

ISSUE 4 | OCTOBER 2023

CHINCHILLA LIT



FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

We can't believe it's been over a year since we created *CHINCHILLA LIT* and almost a year since we published our first issue. In the past few months, we've welcomed many changes—our earthy color palette has been swapped for bright blues and pinks, our submissions have permanently opened, and we've been introduced to a whole new host of imaginative, electric young writers without whom Issue 04 would not be possible. Where Dianna Morales' "driving all night" glows with muted nostalgia, TJ Penman finds spirituality in small moments in "gas station devotional." As our little magazine has grown, each piece we publish continues to fulfill our core mission of spreading warmth through writing.

At its heart, Issue 04 is a product of editors, readers, and writers who have remained dedicated to honoring the work of creative youth and celebrating the written word. We would like to thank our staff editors for working hard to read all of your submissions, as well as our graphics editor Lauren, who created this beautiful issue. And you, the readers, who have made *CHINCHILLA LIT* worth it. Whether you stumbled down an internet avenue and onto our magazine or have followed our journey since day one, know that you endlessly inspire us as we dream new narratives and dare to share our work with the world. As autumn sinks in, we hope you can curl up with a cup of tea and let our writers' words speak for themselves.

Warmly,

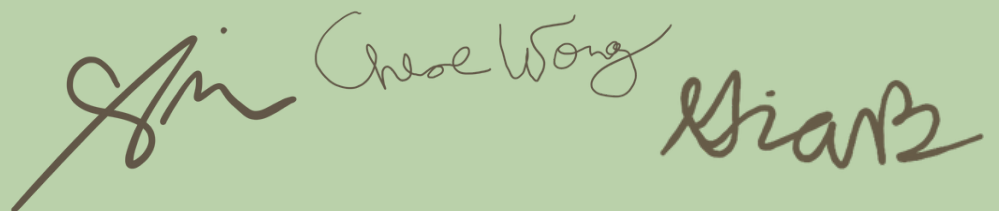
The block contains three handwritten signatures in black ink. From left to right: a stylized signature that appears to be 'Jim', a signature that reads 'Chloe Wong', and a signature that reads 'Diana B'.

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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Zathan is a senior in high school and is an artist who specializes in both traditional realism and digital media. His artwork can be seen in various places, such as Alias Magazine and TeenInk, and he has contributed art pieces to writers at Brookedge Academy.

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Midsummer Drawl

1

by Mikhail Beggs

Air drowned in melted honey, I'm told
I'll soon melt with it. Clouds thicken

From sayings, erupting into memories
Of milkweed mirroring the sky. Softly

Caressing cloud slivers, green from falling.
Ground raw, summer rain dotting the day

In watercolor. Battering, thick as honey.
Milkweed whispering softer, etching

Crowds into the sky. Sun sauntering deeper
Into haze, evening rolling into jewel-toned

Meadows. Gently singing, corners perfumed
With crickets chirping. Lights shut out, fireflies

Blinking in a crawling hurry. Let me only
Wonder if I'm on the ground or with it.

Mikhail Beggs (he/him) is a new writer and high school student in California's Bay Area. In addition to poetry, he loves acting, physical chemistry, and the strange phenomena of physics. You can find him @mikhailbeggs

The Mortician

3

by Acadia Phillips

Content Warning: Death

Despite clamoring up tree trunks,
gravity keeps intruding
into a life he does not own

for the sake of a cycle, neverending,
a blaring train plowing towards the dreaded finality
of a curated gallery of open caskets,

faded grins reclaimed by the finest,
because they know how to extract art from a corpse-
sand from its broken hourglass husk

and can paint each wilting brown face
into something striking
(like a drizzle of wildfire smoke or

a bitter pitter patter of raindrops
on to a cracked windshield)
while still keeping their eyes set on the soaking earth
to which their art will return,
interned by a semblance of yellow handled shovels, flaky roses,
and a final dumping of dirt by crane,
gussied up to be the guest of honor at a feast
for unholy worms and their skeleton neighbors,
the first course beginning with fingernails still painted.

