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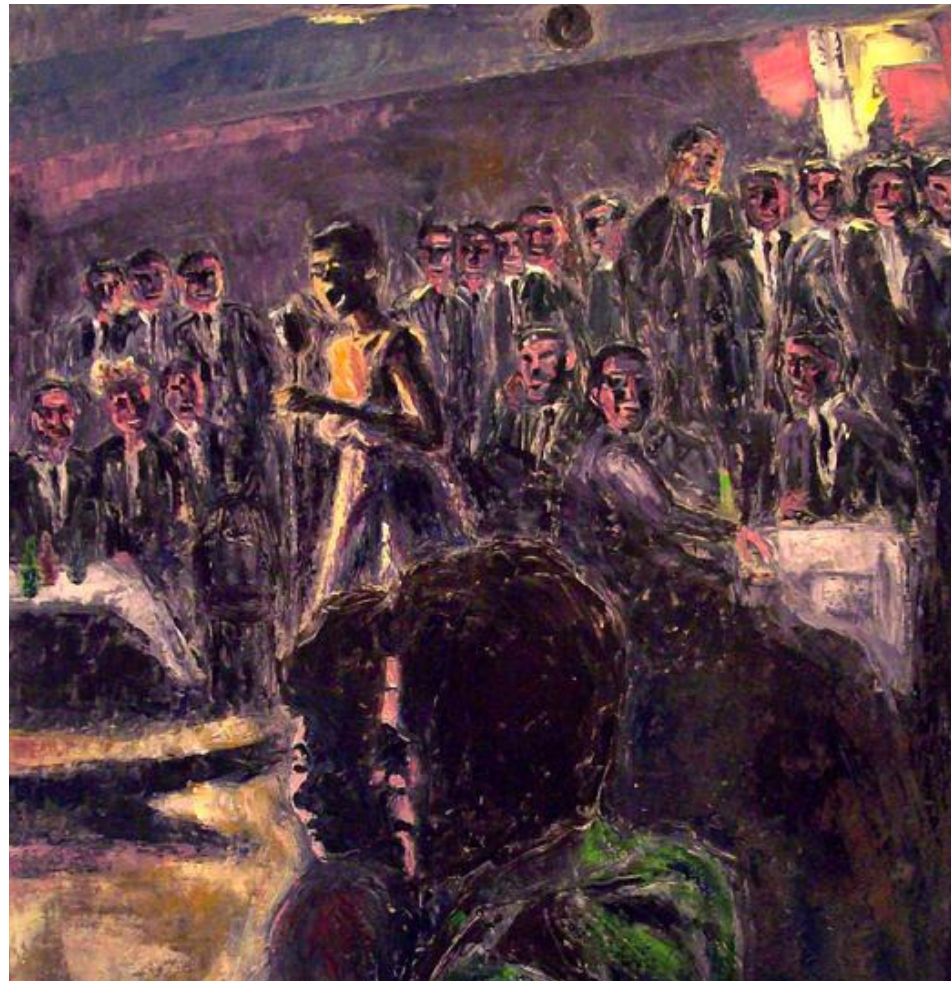
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"Cafe Society Singer" by Brian Forrest / <http://www.brianforrest-art.blogspot.com/>

Chalk Art

by Sue Mayfield Geiger

Blue and white chalk, me
framed.
Bee-hive hairdo
Pale pink lipstick
Coal black eyeliner

What was I? 22?
You told the guy:
"Draw her.
Capture those eyes,
the pout, the cheekbones."

I sat motionless with
booze swimming in my head
as I stared across the street
knowing you were staring at
me,
drinking in my youth
anxious to get me back to
the hotel for our last night in
New Orleans.

I had that portrait for decades.
It hung on various walls in
various houses in various
cities and states.

It looked at me as I slept with
others.
It looked at me as I rocked my
sons.
It looked at me after the death
of a husband.

But more importantly, it spoke to me
after the death
of you.

Bio- Sue Mayfield Geiger writes for several regional and national publications and has interviewed celebrities such as Shirley MacLaine, Steve Martin, Willie Nelson and Ted Turner, among others. Her work has been published in *The Binnacle*, University of Maine's Ninth Annual Ultra-Short Edition 2012; *The Write Place At the Write Time* online journal, 2013; *Inner Landscapes*, Grayson Books, W. Hartford, CT, 2013; *RiverLit Magazine*, Spokane, WA, 2013; *Lifting the Sky*, Dos Gatos Press, Austin, TX, 2013; *Of Sun and Sand Anthology*, Kind of a Hurricane Press, Daytona Beach, FL, 2013, and *Fringeworks*, United Kingdom, forthcoming 2014. Her own book of prose and verse, *Gibbons Street*, is available on her website www.smgwriter.com. She has a B.A. in English and lives on the Texas Gulf Coast.

