

December 2022
Issue 28



Editor Note By Molly Hill

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Issue 28

-For My Children-

What does the world require of you?

Nothing.

So find in yourself what you require
and go.

Kate Baer

Dear Readers and Writers:

We've written our way to Issue 28 and proudly present(!) writing and art perfectly suited for snow days and waiting-for-the solstice nights. This year we've published three (Jan, July Nov) lite, online poetry supplements and wrap up 2022 with our last FULL issue. It goes without saying that we recommend it ALL.

When you finish the poems, stories, essays, and art— here are some other suggestions for waiting out these short days and long nights:

1. Kate Baer's new book of poetry *And Yet*. See above poem, but go ahead and purchase/read/peruse anything else she's written.
2. courtneymaum.com/subscribe— a newsletter of publishing tips for those that aspire...
- ~~3. Smartwool~~

when the sneakers
flung over the cables
started splitting by their laces,

unable to carry each other's weight,
when we looked up, into the
Sun, and saw the beginning of

Freedom

or something
worse. Now, I feel
heat drip down my
leg,

bleeding underneath
sparrows who don't know the
difference between warmth and
weight.

Matilda Stolte is a storyteller and poet. She recently graduated from Franklin & Marshall College with an English-Creative Writing major and a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor. Her work appeared in *boy-band magazine*, the literary magazine at her alma mater. She is hoping to attend a MFA program next fall.

Peels By Vivian Zhu

I miss you. The city is cold
without you. I tripped over a seesaw
yesterday & you weren't there

to yell at the bum who pushed me
in your winded, loping accent.
Do you still keep a plate of oranges

on the kitchen table? I used to dig
my fingers into ripeness, tender
rind congealing beneath my nails.

Now, I wish I didn't see everything soft
as bruised, bent for blows. There's something
nostalgic about destruction waged quietly,

when relative damage can only be reversed
by further desecration. After I leave,
you paint the walls vermilion to hide

a single bloodstain. Erasure only threatened
when invisibility strains. The fog rolling into rain.
Rain cleansing our city of smog. The years

run away from me, but now I know to hold
the door open. I learn to apologize for everything,
even the things I didn't do, because memory

is a living thing & hindsight is evolutionary,
undergoing osmosis. The day I left
the sky was the color of blue raspberry sorbet

shot through with strawberry sauce. Honey
& an aftertaste of hope. Back then, I still thought
of the world in terms of sweet things.

Back then, I ate sliced oranges as the train
bulleted out of the city & everything stung
like citrus on an open wound.

Vivian Zhu is a Chinese-American writer from Adlai E. Stevenson High School. Her work is published in CHEAP POP, Eunoia Review, and Aster Lit. A lover of all things orange, she can be found peeling tangerines for her younger brother.

impossibility's abecedarian By Alice He

after midnight,
blue walls and
cold pencils on the desk;
deliberate motions to
ease the windowpane up quietly,
for fear of awakening others during this
golden
hour.
in the gentle silence,
just listen; a
keeper of
lost stories,
magic and mysticism,
nightmares and daydreams –
oceans of words,
pliant like sculpture clay,
quivering in sincerity and as
raw in beauty as
spring's melodies. let them

tell a tale of the impossible –
underneath these
vast skies and
wishing stars,
xylophone lullabies and
young children's tears, even
zinnia flowers can grow in winter.

Alice He is a rising sophomore at a boarding school in the New England area of the United States of America. She enjoys writing questionable fanfiction, daydreaming about flowers, and pondering about the trivial things in life. When she's not typing away at her five-year-old laptop, she can most often be found sprawled on the lawn, soaking up the sunshine like a plant in need of vitamin D.

Primogeniture By Lauren Mills

I am thinking of my mother
 and my mother's mother's mother
as I stay, languid, soaking my hair in sun

I am thinking of exponential prefixes
 stretching back—the greats—
as I fall for none but July skies

I am thinking of the body mine was traced from,
 the slope of my nose, their echo,
as I dodge, cheat, and forget fate

I am thinking of primogeniture's pressure
——— for a tan line 'round my ring finger

as I weave a crown of violet and rose

I am thinking of being a wife

and more, the pain it brought and brings,

as I long to be all they could have been

I am thinking of daughters

and more, how they stop you in your tracks,

as I commit to moving on and on and on

Lauren Mills is seventeen and feels it in her bones. She enjoys pasta, rain, drawing, and tv shows about strange towns.

I see my Engkong, a Sparrow By Tiffany Aurelia

clinging to the branch on the *jambu* tree
planted on his passing, where sunlight veils
his hickory wings in gilded glow. Where the
shadows bend, hesitant, like they too cannot
discern whether amongst man, myth, or mirage.

I see his face, softly wrinkled and deep lined,
on the folds of heaven-sewn feathers; on the
sparrow's crown laced in white wisps –
whiskers of the hair that tickled my cheeks
in bedside hugs and kisses goodnight.

In silent flight, the sparrow lifts a tawny
wing – a hand beckoning reassurance – and
flutters, down onto the damp grass breathing

the scents our hands traced so long ago.

Tiptoes toward my crouching figure.

Stay, *Engkong*. Reteach me the odysseys
of the tricycle. Carry me upon your wings, tufted
with cloud relic, as we reassemble morning sky
jigsaws and rebuild the birdhouse once more.
Let the puzzle of lost time hold us whole.

Memory is the requiem I hear in the chime
of rustling leaves, branches stirred by the
wind, all the unsaid words between us
translated in morning song, for the air knows
how to carry what cannot be spoken.

And we listen, *Engkong* and I, the sparrow
nestled at the navel of my ankle as if
I am now the elder and he a child, resting
on the lap's cradle, both beings stilled
by the tender familiarity of presence.

**Engkong* translates to Grandfather in several Indonesian dialects.

**jambu* (also known as 'Wax Apple') is a tropical fruit commonly found in Java.

Tiffany Aurelia is a South-East-Asian writer and current high school student, from the bustling city of Jakarta, Indonesia. Home to a constantly traveling mind, poetry is her vessel to give her tumultuous, wondrous thoughts a home. Outside of writing, you can

find Tiffany lost in the pages of another magical realism novel or training for her next badminton match.

a letter to Paris By Rebecca Orten

inside you, the sun feels nothing like
apricot juice dripping like blood down my wrists
at the breakfast table, regardless
of your cigarette graveyard stuffed
into a hollowed Nutella jar on the balcony, despite
your smell of stale piss split
only by pink morning mass bells
chanting wordless hymns to the sleeping city like
the rising sun worshiping shadows
onto the cobblestones, lime-sticky sugar,
red nail polish, my tongue forced backward by
your language, your dazzling midnight unable
to permeate my lightheaded daze, white days
of sun-slain concrete juxtaposed against European caffeine,
burning, burning; I still ache.

