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Dissociation
by Olivia Choi





of crime and love

by Aisha Ahmed

i lie in bed as a child folded
between light and dark, the stretching of my god's hands

over the world and myself. the shift of fabric against my skin, Allah's caress
for He knows we are not all light and

that is okay. is it such a crime to be held in mortal arms?
father kneels and prays,

cradles my darkness in the crevices of his hands
mourns me as i cherish thoughts i should not cherish

i do not need to be touched to be loved, yet is it so wrong to
glide my thoughts over fantasies? some may call it freedom

others, disgrace but
regardless i fold scandal aside and bow my head,

soften my thoughts for morning and clasp my hands in communal prayer
pay my *zakat* and bleed

as i move with grace and vulnerability not out of command or rebellion.
daylight kisses the nape of my neck and i rise.

aisha is a first-year at the new orleans state university. her works seek to explore the nature of emotion, relationships, and vulnerability. her work has been recognized by the Blue Marble review, Kalopsia Lit, as well as receiving a silver key from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

to the boy that tried to be my knight in shining armor

by Matthew (Myeong) Baek

we only dare live
in the depth of night; i fumble the words to the lyrics of your body
as i wonder when you enchanted me
with your fairytale eyes
is love supposed to taste like an elegy? i toss my prayers like flowers into the night
wonder what my family would write as my biography
i count each of your breaths as if it's your last; try to stretch imagination into eternity
your arms hold solace like grief. capture me in my
paralysis
nothing about your body is a cliché. sometimes i wish it was
and we could be a real fairytale: i could ride the well-riden grooves of paths safely travelled
perhaps catch joy spilling from your mouth
instead of the taste of ashes.

Matthew (Myeong) Baek is a South Korean immigrant & queer poet currently attending high school in California. He enjoys baking for his friends and family, as well as writing in his spare time. In the past, he has attended the Kenyon Young Writers Workshop, and has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

liminalities

by Kayla Adara Lee

fish to fish. sliding so effortlessly,
a knife in the water, oil rising higher and higher--
-- and then, a barking cry:

little one, when did you fall into this stew?

no why.

just when,

and where,

and whom;

questions all darting past

inchoate-me still sliding in spices, encased in gelatinous membrane.

there are too many of us, you argue. and too few plates.

we don't belong in the kitchen. yes, even you;
draining moon-sized portions from the pot. you, who
severed my song from the seabed long before i drew breath,
or brine.

you

always told me i was an old soul. meekly cajoled.
inviting arthropods bound blood and limb to my
vagueness.
rotten is the flesh
scoured from my bones; they grumble in a
symphony-sweating chorus of gnashing teeth, as if
its foreignness repulses
but excites them.

mother forgive me, for

i have heard every sound

a mouth can make.


Kayla Adara Lee (she/zhe) is a Hong Kong-based writer of mixed Southeast Asian descent. Most recently, her words have been featured in literary publications such as Humana Obscura, Daisyworld Magazine, and the upcoming second issue of Wet Love. Common themes and topics of interest in her works include cultural loss, critiques of anthropocentrism, and posthumanism. You can find her on Instagram, Twitter and Medium at @kadaralee.

An Old Room, of an Old Friend

by Henry Zhao



Henry Zhao grew up in Vancouver, and is currently a grade 11 student at Collingwood school. His favorite subjects are physics and computer science, and he plans on studying mechanical engineering and computer science in university. He is the lead coder in his school robotics club, and often assists other robotics teams with programming. In his spare time, he enjoys working on personal engineering projects, 3D modeling and rendering, origami, and drawing digital art.

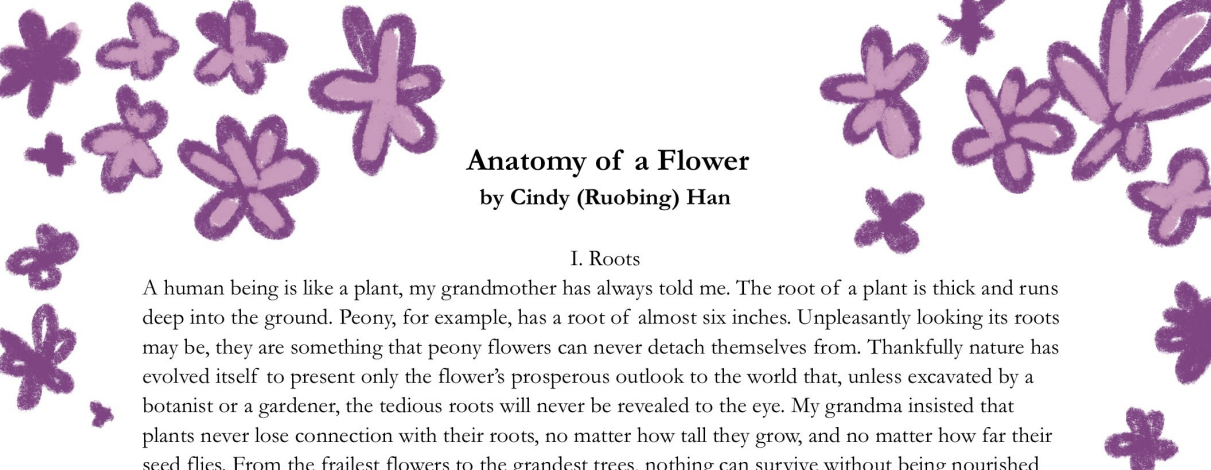


incense and homesickness

by Tanvir Yoosuf

taste spices and tragedy in the air
country mine, born of violence
wretched beautiful creature, you are
pakistan a name I now hear only
in dry clinical language on the news
that talk of suffering and disease and religious shootings in the street and
I stop and listen and think, yes but
keep my country's name out of your filthy mouth
country mine
where cracked streetlights flicker beneath the weight of dusk
where girls fear man as they kneel before our god
yet to me you are
crimson and lavender and lapis thread woven
into tarps that flutter on the street
the roar of warmth on my face
as I step out into the sun
yet ten years and ten thousand kilometres apart
what will I see now?
if I ever return home

A 19 year old Pakistani immigrant currently studying International Politics. He enjoys writing to the void under the cloak of midnight.



Anatomy of a Flower

by Cindy (Ruobing) Han

I. Roots

A human being is like a plant, my grandmother has always told me. The root of a plant is thick and runs deep into the ground. Peony, for example, has a root of almost six inches. Unpleasantly looking its roots may be, they are something that peony flowers can never detach themselves from. Thankfully nature has evolved itself to present only the flower's prosperous outlook to the world that, unless excavated by a botanist or a gardener, the tedious roots will never be revealed to the eye. My grandma insisted that plants never lose connection with their roots, no matter how tall they grow, and no matter how far their seed flies. From the frailest flowers to the grandest trees, nothing can survive without being nourished and stabilized by the root, unwavering in any weather.

It has been twelve years since my grandma moved from her small village in Inner Mongolia to Beijing, the most populated and prosperous city in China. She lived in a city where goods can be bought at the tap of the finger, yet she would still wake up at 5'o o'clock just to be the first customer in the stench-infused morning markets. She always chose Taosu, a traditional Chinese biscuit, and the saltiest Mongolian milk teas over the neatly packed Oreos and the newly brewed coffee from Starbucks. Even after sixty years, she would still hum the tunes of the People's Liberation Army with her Taichi companions every morning. These were her roots. Roots That She constructed her whole world upon. Roots That She would never detach herself from.

I have never believed in my grandma's paradigm. The notion of being chained by your own roots terrified me, not that I did not like my roots, but because I always wanted to embrace something fresh, something new.

To me, the dark, obsolete roots running underground have never had beauty comparable to that of the newborn buds or the vibrant shooting stems.

