



Bending Alleys by Tony Pan

Blue Marble Review January Poems 2025

Elegy for a Ballerina/o By Thehara Ubayawardena

every color of clothing is nude

when the moonlit spotlight falls upon me

unfolded across the bedroom floor

swan-neck limbs above my head

crescent palms cradle muted light

King Midas but it's all ashes

sometimes it feels like everything I touch dies

the swan-neck droops and the cradle collapses

moonlight falls down from these parted fingers

past my collarbone to where this body becomes other

this body isn't bad, I know

yet I can't feel any of me below my neckline

they say *love yourself, that's how we live*

but breasts & hips & curves of limbs

are not anything I'd call *myself*

they came upon this soul, unbidden

the only choice I made was to live with them & call them mine

although *myself* is somewhere tucked in a swan's underwing

somewhere between the lines of a wordless soliloquy

somewhere *he* and *she* and the moonlight do not touch

every place of the world is a stage

and I am caught in the costume of this body

still, each time, I lace slippers onto false feet

and, each time, I watch as the curtains draw open

for the next performance

Thehara Ubayawardena is an essayist, poet, and prose writer from New York. They have won several awards for their writing, including recognition from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and the John Locke Essay Competition. They are an editor for Scribere

Literary Journal and an intern at BreakBread Literacy Project. Besides writing, Thehara loves psychology, Sherlock Holmes, and listening to Linkin Park.

my pappa real strong By Shubhan Mehta

my pappa so strong,

he stronger than yours, he strong like

he could pin pythons with his pinkie like

he could lug whole planets in two grocery bags like

he could stomp out the sun like

a cigarette, turn an orbit into an ashtray like

strong enough to rip the light from his own eyes like

strong enough to wrestle his own jaw shut like

strong enough to send me flying... and see im proud cuz like

a good friend of mine called me a metal cage and

the first thing i pictured was him, and it was like

he could die in all that strength like

a man's bones can only hold so much history like

mortal muscle ain't built for what he carries like

no wonder he got heart problems like

no wonder he cant sleep at night he's busy

bench-pressing the sky like

no wonder we dont hug his arms are too full

of oceans, i wanna be big and strong like

him someday.

Shubhan Mehta is an avid writer and actor living in New York. He has always held a deep passion for the power of human stories and seeks constantly to expand his community of artists around him. He enjoys reading, playing tennis, listening to music, and volunteering.

Collective Soul By Arianna Shaprow

From the moment of my birth

I knew I was meant to inhabit this earth

The creamy warm desert sand

Reassured me

that this would forever

be my land

From the moment my ancestors were free

They knew exactly who I was destined to be

This fearless, bold version of me

God blessed me and promised to show me the way

And be by my side

until I'm old and gray

Til my very last breath

and my dying day

I made a commitment to work hard

and be kind

And he promised

I will always find

Unparalleled success

if I continue to grind

The years on the plantation took their toll

On the hearts of my ancestors

and their collective soul

Some were strung up

and from lynchings

they died

For countless years

they suffered and cried

Many asked, why?

And looked for the answer

from the night stars in the sky

Was the direction to freedom

the way the birds fly?

God's purpose

is love and unity

Not this division and dissension

We continue to see

All I know

Is that I will continue to be

This fearless, bold

brave version of me.

Arianna Shaprow is a poet and activist. Her poetry has been displayed in museums and featured on news outlets across the country, including ABC, Fox, CBS, and NBC.

7 times in which the word 'father' means nothing to me By Ioanna Bosneaga

and i am lingering in the doorway
waiting for him to come down the hall
waiting for him to come
waiting for him

6 times in which i hide my mouth with my sleeve and choke on the past tense like it is
poisonous

and i am watching shadows flicker
staring at the empty space shaped like him
staring at the empty space
staring

5 times i look through family photos like they are someone else's

and i have this recurring dream where
he comes back and says it was all fake
waking up to the silence of absence
waking up to the silence
waking up

4 times i sit amongst my classmates, holding a tattered Father's Day card i will throw
away when i get home

and i think about that day a lot
like it just happened, like i haven't changed
i remember and i don't know if i want to forget
i remember and i don't know
i remember

3 times my friends talk about dads and i hope i am not chosen to speak up
and i beat around the bush all i can
but sometimes i want to scream death
out of my window like a madwoman
i am not embarrassed or ashamed

i am not embarrassed

i am not

2 times where i consider making a joke about it but i know my tears will dampen the punchline

and i want to let it all go

but the past lingers and rightfully so

seasons change and i am alive and breathing

seasons change and i am alive

seasons change

1 time where i meet someone and they don't know what i am and i don't ever want to tell them

and i mourn someone i don't fully remember

but maybe that's why i am doing it

i don't dream about him anymore

i don't dream about him

i don't dream

loana Bosneaga (she/her) is a sixteen year old writer living in Ireland. She enjoys things such as musical theatre and sitcoms. You can find her on Instagram: @heartshapedioana.

