

# TUXEDO

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ART COVER BY RENEE MARIE / BILINGUAL POETRY BY LAS PRIMAS  
ECOVERSE POETRY

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# TUXEDO

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# From the Editors

"Have you ever pondered the significance of a small school newspaper like *Tuxedo*? While it's a question that may not always be voiced, it's one that continually echoes in my mind as we strive to enhance each edition. Why is it crucial to engage students in the editorial production process? And what role does this hold in the realm of AI? The answer, I believe, lies in the profound essence of writing and literary creation, extending far beyond mere words on a page. These endeavors are communal journeys that resonate through our bodies; poetry serves as a form of technology linking us to our ancestors and our communities.

Within this edition, you'll discover a mosaic of creative voices shaping our collective imagination. Through graphic representations and bilingual explorations, we invite readers to immerse themselves in the meticulous craftsmanship of our students. We hope you find inspiration and connection within these pages.

*Claudia  
Morales*

FACULTY ADVISER

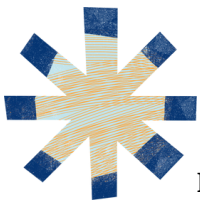


*Why is it crucial to  
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# POETRY

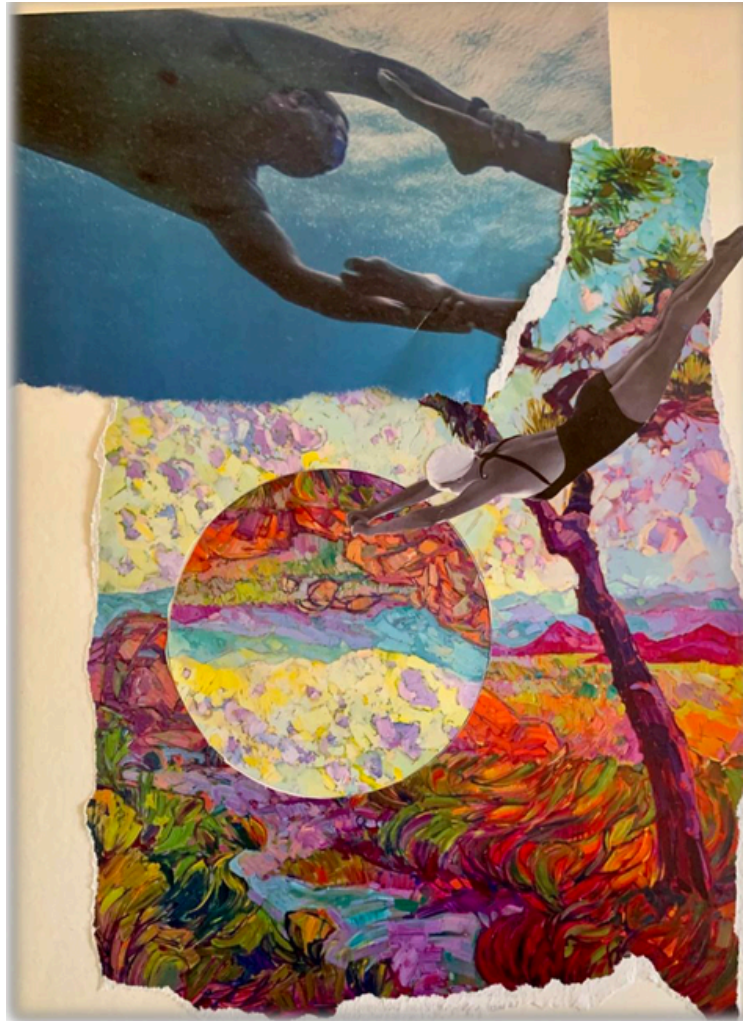
*“One need not be a chamber—to be haunted—  
One need not be a House—  
The Brain—has Corridors surpassing  
Material Place—”*

*Emily Dickinson*




## If the World Will Hold Me

The world is full (of dazzling color) so I dive in, wondering (slightly)  
If the world will hold me  
Or pull me down and drown me  
I dive in, wondering (slightly)  
If the dazzling color disguises a threat Like red touching black safe  
For Jack, red touching yellow kills a fellow  
If the dazzling color disguises a threat  
I will never know  
Because as I dive in  
Part of me (the part of me that holds me back) won't let me go (in the deep end)  
I will never know  
If the world will hold me  
Like red touching black safe  
Because as I dive in  
Part of the world turns upside down  
If the world will hold me  
The whole world can turn upside down  
And part of me (the part of me that holds me back) can let me go (in the deep end) The world is full (of dazzling color) so I won't drown



