



# CHANGE

Just Write  
2022



Writings by students of the University of Bamberg for  
Bamberg's readers

Chair for English Literature Studies

# *Just Write Team*



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In memory of  
**Prof. Dr. Christoph Houswitschka**  
(08.06.1961-10.02.2022)

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# Foreword

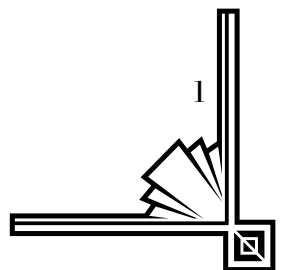
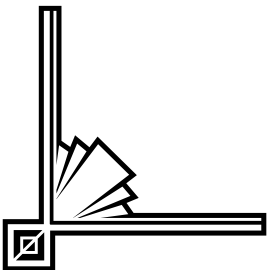
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This is the third edition of *Just Write*, the creative writing journal in English at the University of Bamberg. We, the editors, hope that this edition finds favour with our readers, as did our last two editions. After the first two editions were curated around the themes of 'golden twenties' and 'lost and found', our third edition collected a range of poems and prose dealing with the theme of 'change'.

The faces of 'change' are multifaceted, from a point of transition to a point of facing a crossroads of emotions. Changes can be seen in renegotiating emotions as well as in seizing opportunities. Or, in the most radical sense, changes can be observed in assuming new perspectives. In this collection of poetry and prose, our writers approached 'change' from different standpoints by equating private with the public, emotions with rationale, and nature with the materials.

We hope that you, the readers, will enjoy reading the contributions and possibly be encouraged to contribute to *Just Write* yourselves!

The Editors  
*Just Write*





# in a small town

Yildiz Asar

i often repeat  
the same mistakes  
and alter them slightly  
each time.

i go back to that same  
bench of happy and sad memories,  
in summer and in winter,  
and i try to remember  
what it felt like  
to be me, back then.

i hold onto my people  
and i always seek new faces  
some people i learn to ignore  
until they become strangers  
again.

i choose a café  
and go there every day  
until one day, i stop.





i pretend each neighborhood  
is a different city,  
so i travel often and  
sleep in different houses  
and always manage to  
come back home, just in time  
to water my plants.

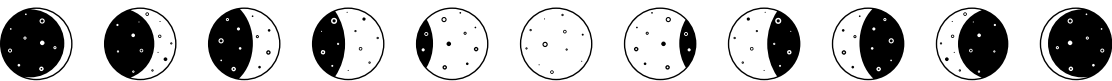
that's how one lives  
in a small town, i guess,  
by sameing and changing.  
how painfully boring  
it must otherwise be  
to be the same person  
in the same small place  
every  
single  
day.



# Becoming Whole,

Anna Èva Augustz

So many things have changed in the past few months, and I am changing day after day. I have a new home, new friends and a new drive but the same determined me; by the first glance I am the same me, the one who holds high values, emphatic and loves to plan ahead. But I am changed, I am a better version of myself or at least I want to be better. In my good days I know that I can overcome my inferiority complex and can leave my comfort zone. Here I have learnt to understand the grounds of my limits. And then I realized that I do not try to find myself anymore because I am already whole, I know what I want, and I know whom I want it with. So, I guess I am just one of the lucky ones. And still sometimes I cannot stop worrying night after night; I woke up from a nightmare dreaming about war on a recently devastated land, smoke that pollutes the air that it chokes you, lands that are flooded, soldiers with machine guns marching through cities, money that becomes invaluable, seeing people who do not have a home anymore. And then I become anxious about myself how it would affect me, and the ones closest to me. And then again, I wonder would it really affect me? Many unanswered questions pop up in my head and the most difficult one of all of them is whether we will be safe here from now on. I don't know but life is different now.



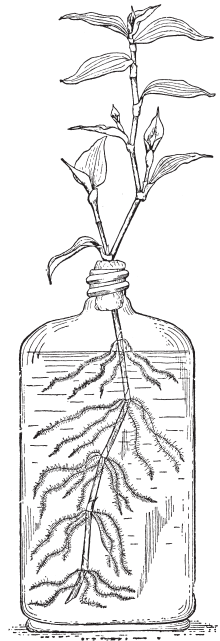
# She keeps on wandering

Sophia Bruni

On a random piece of paper  
She pencils full of confusion  
What's in her heart and What's in her mind.  
Little had she known, so far, her  
Feet had both been through fire and ice,  
All things that've made her so kind.

That same random piece of paper pictures  
The sea and the mountains in Brazil,  
All nature that bloomed so colourful and gleefully  
From this girl's roots to her branches,  
So modestly humble and incredibly big  
Grew her tree in a different continent.

Ten years ago, her biggest adventure  
Set off, loaded with passion she relies on  
Unknown paths to odd directions  
Today, a déjà vu of her own mystical being  
Enclosed by everyone and every place  
That ever came across her way.

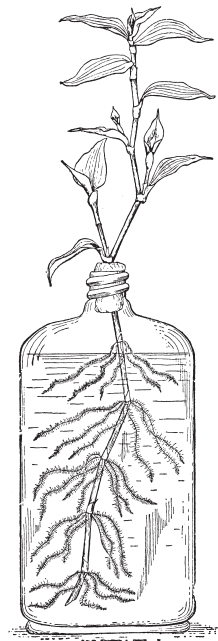


Most familiar destinations, currently  
Not just seeds anymore, but planted tales  
Within her own, unique story  
Of how she never stopped wandering  
Ever since she took off,  
And decided to not look back.

Never did she stop until, naturally,  
She glanced back: her character had changed.  
That little sunshine felt alone in the dark  
Until she realized, her star's the strongest  
To sparkle so bright in a sky  
Not to be afraid of anything, anymore.

With her world turned upside down she  
Faces her ghosts, and tomorrow feels rather  
Refreshing, like a great mix of fire and cold  
Along any long and winding road.  
The girl who's always felt like sunshine  
Now, a woman's enjoying her own light.

*- Not only a random piece of paper.*



# Seasons of Letting Go

Patricia Finzel

Flowers were blooming, the sun in your face.  
It always made you happy - in so many ways.  
Daffodils, snowdrops, and crocuses, too.  
I wished for time to stand still, and so did you.

Summer was approaching - busy were the bees.  
You became so forgetful that you stopped remembering me.

