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Bad Witch/Good Witch

by Anne Whitehouse

"...that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" - Wordsworth, "The Daffodils"

Like a cascade of silken water,
my hair falls over the pool
of the dressing table mirror.
I search my own face,
wondering what I'd hoped to find.

Into the green thicket of the past,
I slip inside a fairy tale.
How my grandmother
pointed to the dying light
twinkling in the trees,
showing me the fairies
I believed in because I wanted to.

The first witch was my mother,
sowing dissension, hiding deceit,
plotting ways to set her children
against each other.
It was more than a game,
it was a compulsion.

We four sisters and a brother

consumed her poisoned love.
 Every year she grew thinner,
 teetering on high heels,
 flapping her wings like a crow,
 her back curved like a question mark.

Her life force fed a fire of trash—
 igniting conflicts
 passed down to children
 like religious obligations.

I shriveled up and dug in,
 a hard seed of resistance.
 I never could relax my guard—
 when I tried, I came to grief—
 better not to be noticed,
 best of all to leave.

I used to dream of the world
 at the back of a mirror,
 as if I could step into it, another Alice,
 and the glass would part to take me in,
 like dry water. There would be
 an interior like a Dutch painting,
 the light falling in one direction,
 a woman sitting quietly, waiting.
 She would look up and nod
 when I passed, and let me go.

Snow Day

by Anne Whitehouse

The snow fell thickly
 blanketing the quiet woods,
 collecting in the crevasses of trees,
 filling up the valleys,
 turning a cold, white face to the sky.

I felt like a child again
 not in my own childhood
 but my daughter's.
 She had tramped through deep snow,
 sledded down slippery hills
 speechless with the shock of speed,
 and tumbled out in fear and joy,
 snow against her skin
 setting her cheeks on fire.

A wild elation filled me,
 like mercury climbing in the old thermometers,
 inexorably rising
 like the beginnings of spring underground,
 the sleeping bulbs,
 hundreds that we planted last fall,
 biding under earth and snow,
 preparing the germ of life.

Phantom Words

by Eric G. Müller

In the pre-sleep dark
 words haunt me –

their hollow sounds
 crowd my mind
 like pebbles cracking
 under the weight of the crush
 or tickle my cheeks with
 their tiny threads
 that break each time I pull
 or try to track them
 to their origin...
 I'm left, severed from the source –
 empty, crushed – laughing

Quiet River

by Peter Franklin

Quiet river
 Slowly
 Quietly emerges from the early morning
 Fog.
 Surreptitious
 Serpentine
 Laziness, water flows almost
 Imperceptibly...eddying about my feet...
 Interrupted only by
 One
 Lone
 Single
 Heron.
 Poised.
 Unmoving.
 Zen-like meditation.
 Fused in place with sky.
 With River.
 With nascent sun.
 With me.
 Were I to have in my hand a calligrapher's
 Brush and ink,
 I would perhaps
 Want to draw a fine-line border
 Around this
 Dawn tableau...
 To encapsulate it,
 Contain it,
 Imprison it forever...
 Framed in place,
 Attached in mind,
 In memory,
 In plain sight.
 But the dimension of calm,
 Serene isolation,
 Oneness with the moment
 Would likely be lost...for how can I know what you will feel?
 I am in no mood to shoulder
 That responsibility. So
 I destroy this vignette...
 Simply skipping a tide-worn stone...
 Skip.
 Skip.
 Three times, four times...
 Giving start to the heron,
 And shattering the motionless moment
 For eternity.

Benares

by Minakshi Watts

In Benares,

Lamps left as prayers float all night
 Into the anticipated embrace of wisdom;
 Mornings come balanced delicately
 On incense smoke and Vedic chants.

Dusty lanes keep many secrets
 Weavers' looms and mystics' songs
 Blend here to dye ambiguously
 Eight yards of dreams with burning pyres.

The weaver looks into Life's eyes
 Here, gazelle-like, she skips
 From bashful brides in brocades to
 Miles of ashes in the winds.

Life plays hide and seek in lanes
 lined with almanacs.

Untitled

by Minakshi Watts

He has bought a new house.
 It is not in Srinagar.
 Walls and buildings enclose the air
 and sunlight he imagines
 still falls into an open balcony,
 into a fully carpeted room,
 where steps fall soft and warm,
 of people known and loved.
 This new house, big, airy, has no garden.
 No rain to look out at, with a cup of his favourite
 Green Label tea in hand.
 Will he sit in the long balcony?
 Others will eavesdrop on his little lonely life.
 Neighbours will hear the silence and sadness
 of his bowed head, of his wrinkles and two sets
 of clothes, washed only on weekends.
 Will we sit there, in the narrow shadows of a struggling sun,
 discuss long lost relatives, who will never visit?
 Will we sit on the carpets, tracing red blue green threads,
 and find
 answers to lost times?
 Will we live in this house, which is not in Srinagar,
 where the fragrance of mountains has no memory?
 Will he sit here quietly, all alone, think of all that
 could have been,
 had he bought this house in Srinagar?

