

Teen
Poetry
1st Place

Nicole A.M.

One inconspicuous afternoon
You find Helen of Troy behind
The counter while returning
A shirt that was a size too small.
She is nothing like you've imagined:
Crows feet and laugh lines, sunspots
Scattered across wrinkled skin,
Her once fair hair browning like a banana.
She asks you for the receipt and when
You fumble through your bag, forcing
The wrinkled paper from its mouth,
She offers you a smile
That could launch a thousand ships.

Teen
Poetry
2nd Place

Shrishant H.

Uprooted: On Being Torn from Home

3-P-15

There is a garden at the edge of the world,
where the soil is rich and the sun is forgiving.
A place where roots take hold and flowers bloom,
where those who come can find their place to grow.
But not all are welcome at the gate.

The gardener walks the rows,
his hands calloused,
eyes cold,
searching for the flowers that do not belong.

He knows the names of the flowers,
but not the story of their roots.

With each step, he surveys—
who has the right to stay,
who must be uprooted.

Some flowers have been there for seasons,
their stems twisting with the memories of years past,
but still, they are judged.
Still, they are told,
“You do not belong here.”

And so, the gardener pulls them from the earth,
roughly,
without a word of apology,
their roots torn from the very soil that nurtured them,
their petals falling with every step away from the garden.

The flowers that remain,
unmarked,
untouched,
continue to bloom,
but their roots tremble,
knowing the gardener’s eyes are never far,
waiting for another to show their face,
waiting to pull them from the earth.

The garden grows quiet,
and though the sun still shines,
it feels colder than before.

For the flowers who were torn away
carry the earth within them,
and the soil where they fall
will never be the same.

3-P-15

Teen
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3rd Place

Isabella A.

Imprints of You

A leaf gets blown onto

the freshly fallen snow

as the leaf passes by

it leaves

marks, lines, dashes, prints on the snow

before continuing again on its way

the prints will remain

for forever it seems

at least until something stirs it up

or it snows again.