*Lisa D. Hinz*



stranded in situationship land  
it's really quite silly, looking back  
'cause the way girls talk, men lack  
an understanding of the intertwining web  
passing in and out of every girls head  
what i mean to say  
–in a simpler way–  
is us girls all know one another  
so he wasn't getting away with a secret sleepover  
secrets joined us at an intimate get together at a house i  
had been to, well, never  
where girls with cherry stained lips squealed as their wine  
glasses dribbled  
gossip until it made our feet shuffle and move i didn't  
expect it to leave such a deep groove  
that same morning he had texted saying he was running  
late the gossip explained how he was rushing out her  
front gate that same day i lay my head upon his beating  
chest  
sensing nothing in him but a man of earnest  
this girl, with the front gate, her heart sunk through her  
eyes feeling more for me, i think, as she describes  
how they met at his job, same as i  
he was fixing her car, how could she deny  
when he asked for her number, so from there on it went  
with him knowing he was less than a mile from where i  
slept  
his excuse, which i so foolishly believed  
was he was merely preparing for me to leave  
nevertheless, i forgave his salty tears  
yet i was not spared my fears  
each time after, when he arrived late  
i questioned whether he had another date  
i allowed him again–and again near to my soul  
until realizing situationships are like waking up on  
christmas morning to a stocking stuffed with, coal



*Erika Anderson*





## Mis Dos Lenguas

I struggle with conveying in my  
thoughts and emotions

*Se me traba la lengua con palabras que  
no puedo decir*

I feel as though I am outside looking  
in.

*Puedo estar en un cuarto de gente y  
nadie me entiende*

it feels like being held back by my  
true self

*se siente retenido por mi verdadero yo*



*Las Primas*



## Upside Down in Chesapeake Bay



The poet-artist-empath ODs on tragic events / murmurs, “what’s next” / her heart’s brain stays ready / connecting cause and consequence dots penciled by the proof of past deeds / predictive analysis / hurt people hurt people and planets / some receive thoughts and prayers / plead as if they believed some damage could be reversed / make the dead come back alive and well / bring them right back here where we still need them / Mother Earth was never ours / never our victim / she waits for no confession, no apology, no promise of change / when The Francis Scott Key bridge took a fatal blow / the 985 foot-long cargo vessel, named Dali, decommissioned his steel / demolished his pillars and workers’ families / workers who filled potholes one minute fell landing upside down / some still in their trucks / screaming thoughts and prayers on the way down / hopeful prayers are innumerable, world-wide dots mixed-in / someone cannot bear to imagine their Amazon package being on that very barge / we begin to connect the dots / yes, it was on that barge! / don’t say those workers drowned just doing their jobs! / say there will be accountability / as if it can even be calculated / say there will be someone to fix every ripple effect up and downstream / Patapsco River’s ecosystem will hemorrhage and vomit-up more and more and more humanmade stuff / leeching a toxic sludge / deformed and traumatized schools of aquatic families, unhoused, are cut-off from customary supply-chains / the fights for survival go viral / eco terrorism turns everything upside down with no left or right limit / no ceiling / no floor / the vessel’s Black Box will undergo forensics / what’s next? / we’re on borrowed time / living our insatiable dreams / a demand-story we cannot bear to admit/ I suppose some must die / they never say the inevitable part out loud / barge of gratification to nowhere

*Renee Marie*



Before

Before I arrived here, I was nowhere and everywhere.  
Not here or there, or this or that, I was nothing.  
Not a thought or a whisper, a success or a failure, I was free. Floating  
and still.  
Black nothing filled with silence.  
Not warm or cold and yet still perfect.  
I could have stayed an eternity.  
I could hear something calling out to me.  
It was distant at first, I could almost ignore it. Their voice pierced  
through the empty.  
I followed it slowly floating down to my body.

