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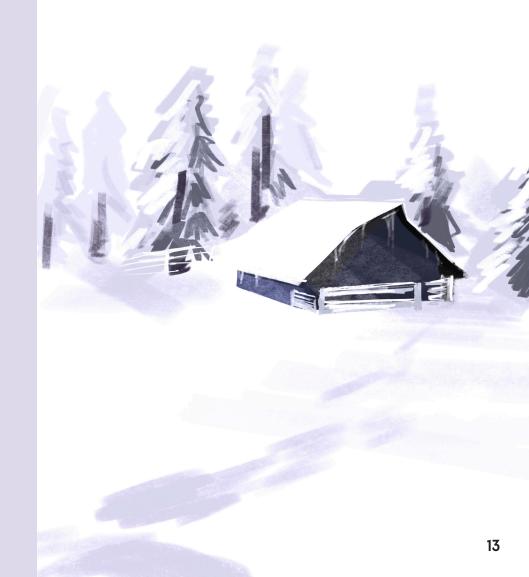
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winter.

Tulsi Patel

warm pockets
and frigid kisses
snow falls.
hot cocoa
and a raging mind
snow falls.
christmas sweaters
and an empty soul
snow falls.
ice skates
and fleeting hope

snow falls.



New Years

Eylul Oktay

As the end nears, There comes the new year. All my family and friends are finally here. Happiness slowly washes away our fears.

I can see the snow falling on a cold night, I can see the luminous, colorful lights. I can see joy within my home, I can see that I am not alone.

I can smell the delicious pastries baked by my mother

I can smell the aromas with scents like no other. I can smell the gingerbread beginning to bake, I can smell the delectable, red velvet cake.

I can taste the delicacies that I'd been waiting to savor,

I can taste the layers of elaborate flavors. I can taste the countless dishes that everyone made,

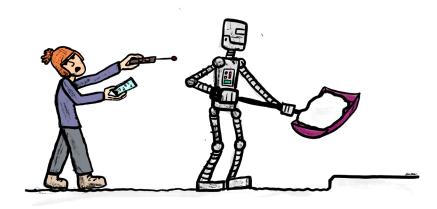
I can taste the flavors that never seemed to fade.

I can hear the laughter of my baby sister, I can hear the struggles of the kids playing Twister I can hear the loud conversations but they're spoken without strife,

I can hear the house filled with life.

I can feel the comfort of the cushioned chair, I can feel the softness of my sister's hair. I can feel the warm cup of hot chocolate in my hand, I can feel the rough planner, scraping me like sand.

So as the end nears, There comes the New Year, Where only happiness appears, And we can all wash away the tears.



December to Death

In the numbness, there's only one thing I remember, How you stared deep into my eyes on that cold December. Little did we know icicles stared down on you like blades. Little did we know, it would all start to fade.

How could I not have known,
When all along, your true colors were shown?
How could I not tell,
When you told all those lies so well?

Too bad it was your heart that went to sacrifice, How it grew cold and frozen in ice. Too bad your lips were frigid on our last kiss, How lifeless and something I'll never miss.

And when the ice blades rained down,
And your blood covered the ground,
And when I screamed at the horrid sight,
No one came to help in the middle of the night.

Your eyelashes frosted and lips blue, Skin white as the snow that fell fresh and new. And when the last bit of life left and you were there no more, Only then did I realize your hands were no colder than before.





Ecclesiastes 1:9

wake me up when the Sun rises staying for a minute [1] each day

i feel like going a way for a while

i want to go away for a while, leave you, with [2] everything disappearing

find me in side the outdoors

when the season turns gray leave me alone [3] don't wonder what happened

i miss your face, it's not the same so [4]

what's the word? alone

i wandered through the winter [5] touching all the flowers and i whispered softly:

"find me in side the outdoors" [6] with what's lost

outside the unknown and the Sun

Rori Stanford

```
some
  where
  else
  where
 i call [7] home
                 // my chanson
                something [8] lost
                              and gone,
                              fought for,
                the little [9] we have
                left
                is
                              beautiful //
  and when i'm walking [10] toward the
  light
  it's easier to see
  vour face
(still) your shadow's only there until the Sun
           find me [11]
           [12] outdoors
          there's nothing new
          under the moon [13] tonight
                 (It's My Moment in the Sun)
<sup>1</sup>longer <sup>2</sup>conversations <sup>3</sup>& <sup>4</sup>lackluster <sup>5</sup>nights
```