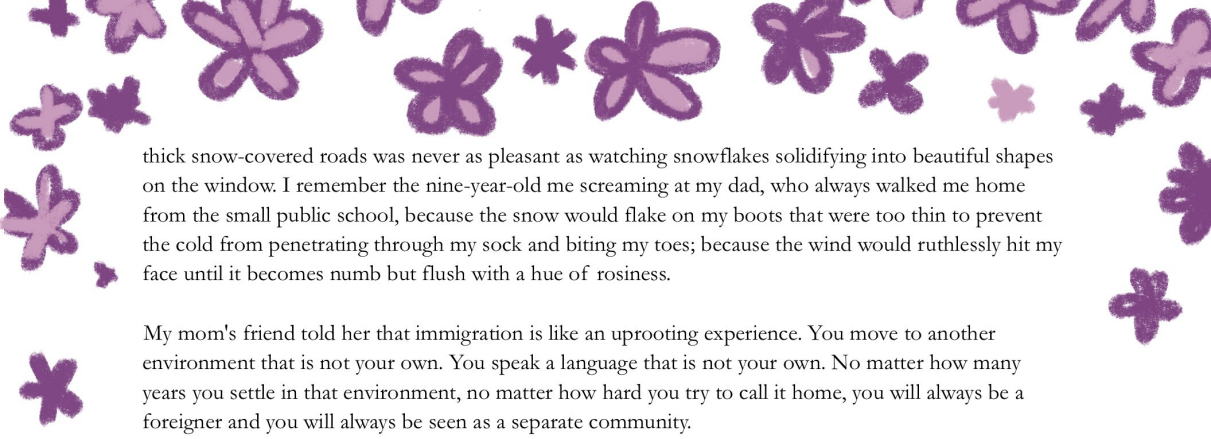
II. Stem

My elementary school teacher taught us that we should be like stems that can endure the harshest winters and grow in the most beautiful summers.

The day my family and I moved to Canada, I nervously held my mom's hand while the customs at the airport checked our passports and piles of study permits. When we stepped out of the plane, I told my mom to stop speaking Mandarin to me, and from then on, I readily embraced Canadian culture, striving to be a part of a community that had charismatic beauty.

Yet the hardest part was adapting to the cold, Canadian winters.

It rarely ever snowed in Beijing, so when it snowed 20 cm in my first winter in Ottawa, I found the world that only lived in books and newspapers came alive, and for the first time, tangible. Yet walking in the



thick snow-covered roads was never as pleasant as watching snowflakes solidifying into beautiful shapes on the window. I remember the nine-year-old me screaming at my dad, who always walked me home from the small public school, because the snow would flake on my boots that were too thin to prevent the cold from penetrating through my sock and biting my toes; because the wind would ruthlessly hit my face until it becomes numb but flush with a hue of rosiness.

My mom's friend told her that immigration is like an uprooting experience. You move to another environment that is not your own. You speak a language that is not your own. No matter how many years you settle in that environment, no matter how hard you try to call it home, you will always be a foreigner and you will always be seen as a separate community.

I guess they have never heard of plasticity. The *American Scientist* magazine explains that with plasticity, all organisms can react to variations in their environment, undergoing reversible or irreversible changes. This occurs in plants as well. The stem of the plant grows and allows them to survive in all ranges of environments, and unlike roots, they are always exposed to everything above ground - while they obtain nutrients from roots, they also absorb sunlight. That's why in many circumstances, flowers can still survive when they are detached from their roots.

Adapting well to the Canadian environment has always been my pride. I learnt how to ski, bought magazines that taught the best Canadian poutines, and found a sense of belonging in my new community. I believed that I could just be a native, with new skills and recipes.

Three months into my first winter, I would readily open my palms and let snow fall into them. I would walk home from school, almost immune to the wind, joking with my best friend when it was cold enough for us to see our own breath in the air.

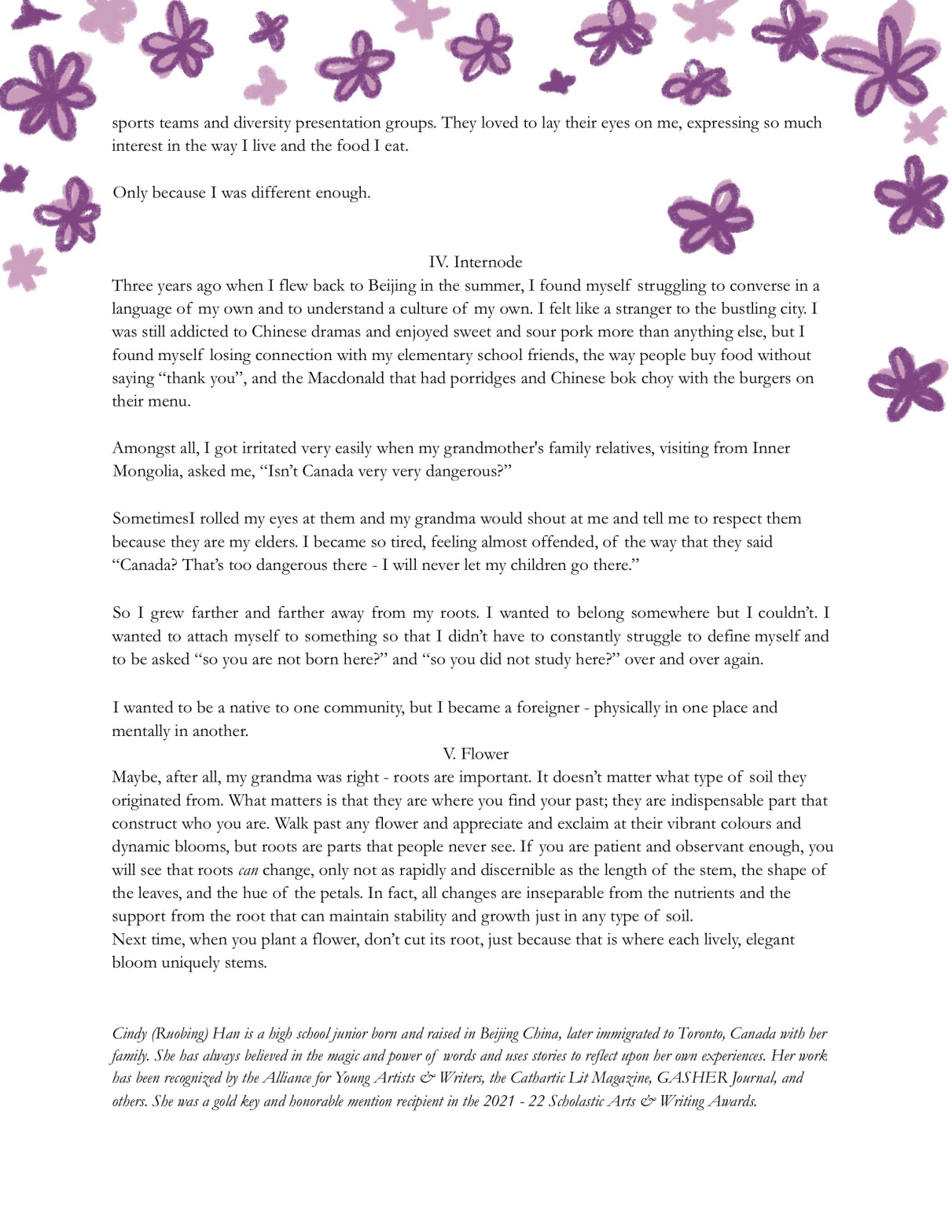
III. Node

When we first came to Canada, my mom read me a book that she borrowed from the Public Library near our small apartment. It was about Botany, and on it, there was a neat illustration of the anatomy of a tomato plant. I was greatly intrigued by the way it explained nodes, little points where branching twigs and leaves originate. The node is what makes flowers interesting to look at - they are not just a single, straight line but have leaves that branch out. They are the places where branches diverge.

Since 7th grade, I became extremely aware of my Chinese identity. When my friends asked me if my parents cared a lot about my grades, and if I was the best at math, I found myself straying away from the sense of warmth that merging always gave me.

I would tell them that I have parents who cared about progress rather than grades, that I enjoyed books more than equations, and that I liked Taylor Swift just like all of them. I have always been a part of them.

Yet no matter how much I tried to persuade them that I was one and the same as all of them, I was always seen as the one who branched out while the others grew together. They loved me to be on their



sports teams and diversity presentation groups. They loved to lay their eyes on me, expressing so much interest in the way I live and the food I eat.

Only because I was different enough.

IV. Internode

Three years ago when I flew back to Beijing in the summer, I found myself struggling to converse in a language of my own and to understand a culture of my own. I felt like a stranger to the bustling city. I was still addicted to Chinese dramas and enjoyed sweet and sour pork more than anything else, but I found myself losing connection with my elementary school friends, the way people buy food without saying “thank you”, and the Macdonald that had porridges and Chinese bok choy with the burgers on their menu.

Amongst all, I got irritated very easily when my grandmother's family relatives, visiting from Inner Mongolia, asked me, “Isn't Canada very very dangerous?”

Sometimes I rolled my eyes at them and my grandma would shout at me and tell me to respect them because they are my elders. I became so tired, feeling almost offended, of the way that they said “Canada? That's too dangerous there - I will never let my children go there.”