Rebecca Orten is a seventeen-year-old student from Vermont. Her work has been previously recognized in the Eunoia Review, Feed Magazine, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and the Bennington Young Writers Awards. She likes dinosaur stickers and magnolia trees.

take me to netherlands By Fransivan MacKenzie

i only sing in the sigh of the midnight and the dawn. and only in sobs.
when daylight arrives and my father has gone, i sleep into the ballad of the

mourning doves, having no one to call to me and say they survived the witching hours. having no one at all. i read somewhere that in netherlands, if you die and have no one to attend your funeral service, they send you a civil servant and a poet so you won't have to be lonely as they bury you. all the time, in my head, i book a flight to the greener planes of amsterdam. i dream of my death sitting through pews, immaculate and vacant of grief. no bouquet of white tulips. no mourners in black with heads hung low. perhaps, not even a headstone. but a poem, a string of words that have seen me through various deaths i died while living can see me through my earthly ending, too. i thank the desolate f. starik in unwritten blues. i tell myself that tomorrow will forgive me for all these wishes. as if the sunrise isn't the bleed unmade yet and already unforgiving. as if it isn't the wound.

Fransivan MacKenzie is a twenty-one-year-old storyteller born and raised in the Philippines. She is the author of *Out of the Woods*, a chapbook of poetry and prose, and *Departures*, a collection of short stories. Her works also appeared in *Germ Magazine*, *Transition Magazine*, *The Racket*, *Ice Lolly Review*, *Jaden Press*, and more literary journals all over the globe. She is currently taking her degree in Psychology at Philippine Normal University – Manila. Find out more about her on her website: <https://fransivanmackenzie.wixsite.com/my-site>.

Babel (Sister to Sister) By Jane McBride

I get my words from our father
I don't mean the one above me

He's in the backyard burning books
To show me that he loves me

I get my courage from our mother
We need no one to acquit us
I speak the language of her brother
A lot of good it ever did us

It's fine with me
If we disagree
But let's not misunderstand each other

Jane McBride (she/her) is a senior at Columbia University studying Creative Writing and Religion. Her work has appeared in Quarto Literary Magazine.

Elegy By Karen Zhao

In memory of 奶奶 (grandmother)

He keeps
quiet, but I know. Your kindness
a river
overflowing.
Sculpting a hunched
figure through the streetlight,
son a shell curled along your spine.
O, you woman of
clay, molding yourself
stronger every day—brisk
steps into the kiln.

O, blood pumping like the wingbeats
of a myth. You coaxed fish-
bones from a child's throat. You
poured yourself into little
vials and gave them away. Shed
skins and grew them back
faster. The last time I saw
you, I was thirteen. I foal. I burden
– ed with bloodline and love.
Like a parasite, I nestled fingers
between your laddered ribs,
palming the smooth underside of
everything I had known in the
city. We took walks by the Huangpu
River, the mall nearby. Your
son now taller, back also bowed
under the shadows of sky
– scrapers. I trailed
behind you like a smaller child. Returned
to America, your voice spilling
over the line. Then, the glass
emptied. I did not believe it at
first, your death. Like a mantra, I
kept company with my imagination:
We were at the beach.
My eyes were on the sand,
watching the waves pull you out to sea.
Back fading into the sunset.
Footprints smoothed away by the tide:
your imprint on me.

Karen is a high school senior from California. She edits for Cathartic Lit and Farside Review. When she's not writing, she can be found watching movies or attempting to sew.

Sheltered By Harini Sethuraman

Bagan, Myanmar

A shell lay in the sand,
bone white temple,
its contours echoed those of the pagodas
glimmering in the distance.

I scooped the shell into the palm of my hand,
entranced by the sandstone streaks and purple spires dotting its surface.
Its mesmerizing facade never betrayed
the haunting voices that lurked inside.

It was only when I scrutinized it,
peered inside its opening,
pressed the conch against my ear,
that I could hear those voices.

Burrowed inside the shell,
the ocean's susurrations were a mother
begging her child to flee in the dead of the night
before their village was burned to the ground.

It was the weeping of a family,
staring at the charred, skeletal remains

of their house and possessions and life,
their existence singed to ash.

It was the chattering of children's teeth
as they pressed their bodies together
on the packed dirt floor of a refugee camp,
rain tearing into their tent and into their skin.

The voices tumbled into my ears,
snaked down my arms, and coiled round my legs
until I was drowning in this requiem of sadness.

I wrench the conch away from my ears,
silencing the voices, burying them in a cobwebbed crevice of my mind,
removing myself from that haunting misery

I place the conch on my bookshelf in my room.
Years later, when I look at it,
the first thing I remember is my family laughing on that beach.

The voices still wail inside.

Harini Sethuraman is a senior at Singapore American School with a penchant for making up her own word definitions and using them as if they are correct. This has frequently backfired. This breaking of convention is also what draws Harini to poetry. Poetry backfires less often for her. Having lived in Singapore her whole life, exposed to a melting pot of cultures, Harini's work examines the ways we interact, and sometimes don't, with the diversity of lives and circumstances surrounding us.

The Garden is Empty By Samuel Adeyemi

The garden is empty, unless you consider the garden.

Lilies all around, quelling the thick bushes. The leaves,

a choir of soft spades. The beauty of moths. The beauty of magnolias; dull pink washing the wind. I came here

to look for you, Lord, in the wild of your creation. God of green, colourless God. I, Adam. Naked in thirst, ribless

with disbelief. They say faith begins with sight. I say touch reveals the presence of truth. Yet I squeeze the vines

& you are not there. As if God could pour out of something that wreathes. *Maybe He is in the water pot*, I say. I bend,

hand-on-rim, over the vessel of clay. At least, the water is beautiful, & when it wrinkles, it heals again, like a miracle.

God must be here, I swear. I mean, give me a language where water isn't the prettiest word. *Mmiri. Ts'q'ali.*

God is inside the water. So I look for His face in the clay's mouth. God of water, of the terracotta holding the water.

But He is not there. The potter, erased from his creation. My reflection ripples over. The crows are cawing at my

faith. The worms, under my feet, mock me. I understand none of it. Is this disillusionment or revelation?

The branches begin to shake—leaves circling before my face. Perhaps there, amidst the green, is God.

Not in the trees, but all of them?

Samuel A. Adeyemi is a writer and editor from Nigeria. A Best of the Net Nominee and Pushcart Nominee, he is the winner of the Nigerian Students Poetry Prize 2021. His manuscript was selected by Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani for the New-Generation African Poets chapbook box set, 2022. His works have appeared in Palette Poetry, Frontier Poetry, 580 Split, Strange Horizons, Agbowo, Isele Magazine, Brittle Paper, Jalada, and elsewhere.

Fiction

The Greenhouse By Noah Cohen-Greenberg

She had been talking about Scotland. You were pretty sure she'd never lived there, but she talked like she had. She didn't seem to notice that you weren't speaking much. Her passion gave way to a pause, then a wordless silence, and now you're alone with your grandmother and the sounds of her house.

She squints, searching for words, like a dazed child actor. You don't like seeing her so lost, so you stare at the grandfather clock in the corner. When you were a few years younger, six or seven, you loved watching the pendulum swing. Now it looks like it's shaking its head.

