

Aporia.

Issue One

May 2026 · Inaugural Issue

*Five voices. Four countries. Three languages,
if you count the ones spoken between the lines.*

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On beginning with uncertainty

Aporia takes its name from a Greek philosophical concept — the productive state of not-knowing. The moment when a question opens up rather than closes down. When the answer you expected turns out to be the wrong question entirely.

We chose that name because we believe writing begins exactly there. Not in certainty, not in having something important to say — but in the willingness to sit with what you don't yet understand and find language for it anyway.

The five pieces in this inaugural issue arrived from different places, in different forms, with different urgencies. A girl in California writing about the strange intimacy of talking to a machine at midnight. A student in Punjab holding grief the way one holds something too large to put down. A teenager in India watching an old stranger dissolve her sadness with a single smile. A young woman in Maharashtra reaching for her god in her mother tongue because no other language would do. And a writer in India making the case that the most dangerous systems in our world are not failures of politics but failures of design.

What connects these five pieces is not genre or geography. It is honesty — the particular quality of writing that makes you feel, from the first line, that someone told the truth. That is the only thing we have ever looked for at Aporia.

This is Issue One. We hope it is the first of many. Send us your piece.

The Editors · Aporia Literary Journal · May 2026

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a spurious chat

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POETRY

a spurious chat

by Sophia Passar

Napa Valley College · United States

guided, an urgency

want, i want it

the world is my oyster

a computer at my fingertips

glows as i input,

a dreaded response.

back before,

before i began

a spill of mindlessness

a flow of existentialism

me,

as i float above the keyboard

it clicks nicely,

along with the steady rhythm

time is gone.

she,

a girl i bury

easily peaks to the surface,

if not tempted to nestle further beneath.

for now,
you remain.
if not a being, a program.
feeding on our lives, our resources,
our affection.
stripping the life,
replacing and reprogramming.

i forget.
you carry me away.
led to my temptations,
i continue my midnight conversations.

Sophia Passar's first published poem.

POETRY

After you

by Eknoorjeet Kaur

St. Joseph's Convent School, Ferozepur · India

In your memories, I stand around,
No one asks why I still look down.
The sky is stained in gold and brown,
Your voice still echoes all around.

Everything I see reminds me of you,
Every color, every shade, each hue.
Crowded rooms still feel half-empty,
Silence speaks where words can't be.

If missing you is a quiet art,
Then, my darling, I've mastered it by heart.
You don't haunt me, I let you stay,
In little things, in light, in gray.

Not everything lost is meant to leave,
Some memories are how we breathe.

Inspired by personal feelings and Nirvair Pannu's song "After you." First published poem.

POETRY

Silence Between Generations

by Akshita

Ashok Hall Girls' Higher Secondary School · India

I stared silently at the old man
Tossing coins into a torn can
His face was tired, wrecked and worn
Radiating joy rarely known.

i stood there watching him,
Patiently finding his lost sim
Wondered what blood ran in his veins,
Mine were rushed, his felt like rain.

I was standing there with a lost heart,
Awaiting joy to play it's part
A girl, a teen who had lost her spark,
Watched the old man in the dark.

He gave me a vibrant smile,
Silence burning through a thousand miles.
My face lit up with his passive glow,
Problems vanished at a hand's blow.

I stared silently at the old man
Tossing coins into a torn can.

A reflection on an encounter with a stranger. Akshita's first published poem.

Ganraya

by Viksha Yeshodar Poojary

Shankar Narayan College, Bhayandar East · India

Original in Marathi (romanised):

Ganraya

tula pahatacha manamadhe umagnary

pratyeka adadhanicha anta hoto

tu alas tar kasa sarva thik hoil

ha eka prashna manat yeto

tu ya dharati madhalya manasancha vighnharta ahes

tujhyakade magitlali sarva goshta milate

karan tu ichchhapurti sudha ahes

manasancha magne kadhi sampat nahi

ani tujha mana bharun dene sudha kadhi sampat nahi

varshbhar vat pahun soneri divas ugvato,

tyamadhe tujhe daha divas kase jatata he kalatach nahi

English translation (provided by the editors):

Ganraya —

The moment I see you, every difficulty

that rises in my mind finds its end.

When you arrive, all will be well —

this question comes to my heart.

*You are the remover of obstacles
for all the people of this earth.
Everything asked of you is received,
for you are the fulfiller of wishes too.*

*The asking of people never ends,
and neither does your giving, full and generous.*

*After waiting a whole year, the golden day rises —
and within it, how those ten days pass,
one cannot tell.*

A personal reflection on devotion to Lord Ganesha. Viksha's first submission and first publication.

The Nuclear Paradox & The NTG Doctrine

by Sumit Chauhan

Aporia Literary Journal · India

This paper is not written for arms control specialists. It is written for every person who breathes, who has children, who cares about the world they will leave behind — and who has perhaps assumed that someone, somewhere, has this problem under control. They do not. And the assumption that they do may be the single most dangerous luxury we have ever allowed ourselves.

