

2014



WINNING ENTRIES



Poudre River
Friends OF THE LIBRARY



POUDRE RIVER
PUBLIC LIBRARY
DISTRICT

Battle of the Bards Poetry Contest and Poetry Reading

To celebrate National Poetry Month 2014, the Poudre River Public Library District is holding this special program to engage both adult and teenage creative writers in our community for a multi-generational poetry contest and poetry reading event.

SPECIAL THANKS GO TO:

THE POUDBRE RIVER FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

- MICHAEL LIGGETT** *Poudre River Public Library District Board of Trustees member; Fort Collins attorney who served on the Poudre School District Board of Education, Fort Collins Baseball Club Board, and Foothills Rehabilitation Center Board; poetry reading program Awards Presenter.*
- MELISSA BEAVERS** *Reference Librarian; Battle of the Bards Co-Coordinator; and poetry reading program Co-Host*
- DIANE TUCCILLO** *Teen Services Librarian; Battle of the Bards Co-Coordinator; and poetry reading program Co-Host*

JUDGES:

- JARED CORP** *Interesting Reader Society (Teen IRS) library district teen advisory group member; 8th grader at Kinard Middle School; poetry reading program Teen Co-Host*
- CASSANDRA EDDINGTON** *Raised in Utah and now lives, writes, and teaches in Fort Collins; MFA in Poetry from Colorado State University; her chapbook manuscript was a finalist in Ahsahta Press' 2012 Sawtooth Poetry Prize competition. Fragments from her long poem "the "hungry matter" were published by Gazing Grains Press, part of their miniature book series. Other recent work is online in Word For/Word, Otoliths, and ditch. Other work is forthcoming in La Vague.*
- WILLIAM HENRY FOSTER, III** *English Faculty at Front Range Community College for over 8 years and has taught a variety of courses in literature and College Composition; served as the Writing Program Assistant for the Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy (RLP) department at the Larimer campus; is Advisor for Writers on the Storm, a creative writing club at Larimer campus; currently the RLP department's Lead instructor for both Technical Writing and Concurrent Enrollment.*
- TODD MITCHELL** *Author of **Backwards** (Candlewick, 2013), **The Secret to Lying** (Candlewick, 2010), **The Traitor King** (Scholastic, 2007); co-author of **A Flight of Angels** (DC Comics, 2011); and instructor at Colorado State University in Creative Writing and Adolescent Literature.*

Teen Finalists

A Dream

by Brianna Alers

As the mighty cheetah runs in the crisp air,
Pollution is Stopped

Like the prodigious forest feeds many,
Hunger is Lessened

As a whale swims in the clear, blue sea,
Water is Cleansed

Like a mother duck cares for her babies,
Neglect is but a Memory

As a family of foxes huddles together,
All Wars are Concluded

Like a flower blossoms,
Depression is hindered

As a buffalo roams in the wide open plains,
Room is made for others

Like a bird makes its nest,
The Homeless find Shelter

As a new born colt takes its first steps,
Hope is Renewed

Like the sun comes out of the clouds on a rainy day,
Love Overcomes All Evil

Music Box

by *Olivia Chatfield-Scott*

child
laughing, pigtails streaming
dance
(the night away)
child dancing
leaping, twirling
ballet shoes
(the ribbons whirling)
untied
pigtails, static
(a mess)
laughing child
bright pink dress
sunlight
who peeps in
(through the window)
sees child stop,
rub her nose.
with a sweet, beguiling smile,
(that says, "Won't you stay a while?")
child still dances,
all night long,
to the same
(though growing fainter)
music-box song.

The First Rain

by Janessa Chenot

Dark clouds fill the sky,
my heart fills up too.
Thunder sings and booms,
and my heart answers.

The gentle pitter patter
sounds as the
drops leave the sky.
Everything leaves
my troubled mind, and
just for the moment,
I am free.

Teardrops of rain
kiss my rosy cheeks,
and my hair clings
to my face in a hug.

Water rivulets
run down my face
like tears, sad to leave
their heavenly home.

