

An artistic illustration of a young girl with short brown hair, wearing a white sleeveless top and patterned pants, sitting on the ground and reading a book. She is positioned under the shade of a large, dark tree trunk on the left. The background features a bright, hazy sky with a large yellow sun, soft white clouds, and various green plants and ferns. The overall style is soft and painterly.

HaluHalo Journal
ISSUE I

Foreword

HaluHalo Journal first began as a small, wholehearted dream. We dreamed of a journal for people like us, a space where young Southeast Asians could exist in deeper forms, and we cupped it into our hands and spread it out into the world. And it has spread farther than we could have ever imagined. It connected us to you.

To all of our lovely contributors: thank you! Thank you for entrusting your most intimate, heartfelt pieces to us. It has been both a pleasure and an honor to review the works of such a talented and diverse group of writers and artists.

Without further ado, we present the very first issue of HaluHalo Journal! We hope you enjoy reading the issue just as much as we enjoyed piecing it together :)

Much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial letter "M" and a long, sweeping tail.



cover art: Afternoon Read by Patricia Djauhari

Patricia Christie Djauhari is a small artist from Indonesia currently studying abroad. She is 18 years old and has been interested in art since she was little. Her specialty is illustration artwork. Besides illustration, Patricia dabbles in animation and comic making. She is passionate about creating art that tells a story.

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Ivory Tower

by: Para Vadhahong

I carry you up the highest ivory tower, our limbs stranded in limbo, our hearing strained by earfuls of corn. We can't prevent yellow from climbing into the windows of our cells, these faces painted by the brush tip of an August moon, young bodies rendered seasonal fruits of decay. We dress up as children of the corn for the afterparty, stalks of wheat brushing past our backs as we move to "American Pie" and I slur the chorus into the shell of your ear. This time of year is for blooming in the fist of folly, for swallowing beer with our enemies and smirking past our ghosts. Mere transplants, we breed ourselves from the gnawed-off roots lugged past our mothers' illegal gardens. We eye the sky in our sleep, catch fireflies with the white-hot need of our teeth. You want to house a wildfire, I want to be caressed by that blind spot of belonging. Tonight I carry you up the highest tower with a match between my lips. I don't set it free.



Bangkok 1945

by: Para Vadhahong

A country served up on a hot plate,

cut, speared, bulleted, renamed,

trembles in tied and occupied hands.

A rock tossed over two oceans

lands on the tracks with a thud. In the right light,

it might become a pearl, deluded

into Venus. An untouchable sky

mangled in explosion rendered touchable

by yellow sprouts of gore

spilling from atomic heaven's jaws

casts its fatal tongue into ash

into a land of ruined smiles,

long chipped way into sunny myth.

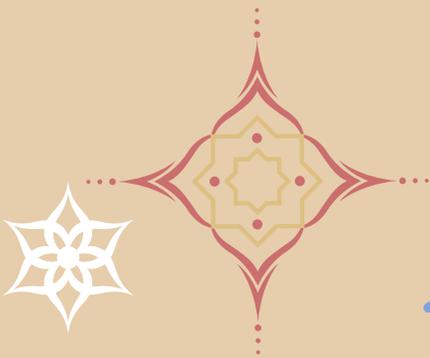
Hands brace for impact the quiet devastation

of prayer a death of hundreds flinches

for no god makes no room for an empire's

thumb to worm through the palace of breath

tucked inside valleys of a heart still beating.



Para Vadhahong is a 22-year-old Thai American poet and writer from the South. Their work is published or forthcoming in Kingdoms in the Wild, Hyacinth Review, Lover's Eye Press, INKSOUNDS, Koening Zine, Ice Lolly, and Salt Hill.

Through the trees

by: Christ Keivom

Where you and I walked,
So quiet, as if silence were a kind of thread.
And words, the sharpness to cut it, we began speaking.

