



# eneration

Reborn







# Generation reborn

English Undergraduate Student Association

University of Windsor  
2024



## Forward for *Generation* 2024

I would like to congratulate the students of the English Undergraduate Student Association for reviving *Generation* and adding to its over forty-year history. Publication of this entirely student-driven magazine understandably lapsed during the Covid pandemic and for a few years following. The students' passion for writing alongside their remarkable initiative have propelled *Generation* back into the limelight. EUSA members solicited work from across the campus, making *Generation* 2024 a university-wide project, and set up meetings and workshops to educate themselves on how to generate, edit, and publish a manuscript. On behalf of the Department of English and Creative Writing, I would like to thank and honour the creators of and contributors to a renewed *Generation* 2024!

*Dr. Joanna Luft*  
*Head, English and Creative Writing*



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Ode to the Ashes

I sing of those precious, broken things  
who wither and crumble in age,  
who burn as a desperate hand clings.  
I sing of ashes.  
Things whose forms live past their purposes,  
that strain and bow under their own weight,  
that exhaustion upon them creeps,  
what of them?  
They crack.  
They shatter and rupture and tear to pieces,  
falling upon the ground trailing chains of memory.  
Their ashes settle and tension eases.  
Soil envelopes them.  
From it are pale roots digging, and green sprouts rising  
out from dead ground into welcoming wind.  
Blood of the new is on old bones feasting.  
I sing of life.  
Born of blood and grown as an old soul grieves,  
a hopeful little sprig joins brethren vast.  
I sing of the ashes under waxy, green leaves.

*Katherine Jones*



*Andrea Niven*

## Generation Reborn

### I birthed a poet and tried to kill her

Born from my molding womb this poet-  
I feed her purpleberry muffins, buttermilk, and sonnets  
I give her playthings of inkpen and creamypaper bonnets

Born from my spoiled womb this poet-  
I press the flimsy blade through her openplum throat  
I muffle her with malnourished mouth, yet she remains afloat.

Born from my tainted womb this poet-  
seethes in tendersensitivity  
pulls out cracked mosaics of reflectivity.

Born from my sickly womb this poet-  
plunges grimyhands into gooeyorgans  
As death gripped the child's rosy cheek  
I birthed her in a newborn shriek.

Born from my dead womb this poet-  
she is the same that sits in you  
from my spongyskin she flew.

Born from my ripe womb this poet-  
light surroundings built on twisted spine  
I've come to honeysoften and care for her, this poet of mine.

*Khloe Rowse*

wick

take me as I am,  
for I am weak

weak as the wick  
of the year-old candle

on the verge of disintegration  
yet flammable

and just like the wick  
I will burn a small flame

I will burn  
until one day feels like two

two days feel like a week  
but a week feels like it was just yesterday

*Stephen Castillo*

## I See Ghosts in a Silver Mirror

The shining, polished mirror  
reflects blotchy figures I see,  
spots of colour like spilled tea.  
With wrinkled eyes I peer  
gazing sideways to hide my tear  
where upon spotted hands it rejoins me.  
In my heart there rests the key  
to being happy with this body that I reign over as puppeteer

For despite this form shifting and changing,  
as a forest does in the arms of a colder time,  
so too does the essence grow but diminish not.  
For I am yet the same, experience and will combining  
yet weathered hands collecting rosemary and thyme  
this thing called age that haunted my mirror now brings peace  
long sought.

*Katherine Jones*

## DIAL TONE

The radio control was stiff. It was stuck on 96.7 and Roger said the demo would be playing on channel 99.2.

I spun it and all I could hear was static. The green light refracted off my rear view mirror, and I pressed down on the gas pedal.

It was almost time. "97.3, 98.1, 98.5, 98.7, 98.9, 99.1—"

The red light had not shown up in my rear view this time.

My driving wheel spun faster than I could get the radio control to go, and I heard the opening chords of our song when the glass shattered.

\* \* \*

I told my therapist that I dreamt about my bedsheets being chewed on by my neighbour's dog.

