



Muse

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Acknowledgments

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Poems Hide

By Lucy C.

Poems hide
in your closet
in the pockets
of your old coats
pretending
not to matter.

Poems hide
in the valley
between
the snowcapped
mountains
tricking you
into thinking
they don't want
to be found.

Poems hide
on your bookshelf
peaking at you
from their perch
between the pages
feigning innocence
when you finally
open your eyes.

Moonglows

By Vincent S.

Dim candles
In the night
Overpowered by the moon

Light falling
Gently shifting
To the night's noon

All is calm now
Peace and quiet
As the moonglows bloom

Sunrise comes
Soon enough
But for now
The day sleeps too

Fireflies

By Rose R.

Mellow whispers
Trees swaying side to side
These gentle giants welcome
The offering from the sky
Lightning strikes off the ground
Booms of thunder
Bright golden sun
Rain
Piles of mud
Birds calling to me
With songs as soft as a breeze
Crunch
When I walk through the leaves
Splashes of water
As I step into the sparkling sea
Vast rainbows stretch across the whole sky
Then they fade away slowly
Then, the sun comes down
And the moon shines
Dark and gloomy night
The only other light
The glowing fireflies

Orange Pekoe, My Cat

By Evaline H.

I walk outside,
Taking a seat in the old porch chair.
You jump on my lap,
Nuzzling me with your chubby face.

Stretch your paws across my legs,
Stretch your body as I lightly pet your stomach,
Close your eyes as you tuck your head into my knees,
The trickle of the creek beside us sends you to sleep.

I slowly sip my tea,
You stick your paw over the rim of the cup,
Try to get a taste of the warm mint.
You look up at me with earnest eyes,
Cute little chubby face I wanna squish,
but I can't since you don't like that.

A leaf falls from a tree, slowly falling on your head.
You look up, squint your eyes and yawn,
Your warm fur pressed against my body,
Orange and White.

I twist your fur around my finger as it slowly unravels.
Your soft purr I can feel through my fingertips.
You roll over onto your back as you yawn once again,
Tucking your little paws into your chest.

You close your eyes one more time,
the chirp of the birds and the rustle of the leaves like a soft lullaby,

Then you drift off to sleep.

I slowly get up,
Then set you on the chair.
Dip my hand into the creek,
Cold water pushing against my fingers.

I walk to a tree beside me, picking a bright green leaf from its branch,
Turning it back and forth in my palm.
I set it in the river as it drifts through the water, turning in circles.

Sitting back down again,
I set you in my lap.
Closing my eyes,
My hand is lying on your stomach.
It rises and falls,
In and out.

Stars

By Charlotte C.

The cool mist settled
Under the starry sky,
Soft melodies blew
In the wind.

Under the starry sky,
The world listened to sounds
In the wind,
Blowing under moonlight.

The world listened to sounds
Of restless sleepy air,
Blowing under moonlight
In the sky abyss.

In restless sleepy air
Soft melodies blew,
In the sky abyss
The cool mist settled.

Questions

By Micah S.

I have questions
too many for you to answer
too much for you to know

The answer
is too big
for our mind

Of why
we are here
where we are
in the universe
what we are supposed to be and do

Our purpose
seems to crumple
The Earth

Seems to destroy
what we live in
and leave the paper blank
for the next chapter

Girlhood

By Rebecca R.

Girlhood. For me, it was spinny dresses, so when you spun around the dress spun with you. It was the plastic rings with the giant fake gems you got for a quarter out of those machines. Being lifted onto my dad's shoulders when I couldn't see something. Plastic tiaras and little wands that you break within 5 minutes. When you get to go to school late because of a doctor's appointment. Getting my hair braided and nap time in preschool when the plastic little purple mattresses were laid out. Tiny sunglasses and little purses. Playing dress up as Elsa and watching Frozen every day. Girlhood used to be girlhood. Now it is crying because you can't find something to wear and destroying your room. It's bad lash days. It's Sephoras and shopping every weekend with your friends. It's coming home and crawling into your bed and sitting on your phone until your eyes won't stay open anymore. It's seeing your crush on Snap Map. It's bingeing Gossip Girl. It's wishing you were in New York at Christmas time. Giant water bottles. And Spotify + Pinterest. Doing your makeup with all your friends for a party. Owning way too many lip products. And putting bows on everything. Having a big slumber party and completely messing up your sleep schedule. It's long everything showers. Girlhood is still there, it's still happening, it's just changed.

The Phone

By Isla S.

“Yes!” I thought to myself as I grabbed a blanket and pulled it over my knees before picking up my book. “Finally,” I thought because I had been super busy this week and all my time went into things like chores or homework. I opened up my book and flipped through the pages until I found my bookmark: an old slip of ripped paper. I began to read, already getting entranced by the book's storyline. I gently turned the page, but I was interrupted by a quiet beep.

I looked over at my phone, sitting on the counter, but instead, I picked my book back up and continued reading. I kept reading until I heard another subtle beep. I sighed, resigned.

I picked up the blanket and threw it to the side as I got up and grabbed my phone. I opened my phone and unlocked it but what I saw was unnerving and left me shocked.

On my phone were multiple photos of me, sitting on the couch, with my book.

I scrolled through the photos before quickly blocking the anonymous number. I sat back down but the sense of insecurity was still with me.

I turned around before opening my book again. Just when I felt settled and like maybe someone had made a mistake, I heard it again. *Beep!* I turned and looked at my phone when *Beep. . . Beep...Beep! Beep!* I picked it up, horrified.

I unlocked it and looked at the texts; more photos and a new text came in. “I'm always watching,” it said and I turned around looking for anything out of the ordinary. I sat back down, shaking. Something was seriously wrong.

“What is going on?” I thought to myself as I put my hands on my thighs and tried to calm myself down. I looked around before opening my phone and dialing 911. “Hello!?” I said into the phone. “Hello?!” I

repeated again loudly. "Hello?" I whispered one more time. I stood up and ran around to lock all the doors. I ran to the bathroom and shut the door before locking it and pulling the drawers in front in case the lock didn't work. I sunk down onto the plush rug and pulled my knees to my chest.

