

Riley Donlon

Age: 17, Grade: 12

School Name: Homewood High School, Homewood, AL

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Category: Poetry

jewelry box

mirage

you wandered the hallways of my heart,
staring into mirrors, knocking over vases —
my heart is no labyrinth, but
when I needed you, you were lost.

thoughts of you grazed my unheld hands,
brushed at my unkissed lips.
I had never even heard your voice.

you were echoes and footsteps and
the faint shutting of doors;
you were everything; you were
nothing at all.

you were a mirage,
and we both knew.
neither of us would admit it.

you faded away, slipped through
my fingers as fine, powdery ash,
leaving only my sighing surrender.

my heart is no labyrinth, but
I would never step inside —

I have so much love and
nowhere to put it.

string of pearls

I thought they would keep flowing and pool at
my feet, but I was told to put them on.

so I did.

my décollatage was the last bit of me left unused; for
the rest of me was so lovingly curated,
the rest of me was sectioned off in a perfect ratio:
skin to silk to leather to shine; the rest of me was
what made me worthy, I was assured, of standing so pretty on
this balcony, high enough above the ground for the view to take

my breath away with delight instead of despair.
I was made to believe this was not only what I deserved, but
my crowning glory.

the string of pearls completed me:
the last bit of my stolen spirit was a fragile cord around my neck.

domicile

I was made a wanderer by a dark and ruthless world,
cast into oblivion before I knew what living was.
my tender, liquid soul needed a sturdy, solemn shell
and I found one in the temple of a Goddess long-forgotten.

when I arrived I saw Her face, but I wasn't worth Her time,
so She left me to wither in this barren, holy tomb.
I know She used to live in splendor, had scores of devotees,
but they moved on, as people do, took back their gold and jewels.

with Her Domicile deserted, they left Her there to die;
now the roof over the altar is bowed and soon will fall.
it shelters me from storm and snow but not from my own heart,
and I wonder if the wicked world was better after all.

had I been a little older, I'd have known to find a place
where I could truly live, not here, where I can only wish.
will I ever be righteous? will I die stained with sin?
if I stay here I'll never know, but can I bring myself to leave?

a pursuit

give me the underbelly
give me caverns newly cut from ancient rock
give me fresh-fallen snow under the night
give me what exists outside these bounds

I long for something unfathomed
something unseen
and untouched
that lurks within
that eternally expands
something that knows

give me what I long for
I will know it when I feel it