

# MCC!

MELBOURNE CULTURE CORNER

**ISSUE 12**

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# Mehreen Ahmed

## The Handmaiden

*1,2,3,4, the bishop moved 4 places. Backstage, was the space, where gods played a game of chess.*

Eliza stood in front of her bathroom mirror and squeezed the end of a nearly empty tube of toothpaste. Between her thumb and the index, her fingernails turned an inconsistent color of white pink, the plumpness of the tip of skin diminishing. Breathing short and tight, her lips were thinning like hard-pressed dry petals, she tried to push up some paste through the nozzle. It slid in and out, light and white, tantalizing the bristles of her hand-held toothbrush.

A decent amount came out after much effort and fell over the tip of the brush, leaving almost all of its bristles dry. She brushed her teeth, rinsed her mouth, and washed the toothbrush under the running water tap. She put it away in a glass by the sink and came outside into the garden with a scowl.

A bird chirruped. It sat on the clothesline and pecked at the clothes, looking for food in the wrong place. A few bats hung down-under from saggy, mega-jumbled electrical street wires. A few cotton masks airing on the clothesline had clown-heads printed on them. One got unpegged and flew away in a sudden blast. Eliza looked at it but didn't catch the vital mask. It landed on a morning's bloom of an unfurled petal's dew-drops.

The dawn had broken beautifully, but she sensed an ending closing in. She decided to visit her mother's grave. The graveyard wasn't far. She took a stool and walked over one block. She found the grave among hundreds, and sat down on the stool close to a grassy patch; her legs had splayed. She had a séance with her every morning; the good spirit silently absorbing her spilled words like a ghost-diary.

This morning, she was telling her, how she'd been implicated in a vicious office politics which cut her out of a dream job she'd applied for. A promotion, she knew she would have certainly bagged. For she had far surpassed everyone in qualifications, with all the experiences for that position, but no, she didn't get it. "Mother," Eliza spoke, "at the interview, they asked me all the wrong questions, and after the interview, a few days of deliberation, this rejection letter arrived. I'm not sure, how to take this, but the job was snatched, I think, by a mere 24-year-old, without much qualification; she got it."

Eliza finished with a sigh, catching a dot of a potent black fly, mid-air, which had just pinched her nose on its tip; it itched as it flew away. No matter, she would not give up; not so fast.

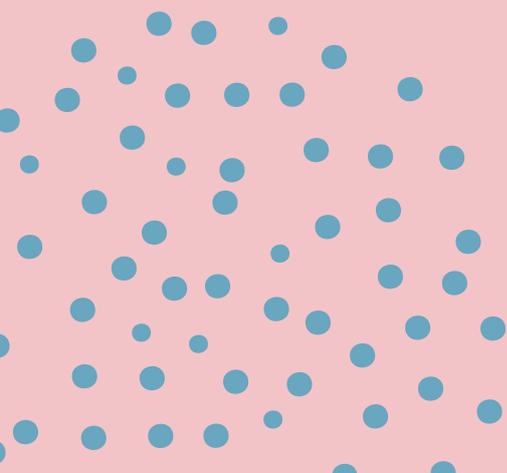
Although she moped, she also hoped that bosses would come to their senses. They would smoke out the snitch; that they had made a mistake in selecting the girl. That she was not worthy of the position. They would then ask her to leave promptly, position freed up for Eliza to fill in. She waited for the moment and counted her days. The numbers were perfect. They never deceived. No calls came.

*1,2,3, the horse galloped and took the Black Queen.*

After the séance, Eliza went to work. No one else had come in, yet. She was rummaging through her things on the table. Her coffee mug sat by the computer, she picked it up and walked into the kitchen to make herself a short black. She heard shuffling sounds coming through the back office file room, adjacent to the coffee machine. All ears on the closed wooden oak, she heard the shuffle grow louder from behind. The full mug of coffee in one hand, her other, held the nobby knob, as she opened the door with a thrust. It had a squeaky hinge and a few character marks.

