

# TIGER LEAPING

# REVIEW

*issue 1*  
*winter '23*



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

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***Dear Reader,***

Thank you for taking the time to read our first-ever issue. Over the last three months, we have curated the work of a few of the brightest voices we received into our inaugural issue of *Tiger Leaping Review*. As each of us read through the submitted work, the selection process became harder and harder. Because of this, we'd like to thank everyone interested in *Tiger Leaping Review* for trusting us with their best work.

We'd like to take a moment to reflect on what an incredible journey this issue has been. When we launched in August, we were unsure if we could garner enough submissions to create an issue, but since then, we have received a substantial amount of work to select from. These past few months have allowed us to grow into our place in the world of literature.

"I conduct the flowers / to a symphony of mourning," Sylvia Sun writes, encapsulating the darkness of mourning into the beauty of flowers. Similar to "two things are unique to a home / writer's block and wetting the bed" from Ziyi Yan's "moving/dream," we find ourselves pondering how the independence of multiple may become a unification. Subhadra Narayann's strong sense of description immerses the reader in something so beautiful—"Fallen flowers, trampled; once beautiful blooms in fugacious tenure, effusing colors and / scents long after death"—that the reader may even forget that there is imperfectness even in a small stroll. Each poem is unique, but their combination is similar to finding the solution to a complex math problem: seeing individual components combine to create something so intricate yet exquisite. Some poems are beautiful, some are haunting, but they all come together in a shared feeling of rawness.

Crafting this edition has been a privilege, and we are delighted to share the remarkable works of our talented contributors. Without further ado, we welcome you to read, to feel, and most of all, to a journey that is only beginning.

***Yours truly,***

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

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

# Loss

by Afra Ahmed

---

for you to get over  
the loss of your  
mother's mother  
i know it is so  
hard as if asking a  
man without hands  
to hold a  
bundle of timber

to lose a love  
that was vaster  
than the Caspian Sea  
i know it is so  
hard, for you are  
used to a fragrance  
not many have  
had the chance  
to savour

but when you  
move on, for once  
spare some time  
to consider the  
magnitude of my pain

and let me know

what is it like to  
be caressed by  
crinkled hands  
and just continue  
holding them  
for hours  
when you know  
the edifice of the  
world you had

assembled carefully  
has disintegrated  
yet again

what is it like to be  
cared and loved  
for who you are  
not for what you  
can do, not for what  
you can lend

what is it like  
to place your  
vulnerable head on  
the safe lap  
of your grandmother  
and dauntlessly let  
the tears drizzle  
the way they prefer  
even when everyone's  
watching with  
eyes like eagles

i do not know

for my mother's  
mother died before  
i entered this world.

---

***Afra Adil Ahmad***

is a writer, poet, artist and calligrapher. Based in Taiwan, she holds a Bachelor's degree in English Literature. She writes about everything under the sun: from dark issues of the society to problems faced by teenagers to imparting chunks of wisdom through her poems, stories and write-ups. Her works have appeared in various magazines including Iman collective, MYM, Rather Quiet, Ice Floe Press, Olney Magazine, Broken Spine Collective.

# Sedroul

by Alistair Gaunt

---

## **TRIGGER WARNING: Gory imagery, violence**

Darkness hides behind dawn, peers over the crumbling balcony. The unknown road morphs into untraced constellations carved into the sky. Acid rain scars your skin. The frost bites like a punch through glass. Sin comes knocking on your door, begging for forgiveness. Your mind is a hurricane and your heart and soul are on fire. The cupboard is empty except for your skeleton. The disheveled sheets hold the shape of your melancholy. I stand in the kitchen with a sinister smile—your fists turn into knives. The walls weep at the sound of my name—a house is not a home without ghosts. Copper pools in your mouth like violent desire. You are not meant for lukewarm vengeance.