Leaves were falling, falling down.  
You've already forgotten our small town.  
Couldn't remember the roads you used to take.  
How many more sacrifices will you have to make?

Snow fell softly, landed, and lingered for a while.  
Covered your memories but couldn't cover your smile.

Flowers were blooming and you weren't there.  
I didn't think they would dare  
To make an appearance without you  
But I guess it's official - they do.

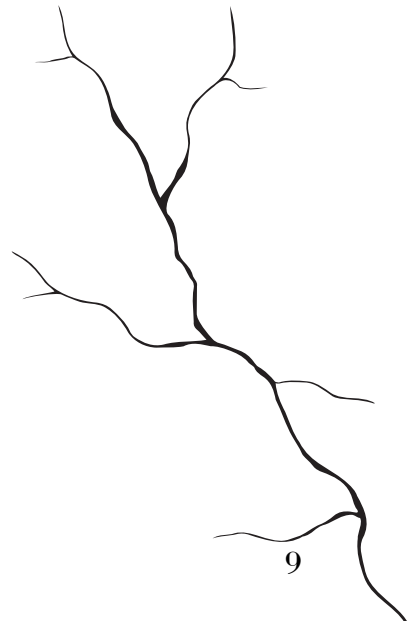
Leaves are falling, falling down. Next year they'll come back -  
I'm sure.  
But until then, with every day, I'll miss you a little more.



# Dust and Ashes

Melanie Hoinle

Dust and ashes.  
People blown to pieces.  
I saw it.  
And felt guilty.  
Why had I found shelter  
when they had to die?  
Later I found  
that it was all because  
a soldier had mistakenly  
dropped a bomb  
on the train station of my hometown.  
I was innocent.  
I was a child back then.  
But I lost my childhood.  
To the bombs.  
To dust and ashes.  
I held my sister's hand  
while the world exploded all around us.  
I am old now.  
And I am asking you:  
Why does history repeat itself?  
When will humankind  
Change?



# The Instrument

Benjamin Kerber

With large,  
even cracked,  
instruments,  
they rummage through the earth,  
working their way forward metre by metre.

The machines roar,  
soundscapes flow unhindered across meadows and forests.  
In the evening, the rain gently pelts the surface of the water,  
complementing the machine music.

Destruction, fuelled by an unquenched hunger.

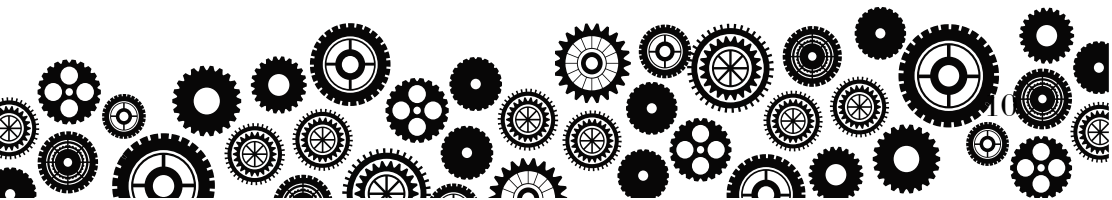
More.

More.

More and more.

Autonomously, the instrument eats itself further and further.

Unchanged and Unstoppable!



# The More Things Change...

Katharine Wilson

Take a minute to remember,  
it was spring and everything  
smelled fresh and wet.  
I am doing the same thing over again.  
It was winter and you told me  
nothing is the same without the smell.  
You mean gingerbread but  
I am imagining I have the nose of a dog  
sniffing seizures and blood sugar and cancers.  
If I wrote to you and said that  
I could smell the growing cracks in your heart,  
what would you think?  
Remember too,  
it was summer and it was snowing ash.  
The sky was red and my nose wouldn't stop burning  
and you were sitting alone across the ocean,  
wondering in the dark if  
it's possible to remember something that never happened.





You've never breathed in  
the delicate aroma of my skin,  
but it's still inscribed in the memories  
of your nostrils, tickling the small hairs  
unwilling to leave you alone.  
I can remember it backwards now,  
and breathe out the scent  
of our new beginning,  
already intertwined with your end.

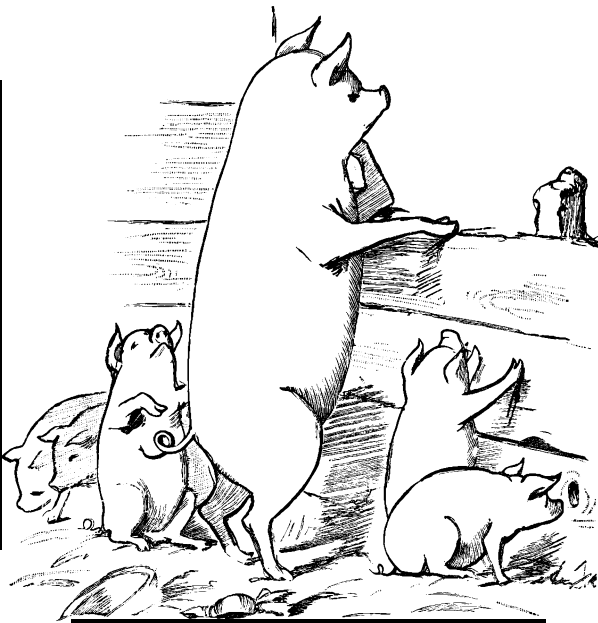


Fiction



Stephen James Counihan

Pinky



**When** I was born, my parents always told me there were no rules in life and my only purpose was to eat, sleep and wallow in the mud all day. “What’s the catch?” I wondered aloud. My parents simply laughed and told me that there was nothing to worry about. Then, one night they disappeared. Where did they go? Did they run away? My mother always said that I was an inquisitive, young pig. Thus, I began the investigation of the disappearance of my parents. I began immediately by questioning my brothers and sisters. I have a lot of siblings. Eight to be exact. I went from one to the other, demanding a clear and definitive answer. The response was the same from all of them, a disapproving grunt of annoyance. I was astounded by their ignorance! They had not a care in the world that mother and father had disappeared. They simply carried on as if nothing was out of the ordinary. They never paid any attention to me. I was the runt, so why would they? I left them soaking in the sun and wandered around the pen, searching for clues. I sniffed the ground tentatively, but it was far too muddy to make out anything specific. I approached the gate and began to study it keenly. Farmer Fran’s scent was clearly distinguishable on the gate’s handle. I decided that I would question him later.

