

FOURTH PLACE WINNER

Kristen Thies

Wellington High School, 11th Grade

Teacher, Flora Rigolo

I'll Mourn for Me

You were born almost two months early,
 Your frail body fit into my two hands, and I watched you
 from outside a glass coffin
 as your lungs began to work
 and your heart began to beat in sync with mine.
 Your father left before your first words.
 It was just you and me.
 I taught you how to ride a bike,
 but not how to practice empathy,
 I suppose.
 Was I a bad mother
 Because I refused to see the signs,
 so bold and neon?
 Was it the lack of a man in your life,
 Or the fact that I taught you how to shoot a gun?
 I was just trying to be your dad
 and your mom.
 I was just trying to teach you how to be a man,
 but I guess I tried too hard.
 I put the razor too close to your throat
 and didn't pick you up
 when you fell.
 I'm sorry.

I still remember the day you took that picture,
 the one they broadcasted all over the news,
 but the words that followed
 sounded so unlike you.
 It couldn't be,
 not him,
 not my baby.
 But you did.
 Did you regret it?

All the memories
 came running back
 and hit me like a stray bullet,

the way you stood over the grave of our cat--
 the one you killed. . .by accident?
 The shell casings
 that littered the backwoods
 like stranded graves,
 and the blank yearbook,
 no names to be found.

And as the kids filed out of the school
 you put the mouth of your gun,
 with cherry stained hands,
 to the temple of your head
 where a bullet entered
 and left through red confetti,
 and I asked myself:
 Did you squeeze the trigger
 the way you squeezed my hand
 through a busy intersection,
 Or did you squeeze it
 the way you squeezed the last breaths
 out of our cat
 when you choked it to death?

I was never able to have a funeral.
 They tore your body apart
 trying to find reasons,
 as I tore my brain apart
 trying to find answers,
 answers that would never come,
 just as the kids who would never
 come home.

And I can't help but feel
 the blood on my hands
 that seems to never wash away,
 but bleach cleanses everything,
 everything but the soul
 and the mind.
 So I will live in mourning,
 not just for you or your victims
 but for me,
 for my sanity,
 for the guilt of still loving you.

FIFTH PLACE WINNER

Eden Brown

A.W. Dreyfoos School of Arts, 12th Grade

Teacher, Brittany Rigdon

Perfectly|Balancing

Strike a pose,
 hold it.
 Simple enough, just

Don't be too loud
 or you're showing male privilege
 Don't be too soft
 or you're performing femininity

Don't be desperate,
 they'll think you're faking it
 Don't be happy,
 They'll question your transness

Be perfectly polite to those
 Who are trying to kill you,
 But don't ask me to remember
 Your name after you've said it

Your life is *my* choice, not yours
 Sorry, I just don't agree that you
 Are a human being worthy of
 respect, just my opinion, sorry

There, now you see? You're one of
 The Good Ones, perfectly balanced
 by the opinions of a million people
 Who absolutely hate you, b a s t a r d s

Who will not determine my life, I am an avalanching
 mountain
 And a flickering candle-flame,
 No one will own me, enthrall me to their will and chain me
 Like Andromeda to be devoured by their
 expectations

And I promise never again to be
 Perfectly
 Balanced

Poets & Writers
 We are grateful to Poets & Writers who have
 generously awarded a one-year subscription to all
 contest winners of the Annual High School Poetry
 Contest.



**15TH ANNUAL
 PALM BEACH
 POETRY FESTIVAL**

OLD SCHOOL
 SQUARE
 DELRAY BEACH

2019

Palm Beach County

High School Poetry

Contest Winners

**2019 Palm Beach Poetry Festival
 High School Poetry Contest Winners**

FIRST PLACE WINNER, Emma Garrett

A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts 10th Grade, for
 "A Note Left on the Universe's Front Porch"

SECOND PLACE WINNER, Yvelande Senatus

Atlantic High School 11th Grade, for "Woman at
 Point Zero"

THIRD PLACE WINNER, Citlalli Villasenor

A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts 12th Grade, for "
 Roots: Trapped in the Land of the Free"

FOURTH PLACE WINNER, Kristen Thies

Wellington High School 11th Grade, for "I'll Mourn
 For Me"

FIFTH PLACE WINNER, Eden Brown

A.W. Dreyfoos School of Arts 12th Grade, for
 "Perfectly Balancing"

FIRST PLACE WINNER

Emma Garrett

*A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, 10th Grade
Teacher, Theresa Beermann*

***A Note Left on the
Universe's Front Porch***

Thank you for listening to us sing through Sunday nights,
wild and pitching, dipping amber-wing calls
marred with tiredness and the sugar high of maple syrup
*We know we're off-key but we keep singing
hoping that someone, somewhere, will echo back*
Thank you for almost-silence,
hearing shared breaths,
damp honeysuckle air that chirps with cicadas,
shifting water, safety in closeness
*This minute is enough, and the next is just as sweet
We will lie here until the doves awake
and the sun burns like midnight oil*
Thank you for emptiness, the space
in a sandbox, all the worlds
we could only make with words and brushstrokes,
telling us the sky is not a blanket but a map
and we will follow it to its nebulous edges
*We think we are stardust but forget that so is everything else
How defiant to be human
in a universe of stars—to love and be loved more than the
cosmos,
to find goodness
in the lightning chasing a thunderclap*
Thank you for the handwritten beauty you tucked
into each pocket of the earth,
tangerine desert sand and arctic seafoam,
for giving this world a thousand times over
and showing us what we've always known
We are not alone.

SECOND PLACE WINNER

Yvelande Senatus

*Atlantic High School, 11th Grade,
Teacher, Tracy Bartels*

Woman at Point Zero

Lie still, hold still, and don't start a riot
Do as they say and be quiet
As a good girl should
As a good woman would
Spread your legs
Lie still
Don't move
It'll be over soon
Maybe then you'll know the life of a woman

They can't see the indifference in your eyes
Eyes which are black
The coldness of your heart
The way that they've left their mark
Never again will you view your body the same
Your body brings you pain
Yet, your body brings them pleasure
There is nothing to be gained
There is no measure

She's trapped in her own body
Held prisoner
Them, the executioners
Her body, the poison
Enslaved without a reason
Oh, what a treason

Come on girl, won't you get it right
Know your place
Paint your face
Well behaved
Stay awake, let them in
It's nothing new, that's the way it's been

THIRD PLACE WINNER

Citlalli Villasenor

*A. W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, 12th Grade
Teacher, Brittany Rigdon*

Roots: Trapped in the Land of the Free

The sun's flowers gaze over
their cousins: children planted
on the ground. Love radiates
from clay skin.

They've run away to the fields,
hoping to find solace, but they got lost.

Porcelain dolls play
in children's tan hands.
The children wonder what
they're missing.

¿Quién soy? one of the boys asks,
as he shifts a pale stone mask
in his tree bark fingers.

The soil screams, *You* are mine,
but the sound is muffled.

¿Por qué no me parezco a ellos? the other boy poses,
hands shivering against
the snow of a doll's china skin.

The soil whispers, *My* flowers grow in different shades.

¿Alguna vez seré como ellos?

*You will remain where you are rooted.
Voy a marchitarme donde no puedo crecer.*

And in an instant, all that
they are is blown away:

Sonrisas to frowns.
Conocido to forgotten.
Innocencia to guilt.
Amor to hate.