I sat in silence until I heard another *beep*! I pulled my phone out of my denim pocket. I held it for a second, unsure if I actually wanted to see what it said. I turned it over, but right as I saw the words unknown caller, I threw it back down. I laid my head down on my knees and began to cry, tears dripping down my face. I opened my phone and re-dialed 911 just in case but it was just as hopeless as the first time. I sat, conflicted. I sat there until I heard something: a quiet knock.

I looked at the door, petrified. I leaned down and tried to look under the door, but nothing was there.

I backed away further before they knocked again, louder. "No," I whispered under my breath as heavy tears continued to slide down my face, leaving little rivers in their wake. They knocked again louder, more of a banging than a knock.

I got up and stepped into the shower. I grabbed the shiny, plastic, shower curtains before I slammed them closed. I curled into a ball on the hard tile. I sat, and the only sound was my shaky breaths. I got up and peeked out of the shower afraid of making a noise. I looked around then exhaled a breath and stepped out of the shower. I walked up to the door and grabbed my phone before I began closing the drawers. I laughed. Maybe I need some sleep, I thought to myself. Maybe I'm imagining things.

I turned the lock on the door, and the cold metal bit into my hands. I stepped out and looked down the empty hallway. I walked down the hall but then I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket. I reached down to get my phone out of my pocket but when I opened it I only saw two words "Got you." I heard a footstep and turned but I couldn't even scream because a cold hand smacked over my mouth and then the world went black.

Feeding Time

By Dalton S.

It was a cold, foggy day in April. I watched as the hand of the clock clicked to its next number, twelve o'clock. The alarm rang, which meant it was feeding time. I looked at my crewmates, knowing we were all thinking the same thing. *One of us had to go down there*, to the very bottom of the ship. We'd have to feed the creature. We had all done it before. We all knew how to do it, but this time it was different. It was different because the last one of us who went down there didn't come back, and now the smell of rot filled the feeding room. We all looked at each other, worryingly. We all knew **it** was no longer in its shackles. "It is loose now," I said. I turned and asked the person beside me when he'd think it would find us. He looked at me hard in the eyes, and then over my shoulder. "It already has," he said, not looking away from what was behind me.

Alcatraz

By Nate K.

All my goods
Lost to the police
Cast away to
A place of torture
To never be seen again
Raking your fingernails on a metal table
Asking yourself if it was worth it to be
Zoned away from humanity

Who Made The Light Leave?

By Zoe B.

after Mary Oliver

Who made the light leave?
Who made her step away,
and never come back?
Who pushed her back into the corner

This person,
I mean —
The one
Who took her away from the people she loves
Or used to
Love

The one who
Didn't think about anyone else
Who lives in her nightmares
Who is without a face

Now she spreads her wings
Now she's slipped through our fingertips

I don't know exactly what a funeral is.
I do know how you're supposed to act
How to cry
How to feel
How to wonder why
Which is what I've been doing all day

Tell me,
What else should I have done?

Doesn't everything leave us eventually?

Tell me,
Why did you go,
And drag her with you.

Four Dimensional

By Jack K.

Through these pale eyes
I see all of time immemorial, webbed in yellow silk
My pupils are flooded with separate worlds
The ultimate curse

No bird can fly past my gaze
No tree can grow above my brow
But this immeasurable sight is muddied by one caveat
As I am never in one place, neither is my appearance
A dripping face, shifting like the change from night to day
Of which I have, on more than one occasion, caused
But one thing remains in one place
Or, should I say, two

Through these pale eyes
I see worlds in overwhelming abundance
But they never see me.

Fern

By Emma S.

Green leaves overhang,
heavy with falling rain.

Segmented branches
in the dark of the rainforest become
shelter for a

small
ant.

Just that tiny hollow could be drowned,
out in the ceaseless pour.

Frail legs sinking in thick mud,
waiting is a heartbreak in itself;

He is far from home.

(like fish in their tanks
that do not know the ocean)

Maybe all they will ever know is the roof
above their heads,

whether it be a lid or a leaf.

Peace With Precipitation

By Mischa B.

Sitting

Waiting

There's a breeze of comfort

Brushing my skin

It whispers in my ear

But I don't give in

The rain is how I feel

It's like getting good news

I've fallen in deep love

With no individual,

No human at all

All I need is a downpour

Dark clouds border the sky

Like paint on a canvas

Am I dreaming?

If only I could be consumed

In the dead of night,

Swallowed by the wind

Chewed by the sight.

The wind holds me tight,

Making me feel alright.

Drips fall from the unknown

Letting me know

It's a desire

Sparkles falling from the sky
Like confetti
Covering everything in its sight.

How can something so simple
Be so beautiful?
So dignified?
So peaceful?
I'm so in love with rain.

Trails

By Ben R.

Trails of adventure, winding through the land
Lead us to hidden places, where secrets stand
Through forests dark and mountains steep
We follow paths that our hearts do keep

With every step we take, the journey unfolds
As nature's beauty, our spirits unfold
The wind in trees, the songs of birds
A symphony of joy, our words

In every trail, a story lies
Of those who came before, with courageous eyes
They dared to dream, they dared to try
And left their mark, upon the sky

O.K., You Can Have a Raccoon

By Julian D.-H.

O.K., you can have a raccoon, but you will have to deal with it yourself. If it rips the curtains, if it rips up the couch, you'll have to buy the ruined items. You'll have to clean up the poop that the raccoon drops (mostly in the house). You will also have to clean up any trash it brings into the house. AND if the raccoon disappears randomly throughout the day, you will have to be the one to wonder where he is, and if you find out that the raccoon has been going to the supermarket and stealing everything the supermarket has, to build a super-apple to end the human race, you'll have to be the one to eventually confront the raccoon to realize that this raccoon can talk, and you try to talk the raccoon out of killing humanity and it says no and then proceeds to steal you and put you in the apple, which turned out to be the final piece to the machine, which then the machine eradicates everything on planet Earth. You *will* have to be the one to rise from the dead and have a giant super villain fight your raccoon because you are both cursed together to then win the fight. In which after you have to rebuild ***Earth itself*** from just sticks and stones and make the only living animals raccoons because that's part of the curse and now you're doomed to a life of remembering what led to the dystopian hell that the world is today.

And you'll need to take it to the vet.

The Art of Origami

By Logan C.

Elegant as a bird in flight, done with grace and ease,
With origami, make a kite, and zen is guaranteed.
Limitless boundaries, with some paper, maybe glue,
Make anything that comes to mind, the choice is up to you!

