

Purely Liminal Magazine



July 2024

ISSUE THREE

PHENOMENOLOGY



PURELY LIMINAL MAGAZINE

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Purely Liminal Magazine is a Toronto-based for-youth by-youth literary and arts magazine. We are devoted to providing a platform for publication for youth creatives.

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Issue 3 Cover Art by Selina Yang



Photography by Grace Zhu



MASTHEAD

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FROM THE EDITOR

Phenomenology was supposed to be the “blue” issue. We planned a colour scheme for it – a dark navy – that would show through our marketing. And yet, once we started the layout for the issue, it began to resonate the most in black-and-white. Ironically enough, showing the subjectivity of the human experience in only black-and-white seemed to also fully express its different nuances.

Though this issue explores what can be expressed in Kantian terms as a juxtaposition between a priori and a posteriori knowledge – experienced vs innate propositions, I think what brings this issue to life is the true depth of *how* we experience. Phenomenology is descriptive and interpretive. There’s no end as to the different creative ways it could be shown; this is expressed throughout all the talented pieces created in this issue.

As Purely Liminal Magazine grows, every issue seems to be a milestone. After putting the finishing touches on each, I always think that it’s my new favourite, and we continue to experiment and explore with each issue. The ever-growing nature of Purely Liminal Mag is what makes it a continuous reward to work on.

Thank you to each submitter – veteran and new. Thank you to readers and supporters, and special thanks to Rachel for becoming a staff prose/poetry reader to help out with the influx of submissions we received for this issue. Of course, thanks to Grace who kept up with the hectic messages I sent while she was in China.

This issue, I think, is a lesson in metamorphoses, experiences, and what we carry with us. And as most of the staff of Purely Liminal Magazine are shifting towards our final year of high school, a lesson in change is perhaps one of the most crucial.

Yours,
Patricia Zhang

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Zhang', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, FOUNDER

Content warning: *The writing and artwork published in Purely Liminal Magazine often contain heavy topics such as self-harm, eating disorders, gore/violence, among other sensitive topics. Please read with care.*

Ode to My Ophiocordyceps

By Yoon Bae

The year began.

There is nothing but the tremor of bedbugs inside my sewage-laced skin.

I wear a blanket of mold as it finds me.

It creates an atmosphere for the aphids and fleas to play

And grow wild as they feed on my sweat and dead skin cells— Yet, I latch

To the thought of an expensive leather couch as

It leaves indents on the forest floor.

The thing is,

There is also a TV that sits on my particle board stand.

This one has a chip on the corner and a loose hinge.

The TV is thin enough to see the wall behind it, as well as split a small maggot into two parts:

1. A red blinking head, like a mushroom cap
2. A soft, thin tail that whips me

My reflection stares back.

The TV broadcasts nothing but the garbage stuck between my toes, but that's when I see it:

The temptation of rain dropping thunderbolts, and I give in to the mist hiding behind tall blades of grass.

Because the sun wakes me dry!

I can feel earthworms sticking under my 2 for \$40 shoes because their tears are unable to slick them alive! Then—

I am hiding under a blanket of nesting ants as we drift from one side of the river to another. I smell exhaustion from the tailpipes of black glimmering shells as my hands are firmly tucked under their armour. Now—

I'm surrounded by a channel of dirt and aluminum, divided into chambers of:

1. Pressed shirts
2. Linen pants

I sit on my plastic bench, tied together with a thick twill coat!

With my stick-like arms, I reach out for the chord of my desk phone, I suck on it, as I let its Spores melt into my mandibles...

—*My hunger.*

It stalks me, and kills me, and sprouts from the tip of my head! Leave me on my sawdust stand!

Fuzzy...

Warm...

Like a caterpillar teetering over the glass—

I look down at my home. My colony. From my desk!

And I reek of nature's itch.



Don't



Photography
By Patricia Zhang

Look at Me

An Intro to Archival Death: the then and now of documented mortality

By A.R. Sherbatov

YouTuber TwoMad died this year while playing Overwatch, which people only found out from his Discord status,

showing that he was still in the middle of a game long after his death. What someone was doing right before their death used to be a very difficult thing to find out, but now, these kinds of stories are everywhere. One example of this is gore. There are hundreds if not thousands of sites whose only purpose is to methodically group gory videos into categories such as industrial, medical, and suicide. There are subsections of social media sites such as Twitter dedicated to drugs and self-harm, where accounts often become inactive, usually forever, for reasons that their followers don't have to do much work to guess. We live in a world of hyper-documented death. Following the advent of modern technology, death is archived in a fundamentally novel way. And yet, is this archival methodology so different than what we had in the past?

We live in an age where death is available for viewing online, instead of existing as a nebulous, mysterious concept. That is not limited just to gore; even mainstream news is constantly showing images of war, killing, and violence. That is why it is impossible to discuss documented mortality such as gore without first discussing the concept of spectacular death. Spectacular death is a concept derived from Guy Debord's "spectacle". As Debord writes in his 1967 *Society of the Spectacle*, the spectacle is "a world vision which has become objectified" (Debord 5). A spectacle is inherently relational, involving an "image" of the world making its way into interactions between people. Without these interactions, a spectacle cannot exist. Applying this to death as it appears in spectacle, spectacular death is not simply the image of death, but rather "people's imagined





relationship with death: collective imaginaries of and around death” (Sumiala and Jacobsen 2). This definition of spectacular death is thus similar to the act of, for example, watching gore, or even one of those seemingly ‘funny’ videos of people slipping on ice, in the sense that both only have value through establishing a relationship between mortality and its viewers.

The kind of documented death we see on social media platforms, however, deserves a more specific term than simply spectacular death. Digital death, in contrast to spectacular death, is “mediatised to an increased level through digital communication technologies that are available to anyone with digital access” (Sumiala and Jacobsen 5). One of the most telling examples of digital death is *rorochan_1999*, a Japanese livestreamer whose streams showed signs of psychological decline until she ultimately livestreamed herself jumping off of the 13th floor of her residential building. The streams are still available for viewing online, if you know where to look. And yet the most striking part of the story is not the streams themselves, which show her playing piano and singing off-key, but the reason that she committed suicide: to be remembered forever as an Internet legend. The *rorochan_1999* story reveals a societal self-awareness of the impending spectacle — a universal, borderless acknowledgement of cyber-death — as it perpetuates a feedback circuit of mortality.

