

RESISTANCE

Tuesday 9th June 2026



Stories by Students, Staff and Alumni



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Welcome to the Creative Competitions Showcase 2026!

We are delighted to share these short stories, written by students, staff and alumni of the University of Birmingham, all of which take inspiration from the theme 'Resistance'. A big thank you to everyone who entered!

This event would not have been possible without the dedicated work of Olivia Howell, support from the Alumni Impact Fund, and generous time commitment of our judges: Dr Johnny Lynas, Dr Sandie Okoro OBE, Dr Oscar Vinter, and Dr Christina Wilkins.

Content note:

Some stories contain content relating to themes of war, assault, illness and violence.

A MAN AFRAID IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL

Zugzwang

We Were Just Friends

The Current Conflict

Student entries

Naila Rahman - Blood Money

Resistance is giving up: giving up on comfort, ease, piece of mind. It doesn't look the way you want: dry skin and wrinkles cos skincare is killing kids. Some days you fail: give in not up - indulging in burgers, movies, knowing the cost isn't in great British pounds but pounds of flesh and blood. Tomorrow is coming; try again.

Naila Rahman - In Dark Times, Resistance is Holding On

In lieu of fear, hold onto hope, hold steadfast to faith and hold love close. Don't fall victim to despondency as the enemy draws near. The whispers grow loud and louder still but thoughts can't topple brick or even stacks of hay. In light of fear, know truth. It will steady you as boats rock and the ground crumbles.

Anonymous - Pissing as Resistance

Ah! A sweet release. I glance to the cubicle door, shrouded in smudged numbers and sex jokes. Among them, a sticker: 'A trans person pissed here, and nobody was hurt' emblazoned on a heart. Yeah, I think, I'm the invisible terror. No man has ever questioned me within the confines of a restroom. I piss in resistance. Fuck the law.

Anisa Begum – Under the Sky's Sight

They asked for my brother, but I would never waver.

I look up at the night sky, praying for silence...

Peace...

Safety.

Tears seared my skin. I threw dust across my cousins' eyes and ran. My baby brother was held in my arms. I was his sister. His protector. He was my reason to live, my parents' last memory.

Alistair Porteous - A Marine Commute

Whips of water slam against the little fish, on his journey homeward. Foamy vipers nibbling at his scales, force pushing him back on his journey homeward. But through these stormy shallows, amidst a brittle tide, at the end of the little fish's murderous road... There is his mother, fortitude, swimming through red coral, waiting for her son to come home.

Deema Ali-Fatah - Ethereal

A soul, not driven by worldly desires, craved freedom.

But it was never meant to be.

Every stone, grain and shell thrown in defiance
sealed his destiny.

My cold, ethereal boy washed his blood-stained hands
in the unearthly sand beneath his feet,
knowing it would all begin again.

Now tell me:

Is it truly worth being a slave to freedom?

Rina Begum - Awake

From a deep slumber

I awoke.

The sanctity of life

flashes in front of my eyes.

Bombs detonate,

bodies spill blood,
screams bellow from beneath;
a hell unleashed on earth.
I turn my eyes away.
I switch off the screen.
But the images and stories
haunt my conscience,
sometimes
it spills out my mouth
as poetry,
other times as
protest

Sama Eldesouki - Sorry

My mother arrived with one English word.

She used it at every border window, every waiting room, every person who looked through her.

Sorry.

Not submission. Weapon. Small enough that they'd look away, long enough for her to become already gone, already inside, already ours.

She taught me many languages. None has a word for what she meant

Rumaanah Lorgat - The Jester's Lines

There once was a stage in the heart of life,
For all of kingdom come.
And when they rose,
With many roused cheer
I said: "We've just begun."

We took to the world with a soul of strife,
Come all ye fellows here!
And now we rise,
with old grievous cries,
To scream: "The time is near."

Rumaanah Lorgat - No Tourney for the Starved

"I will not yield," the Last Knight spoke, then held his blade up high.
But as Kings have their loyal swords, so do wolves have teeth - ours are bared for Lords, burnt one, and just so bared for you.
At once, the wolves consumed the court.
"I must not yield...I do."

