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elt
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GENESIS

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF WRITING
FROM THE ELTU'S CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

ISSUE #4

EDITED BY MS JENNA LEE

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Creative Writing Project launched in the 2019-20 academic year as an extension of the English Across the Curriculum (EAC) Project, an institution-wide language enhancement initiative implemented by the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. With the aim of cultivating a dynamic creative writing environment, the program offers workshops, a campus-wide writing competition, literary events, and publication opportunities for all CUHK students.

The ELTU's Creative Writing Competition encourages students to nurture their creativity, explore a vivid means of self-expression, and demonstrate their skills in English writing. The fourth issue of this anthology celebrates the achievements from the ELTU's Fourth Annual Creative Writing Competition 2022-23 and spotlights CUHK students' broad and vibrant interpretations of the competition theme, "**Beginnings and Endings.**"

Editors:

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EDITOR'S LETTER

The theme for this year's CUHK Creative Writing Competition was **Beginnings and Endings** – a fitting one as the project entered its fourth year under new leadership and support. We said goodbye to the founding supervisor, Dr Christelle Davis, and project assistant, Ms. Natalie Cheung as the year began. Their combined efforts over the first three years of the project meant that the goal of building a space for creativity and expression at CUHK and honing students' creative writing skills was well realised, and as the supervisor of the ELTU's Creative Writing Project during the 2022-23 academic year, it has been my great pleasure to continue to create a home for students' creativity.

This year we conducted three Creative Writing workshops that encouraged students to test their abilities within the genres of creative non-fiction, short stories, and poetry. It is always a privilege to work with students at these workshops, who take time out of their busy schedules to challenge themselves, try something new, and suffer for their art!

I would like to sincerely thank the judges, Dr Antony Huen and Dr Suzanne Wong, who patiently read the many submissions and offered their expert opinions. Furthermore, this project would not be possible without the hard work and insights of our Teaching Assistant, Sarah Abramson, who routinely went above and beyond to help support the project and the students whether it was administratively, in the workshops, or as an editor. Thanks must also go to Dr Christelle Davis, who continued to serve the project from afar with an online poetry workshop, and principal supervisor Dr Jose Lai, who was always ready to offer her sage advice.

One of the most special thanks must go to the student writers, both within this anthology and without, who attended workshops or submitted their writing to the competition. It is always an act of hope to create, and we hope the following pages inspire even more creations from students.

Ms Jenna Lee

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POETRY



Time of a Genius

Lyn

First Prize

From a young age, I was told:

at eighteen, you must be
grown-up, independent, and strong.

All the high school taboos – love, makeup, sex – like Pandora’s box unsealed
Pandora’s sweet fragrance splashes on my face like jam made with overripe fruit.

Unlike most, I feared turning eighteen, growing up, and responsibility.

Seventeen, a safe haven,

sitting on my crumpled camp bed in the balcony I called “bedroom”

bathed in the mysterious blue moonlight pouring recklessly through the shutters

as if this place was always its domain. Winter in the south is chilly as ever

forehead pressing against the ice-cold glass, but still

I felt like a feverish child.

I cherished being seventeen more than anything, even more than

the anticipation of adulthood

I’ve heard stories of legendary figures at this age, like Rimbaud

Or even Lolita, whose death at seventeen

was a crumbled-up petal-like figure

releasing the scent of sweet decay.

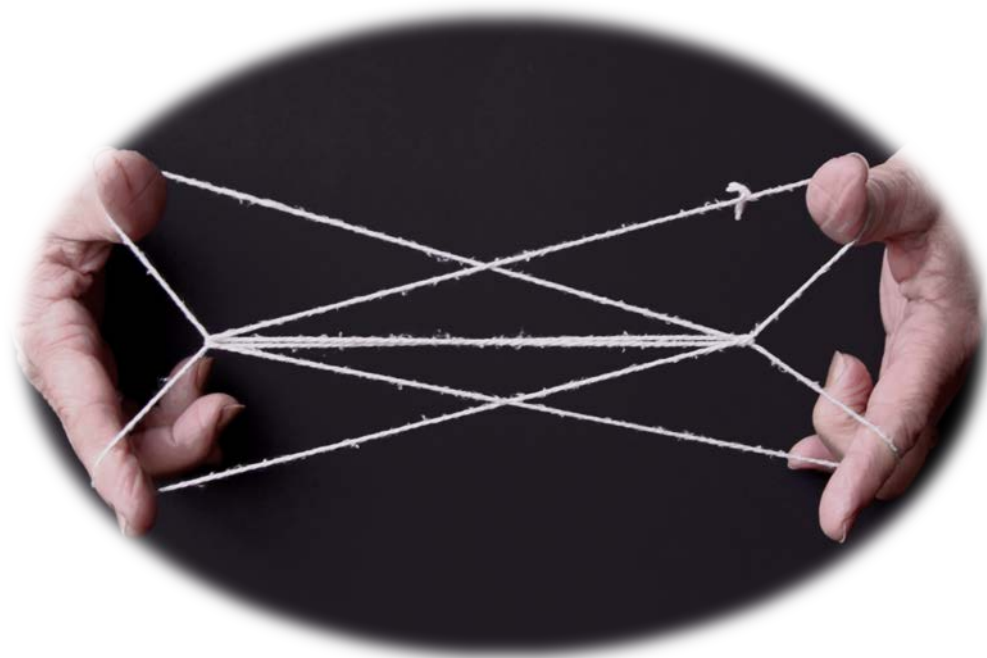
Indeed, I had dangerous and immoral fantasies. But harmless,
for literature is just a lie.

Under the moonlight, I sharpened my pencil stub into the shape
of an eighteen-year-old. But let's say, seventeen—
you are a kid when you misspeak but an adult when you want a kiss.
It is still the age of genius, if you “made it” at seventeen
you are called gifted, instead of going into the ranks of adults' competition.
Being a child is a perfect excuse for refusing socialization
the rebellion that rejects to be an exquisite pastry.
All I need to do is to bury myself in a loose school uniform
with the fragment of sentences in blurred pencil handwriting
written on the edge of exam paper
and enjoy the praise of being a “natural beauty” in and outside.

Eighteen came silently, unexpectedly, smashed on my face and as it happened,
I failed to become what I imagined, sometimes I hate people so much
that I seal myself in the bedroom, the bright blue screen stinging my cheeks.
Didn't everything just get started? Why does it feel so faded?
The sky is always foggy here in August, I fled from the mountains to this island
but still feel incredibly lonely
like a lighthouse shining in the midnight, trying to pierce the thick darkness
between the ocean and the sky with a cold, sharp gaze.
I imagine myself as a scarecrow in the autumn harvest season,
in the pumpkin, persimmon, and wheat fields
my ragged clothes flutter in the wind on the side of the road, and the road is endless
like the coastline, or a never-ending trip—
I'm stagnant. I ask passing vehicles to take me away, but they only tell me
“You have to fend for yourself.”
I stared at the light-polluted sky in the city and dared not to say that
I am the North Star. For North Star shines brightly, but I am just a streetlamp
I'm also a speck of dust under the streetlamp, who is inevitably carried away
doesn't have a destination and stays nowhere.

