

**2014 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest  
Honorable Mention: Paro Sen**

**Winter in Michigan, 2013**

There are still rivers lying beneath my skin.  
You dug your nails in, putting roots down  
Into the permafrost that I shrouded myself in.

We fell out like pine needles, despite all odds.  
The flowers you planted in my arms  
Bloomed into an exit wound that I will never cauterize.  
I refuse to set ablaze the only thing that grew near me.

Frost bites even the hands that feed.  
Even evergreens die.

**11:59 PM, Jim Thorpe, PA**

Autumn leaves behind Pennsylvania winters,  
Putting fall to rest beneath a blanket of snow.  
The end of December was frosted white like car windows  
With frozen breath in frozen hands that I held before my face.

Everything closed early on New Year's Eve  
Except the myriad front doors along South Avenue.  
Christmas lights hung from the roofs like constellations  
In a tarmac-black sky lined with one-story homes,  
Lambent gold windows glowing against their silhouettes:  
Lighthouses sending signals to solitary cars.

Black arrows narrowed stark white lines on 209 that hypnotized me;  
I fell asleep at fifty miles per hour in the front seat of your car.  
There's a sign on 95 South proclaiming:  
"Life's Greater in the Pocono Mountains,"  
And when we left Philadelphia and drove north to a new year,  
Was that greater?

**30**

You left this world right on schedule,  
Shedding pounds like pages on the calendar on your desk,  
Tallying days on your wrists with whatever was in reach.

Your voice on the phone grew sparse  
Like trees in winter as the end of the year approached.  
I hid in bathrooms between classes  
Just to hear it for five minutes.

Every day during your visitation hours  
I practiced writing your obituary in the waiting room.  
It was a project I could not present on the due date -  
Too raw, too open, an exit wound that never healed.  
It still bleeds sometimes,  
The scab I can't stop ripping open.

### **30 (Business)**

The room you slept in was silent save for  
Ill-metered breathing and a heartbeat  
Jumping from andante to allegro  
For an audience that wrings its hands  
Instead of clapping  
For the arrhythmic music  
Of the monitor above the bed.