

Everscribe

MAGAZINE

ISSUE NO. 4

MUSA ET VERBUM

Embrace the art of the written word in Everscribe's fourth issue, showcasing incredible works from our talented writers.

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About Everscribe

Everscribe is a non-profit digital literary magazine dedicated to showcasing exceptional writing and talent. We invite individuals from all backgrounds, experiences, and ages to share their work with us.

Our mission is to create an accessible platform that makes it simple and straightforward for anyone to publish with us. We want to break down barriers and provide opportunities for all writers to showcase their talent and creativity, as we believe that talent should speak for itself. With our monthly issues, Everscribe aims to be a launching pad for those who have longed to share their stories but felt limited by traditional publishing routes. Our submissions are always open, and our process is free, easy, and unlimited!



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Everscribe's Platforms

Join the conversation and fun in Everscribe's welcoming community across various platforms.

Visit our official [Discord](#) server and reach out to us on [X](#), and [Instagram](#)!

-  [@everscribemag.com](https://everscribemag.com)
-  [@everscribemag](#)
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Editor's Note

Dear Scribe,

I'm delighted to share the fourth issue of Everscribe, titled *Musa et Verbum*, with you. The title, which means "Muse and Word," truly reflects the inspiration that drives our writers and the magic of storytelling that connects us all.

This new year marks a huge milestone for Everscribe. Since launching in September 2024, we've had the honor of publishing 41 talented writers from over 10 countries! It's incredible to witness such diverse voices come together in our community, each bringing their unique perspective and creativity.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our writers for making Everscribe your literary home. Your passion and dedication breathe life into every page of this issue. I also deeply appreciate our Managing Editor for their unwavering support and all of you in our community across our platforms who create such a welcoming space for growth and collaboration.

With the arrival of a new year, I want to reassure you that this is just the beginning of our journey together. We're committed to offering even more opportunities and surprises for aspiring writers in 2025, and I can't wait to see what we'll accomplish together.

I invite you to dive into this issue and enjoy the remarkable talent within. Your support means the world to us, and I'm so grateful to be on this journey with you.

With warm gratitude,



Founder & Editor-in-Chief

Scribe's Corner



Word of the Month!

The Scribes have spoken... The word of the month is: **Rebirth!**

With “Rebirth” as our Word of the Month, our Scribes are reflecting on their journeys of growth and the exciting paths that lie ahead. It’s a beautiful reminder to embrace change and new beginnings. Want to help choose our next Word of the Month? Vote in our polls on Discord and social media!



Literary Technique Spotlight

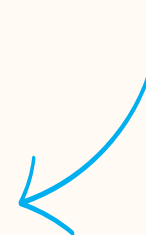
This month’s most memorable method is all about how a sprinkle of sound can make your sentences sing. You guessed it—our spotlight shines on **alliteration!** Alliteration is the repetition of the same initial consonant sounds in a sequence of words, often used to create rhythm, mood, or emphasis.

In "A Dream Within a Dream," Edgar Allan Poe brilliantly blends beauty and rhythm through alliteration. A prime example can be found in the line:
All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.

Question for our Scribes...

How will you push the boundaries of your writing this new year? Are you planning to explore a new voice or perspective in your writing?

Send us your answers in our official Discord community, or post them on X and Instagram using **#ScribesCorner**.



Interview with

Tracie Adams

Published in *Issue No. 2, Vox Novum*.

Hello, I'm **Tracie Adams**, a writer and former educator in rural Virginia. After teaching writing to high schoolers for 20 years, I just retired and started publishing my creative nonfiction, flash fiction, and memoir at the age of 58. I live on a small farm with horses and goats, where we grow the best tomatoes in the county. I'm the mother of four grown kids and Glemma to five grandkids. My two best friends and writing buddies are dachshunds, Hans and Franz.



What inspired you to write the piece that was published in Everscribe? Can you share the story behind it?

"Ghosts of Autumns Past" is an auto-fiction piece, based on true events from my own life, with some fictionalized details. The narrator of the story deals with post traumatic symptoms, like panic attacks, insomnia, and depression. I wrote this as a part of a series of stories, which I called A Life in Seasons. It was born in a workshop in SmokeLong Fitness, where we received a prompt to write four stories that reflect the stages of one's life. In this story, the narrator is in the Autumn season of her own life, raising kids while recovering from previous trauma.

What themes or messages do you hope readers take away from your work?

I hope that readers connect with the narrator as she actively works on healing from the traumatic events of her life. Sadly, the universal themes of depression and anxiety are all too familiar for many readers, especially trauma survivors. Like my narrator, many

parents sacrifice everything for their kids, and they find purpose and healing in raising the next generation. I hope that readers who connect with these themes will see the post traumatic growth in my narrator's life, and that it will give them hope for themselves.

How has your writing evolved since you started? Are there any particular influences that have shaped your style?

I am an avid reader myself, and reading the work of other talented writers has helped me to grow exponentially in my own writing. I especially love the flash form of both fiction and creative nonfiction, and participating in community workshops has taught me so much about how to tighten my prose. I learn something new every day, and nothing compares to the thrill of applying newfound knowledge and skill to my art.

If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring authors, what would it be?

Community is everything. Find a writing or critique group so you can give and receive feedback and support. Not only will this improve

your writing, but the fellowship of other artists will lift you up when you're down and give you the motivation to keep climbing higher and higher. The act of giving feedback to others will teach you to be a better writer, and those friendships will help you feel like you're a part of something bigger, something with the power to change the world.

Are there any upcoming projects or works in progress that you're particularly excited about?

In 2025, my goal is to publish a chapbook of some creative nonfiction pieces that I am currently curating. I also enjoy writing legacy stories for hospice patients, and I hope the new year brings many more opportunities to write those special end-of-life stories.

How can readers find you and see more of your work?

If you're on X/Twitter, please follow me @1funnyfarmAdams so we can be friends. You can read more of my work at <https://www.tracieadamswrites.com>. I welcome your feedback and thoughts.

Everscribe is thrilled to have published talented writers like Tracie Adams! We thank you for choosing Everscribe as your literary home. Read Tracie Adams' "Ghosts of Autumns Past" in *Issue No. 2, Vox Novum* here!

Interview with

Özge Lena

Featured poet and published in [Issue No. 3, Pulsus Litterae](#).

I'm **Özge Lena**, an Istanbul-based writer, EFL teacher, and poet with more than a hundred poems anthologised and published in more than ten countries. I was nominated both for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. My poetry was shortlisted for the Ralph Angel Poetry Prize and the Oxford Brookes International Poetry Competition in 2021, then for the Plough Poetry Prize in 2023, and for the Black Cat Poetry Press Nature Prize in 2024.



What inspired you to write the piece that was published in Everscribe? Can you share the story behind it?

I love writing ecopoetry, especially its more-than-human perspective. I had always wanted to write an ecopoem about monarch butterflies, their fragile beauty, and how they cannot keep up with the harsh changes of the climate crisis. Then in an ecopoetry workshop with another poet, I got the chance to be the voice of those amazing creatures.

What themes or messages do you hope readers take away from your work?

I hope readers can see the world from the eyes of a monarch butterfly, and I hope they can feel how it is to be so tiny and delicate across the atrocity of a changing climate.

How has your writing evolved since you started? Are there any particular influences that have shaped your style?

