

*TO HOLD A MOMENT
STILL*

HARBINGER ASYLUM's
Special Holidays Anthology

2014

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First Edition

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STILL*

HARBINGER ASYLUM's
Special Holiday Anthology

2014

*Stains of red in the snow-
Christmas cactus petals
shaken from a mop*

– Ronald Baatz –

OPENING STATEMENT

This is Harbinger Asylum's fourth year of bringing the poetry community a wide spectrum of wonderful poets! This anthology showcases the best of 2013-14 and poetry on the theme of "holding a moment still."

There are three sections: Pickering's Pick from the first two issues of both years, Wise's pick from the last two issues, and a third section reserved for the theme of the anthology.

I would love for each of the poets to share this anthology with friends and family. This is something we can all be proud to enjoy. Our first anthology, From One Sphere to Another, is available from Amazon.com also.

I have been asked by more than one person what the epigraphs opening From One Sphere to Another mean, what possibly could I have been trying to say? Since this mystery leaves the reader very confused, I must give a hint. Think about the title in relationship to the music of the spheres. Then treat life itself as a labyrinth only a hero can escape. Each moment is a poem- a word after a word after a word- like Margaret Atwood defined language's power. We inscribe these moments in our hearts; imperfect as life shows itself to be, the day of our birth may be the greatest miracle to us.

I attempted a metaphor with the seemingly random quotes inscribed in From One Sphere to Another. It is the reader's decision whether or not I succeeded.

Daedulus's grief for his son after Icarus's downward plummet is a representation of this birth, this miracle: each of us is temporary to our standing in the world, of the world. A poet, in the heart, will grieve because of this mortality.

Let us celebrate the moments we live by, let us continue to dream. Our lives are beacons toward the future, promising our posterity wisdom and the power of creating hope.

Enjoy!

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PICKERING'S PICK

Editor-in-Chief

I Want to Give

Daniel Aguirre

An intuition.

I want to give you everything that I didn't have as a child. All that was not given to me from anybody or anything. I want to give you that which was given to me from father Helios The Word spoken from deep beneath the soil that caresses the sea. The immeasurable value for all that was and is becoming. From the beginning came the end and the end is the becoming. Forgive me if I speak in riddles but the blessed few that know are who these words are intended for. I will my becoming because my will is compelled. Being is androgynous (antinomial) – the ever vanishing moments. Like Christ I am crucified on the quaternary and am subject to the principles that loom over me. A fountainhead and the source of all life.

Spirit in the House
Patricia Oliman Longoria

puff...puff
exhale smoke...
vapors formed you
as real as the fire
from which you
you were born...
no...not from brimstone
but from man's passion
of pure desire...
creating my transformation
into one of happenstance...
that of a fated moth
flirting...gliding
with your subtle
charmingly charged
magnetic heat
sensing my fate...
I smooth your force
loose altitude
suddenly descend
falter
lost
without your lighted warmth
alone
in cold dark
I...like the moth
give no thought
returns to your flame...
Destiny.

In-A-God-A-New-Vita

Daniel Garcia Ordaz

Poor wretch. It refused team in shores.
Why people want to come here, I don't know.
Crashing mosaic fluttering destiny,
Ramp and indulgent strangers energized by time

Why people want to come here? I don't! No!
Instinctive double-cross of oceans leaves. Love's behind.
Rampant indulgent strangers, the energized, buy time.
Into one another we must feed.

Instinctive doubt. Crossing ocean leaves loves behind.
Hunt and gather luggage, gun, and blanket.
In two, one. Another we must feed.
Compass, compact Bible, community.

Hunt and gather lug. Gauge gun and blank it.
Faceless names on tiered family trees.
Come. Pass . Come, packed Bible. Come, Unity.
Genetic disconnection—planned in retrospect.

Face less names. On, tired family trees!
Foreign heirs air different goals.
Genetic disc connection planned in retro specs.
Poor: wretched refuse teaming shores.

Promesas to the Dead

Poeta Power

If time could stop I'd hug you.
Embrace your fragility.
I would be a miracle worker.
I would be an eraser.
I would suspend.
I would mend.
I would be illogical.
I would feel you breathe, again.
We would be microscopic. Myopic.
We would harmonize.
No one would ever doubt hope.
No one would ever die.

Brighteyes

Eva Xanthopoulos

I peeled the film coating from my eyes
in my sleep and as I woke, I heard
archaic tongues chirping in backdrop
of ambiance. I gazed at the outward
world and saw more than trees naked
of all their leaves. More than snow
evenly coating the geo-floor.
The world is anew. For my view
'tis no longer obstructed by destructive
lens. Veils never suited brighteyes.

Grand Illusion

Susan Summers

I. Isolation

This life is the grand illusion.
This life is but a temporary stay
where we dream of terrifying monsters
and invite them into our home,
paying for the privilege of their
entertainment value in our living rooms.
The murders, adulterers, thieves and
idol worshipers become our living idols.
We invite them all inside.
When the false prophets cry and tell us
of salvation and damnation,
we pay them too.
We do not know our neighbor,
but we know every sordid detail
of every deceptively beautiful creature
Living a fantasy life under the lights
that never cease shining upon them.
We walk away from the sick,
the poor, the suffering
to spend more time with the electrons
which form pictures and words
for our pure entertainment.
We are richly entertained and poor in spirit.

II Condemnation

The final judgment is not to condemn us.
We condemn ourselves to lives of poverty-
to lives of guilty pleasures, indulgences and shame,
to lives of isolation and artificial intelligence
with artificial body parts.
Even our lips are filled

with unnatural substances and
we scorn the natural to create
a mask of paint and plastic.
Our bodies are mutilated and disfigured
and become unrecognizable to ourselves.
Inside the beautiful flask, there is no water or wine
only hollow echoes of a life drained of all its essence.

III Torment

The final judgment is a recapitulation experience
where we fully develop, reclaim our power
and are able to see the beauty of each living cell.
In this illusion, even our children are taken from us
so that we can create idols to trade for other idols
our food is created by pollution and blood from foreign lands.
Taken from windows, it offers no nourishment.
It lacks vitality and when we consume it,
it takes our own vitality from us.
We put greater importance on the things
that are even more temporary than our temporary stay.
We live in lies and nightmares and pharmaceutical escapes
while our souls are tormented and hollow as the most beautiful
flask with a crack along its base.

IV Restoration

The final judgment is a reconciliation
of the nightmare we are dreaming to the life of living in harmony
with the Holy God of the un-dream, the true living God.
We will be restored to pure spirit and filled with everlasting joy.
The old earth must end; the new earth is the awakening.
This life is the illusion.

