

# TIGER LEAPING REVIEW

issue 4 - winter '24



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

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**Dear Reader,**

Thank you for taking the time to read our fourth issue. Over the span of this quarter, we've grown so much; from adding in our new fiction genre to finding new editors, we're so proud to see how far Tiger Leaping Review has come. When we came up with the idea two summers ago, we never could have guessed how many people we've been able to reach and how many beautiful stories we've been able to harbor. And because of this, we thank each and every reader and submitter who has made this journey possible.

We'd like to take a moment to reflect on what an incredible ride this issue has been. After receiving a record-breaking number of submissions in Issue 3, starting Issue 4 seemed like a monumental task. We needed a new system to provide every piece of writing with the attention it needed, and we also wanted to open the space to include a more diverse variety of voices. While reviewing writing and crafting feedback, we realized that the workload for us three editors was piling up and that editors would be a crucial next step to expanding our journal. Much of this process took longer than expected, but we remained diligent and transparent through these uncharted waters. This quarter has been both a challenge and a milestone for Tiger Leaping Review. As always, we relied on the unwavering support and dedication of the writing community, which we've found in all of you.

One of the first fiction submissions we accepted in this issue, "Scenery" by Blanka Pillár, reads, "I believe him because the story paints itself like a vivid oil portrait...and finally, it becomes as if it were a real scene on the canvas of life, but only the immensity of human imagination has made what could never be real." Pillár's imagery – like a painting itself – weaves a sense of wistfulness that follows a relationship built on lies. Katherine Zhao's "Tteokbokki at midnight" focuses more on the relationship the narrator has with herself, writing: "Tteokbokki at midnight...best served to <90 pound Asian girls with dried lips, / greasy hair and self-diagnosed borderline personality disorder / ...everything at this hour looks like it crawled out of an urban legend." A standout trait among the accepted pieces in this issue is the raw, descriptive imagery that invites the reader into the author's world. Each story is unique in its perspective, but we hope that these shared themes of imagination and togetherness can evoke a feeling of wonder in the reader.

Crafting this issue with you all has been such a privilege, and we're so excited to share the work of our talented contributors – now in both fiction and poetry. We welcome you to Issue 4, the brand new chapter of the story Tiger Leaping Review continues to tell.

**Yours truly,**

**Mira Sridharan, Claire Wang, and Kenna Zhang**

**Editors-in-Chief at *Tiger Leaping Review***

# names by Andrew Furst

---

1

the mingled scent of plain donuts  
and coffee  
is the flavor of traveling.

my grandparents would take me to towns  
like boylston and shrewsbury.  
names carried here from far away places.

plaid thermoses  
poured into paper cups  
rested on the bench seat between them;

we combed musty hordes  
of treasure and trash.  
spinning wheels, arrowheads,  
and blue willow

2

so much has changed since then.  
eyes have closed, and new ones opened.  
the green station wagon  
and the chicken coop full of copper boilers  
faded to rust and razed.

but much is the same.

the smell of crusty donuts  
and milky coffee still reminds me of the old chevelle.  
and those names that have settled on to these places,  
like the sun's rays onto our children's brows.

---

**Andrew Furst**

is a poet, artist, author, photographer, musician, and a technologist. His poetry has appeared in The Chaffin Journal, Superpresent magazine, Dime Show Review, and Levee Magazine, amongst others. His art has been featured in the Emerson Review and Mud Season Review. More about Andrew at [www.andrewfurst.net](http://www.andrewfurst.net).

# Scenery

by Blanka Pillár

---

I forgive him for the little lies. The little fibs that slip away and the broken promises that go unkept. He always tells the same lies, and sometimes I believe him because the story paints itself like a vivid oil portrait; first, the figures are painted, then the background, then the corners, edges, contours, and finally, it becomes as if it were a real scene on the canvas of life, but only the immensity of human imagination has made what could never be real. It tells me what I most desire, so I reach for it with all my heart, stretching out my soul's arms to preserve all his lips whisper and hold it within me for eternity. I love him with all my heart, but when my reality is keen-eyed, it sometimes smells like the scratch of jagged-edged infidelities in the dawning light or the wistful night. The cold realization slips into bed beside me or touches me as I walk.

