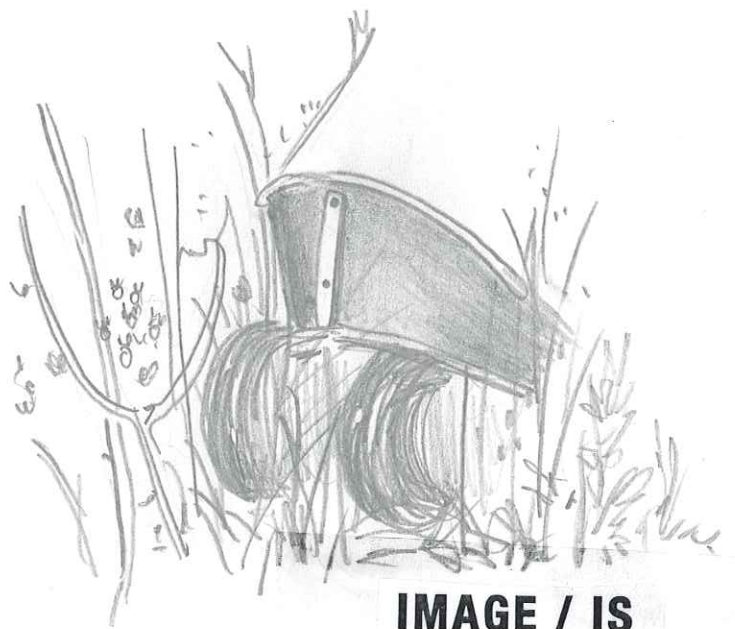


# IMAGE / IS

Mercy High School 2014





**IMAGE / IS**



## Death

Understand, I have refrained from making comment,  
but now that I've stood by for years  
watching you two rant and rave,  
I have to have my say. Death,  
you're much too serious and sober to satisfy her—  
always have been—  
constantly dragging her down by the ankles,  
hiding in the depths of her shadow.  
Sure, she left you hollow and empty, like a corpse,  
to go off in search of a more passionate lover  
but think it through, Death.  
Didn't you have that coming?  
Or will you still insist that your woman did you wrong?  
I know you took it tough.  
You were curb-sided.  
You felt yourself harden into cement  
then wither away like ash.  
And then once she was gone for good,  
you felt justified in letting all hell break loose, didn't you?  
As with Frankenstein, neglect turned you into a monster.  
That's when you grabbed Life by the throat with clammy  
hands, held fate in your arms  
and murdered her abruptly, unremorsefully.  
You threw Love over a cliff when she turned her back,  
drowned happiness in tears of mourning.  
You lashed out to fill that bullet hole in your heart,  
but your heart is cold, Death, cold,  
while your rage remains hotter than the flames of the inferno.  
Ah, Death, do you not see the senselessness  
in such destruction,  
walking around like a zombie,  
watching Life and Love's affection,  
realizing you are nothing but the lack of?

Alexandria Sobczak

## Trapped in the Family Restaurant

Can't my parents see the endless blue of the Atlantic  
trapped in my irises?  
I spend my days moving in and out of the kitchen,  
serving the regulars  
and refilling water glasses,  
living in the calm center of a hurricane,  
knowing it is only minutes before the storm strikes again,  
a storm of ambitious dreams and a hopeful future.  
I can almost see myself sailing away from Portland, Maine  
to where the sky meets the mountains.

Oh, what I could do, the places I could see!  
I could finally fill those canvases  
with beautiful landscapes and abundant wildlives.  
Instead of wincing with the sting of salty sea breezes,  
I could inhale dry, frozen air as I stand  
fourteen thousand feet above sea level.  
Looking down I could gain inspiration from treetops,  
instead of muffin tops,  
and the prancing legs of an eight-point buck,  
instead of the bright red lobster legs sprawled out on pile of potatoes.

If only I wasn't trapped in the family restaurant,  
stuck wearing a smiling face,  
as I answer to "Refill, please" all day.  
*Make sure the customers have what they want*  
has been pounded into my head  
ever since I was old enough to balance a tray full of food.  
But just once I want to serve myself,  
to dish up a plate of endless adventure  
that would fill a gallery of canvasses.

Patti Wallace

Body of Love (Mario Ruoppolo writes to Beatrice Russo)

My love for you is a human body;  
it grows every day, becoming complex and mysterious.  
Even after years of familiar transactions with it,  
so many parts remain unknown, unexplainable.

My love, like a living body,  
aches of soreness and exhaustion,  
but somehow it grows stronger because of the pain,  
because its pain is so evident, so inevitable.

You, my love, remain essential to its survival;  
quenching my thirst,  
putting an end to my starvation,  
you become its welcomed wine and bread.

All the parts fit together;  
it's something no words can explain.  
From the smallest cell to the largest organ  
all is important, omnipotent,  
yet dependent on you.

Jessica Rieckhoff

## To Abortion

I used to think you could be helpful,  
that you actually cared about me  
and those who died or didn't come after me.  
It turns out that you are a liar, only a manipulator,  
using your power to control and destroy  
generations of victims and perpetrators.

You tell us that you only hope for the best,  
that you have good intentions,  
that you are more than willing, even happy,  
to rid us of our problems.  
You get us to believe in you,  
to trust you,  
to, perish the thought, even be thankful for you.  
You convince us that you are some happily-ever-after solution,  
the great hope of a nation,  
the care for all our ills.

Yet you take advantage of the vulnerable and the weak,  
the confused, the desperate  
promising the easy out  
then crushing them with your lies.

Oh sure, days may pass, weeks,  
even years, but the truth will out.  
Sooner or later your cheap tricks will be  
seen for what they are.

Oh, you talk big but only bring us down,  
leveling us to our lowest selves  
at the very time we need to stand strong, rise high.

Rita Jamil

## The Balloon Dealer

As I stand here in downtown Beirut  
I observe many things—  
the big shot businessmen, for instance,  
with their pretty wives and their perfect lives,  
the spoiled daddy's girls with their shining cars and brand name bags—  
so I can't help but wonder what went wrong with my life.

How did I end up here on the corner of Rouche Street  
with nothing to my name but a handful of colorful air?

I had dreamed of a life at the university,  
but once this cruel world took away my father,  
I was next in line to try to support my family.

So each morning, each evening,  
I plaster this smile on my face,  
trying to convince others that a colorful balloon  
can bring a bit of happiness to their life.  
Some even believe me and pass me a handful of coins.  
But these balloons have put an end to my happiness,  
have wound a string around my future.

