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# likeness

magazine

MOMENTS OF HEALING

Low Entropy is headquartered in Kwikwetlem First Nation Territory of the Coast Salish people, and in the shared territory of the sə́lilwətaʔt təməxʷ, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Stz'uminus, Qayqayt and S'ólh Téméxw nations.

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About Low Entropy: Founded in 2015, the Low Entropy Foundation is home to free programs and events that focus on personal and community growth through empowerment, authenticity and meaningful interpersonal connections.

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# Foreword

We bear wounds that evidence trajectories from all different angles. Conditions like anxiety and depression, stress and burnout, they seem inevitable — not from any exceptional level of duress, but simply from our daily journeys between point As and point Bs.

And yet, there is happiness. Yet there is joy.

It's not a perfect system, but we can replenish ourselves. It can come in the form of a reassuring word or revelatory change in perspective, or maybe a fortuitous turn of events. Some of us find just enough to keep trudging forward, and some of us are lucky enough to find more. Scars may not necessarily disappear, but they can become beautiful as lessons learned, possibly, in time.

Indeed, time is essential. It chips away at us, certainly, but it also rebuilds. Or, at least, it allows us to.

Our writers let us into their moments of healing in this issue of *Likeness*, and my great hope is that they have a curative effect, these little capsules of captured text. Whether they confide in you their feelings of grief or the special moments they share with the wind, whether they promise you that it's ok to cry or simply be yourself and in your own space, these are restorative words from difficult times.

They come from good intentions, this sharing and support. And yes, I concede that available interventions are not always enough. Some of us don't find what we need — that is starkly evident. But a community that cares inspires hope in bleak circumstances. And that, to my mind, is crucial.

Thank you for being here.



Editor, Low Entropy



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Photo by Lanju Fotografie

# High Sensations

Shirin Malek

Heart beating, this hollow heart, in healing  
Forever filled with sweet remnants of glass.  
This woman’s true form is quite deceiving,  
Her severed smile, as emotions collapse.

Each emotion entirely emboldened,  
Somberly spearing, searching for silence.  
With no avail, so they go unspoken.  
When they speak, it’s purely with violence.

Ruthless; as they whisper with wild vengeance.  
For she knows not to speak, because she feels  
Melancholic fear trapping her sentence.  
Her cloying pain is silent, hard to conceal.

Beneath the blanket of her bitter thoughts  
She prays to God she will find her safe spot.



Photo by Megan Te Boekhorst

# Therapeutic

Shirin Malek

Let’s play a game,  
Let’s calmly caress the pain.

Let’s situate you in a room,  
You are nervous I presume?

Let’s get you comfy on this couch.  
Your emotions are real,

Feel free to be a grouch!  
You’re here now to heal,

For that,  
you should pat yourself on the back.

It can be quite alarming to open up,  
Try grounding yourself?

Maybe that will help.  
Focus on that painting-

The drawing of the purple flower and its thorns.

Did you know . . .  
The color purple is a sign of renewal, and being  
reborn?

Let’s try,  
grounding your roots; immense and strong  
Think to yourself: “Nothing can go wrong.”

Let’s play a game,  
Let’s calmly caress the pain.

I try to turn away in my seat,  
I can feel every part of my heart skipping a beat.

“I don’t know what to tell you.  
I don’t know why I’m here.

Pouring my heart out?  
What will that fix? I don’t doubt-  
That you know what you’re talking about.

SHIRIN MALEK Shirin is a third-year literature student at the University of British Columbia. Her true passion is creative writing!

But every day, is a constant battle.

If I’m a flower; then my thoughts are the vines.  
They are constant and forever intertwined.

Their inky tentacles,  
slowly embrace me.

Sickening my stomach,  
Right down to its core.

You see,  
the voices in my head  
Are getting louder, even when I go to bed.  
I wonder how I can let myself just be

In the moment.”

Let’s play a game,  
Let’s calmly caress the pain.

The lightly painted yellow walls  
Illuminate the room; steady yet small.

Let’s play a game,  
Let’s calmly caress the pain.

Let’s know that we all have a fight,  
Let’s all know that life can be like flying a kite.

It’s full of motion.  
Blowing in the wind,

But at times it can fall,  
Which is no one’s fault at all.

The key is to prop it back up,  
Find the perfect balance of wind,  
Throw it high

Try to pretend that you are touching the sky.

Let’s play a game.



