



ISD IN LOVE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF WRITING FROM ISD

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ISD in Love: An Anthology of Writing from ISD



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Editors' notes

The work of our students and community members has been reproduced largely un-edited, except for some examples of profanity, which have been removed, due to the age of our readers. Some entries have been shortened and others have been lightly edited.

Many thanks to Anna Gsanger and Patrick Glynn from the ISD Communications and Marketing Department for their help in creating PR for the Writing Challenge, reproducing entries online and around the school, and for producing this book.

ISD Reads & Writes 2020!
Senior School 2020 Writing Challenge
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Foreword

What is love? Our *International School of Düsseldorf 2020 Writing Challenge* looked at this thorny question, one that has been the focus of writers and poets for centuries. We asked entrants to write in English with a limit of 1000 words, giving us their response in any form they chose. Students, staff, and community responded in a typically diverse ISD way. We read poems and haikus, fiction, non-fiction and commentaries, with three quarters of entries from students and the rest from ISD staff and community members. We had humour, psychological thrillers, appreciation of the natural world, and a heartfelt plea that there be *no more love poems!*

A few words on the purpose of this writing challenge. This was not a writing competition. There are no winners, no losers, and no runners up. Excerpts from many entries have already been showcased during *ISD Reads and Writes 2020!*, either on school TV screens, on posters, or in the electronic/paper version of the compendium that you are now reading.

Everyone was invited to enter, no matter how young or old, no matter how good their English is, and no matter what their role is at school. And we even had some entries from our friends in the Elementary School. What you are now about to read matches our thinking on the role of creative writing. Because when we read and write together, we learn and grow together.

Thank you to all of the entrants. Bravery comes in many forms. One of them is publishing your own creative writing. Happy Reading and remember: be strong like a lion!

Stuart Crouch & Claire Schwarting, Editors



David - Community

Haiku

flickering dust lights -
are they falling, rising or
just realizing?

Simone - Student

Only a fool can fall in love

A young boy was in love with this gorgeous girl called Amalia, he just couldn't make her fall in love like he wanted. The girl was really pretty and really smart but no one is perfect in fact she was really mean to people that she did not like. One day after school the boy asked her out like a little date or getting a nice ice cream but the girl made fun of the boy and said that he had no chance with her. The boy was hurt and his heart was in a million pieces after that chat that he had with her. The boy was done with her and did not want to have any relationship with her ever again. After a few years the girl changed, she started to be more open to people and she really wanted to go back in the past and know the boy better. In the hall of the school the girl runs to the boy and promises that she is never going to hurt him again and be a nice and loyal girlfriend, but the boy did not forget what she did to him so he said "only a fool will go back to a girl that hurt his feelings". The girl was really depressed and started to cry so the boy says, "and I'm one of those fools... "



Stoyan - Student

Poem

I will fight for our love,
I'll be the knight to battle for our love,
Everyday I fall under your spell
Your magical charm,
Your eyes glitter like stars,
Your lips as soft as pillow,
Your hair long and shining,
Your charms attract me,
It makes me think you're a magnet,
I truly think you are a rose
With thorns, your beauty a rose,
And your honest lips a thorn,
You truly are the queen of my heart.



Amelia - Student

A child's First True Love

The boy, no more than ten, is an adult.

This is what he tells himself tonight as he lays down in his neat little bed.

Staring at the ceiling, wringing his hands,

She gently kisses him goodnight and he is alone with the thoughts in his head.

Turning on his side, the boy faces the pale outline of the creaky closet door.

Behind it lays his unforgotten friend,

Alone in the dark without the warm embrace of a child.

But the boy is ten now and can no longer pretend.

The years of shared adventures, gone with the turning of the years.

The first true friend the boy knew.

“Ten year olds are too big for teddy bears”,

“That’s not what you do.”

But the boy’s heart ached.

His bear is special, a real living breathing being possessing a soul.

Much like the connection of a newborn and its mother at birth,

The boy and his bear together are whole.



Grinding his teeth, the boy makes up his mind.
With shaky limbs, he sits up and crawls out from
underneath the bed sheets.
Swinging his feet over, they lay a foot above the cold
carpet.
Hesitating, he listens and counts his heartbeats.

One, two, three, a dozen more.
He is afraid.
The boy tells himself "I am an adult, I don't fear the dark."
But the eerie emptiness chills his bones as it surrounds
him and refuses to fade.

Placing his foot on the floor, the boy gathers his courage.
His bear is alone in the dark.
Whatever jitters the boy feels, the bear also feels, alone
and unsafe, trapped in the closet.
Shredding his trepidation, the boy knows he must
embark.

Putting your affection over your fear.
That's what you do for those you love.
You take up the challenge, the barrier suppressing you
from being with those you care for,
And you turn against it and rise above.

Forgetting the taunts, forgetting the teases.
Pushing past the darkness and gloom,
The boy eases into the closet,
Into the prison room.



With quick eyes he finds his friend.

Picking the bear up gently, he presses it against his warm chest.

Squeezing tight, the boy lets the bear know that he is sorry for leaving.

“You must have been so scared. But you’re safe now, you can rest.”

Leaping back into bed, the boy snuggles against the bear.

Pushing the fur away from its eyes, he kisses it gently on the nose.

A warm feeling fills the boy, the feeling of love.

As the teddy bear and his child drift off to sleep, the story comes to a close.

The boy, no more than ten, is not an adult.

He is scared of the dark and he needs his friend.

But this is what he does and this is what children do,

They cherish their special stuffed animal who first taught them to love, in the end.



Caedan - Student

My one and only

I dashed toward you with all I had
It took me so long to get you
The trip was, oh so bad,
I run and run as fast as I can
Just to see the full bar expand....
My screen lit up and my heart as well
It was so glorious, so shiny, so swell
I had no regrets for it was my iPad
My one and only, my favorite iPad
Probably because it was my one and only I ever had
Now we are together all the time
My one and only iPad divine

Sophia - Student

Every time

Striking turquoise eyes
Our fingers brush, my heart stops.
You get me every time.



Mia - Student

Stranger

It was cold. Mid December, and cold. The wind shook the trees in the night's darkness, the icy frost hanging onto any surface that so dared to keep itself exposed. The old and crooked lamp post shone a dull, flickering light through the grey fog and the street was empty. The leaves battling gusts of frozen winds were loud against the still night. The moon bright against the darkness.

It was perfect. The perfect time to see my love. My *love*.

My ears started to sting. My nose turned a deep red. Even through my thick jacket and woolen hoodie the cold shook my body, the hairs on my arms standing upright.

As I stepped out from under the bus station, a strong gust of wind hit my face. I pulled my black hoodie over my head, zipped up my cargo jacket, and closed my eyes. The smell of rain circled the air.

It's time, I told myself. Time to see her again.

I started walking down the street. A brown leaf crunched underneath my shoe. A cat jumped from an old, rusty car and ran behind a pile of black garbage bags, and somewhere in the distance a dog let out a powerful bark. But my eyes were only focused on one thing. House 23.



Silvia

'Can or bottle?' I asked, staring into the dimly lit fridge. 'Bottle' replied a deep voice behind me. The bottles clinked as I lifted them from the battered shelf and closed the fridge door. The handle had broken off some years ago, and the humming noise it made was almost unbearable. But it did the job.

'Here', I said, and handed him his beer. 'Don't have a bottle opener though. But you can use the side of the table. Or your teeth, if you know how to do that.' 'Of course I do. Mama taught me how when I was 15. Haven't forgotten it since.' And with that, he wrapped his lips around the top, applied pressure with his teeth, and listened to the 'pop' as the lid sprung open. Quickly he took a sip, and let out a sigh of satisfaction as he lifted his feet and rested them on the old and scratched coffee table.

I hated that table, the way the paint was practically gone on one side, and how the legs only barely held on. But then again I hated much of the house. Everything was old, given to me by some deceased relative or picked up for a buck or two at a random garage sale.

'How was work?' I asked as I stared out of the small window in front of me. Outside a tree swayed in the cold wind, and a lightpost drew the shadow of a garbage bin onto the cracked sidewalk.



'Nothing special. Mixed some more cement and laid some more bricks. Apparently Marcus' wife wants a divorce. I think he cheated on her or something.' His beer bottle was empty now, and as he got up, the sofa creaked.

'Really? I knew her, Bethany I think her name was. Anyway, she didn't deserve that. That's a really gross thing to do.'

'I guess so.' Was his response as he shuffled to the door. He put the empty bottle down onto the small hutch to his right, grabbed his old and scruffy jacket and reached for the door handle. 'Night'.

'Good night' I replied with a heavy sigh. I heard the door close. Then everything was quiet.