If only I could go back  
and tell myself that this is what would become of me—  
perhaps then I would not have bothered to dream,  
perhaps then I could have been happy  
being poor, lonely, handing out beautiful little toys  
that pull toward the sky  
yet are tied to the earth.

Sara Makki



John Brown Talks Over Breakfast, 1992

I'm pretty settled into my morning routine:  
pop-tarts for breakfast, instant coffee,  
lookin' over the unfinished game of solitaire  
laid out on the kitchen table.

It's been this way since Mary passed a couple years ago  
from terminal cancer,  
which I found out is kinda like fishin' on the river:  
nothin' you can do but sit back and wait.

Though it's long past her fortieth birthday,  
I've left these here flamingos in the front yard.  
They're long and lean, kinda graceful, like she was,  
and they remind me how she used to talk  
about big time fishing one day—  
maybe after we retired—in Florida,  
some place full of color and warmth,  
where the sea air filled your lungs,  
enough so as you thought  
you could take off and fly.

I've been lookin' at the house listings online,  
tryin' to use that Internet thing for the first time.  
I think she would've liked this one place I found—  
painted yellow like the sun.  
Expensive, Florida is, but her memory?  
That's worth a million bucks.

So maybe I'll make a few calls today, 'cause  
ya' know, it doesn't hurt to ask—  
anything to break  
this detestable morning routine.

Katie Baird



## Luca Barotti Speaks While on Break at Café Bella

Rome is home,  
but it's not where I want to be.  
I spend my days trudging from class to class  
at the The Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore,  
listening to lectures from boring professors  
and attempting to do all the readings  
that I don't understand.  
I spend my nights waiting tables,  
but I don't enjoy that work either.  
Mama and Papa have given their lives,  
so that I might become a doctor,  
but I do not seek a life  
of wounds and blood.

No, music is my life  
or at least the life I imagine.  
Mama cries, *Luca, don't you love your mother?*  
Papa says, *Why don't you listen to me?*  
I love my mother  
and it breaks my heart to hurt my father.  
But it is music that burns my soul.  
Nights, days, the words of songs  
run through my brain.  
Awake and at rest, my fingers  
trace the intricate  
chords of my guitar.

How can I ever explain to them  
why I want to break free from this life  
that was set for me before I could live?  
All I know is that I must find a way,  
but, until then, I'm trapped in this place,  
like the notes on a page of music  
that never gets played.

Alycia Bellino

## Desk Chair

As usual, he stands  
ready to face the day,  
to lend his support  
to anything the boss wants to do.

But he's turning fifty this year  
so he can't help but wonder  
if the powers-that-be  
are thinking of replacing him.

Truth is, he can't  
roll with the punches  
like he used to  
or learn to take a back seat  
to his newer co-workers.

So it is that he sits alone in the back  
of the congested office,  
staying out of everyone's way,  
trying to recall what it felt like  
when the warmth of his boss  
was reserved for him alone.

Sophia Romano

## Pasta

I first loved you when  
you came out of Strega Nona's magic pot  
and you still bring me joy along with  
niacin and vitamins.

You are so versatile, like a sweater  
that can be paired with red pants or white,  
and, like diamonds, so befitting  
any occasion—lunch with the girls,  
a discreet dinner for two,  
or a tribal feast for family.

And you come to me in  
myriad shapes—oodles  
of noodles—  
which makes choosing difficult at times.  
But I find that  
your figures fit my mood—  
Am I feeling flat as linguini  
or whimsical, like rotini?

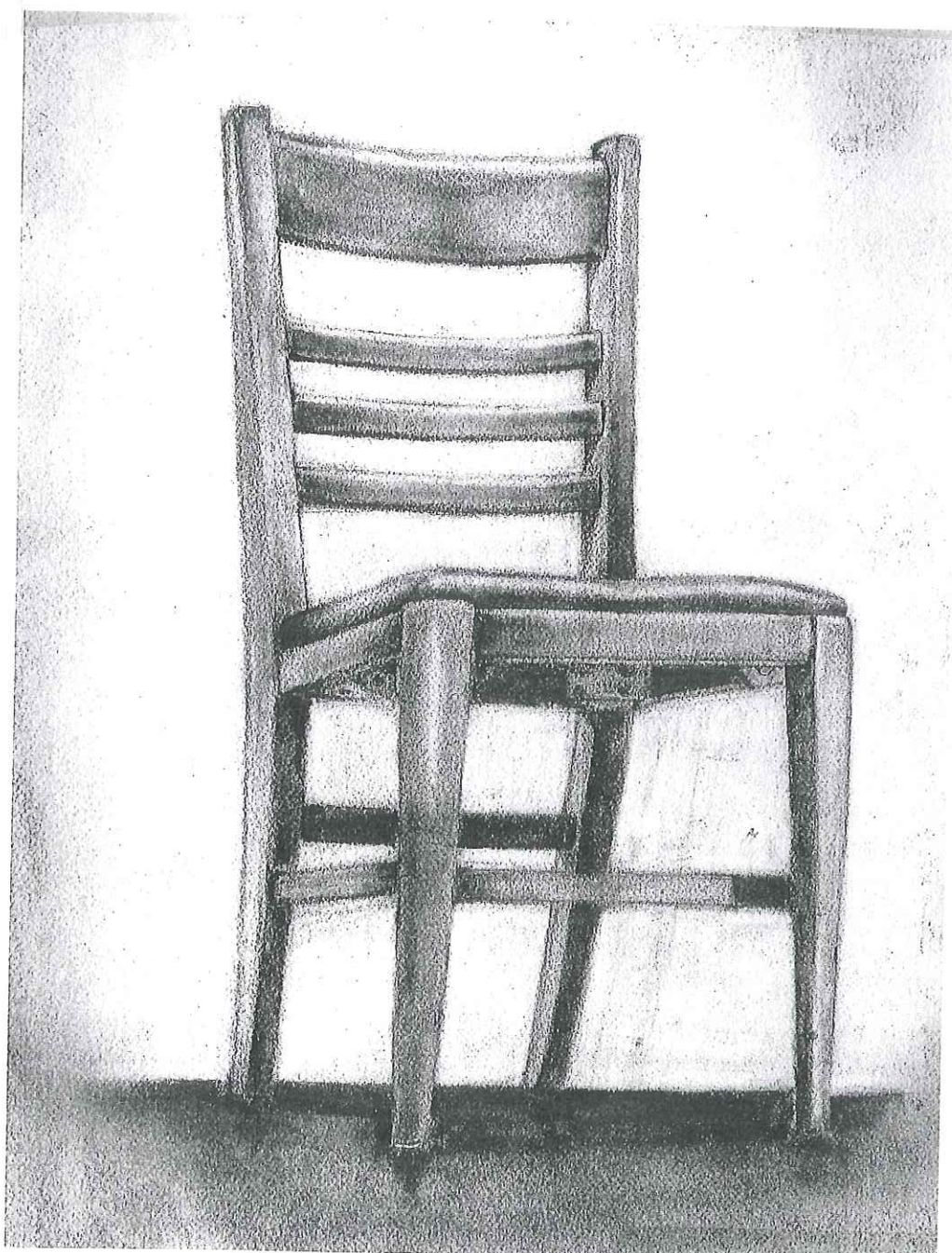
Like Anthony,  
I look forward to spending  
every Wednesday with you.  
And your brand names  
conjure up for me  
a veritable tour  
of romantic settings—  
De Cecco, Ronzoni, San Giorgio, Rossi, Garofalo.  
Oh, I'm so torn!  
I can't choose!