The room was large and it was semi-dark; on the far side, she saw something zap past like a flash of light through the back door. Knuckle-white and petrified, she stood a few jarring moments. She looked around the room and saw a filing cabinet, a drawer of which was slightly ajar. Her fingers clutched onto the mug like wet clinging hair, she took a file out, labeled higher management position. The file only had a few hands full of papers relating to the job's description.

Staff chats had alluded to the fact that there were others, more deserving, better-qualified candidates. But Eliza hadn't paid heed. She'd treated them as gossip memes, fantasy, churned out of a lame factory. 55 years of wait, Eliza had been inching towards this dream, loading her resume with experiences and qualifications. There were no age barriers as far as she knew for this position. In the fine print of the contracts, implicitly stated, every aging staff was a tarnished statistic, who came with an expiry date, regardless of the staffs' mettle. Only, she hadn't considered that this expiry date was applicable for this job as well.





Indeed! A 24-year-old girl's resume would have looked pretty scarce compared to those of the others. The ghost was alerting her to something plush, information that was perhaps quite obvious, only she didn't see it.

*The white rook, the horse, and the bishop stood their places closing in on an imminent checkmate of the black King. In the meantime, all the lowly pawns, a rook and a horse on either side fell, clearing the way for the winning King.*

A fresh day was issued, another mask flew away in the bluster. She saw it on her way to the séance but had not picked it up. She sat on her stool again at her mother's grave and told her about the incident. How someone or something, a ghost was leading her to the secret filing cabinet? But she found nothing there. She wondered what was going on.

Back into the office, she went early as usual. She heard the same shuffling of papers from the file room. She entered and walked up to the cabinet. The ghost lingered in the dark awhile. This time, Eliza, turned on the light and opened the drawer all the way. She felt something touch her hair and give it a strong ruffle. The drawer slid all the way out and down on the floor, nearly, she caught it and placed it gently. She found another folder here, but it was unlabelled. A shiver ran through her; a thin line of sweaty beads sat on her upper lip. She opened this secret file. It held all the staff's biometrics which was super confidential.

There was a commotion outside of the door. Eliza quickly put everything back and came out. The office had gone into a snap shutdown. A senior staff, called Jane Rushmore, had become ill. An ambulance was waiting downstairs to take her away. Eliza remembered her from the interview panel. She stood in the passageway, and let her through being wheeled out in a chair; an oxygen mask on her face. Eliza saw through Ms. Rushmore's glassed office walls, the 24-year-old snitch going through her belongings. It looked suspicious, however, since there was a lockdown, the staff rushed out of the office block.

Eliza heard, that after being taken into the hospital, Ms. Rushmore's condition worsened and she had not made it through the night. But she was not the only one. Whoever had come in contact with her, all fell ill. Many of the younger staff had survived because of age, the many elderly others had not. The snitch's job now hung in the balance, she'd raged when she had engaged the staff in a zoom meeting, held the next day.





Bodies were buried straightaway, Eliza, lamented while at the séance. Those who grieved for the departed, couldn't perform a proper ablution. They could neither be purified nor readied for divinity. Some were mass-graved in caskets. Others burnt in hollow baskets. Eliza described how a towering inferno rose over each funeral pyre; long firewood, group-hugged each body within their crumbling prickly chips; in the throes of it, dismembered bodies, as though at the behest of a medieval Queen. Out of the ashes, some bones looked rock-solid, as ashes were taken and spread across gardens and oceans. A ballpark figure of deaths was reported. No one stood tall but death; the formidable Queen of the heretics had drawn a trump and had aced, "mother dearest," which was what Eliza had called her when she was on this living plain.

At night, she continued to commune. Her mother stood at the foot of her bed, looking down at her. She looked grim, slightly nonchalant. The spirit revealed lights, too trite of the foul play on the planet earth. A portal had opened like a hologram; on a unique sphere called the 4th dimension, all earth's departed souls woke up. Eliza saw her bosses, too. Biometrics danced before her eyes through Artificial Intelligence, Data from Star Trek. Disjointed glimpses, were random and they often faded.