Origami isn't as easy as it seems, and it takes a lot of time,
It can take weeks, months and even years to make it really shine.
There are hundreds of possibilities that you could achieve,
But after all is said and done, finishing is a relief.

If it's too hard, and complex to go on, take some time to rest
It's definitely frustrating, and sometimes a break is best.
If you keep going on and on though, your skills will be enriched,
The sight of a finished piece, makes the mind, oh so bewitched.

Like I said before, this is a skill that's earned, not got,
Experience is the best teacher, learned or self-taught.
And if you're wondering, Does this guy really know his stuff?
It took years for me to master this skill, and even now it's kinda rough.

You can make some pretty sick stuff, if you have a shot,
Even if you're not too experienced, you can do quite a lot!
I've taught some people origami skills, and know a trick or two,
But, now, today, and right now, I'm giving them to you!

Chasing Shadows in the Storm

By Coriander C.

Once I clasp the leash around my dog Sammy's neck, I open the door and start our daily walk around the neighborhood. I love our walks because it is one of the few times I get to get out of the house. The autumn leaves fall to the ground and the wind whips my hair as I crush the leaves under my footfall. This is a perfect fall afternoon.

Once I turn around the corner I notice that the sky is turning dark gray but I continue because the storm doesn't look too close. I do hope it doesn't rain, I think to myself.

After a few blocks the sky rumbles and rain suddenly comes down hard. Ugh, I knew it was going to rain and I hate rain. I take a deep breath. It is going to be okay, though. I am too far from my house to go back in this rain but as I'm thinking that, I spot a bridge. It's not a highway, just a little overpass road over a sidewalk, a perfect spot.

I duck under it and plan to wait out the storm, even though it might take a while. My dog whimpers. With a sigh, I crouch down and pet him. "It's okay, Sammy, it's just a little rain," I croon in my baby voice. At four months old, he gets scared pretty easily, so I take a treat out of my pocket and he inhales it. I stand, zipping up my jacket.

Then I see a griffin.

Wait, no, no, that can't be right, it's probably just wind and rain fogging the street and it's just a regular stray cat or something. But still it's too big to be a cat, or a dog. I expect Sammy to bark, but he doesn't. I guess the training is working after all.

The unknown animal scurries past and, without thinking, I leave the shelter of the bridge and jog after it. Sammy wines, but I continue. It definitely is no animal I have ever seen before. With a closer look, I confirm it has wings, long talons and a sharp beak. With a body of a lion and a head and wings of an eagle, this is no ordinary animal.

As I'm following this animal it takes a turn onto a side street of the neighborhood. Like a wish granted, the sky turns clear and the rain stops. Oh, how odd this day has been.

The creature stops and mutters to itself, "Are you following me?" Shock takes over my face for just a second and I stumble but catch myself.

"Kinda," I choke out. I guess I'm not used to talking to animals, and wait, did it just talk to me?

"So you could actually hear me and see me," it says with disbelief. Well, I should say *her*, not *it*.

"Yes, now who are you and what are you doing?" I demand.

"Well, this is very unusual, to say the least, since you seem to see us, I should you show you something--"

"Us?" I am very confused right now.

"Just follow me," she says, and with that she bumps me and Sammy onto her back and takes off into the air, flying into the sunset brushing the canopy of leaves on the trees.

Out of This World

By Perrie P.

I am determined. I am so ready. I'm going to be out of this world. I'm going to come back better than ever. I'm going to come back famous. I'm going to come back with an Oscar in my hand and I'm going to say something to you that sounds really cool. I'm going to say something a famous person would say. I'm going to be out of this world. You're going to look back and say "Oh I knew her in middle school, she's an actress now" and no matter how many times I fail, I'm going to get right back up and keep going. I'm going to be out of this world..... I'm ready.

Sea Angel's Breath

By Maggie Y.

Under the ocean
Whispering like a snake
Chilling waves crash over

Fall to the bottom slowly
Then push off the ground
Floating slowly to the top

Getting a breath of air
Sighing softly
Waves shove back

Going down
Water flows through lungs

Look up
And see flowing currents

Smiling
Falling deeper
Into the dark

Tears merge with water
Into freezing fate

Breathe out

The Day It Came

By Gemma B.

I would be so amazed to wake up at the right time
But to do that
I would need an alarm clock
But every morning
Again and again
I continue to wake up behind schedule
I beseech my mom "Please, there must be some way to help me get up earlier!"
But still, I wake up late
I even have dreams about being to school on time
And I'm so happy
But then I wake up
And I would get out of bed
Look at the time
And it was late
Again
Every morning I am almost late for school
It's like the world depends on it
Until
One sunny day
I tell my parents how I need an alarm clock
How I try to get up early
But it never works
My parents
Both so willing and thoughtful,
Go to Amazon
Buy an alarm clock
And a few days later
It comes.

The truck pulls up and someone brings it to the door
The beautiful creation, shining from inside the box
I hurry outside, almost slamming the door
“Wait...” Dad says.
“Don’t rush.”
I patiently wait until the delivery guy gets out of the yard
I walk outside
Not slamming the door
I say thank you to the man
Grab the package
And walk back inside
I run to my room,
Grab my tiny scissors from third-grade
And cut the tape off of the box.
I rip it open and see the clock.
And from now forward
I will never be late again
And all because of the precious alarm clock,
That I got in sixth grade.

When I Was Young at the Lake

By Mackenzie R.

after Cynthia Rylant

When I was young at the lake
I sat on the edge of the dock as they lowered me in
Falling
Into the
Deep
Dark
Green
Waters
Like a jump
Only
This was unintentional
But
I knew something was waiting for me down there
Something
Special
Something
Magical
Once I was down there
I swam with the fish
Who were bigger than me
Then
I played cards with the crabs
And the snails
I danced with the sand
As it flowed throughout the water
Swirling around me
Hours went by as I fell
Deeper
And

Deeper
Until suddenly
I fell back on the dock
My day was done
I had my fun
And now it was time for a rest

The Sky

By Aaron U.

