

COBIS Poetry Competition 2025/26

Through Another's Eyes

Key Stage 3 Winner

Little Hands, Big World

I wake before the sun,
before the city yawns and runs.
My feet know every crack, every puddle, every lack,
every tin that clatters with coins I cannot hold.

I hold my stomach tight, like a secret in the night,
like the emptiness is mine to keep,
like hunger is a shadow that follows me deep.
People pass—
shiny cars, shiny shoes, shiny lives—
and I am small,
so small I could vanish in their halls.

I watch children march in neat array,
their laughter spills like light of day,
while I count shadows on the walls,
shadows that echo my own quiet calls.

Sometimes a coin drops from a hand,
I catch it as if it were land.
I close my eyes,
let it warm me for a while,
then drop it in my pocket
because even hope can be heavy to carry a mile.

I have learned to read the eyes:
those that look past, those that pity, those that disguise
their glance with a shove, a turn, a frown,
and the rare ones who lift me, not letting me drown.

I have a mother who folds her dreams tight,
who shrinks herself small,
so I might stand tall,
in a world that gives none at all.
I have siblings whose bellies are quiet from practice, not food,
yet they laugh, still,
because laughter is cheap,
and joy is a shield in a world so steep.

Sometimes I imagine a house,
where bread is plenty, not a spouse of hunger and dust.
Sometimes I imagine my hands full of crayons,

In partnership with:

my shoes clean, not tattered from the dawns,
my hair brushed, not knotted with pain.

But I am here.
And here is real.
The streets speak in cracks and cries,
in engines and tap-tap of worn-out thighs,
in the smell of burnt fuel,
in the shadows of walls too high to duel.

I do not know tomorrow,
and sometimes I do not dare to borrow
its promise or its light,
because tomorrow might only be another fight.
But still,
I carry the small fire of me,
a fire my mother placed,
a fire that refuses to be erased.

I am small,
but I remember the colour of mangoes bright,
the laughter of birds that take flight,
the taste of rain on my tongue,
the song of life that is yet unsung.

One day,
these streets will bend for me.
One day,
my hands will hold more than hunger,
my voice will rise from cracks in the stone,
and no one will ever look past me alone.

Until then,
I walk, I count, I dream,
I carry my mother's hope,
my siblings' laughter,
my own stubborn little heart.
And though the world does not bend for me,
I bend toward it anyway,
because even small hands
can hold the weight of fire,
even small hearts
can carry the sun.

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