



voices

2018



*A Federation
of Students' Service*

Message from The Women's Centre

Voices is the compilation of the artistic expressions of University of Waterloo students that is published bi-annually by The Women's Centre. This project is supported by the Federation of Students and The Women's Centre which allow it to be brought into fruition.

You are about to embark on a journey through the hearts, minds, bodies, and experiences of those who submitted. The next step is in allowing yourself to feel ambiguity and bewilderment in immersing yourself in the experiences of others.

Voices is a celebration of the moments when people have decided to leave their silences and speak out, both through approbation and whispers. It's an homage to the times that we escape into our own solitudes and to write our own thoughts and feelings, to project out into the world in silence, to celebrate a triumph, or a moment of beauty.

We are able only to present to you the voices of artists that are eager to share their personal experiences with you. Additionally, we must remember to listen closely for the voices that we hear in both the streets and the classrooms, and those that are the most difficult of all to hear: the ones that fearfully speak against silence, and the loud ones which have been ignored.

Without further ado, we are honored to present to you the 2018 edition of Voices, a creative piece that we are so proud to be a part of.

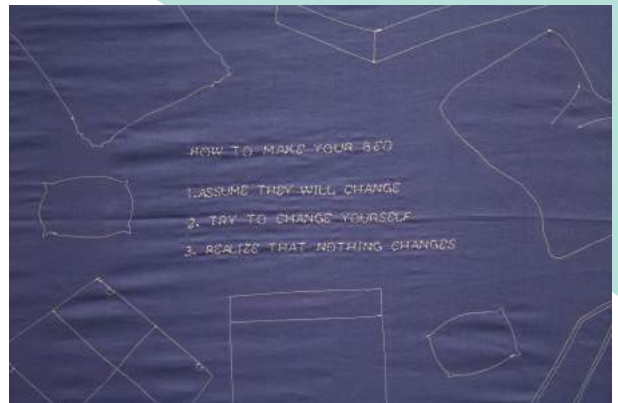
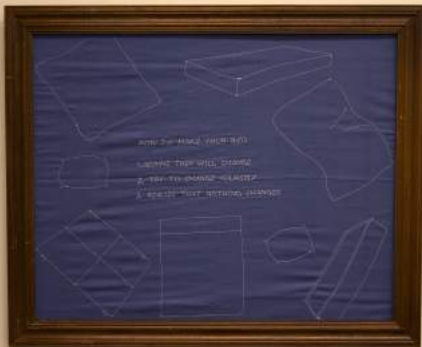
With warmest regards,
Midori Matthew & Amanda Singh
Coordinators, Winter 2018
The Women's Centre

indigo

lexi salt

We were always stuck
In the in-between
Not purple
Not blue
Indigo
Limbo
Hanging between lust and love
Never quite making up our mind
What do you want?
What do you want?
I ask this question over and over
Never getting a clear answer
Or at least one that I am satisfied with
We could never agree on anything
Disagreements quickly turning into debates
Turning into arguments
I am so tired
Of fighting with you
You went hot and cold

Just like the Katy Perry song
Wanting me and not wanting me
Caring about me and then not caring
Everything done in extremes
I was never comfortable
When things were good,
They were magical
Stars and fireworks everywhere
But when things were bad,
They were harmful, dangerous, toxic
My emotions went up and down
Like a rollercoaster
You played with them
Like an expert puppeteer
I refuse to be manhandled
Anymore
So given our state of indigo
I have to let you go
I need to find someone
Who believes in blue



TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

ami qi cooper

I am a daughter. I am a sister. I am a student. I am a boss. I am a leader. I am an employee. I am a renter. I am a friend. I am a girlfriend. I am a mentor. I am a classmate. I am a co-worker. I am a best friend. I am an aunt. I am an enemy. I am a cousin. I am a niece. I am an ex-lover. I am a granddaughter. I am a stranger.

I have been sick more than I can remember this school year. I have accomplished more than usual this year. I have cried more than I can count this school year. I am stressed more this school year.

I seek answers for questions from those I know cannot answer. I ask myself questions with responses I don't want to think about. I think of questions that do not matter. I think about things that happened over a decade ago. I think about things that happened a year ago. I remember people that I want to so deeply forget. I remember words and feelings I need to forget.

I dream about things that then happen. I dream about things I am worried will happen. I once in a while I dream about things I want to happen. Regardless, I remember all of them.

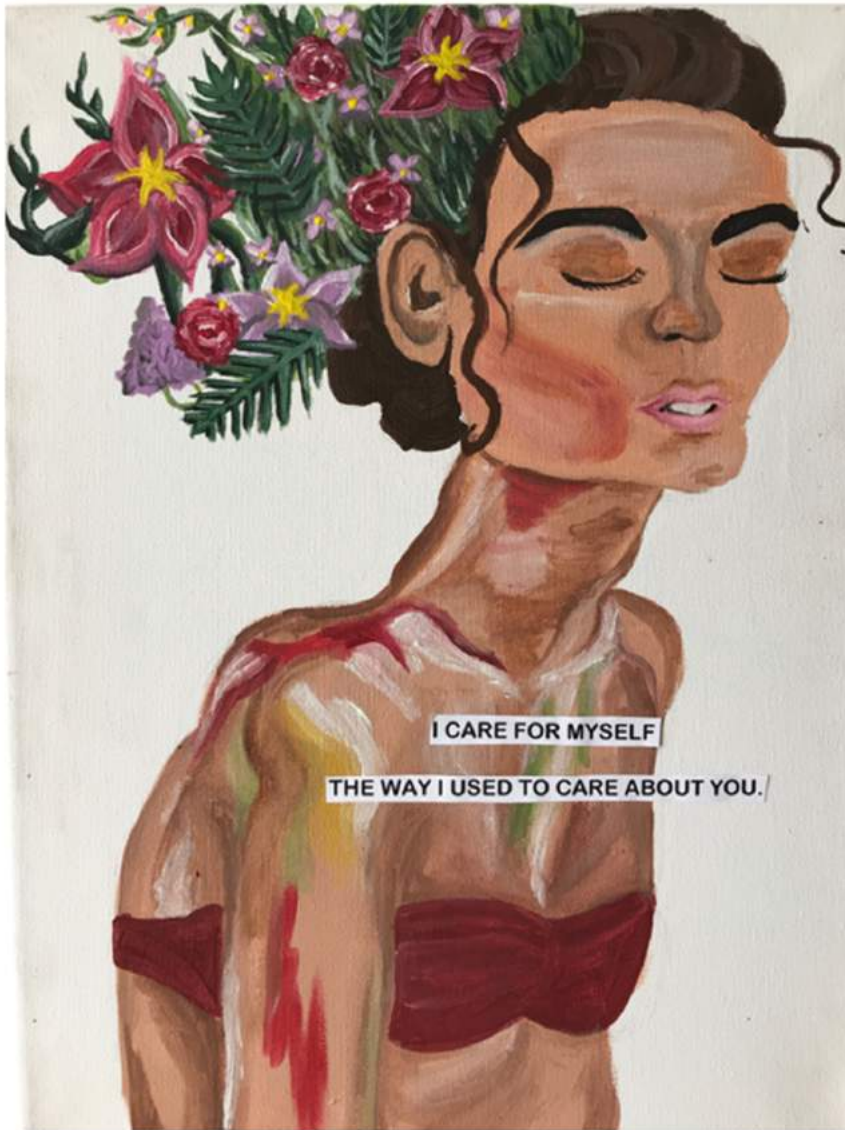
I am an introvert. I am an extrovert. I am loud. I am quiet. I am patient. I am annoyed. I like people. I like alone time. I love someone. I am loved by someone. I am trusting someone. Someone trusts me. I have feelings that I can't help. I have naïve ideas. I think about the future. I love music. I quit piano. I quit singing. I stopped playing guitar. I listen to music all day. I tell people I can play things. I can't remember how to play anymore.

