

StoneSoup



SPECIAL POETRY ISSUE

The Golden Elephant

by Analise Braddock

Searching for Bow and Arrows

by Tatiana Rebecca Shrayor

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StoneSoup

Writing and art by kids, for kids


Editor's Note

In our double summer issue, we are thrilled to share not one but two books of poetry that placed second in our 2019 Book Contest: *The Golden Elephant* by Analise Braddock and *Searching for Bow and Arrows* by Tatiana Rebecca Shrayner—two equally talented yet entirely distinct young poets.

Braddock's *The Golden Elephant* is a wild circus of a book populated with elephants, mice, space beasts, clowns, teachers, strongmen, lion tamers, and planets. Her poems are profound, contradictory ("You are always never alone"), dark, strange, and always playful ("Tigers are boss. / Leave them alone."). Reading her poems makes me acutely aware of the mysterious relationship between language—grammar, rhythm, rhyme, and word choice—and thought.

Shrayner's *Searching for Bow and Arrows* is about the weight of history—one's own personal, familial history as well as the history of politics and nations—and a nostalgic longing for a homeland that both is and isn't home. In her spare, formal poems, Shrayner probes the thin veil between the past and present, focusing on the natural world as a bridge between the two: "Drops / of saltwater / arranged / like letters / on an ancient scroll."

Till September!



On the cover:
Sea to Sky (iPhone XR)
by Claire Lu, 13
Portola Valley, CA

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About the Author

Analise Braddock lives in Katonah, New York, and is nine years old. She has two cats, two guinea pigs, and 16 dogs ... just kidding on one of them. Join my adventure!



On the cover:
Detail from *Fall* (acrylics)
by Alyssa Wu, 12
Pleasanton, CA



The Golden Elephant

by Analise Braddock

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SATURN'S GRAND LEAVE

Half sobbing, half heartbroken it left.

Rings faded, color lost in a twinkle.

It dipped and bowed and pleaded its goodbye.

As it walked away it said I'll be back someday.

It came back indeed.

All gray and shriveled down.

A few craters lay on it.

Its atmosphere was hard as ice.

It orbited differently.

For its gas had gone.

WE SHALL PLAY

We shall play till day turns to night and night to day,
till the planets explode and crumbly bits glide down to Earth,
till the eerie glow in the basement is gone,
till flying cars dip and soar.

We shall play till the world's last light is blown out . . .

By the lips of someone who has been playing for a thousand
years and beyond.

THE WORLD IS WAITING

I know the world is waiting.

I live in a stump inside a tree,

Ready for people to see.

I'll glow like the moon.

I'll dance and sway over meadows.

The earth feels like home.

THE BABY AND THE ROCKING CHAIR

There sat the baby in her glory spot.

She came every day to admire it.

It lived in the woods with no owners of its own.

The baby blinked and admired the moon.

She remembered her name, Daisy, as in mama.

Vines grew around the baby's glory spot.

It started to break down.

Eventually it was nothing.

Daisy will always remember the rocking chair in the woods.

THE IMAGINATION

The imagination is always misplaced.

But you got what key you got.

Not changing a thing.

Stick it up a pickle tree or in your knee.

Maybe get it stung by a bee.

It's always getting lost.

Brainstorm a bit but won't get you that far.

Can't be chosen or recreated.

It gets stuck in a hole when you're down in deep thinking.

Because Doctor Imagination says no today.

Can I try to remake my imagination?

I could. I would. I should.

Oh but then again you get what you got.

WATER

It's mysterious indeed.

It will rise and fall, and people will depend on it.

If you listen closely you can hear them whispering and the
ocean singing.

At the bottom of dreary the salty water makes my eyes burn.

Deep in the nothings of the earth are where it lives.

At the break of dawn, it rustles and rolls up and splashes the
world.

It has a question like everything else.

Its hopelessness and so much question makes people
question harder.

But it remains unanswered.

A mystery indeed.

