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~poetry / prose~

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Coy

Ananya Rustogi



SOLILOQUY WITH HEALING

Muhammed Sanni Olowonjoyin

I am learning how to scribble poems about
Living, about bodies loving their homes, about
Miracles. I want to pluck hibiscuses without
Thorn-bites on the brittle of my skin. Without
Epiphytes telling me that I'm a home for
Fettered things. I want to beautify a language
& unwear the heaviness of my chest, until
There are no ululations, no burns & no magma
Spilling on the faces of boys.
I've been living but still learning the rhythm of my
Respiration & how to hold prayers between the
Crevices of my lungs. Some nights are hope
Pouring into poems. This portraiture is how I
Skid from the claws of my soliloquy and the
Chrysanthemum of my memories before saying
Amen to the prayers I mounted on the relics of my
Faith. I'm learning about flights. Say I'm a bird
Receding into a labyrinth of winglessness—
Levitating on a precipice & about to c

r
a
s
h into
a field of flowers
in nirvana.



Muhammed Sanni Olowonjoyin, TPC III, studies Biochemistry at the University of Ilorin. His poems have been published or forthcoming in Salamander Ink Magazine, Stripes, African Writer Magazine, Words And Whispers, Acropolis Journal, Kreative Diadem, Fiery Scribe Review, Ngiga Review, Livina Press, Arts Lounge, and elsewhere. He reads poetry and translations for The Dodge Magazine. When he's not tracing biochemical pathways, reading, or writing, he's searching for peace. He tweets @APerSe_

mortar & pestle

A. Benét

call us sinner / ámōósú / call us whore / anything but a child of god
and watch us smile / watch us dance in the living room / six arms
reaching from three ringed bodies / uncontained and howling at
the moon / hips grounded in mortar and pestle and there is no
space for your lack of acceptance / the air of our dwelling is
infused with copal and sweat / the salt of tears we cried last night
for years we lost as tethered and you can call us fragile / *ruined* /
call us our mother's dead name and watch us legion / watch us
pound our soles into rich soil / six heels crusted with earth digging
in sacrifice / for life blood and abundance



A. Benét is an emerging poet from California who is pursuing her B.A. in English. She is a lover of literature with a weakness for coffee and the color of burnt clay. Her work is forthcoming in The Acorn Review, and you can, sometimes, find her on Twitter @benetthewriter

Overmorrow

Alorah Welti

The auguries said it would be like this:
My inevitable loneliness beside me,
dream-stricken, knife in-hand.

When the tea leaves said, *Honey, you're ovulating*,
I laid down among the trees. The moss sighed,
Overmorrow, I declare you Magician.

At that moment, across the forest,
he crawled out of the ground, out of my longing–
gasping, earth-stained.

I wept and ran to him
and when I knelt beside the spirit made solid,
I realized my body was not with me.

The absence was stubborn against prayers–
I remained a translucent apparition,
as though unreal.

Then he whispered into the darkness, *Overmorrow*,
and I commanded flesh to create itself– to cup my spirit.
He watched me materialize.



Overmorrow

Alorah Welti

Reunited and nearly feral—
He brushed the hair from my face and said,
My love, the tea leaves lied again.

I licked the dirt off his mouth and laughed;
But I watched you materialize.
He said, *You remain hidden. I remain away from here.*

Look around. This moment hasn't happened yet.

Alorah Welti is a nineteen-year-old Minnesota-born feminist, synesthete, and emerging poet and artist. Her work is forthcoming in *Inklette* and *Allium*, *A Journal of Poetry & Prose*, and has been featured in an anthology by Girl God Books. She is a recipient of the Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists by the Sandisfield Arts Center. She lives on stolen Mohican and Wabanaki land, now called Berkshire County, Massachusetts, with her family.

梦中情人 - dreamlover

Vio

如月光之诺，

like the promise of moonlight,

相与樱下会。

meet me under the cherry blossoms.

纵然梦中醒，

even if i awake from this dream,

孤心依是软。

my lonely heart remains soft.



Vio is a singer and songwriter for the loves that never were. A little shy most of the time, her true self only comes out in karaoke rooms. You can fawn over clouds with her at @violieu everywhere.

the tale of lilan and chanesar

Zarbab Rehman



Zarbab Rehman (she/her) is a design student currently studying at Indus Valley School of Arts in Karachi, Pakistan. She dabbles in digital and traditional art mainly watercolours. Her work focuses on emotions she feels towards particular things and she translates them in the medium she sees fit.

Ophelia talks to Sharon about men, death, and violets

Sharon Zhang

—After Michael Frazier

Who told you to do
these kinds of things? You
try memorizing the
names of flowers, and
Then you are
ruined.



Our souls melted in sunlight,
a black coat dumping the bodies
so gently it
becomes a rite of passage
hands clasped still in
devastated opal, perched on
the hood of a 2010 burgundy Ford.
You don't say
 I love you
because you were
 raised better than that.
Don't do what I
did, man
 coughing yourself
out

Ophelia talks to Sharon about men, death, and violets

Sharon Zhang

into mutilated riverbanks
into magnificent Woolworths aisles
like a prayer to an unrisen god
for which there will never be a temple
—*To an unrisen weather balloon*
He gave me letters and then I
made paper cranes
snipping off their little heads
onto the tiles. *Thunk* as
the syllables fall off and then
a white shower in the swollen
kitchen. *Thunk* as
my eyelids were ripped
open like broken seams
and blood dotted the bouquet;

yes, I became something
so threadbare and clumsy
that violets were pried
from my
purple fingers and then I
was blessed

Sharon Zhang is an Asian-Australian, Melbourne-based poet and author. Her work has been recognised by Anti-Heroine Chic, Antithesis Magazine, and elsewhere. She is a mentee at Ellipsis Writing and an editor at Polyphony Lit. Outside of writing, she enjoys collecting CDs, scrolling endlessly on her phone, and thinking about Hegel a touch more than that which is necessary. She is the poet laureate of pretentiousness and using the word “body” when any other noun would work instead. Skin. Limbs. Humanness. Tablecloth.




inertia

Phoenix Tesni

there is a future that beckons to us,
glinting & gleaming like a double-edged
sword, smirking & snickering like a cat
that knows more about you than your
mind, dark & quiet like an abandoned
heart. you can try & dig & probe &
crawl your way in but you will always
find yourself back here, with only the
next moment within reach. blink:
the future is now the past. nostalgia
sits with her legs up on the dashboard,
refusing to read the map ahead as you
go round & round in circles. she says,
there is no sense in looking at directions
to anywhere. or everywhere. or nowhere.
you let go of the steering wheel. the car
keeps moving. or the world does, outside.

you cannot tell the difference anymore.

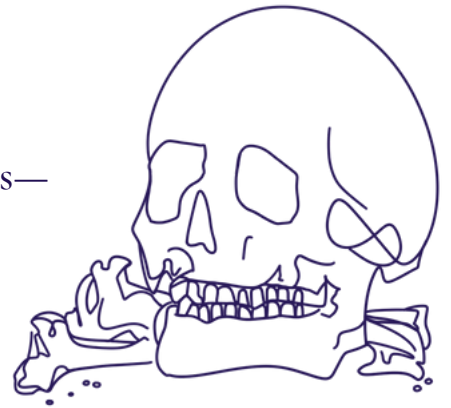


Phoenix Tesni (she/her) is a 22 year old self-diagnosed artist & poet from New Delhi. She has forthcoming works in Morning Fruit Magazine, Verum Literary Press, bloodbathhate, Sage Cigarettes, Cloudscent Journal, tigers zine lit, and elsewhere. When Phee isn't writing, she likes to practice falling in love with life over and over again. You can find her at phoenixtesni.carrd.com or @PhoenixTesni on twitter.

Where to find death-

Shilpa Bharti

I have found it
In {I} inside parenthesis;
In crescent antlers piked to chital's rib;
It's traces in moth's wing splinter over creased arms
and damp cold bangles of my grandmother—ornamentals—
ghee-dipped white wicks into nostrils;



it's not a week ago,
amongst ten, a plant turns yellow—a sudden work
under pressure—a wrong sized boot fitted to wrong foot.
Our breathes made eerie in mist with the plumage in buzzards
Mouth.

It's noon, now, the letter box stunted—empty without the warmth
of letters or say from old friends.
The hundreds of goldfishes in my stomach stoops and peep to the scent of
words
like rivers from my lover's mouth—
when he spoke, his words were not his words—his mouth
spoon fed by Nimbostratus; a haycock's edge; a bungled tale—
trampled grass,
mayweed
beneath our feet.