Stranger

She was watching TV. The bright lights from the screen illuminated her tired face like the moonlight in an otherwise dark night sky. Her hair was tied atop her head in a messy bun and dark circles hung below her eyes. She often looked like this on a Friday night, shoving popcorn into her mouth as she listened to the boring voice of the 10 O'clock game show moderator. And she always looked especially tired after that good-for-nothing jerk left. I hated that piece of trash with every fibre of my being, the way he drinks beer with her and talks to her, as if he owns her or something. She's not his. She's mine. She always has been and always will be mine. And one day, he will regret ever having said hello to her. That pile of garbage.



Rustling leaves pulled me out of my thoughts. As I looked up from between them I could feel the cold air on my cheek, the wind whistling as it raced by. The moon had moved since I came, and the light from the streetlamp had grown dimmer. The only sound I could hear was my own breathing, the calm and steady rising and falling of my chest. It was peaceful, the sort of calm and tranquility you need to think. To plan what you are going to do next.

She stood up. The TV was off, and through the scratched glass window I could see that she had her phone lifted to her ear. It seemed as though she was talking frantically, clearly filled with anger and annoyance. Her left hand waved in the air as she spoke, her eyes wide with frustration. She kicked the sofa a few times and, for a moment, it looked as though she wanted to throw her phone across the room. Her ears turned a pinkish red and the veins in her neck bulged out, their deep blue and green ready to explode.

Silvia

'I told you already! I'll give you the money next week! It's payday then!' Blood rushed through me as I yelled, my head thumping in fury and anger like the steady beat of a drum. I could feel the damp sweat building up as I dug my fingers into the palm of my hand, my skin barely keeping my nails from piercing through. I could feel my throat burn with every word that I threw out of my lips and my chest started to ache.



'You'd better give us the goddamn money tomorrow! That or you're going to be in some deep trouble. And you don't want to mess with me, you know that.' His voice rang through the phone like the siren of a distant police van and his every word hung in the darkness of the room.

'We had a deal! Next week! I can't by tomorrow, there's no way!'

'And whose problem is that?'

I clenched my jaw, and squeezed my eyes shut as I tried to contain the glowing fire burning within me. My hand was wrapped against the phone as though it were a slipping child and my knuckles turned a milky white. Spinning around in fury I opened my mouth to yell when my heart dropped to my knees. A wave of panic flooded my body, my arms and legs frozen, unable to move. I could feel my heart begin to race and the fear felt as though it were choking me. A stranger was standing outside my window, staring at me.

Stranger

We made eye contact. She looked like she'd seen a ghost.



Shriya - Student

Butterfly

You make my heart flutter
Each time you smile
My heart melts like warm butter
When you stand close a while
I never knew that I could feel this way
You make me laugh when I want to cry
You lift me from the ground, put me high in the air
You make me feel like a butterfly

Lost and stray, outside my cocoon,
I felt out of place
Then my fear
Began to disappear,
When among the crowd I saw your face
I never thought I'd grow my wings
I thought they were just a lie
But now wings spread, across the horizon
Uncatchable, as I fly

On rainy days you appear like my sunshine
You make me want you to be mine
I wish moments with you lasted forever
I wish we spent our life together
I never thought I'd be here with you
Now there's no place I'd rather be than by your side
Flying high in the warm summer air
Me and you, two butterflies...



Anna - Student

Love's Powers

The love of the world is not enough to describe since it is everywhere. There is no person who does not love anything. It is natural for love to be around since you are always loved by someone and you always love someone. It does not matter if it is a tree, an animal or if it's a person ♥ ♥ ♥. Humans cannot live without love since then you would be depressed but still find love. Love is unexplainable- but it is so easy to understand.

Annelisa - Student

What is love to you?

What is love to you?
Deception and duplicity,
Ownership and property?
Love is not about control
and love is not conditional
It's not to ignore me
Then to tell me you adore me
Love is not a scorecard
To take while I wait
Just to end up with a sore heart
It's not half effort or dishonesty
Making excuses



That is not a real apology
Is this love to you?
Do you think it's guaranteed?
Because you can't forget to water
Once you plant a seed
Whatever love is to you
Certainly is not
What love is to me.

Daya - Community

Love: an eternal flame

the fire that burns in me
seeks love
the seed of the creation
disbursed on the fertile fields of the blue Earth
filled with filth and hate,
unmasked.

From it springs forth the expression of grief and tears,
strange resonances and little knots of bonds:
that shape and rocks its way to my burning heart,
where it settles with ferocious energy,
energy enough to consume all the dirt and hate
within and without.

then Time disintegrates into bits of drums,
beating the subconscious,
every beat reverberating with memories:
little did I know that love grows not,
without pain.



Minho - Student

Control

A society is formed by a group of humans. Almost every human has emotions. These emotions can be a positive reaction such as joy and relief, but they can also be negative reactions such as anger and hate. Emotions affect how a human behaves. If one cannot control their emotions, conflict starts. It can be as minor as an argument, or it can be a deadly war, killing millions upon millions of other humans. Emotions are a necessity in a human's life, but it comes with consequences. The world, afraid of these consequences, used genetic engineering to erase emotions from everyone. Now society is still formed by a group of humans, but now each and every one of them live in a perfectly controlled world with no unpredictability. Some might say removing emotions are not morally correct, but nobody will say anything now because the term moral does not exist anymore.

The world seems to be holding itself back. Life is the same all the time, so predictable and controlled. The wake is at 7 am. Everybody gets up so perfectly synchronized, as if they have rehearsed it a million times. Laziness or tiredness does not exist anymore. As I struggle to get out of bed, others are already done with breakfast. Only one pill is needed to fulfill the nutrients one's body needs for breakfast. It is effective and takes away the aspect of greed and unhealthiness.



The conversations and sharing of love between families during meals are forgotten. After a quick change of clothes, every family member gets into their own pod. The pod is a transportation device that travels through pipes that connect the different areas an individual needs to go in their daily routine. At school, teachers do not exist anymore as they were deemed inferior to AI and other computing devices. Now a robot with simulated emotions teaches us. Sometimes I think that robots have more emotions and life in them than Humans do. Leisure periods like breaktime are long gone as the will to play and rest does not exist within children. Their lively and curious behavior is now replaced by the monotone answers and presentations.

As for me, I'm different. I find it hard to ignore my emotions from time to time. I feel bored and tired of the same routine. Unpredictability is what makes each life interesting and unique. But without that, there are no risks taken, no discoveries made, and we are just sitting still, afraid of change. I do not feel all my emotions. I have trouble understanding complicated emotions like jealousy, and some emotions I do not know how to describe or what to call them. I see snapshots of what life was like before the emotion control during my dreams. Laughing families and friends. They are not all positive either. I see fights, people with depression, deaths, and loss. I am glad we don't have negativity and risks in the present world, but I still think to myself sometimes, was the sacrifice worth it?



I did not forget about the dream when I woke up. Most of the time, the dream itself was not very clear in my memories, but this one felt like I experienced it myself. I knew there was more to this emotion than that one letter. The following night, I was eager to enter my dreams. This time I was outside, in a park. The air had a slight warmth to it, but the occasional cold breeze was refreshing. I walked around the mossy stone steps of the park until I stood in front of two people holding each other's hands on a bench. One was male, and the other female. They were talking and laughing from time to time. The male started to quieten down, and he seemed a little nervous about something. He suddenly got off the bench, got on one knee, and held out a small, opened blue box. The female let out a small gasp, and the male said something in a quiet voice. The female's eyes started to glisten and she let out a raspy 'yes'. The male reached inside the blue box and pulled out a shiny object which he inserted in the female's finger. They then pulled each other in a tight embrace while crying. I was shocked at the sudden turn of events, but I realised that they were smiling. Then the 2 words appeared right as I woke up from the dream. V and E.

I woke up from my dream, and I had a refreshing feeling within me. I always felt glad when I discovered a new emotion, but this one felt different. It was the first time I was longing for something this much.



I wanted love in my life. It seemed so beautiful that I was almost enraged they had taken away emotions and feelings from us. But I remembered that they had not completely taken it away from us. I still had the memory of love. I was going to be the one who brings back all the emotions and feelings that make up who we are.

Lily - Student

Playing 'Sive'

The rain poured down as a girl ran for the cover of the bus stop. She splashed through puddles and soaked her shoes. Her raincoat had a broken zipper and was flapping open, letting the rain in. Her backpack sagged and got heavier with every stride. The bus shelter was empty except for a man with a briefcase and a newspaper. He sat on the bench, briefcase between his knees and the newspaper covering his face. She sat down beside the man and put her soaking backpack under the seat. She looked at the bus schedule. It was her first day of school and she was already late.

"School starts at 8" she mumbled to herself, wringing out her jacket, "and it's... 7:45" she exclaimed checking her watch, startling the man sitting beside her. "Just great!" she mumbled.

