



PERSIMMON REVIEW  
SPRING 2024

# Issue 04

## Rebirth

“BLOSSOMING” BY JILL VANCE

# Editor's Note



Dear Reader,

Welcome to Issue 04: Rebirth of *Persimmon Review*, an online literary magazine that aims to showcase the voices of young writers and artists. This issue presents the creativity and passion for written and visual work, regardless of age or experience, in hopes of bringing people together through their craft.

Issue 04 features pieces that represent the theme of rebirth, a common theme in literature that can be interpreted in many ways. It is also associated with the season of spring, which is a time for renewal and growth.

Thank you to the contributors who submitted their work to make this publication possible. Additionally, thank you to the readers and social media followers. The growing support for *Persimmon Review* has been truly meaningful.

It is an honor to share the creative pieces of talented writers and artists. I hope this issue inspires everyone to start something new. Happy reading!

Emily Kim  
Founder, Editor-in-Chief



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>COMPOST</i> by Abby Crawford	<b>06</b>
<i>BORN BRUISES</i> by Aidan Chafe	<b>07</b>
<i>FERNS AT EASTER</i> by Blake Everitt	<b>08</b>
<i>WHEN LIFE GOES ON</i> by Charlotte Cosgrove	<b>09</b>
<i>EQUINOX</i> by Chey Morgan	<b>10</b>
<i>SPRING</i> by Eliza Homan	<b>11</b>
<i>DECEMBER YEAR</i> by Erin McGarrity	<b>12</b>
<i>TIDE OUT</i> by Grace Hall	<b>14</b>
<i>REBIRTH</i> by Jedidiah Vinzon	<b>15</b>
<i>A WALK WITH MY DOG</i> by Jill Vance	<b>16</b>
<i>A TREE GROWS IN ANTARCTICA</i> by Jillian Thomas	<b>17</b>
<i>RE_____</i> by Katie Chung	<b>18</b>



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>AS THOUGHTS FLEW</i> by Katrenia Grace Busch	<b>20</b>
<i>PNEUMATOPHORES</i> by Leah Madden	<b>21</b>
<i>CANDLE OF YOUR LIES</i> by Linda M. Crate	<b>24</b>
<i>THE CABIN ON STARLITE PINES ROAD</i> by Naomi A. Evans	<b>25</b>
<i>MOTHER OF SPRING</i> by Nick Barr	<b>27</b>
<i>SPRING IS A LESSON</i> by Sunayana Dash	<b>29</b>
<i>FROST TO FLORA</i> by Tabitha Kyalo	<b>30</b>
<i>LET'S TAKE FLIGHT, MY LOVE</i> by Penny Amara	<b>31</b>
<i>METAMORPHOSIS</i> by Ray Rowan	<b>35</b>
<i>BUILDING NEW BRIDGES</i> by Xenia Vivona	<b>38</b>
<i>CANDIES FOR A BIRTHDAY</i> by Adity Kay	<b>39</b>
<i>MY MOTHER'S EXPERIENCE WITH REBIRTH: A STORY OF RENEWAL</i> by Jasleen Kaur	<b>42</b>



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>DANDELIONS</i> by Sarah Terkaoui	<b>46</b>
<i>GO TO HOPE</i> by An Jinkyong	<b>48</b>
<i>MOONGLADE</i> by Colleen C Brady	<b>49</b>
<i>BLOSSOM FROM THE LIGHT</i> by Didi	<b>50</b>
<i>FROM DUST WE COME, TO DUST WE GO</i> by Erika Lynet Salvador	<b>51</b>
<i>CUTTING TIES</i> by Vasundhara Srinivas	<b>52</b>
<i>UNSPOKENTREES</i> by Wabo Motiki	<b>53</b>
<i>CONTRIBUTORS</i> Author and Artist Biographies	<b>54</b>

# **COMPOST**

## **by Abby Crawford**

Life/death  
flipped a coin?

The skull cracks,

a deer leaps

from bracken.  
Nothing discernible.

Threshold to  
Threshold.

Out spills the contents.  
Wet forest mulch.

Daffodils, Daffodils, Daffodils.

# ***BORN BRUISES***

***by Aidan Chafe***

There are men who mow the lawn  
to make themselves whole. Men who wash  
their truck in the driveway on a Saturday, so it shines  
like God's teeth, to restore order to their world.

Men who can't fix anything without the language  
of their hands. There are men afraid of their fathers.

Men who become them. Some men bleed,  
seek shelter in their wounds. Others are ghosts  
of themselves, intersections of fate and myth,  
not fellows per se but fumes. There are men,

I've been told, bold and beautiful,  
to bare, bruise then bloom. Who hold and are held,  
beholden to the bouquet within.  
Show me, so I may pluck out these thorns and begin.

# ***FERNS AT EASTER***

## ***by Blake Everitt***

In the fierce tremor of ferns,  
the dapple of frayed leaves wired lightly,  
the anemone's petalled silence, chalice-white,  
curls, Christ-ascending, and psalms of fading  
chestnut gutter beneath easter hazel  
where the nuthatch wields wisdom unworldly.



# ***WHEN LIFE GOES ON***

## ***by Charlotte Cosgrove***

The daylight escapes

As she whips the drapes together

Halting the outside from pilgrimaging in.

She wants nothing more to do with it,

Hoping time

will stop, as if

The phone call she has just taken

never happened.

But, a tiny rip in the material

Suggests it is seeping in,

unstoppable.

A panoply of every colour -

black to white.

# ***EQUINOX***

## ***by Chey Morgan***

when they find  
our bodies on the  
first day of spring with  
limbs falling over  
each other in utter disarray  
the earth will know the taste of our cartilage

//

with bones laced together  
so tightly they can't tell  
where i end and you  
begin

//

fungus sprouts from my  
throat; my vocal chords  
still thrum with life even  
while this decomposition  
becomes homeostasis

//

returning to carbon is  
returning to home-  
what hasn't grown to flowers  
will be unrecognizable  
within a week

# ***SPRING***

## ***by Eliza Homan***

The daylight escapes  
As she whips the drapes together  
Halting the outside from pilgrimaging in.  
She wants nothing more to do with it,  
Hoping time  
will stop, as if  
The phone call she has just taken  
never happened.  
But, a tiny rip in the material  
Suggests it is seeping in,  
unstoppable.  
A panoply of every colour -  
black to white.

# **DECEMBER YEAR**

**by Erin McGarrity**

December's hand slips into March this year, although the snow has shifted into some sort of freezing rain that pelts my cheeks and stings my eyes.

It is no longer pretty.