She asked if I liked dogs—I did not. She asked about the bedsheets; I said they gave me rashes.

She said it meant that I defend people who should not be defended, and I can't stand the people who point it out.

When I open my eyes, my brother appears above my face, fearful and teary.

"What *happened* to you—no one got a call. Vance told me about a crash—"

"Well, I couldn't call—" I try at humour. "—concussion I think?"

"No—I didn't know, momma and dad didn't know—who did the hospital call? Who's your emergency contact?"

*Gold bond, forged from a twin flame.*

*Close-cropped, endless amber in their sharp eyes.*

*Sour spittle from their perfect cupid lips.*

I stay quiet.

"Who is it?"

"Ask them if she answered."

"Is it her, Quinn, I swear to God—"

When I repeat myself, my throat burns from the shout.

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He disappears from the yellowed room and returns to say it went straight to voice mail.

\* \* \*

I didn't need my shattered headlight to tell me that she does not pick up the phone anymore, but she could have shown up with a get-well-soon card. I would've taken any scrap of her sympathy into my veins, knowing that it would remedy me faster than any IV.

My gaze flits over the people in the room—four faces looking into me. My brother, his girlfriend, and my parents. Vance just called to find the floor I'm on.

Funny, how time cannot erase whose name is on that sheet. Maybe I'll see her again on the street.

I'll learn the roads better, and I'll set boundaries before anyone can burn the bridge.

I wish it could have been different, but she is going to make my name on the radio be the last word.

I keep thinking about where my wings went. Maybe they were burnt in the twin flame, blackened by heavy loss. But I can be raised from my ashes, and I think it can make it across.

I can make it across.

*Maya Roumie*



*Donevan*

## When You KNOW You'll Die Soon

I imagine people fall  
Into two categories: either they s-l-o-w waaaaaay down, or  
They speed up.  
But.  
Not before  
Their previous life gets its own big, fat, unstoppable period.

The kind of period that ends and demarcates the run-on  
sentence that previously was allowed to represent their just-so-  
so, not-meaningless, but not-ever-grateful-for-it-enough life.

The kind of life that seeks the kind of balance that's found from  
compromise for the sake of pretend peace, fake-smiles peace,  
life-is-better-if-we-just-go-on-as-we-were peace.

Then you learn you'll die soon.

Full stop.

Now life is strategic.

Either all in, or  
All-the-way out.  
All together, or  
One apart.  
All hope, or  
None. At. All.  
You'll die soon. You'll die soon.  
On a loop.  
As if that thought experiment wasn't proven long ago.  
As if we weren't born only to die at a time unknown, but  
That's the clincher.

The not knowing.  
That has no known value.  
Well, the knowing has a value, but  
It's different for everyone.

Whether it's  
Nothing, or  
Everything.

Whether you live for you, or  
For someone else.  
When you know, you start to think you KNOW all manner of  
things.  
Like urgency, like dread, like perspective on what TRULY  
matters.  
As if.  
As if you finally got to punch in your human wake-up call-card.

Now.  
Now you KNOW.  
Does life have meaning?  
Is the knowing THAT important?  
Or does it simply take Faith? Pragmatism? Optimism? Hope?

My life is not ending soon, that I know of.  
I don't know.  
I don't wish to know.

I'd rather just be every moment in the living rather than die  
every second in the knowing.