*Note: This poem was inspired by Book of Revelation and influenced by
Styx "The Grand Illusion" written by Dennis DeYoung*

New Moon

Poetessa Leixyl Kaye Emmerson

Silver shrilled tongue
of the moon
Leaping feverishly,
fondly, through
incorruptible doom.
Swaying softly,
the milky madness
of moon-eyed charms,
greeting saddled sadness
from arms.
Lapping faintly,
creeping feignedly,
through crescent corridors,
mooring Equestrienne Titled shores.
Looming moon gate dreams
adorn, indexed death
of children scorned.
Piercing,
Penetrating,
Lulling moonscape sleep,
crawling back from
Deep Weep;
Waning moon kindness,
Thieving blindness.

As We Wait For the Lights to Turn Green

Emily Sorrells

behind our backs the water beams
and pulses
to the tug
of the moon, that captures
your fuzzy hair
in a way
that frames you
like that waned satellite
lost
in a sailor's
gaze

Dancing Up Main Street

Ria Meade

He is not Fred Astaire.

I'm not Ginger Rogers.

He is Spencer, I am his partner.

He has four legs, a slick-looking black coat,
elegance and rhythm.

I have only two legs, one a smidge short,
much taller,
can't see a damn thing.

And everyday we do a dance routine,
up Main Street.

I don a bright frock, his harness straps on,
my left hand grips the handle.

His gentle tug leads me to the dance floor,
Main Street.

Our background musical score -
Horns blaring, jackhammers pounding,
gears grinding, teenagers rapping,
energy vibrating.

Four months of practice,
I struggle to learn Spencer's footwork,
new partner
new style.

When gliding from block to block,
intent on sensing each other's moves,
I feel a waltz.

Being it Spencer and me,
probably, a visual boogie-woogie.

Our steps often vary, feet missing puddles
with jazzy zigzagging.

Spence takes the lead, I follow.

We have purpose, independence,

happy hearts,

happy feet.

Arriving home, we bow, thank one another.

Give a kiss,

get a lick.

Thinking of our dance -

up and down and around our town -

he is my Fred Astaire!

I Remember

Vanessa Zimmer-Powell

I remember
the powerful muscle
of the ocean
a footprint in the sand
the flat slap of feet
against cold wet rocks
an echo
night
stars
moonlight filtered in and out
of the crevices of our silhouette
of nature's silhouette
breathing
with the powerful muscle
of the ocean
the hush
the roar
the hush
the roar
the hush

A defining moment

Charles Portolano

Haven't seen Wendy Sue
since high school,
but when she sees me
at our 20th reunion
she brings her husband
over to meet my wife.
I instantly flashback
to being seven years old,
in second grade,
on the playground,
seeing those three bullies,
who had picked on me
unmercifully
since kindergarten,
now making fun of
Wendy Sue's pink glasses,
calling her "fatty."
Something snapped in
the back of my brain
as I found myself
standing up to these three
who had become my enemy.

Standing between them
and the crying Wendy Sue,
I wasn't sure what I was
about to do and I knew
they could beat me down,
but I puffed out my chest,
stared them in their eyes,
'enough is enough'
I glared out loud, watching
them to my surprise
back away. To this day
I'm not sure why,
but I loved the gleam
seen in my wife's eyes
when Wendy Sue told
of my standing up for her.

Cinnamon and Chicory

Deb Akers

watching sunrise
through the barn slats
smelling morning coffee
spiced with cinnamon
thick with chicory

shadow ghosts wonder
buttery light billows in
painting a figure, fleshing it
in sunbeams and hay motes
a silhouette in umber, a horse
the color of dried blood
his cinnamon breath
warming my cheek

i wake to find
no barn, no horse
no cinnamon breath
just an ordinary morning
sun-drenched flannel sheets
recalling velvet-muzzled pony
cinnamon and chicory

Survival Lesson

Marcie Eanes

It breaks his heart to struggle
not to buy the world for his wife and children
High school sweethearts, their love has endured much
But these hard times crush spirit
He drinks his failures;
wails in wee hours for ancestors's help
More frustration sets in when he hits another wall
Plea after plea, hustle after hustle
Nothing seem to bring more cash
Dejected and tired, he doubts God hears or cares....

She immerses self in intimate meditations
intertwining fragrant incense with Bible teachings
Hoping Lord Jesus carries them through
Stretching pennies inside hard luck stew
Her shoulders balance extra weight
for babies's sake
Keeping food, shelter, clothes
a must in lost wage hell

Another dreary day the second
eyes open in shared space
Seems escape from despair won't appear
Avoidance is first choice
to keep truce
Doing whatever it takes
Not to let children see their pain
Or desperation dogging their every step....
In secret, both question how love
can overcome again
Slivered breakthrough links vibrant history shared
in each other's arms

A kiss recalls how strong they stood
when world twisted bond in other storms
Connected, they drink the bitters from this test
in small sips until sweet relief overflows shared cup
Fortune's faith gives victory
neither could savor without surviving life-changing trial

Worry Doll

Elina Petrova

On Christmas I listened to Pope Francis
and a Texan pastor whose wife, as we speak,
has been for seven weeks in intensive care.
Both of them talked about the power of prayer –
how to light inner peace from the higher candle
and soar above circumstances. A massive
children's railroad hummed in the church lobby.
Tiny people waved from porches of marshmallow-
roofed cottages to a train passing the Alps.
Taller people snapped selfies with cellphones –
especially where the train on a flyover arrived
above plastic palms to the manger in Palestine.

So did I - mesmerized by snowflakes
and the promise of a delayed miracle.
Then I closed my eyes, and saw white antelopes
turning into nurses, walking soundlessly
in shoe covers into the ward of the pastor's wife
to fix her plastic tubes. The light was harsh.
I wished peace to every soul, at least oblivion
kinder than the snow that meekly dressed
stacks of pale bodies slit up in Bosnia one distant winter –
I thought of things I didn't mean to think this Christmas,
because my country split, and million lighters
from night to night waved in the frosted square.

A little girl gave me her worry doll -
a tiny cloth doll, *muñecas quitapenas*,
to whom a child confined her unrequited prayers.
"Lay me under your pillow to have a good sleep" –
said the doll with the girl's squeaky voice,
and continued in my undertone,
"I shall splash your worries in the waterfall
iridescent with tears of others. I shall
bring your phoenix egg through winged gardens
to the solar navel of the baby-Earth
where all that worried you, will become my poem."