The Turning By Race Harish

I double over like the first fold of a paper plane.

In my bed, I clutch my stomach.
Autumn turns outside my window.
The leaves, sun-freckled and time-burnt,
threaten to spiral downward.
I watch them,
I dare them,
I trace them down a path that looks awfully like your spine.

When I dream about us,
we are facedown in the dirt
counting cicada corpses by fives; else I'm
waxpaper skin and crusty blue eyeliner,
sitting naked on the stovetop,
and you've got one hand on the control knob,
the other on my thigh.
Like the freckled leaves, I tremble under your palm,
and what was once a summer joke settles
into a familiar autumn ache.

Summer fades, and I am afraid.
The season turns, and nothing is over.

Race Harish is a seventeen- year-old writer and poet from Central New Jersey. Their work has been previously published in The Cloudscent Journal, StudentKind Literary Journal, Girls Right the World Magazine, and The Writers Circle Journal.

contemplations from a reclusive farmer's daughter, sitting at the kitchen table By Nabiha

Ali

the summer is warm;

i crack open nuts the colour of sticky bees

i will bake a pie for my father / hear it whistling in the oven

i will pick the lambs free of fleas

i will wash my ashen kneecaps each a sun-dried raisin

he says *when was the last time we saw the trees*

tomorrow i will be full of firm hands

which soon my hands will soon become

tomorrow i will be full of knots and pots and plans

tomorrow i will be the storybook girl weary and neat and good:

say *when was the last time we both saw the sun*

[pearly slats of light become her silence

and silence is forever becoming]

i will separate the peach seeds from each of their yellow husks:

a worthy dissection (see how much larger they are today)

i will scrape the shelves free of books

replace them with ornaments and picture frames and silly potted plants

father i will free your skin of hooks

when was the last time we saw the --

and today i will make invisible conserves

from invisible scores of love letters

i will skim the plucked milk / sing a song to make it all better

Nabiha is an eighteen-year-old writer who lives in Lancashire. She was previously shortlisted for the 2022 BBC Young Writers' Award with Cambridge University, is a first-prize winner of the Christopher Tower Poetry Competition with Oxford University, and is a Foyle Young Poet. She is also a recent winner of the Edinburgh 50-word flash fiction competition. She enjoys journal writing in her spare time.

growing pains, grating peels By Lia Wang

back when we came so easy, twin halves cleaved
by merely two years & ten months. Sisterhood:

splintered grapefruits, sticky at solstice. spilt
sunshine, pooling on our canvas floor. scattered

pearls — when we sneak through the vanity, drowning
in silk shirts & wonder if we will ever be beautiful

or at least some synonym of 妈¹ or 爸². under our dewy
mandarin tongues, even part of one's name is shared

with the other. you are infused in every memory & tale I tell.
an infinity later, I leave for the first time. not even

the ribs of your scarlet-lined dusk can cage me from halfway
across the country. bare flights, new sights, nineteen hours

after I'm gone, & I finally pass it alone. a secret,
coated tart on shaven teeth: 有时候我想一个人³。

snip the nautical naval starcord tied around our necks,
snap our pair jade chokers, shave your first name off

of mine. remember when we planted mailboxes outside
our facing doors? doodles of stamps & chicken scratch

of words. I forgot that my address is no longer home. loss
is more than just letters, but the name of your first crush,

the slant of your scowl, the blue slate of your room.

let me retract every secret I've kept but this:

despite it all, for every twin-smile grapefruit slice, I sneak
you the broader half. it is the easiest decision every time.

- 妈: mother
- 爸: father
- 有时候我想一个人: double meaning of "sometimes I want to be alone" or "sometimes I think of only one person"

Lia Wang loves stories so much, she decided to create her own. She has been recognized by Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, Iowa Young Writers' Studio, Ice Lolly Review, JUST POETRY!!!, among others. When not starting another draft, Lia can be found tracing shapes into the clouds.

Recipe for Cinnamon Rolls

By Snehal Bhadani

Heavy,
the ground with rain,
and I, with anxious grief.
October is still young.
Its weight has only begun
to settle in my bones.

In my cabinet lies
the recipe for cinnamon rolls,
too familiar to you.
When the yeast blooms,
give the dough space to rise—
an hour and a half.

In these afternoon hours,
the black sky hangs low,
and my heart
hangs heavy too.
When the dough has risen,
sticky and wet,
knead it out—
flat and thin, spread the
bittersweet cinnamon paste,
and roll it into a spiral.

A convoluted lump
sits before me,

dense and leaden.

Like grief,
it refuses to lift.
Prod it,
and it will cling.
Slice it, clean.

