

Relevant  
Of  
Erase  
Endless  
Skies  
Colorful  
Symphony  
Like  
Worry  
Laugh  
But  
Glass  
Words  
Shatter  
Stream  
Heal

Memories  
Voice

in del ible

20 24 &  
20 25

in·del·i·ble

/in'deləb(ə)l/

*adjective*

1. (of ink or a pen) making marks that cannot be removed
2. not able to be forgotten or removed

## *Table of Contents*

### **Poetry by Teens, 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade (2024)**

May to November	FIRST PLACE	<i>Dylan Hurley</i>	6-7
Echoes	SECOND PLACE	<i>Josephine Hillegass</i>	8
The Hopeless	THIRD PLACE	<i>Aoping Ren</i>	8

### **Poetry by Teens, 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade (2024)**

A Doll With Two Closets	FIRST PLACE	<i>Molly Gallagher</i>	9
Singing in a Dead Language	SECOND PLACE	<i>Conor Meehan</i>	10
Homesick	THIRD PLACE	<i>Trey Castillo III</i>	11
Lace Against Leather (For my sister)		<i>Alex Patras</i>	12
That Gaze		<i>Angel Hearn</i>	12
Speaking Out		<i>Rachel Veis</i>	13
No One Will Ever Believe Me		<i>Ashlin McDermott</i>	13
Summer's Echoes		<i>Nancy Flais</i>	13
In Our Heads		<i>Eli Bacacao</i>	14

### **Poetry by Adults (2024)**

Visceral	FIRST PLACE	<i>Dawn Plestina</i>	15
The Deer	SECOND PLACE	<i>Joseph Campanotto</i>	15
Even So, Bloom	THIRD PLACE	<i>Richard Burks III</i>	16
A Date with My Lawn Mower		<i>Elaine Gotfryd-Noonan</i>	17
Overview		<i>Carol Mullins</i>	17
Senior Maintenance		<i>Marcia Horan</i>	18
Who Would Have Thought		<i>Veda Gavin</i>	19
Flightless Bird		<i>Dawn White</i>	20
The Sun is Rising		<i>Kathie Tempinski</i>	20
The End		<i>Trisha Honkoski</i>	20
The Library is Our Home		<i>Susan McClellan</i>	20

## Poetry by Teens, 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade (2025)

Ode to Golf	FIRST PLACE	<i>Lucas Gottardo</i>	22
Triumph Over Tides	SECOND PLACE	<i>Claire DeMik</i>	23-24
The Strength of a Shattered Heart	THIRD PLACE	<i>Emery Anhalt</i>	25
Stars		<i>Isabella Taylor</i>	26

## Poetry by Teens, 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade (2025)

Passage	FIRST PLACE	<i>Josie Hillecreadd</i>	27
Resilience Amidst the Ruins	SECOND PLACE	<i>Lola Siebert</i>	28
The Sage	THIRD PLACE	<i>Nessa Eichie</i>	29
Sea of Loss		<i>Grace Lustig</i>	30
Even Now		<i>Mark Anhalt</i>	30
Love Songs		<i>Trey Castillo</i>	31

## Poetry by Adults (2025)

time	FIRST PLACE	<i>K Nosal</i>	32
The Iceberg	SECOND PLACE	<i>Ginny Veerman</i>	33
A Mother's Love	THIRD PLACE	<i>Mary Pierson</i>	33
A Wintery Night on Planet DISCO		<i>Elaine Gotfryd-Noonan</i>	34
Music is Medicine		<i>Daniel Draus</i>	35
I Suppose		<i>Jennifer Kojro-Badziak</i>	35
DMV		<i>Hannah Gill</i>	36
They Said Growing Old Was Fun. They Lied!		<i>Bonnie Patrick DuCharme</i>	37
Scattered Gifts		<i>M. K.</i>	37
Brave Girl		<i>Rebecca Barker</i>	38
Always Choose Truth		<i>Joe Tucker</i>	39
When Push Comes to Shove		<i>Holly Coop</i>	40
Light to Dark to Light		<i>Dawn Plestina</i>	40
Questions		<i>Mauverneen Blevins</i>	41
Lois' Tribute		<i>Nicole Reiner</i>	41
The Last Date		<i>Maria Vela</i>	42
Dancing with the King		<i>Marcia Horan</i>	43
The Imagination		<i>Andrew DeMik</i>	43
The Lead Dog		<i>Anne Styx</i>	44
Mind Readers		<i>Angel Hearns</i>	45
Thank You God for my Brother Michael		<i>Debbie Podwika</i>	46

in del ible

20 24

Wilting  
Be Fall Speaking Sea Around  
Echoes Old Dreams One  
Doll Know Bloom Head See Deer  
Waiting Became

**May to November 1st Place***Dylan Hurley | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

As I'm writing this in the 'summer' breeze of February  
I wonder if the times seem to be going quick, while the months stay by?  
The signs of our finite planet are becoming wary.  
I look into the beating sun with wonder in my eye.

Leaves pass on,  
And so does life.  
Like dust in the wind,  
We all pass by.

There is a wilting flower atop a pretty hill.  
It's no longer pure because of its "odd" colors.  
But it's wilting because of the moon's rays, and its judgment.  
As the sun sets and the moon comes up, as quickly a life gets swept away.

Time flies by,  
The months never stay still.  
Will you move with it?  
Or let it all leave you to the deadly chill?

Flowers bloom at their own pace,  
With the beating sun invigorating their petals with its ember.  
Flowers bloom by May,  
Flowers die by November.

I live on an ever changing planet,  
Changed with the blink of an eye.  
A swift month's pass, came a spoken word revealing years of what was kept away.  
One come-to-truth moment hit my planet, like an asteroid, changing it forever.  
But with the hurt and the pain,  
A beautiful landscape has been carved out.  
With that, new love flora can bloom,  
And a new identity can be formed.

And on that day, where I said everything I wanted to say,  
There was no place left for me to stay,  
So I ran, I ran far away.  
Ever since life every second is a day.

Portals form from tragic memories,  
Crafting out a new path, another possible outcome.  
Did you know you can spend years just overthinking?  
Stop and watch, before the summer turns to winter and you go numb.

Endless humid days thinking thoughtlessly,  
Living lifelessly.  
Don't ask me what happened last sunrise,  
I wasn't living then.  
Don't ask me what happened today,  
I was just waiting for it to end.

I bite at the bars of my cage,  
Screaming out, I've gone too far.  
I'm trapped in the backseat,  
Of my life's car

A drought is forming as my limbs become slow.  
The flowers growing out my brain are wilting.  
As I'm frantically licking up my wounds to moisten them again,  
My entire view on life is tilting.

Some nights are filled with tears like the showers of April.  
Some days are filled with the bores of August.  
Some nights my heart is cold like the winter of December.  
But most nights are spent longing for something different.