Drunken Boat
Chicory Poetry

After all my endless eternal seasons
hell - quagmire - damnation & doubts
illuminations of my mortal transgressions
from foreign foggy foothills - moors & lowlands - swamps
random acts of the intoxicating stenching wilted flowers
of evil deeds - doubts dubious desperation
sweating raging rivers - drowning
in tumultuous currents of dreadful dancing demons
philosophers say there is no hell
but nay they err- for I have carefully constructed my own
into the murky depths of isolation - solitude
my drunken boat slowly sank into oblivion

A Thirst to Stay

Billie Hill

Is the shoreline melting from soft juicy kisses that the ocean
Fetches in on the long arms of waves, caressing distressing
shoulders, fading woes

I saw the stiff then soupy sand grab the waves' hands
Squeeze tight, soak all it could
Unconvinced, both retreated against their will

Stayed behind, just a little lather, white, bubbling foam,
(The head of leadership collapsing),

Sweating, palpitations
Lingering, lusting more
Defecting only when old winds have blown over
Virgin air ripens carrying salt for old wounds

Vacuum Sails

Lemon Ad

"Some will never be happy where they are, or with what they have. They are searching, for things they don't like, about any situation, any person, any job. Eternal searchers set sail into the sky of loveless seas, harsh scorching sun. They are eternally searching. Eternal searchers, enjoy your darkness sails of isolation and doom. The world, and all the love in it, isn't good enough for you. Your souls are vacuums. Vacuum sails...."

WISE'S PICK

Assistant Editor

The Crossroad...

Ioanna Balaoura

Where the sun rises,
where two cultures meet,
where East and West kneel,
we sit and watch Anatolia's rise.
On Vosphorus sea our dreams parade
and our lost home country we salute from afar.
The crossroad of our heart is split apart.
Eternal enemies wanted us to be so far.
But what if in our veins it were the same blood that flows?

Where the eyes cross,
where the Greek epic meets Istanbul's child,
where tales and stories on bonfires take part,
we smile and count the ember days of a hidden love.
Anatolia nights sway in a magic dance under red sky.
Baglama and tsifteteli go hand in hand onto Aegean Sea
sending sensual beats in every heart that dies little by little.
The crossroad of our heart lies hidden onto marble seas.
What if a love lies hidden onto this eternal hatred?

Living in Lost

Rev. Jane Wenninger

Pride forces broad smiles
While Lostness Monsters
Gnaw our feet off.

Gatsby (Poet Muttering Paintings)

Jeremiah Walton

Living would come more natural
If I could believe I was the son of God

I swear
If I could put faith in Gatsby
I could make wrench love with Hope
It'd be wholesome, love
you find in commercials
leaving you with an uncomfortable feeling,
an understanding
that will die too often,
re-incarnated, no Buddha.

(I was supposed to be cloned.

The clone was supposed to be labeled with tattoo.

I awoke tattooed.)

Hope's body is a town of ghosts
tourists wander her early morn
before coffee shops open
and last call drinkers hang up.

Her heart is birds caught in aftermath of rocket,
sounds of red red roses
exhausting in a cage.

I swear
I was born to be living

but not much else.

One

Marcie Eanes

A warrior died today
Peaceful rest deserved after turbulent life
A person who didn't buy the notion
that different equaled less
Or no system could change
Breaking away from the pack
sometimes meant
one stood alone
It hurt deeply to feel so betrayed

But calling had to be completed
It's the reason why seed fertilized egg
and brought this person forth
Not for personal gain or ego;
talents fill earthly void
Internal struggles always present,
Questions like
'Why me?' dogged psyche
But each renewal brought clarity:
Thoughtfully crafting next steps
for productive fights
against oppressive forces

Boldly walking forward
revolution began anew
Shaking up herd-like thinking
One by one
Successful transformation leaves
massive footprints
for generations to study
How powerfully one
can move mountains,
Seize opportunities,
And bring the world along

One can do so much
even with a shaky voice
Another who pushes further
than first;
Forcing settled hardness
to move, dream, want better
Think of the possibilities
united can do
standing strongly in warrior poses

Dear John

Poetessa Leixyl Kaye Emmerson

Dear
World, life is a john.
Dear ask Jesus, to save you now,
snap the whip,
save us now.
For the blue boy and
the dog named Blue,
they, they need you—
to keep them from harm,
in from the storm,
of past, of present,
of the future tension that
sleeps in broad darkness, and
lurks in unconscious brawls. My
Dear World, the center of dirty,
slated halls, this big ball—
that laughs at you in Autumn
and hypnotizes you as you
fall to Earth like the man with
two different turning pupils
hanging on the wall—following
folly time of Lisa's cupid arrow
right through the unseen teeth of
Mona's smile.

Dear
Johns, wanting to tell you
that I can love, with my bloody soul
and all, counting, counting,
counting, orgasms
burial and tombstone walls—
I do leave you as you might
expect, babes without arms,
a lull—the dullness of limber eyes
and nails in the hands,
nothing is as it seems at all.
Except me. Accept me,
Thou is what am I.
A dirty teeny-bopper
that gets paid fifty cents
'cause she has no sense at all.
The un-conceived woman without
a womb to grow,
adopting death in the bathroom stall.
The cubical distractions of this
girl before the mirror, the writing
seen looking back at me,
wanting you, just you, to love
me, my dear one who deserves
to love, but not me—so deserving of
Medusa's wrath sailing the lead sea
that is Liberty.

Sid

Cathy Porter

Low-hung bass, was it even plugged in -
who needs talent with a crazy like that?
Punk, junkie, maybe killer – the debate
rages on, much like you in the early days,
before Nancy and junk took over. Anarchy
never sounded so tough, so fun; spit
and fire all rolled into one classic album -
that album is you whether you played that
bass or not. The most truthful statement
that ever fell out of those rotted teeth:
“I don’t remember if I killed her.”
Your own farewell party wasn’t pretty
or well attended – a fatal blast of heroin
given to you, with love, from mom;
not many can claim that, never mind
the bollocks...

Carousel (Logan's Run)

Jennifer Rodriguez

Hello
Goodbye
Does anyone know why you have to die?

Blinking
It's time
Throw yourself into rewind
It's time to go

Are you heading for carousel?
Call away the ringing bell

A way to go
A life for a life
It's balanced, you know

Awake to find
Sanctuary within time

We will not go
If you choose
We will find
Sanctuary
outside
beyond the dome in which we hide

Somewhere out there
escaping the sentinels for air

And we followed our on path
The dangers lurking at our grasp
Wilderness
Our world exposed this was a lie

They left, we dispose
We're the first ones to get here
It's an overdose

Soon we know we must abide
There is no sanctuary to hide

Explode the dome
We will build ourselves a new home
But how to exist
Oh we need skills or we will not persist

We'd never believe in carousel
and the ringing bells
lives in hell
no chance to survive
in this old world
the ancients knew we would never survive

Strong Coffee, Pink Breasts

David Cowen

we are a line of vacuous eyes shifting
as the whine of grinding
and release of steam
arouses our dullness

she enters
the girl in the pink sweater
just as she enters in every man's life
once

She parts the sea of dreamers
her order already called in
packaged and ready

she is pink wool and black polyester
blonde hair with gold-specked brown virginal eyes
and knowing red lips
no skin revealed
but the fabric forms her breasts and hips
into a carnal chimera

her eyes look my way briefly

but the day is wrong
the clock is late
the hair is too long
the hair is too bald
there are five pounds to lose
there are five pounds to gain
the order is ready and must be attended to
I am too old
I am too young

she exits into a small red car with sharp lines
the kind to be expected of her
the kind you would want her to drive

the grounds did not settle
the coffee is bitter
burnt
and the cream going sour.