These remnants of a life once lived are also a topic well-discussed in philosophy. In his final interview, a time where he was hyper-cognizant of his death, Jacques Derrida describes the

‘traces we leave behind’ as “never simply ours but [sic.] already from the very beginning beyond us and out of our control. Whether ‘spoken or written’, ‘all these gestures’, says Derrida, ‘leave us and begin to act independently of us’” (Naas 114). Digital death is a very direct example of the trace; a posthumous social media profile speaks for the person once in charge of it, keeping webs of interactions, status updates and all its history up for the public eye. Anyone with TwoMad’s, for instance, Discord information could go and see the trace left by something as minute as his open Overwatch window.

However, there are similar exhibits of archival death from before the rise of modern technology, such as catacombs. As I was writing early versions of this piece, I traveled through Paris and Rome, which offer intricate catacombs and crypts that arrange skulls and other bones into nearly-living works of art. The body is thrust into a role larger than itself, a role that examines its relationship with other skulls and bones. In this sense, a piece of bone in a catacomb can be interpreted as a Derridean trace, speaking for its ‘owner’ long after they have passed from this realm.

Saidiya Hartman’s “Venus in Two Acts” explores archival death through a critical lens by addressing the exhibit of two black girls who were killed on the Recovery. The 1792 trial focused entirely on one of the girls, and the other — Venus — was, for nebulous reasons, ignored. In this case, whatever archived documents exist failed to proportionally represent all of the accounts that should have been considered. The sheer lack of this proportionality can be considered a trace of its own. Hartman continues to discuss this lack of proper proportionality in “there are hundreds of thousands of other girls who share her circumstances and these circumstances have generated few stories. And the stories that exist are not about them, but rather about the violence, excess, mendacity, and reason that seized hold of their lives, transformed them into commodities and corpses, and identified them with names tossed-off as insults and crass jokes. The archive is, in this case, a death sentence” (Hartman 2). Hartman not only sheds light on the flaws and violence of the archive, but also deliberately utilizes words such as ‘generated’, ‘commodities’, and ‘identified’ to emphasize that these flaws are part of a methodical process of production.

Hartman goes even further to say that what does lie in the archive is often inaccurate, referring to “rumors, scandals, lies, invented evidence, fabricated confessions, volatile facts, impossible metaphors, chance events, and fantasies that constitute the archive and determine what can be said about the past” (Hartman 9). Hartman shatters the notion of the ‘infallible’ and ‘historically accurate’ archive by listing a few examples of prevalent contaminants, but also maintains that archival death is not a modern concept, and in fact

quite the opposite.

We are brought to the question: what is the difference between archival death then and now? Perhaps the most direct answer is accessibility, since legal records and underground tunnels are far harder to access than social media feeds. The ground is more even, and what traces are available are slightly more controlled by the person in question. And yet, while the medium of the archive has changed, and a dimension of spectacle has been added, the process of production of traces remains active in one way or another. Whether in the past or present, we die, therefore we are.