The man jumped what looked like a foot in the air. He folded his newspaper and stood up, picked up his briefcase and stepped on the bus that had just arrived. A woman with a large handbag got off the bus and looked at the girl with great disgust.



She stuck her head up, turned on her heel and stalked off, handbag swinging madly in her hand. Four minutes later a bus came along and stopped before the nearly asleep girl. The bus driver honked the horn and she awoke, heart thumping madly. She picked up her backpack and jumped on the bus. She gave the driver her ticket and smiled. He snatched the ticket from her and put it in the ticket machine. It beeped green. He pulled it out and handed it back to her. She took it and put it in her pocket. She then hoisted her bag on her back and went down the bus to find a seat.

About 20 minutes later they arrived at her stop. She grabbed her bag and made a dash for the door. She jumped off the bus as the door closed behind her. She set off down the street to find the school. It shouldn't be too hard to find, she thought, as she half ran down the road. I mean, it must be pretty big.

Just as she was rounding the corner, she saw it. The massive, white and gold building of St. Brigid's Academy.

Inside was just as amazing as outside. The massive double doors were made out of mahogany wood and had gold doorknobs. The guard had let her in and she was on her way to the principal's office. The entrance hall was white and the staircase glistened in the light that seemed to be coming from the skylights. You couldn't hear the rain on the roof and the windows brought in bright light which didn't match the fact that the sky outside was grey and overcast.



The door to the principal's office was made of the same wood as the front door, mahogany. Even the classroom doors were mahogany, their gold doorknobs glistening in the bright light. The guard knocked on the door three times and it opened. Inside there was a desk with an empty swivel chair behind it. The guard stepped aside and she entered the small study. It seemed to be empty. A small man came out from behind the door and closed it firmly, rattling the pictures on the walls. He shuffled over to the desk and opened a filing cabinet.

“Name” he barked not looking up from the filing cabinet. “Niamh Sullivan” she replied, taken aback. “Talent” he barked again, still not looking up. “Acting” she replied. His hand went into the filing cabinet and came out again holding a folder. The words “Niamh Sullivan” were printed in gold across it. He opened it and took out a piece of paper. “Your schedule” he barked again thrusting it across the table into her arms, “don’t lose it”. He took out another piece of paper and handed it to her. It was a lot smaller but had the same gold print. The number “337624” was plastered across it. “Locker number” he grunted, shoving the file back in the filing cabinet.

The first class of the day was maths, followed by Theatre. The theatre class was putting on a show for the students, teachers and parents. The play they had picked was called “Sive” by John B Keane.



The auditions would be next week and only the best get in. They had played some improv games and she realised that most of the class were very good at acting.

The next few days were hard for the members of the theatre class. Many people gave not-so-friendly looks to each other on the way to class, and the theatre was always full of students practising their pieces. Niamh was going for “Sive”, but so were many other girls in the theatre class. She practised every day, at breakfast, lunch, dinner and even on the bus. And finally, the day came.

When second-period came around everyone in the theatre class was trembling. Niamh loved acting and she knew if she didn’t get in, she would still try each time the opportunity came around. There were many more experienced actors in the theatre class. But she could only hope she got the part. She was fifth to audition and it was nerve-racking waiting for her turn.

Soon it was her turn. She nervously clambered the steps up to the stage and stood in the middle.

“Well,” said the drama teacher, Ms Lewis, “Who do you want to be?”

“I would like the role of Sive please” she replied

“Ok, you may start”, she nodded at Niamh and wrote down “Sive”.

Niamh took a deep breath and started. “Gran, all I know about my mother, is she died when I was a baby...”



A week later the cast list came out. She stood in front of the notice-board and nervously scanned it. Right beside "Sive" was "Niamh Sullivan". She had gotten the part.

Krista - Community

Unpacking Memories

One day in April we sit on the floor
Surrounded by blankets, fresh sheets, and new towels
And we coo to the little one watching it all
As we pack it away, pack it away.

Snippets of curls and pearls of teeth,
Raggedy tigers who slept in small arms,
We save all the treasures that mark that sweet time
And we pack it away, pack it away.

Each day in June we fill up more bins
With trophies and ribbons and school awards,
We load up past scrapbooks with photos so dear
And we pack it away, pack it away.

Then one day in August we sit on the floor
Surrounded by blankets, fresh sheets, and new towels
And we roll up a piece of our heart in each one
As we pack it away, pack it away.



The handoff begins and we empty the car,
Passing boxes to helpers who've done this before
We refold the shirts and we make up the bed
Yes, we pack it away, pack it away.

But it's over too soon, with no more left to fix.
And the lump in our chest makes it hard to find words.
We've got too much to say but no time left to speak...

And then wide eyes look up with that brightness of youth
Strong arms pull us in for a final big hug
And we hear those sweet words whisper,
"I love you, Mom."

And we pack that away
And we smile.

Moksha - Student

Is it so wrong for me to want to save you?

Hollow eyes stared back at me. Why did they look so dead? Those beautiful blue eyes, shining blue, like a crystalized lake on a bright summer day. Now they were grey, dull and void of any emotion. There was no sparkle, no shine. Only a perished look. Thick tears started rolling down my face as I stared at her. Looking closely, I could now see all her imperfections. How her cheeks seemed too hollow, her cheekbones prominent as her skin stretched over them, like it was struggling to stay in one piece, as if it would tear at any moment.



Her lips cracked, parched, seeming as if it was begging for water to wash over them. When did it all change? When did this jubilant, radiating creature, turn lifeless? Almost as if she would disintegrate any second. Why didn't I notice?

I struggled to hold in my sobs, not wanting to show more weakness than I had already. Her bony hand rose and started caressing my face like she was trying to will the tears away, trying to make them stop, but they couldn't.

A doctor came in, stopping curtly at the door as to not ruin the moment. This was the first time she moved in weeks. Every day I sat there, on the uncomfortable, plastic chair, pleading that she would move even a muscle. The caressing paused before the hand lowered down and the doctor finally moved to continue the checkup.

Anorexia they said. She wasn't eating. There weren't enough nutrients in her body for her heart to keep functioning. I broke down that day, the first of many times, my face red and blotchy the next day. How I didn't notice haunted me for days and weeks, it still does. I should have noticed, I should have noticed how she was disappearing, almost like she was fading, but still here with me.

There was only one option for her to heal, to save her. Rehabilitation. A foreign word that I heard once or twice in my life.



If I wanted her to recover, then she would have to go for months, maybe a year. She would be gone, away from me. I didn't want that, but I agreed. I wanted her back. I want to see her glow, make her happy with herself. I want to see her eyes shine back to that beautiful blue instead of this lifeless grey.

I watched the doctor flit around, asking questions, which she would respond with a small shake of her head, and checking her vitals. I hated it, the sympathetic look on the doctor's face. I don't want pity. I want help for her. I want her to be healthy again.

One day, two days passed. With small progression every day. She could sit up and talk. Barely though. It was a mere whisper, used usually to ask for water. The same doctor walked in, this time bearing news. They were going to tell her about rehab. She wouldn't like it. I know she wouldn't, but was needed, severely.

As the doctor spoke, the phrases seemed to blur together. All I could see was her reaction. Her face. The slight widening of her eyes and the shake of her head. The tears starting to slowly stream down her face, and the distress evident. That's when the thrashing started. Her body twisting and turning, trying to get free from the chains that held her from taking the IV out.

Half an hour later, she calmed down. Her breathing heavy, her face wet with the heavy tears still dripping down. She looked at me, despair and betrayal visible on her face.



“You agreed to this?” she muttered. Her voice seemingly small but heavy with emotion. I nodded. I couldn’t speak. The sobs were caught in my throat, wanting release.

“I want you back. I want you to be healthy. I want you to be happy.” I croaked out, my voice cracking. She shook her head, the tears coming down stronger.

“Why?! If you want me to be happy let me out of this place and don’t let me go there. Let me be! I was so close, so please, if you want me to be happy let me out of here! For god sake please! Please let me continue because that’s the only thing that helps!” She’s screaming, her voice laced hurt, betrayal and thick with tears.

“Is it so wrong for me to want to save you?! Is it so wrong for me to want you to be healthy?!!” I shout, my voice cracking at every second word. We are both crying heavily, staring at each other, willing the other one to talk. Silently, we clutch at each other, embracing tightly.

“I’m sorry. I just want you to be healthy. I want you to be happy. So please, go for me, I’ll be waiting at home for you. I’ll visit once I can.” My voice now a quiet whisper, embedded with understanding. After a moment of hesitation, she nods. I look at her, peppering her face with kisses, muttering ‘I love you’.



Five days later, she is on her way to rehab, with a suitcase in hand. Maybe it will all be alright. Maybe I'll get her back.

Nathan - Student

The angel of love

Every year from above, the dove
Called love comes down.
She comes into town
With a white gown
and goes from door to door.

