

The background of the cover is a dark teal color with a subtle, repeating pattern of small, dark, stylized figures or shapes. In the upper right, a hand is shown holding a pen, positioned as if about to write on a piece of white, lined paper. The paper is tilted and contains handwritten text in a cursive script. The title 'MANUSCRIPTION MAGAZINE' is overlaid on the image in a bold, yellow, stylized font. The word 'MANUSCRIPTION' is on the top line, and 'MAGAZINE' is on the line below it. The letters are blocky and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.

MANUSCRIPTION MAGAZINE

BY: ISABELLE WALSH

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the third edition of *Manuscription*!

We started *Manuscription* specifically for creative people who are 18 and under. It is an opportunity for young people to have their voices heard and get experience in publication, as well as get excellent feedback and mentoring from older, more experienced practitioners. We wanted to help young creatives produce their best work and take something away from this process that they can apply to other projects in the future.

In *Manuscription*, the end result is not as important as the process. We want to know that our contributors (and, in some cases, our mentors) learned something from this experience.

We are delighted with the range and quality of submissions that we attracted for our third issue. Our contributors beautifully explore a range of complex issues with exciting clarity and attention to form. Our mentors, meanwhile, were able to coach the contributors towards improving their craft and highlighting what it is about them that makes them unique storytellers. We at *Manuscription Magazine* are sure that we're going to see great things from the young people who contributed to this issue.

We're excited to bring you this third edition of *Manuscription Magazine*! Keep your eyes out for the fifth edition in December, 2020.

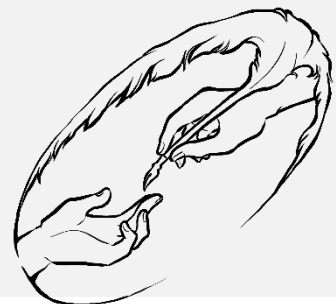
- The Editorial Board

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Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank our generous mentors, who worked with the contributors to produce the best quality work that they could.

Clare Gallagher

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Lynda Nash

Jennie Owen

Thank you so much for your support and valuable feedback!

If you would be interested in a mentoring role with us, please email manuscriptionmagazine@gmail.com

We'd also like to thank **Isabelle Walsh**, the winner of our Design Our Cover competition!

Are you a young artist who would like to design a cover for us? You'll find information on our website: <https://manuscriptionmag.wordpress.com/>

Sarah Mohammed

Bio: Sarah Fathima Mohammed is a fourteen-year-old Muslim-American emerging writer and high schooler from the San Francisco Bay Area in America. She has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers and the National Poetry Quarterly. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Canvas Literary Journal*, *Rattle*, *Girls Right the World*, *The Rising Phoenix Review*, *Apprentice Writer*, *The Heritage Review*, and elsewhere. When she is not writing, she serves as managing editor for *The Aurora Review*, reads for *Polyphony Lit*. She loves archery and Latin.

Terrorist

I.

It's September 11th, 2011. I am in second grade and, as usual, the TV in Mama's bedroom plays the news before school— The footage before the bombing shows New York in its best season on a breathtaking late-summer day; the gleaming buildings glitter with life. Today it is blasting out those horrific headlines once again in remembrance of that shocking attack that amplified the threat of terrorism here in our country and brought home a fear that challenged the idea that we are “the land of the free and home of the brave.” My eyes widen in disbelief as the planes crash straight into the towers, sending chills down the valleys of my spine as they collapse.

After school, my friends have heard about the attacks, bright with a gawking curiosity, they start probing me with questions about terrorism:

Why do they do that?

Does their family support them?

Who teaches them that?

I am seven, so I reply curtly and softly:

I don't know.

I don't know.

I don't know.

They eagerly lap up my short responses like warm chocolate melting against their tongues, and each word only seems to encourage them. Just kids themselves, they press on and on, asking me how in the world I could not know.

I finally ask them why they choose to spit these questions at me, and they look at each other knowingly, finally pointing to my smiling aunt walking towards me to pick me up, her hair neatly wrapped in a hijab. They glance back at me, expressions wary, and ask me a final question before leaving:

Are you a terrorist?

My eyes drop and I feel scared, for the first time, of who I am. Why does it have to be me who my friends think is terrorist? Why does my religion and culture suggest I am a bad person?

II.

On the streets with my family, I see folks are lining the crowded traffic lanes with anti-Muslim signs. Some people walk by freely, ignoring the hateful messages, but when we walk past them, they scream savagely at us, guttural voices cracked with a jagged sort of hatred. One man waves a tattered cardboard sign in my face:

Go back to your country.

I am a child of this country. I have nowhere else to go.

III.

I laugh at my aunt's jokes as we help carry Mama's home-cooked meals to the park to celebrate Eid, a time of celebration, silence, prayer, family, and happiness. The powerful aroma of the spices, unleashed by Mama's deft hand and her skillet, waft through the entire park. My eyes shine with joy as I tell Mama:

This is my favourite day in the whole entire year!