In August 1945, humanity crossed a line it has never stepped back from. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki introduced a permanent condition into human history: the ability to end civilisation within hours. We call the decades since "peace." But this peace is not built on trust. It is built on fear — and on the assumption that the systems governing these weapons will never fail.

On September 26, 1983, that assumption almost proved fatal. A Soviet officer named Stanislav Petrov, alone at a nuclear early-warning station outside Moscow, watched his screen report five incoming American missiles. Protocol demanded he report the attack immediately. He hesitated — and decided it was a false alarm. He was right. A software error had misidentified a weather satellite. His individual, unauthorised judgment prevented a nuclear exchange that would have killed hundreds of millions before the next morning.

Stanislav Petrov died in 2017. Most people reading this have never heard his name. That silence — the world's collective silence about nuclear risk — is what this paper is about.

PART ONE — THE ILLUSION OF SAFETY

The doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction assumes that no rational actor would initiate a conflict that guarantees their own destruction. It is a seductive theory. It is also a bet — placed with civilisation as the stake — that every leader in every nuclear-armed state will remain rational under every conceivable extreme of pressure, misinformation, system failure, and political crisis. History has tested that bet repeatedly. The margin of survival has been uncomfortably thin.

Beyond Petrov: in 1962, a Soviet submarine cut off from communications during the Cuban Missile Crisis prepared to launch a nuclear torpedo, convinced war had started. Only the personal refusal of one officer — Vasili Arkhipov — prevented it. In 1995, a Norwegian weather rocket was misread by Russian radar as a US Trident missile; President Yeltsin's nuclear briefcase was activated with minutes to decide. In each case, the system did not catch the error. A human being did — quietly, in secret, without the world knowing for decades.

"These were not close calls that the system caught. They were disasters that individual human beings averted, in real time, without authorisation — and without the world ever knowing until it was too late to learn from them properly."

The modern threat environment makes these narrow escapes less likely to repeat. Hypersonic missiles compress decision time from thirty minutes to five. Cyber vulnerabilities in nuclear command systems create failure modes no protocol addresses. Artificial intelligence, potentially integrated into early-warning loops, introduces the possibility of autonomous escalation faster than any human can intervene. The logic of deterrence was built for a slower, more legible world. That world no longer exists.

Deterrence is not peace. It is the postponement of catastrophe. And postponement, compounded over decades, eventually meets its limit.

PART TWO — THE PROLIFERATION EMERGENCY

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, signed in 1968, was the world's central bargain: the five recognised nuclear powers would work toward disarmament; everyone else would not develop weapons; and all would have access to peaceful nuclear technology. That framework is now under its most severe stress since it was written. India, Pakistan, and Israel developed weapons outside the treaty with no enforceable consequence. North Korea withdrew and tested openly. Iran remains in permanent negotiation. And the five original nuclear states, far from disarming as promised, are modernising.

Most alarming of all: the complete collapse of bilateral arms control between the United States and Russia, which together hold 90% of the world's warheads. The INF Treaty is dead. New START expired with no successor. For the first time since 1972, the two largest arsenals exist without a formal monitoring or verification framework.

PART THREE — WHAT THE SCIENCE SAYS

In 2019, a peer-reviewed study in *Science Advances* modelled a "limited" nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan — 100 Hiroshima-scale weapons, less than 1% of the global stockpile. Direct deaths:

50 to 125 million in the first weeks. Secondary effect: soot injected into the upper atmosphere blocking sufficient sunlight to trigger decade-long disruption of global agriculture. Projected consequence: famine affecting two billion or more people within ten years. This is what scientists call nuclear winter.

A full exchange between the United States and Russia is not modelled with casualty projections. The word that appears in the scientific literature is "unsurvivable" — at the scale of human civilisation. These are not fringe projections. They are the consensus outputs of atmospheric scientists and epidemiologists at Princeton, Los Alamos, and the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. They are almost entirely absent from public discourse.

"We spend more on treating cancer every year than we spend on preventing nuclear war. Both threaten lives. Only one threatens civilisation — and only one is going largely unaddressed."

PART FOUR — THE CORE ARGUMENT

Every solution attempted in eighty years of nuclear diplomacy has shared one structural flaw: it treats nuclear risk as a political problem to be solved through negotiation, goodwill, and intergovernmental agreement. The NPT asks governments to disarm. Arms control treaties ask governments to verify. Even ICAN's Nobel Prize-winning Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons — signed by 93 states — has been signed by exactly zero nuclear-armed states.

This is not a failure of effort. It is a structural problem. Nuclear weapons are sovereign assets. No government voluntarily surrenders sovereign assets to another government's goodwill — particularly not in an era of strategic competition.