After all, the perfect night  
begins and ends  
with Barilla,  
but Buitoni makes any night  
date night.

Ah, Pasta, you are the essence of simplicity—  
flour, eggs, salt—  
all molded by loving hands  
or ingenious technology  
to answer the chef's desire.  
Rigatoni, farfalle, spaghettini, manicotti, penne,  
the list is as long as a noodle!

I can stuff you,  
bake you, or boil you up,  
batter you or butter you.  
No matter the method, Pasta, the result  
is the same;  
your tender deliciousness satisfies me  
like a baby's pacifier.  
And for you, my gastronomic love,  
I'd even be willing to go to pot!

Mackenzie Zierau



**Rita Erickson**



A Love Poem by Matilde Neruda

You are the sky in the way that I am a child  
perched on the edge of her roof,  
wishing to fly but not knowing how.  
You are also the earth,  
in the way that my body always seeks you when I fall.

I love you like an open mouth,  
like an infinite vocabulary balanced on the tongue,  
waiting to be spoken into creation;  
the possibilities overwhelm.

When we met you taught me the art of cartography—  
how to rediscover my body,  
how to map my skin like it was some new land,  
how to document every curve, dip, and stretching plain.

To you I am no longer a bruised apple;  
I am the flourishing tree from which it comes.  
You sit beneath me, write love letters to my roots.  
Allow me to give you shade;  
in return, let me savor the fruit of your words,  
so that I may fall sleep in the orchards of your poems.

Molly Schwalm

Death,

cruel dictator,  
why do you merit dominance  
over all beings?

You must feel so high and mighty,  
holding, as you do, the power  
of life in your clawed hands.  
For when you say the game is over,  
it really is.

But tell me this—  
do you ever look into the eyes  
of those left mourning?  
Do you ever listen  
to their curses, their prayers?

Do you hear the sound made  
when a tear hits the floor  
or do you merely move on  
to another dismal scene  
so as to snatch up another soul?

Maybe if you listened to the prayers  
of those grieving, you would feel some measure of guilt,  
maybe realize how helpless and confused  
the souls you left behind are.  
Maybe, for once, you could not be so greedy.

Hannah Schmidt

## To My Trophy

You're much better than I,  
for you only know the accomplishments of glory and fame.  
You'll never have to understand the pain that comes with failure.  
You'll never even know about being second best,  
perched, as you are, so high above me.

You stare me down, with your hard etched expression.  
Granted, your form is impeccable;  
not even Phelps nor Lochte could match your perfect physique.  
But did it ever occur to you  
that you take yourself too seriously,  
gloating over your record, your insistent victory?

Face it, you were made for first place.  
Not even the miners of '49 could find fool's gold  
as real as the one that covers you.  
And you're so incredibly crafted that no one  
could tell that, underneath,  
you're just cheap plastic.

So with knees bent, your body braced,  
you steel yourself against  
whatever challenge may face you.  
I'm glad that I happened upon you once again  
because it's given me cause to contemplate  
the difference between you and me.

See, I can move into the future,  
while you, rigid, immobile, dated,  
are forced to live in the past.  
And, set so far in the clouds,  
you lose track of what life is actually like  
down here on earth.

You see, second place isn't so bad.  
Only there do you find the real desire to win,  
and the absolute abhorrence of loss.  
And only those who've intimately, or repeatedly, known second place,  
understand the meaning of being number one.