---

### ***Alistair Gaunt (they/he/she)***

is a Filipino queer non-binary poet who was born in Southern Philippines. She is a self-taught writer, with English being her third language. Their writing contemplates the queer experience, violent desires, peculiar dreams, death, grief, and catharsis. His work has appeared in the House of Poetry's Debut Issue and is forthcoming in Moonbow Magazine. They may be contacted through [alistairgauntwriting@gmail.com](mailto:alistairgauntwriting@gmail.com).

# Ghostlove

by Amy Kelly

---

I have feasted on my own hope,  
Filling up, instead, on decay  
And my reality  
Is malnourished  
Because there was no richness in the food.

My arms strain from clinging to you  
Only to find I am squeezing myself  
And I am alone  
In this bed  
Because loving me is outside your grasp.

I can't grow large enough to contain everything.  
Large enough while sated on nothing.  
The air is thick and violent  
When you are home,  
I grow small.

---

## **Amy Kelly**

is a former midwife, current therapist, mother of two and farmer on Vancouver Island. Her writing has appeared in the Yummy Mummy Club and 805 lit + art . She has been accepted three years in a row to the Yale Writers' Workshop. She has two novels on submission with her agent, one of which was just shortlisted for the YA Leapfrog Global fiction prize.

# The Poetess

by Caridad Cole

---

in the hushed moments  
in a world of wonder  
in the vivid hues of day  
in a gentle surrender

a story  
a girl  
delicate and profound  
dipping her toes into clear waters

turning over soil  
layers and layers  
hesitant and sharp  
listening for quiet revelations

a girl is a tender thing  
a chilly morning  
the solace beneath ruined empires  
music drifting in from another room

in the rustle of leaves  
in the blinding light of snow  
a whisper across your back  
and every petal plucked to the ground

a language only we know  
something we heard through a telescope  
held close to the heart  
one day after school

a girl is a secret thing  
stifled in a laugh  
her spirit  
her body

the melody of a cosmic hum



a vulnerable dance  
memorized just for a moment  
sunset to sunrise

she meets herself  
in the quiet of night  
reflection drawn in a speckled mirror  
she wonders

lost and at home  
dreams and doubts  
whispers and shouts  
she shakes it all away

a girl is a solitary thing  
her own companion  
cleansing and soothing  
threading the needle for you

clumsy divinity  
caught in a canopy  
she knows every language  
every palm to the touch

wading through rivers  
swaying  
serene  
she composes her thoughts

---

### ***Caridad Cole***

is a Los-Angeles based writer and filmmaker who is absolutely obsessed with the strangeness of dreams and the surreality of nightmares. She graduated from Bard College, where she studied film production and creative writing. Caridad was the 2018 recipient of Words for Charity's Compassionate Chronicle and Benevolent Quill awards for her short stories "Empty Houses" and "In a Town Called Albatross". In her free time, she sews little whimsical things, practices henna, and maintains a thriving kingdom for her Sims.

# And there shell by Irina Tall

---

And there shells beats human life,  
breaks through the darkness  
and what's left of a dream, of skyscrapers...  
I'm not there, but someone else  
and there is a screen in front of me and I don't cry,  
but I just watch like a fish in an aquarium,  
because there can't be lies...  
And only the heart shrinks  
removing something with a bowstring  
of itself, unnecessary files  
from hard drive...  
And I live  
veins on the pavement ...  
Don't wait for me now  
I have gills...

---

## ***Irina Tall (Novikova)***

is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. The first personal exhibition "My soul is like a wild hawk" (2002) was held in the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. In 2020, she took part in Poznań Art Week.

