

Poetry—1st Place

The Basement

by *Jennie Fischer*

In black, under darkness we danced.
Spinning, spinning, spinning
as yellow candles burned oils into the air
and our heat warmed the atmosphere.
Circling that cement pillar in the center
of the room, gliding like nymphs,
beating our steps into the cold ground

forcing it to move with us.
Stopping for breath, we pulled silk scarves
from the walls and fluttered them around
like gypsies twirling, whirling,
flying through the air,
snaking round our waists and faces.

Seeing only flickers of candles,
deep brown, ruby colors,
feeling as though I could fly
with henna colors trailing behind,
frozen forever in the moment you leapt by.



Candlelight

Photography
by *Ryan Nelson*

2nd Place

After School Fight

by *Andrew Fischer*

All through math my legs jittered.
I tried to anticipate
What to do, or if it would hurt.
“Don’t worry man, I got your back.”

Keith walked me to the parking lot,
But his journey wasn’t
Nearly as long as mine.

Like grasshoppers under a
Glass jar, my nerves were jumping.
A crowd that could fill a football
Stadium, waited to see me.

“Look. He finally showed.”
Nate’s long, fat nose and his greasy
Hair make me wonder: why him?

I tried to talk Nate out of it,
But it wasn’t worth the effort.
Yelling became pushing.
Pushing became punching.
Punching hurts. Not so bad on
The head, though. My face was numb
And tingly. I knew there was blood.

“Have you had enough?”

“Fuck you!” I yelled as I walked away
Knowing I got my ass kicked,
And everyone else knew. Keith walked
Me back to school and gave me

His clean, white shirt and towel
To clean the blood off my face.
Then I saw Marie in the hall.

She was pissed.

Marie made Nate call me that night
To apologize. He also
Told me he broke his hand.

3rd Place

Children don't play at night (childhood's end)

by *Jorge Peredo*

I visited my lonely child
Surrounded by darkness and by the voice of the lake
Trying to make the shadows awake
To bake the little child nightmares,
I asked him
What do you see up there?

The child said
There's a mystery in the sky.
Why's a nun in the moon?
Why is she so sad
Always crying light
Under the maze of stars,
Her sad face
Hidden in the hood of darkness?

Little child hold your eyes
Don't let them get lost in the well of space
Hold your bones and your eyes
Because you need them for now,
Don't let the reflections of the stars flow with your tears
Put away your fears,
You are not alone
I'm with you.
He seems to be unaware of madness.

Little child
You mustn't be afraid,
You must learn to read
To listen, to sing
The words that the night's wind are telling you,
Those dreams are going to feed us.

And the little child said
a nun in the sky
is sad and is watching me,
Something bad behind the stars is lurking
Wanting me.
I'm sick, this is fear, see my tears?

We seem to be unaware of my madness.

Honorable Mention

Land

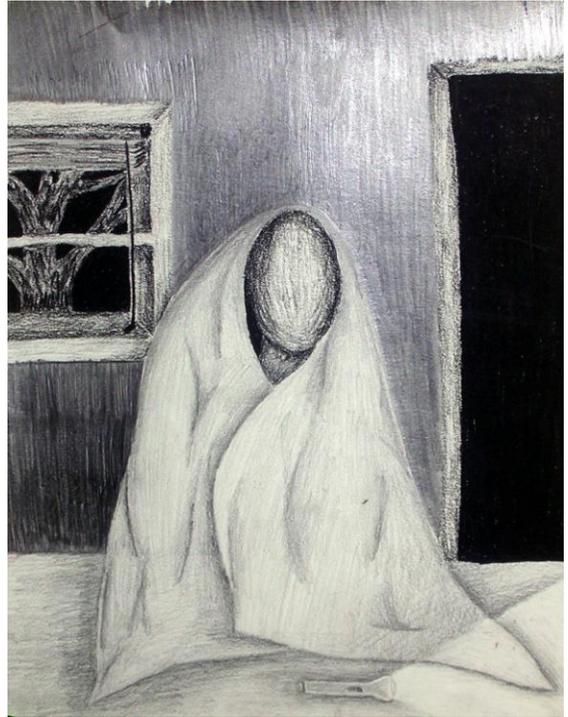
By *Brett Kapaun*

I see it
but only in my mind.
There's nothing
except a bush,
a rockpile foundation
some rusted metal,
the remnants of a tree grove
piled and twisted together,
that once was straight, to
fight the wind
for the barn and the house.

