

SPRING  
2021

# TELLUS



# METAMORPHOSIS



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## letter from the editors

We need change. Therefore, the Tellus Editorial Board carefully selected "Metamorphosis" as their theme for this year's issue of Tellus Zine. This issue's theme was considered in the context of the November presidential election, the murders of African Americans at the hands of police, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Originally exploring the concept of "revolution", the editorial board shifted the second issue's theme to "metamorphosis" after the events of January 6th. Given our generation's need to adapt to these sudden changes with sophisticated maturity, the transformational change of metamorphosis (and the new possibilities that emerge from the process) felt resonant with our experience and our hopes for a better future.

Metamorphosis is defined both as "the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form" and "a change of the form or nature of a person into a completely different one". Metamorphosis is not chaotic, but gradual, transformational change. It's a type of growth which reconfigures structures and expands possibility, like a caterpillar that transforms within, then emerges from its chrysalis as a butterfly.

As a theme, "Metamorphosis" is open to interpretation. As demonstrated by the word's two definitions, there are two pathways for metamorphosed change, one personal and one societal. Tellus received submissions exploring the transitions of nature and politics as well as the artists' own mental health and intrapersonal relationships.

Issue 002, "Metamorphosis" exemplifies Tellus Zine's mission to provide a platform for young people to express themselves bravely and creatively as a part of our diverse community. Metamorphosis indicates dramatic rebirth and new possibilities for any and all—change is universal and inherently takes many forms. The work in our Zine speaks for Tellus and its purpose.

**XX,**  
**tellus zine editorial board**



# tellus editorial board

Tellus is a youth-led digital publication, showcasing art and creative writing by young adults from across Greater Cincinnati. Its mission is to provide a platform for young people to express themselves bravely and creatively as a part of our diverse community.

The Tellus Zine Editorial Board plans, creates and shares creative works by teens about issues that matter to teens in an online zine, podcast and open mic events. Members also work on their own creative projects, and gain artistic and editorial skills through guest artists, professional mentors, and hands-on experience.