⁶yearning ⁷for ⁸tangible ⁹serenity

¹⁰again ¹¹in ¹²the ¹³light



The Snowman

It's the Siberian desert

The snowman

The snowman is content

With peace of mind knowing it won't have to face the

snowflakes that stick in his head

He sees nothing but the same gigantic craters and bright, white

plains

When the time comes

He appeases the giant that appears once again with his dark

boots

Boots twice the size of the tiny, snowy figure

Today, with his knitted gloves, he creates a snow-woman...

The snow-woman

The snow-woman is lovely

As her intense hair is noticeably

The color of her arms

The snow-man

The snow-man wriggles in his place

Trying to catch the eyes of the figure beside him

Until, unexpectedly, the giant appears, in which the boot

stomps onto her hair

It's the Saharan forest

The snowman

The snowman melts into tears of longing

Its heart breaks into a shatter of ice particles

Pierced by sharp, green strands of grass sticking out one-by-

one from the white valley

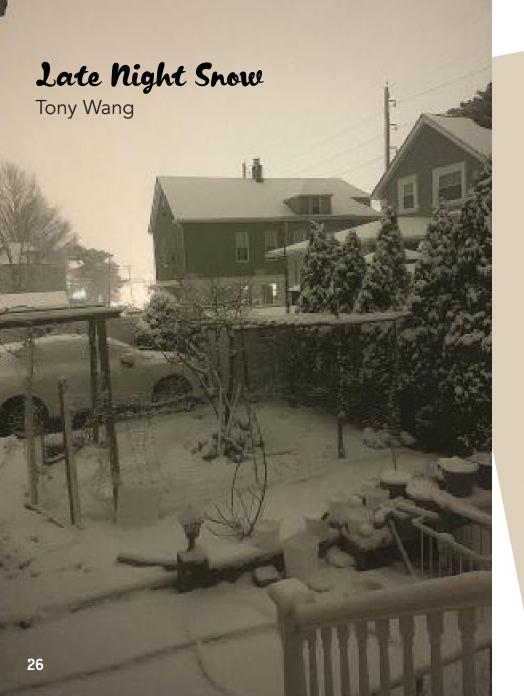
Only its arms remain, carried solemnly by the warm gust

A distinct reminder of the force it once held

The joy it brought to others and to him

and quickly disintegrated

Andrew Park



coronan holiday

Riel Sherbatou

i bet you ten bucks the wi-fi will crash at 11:59:59 and we'll be stuck in this year forever. do you smell the evergreens when we cross the street, passing by the aisles of depressed discount trees? you better be able to smell them. seriously. i'm worried. the cashier talks to us in the Walgreens, asks us if we've

been reading the news as if there's someone who hasn't been, tells us to be safe and enjoy our candy canes.

as we leave, she mumbles, what a wonderful young couple! just barely loud enough for us to hear.

let's make out through our masks under the mistletoe, lock lips with executive orders and PubMed and plans we might've tasted in some other time. maybe some other year.

Deadline

You would always stay at the office till the deadline, Day and night you would work. All our care, you'd reject, all our love you'd decline, But you didn't know what, in the shadows, would lurk.

"The deadline is nearing!" You'd cry, We'd tell you, "Your project has already been done!" You ignored us and we never understood why, Away from us and back to work you'd run.

Pen and paper, you'd frivolously write in illegible scrawl. We'd tell you to stop and that we could help. You'd never notice the darkness into which you'd fall. You never listened to us but only yourself.

You wouldn't eat for, "The deadline is near!"
Your papers, covered in ink.
The help we insisted you'd never hear,
And back into your work you'd sink.

Day and night waiting out your door, We'd ask, "is there anything you need?" But you'd continue writing more and more, Until your hands would start to bleed. "THE DEADLINE IS NEAR!" We heard a scream, In the middle of the night. You merely saw a terrible dream, All covered in sweat and fright.

