

**“Untitled”**

By Kelly Brennan

*First Place*

I stand in the clearing where I've been for awhile  
This is my safe haven, yet I can't smile  
I watched her stumble through the words, lost  
I want to run in and help  
But don't know how without getting lost myself  
Because I've been trapped in this forest, tripped over the branches  
I've been covered in its dirt and darkness, afraid to take chances  
“I'll never get out, the clearing is so far”  
I'd think to myself as I stared at the stars, so far away and cold, barely giving off light  
As I'd huddle on the ground and try to get through the night  
Through the wind I'd hear voices quietly calling to me  
They'd say “We're here and we love you! Come back to us! Please!”  
I thought they were lies, the woods playing tricks on my mind  
Making believe that this forest was kind  
I was happy to be alone, content to be sad  
It was easy to be hopeless and at these woods be mad  
I thought I'd forever trek through this place, lost, with aching bones and sore, dirty feet  
No one would even reach me; I'd live a life incomplete  
Until the day I realized in those woods I wasn't alone  
I saw footprints on the ground that were not my own  
Perhaps the words on the wind were not lies; there was truth in that voice  
I don't have to stay here, it is truly my choice  
It was then that I saw a small beam of light, shining through the trees  
I'd never seen something so bright  
So I brushed myself off and I started to fight  
And in time found that clearing and bathed in its light.  
Now as I look back and stare in that dark wood  
I see others who are lost, feeling their lives are no good  
Especially her, for she reminds me of me  
What can I possibly do to help her get free?  
The journey must be hers, I can't help her with that  
Yet knowing the darkness of this place, I could never leave her flat  
So I will become her faint beam of light  
And shine steady for her, never fading at night  
“My light will never go out!” I will scream through the trees  
And hope my words on the wind make it to her ears with ease  
“Follow my path I've left for you! Look within yourself! I believe in you!”  
“Be brave and be strong! Run as fast as you can into this light and never look back my friend!”  
And hopefully one day she will run as I did and come to the clearing in which I now live  
And make a life for herself in this place she's meant to be, beautiful, happy, content and free

**“Recovery”**

By Valerie Brown

Me  
Emerging-  
Nothing  
Too  
Askew  
Laughing.

Healing  
Eating  
Accepting  
Loving...  
Toward  
Health

**“HOPE”**

By Patricia M. Cannon

“Give up your expectations of what you envisioned her to be.”

Once happy.  
Once carefree, loving, and warm.  
Full of life.  
Always smiling.

“Give up your expectations of what you envisioned her to be.”

Now in rage.  
Screams of anguish.  
Turmoil.  
Hostility.

“Give up your expectations of what you envisioned her to be.”

A Mother’s helplessness.  
Do I have no control?  
A Daughter’s pain producing coldness.  
Will she ever return?

Give up your expectations of what you envisioned her to be?

NEVER.  
How dare they tell me that!

My vision is clear and will persevere.  
Smart~Funny~Kind  
Loving~Compassionate  
Accomplished~Confident  
Physically and Mentally healthy and strong.

Don’t dare set limitations on my child.  
I will NEVER give up. *That* is my control.  
There is HOPE  
I have my HOPE.  
I never lost her.

**“Black Bird”**

By Stewart Charles

Sometimes I wish to transform  
Into a blackbird and fly away  
Just to forget about life today

Each day it gets better  
No matter the weather  
Even through the storm  
I'll feel nice and warm

I thank God for being born  
And for helping me to stay strong

As I continued on my journey  
I felt the cold wind and become pale  
I stopped at the wishing well  
Asked God, why at times do I fail?

He told me to transform  
Back to a human state of mind  
That's why this poem is mine  
I'll never give up or run out of time

**“Untitled”**

By Virginia Erazo

*Second Place*

10pm, Lights out!  
No more pacing the halls  
Rounds open up out closets.  
Anything hidden or stashed?  
No not even an orange.  
6am, Vital signs!  
Yet another day in hell.  
Silently counting the day to open air and freedom.  
Freedom to live in a world outside of locked doors.  
Too many days.  
Too many weeks,  
Too many months.

**“Different”**

By Jennifer Manning

Stigmatizing, what you don't understand  
Labeling, me trying to stamp out a brand  
I have an illness, not a disease;  
Yet, you feel I'm contagious...get it together please!  
I am human and I stand strong  
You call me crazy but I assure you you're wrong.  
My heart pumps all the way through.  
I may be different but I am still a person just like you.  
I am unique in my own way.  
Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care helps me blossom every day.  
You can try to belittle me; I don't blame you.  
I'll just say your lack of knowledge makes you act the way you do.  
Being different is nothing to be ashamed of you see,  
It's exactly what makes you; you and exactly what makes me, me.  
I hope one day the world can see just how serious mental health can be.  
So the next time you call me crazy and throw a fit;  
Just take a look at yourself because I'm not crazy...  
I am just simply DIFFERENT!

**“Skydiver”**

By Suzanne Mills

I always remember hearing his echo  
Never knowing it would be let go  
Peace and quiet is what I have found  
No longer listening to those anguishing sounds

FINALLY I am free.

Replaced my fears with clearer thoughts  
A new experience for which I’ve fought  
A power I didn’t know I possessed  
An unmeasured courage when I get stressed

I FINALLY am free.

I thought that I had achieved check long before this  
Years of neglect that will not be missed  
Fiercely grasping secrets from another day  
And now I can stand firm and say

I am FINALLY free.

To find some solitude and leave  
Hallucinations; I find slight reprieve  
I take control, once and for all  
I jump outward and enjoy the fall

I am free FINALLY.

**“Untitled”**

By Hannah Morris

Thousands of escaping feet  
Circling my home  
Hunting for adventure  
    And I am gone.  
Curvaceous walls  
Housing an endless stampede  
Of wild horses  
    And I am gone.  
An orchestra of echoes  
Performing just for me  
Until my brain stops  
    And I am gone.  
A sweater hanging from my skewed shoulders  
Cushioning my pale broken skin  
Filth falling from sleeves  
    And I am gone.  
The feet stop and stare with pity-filled eyes  
At my scratchy sweater  
Clawing at her long white cardigan  
    And I am gone.  
They forget to feel  
    Listen  
        Love  
            Notice  
                Appreciate.  
    And I am gone.  
But I don't,  
Because when I am not gone,  
I am here.



**“Untitled”**

By Carly Rizza

Shards of glass lie  
Scattered on the floor,  
Nights feel like years,  
Days feel like decades,  
*Broken.*

A battle in his left hand,  
Shaking and trembling,  
Spilling onto himself,  
A stained white tee-shirt,  
*Shattered.*

A body filled with poison,  
Drowning in sorrows,  
Thoughts of doubt and  
Regret flood his mind,  
*Defeated.*

Broken glass and empty  
Bottles of tomorrow's  
Promises and hopes,  
Hollow with his torments,  
*Abandoned.*

**“I never told you”**

By Rebecca Yu

*Third Place*

I never told you why I couldn't face the day  
all the thoughts I couldn't chase away

I never told you about the storms inside  
all the demons then that plagued my mind

I never told you why I used the knife  
that the scars were proof I'd lost the fight

I never told you how I dreamt of death  
how freedom would come with my last breath

I never told you on that starry night  
how desperately I wanted to take my life

I never told you I was falling apart  
that smiles just mask a broken heart

I never told you you're not alone  
I never told there is hope

You never told me you were going Home