I have friends. I have more than most people. I have good people in my life. I am thankful for these people. I feel like I know no one. I feel like they will leave. I feel alone.

I work well under pressure. I have anxiety. I think I have all the answers. I can't voice my worries to my loved ones. I am like my father. I am direct. I am hardworking. I run away from my problems. I am like my mother. I connect with people. I can sing. I react irrationally.

I am so many different roles with so many different expectations. Some matter less, some overlap, but I am all of them. Some give me money. Some give me love. Some I like better than others. I am many different things that often contradict, but I am all of them.

gillian belcher



THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS

krystyna oakman

is what i called her

she was

a stunner like hail in mid July
she caught your attention
demanded it

had a smile that made
grown men crumble
like chalk in her hands
they had no choice no say in the matter

on our first date she said
i'm going to marry you you know
and I knew it i swear i did
she told me she wanted to
crawl into the night sky
lie down next to ursa minor
and whisper in my ear all the possibilities

how could I forget

nothing as delicate as
our love could survive
that tumble down from heaven?

why didn't I remember
that
nothing as bright as
us the envy of the stars
could last for long
before we too

burnt out

learned to fight
as if it were

a waltz

an art that we

an art that we

loved to practice

so that with each step
the bruises blossomed like carnations
on our eyelids and our hearts

I still remember

when she lay her head on my chest
and goddamn her
goddammit

she left sparkles

artwork by

meredith poirier



The Girl who Always Gives Second Chances

lexi salt

To the girl who always gives second chances
Scratch that
To the girl who gives third, fourth and fifth chances
You are a compassionate soul
You want to believe the best in everyone
I hear you
You are a giver, a forgiver
Someone who people want in their lives
I worry for you though
Don't let people walk all over you
Don't let everybody in
And don't let some of them in again
Those who hurt you too bad

He took the form
Of a dancer, a musician
With brown hair
And eyes that you could get lost in
He was a "bad boy"
With a good heart
He was so sweet
But sometimes he made you sick
Humans are not made to consume
So much artificial sugar
You fell for him
And he broke your heart
You believed he was getting better,
That he was finally growing up
At least that is what you wanted to believe
You gave him chance after chance
Donning them out like precious presents
Until you had nothing left to give
He has left you too broken
No room left for forgiveness
Yet another time

You are tired
That is okay
You can sleep
I will hold you
I will keep you safe
Trust in me
You are whole
You only feel broken
You don't have to give him another chance
He does not deserve it anyway





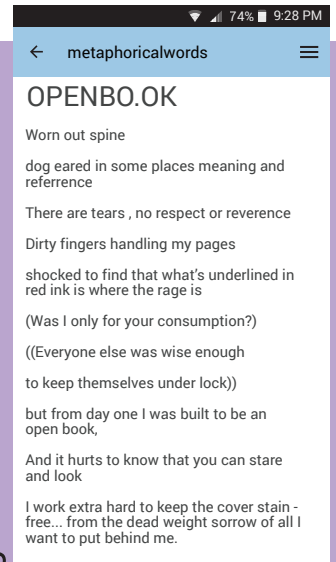
katarina **wex**

amber **patchett**

I used to feel pity for how much the women in my life were willing to take
 How much they would suffocate themselves not to say
 How they could put everything they felt away
 On a shelf
 Even he couldn't reach
 It is my turn now
 I am here
 Doing the dance
 and It is admiration I feel

I do not share their grace

jodelle **matthew**



zaid amer

I am a feminist.
I always have been, and always will be.

It started a long time ago,
when I was 8 years old.
I remember asking my Dad to go out.
To our backyard to play with my sister
And he said yes to me- but not to her.

He said
"It's too dark for a girl to be outside"
and to this day I remember his words.

Now I don't know about you guys, but as a child I could not fathom why or how the
position of the sun changed the rules for her and not me.

To this day I remember those words.
Because insignificant as that was it was the first time I remember seeing the
inequality between me and her

And while being the first
it certainly wasn't the last
I was told I couldn't use the colour pink,
"Because it is a girl colour"
I was told I couldn't play soccer with them,
"because they are girls"

I was told I wasn't supposed to read
I was supposed to go outside
"because reading is girly"

As if that was somehow a reason within itself.
As if girly was somehow synonymous with terrible.

As if the worst thing in the world
You could possibly be was a girl.
And it's funny because there's

All this unwarranted, unneeded negativity and then people still wonder why.
I am a feminist.

Always have been, and always will be.

See back when I was younger
I was a still a little clumsy fat kid
And that meant
I had clumsy little fat kid problems.

Like
sucking at sports.

