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"Consolation Prize"

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Consolation prize



Laurie MacDiarmid (English)

A collection of poems by **Laurie MacDiarmid** (English) bested more than 300 entries to win the 2011 Georgetown Review Poetry Manuscript Contest, the first of its kind.

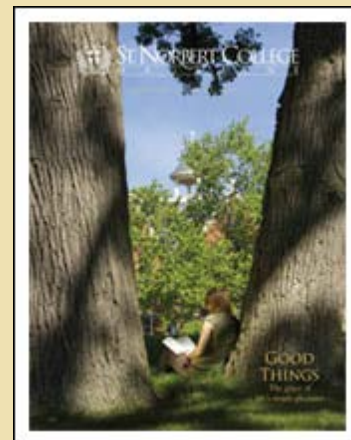
The poems in "Consolation Prize," written over the course of 20 years, relate a daughter's loss after her father's early death from cancer, and how his absence shaped other family lives. The five poems published here are reproduced by kind permission of Georgetown Review Press.

Two Roads

*And if something is broken this afternoon,
and if something descends or creaks,
it is two roads, curving and white.
Down them my heart is walking on foot.*
- César Vallejo

The afternoon he died,
April snow frosted the brown bushes
and a weak sun leaked through the tinted hospital windows
onto the bed where he lay,
sprawled in antiseptic sheets,
the loamy dreams in his head broken
by the tumor's indifferent fingers.

I wasn't there but
I imagine Mom sat next to him, holding his hand.
And I imagine the moment when
he paused, hanging in the doorway between
our world and that other—
I imagine he looked up at her with his
squinty blue eyes (my eyes), and maybe
he smiled, said "I'm tired" or "be good"
or even "the sun feels nice on my legs,"
before, as a sparrow's shadow
flickered across the glass,
he left his body.



Look here for web-exclusive content that expands on topics presented in the current St. Norbert College Magazine.



The St. Norbert College Strategic Research Institute
David Wegge (Political Science) speaks about the evolution of the former Survey Center.



Commencement 2011
A gallery of images celebrates a fine day to remember.



Commencement speaker, author David Maraniss
The Pulitzer Prize-winner addresses the Class of 2011.



On friendship
Friends **Paul Wadell** and **Howard Ebert '74** (Religious Studies) discuss their own connection in the light of Wadell's work on friendship in the Christian life.



A question of happiness
Leanne Kent (Philosophy) speaks on classical and contemporary conceptions.



Well-remembered

Across town,
I waddled out of the house
into the frozen front yard,
stiff and clumsy in my padded suit and
rubber boots:
a small astronaut
setting out from her ship
across an empty moon,
step after careful step into the Sea of Loneliness.
Untethered. Weightless.

I Lie Face Down

sucking in the stale stink of my own
sick spit,
mump-swollen,
light-headed, throat tight,

floating the summer afternoon
on a fever raft,
like Huck set free
on the muddy river,

words and half dreams
and sad unsung songs
pushing with sticky sun
the curled window shades

against their dusty sills.
In the kitchen below, Mom
clangs a pot
against the sink

and it echoes her
hollow anger.
Children shriek and laugh
on a faraway street,

dancing loose,
forgetting their parents.
A stair cracks—
bang—

and then the next one
groans, complains
under Daddy's unbearable
weight.

Redemption

After the benediction, the daffodils grieve,
heaving cups of shade in tiny sighs
over the rustling congregation.

The gold-tipped candles, paralyzed,
twist up a disappointed smoke
as the grandmothers dispatch with their hymnals

Jim Benton (Sociology), **Jim Hodgson** (Biology) and **Donald Taylor** (Art) say what St. Norbert College has meant to them.



“Consolation Prize”

Read a sample of poems from this new collection by **Laurie MacDiarmid** (English).



The art of collaboration

Brian Pirman (Art) and **Leivur Djurhuus '12** talk about their recent installation in the Godschalx Gallery.



Let the music sound

The **Rev. Bartholomew Agar, O.Praem., '55** (Music, Emeritus) performs at the abbey church.



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and float out into the aisle's chatter,
iridescent hats streaking blue and purple along
the sliding light.

Frowning, Grandma Schorr plows a path
to the pastor, who stands, hand outstretched,
stiff in the doorway's glare.

Grandma gives it a tug as she blasts across the stoop and
drags us into the blinding wash
of Buckeye Boulevard.

We bob in her wake, dancing rowboats—
Everything dances—
even Grandma,

navy pumps creaking,
hem beating swollen knees.
And under the waltzing oaks, the other grandmothers

try to reel us in with taut lines—
take eat I made it
just this morning—

but Grandma puffs through their midst,
making a bee-line to the faded Caddy at the curb
where Grandpa Schorr waits.

Grandma hones in, pulling us away from
a world risen today
from a single benediction,

from ash and bone,
from the cracked shoes of women
like Grandma

who have walked leather to gasping
and the ground below
into water

so that one day we may
fall into it—

as Grandma sighs now and tips,
arms out, eyelids sinking,
into her husband's coughing Cadillac.

American Movies

Every Sunday afternoon
we watched American movies
between power outages.

Over yellow subtitles,
feathered Indians—
dozens of nameless extras—
waved their bows and arrows,
screamed with one voice
from their ring of horses,
menacing the blue-suited cavalry,

while John Wayne directed the cowboys
crawling up from the rear
toward their next killing spree,
drawling orders in his languid
Texas diction,
a voice that shivered
through my thin white skin,
until the Indians fell from their horses
in slow motion, gurgling,

and Dad lounged in front of it all
half-naked, belly-white,
sprawled out in a tattered bathrobe
across his leather easy chair
like an hacienda boss
played by an aging Orson Welles,
stirring his gin martini with a thick
index finger.

During those years, the Indians'
silenced screams
pursued me,
welled up in the dark around me like
footsteps in an empty alley.

Lying in bed, I heard
their murmuring voices
in language liquid as spiced hot chocolate,
the scraping sounds of
sliding shadows, and
those blank moments after the credits
and before THE END,
a slither on the front step,
a light knock at the door,
the measured breath and thumping heart
of someone waiting for me there,
someone hungry and faceless, someone
I will be compelled to embrace.

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Laurie MacDiarmid teaches courses in fiction writing, poetry writing, creative writing and contemporary literature. Her poetry has been published in numerous books and journals. She herself has served as the assistant editor for the Three Rivers Poetry Journal, editor-in-chief for the Sonora Review, and assistant editor for the Arizona Quarterly.