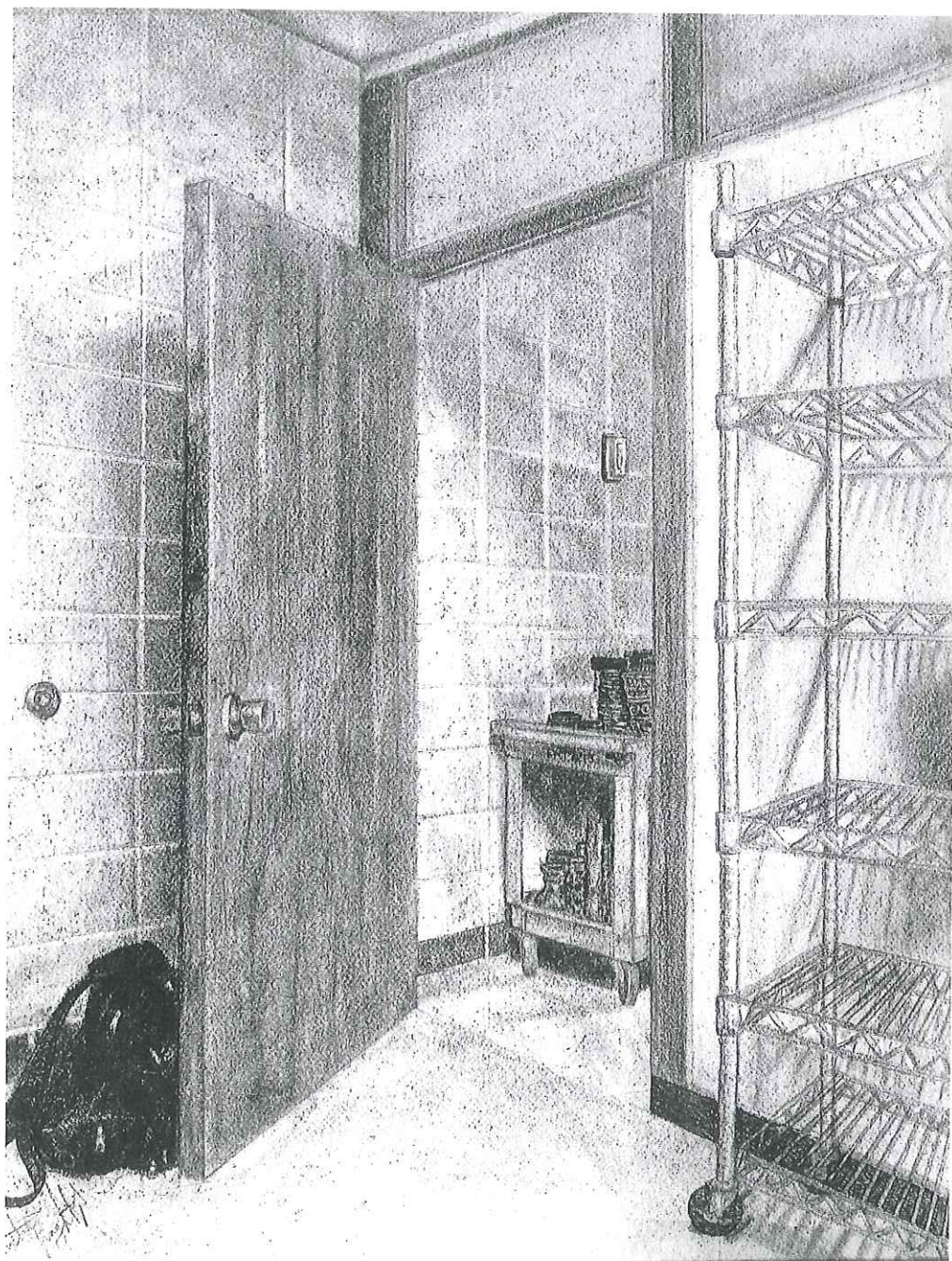
And that is where I live—



with desire in my eyes—  
wanting and fighting for more,

while all you can do is blankly stare back  
with those golden, glazed eyes.

Jordan Ewald



**Christina Gee**



## Fear

Next to you, a giant,  
I am only two feet tall.  
Whenever you show your threatening face,  
I am reduced to an ant.  
When you flee,  
I am invincible and powerful,  
as intimidating as you yourself.

In my childhood, you latched onto  
darkness, bugs, and loud noises.  
Over the years,  
your preferences changed  
from darkness to thunderstorms,  
and loud noises to monsters and villains.  
Now, you thrive with change and the unknown,  
the future, and still, bugs.

Will I ever be able to abandon you,  
you loyal pest,  
such a taunting villain,  
such a little giant as yourself?  
How hard it would be  
to scare you off,  
and beat you at your own game.

Kristin Swad

## Your Eyes

are fresh roses.  
They are morning icicles,  
worthy seconds.

Your eyes are frolicking children  
and falling orange leaves,  
full moons on a dark night.

They are tree-lined pathways,  
opened doors.  
They are glimmers of hope.

They are steps on the pathway  
to the rest of your life,  
are fireflies on a dark night.

They are unread novels,  
testaments to fidelity,  
the veritable cornerstones of possibility.

Haley Gold

## Desire,

like a patch of tall grass,  
grows wild, shifts in the wind,  
hopes, one day, to die a peaceful death.

Jaclyn Ruffolo

## Mi Amor

You are a rosary, monotonous yet comforting,  
close to me in perpetual moments of doubt.  
You are holy water; I rely on you  
to cleanse my soul, to purge me  
of all that stands in the way of loving you.

Your limbs are ribbons of fire scourging my poor body  
with the warm subtle grazes of your love,  
And your hair, strands of a silken baldacchino  
that accentuate your purest features.

Your bones are precious relics  
encased in the parchment of your skin;  
I watch your wary feet, scan the floor  
so as to protect you from anything  
that could tear your delicate body.

And your voice trails like chalk-  
smooth, porous, temporary.  
Dusty words leave your mouth-  
a sacred smoke of thoughts,  
in midair, a hymn of good news.

I follow you like a pilgrim pursues his god.  
I am your shadow leaping after your running feet.  
But like a shadow cannot exist without sunlight,  
I cannot feel the warmth of my heart  
without your radiating love.

Gina Ruggierello

## My Eyebrows

are clouds that cover  
the bright stars of my eyes.  
Even when perfectly still they swell with ferocity;  
like prowling tigers they wait for their prey.

When worried they are small, grassy fields  
on either side of a small, dry riverbed.

Like words they swell with emotion  
Like waves, that change with the weather,  
they echo the mood of the sky.  
Gates protecting the house from the harsh world,  
they move to admit the friend,  
to rebuff the stranger.

Elena Flores

## Spare Change

They are left behind,  
like orphans,  
with no one to care for them;

lonely, and unwanted,  
they wait for someone to notice them,  
to discover their true value,  
to pick them up and hold them.

Monique Bajouka



## White Crayon

I never used you.  
You remained the same,  
as pure, as marginal  
as a blank canvass.  
You stood tall over all these years;  
you never let life wear you down  
or discolor your pristine demeanor.

It is no wonder, then,  
that the others looked upon you  
with disdain. You took the oath.  
You stayed clean.  
You knew, in your pure white heart,  
you could always be them  
reduced, discolored, broken,  
but that they could never be you—  
completely neutral, unaffected, democratic.

And so it is I look to you now  
with the greatest respect  
for your fortitude, integrity,  
and sense of self-worth.  
You are a means of beauty,  
a goddess, connecting  
the beauty of the heavens,  
to the humble realm of this world,  
making things like fresh fallen snow,  
a delicate wedding dress,  
a billowy cloud, feathery angel,  
all tangible to mere men.

Christina Miracle

## Electronic Notebook

He is an intelligent specimen;  
in fact, he holds more facts and figures  
than you'd even think possible.

He is a silent partner, too.  
You'll never catch him  
broadcasting your news  
or posting your documentation  
for the whole world to see.

No, he's no open-book,  
and that's part of his charm.  
The only problem is  
he is not immortal.  
There will come a time when he  
first goes blank,  
and your connection will be severed;  
at that point he'll need to be replaced,  
doomed to remain only a memory.

Sabrina Jamil



**Kate Anderson**

## Apron

For years she's hung about the kitchen,  
working endless hours,  
staining her floury complexion.

She seems nearly compulsive, too,  
baking from morning to night.

Her tidy little body has started to stretch,  
to droop, to expand,  
especially at the hips.  
All the hours, all those tasty treats,  
well, they've taken their toll.

Nevertheless she's in demand,  
especially to prepare the holiday meals.  
And, every time, she rises to the occasion,  
leaving no one disappointed

Her secret recipes  
are kneaded in the dough of memory,  
ready to be passed down  
to generations to come.

