

Welcome to the 22nd Edition of the Kamena Magazine!

Trumpet fanfare
Greetings and salutations!

We know January can be a rough one for deadlines (it certainly was for us) – but hopefully this new Kamena edition will brighten your day and gently push your winter into springtime.

We have some really beautiful works of art in here, as ever.

We hope you enjoy our submissions this term, from the reflective and nostalgic to the romantic and euphoric.

If you're interested in submitting to future editions, check out our website and our various social medias:

https://kamenamagazine.com

The Editors:
Harriet Curry
Bex Howarth
Ivana Stoyanova
Vance Hatton
Dylan Elks

Logo Design: Magdalena Zakrzewska

Cover Art:
Ivana Stoyanova

Warwick Writing Society
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Instagram: @warwickwritingsoc

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<u>River</u> Naxin Wang

She in the waters Steers the red ship forth Braving winds and rains alike So the fire can birth

He on the night sky In the river of stars Heart of warmth and shining light Oh that sun of ours

Writer's note:

Naxin is an MSc student in Statistics. This piece is roughly to the tune of the Arithmetician/Bu Suan Zi, a Chinese poetry template

Ocean

Thomas Hunt

This is what I saw in my dream.

An old man looked over the broad sea; by his side was a young man. In silence they watched as the sun rose and cast a pink glow over the whole Earth.

'The sun is farther than the sea,' the boy said. 'Perhaps. Though the sea is very broad.' They continued looking until the sky settled into a cheerful blue and the sun was hanging comfortably in the air, separated from its berth in the ocean.

The village where the two men lived began to wake up. To them, the old man and the young man were two loafers. Always eating but not working, was how it was said.

Neither the boy nor the old man saw the point in working. 'If one must work, why not be dead?' The old man would say, and they would nod silently in agreement.

The old man was a hermit who lived in the hills. He kept no company, save the young man, and to him he spoke very little. His hut was small, but he saw the whole forest and cliffs surrounding to be his house, bereft as they were of people, so he never felt cramped. The boy had parents, but as soon as day broke he would dart off. In the night, sometimes his father would come and beat him hard because he did no work.

In the warm days, with the lingering weight of oppressive heat, the old man and the young man would tramp the hills, eating fruit and picking flowers to hold in their hands and enjoy for the briefest of moments. Then, they would let their flowers flit, flit — into the wind. 'The point of a walk is to walk,' the old man would say. 'The point of eating is to eat. The truest pleasure is to do as one wants.'

The young man's heart would swell in silent, kindred agreement. Finally I am not alone, he would think.

So the boy and the old man lived.

Hereupon they were looking at the sea. To avoid the gaze of the insipid villagers the boy and the old man walked across the beach to a quiet cove, where they perched themselves upon a huge rock and listened to the waves as they crashed powerfully below them. The ocean was mighty, and placid.

After a while the boy said to the old man, 'What would you think if I were to push you over this boulder, and unto the rocks down there?'

'Please do, that would be pleasurable.'

'Why?'

'In brief flashes I know happiness, but in all other times, I feel misery, boredom, and pain in the joints. How good it would be to die in a rare moment of happiness like this one.'

They laughed to each other, but they felt the truth of the statement. The young man stopped shouting crazily; now they both were meditative and solemn.

Feeling guilty over having ruined the young man's mood, the old man felt compelled to speak about something which had recently been much on his mind.

'You know,' he began, 'when I was a small child, I heard a story once.' 'Oh?' The young man replied, disinterestedly.

'He was a man who was a stranger to the village.'

This raised the young man's interest. 'What was he like?'

'He was a drunk and an immoral man. After a time he was ran out of the village, onto who-knows-where. But we children liked him, because he would always feed us sweets. He was constantly brawling and thieving, yet with us a glaze would come over his eyes and he would be like a boy, like us. And we would jump around him and use him like a plaything.'

They both laughed at the spectacle in their minds. Then the old man continued.

'But one time he said he had something to say to me, and his face was all serious. So we strolled well into the forest. After a time he took me on his shoulders because I was feeling tired, short as a child's legs are... and we eventually got to a tranquil grove.

