

**Excerpt from *Seven*  
by Lisa Rowe**

**Ludus - Playful, Flirtatious Love**

It started with anonymous whodunnit Valentines cards in our second term, progressing to acknowledged flirtations in the bar; there was always a game at play, a love match. There was never an explicit choice of who to play with, just finding someone willing was tempting enough; it meant we were acknowledged, and it made us feel alive. We made the rules up as we went. We feinted and parried, soaring into the rarefied space where we alone had mastery of the air around us, it became thrillingly breathless. However, all games started had endings, they seemingly had winners and losers. In a space where there are no fixed rules a sudden change of altitude, or a shift of direction unanticipated by the other was enough to bring us back down to earth where we were grounded and went our separate ways; looking for the next contestant to start all over again with. There was someone in Malcolm Street I had my eye on. When game players are subtracted from game players, the remainder is an equal draw.

**Philautia - Self Love**

I am here, where I want to be and content with my lot. I am the product of my choices. Rooted at Jesus College, my history will be shown in the wearing of the stone slab at the entrance to the Chimney, a small scratched graffiti in Chapel Court 6, Room One (my apologies) the growth of an Oak sapling, now a tree, in the woodland walk ( three acorns planted after a drunken bet, mine being the survivor), the futures of the students who sought my guidance, the stories of the Alumni who revisit to dine, and my texts in the Jesusan Collection. I was student and fellow, a double life in a single space. I cannot choose between those lives, they are equally important in the shaping of me. Things that are double of the same things are equal to one another.

**Excerpt from *The Silence Around Us*  
by Noah Rouse**

*There are times at night when nothing exists between death and jazz, where rivers merge with oceans and the street lights become flames on the desert sand. These are the times of night where I used to walk with you, or if not 'with you', then for you, because of you, away from, towards you. Often, I didn't know why I walked, but now I do. I wanted to taste your lips on the night air and touch your skin on the cold railings. We had a mosaic of love, comprised of scattered selves and zealous fractals.*

[...]

When we met, Justine held herself with passionate defiance. She walked with her coat around her as if she was smuggling the sphinx's nose out of Egypt. Her struggle against the universe was evident in every minute detail of her body; holding her head high, she glared down the future and let the past batter her shoulders. I think this desperate grasp of tangible creation is why the city and its people fell before her so wretchedly. She hated its boundaries, but the living architecture of this place suited her so compactly. I remember we lay by the river one night, viscerally ecstatic that we were in the middle of something unknown, and she told me that this place reminded her of the Virgin Mary because it's everything to everyone. I laughed because so was she.

**Excerpt from *Frail Halves of a Whole*  
by Serena Warwick-Yamamoto**

She always found it acutely discomforting when there was something she didn't understand. Not in an arrogant, know-it-all sense but in an 'I have something I need to prove' sense. Truthfully, she despised this mindset, which was rooted in the depths of grammar school competitiveness and underpinned by the expectations of her father. If she didn't know something, she needed to find an answer.

Unfortunately, this was not a linear equation to solve, or a passage of text to unpack. She reckoned she wouldn't even be able to pick up any method marks in trying to work out exactly what it was about him which polluted the perimeter of her every thought.

Lying on her bed, colouring in the ceiling with her eyes, she felt the weight of her laptop on her stomach, cruelly keeping her caged in the endless articles she had left to the very last minute. As always - because God forbid, she ever worked ahead of schedule - essay deadlines and required reading lists poked, prodded, and picked at the corners of her brain but... she was faltering. Her gaze fell to her phone, lying face down on the floor in the corner. The twinge in her chest urged her to grab it; text him; ask him if he was all right. She let her laptop slide onto the duvet as she slinked from the bed to the floor.