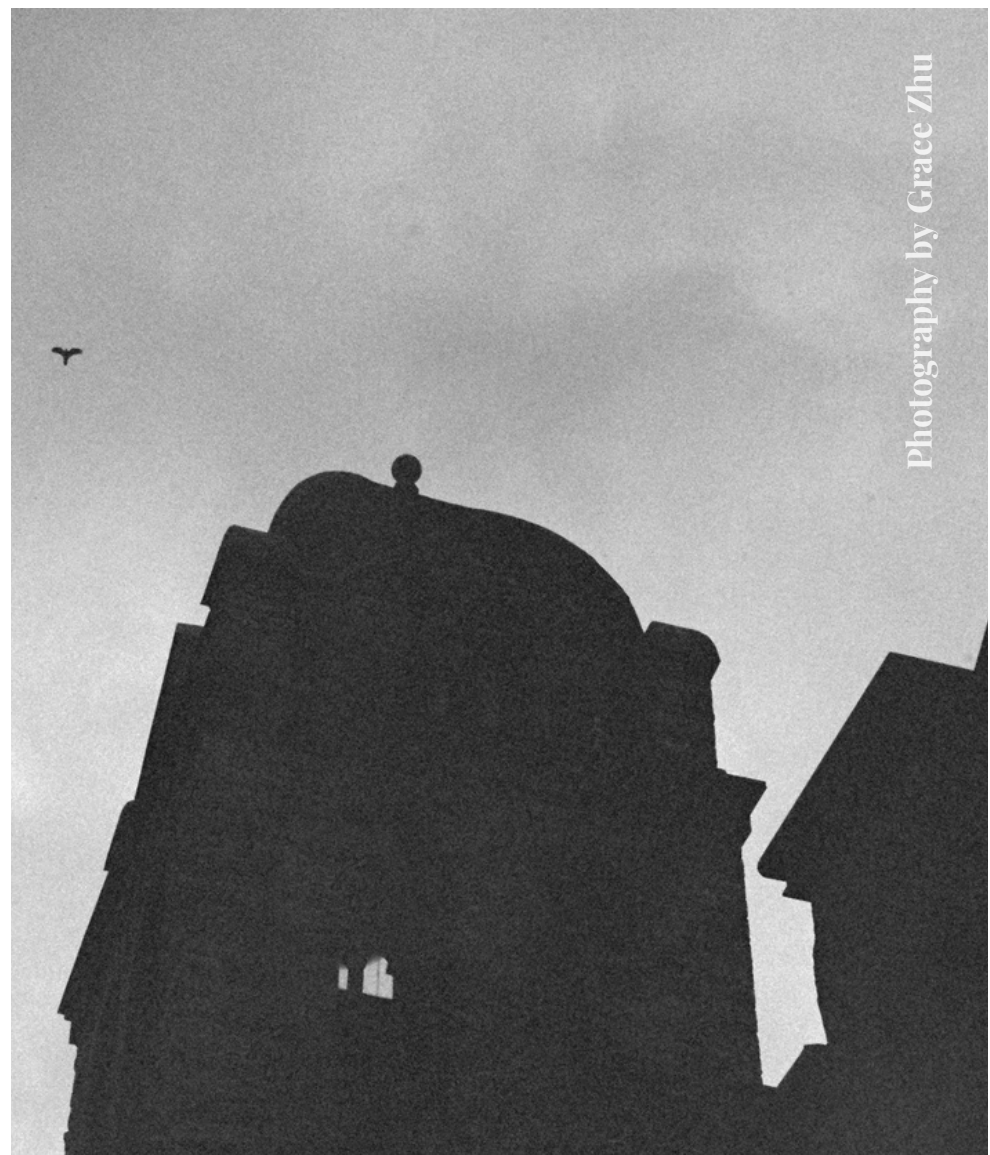
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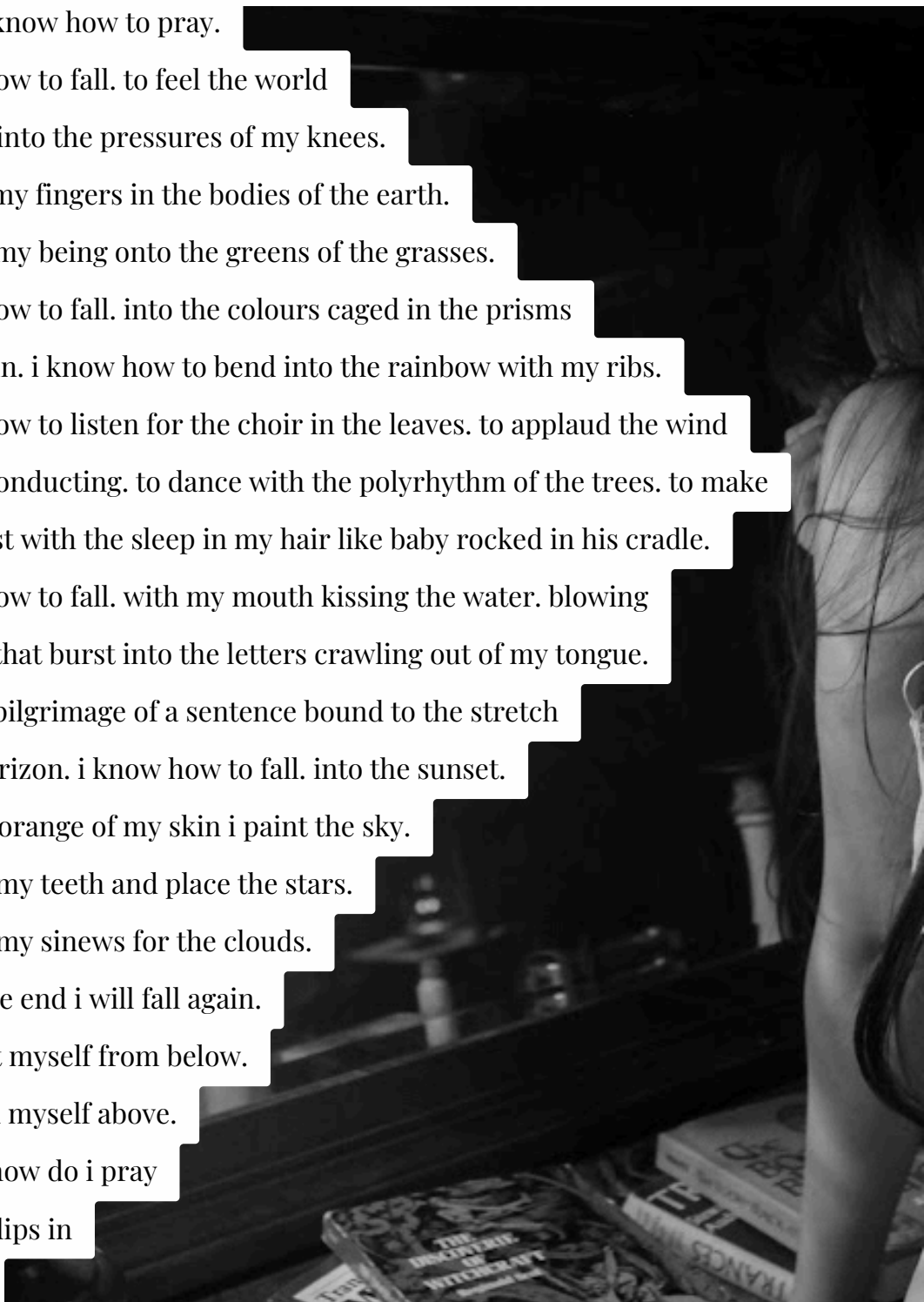
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the life of joy.

By Jedidiah Vinzon



i do not know how to pray.
i know how to fall. to feel the world
collapse into the pressures of my knees.
to print my fingers in the bodies of the earth.
to mark my being onto the greens of the grasses.
i know how to fall. into the colours caged in the prisms
of the rain. i know how to bend into the rainbow with my ribs.
i know how to listen for the choir in the leaves. to applaud the wind
for her conducting. to dance with the polyrhythm of the trees. to make
like a nest with the sleep in my hair like baby rocked in his cradle.
i know how to fall. with my mouth kissing the water. blowing
bubbles that burst into the letters crawling out of my tongue.
into the pilgrimage of a sentence bound to the stretch
of the horizon. i know how to fall. into the sunset.
with the orange of my skin i paint the sky.
i uproot my teeth and place the stars.
i spread my sinews for the clouds.
and in the end i will fall again.
to collect myself from below.
to return myself above.
tell me, how do i pray
with my lips in
the air?



Photography by Patricia Zhang

Anatomy of an End

By C.M. Selbrede

It seemed to Everett that it was funny that things with Luther were going great, really great, until they weren't. It had been hardly a month ago that Luther had been rapping his knuckles on Everett's car window after work, prompting his tired coworker and friend to lower it. Luther had subsequently launched into an incomprehensible, confusingly warm tirade about the nature of their friendship that had lasted some ten minutes before they finally went their separate ways.

"I love you," Luther had said. "I appreciate you, man."

