

“Eleanor was right. She never looked nice. She looked like art, and art wasn’t supposed to look nice; it was supposed to make you feel something.”

— **Rainbow Rowell, Eleanor & Park**

Dear Readers and Writers,

This year our Winter Poetry issue expands a bit— to allow for some incredible art. We received Alina Yuan’s graphic/comic/artistic submission in 2021, and held onto it until we could give it its own issue. And when we received multiple art submissions from Parson’s student Jaeyeon Kim, we accepted all of them. We’re delighted to feature *Pre-Chapter* as this issue’s cover art, and look forward to including more of Kim’s work as 2022 unfolds.

Our aim during this monochromatic winter season is to put up an issue with a synesthesia-* type vibe. Hoping the imagery in the POEMS, and the richness of the ART helps you see why we celebrate creativity in all its forms, every month of the year.

Thanks for reading.

Molly Hill

Editor

*synesthesia:

—a condition in which one type of sensory stimulation evokes the sensation of another, as when the hearing of sound produces the visualization of color (freedictionary.com)

—in literature...the description of one kind of sense impression using words to describe another

—a situation in which skilled use of language, color, and creativity, experienced on your iPhone evoke a sensory festival resulting in empathy, connection, and a sense of shared humanity. (bluemarblereview2022)

i heard your name By Nila Narain

today and i didn't plan time to wallow
in your absence, so i was splattered with

the lack of you again, bathed in loss so sweet
i almost mistook it for your hands

running down my chest. i can't help
the cringe my face coils into when i hear

silverware scraping against porcelain.
or the way i dig my nails into my tingling

calf to coax it out of numbness. i flinch
when the walls crack their knuckles.

i don't have a reflex for you. i'm stuck

in this hellhole where phantom hands
send chills down my body in the way i always

wanted you to touch me. when the white of
the snow sheets slapping against my window

catch my eye, i prepare to converse with
the ghost of you. the hairs on the small

of my back rise in the outline of your
handprint— my body still a snow angel

you keep coming back to make.

Nila Narain (they/he) is a queer TAMILIAN poet and creator studying computer science and creative writing at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. They have previously been published in Serotonin Poetry, giallo lit, and perhappened. In their spare time they like to sing, dance, and stress-craft.

Starving Artist By Savannah Carmichael

I am a simple painter, though I do not feel as such;
I see things no one else can see, that no one else can touch.
The *crinkle, crinkle* of dry leaves evokes a satin grey;
The sunlight on my skin tastes like an exceptional sirloin filet.
When music plays, I see the scenes that write out just for me:
The cello's rich hum is sticky sap, an amber filigree;
A clarinet can conjure smells of lovely cinnamon toast.

While a cryptic triangle reminds me of a ball hitting a goalpost.
A wild violet sky erupts as a tuba gives a *blahhht*
And a smooth glass window is a grand piano's coup d'état.
Round and round the instruments go, kicking up whirlwinds
That transfers to my humble brush, from which the art rescinds
To the blank canvas on my easel. Oh, what a beautiful sight!
But art is not enough to feed me or keep me warm at night.
I am a simple painter, though I do not feel as such;
I see things no one else can see, that no one else can touch.

Savannah Carmichael is a sophomore Creative Writing major at Truman State University. Previously she was given a Dishonorable Mention in the 2020 Bulwer-Lytton contest. In her free time, she enjoys acting and being scared senseless by a good piece of horror.

Image By Timi Sanni

image: a boy and his void. atlas shouldering a burning chaos.
is this not punishment enough? i think i've seen all there is
of darkness, and then, the universe expands—a kind of joke?

the world's dark ink spills into pain—more, and even more
pain—as if to say: roaming ghost of a boy, what do you know
about living to think you could write poems about survival?

image: a boy in the mirror. a baby wood-louse heaving a load of sorrow on its head like a curse. i look into the looking-glass, and like one crazy bird, grief has made a nest of my hair.

wash. how we rebuke fire. *rinse.* how we rebuke pain. *repeat.*
grief, if you won't fall off, won't you, at least, soften a little?
drown. to put out a small fire, I cover my body with a flood