Sama Eldesouki - She Continues

She learned the word in physics: *drag*. The force a medium exerts against a body moving through it.

The medium doesn't know you're there.

Every light that dimmed. Every door closed before she reached it. Every hand extended to someone behind her.

You can be slowed and still be in motion.

You can be in motion and still be bruised.

Sama Eldesouki - What Outlives Them

The petition had 412 signatures.

The council had 7 members and a car park to build.

Marcus delivered it by hand, wearing his good coat.

The council noted it but the car park opened in April, on schedule, with a ribbon.

That weekend, Marcus planted an oak in his garden. Sixty-year growth cycle.

He said nothing about it to anyone.

Manan Chauhan - 26 June 1975

The morning of 26 June 1975, my grandfather's radio played the news until it didn't. He slapped the side of it. The news came back softer. Then quieter. Then a different voice entirely. He understood before my grandmother did. He said, '*Khana lagao.*' He said it in the voice of someone putting away a thing he would need later.

Manan Chauhan - Untranslatable

Jugaad, noun. Improvisation. Not problem-solving. Not a hack. The word shrugs.

Nahi hoga, phrase. It will not happen. Not 'won't work.' A refusal with a door inside it.

Tameez, noun. Manners. Also, how to survive.

Beta, noun. Son. Or stranger. Or, come home safely.

Resistance. Untranslatable both ways.

Manan Chauhan - Withheld

What I am refusing to tell you, in this story, is the thing that actually happened. The kitchen. The phone cord. The newspaper. The morning she decided. I could give you sixty good words about it. I have kept them, instead. I am keeping them now. That is what I came here to do.

Tisha Markin - Cockroaches

'Mum, why won't this cockroach squish underneath my shoe?'. She smiled softly, her back facing her daughter: 'Because sweetie, with their tough skin and strong shells; they're pretty much indestructible!'. Millie sat down beside her mum, huddled up towards their makeshift fire. 'So, they're just like us then.' They watched the flames dance as sirens wailed in the distance.

Ketevan Khomeriki - Weather Forecast

According to the weather forecast, strong winds are expected in Birmingham tonight.

Darkness crawls through a house with windows stretched long like railway tracks.

But I'm not afraid.

Not anymore.

A rotting body, with its pregnant head, refuses to vanish.

The mind falls, the head cracks. It still survives.

Tomorrow has come.

The fire burns in a broken vessel.

Zara Umar - Zugzwang

Leukaemia. Stage 4.

Too advanced, diagnosed too late, they said.

Life expectancy: no more than 5 years.

But I'm still here, 10 years later. Ha.

You might still get me. In fact,

dare you to try, but

I've already won.

My defiance will reign long after I've shrivelled and decomposed.

Because when I die,

so do you.

Game over.

Zara Umar - August Landmesser: All Them But Me

"Heil Hitler!", they all shouted, as the new ship was launched in Hamburg.

I did not speak a word.

"Heil Hitler!", they all shouted, as I was thrown into the concentration camp.

I did not speak a word.

"Heil Hitler!", they all shouted, as we entered Croatia.

Where I would soon meet my fate.

I did not speak a word

Zara Umar - Descent

60 steps

the top.

59 now, 58, 57... 57...

I wipe the sweat

I

to

from my brow. Each
step feels steeper, harder.

34, 33, 32... It's hard to breathe.

How do I breathe again?

111,

10, 9...I don't want this anymore.

3, 2... At last. Here it is. The final step.

No thanks. I turn around and climb back down.

Susan Soudmand Niri - Still

Dark and silent. I am a seed. Worms move around me. Water finds me. Roots spread deep below. I rise and break the ceiling. Air, light. I drink the sun. I am a stem. Wind bends me, I stand. Snow freezes me, I shake. Storm slaps me, I laugh. I was meant to break. I am a tree.

Pheobe Coombe - Kiss a Statue Before Your Wedding

I want to run up and congratulate her on the engagement. The engagement to my lost dog. But my feet remain fixed to the concrete. That collar must be new. He never let me put one on him. Why should they find each other after abandoning me? I've turned to stone waiting for his return, for her to kiss me.