The pristine, clinical indifference of the snow,

The sheet of Nature, untouched, which had sat for so long waiting to be defiled,

Somewhere between December and March has turned into an unrecognizable pile of filth.

The field that I dared not touch for so long suffocated my limbs in mud as I trudged through it days ago, now it hardens and cracks around my joints.

I move no further than the far edge of the field for the fear that I'd crumble away with the dust when the mire dries.

Six days remain until April.

In six days the fields will dry and grasses will grow.

In six days the Winter will relinquish its suffocating grasp on Spring.

Some seed will sprout, some white dove will carry an olive branch to me, I am certain.

It will be a different white, the dove. Not the white of cold and death. A blank slate. A possibility for change.

I am sure that my dove will come.

I am sure that, in six days' time, the world will be singing the praises of Spring.

I am certain, aren't I?

I used to love Winter.

I used to adore her, I had made her my idol.

When the burning heat of Summer became too much to bear my only solace was that in a few months the inferno would be over.

The snowflakes were so pretty.

The way they danced, the way that too many of them meant I could stay inside and watch the chaos from safety.

I was a fool.

I was a fool, but I am no fool now.

Winter is only pretty until she melts, until she falls apart and the filth that has been festering for a quarter of the year has risen up from the bowels of the earth to reclaim what was frozen over, protected.

Six days remain until April.

I am waiting for the wind to blow the dust from my limbs,

As if by an outside force removing the film I will remain intact.

Terror fills me; What if April brings no release?

What if Winter has delivered me to be thawed, just so that I can rot and mold in the mud?

It is no longer pretty, and I fear it may never be pretty again.

# ***TIDE OUT***

## ***by Grace Hall***

On the third day, I rise

From ash, into a new dawn,

A new era of dry-eyed pain.

I mourn with the sun and

Take my place. I stand

At my mother's side.

I learn what it is to say goodbye

To youth, truly, soberly, and tenderly.

I kiss childhood goodbye and send it out to sea.

I wake up in cold truths

And sit in them. One, two, three.

Breathing, accepting, building

Myself back. I will not run.

I feel the weight of sense passed down,

Shunt it along my back.

Come with me. I will not fall.

There is now a clock within me,

I know when it is time,

And it is. Tide out, we may walk.

Follow me, I will not fail.

# **REBIRTH**

## **by Jedidiah Vinzon**

at the end of nine  
do cat eyes count to ten

the way my fingers bend  
like the teeth of cog wheels

in unlubricated time I call seconds?  
what does her pupil dilate into?

where does the universe stop colouring  
unless she has edges like the moon

to rein in the sun from  
the edge? *waxing*, she says

as she spreads the honey  
along her skin, knowing the cost

of beauty is paid in peeling  
flesh for youth: why else is it

new? if it has always been  
the same? does she see this?

the cat eyes at the end  
of nine? when their pupils

swallow the moon at ten?

# ***A WALK WITH MY DOG***

## ***by Jill Vance***

With eyes lazy in the low sun,  
looking skywards, I see the murmuring trees  
with tiny beads of green, new and twinkling.

If I were a bird or God, to my delight,  
looking down through twigs and branches,  
there'd be a kaleidoscope of colour

for the dell is filled with vibrant flowers;  
harebells, crocuses, daffodils and all rising  
above the last of this season's snow.



# **A TREE GROWS IN ANTARCTICA**

## **by Jillian Thomas**

i.

peel me // deseed me // descend me  
// into violent equilibrium until i harden into a promise //  
a pearl in an oyster is swallowed by a penguin and  
// he chokes up my strawberry-sweet denatured conscience.  
& crocuses take root where my throne collapsed

ii.

an abyss opens up, masquerading as my front door, i //  
invite it inside and it invites me  
// to drink a cup of chai & //  
pick my brain apart  
    [did you know frankenstein wasn't the name of the monster?]

iii.

double back // rewind until his words are blurry &  
// your spirals morph into *any last words?*  
// they leave gasoline sizzling on the pavement and  
exhaust circling the clouds at dawn,  
certain death encircles.

iv.

// back to the flowers and the penguin.  
flora doesn't grow in the arctic, except in the wake  
// of jilted princesses  
    [everyone knows their bones conjure up axioms]  
rebirth in a hostile // impossible landscape  
wanes into existence if you wish hard enough.

v.

i stare at the same moon that shines in //  
// the arctic tonight, above my [fruit]ful past,  
phasing into existence a new life for us.  
the crocuses begin to bloom.

# **RE \_\_\_\_\_** **by Katie Chung**

## **i. revisitation**

guerrilla girls. postcards discarded–  
that is, taped up on walls where they remain  
displayed but not seen. exploited and not paid.  
hopeful yet not changed.

somebody, born in the year \_\_\_\_\_. who is  
that, trapped in the hurt locker? my mother's  
hands made mine and her mother made hers  
so I close my fist around my dreams too.

hit & run. it's not supposed to feel that way  
but it does, finger plucking songs. desperately  
clutching, I am hopeful still. another underline  
in the margins, I listen. I write.

the bell jar. cloud wisps rising up like  
steam from the tallest tree branch. like how  
somehow it stays the same: *your poetry's bad*  
& *you blame the news*, lana del rey once sang.

spring cleaning. still warm sheets and  
comforters and pollen dusting the pavement  
outside. settling like snow on my lashes,  
claritin season and / unnecessary / slashes /

things that have changed. a year ago, six  
months ago, two weeks ago, yesterday.  
closer to twenty than ever before and maybe  
that's just math or maybe things change.

## **ii. recurrence**

insomniacs & slow sinking into permanent  
sleep. ironic? no questions, not anymore at  
least. take your words like vitamins,  
wash them down. crudely shaped sentences  
make for the best stories, mold them into  
narratives for the closest of friends. lovers'  
quarrels exist in every language. connection  
is constant & universal, communication is an  
afterthought. finish your ----- . send your  
-----, whatever that means to you.

## **iii. rejoice**

life feels like an exhale  
right now.

# ***AS THOUGHTS FLEW***

## ***by Katrenia Grace Busch***

Though– time was found to split,  
When days ahead were no more;  
Held back by winds which did omit–  
Days– ahead– which were once before

Though– tomorrow shall not be,  
As times reversed declared–  
To immortalize– fix– both sun and sea;  
Which were once before paired!

Strength be found in times afore,  
That is to call– yesterday  
As known– again– repeating once more  
Life– reborn– again to–day!

Found amongst the fowls that fly,  
With words– that move not yet do;  
Be– heavenly songs that prophecy  
With fiery winds– as thoughts that flew!

