CONNECTIONS

COBIS Poetry Competition 2021

Anthology of Entries

A murmuration of starlings flying over Southern Israel, January 2016

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Special contributor

Linda Jin (Year 7A)

Horribly contained

in an international cage

Online – no life

1330 restrictions

build your prison

Masked lives are ruled by the screen

No more “tomorrow”

No more “I can’t”

Masks like phantoms

will stay in the shadows

Familiar strangers will rejoin together

trying to remember

Air will know us once more

drying our tears for the loved ones we’ve lost

Can you hear their souls crying “Live”?

Year 9

FAMILY

We walked up the bright green hill,

And there we sat gazing at the fleecy fluffy clouds,

High up in the sky.

You watched me run, you watched me climb,

And all you wanted to do was just watch me smile.

We sat on the grey pebbled beach,

Unfolding stories and tales as the calm distant waves rolled by.

So I wondered to myself,

What would the world be without you by my side?

We sat on your old leather chair with a book on our lap,

With a pencil in my hand and your endless

Knowledge in your mind,

You taught me how to read, you taught me how to write.

So I wondered to myself,

What would the world be without you by my side?

I once leaned over the terrace,

'Stop leaning! You're scaring me,' you cried,

So I looked at you... and raced to give you a hug.

A hug stronger than anything I've ever known.

So I wondered to myself,

What would the world be without you by my side?

We walked up the bright green hill. I waited for you,

At the top...

But you fell... and you didn't rise.

So I sat there lost in the funereal chair,

A devastation I couldn't bear.

So I thought to myself,

What *will* the world be without you by my side?

Frangiskos Lago Da Silva Sourtaggias

Whenever I asked Dad about you, Granny,

His voice got so quiet he was whispering,

His eyes glossy and lachrymose,

Hands stiff, almost paralysed, against his side.

I never understood

Why.

To me, you were

Nothing *special*.

You looked just like any other Granny:

Stumpy and plump around the edges,

Sugar cookies and steamy pumpkin pies

Your only personality trait –

I might have just been hungry!

But you were nothing *special* or *unique*.

I regret being so oblivious, so ignorant.

So childish.

One mellow afternoon, we were all alone,

The dulcet note of the crackling fireplace

To keep us

Warm.

It echoed in wild bursts, like fireworks lighting up the sky,

Making each and everybody's life

A little bit more

Thrilling, worth

Living.

I asked you to tell me a story,

Maybe one with adventure, romance, or dragons.

A simple enough request,

I thought.

Words trickled out, twisted, and turned.

Like a million and one spider webs,

Intertwined so perfectly you might just think twice

Before scraping it off the wall.

Together we revisited old precious memories of yours,

A layer of dense dust coating them

But still so alive,

That if I imagined hard enough,

I too could live

Within your past.

Turns out your stories weren't about adventure, romance, or dragons –

or maybe they were – but of a different kind.

Trouble you and your siblings

Had got into:

Broken family vases, spilled buckets of

Thick, creamy milk, heavy tin cans stuck down the village well.

It reminded me of 'Little House on the Prairie',

With Laura Ingalls and her friends.

We laughed so hard over simple

Wholesome strings of otherwise meaningless

Words,

that bashed into each other to make *more*,

so much *more*.

Afterwards my mouth felt raw and sore –

And sweet, so sweet

I licked my upper lip,

Believing I'd taste

Icing.

And then you spoke of something else.

Not adventure, romance, or dragons –

This time they definitely weren't.

You said, 'Grab some water, my dear.

Can I tell you something?

Don't tell your Daddy though.

Even he doesn't know.'

You told me of

Red, glowing dancers in the night, the voices of old ladies

Lost in a cacophony of thoughts

And dreams and last goodbyes.

I wasn't too smart;

I didn't know what you were referring to.

Now I do.

Soon, red glowing dancers weren't the only story I was told.

I heard of ladies from the city with little girl workers;

You.

Sleeping in a basement,

Your lullaby each night

not the sound of your mother's mellifluous singing,

But screeching and shrieking rats

nibbling and biting at your little toes.

They might as well have been

Mine.

