

2012 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Poetry Category

First Place: “*Never & Always,*” by Dawn Leden

Never to rock you to sleep again
Always to hold close that last night of cuddles

Never to feel your weight in my arms
Always to keep your spirit alive in my heart

Never to watch you grow into a man
Always to number you as one of my children

Never to see all those milestone birthdays
Always to have those “what if” moments

Never to see that baby smile again
Always to cherish my memories of you

Never to hear you say “I love you”
Always to be honored you chose me as your Mommy

Never without you by my side
Always watching over me from above

Never to hold you again on earth
Always to know when my days are over you’ll be there to lead me home

Never to forget you!
Always to remember you!

Never to feel I can’t talk about you
Always to say your name

I love you Joshua
Love, Mommy

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

"Never and Always" tackles difficult, emotional subject matter—the death of the poet's son. The poet speaks directly to her son, telling him what she will remember about him and what she misses. She makes effective use of repetition, each stanza beginning with the word "Never" and ending with "Always;" the repetition of these words evokes the timeless nature of grief. The poet closes the piece in a way that makes the poem double as a letter to her son. While she discusses ways she will remember her son throughout the poem, the poem itself serves as an additional means of tribute.

Elissa Cahn was the contest judge. She is an MFA Fiction student at Western Michigan University, where she teaches composition and serves as the nonfiction editor for Third Coast. Her work has appeared in: NANO Fiction, Midwestern Gothic, Harpur Palate, and Quarterly West. She is currently at work on a story collection.