The sky
Oh how vast and blue,
Stretches out above me and you

A canvas painted with hues so bold,
A wonder to see

a sight to behold
Clouds drift by in unique shapes,

Whispers or stories they seem to speak.
The sun rises and sets each day

Painting the sky in shades of white and blue
Out here it's just me and you

Up here in the sky with kangaroos
and callaloo

Buried Deep

By June P. R.

At first gaze,
You see a large strip of glittering white sand,
You see waves of brilliant aquamarine roll softly against land,
White bubbles follow with little snaps and pops,
You see the early morning sun cast a warm glow
on the golden back of a dog
frolicking in the wet shallows of the vast sparkling ocean,
You see a tall, majestic sailboat,
Ripped, white canvas flags billowing in the sea salt breeze
You see puffs of speckled silver float through the hazy blue sky,
You see pure beauty...

But what if it's what you don't see that matters?
You don't see the fragile bodies of crabs
trying to push through hot, heavy sand,
You don't see clumsy baby turtles
scuttling desperately towards the sea,
Scrambling to make it to the low tide in time,
You don't see the tiny, finned bodies
scattering in horror from the path of the golden dog,
Its paws unknowingly wrecking the home
of the small but remarkable creatures below,
You don't see the strong, unflinching sailboat
leaving chaos and destruction in its wake,
Flying fish tossed into the air, not gliding but flopping and falling,
You don't see the battered seagulls failing to navigate
through clouds of stormy, polluted gray,
You don't see all the struggle.

Buried just under the bright sand of the beach
is dark, damp hardship,
Dig beneath the first glistening layer
and look closely at the hidden, suffocating earth below,
Muddy your hands in it,
Bring the gritty sludge and sharp rocks to light.

Garden Rain

By Charlotte D.

Garden rain
Warm summer water
One rose,
Yellow from the mountain moon
Remembering winter and his whispers
Cold rainbow sky
Tearful clouds floating by
Missing the cold days that blanketed the sky
A blissful white
Traded for a pounding yellow
And a bold blue that forgot the shyness of spring
Rivers of muted colors trying to shine
One rose,
Yellow from the mountain moon
Remembering

Pirouette

By Wren V.

“Dance”

My mother would say
Each step was a look away
From the thoughts that surrounded me
As the music finally bounded
Who I was to become
5 year-old me was filled with jumping and leaping
The rhythm holding back my weeping.

“Dance”

My mother would say
As she cooked dinner that day
My face flushed with the rednesses of our tomatoes
Although my stomach, filled with rainbows,
Begged my feet for sweet relief
13 year-old me knew what the heart wanted
Although my see-through reputation had already parted

“Dance”

My mother would say
As a text reflected back into me like prey
As it burnt into my eyes like pepper spray
I couldn't hear myself think
As the dance floor was covered in green and pink
And spilt around me was a drink
17 year-old me would tell myself “Not today”
Although I knew that idea would turn gray

“Dance”

He would say

As we stood in the ray of the refrigerator light

“Please, just a dance”

And almost like I was in a trance

I started to advance into a dance

Releasing shackles of fear

In hopes to never reappear

23 year-old me danced

Danced until my PJs were soaked with my own sweat

Danced for all the memories I haven’t met yet

And the one I was making with my silhouette

My mother spoke to me one day

She asked to dance

And she knew with just a glance

“Of course”

I said

And I danced

For every baby blabble

For every whiff of her dinner that day

For every new refrigerator we bought

Although I may not have loved them very much

I danced for them

Beautiful Seasons

By Kobe U.

The day was scorching
I was floating in the pool
The summer was nice

The day was frigid
I was sitting in the house
Winter was pleasant

The day was just right
I was playing in the field
The spring was peaceful

The day was breezy
I was sitting by a tree
Fall was majestic

Today Is a Wonder

By Maya S.

Today is a wonder
Light shines upon the world,
As bright as the stars in space
As bright as the sun,
People gaze as if they've never seen the sun
People bask in it all day singing to it
But I, the outsider,
stay inside and do not see the wonders outside
But I, the outsider, lay in bed
thinking of what made this wonder come to be

I sit inside staring at the wall,
At the one pink splattered part of the wall
I sit inside thinking what they say,
If I made that wonder come to be
With a map in hand I was up all night
With map in hand I went out
Light shines upon the world
Today is a wonder

Clouds

By Coralie C.

My dreams are like a river
On a cloudy day
But without passion
Those dreams float away

My dreams are mine
They are different
With altered colors
And funky skies

In my dreams I can
Teleport and fly
I can
Sit on a cloud in the sky

In my dreams I can feel
I can see
It's like they're real

I Remember

By Jennie T.

I remember the dripping ice cream
the hot summer day
walking in the cool shade
laughing, with a smile bigger than the sun

I remember the warm sunlight,
feeling like I could fly,
being in my favorite place
On a long walk

I remember the love

I remember the warm water,
the show on TV
laying around, playing, without a care in the world
I remember the laughter

And even during the coldest nights
I could still feel the warmth,
overcoming fear together
the neverending joy

I remember the love.

I remember you

I remember the joy fading into sadness
our little bubbles popping
the crying

the room

I remember what used to be love.

wishing I could go back,
the loneliness
the walks alone
the suddenly empty world.

I remember the tears.

I Am a Writer

By Olivia M.

I am a writer.
I write what I
feel,
see,
think,
taste.

I've always
loved to
write with
almost no exceptions.

Writing is my life.

Writing is my soul.

Ars Poetica

By Lucy C.

A poem should be a snapshot
A window into a single moment in time

That stops you in your tracks
And fills your mind with details

A poem should be something magical
While being nothing special

Complex
Yet simple

A poem should be raw and real
As if it was ripped right out of you

Flowing from your heart to the page
In mere seconds

A poem should be a blooming wildflower
Sprouting everywhere

In vivid colors
In vivid pictures

A poem should be you
All of you written on a page

Your self-portrait
Your life

Dreams

By Tennessee P.-F.

