

SECOND PLACE, COLLEGE:

FOUND AT CUT-FACE CREEK ALONG THE NORTH SHORE

Scraps of letters
Written long ago,
Now tattered.

The metallic sheen
Of a beer can,
Tossed aside.

Half-empty blue ink cartridges,
The remains
Of an artist's tool.

Found among the rocks and pebbles,
Echoes of desperate,
Sorrowful songs.

Memories left behind.

The remains of the few
Who could withstand
The deafening silence of the wind.

The lovers. The alcoholics. The poets...

The truth lies
Amidst the all-consuming cold,
In the whispering wind.

Olivia Dahl
Hugo, MN
Dordt University, Sioux Center

THIRD PLACE. COLLEGE:

SHAME

Curling magazines mop up the
tequila scattering its sticky impulse over the
hard countertop. Each Thursday—
the floor burns anew with the
flush of angry faces and rhythms as
emotion is made mighty in movement.

At four in the morning the dimness of the street
settles like the heaving of the gut at the stench
of the loose-bound Bible by the bed.

Shame stings like the searing pulse of snowflakes
clustering the eye's lashes, tracing
the unsuspecting neckline
when propriety lets loose its load
down your back.

There's nothing you can do but lurch in sleep,
damping the cigarette glow with
the toe of your boot
as secondhand smoke from the Sunday service
fills your lungs
like winter's breath.

Lael Bervig
Park Rapids, MN
Dordt University, Sioux Center

FIRST PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL:

MY EYES HURT

The sky after a salt rain
— a drooping monsoon after a dry spell —
Has the texture of a wrung kitchen sponge.
The cacti are unfurling haltingly between needles
And waxy shells, deformed satin crimson petals scatter,
A flood of maroon snowdrops, outing
The sun-drenched pistil of an extinct
Bloom. Dry pores vein and
Crack every rain until the clouds
Arrive seasonally, twisting and needling, stretching, mangling
Like the thing at the bottom of the kitchen sink
Tired, growing nothing but mold.

Athena Wu, Grade 11
Iowa City West High School, Iowa City
Kerri Barnhouse, Teacher

SECOND PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL:

THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH A BRA

You can make a blindfold
so that you do not see
when you play hide and seek.

You can wear it
so that you can feel all grown up

You can feel grown up,
maybe too much too soon.

You can wish yours was a different size
and criticize your unfiltered mirror's reflection.

You can show it
because he asked you to.

You can have it taken off of you.
You're really grown up now, aren't you?

You can make a blindfold
so that you do not see
while you hide

and he seeks.

Josie Handlos, Grade 10
Atlantic High School, Atlantic
Allison Berryhill, Teacher

THIRD PLACE. HIGH SCHOOL:

RIDDLE-LEE-TUM

What do you call a liar that always seems to win? A child, a fool,
A boy without a heart. I danced to impress him, drew flowers
And drew blood, but the stupidest decision, was deciding not to run.

By run I mean, as fast and long and hard
Away from this stupid, broken boy's glass shards.
Maybe he couldn't help it, scraping inside my heart
"I'm trapped in here!" I wanted to scream, but he knew it from the start.

He watched me as I sobbed in pain, clutching at my heart
He'd taken it, and made for me, a necklace of its parts.
"Don't you like it?" he whispered softly in my ear
Bending down, his blue eyes, liquid: bright and clear.

He didn't flinch, no not one bit, as my ears they turned all red,
Shame filled my face and then soon fear, it filled my head.
And sure enough my heart was there, crumpled in his hands
Strings attached the bloody parts, holes with dripping dots of red.

His face bemused, then a smile played slow across his lips
"Isn't this what you wanted? I offered you the moon and stars,
But you said '*bejewel my heart instead.*'"

I could not cry for anything for I knew it was my fault,
I placed inside a little boy's hands what should be inside a vault.

Sophie Boehmler, Grade 11
Homeschool, Sumner
Rebecca Boehmler, Teacher

FIRST PLACE, UPPER GRADES:

SONG OF THE DANDELIONS

Dandelion, rooted yet free, teach me
All your deepest sung secrets
Blooms of woven twilight, sweet moonlight of the valley
Rays outshining even the daintiest of daffodils
You must have thoughts, like me, but you let go
So easily; every little trouble drifting softly into the breeze
You are a weed, yet you are loved by the light
By the west winds that welcome you with tender whispers
As you grace the earth with not an ounce of regret
You flourish, then you burst, a serenade of shooting stars
Continuing the pattern; *your eternal song*

Penelope Fennell, Grade 8
Grinnell Middle School, Grinnell
Matt Griffen, Teacher

SECOND PLACE, UPPER GRADES:

FRAGMENTS

Time itself withers my hands
My bones are frail
In the midst of time
Pricking my skin
Deep and rich fluid flows

Bandaging myself with memories
Patched up with past dreams
All I can think is how it used to be
Soon all the memories flow
Leaving me alone with my past

Fragments of the past washing up
Creating a vivid image in my mind
Should I go back?
Or am I right where I need to be?
I will stay
I can just be

Piper Redman, Grade 7
Baxter Community Schools, Baxter
Katie Kibby, Teacher

THIRD PLACE, UPPER GRADES:

OVERTHINKER

Sitting in my bed
Choking on my words
I ask myself,
“Why am I so misunderstood?”
“Is it my writing?”
“The way I talk?”
But for a second I realize,
I overthink a lot.

Olivia Parrie, Grade 6
Baxter Community Schools, Baxter
Katie Kibby, Teacher

FIRST PLACE, LOWER GRADES:

SNOW DRESS

Looking out the window the sun shone.
I noticed the still white ground.

The snow was as sparkly as a diamond,
A diamond I could not wait to wear.

I could wear the snow after playing,
A dress that would twinkle on me.

Lucy Munson, Grade 2
Cardinal Elementary, Maquoketa
Jenna Spain and Andrea Dostal, Teachers

SECOND PLACE, LOWER GRADES:

Pianos sing songs
To anyone who'd listen
Quiet so you'll hear.

Tia Keller, Grade 4
North Hill Elementary, Burlington
Julie Russell and Beth Junker, Teachers

THIRD PLACE, LOWER GRADES:

THE HEIRESS

There once was a girl from Paris,
Who liked to dance on her terrace.
She would spin and twirl,
then she would hurl,
which was really quite gross for an heiress.

Avery Irish, Grade 4
Black Hawk Elementary, Burlington
Julie Russell and Teri Jo Lane, Teachers