**Excerpt from *The End of Radiant Defiance*  
by Hannah Copley**

Callista's hand was crooked, as beautiful as ever, with long and slender fingers and the single golden ring, slightly too large. We were here in the house we never really made into a home, in the city we could barely afford, full of aspirations unfulfilled. In the background the aircraft engine testing at Marshall's was ongoing, as it had been since 8am. I cursed it on today of all days, wishing we had not chosen a house right next to Cambridge Airport. Closing the window, and kissing Callista on the cheek, I offered her some water as her eyes fluttered open. She gazed up to me, missing her radiant defiance that had characterised our lifetime. Bunches of grapes lay untouched next to her, as one well wisher after another had used food to express what they couldn't put into words. The words that nobody knows how to say, so they stand there awkwardly, and dance around the subject.

*The sun washed over the windowpane, and we were drenched, drowning in the warm golden light of the evening. Time had stopped, and movement of the cosmos waited just for us, the golden orb six inches above the horizon, waiting for our minds to take it all in: that this was indeed real. That somehow, in all the random of the universe our paths had brought us here, tonight, and we were here together. A girl I had only known for six weeks but whom I was so deeply in love with I couldn't even think straight. Everything she did fascinated me. I gazed at her ear when she slept, eventually dedicating pages and pages of poetry to capture the beauty of each inner and outer fold. Everything she said I inhaled, trying to understand this beautiful and mysterious person who for some reason said she felt the same about me as I did about her.*

It had now been 12 hours since she last spoke. 14 hours since she last drank a sip of water. I had barely left her side. The hum had finally stopped, replaced by the intermittent loud roar of a modified dirt bike being raced around the loop of the road. We didn't have any friends in this part of town but had been welcomed nonetheless by this tight-knit community who all seemed to know one another's business

Excerpt from *Their Careless Caresses*  
by Ella Curry

They're sat around the table, huddled together in twos and threes, and she observes them fondly. She is content not to talk, to simply be there, bathed in the floating glow, gently buffeted by their cartwheeling conversation, the soft susurrations of their half-slurred whispers. She smiles slightly: they are just drunk enough that they float, suspended in a glowing happiness of glistening eyes and shivering hair. Yes, she thinks - it is, indeed, quite beautiful.

Every now and then the blanket of quiet murmurs billows up, scattering into laughter, the glowing giggles caught around their lips as they gulp from glasses drenched with lipstick and wine. Each kiss leaves an imprint, a shimmering mouth made duplicate, and she knows that her friends must touch everything in this way: their humming hearts burn with the urge to leave a mark on the world, a trace of life on everything they touch. They can't resist caressing, kissing every object with mouths hungry to taste, to feel it all. By these kisses, they taste the world.

As the moon drifts higher in the stygian sky, the room blushes ever brighter, the glowing embers of the day cupped within its shadowed walls. These shadows waver and shift as hands flit, bird-like, from glass, to table, to chest, then face, hair, and back again; her hand remains on the table as she absentmindedly traces whorls in a dull purple pool of wine that has collected there. She watches tenderly as the milky, golden light wraps itself around her friends' bodies, clinging to their clothes and hair; she marvels at the red-wine roses that bloom across their lips and cheeks, growing and glowing in the pearlescent fluorescence of the halogen bulbs. Her heart flutters, and she sighs gently.

**Excerpt from *Just like Buses*  
by Angela Abbott**

My thoughts had wandered back to the last few days as I tried to pinpoint exactly when it was that I could have averted the situation I had caused. Where exactly, I could stop time and rewind, to make everything go back to normal. I had been replaying the scene over and over in my head during the depth of the night when I lay awake with nothing but thoughts of him. I had loved him with all my heart for the last three years, we had spent nearly every moment together since the day he entered my life on a boring autumn day in Cambridge. He had slipped into the room with that silly look on his face, he was a bit funny looking really, all legs and unkempt hair but I couldn't take my eyes off him. He came and sat down beside me, looking at me with such adoration, and all I could do was gaze back at him, I was helpless. I did not believe in love at first sight until that moment but all at once I knew what I had been missing out on. I felt my heart thumping and unconsciously raised my hand to my chest to try and still the beat in case anyone could see the movement through my clothing. He only rested a few moments before getting up and as he left the room, he turned his head back looking me full in the eye, an unspoken signal passing between us. I was left breathless with wanting and longing for him to be part of my life, for the rest of my life and I knew then I had to see him again and soon.

