

***First place:***

**“The Poem You Need”**

**By John Davis**

It has broad, old trees with bear-paw leaves  
offered by hands of wind onto a blue pond,  
and the poet has told you these leaves are ships  
of a season, smaller Argos floating toward winter.

Winter will mean death as it does in a poem,  
and you’ll ponder mortality – your life as leaf-boat  
crossing this finite and funny-shaped body, driven  
by holy breath wholly beyond your rudder stem.

Your sadness will be rich and brief  
like boyhood butterscotch in church,  
and your eyes will leave the page as you sigh,  
content with humanity still sweet on your tongue.

Later you’ll attempt your own poem and some  
of those same words will slip into your stanzas,  
unmoored from branches in the brain, placed  
upon a rippled plain to begin another voyage.

***Second Place:***

**“5:00 Smoke Break On the Mental Health Unit”**

**By Roberta Obermayer**

Late day light seeps gold and luminous  
Through shattered clouds

As the last breath of brightness pokes through  
And these furrowed edges ignite

With heavenly flames like evidence  
Of something eternal, something beyond

The cool blue ceiling of this industrial sky  
And below it we all pace-

As if we might walk back to the moment before  
The darkness swallowed us

As we stare straight ahead and smoke in silence  
Except for the guy rapping to himself

And the old lady who hums as she conducts  
An invisible orchestra

While this amazing sunset blazes above us  
But no one looks up, we just pace

And smoke and try to forget where we are  
Where we're headed-

And I think I can climb the high fence that surrounds us  
To make a run for it- but run back to what?

As I step to the edge of this fenced cage  
I can't get that song out of my head-

Trent Reznor screaming “I used to be somebody”  
As I watch the clouds break apart

***Third Place:***  
**“Waldeinsamkeit”**  
**By Khepre Bailey**

I wake up surrounded by grass,

Trees,

And logs.

I am engulfed by the smell of pine.

As I walk around the woods,

it reminds of how

you left me

on a cold winter night.

My fingers are bitter like the dehydrated trees.

You picked me up with your words of affection

But slammed me

With your words of goodbye

And texts that said *Read on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

I

go back

to the woods

And remember this isolation is not temporary.

I will forever be alone.

***Honorable Mention:***  
**"Joe"**

**By Trish Demasky**

He's got a smile  
bigger than Broad Street  
And everyone knows  
him by his first name  
"There goes the guitar man!"  
When he walks by  
Butterflies jump  
To his rhythm and blues

And so it goes  
That when he got up  
on the stage  
And started to play  
Nobody noticed that  
There was no intro  
In an instant  
We got swept away  
In his humility  
In his African light

Everyone fell in love  
That night  
With this wounded soul  
All the women swooned  
And the men applauded  
The man with the guitar  
Who belted out lyrics  
With raspy breath

"I just wrote this song two minutes ago"  
And nobody noticed that there  
Was no hook  
Because everyone was on  
That train  
Everyone was waiting  
For an angel to appear

We all knew  
That these were not melodies  
But life  
And pain  
And longing  
For what was  
And is not  
But what can be

When the night lights came on  
Everyone stood to cheer  
I was the only one  
Who saw the  
Lone butterfly  
Land on his shoe

Oh yeah,

Butterflies are serious business.

***Honorable Mention:***  
**“Hello, Yellow”**  
**By Carol Jones**

Hello, Yellow-  
green and gleam  
of Spring  
sprung  
laughing  
from the frozen loins  
of yet another winter.

Welcome, fragile whimsy,  
come to sing to us once more  
the songs of promise,  
come, wet and wonder-full  
to smile us back to life,  
mud, blood life.

We need to put away the greys  
of our long sleep,  
to taste the dawn,  
to lift our eyes,  
to breathe a newer air.

We need to rattle bones,  
no matter how they groan.

We need you,  
season of the heart’s delight,  
to paint the landscape of this  
long day’s yearning  
pastel pink  
and purple.

We need you  
to spin for us a dream of green  
shot through  
with gold.  
We need you  
to tease us into dancing.