Existence

It's not something we choose  
Rather something we are forced into  
Our environments and families given at random Our circumstances  
decided at birth  
Shaping our desires and beliefs  
Yet we are left with the illusion of choice A subtle torment in life  
Mocking the futility of resistance  
Stuck in a cycle destined to be repeated  
A relentless pattern and a silent reminder That endings and begins are  
one in the same When one lifetime ends  
Another begins in its place

After

Not here or there, or this or that  
Back to nothing  
Not wanting or need but waiting Waiting for the veil to be pierced  
again Calling us back to be born again

Maggie Ellis





Tu y yo

We used to be like the sun and the moon  
barely seeing each other, just as we leave  
you'd shine on the night sky and I the day breeze  
bringing light we both did with ease  
somehow we didn't get to see each other  
as our love separated by time and care was taken by the days  
the world lost their way around for awhile  
now that the days have passed and time let us be back together  
I can see that we are not so different, like the night and day  
not so separated by our differences in the light  
I feel that we both are the moon  
throughout its phases and despite the changes  
Its where I've learned that we are different  
where I've understood our similarities  
this is how we were brought back to each other  
now all I hear is

*Son igualitas las dos*

*Y nos miramos*

*yo miro tu mirada matadosa y la mía cariñosa  
veo tu ojos lindos que tiene tanta luz  
y me veo en ti  
que soy más buena que bonita  
y eso no se me va quitar*

They see the resemblance because like the earth is created by  
the sun and how the moon brings out the night

you have brought me here with you to enjoy this sweet life

contigo



# FICTION



*"I just knew there were stories I wanted to tell."*

— Octavia E. Butler

## MAGIC HOUR

*John Tavares*

A few beachgoers called Magic Hour the Never Open Café. Some thought the café was never open because business was poor and weather at the clothing optional beach was unstable, frequently rainy, stormy, and windy, with gusts, cold water, and wind chill. But Hanlan's Hillbillies knew better, and that explanation ignored the gorgeous warm sunny days and the resplendent views of the cityscape and the sunsets from the beaches when Layla could never keep up with the customers that inundated her takeout and café. Layla also preferred to keep her café to a one-person operation, without any employees.

The city and the parks and recreation department that issued Layla her concession permits wanted to reissue those business licenses to an ice cream parlor, a donut shop, a hamburger joint, or another fast-food franchise. With the thirty-five hundred dollars her mother sent her every month, though, Layla hired a lawyer her mother recommended and fought the rescission. Embarrassed by her mother's allegation they discriminated against budding entrepreneurs and small business, the parks and recreation department and the city reversed the order.

The café was unprofitable on paper, according to Layla's mother's accountants, to whom she handed all the business records at the end of the quarter. The café, though, her mother understood, was her true purpose and meaning in life. Her mother kept calling her every Sunday afternoon with business advice, acting as if Layla, whom she described to friends and associates as her wayward daughter, was one of the most important clients in her business consulting practice. Joan also realized that true to her daughter's personality and disposition she would never succeed in the competitive food service and restaurant sector. Her mother urged her to return to university and college to find her true bearings and callings in life.

"But I'm thirty-six," Layla complained.

"You'll simply apply as a mature student, and I'll pay the tuition, the textbooks, and your rent, in residence, where you'll do better and be among peers," Joan said.

Layla was adamant and obstinate, insisting she was living the life she wanted to lead. Soon her business losses would reverse themselves. Joan threatened to stop sending her thirty-five hundred dollars a month. Layla dared her mother to do that precisely, and with that gauntlet thrown down Joan backed away.

The café should have been profitable, but Layla kept taking breaks at the clothing optional beach down the pathway. Sometimes Layla would ask one of the friends she made among the beach regulars who frequented Hanlan's Point to mind the café, while she took a break on the shoreline. She got along well with these beach regulars, but at times she referred to them affectionately or pejoratively, depending upon her mood, as Hanlan's Hillbillies.

When Joni, a beach regular, asked her the reason, she said because they acted as if they owned the beach. They practically lived on the beach, camped on the shoreline, and in the nearby bushes. Often, they frightened and harassed tourists and visitors from the mainland city. Despite her petite size, Joni, who sold homemade marijuana and cannabis edibles, caramels, brownies, cookies, on the beach, depending on which recipes she was experimenting with that week, pushed and shoved the tall, slender Layla and scattered her towel, beach blanket, and picnic basket across the beach shore and trail. Afterwards, Layla learned to keep the moniker to herself.

In any event, Layla loved the sight of the beach, the skyline of Lake Ontario, the cityscape, the boats, the yachts, the ferries, the cruise ships, and especially the bodies, nude and clothed. She sat on the quiet corner of the beach in a wooded area, along the cruising trail, and she injected herself with her magic hour. She covered her head with a towel, and she luxuriated in the warm rush, the orgasmic sensation, and the relaxation and euphoria the medication gave her, which she bought from a friend, one of Hanlan's Hillbillies.