Today we take it into our heads to walk around the riverbank. We get caught in the cool January breeze, and he starts coughing. I take off my thin pink cotton scarf and wrap it around his neck with careful movements. He gives me a weak half-smile and walks on. My chest gets hot, even though my whole body is shivering from the winter's minus temperatures.

Sometimes we stop. We look at the broken-legged seagulls on the slippery waterfront stones, the sloppy sidewalk ahead, and the footprints of giddy pedestrians. He rubs his hand as we spy on one of the old buildings covered in melted snow. His fingertips are almost purple, so I tug off my black fabric gloves and slip them on his frosty palms. He thanks me quietly. His silent words creep into my consciousness like angelically soft notes, wrapping my trembling body in a gentle embrace.

Barely perceptible, the milky-white sky opens, and it drizzles, but we are unperturbed. We sit on a stinging bench and stare silently at the glistening toes of our wet boots as they tread the snowy ground before us. Somewhere in the distance, expensive hand-painted plates clink, light pages of newspapers crinkle in the city breeze, the iron bells of a dilapidated church jingle, and a delicious golden-skinned duck in a warm oven is being prepared. I feel him move beside me, and I put my head down. He sways back and forth with folded arms while tiny particles of dripping snow fall on his knitted flame-red Angora sweater. I slip my thin arms out of my expensive loden-lined coat and place them on his back. He looks me in the eye. My tongue curls and confesses at seeing his delicately delineated perfect face. It humbly admits the truth it has admitted so many times before and hopes. It hopes that, for once, its love's answer will not be a lie. But once again, he replies, I love you too. I-love-you. He utters this gracious lie delicately. The first syllable is trust, the second is passion, and the third is loyalty. He feels none of these, yet he testifies to them. He savours the shape of the voice. First bitter, then sour, then finally swallowed. After all, it's only one word. But for me, it's so much more: I put myself in his hands.

Maybe that's not how it all happened. I've been sick for a while now; my lungs are weak from the January freeze. Every time I close my eyes, I try to remember our last story. Embellish it, add to it, rearrange it, change it. Maybe one day I'll grind it to perfection, and that word won't ring so false. Or the memory will turn yellow, like old letterhead, and no longer matter. Or maybe "I love you" will become just another fluffy word to be whispered in the harsh winter, bored, picked up by the wind, carried far away, across the world, to where it means nothing. Far from the eager, greedy arms of my soul.

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### **Blanka Pillár**

is an eighteen-year-old writer from Budapest, Hungary. She has a never-ending love for creating and an ever-lasting passion for learning. She has won several national competitions and has been an editor-in-chief of her high school's prestigious newspaper, Eötvös Diák. Today, she is not throwing away her shot.

# Snipe Hunt

by Cam McGlynn

---

When I was young,  
we called birds down from the trees.  
They flew in zigzag patterns  
to land in our brown paper bags.  
I never saw one, only felt  
the weight as it dropped in  
and felt the hand of my counselor  
wrapping the top tight  
to make sure the snipe didn't escape.  
After the hunt, we dumped only rocks,  
not birds, out of our bags  
as the counselors laughed.

When I was young,  
I zigzagged to my classroom,  
dodging imagined bullets from real guns.  
They were shooting kids from a white van.  
Turns out we were wrong  
—about the van, that is—  
but the shots were right,  
right between the ribs.

When I was young,  
I didn't know that snipes,  
pencil-billed and feathered-brown,  
were birds of the marsh and reeds.  
They would never be caught perching in trees,  
nor caught by the songs of tie-dyed kids.  
Only the hunters with keenest eye  
and the steadiest hand can shoot  
a snipe in zig-zag flight.