One choice, can change it all,  
One choice can save you from the fall.  
But don't let the choices stay still,  
Because you'll want to go back against will.

When I look into the summer lake of June,  
I see someone different than I saw last February.  
Sometimes I don't even know who I'm looking at.  
My colors fade and reinvigorate like leaves in December and September.

Life is so conflicting, like an oxymoron.  
I savor the sweet taste from my tears of oxalate.  
They fall on the ground and grow new sprouts.  
When I'm on the moss, and my tears warm my legs, I'm consolate.

The seasons pass even if you don't feel them going by.  
Your past and present are ever changing.  
And if you can't remember,  
Flowers bloom by May,  
And die by November.

Life is so conflicting, like an oxymoron.  
I savor the sweet taste from my tears of oxalate.  
They fall on the ground and grow new sprouts.  
When I'm on the moss, and my tears warm my legs, I'm consolate.

The seasons pass even if you don't feel them going by.  
Your past and present are ever changing.  
And if you can't remember,  
**Flowers bloom by May,**  
**And die by November.**

**Echoes 2nd Place***Josephine Hillegass | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

A girl on my Instagram page is complaining about how her Era's tour outfit won't arrive on time when  
Meanwhile,  
Children are walking around with bombs in their throats,  
As their mothers and motherland explode,  
And the country slips through their fingertips.  
They play with bullets on chessboards and speak in trembling, bloody tongues  
As "not my problem" rings in the ears of Americans.

Let's rely on a mother's intuition until her child just sounds like stars and church bells and  
My country's voice is thick  
And stubborn  
And dancing  
As families crumple into sounds, until there is a symphony of bodies,  
And my generation collects trauma like gifts.  
am i the hypocrite?  
The culture echoes its eulogy as the sun goes down,  
You gamble with fire and my generation washes its mouth with ashes.

A child spills the nation across his shoulders,  
And listens to the echoes of excuses,  
Until everything goes still.

**The Hopeless 3rd Place***Aoping Ren | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

The sky is gray and heavy, the grass dead and shriveled  
One lone bird chirps, looking for its lost friends  
One withering flower sits alone, surrounded by weeds  
One tired soul slumps over, dragging a bag of boulders  
All is quiet, all is waiting  
Waiting for the end to come  
In the distance, screeching ghouls wander the wasteland  
They descend upon the broken souls, feasting on their sorrows  
No lone bird could make it to spring without a shelter  
No wilting flower could survive without water  
No tired soul could continue to carry its burdens, not  
without another hand to hold  
The sky weeps as the ghouls cackle  
All was quiet, all was waiting  
Then all was gone

**A Doll With Two Closets 1st Place***Molly Gallagher | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

I am a doll.  
Not quite a barbie,  
But manufactured to perfection

Hair must be natural  
And clothes must be modest  
But boys don't like modest  
So I own two closets.

One closet, with schools on sweatshirts  
And modest leggings to cover the scars  
Scars that they caused from modeling me  
To perfection.

The itchy sweaters grandma bought  
Or the cardigans brought as gifts from other countries  
The bows and barrettes I've had since I was four.

Covered and clothed like my ideas  
My thoughts and opinions  
Just so I can be their doll  
But not a barbie, because I'm not blonde.

My other closet, is filled with  
Fast fashion that barely covers me  
My stomach is constantly exposed  
But boys like it I guess.

Skirts that they would call "easy access"  
And tops they can see through.  
Half of that closet is empty anyway.  
It's been thrown across rooms  
While I sit and do what I'm told

No high heels.  
Men are too insecure when I'm taller than them.  
I stand with too much power. How can they use me  
If I have more power?  
How can they strip away innocence  
like they do my closet  
They can't. Their egos won't allow it.

They treat me like a doll.  
One they stare at.  
Like it was made just for them.  
A doll that they can move in anyway they like  
But there's no need to worry

I may be a doll  
But I'm not a barbie.  
Cause I'm not blonde.

**Singing in a Dead Language** *2nd Place**Conor Meehan | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

“Nobody speaks Irish anymore.”

“But I want to learn.”

My grandfather’s family all died  
when a goat gave bad milk.  
I don’t know why he didn’t drink it, too. But he didn’t.  
They were gone and he was alone and he came here  
To America.

And he came to Chicago and he worked.

“He’d come home with icicles on his eyelids,” my father says. “He worked in a train yard.”

Maternal now.

My mother was a child. My age.

She was only 18 and she was coming over the sea  
To America.

She had nothing and no one but did it anyway.

She willed it to work because it had to work. Luck of the Irish.  
18 years old and she came over the sea...

Time is here and I’m in America,  
Expected to cross the sea  
To Adulthood.  
No more rolling hills on the oceanside or crude jokes at the pub.  
I’ll be over the horizon and across the sea.  
Born with icicle eyes.  
Made to fly.

Nobody speaks Irish anymore.  
But I’ll show them what it means.

And I’ll sing it ‘till they know.

**Homesick 3rd Place***Trey Castillo III | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

I'm homesick  
Home was caught somewhere in a  
Fever dream  
Where I've woken to its absence  
Something I once held in the palm of my hand  
But I'm not sure when

Last night, I went out into the rain  
Barefoot  
The soles of my feet cushioned  
by the layer of cold water that covered the concrete  
My soul felt nothing  
My body could feel the aches of sickness  
My stuffy nose smelt nothing but burnt flour

Green oil  
As much as you could handle  
The universal remedy  
Until your body becomes the burning scent of mint and eucalyptus  
A bowl of cháo sits on the table  
Hot soup, hot everything  
Sweat the sickness out  
Sleep with Bà ngoại holding you  
Picking at each little bump on your skin  
Speaking the tongue you don't understand  
But feel the meaning deep inside

Sitting on a stoop in Ho Chi Minh City  
Where you could still feel the quakes of Saigon beneath the ground  
I can see the panic of my grandparents  
Uncertain of what tomorrow would bring  
Everyone looks like me  
But, no  
This isn't home  
I don't belong here  
I'm not them  
I'm the aftermath  
A shade of pale yellow  
Maybe that's my existence: war  
I am war

I lay in bed at night  
Looking into the dark  
Wondering if this is all I have  
Constantly nauseated for home

## Lace Against Leather (For my sister)

*Alex Patras | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Pretty pink lace against  
perfectly pugnacious leather  
Clashing yet kind  
Courteous yet crestfallen

Beaded necklaces and playing  
wreckless is replaced with locked  
doors and picking at her pores  
At this point I am sure;  
the love that was shared is  
no longer there.

The lace ribbon wrapped perfectly around  
her high-ponytail. Volleyballs and missed  
phone calls from Papa fill the trunk.  
As she approaches her game she  
remembers the songs we sung in  
that same trunk

The cold leather sticking to sweaty skin  
She wears it in the summer still to  
make sure no one is let in  
There is no cup left to fill and  
still the will to live, it dims and  
blows away with the wind but

This is for my sister  
who still has so much time  
So much love she has yet  
to find, so much potential  
to thrive and make up her mind  
One day I want to show her that I...

love her.