When Layla came down from the high, she returned in her bikini, wrapped in the beach towel or blanket, to the café. Invariably, one of Hanlan's Hillbillies helped themselves to beer, pop, chips, snacks, which she expected, but oftentimes they raided the store for their friends and gang and headed off with shopping bags of stuff. They even took money from the store till, even though these friends said they were happy to fill in for her in return for the odd coffee, snack, or takeout meal, which she always gladly gave them. Sometimes, they even took money from the till, or pilfered the whole day's receipts, but Layla did not care.

Joan's monthly allowance of thirty-five hundred dollars to her daughter—which Layla usually considered guilt money (for her broken marriages, divorces, and the childhood it spawned), usually covered the losses. Besides, the important stuff, the Magic Hour, she always remembered to keep locked in the safe in the storeroom, which itself was locked by a combination only she knew, even though Joni knew the combination number after Layla absently wrote it on a notepad. Joni regularly got into Layla's Magic Hour for her own dealings and diluted her supply with her own dealer's stuff and substances.

The Magic Hour she also sold to a few regular beach customers. The profits she earned from the sale of Magic Hour paid for her own habit and supply; so, in the end there was no profit or loss; she was simply living, surviving, as she told her mother. Joan kept emphasizing in her business voice she needed to change this edgy lifestyle, this hipster, hippie life she was living on the fringes of society was not sustainable.

The summer of the pandemic, though, there was disruption in supply, in habits, routines, and lifestyle. People started to frequent and crowd the beach, since most of the restaurants, bars, cafes, and stores were forced to close, but through some loopholes, and in between waves of the pandemic, public health and the government allowed her to keep the Magic Hour Café open. The potency of the supply of Magic Hour she bought from a mariner and sailor at the yacht club was stronger than ever, more than she ever expected.

Several of the customers to whom she supplied Magic Hour overdosed on the beach. Two even died, although alcohol may have played a role in the death of a second victim, a nudist who sold beads and weavings on the sand of the clothing optional beach.

Police checks and patrols by by-law enforcement officers increased in frequency, to a level Layla never saw before on the beach. One of Hanlan's Hillbillies assured her no-one suspected her. Still, Layla became paranoid, albeit she thought her response was justifiable, given the circumstances.

Everyday on the beach that summer Layla passed a floral arrangement set up as a memorial for one of the overdose victims. Whenever she saw a police officer on the beach, she suspected they were looking for her, intending to arrest her. Her paranoia and anxiety always increased her needs for Magic Hour. She started injecting herself behind the counter of the Magic Hour Cafe, which was not her preferred venue for shooting up. Layla favored the experience, the rush, the euphoria, the release, at the beach, which made the ritual more magical and the experience transcendent, especially around sunsets. She carefully measured her doses, and sometimes sent the stuff to a lab, but, lately, her Magic Hour, which became more adulterated during the pandemic, was laced with a potential derivative of fentanyl.

One of the beach gang members, the aged flower child, Joni, who sold cannabis and CBD edibles, found her, when she visited the café to buy a coffee and her favorite oat bran muffin. When she saw Magic Hour café was open and not shuttered, but Layla was not responding, she opened the side door, near the public washrooms and showers.

Joni went through the patio and side entrance into the cramped café, where she found Layla passed out in her wicker chair, with a book about the use of psilocybin and cannabis for psychedelic therapy, at a small antique hardwood desk that barely fit in her cubicle-sized business office.

Joni knew where the first aid kit and emergency supply of naloxone was located and carried her own supply in a red zippered case, like those for eyeglasses. Joni injected Layla with the antidote. Then she anonymously called 911 on her landline telephone, and whispered, cursed, and in her dreads, beads, and woven garments prayed to her Buddhist gods Layla responded to the antidote. Later, before Layla fully regained consciousness in the hospital from the drug-induced coma, her mother discovered she had somehow contracted the hepatitis C virus.

Her mother was furious her daughter overdosed. What made her even more angry—she told Carlos, her personal assistant and current life partner—her baby, her daughter, had contracted the hepatitis C virus. She feared her baby, her girl, was tainted, contaminated now, damaged goods, ruined for life. Her mother could barely contain herself and control her anger.

A member of the team of doctors caring for her reassured Joan pharmacological science had discovered an effective cure for hepatitis C. They were starting to treat her with those medications in the hospital for that chronic condition as they spoke.

Her mother returned to her room and started reading the facts sheets and information about Hepatitis C and its treatment, which the doctor had given her at her bedside.