English is my second language. Yet I've never seen that as a setback but a unique feature. I have written fiction in my mother tongue for many years; I even have a published novella in Turkish. Then in 2020, I decided to write poetry in English, and I have had to teach myself the language of poetry from scratch by reading, writing, taking courses, joining workshops, and studying day and night like crazy. Every poet I read shaped my style, and from every poem I have written, I have learnt something.

If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring authors, what would it be?

Read voraciously. Follow your instincts, follow your nose, and

follow your true self. Be honest on the page; be honest with yourself. Write like life on earth depends on it.

Are there any upcoming projects or works in progress that you're particularly excited about?

Recently, I have finished an ecopoetry collection, and I'm editing it. Also, I'm writing a collection of war, about how it affects the children, which truly hurts to write.

How can readers find you and see more of your work?

They can follow me on social platforms like Bluesky (@lenaozge.bsky.social), X/Twitter (@lenaozge), and Instagram (@lenaozge).

Everscribe is thrilled to have published talented writers like Özge Lena! We thank you for choosing Everscribe as your literary home. Read Özge Lena's Featured poem "Monarch Butterfly" in [Issue No. 3, Pulsus Litterae](#) here or on our official [website](#)!

Nonfiction Short Story

Zary Fekete

The Secret Cave

After the afternoon of scouting the hilltop for a campsite, we were truly famished by the time the fire was hot enough. Gabor brought the sausages, fresh the countryside where his grandparents were from. “The pig was killed last week.” Marton, or Marci, as we called him, brought the bread, two loaves, taken from the pantry just off the kitchen in the large house where his parents, his two sisters, and his grandmother lived. The house was originally a Hungarian nobleman’s house in the 19th century, but the socialism of 1960s and 70s had chipped away at the building and its various rooms were combined into small apartments for five different families. Marci’s family had the largest space: the ground floor. My earliest memories of Hungary were from visiting Marci on Saturday mornings, just after his grandmother made palacsinta, the thin crepes still steaming, barely containing the gooey, sugared whipped eggs.

We were four childhood friends: Gabor, Mate, Marci, and me. Gabor lived just down the hill from where we camped that night. His father was a delivery truck driver and spent most of his days bumping down the pot-holed side-streets of Budapest, delivering plastic toys manufactured in Yugoslavia to large warehouses across the capital.

Gabor’s mother worked for a government import office downtown, so she usually had the first news on what new candy might be coming into the country in the upcoming weeks, giving us a thrill every time we visited the corner ABC stores.

Mate lived in a grander apartment on Bartok Street, just a few blocks from the Danube. He came from a fine arts family and attended a conservatory across town in the

“Four childhood friends: Gabor, Mate, Marci, and me.”

fifth district. Every time I visited him at home he was playing music, usually on the flute, but he could play anything and sometimes was on the piano or violin.

Marci was the youngest, only ten to the rest of our thirteens. His father worked for Hungarian television, and he regularly received advance cassettes from different music agencies, sometimes bootleg ones from western Europe with recordings by Neneh Cherry or Terence Trent Darby. His father was out late most nights, and he almost always slept until noon. When we visited Marci, we knew his father was awake when we would hear pop music playing in

the living room. Usually it was ABBA, but sometimes he chose Hungarian pop groups like Edda or Neoton Familia.

We were camping that weekend because Gabor heard the hilltop would be unguarded. There was a guardhouse at the weedy entrance to the hill where the land sloped up from the last apartment buildings clinging to its gravelly base. The hill was officially a wildlife protection zone, so visitors were only allowed on Hungarian holidays. We were there that night because we had too much energy for a single weekend to contain and couldn’t imagine waiting until March 15th.

Hungarian holidays were when I felt most like a foreigner at school. My schoolmates all wore navy blue and white uniforms with red kerchiefs: the standard dress for “Little Drummers.” The drummer rank in elementary was the precursor to the “Path Breaker” rank in high school. The ranks eventually led to enrollment in the Communist party for college-aged Hungarians. Back then I didn’t know what any of the ranks meant. I only wished for my own uniform so I could fit in.

My parents had two reasons for being in Hungary, one public and one secret. Officially my father represented a midwestern agricultural machine business. He visited various Hungarian

companies to see if they might be interested in importing tractors from the west. Unofficially my parents were missionaries and hoping to meet Hungarian Christians. Unlike in some countries behind the Iron Curtain, Hungary had never pressed down hard on Christian churches, but it was not common for Hungarians to be open about their beliefs. My father spent most days visiting various universities about town, practicing his fledgling Hungarian phrases and hoping to meet students who might be from a Methodist or reformed Church background.

When my parents first enrolled me in Hungarian elementary school, I was something of a novelty to my classmates. In the first grade they either teased me for my non-existent Hungarian or asked me to say the names of foreign cars (“correctly, please” which meant using my midwestern Minnesota accent). I was glad once the novelty wore off, and I could just be a fellow friend.

We often snuck onto the hilltop, but this was the first time deciding to make a go at spending the night. My parents agreed to put up the sleeping bags for the four of us, each one purchased across the border in Austria, a country my family visited once a month to renew our visa but a fabled land in the eyes of my Hungarian friends who had never been outside the borders of their small country.

We each promised to bring what we could. Gabor brought the sausages. Marci the bread. Mate brought corn puffs, the closest thing to potato chips available in Hungary. I, the only foreigner,

promised chocolate chip cookies, a treat that never failed to astonish my friends, in spite of how relatively simple they were compared to the complexities of the Hungarian pastries for sale at any neighborhood cukraszda.

The sky was just starting to kindle into the golden spell of evening when we finally got the fire going. As we waited for it to settle into a good heat, Gabor impressed us by launching lit matches off the side of the cliff. He held the tiny wooden sticks against the strike pad on the side of the flimsy cardboard box and then flicked the matches with his finger. Earlier in the week he showed us a way to make a tiny smoke bomb out of a matchbox by using a scissors to cut off the strike pad and then wedged it against the heads of the matches. He pitched the matchbox at the ground, igniting all the matches at once in a puff of smoke. We were very impressed.

After the sausages were grilled, we ate, slicing off greasy hunks and catching the drippings on large tufts of fresh bread “the Hungarian way.”

“The only thing missing are peppers and onions,” Marci said.

Gabor choked as he gestured frantically in agreement while swallowing his mouthful. “Yes! And what a shame! My mother had some. I should have remembered.”

The sun was still just visible above the tops of the tree line on the western fringe of the hill top, and it cast dark shadows across the dry stubble covering the lumpy ground all around us. I looked up at the sky, and, a moment later, as if a switch had been flipped, the blue above us darkened into a deep purple and the

first stars peeped out. Across the way from the hill top was the slightly higher peak of Geller Hill with the citadel fort and, to its north, the castle district with its many turrets.

“Any moment now,” Gabor said, looking at the river. “Watch the Parliament building.”

“How do you know?” Marci asked.

“My mother told me,” Gabor said.

“Her colleague’s husband is a caretaker for the cityscape, and he

“The fire settled into a bed of glowing red coals.”

times the evening lights.”

At that moment, as if Gabor’s words had willed it, the sun sank completely below the trees behind us, and the entirety of the Danube was illuminated by rows and rows of white and yellow glowing orbs.

“Pearls,” Gabor said. “Never gets old.”

Mate stood and looked up the river to the north. “It’s hard to believe she begins as nothing but a small stream.”

Marci looked up at him. “Where?”

“Somewhere in Germany,” Mate shrugged.

Gabor nodded. “My grandparents said there were winters during the war when the river froze over. Neighbors from both sides met each other in the middle for ice fishing.”