Of many things: sunset as a person leaving
Behind a trail of footprints in the sand.
Detachment; the past that slowly rises from the

Bottom of a memory, like bubbles to the mind's surface.
God; a searchlight in the sky of dark and doubt. Death
as an appointment that one cannot

Keep from meeting or put off the day of dying.
What we did not know about life
Was more of a gift than knowing

Though when our eyes met
We fell in love, immediate and permanent.
Our lives awakened, alerted to the possibility for more—

Of what life has been now translated to what will
be, The years left in you and me.
Suddenly saved, as a flower on the sidewalk.
No matter what tomorrow could be,
You and me, to remain one, what better poem can there be?



Christ Keivom, 22 from India, is currently pursuing his master's in English Literature from Delhi University. His work has previously appeared in Novus Literary Arts Journal, Mulberry Literary, Monograph Mag, Farside Review, Spotlong Review, The Chakkar, Write now Lit, Agapanthus Collective, and Native Skin to name a few.

Goldfish and Others

by: Mahika Mukherjee

What is school to a seven-year-old? It's a chore.

The boy dragged his feet back home, shoes dusty from running on baked earth and hair scruffy, skewered in every which way. His mom always lamented at his appearance after school, and it left him delighted. There was a streak of mud on his face from a fall, and a scraped knee from PE class, but none of that mattered as he walked home from the bus stop.

He was excited to see his pets.

The day before, his parents had surprised him with four fish bigger than his pinkie, four of the frightened kind, though he did not know any better then. To him, they were creatures subject to his great curiosity, to his attention.

He raced the rest of the way home. They had a maid, and she was disgruntled, wiping his face down. He enjoyed playing with her, but she played with him less often in the then week, day, month. What is time to a child?

He was forced to get into the bath, as he detested them, and once clean, was finally able to lovingly gaze at the glass globe-like thing that was now home to four creatures.

There were two goldfish, slow and sluggish in movement. They were a pretty sight to behold, and their wide mouths never failed to make him laugh, but it was the other two fish that left him mesmerized. They had flat, triangular silhouettes, streamlined and thin-finned. Their black bodies with silver stripes and their never blinking eyes that held his gaze make the two his favorites.



He knew they weren't goldfish, clearly, but he didn't know what they were. He had not seen them in any encyclopaedia, despite looking for them for fifteen minutes, though to him it felt like hours. So, he never gave them names, only called them 'others' in his head. He had to feed the goldfish and others. Goldfish and others, goldfish and...

He loved watching them, especially when he was not supposed to. To him, it had been years since he got his companions, though it had only been a few weeks in reality. He was pressed for time, having to finish homework for the next day's class. He had not yet learned the word "deadlines," but the concept was familiar, though silly to him. He sneaked off his unnaturally tall chair and looked again at the trails the fish made, constant changing constellations in the work.

His mother was what he would call a trouble detector, because she would always catch him in the midst of his mischief. However, this time he called her to him.

His mom came to his room, a frown on her face. She was tired from work and wanted to rest, but he couldn't see that, as his eyes were fixed onto the globe-like bowl.

"What's the matter?"

The matter was that one of the goldfish, which was lazy to begin with, did not move. This was not strange to him in the onset, as he figured even fish would like to sit back and enjoy. But it had not moved for a good while, and he was starting to get worried.

"It's because you keep feeding it all the time."



"This made him cross. He did not feed them more than twice a day, and he was very careful not to give them more than they can handle. It sounded like it was his fault, which he felt was untrue.

She brushed him off, and that was that.

After two weeks, when he went to change the water, he felt one stiff body in his net, motionless and long gone. He stared at it in his blue little plastic net and looked for a long time. He put it back into the water, in hopes of it swimming all of a sudden, but there was no movement. He finally cupped it in his palm, unsure how to feel about the whole incident. He dug a hole in his backyard and buried its little body, and then told his parents over the phone. It took three tries to reach his dad, and two for his mom. He was met with an apology of sorts, which he couldn't comprehend.

"Why are you sorry?" he asked.

His dad initially seemed at a loss of words. He eventually decided on, "Because you lost a friend."

The boy took this with a silent nod of his head which was invisible to his dad over the phone and hung up.

The second goldfish also died.

The word death felt foreign in the boy's mouth. He'd been told that once something dies, they get turned into stars, so he stared at the night sky at odd intervals. He thought he might find his fish, his two weak goldfish. But space was too vast, and time was short, and it never felt right. He once wondered if they don't get turned into stars at all, but the idea was met with internal conflict and so he put the idea to rest.