Paige Roberts



My Dearest Pablo,

when you said my name,  
it was like you were desperately calling upon  
the queen of some powerful country,  
so honored did I feel in being known to you.

When you looked at me  
it was in the way one regards an orchid,  
with kindness  
and with thoughts of resurrection.

And when you touched me, you touched my heart.  
I felt a rush of wind,  
and it filled my lifeless lungs.  
Indeed, my love, when you touched me,  
my heart turned human;  
gold was changed to human flesh.

When you proved loyal to me,  
I felt a security beyond mighty palace walls;  
your hand in mine, your vow for mine,  
protected me from the wickedness of the known and unknown alike.

I know I am drained from the sorrow of yesterday,  
vulnerable from the unexpectedness of tomorrow,  
but now that you are mine  
I am in love,  
the only heaven we can know on this earth.

Martha Fons

### This Golden Maple Tree

has drained every bit  
of sunlight from the sky.

Even at evening,  
after the sun had wandered  
far beyond the woods,  
she is there, shining.

Meghan Judd

### To My Love, Pablo

My love, watching you  
is like catching a glimpse of sunlit waves  
as they settle on the shores of my homeland;  
watching you is like meditating  
on the unfolding of a single rose.

After all, you are the candle that leads me through darkness,  
the umbrella sheltering me from all disasters,  
the compass that leads me home.

Yes, you, my love, are the key to the lock that is my future;  
you are my fortune, my dominant hand,  
a replica of my naive soul.

That is why I keep my eyes on you,  
put my trust in you,  
and why you, my love, are my counselor, my strength,  
my motivation and my hope.  
Without you, I would lose sight of all that has beauty;  
I would be nothing but a false promise,  
a lost memory.

Courtney Avromov

## Laila's Crushed Dreams, 1972

My mother agreed to leave last night,  
after Papa and I begged her  
to say farewell,  
to the danger, to the fright.

We were packing our few belongings  
into three suitcases—  
one for each of us—  
so that we could find a new life in America.

It was a dusty day in Kabul,  
dustier than normal for Afghanistan.  
and life seemed more uncertain than usual  
what with rockets streaking overhead all day.

I was placing boxes on the curb  
filled with books that we could not bring,  
abandoning them with a heavy heart  
but hoping they could offer comfort  
to those who would remain behind  
on nights when the sound of explosions  
was too loud to be drowned out.

My father was right behind me  
in his favorite red shirt,  
and my mother right behind him,  
wearing her yellow scarf with the red flowers.  
The car was ready,  
to drive us past the rubble houses, the marked checkpoints.

And just as I put down the last box, I heard it—  
a bomb dropping from an overhead aircraft.  
We stopped dead in our tracks, as they say;  
the three of us paused to listen,  
as a family.

And then,  
books were ripped from their boxes  
strewn over the dry lawn.  
I started to move.  
My first thought was of my parents,  
but something caught my eye—  
pieces of flesh  
with red fabric clinging to them,  
a ripped torso,  
a yellow scarf with red flowers  
and the singed remnants of dreams.

Amira Badr

### An Umbrella

This skinny guy  
in the black mac  
carries himself  
like a perfect gentleman.

And that's just as well  
for when rain threatens,  
he can spread out his lonely arms  
to protect you both.

Victoria Padula



## To The Eraser

You are always  
number two;  
first comes the lead,  
then it's you.

Computer geeks  
tend to forget you are there.  
Perfectionists, who take their time  
so as to make no mistakes,  
may never give you due recognition.  
But they do not realize how important you are  
to the people of this world  
who are less than ideal.

But then, when you are used  
you are immensely abused,  
shredded down to the bone,  
until you're stripped of your dignity.

Still, stubby and stumbling,  
you come back for more  
willing to help each and every  
man to write his page in history,  
or chemistry, or math.

Why, without you,  
even this poem would be a mess  
yet, after many rough drafts,  
it is finally perfect. In that way  
you become the counselor of my work,  
confessor for my many faults,  
because you allow me to see  
that the human thing  
is not to be perfect  
but to be willing to correct my mistakes.

Brianna Curran

## Losing You

If ever I were to lose you  
my heart would become an orphaned child,  
a lone fishing boat stranded at sea  
staring blankly into the darkness.

Only through your eyes can I see beauty;  
only in your arms can I feel loved. That is why  
I watch you move about this colorless town like a hummingbird;  
when you fly, suddenly, red flowers, blue skies appear.

But if I were to lose you, joy would desert me—  
food would remain tasteless,  
water would run dry,  
white sand would fade to gray,  
black skies would rise to form a permanent night.

You must remember, my love,  
that I am but a humble fisherman with no catch for the day.  
How I pray for you to accept my meager bait,  
to grasp the other end of this line  
so that we might remain together,  
joined hand to mouth,  
and know the happiness of sea and land.

Tyler Parlor

## Frost

This sinister midnight killer  
lurks through the cold dark air,  
searching out the frailest creatures.

Quickly suffocating his victims,  
he is gone by morning,  
leaving no trace of his treachery,

except for the bodies,  
so drained of life,  
that are strewn upon the ground.

