

2015 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Poetry Category

First Place: *"I Am Not a Weapon,"* by Elizabeth Enos

I
Am not a weapon
To be used against myself.
These moments from my past
Are not knives
For you to stab into my soul,
Twisting the blade deeper with every scene.
This personality of mine
Cannot be torn into pieces
For you to shine a spotlight on;
I will not be made ashamed
Of the parts
That make my whole.

I am not a weapon
To be used against myself.
Beneath this face,
At the core of my being,
The foundation of this person I am
Is solid.
Built upon the corpses
Of the people I used to be,
Of the faces I used to wear
To escape the onslaught
Of a mind you turned against me

Once.

I am not a weapon
To be used against myself.
I took the sticks and the stones
And built the walls to protect
The recreation,
A rebirth from the ashes and destruction
You left in your wake.
And yes, I died
But a spark remained,
An ember to flare into existence
This person with the passion and the will
To survive, despite your efforts.

Here I stand.
A patchwork soul, once shredded,
Still haunted by the echoes of depression;
An uncertain mind once twisted,
Still questioning the meanings and intentions;
A puckered heart, crisscrossed with scars,
Still uncertain of the reality of love.
But try, if you feel the need,
To tear me from this place
I may not be perfect or complete
But I plant my feet firmly on this ground
And root myself to the truth of me:
YOU WILL NOT TOPPLE ME!

Because I am a weapon
That can be used against myself
No longer.

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

The speaker has a strong voice; the language is direct and concrete. The stanzas of the poem cover the other party, the history of the relationship, and the present: they are comprehensive. I think the poem would be even more powerful if it were condensed, while maintaining the various dimensions of the current version. As a reader, I don't need the line that is all in caps. The writer has more than made her point!

*Catherine Frerichs is retired after many years of teaching writing, literature, and other humanities courses at Glen Oaks Community College, Albion College, and, most recently, Grand Valley State University. She is the author of *Desires of the Heart: A Daughter Remembers Her Missionary Parents* (Cold River Studio, 2010), in which she uses her parents' letters, journals, and other research to write about her parents' 40 years of working in Papua New Guinea and the costs to their children. Currently, she is working on a book that explores her relationship with her three Sudanese children whom she foster-parented for seven years and who have remained her children.*