I like sleep
I like to dream
Sleep makes me happy
Well, sometimes

Because sometimes
Occasionally
A dream will
Turn in the wrong direction
And suddenly you're in a nightmare
Where you have no control

You're screaming for help
And your conscience is laughing
At your despair

You try and call for help
But that only continues the nightmare
As you have just called for help
You have given an invitation

To whatever is behind the dark closet door
You can feel it reach for you
Even out of your dream while in
You can feel the beads of sweat
Dripping down your face

You jump out of your bed
Awaken

Happy to have left the dream
You open your door
And walk down the hallway

The hallway keeps going
You can't escape
The doors are locked
And the walls are closing in on you

You can feel the red liquids
Up to your knees
You once again call for help
The monsters come
Disguised as family and friends

Their masks fall off
Revealing what's inside
You scream
As it's the only thing you can do

You awaken again in your bed
You throw the covers over yourself
To hide from the nightmare
You stay there until the morning
Shivering
And never asleep

You hear a call from your parents
Calling for breakfast
You push more covers on yourself
To hide from the fear

Cat Whisker's Vortex

By Dorothy B.

The puddle of fur on the ground
And it standing above him.
Proud of itself.

The smell of blood
Or caramel
I can't tell these days.

The crunching sound
Of leaves, its tiny leg
That can't withstand my weight.

The taste of iron
Fills my mouth
I bite my tongue, hard.

The feeling of sticky carpet
In my hands, I stare at the
monster I mistook for a friend.

How Can You Become A Poet?

By Charlie P.

Write what does not live
talk about your delusions
be cryptic, confuse.

I Once Went for False Promises

By Wren V.

I once went for false promises
And so I went
And I searched for something
That couldn't even be described
I asked the sun for some of its light
To which it had no response
I asked the moon for some of its beauty
To which it had no response
I asked the mirror for some of her words
To which she answered
"Anything I give you
Will simply already be yours
Because anything you ask the sun, the moon
And the stars for
Is already yours
You just haven't seen it yet"

A Starry Night

By Harry L.

The sky so bright
The stars so white
The city down below
The painting made so long ago
Watching it is such a show
It is a starry night
From so long ago.

Where I'm From

By Jennie T.

I am from dishwashers
from Mrs. Myer's and old-fashioned brooms
I am from a messy white house
that might as well be a rental
With plain walls and no decor.
I am from Red Roses and
tiny crepe myrtles
In a garden full of sharp rocks

I am from the chocolate pies
and Sunday dinners
from weekend trips
and water park staycations
I am from the grammar police
and those who like to make fun.
from SMILE! and Quiet Down!
from yucky church dresses
and skipping Sunday service.

I'm from potatoes and gumbo
from not being able to eat spicy food
and not wanting the different foods to touch
from cooking German cookies for days
and letting them sit in jars for months

I'm from the jewelry box in my closet
with the small spinning ballerina
Holding small slips of paper
with all my hopes, dreams, and worries

I am from all these moments
and so many more.

Four Seasons

By Zoe B.

Sticky sweet sweat dribbles
down my face. Running away,
From nothing but me

A warm breeze slaps my face.
Hot sticky rain is let go
from each cloud, it cries.

Cool wind pulls my hair.
A frozen feeling grows,
at my fingertips.

The pond creates an
icy crust. Could you
stand on it? CRACK! SPLASH!

The Wave

By Sage L.

The light, calm sea
Switches
To a dark, angry ocean
In the blink of an eye

The clouds join
The sky turns gray
I feel a drop
And another drop

My small open boat
Is not meant for this harsh weather

Now it's coming down hard
The waves dance
In the pouring rain
They rise
Then they crash
Spraying my face with water

I watch the sea meticulously
Squinting my eyes
And in the foggy distance
I see something

It rises
Higher and higher
By the second
It begins to look like a monster

As it comes closer
And its arms reach out
For my tiny fishing boat

Then I'm submerged
And pulled under water
The monster throws me around
Like some dog toy
And no matter how hard I try
I just can't seem to swim to the surface

There's no sun there to guide me
To show me which way is up
All I see is darkness
And I begin to drown.

Cornerbrook

By Harlon H.

after Cynthia Rylant

When I was young at the farm, I never realized how lucky I was. I would play in the green grass and run through the barn. I would hop on the 4-wheeler and pretend I was driving. I'd sip the sweet ginger ale from my special cup, and listen to the cars whoosh by on the screen porch. I'd dive into the Mettawee and search for crawfish. I'd fall asleep to the sound of cicadas and birds chirping, clenching my stuffed animals tight. I'd sleep with the window open so I could feel the cool breeze drifting into my room. In the morning I'd wake up to the smell of cinnamon donuts and orange juice. I'd hop in the broken-down Ford and in my imagination I'd drive off.

My Cat From the Beyond

By Dorothy B.

The last thing she will truly feel is our embrace,
My tears on her breathless body.
I can't comfort her anymore, but she is still comforting me.
From beyond, she returns,
Her ears perked for my footsteps.

She's *not* my imagination.
Not gone.
Despite everyone's words.
If not, how come,
The mice that come don't stay long?
I throw them out, but more still come.
How come drizzle droops her whiskers down?
As she whines,
And waits for them to dry in the sun.

I look on fondly,
As she yaps at butterflies,
That are ignorant to her call,
Stubbornly staying where they please.

She bumping counters and coffee tables,
In pursuit of my affection,
Inevitably stumbling between my legs.

I reach out to pat her, but,
My fingers find only stiff, polyester aprons,
From my days cramped in kitchens,
That no longer can have me.

Instead I'm busy,
Keeping her fed and warm,
All that we've been through...
We won't be torn apart again.
As long as she has unfinished business,
I'll be here.

As the seasons *creak* by,
She stays near.
Wandering through life with me.

As my last breath is drawn,
We drift off,
Into the endless abyss.

Iridescence

By Vincent S.

Shining, beautiful colors
Bright rays of light diffusing
From mesmerizing purples,
To glorious, vivid pinks
Glowing bright into the black
Depths of caves, so hidden from
The world above, only the
Brave get to bask in the light
From the glowing crystals, a
Risky descent through tunnels
Under the Earth, in their own
Little dark sanctuary.

Stuck in a Storm

By Susan W.

The birds cry,
flying away to where their worries can't reach them.
The clouds sob,
angry and loud,
screaming because it's the only thing that they can do.
The trees whisper and croak,
calling out, stretching their long fingers,
silently comforting the pain.
Sirens wail,
screaming in the silence,
sorrowful and heartbreaking.
Streams weep,
shivering and sad,
alone and quiet.
I cry,
so silent and deep it hurts.
So angry and cold and tired
tired of pain,
tired of hiding,
tired of being numb.
I cry,
lonely and waiting for the storm to end.