Yarmouth Fantasy

by Diane McDonough

I wear a new coat for the journey,
mossy green with abalone buttons
and a scarf that catches the wind
like a snowy egret's wing.

At the edge of Water Street a loon calls
—or a foghorn—distant, wistful.
I watch the ancient wharf disintegrate,
no longer anchoring even ghostly schooners
or my old, dull resolutions.

Here the asphalt ends. Here the sand
caresses the fish-scale-blue waders
the mermaid traded for my peacock feather.
She dreams of flying, and I

slow dance with the swaying marsh grass,
watch clams breathe bubbles
at ebb tide in the mud flats
in the slanted light of morning.

Bio- Diane McDonough, a member of the National League of American Pen Women and the Cape Cod Writers Center, has been published in *The Write Place At the Write Time*, and in numerous poetry journals, including *The Aureorean* and *The Avocet, A Journal of Nature Poems*. She lives on Cape Cod with her husband.

The Renovation

by Dana Robbins

When I was for sale, on a hot summer Sunday,
she was different from the others, didn't poke
into corners or shame me by opening closet doors.
Instead, she sat on the sofa and said, "look

how the light comes into this room."
Truth is, I was a bit down on my luck,
wearing my faded robe and curlers all day,
a two hundred year old damsel in distress.

When she came to me, she peeled off
my dowdy layers of parquet and linoleum
to reveal the rich hued pine on my floors,
stripped away decades of drab wallpaper,

and chalky paint, dressed me in cheerful tints
of sky and buttercup, hung chimes on me
to sway in the breeze, romanced me
with blossoms, and I sparkled again, my dull

garments replaced by becoming gowns,
my arms filled with oil paintings and apples.
True, she was ungrateful at times, railed
at my tepid bath water, leaky faucets

and crooked chimney, cursed the protruding
nails that scraped her toes. I suffered the boots
of workmen who crossed my blushing floors.
My innermost fireplace was laid bare

but soon my hearth warmed her
with a hearty blaze, as she, notebook
in hand, peeled away her layers, to reveal
the inner rooms of her own heart.

Kitchen Angel

by Dana Robbins

Beneath the glossy purple skin,
the flesh resists my knife.
I salt the eggplant slices
to draw out the bitter beads,

chop onions, thinking of your square
hands which moved like a meditation.
My eyes water: is it the onions
or am I really crying as I remember

you pouring a liver puree into a bowl,
rolling your eyes as we howled with laughter
because it looked so much like shit.
I want to laugh with you again.

I slice peppers knowing you would
have done it with more care; like when
you would nestle chicken thighs next to
sausages, tenderly as putting a baby to bed.

I remember those winter Sundays when
you would cook for hours, while
Arnold Palmer, your hero, played golf
on a tiny television perched

on the counter, as the murmur
of the announcer, the sedate clapping
seemed to applaud your artistic
arrangement of an orange.

Sometimes I glimpse you, father,
revenant in my kitchen, body like air.

I try to talk to you, tell you I am happy,
that you would like my new husband.

Just as when you were alive, you say
little, but as I stand at the stove, I feel
your hand feather my shoulder and hear
you whisper, "Add a little salt."

Ode to My Husband Folding Laundry

by Dana Robbins

Without need for words, our hands
find their way across the bed,
through the textile jumble
as, in choreographed movement,
we fold sheets, roll towels, sort clothing,
knowing the importance of carefully separating
what is yours from what is mine,
even though at night we are folded into each other.
So many times, you drive me, a queen
in a Subaru; wait patiently outside of stores;
so many times, you make me coffee in the morning,
tell me I am beautiful, even when I wake looking
like wrinkled laundry; so many times, you offer me
the last oyster from your plate.
Before you, I was frayed and stained.
Now your kind hands mend me and wash me clean.

Bio- After graduating from Wellesley College with a B.A. in History, Dana Robbins received a J.D from Columbia University and practiced law unhappily for 28 years. When she could stand it no longer, she retired and moved to Portland, Maine where she pursued a lifelong interest in poetry at OLLI and in the Stonecoast Writers program from which she received an MFA in January 2013. Her poetry has appeared in a number of journals including *Drunken Boat*, *Museum of Americana* and the *OLLI Review*.

Dana's poem, "The Apple Tree" received an honorable mention in the 2013 Fish Poetry Contest and will be included in the *Fish Anthology 2013*. Her poem, "At the End of Day" was the winner of the 2013 Musehouse Poem of Hope contest. Her poem, "At the Beach", won the Senior Poet Laureate contest for Maine in 2013 and appears in the anthology, *Golden Words*. Dana's particular interest is in the healing power of poetry.

I Never Went Back

by Ginger Peters

I never went back to see the woman on the corner,
holding a miniature dachshund in her dirty left hand, tightly against her
dirty, ragged shirt:
and in her sun-beaten right hand, she held a cardboard sign, saying
“Hungry.”

