

Adult Poetry

1st Place

Kaitlyn Conley

<< Autumn Child >>

Child of the fall
it makes me rain
to know that mother Nature
let you wither.

Your leaves once radiant
now shriveled and torn.

Your bark, frayed
your branches, worn.

Mother Nature turns her cheek.
She faces south
when north is where she is meant to be.

Helpless tree
stopped growing
because you cannot water yourself.

Your limp branches
reach towards the Sun
but you are so weak and weary
that you cannot see its light.

Child of the fall
it makes me wilt
to know that father Time
let your spirit decay.

Your colors once radiant
now faded and dull.

Your stature leaning
when once stable and tall.

Father Time races
ruthlessly forward
abandoning you with his impatience.

Helpless tree, tumbled over
because you were denied the ability
to support yourself.

Your frail roots
dig for nourishment
but your ground so dry and bland
lacks the nutrients your soul needs
for strength.

Adult Poetry

2nd Place

Deborah Grace

Lehman

Treading Water

"I'm tired of sleeping on your floor," I said

As we stood there in the smoke

As if moving to a guest room

Would make me feel any more at home

How many cold kitchens and borrowed keys

Will it take this girl to see?

There's no going back

There's no running away

I was just a child screaming

Hypocrite

Behind closed doors

Til I learned screaming

Did nothing

But hurt my throat

And hypocrites are easy to come by

And fury looks better in movies

So I take it all out on myself with German steel

Trench warfare just suits some of us better

I wonder as I have a thousand times

What all this fight is in me for

I watch you keep your promises

Fluent in trust

I'm a slow learner in the language of freedom

And you hold my hand like it's easy

No anger to hide in

No scars to parade

I'm not sure I'll ever understand the way

You wait for the things you want

How it doesn't take self-hatred and strength

To get the things you need

I wonder now what it takes to love me

What fight lives in your bones

To say that you're not

Afraid of my questions

I grew up a woman

Complicit

In my own misery

Lover, you make me

Curious

4-P-19

Is there another way?

Drowning never gave me these big lungs

Only breathing does that

It's funny

On the other side of all this thinking

I think you make me feel...

Not broken

Adult Poetry

3rd Place

Evan Short

The year, right now, is twenty-eighty-three.
Look around, for there's so much to see.

There are few people with wealth, many with none,
Genetic lotteries are played, and most haven't won.
Cows are raised to slaughter, and chickens raised to carve,
But food is made to rot, and many live to starve.

Glass ceilings are wrecked while we build more walls,
Shadows shelter hatred, and darkness always falls.
We draw our lines based on color of skin,
But we learned long ago: that's no battle to win.

The gap has been growing between the young and the old,
And resentment brews between the weak and the bold.
Weapons are built and wars are promised,
Talks have been held, but leaders aren't honest.

People are killed when they pray to wrong gods,
Or for being gay, or female, or just a bit odd.
The forests are burning and there's trash in the sea,
And don't question the law (but we swear that we're free!)

The year, right now, is twenty-eighty-three,
But have things changed much from five-hundred BC?
Do you hear this story and think of China or Rome,
Envision long-lost nations or lands close to home?

The year, right now, is twenty-eighty-three,
But it doesn't really seem that different to me.
People still live, and dance, and cry,
People still love, and dream, and die.

The moon still rises and waxes and wanes,
The clouds still splinter and form hurricanes,
The wind still blows and the birds still sing,
Our whole world changes without changing a thing.

Adult Poetry
Honorable
Mention

Gary Michael
Armstrong

Story Left by a Coffee Cup in the Wee Hours of the Morning

He began constructing her
from growing up moments,
beginning, with an image of his mom
angelically smiling down at him,
like the Madonna must have
as she looked upon
the baby Jesus in a manger,
though in his case
it was a crib that his dad
had laboriously put together
from nearly indecipherable instructions
with the aid of a screwdriver
and a few colorful expletives
unfit for a child's ears,
he was told.

And so he gave her his mom's smile,
followed by Snow White's eyes,
sometimes brown, sometime blue,
depending on the year,
and her rosette cheeks too,
hating those dwarfs because they
got to spend so much time
with such a knockout,
but also because
at that age ...well,
it shamed him to say,
he looked like one.

The sweetness of his
first grade teacher, Miss Waters,
on whom he had a crush,
became part of her nature,
though he rejected his teacher's diminutive
stature - she was all of four foot five,
give or take the length of a six-year-old's thumb.

No, he made her a smidgen taller
like Scarlett in *Gone With the Wind*
with a touch of her grit to boot, but only
a touch because having too much grit makes guys
like Rhett Butler want to *give* such a woman the boot.

By and by, her legs got longer, and her figure
began to resemble the hourglass perfection
of every heartthrob that rejected him
during his public school years.

When he finally went off to college
she had become a pinup torn
from the thirteenth month,
if one existed,
of a Playboy calendar,
and so the search for her began.

A pinup being too saucy though,
he instead went on a quest
for the Holy Grail, or
rather the Holy Girl,
that Madonna he recalled as a child and
a Miss Snow White, Miss Waters, Miss Scarlett,
all rolled into one...in a word, Aphrodite,
the perfect woman.

And he was looking for Aphrodite when he spotted
a petite brunette across a crowded dance floor
in the college union - he, wearing his
signature black dickey and
yellow long-sleeved shirt,
she, a pink blouse and dark flats,
and so, they began to dance
in '65 and have never
stopped.

*Now, I know that we have a rule about dispensing
with anniversary cards and gifts,
after nearly sixty years,
the memories alone
were enough,
you said.*

*But I decided to break that rule
(though it irritates the hell out of you)
by gifting you a story about a young man
searching for the perfect woman,
but finding a perfect love,
instead.*

By the way, I still have the dickey.