

The Odyssey Youth

Literary Magazine

Issue II: *Journey*

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The Odyssey Youth Literary Magazine

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Social Media
Managers

Ralia Farah &
Taylor Cotton

Prose
Editors

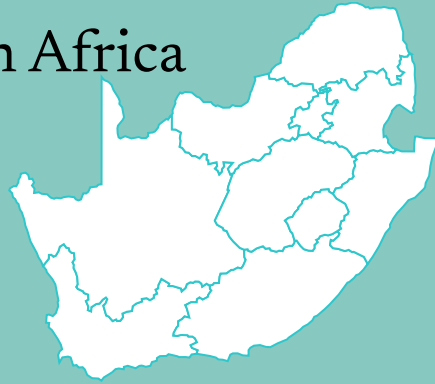
Cheyenne Nielsen
& Annalise Healey

Poetry
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Hannah Phillips

The Origin of the Stories

South Africa



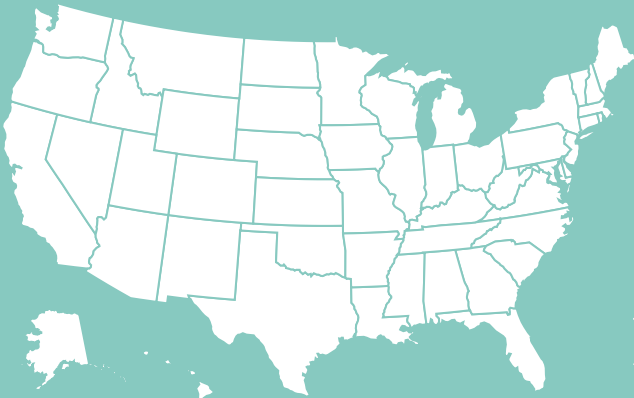
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A Message on Behalf of the Team

The Odyssey Youth Literary Magazine is all about adventure. While we are on a journey of our own, we thought it would be fitting to honor everyone else's journey alongside ours! We would like to thank all our supporters, readers, and writers that are alongside our adventure! Issue II is filled with the most wondrous of journeys through emotions, mindsets, words, and experiences. So, without further ado, let's dive right into them!

-The Odyssey Youth Literary Magazine

Our Talented Writers Chosen for Issue II Publication:

Poetry:

Hiba Muhammad
Juliet J.
Chi-Chi Juan
Cora Smith
Ifunanya
Caitlin Amy Peterson

Prose:

Ayla Bushell
Ella Davey
Jenna M Olivier

We would like to offer our utmost gratitude to every single talented writer that submitted their work to us!

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Part I
Poetry



Journey
Every soul embarks on journeys now and then.

Jasper *by Hiba Muhammad*

I last saw you in Jasper,

I last saw you when the sky and clouds grazed us here on Earth.

I last saw you when you stood tall like an evergreen,

But I doubt you remember.

I last saw you when you explored the glaciers.

You mellowed when I melted them from my touch.

But there's no way you remember that.

I can still see you now,

You're moving mountains,

You're crumbling the Rockies.

Oh, you're ice cold and I'm the fiery heat.

My Brando, My Bogart.

But you never saw that.

Look back, remember our days in Jasper.

Do you see the ice melting and the rivers running dry?

Do you think of mist flooding the silent streets?

Oh, I know this enchanting reverie is unrequited.

But please, let me know

If you remember the few days we had,

In the slippery slopes,

Of Jasper.

Hiba Muhammad

Hiba Muhammad is a second-generation Pakistani-Canadian writer who reaches her audience through her craft and her use of the themes of love, yearning, and acceptance.

The Little Old Me

by Juliet J.

Once upon a time, in the kaleidoscope of memory,
I danced in the sunlight, a symphony of glee,
But now, in the shadows of my weary soul,
I stand, burdened by the weight of my own toll.

Childhood whispers echo in the corridors of my mind,
A specter of innocence, left far behind,
“You were once so full of life,” she murmurs with a sigh,
“Where did that sparkle fade? Tell me, why?”

I bow my head, heavy with the weight of regret,
For the vibrant hues of youth, I can't forget,
“I am sorry,” I whisper, a tear tracing its path,
But she shakes her head, a silent aftermath.

“You let them dim your light,” she accuses with disdain,
“Traded your laughter for echoes of pain,
You were a canvas of dreams, now painted in despair,
Tell me, why did you let them strip you bare?”



I bite my lip, the taste of bitterness lingers,
As I drown in the depths of my own fingers,
“I tried,” I protest, a feeble defense,
But she sees through the facade, the pretense.