The disembodied somersaulted in colored Borealis; in a primordial whale song, the lyrics of the deep blue seas, they spoke about what was unheard of. That after death the first thing the sprits did was to stare at a seemingly innocuous globe. They watched the manifold plays, of playing and being played, continued to be hatched and staged under a blue canopied sandpit. The sprites then left without a trail.

Such reflections, in séance, were handmaiden to unveiling unsolved mysteries. Mother dissipated in the night sky, readily. Eliza thought how, time had eluded the players of all times, of its own sly endgames; that it was deployed to play everyone big time; who played whom, in these games, the mundane bickering, spun out of the threads of life, largely controlled by the unseen Moirai; who won in this life and who lost determined by gods through their earthly judges, they had anointed.

Existence after all was a passing reality. Who wrote this narrative? Billions of years in processing, these metamorphosed fossils; an illusion, a conundrum of plays, full-on deadly swings of lies, of lures, and of profiteering; love giveth and taketh away in death. Only the blind seers had perceived; never the Queens nor the Kings of the day. Alas! When was a full moon ever sighted from the surface of the moon itself? Only from this mortal world, did its beacon glimmer; Hamlet had caught the King's conscience in his play.



What came out of the séance was the half-formed pensées, the machine-character Data, and the biometrics. She had to flesh it out, the alleged crime, to do herself justice. Why would that file be hiding there? Why was it removed in the first place and not put back with the others? Why would someone try to hide the biometrics of valuable data? Ah yes, Data the machine, triggered a thought - a data manipulation rort? How and Why? All these questions buzzing in the head. They had to be really good hackers to do so digitally as well. The records there were well protected by strong passwords for the almighty precious intel. Unless someone was trying to use the threat to an end. Maybe of a data breach? That was it! Which led to the fact that blackmail was a possibility for money, or for something else? By far, the girl's missing links, the puzzle pieces fell right in place to secure the job, she had not deserved.

The snitch, had perhaps, stolen all the staff's biometrics, and hid it there, so no one could ever find the file. Worst case, file misplacement only, without any hint of theft or forgery. Clever, she then blackmailed the panel for a serious data breach, or perhaps, she may even have found additional information about some of the interviewer's secrets, tantamount to bribery or perjury, threatening to go public if police were to be involved. That was how Eliza worked it out in her mind. Up to her now, how she wanted to expose this rotten play; go to the police or give the girl enough rope? A play within a play, the stars twinkled and had their say, concluded that a celestial play had always been at play. Either way, this surely made Eliza's day.

*The white Queen moved 2 places. Checkmate.*



Mehreen Ahmed is widely published and critically acclaimed by Midwest Book Review, DD Magazine, The Wild Atlantic Book Club to name a few. Her short stories are a winner in The Waterloo Short Story Competition, shortlisted in Cogito Literary Journal Contest, a finalist in the Fourth Adelaide Literary Award Contest, winner in The Cabinet of Heed stream-of-consciousness challenge, A Best of Cafelit 8. Her works are three-time nominated for The Best of the Net Awards, nominated for the Pushcart Prize Award. Her historical fiction, The Pacifist, is an announced Drunken Druid's Editor's Choice. She was a jury member and a keynote speaker for KM Anthru Literature Prize: Litterateur Redefining World Magazine Global Literature Conclave 2021.

# Salman Sowdagar

## OF TEACHERS

Who would deny a teacher's importance,  
But for the one who's in deep ignorance.  
And who would not acknowledge their role in our lives,  
But for the one who lies.  
And who would not listen to what the teachers say,  
But for the one who's gone astray.  
And who would not respect a teacher,  
But for the one who doesn't have a bright future.  
And who would not show a teacher gratitude,  
But for the one who has a bad attitude.  
And who would not follow a teacher,  
But for the one who's not a seeker.  
For when teachers nourish,  
Lives flourish.

