

WINNER OF THE WINGWORD POETRY PRIZE

GIRLHOOD



Eshna Sharma

Index

Love

Dinner table conversations	01
Love, and Vocabulary	04
The Question of Eloping	06
Houseplants	08
Group Therapy	10

Coming of Age

From A Catholic Classroom	13
Spring Cleaning for the Home (& Heart)	15
Befriending My Daughter	18
Memories	20
Hospital Beds and Hospital Smells	23
Gun or Glue Factory	26
My Mother Wishes I Were A Better Cook	28

Body

Boys like you	31
Hidden Bodies	35
Girlhood	38
Asma	40
Begin Again	42
Growing Pains	44

Dream

The Writer's Process (Is Not Gentle)	47
How to Eat an Octopus	50

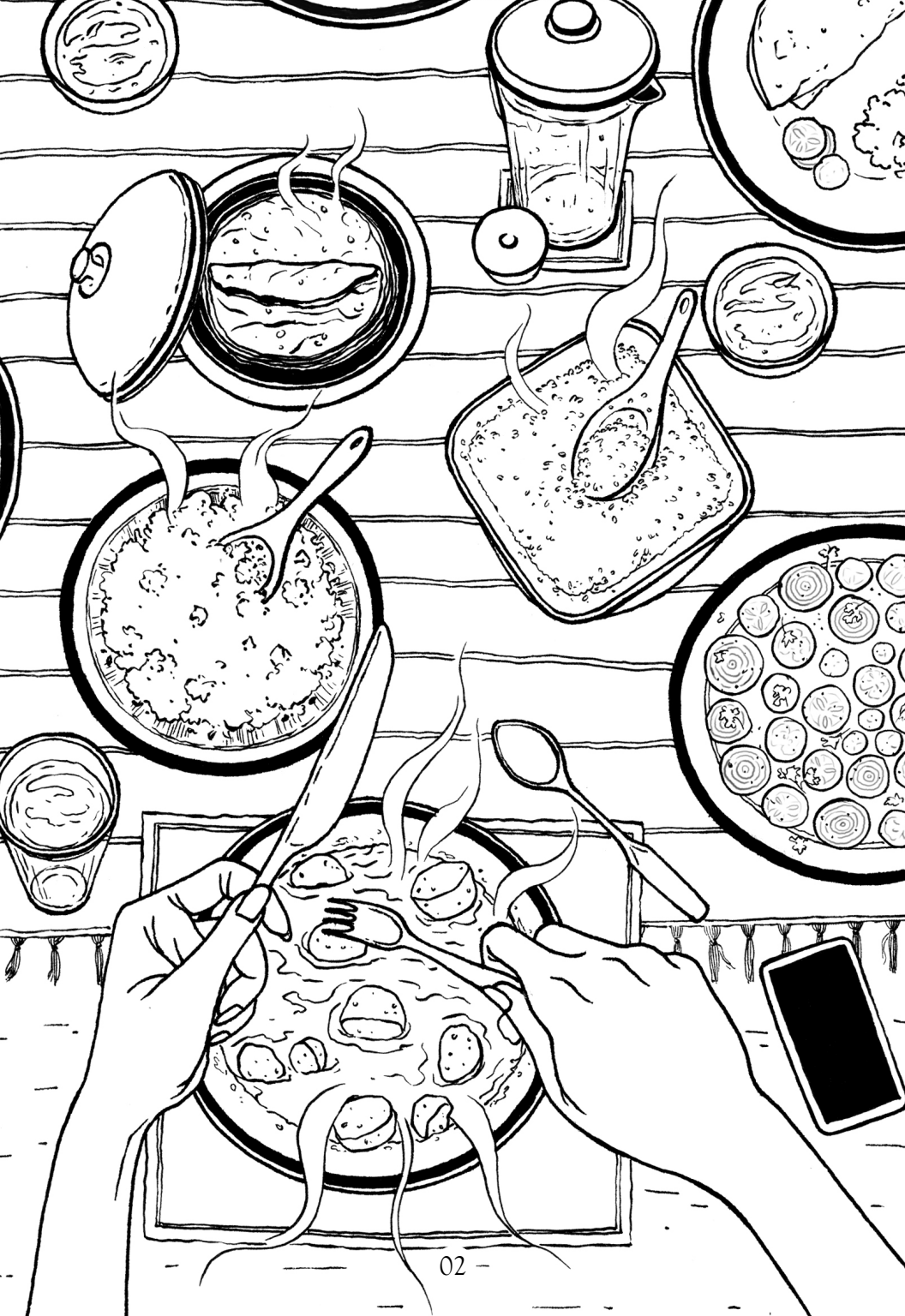
Love

Dinner table Conversations

Glistening crockery
the waft of curry chicken
the radio begins to play
We sit down for dinner

Ma passes around rotis
We make mundane conversation
"How is work?"
"Do you know buaji is visiting us next week?"
We smile and laugh
Ma fusses over Papa's plate
"Why do you eat so less?" she bemoans
Ma, why don't you ask him
why he drinks more alcohol than water?

