

4 Free Verse

In memory of Margarete Cantrall

Sponsor: Beth Staas

Judge: Larry Turner, Fredericksburg VA

First Place Free Verse:

Glenna Holloway, Naperville IL

How to Get By

Since you have to start and end with something,
make it sound: the sound of caramel-colored
alto sax riffs sliding off hotcakes, trumpets
keening Amaretto and Java, pianos spraying
barbs of fire over a tough skeleton of drums.
Blend in verbena and mint from summer nights,
October moon dipped in satin-melt, fish
silvering to the surface to whisper whole notes,
quivering the lunar smear on rumpled black water.
Tune it to chiffon, warm clay, blue steel, always
keeping it malleable, infallible, indelible. Pour it
in the revved-up engine driving the solar machine.

Since you have to call it something, call it jazz,
Gershwin style, Charlie-Bird, Duke and Doc style.
Everything else insinuating into your ears,
your years, is unsound noise. Jazz comes together
as something you can move to, sit still to, kiss to,
milk cows to. You can heal to jazz, or die to it
when the time comes, easy-smiling like my Uncle Hal.

One note attracts another, forms a helix,
connects a cadence. People invented things to blow
and beat, bow and strum, concentrating layers
you can hear— never mind those you can't
or those secret increments of after-pulse
you can't quite feel,
all lending vibes to the parts you can.

Jazz harmonizes snow, lightning, gin, Jello,
a lemon look that says leave, a laugh that says love.
Some passages sing tears, ache-to-the-bone,

Love is the workings that describes this moment
uniting Mumtaz, Shah and me in Agra.
Does he know he's transformed me with this beauty?
Not one sand grain can enter holes he's chiseled.
Sandalwood made lace by an unknown artist
has centered me within a precious timepiece.

Hammer, chisel can arrest in a moment
all of the artistry found there in Agra.
Time I have learned is a piece of pure beauty.

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her curving ribs
enhanced her
thrust
insisted that she