

Rodney J. Firkins

Adult 1st Place

Behind The Bars

Behind these bars, I see no stars.

I see no sun. My life done.

Behind these bars, I hear the cries

Of men whose dreams, slowly died.

Within these walls I'm in a cell.

I sit alone. My private hell.

If prison walls, could call outside.

I think they would warn. The laws abide.

We don't want your eyes to stare.

At bars, and walls. Where no one cares.

Behind these bars, I have no hope.

All because, the laws I broke.

Purshia Adams

Adult 2nd Place

Silent System

An empty corner speaks of ill-luck to

An echodrip of snow melt:

Chapel of lost treasures, sadder still

The chow hall legacy-

These days wild creatures, unrestricted,

Leave tracks in basement snow.

Sentence within a sentence, timeless time

(except Sunday), duration

Unknown to inmates – alone or sardined,

All poorly provisioned-

Whose messages of torment mingle with

Graffiti of lovelorn teens.

In fact, most walls talk: scattered enigmas

-XIV 4- and blunt statements

Of tangible grievance: scorching, peeling paint-

Unsanitized decay abuts

Scentless dried roses beside the snow,

Cliches that speak volumes.

Variegated cellblocks-curious pastels-

Bear messages less urgent

In south-facing sun: hidden calls to dance,

Proclamations of love;

Others propose revolt and repose in

Equivocal reverie

Chill isolation holds different riddles:

Penciled fixations-numbers

Discharged or disappeared-and chiseled

Ironies (in retrospect):

Death by design, though-release snap clean, and

Drop-res ipsa loquitur

Dzevad Vrabac

Adult Honorable Mention

“Murder Degrees”

And it didn't snow then yet the autumnal
Equinox marked the day of the fall with a
Ray of vibrant glimmer into the night, after
Dancing, wooing and drinking, you lost
The head and cut her with a knife. In the deed
Culpability is given, with your own hands
A guilty plea. The fruits of interrogation as
Admissable evidence, a confession as 'mens rea.'
Abuse of discretion by 12 angry men, a narrow
Premeditatio, and verdict of the capital
Punishment for your abandoned and
Malignant heart and sadistic mind as a
Retribution of the righteous and justifiable
Homicide in re prisoner 9509, yet you could
Intend to kill without planning and deliberation
As a chance meeting of two lives swimming in
The crowd at the Hi-Ho – night birds love gone wrong.
By chronic intoxication and rejected appeal your
Death by hanging instead of life imprisonment was
A matter of degrees.