**(vii)** by jw summerisle

---

smoke menthol and  
dip it into the pit.

it is engorged on  
the fire and flaming

broadens when the  
cigarette is

stubbed into  
it.

this pit. mother mud  
and marduk. earth

kissed spade.  
the wheeling birds

edge my dreams. my

nightmares as my  
mother knives her mouth

all red. a stick. a  
maw filler. tree killer.

damson limbs cradle  
the wheel barrow as

they wheedle from  
the ground. how

wounded. how  
wounded i

stuff my mouth

with mint. with

menthol.

fingers blacker than any bruise  
and swollen like forbidden

fruit as i find  
my face still

searching.  
am i here?

roots dug deep  
from the pit.

spell circle cast (wide)  
as the sulphur crawls

out. the bowels writhe

with worms. wet clay.  
my mother claws the

pick axe to pick  
her teeth. soft

bone of  
tree

turns her face  
all white.

all dead. all

yellow with  
tar and tabacco

smoke.

damson elegy.  
backyard kaddish.

soft soil rends  
life from

itself and i

spin. suspended  
by my skin. i

can't escape. we

are all  
such soft  
and fragile

fruit.

---

***jw summerisle***

is an autistic artist, poet and maker of weird stuff from the English east midlands. They have a chapbook called "kinfolk" with the black sunflowers poetry press and have had work in Leicester Museum & Art Gallery and the Foyles Young Poets pamphlets. You can find them on TikTok @jw\_summerisle.

# Every aching memory is a razor cut

by Kirsten Sto. Domingo

---

on the chin of my regret.

I think of my history with you and fear that  
your name will slip through my tongue.

Hard-pressed for closure, all I do is excavate the ground  
of my grudges, only to unearth more stones of my rancor.

Hindsight offers me the wisdom that he wasn't the apple  
our eyes were so desperate to possess.

It was always about us. Look at the havoc  
we wreaked all over the land of each other's ego.

The strands of what we once were to each other  
continue to unbraid.

I wallow in pity of my image as  
a belated thought, a throwaway line, a second-best choice.

And yet, even after I have painted everything  
in gray surrender,

I still indulge in aimless, dangerous hope:  
will there be an empty seat saved for me  
in the party of your tomorrows?

Will there be a spotlight shining just for me  
in the grandest show of your yesterdays?

When you return to the home that I once knew  
as my home too, you'll find me as the last puzzle piece left  
abandoned underneath the couch of your mind,  
waiting for the moment you clean up the recesses of  
what once was and discover me again.

It might bruise my pride to hold this truth but  
my hands are still reaching out for yours.

Turn the knob of my heart and I'll open for you;  
tread in the dark and I'll be the light to pierce through.

# At the End of Future's Tunnel

by Kirsten Sto. Domingo

---

There is always someone waiting. You say it's usually the destination that's on tenterhooks, fumbling with its fingers and walking back and forth. The car doesn't pause, the same way your heart does when it comes to seeking. The backseat cradles you, as you tell yourself this is a joyride. At the end of the future's tunnel, you want to announce that you have arrived. But for now, that want remains an unquenched thirst. The line is not yet finished—a brand new road shakes hands with you, encourages you to continue the ride. The house you've been craving to walk into is still under construction. The car seems to shrink, so you shed the skin of your naivety. Your throat scratches but the water bottle beside you is empty. Here you go, waiting, again. To pass the time, you count, like playing hide-and-seek. The counting never seems to end though. Perhaps you're prolonging the hunt, because you've finally admitted it—how do you even start to search for something so strange? How do you put a name to a face your hands haven't touched? At once your head turns to the window—have you missed your stop already? The weight of missing out pushes your eyes closed.

There is always someone waiting. You're on tenterhooks, fumbling with your fingers, rocking back and forth. This time, the car pauses.

At the end of the future's tunnel,  
Somebody whispers:

"Wake up. It's your turn to drive."

---

## ***Kirsten Sto. Domingo***

is a disabled content writer from the Philippines. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Honeyfire Literary Magazine, Do Geese See God, Moonbow Magazine, Scarlet Dragonfly Journal, Transients Magazine, Rill & Grove Poetry Journal, Discretionary Love, Rewrite The Stars Review, orangepeel literary magazine, and Porch Literary Magazine. In her spare time, she enjoys watching k-dramas and sitcoms, as well as reading fiction. You can read her poems on Instagram: @fromthepsyche.

