

First Place, Adult
Christy Lynne Trotter

Champa Romance

Garage door rattles open, side door unlocks then closes
I vision metallic chips glistening in his hair,
machine oil, engraved on his skin, drifts through the air
He is home, but not to come to me

He goes to his true love - his den, his computer -
the sound of the light switch flips,
his shadow moves across the hallway as I pretend to sleep
Plastic rustles as he reaches for a Nag Champa –
and lights it – the flick of the lighter echoes

Refrigerator opens,
beer cap bounces off the kitchen counter;
moments later, an empty bottle clanks in the trash can

Then he comes to me,
dirty, unshowered, forceful;
but not because he loves me
He wakes me, wanting to spill his dishonesty,
and I let him, but not because I love him
This will be his last grunt of false happiness

Eventually, we share a tender moment
when we stand in the kitchen and
I throw my wedding rings in his face;
the band ricochets off his forehead,
landing behind the dishwasher I hardly ever used
because I ate dinner alone almost every night
for seven years

continued

He looks at the floor – the only thing that can stare back,
and he smirks, proud of himself for being so brave
Tears - tiny rivers of pain, lies, wasted years – caress my cheeks

He retreats to his den, the smell of the Champa
seeping through the bottom crack of the door he just slammed
I vision him as he strokes the keyboard of his true love,
the computer fan purring back in complete satisfaction

Second Place, Adult
Elom Dossa

Nutella

Envy is an ambiguous feeling
It creeps up when I least expect it
It takes me to dark places
It enlightens the missing parts of my life
The first time I felt it, I was eating a tuna sandwich
My favorite.

The taste of tuna on a warm baguette
The crisp sound of broken bread with every bite
The onions my mother added for extra crunch
The unmistakable smell of the ocean
I was eight, at recess
Content.

She walked by and sat across from me
She smelled of hazelnut and chocolate
She smiled with every bite
Looking back, she was smirking
I felt my heart drop and my mouth water
Envy.

**Third Place, Adult
Tom Donnelly**

It was a good day,

the wind moved through the house
and the clouds' thin shell held
out usual August: I wanted
to keep going, drinking coffee, moving
among books and papers following
the day
kept going
like a parent talking over
his shoulder as he lifts, places
and moved the day
into night.

Honorable Mention, Adult
Christina Dendy

English Lessons

We meet twice a week at Formica tables
to practice letters, to make greetings and small words,
 to translate ourselves from one space to another.
English and Kinyarwandan, with different tongues
we resonate along the chord of mother
(she has four, I have one)
 while she tries to learn the hybrid inflections born
 of so much conquest gone before

and I scabble the phonetics to read the meaning
between the lines on her face, on her hands,
 to decipher the lesson in the pale scars that mark the place
 where bullets entered and exited her life, ciphering directions

from one undiscovered country to another.

Her ancestors escaped mastery of our linguistics once
only to seek the tenuous shelter of their refuge now,
 when the stone's throw in the water's ripples
 have finally reached and ravaged her shores. I wonder

what story she will tell,
 if she will blend the intonation of all the speech she knows
 (more than I do)
 if she will squeeze the pulp from every forgotten fruit
 trampled and bled in the road—
 if she will compose afresh the seeds of her own

if all the pain is worth the scribble to grow.

Honorable Mention, Adult
Heather Latham Miller

The lost poems

I am the creator of thousands of lost poems.
They come to me when I'm not ready,
whenever I let my guard down, when I am unprepared,
when I am unaware.
Usually it is while I am driving, or walking
or raking or shoveling... when I am immersed in work
that requires bend of back and steady vision,
leaving pen and keyboard out of reach.
Poems are living things born in movement
creatures of action, memory, time...
so this is when they come, when I am fluid.
They are born in feeling- and in doing- so there they thrive.
They cannot survive the maddening stillness, sitting...
They are over-eager and famished lovers-
they cannot tolerate being made to wait.
They also cannot bear over-scrutiny,
missing the point to translation,
or the dreadfulness of thinking too much.
This will make them evaporate like the mists of a mirage
on the face of the water,
with nothing left but to wonder
if they were ever there at all.
Like a rush of rain that rises river without warning
the adjectives precariously flood my brain,
but never when it is convenient.
I would otherwise have so much to tell you.
As it is, I'm drowning in poems.

First Place, Senior
Conrad Balliet

Not Yet

Laddy, my first love, went first.
After a car hit him, he lay bloody, panting
I still remember Pop saying,
"Too far gone; no point in taking him to a vet."
I cried.

Pappy was next. Mom's pop.
Sat in the rocker, said "hell" and "damn"
and spat tobacco juice. Mom hated the spittoon.
When I woke up one morning, they told me he had gone.
Didn't tell me where.

Then Pop, aged 60, heart attack.
But he had lived longer than his siblings.
Bessie, also heart; Tommy died in the mines.
Drink took Sylvester and Ellsworth; TB got Howard.
I miss them all.

