



# DAPHNE REVIEW

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## SPRING 2021

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“Spring 2021”

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“On soft Spring nights I’ll stand in the yard under the stars - Something good will come out of all things yet - And it will be golden and eternal just like that - There’s no need to say another word.”

- Jack Kerouac



## “Your House”

The one thing I had left of yours was your Harvard sweatshirt. You had bought it at a vintage sale a few years back even though you didn't go to Harvard, nor did anyone you knew. But you bought it because it was soft and because red was your color, and now I can't remember you wearing anything else. When you told me you were moving away, I cried, and so you gave me your Harvard sweatshirt.

Everything else you owned burned with you in the fire.

As I sat in the police officer's office, I pulled at a loose thread in the “H” embroidered on your sweatshirt, and watched as an endless string of gold unraveled. The officer stared at it as well, his hands clasped together on the shiny black desk that separated us.

“Would any of your brother's roommates have-” The officer began.

“No,” I told him calmly.

“I'm sorry, Miss, I'm going to need you to think carefully about these questions. The sooner we figure out how the fire started, the sooner we can let you go home and get some rest. I understand this is difficult.”

“It's not difficult,” I explained, snapping the thread so that it floated down to rest across my folded legs, “House fires start all the time.”

“Jessie,” The officer used my first name, his eyes remaining trained on the thread that now lay draped across my lap, “all of the smoke detectors had been removed from the house prior to the fire.”

There's something vaguely embarrassing about being a seventeen-year-old girl wearing a Harvard sweatshirt in Oklahoma, mainly because everyone who sees you knows that you do not attend Harvard, and chances are your parents didn't either. Some people ask though, and when I tell them that I don't go to Harvard, I'm only borrowing the sweatshirt from my brother, they ask if *he* goes to Harvard, and I still have to say no. I wonder if it would change anything if I included the fact that you are now dead.

When I didn't speak, the officer continued, “Fine, then. How do you think the fire started?”

Even though I never lived in the house you inhabited with your three roommates, I knew it well. I missed you at home and visited often, and since you are now dead, I can admit that I also may have had a bit of a crush on your roommate, Josh.

If a person were to enter your house, or what *was* your house, since it is gone now, the first thing they would see would be a shelf covered in shoes. This is the mudroom. You only had three pairs: your regular Nike sneakers, your running shoes, and a barely-worn pair of loafers for special occasions. Alex had one pair of flip-flops, one pair of Birkenstocks, sneakers, and hiking boots. Hunter wore exclusively white



Converse high-tops. Josh had a whole shelf to himself, one that was full of at least ten pairs of different limited-edition sneakers.

Once one leaves the mudroom, they enter the kitchen. It is small and dirty. Dust covers the counters and it appears that nobody has swept the floor in months. If they look closely, they might notice crushed chips on the wooden floorboards or a lone grape hidden in a corner. The fridge is full of all the usual things a house full of guys in their twenties would have: a half-empty carton of orange juice, three apples, salsa and sour cream. On any given day, there are likely a few stray gatorades, all at various levels of fullness. On the shelves there are bags of Doritos, a massive container of protein powder, and as much alcohol as would be needed in a college bar. Alex is the only roommate who actually cooks; he has a separate shelf entirely for all the ingredients to his favorite recipes.

The stove is on the left side of the room. Above it is a shelf, above which the boys have hung a flag advertising their fraternity. It is a precariously-hung flag. If the wind blew the wrong way through an open window, the flag could be lifted from its spot, fluttering down to cover the stove. If somebody were to leave the stove on and the window open, the wind could blow the wrong way and bring down the flag to meet the stove. This, I tell the officer, is how the fire started.

He looked at me as if he felt bad for me. “The stove wasn’t on. We already know that.”

“There could have been a gas leak,” I suggested.

If someone were to leave the kitchen through the entryway next to the fridge, they could walk down a long, uncarpeted hallway past many closed doors. At the end they would find your room. Your room is messy, with books and papers and empty bags of Cheetos strewn about the floor. There is a *Pulp Fiction* poster hung up to cover the hole in the wall left by the previous occupants. In one corner of the room, they would find the twin-sized mattress that you died on.

“There wasn’t a gas leak,” The officer persisted, “and don’t you think it’s strange that your brother never got out of bed? He stayed there, lying there, until he was suffocated. Why didn’t he get up? Most people would search for an out.”

I bit my lip and stared at the floor. It was made of those mint green and white linoleum tiles.

On one side of your room, there is a closet. The door to the closet is covered in skateboard stickers. Behind that door, your clothes are systematically assembled on hangers and shelves. It is the only part of the house that is well-organized. On the lowest shelf is your collection of sweatshirts. That is where your Harvard sweatshirt would have been if you hadn’t given it to me on the day you moved out.

“Jessie...” The officer continued hesitantly, “Are you alright?”

“Yes,” I told him.

“Then I’ll ask again. What can you tell me about your brother’s roommates?”

Alex likes to cook. Hunter almost went pro in skateboarding but his parents made him pursue a more traditional career. Josh collects shoes. These are the things that I told the officer.

He sighed again. I ran my pointer finger along my leggings and picked up the golden thread, wrapping it around and around my finger until it turned red and felt like it was burning. Everything was burning. The officer stared at my finger.

“Careful,” He said. I unraveled the thread. “Were there ever any conflicts between them?”

Hunter plays his music too loudly. Alex changes the setting on the heat without telling anyone. Josh brings girls home late at night and wakes everyone up. You were messy.

The officer rubbed his eyes. He slumped down in his chair. After a moment, he said, “You know what? How about you go home? Get some sleep. We’ll have you back in here tomorrow after you’ve had time to process all of this.”

“Thank you,” I said as I got up to leave.

That night, I slept in my own bed, wearing your Harvard sweatshirt. It had stopped smelling like you ages ago, only a few weeks after you’d left. After that it smelled like laundry detergent and my own perfume. Now it smelled like smoke. I stared at the ceiling and thought about calling your house phone, just to see what would happen.

*Margaret Brigham*

## *“Our Age of Fitzgerald”*

The moon, a shimmering lemon rind in perpetual dark  
Presses against soft blooms of stars  
Necklaces flash, champagne spills  
Rims of foaming cocktails bleed red into white leather

Brazen shoulders shiver in the wind  
Skirts – smooth and tight – eyes – bright and cold  
Wide mouths splitting with sallow grins  
Faces flushed deep crimson with fake knowledge

Musical pulses and dips  
Lost in a haze of familiar rhythms  
Hands clap to drown out  
Sirens blaring in the distance

Tomorrow’s fears and yesterday’s hopes wither on  
The stained smiles of polished bar stools  
Lipstick stains disintegrate on paper napkins  
Faces slip, forgotten into the evaporating horizon

Phones illuminate the night  
Photographing false moments for timeless preservation  
Caught forever in the endless tawdry spill  
Battered by the sweeping arm of progress

*Isabella Dail*





Danielle Sung is a junior at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. In her spare time, she enjoys creating art, visiting exhibits around the world, studying art history and anthropology. Sung has won recognitions in several art competitions, including winning Gold Medals in the National Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, being selected as the American Vision and Voices Nominee, and the winner of the 2019 Congressional Art Competition. Sung is currently preparing to major in art with a focus on portraiture and installations.



## *The price of success*

is at Chinatown bus stations,  
where distilleries had waited for  
a 40-year-old restauranter whose  
alcoholism started before the buses.  
The barley and rye of Fujian had,  
before his skin sagged underneath  
suns, produced profits of red scarves,  
roasted ducks, feathered pillows  
for him, the entrepreneur,  
success died too early for his  
addition and subtraction of children's denim  
and crops as withered as his wrinkles.  
For them, the first-time drinkers,  
he traced over the Pacific with a fine  
pen and drew wheat fields  
on the other side.

Success  
comes in barrels of whiskey too  
    strong for my little brother, too  
expensive for my uncle, too  
    delicate for my father's fingers  
afame from wooden woks.

The price  
fools my grandfather  
    ever the mathematician  
turning 65.

*Tina Huang*



## *Resemblance*

It never occurs when everyone (except your father and you)  
distracts neighbor James with  
curses in a language he hopes is  
English

Never when your mother stops painting her nails because  
your brother's exam paper hides everything but  
bloody red polish

Never when everyone's outside, your grandmother's voice  
slicing dead grass to reach houses other than old James's

It occurs when everyone (except your father and you)  
plays proper house over Christmas with the artificial tree coated  
in winter's glaze until your father undoes the falsities  
with freezing hands until you crack under the weight of  
Confucius, cursing filial piety for cursing docility

When you and father yell,  
your pitches collide to match grandmother's glassy plea and  
crystallize in the open window's winds, yet  
When brother prepares rice for mother who's  
feeding the family's flames that you, too, intend  
on salvaging

When mother places her hand on your cheek and flies over  
your dimples as equal in depth as your father's,  
you can feel the familiarity of their voice, their breaths  
matching yours.