And there, as soon as we were seated, he wept like a child. He said it was there, in that very grove, that his mother bore him, and now here in the village, having travelled far and abroad, he was forgotten and treated like a stranger. He had no home. And, in so many words, he told me the hardships of his life and of life itself. And even at that age I understood him. I was very young and I've forgotten everything he said, but after he had finished speaking I thought to myself how hard it was to live. I said this to him, and with tears in his eyes he agreed.

At that time, I was enamoured of the ocean, as I am now and I will be to my dying breath. And I told him my one wish, my one hope for a palliative; I told him how I wished to travel across the ocean and land upon the land on the other side.

And he started to laugh, slowly and happily, and said to me: "My boy. That is a very hard wish, for the ocean is very broad... but let me tell you something." "Yes?" I say.

"I have crossed it." He says. I asked him what it was like. And he just laughed a slow, contented laugh and said I would have to find out for myself. But he said one thing, one tiny thread for me to cling to — "

The old man tailed off at the end of his long soliloquy.

The young man, eagerly listening (for he, too, dreamed of crossing the sea) and asked him what the traveller had said.

'I can't remember. Over my life I have forgotten many times my wish to cross the ocean, and spent many days in hellish drudgery, completely ignorant of what makes life worth living. And somewhere in the wash of those times of opaque, blinding fog, I have forgotten what he had said. Lately, seeing as I have few days to live, I have been trying to remember.'

They both sat in silent disappointment. The day slowly sank, and the night shadows fell over the rocks. The pink sunset was mirrored once more in the afternoon, yet now it was the East which harboured the inky black of the approaching nighttime. After a time of the two men sitting and listening to the floating wind, the white shimmer of the stars began to appear.

'After I have crossed the ocean, I should like to go to the stars,' the young man said joking. The old man laughed compassionately, but in his heart he felt the deep, cruel pang which sounded in the lower notes of the boy's voice; the sound of grief.

All the old man could say was: 'you may indeed one day cross the ocean. And then, when that day comes, you must come back and tell me what's there.' But his voice trailed off; 'Although the ocean, it stretches so very far...'

'Farther than the sun,' the boy echoed.

Finally the old man said, 'I will try to remember what the traveller said, about life across the ocean.'

After a time they both went home to bed. When the young man arrived, his father was waiting and he received a savage beating. In his heart the old man understood that this had happened, and he wept and wept for humanity and the cruelty of life.

And thus he tried to wrack his brain, and tossed in bed in fits of rage, screaming mentally to himself, 'Remember! Remember!'

The next day the boy was not his usual self. With his head down he simply floated about the village, he did not walk; it was as though his inner life had abandoned him.

The old man heard this from a passing woodcutter, who happened to be one of his few acquaintances. And in his frenzy, he went down to the village, which was something he never did. And there he took the boy away and once they were quiet, alone, and safe from the putrid bigotry of the villagers, the old man wept and his tears moistened the dirt at their feet. And the boy, too, wept — and at this the old man smiled his happiest smile and clapped and began to

laugh. 'Man always retains the spark of life, no matter what,' he said, and they laughed together through their tears.

But as they talked and hiked through the serene hills around the village, and gazed upon the listless violet buds, and listened to the songs of the birds, a dark pallor once more came over the young man, and the old man could offer no condolence. They simply walked and listened to the soughing of the leaves.

That night the old man knew he had to remember. He did not get into bed but sat up, dull and haggard. He ate nothing and drank nothing. He no longer tossed or screamed mentally, but sat quietly with dull concentration. He had to remember, for his whole life had been a waste. Always the spark of life had leapt in his breast, and he knew it grew within others, too — even the insipid people of the village. But he never raised a finger to act. He dreamt but never knew how to break free from his fetters. But now, with death's cold hand approaching and his life fading, he would act. And he would remember... so were his thoughts for several hours. But after a while his thoughts began to drift, on the boy, on the look that the boy had had on his face. And his own panic and helplessness, and the old man felt a dark feeling of inevitably. And a calm came over the old man and he forgot what it was he was supposed to have remembered. And he leaned back and fell into a deep slumber.