I turn my blue-green
eyes to the dark sky,
and the thunder booms.
The music of nature.

Lightning strikes the Earth
in a playful poke.

The Earth courses with energy,
ready to play.

Shoots of all colors
spring across the sky
in rejoicing,
landing on a soft,
cushiony cloud.

The tired, yellow grass
springs up green,
and dances to nature's music.

The thunder rumbles
throughout my body,
like a low lullaby,
so comforting.

Blossoms open up,
peeking out,
forgetting to hide,
and remembering
to have joy.

The first rain
showers down,
wiping our minds
clear of troubles,
and rinsing the dust
off of our tired souls.

Some Forevers

by Andrew Grant

The lack of forever weighs you down,
More than the tank ever could,
Infinite legacy, with medical dependency,
From which love arises in the purest form.

Metaphors that resonate in eternity,
Or perhaps never, in the face of death.
Affection for always, within the numbered days,
Consumption of bottled stars, for the fateful fate of Anna.
Depression arises as a mere addition to a greater means,
As blatant ignorance of the oblivious future overpowers.

The world continues, with the cherishment of life.
Love is not measured in time, but in feeling,
Even though both are forever.

Country Walk

by Gabrielle Nadig

Crunch! Goes the gravel
Beneath my feet;
The birds overhead,
Singing so sweet.

I am walking down
A country lane.
No clouds up above,
Which means no rain.

Alongside the path,
A brook flies by.
Look in the water,
See fish so shy.

Daisies dot the way,
Splendidly white.
Bonny face lifted,
A cheerful sight.

A pleasanter day
Was never seen.
Everything's growing,
Everything's green.

The happiest smell
Wafts toward me.
Like sun-kissed flowers
And honey bees.

A soft music starts,
As the wind blows.
Gently lifting leaves,
To where-who knows?

Apples grow on trees;
Fruit of the earth.
A delicious snack
Of golden worth.

Cotton candy clouds,
Traverse the sky.
Painted ladies soar;
Orange butterflies.

Red will follow blue
As the sun sets.
Like watercolor,
When it is wet.

And when the night falls,
The stars will shine.
Diamonds in the dark;
Jewels so divine.

Then I'll fall asleep
In my abode;
Dreaming of the days
Spent on that road.

Winter's Silence

by Rachel Poulsen

Shards of ice and shattered glass,
Clear and hard upon the floor.
Through the window snow blows in,
Drifting by the door.

The room is bare, the walls are plain,
There hangs a musty smell,
No signs of life can there be found,
This cottage dank and fell.

The shadows seem to writhe and twist,
As early morning light
Illuminates the empty room,
Dispelling gloom of night.

Yet the doom remains despite the light
Through the silence sounds a call,
The frozen trees and icy breeze
Send their message out to all:

“Death and ruin await you here,
There can be no escape,
No living creature here can walk,
Without the kiss of fate.”

Grey Dove/Encounter

by Isaiah Rayner Fried

A peace overwhelms you, great like the wind, earth, the fire, and water.
Yet you are lost. Far from home, but at home in heavy heart.
You walk, the forest surrounds you, the sun shines through the morning mist.
Still worries persist, a weight you cannot bear.
Then you see it, for the shortest time, like a mother comforting a restless child.
A cry rises from your heart, joining its own.
For the shortest time, a flicker of grey and white, its fanned tail, splayed wings forming
beautiful curves, its grey eyes reassuring, piercing.
Then it is gone, as the mountain storms.
In graceful dance, around the tree, its grey among the green and blue of pine, a reassuring
love, from mother to child.

There, it appears,
You stop, the pedals slowing,
Feet hit concrete,
There, the blaze of white and orange,
Your body tenses as your eyes meet,
The boy, born of city, who's soul dances upon the treetops in the wild
The beast, born of suburb, who's soul is meant for the free glen and forest
Brought together by the ever hungry expansion of man's destruction of nature.
A gleam of wild in its eyes reminds you caution, caution.
Yet here you stand time slips, all that it is here, now.
You remember, suddenly, seeing the foxes den in the great tree by the road, forced here by
metal and stone, man's indifference boxes in the wild beauty, corrals that which they fear.
Yet fear leaves you now, for how long has it been since you met,
You stir, the memories drawn around you in the golden dusk,
In that moment, the fox dashes off,
Leaving you alone, save for the impression stronger than those of your childhood.
God touched, you peddle off, the fiery muse with you still.