Call her Raguél or Aphrodite
Eros or Cupid are other names
She might even be God almighty.
But wherever she goes the hearts go up in flames.

She comes to your door and asks
Whether you are willing or not
To love is your task
And refuse you cannot.

So there I lay stranded,
In my own soul
My heart on a stroll
Just cause she commanded.

And I guess
it is just is what it is.



Nicolas - Student

It is complicated

So I go to a school and there is a writing competition about LOVE. I am 11 so how on earth do I know what love is? You see it in the movies and I love my family but how do I know? I like soccer and food but is that the same as love. So I Googled it and you know what the top result was. A Netflix show made it 2016. So I am still stumped. They think I know what love is - maybe the older kids do. What do I do? I kept scrolling and I clicked on Wikipedia - it said the following:

“Love encompasses a range of strong and positive emotional and mental states”

What does encompasses even mean? Someone, please help me. And I looked that up too it said encompasses means to enclose. Then how do people express their love if it is enclosed?

Let's go back to the quote so love is “emotional and mental states”. That means when you are in love you are crazy. Adults are crazy to fall in love. But it also says strong and positive so you are super crazy and it is a good type of crazy. WHAT IS GOING ON?!



Kids say it too but they say they love each other but the kids don't know what they are getting into. If you are reading this, don't fall in the trap of love. It's dangerous, NOT A JOKE. You would think I am kidding but trust me, I'm not. In conclusion, Love is Complicated... AND Super CRAZY.

Tara - Student

Obsession

People always seem to mention the beauty of love. The harmony between two people that is everlasting. When we read about love, a cacophony of heavenly adjectives are thrown at us that we can't help but believe are all true. That one day we might experience this, or it is used to blind us from reality if we are already supposedly in love with someone. Though rarely does someone notice what lies beneath this thin veil of lies. Nothing is forever. The roses he gives you will wilt, that marvellous promise ring around your swelling finger will rust when you are under the ground. But you wouldn't admit that, right? You ignored the pain while bragging about it to your friends.

I'm here to shine some truth on the matter. I want to talk about the corruption, the fear and the obsession that love can make someone feel. Like an addiction, a one-sided game. You keep repeating the same patterns over and over again, for what? To overflow with oxytocin, bathe in lust and hunger for those moments where you are surrounded by the warm waters of another person's touch.



Dependency on love is worse than any narcotic. Why? Because drugs can't tell you how much you mean to them.

Imagine your whole world being stripped away from you before your very eyes. Watch how your thoughts are bombarded with images of a single person. You can not concentrate on anything but what they said to you. Did you hear a negative undertone when you two last spoke? But what could you possibly have done wrong? What did I do wrong? There is only one form of escape from this, and you know it. I know it.

There was one last thing I asked myself. It might come as a surprise that this was the last thought that came into my mind. I wondered, why was I not scared? Why was I not afraid of what was about to happen? Perhaps because I already knew from the very start, the very second our eyes locked, that our end would look like this.

Ze Xian - Student

April Rift

The grass is craving for rain,
Flowers look forward to the sun,
The Earth is waiting for a comet,
I steal a glance at you.

Droplets moisten the loneliness of grass,
The sun warms the flowers,



The comet kisses the earth,
I admire you from a distance.

The grass receives rain dew,
Flowers bless the sun,
The Earth says goodbye to the comet,
I look at you silently.

The grass needs water,
The flowers needs sun,
The earth needs happiness,
I give myself to you.

Matthieu - Student

Why don't we have high ambitions?

The lives we carry out are full of opportunities, though we like to be mediocre and stay in our comfort zone. Let's admit it, we like it. We do not like things which we are not used to doing, and our instinct passively pulls us back with us just accepting it.

What about the opportunities we left behind? Why did I not do that?

Well yes, these are the questions we will ask ourselves when we retire if we do not make an immediate change to our daily routines. But why? It is simply because we choose to not accept the work abnormal, and have an instant rejection towards things we do not like.



Take a minute to think about the opportunities you missed, and the adventures you could have been on. But just because you have said the famous “no” so many times, you are now used to it. Pulling back has now become normal, and it should never be. Those life-changing moments you missed because you thought you were not good enough. On the other hand, think about the person who did that “thing” and reflect on why you said no. What did he/she have more than you? Why did I say no?

When we were young we were told about reflecting in school, but paid little attention to it. The reality is that reflecting on your daily lives and choices helps a person be better and more self-conscious about the world around them. This does not only help their awareness, but also constantly make a person reflect on what they could do better in order to not commit the same mistake once again.

Trust me, everyone makes mistakes. That is why we have to learn to accept those mistakes and sometimes accept that we are not perfect. We will never be. Everybody has their own flaws. The fact is that many people cannot accept failure, and there is the real mistake. Not coping with our own conscience. We think that we did the right thing, but from the feedback we received we clearly did not.



The real life-lesson which everybody should start to understand, is that when one makes a mistake it shows that they really tried. Not that we are bad, but rather have tried our best. Sports and socialisation with other people we feel comfortable with helps with our self-esteem as they make us feel valuable, worth something, and that we are not wasted.

Think twice before you say “no” and have a valid reason to say that, because that one “no” could be your only chance. Second chances are for children, and in life we have to learn to live with what we have. Time flies by very quickly.

Lauren - Community

Two Babies

Two babies were born
Fate dividing nature's love
Special little fingers, matching little toes
Mother's exhausted but can't get enough

First it's matching diapers
Tiny socks on tiny feet
Two new baby beauties
Sprawled on the double-crib's soft sheet

Both twins should be growing,
But one seems to refuse



Worried doctors look her over
This one won't be tying her shoes

Scared parents wring their hands
Games become less fun to play
Brand new medicines arrive
No more carefree holidays

Childhood marches on
As the family tries to cope
Everyone grows up faster
But never gives up hope

The special twin is the centerpiece
Of the family's daily rituals
Trying to find some semblance of normal
Huddled together for late-night vigils

Struggling to accept what's been given
My hardest task of all
Hoping that someday Rhiannon will get better
Hoping for a sign of change, even small

Off I go while she stays back home
Determined to live a life without regret
Determined to live a life for two
Failing, failing, failing again - why can't I get it yet?



Two babies were born
Fate dividing nature's love
Living lives forever traveling in opposite directions
Always fighting what cannot be undone.

Peter - Community

Your brittle happiness

It's back again
That unwelcome guest
Creeping into the room
Your brittle happiness
Rendered shameful and guilt ridden by love's loss

Who invited it back?
How dare they
What moment of thoughtless joy brought it here?
To cast shame and guilt on you for feeling
just for a moment
what you once took for granted

You don't deserve this.

May your brittle happiness grow strong
Let its sides bend and no longer shatter when noticed
Casting a thousand shards to rain down on you

May its sharp edges that cut and wound
as it crashes back into your life
Grow smooth. Bruising at worse



May it grow robust
Resisting sustained attention
Not crushed under feelings that only hurt

May your happiness grow strong

May you welcome it again as a friend and confidant

You do deserve this.

Harrison - Student

Soliloquy of Emily Dickinson

Rationale

This creative piece of writing is based on the TV series, Dickinson. The show follows the life of the famous poet Emily Dickinson who lived from 1830 to 1886. From the very first episode, it is apparent that each has to do with the theme of one of her many poems. Certain episodes align with the poem very closely (eg. the storyline of the episode relates almost directly to what is being said in her poem), however in others the general theme and tone of the poem are what is explored throughout the episode.

As done in the show, I chose a poem Emily had written and told a story by exploring the general theme found within the poem. I chose the poem Besides the Autumn poets sing and realized very soon one of the recurring themes throughout the poem was a strong sensation of being trapped.



This includes being trapped between society's expectations and her passion as well as in the complicated relationship she has with her parents, as her father's and her mother's expectations of her differed from both each other's as well as her own. A soliloquy being the act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when one is alone felt appropriate to the feeling of being trapped however I decided for Emily to keep these thoughts in her head, to represent how truly trapped she was. This piece of writing would have been kept private, for Emily would have never let anyone discover her undying love for Sue.

Besides the Autumn poets sing

*Besides the Autumn poets sing,
A few prosaic days
A little this side of the snow
And that side of the Haze -*

*A few incisive mornings -
A few Ascetic eyes -
Gone - Mr Bryant's "Golden Rod" -
And Mr Thomson's "sheaves."*

*Still, is the bustle in the brook -
Sealed are the spicy valves -
Mesmeric fingers softly touch
The eyes of many Elves*

*Perhaps a squirrel may remain -
My sentiments to share -
Grant me, Oh Lord, a sunny mind -
Thy windy will to bear!*

Soliloquy of Emily Dickinson

"She hasn't left her room for four days! Four days Edward! God only knows what she's doing in there. Not only have I been lacking much needed help in the kitchen, but I have been made to look like an idiot as well. The boy from across the road was meant to come by yesterday and inspect her but she wouldn't even unlock her door. Edward, this is serious! What will she do if no one wishes to marry her?"