More than she will ever know  
Anyone who is willing to listen  
will hear about her triumphs  
I write this in hopes she finds her bliss  
in the little things in this life  
She will change, but my love remains.

## That Gaze

*Angel Hearn | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Perhaps it all began in my enlightened days  
When I turned around and felt

That Gaze.

It burned into my eyes  
Like a thousand souls  
Reminding me of the past I strived to loathe  
It teared into my heart  
Like a thousand screams  
The eyes  
That seemed to only appear in dreams  
They wrapped around my despair  
Like a thousand snakes  
Denying me any chance  
To escape  
I wanted to forget and continue in my glee  
But the gaze followed me  
From distant lands to my bottomless sea

I want to escape!  
Why can nobody see the never-ending gaze that  
Torments me?  
I want to finally forget these eyes, you see

But most of all...  
I want to be...  
Free.

**Speaking Out***Rachel Veis | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Speaking out is brave  
Speaking out is courageous  
Speaking out is hard  
It's accepting  
It's terrifying  
Acknowledging  
They used your name  
Acknowledging  
They don't know you  
Not like your real friends  
The ones that spoke out with you  
That stayed with you  
And will be with you forever and always  
Being hurt is hard  
Being hurt is okay  
You know they hurt you  
Because they're hurting too  
Someone hurt them  
You hope speaking out about your hurt  
In Acknowledging your hurt  
They acknowledge their hurt  
That they never hurt anyone again  
You know  
Your hurt will not turn into anyone else's hurt  
You will not continue the cycle of hurt  
Maybe speaking out broke their cycle  
Maybe if didn't  
All you know is you faced fear  
You acknowledged your hurt  
You spoke out

**No one will ever believe me***Ashlin McDermott | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

One day my mouth will not be sewn shut  
With this golden string  
It will be undone and the truth will come  
Rattling through all your souls  
You all choose to case your looks the  
Other way  
While she beat me with her words  
And the broken glass  
You all call hands  
You all choose to turn your head  
So my screams will never be heard again

**Summer's Echoes***Nancy Flais | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

I'll follow your sandy footsteps to shore,  
I'll thank our gracious moon for the waves.  
The sun smiles on us, drying for more,  
Take me back to the beach on those hot, dog-days.

Riding the tall waves was a rush  
Made-up games filled our days with sand and fun  
The time just flew, body painted with blush  
We couldn't believe those dog days were done.

But the seasons are coming back around  
And summer's shine follows spring's dew-  
Watercolor sunset, underwater found,  
We long for adrenaline, nothing new.

I crave the beach like a moth to a flame-  
I'll start the fire and take the blame.

## In Our Heads

*Eli Bocacao | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

It was all in my head.  
It was all planned out,  
Because it was everything to me.  
And I was set to go down the perfect route.

We'd talk together, for hours,  
Staying up late, never paying attention to the clock  
We'd walk together, for hours,  
Going to the city, holding hands down each block

We'd always want to be together  
And we'd hate being apart  
Because we knew that we had found someone  
Who could truly heal a heart

I'd propose  
You'd say "yes"  
We'd get married on a beautiful day  
And you'd walk down the aisle in your beautiful dress

We'd have kids  
We'd settle their beef  
We'd have our moments of peace and quiet  
But it was only brief.

We'd watch them grow up  
As we'd grow old  
And as time went on  
My hand you'd still hold.

In my head this happened  
In my head this came true  
But of course not everything goes the way you want it to.

In our heads we make up the same fantasy  
In our heads we relive the same dream.  
In our heads we execute the same improbable scheme.

But I wish I figured out sooner  
I wish it didn't take me so long to see  
That in my head it's you  
But in your head, it's not me.

**Visceral 1st Place***Dawn Plestina | Adult*

Harsh lights  
Constant beeps  
Innumerable lines  
Uncomfortable bed

Your body is breaking down  
I cannot repair you  
Your body aches  
I cannot comfort you

I long for your touch

Because of my selfishness  
Pain bellows from your lungs  
Quickly I retreat

Guilt consumes me

I witness you departing  
No tears will fall  
stare motionless, helpless

Tired of waiting  
Tired of longing  
Tired of wishing  
I conquer gently

No reflexive jerks  
No complaints escape your lips  
As I lay next to you

The thin sheets hold  
What's left of us  
Together  
With eyes closed I return to earlier times

As sleep overtakes me

Peace envelops us for the last time.

**The Deer 2nd Place***Joseph Campanotto | Adult*

I saw a deer today.  
It asked me for directions.  
I said I don't know where you're going.  
It said "neither do I."

So I pointed to the forest  
And the deer galloped away  
Then stood along another path  
To wait and ask another man

He pointed to the forest's edge  
And the deer hopped on its way  
Then stood before the dewy trees  
Then turned and ran away.

**Even So, Bloom 3rd Place***Richard Burks III | Adult*

Rest my dear, my weary darling  
    Be the princess in this charming  
Little fairytale I've weaved  
    To help you fall asleep

Count your sheep and if you're able  
    Count on me to keep  
You safe and warm in slumberland  
    On your last trip with me

So please, light the way  
    Sing to me your song once more  
The soft breaths I adore  
    As you drift off again

To a place, old and new  
    There are butterflies and morning glories  
Just like all good stories  
    And a sky of endless blue

Calla lilies, orchids, snow peas, daisies, tulips, poppies, posies  
    Climbing ivy and sunflowers kissed with dew from cloudless showers  
Cosmos, mums, petunias, hyacinths, and one red rose  
    I give to you atop a hill where everything green grows

And should you wake alone  
    Not all is as it seems  
For by the light of morning come  
    I'll still be in your dreams

Both loss and love can sting  
    Moreso in times like these  
Yet, every lovely garden holds *both* butterflies and bees

## A Date with My Lawn Mower

*Elaine Gotfryd-Noonan | Adult*

In a partner hold, we glide to and fro...from beginning to end  
Ah, the lot line, what a comforting friend!

The sweet smell of grass and green on my shoes  
Give way to the astounding news....

Shall we swing or shall we sway?  
It's your choice today!  
Let's grapevine and dip, too much grip  
send the blades into disarray.

Oh, dancing across the lawn...what a glorious delight!  
Viennese Waltz, tango or a polka would feel so right....

Take heed to the weeds plie-ing in the way  
Dandelions fly and leap into a jeté'

A date like this will be random you see  
Since the end not the journey is what is meant to be!

## Overview

*Carol Mullins | Adult*

It is the autumn of the year and perhaps of my life  
I sit, a solitary creature, engulfed by near silence.  
The soft winds caress me gently  
Awakening my senses, stimulating my thoughts.  
I watch the leaves of the trees lightly free-fall  
Spiraling, swirling  
Only to find their final resting place.