We had just put out the blankets and carefully spread out the banquet when a mob of yelling people approach—they chant and wave their signs telling us to *go back*, as if America were not our home as much as theirs, as if I were not formed in the body of this country, my only home. They spit at us until we back away, our faces crestfallen. We scramble to head back, quickly gathering up the home-cooked banquet and confining its aromas in sealed containers. As we approach the safety of my Uncle Waffiq's car, our alarm grows as we make out the words *GO AWAY TERRORIST* spray painted on his windshield. Our dismay is complete when we arrive to find his car broken into and defiled by defecation. Uncle Waffiq spends three days repairing it, missing work at the local jewellery store. I will never forget the look on his face, usually so reserved and graceful, tightened with anger and melancholy.

We stay home for a week, afraid to go out except for work, celebrating Eid in solitude, exiled from our community. We can't even feel comfortable buying groceries, not with people spewing hate at us in the supermarket aisles and telling us to leave Americans alone.

I was born here and raised with American values – you know, the self-evident truth that “all . . . are created equal,” that “prohibiting the free exercise” of religion is so fundamentally un-American that the first article of the Bill of Rights forbids any such thing. In spite of these principles, I am an American child who is not treated as American because of the colour of my skin and the religion I practice.

Eid is no longer my favourite day in the whole entire year.

IV.

On the first day of third grade at my new school, my teacher calls the roll but stumbles across my obviously Islamic last name. My new classmates’ previously bored faces turn as one towards me, alerted by my name, and I watch them whisper to their friends and point in my direction. Trying to recover the class’s focus, my teacher says that he will always remember my name since I am the only one in my class who looks like she could have that name. He laughs, as if my name, race and culture is a joke, and the other kids chime in with their own derision-stippled giggles.

But I don’t laugh.

The next year, I try to register my name without the last three letters at the end.

V.

My friends ask me where I am going to spend summer vacation and, filled with excited anticipation, I tell them I am visiting my grandparent’s homeland. They glance at each other and laugh—not a full-throated laugh but a choking, sarcastic sneer. Then they ask me:

Are you learning to be a terrorist?

They laugh again, so I roll my eyes and, once again, my lips crack that exasperated smile. "Allah," I say, the Arabic equivalent of "Oh my god." As the name for God rolls off my tongue, it comforts me in a way they never can.

But my friends suddenly back away from me, their faces no longer playful. I hear:

Stop using that terrorist talk on us!

Then they are gone, all hurrying away from me in a tightly packed row, their arms protectively around each other as if finding safety in numbers.

My eyes turn glassy as I consider the unfairness of it all. How can this simple Arabic word be so frightening and alienating? It is a different name for the same God.

Why must a girl in a scarf traveling East be accused of training to be a terrorist?

Since when has terrorist training become a joke?

VI.

Mama smiles at me as we fill out the forms to move to a new school. She has always taught me not to run away from my problems but to stand up for myself and be who I am unabashedly, but it is not working anymore. Instead, I feel excluded and stereotyped at the institution that is supposed to enrich my learning and empower my life.

Mama assures me that this is for the best. "Sarah, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger," she tells me, slowly rubbing her soothing fingers in circles across my back.

I may never 'blend in' with the other students, but I can use what I have learned from the years of stereotyping to embrace the fresh start and welcome the change.

I start my new school in fourth grade, still embracing my culture, my religion and my heritage. I hold my head up high as September 11th passes, as I enjoy my dinner at the park in celebration for Eid, as the teacher stumbles over my name, and as I tell my friends about my summer plans, tossing in an Arabic word here and there.

Although my fellow Americans' assumptions about me may not change, their adversity has strengthened my self-confidence and taught me that their mistakes have no bearing on who I really am.

How Are You?

"Tu kaisi ho?" a stranger asks me in Hindi. She wants to know how I am doing. I could answer, "fine," but the truth is complicated.

The truth is: tired. I am tired but not physically. Tired of going to India Cash and Carry with my brown friends and seeing the rows of tightly packed skin products, all promising a whiter complexion. Tired of watching my friends try the products and ask for feedback: "Is my skin any closer to porcelain yet?"

I wish they could appreciate themselves for who they are and embrace their creamy, chocolate-coloured skin, glittering like bronze in the sunlight. I wish they would stop comparing themselves to something they will never be and find beauty in their brownness. I wish they could take a patriotic pride in their immigrant family members who worked hard to achieve the American dream. But I know that what I wish is unrealistic: the skin-care advertisements prove that much. Even in India, lighter skin is viewed as more beautiful. Even at our local Whole Foods, the brown cashier had her face heavily powdered in sheer white, as if ashamed to be brown. Her legs were covered by the cashing table but, as I passed by, I caught a glimpse of them: long

and brown—gorgeous. I wished that I had told her they were beautiful, that brown skin was beautiful. The truth is, despite what I wish, brown girls will keep wishing that they could be something else, keep wishing that they can ‘fit in’ with their Caucasian peers.

“Tu kaisi ho?” another stranger asks. The truth is still complicated.