But when my
"lack of skill" shined through

I wasn't told that

it was probably due to the fact that I was extremely uncoordinated

I wasn't told that

it was probably because I was unfit

I wasn't told that

it was something I was doing wrong; something that was my fault; something I could

change

I was told that

"I ran like a girl"

that

"I threw like a girl"

that

"I was

as bad

as a girl"

Now that excuses for this were plentiful

"well men are biologically stronger"

"Well men tend to do better at sports"

Well

Hmmmm.....

maybe that's because,

you know

They were actually encouraged to play and grow strong

Maybe just maybe

that's because,

While they were given toy dolls

We were shown the door and soccer balls

While we were praised for being strong

They were told to stay weak.

Honestly?

I'd just like to see any guy I know try and fight Ronda Rousey and then try to talk
about "how being a woman equals weakness."

I'd just like to see any guy take on the pain of childbirth and then try to talk about
"how being a woman equals weakness"

I'd just like to see any guy face the barrage of inequality, that millions of women face
every day and then try to say, "how being a woman equals weakness"

The worst part is that it doesn't just end there
As if physical strength somehow wasn't enough
Men are apparently more inclined towards STEM

Somehow, I am apparently better at Math, Chemistry and Physics

Remember when I mentioned earlier
that I was a clumsy little fat kid

and as a clumsy fat kid;

sports clearly weren't my forte

So instead I spent my time reading

I spent my time reading and began to fall in love

I fell in love and developed that into a passion for writing;

Because suddenly I had the power to create;

Suddenly I could express everything I held inside of me

So, I wrote all kinds of stories; real stories chock filled to the brim with emotions,

Stories I was proud of.

but again, I was told

"reading is girly, man up and go outside"

"writing is girly, man up and do real work"

"emotions are girly, man up."

As if kicking a ball somehow made me more of a man

As if adding fractions instead of writing feelings would multiply the microscopic levels
of hair on my chest and I would become a real man

As if somehow bottling up all those emotions and feelings was the way real men did
it

Oh, and my sister throughout all this?

She faced the opposite

"It's okay if you're doing bad in science, you're just a girl"

and again, this confused me

How does having a penis somehow make me better math

You know

maybe I'm just missing a piece or something

because

I

am

god

awful

at math;

That year I almost ended up making my sister fail with me
And while I didn't learn much about functions I figured out something more important
That I am a feminist.
Always have, and always will be.

Another thing I've always found funny is
since I've been open and declared that I am a feminist
I've always had people try to talk me out of it
I've always had people who want to "fight feminism" and talk about how "feminism
ruins their life"

But somehow your sister, your mother, and your friends being treated the same
was as you ruin your life

but if somehow people being able to do anything they want
without the label of male or female whispering in their ear that they cannot
is ruining your life

Are you really sure that you're living it in the right way?
See the thing is feminism isn't a person, it's an idea
And ideas are immortal.

Feminism is the fire behind her eyes as she is told she can't "because she is a girl".
Feminism is her doing it anyway.

Feminism is crying pink loving boys and rough action figure filled girls.

it is my sister working on applying to health sciences
it is me being unashamed of being in an Arts program; being unashamed of writing
poetry; being unashamed of fighting for a better future
because Feminism is fight for equality

it is a fight for equal treatment between sexes
it is a fight that aims for everyone to be able to do whatever they want regardless of
what they are
is not ignoring that men and women are intrinsically different, but rather treating them
equally regardless of that

it is not hating men, more loving each other
I am a feminist

Always have been, and always will be
Because to me, being a feminist is a mantle that is worn proudly and should be seen
without judgement

Being a feminist
Doesn't mean a future in which guys are ostracized or treated any worse than they
are today

Being a feminist means
a future in which girls don't always have to end their goodbye's
"text me when you get home safe."

17 Things I learned in 2017

ami qi **cooper**

1. Do not idolize people. Sometimes we do it subconsciously, but as soon as they leave, we suddenly consciously realize how truly lost we let ourselves become.

2. People will make time for things and people that matter. Stop justifying them neglecting your relationship. The false sense of hope just hurts you more.

3. Your mind will run a million miles a minute, and sometimes trying to stop it is harder than letting it run its course and then bring yourself back to truth.

4. You are not them and they are not you. Stop expecting the same from others as you do from yourself, and vice versa.

5. There will come a time when you will no longer fear to go places or enter rooms with the possibility of seeing the person that took so much from you. Be gentle and patient with yourself.

6. Free and effortlessly love the world and all the people in it. The world always needs more love.

7. You don't know you've made it until you're already celebrating. Work hard, stay humble.

8. Just because you don't think something is possible, doesn't mean you shouldn't try. You never know how close you could get.

9. If you have any form of anxiety, be with someone who sees your constant need for reassurance as an opportunity to show you love rather than a burden to bare.

10. People will judge you regardless of the truth, so stop feeling like you have to constantly prove yourself to them.

11. Time is relative, make the most of it, for the days are long but the years are short.

12. Do not let those who hurt you determine how you view yourself. You can hate what they did to you but don't hate yourself for it.

13. The road to proper self-love, trust, and patience has never been more difficult, but never has it been this gratifying and exciting either.

14. You are allowed to change. For life changes every day and you have no idea what you will be faced with tomorrow.

15. Know why you believe what you believe. If you cannot support even the most logical ideas and actions, you allow yourself to become gullible and an ignorant fool.

16. Anyone can stick around when things are good, in fact for most, that's all they will do.

17. Stop running away from those who love you. Stop telling yourself you aren't good enough. You deserve to be happy too. Trust love one more time, and always one more time.

artwork by
nadine **simec**



krystyna **oakman**

"Christ cried Eddy Pretty
 once she laid her cheek on my sleeve
 and goddamn you
 goddammit
she left sparkles"

A face only a mother could love
Amanda Lamarche



DOMINIC (ANDAIAIAN)

jodelle matthew

messages on the tv, the paper, the computer... do not drown out the crying land and how everything points to the racism at hand.

the ground we stand on was not a gift it was stolen.

I come from a long line of Caribs... a different place but same story of brutality. Oppression. Colonization

A people who fought the french off from their beautiful isle

(I wonder if that same bravery lies in me)

The disconnect

Trade the heritage for a "better life" the way you change your shoes. My parents had their dreams. I don't resent that

until my relatives say something and say "never mind yuh so canada" and assume I couldn't know what they mean

I cannot speak French creole... I do not know every single river and village.