Mom, a stroke at 71.
I was in L.A.; wife Marion in Erie with kids; brother Karl
away;
Edith (Mom didn't like her), held Mom's hand.
Doc said Mom would last til I got back.
She didn't.

Headlines: "Murder and suicide in Bedford."
Karl's wife Edith had shot herself and their epileptic son.
Karl's now 90, in a rest home in Anchorage.
Never mentions Edith.

Army buddy, Hank Rosenstock.
Parents died in Dachau; he translated at war crimes trials.
Hated the Germans like they hated the Jews.
Back in DC, put a pistol in his mouth, pulled the trigger.
I don't know why.

Good male friend, another Hank.
Pastor and professor, we shared our secret sins.
Parkinson's hit. He confessed sins to his loving wife.
Died unforgiven.

continued

Married Marion in 1950.
People saw her as a saint; didn't see me that way.
We reared four children; dealt with dysfunction.
We'd hoped to celebrate our 50th in 2000.
Cancer got her, 1999.

Daughter Jean; born Aug. 4, 1953.
Different, a loner. To Taiwan for research on landscape;
Returned with MA and husband. Had daughter Clara.
Then a lump. Tried diet, herbs, Chinese doctor.
Cancer, like her Mom, 2010.

After Marion, I found Evelyn.
Wonderful, simple, unassuming. I had turned 72; she, 84.
Shared six years of dance, travel, laughter, and love.
Alzheimer's took her brain. Body lasted four more years.
I loved her.

I've sensed it near me.
In a snow storm in my Cessna; falling from my Suzuki;
skiing down an Austrian mountain.
Death has hovered 'round me, but has not got me.
Not yet.

Second Place, Senior
Delvin W. Johnston

Home Again To Ireland

The distant headland---
 now stands clear...
 now disappears.
From the fog... out of the mists,
 the fishing boats of Killybegs,
 like always through the years,
ride the tide home across the bar,
 trailing a living cloud
 of gulls scrapping about in tight, winding circles
begging the wind for air
 and the boats for scraps.

The bay is alive with whitecaps,
 the grey green hills
misted over with wet winds...
 clouds moving swiftly,
 drip from the thick sky.
The sun... a hostage to the winds...
 it's cold light unable to warm,
 rides low beyond the wind...

This sight cannot have changed much!
Our ancestors must have known
 what I see this day
 before they were driven
 against the west wind
 to the new lands across the sea.

continued

But now... like the fishing boats in the bay...
we, their grandchildren, return again,
carrying the years back across the bar,
trailing our own living cloud
of family, stories, and traditions...
completing the journey of so many years...
so many generations.

Standing on the dock
looking toward the sea
my view of those who went before,
likewise, now stands clear...
and now sadly disappears
into the greyness and mists of the years.
But, from across the miles...
we have come home again.

**Third Place, Senior
Marietta Ball**

Spastic Biscuit Patter

A biscuit should be better
than this biscuit on my plate.
A child could make a better biscuit
than the biscuit I just ate.
When a biscuit tastes like plastic
there's no reason to indulge;
a plastic-tasting biscuit
isn't worth resulting bulge.
When I go to pay the ticket
and am asked "how was the food?"
should I say the plastic biscuit
fell far short of being good?
Or should I let my caustic silence
signal gustatory stress?
Should I voice dissatisfaction
or just ignore the clammy mess?
Our grandmothers' flaky wonders
won't be matched from bag or can;
one can't expect a plastic package
to produce a worthy pan.
But it doesn't take a wild fanatic
to resist a hockey puck
when one's tongue is set for pleasure
and instead gets cardboard muck.
I say "rise" to biscuit lovers;
we shouldn't take this sitting down.
All the gravy goes to causes
deemed more deserving in this town.
Write all the members of the council.
Call the mayor on the phone.
It's time we let the city fathers know
which side their bread is buttered on!

**Honorable Mention, Senior
Frances J. Simon**

Defenestration

i

What she fantasizes about throwing out the window:

his lies and excuses
the other women
him
his leather chair
jewelry he gave her as proof of his repentance
his underwear
her years of denial
long days of despair
hundreds of sleepless nights
his Italian knit sweaters
all the vodka martinis she has consumed
his disrespect
her bitterness
tears and pleadings
her lack of courage to ask him to leave
her terror around leave
his cashmere socks and silk ties
all the dinners she made that he never showed up for
his damn parrot
his money and stock portfolio
his recent unwillingness to even pretend he cares
her paralysis

ii

What she actually throws out the window:

Herself

**Honorable Mention, Senior
Jude Walsh Whelley**

Stacked

I can feel
my vertebrae moving
stacking themselves
one on top of another
elongating into
that soft S
that undulating curve
a woman has
when standing
full in her power
grounded
and reaching
for the sky

First Place, Teen
Dasha Perminova

Her Story

Her wings were clipped long before,
So she could help her brothers fly and soar.
She was stern, outgoing, caring, and bright.
Without her, they'd never have made their first flight.
She was the house maid, secretary, friend,
who had a depressing, terrible end.
The lady whose smile glowed like the full moon at night.
This woman is no other than the great Katharine Wright.