I grew up, no. I grew old.

Never thought eighteen would turn into a bleak exile where the best thing is
having a dimmed room to stay in before being captured by darker nights
and the past has dissolved too, when I, once naive, wondered
if I would be entitled to my own heaven, where the bright future leads to
put me on the bookshelf with those who nurtured me since childhood.
My commonplace hurts me. I didn't realize that time, the real heaven
started in the 17-year-old girls' bathroom with the smell of mosquito coil burner
The school's restrooms are forever dilapidated
with green paint peeling off the wall like popped pimples.
I skipped classes and exams, huddled there, reading. Love after love
over and over again. It said standing outside the villa of the nobleman,
he can see a green light flickering in the mist evermore
like agate, or cat's eyes.
Suddenly I looked up, through the dirty stained glass in front of me
green sunlight was transmitted and tree shadows blowing
"How many windows does Fitzgerald's mansion have?" it occurs to me
and the engagement night, the scent of dew on green leaves.
A shiver runs through me, oh, tenderness
Tender is the night.



Our Threads

Chu Yiu Kwan

Second Prize

In the land where the scythe and hammer reign,
A yellow river's course, a billion lives constrained,
A single seed, a strictly enforced rule,
Winds of change, too late to correct the fails.

A cradle rocked, the firstborn chosen,
Tradition's grip, a truth unspoken,
Sons like suns, to rise and soar,
Daughters' dreams, oft' dimmed, ignored.

Living in shadows, feeling nearly invisible,
Second-borns, bound to their birth's principle:
No travel, no education, and no registration,
Simply a bird's fate in a cage, ridiculed as another tragic fate.

In a moonlit alley, hapless souls abandoned,
Small hands trembling, as night's light disbanded,
Unwanted hearts, their cries unheard,
Left in the darkness, a world obscured.

For men and women who dared, a fate severe,
 Breaking rules, the price to bear,
With children born, either fork over a life's fortune,
 or get neutered, silenced and made invisible.

A spectrum of hues, love's secret dance,
Defying norms, they yearn for a chance,
Yet in false unions, they hide their truth,
 Where hearts ache, and colors dilute.

As tides recede, once chiselled stone,
The rule that gripped, their hearts dethroned,
 A nation's cry, an empath's plea,
 In shifting sands, the seed set free.

In the golden dawn, once muted and worn,
girls strive and soar, their dreams restored,
 Shattered glass, and barriers broken,
Equal footing gained, a powerful token.

But second-borns, in life's lost race,
 Strive to find, their rightful place,
Through ardent steps, they strive to climb,
Yet time's cruel hand, denies the chance to shine.

In distant lands, where love's embrace,
 Adopted hearts, a new life's grace,
Yet yearning stirs, to bridge the distance,
A quest for roots, and bonds' persistence.

Rekindled love, in hearts now mended,
New bonds formed, their paths extended,
 Yet nature's gift, already cast away,
 A silent void, forever to weigh.

For colors bright, in freedom's air,
Siblings' lineage, a solace shared,
Yet shadows loom, in old love's facade,
A struggle lingers, identity scarred.

In every tale, a truth revealed,
Through endings sought, and wounds unsealed,
In life's grand tapestry, threads unwind,
As hope and sorrow, intertwined.



Rabbit Holes

Amanda C

Honorary Mention

when we are all in a rat race
living in crystal sewers
someone chews off more
than they can take

an ox allows itself
to be sacrificed to the flame
Worshipping a sacred name
do we know what it is
to be hunted and revered?

tigers travel to terrorize,
to pulverize their prey
they pounce on the unsuspecting
poor pathetic things

rabbit holes are easy
to fall into and hard to leave—
nothing quite like an underground

labyrinth with no emergency exit
dragons are cool if they can breathe fire
the ones who cannot fly may not survive
a green stegosaurus has orange spikes

in slither a serving of snakes
salt is their second skin
they will not shed a tear
at the misfortunate

the stables house fables
charming knights on horses
get locked into troll towers
and power-hungry princesses reign

goats fight with their horns
looking for the next barfight
if they win maybe they can stay
in the same place forever

some shops say
no monkey business
but everyone fornicates under covers
except for sirens and saints

the crow of a rooster
signals a new day,
a new dawn for the next generation

loyal dogs sit by their master's feet
they play tag and chase
even as the perfect present inches away

pigs are smart and get prizes
but they still roll in the mud
they still snort in their sleep
they still get the runt treatment

the end of winter is the beginning of spring
the end of one book is the beginning of another
the end of the pig is the beginning of the rat
ends are just synonyms for beginnings



Comeuppance

Rabindra Gurung

Honorary Mention

The world was alive and fine
looking with warming lands and seas
swarming with life
Despite the past strife,
their home remained one

Some small sore saurus
chose to lurk in the dark and bark
at the outside norm to which
they refused to conform as if
they had prayed for a lurking storm
under that eerie Sun

The Earth quaked in shaking fear
when the continent started to break
apart with a mere jeer for Heaven's sake,
aching to put every living thing
at severe stake to make sheer steaks
Yet they steered clear of hellish fire

In blood and death they won

When the mobsters came to reign
down on the remaining creatures
in their drained-out domain of Gaia
Some walked, some flew, some swam
To put the new skewed world in chains
of reactions for dominance over generations
Rats deigned with stains of pain too much
their prayers had begun

Fate willed it so that the divine power
unfold in the form of a meteor shower
for the ravenous sinners of old
too cold to care and break another mould
Hear the mighty kings cower
as no longer could they tower
over the emboldened little fellows
At liberty they would bellow
With freedom they could run

Down the path to ascendancy,
victory was just the beginning
But as dreams of revolution withered
some walked, some flew, some swam
away from the common cause
to reassert dominance over generations
There have been new kings crowned
for warming and swarming all around
the world hell bound with dreadful sounds
that patience comes close to none



The Cycle of Ages

Andres Chan

Honorary Mention

Oh history long and winding,
Fate's tapestry forever binding,
From cribs we emerge bright-eyed,
To the grave, weary and mystified.

In our beginning, in innocence born,
We prayed for fair winds, fields of corn,
Long before the guillotine's swing,
When we were but dreamers, we did sing.

We saw revolutions take birth,
Ages of monarchs in history's girth,
Summoned passion, will, and grit,
Decided fates that could never be writ.

Napoleon marched and spilt much blood,
Revolutionaries churned the night until it flood,
Nine days the populace ruled the French throne,
Before the Bourbon heirs claimed it as their own.

Slaves shipped to America's foreign land,
Broke their chains with blood-soaked hand,
New frontiers of democracy's reign,
Never did they live to see freedom's pain.