A pleasant calm settled on the hilltop and the four of us sank back on our hands. The fire settled into a bed of glowing red coals. I reached into my bag and brought out the cookies, passing them to each of my

friends before taking one myself.

“There are tunnels below the castle district,” Marci said.

“How do you know?” I asked.

“Father told me. During the war there was a secret hospital there and that’s where they cared for the patients.”

Mate leaned forward, nodding. “Many of the hills in Buda have caves, too. In fact...” he grinned at us and lowered his voice. “My music teacher told me this hill also has one.”

Gabor looked astonished. “No,” he said. “Where? We would have found it already.”

“No,” Mate said. “It’s on the far side, just above the barracks.”

A knowing silence settled over us. The barracks were a legendary place to us. Hungarian soldiers were housed there for boot camp. Once or twice during our excursions to the hilltop we had crept over to the bluffs that overlooked the barracks and peered down at rows of soldiers marching

“But remember. We’ll all search for them together.”

across the dusty grounds.

“What’s in the cave?” Gabor asked.

Mate smiled at us secretly. “My teacher said there are dozens of tunnels.” His voice quieted to a whisper. “...all filled with musical instruments. Hundreds of them.”

I looked at him. “Why?”

“The Hungarian orchestra played a final performance for the soldiers before the enemies crossed the border,” Mate said. “The musicians didn’t know when they would get a chance to play again, so they crossed the river and hid the instruments in the caves to keep them safe. Then the orchestra members fled the country.”

“They never came back for them?” Marci asked.

“I don’t think so,” Mate said.

We were all quiet for a moment. Then Gabor tossed a small twig into the fire. “We should go look for them.”

I looked at him. “Really?”

“Of course,” he said. “Imagine what they might be worth.”

Mate shook his head. “If we found them, we must return them. The orchestra could still use them.”

“Fine,” Gabor said. “What about next weekend?”

Marci’s face was doubtful. “My family will be in the countryside next weekend. We’re visiting my cousins.”

“Alright, then,” Gabor looked around at us. “The next weekend.”

The sense that two weeks was a huge amount of time was enough for the rest of us to nod and shake each-others’ hands in agreement. We sat back down by the dwindling fire and eventually turned to our sleeping bags. The darkened sky above was twinkling with stars.

Before I fell asleep, I heard Gabor say, “But remember. We’ll all search for them together.”

We never did.

The next time the four of us met was a month or two later, and the instruments were forgotten in the rush of youth and schooltime. The years passed, and our paths took us in different directions.

Today, Mate lives in Vienna and plays for a local chamber orchestra. He is one of the few who graduated with a coveted “artist” inscription on his college diploma. Gabor is a bus driver for the Budapest municipal transport service. He regularly drives the 112 up the flanks of Gellert Hill, the same hill we gazed at from our campsite many years ago. Marci is the only one of us no longer here. He was killed in a motorcycle accident when he was in high school.

I live in Minnesota now. I’ve managed to visit Hungary from time to time over the past years. I’m friends with Mate and Gabor on Facebook. We exchange birthday greetings and comment on family photos we take. Last year, I was in Budapest for business. One morning I took a jog and wound my way up the sides of our childhood hill. The hilltop is still preserved as a wildlife refuge. A friendly caretaker told me families often hike around the top on the weekends.

I asked him if he had ever heard of a secret cave beneath the hill. He smiled and nodded. “It’s a childhood story,” he said. “My friends and I talked about it when I was in grade school. We dreamt of trying to find it.”

Zary Fekete grew up in Hungary. He has a debut novella (Words on the Page) out with *DarkWinter Lit Press* and a short story collection (To Accept the Things I Cannot Change: Writing My Way Out of Addiction) out with *Creative Texts*. He enjoys books, podcasts, and many many many films. Twitter and Instagram: @ZaryFekete

Fictional Short Story

Marianna Page With You

The news anchor's voice was a blur of panic and utter disbelief as Marisol stared wide-eyed at the screen, thumb hovering over the phone, wondering if it was too late to call.

"I have some... devastating news to report. The US Department of Defense has confirmed that the NORAD detection of foreign military missiles is heading our way to the southern region of the United States, more specifically, Texas and bordering New Mexico. The President has issued the order of immediate evacuations of every living person in Texas and New Mexico, with evacuation procedures going underway as we speak..."

Marisol's eyes traveled down to the bottom corner of the TV screen. Though small, the weight of the words nearly debilitated her.

"Emergency Alert: Texas Strike Imminent. Time Remaining: 01:00:00."

"One hour," she breathed out. That wasn't enough time. They wouldn't even be able to evacuate half of Harris County in one hour.

Scrambling to the other end of the table, she fumbled the TV remote in her hands, slipping from her palms like a hot glass plate from the microwave. Once in her grasp, she flipped through all the channels she was paying for—FOX News, STARZ ON DEMAND, Cinemax, Disney Channel—all of them repeated the

same exact thing. The government had taken over every single channel for the national security warning.

Marisol's phone felt like it was scorching her palms. She peeked down at the contact she was

"You'd want someone to do the same for you."

considering. Despite blocking the number over five years ago, she always still saved it just in case.

It could have been for anything—just in case mom's unmanaged diabetes finally caught up to her, just in case aunt Sage popped back into their lives and demanded she be the new victim to surf on her couch, just in case Marisol was stuck in a well and had exhausted every single option she had on her contact list of 300 people—friend, associate, or workday foe. Marisol saved it, just in case.

"I have to call her," she mumbled aloud to herself, her words hanging in the air like a crystal chandelier. "I have to... I have to call her."

Five years flashed in her mind. What right did she have to call her estranged sister after five years? They were nothing to each other at this point. Marisol wasn't even sure if she'd recognize Jamara after all this time. Last time she heard (back

in 2018), she cut and dyed her hair blonde after her divorce from Sarah. Marisol had blocked her two months before shit hit the fan.

Marisol's heart skipped a beat when her eyes focused back on the clock. "Time Remaining: 00:57:00."

She felt each part of herself tearing into two—on one hand, she didn't want to care about the past and the hurt. Her sister was there, alone, back in Austin with no way out as far as she knew. She needed to hear Jamara's voice, that aggravating sweet voice that gave all the people who were obsessed with her a sugar rush, while it made her sick, probably for the last time. But on the other hand, she didn't think she'd be able to stand all that fake sweetness when she knew the aftertaste was bland and bitter.

Marisol spent the last five years hating Jamara, for all the things she did and hating herself for what they did to each other. She had removed the red tethered strings from her heart and took a monumental step forward from the trauma and generational curses that had held their family back since it began. Calling her would regress all the progress. And worst of all, calling her would tether her heart to her sister's once more.

"But you don't have long," the rational side of her echoed in her head. "You'd want someone to do the same for you."

The emergency broadcast flashed over and over, the words repeating in her brain like a broken record. Texas, the place she once called home, was about to be erased. And yet, here she was, frozen, stuck in a sea of painful memories with the person that was supposed to be the closest to her.

Marisol's heart matched the pace of her breathing. Fifty-two minutes—she had less than an hour to make a decision that could haunt her for

“A lost art they had rediscovered once more.”

the rest of her life. She still wanted to hear Jamara's voice. But more than that, she still wanted to know if Jamara was a person she could still turn to, even in a time like this.