# ***PNEUMATOPHORES***

## ***by Leah Madden***

Twice today I fell in love—

With earth below and sky above,

I greeted birds from soil-bound sin

And danced with grasses on the wind.

I clambered up the rocky slope

With burning hands, desperately grope

The life-soaked dirt, a swarm of souls

The cowards, cowering in holes.

They take from Gaia ceaselessly,

And hide their hearts so needlessly

With lava, vena cava fills,

And sculpts the corpses into hills.

They lie within— entombed, oppressed,

And suffocate, eternal rest

In numbers great, beneath the stone

In death a crowd, in life, alone.

I sipped the singing lapis air

The sombre soil awards the hare,

And cast my gaze into the clear

Aloof, untethered atmosphere.

The false and fallow, fickle folk

Conspire with spires of pearly smoke

To purge their trappings: silken cell,

Tight-woven web of earthly hell.

While they disintegrate the spell,

They wile away their bones as well—

Defiant mist which cannot be

Interred beneath the willow tree.

Twice today I fell in love—

With earth below and sky above,

The lake admires the clouds in scuds,

In Spring the eager foliage buds,

The river mangroves stake their ground,

By lethal tides, no longer drowned

Determined tendrils flee the flood,

Bold fingers rupturing the mud.

The makeshift paradise of men

Of far-flung suns and wooded glen,

Where gods in limbo, stretched across

Adorn my ancient skull with moss.

# **CANDLE OF YOUR LIES**

**by Linda M. Crate**

after you left  
i was forced to go on  
as i was or perish,

i held on to my old self  
for far too long;

it hurt so bad to lose her—

but i realized i had to let  
her go if i was going to rise again,  
so i was reborn with more  
power, more magic, and different  
birds in the garden of my heart  
that i ever knew before;

and while i am mostly healed  
there are times where i am still angry—

because you took a girl who  
loved you and broke her heart because  
you couldn't be sincere or honest,  
because your lust ultimately mattered more  
to you than her heart;

did she know you cheated on me  
to marry her?

is she also a victim of  
your lust,  
burned in the candle of your lies?

i am glad i was reborn  
because old me  
loved you,  
but new me looks at you with  
disgust and sees you for the slug  
you are;

the only thanks i'll give you is for  
shattering these rose tinted glasses—

& even that is more than you deserve.



# ***THE CABIN ON STARLITE PINES ROAD***

## ***by Naomi A. Evans***

We arrive at the cabin on Starlite Pines Road

In a rainstorm

Cocooned in blankets, sleepy eyes

Lightning slicing up the sky

Pines loom tall against the black

for a moment;

And then are gone.

You race through the cabin; tiredness forgotten,

Your laughs echoing back to me as my own childhood joy once did;

That time is over now

When you were born

I, too, was born;

Again,

A mother;

A new life.

We create our own memories and they suture the wounds still being carved out by my  
Blood.

I realise I can hold

The new; the good

Alongside the pain.  
Both are a part of me.  
But allowing the pain to  
Define me  
Is a choice.

\*\*\*

I hold tenderly the girl;  
The firstborn child;  
The eldest sister.  
Found broken at the side of the road  
Of life;  
Her wings bruised and bent.  
  
I tell her “you are safe now”

# ***MOTHER OF SPRING***

## ***by Nick Barr***

To my mother

It's Spring now, I miss you.

How long since we've spoken?

How long has it been since I've been wrapped in your  
arms?

I miss you

I miss sitting on the field with flowers

Blooming, bees circling, crickets muddled

In the green sea of grass

The sun brighter than it has been since I grew

Do you remember?

I went to the store today

Have you noticed how expensive milk is?

I now understand why you had to work so much

Leaving me in an empty house

I'm sorry I didn't realise earlier

Would it have changed anything though?

Would you have changed?

The birds chirp again,  
Little ones begging to be fed  
Trees waving new leaves in the breeze,  
The yellow of Autumn long forgotten  
I'll go to work amongst the pollen,  
My white collar shirt unforgiving in the newfound heat

I hope I'll run into you again someday  
Maybe we can call again  
To my mother, the mother of spring  
The mother of new  
The mother of birth  
I love you.

# ***SPRING IS A LESSON***

## ***by Sunayana Dash***

The flowers that once fell on wet autumn earth,  
are now blooming again,  
stubborn phoenixes always rising from dead,  
earth is breathing in vivid hues,  
death isn't the end of all things rotting,  
it's the shedding of old skin,  
old labels, old opinions, old time,  
to erupt into a sea of choices,  
ready to race into the world.

# ***FROST TO FLORA***

## ***by Tabitha Kyalo***

From winter's chill and snow's embrace,  
The garden awakens with tender grace.  
Where weeds once thrived in cold dismay,  
Now blooms emerge in colors array.

In frosty nights and icy dawn,  
A metamorphosis is drawn.  
From barren earth to fertile mound,  
Life springs forth, profound.

The weeds retreat, their grip released,  
As petals unfurl, a symphony of peace.  
From tangled roots to stems that sway,  
Beauty blossoms, day by day.

Each bud a promise, each leaf a song,  
As springtime whispers, "You belong."  
From winter's grasp to summer's bloom,  
The garden thrives, no longer consumed.

So let's embrace this shift, this turn,  
From snow's soft fall to flowers' burn.  
For in this renewal, we find our sight,  
And welcome each dawn with newfound light.

# ***LET'S TAKE FLIGHT, MY LOVE***

## ***by Penny Amara***

Bright rays of light filter through the gaps of the trees above. The shifting movement of branches, an orchestra of nature, as my eyes adjust to the 7 am Sun. A small smile appears across my face as I breathe in the fragrant air. The cleanliness filters through my lungs, providing a sense of calm and ease, my fingers run across the rough wooden bench beneath me, my bare feet splay within the blades of grass, and warmth engulfs the deep ache that has been cold for far too long.

The season of rebirth. A mother bird cares for and loves her newborn babies, the dandelions bloom and cover the earth and her bare surface, and I start anew. I shall no longer feel the cold that the universe forces upon me. I shall no longer let my world be taken over by intense defeat and sadness. I shall be reborn. I need to be happy again.

I tilt my head towards the blue sky.

“Plenty of people would like to be here you know. The beautiful fields, the soft fluffy clouds, and your stand with the flowers provide an impressive income outlet if you’re interested. You can share your world with everyone else.” I turn my head towards the sweet voice.