Now when my daughter is young,  
they teach her the zig-zag run.  
Not to rely on camouflage, only flight.  
Everyday, I pack her pencils  
and brown paper bag lunch.



When I brush  
the feathered hair from her eyes,  
I wish I could give  
her wings.

---

**Cam McGlynn**

is a writer and scientific researcher living outside of Frederick, Maryland. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Neologism Poetry Journal, JAKE, The Shore, ONE ART, and Open Minds Quarterly among others. She likes made-up words, Erlenmeyer flasks, dog-eared notebooks, and excel spreadsheets.

# Newton's Law of Emotion

by Christiana Doucette

---

The ladder scatters the wasps  
rising from the tops of a splatter of felled fruit.

Skin crawls as they buzz from fuzz on old roots rotting.  
Figures next door, figuring how to reach more

breach the highest tree limbs. They reconfigure  
buckets to branches, like chess figurines

stacked back-to-back, head-to-toe. Rook-to-pawn.  
Spawn fresh tart dreams on tongue. Summer songs once sung.

They're grasping figments of Newton's imagination,  
crumbs of his gravity to ground their machinations.

As each fig falls to pail, they spot another.  
swat the flies, improvise new heights

all with mother's old recipe, necessity's invention  
to recreate that plate she set before them.

The time she spent for them, cutting each fig in two.  
Figs became pairs. Became full chairs and laughter.

That's what they're after. Full stomachs, full hearts,  
tarts full of the figgy taste of home, of hope, of her.

---

## **Christiana Doucette**

spends mornings in her garden weeding, because just like poetry, flowers grow best with space to breathe. She has judged poetry for San Diego Writer's Festival for the past three years. Her poetry has appeared in anthologies, been set to music by opera composers, and performed on NPR. She is the 2024 Kay Yoder Scholarship for

American History recipient. Her full-length novel works are represented by Leslie Zampetti of Open Book Literary. You can find recent poetry from her in Full Mood Magazine, The Zinnia Journal (forthcoming), Boats Against the Current (forthcoming), The Creekside Magazine (forthcoming), and Frazzled Lit (forthcoming).

# I Move Away From Home

by Jacob Butlett

---

& these gravel trails wind around my heart  
like thorny vines. Lightning veins through fog

above the lake, shuddered pines in thunder  
snaking in pampas grass full of cicada trill

& dust, mud-spangled, yet I, over a hundred  
miles from home for a job that won't last,

am taking this walk through wind, hoping  
to treat this village of coal mines & backyard

fireworks as my own as lightning reflections  
take wing off the lake's cataracts.

# Dusk

by Jacob Butlett

---

Across your balcony, Grandma, mid-autumn light  
    roosts in swinging pots of pansies  
  
above blood-red canopies billowing in wind.  
    We recline in blue Adirondack chairs  
  
with mugs of hot chocolate, gazing at Dubuque,  
    whose brick buildings & stone spires  
  
knuckle the horizon's blackjack oaks that seem  
    to float on Mississippi River mist  
  
edged in cicada trill & loon cry. Bundled in a polyester  
    blanket, you clutch your mug as if it were  
  
a campfire steaming in your palms. We don't talk  
    about the moving boxes scattered throughout  
  
your apartment. We don't even talk about hospice,  
    your move-in date next week. I offer to switch  
  
out the pink baseball cap on your bald head for a warm hat,  
    but you refuse, your eyes trained on the sky,  
  
that gold prairie of purple thunderheads. We hear  
    no thunderclaps, just a breeze screeching  
  
like a baby heron, wing-shot yet determined, tailing  
    our blanched breaths into night.

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## **Jacob Butlett**

is a three-time Pushcart Prize- and one-time Best of the Net-nominated author. Jacob's creative works have been published in many journals, including the Colorado Review, The Hollins Critic, The MacGuffin, Lunch Ticket, and Into the Void.