# i am asking for me

by Linda M. Crate

---

## **TRIGGER WARNING: Suicide, homophobia**

"you were just a child"  
so was he, and he deserved better.

i wish i had spoken up,  
wish i would've said something;  
but i didn't do anything—

he was openly gay,  
and they enjoyed tearing him  
to pieces;  
bullied and bullied and bullied  
until one day he decided the only  
way out was to take his own life—

now his family will never  
be able to embrace him,  
meet any of his boyfriends  
or even his future husband,  
they'll never be able to eat dinner  
with him or talk to him about  
his life or listen to music or watch  
movies with him;

all because some kids decided  
to be cruel—

i learned to bury the fact that i was  
queer because i was already bullied,  
and i saw what they did to him;  
i wanted to live but what kind of life is it  
when you feel as if you can't fully  
express your heart or be yourself?

is it really living if you have to



stay behind closed doors for fear  
of losing those whom you love?

i am asking for me.

# with every sunset

by Linda M. Crate

---

## **TRIGGER WARNING: Suicide, depression**

sometimes i have survivor's guilt,  
took my uncle's suicide for me to  
realize that i didn't want to die,  
just wanted all the pain and rage in  
me to be dug out the same way  
one would scoop out pumpkin guts;

i wish our love was enough to drive  
away the darkness that devoured him—

still have the last gift he gave me,  
and his last letter to me where he encouraged  
me to follow my dreams relentlessly;

i am trying but i am tired—

but i hope that every time i rise again after  
facing disappointment that he can be proud  
of me,

maybe one day the universe will let us meet  
one another again;

both of us creative souls—i thought maybe  
one day i could pluck up enough courage  
to ask him to teach me to paint,

and maybe he tries to show me with every sunset.

---

### ***Linda M. Crate (she/her)***

is a Pennsylvanian writer whose poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has twelve

published chapbooks the latest being: *Searching Stained Glass Windows For An Answer* (Alien Buddha Publishing, December 2022). She is also the author of the novella *Mates* (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2022). Her debut book of photography *Songs of the Creek* (Alien Buddha Publishing, April 2023) was recently published.

# A Lesson From Zaheer, Our Fishmonger

by Shamik Banerjee

---

All things are measurable, son: the food  
You have, the sprawling mains, for man has power  
Over the world; He deems what's bad or good;  
Determines if a plant should wilt or flower.  
But ordeals measure us—we take the test  
Of mercy when affliction's cavalry  
Threatens to loot the kindness off one's chest  
As in the massacre of '83,  
When every lane had reeked of Muslim blood,  
My Abba Jaan had fallen to the sword  
Held by your neighbours; trembling on the mud,  
He mumbled, "What's my sin? My faith? O' Lord,  
Don't charge them for their deeds." Love was his wish  
That lives through me, for I still feed them fish.

**About this Sonnet:** The incident described by our fishmonger is the Nelli Massacre, which took place in central Assam (an Indian state) during a six-hour period on February 18, 1983. The massacre claimed the lives of 1,600–2,000 people. The victims were all Muslims.

**Word Meaning:**

Abba Jaan: Affectionate term for one's 'father' (used by Muslims)

# My Home's Roof: A Rondel

by Shamik Banerjee

---

Fair Luna, paintress of the night,  
Employs her brush with polished skill  
Upon our quadrate roof to fill  
It with the colours cream and white.

Men viewing from skyscrapers might  
Deem it a pink sheet—such a thrill!  
Fair Luna, paintress of the night,  
Employs her brush with polished skill.

This roof looks pocked to naked sight;  
Therefore, it takes the shielding spill  
Of moon-made hues (like man's strong will  
to paint his griefs with laughter bright).  
Fair Luna, paintress of the night,  
Employs her brush with polished skill.

---

## ***Shamik Banerjee***

is a poet from India. When he is not writing, he can be found strolling the hills surrounding his homestead. Some of his poems are forthcoming in *The Hoogly Review* and *Dreich*, among others.