Salman Sowdagar is one of the Emerging Writers of 2021 and his author bio is included in the book "Who's Who of Emerging Writers 2021" (SweetyCat Press, Virginia, USA). His work received a Commendable Mention in Wingword Short Story Prize; was shortlisted in Wordweavers Poetry Contest, and longlisted for the Half and One Prize. Salman's work has appeared in Bombay Review, Rather Quiet, Merak Magazine, Pangolin Review, Litlight Magazine, CultureCult Magazine, Verse of Silence, The Criterion, Infinithoughts, The World Anthology of Poetry 2016 (Taiwan), etc. He lives in Hyderabad, India, and has recently finished his Master's in English from MANUU.

# Amisha Mohan

## Boys don't cry

I paint flowers so that they don't die,  
I hauntingly put that saying into my brave mind,  
My mind which is rusted with pseudo terms like I'm okay  
which slides down my cheeks and hangs on my face with a fake crescent smile.

You see, I paint flowers  
Not sunflowers that see the sun everyday and dance clockwise and anti - clockwise, shimmering with  
sanguine whatsapp thoughts,  
But touch - me - nots clipped to my eyelids,  
To protect me  
Everytime I want to stoop down  
but had to stand firmly like Himalayas.

But anyways, I wilt

You see, I paint flowers underneath the veil of my eyelids,  
where there are puddles.  
And if you look closely, you will see a black rotten marble groaning in the confluence,  
A confluence that holds anxiety, depression, sorrow  
But it cannot hold it strongly enough,  
So, seasonally it melts down and harbours in the queue beside the pin drop silences saluting  
sophistically on my shoulders.

There are pieces you build planets with,  
I guess it will remain a sterile piece, incapable of metamorphosing safe planets  
Until we preach , "boys don't cry",  
"boys are strong",  
"boys don't get depressed",

Until we preach  
Until we teach

These thoughts do wordplays in my mind everytime I paint flowers for  
I am a grieving flowery tree and I am dying.

Amisha Mohan is your friendly neighbourhood self proclaimed artist who might gift you a personalized poem and an art piece if you love k dramas, dogs, prefer coffee over tea. Might mistake the next political ideology as her next muse. Amisha has bagged several awards in the literary field, including first prize in the creative writing contest organized by Girl Up Heron and judged by Poems India and English Slam Poetry competition organized by Thapar Institute of Science and Technology, Patiala. Her poems have also found a home in notable pages like The Penweilders, Silverleafpoetry, etc.

## Regret

Ask a man  
on a ventilator  
with scanty moments  
left in this world

he'll let you know  
how severe  
the flame of  
regret is. Don't  
tell me you "learn"  
from heartbreaks

I wish I had not  
invested in them:  
tell me, what must  
I name this wail?

Its enervated flames  
keep expanding,  
these flames  
resemble  
undesirable cells  
in your brain  
that smother frangible bones  
that prick shrivelled flesh  
that jab and  
then draw the sabre out  
again and again  
but desire not  
to annihilate  
your crippled spirit.

Afra Ahmad is a writer, poet, artist holding a great passion for Arabic calligraphy. Based in Saudi Arabia, she is pursuing bachelors 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 been published in various magazines including Her Hearth, Rather Quiet, Blue Minaret, Iman collective.

Afra Ahmad

Regret is a  
cacophonous fire  
louder than cries  
of blood dropped  
on the ground  
during war,  
competent enough  
to render  
you deaf  
for the rest  
of your  
life,  
it fails to  
extinguish even  
when pails of  
cold water  
a sip of which  
could save a dying man  
or soft-salmon joy  
like zephyr  
is poured on it  
slowly and tenderly  
the same way  
physicians clean your  
wounds and  
drape them tightly  
with milky gauze  
shower them with  
a sprinkle  
of care and a week's rest  
they will heal,

but the pain of regret  
is lasting  
this ache  
never halts.

I have grieved  
enough to know  
you learn nothing,  
you slowly evolve  
into a living embodiment  
of numbness.



# Yahuza Abdulkadir



TILL THE DAY FOREVER DIES.

Till the day forever dies,  
Our love will still keep rolling by.

Till the day forever dies,  
I will be your sunshine from morning till dusk.

Till the day forever dies,  
I will be the stars that twinkle and make your night so bright.