Your grandmother shakes her head. Her hair is like Santa's, you think. Or, Santa's eyelashes: coarse, white, and thin. They could be friends, her and Santa. He doesn't get out that much, and she could talk about living in the North Pole.

You don't want to get old. At your brother's birthday, you decided that you would rather not have any more birthdays, even if it meant giving up cake. Even your mom's cake.

These weekly dinners were your mom's idea. You remembered your grandmother's house, sugar cookies, and card-playing cousins, and thought it sounded nice. Memories are funny that way. You tap your foot and gaze out the window. Your grandmother hasn't mentioned the sundress she gave you, which you wore on purpose. You ask to go outside.

She takes you down the brick path, around the garage, into the greenhouse. She shows you her favorites, the zinnias. You pick a petal and roll it between your fingers. It's squishy and soft.

She plucks one herself and smiles at you. You'd forgotten her smile. You smile back, and giggle, and take more, and she takes more, and you're both rolling the petals, laughing, you're tugging off handfuls at once, smearing zinnias on your arms. She is too. She's smiling, and crying. She leaves the ground.

She rises steadily, like whatever's lifting her knows exactly what it's doing. You don't touch her. She looks happy, drifting toward the glass roof. There are birds in the sky, beautiful and colorful like the zinnias. Your hands find the latch to the ceiling window. You open it, wide open, and out she floats, her eyes dreamy, her body easy, the clouds between her ears now the clouds between the mountains, wispy, white, and beautiful, like Santa's eyelashes.

Noah Cohen-Greenberg studied literature at the University of Oxford and Williams College, where he was a Roche Fellow, a Wilmers Fellow, and a two-time winner of the Dunbar Student Writing Award. He grew up on a hay farm in upstate New York and is looking forward to the fame and fortune that typically accompany a career in the literary arts.

“You know, this rain makes everything so gloomy,” Lillian says, one hand picking at a fresh scab on her thigh, the other gripping a railing under her. She’s perched on the edge of a balcony overlooking a lake, and my hands sweat as I watch her legs dangle over the empty air below.

“Don’t do that,” Jin responds. He’s in the bathroom, but his baritone voice still echoes out from the hotel room behind us loud and clear.

“Do what? Can you even see me? What are you even doing right now?”

“Getting ready,” Jin says. “And yes, I can see you. Get down from that railing right now.”

“Ugh. Party pooper.” She hops down from the railing and her legs land soft onto the balcony. My hands unclench a bit when her nimble feet finally tilt back inside, each leg crossing over the other in a careless braiding motion.

“Is it raining out there?” Jin asks. “Will I have to bring your umbrella?”

“I just said it was raining, dummy. Can you bring the one with the ducks?”

A toilet flushes in response. They’re out of my sight now, so I unfold my legs and get up from the balcony floor to head into the room. The slight slickness of rain brushing on my legs like a memory doesn’t bother me, but not being able to see them does.

I trace my light fingers along the ridges in the walls as I walk in to ground myself: they’re painted beige, matching the carpet and curtains, all coated in a layer of cheap perfume strong enough for me to smell. The room itself is sparsely furnished, with only a large painting of a trout hanging over the two twin-sized beds and a few retro lamps scattered around on the low tables.

Jin finally responds, poking his head out from the bathroom to look at Lillian, who is hanging off the edge of the bed. “You know, I really don’t know if the pink ducks are appropriate for a funeral.”

“I don’t care. I want the ducks.”

Jin pauses, then sighs. “We’re taking the black ones. No way in hell am I letting you show up to Mom’s funeral holding a pink umbrella with ducks on it.”

Lillian groans, then plasters her fingers over her face, still hanging upside down from the bed. “I don’t think Mom would care, though, would she? I mean, she bought me that umbrella.”

“It’s not about Mom. It’s about everyone else; they’d think we were being disrespectful. Y’know, funeral rules and shit.” Jin steps out to adjust his tie in the mirror.

“What are funeral rules and shit?”

“Don’t say shit. It’s about respecting the dead. Can you get changed? Dad’s coming to pick us up in an hour.”

“Where is Dad, anyways?”

“Business meeting in Los Angeles, or something. Mom would be pissed to see this shithole we’re staying in, especially when he’s got a whole mansion with Jen down in Irvine.”

I smile at this and shake my head, though they can’t see me. I’m sitting cross-legged by their luggage now, gazing at the contents of their suitcases; Jin’s is black and practical, and has nothing in it other than a pair of cargo shorts, a shirt, and some toiletries. Meanwhile, Lillian’s is hot pink and stuffed to the brim: it holds some bright frilly dresses she got for Christmas, a black dress clearly stuffed in there by Jin as an afterthought, toys, and of course, her beloved duck umbrella. Balanced precariously on top of this mess is a grocery

bag full of unhealthy snacks, mostly pink and princess themed, likely a bribe in exchange for wearing the black dress.

I stroke the fabric lining Jin's suitcase. Its roughness is a comfort on my cold skin: the room is slipping away from me a bit, but the feeling of fabric keeps me rooted in reality.

"Lillian, please get changed into your dress. The black one. We really need to go soon." Jin's voice brings me back to the room as I focus my vision on the two of them, Lillian now lying spread-eagled on the sheets and ignoring Jin.

"No." Her voice is muffled against a pillow that she's thrust over her head in protest.

"Come on."

"No. Don't wanna."

"Please. We can't be late for this." Jin pulls the pillow off her head and attempts to lift her from the bed, but she won't budge as she grips her hands onto the sheets.

"Stop that! I don't think Mom will— would care about us being late, anyways. Or about the duck umbrella, or what dress I wear. She's not like that." Her small voice cracks a bit at the edges, but her arms cross in defiance as she clambers to sit upright on the bed. I try my best to interject, but the air traps the sound in my straining mouth as I struggle; it's a futile battle that I refuse to learn from.

"I told you, it's not about Mom, it's about the others. Dumb, yes, but—"

"Fine. Whatever. I'll change now, sorry." Lillian doesn't say anything more, but I can see tears begin to pool in her eyes as her voice grows frail. I want to get up and walk over to her, but my weakened legs refuse me. Instead, Jin plants his arms around her in a firm hug.

"It's okay. Don't worry about it."

They embrace, and I watch Lillian's shoulders shake for a bit as she exhales with sharp breaths, refusing to cry. Jin places a hand on her head before pulling away and whispering something I can't make out. She nods and gets up from the bed.

As Lillian brushes by me to grab her dress from her suitcase, I reach out to touch her arm. My hands stretch out to hers, icy, immaterial fingertips dangling only inches from sunburnt skin, before being forced to stop by an invisible barrier. I can only watch as she heads to the bathroom to change; my hands still stiff on the suitcase, my legs still folded on the floor.

Andrea Li (she/her) is a high school junior from California. Her work has been published in Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine and is forthcoming in Eunoia Review.

this sent struct is odd

Jackpot By MacCoy Weil

"Today's the day my boy, I can just feel it. By this time tomorrow we'll be sipping piña coladas in Nassau, watching the world go by from our bungalow," Papa declares. "That tuition you've been talking about will be pocket money." He slaps the tattered newspaper cutout that decorates the kitchen fridge: a family beams at the camera as they float in turquoise water. "The Bahamas: Welcome to Paradise" shimmers in golden letters. Papa sees it as inspiration. I see it as encouragement to lose the little we have.