I was born here

but that doesn't mean I fit here perfectly

If I did my heart would not bleed the way it does ...to see the trees ripped up and the hills flat.

I waver between anger over the injustice and sadness.

one click away from suffering

there is guilt in looking away

there is a fear that if you do, they will think you don't care

when really, it gets so overwhelming

Don't Shoot

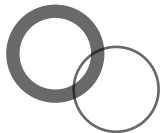
Hands up

Body shot

Pause. Unpause. Rewind the bullet, hoping maybe it didn't happen...
but it did.

It did.

She told me he wants to live in America, I begged her to not let him go





amanda **singh**

falsifiable

"i want to believe you're a good person"

how can you believe in something you can't see? is it easier? or more difficult?

i'm sorry, i'm sorry
for ever making doubt me
because i can't see past the rot in my soul

because if you're the sun - my sunshine - then i must be the moon

and what if, what if
the good you see in me is just a reflection of you?
and the way you want to make me better?

stronger?
worthy?
good? (enough)?

are you seeing me, or is it you?
is it doubt, or do you see something and
believe?

are you seeing something i can't?

*let me find it
and prove it to myself
i want to believe, too*

disclaimer: you're on your own

you know you're never allowed to just feel your emotions. not for what they are, the ugly rawness; that ugly side of humanity everyone has access to except for you -

--not when you come second
even when you're in freefall
when you can't think, can't breathe without rupturing

you don't have that luxury
you don't get catharsis
you don't get to rise from your ashes, there is no phoenix here

"why are you so quiet? are you okay?"

quiet? no, that's not right, i haven't stopped screaming. i can't think, can't breathe

"i'm just off today"

help me, i'm falling

"do you want to talk about it?"

yes. no. no, i can't. i haven't rationalized my hurt yet - i don't know what the appropriate response
- you don't know how -

-calculated, how manipulative you are

i don't know what i'm supposed to feel yet
help me

"maybe later"

later, when i make my hurt small enough so it can't hurt you
small enough to put away, tuck away into a box
inconsequential, insignificant

"it's not a big deal, promise"

they call this compartmentalizing

marked by a disclaimer - an apology in advance

by time i let you extend your hand, i've already helped myself



w o r t h

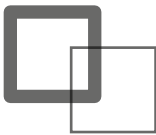
He told me I was nothing
But still tugged on my heart strings
Because women aren't supposed to expect more than
nothing
And are supposed to be eternally grateful when they do
indeed receive something

He asked me if I wanted his opinion
I refused
He didn't listen
and persisted
To tell me what he thought I should do

He said "let me tell you why you don't have a boyfriend"
As if that is the only aspect of my life I could fathom to
comprehend
But that wasn't the end of his train of thought
He said "you're too smart, it's intimidating
but not in a way that's hot"
Because my intelligence is only an asset
If I've got an ass to go with it
As long as I know when to keep my mouth shut
Sure ya I can speak up

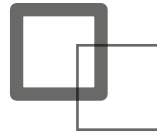
He then proceeds to tell me
If I want to be taken seriously
I can't be proud of my body
You say you're the only thing that is allowed to take pride
in my figure
something I am used to hearing, the worse kind of familiar
You told me cover up
Unless of course I am willing to show you love

He tells me to take it as a compliment



gillian belcher

it's supposed to make me confident
but how am I supposed to be courageous
when the power he holds over me is no where near
contagious
I'm looking in his eyes
absolutely petrified
that if I tell him no
he might put his hands in one swift movement around my
throat



but what about MY worth?
what about MY pride?
What about when my reach for help is denied
And he ends up okay because my consent was "implied"
And no one would believe that he had the audacity to lie
Because I am just an emotional girl who will find any
reason to cry

We are worth more than their words
More than their lies
And the truth shouldn't be classified
Just so they feel verified
While we remain terrified

Know your worth
on this hell on earth
This battle is far from won
If equality is the end goal it has only just begun
And letting our voices be heard
Begins with one single word
WORTH



My 10 truths

rachel dennis

Trigger Warnings:

- Consent
- Course language
- Homosexual innuendos
- Country Music

10. You blame words for why you feel like you don't fit in. But it's actually because you're afraid to fit in.

9. You. Like. Country. Music. And that is okay. You also really dig indie folk music, but you can never remember the artist's or song's name. That is okay. And fuck anyone who tells you its not. Because no one has the right to make decisions about what you like, for you.

8. You are incredibly forgetful. You should take more time to acknowledge what you're trying to bury inside of you. Busy-ing your mind will eventually backfire.

7. You fell in love with your best friend. But when you grew apart, you thought you could do something to prevent it. But it was not in the stars, and they were too lazy to help themselves grow. Acknowledge your loss. Let it ignite your supernova, and like a phoenix, rise from the flames; reborn.

6. Learn to make eye contact in bars. Nothing is sexier than finding someone who can look in the depths of your soul, and acknowledge your existence.

5. In highschool someone spread the rumour that you were gay. This was because you refused to touch a stranger's penis. Eight years later, jokes on them - I'll let boys and girls touch me, as long as there's consent... and in return I'll ensure we both cum, as long as you whisper "fuck...yes".

4. I think I'm a dog person. Why would anyone willingly want to have an indoor sandbox you can't actually build sandcastles in, without wanting to vomit?

3. Your happy place is looking out a moving window. Quietly watching the world move at two times the speed.

2. My first love told me he "didn't want me anymore". Four years later he still texts me every birthday, Christmas, and New Year. I don't respond.

1. Lemony Snicket once said that if you're going to have a shitty month, aim for February. It's the shortest one we got. But I'm done having shitty months. I'm ready to just start living for fresh air, morning sunshine, laughter that makes my belly ache, trees. And me.



embodiment
nadine **simec**

More titties more problems

nirvona soraya

A love letter!

To the tissue paper I used to shove in my bra, Thank you!
For never slipping out even when I was going hard playing basketball in gym you, did the job of making me look like I had boobs and I appreciate you for that. I appreciate your ability to do your job quietly, I wish you could teach my friends a thing or two about keeping secrets, the ones I tell them slip out of their mouths like you did every night as I took off my bra.

