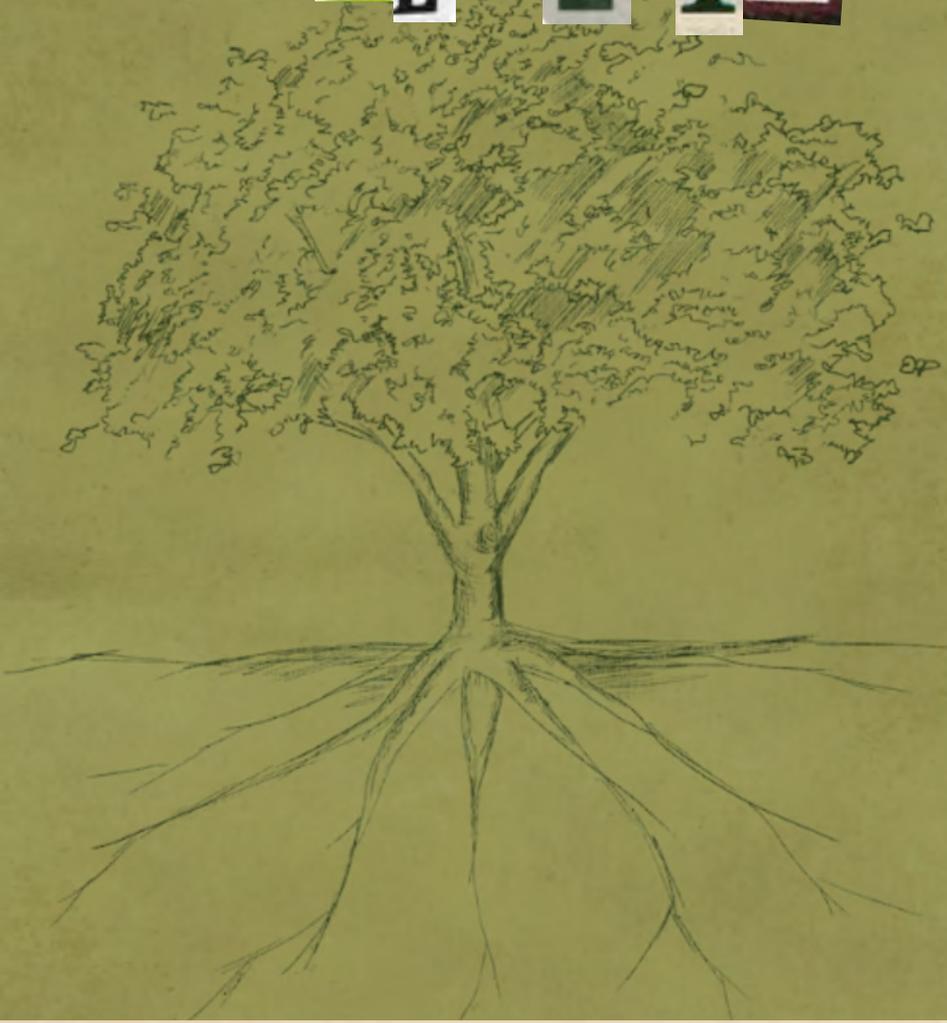


ROOT & REVERIE



Harvest International
November 2025

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An Ode to my Freshman Dorm by Emily Summers

Bare walls used to scream detailed stories of the tears soaked into them through the years.

Attempts to cover the mouths of the forgotten with BluTack-drenched posters and pictures of my beloved were all in vain;

The dread and frustration that rang constant out of each brick tore through any muzzle with a savage fury.

Each moment spent, like the girls before, absorbed into the spackle.

Nothing familial or friendly about the voices, they were all alien back then.

Soon I came to know them all by name.

Asking them questions.

Singing them songs.

Never did the rage simmer, nor the despair mend, and yet it began to sound like music.

The remaining posters preserved by a hopeful glimmer, fell one by one with each passing evening.

Reliance on shelves whose hands were constantly shaking.

Each memory fell into the ashes of the semester before.

When packing boxes, the walls gripped the remaining polaroids and sticky notes with the desperation of a mother clutching to her still born.

The walls empty once again.

My screams will soon ring in the next tenants' ears.



View from the Same Window

by Emily Summers

My orange cat sits and looks outside the window daily.

Rain or shine, night or day.

He sits on the same spot on the same floor looking
outside the same window every single day.

And yet every time I draw the curtains he comes running
with the speed only a small orange cat carries.

I wonder what he sees? His yellow-green eyes flickering
back and forth around the same backyard for the
millionth time.

I envy his ability to be delighted and titillated by every
new bug or flying bird that appears in his mystical
backyard.

I wonder if he ever gets bored of looking out at the same
view- I know I would, the same trees the same lawn
chairs and rocks and concrete.