Generation

by Isabella Rogge

lies
fed to us through straws
we are starving lions
bitter has never been more sweet
strawberries, like strawberries
fresh off the vine
but not quite ripe enough

too young
they said we were too young

to be free
and ignore them
no more than gnats
petty
black
specks

we aren't rebels
just crazy stupid
but honest, and right
misunderstood
that's our excuse

let's go get ourselves killed
martyrs
pick up your pen, fight
to the death
what can we live for
when the world is a prison?
break the chains, we can run
like thieves, by night and moon
with candles—

Pendulums do stop.

Poison Words

by Lily Soper

We are the first generation to be born into a world
Where we have images branded onto our brains
From the day we take our first breath,
We breathe in poison words about ourselves.
We are force fed this idea that
We are not good enough
By magazine ads, billboard pictures,
And television commercials
Staring airbrushed drones posing as humans
Setting a so called normalcy
That is far from any natural norm.
The thoughts that we think have been edited
And dissected by the intricate
Incisions of the media.
We have cut off the circulation of love to our bodies.
we replace it with a drug called self-criticism.
And we become addicted.
Addicted to the self-destructive idea
That “we are not enough.”

It takes you over so wholly that
Suddenly you are limping through life
With glassy eyes frozen in a look of complete terror.
As your self-confidence can be measured out in
Cups then tablespoons then teaspoons
You watch as a mass of negativity
Metastasizes inside of you
Until all you are
Is a skeleton with black holes for eyes
Hungry for someone to tell us we are normal.

We are not normal.

We have to stop telling ourselves that we are normal.
Because the things that make you different
Are the things that someone will fall in love with.
Someone will see the diamonds inside you
All of them shattered by crushed confidence.
And they will grasp your face between their palms
And whisper with voice unfaltering.
The fissures in your heart created by
The poison words you once inhaled,
Will leak gold.
Everyone who is ready to see your light,
Will be mesmerized by your very existence
Yes, words hurt worse than broken bones,
But words heal faster than scars.
You are not normal. You are extraordinary
And you are enough.

unpainted

by Selena Wellington

i. a childhood memory

you followed that girl with too many smiles
and too few emotions,
while i followed my sky.

ii. we were negated in youth

somewhere between the growing up,
the growing unwise and too old
or rather -
losing childhood -
we lost each other.

iii. we reach each other as concealed blades

you wore long sleeves
and i didn't own shorts.
we suffered and coped in ways we shouldn't say out loud,
but we hadn't yet learned to read each other's
darkness.

iv. the world unsewn - you almost died

i found you in the mountains and the wind wouldn't stop -
(i didn't know if i'd find you alive)
the ranger had that posture about him
and you were crying.
i couldn't talk to you then -
you were taken to the hospital and received nine stitches about the artery
in your right wrist.
("we'll try to save your kidneys")

v. now and not yet happened

"i want to live i just don't know how"
we walk the tracks at night and share the silence that says everything.
something changed from then to now
and something will keep changing from after to now to after,
but slowly we become
worthy
of our suffering.