Then came the doctors, you locked your door, so no one could come in. We were scared you'd starve to death, we cried in fear. And when we finally managed to unlock it, you had grown frail and thin. But even then, you had weakly said, "the deadline is near."

Each and every day, Your stack of papers would grow. You refused to speak, there wasn't a word you'd say, Why, we didn't know.

One day, I woke too little too late, On the papers was liquid too dark to be ink. I have since forgotten the date, But I know what happened, I think.

The papers hadn't been submitted to the state, On your desk was your head in decline. But I supposed that was your fate, You had finally reached your deadline.

Eylul Oktay

the jellyfish

I was in the ocean.
Blood leaked out of my
porous skin into the black
water, *freely* dancing among
the *freely* plankton.

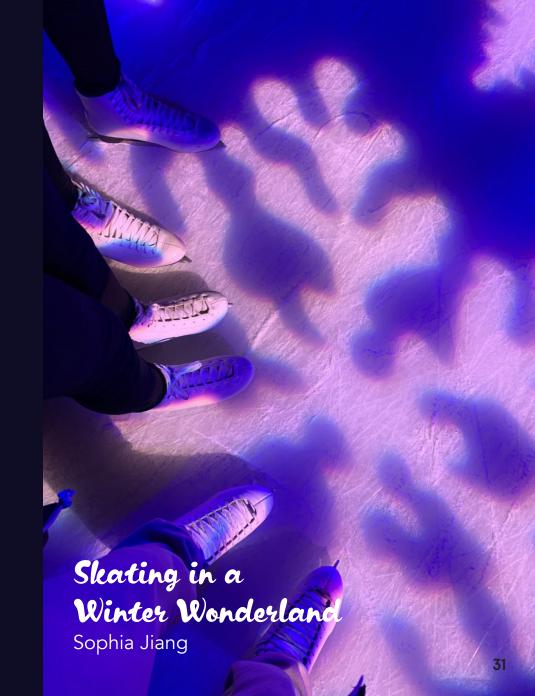
Eyes closed, I was carried downwards - brought gently, sinking on the silkiest origami elevator.

A jellyfish drifted next to me. After brushing me for a brief moment, it apologetically hurried beyond.

I continued sinking. But the blood was no longer leaking and my exposed skin was so clear, produced a hazy light to shine the amphitheatre blue.

Looking to the skies I saw the red *freely* liquid still marauding blissfully around the suspended and wordless plankton.

Tai Nakamura



the offerings of a stranger

Ming-Jing Qin

Catch me,
I beg of you.
I've been falling for so long.

Lay me down in your arms
Let me melt
Until I feel nothing
But the roar of the wind
and the chill of your grasp
against the warmth of my skin.

Let me crumble apart,

I want nothing in the end.

Wash me away in your blank canvas
Until every part of me is gone.
When you breathe take my empty soul with you
Through the whispers of solemn nights,
In the grace of simple things,
Show me life
as it is
as it should be

Show me everything I had forgotten before.

I give you permission to tear me apart, piece by piece Make me a stranger to myself again.

Teach me how to love, how to feel, how to be, Let me sink into your presence and live at peace.

I give you everything, winter, Heal me, please, I wish to be born anew.





Headlighte

Angela Li

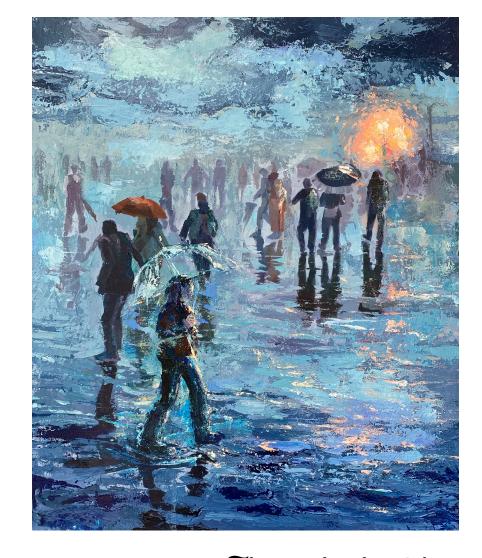
These wind chimes rattle and dance in tune Strokes of moonlight through foggy haze Shape my body, covered in avian plumes. And the doe, quarry of summer days,

Is caught in headlights, that they always say. Her eyes twinkle to whistled beats Off-tune to me, and I divert my gaze To what I can see. Down two streets,

The pubs cast rays in midnight's shade. I start the engine, dangling keys like an Afterthought; carve out space in the glades Flush with blades untouched within.