So I grew farther and farther away from my roots. I wanted to belong somewhere but I couldn't. I wanted to attach myself to something so that I didn't have to constantly struggle to define myself and to be asked “so you are not born here?” and “so you did not study here?” over and over again.

I wanted to be a native to one community, but I became a foreigner - physically in one place and mentally in another.

V. Flower

Maybe, after all, my grandma was right - roots are important. It doesn't matter what type of soil they originated from. What matters is that they are where you find your past; they are indispensable part that construct who you are. Walk past any flower and appreciate and exclaim at their vibrant colours and dynamic blooms, but roots are parts that people never see. If you are patient and observant enough, you will see that roots *can* change, only not as rapidly and discernible as the length of the stem, the shape of the leaves, and the hue of the petals. In fact, all changes are inseparable from the nutrients and the support from the root that can maintain stability and growth just in any type of soil.

Next time, when you plant a flower, don't cut its root, just because that is where each lively, elegant bloom uniquely stems.

Cindy (Ruobing) Han is a high school junior born and raised in Beijing China, later immigrated to Toronto, Canada with her family. She has always believed in the magic and power of words and uses stories to reflect upon her own experiences. Her work has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, the Cathartic Lit Magazine, GASHER Journal, and others. She was a gold key and honorable mention recipient in the 2021 - 22 Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards.

Blue

by Yueqian Zhang

Video performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqF-4O5N7qI>

I heard you shout, I heard you scream,
Nothing could last, it seems
Trekking through the wild blue world,
It's not the end, I've just been found.

And I'll follow you into the deepest sea,
I'll travel far until the sky falls down on me
And you'll never be alone,
I'll remember you forever, home.

My mind is blank, these walls are new,
We've walked through fire, we've swum in blue.
I've seen the stars a million jewels,
It's not the end, it just has begun.

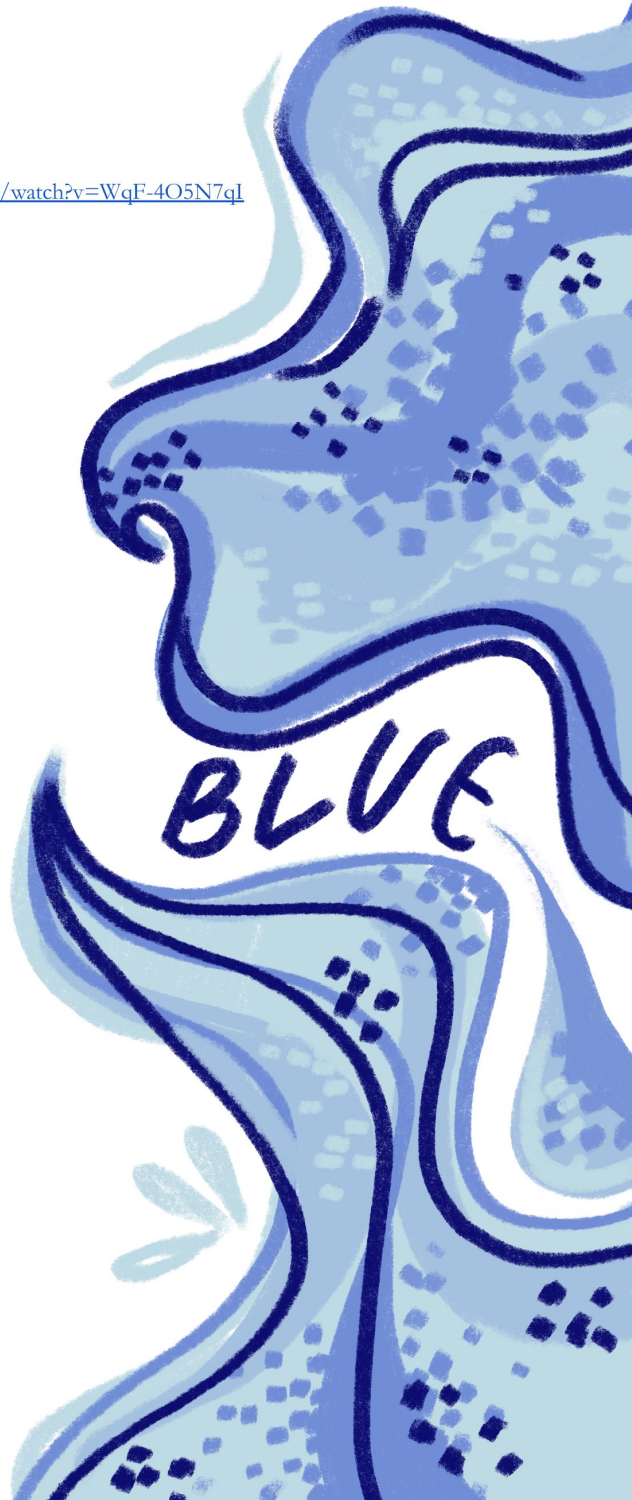
And I'll follow you into the deepest sea,
I'll travel far until the sky falls down on me
And you'll never be alone,
I'll remember you forever, home.

Now that you're gone, I feel like
the world is blank, under my feet
I see the light, but I can't seem to reach it.

I'll follow you into the deepest sea,
I'll travel far because the sky fell down on me
And you might be alone,
But I'll remember you forever, home.

I'll remember you forever, home.
I'll remember you forever, home.

Even when you're gone.



Ripples in the Sun

by Emory Ellis



Emory (they/ them) is a high school senior heading to Kenyon College for university. They're mainly a poet, but also occasionally dabble in the arts and have a soft spot for watercolor in particular. They believe the arts are important for transcending the boundaries between people within society.

Paradox on the Stage

by Adrija Jana

It is quite simple
To step out of a car, walk up to the stage
Hold a cordless microphone in hand
And to talk about sustainability,
About the Carbon Footprint
About Reducing Consumption
And even simpler
To blame it all on the activities in the developing nations
When you know that as you get home
Warm food on the table will be waiting for you
Today, and tomorrow, and the day after and the day after

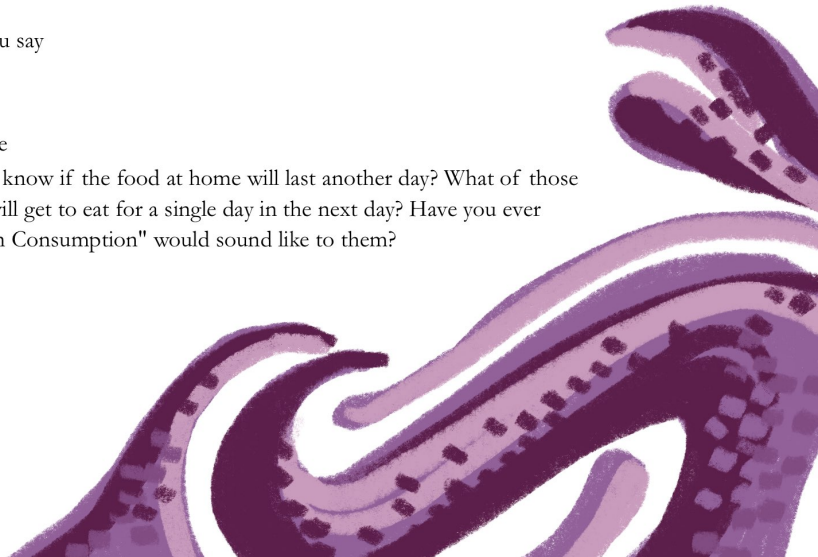
But did you ever pause a moment to think of them
Who do not have the luxury of a home, a table or even a bowl of food? Or of them who have to toil three days to finally get food on the fourth? Do you think of the young children who peep in through windows just for a smell of the delicacies, their stomachs rumbling with hunger?
Do you think of the pregnant women, distraught with starvation, working doubly hard to feed their unborn child?

You have warm soup to soak your throat in the winters
Do you know that there are those who survive on dirty cold water of the polluted rivers And attempt to satiate their hunger just with a drink or two?

You think of the future, you say
You work for the future
But what of those
Whose present is not secure
What of those who do not know if the food at home will last another day? What of those who do not know if they will get to eat for a single day in the next day? Have you ever thought what "Reduction in Consumption" would sound like to them?

No, you haven't.

We can all speak




Speak about what we read in the newspapers everyday
Or about what the news channels have convinced us is important
But do we ever think about the "behind the scenes?"
About the people who suffer in silence
Whose suffering never comes into the light?