Ma heaps a ladleful of
fragrant rice on my plate
We talk about the weather
about the upcoming elections
About Donald Trump
And the new maid
"She puts too much oil in the food, no?"
But we don't talk about
why Ma is always running out of painkillers,
though she stocks the medicine cabinet
every 2 weeks



We don't talk about
the scars on my sister's wrists,
to precise to be called an accident
We don't talk about why
My cousin divorced
her husband last month

But we do talk about
the Super Moon,
the 50 percent off at the local mall
And the Modi government's policies

For dessert we have
rice kheer
Peppered with cardamom and raisins
The subject of marriage is now broached
Sharma ji's daughter is getting married next
week—
"Should we look for a boy for you too?"
This time, I smile.
"No ma, I've been in love with a girl since I
was fourteen."

Love, and Vocabulary

In an attempt to reinforce
my shaky vocabulary
a direct consequence of
my technological dependency,
I encourage myself to
write down
words, I find interesting in
ways both good and bad.
Then I hold up
my notebook and roll them off my tongue:

postulate/marsupial/conviviality
shoegaze/wishbone/cossack/parsley—
pleasant and warm, a little buttery

uvula/phlegm/tartar
wound/pontification/fecund—
all jagged angles, ugly, haywire symmetry

And then of course,
there's your name.

Your name—written on a foggy mirror post
shower,
traced on a bare thigh absent-mindedly,
breathed again and again
on a phone call

till it loses all sense, all meaning
language and geography

I keep it safely,
unlike the others scrawled carelessly in my
notebook,
I cradle it, a word so clandestine,
like it bypassed censorship,
was stolen from the very flames at
book-burnings.



The Question of Eloping

He comes under my window
on one of those
sticky, turbulent summer nights
when sleep is scarce
and the heat makes lovers
restless, as they twist and turn in their beds

Come with me, he whispers,
as I rub the sleep from my eyes,
“Let's run away and get married”,
for a brief moment,
there is only the sound of
the cicadas' orchestra in the rosebushes
and my lover's question hangs in the
warm air,
steeping in the moonlight.

In the room next to mine,
my gentle uncle's snores shake
the bedframe
like tiny earthquakes,
my cousin downstairs, is
lighting up cigarettes that I snuck for him
last week
in a few hours, my mother would rouse
from her scattered sleep
to prepare my favourite dosas for breakfast.

I look at my lover
this impassioned night-time ghost,
heaving and sighing
underneath my window.
I want to laugh~ what ridiculousness!
don't make a fool of yourself, I whisper.
come up to my bedroom,
and we'll sleep on it~you can leave at
first light~ no one will know
And please, be careful around
the bougainvilleas,
my father has been working on them for
weeks, and
he is quite proud of them.



Houseplants

i.

I keep forgetting—

to water

my houseplants

I buy them from the supermarket

All thick, fleshy and green leaves

Flowers bursting with colour,

with petals that are satin to the touch

I keep forgetting and

they all die—

they shrivel up and wilt

melting into the soil

And I try

To resurrect their tiny skeletons

By giving them fresh air

By sitting them on my sill, in the warmth of

the sun

By flooding them with water

Till their remains float around morbidly,

in a puddle the colour of milky chai

ii.

It's always too late, though

The azaleas I bought last week?

Dead.

The purple has rusted to a brown
It crumbles at my touch
leaving its ashes on my fingertips

iii.

At night when I
Sometimes wake
shaking and soaking in my sheets
I run my hands over
the empty side of the bed
and wonder-
Do I do to other people, too
what I do to my flowers?

iv.

I brought home some
African violets this morning.





Group Therapy

They're meeting in that basement
on the corner of Latouche street
They've got paper cups filled with watered
down chai
And napkins stained with samosa grease

And that's where you can find them
Every Thursday and Saturday
Between 5 and 7
But it's not for alcoholics
Or drug addicts
Or divorcees
It's not for cancer survivors
Or rape victims' therapy

Under the light of a flickering bulb
They sit, huddled
The old timers with hollowed faces
And haunted eyes
Whispering through clouds of cigarette
smoke,
Consoling sobbing newcomers that look like
Deer in headlights

They talk of her peppermint breath
Her piercing gaze
The mole on her left shoulder
The softness of her hair
Her lurid thoughts
Her fixation with demons and death
And her kisses, warm, angry, wanting
And the scars that they left

But don't be discouraged
It's not as gloomy as I've made it seem
They bring in guitars on Saturday nights
And they sing some of her favorite songs
To congratulate men who've moved on, from
the girl that consumed them
And left a bottomless pit
Where a heart should've been,
Onto less dangerous addictions
Like alcohol and afeem

So now you can find them
This group of crazed devotees
Amongst the piss stink and walls
stained red with paan like some eccentric
modern art
On the corner of Latouche street,
Thursdays and Saturdays, 5 to 7
A support group for broken hearts.

