



Joshua Tree National Park, 2020

# Blue Marble Review Winter Poems 2020

**Editor's Note/Winter Poems 2020** By Molly Hill

Readers and Writers:

In order to bring a little heat into the heart of a cold winter, we present this month's cover image, a photo taken in the middle of the Mojave Desert. The Joshua tree, depending on whom you ask is thought to represent strength, supplication, and the ability to thrive in difficult conditions. While we hope you're thriving this winter, we're providing a poetic oasis of sorts to get you through the days when the sun seems to set way too early. This is our fourth annual winter poetry issue—and we're honored to present the work of these young writers.

Enjoy the issue!

Molly Hill

Editor

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**Grandfather** By Mara Magarahan

My mom says your body

Took its last breath when I was young,

And if it weren't for the

Boxes of photographs

And presents that she says you

Gave me on my birthday

I wouldn't have even remembered that you

Were once around me.

That your fingerprints were once

Smudged on my kitchen table

or that you once breathed the air of the

Same earth I live on now.

My memories of you don't exist in my head.

They hang on the walls and

Hide in the pancakes

My mom says you always fed her in the morning.

And it saddens me how unfamiliar you look

Through the picture frame

With your arms wrapped around my small body,

Probably feeling so warm,

Probably calling me granddaughter,

Not knowing that I will never be able to remember

Your smiling face on my own.

Mara Magarahan is a High School Creative Writing student from Chester County Pennsylvania, who can be found writing poetry anywhere at any time, even if that means scribbling on napkins or writing on her hands. She is the author of the poetry collection *I'll Be Okay*, which was published in September of 2018. Recently, her work has been published in Bridge Ink's literary magazine's 3.5 issue. Mara finds inspiration from her life experiences and uses writing as both a coping skill and a way to connect with others. She wants readers to feel like they are experiencing the world through her eyes and mind.

**Pretty Ghosts** By Katherine Vandermeel

Another night of forgetting, Mother blurs  
into the bathroom mirror. I watch her

forget my dog's still slumber, his scarred  
throat. How she found the fish bones

that claimed his last breath. How his tongue turned  
the color of milk, how we dug

the hole and knelt in the April dirt. She calls  
and calls his name. He doesn't come.

She taught me to arrange the crayons  
in a perfect line, fingers

cradling color as though only skin  
could cover light. That was the year

it began: Mother heard the wind sing  
of panacea, saw pretty ghosts, watched

the lemons work themselves to rot. The year  
honey was supposed to stick, but didn't.

Mother always talked of rivers—  
boats of blood, ties of daughters

to sisters to brothers to fathers to mothers.  
One by one, her rivers split into streams:

the scarf she wore yesterday, the reason  
she climbed the stairs, my name caught,

a fish bone in her throat.

She once told me of the fish in the markets,  
chained to beds of ice, homes

long forgotten. I can imagine the iron grip  
on their spines. Still, like her

one day I may not keep myself  
from reaching into the gut of a mirror.

Katherine Vandermel is a writer who thinks of writing as painting: each word imbues the world with coloration. She loves music and a good, warm croissant. Her work has appeared and is forthcoming in Alexandria Quarterly, Eunoia Review, Life in 10 Minutes, and Poetry Resistance from Youth.

**Tick Tock** By Annabelle Liechty

Its funny that clocks

Actually used to tick.

Mom's in the hospital.

*Tick tock.*

I am attempting to sleep

In my Amish neighbors house.

*Tick tock.*

Whiffs of day old shoo fly pie

still float through the air.

And I can't shoo away thoughts

Of cold linoleum, and IV needles.

*Tick tock.*

I lay on a too warm bed

Sheets kicked around my feet.

*Tick tock.*

My heavy eyes

can't seem to close.

I never doubted she

would come back fine.

*Tick tock.*

I can't sleep

But not because of mom.

*Tick tock.*

Stupid clock.

Annabelle Liechty is a student living outside of Philadelphia. She enjoys singing, reading, and drowning in her schoolwork. Sometimes when she feels emotionally distraught she poems.

### **3 Blue Bodies** By Rachel Zhu

Yesterday a girl asked me if I would be married by eighteen—*No, maybe, yes*, if you really insist,

I have already begun making rings out of scotch tape, and by eighteen

someone will be slipping them onto my thumbs

(made easy with wet indigo gouache).