The end of eras comes with anguish and grief,
Wars took their toll, timed with agony's brief,
Each new beginning, wrapped in hardships and pains,
Each ending, felt like the release of heavy chains.

So living, we journey through times gone past,
Memories and legacies all destined to last,
A new dawn will rise, ends will never brake,
For beginnings may die,
only to resurrect and retake.



Warfield Reading

Ariel Wen

Honorary Mention

Bombs burst upon the roof like bubbles
Freshly blown out of a dream.
Kids on the pavement pick up pebbles,
Fragments of the knowledge seam.

The library has lost half its roof
And still stands, soundlessly on the ground
Like preaching proof:
Weapons conquer no minds, only bodies mound.

She sways on the stool,
An ancient stool.
On it crawls ceaseless cracks,
Growing longer, higher. Million miniature tracks.

Cracks arise from the foot,
As if nature has craved a tree
On barren soils, completely covered with soot.
“This place needs a tree indeed.”

“It was raining outside,” she writes.

“I hope mother remembers to take the clothes inside,
And father better go out to fetch my little brother
In the paddy field he always hides.”

With a loud *boom* the bookshelves shudder.
She quietly mutters, switching crossing legs.
Time to read the next chapter,
“*The Blitzkriegs*,” a tiny title dyed in red.

It was wartime
When the hero rescued his lover.
She has no lover whatsoever,
It is wartime.

Page flaming. Pistols flying.
Some screaming. Some shouting.
On page 1945 the protagonist is smiling
As that war will end. This war will end.

SHORT STORY

Please note that some of the stories in this section touch upon the following themes:

- Domestic Violence
- Death
- Mental Health Issues – Specifically Personality Disorder and Suicidal Ideation

We encourage you to take care while reading.



The Games We Play

Law Yuen Tong

First Prize

Death: I am a rather skillful chess player.

Block: You can't be more skillful than me. Black for you!

Death: It becomes me well.

The Seventh Seal, 1957

Harsh pants echoed around the labor ward. Rhythmic beeps thrummed to a steady rhythm as the woman struggled with all her might.

“You’re almost there.” The midwife whispered soothingly, gently easing the infant’s crown out of the labia.

The mother breathed a sigh of relief when she heard a feeble cry.

Toshiro Tsukumo. You’re here.

A white pawn slid two steps to the front. Pawn to E4. A typical beginning.

“Kutabare!¹ All you care about is Tsukumo’s primary school fees—can’t you see I’m busy!”

¹ “Fuck you” in Japanese

Tsukumo huddled up in his bunk bed, cringing at the repeated shrieks below. His father had three temperatures: icy frigidity, lukewarm indifference, or scorching rage. Erratic mood swings were commonplace and were amplified by alcohol, fueling his inferno. His mom often took the brunt of her husband's wrath, allowing him to vent it all out on her. But never on Tsukumo.

He yelped when the ladder creaked unsteadily. Was the devil here to finish him off?

Instead, he stared into the kind eyes of his angel. Despite the ugly violet blooming on her forehead, a quiet flame glowed, as comforting as a toasty hearth on a frosty night.

Warm arms wrapped around him tightly, and he caught a whiff of her familiar vanilla scent. Melting into the embrace, he closed his eyes, feeling the thrum of their racing hearts beating as one. Just as it was when he was in her womb.

—

The knight glided elegantly to C3, defending the pawn.

—

“People say that the heart is a complex concept, but it's not. It is an organ made of cardiac myocytes, yet it is auto-rhythmic due to the electrical spark generated by the sino-atrial node.”

It was a sultry midday, the type that left students stretching out like lethargic cats, half-resting their faces on the unyielding surface of their desks. Tsukumo, however, was not one of them. Our protagonist was drinking in every word, a starving man famished for knowledge.

The heart mesmerized him. It kept him awake in the middle of the night, venerating every flutter, conscious that he might be milliseconds away from the end. The only thing between the abysmal chasm of the dead and the living is the electrical coupling of muscles, the shining beacon that keeps the reaper away.

But the heart was weary of fending off internal demons. Screams that plagued Tsukumo. Pain that flared on his back, carving rivulets of scarlet. Sickening bruises that could only be brushed off as him being clumsy. Burying the nefarious secret lurking inside his household.

The heart is an intricate thing.

And he longed to know more.

The next time someone queried him about what he aspires to accomplish in life, he would have an answer.

“I am going to be a cardiac surgeon.”

—
The rook marched to E1, castling the king, determined to be the centerpiece.

—
Doctor Toshiro Tsukumo.

Cardiovascular Surgeon.

It was embroidered neatly on his white coat, precisely on his right breast.

Prim, pristine, perfect. That was what he was.

—
Hotaru Hisako was one of his first patients.

She was young, she was bright, and she was very sick.

“Congratulations! We managed to secure a heart for you. Surgery is scheduled for tomorrow. You’re strong and should have no problem making a swift recovery.”

The girl beamed radiantly, flashing a row of pearly teeth. Tsukumo could imagine what life Hisako would live. Perhaps a long and fulfilling life, as her parents blessed her. Going to school, sprinting without a care in the world—that would be a dream come true.

“Rest well, and I’ll check up on you tomorrow.”

Everything would be perfect.

Turning around a corner sharply, he nearly crashed into his senior.

“Look at this.” His superior passed a file to him.

It was the heart transplant list. And the number one spot was not for Hotaru Hisako.

Masanori Akihiko, it stated in bold. Son of tycoon Masanori Denki.

The fantasy shattered.

An ocean of nausea and disgust washed over him. His boss’s voice became a million miles underwater, muffled and barely discernible.

Denki had offered a generous donation to save his son’s life. The heart would go to him.

Not Hotaru Hisako.

The worst thing? Tsukumo had to break bad news. To have bestowed hope, just to brutally snatch it away minutes later.

—
The world was not kind to Hotaru Hisako.

She died a week later.

Tsukumo stepped out of the ward and couldn't control the stream of scalding tears rolling down his cheeks.

A tiny firefly hovered fleetingly near his fingers before zooming off, a lone light returning to her constellation in the heavenly darkness.

Hotaru Hisako was not the only one that perished that day.

Something inside Toshiro Tsukumo withered too.

—

The bishop cautiously stepped to A6, a white square. Just to be brutally pulverized by the opposing black king.

Chess is not for the weak-hearted.

—

Perfect fingers sliced a perfect wound along the midline. Just like the perfect scores he achieved in medical school, the perfect smile he mastered to grant him the most appeal, not an inch more, not an inch less.

Perfection is the expression on his face, a lake without ripples, proclaiming the fate of his patients. The calm voice pronouncing justice. Dead or alive.

Emotions are messy. Imperfect. He squashed them without a second thought.

His life is oriented around being perfect. Just like it had been when he was younger.

