



Winter Poems 2017

A Thought

By Melody Xiao

After I die,

I will wander the world

the way I've always wanted to,

see the cherry blossoms in DC

and the broken ground of the Berlin Wall

and the barren earth of the DMZ

where the voices but not the souls of the others gone

linger.

And eventually

I will tire of the earthly things

that tower but do not speak.

Somehow I'll find my way back home,

where I'm sure my grandmother will be waiting

sunlight warming the joints that no longer ache

watering her aloe plants

and a bowl of my favorite fried rice on the table.

Melody (Mel) is a high school junior from New Jersey. She has been writing poetry for about two years and has won a number of awards, including bronze in the NJCTE competition and a gold key in Scholastic Art and Writing. When not procrastinating and worrying about her upcoming exam, Mel reads, sings, and volunteers in and with her school (PS: her favorite ice cream flavor is Ben and Jerry's "The Tonight Dough with Jimmy Fallon).

A Note to my Collarbone Loving Sixteen-Year-Old Self

By Emily Wolst

How pathetic is it

I think over black coffee taken alone

That I belong to perhaps the only sub-culture

Of the Homo Sapiens species

That begins to cry when I catch a glimpse of my sun-tanned chest in the car mirror

Because my collarbones no longer protrude like some injured wing of a broken songbird

But are now hidden, more soft, the angularity more subtle under a layer of cushy flesh

Why is that I find magnificence in the sharp lines of the combination of collagen and calcium

Which very protrusion I find sickening on the stray mutts that wander the street

How repulsive is it

That I find strength in what nature intends as a symbol of human weakness

Emily Wolst is an undergraduate English student at Lakehead University in Orillia, Ontario. She enjoys writing poetry and short creative fiction pieces. Her work has appeared in several local newspapers. She works part-time in a public library and spends her spare time reading both fiction and non-fiction and drinking hot coffee.

Riverside

By Peter Beattie

Humming at the riverside, city across the waves hanging low
Lights stabbing across the thrashing water to slip shadows under our feet
Where they, teacher-eyed, observe our dancing and stalk us

We cause sand to leap out the way, feet stomping manic
To the intense chorus of acutely heated wind down wine bottles

Smoke couldn't keep up with us all night and so wanders home
Some bearing a distinct scent that sends trees tutting
Ash diving to the sand where it rests, unfolding into nothing

Bodies sprawl on rocks and sand and blankets, floating
Burning so vital, those webs of pounding flesh and sounding veins
Throbbing, afraid of skin that might scorch them, but adventurous

Those ungifted with a human crutch wobble on,
Sticking to the corners in defensive huddles, cackling

Arms building platonic shields to avoid repeated scars

Moon attacks with full frontal nudity, no clouds-modesty is dull

As stars hang back at the dancefloor's edge, drinks sipped tenderly

Humming at the riverside, we beat a clunky tune into the ugly hours

We are a nuisance, attacking the sea as it tosses and turns, trying to sleep

But summer brims over and we are sipping from the cup

Which floods so sticky onto our vibrant skin

Peter Beattie also goes by Moth, a product of their gender identity crisis. Crises, usually self-caused, are a recurring theme in their life and work, of which this is the first published example.

Nesting

By Moira Armstrong

Almost 20,

Baking pasta into

Zucchini

Gracefully

Moves through the kitchen, a bird

Of glasses and spoons

Newly 16,

Helping her wash the

Silverware

Carefully

Stands at the sink, a cricket

Of dreams and questions

I have these

Thoughts-unfathomable

In this kitchen

(It'll be okay)

You've seen the world and I-well

I've seen Hamilton

You've never

Minded naivete

Wondering

Anything

I wear like blazers. I have

Always been your child.

Moira Armstrong is a junior at Howland High School, where she enjoys stressing over honors classes and extracurriculars. Her favorite is the speech and debate team, where she competes in original oratory and serves as president. In her very limited free time, she likes to volunteer, color, and, of course, write. Her work has also been published in the Power of the Pen Book of Winners and Creative Communications Poetry Collection.

Words for Feelings We Can't Describe *

By Katrin Flores

Ruckkehrunruhe

I forgot
how the hot, sticky wind of
a hundred passing metro buses and jeepneys
felt on the shins—
the pleasant aching of feet
at the edge of a crosswalk—
when my legs were swept up
by the velvet lining
of a living room recliner.

I lost
the New Orleans roar—
the steam of a fresh jambalaya
and greasy oyster po'boys—
caught in the fibers of a shirt
when I stuck it in the washer

with a cup of
mountain fresh

And all the morsels of
the world I've captured in
a photograph
fade each time
I scroll past it in a
two-thousand memory
digital photo album

ruckkenrunruhe- n. the feeling of returning home after an immersive trip only
to find it fading rapidly from your awareness

Monachopsis

The garden holds like
the surface of water

until the gate swings open

and I,

with the careful smack of

yellow flip flops against

stepping stones,

arrive in New Gethsemane

But the crabapple tree

whispers to the bitter gourd

the mustard greens

the cherry tomatoes

the chickweeds

and with a thin, spotted finger

points

I cannot be the ant

on the ochre fence

with them—

only a thoroughbred

among them

monachopsis- n. the subtle but persistent feeling of being out of place

Katrin Flores, a student in the School for the Creative and Performing Arts program, is a junior at Lafayette High School. Besides writing, she is passionate about Jesus, hoards lipstick, plays the violin, and occasionally writes on gum wrappers when she's desperate.

poetry inspired by The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows
www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com

Dismantled

By Rachana Hegde

I am whittled down to eight years old: all shaky hands and
fingers stunned numb. There's a muted street & a house

hiding behind a lamp. The gutter overflows with pre-dawn light and
the manhole is a wound cauterized, awful in the way it droops.