“You've become a stranger to yourself,” she laments,
Lost in the labyrinth of false pretense,
“You wear the mask of conformity with ease,
But where is the girl who danced with the breeze?”

I swallow the lump in my throat, a bitter pill,
As I navigate the labyrinth of my own will,
“I am here,” I whisper, but it feels like a lie,
For the little old me has long said goodbye.

And so, in the silence of our shared lament,
I grapple with the ghosts of innocence spent,
For the little old me, once vibrant and free,
Now stands a shadow of who she used to be.



Juliet J.

Juliet J., a teenage writer, is on the cusp of publishing her first book. A passionate soul, she channels her creativity through music, sketching, and painting. When she's not crafting stories, you'll find her exploring new places on her bike, often in the company of friends.

Our Frequency in the Colour Spectrum *by Chi-Chi Juan*

Rhinos range, treasures to protect;

Ochre wild beneath, where Big Five intersect.

Yonder, Queen Protea stands, honeyed with its natural glow;

Graceful symbol of our heritage's eternal flow.

Bobotie sizzles, a savoury-sweet aromatic delight;

In Zulu kraals, nutty pap steams through the night.

Velvety malva pudding, sweet lekkers we adore;

Salty biltong, snacking as the Bokke leap and soar.

Hearts green and gold, shining with pride, so bright,

The CDs of our hearts reflect the colours of the **rainbow**, in a
kaleidoscopic light.

Chi-Chi Juan

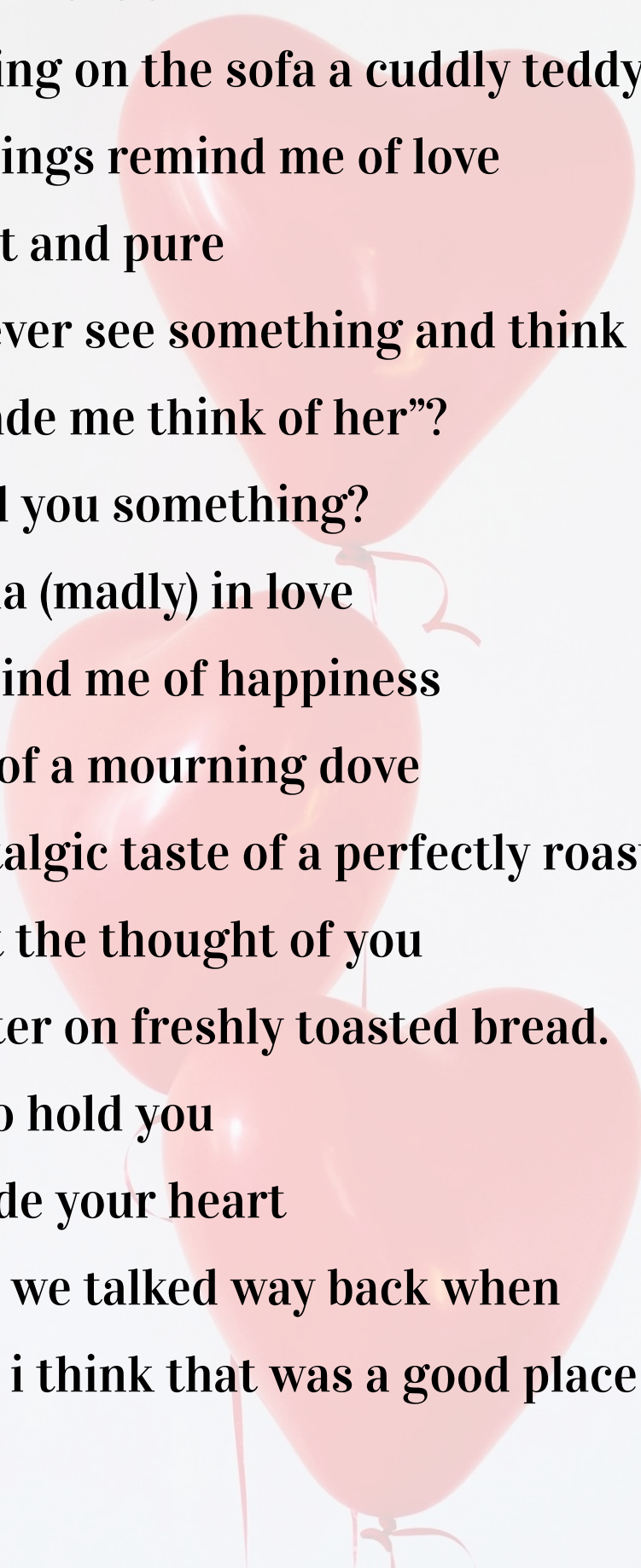


Chi-Chi Juan is a Taiwanese-South African girl who grew up in the “Rainbow Nation”. Her unique journey shaped her multicultural identity. She’s a pianist, designer, and avid traveler who loves exploring global cuisines. Chi-Chi enjoys creating photo journals and writing children’s stories, sharing her passions through volunteering, and striving to foster change.