It is them we need to think about first
It is them we need to uplift
Because if they do not know if they will live another day How
can we expect them to be concerned about the world? Only
when we are at par
Only when we all secure
Can we look forward to securing our world together
Can we look forward to saving our world together.

Adrija Jana is a passionately creative writer based in India. She mostly creates poetry pieces based on her personal experiences as well as social issues she is passionate about. Her work mostly revolves around protest against period poverty, marital rape and advocating for freedom of choice, apart from emotional self-lived experiences. She is inspired by writers such as Margaret Mitchell and Rupi Kaur, as well as the minutiae of everyday life.

Apart from being a writer, Adrija is also a Spoken Word Artist, Theatrecian, Filmmaker and creative researcher, and all her work is woven together by common themes. She believes that creative pieces that let the innate imperfection shine through truly touch hearts.

You can reach out to Adrija or read more about her work on her instagram account- @adrija_jana2004

The background of the page is filled with abstract, flowing, wavy patterns in various shades of blue and white. These patterns resemble liquid or smoke, creating a sense of movement and depth. Interspersed among these waves are clusters of small, light blue dots, some of which are arranged in grid-like patterns, adding a textured, almost digital or scientific feel to the overall aesthetic.

A young woman becomes ephemeral

by Janice Campbell

A curtain of hair swallows the seafoam of the ocean
Dashed with white froth from rocky coast collision
ascending in physical manifestations of sun streaks
Summer solstice wreathes gold upon her head.
Pomegranate seed syrup stains the blush of her cheek.

A vision of fury
The daughter of hades.
She doesn't tell people her dreams.
I was born from the sea with a fire in me.
Jupiter and mars in flames,
I disappear into orbit.

Janice is a queer writer passionate about poetry and theatre. They can be found hogging the beanbags at her local bookstore, or pirating musicals in the comfort of their room.

Street
by Oriana Zhou





Romantic Alcoholic

by Anonymous

There is a kind of romance in the act of teenage rebelliousness, I think, as I paint my eyes with black and lips with red, wear too-high high heels and a too-tight dress that fits me so well it'd make my mother faint. I pucker my lips and imagine kissing a boy. I frown.

It's dark outside, almost midnight, and I should be asleep because I have an English test tomorrow I can't afford to fail (don't you *want* to go to Harvard or Yale or something or other, *make your parents proud?*) but in the moment I can't think of any of that because I crave the romance of rebellion.

The Uber ride is silent, the driver doesn't get paid enough to care that I'm underage, and I get off with butterflies swarming my stomach and my legs weak because *Am I really doing this?*

The person who opens the door is the owner of the house and an acquaintance of a friend's classmate, and he greets me without really seeing me because he's already in another world. I wrinkle my nose at the stench of alcohol but I can't say anything because *Let the one without sin throw the first stone.*

I knew boys would be interested—I'd practically invited the attention—but I didn't realise how suffocating it'd be; my hand curls around a can that tastes sharp and burns my throat, sipping at it periodically despite the taste of gasoline because this wasn't as romantic as I'd let myself daydream and I'm hoping that maybe the sting will make it less insufferable.

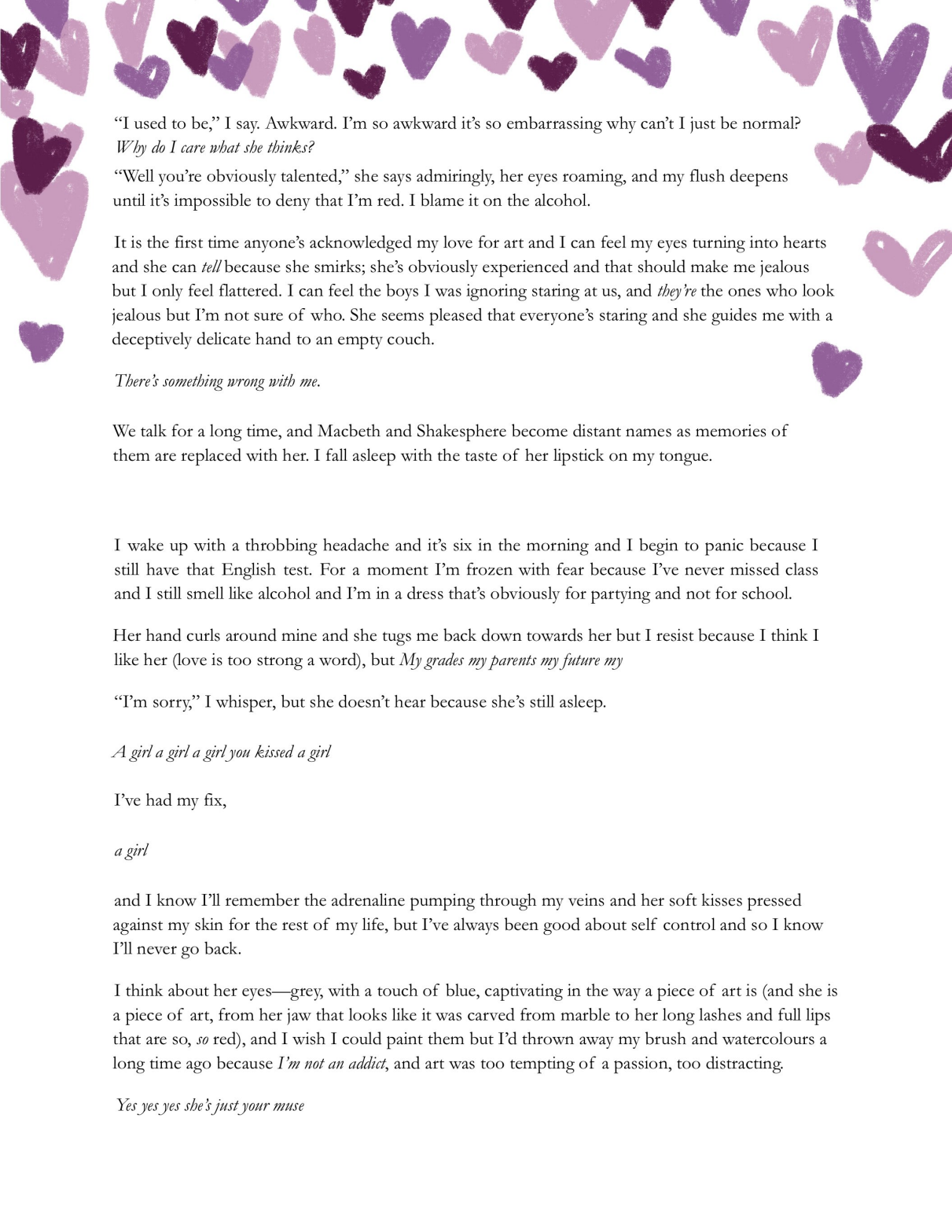
I catch sight of myself in the mirror, and the image is intoxicating; if it wasn't a mirror and a real girl I think I would've gone up to her and kissed her. I wonder if this is how Cinderella felt before the clock struck midnight, because I can hardly recognise myself; I'm Narcissus and the mirror is my pool. I'm drunk on myself, but the sight of someone prettier shocks me into sobriety.

She smiles at me, and it's almost flirtatious but I can't be sure because surely someone as pretty as her can't be interested in me, but it looks genuine enough and I find myself spiralling. She's everything I wish I was, I realise; she's like expensive alcohol and I'm a cheap imitation of finery.

"Hey," she says, and there's nothing smooth or romantic about that at all but the butterflies of adrenaline have turned into something less innocent. *She's a girl.*

"Hi." I feel stupid I couldn't think of anything better, but she seems charmed all the same.

"I like your makeup. Especially your eyeliner." I flush, because I spent far too much time trying to make it perfect and I hated that all the boys saw my breasts before seeing my eyes. "You an artist?"



“I used to be,” I say. Awkward. I’m so awkward it’s so embarrassing why can’t I just be normal?
Why do I care what she thinks?

“Well you’re obviously talented,” she says admiringly, her eyes roaming, and my flush deepens until it’s impossible to deny that I’m red. I blame it on the alcohol.

It is the first time anyone’s acknowledged my love for art and I can feel my eyes turning into hearts and she can *tell* because she smirks; she’s obviously experienced and that should make me jealous but I only feel flattered. I can feel the boys I was ignoring staring at us, and *they’re* the ones who look jealous but I’m not sure of who. She seems pleased that everyone’s staring and she guides me with a deceptively delicate hand to an empty couch.

There’s something wrong with me.

