

Front Royal Bathroom Poetry Project

The Conjurer
by JoEllen McNeal

She had imagined this so well—
the rolls of thunder, the heavy beat
of rain falling outside the window,
the narrow bed, the simple peace of it.

This remembered room with its
slanted ceiling, the old teddy bear
with the sad rubber face, the books
straight-backed on the shelves

read and now forgotten, puzzles,
the high school trophy draped
with graduation tassel, the picture
of the blue ballerina in the plastic frame.

In this room she once reached for her
new husband, moved to desire by his
polished shoes waiting to be worn
to her mother's funeral.

Now years later the same wallpaper,
cream colored dotted with yellow flowers,
And the rain. The thick heat of the day rising
and spiraling, pushed by the cooling air.

Perhaps this is why, for a brief time
she imagines she conjured up this rain;
that she is the small opening through which
each moment emerges and makes itself known.

In this last night of her visit she remembers again
her girlhood when the dreaming of something
was enough to make it real. When there was no
distinction between herself and what was beyond

and the ballerina in the sky blue tutu was her life
twirling into a glowing future.

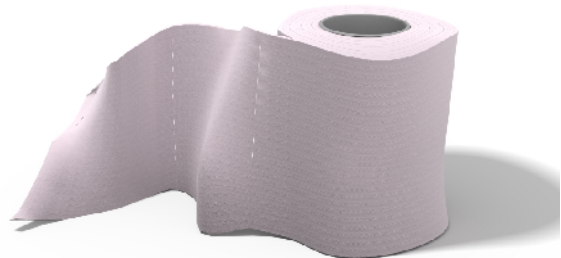


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A Puzzle

by Charity Gaile, student

I've got a puzzle
So do you
Some are old and
Some are new
You can't buy them
But they do have a price
And everyone's will get broken
Once or twice
Can you guess what the puzzle is
It shouldn't be hard to do
This puzzle is
Inside of you
It's always growing
A new piece added everyday
Even after death
Your puzzle doesn't have to go away
Some people's puzzles
Don't fit together right
But if you share yours
You can give them a new light
We all have a puzzle
And we can all do more
Donate your heart
And don't close the door



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My Definition

by Felicia Hamilton, student

These colors, they define me
And the world I've come to know
Bright yellow thoughts surround the
Graceful green dancer in my own special show

Blue dews through my music
And hammers into my head
Purple shadows my thoughts
And it turns them to red

As the anger builds up
I want that special flee
This feeling is a key
To a different place inside of me



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Ancestor Anniversary

by Lynne Lewis

The small blue planet in quiet cadence among the stars
spins in a serenity of seasons.

First, a tranquil blush of Summer sunrise touches woodlands
stretching high above the morning drifts of haze,
sets dew-diamonds to twinkling as they slip from tips of emerald leaves.

Then forests, golden crimson in Autumn's cloak,
delight the eye with fluttering jewels drifting in rustling lazy spirals
to blanket the earth beneath its boughs with warmth enough to last till Spring.

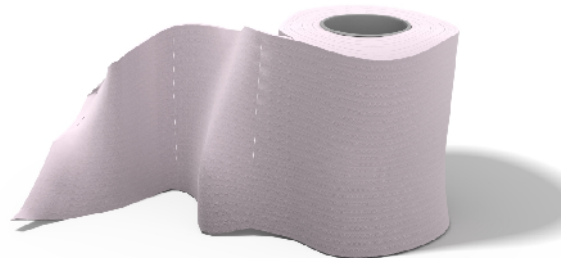
Then come those star-sheen Winter nights with air so still and crackling cold,
when full moons send shivers of visual delight dancing along snowdrift
softened hills, embroidered in tracteries of stark shadow.

And just when you've decided that Spring won't come this year,
there comes a morning startling, ablaze in crocus gems,
and orchards, crowned in scented blooms, blush to robin love songs.

As this small blue planet in quiet cadence among the stars
spins in a serenity of seasons, I see you hand-in-hand:

Timelessly serene, hearts warm as mid-summer's sunrise,
Autumn leaf-jewels twinkling in your gleeful glances
Hearts sweetly brilliant, like fresh snow on a full-moon midnight.
And after generations of years, you still share Spring-bright delight.