He shucks his coveralls and puts on his best clothes, the striped blue button down and khaki pants he only uses for church and the casino. Maybe if this was the first time, seeing the way each foot pops off the ground and his smile would be a nice change, but I can't help but see the man underneath. Deep down, he knows the truth.

Clothes worth a million dollars couldn't distract me from noticing the thick bulge of cash protruding from his pocket. "If I had a penny for every time you've said this, maybe we could *actually* buy that bungalow," I tease. He slides on his leather shoes, ignoring the jab. "Papa we can't keep playing games like this, I know you've seen the landlord's notes. We need the money." His grin evaporates for a second, but the loud honk of a waiting car bails him out.

"Looks like Miguel's here, we'll talk about this when I get back. I promise."

...

Heavy, torrential rain hit the roof like bullets. They smacked the asphalt; maybe God lost some money tonight, too. The alarm clock's red lines twisted themselves into single digits: *1:37 am*.

He came back around two, later than normal. He didn't enter the building. He sat on the concrete steps. His shoulders sank with every raindrop.

I closed my eyes and saw a proud man, someone who beats the sun to work and intentionally loses the race on the way home. But I opened them and found a man broken by crooked lines of cherries.

MacCoy Weil is an eighteen-year-old student who lives in London, England and enjoys writing flash fiction in his free time.

A Thousand Silver Moons By Addie Rahmlow

Edna only sees the dumpling boys on Mondays at the corner of Fifty-Ninth and Harlan. They're an odd bunch: all pudgy faces and meaty hands, skin thick and sticky like half-baked soda bread. The littlest one's trying to grow a mustache, trying to scrunch his face together and sprout up a few more inches so he's not a head shorter than the rest of 'em. Edna sees him on Mondays too, chewing his lip beneath the sky's angry hiss.

Today they're throwing rocks at Ms. Turner's windows and playing hop-scotch in the rain. She's a ghost, they say—Ms. Turner is. She's only halfway-there, stuck in her own sort of hell. But Edna's been there long enough to know that Ms. Turner's flesh hasn't draped into curtains yet, it's only shriveled. She's been there long enough to remember when there was glass stuck to the sidewalk, when Ms. Turner's husband took an old porcelain lamp and hurled it out the front-door. The boys don't know this, of course—they're stuck in another hell. One that sends boys off to wars before they're old enough to realize the world isn't all small rocks and big rocks and *do you think if I tossed this rock right here it'd fit through the windowsill?*

Edna's pa used to tell her that there were two ways to die. Scared or still. Her pa always smelled like warm cabbage. He was always still. Edna thinks there are more than two ways to die now. The dumpling boys will die terrified, Ms. Turner will go ready. Edna will go when time thinks it's best, but now that warm cabbage makes her choke she thinks it will be sooner. She could never go for long without missing someone.

There are two coins in Edna's palm but neither are worth anything. Not here. If she was with her pa they'd buy stale gum and chew on the wads until they tasted like hard clay. The

dumpling boys spit their gum out in the sewers. Edna's positive they don't get all the flavor out.

Even though the air is cold and musty the boys are still playing, still throwing those rocks 'cause their parents never taught 'em any better. Edna swears she can see red trickling through the street, red like fat strawberries: clotted red, deep red. The boys are laughing and skipping and running down to the dead-end but none of 'em see the red, none of 'em smell the smoke that Edna does, none of 'em think that there are more than two ways to die. They call the smallest one, the trying-to-grow-a-mustache one The Kitten and punch him in the side every time they see a stray wandering. Edna doesn't know much about The Kitten, just that he's nothing like his ma. She used to live next door to Edna, flesh wrinkled and creased like Ms. Turner's. Edna thought that she seemed like the kind of lady who'd warm up milk and set out a loaf of sourdough for her son, the kind of lady who'd scrub the cool rain from The Kitten's hair, who'd watch him sleep and pluck out her gray hairs, smooth her skin. Edna knows she's the kind of lady who prays to some distant father and son and holy spirit and sits by the fire, the kind of lady who prays again and again and hopes that the red doesn't take her son.

Each of 'em are different—the boys. They remind Edna of home. Of her pa and of the countryside, of how she used to take boiled potatoes and stick them to the table-top so that they crusted there like glue. Of how she locked her bedroom door with a string and a nail even when her pa told her not to. Of how the stars used to be millions of miles away instead of right up close. The boys are jogging away now, but Edna's still watching, still remembering. Ms. Turner's peering out the front door, sweeping up shards and thanking the lord that it wasn't her husband breaking glass. They're running and running and running, so fast that Edna's sure they're just a blur of red, sure that the world couldn't possibly take 'em away. But the world's taken plenty more than it deserved before, and Edna's taken plenty from it.

The rain is thin and watery like soup and Edna steps outside. She can barely see 'em now, they're too far down Fifty-Ninth, stepping in puddles and tossing rocks. The streetlights

are flickering above Edna, glowing above the boys. Even though it's day they're shining like a thousand silver moons. They're coming back alive.

Addie Rahmlow (she/her) is a teen writer, editor, and student from the Midwest. She enjoys screenwriting, photography and has an obsession with iced tea. Her work can be found in *Interstellar Literary Review* and *Ice Lolly Review*, among others, and has been recognized by the National Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. She hopes you're having a wonderful day!

Dieback By Janice Lin

A whirling of white that revels in immediacy. A streaking of fur—a flashing of teeth.

Then, a stillness: the coyote pauses, tail plumed against manicured lawn. A premature carcass slackens against its jaw.

That ending was a rabbit, once: perched on punctured grass, nosing at a wayward clump of dandelion. It tore down bloom after bloom, yellow suns splintered in its teeth. But one stalk was too stiff: it gnawed and gnawed, cloud of white protruding from its lip. Its last moments strained against its own vector.

This is a trajectory: the rabbit, pulling and pulling on its stalk, but never pulling enough.

But if neither force concedes, inevitably, there is a snap. Tension severed by bared teeth, but not from within: the coyote a foreign convulsion, exchanging one breath for another. The dandelion pierced through, seeds scattered from its mouth.

Now, there is no pulling. They exit in a flurry, haphazard clumps dotting blades of grass. A spray of dandelion seeds settle on its imprint, each tuft blooming red.

Janice Lin is a student from the San Francisco Bay Area. Her work is forthcoming or published in Polyphony Lit, the National Poetry Quarterly, and Beaver Magazine, among others. In their free time, they enjoy worldbuilding, theorizing about TV shows, and trying new boba shops with their friends.

Nonfiction

Empty Reflections By Emma Andersson

Alone in the bathroom, I came face-to-face with my naked body. Illuminated by the harsh light, I studied my reflection in the mirror, scrutinizing the dark shadows tainting the space around my collarbones and across the undulations of my spine. I deliberately stepped on and off the scale, sure of an error, but I repeatedly confronted the same number. Lower than ever, each flash confirmed that this unrecognizable body was mine.

