



Statement

Throughout my life, I have used poetry as a means to keep a record of my childhood memories, experiences, and growth as if watching a coming-of-age movie. However, as I grew older I noticed how different my life, the lives of my friends and the girls in my class, are to the lives of men. I started to notice similarities in the way we all navigate through our lives. Therefore, these poems are my interpretation and my message about how our society has ripped away our most prized moments, our childhood, from girls as we are pushed to meet strict beauty standards at a young age. The chosen poems, following the theme, "To Be a Woman" were mainly inspired by memories of school and life as a child in order to commemorate what had once been and what we might not be able to remember anymore because of societal pressures and expectations. I want to raise awareness and share the experience for girls who might feel lost, alone, or trapped in our society, or in our own bodies. I want to show girls my age, and younger than me, that we don't have to grow up following someone else's rules, but it's hard.



Medusa

By Madeleine Hur

... And so another stillborn daylight plagues my open corridors
Dawn lyric of the robin no longer visits me for it would never find an end
In the still ribbons of light.

I feel I have told this before-

My prison of suspended screams, theatrical masks bar my freedom
I once thought myself a predator for the slurred figures who break my solitude

God given gaze

Worshipped by mortals

Created by men...

My heaviest burden their appurtenance

They mock the Fates in stone...

Have I told this before?

I wish a bird would perch and continue to sing within my gaze.

The ones I freeze gawk at my shape the years I spend here

My silhouette still one of a woman...

It takes no God to see in the cold effigies

The hundreds of eyes I have frozen are hungry for me.

I am frightened.

They drench my bright nights with concrete lust

Their swords are sheathed but pointed

Your face at the summit of their psyche...

Where was I? My mind twirls.

Have I told this before?

Charon's assurance of their passing do not comfort my nightmares

I have lived among them for years

And I cannot flee.

I no longer recall what used to be.

What use is my curse

if I cannot remember days,

The absence of these ravenous stares?

Do I scare you?

Before you sleep I will tell a different tale.

The night falls, or so I think, and another day begins.

We rise from our fruitless slumber.

And so another stillborn daylight plagues my open corridors

Dawn lyric of the robin no longer visits me for I will never find an end

In the still ribbons of light.

I feel I have told this before...



To Be in Control

By Madeleine Hur

My windows must be bigger? If any bigger it will cover the walls...
But if my porch must be smaller, where will I read in the morning?
The paint chipped? I fail to see it. Oh please, that is not the right color!
Are you not but a plain passerby? My house will not bother you.
Oh, please! Do not hit it so, with your hammer and pick!
Now you've done it. You have not done me a favour!
I did not ask for your sweat and sores. Oh,
My beautiful house... it cannot be fixed.



To Be Perfect

By Madeleine Hur

Tracing letters on dashed lines,
Lines that carved your nose,
your eyelids to make them double,
the perfect shape of your body so
Teacher would give you a perfect silver star
from the pack of one hundred from the dollar store,
Just like the girl in front of you, the girl behind you, the sides of you, and Teacher
when she sat there too.

Uniform letters.
Not one line out of place.
Every one with the same flicks and edges and perfectly aligned marks
You wouldn't be able to tell whose handwriting it was.
Each swipe of the sharpened tip a scalpel to the curves and arms of the letters,
Y's and g's and j's that once danced along the lines, curled their tails
To greet the next letters
Stretched, bent, drenched in
hospital gowns,
White lilies like printer paper,
Bandages so that the y's don't try and dance again and
Those harsh, flickering school lights that always needed to be fixed
But never are.
All to fit the strict School curriculum,
The damned School and all those Teachers who pity us too,
The Teachers who know just how terrible it is and
Never let it stop.

Silent cadence of scratching lead an ode to the
Clock we are told to understand,
Each passing hour gossips of
The broken jaw that is to be our own,
Deflated belly and swollen lips.
Though you must understand
Their small hands will still hold their pencils with an uncertain grip,
Four fingers over and thumb on top,
The shouting ounce of resistance left
Legs still too short to reach the ground,
Overhead lights still flickering,
And eyes hopefully still dreaming,
No matter how perfect the font.
Your plastic surgery font.
The kindergarten we never left.



To Be a Young Woman

By Madeleine Hur

Dear leopard leggings and worn sippy cups,
I hope you will remember the baby leaves that giggled and curled
At your small finger's gentle caresses.
Rubber bands and tiles found shelter in the crook of your un-creased shirt,
Chimes sang for you when the wind gossiped of the way
Your velvety, untouched skin shined under the sun.
Your fragile cardboard castles you knew Mom would always protect,
Hands always clasped hers
Cos' you knew then you'd never trip.
Or maybe she held yours.

Dear hide-and-go-seek and yellow school buses,
After some time, a puppy's eyes will begin to open,
Though it still won't know just how small it is.

Dear internet addict and new shoes every week,
Ticking hands seemed to move too quickly
And now begs to
Slow down,
Rewind,
live a little longer.

She knows something you don't, foretells
More than just scathed knees from too much soccer.
Mom's hands and yours are same magnets now,
And your castles are broken and you can't cry anymore
Cos' your phone said so.

The first time a man's eyes and grabbing hands
Took your dreams and consumed your voice
The trees, never leaving trees at the corner
you once disregarded
Branches too familiar,
stretched like arms
scared you at night.

Your calloused hands are keys, buried in the nooks of your shirt that once carried
Colored stones and snails who pitied your nakedness,
You who would always be naked to those eyes
No matter how many shells you wore.
Do you still remember the smell of crayons,
Or have you shuttered your eyes again as if they were your mother's hands?
Dear homebody and still internet addict,
The screen that has engulfed me
Who seems to know the world says



It's the sagging fog that never seems to leave that
Shuns the sun and keeps the trees,
So I must close my eyes if I don't want to see.
The trees at night with breath that raises the hair on my neck,
The trees at night with roots and the
Heavy, dripping, staining gaze with stench like oil,
The trees at night that don't go away at the rise of the sun
That you used to love to watch so much.
An oddity to these familiar roads I want to call home.
It seems that you and I,
We're navigating through a maze that we never asked for,
With ends all over and no end at all.
A crayon-smelling, chime-singing, baby-leaf-curling, untouched-skin elegy.



Destination

By Madeleine Hur

I need to go to a destination.
My map is blurry.
A man, sitting on a tall tree.
"Sir, which way do I go?"
He tells me,
"Swim across the road, climb the river."
I shake my head, but say thank you.
A woman, sitting on a cloud high up.
"Ma'am, which way do I go?"
"Swim across the road, climb the river."
I shake my head but say thank you.
A child sitting on a giraffe's head. His legs dangle.
"Child, which way do I go?"
"Swim across the road, climb the river."
I shake my head but say thank you.
This is impossible.
I will never make it.
I start to walk, but I turn back around.
"Child, have you ever been on the ground?"
"Of course not!"
I run to the woman on the cloud.
"Ma'am have you ever been on the ground?"
"Foolish girl, why would I?"
I walk to the man.
"Sir have you ever been on the ground?"
"What a silly idea!"
I roll my map.
My path is clear.