I see through your eyes and stand in silent wonder,
humble beyond words, cherishing beyond measure
the miraculous endurance of true love.



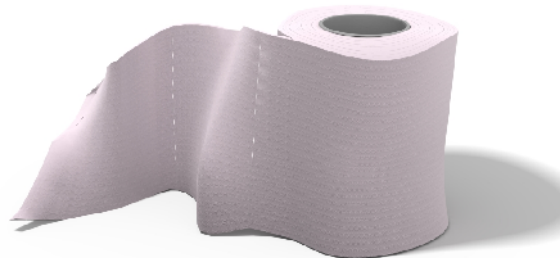
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Because Front Royal is Our Paris
by Heather Davis

-for Jose

"And you may ask yourself--well...how did I get here?"
-The Talking Heads

If Front Royal is our Paris and the Shenandoah our Seine, the gutted mansions on Main have a certain romance about them like the abandoned palaces of a fallen bourgeoisie. Their broken glass reflects us fantastically, revealing otherworldly beauty in decay. Let's go lounge in the columned gazebo downtown as it rises like an ancient temple built to some hillbilly goddess of love. Let's honor our crazy neighbor as he waves his twisted stick and rants in a language only mountains understand. It's almost spring. We should buy some Virginia wine, head on up to Skyline Drive, practice French kissing, utter some words we're fond of: clementine, chiarascuro, penumbra, seduction, dusk. It's almost spring and the Blue Ridge waltzes with the sky around us, offering something sweet, something sultry, the twin gifts of mystic vision, abundant bloom. At night, in total country darkness, from a thousand feet up, you can't see the Confederate flags jutting from every other pick-up. It's almost easy then to believe that the stars above have finally aligned and are shining so ecstatically for us, that this place really is the city of lights.



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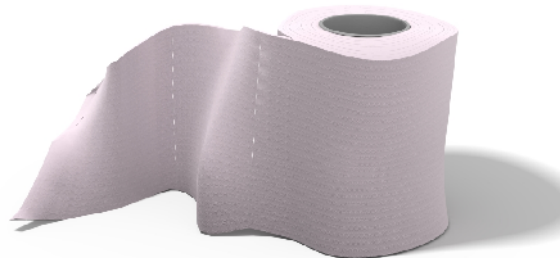
Doing What You Do
by Shelly Baker, student

Tantalizing
Mesmerizing
Melt in your mouth like a kiss–
of chocolate
Doing what you do

Inviting
Loving
Treating me with delicate care,
almost like a–
flower
Doing what you do

Giving
Taking
Shaking me up like a thick rich–
milkshake
Doing what you do

Lingering
Mingling
Putting the sweetest taste of love on my–
tongue
Naturally just doing what you do



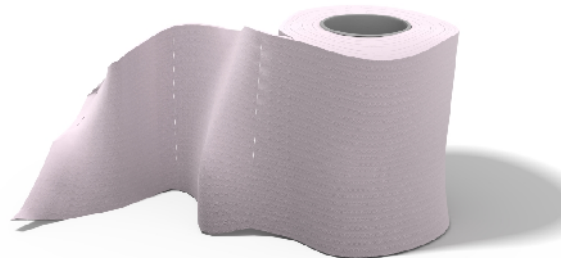
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Hello, My Name Is
by Chelsey Jenkins, student

Hello, my name is melody.
Guitar pick, Monster tabs, wrist bands
Music spectacles of the past
Memories locked in crumpled flyers

Hello, my name is unceasing youth.
Comic strips and noise makers
Game pieces, figurines and Girl Scout badges
To the typical minds, these are objects
Thrown in a junk drawer
The back of the closet
Of forgotten.
But each object holds a memory
Each token has a past and a lesson
These childhood memories keep you alive, elated.
Never forget them.