A draft slips in,
thick and unyielding.
The tick of my oven
too near.
The church bells
of October 1st
wake up my kitchen.
Grief curls beside me,
like a black cat—
quiet,
familiar.
The cinnamon rolls
are warm,
and soft, as I sometimes am,
Today,
I am not.

Snehal Bhadani is a twenty-year-old undergraduate student from Singapore. She writes to form connections between herself and the ever-changing society, and hopes that

someone can find solace in her work. Her work has previously been featured in school magazines and the Write the World newsletter.

Sometimes By Suhjung Kim

After Jeffrey McDaniel

Sick of the secrets that slide
under window sills,
knock on doors, the government
has outlawed eye contact.

No syrupy smile from the paper
doll waitress who leaves
the menu bruised. Flings herself
towards the man in the back
booth, numb.

The ghost of Mom's look
twirling the phone cord.
Her candied laugh,
cherry lips.
The other line takes away
her sadness—guess
I couldn't.

Dad no longer waits
in the driveway oiling

his tongue with rusty
music.

The last thing I remember:
long fingers of gas,
his fading Old Spice,
forehead wrinkles I ironed
with my scratchy fingers

Sometimes,
I wish someone
would see through,
empty.

Suhjung Kim is a poet and writer from Seoul, South Korea. Her poems have appeared in Young Writers Journal, Beyond Words Literary Magazine, Eunoia Review, and elsewhere. She writes for her school's literary magazine, Kaleidoscope, and newspaper, The Tiger Times. She has attended writing workshops with Iowa Young Writers' Studio and Kenyon Young Writers. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading books of all genres, listening to music, and swimming.

broken By Maisarah Rahman

gray texts pop up / thanks for making me golden (like you) / talk about the simple and the solemn / (ridiculous and regular, but) i want you like no other / poof! they disappear, no warning / you're human, like me (though sometimes i forget) / at least i have past presences (presents) to bask in / because if i remember then (i'm reminded of how) i

can't get through / soon, it's time to try (text) again / maybe i'm not someone (like that)
for you / can't she try sometimes, too? maybe she is (or isn't) / maybe i'm not (the) one at
all / and i have to understand

Maisarah Rahman is a(n) (aspiring) person and poet who lives near Boston,
Massachusetts.

ghazal for pancake house By Erin Chen

there's a welcome in the blue awning and a whisper in the coffee, says *sweetness*
everything about the morning cries out in delicate joy, hunger for sweetness

ushered in with the crisp of Chicago air coats lift and warm bodies settle into
warmth, *ready to order?* hoops glint against dark coils, her name is sweetness

lengthy list of breakfast items sent off with the turn of her heel against hickory
wood, what's left is oval dish of salt, pepper, sugar syrup sticky with sweetness

comfortable conversation to fill the days I missed. then: greedy hands reach for
mugs, caffeine, plates arriving by the second, our version of temporary sweetness

tomorrows later only soft happiness will be fossilized in memory reminiscent of
pancakes: melting sour cream glazing crisp latkes, salty apple compote. sweetness.

but now only the swell of full bellies can be felt. scent of breakfast lingers in the
cotton fabric, I smile, Hannah opens a door, wind rushes us out, rushing sweetness.

Erin Chen is a high school senior currently studying abroad in Singapore. Originally from New York City but having also lived in Hong Kong, Erin most enjoys writing of the mundane and somewhat magical moments in her life from the many locations she's encountered. Aside from writing poetry, you can find Erin reading a good fantasy novel or whisking up a cup of matcha.

varadero By Robina Nguyen

like a circle of hawks
you nip at the foreigner in me.
“i’m sorry,” You said, but it was
the way i held guayaba, turning the
bruised fruit with uncertain fingers.
the old vendor gives me a
strained gap-toothed grin, a
burnt cigar tucked between his lonely
front teeth. under this golden-red sun,
your face does not burn and
on the shores of varadero,
i saw You in a little boy
begging tourists for change, nail beds
the browning crust of a cliffside.
You are apologetic, quiet but
obtrusive — a misplaced pebble,
a stray siamese, an illegally parked
russian lada purring quietly. 50
pesos couldn’t chase You away.

Robina Nguyen is a student at North Toronto Collegiate Institute. She is the Editor-in-Chief of The Outland Magazine and a researcher at the Canadian Multicultural Inventors Museum. Her work is featured or forthcoming in the West End Phoenix, Blue Marble Review, Shameless Magazine, Disobedient Magazine, The Monarch Ranger, Overachiever Magazine, Queerlings Magazine, Ricepaper Magazine and more.

Bending Alleys By Tony Pan



Bending Alleys

Tony Pan is a high schooler writer and photographer based in New York City. His work has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Writers & Artists, previously published in Phillips Exeter Academy's summer issue, and is currently an editor at Aster Lit. In his free time, he enjoys playing the guitar and searching for vintage thrift finds.
