



ANNUAL PUBLICATION

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The Women's Centre

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WOMEN'S 2022

WELCOME TO VOICES

Since 1995, VOICES has been a place for the works of students to be shared, admired, and highlighted. Now, as we make our way through 2022, VOICES continues to be a platform for students to tell their stories, share their experiences, and celebrate the voices of their peers as well.

Although these past few years have been undeniably tough on everyone, The Women's Centre is so grateful to be continue sharing VOICES with you. With a mix of long-time and new contributors, there is no shortage of works that will allow you to glimpse into the lives of others and encourage you to view life with an intersectional perspective.

We would also like to express our gratitude for recently being able to celebrate The Women's Centre's 40th anniversary. Since its inception, the centre has striven to be a safe and supportive environment, and as an extension, so has VOICES. As The Women's Centre continues to celebrate even more milestones, VOICES will continue to provide students with the opportunity to express themselves in ways they might not be able to otherwise.

With a sincere thank you to all contributors and readers, we present to you the 2022 edition of VOICES.

With love,

Jennifer Xie, Fabiha Jahan Ahmad, and Zoya Randhawa
Women's Centre Service Coordinators and Literature Director

BY DIVYA AURORA

Walking in the streets of Montreal,
I remember, I walked past all those,
Those swanking about their adoration,
Baby I, I still remember the day,
The day that closed all the ways to my
heart,
Taking frequent trips down a memory
lane,
I reached a mystifying roundabout,
A roundabout where backtracking was
no option.

**THAT ONE
FINE DAY**

Got the one right that evening,
With a heavy heart, bitter
memories and uncertainties in
life.
I remember, I walked past all
those,
Those who tried to pull me back.
Baby I, I still remember the day,
The day that had crowned me with
a mark of approbation.

CHRISTINE

BY CRISTAL
YANLIN LYU



Got the one ri
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no option.

Those who tried to pull me back.
Baby I, I still remember the day

CALLING OF THE FAE

BY RACHEL DENNIS

[CHAPTER 1]

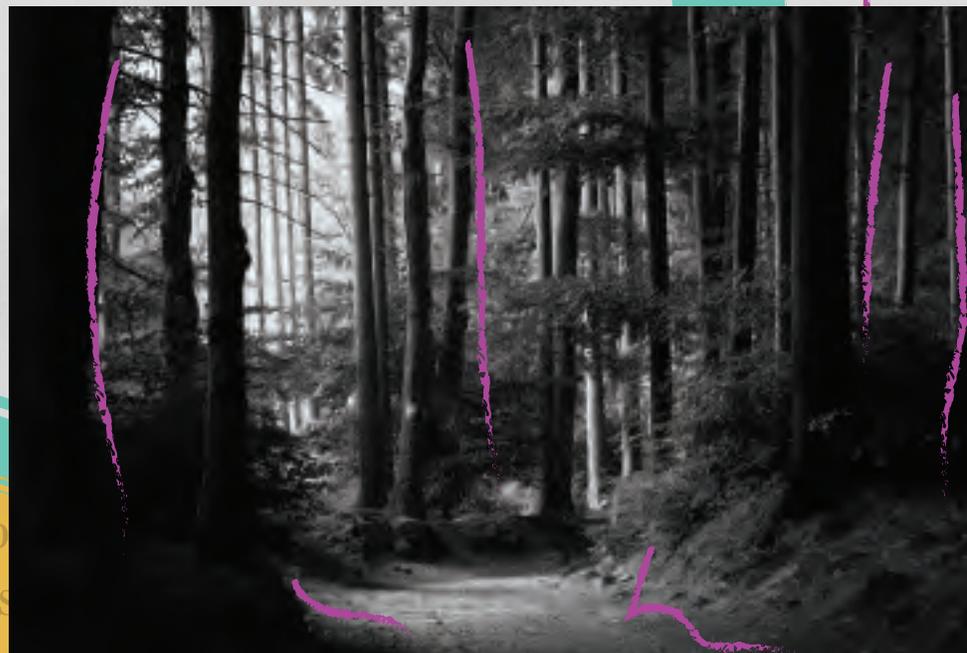
After work it was so cold my eyelashes froze. Musical whispers swirled around me as I climbed the stairway to my burrow.

A calling, from somewhere so deep, I could not resist. At first I was mindful, pausing to get my footing.

Deeper I ventured, my chest unravelling.

I'm not sure how long it was before I realized I was running through the spruce, knee deep in cold sparkling powder.