Anxious Words

By Leelah V.

Anxiety is like bad handwriting: It ruins beautiful things.
Anxiety twists my thoughts into a painful knot.
Anxiety makes me remember and forget, forget and remember.
Anxiety is like politics, painful to watch.
Anxiety feels like vomit and cold metal.
Anxiety petrifies.
Anxiety is falling forever.
Anxiety is flying forever, and staying on the ground.
Anxiety gets you places.
Anxiety is an answer with no question.
Anxiety is like a butterfly's wings scratching you over and over again.
Anxiety smells like subtlety.
Anxiety is humming in your ear.
Anxiety is happiness, sunshine and rainbows, all day,
everyday, opposite day.
Anxiety zaps the life out of you.
Anxiety tastes like fire.
Anxiety is.

I Love...

By Charlotte R.

I love the beach
My sun kissed skin
The lively waves
I love gazing into the sunsets that stretch to eternity

I love the rough sand covering my soaked feet
And how it barely tickles them
I love my pink and orange sandals
No more blisters from tennis shoes

I love smoothies at the peak of morning
The taste of fresh, cold fruit
The smell of salty air that lays beneath the sun
I love the deep blue sea
The pelicans swooping through palm trees

I love the first part of arrival, I dip my toes in the gentle water
Splash, crash, the currents whisper to me
I carry friends on my shoulders and race to the water
I love this heat and the coolness of the air

This place is my heart
I feel the connection with the seashells and vast ocean
I love my sundress that protects me from the scorching sun
My shimmering sunglasses reflect the dreamy pink sky
The feeling, the moment, as magical as a royal castle

I love my sweet, sugar-soaked drink
I'm surrounded by vibrant colors bursting from beach umbrellas

And the rich feeling of my life and family
I love the beach, the water, the sand
It's here for me, holding my hand when no one else can

Christmas Cheer

By Lulu Y.

The stockings hang
Against the fireplace
Snow floats to the street
Where carols are being sang

Dress the tree with lights
Ornaments shine and reflect
Trees colorful or bland
Some short or of great heights

Couples stopping at the mistletoe
Families in striped pajamas
Bundled up by the fireplace
Enjoying a holiday show

Nightmare

By Milka M.

What is a Nightmare
If not only a dream
gone wrong
When your mind is
bored
and now
playing games
And only when your mind
is content
You are
let go

What is a Nightmare
If not only all the
things
you think
but
can't say
When you face them
Then and only then
Can you be
satisfied

What is a Nightmare
If not only a life that
deep
down
you know
can't

be real
But on the surface
Your heart is racing
and your mind
is spinning
and only when you
prove to
yourself
that it isn't real
you
will be fulfilled

What is a Nightmare
If not only
another way
To say
Scared

When He Came

By Mackenzie R.

When he came.
There was a whirlpool of madness.
The moon gone.
The stars gone.

There was a whirlpool of madness.
Trees fell down then vanished.
The stars gone.
The sun never awoke.

Trees fell down then vanished.
Never to be seen again.
The sun never awoke.
Then the flowers went and went one by one they vanished.

Never to be seen again.
The moon gone.
Then the flowers went and went one by one they vanished.
When he came.

Don't Do Evil Death Game

By Penny M.

When he was coming up with challenges for his bestselling novel *Don't Do Evil Death Game*, Damien Arson put a giant battle royale fight in there. It was an obvious choice. As scary as deadly games of shark-and-minnows can be, nothing quite beats forcing your main character to kill or be killed. It's a great way to change your timid, meek protagonist into a ruthless man focused on winning the game. That doesn't happen, though, because Arson is a hack and *Don't Do Evil Death Game* is a terrible book. Instead, the stupid one-dimensional protag gives up his advantage first thing and almost dies because he just can't bring himself to use the advantage. By the end of the book he's still a bumbling terrified idiot, just a bumbling terrified idiot who's being paraded around by his secret underground rebellion best bro and his no-nonsense, opens-up-when-she-gets-to-know-him love interest. Plus, the book lost all of its dystopian nuance when Arson let the money get to his head and signed off on a real life version of the game.

Anyway, the battle royale challenge—or the “brawl”, as Arson calls it—is one of the fan-favorite games. The rules are simple. One member of each pair is dragged into a big dark room and forced to fight to the death. They turn the lights back on after ten minutes to see who's still alive. The big twist about this challenge is that one participant (chosen by the audience, of course) is given an advantage—a hatchet. The people love this one. I guess it's just the feeling of being able to control the fate of your favorite little death game participant. Surprise surprise, the fanbase of the murder game is full of freaks!

They pick the person who goes in at random, but they tell you they're making the decision hours before so you can sit there and marinate in the fear for a little bit, just for fun. Not fun for you, of course—they only care about the audience. Usually, I'd be hoping and praying that I'd avoid the dark murder room, but this time I'm hoping to

get picked. See, I'm pretty familiar with *DDEDG*, so I've been trying to mimic its main character. The scared, stupid guy forced into the game against his will. If anyone's going to get the advantage, it's gonna be me. Plus, Maxi—my teammate—has some serious stage fright, so the audience already doesn't like her. I guess that's what happens to an android after years in antisocial isolation. Strangely human, if you ask me. It's creepy. Don't tell her I said that.

We wait in the Rest Pods of the facility, the small white rooms in which we eat and sleep. Teammates share a room, so Maxi and I are officially roomies. Meals are delivered there three times a day. They don't want the participants eating together—they might get to talking and revolt. It's more likely than you'd think. People think a revolution's on the horizon. I hope I live to see it.

Each room has a TV in it so we don't lose our minds in those infernal Pods. Participants spend their time watching trash reality shows about horrible people and reflecting on the hell we've created for ourselves with our own hubris. I'm putting up my curls into their signature space buns when someone finally comes through the door, grabs me by the shoulders, and drags me out. The door slams shut as Maxi waves good-bye to me. It's supposed to be funny—I think, it's kinda hard to tell—but her always slightly mournful demeanor really does make it seem like I'm being hauled off to die. I think for a second as the door creaks shut that this might be the last time I ever see her, but I'm quick to shove that thought to the back of my head and resume the panicked, fidgety demeanor my "character" is known for.

