

Aspirations of Youth

by Chandrasekaran Hema

the sun shining, sand burning, crowd roaring.
your heart pounding, palms sweating, vision blurring.
hands on your wrists hold you down, merciless.
but for an instant, the vice loosens and you run.
desperate and clumsy, a hopeless pursuit.
the hands chase you, they find you.
you feel the grit, taste the dust,
as you are dragged forward. still can't stop

the sun shining, sand burning, crowd roaring.
your heart pounding, palms sweating, vision blurring.
a mosaic of purple over yellow on your skin, no escape.
the sun on your face, wind in your hair.
as your chains loosen, you stand strong.
nothing to lose, everything to gain.
the devil behind, demon in front, terror within.
stride forward, back straight, head high. still won't stop.

Living the Dream

by Lim Yi He

excuse me, sorry to bother you
but have you seen myself? I seem to have
lost her somewhere along the way -
when I was too busy
caught up in my responsibilities
as both a person with opinions and
an obedient daughter.

(I think she's stuck in this place
called someone else's dream)

she's quite tall for her age -
forced to reach for higher branches
when she was still little to get to
the apples that grow only at the top.

(I think she's tired of reaching
at nothing but air all the time)

she doesn't talk very much, you see
so often mistaken for her sister
that you might have just missed her.
you sure you didn't see her?

(I think she's a bit of a loner but
I like it when she smiles)

she isn't very smart in school but
that's okay as she just turned eighteen
age is just a number and somehow
her worth is too.

(I think I'll give up on finding her
everyone's telling me to)

excuse me, sorry to bother you again
but she's not been back for ages and I'm
really worried that she never will.
I haven't seen her anywhere -
somehow I just cannot
find her.

Drop on a Terrace Roof

by Panchami Chandukudlu

A lone drop trickles down the terrace roof
Gathering dirt, soot, dust- an ugly brown
She watches it, her mind amiss
It's dark even as the sun screams above

Her arms are frail, her skin sunken
Dirt in her hair, a stench to her skin
She can't help but liken herself to
The lone drop down the terrace roof

She looks down at her shorts,
At the small stretch of skin
Wrapped tight around brittle bones
And she sees in it a lone drop
An ugly brown on ugly brown

Her mind joins the sun in a screaming symphony
More drops puddle upon her skin
The sun shines brighter and brighter still
And the dark grows and swells stronger still

And as the scream turns into a screech, she can't tell
Where the sound is coming from
But alone the drop is, as is she
Each a silent witness to the other's woes

Look, It's Our Mary Sue

by Toh Ya Wei

but wait, you see,
she was perfect, that's the thing you need to understand
she was intelligent clever brave fearless, and
that she didn't fuss with her hair was a deliberate statement
about the shallow beauty norms that constrain women
(and she still looked better than all the other girls at school)
she did STEM and sports and went against all the stereotypes
our little Mary was perfect, like ever.

but wait, you see,
there are many a thing she wants to do
maybe binge watch an entire series of soap opera whilst spooning down ice cream
or maybe get her heart broken by a boy or two
(but no she can't because then she'd become another typical bimbo just like any other girls, gasp)
so if you are waiting for a conflict or an interesting story you're in for a wait
because our heroine is perfect and won't go against the grain
and oh, she has never chipped a nail, did I mention that?

Child Next Door

By Yu Borong

hey kid,
remember?
the other day,
when you asked
'have you seen me?'

I think I did.

but you see,
child next door,
you are but a stranger
to me, today, for yesterday
you were seven, almost eight.

do I know you?

I see only a kid
lost and hurt,
stuck in a masquerade
living somebody else's dream.

is that why you're looking for yourself?

maybe you don't
have to do this.
good girl, bad boy -
you've grown so strange.

but there's nothing wrong about that.