Teen Honorable Mentions

Raven Boy

by Krista Beucler

Raven black as dark
was the first thing that I saw as I looked into his eyes
found a feather in his hair
think maybe he could fly if he takes the weight off of his back
think maybe he'll have wings if he opens up his arms

what if he sees right through me?
inky onyx are his eyes
with a beak that never crowed
and the passion of a heart is lost in somber breast

and I think that he'd be looking for me
if his eyes would scan beyond the stars
find the key to open up his heart
and I think that he calls out for me
Raven beak speaks my name
listen ghost
I call back for you and
Raven wings fly us up higher
look down and call for me
call for me
call for me
listen
listen

then the cold came frozen hearts iced over
and I stood alone in the snow
swirling
calling, looking for black
I wish I could see a Raven black against the snow

I remember
when his wings
began to grow and soon enough he flew
on towards the sun
shouldn't have left me behind
since you call me your own

and dusky cobalt the pool that ripples with the passing of the years
and when he began to fly
the sun was not too far
and Raven Boy took flight
and took my heart
and he never did come down
so I wait for him upon the hill top
where I found his broken egg and
from shattered pieces
he soared

I taught you to fly
Raven Boy

My Gift

by Sam Carlson

Writing,
The inscription,
Through pen and paper,
Of the myriad thoughts of my mind,
So the unprivileged multitudes,
May partake and experience,
The illustrious majesty,
Borne of my mind,
Through words,
With the knowledge,
And thoughts transcribed,
From my mind to English to paper,
From paper to your mind go my thoughts,
Gifts given freely without reproach,
Though most meaning is lost,
Through the transcription to English,
The sentiment survives English's evisceration,
And now living among your thoughts,
Anew the resurrected cognitions,
Rise from the fragments of their predecessors,
To allocate again another theory,
Akin to what was lost,
Yet new and distinct,
So flow my thoughts,
Through English,
Through pen,
To paper,
Photons, the particular wave and also wavy

particle,
Are bounced by or absorbed by the paper,
When bounced change frequency,
Into your eyes they go,
Your mind translates,
Then interpolates,
And sometimes debates,
The transmission received,
And so derives,
What was transcribed,
My experiences and ideas,
Through writing and literature,
Conglomerate into,
Something new,
And find their way,
Into you.
...
Sometimes I listen...
Sometimes I hear...
My precious gift,
Silently whistling,
As it soars through the air,
Over your head!

Daybreak

by Gabrielle Nadig

Silence.
Waiting.
Then-
A breath.

Preparation begins.

A sleepy yawn filters across the sky,
Only the slightest suggestion of light.

A velvety quiet fills the air,
As life waits in expectation.

A whispered chorus weaves across the earth,
Gently lifting heavy slumbers.

Something is starting on the horizon.
Waiting, waiting.

Suddenly, a beam of light shoots forth,
Stardust shattering in its wake.

Like a pure, sweet note,
It signals the renewal of life.

The prelude begins
As rays reach up and out.

The light grows brighter;
The celestial orchestra readies its instruments.

Then the sun bursts forth, spilling across the earth.
Heavenly melodies criss-cross the sky.

A new day has been born.
Regeneration of life and joy.

Soon it will start again.

Silence.
Waiting.
Then-
Daybreak.

Cracks in the mask

by Isaiah Rayner Fried

People see you smile, thinking; “how happy he must be.” But they don’t know it’s just a mask
Which smells of tears and a torn soul sewn with satin string.

The mask kept you safe and isolated, but like a snare,
it draws you in alone in the dark, a perfect ruse of safety!

at times, your tears fall down, not into silence inside, but down your face. They fall through the
cracks in the mask

(ALONE)

Through these cracks, sunlight streams, and laughter fills the air, it does not smell of tears.

(THE PAIN)

Your friends, family, allies, all they see is the mask, but those who wish to hurt you can see
through its shadowed guise.

(BETRAYED)

Years pass, the cracks grow, and light becomes a constant dim. Yet its power blinds you, and
you shun it, preferring instead the shadows and old memories.

(STAY STRONG)

Then, one day you look into the eyes of a friend, through the cracks. A tense moment, who
knows how they will react! Perhaps they will turn away, or instead, turn toward you, perhaps
you will find that they too wear a mask.

(NOT ALONE)

All of a sudden, you feel a stirring behind your bruised chest, can it be, your heart still beats?
That person there, you feel a warming radiance, love, perhaps...they will not stay, but like
winter’s will winds pull and stray.