# Reconciliation: Artifacts & Repatriation

by Jan Wiezorek

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After a massacre, items, bloodstained, are taken,  
& it does a soul good, as they say, to know they are  
held—no matter how improperly—in dark boxes  
to remember proud nations that no longer dance.  
But souls cry out in open fields like a dark box  
that cannot hold them. Others write letters & ask  
that a baby's rattle be returned. We all know how  
much we are blessed to be here, in the presence  
of each other, not w/ handshakes, but w/ voices  
reconciling tonight. Whether the toy rattle be  
burned, or welcomed, or prayed upon, or healed  
w/, or displayed, or carried into our spirits, we  
know that the four winds have chosen to shake it.

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## **Jan Wiezorek**

writes from Michigan. His chapbook *Forests of Woundedness* is forthcoming from Seven Kitchens Press. Wiezorek's work has appeared in *The London Magazine*. He taught writing at St. Augustine College, Chicago. His poetry has been awarded by the Poetry Society of Michigan and nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

# Tteokbokki at midnight

by Katherine Zhao

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Tteokbokki at midnight:

simmered rice cakes dried up & shriveled against plasticine wrap,  
baked in the microwave for exactly a minute and 33 seconds. Preferably  
held in the poorly-glazed ceramic bowl you painted at summer camp  
eight years ago, best served to <90 pound Asian girls with dried lips,  
greasy hair and self-diagnosed borderline personality disorder.  
It looks as if curdled milk & sickled blood had a baby, bathed & baptized  
in the buttery-yellow refrigerator light. watch reality TV half past 12 and  
turn the volume down to a nice odd number like 15—but make sure it's  
not loud enough for Mom to wake up & get mad. Flicking through channels,  
you realize everything at this hour looks like it crawled out of an  
urban legend. What a picture of indulgence—you should be finishing up your  
calculus homework! But tempted by bite-sized existentialist thoughts,  
absurdist rationales and pragmatic delusions swirling in a bowl of  
gochujang paste—who can refuse? Later, you find yourself up-close  
and personal with the toilet seat, face-down as you push your hair back.  
acid reflux, sticky fingers clenching a towel. The bathroom smells of  
clorox and rotten mangos. Your teeth will inevitably turn yellow  
after a few months of this, so make sure to double-layer your toothpaste,  
smile into the mirror & tell yourself it'll make a difference.

# The Fireflies Sing Tonight

by Katherine Zhao

---

Murmurs hum in the thick August air like the beating of a bumblebee's heart, the invisible orchestra's cadence drawing the final curtain upon the fox's tail cradling an orange sun.

Mother runs through the auburn fields, coal-colored braids trailing in the wind. Her weathered hands carry a tin pot, where she drops moonstones, bluebonnets and lovebugs in a concoction of sap — "Honeypot tricks," she calls them.

As the sky becomes swatched with indigo hues and black clouds, I take a wooden spoon and clang it against Mother's honeypot. The fireflies come to feast upon her offerings and, in return, show me the path to the city.

Twinkling lights dot the skyline as jazz beyond the bayou shakes the earth beneath the soles of my feet. Coca-Cola lines stretch around the curb as ladies in black sequins and smoky pearls enter golden doors under neon lights. Boys and girls in summer shorts & pinstripe tees chase the sparks of orange fireworks.

I follow them but they are lost in cobblestone storefronts. Busboy caps line the streetlamps as newspaper rags form coats of steel along the brick walls of alleyways. A man with broken teeth who looks like me asks, "Got a quarter for me, Missy?" but the fireflies ignore him and fly on.

I sequester myself in a silent theater as a piano crescendo collides with the rainstorm brewing outside. The movie begins to play, and I begin to cry for Mother.