Grievously I ponder the life cycle,  
Our days numbered, our chances few  
To forever leave an imprint.  
I offer naught but the gift of myself  
Optimistically benefiting those I encounter  
Hoping to touch, transcend and immortally engrave  
Before I too, like the leaves from the trees  
Find eternal rest.

## Senior Maintenance

*Marcia Horan | Adult*

Oh, the woes of getting older with its aches and with its pain!  
It takes time for all the duties so our health we can maintain.  
I wake up in the morning to stale smells of my Ben Gay  
And start the rigorous maintenance trying to keep old age at bay.  
Like an assassin on a mission, I make a drink with my Nutribullet.  
Assaulting water, flax seeds, fruit and veggies, just enough to fill it.  
I take vitamins, some meds and my pre and probiotics  
Then put eye drops in my eyes to help my sight, improve my optics.  
I take fiber in the morning just to keep my system running.  
Work the crossword, at least I try, so I don't lose all my cunning.  
I brush my teeth, swish some gargle, spit it out and then I floss  
Or with neglect I'll pay the dentist for his gain and my tooth loss.  
When I take a warm shower, the loofah sloughs skin down the drain.  
I am like a molting snake shedding layers; I sure hope some do remain.  
I attack wrinkles with the latest beauty cream just to make them go away.  
I'm not looking any younger though, cause my wrinkles seem to stay.  
As I look into the mirror, gray bags hang beneath my eyes  
So I put on cover make-up, hope it serves as their disguise.  
I take walks in the good weather with arthritic, achy knees  
And swing my arms with rapid rhythm, triceps flapping in the breeze.  
All the time in doctors' offices to mend and sometimes stitch.  
Oh, the waiting done to see them, if I billed them I'd be rich.  
I press my Life Alert button so it does its monthly test.  
So if I fall and can't get up, my mind will be at rest.  
Oh, I hate "Life Alert" commercials, where a helpless lady I see.  
But then I face reality and know it mirrors me.  
Yes, we all get very fragile, very easy to fall and break,  
As we sometimes lose our balance, one wrong step, a big mistake.  
My sparse hair, an earned halo, a glowing cotton ball on my head.  
Heaven's waiting with a new body, a younger model please instead.  
My humor hasn't left me despite the miseries all this while.  
And I hope my maintenance saga starts your day with a little smile.

## Who Would Have Thought

*Veda Gavin | Adult*

As a child no one could predict an adult outcome for me.  
The shift of many factors could change my destiny.  
Last picked in gym class, but as an adult I became a Coach.  
Behind at times in school classes, but as an adult I became an Educator.  
I got in trouble as a child by writing in Momma's college books, but as an adult I became a Author  
Shy to talk around people, but as an adult I became a Public Speaker.  
Teachers said my handwriting looked like chicken-scratch, but as an adult I became a Writer.  
Daddy said stop acting up, but as an adult I became an Actor  
My sisters told our parents I took apart their dolls, to see how they worked, but as an adult I became a Computer Programmer  
Did I exceed your expectations?  
In my dreams I always knew

**Flightless Bird***Dawn White | Adult*

What you feel is despair.  
What you see is loss.  
You are longing to be.

What I feel is belief.  
What I see is yearning.  
What you are is inspiring.

I found you.  
You discovered me.  
It is I who can fly, yet never took flight.

**The End***Trisha Honkoski | Adult*

Sunlight creates  
shadows on walls  
like those you've built  
without knowing I  
could no longer ascend.

As my heart beats within my chest,  
thoughts of you spin through my head  
tangled and swirling and affecting,  
weaving their way so intricately.

My shadow, forever accompanying me,  
as you long to be.

I want to be like your shadow, you say  
undetachable and unconditionally a part  
kept close and visible, yet not felt.

I see you,  
as I see me  
in the image cast by the light of the sun.  
The difference is we  
are not one.

**The Sun Is Rising***Kathie Tempinski | Adult*

Early in the morning  
With its big, bright, orange happiness.  
It brings a new day.  
A chance to renew your mind and heart.  
I love the new day sun.  
With it it's fresh mercies and  
Glorious warmth  
To fill your hearts and souls.  
Say hello to  
Early morning sunrise.

**The Library is Our Home***Susan McClellan | Adult*

In busy buildings where activities and noise roam,  
The library is our second home,  
Each shelf a doorway to the past,  
Where dreams and knowledge last,  
Treasures of written word,  
In libraries, our voices are heard.  
Our minds take flight,  
Exploring dreams and delight,  
In tales of wonder, we immerse,  
The books are the universe.  
On the pages of the books we see,  
The endless horizons of all that we can be.

in del ible

20 25

Broken  
My Push  
Remember  
Sky  
People  
Time  
Stand  
Dance  
World  
Heal  
Always  
Water  
For  
Heart  
License  
Soul  
Surface

**ODE TO GOLF    *1st Place***

*Lucas Gottardo | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

O' Golf

I have appreciated your presence in my life since day 1

You have always been there for me in times of need

You have created extravagant memories that I will remember forever

You are like a beautiful sunset on the coast of an island beach

If you tried to leave I would keep you in my sight

I would do anything for you my friend

As you are the reason for my love of this game that is above

The others

You are special, kind, and amazing

You are as special as the president in my heart

You have given me amazing times to share with family and friends

I will cherish those moments until the very end

You are the brother I never had

As you are always there for me in my head

It has been a long journey with you so far my friend

Hopefully it will never come to an end

Almost like the world's lifespan

The extravagant shots, memories, and talents

I have collected

Will lead to memories that will be greater each time

I step on the course

Summer is my time to get out with family and friends and you have become a place I can go to until the very end

You are as sharp as Iron, gritty like a long drive to California

Though you have a humble presence that I like which makes me want more of you

**Triumph over Tides      2nd Place***Claire DeMik | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

We prepared for the day,  
I never thought I wouldn't be ok  
But the King Tide came  
And so did something insane

I woke up one morning  
And looked right outside  
The water was flowing  
The sun was my guide  
  
I knew I had to awake  
And although I didn't know that day  
I would be changed forever  
Starting today

In just a few hours  
I would be in a bed  
Wheeled around in the hospital  
Because of my neck

I woke up and got dressed  
Went downstairs to eat breakfast  
I looked at the news  
The weatherman had a clue

To a big tidal wave  
Coming in pretty soon  
I knew I couldn't live in a cave  
And overall this wasn't new

I helped my mom  
Outside in the sun  
Lay out the sandbags  
It needed to be done

We had to act fast  
Or else it could be bad  
To be caught in a King Tide  
Would make no one at all glad

But when I looked at the time  
I shrieked out loud  
It was time to go to the hospital  
Time for my neck to be figured out

I was afraid, yes indeed  
Because something inside of me  
Said you're sick, yes you are  
But how would I know?

