

## childhood

Name for Publication: elouisa ryan

i remember fickle faces  
not the now's or the present  
the figments and the faded.  
they present themselves  
as tiny daisies that repent  
their clock-work of memories  
i feel the same,  
i can feel their longing gaze  
a thorn so sharp  
upon my paper ego  
but i wept nectar and tree sap  
she is in a daze, confronted by my emotion.  
i have become a wilted rose,  
but she promises me we'll blossom  
she assures me of sunshine  
when we live in bitter winter.  
if she were aware of the present tense,  
she'd watch me wilt away  
but in her benign ignorance,  
she just stands and holds me  
reassures me words of timely  
"you will be okay."  
the words spoken breathlessly,  
a flush of security comes over me.  
to think we have just began breathing oxygen,  
and yet i feel myself miserably exasperated  
and she doesn't like comforting watered plants  
but upon my eyes, she saw stars that were faded  
her pupils dilating, without another word she brings me in.  
her dainty, long fingers cascaded against my back as i wept onto her.  
and it's silent in the hallways, everyone's inside  
i feel happy knowing for once,  
i'll be alright.

## **Girlhood**

Name for Publishing: Matilda Gauci

I mourn for my girlhood cut short,  
My jealousy is a green-eyed monster  
For the boys with scraped knees and  
Dirt stuck under short fingernails.  
I love being a girl  
But I sometimes wish I also could have been a boy,  
To feel the wind in my hair without worrying about the wayward wisps,  
To run wildly without care of the sweat staining my clothes.  
I love being a girl  
But I resent the world which made me one.  
I resent the world which taught me fear was more sensible than freedom,  
The world that occupied my brain as I crossed my legs and pulled skirts down below knees.

I wish I could tell that seven year old girl,  
Begging for five more minutes  
That time was still worth begging for.  
I wish I could tell that nine year old girl,  
To keep seeking,  
To never learn to hide.  
I wish that I could tell that eleven year old girl,  
That she didn't have to be bulletproof,  
That she was too young to be so tough  
That being 'mature for your age' wasn't a good thing.

I mourn for every woman stripped of their girlhood,  
Forced to grow up when she was pushed down into the gravel  
By the boy who 'liked her'.  
When her mum's magazines taught her that her pinchable cheeks wouldn't get her a boyfriend,  
And so at school the next day she threw out her sandwich.  
When the woman on the television told her that Taylor Swift was a cow for having thighs that  
touched,  
So each night she would press her feet together to make sure the light still shone through her body.  
I mourn for the girls who were made to despise their youth,  
Who lathered on mascara and lipstick just for a chance to be noticed.  
I wish that we could've been taught to savour the striped leggings  
And the fairy dresses and long socks,  
The innocence.  
I beg for us not to fail the next generation of girls,  
So that they don't have to mourn.

## The Horror of Healing

Name for Publishing: Larissa Peresipkin

**Trigger warnings: explicit mentions of self-harm and addiction, implied suicide**

My scars have begun healing;  
Fading and forgetting.  
The white welts  
Borne from my talented hands  
Softening themselves and sinking into my skin  
Desperate to be released from their hideous history.

Each one holds a memory.  
From my first, curious and careful,  
To my last, mundane and messy.  
A morning or an afternoon or a night.  
An easy decision to contrast  
The confusion and chaos  
Accumulating within me.

I had become more perceptive in my waning period  
Noticing things other than the planned pain;  
The sawing sound skidding from beneath the blade,  
My skin shrieking for forgiveness in those sharp moments  
And to be spared from its improper punishment;  
The bronze smell of blood droplets  
Staining the stiffened fabric  
Of my mother's long-lost cloth.

Like any accomplished addict  
I moaned the meaningless mantra -  
*I'm only hurting myself* -  
To anyone who caught an unfortunate glimpse  
At my lacerated limbs.  
I pinky-promised I meant no harm to those who loved me  
But as the honoured hypocrite I am  
My words wounded my loved ones the most.

I cannot yet deny  
That I simply wait for the morning  
Or the afternoon or night  
When my courage finally converts to strength  
And the blade is forced definitively deeper. (Deeper).  
But for now, I am left conflicted  
Caught between comfort and craving;  
My scars have begun healing.