# Impe(tus) - rfect by Subhadra Narayann

---

## **(Impetus Imperfect)**

I was irrevocably drawn to their imperfect symmetry,  
settling, discordantly on freshly-swept sidewalks.

Angled blades of green carried by winds of change, strewn; a legacy of striving shoots  
prematurely truncated.

Fallen flowers, trampled; once beautiful blooms in fugacious tenure, effusing colors and  
scents long after death.

Litter of leaves, browned and browning; caressed by zephyr - rousing once again to be  
alive,  
encircling, refusing to be sidelined.

How, in this mundane world, an unassuming stroll  
brings muse enough, for a restless heart so mired.

---

### **Subhadra Narayann**

is a former secondary school teacher turned poet and writer from Singapore who has turned to writing as a creative outlet and elixir to life's many challenging and confounding contradictions. Her first poem to be ever published is 'Shirahige' in Hot Pot magazine. Her other pieces spanning the different genres are also expected in various forthcoming publications.

# —father's 献身 (kenshin) by Sylvia Sun

---

in the garden,  
father bows and kisses the  
green. surrenders his heart  
to each tomato plant.

close enough, you'll see  
the fervent love within his eyes.  
unexpressed affection turns to  
sacrifice (suicide?)  
he kneels into the soil.

poisoned swelling in his throat.  
father cries without a sound  
but I conduct the flowers  
to a symphony of mourning.

---

## **Sylvia Sun**

is a 17 year old aspiring author and poet from California.

# stairwell photos

by Ziyi Yan

---

what is there to pushing something soft  
i dropped my wallet eighteen flights

down a window?  
down the well of us.

i don't remember praying to walls  
seeping the lack of someone.

when they were still grid lines  
let's trample us in fresh mud:

snap a black hallway or  
the bottom of this place

a receipt scrawled with our rocket ship.  
is body shaped & we're still

grafting skin where i scoured mine  
like a book cover, until there is nothing

raw. let's kick this wall  
but paper between our bodies.

anyway, the L-word was rotting on someone  
with letters like dead flies:

until i built it in a poem  
heaved it up like a body & left it

on an unknown floor.  
a screaming comment

let's post this one & one day i will leave  
for knowing we're not the world but just

enough. we are all burnt skin  
scrolling:

to someone, smiles wiped clean by

here we laugh at the fall,

grope our stomachs & laugh that

you don't catch the teddy bear,  
our heads & no one will try calling us

that the wind up here could never snap  
a projection. i breathe

even when i touch you,  
on these steps but

because we've broken something  
everywhere the light still bounces. anyway,

let's spray spit in my camera roll  
outside these walls.

& scream about the weather  
it's mere chance we're not wrung blank yet.

love,  
so fast.

what i want to say is: why do we spiral  
why do the meanings keep crawling,

clawing for air.  
with nothing to fall from,

maybe i have always been in this maze  
searching for a way to know you.



at the bottom of it all is a rotting body:  
if someone comes looking:

we can't run  
the light splinters on us.

what i will say to you is:  
even we cannot ruin

i've found a game  
even we cannot carry

this:

wound place with no lens

only the light.

# nestlings

(previously published in rising phoenix review) by Ziyi Yan

---

i arch my ruby throat to shriek  
in a language we can't hear.  
you carry a bird in each hand  
as you coo.

they squirmed under taut feathers  
as we ate pink flesh, somewhere

in hunger, they ate their own words— crumpled  
in the gut like months-old blame. they were born  
like this. the nest strangled them. a cracked branch still swings  
like your door-chain.

we don't know. did you cry into their closed eyes?  
i strangle my voice into blank hands—

we don't touch. instead,

you clutch their bones like you know them,  
only caressing what is broken. you dig a grave,  
forget to throw them in— say

*mom hit turbulence on her way  
to change the diapers of something shriveled.  
so we cry about a shivering fetus  
who isn't a metaphor.*

*remember when we had nothing dying in the closet?*

we splayed on the sidewalk, bone against bone,  
waiting for something to swing back together.

we nestled them on the wood chips as they clawed, hoping  
your handprints wouldn't gag them from their mother's breast.

at least you held them, bracing as the clouds rolled through.  
i held you for the first time. there was nothing else to do.

