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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.

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### **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.

**On a New Ethnicity in the Twenty-First Century**

by Michael Ceraolo

It did not take several generations of breeding  
to create this new ethnicity;  
no,  
just a few years of conscious consumer choices  
called into being  
this new hybrid,  
this new hyphenate:  
the Wired-American  
(so-called even when wireless)  
this group maintained at least one,  
and usually more than one, of said devices,  
which resulted in two rapid genetic mutations,  
one benign (or just more easily ignored),  
one much more malignant:  
the first a brain disease that led you to believe  
that you were important enough to need to be  
in constant contact with the whole of humanity;  
the second also a brain disease,  
with serious social manifestations,  
that led you to believe that the whole of humanity  
must be available to you at all times,  
and  
all who were not available to you at all times  
had to explain themselves to you,  
and provide a compelling explanation  
for their period of unavailability

**Heart Attack In Paris**

by Michelle Kennedy

The surface of my body  
ripples its own story  
bruising of skin and veins  
ravaged trails of  
wires and needles  
electrodes attached  
a testament to technology  
but where its not visible  
to the naked eye  
other scars have formed  
wrapping around my heart  
emotional detachments  
of past deep threading  
my heart has foreign objects  
within to pump life but  
those new scars will also protect me

**The Governor's Bride**

by Geoffrey Heptonstall

My lord has in me a speculation  
I offer him a calming of the questions  
I see in his perplexed state.  
He, my lord, has many silences.  
I have one. This am I.

My lord takes air in the morning  
I am content to follow.  
There is convention when we walk.  
My lord leads at his pleasure.  
He will be satisfied in me.  
His touch is temptation  
Were I not shamed.  
I am his nightingale.

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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