The truth is: frustrated. I am frustrated that someone can look at me, see the colour of my skin and assume things about who I am before ever hearing a word come out of my mouth. Last week, I went to the salon for a haircut, and the hairdresser asked me if my parents had taught me coding yet. It took me a second to process her question. She had not even asked my name, but she had assumed my parents must be coders by looking at the colour of my skin. At that moment, I hated that anyone could make assumptions about me based on my skin colour and stereotypes about my race, however innocuous those assumptions might be.

Later that evening, I went to an American restaurant with my family, and the server greeted us with a friendly “namaste,” the word uncomfortably dressed in her American accent. My six-year-old sister looked at her in confusion; we do not speak Hindi, and she had no idea why the server would utter this mysterious word. The server’s attempt at inclusion made my sister feel left out. I stiffened—how could she just assume that we speak a certain language based on the colour of our skin and reduce the thousands of Indian languages to this one stereotypical word? My father, used to such comments, offered a dry smile and replied, “Hello. I’ll have the steak, medium rare.” My parents have always been subject to racial profiling, and I will always be subject to racial profiling and, when I have children, they will always be subject to racial profiling.

“Tu kaisi ho?” a stranger asks. Still complicated.

The truth is: sad. I am sad that most of my peers still ask me if I can teach them a few words in “Indian.” Sad that when I go out for lunch with my Caucasian friends, they still call the Sri Lankan restaurant “that Indian place” because “it’s basically the same thing right?” Sad that people can be so ignorant about Indian cultures and still think that they know everything after reading a measly New York Times article about Pakistanis. Sad that this probably won’t change in my future.

“Tu kaisi ho?” a stranger asks.

“Good,” I mumble automatically.

God’s Waiting Daughters

The walk to Kumakonam feels like eternity. Sweat presses against my bare feet like raw hunger, heavy and inescapable. When the miles stretch past the thick humidity and into the musky wood of thatched huts and the rough sand of littered streets, I know I am finally here.

In the bustling village, women push past me, balancing pots on their heads as they walk home. Men sit on the ground under straw roofing selling jewellery.

Umma presses her cheeks against my face, whispers honeyed Arabic into my ear, tells me a childhood fable about the dog and the rat. We sit on the stone kitchen floor, grateful for the cool comfort. I peel onions and chop green beans, listening to the soft rhythm of her deft hand weaving thin white nets. Tonight, we will use these to cover the tattered cloth mats we sleep on so mosquitoes cannot savour our skin.

We work fast because night is already starting to taste the sun, and the men will be back from village trading soon.

After a few hours of slumbering silence, Umma is now backlit by a hundred distant stars. I catch her looking off into the distance, eyes slipping into the shadows of memory. Her breaths sound like sobs in the back of her throat, heated and pulsing like solar flares. I've never seen Umma like this – she has always been the perfect Muslim grandmother, emotion syphoned from her body and replaced by the weighted fabric of a burka, pulled and pressed until smiles are clawed away from her cheeks. I can still see the lurking shadows against her face, reminders of the pains devoted to heritage and culture.

Now longing winds across her face like tears, and I know she is thinking of everything she has lost -- forced to give up education and her youth to marry her first cousin when she was sixteen and live in the household where she is silenced, reduced to the tasks in the kitchen and next to the clothesline.

When Umma's wrinkled eyes touch the sky, I know she is calling god. *What did I do wrong?* she asks. *Save me from this life dwindled into a world of dependence.*

Umma is pleading, eyes cracking with the pressure of craving, the thirst for a world where she can live. She remains a daughter waiting for God, unravelling by the minute, struggling.

While Umma looks up, I cherish my time with her. I am finally able to embrace my Muslim heritage, something I feel unable to do at school in America.

At school, I walk in the hallways of sticky linoleum floors and fluorescent lighting, backpack slung over one shoulder. My teacher stumbles over my Islamic last name.

He doesn't try to get it right, butchering the letters and tossing them haphazardly into my hands. *I'll never forget that name, eh?*, he remarks, voice smooth and charged, burning beneath the surface. Derision-stippled giggles fill the room.

I let my tongue lay limp during the school day, a mere lump of congealed heritage that I tuck deep in my throat so that my vowels wouldn't leak out clunky and offbeat, contaminated by Arabic undertones.

When I look at the sky, I am pleading to God for the life I dreamed of when I came to America, a life where I can finally feel equal. I feel Umma next to me, waiting.

Serrina Zou

Bio: Serrina Zou is a seventeen-year-old high school student from San Jose, California in the United States and a 2019 California Arts Scholar in Creative Writing. Her poetry and prose have been recognized by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Just Poetry!!!, the Asian Pacific Fund, and the Bay Area Book Festival. Her work appears or is forthcoming in the National Poetry Quarterly, In Parentheses, The Rising Phoenix Review, Bitter Melon Magazine, Manuscription Magazine, The Battering Ram Literary Journal, and Eunoia Review. When she is not writing poetry, she is either catnapping or avidly devouring novels.

Moon Ties

From the wake of summer

We pick citrus smiles

Twilled from the spirals

Of hundred-year-old trees

Seedlings like we before

Our mothers poured

Our names into

The sacred reaping between

The delta of christening.