restless reverie

by Cora Smith

i couldn't fall asleep
so, i fell for you instead
because i don't want to spend the rest of my life wondering
where our story could have led
so, i keep up with the times
the story in your eyes
so i don't have to wonder
when I'm older.
i lay on my soft pillow
looking out my dew covered, streetlight illuminated window
kind of poetic don't you think?
funny how you can have something in common
with such a mundane thing.
it's been more than one thousand days I've loved you
almost a quarter of my life
do you know that in one hand you hold my heart
and in the other you hold a present i gave you; in the other you
hold a knife?



there's strawberries in the garden
bubbles in the air
and sitting on the sofa a cuddly teddy bear
these things remind me of love
innocent and pure
do you ever see something and think
“this made me think of her”?
can i tell you something?
I'm kinda (madly) in love
you remind me of happiness
the call of a mourning dove
the nostalgic taste of a perfectly roasted marshmallow
i melt at the thought of you
like butter on freshly toasted bread.
i want to hold you
live inside your heart
I'm glad we talked way back when
because i think that was a good place to start.



Cora Smith

Cora Smith is a young poet who fell in love at the age of ten (now 13), and although the boy is her best friend and doesn't share the same feelings, Cora writes poetry to put down what she can't say out loud. She hopes to publish all her poetry in her own book one day to show how being in love at such a young age has its ups and downs, but also shows how the feelings are just as valid as being an adult and being in love, and kids can have those feelings too. She also hopes she can convey how wonderful love is, and how you can find it in anything (or that one special person).

Triple Tap *by Ifunanya*

“I feel like jumping, I know it’s wrong. I’m supposed to fly but I never asked for wings and it’s killing me.”

Tap, Tap, Tap.

My worst fear is being forgotten.

Not replaced, but forgotten.

Forgotten like melted snowflakes when they come in contact with warmth.

Forgotten like the wailing shards of a broken mirror.

Forgotten like a withering picture that was taken out of its picture frame.

Forgotten like a corpse that returned too quickly to the dust it was created from.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

“I feel like jumping. I know it’s wrong, I know I’m meant to fly with wings I never asked for.”

I lied about my worst fear.

It’s not being forgotten.

It’s being replaced.

Replaced like an old china set,

Rotting away on a new shelf.

Replaced like an amputated arm, that was never cherished like it was supposed to be.

Replaced like names are with pronouns such as you or me.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

“I feel like screaming, screaming into the ocean and surfing on rivers flowing in my b-blood but I can’t... can I?”

I lied about my worst fear again.

I don’t think one has been established as of yet.

But once one has.

You will be the first to know.

Then again, aren’t you always the first to know.

The first to tell when my eyes tear up, from something other than fictional dust.

The first to know when my throat aches

and the first to diminish my insecurities.

The first to argue with me and the first to console me.

The first time to beat me up and the first to apologize.

Even though the apology might not be all too sincere.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

“Are you okay?” You ask.

“No, I’m not okay.”

I lie all the time.

I hold in tears and I fake emotions.

But somehow I don’t need to with you.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Sometimes I hate it when you tap.

I hate it when you tap me on the shoulder
and snap me out of my negativity.

I hate it when you make me want to live again.

I hate it when you laugh, cause it means another part of my mask breaks.

I hate it when you smile because it means I have to shatter my façade.

I hate it when you tap me out of hell and into heaven.

I hate it because I know that once you are gone.

I'll fall back in again.

Sometimes I hate it when you tap.

But I adore knowing that it was you tapping.

I might be a rare diamond.

Keyword Might.

Opinions are subjective.

But you will forever be my Oxygen.

The borrowed air I don't loathe inhaling.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

"Smile, Ify."

And there goes my mask.



Ifunanya

“Embrace the darkness, you’ll hardly be left in the light.”

That is a quote she created herself. During the 15-years she’s lived. She’s realised that positives are earned while negatives are inhaled when you take in a breath of fresh air. But inhale anyway, because eventually...you exhale.