Photo by Jonah Brown

# The Consequence(s)

Grace Young

*The leaf is cluttered with eggs. Small and round. Resting in between the veins and curls, like dew droplets of condensed air. Fragile. Three thousand six hundred chromosomes, seemingly still and silent beneath the weight of the morning. Sugar and phosphate wound in tight coils, tension in every shudder and breath. The shell-encased yolk passed through the oviduct, from darkness to darkness to break through to light.*

**The pain had teeth.** It chewed at my insides, gnawing on my flesh with an ever-growing appetite. As I studied, I felt its bite. As I walked, I felt its bite. My life seemed to be held in its jaws, flicked side to side like a dog's chew toy. It nagged at me, sharp and cutting. I did not long for escape, just reprieve. It taunted me — too late. Too late.

I woke up one morning, my body quelled by sleep. I pressed my toes deeper into the rug to remain standing and walked to the bathroom. My thoughts were a jumbled mix of dreams and reality. But as I looked into the mirror, I was reminded of the little monster that

rested in my uterus. I looked in my reflection and saw pain. I tried to see my hair or my eyes, shaking out the creases along my brow. But in every twisted strand of sugar and phosphate of my cells lived pain

## — pooling and dripping like mercury poison.

And in the poison of pain lived fear, deeper than the ocean I drowned in.

*A caterpillar inches out of its mother's abandoned womb. Flopping slowly from the past to the future. Subsisting in its first few breaths of a new world, filled with the fresh hot air of June. The milkweed barely trembles beneath the weight of the caterpillar's appetite, small mouthfuls being consumed with the steadiness of the sun rising over the horizon. It hovers for a moment over the caterpillar's world, so small and round. And then it continues its ascent, climbing the mountains inch by inch. The sky fills with light and the caterpillar eats onward.*

Slowly, pain persisted in its presence. As I crawled



Photo by Elle Coc

slowly to the future, it tagged along, leeching to my side. It consumed small mouthfuls with the steadiness of the sun setting beneath the mountains. Its appetite demanded my zeal, my delight, my strength, my life. Is this what it was like to not live, but survive? I couldn't do as I had done, laugh as I had laughed. I was the milkweed, drained of my sap and colour. As the sun climbed the mountains inch by inch, I was forced into a world on Earth, where pain was as real as the dead.

They told me it didn't matter, not really. That the future was filled with light. But it didn't matter to me, not really, because

## that future was not mine,

and that light was not mine. It was my baby's. So small and round, seemingly still and silent, yet a monster. Continuing its ascent. Consuming my reputation with the steadiness of the sun rising over the horizon. Another day to be reminded that I was a mother. As my baby came to life, all I had worked for seemed to die. When will I be angry enough to no longer be heartbroken? Had I asked to be ridiculed? Had I asked to be stared at? Had I asked to be alone, waiting? They told me it didn't matter, not really, because even if I had not asked, I had received. And this was my duty.

To me, joy was freedom. The baby's fist, formless and boneless, seized my hand every time I lifted it

to wave hello. No one wanted to know me anyways. I was oversized, weighed down by the mistake I should not have had. Maybe it was not the baby who was the monster. Maybe it was me.

*Within the cocoon the insect grows restless. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Its antennae curled like fern fronds poking through loosening winter ground. The cocoon twitches and shudders, its curtains ready to unfold.*

The beauty of birth was like the beauty of a sandstorm. Frenzied in shapes made up of the same dust that spins in the stars, but spinning counter-clockwise instead of clockwise. I was done having the baby inside of me long ago, and now after all that waiting . . . the baby was done too.

As I laid in the soft sheets of the hospital bed, I thought about motherhood. The desire to love and to know. To stand at the curb in the mornings until your child stumbles off the bus towards you. To save up pennies and nickels in a jar so maybe one day he could go on vacation. To lie about the insults that are whispered behind his back. To avoid the inevitable — I am a mother already cursed. Giving birth to a baby who will never be mine, he will be a social pariah. And I wonder,

## if I do not love him now . . . who will love him in the future?



**GRACE YOUNG** My name is Grace Young and I am 16 years old. I enjoy writing because the process of communicating my feelings helps me better understand them. I have been published in two poem anthologies by the Canadian Poetry Institute. In my spare time, I enjoy rock climbing.

*Time hangs in balance, memories of previous butterflies flying through the air, fluttering and landing on leaves, ready to watch their former friend burst into being.*

**As I clutch the frame of the bed, I resolve: everyone deserves love. As my body contracts, I resolve: everyone deserves love.**

*As if the last grain of sand has hit the bottom of the hourglass, the process is sudden yet slow. Spindly legs poke from the tiny tear. A fuzzy head pushes its way out, taking in the slight changes to the world it last saw as a larva.*

As I hold a bundle of flesh and skin, I resolve: this baby deserves love. And I deserve love too.