Till the day forever dies,  
Through stumbling wind and storms our bond can never be broken.

Till the day forever dies,  
I will stand by you through thick and thin,  
Nothing can tear us apart.

Till the day forever dies,  
I will walk through your lovely garden endowed with beautiful roses.

Till the day forever dies,  
You'll be the fruits that feeds my soul.

Till the day forever dies,  
Our love will never die,  
I promise to leave you not.



Yahuza Abdulkadir is a growing Nigerian writer and poet who see creative writing as a tool he can use to voice out his thoughts and express his ideas, emotions, feelings and views about life. He sometimes write motivational and educational articles. He's a student of physical and environmental science in the university. His interests were found in reading, writing and traveling to explore more about life. When he's not writing, he engaged in social and humanitarian works.

# Chelsea Brown

Was it ignorance or bliss?

I stopped trying to  
hunt and gather  
enough to return home  
with my belly full  
and fell apart.  
I let the world  
see me broken,  
aching for rest.  
I let it see me  
with my mask on,  
still hiding.  
I learned the new  
light through  
the first bloom,  
after months  
of waiting patiently in  
the dark, and I knew  
it would still rise  
and fall.  
I finally balanced  
in the hourglass,  
no longer  
falling to my knees  
at its command.



Chelsea Brown is an artist and poet based in the U.S. Her work is inspired by chronic illness and the loss of control of the body, mind, and connection to others. Through themes in her work, she explores the isolation, anger, and fear that stems from existing in a system that sees healing in a linear context and womens' pain as invalid, and the hope for change. Since graduating from the University of Washington, she has had artwork and poetry published in magazines and artwork shown in exhibitions around the world.

# John Chinaka Onyeche

For You

I am becoming a watchman

To watch over your inks that flow into tiny air

For you,

I am becoming an African

From the Southern tip of Africa

For you,

I am becoming the first inhabitant of the Cape

For you,

I am becoming the first owner of the land

For you,

I am becoming the first race known as the San

For you,

I will go with my bands into the forest and pick wide berries

For you,

I have become the hunter and gatherers

For you,

We will go into the mountains and pick pebbles

Each man on his bands, we will gather up stones

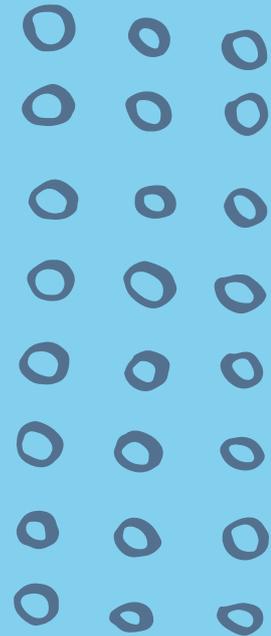
For you,

We will return to use the stones to make you a grave

For you died a hero in the land of your so journal

For you,

We will use our stones to build you a grave,



John Chinaka Onyeche (Rememberajc) is an upcoming poet from Nigeria. He writes from the city of Port Harcourt Rivers State. He is an undergraduate student at Ignatius

Ajuru University Of Education Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria, where he is undergoing studies for his degree in History and Diplomatic Studies. His writings are more on a historical perspective of the ordeal of Africans in the hands of their slave masters, life from the other way around it, and his works have appeared in many journals/magazines online within and outside Nigeria. You can find his works on the following websites; Spillwords, Melbourne culture corner, Nnoko, TunaFishjournal, Moreporkpress, Nymphspublications, Ethelzine, Youthmagazine, Acumen, Zindaily, pawnspaper and conceitmagazine, Mosi oa Tunya Literary Review, Kalahari Review, Rigorous.

# Stephen Oladayo Oladokun

## SAVE MY SOUL

I wandered in a strange land  
to shield my body & soul  
but found sweetbrier & rosa eden  
so, I cried out to the Jungle Lord:  
'save my soul.'

I embarked on a voyage  
to have my dark soul wash  
on an ocean wide as sky  
but was sailed far from home  
amidst octopus & squids.  
again, I cried out to the Water Lord:  
'save my soul.'

