# Table of Contents

## Prose

- **Candy's Story** by Carolyn Dickinson ............................................. 2
- **Hard Lessons** by Shirley Smith ..................................................... 10
- **Tribute to a Pilot** by Deanna Wilson ........................................... 30
- **Growing Up** by Deanna Wilson .................................................... 36
- **A Hard Drinker** by Court Merrigan .................................................. 34
- **Grandma's Ravioli** by Kathi Sparks ................................................ 37
- **Stress** by Arthur Clack ........................................................................ 39
- **I wish I was never born** by Austin Ostergaard .................................... 43
- **Thirteen days in hell** by Joyce Koros ............................................... 47
- **The Infection** by Ramone Dave McBride .......................................... 53
- **Tentacles of Greed** by James “Kip” Joule ........................................... 59
- **Is It Love?** by Kathy Thurlow ............................................................ 62
- **A Purple Bunny Named Ruby** by Andrea Cook ................................... 66
- **Junior’s Mint Bar** by Aaron Holst ..................................................... 67
- **Orange You Glad I Wrote This** by Serena Packard .............................. 69

## Poetry

- **Heartland** by Michael Adams ............................................................ 6
- **Sand Hills** by Gary Henderson ......................................................... 7
- **shipping steers (haiku series)** by Christine Valentine ......................... 8
- **Falling in Love with Lies** by Kari Rood ............................................. 9
- **When We First Met** by Christen Boles .............................................. 11
- **Out of Night’s Black Velvet Cushion** by CJ Clark ............................... 14
- **Religion of fear** by Art Elser ........................................................... 10
- **Bed Bugs** by Shirley Smith .............................................................. 10
- **February Mood** by Christine Valentine ........................................... 11
- **A Bullfighting Hero** by Brook Foreman ............................................ 12
- **Five Ways of Looking at Cold** by Abbie Johnson Taylor ..................... 13
- **Mountain Life** by Brook Foreman .................................................... 14
- **Forest Forever** by Mikala Sweetser .................................................. 15
- **chickadee notes** by Art Elser ......................................................... 15
- **Insecure** by Kaeyla Stafford ............................................................. 15
- **Why Lie?** by Kaeyla Stafford ........................................................... 15
- **From a Distance** by John Goodman .................................................. 16
- **Age of Thoughts** by Cheryl Wilkinson ............................................. 17
- **Unbroken** by Lauren Gull ................................................................... 17
- **Catch** by Roberta Boyd ................................................................. 17
- **Broken** by Melissa Grubbs ............................................................... 18
- **Compare** by Kaeyla Stafford ........................................................... 18
- **Spring** by Bessie Hubbard ............................................................... 18
- **Drowning in Fear** by McKenzie Rosdall .......................................... 19
- **Table for One Please** by Kari Rood .................................................. 19
- **I Live on the Rez** by Aje Mesteth ..................................................... 19
- **Grape Ghost Honeysuckle on a Moonlight Path** by Sharon Jones .......... 20
- **Juice Box** by Joey Lyn Moreno ....................................................... 21
- **Shoelaces** by Christen Boles ........................................................... 21
- **Loneliness** by Martha Boyer Armstrong .......................................... 22
- **A Cloud Full of Ice Cream** by Mikala Sweetser ................................ 23
- **Abandoned Sands** by Joshua S. Greene ............................................ 23
- **13 Bowling Balls** by Diane Dinndorf Friebe ...................................... 23
- **I Forget the Things I’ve Said** by Deanna Wilson .................................. 24
- **Midnight Love** by Taylor (Demitry) Kaus .......................................... 25
- **Stockings and Socks** by Cheryl Wilkinson .......................................... 25
- **My Pioneer Grandma** by Bessie Hubbard ........................................ 26
- **My Rose** by Doug Valade ............................................................... 26
- **Not So Dead** by Madison Verhulst .................................................... 28
- **Nightmare** by Madison Verhulst ...................................................... 28
- **Revenge** by jldyo .............................................................................. 29
- **Remember the Days** by Lauren Gull ................................................ 29
- **Regrets** by Roberta Boyd ............................................................... 29
- **Sounding Red** by Kaiya West ........................................................... 29
- **Waterfall** by McKenzie Rosdall ....................................................... 31
- **Take Me To The Fair** by CJ Clark ...................................................... 33
- **I’m the Weird Guy** by Phillip Allen Burt ............................................ 35
- **Springtime on the Rez** by Riley Jacob Mesteth .................................. 36
- **Walking the Mystery Road Past, Present, and Future** by Jerald Lucas .... 40
- **Luna** by Nicole Hanjani ..................................................................... 40
- **Ascent** by Brian Croft ....................................................................... 40
- **The Battle** by Paul Beyer ................................................................... 41
- **What Will I Leave to My Children?** by Katrina Nuland ...................... 42
- **You Were There** by Christen Boles .................................................. 45
- **Weight** by Nicholas Ross .................................................................. 45
- **Waste and Money** by Deborah Rosentrater ........................................ 46
- **Sonnet of Sound Mind** by Joshua S. Greene ....................................... 46
- **Whisper** by Stephanie Martinez ....................................................... 46
- **Time Flies** by Roberta Boyd ............................................................ 51
- **Survivor** by Rachell Borges ............................................................. 51
- **The Last Retreat In Silent Honor** by Jerald Lucas ............................... 52
- **Spreading Ancient Secrets** by Andrea J. Cook .................................... 55
- **I Am Poem** by Dylan Baim .................................................................. 55
- **60 Year Olds** by Diane Dinndorf Friebe ............................................ 56
- **September’s Pens** by Gary Henderson ............................................. 57
- **I hurt by Gissel Gonzalez ................................................................... 57
- **After the Storm** by McKenzie Rosdall ............................................... 57
- **Rock of Ages** by Martha Boyer Armstrong ........................................ 58
- **Lover Growing Old** by Arthur Clack ................................................ 58
- **Sad Sunday** by Mark Hudson .......................................................... 61
- **What was I supposed to do?** by Art Elser ......................................... 65
- **A True Murder House** by Rhitta Ann Smith-Bounds ........................... 68
- **When Scarlett Said** by Janet S. Craven ............................................. 70

## Artwork and Photography

- **Eyes Mirror the Soul** by Katie Jackson ............................................. 1
- **The Lonely Tree** by Michael Adams .................................................. 6
- **Untitled** by Rachel Moeser ............................................................... 7
- **Home on the Snowy Range** by Margaret Evans ............................... 8
- **The Road to Nowhere** by Michael Adams ......................................... 11
- **Let'r Buck** by Katie Jackson ............................................................ 12
- **Morning Glory** by Brandy Mendoza ................................................ 14
- **Fall Candles** by Margaret Evans ....................................................... 16
- **Untitled** by Rachel Moeser ............................................................... 20
- **Can You Hear My Cries** by Eleanor Leonne Bennett ......................... 22
- **Untitled** by P. J. Nunn .................................................................... 25-27
- **Untitled** by Heidi Belgium ............................................................... 28
- **Still Water** by Katie Jackson ............................................................. 31
- **Wrapped Around My Finger** by Katie Jackson .................................. 31
- **Untitled** by Heidi Belgium ............................................................... 32
- **Wind Breaking Umbrella** by Eleanor Leonne Bennett ....................... 33
- **Warning Signs** by Margaret Evans ................................................... 35
- **Walking Through Skeleton Trees** by Eleanor Leonne Bennett ......... 36
- **Invitation to Believe** by Margaret Evans .......................................... 41
- **Daddy’s Hands** by Katie Jackson ....................................................... 42
- **Farmland Sunset** by Brandy Mendoza ............................................... 44
- **B&W** by Eleanor Leonne Bennett ...................................................... 45
- **Undisturbed History** by John S. Goodman ......................................... 50
- **Untitled** by Rachel Moeser ............................................................... 51 & 52
- **Opening the Door to Memories** by Margaret Evans ......................... 52
- **Statue in Repose** by Derek Wilson .................................................... 55
- **All Who Wander** by Amanda Tafolla ................................................ 61
- **Untitled** by Ronnie Firman ............................................................... 64
- **Sea Out** by Eleanor Leonne Bennett ................................................. 65
- **Untitled** by Rachel Moeser ............................................................... 65
- **Untitled** by Rhitta Ann Smith-Bounds ............................................. 68
Eyes Mirror the Soul

by Katie Jackson
The older bay mare stood in the shelter of the barn, half in and half out. Her young four-year-old friends, a grey mustang and a sorrel gelding, had been standing beside her most of the afternoon. Candy stood on three feet, her right hind cocked, just barely touching the ground with her toe. Her face and neck were drenched in sweat, even her beautiful flowing mane shone with dampness.

The Lady stepped out of the garage and went into the house. She emerged a few minutes later, wearing her choring sweatshirt and muckboots. Candy whinnied, a call of distress, for help from the person who had brushed her and curried her and ridden her for the last 20 years.

The woman ducked inside the barn and came out with some hay. Tossing it into the feeder, she glanced over at the mare standing in the shelter. Dove and Doble were already burying their noses in the grass hay.

"Candy, what's the matter?" She fumbled with the gate latch.

She reached up to stroke the mare's neck. “You’re all wet, Candy.” She touched the wet ears and slid her hand down the sweaty neck. Walking around her mare, she saw the cocked rear foot.

Stripping off her winter gloves, The Lady reached into her pocket for her cell phone. Jabbing through the numbers, she found the vet clinic.

She didn't even identify herself. “My mare is all sweaty and she won’t put any weight on her right rear foot. I can’t hear any gurgling sounds from her belly.”

She listened briefly, then continued. “I'm not sure I can get her into the trailer, but I'll try.”

When The Other Lady came into the back yard, Candy's Lady called to her. “Candy’s hurt.”

Together they examined the mare. The Other Lady lifted the injured leg slightly, feeling up and down the leg and the hip. “It's as hard as a rock.”

"Can you get the trailer over here?"

"I sure can."

The Lady stood at the mare's head and stroked her. “She's coming. We'll get you to the vet. All you have to do is get into the trailer."

Slowly, hesitantly, painfully, Candy struggled on three legs to follow her Lady through the gate while The Other Lady maneuvered the trailer so as to minimize the distance Candy would have to step up to enter the trailer.

The Lady stepped into the trailer and pulled gently on the lead rope. “Com'on, Candy. You can do it,” she spoke encouragingly to the horse. In a much less encouraging tone, she spoke to her friend, “She's not going to be able to get in. She won't be able to stand on that leg.”

Candy responded, leaning into the trailer. If her Lady wanted her in the trailer, she would get into the trailer, no matter how much it hurt. She trusted her. Somehow she managed to raise her front feet, shifting most of her weight on her one good hind leg.

“Good girl. You can do it.”

The Other Lady carefully lifted the hoof of the injured leg and placed it on the floor of the trailer. “Come on.” The rope pulled gently.

Pushing hard with her good back leg, Candy jumped into the trailer. Pain shot through her entire body as her injured leg struggled to lift her body to bring in the good one. She lurched forward, trembling with pain, mindless of the fact that her Lady stood in front of her. The woman backed quickly away, at the same time reaching out to steady the mare.

A sigh resounded through the trailer, neither Candy nor her Lady knowing which one emitted it. Again the woman spoke gently, stroking Candy's face. “Now all you have to do is stay standing ‘til we get to the vet.”

“Do you want to tie her in?” asked the driver, now standing at the front of the trailer, reaching in
through the manger door.
“No, because if she goes down . . .”
Slipping past the mare, she closed the trailer tailgate. Candy had turned herself around and was now standing with her head over the tailgate.
“She shouldn’t be standing backwards,” the driver objected.
“That’s the way she used to ride when she rode in the back of my pickup,” replied The Lady, removing the lead rope from the halter.
As the pickup pulled the trailer away, Candy struggled to hold her balance. Two front feet and one hind foot is not the way horses were designed to stand. Quickly, however, she found a position she could hold. She held her own, standing in the trailer, facing the back, her head out over the tailgate, as the pickup headed slowly down the poorly maintained dirt road.
Once they stopped, and The Lady appeared behind the trailer. “Are you OK, Candy?”
OK was not what Candy was feeling, but she was standing.
The vet met them at the back door of the clinic. Then came the next challenge, Candy must get out of the trailer.
“Will it be easier for her to come out forward or backward?”
“Let her decide that.”
Candy stood facing the open door. She knew what her Lady wanted, and she knew that she would have to put weight again on her injured leg. She hesitated, she felt the gentle tug, and she responded. Front feet first, then she hopped out on her good leg. The forward momentum nearly knocked her to her knees, but she collected herself.
The people around her conferred as the vet examined the injured leg. The words meant nothing to Candy. “Fracture.” “Can’t operate where it is.” “Not a desirable prognosis.” The conversation continued. The vet moved away to the outside stalls which appeared to Candy to be miles away. He came back. “If you can get her over there, she can spend the night. There’s a calf in there, but he won’t bother her.”
Candy felt the needle in her vein, the needle of a sedative, to offer her some relief from the pain.
“Come on, Candy.” The lead rope pulled, but Candy did not move. She had no intention of trying to walk that far. Now it was simply beyond her ability to do so, no matter how much she wanted to please her Lady.
More conversation, and The Lady’s lip began to quiver.
“Can you do it now?”
The vet hesitated, and then responded, “Yes,” and went back inside.
The two women stood at Candy’s head and neck, petting, soothing her and each other, stroking the sturdy bay mare.
“Tell Buck ‘Hello’ for me.”
Before the vet emerged again, The Other Lady pulled a pair of scissors out of the truck cab.
“What do you want,” she asked, “forelock or mane?”
The Lady laughed as she pointed to the little clump of mane behind Candy’s ears, the piece of mane that always insisted on being on the wrong side.
Candy had never appreciated having her mane clipped, but the sedative was having some effect, so she did not raise her head to its usual giraffe position of objection. Whack, whack, whack, and the driver held a small piece of black mane in her hand.
“How long will it take?”
“About 15 seconds after I get it in. You ought to stand a little ways back. They don’t usually go forward. Usually they go to the side, but sometimes they go over backwards. She won’t feel anything by then.”
Another injection into her vein. She began to relax, then crumpled to the side. The Ladies knelt by her head, petting her, talking to her, loving her. After a couple of minutes the vet pulled out his stethoscope and listened. No heart beat.

Standing in grass up to her knees, Candy looked around in surprise. This was not a place she knew. Other horses grazed nearby. A shiny copper buckskin raised his head and nickered a greeting. She did not move, so he came over to her.

“You must be Candy,” he said as they touched noses. “I’m Buck.”
“I’m supposed to tell you ‘Hello.’”
“Yeah,” he responded. “She was my Lady for quite a while, too. But really, it’s her daughter who belongs to me.”

For a few minutes they stood together, remembering. Candy looked around and saw that some of the horses were standing together, in a herd. Others were off by themselves, and still others jogging around with a person on their back.

“This is a good place,” said Buck, finally, interrupting her thoughts. “No pain here. Nobody ever goes hungry.”
“I can see that there’s plenty of grass right now,” agreed Candy, wondering what it would look like with winter snow.

Out of habit, she shifted her weight from her left hip to her right one. Immediately she regretted that action, anticipating a sharp stab of pain. Nothing happened. No pain. It felt perfectly normal.

Unbelieving, she placed her right hind foot squarely on the ground. Again, no pain. Only the feeling of a healthy leg.

“I told you,” Buck said gently, “no pain here.”
He looked at her front hooves. Those shoes on your feet are for navicular disease,” he reminded her. “I had that, too. The Lady used to say that my shock absorbers were shot.” He chuckled a horse chuckle. “But not here. You don’t need them anymore.”

Candy felt the metal shoes melt off her hooves.
“They’re gone?”
“No pain here.”
“And my hip?”
“No pain here. Try it. Take a step.”
Candy hesitated. She had endured too much pain getting in and out of the trailer. She did not wish to endure any more.

“Come on, try it. Take a step.”
Gingerly, hesitantly, carefully, Candy moved her right hind leg forward.
“So far so good. Now put some weight on it.”
“You sure?”
“I’m sure.”
Gingerly, hesitantly, carefully, Candy shifted some weight to her right hind leg. She felt nothing abnormal. No pain, just the movement of muscles under her skin.

“Now the other leg.”
But to move the other hind leg would put all the weight of her hindquarters on the injured leg.