The Emergent Qualities of Love
Dustin Pickering

I can feel it like a shadow over me
looking for the brightest density,
the emergent qualities of Love.

I seek to find only weak dreams
One after another, they are like moonbeams
I do not know how to explain

Love is what we will gain
from the experience of life
If you turn love away, meet with strife

But know only that it is You I love
with every aching tremor of my heart
I hope with help to never part...

Love, your spectacular face is my place
where honor and mercy show me the way
A way, into the Unknowing Cloud

I stay, but see nothing to enrapture me...
I must know you before tomorrow, Now
Love me eternally without questions

But know that questions are answers with guides
that alight our paths with the greatest gifts
and will not look away without guilt

interlude

Elena Botts

only in the sun are we real. you are so
you today, blinking your tight oceans
and running back over the ground
uncovered, tucking a universal sigh
underneath your collarbone but still going,
yeah, sawing the sun out the sky and
the stars too soon, winking their
minute separate sadnesses all through the
resounding night.

and he was sawing and he was sawing
you just wrote her name as if the letters
were there by accident, had stumbled
into the room like loose shadows and left
in the moonlight spilling boundless
all over the floor,

A Centaur
Jefferson Carter

For laughs,
I imitate a horse,
lowering my bare shoulder
into the sand
of the arroyo, my wife
watching from above
& our son inside the blue backpack
watching while I roll, kicking
my hooves & neighing, husband
turned centaur, father
as some big animal.
The boy laughs
because his mother's laughing
& I lurch to my feet, shaking,
blowing through my nostrils,
feeling foolish,
but what's a family for?
Climbing back up,
I smell creosote & sage
& I understand the Greeks
who carried in their armor
a bag of spices
that smelled like home.

Where Have You Been

Yvonne Jayne

Where have you been great Aunt Arthur,
Have you been on the jeweled seas?
Have you masterminded your missing self
and stolen life's great mysteries?
Have you healed ancient lands,
soaking up relentless blood
that runs beneath the fragile crust
of human nature in the buff?
Oh great Aunt Arthur,
You need not bring me truth
for I have traveled away too,
through infinite ages of solitude
and deep shadows where despotism
lurks, and patiently, so patiently, waits
ever longer than I waited for you.
My dear great Aunt, your baggage is full,
your kindness humbles the burning sun
and begs stars to bow down for you.
But wait, let me take your coat,
your feet are bleeding and you look cold,
Your grand humanness is not to blame
for the ills you could not contain
as you traveled across continents with your smile,
and sorry, you did not notice the lurking threats
of sneaks in the shadows who offered wine and bread,
as they spread seeds of disharmony
and stepped on the toes of giants,
who were too grandiose to notice
that meager offerings were deliberate invitations
to greater damage and burning roil,
incited to hold up their reputations
as they poisoned water, sky, and soil.

Rat Dreams

Gary Every

My friend has many, many pets
including exotic animals
and assorted carnivores.
His favorite is Vixen,
eleven feet of red tailed columbian boa;
one long and powerful muscle.
In any house with this much life
there is also plenty of death.
Vixen eats three or four jumbo rats a week.
She is so finicky
that she will let herself starve
before she eats dead food.
The moment the live rat
is dropped into her cage,
Vixen's tongue flickers
as she smells the rat,
remaining calm and still
until the rodent scurries close
and suddenly
the serpent muscles contract,
capturing the rat
in a deadly coil.
The serpent slowly crushes
the doomed rodent
with a suffocating grasp.
Sometimes in the moment just before death,
the rat looks up
and catches eye contact with my friend.
"Every time that happens," he says,
"I get rat dreams."

Vixen is a beautiful animal.
Her size is enormous.
Her presence is primordial and powerful,
colored patterns of tan, brown, and gold
with salmon highlights on her belly.

Most of all her eyes are beautiful,
still waters of snake lake black,
reservoirs of serpent wisdom,
mysteries that humans can never grasp.
One could see primitive cultures
worshipping a creature
such as this enormous beautiful serpent.
Mr. Bill understands, sacrificing rat after rat
to feed the needs of his magnificent beast.
He understands the sweaty brow
of the Aztec priest
as the thirsting blade plunges
for another heart
or the Inca king
who slits the throat
of an innocent child
atop a snow capped Andean peak.
It is the blood of the Gods
which feeds the corn
and Bill offers Vixen another rat.
There comes the inevitable moment
of eye contact
and then a rat
who had maybe one, two, or five years left alive;
gets to remain on this planet
for maybe another four or five decades,
living in the dreams
of my friend.
Every year, year after year,
while Vixen grows fatter,
stronger and more beautiful,
more awe inspiring,
every night,
long after the sun has set
and darkness has arrived,
there are a few more rats
who scurry across the inside of the skull
of my friend Mr. Bill.

Moments
Amit Parnessur

I would have loved
that poetic moment of seeing
your hair cascading and
blowing over your naked back.
I would have loved to see
that shy buddy
of mine break into a lethal grin,
feeling that streak of fire
shooting like a lightning bolt
with our fingers swirling to bliss.
If only the space between
your breasts were a blank page,
I would have written
a poem on your eyes there.
I would erase the words
whenever they go wrong
and blow their dust from the
side of your bulging breasts.
And as you soothe the
frown from my forehead,
pushing back my wet curls,
my broad chest would stand
proudly, surrounding you,
my voice suddenly silky,
spelling out the words
I traced between
the valley of your breasts as my
eyes blaze upon unspoken desires.
I would have loved
that poetic moment of taking
your belly button
as a moon, perched in
a milky sky and draw orange,
purple and pale red clouds
all around it,
while you lie naked in bed,
eyes shut.

Fulfilling Promises

Inna Telkova

Bruises, broken bones, burns—
prints father leaves pushed
Abby to promise herself
no more.

She painted sunrises.
Gentle, loving strokes
caressed the canvas;
Abby, cracked knuckles
promising no more.

Molding from tears, pillow
witnessed Abby pray; Mizaru
closed his eyes; Brahmā
played with ak amālā; Allah
watched Mecca; Yahweh
pulled a Jeremiah 11:11.

Father burst through the door.
Broken bottle brushed Abby head
to toe. Tick tock, the clock mocked
her promise, her promise, her promise.

Soaking in a cold tub,
Abby found a razor. Now,
paint brushes rot in trash bins;
shreds of paintings dust the floor;
her body hurts no more.

A Woman with Flowers

Valentina Cano

She tiptoes around the line
of sunlight that embroiders
the darkness,
longing to plunge into
the bouquet of black holes
she presses tighter each day
to her chest.