*Tina Huang*

## *Two Lies, One Truth*

Before Sleeping pricked her finger, she twirled her blonde hair around two beads. These belly-round beauties whispered secrets to her, tickled the crest of her ear, slicked baby hairs back into crescents dewy from the humid night. In unison, they

became rosaries during Sleeping's first step up the staircase of Eden. On the next step, the steps became bouquets of rubies and rhinestones

growing over roses that smelled of nothing. Before Sleeping Beauty pricked her finger, she had nicked her own tongue while trimming away the split ends of her blonde hair. Before her blonde hair, she had brown, and before that, she wore a wig of gold.

*Tina Huang*





Hyoim Shin is a rising senior in Asia Pacific International School, which is located in Seoul, Korea. She enjoyed skiing since she was young, and still loves to visit the white slopes and race down the hill. Her interests also include drawing and painting, so she has integrated skiing with her hobby, and finished this piece of work.



## Grassia telemachus tenuilimbata

Her blue, holographic shimmer  
Hints of love's color at her tips  
Wings that extended like faultless snowflakes

Now a charred, dusty powder  
Brushed off from life's touch as the  
sniping fire devours her intricate membrane.

Maybe if he'd been spared a burn  
We'd still hear the whiz past our ears  
And turn to catch a glimpse of the only brunette odonata,  
The only lad that didn't make it.

## The spectators

The lamp can't help  
But study the books across the room.  
She skims through  
their titles  
stories untold.  
The mirror like a dog,  
Unable to know her own self.  
The window reads the Earth,  
And whispers of its beauty.  
The fan touches the brisk air  
And the shelf looks at the mirror  
Wishing it were another.

*Jia Dunsby*

## Joseon Maiden

In the stomach of the ligenous box they reside, rosy  
smiles wringing their chapped lips & Weaved Brooks of  
Black resting on dented crowns. Their whispered hymns  
Bleed through the grunts of men, tongues finding solace  
In the gentle curves of their words.

They sing of crudely knit straw sandals. Of tinkling  
Laughter warming pufferfish hands. Of wooden  
Trampolines. Of flinching at market cacophonies.  
Of leaning into the solid arms of their mothers. Of  
Steam simmering around cow-head broth.

They sing of the time when their bodies were their own.

Now, their bodies are graveyards to unspoken cries &  
Unopened eyes. They imitate them, curling up into the  
Crevasses of splintered wrist bones. Folding themselves  
into the cavities of their gums.

Unceasing uniforms chew their cotton robes to dirt-pink  
Tatters & them into chromatic tangles of muscle and  
Cartilage. Hemorrhaging clouds paint olive skies. They  
Whisper her name. They whisper her, along with *Madae*,  
*Obong*, *Gaewol*, *Danwol*, *Onsun*, *Myeong sook*, *Jayegi*,  
*Gilchoon*, *Myeongwol*, *Johae*, *Youngsoon*, *Haesook*,  
*Geumsayin*, *Wolsoon*.

They whisper the girls others seek to efface.

Softly, but relentlessly, they whisper their smoldering rage,  
Scalding tears dripping from coal orbs. Their pained  
Melodies permeate the brittle planks & baked soil &  
Olive bodies & the malignant island-nation & the waves  
surrounding it & the sea.

They whisper the entire sea black.

Hyunbin Kristen



## Midsummer Sanguinity

Rubber trodding. When the asphalt writhed  
    Beneath my swollen toes, my father was clutching  
A bag of frozen blueberries to his chest, a  
    Paltry escutcheon to this heat-baked body.  
The arctic orbs bruised him indigo while I  
    Traced his faint outline saturated in the *maru* floor,  
Reached out & scuffed the chafed air. Cherry-lemonade  
    Glazed my fingertips. I popped them under my tongue,  
& rolled them around, savoring the tart sap  
    before letting it slowly drip down my chin. You  
Looked at me critically—then did the same. The  
    Buzzing tarmac road squirmed at your touch.  
We sun benders. We inferno. We witches of this  
    Fervid spell. We share a bag of frozen blueberries. Under  
This hemorrhaging sky, I mirror your sun-bleached freckles,  
    smearing the now bubbling paste across my cheekbones.  
When the people find us here, fingers sickly-sweet, lips inked  
    Mauve & solstice-drunken bodies smouldering,  
a part of the autopsy must read: Midsummer Sanguinity

### 한 (恨)

Brittle wire hair in *sogeu*-colored tangles // splashes of miniature black holes gorge on a wrinkled visage  
while the hide pulls taut // Angry white streaks web over turgid gums // i rub my mother's lipstick all  
over my face // *where are the little ivory squares?* // upper torso // canvas of a wrathful toddler // the  
ataractic hum wants to smother me // a translucent curtain of skin is drawn // sea-  
girt irides // frothy-teal waves saturate its edges // i // flinch // My eyelashes grow  
sticky with old childhood residue // the foreign yet strikingly familiar // i try to  
place the rigid syllable // pervading // 나는 일상이 한이야 // *Tell me, i whisper, would you tear  
me apart with the coarse edges of your tongue?* // Sometimes I catch the borders of my arm melting away //  
it reminds me of her mangled bones.

Hyunbin Kristen

## *The Ant Rebellion*

Labyrinthine burrows grumble as the quivering chain of cuboids  
Comes to a transient stop. Pellucid walls give way to black beads

Strung together with chitin pushing through, dark bodies rupture  
Earth's rind, flooding its pores with ink. They march in unison to

The plaza, mandibles gnashing and faces contorted in unabating fury  
Toy soldiers—sick of being played with. Red placards held up, cheap

candlesticks thrust up, melting the Sun, the clouds stain with a incarnadine  
Wash. Antennas oscillate to amplify the chant “No corruption! No bribery!”

The Queen peers out of her blue chamber and summons the November  
Wind. “Go.” She clicks, “End this folly”. Her loyal supporter sweeps

Through the crowd and batters the small flames. The ants are oblivious  
to the frigid air smashing against their skeletons. Fires burn brighter than

Ever. The sea of torches almost seem to resemble seoul traffic lights on a  
mundane friday evening, but the Ants know that things are far from normal

Where were you on April 16th? Where were you  
During those 7 hours? Where were you when that metal monster, black

Smoke puffing from its nostrils, receded into the plumbless ocean  
Taking 400 of our sons and daughters. Why were you spending thousands

of dollars bribing universities and companies when some cannot  
even buy school supplies. when you know how hard

students work to get into one good college. The deluge of questions batter her doors  
The Queen shuts down her antennas, buries herself deeper into her chamber.

Her nest has been barren for quite a while, yet she continues to stubbornly  
Occupy her throne, ignorant of her faults. Outside her blue doors, Ants chitter

Protest, Chant, Forming a cacophony. Perhaps the most euphonious one yet.  
The Ants' unified voice vibrates throughout Gwanghwamun square:

“We call for the impeachment of President Park”

*Hyunbin Kristen*

## Space Child

one // I comprise remnants of my mother. Dusk  
Clotted marrow and candied cartilage and splintered calcium rods.  
Orphaned fingers graze the curves—let them linger—the soft bends  
Feel too familiar.

two// Snap the m off from mother.

three// Call it Bone Origami. Whatever womb I came out of squeezed  
Me so tightly that she folded into herself until she was just layers  
of sweaty paper. Until femur became ninth thoracic vertebra and sternum  
And temporal bone. When Everything and Nothing become lovers,  
I will be their tryst.

four// I have mastered the art of drifting through the cimmerician  
Kumbayas. Their songs are aphonetic. Or perhaps they were vocalized with  
Blithe, I will never know. There are no walls to this black. There is  
Too much black for there to be walls.

five// Hazy edges sharpen into fine lines of a vibrant sphere. Marbled  
Hands beckon me closer to its dark greens and celestial blues. I  
Catapult forward, eager to feel its warmth—smash  
into an invisible shell. I can't see it. But I hear it. My skin  
Hissing as its dented armor grates across smooth surface.

six// I am surprised to see that it's chunks of myself, engulfed in red,  
That start flying off. Loaded with rosy attainments and sugar-coated dreams,  
Fingers point at me. Hear a bang, turn into two. Bone Origami. The deluge of  
Bullets weigh me down. Darling, cut through the livid dome, and streak  
Past the night.

seven// An incision appears in the ghost shell. I slip through it, lacrimal glands  
Lubricating the cut. Push past the greensward skin, towards tightly packed  
Muscle, grey with age. Towards the molten putty bones. I nest myself in the  
Center—A technicolor explosion rips through me

eight// I break apart, my remnants mixing with the other.  
Womb that bent mangled limbs into bone origami. Everything and  
Nothing. Daughter and will be my mother.

nine// Remember, rip the m off from mother.