*Ruxandra Nahaiciuc*

a reprise

a memory:

a coal oil heated room

curtains drawn

against november

rattling

against a boy

rattling

against a man

rattling

teeth

false yellowed ivory

float raft like

in grandma's

cobalt-blue hobnail water glass

used just this morning to drink

chocolate breakfast milk

now seltzer-foam bedazzled

gum-less chiclets winkle

and a liver-spot hand

pterodactyl claw clutching

verse

a story:

we had only one toothbrush  
blue with a hot pink rubber  
gum massage tip  
to share for our week in  
Qualicum  
there were no thoughts against this  
there were no thoughts but for  
eating chum  
fresh caught from the fish  
and chip-shack strewn  
beach of hookah-powered hippy  
starfish who

considerate

dropped out  
a decade before us  
so we could eat  
something other than  
ourselves

too late in  
the season to  
gather camas in  
the late night fire  
pit scarred fields adjacent  
we ate  
skin to skin

the toothbrush remained  
when we took leave with  
our senses





*Andrea Niven*

## Folding Knife

Walking through a monument cemetery dedicated to children who died during the industrial revolution. I assumed these children were eaten whole by a spinning mule or swallowed up in the smog from the coal ports. Seldom would one think these children martyrs of protest against the integration and industrialization of the world around them; Dharma's pubescent Kaczynskians writhing in the mechanization of their earthly virtues.

Nevertheless, while at this monument I was reminded of one summer, riding in the back of my mother's station wagon. My older brother's grade school friend at the wheel, my brother laying himself across the back seat naturally, and me, kneeling in the trunk space with my chin resting on the back seat and my heels digging into my buttocks. We drove through the countryside and wondered at the scenery. The tunnels of trees and clearing fields passed by whilst, us, singing as loud as our lungs granted before voices cracked, "glory, glory, what a hell of a way to die."

At night we slept head to foot so as to not inflame any insecure adolescent fuss as to who was and who was not the homosexual of the bunch. When we woke in the morning to a rancher sitting atop his four-wheeler asking after our wellbeing. Assuring him as he drove off down the shoulder, we stood side by side to take our morning piss.

As the days rose out of the night's sky and in turn the darkness of the night slipped again into the warmth and success of the day, I watched the change of time, though thought nothing of it. I knelt in the back seat with all my assumed pansophicalistic view, playing with my pocket knife, flipping it open and closed pretending I was Jim Bowie, or better yet, Davy Crockett. We rarely saw a stoplight and even rarer stopped, a protest of the way of the world I'd expect and possibly why I was reminded of

this story. Would we have been the industrial revolution's dead children of protest and pride, flipping out our folding knives and shouting "glory, glory, what a hell of a way to die" while our grip on virtue went like coal into the furnace, drifting off into the virgin skies? Or would we simply sink into the unwritten history of childhood memory as kings of the wild frontier?

*Colin MacNairn*

## Generation Reborn

finders keepers, losers weepers  
they found me first, they tried to keep me  
they crafted a cage, they welded a key  
they closed the curtains, they stifled the tree  
they printed the rules, they sealed the decree  
they heard my cries, then laughed right at me.  
they proclaimed their innocence, they dismissed my plea  
they started the drought, they held back the sea  
they draw lines that cut, then say they love me  
but soon they will lose me, soon they will weep.

*Arianne Andary*

## Happily Even After

'Dad was in the toilet again,' says Tia.

'Oh, no. Did you get him out?'

'He's on the couch. Watching his show.'

'On a towel?'

Tia nods.

'Cat behaving?'

'Yeah, Jinn's sleeping on the cat tree. Think she's over it. They were cuddling last night— see my post?'

She laughs at the photo and hugs Tia with one arm. Blows out hard through her nose, then remembers to smile at her daughter. *I feel like a watercolour painting. Everything blurring together.* Back to work. Work from home. Work all the time. Now that he's out of commission, more work.

For better or for worse.

During the first lockdown, when he started getting warts, they figured it was stress. She dug out the essential cedar oil, the treatment her naturopath recommended a long time ago.

'It's probably too old to work,' she said. 'But get started, and soon the fresh stuff will be here from Amazon.'

The oil sat on the counter, unopened.

He put on weight. All the ice cream, chips. Beer. Nothing to do but watch his shows, listen to music. *Loud.*

Her job moved online, but his was on hold. She ordered groceries for her father, sanitized, and delivered, but his parents lived hours away and he couldn't help them. She begged *at least put Tia on a routine* while she worked and the schools were closed. He nodded and walked back down to the basement. Came up for food, to share a smoke with the moon, to go to bed.