On the 19th of August, a little girl was born.
But then there came a time of mourn.
For in 1889, a disease like no other,
came along and took her mother.
To help her stay strong in these dark hours,
Katharine arranged an album of flowers.
But poor little Swes had to take on,
The job of her mother, who was now gone.
She had to care for her family, and cook, and clean.
And this was all at the age of fifteen.

But soon Katharine's life took a surprising turn.
For her father send her to college to learn.
She went to Oberlin in 1893,
and was the only Wright to earn a college degree.
Katharine made many wonderful friends there.
Her and Margaret became an inseparable pair.
She joined the Ladies Literary Society, which turned out great.
They got to share their ideas and even debate.
The engagement didn't last long when Arthur asked for her hand.
For from marriage, Katharine seemed to be banned.

continued

At Steele High School in Dayton, Katharine started to teach.
While her brothers flew air planes along a beach.
But soon, she had to put her dreams on hold,
as her family's worst nightmare began to unfold.
Orville got hurt and his passenger had died,
after they crashed during an air plane ride.
Katharine rushed to the scene to help him through.
And he made a full recovery too.

But soon Orville had to go.
Air planes don't sell themselves you know.
The brothers took her to Europe, a wonderful place.
She was their Social Secretary, full of charm and grace.

Her and her brothers made a pact long ago,
that only led Katharine to confusion and woe.
For when she wanted to marry the love of her life,
and become Harry Haskell's beloved wedded wife,
Orv became angry and as stubborn as a rock
and to his poor sister, he wouldn't even talk.
But after three years from what started out as a cold,
a terrible disease began to unfold.
On Saturday, March 3, 1929 Katharine passed away.
Forever in Woodland Cemetery she will lay.

Second Place, Teen
Abby Graham

February 18, 2008

6:22 AM

Harry Potter
Plays softly, disk
Spinning in the clock

6:22 AM

Muddy green carpet
Under a full length mirror
Leaning back against a violet wall

6:22 AM

The tinge of burnt
Hair permeates the room
From the straightener in my hand

6:22 AM

Turned around to face the door
Where my dad stands
Tears in his eyes

6:22 AM

The words I expected to hear
But never could prepare for
And now I don't know what to do

6:22 AM

I just found out
My mother has died
Only a room away

Third Place, Teen
Monica Rook

Sunlight

*inspired by a near death experience

You stand there watching me

through leaves and dappled sunlight.

I carry my heavy, golden halo in my hands.

But my feet are lighter and softer than dreams.

You smile at me from across the field,

I smile back like the moon.

There is nothing but glimmering light within this place,

soaring towards the indeterminable cathedral ceiling above the sky,

and the birds sing what I swear is my own name.

I will never be alone again.

My hair, my skin, my eyes are woven from the finest cloth.

I wish you could see what I see—

Everyone walks around shining like the sun.

I am composed of butterfly wings

held together with the silver filigree of spiderweb.

Nothing can nullify the knowledge that perches in my chest.

For I am an inseparable facet of the diamond that glitters

with a light too bright to look at.

For I am covered in leaves of gold, coating my body,

precious as a priceless jewel.

We are radiant.

We shine brighter than the sunlight on our heads.

Honorable Mention, Teen
Rose Tyler

When Leaves Made Me Cry

I planted a tree
Not too long ago
And watched it grow so tall

I let it go
For months on end
Until its leaves began to fall

They were all brown and hardened
Not at all as I remember
Oh, what is this dreaded curse, these people call September

By now I am much older
And not nearly as naïve
What used to make me cry, doesn't even make me grieve

The leaves will come and go
The tree's a distant friend
And just now in my old wisdom, I have begun to comprehend

That in life, some things will leave you
And you'll have to do without
But if you have a little patience, they'll once again begin to sprout

**Honorable Mention, Teen
Donnie Stevenson, Jr.**

Wonderful White

When used in Church it's a symbol of purity,
The baby's blanket that's used for security.

White is snow that comes from the sky,
A tissue that wipes up the tears when you cry.

So frosty and icy and wintery cold,
White is the color of hair when you're old.

White is the foam rising over the waves,
White is the smoke coming up from the graves.

White is light, goodness, and innocence,
White is a color with a fascinating brilliance.

**Honorable Mention, Teen
William Bryant**

Your Eyes

Your eyes, a popular cliché
The sun, like a simile that's way too overused.
'Love' is an abstract noun, so I can't use it
'Birds': A concrete noun that makes a good metaphor
'Life' is old and boring
But I need something new
Something not-too overused
Something never said before:
Apples
Crunchy, sweet, and good
Wait...
Someone's already made
A poem about apples.
Is this really a poem?
I'm just putting
Sentences
On different
Lines.