He was upset before, but he was truly devastated when one of the other's died. He somehow believed that these two would be exempt from the same fate. He felt a twinge of regret when he fished out the dead body. Did he really feed them too much? Was this his fault?

He looked at the last fish, swimming in the globe with fake seaweed dancing underneath it.

"Is it my fault?" he asked.

He received no reply.

The last fish soon stopped swimming and instead burrowed its face into the gravel. The boy already knew that he would disappear like the rest.

His dad walked by and placed a hand on the boy's shoulder, as if to give comfort.

"I wish I knew why they are dying," the boy asked.

"Maybe they are lonely," he said after a bit, perhaps in an attempt to humor him. The boy did not understand. They were not alone at all, were they?

He tapped on the glass after his dad left and whispered. "I am here," he said, "I am here. You are not alone."

The Goldfish and Other's slipped off his mind once the bodies were laid to rest. His mom muttered that it was good as the fish smell got to her. His dad forgot all about the incident and went back to his work.

They got a cat next.

Mahika Mukherjee (20 years old, India) is not a reader or a writer, but a secret third thing. She would tell you, but it is a secret after all. She ignores her Biology textbooks and crochets in her free time. You can read her musings at mahikamukherjee.com, and her evolution blog at mahikamukherjee.com/evolving-stories.

5.53PM Flight

by: Vastriane



Jillianna Reign B. Paat, writing under her pseudonym Vastriane, at the age of twenty-one, is currently an undergraduate student in University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines. She is majoring in Bachelor of Arts, Creative Writing, and is pursuing the art of poetry. She recently placed second in a Spoken Poetry Performance Contest in her university with her original poem entitled, "The Seven Husbands of Mother Nature."

We fell in love in tumultuous times

by: Aidan Bernales

We fell in love in tumultuous times

Where fathers bore children with their own mouths and David stoned Goliath
Where whores and harlots dressed in fuchsia pink hosed down Ouano Avenue
We were slouching towards Bethlehem for we know the methane there was
Hipster gold back in the '70s, God's land dirty white like mud and silk
Where monarch butterflies grew pairs of knees to kneel toward their children
We were turning heads not because we were masterstrokes, we were fear in
Bottle form, recurrent sleep paralysis eating upon human flesh
Only to sew every follicle into cloth that draped upon Your Majesty
Where Popes were choking on the Bible verses they were spitting out
And out from the stomach, Saturn's children all came slitting out
Where hope held no dictionary definition, paired so close to hate
They had watched the latest Joan of Arc, newly nineteen, burned at the stake
The best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, hysterical and naked
And if you were saving your lips for someone better, kiss your finger's tip
Violet ink - If you had promised everything, why do you mean nothing now?
Where junkyard jukebox junkies were found slow-dancing to Camelot
They waved with pride the Filipino flag wearing nothing but their underwear
Screaming, "Fuck the revolution! We wait for empires to burn in flames!"
Then watch the smile of a five-year-old child ember to ashes from his face
I remind myself time and time again: you're the ash and I'm the flame
For you are just the aftermath of the travesty that I create
Goliath, you were much taller than me, with kind, dewdrop eyes
If anyone were to take your place from you, must it be I? Must it be I?
Instead, grow wings so you may pluck at every feather until they're skeletons



And you'll see where I hid for years on end and will continue to now
Where indecisive Solomons cut their wrists and committed suicide
You've always said I looked good as a martyr – But must it be I? Must it be I?
We should've been slouching towards Sodom and Gomorrah, look how they
Repented! Wasn't it God who said he would forgive or has He learned to forget
Yet? If you had asked me, twenty years from now if your love made me
Change, I'd peel my skin to show you every part of me that failed to stay the
Same. Saturn and your rings, you must have mastered the art of reemergence
Where even if you lost yourself, you'll know how to find your way back
Because if I find only one pair of feet, I know you carried me through the sand.
And if you find around your skin my fingerprints, know I walked with my
Bare hands. Where times have changed and people came and went
And mercy stood and mercy fell, and I had spent every ink on my double-edge
Felt tip pens, know that love knows no boundaries, does not know where
To hide. You and I, my Saturn and your rings, we loved in tumultuous times.
Forever I'll be grateful you were by my side.