THE LOVE DRAWING

A piece of a young girl's love

Awaiting another for the heart of the stone

The drawing will be made when the right hearts are found

It will lie unspoken until that day

A part is found of a loving child who cares from mouse to
elephant

They are out there I know

But we have to be patient and wait

Who knows how long it will take

Maybe infinity

Let's find out

EARRINGS

Dangle
and drop
as lonely
as can be

wish for
friends

just like
themselves

if only
they could
see
the other
side.

THE BATTLE UNDERGROUND

No one quite bad or good today

Devil and angel both fight to show they aren't prey

A swollen-head angel bit devil's ear and crunched

And it split into a halo the devil swallowed

Then devil was being good, and angel was being bad

DAYS

The nights are long

The days are short

A breeze is blown

A day is a day.

It can't be relived

Make today today

Tomorrow is tomorrow

The gray is space or a planet.

A cold breeze sweeps by

It is time to return home.

THE HEART OF THE EARTH

It's old still and quiet.

No heart at all.

Just a place.

The emptiness makes my heart hollow.

I feel it's been stolen.

Hurry there is not much time.

NEVER

Never out or the future in

Down the bowels of the abyss the heart will be in

But the body is out

You are always never alone

FIGHT THE FEAR

Fear can hurt but it doesn't compare.

A fire cracks inside my head.

Eerie noises echo in my stomach.

But only one way . . .

Bash it and clash it till it cowers in the corner and

Raises the white flag and says

I surrender.

STAND UP AND NOTICE

Save the Earth
not cave it down

Stop doing that
Earth is breaking down

People will be booing on you
when animals go extinct

When animals go extinct,
the world is a joke

You may think they're foolish but no
It could be the other way around

Remember this
We need animals

NOTICE THE GREATNESS

Tigers are boss.

Leave them alone.

Tigers are a sister and brother to baby pebbles.

They are the award of everything.

They'll take a bite of you as quick as lightning streaks and
flashes across the sky.

They'll toss you into moss.

Don't take a bite of them.

Watch out for your actions or stripes will disintegrate.

THE JUGGLE MAN

One day I went to the juggle place and on a shelf sat the juggle man.

He said to me you took a juggle now give it back to me.

The owner of the juggle place said to go home and then she called the police.

The police said outside there is young poor Sally with balls in hand but cannot juggle.

Then the police said on a Monday you took a suitcase on Tuesday you took a toothbrush and on Friday you poured milk.

What a bad girl you have been.

THE WILD CIRCUS

The unspeakable juggler on a unicycle tamed the lion.

The cunning lion tamer flipped and turned on the trapeze bar.

The lively trapeze artist rode on the unicycle and juggled.

The creepy clown lifted strongman's weights.

The sweaty strongman tried to scare kids with his silly costume.

The vicious tiger who jumped through the fire hoop sat in the cage with the hungry lion.

The next day the circus was not looking so good.

Not at all.

The tiger and lion were now rats.

The trapeze and strong man became slobbery pigs and all they wanted to do was eat.

The tightrope walker and juggler on the unicycle transformed to white sheets.

With a pop and a rumble, the creepy clown and lion tamer
became pesky flies buzzing around.

An awful day for the circus indeed.

Somehow the next day everything was back to normal.

Somehow.

THE GOLDEN ELEPHANT

Made for the world.

Made for a clown.

Made to be hung upside down.

It can speak.

It can see.

Not better nor lesser than any human being.

It will put on sunglasses.

It will tie a shoe.

It will dive in a pool.

As perfect as perfect will be.

It yawns, it sleeps.

Made for fear.

Made for a snack.

They run and laugh.

They sing and play.

All when you are looking away.

MR MERRYWETHER

His tufts of beard are very hairy.

His nose is very runny.

His bitter jokes are pretty funny.

His teeth are pearly white.

He looks like he has an ounce of might.

His math is super hard.

His kids are usually tardy.

Everybody wishes he was their teacher . . .

On the day of the year he serves cupcakes and tells his bitter
tales.