Shilpa Bharti, pen name- Rose. She has served on the editorial panel of several literary journals. She has been on the judging panel of poetry contests including the poetry pea journal haiku contest. She had her work published in failed haiku journal; poetry pea journal of haiku and senryu; creatrix haiku journal; neo literary journal; narrow road literary journal (young voices slot); an ode to the queer journal; howling press; forthcoming work includes poems in the SAHITYA AKADEMI, throat to sky magazine, resurrection press and Her Artwork has managed to appear in several other art journals

Wherever you go, there you are

Jamie Mann



Jamie is a rising senior student in Toronto, Ontario and is the Arts and Innovation Prefect at her school. She enjoys doing theatre, drawing, going to concerts, and playing dungeons and dragons with friends. She occasionally posts her work on instagram: @jamyeart

OR WAM, OR MY MAN!

Mhembeuter Jeremiah Orhemba

Your DMs are a string of messages.

-Checking up on you.

-I can't call, my SIM has been blocked.

-Have you resumed yet?

-I relive your voice notes just to have a feel of your voice.

-Hey, Mkanem.

You cease reading and scroll. More messages pull up. A lengthy note stretches out, topped with crying emojis.

-Your line is not going through.

-Did you block me?

-Please, say something.

Thoughts stagger in your head. Your heart sears with delight. You glance up, and yes, it is 'Prince Charming'—André—who has sent you these messages.

You notice he is online. And typing...

-Or Wam, are you back?

-Can we meet?

You stare, wide eyed. It is wind inside your head. Memories flush into your mind.

Plunged in a self crisis, you had replaced your SIM card with a new one. Amidst all your troubles, André was the particular reason for your disconnect. Hysteria coalesced in your mind, the air cutting with each pull. You had a crush on him, he saw you as a friend—he was not ready for a relationship. And so you needed space. From him, from people, as much as you could. His goofy grin from previous video calls haunted you. His hollow laughter, killing. Day by day. Until it haunted you no longer. Life became light, easy to glide through. You reached out to friends and family, told them this was your new number.



OR WAM, OR MY MAN!

Mhembeuter Jeremiah Orhemba

-Heavens, Mkanem, they gasped. You had us terribly worried!

Now, you are shaking. You returned to WhatsApp expecting an abundance of messages. But not from André. And 50 messages?

-You are online!

-Finally.

-Six months offline, man. Hope all is good?

You don't know what to type.

The cursor keeps blinking.

And it is so hot in your chest.

-Or wam? Mkanem?

Whatever you decide, to answer or not, will define a new path for you. Should you reply him? Return back into that toxic shell of uncertainty, your heart beating, beating, beating, unsure if his hearts beats same too?

You hover a finger over the screen of your phone. Think hard.

You breathe in.

Yes, André. I'm back.

You put off your data.

Mhembeuter Jeremiah Orhemba is a literary and speculative fiction writer. He is Tiv, Nigerian and first runner-up for the 2021 Kreative Diadem Flash Fiction Contest. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in FictionWrit, The Shallow Tales Review, Arts Lounge, Eboquills, The Muse Journal, Agapanthus Collective, ARTmosterrific, Fiction Niche and elsewhere. In 2021, he was an artist-in residence at ARTmosterrific. He wishes to attain the serenity of water, enjoys watching TK and Carlos kiss, and still loves AURORA and Christina Perri. For more of his works, read here: https://linktr.ee/mj_orhemba He tweets @ son_of_faya



(non)smokers temptation

Carina Solis

walking on cigarette stubs,
my feet crush ash and
last-of-sunset embers.
they are
littered on the ground
and husky wisps
waltz through the air,
secondhand smoke in every inhalation.

the stench of tobacco invades
my nostrils,
takes temporary refuge
in cilia rooms.
and when the stink exits,
i can't help but wonder:
what if i
make the grab
how would a cig
weigh in my palm?
i could eye
a side-walk sleeper

for their lighter, and
as the smoke reveres my fingertips,
take a drag,
let the unruly puff coat my tongue
in a creamy, chemical bitter.

yes, for a moment,
i could fall in love
with the delirium,
live in worship for a pavement butt,
strip my mind and limbs into
nakedness.

but then
the rebellion would end
and I am not ready to stop
dreaming this dead dream.
walk on by.

Reprint (Published in the Morning Fruit Mag on July 1st)

Carina Solis is an African-American writer from Georgia. Her work has been recognized or is forthcoming in the Eunoia Review, the Ice Lolly Review, Rogue Agent, the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and the New York Times Summer Reading Contest, among others. She is also an editor at Polyphony Lit, an intern at Young Eager Writers, and a mentee at Ellipsis Writing. She is fifteen years old.

Field Trip

Willow Kang

Below a cornfield sky contoured
by careless azure strokes,

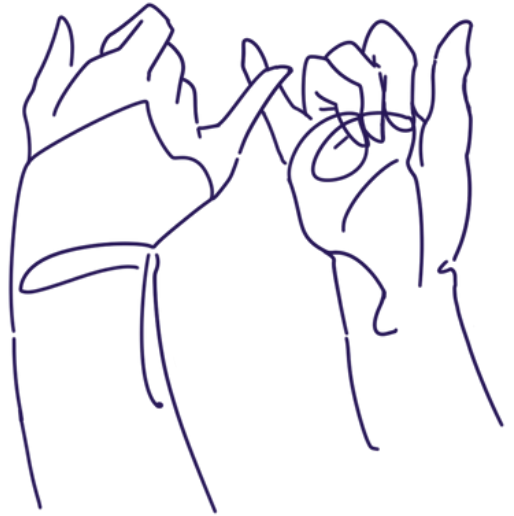
we forget about chasing boars, instead
follow the railroad into new cocoons,

the children humming like bee swarms,
crystal ball visions abandoned
for newer, grander adventures
on bubblegum horizons

& I'm in the East with a inky wish
for peace, mourning the end
of lavender fields & orange trees

when the campfires are lit,
fireflies sing prophecies of the present

in the present, too, we follow the North Star
I sit at seat 33, beside a devotee
of eternity,
birds/souvenir shops



Willow is a writer from Singapore. After school, find her reading thick history textbooks, aimlessly writing poems, and solving frustrating math problems, in a futile attempt to conquer boredom. Just make sure that her coffee bowl stays full.

night time insects are full of wisdom if you gain insect ears

Leopold Crow

xe stepped out onto the street, raising xeir face to the streetlights, every
breath the edge of a storm.

"am I pretty underground?" xe asked the moths, "you can scream all you
like down there."

notice me. xe said, to no one at all. *please. notice me.*

the moths are listening.

it's a quiet road,

it's a quiet road.

a peppered moth flickers its old newspaper wings.

sleep deprivation is a winner for those who want to have conversations
with night time insects.

second-hand hands, each already-used palm, threadbare, hoveringly pressed
to xeir skin in an embrace of resignation.

look, xe said, *I know I was made to be undignified, too clumsy to be held by you.*

dignity and uselessness are two different things though;

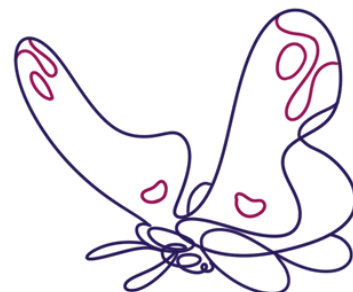
xe has xeir second-hand heart held in xeir second-hand palms, cradled.

the teenage dream isn't all that, xe laughs, tracing xeir thumb from the aorta
to the left ventricle.

the moths are listening.

they don't quite understand what xe means, but it's enough.

it's a quiet road,



night time insects are full of wisdom if you gain insect ears

Leopold Crow

it's a quiet road.

an elephant hawk-moth settled on the kerb next to xem, paper wings
blinking gently. all green-gold and pink edging, just like the ones xeir
grandfather caught in boxes.

if xe gets tired enough, if the sleep deprivation edges too far into xeir
vision, xe could almost convince xemself that there were eyes on the edges
of its paper wings, blinking gently. all green-gold and pink edging. blink.
blink.

blink.

(how do you explain the fall of icarus to a moth drawn to a flame? how
could xe have known they made xem to be the moth and the match?)

night time insects are full of wisdom if you gain insect ears.

the moths have wisdom to tell but they won't speak.

it's a quiet road,

it's a quiet road.

