

**2015 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
First Place: Mary Haapala**

Pyrite

It's been months,
golden months,
but time all the same.

I still feel its weight
like a hole in my rubber soul
that's been filled with cut diamond,
its beautiful rigidity
replacing the air in my lungs
making it hard to swallow,
making it ache.

It's odd to think
how strong the string pulls
at my usually-steel stomach
dragging it back towards
my iron spine,
making the corners of
my eyes droop downward
shedding mercury tears
that laugh down my face
with the weight of these pyrite months.

It's not that I wish it never happened
(dusty glass can still smile from shelves).
It's just that I never realized how hard
it is to be so desperately homesick
for one silver sliver in time.

Skyline: In the Dark

Between the sky's branches, a light leaks through.
A cratered egg waits to hatch, resting in its wispy moltings
whispering inaudibly of things far away,
things unknown.

Synthetic copycats glare back from the ground,
greedy fingers grabbing at the nothingness just out of reach.
They will only know curiosity and greed,
and a frayed tail of patience,
waiting for something digestible to emerge
to satisfy the hunger for a while.

Most will wait for the opportune moment
when the silence is shattered. But
some will leap, destroying what they wished to cherish,

All because of the stars.

Glow

The lone candle giggles.
After being dark so long
one wick cannot contain it's song.
Through its restless joy it wiggles
as all the cold wax sticks look on.

The warm glow spreads
like a smile. More flames laugh
each awoken from its wax bed
overdressed and underfed.

And soon they all laugh together
beaming at each other,
grinning like fools
drunk on air
without a care and
free from all rules.

Shaking and bending,
they laugh until
the wax cries down their sides.
For that much joy,
in a dark world
simply cannot sit still.

Heart of Stone

When they say that I'm their rock,
the stability that's ready there,
I can't help but wonder
how I know of their pain
and yet remain steady.

My heart must be stone.

Brother

You were always the inspiration,
the quiet energy,
the words "this will really work".
And when it did, it was the greatest thing in the world
and we, together, would be famous in our world's eye,
or at least in our neighbors'.

The snow castles with their ice coatings
froze the competition in their tracks and
buried a seed of pride that would never go cold.
Hours of work, wet and frozen,
feeling everything but numb
playing engineers even though
we didn't know what that was.
This will work.

Blueprints for our Lego zoo
drew the creator's instincts to my surface.
This will work.
Along with the blanket tents, the sidewalk cities,
and the capture the flag battle plans.
This will really work.

And even when they didn't:
the ice rink that was as smooth as a mountain range,
the rope ladder that never got off the ground,
the double decker swing, the bow and arrows,
the broken Xbox.
It didn't seem to matter to you
those hours of our time gone,
bruised fingers and raw knees.
We really tried to make this work.
Failure was part of the risk, but
never a big enough risk to pause our efforts
especially when the work is half the fun, and
when failing with someone else
can be so laughable.

And that is the greatest lesson I've learned.