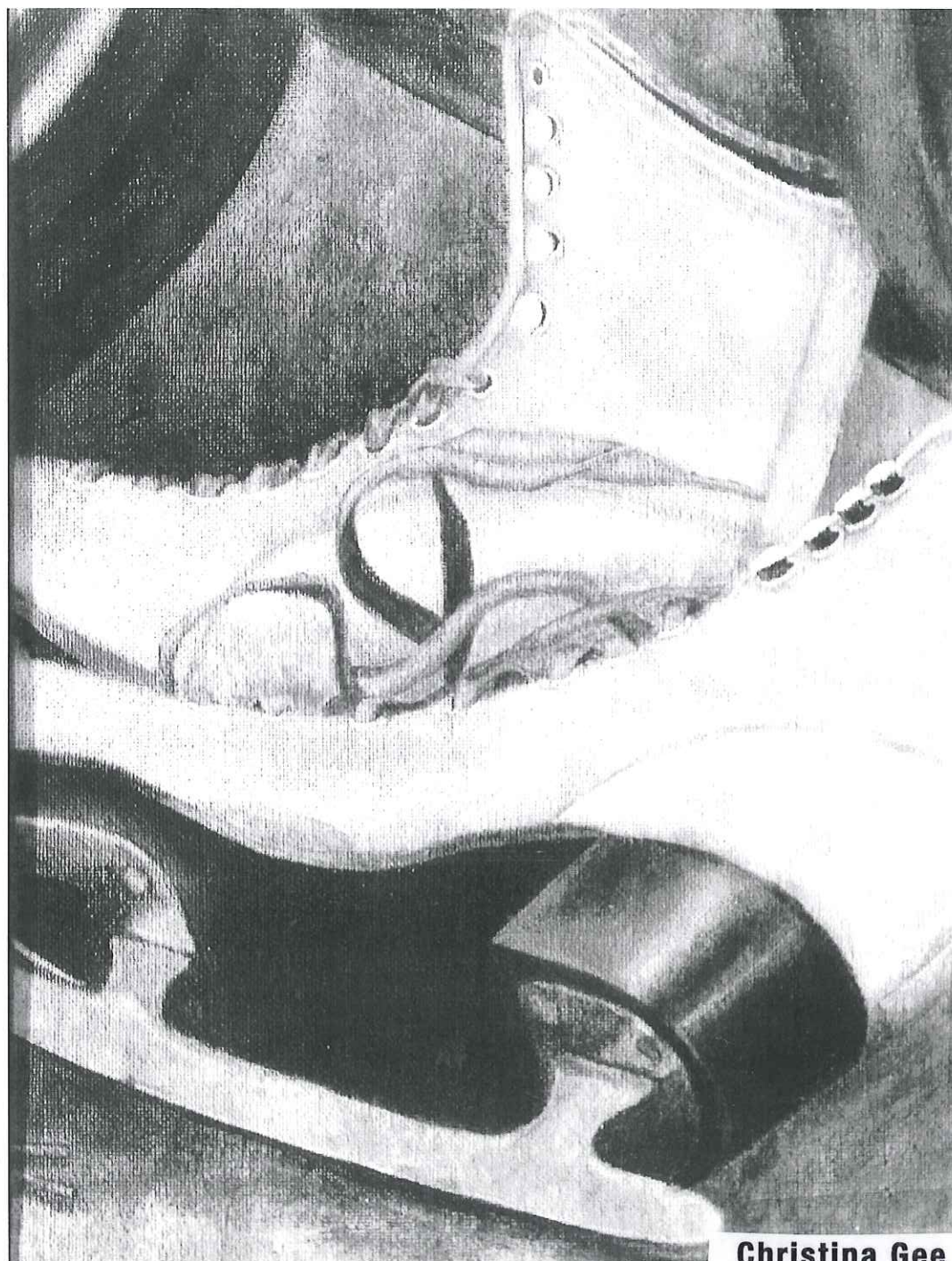
Christine Edwards

## Autumn Leaves

Loose buttons of different sizes, colors, and shapes,  
hang on by threads,  
till they are finally ripped from their garments.

Left to roll onto the floor,  
they become lost forever.

Theresa Kowall



**Christina Gee**

## Ears

Ears are the frozen valleys  
tucked into the mountainside  
upon which words fall like snow

When the array of muffled voices scurry off,  
the air stuffs itself into these deep caverns;  
a thousand secrets imprint themselves  
on their ancient walls.

They are eerie tunnels  
echoing the silent sounds of underground springs.  
They hum a cadence of soft chords;  
they lull the nocturnal animals to sleep, come dawn.

They are shells from some vibrant coast,  
formerly the home of some soft, intelligent animal.  
They drift now  
full of the sweet memories of home.

Kaleigh Beauregard

## Fake Nails

They are princesses  
lucky enough to not know  
the hard work of commoners.  
No wonder they all smile  
while the peasants work hard to support them.

Kari Cieslak



## To My Pablo

Some days, my love,  
you are as dangerous as waves  
crashing against forbidden rocks,  
as sly as the undertow. But other days  
you are a dock and your words of care  
mere rope securing me forever.

Some days you are  
an oyster unrevealed,  
a cave yet to be discovered,  
misunderstood for the treasure within you.  
Other days you are the sun dancing on the water,  
truly appreciated for your beauty,  
offering no confusion to the eye.

When you stare at me, as you would a wishing star,  
the oceans part, my love.  
Mere words become diminutive compared to the sky,  
for your eyes understand the unspoken language of my soul.

Therefore, my love, all days, all nights  
I will remain beside you—  
a shore to your ocean,  
an island to your warm sand.

Allie Gorcyca

## Love

Others thought our love a lost message,  
unfamiliar and perplexing. They could not understand  
how you made lilies bloom in the alleys,  
how you made smiles walk down the streets.

They would not understand that, now that you have left me,  
day is no longer day, only a bitter night.  
Even when I look out the window  
I no longer see the sun,  
only the somber paved streets,  
that remain depressed by the rain.

They would not see how,  
now that you have left me, that also gone  
is the fire from the hearth,  
how, without you, mi amor, my life  
is little more than a message in a bottle,  
unable to find someone to open it.

When you come home to me, my love,  
read to me like you used to,  
and dance with me  
until dawn breaks through the darkness—  
only then might people understand our love.

Michaela Bargardi

## Ashima Speaks From her New Home, 1968

Once I was a bird  
free to roam the streets of Calcutta,  
to soar wherever my heart desired.  
My house was filled with the melody of laughter  
and I sang my way through the crowded streets  
of the only city I had ever called home.

But it wasn't long before I became of marriageable age  
and that smart Indian man, Ashoke Ganguli,  
was ready to take me off my father's hands.  
And so, this bird flew half way across the world,  
far away from home to the land of opportunity.

Little did I know what a cold place is Cambridge.  
It is not the sun that beats down on me anymore  
but rather flakes of snow which nestle themselves in my braid.  
Here, the only street I saunter down  
is the one to the laundromat and back.  
And no melody fills this luxury apartment,  
in which we huddle.  
No, the only sound comes from the couple  
fighting above us in Apartment 5C.

The only one I know here is Ashoke  
and only at night is he here to comfort my loneliness.  
The only friends I have are my pen and paper  
that work to send my love back home to Calcutta.

How was I supposed to know, when only a girl,  
that my bright future would tarnish so easily,  
like the spokes of a bird's ornamental cage?  
How was I to know that I would be stuck  
beating my wings against this apartment's  
casement windows, yearning  
for warmth, flight,  
beyond Calcutta's shores  
to where angels might welcome me into their kingdom.

Anjali Batra

## Lampost

Man oh man, does she light up the town!  
Just standing there with her head held high  
she exerts a sense of radiant confidence.

And when night falls, why, there's no turning her off.  
Her brightness rarely goes unnoticed,  
yet only inspires the dimmest of minds.