Leopold Crow (he/they) is a young trans artist from England who can generally be found talking about angels and The Owl House, making bad (fantastic) puns or doodling all over his schoolwork. More of his work can be found at <https://leopold-crow.carrd.co>



paper adhesive hearts

Amelia Nason

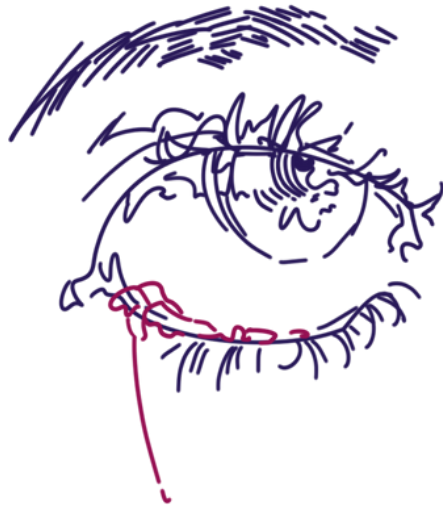
i'm fascinated by stickers on water bottles & phones of strangers // the way
they tell me everything nothing anything about them // i hate not
recognizing a character someone could've modeled their personality
around // but there's gratification in knowing the quote plastered next to it
// because now they aren't a stranger // as if their heart is made of paper
adhesive // but no one puts their secret desires & deepest fears on a fucking
hydroflask // you might as well flaunt your heart on your sleeve // i
remember how it felt to throw out my old ipad case // to put stickers on a
new one // redefinition is wonderful until fear of false advertising creeps in
// our collective uniqueness haunts me // because if we're all different //
aren't we the same // in the sense that abnormality itself is normalized //
there's no space for us all to be original // are we meant to pick & choose
who's special // maybe we already do when we put a celebrity's name in
lights or lie to children about their potential // i was that child // i
remember the taste of passionfruit juice on a rooftop in zanzibar // sour
enough to bring tears to my eyes & make coca cola cry // i can't have been
the only traveler to discover that tang on a sun-soaked roof // i'm
perplexed by people that don't like adventure // the ones without
wanderlust stickers who never tasted true passionfruit // there are too few
of them to make jfk dfw atl ord ams airports less hectic // but too many to
be deemed unique // my friend says unfamiliarity hurts // i tell her the
point of life is to live beyond the borders of your country & comfort //
even if existing there doesn't make you special

amelia nason is a next generation indie award finalist, a scholastic award winner, and an alumna of the interlochen, fir acres, and new york times summer writing programs. she also edits for kalopsia literary journal. her work is featured in ice lolly review and full mood magazine. when she isn't writing, amelia fences competitively and enviously reads the acknowledgements sections of her favorite books. you can find her on twitter @amelia_emn.

GIRL DREAMS OF PERSEPHONE

Ivi Hua

and the air tastes like rain. she's sinking
knee deep, something of a maiden in a field.
something of jade-green eyes. any dreamer
would corrode and dissolve to worship her.
i would throw myself to the wolves, splay
myself onto the fire. o queen of the dead. o
goddess of spring. the way her hair flows,
burnished and eternal, makes me want to
weep.



Ivi Hua is an Asian-American writer, dreamer, and poet. A Best of the Net nominee, her work is published or forthcoming in *Juven*, *[sub]liminal*, and the *Eunoia Review*. In the summer of 2022, she attended the *Adroit Journal's* Summer Mentorship as a Poetry mentee. You can find her @livia.writes.stories on Instagram.

the light of the in-between

Zarbab Rehman



Zarbab Rehman (she/her) is a design student currently studying at Indus Valley School of Arts in Karachi, Pakistan. She dabbles in digital and traditional art mainly watercolours. Her work focuses on emotions she feels towards particular things and she translates them in the medium she sees fit.

application for the position of survivor

Phoenix Tesni

This is the morning you regrow wings. Here is the place
the sun shines, and the clouds bump into each other so often

it feels like hugs. Somewhere two little animals fall in love.
There is lightning striking a dandelion in a desert. These

are the two people whose veins entwined with each other
in the moment before they said goodbye. Five miles away

from the sea is a forest fire. Here is where I let go. I throw
a dart of love at you and it transforms to poison before

striking. Your hair is grass. Her hair is waves. My hair is
petals. There is so much beauty everywhere it spills. In

school a little boy learns of death. A church teaches sin.
The ocean is in flames. The sky turns to tar. Footsteps in the

dark. The stars melt and drip. Chaos disguises itself as poetry.
I am so happy it leaks out and i embody emptiness again.

The world is in colour. The colours burst into music. The music
silences itself. The future blossoms like a flower and wilts just

as quickly. This is how I fall out of love. My head shakes. Your
heart hammers. The world is watching closely, in detail. Here is the



application for the position of survivor

Phoenix Tesni

same, sad look in their eyes because you're never enough,
Here is where you apologize over and over at three a.m. to yourself,

crying. Here is where you learn to love yourself because somebody
has to; here is the place you learn to give love to everyone because

there's enough sadness already and it has to begin somewhere. Here is
all the love you give to people and in the corner is what you refused to

take back. Here are all your childhood imaginary friends. Your talents,
to validate you. The compliments you saved in a folder catching fire.

Hidden in your heart is the elixir of survival. The eyelashes flutter.
Your lungs puff up. Your eyes are watered down. The secret is revealed:

you survive, you survive, you survive.

Phoenix Tesni (she/her) is a 22 year old self-diagnosed artist & poet from New Delhi. She has forthcoming works in Morning Fruit Magazine, Verum Literary Press, bloodbathhate, Sage Cigarettes, Cloudscent Journal, tigers zine lit, and elsewhere. When Phee isn't writing, she likes to practice falling in love with life over and over again. You can find her at phoenixtesni.carrd.com or @PhoenixTesni on twitter.

Janam Din Mubarak

Simran Kaur Sarwara

For my birthday
I want
You to listen to something you don't understand
I want you to trust
That these words carry the same weight
As my room
That I carried on my back
For 5 years
And in my chest
In silence
For the other 18
Let me take
Janam
Again
On my own terms



Janam Din Mubarak: "happy birthday" in Punjabi

Janam: "birth" in Punjabi

Simran is a 25 year old descendant of 'old stories, new relations'. Born in Ambala, India, she spent almost the entirety of her recall-able life on several uncaded and occupied homelands of the Coast Salish peoples on the West Coast of Turtle Island. Home, family, relations, and the tensions between them all have often served as her inspiration to write. As she seeks to come to terms with her fractures, it is her hope that her writing may evolve to also sprout from joy as much as it has from resilience. As the fish of the zodiacs, she hopes to step into the depth of her being and dreams, letting them now guide her words, in the same way that they have guided her all her years.

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

[the CURTAINS open. Only the NARRATOR, OPHELIA, knows how this story ends.]

OPHELIA, narrating, because in her story HAMLET got the soliloquies: *this summer is ours for the taking*.

[the AUDIENCE gasps.]

OPHELIA: *The sun is hot in the sky, some overripe fruit waiting to burst*

...

[the play begins.]

... and that's summer, cradled in the palms of my hands; something's going to happen. I can feel it like a storm on the horizon—you know the feeling, when the air is heavy with potential and the clouds are thick in the sky—and thus, the scene is set. Summer, 2022. Enter the players. This summer is ours for the taking.

I want to crack this summer open like an egg. It's yolk-yellow, somewhere back there. I can feel it. I'm all potential energy, something moving and moving and moving until an outside force stops me in my tracks. *I am abundant, I am beautiful, I am strong*. I punch my reflection in the mirror until something inside me breaks alongside the glass.

I promise. I'm a liar, and I'm a fucking liar, but I think this holds some grain of truth.

No, everything makes you sad. Everything is overcast and dreary until mania and melodrama and brilliant oversaturation, and then I'm the king of the world, and then it all falls down, a whirlpool like petal-stained bathwater swirling down a drain. I love and I hate everything in equal measure, with equal viciousness. People don't believe me when I call myself vicious until I bare my teeth.

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

Summer, 2022. The scene is set, enter the players.

What was it that I've been repeating for weeks, a hum in the back of my head like the playlists I'll make up and sing to myself as I drive? Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. Summer is the most tragic season, and winter is the most beautiful.

Summer is the most tragic season, and I can feel it in my bones that this summer is going to implode. There has been unrelenting pressure all year, and it's ready to burst. It's going to; strawberries and roses and peaches beneath this brutal high desert sun. Summer is the most tragic season, this summer is ours for the taking, and as thus, the scene is set. I am a liar, but those are truths.

I can cast myself as the center of a tragedy. I can be a lover and a villain and everyone's favorite side character, a manic pixie dream girl but only that, only a dream, not the muse but the *somebody* but the poet longs to be the poem longs to be a muse, too, despite it all.

