

**2017 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Justin Stobart**

Storm

I step out into the parkway,
umbrella shielding me
from night's angry tears
as I cross the dark street.

I pause,
heart heavy like my hand,
and lower the umbrella.
Standing in resigned repose,
I try one last time to look for the stars,
but they are hidden.

Water falls upon me in despair
until I cannot distinguish between
tears
and rain.

Yet, I find comfort in night's sad embrace,
for I know that tonight, I do not cry
alone.

The Little Gray Bird

There once was a bird
Who loved to sing
Music came naturally
Like flapping a wing

He poured out his heart
With every song
But in this was a problem
Something was wrong

You see, other birds
Did not like what they heard
They felt scared, and bullied
This peculiar bird

These other birds
Were stuck in their ways
They sang *proper* hymns
They did not like gays

So, the joyful songbird
Lost his smile
His chirp and his cheer
Were gone for a while

He tried to feel better
He tried to sing *right*
But the notes of his ballad
He could not rewrite

So, if not alone
He kept his beak closed
But in secretive solitude
His heart still composed

I have heard this bird sing when he thought me asleep.
His mournful, distraught elegy made me weep.

Diamonds

They say that secrets are no fun
unless you share with everyone,
but where was everyone
when Doubt and Distrust delivered my secret?

They say that truth will set me free,
but I did not know my captor,
I did not feel my chains
before they spoke.

They say that knowledge is power,
and now I understand,
for like a great imperialist,
they wish to colonize me,
cut at the stem of my being,
and pull me out by the roots.

To rule me,
they must know me.
To rule me,
they break me down
with pressure and pain
until I become another jewel in their crown.

Why fix yourself when you can damage others?

The Chase

Only a glimpse
and then it's gone.
But like when a ray of sunlight
peeks through the clouds,
it only takes an instant
to feel its warmth.

I am in pursuit
of this glimpse

when I wake up from a dream,
and my mind is determined
to hold onto the
falling fragments
of memory
shattered from
the pane of paradise.

It is the need for constant betterment,
the yearning for something more
that makes me wander.

I am told it is one of my rights,
this pursuit of happiness.
How curious that it lies
in the pursuit,
and not in the attainment.

I suppose that one never ceases
the pursuit of happiness
unless one loosens the grip on
life or liberty.
I may have been born with
three inalienable rights,
but I only have two hands to grasp them,
leaving one free
to beat in my heart.

Stars

Today,
for a moment,
my heart assumed command.
Stress and obligation
were taken backstage as passion
conducted my neuronal instruments,
orchestrating a masterpiece of adrenaline
I can only describe as life.

It is in the breaking of my passionate moment that
I wonder why it never lasts;
Gravity already pulls my body to the ground,
must she also fetter my joy?

There are billions of stars in the galaxy.
There is infinite darkness.
The universe,
a black sheet of paper
with pinpoint perforations
allowing fugitive light to escape.
The darkness may be devastating,
but it is not absolute.

When death comes,
the earth may take my body,
but as for me,
I wish to be carried away
on a melody into the stars.