

1st Place-Adult Category

By Debbie Holm

Legibility

Maybe four times a year
Bob saw the full moon
Floating above his cell window

Days were full of sweat and swearing.
nights—fatigue, his smelly wool blanket
his thoughts
sometimes sleep.

Bob loved the faithful stars
but when he saw the moon, he fought to follow it
standing on the broken chair
craning, peering,
soaking it in
'til it was gone.

He remembered a full moon night,
not the night they took the horses
galloping, whooping
so stupid.

This night was a fancy dance
in his aunt's town, in Twin,
his cousin Edna's first dance
his, too, though
no one said a word about that.

Her card was pink with yellow roses,
and hanging from a golden cord,
the tiniest maroon pencil
skinnier than a twig.

The handsome young blades of Twin
signed their name on Edna's card
with that tiny pencil.
He didn't dance, nor sign.

He dreamed he had that pencil
pinched it tight, wrote small
on the white moon
circular bit of shining paper.

If she looked up in Wendell
maybe she'd see the words
he wrote in Boise:

Dear Ma
So sorry I drank with C. and about horses
Yr loving son,
Bob

1st Runner-up-Adult Category

By Dzevad Vrabac

“The Big House”

For life caged, by ‘malum in se’ engaged, in the Auburn-type dragging this prisoner’s strife. An easy life is not for you, who flip the stone and seek and image of a con-man. Finding a lazy sluggard napping in an afternoon of a day, tired of playing, plucking flowers and laughing – Ah, if I only could for a moment like children do. how, always subtle and vicious at the mercy of ‘keepers’ locked under guard. And no man is an island thus tradition speaks. Days taking ‘shiv’ shapes, thoughts turning into a melody of ‘pruno’ chant, singing your tune mute, damned to silence, in stupor you hum. Lost in your ‘ego’ and ‘cogito’ like a shell without the sound. I am, you say, but then so sure of your deprived existence. In a language of the Big House – chastised. An absent citizen, an enemy of polis, trialed and judged by your peers, by ‘actus reus’ forever marked man. Stuck in Pen morning, noon and night, industrious in repenting, a per diem charge, at a license plate shop. In a bitter torment of the fortress’ gloomy walls, you are dreaming of a better world.

Honorable Mention-Adult Category

By Elizabeth Pope

A Thing That Flies

A rusting gate swings open
and out go things
once locked,
and things once broken,
things forgotten by the sun, and not rained on
for years.

Things once not used, and not remembered,
and things with names not spoken of
in laughter.

A rusting gate swings open
and out go things
that cannot fly,
things bathed in tears of women,
and things that partly died inside a cell
where roses still bloomed,
and birds landed sometimes,
enticed by shaky hands
which wanted but to touch
a things that flies.

A rusting gate swings open
and out go things in boxes,
made of words and dreams,

and bits of human
hope,
things laced up tightly,
and bound up prettily with bows
to never be united.
A rusty gate swings open again,
and out go things with rose buds pressed inside,
signed in warden's ink,
scrawled in a cellmate's blood
and tears, and warm with dreams
of gentle necks waiting to be kissed.
A rusting gate swings wide, very wide open
and out go things
picked and hewn by time and
smelling of forever,
things that hope forsook,
clutching sacred rose blooms
and feather
in shaky hands.

Honorable Mention-Adult Category
By Nadine Chaffee