I can be everyone's favorite character but my own. I can be everything but the protagonist. I will burn bright and burn hot and spiral into madness and die somewhere beautiful. There will be flowers. There will be a reason.

I am a liability and I am a mirrorball. *The scene is set*. Hamlet got seven soliloquies; why can't I? Why does my narrative have to revolve around the people in my life and not just *me*? I have gravity. I will not succumb to theirs. I am a daughter and a sister and a lover, and most importantly, a ghost.

What was it that I wrote last summer? *A morbid longing for the macabre, like summer roses living and dying beneath the brutal desert sun*. A premonition and a promise; isn't that all poetry ever is?

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

I don't yet know if this summer is going to be a tragedy, but I know that it'll be tragic. This entire year has been a prelude to something, I swear it. The scene is set, and now the curtains are opening, and we don't yet know what this production entails.

I want to eat the world raw.

It's funny. I've started almost every sentence with *I*, the most selfish letter, the most selfish *word*, but I can promise—I know that I lie, I *know* that I'm a liar, *stop looking at me like that*—that for all my manic pixie dream girl-ness, I'm the side character in my own story. *I, I, I*, desperately trying to reclaim my narrative as my own. HELLO, I scrawl on the fogged-up shower door, hot water hot air hot skin. I am melting from my wings. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE MY BODY.

Gifted, tortured, second-best. *Second best* haunts me, even though I shine as brightly as a star and insist, despite it all, that the people I love are made of some kind of *stardust* that I'll never get to be. They're stardust, and I'm an echo. When you draw an egg on white paper, you don't draw the egg itself; you draw the shadows, the shades, the echoes of what the egg should be. I'm what's left—defined by everything but myself.

In my dreams, I am never the main character. Did you know that? I sometimes feel like an inactive participator in my own life, subject to the whims and whimsy of the better brighter smarter more tragic protagonist whose life I reside in. Maybe I am my own main character, but I don't know it yet.

Hello written even more frantically on the bathroom mirror, tears in my eyes and my cut-off hair in the porcelain basin of the sink. We rot thinking about nothing, so drown in a claw-foot bathtub brimming with flowers. Die beautifully, die dramatically. You always had a flair for the theater.

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

I fell in love with a girl who won't ever love me back. Maybe this summer I'll fall in love with myself, or find another girl who makes my skin feel a little more like skin. But she made me feel like *myself*, made the finite joy of this planal existence feel infinite, made everything a little brighter and better and *richer*, maybe, more vivid. She had brown eyes like honey. I would have fallen in love with her in every universe. I know that for certain.

What do I want? I want to eat the world raw.

I exhale, and the dust that the tail end of spring kicked up settles. Dust motes and her honey eyes and one of my close friends leaving for the other side of the country in August—yes, a finishing point. That's where summer will conclude. A paint palette and an unfinished novel and jasmine flowers and a roll of undeveloped film. Summer is finite. We have to make it last forever.

What is forever and what is finite? The line between those two things will blur. It's a red string of fate, perhaps, or maybe it's a noose around my neck. *God*, I'm so *obsessed* with *forever*. Why do you crave immortality? Is it not enough to exist, devastatingly present, in the moment?

Immortality or a creation myth? I am a girl, and therefore I am selfish. I want them both. I want it all.

I can be everything but the protagonist. Did I ever want to be the protagonist? Were my aspirations of greatness and grandeur and a hand to hold too *much*, too much for this second-place friend, close but never the favorite? I destroy things, you know, when I feel too *much*. I scorch everything I touch.

What a poetic way to die, drowning.

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

Summer has always been like a list of new year's resolutions. I will fall in love, I will delude myself into thinking that I'm pretty, I will get my nose out of my books and my eyes off my phone and be who I *want* to be, a saturated sky of an athlete and an artist and a sister.

See? I'm not the protagonist. I'm sister-daughter-friend-lover-failure. *Self* is too much. On principle, I, like summer, am intense and tragic and devastating. On principle, I, like summer, burn so brightly that I burn away, burn everyone I touch. *Self* contains too much power. The world conspires to take it away.

That's why summer ends. That's why it's going to implode. Who's going to be caught in the crossfire? There will be guilty kiss-swollen mouths and racking sobs in the middle of the night. There will be starlight and playlists and blankets on grass, tennis rackets and condensation on the sides of water bottles and hugs touch intimacy. I think *intimacy* contains too much power, too. I've never been allowed it.

The scene is set, I will crow at the sky. Bring it on, you motherfucker!
(It ends in Trader Joe's flowers and a claw-foot tub.)

By the end of the summer, something will happen. My Achilles heel is that I care too much, Sisyphus and Icarus bottled up in a teenage girl, you walk in mythology because you want a creation myth of your own. Maybe this summer will be. It rots with the idea of it.

There's this feeling in my chest that I can't explain, but it's expanding in my rib cage and threatening to burst. That's summer. It sneaked up on us, and now we're waiting in its slaver's maw. It stinks of promise, of potential. It's rancid with it.

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

(When my chest does explode, what will be left in the meat and sun-bleached bones of my ribs? A riot of flowers, a tangling of ivy. Leave me out to decompose, and let the forest and the wildflowers reclaim my starless bones.)

Maybe I have been playing God this whole time. I've been writing this potential summer as beautiful.

I don't think it will be.

With summer comes heat, we're baking in our skins on the tennis court, all this potential wasted and gone to rot because we rot alone and in our rooms daydreaming of a *when*. I touch something and I scorch it.

Summer is when everything is going to happen. Summer is when nothing does. This town will always haunt me. *I want to haunt it*. Blurry Polaroids like an art show exhibit. I think I'd like my memories of this summer to be one of those.

A museum. A mausoleum. They're one and the same.

What can I even call this? Nostalgic euphoria for something that is yet to come, yet to transpire?

This summer is of the drowning variety, is a tennis court that holds the aftermath of a celebration, is the taste of the idea of a kiss on my tongue. I'm playing God, this girl with a god complex, because I want and the luxury of want had been taken away by *survival*, and now I survived and now I'm free to want again.

And I, like this impending summer storm, am bloodthirsty.

Summer will close in on us like a bruised sky and a thunderstorm. The scene is set, the players waiting in the wings.

Ophelia's Soliloquy

Cece Lu

Why, why must she die? She was everything but the protagonist. She was a lover and she was a villain and she was a victim. The people surrounding her gave her every role but herself, so she killed that self because she couldn't exist with it for any longer. How she must have hated herself, Ophelia. How she must have loved herself, to let herself die so prettily.

The storm broils. The curtains open.

And the narrator, a girl playing God, she says something like this:

OPHELIA: *this summer is ours for the taking.*

[the AUDIENCE gasps.]

OPHELIA: *the sun is hot in the sky, some overripe fruit waiting to burst ...*

[the play begins.]

[only OPHELIA knows that this ends in tragedy.]

Cece Lu (she/they) is a mixed-race and lesbian writer and poet, currently in her senior year of high school. Drawn to art, music, psychology, and the beauty of humanity, she can be found yearning about kitchens, romanticizing oranges, and daydreaming about publishing her debut novel.

Olives and Wine

Heather Chi



Heather Chi is a 19 year old artist that is particularly passionate about painting. She loves travelling with her (disorganized) sketchbook and capturing the small aspects of life that often go overlooked.

Dark Purple

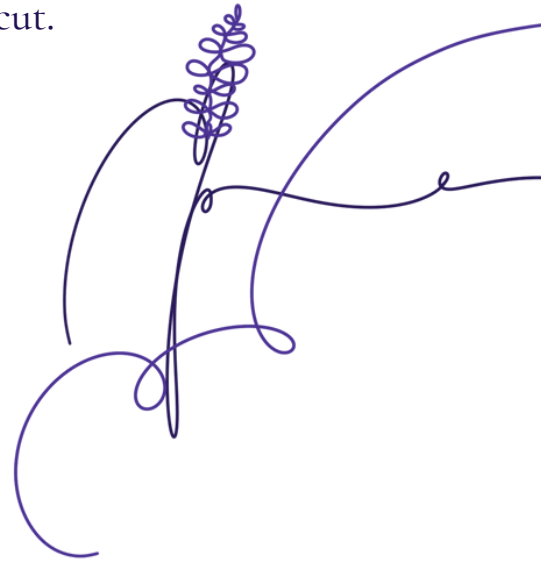
Charlie Bowden

I burst in on the bare-legged broken mauve eggs - not my fault, this time,
and make them do it all again.