LOW AND HIGH

Far up high in the sky lives the space beast.

He gobbles down food all day.

Oh, how far the stars reach is how much he eats the people
say.

The beat of his roar can break down a door.

For mother nature and Earth's elements it will be gone.

And now appear somewhere else.

Deep down where its force is unbeatable and all night.

In the scaly reef trenches they no belong in life and light.

Darkness and peace are out of control.

The bowl now empty he eats no more.

His voice is a boar and grumble stirred in.

He no belong in the deep sea or long, wide outer space kin.

IN A PARTY

Spin! Spins the disk

Confetti in my face

Swing my leg

Beg to stop

With a colorful song

Mouth worn out shoes

We dance in dread till we are read by another

THE CODE

The universe she is in has a code
719?
Oh, she knows it
The code is corrupt
The trees are shaking
Things are glitching
They're moving together
No, the code is corrupt
The universe is corrupt
It is falling apart

THE MANSION

The bed waits lonely
Not one visit
The pink color has a story
Not a flower is wilting
A basket and a bench
A stone purple path
We are all moving in
The bed squeaks
The table shakes
But inside it is broken down
A house haunted

THE TRUTH

You may be big
You might have beauty
You pull your face you smear your lips
To look pretty
Are you sure that is the right word
More like vain

RUBBER ELASTIC

Fly like a slingshot.

Boing.

You carry it around yes way.

You carry it in your hair.

On a hot summer day.

A ball of sweat rolls down your neck.

You know it is time for rubber elastic.

After all everyone loves it.

BELLY OF THE BEAST

It's the guard of the non-rubbed spot
The belly
It will hiss and scratch to get its way
Till he wins as protector
His roar isn't mighty
It is hairy and soft
It will run and charge
Break and bend
Hit and whack
Bat and claw
When this happens, the singing of Earth stops
The people who rub no like violence
The Earth no like it either
The biter, hisser, scratcher, biter, and clawer no like it either
He can't control himself
Violence is no one's friend
Not even a cat's

GIMME A CALL

Gimme a call in France,
Australia, Europe

Gimme me a call in Hawaii or Texas

Gimme me a call in where I can sunbathe
I will sit in the beach with salt filling moist air
While water splashes up to my ankles
And wait for my call

Gimme me a call in Alaska
While washing my metal torso
I will watch the northern lights while waiting for a ring

Gimme me a call in part of Asia
Where hail plunks on my chest
Clang

Gimme me a call where I am polishing my chest
from hailstorm damages

Gimme me a call in Spain
On my computer brain

FIRE PARK WATER PARK AMUSEMENT PARK

They each are amazing
Splendid
Every day

Pleasing little kids

But they don't understand

They fight every day to get their way

To be the best of the best amusement park

One says

CAN'T

Can't be believed
Can't be done

If it was believed and it was done
It would never be

The ripples in the mirror fade away

A person can see it inside but
It's not on the outside

Can't be believed
Be done

UNEARTHLY HUM

Forget about me
That's the way it is supposed to be.

Forget my soup
Forget my delicious fruit loops.

Forget my voice like an unearthly hum
Going through walls to your ears.

Real magic indeed
Forget my talents, my art. Me.

THE SALTY ORB

I am on patrol for orb

The gold and bold one will go to me

I search high and low on the go

Driving through I check the dew flowers

I rolled out far to find my dues

No gold balls

Seven days later I have full vision on

For I have found it

It feels salty

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my second-grade teacher, Mrs. Buckley, for teaching in a way that was determining and inspiring.



About the Author

Born in 2007 in Boston, Tatiana Rebecca Shraye is a sixth-grader at the Michael Driscoll School in Brookline, Massachusetts. Her original poems, essays, and translations of Russian poetry have appeared in *Amazing Kids*, *Creative Kids*, *Four Centuries*, and *Stone Soup*. In 2019 she won second place in the *Stone Soup* book contest. She plays violin and trumpet and lives with her older sister and parents near Coolidge Corner in Brookline.