Two months in, he *looked* like the moon. Yellowish, round. Too much nicotine, too much alcohol, too much time in the dark.

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'Dad looks smaller,'" said Tia one evening, after he hugged them goodnight.

'Yeah. He's not getting a whole lot of exercise.'

'But his eyes are bigger. Don't you think?'

'Maybe a little,' she said. *Maybe a lot.*

'Is it his thyroid?'

'Mmm. Not in his family, I don't think. It's on my side, though.'

'His belly is bigger, too.'

'Yeah.' *I miss his broad shoulders, his strong arms.*

'Aren't you worried?'

'Nah. Once he's back at work, he'll be okay.' *We'll be okay.*

She asked him to get a check-up, but he said the doctor's offices were backed up and he felt fine.

About that time, she began to wake alone. He fell asleep in front of the TV, burrowing into his empty cans and dirty plates. She peeked into the den and saw him shrinking into the couch cushions, head back, mouth wide. *Catching flies.* She kissed his forehead, covered him with a blanket. Not sure he noticed.

In sickness or in health.

Then, one night, thumping woke her. *That's not a bathroom visit... not a midnight snack!* She half-ran, half-fell down the stairs, and saw the cat skidding along the basement floor, slamming into the wall, the TV console, the empty couch. Chasing a creature that jumped up and down, over and under, always out of reach.

It took a few days to figure things out.

'You'll need a good legal team,' her therapist said. 'A good support group. One blessing of the pandemic is that the 12-step groups have moved online, so you can go any time, day or night, anywhere in the world.'

She chose Happily Even After.

'Come at least six times before you decide it's not for you,' the group leader said. 'The first step is admitting your life has become unmanageable.'

*Duh.*

'Why did this happen?' asked Tia.

'I'm not sure, bella.'

It's genetic, said the doctor. A way to manage depression, said the vet. Unresolved childhood trauma, said her therapist. Spiritual corruption, said the minister. Break the cycle, said the 12-steppers. Heal the wound that led you to choose this relationship. Love yourself. Think positive.

Okay. Thinking positive.

1. She doesn't see as many bugs in the house. The cat gave up hunting the centipedes in the basement long ago, but he uses his long tongue with the same accuracy as a pitcher's throwing arm.
2. She and Tia eat more vegetables and pasta – not everything has to be meat, meat, meat all the time.
3. She decorates the house any way she'd like. (The photo of her in-laws comes down immediately. Then, back up. *It's his house, too.*)
4. She and Tia are healthier. There is more humidity in the house because of the filled bathtub upstairs and the kiddie pool in the basement. Better for their skin. For their respiratory systems.
5. She sleeps more soundly now that he isn't snoring beside her—provided she empties the ensuite tub before bed. His trilling isn't as loud from the kiddie pool.
6. She could still snuggle with him. At night, he swims and sings, and plays hide and seek with the cat. But come morning, he's dozing under the couch blanket. They sit together, she with her coffee and journal, the way they sat before. The quiet time they always looked forward to.
7. She saves \$75 on coffee each month.

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8. She takes out the garbage and recycling, once his chore. But there's less now.
9. She did almost everything before anyway.

It's in the open. She can talk about it. The 12-steppers compare scars from possum, rat, and badger bites, and crooked noses from deer and pony kicks. They tell escape stories like they're fingering crystal pendulums. The new neighbour says her ex-husband turned into a wolf six years ago. She parades him on a black leather leash with silver studs, wearing a matching jacket and shiny over-the-knee boots. She shares custody with his brother.

'I wish he was something cool, like a wolf,' Tia says with her hands over his ears (or where they thought he had ears).

'But he would eat the cat. And wolves are a lot of work, bella. You'd have to walk him. Every morning and night. And muzzle him and keep him on a leash at the dog park.' *But I'd feel safer at night.*

'He smells. Like stinky fish.'

