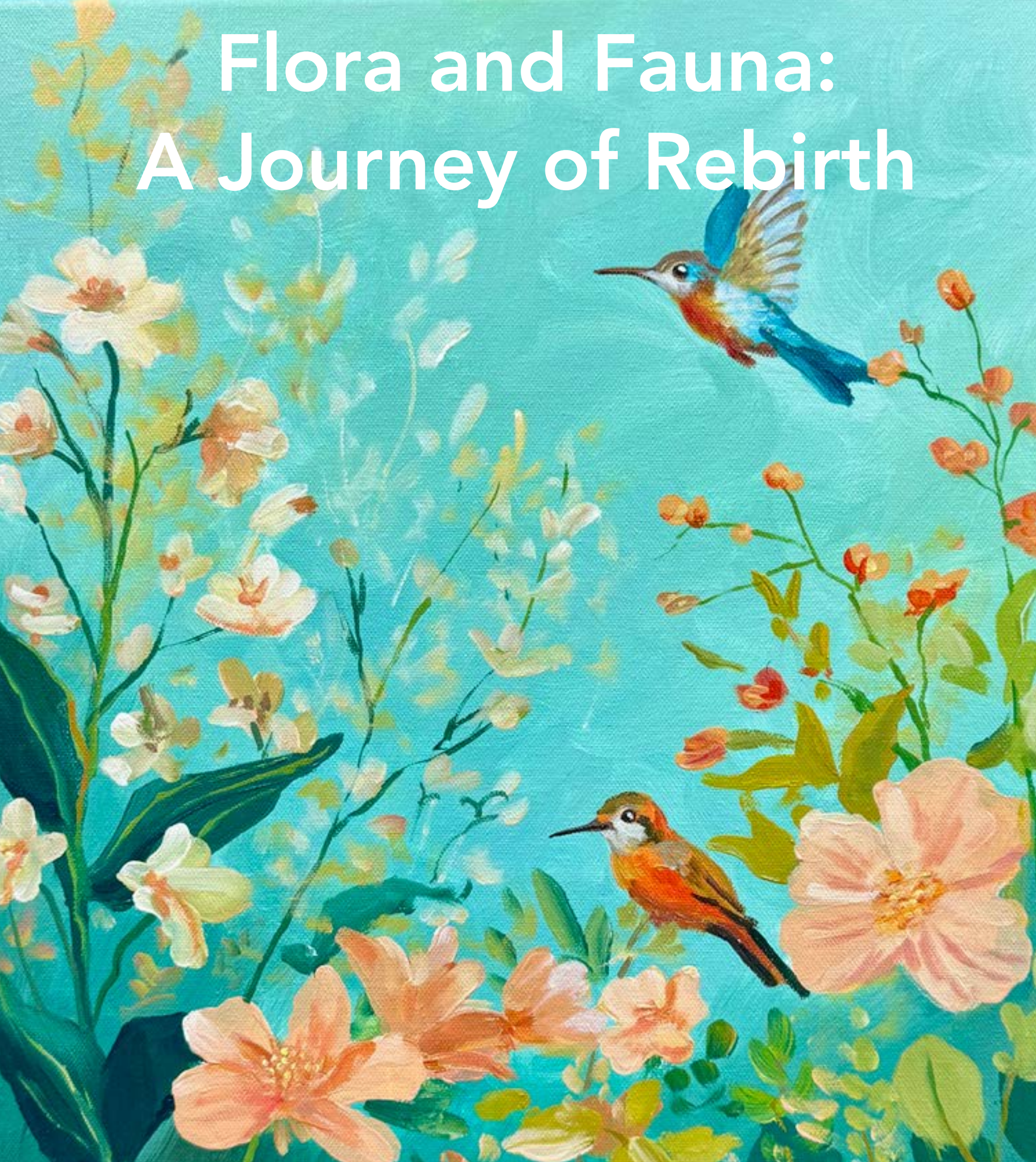


Flora and Fauna: A Journey of Rebirth



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

As the frost begins to melt away and the scent of sunflowers and daisies permeate the air, the advent of spring brings rise to fresh beginnings. The cheerful chirping of birds and blossoming of delicate petals under the sun's warmth portray nature's beautiful harmony. While nature blossoms with vibrancy and a renewed sense of jubilation, we too have embarked on a process of rebirth and renewal.

Spring is a time to revitalize our minds and bodies, reconnect with loved ones, and reflect on our aspirations for the year. Whether it be pursuing a new hobby, setting meaningful goals, or simply appreciating the beauty in nature's simplicity--one thing is clear. It's the season to open our minds to new ideas and perspectives as we begin afresh and spring into action.