On the cover:
Detail from *Fall* (Samsung Nook)
by Vivian Torres, 9
Chicago, IL



Searching for Bow and Arrows

Poems
by Tatiana Rebecca Shrayer

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POEMS ABOUT CAPE COD

I. RIDING TO THE CAPE ON A FRIDAY EVENING

It was a hot and windy evening
When we were driving to Cape Cod.
All I could do was chew a piece of gum;
I was so bored my head was spinning.

But then my window started to turn
Into the most incredible picture,
But the picture wasn't a picture:
A night sky full of stars.

I saw the bridge, old and rundown.
Moonlight made the trees glow.
I was so happy: the canal down below
Promised that I was almost home.

II. SHELL WORDS AT FOREST BEACH

This shell
reminds me
of a tiny gold rose.

Shaped like
a broken
spiral staircase,

Outside
it feels like
a soft young chestnut,

Inside it shines
like a sunset
over Nantucket Sound.

If I entered
I'd see drops
of saltwater

Arranged
like letters
on an ancient scroll.

Holding my shell
I feel
like I'm climbing

The tallest
tower
in the world.

III. SEARCHING FOR BOW AND ARROWS

Because I wanted to feel like an Amazon
I asked my father to build me a bow with arrows.
We went to the nearby woods that overlook
Forest Beach in the village of South Chatham.

My father, sister, and I followed
A wavy uphill path to the clearing
Where we found young oak trees
With pointy, strong branches.

We sawed off three branches
That looked like they would suffice.
We carved them and sanded them,
And we bent them till they could sing.

By the time we had finished tying the string,
The evening chill had descended.
We shot our arrows into the darkening sky
Where the stars scampered like red foxes.

IV. THE FISHING BOAT

On a cloudy Monday morning
Bearded fathers with children
Trekking to the docks
Carrying plastic buckets
And beat-up coolers
To store the catch.

As we boarded the rust-eaten boat
I, a nine-year-old city girl in glasses,
Saw young deserted men
Chopping squid,
And wondered if they
Even had a life on the shore.

We set sail, and I heard the captain
Speak in his vehement voice:
“Bait your hooks, hold your lines,”
And then I caught a glimpse of Hyannis
Dissolving in the distance
Like a homeland I’ve never visited.

V. FIRST TORNADO

On Cape Cod a leaden day
Descended over the bay.
Lights were flickering in the church,
The wind ripped through the birch,
The rain tore through the cloud,
Thunder and lightning came around.
Then it stopped and all was dark,
Thousands of trees were down,
The steeple was lying on the ground
Like an open battle wound.
Mother Nature said its word:
First tornado on Cape Cod.

HOPE

Hope is a friend
or maybe a foe.
It carries me
across the treacherous ice
and the darkening sky.
It watches me
with glistening eyes
knowing me better than I.

LONELINESS

Imagine the loneliness of a crab . . .
It takes its anger out
by pinching swimmers' feet.
It hides under rocks,
scared and shocked,
waiting to be caught.
Do people remember
that they hurt a lonely being
after it's been captured, dried,
and mounted on the wall
like the head of a deer?

THE JEWISH GRAVEYARD

I made a journey from Boston to St. Petersburg
to visit my forebears at a Jewish graveyard.
On the way we stopped at a little bake shop
with tired women selling day-old bread.

My father and I entered a rickety gate
in front of the old synagogue.
A stooped man with a wheelbarrow asked
if we needed water to wash the graves.

Wash the graves once a year? I wondered.
To connect with ancestors I'd never met?
To speak to them, to hear their wisdom,
to keep the memory awake?

On the way back, we crossed a long grey bridge
over railroad tracks and abandoned factories.
I was thinking: would Russia be in my dreams
if my father hadn't left forever?

THE WAKING OF SPRING

A sprout comes up, a raindrop falls,
The shadow follows us around,
The buds are born and singing too,
The beauty of the spring is here with you.