*Hyunbin Kristen*



## Samgye-tang Elegy

Your bloated corpse floats weakly in the pale, bubbling  
broth. I want to ask you how it feels to drown in the liquid  
Of your own bones. We mourn you. We thank you. We  
Resent you. Two rhythmic taps are followed by careful  
Dissection of the slimy, translucent barrier from your  
Tender flesh. My brother pinches it between his fingers,  
Slurps it up. I feel the *ajjumma's* stare, wet with pity  
And disgust.

I slap my brother's hand.

I remove the stitches holding your abdomen together.  
Rice fills your organs. We attack you. The stock turns  
Sticky with salvia. I then dismantle you, starting with  
Your legs. Your sockets, puffy from hours in hot bath,  
barely protest. We suck them clean, crunching  
Down on the pearl orbs that rest on each end. Then  
I take apart your wings. Then your neck. I flip you  
Over. You look like a horse fetus, Your hide stretching  
Taut over your emaciated limbs.

You remind me of my brother

When he was born. Let our little-child-fingers rip apart your  
Carcass and slather your marrow on our tongues. Let us  
Gnaw on your hollowed bones. Let our stomachs, screaming  
With perpetual hunger, be eased with your sweet flesh. Let  
Me cry for you. For this child's past. For the truths we will  
Never know. Let our guts fill with rice. Let us devour you  
To the point where watered-down soup and salted ginger  
Replaces our blood.

Hyunbin Kristen

## Middle of the Road

It's so close up:  
Just a grain away from your flesh,  
Just a slice from skidding your fleece,  
Just a little more and you would be cascading in its unknown.

Go too far in,  
Then darkness will inhale vision,  
Go too far out,  
Then light wouldn't know its bound.

Only so ever can we be in equilibrium,  
Where we fuse in trickling euphoria,  
Following the alleyway, all eyes closed,  
Quite never.

We either become too immersed in our doings,  
And our peripheral vision becomes blanketed by dusk,  
Or we stare from afar, beyond what's before our naked eye,  
Too far that valleys collide.

*Lauren Lee*



## Dear Eurytellina Punicea

From nothing but the ocean marl,  
Where it lay concealed beneath the gnawing blaze,  
Where no human eye may ever conceive,  
Such beauty was unfounded.

Now the glory-embedded corridor,  
where the feet of wonderment were trapped in shackles,  
Anchored by this one mollusk,  
Its lucidity speaks among tombs of souls.

The hoax brought upon,  
Just what wickedness has this brittle shell's done,  
To shroud into some ashes and bones,  
Nothing but a skeleton floating in earth's agony.

Please remember my begotten soul,  
I too have been awestruck,  
By the bliss tears you stained in this hall,  
Full of memories, hope, and visions.

*Lauren Lee*

## Fantasy Glitch

Since the beginning of a coincidence,  
Everything was done together, everyone was together,  
The head, the body, the tail.

How the nostalgia never feels rusted,  
The hazy moments come back to our time,  
A melody on repeat - ever so sweet.

Our backs pushing against the smolten stones,  
Gazing at the floating and jumping cotton,  
The amazement that ponders us so deep.

A cup of pink lemonade, a handful of roasted peanuts,  
Lavender fumes, and a whiff of merriment,  
Perfection to say the least.

We would stay there for hours with tender minds, softened souls,  
A bit of chatter then stalls the open scenery,  
This friendship - I've struck gold.

These hollow summer days,  
Where reality withers into buds of dreams,  
The skies glitching like a hologram.

*Lauren Lee*

## mud&water

saanvi nayar  
she floats mindlessly  
petals strewn across the purified river  
divinity coursing through her roots  
for she is the standard of beauty  
(in all of its subjective glory)  
as the bleeding sunshine bellows my name  
i regard the lecturing mindset of my skin  
(too dark, too dirty, not pretty)  
the mindset timelessly bolstered by my culture  
for in mockery  
they spew bleaching products on their shelves and yet  
expect me to follow in embrace  
for in ignorance  
they cast fair-complexioned actors in their films  
modeling the same fabrics buried in my closet on the skins  
of white, of light, of *superior* women.

she floats consciously,  
more conflicted than ever,  
teetering on the untaught insight of embracing a culture  
that does not offer the same embrace back  
and, so, she reminds herself  
that the lotus,  
with divinity coursing through her roots,  
blossoms in water and mud alike.  
for in the mud of a scornful culture  
(too dark, too dirty, not pretty  
embracing, untaught, and unloved) -  
the bleeding sunshine drenches my rich brown skin  
for i revolutionize the standard of beauty,  
idiosyncratically crafting my own.

Saanvi Nayar

## A Silver Ring

The cell smells of piss and dirt, and it reminds Dee of her old apartment. When she had moved into the abandoned building, the squatters were ubiquitous and stubborn and she'd had to pay them to go.

"You're lucky," the guard says, reviewing the chamber with obvious distaste. "Wilkes left last week. You got the whole place to yourself."

Dee smiles and nods curtly. Her dyed, damaged hair dips and brushes her shoulders.

"Well," the guard mutters. "Good luck."

After he leaves and locks the door, she examines the cell. A bunk bed sags in the corner, the mattress is gray and littered with stains and holes. There is a flimsy set of drawers next to the bed. *As if I have anything to put in them*, she thinks, annoyed. It seems to only stand as a reminder of all that she no longer had.

That night, as she lies on the bed, accustomed to the scratchiness of a worn, thin blanket, Dee wonders. The cons who came here, captured by the law, were in two groups: those who had succeeded in their skill—the ones who had spent years pilfering or murdering—and those who had not. Dee refuses to believe she is in the latter group.

She had succeeded, hadn't she? She had money (not a lot, admittedly), and an apartment (not hers, technically), and food (but not every night). She knew what she was doing: under the blanket of darkness, and occasionally the light of desperate stars, she would scamper from her apartment. She wouldn't walk towards the bars and clubs, where smoke, murmurs, and music drifted from the windows. Instead, she would creep towards the streets where houses were larger and spaces between them filled with giant bushes and creeping vines. There, amidst these sturdy brick houses and behind gates masked with rust, the Augustine Cemetery waited for her.

When Dee does it, when she opens a coffin and roots around, it doesn't feel wrong at all. Yes, there is a body lying there, preserved in an ornate box surrounded by dirt, and yes, it seems so disrespectful and cruel. But what makes it okay is the relief she feels each time she opens the heavy lid and sees a face that isn't the one that once kissed her goodnight. They are both alive when she digs in the dirt.

The next morning, Dee wakes to light from a tiny window in the corner shining a perfect golden square on the floor beside her. It looks like a stage, as though a performer is about to walk out and stand in that square and sing.

A few minutes later (or was it an hour? Dee isn't sure), a guard approaches her cell, pushing a rickety metal cart. Slowly and deliberately, he spoons pale oatmeal into a plastic cup. Without saying a word, he pushes it through the bars in the door and continues down the aisle, a multitude of gays.



She rolls out of bed and looks in the mirror. *Tril tomrouw*, someone had etched in the glass as if it were a diary. *You ain't never leaving*, someone else had written. *You stuck in this hellhole 4evr*. Dee stares at her bleached blonde hair, tangled and dirty. Her once bright brown eyes are now dull. Her crooked nose seems to glare at her through freckles.

A silver ring is jammed on her pinkie. The guards couldn't get it off when she arrived, so they left it, stuck, on her finger. It is thin and plain, but she would rather die than part with it. The metal once aggravated her skin and turned it the color of algae. Dee remembers when she found the ring, perched on the window sill above the sink. She never recalled her mother wearing it, but it couldn't have belonged to anyone else. Dee had picked it up, cradling the shining silver as if it were a baby.

"Mommy," she had called into the house. Her voice echoed across empty rooms. "I found your ring. I'll bring it to you."

Dee had run, cheeks flushed and eyes bright with the expectation of a hug and an "*Oh thank you, jitterbug. I was looking everywhere for this.*"

She never found her mother. But she had found her father, drunk and screaming, on the porch. Next to him, a butterfly fluttered in the air, its wings like velvet in the dim light. Her mother had always loved butterflies. She would sit, perfectly still, in their garden, waiting for a monarch or a painted lady to land on her outstretched fingers, their presence hardly noticeable, their opaline wings like stained glass. When she was a baby, her mother would sing to her before bed, her voice weaving its way into her dreams. *Fly, fly, little butterfly, fly. Fly, fly, little butterfly, fly.*

"Daddy, where's Mom?" she'd asked. "I found her ring."

Dee cupped her hands and showed it to him. He'd looked at her and grinned wildly, his eyes bloodshot, his beard overgrown like a thousand brown weeds. He glanced at the ring and then looked away. "She's got no need for that anymore."

