

STUDENT
POETRY
CONTEST



"Little Things"

CONTEST SHORTLIST 2025

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DOUGLASCOLLEGE
Learning Centre

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Papa, I'm here

Francisco Lopez Su

Papa laughed, once again, hugging his kids, being observed by their Mom,

-never forget what you are living for, and no matter what, start your day with a smile,

Enjoy every day, learn something, be grateful, help the others, so by the end of your days,

you can rest in your bed, again, with a smile in your face-

Papa past away sixteen years ago, but everyday their words do an echo in me.

Now I became a father and got two daughters. Now I'm Papa repeating those words to my

kids. And when I do it, my father appears in my heart and my tears start to fall.

I'm not sure when I'll be a good dad, If I had been one or if I'll never be. But I'm following his legacy even if my daughters don't realize I'm doing it right.

I see the pictures through the time, now my kids are little girls. There is no doubt, I'm getting older and getting closer to my dad.

These last months have been tough. Lack of strength and appetite. My wife says I should get a doctor, but I said I'm ok. There is no time for that as my girls are growing up, and I have to scare away the boys.

They barely speak to me lately, as I don't understand the world, they say. I'm still doing an effort everyday to gain again their sympathy. I forgot I have a life too.

Today I couldn't get out of bed. A doctor has come late night and he left with a bad face. I'm sure it was the late hours. My girls didn't come to see me, even when I was burning in fever.

Tik Tok must be something so important.

This day I'm going to smile, just like Papa said I should, even with all those studies doctors are doing me. It's not easy with all those punctures.

Tonight my girls went to a club, they looked so beautiful. I remembered them in my arms as babies. Times has flew. Tears have fell again. This time the pain was the cause. An ambulance has arrived. I hope to be back home tomorrow morning so I can cook them pancakes.

The truth is that I never came back home. That night I was taken to a hospital. Leukemia they repeated. There's nothing left to do. I feel so sleepy, but I want to be awoken for my girls. I try so hard but there is no strength left in me. I close my eyes and in my mind I kiss them with a big smile.

Papa, I'm here.

Happiness Whispers

Edmundo Rojas Castillejos

When I write, everything is sad.

There is no wonder,

no laughter,

no interludes with kisses,

no surprises nor goosebumps.

Everything is sad.

There are fights in between,

imitators who love you,

circuses and raids,

and impossible longings.

When I write,

I think only of myself.

Of what I did and what I didn't do,

of what I said and what I only thought.

But then the world came crashing down on me.

Because it's from my worst days

that I write best.

A smile settled on a stranger's face

and pointed at me.

Warm as a cloak,

sharp as a sword.

It pierced me.

You see,
it condemned me forever.

I came home with my head in the clouds.
Bittersweet lips,
goosebump-covered skin,
flushed face.
And as I gathered words to describe my misery,
searching through the wreckage,
I found roses.

The stroke was soft and delicate,
the whisper of the unknown muse
was angelic.
Words of peace,
rhymes at the tip of my tongue,
love in theory,
not just in concept.

But happiness is momentary.
As it comes
it goes.
The effects are temporary,
but the taste is forever.
And I wanted more.

I walked through streets,
I crossed bridges,
I ignored traffic lights.

I ran in circles.

"Once more, please!"

"Smile at me once more, please."

"Anyone."

"Pain is my ink,
and I don't want it anymore."

But the world fell silent.

And so I thought of castles

and cities of gold.

I wandered through my mind to match the feeling.

It's the alcohol,

the adrenaline,

the money,

the fame,

success knocking at the door,

revenge.

But the gold was sand between my fingers.

Every line faded before it was written.

It wasn't sad,

it wasn't happy,

it was empty.

So where is it?

Where does it hide?

How do I lift the pencil again with such ease?

Surrendered to the night,
I sobbed on a sidewalk,
and interrupted by footsteps,
I lifted my gaze.

"Why are you crying?,"
whispered a voice.

"Because I don't know where to look for happiness."

The shadow bowed its head.

"Maybe you don't look for it," it said,
"perhaps it is found."

It is found in your tragedy,
reminding you that you have fallen, but risen again.
It is found in those who have left,
reminding you that absence does not erase the marks that go beyond the skin.
It is found in how wonderful it is to forget,
reminding you that yesterday's wound... has been forgotten.
It is found in the red on your cheeks,
reminding you that you bleed,
but also love with emotion.

It is found in the little things
that long to be discovered.
Happiness doesn't always shout ;
sometimes it whispers.
So gather your sorrow, and within it, find your joy.
And write.
But not just anything.
Write a poem.

Go Talk to Some Rocks

Logan Brown

A year ago, I met a pink margherita pillow. Covered in mucky water and tracks from a car, when I bent down to poke her, she woke up and said, "I'm okay, I just partied too hard."

At an antique shop was thee Mr. Peanut, in the shell! His smile beamed; my heart swelled! The price tag: oh, an easy sell! A friend for life was made! My parents did not take this well.

I had a tryst with a punk rock bathroom once, and the graffitied walls bared it's soul to me. Scribbled names, sordid confessions, sharpie dicks. I'd gleaned them all before I even peed.

On a very sweaty dirt road sat a green-skinned goblino, a clay *duende* created from Mexico, whose eyes promised me some spiritual revelation, but only if I asked it, "cuanto dinero?"