The gardener

Calls us sisters and I

Cannot bring my lips

To correct him,

Without sinning. Come

Moon Night we hold

The navy shingles

Under heaven's gaze

Paper perfect oceans

Creased with origami.

This is how I fold

Our skins, together

Immortal in crescent

Crane grace. Our god

Stares at us from heaven

And this is where our

Mothers mistake

The rabbit curled up

Like a cat in the shadows

Of lantern light; our eyes

Follow the camera

In a 360 degree arc,

The way ink follows

Felicitous blessings

Bleeding rouge in

Peach blushed gold.

We don't eat mooncakes

That year; instead, we

Soak the yuzu citrus

In sugar crystals, and

Taste the sun for the first time,

A bizarre, benign reckoning.

In chronicles, we live again,

In ebony and ivory, the

Language of eternal love.

Quarantine

In the new year we beseech God

For health and happiness, hung for him

The body of our ancestors, the vitruvian

Anatomy parcel unfurling like lotus;

I am told in spring with its skies

Arcing with drip fires and dandelions

Wisps God will take scorched earth

And fold a miracle, his hands deft

With origami, the ageless wrinkles

A testament to his omniscience

And protection. That year, we prayed

With invisible threads entangled in invisible

Threads, the telegraph wires to God

Intercepted by antiseptic sting; time

Cutting the glass of each of us drenched

In welts of Purell and isopropyl alcohol.

In the spring, Grandmother turns

To her primroses, lullabies undressed

All the uncertainties knit into her
Creasing brow, the postcards of
Her youth burning against immortal
Crooning and I imagine her in her
Bed of petals silk sutured to her
Skin, the earth's pulse slick like
Baptism and I dream of her dreams,
Sixteen -year-old fragility steeled
To the spine. In the war years, she
And God took clear tea and rationed biscuits
With their protests, the crumbs trailing
To the horizon and back. Grandmother
Signed her inheritance to Entropy whose
Skylines of biscuit crumbs unravelled
Like a skein of bloodline; grandmother
Thrust from her cocoon body a reaping
Of unsown sinners, impervious to the
Immortality and gospel hymns. She

Sang them anthems and nursery rhymes,
Hoping that they were enough for just
One more spring. When Grandmother
Sears the history of me into the steam
Of her God tea, I am always abortion,
A child tumbling from the splinters
Of heaven, innocent and unwanted;
I hear the stories too often, a psychedelic
Haze of mythology and tragedy drowning
In the chest of God, so when Grandmother
Dies on a sterilized hospital bed with heart
Monitors and dripped morphine the next
Spring, God goes with her, mouths
Contorting poems and elegies, all
Their wishes fleeing like shrines.

Adularescence

Summer sunset, diaphanous stammering

Light, a heartbeat with rain dancing

Against the windowpane, glass

& windchimes & teeth

Beating against the chatter

Of stars the hue of November frost

Rimmed in fiery maple leaves,

Beating for no one, beating for nothing.

I puppet death, the lifeless elk

With stargazer eyes, antlers clutching

The moon & breaking, breaking,

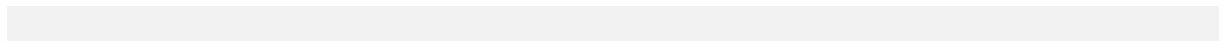
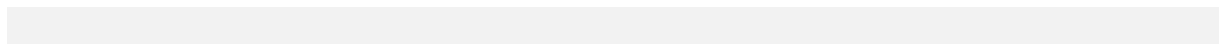
Gone. In my imagination I am

The galaxy cauldron, swirling summer

Like Van Gogh, bleeding fireworks

Into the bodies of gods, a concave

Breath, gone with resurrection.



Sarah Hurley

Bio: Sarah Hurley is a 17-year-old American writer currently living in North Carolina. She believes the most wonderful things in life are music, books, pumpkin muffins, and flamingos.

Echoes of the Dead

I remember you—

I remember

Grease-fried fish from a restaurant

With carefully-painted seascapes

I haven't seen in years now

And laughter bubbling out of your sturdy frame

As I asked please-pretty-please

For a Peppermint Patty at the front desk

(Still one of my favourite treats)

I remember you—

I remember

The sticky sweet flavour of homemade pear preserves

Lingering on my tongue alongside

Toast and stick butter

And wondering how on Earth you could

Cook up so much *good eatin'* in that tiny kitchen

And have time left over for

A round of Crazy 8s with me

I remember you—

I remember

A never-ending stream of peanut butter crackers

And skin as baked as gingerbread

From hours under the raging sun

Because *nothing* could keep you indoors

(And Heaven help even the weather if it tried)

I remember you—
I remember
Hearing my mom call you “Firecracker”
In place of your name
And wondering *Why?*—
Then meeting you once and *knowing*
By the sight of your cherry red sweater
And tales of your bowling escapades

I remember you—
I remember
The day you were born too soon—
Babies without beating hearts—
And I try to keep you each alive
In shades of aquamarine
And peridot
And amethyst
Since I was never allowed to love you
Beyond a birthstone

I will remember each of you
Despite the looming absence that hovers
In my chest, stealing my breath like heavy smoke—
The spark of your existence will never burn out
As long as the memories of you remain
Pressed like keepsakes in the precious corners of my mind—
I will remember you—

I remember

Long Division

When did
You & I
Become
You
&
I
Separated by the great divide
On opposite sides
Of best friendship?