I soared high on eagle's wings  
far above the sky into heavens  
that I may write my name  
in the highest of heavens  
but was found among harpies.  
again, I cried out to the Air Lord:  
'save my soul.'

forgive me and save my soul  
from fluttering down the hill - love  
that has grown iron teeth to  
crush me between sanity & madness.

Stephen Oladayo Oladokun is a writer, photographer and researcher from Nigeria whose works have appeared and forthcoming in Queenview Magazine, Fly on the Wall Poetry, Pine Cone Review, The Shallow Tales Review, Fae Dreams Anthology, Corona Blue Anthology, Innseai Journal Issue, My Woven Words, PEN Nigeria and elsewhere. He is a member of Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation in Minna Niger State, Nigeria. He is on Instagram as Oracle\_Voice and on Facebook and Tweeter as Oracle's Voice.

# Rajiv Bakshi

## Interest in Golf

Only at the end of the Olympics in Tokyo, I heard the name of Aditi Ashok for the first time. The young golfer from Bengaluru was ranked 200 in the World ranking but finished 4th at the Tokyo Olympics. My interest in golf started after the games came to an end. A few of my school friends play golf in Chandigarh golf Club and Police Academy golf Club in Phillaur. They had invited me a number of times to watch them play but I politely declined. I had gone just once for a heavy breakfast in the golf Club.

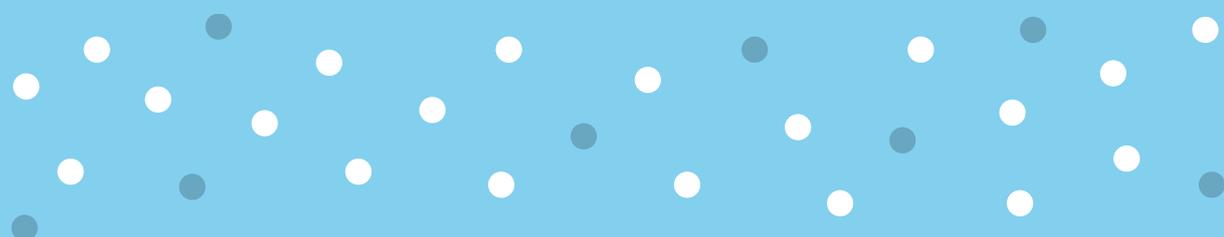
During the pandemic, people have discovered that they could be safer on the golf course. Golf became popular in the USA, due to “the Tiger effect” after Tiger Wood’s 1996 PGA debut and electrifying performances in the years to follow. National Golf Foundation count shows 24.8 million golfers in the USA.

Since, these days, I am in Chicago, I did a search for a golf club in my neighbourhood. I did not want to cut a sorry figure, if I went to a golf club, so I ordered two books teaching me a few basic facts of this highly popular game here. I also ordered 2 golf t-shirts and 2 golf caps. There is a Disc golf course, played with a Frisbee, with 18 “holes” reservoir near my home. Till the time I learn a few basics of real golf I have started practising with the disc. I play disc golf daily for around two hours. I have made a number of friends who wait for me so that they can play this game with a senior citizen from India.

I see a lot of my neighbours going to various golf clubs. During a chitchat on one of my morning walks, I casually asked the price of joining a golf Club. It came as a huge surprise to me that the lifetime membership cost him \$80,000. In addition, every month he has to pay \$400 as recurring charges; the food and drinks are not complementary in the club. I searched a few golf clubs online and the minimum charge I found was \$10,000 for life membership.

My friend John took me three times to his golf Club. I was wearing my golf club t-shirt and golf cap. With my 6 feet height and sturdy frame, I looked like a golf player. John introduced me to a few of his friends. Every time we went to Club, we had a nice lunch with few pints of local Chicago beer. The food bill was never shared between us. It was always he, who paid via his credit card.

I decided that once I get back to India I will join a club and take up the game of golf. If one has a passion for anything, age does not matter. So, upon googling Delhi Golf Club, I found out that membership is ₹15 lacs, and the waiting list is years long! Perhaps, I will just watch golf on TV.