The deafening shrieks from my mother and stern shouts from my father woke me that Saturday morning. The calm, soothing sound of the rainfall smacking my window had not managed to drown them out this time.

I had promised myself years ago I would never marry or have children as this would only inhibit my chance of one day becoming a famous, published poet. I love poetry; so much so that I often hide in my room for hours and write, something I would never have time for nor be allowed to do if I were a wife and mother.

My mother refuses to even consider the possibility of me living my life, unmarried, as a poet, as she persistently recounts what a spectacular housewife she has been to my father. She believes the best quality a woman can have is the ability to keep the house clean, her family fed and her husband content.

My father's views differ slightly. Although he still wishes to see me married, he disapproves of me marrying just anyone, unlike my mother. Although he hopes more than anything, never to read one of my poems in a published article, he does appreciate my pieces of writing and recognizes my talent as a writer all the same. He understands I have more to offer than simply my ability to cook, clean and have children.



Although he and I share an appreciation for certain educational pieces of literature, his disapproval of my desire to one day publish my poems often leads to heated arguments at the dinner table, leaving me storming off to bed, too furious to sleep.

As a result of not fulfilling my father's nor my mother's expectations, I very often feel trapped, trapped between what society expects from me and what I expect of myself, trapped living a privileged life but being confined to only a fraction of its benefits.

The sudden pounding on my door startled me. I knew my parents were both downstairs arguing, my sister Lavinia was most certainly out fetching the water by now and my brother Austin would never visit me in my room, regardless of how many days I remained hidden. I swung my door open, without hesitation, for I knew it could not be a member of my family, to find Sue. Sue! My love. My life. My best friend. Austin's soon-to-be wife...

We were just five when I first met Sue. I knew she would have a special place in my heart for years to come from the very first day we spent together. I loved her more than a best friend would love another, I adored her. Over the years I have been blessed to be able to watch her grow into the most beautiful, intelligent, caring young woman I know.



Regardless of how upset I was with my mother, often after having either been forced to work in the kitchen for hours or sit through an interrogation with a possible soon-to-be husband, Sue always brightened my day. This never ceased to amaze me for if either of us had a right to complain about our lives, it was Sue. Her father. Her mother. Her brothers and sisters. Each and every one of them had lost their lives to the flu. She has no family. My moaning and whining of the conflicts in my family often left me feeling guilty, however when I did apologize she would immediately reassure me she was unbothered. I can only fantasize of being as strong as her, or having her ability to always see the positives in life, no matter the circumstance.

As a result of her and I being so close, Sue would spend countless days around our house. My father was fond of our friendship, for that was all that it was in his eyes, and encouraged me to spend time with her when I could. My mother, on the other hand, viewed Sue as a serious distraction from the pressing task at hand: finding a husband. In my mother's eyes, the ideal husband would be anyone with wealth, status and perhaps the most challenging for her to conjure, anyone willing to look past my ridiculous qualities. However, until my mother manages to summon the rich, famous gentleman who I am confident recognizes and appreciates my talent as a poet, she will remain disappointed.

Four days ago, Austin, and Sue indirectly, broke my heart.



“I asked her, Emily. I asked Sue to marry me. She said yes.” My brother. Austin. My best friend. Sue. My brother could not love her. He could never love Sue the way I loved her. I do not recall exactly what happened next but I vaguely remember sprinting outside into the garden, screaming at the top of my lungs until I felt as though I may pass out.

Shalini - Community

What is love?

Here is love

There is love

Why do you look for love?

This beauty of love is the beauty in you

Which is not far but inside you.

It has no shape and no size

It is the shapeless flow which manifests inside;

It is a timeless and ageless feel

Which your eyes see to fool

They see it as an outside beauty contained in a form for you to see

An illusion it creates to desire what is within

The flow in this beauty is to feel and see

The outside beauty deepening that feel in

Pulsating in your heart is its resonance

Heightening the understanding that nothing else is more vibrant than the love you are

So open yourself and feel the flow

Let it meet the outside flow

This duality is to see and feel

As a divine being radiating in this field



Sungyup - Community

Love of the Rhine

“Life’s but a walking shadow, a pure player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more.” With recalling these famous lines of Macbeth, I, with a sigh, asked myself. What about love? The Love I think transcends time and space, as the name of Shakespeare.

I can name off the love of Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Lotte and Werther and so forth. Their young and eternal love has inspired a lot of people as well as artworks including music, painting and literature. And here in Düsseldorf I remember the Songs of Robert Schumann and Clara’s loyal love to her husband, of course with the Brahms’s homage to Clara Schumann. As the usual quote, ‘Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting’, but love inspires me over actual life.

Along the Rhine, I've experienced how the color and shape of the leaves change in the respective seasons. In autumn, there are leaves everywhere. And I could meet the very attractive leaf of the Eiche that is carved in one cent euro. I have never noticed these leaves in Seoul. As a stranger, I had time to carefully look at it which I have known only through the book. The tree has survived in the midst of difficult times and they can verify it in the Caspar David Friedrich’s paintings. How could he have painted without love for the tree, for the spirit? I was really comforted by it.



Would Schumann meet this tree in person? When he moved from Dresden to Düsseldorf in 1850, he was very welcomed and fascinated by the Rhine. Robert Schumann's symphony, Rheinische is dedicated to the Rhine and the surrounding landscape. This story reminds me of another name. Heinrich Heine- a poet who left his homeland and sang Düsseldorf in Paris. "The city of Düsseldorf is very beautiful, and when one thinks of it in the distance, and was born there by chance, one becomes in a fantastical mood. I was born there and it seems to me, as if I had to go home at once." For him exile in Paris, the hometown was a driving force to overcome his hard life. Love is thus deeply ingrained in real life, even though abstract and formless.

Love exists everywhere in this city, if you only try to find it. Love has the power of overcoming the pain and sustaining our lives.

Conor - Student

Cupid Missed

This is not a love poem.
The last thing the world needs
Is one of those.

I don't like them.
Some might say,
Love is a gem,
But hey!



Love poems make me cringe.
They are so common,
It is difficult not to whinge.

But don't take this badly
If you are so madly
In love with a person
Express it,

Just please, oh please,
Not another poem.

Deepika - Student

Love of Nature

The world is a beautiful place. Nature has its own diverse values, which really impacts us in a positive way. Green Hills, Waterfalls, Flowers, Trees, Lakes, Transition in Seasons, Beaches, Cherry Blossoms, Weeds, Bushes and many more are impressive things that Mother Earth has granted us. These values really are extraordinary and set a positive mindset for us humans. Nature has its own significance and that's why we humans appreciate it. Humans have senses to enjoy the things around us, including nature. You can smell, hear, see, feel and perhaps even taste nature (fruits, etc). These senses enable us to admire the things around us and this is why we humans think nature is pleasing. Nature is a delicate but beautiful thing.



Discovery is in the human blood. This is what led us to invent many new things, which shaped our world today. Some inventions were incredible and were bound to be invented, while some weren't. To be straightforward - Human discovery has caused climate change. This is because cars, factories, and even our very own chimneys are releasing harmful gases which not only is impacting our environment but also our health. These gases are being caught in the atmosphere, producing more heat and in result is warming up the earth - the greenhouse effect. Floods, earthquakes, wildfires, melting glaciers and drought are severely impacting the world today. Approximately six billion people will be affected by the water shortages by 2050. Animals are starting to become extinct. In order to stop this, we need to reduce the usage of transportation which lives on fuel and instead use electrical powered vehicles or bicycles or just walk. Instead of using plastic bags, we should use cloth/paper bags. Participate in the Rhein clean up! Start your own campaign! Participate in the Fridays for Future protest! These are the little things you can do to bring a change in your community, which will help protect our environment in the long run.

Nature is beautiful and should be respected by all. We are all responsible for what we have done to our home, planet Earth. We should all be responsible to protect the beauties that Mother Earth has granted us, by doing the little things to help, because in the long run, these little things can reduce the impact of climate change on our home.



Emily - Student

The sweetest kind of all love

'It was a warm summer day and the dry smell of the wheat fields was covering the small village I call my home as we sit here, under the willow tree on the small hill behind the Smith farm. But today I don't feel like writing about how 'fantastic' and 'wonderful' my day was.

Today aunt Raily died. I am still not sure if-

"PAUL! What are you doing all alone here again? Are you writing poems again?"

The young girl sat down by Paul and snatched his notebook away to read. Her expression dropped as she read further.

"Oh, Paul. I am so sorry to hear that. I know how much you loved your aunt." She gave the book back and looked down.

