



“Golden Ratio” by Emma Cinocca
1st Place, Poetry 16-18

the girl in the front of the classroom

cradles a leaf in the dip of her palm

as though it's the solution to the equation,

the lines drawn in glass condensation.

that is where the streetlamp flickers into death, screaming;

a firefly takes up sacrifice as its virtue and bears flame unparalleled.

the woman outside an elementary

school walks home on the precipice of a bassinet

and a sidewalk. her elbows are tethered to her sides

in the way a wick is to a candle, like gentility

maintained; the children inside are circling red rosies.

i too, learned nursery rhymes

as the mystery of burning, the witch trials

as necessity for the sake

of such feminine madness. between

the cracks in that street, a sapling births and is fostered

only until its inevitable withering; i watch

the undefined form of a man

stamp it into the cement with the toe of a polished

shoe. in the back of the classroom i gnaw the

end of my pencil until one of us erodes,

the bend is an equation with no solution,

and i cannot help my satisfaction

with a small failure, a slight chaos:

the classroom window—the outline of a ghost

and commitment to pattern—fogs over. another

streetlamp dies overhead, the silhouette of its

Christmas wreath losing shape.

the boxwood is unseeable this way,

left shrouded like a woman's humility

or the sapling's phyllotaxis, burning. it might as well

have been my own flesh by the scent of it.

the imposition of his dark suit jacket, the gum lining;

my stake has never looked so much like stems unfurling

in perfect fibonacci sequences—

0, 1, 1, 2, the numbers are uncountable with smoke-filled lungs

golden ratios atrophy to tarnished metal

and i have never longed so much not to be gold.