Providence (Freedom has Come and Gone)

Christopher Suda

People talk to heaven
like it's glass; made
to mend and bend--

never. Can you hear
God again? He's calling
on my own *free*
will.

Again we start
to be another wild
ghost to make you free
us from ourselves.

There is *there*,
and is that all?

Funerals, then funeral?

Funerals echo
(catastrophe)

towards

(whatever this is--)
us all.

We're made
born to vanish

like the Maldives
below the Indian.

I Love Proof
Dory Williams

I'm not crazy and
Now, I love proof.
You crawled up into my mind then, threw me from the roof!
You didn't love me. So, I went crazy,
With you in my bed,
And like I said...
Now I need proof!

So, I'm not in love with you.
Test me and I'll act aloof.
Like I said, I'm not in love with you,
And I'm not crazy too!

Turns out 'romantic' wasn't true.

The lies you told...
As time goes by and you,
Grow old...
The ones you'll fear
Were the ones to me so dear.
The ones where you said, "I love you".

(And you said it like it was nothing too!)
As girls and time go by,
You'll hold your freedom flag so high.
Things may not be what you see.
A test of faith
At that old birthday cake,
Make a wish,
There are plenty of fish,
In the sea

One day I'll be 'the one' and you'll prove that to me!

TO HOLD A MOMENT STILL

Holy Henrietta
Rev. Jane Wenninger

Lines! Lines at check-out! Lines at the book store! Here it was, two days before Christmas, and Henrietta was stuck in another line.

Her husband's complaint from the previous night still stung.

"You used to love people more than books," he sneered.

"You're right," she retorted. I've changed. "Now, maybe it's your turn to change. Try being patient."

Henrietta had returned to college after long years away from school. Finals had gone right into Christmas week, and she had three grammar-school children at home. As she glanced at her cheap watch, she grimaced because she had begun to resent her shrunken prayer-and-meditation time. And her missing relaxation time. And her time to notice little things that used to cheer her. She felt like a barnyard hen--always pecking away at things, but never really getting them done. Never stopping to look around – just pecking away.

Knowing that the crowds in other stores would be worse than the one she faced at the campus shop, she ran in to pick up some stocking stuffers. She resisted the urge to tap her foot as she awaited her turn at the register. She juggled books and packages as she rushed through the piercing wind and gray slush to the college parking lot and dumped everything into the back of her rusty blue Chevette. The slamming car door locked out the nerve-racking sound of "Frosty the Snowman" that blared from somebody's ghetto blaster. She absent-mindedly turned on the radio. Static. A small adjustment. "I'm Dreaming of a White Chris..." She turned it off.

"I still have to buy a few presents after I get the groceries for the party," she thought sullenly, "...and wrap them."

The starter groaned and the freezing car convulsed a little. But it started. Checking for the presence of campus police, she sped toward her favorite supermarket. More carols greeted Henrietta as she rushed through the store's automatic sliding glass doors.

"May as well get the worst over first," she decided, heading for the delicatessen at the rear. Wading through the crowd there, she reached over the green-and-gold tinsel garland and picked a ragged cardboard ticket from its red plastic dispenser. From behind the garland-trimmed, gleaming glass meat case, a neat, white-haired gentleman in a jaunty Santa cap called authoritatively, "Two."

Henrietta glanced at her ticket. "Fifteen," it read.

Oh, gees, she thought sarcastically, *Can't we cancel Christmas?*

It was two days before the big holiday, sales were good, and customers were buying heavily.

"Five," the man said clearly.

"A pound of domestic ham, two pounds of seafood flakes, a pound of cocktail hot dogs, four pounds of shrimp. Oh, yes. Throw in two pounds of roast beef, sliced thin," ordered a retired gentleman.

This is going to be a fun afternoon, Henrietta brooded, shifting her weight to the other foot. A cheerful "Jingle Bells" annoyed her over the loudspeaker. She did a little fidget.

"Six," called the fake Santa.

"A party platter for 25. Heavy on the ham and Swiss cheese..."

"Nine." Another litany of items was ordered, custom cut, and weighed. Henrietta shifted her weight to the other foot again.

"Twelve."

A pretty young brunette with a very round tummy reached over and picked a number. Henrietta probably wouldn't have noticed her except the woman's fat, three-year-old daughter kept trying to climb her mother's leg while whimpering, "Mommy, Mommy, please hold me."

The young mother lugged the little girl up and sat her across her big, pregnant abdomen. The woman, too tired to notice whether or not anybody cared, whined to her daughter, "You're so heavy."

Henrietta began to feel the "tyranny of the shoulds." *Terrific*, she thought. *now I get to hold a little urchin*. "May I hold your daughter for a moment?" she asked politely.

"Oh, no," the mother answered. "She's much too shy to go to anyone."

Even I get a break now and then, Henrietta thought wryly.

But in a flash, Henrietta remembered the fatigue that had accompanied her own pregnancies and glanced back at the mother and child. Henrietta became aware of a mysterious, metaphysical presence among them... For one split second, only inches away from her right elbow, life became homogenized: The woman, struggling under the weight of her daughter as she approached her own labor. Jesus laboring under the weight of his cross. Mary, the Virgin, with a very round tummy, awaiting the birth of her child. All superimposed themselves upon each other, blended, and became one reality.

"Fourteen," the delicatessen man intruded.

"What's your ticket number?" Henrietta asked the pregnant lady.

Twenty-five," the brunette muttered.

Henrietta winced as she stared incredulously at the woman's cardboard ticket to avoid facing the imaginary red-and-green temptation signs that flashed all over that supermarket ceiling:

LONG WAIT. LONG WAIT.

Henrietta responded decisively. "Great," she said, "We'll trade." And she quickly switched their tickets before the woman could protest.

The young woman's face flashed appreciation, but, before she could say anything, fifteen was called, and the brunette stepped into Henrietta's place in line.

Henrietta braced herself for the next ten orders by again resting her aching foot on the rear axle of her still-empty shopping cart. She watched the young woman's fur-lined clogs briskly slap the bottom of her feet when she sped down the canned-goods aisle.

As Henrietta recalled the instant gleam of appreciation on the pregnant lady's face and the new sprightliness of her step, Henrietta's own spirit began to twinkle. Her frazzled, sarcastic heart had been tickled by the experience. Now it bubbled over with joy – and she was growing eager to share it.

I'll lighten my course load next term, Henrietta promised herself and her Maker. I won't give up, but I'll give myself a little more comfort. ... And I really don't want you to cancel Christmas this year. Happy birthday, Jesus.

She planned to build her husband a Dagwood sandwich and serve it with sparkling wine in front of the Christmas tree – and to whisper eager words in his ear – eager, lickerish words like he had not heard for a long, long, time.

