

Alumno

By Kate Mullikin

An old student chum
Of yours just told me about
Your untimely death.

He was disgusted.
He said they shot you
In the head and chest -

I guess my shot at guiding you
Away from a violent life didn't take.

I knew you when you were 13 going on 30
And now you're gone at 29
And I feel as if my heart will break.

You used to laugh, as you'd beat me at baraja
And you played that mariachi trumpet
Like you were the king of corridos.

I can hear you play it now.
I can hear the excitement in your voice
The day you discovered "Flight of the Bumble Bee."

I am remembering you buzzing around our campus
Singing, laughing, helping to bring your band
To the school-wide Cinco de Mayo festival.

I am watching you reach across a crowd of
Family and friends to make sure
That you shake my hand
On your graduation day -

Reassuring me, loudly and proudly,
That you'll never get mixed up
With people in gangs.

I miss you Alumno.

A Graduation Wish

By Kate Mullikin

I wish for you
A day when you are satisfied
A place where you feel wanted
A moment when you realize
You can live a life undaunted

I wish for you
A home that is not shelter
A quiet place to read
A thought that might spark desire
A reason to succeed

I wish for you
A word of praise from a parent
A high-five from a friend
A high school teacher to lift you up
A passion that never ends

I wish for you
A day without Facebook
A night without Gameboy
An hour without texts
I hope that you can date and dance
And find romance
Without immediately having sex

I wish for you not
To drink and drive
Or get mixed up in drugs
Go get mixed up in words and art
Go give and get more hugs

I dream that you will love yourself
And discover what you're worth
And that you feel it's worth it
To make a better life on earth.

Instructions from an Urn

By Kate Mullikin

I'm tired of noticing you out of
The corner of my eye
When I open the linen closet
To grab a towel.
"Release me!" that's what I hear you howl.
But again I shut the door.

Since you've been gone, it seems there's been
No time for rituals; plane fares are too expensive
And besides, you never told me
What to do with the rest of you dad.
And I didn't want to think about it any more.

Yet just yesterday, I awoke hearing you shouting
Instructions from inside the urn,
"Dump these old dead bones
Ground down to a pulp
On a shelf in your home
Ground yourself,
And there will be more space for my song."

That urn will be gone tomorrow,
Along with two years residual sorrow.