Coming of Age

From a Catholic Classroom

Plastic Jesus nailed to a
plastic cross, casting
plastic glares, at what I believe,
the heathens in class.

May heat runs rivulets
across my spine, and
I wonder if the Matron is
turning to sweaty Christian pulp
underneath her endless robes,
I wonder if she ever wishes
to wear lingerie, if she ever strays
from her righteous path.

I could have been practicing
the chain stitch, or completing
chemistry assignments, yet I
sit,
untethered,
in my hand is a book of hymns,
in my head are Unchristian thoughts.

Mouth on mouth.
Skin against skin.
I count every sin on my fingertips,
I make a mental film-scene of
every trespass.

In a classroom of thirty-five
believers, and
sits an unfaithful girl,
wondering of enlightenment of a
different sorts.



Spring Cleaning for the Home (& Heart)

i.

throw all your duvets, towels,
linens and underwear
into the washer- a capful of
detergent, too, por favor
This will remove all
lint and grime and also
the scent of their perfume,
once and all.

ii.

if your glass surfaces
are beginning to look cloudy,
worry not! Vinegar and water
ought to do the trick.
This works for your vision, too.
Take a sip everytime you think of them,
it is bitter but quite
effective.

iii.

open your drawers
throw out all grocery bills, brochures, expired
pedicure vouchers, you do not
need them anymore.

we advise a similar treatment for your
phone's gallery, too—
delete their number,
and all of their photos, you do not
need them anymore.

iv.
if your house still
looks a bit drab,
buy some houseplants
for a fresh, new look.
Give them water,
sunlight, fresh air.
Care for them gently, and
see, for once, that love can be
noiseless
and soft,
and frankly, quite undemanding.

v.
in the evening
when you sit down in a house
sparklingly clean, and
painfully empty,
do not open another wine bottle
and drink your sorrow away.
Instead,
call your mother, remember the time
when you were fourteen and still

living in your parents' house.
Ask her
why she would turn the house
upside-down every spring,
scrubbing, soaping, and shouting
vacuums and dustpans and bleach
the general Sunday morning cacophony.
Why, dear, she will reply,
do you ever welcome the summer
in a house that reeks of wintertime?



Befriending my daughter

I took a five week sabbatical
from the bank where I haven't
skipped a day in twenty years
Five weeks to get to know
the girl growing increasingly
a stranger under my roof

I wish I knew the songs she
hums underneath her breath
what jokes she finds funny
the names of all her friends

And now silence between us
at the dinner table sits
so thick and heavy as we eat our stew,
that I wish
to suck the marrow from
lamb bones and tap them
for musical notes
if just to amuse her,
if just to ripple the jelly of
uncomfortable quietude
with the end of a hot knife

I was taught how
to change the car oil, to
pay off mortgages and

what to do when babies
throw up all over the front of my shirt
but I was never taught
to say "I love you" and
"I'm sorry that I don't tell you
that I love you enough."

So I just flit about
bringing her bowls
of cut up fruits,
and on Sundays when my worries
dull in intensity
and weight
I cook her lunch
and she lets me rub in oil
into her
thick black hair
And for a few minutes, I get a
glimpse of her world,
and I hope I can raise her
to not make the same mistakes
as I did,
I hope I can raise her
to forgive me.



Memories

My memories arrive in the mailbox
Amongst bills and insurance company letters
Spilling with scent and sound—
Dried roses between the pages of secret
diaries
Filter coffee from the corner restaurant
Squelch of wet earth on monsoon days
The cry of hawkers passing by in childhood
lanes