I drive the bus that no longer
stops.
No children run to it
through puddles of spring.
The approach is there
but it leads nowhere.
He doesn't walk from
the barn with pails of foam,
stopping to wave,
then trudging on.
She's not on the step
or in the window, making sure they all
get on.

The cows are sold
and pigs don't wallow,
chickens aren't wandering the yard
scratching for a meal,
in a cow pie long since gone.

It just isn't there but,
I see it every half mile,
streams of kids
flowing out of houses
like water in a coulee.
Everyone had more than one,
that's the way it was.



Alone

Graphite
by *Chris Judd*

The land that supported those who
survived
is now possessed by those
who live somewhere more
important.

They own the land
but don't care that the farms
not there.

Honorable Mention

A Good Day

by *Andrew Fischer*

My dad always taught me never to make excuses.
So when I walk through the door after a twelve hour day
and see her sitting on the couch with our new addition,
Feeding her, burping her,
I feel I'm the only one who knows my pain.
My back is a hundred year old tree with a hanging rope
that kids have climbed and scraped as if to have
Some kind of fun.
My mind is racked with thoughts like a leaning bookshelf—
my homework is due tomorrow,
a short night ahead full of two hour naps,
then tomorrow: another day of stocking shelves.
Then she sits on my lap in the recliner with a pint of Moosetracks,
and spoons it to me, then to herself, then again to me.



Drawing Honorable Mention

Torn

Colored Pencil
by *Chris Judd*

Assorted Haiku

by *Kathleen Bolstad*

All the blades of grass
Bow before the springtime breeze
As the leaves applaud.

Limitless, dreamy,
A blue no words can describe,
The summer ceiling.

Mellow sunlight fades
As the sun lowers into
Night, oblivion.

Deep underneath

by *Shelly Witt*

Fire burns deep
 Uncovering glowing flesh
 hidden under decayed life.
Creating light inside to shine
Once the thick blanket
 of sin is torched.
Rain brings the relief of
 lost memory.
Once overgrown by tension
 results struggle
Intertwined by vegetation
that's wrapped tightly with veins,
 Strangling life.
Destruction releases the
 tight grip of restriction.
Bright visions increasingly flow
 as remembrance of time
 floods the pathways.
Letting memories enter
 The soul once again.

Hiding from God

by *Jorge Peredo*

A bacteria crawls into an invertebrate,
Crawls into a vertebrate,
Swims the fish, in-between swim
And it crawls into a reptile
Flies a pterodactyl
Into a rat, into a monkey,
But as you see
I was left behind
Far below in this cracking chain of crawls,
Creepy crawler in the dark
Stuck at the bottom of creation.

I see the shape of your body
Your perfectly evolved flesh and bones
I want to be able to connect with that,
I want to know what pleasure is.
What I am now I know is obsolete
It was obsolete since the moment I desired the shape
Of your lips
Or a name in your lips.

I want to crawl up,
To reach the skin
I want to be human
to kiss, to sin
to know what's beyond procreation.

And with total peace of mind
I try to escape from myself
into a face you can recognize,
My breath slips away
Out of oblivion,
Into a mouth you will say
"is like mine"
And (now) as 2 good beings we'll fuck
Hiding from the angry beasts of old.

Playing Dolls

by *Nikki Laine Zinke*

I lived in a pink, cardboard house.
I drove a smooth plastic car.
I dated G.I. John.
He pulled my head off.

A Winter's Night

by *Bryan Miller*

Thy fog had lifted
But there still was a haze
I looked toward thy heavens
A calm peaceful night
Walking across thy Valley
the mist rose from thy ice
My eyes following
As it disappeared into thy dark
night
What a peaceful moment
Closing my eyes
Smelling thy air
Clearing my soul
Peace at Last

Narrow Place

by *Jacquelin Zimmerman*

In between a narrow place,
Darkness, dimming light -
all I see
Screaming,
Yelling,
Empty noise echos
... and echos.
Falling heavily
Falling fast
Always falling.

In Between a narrow place,
The wider to wish it,
The smaller it becomes.
Reach for it,
Keep reaching,
The arm only stretches so far.
Excruciating pain,
Jolting from the mere tip of my spine,
Down - slowly towards my toes
But doesn't reach them.
It gets caught
In between a narrow place,
Place in my heart,
...Yet to be forgotten.