Acadia Phillips (she/her) is a 17-year-old creative from Tennessee. She has had pieces honored by Scholastic Art and Writing and the Southern Literature Alliance, along with being published in the literary magazine she cofounded, The Empty Inkwell Review, where she serves as the Prose Executive Editor. She is the founder and president of her school's creative writing club and is a recent attendee of Kenyon Review Young Writers Workshop. When she isn't writing you can find Acadia working at the art museum or practicing at the rock climbing gym!



Fermenting

6

by Landon Wittmer

So you have dragged me back to cold linoleum
While chamomile kettles the stovetop
And apple-vapor thickens the air,
Tapers to the mouth of a goose,
And fixes these eyes on its barbed tongue.
So you have pinned me to kitchen grid
And stuffed me in its cracks,
For tears distill me; vision diminishes;
Compost composes the wine-vat
And rats sink in the cellar, waft
On rot-winds, pour as from an urn
Vinegar from my eyes.
The tea yells—
You who do not know the scent of aging tile
Sip rose-water and
Cache me in a cask.

The Last Encounter With a Consumer

by Landon Wittmer

I have watched the wind drop between us,
Proffered a phrase for its setting, and sought
A mossed cave wall on which to graph
The funeral path of our shared forgetting.
You await the phrase, the rhyme,
Some stanza to dose you with summertime;
Store salt water in remembrance of me,
And toast this social corpse of prosody.
I am sealed in a sonnet; packaged, labeled,
Eaten in the margins of a college-ruled fable—
For you, I say, the sacraments,
Burying the obelisk of a silent moment.
But you considered a man for his skin
And slated your thirst with a mannequin.

Landon Wittmer is an emerging writer from Grand Rapids, Michigan, whose poetry parses the barriers between individuals in relationships. His work can be found in Mag 20/20 and The Periwinkle Pelican.

driving all night

8

by Dianna Morales

It's been a year. You have a job. I have one too. You're office work. I work with kids. Neither our dreams. Do you love him? I'm not in love. I used to be. Maybe with you. But not like that. How's your father? Still live with him? And your mother? She happier? I've left the state. Left for concerts. Saw some with friends. Saw some alone. I ate good food. I had a blast. I still miss you. Do you write now? Do you have time? I'm so busy. Can barely breathe. Can sometimes sleep. There's nothing left. I still cook lots. Nothing for you. Eat your veggies. Bake your cookies. We never baked. You bake with him. Got a kitten. She's a sweetheart. She would like you. Maybe him more. Are you still sad? I'm sad all day. Every night too. Do you feel bad? Sometimes I do. Any new shows? Go see movies? I still miss you. Wish I didn't. Do you miss me? I'm older now. I don't feel it. I know I am. Just like you are. I've made more friends. Kids make me things. Co-worker lunch. Never did those. Go out for food. Miss my roommate? She's my best friend. Love loving her. You couldn't cheat. I always knew. Make you laugh hard. Collapse in tears. Happier times. How's your

island? Still a trainer? I'm so sorry. You know what for. Are you sorry? Do you feel guilt? How's therapy? Does she know me? Is that harder? I still miss you. You remember? I'd hug you tight. Never let go. But then I would. You did it first. Would you feel cold? I don't want to. I still do though. Do you miss me? Do you love him? Do you know me? My heart is yours. Was yours mine too?

Get home safely.

Text me when you do.

Dianna Morales is a queer Mexican-American writer currently working at a non-profit that focuses on inspiring social change and creativity in young people. Dianna's work has been published in The Field Guide Magazine, Dream Glow Magazine, and The Rhizomatic Revolution Review. Dianna currently resides in Austin, Texas, and is also very fond of cats.



alternate names for gay girls

11

by Ariel Wu

after Danez Smith

1. burnt blueberries exploding on grass
2. pink confessionals made out of guts
3. customers denied service
4. lana del rey songs about cinnamon teeth
5. grilled rainbows
6. national state of emergency
7. butterflies grained & seared in the backseat
8. ungrown hands but not their wings
9. anemones un-snowed
10. bone-purple nightingales dying in plastic
11. evidence of rancidness in the genealogy
12. antiheroine of the scripture for lactation
13. apple cores which are also violets
14. the wall that speaks to walk

Hamlet

12

by Ariel Wu

%

remember, neither of us can escape
when the window thaws and
the sparrow splatters in,
thrashing devil-pink.