I began to trot alongside the fence, my feet squelching in the warm mud. Several of my siblings raised their heads, lazily watching my circumnavigation of the pen. In the pen next to us, the hens clucked with laughter. I ignored them. I was searching the fence for possible escape routes that my parents could have taken during the night. Alas, I found nothing. My parents were far too large to squeeze under the little fence. Dismayed, I trudged back to the group and wallowed down in the mud. After feeding time I would resume my search by questioning Farmer Fran, although I had no reason to suspect him. After all, he was our servant. Every day he would refill

our troughs with mouth-watering slop. He loved my parents; he would always make sure that they had enough food. He loved me too. And so did his daughter, Penny. Often, she would accompany him to the pen, and she would pick me up and swing me around in her arms. I didn't like this very much and once it had made me sick, although I am not one to complain about extra food. She had a funny name for me, she would call me "Pinky". I think she said it this way because she couldn't pronounce "piggy" correctly, but I didn't care. I had a nickname and none of my siblings had one.

The sun was getting low in the sky when Farmer Fran refilled our trough. I made my way over to the trough and gave him a long questioning stare. He looked down at me through small, round spectacles and smiled. "Alright, Pinky?". I didn't know what he was saying, although I recognised my nickname. "Eat up now, you'll have to build up your strength. That's it, good pig!". I had momentarily forgotten about my investigation, as I chowed down on leftover noodles and vegetable soup. However, I was soon barged out of my place by my stampeding brothers and sisters. I looked around for Farmer Fran, but he had already made his way over to the chicken coop. I had already made up my mind on Farmer Fran, however. I was certain that he had nothing to do with the disappearance of my parents, he simply had no motivation. He was probably just as worried about them as I was. I rested my head against a fence post and slumped down. It was now dusk and there was excitement rippling through the farm in anticipation of sleep. Chickens were clucking, dogs were barking. One of the cats hopped up onto the fence and sat, swishing his black tail in the cool evening air. I didn't have the heart to join in on the excitement. I had begun to feel drowsy and I decided that I would resume my investigation in the morning, although I felt in my heart that I would never truly

know what became of my parents. I blinked away the tears, as I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

Several hours later I awoke. It was night-time and the moonlight was shining as brightly and proudly as the sun. I staggered to my feet and stared longingly up at the moon. It looked like a delicious, chunky slab of cheese. I was suddenly feeling quite peckish. I walked stiffly over to the trough and sniffed around for some leftover noodles. Predictably my siblings had scoffed everything already. I suddenly became aware of a noise coming from just outside the pen. It was someone sobbing. I peered out of the fence. Penny was sitting on a stool, several feet away with her head in her hands. I poked my head out through the fence in puzzlement. She looked up and I saw that her eyes were red from crying. "Oh, Pinky," she said when she saw me. My ears picked up when I heard my nickname. She rushed over to the fence and climbed over into the pen. She sat down in the mud and picked me up in her arms. She gave me a big hug and squeezed me until it hurt. "Daddy promised me he wouldn't, but he lied. Daddy's a big, fat, stupid liar!". She held me up and the moonlight reflected more tears in her eyes. "I won't let him get you Pinky. I won't let him do it again". She brought me into her lap. She had stopped sobbing. She seemed very tired and she started to speak in a low whisper. "I'll take care of you Pinky. I'll keep you safe. Your mummy and daddy can't anymore. They're gone now. You'll be OK Pinky. I promise". She rested her head against the fence post. After a while, I felt her chest rising and falling. I didn't know what had made her so sad, but it didn't matter because I was there to comfort her. I stretched my legs and snuggled into her cosy, yellow coat. I stayed with her all night until the first slivers of light appeared in the sky and the rooster announced that it was time for a new day to begin.



Jan Müller

Ronny's Store



**There used** to be a corner store on my street. The owner's name was Ronny, he was a true Saxonian, grumpy and brusque. He sold everything, from toothbrushes to sausages, from cheap porn magazines to copy paper. Ronny's had the store since before the reunification in 1990. Inherited it from my father, Ronny said, he was an asshole though, he'd add. The neighborhood we lived in didn't look like it was affected by the turnaround whatsoever. If you wouldn't know, you would think you still were in Eastern Germany. Crumbling facades, old police cars, badly painted and the omnipresent Saxonian dialect, despised by most Germans outside of the former East.

I liked Ronny. He drank too much. He had questionable political views and he was very direct. When I first came in and casually asked how he was doing he told me that was none of my business. Another time, I rushed in his shop just before closing hour. After grabbing a few tinned items for a lonely Sunday, he yelled at me in his entwined dialect, raging how he had to stay open for these small things and how I lacked decency. At first, he opposed to my southern German descent. When he found out about my preference for cheap Pilsner in cans and my passion for boxing, he started to perk up. He even ordered a boxing magazine for me. After buying and reading it, I had to hand it down to him though, but I appreciated the gesture.

When plenty Arab and Turkish families moved to the neighborhood, Ronny wasn't happy at all. Those folks can stay where they came from, he'd say, why do they all come here, we don't even have enough work for ourselves. Soon, some of the teenage boys would hang around in our street, chewing gum and do-



ing stupid things. After a couple of weeks, Ronny closed his store early on a Monday and told the group of 12 to 15-year-olds lurking around in front of his store to follow him. They gave each other the look and shrugged. They didn't have a particular place to go so they went with Ronny. He took them to his friend Kalle's boxing gym. He watched them skipping rope, learning basic techniques, joking around. He yelled orders and advice at them, regardless of their lack of German. No discipline, but some have a little talent, he told me later, shaking his head.

Next Monday, I hung around the store, chatting to Ronny about big fights of the past, Ali, Foreman, Frazier. When it got dark, the boys with their pimples and uneven beards waited in front of Ronny's store. What the fuck do they want now, grunted Ronny, grabbing a baseball-bat behind his counter. Some had organized sportswear; some had brought friends or siblings. Ronny, they want to train again, I whispered. He raised his eyebrows and exhaled loudly. Huh, well then, he said. You close the shop later, he told me without looking at me and threw me the key. Then he marched out. The boys greeted him shyly, Ronny made a vulgar joke, they didn't understand and off they went. I walked past the store a couple of days later. The opening hours had changed. With meticulous precision, that I didn't think Ronny was capable of, he had overwritten the closing times on Mondays and Thursdays, closing earlier. He noticed my quizzical glance. Gotta bring them boys to practice, he told me, a proud flicker in his eyes.