Laughter devoured me,
And the moon smiled.



After work it was so cold my eyelashes froze. Musical whispers swirled around me as I climbed the stairway to my burrow. A calling, from somewhere so deep, I could not resist. At first I was mindful,

BY RACHEL DENNIS

I AM MY OWN GENE

It doesn't matter how much you try to will things into existence,
there is always a catch.

Was it worth it?

IN HUMAN SKIN

Sometimes I am filled with doubt,
that the intentions will always be self-serving,
and that will be a survival mechanism,
we will never be able to shake.

In the end,
we will leave Earth,
to infect explore other parts of the galaxy,
and the fall of the universe will be from a parasite,
that could never really grasp,
what it felt like

to
be
full.



INSIDIOUS INK

Cut down the wards,
tally Her bounty,
document your boundary,
rewrite your history...

Nothing can outrun the “truth” of the written record!

Why are we here?

To state your claim,
on land that answers to no one,
but Herself?

Does it scare you that the spirit cannot be contained by ink,
and mankind’s mortality?



AVA BY AMMAARAH SHIRAZ

The curtains are drawn and the room is dark and cold. She has been lying in her bed, eyes wide open, for the past hour or so. It is quiet outside except for the sound of rain. One window left open for the cold breeze to come in but her naked body doesn't shiver. The white bed sheets were crisp and clean, now not so much. Her ring finger is not decorated with the wedding band. She takes it off whenever one of her lovers come to visit. As if it made things seem less sinful.

When you look at her from above, she looks almost like she fell from Heaven. Limbs in odd angles, dark hair strewn everywhere and a deep slit in her chest. The stab wound looks like it was intentional but hesitant. The blood, still oozing out of her like a water fountain. A fresh kill. He had wanted to plunge the knife deep enough to pierce her heart, the same heart that had loved him and betrayed him.

There had been tears in his eyes and anger in his soul when he had done it. He didn't want to but he had to. He needed to. She was supposed to only his. Forever.

Her husband is crouching beside the bed and staring at his dead wife. He stayed there and studied the painting he had created. The blood on the knife had been wiped clean on his shirt, now he looked stabbed, too.

He recalled how he had worshipped her. Her skin was so soft, her lips were so full. He looked forward to loving her everyday. But that night he had come home and found her being loved by someone else. Someone young and naïve. It had broken him to see his beloved wife held by someone who was not him.

He stands up and walks to his dead wife. He stood towering over her slender body.

"I loved you too much," he said out loud for her to hear.

He bent down and kissed her cold cheek.

"Happy anniversary, Ava," he whispered into her ear.

TELEWORK!

BY TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY SATIRE

~Your House~

(Close up of your brain's perspective)

You: Internally worried you are not actually working.

You: Imagining boss working hard.

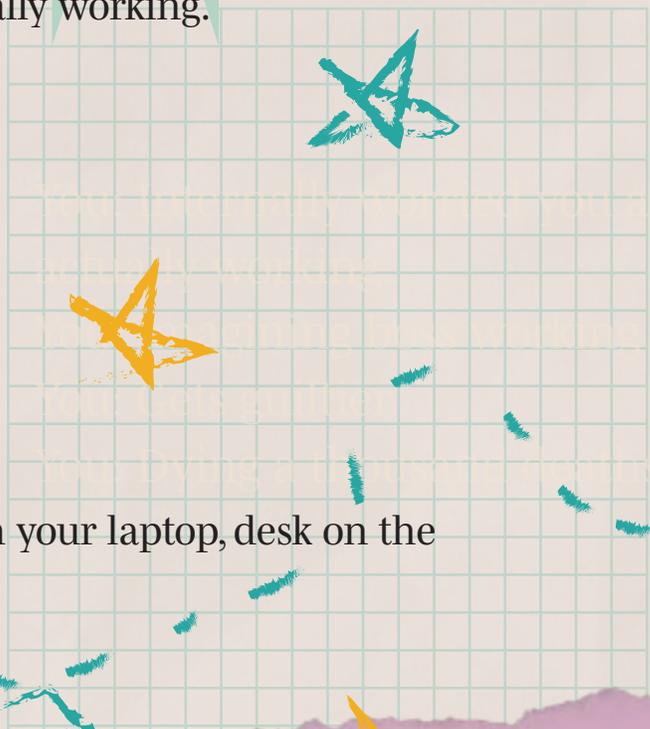
You: Gets guiltier.

