

**2014 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Kaleb Pifer**

All the Always

All the always

I am Lancelot

And she is Guinevere

Reaching out to cup my chin

Barely letting her fingers brush my face before the kiss arrives.

All this time

I am Jesus

While she is Judas

Reaching out, but not taking my hand

Barely skimming my cheek to lay that traitorous kiss.

All the while

She is Guinevere

But I am Arthur

Reaching out to grasp her hand and pull her close

Barely long enough to kiss her brow before she turns away

All the always

She is God

And I am Adam

Reaching out to touch, feel, this one who moulded me

Barely-not-kissing fingers before she turns away and leaves me.

I Thought I Saw You

I thought I saw you

When I stopped writing, looked up.

I guess I was wrong.

There wasn't anyone there to see,

Just a few leaves in the wind.

The Shoe

A shoe, untied.
Laces dripping
Dribbling over the edge.
Cloth snakes squirming
In the open air
Trying to untie their tails
From the base.
They're trapped.
They gasp for air
As I strangle them.
After the struggle
They lie dead.
I've killed the
Untied shoe.

A Tale of Pandora

She asks Husband
What to do
He tells her to go away.
She does.

She comes back later
Asks again.
Husband responds
The same.

Her heart is heavy
Small
Yet dense
A neutron star of pain.

She doesn't go back again.
Doesn't want to see Husband again.
Decides to stay in the room
She thinks they share.

She sits
On the edge
Of the bed
They bought together.

Her head drops into her hands,
Fingers pushing strands of hair
Out of place.
She doesn't care.

She closes her eyes...
... feels as though something...
... something should be happening.
But... no.

Nothing happens
Nothing changes
Just...
Just emptiness.

For an hour...
More than an hour
She just sits
Like this.

Eventually
She falls asleep
Head sliding
Off her palms...

Awakened by a ringing bell
It takes a moment,
But then she remembers
It's the door's call.

She painfully stands
And stretches legs out
Out past one another
Until she finds herself walking to the door.

She tries to
Go on.
But a hand from nowhere
Stops her.

"No.
Stay here."
Husband's voice
Low and gruff.

She does as he says
But still she watches
She sees
The door open.

She sees the man there
The one with the package:
Brown and cardboard,
Marked with translucent tape

She sees the exchange.
Bulging envelope
For dull
Brown cardboard.

The door closes.
The man is gone.
The envelope is gone.

But the package remains.

Husband lifts the box.
Looks at her.
“Open the door,”
Husband commands.

She does
Just as he says.
She opens the closet,
And he sets it inside.

He takes a lock
Out of his pocket.
Puts it on the door.
Turns the key.

“Go away,”
Husband says
In his voice.
She does.

Later that night,
Hours later,
She lies awake
In their bed.

Cannot sleep
Not without knowing.
Not with Husband right there.
She decides.

She takes the key.
Out of his drawer.
Creeps out of the door.
Creeps down the hallway.

She unlocks the closet.
She opens the door.
She splits the tape
With the key’s sharp edge.

The flaps pull up.

She looks inside.
And then...
Then it happens.

The feeling that
She'd had before returns.
But it features now
What was missing.

The tears drip silently
Out of her eyes.
Now she knows
What happened.

She closes the box.
She locks the door.
She places the key
Back in his drawer.

She grabs her favourite jacket,
With its deep, wide pockets.
Pockets just wide enough
For the granola bars she shoves inside.

A second of hesitation
Before paper from Husband's wallet
Joins the granola
On her way to the door.

The very same door,
Where the delivery man stood
And brought the package
Into his house.

She opens the door.
She feels the breeze.
She opens the door.
And she steps outside.

Headlights in the Distance

Far away,

Down past the "Do Not Pass,"
I see the lights of your car.

Coming out of the *only* sound
Of the night-road
I see your pinpricks.

It's twelve past nine,
And I'm heading home,
So, I assume you, too
Are heading back to family.

You're probably returning,
After a long day at...
(Work?)
(School?)
Something or another.

By now,
White pinpricks are
White floodlights,
Throwing
Confusion into
My vision.

Happily blinded
I don't see your face
Or your family
Or your emotions
Or your troubles
Or your past
And definitely not your future.

And then white floodlights
Become red ones
As front becomes back
As forward keeps on going

As I drive, and
As we go on not seeing each other.

A quick glance in my mirror
And a suspicion confirmed,
Red floodlights
Become red pinpricks
As you pull farther away.

And the *only* sound
Of the road
Again becomes
The only thing.

As I watch you
And you watch me
Disappear

As that hill behind me
Behind you

Obscures.