

Honorable Mention Poetry – High School

A Timeless Second: A Sestina

By: Brittney Ward

Grade: 11

School: Pellston High School

wish that, in my youth,

I could've had something to give to friendship.

We went our separate ways, leaving each other on a diverging road,

And I can't help but wonder: "Did I provide anything of value to you?"

Some sort of lesson, some fond memory, the press of my palm into your hand.

But I know, at least I was able to give you a ride in my car.

A simple favor for a friend, the promise of a quick drive in an old, rusted car,

But it allowed for a blissful moment, to giggle freely, like youthful

Children. We stretched our hands

Carelessly through the windows. As we reveled in our friendship,

Palms upturned to the sky, I never felt more anchored to you

as we floored it down the road.

I remember when I peered long enough into the rearview mirror, down the road,

I could make out the demons we left behind, with bodies of gravel and dust and teeth made from chips of asphalt. Shrouded in the dust kicked up by the car

Tires, they were merely waiting for you

And I to return. I looked at back at you and saw your eyes glittering like stars, so full of hope and youth.

You were not thinking of what was behind us. Your mind was free like the infinite road

before us, thoughts full of nothing but us, this friendship,

The music blasting on the radio and the rays of sun, filtered through the dusty windshield, warming our faces, arms and hands.

Now, I question if, when I grasped your hand,

I was helping you up or dragging you down. Swept up in a timeless second, it would only come to haunt me later, when we ran out of road

To drive on. I watched our friendship

Disappear, like morning fog in the afternoon as we tumbled out of the car.

Pride, once hammering in our chests, brimming with light and youth,

Was gone, as were you.

As we slipped from the tattered, worn leather seats, I watched you

And your smile fade from view. Your hands

Fell to your sides, no longer trying to touch the sky, searching with your fingertips alone for the joy in our youth,

But pointed toward the hard, unfeeling road

below our feet. Your face seemed to collapse with sadness. The demons of stone and dirt rose from the potholes, the same ones I had seen in the rearview mirror from the car,

Reclaiming what was once theirs, tangling up our thoughts, strangling and severing the tender friendship.

Gone is the warmth of your hand and the liberation we once had in the car.

Gone is the friendship as I turn my back to you.

We walk on separate paths, split by a forked road, but we will always share a origin: that timeless second, when we could just be young.