Its small face did not look like mine, and yet it was mine. Mine to kiss, to hold. To choose, to love. It was simple intricacy, woven sugar and phosphate smooth and tight. It was pain, and yet it was peace. The monster of humiliation was now replaced with pride be-

cause he was mine. Maybe I had not asked, but I had received. And this was my duty. But maybe now it was also my joy.

*The air seems to hover slightly to the left, the earth seems to be packed just a bit denser. The thorax and abdomen greet its old friends, that little thistle, and that little sapling. A folded pair of wings fight past the snags in the cocoon. Crumpled and pleated, they shiver in the cold morning, like the dead leaves of fall precariously clinging to the soil. And yet, how much stronger. They spread, expanding in black lined blue, bright as the borrowed silk of the ocean. They catch the air, pumping like each heartbeat pumps blood. It has been long enough. It is time to fly.*

**CRISTINA CRESCENZO** My name is Cristina Crescenzo (she/her) and I am a 21-year-old English major at Capilano University with hopes of eventually writing YA novels and spreading disability and mental health awareness.

# Forgive Yourself

Cristina Crescenzo

I don't know if there will be any stock taken in my words, since I am only 21 years of age and I have a lot more life to experience and mistakes to make. However, the traumas I have faced in that time have made me form an opinion on the subject of healing a lot sooner than most people my age. But you can decide for yourself if what I am saying is true. Of course my life is one of billions, so I know others will come to their own conclusions when the time comes for them to patch themselves back up again. In my case,

**I can't say that I have healed completely, but I know that I am healing,**

even if it is a slow process. The thing is, I didn't start to heal until I was able to acknowledge that I could forgive myself for things I have done. No, before you ask, I didn't commit any crimes, but over time I did rip myself apart, as well as some of the relationships I had built in my young years.

Perhaps I should be more clear: the guilt that I have carried on my back every day since I was 10 is the knowledge that I am never going to be perfect, be-



Photo by  
Cristina  
Crescenzo

cause as much as I liked to wear rose-coloured glasses, I know that no one truly is. Since being born with a disability, I have felt as if I had to make it up to not just everyone around me, but also to myself, because I thought there was something I had to have done to deserve coming into this world with a disadvantage like cerebral palsy. I thought I had to overcompensate in every aspect of my life, like the way I treated people, how many friends I made and the activities I tried to participate in, just to name a few.

I worked so hard at it that my body finally shut down altogether and is still recuperating.

I will now attempt to depict a couple of instances that I believe have led me to where I am today, with the first being my stint as an amateur horseback rider.

**As a child it is only natural to want to feel a sense of accomplishment, and this is something that I learned continues into adulthood.**

Growing up with two able-bodied siblings, I saw that they were always out and partaking in a range of athletic activities, from bike riding to soccer to baseball. My mom eventually noticed that I was feeling left out, so she searched for an activity in which I could feel included, and the answer came in the form of therapeutic horseback riding. In all aspects it was the perfect solution, as it was a sport that I felt I could do, I was surrounded with other disabled children just like myself and I got to hang out, brush and feed apples to adorable horses. Therefore, at the age of only four, I started to attend lessons, even joining some competitions, and it finally felt like something that was only mine, at least for a while. I guess you could say I was a fickle child, because I would often take hiatuses from the practice due to my own festering insecurities and maybe just a tad bit of laziness because of the long drive to Langley. Yet, with time, I returned once more to horseback riding at the age of 12, after learning my father was diagnosed with cancer, as I felt that maybe this was something we could do together and that I could make him proud. So I did research, bought some gear and convinced my parents to let me give it a try one last time. The horses were beautiful and the instructors were wonderful and I cherished those moments on BC's North Shore, where I received my dad's undivided attention.

It was one single straw that broke the camel's (or, should I say, horse's) back. Looking back, it may seem stupid, and was probably one of my biggest regrets because of the sheer joy horseback riding actually gave me. One day I was leaving my lesson, and in one of the adjacent barns were a bunch of little girls who were probably only five and were getting up onto their steeds with no assistance at all, and that image broke my spirit. Here I was at 12 years old and I couldn't get on my small pony without a big box and two other people helping me up onto the saddle. It is probably one of the clearest memories I have, and it was a moment when I couldn't help but feel inadequate in this world. So I never went back to a sport I loved because I couldn't stand the fact that able-bodied kids were

ahead of me and the crushing realization that my trophies and ribbons were only for participation.