MEMORIES CAUGHT IN SEAWEED

Wet feet on the sand
Touching the seaweed.

Memories dissolve in the tide,
People toss wet seaweed, as if it's a joke
To lose one's memories.

Yet when the seaweed dries in the sand,
It forms a grid
And returns to life . . .
Memory restored.

SOMBER KEY

I open and close the same
tall supple door,
hang on my frozen gold hook,
and wait for my life to change.

I get placed into a large
maroon bag and lie there,
wistful and alone.

The bag opens.
A vivid light
shines through
my empty body.

But then I fall
onto the cold white floor.
The maroon bag walks
out and I know
I'm lost forever.

THE GHOST OF FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Walking up stairs where Dostoevsky walked before,
Looking through doors where he looked before,
Sitting in chairs where he sat before,
Mourning his young son Aleksey.
Ringing doorbells Dostoevsky rang before,
Looking at pages he wrote before,
Shadows of him filling the air,
As a white night falls on the Baltic shore.

MY SICILIAN TRUMPET TEACHER

Each time he comes to our house
To give me a trumpet lesson,
He arrives in a large SUV
And tells us his family
Hasn't visited in ages.

He drinks an espresso,
Spreads pages of music
On the stand,
And instead of playing,
He talks about Sicily.

Mount Etna in the distance,
His grandfather's old village,
Olives and rosemary ...
The only place
He feels at home.

THE OLD TENNIS RACQUETS ON THE WALL

My relatives once played
with these old tennis racquets.
Their souls bounce on the strings
like scraps of forgotten music
while their hands grip new handles
on a star-paved tennis court.

WHEN LIFE GOES DOWNHILL

When life goes downhill
you start to drift.

When the clouds push
you run down the slope.

When rain lashes you
seek cover
in a dark cave
with a shimmering light.

WALKS TO THE THREE WATERS

Running with Stella
the silver poodle
who hunts rabbits
and chews on clams.

Taking in the salt
and letting it go
while the sea breeze
refuses to slow.

Talking about election politics
and getting bored
going to sleep
when the stars are restored.

MY GRANDFATHER'S RUSSIAN TYPEWRITER

He wrote novels and poems
On that old, grey pony.
But now it sits in our shoe closet
Next to a pair of old rain boots.
One afternoon I find it on the kitchen table
Released from its case,
Buttons dusty yet ink still wet.
I insert a blank page
And type awkwardly in Russian.

THREE POEMS ABOUT CHILE

I. SANTIAGO

Santiago in the afternoon,
the Andes built
with rocks and
moon,
o I wonder
if I glide
I'm coming home
soon.

II. LAST NIGHT OF THE WORLD

Last night of the world,
New Year's Eve
in the mountains of Pucón.
A local girl and a local boy
slaughtering a lamb
the tourists will eat
for New Year's supper
as the volcano
erupts with fear.

III. VIÑA DEL MAR

Today
I went to the
beach and swam
in the stormy Pacific.
I touched dead jellyfish
on the sand,
then took a bus to the hotel.
Out the window
I saw rusty cars,
tired people in corner stores,
buildings with graffiti,
and peeling paint.
It was a living city.

SNOW IN THE DISTANCE

I walk down the grey path
And I see the snowflakes coming down,
Light as the sun, dark as the moon.
I see a man shoot a deer,
I see a girl streaked in tears,
And I wonder why the snow
Is so peaceful and clear.

THE GIFT OF A BOOK

Books are alluring,
their words flow across
the printed page,
coming alive with rage,
with melody, wisdom, sadness.
Pushkin, Frost, Steinbeck . . .
Books are pages, chapters
from the story of love and loss.

THE EMPTY COP

Once a cop, now he mows grass.
He was once fearless and brave,
now he fishes off the bridge and
sells oysters to local bars.

Not his shiny patrol car
but his wife's old sedan,
not a sheriff's star
but sticky sand.

He still dreams of his siren as
the lawn mower rumbles.
Rich people's gardens are his
last assignment.