In the morning, he awoke in a wild frenzy. He was so joyous that he ran all the way to where the cliff met the sea and screamed at the top of his lungs of his love for life. For somewhere in his sleep, he had remembered.

And feeling like a young man again, he ran down to the village to tell the boy what it was he had remembered. He saw by the sun's place in the sky that it was far earlier than he usually awoke. Being early morning, the light had only just begun to pierce the firmament. The warm purple emanating from the sun danced forth, punctuated by deranged streaks of crimson. What a glorious thing is life!

He ran straight into the boy's house, but found him not inside. He barged right back out again, awakening the family to shouts as he went. He ran throughout the village, calling like a madman. After a few minutes the whole village was awake, but they were so perplexed by the sight of the old man that they were silent. After a while a kindly fisherman with a broad, amiable smile came up to the old man and spoke to him. The fisherman seemed to know what had happened, and seemed to understand its importance, for he harboured no anger.

'You know, my boat is missing,' the fisherman said.

In a wild ecstasy, the old man tore to the beach, with the whole village following and murmuring. And there, with the people behind him, the brooding cliffs on either side, the white caps tossing forth like mermaids, the wind blowing triumphantly, and the sun jostling its way into the sky... The old man saw the white of a sail; far, far into the distance.

Writers note:

I am 21 years old, and I was a Warwick undergraduate student although I have recently left.

My Room Thomas Hunt

Here, it's me in my lonesome room. Grey and black flows. The world rushes outside my window. A five-lane highway; Will life stop? Will the suffering end? Here I am, I watch everything with a mug of coffee in my hand. Grey and black flows. I swirl the murky black then take a lukewarm sip; Outside, millions die, billions live. I watch everything.

One day, maybe, I'll step outside — Maybe I'll leave this room. Grey and black flows. The mould creeps in from the corners. The shower has inexplicable black stains. The grey walls have marks from the rainwater. Here I am, in my murky lukewarm room. I watch the world. Some are happy, some cry. What am I? Will this go on forever? Will I leave? Is it safe to leave? Grey and black

flows.

<u>Binaries</u>

SC

i really did enjoy the time we spent together. i know you dont care and that i felt safe, strangely, wrapped in your arms, sheltered by your stupid electric blanket that i still find fucking cool.

your sweet nothings, an open mouth, traced on my face.
my head, nesting on your shoulders, cradled like two those
ornamental plates in their stands. do you actually understand what it means?

You mentioned twins. i imagined 'You Are Jeff', Siken. you speak of some real twins i didn't know of, or cared about. i quess i'm one of those twins now:

You reveal your truths. I reveal my lies. A/S/L I love you. at least for the night? Lying, next to each other when we shouldn't be, twins, waiting, to devour and be devoured

i savoured You. You didn't even care. Let me finish please. Let me finish You.

Writer's note:

After being ghosted by someone whom I felt safe sharing intimacies with, I wanted to explore sexuality and the conflicting binaries I associate with that person. To be celebrated but also despised, deceived whilst also being the deceiver, my delusions and your reality. Many of the elements mentioned allude to things either I enjoy, he enjoyed, or we enjoyed - or seemed to enjoy.

Editor's note:

Font chosen as per the author's request.

A Mental Anthology

George Somper

Each Night soldier and captain came calling came calling They shoved and they stabbed from dusk until morning.

And then from heaven and earth I was born between sand My workplace between the sky and land.

But As I sit and lie in wait for the feeling that I hate
I cannot help but feel disgust, for the thing I often lust...

The Brown and the Blue, the Hill and the Green

"For there is a place so fair I've seen"...

: Where I crawl back under empty days, fastened on repeat

A familiar room and my familiar seat.

Last night I spoke to God but he failed to listen- Now I'm stuck in "LIMBO LAND".

Oh but look there's a passer-by! His heart unburdened, me on the other hand:

My face is grey my limbs are soft

My eyes are lined with grief

And although all events will decay

Fear will always remain my commander-in-chief.

Writer's note:

George is a first year PAIS student who's been writing poetry for a few years. They have just started *A Mental Anthology* about anxiety and the distinct feeling of displacement it causes, like you're neither here nor there at any point in the day. It also concerns itself with self-criticism, and a desire for escapism through comparison which only leads to more isolating experiences.

