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Barrett Creative Supplement

Through my literature, I aspire to be an integral part of changing the narrative on fronts concerning all of humanity. To that end, many of my poems discuss topics like poverty, women's issues, mental illness, cultural diversity, etc. with the goal of addressing contemporary issues. However, not all of my poems deal with tragedy-- some are about appreciating the beauty and marvels in life, which aim to uplift the human spirit.

Although I have written over 40 polished poems in the last three years, I feel that these poems are most indicative of the reason I write poetry-- not only as a mode of expression, but also a form of creation, innovation, and contribution as a young, strong-willed voice. I am including this in my Barrett application because writing is an indispensable part of my identity-- it represents the active efforts I have made to offer my work, time, and voice to issues I understand as important. These poems speak for the societal awareness and empathy I have cultivated through studying literature for so long. I hope this sample of my poetry, and the accolades they have been honored with, prove that I will valuably contribute to the campus, the community, and the world through my writing and the perspectives and worldly conscience I have acquired because of it.

AS ONE

Destitute and gaunt,
Villagers cluster around a bonfire
In their barren village.
With a dearth of food and water,
No electricity,
No kerosene,
They hold candles
And huddle,
Cruel cold in their bones,
But still hopeful
As clouds roll by,
And night trudges high,
Frightful when candles flicker.
They crowd together,
Form a barrier
Not even the mightiest
Can penetrate
As each dirty hand
Of child, man, and woman
Grasps a candle,
Light reflecting in their eyes.

This poem won 2 Honorable Mentions from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, hosted by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers. Additionally, this poem was selected as one of six poems to be read for *Silicon Valley Speaks* with the Poet Laureates of Santa Clara County on the topic of immigration at the Mexican Heritage Plaza.

RELEASE

Try as I may, I cannot fall asleep.
The pink luminescent clock hands read midnight,
And my mind still travels round and round
Like a hamster on a wheel.

The answer never comes to my ceaseless question
What shall I do with my life?
Over and over, it echoes inside my head

I throw the covers off the bed,
Get up and dressed, wrapping my knitted scarf
Around my neck, putting my stupid-looking
Red and brown beanie on my head.

Grabbing my keys, I open the door
And head downstairs only to find
It's freezing outside and takes my breath away.

I guess for tonight, that's a good thing.
As I head down the abandoned streets,
The overwhelming question repeats
Itself with each step I take

I stumble into a lonely coffee shop at 1 a.m.,
Leave my order, and head back to the streets.
My brown boots follow each other

Out into the nebulous night
Until I stop in front of a sleepy house
Fronted by a low wall where I sit at last,
Leave my head, and look at the stars.

Spellbound by the separateness of each,
I realize they all have found their place
As I, in time, will find mine.

This poem was accepted as an Honorable Mention at the Soul-Making Keats Literary Competition, hosted by the NLAPW. It was read aloud at the Koret Auditorium in San Francisco. It was also published in *Whispering Angel Books* and was awarded a Silver Key by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

HELPLESS

If I could, I would pick up my pen
And write an ocean for you
Instead of you walking into the ocean
And drowning as you desire.

If I could, I would take my scissors
And cut out your rotting feelings
Instead of you cutting yourself
In stripes across your arms and legs.

If I could, I would use my scarf
To rub scriptures into your brain
Instead of you dwelling in heartache
Day after night and night after day.

If I could, I would. If I could, I would.
I would if I could, but I can't.
Please, watch the sun touch the horizon,
And one day write yourself into life.

Darling, death is not a friend of yours
Though you set frequent dates with him.
Does his neck feel like happiness?
Do his lips relieve your suffocation?

You say your hope lies in the bridge
As it lights up the city in gold;
And I ache, knowing the depths
Of the ocean waiting to drown you.

Originally written as a tribute to a close friend, "Helpless" has gotten both an Honorable Mention and a Silver Key from the Scholastic Arts & Writing Competition. It has tied for second place in the Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest, and has been read aloud at the Lincoln Public Library in addition to its publication in the *Voices of Lincoln Chapbook of Winners*.

JOURNEY

~a prose poem~

A little girl, sincere and simple, I listened to my teacher when she told me she *couldn't stand the smell* of the coconut oil my mother had massaged in my hair for strength. Shy, I responded *okay*; and from that point I refused to let Mom rub it in again.

A fourth grader, when a blue-eyed classmate said with a scrunched up nose, *You actually eat that?* pointing to my spinach naan. I shivered -- from that moment, shamed, I ate it from the bag.

A bit older, but still not bound by American beauty standards, I lifted my sleeves to play Indian burns with the boy next to me, who commented *your arms are hairy*. Though I feigned amusement, for the next four years, I never wore short sleeves in public again.

My parents took a different toll on me. They had different standards, different ideas, different values, and different disciplines from most American families. In the mornings, instead of sleeping in, they taught me to wake early and review vocabulary lists. Instead of access to digital devices, they left me at home during summer with textbooks and novels. Because they knew education would propel my future, they taught that studying was my religion.

For a long time, I spurned their ideas, engaging in an ongoing battle with my parents and my Indian heritage. I was a stranger to their struggle, an alien to their ideals. I fought their way of life and its rules, cast aside their wisdom.

In my fifteenth summer, after my mind had opened, studying the great poets and taking yoga, I laid down my weapons. No longer did I want my life consumed with fighting my parents, and decided to include their ideals on my own path.

At last, I asked Mom to rub coconut oil in my hair again. It had even become a habit for non-Indians. And for the first time in four years, I wore short sleeves.

This poem took Second Place in the Youth Division at the Voices of Lincoln International Poetry Contest which included my presentation of the poem at a well-known Northern California venue. It was also published in a Winner's Chapbook in the fall of 2016, and won an Honorable Mention in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.