

2023 Winning Poems Adults

Girl

She was so beautiful.
Her skin like a lake at night, perfumed with flowers,
reflecting the stars.
That is why the snakes came
drawn by her perfection.
The hand reaching out is already too late.
And even her sheltering god cannot protect her
From the inevitable
unfolding.

- *Patricia I Wathen*

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Word Smack

You whistled at me from your open car window
as you slowly drove past my house.
I was sitting on the porch, my throne,
overlooking life emerging from my spring garden—
a contrast to your uninvited serpent's gaze and flash of tongue.

Whistling again, this time gesturing with your hand,
you thought you could lure me?
You were wrong.
This woman is keenly aware of the hidden venom in your hand.
Instead of expected compliance, you
got **this** woman's harsh words,
hurled at you from my mouth like a rock,
smacking **your** ear for a change.

And renewal resumes.

- *Caroline Brooks*

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Ascension: Black Girl with Snakes

This black girl is going full-out goddess.
Since childhood, she has been levitating—
lifting any fearless creature right along with her.
Snakes uncoil and break through ground
to rise as followers of her black flowering sunshine.
Hummingbirds escort her ascension.

The world tries to close in, presses downward
with gilded frame and green fence-board
keen to restrain and restrict her might.
But, this black girl holds the mirrors.
She will not be held back from full divinity.

Keep rising, Ebony One.
Embolden our spirits, enlighten our sight.
- *Cyra Sweet Dumitru*