The 27th of December

A. Stafford

There's this Tumblr poem that I think about — the one about the painted-over stars in the Air BnB and how we don't need poems anymore.

And when I think about it, I can't help but remember walking through Nottingham on the 27th of December; it was cold and wet and I was struggling with three bags.

I passed by a homeless man under the McDonald's Golden Arches, mostly covered in a Christmas blanket.

And everyone else passed by him too.

Writer's Note:

Should I be doing this in first or third person? Either way, the writing is kind of on the wall with this poem.

<u>Childhood</u> Raju Das

<u>Immersion</u>



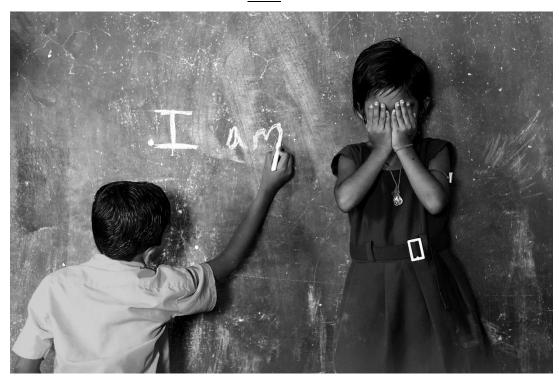
Strain +



The Eyes



<u>I Am</u>



Writer's note:

One of the strangest and beautiful chapters of life is childhood. Childhood takes different forms in different social and economic situations. Sometimes he laughs and plays, sometimes he looks for money to run his family. In the development of the society, child laborers are seen everywhere from the streets to the masnads. God's best gift, these children are in crisis today. They should not be deprived of this best moment. Life is a child's play to a mother, even in a life full of responsibilities. In many nomadic lives children also become nomads, all desires die. Although there is a difference between boys and girls in society, in some cases it still exists. Girls can do everything, it's not a dream now, it's true. Children are still not safe in the sex village. Society does not stand by them effortlessly. Dreams and hopes are full in the eyes of a child. With a little encouragement they can do everything, even win the sky.

All At Once Ing How Law

You are there at every turn,

Taking my mind to places I never knew.

Reminding me always,

That my heart will never return.

You are there in every thought.

Every memory, fading into the backdrop.

Omnipresent in every feeling,

And the dreams of my most impossible desires.

You exist, even in my words.

Every line, every space, every page;

Written by the hand that once held yours.

You are everywhere all at once.

But you are never beside me.

A Summer's Kiss Ing How Law

I dream of twinkling lights upon your tender face

From a warm summer's day or rainwater's trace

Like kissing yellow sun rays, they dazzle and daze

Enfolding pure beauty, never escaping my gaze

With gentle hands, yearning and caressing

Soft cheeks in warm hands... kindred souls coalescing

My raw and pounding heart rid of all its cloaks and guises

Exposed by crystalline reflections cocooned within liquescent eyes

Your trembling heart now entrusted to mine

Nestled in my hands, surrendered as our fates entwine

Rhythmic flows of sanguine streams passing patiently an anxious heart

Synchronizing in space and time, with mine, merely inches apart

Scarlet lips warmed by deep shared breaths

Every second of waiting, like little deaths

And no ambrosia can ever wish to compare

To those sweet rose petals, should I dare

With all my affection, all my heart and all my care

Now and forever, between us... not even air

Writer's note:

I'm Ing How Law, a master's student studying Behavioural and Economic Sciences. Both poems were inspired by the same person. Unfortunately.

Depth Reading

Albert Campling

"Depth reading?"

The deepstar pulsed below. It rattled the thin glass of her head and buzzed in the copper of her limbs like static or pins and needles or phantom pain. A limb tapped on the gauge of the bathysphere. "Eight and a quarter miles." The pulse continued. It promised things, even as she worked to ignore it. It promised to cancel out the noise, meet positive waves with negatives, to reduce all to silence, and understanding, and peace.

All she had to do was let it fill her, just for a moment.