Aidan Bernales, 20, is a Cebuano writer currently studying Communication at Ateneo de Manila University. His articles have been published in Rappler, Sunstar Cebu, The Philippine Daily Inquirer, and The Guidon. His poems have appeared in Ateneo's Heights, UP Writers' Club's Sinuman Magazine, and Vox Populi PH. In 2022, he was a citizen journalist for Rappler and covered the local elections in his hometown. He is particularly interested in writing psychological thrillers, slices of life, and romance stories. Taylor Swift is his favorite singer, if that helps.

by: Savhanha Small Nguyen

Picture this:

A cafe at midnight -
a guy nursing an empty drink
and an infertile hope that tonight
he'll meet the woman of his dreams.
Bad eggs make really shitty omelettes
(they're good for throwing at people though).

Imagine,
only living vicariously but
holding out on blind faith
that it'll all work out in the end.

An illiterate writer
capturing a white whale.
Nostalgia burning like
bricks in a house fire.

Calling out a name
you've only heard in your dreams
(hint: it's silence,

you only dream about things you know).

Pain being reciprocal.

Have you pictured it?



Savhanha Small Nguyen is 25 years old and currently residing in Birmingham, UK. She has been writing since she was 13 and only recently took the leap to get her work out there. Her interests include film, photography, and food – the tasting more than the making!

Sumpa Kita

by: Daniela Lorraine Brutas



“Sumpa Kita” was heavily influenced by the Spanish translation of “I promise you” to Sampaguita. The Sampaguita flower or *Jasminum sambac* is the Philippine national flower. The flower was painted with the colors of the Philippine flag to symbolize the promise of purity, fidelity, hope, love and devotion to the country.

Diyan Lang Sa Tabi

13

by: Daniela Lorraine Brutas



This piece is a vibrant homage to my Philippine culture. In the busy streets of the Philippines, you are guaranteed to find a street food stand with a wide variety of affordable and mouth-watering delicacies. One of these delicacies is Kwek Kwek, or boiled quailed eggs coated and deep-fried with orange batter. Categorized as one of the many famous Pinoy street foods, Kwek kwek is sold along with fish balls, squid balls, and chicken balls.

Daniela Lorraine Brutas, or 'Raine' (16) is an aspiring classic romance novelist and contemporary artist. She is the author of Till Death Do Us Part in an Anthology Book for Ukiyoto Publishing Magkasintahan Volume V. You can find Raine at <https://theyourlifeonthego.wordpress.com/> where she runs the blog Clouds&Raine–A Dreamer's Space.

sepi dan sendiri aku benci

by: Patricia Kusumaningtyas

java, park slope, brooklyn. 5:31 pm, october 5.

this is not terong balado

my auntie said
as she video calls me on whatsapp
and drives her family subaru
out of her elmhurst driveway.

see i live a bajillion train transfers away from awang kitchen and sky cafe and indo
java and upi jaya (rest in peace)
all i have of home, in this tiny brooklyn apartment, is:
ada apa dengan cinta in its fragile plastic box

dian sastro banging the airport window as nicholas saputra leaves her for new york
(at least they kissed, right?)
she read the notebook he left for her and she smiled at the sky
that silly kind of childish love.

i called you on your parents' landline before i left you for new york.
i wished you would chase me just as dian sastro did
(i embarrass myself just thinking about that sometimes.)

or maybe i'll go back like nicholas saputra
and take you on an odyssey across jogja



and we'll eat sate klathak on a stormy night
and you'll end up leaving your fiancé for me
that kind of childish love.

instead i'm here
eating terong balado that's not exactly terong balado
but the fake thing will substitute for the real thing
until the fake thing doesn't seem fake anymore
until the terong balado tastes like my aunt's terong balado
and your double tastes like you



an anger like pyroclastic flow

by: Patricia Kusumaningtyas

i always return to gallery 247 to see what they stole from us.
a headless buddha greets me by the door.