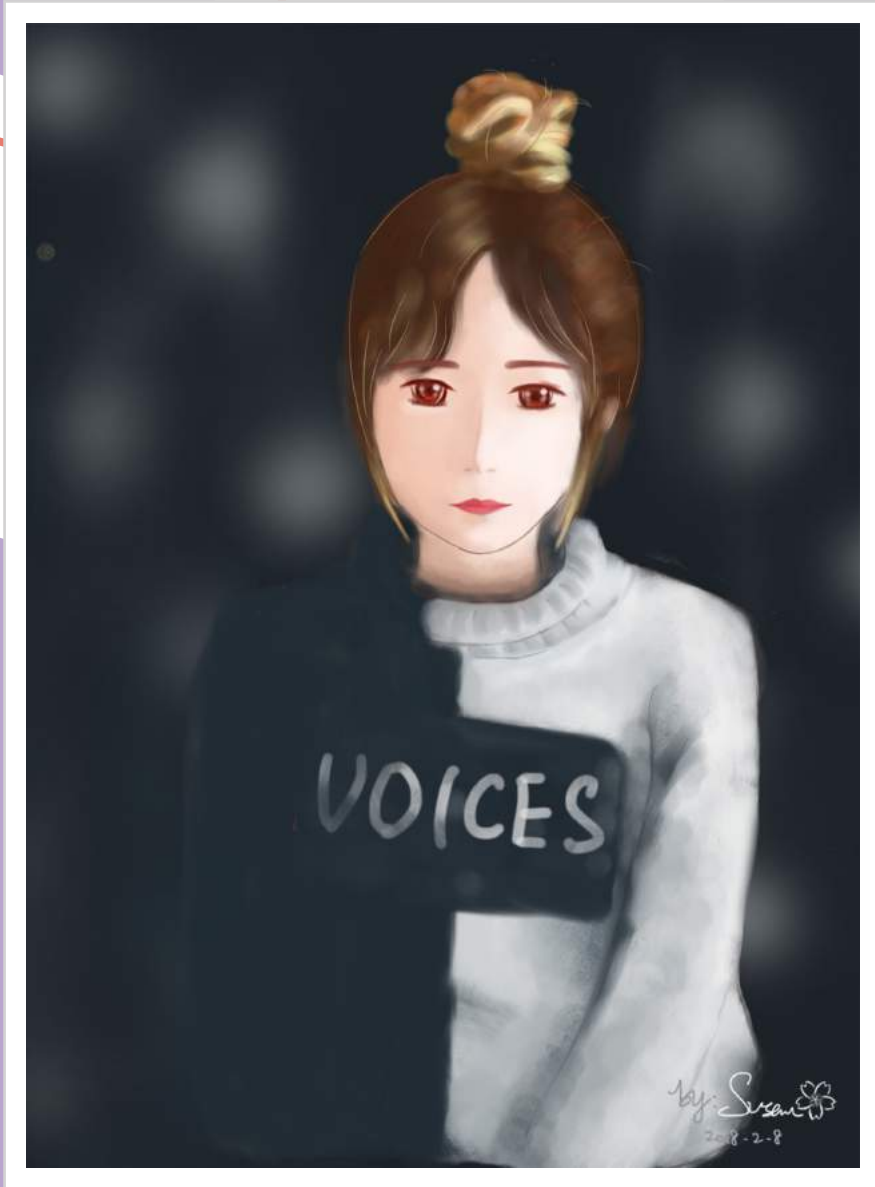
You see dear tissue, I had no intention of shoving you next my breast cavity until I came to the realization that my flat chestedness was the reason none of the boys wanted to go to the school dance with me. You see in grade 8 logic, if you had no boobs, that must mean you were secretly a dud and god forbid any of these boys strayed away from the straight line labeled sexuality they walked along so carefully I just wanted someone to dance with me. And thus, began the start of our epic love story.

I would think to myself, I have a flat chest, but I have a heart that could take on Kate Upton and her double d's so why cruel world are these boys so obsessed with only what the eyes can see, if they took one minute to look within me. They would find a treasure, which, no bra could contain but no.

Because like the babies they were, on a tittie was the only place these fools wanted to be. So I started to stuff and stuff and just like that all the boys were all over me taking me to movies, wanting to go on walks and talks with me till lips start to smacking and hips start to whacking and I had to yell STOP. I am not ready to take off this Halloween costume, this game of make believe is no longer fun for me. When my friends asked me, what my secret was to magically enlarged my chest I would tell them eating lots and lots of chicken, which was ironic, because that is all I was in the end just a big old chicken being plucked and devoured by the very men I would have done anything to find acceptance in.

And although I am now grown, both mentally and physically and can now tell the difference between a man and a boy that could never love me for more than my physicality, tissue I still need you. For when the tears roll in, for I am not perfect. I make mistakes fall down victim to cuts scrapes and bruises however these mistakes will never again include hating the skin god so graciously put me in tissue I love you. For sticking with me from A cup to C cup and all the way back down again.

shuyun **huang**



"A beautiful young woman strives to demonstrate equality between men and women through presenting the balance of yin (black) and yang (white) in Chinese Philosophy."

STRONG, INDEPENDENT AND FREE

claire woodgate

When I was young, I never thought
That I would be the girl to fall,
For someone who never fought
To see the goodness in things at all

When life turns into craziness
You focus on what you can,
Throughout all that haziness
Is how it all began

Naïve 18 year old little me
Was enchanted by those blue eyes,
Hoping that you would see
That I wanted you to be my guy

A look, a touch, a wave, a smile
Hoping you would stay a while,
On that couch with me that night
My interest in you shining bright

When I later returned to my room alone
And your number appeared on my phone,
My heart leapt and I felt all warm inside
Not knowing you would make me want to hide

At a time when my brother wasn't well
And my life was turning into hell,
You made me believe I had nothing to fear
Not knowing of his suicide attempt that year

I never shared what was going on
Because I thought that it would be wrong,
To confide in you, an older man
I didn't know that I was part of your plan

On our first date, I fell hard for you
Not sure how to act or what to do,
You lead the way and I followed behind
Thinking that you were one of a kind

I eventually gave myself to you
Not wanting to miss the cue,
The whole time I was so scared
I feared that I was not prepared