A quick breath. Marisol pressed the call button. Each passing second felt like an eternity. If only they really had that much time. She waited, the jacuzzi in her stomach bubbling with unease.

After the 5th ring, the call went to voicemail.

Of course it would, she thought to herself. Jamara and Marisol were strangers now. You don't typically pick up calls from strangers, do you?

Marisol set her phone away. She rubbed her bronze, trembling hands down her face until the heat from them made her cheeks blush. “Jamara is okay. She travels all the time. She's probably somewhere in Bali, or the Islands. She's fine, just like always.”

For the next half hour, as the clock ticked down, this is what Marisol told herself. But when the time winded down to ten minutes, she heard her phone ring.

Jamara was calling her.

770-310-3070. It rang like a jingle.

Marisol picked up immediately. For a few moments, all they could hear from the other was each other's breathing. She heard her sister's sniffles and Marisol's heart sank. Jamara was still in Texas. She wasn't able to leave.

Marisol spoke first. “Jama—” She paused. “Nini,” she whispered affectionately.

“Hey,” Jamara said back. “You called?”

“I did.”

“It's nice to hear from you. I... didn't think I would.”

“Mhm.” Was all that Marisol responded with, despite having so much to say. ‘I'm sorry,’ ‘I hate you,’ ‘Please don't leave me.’ But when Marisol noticed the clock wind down to eight minutes, she understood finally that now was not the time for any of that.

Just like the butterflies they had released together as children, with the help of their parents, she let it go.

She smiled through her tears. “You know... I started reading this new book last week. It actually reminded me of you. The main character loved to cook, and they made the same lemon pie you always do.”

Jamara hesitated, but after a moment, she understood. She chuckled, “Really? Who was the author?”

“Vivian Monroe.”

“I love her.”

“I know. Have you read anything lately?”

“Hm, I've dabbled in some of John Carol's essays on the liberation of minorities, but nothing besides that.”

“I see... Hey, you still taking those swim lessons?”

“If I still suck at swimming after five years of lessons, I think at that point I need to stay out of the water!”

Marisol and Jamara giggled to each other. And that's what they did with the rest of the time they had left: laughing and teasing, a lost art they had rediscovered once more.

When their time had reached its end, Marisol heard a rumbling in the background. Her panic flared up.

“Jamara! It's gonna be okay, I promise. You hear me? You're going to be—”

“Marisol,” Jamara whispered. As big-spirited as Jamara was, Marisol had never heard her voice be so small.

“Mari,” she repeated, quieter. “You'll always be with me, right?”

Marisol felt her heart break. “Yes. I'm with you.”

Jamara sniffled, “Good. I'm with you, too... Always.”

The last thing Marisol ever heard from her sister was a short, panicked cry just as the missile reached Texas, and the line went dead.

Marisol was left alone with only the haunting sound of silence in her ear, and the forever empty hole in her heart.

Marianna Page is a 23-year-old writer from the gloomy cornfields of the Midwest. She began writing poetry in middle school on her iPhone 5s notes app, battling the highs and lows of middle school angst and grief. Transitioning from poetry to prose, she found her groove. Marianna writes works filled with angst, humor, love, and longing, aiming to connect her heartbeat to readers who have good enough headphones to listen.

Muheez Olawale

Death's Embrace

When death comes to take away most people, they are caught unawares.

They usually have no idea that they would be leaving the world so soon. In fact, they may have plans for the next year, the next month, the next week, the next day, or even later that day. However, death, a quite mischievous fellow, gleefully bursts out of the shadows, brandishing his scythe and glaring at his victims. To cut short the dreams of his victims by sending them to the great beyond was his duty, and delightfully, he performs it.

However, Otunba's case was contrary. As he sat on the creaky hospital bed, gazing at the white ceiling, he saw ephemeral shadows dancing in the lights, and he knew. Death was close. In the eighty-four years of his life, he had never felt so sure of something. He knew someone else was in the room, watching the wall clock tick away his allotted time on earth.

Before he slept that night, Otunba prayed to God. For the first time, he didn't request money, riches, and longevity. Instead, he requested the passage to eternal life in paradise. He thanked God for walking him through life. And now that he was grey, Otunba prayed that he march

in with the Saints.

As Otunba's eyelids drifted closer, and darkness sneaked upon him, death appeared. Otunba saw the dreadful figure and his intestines twinged. He felt hot within, yet cold

“Otunba inhaled deeply as his brain fetched memories.”

sweats garb him from head to toe. Death stood at the foot of Otunba's bed in his giant gait with a scary, bloody face. He wore a cloak black as the night, and he held a scythe in one hand and a clipboard in another. He turned the clipboard to Otunba so he could see *his* name in it.

“It's time,” Death whispered.

Otunba shivered. He tried to shut his eyes to avoid seeing this grotesque monster that he lacked adjectives to describe.

“You don't want to see me?” Death smirked. “Well, I appear in the form of the life you lived.”

Otunba froze. He opened an eye to peep. No way! There was absolutely no way on earth that he lived a life as ugly as this?

Otunba inhaled deeply as his brain

fetches memories. The smiley ones came first. He saw himself flashing smiles at cameras in multiple places where he had made donations. He also saw himself in expensive limited edition Englishman suits, grinning at the cameras as plaques were being presented to him. All his life, ever since money was subtracted from his problems, he has been a philanthropist. He donated large amount to orphanage homes, refugee camps, churches and empowerment institutes. The room where he kept the humanitarian awards he had won lacked breathing space because of the overpopulation of the plaques. To everyone who saw him from afar, Otunba was an angel trapped in the body of a man.

Suddenly, the memories dived into a chasm. Otunba saw grim, grime, and darkness. He saw the pillow with which he smothered his father to death. He saw the knife with which he killed his only brother two months after his late father's will reading. He saw the poison he forced his father's lawyer to drink. He saw the line-up of assassins that helped wipe his bloody trails.

Otunba grew brave enough to look Death in the eye. The bastard couldn't have come uglier.

Maja D.B.

Of a Doubt in the Rainy Season

She met it at the train station. Her long blonde hair was wet and radiant brown from just-passed rain and the tears of someone whose parents forgot that she was on the morning train and not the evening one. Dusk had descended. The mountains glowed from behind.

It cast no shadow. It was one, after all.

It made a sound, like clearing its throat, but forced, as if every sine wave that composed the audio was constructed manually. Because they were.

“Senka.”

She looked up with just her eyes. They were terrified, but they had been.

“My name is Atho,” it said. It was kneeling before her. Jet black, crystalline, tall, but strangely human.

She remembered her manners and

“The anxiety was gone. Strangely so.”

nodded. “Hey. My name’s—”

It smiled. “It has been a long day, I know.”

“Is it short for something?”

“Hm?”

She sat up more properly, meeting the Shadow’s glowing green gaze.

“Atho. Is that your whole name?”

“Athocilim,” it intoned. Its voice didn’t come from its moving mouth, but from deep within.

Senka sat on her bed with a striped towel and watched Atho survey her books, her stuffed animal collection, her shrines to her favorite video games. It smiled and nodded at a particular dragon-esque creature that bellowed towards the top shelf.

“I must bind to you,” it said.

Senka froze. “What does that mean?”

“It is not difficult. It will just take some time.” It floated towards her, not fast, not slow, and held out its hand near her shoulder. “May I?”

She leaned back. “What will it do?”

“It will allow me to serve my purpose.”

“Which is?”

“To help.”