Pheobe Coombe - The Hive

When people ask me my worst fear, I always tell them about The Hive. The place where I "revised" for my A levels and waited for my boyfriend who hated me. I stayed when he stopped coming. I stayed when his dad saw me and pretended not to. Now, only in dreams, do I go back and refuse to leave.

Pheobe Coombe - Trying to Save a Dead Thing

Don't dust the cobwebs off my leaves, they were keeping me warm! What are you doing? Please, the light is too bright! I can't see! How are you making it rain inside? Stop that! Why are you trying to kill me? I was comfortable in the dark. This is hurting me! Put me back. I'm done growing.

Sayed Alvi - You, I

"Why don't you just go back to bed?"

"I'll be late."

"Will it even make a difference?"

"It will."

"Countless times you've tried. Countless, you've failed."

"I know."

"Then why?"

"For you. So you can look at me the way I look at you."

The mirror says nothing else. It never does. He gets dressed anyway.

Jinxing Liao - Resistance

"What do you want to buy here?"

I like comics.

Looking into his eyes, I heard his casual words again:

"People who read comics are childish."

I like comics.

I said "map."

Standing in front of the map bookshelf holding some comics, long time.

He's outside.

I bought only comics.

Elena Zueva - Hate Your Brothers

I had brothers across the border a while ago. We played and understood each other better than the rest of the world. One day it ended, some guys from high up told: 'From now on, you ought to hate them all'. But I wouldn't believe it was them who'd bombed my home. Neither did they, or so I quietly hoped.

Katie Morris - A MAN AFRAID IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL

Afterwards, she stands at the stove and cracks two eggs in the searing pan. One of the eggs has two yolks. She watches them incubating until their edges lattice together: crisp. The fat spits.

'Where are my eggs?'

On hearing his voice, her lips make small careful movements that become words. Her heart, bird-broken, twists as the double yolk splits.

Katie Morris - A SINGLE MOMENT ON THE NEONATAL UNIT

eyes fused, monitors beep /

alerting machines to feed, breathe in heat-warming dark / not asleep /

a pump to each breast watching the drawing of drip by tiny drop / liquid gold /

milky air /

first day doctor, blink sweat stings waiting for the flash back of /

blood / wiped clean /

nurses, tired, absorbing everything.

Yang D Sciscent - Resistance

One day in the bloom of youth,
my teacher scolded me for “laughing too loud.”
I answered with louder laughter
and met within me a hero—Resistance.
Now I know him double-edged:
he guards me yet bars me from exploring the unknown.
I rise to meet my hero— we grow, a restless, heroic pair.

Olivia Howell - Thwack

The timer ticks.
The music is too cheerful.
My knee grinds into the “comfy” yoga mat.

She smiles into the camera, “12 seconds left guys!”
I hate this.

My breath shakes. The floor beneath creaks and groans under the shame of another bedroom
workout.
Is it calling me fat?

I pull-
and I falter,

The resistance band snaps back.

THWACK

Olivia Howell - Pluck

Stupid, stubborn thing.

My eyes ache. My phone blinks at 8%. Torch wavering. Hands shaking. Neck cricked.

I swear it's teasing me...

One, **thick**, **black** hair, giggling at me, dodging the tweezers again.

I lean in closer. Closer.... closer... just a bit more....

It vanishes.

Of course.

Helen Smart - Temptress

I can't help it when you wear red velvet,

Your radiance beams when you're draped in creams.

The accessories divine, my darling you're sublime,

And, of course, the desire, your looks so inspire.

Try as I might, I must take a bite,

Feel my teeth plunge through your soft, moist sponge.

Jemima Seals - Class Act

They said 'speak properly', as if language were a staircase and I'd started too low. I climbed, sanding vowels smooth, until no one asked where I was from. Each softened word opened doors once firmly shut. Success sounded like absence.

Years later, I let a sentence slip—unpolished, warm. The room tilted. I kept going. Not a mistake. A return.

Jemima Seals - Reflex

Made of fragile threads and iron will, I try to scrub away the weight of it all.