'Good thing he's not a skunk.' They laugh. He squeaks when Tia squeezes too hard.

'Do you think he understands?' Tia asks.

'Sometimes.'

'I need to know you're in there,' she tells him, after wiping his white ooze off yet another cushion. 'Say something. Please. Can you blink twice? How about jump? Jump onto my lap. C'mon. Show me you understand.'

He jumps. Off the couch, across the floor. Into the cat's water dish.

The morning of their twentieth wedding anniversary, she sees Tia off to school. She lines the cat carrier with a baby quilt made by his mother, then picks him up, places him inside. It's a misty morning, and the steady rain has eased into a drizzle. She shrugs on Tia's yellow slicker (*Why doesn't she wear it when it's raining?*), pulls on her old red rainboots, then carries

him up the grassy lane that leads to the park, the woods. On their way, they pass through ghosts of horses pulling milk-wagons, drivers leaning forward, reins slack. This history, this green space, is why they bought the house as newlyweds. Once upon a time ago.

He sits quietly during the walk. They travelled this lane many times before.... His hand brushing a red leaf from her hair, touching her baby-big belly. Pulling Tia on a sled during her first snowfall, the night sky mulberry-taupe with refracted light. Standing at the gate, her head on his shoulder, witnessing Tia's first solo journey to the park. Passing binoculars back and forth under the sharp-shinned hawk nest. Standing at the edge of the woods, listening to the sounds of the night shift.

One block to go. Puddles shine in the grassy park between the woods and the road, the standing water from spring thaws. *Are the ducks back?* Tia was a toddler the first time they spotted the mallards in the park. Silly ducks, pretending puddles were ponds. They laughed and shook their heads as driver after driver, pedestrian after pedestrian, passed without noticing. *See the duckies, Tia?* Last spring, he pointed out the line of fluffy, yellow-striped balls bobbing behind their daddy, who glided, feathered green head held proud, along the flooded path in the woods. A few days later, the sun dried the water, and they wondered about the little family. Were they picked off by hawks? By the raccoons who spilled out of the trees at dusk?

Red rainboots on green grass. Toes chill through rubber as she reaches the boggy parts. But no wetness. Her shoulders relax, just a little. No leaks this year. She slishes toward the deepest puddle-pond, nodding to the ducks who skim away from her approach. Reaches into the cat carrier, pulls him out. Cradling up his dangling legs, she lifts him to her face.

'I didn't know,' she said. 'I loved you, but I didn't know. I didn't *want* to know. Because I loved you.'

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She waits. For that moment. That moment of connection. When she knew he heard, he understood. She waits for that last message of love, regret. For the instruction to *take care of Tia and tell her I love her*.

He wriggles in her hands, smelling the water. She lowers him, facing him toward the ducks, the woods. He sits. Then splashes into the puddle-pond, frog-kicks toward the middle, disappears.

She brushes droplets from her slicker. The ducks mutter, then tip forward, mooning her in tandem. *Do they see him down there?* She laughs. *Dinner and a show*. The hawk whistles its squeak-toy whistle from the top of the oak. She watches the ripples spread and the surface settle, reflecting the sky. Then she turns and sloshes to the sidewalk home.

*Natasha Wiebe*



*Miranda Mullins*

## The Antidote

We began today to listen  
Listen critically from the echoes  
Echoes of a weighted past  
Past the theme of Frankfurt  
Frankfurt bursting with Enlightenment  
Enlightenment illuminating Race  
Race Critical Theory taken up  
Up to lawbreakers to make equality  
Equality a running Orwellian joke

Then we took up the call  
Call for narrative inquiry research  
Research melting into chocolate  
Chocolate melting into star  
Starring time, place, and sociality  
Sociality? For me context  
Context for the text to speak  
Speak truth if only through story  
Story to enrich the world  
Worldly research to be fair  
Fair and ethical in one  
One narrative but two voices  
Voices of lived experiences  
Experiences: voices of reason  
Reason in a mad world

*Ruxandra Nahaiciuc*

Untitled Attempt No. 3

Perhaps, there is nothing sadder  
than a child who cries out  
in a language unknown to her own mother.