I believe that fear never went away
I just got used to feeling it every day,
Dating you I didn't expect
How you were to always be correct

I thought life was good, that I had it all
But the thing that I had made me feel so small,
Not realizing you were making me drown
I wasn't myself, couldn't make a sound

Couldn't explain the pain that I was feeling,
That night my brother thought those T3's looked
appealing,
The courage it took when I finally shared
And after 9 months, it didn't even seem like you cared

It made me wonder after this time
If the relationship was past its prime,
I was starting to wonder how it would feel
If you believed my problems were actually real

I thought that if I finally said, 'I love you' things would
change,
And after a year, you'd think you'd feel the same,
But when you said nothing, I knew I was wrong
And I knew at that point that I needed you gone

amber patchett

She is soft skin
long hair
hauntingly beautiful

but I am trying to forget that

I curl in beside her
sharing the shame
I am only her secret
he and I not the same

The road ahead was finally clear
I was to no longer call you my dear,
Knowing that you were not willing to fight
For a future that I thought could be bright

Off to Europe you went with your friends
Leaving me alone to mend
Not knowing if the pain would ever end

For weeks tears flowed at a steady rate
I had never been in a more worst state,
The darkest of thought swarming my head
Never wanting to leave my bed

To me, you seemed to be doing fine
From what I saw through the Facebook grapevine,
I couldn't understand how you weren't sad
Had our relationship really been that bad?

It was obvious that I was more upset
Feeling so much pain, loneliness and regret,
Regret that I fell for someone like you
Who made me feel guilty at every cue

I could now become who I wanted to be
Without worrying about you judging me,
A confident, and positive person who cares
With an open mind, and friends everywhere

Thank you for showing me
The controlling person you turned out to be,
Before we wasted more time together
Thinking it might be forever

I know that no matter how much I try
You will always be that guy,
Who took away a piece of me
But it lead me to grow strong, independent and free

artwork by
meredith **poirier**



What it's like to remember almost everything

ami qi **cooper**

It's a beautiful thing, how our minds work. Helping us remember both the random and important things. How they help us identify who we love and what we want to do. How amazing it is to remember how your first love made you feel, or most recent love.

What you'd talk about on the phone and what you'd talk about in person. How great it is to remember what it felt like to be joyful, innocent, young. How gracious it is to remember people love you and care. How intriguing it is to remember every single detail about every person you've ever met. And not because you're trying to, but because it just happens. But how dangerous it is to remember that those kids said about you because you were different. Because you just didn't look like everyone else. How violent it is to remember every single remark they made about your ability to accomplish things.

How devastating it is to remember being told people love are dying like you wrote the entire movie scene. How painful it is to remember how you didn't picture a life after high school. But how damn glorifying it is to remember how it felt to move forward from those toxic people. How freaking beautiful it is to remember how happy you can be and how smart you are. How gratifying it is to remember all your accomplishments and times you proved them all wrong about you. How absolutely phenomenal it is to remember your story, so you can see just how far you have come.

My English

EUNICE NA

If you ask me about how well I know English, I will tell you that my English is the never-ending spiral of hard-pressed black ink in my spiral notebook. I will tell you that my English is the wobbling, unsteady, growing child that traded rigid characters for curvy letters. My English is the high maintenance norm that seeks attention, pushing aside my family's language. My English is the hope and dream of my young parents leaving behind strong, familiar scents in the kitchen and drinks with best friends for the foreign stares and drinks with strangers. My English is the future of their part-time jobs, full-time jobs, college classes and countless workbooks and dictionaries lined along the shelves. My English is the goodbye. My English is the hello.

If you ask me how well I know English, I will tell you that my English is my parents' frustrated and angry tears. My English is the doubled edge sword that cuts through the words that take advantage of and decimate the confidence behind strong accents and misarticulated thoughts. My English is the armor- the armor against degradation, segregation and misapprehension. My English is a shapeshifter- a red dragon spewing confident and sharp flames amongst great beasts to a lurking golden tiger ready to defend territory.

My English is the sophisticated, articulate and smart.

My English is the rounded, accented and simplified.

If you ask me how well I know English, I will tell you my English is Hiroshima. My English is Chinese railroad tracks. My English is Korea's separation. My English is Western invasion. My English is culture destruction. My English is history forgotten.

And yet, my English is proud. My English boasts. My English stands tall, chest out, head high. But my English is also sad. My English is sorry. My English acknowledges intrusion, but remains as host, not guest. My English is controlling. My English is omnipresent. My English is embodying. My English is identity, but yet it strips away the silent side of me.

If you ask me how well I know Korean, my English will say.

"Here lies her grave."

A Solid Nod of Acknowledgment

vivian pham

She met you the first day she moved in
And welcomed you with open arms.
Never would she have expected
To find a best friend she can't seem to let go of.

She met you the second day she moved in,
And thought you made advances on her friend.
Never would she have expected
To have her first relationship with you that'll come to an end.

She met you in Public Speaking
The day students had to introduce one another to the class.
She found a classmate and roommate in you,
And you became one of her only friends in her program.

She met you in front of Linden Square,
As the bright neon lights danced on your face.
She learned the tragedy of different co-op streams
And the handiness of campus overpasses.

She met you inside Linden Square,
And immediately took note to never trust old Tinder photos.
She was too naive back then,
But took another note to never go out with older men.

Once upon a time, in an app long gone,
Two online entities instantaneously clicked.
Just last year your paths collided in a hallway,
And late brunches at Mel's became a monthly thing.

You got up from your seat so she can get to hers right next to you,
And she made note of the lipstick-stained Starbucks cup you clutched onto.
Neither of you spoke a word to one another,
But in two years time you'll become all that the other has.

You hit her head with your water jug on the last Bus 9,
And she told you it hurt even though you both know it didn't.
The clock keeps ticking as you both change with time,
Yet she walks with a heavy heart knowing she can't always have what she
wants.

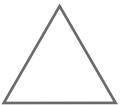
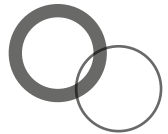
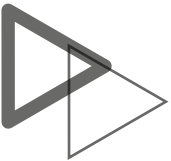
She locked eyes with you as you descended the QNC stairwell.
God, it was so awkward and she probably smelled like sweat.
Never would she have expected
You will be her longest ongoing fling. Nope, no regrets.