Three days after this encounter, I reclined on the doctor's table. Scheduled for an overdue physical, our casual conversation pivoted as she moved her stethoscope up my chest and revealed the sharpness of my ribs.

"You've lost some weight since I last saw you," she commented, a hint of concern noticeable in her tone. "How many meals are you eating per day? Are you exercising?"

"Breakfast, lunch, and dinner," I answered. "I walk almost every day, usually for an hour and a half."

“Add a snack between meals and no more than one hour of walking per day. Before addressing your anorexia, I want to see some weight gain.”

I straightened up, crinkling the paper beneath me. The harshness of that word lingered. If she registered my shock, she didn't show it as she dove into a discussion of the physical and mental signs of an eating disorder, connecting each to the behaviors I had revealed during our dialogue.

Was it then that my eating disorder began? A diagnosis from a qualified physician may seem like an uncontested point of origin, but in the days following our exchange, her observations incited reflection. Truth is, my story extends back farther in time, though to when exactly remains unclear.

As I proceeded with treatment for my anorexia, I found myself obsessed with deciphering when it began. I analyzed and re-analyzed every moment of my childhood, desperately trying to discern which one triggered the behavior that brought me to my breaking point. Aware that such rumination bordered on self-destruction, I let the memories flood in nonetheless, each a possible explanation.

Age 10, a day at the lake, the first time feeling shame about my body. I removed my cover-up to show off my new pink swimsuit. My brother ran over, cruelly pinching the fat on my prepubescent hips: “When are you going to lose those love handles?!” I held back tears, and later, dabbed the oil off of my pizza and left the crust uneaten.

Age 12, Mom's birthday dinner, Dad skipping me as he distributed narrow slices of chocolate cake. “You've had enough to eat,” he announced to all with a chuckle. Heat consumed my cheeks and I spent the night tallying up the calories from dinner. The next morning, I woke early to run before eating a light breakfast.

Age 16, the universal age of insecurity. I downloaded a calorie-counting app and logged every morsel of intake, down to a single grape. There was no limit as to what I could

withhold from myself. I eliminated all wheat products and religiously logged 12,000 steps per day. I avoided parties, fearing the snacks involved, and exercised outdoors despite brutal temperatures and a body that ached for rest. Friends and family expressed admiration for the perceived dedication to my goals.

Met with endless praise, I never questioned the impact of my actions. I unearthed a new obsession, external validation, and my thirst for it became unquenchable. Eating disorders are an addiction, and I was hooked on the high of reverence.

Back on the examination table, I half-listened to the doctor rattle off symptoms of anorexia. Though my behavior matched the diagnostic criteria, I struggled to comprehend how the same habits that once solicited praise were suddenly labeled as disordered. Developed long ago, my “admirable willpower” transformed into “harmful restriction.” What changed?

Finally it clicked: *I* changed, physically. I recalled the hollowness reflected in the mirror, the way my pants hung on my protruding hips. Newly shrunken, my appearance matched the diagnosis, turning age-old tendencies into causes for concern. Aligning with the socially-accepted definition, others came to recognize my condition for what it had been all along: an eating disorder.

How infuriating this is, I think as I reflect on the years spent at war with my own body, on the energy expended on self-loathing. Had someone, *anyone*, seen past my size and noticed my actions, intervention could have occurred sooner: before I hurt my body, missed moments of joy with loved ones, and felt trapped by the darkness of my psyche. No matter how hard I try, reversing the harm done during that time remains impossible.

This narrative is not uncommon. For a multitude of reasons, eating disorder victims experience a lag between the onset and recognition of their illnesses. Latching onto the stereotypical image of the paper-thin anorexic teenage girl dangerously excludes people of color, older people, men, the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized groups from accessing the help they deserve.

I feel obligated to recognize my own twisted privilege; by achieving the anorexic stereotype – thin, white, upper-middle class, teenage girl – I received the help I needed. However, most do not enjoy that fortune.

Specifically, I think of cis men, prepubescent girls, postmenopausal women, and women using hormonal replacements who cannot meet the pre-requisite condition of amenorrhea in the diagnosis of anorexia. I think of bulimia sufferers, many of whom exist at Body Mass Index (BMI) levels deemed “normal.” I think of the victims exhibiting disordered tendencies but whose bodies do not satisfy the DSM-IV definition of weighing 15% less than their expected weight relative to height. I think of those struggling with eating disorders not recognized: orthorexia, an obsession with “healthful” eating, representing one of many.

These victims, whose bodies do not reflect society’s expectations of their mental condition, deserve support as much as the stereotypical victim does. How long must these individuals suffer, and at what greater cost?

Marginalized voices have joined the conversation in recent years: through her own story, Roxane Gay demonstrates how eating disorders develop in response to trauma; Kiese Laymon brings weight into a racial context; and Portia de Rossi recounts using her eating disorder to conceal her sexuality.

But to fully grasp the reach of eating disorders and their potential damage, and to support people of all backgrounds, this message must reach the medical community. Retaining a limited view of eating disorders that revolves around weight threatens the victims of body image disorders that do not meet this conception, rendering it impossible for people to receive help for their mental illnesses. Healing people after they become sick is one of the greatest flaws of our healthcare system, and the mental health sector commits this same fault. The medical system holds an obligation to keep people in balanced states of health, rather than permit the formation of preventable conditions arising from a lack thereof.

In the period of time between onset and recognition, eating disorder victims risk enacting irreversible damage to their bodies: infertility as a consequence of malnourishment; damage to the digestive system; comorbidities like anxiety and depression. In fact, anorexia nervosa demonstrates the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

As I progress through treatment, I have witnessed how the medical and public perception of eating disorders fails those attempting to recover. Eating disorders do not discriminate on the basis of size, race, gender, ethnicity, or sexuality. So why do we?

In an ideal world, there should be no minimum level of sickness required to qualify individuals for aid. An effective system must grant all individuals equal access to treatment, regardless of race, gender, or class. Practitioners must expand their diagnostic criteria to account for age, ethnicity, trauma, and other factors that contribute to the onset of eating disorders. Finally, the medical community must recognize that eating disorders, at their core, are not physical; they are multidimensional disorders influenced by biological vulnerability, psychological predisposition, social environment, and family.

Given these complexities, diagnosis based on physical attributes must end. So does abiding by the belief that eating disorders exclusively spawn from attempts to adhere to societal beauty standards. This stance disregards the victims that turn to disordered eating as a means of coping with trauma and discrimination. Trauma-informed care has gained traction throughout the medical community, and eating disorder victims will gain from that same approach.

The medical conception of eating disorders as physical pathologies, defined by being underweight, trickles into society and into the ways we perceive our bodies and our suffering. Earning praise for my disordered eating and exercise habits harmed me and my relationships, before and after my diagnosis.