As you explore the April 2025 issue of the iWRITER, take a moment to reflect what rebirth and renewal mean to you this spring. This issue will delve into this theme through fresh, creative, and insightful perspectives - featuring captivating poems, personal stories, nature-inspired reflections and recommendations, film reviews, and more! With spring in full swing and creativity blossoming, we hope this issue of the iWRITER inspires you to grow, reflect, and let your imagination *spring* to life!

Happy reading!

Warmest wishes,

Tanvi Padala
Editor-in-Chief

I WRITE because words are the sound of my thoughts and let me be creative. Through writing, I can escape to impossible worlds, experience magic, and create imaginative characters. Writing brings a tremendous amount of joy and relaxes me.

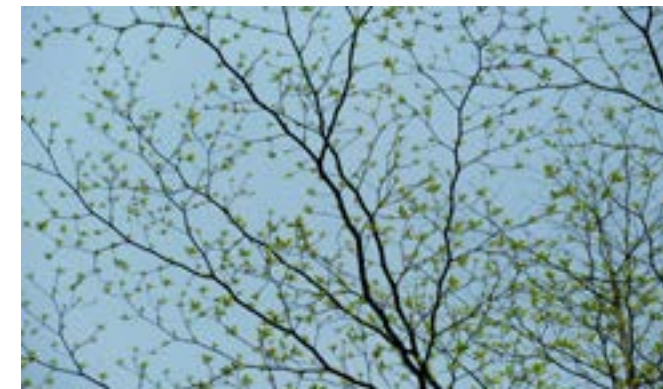


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Blooming in Spring: The Time to Reset Your Mind

As spring breathes life into trees and flowers, this season can also breathe clarity and realization into our minds. With **AP exams, standardized tests, and finals fast-approaching**, now is the time to spring into action and stay focused. You've got your study guides, YouTube videos, and practice tests lined up - it's clear you're committed to grinding everything. But sometimes, a wave of nervousness creeps through your mind. The pressure of exam season can feel overwhelming - if you let it. This time of year isn't just to overload your minds with a year's worth of information through late-night cram sessions; it is the season to pause, reflect, and refresh. The opportunity to evaluate past study habits, set a realistic schedule, and reset your mindset. To many of us, panicking always seems like the course-of-action in spring, but in actuality, it's a chance for transformation.

Shed Old Leaves

For many of us, this year was an emotional rollercoaster. All-nighters, a test we bombed, a moment we doubted ourselves-whoa, what a year. But just as trees shed their dead leaves to make way for the growth of new ones, we too can use this time to learn from past mistakes in order to perform well on what matters most-our final exams. While we can't fix the past, we can let go of past academic regrets by using them as stepping stones for success.

By using this time to evaluate study habits that were successes this year or ones that may not have been helpful, you're not only able to study better for your exams now than you did back in October but also build confidence and trust in yourself.



After all, a missed question doesn't define your potential; what does, though, is how you learn from the mistakes you made in order to ace your exams and most importantly, grow as a person. So take a deep breath, let go of what's happened, and reset your mind as you embark on a journey of reflection and growth this study season.

Plant New Roots

Just as important as it is to let go of the past, it's important to learn from your mistakes by opening your mind to new ways of thinking, or perhaps, new ways of studying. If you want to bloom, your mind must have a solid foundation, and that starts by rebuilding your routine in a way that balances your academic goals with your mental health. It's important to adopt an effective schedule by pledging consistency, whether it be a regular sleep schedule, balanced meals, or breaks that refresh rather than distract.

While it is important to study hard, it's equally as important to study "smart," with techniques like the Pomodoro Method, which involves 25-minute study sessions accompanied by 5-minute rest periods. Additionally, it's important to spread out studying for your exams across multiple days/weeks. For example, if you have a Math and English test approaching, it's not recommended that you only study Math for a few days and only study English for a few days.

This method can not only overload your brain but induce stress and fatigue. Try studying a little for Math and English each day; this method helps you recollect information effectively without overloading yourself and study with different methods across various days to holistically revise concepts. The techniques mentioned are ones that work for many individuals, but it's important that you find the techniques that help you achieve your academic goals effectively.