Building a new man is like balancing spinning cars on ice in the dark,
the cracked tundra baying for a crash, a spark, a satisfying splash
as dawn gobbles up our purple Prometheus.

I want him to decorate him with wisteria, waltzes of garland,
wrap him up like a Christmas tree,
find a cure for my love and then kill it so I can set him free.

He'll be perfect, I promise, just not this round.
his skin's too dark a purple, his eyes too brown.
He'll paint the town lilac, mulberry, violet,
spraying sangria and stoking the fire, not thinking once
of me or us, his mothers in abundance, our connection cut.
I won't have him stuck in a rut or scrambling to save us
from a burning building,
he's too mauve to see melting.



Charlie Bowden is a student from Hampshire, England, who discovered a love for writing poetry in lockdown after spending years studying it at school. His work has been included in collections by Young Writers and the Stratford Literary Festival among others and he won the 2021 Forward/emagazine Creative Critics Competition. You can follow him on Twitter and Instagram @charliebpoetry for more.

a tongue is only a portal to the world

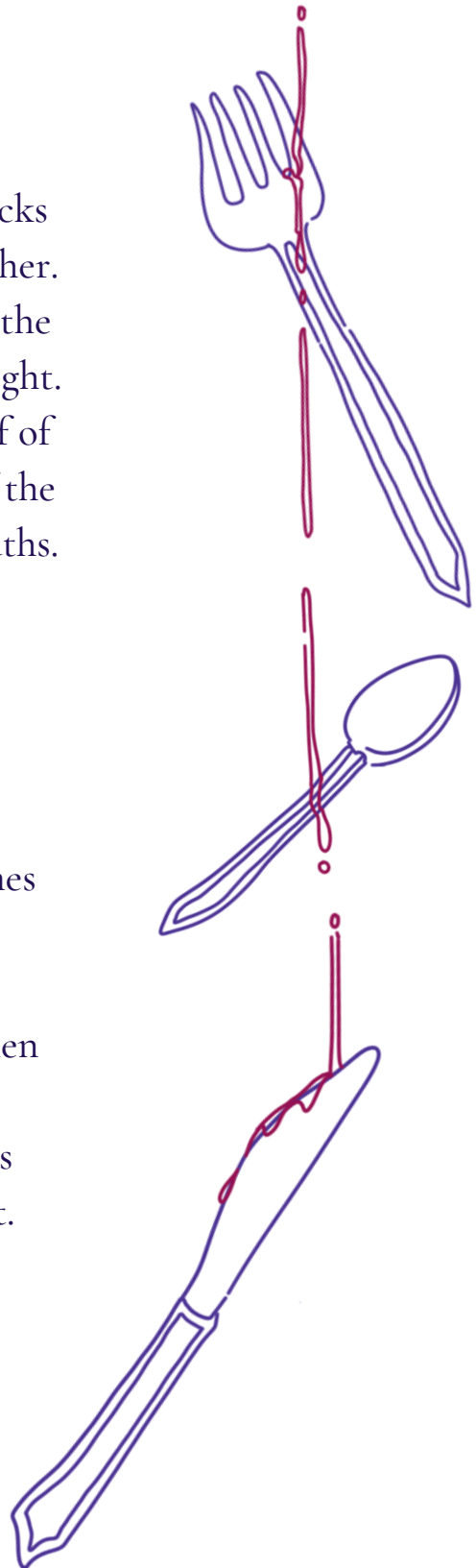
Anna Lin

The guest is always an incarnation of God.

— *Chef's Table*

The dinner table is always one. There are no backs
turned to each other.
In the center lies the
spirit of the night.
Colors have never been so true. The belief of
creation with love, the fulfilled expectation of the
first eye-widening swallow, moves mouths.
Hands reach
in
out
across
over
to scoop, to take, to enjoy. In consumption comes
an understanding.

From the far away kitchen
the chef says come come again
come seek with your companions
that joy linking mouth and heart.



Queen of Hearts

Heather Chi



Heather Chi is a 19 year old artist that is particularly passionate about painting. She loves travelling with her (disorganized) sketchbook and capturing the small aspects of life that often go overlooked.

Saint Agatha in the Psych Ward

Caitlin Irish

TW: blood, death, sexual assault

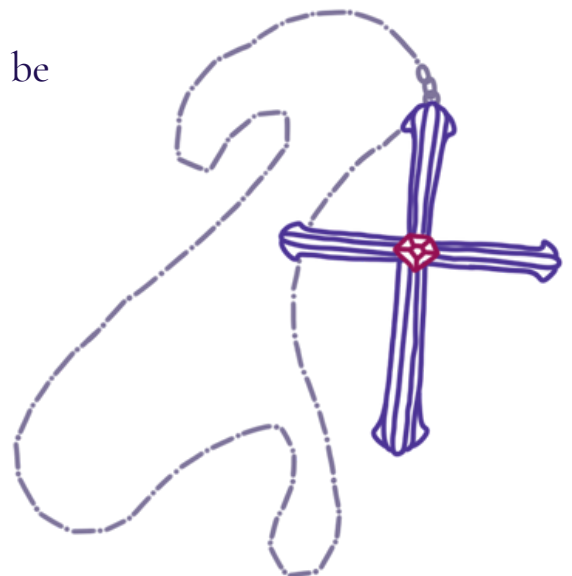
Given the choice of defilement or faith, Saint Agatha chose her Lord. She took great courage and never wavered in the face of persecution.

Before the judge, I am told
to obey, take my rightful place
on my knees.
Tears falling steady, my fingertips shake
as I stiffen my spine in defiance.
This is my sentence for loving my God.
He does not come to my rescue.

One of the tortures she endured was the excision of her breasts. Still, she did not lose her faith, only growing stronger.

The barren skin where my breasts used to be
clings to this hospital gown.
The nurses give me non-slip socks.
It is more than He ever sent.

She is one of many virgins named
in the Canon of the Mass.



Saint Agatha in the Psych Ward

Caitlin Irish

They hallowed my months
of arduous torture, made pastries
of my womanhood.
Paintings of the moment I see in my nightmares
hang in every cathedral.
We all know my pain means nothing to no one
as long as my hymen is intact.

*Though the date is unknown, she is thought to have died
in 251 AD.*

I was only a child.
You allowed this to happen.
This is not what I thought love to be.

Saint Agatha, pray for us.

Do not send me your prayers.
Do not call me a martyr.
I did not want to die.

Caitlin is a newly graduated psych nurse with a passion for mental health and wellness. She has previously been published in Renaissance Review, OC87 Recovery Diaries, and Auxocardia Journal. In her free time, she can be found reading, querying her first novel, and playing with her pet hedgehog, Bobbin.

Glee, Season 6 Episode 8

Maggie Kaprielian

I never understood why my ability
to carry love in my heart for another
woman made me intolerable.

But what I can understand is the
ignominy seeping into my skin whenever
someone alludes to homosexuality being vile.

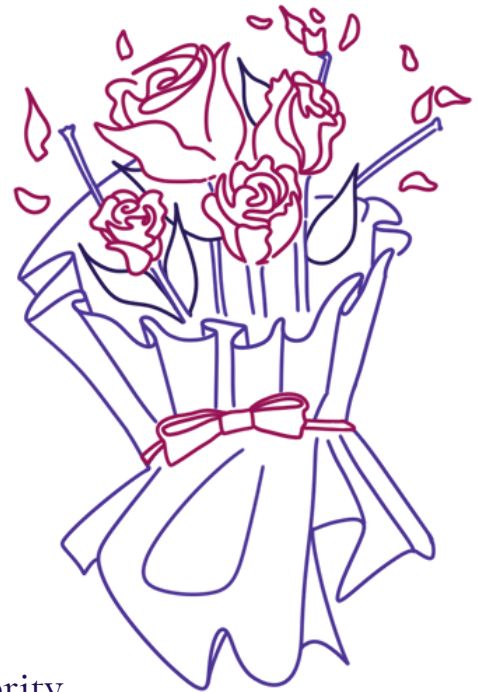
I understand the devastation of
pure loathing from a hypocritical crowd
that raised me on the notion of “being myself.”

I understand that coming out is never truly over
in a universe where straight is the human default.
It’s perpetual. It’s being sixteen and proud of your
courage to tell your family, only to realize the majority
of people you are bound to meet throughout your walk
in life will habitually assume you only like men.

I understand how a decade of my life passed by before gay
marriage was legalized.
I recall watching Glee and my soul pining when Santana and
Brittany had to push
their wedding out of state borders, because at the time, Ohio
prohibited their marriage.

t’s as if their earnest love for each other wasn’t actually love
in the willingly-ignorant eyes of hatred.