We drove up North  
But not too far  
And at the pediatric hospital  
We got out of the car

To the 7th floor they told us  
At the check in desk  
They gave us our passes  
There was no time to rest

Eventually I went  
Into the operation room  
They covered my face  
I didn't want to see through

I knew what they were doing  
I could feel it inside  
They were pulling cells out  
I truly tried not to cry

My mom got a call the next day  
It wasn't for sure  
But my doctor said  
I had thyroid cancer

The king tide came in  
It took over my life  
Water everywhere I could see  
I was drowning in just 1, 2, 3

I couldn't think  
I couldn't live  
I was in a dream  
Yet I couldn't wake up

One day I was forced to believe  
The information I had received  
This sickness would have to be gone  
The king tide would have to move on

The water kept coming in  
The fear from this  
The fear from that  
My life needed to come back

I was stuck at home though  
Stuck sick and cooped up  
Our cars could not get out  
So I was stuck in our little hut

The water cleared out  
Little by little  
The sun came out  
Bit by bit

Eventually  
The day came  
I was afraid  
Yet I was ok

I took a step outside  
The first one in a while  
After this day  
I'd have a big smile

The water was clearing  
You could hardly tell  
The water had come here  
The town protected itself well

When I came back  
A day and a half later  
From the hospital  
I found out later

I was cured  
I was not sick  
My cancer was gone  
And my triumph was on

King tides come and go  
Just like injuries  
Illnesses  
And every low

But the one thing  
You need every time  
Is to find joy in the small things  
And hope through it all

**The Strength Of A Shattered Heart 3rd Place***Emery Anhalt | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

The heart, they say, is fragile

The heart is a fragile thing.

Fragile.

Something that is easily broken, damaged, or destroyed.

The heart.

A muscular organ that pumps your blood through the circulatory system.

The heart, they say, is how you love.

Love.

Feeling affection, compassion, or admiration for another person.

Love, they say, is dangerous.

Dangerous.

Able or likely to cause harm or injury.

The heart is fragile.

Love is dangerous.

And yet, the two come in a pair.

The heart loves.

The heart yearns to love.

The heart is made to love.

So why do we call it fragile?

The heart is made for something dangerous.

Love is destructive and the heart beats for it.

The heart has the ability to repair itself to a certain degree.

You can say you are smitten.

You can say that nothing could conquer your love.

You can say that you are completely whipped.

But once your heart is broken, and that bond is shattered,

The heart will repair itself eventually.

Because love is destructive, but the heart is not fragile.

The heart is desperate.

## Stars

*Isabella Taylor | 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

They were high in the sky,  
They were glistening into my eyes,  
They were waltzing across the clouds,  
They were of great big crowds.  
Then they fell to the ground,  
Went under and all drowned,  
I looked upon the stars,  
Only one was still above the ground.  
And so I went beside it,  
And took it in my hand,  
I put it through a strand,  
And threw it back towards the sky.  
The star glided along the current,  
It swayed against the wind,  
It landed in its rightful spot,  
Shining with a grin.

**Passage 1st Place***Josie Hillegass | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Time

Is the plum I press to my lips,  
Juice dancing on my fingertips  
Until the pit grips my teeth with halting hands.

Time

Is the face of the Venezuelan man on the street corner,  
Who knows more than I could ever imagine,  
His veins spread like tree branch stories.

Time

Is the opłatek my father's family passes,  
The virgin mary dissolving on my tongue,  
As my uncle sings in a language I do not understand.

Time

Is the book I never read anymore  
As if someone could outgrow words on paper,  
As if the ink was something nostalgic.

Time

Is the church I am lying under,  
Like a thousand rosary beads weighing on my eyelids,  
The dirt soaked in holy water and salted.

Time

Is the evolution of my poetry,  
Metaphors that itch at my insides,  
Growth interlude.

Time

Is my own body,  
An anthology of scars and contrasts  
Grown, now.

**Resilience 2nd Place***Lola Siebert | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

In shadows deep, where silence weeps,  
A frozen breath, a secret keeps,  
Barbed wire whispers tales of dread,  
Where hopes lie buried, dreams are shed,

The sky, a cloak of muted gray,  
Hangs heavy with the price they pay.  
Each footfall echoes in the night,  
A testament to lost delight.

Faint flickers of a lids once bright,  
Now cloaked in darkness, stripped of light.  
Faces pale in hunger's grip,  
Each moment feels a tightening slip.

Yet in the midst of sorrows reign,  
A spark remains through endless pain.  
A whispered song, a quiet prayer,  
Defiance found in the thin, cold air.

Though chains may bind and spirits ache,  
Resilience stirs, it will not break,  
In unity, the heart will soar,  
For even here, hope dares to roar.

So let the world remember well,  
The silent cries, the tales they tell,  
In Auschwitz, where shadows blend,  
A story of courage will never end.

**The Sage 3rd Place***Nessa Eichie | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

I study myself, analyzing each action and reaction on a periodic basis, criticizing myself to exhaustion;

Will it ever be good enough?

Sometimes I don't know why I do the things I do, so who, if not I am doing them?

Is it possible to truly connect with others if you do not feel connected to even yourself?

How am I supposed to trust myself when I believe the very mind I think with is broken?

In limbo between consciousness and chaos.

I wish I could be inside my own head, or on the outside looking in, I wish I was anywhere but here.

I am not my self, because I can dream;

I am not my mind, because I can feel;

Yet I am not my soul, because I will be forgotten

So I learn to hate what I am and focus on who I'm becoming, over, and over, and over again.

No matter where I am, or who I'm with, I can't help but feel a constant sense of impending doom somewhere in my mind

In every place but there, that is

I feel as though I need someone to pull me close, hold me down, and keep me present.

Who will keep me whole when I cannot pick up my pieces fast enough?

## Sea of Loss

*Grace Lustig | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Losing is a silent cry.  
A heaving gasp for air underwater.  
The surrounding noise screams at you  
While your feet are cemented by sand.  
Emotions billow and pollute the water.  
Slashes of denial and blame will not keep you afloat.  
The weight of the waves compresses your lungs,  
Pulling you under.  
The current stills and bubbles rise.  
There you rest, riding the waves.  
The salty air begins to smell fresh  
And the sun sparkles upon the water.  
The silver capped surge forced you to swim.  
Grab a board, another wave is coming.

## Even Now

*Mark Anhalt | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Even now,  
as I lay bruised and breathless,  
gawking at the stars above me,  
I think of nothing but you.

The beauty of constellations and possibilities stare me down in jealousy as I look past their glory and search for you in my thoughts.

It's not hard to find a line of them connected to you,  
most of them in my grasp are.

I blink to make sure my soul hasn't left me as I lay in the snow.  
I lick my lips, out of lust or dehydration, and the cold winds  
ambush the wet planes as I lay them on my lips.  
I start to notice how my lips have chapped, how my body aches  
from the cold, and how it's shaking for warmth.