Timi Sanni is a Nigerian writer, editor and multidisciplinary artist. He was the 1st place winner of the 2020 SprinNG Poetry Contest, the 2020 Fitrah Review Short Story Prize, and the 2021 Anita McAndrews Award Poetry Contest. He was also the 3rd place winner of the 2021 Stephen A. DiBiase Poetry Prize. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in magazines such as *Black Warrior Review*, *New Delta Review*, *Palette Poetry*, *Lolwe*, *Lucent Dreaming*, and elsewhere. Find him on twitter @timisanni

How to Dress a Wound By Allyson Ye

On Wednesdays, the city turns up its collar
Not rough, never vindictive
Subtle as a new chill against your cheek
Or a mist that dims the eyes
Stray thoughts stow like orphans into fastening sleeves
Shadows slimming on the concrete, bereaved by twilight

Today, dusk was an ebbing tide; we drained from school like water through a sieve
I buried my coat in my bag, arms bare and ponderous
Even bowing my head, I sensed your approach, you with your fraying maroon cuffs,
face a study in angles, your gaze like charcoal

softening everything it lights upon,
your hand nudging my hair

I thought, I want a conversation in polychrome
I thought, I want a riot
To lean my head on your shoulder, thread our hands into latticework
Startle you into laughter until your hood falls away

But the cold was biting and my arms were bare
I could only smile, trembling with unshed words
In the interregnum between sense and sensation
I thought, maybe that's why they say to wear your heart on your sleeve.
If it breaks, the shards slit the fabric and not your skin.

What I mean is: we all crave love, we are all soured by it
Hands cup loose change, hands build barricades
The wind is a lone rogue across the flat sea
Mourning the missing things she will never seek
We are too fragile for this, this restless imitation,
this plundering of ruins for a scrap of our salvation

Allyson Ye is a high school senior from Hong Kong. She writes prose to vicariously experience the lives of others, and poetry to romanticize her own. Beyond writing, she is a passionate genre fiction advocate, budding fortune teller, and a capella enthusiast. You can find her on Instagram @sunnygally. She hopes you have a very nice day.

Rules of a Zoom Funeral By Liam Powers

I am sitting here once again with nothing
but a blank page labelled POEMS
and I wonder why
All my poems are about writing poems.

The walls are blank. The cats have
stopped fighting. The child that cries
next door has gone to sleep. It is too dark
to see the birds outside. Beauty is scarce at this time.

And
The room implodes with the unbearable weight of poems.

The radiator screams and I am saved.

If it weren't for the radiator and my mother's handball games I would be the most boring
poet on the planet.

I would sit at the bottom of The Ocean of Heavy Poems and write poem after poem
about what it's like to write poems. I would kill the fat poem fish with my poetry.

Today she won two games and I won one. Youth and lanky limbs are on my side but she is
a much smarter player than me. One day I will be able to slow down and think, or she will
be unable to speed up, of course; the cycle will complete.

Today her glasses fell off and she missed the ball and the gray hair of a monarch burst loose for all to see. I laughed and she laughed, we laughed and I imagined my parents' funeral. I always imagine their funeral as one, a double feature, as if their life force is inextricably linked. At the funeral I will make lots of jokes and they will laugh and smash their coffin to bits and leap and dance and cry out because their *son* is just so dang funny.

A funeral is a good thing to write a poem about.

The other day I attended my first Zoom funeral.

My dead grandfather's close friends fumbled with the camera and told stories about people they killed in a war. It was very poetic.

The poetry of my grandfather's Zoom funeral joins the poetry of the blank walls, my screaming radiator, the cats that have stopped fighting, the child that cries next door and the birds that I can't see and the beauty is less scarce but it is still me vs. poetry and dignity vs. Zoom and funerals vs. handball.

Liam Powers is a high school senior living in Brooklyn, NY. He is in the Writer's institute program at Edward R Murrow High School. His muse right now is his eclectic neighborhood of Sunset Park. His default mode is practicing jazz guitar, piano or drums. He also loves wilderness canoeing, handball and every dog he's ever met.