Dee never saw her again.

Now, the ring is tarnished and tight. Once, Dee had tried to take it off, but it was stuck. The ring is part of her.

Dee discovers there is not much to do in jail. She toys with her hair, braiding it and unbraiding it, and then fiddles with her nails. She thinks about getting a new tattoo. A single magpie, she decides, on her shoulder. Already, she has a butterfly behind her left ear. Soon the guard comes around again. He is brawny, and has reddish hair that falls into his eyes.

"Come on," he says, unlocking the door. "Go outside. Lunch in twenty minutes."

He escorts her down the hallway, past rows of women in dark blue jumpsuits. They stare at the guard with so much hatred it frightens Dee. Their loathing combined with their alarming appearances—tufts of blond hair, black eyes, gold teeth—make Dee walk faster. Is that what I look like? she wonders. Do I look that wild?

Outside, the sun is blinding. There is a large rectangle of dust surrounded by a concrete wall, dotted with benches. The guard walks off and joins the group of others standing near the wall.

Alone, Dee heads to a bench where two young women sit and talk. One has long black hair that flows down her back like a waterfall, and the other has a plethora of piercings in her ear. She sits next to them, introduces herself. The girl with black hair is Minnie, and the girl with the piercings is Astrid.

“So, Dee,” Astrid says, twirling a lock of wavy blond hair in her spindly fingers, “What’s your story?”

Dee looks at her, confused.

“Why you’re here, dummy,” Minnie adds. “What’d you do.”

“Ah,” Dee says. “I’m a graverobber. I rob... graves. For a few years now, actually—” she catches herself. *You can trust no one.* Her personal motto since the day her mother left. Trust no one with your heart, with your secrets. Especially in jail.

“Kinda twisted,” Astrid remarks.

Dee stares at her ring. “Yeah, sometimes.” She pauses. “What about you two?”

Astrid grins, glances at Minnie. “Some way or another...”

“Tell us more about you,” Minnie drawls, interrupting her friend. Her voice is thick with a Lowcountry accent. “Where’d you come up from? I’m sure there’s more to you than just shakin’ down dead people.”

The way Minnie says it seems to demean Dee, as if graverobbing were inferior to her criminal specialty. Annoyed, Dee shrugs.

“C’mon,” Minnie presses, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. “Why’d you do it? All that diggin’ in dirt?”

Before she can answer, the guards send the women to their cells, leaving Dee to grapple with the question.

Every day, this continues. Dee spends most of her time thinking, and when she isn’t, she talks with Astrid and Minnie, who seem to want to hear everything about her but reveal nothing about their own pasts. A month passes, then two. She falls into a rhythm, a steady heartbeat. At night, she mulls over the question Minnie asked her: Why do you do it?

Is it because her mother left them with nothing but debt and a house full of ghosts? Or is it because when Dee fled too, she found something she needed in the cemetery. All that diggin’ in the dirt.

She recalls when she robbed her first grave. She was so inexperienced, so green. The whole process of getting into the cemetery was easy; the night watchman slumped, asleep, in his car, leaving the gates wide open and inviting. She had brought a small spade, the same one her mother had used to plant daffodil bulbs in their garden, the damp dirt full of squirming, pink worms. It took her half the night to reach the coffin.

The wooden box was ornate: pale irises draped over viridescent vines dotted with pink roses. A robin, bright and red, perched on a branch. Why so pretty when no one sees? Dee had wondered.

Inside, the woman was young, and pale. Her smooth skin stretched over her round face. Dee tries not to remember the faces, but she remembers this one. Golden curls around her head like a halo. A necklace



of violet jewels and shining pearls circled her neck. Crouching in the huge hole she had dug herself, Dee slid her hands behind the woman's head, unhooked the clasp, and slid the necklace into her bag.

"Thanks," she whispered. She looked up. Ropes of mist-colored clouds shrouded the ebony sky. A few stars pierced the darkness. She stepped from the pit and carelessly shoveled dirt over the coffin. Tendrils of fog swirled around her as she walked home.

When Dee is released, it has been nearly two years. Astrid and Minnie had left months ago. She never learned what they did. Dee is now twenty-two and her whole life stretches out before her.

She becomes an accountant and hates it. She was always good with numbers, but detests the dry monotony of a company's expenses. Every morning, she wakes to the buzz of her alarm clock. There are no more late nights digging in the cemetery, no exhilarating rush when she slides jewels into her pocket. But isn't this what her life is supposed to be? A steady job, a small house, a child? Dee wants to know what's missing inside her. She craves the delicious thrill of pearls in her palm, dirt beneath her nails, a spade in her hand. What she feels when she opens a coffin and it's not her mother inside.

She marries a man with a large smile, an inability to sit still, and a large inheritance. He loves her, and when he proposed, she said yes. Sometimes she wonders why. Their daughter seems to grow up quickly, no longer needs her to kiss her goodnight or tie her shoes.

One day, Dee is sitting at the kitchen table with a mug of steaming coffee. She is 50; time has slipped from her hands like a rope. Her daughter walks into the room with the newspaper. She drops it in front of her mother, a morning ritual they've had forever.

"Thanks, jitterbug," Dee mumbles.

There, on the front page, are two women: one with a constellation of earrings, the other with black hair flowing down her back like a waterfall. *Partners in Crime: Two Women Rob Bank, Take \$60 Million in Cash and Escape*, the headline reads.

"...The two women have been identified as Astrid McCulfroy and Minerva Wilson, who previously were in jail almost 30 years ago for the attempted homicide of billionaire Henry Miller..."

Her daughter taps Dee on the shoulder. "What happened? Do you know them?"

She looks up at her daughter, at her cluttered kitchen. She thinks of her husband, showering in their bathroom. Of her job. Of her whole dismal life.

The next day she is at the grocery store. As she walks back to her car with a plastic bag of milk, eggs, and apples, she stops in the parking lot. On the backside of an abandoned building, a mural lights up the derelict wall. *Fly, fly, little butterfly, fly*, the words read. A butterfly, with wings like stained glass, flutters above them.

She leaves that night. She brings nothing but a wad of cash from her husband's wallet. As she walks down the sidewalk, moonlight glints off her ring, and from far away, it appears she is holding a star.

## I forgot.

I write of the Ending Scene, Seaweed, and the Back Door,  
About Me , Myself, and I,  
About Scissors, the 3 AM Flight from ICN to JFK,  
And hugs.

I write about that one toy robot that scared me whenever I looked at it at night,  
About being her friend,  
About how I took a personality test and it turns out I'm a: Black Meerkat with a Lot of Doubt,  
And fake people.

I write of Business, Money, and Insecurities: How the beauty industry creates crazy insane standards so  
they can gain more profit off of selling products/or encouraging people to receive plastic surgery,  
About motivational quotes  
“if you can't find a motivation to study, just do it for the aesthetic”  
“There are people studying when you are not, if you want to be the best you should be the one studying  
when others aren't”,  
About rainbow sunsets and rainbow butterflies,  
And me learning the ukulele.

I write about how we should drink 2 liters of water a day,  
About Pick-A-Bagel,  
About the flow of mind,  
And about lost instruments.

I write of the spiders in my room at 3 AM,  
About putting a string through a ring,  
About the Polar express,  
And ask, “Santa, is that you?”

I write about how I forgot that he existed,  
About the “tiny flamingo,”  
About how “that's not nice,”  
And about my intentions.

*Stephanie Park*

## *Small Places, Big Places*

Every child undergoes the common change in playful habits as that near-ubiquitous instinct reveals itself within them. Under that table, inside that log, in the depths of that pile of pillows and cushions. I am not unique to any of my friends and siblings in having that ever-present desire to dive into small cozy spots and hide away, giggling and smirking at the adults and big kids who can no longer reach me in my Small Place. Why any child finds infinitely more interest in sitting under tables or covers than in a chair or wide open space can only be attributed to our closer proximity with natural animal tendencies; those fade as we mature. We six-year-old boys think ourselves half fox, making our burrows and mini worlds to rule over. There are requirements for these Small Places, of course. They must be small. They must be cozy. They must be strangely ordinary, in order to leave room for imagining what they may hold in ways of the extraordinary. They must be private, in the “us kids” sense of the word. What I mean by that is that even though Mom can clearly see and hear me in my Small Place under the dining table, I can tuck my blanket between the chair cushion and build the walls and foundations of my fort, making it impossible for her to enter. I can pretend there’s a sound barrier, and as soon as I think it, it exists. This is my superpower, and next-door Joey’s too, and curly-hair Beth’s as well.

What I know, though, that my other rowdy boys don’t is that a Small Place can become a Big Place if you wait long enough. Yes, it’s hard to believe, I know, and my parents certainly wouldn’t which is why I don’t share this magical knowledge with them. But it is true, it does happen. I’m patient for a six-year-old, they tell me. That’s how I figured out how to make my nooks and crannies into impossibly Big Places.