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**Katherine Zhao**

is a 17-year-old artist and writer from Long Island, New York. She is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Chromatic Scars Review. She is a Best of Issue Winner in the National High School Poetry Contest, a multi-time Scholastic Gold/Silver Key recipient, a Top 5 Winner for the NCTE National Writing Award, a 1st Place Winner in the Wildlife Forever Art Contest, and many more. She has been published in The Looking Glass Review, the Blue Marble Review, TeenInk, Firework Stories, and more. When she's not creating, you can find her watching reality TV while eating ramen.

# Texas in Summer: Let's Have an Hour Underneath the 8pm Sky

(prev. published in Chantarelle's Notebook) by Michelle Li

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## I. Prologue

I know I have

    a good poem lodged in me  
somewhere.

I opened the hungry mouth of door & the sky  
    is changing hands  
    between twilight and evening.

Sit down with me, your bones are tired.

    The voices from the house are like how you want death  
    to sound: faraway enough to forget.

A wobble of branches has  
    the same wind that turns up the  
the dirt from streets of Paris.

The trees wave and throw  
    up leaves in applause.

Everything collapses back home.

## II. [untitled]

The place, you would not know  
    until light. June is an  
ugly month, but the breeze from  
    elsewhere loves me enough to brush  
    my hair, the mosquitos to pick at my flesh.

The incandescent glow from the last  
porch light stretched,  
    elastic and tender, band-like, to mimic  
a smoldering fire.

The clouds that cap us from falling into the atmosphere  
    play their final verse (most people mistaken them for crickets).

## III. Epilogue

This place, you would not believe  
    until light. June is a  
soft month. The glint of stop sign metal  
    in the afterglow of streetlight &  
        the trees throw up their hands again,  
this time in ash. The cough of plane engine  
overhead, choking on blue sky.  
    Perhaps this flight is not mine to take, but I will have it  
anyway.

---

### **Michelle Li**

has been nationally recognized by Scholastic Art and Writing, The Waltham Forest Poetry Contest, and the Rising Voices Awards, and is published in Blue Marble, Masque and Spectacle, and Lumina Journal. She is an alumnus of the 92Y Young Writers Workshop, and Kenyon Review Workshop, and is on the board of the Incandescent Review and Pen and Quill magazine. She plays violin and piano and loves Rachmaninoff and Sylvia Plath.

# Gas Station Ghosts

by Rory Perkins

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She said the gas station was haunted. That anyone who went in never came out, their bodies crushed down and made into fuel for the cars that came and went in the night. I said she was full of shit, then pushed her back onto the grass.

She'd taken us to the ditch opposite the gas station for our first date, back when her Dad was still alive and the idea of ghosts was something abstract. After he died she wanted to visit more often. We sat patiently until someone arrived and watched them disappear behind the grimy gas station windows.

Usually it would be truckers or hippies in beat up campers popping in for a piss. Once we spotted someone we knew, one of the priests from the church on the other side of town. In the ditch she pulled away from me and pointed to where the gas station door was swinging shut. We watched the back of his balding head making its way through the aisles, stopping every so often and then retreating towards the rear. "He'll be back." I said, and so we waited. An hour passed and at some point dusk drew in turning everything cold.

When the priest failed to reappear, we went back to hers. She waited until her mother had gone to bed and turned all the lights off one by one until there was nothing but darkness. In that uniform void we explored the shape of each other and made love in silence.

After the funeral I met her outside the gas station. She was closer than usual, standing on the edge of the forecourt where the fluorescent lighting couldn't quite reach.

"What do you think happens to them?" She said. She smelt faintly of other people's perfume, mourners I imagined queuing up at the funeral to give her a hug, telling her about *a better place* and *eternal peace*.

In return I told her the truth. That I was sorry about her Dad but there was no such thing as ghosts. Whatever happened to the people who went into the gas station would have a perfectly reasonable explanation.