Sinking deeper into the snow,  
deeper into thought,  
I think how warm you'd be,  
next to me.

## Love Songs

*Trey Castillo | 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

And if I could write them love songs  
They'd be soft and sweet  
With memories  
Large bubble tea, car dealership  
Cloth seats of a pick-up, pine tree license plates,  
The smell of cold morning cigarettes,  
Northern Vietnamese Alabaman accents,  
Yellowed photographs of permed hair; war; happy struggles

I'd write love songs for them  
For things often are easier to remember in song  
They're getting old  
They're forgetting  
They've forgotten  
Everyone is going to die

I'd write them love songs to remind them of before  
When I was a child and thought youth was invincible  
I'd write love songs to remind them of the promises they made  
They said they'd never leave me  
That part of me has never grown up  
There's a child like rage that fills me  
To know that their promise will go unkept

I'd write them love songs  
I'd hum them by their bedside as they leave  
I'd write those love songs for me  
Because things are often easier to remember in song  
And when they've forgotten

I'm afraid I'll forget

**time 1st Place***K. Nosal | Adult*

fragments of memory flash before stars,  
beyond space, slipping lucidly  
like sand through my fingers,  
falling softly like rain.

where rain lands, flowers bloom.  
blown gently by the breeze,  
caressing each petal as if they were known to them,  
whispering reminders that this is temporary, subtle.  
but even time is not moved by it.

not moved by our shadowed footsteps,  
brief, gentle, voices faint,  
echoes within the wind, carrying divine breath on its fingertips.  
moving without care, worry,  
shifting the world beneath our feet  
until, we too, are swept away.

i look up to the moon,  
wondering if it recognizes my ancestors in my face.  
soft light, faint, constant,  
warm on my skin.  
slips away like it never truly belonged to me.  
the petals recognize its embrace  
and bloom anyway.

time embraced gently within my hands,  
delicate, slipping between breaths,  
carried away in the wind.  
i release a sigh of surrender  
as rivers carve their own paths  
through walls of rock and stone.  
even they know the futility of stillness.

**The Iceberg** *2nd Place**Ginny Veerman | Adult*

A universe of triangular confusion—  
It surfaces, in sharp protrusion.  
The scope surveys the mental deep,  
To find the surface an illusion.

Nature's way has been improved;  
The ocean's tide is warm and smooth—  
But when the waves dare to recede,  
The cold sharp ice lies unremoved.

I can walk the waters, troubled,  
Where underneath the danger's doubled  
If I have Him by my side,  
My sights are set above the rubble.

**A Mother's Love** *3rd Place**Mary Pierson | Adult*

Every minute a mother's love for her child grows.  
Loving you through all of the highs and the lows.

She rocked you in the middle of the night,  
And held you close to make everything alright.

She kissed your owies and dried your tears,  
Held your hand and consoled your fears.

Losing a mom makes your heart ache,  
Thinking of the memories you can no longer make.

Feeling broken, distraught, and unable to cope,  
Be certain time and support will bring you hope.

Always remember that your mom is with you.  
A sound or smell, and her favorite song too.

Give yourself time, give yourself grace,  
Healing is a process and never a race.

## A Wintery Night on Planet DISCO

*Elaine Gotfryd-Noonan | Adult*

Warm up with a Kup O'Joe, yummy Sky Dots on a  
snowy night with an Intergalactic friend from the planet  
DISCO.....

### Barista Code

Steaming Kup O'Joe  
Frothing hearts, freely  
    floating  
Espresso soirée

### Crystal Scene

Blanketed rooftops  
Footprint trailing path you  
    go  
Snow angels soar

### Dessert in the Sky

Dippin' Dots snowflakes  
Tongue out catching  
    yummy treats  
Melting, melting – GONE

### Planet Disco

Mirrored galaxy  
Pulsating beats, flying  
    sweat  
Dancing all night long

### Outer Space Queen

Intergalactic  
Real time dreams  
    manifested  
NEUTRINO powered

## Music is Medicine

*Daniel Draus | Adult*

It can express parts of your life  
It can pick you up when you're down  
It can take all your worries off your mind  
It can grab your heart  
It can lift your soul to new heights  
It can express your intimate emotions  
It can remind you of all the good and bad times  
It can bring back memories  
It can make you feel like you are on top of the world  
It can be the magical mist in the air, which changes your day around  
It can make you laugh and cry  
It can bring you to a special place  
It can bring people together  
It can do your talking  
It can relax you  
It can be your medicine if you let it

## I Suppose

*Jennifer Kojro-Badziak | Adult*

I suppose it's most mothers and daughters. I think it's more often than not. I can't blame either of us, there are times I want to, but how could either of us have known? It's funny how it takes so long to get to the point that you tell yourself "we only have one life". I would have to guess that point arrives when you're slammed with the thought of losing the first significant person. I'm certain I could say I'm sorry I thousand times ... but I am also certain you deserve a thousand and one. I would guess that it is because of you I had no fear saying yes, without hesitation, to my son. I would guess it is because of you I have been able to manage for a couple of years on three hours of sleep. You did it. You did it for me. I always fell out of the bed in the middle of the night, and I'd wake up on the floor with my head in your lap. You worked three jobs, one before we went to school, and we went with you. You made it work. You took the punches. You cleaned up the messes.

Keep fighting ... That's it. That's all. I'm not ready to say goodbye. I can't do it. I will not. I'll tell you when I'm done. I'll tell you when you're done. I was your easiest birth, but you're most difficult child. I will scream the loudest. Fight the longest. I will say I'm sorry - but you won't react. It's us. You and I.

"Hey Jude, remember to let her into your heart ... then you can start to make it better..."  
I'm Sorry.

**DMV***Hannah Gill | Adult*

I took my mom to the DMV for the last time.

I bought a house nearly 3 years ago and her license was the only one not updated

Now that her body is being eaten by cancer, it seemed obtuse.

I made an appointment. Times have changed. Things aren't like they were. You can't just walk in to the DMV ready to surrender hours to wait.

The last time I was at the DMV was for my daughter to get her license.

I made an appointment and was yelled at for bringing in an iced coffee and trying to accompany her through the juxtaposition of lines to get all the steps necessary to leave with a temporary license.

I was lucky. After I trashed my drink, I was allowed to sit in a chair and watch my daughter maze through the process not sure of herself and the terse directions each counter gave.

Other parents were kicked out when there were no more chairs left. The whole thing was less than 30 minutes.

I was ready to take my mom to the DMV.

I did not bring in an iced coffee and I was ready to affirm the necessity of being with my mom. She had morphed into a frail old woman. Pancreas, liver, and lungs blackened and poisoned the sturdy frame I remember. The sturdy frame I inherited.

I didn't need to bark at the lady at the counter. She saw how weak my mother was, barely able to stand upright for more than a few minutes at a time.

She let me walk her to each line.