It was June when Tony and Joey and I were playing Kingdom in the woods by the creek. I built my castle inside a tree, with the squirrels as my sentries. You could only enter my castle through the hollow at the bottom of the tree, only big enough for us kids. Joey and Tony led a siege against my kingdom, so I hid and guarded it from within the hollow, waiting out their feeble patience. This, friends, is how you make a Big Place. The wait time is pretty long. That’s why you have to be as patient as me. I sat in that hollow and sat and sat and sat until Joey and Tony went back to their own kingdoms, then kept sitting until they whined for lunch and went home. Could you guess what I did next?? I sat some more. I was determined to guard my kingdom forever and ever, fueled by determination and a flight of stubbornness that only comes when you’re my age, and as patient as me. I waited until lunch time passed, until dinner time passed, until flashlights danced between trees looking for me, until my parents cooed with the rest of the owls and birds of the night, calling me home. They wouldn’t understand. Sometimes a boy just has to do these things. And so I waited them out, until I got sleepy, and then I got to feeling funny all over. That’s when I knew all of my patience had paid off.

That sinking feeling that follows when you fall into a drowse came over me in my tree hollow. This time, it tickled and made me feel light all through from my bones out to the ends of my arm hair. I suppressed a



giggle, and felt the giggle rumble and tumble around inside me until it slipped through my skin; that's how I sensed myself going transparent and hollow. A ghostliness seized me. The Small Place got warmer, then bigger and I pulled out my flashlight to keep the shadows from taking away the cozy. Later on, as I mastered my skill of making Big Places, I realized more the importance of chasing the shadows away. This is because a Big Place, as impossibly magical as it is, is still a Small Place underneath the magic; I was logical enough to know that. Shadows and darkness, however, make the larger-than-average corners disappear into space all together, and you NEVER want that. Darkness is too big for little boys like me and little girls like Beth. A Small Place should be just for kids, but darkness allows room for other people and things.

My Flashlight lit the entire hollow, and it stretched and stretched until I had a me-sized Big Place.

My tree hollow became a true gatehouse to my castle. Torches appeared on the walls and swords and axes gleamed from each corner. I was in awe, and spent that night merrily sipping away at pints of ye olde root beer with the squirrel sentries--they looked very cotton-stuffed and downy of skin and it wasn't until this moment that I realized all animals in the wild must be sentient stuffed animals--who chuckled at my jokes and practiced sparring with me using the perfectly sword-shaped sticks lying around.

My Big Place was positively wonderful and I could have stayed there forever... but my flashlight ran out of batteries. Its glow fuzzed out of existence and with it the warm light of the torches in the gatehouse. The squirrels scampered away and the darkness took their place. I heard croaking, creaking, and worst of all heavy breathing. I ran out of the hollow at full speed, imbued with all my fox-like agility. I lost my Big Place; it wasn't mine any more.

After that, I made sure to magic into existence those Big Places in daylight hours or, alternatively, with five fully-charged lamps and flashlights at my side. I created all sorts of wonderful places, one even big enough for both me and Joey. Under the dining table was the race track, where I didn't even need to steer my tiny cars because they sped and huffed along all on their own, powered by the Big Place magic. Under the covers in my bed was the circus tent, with all kinds of wild colorful creatures and rainbow-flavored popcorn. And no, I didn't know rainbow was a flavor either until it appeared in my Big Place. All sorts of fun things like that existed in them. My favorite Big Place, out of all of the ones I made, was the Funhouse. It only existed on the weekends when Mom and Dad let me build a pillow fort on the couch in our basement. I loved this Big Place. It was the biggest of them all, spacious enough for Joey AND Tony and stocked to the roof with candy bars. We'd go in there and make mirror mazes using small hand mirrors that, once in my Big Place, transformed into full-sized walls. What I liked most of all about this space, however, was that it was the safest. The cushions made foolproof walls, and there was never any room for spacious darkness inside.

When I turned eight, I made the worst mistake of my childhood: I made a Big Place that wasn't safe against the dark.

It was on my birthday that Dad built the treehouse for me. It wasn't very nice. In fact, it was hot and full of spiders. I didn't even want to touch the ladder, but my dad wasn't very good with rudimentary dad skills and seemed very proud of his finished work, so I put on a brave face and decided one weekend to build my next Big Place up there. I thought the magic in it could drive away those stupid spiders. I didn't even

think about the fact that the Big Place would never be all mine if the spiders were already there during its making. That's probably why it came out as bad as it did. I was making a tree mansion inside my treehouse, but I started too late and I had only candles up there. They burned out quickly, and darkness entered.

It was even worse than the dark that came into my tree hollow castle.

The barren autumn branches outside cast black fingers on the walls of my Big Place. The floor stretched out into night that went too deep into space around me. That heavy breathing was in my ear again. My heart thumped out of my chest and I scrambled for the trapdoor to the ladder, knowing I couldn't stay any longer.

I'm not a scaredy cat, in case you're thinking that. My eight-year-old self understood the very real danger in that moment.

The danger was that anyone can create a Big Place, not just kids.

But adults should never be allowed to make Big Places.

I tried lifting the trap door but a foot slammed down on it, and that heavy breathing came again. The source couldn't speak words, only creaks like old floorboards. The creaking moved towards me, and I shut my eyes tight, wishing for all the world I'd brought a blanket to create a Small Place safe against this man. Yes, I said it. *This man*. There was a grown man in the treehouse with me, emerging from the shadows that had stolen my Big Place and turned it into his all-too-large Big Place. The grown ups that made these places were not normal grown ups, but ones who never left their childhood Big Places and stayed forever until they no longer needed to eat, no longer needed to sleep, and only ever wanted to *watch*.

Even if you don't know it, you probably have one in your own bedroom too.

They make Big Places like spider webs in dark corners and watch from there. They can talk all night, with their creaky floorboard voices. Some of them sound like buzzing ladybugs too, or croaking frogs. Creaky floorboard ones are the most common, though. My parents called these adults *closet monsters*. Some people just never realize that all monsters are men, and that it will always be men in dark corners and behind closet doors. They watch and breathe and whisper creaks under their breath to scare you. They want all the Big Places for themselves. I knew that, facing this watcher and thief of spaces in my own spider-infested treehouse. I'm not a scaredy cat, and I could have taken him on, but I didn't care much for any spider home anyway. I stood still, waiting for the creaking to stop, waiting for the watcher to move back. Then I closed my eyes and made an imaginary Big Place in my head. This was the only way I could escape, I knew that. I felt the trapdoor beneath me, hummed to myself to drown out the creaking, and swung it open, then descended. I would never enter the treehouse again.

It didn't matter, though. The lurker from the treehouse just kept coming into my other Big Places. I noticed bugs and spiders in the crevice under the dining table, now too big for just me. Cockroaches slipped in between the couch cushions in my weekend Funhouse. But worst of all was the tuck between the sheets and footboard at the end of my bed. No longer did my nighttime circus appear under my blue *Toy Story* bed sheets, but instead a dark crevice where shadowy hands and creaky bed spring noises lurched towards me, growing closer and closer every night. One night I got so upset that I screamed at those Big



Place thieves in the dark crevice at my feet, over and over shouting, “What do you want? WHAT DO YOU WANT? JUST GO. AWAY.” My parents made me see a counselor after that, which made me mad. She didn’t like my Small Places and Big Places; I think adults are jealous that us kids can create our own world to live in and they forgot how to. Maybe that’s why the Big Place Thieves have to take Big Places from kids, because they need something of our magic to make their own, they need a starter kit.

More time passed; Joey and Tony still had their Big Places, Beth grew up too fast and forgot how to make hers, and mine? They were all stolen. I had no world for me anymore, and my parents just made things worse by yelling at me any time I rearranged the furniture in a room to try and make a new Big Place. My bedroom was infested now by the thieves, and I refused to sleep in there. I was mad at my parents. Mad for making me see a stupid therapist, mad for not understanding my anger and fear, and most of all mad for their blindness to the ever-thickening shadows in our house that made all corners and all closets unsafe. Couldn’t they hear the creaks and croaks that cried for more darkness? Couldn’t they see the hands that looked like skeletal tree branches always stretching closer and closer towards me, trying to pull me away into shadows that were once MY Big Places?!