You: Dying a thousand deaths.

EMAIL PINGS

Inbox: It's the boss!

(Zoom out to you laying in your bed with your laptop, desk on the outskirts of the scene)



You: Laying on your stomach, smoking a joint, elbow deep in a bag of chips.

You: Feet swinging back and forth in the air..

Composing a timely response.

(Outloud)

You: I bet they are doing so much work right now, I suck.

CUT SCENE

~Their House~

Boss: Half sitting up on the couch.

Boss: Glass of wine in hand.

Boss: Scrolling through twitter,

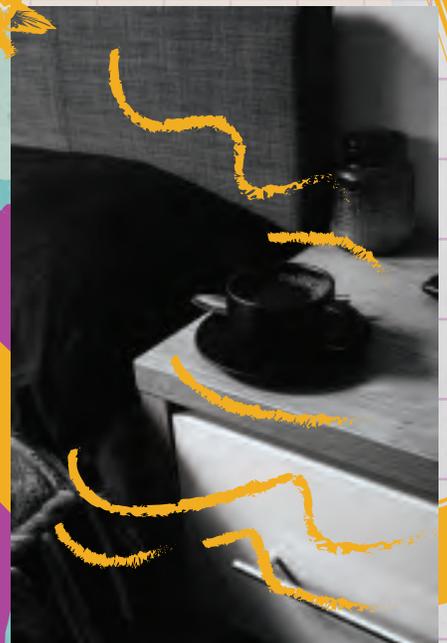
Emailing delegations.

EN FIN

You: Internally worried you are not actually working.

You: Imagining boss working hard.

You: Gets guiltier.



I WONDER IF NINETEEN IS TOO YOUNG TO BE BITTER

BY TOFUNMI AKINLALU

I wonder if nineteen is too young to be bitter,
Because with every Karen video on Twitter,
With every ignorant comment justified by “Scripture”,
With every chant of ‘All Lives Matter,’
My heart grows a little harder.
My skin struggles to grow thicker,
But my temper has no trouble growing quicker.

I wanted to scream that first week,
To make those who were silent feel my pain,
To shake the arrogant ignorance out of some people’s brains.
I had no words for those who posted a black square
But who make Black girls feel less than for their Black hair,
Who spoke up and said the death of George Floyd was tragic
But who just last year posted their outrage at the supposed “audacity” of Colin Kaepernick.

I didn’t though.

I didn’t yell.

I didn’t scream.

I didn’t want my words to be in vain.

I knew and I know that my anger
Isn’t enough to make this society feel a Black woman’s pain.

A couple weeks later I learned about Elijah McClain
And my introvert art-loving heart broke again.
Then I heard the story of a girl called Oluwatoyin
Tears fell as I whispered her Nigerian name.

My White friends and sisters

They ask how I’m feeling,

I sigh and say,

“It depends on the day”,

Because on the 5th of June I cried myself to sleep
On the 8th my anger kept me wide awake.

I feel like I should pray
For strength to hate the sin of racism
And yet love my fellow sinners,
To process my grief
And not grow bitter.

But I'm tired.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of being so tired all the time.

I am tired of forcing a smile

But holding onto my rage like a toxic ex I can't seem to leave behind.

I am tired of fighting against Christian culture's lies.

I am tired of reminding myself not to imitate the behaviour of those who are not imitating Christ,

Those who don't seem to care,

Who speak of injustice and fail to confront their racist ideas,

Who call for unity and fail to promote diversity.

God please help me,

Not to let the sinful actions of other Christians poison my perspective of Christianity.

Despite their inaction I know that you care,

I know that you're here

In the streets as we protest

And in our rooms as we weep,

As we try to deal with the repercussions of 200 years of Black American slavery.

I know that you care

Because when Egypt enslaved the Israelites for over 400 years,

You were there.

You did not sit by.

You heard their cry.

You led your people out of that place.

You rebuked Pharaoh and sent Moses.

You put an end to their oppression,



So I won't listen to those who try to use Your Word to quench my Black expression
To undermine our grief.
I refuse to believe
The racist claims of those who claim
To be children of God.
It's hard to love my fellow Christians
When they don't bear the Spirit's fruit.
It's hard to forgive when some people don't even think there's an issue.

I'm not going to lie to all of you
My faith in humanity is weak.
But somehow my faith in God is stronger than it's ever been.

It's not always smiling,
It's not as loud and large as others' seem to be.