“I’m not interested, but thank you. I’ve told you already Sadie, this place is just for us. Not the newspapers, not strangers, and not the eyes of people who will take this place and turn it into something it shouldn’t be. This is our home, not a damn hotel.” I reply.

Sadie shows no signs of annoyance or stress at my words. She only walks closer and sits on the bench beside me. Her small figure is covered by a blue sundress, her short blond hair

flows in the slight breeze, and her eyes close as she inhales the air. I smile. She is the most beautiful woman I have ever known.

“What would you like to do today?” I whispered, not wanting to ruin the comforting quiet.

“Hmm,” she responded, eyes still closed, “let’s stay here. Forever.”

Her eyes land upon mine and I can’t hide the grin that spreads from her words.

“Okay.” I move my right arm across her shoulder and she places her head upon mine. A small robin lands with ease atop the branches across from our view. Small beaded eyes find us and brown wings flutter.

“I think birds represent many things, Daniel. I believe that’s why I appreciate their company so much.” Sadie looks at me with her emerald eyes.

“Like what?” I reply. She looks to the robin and her eyes shine with inspiration.

“Love,” Her gaze falls upon me once more, “loss, heartache so deep you can’t move. But also wonder, adventure, and excitement.”

With one last look at the sky, I close my eyes.

A small droplet of water hits my face, waking me from my slumber. Confusion covers my features and my eyes slowly flutter open to see dark rain clouds looming above.

“Sadie! A storm is coming. Why didn’t you wake me up?” I exclaim. I stand from the wooden bench and look around for her. My eyebrows furrow when I realize she is no longer with me outside of our small cottage.



“Sadie?” I spin around frantically, waiting for her to catch my sight. Instantly, a flash of lightning brightens the sky, and a deep sound of thunder crashes. The rain becomes harder, and my vision is soon clouded by strong droplets of water. My breathing becomes frantic as fear and utter turmoil encase me in the pouring rain.

“Where are you?!” I yell into the oncoming darkness.

“Daniel!” My head turns abruptly towards the sunflowers to the left of the bench, and relief washes over instantly.

“What are you doing? Let’s get inside!” there is no malice in my tone as I see her begin to prance around under the rain merrily. I chuckle and run over to her with complete adoration. Her blue sundress was now soaked through, but somehow her dark mascara and red lipstick are sitting perfectly upon her lips and long eyelashes. She begins to laugh. The beautiful melody of happiness and contentment drifts through to my heart.

“Dance with me, my love! It’s raining!” I place my hand in Sadie’s and grasp her hip lightly with the other. She falls into my chest and drops a chaste kiss on my lips. She hums a short tune as the rain plummets down across our skin.

“I love you.” I murmur into her damp hair.

“I love you too. Let’s stay like this. For as long as we want.”

We don’t worry about getting a cold. We keep each other warm.

The downpour begins to lighten up and I hear short and bright chirps of birds fill the surrounding trees once more. My hold on Sadie loosens as I turn towards the bench. A small red and brown bird sits on the arm of the damp wood. I smile.

“Look! It’s a robin. I-” I stop as I look towards where we were dancing in the blooming field.

Only sunflowers. She's not here.

\*\*\*\*\*

My eyes flutter open to see the midday sun blare straight into my vision. I sit up and take my arm down from the empty spot next to me on the bench. I take a deep breath as I savor the freshness of the air.

I must've fallen asleep.

Tears begin to cloud my vision just as the water did all those times my love and I would dance together in the rain. The winds sound the same as they did before, but it feels too unfamiliar. Everything feels wrong.

A loud chirp pulls my mind, desperate for a distraction. I slowly turn my head towards the arm of the wooden bench. A small robin's beady eyes are bearing into mine, and it spreads its short feathered wings. The bird takes flight, and I release the breath that I'm holding in my chest. My heart aches. She is still here with me. I will be happy again.

I smile as I watch the robin soar across the bright blue sky.

# ***METAMORPHOSIS***

***by Ray Rowan***

Change is inevitable. It is something that happens to all of us. There are times when we want to change things about ourselves. There are also times when we want to change others. And in the end, people do change. Just not in the way we might want them to.

Some might find change scary. It's a silent hunter and only attacks when you least expect it. It can alter a person, for better or worse. There are, however, situations where you can't change unless you fully accept it. If you want to become a better person, you need to work for it. It's not easy, but nothing ever is.

When I woke up to locks and strands of my hair scattered all over my bed like fur from a shedding animal, I thought I was going to be sick. Not only was it on my bed sheets, but it stuck to different parts of my clothing, too. I shakily stood up and made my way to the bathroom. When I looked in the mirror, I realized that I hadn't imagined it. My hair was thinner, and some spots on my head were missing hair completely. I picked up my hairbrush and gently brushed what remained of my hair. The brush tickled my scalp with each stroke. Clumps of hair fell to the ground whenever the brush touched my head. I cried as I watched my life fall apart right in front of me.

I wanted to take a shower and get ready to start my day off, but I was in so much pain. My whole body was aching as if I hadn't moved in ages. My back hurt the most. Both of my

shoulder blades were extremely itchy. Despite all this, I tried to ignore the discomfort. I already had to ignore the fact that all of my hair had fallen off, so I thought that ignoring everything else would be fairly easy after that. My assumption was wrong, and when my skin began to shed as well, I knew I couldn't take it anymore.

My body was falling apart and so was I. I ran back to the bedroom, locked the door behind me, and sat down on my bed. The pain and itchiness were only getting stronger. My skin was suddenly sensitive to touch, feeling any kind of fabric touch my body made me shiver. I took my clothes off and lay down on my side. I wanted to cry, even if I knew that tears would only make things worse. The itching was getting harder to resist. I had to scratch. I carefully wrapped my arms around my body, and I began scratching my shoulder blades. For a second I felt some relief, but it was not enough. I had to keep going. I had to keep scratching. When my nails weren't enough to scratch the itch, I moved around the bed, desperately looking for relief. After a few hours of endless scratching, I finally felt better and managed to fall asleep.

I stayed like this for a few days. I refused to move in any way. Instead, I slept. Whenever I'd wake up, I would scratch my back for as long as needed, then go back to sleep. I knew that my back was bleeding from how much I scratched it, but I could not stop myself. After sleeping for days, I decided that I had to accept what was happening to me. I couldn't spend the rest of my life in my room, and surely there was something I could do. I slowly stood up, allowing my body to adjust to the sudden movement.

My body was still aching, but something felt... different. I carefully made my way to the

bedroom door and unlocked it. And as I opened it, after days of being trapped inside, I felt free again. I took a deep breath, taking in the fresh air. Now that my bedroom was properly lit up, I could see just how much of a mess I created. Clumps of hair and dead skin were scattered all over the bed and floor. The tips of my fingers were covered in blood, most likely from how much I scratched my back.