We talk for a long time, and Macbeth and Shakespeare become distant names as memories of them are replaced with her. I fall asleep with the taste of her lipstick on my tongue.

I wake up with a throbbing headache and it’s six in the morning and I begin to panic because I still have that English test. For a moment I’m frozen with fear because I’ve never missed class and I still smell like alcohol and I’m in a dress that’s obviously for partying and not for school.

Her hand curls around mine and she tugs me back down towards her but I resist because I think I like her (love is too strong a word), but *My grades my parents my future my*

“I’m sorry,” I whisper, but she doesn’t hear because she’s still asleep.

A girl a girl a girl you kissed a girl

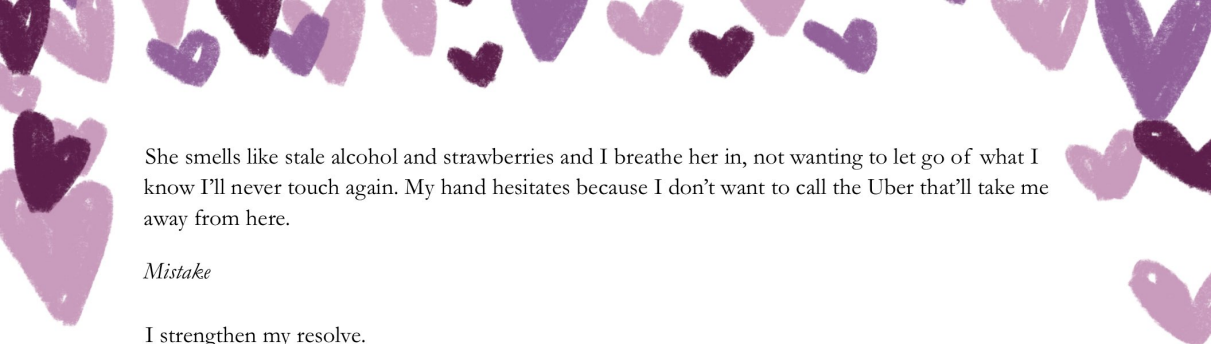
I’ve had my fix,

a girl

and I know I’ll remember the adrenaline pumping through my veins and her soft kisses pressed against my skin for the rest of my life, but I’ve always been good about self control and so I know I’ll never go back.

I think about her eyes—grey, with a touch of blue, captivating in the way a piece of art is (and she is a piece of art, from her jaw that looks like it was carved from marble to her long lashes and full lips that are so, *so* red), and I wish I could paint them but I’d thrown away my brush and watercolours a long time ago because *I’m not an addict*, and art was too tempting of a passion, too distracting.

Yes yes yes she’s just your muse



She smells like stale alcohol and strawberries and I breathe her in, not wanting to let go of what I know I'll never touch again. My hand hesitates because I don't want to call the Uber that'll take me away from here.

Mistake

I strengthen my resolve.

Good.

I call the Uber and dig my glasses out from deep inside my bag before unearthing the crumpled notes I'd shoved last minute into my bag under the bottle of tequila I'd snuck out of my dad's cabinet, skimming the red-and-blue writing as I allow *Thou* and *Wherewith* and other Old English words to replace the sweet nothings she'd murmured into my ear last night.

She becomes nothing more than a distant memory. It's like when you think about your childhood—you can envision it like you're watching a movie through blurred lenses, but think too hard about the details and it all dissipates like it never happened to begin with. Maybe if I concentrate hard enough I can still make out her face. I try to draw her but nothing looks right, because you can't recreate art and I was never much of an artist to begin with.

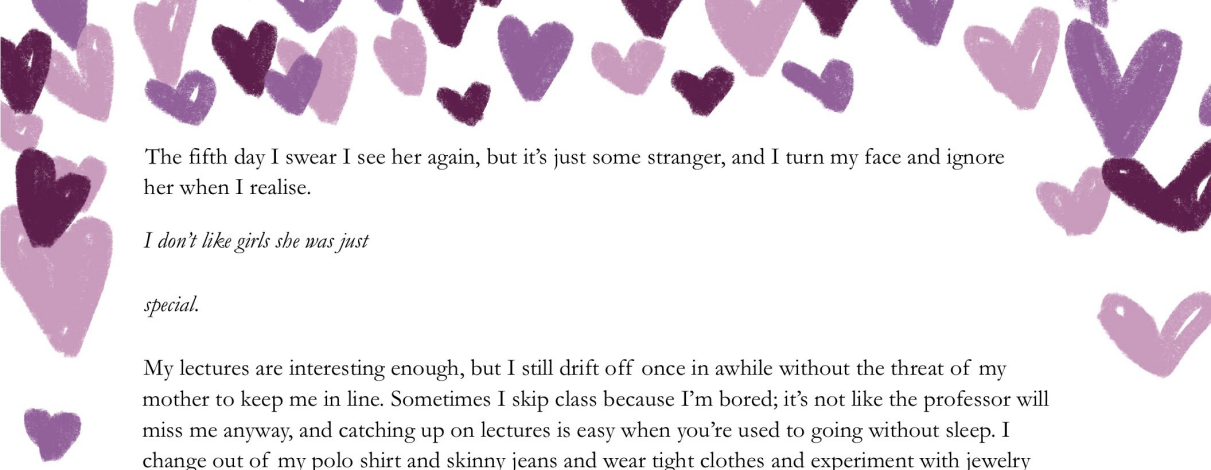
It doesn't matter, I tell myself, because in my hands is an acceptance letter to Oxford. It doesn't matter because even if I remembered her, I'd still be leaving her behind.

My family introduced me to a boy. He has an auspicious future and is interested in me (or who I pretend to be), and my parents like him well enough so even though I thought she'd be my first and last kiss he became my last, and I dated him even though he is faceless to me and all his I love you's were never reciprocated. He's nice enough but *he's* not enough, and sometimes when kissing him I wish his lips tasted more like strawberries.

He was accepted to Harvard and so we decided on long distance (I preferred it this way, I could pretend he was someone else), and I guiltily allowed myself to feel excited about leaving home.

Freedom is exhilarating. The first day away from home I get drunk, but it's not romantic like it was in high school, back when it was rebellious to do so and not just a thing people did. The second day away from home I break up with my boyfriend, and I feel a little better about myself. The third day I kiss a girl, and convince myself I didn't like it.

The fourth day, a boy tries to kiss me and I punch him in the mouth.



The fifth day I swear I see her again, but it's just some stranger, and I turn my face and ignore her when I realise.

I don't like girls she was just

special.

My lectures are interesting enough, but I still drift off once in awhile without the threat of my mother to keep me in line. Sometimes I skip class because I'm bored; it's not like the professor will miss me anyway, and catching up on lectures is easy when you're used to going without sleep. I change out of my polo shirt and skinny jeans and wear tight clothes and experiment with jewelry I've never been allowed to wear before because *Are you trying to attract boys? What will your future husband think?* Every night I call my mother and pretend guiltily I'm still her perfect daughter, but I already ruined that perfection the night I finally learned what artificial strawberry tastes like. "How is school? Is it hard being away from home?" she asks, and I answer in the way I know she wants me to: "No, but I miss you, mom." I do miss her. I cry sometimes because I miss home cooked meals and the way she would ask about my day every time I came home, but I cry less.

I've never been short on friends and I make new ones quickly enough, and maybe they recognise the lonely look in my eyes because they drag me to a club I shouldn't be allowed in and convince me to *Talk to her!* I say no, *She's a girl*, and they frown at me and ask, *And so what?*

I don't like girls, I say, and they all giggle as if I've just told a particularly funny joke, and I know how ridiculous it is, even to me; straight girls don't kiss other girls and think about it for years. Straight girls don't date men and wish he was more like a woman.

I talk to her.

Her laugh makes my heart stutter. She's not her, she's not even close, but maybe that doesn't matter. It's hours later when I realise she's addicting in the most delicious way, sweet like candy but intense like nicotine. I kiss her and I feel like I'm drowning. Her eyes are the most beautiful brown, honey in the artificially too-bright light, and I can practically taste the thick sweetness on my tongue. My stomach is full of bees instead of butterflies. "Honey," I call her, and she seems to like the nickname because she laughs, and she sounds like wind chimes.

I think I like girls.

they are lesbian so they write this.

do you regret growing up away from home?