Did she dare do that? She remembered riding in the trailer.
“It’s OK. No pain, remember?”
Head up to balance, she slid the left hind leg forward.
“No, do a real step. Pick it up.”
Angrily, Candy took two full steps forward. Then two more. Then two more. She stared at Buck, who was laughing at her.
“See? I told you. No pain!”
“And I can trot and run?”
“Let’s go!”
Candy had no trouble keeping up with Buck at a trot. She remembered trotting under saddle. The Lady sat her gentle trot, but with more speed, she would post, rising up and down in rhythm.
“The Lady didn’t like my trot,” Buck told her. “My legs don’t paddle out like yours do, and she had to post all the time on me.”
When they broke into a run, however, Buck’s longer legs took him ahead of Candy. When they finally stopped, Candy expected to be breathless. She was amazed that she breathed as quietly as if she had been standing still.
Again, she looked around, trying to orient herself in this strange place. Not far off she saw a man standing at the front of a black horse. The man was stroking the horse passionately, as though they had not seen each other in a long time.
“Jet’s man finally made it,” Buck explained. “Jet’s been waiting for a long time. The man was 56 when Jet came here, some 40 winters ago down there.” They watched Jet dance around the man and listened to the man laughing.
Now Candy paid more attention to the people and horses around them. The people all rode bareback, no saddle, no bridle. Some simply rode around the meadow, others worked in circles and figure 8s. When a horse stopped, its person slid off, and they walked off together.
“Let me introduce you to some of the others.”
Everyone greeted the newcomer in a friendly manner, sniffing noses to get each other’s scent. No pawing, no snorting, no swearing at each other. They grazed together peacefully, no challenging each other for a specific clump of grass.
After a while Buck took Candy to the pond. As she lowered her head to drink, she realized that she was looking down at the lot where she used to live. Dove and Doble stood together at the feeder, waiting, as The Lady came out with a couple flakes of hay.
“It’s hard to see just two of you,” she told them. “I really miss Candy.”
Candy noticed that The Lady had tied a braid of black mane to her coat.
The woman slipped up beside Doble. “You’re my 20-year horse now,” she said softly, sadly.
“You’re going to be a fine horse.”
As she walked away, she added softly, so he would not hear, “But you’re not my Candy.”
The bay mare often returned to the pond to drink and to observe below. As time passed below the pond, her Lady moved more slowly. She continued to ride Doble, often with The Other Lady riding Dove. When her Lady’s choring coat wore out, the braid of black mane shifted to the new coat. Below the pond, winters came and went. Winter never came where Candy now lived.
The time came when The Lady no longer rode the aging gelding. She would stand beside him, stroking him all over, petting his face, as he nuzzled against her. And then she would only sit in a chair in the back yard, gazing fondly at her grey-muzzled Doble. Eventually she no longer came outside at all.
Candy was puzzling about that when she heard people feet running toward her. “Candy! Candy!” a familiar voice shouted with surprise and joy. “Buck!”
Her no-longer white-haired Lady ran toward her.
Buck’s head jerked up in recognition! “It’s our Lady!”
Together Candy and Buck ran to meet her.
Heartland
By Michael Adams

I am from the heartland
From twisters and summer night rains
I am from the Sand Hills and prairie land grass
I am the one tree in the middle of the field
From Dalmatians, cows, and old Dodge trucks
In the fields grazing and rusting
Those memories are fading
I am here now

Home town values with small town pride
Not locking your door at night
Leaving your keys in your car and
Helping your neighbors in need
From the heartland to the blue grass
I am the redneck down the street
True in heart and faith in love
Marrying your high school sweetheart

I am the Adams and the Bertrams
Piecing them together after hearing the bad news
From my father in Wyoming who is not me
To my step dad who is

Déjà Vu with family cookouts
Lost time, lost memories
700 miles from home and
The memories cannot be made.

The Lonely Tree
by Michael Adams
Sand Hills
By Gary Henderson

The zen art of standing
Six-score years in chaste but barren sand
Has taught the threadbare fences
Of my youth
An infinite grace,
A resourceful peace
Of body, mind, and soul.

And yet they say
Madness lies in the practice.
But they--
Whoever they may be--
Never bloomed in sand,
The result of prayers
And persevering faith.
They were never gathered by desert hands
Hoping for richer soil.

They will never know
A childhood rooted
Day by day,
Year by year
On its gentle knees
Praying for different results
In every sunrise.

For every rain--
Those eclipsing storms--
Brings bright, dusky blooms
For a day
Or two.

They--
Whoever they may be--
Will never know the loving office
Of fence-post monoliths,
My stooped and weathered Buddhas,
Guiding a sunset tide of flowers
To the only stable ground
They may briefly know.

Untitled
by Rachel Moeser
shipping steers  
(haiku series)  
by Christine Valentine  
on the high divide  
clouds scud before morning wind  
empty possum-bellies wait  
one cowboy complains  
electric fence jolted him  
better than coffee  
horses saddled up  
patiently wait for riders  
to load waiting steers  
steers bawl in corrals  
bewildered about being  
penned up with others  
cowboys mount up now  
steers get moved to a new pen  
ready for weighing  
ten steers at a time  
are wrangled onto the scales  
weighed ready to ship  
old buck stomps and snorts  
waiting in his horse trailer  
for the journey home  
cowboys eat croissants  
quite a change from beef and beans  
it's a modern world  
semis full of steers  
off to get fat in feedlots  
leave the prairie now

Home on the Snowy Range  
by Margaret Evans
Out of Night’s Black Velvet Cushion
By CJ Clark

Out of night's black velvet cushion
the report of frozen tree limbs
snap! crack! under heavy weight.
Melting ice cocoons in bowers
Downing power lines.
I, a pilgrim in this journey,
light a candle, blow on my hands
as mercury plummets. Motors grind,
refusing to start; dammed water pipes,
parched throats and silent furnaces do not blow.
Cold seeps in shrouding flesh
and bone. Survival takes on new meaning.
How long can flesh endure no heat, no sun?
Oh, to wrap my hands around a hot cup of coffee,
A bath to warm this icy flesh.
How careless to take pleasures for granted.
Here in waiting darkness. Incessant waiting,
For long black hours to pass into day,
Only to be repeated again and again
Until Mother Nature’s fury is past.

When We First Met
By Christen Boles

When we first met, we had our lives dedicated to each other.
We always spent those summer days, talking to one another.
As the summer begins to end, that’s when it all broke apart from our hands.
And we couldn’t understand why everything had left us in the dust.
But both of us managed to see through that glass, lying there in shattered pieces.
Standing on that bridge of years with you, all I see is those waters spinning in circles.
A sudden wind blows against our faces, leaving us with hope and faith.
When the wind begins to weaken, it shows our past on the mist rising slightly above the water.
Every moment I lived with you, can’t ever be relived on this bridge again.
Religion of fear
By Art Elser

When I was nine, one summer afternoon each week, I was sent to catechism class where humorless nuns marched us to a beautiful grotto set in a hillside, framed by maples, oaks, and flowers. The grotto had a small statue of Mary in a blue robe, holding the baby Jesus.

The nuns lectured us about God's love. But, if I whispered or squirmed, one of the nuns would come up silently, grab an ear and twist or yank a handful of hair and warn that I'd burn in hell. Those nuns, Darth Vader prototypes, in their black habits and starched wimples, stormed imperially across my childhood.

Why didn't they show us the beauty of the flowers by that peaceful grotto? Why didn't they point to the trees and tell us how they nurtured birds? What if they had sat quietly with us to listen to chickadees, orioles, cicadas, crickets? What if they had showed us God's creation?

Would that have changed my childhood faith? My spiritual life? How would I believe today?

Bed Bugs
By Shirley Smith

Bed bugs! Bed bugs, careful where you lay.

They crawl on you, and chew on you and just won't go away.
They are in your bed, and in your hair and even in your clothes.

They nibble here and nibble there and sometimes chew your toes.
First you spray, and then you pray and then you fumigate.

But hurry, hurry get it done, before you are too late.

Hard Lessons
By Shirley Smith

Did you hear about the Civil War going on? The government is trying to put the rebels down, but they have a strong army of their own. The government troops are determined to put the insurrection down by any means. The shooting and killing is terrible on both sides. The rebels are determined to free themselves from the tyranny of the government. The bloody slaughter continues on both sides.
The foreign countries take little interest in this small country. “Let them settle their own war,” they say. Not only the soldiers are being killed and maimed but hundreds of women and children are dying also. The countryside is scorched with the burning of entire cities. When will this horrible war come to an end? Only when the Union soldiers of President Lincoln convince the Southern Rebel armies to surrender. Some things never change. Will we never learn?
February Mood
By Christine Valentine

Late winter
Gray skies
No sun
Cold of body and cold of mind
Self-criticizing for lack of productivity
I have my usual late February mood

I complain this is the time of year when
Apples have no flavor
Tomatoes no tang
Grapes wither and wrinkle in the fruit bowl
And the cat gets hairballs

So I sigh a lot and sometimes swear
Then fling my body around the kitchen
Or feign fragility and sit in the chair
A moody wastrel of time and substance

The Road to Nowhere
by Michael Adams
A Bullfighting Hero  
By Brook Foreman

The day was hot as the wind arose,  
dust in eyes, ears, and nose.  
Standing there feeling warm and cold,  
was a true bullfighting hero.

A clown they thought,  
but none of the sort.  
A clown who fought,  
the crowd grew coarse.

Cowboy on the ground,  
bull in the middle.  
He lost the crowd’s sound,  
then heard heaven’s fiddle.

The bull scratching the dirt,  
pissed off and steaming;  
Wanting to cause hurt,  
bullfighter’s eyes gleaming.

The bull began to rant and rave,  
as the clown ran for cover.  
In a barrel he was caved,  
while desperately saving another.

Over and over he rolled,  
barrel and bull clashed.  
His heart turned cold,  
as it banged and bashed,

On this hot summer’s day,  
stood a man not a myth.  
The bull lost this day,  
not Casey Smith.

The crowd turned hasty,  
bullfighter’s eyes aglow.  
Stood blue-eyed Casey,  
a true bullfighting hero.

Let’r Buck  
by Katie Jackson
Five Ways of Looking at Cold
By Abbie Johnson Taylor

At a quarter to nine in the morning, it's seventeen below.
Waiting for a ride, I stand inside the kitchen door.
The sun shimmers on the frosted glass.
I rub with gloved hand
but don't even make a dent in the frost.
I hear the car pull into the driveway—
its tires crunch on the frozen snow.

"I don't have the heat on yet," she says when I get in the car.
"It needs to warm up first."
I'm not complaining--
walking the half mile to the YMCA
would be a lot worse.
When we arrive, I feel like a popsicle.
In the locker room, my nose runs.

The water exercise class is in progress when I get in the pool.
"North to Alaska" plays on the stereo.
Why would I want to go there? I'm cold enough--
but as the water's warmth surrounds me,
I move across the pool--
my mind unfreezes, opens to a world of possibilities.

Driving home isn't so bad.
The car has absorbed the winter sun's warmth
after sitting in the parking lot for over an hour.
When I get home, the temperature is four degrees above zero.

The groundhog did not see his shadow today--
there will be an early spring.
We've never had one of those in Wyoming.
In the late afternoon, the temperature has risen to twelve above—
it feels like twelve below.
Where's our early spring?
Mountain Life
By Brook Foreman

Mountain sunrise,
the rain air.
Calm cool mornings,
coyotes and bears.

Mountain breeze,
from miles away.
Whispering through valleys,
like an ocean’s wave.

Mountain river,
flowing clear and clean.
Water churning,
as waterfalls gleam.

Mountain snow,
a blanket of cotton.
Freezing temperatures,
summer not forgotten.

Mountain sunset,
colors of glory.
the crisp night air,
a mountain man’s story.

Mountain love,
unpredictable like the weather.
mystical and rocky,
but always together.

Morning Glory

by Brandy Mendoza
**Forest Forever**  
By Mikala Sweetser

As the wind slows down.  
Bugs fly above my head  
In the dusk of day.

I walk past tall trees  
That wave to me as I leave.  
As for now, I go.

I'll be back again  
To see what is new and old.  
The trees stay and wait.

**Why Lie?**  
By Kaeyla Stafford

Lying  
So easy, rolls off the tongue  
Why?  
Because it hurts?  
More and more to keep track  
Never having anyone's back  
Get caught  
So you make up another  
Living in a blanket of lies  
Nothing you don't despise  
Be honest,  
Loyal,  
And truthful  
Life is so easy  
To keep track  
Someone always has your back  
Because they know  
What you say is so

**chickadee notes**  
By Art Elser

a chickadee plays  
black and white notes from the trees  
a winter keyboard

**Insecure**  
By Kaeyla Stafford

How does my fingernail feel when I paint it a color it doesn't like?  
In a dress I don't like I feel...  
Obese  
Hoping no one sees  
A prisoner parrot in green  
Instead of a human being  
Morphed  
Like a chubby little dwarf  
When I have on a dress I don't like, I feel insecure  
I doubt my nails feel dissimilar
From a Distance
By John S. Goodman

Watching from a distance as they smile and laugh…
Totally unaware of the devastation they have caused.

One careless thought…spoken.
Destroying friendships years in the making.

Friendships that, in hindsight, must have been imagined…
For they are forgotten by all but one.

Memories surround…providing constant reminders
Of the smiles and laughs now absent.

Except those shared with others…
From a distance.

Fall Candles
by Margaret Evans
Age of Thoughts
By Cheryl Wilkinson

I’ve been told that old age
Is only in your mind
Younger people tell you that
They’re trying to be kind.

If old age is really
Just your mind thinking so
Then how do you keep age
From creeping down below?

You try to watch your weight
I’m really good at that
I watch all my body parts
Turn into fat.

Organic food is what
You’re supposed to eat
But I really need more preservatives
To stand on my two feet.

If I had only known
That I’d live this long
My body would have had
Better care all along.

If I’m not confused
I don’t know what’s going on
So absent-minded that in the middle
Of a sentence I just…

Unbroken
By Lauren Gull

Rain is a melancholy miracle
Laughing
It dances sadly down the windowpane
Weaving a warped reality
A kaleidoscope of sky and earth, its image
Mocks perfection
And captures the beauty of emotion

The stillness of this downpour
Sings a lullaby to the restless
And paints the world
Between reality and illusion
Where fears are eased and
Tears wiped away

Its unquiet silence
Patiently smooths our scars
Gluing the world back together
One heart at a time
In this gentle sorrow
We become unbroken once more

Catch
By Roberta Boyd

Catch me,
  my breath,
  up on things.

Catch it from someone.
  or from all sides.
Catch hell.

Catch a break,
  a ball,
  a falling star.

I have a catch in my throat
  In my heart.

Please play catch with me.

Catch me.
Broken
By Melissia Grubbs

Broken
Is like
Your heart and feelings
Being torn
In half being
Broken
Isn’t a good feeling but sometimes
All you have to do
Is move on one day
You will
Find “the one”
And you will
Be happy and not
Broken
You will always
Have a smile on
Your face that will be
The day when you aren’t
broken

Spring
By Bessie Hubbard

You came so quietly
The first thing I know
There’s not one sign
Of last winter’s snow.
The cold air of March
Has lost its chill.
Just see the hint of green
There on yonder hill.

I spy the first robin
Perched high in that tree
Singing his spring song
As he sways in the breeze.
Now the bright sun warms
The sleeping flower beds
As the tulips and daffodils
Sleepily raise their heads.

Feel the freshness of
The early morning now
As the farmer turns
The warm earth with his plow.
Hear the children outside
Happy at their play.
It’s time for tired old winter
To slip quietly away.

Compare
By Kaeyla Stafford

Can you look at me without the glare?
I am me and you are you
I feel like all you ever do is stare
If you could accept me, it would be a
breakthrough
Why do girls compare?
Everything down to my gym shoe
My dad is definitely no billionaire
Everything I need, I feel the need to undo
You are the one to declare
Which one is wearing clothes that are true
Being in high school is so unfair
But, I know I will make it through
Being equal is my prayer
We can all be girls to look up to
Drowning in Fear  
By McKenzie Rosdail  

Fear is the dark ocean  
Grasping you, pulling you in.  
The longer it has you, the harder it is to escape.  
Cold and dark.  
Your skin is wet and clammy.  
Everything is closing in  
And you start to feel the pressure.  
Finally, there is help  
As you rise to the surface  
There is a light.  
You are free.  
Nothing is left to fear.

I Live on the Rez  
By Aje Mesteth  

We have the Badlands. The Badlands are rocky and rough.  
There are giant spiders that live in the Badlands.  
We have skinny creeks.  
Our creek is called Porcupine Creek.  
We have bad weather in the winter and good weather in the summer, fall and spring.  
In the winter, it snows a lot and we have lots of cancellations of school.

Table for One Please  
By Kari Rood  

I’m sitting at my desk thinking of a poem,  
Writing words out of the thesaurus, I don’t even know them.  
I write a couple of words and take a break,  
Go downstairs and eat some cake.  
I go back upstairs and practice some arts,  
Go back downstairs and eat some pop tarts.  
I sit in the living room and watch some TV,  
Then I eat some macaroni that is real cheesy.  
I like to eat as you can tell,  
Now ring the Chinese bell!  
Rice, eggrolls, shrimp, seafood,  
Chinese puts me in a happy mood.  
The day is finally over and now I can go to sleep,  
But I can’t wait until tomorrow so I can finally eat.
Grape Ghost Honeysuckle on a Moonlight Path
By Sharon Jones

My journey leads me traveling on a moonlight path; heart, eyes and ears are searching for a destination.

I have no idea how to get there; moving through all the obstacles guided with wisdom from my brothers and sisters with desire and determination.

Briefly looking behind, a path of pain has now transformed within my mind’s perception to peace, endured with independence, strength and courage.

Flying through the forest a choir of white angelic tall Aspen trees shield and protect me from the environment around me filled with anger and rage.

The fine diamond mist of moisture of the waterfall glistening in the moonlight refreshes my delicate body’s senses with ominous exhilaration.

Mother Nature’s magical breeze lifts my opaque wings on a higher flight of future life ambitions.

