

**2018 Roger M. Jones Poetry Content
Honorable Mention: Lyndsey Covert**

Peaches

Midsection twisted so that the skin stretches to taut folds
bones creaking with the burden of living.
A scene all rosy cheeks and jackknives
slicing off the velvet skin of a peach,
my father, making breakfast for the
baby he sees when he looks at me.
Sun rises, the color of daffodils and
tiger lilies and freshly skinned knees.
It's peeking in from the blinds, running
one finger across my calloused palms.
My father squints when he walks past with
a plate full of glistening peachy gems
and he sees fleshy little hands on
the table in front of me.
We love each other in our own quiet way.
I think about the way his ribs expand
to hold lungs full of air—
the same body now made of something.
Proud father, humble father, bruised peach, bruised body,
thank god or the empty sky for
something
worth fighting for.
Fruit, cut with care, into sticky little pieces,
juice like dew on my lip.

My eyes are more grey than blue; his are hazel.

We love each other in our own quiet way.

Love is in Hospice Care

Brandy, body buzzing warm and hazy,
lazy summer's evening poured like honey over my body and your body,
something sweet and sharp sizzling between us on the backyard boardwalk,
Conversation flowing fluid, fast, and far freer for now,
maybe thanks to the brandy, maybe thanks to the heat,
maybe thanks to your fingers resting, caressing, skating
lazy loops reminiscent of this pond come icy winter,
mindlessly gliding over gossamer folds of satin separating
our skin, covering my thigh and spilling smooth and slow onto
the drafty driftwood slats that lie above complacent waves,
waves lapping lazily on posts
that support my body and your body and planks your grandfather placed
when he was poor, proud, and striving to provide a paradise
for the woman he loved enough to swallow splinters and smile
still more tender than ever over dinner she carefully prepared
to the sound of one pounding hammer and the low light
of a setting summer sun sinking like a stone beyond the pond,
fringed by a line of lush emerald trees and throwing wide spotlight
onto the bent back of her husband, silhouetting each swing
of his arm downward to the deck.

It is smooth beneath bare calves now, worn and wearied by years of trying weather
and pounding footsteps of shouting children gently chided by worried mothers
as dusk swallowed another summer, always hungry,
taking kids with dreams and stretching them into something more solemn,
but still wide-eyed with childish wonder when they hear

the tall stories of leathery grandfathers reclined in overstuffed armchairs,
even if they've heard them one hundred times before.

You've been stretched thin
though you try to hide your worry lines
and smile when you notice that I notice
and then your body is on my body and the deep scarlet of days end bleeds
between trunks of trees and we're being stretched again,
with taller tales to tell grandchildren and lighter feet to fall upon
as we walk,
winding and intertwined
from toes dipped in time passed to soft grass and the first fireflies of the night.

There is music playing, or maybe there isn't but I'm sure I am alive,
stretched into new, nearly unrecognizable, shapeless, ethereal expansion, divine rising
from tonight and tomorrow and every day with sliver sized splinters leading the way.

Unburning Bridges

There's something sad inside us all,
it shrinks and grows, it stretches to fill
empty spaces like an echo,
reverberating off the walls of your heart until your whole body shakes,
a gong beaten to herald the beginning of another end.
I can see your knuckles white on the steering wheel,
trying to forget the dirt under your fingernails,
the soot in your lungs,
the crushing weight of heavy hands clamped on shoulders.
Your dreams are fine and multifaceted,
grains of sand slipping between your fingers to remind you
how swiftly time runs out.
I taste them on my tongue when it slides between your teeth,
when my jaw tenses I hear the grit trapped between my molars,
a vague tinge of iron that reminds me of when the
something sad inside of me
filled up nearly every shadowy corner and the gong was so loud
my ears ached for silence.
I want to grab your hand and unfold the white knuckles,
run the pads of my fingers over your calloused palm,
love you so desperately that you feel it fill the creases your hands form
when they clench into fists,
a love so fluid and winding that it drowns out the echoes
and fills the emptiness upon which the something sad
inside of you thrives.
Instead,
I am bridges and smudged ink,

earnest and purposeful and mortal,
trying to fill the spaces too frantically to leave
room to breathe.

Always with eyes on destinations,
Never appreciating enough how comfortable
the silence is as we pass exits on I-94
and how much it feels like I'm already home when you kiss me
through the open window as you fill up at the Shell station off 83.

You are sweet and calm,
like the slow drip of molasses off a teaspoon,
like the sun settling low over a glassy Lake Michigan summer,
lingering as if there were something more to say
though it's definitely all been said.
As you gently close the bedroom door,
leaving pale explosions of color shifting in front of my eyes
and darkness expanding in the background,
to life comes a comfortable blackness that coats us both in honest whispers.

I reach out and grab your hand
and for a moment or an eternity,
it feels like enough.