

POETRY SHOWCASE



From bubble wrap to dragon fire, popcorn to petals, these poems offer honest, surprising and inspiring reflections on living with persistent pain, and how tuning into Safety In Me messages (SIMs) can help.

SIMs are things that make us feel safe and supported. They help the brain worry less and the body feel more at ease, making it easier to manage pain in everyday life.

The idea of SIMs comes from pain science research and is used in pain management to help people re-train how their brain and body respond to pain. By focusing on feelings of safety rather than danger, patients can gently shift their pain experience over time. Through writing, patients were able to connect with their values, memories, humour and hopes – all of which can act as SIMs. In this way, expressive writing becomes a practical tool for shifting attention away from fear and towards safety, connection and meaning.

This digital poetry exhibition shares the experiences and voices of people living with persistent pain. The works were created by patients in the P.A.C.E. (Pain + Activity + Coping + Education) program at Gold Coast Health's Interdisciplinary Persistent Pain Centre (IPPC), as part of a Poet-in-Residence initiative delivered in partnership with Everybody NOW!, the Gold Coast Health Creative Health Hub and IPPC.

Facilitated by poet Angela Peita from Everybody NOW!, the sessions combined play, humour and creative writing to support emotional expression and self-reflection.

Now, their words are printed and with care, transformed into visual works that honour each patient-turned-poet's unique experience.

Pain may be persistent, but so is creativity.







This program was delivered with support from Everybody NOW! who helped facilitate sessions that created a safe, positive space for our patients to express themselves.

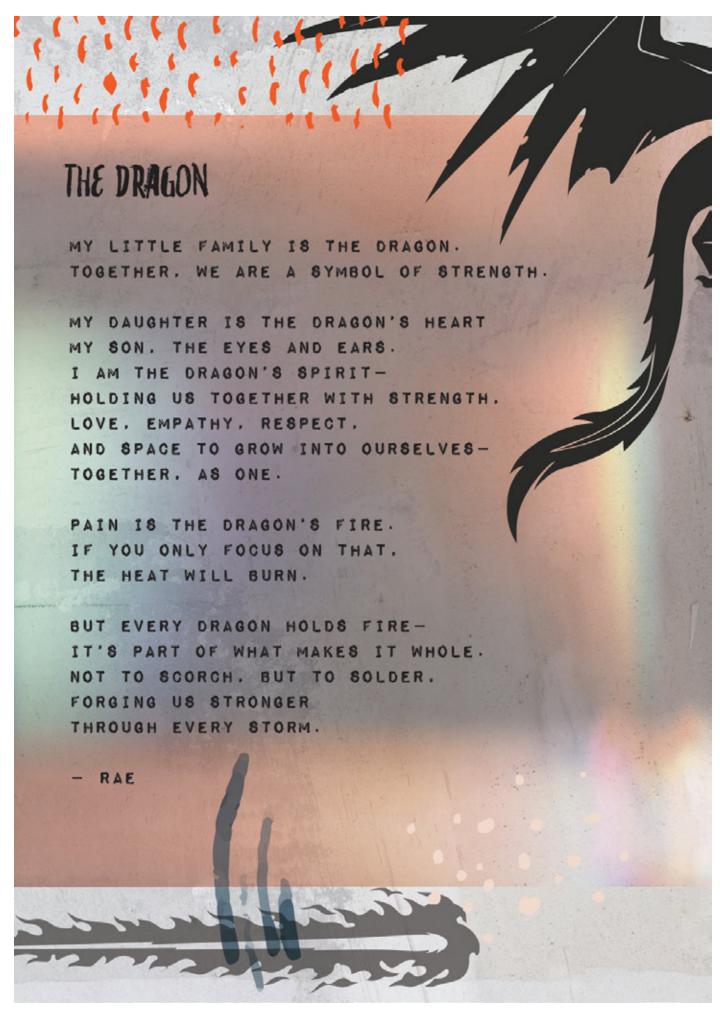
Thank you to Zoe Ryan and the QUT Design Lab for transforming our patients' poems into powerful visual artworks. Your thoughtful design brought their words to life in the most meaningful way.