(do these tourists know
that he is made
from the volcanic rocks of mount merapi?)

i remember that drive down magelang;
palm trees bearing the weight of ashes
endless chores
sweeping balconies like sisyphus
a reminder of the unrelenting want of the earth
humans are too meek to refuse.

meanwhile, buddha sits clean in manhattan

knowingly, separated, disappeared from his birthright

a gift from [insert dutch name here]

donated by [insert japanese name here]

and independence day wasn't our independence:

the smiling general sold his soul in exchange for a throne in the west.

and where is marsinah? munir? wiji thukul?

who will write the song for the bengawan solo in '65, unsung, flowing red with blood?



we have mourned from merapi, from Krakatau,
to '04 Aceh and '06 Jogja.

in a dream i walked into 247 to an empty room.
none of the buddhas were there.
white linen covering the furniture,
nothing to see but silence.

in Manhattan, i wish i was clean

Patricia Kusumaningtyas (24, they/she) is an Indonesian director & playwright based in Brooklyn, NY. Their play "Some Things Last a Long Time" received a staged reading at the Drama League in 2022. Previously, they also wrote and directed Al Pacino Eyes (2022) for The Players' Theatre Short Play Festival in New York. Besides working in the realm of theatre and poetry, she is also a tech worker and a film & music critic/writer.

an immortal's love song

for naomi ong

by: Willow Kang

last night,
I strung stars along a ribbon for you,
& watched
a pomegranate fall,
its clock-hands flailing;
time tempers all things deathly

& time is a melodramatic mistress
of citrine lavender,
crumpled scarlet letters
reluctant slumbering
in teary fingers

over her lap are fate-threads
that binds me to her
a cartographer's first lesson
in the canals that make up tender bodies

she says I'm a purveyor
of foolish bouquets, their petals
gossamer-thin, in anemic soil
those & these, the objects
of my midnight fevers:



papier-mache dogs
with hearts hanging out of slippery mouths
like lovesick cherubims,
the ones pursued by ravens

amidst a red dawn,
parisian sights are vicious
in their ephemerality,
flashing as dying fireflies do

tenebrosity becomes reckless daylight
then back again
to torpid twilight:
the stargazer who dozes beside me
returns to her unsullied dreamlands

I drift in stagnant backwater,
eyes to luminescent creatures
how naive they are,
of the flowing river's creed
this time, may I, too, know of quietude.



Painkillers as Mica Flakes

by: Willow Kang

At the end of Main Street is a pharmacy dispensing painkillers as mica flakes. The dinner table teems with tepid hopes; snicker at Lucy in the sky, with her moissanite earrings, snatched from a train station pawnstore. I hope to shut those dreamless eyelids someday, each iris, a frustrating mortal joy rotting as cautionary tales for rebellious cherubs. Let them linger in their unsullied dreamscapes. Every tear shed in awakening is a starry stray, abandoned by the zodiacs that promised them Eden. So consume, without mercy, dear Lucifer. The heavenly edicts are amphetamines for immortals that have never touched the underground. The badgers, the owls, that prey on rabbits, all for comprehending dawnlight & dewdrops on metallic greenhouses. How foolish of Clarice Lane, to wave glowsticks about in catacombs. The poppy fields have forgotten, & so have the snowdrops. But keep your silence. There are no lessons to be found in springtime hallucinations, not with the celestial giant having left for more verdant pastures, nor with the troupes of revelers shot. Thus, in the name of eternal serenity, worldly daughters, remember to ingest painkillers as mica flakes.



Willow (16) is a writer from Singapore, where she is studying. Her current preoccupations include taking naps, and taking naps. While not in school, Willow reads a copious amount of fairytales and writes the same way to keep herself sane. Coffee breaks are also on her mind. You can find her @oldmanheart on Instagram.

transient I

by: Grace Zhou



transient II

by: Grace Zhou



Grace Zhou is a high school senior from Vancouver, Canada. She is a visual artist and photographer whose work focuses on encapsulating singular moments in time. Her work is featured or forthcoming in Kalopsia Lit, Gaia Literary Journal, among others. She is also the founder of Curio Cabinet Magazine, a literary and visual arts magazine dedicated to the wonders and oddities of our lives.

Issue I



HaluHalo Journal

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