A Journey to Healing *by Caitlin Amy Peterson*

In the heart of the city, where buildings scrape the sky,
Lies a soul in turmoil, with tears it cannot dry.
Addicted to the pain, seeking solace in the blade,
A silent cry for help, in darkness it did fade.

The scars upon the skin, a map of hidden woes,
Each cut a whispered secret that nobody truly knows.
Lost in urban chaos, drowning in the noise,
The city's cruel embrace suffocating all joys.

But one fateful day, a glimmer of hope appeared,
A chance to break free from all that they had feared.
Packed their bags and left, for a rural coastal town,
Where the waves sang softly, and the seagulls flew around.

The salty breeze embraced them, like a long-lost friend,
Whispering tales of healing that have no bitter end.
In the arms of nature, they found a soothing balm,
A gentle touch that eased their soul and brought them calm.



Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into years,
The wounds began to heal, replaced by joyful tears.
No longer bound by chains of self-inflicted harm,
They found a new beginning on the beach's sandy charm.

Sunsets painted skies in hues of pink and gold,
A reminder that even broken souls can be bold.
In the quietude of nature's loving embrace,
They found their inner strength and reclaimed their grace.

So here they stand today, by the ocean's shore,
A testament to resilience and courage evermore.
No longer defined by scars or urban strife,
They found their true essence in the rhythm of life.



Caitlin Amy Peterson

Caitlin, a budding writer, is embarking on a literary journey with a passion for storytelling. Despite no known accomplishments yet, her dedication to honing her craft shines through in her commitment to learning and growing as a writer. With creativity and perseverance, Caitlin aspires to make her mark in the world of literature.



Part II

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Journey


*No matter where it leads you, may your journey be filled
with adventure and wonder!*

Something Blue

by Ayla Bushell

The wind wails like a screaming child as it crosses the barren field. A muddy river winds through the dry, withered grass to her left. Like ink seeping into water, there is no defined border between river and bank and sky. Little grey birds, like lumps of clay formed by unskilled hands, splash in the shallows before clumsily taking flight. The wind slices across the water, precise as a scalpel as it digs into the surface—skin that didn't think it could bleed until it realized it was cut. The bitter chill bites through her jacket and leaves her shivering.

She has been walking for hours—days, even. The minutes have blurred together into a murky jumble she can no longer distinguish. Time does not quite exist here, or at least it does not seem to pass as it should. She clings to the phantom hope of a childhood dream that there is indeed something brighter waiting beyond this endless expanse of grey. She doesn't know if it exists and isn't sure if she even believes in it anymore, but she keeps walking regardless. It is the only choice she has left. That, or give up and go back to *him*. Go back to that house and its empty, echoing rooms. Go back to those days spent trying to pile her bones atop one another into something resembling human—something resembling a woman. Hiding bruises that bloomed like rotting roses on her skin; vomiting until she felt like she could turn herself inside out and remake herself into something beautiful. Back to his hands on her neck and his voice skittering down her spine and his lecherous smile. Back to the things that have been done to her, and the things she has done in return. The wind howls again—not like a scream but a *shout*, angry and vicious—and her shoulders bunch up in a knee-jerk reaction, and she knows she cannot return. She knows that going back will kill her entirely, even if he does not. So she walks, even as her feet throb and her steps drag, and she doesn't allow herself to look behind her. She doesn't allow herself to hesitate.




Ahead of her, a barbed wire fence rises from the flat, chalky ground. Sharp and imposing: a woven metal barrier carving the sky into pieces that splinter and bleed wide into the cradle of the earth. She buries her hands deep in her pockets, curling her fingers around each other. Her skin aches from the cold.

As she approaches the fence, she can make out a small scrap of fabric caught amongst the barbs. The rich, vibrant colour—bright like a fragment of summer sky that had fallen from the heavens and been trapped there—flares starkly against the dreariness of the landscape. She catches the fabric between her fingers as it flutters in the wind and peers at it curiously. The edges of the rough, well-worn weave are frayed and jagged as if it has been torn away from a larger piece.

She hasn't seen colour for a very long time. Not like this: bright, vivid, and unapologetic. At the house, it was all clean white and shining silver, practical and impersonal. Here, everything is monochrome: grey fence on grey grass and grey birds in a grey sky. Even she seems dull, her clothing in muted shades of brown, her skin pallid and bloodless.


Something blue, she thinks to herself wryly. Her wedding is a distant memory—a fever dream buried beneath the weight of the nightmares that came after—but she remembers the heavy weight of the wedding dress. Drowning in white fabric that wrapped around her like shackles. She had become a ship tied to her anchorage and a false sense of safety. She knows that she was never supposed to break away.