But Joan grew impatient and moved on to perusing her beloved Globe and Mail and then the Wall Street Journal. When Layla roused herself from her torpor and became aware of her presence, her mother glared at her, as if she had done something terribly wrong.

When Layla gazed at her mother, through oxygen tubes and intravenous lines, and she reached out to her, helplessly, Joan automatically slapped her hand, to which was taped and bandaged a tube and intravenous needle, hard. Her mother had never administered corporal punishment to her in her life. Her mother did not believe in the use of corporal punishment to discipline her child. (Joan had even had a grade schoolteacher fired from her position when she was a child. The teacher, in the heat of the moment, slapped Layla when she punched in the gut a grade five classmate, who had a history of teasing her for her height and long aquiline nose, a boy who sobbed and cried, as if he was dying from a perforated ulcer and internal hemorrhage.)

O He was blocking Layla on the stairwell, stopping her from climbing the last flight of stairs, preventing her from reaching her classroom after recess.)

Layla drifted off to sleep. When she awoke, regained consciousness, as soon as her mother saw her eyes were open, she slapped her again but this time in the face, against her cheeks to which some color and red hue had returned. Her mother slapped her hard, and the smack echoed against the antiseptic hospital room walls and ceiling.

“Ouch,” Layla cried, “you’re hurting me.”

Layla covered her face, smarting from the sting.

Her mother tossed a packet of moisturizer and painkillers from her Coach handbag at her.

“You never slapped me before in my life.” Layla started sobbing and crying.

At thirty-six years old, recovering from a near fatal drug overdose, her mother slapped her. The nurse saw Joan slap Layla. Then, so, the nurse could witness firsthand how angry and outraged Joan felt she slapped her again.

“This is what I should tell people: This young woman—her tainted illicit drugs contributed to the death of at least one hopeless lost soul.”

The nurse asked Joan to leave Layla’s room. When Joan ignored her, the nurse demanded she leave the hospital. The two women engaged in a literal stand off and glared at each other, until the nurse relented.

But the nurse consulted her supervisor at the nursing station. The nursing supervisor returned with security guards, who Joan also ignored, as if they didn’t exist. Then the security guards returned with a police officer, who threatened Joan with arrest. So, Joan called Carlos on a security guard’s smartphone to drive her home. Still, Joan continued to visit her daughter in her hospital room, as Layla was treated for hepatitis C, with a new medication that would cure her, doctors said.

The doctors insisted and recommended she not leave the hospital until she also entered the drug rehab program. During each subsequent visit, her mother slapped her. Her mother would sometimes lose control, wave newspaper clippings at her, call her ungrateful, a bitch, and slap her.

While the doctor made a tour and rounds with her medical students, pausing to visit Layla, Joan pointed towards Layla and asked if her patient was making progress. In her outraged voice, Joan loudly told the doctor, so her entourage of aspiring bright interns could hear; so, patients and visitors in the hallway could overhear; so, even the ward clerks and orderlies down at the nursing station could eavesdrop: “This girl, this young woman—her tainted narcotics led to the death of at least one hopeless lost soul.”

Her mother argued with nurses, doctors, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, and hospital administrators until nursing staff complained and security guards and police were summoned. Hospital administrators ordered her banned from the hospital, but Joan ignored the ban. Then administrators applied for a restraining order. Her mother fought the restraining order with an expensive family law lawyer, who she was averse to hiring until she realized she had no recourse.

The lawyer admitted in court he handed out corporal punishment, which Joan resented since she had never administered corporal punishment in her life. Joan explained to the lawyer she never believed in corporal punishment. As she listened to the lawyer in his law office and court, she realized she totally disagreed on just about everything with this flamboyant character, who claimed he was a Christian fundamentalist when it was convenient.



*Joan again felt like a failure as a parent, especially for having to hire such an ignoble man to resolve her legal problems. Her friends had reassured her, though, he was the right man and lawyer. Somehow, he won the case and the restraining order was thrown out of court. Joan resumed her visits to Layla in the hospital.*

During each visit Joan found herself entangled in a heated argument and dispute with Layla, and she would slap her hard at least once. Her mother showed her clippings from the newspaper, which she asked her personal assistant, Carlos, to clip and scrapbook. The urgent articles reported the overdoses and death from overdoses on the clothing optional beach. Joan said it was a wonder Layla was not in jail on murder or manslaughter charges. Then, when Laya called Carlos a lackey, Joan whacked her even harder on the face. For the first time in a long while, her mother frightened Layla, and she wanted to frighten her.

“Reason does not work on you and your entourage—only passion and raw emotion.”