Bloom with Intention

Mindset matters. It's easy to convince ourselves that we will not do well or that another person is studying better than us. But studying for exams isn't a contest. It's like a garden, with each flower growing at different paces or requiring a different amount of water and sunlight. In the end, however, these flowers are able to blossom into beautiful plants because they grow according to their needs. Likewise,

Blooming in Spring: The Time to Reset Your Mind

don't pressure yourself into thinking that you're not doing enough; everyone studies differently. Visualize yourself with confidence, taking your exams with a sense of pleasure and a can-do attitude. After all, spring is the season to not only prepare yourself with information but prepare your spirit. And remember, don't underestimate the power of mindfulness. Whether it be positive affirmations or meditation, know that it's important to treat yourself with care and kindness.

Prepare to Blossom

In the coming weeks, the temptation to give into panic is real. But it's important to approach this time with a focused yet steady mindset. Flowers don't grow by rushing, but through a slow, steady process that allows them to bloom. Throughout this year, you've worked hard. You're still working hard. It's normal to feel nervous--it means you care about doing well. However, it's important that you believe in yourself. Ask questions, take practice tests, review with friends, and stay curious! Every effort you put in will reap the rewards.

Good Luck!

This is your season. You've got this! Exams may symbolize the end of the school year but in reality, they only mark the beginning. They're a chance to show what you've learned, not just from textbooks but also about yourself. So breathe. Let go of what was. Prepare yourself for what is to come. You've already accomplished so much this year and transformed in countless ways. Continue to keep your heads held high, and good luck!

BY Tanvi Padala

I WRITE because words are the sound of my thoughts and let me be creative. Through writing, I can escape to impossible worlds, experience magic, and create imaginative characters. Writing brings a tremendous amount of joy and relaxes me.



Ramadan: A Month of Renewal

Ramadan is a sacred month celebrated by 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide. During this month, Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset. Because Ramadan follows the lunar calendar, its timing changes each year. This year, Ramadan took place in March, with each fast, or *roza*, lasting nearly thirteen hours. However, when Ramadan falls during the summer months, rozas can be as long as sixteen hours or more, due to the longer days and shorter nights.

While fasting may initially seem challenging for the individual observing it, known as a *saim* in Arabic, it is much more than simply enduring a month of hunger. It is an opportunity for *saims* to grow spiritually, mentally, and physically. It allows them to reset their relationship with food by moving away from mindless overeating and snacking, and instead focusing on having intentional, scheduled meals: *suhoor* in the morning and *iftar* at sunset.

The experience of fasting also builds empathy for the 700 million people worldwide who face hunger and food insecurity. This awareness leads to mindful eating, which means eating with awareness and appreciation. Additionally, fasting frees up time, allowing Muslims to focus more of their day on prayer, worship, reflection, and self-improvement.

But are there other benefits of fasting? Yes, there are also benefits at a cellular level. Fasting triggers a process called autophagy, in which cells clean up and recycle damaged organelles and misfolded proteins to maintain their health, allowing them to undergo renewal. An article titled "[The Beneficial and Adverse Effects of Autophagic Response to Caloric Restriction and Fasting](#)" emphasizes that short-term caloric restriction can help keep cells healthy and may even make them live longer.

Fasting is not unique to Islam; many religious groups around the world observe fasting. Many Orthodox and Catholic Christians fast during Lent, a 40-day period leading up to Easter. Additionally, some Christians fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. In Judaism, fasting occurs during Yom Kippur, a 25-hour fast aimed at seeking forgiveness from God, and Tisha B'Av, a day dedicated to mourning the destruction of the first two temples built in Jerusalem. Buddhists fast on the four Uposatha days of the lunar calendar to deepen their

meditation practice and purify their minds. Hindus also fast during festivals such as Maha Shivaratri, a 9-day celebration honoring Goddess Durga, and Karva Chauth, when women fast for the well-being of their husbands. Another popular type of fasting is intermittent fasting, which is widely practiced in many secular cultures for health benefits like weight loss, improved metabolism, mental clarity and heart health.

As the body becomes conditioned to fasting, it adapts to the reduced intake of nutrition. This year, I fasted daily for a month and noticed how my body gradually adjusted. The extra time I gained from fasting allowed me to spend more time building good habits such as praying regularly, being kind to my sisters and reading. During lunch, I spent time reading at the library and ironically finished the Hunger Games series (no pun intended). I discovered that while fasting can be challenging while playing sports, my body actually grew stronger. I compared the experience to how elite athletes train for a marathon at high altitude, to make their body adjust to reduced oxygen levels, ultimately enhancing their performance in normal conditions.