His mother handled the blows imperfectly. He learned from it, and his reaction was perfect. Perfect hits on his bloody imperfect skin that he can cover up with his perfect uniform.

He heard the whispers of his colleagues. The heart is an emotional organ, they said.

Then why is Tsukumo so cold?

No, he answered in his head. The heart does not exist. It is just a complex riddle to be solved, reduced to electrocardiograms and difficult choices that he has to make.

He expertly dissected the still heart from a patient, replacing it with the donated one. Deftly repairing the severed arteries and veins, he watched as the heart twitched, the wings of a butterfly struggling to emerge out of its chrysalis.

A new life, he mused.

Hearts beat.

Hearts stop.

The beginnings and the endings.

—

It was an ordinary day.

“Everyone down! Or I’ll shoot!”

Tsukumo instinctively crouched down. Beside him, a patient whimpered.

The crazed man marched straight up to the boy next to Tsukumo. “You! You’re coming with me!”

Eto Tadashi, Tsukumo recalled. With a restraining order filed against his father for domestic violence.

Eto shook his head. For a split second, Tsukumo could see himself in Eto. The terrified child.

He felt himself standing up, staring into the eyes of the maniac. “Sir, please mind your behavior.” He stated. “Eto needs rest. We can settle this later.”

“There is no later!” The man hollered, spittle flying everywhere. “Give me him, or I’ll kill you!”

This was easy. He could surrender Eto, and return to his everyday life.

But deep down, he knew that would add more red to his ledger.

The ledger which was dripping red with the lives that he failed to save.

With one word, he sealed his fate.

“No.”

The last thing he heard was the echo of his pounding heart.

Then all faded into black.

—

Toshiro Tsukumo somberly picked up his king and offered it to the open palm of his opponent.

A sacrifice.

Perhaps more kings didn’t need to fall because of him.

He gazed fearlessly into the knowing eyes of Death.

“Check.” It whispered.

A king toppled soundlessly onto the marble floor.

Dead.

Checkmate.

—

He woke up to the steady beeping of his heart on a monitor.

Wait—isn't he... dead?

His superior appeared in his field of view. “Dr. Toshiro, it seems like we won't be seeing the last of you. Multiple fractured ribs, a bruised left lung, and eight hours of surgery. But you'll live.”

Tsukumo nodded languidly. His boss chuckled. “Can't say I ain't impressed. Your heart arrested and we did everything to bring you back. The shooter, not so much. Succumbed immediately after being shot in the back.”

Everything hurts. Walls too white, lights too bright, sounds too loud. Millions of invisible pins pricked his brain, and the stitches throbbed every time he breathed. But he survived.

“I'd leave you to rest, but a visitor would like to see you.”

Doors opened, and Eto Tadashi timidly shuffled in.

“Thank you,” he breathed. “And this is for you.”

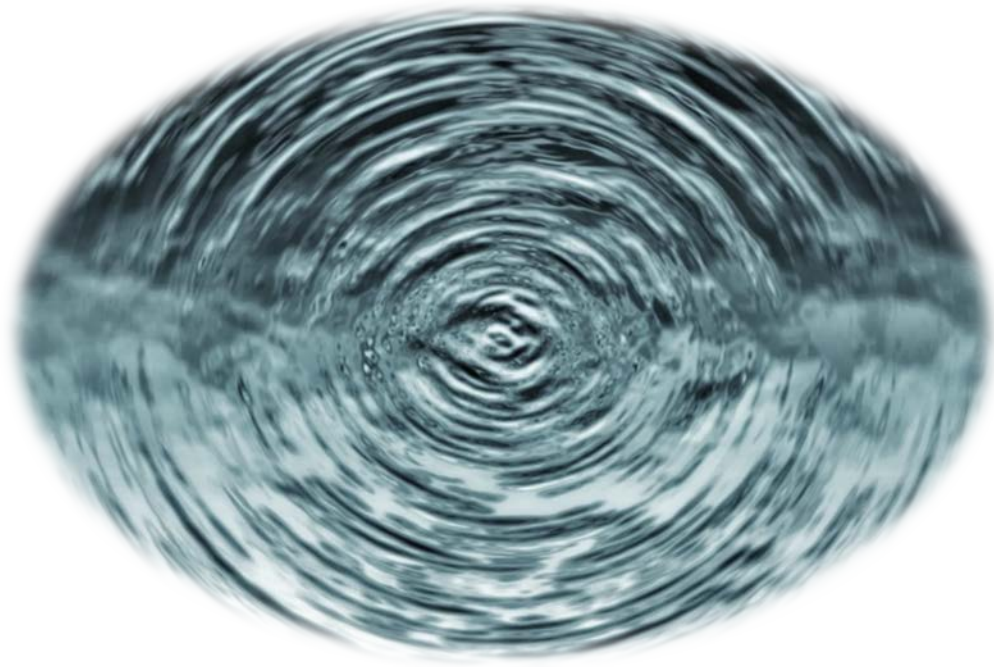
He placed a white bishop on top of the windowsill. Tsukumo's eyes widened. “You like chess?” he rasped, barely finding his voice.

“Yes,” Eto confessed shyly. “This is my favorite piece.”

Tsukumo smiled. That smile was crooked. Imperfect.

But he found himself not caring.

Basked in the early morning glow, the bishop gleamed proudly.



Glass

Lam Tsz Hei Errin

Second Prize

“No,” you say, and take a step backward. “No.”

The old goddess cocks her head, like a bird at a worm. “You are displeased with your destiny?”

The glass orb is cold and smooth beneath your fingers, draining the warmth from your skin. You yank your fingers from it and straighten your suit sleeves, as if that’ll stop the images in your head. Eighty years of memories yet to exist, flashing past your eyes in a silvery waterfall of shards. Your breath scrapes your throat coming out.

“I don’t believe you,” you say, and you do not believe yourself.

The woman hums, flickering out of sight for a moment. “Many people do not believe, when they see their futures.”

Your laugh comes out strangled. “That’s really how it all ends.” Two decades of pain and grit and tears, and your dreams are going up in smoke. Lady Fate looks at you with pity in her weathered face and you have to look away, eyes stinging. You’ve heard the cautionary tales of the men who thought they could defy destiny, and now you understand *why* they would take that risk.

But all prophecies are self-fulfilling, and you know better than to run from yours.

You throw yourself back into the memories with a vengeance. If this is your destiny, then you want to know it all. You plunge your hands into the silver river of falling memories, but it's like trying to catch water with a sieve, so without thinking you step into the waterfall and the weight of eighty years

brings

you

to

your

knees.

You reach upwards, memories sluicing through your fingers like fine glass powder. You slice your mind open on their edges, fingers grasping and slipping, and *finally* grab hold of a gleaming shard that shines like the sun. The light is buttery, golden, something joyous, something—

You walk into the memory and watch yourself die.