Her roommate invited you up to their apartment,
And she thought it seemed like a good idea at the time.
You don't even deserve a poetic stanza, you sack of shit.
Rot in hell.

She ran into you at the Science Teaching Complex,
And you were as kind as she expected.
In that moment, she made a note that
Some secrets are just better to be kept hidden.

She sat on the bench across from you
As you both waited to start your first day.
The office brought you together through laughter and love,
And for the first time in a while, her heart was full.

Along the way
She has met a handful of memorable faces.
And without your existence,
She wouldn't be who she is today.



amanda **singh**

a study in self-esteem

at your worst, you are:

bitter

resentful

helpless

a litany of why me and hollow pleas for answers

at the buffer zone, you are:

surviving

and that's enough to get through the day

at your best, you are:

a work in progress

(an investment, she keeps saying; whatever that means)

happy to be alive but...

devastated

...after years of fighting for something you couldn't see - something you didn't think existed

you have it. frail, weak - thriving with life

right there, in the palm of your hand

so, your best becomes the new low, and in another life

i don't know

in another life, you're whole

home is a person

these days, life is a little less bleak

when homesickness seizes your heart

and you're in freefall

there's a home you can return to

waiting for you

with open arms

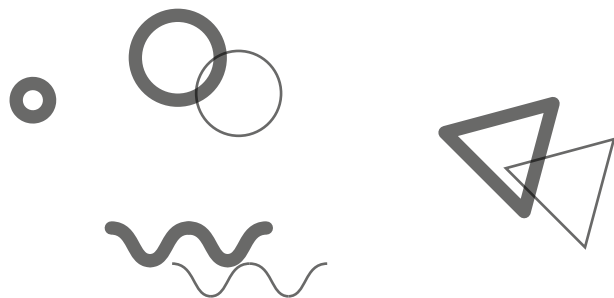
and a gentle smile

"come here"

ready to strip that ugly thing away

caress your splintered soul

and welcome you home



a study in self-love

sure, they say self-love should come from within,

how can you have someone when you can't even love yourself?

and yes, you can't rely on the validation of others forever,

easily, darling. easily.

but the way you look at me? with the sun in your eyes, infinitely gentle and twice as -what is that?

*shh, no, don't spoil it
maybe i'll see it, too*

oh-

*you didn't teach me how to love myself
you showed me that there was something worth loving*

because you never had to do this alone

let me pour myself into your cracks, repair the broken bits of you

-no, i don't want to fix you; the only one who can do that is you and i won't

rob you of healing-

but:

let me hold you together. let me seal the holes in your lungs

-breath for you, in time with you-

just for a moment,
until you're ready to get back up and fight
again

samridhi sharma

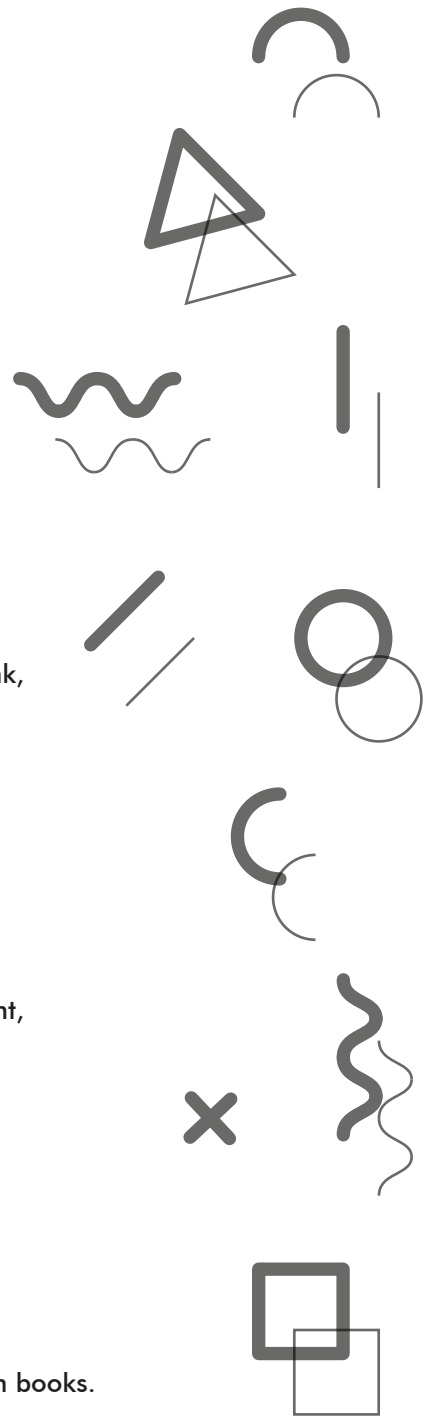
At childhood's end, the houses petered out
into playing fields, the factory, allotments
kept, like mistresses, by kneeling married men,
the silent railway line, the hermit's caravan,
till you came at last to the edge of the woods.
It was there that I first clapped eyes on the wolf.

He stood in a clearing, reading his verse out loud
in his wolfy drawl, a paperback in his hairy paw,
red wine staining his bearded jaw. What big ears
he had! What big eyes he had! What teeth!
In the interval, I made quite sure he spotted me,
sweet sixteen, never been, babe, waif, and bought me a drink,

my first. You might ask why. Here's why. Poetry.
The wolf, I knew, would lead me deep into the woods,
away from home, to a dark tangled thorny place
lit by the eyes of owls. I crawled in his wake,
my stockings ripped to shreds, scraps of red from my blazer
snagged on twig and branch, murder clues. I lost both shoes

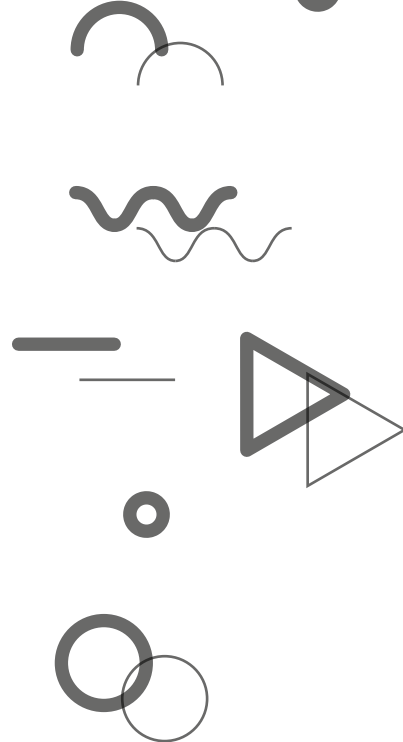
but got there, wolf's lair, better beware. Lesson one that night,
breath of the wolf in my ear, was the love poem.
I clung till dawn to his thrashing fur, for
what little girl doesn't dearly love a wolf?
Then I slid from between his heavy matted paws
and went in search of a living bird – white dove –

which flew, straight, from my hands to his hope mouth.
One bite, dead. How nice, breakfast in bed, he said,
licking his chops. As soon as he slept, I crept to the back
of the lair, where a whole wall was crimson, gold, aglow with books.
Words, words were truly alive on the tongue, in the head,
warm, beating, frantic, winged; music and blood.