It was summer again when I found the solution to all of my problems. I was about to create the best Big Place yet, bigger than all of my old ones combined. All of them had been stolen now, but this one wouldn’t be, I was sure of it. All I had to do was follow the steps like usual. Step 1: hide away in an established Small Place. Step 2: wait. Step 3: keep waiting. Step 4: enter new Big Place. And with all the confidence in the world, knowing no one would EVER steal a Big Place from me again, knowing I would never have to leave this one and go back to school or counseling or to my dangerous shadow-filled bedroom, I swam to that bottom step at the deep end of our pool with my heaviest boots and my dad’s dumbbells and waited, like I always did, then waited some more. Past the breathing pains, past the lung-gripping panic, then my Big Place came. It was a bright me-sized Atlantis, and it was more real and more magical than any of my previous Big Places. No adult nor adult-turned-shadow lurker could take it from me, ever. Why was it so foolproof, you ask? This particular Big Place *always* had light, brighter than any you could fathom existed, and never grew dark corners.

It was the perfect spot, it was everything a Big Place should be: a world within a world all to one’s self, all the space one needs and no more, where one can gaze out at the too-big world and that world can gaze back in, but never penetrate into its more perfectly-sized counterpart.

*Meghan Stewart*





Jeewoo Park is a junior at North London Collegiate London Jeju in Korea. She has been interested in film and animation and developed her skills in traditional art as well as digital painting.

## Gaia Defines Regret

*\*with italicized lines taken from Maggie Nelson's Bluets\**

*Long before either wave or particle;  
before light perched in the flesh  
of our scorched skirts; when his eyes  
tugged at the craters of my land, hills  
straining to undulate over each other;  
when I slipped into the sheath  
of the night and still pricked  
the stars' fingers; when I was splayed  
against verdant spines  
and refused to take root.*

But I took these hands  
looted with rocks; *I took these  
to be the words of a wise man.*  
Alexa Theofanidis

## *Fable With an Overturned Slot Machine and the Bike Who Carried Him*

His clanging corneas of cable coils  
strike, sling cherry stems into the spokes  
of girls' bouncing mouths.

Their dizzied rims run raw circles  
counter to asphalt, the twirl  
of a coin tipped out from  
his clasped hands. Beware of slick fires  
from a greased-up spark, watch glass-lipped  
breaths go crystal  
amid electrical fallout. See scattered  
pixels of woodland  
cherubs glitching up the road  
in search of a socket.

*Alexa Theofanidis*



## Visiting, And Other Things That Move

i. the first  
your grandmother used to smell of orange rinds.  
she rubbed the skin like soap  
all over the backsides and flip

mince and dice scallions too.  
seared fresh and click of chopsticks,  
this type of music.

her hair was dyed red and sometimes brown and deep  
down to the roots you could smell the fire  
when she quipped right back at you and smiled.  
hey, you're *my* daughter, *my* granddaughter, and  
taste it --  
there is no simpler statement than the  
god given senses, the crunch  
and the smoke and the fire in the belly.  
and do you, do you question those?

the last to the table and the first to leave.  
the shuffling of a slippered supervisor  
ensuring food finds teeth.

do you, granddaughter, question the lavender laced between  
her fingers? the last time you saw her holding flowers  
was when she waited for her husband's delayed flight to arrive  
at terminal god-knows

up, just delayed, up and more up and further  
like the plane.

she tells you, she thinks he's just on a business trip,  
and you know this to be true, so much so  
that you offer to set aside the violet  
colored stalks in a vase, so that they may  
still be alive when he returns. she agrees,

and tilts her head up, up to the sky.  
your grandmother used to smell like orange rinds  
and now she smells like lavender and waiting.

and a leaf falls flips in the summertime  
and you take it as an explanation from god,  
like you know your grandmother loves you  
even when she can't seem to meet your gaze.

ii. the second  
my grandmother wears a floral print button down shirt.  
she sits on a wooden bench in brown clogs and a straw hat,  
cradled by the shade.

the web in the corner bows to the wind,  
unbroken. once the spider rests,  
nothing in nature is ever complete.

she says, poor husband, poor friend, poor Ki,  
like he has lost, like she knows he will be  
so sad, and she wants to give him a hug and say it's okay,  
you always have a next time.  
she snuffs out like a candle.  
my mother and I hold her without touching,  
and she tilts her head down and to the side  
and stares between us.  
you were right by his side the whole time,

and to me – that is all we can give you.  
the spider has spun all our webs.  
there is still a lot to lose.

up to my right is a tree behind the bars of the fence.  
a grey bird sits on the wooden branch and plucks  
red spheres, berries which it swallows whole,  
like a pill forced down the throat.  
it is, in the literal sense, a hard pill to swallow.  
it plucks each one off one by one, tilts the beak up, up  
to the sky and then down into its ruffled body  
to survive.

Spring 2021

she has no appetite. she asks, again,  
why do I not remember? we swallow  
our pills because we have to,  
and I say out loud: the bird and the web  
and the trees and the bees do not remember either.

she looks between us and I say,  
the web will be broken tomorrow, and the spider  
will build a new home, and the bird will swallow  
its berries and the clouds will still billow  
away and the pollen will be woven into  
fields of daisies and it's okay that you don't remember,  
grandma, it's okay, because I am trying to remember  
to remember what the world looked like yesterday.

we sit, cradled in shade, a pocket of stillness  
in the current of the day.

iii. the third  
the warbled woman perches on a bough.  
all the uncle does is blabber about laboratory funding.  
his mother used to deal drugs.

she wants her granddaughter to be a pharmacist too,  
but the granddaughter is too ambitious,  
which means she wants to be whole.  
there are no pills to palliate pure-blood killers  
like visiting hours made of incomplete promises.

today, the bespectacled relative tags along  
and talks about things he shouldn't, like  
paternity. he used to run crying to his mother,

but doesn't know what to do when her silence weeps.  
the son shines down on his bald, bald head.  
he offers the expectation of rain.

his daughter, he says, just graduated.  
he says she's waiting.  
waiting for what,  
the grandmother shifts, she should get a job, she says.



well, you know, burned out, he says,

like burning out is an action that has been done  
and not a trait that one inherits  
from their father, like the color of their eyes  
or the purpose of their life.

the granddaughter is a first child too,  
so she understands what he means.  
pharmacy will haunt her for the rest of it,  
and she is sure that one day she will  
brag about laboratories to bypass the hours.

the bird wearing floral prints bows her head a moment,  
unfurls her wings and ascends to god knows where.  
they look up, and have lost her in the skies, again.  
here and there they fall and sigh.

in one big breath the granddaughter says, do not fret, there will be time to fly,  
where lies your mother and Ki and the sky.

*Isabel Torio*

## The Present

Ahora was a sweaty, stubborn, shadow of a girl who lived under a red tiled roof in a town on the acrid plains of La Granja. I couldn't tell you which roof it was, how many paces northwest of Madrid it would take for you to arrive there, or the surnames of the next door neighbors, for the most notable aspect of the town was that it was home to over five hundred lambs as white as snow, who had an irritable habit of stampeding through the local farmer's market every Sunday. There was never any snow in La Granja, just the occasional rain-down of stray sheep-hairs surfing a gust of dry wind, bundles of which were sold fresh at said Sunday market. The hairs, not the wind, though if people got desperate enough (as they did about once every full moon) they'd likely attempt to bind the breeze and put a price on that too.

Ahora loathed the dust-dwellers who cheated her out of the dancing winds. They turned everything into a bargain -- give a little bit of this for a little bit of that -- and she had woken up one morning to find her spirit flask utterly empty. She had given it slowly drop by drop, or let them have it, or maybe they had stolen it from her. She was weary of her motions -- the selling and the toiling and the harvesting -- and was tempted once or twice to become one with the pale ground and cease to feel anything about all of it. Not once in the past three years had she run, shouting, through the bewildered streets, and felt the wind carry her spirit to the nooks and crannies and stars. No, she had not felt that euphoria in years. Ahora had been born in that town and, from a lack of nurtured ambition, planned to die there without much fanfare (a couple moanful-sounding rooster calls and a tear from her mother would do). So she shut her mouth and let the bluntness of it all sink into her olive skin. Life was not beautiful, or ugly, it just was.

Ahora had a sister. Her name was Futura. That moody, bountiful girl had the power to seal the fate of both her enemies and her friends. Everything Futura did was never set in stone, and that is what made her both frightening and thrilling. She was likened to a short fuse, a mangled horseshoe and a black cat in the night. Futura was a legend, a story, a dream, and a warning. Was she even real? The local bartender insisted that he had once served her a drink.

I must not forget about the third sister, for many things good and many things evil come in threes, and each is eternally dependent on the other. Her name was Pasada. She was riddled with admirers (if you could even call them that), who either leached on her for their own sanity or ran in the opposite direction for the exact same reason. At every corner she would be there, shackled to some bawling and griping being made delirious by her citrus scent. They tried to recreate her in their dreams, wallowing or laughing or crying or thinking her into existence. If you've never been among the ranks of her lovers, perhaps you have never been troubled enough, or never known limitless joy. (Though I guarantee that we have all been drawn to Pasada at least once in our lifetimes, and most likely still carry a piece of her frock in our pockets.)