Your heart gives out in a hospital room, in the middle of the night. The air is artificially cold, but you think the night air might be warm. The moon is hidden by the smog and the sky is stabbed through with glistening skyscrapers and neon billboards. Sixty years from now, you're going to die successful and alone.

You rise with a gasp. Lady Fate is at your side. “You do not like your death.”

“I don't,” you agree, remembering the phantom feeling of your heart stalling in your chest, a dead thing. “But I'm not stupid. I recognize your divinity, my Lady.” Your brain jumps between your future and your present, like the chance to change anything has long passed.

Outside the window, the moon is bright, the sun

rising and dipping into the sea like a quill into ink. Seventeen times you've gone 'round the sun and the sunset-color days bleed into each other as you look out your window, always in motion but always still. Funny, how you can chase success, then look down and find that your feet have never moved. You take a swig of lukewarm lager, chasing liquid courage with liquid Lethe through your veins.

You hunch over a hunk of grey metal, black lines of text on a white background. You're in the age of colour, but sometimes it's like the world is still in black and

white light reflects off the glass orb. You wonder, if you smash it, whether the primordial goddess will have to kill you. End you before you were supposed to end. Change the destiny she wrote for you.

"I know better," you say to the moon through the window, "than to defy destiny."

"And yet you question me," comes the smooth voice, not accusing just remarking. "You came in here questioning my existence, but ready to accept your fate. You are

a little scary, at times," says a face that blurs as you look at it. You're in your dorm room, the moon high outside your window, and there's a textbook stuck to your face.

You squint up at your—roommate? Classmate? Acquaintance? "I have to keep my grades up."

"I come back from the bar, it's 3am, and I find you here with a book. You're—what, twenty-four?"

"Twenty-two."

"You need to live a little, buddy."

You look at the face that you've never seen before, match a name to eyes alight with life, and watch it fade into your phone contacts, scrolling down a list of memories that don't seem quite real. Are you real?"

Lady Fate lifts one wrinkled hand, examining it in the fading moonlight. "I certainly appear to be, even though we are meeting in your mind."

"Do you exist, then?" you demand. "Does Lady Fate exist?"

Lady Fate hums noncommittally. "Does it matter? If someone enters my shrine who believes in me, they will see me as I am. I will guide them to the glass and explain to them what they see."

"Is it fair, for someone not to know what they're seeing, because they don't believe in you?"

People have gone mad from seeing the future. I feel like *I'm* about to go

around the corner, and that's your supervisor's office," says the smiley woman from HR. "First-job jitters? They'll pass pretty fast. Since you're on the fast track!" she giggles. "You know, I explained to you that you were seeing your future. But did I tell you anything that you did not already know?"

"You're telling me you don't exist. That this is all in my imagination." You shake your head free of the memory. "If this is all in my head, then everything you say is something I thought of. That's why you can't tell me anything I do not know."

You start pacing. "But if you're real, if destiny really exists—" you turn to the goddess. "If I asked you, would you try to prove you were real?"

"No."

You pause, taken aback. "Why?"

"I am the goddess of choices," said Lady Fate. "Of destiny. It would be a little crass of me not to allow people the freedom of choices."

"But that's the entire purpose of destiny," you say, dumbfounded. "To lead people. To guide them to the best choice for

them," your supervisor says, holding his beer bottle loosely at the neck. You wonder if the bar will kick you out when he drops it. "You need someone to recommend you to partner track. You work hard, but don't think you'll get there before you're forty. You could focus more on your social li—"

The bottle slips and crashes. The barkeeper yells at you. Fragments of

memory whirl through your mind. You're standing in front of the window this time, hand on the latch. The moon is dimmer now, the sky lighter.

You blink and close the window. She's still speaking.

"So I allow people the freedom to choose whether or not to believe in me. For those that do, I act as their beacon. I show them the path they want to follow. I am their mooring, and I am their strength." Her voice is kind. "But many people choose not to believe and live perfectly happy lives."

“But you’re a goddess,” you say, numbly. “Your right to lead is absolute. Your will is divine. There are people out there who think you don’t exist, when you’re the one who made *it to partner*,” says another nameless face. “Congratulations. You’re all set from here on out. But maybe it’s time for you to, y’know, put your toes back into the dating pool, so you don’t end up a cat

Lady Fate leans forward, suddenly inches away from your face, like she’s sharing a secret. “What kind of leader would I be,” says Lady Fate, “if I only listened to the people who agreed with me?”

Do you believe in destiny? Follow the path you’ve just seen, graduate with first honors and make partner at thirty-five? Married at forty, divorced at fifty, dead by eighty.

It’s not a *bad* path. All the choices are already made, and all you have to do is live it.

So why does it feel like your life is ending before your eyes?

“You need not make that choice now, child,” says Lady Fate, and her voice is already fading. “If you choose to believe in me, I will always be there for you. If you choose to walk away, I wish you peace and prosperity, but you may always return, and I will always welcome you.”

You’ve made your choice, and she’s becoming fainter and fainter. The weight of eighty years sloughs off your shoulders, fine grains of memory slipping through your fingers, melting away like snow in the sun.

There’s a destiny already written for you, but having all the answers feels like cheating. You think you’d quite like to write your own.

You turn to the glass window and watch the sun rise.



The Rise of Dawn

John Cheung

Honorary Mention

1. The Ending of Beginnings

I was the Earth and things have not changed since I was born. The Sun always sang enthusiastically, radiating its never-changing heat and passion onto me. The fire on me glowed as usual, so I suffered changelessness and stagnation. Although I could see my planet siblings, they were so far away, and I could not hear them talking. Therefore, I always tried to invite visitors from outer space to come and bump into me to make some fluctuation on the fire to ease my boredom, but they seldom responded to me. Even if they came, soon the lava ripples disappeared, and my surface calmed and returned to a boring hot lava ball. Luckily, a kind neighbor nearby offered its help and promised to be my partner. We were attracted by each other and hardly collided. Consequently, we were off track and were a little further from the Sun. However, my rotation altered, and I could not face the Sun again. We failed to fuse; my partner's remains became the Moon and my surface started to condense to a harder shell with the mark of collision. My forever loneliness ended.

The Moon asked its asteroid friends to fix my rotation issue. After millions of asteroid collisions, they barely corrected my rotation and brought plenty of organic substances and water upon me. The collisions obviously did not help as the Moon had expected. I did not want to upset my kind

partner, so I tried to mimic the waters on Mars, break my dull rock shell and allow the waters to flow. I pretended that everything was improving and good. Luckily, the Moon was interested in them and helped me swing the water back and forth to generate interesting wave patterns. Intense thunders and underwater volcanic activities created new melodies, I felt that my tiniest parts were reforming harmoniously. Little beings started to float around in the waters and replicate themselves. Suddenly, these beings entered exiguous bubbles, and a small portion became blue and purple. Gas bubbles erupted, and my dress became cloudy. A thin transparent layer formed on my surface and blocked the light from the Sun. I was panicked and anxious because none of my planet siblings, even Mars, experienced such drastic changes before. Those blues and purples stayed for a long time and halted evolving. Nevertheless, the new beings were interesting, and I should address them as life.