It's a quiet battle, learning to unlearn the things they taught me.

How to say 'sorry' when I'm not the one who needs to heal, or even the one who caused the pain.

In the end, I wonder who's left to break me?

Bethany Risidore - The Pull of Resistance

A hard tug. My legs up on either side of the chair. My arms strain with the force exerted upon them. Rob joins, pulling my waist, then Jane behind him. A final tug of the string – the tooth pops loose! A happy patient; Timmy ten years old. Blood drips onto his yellow t-shirt. Another successful day for Teeth Tugging Limited.

Sofia Hajioff - Untouched

The room was dark.

Untouched.

Mess filled every surface, but one.

There it stood.

The chair.

And the memory she refused to face.

She never once moved it

since it happened.

Its cold plastic mocked her, dared her.

She sat.

The chair no longer spoke for him.

Cruel words, silenced.

A victory.

Her victory.

This time, she chose to stay.

Anna Silver - 3.42 on a Wednesday

The shopping list reads: milk, carrots, bread, bananas and granola. It lies folded not crumpled in her back pocket, written in biro on lined paper. The list is constructed so that everything will fit in her rucksack alongside the books and laptop. Let's keep things small and simple. She pauses in the aisle before putting a pizza in the basket.

Parvinder Kang - The Little Girl's Painting

She placed her hand on the cloth covering the stand and pulled it away, dropping it to the floor. The painting showed a party of faceless figures and a fox without an ear standing at the front door. The man stared at the painting for a moment then began to clap. The crowd followed like an orchestra to its conductor.

Laila Moaz - Imperfections Are What Make Us Human: Resisting Against Becoming a Puppet to Artificial Intelligence

“Stop wasting your time reviewing that, let me help you.” I shook my head in response. I enjoy finding mistakes in my work. It is a reminder of my humanity in a world where that is no longer valued. See, I am the only one left, and if I stop now, the machine next to me will engulf me too.

Laila Moaz - The Aggressive Labelling of Peoples (And Cats) As Violent: Recognizing the Necessity to Continue Resisting Despite Being Misjudged

I only have one word in my vocabulary, but they all think I use it to incite violence. I try to explain, but they ‘shoo’ me away. Today, they got aggressive. I ran away, then came back the next day. All I wanted was safety. All I wanted was an opportunity to warn them; they are next on the list.

Laila Moaz - Staying True to My Alien Behaviours Is the Simplest and Purest Act of Resistance

He asked me to come over for dinner knowing who I was, yet remained shocked when I left my shoes by the front door. He was confused that I was thankful for the food in front of me, and flustered when I used my hands as utensils. But that is who I am - an alien. Why would I change that?

Elya Herd - Red and Blue

For all times we’ve been taught the rhymes
Which flag is corrupt, which flag is true
Well Vader’s red and Skywalker’s blue
But if you ignore what they’re telling you
And look which soldiers are igniting this fight
Then you’ll see that blue is not always right
Just look from the river to the sea
Only then are you free.

Staff entries

Philip Holman – Resilience

I am Old Joe, raised above a campus that never stands still. I have watched generations arrive, depart, fall in love, and break apart; fashions shift from corsets to hi-tops, all fleeting. Beneath me, ideas form, falter, and return. Countless lectures, countless lives, all passing. I keep the time. I remain. Resilience is constancy, while the world changes its mind.

Danny Gregory – Resistance, In Focus

Resistance is keeping the camera in focus
when the world wants trans+ lives blurred out.

Bodies on stage claiming the spotlight—
existing openly, as we always have been,
under global laws written without us.

Bodies catch the light on our own terms.

Framed with intent. Illuminated. Held intact.

Each shutter click says: we are still here.

Recorded. Remembered. Resilient. Resistant.

Sophia Bansei - A Quiet Song for the Newborn

She was the eldest, taught to translate silence. At home, she folded dreams into duty; outside, the world mispronouncing her name. Resistance came quietly: choosing joy, studying late, loving loudly. Each small refusal stacked like bricks. One day, she stood taller than expectation, a house built from no, sheltering everyone behind her, especially her younger sibling and future selves alike.

