



Old City, Jerusalem, 2016

## FEBRUARY 2019 Winter Poems

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**razing the jungle** By Rukmini Kalamangalam

she, temptation

curved coastline & hair black as boot

mother india with her *sari* hiked up

temple in her legs forgotten

& doesn't starch just

glide against her

she, reborn daffodil

crumples slickly into rot

ground bared for McDonald's playground

children wearing English like

clear braces & acne medication

oil carefully fingering tooth marks

she, fish-eyed beauty

water creature saved from oncoming

tsunami

thermostat turned down

pence rattling against her deities

gasp reborn in cracked lipstick

she, lawless

loose hair trapping curls of smoke

tobacco decorating center part & spit saying

*I do for her*

Rukmini Kalamangalam is a page and performance poet from Houston, Texas. She is a graduate of Carnegie Vanguard High School and a current freshman at Emory University. In 2018, she was named Youth Poet Laureate of the Southwest and a National Youth Poet Laureate Ambassador as well as Houston Youth Poet Laureate. Her poem, "After Harvey," was set to music by the Houston Grand Opera. She has been published by the Houston Chronicle, ABC 13 Visions, and Mutabilis Press, with forthcoming work in *Polyphony Lit* and the Kweli Journal. She has been recognized by the Harris County Department of Education and nationally by Scholastic Writing Awards.

**A Poem Not About Love** By Jenny Cheng

I like three-pronged forks,  
goodbye kisses (more than hello ones),  
sleeping in rooms with dusty books  
while it rains hard against the window.

I wear goggles while chopping onions,  
and count everything that is white:  
sugar, the paws of my lady-cat,  
my mother's orchid that is in perfect bloom  
and just about to die.

I think about your soft, brown, dissimilar eyes,  
and how I pretend  
they never reach me.

I think of the way you touch me sometimes,  
so gently, at the hip,  
as if this ache were suddenly allowed,  
as if we were about to hop on a train  
towards some kinder,  
more understanding universe.

Jenny is a Chinese citizen living in California and an aspiring writer. She moved to the US from China at age fourteen, and is currently a senior at Beverly Hills High School. Aside from writing, she's passionate about social justice and animal rights.

**Shalom,in translation:** By Noa Padawer-Blatt

the kibbutz movement fell

in the '90s

my mother

a progeny of the fence playgrounds and

stained glass dining halls

danced in the fields

of shattered glass --

later poppies

on the hills

of red white and blue --

before the sinkholes by the

**ים המלח**

dead sea

collapsed

the great mouth of

the bleeding *galil*

the parachute

a boot

water fought with

children

i visited a kibbutz

two summers ago

heard my name spoken in the

song of my ancestors

poetry of melancholia

and saw the

cinders

of laughter

still there —

gunshots playing

softly

in the background

Noa Padawer-Blatt is a rising junior from Toronto, Ontario. Formerly, she was a staff writer and editor of INKspire, an online literary platform; she is currently the lead editor. Additionally, she attended the launch program of the Kenyon Young Science Writers

Workshop, as well as the School of the New York Times for Cultural and Creative Writing. Her poems search to divulge both her heritage and modern issues, and the moments where the two collide.

**Zoodles** By Cassidy Bishop

I once sat next to a weathered man  
who wore the sea on his arm.  
Said he, with gladness:  
“Tell me,  
oh, tell me!  
How do you do  
this lovely first spring day?”  
I opened my mouth  
and butterflies of peach  
danced from my lips.  
He did know what they meant,  
and caught them gently.  
Raising the ‘flies,  
he let them to sunlight canvas  
and painted the nearby beams  
with the blushing color of their wings.  
And since, each sunny day  
has passed with the aroma of peaches and sea  
and it is a lovely spring indeed.

Cassidy Bishop is a sixteen-year-old aspiring poet living in Loveland, Colorado. Her work has appeared in multiple publications including The Gifted Penman's Poetry Anthology, the Young Adult Review Network, and Upon Arrival. She finds inspiration from the mountains, her peers, and the artwork around her.

**Fire** By Adam McCarthy

Sparks glide in the cool night.  
The icy breeze tries to follow them.  
The sky darkens,  
the flames get ever brighter,  
The glowing orange seems to say, *more wood*.  
It is that wanting that destroys homes,  
Leaving only a charred base.  
How beautiful,  
yet monstrous.  
The fire rises,  
it sends a wave of heat so hot I almost back away.  
I feel stuck,  
as if I can't speak or move.  
Away from the fire I would be blind.  
Here I am silent.  
I am immobile.  
I am alone.  
The fire grows tired,  
No longer dancing,  
But sitting,



Spending all of its energy to keep itself alive.  
Flames soon fade to illuminated coals.  
I douse the fire.  
The sky is not the color black,  
But the color darkness.  
I turn on my headlamp,  
And walk to my house,  
a single drop of light in front of me.  
I long for the moment when the house's light covers me,  
And I am scared no more.

Adam McCarthy lives in Missouri, where he currently attends St. Patrick School. He has been at this school his entire life. One of the greatest teachers ever, Mrs. Meusch, has tasked his class with writing poems for the world to read. He thought it was going to be easy, but found that writing has many, many different properties.

### **Through the Camera Lens** By Emily Lu

The girl freezes—suspended  
in the air, barely skimming

the lake's surface. Time  
is still. The water loses

its fluidity, its ebb and flow,  
becoming a pane of glass,

tinted blue like the summer sky  
but rough and unpolished,

the ripples jutting out  
like ridges, sharp as glass shards

ready to impale. But the girl  
still hovers above, caught

in time's grasp,  
immortal.

Emily Lu is currently a sophomore at New Trier High School. She has been writing poetry for three years and attended creative writing courses at the Northwestern Center for Talent Development. Her writing has previously appeared in BALLOONS Literary Journal and Paper Swans Press.