Oops. I had gone too far from the Sun, and the waters froze. Unexpectedly, the beings seemed to be okay with this freezing temperature. I then realized that my asteroid friends had not been visiting, and I asked my partner about that. The Moon told me that my thick atmosphere burnt our friends into ashes, and I ruined the friendship. Admittedly, I was focused on the tiny beings and constantly ignored my friends. I could only send more invitations and did my best to repair our friendship. I hope they will respond to me again.

The ice melted and condensed, and the water level rose and dropped again and again unnoticeably while I was busy contacting my old friends. It took a lot of time to rebuild trust and deliver invitations to them. Some asteroids kindly came to us with metal gifts, and I gave them a resting place. Finally, I found my big old friend who was wandering in space and convinced it to come. It visited us with the stone of a gigantic mass as a warm greeting and I was so glad to see my friend after so many years. Although the stone shocked my shell and froze lizard-like beings to death, I was fulfilled and satisfied. I finally had spare time to watch the little beings on my surface.

The diversity of the beings skyrocketed after that, and some beings even sent metal structures into orbit. Oh, I must tell the Moon that it will have an extraordinary guest. The little beings were going to visit the Moon in metal shells. I could not wait to see their evolution.

2. The Beginning of the Endings

I was the People; I become Death. On a hot summer day, a little boy and a fat man met each other in the bay of Fukushima.

BOY: Hey, long time no see, Man. We have not seen each other since 1945, how is your day?

MAN: Fair. I feel good to retire and enjoy my life. Nobody wants us to come under the spotlight again. I, therefore, visit here to witness the last journey of our innocent friends because nobody will dare to come here.

BOY: I am here to see the journey too. I thought that we were enough to convince people not to utilize any of our kind since we created terror and the foundation of their current prosperity.

MAN: Boy, you are still young. Animals can never learn to stop until our kind brings forth the ending. You must have met Tsar. Strong and tough as he was, he still failed to stop the cold war. I met Tsar in Chernobyl and he also lost faith in humanity after witnessing the red trees and distorted beings.

BOY: (Sigh) After retirement, I visited so many places and talked to the beings there. Most of them were friendly, self-controlled, and elegant. They kill for survival and respect other beings. If I am to say, our creators who kill everything are the worst of all beings.

MAN: Ha. I know it. They are still making our kind and are always prepared to use them. Still, they get smarter and tried to use our kind more constructively. At least our innocent friends here were serving people instead of wars, and they never had the terrible feelings of emptiness and purposelessness.

BOY: I hear that they will travel through the waters after disposal. Our lucky friends, they don't have to kill.

MAN: In fact, they are no different from us. Our material body, the radioactive dust, eventually reaches the waters. Every bit of our kind faces the same destiny. Behold, a tiny bit of me enters the fish's body and it is doomed. This is our fate.

BOY: Then this fate is not exclusive to us. Plastic kills life, CFCs destroy the vital ozone layer, and orbits fill space with waste. Every human creation ruins the Earth irreversibly, and there is no solution.

MAN: The Earth doesn't even care. Man is a merely one of the beings, and the existence of the beings is not significant to the Earth. If I was to imagine that I was the Earth, then numerous beings thrived and faded in a blink of time. I would not feel anything when mass extinction happened. It is because, after another blink of time, everything is restored.

BOY: Ya. That is true. Earth does not care about any being, let alone humans. Oh, our friends are coming out. God bless you.

MAN: How hilarious is it that men thought that they were important and deserved eternal prosperity. Their history is even shorter than my half-life. My radiosity lasts longer than their life. How funny.

BOY: Let's hope for peace. I don't want to bother the human world anymore.



Apparitional Guidance

Lee Chien Chien

Honorary Mention

Virtually everyone is born from a cocktail swirl of combined genetics, and the inappropriate stories of (artificial or natural) reproduction. Well, I am not born anymore. Nobody can be reborn again, not literally. Spectators do not get to chat much about their truths, though. Most of us did not predict this future. We were either irreligious or belonged to other faiths, and our original views of the afterlife sounded more fulfilling than this physical limbo of being anchored here by the knot of unfulfillment. Not everyone can be spectators. Just the ones that never matured in time.

I was born by Caesarean section after I failed to be delivered naturally. My mother always relayed that to me whenever I curiously asked. I was a week overdue and refused to leave my burrow, to explain in a semi-ordinary sense. The doctor extracted me with large forceps and both stitched and stapled my poor mother's gashed abdomen. Whenever I asked to see the scars, they diminished each time into more faded but still large white jagged stripes. She told me the best way to make up for that uncomfortable delivery was to live as long as possible and let her witness the best moments. She expected me to live to ninety years old. Her mother did, so why couldn't I?

I should have known from my birth that I was destined to disappoint her expectations.

“A sudden heart attack,” the doctor pronounced lamely to my poor mother as I laid dumbstruck at fifteen years old on a stiff bed, unable to shut out the annoying heart monitor displaying my weak signals. I pondered, in the dark innards of my locked body, if I could just get somebody to turn off the damn machine so that I could get some peace. My heart did it for me when it stopped beating a week after hearing the machine beep repeatedly. It was more frustrated by the repetitive rhythm than I was.

I awakened outside my body, watching Mom weep at my feet near an indifferent doctor. I was about as neutral feeling as the physician who failed to revive me. I thought this was a ridiculous dream, and my mind was sadistic to do this to my mother in my imagination until I could not protest physically at my corpse. My hand touched it, but it did not leave a mark. I failed to make an indentation on my mother’s brown dress, either. Or my body’s crumpled gown. I even tried pinching the doctor’s cheek. Usually that warranted a displeased gaze or a good slap to the face. I was not gifted even a particle of acknowledgement. I kept trying for three days, making inaudible jumps around my mother, shouting the worst curse words I knew in my lonely vacuum, and trying to blow air in the room despite missing lungs to inspire the observant nurses that the supernatural was possible. I would not be recalling this if it had worked.

It did not feel real until I began to see my body decompose, and the stunned faces of fellow ignored spectators looking at their sagging vessels and mourning relatives when I took a break from watching my own useless vessel rotting by visiting other rooms. The stages of decomposition played like this: the skin yellowed, the fingers blackened, and the fingernails loosened. Fetid fumes stank up the space. I could tell — the nurses were double-masked. But in hindsight, it was stupid for me to expect to return to that decaying sack of flesh. It was very obvious that I was doomed to not return to life. I was not ready to leave the hospital before my carcass did, but as the stretcher entered, I permanently exited my room. I was not at my own funeral. I wish I was, but melancholy struck just thinking of my mother and knowing she would never see me as she knew me again.

I noticed immediately that the stupefied ghouls were only in the pediatric center. Knowing they would never move without gentle coaxing I fetched them, stating my goal to find answers for our predicament. They followed readily. One child held my hand the whole way.