Moving forward a few years, I was now 16 years old, my father had passed and I was in my third year of high school. It was the first time I was back inside its walls after deciding to take several months away and trying my hand at homeschooling, as my mental health had worsened due to the blow of losing several friends because of various cliché high school reasons. In my mind back then, and maybe even a little now, I considered those reasons to be because my depression and anxiety were too much for them to watch me go through. I will never truly know the answer, but I don't want to put any words or ideas in anyone's head, and I also won't go into detail about what transpired in those friendships, because everyone has their own recollection of events and I don't have the right to monopolize the story. The essence of what I am trying to say is that I made mistakes too.

In the end, all the lies I had weaved snapped within my grasp. In retrospect, it is understandable now why I

**I lied often to get what I wanted from my peers, and I had big expectations of them because if I wasn't going to be perfect, I needed the rest of the world to be.**

lost my footing. Although I struggled with many things inside my heart, I had no right to force anyone to carry my baggage alongside me. I had to learn to take responsibility for my actions and start to repent, even if it still meant that not all those bridges I'd burnt would be rebuilt. I know what I did wrong, and for that I sincerely apologize.

I have spent many years telling myself that I am a monster as punishment, but recently I have slowly held back and allowed some of my wounds to heal, because I realized I couldn't move on until I fully accepted the fact that we come into the world the way we were meant to be, and I can't force the universe to change just because I yearn for it to. In addition, I have to realize that, compared to all those who have lived up until now, my existence and the infractions I have made are nothing but the smallest speck of dust in the grand scheme of everything. Whatever wounds might be bleeding now, you have to be patient and understand that the healing process takes time and remember that it is okay to care for the wounds you inflicted upon yourself, for even those will turn into glorious battle scars.

# Purifier



Photo by Dimitar Belchev

**BETH-  
ANY  
HOWELL**

**My name is Bethany Howell and I am a third-year university student majoring in psychology and minoring in family and child studies. I have a passion for writing and mental health, and my ultimate goal since age 13 has been to make a difference in the world through helping others, which is how I ended up here at Low Entropy!**

**Bethany Howell**

You know that feeling,

When you haven't cried in a while,

And your eyes sting as the tears begin to run?

It's like you've relapsed —

Like you've failed a challenge you didn't even know you were taking part in.

It's time to start perceiving our tears

As not a sign of weakness,

But the cleansing experience that they are.



SAND- Sandeepan is an aspiring writer and he loves writing short stories. When not working or writing, he can be found lying down with a book over his face or running around with his baby daughter.  
EEPAN  
ROY

“He had to find himself before he could commit to bringing her into his life.”

# The Climb

Sandeepan Roy

Just wow! No other words. Akash gasped as he stepped out of his tent at nearly 10 at night. The cold wind cut through almost five layers of clothing, through flesh and was tingling his bones. But what lay in front of him were just phenomenal snow-clad mountain tops, and the moonlight dancing on them created a magical world around him. He just couldn’t take his eyes off of them, as if he were looking for a way to soak it all in and keep it stashed away in a hard drive for long after.

The river water shimmered in the moonlight as it flowed silently, as if to avoid drawing attention. He could hear the waterfall in the distance. He looked in the direction they had come through to spot it, but all he could see was the dark valley covered in fog below. Akash had never even known that there could be this many stars in the sky. Pure magic was surrounding him. Akash had seen these in Facebook posts and school textbooks and imagined what they would be like, but this was far better than that. Weirdly, it took him back to the night a few months back, the night of the celebration of his promotion.

“Proud of you boy!”  
“Way to go son!”  
“You’re now ready to settle down.”  
Compliments were flooding in from all angles, with handshakes and pats on the back as Akash made his way through the room swarming with people, mostly his relatives and neighbors. Among all the comments, a particular one stuck in his head till the end of the night – “You’re 32 and you’ve achieved what you were supposed to, you should be feeling satisfied.”

Did he though? Was becoming the manager of a bank all that he was meant to achieve? And should he be satisfied and happy since it happened? Why wasn’t he feeling that? Was he missing something? Why did he feel like he had a wound he didn’t notice before? He had gone through what was the prime of his life, had done fairly well for himself and, if people were to be believed, had ticked off all the checkboxes society had established to measure a good life. But . . . ?

A gust of cold wind brought him back to his present.



Photo by Sandeepan Roy

The trek leader was reaching out to all the trekkers and making sure they were okay and healthy for the next stretch of the climb, giving out last-minute instructions before the trek to the summit. Oxygen levels were being checked to ensure that everyone was ready for the climb, and some began to look nervous as the measurements were taken.