Fasting, whether for Ramadan or personal reasons, is not just about abstaining from food. It is a mental, physical, and spiritual reset. Just as autophagy rejuvenates the body at a cellular level, fasting helps clear distractions and brings focus to what truly matters in life- spiritual growth, self-improvement and compassion for others.



BY Raasti Kayani

I WRITE because it brings me joy and is a simple way to express my thoughts and feelings. Writing has the power to transform an ordinary moment into something extraordinary. I can lose myself in another dimension while developing characters, introducing conflicts, and building my setting.

Being My Best Self Learning Through Scholarship

Confidence. Talent. Compassion. For me, these three words grew in meaning this past January and live as core tenants of who I am now.

In October, I largely focused my efforts on college and scholarship applications. One day, my Dean emailed me a link to the Distinguished Young Women program, a scholarship initiative focused on highlighting young women academically, artistically, and socially. I applied to the program on a whim, yearning deep down for it, yet still doubting myself. I submitted a video of my tap routine, completed the fitness and academic categories, and finally, took on an interview. For Distinguished Young Women, participants are assessed on five categories: talent, fitness, academics, self expression, and interview. Talent is self-chosen; fitness shows girls strength and flexibility while following a set routine; academics assess grades and extracurricular involvements; self expression is graded on participants' ability to answer a question with an under minute response; and interview is based on participants' interview responses and skills.

For weeks, I anticipated the announcements via email and on a livestream, refreshing my notifications regularly. Soon the day arrived. I received a notification that I had been chosen to represent Harris County in addition to winning a category award.

Before the showcase and competition, we spent two full days together rehearsing and learning. One of the activities that stood out to me was a business education Q&A where all participants heard from Meriden Jurica, an entrepreneur who started her own makeup bag business, 'Makeup Junkie,' and was featured on Shark Tank. Additionally, we participated in service projects such as creating bagged lunches for Kids' Meals, a nonprofit aimed at providing food to preschoolers in Houston.

Through service learning and conversations with prominent women in Texas, I was becoming the best version of myself. In between activities and rehearsals, I spent time sharing meals with the other participants, learning about what excited them from teaching little kids martial arts to performing in orchestra. These young women's stories allowed me to paint a vibrant picture of Texas feminism in my mind. At only eighteen and seventeen years old, these girls, just as I am, were

striving for self-improvement and a better community for all. On our final day together, the competition performance, I was terrified. Not only was I beyond nervous to perform my routines and answer posed questions, I was simply scared to leave. I was thrown quickly into a space where clapping was common, smiles were ordinary, and each girl was rooting for the girl next to her. I wasn't ready to leave.

A mere couple of hours before our showcase, three former participants spoke with our 2025 Distinguished Young Women of Texas class. Each girl told us to savor the minutes we spend with one another, hold dearly to the friendships we form now, and never forget the kindness we've been shown and shared. Suddenly, the program that terrified me due to its competitive nature felt like a tranquil home with the people I loved most.

Before walking onto stage, the former DYW of Texas, Grace Chu, handed each girl an "encourage-mint," a small mento meant to taste like confidence dripping from our tongues.

When I walked onto stage, I noticed my family's faces beaming back at me from the audience, their eyes glimmering in hope and anticipation. Hours turned to minutes, the program came to the final award ceremony. As the administrators announced the awards, my heart pounded not only for myself, but for the girls' around me as well.

I was awarded the Self-Expression Award for my response to the question "What's your greatest attribute?", the Spirit Award for being voted by my peers as having the kindest spirit during the rehearsal process, and the 2nd Runner-Up for Distinguished Young Woman of Texas. Once all awards were announced and Cynthia Kong was named Distinguished Young Woman of Texas, we all ran towards the center of the stage, embracing one another.

Three days. That's what it took me to honestly understand what it meant to be confident and kind. Toiling with my found sisters, laughing over lunches, learning to listen closer to other women's voices—that's what taught me the essence of what it means to be a strong, independent woman and future leader. Walking away from the Distinguished Young Women program, I'm not only leaving with a scholarship to fund my education, but also with chin held an inch higher than before.

BY Cami Culbertson

I WRITE because it makes me feel powerful. Normally in my everyday life, I feel small or insignificant in the grand scheme of things. When I write and have the ability to publish, I feel like I am making my mark.

Reconnecting with Nature This Spring

Spring brings a sense of renewal, color, and energy, making it the ideal time to step outside and connect with nature. It's not just about the fresh air, but instead, about reconnecting with the living world around us. From colorful wildflowers to busy pollinators and singing birds, spring is filled with the beauty of nature. Whether you're looking for a peaceful solo escape or a fun way to bond with friends and family, there's no shortage of outdoor activities to help you engage with the flora and fauna of the season.