I can't return you
yourself, the way you
can't return me myself.

because memory makes a person.

but you have
it all even if it's lost in
another time, another place.

another world entirely.

another day, dawn has fallen.
I see you there, I think

where did my neighbours go?

you look strangely
familiar

like somebody from long ago.

in you, there's
a hint of a shadow of –
oh, it's you.

have you found what you were looking for?

I'm sorry, I seem
to have forgotten, the
years gone by. It's my
long, long ago now.

I used to be young and alive, didn't I?

silly me, asking you all this,
I must be getting old already.
just, could you do me a favour?
can I ask that someday, if you see me,
let me know?

A Boat

by Raphael Xujie Yip

a boat sails into a storm
no longer one amongst many,
but one, alone.
with the vast horizon looming,
one voice remains,
prominent but distorted,
reverberating across the empty deck.
yet, it sails on.

a boat sails into a storm
it's hull yellowed with age,
planks creaking under every step.
having passed the test of time,
it's sails flap violently in the wind,
struggling to withstand
the torment from ferocious gales
yet, it sails on.

Faster, Better, Stronger (Flash Fiction)

by Seah Jia'En Gyan

I was Wiseman Orion or, as I would have been called back then, scientist Orion. Sixteen years ago, a group of Wisemen and I came up with a machine able to copy and replicate objects at an incredible speed of up to ten objects per second. It did not matter how large or complex the object was. If it would, it could make a copy of an elephant down to the wrinkles of its skin. And it did not require a design to be inputted as it would scan the object by itself, even the intricacies inside the object. It was like a 3-D printer but more powerful. Its "eyes" were precision lasers that scanned the objects to the finest detail. Its "hands" were guns that shot out material to form the copy. Its "body" was a shiny metal box that contained the intelligence that instructed the machine. With this, we hoped to improve the productivity and economy of other countries by increasing their manufacturing capabilities. We called it the Replicator.

We decided to hand the technology over to the governing body of the Republic Union of Nations, a state of 50 nations that coalesced together as one body 100 years ago. We proposed to ship fully constructed Replicators to several countries and implement them in factories to make their products at a greater rate. It was approved and used in countries around the globe.

However, I found out the truth when I made a trip to the city's outer wall. I sat there as I saw the arrival of several monorails. They were one of our greatest achievements. Fortified glass windows ensured the passengers' safety. Virtual particles kept the monorail levitating and ensured our efficient transport. I pushed up my glasses as I gazed into the distance. This was one of the few times when I did not have to follow the orders of anyone. I felt like a heavy weight was lifted off my shoulders.

Pharmaceutical Journals

by Mackenzie Tan Phei Huey

Enter interphase mitosis and cytokinesis

How well can we sell this cell thesis?

When the purview of pressure punishes publishers, who cannot persevere

When prices are set by Springer, and Elsevier.

Free flow of academia is piracy,

Because knowledge is kept behind a paywall of intellectual property.

Pharmaceutical conglomerates can skew peer reviews,

As vials of unvital "vital" vitamins sold, advertisement propaganda they spew,

Adjourn journals from the newsroom as journalistic integrity isn't in.

Add Ads, can servings of "blank" cure cancer villainous vaccines are sin.

Martin can call it Pyrimethamine or Daraprim,

Hedge funds Prim up hedges of sterling with a trim

By raising the cost to cure HIV 5500 percent overnight

Senseless purchase of patents of cures for cents requires no consent or oversight.

The path to hell is paved with intentions of relieving affliction,

Ill will still kills, painkillers fuel opiate addiction.

For legal pills there is no war on drugs

But states declare war on the poor that are trapped by the chemistry of thugs

Meanwhile, Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus Aureus is back

Viral Triclosan sponsorship will help back a bacterial attack

Antibacterials select for resistant plasmids

No macrophage can face phases of phage altered chromatids

Enlist, expand the list as Colistin cannot persist against hospital hotbeds of pain

Whereas the first to the cure acquires grants and gains

Hippocratic hypocrites are often trained in areas where the common find mundane,

Yet those with brains kill more than those with just membranes.