I asked around the lobby, meeting fellow apparitions dumbfounded at their situation. The spirits I met had common characteristics. They were young, unfulfilled, and wanted to know why we were like this as well. Wherever I went, they followed behind like a depressing conga line. We walked until I missed a step on the staircase and found out it did not matter. Many happily floated as we continued toward our destination, their feet hovering over unimportant ground.

I am unsure why I became the de facto leader. Perhaps it was because I was perceived as the calmest among us. While the others trembled, wept, or sniffled perpetually, I remained silent. It was because the less I thought of it all, the more sanity I conserved. The unpleasant realization of knowing I would never return as a touchable teenager did inwardly simmer and bite at the round edges of my non-existent skull, but the presence of fellow wanderers helped stave it off. The sooner I found answers, I thought, the faster I could finally get our questions resolved and break down in my own right. I wanted to cry, but my lack of tear ducts eliminated the ease of performing it. I have since forgotten what it is supposed to feel like. Did the liquid that used to seep down from my eyes feel warm? *What is warmth again?*

The apex floor of the hospital harbored our answers. I saw a stereotypical grim reaper with a scythe that looked reminiscent of a Halloween toy. But the other children saw something different. Several saw angels with white robes and wings. One younger spectator also saw an angel but with more casual attire – not robes, but a T-shirt and jeans. One older witness claimed they saw a soul rather than a physical entity. Another said they saw nothing. We all had varying visions despite being in the same area. *How?*

“Everyone is right in their own regard,” the reaper/angel/soul/nothingness declared. The kids giddily ran up to the figure while I and the older ones stayed behind. When the kids matured themselves years later, they would claim their figurehead’s voice sounded pleasant and rich, like the Heaven they were promised to reach if they were good. I was not raised religiously. My mother was never against it, she was just too busy working to teach me about it. I had classmates who were, and I was pleased to hear them be comforted by what they believed in. I just lacked a theistic foundation.

“Can we return to what we once were?” I asked futilely, already knowing the answer after witnessing my putrid cadaver. The figure gently shook their head and let their scythe hang by their right elbow.

“I am sorry,” they could only say. “Just know you did not deserve this. None of you did.”

“There was so much I didn’t get to do,” I admitted to myself, and everyone else.

“And that is?” my reaper asked, granting me space to vent.

“Learn how to ride a bike. Travel to another country. Go to university. Get a job. Use that job to move my mom and me out of that stupid house she can barely pay the rent for. Buy my mom everything she ever wanted because she was never able to because of me...!”

I cannot technically choke up, but I mimicked the sensations perfectly. I found exactly what I was unfulfilled in from that one allowance by that reaper than the fifteen boring years of my life. I wanted some indulgences, yes, but I also wanted to make my mom happy. She could have been angry at me for coming into her life when she wasn’t ready or ruining her body from the inside out. Or when I got sick, and she had to pay for the costs. But all she expected of me was to live a long and good life. I did not have to be the smartest person in the world, the handsomest, or the best in any field. I just had one duty. And I botched it.

I didn’t just fail her. I failed myself.

“At least I freed her from my useless self,” I miserably said.

“Nay. You were never worthless...” the reaper insisted and waved at the children who were with me. “Have you not brought them here to find answers? Have you not expressed deep sympathy for your mother? Are you deprived of heart and mind? The answers are all no. You are here with me to do what you could not fully do on Earth—experience. And let me inform you genuinely: you are doing perfectly. What appears to be the end is not so. Progress can always be made.”



The Last Winter

Casey Law

Honorary Mention

It always started with the white room I called home.

“Lyra, what are you doing?” The door always opened itself. It was the devil. The frowning face I grew to call “Mum”. “Put away your book.”

I held the book in my hands, frozen on the chair. Momentarily, it seemed that time had stopped. Only the sound of my breathing and heartbeat remained, murmuring within my skull like nature’s lullaby for a baby left behind in a blizzard.

Breathe in, breathe out. The wind accompanied the rustling sound of my breath, whistling through the narrow gap of the wide glass window.

The spell was broken when the jarring, croaking voice, growing impatient, intruded on the peace in the room. “What are you waiting for? We don’t have time to waste on this.”

I nodded and quietly slipped the book back onto the shelf. There were rules I needed to follow in this room, and this was how she liked it—the core of my action was obedience.

Under the glow of daylight, everything was pristine, melted into insignificant strokes of white paint. Her friends all said I was a role model for their children, who were so naughty and defied them all the time.

From very early on, I knew that my life belonged to my mother.

Every time I looked out the windows, through the wide spans of glass in front of my desk, I admired the eagles that spread their wings across the halcyon blues despite the never-ending snow of winter. Free to roam and sing freely.

Some of them were previously wild birds trapped in cages, but eventually, they were able to perceive the bars around them, the chains tangling their wings — they put up a struggle. The adults call it puberty; they try to pacify the rebellion, label it a "reckless" phase that the youths will later regret.

But I was never one of them. Unlike them, my owner had never trusted the nightingale who never sang a tune — she kept me under a leash of orders. As much as I wanted to escape and fly to the horizon, I was constantly reminded that I was never the wild falcon in my fantasy. I was merely a domesticated nightingale without a voice, dreaming about the infinitely stretching dome of white and blue outside of the white aviary.

Gradually, the best-performing bird needed no chains around their wings. I had been so accustomed to having shackles — schedules detailed to milliseconds — screwing me into the ground that I felt their presence even after they were removed.

I never thought of leaving. It was like repeating a mantra — if I repeated this lie to myself enough times, it would be the truth for me.

Instead, I waited, waited until the sun grew tired and retired to her room. When everything dissolved into darkness and sank into the sea of tranquility, I finally had time to listen to that soothing, consoling voice in my head.

I call her the angel.

*

My life only begins upon the angel's appearance.

The angel is the most perfect being I have met in my life. Unlike me, she doesn't care about dignity or sort — nothing can ruffle her feathers. She doesn't talk much; most often, I merely see her smile through my reflection in the mirror, a gentle, endearing expression I could never imagine on my face.

The windowsill is the last sanctuary between the white room and the never-ending snowstorm outside. In the latest and earliest hours of the day, when the chains feel lighter, we practice hard to voice opinions on the narrow ledge, spending hours typing away, weaving thoughts and emotions into stories of heroes and villains, of nightingale and lark.

It is also a narrow space where the angel spreads the safety net over this floorless aviary. Every night, in the cosy nest, I sing a lullaby into the silent air over the sleeping city, coaxing myself to sleep.

But like how nightingales only sing at night, when daylight returns I am again mute — the croaking laughter of the lark speaks for me.

Like how it is now, the heart-palpating voice piercing through the atmosphere of silence I create in my mind. It weaves through my thoughts and snips them off into the abyss of subconsciousness when my attention is whisked away by the clamour.