(TURN BACK)

Still! Carry on! For the warmth shall thaw your broken body. Someday, you shall meet that one,
who shall return your love, the glow of compassion! (STAY STRONG)

With the warmth of love, with the light streaming in, with the words of support you couldn’t
hear through your sobs, you gain resolve, a fire ignites (IT’S TIME)

Your hand reaches up, and with all the strength of your blazing soul, your impassioned body,
you tear the mask from your raw face! (LIVE FREE)

The darkened lie dissipates, like the evil things at daybreak. the dust settles, and all the
tears, the years, laughs, smiles, the screams, the anger the pain, the self-pity and hurt, come
crashing down. But you still have friends, a love, a family, and now you are free, to walk your
path in life. (ALIVE AT LAST)

What it Means

by Selena Wellington

She who watches the rain create movies in the sky,
She who sings when no one is home – sings about her fiction she forges in
stolen glances and fragments of overheard conversations,
She who – from her room – watches the snow collect on the windowpane;

She who writes metaphors in a woven journal,
She who sits in her bed painting scarlet words on pages she'll never show anyone,
She who hides her tangible memories behind books on a dusty shelf,
She who keeps a woven journal but burns the chapters she doesn't want to remember;

She who lights matches on her arms,
She who keeps gauze and medical tape under her bed,
She who hides her addiction in a heart-shaped box,
She who composes the poem,
And she who shakes her head when people ask what it means
To be Alone.

Adult Finalists

Tonight

by Michael Archuleta

My tribe follows the paved black river,
under the aligned fluorescent moons.
With nomadic thoughts the destinations differ,
with the help of the nights iridescent reflections.

In steel animals of no soul or features,
on our journey they rely on us as the teachers.
The dark and light start to blur,
as beasts without legs stars to stir

Different blood same litter.
In the pale moonlight, none roam alone
To places where we only hear the wind purr
We don't look to the world; we offer our own sights;
Tonight.

watching monkeys on Barro Colorado Island

by Mark Nicholas Brady

How light and limber, like the stream over the stones, tumbling over the mossy chins
of stones

so soft

the belly of a little pool, where water tumbles into chuckling leaves, these bitten, yellow
leaves, chuckling
with the ripples

and screeching capuchins, splashing through the shallows of the treetops, leaping,
plunging through the boughs

and splashes, the blue-enameled splashes of a morpho's wings, a cup for light's drops
dribbling through the leaves, with flutters of the wind
and the wind, pattering like raindrops on the leaves, and the wind's
warbling, through the smooth leaves like the stream over the stones

October

by Kristy Clark

She once raked leaves.
Fleeting moment
caught on camera
so proud in her kerchief
she posed for the local reporter
standing her full five feet one inch
surrounded by towering
piles of gray leaves
framed forever on my wall.

I raked leaves for you, Dad,
caught in your hospital bed
on the ground floor
next to windows in the dining room
all those majestic shedding oaks
just out of reach.
I waved and raked and waved
as golden leaves surrendered into
piles at my feet.
Over and over
I rearranged the piles,
waving.

I raked leaves today.
Freckled lemons, plums,
persimmons, cantaloupe balls
tangerine slices, kiwi wedges.
Fruit basket
upset under the pear tree.

Shoes

by Nathan Delacastro

open on:

Her worn white sneakers lie on the floor.
Two bent tongues loll, empty eyelets stare out blankly.
The untied torsos spread wide –
corpses peeled, poised for dissection.

zoom out

Her stocking feet sway lifeless just above,
winding and unwinding lazily – a rope swing over a river,
a pendulum coming to rest.

end scene.

July Fourth, First Date

by Stephanie Eyster

Beside the full moon, tiny diamond splinters pop and glitter in the sky,
while you and I release fragments of our pasts; firsts and lasts,
who made us laugh?

Your Jersey-boys football team; my cheerleader dreams of travel,
a cross country drive to the golden gate, and my teenage date who
never showed up for the prom.

We talked of ex-lovers and broken vows, the milestones and tears
that led us to now...and here; fresh friends, nothing more.