1. Go Wildflower Spotting

Spring is the season of blooms, making it the perfect time to check out vibrant wildflowers in their natural habitat. Pack a picnic, grab your camera, and head to a nearby meadow, park, or hiking trail. You'll be amazed by the explosion of color and variety of blooms. Pro tip: bring a small field guide or plant identification app (such as Picture This or PlantNet) to learn more about the flowers you find.

2. Hike a New Trail

There's no better time to explore new places than when the weather is crisp and the trails are coming alive with green leaves and bird-song. Choose a hike that matches your energy level, no matter how big or small. Don't forget water, snacks, and sun protection!

3. Plan a Scenic Bike Ride

Ditch the car and opt for a bike ride through scenic backroads, along riverbanks, or through local parks. Spring's mild temperatures make for the most enjoyable cycling weather, and the surrounding sights and scents add a natural boost of endorphins.

4. Host a Nature Picnic

There's something inherently joyful about laying out a blanket under a blooming tree and enjoying the sunshine. Gather a few favorite snacks, bring a book or a frisbee, and make a fun day out of it.

5. Try Birdwatching

With migration season in full swing, spring is prime time for spotting a variety of birds. All you need is a pair of binoculars, a notebook, and a little patience. Early mornings are best for catching

birds in action, be sure to listen closely and let the sounds guide you!

6. Practice Outdoor Yoga or Meditation

Find a quiet patch of grass and let nature be your studio. Practicing yoga or meditation outside not only helps ground you, but it also enhances mindfulness as you tune into the sights, smells, and sounds around you.

Spring is a gentle invitation to breathe deeply, slow down, and rediscover the world beyond your walls. It's also the perfect time to engage with the vibrant web of life that surrounds us.

From spotting birds at work to learning the names of native plants, connecting with flora and fauna adds a deeper, more meaningful layer to our outdoor adventures. So go ahead, lace up your shoes, pack a snack, and let nature guide your next adventure.



BY *Shavi Moparthy*

I WRITE because writing is a way for me to express myself, and it helps me connect to my artistic side. I enjoy writing because it allows me to reflect on experiences that I have encountered. Writing is something that I truly enjoy, and it has always been one of my greatest passions.

After the Smoke Clears (cont. on next page)

Kinsley- Silence. We sit in suffocating silence for what seems like hours, until the other woman suddenly stands up.

“Hi, everyone. My name is Rita Declan, and I've invited you all here so we can help each other work through issues and support one another during these...tough times.” She looks closely at each of us. My hand instinctively moves to my neck, fingers twisting the chain of my necklace absent-mindedly. The man sitting across from me is looking down at his hands that are folded in his lap. My eyes track down to see the peeling skin. His hands, they look like they've been through a lot—rough and worn, like the edges of an old book, weathered, but still managing to hold together.

As if he can sense me looking, he folds his hands over and looks down at his feet instead. The woman, Rita, sits down and gestures to the other man sitting in the circle, “Terry, why don't you start us off.”

Terry- *Well, I guess it's my turn now,* I let out a small sigh, trying to steady myself. “I'm Terry, Terry Sallow.” I pause, rubbing the back of my neck. “I... I lost my family's coffee shop in the fires. It wasn't much, but it was all I had. It was all my family had, really.” I feel the eyes of the young woman in the blue sweater on me. Her voice barely above a whisper, she asks, “What was the shop called?”

I smile sadly, suddenly thinking of it. “Sallow's Brews. It's been in our family for generations—until now, I guess.” She hesitates for a moment, her lips pressing together, and then I hear her speak again. “Actually...I think I have heard of it.

I'm pretty sure I went there once with my—” Her words trail off, and for a second, I see a flicker of pain in her eyes. She's hurting too, I can tell. I shift in my seat, trying to break the silence. “Yeah... it was a good place. I just...can't really believe that it's all gone now. Everything, all of it, it's just... gone.” I scratch the back of my head, giving a weak chuckle.

“I don't really know what I'm supposed to say now. I just... miss it. Miss the people. Miss the... rhythm of it. But I'll figure it out, like everyone else is.” Rita's voice cuts through the silence, “It's okay, Terry. Take your time. We're all here to listen.” I nod, but

I don't say anything more. What else is there to say? The words don't seem to fit the weight of everything I've lost. So, I just sit there, feeling the ache in my chest, and hope that someone else will start talking.