Anchored

Colored Pencil
by *Chris Judd*

A Calling Home

by *Bill Schlosser*

Feeling the sun warming my face,
I watch as the sea races toward me.
I can hear the surf crashing on an island just off the edge of the bay.
The smell of the water and the sounds of the surf remind me of chilling memories.
It was a year ago today the sea nearly claimed me.

A fierce north wind brings a reminder just who is in charge.
The sun vanishes as the storm approaches; it will hit within minutes.
But I cannot shake the feeling that there is something on the wind.
A distinct sound, or is it just my imagination?

No. I can hear a voice, kissing the wind with her sweet breath.
I search the shoreline for the source, yet find nothing.
Again I hear it, stronger, closer.
Still the voice sounds mangled, twisted by the approaching terror.

Engulfed in the sounds of the wind, I see not the danger steaming toward me.
The surf smothers me and knocks me off my feet.
It drags me out to sea, and then begins to beat and punish me into submission.

I surface and see the full fury of the sea.
She is angry, as if something were taken from her.
I hear the voice again. She speaks my name, calling me.
I surface for the last time, as my body can no longer battle the vicious waves.

My entire world is spinning with the sea.
Again it crashes down upon me.
I cannot win this battle; I let go of my lifeline.
Sinking into the darkness of the deeps,
I hear again the calming voice of the sea.
“Welcome home.”

I. On the Road to Oriska

A proud ship on a foaming sea
It rides the billowing prairie.
Tall arms fencing with the wind
Like schooner's sails on oceans long ago.
Pluming wheat runs up the little hillock where it stands,
Crests at the summit in wind tossed waves
And falls, furling and foaming with a silent crash, into the gulley behind.

Nary a creak from its rigging,
No thud of wave on hull
No human shout of command
No burst of laughter or glad song
Mars the solitary stillness of its sentinel duty;
Only the sibilant hiss of wind through the grain,
Only the ever-present hum along the avenue of commerce close-by.

You thing of beauty,
Would that no one could ever hold you contemptible,
With your arms out stretched
Facing your adversaries full-on;
A remarkable creation from the mind of man
Gracing these grassy seas
With the dignity of sailing ships on oceans of yore.

II. The Highliner

With the fury of thunder it roars into view
Wailing like a banshee from a child's forgotten nightmare,
Flinging itself across the abyss surging from span to span,
An iron dragon from the hand of man.

It cleaves the rivers, plains and hills
Dragging its long tail mile after mile.
It loosens stones from their beds, books from their shelves,
Rattles windows in their panes, and a tired woman's brain.

III. At Midnight

It begins with a whisper on the edge of vision,
The understanding that something is changed,
Something is here that wasn't before:
Tentative tendrils reaching from earth to the indigo sky
Tenuous, mysterious, changing shape and hue,
As ephemeral as a handful of fog,
As solid as the sun itself;
Finally cascading in a cacophony of colors;
Dancing, gyrating, pulsating from its source,
Unearthly, unreal, untouchable, heaven.

Vibrance

by *Jennie Fischer*

Rotten candy filtrates the air with old cherries,
chewed remnants of gum and a hundred scents
of different smell.

Crushed curls lay heavily
while rain dances over tin and woods.

Eyelashes silently flake
of ink blots indisposed.

Behind a locked window stares out the world.

An oil candle with orange rinds and lime chunks
cuts into soap and lay in its passion on lace.

Metal ridged rounded squares of red chocolate
with deep pink swirls melt onto the floor,
one slow
drip.

Woven hands strew peach, Irish, cinnamon
and sunshine into carefully collected tufts
of knot and throw the great thing
over a cold bar.

Turned, the gentle breeze wafts the grape
fragrance of you grandmother.

Life Once Remembered

by *Shelly Witt*

As the strong hold of
the miracle rose began
to increasing fade;
New life was envisioned...

The remembrance of
sunny, joyful hours
created by a
warm flutter of southerly
summer wind.

Every breath created
by a ray of a
warmed heart,
struck the soft
gentle core within.

Melting all black.
Letting the vision
enter the soul
once more.

A Moment Before Planting

by *Brett Kapaun*

The odor is strong
almost overpowering
like incense burning.
It draws him to his knees
its musky scent
clinging to the fibers
sewn in patches
on his pants,
black from bending
to check for depth.
He digs with hands
lifting the soil
to his face, inhaling
deeply like a first
breath, feeling renewed.
Fingers thick from work
crumble the ground
feeling for texture
smelling it again,
so as not to forget.