Landing gently gliding on the path, the moonlight shines on the Grape Ghost Honeysuckle vines that intertwine throughout my wings and my soul.

These vines lure and entice my brothers and sisters to converge upon its delicate flowers and experience the Grape Ghost Honeysuckle.

Together in the moonlight path we will all search for enlightenment and like the butterfly glides through the forest, carefree without a destination.

Untitled
by Rachel Moeser
Juice Box
By Joey Lyn Moreno

I was just a sittin’ one summer, drinking a juice box,
Then over walked that cranky ol’ fox.
He started goin’ off about how someone had done him wrong.
Then he noticed the juice box, and said, “I haven’t had a drink in so long.”
And if I could spare him a cup.
Then I stood up,
And said in a deep, mighty, powerful voice,
“That’s not my fault, that was your choice.
This is my juice box,
Go and ask for pity from someone else, Fox.”
And he scampers away,
Until the very next day.
I was just a sittin’ one summer, drinking a juice box,
Then over walked that cranky ol’ fox.
And he started going about, like a mad man
How he desperately needed a fan.
Then he noticed my juice box, and once again asks if I would share
Then I said “I wouldn’t dare,
Go away from me,
Or I shall make you pay a fee.”
And he scampers away,
Until the very next day.
I was just a sittin’ one summer, drinking a juice box,
Then over walked that cranky ol’ fox.
And he started going on…no, wait, he wasn’t going on about, not about a fan, or how someone had done nothin’ to him…
And there was a simple tone of pleading in his voice, and he looked very slim.
And he said “May I, just may I, have a sip of your juice box?”
And I said, “No you may not, Fox.”
Because today I brought two.
One for me, and one for you!”

Shoelaces
By Christen Boles

Friends are like shoelaces, always sticking together through whatever comes towards them.
But sometimes, the laces seem to somehow untie, and let things in between them.
Through those experiences friends will tie their shoelaces back together and become one like before.
Then realize they’re going to be together side by side til the end.
Loneliness
By Martha Boyer Armstrong

Loneliness has nothing to do with being alone.
The heart is heavy.
The spirit sags.
The mind tries for non-identity.
The soul seems not to exist.
The eyes are unseeing.
Even the mouth has no words to speak.
The silence is mute.
The ears do not want to hear the emptiness.
Feet cannot stand; arms cannot reach.
One can hear hints of danger in the air...
A deep cavern of carelessness...
A wisp of air trailing past, yet I cannot breathe.
The rain is a slight drizzle yet I cannot drink.
Bird sounds fly past me quietly.
I am immovable.
Safety is gone, for security is gone.
Caches of cruelty are visible everywhere.
They are like ghosts draped in darkness.
Amid crowds of humanity I stop to stare.
Everyone surrounds me yet they are not there.
No one cares whether I am there or not.
I am alone!

Can You Hear My Cries
by Eleanor Leonne Bennett

I am alone!
A Cloud Full of Ice cream
By Mikala Sweetser

The delicious ice cream is the clouds in the sky.
Taller than the mountains, the ice cream mounts.
So light to the touch,
You hardly know it’s there.
So bright,
Everyone can see the wonders of it.
Vanilla is wider than the world.
Chocolate is the taste of dreams.
Strawberry is the picture
Floating above everyone’s head.

13 Bowling Balls
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

They sat up there
In the dark attic
13 bowling balls
Different colors
Different weights
Some he never threw down a lane
But they sat upstairs
Reminders of all the great nights, great games
13 bowling balls
Up there above his head
Rolling memories down the stairs to Frank

Abandoned Sands
By Joshua S. Greene

Magnified beams of fire sprung from the heavens,
Giving shape to lifeless landscape
Awaked was the beast of heat, his wrath unleashed,
The claimer of strength, the taker of souls
Orange tongues licked stone, boulders alighted in flame
A fortress ablaze in a golden gaze
The nomad strode abandoned sands with endless vengeance,
An eye of death itself ever roving
The hallowed land of damned awaits his cry,
Screams of heartless injustice
Breathless clouds engulfed the distant skies,
The hand of the desert’s clock ever winding
Gleaming steel shines among the shadowed day,
Another wayfarer doomed to perish in the thirsty sea
Blue glow overcomes the burning wasteland,
Now engulfed in the mourning tint of night
The demon took his leave, to return when the sands again ignite.
I Forget the Things I’ve Said…
By Deanna Wilson

I forget the things I’ve said to my children.

Did I tell them to brush and floss and sing out loud?
Feed the fish and walk the dog, give and take and stand their ground?

Did I tell them to open doors and step over thresholds and see what’s on the other side?

I forget the things I’ve said to my sons as they grew into men and learned the rough ways of the world when I couldn’t always be there and when I could but wasn’t.

Did I tell them never to speak unless spoken to or did I tell them to always speak up for what’s right?

Did I tell them to say “Please” and “Thank you,” “It’s all my fault?” and “If you loved me… you would.”

Did I tell them to be generous, loving, gentle and kind, fight the good fight and don’t cross that line?

Pick up their own mess, and fight their own wars, hold on to old friends, and let go of old scars?

To reach for the stars and follow their hearts, use their heads, lend a hand, dream their dreams, take a stand, keep their feet on the ground?

Did I tell them to believe in Batman but there’s no Santa Claus, to love what they do and do what they love, that big boys can cry and bad men don’t win, and good people die.

Did I tell them?
Midnight Love
By Taylor (Demitry) Kaus

It was midnight; I was by the lake.
I was alone, and so cold, it made me shake.
Through the mist I saw her walk,
Right to me from across the dock.

My heart skipped a beat
That time heaven let us meet.
The atmosphere could disappear,
But that would not change her, my dear.

She came to me with flowing hair.
To try and describe her beauty, I shall not dare.
It was so unreal, the way she came,
And so easily she lit my flame.

My heart skipped a beat
That time heaven let us meet.
The atmosphere could disappear,
But that would not change her, my dear.

But then I started to realize,
That her being real was to be my demise.
Because I asked her to be kissed,
Only to watch her disappear into the mist.

My heart skipped a beat
That time heaven let us meet.
That atmosphere could disappear,
But that would not change her, my dear.

And thus I awoke from my dream.
And everything was back to how it should have seemed.
But I will never forget that girl of mist,
Whom I had no will to resist.

My heart skipped a beat
That time heaven let us meet.
The atmosphere could disappear,
But that would not change her, my dear.

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Stockings and Socks
By Cheryl Wilkinson

My stockings run
When I’m in them
And when I’m not.
Whether it’s cold
Or whether it’s hot
My stockings run.

Socks are different
No running for them
They get holes
In heels and toes
Spiritual they are
Holy, holy, holy,
Socks are.

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Untitled
by P.J. Nunn

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My Pioneer Grandma
By Bessie Hubbard

My dear Grandma, you were
Surely a pioneer true,
In 1909, you homesteaded here
Granddad, fives kids and you,
You set up housekeeping
In a one room shack.
Hung up your bonnet, tied your apron,
And never looked back.
There was always plenty
Of hard work to do…
Milking, gardening, chickens, sewing.
Storing food for winter, too.
You fed anyone passing by
When Granddad invited them in,
And often cared for the sick
Be it neighbor or kin.
As your pioneer family to
Seven grew,
You even played the piano
For Sunday school, too.
When we grandkids came visiting
From the Sandhills afar,
We always found sugar cookies
In your cookie jar.
I cherish the Christmas days
We spent with you…
The company, the dinner, and gifts
For each one of us, too.
Any memories I have of
The tales that you told,
Of your pioneering here
In the days of old.
You lived on your homestead
For years numbering 72,
And made the changes as they came
From the old to the new.
Through God you managed to keep
Your spirit so strong,
And set the community example
All your life long.
**My Rose**  
*By Doug Valade*

For you, mine most dearest dark and ashy rose,  
Your deepening colors are anything but gray.  
For only you have I wrote this small prose,  
And for only this I hope that you will stay.  
I’ve thought much of our great love as I rose,  
To live through yet another long lasting day.

Your colors seem to rise from the bright spring,  
And that shine I see will be here always to stay.  
Your wonderful noise makes both these ears ring,  
And that joyous smile will always pave the way  
To my open heart that yearns to cry out and sing.  
For only you, most dearest rose, am I here to stay.

It is true that around you I am never lonely  
And for all the world that our great love boasts,  
That possibly on that first day of holy matrimony,  
There will be a great amount of jolly toasts.  
On that day both our lives will be in harmony.  
By that day never will we be haunted by our ghosts.

For you, my dearest dark and ashy rose,  
Am I ever willing to most gratefully stay.  
For our Lord’s greatest love we were chose.

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**Untitled**  
*by P.J. Nunn*
Not So Dead
By Madison Verhulst

Chorus:
Staying alive is even harder
What we knew is forever gone
Everyone dies, none the martyr
Walking, rising, the dead are at dawn

It started out as a myth
No one believed the ones who did
Until one day the dead began to writhe
The reality sank in, this was no kid

Chorus:
It spreads through just one poison bite
Just one kiss could infect
Every day I travel, I fight
A nomad, no one to detect

Chorus:
Every nook and cranny they dwell
Once happy, now no mirth
“When there’s no room in Hell
the dead will walk the earth.” – George A. Romero

Nightmare
By Madison Verhulst

Terror of evil
Awakens the sleeper
Frightening dream, monstrous nightmare

Untitled
by Heidi Belgum
Regrets
By Roberta Boyd

Blank my mind
Blank our slate
NOT TOO LATE
To
Shed hate.
Don’t cogitate
Prevaricate
or
Denigrate.
Find a way to forgive before she dies or I do.

Remember the Days
By Lauren Gull

Remember the days when we would just run?
Just your hand in mine, just us and the sun
Nothing to stop us, and nothing to do
Moving so freely, the sun, me, and you

Remember the days we played in the rain
And bruises and cuts were our only pain
We napped in the sun and climbed every tree
It’s been far too long since I’ve felt that free

Remember the days before the long nights
Before there were lies, before there were fights
Before the mistakes defined who we are
When we were judged by our hearts, not our scars

Remember the days I believed in you
I want you to know, I did and still do

Sounding Red
By Kaiya West

Sirens screaming in my eyes
Roars of rumors, rather cries.
Lusting forbidden love whispers
passions grasping pleasures
by fire’s flickering flames –

Crack
Burning wood planks.
Pop
Sizzle
Blistering boisterous heat. Ahhh

Hurtful hatred hollering from
his flushed face
A complexion
boiling, gurgling blood
As sirens scream at my eyes.

Revenge
By jjdyo

The carpentry of revenge
Has a two way hinge
Injured on both sides
It is pushed-it glides
To the other side then
It will be pushed again
Slanted one way from one side
Slants the other as it glides
No right angle resolute
Just obtuse and acute
Who knows if it ever will close
Forgiveness centered once more
It will take delicate precision
To key this cockled and cocked division
sensitive course and a gentle force
To close and silence a very squeaky door
The following poem was written by a tanker pilot. He scribbled it on a napkin during dinner in a restaurant. My father, also a tanker pilot, was having dinner with him at the time. After seeing his friend repeatedly jot something on the napkin throughout the meal, my dad finally asked, “What are you writing?” “A poem,” the other pilot replied. “I didn’t know you wrote poetry!” my dad exclaimed in surprise. “I never have before,” he answered with a sheepish grin and a shrug. Both pilots were part of a crew hired to drop fire retardant on an out-of-control forest fire in California. That day, my dad had already made his run into the hot, smoky, dangerous hell of burning canyons. It was his friend’s turn to fly, so, scheduled to climb into the cockpit of a C-119 soon, he left the table early. After he had gone, Wes Wilson, my father, picked up the napkin that had been left behind and read what was written there. “It was good,” he told me the next day on the phone, “I put it in my pocket. I was going to tell him the next time I saw him that he should publish it, or at least keep it.” But he never got the chance.

According to the Aviation Safety Network Database, Report # N48076, “The pilot and crew of Tanker 135, a C-119, died on 9/16/87 when their air tanker broke apart on a retardant run on a fire on the Shasta Trinity National Forest. The converted WW II vintage “flying boxcar” crashed in clear weather at about 1730 hours while making an initial attack retardant drop on a 15 acre fire deep in a canyon.”

I believe the pilot who wrote this poem was Bill Berg, but attempts to verify this or contact any surviving relatives have been unsuccessful. I can’t ask my dad. While battling a locust plague that had left entire villages starving in Africa in 1988, the plane he was piloting went down after being hit by a missile. There were no survivors.

My father gave me this poem, still on the napkin, 25 years ago. I printed it, framed it, and hung it on the wall. Until now, it has never been published.

Not one who plows upon the blue
Is free from threat of storm
And none there are that do not know
The dreaded anvil form
Where blow on blow has forged the sword
Of lightnings’ bright blade
That clears the sky and blinds the eye
And makes the heart afraid.

But were the heavens always clear
The winds forever fair
The cockpit where I’ve sweat my sweat
Were but a rocking chair
Where I would wither in my soul
And waste my life away

Untempered by my daily toil
To meet a judgment day.
I cannot know what He will ask
Who totes the great white book
Of what I selfless gave to life
Or what I selfless took
But this much I shall hazard Him,
If asked, “Were you afraid?”
Aye, Sir, but fear has served me well.
I’ve walked where storm is made.
**Waterfall**  
By McKenzie Rosdail

The crystal drops shower down  
Onto the sharp rocks below.  
A suicide jump from a staggering height.  
Crashing down.  
Ribbons of water splashing into the sky,  
Creating a frothy milkshake in the clear  
pool below.

**Still Water**  
*by Katie Jackson*

**Wrapped Around My Finger**  
*by Katie Jackson*
Growing Up
By Deanna Wilson

When I reflect on the obstacles I’ve faced, I can’t help but think about my amazing good fortune. Foremost are the people in my life. My mom, unbeaten by life’s hardships, taught me to never give up. And in my two wonderful sons, I sometimes catch a glimpse of my dad’s quirky sense of humor, his gentle soul, and his steely resolve. Through the darkest days of my battle with cancer, they were all by my side, giving me love and strength. The will to succeed, however, thanks to my parents, was already mine…

Growing up on a ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills, I always loved “checking pastures” with my dad. Bouncing over endless acres in our old gray truck, we saw coyotes like tawny ghosts and wildflowers that painted the dusty canvas of the prairie with brilliant strokes of blue and gold. But my favorite thing was my dad’s stories. He would make up fantastic adventures, just for me. In those tales, we would hunt, fish, and explore; from the snowy wilds of Canada to the Cypress-shadowed Everglades.

Often, his stories would take to the air. When he talked about flying, a special light brightened his eyes. Flying was his first love, and from his first job washing airplanes at the local airport at age 16 to night classes at the community college 20 miles away, he devoted every spare moment to his dream.

By 1988, he had the gold wings he’d worked so hard for. He was one of the best commercial pilots in the business, flying giant tanker planes into the throats of raging forest fires, saving lives as well as the wilderness he loved. Then, while spraying locusts in Africa to end an insect plague that had left entire villages starving, his plane was hit by a missile over the Sahara Dessert. My hero was gone. But the lessons he shared with me, the spark in his eye and the joy of life that filled his big heart, those things survived.

Twenty years later, faced first with heart failure and then with metastatic breast cancer, 2008 was a year clouded with pain and uncertainty. I emerged from that fearful darkness into a bright future filled with new possibilities.

My accomplishments in life aren’t due to what I’ve learned through my ordeals as an adult, but because of the ideals I learned as a child. My bedtime stories weren’t about fairy godmothers showing up and making all my dreams come true with the flick of a magic wand. They were about making my own dreams come true.

Untitled
by Heidi Belgum
Take Me To The Fair
By CJ Clark

It’s summertime. I can hardly wait
Carnivals and Fairs will open their gates!
Walking the midways of sights and sounds and smells
Hearing the barker’s cry “Step right up and ring the bell!”
“Ring ’em! Pop ’em! Shoot ’em! Score!
Win a prize for the little lady.” Oh, the allure!
There’s the duck pond and a basketball shoot,
Darts, beanbag tosses, bottles to loop.
Here’s a man who’ll guess your weight or size
Chalk ware, Kewpies, Pandas for a prize.
Smells and food tantalize . . . gosh, I love the Fair.
Sausage sizzles on the grills, onions pungent fill the air.
Ice cream, snow cones dripping down elbows on to knees,
Corn dogs, peanuts, popcorn, cotton candy, elephant ear pastries.
Fried foods and candied/caramel apples on a stick
Fair time is eating and eating until you’re good and sick.
And if the food doesn’t do you in, then you must go on rides
Far away the Ferris wheel’s spinning way up in the sky.
Swirl ‘round on the Octopus, the Zumur, Teacups, or Tilt-a-Whirl
Food and rides and dizziness just seem to equal hurl.
Oompah, oompah, ting-a-ling, jing-a-jing calliope beat
Of carousel painted ponies making hearts happy, tap-tap-tapping feet.
If that’s not enough there’s more to arouse
Like your distorted shape in the mirrors of the Fun House.
Find your way over, under and through the House of Mirrors
Lost in glass mazes, watch out, you may disappear!
See the wax works, sideshows, and animal menageries
For once back home you can only relive it in reveries.