Cats must possess an ability to make the mundane
magical and the most plain days full of joy and whimsy.

I will try to live like this. I will try to come running with
the enthusiasm of an orange cat every time my days
draw the same curtain open for the millionth time.

Maybe I'll notice a new bird or bug I haven't yet seen.



The Creation by Pen

I sit at a desk.
My head held low
With an empty expression
With voids for eyes.

From them sprout twin rivers,
Their current runs across my cheeks
And drip down into a vial.

Within my hand is a quill.
An instrument of making
And creating worlds
From imagination.

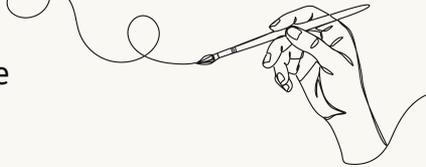
Creation is my calling.
The artistry behind the words on a page
And the snap of a photo
And the stroke of a brush against a canvas,
Creation is the root of my humanity.

My tears are my ink,
And memory, the page
With which I bring forth life.
I am reborn in the words I write.

They are my joy and grief.
The loss and success,
Pain and love that wraps around me
Like a blanket I wish to share.

My art is a seed
That grows to a garden
To banish the colorless world before me
And replace it with vibrant life and a path ahead.

From my art I am a husk no more.
The twin rivers remain.
For where my tears flow
My art will grow.



The Fox by Pen

A body of tired amber hues
Cut through blades of grass.
A trickster creature who soon
Will grasp the sun.

It is a creature of dark
With a coat of solar blessing
And flashing teeth with a smirk
With paws, muddied from eternal living.

The passage of time
Cannot wash away its mask.
For it was never allowed to shine
In this world on the attack.

Beneath are eyes of grief.
A bundle of stars
Longing for escape and relief
From its oldest fears.

Left alone it begins to ask:
“What will I be
When there is no mask?
Who will stare back at me?”

Sun-touched leaves begin to fall
Along their feet
As they ponder on a name to be called,
Names that taste bitter-sweet.



Identity.

A foreign concept

Just like destiny:

The fate of stars one cannot accept.

Warmth.

A crack

Against a sun-kissed sky

They stand at the line of light and dark.

With it,

The trickster crumbles

A new world opened

For this new being.

Freedom.

A magic of fantasy

To free themselves of

The words that once shaped their fiction.

With every new step,

Mischief, sorrow, and pain

Are left behind.

The trickster's grave, a mark of a creature's golden path.

The Healer by Pen

I have yet to go out
In this world I thought I'd live without.
Planes that slice the sky
And stars of dreams and wishes made.

In each day
Every step I take
Will be made of
All of me.

The leaves that crunch beneath
My feet
And the gentle touch
of a wind's lone breeze.

Never have I thought
I'd breathe
And see
Past mistakes, again hopes once lost.

Grass tickles between my fingers,
A calming amidst forgotten prayers.
Words that cut like blades
Are softened with what you say.

You have turned my arsenal
Into a garden, a sentinel
The softness of a rose petal
And thorns to protect and improve mettle.

I didn't want to be anywhere,
Now I want to be everywhere.
I'd travel far
To be where you are.



Never Forget Who You Are

by Fernanda López-Bracuto

I grew up hearing stories about my ancestors' emigration from Italy and how they left hunger and poverty behind to start fresh on South American shores. Their extraordinary experience gave me the courage to follow my dreams. I never imagined I would ever leave Argentina and become an emigrant myself—yet one day I packed my things and moved away.

Interestingly, emigrating is not always about chasing better opportunities. Choosing to start fresh and far away from home is sometimes—like in my case—simply related to an unexplainable thirst for adventure. Yet, achieving this dream doesn't make leaving your country and your loved ones any less painful. My own journey showed me the true plights of being an immigrant, yet the most valuable lesson I've learned through my ancestors' experience was the importance of keeping our heritage alive—to maintain our identities and build our present, while honoring our past.

Although my great-grandparents quickly learned Spanish in Argentina, they kept their Italian and passed it down to the next generation. They adapted to the new country and wanted their children to grow up speaking the language but didn't want them to lose their roots. They respected the language and the people of the country which had given them a chance, while also maintaining their native tongue fluent in the family. They respectfully acculturated and integrated into the new community without losing their own identity. That kind of pride and conviction inspired me.

I first moved to Mexico and lived in Guadalajara for a year. The similar culture and same language made it easy to adapt, meet new people, and relate to many traditions and habits—family and friends were as important to the Mexican community as they were to me as an Argentinean. We had common ground that kept me feeling more at home—I always had a complete sense of belonging.