This Poem Has No Name

by Minakshi Watts

Yellow receipts, unimportant now;
 their cities and shops, faded glory!

Chinese oranges in the patio,
 sweet and sour inks embedded under the skin.

You and me, lost rivers of old stories.
 Birds caught in painted wooden boxes, all askew.

Ghosts of books, libraries of wisdom lean against a wall.
 Tiles laid to precision underline this vague search.

Misplaced poems of this room, a Mandala of octagons.
Bits and pieces of saffron meditative sparks.

Years in this tall city of dust and din write animated stories.
Framed watercolours turn mono-chromatic in slide shows.

Seagulls dance on an evening's winds.
The sun leaves curled promises of tomorrow.

Mona Lisa peers at music CDs under a sad sun.
Apple blossoms fall to the earth, covering all signs.

Memories, like fish, migrate to warmer waters.

War

by Philip Fleisher

A fallow field and an empty wind absent
Of any voice to lift it above the clouds.
Heavy boots that once touched
The earth, heel to toe alongside
Crescent shaped scars raised in the dirt.
Even the dead retreat from memory.
Darkness recedes a new snow falls
Light is erased by light.

Autumn's Call

(Autumn 2008 issue)

by Denise Bouchard

Autumn's
Bewitching
Call
Dazzlingly
Enchanting
Fiery
Golden
Hues
Indian-summers
Jewels
Knowingly
Last
Moonlit
Nights
Over-shadowing
Pumpkins
Quilted
Roundedness
Spying
Tapestries
Uncovering
Virtual
Woodland nymphs;
Xenolithic
Yearly
Zenith

Inside This World Zipped

by Michael Lee Johnson

I'm inside this world of silent creative space
 within a zipped up tube of words
 within the darkness I crawl
 from my vocabulary.
 I look on the walls of night
 looking for an exit.
 I look through the crow in the darkness,
 the gray on the bark of the willow tree,
 serve as my lantern out of here.
 Wayward are the gray clouds
 I can't see I toss my faith upon.
 Wild horses of creativity form
 lines, stanzas, poems with
 and without form.
 It's here I beach the darkness
 and the conclusion in the end
 and the final lines that allow
 you to envelope me between
 my screams and creativity.

The Seasons and the Slants

by Michael Lee Johnson

I live my life inside my patio window.
 It's here, at my business desk I slip
 into my own warm pajamas and slippers-
 seek Jesus, come to terms
 with my own cross and brittle conditions.
 Outside, winter night turns to winter storm,
 the blue jay, cardinal, sparrows and doves
 go into hiding, away from the razor whipping winds,
 behind willow tree bare limb branches-
 they lose their faces in somber hue.
 Their voices at night abbreviate
 and are still, short like Hemingway sentences.
 With this poetic mind, no one cares
 about the seasons and the slants
 the wind or its echoes.
 I live my life inside my patio window.

Charley Plays a Tune

by Michael Lee Johnson

Crippled, in Chicago,
 with arthritis
 and Alzheimer's,
 in a dark rented room,
 Charley plays
 melancholic melodies
 on a dust-filled
 harmonica he
 found abandoned
 on a playground of sand
 years ago by a handful of children
 playing on monkey bars.
 He hears bedlam when he buys fish at the local market
 and the skeleton bones of the fish show through.
 He lies on his back, riddled with pain,
 pine cones fill his pillows and mattress;
 praying to Jesus and rubbing his rosary beads
 Charley blows tunes out his

celestial instrument
 notes float through the open window
 touch the nose of summer clouds.
 Charley overtakes himself with grief
 and is ecstatically alone.
 Charley plays a solo tune.

Flight O' The Hawk

by C. Michelle Olson

Breaking dawn, a glimpse of a delicate movement gliding throughout the wide-open skies
 He sways with the rhythm of the cool breeze
 The flight of grace begins the day
 A floating in the air, feeling the cool, crisp breeze beneath his massive wings
 At this moment, nowhere to go just meant to float
 In an instant, a flight begins
 Surveying the land below, contemplates a destination

Admiring beauty in the path, seeks higher planes above anger, anguish and wrath
 Many choices to land
 Trees calling to keep company
 Lakes glistening, water demands attention

The sky is vast and knows no boundaries
 A world opening arms
 Welcoming a majestic presence

Home can be many places
 You are free to fly wherever you desire
 After miles of gliding, slowly drifting towards a final landing

A tree is the chosen home overlooking a moonlit lake
 Upon rising, another flight of grace to take place, moving onward day and night
 One never knows where he will go