As the last red sparks spiral down to the black pool, we lie back
on the army-green wool, scarcely brushing shoulders and thighs.
Out of reach, but reaching out.

Unraveling our histories;
the mysteries of who we were, who we are
and what We may become.

The Night of Sense

by Seth Forwood

I tried to temper
my desire, a bug
in the butter,
and grew very tired
of breathing answer's
air, laid like Lazarus
in question's coffin,
until I allowed life
to wrap me, bound
by attraction beyond
logic: the cocoon
of desire, discipline's
fettters like petals,
I became every
unslaked bee's nature,
to hum with hunger,
the most devouring
joy of all.

After the Fact

by *Rachelle Hernandez*

When I spent some time away from you, I realized that you have worlds inside of you: planets rotating around stars floating in solar systems twirling in galaxies stretching like taffy in an ever-expanding universe.

And in your saltwater eyes, swimming, whales swallowed up schools of vibrant fishes, that had made their way from blooming corals to rushing currents around stagnant gyres, where jellyfish bathe in electric light that penetrates the shallowest, most superficial layers of your mind. The dark, secret trenches swallow me up as your consciousness expands like the seafloor and you and I drift away from each other.

We reduced each other to arid continents. We, faces wrapped in turbans as sand scorched our bare hands, could only make out the vague shapes of each other, distant dark spots shrouded by shaky mirages, glimmers imprinted in dried-out eye sockets, mistaking salt flats for lakes. My tongue shriveled, a riverless reed behind cracked lips, voice-box parched of any sound.

I could feel my organs failing, fluids unflowing, nerves exposed like hot wires, knotted tendons coming undone. You stacked my bones into wooden crates where they clattered and broke like empty bottles. The skin on my hands is yellowing, fingernails shed like corn-husks, the grooves in my fingers become smooth as glass.

Worst of all, the stains you left on my tablecloth, the stench of vinegar scrubbed into the carpet, bleach splattered on bathroom towels, fluoride splotches on my teeth. I flooded my home with ammonia and formaldehyde and still couldn't wash out your bitter scent.

Unwittingly, you uprooted me, slipped your thoughts into my ever-expanding mind: nebulae, red giants, black holes. First, like a flame licking up gasoline, then, like multihued light seeping through church windows, you poisoned me. After the fact, we are still bleeding into each other.

Braille

by Cynthia Lohnes

Flies tickled my eyelids
And spiders spun silk
In between my fingers
Tracing my knuckles
Like connect-the-dots.
I was trying to
Read the Braille
In the goosebumps on my skin
But I never really knew Braille anyways
(Although it's nice to pretend).

I felt myself drifting
Up in the atmosphere
But I feared that if
I opened my eyes
I would fall.
So I had to stay still,
Very still,
While the flies carried me away
On spider-silk parachutes
Tied to my toes.

I still can't read Braille
But I'll try to find it
In the dimples you have
When you smile
And maybe I could practice
If you'd just smile more.

I can't open my eyes,
I'm afraid I will fall
Afraid the parachutes will snap
Seeing as how fragile they are
So I'll just have to imagine
You smiling at me
So I can practice reading Braille
As I drift away
Into the cold atmosphere
Pretending I can read Braille

(I wish you would smile more).

Edges of Words

by Kari Redmond

On the edges of words
You spoke so softly
I have trouble remembering
The truth within them

Where what is not said
Means more
Where words float to fill the space between
You and me
Where forever once belonged

On the edges of boundaries we were always testing
Pushing like a rubber band
You from me
Me from you
Till the edges become blurred
Like the crayon drawing your niece gave me
Outside the lines, we were magic

On the edges of love
between your heart and your head
Where moments become memories
Piled into years
I thought there'd be time for always

There on the edge of the bed, what used to be ours
sometimes, only sometimes
I hear the words you tried to say
The whisper on the edges you kept to love me
And I forgive you

Paper Sun

by John Vollinger

I lie blanketed by the heaviness of a dream
The type that feels boundlessly significant until you start living for the day
But the blades of grass of the days that pass never quite support me
No matter how gingerly I spring from one to the next
Of no consequence to either