Paul sighed. "It's fine, Ramona." he paused. "I'm just... I'm not sure what- I..." the boy began to stutter and he covered his face in his hands while pulling his knees up to his chest. Ramona bit her lip and thought about something to cheer her friend up. Paul slightly tensed up as he felt Ramona hugging him but returned the comforting action.

"It's alright, Paul, they all need to go at some point. She is better now- well at least she doesn't have the bad pain in the back anymore." Ramona pats his back, comforting.

Paul just nodded and sniffed a bit.



They pulled away. “ Thanks, Mona.” Paul smiled weakly at his friend. “ Of course, Paul, I always have an ear for you if you want to talk.”

‘To my dear Ramona, since the day we sat under the willow tree I cannot stop thinking about your sweet smile, your soft silk hair in the blowing wind and the pretty green stones by your ears matching your beautiful eyes.’ The doorbell rang and Paul looked up from his notebook before going downstairs to open the door. “ Huh? A package? But where is the postman?” He shrugged and brought the strange package inside. Was this a gift from Ramona? Could be. After all, it was almost Valentine’s Day. By the way Ramona, Paul did not see her for a while since they sat together by the tree. Maybe it was just something his father or mother bought. Paul left the package on the kitchen counter and left for his room to continue his writing.

“Paul? Is this your package on the counter?” Paul’s mother called upstairs with the pack in her hands. “I thought pa or you ordered something.” he came down the stairs to his mother.

“No, we did not.” She turned to the package to find a senders note.

“Perhaps a neighbor?”

“There is no sender or anything.”

Paul sat by the table and bit into an apple. If his parents didn’t order anything or the neighbors it could be... Ramona? He slightly blushed as he continued to think what his friend could have put in the package.



“Buuut, there is a note that it is for you.” Paul’s mother smirked slyly and waved a small letter in the air. Paul jumped up and snatched the letter and the package from his mother. He ran upstairs again with a fresh blush and a grin on his face. Carefully he placed the package on his desk. First, he opened the letter and started reading. His expression changed from happy and excited to confused and then fearful.

‘Dear Paul,
Why oh why do you look at her?
Why oh why do you speak to her?
WHY oh why do you smile at HER?!
WHY OH WHY DO YOU HUG HER?!
WHY HER?!... and not me?
I see you every day and every day I ask myself: When will he look?... When will he speak?... When will he smile?...

Oh, Paul,
You break my heart every day you walk right past me with your thoughts just around HER. I love you too- NO! I love you MORE!
She doesn’t love or even likes you!
But I will always and forever love you, Paul.
I will give you everything she promised and more.
Just me.’

Paul’s hands were shaking. What was the meaning of this? Who was this person? Why would someone write or even think something like this?



His gaze went over to the package. What was waiting inside?

“Paul?”

He flinched at the sudden sound in the silence.

“Y-Yes, mom?” he called back.

“I’m off for the market.”

“Okay, mom.” He swallowed dryly and heard his mother pull the door shut behind her. Paul was concentrating on the package again. With shaking hands he slowly pulled off the tape and put it aside. Cold air escaped and Paul shivered. He opened the package his eyes widen as the lids folded to the side to reveal... Ice? Paul hummed in confusion and he started to go through the frozen water. His fear was gone. There was no need to be afraid of simple Ice, right? He paused as he felt something different. It felt like... rubber? Paul pulled it out of the ice that covered it. Green light was reflected in his eye and he threw the object away from him. Paul sat at his desk staring down at the thing in front of him still trying to catch his thoughts. He was still in shock and didn’t know how to react to all of this. Who... who could do such a thing? He had recognized the pretty stone directly... and the ear to the person it was supposed to be attached to. He felt his lunch press against his throat and he quickly ran to the bathroom.

Paul walked around downstairs holding his stomach which was still feeling like someone was pulling and gripping onto it. He stopped as he heard footsteps in front of the main door. Paul looked over to find a note which was slipped underneath the door.



He approached and picked it up. It was the same paper as the letter which came with the package before.

‘Dear Paul,

I worked so hard to keep the promise this wrong snake gave you. ‘ Will always have an ear for you’

I spit on that. I know exactly that she would have only hurt you.

Not like me. I will always be with you and care and love you.

My dear Paul,

Will you be my Valentine?

Just me.’

Paul could feel his stomach rebel again but it was already empty. His head began to spin and he stumbled back to sit on the small bench in the entrance of the house. After a few minutes of catching his thought, he jumped up and crumbled the letter before running out the door and down the street to the neighbor’s house and rang the doorbell to ask if they saw anyone by the door. Mr. Westerfield had seen someone leaving the package and slipping the paper through. Paul thanked the elder man and ran in the direction he had been told the person had left. He asked the neighbors and slowly the puzzle solved itself. Soon he stood by the wheatfield again. The willow tree was standing in the distance as he looked at the farmhouse of the Smiths. Of course. How could he have been so blind the whole time? The daughter of Mr. Smith always looked at him.



Always followed him thinking he wouldn't notice her and now he was the one standing in front of her doorstep. Paul gathered all his courage to lift his hand to knock but the door swung open by the slightest touch. It was dark in the house as Paul entered and a cold breeze made him shiver.

Slowly and careful went he deeper in the home and still no light was to see. Paul's eyes slowly got used to the darkness and soon he could make out shapes and forms in the blackness.

Another door was slightly opened and Paul squeezed through but almost fell down the stairs that began behind it. The metallic smell of blood hit him like a brick wall. Paul's heart began to race as he slowly walked down the cold stone stairs to the basement of the big farmhouse.

"R-Ramona?" his voice was weak and shaking of fear as he walked in darkness. Paul listened in the darkness before calling his friend again a bit louder. Sniffing was heard from the corner of the room and the boy quickly rushed over to the source of the noise. "Ramona?" he reached in the darkness. Only sobbing as a response was heard. "Ramona?" Paul searched in the dark until he felt soft hair curling around his fingers. "Ramona..." his hands found their way to the cloth covering her mouth and he pulled it away. A small gasp of relief followed by quiet crying. "P-paul- I am so scared- please bring me home-" "It's alright- I am he-" Paul got cut off by the loud sound of the light switch turning on the light.



“Paul?” A disappointed looking girl in a slaughters apron and rubber gloves stood in the doorway. Now since the basement was lit it was clear that this was, in fact, the room where the Smiths slaughtered the animals of the village for fresh meat.

“What are you doing here?” Laura Smith slowly walked in the middle of the room her gaze fixed on the other two. “You are not supposed to be here, Paul.” Laura looked him dead in the eye and came closer. “ You are supposed to forget her!” she got louder and pointed with her gloved finger on Ramona who flinched at that motion.

Isabel - Student

Once they're gone

Sometimes, you never really know you loved them until they're gone. That's what my mama always said, among other things. When I was little, that meant nothing to me. I would ask “Why wouldn't you love them before?” and she would always respond with “You're too little to understand, baby.” But now that I'm older, I finally really understand what it means, and I mean really. Some say you learn from heartbreak, and I've sure had my share of heartbreak...

Last semester, around February 18th was when this whole rollercoaster began. I was just finishing up my math test, when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around to see my best friend, Ann, holding a crumpled, yellow, college-blocked piece of paper.



“It’s for you, Val” she whispered. Val was short for Valerie, my name.

“Ann! We’re doing a test!”

“It’s from Noah.”

I eyed the note and quickly snatched it from her hand. Noah? I thought. Noah was the kind of guy who people liked, but as a friend. He had relatively curly hair with honey eyes and freckles. I opened the note hesitantly. It read, in neat handwriting; Meet me by the water fountains after class. ;) I folded the note, and looked around the room. I caught Noah looking at me, wringing his hands. Just as the bell rang I looked back at my test, realizing I didn’t finish the last two questions. I quickly shoved my stuff in my bag, muttered “good-bye” to my teacher and left to the water fountains.

“What do you want?” I asked. He looked at me like he hadn’t expected me to come. “Noah?”

“Oh yeah, right. Sorry.” He cleared his throat. “Anyway, um. Would you by any chance, want to maybe... come to prom with me?” The question hit me like a train running at full speed.

He looked at me expectantly.

“You know what? Stupid question. I’m sorry I’ll just-”

“No, no, no! I’m just thinking. This is new.” I waited a little.

“Sure, why not?” I said. Prom was in 5 days and almost everyone had a date and, besides it’d be an experience. He relaxed.



“Great.” He said. My phone rang. I apologized, said I had to go and left. It was Ann who had called. After I told her what happened she screamed and I could hear her jumping up and down, until her parent’s asked what the noise was. “I have to go now Ann, my mom’s picking me up and she’s wondering where I am.”

“I know I’m just so happy for you! Well, I guess I should finish my physics homework.” She sighed. “Bye for now!” She hung up. I quickly ran out of the school to see my mom half asleep in the car, waiting for me.