The answer hadn’t mattered, anyway. She was desperate. Senka gave Atho a look that it understood, and its hand passed through her shirt and shoulder, touching something vibrant and internal. She felt comfortable bands of tightness slot into place, as if they had always been there. Ankles, thighs, wrists, shoulders, waist, neck, chin, and forehead. But deep inside. Atho hummed.

It followed her up the stairs again. Its foot brushed through a step, and it winced. “Your teacher wants it tomorrow? You are sure?”

“Yep,” she crunched. The cereal was left in the back corner of her desk to sog.

She stared at the blank page.

What if it was right? She logged into her class’s webpage and stared at the assignments tab. The due date was still midnight that night, unchanged. But what if her teacher hadn’t changed the digital version yet? She vaguely remembered an announcement that the due date would be extended. It seemed like Atho did too. But to when? What if she forgot to do it tomorrow, the day it was probably actually required? What if the due date changed again? What if the day came, and she logged into class, and everyone else had finished it, and—

Atho’s hand made contact with the skin of her shoulder, its long, needle-sharp fingers curling down her chest. She jolted to, losing sight of the nightmare and relishing the deep, smooth cold that counteracted her sweat under too many layers of clothing.

The anxiety was gone. Strangely so. Senka looked over her shoulder, but Atho only blinked down at her. “Better?”

She woke up from another pleasantly vague dream, ten

minutes before her alarm. After checking the time, she turned over.

Atho was lying in the air, an arm draped an inch above its chest. A thread of black spirit material led from one of its fingers to the green, hastily painted wall.

“Atho?”

Its eyes flicked open, and it smiled warmly at her. “How did you sleep?”

“Um.” She shrugged. “Good.”

It nodded and sat up, as if on a bed of its own, but without the drowsiness. With a tug, a net of black threads, dense enough to nearly qualify as a cloth, emerged from the wall and collected itself in Atho’s palm. Unlike the Shadow, the material was webby and thin. It resembled the outer fuzziness of a ball of cotton.

Senka watched all of this. “What are you doing, anyway?” She had never asked before.

It began to disentangle a thread and wind it around its finger. Its smile faded into neutral focus. “I am eating, one could say. My anchor material dissipates over time. When spirit material floats this way, I can catch it.”

“Like a spider,” she said.

It chuckled. “Yes. But we did this long before spiders.” The material was now cat’s-cradled between its fingers, and it started to weave a paper-thin layer of darkness. A second skin.

It had been another long day, and when the front door closed, everything came crashing down. Only because it was allowed to, because her parents weren’t home.

Atho lifted her chin, and already, its powers started to work. They echoed through her core. She sniffled, its finger separated from

her for a moment, and she scrambled away, gasping for air. “What are you doing to me?”

“What I can.” It frowned. “I apologize. Was it too much?”

It was better, she realized. She hesitated, then reached out to the Shadow. It took her hand. Cold.

The feeling was an absence.

“Just a few more minutes,” she heard Atho murmur. “Your biology needs to catch up with the changes to your soul’s vibrations.”

It went quiet.

When she opened her eyes, it was quivering in front of her, struggling with a demon. She stared, its hand still in hers. “Are you okay?”

Its head twitched inhumanly far. **“Do not mock care for me, pathetic human.”**

“I am so sorry. I am still young; it was more than I could handle all at once. Forgive me.”

She wiped blood from the thin scratch on her cheek, face unreadable.

“Senka. I care for you. Please know that I would never do this sort of thing in my right mind.”

“I know.”

“You have every right to request to unbind from me. I would understand.”

A drop slid down her neck, and she shook her head. “No.”

“Do you hear that?”

Senka stopped typing.

“Rain.”

She slid off her headphones and listened, crossing her legs on her swivel chair. Thunder cried out across the forest. A nearby horned owl interrupted it.

“Would you like to see?”

It touched her forehead, and her vision expanded in all directions, through the walls, through the rain, reaching the shed down the hill and stretching along the gravel driveway that led up to the road, all at once. She gasped softly.

“Your brain cannot process it all at once. Stay on a layer.”

One layer still gave her the individual drops on leaves, the mosquitos trapped in them, their legs, the molecules their legs were

“ A drop slid down her neck, and she shook her head. ‘No.’ ”

made of-

Her breath quickened, and she looked back at herself. She and Atho were still there, but within them both was something green and glowing. Six shards, in a vaguely human shape.

“That is us,” it said. “We are the same.”

But there was a difference. Bands of darkness, perfect circles, were slotted onto each of the two pointed ends of Senka’s soul shards. “Your binding bands,” Atho told her. “They make you my Match.”

She reached up, watching her soul move with her arm, and removed Atho’s hand.

“Have you had others?” she asked.

“A few. I am still young.”

“There is no use running,” it cackled.

Senka slammed the door behind her and hurried down the stairs. Her parents had already gone to bed, and the house was as dark as Atho. She turned on the lights in

the living room, pausing for breath in the kitchen.

For a moment, she was alone. The sheer dark outside taunted her, and she rushed to shut the blinds. Roaring rain drumrolled on the window, pounding, begging to be let in.

All was still. She breathed in and listened to the wind.

Atho phased out of the wall behind her, growling like a coyote, and Senka's heart thundered. She whipped around and backed into the counter. Behind its unassuming mouth were huge black teeth, shining in the light, narrowing to points. **"You will be sorry for this. For what you have done to me."**

It looked the same. So close to sanity, if not for the violent tremors. Her hand reached out before she

could stop herself. "It's okay."

"No. It is not." It lunged for her, but cringed as its leg passed through a chair.

She bolted out the front door into the downpour.

When the rain had stopped, it appeared.

Heavy footprints traced a path through the overgrown garden to where she was sleeping. Her form was curled beneath the shed roof's narrow overhang, half-soaked.

It touched her side, ever so gently.

After a few moments, she awoke with a peaceful yawn. When she remembered, realized what was happening, she pulled away. They stared at each other.

"Are you all right?"

"I think so."

"How can I help?"

She just looked at it. It was pained. Desperate.

"You don't have to anymore."

"What?"

"This isn't the only way."

Its face hardened. "You want me to go."

"No. Of course not."

Maja D.B. (she/they) is a passionate human hailing from Woodinville, Washington, and a junior creative writing major at Colorado College. She loves writing adventurous fantasy stories with complex worldbuilding, technical magic, and a hint of danger. Maja has been featured in Colorado College's *Leviathan magazine*, *Bending Genres*, and the *Henrys Fork Journal*. More of her writing can be found at www.majadb.com, and her Discord server is discord.gg/Jw7ErAk.

Simon Collinson

Hello Mr Magpie

I overheard my wife greeting a solitary magpie that was marching up and down our lawn. “Hello Mr Magpie,” she said cheerfully.

“What did you do that for?” I asked.

“I always do that when I come across a magpie. It's always best to greet the magpie if you don't want something bad to happen.”

“Ah, that's just a silly superstition. What's one magpie going to bring anyway?”

“Sorrow,” shot back my wife in a flash.

For it's a well known fact that she is learned in magpie lore, and knew a lot more about magpies than I. She was always chatting to magpies when driving around.

We both watched as a second magpie soon joined the first.

“What does that mean?” I asked.

“That'll be joy,” my wife replied.

“That's much better. Oh, a third one has just landed on the lawn. What will three bring?”

“It's three for a girl.”

“Hm, I can see a fourth magpie.”

“That means a boy.”

“Can't they make up their magpie minds? Now there's another one, that makes five!”