Wind Breaking
Umbrella

by Eleanor Leonne Bennett
I was drinking whisky and Jiap was drinking water. He wanted to learn some new English.

“Okay,” I said. “Hard drinker and heavy drinker.”

“Hard drinker, heavy drinker,” Jiap said. “You mean about alcohol, right? What does it mean, exactly?”

“A hard drinker is a person who, when he drinks, likes to drink a lot. Maybe too much. But he doesn’t need to do it every day. A heavy drinker is a person who drinks too much every day. Like an alcoholic.”

“Hard drinker, heavy drinker. So a hard drinker, this person, he does not drink in every day?”

“No. But he may see no point in drinking without intoxication.”

“Intoxi …?”

“Intoxication. Getting drunk. Being drunk.”

“I see. A hard drinker may easily become a heavy drinker, yes?”

“Oh yes. Very easily.” I had a drink. “A hard drinker drinks because he likes it. A heavy drinker drinks because he has to.”

“This is easy to understand,” he said. “Of course it is the same here.”

We were sitting at a fold-out table at a street-side vendor’s stall. Jiap knew the place and the young woman running it. He said the noodles were the best in all Bangkok. Also you could sing karaoke. They had wheeled a karaoke machine out next to the curb. It sat under its own umbrella. The rain had just stopped. The air was soupy. The young woman brought you a bottle of whisky, glasses, soda, and an ice bucket. When you finished eating, you could drink and sing, or just drink.

“C’mon, Jiap, finish up that water and have some of this whisky here. I got this for the both of us,” I said.

“Ah, Hendy, thank you very much. But cannot.”

“Don’t tell me you’re a teetotaler.”

“Excuse me. I do not know this word.”

“A teetotaler. Someone who doesn’t drink at all. Always sober and always toting around a mouthful of stupid excuses.”

“Teetotaler. Teetotaler. This person, they do not drink at all?”

“No. Not at all.”

“Okay,” he said. “This is me. I am a Muslim.”

“Oh,” I said.

“I had to, how you say in English. Change my religion.”

“Convert.”

“Yes. Convert. So I can get married. My wife, she is Muslim. I wanted to get married, so I had to change.”

“You were Buddhist before?”

“Of course.”

A couple tables over, someone was belting out a tune. The young woman brought out our food. I liked the looks of her. Her hair and fingers and smile were all long. We started scooping up the noodles. A tuk-tuk gurgled by, leaving the reek of burnt lead behind.

“Was it hard, to change your religion?” I asked.

“No. Changing religion is not difficult,” said Jiap. “Far more difficult is another thing. To become Muslim, I must make a cut. An operation. Around my penis.”

“Ah. You mean circumcision.”

“Yes. This word. Very painful. To marry my wife, I must do so.”

“Well,” I said. “You must really love your wife.” I had a drink.

“Yes,” he said, and very slowly had a sip of water. “Many people tell me this.”
I’m the Weird Guy
by Phillip Allen Burt

The meaning in life that I strive so hard to find,
Is at the tip of this pen as I sit here and write
About the anger and Love that I keep inside
this body of mine.
I’m free as I hide from those who would try,
To show me I’m wrong as I smile and pass by.
I’m the guy in the corner, the one who’s quiet and nice;
The same guy who smiles but doesn’t seem right.
The one who seems weird because he looks at the sky;
while you’re pondering your paycheck,
Wondering how you’ll get by.
I think of the stars while you think of late night T.V.;
I hear music in the sunlight, but you need a C.D.
I’m the stranger in the crowd that you can pick out,
Because of the fact that I stand still, while you all move
so busily around.
I see miracles everywhere that I look, and you need a sign:
When my foundations shook, I have the strength to rise;
For I revel in the beauty of a fight.
Were your wife to leave you, you’d sit at home and cry,
Whereas I’d write a poem in the bluffs, and think about life.
Or husband; I don’t really care about your gender.
I just want you to know, though I’ve not lived long,
I still remember;
When the world was born, there was a spark.
Then the flame of life consumed it, making it apart
Of the wonder of its swirling mass.
It seems though, that we’re cinders; shadows of the past.
Life has now lost that fire, and has few
remaining embers.
It can last, but life must preserve life;
So why do we humans have Mother Nature at the
point of a knife?
Where I find beauty, such as in an undeveloped field,
Farmers are looking to plant more food to
increase their economic yield.
Don’t get me wrong; humans must survive.
I just wish that so much didn’t have to die in order
for us to live our lives.
Don’t listen to me though, I’m that weird guy.
The one looking up, saying goodbye to this sight.

Warning Signs
by Margaret Evans
Springtime on the Rez
By Riley Jacob Mesteth

I live in Porcupine, South Dakota.

In the springtime I hear the birds chirping, the geese flying back from the south.

I smell the flowers, chokecherries, and the wild plums.

I see the pretty birds flying around, the deer grazing in the fields, and eagles flying over our heads.
Grandma’s Ravioli
By Kathi Sparks

For as long as I can remember, probably long before I was born, the meal served at the Easter dinner table was homemade spinach and sausage ravioli. My grandmother, who was born Anita Tranchetella, was a marvelous cook. While she knew how to prepare any number of Italian dishes, my favorite was her ravioli -- handmade pasta squares filled with cheese, chopped spinach and ground pork sausage. These delicate morsels were covered in a homemade sauce that no one in my family could replicate. Served on the side were fried chicken, Italian sausage, crisp cold lettuce salad, warm Italian bread and wine. Lots of wine. My mouth waters for the taste of this wonderful feast.

My mother’s side of the family is rich in Italian heritage, a heritage of which I am proud. It wasn’t, however, until I was grown up that I learned what went into creating this meal. There is a technique to making homemade pasta. The flour must be mixed just to the right consistency so that it can be rolled out flat. Too much moisture makes it sticky, not enough and it crumbles. Grandma perfected this process to a point where she could whip the dough out in absolutely no time with minimal effort. To an inexperienced pasta creator such as me, it took hours. Literally hours.

Grandma died in the month of November in the year 1987. I was 27 years old and my sister Lorrie was 31. It was our goal to not let this family tradition die with our precious, beloved grandmother. It would be up to us to prepare the traditional Easter meal. A couple of weeks the following year, before the holiday, Lorrie and I decided to see if we could pull this meal off. My sister had done all the shopping and had everything at her house, so I packed up the car and with my kids made the trek from Fort Collins to Littleton, Colorado. The morning after my arrival we were up bright and early, excited and enthusiastic about the task ahead of us. Lorrie already had Grandma’s mixer out on the table plugged in and ready to go. It sat there staring at us as if to say, “You’ll never get it done!” Oh, but we stared right back at it saying to each other, “Let’s do it!” Donning our aprons over our pajamas, coffee in the coffee pot, and kids fed and outside playing, we both took in a deep breath and began.

Now, when you read the ingredients needed to make this pasta, it doesn’t look too hard. Five cups of flour, two eggs, and 1 ¼ cups of water. Not so hard, right? Little did we know that this would be the most difficult recipe we would ever attempt. The empty white mixer now contained the eggs and water, and with a flick of the switch, the mixture was beaten into a foamy white froth. Next, add one or two cups of flour. We decided that one cup wasn’t enough so we added another cup for good measure. The mixer prongs twirled around effortlessly. Next, the recipe called for us to add all but ½ cup of the remaining flour to the bowl and knead it thoroughly. Lorrie took the first attempt at kneading the dough. Grandma’s recipe said the dough should be smooth, even colored, no lumps. We looked at our round ball of dough and it was far from having any sort of “even” anything. “Let’s start over,” Lorrie suggested. “Okay,” I replied. Two more eggs, 1 1/4 cups of water, again white fluffy froth. This time I added the flour and began the task of kneading it to perfection. Well, that depends, I suppose, on one’s definition of perfection. We managed to get a nice even colored ball of dough, but when we attempted to roll it out something
odd happened. The dough kept shrinking. After several attempts to roll out a thin square section of dough, we looked at the clock and three hours had already passed. The filling of spinach, cheese, pork and spices still sat in the pan waiting to be spread out on the dough. Lorrie and I were covered in flour and still in our pajamas. Stymied but not defeated, we decided to take a break for lunch with the kids. “What were we doing wrong?” we asked ourselves as we scarfed down hotdogs and potato chips. My sister again made the decision to try again for the third time to get the dough right.

Once more eggs, water and flour back in the mixing bowl. Using her hands, Lorrie began to knead the mixture. If the saying “third time’s a charm” is true, it certainly was for us. We finally reached success. Placing the dough patties out on the floured counter top, Lorrie rolled it out to a perfect smooth square. No lines or wrinkles could be detected like the smoothness of clean sheets just placed on the bed. We could almost hear our grandmother clapping. Excitedly, Lorrie and I jumped up and down hugging each other and laughing. We could now spread the filling out over our perfected handiwork. Ever so gently we folded over the top half of the dough, and with our fingers we pinched the sides closed. A ravioli rolling pin has the square shape built right in to the roller. You only need to press down firmly, and as you roll the pin across the dough the squares take their shape. Next comes the process of cutting the squares. This is done with a little serrated cutter. As you roll through the lines of the squares it cuts them out with little triangular shapes molded to the outsides of the squares. We stood back and admired our efforts. It didn’t matter that we as well as most of the kitchen were covered in white dust and that it took us all day to get it done. We knew that grandma was looking down on us with pride and admiration. We had done it.

This was the first and last time I would ever make these wonderful pasta squares. My sister, however, has made them every year since our first time we made them together in her kitchen. Lorrie and her family moved away to Florida several years ago, and while she still retains our family tradition, I have not tasted what was once my favorite holiday meal. I am proud to tell you though that our tradition will not end with my sister as my niece, Lorrie’s daughter, has also learned how to make the ravioli. I have my grandma’s recipe and perhaps it is time for me to attempt the task of mixing the dough again.

Traditions should be kept deep inside the hearts and souls of families. It is just too easy to lose what once was so important to those who lived and worked before us. My grandmother is gone, but she lives on through the Easter celebration of family and the ravioli dinner. Perhaps this year my own family will taste this tradition once again. I can hear my grandma’s voice calling out to me saying, “Kathi, it is time to make the ravioli.” My mind drifts back to those wonderful visits to her house, the smell of the sauce from the kitchen, the sounds of the oil popping in the pan with chicken dredged in flour frying to a golden brown. The dining room table set with her china. Grandma calls out to us, “It’s time to eat!” Then with glasses raised, the toast is made. “Salute!” Grandma looks at her family and proudly tells us all “Mangia!” There is no denying this family tradition. It will be passed on through the generations.
Stress
By Arthur Clack

The police had not collected their copy of our pawns and purchases for an amazing three months. I was getting nervous because the City Ordinance required we submit weekly. To ease my nerves, I decided to make a special delivery to the cop shop.

Roy greeted me enthusiastically, like I was a relative just returned from exciting places. In the middle of his staccato greeting he interrupted himself and said, "You look tired. You look exhausted. You look like I feel."

When we got into the better light of the break room, I realized that I must have looked bad. Roy looked like someone who had been up two nights running, but he claimed to have gotten twelve-hours sleep the night before. "I'm the only detective now," he said. "The other one had a nervous breakdown." I noticed the circles under his eyes were red, not black. A sudden severe illness requiring bed-rest was suggested by the skin of his face, which still had the thickness of a well fed person, but it looked like the muscle mass beneath it had wasted away. His mustache and hair were neatly groomed, shot lightly with gray.

Between yawns he told me, "I've got a little girl. She's three years old. She got kicked."
"Jeepers, Roy. The way you say it, I can't tell if it was by a human or a horse. Is she OK?"
Looking exhausted and distressed he leaned against the break table and said, "By a human. She was kicked in the stomach by a five-year-old girl." As he continued, I realized that the three-year-old girl was not HIS three year-old girl. She was just a case. Just another case that was tearing his heart out. "The kick tore the intestine free of the stomach. They think she's going to die. She didn't feel good so they took her to a local doctor five days after the kick. He said she was constipated and gave her a laxative. She collapsed five days later. They sent her to KU Med Center. She had peritonitis and air had collected under her spleen. She had peritonitis untreated for ten days and they think she will die."

In a manner suggesting infirmity, in a controlled collapse he eased himself off the break table and into a chair. "If I ever get shot, I'm not going to let the local doctors near me. I'll make a stink... If I'm conscious, I'll make a stink."

"I'm responsible for gang intel, pawnshops, and..." I didn't hear the rest because he suddenly lunged forward and snapped his right arm to the small of his back. He adjusted his slouch and fumbled behind saying, "Sorry. I almost lost my gun."

A cop dressed in motorcycle togs stuck his head through the door just long enough to say scornfully, "Roy, get a job."

Cheerfully, as if to say "Can I play, too?" Roy said, "Yeah, I'm on permanent break. This is my office."

The motorcycle cop breezed out to be replaced by another officer in plain clothes. To the new officer Roy raised his hands as if to count on his fingers. "One," the fingers said, while his mouth said, "I got eight new cases yesterday." "Two," the fingers said, "And I got four more new cases today."

To me he said, "I get forty cases a month and have about twenty days to work them." I assumed aloud that he spends the rest of his time in court, and was not corrected.

"Years ago," he said as he sat up and looked more animated, "We could give a drunk a ride home. We could take his car keys and deliver him to his wife." Abruptly he stood up, crossed his arms, shifted his weight to his rear leg, scowled, and tapped his front foot in a wonderful impersonation of Andy Capp's wife, Flo. "The wife was usually doing like this, and he had to come down to the station the next morning to retrieve his keys. It was embarrassing to him. I never, never saw it happen to the same guy twice. Today we have to arrest him. He spends the night in jail. He borrows money to post bond. The lawyer costs him $3000. He gets fined. And maybe loses his job. It all adds to the original stress that had him drinking anyway. So what's he do...?" At this point Roy turned sideways and pantomimed a long chug from a bottle.

As I drove back to work I thought, government is an over-stressed machine and the stress is showing in its individual parts.
Walking the Mystery Road
Past, Present, and Future
By Jerald Lucas

We walk the mystery road
From our past to our future
We cast two shadows
Before and behind, as we walk along.
One is the shadow of honor
The other the shadow of shame
With one there is pride and dignity
The other has disgrace and contempt.

With each step, with each day
With every act, with every event
The shadows grow and shrink.
One gets larger, the other smaller
Always seemingly in balance.

The mystery road appears before us
As we take each unsure step,
Our road bends left and right
As it stretches out behind us.
As we move forward, step by step
Into the glow of our setting sun
With wisdom and knowledge
Our path will be straight and true
Before we reach its eminent end.

Ascent
By Brian Croft

Three feet upon the creaking stair
His hesitancy grows
Both houses lean; just one aware
The ticking pulse now slows.

And with the weakness gaining strength
He claws the skin-worn rail
Ascending, here, the given length
Of lit and darkened trail.

Now, reluctantly, the lone man
Before the boarded sill
Stands both to feel where it began
Where, now, they cease their will.

For when she gave the pane her weight
That which the body held
And let light take her, mind prostrate,
His frame and soul were felled.

And so, he, searching for the space
Where casing, plank meet not,
He pulls, the strain bright in his face,
And finds the path she wrought.

Luna
By Nicole Hanjani

We sat in the room with cinder block walls and I listened to your
Words of sorrow and repentance and up welled my sadness like a heavy
Mist though I willed it down, down into a deep stillness.
And you took my hand, yours soft and lightly marred, and
Sang me a lullaby about the moon and kissed the purple bruise
On my forearm left by the phlebotomist.
And I loved you with reservations and intensity.
Then the night was there, heavy and quiet, and we held each other in the small
Bed and I finally let you kiss me and how beautiful you looked with your
New yet familiar face and the bracelet on your left wrist.
In the morning we embraced and I left and still I love you, with
Uncertainty but deeply, overwhelmingly.
The Battle
By Paul Beyer

Such a pleasurable sensation 
This truly filling temptation 
A rewarding delight 
And magnificently right 

It’s your soul that’s on the line 
You’re turning on Divine 
You’re created for felicity 
Delight in innocent tranquility 

It won’t really make a difference 
Whether or not you show temperance 
Chastity — what is this lie 
Did you really hear you’ll die 

How can you do this 
This is a lie not true bliss 
It’s gripping you with its claws 
Violently shredding your soul with its jaws 

No one will notice if you let loose 
It won’t matter if you seduce 
Go ahead and entice 
It will gratify without a price 

Before you can even ask 
Your salvation will be grasped 
Not knowing your life’s end 
A slippery slope you will descend 

Yes, do it now – there you go 
Welcome to the damning show 
This was a trick, and yes I lied 
Now I have you on my side 

Stop this ugly monster at the moment 
Then the devil will be impotent 
Take refuge in your humble Savior 
And Stop this horrible, disgraceful behavior 

Why do that - - it’s perfectly fine 
Now you must do it all the time 
Don’t be a puppet on a string 
Come with me and happiness I’ll bring 

While all this was happening inside of me 
I suddenly realized that I could truly see 
This lie of sin growing and free 
Infecting the world and what God wanted it to be 

It was only tearing apart the beauty of creation 
And demolishing this exquisite formation 
Drowning those by this inclination 
That Flesh is what really matters, not your salvation 

What a horrible lie is this madness 
Only causing humans sadness 
It will continue for every generation 
Until we learn how to say NO to our temptation 

Invitation to Believe
by Margaret Evans
What Will I Leave to My Children?
By Katrina Nuland

What will I leave to my children and their children?
What will they remember?
I hope they will value the beauty of their environment-
the trees,
the sky,
the birds and animals,
the land,
the changing of the seasons,
the rivers and streams,
the never-ending roads upon which we travel.
I hope their eyes will see and their ears hear those things that God intended for us to enjoy.
In the middle of the night-
I hear the wind rustling the leaves and branches and there is – a calm – a quiet –
like none other.
In the darkness-
there is peace and a desire for rest.
I hope they will take time to rest-
sometimes when I had worked too hard I could not appreciate the rest.
There is a balance
In the quiet times-
I hope they can reflect on the good times and their accomplishments-
for each has their own special gifts and contributions.
Sometimes we forget to reflect – it does so much good to remember.
How grateful I am that they have found good work to give them a sense of accomplishment.
How grateful I am to see the ways in which they show honor and respect for each other-
and know the joy that comes from honoring and respecting one another.
“I wish I was never born!” I shouted from the top of the stairs. “I wish I would have gotten an abortion!” My mother called back.