To feel every ounce of heart separation  
in mother's tongue but unable to back-translate the infinite  
depth— of a shallow kiss upon cheek,

to be the stranger in the shape of a small child.

A defunct symphony of accidents trapped beneath syntax,  
speaking volumes, but if no one is around to hear a heart  
scream to bloody pieces— did you ever really make a sound at  
all?

Emotional solitude landslides after a rainfall of  
miscommunication are indistinguishable from pain beneath it  
all:

And I still try to say it:

I love you

I love you

I love you

I love you

I love you

I love you

I love you

Beneath my breath—

or should I save it, considering how much time we have left?  
How do I communicate the distance between our minds? How  
do I ask you to come closer till we comfortably collide?

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Perhaps there is nothing sadder than a child who asks for love...  
No, there is nothing sadder than a child who begs for love but  
does not have the word for it in a language unknown to her—

Then there is no greater action— nothing more defiantly  
passionate than the attempt to say:

A huru m gi n'anya  
A huru m gi n'anya  
A huru m gi n'anya  
A huru m gi n'anya

Means "I love you" in Igbo and  
every mistake  
in mispronunciation  
is an exclamation of that love,  
to my mother.

*Chidera Ikewibe*

## Deaf-Mute and Blind

I am a deaf-mute. I am not pretty.  
I stand five foot nothing, gap-toothed and  
Yellowing, with singed white hair. A beggar  
for time and providence to take me seriously.  
I can't take myself seriously. My cosmic joke imploded and  
the Silence is, let's say, deafening.

I am Greek-goddess perfection they say. Too  
Symmetrical and too ripened not to ooze  
Golden strands with pearly smiles. A milkmaid  
Or a whore begging for the time of day from everyone.  
I need you to take me seriously. I look in the mirror and  
The Vision is, let's say, blinding.

These two parts make a whole in which one can fall and  
Meld together. There they can bump and grind until the  
Lodestone shortens and Chronos gasps in pained ecstasy.  
One part, two parts form one part wholly new.  
Generations of Love lost in Time. Love is birthed into existence  
by Paradox.  
The measure of it stands apart from man or woman.

Love cannot see sight, hear hearing, or talk to speak.  
Love remains, always, in its infancy.

*Ruxandra Nahaiciuc*

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*Andrea Niven*

A Renewal of Spirit

Breaths held in reverence  
New lungs in body old fill  
Eyes forward, release

*Katherine Jones*

## Chasing *Rainbows*

Everybody knows there are two kinds of rainbows. There's the scientific phenomenon of the sun's rays interacting with water droplets to form arcs of colour in our atmosphere, and then there's the other kind: *rainbows* that have nothing to do with our star's runoff and H<sub>2</sub>O. Not that you can tell the difference just by looking at them. Sometimes I look up at the rainbows that form over my apartment in spring and wish that they were more than nature's favourite light show. *Rainbows* are just as untouchable and unknowable as rainbows, though for entirely different reasons.

Everybody knows that whatever crosses under a *rainbow* will change, anything living, that is. Flora, fauna, fungi, bacteria, humans. It is a natural disaster, a superlative blessing, or at least the stronger ones are. I wonder sometimes what would happen if I broke into the restricted area that houses the giant *rainbow* the government claims is more dangerous than nuclear fallout. Perhaps it would transform me into the face I wish I saw in my bathroom mirror, into a body that wouldn't haunt me with the ghost of who people say I am. And humans, well, they've found a way to alter that power, channel it towards specific objectives, to hone them into a neat commodity.

There are so few natural rainbows left today that have not been bought up by major corporations, governments, or taken over by military organisations. All that was left for the public were the small and weak ones that had slipped through the cracks and trickled down into a misty uncertainty. Some *rainbows* change your hair colour, some give you schizophrenia, some give you cancer, some just irradiate you to death. I would know. I've spent the better part of the last two years looking for one to remake myself.