Jeremiah- I don't want to be here. I wish I could just curl up into a ball and disappear. Maybe roll all the way home. Home. But where was my home now? Had it ever really been home?

I used to tell myself I had it all under control, that my life was predictable—my job, a job meant to save people, to protect them, but here I was, sitting in a room full of people who had lost everything. How could I even show up here? What could I offer them? What could I say?

I snap back to reality when I hear my name. “Jeremiah,” the lady in the blazer says again, her voice cutting through the haze. “Your turn.” I freeze. I can feel the weight of everyone's eyes on me. What should I even say? The words don't feel real. My throat feels tight. I don't like this, I don't like being vulnerable, but I can't just sit here in silence either. “Hey, I'm Jeremiah. I work as a firefighter.”

The words feel hollow. They don't capture anything that I feel, the things I've seen, and worst of all, the guilt that keeps gnawing at me. The girl across from me widens her eyes slightly, and the man next to me straightens in his seat. It's like they suddenly expect me to say something more, and suddenly, the room feels even smaller, suffocating, burning, like a fire. I want to shrink away.

Rita- *Great start,* I think to myself. Kinsley's on the verge of tears, Terry's closed off, and Jeremiah looks as if he's about to have a stroke. What have I done? I clear my throat and look around at the group, all of them so tightly wound, so raw. I wasn't sure if I should say something more, I don't want to keep pushing them.

“My family has been through losses as well”, I start, my voice measured, “My sister and her family lost their home in the fires. I opened up my house to them, but it's been hard. The house is full, and we're all trying to make do. It's a lot to juggle.” I pause, trying to gauge a reaction, a response, anything.

“I brought us all here today because I know what it's like to feel like your world's been pulled out from under you, to feel like nothing is the same anymore. It's not easy, I know. But I think... I think it's important to be here, to support one another.” They're quiet, still.

After the Smoke Clears

(cont. from page 9)

“You know, Terry and I, we go way back to college, actually. I probably should’ve known better than to drag him into this. He wasn’t thrilled when I asked, but... I didn’t want this group to be empty. I thought maybe, if we could all just listen to each other, it might help. Even if it’s just a little bit at a time.” I glance over at Jeremiah, who’s gripping his hands together so tightly, like he’s waiting for the floor to fall out beneath him. “Look, I don’t have all the answers,” I continue, trying to keep my voice steady. “But sometimes, just being in a room with others who get it, who’ve lost things too, it can make a difference.”

Kinsley, who’s said little until now, suddenly starts speaking.

Kinsley- I force myself to take a deep breath. *Everything's alright.*

“Hi everyone, I’m Kinsley.” I start. “Fortunately, my home was safe from the fires. But—” *Oh, god. I don’t think I can do this.* Rita’s hand is suddenly over mine, a look of encouragement in her eyes.

“But I did lose my boyfriend, Myles. We were together for four and a half years.” My voice chokes at the last word, and tears start to form in my eyes. Then, like a tsunami, everything is let out all at once. Words come rushing out of my mouth uncontrollably, spilling faster than I can stop them.

“We were supposed to get engaged, marry, have children, and grow old together. We were meant to share our lives—side by side, forever.” I pause, my breath shaky. “He was everything to me. My whole world. He’s gone now.” I bury my face in my hands, my body trembling as the tears come in waves. The room is quiet, yet I can feel the silent understanding coming from everyone. Rita gently rests her hand on my shoulder, but it doesn’t make the tears stop.

“Why? Why did this have to happen to him? Why did he have to die?” I look at Rita in desperation, as if she knew an answer. “Well, Kinsley, we tend to ask the question ‘why’ a lot. Like ‘why does this happen to me?’ or ‘why do I have to deal with this?’ but really, we should be asking ‘what’; ‘what will I take from this?’ or ‘what is the true purpose that this holds for

me?” Rita replies, her voice soft but sure. I smile sadly, thinking of Myles, because that’s something he would say. He would remind me not to lose sight of who I was, what I was capable of, even now that he wasn’t around. The way he always seemed to know what I needed to hear, even without saying it outright. I can almost hear his voice cutting through the noise in my head. I don’t feel less sad really, but I feel a little more sure, a little more ready. Ready to try again, even if I don’t have all the answers. Rita’s words worked as a kind of grounding I didn’t expect. A reminder that I can still find my way, even when I’m not entirely sure where I’m headed.

