

Winning Poem

The Study of Life

By Joel Bush

The professor points her laser at the diagram
of a cell. It looks like a purple tennis ball split open.
She waves her arms in wide circles,
and makes quick slashes in the air.
Her voice goes up and down like a
rickety seesaw.
She always tries to make it interesting
by saying that biology is the study of life.
I need to get out of this bomb shelter
and feel the sun on Sarah's hands again.
I survey the room with its white walls and dingy desks.
Kaylee's surfing the Sephora sale on her ASUS.
Brian's hoping his mom and dad
will love him a little more if he can pull out a B on the final.
Britney's still pissed her financial aid
hasn't come through. It'll be another long week of apples, cereal,
and canned beans.
We finally escape, stumbling up
into the bright California afternoon.
A *Danaus plexipus* flutters
by my shoulder.
I make my way across the
silica, alumina, and lime, and sit next to Sarah.
She nestles her cranium on my sternum.
I wonder how much that textbook can really
tell me about life.