Hello, my name is raffiné
Library cards, bookmarks
Art expositions, Harvard, paper flowers
Buddah, antiques, martial arts and Coach
Education and involvement
Cultured and knowing
The aspect of one's own tour de force, exploit, conquest



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To My Friend

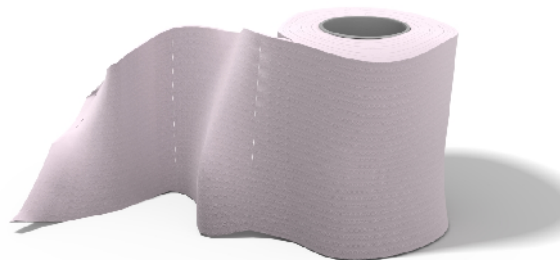
by Carol Toba

My friend, I miss you,
your many talks of fears and hope,
of dreams fulfilled
and those on hold,
your drums I never heard you play.

You named your demons,
those that rode the wind
and slipped through walls
pursuing you inside
and those that wafted on smoky hills,
hills that were your nemesis and love.

I walk our greening woods
and feel your restless spirit
flowing in the mist,
your unasked question, things not done,
no answer why.
I ask the ancient oak,
but she, with upstretched arms
stands quietly, sentinel.

Our healing woods,
filled with Spring's song
spice bush, bloodroot, ramps,
witch hazel, life:
and there laughs Puck, he has the answer;
"What fools these mortals be."
Your dog and you,
I miss you both, my friend.

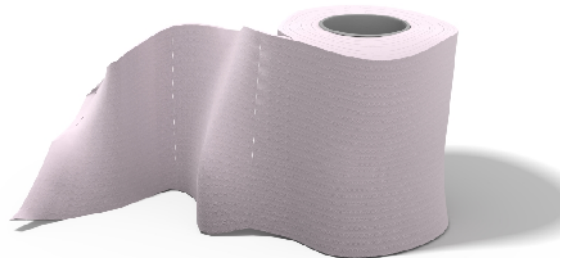


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Ancient Messengers
by Robert S. Harding

Merchants and churchmen
Essentially in concert, wait
As poets,
struggling alone
With new ideas and copper lanterns,
Find the plays of their mind
Impassioned by accepted thoughts
and actions,
Evolve in natural order
As they release
Their controlled communion
Of our perceiving fate.
Mikolaj Kopernik
Awake, late...
Alone on a high
mountain tower

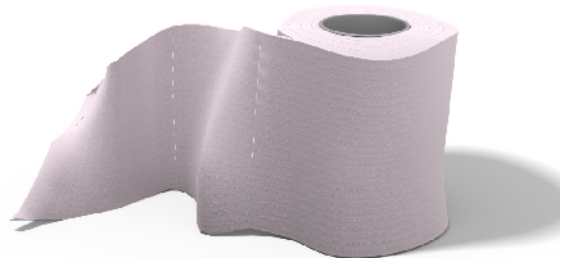
Inquiring contemplation
In his orbs,
our earth, himself
Nestling in the remote corner
Of the Universe;
Arresting time
In his perspective mirror,
He guides ancient dowagers
Back through forests,
Past mumbling statues,
Forever Holy.
Now below moon shadows,
We emerge from astronomical lakes
Appearing on cosmic sands
As children,
knowing neither country nor color
Who at the beginning
of our own conception
Realize we are all
of the race of man,
As our fathers from the earth
Discovered they were
of the Universe.



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Something More
by Pamala Farley, student

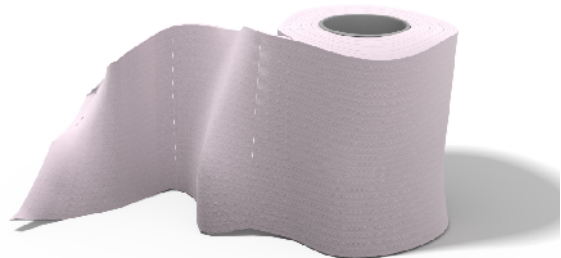
Wishing
Wanting
Wanting something more
Wishing something more
Then one day you realize,
Everything you were wishing and wanting,
Was right in front of your blind eyes
Like they do say,
Love is blind



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Nature's Beauty by Jade Rowe, student

The tall mountains to the far west
Look beautiful with the thin layer of fog gliding between them like it should;
Like a river flowing through a moss covered wood;
Nearby, birds are chirping softly in the trees;
If you stay quiet, you can hear the whispering breeze;
As we go up the mountain, as we get higher;
Listen to the deer walking on the branches that sounds like a cracking campfire;
Let the sounds of nature put you to rest;
Now you'll never know if nature's done its best.



