

**“Edgar Lee Masters, Writer”**

*by Mary Zachmeyer (Mt. Pleasant, IA)*

*The Edgar Award for Best Poem in the Competition*

I LAY here listening to buzzing locusts,  
Trees clapping in the wind, even the splash  
Of the river rushes up the hill and seems to touch  
My resting place. Entombed here are all those  
Who once walked in and out of my days,  
But now surrender their body and soul somewhere  
In this green and gray plot upon plot of land:  
The doctor who once tried to save a woman's life,  
Failed— only to lose all he had;  
The editor so heartless and cruel,  
God chose the worst lot for his end of days,  
A flow of decay worthy of his earthly actions  
Meanders over his grave; the judge  
And lawyer who each got what they wanted  
Whether it was right or wrong; and Minerva,  
The poetess, that only wanted to live and love  
Through her writing. Is life real  
Or just a Ferris wheel ride,  
Crashing through rights and wrongs?  
I wrote about them all yet I know no answers.

**"Jenny"**

*By Ashana Neale (Mount Vernon, NY)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Place – Youth Category*

That old oaf, Hon. Henry Bennett-  
Took my affection as sincere.  
A delicate rose, such as I,  
Deserves a man with tour de force and ambition.  
His deep passion for me overshadowed my artifice.  
For I saw a future with Willard Shafer  
Catered by my inheritance  
Left by my ex-lover  
And his heart kept him in the lie  
until it was too late.  
Roses break skin with their thorns.  
The beauty of the rose attracted its innocent prey  
And its arrow-like thorns gave its victim wings.  
Poor Henry-  
Slept with his poison  
And walked blindingly into his grave.

**“Butch’ Weldy’s Servant”**

*by Tiffany Le (Bronx, NY)*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Youth Category*

*Popular Vote Winner*

What would you have done?  
To have witnessed such a lewd act -  
How could he have possibly done something  
So horribly vile to her?  
The poor girl already suffered through so much  
And to think he "got religion".  
His routine was well known so  
May God have mercy on me for the justice I served.  
Nobody suspected any foul play and  
That it was really intentional.  
The judge determined it was an accident,  
But let me be the first to tell you  
That it was definitely no accident.  
It was more than just revenge.  
He got what he utterly deserved -  
Karma.

**"Mrs. Halmark"**

*by Dana Solitaire (Mount Vernon, NY)*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Youth Category*

Charlie came home late that night.  
And I, none the wiser  
To Nellie's trouble until her father  
Tried to murder my boy.  
Had he forgot our arrangement,  
Or was he blinded with fury.  
He left my boy alone  
Not long after I intervened.  
And poor Nellie forever marked unwanted.  
Charlie left me the following week,  
Omnipresent grief filled my remaining days.

**"Fulton County Legacy"**

*by Barbara Jenkins (Lewistown, IL)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Place – Adult Category*

*Popular Vote Winner*

Close your eyes, take a deep breath and  
Smell the fragrant up-turned earth.  
Blacker than black  
And rich like velvet or silk.  
Stop to scoop it up,  
Then let it loose between your fingers  
As a soft, light wind puts it gently back.  
The smiling farmer who always waved at passersby  
From the seat of his old blue tractor  
The popped an chugged along  
Has not been seen yet this spring.  
A newer, bigger and quieter tractor hums in the fields now  
His son waves to me as I pass by...

**"Julie Ann"**

*by Nicki Hazzard (Lewistown, IL)*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Adult Category*

I am on the hill but no one knows.  
I traveled across the ocean in the belly of a big ship,  
Nearly starved to death and the smell!  
14 I was, indentured as a governess for two of the sweetest little girls.  
Their Papa was the Banker of this small village,  
And their momma, poor soul, was not well.  
I was very happy...until late one night,  
Walking home alone from Wednesday night worship.  
I fought, I cried, and I died 9 months later.  
My benevolent employer buried me a little outside the fence here on the hill,  
'Twas only right.  
My boy will never know any different,  
Raised he was along with those precious girls.  
Now, he is the Banker.

**“Scottie Walker”**

*by Richard Hanson (Monmouth, IL)*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Adult Category*

My co-workers never had much use for me, contemptuously  
Referring to me as an "ass-kisser," or "company man."  
I always knew though that I was better than the "tunnel rats"  
That I had to work with. I was forced to leave the mines though,  
When some of the men discovered that I'd been turning in names  
Of union organizers and those miners sympathetic to joining one,  
To management. I feared that if I stayed after my role leaked out,  
That they'd find my body someday in some branch tunnel,  
My head caved in and a bloody chunk of anthracite beside me.  
There were men now who hated me and wanted to see me dead.  
The company brass took care of me though, getting me a new job  
As a Pinkerton dick. How I loved my new uniform! Two rows  
Of shiny brass buttons, a badge, a gun and a billyclub.  
As for the men who had little use for me as a co-worker,  
You think I didn't lay it on them when I got the chance to?  
Let me tell you this, you ambitious young men:  
You'll rise faster if you ally yourself with capital.  
You do its bidding and you'll reap rich rewards.  
You join a union and all you'll get is a club to the head.  
I rose to become Chief of the State Detective Bureau.  
I had a grand mansion on the hill with the other rich folk,  
And the boys at the club addressed me as "Mr." Walker.

**"To Love at Last"**

*by Pat Crommett (Lewistown, IL)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Place – Senior Category*

She was a world-class control freak.  
The ladies thought her sweet, witty, clever.  
The men found her charming.  
I feared that I would kill her.

One day it almost happened.  
I slapped her, hard, and found myself standing over her with my walking stick raised over her head.

She cried out to the family.  
My brother came running 200 miles and got her out of my house.  
My sister took her to an assisted-living near her home.

Wonder of wonders, I didn't kill her, And I was free of her.  
When she died at last, I was surprised to hear myself saying,  
"Now we can love her."

**"Alice Burge"**

*by Susan Hatton (Pekin, IL)*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Senior Category*

*Popular Vote Winner*

I was a cheerful girl, bright and full of life;  
My mother came from England, my father a stone mason.  
I married first at eighteen, was widowed twice while still young,  
Once by tragic accident, once by deadly Spanish flu,  
And left with seven children to raise alone.  
I took in washing, ironing, sewing, raised a garden, canned, made preserves.  
Mostly my family did without.  
Yet all my children finished high school, a major feat in those days.  
With two children still at home, I moved back to Lewistown  
To care for my widowed father who had gone blind.  
The hard, confining work continued on for years, as he lived to 91.  
I inherited his house, but had to take in boarders to survive.  
My children were now scattered over several states.  
I died alone in that house, was buried out on Oak Hill.  
Yet I left behind a legacy for all who carry my blood,  
Not gold or silver, jewels or such,  
But courage, grit, determination, commitment to what's right.  
It follows them wherever they roam, across the miles and years:  
My legacy – brave, dauntless hearts, strength of the pioneer.

**“Reverend Thomas Benton”**  
*by Vicky Dovenspike (Salem, IA)*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Senior Category*

The women who gave me life  
I never got to know  
The man who was my father  
Could never tell me so  
Sitting by the river  
Passing away the time  
Sometimes feeling the Spoon  
Was the only friend of mine  
But sorrows float away  
And peace I came to know  
As I learned to read the Bible  
The path I chose to go  
Sunday morn would find me  
Head bowed low in prayer  
Lost souls of Lewistown  
Would find me preaching there