(or maybe it is not pigment but bruising, some slow purpling dripping from my fingers to yours.)

Three Thanksgivings ago I shut myself into my room and cried and when my parents asked why



I said it was because I missed my grandmother (it was because I didn't like the guests).

This year the girl had a blue tang on her forearm and the sticker was mine

(I was saving it)

I don't like Thanksgivings anymore.

I wonder if by marriage I will be skilled enough to be able to sew

blue tangs into my skin so no one can take them,

like my grandmother did when she etched all the jujubes

her stepmother never let her eat

into brown spots on her hands, all the

untrue words my grandfather said about her into lines on her forehead (then she

planted the heartache in her body and

died from it)

I think, I am just three *maotais* away

from enlightenment, three broken bodies and a tapestry tree

I think, I am dressed wrong—this scarf does not go with my skin and neither does the

tablecloth

I am turning a bit red, you see, from red bean beads (of sweat, I think) and

speckled mango skin

(To paint it in pretty words, they call it the *glow*, as if we are lightbulbs)

I am turning a bit red and a bit blue (for lack of air) and so a bit purple,

like the day my mother cried because she lost her mother and I had to fake

my tears

to pretend that I could still cry over it, when really they had all dried up

in my eyes like gouache eventually does and

I think she probably wanted to see me get married but she never did

and she never will.

Rachel Zhu lives in New York and is currently a junior at Horace Mann School. She is the cofounder and Editor in Chief of Horace Mann's creative prose magazine, *LitMag*.

Outside of school, Zhu writes creative short prose and poetry, and is also an artist and ceramicist. She draws influence from her Chinese background and culture as well as classical European and American works of literature. Through her work, she hopes to inspire other Asian Americans to express their stories and experiences through the world of humanities and art.

**Next Solstice** By William Leggat

The last I saw Dad I didn't know it was the last.

Buildings in San Francisco are on roads like hills like mountains  
and the roads at home are just, roads.

Mom's commute

the MTA off-schedule

scheduling for check-ups

for chemo

for follow-ups to the check-ups,

blood drawn.

Mom draws families like trees.

Branches fall in winter and no one minds.

Dad's branch fell in August, and the hills  
that were like roads

fell too,

fell flat,

and dull,

and took tears to the gutter.

Where he pretended to sew the scattered ashes:

that man from Georgia, who knew the

Mom from Georgia,

Soon

She and I, one two,

became

three

became

six  
became  
—wait.

Siblings or  
not siblings or  
not blood but  
some love.

And as alone  
so together.

Like branches in winter,  
like lines on roads that  
drift past the rows of houses  
which stand above cornfields  
and blow like leaves  
in the summer  
and fall in winter  
the next branch fell  
in May.

When he crossed  
the lines in the road,  
no hills but

six became  
three became  
two one, just

Me.

and mom.

Two branches that never fell.

Two branches evergreen.

Like check-ups

or trains,

on schedule,

on time.

But time doesn't wait.

and the clock is just running

until

the next branch

falls.

And no new seeds are dropping

And these branches won't regrow.

Will Leggat is a high school senior from Brooklyn, New York. He attends Phillips Academy Andover, where he is the editor-in-chief of his school's literary magazine, The Courant, and a Prose Reader for The Adroit Journal. When he's not writing, editing, or riding the Q Train, he's drinking a bit too much coffee.

**This House is Not for Sale** By Oni Tomiwa

I asked if this lebensraum of furtive

memory could house my body//they said

no//that they can not withstand//my

mother's wrath//that I am a conch//only

meant to kiss the salty sea at sunset.

they said in contorted clamours that every

sad face//is sculpted from the same sorry

clay.//I said no//that our demons are

composite of different debris//that

happiness is a place//and some people are

homeless//like birds//when trees are felled.

then they asked for an exchange//of my

body//for a droplet of nirvana.//I said no//

that we all become water at the journey's end//

at sunset//and this house is not for sale.

Oni Tomiwa is a lover of poetry. A lover of every form of art and an amateur nature photographer. He resides and writes in Osogbo, Osun State. His poems and essays have appeared in both prints and journals. He also loves football.

**First** By Aubre Siler

Being offered drugs / is like being bullied into sentience—the body's brain douses itself /  
in cold-water neurons, their electric singe / kneading muscles into a pit, blood slow, at  
attention, everything alert / with the adrenaline of a waiting decision, and so / it's the  
waiting that hurts.

