

My victory song [1st Place]

By Megha Sood

My heart parts its lips
utter something
pure and divine
like the moon in its reverie
you ask "What's my song"
I laugh and smile
with beauty imbued with
the fluttering of the
butterfly wings
so sublime;
My heart though brimming
with pain and anxiety
but ready for its encore every time.
My love is boundless
like a star-spangled sky
covering every iota of my soul;
gives me the sustenance
clears out the wool and webbing
from my disordered thinking
and makes me feel alive
once more.
I adorn the scars
as victory marks and
leaves the bloody trails
as maps, who follow;
Pushed and shoved aside
for reasons unknown
I thrash like a juggernaut
crashing and crumbling
the voices which pull me down
I simply ignore.
Waving my victory flag
so fervently
and singing my song
under my bated breath;
Here I come to
conquer the
uncharted waters of
my life
with a roar.

More Than Words [2nd Place]

By Laurie Goldman

I tried to make the piano scream last night.
I struck the keys so hard,
that I could feel my fingers bruising more and more,
with each passing measure.
In that moment,
I don't think I cared if they broke,
because,
I needed my song to be heard.

Ironic thing was,
It wasn't even "my song".
It was a cover of "Paint It Black" by The Rolling Stones,
and,
at this particular open mic,
I had decided,
last minute,
that Mick Jagger's lyrics needed to be heard,
because,
I needed to hear them.

So,
there I am,
pounding the keys,
stirring up a symphony of sound,
when I realized,
the piano didn't need to scream,
I did.

Symphony [3rd Place]
By Maria del Carmen Rodriguez
(Dedicated to my mother)

Winter, majestic power of naked trees and silent nature,
Spring, air crisp as an arrow, lifting me as a sparrow,
Summer, disguised as gentle sweetness of ever shining sunny days,
Fall, many dancing, vibrant colors, leaving me breathless,
Life is a mysterious hoop, always flowing, never still.

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Freedom [4th Place]

By Brenda Vaughn

Property.

When my grandmother was a slave

Raped.

When she was taken by her master

Servant.

When she had to cook and clean

Time.

They said things would get better

Segregation.

When my mother had to go to separate schools

Movement.

When I raised my voice to speak for myself and my people

Freedom.

I am woman, black and free.

My Song (1) [5th Place]

By Kelly Brennan

My song is a gentle breeze in springtime
And the rhythm of the rain
My song is a feeling
That takes away the pain
Like soft sheets cool on my skin
My song it touches me
It plays its chorus deep within
So melodically
My song is wordless
No lyrics to sing
Yet I know every line
I feel everything
My song is a quiet moment
Of reflection and prayer
It's the space inside of my soul
That I do not easily share
My song is the peace and calm
That helps me through life
When days get dark and nights are long
I know it will be alright
Because I hear the birds that sing
And I see it in the stars
I find it in my heart
Whenever my life takes a downward slope
My song is light
My song is love
My song, you see, is hope

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Cosmic Masterpiece [6th Place]
By Sacha Batra

It appears to most that to vent about something invisible to the eye,
Is somehow begging for attention,
Or a reason to act like a victim and cry.

It is not a scream, nor a cry,
It is a plea for you to understand my struggle to survive.

I've been down that road once before,
But I promised myself that detour I chose,
Would help me persevere to the utmost core.

Complicated and ugly,
I still decided to stay,
And I thank the universe daily for that extraordinary day.

Warriors keep fighting,
The universe sheds light with each grueling fight.
You are not your diagnosis,
You are beyond the titles,
You are powerful like a star and beyond explosive.

My illnesses do not define me,
Even when I complicate the puzzle pieces of my life.
It builds resilience and hope,
To keep those puzzle pieces glued,
And I have faith this will suffice.

There will never be a perfect painting,
Puzzle, or centerpiece,
But nonetheless it will still be,
Your marvelous messy masterpiece.

The universe can handle all you want to scream,
The anger, resentment,
And the light that does not gleam.