Your voice got so quiet you were whispering,

Your eyes glossy and lachrymose,

Hands stiff, almost paralysed, against your side.

But this time, I understood

Why.

It's not every day that someone

Is blessed with a Granny like you.

So brave and to keep surviving,

That no matter what stands in your way,

You do.

And if anyone asked what makes me tick every day,

I'd give no other answer than,

'My Granny, her name is a five-letter word

beginning with 'P'

and ending with me.'

Penny Tritsinis

Dear great-grandfather

Though your inner sailor will live forever

after you're gone, you won't see how the ship raises its sails

and glides into the ocean full of storms, for the last time

you left and are not coming back, we watch together from afar

seeing how the sails of your ship get smaller

and gradually fade away,

and when the water meets the sky,

you disappear on the horizon,

and while we mourn your disappearance

the others are greeting you with open arms,

for death is not more than a horizon

and a horizon is but the limit of our vision,

and while we mourn your disappearance

the others are greeting you with open arms,

on the other side

of the horizon.

Dear great-grandfather

in the light breeze of the ocean we hear your voice,

every time you tell us to laugh instead of weep,

you tell us to see you in the things we love,

you tell us

watch the waves and talk to someone we love,

sit outside with a book,

run around with our pets,

spend some time on the beach,

dig our toes into the sand,

smell the salt of the sea, feel the grains, look at it,

go sailing, watch how the trees sway in the wind,

watch the waves wave you hello on our behalf.

You have now left for good,

dear great-grandfather.

The horizon has taken the last of you.

I was defeated by a tsunami of distress,

it calmed down with time,

at the start I could barely hold myself together,

my chest ripped as I sobbed,

but as the last tear eventually fell,

I recovered and now,

I'm ready to meet you again

in a better time,

many years later when we can run around

together like we used to do.

Dear great-grandfather,

I hope we meet again

in a better place,

on the other side

of the horizon.

Natalia Bortnyk

When a man wakes up with a start,

the first thing he feels is the trepidation of living alone.

The empty room he lives in is like a bleak park on a rainy day

which is supposed to have a lot of people but they're all at home.

Desolation slowly devours him.

The lonely old man it seems nobody cares for,

in his bedroom he sits there and stares.

He raises his children like swallows that fly,

Now he grows old in the nest alone.

Young children,

What are you up to?

A gorgeous world makes your eyes confused,

but can you take time, even a little bit,

to accompany the elderly who miss you with all their heart.

Companionship is a wood-burning fireplace,

it can bring you warmth when you feel cold.

Listen to his heartfelt love,

Some people are worth melting for.

David Liu

Mother,

Your pale fingertips care for my temples,

I can't help being like a child

holding your skirt tightly.

Mother,

to keep hold of your gradually disappearing figure

although dawn has cut the dream into smoke,

I still do not dare open my eyes for a long time.

I still cherish the bright red scarf

I am afraid that washing it will make it

lose your unique warmth.

Mother,

Years of flowing water are not enough.

I am afraid the memory will fade too

how dare I easily open its screen

I cried to you for a thorn

but with the crown of thorns now, I dare not,

I dare not groan.

Mother,

I often look up to your picture sadly

Even if a call can remedy the loss

How dare I disturb your sleep

I still dare not display the sacrifice of love like this

Although I write songs

to the flowers, to the sea, to the dawn

Mother,

the first dear in the world, maternal love, the first love in the world.

Yixin Wang

RELATIONSHIPS

We walked on the same rough road

Friendships are like sea waves

You can feel it's true

You can hear it by the sound waves

Maybe it will go but will come again

We leaned together like a blind flower

In the wind and rain

Still not giving each other up

Sometimes in life you find a special friend

May change your life completely

Looking up at the night sky

Counting the stars

Clear eyes

Bells – like laughter

As if it happened yesterday

Enter society with ignorance

Without the help of friends

The abyss pulls me down with force

Loneliness envelops me

Can't wash away sadness

Friendships are like gems

They need care and affection

We part ways after growing up

Bring our own dreams

Go on to different lives with our own mission

Believe in yourself, that's the secret of success

Miranda Zheng

I just want to let you know

That I love you more and more,

I see our remarkable relationship rapidly grow

You are my wonderful world

You shine like a bright star

A wonderful soul with a golden heart,

You are the one, the only

Unique person I deserve

You are a gorgeous girl

That I wholeheartedly embrace

Every day I hear that knock on my door

Your melodic voice like that of an angel's

My brain can't seem to take a break

From that mellifluous voice of yours

Eeriness and uncertainty all around,

Every time you leave the room.