## No one wanted their magic moments to be ruined.

Akash was surprisingly calm, with a resolute glow on his face, eyes on the peak peeking through the clouds, mind already pacing the walk, as if he belonged to this valley, these mountains.

Once the entire troop was ready, the trek leader gave the signal to start, and the group lined up in a queue and began the climb. Everyone had headlamps on, and in the darkness the queue of lamps looked like a glowing caterpillar slowly making its way through the hills.

The first part was a 50-minute steep climb up a hill, at the top of which everyone started searching for a place to sit and catch their breath. As Akash headed

himself on a rock, the world below disappeared beneath the clouds, and the dreamy place took him away to another time, his date with Roma a few months back. Little did he know it might be his last date with her.

“So, you don’t know?”  
Roma had asked that question for the umpteenth time, and he still couldn’t muster an answer to it. He had been dodging it every time, but today seemed quite different. Roma had a fierceness in her eyes and looked to be in no mood to be swayed by Akash’s usual strategy of using compliments to change the topic.

“You look beautiful tonight,” he tried anyway.  
Not that he was lying, she really did look smashing. The nude-colored heels peeking out from under her yellow skirt, the white crop top with a little bit of midriff showing. Akash was lost in that for a moment.

“No. Not this time.”



Roma sat up straight and bundled her hair with a clip, which snapped Akash back to his senses.

“At least tell me what’s going on in that head of yours. It’s the least I deserve, isn’t it?”

Akash took a sip of his coffee and remained silent. He didn’t know what to say, exactly. He loved this girl, he was sure of that. His parents liked her too, but marriage was not as welcome a thought to him as much he’d thought it would be. It wasn’t living with her that was troubling him, he was pretty excited about that. He figured it was something very different. Deep down he didn’t want to marry her just to check another box on the “should-do” list as the next step after getting a good job. It somehow seemed like she would just be another bit of salt on the wound he’d been nursing, and he couldn’t explain this to her.

**He had to find himself before he could commit to bringing her into his life.**

The next phase of the climb was beginning. Weather continued to be conducive to the climb, as the sun stayed behind the clouds, some who were like companions on the trek, floating leisurely amongst the climbers. The panorama was starting to light up, as a few yellow-billed coughts could be seen flying in a pattern far below. The terrain had changed from soft soil to rocky, with huge boulders and trickles of water flowing underneath.

After an hour of exasperating negotiations with the rocks, the troop hit the first glacier. It looked like a white blanket over the sleepy mountains. As pristine as it looked, it was way more difficult to climb on than the rocks. Crampons on, Akash was the last in the group as he maintained a tortoise-like pace on the trek. He could feel the blood pumping through the arteries in his forehead as he struggled to breathe, and Akash felt a weird satisfaction. His soul was feeding vigorously, like a gourmand kept away from food for too long. His wound seemed to be healing.

He kept hearing his fellow trekkers talk of ending this madness and turning back to the base camp to get under the warm sleeping bags. The thought had tempted Akash too, but it was as if a beast was waking up inside him, pushing him through these inhumane conditions, all for a healing touch. As he climbed on beyond the ledge, he saw the trek leaders and rest of trekkers resting in a small area ahead.

Akash grabbed a rock to sit down as well. As his breath came down to normal after a few moments, his eyes lit

up to the golden streaks dancing on the clouds below. It showed eight on his watch, and the sleepy world below was slowly waking up.

The team had a quick briefing to remind them of the road ahead, accompanied by a quick bite of their stone-cold food. Crampons were re-fastened and harnesses were now keeping the entire team together for the final summit. Their eyes were dreary, but shining. Maybe it was the sunlight playing tricks, but Akash wanted to see the grit in them, the pledge to make the last 12 hours of inhumanness worthwhile. This was their final plunge.

Akash lifted his eyes to look ahead and there it was, the peak glowing among the clouds above, like a yellow hat in the sky, as if it was the only thing that he could see, or maybe the only thing he wanted to see — this was what was missing from his entire life, this was the gaping wound he had felt, and now he could feel it healing up so quickly. He felt alive as the entire team got up and stepped forward . . .

. . . Four months later . . .

“Damn, it snowed overnight!”

Akash gasped as he stepped out of his tent. Fresh snow had blanketed the entire camp area. He stretched his arms to brush off the morning haze and went towards the tea tent to get a glass of hot black tea. Tea is like an addiction at this altitude. He peeked inside his tent; Roma was still asleep. It’s been two months since their marriage and this was his first trek with her, his way of bringing both his loves together.

