

Golden Point Award 2023  
English Poetry – Honourable Mention  
*of all the make-up she brought to the ward* by Tricia Tan Hui Ling

ziplocked lipstick was the most important.

*Yes mum, we got the value pack from Watsons.*

xoxo: the way she'd sign off every visitor card, the inevitable  
*what happened* that became everyone's favourite hospital greeting, their  
vases housing flowers remarkable as pearls. They'd become  
urns, with time, dozens emptied of flowers we forgot, like  
texts to her therapist, chemo woes like sample creams  
splattered on sephora floor. Flouncy haired ladies,  
rosebud lips frozen in passive Os. Nothing against the  
quicksand of indifference. I just thought  
pity parties were something people loved to throw. Party trivia:  
oyster reefs go for miles and absorb up to 93% of wave energy.  
No names but they braved the most  
menacing tsunamis. Something about  
lipsticks that made her brave, like the  
kindness of oysters, saving kids numerous as  
jellybeans, playing *fire and ice* by the shore.  
Ideally her lips would be safe, too, cisplatin benign as  
Hi-chews, our manmade way of remembering fruit. Lipstick was a  
guardian smothering peeling lips in a shiny hug. Lipstick  
followed the order of oysters, defending lip island from the fate of  
eggshells. Chemo's waves reliable as the forecast, an unseen hand  
dabbing at her lips, over and over. She took the lipstick, built a  
citadel of momentary oysters. The war wore on and was  
breath-taking in its persistence. Lipstick was the best  
ally, one she could always hold in her hands.