

Hand-me-down Happiness
by Devaki Devay

Tumbling through the honey tea, the crystal cup, orange sun
Scatters over the dining table
These shattered remains of the patterned glass--
Are my dinner. I drink along with them
The clean blue light bursting beneath my dark screen, unblinking, a much safer
Sort of sky.
I thumb and scroll and thirst and bite. The tablet
Crumbles beautifully, spiderwebs, curls
Like a flattened chandelier.
This is my dinner. It is now enclosed
In my envelope of sticky skin. I have
Overeaten.
I press my lips against
This last glass window, this toilet's rim,
Vomit to the people, deliver
My filling. I am lighter, now starving.
This is my guilt
Pleading innocent.
My desperate defense.

Devaki Devay is a sophomore at a California community college, and has worked as a Managing Editor and Teaching Assistant for the student-run paper. In their free time, they work at a local preschool. Their writing mainly grapples with the aftermath of abuse, a fractured identity, and loneliness as it is felt by diaspora populations.



*To all the friends who witnessed my
downfall and stood by*
by Juliette Sebeck

When the palace was sieged,
murdered princess, prince, and queen,
I wasn't sure I could ever feel whole again
behind the barricade.

But it was at a rectangle table of pillows and knights
where still, you stood by
me and believed me
and helped to build a new palisade.

You not only believed me,
but helped to banish the banshee
and let the banished live in something resembling peace
in the rebuilt castle.

I firmly believe that I wouldn't be standing
here today if it weren't for your brilliant handling
of my bloody downfall,
so I thank you, valiant vassals.

Juliette Sebeck is a poet and writer
born in small-town Pennsylvania.
After several years of journalism
and work with sources like Her Campus
Media and The Mighty, she turned her
focus to poetry, publishing the
chapbook, *Mistakes Were Made* in 2017.

Thank U
by Juliette Sebeck

When I text my friend,
Thank you for not being a man.
She laughs despite knowing that I'm entirely too serious.
She laughs because she knows what it means.
Thank you for answering my messages.
Thank you for not trying to sleep with me.
Thank you for recognising whether I'm in love with you.
Thank you for letting me complain without shrugging and looking away.

Currently, Juliette is working
on *Nightingale & Sparrow Magazine*,
lifestyle blog *For the Sake of Good Taste*,
and a variety of poetry and prose pieces.
When she isn't writing (and sometimes
when she is), she can be found with a
cup of coffee and her cat, Fitz.



universe customer service
by Dior Stephens

hello world,
I am a Pisces.
which I love with
all my soul, however,
I am not quite sure
if I'd like to be a Pisces
any longer

Please advise

.....
you see,
it is quite taxing, really,
to feel it all,
to know the waves
and still sink underneath them
to know you belong to something else
so old, so foreign, so mystical, so
not of this world, I'm (astral-projecting again)
tired of it all,
really,
I am.

.....
is there a
return policy
on these sun signs?
I didn't ask to be conceived but I
certainly didn't ask to be
a malleable, sensitive,
dreamy-eyed wanderer
in a world full of—

please,
what is the policy?

.....
hello stars,
I am a Pisces, but I
am hoping we can
open this up for review.
are these things forever?

—oldest of the bunch
and easily
the most tired.

Prompts for Middle School Teachers Who Write Poetry,
After Dante Di Stefano
by Richaundra Thursday