"Thank you," Everett had responded. "I appreciate you, too." He didn't feel like he could say he loved Luther back. Mostly because Luther was drunk (he'd downed 5 hard seltzers in a camera-less corner of the basement in the middle of the shift) and Everett was overwhelmingly homosexual and unsure how that would come across. But, to be honest, it was mostly the drunk thing. Everett knew Luther had a high tolerance, drinking just about every night, but that didn't preclude him from saying stuff he didn't mean when he was buzzed. No, Everett would have to be careful, he'd decided as he turned out of the store parking lot. He'd have to stay strong. No sense in letting another friendship break his heart.

Unlucky in love? No, Everett had always been unlucky in 'like'. He'd been 13 when his best friend, Matt, had stopped talking to him. Matt's father was a coach for the nearby NFL team. That NFL team had won the Super Bowl that year. Matt had been there, on the sidelines, watching the whole thing unfold. So needless to say, Matt had been having a very good year, socially and personally, and the same could not be said for Everett, perpetually awkward and thoroughly uninterested in sports.

But what had killed Everett... really, really killed him... was that Matt had refused to admit anything was different. "I don't know what you're talking about," he'd said when Everett had pointed out they weren't talking, they weren't hanging out... that, mid-conversation, Matt would turn away and begin conversing with a cooler, more popular boy who, ironically, would come out as gay and become a drag queen in a few short years. "I have a lot of friends," Matt said. "Don't be

greedy” was the subtext.

So Everett had let Matt go, refusing to sit with him or hang out with him or even respond to him whenever he decided he was in the mood for him. Everett deserved better than a friend who couldn't be honest with him. Or at least, that's what he told himself.

Two years later, in high school, a new girl named Jackie had started eating lunch with Everett. They'd become fast friends, her dry, cutting wit playing off against his warmer, kinder humor well. They ate lunch on “B-days”, every week, they hung out just enough, they even impulsively joined the school's pathetic club hockey team together despite having approximately zero experience and knowledge of the sport.

But one day, something had changed. Jackie's sharp edges started to sting. She seemed more interested in aligning with the other hockey players, the ones who made fun of Everett for drinking water “like a girl” among other things, than with Everett himself. They'd been at the ice rink together during a free skate, milling around in the mixed strobe lights and darkness in a group, when she'd told him he was overestimating his importance in the world. And, when she'd become assistant captain of their JV team, and he had to miss some practices for play rehearsal, she texted him, telling him he was dead weight.

“Are we not friends anymore?” Everett asked.

“We're just not compatible,” Jackie had replied.

This wasn't to say that Everett had no friends... he had some people, few and far between as they seemed, who really cared about him, but he always was scared to get close, too close, because as soon as he began to really feel like he understood someone, they'd change, like a mood ring under a thumb. Sometimes, like Matt, they'd deny that anything was different. Other times, like Jackie, they'd be clear it was his fault. There was Ben, his college teammate who let him think he was experiencing a paranoid episode due to medication withdrawal, when really Ben was just being kind of a shit friend. There was Louis, the coworker Everett really liked, who told him he didn't want to hang out because “he just didn't want to” and it “wasn't personal”, prompting the 24 year old Everett to feel a mixture of admiration and stinging embarrassment. God, it would be amazing if things weren't

personal for him. But they were, they always were, they choked and smothered him and beat him to death with how personal they were, and everyone told him to just not care but he couldn't not care, caring was all he did.

Which is why, sitting here at this bar with Luther, arguably the best friend he'd made the past few years, listening to him say they weren't compatible because Everett wasn't independent enough, not enough of a risk-taker, and far, far too kind, felt like a nightmare. Jackie's edge, buried in the brutal honesty, mixed with Matt's indifferent denial, shading in the hurried admissions that Luther still liked Everett and they were still friends. Sure, they were friends. But what did being friends mean after a conversation like this?

Midway through the conversation, Everett just stopped. He tuned out Luther's words, rambling and indirect, and tried to think of something, anything else. But instead, all he could feel was the pain rewinding like a VHS, returning to the start so he could feel it all again and again.

"Sometimes, friends are just there for a season," Luther said. Which was a pretty stupid fucking thing to say in Everett's opinion... no shit, Sherlock! But he didn't say anything. He just sat there. Staring. Trying to think so he'd stop feeling.

"You can tell me to fuck off," Luther said. Could Everett? Not really. If Luther had known him at all, he'd know that. But it was clear that Luther had only ever known a shade of Everett's true self, a dim, flickering aspect of all the cascading colors and lights that made up a person.

"I don't know if this is helping," Luther said. It wasn't.

Everett was drowning in saltwater, old wounds torn open, but it was peaceful, almost. Freeing. Maybe this was just how life would be. Maybe everyone he loved would let him go. Maybe they never had him in the first place.

When Everett was in college, he'd seen a Snapchat story from Jackie making fun of autism. This made Everett very, very angry and he'd finally done what he should've had the courage to do years ago... unfollowing her, blocking her, and blasting this comment for its

thoughtless nature. She texted him, asking to talk privately.

Everett didn't block her number, but he didn't reply either. He simply tucked his phone away, walking away from the conversation and the friendship he knew he'd never recover.

It was the most powerful he'd ever felt.



pencil on canvas

if the shoe fits

By Abby Wang

Phili



a#1



Photography
By Orsi Szilveszter

february 9th

By Ben Ramakrishnan

paper dolls with paper dresses, abandoned under your twin bed
made friends with the dust bunnies inside your room
now they have forgotten about you too
just how you have forgotten about them

— just how everybody forgets about you

your mother says she is worried about you
and she drives you to talk to a woman in a little room
with tea and sofas and peeling pale yellow wallpaper every week
and every week, she expects you to say something, *anything*

— yet you are silent, by some force compelling you

this is to be expected, as even you, as even your mother
cannot recall the last time you opened your mouth to speak sentences
to utter coherent words except for help me and please
and the act of keeping your mouth screwed shut is natural now, muscle memory

— and it feels wrong to open your mouth, *unnatural*

you, too, are unnatural

says the woman in the little room with tea and sofas and peeling pale yellow wallpaper
says your mother with increasingly more worrisome lines on her forehead day by day
says your peers in the classroom you have stopped attending due to *personal circumstances*