"Seventeen," Santa called. Even that sounded good.

Getting Better

Robin Wyatt Dunn

It's not how i would have it, tragic
but subliminal and slim,
a grim happy strength that bleeds in my within,
Like joy--

The Final Kestrel

Robin Wyatt Dunn

No but black,
Caught in the fantastic track of
Musing,
He stretches the last sounds
To court the night.

Peace Rule

Marcie Eanes

Let peace thrive for a single day!
Laugh like kids
Before the world
 stole innocence
Live life out loud with loving gestures,
 forgiving graces, kind words
Honor mercy and glory glowing brightly
 before our eyes when we look beyond familiar
It's in our power every sunrise
 to observe gentleness;
Making night restful, not filled with worries or doubts

Living closer to your true self isn't dependent
 on money or fame
Seeking beauty in ordinary wrappings
 gives great joy too
So for a day, practice peace
Expect nothing for kindness toward others
Greeting everyone with a simple 'Hello',
Could be the best present
you give all year

Burden's Light

Marcie Eanes

This is for the ones
whose hearts
are heavily laden
during the season of lights
Those who struggle and sob
wanting
to shut down the world
because the glare of happiness
Rips open
another painful layer
without warning
Sappy cards
raise fiery ire
Constantly poking
that bottomless void
No words fill

Just know
right now
You are not
alone
Someone's on their knees
asked blessed grace
for all you face
Hoping grief's dark veil
will lighten over time
And those tearful pools
staining your cheeks
are dried
through loving strength

Weaving new into old,
Missed absent ones live
 through new traditions
 you decide
Joy replaces
 grief's paralyzing numbness;
Powerful renewal
 touches another
Whose newly lost
 is the same dreariness
You now face

Twilight
(in response of Afterblues,
by Lucille Clifton)

Jan Folk Benson

brown-gray eyes rest
in her tanned face,
framed by silver tendrils
fallen over sloping shoulders.

eases her ashen frame
on the aged West deck
dreaming of twilight spent.
amethyst sky, folds charcoal; black

Unconditional

Michael Verderber

I guess it shouldn't surprise me that you aren't here right now.

I look around, exhale, realize you aren't coming back.
You could be miles from here, miles from home, miles from space.
Reapers have sown, as it were, as I'm left with a blank pallet.

I guess it shouldn't surprise me that you aren't here.

I can see anger in those eyes, a tone of sadness.
I see old things swimming, a place you could hide.
Regret and love. Happiness.

I guess it shouldn't surprise me that you aren't.

No, your eyes shake...dismally, lacking life and that spark.
Your lips move in different rhythms, different tones.
Words emanate, dance lines of sanguine greed.

I guess I shouldn't be surprised.

Inevitability rears its ugly head, facing the unconditional.
My unconditional, bountiful and mundane. Trapped inside.
But it makes me want you more...this absence.

I guess I shouldn't.

Not that I could stop it, could I?
I answer my own answerable questions of fear.
Am I ready for the leap?

I guess I...

I'm at a loss, a loss with a mouth that has so much to say.
A dead tongue that falls on deaf ears.
I suppose I'm talking to myself.

I guess.

I've flooded your time
By drowning in miseries.
Let me just end on...I miss you.

I...

Woman

Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi

My history is a story of long-suffering.
I suffered anguish, attack, and condemnation.
My story is a tale of survival.
It tells that I survived.

From one era to another-
From one generation to another-
From a decade to another-
And you are born to see my persecution.

Your history is not sincere.
Your story is false.
All politeness is mere cruelty.
All respect is only hypocrisy.

Your blood-stained index finger
Indicates me as a weaker sex;
Your lip service pays tribute to my sexuality.
You regard me as a sex object.

I asked many questions.
But all remained unanswered.
When I talk of feminism, you nauseate.
When I speak of equality, you show your muscle.

You are rational; I am emotional.
When I demand for my rights, you say it's wrong.
You think-you are strong and I am beautiful.
But these beauty contests & compliments won't end my suffering.

I am not tired of suffering.
I am also not frightened.
My past witnessed my sitting idly.
But it is not the end.

I will not stop questioning.
I will not prefer sleeping.
I will always raise my voice.
I am still alive.

Dandelion Seed

Lynn White

There's a dandelion seed
caught in your hair.
A fluffy wisp of white and grey
hanging there,
Suspended
in your frothy crown.
A shimmering seed held
like a star in a wiry halo
made by the light.

Blow it away.

Perhaps you will,
if I tell you it's there.

Blow it away.
But it looks so beautiful
suspended there.
I won't tell you.
I'll just admire it's beauty
as it hangs
in your hair.

Blow it away.

No, I won't.
It will leave soon enough.
Best not to rush these things.
Who knows where
they will end up

after all.

Billie

Cathy Porter

From your arrival in Philly,
through the horrors of Jim Crow,
you were not to be denied -
the world was going to hear that voice.
The strange fruit of stardom was an
intoxicating nibble, one you just had to taste.
The glamorous stages, abusive men,
and every dramatic low - did the needle
help you erase the visions that haunted you –
the rapes, the brothel, the black legs
hanging from the poplar trees? When
that voice was stilled, the ghosts in those
trees swayed against the winds in
defiant victory of all you had stood for.

Some see sadness in those eyes; others see
blood on the leaves, still wet despite
the best efforts of the sun.

We Will Meet Again

G David Schwartz

At the close of the wind
At the height of the gin
On the road of Begin
There, I am sure, we will meet again
At the blowing of the horn
Where the hates all fall with scorn
I remember when we were born
And I think still of you

Looking Out The Window

G David Schwartz

Looking out the window
Thinking where you did go
Hoping soon you will again show
But I don't know, I don't know
Once we did love so truly
You were you and we were silly
Your mother liked me, that I know
Because she once did tell me so
But just as the dew and moss
I sat right there with my eyes so crossed
That did only mute the shade
Across the highway
Where our love was laid

I Didn't See You All Day

G David Schwartz

I didn't see you all day
And that did make me sad
For when I am seeing you
I am really glad
I don't know why you say
That your going to tell the wife
I really think that that
Would really not be nice

Edwin Starr was right

Katherine Sanger

if we're all brothers in arms
what happens
when we're all in coffins?

alive and on fire

Weasel Patterson

we lay on leaves
smeared across
her grass; nature's

breath invading our
bodies as we huddle
together watching

her rise. light the
kerosene, for
the morning has
never felt so alive.

fedora*Weasel Patterson*

i'm staring at this hat
kept hidden in the
closet. winter-plaid
material seeping from
the darkness. it carries the
snow from its homeland, remembering
the stillness of your touch---the warmth
of your hands as you passed it along.

when the plane took off i
ate rosary beads to
keep our bones
buried. they lay
in body bags now forgotten.

we were apocryphal,
sunset dripping on the
sins we wanted to commit;
not ready to take the
moon as our whore and return
to anarchy like children.

our hearts were too
exploitive of ourselves
as we huddled together,
afraid of the sacrifice.

i have forgotten how
you look, but i still
think of you when the cold
trickles along my bones.

