

**-Laila Carter,**  
**Age18**  
**-12th grade**  
**-G W Carver Center-Arts & Tech Towson**

Grandma Ester (Poetry)  
floating through decades, chicago born  
a teen during the great depression  
wife of a blackman during jim crow  
mother of a mixed child long before and after  
you lived through 11 decades  
died over a century old and  
yet what I remember most is that  
you loved WWE Wrestling.

**Amanda Bair**  
**Age: 16 Grade: 11**  
**Cambridge South Dorchester High School**  
**Cambridge, MD**

The Night He Lost Everything Short Story( Excerpt)

Ethan felt his heart drop into his stomach as he stared remorsefully at his suffering goddess. She laid tangled in a pile of sheets, her once shiny brown hair matted and oily as it splayed over her pillow. She groaned as she tossed and turned in a pitiful attempt to sleep.

"Ethan?" she called into the dark room.

Ethan took a deep breath as he blinked his eyes, hoping to blink away the tears that threatened to spill. "Yes, love?" he answered weakly. He left his hiding place behind the curtains and approached his sickly wife.

"I hope you're not trying to quarantine me," she tried to laugh, but instead, she was lost in a coughing fit. He patted her back lightly until it came to an end. She looked up at him with her usual doe-like eyes.

"It's only cancer, after all. You can't catch it from me."

Ethan bit his tongue harshly to distract himself from the pain the c-word caused him. Every time she said it, he wanted to crawl into the fetal position and cry until there was nothing left of him. Ever since she was diagnosed a week ago, he couldn't even think of the word without wanting to disappear from his life completely.

"I know that, Lily," he breathed as he crawled into the bed with her, "I wouldn't be able to leave you alone even if it was contagious, though."

She smiled as she snuggled up to him. "I'd make you leave me alone, then."

Suddenly, she fell into another coughing fit, forcing her to wrench herself into a sitting position. Ethan rubbed her back soothingly and whispered sweet nothings into her ear as he waited for it to pass. But this time, when he looked at the white bedding, he saw specks of crimson spatter.

Blood.

**Asher Borger**  
**Age: 17 Grade: 11**  
**Homeschool**  
**Westminster MD**

#### **Enfaer's Secret**

Sandra collapsed on her bed, exhausted from a long day of studies. She felt herself about to drift off and pulled out her phone to check it before she turned herself over to the sleep that was now shadowing her thoughts. She saw a new message from Peter and abruptly sat up. She hadn't heard anything from him since he had left for Enfaer, a long way from Ceredeen, their home city. She opened it up and read it, and then read it again. She was

fully awake now, her heart fluttering inside her chest as she tried to decide on a course of action. *I'm still new to this whole "taking on the criminal underworld" thing* she thought to herself *and if Peter was captured by these guys I don't stand a chance*. An idea sidled into her head as she came to a slow realization. She might not be able to help by herself, but she knew someone who could. She would go rescue Peter, but first she needed someone, and she knew just where to find her.

**Age: 15 Grade: 8**

**Jessica Beck**

**Stephen Decatur High School**

**Berlin MB**

Subconscious Surprise; Welcoming Unexpected Events (Poetry Excerpt)

I walked downstairs in my sleep-grudged way  
When I realized something wasn't quite right that day.  
The dishes didn't pile all the way out the sink  
And the table had been cleared of its grime and grink.  
The papers that usually cluttered my dad's desk  
Had been whipped away, not a sign of his mess.  
My mother's fine china, a gift at her wedding,  
Was polished and adorned the table setting.  
But it wasn't until that I searched a bit more  
That I found my mom's note reading "I'm away at the store".  
I sat on the couch and flipped on the television  
And began to snack on my breakfast provision  
Then a thud shook the house and a bang surfed the walls.  
I jumped up from the couch and raced down the halls,  
I reached the front door and what did I see?  
A crowd of masked people staring back at me!

**Aziza Cossentino**

**Age: 17 Grade: 11**

**Dulaney High School**

**Timonium, MD**

Nettles of Time (Poetry)

Do you remember,  
When you walked the pale gravel path with ease,  
Leaving me on the steps?

Do you remember,  
How it felt when I held my breath so close to my chest?  
How badly it ached when the jagged rocks  
Raked along my porcelain skin?

Do you remember,  
When I fled to that very edge,  
And threw myself into the embrace of the misty grass,  
Only to greet the nettles that had disguised themselves there?

Do you remember,

How quickly I forced myself up and ran?  
How badly my heart wanted to jump out of my chest?  
How deeply those nettles had pricked and stung and bit my bare feet?

Do you remember at all,  
How those salty tears slicked my youthful cheeks,  
When even reaching those porch steps didn't soothe the pain I felt?

You convinced me,  
That I could walk Grandma's gravel driveway,  
Without shoes or socks,  
Nothing between me and those terrible growing pains,  
Why didn't you tell me otherwise?

Do you know,  
How desperately I look back for those porch steps?  
How longingly I've yearned for them to reappear as our base in tag?  
How horrible it was when the poison ivy kissed my naive skin?  
How loudly I sobbed when Grandma came outside?

I started to wear long socks in the summer,  
I stayed inside,  
Tucked away from my childhood nettles,  
That lurking ivy,  
Thinking nothing could get me from within my confines.

But they still found me,  
And their nettles became far sharper with time,  
Part of me wonders if it would've been better,  
To have worn my shoes when we walked that path,  
And how long it would've taken me to find the ivy on my own.