I made my way to the bathroom and stared at my reflection once more. There I was, a complete mess. I hid from the truth for days, now was the time to finally accept it. I looked at my reflection and for the very first time, I smiled. Sure, I have smiled in the past, but this... This was a genuine smile. I was ready to face whatever was waiting ahead of me. I was ready for change.

Suddenly, I felt a sharp pain in my back. From there, it spread throughout my whole body like venom. I screamed and grabbed onto the sink, trying to stop myself from falling. My legs were shaking, ready to cave in at any moment. While I tried taking deep breaths to calm myself, I felt something begin to grow from my back. I let a few tears fall down my cheeks onto the sink. My eyes were completely shut and my only focus was the pain and nothing else.

After what felt like forever, the pain finally subsided. Once I opened my eyes, I looked back at my reflection. From behind me, I saw a pair of fluttering, black and gold wings, their colors blending in and swirling into different patterns.

# ***BUILDING NEW BRIDGES***

***by Xenia Vivona***

The morning dew wets my feet, blades of grass swaying in the breeze. I trace the outline of soaked earth with a pointed gaze. Lush greenery and grey horizons—everything is muted and muddled together. The creek water runs into a fine stream, and there are tadpoles swimming through the muck.

I scuffed my knees on the pavement after tripping over a rock. The hem of my dress is still stained. I considered trying to wash it off in the water—my dirtied hands, my soiled garments—but I found it to be of no use. For my efforts, all that was left is an unpleasant reminder. A lesson for next time, new adventures.

My heavy feet drag through the mud, viewing the blank sky as the aftermath of a storm clears. I never thought such a drab color could be so illuminating during the daytime. Mother asked me not to come inside, and I wonder if it's because she can't handle my mess. I see puddles on the road, and think to skip stones in the lake of debris. I soon learned that pebbles don't tread shallow water.

I pick wildflowers in the pale sunlight. The gleam brightens my dark eyes, so much so that I'm blinded, and I'm not quite sure yet whether that's for the best. With the resurgence of the sun, I observe the seasons shifting beneath me.

I hope to leave my old self behind in the snow, watching her melt away into spent earth. This endless wandering has made my feet tired, bruised and calloused as they trudge onward, following this wayward path—but, all the same, they move, and with them, so do I.

# ***CANDIES FOR A BIRTHDAY***

***by Adity Kay***

The morning of my 13th birthday, I went to school as usual. At home, my mother got up early, prepared tea for my father, and got my younger siblings ready. It was just another rushed, ordinary day. I was sure my parents would remember my birthday only after they had looked at the morning paper. They would note the date and look at each other guiltily. I felt glad at this thought.

My friend Nina got me a whole bag of candies from the tiny school store. Candies, sweet, syrupy, and of different lip-changing colors. I shouldn't have too many of these, I told Nina, remembering my mother's warnings, the way her eyes always ran down my unshapely, unsightly figure. I looked frumpy in whatever I wore. Nina said I was healthy, not fat at all.

Nina often gave me a ride home from school. We rode in one of the cycle rickshaws her father owned, and I heard her chatter as we traveled almost a half-circle covering the entire town before we reached her home. Sometimes she dropped me off first.

These days on google maps I can trace the route the rickshaw took, those warm summer afternoons. Down the small rocky lane out of school, past the one-story cottages, the suddenly busy crossing with the ever-perspiring traffic policeman on his stand, then the road lined with shops selling fabrics, utensils, and toys. Nina stopped her chatter then, for she loved to look at the saris draped outside the shops, and those displayed on stands and wires, fluttering brightly like millions of rainbows. While I thought of home, and if my mother would be pacing the portico looking out for me, wondering why I had not come home in the car sent with a driver to bring us back.

I preferred the rides with Nina because I wanted to make my mother worry. But she was always preoccupied with my younger siblings. They were better behaved, my mother always said. What she never told me was that they were better than me in every way: my sister was prettier, my brother got better grades than I did.

I thought my mother might notice me if I disappeared entirely or changed into something not so unshapely. If I shrank, became smaller, quieter, less troublesome, she would look out for me. I think now that was when little by little, unobtrusively, quietly, and obsessively, I stopped eating.

Over weeks, months, all I did was think about food. I counted calories, assessed foods almost scientifically, pushed food around on my plate, and secretly read up all I could about diets; the newspapers then carried advice columns by prominent film stars and models on their regimen. I measured my waist every day with a tape, secretly again, in the bathroom. In weeks, months, as I lost weight, I lost interest in a lot of things. I dwindled and shrank. I wanted to look like all the lovely women I saw in magazines and on television who could wear anything they wanted. I waited, wanting my mother to tell me this.

These were years in which I lost touch with Nina. Years, when we moved places; she, to a different college and I moved cities too. Years when my mother changed as well, slowly, and suddenly. She wept when she lost her mother. Then the years when she began talking more to me, as my siblings moved away. She told me of her conservative, hidebound in-laws, the vicious envy of other women, the loneliness of new motherhood. It took years but now my mother appeared someone different: a vulnerable, troubled being, lost in the role thrust on her.



She had once faded away too. Maybe I was just a better listener.

One year, during a conversation, I thought my mother said: *You were with Nina. I never had to worry about you.*

Recently I was on Facebook and Nina came up, like an algorithmic vagary. Outside, the leaves were falling fast in the breeze. Red, yellow, and purple in color, almost like saris, smaller in shape, moving in the wind. It was September and I remembered something.

I messaged her, unsure and impulsive: *Your birthday must be near. It's today*, she answered, instantly. *And yours is two months away.*

She sent me an emoji: a candy-shaped one. The moment I clicked on it, it burst, throwing up stars, scattering the years away.

# ***MY MOTHER'S EXPERIENCE WITH REBIRTH: A STORY OF RENEWAL***

***by Jasleen Kaur***

Rebirth- being born once again, having a second chance at life, time for new beginning and transformation, a situation often described by someone who escapes a near death experience or incident. The term is closely associated with death. When we talk about re-birth that means that we are reigniting something or someone that was almost dead. It may be your hope, your life or your choice to live. Being dead and then being reborn. There are numerous instances , you get into an accident, barely make it alive, lo behold you feel you have a second chance at life. You are in a terrible fix with no solution in near sight for months, and all of a sudden things start looking brighter for you, you finally see a way out of your problems and get rid of those depressing blues gripping you tight by your throat, you feel you can finally live again. In every instance, you feel this is the end or this is how it is going to end and the weather clears up, sun comes out and flowers bloom. But can you have rebirth as a result of the death of others?