Soft Won't Do

by *Martin L. Kelly*

Soft won't do,
Smooth is inadequate,
Nor will silky or velvet
Describe her bare skin.

Warm just misses the mark;
Responsive is getting closer,
But how can frail
And mere weak words

Reveal that more than
Warm—yet not hot, that
Soft yet smoother flesh
Responding with love's passion?

Why All the Tears?

by *Wendy Matcha*

As I shed a tear or cry,
God is crying with me.
I think every night,
Why Me.
Why did this happen to me?
Was there a reason for all of this?
I cry almost everyday thinking,
Why did I do this?
I can't live with pain this bad,
in my heart.
There is a hole that will never be filled,
until the right guy comes to me.
When a tear comes rolling down my face,
no one cares about it.
I need something or someone to help,
this pain heal.
My life is filled with so much pain,
it is always killing me.
The pain is a mess,
all rolled up in one big ball.
I need to take that ball and untangle it,
to find what is on the other end of the line.
All the tears that I shed,
have a meaning.
Some meanings are sad but,
others are happy.
I cry cause it releases some of the pain.
Some tears carry a story.
Some tears are just there.
Some tears just never go away,
when something is wrong.
As the tears come down they,
will have a meaning and a story.
But as my life goes on I hope that
I don't shed anymore unless,
they are happy tears coming down.

Little Dancing Doll

by *Deborah Anderson*

Little Dancing Doll, my pretty little dancing doll,
whenever I am sad and my dreams fall through
then I know I can come to you,
and you'll dance for me, to a pretty melody
soon all my fears fade away,
and the world once again is gay
and all because of you.

So dance little doll, turn around in your silken gown
And I will try to smile, though my heart is breaking all the while.

Little dancing doll, my pretty little dancing doll
I know you cannot bring him back to me
But you are still part of his memory
For when I was a child, he gave you to me.
With a locket and love for all eternity.

So dance little doll, turn around in your silken gown,
and I will try to smile, though my heart is breaking all the while.
My little dancing doll.

This is Just to Say II

by *Wesley Staton*

*a parody of William Carlos Williams'
"This is Just to Say"*

I have used
the last of the toilet paper
that was in the bathroom

and which
you probably
needed
for after your morning cappuccino

forgive me
it was soft
so gentle
yet so firm

Fastpitch

By *Lee Kruger*

A peace that passes all
understanding falls
in the form of a white ball
from the blue sky.

The same ball rose
against all physical law
from the lefties hand to nip
the inside corner at my chest
for strike three the previous inning;
the same ball skidded by my flailing glove
at third to tie the game at three a moment ago;
the same ball will shoot (I know this) from my bat
to the right field gap in an inning or two depending on who
gets on when; that same ball will pass from the game to the batting
practice bag to some poor kid's mantel to be left outside on a rainy day
and finds its destiny unraveling in the corner of some dusty lot—a piece of heaven
gone the way of the world.

But for now, that ball nestles in the soft leather web
of the glove fitted and outstretched
for just such purposes after
an over-the-shoulder
dance and dive
choreographed
from time
eternal
by a
god
who knew something
about peace and how
it passes all understanding.

Stones

by *Candy Laube*

Her fingers were adorned with gold,
With magnificent and beautiful stones.
They showed a love untold,
Of high priced debts and unpaid loans.

He'd do anything for her love,
Anything he could.
Buy the stars and heaven above,
But not what he should.

Although he loved her madly,
The debts were more than he could bear.
And he died...sadly,
For the stones that she wears.

The Beats of Life

by *Brett Kapaun*

Legs jut out
of the snow.
Frozen in anguish
or pain
or no.
Pain is no longer
a problem.
If it ever felt it.

I pause
what is better?
The bullet,
which rips
through the air
through the heart.
Or
the Mack
that bears down
and doesn't leave a dent.

Grandma we are dead.

By *Jorge Peredo*

These sad adornments belong to a dead age
hanging from darkness
covered by dust,
forgot in the silence
unwarned of the passing time,
waiting for holidays far gone
and they are not coming back.

The tree is dead and dry
a piece of wood for a fire that is not going to wake,
too lazy, too weak, too old
the squeaking in the rocking chair
the voice sparking, cracking in the air
the sparks of other days, floating
too lazy voice
too weak to make a fire.

The holidays are far gone
they are just a memory, or an echo
or a chant of children in the church.
The snow melted ages ago, the grass grew
the snow came again, and left again
the cat disappeared in the black soil, the rabbit under white snow
the blood spilled over red leaves,
it doesn't matter there are not any children left to play with them.