She releases the fabric from between her fingertips. It remains caught on the fence, rippling in the wind as if she had never held it at all. She has been alone for a long time—not truly alone, but alone in every way that matters. Trapped in a house with a cruel man and a crowd of injustices and no escape. It has made her sentimental, made her search for meaning where none exists. Too much time has passed since she last heard a kind voice, or since she has seen a face that hasn't sought to break her. Now, even the most insignificant things provided some measure of comfort.

She wraps her fist around a smooth section of the fence, barely wide enough for the width of her hand. She stares at the appendage: slim and delicate, a hand that should belong to someone who has never known violence. A hand that should belong to someone untouched and unburdened. She remembers his voice—she *always* remembers his voice—as it echoes and bounces against the walls of her skull. *You were supposed to be beautiful.* A hand on her wrist. *Why won't you just listen to me?*

I was beautiful, once, she thinks, in the way that fresh snow is beautiful: lovely only because of the inevitability of its destruction. But then her bones became too brittle, and skin stretched over them like a taut canvas of bruises, and the ravenous hunger for love ate away at her until there was barely anything left. Her beauty was her armour, but what was she meant to do when that beauty no longer shielded her? What was she meant to do when her beauty was just another weapon to be wielded against her?



She ran. It is still the only choice she ever could have made. She stored up the sleeping pills he gave her—to calm her nerves, he said, though she has always known that this was a lie—ground them up, and slipped them into his morning coffee. He drank—drinks—it black, so bitter that she sometimes wondered if he would choke on it, and so the taste was easily concealed. She ran from the house with no hesitation and did not allow herself to look back at his prone body slumped against the table. She still cannot regret it.

She casts one last look at the scrap of blue fabric, electric and almost glowing against the desolate landscape, tangled in the thorny lengths. She has paid dearly for her freedom, but she knows it will be worth the cost. She will *make* it worth it. She used to pity him, at the beginning, but he has taken too much from her now. He has forfeited the right to pity or mercy.

She shakes her head, tearing her eyes away from the fabric, and bends down to climb between the lines of the fence. The barbs dig through her sleeves and slice into her skin, but she grits her teeth and ignores the sharp, stinging pain. This pain she can bear. This pain is one that she has chosen.

When she stands on the other side, her hands are bleeding, crimson tracks bright like the fabric was against her skin. Behind her, she knows that the scrap of blue is still caught in the fence, gleaming like a flame in the dark, fluttering like a bird. She does not glance back at the imposing fence or the land it cages. She looks forward, and she walks. Somewhere ahead of her, far in the distance, the sun begins to break through the clouds.

Ayla Bushell

Ayla Bushell is a 17-year-old writer from the UK and Australia. An avid reader and writing from childhood, she has an ever-growing list of novel ideas she insists she will write one day. Apart from writing, she enjoys reading books that make her cry, listening to Hozier and classical music, and researching obscure historical figures.

The Siren's Last Song *by Ella Davey*

Apprehension gripped Reidne's bones as she spotted the ship, barely believing her eyes. The famed Odysseus, tied to the helm of the vessel.

Was he being held hostage? Or was he being presented as an offering to them? Other sirens—her sisters—murmured excitedly as they gathered on the rocks, preparing to sing.

“Is it really him?”

“Why is he tied up like that?”

“It doesn't matter; we're going to have fun with this one.”

Reidne ruffled her feathers and blocked out the noise. She tried not to look at Odysseus as he drew nearer into view, in the same way that she tried not to look at any of the sailors they drowned.

She hated this part. The more men they killed with their songs, the more the guilt clung to her like blood she couldn't wash away. How could she kill someone as great as Odysseus?

The first note of one of their loveliest songs was carried on the wind to the ship. The music they made came as naturally as breathing, as though the notes were engraved in their life blood.

Reidne supposed that they were. After all, they were told the same thing throughout the generations. This was the purpose that the fates had woven for them. To sing, to lure men, then eventually pass into Hades' realm. She didn't know what she believed. It seemed cruel, somehow, that their only purpose was to kill innocent men.

The deceit was the worst part of it. Deceit, because their beautiful music—telling the stories of life—would only bring the people who heard the alluring notes death.

She hated that her one talent brought only destruction. It was unfair, that that was the fate assigned to her, when others—such as the legendary Achilles—had a grand fate laid out on a silver platter for them. A grand adventure in life before passing into Asphodel Meadows—or, if the fates were particularly generous, Elysium. Meanwhile Reidne, as a monster, would pass into Tartarus and suffer eternal punishment. Her doomed fate weighed on her, the ticking clock of fate sapping the energy out of her days as time went by.