Olivia Hurt

## Yellow Pencil

She knows she's been chosen, one out of many,  
but has that sneaking suspicion  
that she's only number two.

Maybe that's what causes her  
to come to life when her boss needs her,  
taking care of business  
so efficiently, so effectively.

Why, she can mend her own mistakes,  
erasing them before anyone can even notice.

Beware, though, because she has an attitude.  
Why, she can go from calm discussion  
to a bellowing rant in just a heartbeat,  
then go all broken and browbeaten  
once she's worn down  
with all the histrionics.

No wonder, at the end of the workday,  
she feels rather dull, worn to the core.  
Only her boss can sharpen her delicate demeanor,  
restoring her enough to complete yet another task.

Erica Allor



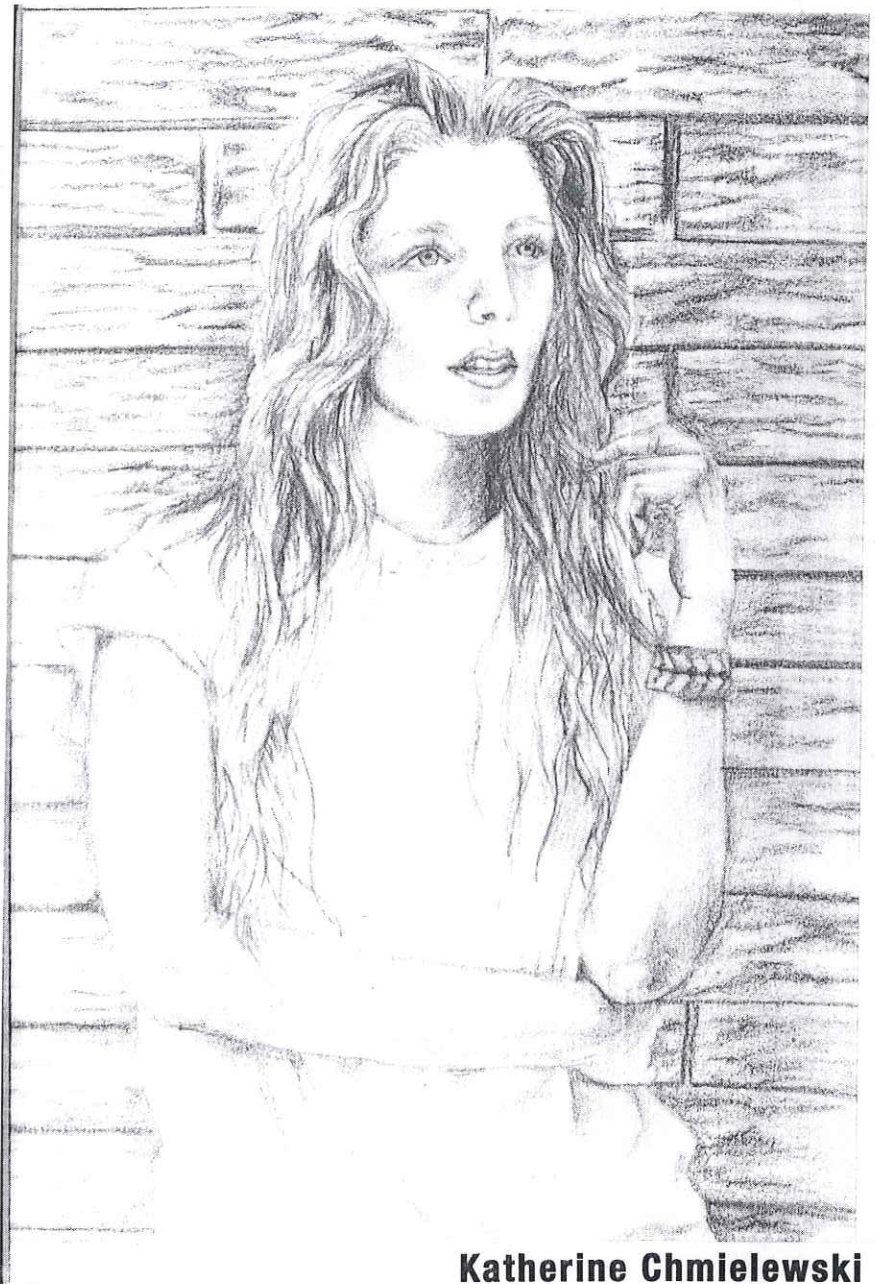
## Autumn Leaves

This rebellious teenager,  
feeling too trapped in his crowded home,  
cannot help but yearn to break free.

Once he does, he makes a dash for it  
but has nowhere, really, to go.

Lone, susceptible,  
he soon runs with a crowd of other loners,  
misfits by default.

Julie Flanagan



**Katherine Chmielewski**

### A Penny

Life on the street is hard;  
night after night,  
she's been left out in the rain,  
left to cry herself to sleep.

Come morning, though,  
she attempts to clean herself up,  
show her brightest side,  
hoping to be picked up by some passerby.

It may not result in happily-ever-after,  
but at least she'll have  
a home for the night.  
And who knows? Maybe he'll realize  
she's the type that can bring him luck.

Kelli McDonald

### A Poem for Your Lips

Lips are doors  
kept closed for a stranger,  
left open for a friend.

Lips are fabric stores  
of saleable goods,  
an array of templates.

Lips are scissors  
that cut with precision;  
they are intricate locks  
that guard haunting secrets.

Lips, often forecasters of weather,  
betray a torrent of cold storms  
or an onslaught of warm, sunny days.

Amy Jenereaux

## To My Computer

My dear one, you are my means of escape,  
opening me to a whole new world,  
teaching me things I never knew,  
sending sparks of electricity through my veins,  
giving me all my drive.

Visiting you,  
in your extraordinary little house,  
we spend countless hours  
exploring new and mysterious places,  
with no filter, no holds barred.

And over the years I have come  
to depend on you for everything.  
There is your solid memory that is so strong,  
that I swear your head is a virtual file system  
for all my thoughts and words.  
You seem also to be a complete wizard,  
knowing the answers to any question I might ask.  
Surfing across the internet  
you have helped me find the way  
to adventure and discovery.

But sometimes, when we spend too much time together,  
we end up fighting like we're Sonny & Cher.  
You make it your job to correct my mistakes  
and I, haughty and irksome, totally  
turn you off.

Yes, indeed, our love for each other  
is so often in need of repair.  
You claim I don't appreciate you  
but that's not true.

Whenever you catch a virus,  
slow down, cause glitches,  
leave me with little or no support,  
I always try my best to treat you with care.