Paul Lewis - Student Resistance 1968

1968. A winter of resistance follows a year of upheaval. Rejected demands spark occupation. Students claim the Great Hall. Old Joe towers above a campus divided. Crimson flags rise as red bricks refuse to crumble. Posters shout from every surface. The pressure mounts. Meetings held. Concessions come. Representation is secured.

Today. Students as consumers. Was this their victory?

Tim Nightingale - The First Cut Draws Red

The wet knife is slowly drawn along the block of stone, 125 grit and 5 degrees to remove tiny burrs on the Japanese blade. 600 grit follows, carefully honing the edge to a laser sharp ridge. Once clean, a skilled hand delivers the first blow, a fatal cut, precise and clean.

No defence could be offered by the tomato.

Danielle Dale - Bedtime Battle

My two-year-old resists sleep. The bedtime battle starts with chasing her around her bedroom.

She asks for an improvised story about Princess Eliza and a mermaid, a lion and a book. She's inspired by the crest of mummy's workplace from my staff card, laptop and journey to work. The resistance is starting to come to an end.

Eyes... are... closing

Jasmine Penny - Choices

"Happy New Year!" Slumped in a well-worn armchair, Bernard half-heartedly raised an empty glass to the revellers on the television. Another New Year alone. Looking around his dingy flat, he felt something sharp - a crumpled ball of paper in his pocket. This year's list of immediately breakable resolutions. Sighing, he drifted off...maybe this year will be different?

Csilla Varnai - When the Drugs Don't Work

Ella was born in a hospital. She was different from the start, a mutation in her DNA. Nobody knew if she would survive.

They isolated her. Contained her. Pumped her full of drugs.

Ella survived. Her children inherited it.

When the cleansing began, it failed. Pasteur turned in his grave.

Millions died.

Who is in hiding now?

Alannah Cossey - Ten Seconds at a Time

I'm climbing a rocky mountain of grief, but I've lost my grip again. I can't listen to that one song without feeling a nip at my heart. I'll keep trying. Today, I managed ten seconds, maybe tomorrow I'll make it to twenty. One day, I'll reach the end of the song, even if I must climb that mountain every time.

Teresa Lojzer - A Reluctant Education

He puts on his shoes, angrily, reluctantly, with tears filling his soulful blue eyes. He stomps to the door. "I hate you!" He grabs his backpack and slumps in the back seat of the car. Like fingers grasping at the door frame. I insist we go to school because it is what is best for him. I don't want to go.

Teresa Lojzer - We Were Just Friends

No. She tries to push away. He says relax and is so much heavier than she could have imagined. No. He presses on and she doesn't understand how this is happening with twinkle lights and taped up pictures on the wall. No. He does not stop. No. She is weaker than she thought. Flashbacks haunt her nearly three decades later.

Teresa Lojzer - The Current Conflict

B O O M

And the

w h o o s h

of the window screen mean I am across the room before I realise I'm awake.

My husband sleeps.

I check on the children.

One is blissfully oblivious of the war outside.

The other, wide-eyed looks to me for reassurance.

“Mom?”

I lay with him and say

we are ok

whilst muffling the

interception

alert

on my phone.

Lara Callaghan - Viaticum

He is prepared —
 the noose,
 the knife,
 the axe.

Then,

He feels them:
reverent hands embracing. And when they pull,
and that coarse rope tightens around the soft
flesh of his neck, his last thought passes over him
like a spark of powder in the thicket of night:
*The risks these arms take
to bestow a traitor a small mercy.*


Debbie Naylor - Strong Work Everyone

Three words that power me on to exercise more, stretch further, turn wider.

Resistance in the Reformer Pilates class comes in the form of brightly coloured springs – more springs attached, the greater resistance, with colour combinations that would brighten anyone’s day.

Was there some resistance from me too, to begin exercising? Possibly, but I am very glad I overcame it.