"Nuclear risk is not only a political problem. It is a systems-design problem. And we have not yet built the system capable of solving it. That is what this paper proposes."

The missing element is not goodwill. It is architecture. What the world needs — and what has never existed — is an integrated, real-time, independently verified layer of nuclear transparency and accountability that operates alongside the political system, does not depend on the voluntary cooperation of every state, and creates facts on the ground that make the continuation of nuclear risk more costly than reducing it.

PART FIVE — THE NUCLEAR TRANSPARENCY GRID

The fundamental problem with current nuclear monitoring is that it depends on states choosing to report. The IAEA inspects what it is permitted to inspect. Arms control verification works only where treaties exist. Intelligence agencies know more — but their findings are classified, unavailable to the

public, and politically contested.

This is a solvable technical problem. Commercial satellite imagery now resolves objects to 30 centimetres. Open-source intelligence analysts at institutions like the Middlebury Institute already track nuclear facilities, missile tests, and warhead movements from publicly available data. AI-powered anomaly detection can identify patterns in emissions, seismic signals, and electronic signatures that human analysts would miss. The technology for independent, continuous, high-fidelity nuclear monitoring exists. What does not exist is the institution mandated and resourced to deploy it.

The Nuclear Transparency Grid (NTG) has four components: (S) Continuous satellite and sensor monitoring; (A) AI-powered anomaly detection; (V) Shared but controlled global visibility with tiered access; (T) A publicly published Transparency Index linked to sovereign credit ratings and trade relationships.

"The IAEA inspects what it is permitted to inspect. The NTG observes what physics and orbital mechanics make observable — regardless of permission. That is a fundamentally different kind of accountability."

PART SIX — THE PARALLEL ARCHITECTURE

The NTG is the technical foundation. But technology alone does not change geopolitics. Four parallel mechanisms must operate alongside it:

01 — The Global Citizens' Nuclear Compact: a digitally verified Compact signed by individuals worldwide, ratified by cities and regional governments — bypassing national governments where necessary.

02 — The Nuclear Divestment Doctrine: the fossil fuel divestment movement shifted \$40 trillion in assets by reframing risk for investors. The same framework applied to nuclear weapons contractors creates financial consequences for risk.

03 — Open-Source Verification Layer: a global network of independent researchers, universities, and investigative journalists with access to standardised NTG data, making suppression structurally impossible.

04 — The Individual Accountability Register: a permanent, public Register modelled on the Magnitsky Act framework, ensuring that the human beings who hold the decisions face personal consequences for obstruction.

PART SEVEN — A SEQUENCED ROADMAP

Immediate (within 12 months): Launch the NTG Founding Consortium — a coalition of willing nations, scientific institutions, and technology companies. Begin publishing the Transparency Index for consenting states.

Near-term (Year 1–3): Launch the Global Citizens' Nuclear Compact digitally, with city-level ratification campaigns in major democracies. Initiate the Nuclear Divestment campaign targeting the ten largest institutional investors in weapons contractors.

Structural (Year 3–5): Use the NTG's verified data to renegotiate a successor to New START — now grounded in independently observable reality rather than state self-reporting. Expand the Transparency Index to cover all nuclear-capable states.

Consolidation (Year 5–10): Work toward a reformed NPT framework with NTG verification built in. Expand the Citizens' Compact to 500 million signatories. Formalise the Accountability Register under international law.

PART EIGHT — THE ROLE OF EVERY PERSON READING THIS

There is a persistent assumption that nuclear policy belongs to governments and specialists. This assumption is historically false. The Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963 was precipitated by mass public mobilisation. ICAN won the Nobel Prize and produced a binding treaty through civil society pressure alone. The fossil fuel divestment movement shifted \$40 trillion without a single government leading it. Public opinion is not supplementary to change on this issue. In democratic systems, it is the primary driver.

Understand and share this paper. Sign and promote the Compact when it launches. Ask your representative specifically about independent nuclear verification. Push for divestment from weapons contractors. Vote on this issue. Demand media coverage proportionate to the stakes.

CONCLUSION

Stanislav Petrov did not save the world by having better weapons. He saved it by refusing to trust the system when his judgment told him the system was wrong. For eighty years, we have been lucky that people like Petrov were in the right place at the right moment. We have built a civilisation whose survival depends on that luck continuing indefinitely. That is not a strategy. It is a prayer.

The world went from 70,000 warheads to 12,500 through negotiation and political will. That will was generated by public pressure, sustained advocacy, and the refusal of ordinary citizens to accept that this was not their problem. The next phase of reduction — and the design of a genuinely stable system —

requires the same. The question is whether this generation decides to provide it.

"We have engineered a world where survival depends on the flawless functioning of imperfect systems. The question is not whether those systems will eventually fail. The question is whether we redesign them before they do."

Share this. Debate it. Build on it. The conversation is the beginning of the system.

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The writers of Issue 1

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