The hands are too weak to make a fire
too old to carve in the soil for bones,
just need the memory
just the squeak of the rocking chair
and a smile,
and the laughs are alive,
and the little hands are hitting the table again
all of them begging for a quick meal, all of them waiting
for presents and a tale.

No more
Just the echo,
the almost empty house,
the rocking chair, the rocking wooden horse
the wood for an impossible fire.

Selected Poetry and an experiment in poem and prose
by *Ellen Douglas Chaffee Reithard*

Valley Fog

In the valleys this morning
Appear to be rivers and lakes.
They were not there the last sunny day.
They appear occasionally
After the rain of the day before.
We on the hill waken to bright sunlight.
The rains of yesterday remain
 as low clouds
 and fog
for the valley below.

Nutrition

Rain on fallen leaves
Beats nutrients into earth.
Life once more begins.

I went back

Lured back to find two brickyards on the Erie barge canal,
From childhood I remembered well...
 The roaring fire of the kilns,
 Loaded wheelbarrows of bricks...
 Ready for the run to the barge,
 Men with muscles flexing:
 Fires to stoke, carts to push, barges to load

Horsepower was real horse power in that day far far away,
 The black horse gleamed with sweat,
 The white horse seemed pure
 Despite smudges of red gray.

Horses walked the barge paths, pulled through life, so nondescript...
No goal.

Houses now front the abandoned yards.
Gone is that section of the Erie Canal.
But those those brickmaking days I remember well.

Nature's Symphony

Watching a small brook spill along ten feet or so mesmerizes. .
I become one with the mainstream and its surroundings...
The sound, the sight, the feel and the smell mingle
And my mind creates a Symphony of the Brook.

Eddies, bubbles, and waterfalls
Tumble into unexpected sequence.
The flow sidesteps,
Adjusting to rocks strewn by the ages,
Where they stay.
As the water flow sidesteps,
Leads to quieter places...
To featherstitched water patterns
And mountain reflecting quiet pools.

Sound changes with movement
Fresh, clear, high tones drop to baritone,
as the water falls into deeper water.
Clogged...

A symphonic theme follows a structure from beginning to end,
Its beauty in the blend of varied instruments and harmonics.
The brook follows a structure from source to ocean
With beauty of nature and a gentle determination....

And my mind creates a Symphony of the Brook.
The sound, the sight, the feel and the smell mingle
I become one with the mainstream and its surroundings...
Watching a small brook spill along ten feet or so mesmerizes.

Nature's Symphony In Prose

Watching a small brook spill along ten feet or so mesmerizes. The sign, the feel, the sound and the smell mingle. As I become one through my senses with the water's mainstream and its surroundings, my mind creates a Symphony of the Brook. Eddies, bubbles, falls and quieter patterns of featherstitched waters appear in unexpected sequences. The flow side steps, adjusting to rocks strewn by the ages. Just as a symphonic theme goes from beginning to end, the brook continues from source to ocean with gentle determination.

Sounds change with movement. Fresh, clean, high tones drop to baritone, as the water falls into deeper water. Clogged pools seem silent. More active waters dominate. At times the undertones are brought into focus and run their accentuating course. I hear and see the crispness of a wind forgotten leaf. I pluck the leaf. I crumble its dried, brown shape in powder. My eyes see it change; my ears hear it. Fingers and heart sense a change in this symphony of nature as the powdered leaf falls to the brook's edge. I recall the clinging uselessly of the leaf on its small, brook-rooted tree. Now the powdered remains become a productive part of the brook.

The wind no longer plays with the leaf, but catches a lock of my hair. The breeze caresses my face with the coolness from the stream's moisture. Like soft but persistent drum snares the solo of the moving air state whispers to the brook.

Suddenly a rustling cadence of leaf-crushing jars me. A puppy breaks through layers of leaves and bush to stop at the brook's edge to wet his panting tongue. A puppy belongs to the Symphony of the Brook and this interruption blends as an accent to the main theme.

I listen for wind instruments of birds but the moment is shared solely with the scampering puppy, who pops in occasionally to tell me I am not alone in my elemental symphony. The timpani view of dynamite brings me back from my musical moment in nature to thoughts of man and his Symphony of the Highway! I turn back to the brook and vie thanks. Then I walk up to the hill to rejoin mankind.

Ellen Douglas Chaffee Reithard