~this poem originally appeared in *The Magnet*, — a literary magazine at Edward R. Murrow High School~

Dyspraxia By Izzy Searle

I'm the ship's navigator when the stars disappear
Constellations leave no consolation
Orion hunts further along the horizon
Cassiopeia spies other skies to rule
Aries rams into the waves
And I'm a drop in the ocean
No notion of where to point my sails

I'm the orchestra's conductor when time stops
Metronomes clock out and go home
Clocks stop in a timeless tick
Chronos is dropping, dropped, drops chronology
Then picks it up without checking the page numbers
Musicians wait for the beaten beat of my baton
Never, and always, all at once

I'm the tightrope walker when the world quakes
The Earth's core is a clown, spinning plates
Arms tired, gravity drops reality
Mountains move, shaking snow from their slopes
Titans turn my tightrope into a skipping rope
Turning me into a skydiver without a parachute
Shooting into the valley
I'm the escape artist when the cage turns invisible

Audiences wonder why I'm struggling to leave
Assistants hold keys just out of my reach
Give me a stall and applaud their accessibility
I take Orion's sword and slice through the locks
Take time from Chronos, take the Titans' strength
And escape.

Izzy Searle is a neurodivergent poet from Sussex. Her writing is featured on the International Network of Italian Theatre, and she has a poetry anthology in the process of publication. In her spare time, Izzy loves to hike and volunteer at Scouts.

Our Mother in the Blackberry Bushes By Hannah Riffell

Our mother in the blackberry bushes. Who knew
where she came from, with her peach-colored sweater and

blue bucket hat. Someone said she had yellow hair
when she was young. As if that were important. This day,

under a summer sky, she names wildflowers with her hands and
fishes through brambles for berries. She hums

what served as a lullaby, when her children were children. Someone
said she was a good mother. Who remembers?

She always foraged, always picked up ideas on the side of the road
(like blackberries) and brought them home. Cartons of recycled cardboard. —

green and sugar-stained. We were like fingers inked in blue-black juice, teeth grinning and gritted with seeds, stomachs rumbling with joy.

Someone said we should be patient, and make pie, as if as there was something important about eating food

with forks. When did we know we were children exiled, our mother singing us back from the thickets

with a lullaby. In the end what is hunger but lack and we lacked for nothing. Someone said we had plenty

of nothing. Who remembers. We had our mother, who had blackberry bushes. And there was something important about that.

Hannah Riffell is an upcoming graduate of Calvin University, where she studies writing and business. She won the 2018 National Writers Series Poetry Scholarship and the 2021 Academy of American Poets Prize for Calvin University. Her work is featured or forthcoming in PANK Magazine, Heavy Feather Review, Dialogue, and the National Writers Series Journal. She hopes to continue sharing poetry after graduation.

sijo for (i don't know your name) By Skylar Peck

*for my cousins on the other side of the 38-seon**

i wonder / could we have been // (real) family / had *they* not
chiseled our / fate & had jo-//-seon not been / scissored apart. scarred. _____

i beg this / epistolary // not become an / elegy

*38-seon: the 38th parallel north, the line that divides North and South Korea

Skylar is a high schooler from South Korea who enjoys writing poems that help her make sense of real events and experiences. Her work appears in *The Daphne Review*.

Old Dog Secrets By Isa Marie De Leon

I don't walk how I used to and I piss on almost everything:
doorframe corners, the humming refrigerator, table legs,
human legs, couch cushions, flowerpots, unshelved shoes—
anywhere but the backyard. It's sacred out here.

I can ignore the puppyish tremor of my limbs
and see out my good eye the world's slow-turning marvels.
The haunt of grass. The baby bees, clutching their pollen.
Oh, the troves of dirt I once unearthed, the holy hills.

I have tried to tell my owner, silly girl and awful listener,
of all the names and places of things. That I have deciphered
the secrets of our shared niche, and the codes cannot be viewed
from beneath the blankets of the comforter I am shoved off,
nor are they hidden alongside a ham treat, enclosed in her fist.
I've yowled at her, in my most potent and insistent snaps:
Have you seen the dreary socks in the laundry basket?