Rayhan Razim

NATURE

The veins are connected to the green

Absorb the yellow dust

To purify the poisonous gas

Release beneficial air ions

The Green food

Is physically and mentally unhurt

Like a butterfly flying

The light body can glide slowly

Fly up to the blue sky and white clouds

A Green Environment

No black pollution

There is no harm

Full of genuine love

Green mind

Let us be like the wings of an angel

Flying between the green space

With a message of truth

Let's come together

Save every piece of paper

Save every kilowatt-hour of electricity

Save every drop of water

Michael Wang

Year 10

RELATIONSHIPS

Friendship is a priceless flair

Dwelling within our hearts

An irreplaceable pillar of support

I will forever cherish this budding rose

This sweet smell of sureness

A helping hand when times are tough

The best gift you can bestow upon each other

I will forever cherish this budding rose

Like two peas in a pod

Like soft waves dousing a sun-kissed beach

This warm feeling of comfort

I will forever cherish this budding rose

The home of our hearts

Where problems melt like lemon drops

And sadness fades away like pain

Their hand in mine and mine in theirs

I will forever cherish this budding rose

Danai Georgiadou

Numb.

That is all I am feeling since I last heard from you.

I still can't believe you betrayed me like that.

My heart has shattered into pieces like glass.

I hope you know how much pain you're causing me.

We were neighbours but treated each other like family.

Meeting you was like meeting my destiny.

Your imagination was out of this world,

Having a goal to touch the clouds,

Who knew your eagerness would cost you a fortune.

Nonetheless, your energetic vibe would always make

My lips to break out into a smile,

No matter what occasion.

But as they say, happy moments don't last forever,

The string between us finally snapped.

We started quarrelling over silly things,

Not knowing the repercussions of our actions.

Until one day, I got the news that you left,

Left me, your best friend of more than eight years.

I didn't care much at the time,

I still wasn't over the fact

That you blamed me for a mistake you made.

But the guilt of not visiting you on your birthday

Is still eating me up.

I didn't know.