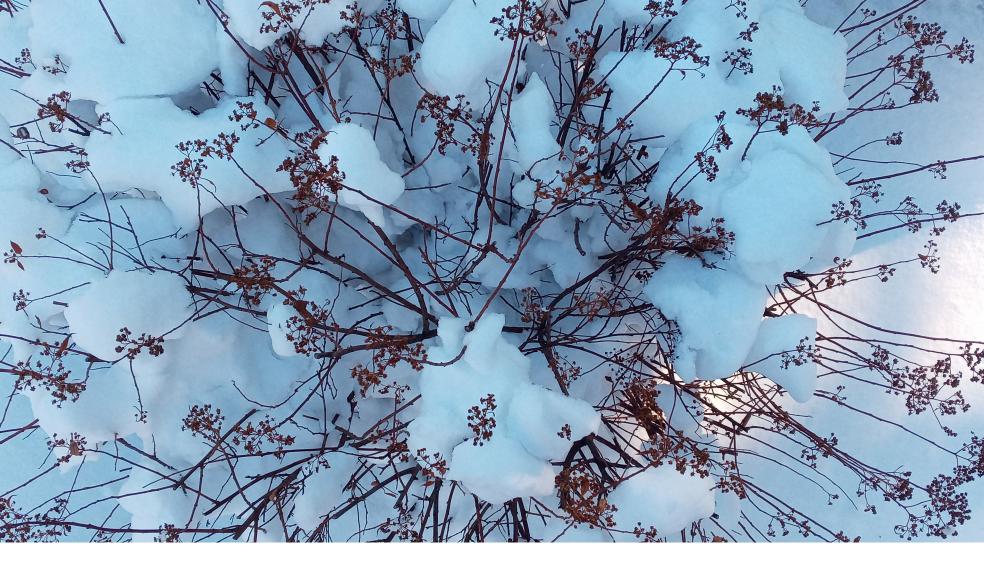
So phantom is the shadow of me, All swept up in the vestige of captivity.





Through the Blue Erica Lee





SnowflowersMariam Ali

True Love Shines at 2 AM

Dear <3

Every time I stare into your eyes, it's like staring into a smooth, calm lake. This lake has no turmoil, no corruption, just calm rolling waves drifting in a sea of purity and kindness. And, deep below in the bottom of this lake of virtue, a bright streak of intelligence and brightness shines and unexpectedly shoots through the calm lake, piercing the smooth water, radiating its aura of understanding and kindness. The beautiful pillar of light and empathy sends ripples through the water, its own brilliance releasing itself into the water. expanding and growing. Slowly, yet ever so surely, the light collapses and molds itself into the stunning water. This, , is you. You are a basin of purity, compassion, intelligence, brightness, and so much more. That is why I . It doesn't matter how lowly love you. you think of yourself, how dumb you think you are, how cruel you believe yourself to be. Deep inside, I know of your true brilliance and tenderness. It shows in your eyes.

From your one true love,

Anonymous

Magnificent Obsession II

Let the sum total of what we are Always be the truth. Let heart feel, soul know the difference. Let eyes see; mind search for greatness.

Let the struggle continue -- not without wisdom--Lest failings scar so deeply Let hands work; intellect seek purity. Let lips sing, spirit rise to song.

For we are, as we have been forever, An unfinished product In search of the Master-Mind who drew The plan and set the cast.

A devious and cunning creator of struggle Perhaps, in a moment of folly not mindful Of the full impact of the decision to create, Or when created, that magnificent obsession Sprung from perfection, yet with a flaw, Could not be destroyed. For the true Creative cannot destroy. And so, we are.

Let will prevail, time continue with joy, Future be of no concern. Let love relax, repair the flaw. Let time succeed and, in the end, only one sustain.

Family...

It has four eyes, six, or even more Arms and legs that grow at different rates. Changes daily in its weight. Eats a strange variety of fruits, vegetables, meats. Harbors a strong propensity for sweets.