But then I was young – and it took ten years
in the woods to tell that a mushroom
stoppers the mouth of a buried corpse, that birds
are the uttered thought of trees, that a greying wolf
howls the same old song at the moon, year in, year out,
season after season, same rhyme, same reason. I took an axe

to a willow to see how it wept. I took an axe to a salmon
to see how it leapt. I took an axe to the wolf
as he slept, one chop, scrotum to throat, and saw
the glistening, virgin white of my grandmother’s bones.
I filled his old belly with stones. I stitched him up.
Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, all alone



artwork by
mikayla **barney**

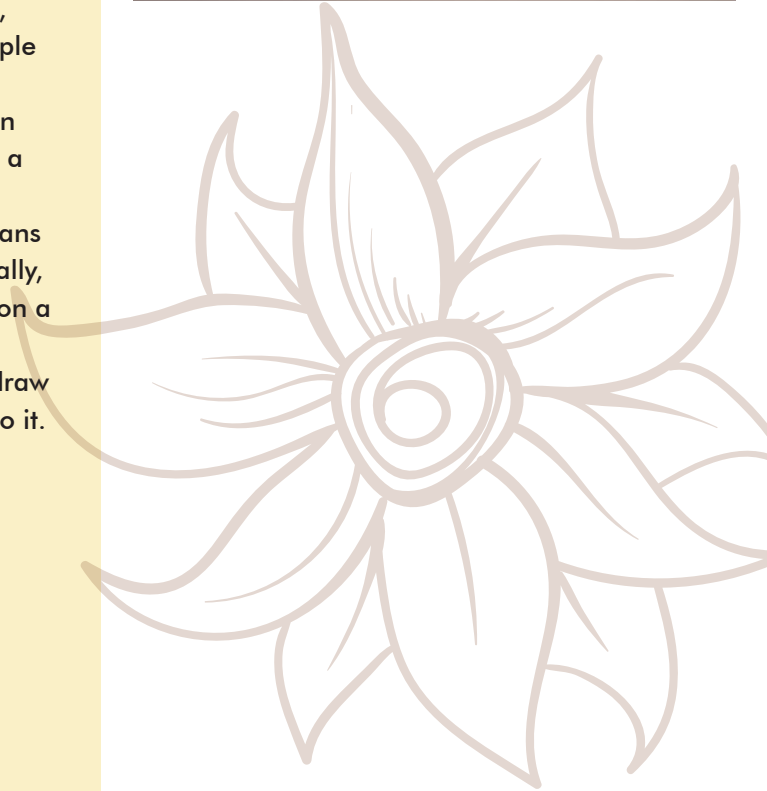


A woman's work

nadine **simec**

"A Woman's Work" is based off the images beyond the screen option and focusing on the relationship between woman's labour and the commodification of an image or work. The images used are two copies of my sister's ultrasound of her twins at approximately 5 and a half months. One of the photos was cut into strips and while the other one had slits cut into and then the two images were woven together using basic weaving method. This technique refers to 'woman's work' such as weaving baskets.

The work that is put into these items is often underestimated, and the prices are low as people take advantage of woman's labour. I printed the images on washi Japanese paper to give a delicate skin feeling since the images are representing humans in their most fragile form. Finally, I decided to print the images on a large scale to make a bigger impact on the viewer and to draw attention to the labour put into it.



All the Pretty Flowers

Each petal you plucked
from me
fell to the ground
and withered

Each petal you plucked
from me
detracted from my
radiance

Each petal you plucked
from me
was another friend
lost

Each petal you plucked
from me
was a day spent in silence

Each petal you plucked
from me
was your tone-deaf
apology

Each petal you plucked
from me
marked the days following my
16th birthday

"Sorry I couldn't cum"
you said
to the drugged woman
beneath you

LIKE A GIRL

samridhi sharma

I can swing a hammer like a girl-
So if you wait for it to unfurl
And think for a second you won't break a pearl
Of sweat if your fingers uncurl
Underneath the hammerhead
You are mistaken.

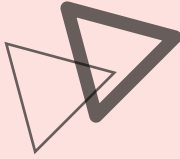
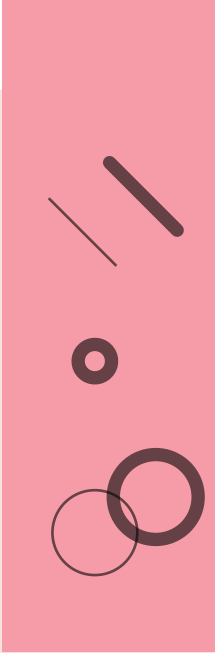
I built skyscrapers and a house
With tools hidden under my blouse
So you'd shy away like a mouse
And think twice before you arouse
Before you touch me.

I've had a drink or two to drink
I'm alright, I don't need a lift
I promise I won't sink
Under the influence like you think
So get away from me.

I laugh like a girl, hands down
Head thrown back and loud
Think again before your frown
Because my laughter will out-drown
Your disapproval.

I swing my hammer high with might
And of course it's not a pretty sight
But girls aren't meant to stand and fight
Cross your legs, good girls don't bite!

And of all the things I do like a girl
My favourite one is when you hurl
Those insults in a twisted twirl
About how I am not the perfect knurl
Arranged around your thoughtful pearl
Instead I set your thoughts awirl
Against what you think makes a girl.



The
Women's
Centre