## The 2020-2021 Tellus Editorial Board includes:

**IRIS ANDREWS**

**NADYAA BETTS**

**KYLIE BRIDGEMAN**

**CHLOE DIXON**

**ERIN FINN**

**CIERRA FOGLE**

**HUNTER HARTLEY**

**LILA JOFFE**

**NANDINI LIKKI**

**MAYA MARTINEZ**

**RIA PARIKH**

**NAINA PURUSHOTHAMAN**

**MARGARET SPRIGG-DUDLEY**



## featured artists

**BIJIN BASU**

**CIERRA FOGLE**

**CHANDLER GRAY**

**HUNTER HARTLEY**

**LILA JOFFE**

**ROSE JOFFE**

**JADA KEITH**

**NANDINI LIKKI**

**BRENDAN LUDWIG**

**MAYA MARTINEZ**

**GABRIEL MCDONALD**

**HANNAH MOORE**

**JEREMY NEWMAN**

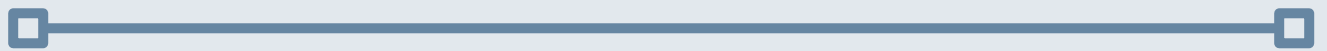
**RIA PARIKH**

**AIDAN PRISCO**

**ADITI PURUSHOTHAMAN**

**NAINA PURUSHOTHAMAN**

**KIRSTEN TING**



# CURE

CIERRA FOGLE

FIRE IN MY GUT  
BURNING, NOT ROTTING, FINALLY  
BUT FROM FEAR, NOT LOVE

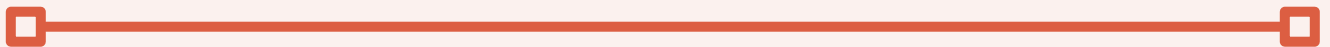
REACHING FOR SOMETHING TRANQUIL  
BURIED DEEP WITHIN MY FLESH

MY FLESH AND SOUL, A TEMPLE  
WISE AND STRONG WILLED BEING  
GENTLE DAFFODIL

EARTH IS A CAGE IF YOU REFUSE TO LISTEN TO WHAT YOU HEAR BEHIND YOUR EYES  
AND IN YOUR GUT

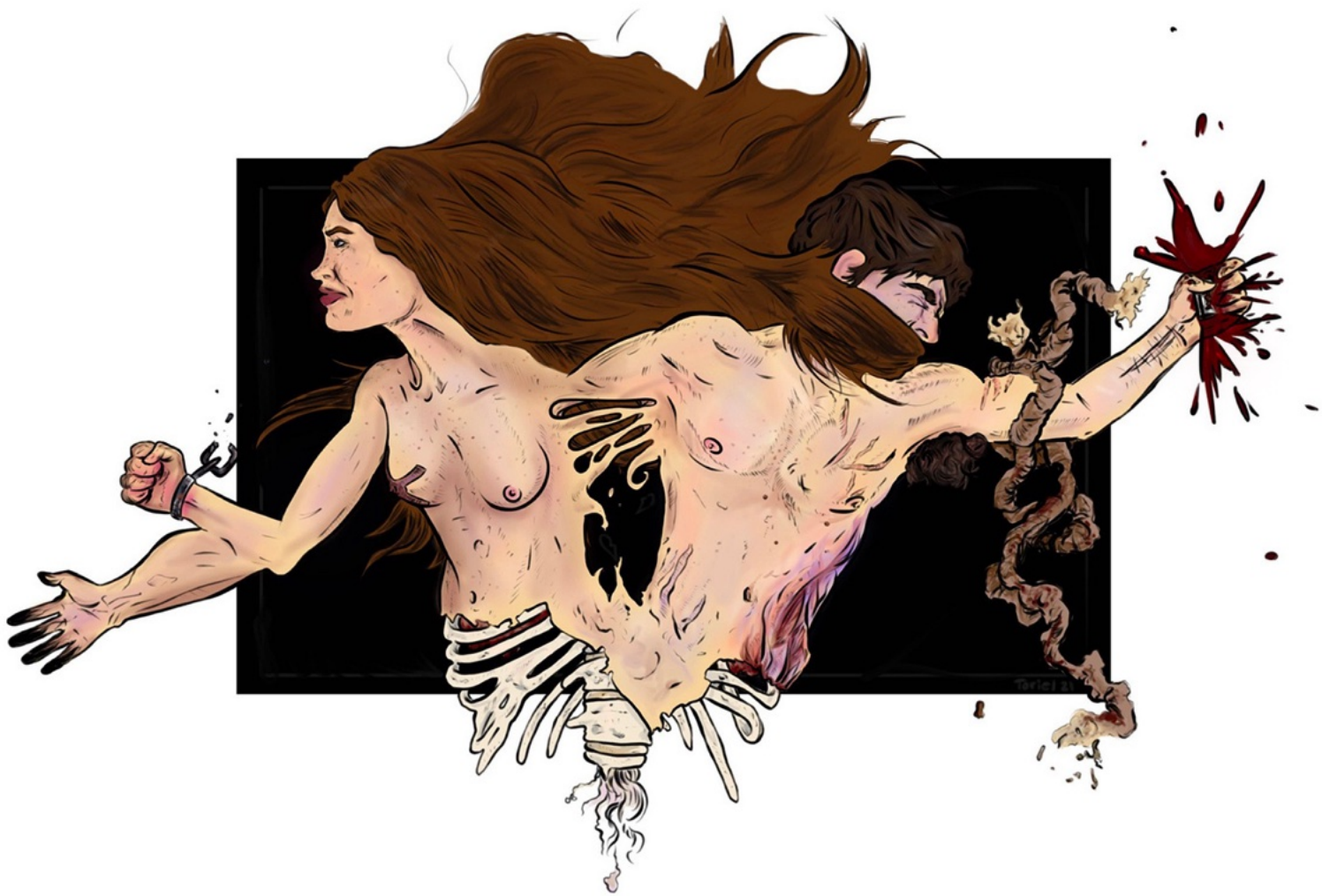
IT BURNS IF IT MEANS SOMETHING

GUTTED FISH  
IMPULSIVE DREAMER  
STUBBORN HEALER  
FEEL EVERYTHING YOU CAN FEEL UNTIL YOUR MIND GIVES IN  
THE MIND IS A CAGE IF YOU DON'T TEACH IT VULNERABILITY



# earth is a cage

CIERRA FOGLE



---

# dysphoric nightmare

GABRIEL MCDONALD



moons cycle  
clock ticks and sifting in milk spilled  
rock  
and my bloods cycle sways to  
divine phases.

~

harsh, whipped up mouth  
and words bite slow—  
freshly squeezed, newborn to worlds of fear and

hammered, high, lazy on the feet  
kiss-caressed skin bruises real fine.  
hold, held, falling short still—

leave, run, gone—  
one bedroom away—  
too much silver tongue.

~

i fought the infectious bloom—  
for who's to say tender pink is woman?

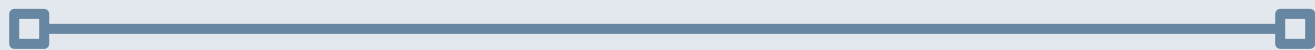
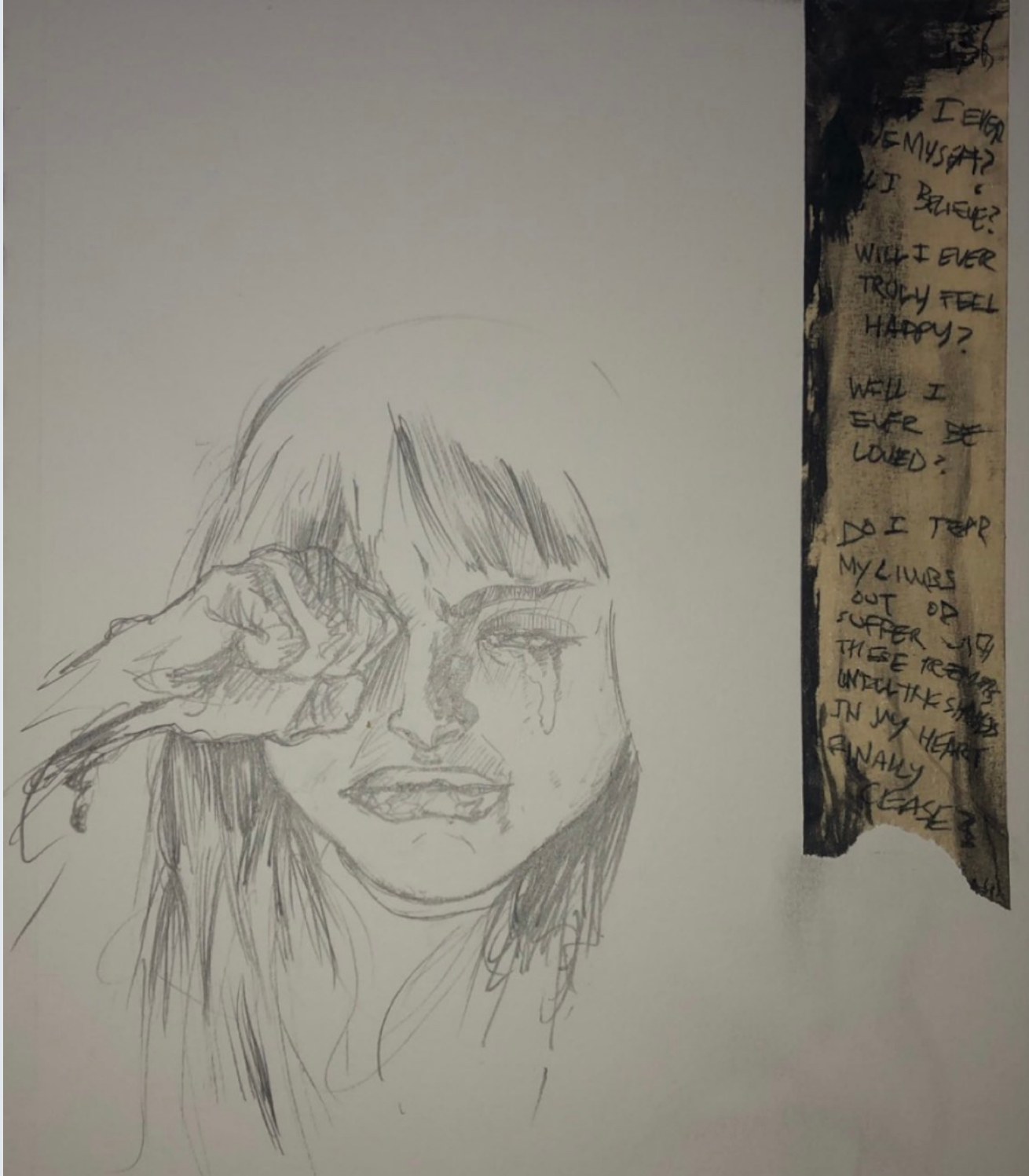
i defy—  
red, raw, delicious eroticism is