What if, as a society, we recognized these habits as symptoms of a mental illness – without regard for size, race, or sex of the individual in question? What if we stopped romanticizing

weight loss, or better yet, stopped commenting on it entirely? What if we gave all those suffering from eating and body image disorders a real chance to heal?

Three years later, my body looks back at me in the same mirror. In her, I see softened hips, a belly full of enjoyment. I see round cheeks, pink after a day spent in the sun. I see tall shoulders, a sign of heightened self-esteem.

I recognize this body, but I also recognize what more reflects back at me: an earnest woman, a daughter and a sister, a loyal friend, an avid learner, a world traveler, and more. Though I will always grieve the moments lost to my eating disorder, all I can do now is move forward and be present in the moments to come. Healing permits this, and I am grateful for signs of its occurrence daily, but I continue to fight for a world in which this becomes a reality for all.

Emma is a third-year undergraduate student at The Johns Hopkins University, where she double-majors in International Studies and Sociology. Her first-person piece integrates reflections on her own experience confronting disordered eating with a sociological critique of its diagnosis in the United States.

Specifically, she addresses the way disordered eating is glorified in society yet pathologized in medicine; the current exclusion of many victims by a limited diagnostic criteria; and the inaccessibility of treatment. A survivor of anorexia herself, she argues that the medical community and society at large must expand the current practical and cultural understanding of eating disorders in order to help the growing number of people struggling with these diseases.

Time manifests differently in South Dakota. The form it most often prefers is in the shape of corn that stretches in rows across every direction, everywhere. You could drive for twenty minutes in any direction in any part of any town in the state, and eventually you would encounter the odd, liminal space of dirt-torn roads splitting down soon-to-be-ethanol corn by the mile.

With that said, this particular configuration of time means that it's hard to write. Writing, I think, more or less operates on urgency, especially poetry. It is in the specific, mercurial alignment of global catastrophe, personal apotheosis, and regional disquietude that yields of my own poetry, and poetry seeks to transcribe this volatile conjunction in maybe a few stanzas, several lines.

I find it more difficult than ever to capture these fleeting intersections in time now that the terminal condition of senior year has come upon me. That, and the stifling rural character of where I live (South Dakota), has done peculiar things to my grasp of time. What does impending global catastrophe matter when I must ask teachers for their recommendations? Why track the passage of my personal apotheosis when my general application awaits amending? Any "regional disquietude" wallows already in so many tonnes of corn that I couldn't bother to excavate what drama remains even without the pressures of high school.

I think perhaps corn and high school both foment a sort of lateral myopia when it comes to time; it grows harder to see on either side the gradual progression of events. Technology has helped somewhat, but it has also harmed in equal measure when so much digital content is designed to pacify consumers rather than inform and present the troubling events of the "real world." Then again, what is real? Sometimes heartbreak is no less critical than the assassination of a distant former president. Sometimes the making of a few new friends trumps climate change, and sometimes a difficult discussion with your mother carries more weight than even extinction.

There is of course a certain obligation to pander towards apocalypse, but personal armageddon works just as well. Yet, I have discovered that when problems writhe around me with staggering indifference, the only distinction lies in my own interest, my own appetites and discoveries. To track every event worth considering to any degree would represent a sort of ego-suicide, and so instead I look to that which startles me, that which bursts forth with exquisite abandon between rows and rows of corn.

Heidi Pan is a student at Harrisburg High School. Her work has received recognition at the national level from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Previously, Heidi has attended both the Iowa Young Writers' Studio and the Kenyon Summer Writing Group.

Devi Vishwakumar: The white Indian or the brown American? By Parishka Gupta

Ethnically multi-hyphenated Mindy Kaling's Netflix series 'Never Have I Ever' raised cries of both amusement and indignation with its portrayal of a south Indian girl leading an American way of life in California. With two successful seasons that won the hearts of critics and audiences alike, the show returns to Netflix with a third season in eight days.

The show revolves around Devi Vishwakumar, an Indian American high school girl from a Tamilian family who plans to climb the social ladder, get into an Ivy school and "be an atheist, eat cheeseburgers with (her) white boyfriend".

'Never Have I Ever' has raised the question of being culturally accurate, for it stands two steps away from outright cultural appropriation and two steps close to authentic representation. Devi's character employs stereotypes like being an overachiever who's not allowed to wear sleeveless clothing but also allows her to independently lean towards the American end of the Indian-American cultural spectrum.

Although there were concerns with the diversity of the cast being purely tokenistic, it turns out that although 'Never Have I Ever' missed the mark of being a hundred per cent culturally accurate, it covered the Indian American experience very well.

The show is marvelled for several cultural accuracies, some of which are displayed with a hint of satire. The Ganesh Puja episode, for instance, raised eyebrows for all reasons, good and bad. Some notable mentions in the episode include the gossipy Indian "Aunties", the Bollywood dance and the sea of footwear. The stereotypical Hindi songs in the background didn't fit the context and threw us off, leaving a bittersweet aftertaste. A range of emotions, from appreciation to criticism, can be experienced throughout the series.

Adding new flavours of culture and diversity to American television has always been a precarious yet thrilling move for creators of TV and cinema. 'Never Have I Ever' is hard proof that we've come a long way from Amrish Puri playing a heart-ripping mythical tribal in 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom', which carved out a despicable image out of the Indian culture. Back then, the aim of integrating a foreign culture was less inclined towards inclusivity and more towards collecting cheap laughs.

This show is Kaling's attempt to illustrate the Indian American experience in particular and not the Indian experience per se. Although viewing the Indian culture via the American lens falls under the cultural appropriation, it won't be right to expect authentic delivery from an experience that isn't authentic, to begin with. Devi being born and brought up in California and never having visited India makes her prone to cultural appropriation because apparently, that is what she was surrounded with her entire life.

Parishka Gupta, a second-year Journalism Hons. student at Delhi University is an amateur travel journalist. Travel, food and culture, initially her home niche are now her strongest

suits. Apart from these, Parishka developed a flair for global issues and the research and analysis process from my experience as a journalist in Model United Nations conferences. Parishka now runs a writing organisation called The Red Megaphone which works on bringing young writers into the spotlight. If she's not working, you'll find her belting a song with the college acapella team. She spends her days hopping colleges of Delhi University, working out at home, interning for media organizations like Travelxp and Outlook Traveller and producing some of her best work as a student of journalism.

In My Own Backyard By Sabrina Guo

Growing up in Long Island, the love and care I received from my teachers, friends, and neighbors from all walks of life made me feel like an integral part of a diverse community, nurturing an open-minded conscientiousness and deep desire to help those with whom I felt so closely intertwined. During the pandemic, a time when I witnessed countless people suffering, this same love encouraged me to sow seeds of service into all in need. I founded LILAC, Long Island Laboring Against COVID-19, a youth-led COVID-19 relief organization dedicated to uplifting all who have been affected by the pandemic. Even with my efforts to do good in the diverse, forward-thinking place I've always called home, I was met with another pandemic, one deeply rooted in the garden of America: Prejudice.