She asked how I got through life being so sure of everything. Assuming there was an answer to the world's mysteries and all we had to do was wait for things to become clear. We watched as a motorbike pulled up and its teenage rider wandered inside. She moved closer and asked what was wrong with wanting to believe in something. I said she was

being naive, that death was a fact of life and wasn't that beautiful enough without the need to bring the supernatural into it?

Later we made up with the one thing that we knew was real. Our bodies and the love they shared. She took out a pair of blindfolds and earplugs and said she wanted us to put them on. Shut down our senses until there was nothing but physical touch. In the darkness I saw the teenager wandering around behind the gas station windows, getting smaller and smaller until he could have been just another smear on the glass.

That week she hardly made it into school. We all knew about her Dad so no one brought it up. In the evenings I met her on the forecourt with sandwiches and hot chocolate. Winter was really setting in then and her skin was unhealthily pale. When we did make love it was like handling a dying creature, unsure whether each moment of contact was going to shatter something within.

She would no longer leave the gas station's perimeter. When I did manage to get her to sit down she would talk about the people she'd seen, and the way they'd looked before disappearing.

"It was him." She said one night. I was helping her into the coat I had brought and she was making no move to help. "It was Dad, on the other side of the glass. He was happy."

There was no point getting angry. I pulled her into my chest and told her how the brain deals with grief. I told her all the explanations for hallucinations I'd read online and the way the cold probably didn't help. It was like talking to someone who wasn't there. She nodded rhythmically, not agreeing with me, just locked into the movement as her eyes stared out at the gas station entrance.

It was on the news a few days later. Teenager vanished without a trace. A search party was being set up, a hundred faces without hope. Of course everyone asked me. Accused me of knowing something when all I could tell them was my version of the truth. That there would be an explanation if we just looked hard enough.

I went to the only place I could think of, not sure what I hoped to find but knowing it wasn't what met me there. Her necklace abandoned on the concrete, the gas station door propped open. I stood there all night trying to summon the courage to follow her inside. Telling myself there was nothing to be scared off and praying I was right. In the end, though, I turned and left. Returned to school and the world I could understand.

Now, when everything feels too predictable, I go down to that ditch where I met my first love. Night after night I stare into the yellow glow from afar and try my hardest to believe in mysteries.

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### **Rory Perkins**

is a British writer focusing on shorter works. He has been published in Vast Literary Press, SoFloPoJo, Passengers Journal, and Artam's The Face Project (forthcoming). He can be found at @roryperkinswriter on X.

# At My Grandfather's Dissertation Defense, He is Denied

by Rukan Saif

---

My grandmother tells me this  
from the passenger seat  
holding a napkin stitched  
with four needles for safekeeping.  
She has become so small  
I almost believe she can fit  
through the eyes  
of their metal holdings.  
I know, though, that it is never  
so simple. Somewhere, the thread  
always hitching. Picture it:  
my mother's father in the 60s  
in a brown wool suit, scouring  
the whole of Sheffield for a  
plate of rice, my grandmother  
with her hair still black and rivering  
past her hips, my mother  
rollicking deep in her belly. They spent  
six hours that day searching  
not for rice, my grandmother tells me,  
but for an echo  
to reach back up from the well, to  
take them by the collars, and whisper  
*You are not the first. You are not alone.*  
Of course, she doesn't say this. She says  
Ya Allah everyone was so white  
and the only rice they did find was  
street scattered and for passerby  
pigeons so they went back  
to their apartment, where my  
grandfather would spend the next  
six years philosophizing a whiteness  
resistant to bleaching. Head bowed  
towards the words of men

who in all their loftiness  
would also have denied him  
no matter his sacrifice, and him  
supplicating and  
supplicating

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**Rukan Saif**

is a Bangladeshi American poet from Los Angeles. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in The Penn Review, phoebe, Furrow Magazine, ONE ART, and elsewhere. She is a digital resident with The Seventh Wave and lives in Boston.