“You should see this,” he called out to her, as he settled on a snow-covered rock to enjoy his tea.

**This was happiness.**

**Fiona Woo** A longtime lover of all things personal development and well-being, Fiona is a psychology major and certified life coach. With goals to reduce anxiety and provide clarity and direction for struggling new grads, Fiona seeks to open raw and vulnerable conversations in her writing. On her personal blog at [coachfionawoo.com](http://coachfionawoo.com) she exposes her greatest struggles to make space for honesty during a confusing and volatile time. Other than writing and psychology, Fiona loves the ocean and you will never see a bigger smile on her face than when she's on or by the water.

# The Grace that Follows Loss

Fiona Woo

Grief is a universal experience of human life. No matter who you are, what gender, socioeconomic class or age, you will experience grief of some sort. A lot of the ways in which we hold on to negative emotion and become guarded and untrusting are because of our inability to process grief in healthy ways. In my abnormal psychology class, we learned about the differences between healthy/integrated and unhealthy/complicated grief.

Here are the differences outlined by my professor.

The five stages of grief are anger, depression, shock/denial, bargaining and acceptance.

At the front end of grief, the cycle moves very quickly, and as it settles out, the person spends more time processing each phase (from minutes to days) until they reach acceptance.

Normative/healthy grief is when a person begins in a state of shock, moves through five stages in appropriate amounts of time and bounces around and between stages, possibly in a circular manner, but ultimately ends up in acceptance and spends most of their time there.

Unhealthy/complicated grief is when a person gets stuck in a state of depression or anger and never fully reaches acceptance.

If you find yourself stuck and unable to reach acceptance, you’ll know that you have not moved all the way through the grief cycle. This also applies to any past events, no matter how long ago and regardless of whether you label it as “grief” or not. Grief comes in many forms, some subtle and some severe, but if negative events get stuck in our system, it is probably because we haven’t properly grieved over the situation. If you find yourself ruminating over past events, it is time to unpack the situation and grieve what you have lost, whether that is a relationship, an opportunity or an unattained goal or vision of yourself or the world.

When you’re grieving, it is important to give yourself grace and allow the anger, disappointment, pain or any other “negative” emotion to exist. It is a process, and you will inevitably cycle through the negative feelings again, but each time you will spend less time dwelling and it will be easier to move through the stages and back to acceptance, ultimately finding your happiness again.

Photo by Yuris Alhumaydy



If you are helping or supporting someone through their grief,

**the best thing you can do is simply be a non-judgmental and open ear for them to process their thoughts and feelings with.**

Many people fear seeing those they love grieve, but rest assured it's a healthy and natural process. Give your loved one the space to feel negative emotions instead of simply trying to cheer them up. Most of the time, our desire to make the other person happier stems from our own inability to cope with negative emotions. It is not actually very helpful to the other person to tell them to ignore or simply move on from their sadness. The sadness, anger or disappointment will still be on the other person's mind, regardless of whether we distract them from it or not. The only difference will be that their time with you will be spent ignoring the problem, whereas their time spent alone will be time facing their grief on their own. The grief doesn't go away when you ignore or deny its existence. At some point it will rear its ugly head and you'll have to face it, one way or another. There is a time for moving on and solutions, but that time comes after the acknowledgement and processing of negative emotions. Allow the other person to tell you what

they want or need and support them in ways that they want, instead of in ways that ease your own discomfort around their grief.

We all must grieve different things throughout our lives. Whether it involves grieving the loss of a relationship, a career aspiration, a childhood, our innocence or a loved one, grief doesn't only follow the loss of material or external things, it can also be experienced when we lose a dream or hope for ourselves. Whatever it may be, we must acknowledge the truth of our disappointment and pain in order to move forward and heal.

**Lean on those who love you,**

be kind and patient with yourself, and take care of yourself mentally and physically.

# Right as Rain

Karen Bosurgi

I like to pretend  
that I can create a tiny universe  
three feet in front, behind, and to each side  
And that is my universe

What do I need?  
I need a candle  
for heat and light  
a cup of tea  
a bowl of blackberries  
I fill my universe with music  
Something soulful that moves me  
And I feel my breath  
fall lower in my belly  
I feel my shoulders ease

Outside  
there are endless things that frighten me  
frustrate me  
baffle me  
But here inside my universe  
everything is right as rain



Photo by Yulia Khlebnikova

KAREN BOSURGI

Karen lives in Seattle, Washington with her husband and Australian Cattle Dog. She is a product manager, blog writer, gardening enthusiast and avid couch potato.