## NO 11, Smile Comes Silence

My lips expire at every 8.00 p.m. I serve between plates  
As the burned bread whispers “Take my silence to you before my chocolate”  
Brains under this table are ravenous and crawling up  
My words cost more than chicks  
My smile with halved tail, that sink’s mirror where are burials of  
good people. They should bow to the sun  
Neighbours carry my relatives’ genes and my mother’s sister  
complaint about my trouser.

After the table is wiped my mother whom speaks like the brains  
All stained plates tell often, “The sweet Healthy Boy’s sauce  
at tips of their lips smell as rotten words”  
From someone bending to look at my small fall

I yeast my silence fatter than o fatter tears, tapes of tears play  
to awake the good people again

My smile thin in thin tells me  
“Mix your dough, their tongues’ ants don’t love”  
If they would rip crumbs and crumbs of my dreams  
I still be my mice hides in my bread  
But they leave noisy mucor everything around me

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## EIGHT ANGELS' HOUSE

Neither his cookies nor brownies hauled me into this house, freckles of fifth  
angel burns through my glass. Where did I came from? I was waiting in a bus  
stops at dead personas, but I saw a squirrel flying into this house

He's the sixth angel sew clowns

from all teeth that toddlers lost. It's a house, laughter eats old languages

A father of the seven angels, he has hugs, he has hundred and eleven Sundays

knocked his room. Open the door of Monday will his broad shoulders

Baby angel let loading his mouth, all the other angels open their mouths

His smile is the most bread awakes, my desert fox's days share

While greet, he wears our bird's nest above his head. The father's eldest angel  
whatever face he wears we have come to see every strange sides

Third angel is coming to check our bowls after each meal

From a smaller cradle than his rapports and long ears. I saw a beautiful portrait

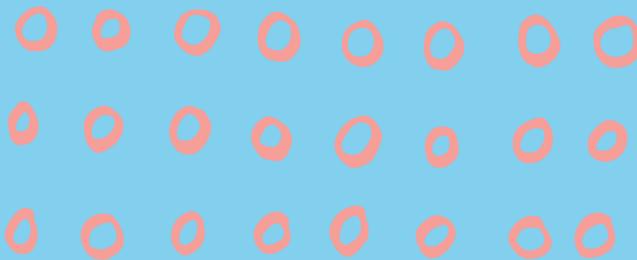
Seventh angel is standing at black and white ocean

He calls us whom we don't listen to ourselves love

By fourth angel's diary we are the staying children. He pokes scary dark eyes of dolly

In a deaf-room their quills fell songs rise up our sleep

I'm their two years-old child



Thanusha is a writer from Malaysia under her pen name Aurora. She is 20 who majors in Biology. Her works vary from different subjects but her strongest desire is in bringing awareness about our environment among other souls. Her recent work, 'The Begging Bag' can be found in Soy Oi Community project. Her hobbies are gardening, a melomaniac and hunting poems.

# Christian Garduno



## The Sky is Falling in Berkeley

The leaves are falling in Berkeley  
and it just makes you want to go home  
because you know  
no one lives in Berkeley  
it's just a place we go  
when we want to be free

The sky is falling in Berkeley  
and now I'm on my own  
but it's making me warm to know  
no one's living in Berkeley  
it's just a place our minds go  
when they want to be free

They say the first bitter winds will catch you alone  
They say the first bitter winds will catch you alone  
I say they'll make you alive

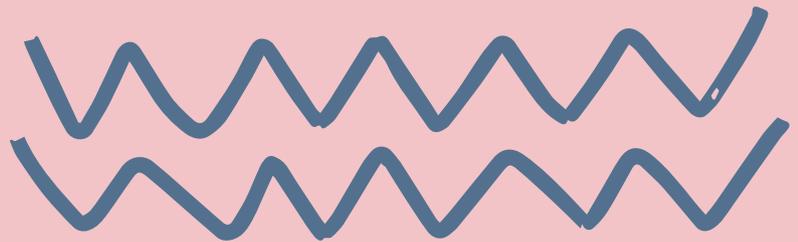
The heavens are calling us to Berkeley  
so bring a hoodie for your soul  
'cause up here it gets biting cold  
and no one ever dies in Berkeley  
it's just a place we come  
when we're already free.

