

Senior Division, Poetry
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Now Is Not The Time

The selfie was no longer our go-to display of beauty. Now, smartphone cameras scanned not for aesthetic value, but the weight of our hearts, our interactions with the world. The same technology that produced lab-grown meat could replicate intricate suits of flowers so complex and delicate they could fit the body like skin.

Initially, social media was on board. The skins trended on Twitter while TikTok tried making its own filter but the algorithms kept missing the point. This was a measure of how we'd lived, not how we looked, expressed in photosynthesis. We had no control over what flowers we'd get – to engage with the process was to trust it.

Your flowers were deep blue, they shimmered to purple and back, the centres bright yellow. You said you'd never felt more yourself, blushed a flash of poppies when our eyes met. You asked me to join you, finding myself head-to-toe in forget-me-nots with undulating waves of midnight blue.

We stood, shimmered together for a moment, your blooms slowly tracking the sun, mine still thrumming in deliberation. My irises turned marigold, followed the curve of your shoulder as its petals tasted a change in the air. You turned, brushed a blade of grass from my cheek and said

now is not the time to fear the bees.