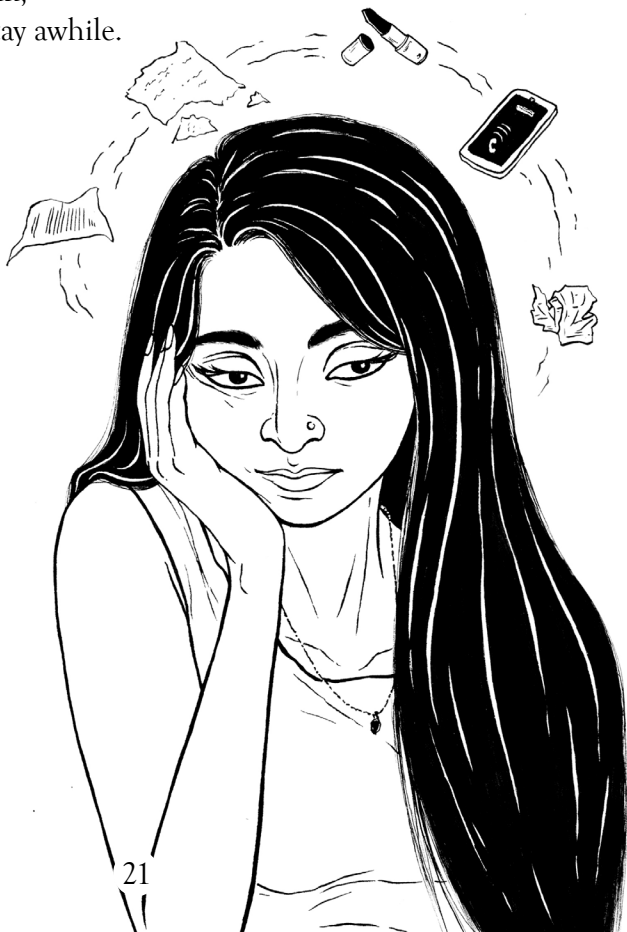
My memories are everywhere—
In the bedsheets when I wake, like oil stains,
In the grout of the bathroom tiles,
In leaking drain pipes and dirty kitchen sinks
They look at me from the mirror—
My 6 year old self, mom's lipstick in hand.

They sit at the bar—
And I see my first love's face in every new
person I meet.

They wake me up in cold sweats,
Missed school exams, break up texts,
interviews gone wrong,

They unpack my grief and hurt
And send me handwritten postcards,
Photographs attached
On the nights I can't fall asleep.

I hold every memory by its hand,
the good one that tingles
Like cotton candy dissolving on my tongue,
and
the bad one that punches me square in the
guts.
I offer them a drink,
and ask them to stay awhile.





Hospital Beds and Hospital Smells

The first time you visited the hospital,
you were 13, with a broken ankle
from playing football,
and when the doctor snapped your bone in
place,
you bit your tongue so hard you tasted
copper,
later at home, you puked—
partly because of the pain but mostly because
of how much you hated that goddamned
place
and the overpowering lemon and pine scent
that hung to everything—
an attempt to mask the smell of blood,
the latex gloves and the noise they made
when the doctor slipped them on
and the perpetual squeal of wheelchairs in
the corridors,
your 13 year old self vowed to never return
again.

But then you turned 17
And began chewing cigarettes for breakfast,
kissing boys in empty classrooms,
you were a fool to not know that razor scars
tend to shine and
become visible when the light hits them
right,

so you found yourself within those sanitizer
smelling walls again,
your mother weeping silently into her
dupatta
as the doctor wrote down your prescription.

And then at 22,
You were getting black out drunk every
weekend—
so drunk you would walk on the broken
bottles in your room and not feel a thing
and they found you one day,
on the steps of the hostel,
almost unconscious from the abuse,
they dragged you to the hospital,
and pumped your stomach clean,
but they couldn't scrub the copper smell
from your nostrils and the taste of latex in
your mouth,
and by God, you thought were going to die,
but you decided to live because
you hated hospitals too much
to die in one.

The next time you returned,
you were holding your mother's hand

IV lines hooked into her wrinkled skin, blue
veins running across her body like rivers on a
map and suddenly you were 13 again,
hating the blood and the urine
and the beep of machines
and the starched bedsheets,
you wanted to leave but you stayed,
you slept on the couch and
ate hospital canteen food and
argued with all the nurses

And then one day,
you find yourself in that hateful place,
and although you're surrounded by hospital
beds and hospital smells,
it doesn't feel as bad as the other times,
and you smile as you get to hear the
heartbeat of the child inside,
maybe she will grow up to hate hospitals a
little less than you do.

Gun or Glue Factory

The single most peculiar—and infuriating—
reality of life is, how often
it throws at you difficult choices,
how often it
drags you to the crossroads.

And you want to punch a signboard,
scream at the sky, but you will never
know anything apart from the choices you
make,
you never know
which road will lead to
investment banker,
dead at 22 or
twins with a third on the way.

So you find yourself with walls
closing in around you,
the alarm clock mimicking your mutilated
heartbeat, your dreams and waking hours
all haunted, tainted, adulterated
with questions aching to be answered

A piece of advice for you, my lonely
friend, with difficult decisions
on your head.
The universe is cruel, frankly

it couldn't care less about the choices
you have to make.
You are small, and weak,
a speck on a stone in the endless river of
time,
you are a weary horse-owner
with a broken beast at your feet,
and the universe laughs as
it asks you to
choose between the gun
and the glue factory.

It prods you and pushes you,
there is no escape.
Choose, fool.