The camera where one of her last photos was taken.

The line to verify her change of address paperwork.

The line to check her vision, because we can renew since we are here and she won't have to come back in four years (ever).

And the line to pay, where she was too weak to stand any longer so she sat in one of the few chairs left in the building.

My mom used to walk so fast, always on the go. I feel the same way now.

She is just a shell of what she used to be and I can't help but think of the future when I'll be a shell and my daughter is solid and fierce and sure of herself because there is no other option when the woman and god you love and shadowed is being eaten by cancer.

My mom died four weeks later and never needed to use her updated license. Who does that make me now?

## They Said Growing Old Was Fun. They Lied!

*Bonnie Patrick DuCharme | Adult*

Your hair turns white  
 Your teeth fall out  
 Your knees start to bend  
 You're getting the gout.  
 But when you stand,  
 You start to stoop...  
 Getting old is pigeon poop!

Your skin starts to stretch  
 From your chin to your butt  
 Your boobs slide down  
 and cover your gut.  
 But when you stand,  
 You start to stoop...  
 Getting old is pigeon poop!

Your balance is gone  
 You're afraid you will trip  
 You don't want to break  
 Your knee or your hip.  
 But when you stand,  
 You start to stoop...  
 Getting old is pigeon poop!

Your memory is fading  
 Your blood pressure's high  
 Your eye starts to twitch  
 And they can't tell you why.  
 But when you stand,  
 You start to stoop...  
 Getting old is pigeon poop!

The fat on your arm  
 Starts to flap in the breeze  
 You'd like to leave early  
 But where are your keys?  
 But when you stand,  
 You start to stoop...  
 Getting old is pigeon poop!

Your clothes get tight  
 Your waist disappears  
 Your hair starts to grow  
 Out your nose and your ears.  
 But when you stand,  
 You start to stoop...  
 Getting old is pigeon poop!

Yes!  
 GETTING OLD IS PIGEON POOP!

## Scattered Gifts

*M.K. | Adult*

Poke a finger into a fictitious wound and blame  
 another,  
 Asking, "Am I broken?"  
 Stomp upon another's innocence,  
 Asking, "Am I broken?"  
 False words come from a chaotic mind,  
 Asking, "Am I broken?"  
 Envy, thievery, greed .... harmless folly?  
 No! No! No!  
 Such folly becomes the landlord of the soul.  
 You are broken.

Abandoned hearts and wounds recover,  
 But homestead the mind and breath of the drummer.  
 Dim shadows descend upon soiled threshold,  
 No longer strong and proud.  
 What becomes of the harbor once lively with waves,  
 Now dense stringy growths of deception abound.  
 Reward to the Captain? Reward to the keyholder?  
 No! No! No!  
 The albatross drapes wherever your Port.  
 You are broken.

**Brave Girl***Rebecca Barker | Adult*

Be loud, my sweet girl.  
Make some noise if you want.  
Let the world hear your voice—strong, clear, and full of all the things  
that make you you.  
You don't need permission to take up space.

Care deeply, my darling.  
Put your whole self into what you love.  
Let your heart stretch wide, even if the world doesn't always understand.  
The depth of your kindness, your passion, your love—it is your gift.

Be brave, young one.  
Bravery doesn't mean you won't feel fear.  
It means you step forward anyway,  
even with shaky hands and unsure steps.  
Your try is always a great feat.

You are beautiful.  
You are gentle.  
You are kind and sweet.  
You are bold.  
You are creative.  
You are perfectly, wonderfully, uniquely you.

You are so many things—and so much more.  
Never let anyone define you but you.

Because right now, in this very moment, you are exactly who you are meant to be.  
And that is enough. Always.

## Always Choose Truth

*Joe Tucker | Adult*

Danger knows no limitations.  
On any given day, at any given time  
New circumstances may arise  
Throwing chaos into our lives.

War is as old as humanity.  
Our country has fought battles against evil,  
Risen up against tyranny,  
Resisted the pressures from dictators.  
Yet today we face a different threat.

Across a wide range of once strongly held  
Beliefs about our freedom, we now find  
Our rights are  
Under attack from within,  
Taking on a different challenge.

You didn't think it could happen.  
Our country, at times, has struggled and today this  
Union's future is being  
Reimagined by those in office.

Focus is on an agenda  
Represented by authoritarian ideas that  
Expose threats against our constitutional rights.  
Endangered are our liberties, our allies, and our future.  
Democracy is for the people, by the people.  
Ours was won through lives lost fighting for freedom.  
May we honor those lost lives by what we do next.

Across the country we face a decision:  
Choose truth, law and justice, or be ruled by an autocracy.  
Truth, along with law and justice, is the root of democracy.

**When Push Comes to Shove***Holly Coop | Adult*

When push comes to me, I don't want to shove  
I don't want to push either  
I just want to invite for tea  
Sit  
Chat  
Let's discuss  
What's bothering you  
What's weighing on me  
Calm connection  
Sitting out  
Perhaps neither really know what *the push*  
*The shove*  
is really all about  
Let's take out the iron  
Smooth the wrinkles away  
Save the pushing and shoving  
For someone else's day  
The tea is ready  
Let's chat  
Push the camel through the needle  
Tie up our loose ends with a thread  
Today is a good a day as any  
To mend  
I hear the whistle  
It's calling out  
I have a smile  
To replace your pout  
You can lend me your calm  
When I'm boiling with shout  
When push comes to shove  
Let's sit this one out  
The tea is ready  
Pull up a seat  
Let's chat

**Light to Dark to Light***Dawn E. Plestina | Adult*

Light tears fall, then stream  
Darkness dampens my whole soul  
While May flowers grow

Bright colorful blooms,  
Blind to them, while depression  
Leads to the black hole

Struggle to escape  
Chill like winter-- no success  
Death becomes the light

## Questions

*Mauverneen Blevins | Adult*

What is love. What is Life.  
What is happiness. What is strife.  
People come and people go  
The ones we love. The ones we know.  
Life goes on

What is false. What is true  
I'm most alive when I'm with you.  
But now you're gone, like a dream of the night  
I have left in me no more fight.  
Life goes on.

I eat, I sleep, I wake, I cry.  
Be it a long, a short, or an absent goodbye  
It's always too soon when someone must die.  
Life goes on.

Will anyone miss me? Will anyone weep  
When it's my time to sleep the eternal sleep.  
I will miss my children, my lovers and friends  
And pray it is true that we will meet again.

But for now we're all here. Let us dance in the rain.  
Forgetting our sorrow, our fear and our pain.  
For now we're together - even though we're the last  
So Dance that dance! Raise your glass -for this too shall pass.  
Life goes on.