Write too many desks bulging unyielding classroom walls.
Make an ouroboros comparison to too much content pressing
Against too short class periods. Write a funeral dirge for Civics.
Write a sonnet about passing kids in grocery aisles and hiding
Your panic when you realize them knowing your name
Is not mutual. Write meetings that take place too early
And odes to mediocre pastries.
Write a cento of phone calls home. Voicemail, disconnected
Number, 'I will talk to him.' Voicemail of someone else,
'She's with her father today, call him.' Well, he says the problem
Is you. 'Disconnected line, Voicemail, 'Sorry, we're just
Really busy here.'
Write a dozen good mornings to pubescent stories
You'll never hear, battles you'll never know, triumphs
You'll never share. Believe in them like fairies or angels or reimbursements.
Write from the perspective of gum under a desk,
Write the apocalypse as seen by all the leftover Takis
Strewn over every sidewalk. Write a pastiche
Of 'The Yellow Wallpaper' involving anchor charts
Write papers graded after the janitors go home,
Papers graded in the dark, papers graded at home,
Papers graded in front of the tv, papers sploshed with
With wine or tears, papers graded in dreams,
Papers no one else sees, papers that wait failure,
Papers as street signs, giving direction
Write about giving directions, try not to let
The bitter of your coffee seep into your smiles
Of repeated performances.
Write 'modalities.'
And 'differentiation' and 'engagement.'
Make a strained pun on a student name.
Erase it in a cloud of FERPA paranoia.
Write about knowing everyone's drink preference,
Avoid cliches like 'in the trenches with,' or
'Front lines.' In this timeline of potential armament,
Refuse to identify as soldier.
Write about hope.
Write it over and over. Scrawl it on whiteboards,
Tape it to tables, carefully print it on rubrics,
Slide it between book pages.
Whatever else you explore,
Write hope.



vulnerability
by Nadia Gerassimenko

fate brought us together
free will tore us apart.

when i felt affinity with you
in secret, you showed me pearly tears
of loss of love, a mirror echoing
the forthcoming of my own.
i cradled you that day
like mama, babe in arms,
until the lost drop fell.
& we just knew
this loss was gainful.

when we bared our souls
under moonlight in corpses,
performed group rituals
for our spirits crestfallen,
danced & laughed the nights away
& woke up on cloudlike satin beds
i felt so safe completed.
if there was ever just a boy, you were
my soulmate for balance.

vulnerability passes on to others,
like passion ignites, flickers & dies
for the old, rebirths for the new.
still you kept me at hand to reach for
when he couldn't answer everything,
when you wouldn't let him cradle you
like i had that day yet
it was never the same.
i may well have walked away,
you left long ago.

i know, now, soul connections come
when you need them most & go
when there's nothing left to say.

Nadia Gerassimenko is the founding editor
of *Moonchild Magazine*
and proofreader at *Red Raven Book Design*.
She is a freelancer in editorial services by trade,
a poet and writer by choice, a moonchild and nightdreamer
by spirit. Nadia self-published her first chapbook
Moonchild Dreams (2015) at the water's edge |
s her second chapbook (*Rhythm & Bones Press*, 2019).
Twitter: @moonmoonmother



Dior J. Stephens lives in Chicago, IL.
He is the author of *SCREAMS &
lavender and 001*, both with
Ghost City Press. He tweets at
@dolphinnptune and Instagrams
at @dolphinphotos.

IMAGINE
by Dior Stephens

can you imagine me •• I've always wanted something like you •• I thought they told me I
wasn't good enough •• I began to believe I was •• just a •• dirty rotten kid •• how did they
cast the stones so easily •• how did you wash my wounds •• these festering wounds •• you
keep finding more •• and I •• have to remind you •• you'll never find them all ••/

can you imagine me •• hello dolly •• pristine figurine •• queen of ice •• prince of summer
•• will we sweat til the world ends •• will we dance in poppy fields •• O! •• to open for you
is to •• write in •• what was that? •• ah, yes, •• in EX-hilaration ••/

can you imagine me •• one day when the dreams plant themselves •• one day when the
skies turn black •• one day when the crown rests with the beaten •• one day when I can
show you •• all that I am •• will we linger here •• in this sweet spot •• this realm between
realms •• this connection of pulses •• this warmth of wanton pleasures •• these festering
wounds •• you think •• you'll catch them all •• not today, Ash •• not ever ••/

can you imagine me •• imagine me as I imagine myself •• imagine me as they used to •• as
they will •• as they do in private •• as the lovers who once had me •• the way you do now
•• as the Mother once did •• as the sky turns black ••/