

Spirit First Poetry Contest 2018 Winning Poems

We are pleased to announce the winning entries for our ninth annual Spirit First Meditation Poetry Contest. We received nearly 2,000 poems from 49 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and 46 foreign nations. International entries arrived from Argentina, Algeria, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, The Netherlands, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, Wales, and Zimbabwe—and some poems arrived without location indicated. We are thrilled to have the participation of meditation and mindfulness from all over the world, and we are honored by your presence, from home and abroad. This poetry event is such a great joy for us.

Thank you to all of the many beautiful poets who participated—please know that we deeply appreciate every poem, every word. Your writing on the themes of meditation and mindfulness is important to the world, and what a great work it was to select winners from so many beautiful and meaningful poems (difficult work).

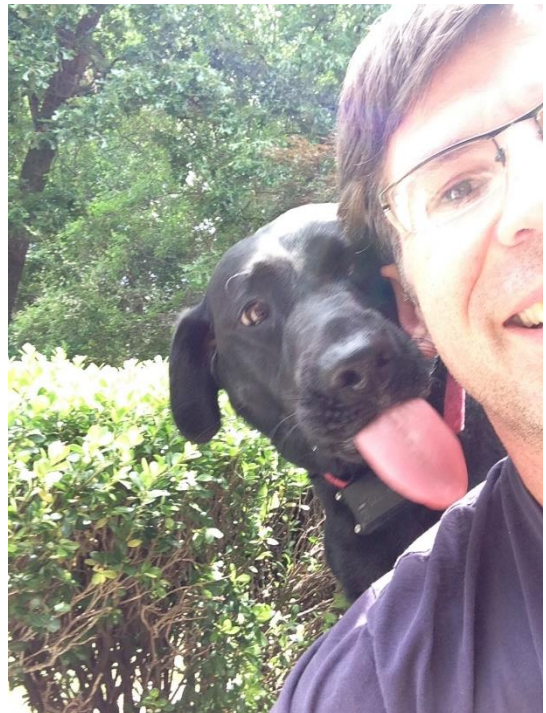
We are delighted that this year our Haiku/Micro Poem Special Category received twice the number we received in 2017. Most of the entries were haiku, but we received a few tanka and other micro poetry forms. Please know, though, that every poem is included in the full contest—but if no micro poem places in the final list of winners, we also award a Haiku/Micro Poem Special Category award.

Special Category Award—Haiku/Micro Poems

Balloons: a haiku
by David Monteith

**Like children holding
balloons on strings, we cling to
thoughts better set free**

David Monteith stole a library book once in his life (but only once), a collection of poetry by Robert Graves. He hopes you'll forgive him. In his defense, it was pre-Internet, and he was desperate for poetry. In addition to Robert Graves, some of David's other heroes include Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry, Brian Andreas, Rumi, and the classical haiku master, Issa. He draws on his experiences as a middle- and high-school teacher for inspiration and is currently working on his first children's book. When he's not writing, he loves taking care of other people's dogs, making earrings from comic book word bubbles, and doing lyengar yoga.



David Monteith

First-Place Winner

Meditation at the Waterfall of the Gods

by G.G. Silverman

We wondered how it would change us,
the roar of an ancient river
as it hurtled from a cliff's edge
and raged into the mist.
We stood there for mere
moments, snapped a
photo we'll forget later,
because eternity
cannot be captured.

We cannot fathom
how this precipice was
graven by aeons, how
this river's cold bed
cradled its
child for
seven thousand years,
what motes we
are under the sky.

Gods were once brought here
to drown, and so we
brought our sorrows,
made paper boats
of grocery lists and death
notices and overdue
bills, then
set them free on the river.

The waters hummed
the secret
to everything,

surrender,
surrender,
surrender.



G.G. Silverman

G.G. Silverman practices walking meditation in wild or natural settings as frequently as she can. Her favorite place to experience nature's raw power is the Pacific Northwest coast. G.G.'s writing was most recently nominated for the Best Small Fictions anthology, among other honors, and has appeared in *Corvid Queen*, *So to Speak feminism + language + art*, *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*, *The Iron Horse Literary Review*, *The Seventh Wave*, *Iconoclast*, *Ellipsis Literature & Art*, and more. She is currently at work on a short story collection as well as her third novel. She is also a visual artist and practices improvisational theater, which she believes is another form of connecting more deeply to one's inner truth. To learn more, please go to www.ggsilverman.com.



Second-Place Winner

A Long Journey By Sea

by Levi Noe

From the helm
of this pitching ship
I cry to Poseidon and
Yahweh, Jesus,
Buddha, Krishna, Kali
Allah, Vishnu, Anu, Gaia,
anyone! who's listening:
How far
have I to go?
How much
have I to give?
Until You
will let me in.
I have all the charts,
I followed the stars, I've read
all the Words about the journey.
I should be There by now,
but still the Undying Land eludes me.
Could You send me a sign?
A dove,
like You did for Noah.
A dream,
like You gave Gilgamesh.
It seems all You've given me
are these questions.
Is it learning or
unlearning
that will stop the storm?
Is it praying ceaselessly
or pure silence
that will bring peace
to these waves?
I assumed the deathless
was my destiny, but
I haven't received an invitation.
Supplies are nearly dry.
A storm is coming and I'm still waiting.
I am the only voice I hear.
I've tried everything
apart from drowning.
Is that how this separation ends?
By breathing the ocean in.



