

**First Place – Adult Category**

*Sloping Walls*

by Colleen Dwyer-Lulf

Hollyhock nodding against my grandmother's house  
Brushed on screens surrounding the porch  
Where I sometimes bunked on hot summer nights.

My uncle slept in the attic with sloping walls  
That tilted toward ragged quilts  
My grandmother made by hand.

I was ten and he was seventeen when he became my hero.  
Not for something he had done, but just because he was so old  
And wise in that way teenagers seem to children.

He did not push me aside as I watched  
Him paint curly-top flames (fire so beautiful it hurt)  
Arching from the front of his '52 Ford.

Then my vacation over, I went home and he to Nam.  
There the North Dakota boy "Became a man"  
Intertwined with jungle rot and steamy swamps

Like the hot, wet cloud that rose from his cup at a Saigon cafe  
Amid the chatter of their foreign talk  
And black lacquered dishes he sent home to Grandma.

He didn't tell her how the brains of one gook  
Dried on his face like a gob of snot  
Or of the warm pee that washed pants in the foxhole

Or the child who carried the exploding present  
That threw bits of men to rooftops  
Or the gnarled hand of one old woman who reached

From the mass of flesh that had been her family  
To touch his dark, wet boot  
When he entered the sloping walls of her bullet-riddled hut.

Instead, when he came home, he polished his car  
'Till it mirrored the tossing trees above, clouds, birds,  
And his own black eyes behind the patterned flames.

**Honorable Mention-Adult Category**

*Wishes for the Next War*

by Richard Swanson

That the dogs of war on the eve of battle  
Share their fleas with their generals' socks.

That codes of smart bombs be sent to dyslexic pilots,  
Who drop all their ordinance into the sea.  
That tanks on the road to glory return to base  
With the hiccups.

That soldiers on opposite sides in separate tents  
Get sent by scrambled mail  
The photos of each others' families.  
That field commanders lose interest.  
That subsequent orders begin with "If you'd like to..."  
That maps of battle crumble like manna from heaven.

That the generals dance for peace.  
That the checks for weapons bounce.  
That the vultures starve from lack of spoils.  
That the troops sleep in, this morning, tomorrow,  
And as long as it suits them,  
Knowing the sweetness of time on one brief earth.

**Honorable Mention – Adult Category**

*Small Fires - Nagasaki*

by Elizabeth Murawski

The wind when it comes  
is warm. There is no home  
that isn't leveled

or burning. She barely  
feels the tug  
on her nipple, or sees

the blue-white dribble  
on her baby's chin,  
his swollen belly,

the one tree  
left standing, its trunk  
and branches a Y

incision, its few leaves  
whispering  
like witches. Leaning

by itself on the sky,  
the gate of the temple  
resembles pi,

an irrational number.  
Small fires flicker. Empty,  
she lets him suckle,

the child in her arms  
who may die  
or live without her.

**First Place – Youth Category**

***Dark Side of the Moon***

by Lois Beckett

The moon hangs tonight in the summer sky:  
distant, sweetly tinged with gold.

Such serenity comes  
only with distance. I am like the moon.  
I am calm because I am far from suffering.  
I can walk outside tonight hearing nothing  
but the sighing of the breeze. I am only afraid of shadows.

I shine tonight in my quiet world, peaceful as the moon.  
How could I not love such beauty?

With that same loveliness the moon shines  
on a deserted field. No one walks there.  
The earth is sown with landmines. Do not gather  
their sudden, deadly blossoms.

How full and romantic the moon is  
over the city's vacant streets.  
No one pauses to gaze at it. Kidnappers wait  
in the dark. People stay at home –  
not that their homes are safe.

Gun shots, moans of the sick, weeping,  
and the moon is beautiful, beautiful.

It turns and turns around the earth,  
does nothing.

The moon does not understand suffering.

And though I barely understand it,  
I cannot rest in the moon's soft light.

Far from me, a girl wishes she lived on the moon,  
that she could bound weightless through the air,  
never hear another cry. Silence, she prays, silence.

But I cannot be silent.

Though the sun is far from the earth, it's shining  
is not as cold and empty as the moon's.

It's life brings life. I must find a way,  
whatever my distance, to help, to give comfort

I cannot numb my gaze with stars  
or veil my eyes, as clouds cover the face of the moon,  
that glowing face, beautiful and blind.

**Honorable Mention – Youth Category**

*White Feathers Falling*

by Rosemary Bateman

i

I wanted more of myself in my hands,  
rising like wind-twisted juniper over the ledges of thought,  
layer upon layer and all the same.  
I wanted moments to pass like slow sugar in the veins of trees,  
thick with untasted sweetness, but  
I dream the numbness of winter  
creeps like ivy between my ribs, pulling them apart.  
If I were empty enough, I would let the soul of a dead mother of dead sons  
share my shell, but I am too overflowing with the song of my life.

ii

Miles from the throaty calls of mourning doves,  
a woman lies dry in the dust.  
She is bent forward, curving neatly into a gray photograph  
where blood still crusts red.  
I expect the wind to fold her husk-like body into the sand  
or peel her like a yellow onion, first crisp,  
then moist enough to burn the eyes.  
I wonder how much war took away  
before that one bullet finished  
the long and heavy task of dying.

iii

Somewhere a dove  
slams its skull into a shining window,  
thinking there is more sky there.

iv

Let us just look into and through each other's eyes for a while,  
under the om-shaped moon and careless stars,  
and not say anything.  
Let us stand for a while on the bank of this river,  
cry, pray, wound ourselves with thought,  
before we embrace and our minds like pearls like white feathers  
fall back to hands and heart.

**Honorable Mention – Youth Category**

*Manji*

by Danelle Forsthoefel

Falling.  
No, not falling.  
Floating.  
Yes, floating.  
Drawn to an unseen force, leaning forward and back,  
Rolling side to side.

Lying, floating there in white reverie.  
Hear the rare whisper of the calumet,  
See the proud sprig of olive.  
Honor the once barren field  
flooded with blood red poppies.  
The flat open palm of a hand  
Shouldering no pain,  
Numb to the world...numb to the cause.

Floating. Floating.

Directed with a whisper  
along the periphery of a seven pointed star,  
Bending one direction...then shifting.  
No peril anymore.  
No glorious death to celebrate:  
the bullet planted in my heart  
a token of honor, a medal,  
bloodstone.

I look to a thousand cranes,  
weep for the buried bird of Aphrodite.  
Drifting towards the unknown.  
Skimming the unseen.  
Floating.  
No, not floating.  
Falling.

**First Place – Child Category**

*If The World Was Silent*

by Helen Wang

New cars, old cars, chugging on  
the road. Yet unable  
to drown out the  
yelling of the boys  
with wet wash cloths.  
If they weren't there  
I could listen and hear  
what painful thoughts  
still linger.

Just for a minute,  
If the world would  
stop, just for a  
minute, just for a  
second.

The silence, so silent you could  
hear the broken spirits crying  
and pulling us into  
their hearts, to hug and wrap our  
silent awe.

**Honorable Mention – Child Category**

*A Cool Pine Forest*

by Fiona Ferguson

Peace means  
no war and  
no sicknesses  
peace is like  
a walk in  
a cool pine  
forest with lots  
of flowers