Every person, I am assuming, at some point in his or her life thinks about rebirth. Starting something new or even getting a second chance to change the old ways or live old differently - a mini version of rebirth. Or some even be bold enough to think about their rebirth as life after death. I have a good friend, whose family was in a terrible fix and they all found religion and faith which felt like a rebirth. They felt they were born again with a clearer perspective in mind on how they should lead their life and what all wrong they were doing till now.

Flowers begin to blossom and all is well again. New year is here, so here is a chance to do everything differently this year. Shedding old worries, bad habits, toxic mentalities- isn't this what rebirth is about? Can an idea of rebirth not emanate within ourselves?

I lost my maternal grandmother recently. She was the last of my grandparents alive (both paternal and maternal). So now I do not have any grandparents and as sad and heart wrenching this is for my family, I heard my mother say the other day, "This feels like my rebirth. I feel like I am just starting my life now." This is definitely an out of blue statement from someone who is mourning the death of a mother. However as strange as it sounds, I know it to be true. To justify her statement, I would have to give a little background of her life.

Ever since my mother was a teenager, her mother treated her more as a confidante rather than her daughter. Her being the eldest and her mother putting an intangible burden of sharing household responsibilities choked her to a point where she would always be panicked about things at home. My nani (maternal grandmother) would always tell her that after she dies, my mom would have to take care of her sisters, that they have no else to rely upon but her. It doesn't take a career in psychology or mind therapy to understand what that does to a young mind. She was always on the lookout for something untoward to happen, always worried about her mother's health, always praying for their well being.

She was always on the front foot in family issues, treated more like an adult than her sisters. So much was my grandparents' dependency on her that after her marriage, they told my

father that they are also dependent on him now. They then felt relieved to share their family's burden with him. I am not here to say that we should avoid family problems. However, some things should be handled with age.

After her marriage, she took care of both the families. She was submissive to her in-laws and lived life to their conditions, but nevertheless she was loved. She was loved as a family and was supported with taking care of her parents. However, soon after my birth my paternal grandfather died, and my grandmother also fell, hit her head, fell sick, fractured her bones multiple times. My mom was always on hand in taking care of her. She always considered it her duty to take care of her and be subordinate to her nature. So much so that she let go of her individualism. My grandmother was last bedridden for six months before she breathed her last. After that we soon shifted our houses and our maternal grandmother came along with us. She had been living alone after her husband's death around 10 years ago , but since she was in the vicinity of our residence, we visited her daily. When we felt that she was too old to stay alone, we pleaded with her to come live with us. Her being alone was a stress my mom always bore in mind. She then decided to stay with all her daughters for some time. Fair enough to say that she treated our house as her house and went to her other daughters only for a short span.

When she came to our new house, she fell and broke her shoulder within weeks of arriving and was soon bedridden due to weakness. Then began another cycle of caring for a patient. Even when she wasn't with us she was always on my mom's mind, her health and well being a constant worry. When her health improved and the doctor gave her a clean chit to travel, we

took her to her younger daughter. She breathed her last there. After we had the last rites held for her, my mom sat one day at home and said, “I feel like this is my new life. Ever since I was a kid, I felt burdened to take care of my mother, always worrying for something upsetting to happen to her. Soon after my marriage, I had to take care of my mother in law and sometimes take care of both simultaneously (mother and mother in law). I had no other thought for myself but just wanted to take care of the elders. Now that I am elderly, I am at a loss of things to do when I have no one to take care of.” She feels she is just starting her life, so she has asked me, my sisters and our father to help her find new hobbies or reignite passion into old ones so that she can do something worthwhile. Now, when she has time on her hands and no tension on her mind, she wants to explore new things and new places. She wants to live for herself now and not as a daughter or daughter in law.

It is a new phase for her, a new season. A season for her to bloom. Tending old roots, letting sun in her eyes and wind in her hair. She is slowly trying to let go of the fact that she has to live for others or in constant worry of others. She is learning to prioritize herself, her choices, her needs and her health. It is a new beginning for her in her sixties—a time where people start resigning to the daily humdrum of life. At this age, she is planning to up-swing this routine and bloom to live as a person with individualism. This is her re-birth.

# **DANDELIONS**

**by Sarah Terkaoui**

There are dandelions around my feet, growing where they can, quickly, stealthily, before the violence of a mower is visited upon them. Their only impulse is to grow and seed and continue their genes. They wave their bright yellow heads in a breeze that keeps the day from dissolving into a smear of heat, and their seduction is answered by a bee, working its way across the untidy rise and fall of the field, looking for the first of the year's flowers. The dandelions shiver on slight stems and the bee moves with them, quiet in its concentration. They are the first and the last of the year's nectar sources for pollinators, staving off starvation.

The yellow sunburst of petals are pins in a map of my past, linked together by spiderweb threads, that are invisible to all but my eyes. The dandelions that pockmarked our back garden and defied any effort to be removed by either colonies of ants or my mother's benign neglect which she applied to all living things within her purview. The dandelions, as the strongest of their kind survived, as did we.

Their small florets huddle together to form a composite flower head, that once held me enthralled as I childishly dissected them, trying to understand their anatomy. They are both one and many at once. Dandelions crept through the cracks in the pavement outside the small room that marked my first foray away from home. They kept me company while I waited for buses that never came on suburban roads. They jostled in the meadow behind a suburban estate vying with poppies and buttercups and outlasting them all. The soft poof of their fur

ball seed heads enchanted me while I sat and watched the small parachutes of each seed set free by my breath sail away to be lost to the sky and the earth.

I imagine they would speak with a French accent, their name coming from the French *dent-de-lion* meaning lion's tooth. They were as foreign as I was. Interlopers who waged war on the regimented beauty of gardens, robbing them of respectability. Neighbours talked when one's lawn had dandelions. But I envied their freedom to be carried by the wind. If they reproducing asexually, I believed each iteration was carbon copy of the last, each birthing a chance to start again, leaving their past selves behind. Their lesson is one that I am still trying to learn.

**GO TO HOPE**

*by An Jinkyong*





# ***MOONGLADE***

***by Colleen C Brady***



# **BLOSSOM FROM THE LIGHT**

*by Didi*



# ***FROM DUST WE COME, TO DUST WE GO***

***by Erika Lynet Salvador***



The artwork shows the life stages of a leaf from its vibrant green youth to its desiccated, crumpled form. It portrays the natural cycle of maturation, deterioration, and eventual renewal found within the environment. The sequential display from left to right mirrors the unstoppable march of time and the inevitable process of aging. It suggests a motif of rebirth: as one phase concludes, the seeds for the next are sown.