No matter the loss of hope,
The universe has a scheme.
Give you moments when you crash,
To rise up and be closer to the cosmos and beam.

The cosmos can help you get out of that black hole.
It has helped me many times,
Even after throwing arrows of coal.
The universe said, look at this unique young soul,
I think she can spread positivity and create diamonds from coal.
I think I will give her only what she can endure,
Actually, I don't think,
I am absolutely sure.

My Freedom Songs [7th Place]

By Nicole Spector

It's a nightmare.
People who stop and stare
We were all there.
Struggling to be fair.

Fire and gold.
It's what we're told.
They want our soul to be young but old. They want us to be hot but cold.

I can remember a time when I was so afraid. Afraid to come out, afraid to be brave. My family was out while I was in a cave. Love and affection was all I craved.

I've gotten used to staying strong.
So that my life will move along.
It allows me to keep going on.
So I can keep coming on.

This is for those who took their lives. Don't worry, just give it time.
Don't be like them, you'll be fine.
Be yourself, don't walk the line.

I'll break down the wall.
I'll be running down the hall.
You will hear the call.
You won't make me fall.

So what if I'm not perfect.
I don't care, 'cause I'm worth it.

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“notes of silence” [8th Place]

By Deesha Arabatti

the notes in typical music, go in this pattern
quarter, half, eighth, sixteenth
there are other notes that follow the same pattern- but nobody likes playing them-
because they're boring- they make no sound-
just an empty space

in the score.
a rest-

they go just like the other notes, following in the same pattern-
quarter, half, eighth, sixteenth
other's hearts may sing with liveliness and glee,
delivered with such power-
but my heart only sings of rests,

my heart only sings of silence.

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Flirting With Suicide [9th Place]

By Edward W. Fashole-Luke

Show that face again, my hollow friend.
All I do is pretend you're not there
Smiling from the farthest nether of my mind, you grin...
You used to coerce a world of hurt 'til I wanted the lights dim.

No more.

Lurking behind, beside, and before like a midday shadow
I liked to toy with the idea of you like a displayed panel.
Although I'm barely holding on by a thread at times,
My sanity's tattered remains had me acting reckless with intrusive thoughts.

Pol- -arity.

Sometimes I would wonder if happiness was a virtue with which I was at a loss
Meandering through life, thinking I'm eternally cursed to move in a hearse, for better or worse
Considering myself a living regret, my existence cursed by the realization that self-medication is truly the
worst.
I would laugh at myself, cry because of myself, lie to hide my true self, or try to die to escape myself.

Deeply flawed perfection.

Is this who you really are?
This lonely, malignant succubus who wants me from this planet evicted?
Yes, I was a victim. Depression, my guilty pleasure, I was a victim.
But I have come to the conclusion that I am deeply flawed perfection with flaws as designed intentions.

My self-portrait showed a man that systems of this world have tried to torture...and break.
Labeled with "disorders" like livestock branded before slaughter.
Now I'm sort of found. Joy within, I know the sound.
Drum beats in my chest. No system can take that next.

I now know I am by no means short of options.
We may flirt with each other from time to time,
But your flaunting will never haunt me.
Your love, or lack thereof, can't compare to a love once found for myself, that can never be forgotten....

I choose to flirt with Life and her myriad virtues, not vices, for the rest of time.

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My song (2) [10th Place]
By Jaime Chaifetz

Sick, I was
better
came running down the stairs
just to tell Grandma
funny hat and quirky face
the jokes are now alive today.

A rose,
never received
he was in love, but for me
a shower was better
so I cut his love story short
continued on my path of
being me.

Love,
for yourself,
will always come first
and the others will follow
and somehow the magic
comes
when you accept yourself
and just become happy to be wherever you are.

Me,
a wizard, captain hooks
right hand gal,
a genie,
parts I've played and parts of myself.

The pages have listened
to my destiny
I come from water
them from a tree.

From the dust grows
the branch that sits out my windowsill
forever still
the sunlight splashing on my face
riding a '98 Elantra
hand out the window
just me...

pouring my soul onto a tree.