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2010 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

Seven Tree Rings

Ticonderoga #2

The mustard yellow
pencil broken
off
jagged broken brown
shards of rough wood
sticking into my
hand while I
try
to scribble my name
eraserless

10:51 AM

Polished

Deep

Red mahogany

Reflects the blinding morning sun

Eggshell

White

face of grandfather

blemished with black faded hours

seconds

tick

brown hands creak; resist

internal war of rusted gears

Thirty Variations with Marion

My splintered fingers slide elegantly down the *barre*
and my ingrown and blistered toes in satin shoes stretch to a beautiful point
my bruised and twisted knees under my pale pink tights hyperextend to the perfect degree
and my hip sockets pop and creak from the stress under my black cotton leotard
yet the limit of my pain
is not enough for Miss Marion
she demands for my soul to be on the tips of my fingers
on the tops of my toes; on the edge of my tutu
for twenty-nine days I struggle to find a connection I know is there
my *pors de bras* and *promenades* fall short of the expectations of a grumpy British ex-ballerina

The thirtieth day I slip into the pale lilac practice tutu and step out onto the beaten marley
Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake fills the room as emotion erupts from the depths within me
my aggravation, frustration, pain, and fear...
the last note hangs in the air, and on Marion's face a single tear

Camping on Bull Island

White trembling hands grip the splintered driftwood

A weapon against the phantom mountain lion shrinking back

Into the dark murky reeds of the swamp

A Ride with Myrtle

I throw open the screen door
and my brown boots clogged
with red clay
bang across the back porch's chipped gray painted pine
and clomp through the gravel and grass
to throw open Myrtle's dented door

I crank down her stubborn windows and grip the steering wheel
as her engine roars to life and we rattle off down the dirt road

We barrel into the shadowy woods
as bent maple branches scrape her sides
and oaks' roots send Myrtle into a series of wild bumps
we careen to the bottom of the field when her engine dies

The wind ripples through the tall moist emerald grass
and a thousand yellow sunflowers arch towards the late afternoon sun
their petals bursting with light
the quiet filled with the breeze whistling through the giant leafy trees
where birds fly from limb to limb
and the wind gently weaves through the shade and sun
a field in the woods
softly transforms
into a tranquil clearing
surrounded by a luscious jungle
awaiting a lioness

Degas

The ballerinas perform a *grande allegro pas de trios*
transformed from three beautiful dancers
to three blossoming fairies
they soar to incredible heights
the bright white tulle of their tutus floats
from the air of an invisible enchanted breeze
and the trio lands its flight with only the quiet wooden sound of pale pink satin pointe shoes
and they *pirouette* and *glissade* around the gold ornate mirrors of the royal garden before they
joyfully *grand jeté* off stage left

Into the wings

They are smacked with the colossal empty blackness
and the cold hard stare from the depths of the shadow of a man
whirling gloom and bending silhouettes consume the dancers
and they are surrounded
by tornados of dust and murky light
the fairies lose their wings and the brilliant white bodices become caked with sinister grime
the three flail out
clinging to the only thing near
the false security
of the black ghostly thing
in a gentleman's top hat

The Redwood

The coast redwood's cracked bark
broken and jagged
arches its way up to the noon sky
Her roots thick hollow vacuums
sucking nutrients from the red clay
suffocating the smaller, weaker oaks

Growing taller, stronger

Midnight plummets from the depths of the red clouds
the blackness swallows her trunk and limbs
shrinks her roots to shriveled bent toothpicks
she teeters precariously
on the edge
of a cracked cliff

The fate of her people slamming her saturated, decrepit branches towards the black dirt

Bankers and investors scramble
from root to root
trying desperately to stabilize her
and families grip her limbs
splintered fingernails dug into her rotten bark
she inches closer to the cliff
the deep emerald ocean waves collide
with charcoal gray boulders at the base of the sudden drop

The ear piercing split of wood
the heart wrenching snap of her boughs
she lurches forward

But

Grips the earth by the exhausted tip of a root
and lives to fight
through another night of the unexpected storm