# **CUTTING TIES**

*by Vasundhara Srinivas*



Cutting Ties - The act of cutting ties is an act of welfare and mental wellbeing. In terms of rebirth, it gives the person a new found sense of setting boundaries and self respect.

# **UNSPOKENTREES**

*by Wabo Motiki*



They are trees that we decided not speak about because of the medicine they carry



# CONTRIBUTORS

## **ABBY CRAWFORD** - *COMPOST*

Abby Crawford is a writer and poet based in Devon, UK who is interested in the intersection of spirituality and ecology. She received a commendation in the Crysse Morrison Prize for Poetry 2023, and is currently working on her first pamphlet.

## **AIDAN CHAFE** - *BORN BRUISES*

Aidan Chafe is the author of the poetry collections *Gospel Drunk* (University of Alberta Press) and *Short Histories of Light* (McGill-Queen's University Press). He lives and works on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples (Vancouver, BC).

## **BLAKE EVERITT** - *FERNS AT EASTER*

Blake Everitt was born in 1989 and lives on the Isle of Wight. His work has appeared in a range of periodicals, including *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian Journal of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics*, *Open: A Journal of Arts and Letters*, *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality and the Arts*, *Apricot Press*, *Hawk & Whippoorwill*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *The Dawntreader*, *The Poetry Village*, *Amethyst Review*, and *Drawn to the Light Press*.

## **CHARLOTTE COSGROVE** - *WHEN LIFE GOES ON*

Charlotte Cosgrove is a poet and lecturer from Liverpool, England. She has published two collections of poetry *Silent Violence with Petals* (Kelsay Press) and *Neurotic Harmony* (Alien Buddha Press) as well as having work published online and in print. She is the editor of *Rough Diamond Poetry Journal*.

## **CHEY MORGAN** - *EQUINOX*

Chey Morgan is a sixteen-year-old Canadian author. She's been writing as long as she can remember; about things as far away as outer space and as close to home as her small town. If you're lucky enough to find her without her laptop open she's probably crocheting, listening to music, or drinking too much coffee. She's been published in *Purely Liminal Magazine* and *Evanescent Magazine*. You can find more of her poetry on Instagram @cheymorgan.writes.

## **ELIZA HOMAN** - *SPRING*

Eliza Homan is a founding member of *Airfield Writers* in Dundrum. She has been published in *The Bureen Meitheal*, *Waterford Review*, *Wolf Warriors*, anthology in *America*, *Lights on the Horizon* and chapbook *Windfall & Harvest Nature and healing*, drew her to the practice of Shamanism, which influences her writing.



# CONTRIBUTORS

## ***ERIN MCGARRITY - DECEMBER YEAR***

Erin is a student studying animal science, but her love of science does not overshadow her love of expression through writing. English has always been one of her favorite subjects, and consumes most of her free time.

## ***GRACE HALL - TIDE OUT***

Grace Hall (she/they) is a 19 year old poet from Northern England. She is a feminist, a Jew, and a history student with a passion for medieval studies. Her poetry focuses on themes such as bisexuality, womanhood, love and spirituality. Grace published her first poem in Unfiltered Magazine at the age of 16, and has since published poems in Binge Magazine, Paper Lanterns Literature, Pastel Serenity Zine and the Luna Collective.

## ***JEDIDIAH VINZON - REBIRTH***

Jedidiah Vinzon is studying physics at the University of Auckland. In his free time, he enjoys listening to jazz and K-pop, writing poetry and watching reruns of finished sitcoms. His works can be found in Tarot, Circular and Symposia. You can find him on Instagram @jayv.poetry

## ***JILL VANCE - A WALK WITH MY DOG, BLOSSOMING***

Jill Eloise Vance is a poet and interdisciplinary artist. Her work has appeared in Truth Serum Press, Pure Slush, Dirigible Balloon, Spilling Cocoa over Martin Amis, Full House Literary, Forge Zine, Celestite Poetry, Overtly Lit, Green Ink Poetry and Alchemy Spoon. Jill hopes one day to have a pamphlet published.

## ***JILLIAN THOMAS - A TREE GROWS IN ANTARCTICA***

Jillian is a 17 year old poet from Pennsylvania, who has been writing since she can remember. She has been published in Fruitslice, Footprints on Jupiter, Mollusk Lit, Ice Lolly Review, and Zhagaram Lit, among others.

## ***KATIE CHUNG - RE\_\_\_\_\_***

Katie is a second-year cognitive science major at UCLA. In her free time, she enjoys running, reading, and writing. She believes that poets keep the world alive.



# CONTRIBUTORS

## **KATRENIA GRACE BUSCH** - *AS THOUGHTS FLEW*

Katrenia Grace Busch is a freelance journalist whose work can be found amongst NPR affiliate radio stations and CBS affiliate TV stations. She holds an associate in journalism and general studies. Her publications have appeared amongst 50 Give or Take, Flora Fiction, Whimsical Poet, Red Penguin Books, October Hill among others. She is a poetry editor for Zoetic Press and The Bookends Review and serves on a local playreading committee. She serves on an editorial board for the American Psychological Association and has appeared as a guest on Quintessential Listening. She can be found on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087528584176&fbid=AEUHqQ>

## **LEAH MADDEN** - *PNEUMATOPHORES*

Leah is an ancient history graduate and occasional poet/archaeologist based in Sydney, Australia. Her interests include oil painting, nature, George Eliot, and digging up really old things. She has had previous work published in The Lovers Literary Journal.

## **LINDA M. CRATE** - *CANDLE OF YOUR LIES*

Linda M. Crate's works have been published in numerous magazines and anthologies both online and in print. She is the author of twelve poetry chapbooks, the latest of which is: searching stained glass windows for an answer (Alien Buddha Press, December 2022). She's also the author of the novella Mates (Alien Buddha Press, March 2022). She has published four full-length poetry collections Vampire Daughter (Dark Gatekeeper Gaming, February 2020), The Sweetest Blood (Cyberwit, February 2020), Mythology of My Bones (Cyberwit, August 2020), and you will not control me (Cyberwit, March 2021).

