

ARTFUL POETRY CONTEST



2021 First Place Winner

We Are; I am; She was

By Victoria Rollins

I got my mothers mind and my fathers tongue. His poetic way of speaking and her warrior lunge. So I became a poet, just like my daddy

But I didn't know poetry came with a body count. Didn't know words wrought death in between the cracks of their consonants.

That I'd have to murder myself a thousand times, and pray one of my deaths was poetic. Pray that my blood spilled in a way that mattered. A way that could be written into my next book, chewing at the nooks and crannies of my sanity for rhymes. No one told me that I'd have to write pain as the hero; the reason for victory. No one told me the sword was an author. Dipping its sharpened quill into the black ink of my blood.
No one told me.

"She act just like her momma. Got the hip sway and hand gestures." They said "she got her daddy's color, but her mother's temper." No one told me it'd leave me so cold in winter. That I'd burn words like wood, leavin' me to shiver. That I'd write myself to death, a corpse of a book, with a crooked spine and faded letters. Why didn't they tell me?

That to be alive is to tear my soul in two and gently lay the thing against the concrete. Map the meaning behind my words and connect them to veins. Explain the definition of my desires secretly sewn into my metaphors and membranes.

People don't realise when they ask poets for works they are asking for pain. They want my masterpieces but not for me to master the pieces of my mind that don't necessarily rhyme. The parts that are just dirty band aids and glass. Ricocheted bullet caskets and empty fireworks.
Why didn't they tell me?

If I could pin prick my skin and draw the memories from it I would. Like a child being force fed the meaning of death at 5 or having to detangle scissors from between the veins of my skin because I always seem to mistake my flesh for desk drawers. Maybe if I string these words together nicely enough they can call it pretty.
Call it priceless. Call it childhood.

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If I can glue enough gold stars onto the pieces of me that are acceptable the cosmic explosion of their closeness will distract you from the parts of me that are still dark. In space black holes will suck up any light it gets. Reaching for scraps of love, you'd think they'd never been held before. Think they'd been told they were just a hole for rich white men to want and open. Think they used to be something.
Why didn't they tell me?

To be fed love on a silver spoon is to imply someone wants to give it. Black holes don't have time to wait for you to decide they are worthy of light. Sometimes if you want something you have to snatch it. Sometimes you have to grab and pull and reach and cry. Because sometimes love will not be given to you on a spoon. Sometimes it'll explode in your face and make you pick up the pieces. Sometimes that love is all you get. You cannot beg for milk from bulls. You cannot expect every cow to know how to give you milk. Sometimes you must eat the small flowers of the field and the wild berries you come across. And when it comes together there will be so many good little things that you will forget what it's like to beg. Dear future me. Please, take into consideration, we were not born to die. What a sad thing that would be.

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2021 Second Place Winner

Young Girl Dreaming

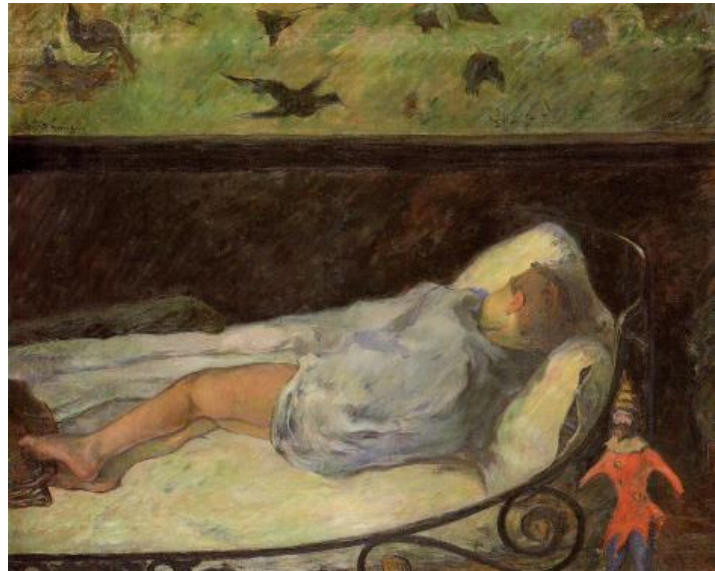
By Lauren Kopitas

Light flushes the walls
To four dimming
Dwarves
Born from the cusp
Of the child's mind.
She

Freezes in the palm
Of the sun, ivory legs stacked to barricade the Wall.
Cerulean blue wades
Around her waist, a nightgown clasp the Fruitless
chamber hovering

Above gossamer thighs.
Painted leaves wallow
Down to her, a rasping infantry,
And birds, fantasy
Fuming in their blood, never dare snag the

Blistering mahogany to unite with their Home in
the head of the
Girl,
Who has yet to collapse into a
Cradle
Of logic, who has yet
To squeeze her chest into the bony corset Laid out
for her.
The imaginative jester straddles his



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Wiry fuse, cinder churning in his cheeks. Pinned To the bed by
the collar, he will soon Plummet to the yawning chasm
Of iron floorboard below. But for now, he Ferments
in mid-morning
Silence,
And so the world pivots, deflected,
And leaves the girl
To be still in the wilderness of her dreams.

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2021 Third Place Winner

The Boulevard Montmartre on a Winter Morning (Camille Pissaro)

By Elwyn Patterson

Klip Klop Klip Klop
mmaammstOmmRottmmm
plisshhhhhhh
plip plip plip
ting ting clang tang
tic tic tic
spliisshhh spliisshhh
Klip Klop Klip Klop
mmyOulittImmsommmm
plash splash splash
plisshhhhhhh
clack clack clack
tic tic tic
spliisshhh spliisshhh
Klip Klop Klip Klop
mmheymmilovebagummm
plip plip plip
plisshhhhhhh
Thud Thud Thud Thud
Boooooonnggg Boooooonnggg Boooooonnggg
spliisshhh spliisshhh
Klip Klop Klip Klop