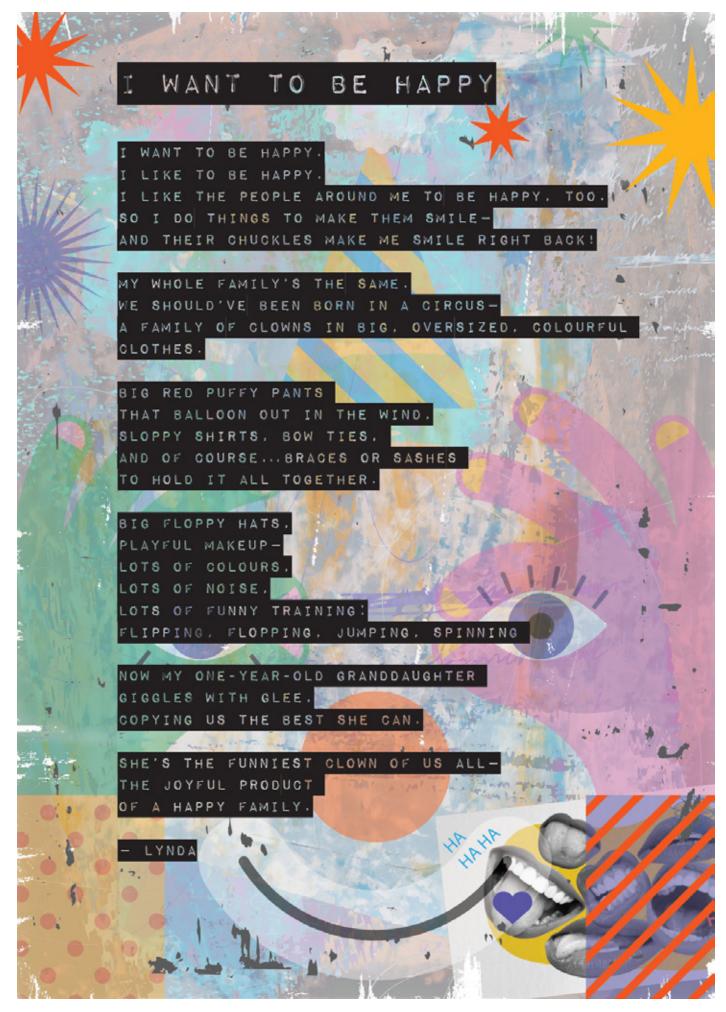






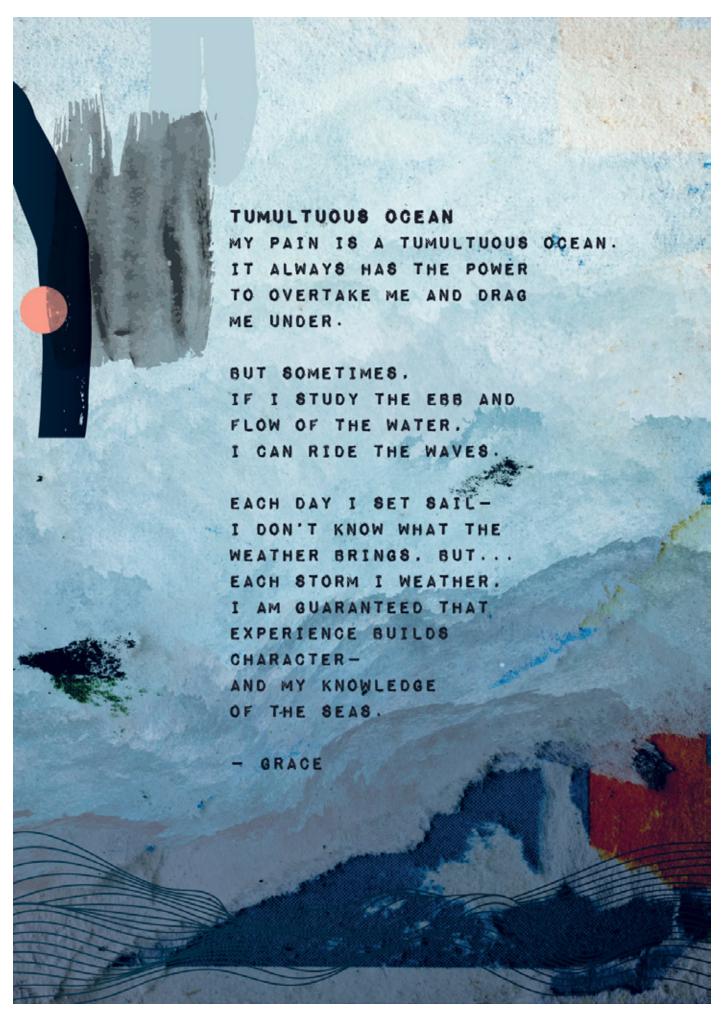












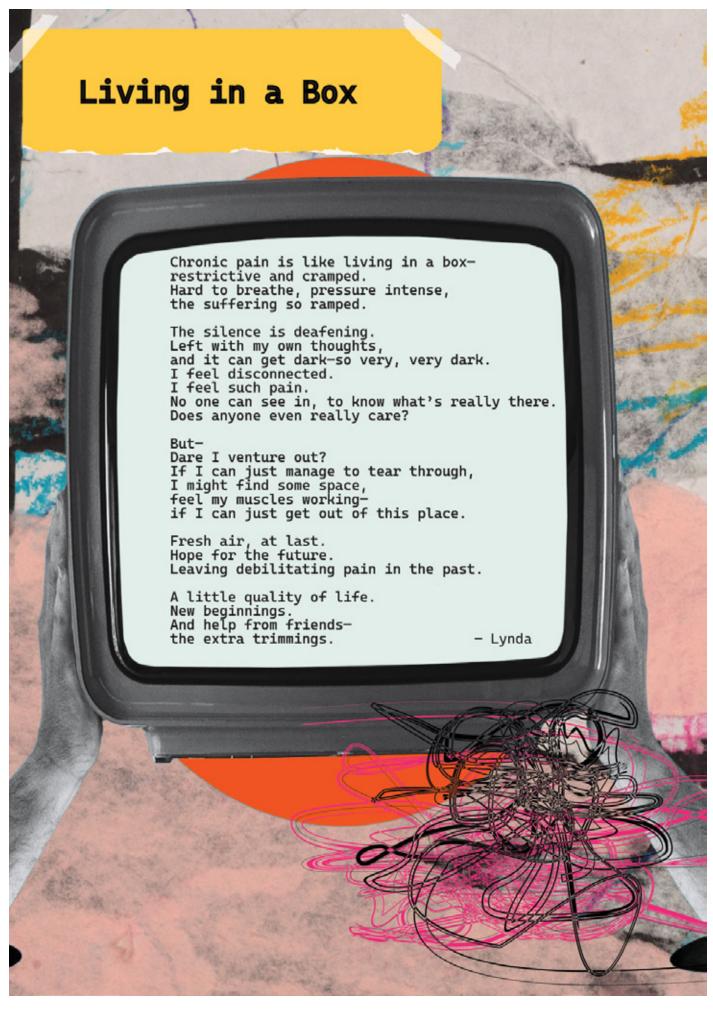






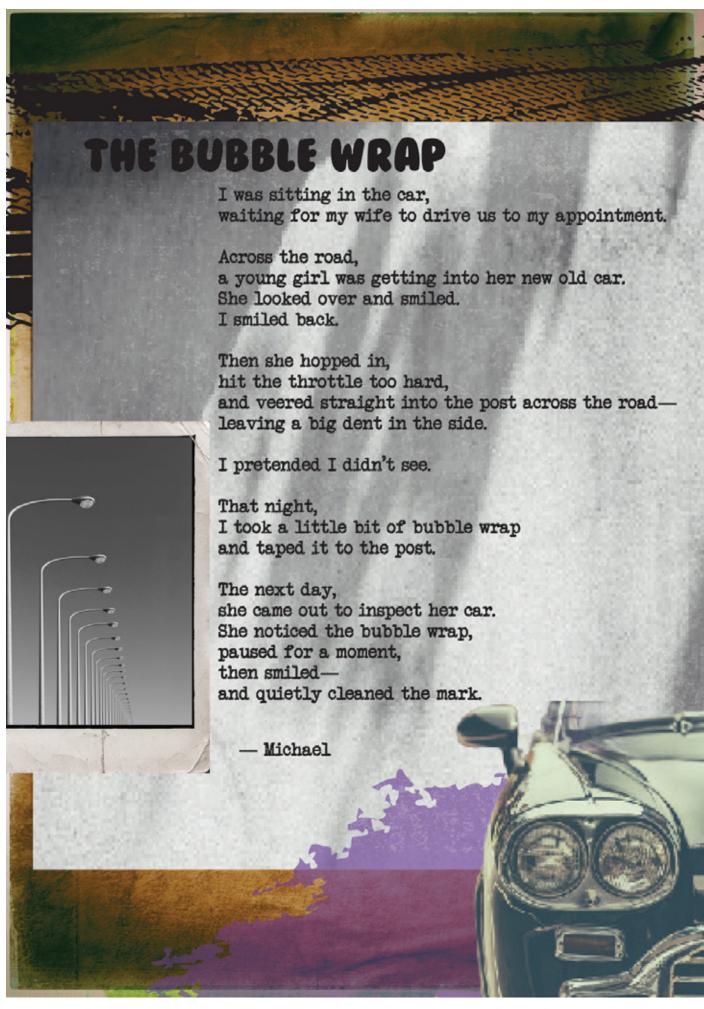












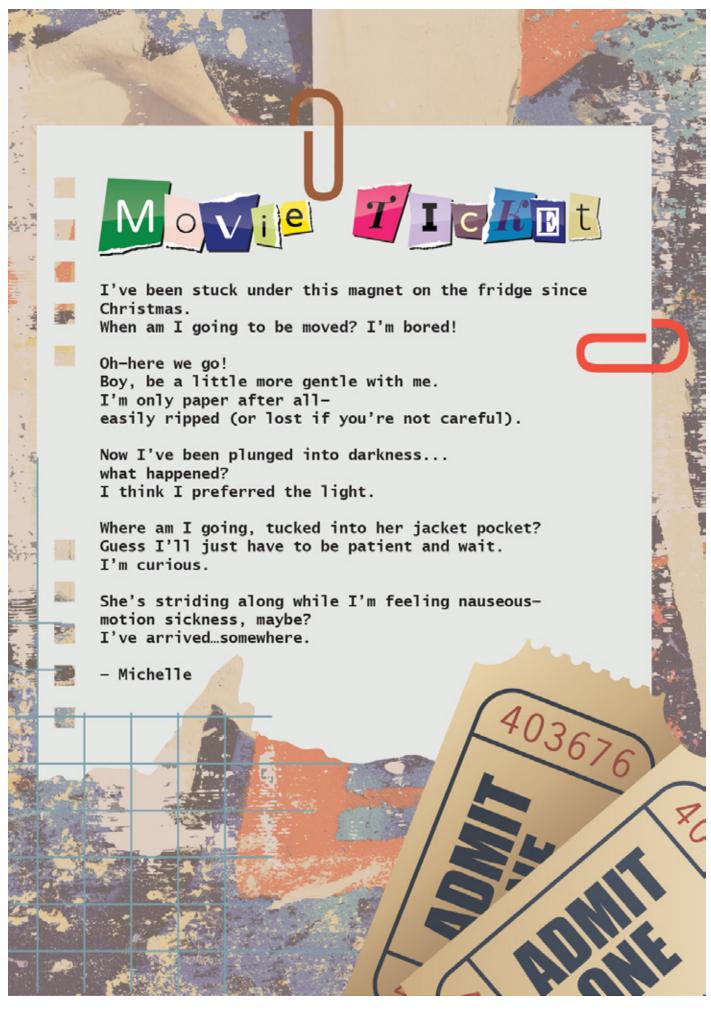






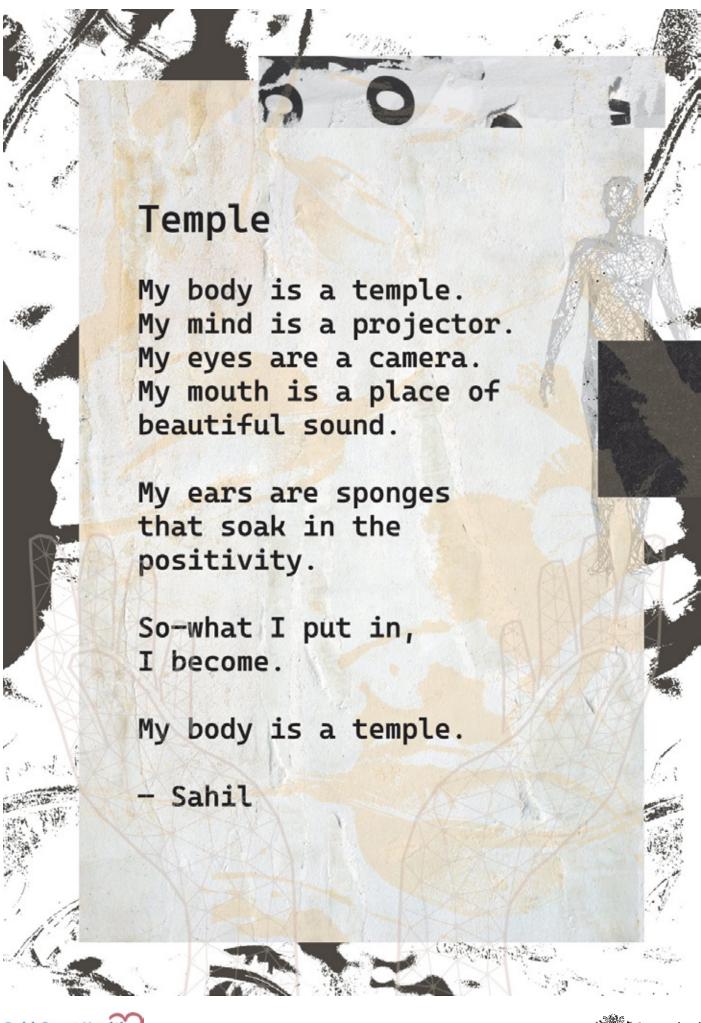






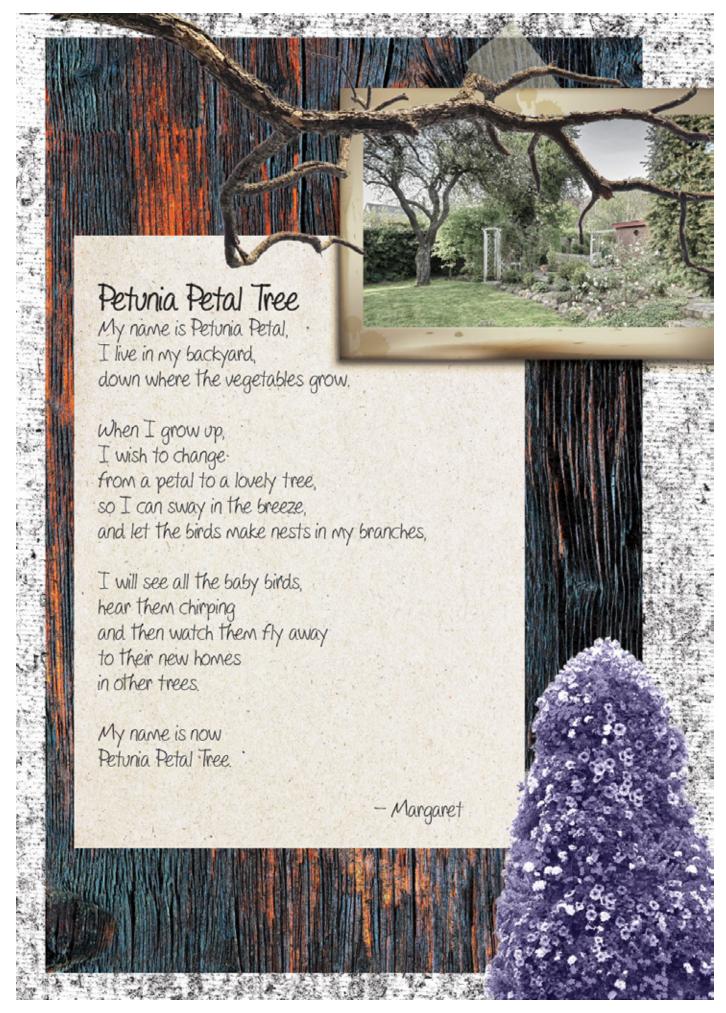


















Microwaveable Popcorn