Levi Andrew Noe

Levi Andrew Noe was born and raised in Denver, Colorado. He is a writer, wanderer, yogi, entrepreneur, and amateur oneironaut. His flash fiction collection *Rain Check* was published in August 2016 from Truth Serum Press. His flash fiction, short stories, creative non-fiction and poetry can be found in *Connotation Press*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Bartleby Snopes*, and *Literary Orphans*, among many others. Levi is the editor in chief and founder of the podcast Rocky Mountain Revival Audio Art Journal.

Twitter: [@LeviAndrewNoe](https://twitter.com/LeviAndrewNoe),
[@RockyMtnRevival](https://twitter.com/RockyMtnRevival)

Website: <http://leviandrewnoe.com>

Third-Place Winner (Tied)

Only This

By Mike Joachin

*Live the actual moment.
Only this actual moment is life.
– Thích Nhất Hạnh*

Only this actual moment
is warm air on the hairs
of our neck, swaying
each like grass in a
summer breeze.

Only this actual moment
tugs at skin like a hungry
child, craving nothing more
than acknowledgement.

The chance to walk hand
and hand with our thoughts,
follow the map of the
heartbeat, breathe in what
we breathe.

What else deserves to
swallow us whole?

Other than what wakes
the senses. Gives life.
Is life. This actual
moment.



Mike Joachin

Mike Joachin currently resides in Miami, Florida, with his wife and two young children. Poetry has always been the natural way Mike expresses himself and tells stories. He is of Caribbean descent, where the art of storytelling is deep-rooted in the culture—this, perhaps, has a lot to do with his passion for poetry. Spirit First is honored to be the first major publication of Mike Joachin’s poetry.



Third-Place Winner (Tied)

Walking Meditation

by Jeanie Greensfelder

I leave the world and my worries,
walk the wood-mulch trail that shifts
to sand. Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh

said we're just one step from the
kingdom of heaven. I say his mantra:
Oui, Oui, Oui, Merci, Merci, Merci.

Yes to going slow, feeling the breeze.
Thanks to eucalyptus trees
where migrant monarchs hang

one from another like beads on a string.
A kingfisher calls and circles her pond.
At the bridge I inhale rain-fresh air

and note mallards, heads tucked.
A snowy egret lands, fans her wings,
and steps into the pond. Perfect stillness.

Time stretches. My mind quiets.
The egret ignores her ruffled feathers.
Focused, she waits for food to near.

Her pointed beak strikes, catches a fish.
And me?
I got what I came for.



Jeanie Greensfelder

Jeanie Greensfelder feels honored to have won Spirit First third place this year and in 2015. Her work has been published at *American Life in Poetry*, and *Writers' Almanac*; in anthologies: *Paris, Etc.*, *Pushing the Envelope: Epistolary Poems*, and *Corners of the Mouth*; and in journals: *Miramar*, *Thema*, *Askew*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Persimmon Tree*, *Solo Novo*, *If&When*, and others. She is the author of *Biting the Apple*, *Marriage and Other Leaps of Faith*, and *I Got What I Came For*. Jeanie serves as the San Luis Obispo County Poet Laureate, 2017/2018. A psychologist, she seeks to understand herself and others on this shared journey, filled, as Joseph Campbell wrote, with sorrowful joys and joyful sorrows. She lives on the central coast of California with her husband Andy. More poems can be seen at jeaniegreensfelder.com.

Editor's Choice Award

If We Are Doomed

by Matt Nagin

if we are doomed
i say embrace it
marry it
let it carry you
into verandas of
bliss.

if we are doomed
fall into it
this gentle blanket
array of fireworks
the hot night soaking
your shirt.

if this is the end
i say sing to it
let the bullets cascade
and the bombs echo
but embrace it with
what you have
left to give.



Spirit First



Matt Nagin

Matt Nagin has been writing poetry since age sixteen—where poetry became a bit of a spiritual practice. Matt has always enjoyed the non-linear nature of poetry and believes in what Rimbaud called “a derangement of the senses” to obtain the unknown. In recent years, Matt’s poetry has been published in *Antigonish Review*, *Dash Literary Journal*, *The Charles Carter*, and *Grain Magazine*, among other markets. His first poetry book, *Butterflies Lost Within The Crooked Moonlight*, was released in 2017 to very strong critical and reader reviews. Matt is also an award-winning filmmaker, comedian, and actor. More info at mattnagin.com.

Spirit First promotes the practice of meditation and mindfulness, inclusive of all faiths. Our annual Meditation Poetry Contest begins in October and runs through January. Details will be posted on our website at www.SpiritFirst.org in October.