Photo by Mixkit

## The Kid and His Loonie

Julia Magsombol

Please note that this piece contains references to child abuse, self-harm and suicide.

“Enough! Enough! Enough!” was the only thing she said. She was out of breath.

It has been years since the woman said that. Now she’s 10 years older.

She is done taking a bath. She doesn’t want to dress up because she’s looking at her body, which was once full of bruises and scars. The woman stares at her body for a long time, then dresses up. She doesn’t feel anything.

She then goes to a coffee shop to buy coffee. Then she goes to her work and meets several people. She talks in the most usual way – she doesn’t stutter, nor talk nervously. She’s a confident woman who can speak to anyone. After eight hours working, she goes to the grocery store to shop for food.

She wakes up, she eats and she works. The woman seems like a person who lives a peaceful life.

When she goes home at night, it’s all quiet. She’s alone. Despite the things she did earlier, she doesn’t feel good. She feels empty and feels numb. She lives comfortably, so there don’t seem to be enough reasons why she couldn’t live happily. *Others have it*

*worse*, she reminds herself.

The woman takes at least seven hours to fall asleep. She’s an insomniac.

While sleeping, the woman dreams about her younger self. She hears voices.

“Here is the knife.”

“Kill yourself!”

When she was younger, her mother knew of her depression and the notes she had written about killing herself. Her mother was furious. Instead of offering comfort, her mother offered a knife.

In her next dream, she’s in her old house, in her family’s living room. She constantly receives punches and slaps from her parents. She wants it to stop, but she can’t stop them. She can’t run away. She’s stuck on the sofa, taking every punch that is thrown at her. The woman is crying.

The woman hurts herself instead, as this is the only way to stop her parents from hurting her. She pulls her hair, slaps her face and punches her body. Her

Photo by Julia Magsombol

parents stop hurting her.

“That’s what you want. There, I hurt myself!” she says.

“You’re crazy,” her parents say.

Not long ago, the woman woke up from one of her nightmares. She didn’t feel anything. She always has these dreams, but for some reason, she doesn’t feel scared or sad anymore. The woman probably got used to them. All she ever feels now is numbness. She wondered if it was alright to be like this, to feel nothing.

It’s already eight in the morning now. She decides to get up and prepares to go to work. This time, she doesn’t stare at her body after she showers. She only looks at the tiny scar on her wrist.

As usual, she goes to the coffee shop to grab some coffee. When she leaves, she spots a child who’s crying while sitting on the bench beside the coffee shop.

“Are you alright, kid?” she asks.

“I’m lost. I lost my parents.”

“What do you mean lost?”

“I don’t know where they went. They told me to stay here, and they would come back soon.”

“Then you shouldn’t leave. You have to wait for them.”

“How can I wait? I don’t know when they’re coming back anymore.”

The woman can’t say anything. This child seems like he doesn’t trust his parents. She remembers her old self. She pities the kid.

“How about if I stay with you until they come back?” offers the woman. “If they don’t, we can go to the nearest police station to find them.”

“Really?”

“Sure.”

While waiting, the woman buys an ice cream for the kid so he’ll stop crying.

“So, how old are you?” the woman asks.

“I’m nine . . . and you, miss?”

“I’m just old.”

There’s a long silence between them. The only thing that can be heard are the footsteps of people entering the coffee shop. But the kid suddenly looks at the woman.

“Have you waited like this for your parents too, miss?”



The woman is surprised, and she doesn’t know how to answer. It takes her at least a minute to answer back.

“Yeah . . . I did. I waited for them. I waited for them to come back to me.”

The woman looks at the kid with sadness in her eyes. She suddenly remembers her younger self. Years ago, she was waiting for her parents to come back to her, to understand her and to accept all her vulnerabilities. But they never did. The woman understands that every child deserves a parent, but not every parent deserves a child. She wonders about the parents of this kid.

“Did they come back?”

“Yes,” the woman lies.

It’s been an hour, but the parents of the kid haven’t shown up yet. The woman looks at her clock and she realizes that she is late for work.

“Are you okay, miss?”

“What do you mean?” asks the woman, surprised.

“You look very pale. The dark circles under your eyes touch your nose because they’re so huge. You talk like a robot. You’re not emotional. I know how grown-ups don’t express themselves like kids. But you’re different, miss. You’re like a robot.

**You don’t really have any emotions.”**

The woman is a little pissed about what the kid just said.

“Really?”

There is a long pause between them. Out of the blue, the woman starts to cry.

“Are you okay, miss?”