The lights in the big room are still on when I get there. No one's allowed to move before the timer starts or they're disqualified (killed). I'm the last participant there, so the lights go out as soon as I get into place. We're all standing in one big circle, in this huge room with black walls and a giant timer, stopped at 10:00. For the first time, I feel a bit nervous. I guess you could say I'm trying to go method. I try to remember the solemn, determined faces of the other contestants, memorizing every detail.

My lips form an involuntary smile as the handle of the hatchet slips into my hands. I really am an actor at heart. Maybe one day, after I win this thing, I'll be in a movie or TV show. Sal Crawford, movie star and genius actor. I like the sound of that. Maybe I'll even have enough money left over from her treatments to move my mom and me into a giant, fancy mansion. Maybe Maxi can come visit.

The timer starts to count down.

I Am

By Marco P.

I am an athlete
That's what I love
To go outside and play
Free as a dove

With the ball at my feet
Running with speed
Nothing can stop me
This is what I need

I love the rush
Going through my veins
Pushing to the limits
Like some freight train

I am agile
Quick on my feet
That is who I am
I am an athlete

Letters

By Finn G.

The day he left, she sat on her balcony and watched each plane leave the airport wondering which was his. She sat there as the blue sky turned black and stars littered the sky. Only waking when the soft cold breeze woke her.

She wasn't surprised when the first letter arrived. But that didn't make it any less exciting. She read each and every word. He spoke of his flight, and his meals, the people he met, and the places he went. Once she had read the whole letter, she put it in her drawer.

Everyday from then on she would get his letter, read it, and put it in the drawer. Some days he had paragraphs and paragraphs to say and sometimes it was just an 'I love you'. Occasionally he would send a small box with some small gift for her.

The letters stacked up on her desk. They comforted her. They reminded her that he was okay, that he loved her even if he wasn't with her. But one day, they stopped coming.

She panicked.

Thinking he had died, she wrote to everyone who might know where he was. She got word back from his commander that he was fine and unable to send letters at the moment. This relieved her and she was able to sleep that night.

The letters began again three days later.

She sent him letters, too. She would go to the garden to pick poppies and dry them, sending them in the envelopes with her letters. She had wondered if he read her letters with as much excitement as she read his with. She was sure he did.

Though the letters were not the only thing in her life, they were the highlight of each day. She would bake, too. She wanted to surprise him when he came home with a big batch of freshly baked cookies. Even

if everything she baked now came out burnt or bland, she had plenty of time to get better.

Two more months went by just how it was. Her baking and doing other hobbies. Then, at the end of the day, writing a letter and reading a letter. But when they stopped again, she told her friends it was almost definitely the same reason as before.. Though that aching worry never left for a moment. So, she waited and waited.

And a week later she got a letter from him explaining why he hadn't been able to send his letters. She was relieved and the worry immediately disappeared.

A year, two months, and 19 days had passed and a letter came with a larger box than he would usually send. The mail carrier dipped his hat, not something he normally did. She opened the letter with delight. When she saw the writing her heart sank. Her husband's writing was soft and gentle. This was the opposite. This was someone else.

The letter was detailed, yet short, but still longer than she could bear to read. She was stuck on one particular sentence. 'Died in battle'. She read the letter over and over, not crying or reacting in any way. It was a mistake. It had to have been. Yet there was his name.

And the box. The box full of his belongings. The box that was full of her letters. That's when it hit. When she realized he couldn't send the letters and he never could. He could never come home, he could never sit with her again, he could never hold her hand again.

Storms

By Rose R.

Storms, storms, storms,
The rain pounding on the windshield
On the backs of cars and roofs of buildings
Approaching the night as the sun sets on the horizon

I hear the song of the storm
The swaying branches, the wild whistling winds
As lightning strikes and thunder roars
Flashes appear up and down outdoors

My sisters are terrified, clenching hands and closing their eyes
As I sit there still, and just stare outside
Enjoying the beautiful storm

I touch my hand to the window making a foggy print
I twirl my finger along the water droplets that could fill up a lake
As I watch tiny pieces of hail drop and then break

A cold breeze brushes against my shoulder
And runs through my hair as I step outside
A pool of fresh rainwater
Fills my shoe and slowly seeps inside

And as others are scared, hiding in their rooms
I stand there watching the lightning
Rainwater pours out of fluffy clouds
Sunlight far away from the entire town

Storms, storms, storms

So mysterious, so beautiful
Like strangers, they come and then they go
Vanishing into the day as the sun comes back and fills the sky

I Look to You

By Charlotte R.

I look to you
sister
to hug you and confess my problems
to laugh with you till eternity
to get comfort, to smile
to trust you and look you in your eyes
to grow old with you,
to fight and forgive you,
to love you till your face is too old to smile
to hold your hand
and squeeze it tight
to be with you forever

Ghosted

By Wren W.

On the last day at our house, we packed our life into cardboard boxes, but not everything fit. We tried to keep all the memories, but there just wasn't enough space. On the last day at our house, when the big moving van parked in the driveway, I strolled through the halls one last time. I admired the loud creaks when I walked up the stairs, I admired the cracked window in my room, that we never got around to fixing. I even admired the little ghost at the end of the hallway, forever standing in the corner, unseen by any other. I saw it. I always do. On the last day at our house, I got in the car, and we left the creaky old house, with the little ghost, in the corner of the hallway.

We drove to our new home in Austin. It was large and modern. Painted white with a sleek, black roof. It wasn't far from our old house in Fredericksburg. As soon as we got to our new house, I ran inside. It smelled like apple cinnamon, and all the furniture was beige and boring. I looked in all the rooms. There were three bedrooms, two of them were fairly small, and there was a master bedroom that my parents would be taking. I got to choose between the two small bedrooms. I chose the one with a view to the street. It took all day to unpack, and I was so tired, I fell asleep in my clothes. I woke up in the middle of the night, and couldn't go back to sleep. I walked downstairs to get water, and I saw something waiting for me. It was the ghost. It watched as I filled up a cup with water. It tried to open the fridge, but it failed. I opened it, and handed the ghost a cheese stick. It ate quickly, and walked to the couch. I went back upstairs.