TRUST

Trust is like leaving a dog alone
and knowing it won't knock over your pawn
on the forgotten chessboard.
Trust is believing love won't last
but knowing that hope will go on
always reborn.

TRAIN TRACKS AT SOBIBÓR

On a spring morning we arrived from Lublin
to witness what was left of the death camp;
a rusty peeling sign came into view
it screamed: "Sobibór."

The Nazis destroyed evidence of the gas chambers.
What was left were the grounds
through which Jewish bodies walked
to take the shower of death.

As I stood on the platform
and touched the tracks,
I felt like a little girl named Hanna
looking for her murdered parents.

THE CAST IRON STAIRCASE

In the market town of Yelets
in the south of Russia,
stands an old high school for women
that survived wars and destruction.

Everything in the building has been restored,
except the cast iron staircase
with curving steps
and black, polished railings.

Everything has been lost.
Only this cast iron staircase remembers
the light steps of the young women
who ran down, clutching their new diplomas,
dreaming about freedom.

THE FOG'S MYSTERIOUS CLEARING

The morning dew crept in
As the blackbirds began to sing.

The sky was covered with fog
As the coyote chased the small dog.

Soon the mystery was gone
And the morning sunrise began.

And I wondered, greeting the day:
Who cleared the fog away?

A DOUBLE-HEADED MAN

Very clever but makes no sense,
He says he's always on the fence,
Both a friend and an enemy at war
Though standing in the corridor,
Quiet and peaceful with hints of love,
Both minds have something from above.

MOPING ALONG MUDDY RIVER

On a cold winter morning I have a class
At the Museum of Fine Arts.
The frosty wind awakens me.
I turn to the river and there,
Like a still life created overnight:
Muddy ice, shaped like dirty brushes,
A mallard crossing to the other side,
A plastic bottle floating in the water hole.
As I run up the granite steps
I know what to paint today.

THE GRADUATES

I was ten. I stayed on the Upper West Side,
An old hotel with dusty paintings in gilded frames.
My father kept telling me not to lose anything
And not to be on my smartphone all the time.

I was on the third floor, not too far from the ground,
A view of a bird's nest and dark alleyways
Cluttered with trash cans and filled
With loud music for the graduates.

As the day unfolded, aging parents woke up
And came down to take their coffee
At the French bistro Nice Matin,
Where croissants were warm and omelets runny.

As I watched these parents at breakfast,
I thought they looked both anxious and glad
And I wondered if they too felt like graduates
Starting a new adventure.

Soon these graduates will dissolve
Into a big new world, a hidden one
Beneath the water's edge—
That I have yet to see, have yet to love.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my loved ones for supporting me, especially my grandfather and mentor, David Shrayer-Petrov, and all the writers and readers in our family.

HONOR ROLL

Welcome to the *Stone Soup* Honor Roll. Every month, we receive submissions from hundreds of kids from around the world. Unfortunately, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

ART

Christian Goh, 12
Nolan Mealer, 10
Sage Millen, 12

FICTION

Antara Gangwal, 12
Celia Miller Pitt, 13
Kai Wells, 11
Miles Wright, 12
Jiaji Yang, 12

NONFICTION

Leon Bui, 11
Sunshine Mitchell, 12
Renee Shi, 10

POETRY

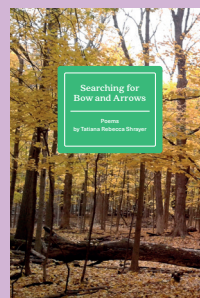
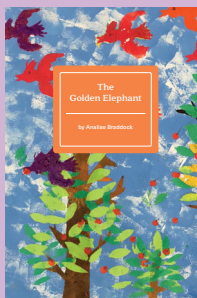
Laurel Aronian, 12
Benjamin Ding, 8
Mackenzie Duan, 13
Quinton Fitzgerald, 9
Anyu Geist, 13
Oisin Stephens, 10
Andi Jo Wroblewski, 9

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