

Angel of Kindness

Winning Poem

It never rains in
Southern California—
but man, it pours.
I'm at the toy store
when a curtain of water
hits, laced with hail.
No other shoppers,
so the clerk and I go
under the awning
to watch. We laugh
and laugh, there's
nothing else to do.
Back inside, he leans
on the counter, says,
*It used to rain like this
in Vietnam—two or
three times a day.
You couldn't tell
which way the bullets
were coming from.*
We are quiet.
You never got dry,
then, I say. *No, and
it got so you didn't
care any more.*
For a moment
he's far gone,
down a dark road—
but he comes to,
resuming his life
as an angel of kindness.
He hands a balloon
to a crying baby,
and finds a reversible
doll for my niece's
birthday—Peter Pan
and Captain Hook,
two sides of the coin
that was wagered
in his name.

- Cynthia Anderson

Faith in Us

Second Place

Sometimes I choose
a spot on a quiet page
and write down
something unusual
such as the story of
how everyone
on a street
in Chinatown
walked carefully
while a woman chased
hundreds of tiny turtles
after they got loose
from a tank
in her market stall.
Not one turtle
was harmed.
And this mercy
lifts my spirits,
reminds me that
acts of kindness
appear like moths
circling our porch lights
drawn to the light.

- Jeffrey Johannes

The Difference Kindness Makes

Third Place

If my father was alive
I would take you to meet him
in our humble abode in El Monte
He'd be sitting in a sofa
a stack of newspapers on his lap
He'd be looking up behind
thick myopic lenses
his eyes wide and good humored
He would nod his head and smile at you
Not scowl at you like my sister does

If my father was alive
you and I might be cruising down
the highway with the windows down
the soft afternoon breeze
would brush against our faces
as we head to a Chinese buffet restaurant
where we can eat fish fillet and sushi

If my father was alive
I may not have a nice car
or more money for clothes
but I might be slightly happier
for he would nod his head and smile at you
Instead of scowling at you like my sister does

- Jackie Chou

Saint of the Day

Honorable Mention

In class she knits prayer shawls.
Smooth yarn rolls between her fingers
like rosary beads. Each stitch
a wish for recovery from sickness
heartache, addiction. By noon

she is halfway there. The instructor
frowns at her, blind to the work
of her soul.

- Jan Chronister

Content

Outside a restaurant in Chivay, Peru
the short-haired yellow dog
gazes furtively up at you
and away,
brings her head and brown eyes
down shyly, yet hopefully.

Ola, pero, you say.
Orbs raise, blink.
Tail wags, thumping the stucco wall
where you lean.
Oh, you're a good dog.
You're such a good dog. •

She sits, raises her paw,
presses your leg with kindness in return.

Confirming friendship,
she lays down, rests her chin
on your shoe,
content to be near you and rest.

Honorable Mention

- Marilyn Zelke-Windau