My Mother Wishes I Were a Better Cook

My mother in the kitchen is military.
She marches around the kitchen
whipping up culinary delights in the time
it takes me to peel a single bulb of garlic

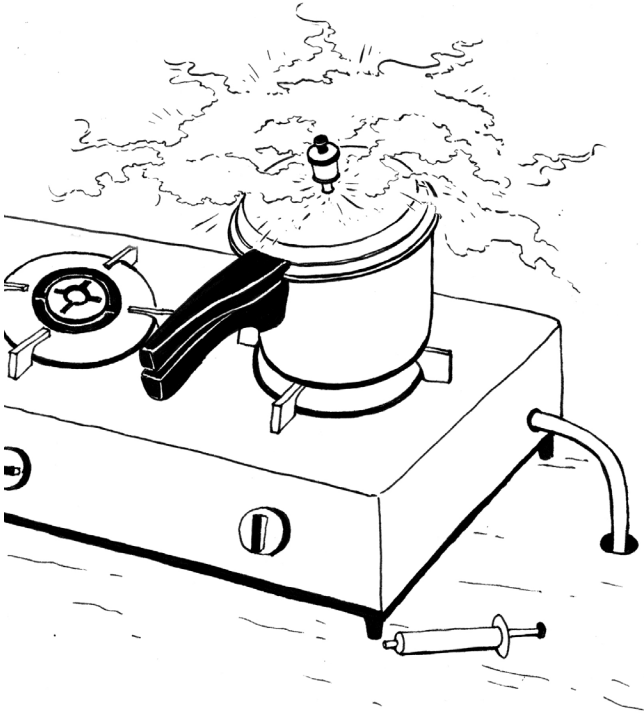
My mother tuts at how I fumble when I
wash blood from meat, how I can never
slice the tissue in sharp surgeon strokes like
her's

When I knead the dough she laughs at how I
fight it like I'm
in the boxer's ring, then demonstrates
the correct way, her forearms taut and
rippling with effort

Often I splatter hot oil whilst deep frying
vadis,
splice a fingertip or two when chopping
globes of tomato.

Sometimes she laughs,
sometimes her mouth sits in cruel straight
lines of abject,
unfiltered disappointment
I flounder, I stumble like a cadet on her first
day.

My mother wishes I were a better cook.
She frets and worries about how I'll get my
nutrition,
how I'll char my vegetables and undercook
the rice,
I laugh and offer her consolations.
Truth be told,
the prospect of hunger does not worry me
much,
being a writer
I know it quite well, already.



Body

Boys Like You

Middle school, and I saw red in
my underwear for the first time
Mom told me everything
How to deal with becoming a woman
How to fight the pain, because that's
what women do
But she never armed me for
the boys at school
Boys like you, who
laughed at me for the hair on my arms
And on my legs
Boys like you, who
would never like me back
For I didn't have long lashes to bat at you
Or a wit to amuse you or even a sharp
tongue that could wrap around your acid
words and dissolve them to nothingness
Your laughter rang out in that crowded
school bus and
reverberated around me, your mockery
crushed my tender adolescent heart into
tiny, bite sized pieces.

So I took my seat at the back of the bus
Out of the sight of
Boys like you
And I skipped school on the days I bled,

afraid of staining my skirt in front of
Boys like you
And by god, I wouldn't dare to wear anything
but long sleeves, even if
it was melting outside, for I was
afraid to be shamed by
Boys like you

But darling, it's been some time since middle
school,
and I've changed my mind
I no longer steal dad's razors
Or pull up my socks and roll down my
sleeves to hide
my body from
Boys like you
I am longer ashamed of the skin
I was born in, no longer
spending my days, empty stomach
Covering up my acne flare ups or
preening myself to impress
Boys like you
I don't want to be fair and lovely
Smooth and hairless like a skinned chicken,
thin waisted
and starving for
Boys like you

I've realized I don't want to be anything

but myself for
Boys like you
I'm not gonna hide
at the back of the bus from
Boys like you
So, I write this poem today
For girls, everywhere, broken by
Boys like you
And for the future mothers
So they don't grow up to raise
Boys like you.





Hidden Bodies

"If your body could speak to you, what would it say?"

On a good day,
you, let me be.
You do not run your hands over me,
again and again, as if searching for some
hidden wound, you do not
grope, pinch, pull at me, like an unfamiliar
face sometimes does,
in crowded metro carriages

On a bad one, you
stand naked in front of the
foggy bathroom mirror,
staring at me, almost dispassionately
looking for places to fix knees
too wobbly,
nose, crooked
hair, cropping up everywhere, thick, dark,
like weeds that grow back every season no
matter how much
the gardener salts it or sprays it or takes to it
with a trowel

But I'm not here to preach to you
body positivity

I'm sure you've heard enough of that already
And no matter how hard you try
not to buy into societal norms of beauty,
Sometimes the voices of your sixth grade
bullies are louder than some stranger-on-theinternet
telling you "you're beautiful as you
are"

See, I know you love me.
things could've been worse you
could have been born a cripple,
or deaf or colour blind
or with defective genitalia, like Hitler—what
the school counselor said,
And you love me
as a mother loves an unruly child,
guarded, held back,
as if a single indulgence would spark off a
rebellion

But before you start off again tomorrow
morning
Hammering about your body, fixing what
doesn't need fixing
stare at yourself hard in the mirror,
familiarise yourself with every nook, ridge,
cranny
touch yourself, and I mean, really touch
yourself, do not be perfunctory

feel where it is soft, where firm, trace the
angles,
give a name to all your scars.
you and I are bound together for a long
journey, my dear
Let us cease to be strangers first.

