

First Prize Poetry, High School Division

Protection

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Heavy footsteps grow closer,
Each uneven step accompanied by the crunch of crushed beet leaves,
Rows and rows of beets grow wild,
Concealing beneath them a girl.

Her heart thumps wildly,
She dare not move, lest he spot her,
Melting into the ground she lets the large leaves envelop her,
Accepting their comfort.

They have come for her once again,
But the leaves will not let them take her,
If she must die, she will die with her mother,
Not like this, alone.

The officer's strength is his gun,
Her strength is her faith,
Her faith and trust in these leaves will protect her,
As they did the time before.

Footsteps fade to silence,
Silence rings angrily, loudly, relentlessly,
The roar is deafening as she waits for the footsteps to return,
They never come back.

Time finds her hours later,
Seated in the field of beets,
She does not wipe the dirt off her dress,
The marks are an honor, as are the stains of purple.

The purple dye swirls in my plate,
Staining my fingers and leaving marks on my clothes,
I stare at the taciturn vegetable before me,
The beets still betray no secrets.

Never have I seen such beauty.