**Last One** By Kolbey Gentles

Just one last chapter.

Just one last episode.

Just one last bite.

Just one last piece.

Just one last time.

Just one last try.

Just one last level.

Just one last round.

These are the lies we tell ourselves,

Time after time after time.

Kolbey has been a proud writer since he was in fifth grade. It all started whenever his fifth grade teacher started a monthly writing competition. He usually won, but he always found a way to make his stories dark and gritty, no matter what the topic was. Horror is the genre he thrives the most in.

## **Quilted** By Caroline Fuller

Mama sits under the hanging lamp with her eyeglasses on,  
fingers feeding fabric steadily  
beneath the pulsing needle.  
She shows me how to cut, to sew,  
edge against edge,

stitch after stitch.

Remove the pins, snip the thread,  
finish this square and trade it for the next.

In the end, there are eighty-eight of them  
joined neatly together  
they lie atop the twin xl in my new dorm room  
and I trace the seams with my fingertips:  
patterned squares cuddle up next to each other like cottages down the lane,  
stitches weave through like picket fences,  
and blues and pinks spill like smoke from a chimney.

One fall morning, I trek up the hill at the edge of campus  
and breathe heavily at the top.

In the valley below,  
houses spill like thimbles across fabric,  
fog presses down like thick cotton,  
and the trees thread up and through.

Slowly, methodically,  
I will take each square of this new-city fabric  
like mama taught me  
until I know every edge and every color  
until I can lay this landscape across my lap  
and trace the streetlights of its seams.

Caroline Fuller is a sophomore at Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. She enjoys playing frisbee, dancing, and trying new restaurants in the city. Her writing can also be found in Germ Magazine and Teen Ink.

**cost of a downpour** By Sonali Pan

this, pinprick wetness,

the sky falling like knives into our back,

the pretending i'm not road-kill at parties,

the million little letters monsoon writes to my cheek.

tuesday, i saw a pair of lips that looked like they'd just been

kissed, and bit down on mine, and thought about how my hair

gives away under the water, you see: nothing wants to hang onto trouble.

Sonali is an eighteen year old studying economics and mathematics in Delhi.

**faith in miracles and mirages** By Vanessa Tsao

My aunt leads her blind husband  
down a steep narrow path  
guiding him solely with the  
handle of the brand new broom

I avoid stepping on the other graves we  
pass on our way down  
into the structure with a blue-tiled roof  
our family name embossed thickly in  
flamboyant gold like it were  
airbrushed onto the dark marble

dust had settled everywhere  
we come every year to clean up the  
weeds threatening to colonize the grand yard  
lanky red candles with broken backs are  
unfaithful foot soldiers of this sacred place

when every speck of dust has been abolished  
every weed and fallen leaf swept away  
leaving the courtyard slightly less morose  
(good spirits dwell in clean places, I hope)

my aunt lights the skinny incense sticks  
I avoid breathing in the mysterious finger like  
projections reaching upwards, upwards  
to heavenly blue

My fingers feel incompetent  
clasping an unknown god's cigarette  
There is a certain coldness

about the way my fingers are  
positioned squeezing the sticks  
hovering in mid air  
I must be doing something wrong—  
But I resist the urge to interlock my  
clumsy fingers together  
mountains colliding with a gentle  
steadiness

Does this unknown god inhale  
every confession every hope  
every plea and heal  
with his warm breath  
I wanted to ask

The flames dancing to a  
tune nobody hears remain  
silent—but I am not a guard  
watching over a mirage  
of a castle— I think I will  
keep on hoping that someone,  
even fire, can ferry our  
wishes across.

Vanessa is a high school senior who is a Social Media & Marketing editor and staff reporter at her school newspaper. She can also be found jumping and spinning (and falling) on ice in her free time.

**We are Strong** By Adryanna Revill

We are strong  
We are not weak  
We are family  
We are not enemies  
We care for each other  
We don't hate each other  
We stick together  
We are not alone  
We are the next generation of the human race  
so let's join together and be ONE.

Adryanna Revill is a seventh grade student at Kuumba Academy Charter School, in Wilmington Delaware. She is from Wilmington. She is fourteen years old and will be fifteen in April 2019. She loves to dance, sing and rap.

**mother tongue** By Priya Kanneboyina

my history teacher calls it languicide  
the way the words fall from my mouth  
sentences broken and words blocked  
loose tongue now stuffed down my throat



speaking is third nature  
recalled only from months in the mumbai sun  
words forced into my mouth  
after overuse in someone else's

it sits untouched  
marinating in between my teeth  
with a curled tongue and a songbird's voice  
my mother tongue is only my mother's.

Priya Kanneboyina is a senior in high school in the DMV area. She enjoys writing poetry, particularly writing to experiment with multiple forms of expressing her most consuming and laborious emotions. When not writing, she spends much of her time in the wonderful company of her dog, Luke.

**Left Behind** By Jayden Harrison

I met you years ago  
In a building tired and warm  
Where the voices of children carried  
It's bricks weathered many a storm

In a building tired and warm  
Now cold and left behind  
It's heat all but forgotten, it's warmth impossible to find

Where the voices of children carried  
Now silence fills it's halls  
No crying can be heard here, no laughter off its walls

Its bricks weathered many a storm  
They crack and crumble now  
The wind whistles through them, and longing the gaps allow

Jayden is an eighteen-year-old high school senior in rural southern Illinois. She grew up in a small town with a farming background, and is also a PFC in the Illinois Army National Guard, having enlisted as a Horizontal Construction Engineer. She plans on attending college in this area and earning a degree in Civil Engineering. She enjoys movies, drawing, working out and spending time with friends.

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