There were whispers of a rainbow in the far north of the Americas on government land—in sacred territory reclaimed by the descendants of the Indigenous tribes that called it home, in a not-so-distant time, separated from today only by the pain of the active cultural genocide of children by the Canadian government. In the fluorescent white wasteland between the places that those people now call home once more, that is where I am, where our group has come, fighting snow blindness to beg for a charitable passage from the residents of this land. We are lucky that they value kindness more than personal profit with a sustainable resource that so many are desperate to access.

Today there are several dozens of us who were escorted snivelling and shaking into their *iglulik*, and they set us up in pairs in *igdlu* prepared and maintained for desperate folk like us. My roommate is beautiful. Their hair long and dark with rich mehndi tones, and sun-coloured eyes nestled between crow's feet, like two beautiful eggs that carry new life beneath their shell-like surface, waiting to claw it apart and fly off to begin again. It seems strange of me to think we are both Canadian citizens when there is such a gap between us.

He introduced himself as Eddie Taqvi. I have gone by Eddy Buscemi all my life. I told him this, and he laughed. He complimented my nails and said my lipstick complimented my black eyes. We compared the ways our hair was braided, and he offered to make art on my skin in a way he can no longer wear. "It would be haram," he said to me, when I asked him why he only wore it in his hair.

We conversed on the discomforts of dresses and how it is so wonderful for me that they make so many with pockets now. He told me he used to sew pockets into his dresses out of frustration. We admired one another's jawlines. I envied his soft face and straight back and the polite smile that flitted between the furrow of his brows but didn't reach his lips. He

## Generation Reborn

wore his age like fine wine, even as it bled through the fabric of his skin and stained it with the passing of time. He looked at me like he would give anything to rip my skin off me and wear it as a three-piece suit. (It was electrifying.)

He told me his Father was a white man who died in the early days of Vietnam, before his Mother left the nation of the patriotic war machine. I told him of how my parents immigrated from Italy, and how they weren't really Italian but Sicilian, and he nodded like he understood. He told me how his Mother never spoke English and how he always felt they were different kinds of creatures, how she married him off to a man who drank and how he eventually ran away with nothing but the clothes on his back and his jewellery. I felt as though we had known each other all our lives.

At three o'clock I knelt to pray. *"In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. Pater noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum. Adveniat regnum tuum. Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra..."*

Soon after, Eddie joined me in worship, with physical movements accompanying his words. *"Allahu akbar. Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem Alhamdu lillaahi Rabbil 'aalameen Ar-Rahmaanir-Raheem Maaliki Yawmid-Deen Iyyaaka na'budu wa lyyaaka nasta'een Ihdinas-Siraatal-Mustaqeem Siraatal-lazeena an'amta 'alahim ghayril-maghdoobi 'alahim wa lad-daaalleen."* We each spoke in a language the other would never know, but what we said was understood.

He finished before me and waited quietly, kneeling at my side for me to finish. Then he painted my hands, covering them in thin, neat little lines. I gave him a pair of miraculous medals and explained how they would protect him if he pinned them to his clothes. He's wearing them now, pinned to his undershirt. I washed the henna dye off my skin, and now only beautiful stains remain. A man dressed in a coat lined with furs,

with a name I could not pronounce and cannot remember now, came to us mere moments after. He brought us to a larger gathering for our dinner. It was a large meal with many foods. We each took what we were given.

Eddie sat to my right, and to my left sat someone neither man nor woman who told us their name was Jordan. They were older than me and younger than Eddie and had that distinctively gorgeous nose that framed their face so pretty that Eddie couldn't help his staring. They took one look at the whale meat they were served and explained to us in a hushed tone that it wasn't kosher and "could you please share your eggs, or Eddie some of his caribou?" They told me later that evening when they joined us in our cabin after dinner that they "didn't believe in all that Yahweh nonsense" but that they had promised their *Savta* on her deathbed that they would not abandon their shared tradition and that even though those eggs were "probably fried very un-kosher-ly," since they didn't know for sure, they thought they would still get the points for trying.