It looks at life with varied eyes And often deals in great disguise. Howls and roars and squeals with rage Whispers, sings, and smiles with age.

Grows and shrinks at the same time. Thrives on milk or dines with wine. It's dull and wise, no surprise, yet is Often prone to compromise.

A family breathes long hard breaths. Can soar, can spoon, can be bereft. Can be in pain, or can be well. Can know the gods or look for hell.

It ages with speed and memories. It strains to retain cohesity. The arms and legs do break, in time, But then can reproduce in kind.

Family can laugh or groan
Be warm, or be as cold as stone.
It embraces the old and hails the new.

It may not always fit in the pew.

It longs to stay alive and grow, And for the future waits To be the cure, the answer and The remedy to all our nations' hate.

Profe Carberry

Have You Ever?

Have you ever beaten your brain trying to find the thing that makes the thing you desperately need to finish the thing that is probably the most important thing you will ever do?

Have you ever felt the acid surge in your stomach as you hustle to get there?

Have your ever moaned then cried because "It's over!" – "It" can be whatever you need "It" to be.

Have you? Then, yea! You're livin.'

Profe Carberry

Apathetic Crisis

Liam Carroll

"-and the third time this month. We just had one last week! Do they even realize how much this disrupts our lives?" Bill continued on angrily, barely stopping to take a breath.

"Mmhm." John was barely listening, more focused on the harsh metallic steps below him, trying not to trip. For all the money that went towards defense, the bomb shelter itself was pretty outdated. No elevators, escalators, autowalks, or anything. Every step was their own, and Bill was quite tired of it all.

"I'm sick of it, really. We were gonna order in tonight, had coupons from Buy n' Large specifically for today. And now that all goes to waste".

"Mm." John agreed. When Bill talked lower and slower that was his cue to agree.

"Y'know I'm so sick of it, I might not even show up next time."

"Don't do that." John protested lazily, sliding his hand down the railing beside the steps.

It was just as cold and dead as the rest of this place

seemed to be.

"No, really. Y'know the Sullivans never show up for this, this, this jo- Y'know? He was telling me last week how he got to see Metalhead right when it aired, just because he doesn't show up to any of these! And how fast did I get it spoiled for me after I left here? How fast? Immediately. I think they're ahead of us with this," Bill said, shaking his head. "Just not even gonna show up next time."

Right when he finished talking, the rest of the bomb shelter came into sight. It was an extremely open, rustic area that extended for a few miles in every direction. Support beams fifteen feet wide were scattered throughout the room, holding the massive weight of the metal roof above them.

The first thing John noticed was how much emptier it felt than even just the last few times he had come. As they descended closer towards the ground, he saw large swaths of the light gray floor completely unoccupied. It seemed that others were equally annoyed with the inconvenience.

"Well, I hate this," Bill complained. "Not even going to show up next time, I mean it," he said quietly to himself.

John changed the subject. "Where do you think we should head first? We might be here a while."

They'd now reached the bottom of the stairs. Since it wasn't too crowded, they could see most of the bomb shelter with ease from where they stood. To their immediate right was where all of the entertainment systems were kept. They had simple VR; just a headset and a controller for anyone to explore the internet or watch television and movies, but not nearly enough sets. None that had been broken or damaged in the past five years were ever replaced. Consequently, they were outdated and damaged, as well as too few to use.

To the left of where they entered stood the food court (if you could even call it that). An elongated slab of metal stretched across the eastern wall for about a mile. On it sat hundreds of thousands of care packages, enough for just about everyone in the city; yet only half appeared to have been taken. The packages included enough food and water to last anyone a week or two.

"We haven't tried the entertainment systems here in a while. Maybe they're..." John was going to say better, but knowing that wasn't true, tried to think of something else.

Bill waved his hand in a dismissive motion, preferring to pout than come up with a solution.

"Well I'm starving, maybe we should hit the care packages already?" John said.

"So soon?"

John shrugged.

"Well, alright then. But I'm telling you, I'm not having any of that synthesized grain crap."

They started towards the eastern wall, weaving by

the occasional group talking amongst themselves.

"Y'know I heard the synthesized grain stuff uses a lot less water," John said.