My pain is like a microwaveable bag of popcorn. Sometimes it pops beautifully— it tastes delicious and buttery. Other times, it burns, and I find a lot of unpopped kernels.

Just like it's hard to eat those kernels, it's hard to manage the pain sometimes. I just have to find the proper temperature and time in the microwave to try to get the best popcorn.







CONSUMPTION OF PAIN

By Michael Wilkins

The pain that you feel it gets in your head
A lot of the time you think you're better off dead
You hold on to the morsels of pleasurable things
Memories from the past of happier times
A morsel of pleasure caught up in your mind
That morsel of time you keep in your brain
That sweet morsel of peace that keeps you from going insane

You'd try if you could but it just doesn't help others see you as broken To be put back on the shelf That's probably why I keep to myself

But I'm not that broken that I cannot feel
And it doesn't help when you're trying to heal
You push others away cause you think that's the best
When deep down inside you want to pull them to your chest





DON'T STOP DREAMING

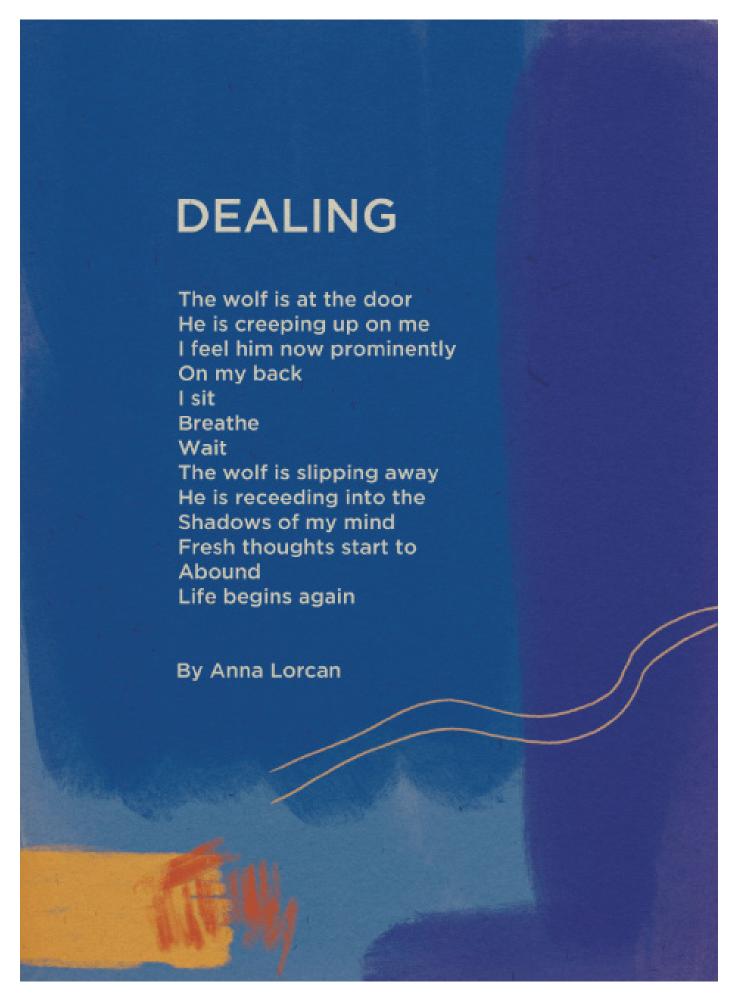
BY AADHIRA VELLALA

Stop! Keep the cascade of tears running. After all, that is what defines one of the laws in this new world. Ruled by the dictator known as pain. The living conditions here will break you. There's heavy work for little pay. Simply getting through to the end of each day will leave you with fatigue and aches. The air here feels so heavy to breathe. Even the corner of your lips is dragged down by the intense gravity.

