

DYSPHORIA

AFSARA KHAN

You can see it in these eyes, I am here no more,
 Just a hollow vessel lingering, that a soul once bore.
 How to fill this void in me, this yawning chasm?
 Art, music, literature, I've tried it all before.

I suppose there's something else that's missing,
 Something one can't touch or see,
 What else is left to try, what more could there be?

It hurts to want, my dear, it hurts to ask.
 Perhaps I'm unworthy of peace, it's ever so out of grasp.
 Is it always going to be like this? Forever behind a mask?

It all feels so strange these days, quite peculiar indeed,
 A sea of friendly faces in sight, but not one when in need.
 The void is taking over, my friend, I can sense it engulfing me,
 Eternally tired, I tread these forsaken roads of mine
 How long will it be?

Afsara likes to waste time looking at memes. Send her more at <https://www.facebook.com/afsaraakhan>

Lost hopes

NAMREEN SHAIYAZ

His breath is the first thing to stir the stale air here in eons. As he lays down on the dusty bench he tries to envision what this place once represented: a sea of expectation and hope.

Many years ago, young, bawling children had bounced impatiently on these benches as the waiting for the magical train to take them aboard and see relatives they'd only heard snatches of and waited and waited. *Where's the train, where is it? When is coming?* Their worried parents would hold on to their tickets as if their lives depended on it and hope that they'd get a spot on it. *I need to get a seat on it I waited hours in line for this!*

Fresh-faced graduates in their neatly pressed clothes would sit as impassively as they could, trying so, so hard not to show the nervousness on their faces as they thought about the far-flung places they'd been posted to for their new jobs and *I'm already feeling homesick, how will I last for so long out there? I'm so scared.*

And lastly, there were the most hopeful ones out of them all, the ones waiting to see their long-lost companions, the loved ones they hadn't seen in ages, the loved

ones who were little more than fragments of happy memories. *Are they the same person anymore? Will I still love them? Will they still love me? Please let them love me still.*

Millions of people with millions of stories and millions of dreams had worn down the floor with their anxious pacing

and the inevitable stampede when they heard the shrill whistle of the train over the constant hubbub — the hubbub that would quiet down and start up again with a renewed vigour because *the train's here, get your bags, we need to hurry up, hurry up, hurry UP!* And people would board the magical boxes that would carry them to

the world of their dreams.

But no more.

No more did the train whistle, no more did anyone run to their dreams, no more did the din of excitement pervade the air.

All that now remained inside was silence, just like the boy himself.

He too was once a vessel for joy and hope and *dreams*, but all that remained inside was bitter loneliness and hatred. All that joy had been destroyed, just as easily as one would break the intricate cobwebs that lined the insides of the abandoned ticket counters.

Gone, just like that.

All it takes is the wrong words at the wrong times, the wrong cracks in the wrong places to shatter someone in the worst ways possible.

And all you're left with is lost dreams.

The boy swung his legs off the bench and picked his way through the grimy floor. He stopped in front of the platform and whistled an eerie tune as he waited for a train that would never come to take him somewhere that didn't exist.

The writer is a class XI student at Green Dale International School.