This was the way that fate worked, she told herself. Nothing can be done about something that is already written in the stars, even if a small part of her thought otherwise. Maybe this didn't have to be their fate. How did they know what their fate was until it had happened? But then again, no one would listen to her, even if she dared to speak these thoughts. Sometimes, she managed to keep them at bay, though this was proving more and more difficult by the day.

Odysseus's ship was passing so close that she could see his brown eyes, wide with awe and pleasure—an expression she was used to seeing on men right before they yielded themselves to their song. They went through their most enchanting harmonies, and though he strained against the ropes binding him, he still didn't break through. By this point in the song, men had usually jumped off their boat and swam to them.

Reidne could tell that the others were trying harder to entrance Odysseus with their most beautiful ballads, legends of glorious battles and adventures. He had to be strong willed, she thought. Or he simply didn't have the strength to break through his restraints.

Odysseus's ship was starting to pass by the island. She felt, rather than saw, her sisters' confusion and desperation as they bellowed out the last chorus of harmonies that had men crawling on their knees before them. No one had resisted them before. Ever. They would never forget it if he escaped.

Despite their ability to fly as a hybrid of woman and bird, they preferred not to roam too far from their island when attempting to lure men to their deaths. There were far more dangerous monsters in these waters—monsters that could kill them with minimal effort.

His ship was out of hearing range. The sirens finished their song, the tense silence roaring through her ears. Some of her sisters' eyes were wild with both perplexity and violence.

One of the elder sirens came storming up to them. She demanded in her cold, sharp voice, “One of you. *Speak.*”

There was a short pause in which they all looked at each other, all of them beseeching with their eyes not to be the one to tell her.

Finally, one of them came stammering up to the elder. “He...he was tied to the mast of the boat and he just...just escaped. He couldn’t get free of his restraints.”

There was a long, horrible pause. The siren sighed through her nose. “That’s a poor reflection on all of you. You mustn’t have been up to standard. Useless, completely useless.”

Useless in her eyes, maybe. But Reidne couldn’t help but feel something like relief course through her.

Relief, that she hadn’t stopped another man from living his life.

Hot tears slid down her cheeks. She had never known what it might be like for someone to enjoy her music, without it bringing them a premature death. How could she watch another man die because of her songs, when she knew how it felt to see one escape?



She wouldn't do it any longer.

She turned around and started walking. One of her sisters—Molpe—called after her. “Where are you *going*, Reidne?”

Her voice sounded distant, even to her own ears. “I tire of singing. I'm going away.”

“Away *where*? It's too dangerous, Reidne—”

She blocked out her voice. There had to be a way off this island.

She'd find a way, for no one knew for sure what the fates planned for her, or anyone. All Reidne knew was that her fate didn't have to be on this island. So, she turned towards the ocean that glimmered towards the edge of the world.



Ella Davey

Ella Davey is an English Literature student at the University of Warwick. She has an interest in creative writing and painting. Her favourite genre to read is fantasy/adventure novels, but she particularly enjoys Shakespeare and Homer as part of her degree.

Strawberries and Cream

by Jenna M Olivier

Blue. A blue as pale as the sky on a cloudless day. But then, in a certain light, a deep, ocean blue. She would look at you and you'd drown in her eyes. I've been drowning since I caught my first glimpse. It feels as if you are floating there, meters upon meters under the water with rays of light splitting the empty blue around you. At first, being there is terrifying, but you get used to it after a while. Nothing passes you by, and nothing is there with you; it's just you and her.

She is the crux of every thought I have. She is the sweet to my sour. She is my world. I can only imagine a future with her in it; one with a small charcoal pug and a big fluffy cat, a cozy home with creaking hardwood floors, and a living room enchanted by houseplants. We would have a vegetable garden and every morning we could go out together and pluck ripened tomatoes off their curling stems. Our cat would stalk birds through heads of lettuce, silently creeping toward them, its paws leaving indents in the rich, brown dirt. We would fawn over the prints as we find them in the soil, thinking them adorable and so, so tiny for such a big, fluffy cat.

The pug would have a habit of running under our feet as we are in the kitchen. I'd secretly pass it scraps from my dish, and you would too, but we wouldn't tell each other due to the unspoken rule that we "mustn't feed the pets unless it's in their bowls". The pug would be happy and so would we.