i—  
forget to follow, see my head held high



## rising woman

MAYA MARTINEZ



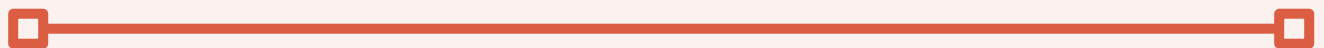
# autophobia

GABRIEL MCDONALD

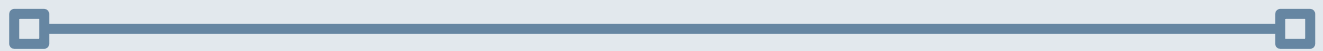
the morning after the attempt  
you'll feel lost  
how do you go about a day you weren't expecting to be here for?  
you'll find that your clothes feel heavier  
the air is too cold ; too thick  
every breath will feel like all of the air  
is being vacuumed out of your lungs

in the following weeks  
your anger will grow  
until it is too large for your body to hold  
furious at the universe for making you stay  
you've dealt with so much for so long and you  
don't want to carry it anymore.  
you'll want to try again (you won't)  
but you will find other ways to hurt.  
bite. scratch. bleed. drink.  
people will worry, people will leave  
which only makes you fall further into the hole you're digging  
the hurt and the loneliness will consume you  
turn you into someone you don't recognize

eventually,  
you'll make the decision to try  
try to recover  
try to untangle the mess in your mind  
it will take time, but at some point you will realize  
the sun gets a little brighter ; days feel a little warmer.  
but you still won't feel happy all the time  
and you'll question whether or not anything  
is actually getting better  
or if it will ever get better.  
ask yourself :  
are you at least 1% better than  
the person you were?  
1% isn't a lot.  
but it's progress  
and sometimes, that's all you need



**1%**



# aftermath

LILA JOFFE

recovery can often feel like the aftermath of  
a natural disaster ;  
a wildfire that took a little too long to put out  
the flames of the fire are gone  
but the buildings are no longer there  
the water isn't clean  
the place you once loved is nowhere to be seen

any heat will remind you of the hurt  
but you have to remember that  
there is no danger here  
take a deep breath, even though the dry air  
will burn your throat  
look around you  
you will see no flames  
touch your skin  
notice how it isn't burning take a drink of water  
remind yourself that it is over

you will have to rebuild everything  
and it won't be the same,  
but that does not mean it isn't beautiful, still  
recovery takes time  
and sometimes you take one step forward  
and two steps back  
but the hurt doesn't last forever.  
it may not happen quickly,  
but the green leaves will return to the bare trees  
flowers will grow in the soil once buried in ash  
you too will bloom again  
you have beauty inside of you  
you may not always see it,  
but that doesn't mean it isn't there  
and if the flames in your heart ignite again  
i will be here to help put them out



# wildfire

CHANDLER GRAY



# intersectionality

BIJIN BASU

Have you ever burned before?  
Because I just started to.  
Just started to feel the flames licking my new skin  
After years of iron covering my face, my eyes,  
My truth.

And as my body was forged,  
As I evolved,  
As life changed me beyond recognition,  
The iron didn't shift with my new self,  
Screaming for freedom,  
Because there was no flame hot enough to make that unyielding iron bend to my will.

But then, suddenly, I cracked that metal from the inside.  
And I felt everything.

However, the feelings weren't an avalanche.  
Cold.  
Icy.  
An unwanted shock to my system.

It was a soft warmth.  
Or at least it started that way.

Because before I knew it, there was a bonfire being lit within me. Not destructive but  
restorative,  
Awakening the senses that I have never known  
Were numb.

And with that cold, once-unyielding iron  
Nothing but a melted puddle at my feet, I learned to burn.  
And I learned a lesson.

Burn for the family, The friends,  
The times which you had once been afraid to hold close to your heart.

Burn for the young loves,  
The crushes,  
The passions that you had once kept hidden in your dark.

Burn for the laughs,  
Burn for the cries,  
Burn for everything in you that has died.

But that burning in your gut,  
That tightening in your chest,  
The hidden tears choking the throat  
Of the one in the mirror that you thought you knew best.

Don't burn for that.  
But shed.

Shed what it left until what you thought would kill you  
Is nothing but burning embers scattered on the floor,  
Waiting to be stepped over when you are finally ready to walk that journey into a fiery future.  
A future which the iron and the ice had once made impossible to explore.

# dear fire

NAINA PURUSHOTHAMAN



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# fantasy

LILA JOFFE



Since I was little, I loved to read.  
I would stay up under the covers with a book-light.  
Fantasy novels and murder mysteries are all I need  
to be happy, so you can't call me pretentious  
I don't look down on non-readers; I look up  
to the heavens to ask how? But I'm done.