I understand it all,
and deeply yearn I didn’t have to.



Glee, Season 6 Episode 8

Maggie Kaprielian

Often, I fathom a reality where everything is different;
One where queer people are seen as people.
Where Santana and Brittany never faced prejudice to begin with.
Where I don't have to actively seek for representation
in the media, just to feel less out of place in life.
In this reality, I can tell people I'm bisexual the way I tell people
my name.

But I understand that's not always true.
There are a lot of things I cannot control.
The list is colossal.

But what I can control is not letting myself
dissolve into a reality where I fabricate my identity.
I'll stop bargaining authentication for the majority's comfort.
I'll celebrate queer joy and solidarity.
I'll give speeches at my gay friends' weddings,
as I remember how it's our community's persistent love
that pushes through storms everyday.

It's the bravery we have to admit to ourselves who we are, and to
keep on
existing as we are, no matter how gargantuan the presence of
opposition is.

So I sit here in solace,
knowing if Santana and Brittany were real,
they'd be living happily together at this very moment;
Just like the millions of queer people
who've learned to grow love from darkness.

Maggie Kaprielian (she/her) is a seventeen year old from Maryland. She is an editor in chief for the Erewhon Literary Arts Magazine and president of Potomac's chapter of the Maryland Teen Writers Association. She attended Susquehanna University's Summer Poetry Workshops in 2021 and 2022.

Little Tutka

Neil Lewis

Moon jellies are braggarts, resilient.
They come towards shore in plumes
to tease the anemones,

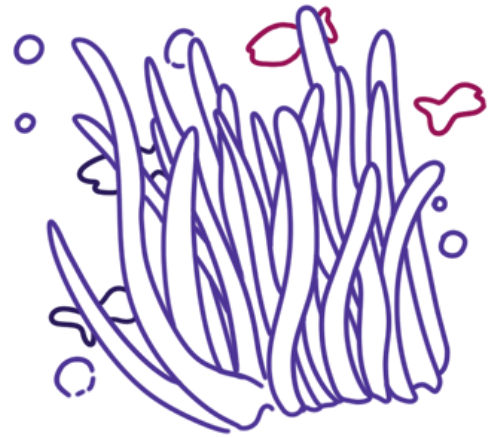
spread out and naked on the wet sides of cliffs
exposed by the tide.
Anemones get dried up by the sun.

Their fronds crisp
like rice noodles fresh from cellophane.
Some flake off into the big broth of the sea,

but most wait, stay crisped,
hanging on,
dead and hideous attached to that fat slab of radiolarian chert
while their cousins and mothers bulge next to them,
screaming and
gasping for

air until the water rises again and they get a quarter day's respite
because their dead look good underwater.

So good that the living
can pretend they're more
than socks full of salt and wind.



Little Tutka

Neil Lewis

Moon jellies, they're braggarts.

In plumes they come in by the thousands,
getting close enough to blow kisses
with each greedy flap of the exumbrella.

Their bodies, stunted by sick
nonchalance and blindness,
soak up the steely sky.

Lots die and are left behind,
still lumps knocking
every time the water coughs
up
against them, into the screaming,
bulging anemones

while the plume moves north

or east,

massive,
malignant.

Neil Lewis is a writer and brewer living on the coast of North Carolina. If you'd like to get in touch or learn more, you can find her: www.elizabethneillewis.com

Sunrise Vision

Megumi Jindo



Megumi Jindo is an upcoming junior in NYC and has been published in various magazines like Write To Roar (her school magazine), Revolution Publication, Poet2Poet, Cathartic Literary Magazine, and Taking Root: The Girls Write Now Anthology. In addition, she has been RealSimple's top 15 winner submission on Girls Write Now and Scholastic Choices Magazine's, top 5 winner submission on Girls Write Now and has received one gold key award and two honorable mentions from Scholastic Arts and Writing. Currently, she is part of the Girls Write Now program and is producing more poems—aiming to help this country through her love of writing and music.

crushing / cruising

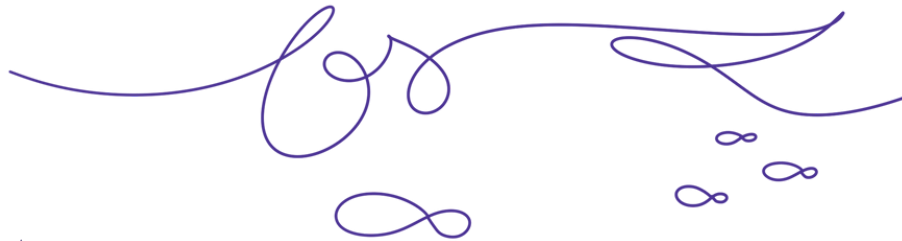
Phoenix Tesni

adelaide crapsey cinquains-
ababb, abaab or abccb
2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 syllables

water
glinting, starry
as the day gets hotter
you say: go for a dive, shall we
joy, glee

tanned skin
hearts racing by
we watch each other swim
till dawn arrives, the sky goes dim
breathe, sigh

towels
wrapped around us
skin flushed and eyes unmet
with our hair still dripping and wet
confess

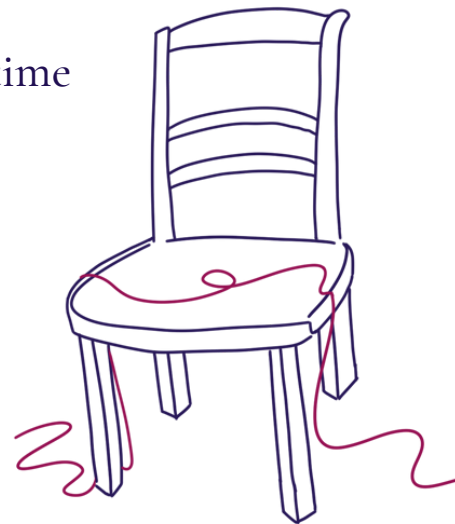


Phoenix Tesni (she/her) is a 22 year old self-diagnosed artist & poet from New Delhi. She has forthcoming works in Morning Fruit Magazine, Verum Literary Press, bloodbathhate, Sage Cigarettes, Cloudscent Journal, tigers zine lit, and elsewhere. When Phee isn't writing, she likes to practice falling in love with life over and over again. You can find her at phoenixtesni.carrd.com or @PhoenixTesni on twitter.

something something musical chairs

Luke Carmichael Valmadrid

No first sight falling, more an induced dream
drawn out, lulled by chalk smell and coffee notes
splashing through clef transpositions. Drunk on fumes,
running on clouds, I started staying up late,
to wake up early, to set up the room with you,
to choose the chairs we would sit in
across from each other. We predicted
eye contact, flint on steel strings, hot laughter in cold weather --
firework bursts in snow globe moments,
and that the spaces between those chairs, the lines, and the
memories
would tread water to bloom for years to come. We
were right, though we have also since stopped saving time
by spending it across from each other.



Luke enjoys cooking tofu, qualitative research, IU's prolific body of work, and playing video games with faraway friends. Is also an M1 at UCSD. Hopes to make some music soon. One time.

She's Gone!

Zoe Adrien Lapa

I. A night more blue than black shines its million lights through Lucy's window, spilling sparkles all over her bedroom floor. Breeze and cricketsong flow in gentle waves towards her, begging her for a sweet honeysuckle night of dreamy sleep, but nothing penetrates the glass she seems to be encased in. She's a beautiful dead butterfly, pinned, and tonight she's thinking of crawling into her closet and scratching her way straight through the wall.

Not as a ghost passes through; she imagines tearing at the pale cream with her blunt nails, scratching and punching through plaster until a hole just big enough to fit her body is carved out. She imagines it as a relief, a reward after a long night of hard, desperate work. The heat of all those clothes, all that enclosed space pressing down on her, and then finally! the cool night breeze. Comforting. Refreshing. And the night— so very still.

Lucy contemplates this hypothetical stillness. Holding the thought like a grain of sand, she rolls it around her mind until it emerges from her wriggling worm-like tongue: a pearl.

II. After sleep and morning's arrival, Lucy gets dressed, grabs breakfast and starts the trek to school. She does this five days out of seven, like most everyone her age. She walks to her first class, picks out a chair and drops into it, pulling out her notebook and clicking her pen in one fluid motion. As the teacher walks in, she prepares to take notes.

And then she blinks.