Twice a week, Ronny and his entourage marched to Kalle's gym. Can't they find the way on their own now? Sneered an elderly lady witnessing the parade. I shrugged. The people on our street were mostly hostile towards the young foreign looking men at first. The

fear and skepticism diminished after the boxing practice became a routine. Ronny's got a good grip on them, people said. Ronny drank less. His store became the meeting point for the youth of the neighborhood. Ronny listened to the boys' problems and struggles. He didn't give any advice or consolation, but he listened. Some of the long-time residents avoided his store because of the boys hanging around but Ronny didn't care.

At some point, hip people started to move to our quarter. There weren't many areas on the popular east side of town with low rents left. Many houses were renovated, the apartments rented out more expensively. Since the turnaround, our block had belonged to a big real estate company. Ronny used to swear and cuss the company, but the rent stayed the same and the company people never showed up. That changed when young families and cool people moved to the area. From time to time, men in suits pulled up in Mercedes and BMWs. They'd get out, straighten their ties, show their impeccable teeth, smile while talking, inspect the houses in the quarter. Especially Ronny's store seemed to be of interest.

At first, they tried to talk Ronny into moving to another district. We need something more contemporary, they told him with their shiny smiles. I don't give a fuck what you need, Western scum, get lost, Ronny replied. He told me about this conversation when we watched one of his boys fights, a decent lightweight, who made it to the city championship. I was shocked. Don't you think telling them nicely would have done the deal, Ronny, I asked him. That's the only language they understand, he responded angrily, they want to have a supermarket chain replace my store, fuck them and their contemporary bullshit. Move, tuh tuh tuh, uppercut, right hand, step out, Mahmoud! His glance was glued on the lean boy in the

ring, the conversation was over for Ronny.

Two weeks later, the letters started coming in. Need for renovations, lack of fire security, iron in the waterpipes, they came up with a whole range of reasons to get rid of Ronny. I tried to help him with the countless propositions, forms and pleas. It soon turned out that legal counseling would be necessary to achieve anything in Ronny's favor. He couldn't afford it and wouldn't have wanted it anyways. This is my store, this used to be my father's store, they won't get it, he ranted whenever a new letter came in. Ronny drank more, his shop smelled like booze and cigarettes. He opened late and closed early. Mondays and Thursdays were the only days he stayed sober.

I can't believe they're doing this, he told me one late night when we sat with some of the boxers, they're just taking our homes, like they took our jobs after the reunification. He spat out. And what for? To bring in rich assholes that don't give a fuck about the people born and raised here, where are they supposed to go, tell me that. I stared at the floor; I was also a newcomer who came with his Western fortune and resources. The Arab and Turkish boys and their families were not part of the restructuring since the company wanted the neighborhood to be mixed and international, whatever that meant. Ronny was alone with his anger and despair, and when we left, slapping Ronny on the shoulder, I felt shallow and fake.

Ronny got evicted from his shop eventually. The booze had him all weary and pale; he didn't even protest when the court officer and his entourage came. He knew it was pointless to argue. He stood next to the door when they stripped the shop bare; some of his boys came to witness. They talked quietly and glances shyly at the man

who used to walk them to the gym as proud as a peacock. His head hanging, his shirt dirty, smoking one cigarette after another. I watched the whole scene from my window and finally couldn't stand it anymore. I took Ronny to the bar close by. We sat there tacitly and drank until the bar closed. When we left, I tried to talk to him, say something encouraging, he just shook his head.

Ronny disappeared, people said, doesn't leave his flat, let himself go. I went to his place a few times; he didn't open. The quarter became clean, less shady and faceless. Mondays and Thursdays, the boys would gather at the supermarket. They would joke around, talk about girls, make fun of each other. When it was time to march to Kalle's gym, they looked around as if they had lost something. They would hang their heads for a moment, stop talking and start walking.



Sofie Koch

Familiar Aches



**Every word** they say is not as much a punch to her face or a scratch on her skin as it is a seed. A tiny, invisible, laughable seed that drops from their lips and too sharp teeth, drips like saliva from their tongues and hits her skin; every shot a mark. Once on her skin, the seeds don't rest there or slip off when she moves, flinches back from the pain the words carry between their sweet coatings like birds carry struggling insects and worms to their screeching, open-beaked young to gobble down. No, they stay; they bury inwards, squirm their way through skin and fat, through tissue and bone until they're so deep inside of her she almost doesn't feel them anymore, can almost forget their sharp entry and blunt march through flesh and blood.

She receives hundreds of them every day; comments about her weight, her diet, her appearance and her plans, the way she lives and dresses, what she does and thinks - and what strangers and family think it means. Gone are the days when she could wave them off, smile a crooked smile and laugh as she retold the stories to friends and lovers. When she did not know the cost of those words and what they brought about. When the hurt did not crawl into her body to stay and quicken.

It's not flowers that grow from those angry, bitter seeds deep beneath her skin, not blossoms and vines which wind their way green and vibrant through her veins and arteries further and further outside until they finally bloom as confidence on her skin for the world to see. No, what breaks out of its shell are not pretty leaves, but living, squamous things without limbs or voices, but teeth- and they bite and tear as they unfurl, covered in slick despair, and hurt so acute it makes the skin it touches shrivel and rot.

They are pale things, legless, boneless snakes that twist their way through her flesh, endlessly long and so thin they are all but invisible. These days there are too many to keep count; they can barely move without touching one another, without coming across a new seed, a new hurt buried deep and agonizing while its creator has forgotten about it the second it had left their lips.

She doesn't forget though. Doesn't get the chance with those horrible words snaking their way through her, eating away at her and pushing against her skin from within, trying to press through. There is so little left of her now, and she's afraid of losing everything - but she has to go on, leave the comfort of her own home, socialize, talk to strangers, friends and family and she has to smile through their words and insults, their backhanded compliments that only feed the writhing mess behind her clenched teeth and weary bones.

She can't stand silence anymore these days, always needs to have noise and music around her to drown out the ghastly, squelching sounds those things make as they move and she can't bear light any longer; light shows off her body, and what has become of it and a body that's visible is a body that is food to others, that gives them something to talk about and will only make her unbecoming worse. So little left of her, so little room for positive thoughts and feelings next to all the hurt and insecurity that have been filling her up for so long, she can hardly remember whether there had ever been a time when things weren't like this.