Unfortunately, he wasn't done  
He was ready to scoff at those who are well-read  
because he's a stupid idiot; he wakes up  
on the wrong side of the bed everyday. Light  
from the sun irritates him. He's dumb, pretentious,  
and cynical. Everything I'll never want or need.

But for a group project, I did need him.  
I hate public speaking; we couldn't get done  
without his charisma. Maybe he's not pretentious.  
But he still doesn't read.  
Not even Gatsby, Holden Caulfield, or "A Light  
In the Attic." I guess his brain space has been used up.

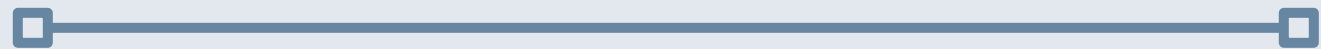
In class, when we were up,  
he squeezed my hand. He finished and felt the need  
to wink at me! How dare he make light  
of my favorite activity, openly flirt with me, and call it done.  
Oh Fortune! Give me an honest read  
on this fool, and don't be pretentious.

I was sitting on a school bench, alone and non-pretentious  
when he decided to come up  
to me. He tossed an un-read  
book at me. He said, "I think you need  
this," and walked away, apparently done?  
On the first page was his number, written light.

At the sight of his digits, my face turned light  
and sickly. I wouldn't call this pretentious,  
conceited, dim-witted loser even if my days were done.  
But maybe I'll look him up  
on Instagram and see what I find. But it's not like I need  
to. Whatever. It shall be a short read.

'Twas a long read, and I am no longer pretentious,  
for I have seen the light of love as it rises up  
over the heavens; tired, needy, un-done.

## the bibliophile's un-romantic sestina



# in the mirror

ROSE JOFFE

eyes closed, i fell—  
and the hot, crackling embrace of my god threw itself  
around my dirty skin,  
to catch me.

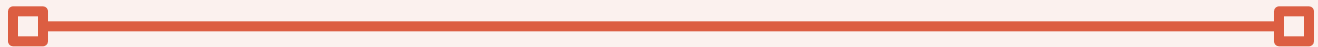
i fought its devastating kinship.  
its embers exposed the ugly of my fear—  
its smokey breath plundered my lungs of oxygen—  
devouring,  
quenchless,  
it took me greedily.

i felt vulnerable in the most agonizing of ways—  
my naked truths sizzled, forceful in their glory—  
and yet.

and yet—  
a gentle caress—whispery sweet and kind—  
melted longingly into the sinews of my flesh temple.  
i laid—barren and enlivened and full—with the healing kiss of my god.  
within its searing laceration, i was purified.  
built anew.  
renewed—a recycled youth.  
i reveled in the clarity—  
the all-seeing, the everythingness.  
it flared in the colors of airy sunshine,  
molten citrus, but flowered in charred ink and sapphire tears.

i sank into the balance of being and god—  
laved myself with its ethereal rebirth,  
consented to its unknowable burn.

eyes opened—  
i had become myself.



# becoming

MAYA MARTINEZ



# blessing in disguise

RIA PARIKH

I look down and find iron manacles on my wrists  
Chains surrounding my body,  
Weighing me down.  
My young heart is beating uncontrollably.  
Only I can see what cages me.

Phantom voices of old souls haunt my dreams.  
I reach out my arms to show them the iron which lies there,  
But they do not see  
Despite those old souls being the ones who put them on me.

The unforgiving restraints are reinforced with lies  
Condescension, bitterness, and hate.  
And when the fires started to burn  
You thought I would only retreat deeper into my invisible cage  
But that was a mistake.

My young heart screams for peace  
For justice  
For revolution  
Watching the fires grow and spread.

So, I get up  
Chains and all,  
And burst from cage which I once thought was invincible.

I am free so let them hear me.  
I repeat those songs of peace,  
Of justice,  
Of revolution,  
Until every caged tongue sings with me.

Suddenly I feel young hearts all around me  
Finally spreading their wings.  
And the songs continue well into the night,  
Because we are the young  
And we must keep beating that drum.

---

# invisible cage

**NAINA PURUSHOTHAMAN**



# bug in the sun

AIDAN PRISCO

if people were seasons  
i think you would be spring  
because just like the blooming flowers in may  
you have shown me that beauty can come after the cold and dreary you  
have shown me that i can grow from the hurt

before i met you,  
i felt like i was trapped in an endless winter  
i thought i'd have to deal with  
the snow storms and black ice  
the frostbite and harsh winds  
for the rest of eternity