The next morning I walked around the neighborhood, seeing if there were any good parks to go to, any potential friends, any cool stores. I found a dog park, with a muddy pond and a big hill. I found two girls

playing outside, and they waved to me, and I found a toy store, Terra Toys. I began to think that maybe living here wouldn't be so bad. By the time I got home it was sunset. I looked for the ghost, but couldn't find it anywhere. I spent all night thinking about it. When I was little, It used to play with me, and I would give it some of my dinner every night. It was my best friend. The next morning, there was a knock on the door. I opened it and a shadowy figure was standing there. It had white beady eyes that stared down at me. It handed me a note, and stood there as I read it. *"I am here to inform you that the ghost, who shall not be named, has moved on to another child. His purpose is to entertain young children until they reach a certain age. You have taken good care of him. For that I thank you."*

2 Months Later...

I was talking to my new friends, Layla, and Jane, when Jane's little sister came running out of the house, screaming "There's a ghost in my room! And he wants to be friends!"

The Palace

By Henry G.

Beyond the forest green,
Over a thousand seas,
Lies a pair of mystic gates
And behind them
The mysterious fairy castle.

A velvet carpet streams outdoor,
The moat sparkles like crystals,
Its towers glisten in the sun,
Their splendiferous hues of silver and gold revealed.

Purple violets sparkle with dew,
The castle lake glistens in the light of day,
Fairy thrones crafted of exquisite diamond,
Polished till they radiate light
And each studded with the rarest jewels.

The banquet table constructed of shining silver
Its tablecloth of the finest silk
The sun itself glitters like a gem,
Illuminating the surrounding land,

Legend tells us of such a castle,
But the mystery of its existence
Is yet to be confirmed.

Lost

By Penelope C.

I hear his laughter behind me. It's patronizing and aggravating. His grim smile is etched into my mind. I have to get away from him.

I start running. After sprinting for some time, I still hear him giggling, "I'll get you," he calls out. I notice a door in the alley. I can't tell where it leads, but anywhere is better than this. It's a dark green color with daisies growing from under it. I can't comprehend why this door would be next to 5th Street. It creaks as I open it.

I slam it behind me, hoping the man won't follow. Immediately the dark alleyway transforms into... a garden? There are potted plants everywhere. More daisies lay at my feet. It looks like it was once a well-kept garden, but now vines grow everywhere and weeds litter the area.

I look around and see that it's not just a garden, but an entire palace. I see beautiful towers with golden bricks. There are ornately decorated windows in each tower. Pillars stem from a gorgeous front entranceway.

However beautiful the castle is, it looks like no one has been here for decades. The building is in disrepair and ivy grows up every wall.

I was hoping to find someone to help me escape my captor, but I clearly won't find that here. No one else has run through the mysterious door though. I look back at the door to make sure no one is there, but it has completely disappeared.

That's when I realize I may not be any better off here than in that musky alleyway. I am completely lost.

Road Stop

By William E.

I had been driving for almost 30 hours straight now. The lack of sleep was starting to get to me. But I knew I had to keep going. Now and then, another car would pass me by, and I didn't dare look at them. If I made it north, then I could build a cabin and live off the land. No worrying about a global collapse and no ICG soldiers to tell me what to do.

Then I saw it, a line of cars that stretched on for what seemed like forever. I took a deep breath and squeezed the steering wheel as hard as possible. I waited in that line for what seemed like centuries, never daring to loosen my grip. By the time the sun was rising, there were only four or five cars ahead of me. And I could see the sign in big blocky letters, reading *WARNING: INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GUARD (ICG) IS PERMITTED TO ENFORCE NEW AGE LAWS THROUGH ANY MEANS NECESSARY.*

The all too familiar words. The words that were responsible for genocide. Soon, the car ahead of me pulled up to the stop, so close I could hear the conversation.

"Alright, let me see your identification," said the soldier, whose identity was concealed behind his helmet and the numbers on the back of his head.

The man stuck out a card through the window, and the soldier grabbed it, took a moment to look over it, and then set it face down on a nearby ID scanner. Soon after, two quick beeps and a red light flashed.

"Step out of the vehicle, please." His tone was suddenly much more menacing.

"W-wait, what?" The man's voice quivered with fear.

"I don't want to have to repeat myself."

"No. No, no, no, no, no. There has to have been some kind of mistake, I-

“Step out of the vehicle, *please!*” This caught the attention of an ICG manager behind him. The man slowly opened the door, stepped onto the concrete, and then put his hands up, shaking with panic.

“P-please, my family is up north, I-I’m just going to meet them there-” This was where he took his first hit, I knew it probably wouldn’t be the hardest he would take from the ICG, but it looked like it was his first.

He stumbled backward until his back was pressed against his car. His eyes drifted to the ground, but he kept his hands up. The soldier grabbed him by his collar and slammed him against the car.

“Don’t say another word. Understand?” This was one I had heard before too, and it seemed the man had fallen for it.

“Y-yes, I understand-” The soldier threw him onto the concrete ground, and reminded him on how to be silent.

Elie Wiesel

By Lili B.

In Auschwitz
people are like leaves
beautiful as they swirl around
but end up in piles on the ground

In the gallows
bodies hang like limp fish
bullets fly so often
I no longer flinch

We try not to think about who
the choking smoke and ash come from
some things are better off forgotten,
like the rippling waters of hope

I had faith in him
I worshiped him
I prayed to him
I *believed* in him

It was all for nothing

A Hot Summer Day

By Ivy A.

A hot summer day
the sun scorches our backs

it's not a pleasant sort of tingle,
prickle or sensation

it's a feeling like your skin is on fire

so unreasonably hot
like being baked in an oven
unable to get out

we trudge through the streets
shoes getting stuck in the melting,
sticky, tar of the road

there is sweat
leaking
through our clothes

It cascades
in salty puddles
on the parched sidewalk

when it seems like the heat
is too much to bear

that we will curl up on the grass
and drown in the searing light

of the sun

a gentle jingle erupts in the sultry air
the sound of the ice cream truck

of cool, frosty treats
of air conditioning whistling through our hair
of pure, delicious, goodness dribbling down our chins

we charge towards the familiar sound
and fumble through our pockets for coins
like our lives depend on it

the ice cream man
gives us a cheery smile

and presents us with
ice cream and popsicles in
all different colors

we lick our icy treats
greedily gulping down the arctic slush

before we know it
it's all gone

and all that is left
is a full belly
and a sense of relief on
this
sweltering
summer
day