**Excerpt from *A Match in Malcolm Street*  
by Nicholas Ray**

Only Sophie took milk with her coffee, which was consumed at the table together with more of the white wine the company had been drinking before the twins' arrival. By now the conversation was animated and had reverted to politics: "Why did the British not march in the streets" asked Amélie, "or at least go on strike, in protest at a Prime Minister and government that is manifestly corrupt". "That's not how we do things in the United Kingdom", her brother replied. "Speak for yourself" said Amélie. A slight flush had appeared on her cheeks - Sophie wondered whether Henry noticed it, as she did, but he simply remarked: "Maybe a 'shortage of drivers' is as close as we get".

Amélie helped Sophie clear the dishes and when they were together in the little kitchen placed her arm on Sophie's; "I am sorry", she said, "to express myself like that". "Don't apologise - it is refreshing to see someone who stands up for what they believe in." And Sophie, embarrassed to recall her foolishness in imagining a match that evening between two people who had never met each other, leant impulsively towards Amélie and kissed her. In the clearing light of the evening - there must have been a storm somewhere - Amélie, clearly unsurprised by Sophie's kiss, looked closely at her and smiled. "Yes", she said, holding both her hands, "the pattern has become clearer to you this evening, hasn't it?"

**Excerpt from *Misjudgement*  
by Rachel Gardner**

But that one evening, with her wood-polish-fizz and her legs aching from what had happened in the narrow hours before, she stared at his happy largeness and felt herself say shortly, My feelings have changed. It came out like a slop, like her morning porridge slapping into a bowl. But she wasn't that surprised because it felt like it came from her chest, a little kernel of something else deep inside her body but very separate from herself. She stared hard into the murky drink, knowing that he was looking at her, open-mouthed, like a fish. And it was a little repulsive. She wished they would shut the fish's mouths and close their one eye when they lay like that on the ice in the supermarket, bloody and dazed. She would push past with her trolley and try to think of something else.

Your feelings have changed? He asked desperately. She knew that they hadn't, but she felt now that there was no other way to go about it. That thin inner-place in her body had reacted against something that it knew had been tolerated for too long. She nodded lightly and felt her breath come shallowly. And he blew out his cheeks and turned to face the empty, dark window. And he said curtly, You know mine haven't. She felt brittle, rubbed-bald, worn. He added, We had something so perfect. You can't do this to us. His mug rattled. She worried her cold fingertips and counted a long time waiting for him to speak again.

It was him who made the decision, not her decision but a decision he had made for them both. You won't do this, he said. He put the cup down firmly. I won't let you do this. And that was enough; he had laid it to rest. She knew that there was nothing more to be said. Her protest had been courteously overruled and so things must continue as they did before. He turned to face her and she saw him suddenly and clearly as another person, as someone she would examine on the train, his cuffed jeans and scratched jacket, his hard eyes. He looked like someone who was owed a debt. Had he always been like this and she had simply not seen it? And she thought of the long weeks with him pouring out like water, staining the years behind and the years ahead, her whole life unstoppered like a bottle and seeping away like an accident. And she knew that this probably wasn't what you felt when you were [in] love.



**Excerpt from *Abide With Me*  
by Anika Goddard**

There are bats nesting in Cloister Court, did you know? I think about them during morning prayer because it helps me to avoid thinking of you. Today, I stifle a yawn with the back of my hand and wonder how many of them are sleeping above me in the crumbling gaps between timber and stone. Mother Abbess is not happy with the state of the chapel - she likes to tell us in a voice of high drama that it may bury us all alive at any moment. I do not think that she knows about the bats, indeed, barely anyone does. Only those of us who like to linger in the cloisters at dusk with a low-burning candle, looking up at the sky.