— says the note from your mother (who was really you)

and, anyway, your mother cares little that you are home now every day
glued to the confines of your bed with the abandoned paper dolls under it
because everyone forgets
even your paper dolls, even the dust bunnies

— *even your mother*

after all, after february 9th

— *after february 9th*

— after february 9th

— *after february 9th*

you are nothing

— but a ghost

Photography by Patricia Zhang

Miles Davis, NYC 1953

By Merrick Lu



pencil on canvas

not my story

By silly genghis

I persist pessimistically through pain killers and porn stars,
You can fight for your right just don't write anything on par,
To incite any form of questioning or confusion,
Because breaking the illusion leaves you bloody and beaten,
Defeated for inciting a riot found dead in the backseat,
With fourteen shots in the back,
but he deserved it because he didn't live on the back beat,
Have your soul grinded like meat in university,
For the small price of free will and student loan fees,
And now i'm lonely, i'm looking for a new page,
And this social security soldier won't adhere to praise,
Been praying for a job that pays, but still haven't got a catch,
Dispatched from each interview with no strings attached,
I go walking back to cash in on the benefit,
And the remedy of emptiness existentially exists
within every other man i share the governments penny with
And i'll keep taking , if they keep giving ,
And It's not living, but it's not dying and i'm trying but ticking each box is so tiring,
Love without lying, truth without honesty, belonging is a loser's game, found commonly,
within the age of assholes, drinkers and old politics,
Policies for robberies, they pickpocket us properly,
The judas of our time,
All judas's combined to a building of emptiness,
Apathy and ticking time,
Your lawyer snorts a line,
Before your sentence is given,
and i was born and raised and my graves in the system,
I'm a slave to time traps and cheap television,
My coffin is a pre built company sponsored prison

Lover, I

By Savannah Fae

His back shuddered violently, the notches of his spine glistening and whispering me further. His entire body trembled as his hands tore into half-eaten rats littering the pine-strewn clearing. His frail fingers shook around the chittering rodents he lifted to his mouth, his jaw unhinging and stretching over the ridges of their neck until—with a crunch—they'd snap. Moonlight spilled into the dips of his pulsating rib cage and ate from his torso greedily, his heart thudding and veins pushing against his pearly skin like a tumor begging to be removed. His feet arched awkwardly, flies feasting upon the bloody pulp spilling from navy in his heel. His scalp was misshapen and curled into itself, an imprint of the blunt end of an ax. I crouched next to him to soothe his nonsensical muttering, bringing a hand to his face to gently catch the tears running down the edge of his nose. His eyes darted to my own and—as if I'd hit him, he recoiled, brandishing a headless rat threateningly. The amnesiac bared his crooked teeth intimidatingly, his pupils blown wide. He called to me shakily: "Lover, you?" I called back tenderly, watching the lines of his face melt into recognition. "Lover, I."

His muscles twitched and silence swelled in the air before he embraced me, releasing the rats in hand and breathing down my neck heavily. I felt his heart fluttering through his translucent skin as I swayed beneath the moon, cradling his head and whispering sweet nothings. "Let's go home, darling," I whispered, bringing him to his feet and supporting our weight as we stumbled back. My skin prickled as I shoved dying pine out of our path and shielded him from mourning rats scurrying vindictively between our feet. I guided him home to the familiar strawberry bushes and owl door knockers, making sure not to brush the ax perched precariously by the porch.

He spat out rodent fur in my mother's bathroom sink, spattering small bones onto the floral wallpaper. I drew him a bath in the porcelain tub, calmly taking him by the arm to soak. He hissed when the warm water drenched his skin and permeated the chunks missing from flesh. I washed the amnesiac carefully, massaging his blood-soaked hair and lathering the dips of his belly and hips with warm soap until the water turned rosy. I noticed the veins webbed beneath his dark eyes, his cheekbones peppered with violet, and the plaque on his teeth. His sienna eyes met mine, and the bar of soap in my grasp became the least of my concerns as it slipped into the water. Hands threaded through the hair on the back of my neck and I smiled against his lips.

His skin was surprisingly soft after being trapped in the woods for two weeks. My thumb rubbed the vessels through the thin skin of his bruising jaw as he kissed me like a starving man, ignoring the sick sound of his teeth tripping out of their sockets. He was more teeth than lips





Photography by Patricia Zhang

anyway. I pulled away for air, his blood pooling down my cupid's bow to color the water red. I shifted, my toes catching on the teeth at the bottom of the tub. I felt fingers form around my waist and his pungent breath unfurling in front of me. The same utterance as before, this time his words were soft; he knew the answer. "Lover, you?" My hand reached up to lovingly wipe soap out of the shell of his ear. "Yes. Lover, I," and once more we were kissing, the tang of rat on my tongue.

While his hips carved themselves into mine, his nails bloomed tangible on my skin. I ignored the sound of hands scrabbling against wood beneath the porch and the agonized keening through the hallway. He is real.

The next night I bathed him again, and the next night, and the next. It became a routine, holding his arms up when he was too weak to— kisses that morphed into nights of salt and the deepest carnalities. Each night she howled, her fists thudding and screaming hitching upwards when she'd hear the water start. Her weeping slipped over his ears. Lord, if only I were that lucky. Each night, her figure would loom over me, knotting her flesh to mine vindictively. With the comforters smelling like his warm body, I'd coil into him to shield myself as threats rode past her breath and hit the back of my neck. She wasn't supposed to get out. She couldn't get out.