Didn't know it would've been the last time I saw you,

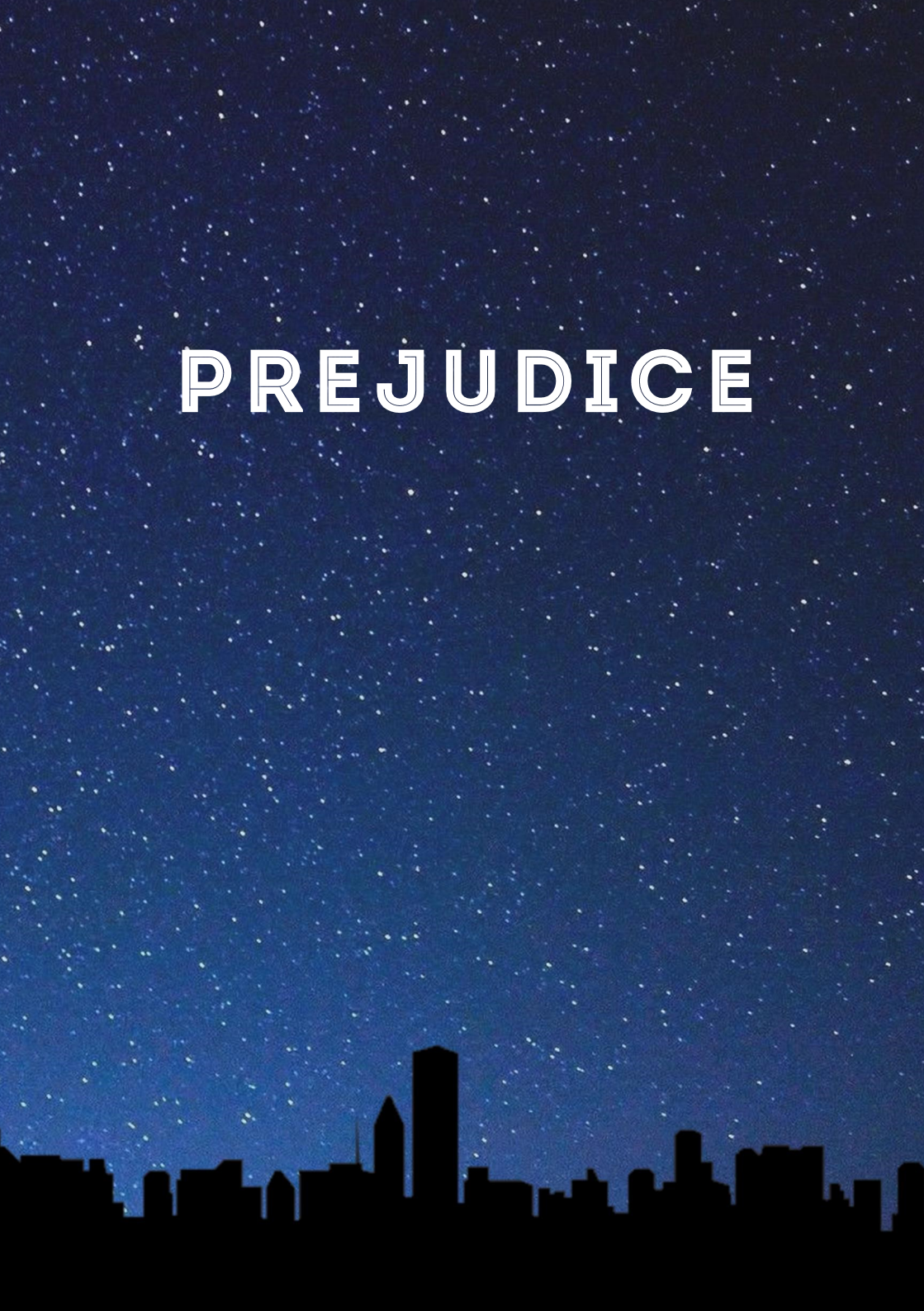
My valiant Valkyrie. I heard the news about you.

Come back, I have to tell you so many things,

Let heaven miss you a little.

Aisha Chand

PREJUDICE



Children are born to be kind and considerate

Prejudice damages their perspectives

They put on 'coloured' glasses to look at people

and treat them differently.

What is the difference between you and me?

I was just a normal innocent kid

Until they teased me like most people did

To get into someone's shoes

Feelings, emotions, and moods are the same

for every conscientious person

The more you ignore, laugh, and bully me

the more tolerant I will be to you, my friend.

When racism comes to an end

you will be as embarrassed as it sounds

Back to the beginning,

What is the difference between me and you?