# Instant

by Scott Hales

---

"Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

—William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust*

It is not yet two o'clock, and I want to say  
the instant doesn't matter: you crouched  
behind a rail fence and a furled rebel flag,  
waiting for Pickett to signal the advance.  
In no future does this damned gamble pay off,  
poor mountain boy, even if you win the day.  
But Faulkner was right: all is in the balance,  
and nothing has happened yet.

In this instant,  
somewhere along the federal line, a Minié ball  
with your name on it, wrapped in cheap paper,  
waits in a cartridge box for some Billy Yank  
to send your way. And I can tell you what happens.  
In another instant, you charge across that field,  
gripping your musket, a desperate skeleton,  
blind with hunger, ready to face the enemy  
with one lead ball and no bayonet.

Maybe  
you reach the wall. Maybe you only get in range.  
Either way, that Minié ball whistles a hole  
through your hip.

Once upon a time, I wondered  
what might have happened if that ball had struck  
you square in the gut, somewhere soft and vital  
and easy to infect, thus consigning our tomorrows  
to a slow, festering death, ten thousand years  
in the making. But I was missing the point  
of this instant. You are in the balance, not me.  
It is not yet two o'clock on this July afternoon.  
Nothing has happened, and you can still walk away.

**Scott Hales**

is a poet living in Eagle Mountain, Utah. His work has appeared in Dappled Things, Vita Poetica, The Sandy River Review, Irreantum, Wayfare, The Under Review, and other journals.

# The Flames Saw

by Suhjung Kim

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*"On April 16, 2014, the Sewol ferry, which was sailing from Incheon to Jeju, sank. The final death toll reveals a tragedy. 304 of the 476 passengers were killed; five of the bodies were never recovered. Of the 299 deaths, 250 were second-year high school students. Like so many other students, they went on a school trip to Jeju Island, the most beautiful place in South Korea, in the blue spring of April. They failed to return home." — The Diplomat*

The flames saw the hungry  
waves lunge at the quivering

railing, cascade over the  
blubbering deck, tangled muscles rippling.

Knobby fingers of boiling foam danced  
its waltz, peeling people off their beds

on the lower C, kissing the wood off the walls  
on the trills, humming the windows from their frames  
in merciless shimmies  
of its hips.

They all drowned by noon.

The flames smelt  
the metal screams,  
smelt the scratching doorknobs,  
the steaming stained breaths,  
the sour sweat that leaked  
from bobbing heads.  
Smelt the sweet water  
crooning its way  
with its flirtatious tongue  
through limp tangles,  
of hair  
that swayed  
in the syrup.

The flames felt  
the slick porcelain  
of balloon limbs,  
leached of their vivid color  
like wooden chopsticks.  
Cold fingernails slump  
into the soft flesh  
of arms.

The flames heard  
the sandy skin  
on worn toes  
breath a soft sigh  
as they sank  
into the embrace  
of the water. Heard  
the jittering bones  
thump  
a solemn tempo  
against the wailing piano,  
purple bed rails,  
a pair  
of oscillating legs.

The smoke skidded over  
the hills,  
raced  
the cold sun,  
arrived at the huffing buildings,  
knocked on the doors.  
whispered into young ears,  
words  
keen scythes,  
cleaving light footsteps,  
the babble of the television,  
nimble hands frying  
snug eggs.  
The walls were left heaving,

clumsy tears  
stumbling down cracks in ceilings,  
into brewing coffee,  
hands holding fresh diapers.

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### **Suhjung Kim**

is a poet and writer from Seoul, South Korea. Her poems have appeared in *Young Writers Journal*, *Beyond Words Literary Magazine*, *Eunoia Review*, and elsewhere. She writes for her school's literary magazine, *Kaleidoscope*, and newspaper, *The Tiger Times*. She has attended writing workshops with Iowa Young Writers' Studio and Kenyon Young Writers. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading books of all genres, listening to music, and swimming.

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