#

It is not pain that feeds on her for long though. Day after day passes, weeks pass, months and finally years and it feels like it's going on forever - but it doesn't. And as time passes, the hurt that's winding its way through her very being morphs into something else.

#

Everything has a breaking point, a point where material and patience are bent so far out of shape that they snap like dry twigs and leave nothing behind but sharp edges and the echo of a deafening crack. That breaking point has finally come for her during a family dinner, when the last word has torn through her and unfurled - and with that, there is no more room left within her.

She is wearing her Sunday best, even though it's a weeknight and she will have to get up early the next day. Her makeup is not too heavy, her hair tied back into a simple plait - and it is not pain that finally breaks through her skin with a thousand open mouths and teeth so sharp they slice through music and chatter alike, not pain but frustration, hate, fury. Countless eyes open as forked tongues hiss and taste the air, lifting from her head in a horrible, glorious mass of writhing bodies in all shades of black and red.

It doesn't hurt when the snakes break through, wind their way outside and flex their shining, curving bodies in the ancient chandelier's light; not as much as the words hurt when they first settled over and inside of her anyway and she doesn't scream when they erupt back out, hissing and glaring, dancing like seaweed in the current. She doesn't even open her eyes as her face changes and warps.



The whole room has fallen silent and the only sound that cuts through the quiet is the sharp click of her father's teeth when he closes his mouth after the last insult he is ever going to deal her. Medusa can feel her relatives' eyes on her, can almost hear the wheels spinning inside their heads, can all but taste their fear in the air. Her snakes can though, undulating around her head, turning from side to side, daring the onlookers to move, to speak, to even breathe too loudly.

It's not a hard decision, really. Perhaps it's no decision at all when she opens her eyes, pupils now vertical and as black as the despair she had felt for years and years.

The legs of her chair scrape across the floor when she pushes it back and turns away from the table - but no one comments on the horrible sound, and her inconsiderateness, the way her skirt hugs her hips and legs as she moves or the single tear that's running down her left cheek, soon to be lapped up by a hundred gentle, forked tongues.

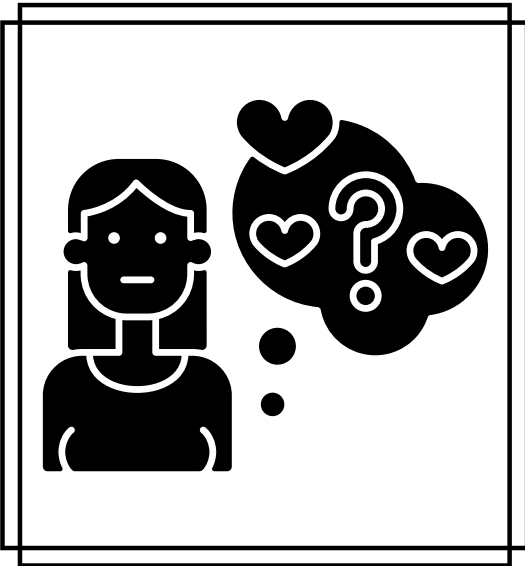
She doesn't turn around to the dozen stone statues she leaves behind in her grandmother's sitting room, hands still clutching cutlery and glasses, faces frozen in mute horror.

For the first time in years her shoulders do not slouch as she walks, and her head is filled with nothing but a soft murmuring, a thousand words of comfort. Dark scales brush against her face and neck, caressing her skin with a love she has never known, and she doesn't even think about looking back.



Leonie Unkel

Feelings



**I blink** a few times. I'm awake. My head hurts. I rub my eyes. My fingers move smoothly. I don't think I am controlling them. Automatism, I guess. I have a hard time placing myself. I know where I am. It's familiar. The dark, heavy curtains that keep the daylight out. You never know if it's the middle of the night or morning. Or afternoon, really. It's just dark. I know the sound, the heavy breathing beside me. I've gotten used to it. It must be dusty. Allergies. The breath smells sweet, of beer. The duvet is soft, I seem to have gotten the good one. I can't remember. There's a hot water bottle at my feet. Probably why they aren't freezing. Even the cold is familiar. Still, I feel out of place, or out of touch really. I am numb.

My eyes are swollen. Slowly the thoughts find their way to me. They demand my attention. It's like I've misplaced them and am now successful in my reluctant search of the lost thoughts. With every heavy breath beside me they seem to get sharper, seem to take their shape, reclaim their space in my mind. He's kissed her. Or she's kissed him? I don't even know. I can't remember what he said. I just hear the apologies, echoing in my head. I feel disconnected from my pain. I know I was drunk last night. I know I cried. I know I am hurt. I know all this. I don't feel it. I am numb.

He's awake next to me. We fucked last night. Because of the gin, I think. The taste still lingers in my mouth. I'm disgusting. I smell like a liquor store. My face is swollen, the eyes, the lips. I just know my hair is a mess. I don't know why I care. I don't even want to think about how I looked last night. Still, I had to do it. I had to go see him. It was like ripping the band-aid off. Did he think of her? I feel nothing. He asks me how I am. Carefully, anxiously. I can't look

at his face. I don't want to see the guilt in his eyes. I'm fine, I say. I mean it. He seems relieved. I look at him. I feel numb. I can't think of another feeling. I feel nothing. I am numb.

I go home. I sleep. I wake up. Immediately thoughts rush into my mind. They want to do better than this morning, I guess. He's kissed her. Or she's kissed him. I still don't know. Why did it happen? What kind of a kiss was it? How long did it last? What does it mean? Why did it happen? Was it passionate? That would be bad. Was it tender? That would be worse. Why did it happen? I don't understand. I cry. I can't fucking stop. My eyes are sore immediately. They haven't recovered from the night before. I long for the numbness. I am sad.

I call my sister. She sounds busy. She always is. She makes time for me. She always does. I wouldn't know what to do without her. She shares my sadness. She's my best friend. I love her. I am blessed and I feel sad.

