

Ledbury Poetry Festival
Poetry Competition 2015

Adult Winner:

Forfeit

By Jane Satterfield

*—lost the Hawk. Nero which with the geese was given away and is doubtless
dead for when I came back from Brussels I enquired on all hands and could hear
nothing of him—* —Emily Brontë, Diary Paper, Thursday, July 30, 1845

I know a hawk from a handsaw & when Nero
came crashing down from what wound, what wonder—.

I know a hawk—& the wind running armies
over grasses, hedge and path, the sky unfurled

over a fever of fields, torn petals ferried
on the stream—a hawk, handsome-feathered, rescue-won.

—I know a bite from a beak & when the wanton
spirit rises nothing mournful opens—a day's walk,

the weather fine, sunshine floating free. Bog & bracken,
heather lit from within. I know hilltop, heath & stunted

firs. Thought silt and crow flowers, rue. Thought &
thought again. A proper letter I have never performed.

There must be magic in my taming—cuffs & collars:
the falls are fresh in mind. The hawk's wing-beat's rapid,

can't connive a cage. When clipped, is stripped of dive
& plummet, grip & tear; heart feathered, fettered. Stutter

or hop-to-hand. I thought of rumors, a remembered
sketch, the talon here, the moment tamed. Sift the embers,

scratch the meal; I am seldom troubled with nothing
to do. I have no answers for extreme weather, a failing

source of light. We are at home & likely to be. Or
walking out, I guess, if all goes well, toward the maw

of time. I have no answers but I knew him—hawk quick-witted
as questions in margins, as window-clatter when the clouds

turn cool as iron, ashed in the afternoon. For a while,
a page's torn beauty—I could not countenance a flame.

Note: Line 1 excerpt from Shakespeare's Hamlet
Lines 20 and 22 paraphrase lines from Brontë's Diary Papers.

Second Prize:

Break

By Rosie Shepperd

Thank you for leaving my books without shelves
I like the way they lean against each other
sometimes tumbling over on to my grandmother's kilim
I may leave them like that – 'strewn' is the
word and I say it out loud and wonder if pressing words
instead of flowers might qualify as one of the six activities I
might use to diversify my mind
Tomorrow evening I will toy with 'square' for
the space left by my Wolf Dual Fuel Range
and the larger place where I shall install my
new bed and this makes me think of the word
'cherry' as a wood you conserve and I can now buy
'Wire' is a clueless question of a word as it
searches for some explanation behind each
embarrassed copper thread that protrudes
from the drawing room wall and at 'protrude'
I imagine your new lover and my lights and
I am sad to think she has no fixtures and fittings
but wonder if this might explain certain
uncertain aspects of her coordinated separates
'Chaise' is a fabulous word and it's in the
diary for Thursday and it reminds me how grateful
I am to you for removing mine so that
I am not forced to recall your groaning weight in it
and your buttocks on it and your stains
of herbal infusion that you swore would not mark
the emerald ciselé and always always did
I'm leaving 'jar' for Friday – your bathroom door
ajar and the jarring effect of your blinking
on my concentration and your damn jam jar with
a spare key inside and little label outside and
your HB capitals: 'IN CASE OF EMERGENCY'.

Third Prize:

Five throats

By Nisha Bhakoo

She owned five throats and had something stuck in each of them.
She is imperfect and it breaks me.
Sitting there stoned and cold, looking for luck and distraction,
she cleared her five throats simultaneously,
harmonising with herself.
Sound creeping on to my shoulders like a winter scarf.
The edgeless street, no longer shy at night

no longer artless in heartbreak.
I am imperfect and it breaks me.
No overdrawn lips, pure throat, just throat
with an evening scent of rain on the canal.
She could slice bread with those high notes.
I could slice bread with my thoughts.
She got lost in her music, shutting the mind off at intervals.
Her song whistling along the wet concrete in yeahness.
Notes rolling boldly like teenage eyes.
Heart in each note. Heart in all five throats.

Young People Category Age 12 - 17

First Prize:

The Disappearance

By Shaliyah Grant

I don't know when she disappeared,
Only when I realised that she was no longer here.
Her frequently glazed eyes were a giveaway,
But I ignored that too.
I had thought I heard the door close
One night in my sleep
Although she'd already made up her mind. By then,
She'd been halfway through the door
A long time before.

She'd painted her smile like a Picasso;
It hid those bags she'd packed,
But never taken
That stay forsaken,
Underneath her bed.
Although sometimes I hear her dragging them across the hall.

The neighbours still don't know she's gone,
They smile and wave every morning into the emptiness.
I often search for traces of her
Behind the eyes she used to have,
There might be something that I missed
Or haven't tried,
But I remembered my unheeding of
The tell-tale signs.
And it is hard to pry answers
From a memory.

There's still an indentation on her side of the bed
That matches the outline of her body,
But has long since grown cold

And started to fade.

An empty space stays in her seat at the table,
An empty promise that she will return.

Second Prize:

aubade

By Daniella Cugini

we bridge the space between
us – music, radio, two cups
and string. anything to
avoid the ruined geometry
of ourselves: *weather's
nice out, the leaves* – last
night the canaries woke up
dead and we blamed geopolitics,
twisted our mouths up
and back, slept too
clean. now i siphon clamour
off the kids in the park,
anything to cut this
peace. as you leave, i
resist the urge to grab
your shoulders; snap your
healthy, contented
jaw – how lithe we were
as children! please god teach me
to shiver again, grip and tear and
burst up like a live
thing – i clear plates.
cold toast; bright balls
of yolk. light enough to drown
in, and we do.

Third Prize:

Paper Cats

By Elin Gray

Paper cats
above the bed.
Copied from the pictures on your grandmothers walls.
Coffee rings on the window sill
and chipped paint
that time picked away. And a vase
of flowers, dying
sat on top of a handkerchief
stained with red
wiped from the porcelain
after you coughed blood into the sink.

Kisses on cheeks of people you're supposed to remember
even though they all look the same
with that sickly sweet taste still left in your mouth
through the syringe
and on to your tongue. Paper cuts from paper cats
copied from your grandmother's walls
torn from the wind because you left the window open too long.

Children's Category Age 11 and under

First Prize:

Deteriorates

By Inés Rossi

Brisk breezes
petrify me
as the scratchy oak
encased in fungus
expels little black
Dots,
dots that skitter down
from bark
to
Britannia blue stone
down the sharp blades
of iridescent grass,
up the layered translucent sole
that leads
to yellow stitches
and a salmon
matte surface.

Little black dots
entwine
around my bones
until I relocate
and blow out
the forcefield
of vanilla silk oblongs.
They disperse,
the petals
of yesterday's amber sun
in a wonder
built whimsically
whisp by whisp
just
to be blown away
in a fraction
of a second.
A blossom of sunbeams

deteriorates overnight
into
a tuft of snow.

Second Prize:
The Cobweb
By Kitty Prince

Handmade home,
the spider carefully sews
a cobweb
bent like the spine of a book
unique shapes,
a curtain for all things horrible,
a wall within a gap.

Third Prize:
The Magic Box
By Victor Nogueira

I will put in the box
the swish of a waterfall touching the depths of a lake,
Fire from the fireplace on a winter's night,
the last Tudor house in England.

I will put in the box
a man with a risky life,
a moon at day and a sun at night,
the last drop of water in the desert.

I will put in the box
a brown hair from a hopeful mammoth
a blue flame from the great fire,
a faithful man standing up for his country in the war.

My box is fashioned from fireworks
With plastic on the lid and surprises in the corners
Its hinges are the spine of a book
I will ski in my box on the white alps.