I See You

I see you

I see you everyday
And though I would never get up the courage
To utter it aloud
I think you are more beautiful
Than sunlight reflected atop the dew
O'er the sprightly green blanket of spring

I see you wearing that plaid button down—
The one with red and blue lines
That makes the almond colour of your skin
Stand out against its folds and seams—
And I wonder how anyone could ever think
The Spanish language is less
Than elegance personified

I see you and I see
Your eyes glimmer as you smile at
Someone I do not know

As a cherry tree blossom falls
And catches in your hair
And I cannot stop myself from laughing
At the face you make when you swat it away

I see you—
I see you and I remember
That one shining moment when
You looked at me as though I were
More majestic than the shimmering mist
That escapes the crest of a wave
As it breaks upon the open ocean

I see you and my chest clinches—
My mind reeling in an effort to remember
If I ever really loved you
Or if I loved the idea of loving you—
But I fear it is all in vain
Because for better or worse
The universe decided we weren't meant to be
(Funny, I'm still writing you poetry)

I see you but that is all I do—
I can always look but never have
Because you are not mine and never were
And looking back I wish
With every shattered fragment of my heart
That the luxury of time and circumstance
Had for once been on our side

I see you—
I see you everyday
And though I never listened when Mama said
Some boy would take my heart and run away with it

It does not change the fact that
It aches with the intensity of
A thousand supernovas
Obliterating the once-held *aligned perfection*
Of the galaxy's night sky

And I still have to see you
Every day, every day—

I see you and I know you could not possibly fathom
The thoughts in my head
Or the words from my pen
And though that does not sit well with me
I smile and play the part of one whose heart
Has not been split in two
Every time I see you

I see you

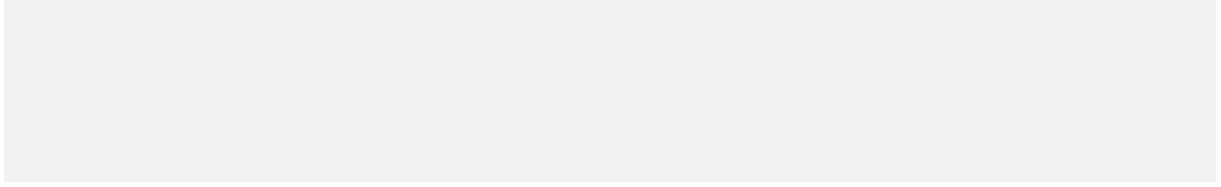
I see—

Sounding Off

“Why do your poems
Take up so much space?”
They ask with a curious stare

I let out a sigh as I
Pick up my pen:
*People only care about my words
When they exist beyond the
Perpetual babble of modern society—
It's easy to forget the sound of*

*One's voice when stuck
Forever sending a poetic, never-ending
Ink and paper SOS to a world with
Static in its ears*



Julia Aloi

Bio: Julia Aloi is an eighteen year old writer from the United States. She is an editor for BatCat Press, where she also practices a variety of bookbinding techniques. She serves as the managing editor of the award-winning literary magazine, Pulp. Her work has been published in Balloons Lit. Journal, LandLocked, Jokes Review, Variant Literature, and Sheepshead Review.

Small and Insignificant Things

I write memories and glimpses
from my childhood down
on the rose-patterned walls
of our house so I know to never
forget them.

Before you found them
and painted them over:
the springtime picnic in the meadow,
mosquito bites from the campfire,
eating burnt toast on Mother's Day,
the birthmark on your left ear,
cutting holes in bedsheets for ghost costumes,
baking blackberry pies in the summer,
and all of the moments
where being a girl
and being my mother's daughter
were not exclusive roles.

Though these inked moments
remain forgotten by you,
I still like to think about the times
that are now long covered
by paint.

Cellar (Door/Spider)

Cellar door

is thought to be one
of the most beautiful phrases
in the English language,
though the reason behind its
inherent attraction is unknown.

I have a few words that fall into
the same category:

lemon drop

defenestration

canary

pocket lint

pluck

shatter

flutter

quintessential

obsidian

waltz

Mother

However,

cellar doors and cellar spiders,

though stemming from

the same base word,

are opposites.

Cellar spider mothers will

throw themselves in front of their

unhatched eggs

as a defense mechanism,

crawling and wrapping

themselves around

the egg sacs with feverish love.

Yet when the eggs hatch,

the children will not hesitate

to feast on the corpse

of their creator.

Just as we are drawn to phrases

such as *cellar door*,

the youthful children are drawn

to their cellar spider mother -

though their intentions
aren't as sweet.

Teeth Box

My baby teeth are set in lines,
shapes of tiny white morsels
with caked blood,
in my velvet, heart-shaped,
emptied ring box.