I seek counseling for us,  
even consult with experts,  
so important is it to me that we stay connected.

So do not abandon me, my dear one.  
Beneath all the disruption I remain loyal

and, though I realize you can be a challenge,  
I still know you're exactly my type.

Ashley Yangouyian

### Her Mouth

has a mind of its own,  
moves of its own accord.  
It is like a dancer  
who sways to her own rhythm.

Come night, it comes to settle  
like a dancer does,  
drifting all throughout the day.

The lips fall still, one against the other,  
like the dancer's aching legs.

And for a few hours,  
both know the beauty of silence  
that possesses a tempo,  
a melody,  
all its own.

Alicia Henry



## Cold

Common and oh, too communicable,  
you disguise yourself within thin air  
and, spreading with a single sneeze or cough,  
you seek out your next victim  
in order to thrive on their living matter.

Oh what a pain you are,  
making your way up dark passages,  
sneaking into my body,  
and bringing with you  
your mucussy friends.

In the middle of night,  
you suffocate me,  
attack my respiratory tract,  
turn me into a wheezing machine.

In the day,  
you strike me  
with your feverish blows,  
leaving me nauseated,  
you infuriating bug!

Sure, I try to blow you away,  
but you always find your way back in,  
reconnoitering my ears, my mouth,  
for a land attack of my nose,  
to send in your nasal forces.

But I tell you, I have had enough of you, cold!  
Though my nose and throat be raw,  
though my lips be chapped, my mouth parched,  
let me tell you loudly  
and, well, not exactly clearly,  
that you've crossed a line  
here, fella, that now,  
this means war.

I'm getting out  
the big guns—the Alka-Seltzer,  
the Sudafed and—  
better cower now, you cold—  
the Nyquil!

Yeah, this is D-Day, buddy,  
time to decongest!  
And within a day or so—  
so help me—  
I'm going to knock you out cold!

Tori Sullivan



**Christina Gee**

## Broken Clock

This critical patient  
is no longer comatose  
but has such atrophied muscles  
that no one could expect him  
to stand on his own.

He will try to begin where he left off  
but the thoughtful impatience  
of those around him  
will force him to skip over all  
the times he has missed.

No doubt he'll be left to stare at the wall,  
the chrome frame of his imprisonment  
perpetually, peripherally, visible.

Meaghan Tilson

## Lamp

The service may not begin  
until he is at the altar; without him,  
God's holy word could not be read,  
light could not be shed  
onto the lives of others.

Mainly, they look to him for guidance  
for he illuminates the path to Christ,  
and, in his presence,  
do the faithful immediately see  
a brighter future.

Megan Nadolski



## Moon

the listing crescent moon  
floats in the night sky  
like a swan  
gently gliding  
on watery clouds

Alyssa Naimi

## The Wooden Spoon

This mere culinary student has become  
discouraged by the lack of progress she's made.  
She longs to be chosen by her chef  
to be the vehicle for his next great repast  
yet is only passed over, time and time again.

Surrounded by such sterling students,  
all dripping with confidence,  
she has come to feel inferior, unneeded.  
She tries to remain observant,  
tries to get the scoop on how best to serve,  
but becomes so confused about her lack of progress  
that she feels she's only running around in circles.

Even on the rare occasion when she is taken in hand,  
she's only assigned the simplest tasks.  
Though she's been trying her best,  
and frankly, it's got her in a spin,  
she's come to realize  
that she doesn't have a leg to stand on.

Aware of her disadvantage, she is not deterred,  
for she knows that just as the bread rises in the oven,  
the sun will do the same each new day.  
Then will she continue her fight,  
knowing that, in this world, you can't rely on handouts.  
No, nobody's going to spoon-feed you.  
Ultimately we're all measured by our own determination  
and our ability to take the heat.

Kara Peltola



## Pointe Shoes

Outsiders see you as mere apparel;  
they do not understand what you really are.  
You are Beethoven's pianoforte,  
Picasso's paintbrush,  
but, even more,  
you are the very arrow of Cupid  
engendering a deep love  
between girl and art.

Your passionate love is apparent in your every move,  
as are those silken laces you use to harness me in.  
Yet, even perfect relationships cause pain.  
You, for instance, always push me to the point of no return,  
to limits mere humans cannot rise to.  
And I, in my natural resistance,  
so often let you down.

Granted, you do what you do  
to keep me in line,  
keep me on my toes.  
You use force in your discipline,  
placing me in your wooden stocks,  
hidden under pink satin,  
until I, your student of such promise,  
promise to do your will.

Working together, as one,  
our performance becomes a bit of magic,  
as delicate as the falling of snowflakes.  
So graceful, so mesmerizing,  
we become able,  
capturing the hearts of viewers,  
to transcend this grave earth.  
Though you seem to dance through your day,  
the work gets to you.  
Too soon you are beaten down,  
until, ravaged by time, literally broken,  
you find your final moment in the spotlight.

Yes, new always replaces the old,  
and so you are left in the wings  
to whimper and hide in the darkness.  
But though soon forgotten, so often ignored,  
one thing remains true:  
the passion never dies.

Amanda Alonzi

## Northern Wind

My love, there is nothing to reclaim;  
now all is lost except the quiet hush  
in the heart of the northern wind.

The days go by without a thought,  
a regret, a memory;  
there is only the lullaby of the sea  
that creeps in at night to sing me to sleep.

The bottom of the ocean embraces the raw sand;  
so are your words memorized,  
cherished by my heart.

My love, the mere sound of your name  
can send a current down my spine,  
can send my cautious heart away from the shore.

I had never known darkness until that day you left;  
breaking all your promises you forgot me  
to slowly sink to depths I had never known.

My love, with your departure I have been pulled under the waves;  
the deep truth that will forever linger in my lungs, like water,  
has suffocated me until I have no choice  
but to accept my own fate.

I would have willingly stopped breathing with you by my side,  
but have been left to drown alone,  
accompanied only by the soft northern wind  
that disrupts the tranquility of the waves,  
just as you have my earthly life.

Samatha Bauer

## The Oak Tree

In full sunlight he opens up,  
stretching his branches  
into an intricate fan.

Proud as a peacock,  
this old oak shows off his verdant plumes  
to any female who happens by.

Sierra LaGrande

## Snow

Tonight some of the older stars  
have grown tired,  
so weary that they  
can't keep up  
with the interplanetary schedule.

So they carefully move  
off their perches to fly down to earth  
seeking a feathery nest—  
one where they might spend a night or two,  
or eventually call home.

Lainey Gossett

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