Me and Jordan, we sat in companionable silence as Eddie went through an evening prayer, and once he finished, I excused myself and left them to let them have some time together. The wind pricked at my skin like the jagged fangs of demons. Jordan spent the night in our quarters sharing a bed with Eddie. We all got up the next morning and made our way with the others behind our guides towards the base of the *rainbow*.

When we reached the official checkpoint, we showed the official-looking officials and guards our papers. Mine read *Epifanio Buscemi*, and some letters in between those names, forming unimportant words that had never meant anything in my self-edifying history. Eddie's read *Edwin Taqvi*, but after today, that name won't matter anymore. After today, after the *rainbow*, no one will ever say I am my Mother's first-born son.

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After today, everyone will see that Eddie is a man, and that Eddy is a woman.

*Russell Russell*



*Emily Nicholls*

Clovers

When all of this is over  
I see us in the clover  
honey-suckling  
through hands  
unsheathed  
from their wool  
scabbards

fingers set free into  
new warm breezes  
just to see what it is  
that sustains us

until  
we once again  
shack up in cold houses  
as to not crack bones  
on January's verglas

*Emily Nicholls*



*Emily Nicholls*

## Navigating the Labyrinth of Existential Longing

Existential ponderings have plagued humanity since time immemorial, and the question of whether this is all there is remains a ubiquitous source of anxiety and reflection. Even in moments of triumph and celebration, a sense of emptiness lingers, casting doubt on the worthiness of our endeavors. It is a feeling that haunts us all, the realization that the accolades we accumulate pale in comparison to the unrelenting emptiness that pervades our existence.

This sense of ennui is particularly acute in a society that has been conditioned to measure worth through achievement and success. We are told to pursue our dreams relentlessly and to seek fulfillment in our work, relationships, and personal development. However, such aspirations are fraught with the inherent impermanence of existence, and no amount of attainment can offer a lasting sense of satisfaction.

The temptation to retreat into a purely hedonic existence, a life of indulgence and present-focused pleasure-seeking, is strong. But such a life is not possible for most individuals, as we are embedded in a system that demands our participation in the pursuit of meaning and identity. The self-help industry, cultural distractions, and consumerism all serve to remind us of our place in the machinery of society: as cogs in a larger system that perpetuates the myth of progress.

The human compulsion to achieve, to become something more than what we are, may be inherent in our nature. Like the housefly drawn to spilt syrup and fleeting pleasure, we are destined to spend our lives in pursuit of goals that will never fully satisfy us. And yet, this very urge has led to remarkable feats of creativity and technological advancement that have shaped the world we live in today.

However, the pursuit of purpose, no matter how noble or self-serving, is ultimately transitory. Everything that gives us direction and meaning is subject to the inexorable forces of impermanence. And yet, it is precisely this fleeting nature that

imbues our lives with meaning and significance. The awareness of our own mortality and the ephemerality of all things is what allows us to fully appreciate the present moment and all that it entails.

In the end, it may be better to make peace with the knowledge that this is all there is, rather than to fight against it. It is only through acceptance of our impermanence that we can truly appreciate the beauty of existence, the delicate balance of maturity and wonder that comes from acknowledging the fragility of life. And in this acceptance lies the possibility of true fulfillment, not in the attainment of goals or accolades, but in the simple act of being present and alive in the world.

Therefore, in the pursuit of fulfillment, we often seek a sense of renewal. It is not found in the accumulation of material wealth or the attainment of status, but rather in the cultivation of our inner selves, our relationships with others, and our appreciation of the world around us. Style is substance, and the way we live our lives, the values we embody, and the actions we take are what ultimately define us. In a world that is so often defined by external markers of success, it is essential to remember that true rebirth and fulfillment are found in the simple act of being.

*Muhammad Mohiz*

Generation Reborn



*Andrea Niven*



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