The next day was just a run-of-the-mill day at school, but the day after was yet another turn in this winding road. I was walking to class when Matthew, your classic jock, came up to me and tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around to face him. “What?” I said, impatiently.

“Do you... I dunno... have a date to prom yet?” He asked. Not this again, I thought.

“Um, yeah I think so.” I replied.

“You think so? Val, there’s 2 days left. You either have one or you don’t.”

“I-I-” I stuttered.

“I-I” He mimicked me. “am assuming you don’t. See you at 8?”

“Yes, no! Wait!” I blurted.

“Nice.” He said and ran off. My head swam with thoughts. I had had a crush on Matthew since 5th grade, so it would be cool to go out with him, wouldn’t it? But I already committed to going out with Noah.



Maybe I could double date! But those never worked out in movies. But this isn't a movie, this is real life. I really just needed someone to talk to.

After school I met up with Ann to grab some coffee. The whole time there I was venting my thoughts and she was just nodding and saying "yeah" or "totally". Finally I stopped. "Pick one." She said, "There are only 2 days. Just pick one." I was trying to decide who to go with, when Noah popped up. I wasn't surprised he was here, this was a place where everyone met up with each other. "Hey Valerie." He started walking towards us. My heart started racing. Ann gave me "that look" and pretended to be on her phone. He finally reached our table and said "Do you have a dress picked out yet?"

"Um I think so, yeah."

"I can't wait to see you in it." His face reddened. "Not in a weird way of course, I'm not that kind of guy. I meant like it'd look cool, I mean you'd look nice." He gave up. I laughed. He smiled. I was going to say something in return when someone's hand grabbed my shoulder.

Once I turned around to see it was Matthew, he bent down and gave me a kiss on the lips. The breath from my lungs disappeared. "Ready for Saturday night, Val?"

Matthew smiled. Noah looked at me with a puzzled look on his face. "What- Did he just kiss you?" He pointed at Matthew.

"Looks like that." I breathed. Matthew started to look confused.



“Valerie, I thought we were going together.” Noah’s honey eyes were now like shattered glass.

“I-”

“Oh! This little chicken asked you out, and you said yes? You know I don’t like him.” Matthew was visibly getting angry. He and Noah had always had beef since Noah arrived at our school. Now both of the boys were looking at me. My heart bungee jumped to my throat. I turned to Matthew.

“Matt, he asked me out first, you forced it a little.”

“I can’t believe you right now! I know you had a crush on me, I just tried to make you happy! I’m done.” Matthew fumed. He pushed through people waiting to order causing an uprise of “Hey!”s and “Watch it!”. I turned to Noah.

“I can explain-”

“No, Val. I-I just need some time. I was just a joke to you anyway.” He turned around and started to leave.

“Wait, Noah!” I yelled after him. He didn’t turn around. I looked to Ann who’s jaw had dropped, and burst into tears. Ann leaned in and comforted me. After all of the drama that just happened, it had dawned on me, that Noah was who I really loved. He was the only one who would have truly loved me but I pushed him away. I called my mom and asked her to pick me up. I stayed in my room talking to my mom the whole night.

The night of the prom came around 2 days later. I ended up going with Ann instead of a random guy.



Ann was talking about her struggles in physics, but I was searching through the sea of people for one person in particular. Through the bright, flashing lights and the wisps of fog underneath people's feet I finally found him. Noah was standing in the corner talking with some friends when a girl and her friends walked up to them. The girl's friends started urging her towards Noah. She whispered something to him, took his arm and pulled him into the crowd with her. They were both smiling and laughing. I sighed and listened to what Ann was saying. "-and Mr. Brown said I had to..." But while listening, I realized that, although I really did like this guy, he would have another girl to treat him better and that I don't need a guy to lean on. I watched Noah and the girl get lost in the crowd, knowing I would never get him back but he would hold a place in my heart. And that's the thing about love, you get your heartbroken but you move on. You may have lost a piece of your heart, but you just gotta get up and keep on going without it.

Ishita - Student

L-O-V-E

L is fr the '*life*' thee gaveth me

Thee hath left me wond'ring what 'twill feeleth if 't be true thee w're not h're

O is the '*optimism*' thee gaveth me ev'ry day

Mine own life did turn upside down at which hour I hath met thee.



V is the '*vulnerability*' thee madeth me feeleth near you
Even the stars might feeleth shy at which hour those
gents see thee.and finally,
E is the '*everything*' thou has't sacrificed for me...

Fiona - Community

True Story

Her heart is heavy. Time to downsize. She's been cleaning out all day - a lifetime of memories. From the battered shoebox she splays a one-handed fan of school photos. They go back decades. One flutters to her lap as she kneels.

Oh that shy smile and those unruly blond curls of her youngest when he was seven! She sees him again at breakfast the morning of that photo. "Tell me the story of Oma and Opa." Again she had told his favourite story of how, in 1937, a young man from a farm near Dresden had found himself quite by chance at a crossroads in a village in Denmark one midsummer evening. The villagers were celebrating something with flowers and music and dance. All he knew was that he had danced all evening with the beautiful girl who would be his future wife. And so it was. They married in 1938. Karl and Anna. She moved far away from her family to his ancestral farm in Saxony. They established a new crop: 98 hectares of tulips. In 1939, the war had broken out. She could not return to Denmark. He was conscripted but survived, never to speak of his experiences in all of his 102 years.



The Russians confiscated their farm in 1946. In 1951 the little family, his father included, had left for America as DPs – Displaced Persons - refugees on a converted Italian troop ship. They arrived with thousands of others at Ellis Island to start a new life.

She watches him digest it all; fit it into the emerging patchwork of his identity. In the photo, his green eyes are earnest and trusting.

In the next school photo, he's 13. Taken the day after his father's cousin from Denmark had visited. In her serene, measured way the cousin had told the story of the Prussian invasion of her village, Sønderborg, in 1864. A young mother had looked from the window of their isolated little farm to see a Prussian officer rushing down the lane towards them. On the crest of the hill behind, she could see Dybbøl mill on fire. The young couple scooped up their children and rushed down to a hidden cove. They leapt into their little white boat. The father rowed his family with all his might away from the cannon fire. Safely anchored, both parents wept to see the thatched roof of their farm go up in a blaze of sparks that night of 18th April 1864. "We can rebuild", they reassured each other. "At least we saved all six children..."

Their faces turned ashen in the lamplight. They counted again. Frantically. Five children. "I thought you..." Reality dawned. In the frenzy, the sheer terror of flight and chaos, each had presumed the other had bundled up their newborn, Hans.



They had unknowingly abandoned their little boy to his fate in the burning farm. The whole family shed bitter tears.

Days blurred into months, then years. Eventually they returned to their farm. No sign of their baby of course. During the battle of Dybbøl Mill, around 3,600 Danes and 1,200 Prussians were killed, wounded or missing. A peace treaty, the Treaty of Vienna, was signed on 30 October 1864. Otto von Bismarck had taken one of the first steps to create the German empire.

Three years after that disastrous day, the careworn mother looked out from the rebuilt farm to see two strangers coming down the lane. Between them skipped a little child. They knocked at the door. "Sorry to disturb, ma'am, but there's a story that during the Battle a Prussian officer, about to torch a farm around here, heard a new-born cry. Having recently become a father himself, his heart softened and he ordered his captain to take the baby away from the fighting. The captain passed the tiny baby on to a fleeing family. In turn, they handed him on to another family who could feed him better. They eventually came to our village. After some years, news reached us of the tragedy that had befallen your family. The town elders considered both stories and sent us here. We think that this little lad might be yours.

And so he was.



The cousin from Denmark looked at the 13 year old with ineffable love.

“Little Hans,” she said “was your great-great-great-great grandfather. Anna’s father”

In the school photo, there’s a new depth in his eyes: a sense of becoming.

He’s 18 in the final school photo. Studying for his DP exams. Diploma Programme. That morning, she’d offered him the Swiss watch for his birthday. From your father and me. “Tell me again how you met” he smiles.

“I was at a conference in Bratislava,” she begins.
“Learning to teach International Baccalaureate English. Your father was running another workshop. At that time he was the IB co-ordinator at ISD. He had come from America to Germany some 20 years earlier. He didn’t want to be conscripted to fight in Vietnam. One thing had led to another. He was offered a job at the new American International School of Düsseldorf. They’d asked ‘Can you teach IB?’ ‘International Basketball?’ he’d laughed, ‘Haven’t tried yet, but I’d be willing to give it a go!’

Back to Bratislava. We met and time stood still. Two years later we were married, living in Düsseldorf and you had appeared! 1999 I too began to teach at ISD.”



“Talking of which, gotta go.” He gets up from the table.
“Thanks for this wonderful watch. Funny the role that chance plays in any life. Just think, even ISD has played a pretty big part in who I am today...”

