

1st Place: Bubblegum Ice Cream, by Janette Schafer

My cousin Bobby was a slender, wounded faun with chestnut hair who gathered me like so many feathers, threw me into the air. He told me a secret that I was once a butterfly and my grandparents found me with broken wings in a little brown pinecone that fell from an evergreen in the swing park by Rose Cemetery.

My grandpa said Bobby was *in a bad way* ever since he found out his father, my great uncle, was out of prison. Bobby didn't feel safe anymore and my grandparents told my sister and I that he would be staying in their basement until he found his bearings. I said, *Bobby, if you tell me what your bearings look like, I will help you find them. Maybe they are in the yard or in the barn.*

One morning as we ate breakfast, there was a sound of a firecracker exploding downstairs. Grandpa said not to follow him as he went into the basement. When he came back upstairs, his eyes wide like daisies in bloom, he said, *Don't go inside the basement, don't go down there no matter what.*

Police shuffled in the gravel driveway. Ambulance lights flickered off the yellow aluminum siding. Two men went in the basement and carried out a big black bag.

Grandpa and Grandma took us out for ice cream even though it was morning.

They said not to tell anyone about breakfast.

I bit into the artificial sweetness of bright-blue cold.

BIO: Janette Schafer is a recent MFA graduate from Chatham University. Her writing and photographs have appeared in numerous publications. She has a forthcoming chapbook of poetry titled "Something Here Will Grow" which will be released in September 2020 by Main Street Rag Publications.

2nd Place: Murder/Suicide, by Dmitra Gideon

A person who has experienced six or more types of adverse childhood events, defined as abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction, has a life expectancy 20 years shorter than a person who has experienced none.

If thirteen years later my jaw still sounds like tires on gravel, if the doctor says repeat impacts have re-shaped my neck, if the ligaments in my wrist can never be repaired, has too much time passed to blame the original act?

Increased risk of: diabetes heart lung liver kidney disease obesity brain injury chronic pain chronic fatigue asthma cancer stroke HIV alcohol abuse drug abuse depression anxiety PTSD suicide suicide suicide sometimes my bones become rust my muscles stones sometimes my eyelids meld with my cheek my stomach burns and I want to scream for my mommy for my mommy my mommy sometimes their bodies return as jackhammers between my thighs knife in my rectum sometimes my skin swells red I scratch till it bleeds doctors find scar tissue inflammation sometimes my mouth fills with cum my head splits open sometimes I spin when I stand sometimes I'm tired I'm tired I'm so tired so tired diabetes heart lung liver kidney disease asthma cancer stroke suicide suicide suicide suicide

And if I should wake tomorrow, decide I'm tired of feeling your breath on my neck, if I swallow glass and vomit memory, if the bullet tunnels its way from chin to eye to brain, whose is the hand that kills me?

BIO: Dmitra Gideon is an alum of the Chatham University MFA Program in Creative Writing, where I she the 2018-2020 Margaret L. Whitford Fellow. She is also a 2020 Pittsburgh Schweitzer Environmental Fellow. She teaches creative writing in schools, jails, and other spaces, and currently create virtual curriculum for Write Pittsburgh.

3rd Place: Ghetto, by Lake Angela

I am afraid to enter the quarters in my brain where my banished selves are kept, denied access to the view through the eyes. They sense only scratches on pink, windowless walls. Held by pressure, they are vacuumed, sealed, and cleansed, though sometimes one is strong enough to break past the pulpy walls, bloody shreds dripping from the hands outstretched.

One is a skeleton of a woman, hair torn and dirt-caked. One drapes over a nest of layered blood: crust-congealed placentas reeking of better progeny. One is an old man, gentle without his memory. All are restless, tortured by the cold, the isolation chambers, the wrongly tinted light as it falls outside this world.

Cockroaches care for the best of the rooms, quietly preserving the bodies with strokes from their silken legs. Deep inside, one child still breathes. Eyes wide, she sees through the ice and in her small arms cradles half of a hawk.

BIO: Lake Angela is a neurodivergent poet, translator, and dancer-choreographer from Lake Erie who develops her work at the confluence of verbal language and movement. She holds a PhD from The University of Texas at Dallas for her inter-semiotic translations of German Expressionist poetry into dance and has her MFA in poetry. She is a medieval mystic and beguine. Her poems and choreography often explore the possibilities in and kinds of darkneses and silences and the expressions of colors, waters, and suffering. Her first full-length book of poetry, *Organblooms*, was published by FutureCycle Press in January 2020, and her second collection, *Words for the Dead*, is forthcoming in January of 2021. Her poetry-dance may be found on her website: www.lakeangeladance.com.