# moving/dream (previously published in Kissing Dynamite)

by Ziyi Yan

---

two things are unique to a home:  
writers' block and wetting the bed. in sleep

my adult teeth pushed each other  
from my mouth like dominos. you held

me, a wrinkled fetus with long hair—  
we can laugh at that. but really, you held

old jeans like a plea. my stomach bulged  
from the fabric and i forgot why

we took turns apologizing.

/

whenever my sister wants to play  
a board game, i say *i need*

*to write*. actually i scratch out  
my hair and watch videos of celebrities

kissing in the next room. i crawl  
to her bed when i'm sure she's crawled

to yours. in a false dawn you nestle  
me to your stomach, so i feign deafness

as you open the curtains. 五分钟走, you  
snap. in haste, i paw everything

out of my underwear drawer—

/

i never wrangled our knocker to choke  
your screaming. instead i sprawled

on the porch, winced at how even wood  
whined under me. the time you waste

in driving me has dribbled  
down my chin, groping for taste. mom

we whittle this house  
to a pyre. tonight

my mouth is dried raw and i'm sorry  
i mocked you for this:

we've locked our keys in the new house.  
your jeans in my closet are moving.

**“五分钟走” translates to, “we leave in five minutes.”**

# faster, baby, faster (previously published in Rust & Moth)

by Ziyi Yan

---

in Greenwich, Connecticut, the sun is burning from Canadian wildfires,  
skies hazy like cremation. Netflix says mother nature is fast nearing her

limit. by noon, mothers sift through cobalt on their knees, babies  
still fastened to the mine as the earth clamps its jaws shut or just

crumples. the boy i loved is fast asleep. *the cobalt in his phone is  
rusting*, i write, eyes chafing against the screen, searching for him

just as he wanted. he has been watching girls like me, screaming *fill  
me like a wound & faster, baby, faster*, a joke until it isn't. the poems

come faster by the day, wrested from my skin like pores. let them  
be searing & heartless, so long as they send me to Harvard & him

to hell. *god, let my words save someone*. i'll FaceTime my grandma  
with the news, hold her sun-cracked skin & a stranger's blood. our

clock runs so fast, nobody can be saved. at least i'll become a fossil  
fuel before our home is wept dry. by night, ChatGPT

is more generous than any lover i've met. by dawn, it holds steadfast  
to its tired gospel. *as AI, I can't form attachments*. doesn't it know its

time? time to buy your daughter a bigger cake, faster internet, stronger  
chemical peels. to stand for love, to eat your words, to start your fast.

every poem about exploitation is exploitative, every pore scratched to  
a wound. islands look like bridges, shampoo like conditioner, & by

breakfast, every town is dirty with mourning victims & laughter  
from newly-formed committees. mother, you spin so fast that dust

settles everywhere, & all i can clean is my room. 10,416 people died  
of hunger in the time i wrote this, & all i am saying is *get better*, &

*publish me, & just make me stop & scrub faster, baby, get clean.*

---

“Losing 25,000 to Hunger Every Day.” United Nations. Accessed June 18, 2023.

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/losing-25000-hunger-every-day#:~:text=Hunger%20and%20under%2Dnutrition%20are,from%20hunger%20and%20related%20causes.>

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**Ziyi Yan (闫梓祎)**

is a young Chinese writer living in Connecticut. Her work is published in Poetry Northwest, Rust and Moth, Kissing Dynamite, and Peach Mag, among others. She is also the editor-in-chief of the Dawn Review. You can find her on Instagram and Twitter @Ziyiyan\_ or visit her website at <https://ziyian.carrd.co/>.

TIGER  
LEAPING  
REVIEW

*issue 1*  
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