I'd get to trace your skin every night, drawing constellations in your freckles, and fall asleep cocooned in your pale arms. Everything would be soft, from the way our pillows hold our heads to the dancing curtains that frame the French doors overlooking our garden. Even the way I'd hold your face, with such reverence—and fear that I might drop it and see it shatter like porcelain on my floor—would be gentle.

Your lips would taste like strawberries and cream. We'd grow them ourselves. They'd stain your mouth pink and your eyes would stand out sharper against your fair skin. I'd kiss you then until you tasted of me and no longer like strawberries.

But, back to reality, where we do not have strawberries or a house of our own, or gone anywhere remotely near each other's hearts.

It's late January, mid-summer where we live, and Cassie and I are at Aerostar, a local cafe situated on the beachfront. It's mid-afternoon and we're sitting at a table next to a window overlooking the white sand. There's an unlit candle and an unneeded tomato sauce bottle on our table. She shoves a forkful of Oreo ice cream and waffles into her mouth. Some of it dribbles down her chin.

Yup. That's the girl.

She's a bit of a dork. Perfectly exemplified by her outfit today: black shredded jean shorts and an oversized sunflower yellow t-shirt with the phrase "suck my butt" in vermilion across her chest. She has on a pair of black and orange Converse and a couple of silver necklaces. Very Cassie. Her hair is platinum and unraveling from a bun made in the earlier hours of the morning.

"Are you going to finish that?" Her fork prods a lone cherry, drowning in a pool of chocolate ice cream. Glazed cherries are a favorite of mine and I hardly ever get any, but it's Cassie who wants mine.

Sighing, I nudge the cherry with my fork toward her. "Yes, you can have it." I groan.

She smiles at me and butterflies tickle my stomach. Cassie plucks it from my plate and pops it into her mouth. The red cherry disappears through her pale lips, sweetened glaze catching in the corner of her mouth.

"Thanks!" She pauses, chewing the cherry, looking out of the cafe windows and down onto the beachfront. "When we're done, would you like to walk down to the rocks?"

I nod and add a forkful of waffles into my mouth.

The rocks are ours. It's a cluster at the end of the beach that reaches out into the ocean like a pier. Nobody else walks that far down, and so ever since we were fourteen we've made our way along the sand every weekend (and on special occasions) to the rocks. Over those four years, we found a spot that overlooked the sea and simultaneously sheltered us from wind and waves. We'd found indents shaped like seats nestled in the rocks. They were uncomfortable, but bearable for an hour at most.

Cassie pushes a stray strand of hair behind her ear before it dips into her ice cream. She neatly cuts a square off her waffle and squishes ice cream into it. She is truly a peculiar person.

"What..." Cassie catches me squinting at her. "It's like an ice cream boat! Try it. It's like the perfect balance of waffle crunch and ice cream cold!"

I giggle at her. "You're weird!" I cut a square off my waffle and shove ice cream into the crater. She's not wrong; it isn't bad.

It's late afternoon as we finish our waffles and make our way out of Aerostar. There's a warm breeze floating about; it keeps us slightly sweaty and the beach busy.

The sand by the waterline is warm and makes my feet feel heavy as I trudge along. I watch as Cassie skips a little ahead of me, humming to herself. She occasionally turns to look back at me, making sure I haven't fallen too far behind. When she turns away a smile always tugs at my lips. It's cute how she shows she cares about me. We're definitely a cliché: me the stoic, serious friend, and her the cute, naive, and beautiful friend. Yin and Yang.

Cassie stops at the waterline. I catch up and we stand for a second; the waves wash up the sand and bite at our toes. It's not too cold, but definitely not warm enough for a full-on swim. A few reckless kids are out in the waves, barely any clothing on despite the temperature of the water. Watching them makes me shiver; I'm not one for cold water. A wave barrels into the sand and crawls its way quickly up the beach. Bubbling white foam tickles my ankles and I rise onto my tippy toes, gasping at the sudden cold. Cassie turns and laughs at me, unbothered by the freezing water. I feign being upset at her and she laughs harder.

She leaves me feeling so wonderful and happy, but so disgustingly hopeless at the same time.

Today we've had a relatively quick pace compared to most days. We haven't talked much as we've walked; we don't usually, comfortable in silence only people who completely understand each other can have.

My mind runs circles around me, talking enough for the both of us. The thoughts mostly consist of her. A few trains keep the track interesting, changing my thought pattern a bit, away from her and to my schoolwork and other friends, but they always rejoin the main route back to her. I relish in the fact that at least I can imagine hypothetical situations between Cassie and me—even if that's the only way they can come true. 43

There are a few things I'll never understand about her. While we walk, she picks up pretty seashells and puts them in her pockets. I don't know what she does with them. There are none in her bedroom, her bathroom, or her garden, all the places where ordinary people may put collected seashells.