He texts me. 'Hey.' I cry. He texts 'Hey.' I text 'Hey' back. It's a thing we do. Or did. Are we a 'we' still? I'm not sure. We are definitely not the 'we' we used to be. I text back. 'Hi'. I hope it fucking hurts. I'm in pain. I didn't think it possible, really. I know we've got issues. Who doesn't? I shouldn't swear so much. I'm ashamed. Ashamed this happened to me. I still can't fathom it. Why? The question is burning in my mind. No wonder I'm in pain. All the reasons I can imagine hurt. I cry. I can't fucking stop. I shouldn't swear. If I do it in my mind, I'll get used to it.

One of my friends used to say 'Shut up' to things that surprised him, shocked him, delighted him. To everything really. Not in a me-

an way. I've gotten so used to hearing it that I started to use it ironically. Until I used it unironically. The vicious circle. 'Shut up!' It became a habit, like second nature. I think of Hegel. I still don't understand Hegel. I've given up. I'm ashamed of that as well. Just like I was ashamed the day I unironically commented 'Shut up' to my Dad's face when he told me a story about his colleague. It wasn't even that shocking. It slipped my mind instantly. The disappointment in his face. That I remember. I have to stop swearing.

My phone buzzes. He asks if he can see me. To talk. Fine. It's perverse really. He's hurt me. I sit in my room crying. He should be the last person I want to see. But it's him I want to see most. Am I really this fucked-up? Shit.

I went to a boarding school when I was a teenager. I learned English there. One time in my English Lit class we were discussing an excursion to a play we had seen, Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*. A guy sitting in front of me in the stuffed, old theatre, in a chair that nearly swallowed him up because it was so soft and worn out, had made some rude comments. I was recalling them in our posh, private school classroom, not editing out his 'fucks' and 'shits'. 'Language' my teacher had said. She'd been shocked. I liked her; she was great. A teacher that really taught you, believed in you. Spoke to you as an equal. The whole class laughed. Maybe I made swearing a habit a long time ago. Shame, again.

He picks me up. I cry in his arms. We walk to his place. The air is fresh and cool. It feels nice on my swollen face. The whole city's watching me cry. I feel their eyes on me. And their pity. This is ridiculous. I can't fucking stop. The more I try the harder I cry. We

walk. It is getting darker, thank goodness. I feel less exposed now. I cry. He picks up beer. I need it. Numbs the pain. Should I be concerned that I need alcohol to cope? Doesn't addiction start that way? I don't want to end up a drunk just because my partner's kissed her. I am sad. I didn't know I could be this utterly sad.

I cry. I'm exhausted. I stop. Everything is normal then. I feel normal. Like before. We sit on the couch. We watch *Friends*. The blueish TV-light fills the dark room. Ever changing with every second. It's kind of mesmerising, I think. The windows are open. We clap. Each time. Like we always do.

'Beep'. 'Beep'. 'Beep'. I scan the items. People are watching me. Waiting. I'm too slow today, I know. My arms are heavy. I'm wearing too much. It's hot in here today. I can smell my own sweaty armpits. I hope I don't get a rash. I can see their annoyance. They lead busy lives. I slow down their day. I tell the lady the price. She gives me coins. I can feel them cold and heavy in my hand. I shiver. All the germs. She's gone. I put disinfectant on immediately. 'Beep'. 'Beep'. 'Beep'. What if she shows up? A million scenarios are in my mind. No searching for lost thoughts. They've gotten used to the rush. Like addicts. I can't walk off. I'm trapped. I could call a colleague. But I'd have to explain. I'd hate that. I could be friendly. But how can you be friendly to a person who's kissed your partner. I feel like I'm sixteen. I think of the lady earlier. I'm annoyed at me too.

Do I give her the finger? That'd be my first impulse. I wouldn't be happy with myself if I did that. I sigh silently, in my head. I hope she never shows up. How fucked-up would that be, honestly. I don't think she'd do it. Then again, I didn't think they'd kiss. Ever. Anger creeps its way up my throat. I harrumph. I am angry.

She sends me a message. I don't want to hear from her. I throw my phone across the couch. I'm drained. I'm a little confused. I don't want to hear from her. I don't understand. Why. Then again, why seems to be a question nobody can answer me these days. I read the message. I am angry.

I'm told that she's chosen a "good way" to communicate. My friend Ann says people can be dicks when using "good ways" of communication too. I agree.

He doesn't know why he did it. We have the same conversation. Over and over. And again. I'm exhausted. He must be too. I make myself miserable. I make him miserable. I need to stop. We need to find a way forward. It's been weeks. Time passes. I feel so strongly. About anything. And everything. The emotions come rapidly. In waves. Strong fucking waves. I'm exhausted. I don't want to leave him. He doesn't want to leave me. Exhausting.

I have coffee with Ann. The smell of spring is in the air. It mixes with the smell of coffee. It's delicious. We sit outside. It's warm. I hope I put on enough sunscreen. Sunscreen is important. The UV-rays are the main reason your skin ages. I found one I like, and I use it daily. Religiously. It doesn't smell like sunscreen. A plus in my eyes. Something in the smell of sunscreen makes my nose crinkle. Not in the good way. We chat. I miss her when she's gone. I feel her absence in my heart. When she's here, my heart's a heart less heavy. Talking to her clears up my misty thoughts. I love her.

I call him. I tell him that he can do whatever. Business as usual. If it happens again, I'd rather know sooner than later. He seems sceptical.

He meets up with his ex-partner. He hasn't done this in years. I don't understand why he has to do it now.

I lie in my bed. I put my phone in flight mode. I think of before when I told him to tell me when he cheats on me again. I feel like a dick. I don't trust him. How can I. I clutch my duvet. I hurdle up in it. I've just changed my covers. They smell clean. Can something smell clean? I think so. I feel a little more relaxed. You should change your covers every one-to-two weeks. I hadn't changed mine since they kissed. Why did he kiss her? A little sharp pain. It hurts. I pull the duvet closer. It's clean. I'm anxious. I put my phone out of flight mode. No new message. I put my phone back into flight mode. I am anxious.

A short text. He's home. I'm relieved. He asks me if I want to spend the night. I do.

We play squash. My shoes don't have white soles. Technically, I am breaking the rules. You're not allowed to play with black soles. They leave marks. My shoes have black soles. Is that a problem, I wonder. I see the court. It has marks all over. Is court the right word for a place to squash? Is to squash a verb? So many questions. I can get answers to those, I smile. The little black ball swishes through the air. Fast. The room fills with sweat. The air is buzzing. The soles squeal. They leave their marks like others before them. The floor will survive. My face is red. My heart is pounding. I'm happy. Tomorrow, my muscles will ache. I know they will. But that's tomorrow. Now I'm happy. Fucking happy.