This wasn’t the first time we talked like this. It seems these arguments we have happen more often with every year that I collect. Usually it’s something stupid that she screams about, like me not taking out the trash, but they’ve been getting more serious. I don’t know why but I’ve been getting more and more violent, more vandalistic. Maybe it’s just that I’ve stopped caring about the world. Maybe I can’t deal with the fact that my brother died in the war. Maybe I’m just looking for attention. Either way, I just stopped giving a damn about anything.

I slammed the door to my room, locking it behind me so I might have some sort of privacy. I heard stomping up the stairs. I wasn’t supposed to slam my door and I was sure that the stomping was my mother coming up here to have another one of our yelling contests. Slipping on my soundproof headphones, I hit the play all button on my Mp3 player and turned the volume up to max.

Locking the door did nothing to stop the five-foot-four tank that was standing outside my door. She broke open the door, screaming loudly as she did, and ran at me with inhuman anger. I’m not sure what happened after that, all I know is that she knocked me off my bed onto the cold hardwood floor. The last thing I remember from that night was the cold, drunk, and careless look of discontent that filled her brown eyes.

I don’t remember when I awoke. The blood on my face was dried and cracked so it had to have been a while. I didn’t care. I had to leave; I had to get out of there. The front door wasn’t an option, she had an alarm rigged and I didn’t know the security code. The only possible route would have to be out one of the windows.

Opening the door to my room, I made sure I was as quiet as I possibly could be. It wasn’t easy with the creaks and moans of the floor with almost every step I took. Hopefully my mom would be passed out somewhere but I still wouldn’t take any chances. I silently scuttled down the front hall steps and made my way for the office door which lie directly in front of me. Within a few quick and silent seconds I was within the walls of the office. The windows were all locked, just my luck. The office had a bathroom and I was sure that there would be a towel or something in there that I could wrap my hand up in to bust the glass. As I had suspected, there was a towel. I quickly wrapped the thin white towel around my fist as tight as I could make it and punched the glass.

The towel didn’t help. Many glass shards were now embedded painfully in my knuckles. I didn’t care. I was free. After seventeen years of my life I was finally free of the hell I used to call home. I kept the towel on my hand so I could have something to absorb the blood that was slipping out of the wounds on my hands.

After walking for a few minutes I came across the old gas station that I used to vandalize and steal from. They were usually open twenty-four/seven so I walked into their bathroom. If I was going to start a new life or if I was to do anything there was no way that I could get recognized by anyone. I took out the razor and scissors I had stolen on my way and shaved my head. I shaved off all the long brown hair that I had been growing for three years. As I did so it felt as though I was saying goodbye to an old me and saying hello to a new one.

My hand was still bleeding but less now that I got rid of the glass that had made my fist its home. I left the gas station and went to the park a block or so away from the gas station. My friend lived across the street from the park. I walked up to his door and knocked once, hoping that someone was still up this late at night.

The door opened and my friend Cliffy’s face was now looking at mine. I don’t think he recognized me so I decided to speak first

“Hey Cliffy, I need a place to stay for tonight. Would it be okay if I stay here?” I requested.

It took him a few seconds to realize who was asking him this question but his eyes widened as soon as he did, “Yeah kid, you just gotta tell me what happened to you.”
He led me into his house and fetched me a blanket and pillows and gauze while I filled him in on everything that happened in the past hours. He listened to what I had to say, he always did when it came to my mother. He hated her. He was there once when she hit me and it made him sick to his stomach to know that someone could treat another person like that, let alone their own child.

“I’m leaving, Cliffy.” I finished.

He sat there and looked down at the ground for a second, as if afraid to look at me. “I have an idea.” He went to his room and after a few minutes he motioned for me to come in after him.

Cliffy was an expert at making fake IDs. The cool thing about the IDs, they actually worked if a government official were to run it in a machine. He had me sit down on the chair he had set up in front of some piece of cardboard and cleaned my face up. He took my picture without warning and told me to go back to the living room. I went back and lay on the couch and closed my eyes and drifted off to some much needed sleep.

When I woke up, Cliffy was making me breakfast. I wasn’t hungry at all, though. I sat up slowly and pulled myself, exhausted, off of his couch and walked into his kitchen.

“Here” He said putting a plate on the table, “you need to eat.”

Although I wasn’t hungry I understood that I needed to eat something so I could keep my strength up. I sat down and grabbed a fork and started eating the food my friend had prepared for me. Cliffy reached in his pocket and produced an ID for me. I picked it up and looked it over.

“Your new name is Darius Harley. You grew up in Tallahassee Florida and moved here when you were 15. Take this as well.” Cliffy handed me a wad of bills that looked like it held about ten thousand dollars in it.

I grabbed it from the table and looked at it, “Cliffy I can’t take this…”

“I didn’t ask you to take it,” he interrupted, “You’re a good friend of mine, so take the damn money and let me help you.”

A knock at the door warned us that someone was there. I looked to Cliffy, he looked back. We both knew who it was. He tossed me the keys to his old car and pointed at the back door. I knew what he meant. I waited for him to answer the door to be sure it was who I thought it was before I left.

“Where is he, Cliffy?” My mother calmly asked.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He replied.

I took this as my time to leave. I carefully closed the door so as not to be heard and got in the car. I started it and drove off with the money sitting in the glove box.

“Goodbye.” I whispered to myself as I left Cliffy’s house for probably the last time in my life.
You Were There
By Christen Boles

I keep asking myself questions like, “What is wrong with me?”
“Why am I never happy anymore?”
“Where do I fit in?”
“Am I supposed to feel this way?”
Every time I ask myself, there is never a comment, just the feeling of a hand on my back, as if to comfort me.
Without these answers, I can’t be me again and that ghost inside of me can’t escape my fear.
This leaves me living in a burning fire, crying out to you.
As I lay there crying, I realize the first time this all happened was when you began to lose touch with me.
Then suddenly the clouds shut down, the rivers open up and I’ve lost a little bit of that hope I once had.
At the same time I feel myself imagining me in the fields listening to every step I take and I’m able to slowly start finding me again.
My ghost is rising out from beneath me, gradually lifting higher and higher til you see it no more.
Leaving me happier than ever before.

Weight
By Nicholas Ross

The decision weighs heavily on my shoulders.
The walk to the dimly lit room pressing down like boulders.
A woman is fawning, saddened and yawning, as I ask her to take a seat.
What is going on, she asks, plucking at the sheet
Death.
Death – Cold and unrelenting. Buries its hand in my chest.
Your husband is dying slips past my lips, tumbling like a ship,
A ship reaching its crest.
A sob – unleashing a tide, rocking my chest
A wife beginning to greet tells a soul-wrenching story.
The Lord is calling me home escapes, ending marriage’s glory.
Fear drips – filling the room,
A wife terrified of being alone – standing in a tomb.
Waste and Money
By Deborah Rosentrater

Envision a place
Lush with vegetation
Overflowing with life
An abundance of
Chemical-free water
Where trees shade
Instead of smog
Regardless of where your eyes
focus
A masterpiece awaits
Nature’s beauty
One that we named
North America
The land of milk and honey
Now
The land of waste of money

Sonnet of Sound Mind
By Joshua S. Greene

Oh, harsh the windings of this dismal day,
The sun hidden with none of God’s divine,
Angry clouds looming in the new dismay,
Passions paused for the mourning of my mind

Lightning shatters depressed skies of mad black,
While the angels close heaven’s golden gates,
Now Zeus prepares for the final attack,
With a lack of mercy and excess of hate

Blood runs in the rivers that are flowing,
While the fires turn true bravery into dread,
Fear’s icy grip’s hold ever growing,
While now increased the number of the dead

Fictional is this very storm of late,
My mind the only loss to compensate.

Whisper
By Stephanie Martinez

Quick step,
quiet step.
You step,
me step.
Tip-toe.
Tip-toe.
Tip.
Crash,
thud,
thump.
Get off,
get up.
It’s all about balance.
Dust off
Straighten up.
Tip-toe.
tip.

Swish,
swoon,
dip.
Twirl, swirl.

You step, quick.

Goodnight.
Thirteen days in hell
By Joyce Koros

January 7, 2011. This was the day I was released from my 13-day nightmare. It started out
simply enough. My surgery was scheduled for 9 a.m. on December 26, 2010.

I was scheduled for a Nissan wrap, a common surgery to relieve acid reflux disorder. My
surgeon explained to me again that the procedure consisted of taking part of my stomach and
wrapping it around the bottom of my esophagus to strengthen that muscle and keep the stomach
acids from going back up. I was also told to expect a three-day hospital stay. Although a little
nervous, I was ready. I was tired of being sick.

When the surgeon left, a nurse came into the examination room. She completed one final
check of my blood pressure, pulse, and temperature. Everything was fine and I was ready to
proceed to pre-op.

Usually pre-op is a cold, quiet room with nurses checking on patients and anesthesiologists
talking to patients or giving orders to the nurses for one kind of medication or another. This day
was different. The room was still cold, but when the nurse wheeled me in, it was empty and
silent. The nurse locked the wheels on my gurney, told me someone else would be right with
me and left the room. Time crawled to a stop. When the pre-op nurse finally arrived, I was on
the edge of panic. I’d had a bad feeling about this surgery for awhile. A few nights before I was
supposed to go in, I told my husband Bill and my oldest son Joshua I had the feeling I wasn’t
going to live through this surgery. I told them both to prepare for the worst. I went through some
legal and financial matters with them. Both of them told me to stop talking that way and that
everything was going to be OK. This being the pre-op room, and me alone and scared, my worry
of dying came flooding back.

This was not my first time in pre-op, nor was it my first time under the knife, but it was, for
some unknown reason, the most frightened I could ever remember being. I almost immediately
asked the nurse for a sedative. I told her I was terribly anxious and just wanted to be oblivious
to everything until the surgery was over. After consulting with a doctor she obliged. An I.V. was
started and I very quickly and gratefully drifted into unconsciousness.

When I opened my eyes again, I realized they had not done the surgery yet. I was awakened
by someone screaming. As I looked around I knew something was not right. I was in a hospital
bed. I knew the surgery had not been done yet, but I couldn’t understand where in the hospital
I was. The room was crowded. Not with people but with junk. Boxes, metal stands, and free
standing blackboards filled the room, filled to the point the only place left for my bed was right by
the wall.

It wasn’t by the wall in the conventional sense where one full side is by the wall and the other
side is open for entering and exiting the bed. The bed was pushed into the only open space left
in the room. Like the last thing to be placed in a poorly organized storage unit, the foot of the bed
was pushed up against the wall and on the wall hung a blackboard. The head of my bed was
elevated, leaving me in a slightly reclined position. A position which gave no way to escape the
bugs.

I was trying to figure out why I was in a storage room, why they hadn’t done the surgery and
what was going on when I noticed the first big black bug slink out from the ceiling panel. It only
took seconds before a river of bugs, some big, some small, spiders, cockroaches, and many
others I couldn’t identify, flooded from the ceiling panel, down the wall and onto my bed. I was
terrified. Soon I’d be covered in bugs!

I quit worrying about the where and why of my situation and went directly into escape mode.
Halfway down the wall the bugs were coming. I started pushing with my feet, trying to climb
over the head of the bed, the only way there was to get off the bed. My mind was racing. I had to get out of there. My only thought was “I have to call Dad. Bill won’t get me out. He wants me to have this surgery.” As the bugs marched ever-forward and soon covered the foot of my bed, I continued to struggle, trying, with no success, to escape over the head of the bed. The unspoken words, “I have to call Dad!” reverberated through my panicked brain as I again fell into precious, peaceful unconsciousness.

By the time I opened my eyes again, I had been moved from the tiny, bug-infested storage room to a larger, busier storage room. In this room I was fenced off from the main storage area by a chain link fence and tall filing cabinets. The room was hot and stuffy. Outside of my “cage,” I could see stacks and stacks of books or paper or something of that size and nature. The room was decorated for Halloween. I could also see people, a man that may have been a doctor and these small people. They were dressed in scrubs or business professional clothing and wore white lab coats. The man dressed like a doctor appeared to be giving the small people, maybe children, a tour of the storage room.

I tried to sit up and call for help only to find that I couldn’t talk and my arms were tied to the bed. Alone and scared out of my mind, unable to call out for help, I realized there were tubes in my nose. That must be why I can’t talk, I thought frantically. I bent as far forward as I could so I could reach the tubes with my hand. Still tied to the bed, I grabbed one of the hoses and started to pull. A nurse rushed into my caged area. She gently pushed me back onto the bed. She told me I had to quit pulling on the hose or I would hurt myself. I didn’t care. I wanted it out! I lay on the bed crying silently, the tears rolling slowly down the sides of my face. Frustration, fear and pain wracked my body.

After wiping away my tears, placing a cool, damp cloth on my forehead and turning on a fan for me, the nurse assured me she would go find a doctor and get permission to remove the tubes from my nose. Again I found myself alone and scared. I had no concept of time. What should have taken minutes felt like it took hours. True to her word, the nurse came back some time later accompanied by a doctor. Not the same doctor still giving the tour in the Halloween decorated part of the storage room, but a doctor nonetheless. Both the doctor and nurse seemed oblivious to the strange surroundings. Neither spoke to me except to say, “Relax, this is going to hurt just a little.” As my eyes closed to block out the pain, my surroundings faded to black as if the end of a movie had been reached and again I was blissfully enveloped in the tranquility of unconsciousness.

I woke next to the beep, beep, beep of an alarm sounding a warning to the nurses that something was awry with one of the many machines attached to me. I was in a nice, private hospital room and my simple surgery was over. I thought about the bugs and the cage, but the decorations in this room proved mesmerizing, again a Halloween theme. The silhouettes of winged bats floated up and down the wall, in and out from behind the door, silently gliding around on the wall as though sliding on ice. “Where is the projector?” I thought to myself. I looked around the room, corner to corner, even above my head. I saw no evidence of a projection system at all. The silhouettes continued moving and gliding gracefully on the wall. I was hypnotized. I don’t remember the nurse speaking to me, only that I drifted off quickly into a more peaceful rest.

“Joyce, I need to get your vitals,” announced a woman with a gentle tone. I lifted my arm to allow her easier access for the blood pressure cuff, but I did not open my eyes. She worked quickly and gently. She gathered her information and quietly left my room. When I finally opened my eyes, I found the same private hospital room. The silhouette bats were gone. From my bed I could see into the hallway. People were coming and going. Nurses worked at the nurses’ station and … oh the beautiful decorations! I saw hearts in all different sizes and varying shades of red and pink floating through the air. There were stacks of five or six hearts in each. They flew into
the air as though a burst of air blew from beneath sending them into the heavens. Gently gliding back and forth, they began their slow descent only to reach the floor and be blown skyward once more. Some landed on the floor, some on the nurses’ desk, all were beautiful. These hearts, this decoration, felt like a gift from God. For what felt like hours I watched them before I drifted into a peaceful, happy sleep.

The next morning -- I believe it was January 4, 2011 -- I woke up wanting, no, needing water. I called for the nurse and waited. When she finally arrived she informed me I couldn’t have anything to eat or drink. My mouth was so unbelievably dry. I joked and pleaded with the nurse. Finally she agreed to bring me ice chips as long as I promised not to drink any of the water from the ice melting. I promised. The ice was good, but the water was heavenly.

As the morning wore on I began thinking about my family. I didn’t really know how long I had been in the hospital. I did know that through all the bugs, storage rooms, hoses and fear none of my family had been to see me. They brought me to the hospital, watched as I was wheeled to the pre-op room and forgot about me. I felt abandoned, unloved and angry. I turned on the television and started flipping through the channels to occupy my mind.

At some point in the day, I believed it was early afternoon; a doctor entered my room with a group of people. Some were wearing scrubs while others were wearing business professional clothing. All were wearing white lab coats. Someone explained to me that once a week they took a group of students and staff from room to room talking with the patients and about the patient’s condition. During their visit with me, one gentleman in the back of the group mentioned that I had a large family. My response was “Yeah, and none of them have bothered to even come see me.” “Wait a minute,” he replied “someone, your husband, sons or daughters have been with you every day.” I was surprised. Every day? I began to wonder, finally, how long I had been there and what had happened.

I remembered my oldest daughter being in the room talking on her phone. I remembered her handing me her phone and saying, “Tell him not to come. He will only do what you say.” I took the phone, not knowing who was on the other end or why she was so adamant that he did not come. I said, “Hello” and in my ear rang the sweet music of my husband’s voice. “Hi Babe” he said. Ok, the who part of my confusion had been answered. I didn’t really care about the why. I told him there was no sense in him coming. He said ok. I gave the phone back to my daughter, Cathy. I found out later that this conversation and phone call was done before the second surgery happened, the surgery to save my life.

My husband wanted to be there because they were taking me back into surgery. Things had gone terribly wrong and I was dying. Cathy didn’t want him to come because she was already there to make decisions and there was a blizzard going on outside. Travel was treacherous. Would I have asked Bill to come had I been aware of anything that was going on around me? I don’t know. I can only hope I would not have been so selfish that I would have asked him to risk his life. I know he would have come.

Now that my conscious mind rejoined the rest of me, I started to push for things. I wanted water, nope, only ice chips. I wanted food. Sorry, you can’t have anything yet. I wanted out! If I couldn’t get out of the hospital, I at least wanted out of the intensive care unit. It took about 24 hours to get moved from the ICU to a regular room. I was glad to be in a regular room but this room was nasty. It was small, dark, smelly and dirty. I was told this was the room I was in after the first surgery. I don’t remember. The nursing staff on this floor was kind and patient. I was allowed to get out of bed on my own, use the facility by myself and walk around the halls. I began to develop a really mean disposition. I realized it when I told my son to take his father home and not bring him back until he had showered and bought new shoes. I could smell him.

When a nurse came into my room to check on me I asked her how come I wasn’t getting my
regular medication? She asked me what I usually took and I gave her a daily list. The next time she came in I had been to the bathroom by myself. While in there, I kept hearing someone talk to me, whispering the same thing over and over again, “Get them, get them.” I was frightened until I realized it was the morphine. That machine was supposed to be turned off. I asked the nurse about it. She explained to me that even though I wasn’t receiving injections of morphine anymore there was a little seepage that was causing the minor hallucinations. I demanded it be removed immediately. Once the morphine machine was removed from my room the voices stopped. I began getting my regular meds on a regular basis and my mood improved dramatically.

During the days that followed, I was allowed a soft diet consisting of puddings, Jello and baby food. They were still trying to give me my medication in a crushed form, mixed with apple sauce. YUCK! I had problems sleeping and watched a lot of television. Family came and went on a regular basis, many laughing at me when I told them about the hearts. I didn’t mention the bugs to anyone for a long time. I started learning about what all I had been through and why over the next couple of days. I then understood the incision from the bottom of my rib cage to the bottom of my belly button. I understood the storage rooms, the bugs, bats and hearts. The incision was real but the rest were horrible hallucinations. I believe the hearts were sent from my mother to assure me that everything was going to be alright.

I learned that some time after the first surgery, my stomach had gotten stuck in my esophagus and burst. They had to perform the second surgery to rebuild a stomach and clean things up inside. I spent 4 days on a respirator fighting for precious life itself. My poor family, my heart breaks every time I think about what they must have gone through.

I spent a lot of time thinking about my life and how many times I had beaten death. I thought about how precious life is and decided I was going to quit living on the sidelines. I was going to do things and go places and see people I hadn’t seen in years.

Since my release I still have nightmares about the hallucinations. I live with post traumatic stress disorder caused from this event. I still have the same reflux disorder that sent me into surgery in the first place and I have developed other disorders that are a direct result of the surgery, but I have tried to live up to those thoughts of living my life better. I have reacquainted myself with some old friends; I go places I want to go without waiting for my husband to go if he doesn’t want to. I have gone back to school. I am doing what it takes to let me know I am alive.
**Survivor**  
*By Rachell Borges*

The terrors and fears  
Brought upon us each day  
Every night I sleep with a rabbit  
To calm the habit

The world is but a cold place  
Cancer brought upon the good  
The heat overcomes my body  
Booming onto the ground  
But my angel is always watching  
And having better days to come

Now I have regained my strength  
I wear my heart necklace  
Given by my best friend  
Hannah Banana

I’m on top of the world  
Smiling at the simple things  
As butterflies glide by  
And tinkling tinks in the night sky  
Breathing the Carolina air

I now can put my jersey on  
And dance the night away  
With my sparkling red shoes

The red beady eyes of the demon have vanished  
The claw no longer has a grasp  
All I have to show are my scars  
I am a survivor  
I am strong
The Last Retreat
In Silent Honor
By Jerald Lucas

In the calm
Of a mid-morning sun
In mournful silence
Rests a lonely
Flag draped casket.
Hushed words are uttered
By a black cloaked figure
Cut short by a resounding echo
Of three seven-round volleys
And an unseen bugler blows
The somber Last Retreat.

The scene has been repeated
And shall continue to go on
As long as we do not remember
What befell us in our past.
The young among us now
Stand at the ready
To serve, protect, and defend
Much as we did then

In the tearful calm
Of the setting sun
Over the mournful echoing silence
Resounds the haunting
Last Retreat.

Opening the Door to Memories
by Margaret Evans

Untitled
by Rachel Moeser
The Infection
By Ramone Dave McBride

This story begins on the great Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The day is October 2\textsuperscript{nd}; it’s a warm and calm day outside. We woke up one by one: it was me, Zack, Bruce, and then Jeff. We woke up ready for a day of fun riding horses. We sat in Zack’s room deciding what we wanted to do that day. My friends and I decided to ride horses, so we got ready. We went outside and rounded the horses into the corral.

Two of my friends didn’t know how to ride horses that well, so Bruce rode double with my other friend Zack and Jeff rode a Shetland. We left his house and went to the store which wasn’t that far away.

On the way there we talked, teased, and joked around with each other. Halfway there Zack and Bruce wrecked because their horse got spooked. They were alright, though. When we got to the store we tied our horses up and went inside the store, bought our snacks and ate.

Jeff wanted to go to his house which wasn’t that far away either. We hopped on our horses bareback because that’s how we do it here on the rez and started to ride to his house. A quarter of a mile away we started galloping so fast. Then, all of a sudden, BLAM, ROLL, and CRASH!!! My friends and I had wrecked.

Zack and Bruce’s horse tripped over a man hole and flipped. I was behind Zack and Bruce riding full speed toward them. BLAM!! I crashed into them so hard my leg slid in between the two horses Zack and I were riding. The bones in my leg instantly snapped and I had this feeling that told me I broke my leg. I lay on the side of the road laughing and at the same time trying so hard not to cry. All my friends wondered why I was laughing instead of crying! Then, the PAIN kicked in so eventually I started to cry. The pain was unimaginable, THROBBING. Pain like I’d never experienced so I didn’t know how to cope with it. I wanted my mom!

As I was lying there yelling, Zack’s dad pulled up unexpectedly and rushed to help me. Zack’s dad told him to call my mom and tell her what happened. Zack also called the ambulance to come get me. When the ambulance arrived I was already going into shock. The ambulance took me to the Pine Ridge Hospital. There, I waited impatiently for my mom and dad to come and give me comfort, which seemed like an eternity. When they got there, they signed papers for me to receive medication and finally took an x-ray of my lower leg. They told my parents it was bad. I had broken the tibia and fibula bones. They couldn’t do the surgery there so they flew me to another hospital that night. I didn’t remember the plane ride. I was to have surgery in the morning. My mom told me I slept peacefully without feeling pain. She rubbed my eyebrows, and was there with me until midnight when my dad got there to be with us. She missed her Monday at work to be with me, even though I don’t quite remember my night.

I remember them waking me up early in the morning telling me I was going to surgery now. When I woke up after surgery the doctor told me he had put a plate and seven screws in my leg. I was in so much pain; all I wanted to do was sleep. I didn’t eat or drink anything for days. Two days later I started to eat, drink, and feel a little energized.

When I got discharged I was so happy to leave the hospital, as I only got out of bed to use the bathroom and it was boring. Then, two weeks passed and the doctor told me I could go back to school. I was excited to go to school the next day and see my friends.

But once I was at school I started to notice how many things I couldn’t do. Things that I’d loved for a long time, such as being in sports or taking part in P. E. I was doing great in other areas though.

When I was fresh out of the hospital for two weeks, infection settled into my bone. My
incision started to get infected and tear back open. It got to the point where my dad and mom started to get worried because of the odor from the infection. They called my doctor and he told them to take me back to the hospital only to learn that the doctor there said it was badly infected. He also told us that little things such as the air or things with germs can get it infected.

The doctor then told us that I had to be admitted for another surgery the following day. I can just imagine how I felt that day... “Another surgery?” I was bummmed out, sincerely. I hadn’t slept well that night; my mind was on my leg, pain, and surgery. My dad told me to be strong, he confided in me and so did my mom. Her love took away all my pain, and as long as I knew she was going to be there waiting for me brought me sounds of joy.

I tell you, I came out of surgery in pain. The doctor told my parents, “surgery in two more days.” This surgery was to remove the 7 screws and plate; the following surgery would be to clean out my bone again and try to close the widely opened incision as there was not enough skin to sew it together. I was horrified because the other route would be to perform a skin graft, which my parents thought was out of the question.

The doctor also told us that I would have to stay in the hospital to receive pain medications as one of them was going to be an IV to the heart. The nurses were always ahead of my pain, and now the IV to my heart was going to combat the infection in my bone, which would take 4-6 weeks. It was a difficult time for my family. My dad stayed with me the whole time while my mom worked and came up on Fridays after work to spend the weekends with us. Unconditionally, I am lucky to have awesome parents in my life and I respect them as they were both there with me. My bff, Zack, even came to spend time with me. We played X-box 360, went to movies, and caught up. (I got a weekend pass for 6-7 hours.) It was holiday time, kind of a sad time because I couldn’t be home, so my mom brought Thanksgiving dinner to my room. She brought a gingerbread house that we could decorate along with a hobby I collected some years ago, Origami, to keep me busy along with school work I had to do.

When I did the next surgery, the doctor told my parents and me that my bone WAS NOT healing and another doctor with a brilliant idea said, “There’s this external cast that’s called a fixator, it stabilizes the bones to help them heal faster.” My parents and I agreed to the external fixator, so for the fifth time in surgery, they installed the external fixator. I went to surgery and came out with a little pain, not so much as before. I stayed in the hospital for almost four weeks. Three days before Christmas, they discharged me. I hadn’t seen my kaka (grandpa) or two of my uncles in nearly two months, or my dad’s mom. Meanwhile, Miss South Dakota and Santa came to visit me, along with Children’s Miracle Network. I did a brief story for them and got selected to be part of their banquet in March. Being Oglala Lakota, I was sort of humbled in my situation.

I knew this time around that I had to be more careful with my leg and do physical therapy to make my leg strong. Each day that goes by, my leg improves with little weight-bearing, and crutching is like my exercise. To be able to carry my weight is not a barrier anymore. This time, I can strongly say that my infection is gone. The reason I know this is because my leg no longer swells up, and I can even walk without my crutches, but with a limp-like walk. My last visit to the doctor was to determine my bone density, to see if it was healing stronger. The best thing I heard the doctor say was, “Dave, you’ll get this fixator off in March!”

I would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Applegarth for confiding in me, reassuring me, and guiding me into writing this story as it was quite the experience. I now know to obey, respect, and love your parents unconditionally. They gave us life, so let’s not take it for granted. The next time I write, I will be walking proudly.
Spreading Ancient Secrets
By Andrea J. Cook

It lingers here
a chime
being played
by unseen fingers
felt upon
my cheek.

I linger here
in my chair
wanting only
to exist like a
dried milkweed pod
relying on the wind.

The day lingers here
in noon shadows
spreading North-East…
talking of miracles
lingers in branches
spreading ancient secrets.

I Am Poem
By Dylan Bairn

I am a motivator and a risk taker
I wonder about where I will end up in life
I hear the secret to life
I see my life how it is now
I want to be successful
I am a motivator and a risk taker

I pretend to be that successful person I look up to
I feel the pain of mistakes I have made
I touch the surface of greatness
I cry from the fear of failure
I am a motivator and a risk taker

I understand that I learn from my mistakes
I say I can be successful
I dream of being a leader
I try to stand out in the crowd
I hope that life takes me down the right road
I am a motivator and a risk taker

Statue in Repose
_by Darek Wilson_
60 Year Olds
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

60 year olds
They used to wear dresses
And klunky black old lady shoes
With those thick tan nylon stockings
Attached to their garter belts
As they cleaned and shopped and cooked
For their husbands
Darning his socks after dinner as they watched
Lawrence Welk and the Lennon Sisters

They had gray hair and cat glasses
Smiled sweetly and smelled of toilet water
Wore dress coats always
And little plastic rain bonnets to protect their hair

60 year olds
Now they stretch in yoga classes
Wearing stretch yoga shorts and Reebok tennis shoes
Go to the track afterwards and walk 5 miles
Before hitting the machines for some weight lifting
Wear power suits to their jobs as lawyers and executive VPs
Drive car pools on their way to work
Share the household work with their husbands
Know the best take-out places

They have hair with highlights and lowlights
Have cosmetic surgery and colored contacts
Take ERT for their menopausal symptoms
And act in local theatre productions

60 year olds
Then and now they are so different
But so much the same
They have aches and pains
Bursitis and plantar fasciitis
Hot flashes and night sweats
Husbands that love them
Children that confuse them
Friends that console them

Eighty year old parents that frighten them in their frailty
They have strength and stamina
Sense and sensibility
And through everything can still laugh at themselves
**September's Pens**  
By Gary Henderson

I keep the prayers you send  
The tarot card five-night forecasts  
And little angels with sayings  
All tucked up like a pen above my ear  
So that your wishing-well well wishes  
Like white-noise cancer-cancelling headphones  
Can be the mixed tape soundtrack that I hear.

Like sunlight in Autumn, you're golden  
And there's something in the color  
Of a tallow candle orange-pumpkin flame  
And ecru wax and charcoal wick slinking smoke  
And preeminent October that seems to raise your name.

And I drink with all the apartment complex ghosts  
And they invite their imaginary people  
And we play all the identity guessing board games.

And you're not here.  
But you're not here.

We drink my green glass cider  
And take your prayers and Lovers two,  
The Sun, The World, Temperance,  
And perhaps the Hangman's noose  
And write some poetry to bring you, too.

We compose your bones and eyes and smiles  
With similes and checker tiles,  
And fold the paper and write some verbs for nerves  
And black and white there's a sure cursive  
Facsimile of you. And this will have to do.

And that will have to do.

And this and that I know  
We'll have to do.

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**I hurt**  
By Gissel Gonzalez

I awake to the lack of your warmth  
on crisp cold creaseless sheets.  
Aching to see past your sky blue eyes,  
recognizing who you really are  
and not what I made you to be,  
I long for you to return my heart  
to its rightful owner; ME.

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**After the Storm**  
By McKenzie Rosdail

Radiant, with ravishing displays of color  
After the Storm has passed  
Incredibly beautiful, and full of life, as though  
Nothing in the world is dark  
Breathtaking as it arcs  
Over the horizon  
Wonderment amplified
Rock of Ages
By Martha Boyer Armstrong

You stand so firm and tall,
Towering against a sky of azure blue,
Rising over the wide grassy valley.

You are majestic in form and feature,
You stood as a guidepost and watched the many families who came looking for land and freedom.

You are truly a memory of the paths the pioneers took;
The faint ruts of their journeys still to be seen.
The hardships were many, the dangers constant.

You were once taller but the years have taken their toll.
The cracks and crevices widen and grow from the years of wind, rain, sun and snow.

If you could only speak, we would listen to your endless tales.
You both rejoice and sorrow at the memories.
You weep for the ones who were lost along the way.

You will be here long after I am gone – as you were before I came.
A beacon on the prairie with lasting beauty all your own;
The record of the years to be honored.

Lover Growing Old
By Arthur Clack

When there's grit on my eyeballs or mold within my lungs,
Or sufferin' on some special sin, from back when I was young,
Or maybe I feel the hopelessness of running low o' gold;
Or perhaps I'm feeling helpless, 'cause I've just gotten old,

I 'member – then – there's worse to come, a special brand of hell
Reserved for those who've been well loved and in turn have loved well.
Reserve it, too, for Combat Troop – a lonesome, haunted guy -
Who would not have, for all the world, watched a buddy die.
But who, ...then, on a second thought, ...would do it all again,
'Cause he couldn't let the buddy go alone... without a friend.
That is my hell, my special fear, the shadow on my Fife,
That, if I live, I'll watch you die, the princess of my life.

I confess to melancholy, depression and being blue,
But know it cannot last, if I catch but a sight of you.
If there is one recompense to a lover growing old,
It is I know that when I go, I'll have a hand to hold.
While growing up, Loretta “Lottie” Hargen was provided for, but never, ever encouraged. As the lone female offspring in a male nurturing household, her moral and intellectual direction wandered between vestigial support and a subsistence that bordered on avoidance.

Even so, Lottie remained a relentless optimist and opportunist, but never let such instincts cloud her intentions. She was determined to find out for herself what she wanted, and then when and how to pounce. Trouble was, she remained carelessly unsure what to do with things once she obtained them. You could safely argue that she either was or was not born that way. Either way you’d argue, you’d have a leg to stand on, knowing what the experts have told the rest of us about such things at this point in time.

“Good Lord! Now we’re going to have to feed her for the next eighteen years!” Patrick Hargen, upon finding that his firstborn was a daughter, thoughtlessly scolded his wife while she lay in her hospital bed, minutes after giving birth.

As a well-respected independent broker of stocks and bonds, Patrick Hargen’s family enjoyed the amenities of a better-than-average middle-class family. During the eight years following Lottie’s birth, Edna Hargen presented her husband with three sons. Now, instead of dwelling on Loretta as a “total loss” by family standards, Patrick affectionately doted on his three boys. Accordingly, his brutally silent disdain toward Lottie calculably vaporized into ambivalent neglect. Ultimately, she simply was not seen.

Same as with any of his business expenses, Daddy made sure that Lottie “was provided for” . . . and that she stayed out of the way. More unfortunately for Lottie, Edna Hargen, with dog-like obedience, bowed to her husband’s every wish. Any time-honored advantages from a mother-daughter bond remained untapped solely because Mrs. Hargen sought to fulfill her husband’s commands without so much as a whisper of an alternate point of view.

During her preschool years, Lottie mostly entertained herself in her room — the smallest personal space afforded to the Hargen siblings, with a rudimentary collection of starter books and toys. She became a good listener, and not so much of a talker.

Lottie began kindergarten as a pigtailed, dumpy, plainly dressed classmate with a forgettably quiet disposition and missing both upper front teeth. Later, her plain brown hair was maintained at shoulder length or shorter, while Mr. Hargen systematically ignored the family dentist’s suggestions that Lottie’s noticeable underbite be attended to by an orthodontist.

“Braces? I’ll be damned!” Mr. Hargen muttered more than once. Otherwise, he remained reticently unresponsive about the subject.

Her preschool personality remained unchanged as she matured through her high school years. Although earning exceptionally good grades, with abilities and interests as varied as Mathematics, History and the Life Sciences, Lottie was pushed at home to study shorthand and bookkeeping, and to practice her typing with an eye toward joining a secretarial pool. Her father gladly approved when her mother enrolled Lottie in an after-school program that emphasized Etiquette and Charm.

Painful to a height of unforgivable, Lottie became a permanently scarred spectator to the way her brothers were garishly exposed to all available opportunities at every step where she had already experienced vacuous parenting. The boys went camping, fishing and skiing with Dad. As part of her household routine, Mrs. Hargen was forced to chaperon Lottie whenever she shopped for clothes and others personal necessities, with the full receipts presented to and carefully scrutinized by Mr. Hargen immediately after each excursion. Meanwhile, the boys, beginning at early ages, were singularly assigned their own open charge accounts without constraints. Seeing what could have been, constantly churned in Lottie’s mind as what should have been.

Accepted as quiet to begin with, the brewing embers underneath her smoldering hatred of family life easily remained undetected. Away from home, she found that she ruthlessly could subjugate men whenever necessary and recruit women with her own brand of pseudo-camaraderie.
Always, she was chosen near the bottom for a volleyball, basketball or field hockey skirmish. And, why shouldn’t she have been? Not once did her Dad or her brothers ever consider taking the time necessary to expose her to these sports, let alone teach her anything about the rules involved or the skills required. Her brothers knew about these things as soon as they were capable, including football and baseball. And they were always provided with better equipment than most others of their age in the neighborhood. They always thanked their father the same way. With his standby approval, Lottie became the constant brunt of their jokes and pranks.

Once, when Lottie chortled to her father that she had been asked to play on a local softball team, he didn’t ask what position she would be playing or offer to buy her a bat or suitable glove. Without so much as a word, he blankly listened, patiently waiting for her to turn away. That was the quivering limit of her ability to confront him with a personal request. From the start, he had shrouded her into submission with his terrifying size and strict tone. He even took pleasure in their eyes being different colors: his hazel-blue, while hers, similar to her mother’s, beigy-brown. And, he never offered a hint of tenderness. Her terror of him remained unabated.

Yet, her subconscious ethos kept insisting that a father’s love wasn’t to be questioned. She truly believed this to be one of the inarguable facts of life. And, why shouldn’t it be? Didn’t his behavior toward her . . . his distance . . . his coolness . . . come from the eternally caring pedestal of his fathomless wisdom. He knew what he was doing. He loved her . . . didn’t he? Of course he did. All fathers love their children. Sons or daughters, made no difference. She believed that when she had reached maturity, she too would fully understand the parental love that had nurtured this arduous process. Til then, she was perfectly willing to childishly suffer in silence.

As the uncontested valedictorian of her class, upon earning her high school diploma Lottie was awarded a full tuition-and-books scholarship to study Mathematics at Penn State, renewable every year as long as she maintained a 3.25 GPA. The notifying letter explained that the qualified student would only have to cover room-and-board and personal expenses. In closing, the letter wished the recipient the best of success during the upcoming fall semester.

Sure that she had made the entire family proud, Lottie was beside herself while waiting for her father to come home from his office. At the dinner table, smiling unabashedly, she presented Penn State’s letter of financial support.

“If you can find the funds to cover you living expenses, as they are explained in great detail here,” Mr. Hargen, with a blank expression, said tersely while handing the letter back to her, “then you have my blessing. But, a Mathematics degree? Hah, you certainly wouldn’t be counting money.”

Taken so completely by surprise, Lottie was too stricken to react. While her father continued on with his meal as if he had never been interrupted, her stoic silence masked her shattered anticipation. Blinking in time with her cascading disappointment, she stared at the table’s floral centerpiece, highlighted this evening by three spathes of orange Bird of Paradise. Lottie’s dinner plate remained untouched after her father’s commentary, then, after what she deemed as a timely fashion, she excused herself.

Throughout the entire meal, it was as if her mother wasn’t there.

*Excerpted from the unpublished novel “Obelia Venom” by Kip Joule (a.k.a. James)
Sad Sunday
By Mark Hudson

Today I was supposed to visit my mother, who has cancer. She called my cell phone, and then the cell phone hung up and said the battery needed to be recharged. I couldn’t place outgoing calls. So I got on the Purple line to get to the Skokie swift. Meanwhile, a Red line pulls up and the conductor says, “All passengers must leave the train.” So a man with headphones who is also talking on a cell phone gets on, and sits down and reads a book, oblivious. Then the conductor has to check the train to make sure there are no passengers on. This delays the Skokie Swift from coming. Then a lady says, “Look at these people!” And a whole family of homeless people is gathered on the train, with all their stuff. For a brief moment, instant gratitude. So the other lady says, “Come on, I can’t be late for work one more time!” And I think, “At least you have a job. I don’t.” But it doesn’t matter, ’cause I hate working. So then the Skokie Swift comes, and I temporarily forget the homeless family, who have everything they own with them. I get to Skokie and my father arrives just in time. We go to the rehab where my mother is to be delivered. She is not there yet. We wait patiently in the lobby. Finally, my mother arrives in an ambulance. She has an oxygen tank attached to her nose. We go to floor two and wait outside.

A lady next door says to the nurse, “The only thing I can eat is a kosher Corned beef on rye sandwich.” They take my mother’s weight and blood pressure. I talk to my mother as if she might not be leaving me soon. After visiting my mother, my dad and I leave and two seniors in wheelchairs approach each other, and one says, “We’re like ships passing in the night!” and my dad and I laugh, which causes us to get on the wrong elevator. We get on the right elevator and he takes me back to the Skokie swift. Now here I sit, at the computer, composing this sad, sad poem.

But was there anything happy to report? If anybody can do better, they should step up to the plate. I used to think as long as I had art and poetry, I’d even be content in a nursing home. But sometimes, I question my own optimism. If ignorance is bliss, am I like the guy who got on the wrong train because I’m not paying Attention? I’ll have to admit, when I saw him do that, I thought, “What an idiot.” But how many times has my intelligence been questioned? Or my compassion for others? There’s always something to look forward to. When we’re all dead, who will we able to envy?

All Who Wander
by Amanda Tafolla
For reasons I have no need to go into I was discussing something nice my parents had done for me. I had two examples, one about my father and one about my mother, but by the time we got around to me, I could not remember it. It was gone. I had thought of it for almost a week and when I needed it-GONE.

As soon as I was in the car I remembered it. I turned on the air conditioning, backed out of the drive, turned the wrong way and then turned around again the right way (also a metaphor? allegory? for my life.)

Because it wasn't really something my Mother did nice for me.

So—here is what happened. I was in third grade at Bradley Elementary. I do not remember my teacher—I remember only three of my teachers in my whole life—and obviously—up until this point in my third grade life I had made no dent in her brain, either. We were doing our grade school talent show for the parents. The third grade was going to sing the #1 Hit Parade song of the season-Perry Como's "Catch A Falling Star." If you do not know the song let alone the singer, it does not really matter except that it required all of the thirty children in the Third Grade Bradley Elementary class to bring a cardboard star with glitter on it that we would move over our heads as we sang.

At the time I was a professional entertainer since the age of five. My mother worked as hard at getting me singing and dancing gigs as she could.

She was most proud of my being the Sunbonnet Bread Sunbonnet Sue girl at age seven.

I wore a heavy and hot blonde wig with Shirley Temple curls, and a blue and white checked dress with a full skirt and three big slips underneath to make the skirt stand out. Over that was a starched white ruffled pinafore. I wore white lace trimmed socks and black patent Mary Jane tap shoes.

I went to Sunbonnet Bread conventions, and board meetings and grocery store openings. I sang and danced and threw miniature bread loaves out into the crowd.

The Saturday before the concert, I was fired as Sunbonnet Sue.

My mother and I were at a grocery store opening in Denver early in the morning. I had not eaten breakfast. She ran into the store and quickly bought bread and peanut butter and plastic butter knives. She came back "stage"; behind a giant poster of the Sunbonnet Sue girl with a slice of buttered bread about to be eaten; and made me a peanut butter sandwich.

As I ate, the President of the bread company came back stage to say hello.

All of a sudden he was red faced and spluttering. He was so distressed words would not form until, finally, he yelled, "You're fired!" and he pointed at the bread bag.

My mother had bought Wonder Bread. I was eating a peanut butter sandwich made by the strongest competitor to all other bread companies.

All the way home my mother kept yelling and crying "Sunbonnet Bread was sold out!"

I cried because by the time we got home it was all my fault for being hungry. I spent the rest of the day in bed.

The day before the concert mimeograph instructions were sent out with dimensions and suggestions for brands of products to buy and 'please' every one's star must be THE SAME SIZE. God, I loved mimeographs. I am surprised anything resembling purple ink got home to my house a few blocks away, I had sniffed so hard and so deep. I always regretted handing it over to my mother.

My mother worked harder than any other stay-at-home mother. She was a foster care mother and had a day care as well. Sometimes, there would be as many as five newborns from the Foster Care and five toddlers in day care in our two bedroom house. We also had a boy whom we had cared for since he was six months old. He was the same age as my little brother. That made my parents, my baby sister, my brother, my other "brother", myself and up to ten other children in the house.
On this day, there were four newborns and three toddlers still in diapers. My mother wanted everything perfect. You can’t have PERFECT with up to fifteen people in a two bedroom house. I gave up on PERFECT at ten. My mother never gave up.

I grew up refusing to take care of other people’s children. I had had it up to here with other people’s children. I raised my two granddaughters, but there was nothing else to do. I had to keep them safe.

My mother swore like a longshoreman; so do I. My mother hated herself; so do I. I hated her, too. She hated me. I was the family scapegoat.

At least when I had my own children there was nothing frightening or overwhelming to me. I had folded thousands of diapers, changed hundreds. I had bottle fed or spoon fed dozens and dozens of babies and toddlers. I had gotten up in the middle of the night to take care of a screaming infant. Basic child care left me unsurprised at almost anything a child could do, almost. My children and grandchildren still managed to throw me one from left field every now and then. I am rather proud of them for that.

Anyway, mother read the instructions.

“God damn it!” she swore.

She screamed, “Why does that bitch,” obviously my teacher had made a dent in my mother’s brain, “always always wait until the last minute!” as she always screamed and always swore about anything I needed or must have.

“I don't have the time or the money to do this! What does she think I am? I can't make a star. Why did you bring this to me now!”

I looked up from the pile of washed diapers taller than me. “She just gave it today.”

She swore some more and screamed some more, and then she did what she always did—she called Dad at work for the list of things to buy, set up a card table in the living room, taped newspaper on it, screamed at us all until we went to sleep and while we slept she did her magic.

I had the most stunning five pointed silver glittered star you ever saw. It even had a handle on the back so I did not have to hold the edge and make the glitter come off. There was no square inch of that old grocery store carton cardboard that wasn’t THICK with silver glitter. She always did that. Better than anybody. Bigger than anybody. More perfect than anybody. I did not know 'who' at the time all that meant—I just knew it.

The next day, when I saw it, I was wowed as usual. There was so much glitter on my star that when I took a step with it the glitter left a trail. Mother called dad at work downtown. She made him come home and take me to school so the glitter would not be gone by the time I got to school. The program was that afternoon at three so he just went back home and helped with all the babies until the babysitter came. You can imagine how difficult it was to find a babysitter for six toddlers and four infants.

I was so excited by this program. I knew the song backwards and forwards. I sang it walking to and from school, I sang it in the bathtub, I sang it to the babies. I sang it so much my mother screamed at me to shut the hell up. I can still sing the song. Do not ask me to. It was fifty-six years ago, my voice is nowhere near what it was at seven.

At 2:55 we all left our classroom to a full auditorium. Over a hundred children—two parents each —full auditorium. We were behind the velvet curtain, all standing where we had stood every day for two months practicing for the moment. I was so small I was always in the front row. I held my star out and the teacher did an absolutely classic double take and took the star from my hands. She looked up in the back row and called out for Susie Gunther to come down and "bring your star, dear!"

Susie Gunther was Shirley Temple. Really. Somebody took her from the movie screen and froze her and put her in my class. Blond hair with natural curls that fell in angel kisses around her bright blue eyes and her perfectly round rosy pink face. She had lips that looked like bee stings and she was dressed in velvet and lace. Susie Gunther wasn’t terribly smart but she was chosen for everything from class monitor to the lucky child who got to say the Pledge of Allegiance over the microphone. The rumor was she read off a piece of paper because she didn’t have it
memorized. She wasn’t terribly smart.

Susie was taller than me and she looked healthier. I had the “Starving orphan from Europe” pallor. Many times the visiting school nurse would have me in the Principals office worried I wasn’t being fed. The Principal would eventually say that I just looked like a half starved waif.

Susie was chosen first for sports teams even though she was uncoordinated and did a lousy job.

She was my-what-opposite? I was small to the point of emaciated. I rarely smiled unless I was performing. I sang like an angel but I looked like that starving orphan from Europe. A big thing at the time; my children had starving kids in Bangladesh; their children will have starving kids somewhere, God knows.

Susie’s star was pathetic. It was too small. Cut from a Tide box, and IF Mommy made it she might have done so while watching Perry Como sing or perhaps after drinking another Martini. You could see the few odd squiggles of glue and not even a handful of glitter on it. Not only that-the bright Tide box design showed. Mommy had done it on the wrong side of the box

Then my teacher did something I bet she will never forget even if I did for a little while. She put me in the back row with big beautiful Susie Gunther’s horrid star and Susie in the front-CENTER FRONT-with my star. The curtains opened, the teacher bowed and turned around to direct us.

"Catch a falling star and put it in your pock----"
That is as far as we got.

My mother, all 5 feet of her, was stomping on toes, screaming –screaming,” AAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!” as she got out of the middle of the row about 3/4ths of the way back. Her hand bag swinging, her high heels clunking. She made it up to the stage and pushed the teacher out of the way and grabbed my star-uh-HER STAR- out of Susie’s hands and screamed for me "KATHY BEGLEY GET DOWN HERE THIS MINUTE!"

The piano player squeeked, “OH!” my teacher and all of the audience were agog. No sound came from anywhere else.

She couldn’t see me in the back. I squirmed through the group, studying my shoes as hard as I could. Mother took my hand and dragged me off the stage. By that time Dad was holding the auditorium door open... and we left.

I absolutely do not remember what happened after that but I do know both parents had to go back to school with me the next Monday.

And Susie Gunther and I never spoke again.
What was I supposed to do?
By Art Elser

How was I supposed to know that a priest was molesting boys? I probably read the memo and told a monsignor to deal with it in the usual way, whatever that was. It seemed to happen often enough that surely there was a usual way to make the problem go away and protect the church’s reputation. Isn't that what I had a staff for? To take care of minor issues?

I was a busy archbishop with many parishes, and important doctrinal issues to address. There were all those heretical suggestions that the church reconsider its position on abortion, on allowing women to become priests, on allowing priests to marry. And nuns wanting to be taken seriously. And the Pope ... He ... He ... He seemed to be listening to them.

I had to establish my reputation as a stout defender of the church. Newspapers were defaming it, trying to destroy it. That was years ago and they expect me to remember if I read one particular memo. One out of thousands? And about a trivial problem? I was more concerned with the spiritual health of the church's doctrine ...

Surely you understand? Don't you?
A Purple Bunny Named Ruby
By Andrea J. Cook

She stood up from her favorite old chair and replaced the Bible back on the shelf. She had read through Ecclesiastes three where King Solomon wrote about time. There is a time to be born and a time to die.

She sat back down thinking over the words. To each thing there is a time and also an opposite. A lifetime can have many ends and many beginnings. For her there was a sometime, and somewhere – a new beginning as a divorced mother finding her way through college and vocational training, and her son who was five years old and starting school.

They rented a compact trailer with three rooms and a bedroom with two single beds, and they managed to make it a cozy home. He could actually reach out and touch her at all times, except when she was holed up in the bathroom for some alone time.

Graduation meant she could move away and begin anew with her son. Her aim was to go west and there they came to a place to stop, work, and rest. It was Home, and the opposite would be destitute… which they were not.

He went through school and she mixed it up by changing her career focus to a place in her heart – education. To encourage others even at the edge of doom, to teach them to push away and never give it all in.

Years later when she decided to retire because of health reasons; he asked her what it was he could buy her. She thought for awhile and answered, “A bunny, an Easter Bunny of medium size.”

He peered at her, perplexed, and replied, “Of all things, why a BUNNY?”

“Because, Son, I have always wanted one, even way back when I was a kid, but we had no money for stuffed animals so I never asked.”

He chuckled, “Well, we’ll see, Ma.”

It being around Easter it wasn’t difficult to find them. Though he procrastinated and at the last hour he stopped at the grocery store to pick one out. There were only a few left and only one of medium size. A purple and white girl bunny with floppy ears, it sat on its rear. He picked it up and looked it over and it wasn’t as grand as he wanted. It was ordinary like life usually is. He bought a bag and some wrap and tucked the bunny away to give to her the next day when he would visit her during Easter.

Her eyes looked like a little girl’s when he presented her with the gift bag. When she pulled the rabbit from the bag she smiled and told him, “Oh, thanks.” She thought to herself that he must have waited until the last minute.

She looked back at her son and asked him, “What shall we name her? One can’t really have a stuffed animal without a name.”

She thought maybe Lila for Lilac or Violet, but a name just wasn’t coming to her.

He took the bunny from her as he was concentrating. “How about Ruby?”

It took her by complete surprise. “Ruby?” What came to her mind was RED – blood red – or deep jewel, ruby red, but Red.

She stared at her grown son holding the medium size purple and white bunny and realized it was a perfect name for the perfect bunny – it fit. It fit their lives – their journey together, their wants, their needs. It was their life summed up – a purple bunny named Ruby, ordinary yet very rich with experiences, journeys, and love.

“Yes,” she agreed, Ruby it is!”

Ruby would be traveling home with her. Back home where she grew up and where her dreams began, and where she would now spend the remainder of her life. He would stay where they had made a home for twenty tears… three states away from where she would be.

He sat Ruby down against a corner of the couch. She walked over and they hugged each other in a very familiar embrace. She knew it was going to be okay, just another new journey for both of them.
Fred Junior's mom left forty years ago like all the women in his life – middle of the night, without a word. She was the only person who ever called him “Freddy”, but the regulars called him “Junior” because it sounded like a bar owner's name. The last four decades fixed him with a menacing scowl and his rage blew through the Mint like the dry Wyoming winds, desiccating him and his customers. Just this morning, he chased off two regulars, pounding his club on the bar as they stumbled out. Only three remained, those who signed over their pensions for “room and board” – a reserved bar stool, daily breakfast of pickled, hard boiled eggs, cold Polish sausages, and a “jump-start”, a shot of whiskey in a mug of varnished coffee. Each month, he cashed their checks, doled out twenty dollars “allowance” each, pocketed the balance. Any guilt he felt was long gone, buried beneath his desperation.

Cleaning out the till, he took stock.

All I got when Daddy died was this dump and the dirt, neglect, and darkness that goes with it. Right now, it changes. Thought it through, knew what ta say, how ta do it. If I'd a planned this much before, I wouldn't be bustin' my ass in this broke-down, dyin' bar. No Social Security, no savings, not even 'n ol' sock fulla change!

When the regulars asked at “breakfast” why he was going today, Monday, instead of the usual Wednesday, he announced, “Headed ta town, buy supplies, pick up 'n extra battery for winter. Gonna stop at the Ranch and Feed, load some bales ta line the north side, order 'nother propane tank, large enough ta ride out bad weather, case the bulk plant boys can't deliver.”

Man, they were wild, me leavin', stayin' most of Tuesday, fixin' to return later that day. No Tuesday breakfast, no jump-start, sent two packin' they were so mad. But it don't matter anymore. He already bought a dozen scented candles last spring, burned one every Monday. The regulars had him jumping with their questions. “Bar smell's seepin' inta the house, keeps me awake,” he explained. “Candles deodorize it, keep the house smellin' good for a whole week!”

“Why don't ya put the door back up between the bar and the house?”

“Naw, I can hear inta the bar case somebody's bustin' in. All those break-ins in town, some might think, out here, middle a nowhere'd be perfect, money pile waitin' for the bank trip. Hell, I'll hear 'em, catch 'em, get my picture in the paper, maybe even some crime fighter's money!”

“That's usin' your noodle, Junior! We could take turns, coupla nights a week, watch it for ya. Get a piece a the reward!”

Had ta think fast!

“Well, you guys are the best,” he lied, “but I wouldn't wanna put ya in danger. Drugged-up crazies sneak in, tie ya down, take all the money and whiskey, blow the place up covering their tracks. I wouldn't want any ya ta get hurt!”

Every Monday, a different candle, eleven gone, he lights number twelve as he runs it one more time.

Okay, cash in my pocket, all the good whiskey in the pickup, burning candle in the bar, leak in the kitchen fills the bar. Candle torches propane. The Mint, blown, and me, gone! Thought a everything, smell gas already...

Soft words crack his thinking, explode in his ears –

“Is that you, Freddy?”
One hundred years of silence broken by laughing children, and
lonely tintype tunes--a gentle reminder of happier times.
A banging closet door and illusive sinister recordings urge visitors to leave or die,
unsuspecting voyeurs find themselves assaulted by demonic trinity scratches.
1912 eight axe murders remain unsolved, hushed by politics and limited scientific knowledge.
Was the catalyst perversion, avarice, or revenge?
A small, industrial town broken by a hundred-year-old murder to be spoken of in hushed
circles, but not in any hall of justice.
Villisca “the evil one,” long respected by the ancient ones who knew the power
of the unseen and unknown.
A century of mystery revisited on a lazy summer day. June tenth, is this the year the Moore
mystery will be solved and will Villisca be allowed to heal?
Whether the sun is waking or setting, I can’t seem to resist scooping up the piece of produce that shares its name with my favorite color: orange.

Making my way across the dim kitchen, I spy the fruit bowl on the counter next to the toaster. I see my goal resting right on top of a looming mound of fruit. From a distance, it has the glossy sheen of a tangerine sunset. When I come nearer, I observe the skin-like peel. Hundreds of pores cover the rolling rind. Turning my selection over in my palms, I notice the peculiar little navel on one end and a star-shaped stem on the other. I squeeze and find this plump citrus to be pleasantly firm. This seems like a suitable place to begin skinning this baseball-sized fruit. As I drag the knife from navel to stem the citrus coughs a breath of summer. It fills my nose and entices me to continue. Three more cuts, with each of them a warm, bright exhale. With all my incisions made, I wedge my thumb into my first cut. The juice burns a small nick next to my nail. Pulling away a section of skin with a short rip, my orange starts to sweat fragrant oil like an athlete in a sauna. Wedge, burn, and rip. Removing the last piece of rind with a quick snap, I’ve exposed all the velvety white vellum that conceals my delectable snack. Scraping away at this layer, I remember my dad sitting across from me going through these same motions. Whenever he was in charge of snack time we always split an orange. They are his favorite fruit, too.

Satisfied with my progress so far, I decide it’s time to start the finest part of this endeavor. There is a whisper of protest as I tear the segments away from one another. Veins cover every space on their surface and create chambers for sweet, citrusy liquid. Tiny pockets of juice burst under the pressure of my digits as I finish separating each section. I lay out the segments in a haphazard row. I decide the third from the left will be the first fragment I eat. The piece of citrus feels rubbery against my fingers and tongue. I push the segment against the back of my front teeth and all of the pockets of juice pop. They are bubble wrap and I try to burst as many as I can before mashing up and swallowing what remains. I swear I can taste the invigorating vitamin C. The next piece tastes a little sour, but clean and fresh. Do I detect the slight tang of a Florida orange? My fingers are getting tacky but I don’t care as I keep playing the bubble wrap game with every piece. I am really fortunate that this is a healthy, guiltless indulgence. Popping, chewing and swallowing each piece, I decide that this fruit really does live up to its name. Orange is a power color. It represents happiness, health and vibrancy, everything the fruit also represents. I make a mental note to Google why oranges are the only fruit that share a name with their hue.

Finishing up my midnight snack, I take another look at the star shaped stem where the orange blossom used to be. I decide that maybe this is a lucky fruit. I throw the shredded skin of my treat in the garbage can and make a wish on the star just for good measure. Making my way back to bed, I realize that orange peels leave an excellent tropical odor in the trash cans they occupy and smile at the strange thought.
When Scarlett Said
By Janet S. Craven

When Scarlett said…
"After all, tomorrow is another day."
Did she become Every Woman
Overwhelmed by Today?
When Scarlett said…
“Tara” did she mean good Earth terra firma?
Or was she more taken with those sultry southern stars
Pressing down with breathless passion—
The blood and sweat of slaves into the ground?

While I’m not Scarlett and young girls
May no longer recognize her hooped and corseted fashion,
Every Girl knows dreams, love, hope
Can become “Gone with the Wind.”

And when Rhett swept Scarlett into
That iconic passion poster embrace
Did he really give a damn
Or was he just taken with her pretty face?
Frankly, it doesn't matter.
But when Scarlett said,
“After all, tomorrow is another day.”
She pointed afar—the way
To survival, revival of dreams rising
From smoldering ashes and earth
  Teasing sultry southern passion
  Dripping mossy trees
  Rooted in terra firma
  Beneath hot breathless stars.
Biographical Notes

**Michael S. Adams** is a student at WNCC who serves as vice president of the Student Veterans Organization. He is studying business.

**Martha Boyer Armstrong** is a retired ranch woman and music teacher who lives in Gering.

**Dylan Bairn** is a student at WNCC studying criminal justice.

**Heidi Belgum** is a WNCC art student.

**Eleanor Leonne Bennett** is a 15-year-old award winning photographer and artist who has won first places with National Geographic and many other photo competitions. Her art is globally exhibited in Great Britain, the United States, and around the world.

**Paul Beyer** is a Sidney High School student who has been writing poetry since age four.

**Rachell Borges** is a creative writing class student at Sidney High School.

**Christen Boles** is a student at Bluffs Middle School. She is the granddaughter of Bessie Hubbard who is also published in this edition.

**Roberta J. Boyd** was a student in the WNCC Creative Writing class last fall. She works at the Lied Scottsbluff Public Library.

**Phillip Allen Burt** is a WNCC student at Scottsbluff with a major in pre-forestry.

**Arthur L. Clack** took the Creative Writing class at WNCC last fall. He is retired and building a house, after moving to the Panhandle from eastern Kansas.

**CJ Clark** lives in the Arkansas Ozarks. She is currently working on her third novel.

**Andrea J. Cook** is a 1980 graduate of WNCC. She recently returned to the Scotts Bluff Valley where she was born and raised. She continues to write poetry, prose, and fiction.

**Janet S. Craven** works for TRIO Y.E.S. Student Support Services at WNCC. She enjoys encouraging others to write poetry.

**Brian Croft** is an English instructor who teaches Creative Writing at WNCC.

**Carolyn Dickinson** works for the GED program at WNCC in Scottsbluff. “Candy’s Story” is true.

**Art Éler** is a retired technical writer with a PhD in English. He taught writing for over 30 years. His poetry has been widely published. He lives in Denver, Colorado.

**Margaret Evans** is a WNCC employee in Sidney.

**Ronnie Firman** is a WNCC student.

**Brook Foreman** is a WNCC student at the Scottsbluff campus who was born in Loveland, Colorado.

**Diane Dinndorf Friebe** lived in Nebraska for 15 years and is now retired to Two Harbors, Minnesota. She is a former employee of WNCC at Sidney.

**Gissel Gonzalez** is a WNCC student.

**John S. Goodman** lives in the Scottsbluff area and enjoys writing and photography.

**Joshua S. Greene** is a Sidney High School student who aspires to be a writer, poet, and musician.

**Melissia Grubbs** attends the Gering FRESHMAN Academy.

**Lauren Gull** is a student at Sidney High School who loves watermelon and writing.

**Nicole Hanjani** is a former WNCC student who graduated from Wayne State College with a degree in history. She enjoys opera, reading, and writing poetry.

**Gary Henderson** is a WNCC alum now living in Chicago after graduating from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln with a degree in theatre.

**Aaron E. Holst** lives in Sheridan, Wyoming. He spent many years as a Fire Chief. After retirement he signed up for a nine-week poetry workshop through the Senior Center and has continued to write.

**Bessie Hubbard** was an elementary school teacher for 38 years in various schools throughout the valley in the Nebraska Panhandle. She is nearly 84 years old.

**Mark Hudson** has a degree in creative writing from Columbia College in Chicago.

**Katie Jackson** has a photography business, Spotted Horse Photography in Lyman.

**jjdyo** is a pen name for a WNCC student in Alliance.

**Sharon Jones** lives in Gering and enjoys writing and gardening.

**James “Kip” Joule** is a writer and WNCC student living in Alliance.

**Taylor (Demitry) Kaus** is a Sidney High School student who was born in Chadron.

**Joyce Koros** is a WNCC student.
Biographical Notes

Jerald H. Lucas lives in Scottsbluff where he is a founding member of the former Literary Arts Committee of the West Nebraska Arts Center.

Stephanie Martinez is a student at WNCC in Scottsbluff.

Ramone Dave McBride is a student at Porcupine School in South Dakota. He enjoys singing at powwows and sundances, Origami, football and basketball.

Brandy Mendoza is a student at Gering Freshman Academy who enjoys theatre.

Court Merrigan has been published widely, including in PANK, Night Train, Spinetingler, and others. He lives in Torrington, Wyoming with his family.

Aje Mesteth is a fifth grade student at Pahin Sinte Owayawa (Porcupine School) on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. He enjoys basketball.

Riley Jacob Mesteth is a fifth grader at Pahin Sinte Owayawa. He loves cross country, basketball, art, poetry, archeology, and wants to find some dinosaur bones.

Rachel Moeser is an art student at WNCC.

Joey Lyn Moreno is a freshman at Minatare High School who participated in the school’s Poetry Out Loud event and has been writing poetry since fourth grade.

Katrina Nuland is a former WNCC employee from rural Minatare.

P.J. Nunn is an art student at WNCC.

Austin Ostergaard is a student at Gering High School.

Serena Packard is a WNCC student also enrolled in the Food Service Management program with Southeast Community College online.

Kari Roed is a Sidney High School student who says writing is a stress reliever!

McKenzie Rosdail is a Sidney High School creative writing student who enjoys poetry.

Deborah Rosentrater is a graduate of WNCC and CSC now working on a master’s degree in social work from Florida State University. She lives in Hemingford.

Nicholas Ross is a Sidney High School student who hopes to become a surgeon.

Rhitta Ann Smith-Bounds is a Supplemental Instruction Specialist for TRIO at WNCC and also an advisor for Phi Theta Kappa honor society.

Shirley Smith writes from Mitchell.

Kathi Sparks is a WNCC student.

Kaeyla Stafford is a Sidney High School student who plans to study in the medical field.

Mikala Sweetser is a Sidney High School student who is in pep band and science club.

Amanda Tafolla is a cosmetology student at the WNCC Sidney campus. Her daughter, Lily, is her biggest inspiration.

Abbie Johnson Taylor’s collection of poems was recently published by iUniverse. She is visually impaired and lives in Sheridan, Wyoming.

Kathy Thurlow is back in college at WNCC and works on the Spectator newspaper.

Doug Valade is a WNCC student majoring in theatre arts from Poquoson, Virginia.

Christine Valentine writes poetry and non-fiction from Birney, Montana.

Madison Verhulst is a Sidney High School student who enjoys writing and music.

Kaiya West is a first-year English teacher at Sidney High School who taught creative writing to juniors this year. She has enjoyed watching young, new writers experiment with all types of writing, as well as writing alongside them!

Cheryl Wilkinson was born in the Sandhills of Nebraska where she learned the love of nature. Her paintings, writings and photos depict this love. She lives in Gering.

Deanna Wilson is in her second year as co-editor of Emerging Voices. She is president of the PTK honor society and graduated from WNCC this spring. She is also the mother of two sons, a breast cancer survivor, and published more than 400 feature articles in women's magazines.

Derek Wilson, formerly of Gering, now lives in Mesa, Arizona. He will always believe in Batman!

Help the Animals!
Please have your pet spayed or neutered.
the end
By Deanna Wilson

Crimson shards of glass
Broken bodies, mothers mourn
The party’s over

Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk!
Thanks for being a designated driver.