“That means silver.”

“Oh yes! We're in the money! Oh no, there's another one coming. Shoo it away! Shoo it away!”

“I wouldn't be so quick to shoo if I were you, six means gold.”

“Gold, get in! Who wants to be a millionaire?! I do! Come along, come along, my beauty, yoo hoo!”

“Don't get your hopes up, dear. A seventh one has just landed.”

“What are we getting now?”

“It's a secret never to be told.”

“What's that when it's at home?”

“I can't tell you. It's a secret never to be told.”

“Damn! Can't we shoot one and go back to gold?”

“It doesn't work like that. Oh, here's another magpie landing.”

“I thought the rhyme stops at seven?”

“No, it goes on. Now we've got eight. That's eight for a wish.”

“I wish the magpies would clear off. Here's another one. That's number nine.”

“That's nine for a kiss.”

“All I know is I can kiss gold and silver goodbye.”

“Those magpies just keep on coming. There's ten on the lawn now.”

“OK, what's in store?”

“That means surprises, be careful not to miss.”

“I wish I had a gun. I wouldn't miss.”

“Now there's eleven, that means health.”

“That's alright. Tell them to stop coming now. We've got enough

“What's one magpie going to bring anyway?”

magpies in the garden and I'm happy to bail out on health.”

“Now, there's another. That makes twelve. That's twelve for wealth.”

“Yes! That's more like it. Just stay at twelve. Please.”

“Oh dear, another one has landed. That makes thirteen!”

“Is thirteen unlucky in magpies?”

“You bet it is. Be wary, it's the Devil himself. So they say.”

“Typical. I hate magpies.”

“Yes, I'm not too fussed on them. And why is it getting all dark and sulphurous round here?”

“I'm glad you said hello, Mr Magpie.”

Suddenly we heard a thunderous knock at the front door...

We both turned to face one another, saying simultaneously, “I'm not opening that door!”

Simon Collinson

Keith the Leaf

There once stood a fine tree next to a fine church with three faces.

The tree was tall and called Tina and she had a glorious display of green leaves that shimmered and rippled in the breeze. When all the leaves got excited it looked like the flutterings of a thousand tiny green handkerchiefs waving ta-ta.

The leaves formed an impressive sight and they all were pleased with themselves with the great displays they put on, looking down on all those people who walked below.

They were a closely knit bunch those leaves, you could say, “as thick as leaves.”

That's how they stayed, every day.

Then one day one of the leaves, a lively, likely saucy, leaf called Keith, got to thinking what it must be like down below. Keith was fed up of hanging around all day speaking to the same neighbours about the same things. Surely, Keith believed, there must be more to life than this?

So Keith declared, “I'm bored of all this hanging around, this leaf must take its leave of this fine tree. I can't carry on living a life like this. I'm off to leap away and see what life holds down there.”

And with a wiggle, a tug and finally a mighty heave Keith the leaf had detached himself from the

branch and was quickly wafting down to the ground, waving and shouting to his neighbours as he floated down.

The other leaves were shocked and started to talk about what this leaf called Keith had done. Most of them grumbled that what Keith had done was a shocking and silly thing. The sensible leaves sadly shook their stalks and stems and thought “oh foolish and impetuous leaf called Keith,” and vowed to speak of him no more.

But some leaves decided what Keith had done was exciting and cool and they decided to follow Keith the leaf and would lief throw themselves off the tree and fall to the ground.

Every day at least two dozen “took the way of the Keith” and threw themselves from the tree.

“Surely, Keith believed, there must be more to life than this?”

Coming up with ever more imaginative, shocking, shameless, and, outrageous ways to fall from the tree. One leaf shouted out “Vive la Keith!” as it leapt from the tree in a flamboyantly French way.

You always get one.

Really, it was becoming a bit of a leaf for all up there.

And the other leaves looked on and soon decided it was the height of fashion to fling themselves off the branch and drop onto the ground, they were afraid of being mocked as old stick on the branches.

Soon loads of leaves were falling from the tree.

“Come on, let's do a Keith,” was the rallying cry for all the leaving leaves. It seemed the thing to do that season.

And soon there were very few leaves left.

These were the hesitant leaves, the aloof, the nervous ones. But they were getting lonely up there. And it was getting colder. It looked so much more inviting on the ground below them where they could see all their friends chasing one another around.

So one by one they detached themselves from the tree and floated down to the ground. Until the tall tree had no leaves at all for her display, but was totally bare.

But the fine tree was unperturbed for she had seen all this happening many, many times before. And she sighed a sigh of relief for where would we be without the antics of a leaf like Keith?

Simon Collinson is a writer from England. He seeks solitude and shadow.

Poetry

Mallory Gunther

Mary Oliver Would Ask Me

To go touch grass.
To stop tossing worrywart
Wishes down the future well,
Tucking my hands under my lap.

With a guiding pinch to my shoulder
Mary Oliver would ask,
Can you see those herons?

Watch them hovering
Over the waterway now.
See how their talons
Skim thin surface?
Like scratching glass,
Glistening in sun-stained shatter.

Do you see how those gators
Glide slow through the canal?
Going against the current,
Pointed grins towards the sky?

Did you hear those ducks drop
In sudden dive? The crash
Of wild splash. Just now!
Can you hear how the water
Wicks quick off their slick wings?
Can you hear the bubbling
Of their small bodies bobbing,
Snorkeling in synchrony?

Do any of these beings
Seem worried to you?

Mallory Gunther

At The Tea Party For My Saturn

Return

In a city long built and rebuilt
Inside my mind, at a crowded cafe,
I'm having tea with an old friend.
Sitting across from my Self-Doubt
I'm sharing sugar with my demons.

In the corner, the old clock ticks—
Turns round—as I wring my hands
Over in a nervous fit, fussing about
Chips in our china, catching my nails
In torn linen, overwashed. My fingers
Fidget with each nick and notch in the
Wooden rings round our table, worried
About the taste of my life in my mouth.

“Is this brew too bitter?” I ask.
Self-Doubt shakes its head,
“Nonsense. Chin up now!”

Pinkies raised above the bistro set
We cheers—*Clink*—and tip ceramic lips
To our lips with ceremonious slowness;
We learned to swallow our pain softly.

“So, how have things been?” I ask.
Self-Doubt shrugs its shoulders,
“You know, the same old same old.”

We're beating around the bush.
We both look different, we act
Different, we sound different
And yet we are the same—
Strange—beings we once were
And always will be. This face is familiar
Yet I know it not, and I know less still
Of the future faces that will follow.
We exchange a solemn nod.

“What brings you to town?” I ask,

My voice wry. Self-Doubt sighs,
“You can’t have forgotten, old friend
I come bearing the same gift as before.”

The facade flickers, blinking out above us.
Below our feet, tiled floors shake and spin as
Sirens blare in the distance. Out the glass
Window I watch traffic jam and tires screech;
Smoke plumes, panicked patrons shriek, rising
From their seats; Our saucers rattle and sing
Songs of re-returning to their stations, direct.
The old clock in the corner chimes again—
And again—echoing back through the chaos;
Embers swirl heavy and hot in the air as I
Turn and face my Self-Doubt. Both silent,
We stare at our other, suspended in stillness,
Collecting piles of ash on our shoulders.

“What do we do when our city is burning?”
Self-Doubt asks, reaching for more sugar.
I know the answer already. Like a mirror
I remain, I reach, I return, and I stir
Another lump of sugar in my tea.
“We let it burn.”