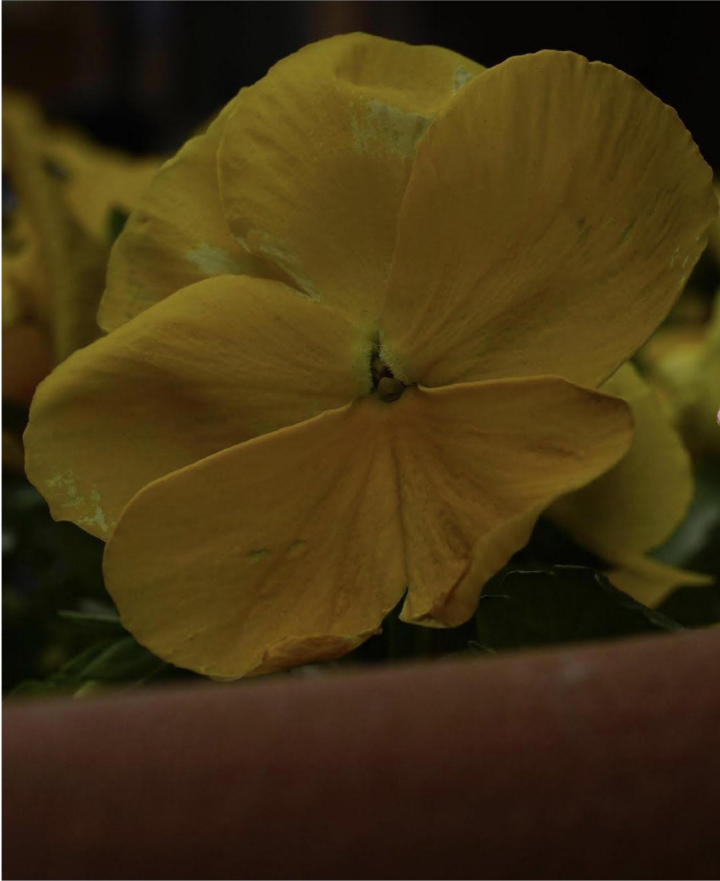
by Kayla Adara Lee

imagine; time yawning up to swallow the cracks. everywhere, and endless, and eager to please. to please who, you may ask? not me. not you. but the kampung mother squatting outside by the gate, offering satay to a wary, half-grown cat whose belly rounds far too soon, and whose kittens wake squirming underneath the call of the azan, and the little children who pray for those kittens, and the auntie that watches from afar, and as evening falls they will all face northwest and come together to be whole again. i strain to claim a part, to hear the susurrus of milk rushing into a chipped cup upon waking (antithesis to propriety but oh so delicate on the ears), to not remember i am a guest of my own making. hesitation to soar on the words I was born with, in an aviary half-bursting and birdsong trilling from every om and tante, is to resign myself to the hollow of a concrete tree-trunk because the sky can't hold us up much longer. have mercy. i am so many, and scattered, and tethered to the fuzzy still image of something that once was there but no longer is.

Kayla Adara Lee (she/zhe) is a Hong Kong-based writer of mixed Southeast Asian descent. Most recently, her words have been featured in literary publications such as Humana Obscura, Daisyworld Magazine, and the upcoming second issue of Wet Love. Common themes and topics of interest in her works include cultural loss, critiques of anthropocentrism, and posthumanism. You can find her on Instagram, Twitter and Medium at @kadaralee.

Portrait of a Flower

by Sean Nguyen



Sean is a Grade 10 student attending high school in Massachusetts, a place he still can't spell correctly half the time. He has a passion for photography and capturing the beauty of the natural world.

Windows, the World, and Us

by Kelly Huang

When the sun sneaks through this window,
the coat on your elbow, dangling and swinging,
becomes yellow.

Your eyes flicker
as I think of something good to have
for a breakfast in midwinter.

And this morning would be one of those mornings
that we might not wanna be
World changers
Anymore

One of those mornings
That we'd just lie quietly by the fire.

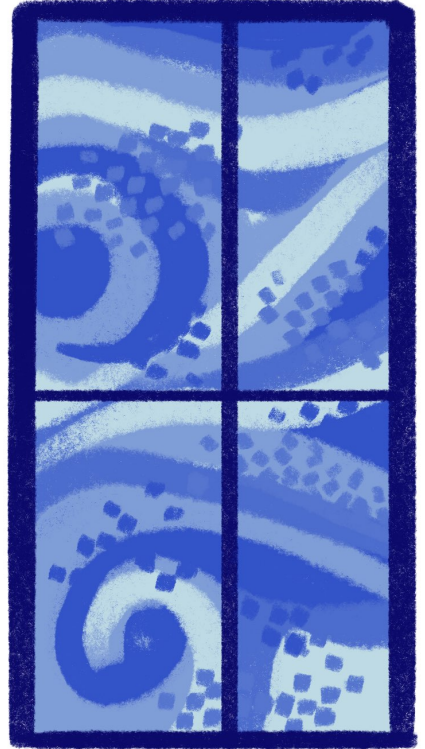
We'd look out this window,
and see thousands of windows,
shining in the afterglow.

But somehow
At some point that we don't know the windows
Break into shiny pieces

Their voices of glass hitting each other
And falling apart
Till the light disappears

It's our dreams. It's our dreams
Given up, poured out, laid on the ground
And that's when we know
This is all wrong

Kelly is an 18 year old that loves writing and poetry. Alongside writing, she also likes volleyball, dancing, and gazing up at the stars despite knowing nothing about constellations. She also writes for her school newspaper.





would you like peace? i would, at least

by Wong Cheuk Chi (Cherry)

Part I: Proposing a Christmas violation

Infoslide: You are a Western liberal democracy in a four-year long brutal and bloody war of attrition against an imperialistic dictatorship. Every Christmas, there is a football match between the two sides and a ceasefire. Attending the match are high ranking political and military persons of both sides (Achte Minute, 2020).

Motion: THW violate the ceasefire and kill the leaders (Achte Minute, 2020).

Panel, as Prime Minister I will first go over the framework and definitions of this debate before moving on to the actual argumentation. On Opening Government, this House represents a Western liberal democracy engaged in a four-year-long brutal and bloody war of attrition against an imperialistic dictatorship. We define Western Liberal Democracy as a political system that believes in freedom, equality, and liberalism, while the imperialistic dictatorship in question is the country suppressing the democracy, having used force to acquire control and power over important officials who have recognizable power in the latter. Given the situation that every Christmas there is a ceasefire, defined as an agreement to stop fighting to allow discussions about peace, in the form of a football match, with high ranking political and military personnel such as lieutenants, commanders, chief ministers, and chancellors from both sides attending, this House would violate the ceasefire and kill the leaders. The key question in this debate is whether or not to violate the ceasefire, and if Opening Government can prove to you beyond reasonable doubt that violating the ceasefire will do more good than harm then this House wins this debate.

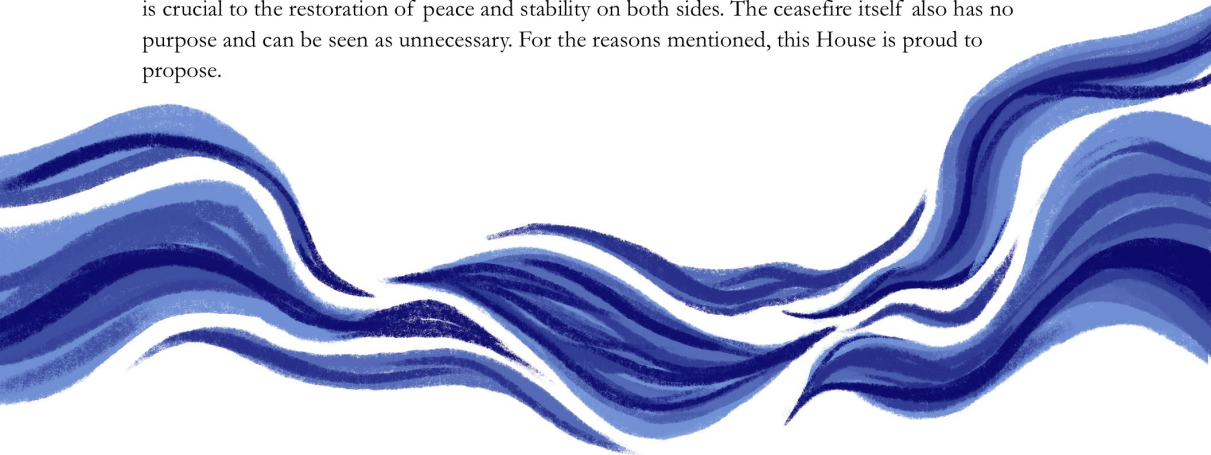
Moving on to my substantive material, I will first explain why the violation can effectively end the war. I will then move on to the unnecessary nature of the ceasefire. My Deputy Prime Minister will further elaborate on the negative impacts of not ending the ceasefire.