"I know, I know. Just- I mean does it have to taste so bad though? I mean it's not our responsibility to make sure there's enough water for everyone. In fact I hear the war's almost over, y'know? Nothing goes on forever."

The major victory of the twenty-first century was the successful hop to renewable energy. But as the wars over oil came to a close, the wars over water had just begun.

They arrived at the food court. Littered in front of them were thousands of golden foil bags, filled with supplies to last anyone weeks. Bill pried into one greedily. Although he knew the care packages all contained the same things, John looked through a number of them to make sure, whether it was out of boredom or some subconscious unease. He then selected one and they began digging in.

"I always go for the cheese first," Bill said while chewing.

"Mm," John said, absentmindedly.

"Sometimes I'll just grab a second care package when the first one runs out of chee-"

"Does it ever scare you?" John said.

"Huh?" Bill asked, confused."

"I mean, we never had to do this before, when we were kids and stuff. Just more countries having nukes..."

"Hey, I guarantee that if they had bomb shelters

this big back then, we'd all be herded into them just the same. Y'know it's really no different. Now and then."

"Yeah, yeah." John considered that for a moment. "That's probably right."

They continued eating.

Bill nodded towards John's care package, "Are you gonna finish tha-"

The whole shelter shook ferociously. In the distance, John could see all the people using the VR come crashing down, as if someone had pulled a rug out from under them. A hail of care packages slid off the table, and came crashing down onto John and Bill. It felt that the whole shelter was falling, but in what direction, they could not say.

"Stay calm. This is not a drill."

The metallic voice of the loudspeaker rang out amongst the chaos.

"Stay where you are, this is not a drill."

John and Bill saw everyone else running towards the exit in a frenzy. The already deserted facility emptied more and more towards the exit, a clear sign of panic. A scream rang in the distance, echoing against the metal walls.

"What's happening?" Bill shouted over the noise around them.

"I don't know! We need to get out of here."

The ground still shook under them as they hobbled towards the exit. Guards rushed towards the exit with

everyone else, forgetting all their protocol and training in an instant.

"Stay calm. This is not a drill. Remain in the shelter at all times. Do not try to leave under any circumstances. This is no-"

"Up there!" Bill pointed towards the bottom of the staircase.

Everyone's hurried footsteps against the harsh metal stairs sounded like a thousand gunshots. A wall of people behind pushed them forward. If either John or Bill wanted to turn back, they wouldn't even have been able to.

Up the steps became a blur, with the constant crashing of footsteps ahead and behind them, dull lights swinging overhead, and shouts echoing all around them due to the metal walls. John nearly passed out, when he saw a ray of sunlight shoot down the staircase. He had lost sight of Bill at this point, and was solely focused on forcing his way through the crowd.

"Stay calm. Keep the doors closed at all times. Do not leave the building under any circumstances."

He pushed between the people in front of him towards the ray of sunlight. The sky slowly came into view as he got closer to the front of the crowd. At first the clouds came into view, and the bright blue sky. Then he saw the mushroom cloud.

"Return to the shelter immediately. Radiation has reached us. Do not look directly at the explosion."

John fell to his knees, unable to take his eyes away from the explosion. Everyone around him rushed back towards the shelter in a hurry, screams rising up around them. But he was unable to pull himself away from the sight.

"Radiation has reached us. Get back in the shelter immediately."

John couldn't tell whether the sky was beginning to turn red due to the nuke, or whether it was the radiation messing with his eyesight. But either way, it all looked like hell.

His vision darkened, all of it blacking out, while he knelt there in the dirt. His burnt skin was pulling itself towards his back, away from the explosion.

"More strikes are being anticipated. The outer door of the shelter will close."

John felt people carrying him back indoors; he didn't fight it. The rumblings of the outside world grew quieter and quieter as he retreated deeper into the shelter. Absolute darkness surrounded him. He felt his heart racing in his chest and tried to concentrate on something, anything. As he was dragged further into the darkness, the words of the loudspeaker pierced his ears.