Terry- Man, what Rita’s saying right now, I actually understand. She always used to talk about this stuff back in college. We’d all laugh about it, teasing her for saying random things, but now... now, it makes sense. I get it. It’s not always about *why* things happen, it’s more about what we take from it, how we’ll grow from it. Honestly, it’s not that I haven’t heard something like this before, but for some reason, it resonates more deeply now. Seeing Rita be there for Kinsley while she works through her pain—it just makes more sense. Maybe it’s because I’ve never really seen it like this before. It’s like everything Rita’s said over the years is finally coming together, finally clicking in a way I could never understand before.



After the Smoke Clears

Jeremiah- My hands are shaking. I’m trying to hide it, but it’s hard. My fingers keep clenching into fists, then loosening, trying to find something that will make me feel like I’m in control of myself. But nothing does. I can feel the heat in my chest, the tightness in my throat. My body’s telling me to run, to bolt out of this room before I say anything I regret. But I can’t. “Jeremiah,” Rita says, her voice soft but firm, pulling me out of my head.

She’s looking right at me, waiting. It’s like she knows I’m on the verge of shutting down, of closing off again, but she’s not letting me get away with it this time. I clear my throat and glance around the room. “I didn’t choose my job,” I say, the words spilling out before I can stop them. “My dad was a firefighter.

His dad was a firefighter. It was just expected. I didn’t want this life. I never did. But I kept pushing forward because I thought... I thought if I did enough, maybe I’d make him proud. Maybe I’d be good enough.

But now, I don’t know. Now, I’m just... tired. Tired of doing what everyone expects, tired of saving people and still feeling like I’m not doing enough.” I stop there, because I can feel the heat in my chest rising again.

“I guess... I thought if I just kept going, I’d eventually feel like I was making a difference,” I continue, my voice quieter now. “But the truth is, it’s not enough. It never is. I still see the faces of the people I couldn’t save. I still hear the screams from the buildings I couldn’t get to in time. And it doesn’t matter how many lives I save. I’ll never feel like I did enough.”

I swallow hard, trying to keep myself together. I don’t want to fall apart in front of these people, but I can feel the cracks spreading. The guilt, the anger, the frustration—it’s all building up, and it’s hard to keep it in.

“Sometimes I wonder if I’m even cut out for this,” I admit, my voice trembling. “I mean, look at me, I don’t even know who I am anymore.” I say,

glancing at my hands, rough and scarred from all these years.

“I don’t even know what kind of a person I’m supposed to be.” The room is silent for a long moment, and I don’t know if I want someone to say something, or if I just want the whole thing to end. But then Rita speaks, her voice steady and calm. “You don’t have to have all the answers, Jeremiah. You don’t have to know who you are, as long as you know that you want to become someone different.” I nod, though it doesn’t feel like enough. I don’t feel like it’s enough. But for once, it’s just... something. Something real. For the first time in a long while, I feel like I’m not all alone.

Rita- The room feels different now, quiet, still, but in a way that isn’t heavy. It’s as if something shifted in the air, a subtle change that’s hard to describe but impossible to ignore. I look around at each of them, the faces that once seemed so tightly wound, now a little lighter. “I know it’s not easy,” I begin, “to sit here, to open up to people you don’t really know. But there’s something powerful about this space we’ve made together, even in silence. It’s in the way we listen to each other, the way we help each other through the pain.”

I glance at Kinsley, her soft eyes slightly red from crying. Terry’s posture seems to have eased just a bit, and Jeremiah, though his hands are still shaking, there’s less tension overall, I can feel it. He’s here. They all are. “We’ve all lost something,” I continue, the words coming slower now, like they’ve taken on more weight. “Maybe it seems like we’re covered in ashes right now. But that doesn’t mean the story ends here. It’s a new beginning. We can’t erase what happened, but we can choose what we do with what’s left.” “I’m not saying it’s easy,” I add, with a slight smile. “But what we’ve got here—what we’re doing—it’s enough to start something new, to rebuild our lives.”

There’s no rush to fill the space with words. It’s like we’ve all just agreed, in some unspoken way, that maybe we don’t have to know exactly how to start again right now. But we’re here. And that’s enough.

BY Sanvi Pandit

I WRITE because writing is my way to share what I think and feel. Composing stories and poems helps me tell the world about myself without feeling scared.