“I don’t have an entourage,” Layla protested.

“That just proves how estranged you’ve become from ordinary people, real people, not addicts and pushers, and society.”

Joan told her once she recovered, she would head to college or university. She was not accepting Layla’s age, at thirty-six, as an excuse. Joan did not care what subjects Layla studied at college; she only knew she could not live this life as a beach bum and boardwalk café owner and operator any longer. Joan’s personal assistant and secretary, who was the highest strung and most tense, nervous and anxious man Layla ever met in her life. He doubled as her submissive life partner these days, helped her with the university and college residence applications: the transcripts, resumes, the countless questions, documents, paperwork.

Layla did not see what choice she possessed. Carlos told her about his sister who was an alcoholic: she recovered, returned to university in her forties, and now worked as an addictions counsellor. Somehow the idea appealed to Layla: Addictions. Counsellor. She was addicted, and needed counselling, among other things. She could or would try to work from there. First, she went to York University, majored in psychology, and lived on campus, and in residence. She avoided the clothing optional beach, frequenting the gym, and swimming pool during the off hour. She swam so obsessively she frightened the lifeguards monitoring the indoor pool of the sports center on the university campus. The head lifeguard wanted to ban her for her arguments, and her loud voice and hostile tone and aggressive attitude towards the lifeguards. Layla figured Magic Hour would have mellowed her, but she could no longer resort to that route of self-medication.

She obtained her degree in psychology. Then she studied in an addictions counselling program at an Ontario college of applied arts and technology. She did her internship at the hospital where she recovered from her overdose, her addictions, and Hepatitis C. She found work with a nursing station on a First Nation community with an Indigenous health services organization and then an indigenous social services based in Sioux Lookout, which gave her a position as a counselor on a reserve on the Hudson's Bay coastline.

This is the story, in one form or another, Layla tells clients and patients when they consult her or are referred to her for treatment. Layla feels the need to share, to tell them, if she believes it will help her connect with the client or patient.



## Tuna Sandwich Girl

Ana Molestina

There were three of them. There were two of us, and there existed a line divided between them and us. They were considered the perfect family who achieved the famous American dream, without the help from anyone. Yet, we were considered the losers of the family, who needed to immigrate to the United States to improve our lives. They were five people, my aunt Natty, her husband Pancho, her daughter Brenda, and her two grandsons Michael and Daniel. The two boys were too small to mimic their family behaviors. We were three—my mom, my brother, and I. My brother decided to move to Florida.

The union between us began when my mother decided to immigrate to the United States. We lived in Ecuador, and my mother worked too much since she separated from my dad. He refused to send us money. One day my mother decided to come to the United States because she wanted my brother and me to study in a university. She told us that the only way to progress in life was by studying. Our economic status was a big problem for studying in higher education. My mother called her sister Natty, who lived in California to help us with a place to live while we find a job and eventually find our own place to live. Her sister agreed to take us in. When we came to California, they received us, hungry and all. “Family does not exist here in the United States, and we are doing a huge favor in providing our house as shelter while you find a job. But never forget, that nothing is free, and when you have a job, your first checks will be used to pay our bills.”

*“Eat a tuna sandwich every day, for it’s cheap, and you can save money towards paying for driving classes.”*

My cousin also added, “Why did you come here if you don’t know how to speak English or drive? You need to go to Adult School. College and university are for people like me.”

In Adult School, I met very friendly people, but some of them did not know how to read or write our native language, Spanish. I was 18 years old, and I was the youngest one in the classroom. They could not learn English the same way I did.

“Eat a tuna sandwich every day; for it’s cheap, and you can save money towards paying for driving classes.”

They gave directions for places where I could apply for jobs. These people were not my family, but in them I discovered the true meaning of help. The teacher was also nice, and she told me:

“This place is not for you. You need to go to college, and apply for financial aid.”

After asking some of my classmates, I took three buses to a college. I applied for financial aid, and they tested my English, reading, and math level. The day I received the letter from that college, and financial aid award was a big celebration for us, my mom and I, but for them, was the day for me to start paying their bills.

“The money from your financial aid award is the money taken off of every check of mine. My money will pay for your studies and expenses. You better be grateful.” My aunt Natty told me. I preferred not to answer, but she continued complaining about my scholarship. The worst thing that she told me was:

“Now, it’s the beginning of the eternal student that we will always have to support.”

“I am grateful for the opportunity this country has given me to have an education. I will take advantage and make sure I go far in life,” I chimed back. My aunt’s face got red while staying silent.