The lines between the kitchen tiles? The color of my fur?

The dogged flickering of lightbulbs, dreaming in the ceilings?

Isa Mari De Leon is a Filipinx American writer. She is currently studying English at the University of California, Berkeley. A previous English tutor, publishing intern at W. W. Norton & Company, and game writing intern at Riot Games, Isa is a student of any form of writing she can get her hands on. When not reading or writing, she might be playing with her dog, studying in a library, or playing video games very, very poorly.

Disqualified By Clara Harden

I sit back and lean into the turn

urging her forward with my hands.

We turn and weave down the black and white poles.

She takes advantage of me and edges into the lope.

I half halt her to bring her back to the trot,

but the damage is done.

Disappointment flickers across my face

but I won't let that ruin my run.

Loping is forbidden in the kingdom of walk/trot.

One stride and you're out.

Last pole on the row, and we swing wide. I guide her back to the poles, and

we turn sharp, and head home.

We trip the timer

I hold my breath hoping.

The announcer calls out my fate.

"Unfortunately, that was a no time for Clara Harden."

I lean forward, pet her and

walk out of the arena thinking who cares.

It was a good ride.

She did great,

But even now I still long for that shiny ribbon.

Clara Harden is a student at St. Patrick's School, in Rolla, Missouri

A Flock of January Sparrows By Daniel Boyko

Their silhouettes trace the grey New Jersey sky.

They should be down South, napping
on Myrtle Beach, the empty Florida shore

like a groundhog should be in its burrow.

They should be guzzling spilled Cokes,
feasting on shards of leftover beach

pretzels. But they're too small, too stupid,
too broken. Down below, a fawn points,
giggles at the funny-looking ones. A fox smirks

at the runts. Soon, stomachs will wither
bone. Dead bodies will dot a neighbor's backyard.
Feathers will scatter over driveways buried

in fresh snow. But they keep gliding
like tragic heroes, hoping for an elegy.

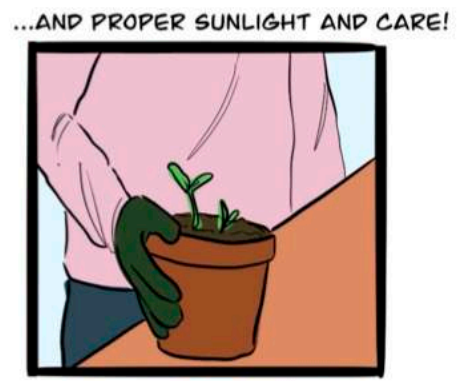
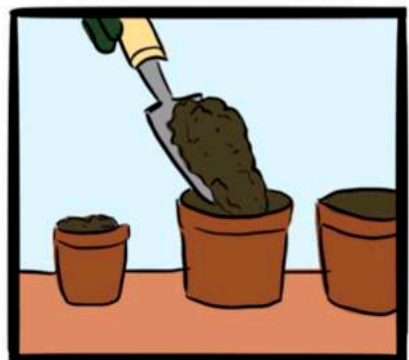
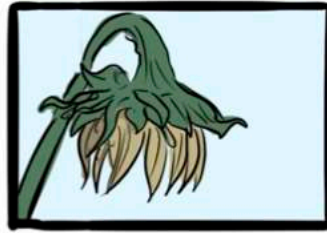
Daniel Boyko is a writer from New Jersey. His work appears or is forthcoming in SOFTBLOW, Nanoism, Eunoia Review, and The Aurora Journal, among others. He serves as Editor-in-Chief of Polyphony Lit. Wherever his dog is, he can't be far behind.

A Bee's Colorverse By Alina Yuan

THE EYESIGHT OF A BEE IS
RATHER EXTRAORDINARY.