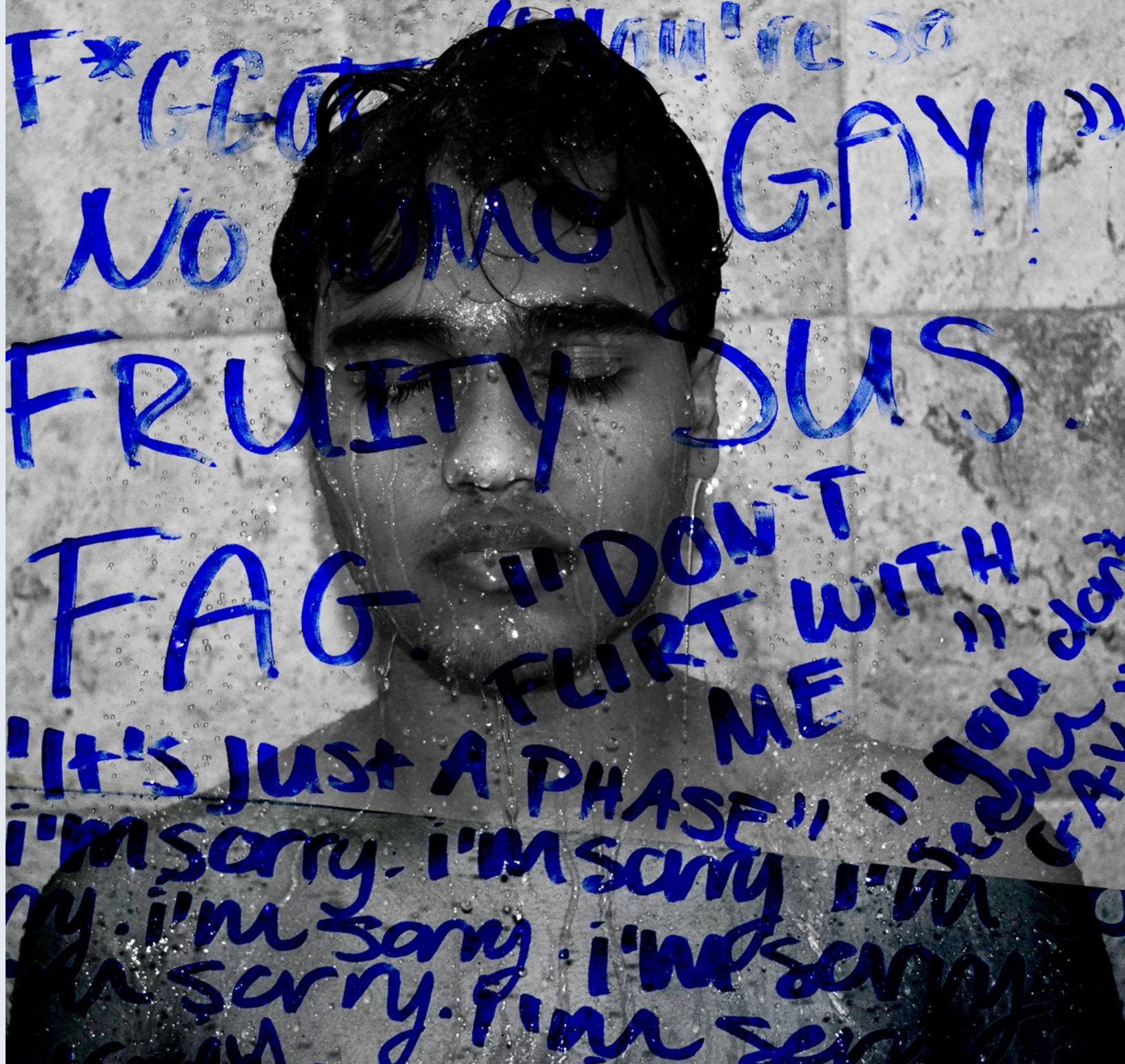
but every word you spoke sounded like a sweet lullaby  
every breath felt like poetry  
your presence made me want to believe the  
warm would come again

just as you proved to me the beauty of the changing season y  
ou taught me that  
the spring is not always glamorous  
sometimes the rain goes on for days  
leaving the world gloomy and wet  
and when the sun comes back again  
the pretty flowers bother your allergies  
you taught me that it doesn't have to be one or the other  
that the goal is not to get rid of the hurt  
but to learn to coexist with it  
learn to balance the cold with the warmth  
learn to allow the rain to wash away all of the heavy thoughts  
  
you made me believe in the spring, again

---

## april showers

CHANDLER GRAY



## SLURS

BIJIN BASU



It was a plight yet unknown to me  
Seeing you from across the water  
Once I wanted you here next to me  
Even as I was your cannon fodder

I laughed as if you didn't exist  
But you do when I'm not innocent  
When I need someone to blame  
You're beautiful trauma all the same

It was a broken untapped melody  
Playing as the room grew hotter  
The fire set by the ache in me  
Looking at you like a desperate daughter

Now he stands with me here  
Delicate as a rolling tear

But I'll trust the sunshine for a couple years  
Smiling as it streams through my house

So once again unto the trenches I go  
Entertaining these oh so beautiful ghosts  
I look at them as they grasp my throat  
I don't beg them now to let go

Do your worst I plead as I drown  
I wanna fall all the way down  
So I can know that I can kill a frown

Even if the smile's fake

---

# beyond the rubicon

HUNTER HARTLEY



# ***i can't close my eyes anymore***

**BIJIN BASU**

I am seventeen  
and yesterday she made me  
cry in English class  
my water bottle is always leaking  
and sometimes I hesitantly dream  
of different fathers  
when him and I discuss our ancestors  
I wish his blood was mixed with mine.  
A meaningless wish  
to forget reality.

I wonder if she remembers  
lying on the trampoline  
and looking up at sunlight leaves  
the heat in her almond eyes  
I miss her ugly accent  
and her orange jumper  
that she threw away at seven  
complaining that it wasn't her style  
I wish to see her wearing it again.  
A meaningless wish  
to forget reality.

My dark hair, mixed with the night winds  
Hear it call to me, but only I listen  
I hate my breath, my skin,  
not dark or white but something else  
When I move out I will scream  
for the first time, blue and unafraid  
until my voice breaks and I die  
my body adorned with flowers  
aloft and breathing at the pyre  
I wish to exist.  
A meaningless wish  
to forget reality.