"The United States is preparing for retaliation. I repeat, the United States is preparing for nuclear retaliation."







starlings

Ji Echo Qiu

peaches growing in california

winter dreams. of peaches eaten, dripping

winter fingers— flesh and pit and skin pinkish-orange until in

winter: trees in stomach begin growing peaches, a murmur in low

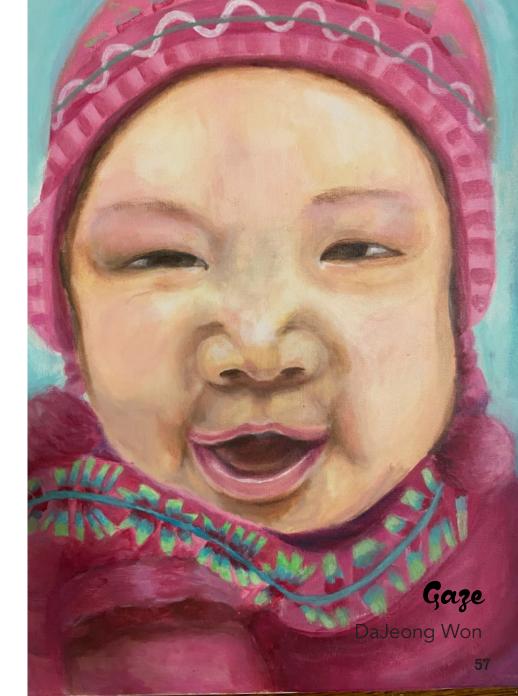
winter tide. limbs against pinkish-orange skybranches carry these black

winter birds: crows, ravens,

winter starlings. delivery trucks shuttle smoke and

peaches instead of my dragon fly breath. (sigh) flying—

starlings.



A Moment of Winter

Drea Chakravorty

The morning after the storm is a beautiful one.

The atmosphere is cold, cold enough to crystalize your breath and let it linger for a second for the world to see. Trees, normally barren of their green foliage, now are decorated in gleaming white. The white extends to the ground, enveloping it, coating it, crunching as you walk through it. Sparkling in the sunlight. Not a cloud in the sky. Not a sound in the air, save for the tinkling wind and your breath.

And you walk, taking it all in A being thrumming with warmth wandering the beautiful icy landscape.

A particularly soft, faraway crunch reaches your ears.

A rabbit.

Small compared to the towering trees, nibbling at a splash of red berries. Strikingly red, small berries.

Such a small moment, in a corner of the world forgotten to all. And you have the rare privilege of making the rabbit's acquaintance.

The bunny notices you and freezes. You freeze as well. And you stare at the bunny, into its small dark eyes, shining with curiosity. You notice the snow clinging to its tiny frame, the half-eaten berry, the minuscule trembles of its legs, the fluff of its white tail, the length and sturdiness of its ears. Taken for granted and yet so fragile, so graceful. So beautiful.

You come to a sort of mutual understanding with the rabbit and it goes back to its winter snack.

And as the life of the rabbit goes on, so does yours.

WINTER

The journey of a snowflake,

With it the whole world takes

A breath, to slowly release.

The ice, a slice of frosted air,

On which light forces a shiny glare,

Decorates a silent lake.

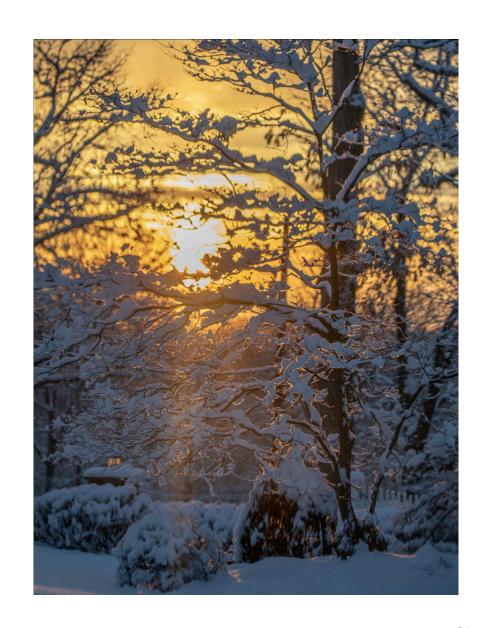
Gusts sometimes let snow fly,

The moon and the sun share the sky,

And time is marked by the end.

A new year, beginning again.

Varshaa Venkitesh





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