She drops the photos back into the box.
25 years ago she had heard the name of the International School of Düsseldorf for the first time. Didn't even know where it was.

Her heart is light.

She realizes she's loved you with her life, ISD.

She smiles to herself and whispers softly

“I
Still
Do.”

Seoyoun - Student

For Paul

I love him. I love my brother, Paul, very much. And unlike many other people, I love being an older brother. Now, he's lying down on a white bed, sleeping. My mother says he'll wake up in no time. The Doctor says he doesn't have time. How am I supposed to stay still when one of them is telling dirty lies?



Paul likes watching Basketball. He told me that he wanted to be a Basketball player one day, and he wished for more time. I told him that he will become a Basketball player, no matter how much time he's got. He tunes away and tells me, Samuel, you liar.

I took Paul outside. He didn't feel so good, so I gave him a cool cloth. He sleeps again in his wheelchair, and the Doctors take him away from me. They say that I have done wrong, taking him out. So what? He's just asleep.

Maybe I have done wrong. Paul looks at me with eyes full of tears; he tells me that thanks to me, he could feel the Breeze of summer and the blazing sun. My mother says that Paul will be healthy again in a few days. The Doctors say that he has 3 days to live. But now I know which one of them are telling lies.

He's gone.

The Doctors glare at me, as if it's all my fault. They call me... a psychopath. They say that I think differently from other people, but in ways that are violent and harsh. They tell me that someday, I will be forced to somewhere that I can be... contained. Where people can forget that Samuel Anderson ever existed. I don't think that someday will come for me.

I love him. I love my brother, Paul, very much. That's why I was leaning on the kitchen floor with a bloodstained knife in my hand.



I felt... cold, but happy, as I knew soon, I will get to meet my little brother again. I will get to teach him basketball properly. I will tell him that now, we can be free from lying parents and stony Doctors. I should tell him how sorry I've been when I couldn't do anything for him. I have no regrets; because I did this for Paul.

Ruby - Student

Dead people can still love

Tracy Chapman was hunched over her desk. What was she doing? No idea. Tracy was known for having epilepsy. She had many epilepsy attacks at school, so her reputation quickly grew; the sick kid.

Tracy had a very small amount of friends. Everyone thought she was a weirdo.

When Tracy walked from class to class, people would imitate her, by falling on the floor and shaking.

One particularly dreadful day, Tracy was running laps, because she was late to gym class. All of a sudden, her legs seized up, and she fell flat onto the floor. She started shaking. She was having a seizure. But, no one cared. Her biggest bully walked past, and kicked her in the stomach. Laughter was ringing in her ears...

“Honey? Wake up!”

Her mother was calling to her. Tracy couldn't hear her. She would never hear anything again...



3 months later...

When Tracy's parents finally summoned the courage to venture into Tracy's room, three months had passed. Since what? Her death. Mrs. Chapman picked carefully through the contents of her deceased daughter's desk. What she found, startled her:

4 envelopes, each addressed to a different person.

- One to her best friend Emily.
- One to her mom.
- One to her dad.
- One to her crush, Calvin Smith.

Mrs. Chapman opened her envelope with great care not to tear through it. She was brought to tears by what it said:

Dear mom,

So. You are either reading this because I have passed into an unknown world, or you're just snooping through my room. Well, I'm going to assume it's the first one. I knew that my time was limited, so don't be sad. You and daddy were the best parts of my life. Never fear, I haven't quite left just yet. My memory will still dwell in the heads of those who loved me. Maybe even the ones of those who hated me too. I will never forget you, even if my soul is separated from my body. I love you, mom. Never let anyone make you think I didn't.

Bye for now,
Tracy



Mrs.Chapman made it her duty to pass out all of Tracy's letters. Each person was astounded to read theirs:

Dear dad,

Thank you for always making me smile. All of your jokes resulted in me rolling around on the floor, in laughter. I will miss our inside jokes. Keep calm and carry on.

There is always a bigger plan, even if you can't see it.

I will always love you,

Tracy

Hey Emily,

I know that you have most likely already picked yourself back up, and gotten back on the horse people call life, but I miss you. I miss being the only two at our lunch table. I miss laughing with each other when Violet would say something idiotic. I guess one could say that I just miss you. Before I met you, I had always been alone. But then you took me under your wing and took care of me. Promise that you won't ever let Violet Chester be mean to you again.

I'm always with you.

Love,

Tracy

Dear Calvin,

You probably don't even know that I existed. Maybe you did, but just by the name 'sick girl'. Well, I have news for you! You used to be the sick girl's crush. I never acted on it because Emily said that boys don't date outside their cliques, and they especially wouldn't date me. You might've heard Violet Chester talking about me. And I bet anything that you believed every word she said. But, now, there is nothing I can do. At least, now you know, that the sick girl was obsessed with you.

Love, hate, whatever,

Tracy

Now, you know what Tracy was doing that day...



Valentina - Student

Now I'm done for

The wetness of the grass is making it hard to run.

The clammy cold sweat dripping down my red heated face was making it hard to concentrate, but right now is not the time to be focused on that, I could lick it for all I care, today in this very moment this very hour even this very second was my time to shine my time to prove all of the dream stopping comments wrong.

My time to prove all of the people in the bleachers filming me until I make my first mistake wrong.

I wanna be the star that I have practiced my whole life to be. I wanna be me without people having to push me down and laugh at me. I wanna be the person that I see in my dreams the girl I wish I could be.

As I dribble towards the goal the defence is ready to strike. I dribble towards her and spin causing the defender to stop a moment in confusion but that was enough time to get past her, as the goalie positions herself to block my shot I hear the the referee scream "last ten seconds"! I brace myself eyes fixed on the small checkered ball I push my leg through all of my dreams and hopes and I..... SCORE



The crowd roars the referee says something that is sweeter than candy “STANFORD WINS THE COLLEGE SOCCER CUP 1:0”.

I fall on my knees the fake grass rasping them there's blood trickling down my skin but I don't care I start crying uncontrollably but these are not tears of frustration these are tears of joy, this is the happiest moment of my life.

My team circles around me and they all pile on top of me laughing the referee walks over with the shiniest trophy I've ever seen and then gave it to my coach. My coach smiles at me and gives me a giant hug then she places that pretty trophy in my still shaking hands. I smile back at her and celebrate with my team.

When the celebration is over I walk over to my parents but for some reason I start feeling really dizzy my head was bulging almost like someone grabbed drumsticks and acted as if I was the drum. All I remember is that everything went a blur then black.

As I wake up I am in a white dress and on a white uncomfortable bed. It feels like a rock in disguise of a cloud as my blurry eyes turn clear again I start to have trouble breathing. I start panting, my breath was now something I could no longer control as I start having this cold feeling in my blood I look over to see a nurse rushing and all she told me was “Calm down sweetie, it's ok” my scared face started to have tears streaming down it.



My eyes were watery and my throat was tired of coughing as this horrible situation carried on for a couple more seconds. I felt something coming up but it was not vomit no, it was blood!

I suddenly stop my eyes getting wider the more I stare at the blood I just coughed out. I look to my right to see tubes connected to my right arm. I can't believe that I'm in a hospital!

My eyes are puffing up. I start bursting out crying. This can not be happening! As my parents walked in the white small room that was now my least favorite room in the world, they looked very concerned my mom burst out crying when she laid eyes on me. She said heart breaking words after the heart aching silence that I will never forget.

“Hunny you were diagnosed with” my mom choked out the last 2 words “lung c-cancer”. My head explodes inside my mind and I start crying uncontrollably. My eyes were puffed, my nose was clogged and my lips were trembling as my parents came and hugged me. I can't feel it. My entire body is numb so I go to sleep.

I wake up with huge pink bags under my eyes. I see the doctor was sitting in a chair waiting for me to wake up. She has a small slight smile.

“Good morning!”

“Good morning...” I respond with no energy whatsoever.



“So I'm going to talk about what you can't and can do because you have this type of cancer” her face expression changes. “This cancer will last for 22 years and its a horrible type of cancer so you will have limits on what you can and can't do. First of all NO SPORTS” my eyes widen I can't feel them anymore “so this will last for how long?” I say with my throat hurting “22 years...” for the next two hours I was emotionless.

I look at my phone in the uncomfortable bed and see that I have a new Email it read: Hi I'm Lisa. I'm a scout. I saw you play for Stanford the other day. Would you like to come to USWNT tryouts? My heart shatters into a billion little pieces. I grabbed my pillow and started crying this time after I was done my pillow was as wet as it would have been if you poured a bucket of water on it.

This was the end of my happy ending. Everything I ever wanted was gone. I might even die.....!

But no matter, I will fight this sickness, but not for me for what I love, for what has a special place in my heart and that is the mysterious emotional roller coaster sport that they call soccer.