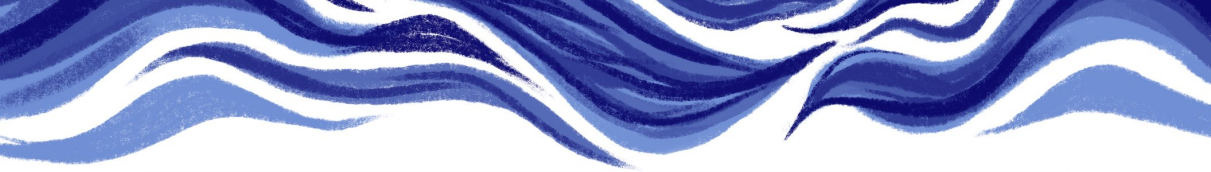
To begin with, violating the ceasefire can effectively accelerate the pace of the war and potentially lead to the ending of the war, something that is most desired. Indisputably, the ceasefire violation will result in escalated conflict. As the Western liberal democrats, we will wait until the football match is going well and smooth, with a peaceable atmosphere in place and everyone enjoying themselves. Then, we will take action to ruin the concord and wreak havoc. There are two potential tactics we may take. We can either stamp out onto the field and assault the army of the imperialistic dictatorship without warning. The army will react to our surprise attack quickly through violence, and our attack will either succeed or fail. Or, we can attempt to assassinate the enemy leaders, who are the bearers of all the concentrated power in the enemy's military and government. If we succeed, the enemy will be leaderless and overwhelmed. Their army will fall into chaos and confusion, and

our democratic army can seize the opportunity to launch our attack on them. If we fail, our act of assassination will trigger an aggressive response from the enemy's army without question. Of course, the best scenario is to end on a high note – that is, to win the war by violating the ceasefire. Whereas even if the violation ends in failure and we lose the war, we still benefit to a great degree as the war will end. Note that the war has already dragged on for four years, and our side has been suffering from grave casualties, heavy military expenditure, and drainage of national resources ever since the war began. With the burdening costs of war, there is no reason to allow it to drag on for a fifth year. Therefore, based on the goal of ending the war as soon as possible, it is only reasonable that we violate the ceasefire.

Secondly, the ceasefire is unnecessary. Ceasefires are established to allow peace negotiations. Yet if the Christmas ceasefires in this war had been effective, the war would have ended four years ago when the first ceasefire was held. Yet ceasefires have been held annually for three consecutive years, and the two sides are still engaged in warfare up to this date. This proves that the past ceasefires were nothing more than temporary festive luxuries for the soldiers trapped in this whirlpool of chaos and bloodshed. They created charming illusions for the soldiers, that the war had ended, that peace had returned, and that the fighting was over. But right after the end of the ceasefires, the soldiers were roused from their dazy states, only to realize the war had not ended and they were forced to return to the world of combat and blood again. This year's ceasefire will be no different. It will provide nothing more than false hope for the soldiers. It will meddle with their mentalities and deceive them. It will harm the soldiers on the inside. Not to mention in the aftermath of the ceasefire, the soldiers will be forced to go against their morale and shoot the very same people who played football with them not long before. The guilt that comes with such will tear them apart and torture them within. The initial purpose of the ceasefire to bring peace is completely defeated for it does nothing more than prolong the war and wound the soldiers mentally. Hence, we can conclude that the ceasefire is pointless. By violating the ceasefire and ending the war quicker, we see a much more ideal scenario: the soldiers can play football in their respective homelands with no belated fighting to worry about.

In conclusion, the violation of the ceasefire can bring about an accelerated ending of the war, which is crucial to the restoration of peace and stability on both sides. The ceasefire itself also has no purpose and can be seen as unnecessary. For the reasons mentioned, this House is proud to propose.





Part II: That's humanity, and that's Christmas

24th December 1914

I was over the top.

One by one, we leaped out of our trenches – tentatively, hesitantly, yet indeed...

It was happening.

Along with my English comrades, I rolled down onto the gravel field of No Man's Land and laid flat on the ground. I remained static for a second, but the world enveloped me, refusing to remain silent, vibrating with a whirl of energy I had never sensed before.

Our squads moved forward, as the men from the other side advanced towards us little by little. They were not like us, I had always told myself. They were blatant, and they were eager to spill our blood. They were not soldiers the way we were, as we fought simply to uphold the honorable cause of defending our country. They were soulless monsters, tramping the earth like machines, with no guilt or sympathy. And therefore I had every right to kill them.

But now I saw the Germans soldiers – the youth, the young. Kicking at pebbles along the way, scratching at their tufts of hair, surging forward in almost what seemed like... excitement. They looked ecstatic. I could feel the bliss blooming from them and see the sunlight smiles on their faces from afar. They had emotions, just like us. Without their usual pointy helmets and murky viridescent jackets, they looked every bit like us. We were humans all the same. The monstrous beasts I had been trying to kill a day ago were gone.

Yet they could be acting. The evils of their sins and souls concealed deep beneath their friendly faces. Their rifles and firearms hid behind their backs, waiting to blow our heads off. Using the ceasefire as an attempt to start a massacre. We would be foolish to fall for their trap.

All of a sudden, a cheer erupted across the field. Both our sniper and that of the Germans were clambering down onto the ragged piece of No Man's Land, unarmed. A soft breeze blew past our heads. The wind brewed, fizzling with a hint of thrill. We all wrapped our coats around ourselves more tightly and inched through the snow in huddles, reducing our distance from the opposing side.

At some point, a pair of luminous eyes glimmering blue found mine in recognition. He had curly, chestnut hair and a long nose, small palms, and skinny limbs. A sling was applied to his left arm.

I silently condemned myself for what I had done the day before.

But there was no hatred in the eyes of the boy. Instead, there was blessing.

My raw feelings and muddled thoughts melted into the dirt as the balmy rays of light sliced through the air, warming my throat, dissolving the acrid in its midst.

I was sick and tired of the meaningless war. Let it fade away behind me. No longer did I care about the authenticity of the breathtaking smell of peace placed before me. If I were to die I wanted to die a happy man.

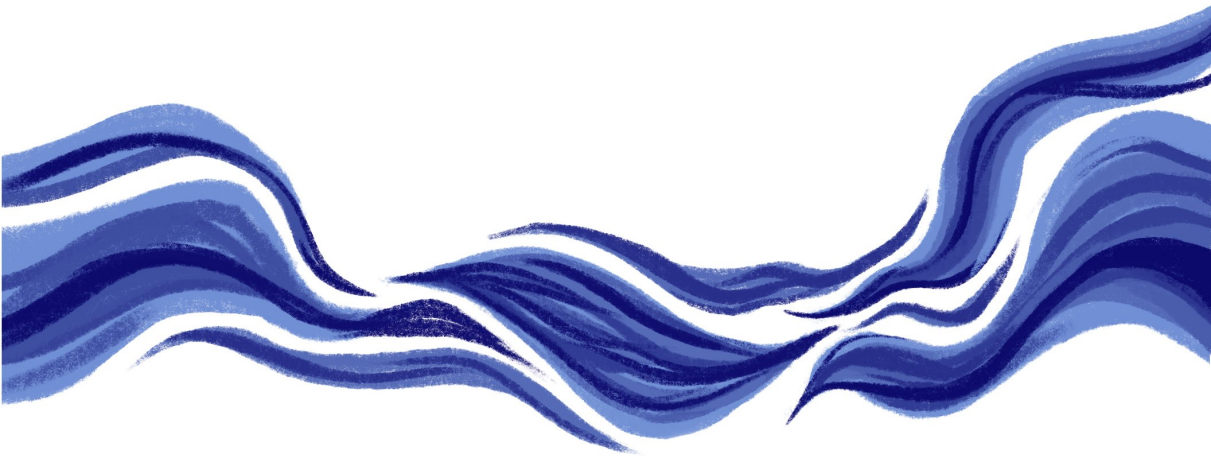
This was our hour.

Our liberation from the atrocities of the world.

Our moment of humanity.

Our state of peace.

A soccer ball was produced as champagne spilled, gleaming in the hearth of Christmas.



References:

Cambridge wins Trinity Open 2020 Online. (2020, June 11). Achte Minute.