He called to me, his voice shaking while her hands held a vice grip on my shoulders: "Lover? You?" I swallowed my guilt and turned to him, praying he didn't mean the pale figure standing over me. Words dried on my tongue and I coughed, my intestines outstretching and embracing each other in a sorrowful

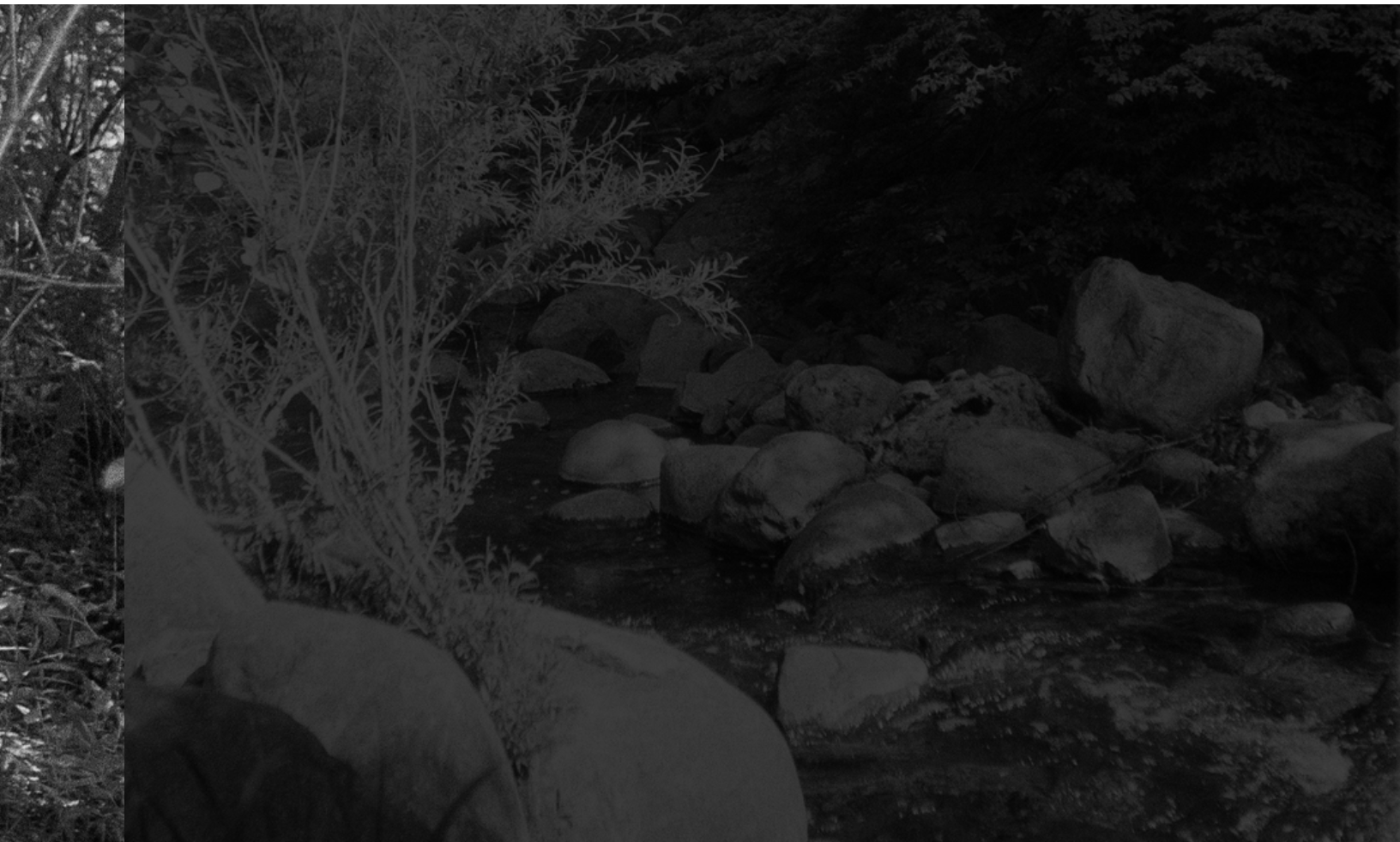
requiem. The calloused pads of her fingers burst veins between my shoulder blades as her dark greasy hair trailed into my face, tickling my nose. His face blurred in front of me as tears spilled down my cheeks. I opened my mouth— but stopped myself. The woman in a bloody nightdress had returned to take back what I stole from her— that when her body found a place in a barrel beneath my porch, I found a place with her husband. Fear wormed into my belly at the prospect of his eyes flitting upwards and seeing her hunched over me; and calling to her: "Lover?" Then hearing her: "Lover." He takes my hand and stares at me for a moment with amused concern before kissing me lightly, my lips pressing against his vacant gums sweetly. I am safe. I know she is nothing but a barrelled body beneath the porch, and when I'm in her husband's arms, all is well.

The ax I used to sap the lifetimes from him rests snugly by the strawberry bushes, and the rats are long gone. He moves closer and repeats the words from when we first met, echoing a life that never existed for me. "Lover, you?" The amnesiac's lips crack open to reveal a toothless smile and love swells my chest as I run my fingers over the gaping cavity of his skull.

"Lover, I."



Photography by Patricia Zhang



The Ballad of Chang'e

By Katherine Zhao

Chang'e (嫦娥) is the moon goddess of Chinese mythology often represented with a white rabbit. She is known for her beauty, and is said to have stolen her husband's immortality elixir to become a goddess. She is also said to have been courted by the pig demon 猪八戒.

i. O Chang'e, O Chang'e!

Ivory hair braided by tendrils of lunar silver
 Swan's neck tracing into folds of
 fine white wine – Glass skin molded by the
 blushing fingers of Autumn wind

Open mouth clutching infinite lotus pearls

Bosom shrouding mutters to the elixir of seduction

Women of the village whisper into silk pillows at night
begging for your secrets — The men beside them

writhe

for the wind sings of your soft touch

Blessed are we to witness your reflection undress as
the moon's shine basks the lake — haunted are we
by the tantalizing revelation

that your beauty
gasps through its surface

ii. clutch your husband's prize // deceive blind white eyes castrated / ruby
lips red as rabbits' eyes .. lily stem stripped naked to the bone / you deceive his arrow
and carve his elixir into supple breast // nonsensical blabber of your empty vindications /
eastern eye eats the pomegranate \\ men envy you, women curse you as they grovel



iii.

don't tempt the pig

let his snout weave

mandalas of piety

upon impure

mangles of skin.