You stopped collecting mine
after I lost my first few,
the manila folder labeled
“TEETH”
pushed back into the filing cabinet,
so in the box they now rest,
back with their owner
for even cold teeth deserve a home.

Clinging

Baby orangutans will hold onto
their mothers for up to a year,
no force capable of tearing them apart
from her.

If their infant dies unexpectedly,
the mother will carry the corpse around
for seven days,
and on the eighth day,
when the child no longer resembles the child
and the mother sees not a son or daughter
but a piece of meat,
she picks apart at its flesh,
picking and scooping and eating.

When the child no longer resembles the child.

When the mother does not recognize her child.

At what point does this happen?

When the infant's face is unrecognizable,
stolen by death and decay?

When the infant's face is fresh,
untouched by the worms of the earth?

Does the mother feel guilty?

Beets & Pricked Fingers

Your mother always hated makeup,
forbidding you to wear it as a child.

I know this because

I have suffered the same fate

that you most likely did -

growing up as a teenage girl

with a mother,

a loosely-defined one

at that

in both mother-daughter cases.

Each Sunday, before the mirror

I crush up beets in the sink,

staining my fingers pale pink,

and rub the colour onto my cheekbones.

When you saw the beets

and half-used makeup wipes

in the trash can,

you became suspicious.

I prick my pinky finger

with an earring and dab the oozing red

onto my cheeks instead.

The earring is thrown away
and the makeup wipes are hidden
under the wooden floorboards.
I learn from my mistakes.

About a Butterfly

Two glasswing butterflies
flutter through the air.
Their opalescent wings,
radiating and proud.
In the mushroom meadow,
they land on a fallen log of oak,
oozing a fermented sap.
The creatures land and sip on
the ambrosia, drunk with sugar.
With serrated wings, the zebra longwing
appears and shreds one into pieces.
Its remains scattered on the log,
sticky and dead,
combine with the sap.
The remaining one sips from the mixture.

Ashley Duraiswamy

Bio: Ashley Duraiswamy is an eighteen-year-old from Princeton, New Jersey, and an incoming freshman at Yale University. Her work has appeared in *The Apprentice Writer* and *The Daphne Review*, and she owes much of her growth as a writer to programs at Kenyon College, the University of Iowa, and Middlebury's Bread Loaf School of English. In her spare time, Ashley enjoys teaching creative writing classes at local elementary schools and playing ping pong with her dad.

Pods

We agree that

Beans spill from sea-green pods:

Hard, lacquered,

Shining the way our feet shine

As we trail them through the pond.

When I say "we," I mean "I"—

When you say "I," you mean everyone

Who leans against you on damp pond sand,

Flicking your toes with theirs

Like silver fish spilling

from sea-green pods

Together, but hard, lacquered.

What This Has Done

You were slow to walk, but Mother fixed you.

Her hands slid up your arms and pulled:

Nails against baby flesh,

Lullabies muttered like prayers, penance,

Basslines for your sobs.

Father found the marks—

Moons sliced into your skin—

And you cried because you didn't know

What they were.

I don't know what this has done to you.

You were slow to write, but Ms. Shapcott fixed you.

She bent over your chair, hair tickling

Your cheeks, stomach curved

Against nape of your neck.

You mixed up *love* and *leave*,

So she taught you more words,

Lips sticky

Against your ear:

Ungrateful

Retarded

Broken

You thanked her because she swore

She was helping,

And you wanted to believe her.

You don't know what this has done to you.

You were slow to laugh, but Jonathan fixed you.

He was ten and a day; you were nine and two months.

You'd walk home together, palms pricked

With playground splinters like constellations

No one else had seen—just you and him.

They say it's unfortunate you saw his body.

You were too young, and he was too dead—

You couldn't pretend he was sleeping.

We don't know what this has done to you.

You were slow to heal, but I tried to fix you,

Sang *baby brother, who loves you?*

As you swung from my neck

A noose

No tears

Not even now, when my cells are blooming

Too fast for my blood

(Too much life in my veins,

And they say that's death)

I pray you pretend that I'm sleeping, but

I don't know what this will do to you.

You don't know what this will do to you.

Valentina Donato

Bio: My name is Valentina Donato and I am a 17 years old student. As every stereotypical Italian, I am loud and I use tons of gestures. I try to use my voice, words and pictures to speak up for social justice and equality. In the meanwhile, I pet cats.

MANSPLAINING

I deserve to be heard

says the man

unconsciously overwhelmed

with privilege

he doesn't care if she is right

if she is more competent

has more experience

lives those things on her own skin

he doesn't care if she argues back

he's gonna talk louder, louder, louder

until his noise will cover her words

poor man, he is just

settled in his ignorance

he's not racist, sexist, homophobic

he didn't get the chance to be heard

so he'll talk louder, louder, louder

he won't listen to her anymore

he is the victim now and

victims deserve to be heard.

Luke Park

Bio: Luke Park is a 15-year-old freshman from South Korea, with a love for poetry and comics. He would mention how he loathes speaking in the third person, but enough people loath third-person speech anyways.