Girlhood

noun

the state or time of being a girl.

Girlhood is—
Taut flesh and
swollen gums

plastic trinket and paper swan
blister and eggshell.

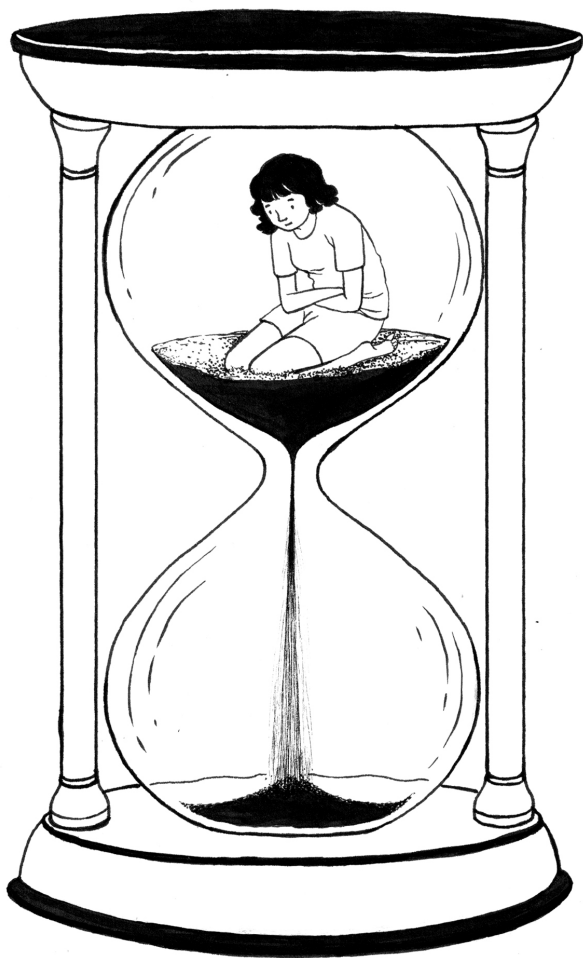
sugar syrup and bleach
a flaming red gulmohar tree

Girlhood is—
A blue-limbed beetle at the
bottom of the throat, trying
to claw its way out.

A body, pinched, pulled, policed
A body still
reinforcing itself with
connective tissue,
calcium and
steel.

Girlhood is—
a body

of equal parts cartilage
and gossamer,
A body not quite used to
bruising,
yet.



Asma

Every morning,
Asma wakes up
to the blare of her morning alarm
Straddled in her pink comforter,
Eyes lidded with the night's dreams,
birds-nest hair and bad breath

In the shower,
Droplets of condensation
Race down her back and bare legs
As she takes a blade to her skin
she is raw, rubbed, freshly shaven flesh
The blade is sharp and draws blood
And the droplets that race down her leg
are now red.

Wet hair drying on her shoulders
Vanilla body spritz and clear nail polish
A bandaged nick like an
undone thread in a tapestry
Asma blends foundation
On her cheeks
and kohl-lines her eyes
Rose coloured lipstick on her lips

Now Asma treads carefully,
She can't look too pretty,
or they'll stop taking her seriously.

A stole wrapped carefully to hide her chest
There are men on the streets that strip her
naked
With just their eyes
A pepper spray in her handbag
and a pocketknife in her jeans.
She wonders if she will have to use someday
Will it sink into flesh, or
will it scrape against bone?
The women's helpline number is tattooed
Across the grooves of her brain
Asma steps out into the world,
to live her life through just
another
regular
day.



Begin Again

It's the first date.
I take the salted caramel popcorn
You have an extra large Coke
I'm wondering if I did the right thing by
saying yes when you
trip over your own shoelace
And splatter sticky, cold cola all over my
white shirt, and
your eyes are fixed at my chest as I try to
clean the mess
I never call you back again

Wait.
Let's go back.

Begin again—
We settle down for the movie
You told me it's a surprise
When it starts playing, I realize
it's slapstick comedy
And you laugh all throughout the 1 hour 43
minutes at terrible sexist jokes
I never call you back again

Begin again—
The movie starts
My heart does a little cartwheel,
We have the same taste,
I'm enjoying it so much that I
almost don't notice your hand,
Sidling up slowly to rest
squarely on my thigh
I shake you off, you call me a prude as I walk
out
I never call you back again

Begin again—
The movie was wonderful
We can't stop discussing it and
Our hands soon find their way to each other,
It's getting colder, your hands are warm
So I grip them tightly,
But when you offer me your jacket, I refuse
I get home
And then I call you back again.

