

Category D - Individual Poem – Grades 9 & 10

**Bianca Zhou**

---

**“Paper is All Trees”**

I was born in the year they thought the world would end,  
When the people were selfish like wildlife they tell you not to feed.  
They said they wanted a child before they died,  
Even if their child died younger than they;  
And that, was a game, an achievement to be made,  
But when I was born, the world was smog and plastic.  
As if we were meant to be surrounded by  
The organized disaster of morning traffic, packaged lunch, and selfish nannies,  
The sparkling-bluish-purple Hula Hoops, the Easy-Bake Ovens, the stuffed bunnies, giraffes, tigers and pandas,  
The tiaras and trophies at the top of the shelf in the closet where no one can reach, the ice-skates  
leaning up against a wall of the garage in the hot summer next to the dusty pink Schwinn.  
Outside the grass rippled in all different directions like long hair, no intentions of impotence.  
The wind blowing east at chimes on front porches  
The red belly of humming birds whipping by like whirlpools,  
The lagoon brimming with mallards quacking for bread under gentle skies,  
And seagulls, with greedy eyes, their black-tipped wings dripping like wet paint  
There I patiently waited for the flesh and blood,  
For the punchline when I would say my words, when the tired ends came to means.  
That was the sallowness of where bones begin and counterfeit ends,  
But the smiles were marginal and  
My eyes were tempted to blink.  
There were times when I forgot my existence;  
I saw myself on stage with the painted faces, nude tights, and character shoes,  
The exaggerated expressions, the costumes that conceal actors that manipulate the minds.  
They kept the stage cold so the nervous heat didn't win,  
But on the stage I was not nervous;  
I was only cold,  
So I forgot  
Life beyond performance,  
The melting pot of flowers on the face of the hills, the rabbit dug railways underneath the ground,  
the soaked green cypress saplings, the banana slug kisses, with barked aspen with blonde leaves, and  
the sun setting, lowering toward the grasses, threatening to set them on fire.  
I forgot, that I, too,  
Am paper, once made from trees  
I think  
Sometimes that I see myself, growing beneath a canopy of branches  
Their limbs stealing the sunlight,  
And beneath the canopy, I reach past the height of the limbs around me  
Until I have room to  
Catch fire of the rising sun

Bianca Zhou

Dougherty Valley High School, Grade 10, Ms. Jaclyn Mann