## **NAOMI A. EVANS** - *THE CABIN ON STARLITE PINES ROAD*

Naomi is a storyteller through poetry and prose. She is passionate about writing because she enjoys how words and syllables can be strung together to create beautiful, evocative imagery; as real to the mind's eye as a piece of artwork is to the physical eye. Originally from London, UK, she now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, their two tiny humans and two beloved cats. She is proud of her mixed heritage: Barbadian and Guyanese on her dad's side, and Welsh and English on her mum's side. She has a Bachelor's Degree in History from Cardiff University, Wales, UK, and a Diploma in Professional Digital Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing. She enjoys tea, travelling, sunsets, pretty stationary, sparkly things, to-do lists, and the beach.





# CONTRIBUTORS

## **NICK BARR - MOTHER OF SPRING**

Nick is a current high school student with an affinity for all things creative from art, design and writing. He aims to become a published writer by the time he graduates and takes inspiration from the little things in life that are often overlooked or ignored.

## **SUNAYANA DASH - SPRING IS A LESSON**

Sunayana Dash is a Business Process consultant who lives in Bangalore, India. Her poems explore emotions and the inner workings of relationships among humans. She loves taking pictures of mundane life and believes art exists in every form in nature. She rediscovered her love for poetry after a six year gap post her graduate degree, during the pandemic. She loves to read and watch crime thrillers, especially Nordic Noir fiction. This influences her writing to be raw and at times, visceral too. Her works have appeared in many journals, zines and anthologies, like Letters to Lovers Zine, The First Line Poets Anthology, Campfire Confessions etc.

## **TABITHA KYALO - FROST TO FLORA**

Tabitha Kyalo, 13-year-old living in Machakos town, Kenya, a curious mind with a passion for math, science, and the written word. Her passion for writing blossomed into a love affair with poetry. With each stroke of her pen, she discovered the power of words to paint emotions and capture moments in time. She found solace in the rhythm of verses and the melody of rhymes. In the quiet corners of her room, she poured her heart onto paper, crafting verses that whispered secrets of her soul. Through poetry, she navigated the complexities of the universe, finding clarity amidst the chaos

## **PENNY AMARA - LET'S TAKE FLIGHT, MY LOVE**

Penny Amara is a senior at Clark University receiving her degree in English and Creative Writing! Her work has been previously published in Blue World Literary Magazine, Mosaic Literary Journal, and Lilith's Diaries. She loves working in the arts, and she is currently writing her debut novel!

## **RAY ROWAN - METAMORPHOSIS**

Ray Rowan is a passionate writer from Slovakia who has been interested in creating his own worlds on paper from a very young age. Ray enjoys working with a wide variety of genres, though he finds particular delight in exploring the darkest human fears and their influence on things around us. In his free time, Ray enjoys going on walks with his dog, Cassy, or drawing.



# CONTRIBUTORS

## ***XENIA VIVONA - BUILDING NEW BRIDGES***

Xenia Vivona is a young writer with hopes to pursue her love of literature, exploring a wide variety of themes through her poetry and prose.

## ***ADITY KAY - CANDIES FOR A BIRTHDAY***

Adity lives in New Jersey. She studied at the Vermont College of Fine Arts for an MFA in Writing. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in The Missouri Review, The Common, On The Seawall, Catamaran Literary Reader, The Maine Review, Litro magazine, South Dakota Review, and elsewhere. She writes regularly for a Bombay-based digital magazine called Scroll.in. Her novel, The Kidnapping of Mark Twain : A Bombay Mystery, appeared last month, and was published by Speaking Tiger Books, India.

## ***JASLEEN KAUR - MY MOTHER'S EXPERIENCE WITH REBIRTH: A STORY OF RENEWAL***

Jasleen Kaur was recently working as an Assistant Professor in a college and now is at a lookout for a place where her words can find a home. She has studied Journalism and Mass Communication in her post graduation and is fanatic about everything fiction. She resides in Punjab, India and her mind resides in the book she is currently reading.

## ***SARAH TERKAOUI - DANDELIONS***

She has been shortlisted for the Cinnamon Press Poetry Pamphlet Award 2022, and the Bridgeport Poetry Prize, commended for the Goldsmiths Poetry Festival and the Hippocrates Poetry Prize 2021, and longlisted for the Live Canon international poetry Prize 2021. Her work appears in anthologies of the latter two. Her poems have also been published in Fragmented Voices, Ink Sweat & Tears, Imposter, Green Ink Poetry, Lucent Dreaming, Propel, Porridge, The Storms, Visual Verse, Dreich and Wee Dreich. She has appeared as part of the Live Canon Lunchtime Readings series and the Poets for the Ukraine poem-a-thon fundraiser. She has an MA in Writing Poetry (Newcastle University/ Poetry School London) and is working on her first collection.

## ***AN JINKYEONG - GO TO HOPE***

I began painting as a child and won prizes in Japanese international and Korean competitions. He is active in India, Japan, the United States, and Europe and majored in Korean art



# CONTRIBUTORS

## ***COLLEEN C BRADY - MOONGLADE***

Colleen C Brady is an award-winning documentary filmmaker & artist. Drawn to interesting stories and vivid colors, you can find them asking questions in small towns or wandering botanical gardens. You can check out their latest project at [FirebirdDocumentary.com](http://FirebirdDocumentary.com).

## ***DIDI - BLOSSOM FROM THE LIGHT***

Didi is an Italian illustrator, working in the field of editorial, posters, album art and CD cover design. Her desire to learn and discover new things led her to explore different worlds and techniques such as traditional drawing, painting, digital techniques and photography. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Italy. Since graduating she has been working as a freelance illustrator.

## ***ERIKA LYNET SALVADOR - FROM DUST WE COME, TO DUST WE GO***

Erika, born and raised in the Philippines, is an incoming first-year student at Amherst College, Massachusetts. With a passion for art cultivated since childhood, she intends to complement her STEM major by immersing herself in a variety of art courses. While oil remains her preferred medium, Erika also explores ink, charcoal, and watercolor. Her artistic focus revolves around creating vibrant impressionist paintings, often featuring women as the central subject. As an emerging artist, Erika has already made appearances in literary magazines such as the Cosmic Daffodil Journal, the Moss Puppy Magazine, and Ambrosia Zine.

## ***VASUNDHARA SRINIVAS - CUTTING TIES***

Vasundhara Srinivas is a self-taught visual artist from India who is currently pursuing MA Illustration from Arts University Bournemouth. A striking mix of colors, detailing, and symbolism, her work seeks to challenge perceptions and evoke a sense of resonance. Her work mainly explores manifestations of mental health and visualizes emotions.

## ***WABO MOTIKI - UNSPOKENTREES***

She is a creative who believes in God and creating using all forms of mediums , plus collaborating with multiples of people.

THANK YOU

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