Mallory Gunther

Black Coffee with White Wedding Cake

After Daddy split, Mama started drinking
black coffee with white wedding cake,
'cause that's how she saw the world—
In black and white, frosted in irony.

Those mornings, Mama and I lay belly down
with our necks stretched up at the TV anchor,
acid astringent on our tongues like stories
dripping out slow across the news ticker.

When I was thirteen, Mama gave me the talk
about men and caffeine, how to grind down
beans for different brewing baskets. So now
I measure our grounds in meticulous grams.
And when coffee goes cold, Mama mercilessly
dumps it down the drain; tells me to brew again.

Mallory Gunther is a writer who hails from the Midwest but finds herself everywhere, most recently in New York and Florida. She is a recipient of the Will C. Jumper award and has previously published poetry in *Gasher Journal*.

Angeli Arellano

Psychosomatic

I might have been able to make me fall in love,
but why can't I keep my anger from being unfound?
I write to rage and engage in bedroom warfare,
but every night, the clock ticks away at my time.

I race to the edge of the morning and eve,
numb now to the poems with which I plead;
I lie to myself, cover myself with metaphors
to blunt these blades, of mine or others.

There's a constant fear of disappearing,
of being as fleeting as my freedom.
I'm honestly running out of words
to turn these heartaches into pages,

but I can't let my cries for help
be band-aids when they were bullets,
charged with white-hot
electricity of my emotions.

I could call myself a vigilante
for these bouts of vanilla valor,
if I was nothing less than a queen,
or nothing more than naive.

Or I could be a nobody,
a voice avenging voicelessness
by echoing in theater halls,
or escaping into hollow hearts.

I've been told I simply write too much.
Two hundred pages in, and I still can't see myself:
I could be anyone with my eyes, my mind, my heart.
So why do I keep writing as if I was the only one?

*Think what you want,
and you'll feel what you think.*

So does the mind dictate what the heart will feel?

Can the mind even dictate what the heart must feel?
Something tells me it's reason enough.
Something tells me it's not even yet tough.

When you love, do you think?
When you think, do you love?

Does love appear when the beloved is near:
the loyal presence that always lends an ear?

Does love approach in bouts of touch,
when the thumping in the chest becomes too much?

Does love arise when you look into its eyes,
as you search within for truth and lies?

Does love burn when you just give the word,
when preset identities have already been blurred?

Love, love, love, love.

I savor the word, but not what it means.
Maybe I've been living too long in my dreams.
Maybe I've been so used to living in fear,
that I no longer know how to hold things dear.

Angeli Arellano is a twentysomething multimedia designer and writer from the Philippines. Her poems have appeared in *Beyond the Quill* (digital) and *De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde's Shades of Gray* (print). Her inspirations include her countrymen's grievances and moral dilemmas. She can be found practicing her words on Medium (@angeli.eveningeditorial) and Instagram (@authoredbyangeli), or stomping around her first novel at biancaarellanoblog.wordpress.com.

Uchechukwu Onyedikam & Christina Chin

The Ongoing Struggle

*the blood of forefathers
running in torrents
from a Gillette-blade whip
the silence
by censorship*

*another day
of following
the news
the mainstream
same stream*

*voter id—
forefinger dipped
in indelible ink
a step in preventing
election fraud*

Uchechukwu Onyedikam

Reflection From The Walls

The passport I carry is not me –
I am from here; look behind you
I am from there – here and there
and elsewhere resides within me!

Stare through my veins I bleed
the name that christened you
at the bosom of life; hear, feel
my heartbeat, I dance in my sleep
and sing in my dreams of a new
land so full of grace – so full of
you and I, one human people

I am from here, raze those walls down
let them crumble to the earth, and through
the rubbles we will find ourselves again
hanging on each branches of the
olive tree – swinging at the wind

Dear brother, you delay our coming
tomorrow with all these labels assigned
to each and every one of us – we want to
play, roam and jump off this elevated
surface like we are here to do – no to
all these restrictions, no to this pass
you want me to display on my forehead

I am born human – we're the promise kept, let me go free and watch the moon,
blushing away... the reflection from the
walls, I want you to sink all those
instilled differences and let them find themselves at the bottom of the ocean
as we watch them drown...
let's go grab some beer

Uchechukwu Onyedikam

They Don't Care Till It's RIP

bring me back the sunshine
stolen by the roar of despair
this little wish of mine
that fueled the lamp
that died at dawn

thou art worthy of majesty
behind this table of grief
I mourn my sentence
in the blood that ink
thy high legacy

yesterday is of great relevance
in which I was able to catch
the dispelled tempest-tossed
through thy charming gaze
and bosom that bore me

prior to transcendence
i saw many colours in different
paintings beyond what mere
human comprehension would
conceptualize without prejudice

red, green, yellow stood me in awe
and left me in breathless symphony
in the warm stillness of bone & flesh
as i tried crawling out of my skin
watching the sun lower its walls

behind the letters full of paradox
streaming in through the window
of my father's house – such
longing of virtue signaling
one is in dire wish to express

granted that I may pause and
wonder about the flaws embedded
in the human system that stretches

out one's true consciousness
without being in the know

beknowing that one don't bother if another
is waking up, trying to make both ends kiss
this takes shape when one fails to
interrogate the wind of life that blows
towards one's thinking and/or know-how

because they don't care till it's RIP
to stuff up the dead with empty notes
of unworthy thought that never had
a hold on life when it has the benefit
of breath – of talking, walking & singing

and hence they congregate in
the holy name of the unlife body
under the human ego to pour wine
break merry and fire up excitement
to the one who never lived

Uchechukwu Onyedikam is a Nigerian Poet/Photographer based in Lagos, Nigeria. BOTN, Pushcart Prize nominee. His poetry has appeared in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Brittle Paper*, *Poetic Africa*, *Poetry Catalog*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Unlikely Stories Mark V*, *Spillwords*, among other publications. He and Christina Chin have co-written and published two poetry chapbooks. He's a contributor at Mad Swirl.

Claire Kroening

Dying Summers

Lilac groves overturned lackluster
arteries, mending deep beneath
once-uprooted soils.

Promises hung to the wayside
as choked ink and wilting
poppies by the fistfuls.

Of all the burnish, drained from
goodbyes into smoke-laden air—
lingered resonance strew

upon taut-glasses and tart wine,
leaving dying summers
in their wake.

Claire Kroening (they/them) is an award-winning writer based in the upper midwest, with their works appearing in a multitude of literary magazines and publications worldwide; where their recent works can be found on their Instagram @clairerosek. When not fostering their latest creative endeavors, they appreciate visiting art museums, studying foreign languages, and exploring the coastlines of The Great Lakes.

Elizabeth Barton

Cyclone Dovi

Thick sultry air loitered, trenchant humidity
hung with the expectation of thunder.

I was a sauna; glasses steamed over random words;
sweat clung, a slack costume I could not discard.

The wind rose, wet and heavy; bellicose air bitch-slapped
the morning awake. Trees leaned headlong,
whistling with stripped leaves, punch-drunk
by a howling sky blind with stinging rain.

The storm whittled away a vacant Sunday;
gusts rocked and jostled the house, tinkered
a roguish thrum through roofing trim
and plucked playful tunes in the guttering.

I was on a ship tossed at sea, rolling with waves
tumbling random reveries. Cocooned in smooth warmth,
I watched the bellowing fury outside, inviting
voyage on unending vistas in my mind's eye.