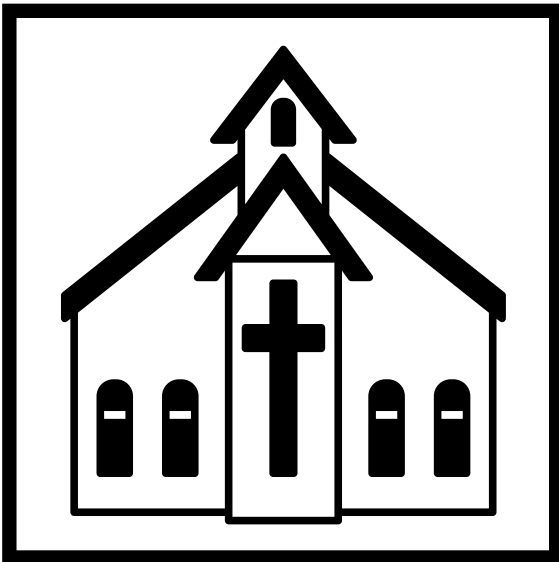


Non-fiction



Lorenz Kilian Hegeler

Change in Church - necessary! -  
but possible?



**In 269 A.D.** a man was beheaded by roman authorities for secretly marrying Christian couples although it was previously forbidden. It is uncertain who this man actually was, but his story remained known for centuries. As a martyr who was executed for the realization of his own ideals and beliefs, he is now the figurine of a powerful narrative of illicit romantic relationships. This man is Saint Valentine, famously known and remembered of in secular spheres in mid-February. For a long time he was remembered mainly for keeping his Christian faith and resisting his suppressors. But my perception of him has shifted. In his life, there lies a more sublime and basic truth. As simple as it sounds, this man married people. He did something he was not allowed to do. He secretly married Christian people. For this he was killed. Saint Valentine was a sincere person and is now a symbol of resistance. This sign of resistance is needed nowadays.

Today, there are groups of Christian people who are not allowed to marry. There are gay men and lesbian women, bi and trans people, and so many more who all want to spend their lives together in marriage. However, they are not allowed to. In most countries, for instance where I live right now, it is not prohibited by the state's regulations. But by religious authorities. It is the Catholic church itself, proclaiming to be the living representation of the heavenly G\*d. It is this institution that denies the existence of trans people and regards sexuality in general as sinful. How does this fit with the message of love, compassion, and remission? How come the Catholic Church still has the audacity to tell me that only through her is life and wholeness? This Church has lost purity and innocence long ago. It cannot be a *Holy* Church anymore. How this Church and many superiors in that system have treated people makes one thing crystal clear to me: It is not the queer people; it is not the deviating

people who are sinful; it is the Church herself that has become a suppressing body for so many.

#

A little boy thought of himself for the first time as not being heterosexual, as having a somewhat deviant sexuality. He thought this ought to not be who he was. He was not a worthless boy he thought, not a gay, bi or pan freak. He could not imagine being this way - not because he did not know for sure that he was - but because he did not want to experience exclusion from the Church. This place was of utmost importance to him for many years. As a spiritual (in the sense of mystic) person, these places were essential to him. It was the thing that kept him alive. It was his passion and joie de vivre. He did not want to lose it. But he had to. When he first expressed his empathy for LGBTQIA\* people friction emerged. When he told his family he had a boyfriend and that he was not suffering from being queer there was oppressive silence. They said it was fine but he felt that it was not. He just refused to hide the reason for his joyfulness and continuous smile at the family Christmas gathering.

This little boy accepted himself as he was but he knew that others would not do the same. He knew that people, especially those rosary twisting grandmas and pious priests in church did not. Though he always needed this place. He never wanted to abandon it. But he felt that he was being abandoned. He was uncertain for how much longer he could endure these condemnations...

#

„Ecclesia semper reformanda est“ - „The church must always be reformed“ is a phrase that I got to know in my first year as a theology student. Theologians of the Second Vatican Council decid-

ed on implementing this phrase into the Church's language. Change in the Church is therefore inherently possible - at least in common understanding. But why then is there no change? No change at all! *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. That is what everyone was telling me. But why then is everything staying the same? I only hear voices calling for change, exclaiming empty words... Nothing is changing at all.

The Catholic - meaning universal - Church claims to be all-encompassing and independent of zeitgeist. Does nobody see how much all these dogmas are imbedded in the zeitgeist of the times of their creation and therefore anything but independent of it? Why do people not see the history of ecclesiastical origins and how they are tied to the ages the Church has been through? She is always made by her time. People denying this in fact do not want any change. They are justifying their conservatism and longing for preservation as a universal and indispensable truth. But there are also people recognizing the Church's origin in time who want to renew her. I want to change the Church so it does not become a conservative cult. I want for my Church to be "*Ecclesia reformata*" - "*a reformed church*" that is not constantly lacking connection to people and their times. I seek this change but I do not see that anything is ever going to happen.

#

The one who thinks there are no queer role models in biblical texts is totally wrong. They exist but were erased or rewritten throughout the centuries for they were viewed to be *contra naturam* (against nature). As the little David who defeated Goliath in a well-known duel was taken to the royal courts in Jerusalem, he met Jonathan,

one of the sons of King Saul. The two boys got to know each other and became close friends eventually. How close? As Jonathan died in a battle against the Philistines, he lamented and cried out his mourning. He declared: “your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women.” This is not only fraternal love. There is something homoerotic there! Another queer narrative is the story of Naomi and Ruth. Both women were recent widows and would normally need to get newly engaged to be socially, legally, and financially secure in antique Israel. However, Ruth pushes Naomi not to part from her and stay together. She says: “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” Anything but death parts me from you. This is almost equal to the marriage vows of loyalty. Additionally, see how the roman martyrs and saints Sergius and

Bacchus are depicted in icons. That is pretty gay. They are often regarded as Christian forerunners of same-sex marriage. Or see the saints Perpetua and Felicity. They were not just female friends!

#

There are uncountable role models of forbidden and queer love. Even though they have been silenced and swept under the rug many times. The people living in Church are as diverse as people can get. They want to be heard and seen. They do not want to solely exist but to express themselves. They want to be out in their communities, meaning out in Church too. Church for many people is an important and beautiful community. Meanwhile it is also a

place of distrust and traumatization. Many people are demanding a significant and honest change in the Catholic Church. If that is not going to happen, then... yeah, what then?