Small strings of light fall on my shoulders
Each knits a piece of a warm sweater that bounces my being awake
Standing slowly
Each fiber slides down my body to rest atop and around my feet
The mouth of the cave sensitively tightens like an iris
The reaching shadow blackens a circle around my face
This is the only place I am able to learn
In the far reaches of space the palms curl to a grip

I squeeze myself out of the cave
Into the shell that is waiting
I stretch lifting all my muscles off of one another and feel the blood run through me
unrestricted
I release and let each muscle drift down
Settling gently like fall leaves
Leaving an even layer

The paper sun extends in many diamonds
The sky is an alternating white-black
Flashing and flickering like static
Its abrasiveness has brushed my mind and the sun has caught sparks
It burns away the varnish
Ash dusts the dark sky
The mouth of the cave releases and opens
The whole world opens

Adult Honorable Mentions

Ancestral Graves

by Leslie Andrew

Watery wraiths ascend from the lake bed, beckoning to the dreamer.
Come to Palmyra, the ancestral home. Eternal
waters nurture your mothers,
who shimmer and sigh
in forgetfulness.

Your search for our graves in the daylight
deceived you. So we come to you by night
to say:

Look not to the tombstones moved to the hillside
when water invaded our land. Our bones
stayed behind to melt in the water,
to nourish the apparitions you see in the dream.

Come, daughter, float with us; drift in heedless harmony.
Merge with the ripples that glide over the murmuring lake.
No hand will hold you down.

The man of your life is pushing you under.
See how you spin in his grasp.
Shore-bound arms entrap and confine you
while we entice with a careful caress.

Come to Palmyra! Ours is an embrace to release you.
We make no demand but the one:
Join with our souls in Palmyra;
Sleep in the ancestral bed.

Rain Check (a poizontea)

by Stina Branson

She poisoned his coffee, she poisoned his chai,
Then crowed, "Burn in hell, y'old goat!"
"Some other time, maybe," was his calm reply,
"For now, I have the antidote."

Twilight, All Hallow's

by Seth Forwood

morning light rimmed round the world, still
not my world yet. Beyond absence-black hills,
below the rose shade of night appalling, blue milk
in tides of cloud nestles. Cottonwoods clutch
their first-water yellow, rich hearts
of shadow soon to exhale when the wind
claims all stained hands. Habits hang
like a rag on a nail, let the sun-swallowing
sky purge these tastes of night.

Color, Natural

by Sierra Hastings

you say that you could never love
the girl whose hair isn't a "color found in nature..."
you mean, a color that people are born with.

if you think that my hair isn't a natural color,
you may need to look a little bit closer -
I've got violet violence,
bruises beneath my eyes from nightly fights with sleep
scrapes and cuts that glisten ruby red from misadventures
and veins beneath stained-glass wrists that flow sea-foam green

If that's not natural enough for you,
look into the sky for each Colorado sunset -
dappled cotton-candy pink
lavender, forget-me-nots,
paint the sky like the Renaissance
gilded gold and molten lava orange.

you say that you could never love
the girl whose hair isn't a "color found in nature..."

but you should choose your words more carefully,
for last month's teal,
and last week's pink,
as will be tomorrow's electric yellow,
and Sunday's neon green
are all found in only nature's most beautiful treasures.

I pity you for never having known them.

Whipped Frosted Cake

by Kacy Wilms

The cake had whipped vanilla frosting
Her favorite.

With pale white frosting blending with her
chapped pale skin.

Sprinkles scattered across the top
in a mosaic pattern of colors.

A big 5 and 0 stood like statues
on a frozen tundra
that marked the passing of another year.

Who knew this would be the last celebration?

In three short months, the cancer
seeping like sludge into her bones
and organs, like an army in war,
would quietly take over. The system that fought
so gallantly, would hold the inevitable white flag
and surrender.

With blinded ignorance, the candles burned

Then with weakened lungs,
the light went out forever.



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