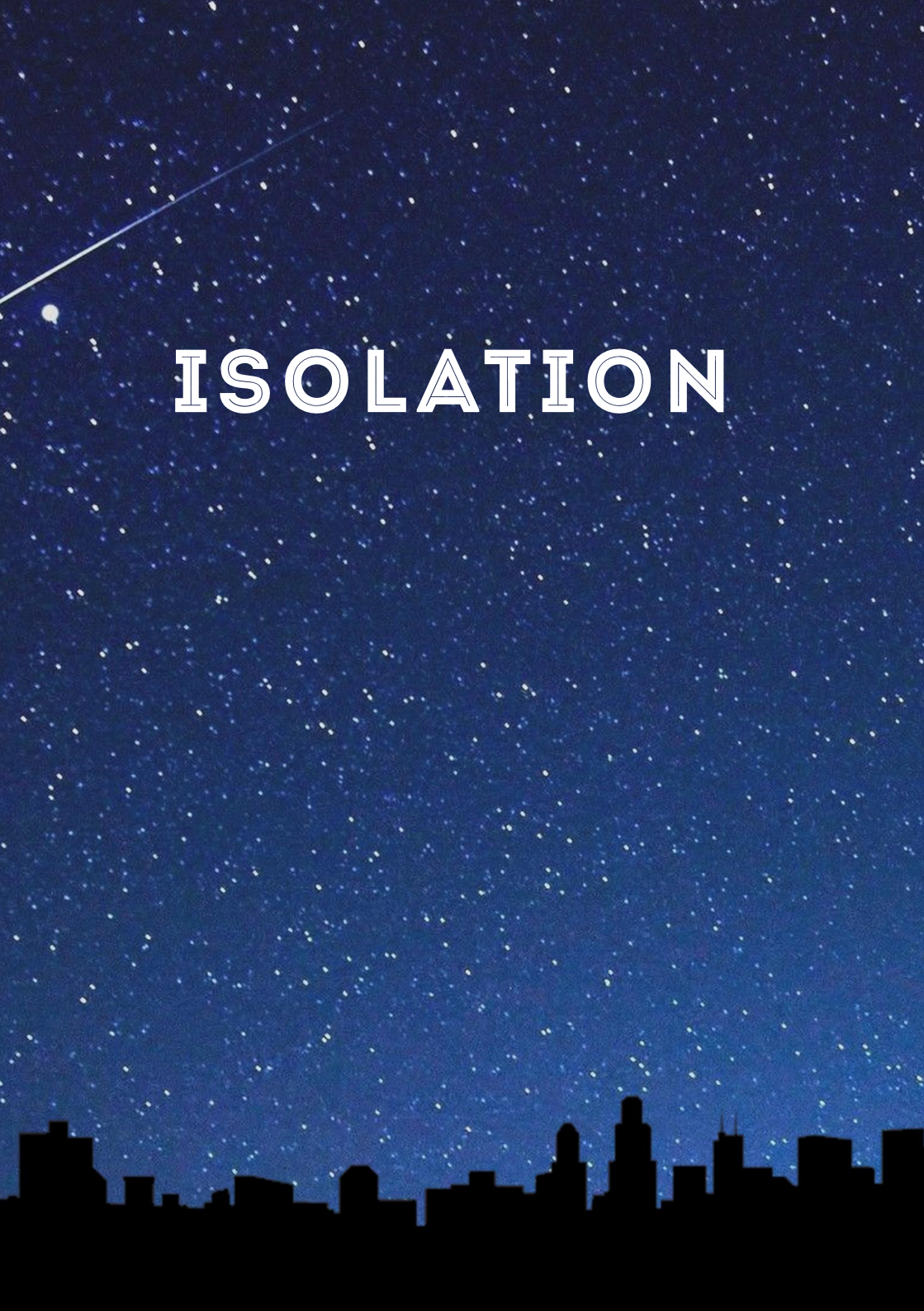
All humans share the same blood and heart

In order to love, not to hate

Take off your 'coloured' glasses and you will find

A world full of pride

Elias Huang


ISOLATION

Lockdown is an infinite holiday for him

He is like a king, has all things around him

He swims in a sea of snacks

The video games are like the elves, having fun with him

School is not as important as painting

Entertainment is the only thing in his mind

Will anything interrupt his peaceful life?

Online school is like a huge rock put on his back

His arms and legs start to feel heavy

He cannot stand up with the curse called homework

He is trapped by the demon called professional words

When he notices, he is in an inescapable hell

Boredom is like a hurricane, crashes every beautiful thing in its path

The interests of video games are like helpless animals eaten by it

Even the lightness of fire is like the dark ash in the wind.

Trying to keep the beautiful things from the hurricane

Do you know which will be next?