Soulmates

by C. Michelle Olson

One warm October Fall Eve
 He knocked on my door
 A man whom I met
 Came dressed in disguise
 Never knew who he would be
 Became a soulmate for life
 Instant friendship we did spark
 Face to Face we engaged
 Conversation so easily made
 Your eyes always adored mine
 A feeling so warm and comfortable
 Like a childhood stuffed teddy bear
 Our hearts soared with excitement
 Feelings that could not be controlled
 Expressions of an unexplained love
 Hearts were woven together
 Just like a patch-work quilt
 So beautifully sewn together
 A love caught by surprise
 Stays in my heart safe and sound
 Memories to last a lifetime
 When a love has faded
 Soulmates may not stay together
 For reasons beyond our control
 But, the feeling is worth letting linger
 Darling, I do believe love should have lasted

So perfect and pure
 How could anything taint our love
 I surely did not think so
 Love always lasts forever in the heart
 Precious memories live on
 But, will a lover fight for his prize
 Sacrifice the price
 For a love so divine
 One must think so
 But, not all endings leave happy
 Reality harshly takes over
 Take the Chain off your heart
 Allow new love to move in
 Be free to love
 Soulmates can surprise once again

Misty, Gentle Rain

by C. Michelle Olson

Misty rain sounds gentle as a baby's breath
 Sound is faint, yet never shows restraint
 Flows sweetly and sound
 Like beautiful music that plays a soft melody
 Listen to the song
 As it hums a steady beat
 It speaks a gentle message
 A slowing pace
 Welcome It
 Live In It
 Break from the bustling world to hear the sound of falling misty, gentle
 Rain

Fidelity

by John Grey

A pit, this fidelity.
 I can't crawl out.
 The walls are three hundred men tall
 and the handholds and footholds
 are weak.
 Is this how it ends?
 I love you because
 I've given up
 trying to escape,
 that I'm weary from all this falling.
 What's it to you?
 In your eyes, everything is upside down.
 You think we're living on a mountaintop.
 You love the view
 but you're afraid of going near the edge.

Lost In The City

by Cheryl Sommese

Perhaps he was meant for the damp streets that snare youth
 and hold idealistic notions hostage.
 Wandering from avenue to avenue in search of a heat grate
 that could temporarily warm his goose bump legs,
 affording him
 a glimpse into paradise
 equipped with a temperature system
 that could lavishly
 be turned up and down at whim.

After all, he rarely did anything in a conventional manner,
 following rules like a headstrong child darting
 in and out of traffic.
 Filled with a multitude of aspirations until reality overpowered naivety,
 then inhaling anguish like
 a desperate mother breathing in the smells of her lost child's belongings,
 frantically replaying even benign decisions
 over and over.

But he was beyond that now
 abandoning the hope of anything more promising.
 Living in corners and spaces where food may
 or may not come.
 Envyng those judicious enough to submit to other people's rules,
 securing cushy spots
 in life's circle
 outfitted with sheets and even soft blankets.

A Pretty Good Deal

by Mark Barkawitz

helena shaved my head today.
 i'd been contemplating it ever since my lock-down in here.
 only took about half-an-hour.
 kept the short beard (for now).

staring in the mirror, i appear a cross between
 bruce willis and a retired, cage fighter.
 didn't take but a few moments for me to get accustomed to my new look.
 (i'm sure it's more traumatic for the ladies.)

i haven't been out of my environmentally-controlled room yet.
 walking the halls in my breather mask and rubber gloves,
 i'm pretty sure i'll get a few second looks.
 but most of the men in here have their domes likewise fashioned.

one gets tired of leaving all that hair on the pillow-casing.
 so when i leave the city of hope next week,
 it'll be hair-free and cancer-free.
 all-in-all, a pretty good deal.

Exquisite Pain

by Leeanne Meredith Oschmanns

In memory of James Bulger and all lost babies

A crystal tear
 Coldly shattered
 Against rock hard reality
 Of thwarted dreams

A million shards of light
 Spinning from a shattered core
 None bright enough
 To light the way beyond
 Deep and endless pain

In place of light and laughter
 And growth's journey

Toward manhood
Nothing...nothing

As the seasons march
Hair turns silver
Memories dim and images fade
Save one bright and clear
Tiny shard etched in my Soul

Your cherub face
Tucked away
In fetal slumber

In that dark
Warm nurturing space
Where you dwell
Deep within
The chambers of my broken heart

Your tiny handprint
Etched forever
Shining brightly to the end
Wait there my love
Until we meet again...