<https://www.achteminute.de/en/20200611/cambridge-wins-trinity-open-2020-online/>

Cherry Wong is a 15-year-old high school senior from Hong Kong. She loves writing, and especially novels of the fantasy genre that are layered with unpredictable, twisty plots. She is the Founder and President of the Teen Writers Club Hong Kong Branch (TWCHK) under the international TWC. Her writings have been published in-school and by the Hong Kong Young Writers Awards. Apart from writing, she also has a great passion for law and loves mock trial and mooting. She aspires to become both a renowned author and an outstanding lawyer when she grows up.

Dandelion

by Claudia Isabella

Dandelions are perceived as weeds.

She wonders, why are they unwanted?

Because they appear wherever he goes? Because they are so common? Is it only because he wants see the rarer beauties? That he forgets how dear dandelions are?

She cradles the dandelion in her palms.

She knows they don't need comfort. Perhaps, she is comforting herself. She's seen them get crushed under the rubber of a tire.

She's seen them get picked and discarded.

She's seen them get run under a mower.

But they still stand. They grow again, as a big *'fuck you'* to the world.

It's as if they know they are unwanted. It's as if they know they are overlooked. But they still grow again. It's as if it's out of spite.

They don't care if they are overlooked. They don't care if they are unwanted. They grow for themselves. They grow out of spite.

No matter the amount of times they get taken from their homes,

No matter the amount of times they get run over.

No matter the amount of times they get picked.

They still grow.

Resilience, Courage, Strength.

He knows naught of the wishes made with their seeds.

He knows naught of the kisses she gives to their petals.

For someone who does not recognize her worth,
In the vast sea of dandelions,
She holds her head high.

For she is a dandelion,
Wanted not by him,
But wanted by herself.

Claudia Isabella is an 18 year old Creative Writing student who writes gothic prose and poetry; she strives to create more sapphic content in dream-like (or more accurately, eerie) situations and find the pleasure in the little things in life. She loves the language of flowers, art of guitar dissonance, and the kisses of self. Being hard of hearing, she has found comfort in ink printed of the bark of trees that have once lived. You can find her on twitter and instagram @neptunitii.

Curl my tongue around glass

by Chloe Chen

In the thick of roasted oolong tea and spicy Sichuan pungence, *Nainai* nudges me towards a chicken vendor.

“When will you learn?”

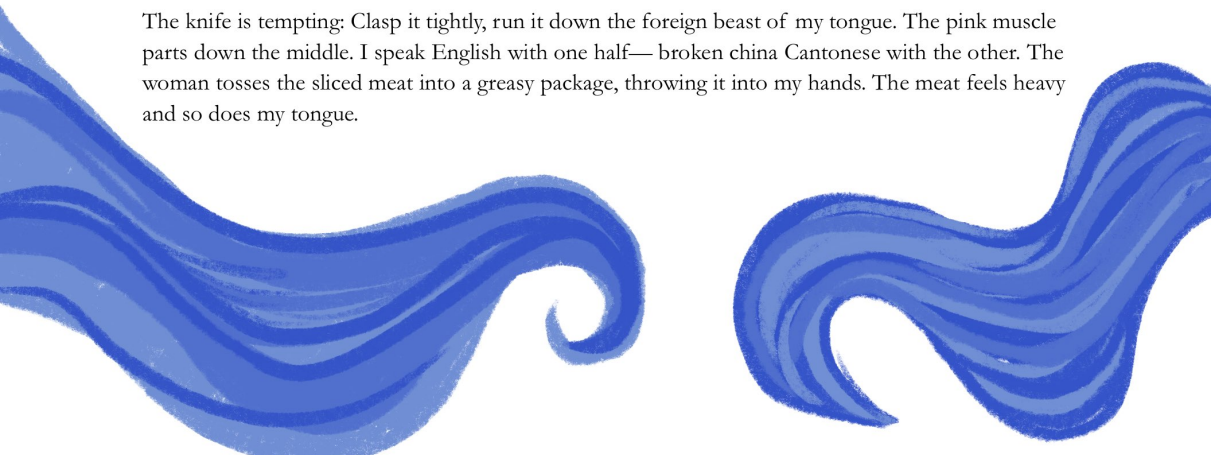
She wants me to practice my Cantonese even though I can barely utter my own name in my mother tongue. I heave a sigh and shuffle along towards the stout chicken vendor woman who sits on a three-legged wooden stool, counting curled up bills in a lacquer box. Behind her, whole chickens rotate above a charcoal grill.

She looks up at me. “What do you want?”

I want to talk to you. I want the English in the slums of my tongue to slowly rot away. I want to carve every stroke of Mandarin on the roof of my mouth. I want conversation. The wafts of honey-glazed chickens, now sour and tangy. I open the mouth cage to unleash the untamed and unknowing tongue. Choppy Cantonese.

Sticky apprehension drifting in the air settles in between cage and creature. Loose accents slip and tumble out. Word fragments. I point to one of the chickens. She gives a quick nod yanks a knife out of her left apron pocket and lodges it deep inside the meat. It moves through thick flesh, in sync with the industrial pulse of the city. Shreds and skins.

The knife is tempting: Clasp it tightly, run it down the foreign beast of my tongue. The pink muscle parts down the middle. I speak English with one half— broken china Cantonese with the other. The woman tosses the sliced meat into a greasy package, throwing it into my hands. The meat feels heavy and so does my tongue.



chloe is a sixteen year old from CA, USA. in her spare time, she enjoys learning how to cook dishes from different cultures and (guiltily) reading trashy romance novels. her work also appears in aster lit and numerous anthologies.

2022 year of the tiger

by Dayeon Jung



Dayeon is a passionate young artist who loves exploring digital art. Dayeon has just started her art journey during the pandemic and used that time to further develop her skill. Dayeon is not only a visual artist but has a striving love for the classical flute.

The Oracles Foretold

By Miles E.

They say, "The pen is mightier than the sword",
But it is only those that wield the sword that may,
Leave behind the markings of their pens,
For there are a thousand stories,
But the victors ensure only theirs are told
It is as the ancient Oracles foretold,
If the kingdom falls, the fire of remembrance runs cold,
For out of all the heroes that once walked the Earth,
How many have their stories told?
If you had the misfortune of being on the wrong side of history,
The circumstances of your demise are shrouded in mystery
It is as the ancient Oracles foretold,
Everyone that falls is remembered no more.

Miles E. is a senior in his high school and likes to dabble with poetry pieces and short stories. Furthermore, he's also been trying to teach himself songwriting. He is a big lover of cats and wishes to be able to live by himself someday with only feline company.

Reverie

by Emory Ellis

Android lullabies murmured
in curtains of dusk. Beyond
the reach of oozing tissue—

What we become when we float
instead of dream. I see us
now as the fawn cleaved from its

mother by steel. Its vein wires
malfunctioning. Hoping
the carbon gods hear the sizzle

of our exposed arteries.
Almost as burnt as fraying cables
transmitting prayers

through clenched fists and folded knees.
Here in the blackout of all is
still but the sight beating of

electric chambers. Seeping
out static. Dimming the fawn's cries
with ignited currents.

Here I can be nothing. Here
I can be as still as the
doe. Waking empty and cold.



Emory (they/ them) is a high school senior heading to Kenyon College for university. They're mainly a poet, but also occasionally dabble in the arts and have a soft spot for watercolor in particular. They believe the arts are important for transcending the boundaries between people within society.

Thesis and Hypothesis: the evidence we live

by Chloe Chen

I have a theory that thirty-degree wind tastes different in March.
Like having forgotten yourself, before the frigid wall of used-to-be winter
Have you heaving until you remember

I have a theory that every time my dad woke into a bruised dawn
And drove four hours north he forgot me because he had to

I have a theory that the more we intellectualize our happiness
The horizon grows sharper with untouched feelings and it becomes
Harder to familiarize ourselves with another day

I have a theory that whittles away at the vacant caverns of my fleshy heart:
That everyone is fifteen, everyone is so fifteen that the road no longer feels like gravel

I have a theory that I was the translucent wine and the plastic cup too
The oven left hot and my brother's icy rage
Even though I was actually it's going to be alright

I have a theory that guilt is never an act of love
Despite its softness, lies sticky as it awaits a balm of forgiveness

I have a theory that it doesn't get better until it does— and then it doesn't
All of this avalanching in slow motion like waves, like the slow winding hand
Spinning cotton candy around a paper cone

chloe is a sixteen year old from CA, USA. in her spare time, she enjoys learning how to cook dishes from different cultures and (guiltily) reading trashy romance novels. her work also appears in aster lit and numerous anthologies.