he's demon spawn

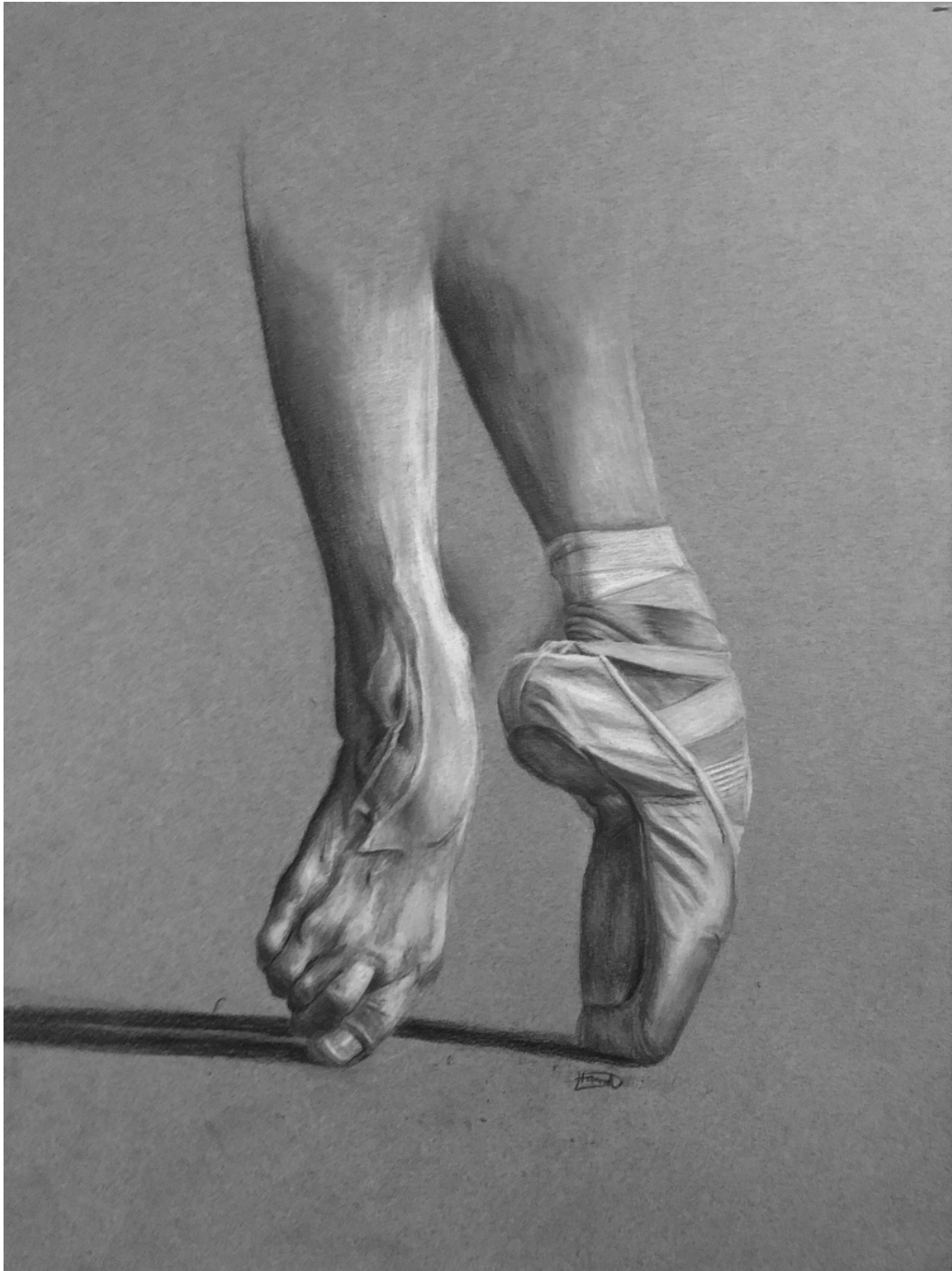
but at least

he inked upon

your lips of

crinkled parchment.





pencil on canvas

In & Out
By Hannah Xu

Creation is an Inviolable Act

By Yi Lin Ho

*“Creation is an inviolable act, and those searching for the divine need not descend to Hell for fuel.”
(The Mammal and The Reptile, Phil Jamesson)*

i.

These static senses are muted
from every incense-ridden funeral/ three day affair
of paper money and a Wake. Maybe it's
this fear that death will outpace my
ravenous soreness lodged in transit/ unfinished
corporeal cremation reaching for
something beyond its orbit.
Death is not robbing anything tonight.

ii.

What I'm trying to say is: sometimes I
want to escape. She once said
that I was aloof and truly I know that
I am living in odour/ so to weed out the
scraps/ an existential cartographer
of yearning undulating from one synapse to the
next I know

I know
the limitedness of
drifting. And death

will always be adrift,
pervasive enough to tuck me into
bed, to anchor its stench beneath
these dogged rinds/ Maggots
tunnelling through carcasses. These things
just want to live, just want to be.
Like a syncopated refrain I go and it

follows. Erring on
arrhythmia, transience on
touch, I trail after what I can take.

iii.

Once again: I can always swerve or choose
to hit that deer – vertebrae
echoing the ichor of spring/ antlers
driving towards an agonised landmine. Whatever.
Another epoch of imbalance
homeostasis nests / Let me
seize that steering wheel

And swerve. I know nothing about taxidermy
but creation is alive and rotting
in my gut.





Photography by Patricia Zhang

Half-return

By Lerana Lambordi

Rings of myrrh burst out of your mouth,
your tongue begs for the forgiveness of the poison it drank long ago.
It drowned sorrows and battled anguish.
It wreaked havoc and left only the ruins of your guilt in its wake. Minha Tróia.

This venom of mine is sweeter than the Dionysian milk the Greeks sang of,
its cloying honey rots your crooked teeth in maenadic worship.

There is a place beyond your throat that holds my spirit hostage.
It dangles erratically every time you move, and yet, it remains silently anchored within your being;
like a rotten fruit, bound to fall into the depths of the sinful. *The catalyst of a downfall.*

It grows and stretches from your empty womb – this love of mine.
Its frail branches, devoid of the gifts of spring, seek the embrace of your frame;
they beg for the kiss of death; they pray for the taste of life. And all I have left
are lips of tarragon and Cyprian words, invocations that echo and shrill along the walls of your bones.

There is a place beyond your throat where my sleep is never hindered.
Where my blood ceases to burn and my dialect of being loses its wit.