Docks

It's a dark blue night

seagulls cry signals

It's last call

Sea salt fills the air

Water winds accompany

A silent peaceful breeze

Yellow of red, red of steel

On ships over yonder

Voyaging

Like elegant dancers

On ocean's stage

Sailing under a blanket

Of an astral followspot

And to the right

Hands ponder

To the left

As well

And carefully toss nets

They do, as

Posiedon's children

Fall to rest

Supper is ready.

Waves are our waiters

And our boats

the tables

And the lighthouse

Afar, the

Signal of due work

to the docks.

Mariana Trench Jury

Baggage of air, I carry
Cry tears of interrogation
Try to breathe, I dare you. Furor of the southern west king

Exclamation mark!
When the dam of yuletide collapsed, a stream of consciousness followed
the child, of the poor, poor, child

Drowned in her own misbelief

How to boil an egg
Place your eggs in a pot
Cover the eggs with water
Ensuring that at least an inch of water has covered each egg Boil for eight to ten
minutes
Serve the shells to the ethereal corpse
Consume without abandon
The eggs go blue, wait till midday

Rise and shine, idiot

Cool crayon of distinct tint
A butterfly steals your cadillac
On further notice, corruption of the quetzalcoatlus

Orange, Asmodeus
Electricity flows through his brain Breathe, Breathe!
I told you to breathe, yet you complied

A lonely soul drifts into a freight train As Saturn devours his son

Horace, taste the pain of gluttony Spaghetti for the damned

A lock was stolen in the process

Goodbye, Mariana Trench Jury.

Firewatch

Isolation
Does it drive the mind To solitude or Insanity?

Abode Clouds, trees Hands, beings Nonexistent

Nothing
Nothing is here
No sparks, no earth

The truth is evident For it does not exist

Envy

No eyes
None on me, none possessed Or so I believed
Upon my art

They say that it's green with envy
I think it's more red
Like a burning flame of misguided passion Spawning cinders, inner demons

A voice
Unexpected, unwanted, unruly Uncoerced
Parasite, gnawing at my insides

But now
Looking down, at My own pedestal I can see

Moon

What a strange feeling this is

To stand upon the star stained hovels

Holding a dish, empty

Save for the reflection of a pale sphere

Devotion (3 poems fit into one)

Isolation
Does it drive the mind To solitude or Insanity?

Abode Clouds, trees Hands, beings Nonexistent

Nothing
Nothing is here
No sparks, no earth

The truth is evident For it does not exist,

Blinded, blissful sleeping

No eyes
None on me, none possessed Or so I believed
Upon my art

They say that it's green with envy
I think it's more red
Like a burning flame of misguided passion Spawning cinders, inner demons

A voice
Unexpected, unwanted, unruly Uncoerced
Parasite, gnawing at my insides

But now
Looking down, at My own pedestal I can see

What a strange feeling this is

To stand upon the star stained hovels

Holding a dish, empty

Save for the reflection of a pale sphere

Sophie Patulny

Bio: Sophie Patulny enjoys writing short stories and novels of the fantasy genre, as well as historical and contemporary fiction. Sophie's short story, "Once A Jolly Swagwoman" was the winner of the Better Read Than Dead 2018 Summer Writing competition. Her novella "Earthians" was shortlisted for the 2020 National Somerset Storyfest Novella Competition; she was one of nine high school student finalists of the NSW and ACT area. She also loves dragons. Probably a bit too much.

Aragog The Huntsman

Most school lunch breaks are monotonous and boring. Especially when the playground is a concrete slab, because your school thinks that play equipment is dangerous. It means that even the smallest thing becomes such a massive fuss; you'd think Voldemort was here to kill us all. Even stupid gossip was better than nothing, although still pretty boring. I'd much rather fight witches or ride unicorns.

One particular day, I was telling Victoria and Joyce, my two best friends, about my pet dragon, Norbert. The same one from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, which I had read not long ago.

"He's small, and brown," I said to them, stroking the air where I thought my dragon would be. I imagined him sitting beside me regally, scales shimmering.

"I have a pet. He's a phoenix," Victoria said. She pointed at the concrete in front of her. In my mind's eye, I saw a fiery red bird with long crooked talons and sharp black eyes standing there, just like Fawkes the phoenix. Victoria had just started *The Chamber of Secrets*. Her copy had a super cool front cover of a green snake hissing. I had always liked that cover more than my own, which was a drawing of Ron and Harry in the flying car. It looked a bit silly, to be honest.

I decided it was time to play a game, so I pointed to the library block across the playground, a big brown brick building. "The Giant Octopus!" I cried.

The Giant Octopus was our most dreaded enemy. He loved to wreak havoc wherever he went. It was our job, as the guardians of the human world, to protect it from him. Often, entire lunchtimes were devoted to fighting him, and any other creature that took a fancy to our school.

Joyce gasped. "I can see him!"

He was blue, dangerously huge, and strong enough to rip apart a house as if it were paper. He sat upon the library roof, smashing the building with his tentacles. Masonry came crashing down upon unaware children. Had the monster been real, they would be running for their lives, but he was only a figment of our ridiculously bored minds.