Begin again...



Growing Pains

One morning I awoke
to a stain on my bed sheet
a mark blooming like a red flower
My mother said I was
becoming a woman
Why did she seem so sad, then?

As I grew, I noticed
How strangers in the street stared
at the bulk in my shirt
Uncle's hugs lingered a bit longer
And bit by bit, all the shorts and
miniskirts in my closet disappeared

And I brushed them all aside
The lecherous glances, whistles and
laughter that followed in my footsteps
And I stopped going out after dark
to watch the fireflies
And I stopped playing football with
the neighborhood boys

Sometimes I rest my head on ma's lap
And I cry
And I think why do things
have to be this way?
Ma says nothing
I think she cries too.



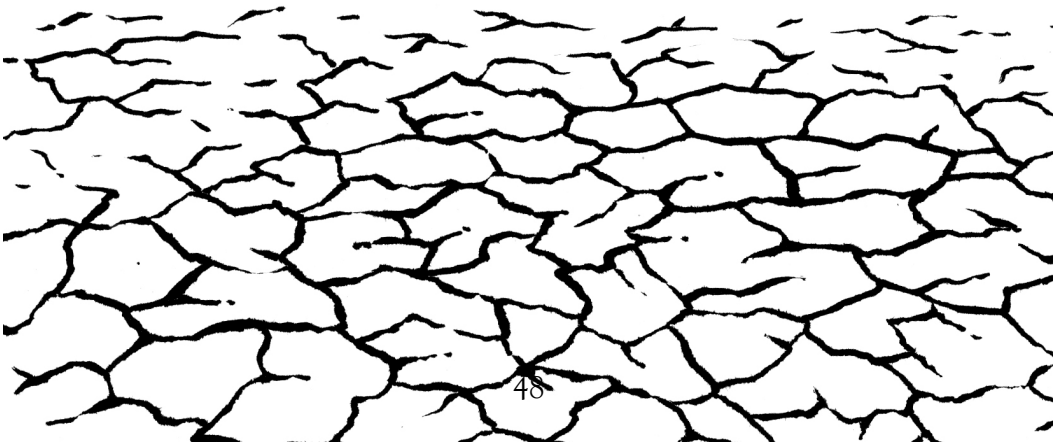
Dream

The Writer's Process (Is Not Gentle)

Inspiration, elusive stranger
arrives unexpectedly
in the seconds before sleep,
in the haze after lovemaking
making poached eggs for breakfast
or walking the dog

The birthing is difficult,
it is not gentle, or elegant, or any of those
beautiful things
that writing is compared to,
to push inspiration out into a tangible form
there is blood, of course, torn muscles,
the sight to see when legs are spread apart
is often not pleasant; creation is not
always beautiful
Then, the glistening head of a new born,
a breathing, purple-tinged alien is received
the joy is boundless, but temporary, for then
another struggle begins

You must nourish it
breasts may turn sore, but the beast is not
satiated easily
it demands more, it mewls and screams and
the writer knows no peace



then chisel it, carve, Michelangelo's
apprentice
muscles ache, sweet, salty sweat and maybe,
even tears

What emerges of all that toil
of the struggle of whittling thoughts
into shape, of pruning a word here, a
paragraph there,
sandpaper, sandcastles, coffee, killing time
and characters and plotlines
is
beauty, coal turned jewel
yet the cautious writer is never too attached
to this creature of his own creation

If ever he begins to resent it,
find fault, or misstep or weakness
he discards his work, without sentimentality,
without filial affectations
and soon embarks on the long, arduous
journey of birthing another.

How to Eat an Octopus

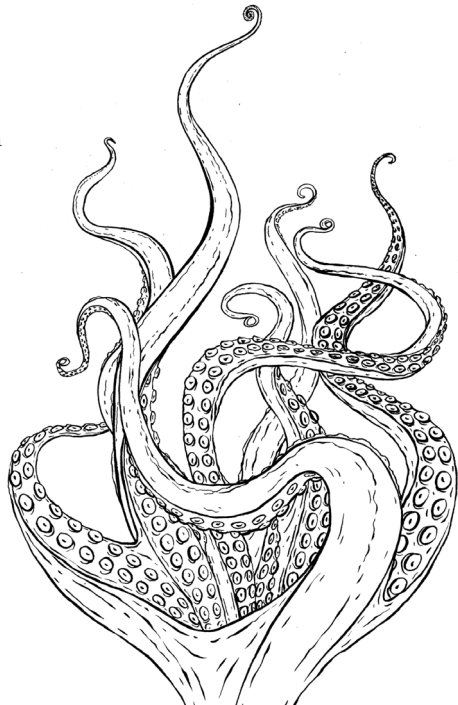
San-nakji (산낙지): a Korean raw dish that features a young live octopus cut into small pieces and served immediately.