Strangled by your bursting veins and smothered by your pulsing core – I become
a shell of what I once was. The abdication of my humanity is a feast for your famished eyes –
– sacrificed like a lamb, whose sweet-smelling smoke does not caress the clouds.

I kneel before the icon, and in her eyes I see your chastising gaze.
Your Marian ways will haunt me into my final trial,
like the mantle that stifles the newborn child, like the crosses engraved upon my graying skin.

Like furies, the memory of you will punish me for desecrating that which is holy.
I have been hungry my whole life, and you dared to offer me the drink of the gods,
served not from a golden chalice but from your bared palms - skin rubbed raw in salt and *alecrim*.

Is this vengeance flowing from the crossroads where our souls meet?
Or is it hatching from a shell we were too careless to safeguard?

There is a place beyond your throat where we remain children of purity.
Where the Mediterranean wind howls and the Moroccan sand storms shudder, where the scorching
Iberian soil caresses our naked feet instead of burning them. There is a certain sweetness to
relinquishment, and this sour half-return, shall become my last penance - to *You*.

Minha Tróia : My Troy
alecrim : Rosemary

Photography by Grace Zhu



CONTRIBUTORS

Yoon Bae is a Korean writer based in Toronto and the 2024-2025 editor-in-chief of Uoft Mississauga's creative writing magazine. She enjoys immersing herself in nature documentaries to find inspiration for her work, as she incorporates biological phenomena and symbiotic relationships that are compelling to the human experience. You can find more her work in the upcoming issue of the Encore Poetry Project, and reach her on Instagram @eunereun.

A.R. Sherbatov is a student at Columbia University, essayist, poet, clothing designer and metal guitarist. He enjoys reading Japanese literature, screen-printing band shirt dupes and watching post-Soviet cinema. His true identity remains a mystery to us all.

Jedidiah Vinzon is studying physics at the University of Auckland. In his free time, he tutors students in mathematics and physics. His works can be read in Tarot, Symposia and Purely Liminal, among others, with many more forthcoming. You can find him on Instagram @jayv.poetry.

Craig ("C.M.") Selbrede is a recent graduate of Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. A Maryland native, he is best known for his self-published works, including the Valley Chronicles trilogy and National Gold Medal winner Makeshift, but has also co-created Unthank Productions' fantasy webseries 'Relic' and dramedy webseries 'Hurt'. Craig enjoys telling stories that transcend genre and convention to cut to the heart of humanity.

Szilveszter Orsolya (Orsi) is currently a high school student in fine arts, living in Romania. Besides the art classes taught in school, she enjoys making art with various traditional mediums, mostly illustrations and sketches. A main hobby of hers is photography, especially analog, shooting film. Having taken part in art related competitions and workshops, while also being interested in many forms of art in general, she is open to learning new things. Her photography can be found on Instagram: @szlv.tr.

Ben Ramakrishnan is a high school sophomore who is passionate about music, theater, and literature. He has been writing songs, poetry, prose, scripts, and so much more since before he can remember but has only just sought out to begin publishing his work in literary magazines. He has been previously published in Era Lit, multiple times in Matcha House Writers, and is soon to be published in The Chartium. When he isn't submitting to literary magazines, working for youth organizations, or working on his monstrous WIPs, you can find him making and performing music, drinking copious amounts of coffee and tea, and reading just about anything he can get his hands on. Ben is also the founder and editor-in-chief of Vellichor Literary.

Silly Genghis is a writer from New Zealand trying to get their stuff out there. Silly Genghis is a certified Instagram user and has multiple emails (flex). Silly Genghis enjoys slightly intimidating people at tea parties. Silly Genghis is not one to enjoy the cars movie series. Silly Genghis once had a dark blue you-tube themed tapestry customized for his grandmother (on his dads birthday).

Savannah Fae is a 17-year-old from the desert, obsessed with creation since she could pick up a crayon. She loves jazz and horror movies.

Katherine Zhao is a 16-year-old artist and writer from New York who serves as the founder and editor-in-chief of the Chromatic Scars Review. She is a first place winner of the Wildlife Forever art competition, a Top 5 winner of the NCTE National Writing Award, a Scholastic Art and Writing multi-time Gold/Silver Key recipient, and a finalist for the New York Youth Poet Laureate. She is also an accomplished pianist, having placed in international competitions and receiving the prestigious "Distinction" designation on her Level 8 ABRSM Piano Performance Exam. In her free time, she loves playing badminton, video games, and eating ramen.

Yi Lin is a writer and student from Singapore. Her recent works have been published, or are forthcoming, in the Eye on the World (2024) anthology publication. You can reach her at @leanzered on Instagram.

Lerana Lambordi is an Algarvian writer that grew up consumed by the clashing of the Pacific and Mediterranean shores, devoted to the native practices of her land and to the search for the not yet known. When not writing, she can be found studying for her Astrophysics degree, reading Russian and Portuguese literature, or drinking unhealthy amounts of Turkish coffee while going through Andalusian astrological manuscripts.

STAFF ARTISTS

Abby Wang is a 17 year old from Toronto who loves painting in her free time amidst shopping and swimming.

Merrick Lu is a 17 year old student in Toronto who kind of does art. He's hopelessly addicted to snooker, and when he's not missing shots in the pool hall, you can find him messing around with his guitar or jamming out jazz tunes on his piano. His art has been published in the prestigious gallery of Mom's House, and nowhere else, really. Who needs the Louvre, right? If you're into quirky doodles, (mostly superhero sketches and whatever weird shenanigans he find funny enough to draw) you can check out whatever he remembers to post of his art on Instagram @dra.wer7.

Hannah Xu is a Grade 12 artist from Toronto, Canada. Having done art all her life, she loves drawing still life and landscape sceneries, with a few abstract pieces in between. Her favourite mediums of choice are soft pastel, colour pencil, and watercolour, but also explores acrylic and sculpting. In her spare time, Hannah enjoys watching tv shows and shopping, as well as making art for her school newspaper.

COVER ARTIST

Selina Yang is a Grade 12 student from Toronto that utilizes colourful palettes to paint vivid scenes from the depths of her (somewhat limited) imagination. She blends her canvases with a passion for photography, where she finds inspiration from lens that show her the familiar world in a fresh new light.

Thank you for reading! Stay in touch

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