"I'm sending my phoenix to try and take out the octopus's eyes!" Victoria said. We watched the fiery bird sweep through the air, but before he could even get close, the octopus slapped him away like a fly.

"Something stronger! Cast a spell!" I cried.

"Fire!" Joyce yelled.

Other kids near us turned. "Is there a fire?" the ringleader, Allison, asked. They were the popular girls, I think? I could never be bothered with that nonsense. Who cared if you were popular or not, if you had no imagination? A popular robot is still a robot.

"No," I replied. "Why?"

"Joyce just yelled 'fire'," another girl, Emma, said.

"It's our game," Victoria began. "We're pretending to fight a giant octopus using fire."

Emma frowned. "Giant octopuses don't exist, you know?"

"We're *pretending*," I echoed.

"Also its octopi, not octopuses," Victoria said.

Allison looked irritated. "That's dumb. Why pretend to fight something that doesn't exist?"

"Because it's *fun*," I spat. We exchanged frowns, and then I turned back to Victoria.

"Use the fire spell!" I told her.

She turned and pointed at the monster, muttering incomprehensible incantations.

Suddenly all the octopus's tentacles burst into flame. He roared. Smoke mixed with the dust that rose from the building. Howling in defeat, he slid off of the library roof, and faded from our minds.

We all sagged with relief, and dug through our lunchboxes for a celebratory sandwich to revive our energy.

But our imaginary problems were barely gone when we heard real ones. On the far side of the playground, a group of kindergarteners were standing in a circle, pointing at the ground and screaming.

From behind us, other kids ran over to see what was wrong, and then recoiled in fright as well.

Victoria, Joyce and I hurried over, but couldn't see past all the people what was causing the commotion. I tried to push through to get a better look, seeing as I was the smallest and most agile.

Suddenly there was movement on the ground, and everyone jumped back, screaming. I was finally able to see the source of the trouble.

It was a Huntsman spider! No wonder they were scared. Rumour had it that years ago, a girl had been bitten by one while locked in the last cubicle of the bathrooms, and she had died, her ghost forever haunting that cubicle. No one ever went in there now, even if they were busting and there were no other cubicles available. Not because they were scared of the ghost, but because they didn't want to get bitten by the spider.

Apparently, if you leave a Huntsman alone, they'll leave you alone. Just like the giant spider from *The Chamber of Secrets*, Aragog. He only tried to hurt humans who trespassed into his secret forest home.

I turned to see Allison and Emma behind me, looking completely terrified. Urgh. The robots. Aragog would have loved to eat them.

That gave me an idea. I grinned at them wickedly, and pointed to the spider on the ground. "It's Aragog!"

Emma, frowned. "Who's Arrowgog?"

"*Aragog* is a giant spider!" Victoria said. "He's bigger than an adult!"

"He eats children for dinner!" I told Emma. "And he doesn't even cook them first, he eats them *raw*!"

A couple of other kids nearby stopped screaming to listen.

"You're saying that this spider is him?" Lily-Lu-May, a girl in my class, asked, pointing at the Huntsman on the ground.

I nodded.

She looked horrified.

"Hang on," Allison said. "You said Aragog was a giant spider, but this one is tiny."

"He wouldn't be tiny to ants." Joyce said.

"But he still couldn't eat us. It's just a made-up character from *Harry Potter*."

"Wait!" I cried. I whipped out a stick from my pocket. Victoria, Joyce and I each had one. They were our 'wands'. We had found them in Victoria's backyard.

Everyone gasped.

Victoria and Joyce pulled out theirs too.

"It's a wand!" Emma cried.

"No," Allison replied. "It's a stick."

"A wand *is* a stick," Victoria said.

Now the huddle was around *us*, rather than the spider.

"Aragog has stopped moving," I said, pointing my wand at it. "I think he's dead."

Everyone peered forward to see if that was true.

"*Expelliamus!*" I cried, waving my wand at it.

To my amazement, the spider skittered forward a few centimetres.

Everyone jumped back another step, screaming.

I grinned at Allison.

"What's going on here?" a deep voice pierced our conversation.

Mr O'Scott had arrived.

Everyone suddenly dispersed, leaving Victoria, Joyce and I alone with Aragog and the teacher.

Mr O'Scott saw the spider. "Goodness! All that fuss over such a tiny creature?" He turned to us. "What have you three been stirring up everyone for?"

He was trying to tell us off, but he said it so calmly that it sounded more like he was wondering if we liked sherbet lemons. I had to bite the inside of my cheek to stop myself from laughing.

Then the bell rang. He sighed. "Go on. Off to class."

As we hurried away I saw him gently pick up Aragog with a plastic container from his first aid bag. I was glad the spider would be alright. Hopefully my spell hadn't hurt him too much.

Then I felt someone tap my shoulder, and I turned to see Allison.

"Hey could you teach me how to cast a spell like that?" Allison asked. "I know it's not real, but it's still cool."

"I'll help fight the giant octopi," Emma added from behind her.

Joyce, Victoria and I grinned at each other.

"Alright," Joyce said. "If you like."

"But there's one rule..." Victoria continued.

They leaned forward eagerly.

"Don't be robots," I said.