And so, every day I prepared my tuna sandwich. While I was preparing my sandwich, they laughed because they told me that I smelled like poverty. My aunt Natty and her daughter called me tuna sandwich, instead of calling me by my name. I ignored them, and I preferred to remember the people who were nice to me by giving me good advice on how to improve myself. Finally, I raised enough money, and the first thing I bought was a used car. I was really excited. They, like always, were upset saying how it was with their money that I was able to buy a used car. They then decided to increase the amount we paid them every month. From that day, my mom and I started to find an apartment. After a month, we were able to move to our own apartment. My new classmates recommended applying for a work-study program. I followed their advice, and I was eligible for this program. I could work in an elementary school located in Latino zone as a teacher’s aide. I could study and work at the same time.

One day at work, one teacher asked me, “Where did you buy this sandwich? I don’t want to eat the same food from the cafeteria.”

“I made it myself.”

“Oh, really? Well, that looks delicious!”

“Would you like half of my sandwich?”

“Yes! If you don’t mind,” she said as I handed her one half of the sandwich. “Oh this is delicious! I can’t believe you made this.”

That day, she gave me the idea of making more tuna sandwiches to sell during lunch time in our break room. Tuesday and Thursday were the days I sold my tuna sandwiches. On these days, I was the tuna sandwich girl, but not in the way my family was calling me. This tuna sandwich girl was admired and loved by people that were not family. I continued eating and selling tuna sandwiches until I graduated in getting my Master's degree, and later went on to find a full-time job as a Special Education teacher. While my aunt and cousin have not changed at all since, I am a very different person now. And although my tuna sandwich days smelling like poverty have since ended, I still eat tuna sandwiches just like the first day I came to this country



# Ecoverse Poetry Contest

PHOTO BY MARIANNE ROGOFF

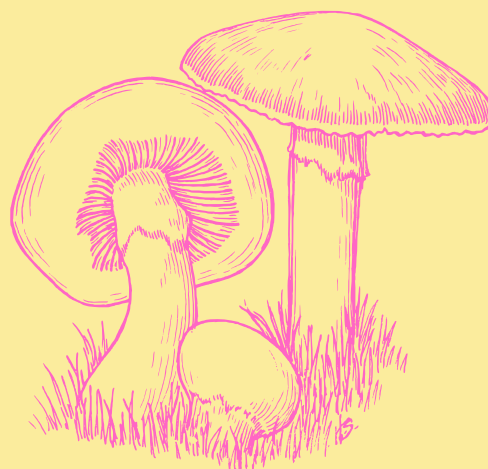


*In our debut year teaming up with the Dominican University Sustainability Committee, we kicked off our Ecoverse Poetry Contest with a nature-themed exploration*

The jury, consisting of Professor Joan Baranow, Professor Wolfgang Schweigkofler, and MFA student Rhea Dev have announced the winner of the competition as the poem:

## **"Swallowing Silence" by Erika Anderson**

With an honorary mention for "Old Farmer Smile" by Liz Rosales The judges carefully deliberated the anonymous poems to ensure fairness and objectivity in their decision-making process.



The winning poem "Swallowing Silence" was chosen for its poetic craft, vivid imagery, and a feeling of alienation from nature. The poem presents a deeply reflective and contemplative perspective on the theme, and the metaphors used are both evocative and precise.

Old Farmer Smile, the poem that received an honorary mention, is also a well-crafted piece of poetry. The judges appreciated the subtlety of the poem's approach to global warming, particularly the line "wings that slice the damp sky," which is a wonderful example of vivid imagery.

Overall, all the poems submitted offer a unique and insightful perspective on the competition's theme, and the winning poem and the honorary mention both exemplify our deep connections with nature

## Swallowing Silence

We began in this world seeming closer than  
ever The waters drifted between then  
brought us apart Were merely oceans that  
never  
Used their force upon my heart  
It's often arduous to recall All the reasons  
our teeth split The way a zipper takes a fall  
Unable to name one culprit  
We are left only land and silence Water  
drowns out secrets best  
Now i'm landlocked in violence  
There will be no avoiding our next test  
There may not be a cure for our mess  
Yet it may begin, it may end, the moment we  
confess

*Erika Anderson*



## Old Farmer Smile

There's a horse with three tears  
rolling down its wrinkled face.

Its hair is thinning, eyes off to the side,  
where a crow sits  
on its coated back.

