

2017 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Mackenzie Johnson

Through a Mother's Eyes

You have so many stars in your eyes
That sometimes, I think I see galaxies.
Sometimes, I think I see shooting stars,
Blazing suns, gas giants, and
Really, I think it might be true.

Because you've got a light
That has enchanted the planets.
They follow you like puppy dogs.
I know this.
I've seen it.

But I have to check myself.
Check myself,
Because I know each year
One by one,
They will all fade.

Some quietly,
Like dandelions feathered away
On the breeze of a whim.
Gently and unnoticed.

Others, violently.
Dripping starry ichor from
The latched and salivating jaws
Of cynicism and self-doubt.

The worst ones are the supernovas.
The glowing stars of a dream
That reach their end in blinding defeat,
Leaving black holes in their wake.

They are doomed things,
Your galaxies.
Doomed but not without hope.

For I will be the caretaker of your stars.
I will be the careful curator of your nebula.

I will pluck the brightest star,
Lock it away,
And keep it safe for you.
I will lay the glittering golden bricks
For a bridge to that precious star of your heart.
And then, my starry, starry child,
We will have won!

But if you get to be like me,
So weathered,
So worn,
With not one star shining back,
Then I will have failed you.
I will have doomed you,
And I will have snuffed out your light
As good as any doubt could have.

And let me tell you,
Although it is agonizing to feel
The slow death of your stars,
Nothing,
Nothing, my child, is worse than knowing
You were the one who let them die.

Lost Things

I've been here two years.

I've been here two years and four months.

I've been here two years, four months, and four days.

I've been here two years, four months, four days, and I just found a place I've never been before.

It was a hidden place,
Protected, quite accidentally,
By inconvenience and misplaced inspiration.
Too big to be an alcove,
Too small to be a room.
It was a nook.

Several overly puffy chairs
Closely dotted the space,
Covered with sleek pleather,
Seven shades short of pea green
And six shades from pleasant.

The tables were economical,
Pale,
And square.
Bejeweled with a lonely
Document,
The nook's only occupant.

It was a forgotten space,
Though not in a sad way.

More in the way a stream
Lays hidden behind the foliage,
Patiently waiting,
But not anticipating,
A weary traveler
To wander upon it.

Forgotten in the way an old stuffed bear is.
The one you stumble across,
In an unremarkable box,
While cleaning out the attic.

The one that makes you pause.
The one that makes you remember.

They are forgotten things, to be sure.
Though, never unwanted ones.

But, the weird thing about forgotten things,
Is they are never found unless you're lost first.
Lost in the forest,
Lost in memories,
And sometimes, lost in time.
The nook was forgotten to me,
Until I lost myself.

Life knows the value of a lost thing.
Knows the importance of going down the wrong path
Every once and a while,
Just to find the stream in the woods
Or the teddy-bear in the attic.
Life knows how comforting a lost thing can be.

But life also knows
There is even more comfort in knowing
Lost and forgotten things
Don't stay that way *forever*.
And for that, it gives us lost things
Something to look forward to.

The Bullets I Gave You

I hand out bullets for second chances,
For third chances and fourth chances.
I hand out so many bullets I've stopped counting.
They always manage to miss the mark, so far.
But it's only a matter of time.

You'd think I'd have learnt by now,
What people with guns do with bullets.
Yet, I always find myself surprised
When you point that gun towards me.

I treat chances like trash,
And maybe that's what I think they are.
But really, I think I just hope you'll change.
That someday you'll stop thinking of me as a target.

I'm lucky you're an awful shot,
And you're lucky too.
Otherwise, who else would give you
Free bullets and willing targets?

But with all this practicing
There will come a day
When we both won't be so lucky.

I hope I learn quickly,
Because lately, these bullets have been grazing.
And I'm holding my breath,
Holding it for the bullet that finds its mark.

Real Things

Real things aren't meant for this fake world.

They are too honest.
Too pure.
They break too easily,
And can't be mended.
They are flesh and blood,
Real flesh and blood,
And they can't help falling apart.
Not when the crows come pecking at them,
Taking chunks of real things,
And leaving a patchwork falsity behind.

Real things aren't meant for this fake world.
Which is why I don't understand you.

You, who is so unblemished.
So innocent.
So honest.

You, who walks around in a bubble
Of sunshine and rainbows.
Who ignores the crows!

Maybe it's an act.
A desperate attempt to hold on to yourself,
While the whole world tries to drown you.
But I don't think so.

I have seen your soul,
You bare it for most anyone to see,
And it is as whole as the day you were born.

Real things aren't meant for this fake world.
Real things *fear* the fake world.

But not you.
If anything,
I think the fake world
Fears you.

Girl

First, I am girl.
I cry steel tears,
For the sky.
For the broken.
For the fallen.
Let them fall down,
Down, and
Build me up.

Then I am *like* a girl.
Crying at romantic notions,
Tears empty boats
Full of plastic lies,
To feed the ego and
Hungry expectations.

When you see me,
You see *like* a girl.
You see pink skirts and painted faces.
You see *always home-baked, just the way I like*.
You see *don't hurt yourself, beautiful*.
You see *leave it to me, princess*.

When you see me,
You don't see girl.
I'm not even sure you see you.