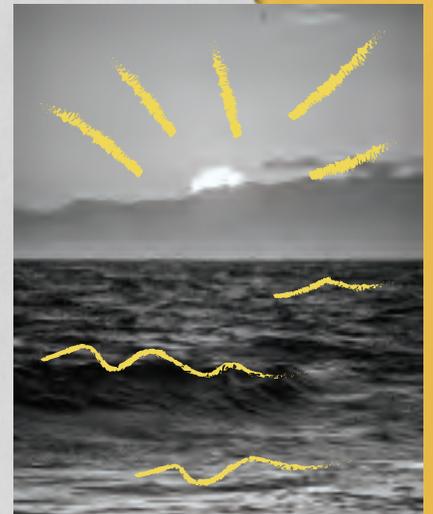
It's small
Like a seed
But it's there
And it's growing.
And so I know
We're going to be okay.

And it's with this knowledge I pray
To our Father who art in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth
As it is in heaven

Give us today our daily bread
And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from all evil
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory
Forever and ever
Amen.

I don't think nineteen is too young to be bitter
But I'm choosing not to be.



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and grow
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eps forward



WOMANHOOD

BY SIMRIT DHILLON

Shining strong and bright
this twinkle in my eye
look closely and you'll see
it can light up the sky.

Magic beats in my breath
watch it pound and grow
the thorns that sprout my throat
will never make it slow.

There is power in my pulse
thunder booming in my heart
propelling footsteps forward
each end – a new start.



Shining strong and
this twinkle in my
look closely and yo
it can light up the sky.

Magic beats in my breath

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each end – a new star

THE HIDDEN FACE OF THE LILY BY NAVYA MANOJ



**PASSENGER SEAT
BY RACHEL DENNIS**

Sometimes,
i don't really feel anything.

That my body,
this existence,
has a job that I am not privy to.

That my spirit is just tagging along for the ride.

COBAIN BY AMMAARAH SHIRAZ

Your voice was rare and soft,
Yet—so intense in ways it said something without meaning to.

Your fingers cradled the guitar,
Strumming the chords so delicately – it meant so much to you.

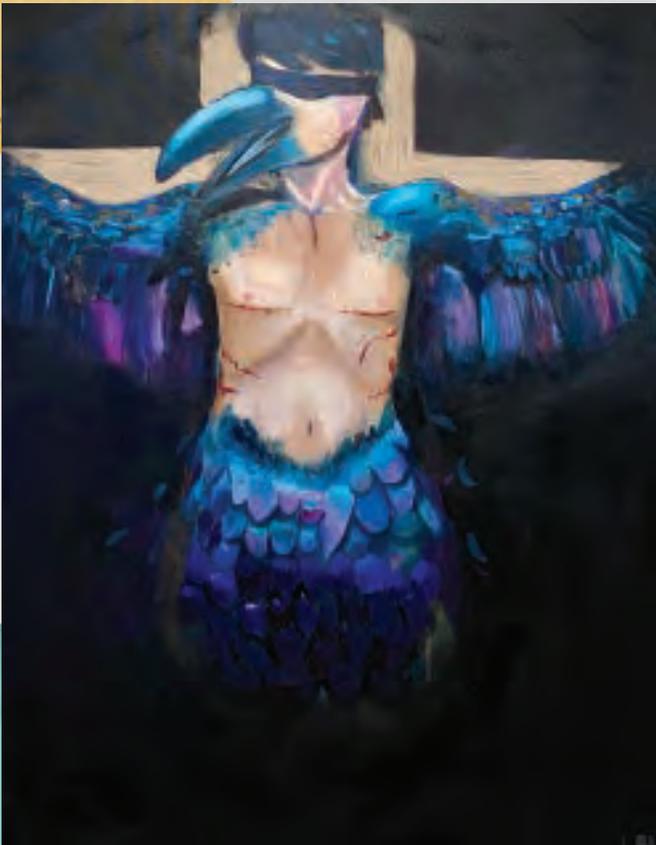
Tell me, when you held the gun to your head,
Did you hesitate?

When your fingers wrapped around the trigger,
Were they being delicate?

Did your skin shiver,
When you pressed the cold metal against the side of your head?

Tell me, Cobain
Was it truly better to burn out than fade away?*

Footnote: *In Kurt Cobain's suicide note he wrote, "It's better to burn out than fade away." Please see <https://www.lettersofnote.com/2011/05/its-better-to-burn-out-than-to-fade.html>



DEFIANCE (WE WILL NOT BE ERASED)

BY REMY LEIGH



BY EMMA SCHUSTER

Is there anything left to achieve?
Has my youth run out of me?
I can no longer be a prodigy,
Welcome to twenty.

