

**2012 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Cynthia Li**

Implicit

I left my mask
On the bathroom counter
And while I rinsed my hair
You saw it
Fine whiskers twitching in a dance
Its ember eyes you thought were mine
You saw it and you put it down
And you walked out and you made breakfast

When I came out with my hair dripping
You pushed a plate of hash at me
And my mask ate it like she always did
With a smile and a snarl and the sly glint of teeth

Tempted but ashamed, I confessed in the lines of this poem

Despite past feeling, I am reeling
And drunk upon the words you share
I thought I was too old for this
Still I become a willing player

I've no intentions, make no mention
For breaking my vows, I've no care
You are but a passing fancy
But passing slowly, drifting there

Though I lay idle, my heart's prideful
A scorned cat in the wicker chair
Truth be told I feel like ashes
Your passing scatters me like prayers

And playing posey, I got cozy
Pretended that I didn't care
But while you looked the other way
I hung my heart upon the stair

Separation

I tied no strings betwixt our hands
With no red ribbon fixed our hands
My body and yours, two distant lands

A span of years held us close
And then those years drew to a close
The aftermath: neither friend nor foe

For a time I thought that we
Were fated, wild grass on the mountainside

For a time I thought that we
Were glued, sinew stuck fast upon white bone

For a time I thought that we
Were true, one arrow speeding towards one eye

But came time I knew that we
Should part, the waters carving between stones

It was messy before but our bonds so loose
No blood to shed, no sleep to lose
Two planets disengaged from uneasy truce

I part from you.

Silence

After that brief brush of companionship
The sun of your smile warm on my cheek
The subsequent cold leaves me trembling
The loneliest person in the world

Like a flush of alcohol, burning me clean
Of shadows, this encounter fades all too quickly
Still reeling, still stumbling I begin to shiver
And wish I'd taken more of you when I could

Each time I stalk you, a decadent dessert in the freezer
Spoon in hand, longing for a plate heaped high
And yet, timid to take even the tiniest bite
I pass you again and again, eyes meet but silence follows

Sometimes I get it right, my time and excuses and somehow
I am under your gaze again, greedily basking
And our words are just strings made of taffy
Pulling longer and thinner, sticky and melting

And when the silence comes, we know we must part
But somehow, we stay a moment too long
And I suspect this game of hide and go seek is
Tiring, taxing on both of the players

I long for the day when I can raise you
Like a cherished goblet to my lips
And drink of you without shame, only wonder
Continuing and without end, our silence gilt

If you lead, know that I'll follow

It stirs, a titan fast asleep
A titmouse napping in my bones
Red and black, it rolls like thunder
Tugged past my throat on a silken string
A roar, a whimper, one velvet heartbeat
Slips past a cage of jagged teeth
An ocean spilling from my lips
Salt seas and sand and pearls and fish
From words to scarves to doves to dust
You draw me copper threads from rust
You brew me like a cup of chai, I taste of earth and lust and spice
You pull me like the aching moon, thawing oceans made of ice