A bedroom lies dismantled. I rest a hand against its underbelly,
learning how a house moulders. My parents are cluttered, scuttling

around an orphaned home. This place looks like the still life of a fruit
covered in soot, hijacked & rotting in the palms of our hands.

A year passes. And still, there is an awful light in my
mother's eyes when she looks at the sky. It is different.

I know her fears intimately: contorted & swarming.

Ten years later, a pheasant couches me, in a bland sketch of

sakura trees. Cherry blossoms scale the mountains of my childhood.

I am looking through a window & seeing my parents dappled
with moonlight. Distance is coiled in the strands of our hair.

I reverberate with antiquity;

& each place is a second chance I will not miss.

Rachana Hegde collects words and other oddities. Her poetry has been published in Alexandria Quarterly, Moonsick Magazine, and Hypertrophic Literary. You can find her reading, drowsy-eyed, or at www.rachanahegde.weebly.com.

Ursa Major

By Farah Ghafoor

“While he was hunting wild animals... he came across his mother [Callisto, a bear], who stood still at sight of Arcas and appeared to know him. He shrank back from those unmoving eyes gazing at him so fixedly, uncertain what made him afraid, and when she quickly came nearer he was about to pierce her chest with his lethal spear. All-powerful Jupiter restrained him ... and set them in the heavens and made them similar constellations, the Great and Little Bear.”

Metamorphoses Book II

The evening like a frozen bell. The silver, ghostly
mouth of Callisto as she looks for her son. A spear
tucked into dark, mute hair, she now hunts

the idle mothers. Warns: Carry your children
between your teeth, your nails. When the sky veils itself,
do not let them be moonflowers to be picked by men
with fingers like thick wooden pipes.

Give them more than birth: This distance is as faceless
as a beast. You will know when they become only a slash
of heart, a blackened window. You will know

when every morning echoes a tinkling light

for what you will have lost.

Farah Ghafoor is a sixteen-year-old poet and editor-in-chief at Sugar Rascals. Her work is published or forthcoming in Ninth Letter, alien mouth, and Big Lucks among other places, and has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Farah is the recipient of the 2016 Alexandria Quarterly Emerging Artists and Writers Award. She believes that she deserves a cat. Find her online at fghafoor.tumblr.com.

Mouth

By Arah Ko

I.

Tonguing suckers
until the end has slickened to a sharp
edge and you have cut your mouth
over and over in search of residual
sweetness. Red dripping chins;
I do not know syrup from
blood.

II.

The park is stiff with new
cold. Your mittens hang like ruby rags
from their clasp on your coat.
Eating junk food on the bench, a dying
wasp creeps in your straw, stings
your lips, over and over; you cry
until dad pries the stinger from
your gums.

III.

The dental students say

one tooth wants to come out.

You shrug, brave apprehension

crinkling your rosy, round cheeks,

for the first time losing fat. You leave

the office, three milk teeth in a

ziplock bag, gauze cottoning the wound

in your young jaw. Your face is swollen

but you smile at me,

over and over.

Arah Ko is an English Major in the Chicago area. When not writing, she can be found frequenting open mic nights, explaining her name pronunciation to coffee shop baristas, and contemplating the meaning of life, other than 42.

Family Hike

By Vivian Tsai

We march out—so early I can't even see—
till Meg has a headache and John has to pee,
and Ruby is swearing she'll die of despair
if another small nature bug lands in her hair.

“Now, camping's a great way to spend time together,”
says Dad as we groan about grime and the weather.
“Just humor your father,” our mom chimes along,
but none of us join in her hiking trip song.

Come noon, I discover the map's upside-down,
and Ruby and Meg both wear permanent frowns.
The lunches have melted, a PBJ puddle,
and even Dad's beat when we do our group huddle.

On campground, we're weary and beading with sweat
at the peak of what Dad says we'll “never forget.”
He can't pitch the tent, so we lie on the dirt

and the earth is so bumpy, our spinal cords hurt.

But the six of us match with our sore limbs and yawns
as Mom sings and I squeeze between Ruby and John.

We marvel together as stars come to peep,
and I'm grateful to Dad as I drift off to sleep.

Vivian Tsai currently studies computer science and applied math at Johns Hopkins University. She spends her free time doodling, writing letters, and playing tennis with friends.

An Impossible Rupture

By Maya Rabinowitz

The day after things changed

It rained buckets

Bubbles floating across mirrored puddles

I woke in grey violet

And left my dreams in a hurry

A flurry of heartbeats

Racking the dreary room

I took a drag through the rain

To count my words

To spread

Water from the

Crease of my cheek

The bridge of my nose

A silent story of sorrow

I warmed a can of
Salty metal soup
Til it hissed at the corners and
Overflowed the bowl
Cloudy liquid growing cold
As it clung to my throat

I could not stand
Inside my skin
I could not stand my head

Through years
Of shifting loss
The same prayer flags still
Drip from my doorframe

Still tangle on the synapses
That lie between wake and dream

May I never settle

May I always have a song to sing

Maya Rabinowitz is a sixteen-year-old lover of music and avid reader of anything poetic. She lives in Philadelphia, PA, in a quiet neighborhood with her two moms and her dog Ollie. She spends much of her free time writing, and her work has also been recognized