

POISON

MASHIYAT NAYEEM

A vial,
 Concoction of crimson, lilac, sickly green.
 No room for trial.
 Put the stopper on death.

An apple,
 Glimmering red, token of kindness.
 The stuff of fairytale.
 Poisoning my trust.

Sugar-coated words, dipped in honey,
 The venom that drips from your mouth
 Laced with malice, washed over me.
 Poisoning my ears.

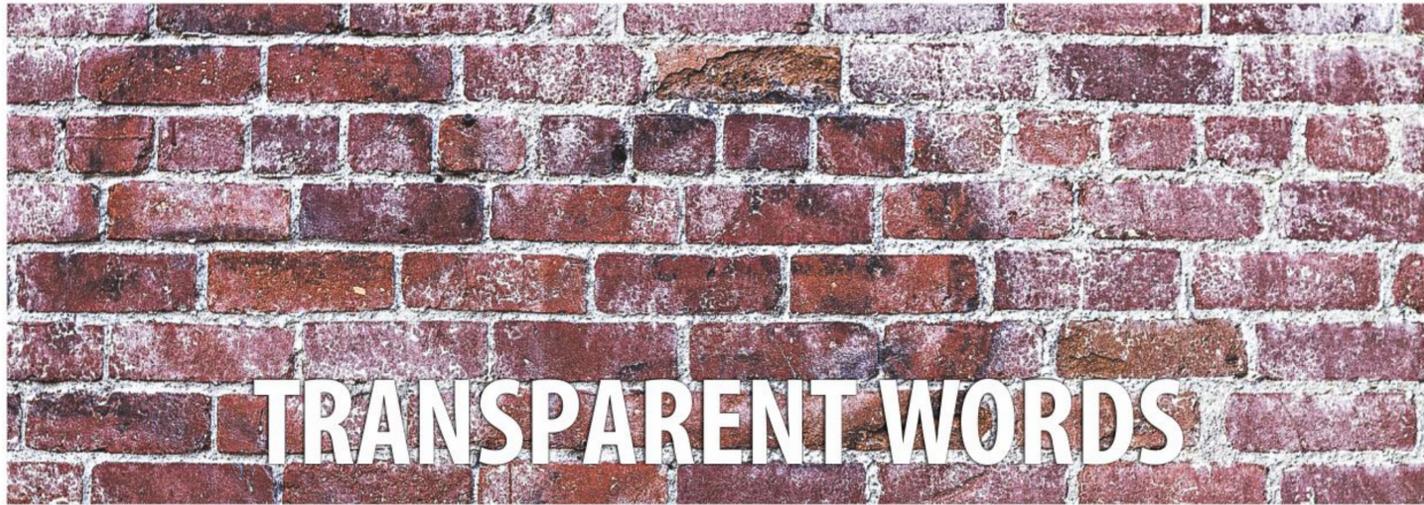
The mind,
 A wanderer in murky waters.
 Evocating the lost desolation.
 Poisoning my soul.

You,
 Malevolence twirled in your eyes
 Yet I come back every time.
 Poisoning my heart.

Why reach for the bottle?
 Let the churning toxicity caress you instead.
 Life may be poisonous,
 And you may be too.



ILLUSTRATION: MASHIYAT NAYEEM



ZARIN RAYHANA

As I stood in front of the derelict building, all I could think of was how much this place had changed since last year. The walls were covered in all sorts of scribbling from random people, some of them so faded that they were almost undecipherable. I took a step forward and assessed some of the writings I was standing in front of. They all had different handwritings.

I stood on the ledge a few days ago to watch the midnight sun. It was so beautiful, yet so deadly. Just like your face as you slept in your coffin.

My mouth curled into a sad smile as I read another. *The lyrics cut deeper, but because it didn't kill us, it made us stronger. You have closed your eyes; in front of you are true lies.*

Sighing, I felt myself drowning deeper into the void. Just when I thought I would swivel around and never come back again, Olivia came up clutching two cardboard boxes with one hand. She set them down on the threshold and turned to look at me with nothing but dismay.

"I know you're having second thoughts about this, but think about it, Kate. Your fans love you and they probably can't wait to have you back. Have you read the writings on the wall? They all reflect how much your songs meant to them and as long as you keep up with their expectations, they won't mind having new members."

I swallowed the lump in my throat as I nodded at her and handed the door keys. The building is small, only three storeys high with a bedroom on the rooftop where I

would often spend nights writing lyrics. But that was of course before my brother died. A small part of me said that I was partly responsible for his death; I had seen him take the car that midnight but never decided to stop him. We rose to fame a few years ago due to our songs reportedly being unique and deeply meaningful, no wonder our fans had left such messages on the wall. The building, belonging to our father, contained our studio, a place for a live gig and all our instruments – something I had left behind when I decided to quit music after his death because I had been too heartbroken. However, it wasn't long before I stumbled into this group of aspiring musicians at the community college who eventually convinced me into opening a new band.

Instead of entering the building with Olivia, I opted to read some more of the writings on the wall. They were strangely pleasing. After I was done with almost half of them, I came upon something that seemed really familiar. Someone had dotted down lyrics from one of our own songs, but the one that hadn't been written by me. It was one of those days when I was suffering from writer's block and my brother had taken over the job.

It said—

But even if the storm washes down the memories, close your eyes and you will always see something there. It's not the dark, it's a path to another realm.

Zarin Rayhana is a self-aggrandizing ambivert who ponders over philosophical epiphanies during rainy evenings and waits for her crush to jump straight out of her favourite novel. Treat her with novel suggestions at ericaavianazarin@gmail.com

UNREQUITTED

SAMA AHMED

Side by side on a rooftop,
 Just two kids baring our souls.
 The crack in your voice.
 God, it sounds so beautiful.
 The sound of the innocence in you.

I sigh and say, "I hope one day,
 You will find someone.
 Someone who will protect this innocence.
 Someone who will see it.
 Cherish it.
 Protect it."

As I say this, I imagine you thinking,
 "I wish I had fallen in love with you."

Truth is-
 I wish you had fallen in love with me.
 But I'm not that lovable,
 And you could rule the Galaxy.

The writer is a civil engineering graduate from Ahsanullah University of Science & Technology.