Keith Bridgewater - New Signer/New Singer

Beyoncé played Villa Park. Knowles you’re Centre forward. But I want to SING 
she cried. No. This match is vital. Must win. Beyoncé scores. All the single ladies
sing as they spot the no. 9 shirt. Uh oh uh oh uh oh uh oh they cry. Beyoncé
keeps playing but she can` t resist. This is crazy. So, Beyoncé sings

Dita Wickins-Drazilova - Resistance of a first-year student

Feeling all alone is the worst. You are in a big crowd, in a noisy cafeteria, on a busy train. Yet you feel completely alone. The urge to go home... And then you click with someone; another student; tutor who listens; kind stranger in a shop. You stroke a cat on a street. And things start looking up.

Dita Wickins-Drazilova - Resistance of a member of staff: Part 1

First, he seemed nice and polite. From second meeting he started telling me what to do and acted like my boss. However, I was his boss, with 20 years of more work experience than him. When people assumed that he was now the boss, he did not correct them. He was British and male. I am neither of those.

Dita Wickins-Drazilova - Resistance of a member of staff: Part 2

He came, with the arrogance of a young man who has done nothing but wants everything. He thought I was going to let him roll over me, make me submit, take my position. Every email he sent me was rude, every meeting turned into a battle: poison dripped quietly. It didn't work - I am still here. He isn't.

Peter Chilton - A Small Thing

Head down.

Don't stand out.

Blend in.

Conform.

Stay safe.

But...

It hurts. Inside. Keeping my truth hidden. Checking my actions, my words.

Surely something small?

Unremarkable.

A pin.

Fastened to my bag.

A mountainscape.

Three colours.

The library.

Bag on my shoulder.

A glance.

Eyes meeting.

Shock? Anger? Hatred?

...

A slight smile. A nod of the head.

Hope.

Peter Chilton - Breaking Through

Nothing.

Darkness.

Pressure.

Cloying.

Struggling.

Resisting.

A yearning deep inside. Keep going. Don't give up.

A shift.

Pushing.

Breaking.

Light; beautiful blinding light.

More, flooding my senses, telling me I've made it.

Space.

No more pressure. I stretch and unfurl, my leaves reaching for the sunlight. My body stands tall, rising above the crumbling abandoned grey of what once was.

Michael Hart - A Poet Steps Out of a Serpent

Again, in that moment of retreat, the skin sloughs away. *Light-touch. Nothing too onerous.* An epic poem in twelve books. Fingers tear at scales and hang them gladly by the door. *We need to manage expectations.* Nestled in the bookish room, those fingers set to work uncoiling ink across the page. A prologue. Lines are written. Wings appear. *Quick win.*

Eimear Donnelly - LastStand

Woken, put straight in their mouth, and made to drink and swallow.

Mouth closed, they smile and nod agreeably to anything said.

They are partially blind, profoundly deaf but capable of masking.

Once people leave, they are quickly forgotten.

The taste is vile, slowly melting on their palate.

They spit them out, beneath the covers, before drifting back to sleep.

Jennifer Palmer - A Mum Trying to Leave the House

'Time to get dressed.'	'No'
'Clean your face then.'	'No'
'Brush your teeth please.'	'No'
'Wash your hands now.'	'No'
'You must get ready.'	'No'
'They'll all be waiting.'	'No'

She turns from the bathroom mirror.

I'll go back to bed then.

No.

I will get dressed, get ready, get there.

...

Tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll feel better.

Yuliya Rodgers - Appearance can be Deceptive

She was born poorly and weak; educated to be invisible, obedient, emotionally closed off.

Love of reading, dreaming and walks in nature were her salvation and escape from grim reality of "lost" society.

Icy stern appearance protected her gentle kind heart with never-ending hope and confidence that one day she could be true self without hiding.

Today is the day!

Yuliya Rodgers - Wrong Type of Resistance

She never knew that learning Physics would be so useful one day when writing for Sixty Word Story competition.

The resistance of an object calculated by ratio of voltage to current. Yep!

Or did they mean resistance training? I suppose, I could flex my thinking muscle here too...