Aubre is a current junior in high school, spending all of her money on energy drinks. She's had her work published in Appelley Publishing's 2018 Rising Stars Collection, Apricity Press, and a few school publications.

**Teeny** By Aubre Siler

From the matter-bank / I take

a loan / of dirt and soil / and stardust

from which my body is composed.

Aubre is a current junior in high school, spending all of her money on energy drinks. She's had her work published in Appelley Publishing's 2018 Rising Stars Collection, Apricity Press, and a few school publications.

**Neighborhood** By Abigail Diaz

sword earrings, unhinged ankles, a juicy fruit mouth, and the sun setting

molten fire in the windows of every american city.

a cold breeze is coming up from december to chill us all to the bone. you know the one.

the

beginnings of sickness, in the likeness of a

skinny kid fixing his mustang in his driveway, creeps into the back of my mind and decides to live there

for a time.

i pass a sign that says "I'M GORGEOUS INSIDE" and i identify with it. i pass a sign that says

"BEWARE OF DOG"

and i identify with that too.

as always, i am aware i have a



dreaming face, and

as always, i feel like a machine with bright headlights whose engine is

only now shifting into gear.

nothing is as cold as i thought it might be, but of course

the weather changes.

Abigail Diaz is an author of both poetry and fiction. She has been practicing fiction for five years and poetry for two. She has been published in the Sheepshead Review, the Ear, Rock&Sling Magazine, and the San Antonio Public Library 2019 Young Pegasus Anthology. She is currently a freshman at Texas State University and is majoring in English, with hopes of publishing poetry and fiction full-time in the future.

### **Strange Man in a Suit** By Bri Fraser

My father has been gone for quite some time.

Instead a strange man in a suit stays with us.

He sombers through the door carrying a worn out briefcase,

Both have seen better days.

He sways when he walks, stumbling over his own two feet.

When he calls my name to kiss me good night,

It never sounds right.

His breath smells sweet it makes my nose wrinkle

But I don't like this strange man in the suit,

I know tomorrow when I wake

He'll disappear for the day

Only to come home and fade away.

I once asked my mom when dad will come home.

Soon she hopes, soon.

Bri Fraser is a senior at Gilford High School who loves to snowboard, hike, and run track. Her future plans are to continue to enjoy life and stay happy.

### **Last Night I** By Miranda Sun

I read a poem last night and now I shed

rhymes from my head like hair. Lose line breaks

in boar bristles. Tear out syntax in

pure frustration.

That poem is the reason  
today I have sonnets  
fluttering loose  
wherever I go. In the afternoon,  
I sit and braid stanzas together,  
and the sunlight makes even  
the mistakes look nice, those  
knots I can't seem  
to unravel, that my fingers  
get caught in when I run them  
through a song.

This always  
happens. You would think  
I would learn not to eat

poetry before bed, maybe drink

a glass of warm milk instead—

but I rather like the sensation

of sound across my scalp

and untangling metaphors

the next morning. We all

have our vices.

Miranda Sun is twenty years old. An alumna of the NYS Summer Young Writers Institute and the Kenyon Review Young Writers Workshop, her work has been nationally recognized by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the Writers Alliance of Gainesville, as well as nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize. Recent publications include *Body Without Organs*, *Lammergeier*, *Red Queen*, and more. She is a former editorial assistant for *Ninth Letter Online* and loves the Monterey Bay Aquarium. You can find her procrastinating on Twitter @heregoesthesun or roaming the streets of Chicago in search of bubble tea.

**Midnight and You're Still Walking** By Spencer Chang

*for the brother/sister I never met*

as always, Ma kneels by her bed  
and offers a prayer to dawn, slipping  
through the curtains the way millions  
of babies crawl into her dreams at night.

*pray harder*, my mother opens her chest  
to the sky, always waiting for two hands  
to dig through the clouds and press  
her lost life right back into her.

you were all we expected, not the car  
that crashed into ours, not Pa telling us  
to stay inside, not Ma hunched over  
on the side holding her stomach, not you

bleeding out of her. I still see your footprints

everywhere, the lonely crib that swings by the window,  
the sea of red you drowned in, your name's etched into  
the walls of this empty not empty not empty house.

Spencer Chang is a high school junior from Taipei, Taiwan. In his spare time, Spencer enjoys reading, dancing in his bedroom, and dreaming about traveling the world.

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