Autumn's Show

by Leeanne Meredith Oschmanns

Autumn in the air
Subtle highlight
the ochre of wheat fields and the black of winged crow

Not a word she spoke
As wrapped within her cloak
In hues of red and orange brilliant glow
As of dying embers, in faded Septembers, not wanting to let go

A tiny whisper gently sailing
On breezes rich with gold
The sun slowly dipping
Heat and ferocity gradually slipping

He turned toward her ever so slightly
Winter's step resounded
Treading just a little too quietly

Her cloak of Autumn hue
That lovely garment all for show
Slipped from her slender shoulder
With the icy touch
Of Winter's first snow

As he raised his eye one final time
To watch her go
His fire cooled, his color waned

The world sank
Into Winter's passionless dream
And took no warmth
From his frozen, watery gleam.

The House

by Vince Corvaia

You can love a house
better than you can a lover

because houses don't leave.

The apartment house I left
had a stained-glass vestibule,

holy to me as I stood
on the blue and white tiles

and let the sun bless its fragments
over me. I was six.

The apartment tenant closest
to where I stood played religious music

on her radio, the vestibule becoming
a church where I prayed

to a god I didn't know
to make my parents stop fighting.

Mornings, I stood in my short pants
with my notebook and my speller

until the yellow bus greeted me
at the curb, and

I opened the splendid door,

and marched down the red brick steps
into the merciful world.

Because I Love Alone

by Vince Corvaia

Because I love alone
a star falls unseen
at noon.

Because I love alone
I tie my robe
with a blue sash.

Because I love alone
rain fills the trap
for Japanese beetles.

Across the village
a younger woman walks
over red leaves.
Her white dress
waves around her legs
like a sad farewell.

Because I love alone
there is no cure
for this blade of night.

My lord espied me
To be sold for a song.

Shall he whisper progeny?
I am myself a child.
He speaks inheritance,
His gracious design.
Then for him I carry this burden.

I recall my native nether land,
Silt-laden salt marsh,
Before the gilded ship
Made of me a navigation.
I sail in my lord's chamber.

When he sleeps
I dream of waking.
Would that my lord dream
That he will rule another.
Sir, I pray to be loved.

What Meaning Means

by Geoffrey Heptonstall

In the public gardens
There are faces by the fountains.
Still, solemn, solitary,
They sit as memorials
To the closing of doors,
The darkening of windows.

There are things that befell her shadow
In the suddenness of day
That she dare not ask why?

The grass grew wild
In the old street stones.
Shards of window pane
Shatter underfoot.
We were not thinking of a poor child
In her hopscotch of memory.

The trees in the garden
May dance with her plans
When her dream arranges traveling
For her soul to sing in basilicas
And her eye to linger on frescoes
And her hand to touch the grandeur
Of all the ancient places
And her feet to discover
The other side of cities.

And so to push at an opening door
Toward the elders' temptation
Of kindly faces beckoning
All the poor children
Along lost corridors
Where innocence collides.
In her private garden
We find infinite space.

Once

by Nicole M. Bouchard

Anyone who has suffered and survived them knows, fairy tales and happily-ever-afters are not idle dreams of asking and receiving,
Believing and conceiving of
They are the quests of a fevered few risking nearly everything they are,
coming to and past the brink so far
For that extraordinary- which they fear, loathe and love

They do not enter lightly into that dark wood beyond the realms of self,
leaving what is real for what's more,
a choice and no choice all the same at desire's core then;
They walk unafraid of the monsters of their making yet so afraid of those
guilty of them forsaking
One might see through their skin, wondering if they be ghosts or men

Their aim is not to emerge as they were in rudimentary form, none the worse nor the better,
To be quite so pure as before by decree and letter; no
They crave the transformation,
From the raw blood spite, fight and indignation
That the beauty of their earned scars might, like a map with the secrets of
the world on their eyes, show

Stalking the dark, the ruins, the storms most would avoid... to fill their
casks with the rare light that lies just one step beyond,
These warriors wear ivy threaded armor; tout le monde, climbs
They scale the walls, draw the sword, seize the moment because it waits for
none despite the longing for the past, the plea for the flame to last,
It happens but once... upon a time

Hurricane

by Nicole M. Bouchard

It seems strange how after millennia, what would appear as rather a low grade storm inside of the season for such things could strip away centuries of progress in a moment- our man-made light, contraptions and sense of technological superiority along with it.

'You are still at my mercy,' Mother Nature warns, her breath the wind that tears solid trees up from the ground by their roots. She says this to us like a stern parent to an older child, but still yet a child, who has exhibited the first gestures of rebellion, however timid or pitiable.

Lest we should forget ourselves, she rails at our modern fortresses, tearing away roofs like the feeling of solidarity resting atop our minds, that each day we think ourselves growing more immune to the world. Television, radio, phones, computers... any devices we've depended on too much for our communication are suddenly ineffectual or the battery is dying out.

What shall we do when we're forced to stop, breathe, write, speak or read by candlelight... take up an old book to battle the hours or go out of doors to face one another again?

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