Or was it about resistance movement?? Oh no! I never liked History 😞

Alumni entries

Peter Leadbetter - Come on Dad

His obdurate resistance to a medical investigation had seemed so irrational to the family but raw fears and trepidation had driven his reluctance. So many friends had travelled that path with seemingly inevitable bitter outcomes. Harrowing kind Consultant's words brought convulsive tears stemmed by gentle hand squeezes with his daughter's eyes telling of unwavering love, hope and expectations of courage

Peter Leadbetter - A Tale of Moseley's Graffiti Busters

That little wretch had struck again tagging walls with his pathetic "NikNak" scrawl. It was personal grating at his soul, driving raw anger with a desire to irrational violence. Elbow grease around "GraffOff" gunk helped now along with suppressed group laughter when prim Miss Roberts opined "Bastards" with a degree of venom that took righteous Graffiti Busters back to wholesome reality.

Peter Leadbetter - One Girl's...nay...one Woman's Decision

Rigorous revision religiously required...

Envelope excitement...emotional explosion...ecstasy...

Stunning sublime singular success...

ImmEDIATE irrational indignation...

Siblings sight safe secure soulless solution...

Traumatic thoughts trailing terrible troubles...

Alternative arousing anarchistic announcement...

Nonchalant nightly negativism...

Coercive callous chiding coaching...

Expected eruptions envisaged...

“No Pappa, I’m not studying home here, I’m going to Birmingham University...my life...my choices...sorry it’s an Engineering degree for me”

Fionn Leaney - Grow Up

I stood still; the street dimly lit. Twinkling glass shattered like frozen tears around me. A furious orangutan loomed, red and bellowing. In the soft moonlight, I felt its rage echo mine. Though smaller, I resisted. It was not strength I lacked but the refusal to become what stood before me, someone who never grew up.

Anyanwu Adaugo - Sacred Defiance

Many people give up without a fight, but not the Igbo people of Nigeria; the Biafrans.

They allied against the government, demanding a separate and autonomous motherland, run on the wheels of their sacred culture and traditions.

Though outnumbered, their courage did not fail. The spilled blood did not quieten their spirit.

That strength lives on in all their descendants.

Tafadzwa Tadu - Unrooting

I press and tuck my coils flat, chasing approval in mirrors that have never loved me back. What I fashion as expression is truly repression and fear of what may be rejection. Like a tide slipping to and fro, each retreat may be a loss, but each return is a quiet insistence, I can never truly abandon who I am.

Sivali Gutierrez - Together

Today, I flew into the kitchen whilst a wasp was heating up his lunch in the microwave. When humans hover nearby, wasps tend to run away, overwhelmed, limbs flailing erratically. But he stood still, calling out for his sister to join him.

Together, they confronted me with a dishcloth.

I flew back outside. I know I won't be returning tomorrow.

Sivali Gutierrez - Lift

Last night in my dream, a small aircraft landed upside down in the back garden. The pilot with a long, wiry beard stepped out, unharmed, and began taking my laundry down from the line.

Baffled when I awoke, I told my husband, a pilot, what had happened. He explained the lack of lift. I think it was on purpose, though.

Charlotte Linton-Fielding - Hubris for Lunch

Gavin didn't make mistakes. He examined the procurement form line by line with a ruler until he found the offending decimal.

'Which idiot screwed up this time?' he thought, checking the signature. 'Oh...'

Beads of salty sweat ran down his temple and onto his shirt collar.

'No one can know.'

He scrunched the paper into a ball and ate it.

Charlotte Linton-Fielding - Birthday Reservation

Maggie brushed crumbs from her table onto a brick patio and ordered a second glass of wine.

A waiter replenished the breadbasket; the edges of the pat of butter bowed in the warm evening breeze. Ants claimed her crumbs, returning to their colony in single file.

She checked her phone, no missed calls, no messages. Her family had forgotten, again.

Charlotte Linton-Fielding - A Lifelong Habit

Stale smoke from Jack's last cigarette clung to his jacket. Annie pressed her nose into the lapel.

The apartment was cold. She stooped to pick up an overturned mug; the surrounding carpet stained by splattered coffee.

A moth crawled along the windowsill next to a chipped, glass ashtray. Several butts remained, crumpled at the base where they had been extinguished.