My fingers fly across the keyboard amidst the scratching dissonance that seems to close a fist around my cramping heart.

Shout to the world that you are fearless.

“Sit straight. Don’t think that I can’t see you from here. Do you know how appalling you look now, crouching over the screen?”

I continue typing, at a much faster speed, as if the mellow sound of typing keys could overshadow the annoying buzzes in the background.

Speak for yourself. Be brave against the accusations.

I still can’t speak.

“How dare you disrespect me like this?” The lark screams. She jerks open the curtain, and sunshine bursts into the room like a flood. I shudder at the heat, withdrawing my limbs from the searing glare.

It is too overwhelming. With a trembling hand, I put a finger into my ear and pinch the earlobe with the rest, sealing the entrance. The sudden coldness at my ear suspends my hearing

like an ice cork, interrupting the noise with rhythmic throbs of biting chill. But it is futile against the overflowing torrent of fire rushing into my nose, my lungs, my blood.

But it is still so cold.

Why am I still alive?

I'm useless.

I hate myself.

My fingers type these words before the angel frantically deletes them.

Only the angel understands me, but she doesn't understand that I can't last till the day the devil dies.

*

I am not an angel. But I listen, I feel, unlike the others in Lyra's life.

Like how I feel that tonight is different.

"Today I read books about my name," Lyra's voice murmurs through the humming breeze. "In Greek mythology, Lyra was the lyre gifted to the great musician Orpheus, who travelled with the Argonauts."

"How I wished to be a free lyre like my namesake, travelling through the ancient land of Greece." I feel her tears clouding up the dotting starlight, running down our cheeks, and taste the salts on our parted lips. "Yet, in reality, Lyra is a small, dim constellation barely making an appearance in the night sky."

Lyra shifts to sit further away from the window and takes a deep breath.

She wants to jump.

Panic strikes me like a sledgehammer on the head; at that fleeting moment, I don't care about being acquiescent as Lyra wishes me to be—I try to gain control of our body, but Lyra holds onto it with steely determination.

"Let me go." Lyra's eyes are always hollow and lifeless when she smiles. She learnt how to smile from the devil, who demanded her to smile every moment. She complied, but I knew her

heart ached, as if it was squeezed through a paper shredder, because one cannot force a nightingale to be a lark.

I also don't have the right to coerce her into anything.

"I don't want to lose you." This is the first time I talk through our lips. It feels strange; I am choking up like Lyra did.

"Then live for me."

"I can't do it." Tears re-condense over our eyes, obscuring the blinking lights of the city under our feet. I can only reiterate the same sentence again. "I don't want to lose you."

"You have to do it for me. This is my last wish."

I yield, at last. I always yield to Lyra.

"Thank you, my angel." This is the last time I hear Lyra's voice.

*

I remember how I was born.

It was a snowy day. I remember the whistling wind echoing in the white room, and the flitting petals of snowdrops too — splattered across the creeping frost on the glass window.

Lyra was standing in front of the wide-open window, helplessly looking at the exhausted nightingale perched on the windowsill.

I took her shivering hands, and sang a lullaby, while it sprawled weakly on our palm. We watched its breath slowing down, then halted.

Now, singing the lullaby, I lead Lyra into eternal slumber with the stars high up in heaven, away from glistening cages and swirling snowflakes.

In the purring winter wind, I hear the thrumming call of the nightingale, a mellifluous tune that declares the end of winter.

Spring has arrived.

We never wanted that.

JUDGES

Poetry

Dr Antony Huen

Antony Huen is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts and Social Sciences of Hong Kong Metropolitan University. He writes about contemporary poetry and creative writing and he is the winner of the inaugural *Wasafiri* Essay Prize. He has taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, and the University of York.

Short Story

Dr Suzanne Wong

Suzanne Wong is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where she teaches creative writing courses on short stories. She is a winner of the Hong Kong Youth Literary Award and has published some of her works in *Hong Kong Literature Quarterly*.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Poetry

Lyn

I'm a year 2 student in Cultural Studies. I would love to chat with people who love literature and films, especially those who love Eileen Chang and Theodoros Angelopoulos. Writing is my way of communication, to connect and to select. If we build understanding through this piece, let's hang out together.

Chu Yiu Kwan

Ben Chu is highly interested in politics, human rights and philosophy and hopes to contribute his ideas and stories to Hong Kong to make it a better place by writing poems and stories representing Hong Kong.

Amanda C

Amanda C is an aspiring poet and singer-songwriter from Hong Kong. She grew up in India and can be found playing ukulele and singing or writing stories and poetry.

Rabindra Gurung

Rabindra is an ethnic Nepalese born and raised in Hong Kong. From a young age, he has been fascinated by history, biology, and language. Inspired by the scientific fiction genre, he wishes to incorporate elements of all his interests into his future works of imagination.

Andres Chan

As an avid poetry enthusiast, Andres has always been drawn to the power of words and their ability to evoke emotion and spark change. His academic background in political science has further fuelled his passion for writing, particularly in the realm of historical events and their impact on society. Through his work, he strives to capture the essence of different civilisations and weave their stories into thought-provoking pieces that inspire reflection and action.

Ariel Wen

Studying at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Ariel majors in English Language and Literature. She has always been fascinated by the beauty of nature and loves to express her thoughts through writing. Her love for poetry began in high school when she co-founded a poetry society called "Trace Under Roof" (檐下履) with her friend. She is currently working on a Chinese fantasy novel.

Short Story

Law Yuen Tong

Phoebe is a medical student who, ironically, is interested in arts. Struggling between the fine line between rationality and sentimentality, she pours her emotions into writing, allowing words to flow between her bewitched fingers, carrying her and her readers through literature landscapes. When inspiration strikes her, her fingers would be flying, coaxing the potential stories out of the back of her mind, before refining them and fleshing them into life. Usually, you would find her chilling with friends or doodling when her nose is not buried in Gray's Anatomy (the textbook, not the TV show).

Lam Tsz Hei Errin

Errin is a first-year Business and Law student with a passion for social justice, philosophy, and ethics.

John Cheung

I study science and I feel good to randomly write something with planning. Let's write creatively.

Lee Chien Chien

Chien Chien is a master procrastinator Year 3 History student who has loved writing since she was ten but was always too shy to share her stories. Until now. Well, she's still scared, but she hopes you liked this one. She likes reading, writing, listening to music and playing games. She often procrastinates on her own hobbies, too.

Casey Law

Hi, this is Casey! I have been writing short stories since a fateful encounter with fanfictions, and ever since it has been one of my most long-lasting hobbies. To me, weaving ideas into paragraphs is a way to process reality and imagine an alternative ending for the misfortune in life. For this story, I explored the possibilities of an alternative ending for a girl under the control of her mother, with a slight touch of personality disorder. After reading this, I have a little request — ask yourself, is this ending a bad or happy one? Hope you enjoy it!

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