And the teacher's walking out. Every other student in the room is standing, yawning, picking up backpacks and shrugging them onto shoulders. When Lucy looks down at her notebook, she sees a page full of mathematical gibberish in her own chicken-scratch handwriting. There's even a couple doodles in the corner, a heart, a star, a distorted smiley face. But she doesn't remember ever drawing them. This arrests her, shocks her enough to hold her with invisible chains to her chair, but after half a moment paralyzed, her limbs gracefully unfurl. A thin film of acceptance settles over her entire body.

Lucy stands tall and walks right out the door.

III. Ann's name fits her well. Short and sturdy, unobtrusive but not unrefined. Bright as a pinprick star. Ann is a beautiful young woman and she's Lucy's very best friend.

She's Gone!

Zoe Adrien Lapa

IV. The world can be quite beautiful in limited color. Monochromatic, melodramatic. A kind of cornflower blue. A very urban kind of darkness, where the darkness isn't a total or even partial absence of light; just a filter through which selective lights pass. Lucy found her field of vision narrowing, the hues becoming more subdued, and found herself unconcerned. It was getting harder to care, harder to do anything not in the repertoire of her autopilot; much easier to follow the invisible hand guiding her. It moved her from place to place without consulting her actual consciousness. In this manner she swam through the world, barely rippling the water. Slowly removing the barriers between *her* and *it*.

V. They'd been friends since they were babies. Their families went to Sunday church together. When Ann and Lucy were kids, they loved each other with a fierce childlike love that scared their mothers. Lucy was adamant and Ann was firm: they went everywhere together. Neither left behind. When Lucy went on vacation with her family, she took Ann because Ann demanded to go. I am not, she said, letting you go alone.

In high school, they separated into their own people. Lucy wrote for the school newspaper and Ann played oboe for the school band. The boundaries between them were always a little bit blurry, but they learned to be apart, how to have other friends. Ann even had one or two boyfriends for a while. Lucy was never really interested in that kind of stuff, but she thrived in high school nonetheless. Top of the class, journalist, promoted to editor, all wonderful. Her mother kept trying to get her to join a sport, but she wasn't good at any of them. Still, though, Lucy was fine until she wasn't.

VI. Lucy's mother presses a bible into her hands. It burns her palms, but that could mean nothing. It hurts her heart, like thorns replaced the ventricles, but that could mean nothing. This could all mean nothing— this table, this chair, this family, this family, this curse hanging over her head, this movie. It could mean fuck-all.

VII. *She's walking on a layer of glass all the time, never touching the actual floor! She's blacking out from moment to moment, blinks and then an hour suddenly gone! She's talking less, smiling less, floating through every day! She's flickering like a candle in the wind! She's fogging up the glass on every mirror, window, and windshield! She's lighter than a feather! She's lost touch! She's missing! She's gone! She's gone! She's gone!*

She's Gone!

Zoe Adrien Lapa

VIII. Lucy's on the front porch. She's still present, still here. She wills herself to stay here. And she does— she notices the grass, the roads, the moths, and the moth-eaten night like a wallpaper behind it all. Every second happens to her, all neat, in consecutive order. Time obeys the clock.

Just then, she sees Ann walking up, her smile gleaming in the dark, and Lucy begins to smile back. And there Lucy feels it. The almost-involuntary stretch of her mouth—

IX. Blink. Ann's face. Ann in a beam of light. Ann in blood-red, cornflower-blue. Lucy's fingers feel numb. Her entire body is thrumming, thrumming, thrumming.

X. Blink. And then: Lucy's body wracked by sobs, Ann bent over her back, hugging her close. The two girls meld together, shaking as one. Lucy hiccups. "Hey, hey, Lucy. Come back to me. I'm right here. Lucy. Come back. Come back. Come back."

Lucy, wet-cheeked, begs Ann with her eyes, beautifully expressive. *Life is hard. It's hard. And I don't know why, but I know I can't handle it anymore. I haven't been handling it. I'm slipping away! I'm going crazy! I'm dying!* Ann, using carefully measured words, begs back. *You went away. I don't blame you. I know it's hard. You left me here. Don't do that. Please. You're not crazy. Just stay, please. Together: we'll figure it out.*

XI. Reality hurts. It's almost garish after the monotony of monochrome blue; just like that, Lucy's false peace shatters. Everything happens too much, all of the time— keeps happening and happening and never stops. There's Ann hugging her from behind and there's Ann beside her with a glass of water and there's Ann holding her by her shoulders saying something incomprehensible. Lucy yearns for darkness. It stubbornly refuses to come.

Think about the space between you and your closet. Between your closet and the wall. The space between you and your boyfriend. The space between you and your best friend. And then think about the space between you and the water you're swimming in. Between your heart and the water. Between you and your waterlogged heart, crusted over.

She's Gone!

Zoe Adrien Lapa

Saturation: occurs when no more of something can be absorbed, combined with, or added to something. No clear antonyms, just the opposite of maximum capacity; in other words, a fraction. Incompleteness. Hunger. Lack.

XII. Once, Ann had skipped out on a lazy day with Lucy to go to the movies with a boy. The entire time she thought of the space between her and him, how it was suspiciously girl-shaped, how it smelled like her best friend. How it glimmered in the darkness of the theater. The popcorn tasted like it had been laced with something. His arm at her back felt like a crucifix to carry. And she did carry it, all the way to the car— to its cramped backseat. She carried all that weight for half a night, and then for the rest of it she laid in her bed. Thinking of holes and the things that could fill them.

Half a step away was Lucy with her beckoning closet. Somewhere, something like glass shattered. “Something is happening to me,” like a wisp of a whisper, floating away like smoke. Something is always happening and it’s always less solitary than anyone thinks. Everywhere the threads that bind us to each other wriggle, stretch, and slice. They never break.

XIII. Lucy keeps coming back to herself like lightning striking the empty body. Ann keeps on being there, smiling at Lucy’s broken face, welcoming her home. Ann tries to teach her all the ways we learn to stay inside our body. They go running, sometimes. They try not to be alone. Still, the atoms and molecules at the edge of their fingertips repel each other’s skin. They try but they never really touch.

XIV. Ann starts ignoring her boyfriend. And then Ann breaks up with her boyfriend. Ann, actually, stops dating boys. Says she’s bored with them. Says she’s got too much on her mind. Says all the boys here are ugly. Says her grades are going down, and anyway, Lucy, won’t you study with me? Lucy sees. Lucy observes. Lucy keeps observing.

XV. A night composed of all stillness, no animation, drops from the sky like a theater background. Not even an owl, or a bat. Not even a rodent. But here she is, hair over her eyes: She’s crawling up and down the walls! *She’s spinning on an axis like a ballerina in a box!* She’s throwing up black bile! *She’s digging a hole straight through the tiled floor!* She’s eating shards of porcelain! *She’s transmogrifying into something!* She’s fanged! *She’s clawed!* She’s gone!

She's Gone!

Zoe Adrien Lapa

XVI. There are a million ways to die: you burn, you bleed, you break, you crack, you drown, you pass, you slip, you slip away— and it goes on and on and on. One for every person but nobody ever gets to pick. But Lucy? Someone's pressed all the buttons on the elevator and now she's stuck stopping at every floor. Building with a million stories, and infinite windows to look out of. Life's passing water through an aquarium and she's in the doctor's office staring at it. Life's a raccoon eating cat food and she's the cat. Life's on a video call with her, supposedly, but the video won't fucking load, and the audio's cut off, and nobody's heads can stay still.

XVII. And now comes a day so blue it hurts your eyes. The pavement's pink like nothing else is pink, the wall's put on its very best shade of beige. Grass so green it could be a forest. Oil puddle with a rainbow in it at the back of her father's car. None of the colors fit with each other. They all demand to be seen, to be heard, to be felt. They all feel they have the right to exist.

So, without thinking about it, Lucy gets up. Walks out of her room, down the stairs, straight out the front door. And keeps walking. Criss-crosses all over the streets, looking at house after house after house after building after corner store after flowerbed after house after house and takes note of every single thing; cataloguing the image her eyes present, separating it into distinct and disparate parts. This is the road: it is a road. This is a person: they are a mother. This is a car: it is a Honda. Something is happening to her, like someone shouting in her ear. Like someone scooped out the soup of her from the oceanic world and put it into a clear vase. Like someone's scooped everything, put everything into its own little clear vase. She watches, no longer part of anything but her very own, disparate self.