The claws grip on, hopping along the spine, yearning for the prey to escape  
from the fallen wheels of the tractor.

For a mouse to pounce from the wooden fence and scurry through the dead grass  
that horse hooves trample every day.

The plaza miles away is abandoned, where only the crows rule.

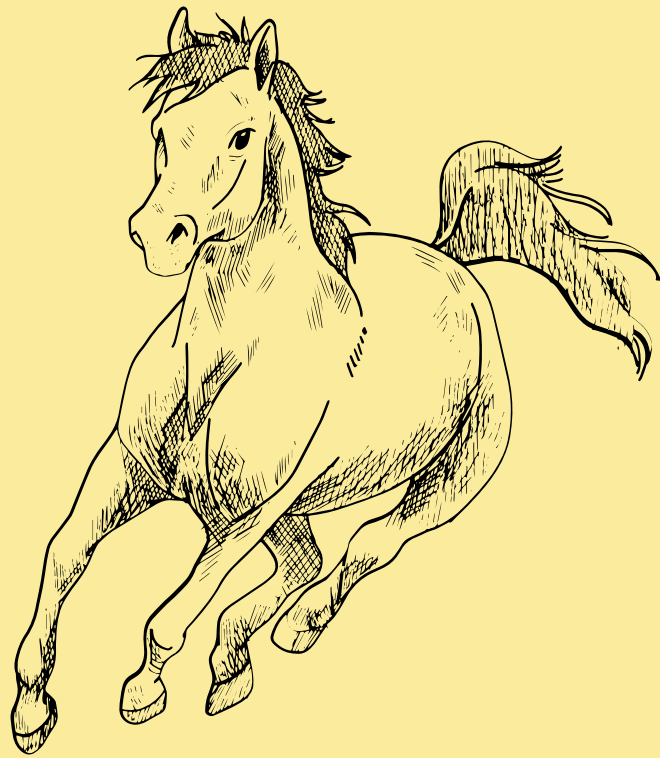
The mice fear them, the bugs, too for they can't escape the macabre wings that slice  
the damp sky.

A bird's last look  
at the plaza,

the withering leaves and the dying rodents. It ventures to the dimly lit  
small town of horses,  
where it all becomes taboo.



*Liz Rosales*





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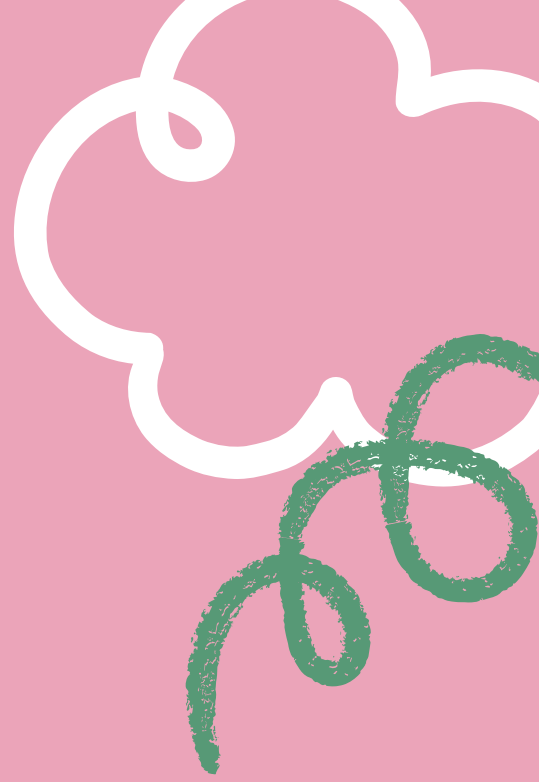


## *Are you a writer?*


Are you a writer? We writers exist in many forms, we inhabit the world like any other person, but no matter what our major is, or what our day job looks like, we inhabit the world in search of beauty. We may seem like any other person, but we possess a unique skill to excavate stories and poetry in places others may overlook.

If this sounds like you, you might want to check out the Creative Writing Minor and MFA program at Dominican University. It could be the space where you could cultivate your talents and your creative being. These programs offer workshops, mentorship, and publishing opportunities. But most importantly we form a joyful artistic community, a safe place to nourish your creative being.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to take your writing to the next level, these programs can help you unravel your gift as a writer and storyteller.



**TUXEDO**  
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A black and white illustration of a penguin wearing a tuxedo, including a top hat, a white shirt with a bow tie, and a dark jacket. The penguin is standing on a small patch of ground. The illustration is centered within a light gray rectangular area.