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Namesake

by Julia Campbell Johnson

-with acknowledgments to Alexander Pope
Epistle to Miss Blount

On dreary days like this we stay inside—
Elizabeth and I. I lift her to the window,
in her red, footed pajamas, so she and her doll
can watch for squirrels. She is a picture,
and outside, the shutters frame her.

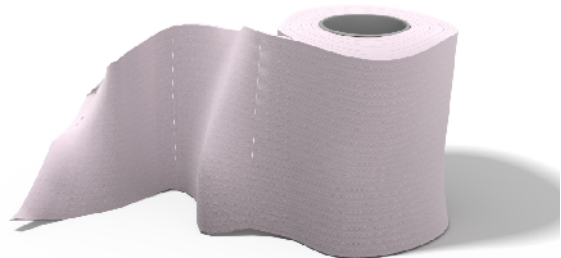
It's a grey day—grey like the still, small mouse
we found in the cellar—the cat's prey.
We are boredom's quarry. At home like this
she will see me at my work—
bending to straighten toys, putting up laundry,

pressing dough for bread. Elizabeth
brings paper, and with crayons
I trace her hand. Suddenly,
The phone heralds news from the city!—
Her publisher's been good to her, my friend says,

and these days she's lacking sleep. Elizabeth pulls at me.
I say, mommy's talking to her friend,
the lady who has your same name. She sighs.
Into the phone I say, life here is quiet—
kids growing. Happy. I sigh.

Not that her pleasures caused my discontent;
I sighed not that she stayed, but that I went.
We talk a few minutes more. I smile, laugh a bit.
When we're finished, Elizabeth comes, climbs onto
my lap, swings her legs, sings, "lady, lady."

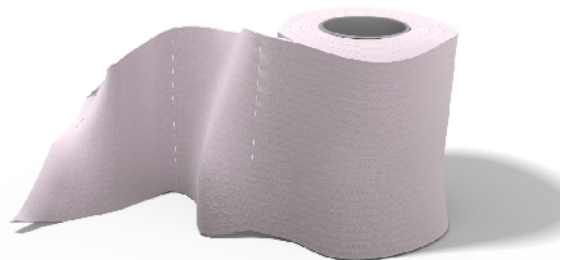
-for Liz



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Moving Picture Show by Darcy Myers, student

Dreaming in color and light,
Death rides a White horse.
Angels pause in flight,
Gold curls on red silk.
Dogs of coal and ember,
Breath foam of the sea.
Rainbows spread high,
from a pool of warm blood.
A wolf who's a man,
cries in the night.
Blue eyes of the blind
couldn't miss this sight.
A lamb, a lion at heart,
and a jackal, rarely apart.
Each man and beast,
comes to his call.
Live for today,
or live not at all.

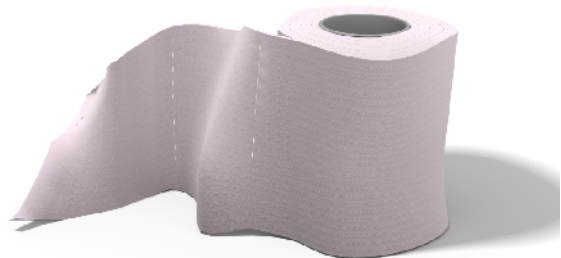


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The Universal Cycle
by Britt Cupp, student

Humans always searching
For a beginning and an end
Never really knowing
That things can just be
They think and create their own ideas
But no one ever just accepts
We could've just come to be

The universe exists forever
Infinite in its own self
We supposed intelligent beings
Are only part of its forever cycle.



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Young Ballerinas Rehearsing by Jane A. Kane

Dust motes dance in the beams of light from shadeless windows
as the old wooden gymnasium comes alive with the rhythmic slap-slap of bare feet
on the creaky plank floor.

Girlish giggles rise to the rafters
along with the low-voiced instructors repetition "5-6-7-8-again!"
The air surrounding the young ballerinas is musty and flavored with sweat,
as they lick salty drops from their upper lips.

Tchaikovsky melodies pirouette corner to corner and back as unformed female bodies
transform through stretches, leaps and spins
into graceful 'Swans.'