They tell women their bodies expire,
While ugly men build an empire.
Is there anything I can be?
Welcome to twenty.

Who let them make a woman out of me at 16?
My growing body
Frozen in time,
Discarded
As I claim that title.
In the eye of the beholder,
I am too old
To be held.

I have forever been
Scared to grow up,
To face the betrayal of beauty
That leaves me defenseless.



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you see it started as a friendship
which quickly turned into a relationship

you became my spouse
then before we knew it
we were buying our first house

but you see, I was playing Tears on My Guitar
because we were driving right into the Death Star

with the rose, I was expecting
the conversations and the constant communication
but that was not what I was receiving

it was a love story that was never mine to begin with
the happily ever after
the romantic chapters
the deep talks and
the late-walks

in reality
we were not on the same page
we were totally disengaged

in reality
I never accepted that rose
because those love stories
are only in movies and tv shows

FIFTEEN

BY AMANDA RIVERA





**BY MIHO
NAGAYAMA**



Am I
pretty?

I mean don't get me wrong,
I think I am.
But every time I stand in front of a mirror,
I can't help but wonder,
Am I pretty?
I can't help but lean in as close as I can,
So close that I can see the dermal ridges,
So close that my breath fogs the mirror.
And I wipe it clean,
So that I can scan every nook, every cranny,
I need to know exactly what is it that makes me pretty,
What specific features,
Which specific part of my body down to the cell that's pretty.
Am I pretty?

I mean I love my dusky skin tone.
And I work hard to keep it even.
And so far, those efforts haven't gone unnoticed.
But I would actually prefer if my face was,
A little less round,
And my nose a bit sharper,
And if I had a little bit of thigh gap,
And may be if my stomach was a bit more flat.
Am I pretty?

I think I am.
No.

I know I am.
My face, round or square,
With a nose sharp or blunt.
Will always greet you with a smile.
My legs, with or without a thigh gap
Has managed to drag me to a class
That I thought I was failing.
Through...

You know how it is in at 8:30 in the morning in the month of January.

Am I pretty?
Yes, yes I am.

AM I PRETTY?

BY FABIHA JAHAN AHMAD



THE DIVINE

BY ISABELLE
BOUCHER



Each phase you enter
and each lesson you learn
is not meant to conclude
but instead, teach you of
where next, you can turn.

The worst thing
in life you can do
is convince yourself
you're writing an epilogue
when you're really just
finishing up a chapter.

**WRITE YOUR STORY,
CHAPTER BY CHAPTER**

BY SIMRIT DHILLON

My birth brought my parents great dilemma.

Roza, Anika, Fatima.

Who was I,

They couldn't decide.

Fabiha, finally they made up their mind

Any guesses about what that word meant.

The word say excellent.

That's who I was,

That's who I am,

That's who I was supposed to be.

Or so I thought.

Who is Fabiha?

Who is Fabiha supposed to be?

Every passing day brought,

A new lesson, a new thought.

Every success, every failure, every person,

Changed me and my identity.

My identity changed when I boarded that plane to Saudi Arabia in 2003,

And then back to Bangladesh some 10 years later.

And then again to Canada.

My identity changed when I went from being a talkative tomboy to a somewhat feminine wallflower.

My identity changed when I shaved off my long curly locks,

That very idea.

And I merrily shared the pics on social media.

So, what's next?

Who will I be,

What will become of my identity.

Who knows?

This is my story of evolving egos.



EVOLVING EGOS

BY FABIHA JAHAN AHMAD

THE ELEGY

BY AMMAARAH SHIRAZ

Would you be missed when you're gone?

Your father would sit on your bed, head down.
What a sad sight that would be for a man who never looked down.
Your mother would not have slept in days,
For shutting her eyes inly made her see you more.

Would you be missed when you're gone?

Your brother would be numb.
Never the same again.
He would pick your favourite flowers and whisper to the stars,
"These are for you, sister."

Would you be missed when you're gone?

Your words would be understood.
Your cries of help would be heard.
But now as you lay as one with the Earth,
Mother Nature cradling you to sleep,
"No one will hurt you here."

Will I be missed when I'm gone?





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THE CENTRE

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BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE WOMEN'S CENTRE

WOMEN'S CENTRE