She focused the cracking and popping of the brass shell. Out of the little quartz porthole, eight inches wide and two foot thick, the pressing dark of the astra pushed and pulsed and sang. There were tides down here, below where the stars were familiar. Where the deepstar sat, heavy, languid, far too real. Darker than the nothing all around.

They had talked, for a while, but the words had begun to feel heavy, and they had stopped.

"Depth reading?"

Tap, tap, tap on the gauge. "Eight and a half miles."

The long chain rattled and hummed. Eight and a half miles above was the ship, expectant. Heavy. The air was heavy with meaning. If she could just... bring some back with her. Cut it out of the astra. Give them that little piece of meaning to fit into their puzzle, just like they wanted. Maybe... if she just listened... they wouldn't need the instruments, or the collection vials, or the... "Depth reading?"

A hand gripping the edge of the gauge until it hurt. "Eight and three-quarter miles." Like clockwork.

"We're deep now."

"Yeah," she said. "Deep now."

"Not many make it this deep."

Plenty do, she thought. Plenty fall into the sky below. The astra takes its due. "Yeah," she said. "Be a story, when we get back."

Tap, tap, tapping. "I'll buy you a drink," he said. "I'll buy us all drinks."

"Not if I buy them first," she said. The words were wrong, stumbling, numb, sluggish under pressure like the astra outside.

"There won't be anything out there," he said. A mandible clicked. "Fish avoid deepstars. Even the nastier ones."

She knew. They both knew.

"Yeah," she said again.

The bathyscope groaned. They watched the scene that would come next. The sphere crumpling like a paper lantern. Bodies trapped in amber by the sudden embrace of the brass, the metal pressed close like wet clay.

It did not happen.

"Depth reading?"

"Nine and a quarter miles," she said.

Clicking, like something wandering along the edge of the hull.

"What happens when we die?"

"We stop," she said. "The living weep, and move on. Our story gets mistold." The deepstar's pulse formed harmonies with her words. She shuddered and tried not to think of how the rattling of her limbs formed a duet with the creaking all around.

"Been wondering, is all," he said, suddenly moving to peer out the little porthole. If he saw anything it did not provide answers because he stood and looked at her straight for the first time since they had passed four miles and the distant buzz grew heavier than their thoughts.

"What," she asked, feeling a fluttering of panic.

"They've got to be looking for it," he said.

"What?"

"The answer."

"To what?"

"You know." Chitin tapped on quartz. "The solution to life."

She snorted, the sound thick and hazy. "No."

"Really?"

"If they're looking for it they won't find it down here," she said, head buzzing. "Just a strange, old star."

The chain lurched. The astra pressed down. The little quartz window, eight inches in diameter and two foot thick, looked out onto the pressing weight of nothing in particular.

"Gotta be somewhere."

A pause. Empty breath. Like drowning.

"Depth reading?"

Tap, tap, tap on the gauge. Vibrations running up her arm. "Ten miles."

"Clean," he said. "Ten miles and no problems. Hm?"

"Ten miles and no problems at all." Tap, tap, tap on the gauge.

Fingers tugging at mandibles. "You think that thing's accurate? The pressure might be higher around the deepstar. We might be-nine and a bit. You know?"

"Just a gauge," she said faintly. "They'll have proper measurements from the length of the chain. On the boat. They'll know on the boat."

"But do you think it's higher?"

"Around the..." Lights flashed and the glass bulb of her head rang. It was-

She slammed her fist down on the gauge hard enough to dent her metal, grasped hold of it. The pain wasn't numbness. The pain was irreal. "Don't-" a hand grabbing at her shoulder, pressing down, smooth on smooth, hard on hard. Chitin and copper. "Don't listen," he said. "You're not listening. The voices aren't as strong as you, not nearly. Listen to me, I- we gotta get a drink after this, right? Not even- I d- I don't drink, I'll drink for us, for the..." She stared desperately into his compound eyes as they grew distant, as he drew himself up and stared at a point on the hull. A point she knew. Knew

what was on the other side. His voice was slow and unthinking, a sleepwalker's.

"Why are we down here?"

Saliva dribbled through his slacking mandibles.