Dinner tonight has:
Three hearts. One systemic.
Two branchial.

Feel a tinge of jealousy—you
have only one, and
it's already started to bruise.

Feel it scrape against your tongue—
raw, gelatinous, like toughened jelly,
you expect also
to taste brine and ocean
but this little one was
factory-farmed—it has not known
the open water, never will.

Octopi can open jars,
solve puzzles, remember faces—
every bite you take of its
rubber skin is
memory, cognition
dissolving in your mouth.



Its tentacles, daubed in sauce and sesame
seeds,
dance morbidly on your plate,
fighting your chopstick ever so often as
the last of nerve activity
ebbs through them.
Chew, chew faster.

The suction cups kiss the roof of your mouth
Sticking stubbornly to your gums
as if trying to cling on for dear life
It's a futile struggle.
Your teeth sink into the slime.

Bite, chew, swallow, repeat.
Flecks of octopus escape your mouth.

You begin to choke,
octopus trapped in your throat
choke because
the creature in your mouth
can navigate mazes, could have even learnt
to recognize your face
And you choke, because
you realize you like its taste.

About the Poet

Eshna Sharma is the recipient of Wingword Poetry Prize 2019. She is an eighteen year old poet from Lucknow, India.

Eshna's work traces her personal growth as she matures, crossing the threshold from teenager to adult. In the book *Girlhood*, she expresses her disillusionment and disorientation of growing up, of finding out that the world has never been rosy. Eshna hopes that her poetry will strike a chord with teenage readers. She seeks to help them in developing their own perspectives and coping with a plethora of changes in order to make a healthy transition to adulthood.

Eshna recently started pursuing an undergraduate degree at Ashoka University, Sonapat.

Wingword Poetry Competition

Wingword Poetry Prize is an international writing competition open to both children and adults with a vigorous zeal for weaving words. It is organized on an annual basis by Delhi Poetry Slam, a prestigious literary organization based in the capital city of New Delhi (India).

The competition aims to provide a platform to alternative and unique voices in poetry, who write in English language. Since 2017, the competition has awarded more than 500 individuals who utilized poetry as a means to express their thoughts. Our winners come from all walks and creeds of life- be it school students, college-goers, engineers, doctors or retired government officials. Some of the winners belong to small towns like Gangtok or Coimbatore, whereas others live in bustling metropolitans like Mumbai or Kolkata. The lists of winners are far from exhaustive and surely continues to grow!

Prizes are awarded to those with talent in writing and a cumulative sum of ₹ 5,00,000 (approx \$7,000) is distributed among the winners of the esteemed competition each year. In addition to receiving cash prizes, winners are invited to attend Wingword's prize giving event. The winning and commended entries will also be published in the annual anthology.

Wingword Poetry Prize is open to entries from all over the world. With an emphasis on bringing the world closer through the medium of poetry, the competition envisages a global vision to value new-age thinkers with an Asian or African heritage. We believe that the language English unites us in ways more than one and we can uphold this regional diversity through an exchange of poetic magic.

We push our participants to think beyond the ordinary, extend their creativity and passion for writing. Selected poems showcase a fresh and authentic composition, brimming with a vitality of inventive surprises. The poems should have the ability to make us stop and reflect, smile, laugh or even cry. All themes are allowed- family, love, heartbreak, society, history or intricate observations on day-to-day life. It's your imagination, so let it run wild.

Read Other Books by Wingword

How To Love A Broken Man by Vancouver Shullai

How to Love a Broken Man is a collection of thoughtful and honest poetry exploring varied shades of life.

Author: Vancouver Shullai is the winner of Wingword Poetry Prize 2017. He was born and brought up in the Khasi community of Shillong, Meghalaya.

Riding On The Summer Train

Riding On The Summer Train is an anthology of poems that delicately represents the diverse voices and thoughts of the new generation of Indian poets. These are the winning poems of Wingword Poetry Competition 2019, celebrating the multitude of thoughts and the creative spirit of young people.

Girlhood is a stentorian poetic revolt with its unapologetically independent voice. Eshna Sharma has seamlessly conjured up the prismatic panoply of poems that would profoundly resonate with young readers in the liminal phases of their lives. From poetry fervently brimming with the themes of societal evils, faith, gender, identity and familial bonds to the reminiscent recollection of first love in a refreshing, non-clichéd fashion, the poet has poignantly disrobed the world of its pretentiousness and poured its essence into her verses, in its raw and unconcealed glory.

Girlhood is a collection of twenty poems accompanied with imaginative illustrations by Manisha Naskar.



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