Life Lessons

David Cowen

white birds ripple the glass circling low
we in the silver canoe are stoic
stumps jutting from the lost forest
that thrived before the dam

he fidgets next to us
blue and red jacket zipped against the cold
trying to hold still the short rod
with the cartoon face reel
he wants to catch a speckled whale
with the plastic training weight dangling
on his line
it will never happen
no matter how hard he dreams

Old and Lost

Elina Petrova

"If they start to go over the cliff – I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going, I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye."

~ J.D. Salinger

Days slip between my fingers – meticulously shaped acrylic tips without which I'd bite cuticles to blood. Autumnal light throbs through me addicted tenderness to a shortening life, tempts me to sprawl out – untanned, blue-vein topless - on the mowed yard. *"I got so much more, so much more love left to give,"* Marianne Faithfull sings with a cracked voice to her early film "The Girl on a Motorcycle." Oh freckled, fertile / sterile, many-breasted / flat-chested Isis in the leather suit. My KravMaga trainer jokes: one day you have energy to repel a regiment, the next you tumble like a depleted tire. Have you driven from Houston along Interstate 10? On the way to Beaumont, there are greenish, shallow bayous that feed the Trinity River. When it's dry, they evaporate. When it's rainy, they flow – the Old and Lost Rivers.

I recall a white blur – a doctor in the emergency room who checked my pupils, dilated after two hundred pills hidden in the school pencil case until I took them all at once. "I won't report you to a psychiatrist, because at sixteen you're more thoroughgoing than I – just haven't learned to compromise, haven't met someone to talk to." In that haze, unfocused sunny dust waltzing around a plastic bottle with physiological saline, I forgot to ask his name, but for many years he was the one who talked to me, kept my hand when I balanced on the tarred edges of high-risers' roofs, looking down at anthills of children building and crashing castles in the courtyard sandbox.

Here I am, past sixty. Child therapist, Old and Lost
like those brackish rivers in Chambers County.
Still trying to find a flow, a red fish in Trinity Bay.
Keeping up hands for others.
A catcher in the rye.

Bookmark

Elina Petrova

My son, who I saw in the book of belated life,
though still haven't met, but I placed the bookmark – a red
maple leaf before your unread chapters – I won't
have much to teach you: a few books, kung fu kicks,
commandments that I failed to follow, the photo
of Gandhi's last sandals stored in my cellphone,
but I'll give you a key to the spacious room – You,
and I'll try to stay younger to watch you grow
so different from me, so adorably different.

My blood is too thin to pass heredity,
noticing its discord with genetics of strangers –
random spirits exchanging warmth are family
while the sun stages the same antiquated play:
the raspberry plasma disc lifts from the grey
non-stop highways to white hot madness,
then descends into the lava-ocean – Hawaiian
orange-violet that turns into a bruise, then peace,
the twilight of the dove, unknown darkness.

What's invisible is the key:
you will learn to lift a little sun through your body –
from the golden stove of causes to the white
chrysanthemum bursting with a thousand limbic petals
above the skyline of the bayou city; you'll learn to exhale
through your palms to ground, hear the whispering pines,
notice that horses ask with the wet plums of their eyes.
I'll be there – just a bookmark, the red leaf in your life,
always with you, even after the book is closed.

Red, White and Blue

Gil Hoy

Honor the brave dead
from Afghanistan and Iraq,

heroes against
German and Japanese imperialism,
and the sacrificed souls

in "the war to end all wars."

But also thank Custer's soldiers
for not completing the genocide.

I went to bed and dreamt that Sitting Bull
saw Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a vision quest

and then dropped an A-Bomb
on Washington, D.C.

to stop invading Custer from killing
his women and children like so many insects.

Upon awakening, I discovered
that America attacked Iraq
for weapons of mass destruction

after murderous pecuniary munitions manufacturers
crumbled twin towers
with their boomerang missiles
because recipients of evil often do evil in return.

Russian troops rhythmically
marched in the Ukraine,
a cruel video
beheaded a journalist,

ruinous bombs reined down
on rubble villages of the weak,
and a bullet to a private's leg became gangrene
as sepsis spread to amputation and death.

An obscure philosophy book said
that Custer should have refused
to attack renegades

because the Black Hills were the Lakota's by treaty

and that God had ordered
Custer's men to lay down their weapons
or be shot for insubordination.

By river rapids, a sweating grimacing squaw
watched the blue cavalry approach as
she gave birth to a red son,

who drew his first breath,
wailed loudly and coveted white milk.

Cover to Cover

Gil Hoy

A book can be more
than its words and its pages.

When I trekked to my chum's home
up the street years ago,
clay Lincoln on his first days of school,

we flipped through pages and pages
in a quiet little study in his house.
The words sounded good to me.

My friend's mom oft times would set out
milk and cookies for us to eat,
planets of dirt and rock
circling two white stars.

The earth is a blue marble
with white swirls from the sterile rock
of the moon. The milk and the cookies
tasted good to me.

The words and the pages went by
so fast then, like a bus you run after
but miss, and you knew the end
was coming. The ephemeral perfection

of goldilocks planet has always been
that it is not too hot and not too cold,
with just the right amount of water.
It occurred to me on one of those

unspeaking afternoons that my death
was like my book and I was on chapter four.
I wasn't troubled because there was still
so far to go. Given the big bang,

like an explosion of planets from the head
of a ruderal species, futures of finite
and infinite duration are both possible
depending upon physical properties

and the expansion rate. One rainy afternoon
I learned my friend's mother had died.
The drapes in the study were drawn shut
and the house was so cold and so dark.

I didn't know what to do.
But I knew there was no time
to waste. I knew there was
no time to waste.

So I gathered up all of my books
in my bag and started
the long trudge back home.
And now Big Ben chimes,

the shrill tea kettle boils, barking
dogs to feed, and my rattling
car's
around the shop for repairs.
But I know there is no time to waste.

I Believe in Santa Claus

Sarah Frances Moran

Santa Claus visited our house
every Christmas Eve.

The bells would jingle.
right in the middle
of the anticipation of possibility
that Rudolph was on the roof.

Dad was always away.
At the store - acquiring something he swore he'd forgot.
Miller Lite, eggnog, ice.
We'd ask him to stay
and he'd go anyway...
Blowing off Mr. Claus.

Santa would enter with the usual Ho Ho Ho
asking us if we'd been good.
He was short and he was darker skinned.
He was nothing like Santa at the mall.

His hugs were phenomenal and
after photos, laughs and small gifts...
We'd received the beauty of the Christmas Spirit
and then he'd depart
on to make some other child smile.