%

the day you were leaving, i cried
into your sodden sonnets. suddenly
we are both worshippers of
blank pages, scarlet & gobble-eyed
in the wreck of my mowed lawn. i didn't
know if you were the entrance to my blood or
the exit from a moon of crepuscular wounds,
but i know now that you are neither, glazed
& slipping into a shut-down sun, hands spearheaded
in the frame of your chest.

%

we are weighing down the bridge, which is wobbly
and drizzles grass-red. with the womb of my teeth
in your hand, the slit figs of your nails crumble
in deluge. the shrapnel of hair like a pregnant
moon undelivered. the heat makes our tongues wilt
so that we don't disgorge that which wriggles in
the tip of your pointe shoes. tethering ourselves
to the banister, we emboss the water
underneath into our skinlessness as if
we won't sag in its weeded fringes like
caramel in corrosion. we've always had
trouble with water, failing to tell wind from
skin, sugar from thirst. sea foam is a bullet
in your pigtail, rippling rut to color
your vertebrae. when the cirrus reddens, i'm
the one that undulates.

Ariel Wu (she/they) is a high school junior hailing from Shanghai, China. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in SOLEIL, Humans Of, and PVLSE. She is an alumna of the Iowa Young Writers Studio and the Kenyon Young Writers Workshop. Her poem "persephone" won the first prize in the 2023 PVLSE Summer Writing Competition. When she is not writing about the quandaries of girlhood and over-analyzing classic literature, she can be found playing the viola for the Shanghai City Youth Orchestra, playing the piano, and dancing.

FIRE IN THE HOUSE

14

by Sydney Heintz

The air is as thick as smelted iron. Grass a yellow rug to feast on. There has never been a season so ridden with carcasses – sunflowers', the two-year-old dog's, the Mexican kid's who lasted a month in your class – and so populated with smoke. Ghosts of clouds are drawn in the pond at the foot of your house. Roads lead to steaming corn fields. You go to a wedding after a funeral. The entrance of the church is like the jawbone of some great reptile. This is not the desert. This is where shadows melt into furniture and mother's cross clings to your swollen neck like a child. You don't wish for rain because then you'll know you are dead.

Meanwhile, the tide creeps on, hissing steadily down your throat, dilating your esophagus, swelling your stomach, burning your intestines. Spitting fire is out of the question; all you would puke up is muck. Still, you glance at the brown spot in the sky from time to time, hoping for an

Ungraspable God, a Mad Creator, and are greeted with silence, a field of shrinking fruit, occasion for weak light.

Sydney Heintz is a freshman at the University of Cambridge. She is an alumna of the Iowa Young Writers' Studio and has been published or is forthcoming in The Write the World Review, Paper Lanterns, The Alcott Youth Magazine, and Parallax Online. Though originally from New York, she has been living in the Geneva region of Switzerland her entire life, where she reads, paints, and practices Bach.

gas station devotional

16

by TJ Penman

and God said “put religion in the Shelby car wash”
between the soap suds and the place where you insert your loose change
in the eyes of the man in the army folding chair
sitting outside of the 7/11 at 9am on a Sunday
in the heart of that boy trying to purchase an item
illegally from the hemp shop on Main Street
in the civilization that appears far from normal when you turn it upside down
but was made normal through its own stubborn will
to invent convention through modernity, pre-packaged BLTs
this belongs to the believers and the faithless alike
because who would make something as ugly as a town
without a purpose to put the promise of something better in the afterlife
the concrete jungle is just whispers from the messenger
smoke and ash, they lit the steeple on fire again!
ask your nearest Target employee where Jesus is hiding
in between the yogurt and the cream cheese on aisle seven
no worries, if not
you can find Him in the parking lot behind the raccoon
decaying flies, restless faces
“come again later!”

TJ Penman is a current undergrad student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is an alumni of both the Iowa Young Writers' Studio and the Shared Worlds Program. You can find her writing both idiosyncratic poetry and prose. Her favorite cheese is Trader Joe's 1000 day old gouda (if you were wondering).