During a LILAC donation of meals and Personal Protective Equipment to Mount Sinai South Nassau, a COVID-19 hospital in Oceanside, Long Island, I was flipped off and verbally assaulted by a couple who were walking by while I was in the middle of an interview with a news station. After months of giving everything I had to support my community, I couldn't believe what was happening. At that moment, everything around me froze. I felt a surge of fear and adrenaline thundering through my body. Was there more the couple had to say? Would they be back, or was it a one-time thing? Should I leave? While I attempted to carry on with our donation, I was shaken to my very core. It felt as if I spent the rest of the day recovering from a winding blow – breathless, trembling, tense, and faint – all while I was doing my best to tend to those who I considered almost family. However, as shocked as I was in that moment, I rationalized that the pandemic was acting

as a catalyst for rising hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) community.

Racist immigration policies, such as the National Origins Formula, a system of immigration quotas that restricted immigration from the eastern hemisphere, systematically excluded Asians as recently as 1965 until the Hart–Celler Act repealed the *de facto* discrimination. Considering all this, it can be concluded that targeted discrimination against Asian Americans is not new. America’s increasingly antagonistic relationship with China and the inflammatory political comments about the “China virus” only served to worsen discrimination against the AAPI community.

As I experienced first-hand, it seems as if nowhere is safe. According to a study conducted by California State University that examined hated crimes of 16 America’s largest cities, hate crimes in 2020 decreased overall by 7%, while AAPI hate crimes rose by nearly 150%. Stop AAPI Hate, a nonprofit organization that tracks incidents of hate and discrimination against AAPI populations in the United States, reports 9,081 instances of hate crimes from March 19, 2020, to June 30, 2021, with an increase from 6,603 to 9,081 during just three months between April and June 2021. This is an alarming spike in recent months as tensions rise during the pandemic, especially with conspiracy theories, scapegoating, and more targeting of the AAPI communities. In addition, AAPI hate incidents reported by women make up 63.3% of all reports, an often-unheard-of statistic which brings to light how AAPI women suffer on the intersection of race and gender. Harassment, threats, violence, microaggressions, and even the anticipation of being mistreated lead to racial trauma akin to PTSD, creating compounding anxiety and hypervigilance, the sum of which leads to immense psychological harm.

Though I don’t know what motivated the couple to harass me, the experience led me down a path of reflection, questioning my place in my community. Was this truly a place where I belonged, where I could call my home? As a young Asian-American girl, I was only beginning to recognize that Long Island’s long history of inequality ran deep. UCLA’s Civil Rights Project labeled Long Island as “one of the most segregated and fragmented suburban rings

in the country.” The juxtaposition of affluent Dix Hills sitting atop working-class Wyandanch, which former New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo called “one of the most economically distressed communities on Long Island,” shows a stark contrast which is quite literally, Black and White. Even elsewhere in Long Island, a judge recently ruled in a federal lawsuit that Garden City had broken the Fair Housing Act by discriminating against minorities. While I loved my community, the subtle nuance of well-meaning hypocrisy, which acknowledges oppression at face value, but makes little actual sacrifices that would change the status quo, showed Long Island had a ways to go if it was to be truly called a home for all.

My experience of racial harassment, and the research which shortly followed, galvanized me to lead the charge with a socially engaged local youth movement to build solidarity with BIPOC communities in Long Island. I realized that, for change to truly happen for the AAPI community, we must not only uproot the weeds of Anti-Asian hate, but actively cultivate groves of solidarity, compassion, and action with other disenfranchised POC and earnest allies, looking back on our collective history to build forward a brighter future. In the vein of activist and writer Grace Lee Boggs, whose Chinese name, 玉平 (Yu Ping), means “Jade Peace,” I strove to unify my community with a peace that transcends color, creed, or class. I utilized LILAC’s platform to fight food insecurity, provided the PPE needs of my disproportionately affected BIPOC neighbors, and I realized it was incumbent on us youth to work towards a more attentive and conscious Long Island. In partnership with political and cultural leaders, LILAC organized a “*Love, Unity, and Action*” Anti-Asian Hate Rally in Syosset, joined by County Executive Laura Curran, Senators John Liu and Jim Gaughran, Congresswoman Grace Meng, and Director of Nassau County Office of Asian-American Affairs, Farrah Mozawalla, to demand effective legislation to fight hate crimes and violence. I continued to find avenues for making my voice heard—and matter—as a panelist in several discussions and roundtables on race with elected officials like Senator John Brook and Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams. And, in a joint meeting discussing AAPI issues with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, I advocated for my community and the importance of including female AAPI history in our educational curricula.

Though AAPI hate and violence is a national issue, I decided I could begin by tackling it in my community. In doing so, I saw first-hand how interconnected systems of oppression were, and how they affected all minority groups. Whether we know it or not, everyone in society is assigned multiple identities, with corresponding hierarchies between dominant and non-dominant groups. With race, the majority can bestow benefits to members they deem “normal,” or limit opportunities to members that fall into “other” categories. In the United States, this expresses itself as all non-white people being categorized as “other” and experiencing oppression in the form of limitations, disadvantages, or disapproval, even suffering abuse from individuals, institutions, or culturally. This oppression, a combination of prejudice and institutional power, creates a system that regularly discriminates and disenfranchises the minority. In a concrete way, when one of us is hurt, all of us are, and likewise, by lifting my fellow POC, I was not only working for a better future for them, but for us all. This mindset was pivotally important in our work, especially in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, when LILAC led racial reconciliation initiatives in solidarity with our Black brothers and sisters. During a tender time of mourning and reflection, we held space for and supported Black Lives, promoting unity and action across boundaries. We partnered with BIPOC businesses and nonprofits, connecting the predominantly-POC South Shore with the majority-white North Shore with community events alongside Senator Kevin Thomas, Legislators Kevan Abrahams and Debra Mulé. LILAC’s ThankYou & WeCare Arts Initiative created and donated over 200 framed artworks boosting morale, with special BLM and Anti-Asian hate inspired artworks now displayed in government buildings, nursing homes, and offices, including a fifteen-painting exhibit in the Theodore Roosevelt Executive and Legislative Building. These artworks were created by the community, for the community, and are a testament to what can sprout from actively cultivating a united coalition of young, civically minded, and diverse Long Island.

Even during the darkest of times, in a broiling pandemic, I had a taste of what a beautiful place our community could be. I want to fight for that future for all communities, and I want you there too. The amazing thing is that, despite those insistent voices of hate, people from different races, religions, and regions can truly live and work together, and better yet, they can blossom. The capacity for us to connect and flourish despite our differences, or

perhaps even, because of our differences, is not an oddity. In fact, it's the way nature was created. Though monocultures wilt and quickly catch disease, a garden flourishes when all plants are taken into consideration, and by nurturing a permaculture of regenerative community resilience, planting seeds of hope, I believe that change will bloom, even in my own backyard.