But please, keep pushing through. Through hard work, we can slowly change this place. One pixel at a time we can paint a dream with vibrant colours. A dream where everything doesn't feel so heavy. Where even light can have a safe space to shine. So please, don't stop dreaming. The air may feel lighter than you realise. Where you can feel the gentle breeze soothing your cheeks as you inhale the taste of salt and sand by the soft beach. Lightened up by the warmth of a golden globe. A place, where you may finally be free.

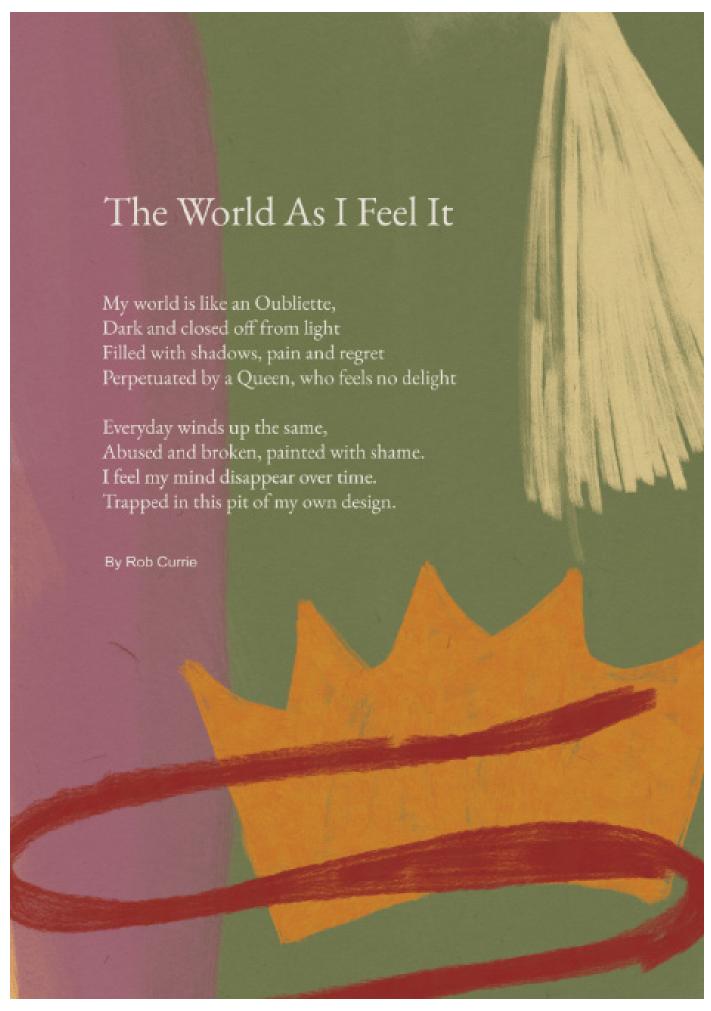
















ROTTING?

My future rots away while I live with chronic pain Thinking of the passage of time, I'll never say My wisdom improves with every sunrise As the suffering I've endured shows That pain has infected my mind And so it's naive to believe I can cure this situation Since I realise how Unhappiness Inverses Hopefulness As I'm convinced I'm shackled by agony It's therefore foolish to say My mind's potential has no limit By using mindfulness, I understand I'm too fragile to march into more battles Having been seared by pain, I'll never believe My life can blossom while I live with chronic pain.

Now read each line again, beginning with the bottom line.

BY AADHIRA VELLALA