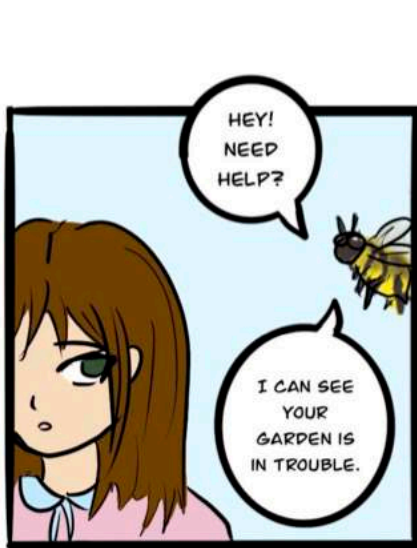
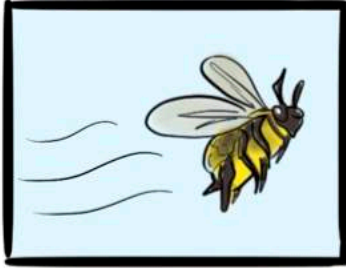
THEY SEE IN ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT, SO THE
WORLD OF FLOWERS LOOKS VERY
DIFFERENT TO THEM THAN TO HUMANS...

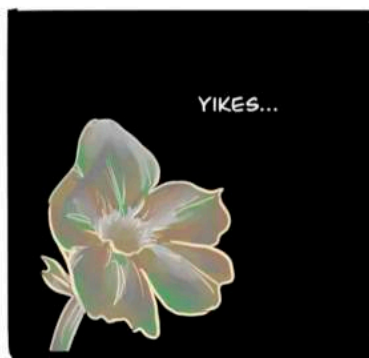
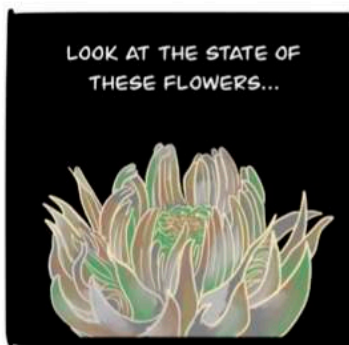
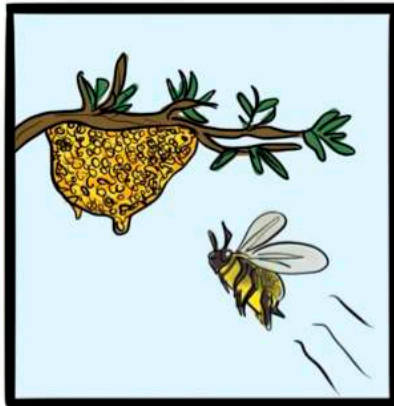




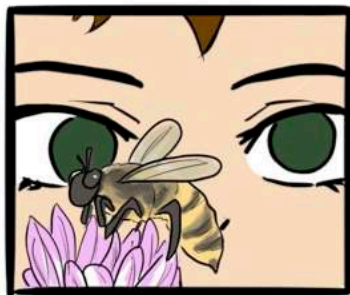
...SOIL...







