

There is an urban legend that, as a boy, George Washington damaged his father's prized cherry tree with a hatchet. Upset, George's father confronted him directly. As the story goes, young George replied, "I cannot tell a lie." He confessed to chopping the tree.

Each time I hear that story, I picture the cherry tree in the front yard of my childhood home. Situated in the corner of a busy garden, the tree grew with me through the years. And, as they fell, its dainty petals graced the grass I grew up in. To me, the cherry tree represents comfort. So, I could never help but ask myself: what compelled little George to so carelessly wield his weapon?

I imagine the hatchet's blade swinging backward, reflecting rosy speckles below as it glimmers in mid-March sun. Just as the cherry tree's flesh braces for impact, a chill of iron slices into its fibrous trunk. Wounded, the bark lets out an exasperated sigh. Its cellulose cowers.

I wonder if George meant to harm the cherry tree. Perhaps he got carried away, mistaking the hungry cry of cardinal fledglings for an audience, egging him on. I'm partial to the promise of spring — its gift of warmth and its whispered "Welcome back" that bends the stems of unfurling tulips. But this doesn't mean the harsh cold of winter is so quickly forgotten.

For this publication of *Iris*, our team has cultivated a specially-themed Spring edition. This time around, in its tales of everything from rejoice to resentment, *Iris* asserts that spring is host to more than daffodils and delight. Our writers remind us, in fact, that the season births thorned honey-locust and anguish, too.

Chloe Lyda dares, **Can You Handle the Heat of These Poems?** Stuck in transitional spring and begging for summer sun, she reflects on the transitions love endures — its beginnings sweet as peaches, its endings smudged in clay. Sadie Randall authors **what shall i do**, in which she questions the complex nature of familial nostalgia and, in her decision to "smile at the rain", assigns new meaning to April showers. Then, in **Poems that Hurt**, Lexi Toufas shows that stark pain can coexist alongside flip-flops and bird calls in a multidimensional spring.

With her *Iris* writing debut, Kim Salac sends us **Adrift**. This screenplay, set in outer space, demonstrates a cycle beyond earthly seasons — that of birth and sacrifice. In **Savoring My Cosmic Latte**, Pasha McGuigan leans into uncertainty, and notices as joy mixes with sadness to form the color of the universe: "A warm, boring, in the middle beige". Also finding peace in slightly-dulled sweetness, Juliana Callen explores **The Effect of Valentine's Day on Shortbread Cookies**. With the methodology of a scientist, she finds of life and baking: "It is a messy procedure, but flawless". Finally, Lulu Jastaniah brings us **Signs of Life** — through the coldest moments in life and winter, we can grasp tightly to a "terracotta truth" of hope.

I'd like to think little George was young and naive, oblivious to the cherry tree's charm; that unaware of the promise of spring, he simply made a mistake. But the more I reconsider, I realize hatchet-wielding George may have been onto something after all. In the aftermath of winter's trials — as branches are weighed down by snow and people are weighed down by worry — maybe spring arrives just in time for us to let it all out. A canvas for pent-up frustrations, I think the season invites us: swing the hatchet. Break the bark. But leave the tree standing, confess to the deed, and watch as the scarred cherry tree heals over time.