My eyes dart from piece to piece of shell half-buried in the white sand. What makes the fragments she picks up more special than the others on the beach? The practice becomes mind-numbing for a while until a tiny perlemoen shell, half-hidden in the sand, catches my eye. I stoop down to pick it up. It fits perfectly in the palm of my hand. You don't usually find small ones; it was only alive for a short period of time before somehow, it died. It probably didn't even have time to mature and reproduce. They are an endangered species, however, I can't comprehend how one casualty would impact a whole species.

I tilt my hand and the sun's orange glow makes the underside of the perlemoen shine, rainbows sliding across the gray, pearlescent surface. It reminds me of Cassie's hair. I look up. She's ahead of me, a little further down the beach, heading to the rocks which are now in sight.

I slip the shell in my jeans pocket and speed up.

She stands on top of the rocks looking out at the sea as I catch up. I scramble after her and we make our way along the 'pier' to our spot.

The sea is almost flat, except for a few ripples where waves are brewing to meet the shore. The sky is turning a gradient of pink and orange as the sun begins to sink. Thin clouds reflect the deeper hues of the sky.

I sit down on my seat and the lingering warm breeze brushes my hair away from my face. Cassie comes and sits down next to me, a few silver strands of hair floating around her face. She looks at me, her blue eyes big and content. My stomach drops; I mustn't get caught or I'll forever be captivated, so I turn away.

The sun begins going down and we slowly turn orange. Cassie looks beautiful in the golden light. It turns her hair rose gold and her skin peach.

The perlemoen shell presses against my thigh. I sigh and lean to the side to get it out of my pocket; my rock seat jabs into my butt.

"Here." I hold it out to her.

Her eyes widen a bit and she takes it.

"It's pretty!" She turns it in her hands.

"I thought you'd like it."

I watch the sun begin to greet the horizon after its day in the sky. I wonder what it tells the deep blue waves as we sleep: 'There's this girl with moonshine hair and blue eyes and a boy who follows her footsteps in the sand.'

"We might need to get back soon..." I say, turning to look at her.

She leans back looking up at the sky, legs crossed and arms back supporting her. Her silver hair sways as she moves her head and the warm breeze takes its thick fingers through the ends of it. My eyes trace her jawline and look over her side profile; everything about her is perfectly proportioned. I'm not breathing. I rake my eyes away and back onto the weathered, brown rocks.

"The stars are coming out," she says, unaware of my inability to function.

"Yup," I reply softly. "They look like pinpricks in an orange blanket."

"Oh, look at you, so romantic!" she teases and nudges my shoulder. It pulls a smile out of me.

"Right, well, I'm going to begin my walk back as I know you'll shortly catch up to me."

I stand up and climb onto the rock behind her that shelters us from days of harsh wind. From here I can see her little silver head looking out at the deep orange sea. I know her eyes would reflect it, becoming just as orange.

As I turn to make my way down to the sand, I look out to where the rocks continue further down around the coast. In a dry, flat cove in the sepia stone, hundreds of seashells are laid out in patterns. They circle each other, evenly spaced into a magical phenomenon. So, that's where Cassie's shells go.

Jenna M Olivier

Jenna is a 19 year old, neurodivergent, artist from South Africa. She loves writing and fine art as forms of expression. Her favorite Dinosaur is the “Atopodentatus” and she loves cats (She has 3), plants and the colour pink. You can follow her artistic journey @_JustJensArt_ on Instagram.

Editor's Note

As we advance from Issue II and dive into Issue III, I cannot stress how proud I am of how far The Odyssey Youth Literary Magazine has come. Talented teenagers from all over the world have submitted their powerful, emotion-evoking writing to us, entrusting us to give them the credit and attention they deserve. I am proud to say that with Issue II, we have been able to put the spotlight on so many amazing teen writers! They deserve so much love and praise.

However, we cannot forget our wonderful readers. Without them, the teen writers that are a part of this issue wouldn't get the viewership that they deserve.

Everyone, don't forget to give a big round of applause to our team! They work so hard during each issue of our magazine to make The Odyssey Youth Literary Magazine the wonderful magazine it is.

Without further ado, let us move on from this journey with nothing but fond memories. Stay tuned, and we can't wait for you to roam side-by-side with us on future explorations!

Best Regards

Ralia Farah

Founder, Editor-in-Chief



We have concluded this
Journey

Make sure to keep your eye out for our next roam!