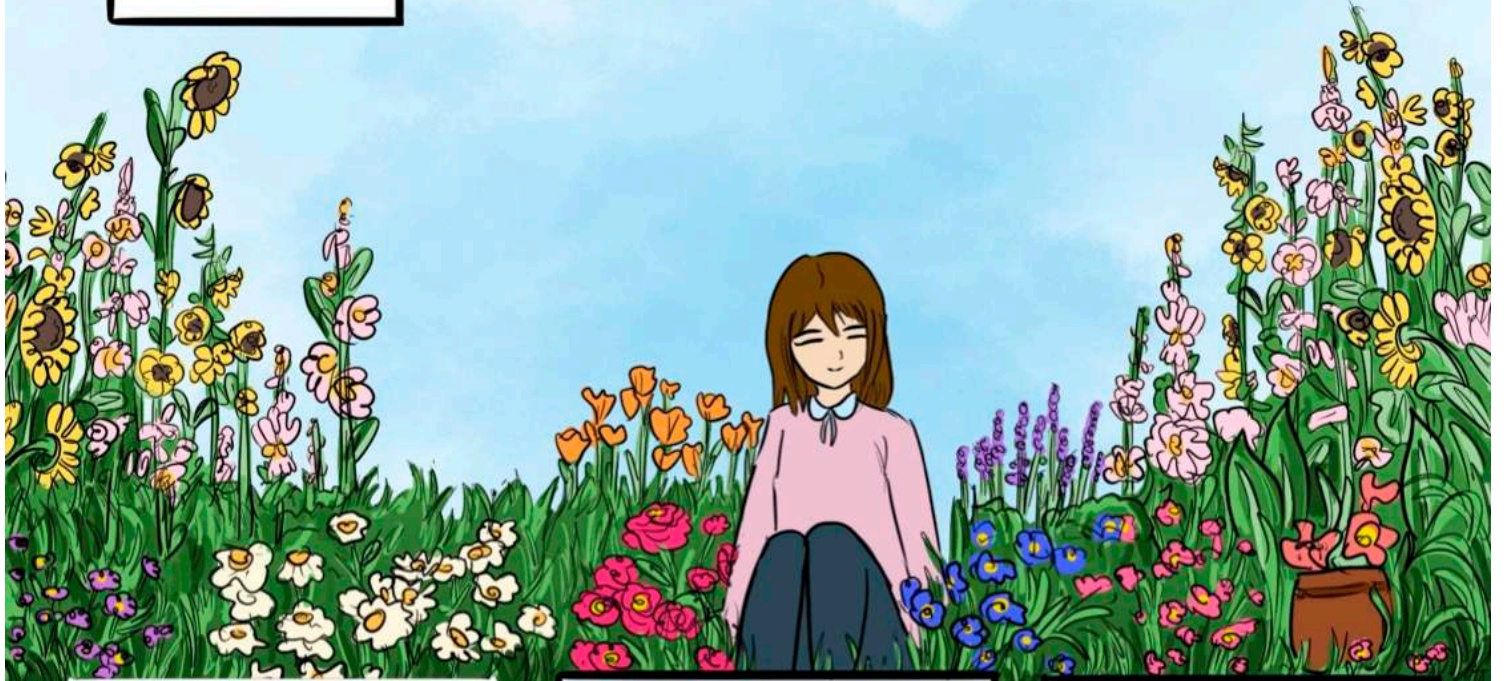
THE BEE GOT TO WORK



IT TAUGHT HER ALL ABOUT FLOWERS...



FINALLY...



WITH THE HELP OF THE BEES AND
THEIR EYES, HER GARDEN HAS ONLY
KEPT THRIVING EVER SINCE.

Alina Yuan is a senior at The Harker School in San Jose, California, where she serves as the Co-editor in Chief for Harker's annual Eclectic Literature and Media magazine (HELM). She is also president of her school's Writer's Advocate club. Alina enjoys writing flash fiction and short stories, and drawing comics, and her work has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. At home, Alina loves playing with her dog, a Shiba Inu, and collecting an eclectic array of stickers.

Pre-Chapter By Jaeyeon Kim



Pre-chapter

This image represents the way I pack whenever I go back to my high school campus from Korea. I tend to throw everything that seems personally significant to me into the mix, just like a writer spilling their imagination onto a page. My big travel trunk becomes a canvas and eventually, I start to organize the items as I make sense of my thoughts. I believe that all major turning points in life require a “draft” phase, like previewing a book to grasp its content. The start of your journey may seem disorganized and messy, but from this sense of chaos comes the greatest inspiration of all.

Jaeyeon Kim is a fine artist who works to claim spaces for the public to engage with art without difficulty. Her work often revolves around detailed paintings, installation art, and sculptures, which become a place for social engagement and visual communication.

Standing at the many crossroads of life, my decisions would add up, change my course, and alter the fabric of my being. Go straight, sail smoothly, and travel the more conventional yet ultimately uninspiring path. Step sideways, however, and journey across rugged terrain into unexpected storms and incredibly beautiful clearings. Although risky to a point and laden with obstacles, going the long way round has certainly opened my eyes and shaped me into the type of artist I am today.