I am reciting now without fervor, scripture pouring off my tongue in the way it does when my thoughts are roaming. I look down at my clasped hands and see that my nails are digging into my skin and my knuckles are white. It has been almost three months since I last saw you, and I have not for a single second ceased being furiously angry with you for ever having had the audacity to exist in the first place. I will never see you again, not the flash of your eyes as you pore over Latin and then grandly translate it slightly wrong (it is the tenses that always get you) nor the corner of your habit as it disappears round a corner, followed by your muttered curse as you hit your head on some low-hanging archway. Or if I do see you, we will stand stiffly at a good distance apart and avoid one another's eyes as we talk. I can hear the conversation playing out already, the grit of your bland platitudes rubbed into still-aching wounds. But I am settled now. I will despise all earthly desires fervently, as I once despised God for you.

**Excerpt from *Dear Charlie*  
by Niamh Bradshaw**

Close to where we are, there is this place - and here, there are always people passing by one another, finding one another. There are some times I find myself here as well. I have snatched at glimpses of other people making plans (the little and the life-changing) and, listening, I cannot quite believe how in each and every one of these people, there is a whole life which extends beyond the edges and the moments I have seen - that I have brushed past the most beautiful, the most fragile, thing in the world. I have touched it. And I just can't help but smile at it all: at us all.

Over the last six months, I have watched these two people grow into one another. They are the people, Charlie, who make me feel my happiest, the happiest that I have been in so so long. With them, I do not feel quite so alone anymore. I did not think I would be able to do this - you know, leave you all behind; what I didn't realise, though, is that I would make a whole other family here as well. Sometimes, they are not quite the same - but then neither am I, Charlie. I can feel things now; at least, I think I might be able to.

**Excerpt from *Dancing with Rakel*  
by Anonymous**

After leaving secondary school and going to sixth form college, I got a holiday job at the big department store in our West Midlands town. I was employed in Despatch, a subterranean area called the Van Way. There were four men unloading incoming goods, uploading outgoing deliveries. There was stress: rows over breakages, porcelain and glassware; curses when we lugged king-size mattresses, or three-seater sofas. I'm small - five foot one and a half; but I'm nimble, and I work with rhythm. But foreman Geoff, a tattooed hard case with a mullet hair cut, liked to press my buttons. My name is Timothy (Timoteo to Mum who's Spanish, Timmy to my Dad who's Irish) - at school they called me "Tiny Tim", which was OK. When Geoff called me "Titch", I stupidly sulked. So it was "Titch" all the way.

I liked it best when we heaved our trolleys into the maintenance lifts and went up to the sales' floors: soft background music, wafting scents from Cosmetics (a change from the dank diesel stink of the Van Way); and I would try to linger by the TV section, especially when tennis was on.

In Domestic Lighting, among the glowing lampshades, I discovered Rakel the pretty young Asian assistant. She was no taller than me, even in high heels. She wore her thick lustrous hair down to the waist. She had large, watchful amber eyes; a dazzling open smile. Even the corporate black skirt and blue blouse looked stylish on her. One lunch time I saw her walking ahead of me on the High Street, poised, graceful; she walked like a dancer. You don't have to be tall to be graceful in my view. I never heard her speak; I guessed her voice was a kind of posh Indian lilt.

Rakel's senior colleague was Misty, frantic blond mop, violet eyelids, hang-glider lashes. Misty used to come down to the Van Way for a smoke. She was into horoscopes on her smartphone: she had all our birthdates. I asked Misty where Rakel came from. She said her Mum was from Goa and her Dad was "from Malaysia or somewhere..." Then she went: "Whoar!... ho ho ho!...d'you fancy 'er then?"

After that, whenever I passed Domestic Lighting wheeling the trolley Misty nudged Rakel and whispered in her ear. Rakel would take a look

at me and turn her head with an inward smile. And I would be wondering how to ask Rakel to go dancing.