It keeps fading in and out of her. One day she looks in the mirror and sees blood seeping from her pores. The other day she looks and there's nothing but acne on skin. Sometimes she feels like a winged creature. Other times every inch of her foot presses into the floor like gravity's decided to stop being lazy. In one brilliant moment, she realizes it: the undeniable truth, the truism that'll save her, the idea that'll stop everything it needs to stop: she sees it unfolding in front of her like so many index cards taped together. She can see it! How to Be! She can trace the path she needs to take on any map. It's shining!— a snap of someone's fingers and suddenly she's in English class, she's thirsty, she's sore, someone's giving a presentation, and Ann's looking at her. She looks back at Ann, deliberately.

She's Gone!

Zoe Adrien Lapa

All that bright and honest gospel evaporates away.

XVIII. The bible doesn't help. Lucy never expected it to. Something in her wants to burn it, to hiss, to tear it with claws she mostly doesn't have— but she's normal. Or trying to be, somewhat successfully. So she just shoots it into the trash: perfect three-pointer, rimless shot. Her mother would be proud.

XIX. She tries to find the words to explain it to Ann. She tries saying them out loud, in the usual way, with words that form sentences that coalesce— if done correctly— into pure meaning.

So, like, sometimes I'm here. Sometimes I'm gone. Sometimes I'm, like, different. See, the thing is, I left a part of me in my closet. I was trying to scratch my way out. But don't worry. You don't have to come with me. You don't have to help me get it back.

XX. Ann doesn't let her go alone. That's the story. They go to her room, under the cover of a night more blue than black. They go into the closet. They don't try breaking through the wall. They just sit there, under all those clothes, and overheat. When they reach their limit, independently, they reach for each other's hands. And then they leave. They go outside, right through the door.

XXI. Lucy can't stay all the time. Sometimes, she just goes. Like a live wire touches metal. Like bread in the toaster jumps. Like the birds all flying, all at once. But inside her body, where her soup is, she's still, she's breathing, and she's cool and bright and free.

XXII. The roads cut through the sidewalks, neat rows of houses behind them. The many, many cars. The air is suffused with something like potential, like the dip before an exponential curve. Ann sits on the curb and looks out at the empty streets, the sky a familiar blue-black expanding in front of her. It's approaching 6:00 AM and Lucy has plans for today, important plans that required early rising, and she's running close to being late. Just when Ann is tempted to pull out her phone, there! Lucy comes on walking, the sun a halo behind her. Like Ann's own personal devil— like a dark angel— like a bringer of light.

Zoe Adrien is a young Filipino writer. Their work is featured on Fifth Wheel Press and Father Father Magazine, among other digital spaces. They can be found on Twitter and Tumblr via @zoeadrien.

The Changeling and the Orphan

Willow Kang

In a technicolor cotton tunnel of dreams,
I am a changeling & you, an orphan,

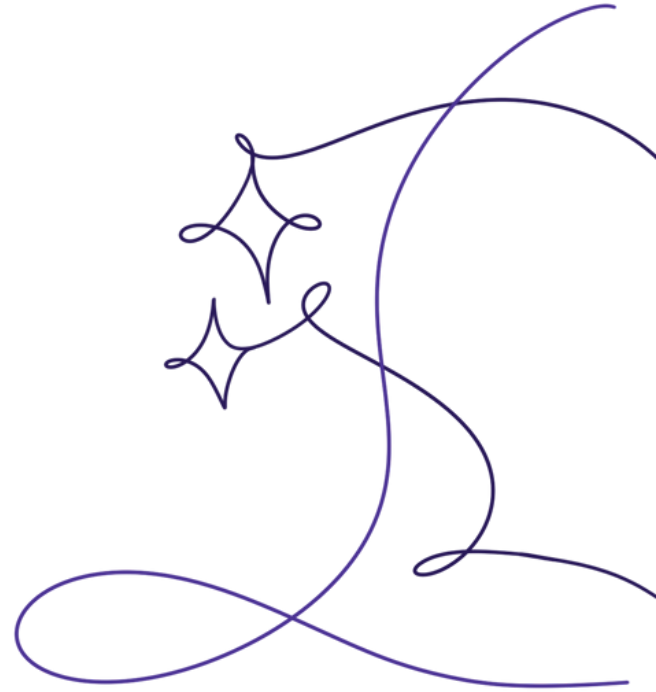
kicking feet in the sky's laughing face
I drop you off in front of an apartment,

swaddled with wispy threads of starstuff:
celestial, but still tenacious, mapping out

the topography of my palettes
below a traitorous sky

releasing downpours on your funfair trips,
balmy afternoons while you toil,
out of sight

Yet each night, you jump over the hedgerows,
lighting beacons for me to return home



Willow is a writer from Singapore. After school, find her reading thick history textbooks, aimlessly writing poems, and solving frustrating math problems, in a futile attempt to conquer boredom. Just make sure that her coffee bowl stays full.

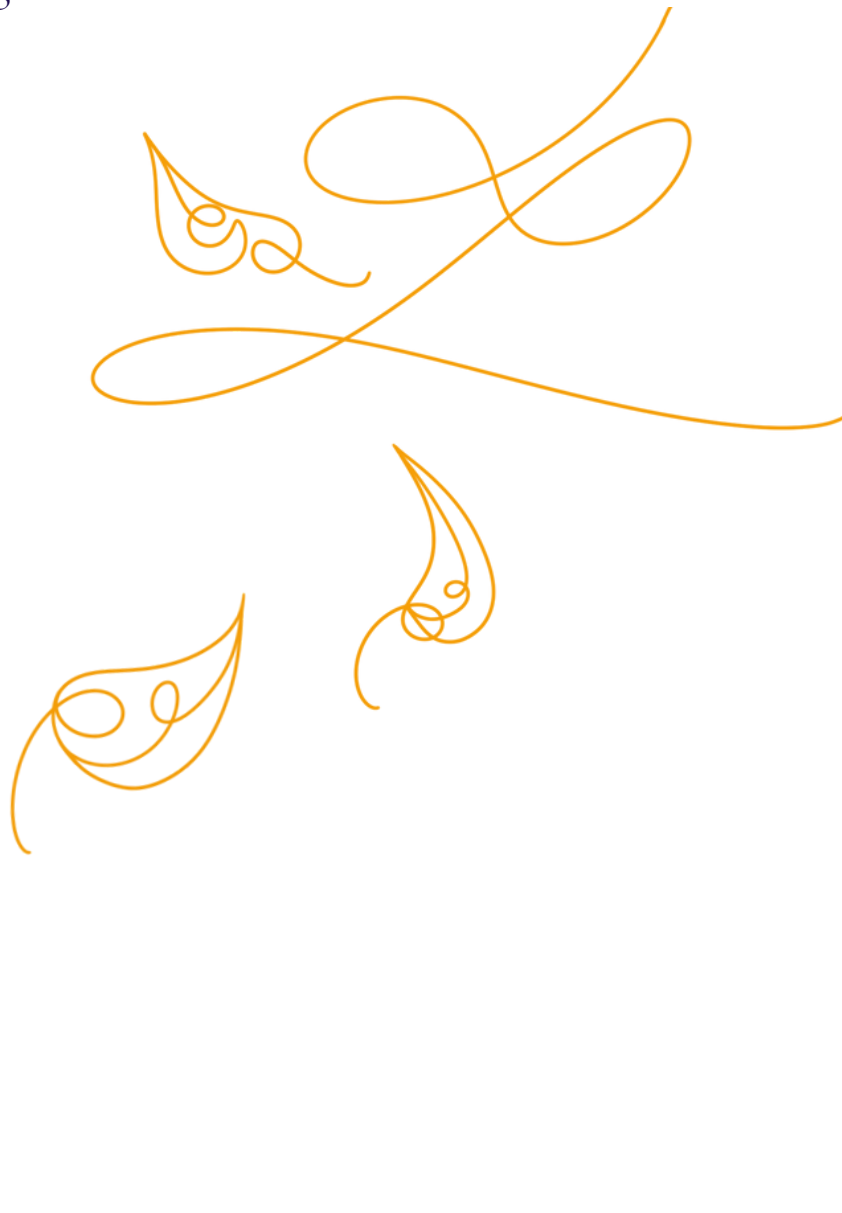
All I See is Golden

Katie Palmer

My dad always says to look at the bright
side of life—he wouldn't believe me
if I told him I found it here.

The yellow leaves catch the light
of the setting sun, a glimpse
of heaven, clinging to the branches
to their final days, and I'm not sure
if it's a celebration or a funeral.

I should see death
but all I see is golden.



Katie Palmer is a poet living in Upstate New York. She loves her two cats, eating sushi, and watching interior design shows. She's been previously published in Pomegranate Lit, Tiny Spoon, Honey & Lime, among other magazines.

thank you for reading :)

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the end

THE ORIGAMI REVIEW