

New York Summer & other poems . . .

By Christian Cheng

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

So, Christian is a high school junior in New York City. Along with an avid interest in insects, he reads and writes poetry. My first instincts and envious nature suggests to me that it is an imposter's biography. I know you people are heaped with imaginative minds and we're all hoped and hooped-up on the prospect of notoriety. My, now, not so secret uncertainty is that he's a faculty member in some department of English at either Columbia or Cornell. The academic tenure track, as an incentive, is a gateway to suspicion and deceit—just as any prestigious appointment or position of status might be. But for now, we'll give Christian the benefit of the doubt. Cheng's works have a refined cadence, adept imagery and deft diction. "Imperfection / Wrapped carelessly / into a ball of perfection" "Grasping for words to form feeling / For words to capture light and dark" "What can I see that your eyes don't define" "Even the thirsty weeds / Seem to shy away in disgust" There's no denying they're inspiring. Christian, you know I'm only (half) kidding, right? (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

New York Summer

Blue light up above

Matched with the grey of asphalt

Cracked and filled with weeds

Maggots

Candy wrappers

Imperfection

Wrapped carelessly

into a ball of perfection

Life spirals in heavy chambers of smoke

Lifting up from heavy steel buildings

Anchored by so much responsibility

And decades of trust

The blue expanse

Millimeters away from

Touching iron and glass

The connection between heaven and earth

Between the asphalt weathered

By a million steps

And a carefree monotone sky

Words On Paper

Strange and melancholy, I feel a peace extending through my body

Extending like my fingers reaching away on the keyboard

Grasping for words to form feeling

For words to capture light and dark

Day and night of my mind

Words which, ultimately are just words

Illusions with no substance

But yet

Are able to trick our minds into delusion

Delusion that procures feeling

Feeling that procures light

Star Extinction

Star

Shining in the night

Do you see why I watch your dazzling light

Why I grasp your picture in my mind

Even as it fades away in time

Star

Star

Trying to be bright

But fading away so soon in the night.

Alone in your eyes

Yet close to others in mine

What can I see that your eyes don't define

Rainy Day

I look to the sky
And wait
A moment of silence
In anticipation of its touch
 I open my mouth
As it begins to descend from the heavens
Drifting gently to concrete
But It tastes bad
Body sweat from clouds on a bad diet
No one ever waits for raindrops here
Or gazes nervously
In anticipation
Even the thirsty weeds
Seem to shy away in disgust
And in weak whispers
Tell me it's my fault
But I stare up to the sky
And hold out my tongue
In hopes that a drop
Might taste good for once

THE POET SPEAKS... *I have always been interested in poetry. It is a beautiful art form, and acts as a way for me to convey a deeper message through structure and metaphor. In addition, I really appreciate how Poetry's unconfined structure gives you an opportunity to truly write about whatever you want however you want. Poetry allows you to express an abstract feeling in a way that is completely unique. I feel it is difficult to do this with spoken words, but I can convey these feelings through writing poems.*

In my poem New York Summer, nature represents the relationship between all forms of life, both human and non-human. I tried to exemplify this relationship in my poem, where even the smallest maggot wriggling in the pavement manages to coexist with tall men in big skyscrapers. I also wanted to write about human ambition, and the eternal desire for a connection with the heavens (much like the Tower of Babylon). In New York Summer, the skyscrapers are always striving for perfection and reaching for heaven's paradise. They inch closer and closer to heaven but never quite reach it, and as a result, never taint the blue sky.

In Star Extinction, I tried to evoke the wonder one experiences when looking at a cluster of stars, while balancing it with a sense of loneliness, isolation, and the realization that stars are a lot farther apart from each other than you might imagine. I tried to describe stars with an ephemeral quality, as they seem to fade out of existence when day comes. Lastly, I tried to question how each individual sees or thinks about these things. Also, does a star know that it exists and is surrounded by others like itself? Does it know that we can gaze upon the night sky and see the light from millions of other stars?

For Words on Paper, I wanted to capture the actual feeling of writing. The title is a little bit strange because I describe the process of writing on a computer, not paper, but to me, it still represents the same process as putting your thoughts onto paper and turning nothing into a tangible reality.

AUTHOR BIO: Christian is a junior who attends high school in New York City. He is particularly keen on studying insects and reading and writing poetry.