The sisters were everywhere and nowhere at once, making circles in their small world and stirring up trouble. They were human, after all, and were as malleable and imperfect as a slab of wet clay. I don't know how or why they ended up in such a tireless place as La Granja, but they did, and my sinking suspicion is that the confines of their world forced their inseparable entity to a pitiful end.

It all began one morning when their great grandmother called them into her presence and said girls, you must take these three precious eggs -- these three precious presents -- and deliver them to my twin on the other side of the light. Their great grandmother said something about how they each must carry their own burdens, or something philosophical like that (she was quite the prophet, a really omniscient lady who always had her reason), and sent the girls off without further explanation. She did warn them to never stray in their direction, but that was all.

So the three girls marched onward, out of the town, one after the other. Futura led the pack, with Ahora in the middle and Pasada trailing behind. The sights, sounds, scents, and sensations of La Granja were absolutely marvelous. A massive bull, its thick black body nestled on a stack of hay, raised its battered hoof in a salute. As the girls trudged forward, the gravel cackled beneath their feet, the sun baked their barren arms, and the prickly wild boars trotted alongside, stopping every few miles to sip from forlorn puddles. As the life-giver of this tale I can tell you with minimal bias that La Granja was the most beautiful place on earth. Even with its dust-dwellers, its lovers, its pueblos, its bartenders and its dry, dry heat, La Granja was beautiful because it was a home. And a home, no matter how empty or moody or elusive you are, is always a wonderful thing.

But the girls were too caught up in their own thoughts to take a look around at the scenery. Pasada kept glancing over her shoulder. *I swear I heard something following us*, she'd claim. *I think I forgot to close our great grandmother's door. I feel so guilty! Remember that grand feast we had two summers ago? It was so delicious that I remember the taste of the roast to the last pinch of seasoning. Our great grandmother was so happy, cooking the paella, it makes me warm to think about it. But now she's rotten and wrinkly, and I should have made sure she was safe! Can we go back? I must fix this. I need to go back!* She talked without ceasing, and in circles. From her last year's lover to the painting she sold in second grade, her stories soon bled into one rambling trainwreck captured from a thousand different angles through her tongue.

Ahora was more focused on the tangible world. *What an ugly egg*, she thought to herself. *And what is great grandmother's twin going to do...crack it open and suck out its yoke? There are no redeeming qualities in this thing, I might as well throw it to the ground!* But the moment kept escaping her, and she'd be counting her 54th step, and then her 1000th, and find herself still cupping the delicate sphere in her mind and in her palm. As I mentioned earlier, her spirits had been irreversibly stolen by those dust-dwelling townies accustomed to seeing the world from a quasi subterranean perspective. They were, after all, made of the dust, and were grumpy yet impassive to their dull circumstances. At least from Ahora's point of view. So she counted her steps, refusing to look in any direction other than down. She eyeballed the egg with an impenetrable wall of mild contempt, insisting stubbornly that the egg was nothing more than a boring light-brown burden. *I'm just seeing it for what it is*, she convinced herself.

Futura was equally as troubled as Pasada. The oldest of the three, she had to look over both younger girls, and if neither of them were in a good mood then neither was she. To pass the time, she made up



scenarios in her head. *When we get there, we will find out that our great grandmother's twin is a poisonous snake, waiting to eat us all! I will find a heavy stone to crush it with further along the path. But what if the stone is not big enough? What will I do? What might happen?*

The path was long, and narrow, and endless. And just as the sun began to sink into the horizon, Futura, preoccupied in her fervent musings, tripped and fell into a bottomless ditch. Down she went, her screams reverberating off the smooth walls, until there was silence. There would, evidently, be no snake, and no stone to crush it with, and no girl to yield the stone, and no egg to give either. What a waste.

But Ahora and Pasada were too concerned with their own troubles, and walked right around the gaping hole. They continued on for a little while longer until they reached a mountain. They began to climb upwards, grasping onto protruding boulders to scale the jagged sides. All of a sudden, Pasada, mesmerized by the ground below her, missed a rock just above her head and tumbled backwards into the air, falling through a flock of ravens and eventually landing on the dirt below.

Ahora knew her sister had fallen, for she had heard the squabbling of the ravens, and paused as she came upon the top of the mountain. She was so caught up in her sister's untimely death that she refused to take a look around. The sky was draped in an orangey-hue, with streamers of red and gold strung in intermittent clusters. It gave La Granja's lonely plains a warm and silky glow, the scraggly orchards and grazing wildlife tiny silhouettes against a vibrant backdrop. The pueblos littered as far as the eye could see and the people who lived there sang in harmony with the setting sun.

But Ahora did not see this. Angered by her sister's death, she became more and more blind. *This stupid, stupid egg! It brings me nothing but pain!* She yelled. *There is no hope! There is no good in this world!* In her wrath she fainted, fell unconscious and hit her head against a tree. The egg spilled out of her hand, rolled to a stop, and cracked.

A being slowly emerged, yellow and fluffy and petite. It crawled out of the empty shell and stood on its two twig-like feet, looking around at the magnificently tragic spectacle. It had been there all that time, waiting for one of the girls to notice. Oh well. It would continue living despite. And so it went along to wander the landscape of La Granja and left the body of the girl laying in the dust.

*Isabel Torio*

# The Past is Talking Through the Birds, But It Is Getting Hard to Hear

wade into the shallows, inhale surmount and plunge and exhume,  
the cool puddle skimming and rising along sticky skin,  
the rush of liquid into cavernous ears bellows, *it is easy to drown in here too.*

distilled chirping,  
the shush of sweaty leaves  
a cicada's sex call

recounts a living history  
relearned in the moment  
by hands that mead my skin  
and my own that explore / and join / and diverge /  
and form again.

the instinctual rubbing of wings

and the loving these words contain

catch the rushing that rises from the groundmouth

in cupped palms ebbing my face

criss cross of gravel sludge to silence the breathing.

I say, speak to me in a language I cannot  
understand, and sing stories of the people  
who looked up, too, who hoped for me

in cloudshapes  
and the weeping of motherbirds  
and the riversun.

\*\*\*

How self-important, though, to think time swings around / me / around, how I have sent the world's rivers  
ricocheting and weeping yellow and white tears

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to chide in stagnant mill ponds and rest forever there. to think that one would think a shrinking puddle the perfect tombstone for a family, and praise their children for burying their parents there, stifled and silenced by morning.

My being has buried one too many, and disappointed more.

I promise to be the wind that treks onward and bend with the wind / both at once.

\*\*\*

I admit, I have dressed the birds in armor and the roads in leaves, and pitied them against each other when I could not

believe my ears / to blow west or blow east  
/ like neither could ever exist together / to  
decide / to wait for my people /  
to exist together / to flow together  
like me.

there are pools of crystal

water that have not been filled,

the hollow pooling

in man-made craters, like my body.

victorious means satiated,

filled up backyard pools

that sink into my family's ground

like one must win / history or the now /

my body of stone rips into the ground.

\*\*\*

I hope the roads will never

run away the earth beneath

and the soldierbird calls will penetrate

the evening's rumbling armor,

and sing like their ancestors did /

like my ancestors heard it /

like now I hear /

like I am a listener where water kisses air

*Isabel Torio*



$$ax^2+bx+c$$

i can't see the bottom of this black pond  
your wrongs sink and my remembrances float.  
who is this? it's not you on this trembling glass.  
to recall is to miss.  
koi fish must have been lost  
in communication because there are too many unknowns.  
yes, i've been thinking about equations:  
my notes remind me that a parabola's spine is aligned on three points, ruling if  
it raises its sunlit arms to face the sky or  
hunches, bleeding out on cracked earth.  
but in this murky pond, the orange teardrops are only two.  
the wind flings the crumpled parabola into the atmosphere.

so i'll bunch up my paper resolve and fold it into flowers to drop at your door.  
slinking away, i'll scour the bottom of this cold pond for redemption and you.

*Allison Zhuang*

## cygnet down

i'm flying across the sun to you on the wings  
of a revelation. these dove-gray clouds  
dissolve under golden showers, so i'll bend  
to collect the feathers strewn softly on the damp ground.

the rain-soaked cool rising from the asphalt  
reminds me of that umbrella we both held in not-Tokyo. hunched over  
at my desk, i'll dip these needlepoint quills in liquid midnight. it's not  
my choice but the pursuit of my lifetime will be to letter your likeness.

the world is the atlas of the creator's mind; i'll fold the miles  
into a pocket where memory can flutter off the page. allow me  
to steal you out of your thorny nest and weave  
the gridlock latitudes and longitudes into olive branches.