## Lois' Tribute

*Nicole Reiner | Adult*

That was the night that our world got smaller  
That was the night that the moon was dimmer  
That was the last night we spent all together  
That was the night there were tears and laughter  
That was the night that my heart was broken  
But this is the day that Heaven is bigger  
This is the day the sun shines so bright  
This is the first day of our new life together  
This is the day there are tears and laughter  
This is the day that my heart is healed  
This is the day and I will rejoice

## The Last Date

*Maria Vela | Adult*

I went on a date with my ex the other day  
Not sure what to expect  
I swore I wouldn't respond to his texts  
but decisions were made.  
Promises were broken  
So there we were.

His familiar face  
was now that of a stranger.  
Unchanged over the last 6 months,  
apart from his eyes  
now frosted over.  
The once comforting warmth  
of his hand over mine  
was now claustrophobic.

His words were all the same  
just asking how I'd been.  
Our chit- chat was as always  
He cracked his jokes,  
and we laughed like it was still January.  
Although in the moments of silence  
I saw past the wool over my eyes

Reminders so loud  
no conversation drowns them out  
They seep into my skin  
and right into my bones.  
This man is far too cold for January

My food didn't sit right in my stomach  
as he grasped so desperately  
at the connection we once had.  
You can try to tie burning string  
but the flame doesn't die.  
His singed fingers won't slow its rage.

I remembered our apartment.  
Our shared nights and subsequent mornings.  
Curtains drawn  
to shut out the world around us.  
Just us.  
Dancing, laughing, crying  
forever tied to one another.

I remembered our homemade breakfasts  
Lazy afternoons  
fulfilment in coexisting  
Late nights  
intimate candle-lit dinners.  
Sparks flew,  
The fire brightened,  
And his wax went up in flames...  
And the string was ashes between us...

And it all comes crashing down.  
His jokes and "how are you"s  
our chatting and laughing,  
it's hollow.  
The butterflies are dead,  
laying atop the ill-sitting food in my stomach  
It's a new type of nausea

He'll cover the check, he said.  
What an empty gesture.  
There's no more love behind that smile,  
Though I wonder if there ever was.  
Maybe not,  
he's just an ex.  
Not a lover,  
a stranger.  
Not a candle,  
just a melted blob of wax.

## Dancing with the King

*Marcia Horan | Adult*

I saw you from the beginning of time...  
Partnerless and alone.  
It was my plan and desire to ask you to dance.  
I reached out to you; I beckoned you to be My partner  
And when your hand clasped mine the dance began.  
The first steps I knew were new to you, but as you leaned on Me,  
you learned the gentle touch of My hand.  
As I stretched you beyond your own abilities.  
I said don't worry for I will support you with My strength.  
Focus on Me so you will not lose your balance.  
When you slip, I will set you upright.  
I will always turn you in the right way.  
And I will lift you to heights you never knew you could soar.  
Smile and you will reflect a love for the dance.  
We shall make beautiful patterns together as I direct your way.  
Your trust in My leading will cause you to emit an inner joy.  
Follow my lead with complete abandon and then.  
your movements will be graceful and seem effortless.  
Learn that music is the background, but the timing I will control.  
Most of all, we will move hearts to desire the joy we have.  
Love will direct us as we have a partnership that cannot be broken.  
Our dance floor is eternity....

## The Imagination

*Andrew DeMik | Adult*

Creative minds sour through the clouds above,  
A never ending trail of thought to thought.  
In places near and far, concepts are thereof,  
And sounds and visions can be greatly sought.  
All books, machines and toys and movies scenes  
Were all some concepts people gave life to,  
From multitudes of thoughts they had the means.  
This is something people should look into  
Cause thinking up ideas can be fun,  
For endless worlds appear in heads each day.  
If you take part in this, then you have won.  
Creativeness can take you a long way.  
Imagination really sets one free,  
To see the world beyond real

## The Lead Dog

**(A poem for my child leaving home to start college)**

*Anne Styx | Adult*

I was listening to a podcast.

(I am often listening to podcasts.

I saw somewhere

It is a sign of loneliness.)

Anyway,

I was listening to a podcast

And a musher who has competed in the Iditarod

Was talking about what

Makes a good lead dog

In a dog team.

It's not about being the "alpha dog."

It's not about being dominant.

It's not about fighting your way to the front,

Earning your spot.

It's about being

Willing

And

Able

To see a trail where none exists.

Being able to cut a path through difficult terrain and  
Challenging conditions.

Lead dogs can be shy, quiet, submissive even.

But, they can do without

The surety of following someone else.

Be a lead dog out there, my dear.

## Mind Readers

*Angel Hearns | Adult*

Skimming the surface of an oceanus mind  
A single soft touch sending ripples through the sea  
A wave of feelings pass in time  
In the blur of the ripples, I see thee

But this was only you by the surface of this sea  
Harmless and normal but mostly carefree  
Like a seagull honing onto his prey  
I dove past the surface, away from the rays

I cut like a knife, sharp as a blade  
Through the layers and layers of memories in haze  
They flowed in the currents of this vast mind  
I cut through them all, never looking behind

Dodging and darting through labyrinth reefs  
I descend to the inner reaches of the mind  
Abyssal black and undefined.

Drowning, sinking, flooding thinking  
Trapped in whirlpools, endless shrinking

Within these chaotic walls in thy mind  
Forever, I was confined.

I was blind.

A single ray broke through the storm  
Piercing through the blackened swarm

Holding on, my hope took form  
Reaching the trenches and bathing it warm  
Bringing color to the forgiving deep  
Awakening this mind from its eternal sleep

Reaching the surface  
I saw the sun rise  
Reflecting the light off the ocean  
like your glittering eyes

## Thank You God for my Brother Michael

*Debbie Podwika | Adult*

You came home and my life was never the same.  
Your enchanting eyes sparkled and made me smile.  
Your fuzzy blonde hair tickled me.  
Your new baby smell calmed me.  
Your coos and squiggling made me laugh.

When you were one year old, you got very sick.  
I did not see you for most of the next year.  
I missed being able to feed you and play with you.  
I was scared you would not get better.  
I prayed to God to heal you and bring you home.

You slowly got better and came back home.  
I thanked God for helping you get better.  
I helped you crawl, walk and talk.  
We cuddled, played and laughed.  
With each day you became stronger.

Your heart is sweet and kind and loving.  
Your spirit sparkles and charms everyone.  
You light up a room so much, when you leave everyone notices.  
You are brave and strong and loyal.  
You inspire me every day.

Recently, you got very sick again.  
Once again I was scared you would not get better and I would lose you.  
I prayed to God again to heal you and bring you home.  
God sent you Angels to help you heal.  
I again thanked God for helping you get better.

Thank You God for my Brother Michael.  
Every day I try to be a better person.  
I'm not sure where I currently measure up, but I know it would be drastically lower without him in my life.  
And I pray to You once again to keep him in my life for many more decades.  
I need him because I still have a lot to learn.



in del ible



PUBLISHED BY THE NEW LENOX PUBLIC LIBRARY  
New Lenox, Illinois, United States of America  
2024 & 2025