I later came to the United States, knowing that adapting to a completely different culture, trying to find a job as an undocumented foreigner, and living illegally and in constant fear of deportation were going to be big obstacles. Yet, despite all the hateful reactions and anti-immigrant sentiments I endured, I never doubted who I was. I've always had strong ties with my heritage, my language, and my culture—extremely proud of my Argentinean origins and background. Emigrating to another country and experiencing prejudice and intolerance did not make me lose myself in the process. I knew that no place or person would ever alter my sense of identity.

I am grateful to my family. Thanks to the emphasis they always put into honoring our ancestors and where we came from, I always had immense pride, love, and respect for my roots. Migrating wasn't easy, but no hardships ever managed to make me forget my culture and my past. I honored my Argentinean roots and identity, always carrying with me the immense pride of an amazing heritage—making sure it always stays alive.



Growing Into Myself by Tristin Sullins

I began in quiet places.
Cold mornings, fog thick in the air,
a small figure walking to school alone.
The world felt wide,
and I moved through it gently,
books held close like a shield.
I learned to listen before I spoke,
to watch before stepping forward.

As the years passed,
I found warmth.
Voices opened around me
and I opened it in return.
Friends appeared like early sunlight
breaking through fog.
Laughter taught me that belonging
can arrive slowly,
but it arrives.

From that warmth
I began to grow.
Confidence settled into my bones.
I learned the shape of my own voice.
I learned that I could choose
where I stand
and who I stand with.

Now I look back
and see how every version of me
led to the next.
Quiet child, blooming teen,
the person I am becoming
rooted in all three.



When the House was Full by Tristin Sullins

Thanksgiving was the one day
the house truly felt alive.
Family arrived early,
arms full of food and laughter,
voices overlapping in the warm kitchen.

My aunts and uncles moved together
chopping and stirring and tasting
filling the air with the smell of home.
Turkey roasting. Pies cooling.
Sweet potatoes caramelizing.
Collard greens simmering slow.

I loved drifting from room to room
catching bits of jokes
being pulled into conversations.
Cousins crowded every hallway
older and louder
always in motion.
I never ran out of people to follow.
For once I did not feel alone.

Desserts lined the counters
pumpkin and pecan and cherry and sweet potato
cheesecake shining like treasure.
We passed plates to one another
along with stories.

Thanksgiving meant warmth
borrowed but real.
A moment of belonging
gathered around a table
overflowing with food and love
a feeling I still keep in my bones.

Where My Roots Began

by Tristin Sullins

I remember when November felt colder.
Mornings were fogged and grey
and the air bit deep enough
to make my chest sting like glass.

Back then I walked alone.
Sweaters were never warm enough
and books were the only friends
who stayed beside me without needing words.
The farmland stretched wider than it does now,
before the apartments arrived
and before the cul de sac forgot
the smell of livestock in the morning.

I learned to swim in 2006,
alone in the Alta Loma pool,
chlorine stinging my eyes
the way loneliness stung my heart.
I wanted friends so badly it ached
but childhood stayed silent.

Then high school came
and something softened.
I bloomed among laughter
and holiday air bright with voices.
Inside jokes warmed me
more than sweaters ever could.

I grew from silence and noise,
from cold mornings and warm memories.
I carry every November within me.



Family Ties by Jameela Abdullah

Grandma, grandpa

I'm still learning to laugh through life's curious hurdles

There's been a lot of rain along my path

You were the ones I ran to on cloudy days

You were my only true shelter, strong and steady

With an aching heart, I look at your photos

I miss you

I would do anything for one more hug from you and to say
goodbye.

Memory by Jameela Abdullah

You are not alone

You are not broken

Stop forgetting who you are

You came from royalty

You have a purpose to fulfill

Listen and serve

Stop forgetting who you are

You are loved

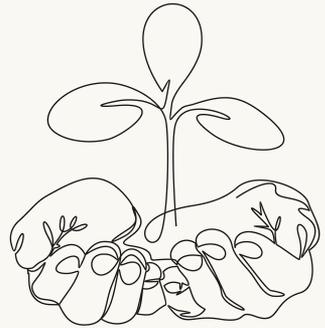
You are forgiven

Doubt and circumstances don't define you

Let laughter and kindness be your hallmarks

Let compassion and resilience be your legacies

Keep pressing forward.



The Response

by Jameela Abdullah

Form, color, line, and space:

Be my lifeline

My Valentine

My justice

My safe place

With every breath, you satisfy and liberate

With every brushstroke, I am redeemed and restored

Oh, how you heal the heart

Oh, how you clear the mind

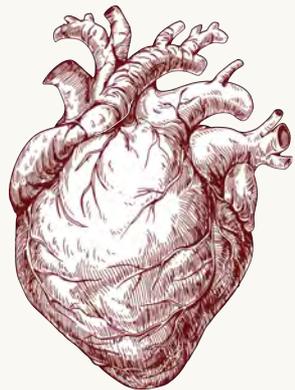
Work your wonders on the world:

Create harmony,

sanity,

and

love.





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