

**Merion Concert Band 2024 Poetry Competition
WINNER**

**Trusty Winged Friend
By Sophia Guglielmo**

Hiding behind a large oak tree I see a small creature appear
The creature seems interested in me
She tiptoes through the woods, hiding behind trees
I kneel down and wait patiently
As I am a kind being
She touches my hand and greets my dragon
Who's wings weigh a ton
I pick her up and put her on my shoulders
As we view the landscape of wonders
Seeing the moon arise
The pink beautiful skies
I place her back onto the side
As she greets her family in surprise
Reunited at once, a reaction
Jumping on the saddle of my dragon
Soaring as the dragon tamer
We fly through the clouds, searching for dangers
A tree rumbles and we dive down
Hitting the ground
Presented with a pack of hyenas
Hovering over this lost creature
I yell at them to stop harassing this poor believer
Until they start attacking either!
I'm disarmed, over a cliff, as the hyenas push me off
About to hit the watercross
My dragon soars through the air, catching me just in time
We ride away, escaping the vicious lies
To save the day at the end
With my trusty winged friend.

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Merion Concert Band 2024 Poetry Competition
HONORABLE MENTION

4 Memories
By Fiona Yates

I

The grass is uncut and scratching at the underside of your legs, burning your palms.
You're stretched out, star-fish, on a ratty beach towel in your favorite paisley dress. You try to catch the
bunny rabbits with your eyes, catch them living.

Nobody wears shoes.

The hose is running into the blue, blue kiddie pool; the air is pink and yellow and thick as dreams in your
mouth.

A breeze twines through your knotted hair, across your face, and
your legs are bleeding from the bumps the mosquitoes left behind.

You scratch at them, they bleed, they bleed and the blood decorates the ridges of your fingers like the
cheap watercolors you paint with.

Mother is sitting behind you, drinking heavy from a fake glass and letting out her throaty laugh.

Father is at the grill.

The flames jump and dance and you imagine you are one of them:

Twirling, letting the skirt of your dress flow out, letting your hair whip out behind you.

The crickets, like ghosts, are chirping now and there is a sudden hush—

The red-orange from the candles light up Mother's face.

You are the flames on the candles, planting kisses on her eyes, her cheeks.

It is your older brother's sixth birthday, and Father stands behind you, filming on his old digital camera.
You see and hear through it; vision crackling, audio warped. There's a haze, a curtain, hanging between
your eyes and your people.

Everyone is smiling, everyone is warm.

II

Today you are nine years old.

Vanilla ice cream makes two twin paths, curving down your chin, your neck.

Pink polish chips off your fingernails.

Your feet, like dying fish, *thump thump thump* against the glass;

you see the people walk by on the sidewalk outside, they don't see you. You wish everyone could.

The ice cream parlor is chilly and echoing and pink like your nails,

but the water is colder and the sky is blue and you wish you could leave this town already.

Your legs don't seem to understand what they are meant to do.
If you could run out of this store now, run across the street, cross without the stoplights, go to the water, get in it, become it.

But your aunt and your cousins got their ice cream as well so now they sit with you too,
and the thought can't be here anymore.
They do not hate the stop lights or the white lights on the ceiling or the pink nail polish like you do.
They don't seem to understand they speak with trumpets for mouths.
They ask you how school is, but your mind is still in the water.
Imagine yourself crying out:
Would they rush to you, beat your heart back alive?
Would they look down at you on the bleached floor and whisper to themselves?
Would they?

III

You are sitting in the sky with a boy you won't speak to again after this night.
The boardwalk is neon and flashing below in its hell zone. The ferris wheel is creaking,
but finally the boy shuts up and there is a moment of silence for the stars to breathe, and you
breathe with them.

He jokes and maybe it would be funny if it weren't him, but it is and so it isn't.
It isn't his fault, he doesn't want to be there either, so you sit by him.
You close your eyes and tilt your face to the black sky
He does the same, but you can't see him. You know his heart is a liar, too. You see where he looks.
Maybe he's found out the same about you.
The ferris wheel under your weight can be forgotten.
The air and the clouds dissolve your muscles, your cringing throat. Your makeup is taken off with
it, your hair is loosened.

A devilish child screams below, a couple shrieks and laughs.
You open your eyes and tilt your head back to him.
The breeze wanders across your cheeks, and you wonder when you will be human.
His eyes follow yours, he's thinking the same.

IV

It's been four years since your first kiss and you've finally forgotten it.

The campfire bakes the air all around, but the earth is cool and solid.
You scoot down, off the log you're sitting on, and lay down.
Let the earth be forgiven, let the earth take you in
and cover your bones like a blanket,

Cover your secrets like a friend.

Mother lies next to you. She folds you in her arms, warm and soft, heart of dog.

These are the right people, these are the true people, they don't know that their teeth shine like pearls,
their orange necks grow like trunks.

You close your eyes and see black, you open them and see red smoke to blue.

The flat soles of your feet are burning, but don't move.

If you step on the coals, will that make you a man?

Your eyes gloss as the flames whip up, crack, snap, like Father's shining shoes on blue linoleum,

A soda can pops and you remember where you are, you move your feet and curl your toes, listen in,
laugh. It will be time to go in soon, kick at your blankets till you sleep.

The hollow in between your collar bones will still be there,
but you're working on it.

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