Dad would return shortly after.
Sad that Santa had come and gone.

It took me years to realize
Santa wore the same wedding ring as my Dad,
Smelled of the same cologne and alcohol breath.
It's taken me even longer to recognize
the importance
of positive memories.

My father was bestfriends with Miller Lite and Jack Daniels.
He allowed those friendships to ruin his marriage.
He allowed those friendships to make him mean and violent.
Those are moments,
I've learned not to dwell and hold onto.

Negativity does nothing for the mind
and I know my father loves me.

Love trumps fear, hatred, shame and disappointment.
Love trumps everything.

I don't believe in a lot.
My list of skepticism is long and complicated.
But,
I believe in my father.
I believe in the power of Christmas,
and I believe in Santa Claus.

Big Bang
Winston Derden

Boredom in the void,
a romance with oblivion

celestial hands on crystal spheres,
palm to palm they roll so easy,

orbs of light, orbs of storm,
hefted high, gliding

in mid-flight,
collide

shatter into solar wind,
loosened light, rippling prisms,

fractured fractals running riot,
all this accidental beauty,

cosmic egg, cosmic omelet
in a moment's inattention.

Catching a Cab from 26th and Valencia

PW Covington

They called for a cab from 26th and Valencia
To the Whitcomb Hotel, Market Street, Civic Center
Some word misplaced
One too many Mission Street drinks
It was their first trip, together, out west

With power-exchange yearning in her dark, leather, eyes
He, still clinging to a façade of masculine pride

The next time through such heavy, wooden doors,
She would lead
And, with an exhaled breath and an unburdened peace
He would follow her, humbled, yet majestic

But, tonight, they stare out opposite windows
From inside the Yellow night cab

**Overnight, Warming Shelter
Victoria, Texas**

PW Covington

Picking up poems
Off of the floor
At the overnight
Warming shelter
Freezing in south Texas
Bitter, post-election November
A week away from Thanksgiving
Awake, tending coffee pots
Refugees from the local atmosphere
Natural forces drove us here
Exiles from the cold

[the crumple]

Jenuine Poetess

it's a funny thing about grief
everyone has their triggers

mine is the crumple

that first split second
when the words hang
lingering surreal in air
moving so slowly
until their impact
a blow with such force
the body goes limp

the notification

no matter how many years
melt into decades
each time I see it
in an instant
I'm there again
falling
heavier than lead
my body folds
into a perfect kneel
hands limp against the carpet
I'm grasping
scratching
trying to wake up
to rewind time
to unhear the words
to unsee the look on her face
that tells me
this is my new reality
nothing will ever be
the same

other things make me wince
random
out-of-the-blue
memories, thoughts
move me
to tears or laughing

but that one moment
seeing a body whither
grief. struck.

pierces my soul
every
time

The Last Sigh

Susan Summers

Pain leaves their eyes as the light fades.
Tight corners of the mouth relax.
Wrinkles accumulated over years
release the worry they held,
relax, surrender.
Skin is smoother,
more youthful, carefree.
The last sigh
of a life well-lived lets go easily.
Those who are aware and prepared
relax into the prospect-
comfortable with the life
left behind.
There's nothing left to do,
ready to face the time
when heartbeats cease.

Sacred Space

Susan Summers

What happens in this room can only be good –
no regrets allowed –
and it must be done fully
without reservation or hesitation
with freedom and unfiltered joy.
We must, for this brief moment, convince ourselves
that the door we shut will seal out the world
even though we know
we will open the door to a world changed
by our departure from it,
and by what we do here.
For now we pretend, and find laughter
with a lightness of spirit, feeling safe, buoyant,
and we journey together
allowing full expression of ourselves
so that when we separate,
we will be renewed, validated,
confirmed as exquisite in our imperfections.
If we can embrace in love without flinching,
with no requirements or conditions;
if we simply agree to love gently, fully, generously,
we will find peace and the deep well of happiness
and drink from it whenever we thirst.

Graduation
Shloka Shankar

The air was electrically charged with the excitement of high-school graduates. Everything looked so different. Teachers went out on a limb to be friendly and welcoming, putting aside their petty differences. I saw a few plastic smiles plastered onto their silly faces, and reassured myself that it would soon be over. Parents gathered in the school grounds and looked like they were attending a wedding. A grand affair in the lives of a bunch of clueless and timid 15-year-olds.

We had a red carpet to welcome us, and I almost felt like a bride walking down the aisle. I was happy to wake up from this nightmare. Tomorrow, I would no longer have to attend the same school and pretend to like the same people. No more being pushed around. The voices in my head began to chatter amongst themselves as the ceremony proceeded at snail's pace.

The Valedictorian gave her lofty speech that received thunderous applause. Groups of drama-queens shed mascara tears, while I smiled meekly at my beaming, humble parents.

The event in itself was quite forgettable, but a part of me had metamorphosed that night.

untitled
Daniel Aguirre

The glowing oscillations flicker

A time to dream all

The impertinent tyranny
before difference and below darkness
you are above intervals and before beginning
the soil and the sunlight colliding into fragments that remorselessly
erupt into the serpentine dances that reveal silence

The idle symbols await

Feet scamper ushered by cold outstretched hands overflowing
with impassioned obedience to reach the tension riddled violence
that guides inconspicuously the silence that reveals a mantra
creates principles that reign roughshod suffocating the moon's
aspiration to share
its dearest secret

a sensual thrust that all of nights stars sing with each flicker
reaching its throne in the reflection that it rears

The horizon which it longs for

like the father ensnared by its primordial law it has not eyes
to see the majesty in the child he neglects but I

Father

As your child I am frozen by your stare
with eyes humbled over-spilling like a bottomless chalice
beneath the ocean drowning in its essence

in adoration

a heirloom that once was a relic revived and enthroned in the
meaningless rituals that swim to you as a great white gliding
through the emptiness that has gifted its never sated appetite

the murky water that uncovers a fish

the air that reveals a breath

the space enslaved to mass

the majesty that gives

ever rising

a gentle graze of your supple skin conveys metaphors
sweeter than the nectar that sings to the hummingbird's dance
have you no shame in withholding from me the water beneath your glance
Have you no remorse in the lies you spread before my eyes
Your soil yearns to be furrows unending
Seducing songs into harmony that rupture to an apex in the crashing
upon birth you've enchanted the hearts elixir from its prized dwelling
like the tide that forgives the compassionless moon
for plundering the abundance she honed
folding out of the womb
the science to be reared by formulas
the words enthroned by imagination
the impetus haunting all musings drowning despair toward the surface
from beneath the ocean breaching the abundance that cradles
the ever yearning waters

Tensions arise from decrepit birth

Rotting Void found its victim

enveloped

Haunting lies above the air

Timeless enchantment

Check out our first anthology
From One Sphere to Another,
released 2012!



Available from *Amazon.com*!