At work in a box, I hear a small "let me free!" Out comes my cutter, and what do I see? Jolly gnome riding a snail! "Yippee! Yippee!" What else to say? You're coming with me.

In a thrift shop, we met a pastel-painted kitty cat. She sat every day, watching the rats. So we snatched her, cha-ching. At last, at last! She's on the other side of the welcome mat.

I sat with a bus window once, trying not to cry. They were cool and didn't fog up, or pry about the who and the why. Together in silence, they showed me the trees passing by.

In a tree I met a geezer, Old Man Lichen. I asked him, "Sir, you know where a guy can get signal round here?" He leered n' said "Iffen that's what you're after, why're you hiking?"

I spoke with a lamppost the other day. The sky was sullen, dark and grey. "How's life

outside?" I asked, but he didn't say. Just watched o'er his fife. Bright-eyed, bright rays.

There's a small wooden bridge in my local sticks, and the kids in town are little pricks.

Poor sad thing covered in filthy slurs for kicks. So, when I cross, I always stay with it a bit.

I carry a pair of pebbles in my pocket, from the island where she lives without me.

The rocks and I reckon if I rub em together every day, they protect her across the sea.

The rock pockets on a jacket, my XL Carhartt one. He's with me through a lot, and

I'd tell you the fun things he's squawked, but get this, the big guy? He doesn't talk.

Crow's Feet

Callum Eaket

Beside my eyes, a one-hundredth of a millimeter
larger than yesterday, sit etchings shaped by smiles.

Divots on my face, catch light. Carving their presence
with every facial movement and flex.

I am not ashamed of these lines, my tattoos inked with emotion.
Unrestrained, unapologetic, forever worn proudly on my skin.

Flesh like wood grain, shaped by growth and strength.
Character communicated through the face itself.

Dimples, once shy, have come out of their shells. Ever-present,
a welcomed guest staying for the long haul.

But remember: snowflakes cause avalanches. Drops of rain, rivers.
Stone paths warp with the placement of feet. Is it not powerful, even smiles make an impact?

So, if you feel insignificant look to my wrinkles,
records of laughter shared. Your fingerprints are left on those you have touched.

Wear no mask. Show off and admire beautiful lines and curves,
textures of a life well-lived. Love is there if you look for it.

So, spread that love to everyone you meet. Your voice may be the only one heard.

Yet even the dimmest of candles illuminates a dark room, you do not have to be a lighthouse.

Acknowledge, nod, exchange pleasantries with strangers on the street.

Leave your handiwork wherever you wonder,

and know when you see a crease:

humans spreading love have shaped it.

Cake Candle Flame

Yeganeh Haidari

Her blood is red. It has always been red.
Only now do I see the walls, not crimson,
but stained, stretched, and sagging.
Her bloodstream, sprawling and spread,
leaves behind pale echoes,
faint figures of what once was,
traces of absence in achromatic patches.

The evening light spills like wine across the table,
the room bathed in its bright bloom,
touching all, but never lingering.
The father watches,
his gaze drifting like a desert scavenger,
searching for a mirage
his son's face a fragment of a city now foreign to him,
a monument swallowed by the dark,
self-severed, silent space within.

But he reassures his son, his words soft, slow:

*"One day, the morning will come,
and the weight will dissolve into light."*

In those words, a fleeting comfort,

The boy steps forward,
not in the fleeting purity of youth,
but in the quiet reckoning of now.
He meets his father's gaze,
and in that moment,

something stirs—
a question unanswered,
an answer unspoken.

The cake sits between them,
a silent sentinel to what's passed,
untouched, heavy,
a relic of joy that cannot return.
The air thick with anticipation,
balloons bobbing above wooden armbands.
Candles flicker, their flames stretching,
the scent of sweetness in the stillness.

The mother moves,
her hands poised
one clutching the knife,
pressed against the curve of her rib,
the other holding the cake,
suspended, a sacrificial offering.

The father watches his son from the corner of his eyes.
It's a strange thing, this fleeting vision
we think we see it all,
yet it's the edges that hold us,
the almost, slipping just beyond reach.

The father reaches out, fingers grazing the table.
His voice shivers in the quiet,
whispering, "I don't know..."
Swallowed by the weight of it all,
the words tremble

The mother exhales,
and it feels as though she blows away more than a flame
her hand trembles,
but it finds the father's.

She speaks softly,
as though her words are weighted with years:
*"Your eyes cradle the dark,
but had they unveiled the opaque curtain,
they would have seen
the faintest flicker of light,
hidden just beyond the horizon,
waiting to emerge, like a flame longing to dance again.
I have painted the walls with the depths of my essence,
and in return, what I gave echoes back to me,
alive with meaning and hue."*

Even the candle danced,
though its light is quiet now,
it will reemerge,
to sway and shimmer once again,
as your eyes cradle the dark.

True beauty lies not in perfection,
but in the spaces where control and chaos meet
in the brief moment before morning and night,
where colors blur and bleed,
life simply is.

The highest art is not the imagined ideal,
not the untouched and unbroken,
but the brutal, unscripted dance of existence
chaotic, indifferent, and yet,

through its very disorder,
achingly, undeniably beautiful.