*Allison Zhuang*

## euneirophrenia

here's to the youth i could only have in dreams: suspended in the temperate nowhere between blindness and longing, combat boots splash chlorine from the glassy puddles underfoot. the breathless air lulled in a wisteria haze, nested in rust-red ribs, let us wet the concrete with dying footprints; bleeding lilac honey, flaunt secrets or nerve; let us

    breathe

each other in and drape laughter over yearning (we don't worship the gods because we are them); welcome the green grass stains climbing over our knees, pooled in dew under watchful golden streetlights—no, stars—no, crushed

goddesses.

the orchestra of copper sequoia surrounds our very own twilit galaxy. let us pledge our bodies to temporal ruin; carve open our souls to sip upon milky emergence; swim in the silent undersea tombs of our dreams and hold our friends always this close;

whispers the cobwebbed after-hours fountain:

    you will, you will, you will.

*Allison Zhuang*



## Billy Carter of Wainuiomata

Billy Carter of Wainuiomata  
was very well known to be a bit of a farter.  
All the places he visited had an interesting scent  
that lingered around wherever he went.

The problem was that Billy loved peaches,  
they had a drastic effect inside of his breeches.  
One day he went a little too far  
and let one off in his mother's car.

They were passing the zoo and the lion enclosure  
when his mum's nose detected the smelly exposure.  
She let go of the wheel, the car crashed through the fence  
startling the lions who took great offence.

The beasts circled the car and let off a roar –  
Billy was so frightened he let off one more.  
This one had such a peculiar pong,  
even the lions could tell something was wrong.

They sniffed for a second then passed out on the rocks –  
this was worse than the park rangers' socks!  
While the lions stayed in a very deep trance  
Billie and Mum left while they still had a chance.

A policeman took a statement from Billy  
who blushed bright red and felt rather silly.  
His mum was still shaking and asked for some water  
and silently wished that she'd had a daughter.

She looked for a peg for just these occasions  
like when Billy had eaten too many raisins.  
Just then she heard a car trying to start  
and realised it was her – she'd let off a fart!

The policeman and ranger just looked at each other.  
Billy cracked up and looked at his mother.  
A moment later his nose caught the scent  
of an aroma he described as 'not heaven sent'.

So life is strange and one never knows  
what mystery may pass beneath one's nose.  
As Billy's behind put the lions out cold  
his mother's awoke them – and she turned it to gold!

She patented their perfume and sold it to vets,  
now Billy nor mum have any regrets.  
While they holidayed well and lay on the beach  
Billy smiled at his mum and said "Pass me a peach".

END

## The Waiheke Whale

The Waiheke Whale had a curious nose,  
she kept poking it everywhere.

One day on a whim she went for a swim  
and it got caught in her underwear.

She splashed and thrashed, twisted and twirled,  
jumped and bumped, whizzed and whirled.

But whatever she did, did no good at all –  
at the end of her tether, she let out a call.

“Oh, help me, help me, is anyone there?

My nose is stuck in my underwear!

I’m tired and grumpy, it just isn’t fun

having your nose so close to your bum.”

Well, the crays were laughing and the crabs were amused,  
but the Waiheke Whale was dazed and confused.

A sly snapper said, ‘I’ll make you a deal.

If you pay me ten squid I’ll fetch the wise eel.”

“Oh, yes please, as fast as you can!

Fetch the wise eel, she’ll have a plan.

I’m dizzy from spinning and it just isn’t fun

having your nose so close to your bum.”

So the snapper told the hoki, and the hoki told the hake;  
the hake told the groper who was eating seaweed cake.

“Can’t you see I’m busy?” said the groper. “Try the seal.

If I’m not mistaken, she’s best friends with the eel.”

Soon the whole ocean had heard all the fuss...

they gathered in groups to share notes and discuss

the story of the whale and her curious nose –

how it got stuck in her knickers, nobody knows.



Then the wise eel swam into the crowd  
and the fish all fell silent and quietly bowed.  
“Well, this is a first,” she said to the whale,  
whose complexion by now had turned rather pale.

Quickly the eel asked all to help  
gather seaweed, kina, starfish and kelp.  
Crabs chopped it together and with a swish of her tail  
Eel fed the mash to the unfortunate whale.

Soon Whale’s tummy grumbled and groaned –  
it made all sorts of noises and then she moaned.  
“My belly’s expanding and I’m feeling quite queer”.  
Some moved away as they were standing too near.

Then none too soon they all jumped with a start  
when the Waiheke Whale let off a huge fart.  
Well, it wasn’t a small one.... it thundered away.  
Nothing quite like it had been heard till this day.

It ripped, it roared and made bubbles galore,  
and when it was over there were knickers no more!  
They’d been blown off completely and couldn’t be found  
and all the fish cheered and made a glorious sound.

The Waiheke Whale was relieved from her stress  
and vowed from that moment never to dress.  
So that is why if you ever see whales  
they don’t wear clothes – not even scales.

The whale was so happy she kissed the wise eel  
and then kissed the hoki, the hake, and the seal.  
She paid the sly snapper his price of ten squid –  
it was worth every feeler for what eel did.

The whale, overjoyed that her nose was now free,  
invited them all to come home for tea.  
Gathered around on the seabed,  
after jellyfish custard the happy whale said,  
“It’s so good to know when you get in a mess  
there are friends all around to help with the stress.”

END

## Students Bio

**Margaret Brigham** currently attends Concord Academy. They enjoy writing, surfing, and reading Jack Kerouac. They edit their school's literary magazine as well as head their Poetry Club.

**Danielle Sung** is a junior at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. In her spare time, she enjoys creating art, visiting exhibits around the world, studying art history and anthropology. Sung has won recognitions in several art competitions, including winning Gold Medals in the National Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, being selected as the American Vision and Voices Nominee, and the winner of the 2019 Congressional Art Competition. Sung is currently preparing to major in art with a focus on portraiture and installations.

**Isabella Dail** is a rising high school Junior in New Jersey. Her work has won Gold and Silver Scholastic Keys, and she has poetry forthcoming in Rare Byrd Review. In her spare time, Isabella loves playing tennis, reading, and practicing French.

**Hyoim Shin** is a rising senior in Asia Pacific International School, which is located in Seoul, Korea. She enjoyed skiing since she was young, and still loves to visit the white slopes and race down the hill. Her interests also include drawing and painting, so she has integrated skiing with her hobby, and finished this piece of work.

**Jia Dunsby** is a freshman attending Seoul Foreign School. She is currently working on her writing portfolio for university. She uses her writing to open a conversation and a way to think differently about the world.

**Hyunbin Kristen** Joo is a poet based in South Korea. Her work has been recognized by scholastic and a national embassy. She enjoys umbrellaless rainy days, low-fi music, and *ddeokbokki*.

**Lauren Lee** is a Junior attending Yongsan International High School in Seoul, South Korea. She is currently building her creative writing portfolio in preparation for enrollment in a university. Her other hobbies include volleyball and baking.

**Saanvi Nayar** is simply passionate about activism, whether that be in regards to social justice or her personal beliefs. As a second generation Indian womxn, she connects with the paradox of her Indian heritage and American upbringing through her poetry. When she isn't scribbling down poems, Saanvi can be found editing *The Lenz*, compiling debates for upcoming online conventions, or reposting political anecdotes on Instagram.

**Aoife O'Connell's** fiction has appeared in *Stone Soup* (December, 2019), *The Parenthetical* (Winter, 2017) and has been anthologized in *Just One More: Stories You Can't Put Down*. She is a winner of the 2019 Lune Spark Short Story Contest, a national fiction contest. Her travel writing has appeared on the Churchill Wild blog. She is thirteen years old and lives in Los Angeles.

**Stephanie Park** is a freshman attending Milton Academy in Massachusetts. Her other hobbies include singing and drawing. She is currently beginning her writing portfolio for university

**Meghan Stewart** is a Senior at The Mount Vernon School in Atlanta, Georgia and enjoys writing in her spare time when she's not on stage with her band. She has recently self-published a short story collection on Amazon whose proceeds are donated towards restoration projects at Atlanta's historical Oakland Cemetery.

**Alexa Theofanidis** attends St. John's School in Houston, Texas, where she is the co-editor-in-chief of the literary arts journal *Imagination*. Her work appears in *Rising Phoenix Review*, *The Loud Journal*, and elsewhere. She has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and is part of the Summer Poetry Studio's 2020 cohort, run by Peter LaBerge

**Isabel Torio** is a student at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. She is a poetry editor for The Courant, the on-campus literary magazine, and enjoys writing poetry and prose when she is inspired. Much of her writing explores the intersection of topics such as biracial identity, migration, history, and the body

**Allison Zhuang** is a gap student from Palo Alto, California and an alumna of the 2019 Kenyon Review Young Writers Summer Program. Her work has been recognized by Scholastic Arts and Writing. She's grateful for her loved ones, puns, manatees, and the rain (this list is non-exhaustive).



# DAPHNE REVIEW