The kid is confused, and the woman keeps crying and crying. The kid doesn’t say anything and just eats his ice cream. The woman cries for almost 10 minutes. Everyone on the street is looking at her. The kid is blushing, his ears and cheeks are all red and people can see how shy he is during this moment.

The woman finishes crying, and she suddnly speaks with a raspy voice.

**“No, I’m not okay,” the woman concludes.**

“You said you’re old, but you still cry.”

“I guess it’s because you asked if I was alright.”

“No one asked you that before?”

“Adults are very busy human beings. They don’t have time to ask those types of questions . . . in work or public places.”

“I see.”

The kid has a confused look.

“It has been an hour. We should go now. I cannot wait any longer. I have to work.”

“Alright,” the kid sighs.

But at that moment, the kid’s parents return to their spot. The parents run towards the kid and hug him tightly. The woman smiles. The kid tells his parents

how the woman stayed with him so that he wouldn’t be scared and lonely.

“Thank you so much, miss. My husband and I got lost, and we didn’t know the way back here,” the mother says.

“No worries, **I’m happy to help.**”

When the kid and his parents are about to go, the kid hesitates and reaches into his pocket.

“Here is a loonie, miss. It’s a token of my appreciation. It’s a bit of good luck. And I hope you feel better soon, and you find what you’re looking for.”

The kid smiles as he walks away with his family. The woman waves her hand and says goodbye, holding the loonie in her other palm.

While walking to her work, the woman genuinely smiles for the first time in a long time. She had always smiled, but it was all fake. Now she is smiling because she has just witnessed small pieces of *happiness and hope* that she’s been longing for.

People don’t usually feel happy or hopeful while they heal from their painful past — they are still hurting. They are still not okay most of the time. But it’s alright, because healing is about keeping a piece of hope, and believing that everything will be better, as sure as tomorrow comes.

**JULIA MAGSOMBOL** Julia Magsombol is currently a journalism student from Edmonton, Canada, who desires to bring hope to people through her writing. When not writing or reading, you can catch her sewing clothes, painting nature and drinking instant coffee.



“People don’t usually feel happy or hopeful while they



heal from their painful past — they are still hurting.”

Photo by Susan Turi

SUSAN  
TURI

I am a writer, illustrator and painter living in Montreal, Canada with a degree in fine arts. I began my career as a production artist for design studios and ad agencies, before deciding to devote myself purely to self-expression through writing and painting. I am currently at Concordia University majoring in creative writing and English literature.

## A Conversation with the Wind

Susan Turi

The sand stings my bare ankles as I walk along the beach looking for shells to take home, and I’m reminded of the wind’s conversational power, its every thought and determination felt via proxy.

A strand of hair tickles my cheek and I wipe it away. The waves offshore crest and charge perpetually forward, yet go nowhere. To my left, at the edge of soft dunes, wild grasses rustle and sway, telling me they have greater stories to tell through the wind than I, of raging storms, shipwrecks and beached jellyfish. Then there is a pause, and I feel the precision of the sun on my back, as if through a magnifying glass — a vague warmth shrinking to one laser pinpoint. I hear the hesitance of an incoming tide like the stealth of an ambush, scheming to sweep away the silt foundations from under my feet.

Around my ears, a breeze begins to waffle, hinting at the wind’s return. It’s telling me how persistent it can be, in its very roundabout way, but also how famous it is, because its swings in mood are felt by every living organism and are measured by every climatologist with altitude-defying balloons from their earthbound labs.

We then discuss the topic of texture and sound as our conversation picks up in intensity — the soft

flapping of a dry towel against my legs, the static tic-tic of grains of sand returning like fire ants to my ankles. I rub my eyes free of its grit and turn my face away from its words, to look down at goosebumps rising out of a patch of freckles on my forearm. There is another lull between us, and I empty my mind of dwindling clutter.

### Now, just me with my windswept self.

Our exchange resumes a few moments later, on the subject of Time, and to a lesser degree, Temperature. Time, like erosion — wearing away of solid matter, a coastline, leatherizing of plump, peachy skin. Temperature, as in cooling bodies of warm water, evaporation, sublimation. Movement of particles. Transformation of matter. Direction. It shoves me this way and that like a bully without a sharp elbow.

Me as its windsock. Me as a willing marionette at the end of its string. Me as a kite animating a gray sky.

We discuss the approach of a crisp late afternoon from the west, signaling time for me to pack up and head on home.

We’ve discussed our life together for the umpteenth time, the wind and I, or maybe we haven’t. In our decades-long marriage, there has been only one listener, one curious mind, but two spirit bodies.



Photo by Matt Seymour



Photo by Valerie Fomina