ESV 2 Samuel 1,26b

ESV Ruth 1,16f





# Biographies

**Yildiz Asar**, author of the poem "**in a small town**", is a Turkish singer-songwriter and a forever-literature student residing in Bamberg since 2017. Her poetry draws its inspiration from everyday life reflections: thoughts, walks, feelings, cafés, observations, music, people and experiences. Having recently obtained her European Joint Master's Degree in English and American Studies in 2021, dissertation titled "'The Girl Who Was On Fire': Empowering Rebellions through Liminal Subjectivities in Feminist Young Adult (Eco) Dystopias", Yildiz is currently working as a Research Assistant at the American Studies Department where she is also pursuing a PhD.

**Anna Éva Auguszt**, author of the poem "**Becoming Whole**", was born and raised in Budapest. She finished her BA in English and American Studies in Budapest. She is currently doing her Master's in English and American Studies at the University of Bamberg.

**Sophia Bruni**, author of the poem "**She keeps on wandering**", is an aspiring writer who was born in Brazil but raised in Germany. She has always been enthusiastic about many different passions and is continuously working on her several half-talents. She likes travelling, dancing, reading, taking photographs, and writing in several languages. Her fascination and obsession with languages led her to study Communications and Intercultural Studies.



**Patricia Finzel**, author of the poem "**Seasons of Letting Go**", is 21 years old and studying English and American Studies and Romance Studies at the University of Bamberg. She also enjoys reading, drawing, playing the piano, and learning languages in her spare time.

**Melanie Hoinle**, author of the poem "**Dust and Ashes**", is in her sixth term. Her courses of study consist of English, German and Educational Sciences. She enjoys reading, writing, travelling and going for long walks.

**Benjamin Kerber**, author of the poem "**The Instrument**", is 26, a student of International Business Administration, lives, works and studies in Bamberg. In addition, he is passionately active in the arts, whether as a painter, poet or \_\_\_\_\_. Exactly. Put in a word; you might think he has worked with it or experimented with it. Benjamin was particularly fond of experimental poetry, but he also dealt with the urgent problems of our time. When Benjamin is not writing poetry, he writes for the Bamberg student magazine, his own finance blog *Finanu* or is in the volunteer fire brigade.

**Katharine Wilson**, author of the poem "**The More Things Change...**", is a Master's student in English and American Studies at the University of Bamberg. She received her Bachelor's in English Literary Studies and German from the University of Denver in Colorado, USA. She has previously published poetry and academic work in *Foothills* (University of Denver's Visual and Textual Magazine) and *WRIT Large* (University of Denver's journal of undergraduate research and writing).

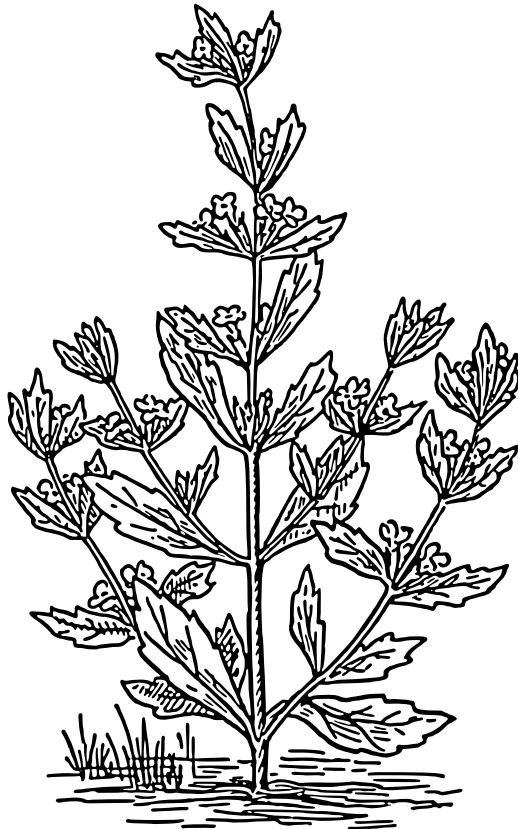
**Stephen James Counihan**, author of "**Pinky**", is 22 years old from Galway in the Republic of Ireland, and he is in Bamberg for one year on Erasmus. In his spare time, he likes to go running and listen to music. Since living in Bamberg, he has been running a small online business called 'Kebamberg', a nutrition website dedicated to finding the best locations for dining in Bamberg.

**Jan Müller**, author of "**Ronny**", studied English, history, and politics to become a teacher. After taking classes on creative writing with Prof. Johnston at Mercer University, he stuck to writing. He had texts published in *fortississimo*, a student magazine in German at the University of Bamberg. In 2021, he took part in the writing program of the Bavarian Academy of Writing in Munich. He tells tales about losers, freaks, and outsiders in an unadorned, unsparingly honest language. Places that inspire him are the boxing, gym, motel breakfast rooms and smoky bars. Greatest achievement: running into rapper Waka Flocka Flame in Atlanta.

**Sofie Koch**, author of "**Familiar Aches**", is 23 years old and currently studying German Studies, General Linguistics and History at the University of Bamberg. If there is one thing her writing has to offer, it is an astounding amount of semicolons, commas and dashes and an equally disturbing lack of full stops. She enjoys knitting, sewing, reading and writing.

**Leonie Unkel**, author of "**Feelings**", studies English and American Studies. She has just recently rediscovered her love for creative writing. She is an avid reader and enjoys spending time with friends.

**Lorenz Kilian Hegeler**, author of "**Change in Church**", graduated with a BA in Catholic Theology and European Ethnology, and is currently studying Religious Literacy in Bamberg in his 3rd semester. He loves to write and read, and discusses the material afterwards. He is occasionally seen at theatres and cinemas. He is discovering the depths of both modern and antique languages and identifies as a queer Christian (which is not at all a paradox!).





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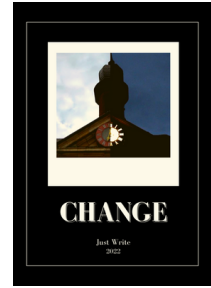
Finally, our appreciation also goes to all who have submitted their writings for consideration.



1st Edition:  
Golden Twenties



2nd Edition:  
Lost and Found



3rd Edition:  
Change

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