Elizabeth Barton is an artist and poet from New Zealand. She has poetry published in numerous journals and anthologies including *Vita Brevis Press*, *Literary Revelations*, *Flights* and *Spillwords.com*. She is the author of the award-winning pamphlet *Mirrored Time* from *Hedgehog Poetry Press*, and *All Revolutions Begin This Way* and *Auroral*, from *Alien Buddha Press*. Her art is in private and public collections worldwide including the V & A Museum Prints Collection, London.

Prithvijeet Sinha

A Scar

There's a scar on
my brown sandal,
akin to a star sign.
I think it's beautiful
how even the break
in the leather tissue
has a certain poetry to it.

A tiny inner white thread
has now started to show up
out of that earthy crack,
like a seedling
intent to
sprout
in the most
extraordinary
space of its own.

It's the visuality of it,
the poetics of it,
my eyes
transferring pretty
possibilities
to this
mundane item
that could have been
condemned
and thrown out.

But now after the
first drops
of delayed rain
have opened up
the skies
for a long-term
engagement
with our plains,
I'm certain
that flowers

will grow
out of that
tear in the outer
surface.

I'll leave it out
on the stone.
It will
house a green empire
soon
within it.

An innocent bunch of shiulis
will
find its cosy
little bed
in it first.

You don't pray for these
things.

They happen intrinsically
in Nature.

That is
the miracle.

Prithvijeet Sinha, a proud resident of the cultural epicenter that is Lucknow. His prolific published credits encompass poetry, musings on the city, cinema, anthologies, journals of national and international repertoire as well as a blog. His life-force resides in writing, in the art of self-expression.

Marianna Page

The Tragic Tale of Annabel Lee

My name was Annabel Lee,
My lover, who I loved so deep, was very faithful to me.
We met each other in a kingdom by the sea,
And loved each other more faithfully than any man on one knee.

In our beautiful kingdom by the sea,
A fate as beautiful as I, sought to take my love from thee.
But our love was as strong as a tsunami's winter tide,
And there was no fate that could ever keep him from I.

With a devotion so wonderful that the winged seraphs of heaven could not ignore,
In a kingdom by the sea.
They saw fit to take my soul from thee.

The trumpets echoed, sweet and eerie,
A wind blew out of a dark cloud, chilling.
Oh, my poor lover and me,
My new kinsman came
And took me away from thee,
To gag me up in a sepulchre,
In this kingdom by the sea.

Those bastard angels, so miserable in heaven,
Envied the love between you and me.
This had to be the reason (as all men know in this kingdom by the sea)
That the harsh winds came from the dark clouds that night,
Chilled and killed poor little old me.

But our love was mightier far than the love
Of those older than we—
Or wiser than we—
And never the angels in heaven above,
Nor Lord Lucifer reigning in hell under the sea,
Will ever isolate my soul that floats above the world,
Away from my lover and me.

Oh, how I beg the moon to bring you sweet dreams of me,
Even though the stars never rise, I hope you feel my bright eyes,
To connect me to thee.

Ah, my delight, to see you in the night, lay down by my side,
My lover, my lover, my past and my pride.

In my sepulchre, there by the sea,
My spirit embraces you in my tomb, where shadows sigh by the sounding sea.

Marianna Page

Time Passing

Today I rotted all day and watched the time pass.
I couldn't stop. Couldn't help myself.
To rot and watch the time pass gave me a sense of purpose
that no other day could compare to.
There's something about watching the time pass
on a Sunday morning, afternoon, and evening
that makes the essential dread just feel better
when you were already feeling worse.

They said time spent well isn't a waste of time.
But my wasting of time wasn't well spent.
All it did was make me feel bad about myself—
that I couldn't get up and do something,
that I couldn't run away from the gaping void
in the bottom pits of my stomach,
the huge emptiness in my chest.

I felt jealous today.
Jealous of the people who have never felt this way before,
who have never run away from themselves or their emptiness.
I felt jealous of my friends who had someone to talk to about their day.
I felt jealous of the friends who didn't wake up alone
and think soberly to themselves, "*When will it be my turn?*"
before running away from those feelings too.
I felt jealous of the friends who had someone to pass the time with—
a beautifully, dreadfully boring Sunday
well spent with someone they loved and who loved them.
A Sunday to pass the time with and be excited for tomorrow.

Because tomorrow, for me, will feel just like this empty, boring Sunday.
Only it will be Monday. Then Tuesday. Then Wednesday.
Then Thursday. Then Friday. Then Saturday.
And once again, Sunday.

I'm sure at some point the void in my stomach will slowly close up
like a healing wound.
I'm sure the emptiness in my chest will be filled with some sort of emotion
reminiscent of joy, anger, disgust, and love.
I'm positive it will.

But as time passes, the end of these feelings will return to the beginning,
and I'll ask myself if something ends and starts again,
did it ever truly end?
Or did the time just pass?

I'm not sure,
but I do know that even knowing that these feelings will return to me,
I can lay down in my bed, rot, and watch the time pass.

Marianna Page is a 23-year-old writer from the gloomy cornfields of the Midwest. She began writing poetry in middle school on her iPhone 5s notes app, battling the highs and lows of middle school angst and grief. Transitioning from poetry to prose, she found her groove. Marianna writes works filled with angst, humor, love, and longing, aiming to connect her heartbeat to readers who have good enough headphones to listen.

Abdulmalik Adeleke Olalekan

Lucid Dream

Friendship days gone
Like the smoke trailing a moving jet
Feelings moves around it but
Changing environment make it a chronicles

Moments of moments of a having indebted feeling about you
Yet, still uncomfortable unconditional uncontrollable
No bridge of words
Two years gone

Lucid dream intruded, dreaming of you for three good days
Your message inscribed overwhelmed enjoyment loops in
Who to tell? who to trust?

The day I decided to inform you about it
Chest raised, waving high like ever before
Fearing of thinking of calling you something evil or supernatural
But bracing up to accept every outcome of it
Telling you, phone rangs, never mind follows

Dreaming about you more
Lucid dreams follows
Checking on you to avert it

Ocheni Kazeem Oneshojo

A Poet's invocation

O death hold my neck
Let me breathe life
O sorrows confide in me
Let me seek sadness
O muse capture me
Let me see madness
O life strangle me
Let me feel pain
O humans leave me
Let me live in my Abyss
O abyss hide me from these people
And let me dwell in you

Ocheni Kazeem Oneshojo is a Nigerian poet and writer exploring love, nature, identity, and social justice through the lens of African culture. Currently, he is an undergraduate studying English and Literary Studies at Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State. His works have appeared in *Outsidetheboxpoetry Magazine*, *Everscribe Magazine*, and more. A Pushcart Prize nominee, Oneshojo writes from the heart, driven by a desire to inspire reflection. Follow him on Twitter @KazeemOcheni.

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Future Issues

We're thrilled to announce that our next issue, Issue No. 5, ***Aeternum Scriptor***, will be coming soon! Everscribe releases a new issue every 1st of the month, so stay tuned!

Writers can always submit their works through our website at everscribemag.com. Join our community by connecting with us on our [Discord server](#), where both writers and readers are welcome. Stay updated on issue releases, special opportunities, news, and more by following us on [social media](#).

For inquiries or questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@everscribemag.com. We hope you enjoyed reading Everscribe's fourth issue, and we extend our thanks to all the writers for making this dream come true!

Until next time,
The Everscribe Team