Sabrina is from New York and is the youngest global winner of the 2021 Poems to Solve the Climate Crisis Challenge. She spoke out against climate injustice and performed her poetry in the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26). She received the Civic Expression Award and nine national medals from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. She's a commended winner of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, first place winner of the Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Award, recipient of the Poetry Society of Virginia's Jenkins Prize, and nominee for the 2021 Pushcart Prize in Poetry. She is recognized by the Adroit Prizes in Poetry and Prose and the Bennington College Young Writers Awards. Her work has been published in the Best Teen Writing, Raleigh Review, West Trestle Review, Counterclock, Blue Marble Review, Polyphony Lit, among others.

Life and Death Within Words By Moa Maeda

The soft lily lay on my hand, the pink petals powdery with pollen. The end of the stem, brutally cut off, dripped tears of sap, its smell mingling with the sickly sweet perfume my grandmother wore for that day. My grandfather lay stiffly in his coffin, yet wore an odd smile while my relatives smothered him in flowers and tears, and I stood by awkwardly holding the flower to my chest.

If anyone had asked me what I feared most, I would most likely have replied "death." As disturbing as it was, though, death stirred a subconscious interest, led by morbid

fascination, in the back of my young mind. Ignorance only fed the flame; I allowed my imagination to roam to keep fear at bay.

I imagined an unknown world of silence and darkness, of constant suffering, or complete numbness in the senses.

I was 10 when I first came across the words that suggested otherwise. John Green walked into my life through The Fault in Our Stars, and since then, I had been ravenously eating up his works. I had gotten to Looking For Alaska when Miles, the main character, introduced me to the last words of Thomas Edison: “It’s beautiful over there.” Those vaguely suggestive and foggy words drew me in.

Where is there? The train of questions that followed intrigued me and triggered my new hobby of collecting famous last words.

Collecting last words became a way of connecting with a mysterious world. “The Other Side,” as I thought of it, allowed room for open debate and so many different perspectives.

I began to spend as much of my time with the words of the dead as with the living ones. Before I realized it, I’d developed a better understanding of both life and death.

Though I cannot say that I have let go of my fear towards death entirely, I have begun to see that if reality dissipates into nothingness, it’s inevitable and so I might as well accept it with calmness. Accepting, I realized, can bring a sense of peace as though all burden of fighting back were lifted off my shoulders.

When they closed the lid on him and his flower, I did not cry because I believed that wherever my grandfather had disappeared to was a better place—one filled with unworldly beauty. As Bach last said, “Do not cry, for I go where music is born.” I remember very clearly that my grandfather always had quite an obsession with beautiful music. Standing over him, for a second, I saw him on the “Other Side,” and he was beautiful.

Moa Maeda is a Japanese high schooler who enjoys writing poems, learning about other cultures through food and music, and collecting famous people's last words.

Art

Chronicles of Myself By Dakota Williams



Chronicles of Myself

Dakota Williams (they/them) is a teen artist from Hoover, Alabama. They see art as a method of storytelling—as a way to not only share their own experiences, but also bring awareness to the obstacles black nonbinary teens like them go through. They eventually hope their art is able to uplift those in her community.

Gillian By Elinora Westfall



Gillian

Influenced by David Bowie, Virginia Woolf and Sally Wainwright, Elinora Westfall is an Australian/British lesbian actress and writer of stage, screen, fiction, poetry and radio from

the UK.

Her novel, *Everland* has been selected for the Penguin and Random House WriteNow 2021 Editorial Programme, and her short films have been selected by Pinewood Studios & Lift-Off Sessions, Cannes Film Festival, Raindance Film Festival, Camden Fringe Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival, while her theatre shows have been performed in London's West End and on Broadway, where she won the award for Best Monologue.

Elinora is also working on *The Art of Almost*, a lesbian comedy-drama radio series as well as writing a television drama series and the sequel to her novel, *Everland*.

Clothes for All By Kristen Cho



Clothes for All

*Fashion is fascinating. It does not take the 2006 film *Devil Wears Prada* for one to be intrigued into the fascinating, yet mysterious world of fashion, and want to make a career in the industry. In*

communicating and appealing to our own unique style, a fashion designer can take inspiration not only from fashion, but music, literature and art at large.

Within the space of a square frame, the one thing that I wanted to convey was a dream of my future as a designer. The dream that is not just for me but for everyone who desires to wear their favorite clothes. Clothes are not simply a type of accessory that we put on in order to flaunt or show off the monetary value. Instead it is a way of expressing and introducing oneself to people around us. For instance, the clothes that one wears portrays his/her personality, preferences, and interests. Thus, through my artwork, I wanted to show the process of making the clothes for whoever is watching the artwork. It can be you, someone next to you, or anyone. The concept of "Clothes For All" was to convey the idea that my dream is to literally design personalized clothes for everyone and I hope I can achieve all the dreams of mine in the future after following the path of a fashion designer.

Kristen is an emerging designer artist living in Seoul, born in California. Through her artworks, she explores the social and environmental issues behind the shiny surface of the fashion industry. She often finds joy in embracing things that induce creativity and euphoria into her life and turns them into reality by creating artworks; she creates her work using different mediums, ranging from installation, fabric, painting, and illustration to drawing. Through her work, she seeks to inspire in the audience questions that they have not asked themselves before and conversations that precede actions.

Portrait of a Girl Concealing Her Pains By Salami Alimot Temitope



Portrait of a Girl Concealing Her Pains

Salami Alimot Temitope (she/her) NGP X is an emerging Nigerian writer, Phone Photographer, Digital Artist, Essayist. She currently studies English Language in Lagos State University, Nigeria. Her works explores themes on life, grief, loss, and family. Her creative works have appeared, or are forthcoming, in Lolwe, The Drinking Gourd Magazine, Typehouse Literary Magazine, IbadanArt, Native Skin Magazine, Olney Magazine, Hey Young Writer, Icefloe Press, Brittle Paper, Arts Lounge, Terror House Magazine, Nantygreens, Shortlisted in Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest August/September,

Kalahari Review, Pawners Paper, Nymphs, Nnoko Stories Magazine, The Hearth Magazine, Naija Readers' Buffet and elsewhere. She says [_hi_](#) on Twitter & Instagram [@lyma_lami](#)

The Girl By Maggie Yang



Maggie Yang is a poet and artist from Vancouver, Canada. She is a Foyle Young Poet of the Year, and her work has been recognized by the Scholastics Art and Writing Awards, The League of Canadian Poets, The Poetry Society of Virginia, and Poetry in Voice. Her work appears or is forthcoming in The Adroit Journal, Polyphony Lit, F(r)iction Lit, among others. An interdisciplinary artist, she is particularly intrigued by the intersections of the written word with the visual and performing arts.

Self-Reflection By Maggie Yang



Self-Reflection

Maggie Yang is a poet and artist from Vancouver, Canada. She is a Foyle Young Poet of the Year, and her work has been recognized by the Scholastics Art and Writing Awards, The League of Canadian Poets, The Poetry Society of Virginia, and Poetry in Voice. Her work appears or is forthcoming in The Adroit Journal, Polyphony Lit, F(r)iction Lit, among others. An interdisciplinary artist, she is particularly intrigued by the intersections of the written word with the visual and performing arts.
