Rebecca Pelky

Mowing the Lawn

Curled around myself I shuffle out of the shadowed glass door into overexposed August. For a moment my skin recalls the soothing cool incandescent interior of the clinic but summer presses me too close to her damp breast and I have to remember instead to force her thick breath into my lungs.

It’s just like mowing the lawn, he’d said, snipsnip the stems before they get too tall, but there will always be more seeds. The yard has to be tidy when the neighbors stop by.

Sweat beads my face, cramps contract my stomach and I lurch to the brittle lawn to heave. There is nothing left in my guts to expel. My fingers rake the dry grass, nails digging down for the fertile earth. The sharp stalks blur to mottled tan and I can’t help but wonder if with my tears they, at least, will grow.

Rosalinda Leyva

A Time to Watch

2008 Lester M. Wolfson 2nd

My grandfather is nearly blind. Walks with his hands extended in front of him, tries not to run into something that has been in the same place for forty years, like the china cabinet stacked with cantaritos and comales.

His walking stick hits a shoe box filled with plastic forks from restaurants. “Qué es eso?” “Tenedores.” I answer. He laughs for the first time in days. He walks outside with leftovers and I watch him feed rice and empanada to starving birds and stray cats. I think he does it searching for something—Life—Hope—Peace—

I don’t know, but I need my grandfather like he needs the birds.