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**except earth**

**NANDINI LIKKI**



# the silver shadow

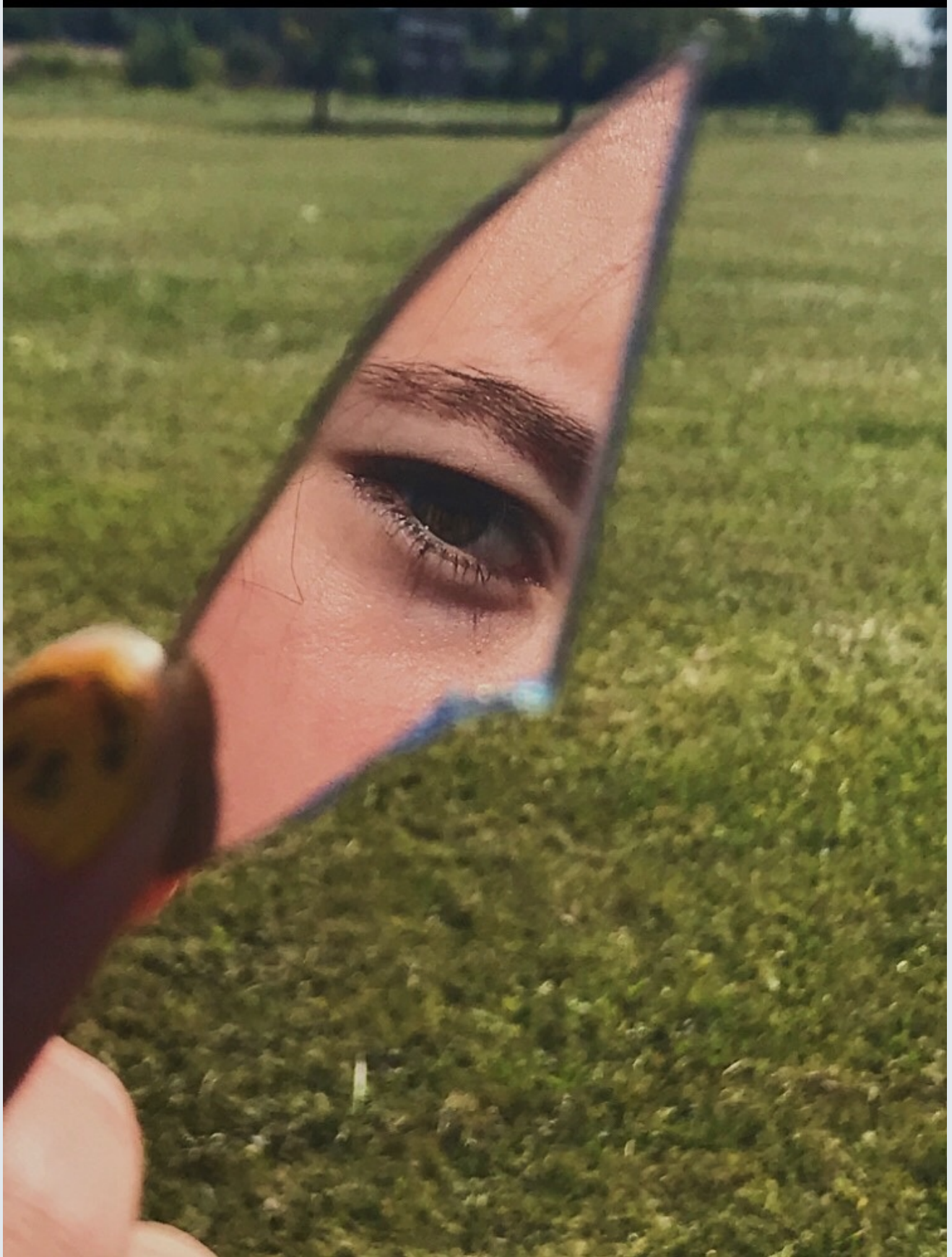
BRENDAN LUDWIG

i like fitting myself into (small) (spaces) and see how much ( ) I take up. look! i'm in those parentheses but i'm (invisible) do i exist when other people don't see me? when he enters the room i won't make a sound (huff huff, breathe in and out) i can't see his face but i know it's red. he will scream my name and make a scene (like a desperate actor searching for an audience) but i am hiding!! he doesn't know he doesn't see me (heehee) oops! i will accidentally slip my foot out from behind the desk, peach-painted nails, toe ring, (a scar at my heel) he will notice and drag me out of my Hiding Place like achilles' mom taking her son out of the styx. his face is red (i knew it) but his hands are too. they grab my neck and choke me, push me against the wall (now red too) i'm too scared to admit i like it (i'm too scared) (huff huff, breathe in AND

---

## **claustrophilia**

**NANDINI LIKKI**



# changing gaze

HANNAH MOORE

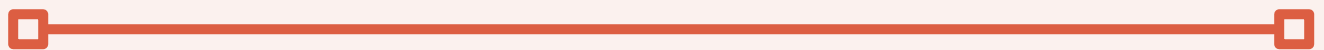
fragments of life  
a distant memory  
little strings being pulled in divergent ways  
moving furiously with grand falsity  
not in control of her own wires  
of a marionette.

time trudges by  
a broken clock  
trapped in perpetual stagnation  
the same old, depressive cycles go on  
again again again  
need to be touched, cared for, loved.

pellucid tears  
make their mark on a hard mattress.  
the red beat hammers erratically.  
bum bum bum  
white clouds hold the wooden body  
a soft, wispy blanket.