Sunlight shines into the bedroom

His eyes are open

The familiar ceiling, the familiar bed

Another day, another day of lockdown

Shikun Shan

Isolation slowly turning him insane

staying all day and night in his house

away from everyone else

feeling alone like a stray dog

Being stuck home another day

missing friends and family

looking for a way to spend the day

feeling frozen in time

The only way to go out is to wear a mask

and then space must be more than enough

shops struggling to survive

supermarkets like waterholes in a desert

All alone at home

for some is torture

others find it relaxing

like having a break from the fast-paced world

Stefanos Vassos

NATURE

She generously gives and never asks for anything

Open like a hug to accept the wonders of life

With her beautiful light blue dress

and the green clover-like colour

that keeps vanishing and shrinking

and fading by some frozen rivers

Hearts that keep destroying that dress piece by piece.

By cutting the open-handed suppliers of oxygen,

throwing garbage everywhere

and polluting the fragile ecosystem of the vast, blue sea.

The dress has remained beautiful

but it will struggle to sustain itself for longer.

We have dark times ahead so prepare to conserve the dress.

Adam Papadiamantopoulos

Wars are depriving lives just like criminals

Driven by desire, conflicts never end.

There are no victors, only failure.

At the end of the day, humans are harming themselves.

I suffered, I endured, I forgave.

Deforestation, pollution, overpopulation, the terms I never heard.

But it really hurts.

They made me look bald.

And sometimes I feel I am old.

I suffered, I endured, I forgave.

Technology is great but cash is king

Millions of factories make me hotter than before.

But we are together, we are one.

You are killing yourself.

Everyone says humans are the smartest.

I don't think so.

I suffered, I endured, couldn't forgive.

Now's the time to show my anger.

Harsher than anything.

Tsunamis, floods, locusts, these are my sharpest weapons.

The only people who can save you are yourself.

Hope you remember and change.

You suffer, you endure, you forgive.

What can I do to you

You are all my kids.

Kangwei Zhou

Special contributor

Aithra Anagnostopoulou (Year 13B)

A Hand of Light

'Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.'

from 'Anthem' by Leonard Cohen

I

The rays of the sun percolate thinly through the cracks in the walls
onto latticed wallpaper cracked and peeling from the passage of solitude and time
revealing a bare, naked wall
smothered by the willow's tendrils.
The sunglare outside hazes the green overgrowth
that has scaled the crumbling walls and crept through the cracks,
illuminating within motes of dust suspended in air,
silent thieves trying to fulfil a long-forgotten prayer.

The scent of time is there, suspended –
The scent of the years are there, suspended –
The scent of that vanished smile that once danced with grace
within these cracked and time-smeared walls.

The scent of memories –
Forgotten memories.
The scent of loss.

II

Your memories gleam
like candles in the bounding winter dark –
they'll sputter and vanish
with one frozen breath of wind.
Ash on the wick and the
lingering scent of petrified wax
are all that remain.

And all those moments –
motes in the light

that you took for granted –
they too like thieves will suddenly take flight,
never to return.

The past haunts the present
as the mind taunts the soul.
You'll be alone –
empty.
In the dark, the memories have absconded.
And what will you be left with?
Hope?
Hope hanging by a bitter thread
to be snatched by one breath of wind.

You're alone –
look around you –
in this dark may you find your light,
in this light may you find your substance.
Look for it, seek it out. Utter the prayer that can reveal a hand of light.
You're alone with your memories that gleam and fade –
hold on.

III

And then –
the gleaming motes grow warm and arise,
coalescing in a pulse-beating hand of light
that is born of the ashes and
grants you care and hope.
It rises from the strangling weeds,
it frees itself and takes flight with those thieves
reviving a breath of life inside these cracked dying walls.

The light surges in,
prises open the cracks
and extinguishes the hollowing dark.
The flame on the wick gleams and burns,
reviving again those latticed years
and the smile that had danced with grace.
All is not lost. A hand made of light
cradles you, holds you as the walls fall away –
you are not lost.

COBIS
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Poetry Competition

Competition theme: 'Connections'

Deadline: Wednesday 3 February 2021

cobis.org.uk/poetry

CONNECTIONS

This year's COBIS Poetry Competition focused on the theme of 'Connections' in light of the global pandemic.

Our students used the opportunity to explore through poetry-writing our interconnectedness with each other and the natural world, and the ways in which we are never truly alone.

Produced by the English Department, Byron College, Athens, Greece

Byron College
THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL