

AGAIN

I waded deep in shallows,
and watched light flit through.

And waited.

I looked for you.

I followed blues,
and green in the stream,
to be how far, and then how near?

Again.

I looked for you.

I listened for the stilled voice,
the warmth of dreams recaptured,
the night endless, enraptured,
and laid my head on sand and loam.

And the waters engulfed me,
and the tides implored me,
and the crush of waves near destroyed me.

And I waited.

Again.

I looked, and waited. Again.

For You.

--Connie Harold
February 2024

Five Ways of Looking at a Bird Feeder

(Inspired by “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens)

The seeds are there
Encased
For small beaks only.
On the white crust
Stands the crow,
Impotent.

The Blue Jay
Puffed out from winter and from pride
Lords it over the Chickadees.
They flit around
Keeping out of his way
And having all the fun.

In the night
An icy frost has dusted all the trees.
The cold blooded Shrike swoops,
And the breasts of small birds
Clench.

The Juncos came one morning,
A quartet of monks.
In their humility they ate from the ground.
Fasting now,
They have not returned to the feast.

First she came
A few days in a row.
Then he came consecutively also,
But never together.
Even the Cardinals
Have mystery in their marriage.

--Annette Staubs

In The Beauty of the City

Spring

The land is telling its truth again.
After Winter's sleep, it shows us
what must be saved. Look at these

trees feathered with light,
the necklaces of foliage,
all here from earth's compassion.

In this harmony of place
presidents, poets, shepherds and kings
must have talked of peace as they walked these paths.

While it's true there's no scale to measure
a treasure within a city, this one is
kept safe from the aridity of stricken places,

and destruction's deadly face.

Instead, there is serenity here to pray against such visions.

"Hope" is the map that extends throughout these Oaks

under its house of sun,

where intellectual and natural worlds thrive.

Just look around at the surface of this earth

where we've come together, in the radiance
and glory of all this flowering which exists
in praise of its keepers.

--Grace Cavalieri

Ode to a Cherry Tree

Arriving early this year the winter curtain parted;
a new act began.

Your blooms preened with joy, and
saturated pink atomized the air.

But best, you brought peace.

Elation my heart in this time of viral terror
stems slow-danced to the rhythm of renewal.

Within three days your blooms lived their cycle--
but never in vain, for bees hovered.

How special is your ephemeral cycle--
pregnant bud to bursting bloom to spent petals.

You retreat slowly into your garden background,
a member of the chorus once more.

You will grow and rehearse for next year's show, quietly, unnoticed
until your moment in the sun.

I applaud your display--
glorious defiance mixed with resilient beauty.

--Carole Falk

Natural Scene

Framed by my window—

a landscape of both changing hues and continual comfort.

Some days it's a wind whipped froth of wavelets;

some days it's a mirror that shimmers trees into kinetic arcs.

Some days lightning pierces the surface with jagged anxious calligraphy

and today it's quickened by roiling concentric circles: a fish below?

No matter: life generates landscapes.

Some days it's warmed by the yellow orange of a rising sun;

some days it's intensified by the violet of an explosive sunset.

How difficult it would be—

without this scene outside—

--Carole Falk

Paint Doth Live

Paint your thoughts with color.

Mix mood into the color as a highlight,

Stumble out the angst and then use yellow.

Define shapes with depth and perspective.

Just a tiny bit of black sorrow but—

Draw from a reservoir of see-sawing with different lines.

Keep turning the canvas to birth it with newness— keep on painting life.

--Carole Falk

DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

A song in the universe echos from an ambient galaxy
Cerulean waves crashing and mirrored waters
run through and down your ocher locks from one moment to the other
as your head twirls in space
Diamonds twinkle as your skin tells a story of desire
as the mad rush of air roars from your lips
music notes dance and tumble with the atmosphere's smile
You are full of balloons and boulders — hot air and solid mass
as a tornado wraps around your body as butterflies
carry music notes through the clouds
Thunder moves the energy in the room
as your pointed toes twirl on a borealis
Feathers from your arms lift you to whispers of sounds
when the man on the moon calls for the next dance

January 2024

~Dona B. Rudderow

Backyard Miracles

Our earth's beauty experienced.
Nature: mystery and miracles...
All the world's glory: a puzzle.
Every nook and cranny, balanced.

Bees buzzing freely unfenced.
A humming bird roaring so subtle.
Our earth's beauty experienced
Nature: mystery and miracles...

Blooming flowers by sun silenced,
While butterflies float as oracles.
Fox in their den so quizzical.
Dancing green grasses beautifully balanced.
Our earth's beauty experienced
Nature: mystery and miracles...

~ October 2023

--Dona B. Rudderow

EVENTIDE

Beside the lake's wooded shore
A birchbark canoe lies rotting,
Collapsing, as if crushed by a careless giant.
How long ago was this decaying vessel a
Pliant birch- white bark, green leaves reaching
Toward the heavens?
How long ago did this trunk glide freely
Across this sheltered lake?

In time, my eyes adjust.
I see more clearly now,
In eventide's half-light,
Within and beneath the rotting log canoe
Millions of spores bloom- orange, pink, gold, violet.
Mushrooms lift their caps – fluted, plump, marbled, marred
From the old log toward the dappled light
And grow.

--Janice F. Booth

Not Worth a Plug Nickel,,,

,,,each day's simple pleasures
floating about, pungent and sweet:
breakfast's plum preserves,
eaten on the back porch or
margarine and peanut butter on fresh bread,

at the ballpark simmering
hot dogs, pizza, lemon Icee;
crowds cheer and children drip ice cream
off sticky fingers and soggy cones.
How can I be discontented

when I catch a peak as Malcolm steals
a kiss beneath the shady oaks? And
what delight - Marguerite on a park bench
nursing her infant, while six goslings trail
mother goose across the pond.

Not a plug nickel or red cent required.

--Janice F. Booth

A Ghazal For Me

I know that darkness and light, sadness and joy, will find their place.
And for those in my life, both family and mates, I'll carve a place.

I know the cat's on my lap and garden's weeds can wait.
My floor needs sweeping and nothing's in its place.

I know that I've a letter to write, and three books to read.
While the faucet keeps dripping, dust settles everywhere.

Sunshine's streaming through the windows, calling me to away.
I'll toss the laundry in the basket; let spring's promise fill the place.

When cobwebs grace the corners, and drooping blossoms hide the vase,
I reach for keys and jacket, head out for just the place

That fills my heart with energy and quickens too my pace.
Bluebirds call me from the treetops; Mother Nature knows my place.

--Janice F. Booth

Glistening webs
Catch the teary eye
Dew at dawn.

QUANDARY

An elephant will flounder in the ocean
A whale can't walk the beach if tossed.
Every creature learns life's first lesson:
Dwell inside your own galaxy.
Know that you're a hunter or a target,
a flyer or crawler, swimmer or runner.
To contradict our primal nature
courts the final shared disaster.
So we are doomed to encounter the world
through the narrow window of our kind.
But to stay within our ordained limits
guarantees not contentment, but regret.

--Natalie Canavor

The Parable of Bee and Bear

Said Honeybee to Bear,
“You will feel my revenge
should you steal our amber fortune—
food for our hungry progeny,
our bridge to the future.”

“Oh,” said the bear,
who had begun
gingerly poking his nose
into the hive.
He was brown and small
as bears go, but still, a bear.
“And how might a tiny blip
of almost nothing such as you
threaten such as me?”

“Allow me to illustrate,”
said Honeybee.
And he proceeded to whir
around Bear’s head
buzzing his loudest buzz,
in ever closer orbit
to Bear’s sensitive ears.
Bear tried to swat the
miniature dervish away
but his huge paw was too clumsy.

“I admit you are very annoying,
but so what?” he said.

“Sting me once and you die.
Your puny noise shall not
stand in the way of me
enjoying my most favorite treat.”
“You forget,” Honeybee said,
“my colleagues inside—

thousands of them waiting
for a signal to come out
and buzz you, with enthusiasm.”

Bear thought about this prospect
for a few minutes, then
beat a grumpy retreat
down the tree
to find easier plunder.
Honeybee went home,
proud of his quick wit
in saving the hive’s hoard.
He generously shared his success
with an appreciative audience.

But not one happy bee noticed
that the dreaded Varroa Mite family
was making itself at home
in the Queen’s nursery
to raise its own brood,
spreading its lethal poison.

The moral of the story:
The small enemy below

may be more dangerous
than the big bully above.
Always look past the obvious.

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--Natalie Canavor