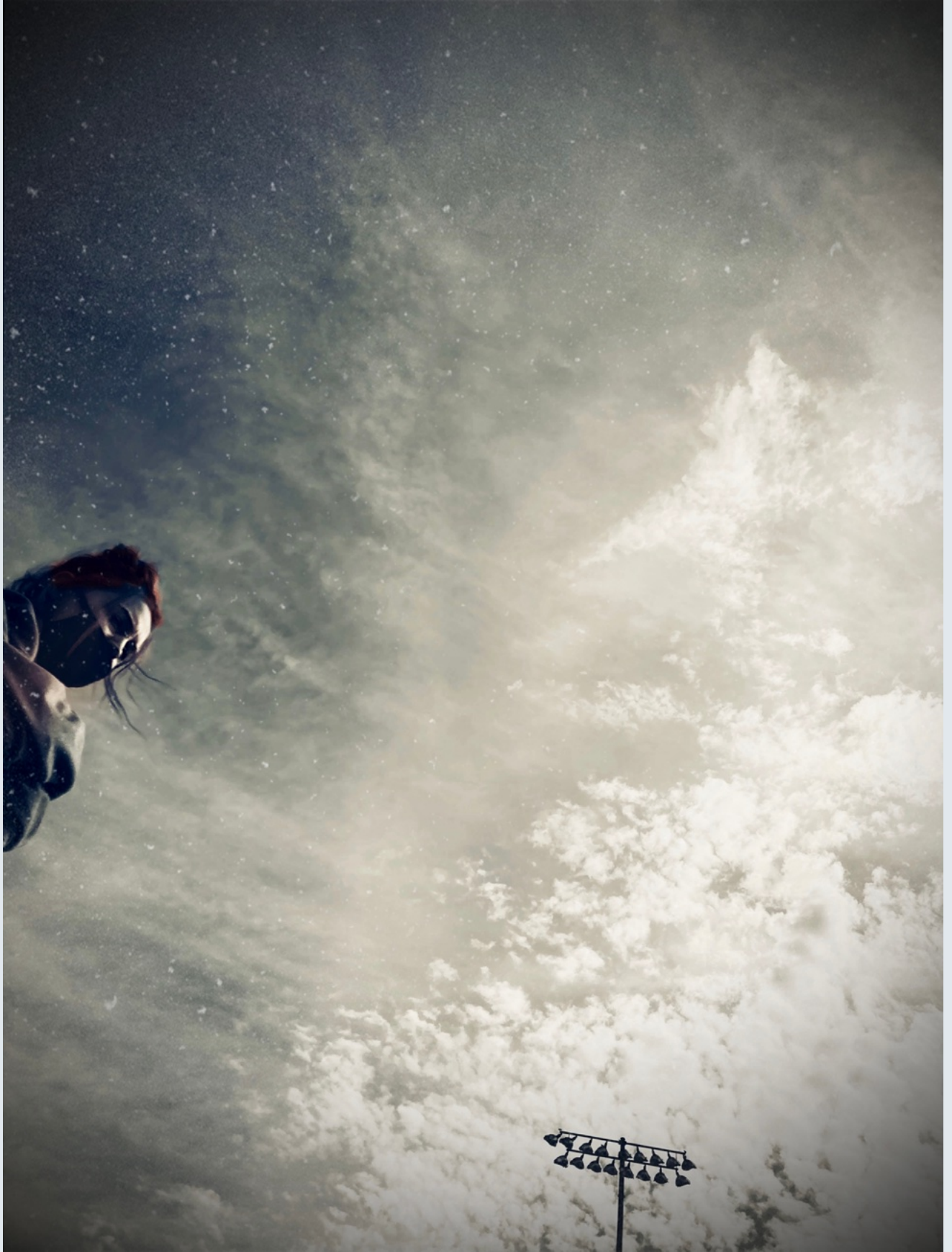
the brightness shines through broken glass  
a factitious mask is worn  
painted smiles  
blood-red  
a steadfast doll  
always getting gunned down.

the eyes of one is blind to  
the soul of another.  
a remarkable black veil  
on a marionette.



# marionette

ADITI PURUSHOTHAMAN



# empyrean dream

BRENDAN LUDWIG



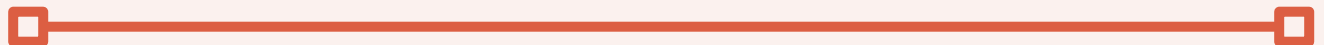
we need stop telling survivors  
how strong they are  
how *brave* they are  
this strength ;  
this bravery -  
it was not a choice.  
it did not come for free.

this poem is for everyone to had to  
become the butterfly  
before they even had the chance to be the caterpillar  
for the children who already have more  
life experience than the adults in their lives

but this is also  
for all of the survivors  
who didn't come out the other side  
"stronger"  
for those whose story isn't that  
of a great metamorphosis  
whose wings don't work the way they're  
supposed to ;  
too fragile to fly on their own,  
but know too much to cocoon themselves  
back into safety

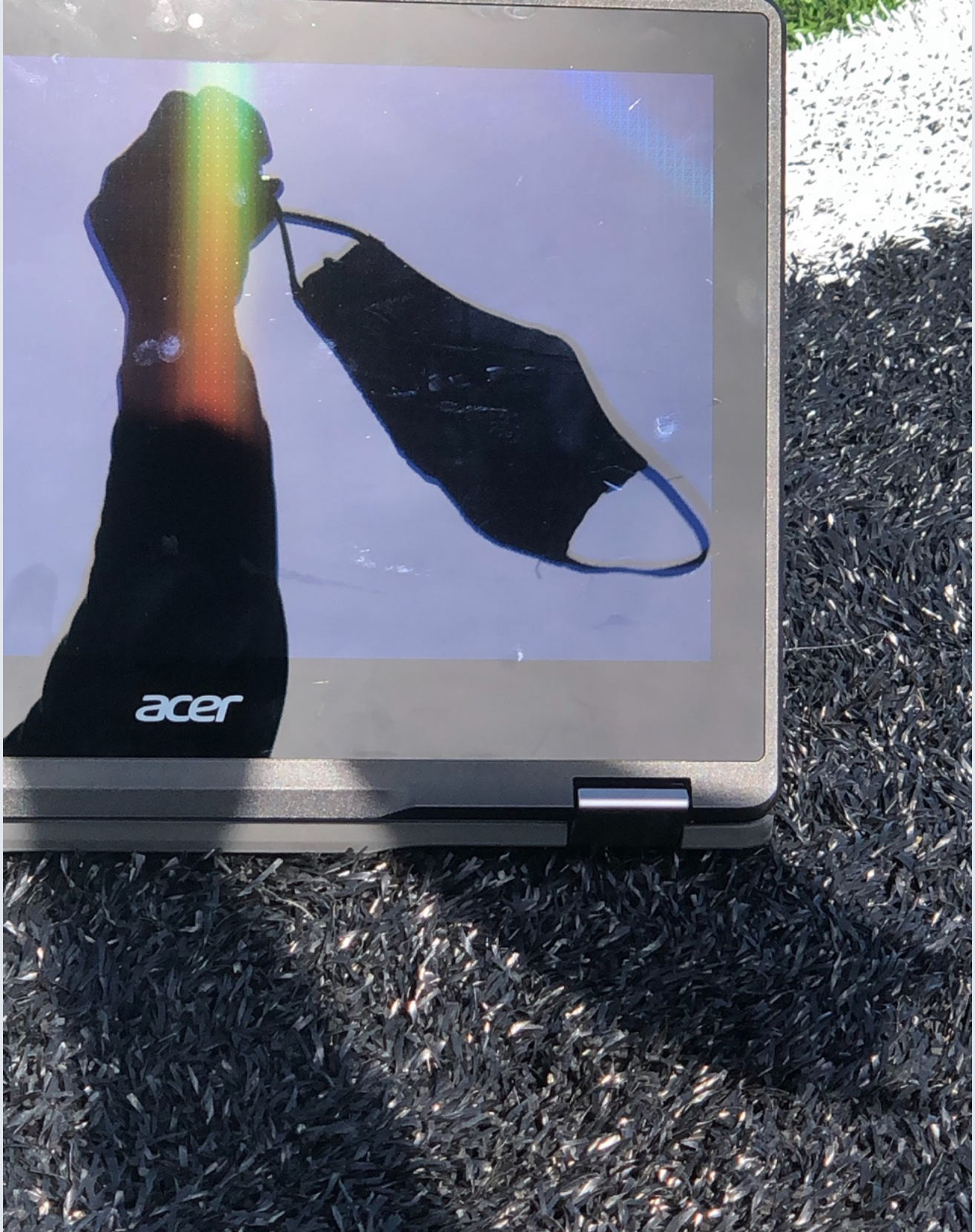
this  
is for everyone who feels more tragedy than survivor  
i see how hard you work  
to stay here with us.  
i know most days it still feels like you are at war  
but please know i am here to fight with you