## The Eastern Hemisphere

The blood trade-  
it stains your throat  
skulking around Astrid's blown-out town  
I've been asleep for centuries  
dreaming of yesterday

The gloaming has eight arms  
to push the sands back up the hourglass  
your heart beats in a sound-proof box  
two things can be true at the very same time  
strains of Vivaldi wafting through your hair

We are beginning our descent  
yellow traffic lights blinking on blank streets  
your eyelids flutter  
the Sun is moving  
it is we who are still in the night



Christian Garduno's work can be read in over 80 literary magazines. He is the recipient of the 2019 national Willie Morris Award for Southern Poetry. Garduno is a Finalist in the 2020-2021 Tennessee Williams & New Orleans Writing Contest. He lives and writes along the South Texas coast with his wonderful wife Nahemie and young son Dylan.

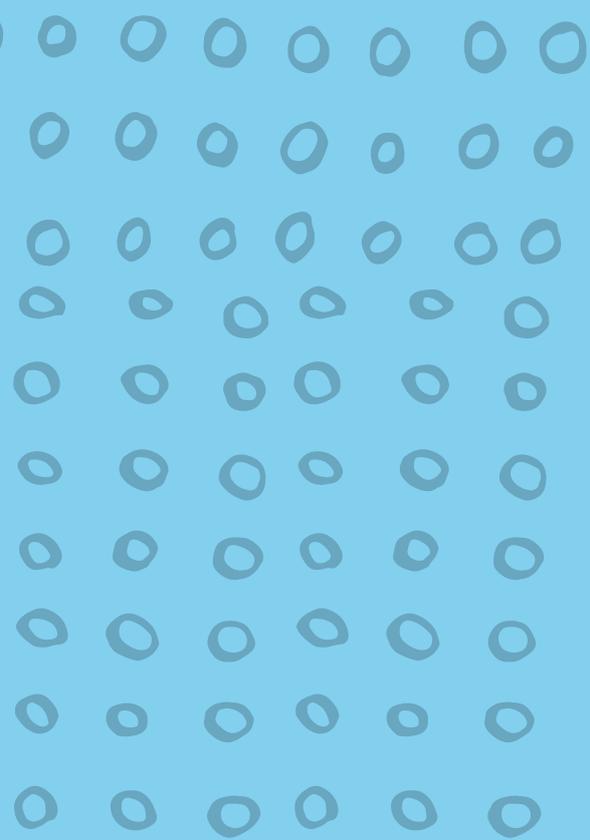
laces

when i was little i remember the way  
you would make a circle with your hands  
like you were catching dawn  
before school after braiding my hair  
smell of the nerf ball  
plastic flakes depositing on my palms  
left foot extended whipping my arm  
forward ball tunneling in a spiral  
how i dreamed eventually my hands would  
grow big enough to grip  
the laces of that leather  
my memory of you snoring on the couch  
with the ball tucked under your left arm  
dad the sun those laces  
and the way we yelled loud on sundays



freight day

the truck arrives in the morning  
filled with boxes we carry  
lining the walkways with cardboard  
until aisles are plateaus  
sometimes we hear the tinkling of ceramic shards  
begin to salvage no gloves  
our rough hands are not afraid of edges  
in one box ten sunflower plates  
broken into petals and seeds  
two plates chipped on the rim  
when we leave that night  
we carry those plates with us  
and eat eggs off them on sunday  
the yolks are marigold against the sunflower  
we feel bright



Thank you to all our lovely contributors for their support and submissions, and to everyone taking the time to read all these amazing poems and stories we receive!

We hope all our readers going through lockdowns are safe and looking after each other

# MCC!

As always we would like to acknowledge the original custodians of the land we live and work upon, and pay our respect to all indigenous peoples past and present.