Deepstar singing.

Almost... coherent, now.

She went to hit him but her fist lost meaning, splayed into fingers, thin copper

tissues, a drifting mass of inanimate tissue letting itself be taken by gravity. What was it? In front of her? What was she? Self was gone, and so were questions. The mass before her began to fall backwards. It was... something. It had been something. It was nothing.

A sound happened. A crunching sound. Like something breaking that shouldn't break. A wet sound. A meat sound. But it was okay. It was all a part of the chorus. The song. The sound. The deepstar thrum. Only it wasn't a deepstar.

It was, and everything else wasn't.

The thin copper plates of her throat buzzed and made familiar not-words. They had been an answer to a question that had not been asked, but it didn't matter because it had been the wrong question even when questions still existed.

It didn't matter how deep they were.

A popping, then a tinkling sound. Like crystal rain. A sound that meant nothing terrible.

The bathysphere went down. The measuring instruments sat, inert. The important gasses went into the sampling tubes but the stoppers which had been so carefully engineered to stand against the internal pressure did not close and the gasses slipped back out again. The irises over the delicate silvernitrate plates did not click open to capture their views of the depths and sat, unused, collecting only a greying deterioration as meaningless light seeped into them. The metres and mercury thermometers and complex measuring devices told their numbers to nobody, and their patterns went slipping through time with nothing to say they had been there at all.

On the floor and all over the thing of the floor lay little shards of broken glass, glinting in the oil lamp like stardust.

The depth gauge sat, unread, a copper hand tightened over it in rigor mortis. Every now and then, a single finger tapped on the glass.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The deepstar was singing.

From Leda (I) Junes Chung

Summer is the promise of difference and repetition. Walk with me barefoot to the Gardens of Eden, and there, with innocence, I slept at the foot of the primal vera copula; there, the burning sweetness of the first forbidden knowledge. The genesis of a new, brewing consciousness, something people call bravery.

Laying down, I fell in love with muted tone. I wrapped around me a veil of feigned night, of nine shorthand ciphers to rival even Torquemada; of waking intoxication, of past and distant languages. All to spy from the edge of a door that was not mine, an adder. I whispered to it, 'I want to be planted here forevermore.'

Ecstasy is located on the ridge of fingertips, those breathless, dizzying cliff edges. The sea caresses the calloused fronts, and disseminates the sour perfume of August.

Writer's note:

Author details: Final year law student with a pen and a dream. This poem is a short excerpt from a much longer journal entry 'From Leda' documenting August 2023. I am partly inspired by Genesis (of course) and Une Saison en Enfer. Rimbaud's mother, after reading it and not understanding, asked him: "What did you want to say?" and he replied: "I wanted to say what it said, literally and in all the senses."

New Year's Resolutions for 2024

By Izzy Shackleton

In:

- Being Happy
- Writing More
- Writing Less
- Learning how to sew
- Learning how to read
- Learning how to write
- Transexuallism
- Kissing more women
- Kissing women morely
- Entire Self-Reinvention
- The creation of new stars (sky notwithstanding)
- Taking photos (why have a phone)
- Taking screenshots (press the left eye and earlobe at the same time)
- Murder
- Manslaughter
- Slaughtered men
- Slutty men
- Revolvers in Under-Arm Holsters
- Cigarettes sans Nicotine
- Slit Dresses (Made Cowgirl)
- Cowgirl hats (Made Goth)
- Yeeing and Hawing
- Never letting go

Out:

- Self-destruction
- My usual bullshit
- Learning to knit
- Learning to read
- Learning to write
- Writing More
- Writing Less
- Wasting a Doctor's Time
- Severe Depression
- Understudies
- Love
- Underwire Bras
- Throwing myself against the wall and seeing what sticks
- Eating Soap
- Chemicals
- The Cold
- Snow
- Reaping what I Sow (let it die)
- Taking Breaks
- Taking Photos
- Taking Selfies
- Respiration
- Regret

• Prayer

Writer's Note

Happy 2024, folks.

Izzy is a Linguistics with Japanese finalist, is getting a book published this year, and writes perhaps too much poetry.

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