to all of the survivors out there -  
even if most days you feel like the word is not yours to claim  
it was not your fault  
you are valuable  
you are not in this alone



# stronger

CHANDLER GRAY

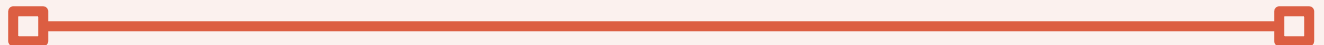


# blowing in the wind

AIDAN PRISCO

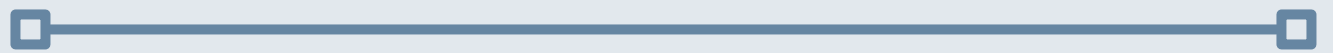
In the corners of my house  
bygone threads are webbed over  
drooping beams,  
ghosts of shadowed melodies as they wait for  
daylight to cast golden trails on gossamer strands,  
(and when breezy whispers happen to brush off sprinkles of dust)  
they splinter  
into an unrelenting cacophony as I knock away clusters of spun lace,  
silvery twists clinging to walls  
tangling into knots,  
viscid silk grating between my fingers,  
ensnaring me,  
vice-like, ceaseless.

Those tenacious chords  
snake around my wrists,  
loop through hollows of my mind,  
force me to bend to the raucous strains.  
of their never ending chorus.



## **earworm**

**KIRSTEN TING**



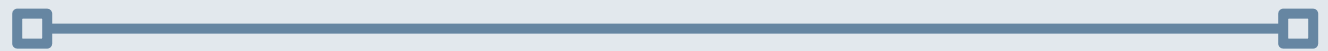
# surrealism

JEREMY NEWMAN

- ● wow he's kind of cute. 6/10
- ● oh—he's eating the baguette
  - ○ now he can forget about the shakshouka spaghetti penne alfredo?
  - ○ (does he look like the kind of guy who eats shakshouka? seriously...)
- ● please don't start crying
  - ○ ohmygod how do you look even cuter while crying?
  - ○ ugh his tears are getting all over the bread
  - ○ and the crumbs are getting on the floor. 3/10
- ● he's pulling out his phone
- I wonder what he's listening to? Probably The Who Babymetal CCR? does he look like the hillbilly type ● I like the color of his hair
- is it black or brown? in between? ● why is he hitting his phone so HARD
  - ○ is he typing something?
  - ○ a mean text to the ex he just broke up with?
- do i want him to be single?
  - ○ an email to the boss who just fired him?
  - ○ why am I cursing him with these woes
  - ○ i'm a 2/10
  - ○ maybe that's just how he types + he's not angry
  - ● FUCK
    - ○ helookedatmefuckfuckfuck
    - ○ does he know that I've been watching him godi'msuchastalker
  - ● WAS THAT A SMIRK!! ○ holyshit
  - ● wait a second
  - ● wait one more
  - ● okaynowlook ●
  - ● he's gorgeous
    - ○ even with tear-stained eyes
    - ○ I think we're going to get married
    - ○ bread-themed wedding
    - ○ 2.5 kids
    - ○ country villa
  - ● is he going to get off now?
    - ○ it's only been a couple minutes
    - ○ Penn Station can wait, come back to me boy
  - ● gone ●
  - ●
  - ● what the fuck did i just go through
- 10/10

---

## notes on the man on the train with the singular baguette



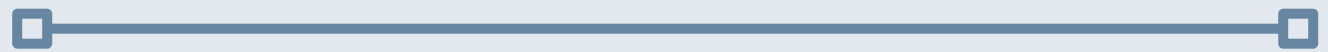
# failureboy

GABRIEL MCDONALD



# presentiment

GABRIEL MCDONALD



# madisonville

LILA JOFFE





# begging

LILA JOFFE



# **unbroken stare**

ROSE JOFFE



# **i'm still the same**

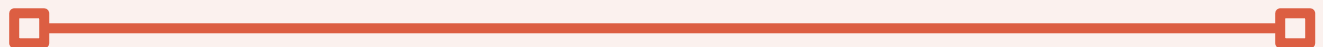
**BIJIN BASU**



# post colonial portrait

LILA JOFFE

metamorphosis  
like the change to a new life  
or even the change to become you, a full you  
the entire you  
morphing into a new you  
a better you  
a new soul trying to find its way home to peace  
we change, we grow, we prosper, we fly, land and  
even crash  
not knowing which one is worse, we take it, ball it  
up and deal with the outcomes of each. good or  
bad



## **metamorphosis poem**

**JADA KEITH**



## acknowledgements

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**For more information and to apply visit: [telluszine.org](http://telluszine.org)**