A Place for Poetry

Featured Poems From the *iWRITER* Staff

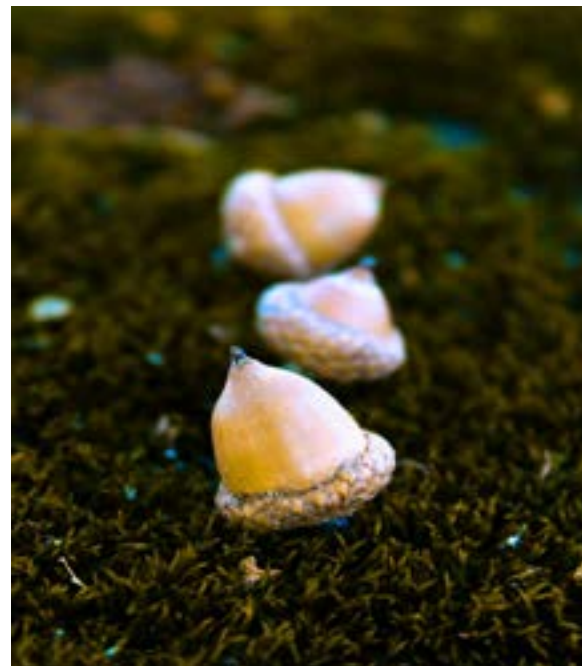
CITY-BUZZ

springtime city-buzz
spins to clairo and funky
jazz, slips between juniper,
june-bugs, amber fig-folds
children's waiting palms into
roly-poly's shaded beneath
acorn tops and stag beetle nests.

across my house, graveyards
begin to drip gold. school's
classmates posted up on their stories
to fake anniversaries and tarot cards
play me the upright devil.

i have yet to bite
into amethyst plum, i have yet
to crack our jade rings. really,
i am just missing home, really,
the worker bees die too soon.

my drunken knees still know nothing
but the crackle of midnight fistfuls of cotton
and bangsnaps. they know nothing
but lighthouses, ginger shots, myths,
mothers, and peach fuzz.



BY Sophie Yu

I WRITE to let my thoughts, feelings, and ideas spread across the paper. To form and create a story that can be told in any perspective, described with any words. Writing can create a whole new world.

THE BIRDS ARE FLYING

The birds are flying. See?
They flit and flutter, they are fast and mighty.
The hummingbirds drink the nectar. The nectar is their treasure.
What if we need nectar? Is it fair?
But life can't be fair, maybe it is?
When she smiles, I see the birds flying.

See? The birds are flying.
They are fast and mighty, they flit and flutter.
The nectar is their treasure. The hummingbirds drink the nectar.
Is it fair? What if we need nectar?
Maybe it is, but life can't be fair.
I see the birds flying, when she smiles.



BY Sanvi Pandit

I WRITE because writing is my way to share what I think and feel. Composing stories and poems helps me tell the world about myself without feeling scared.

Film Review: About Time

About Time is one of those rare films that sneaks up on you. At first glance, it's a romantic comedy with a quirky premise--time travel as a family inheritance. But beneath that lighthearted surface lies a deeply emotional meditation on love, loss, and what it truly means to live.

Domhnall Gleeson's portrayal of Tim is refreshingly vulnerable. He's not the suave, time-traveling hero we might expect, but rather a soft-spoken, awkward young man seeking a meaningful life. His love story with Mary, played by Rachel McAdams, is sweet and grounded, filled with those small, tender moments that feel wonderfully real. But the heart of the film isn't just their romance; it's Tim's relationship with his father, played with warmth and quiet wisdom by Bill Nighy. Their scenes together are among the most moving, offering a poignant look at how fathers and sons say goodbye without ever truly saying it.

What sets *About Time* apart is how it explores the idea of renewal. Time travel in this story isn't about changing history or fixing major mistakes; it's about appreciating each moment a little more. Tim learns to relive ordinary days not to improve them, but to see them differently. A frustrating commute becomes a chance to notice a stranger's smile. A bad day is softened by simply living it again, more gently. The film subtly reminds us that every day holds a chance to start over, to choose joy, to be present.

The cinematography captures both the cozy corners of home and the hustle of London, grounding the film in a space that feels both personal and familiar. The soundtrack lingers, just like the emotions the story stirs up, enhancing every quiet revelation and every moment of stillness.

About Time doesn't try too hard to be profound--and that's exactly why it is. It's a story about the magic in the mundane, and about how life, in all its messiness and beauty, is worth living fully the first time. It's the kind of movie that stays with you, not because of its time travel twist, but because it makes you want to call your parents and loved ones as you cherish every moment on this Earth.

BY Nia Shetty

I WRITE because of the joy I feel when I put a new idea down on paper. To be able to bring feelings and emotions to the reader, through ideas that I get to express.



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