I noticed her when I returned to my car, after buying almost \$100 worth of
groceries,

adjusting my air conditioner to high
on such a very hot New Mexico summer’s day.

She stood on that corner with all her worldly belongings in one old
backpack—

her hair plastered greasily against her head,

her face hollow and hopeless,

her eyes haunting and pleading at me, as I passed, pretending not to see
her.

I told myself, I would go home, quickly put the groceries away in my nice
safe home—

then go by the ATM and get some cash.

I would give this woman a \$50 bill,

for the heat was great, the humidity rising,

and thunderstorms a certainty for late afternoon.

Once I put my purchases away, I noticed the birdbaths were dry,
so I filled them with fresh, cool water.

Then I fed our dog and cat, put a load of laundry in the washer, and the
hummingbird

feeder needed fresh nectar.

By this time, I realized I had to start dinner for my husband,
who would be home soon from his stressful job.

But, thunder began to roar, lightning flashed,

and the monsoon rains poured heavy across the land.

I couldn’t go back now—it would be unsafe to drive back to that corner,
where the homeless woman stood, with her tiny dog in her arms.

I never went back to that corner, but I did see the woman again.

I saw her face as I laid down to sleep in my nice soft bed,

as I drank morning coffee while reading the newspaper,
as I poured fresh water for the birds, the dog, and the cat—
and every time it thundered, thereafter.

Will It Remain?

by Ginger Peters

Born yesterday to a father who works a cotton farm
and a mother who works hard at not going insane.
She will feed and clothe me well,
both will provide the subtle necessities of life and my future.
Mother will laugh at times, but shake and scream more often,
father's passive nature will be unable to handle her fits of rage
and threats of suicide.
I will live never understanding her troubled mind.
I was born yesterday full of hope,
but, will it remain?

Searching Life

by Ginger Peters

Did I fail someone,
Did I not protect a small child or
an old woman out in the cold
did I do nothing one day long ago
is that why I face the wrath of the vicious winds?

Somewhere in time, perhaps there was
a note hidden under a rock I did not pick up,
a cry for help that my heart ignored
an eager hand that I did not hold.

I see a soul walking in my dreams
hauling my sins behind it
I turn from the specter, I shudder
Awaken to the gusty winds of judgment,
And I search for what I can do all the day.

Bio- Ginger Peters is a published poet and published author of fiction and nonfiction, living in Santa Fe, NM. Her days are filled in brilliant sunshine and the beauty of the high desert surroundings, giving her inspiration for many works, including her poems. Ginger remembers memorizing "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe in the 7th grade for a literature project. Once she recited the lengthy poem in front of her class; she was completely hooked on poetry. She has had people ask her, "Why do you write poetry, when you do not make hardly any money for doing it?" Ginger believes "poetry is a way to communicate to the world—the things you notice, feel, love, believe, respond to, wish for, and have great compassion for. It's a way to reach others and to make a difference for the planet and all that inhabit it."

My Wife Plays Ancient Music

*Inspired by painting of Kokopelli by Georgia O'Keefe
Denver Art Museum*

by Neal Whitman

From the wing bone of a mute swan
music filled a cave 35,000 years ago—
a 3-hole flute fashioned to express
joy and sorrow. Music at the end
still the natural way to go. Yes, the heart
must beat to live. Yes, brain waves
signal life spark. Still, we note the end
by our last breath. Her 6-hole wood flute
custom made for Hospice, long for low notes,
thin, so light to hold. She follows the breath
of the patient. Starts and stops with him.
The sound of the flute following, not leading.
He takes his last breath.
Now soundless.

Bio- Neal Whitman lives with his wife, Elaine, in Pacific Grove, California, and in nearby Carmel both are docents at poet Robinson Jeffers Tor House. They love to combine his poetry and her Native American flute & photography in public recitals. They utilize this as hospice volunteers to help patients and family members identify and sort out their feelings at a time when these people might be overwhelmed with feelings. Both are published poets. Neal's 2013 awards include the 2013 Blaze Memorial Prize, 1st place in the summer 2013 contest sponsored by *Diogen* magazine in Serbia/Bosnia-Herzegovina, and 3rd place in the 2013 Dancing Poetry International Contest. In a 2013 anthology, *Remaking Moby Dick*, Neal "found" five haiku in Melville's *Moby Dick*, chapter 47, The Mat-Maker, and

related in prose how weaving a mat is a metaphor for Life. His own becoming a poet was created out of the warp (fate) and weft (free will) of his life.

Begging the Question

After Ribera's The Boy with The Club Foot

by Lee Marc Stein

Shall we pity you, poor club-foot boy,
face aged beyond your years,
clothes dripping with humiliation,
paper in your hand begging for alms
(please) for the love of God?

Ribera painted you to hang housed
in an obscenely ornate frame
in the home of a powerful don
who hated the wretched in life,
but loved to see them in pictures.

Hmm, that smile—no idiot's delight
but smirk of knowing you're no mere
poster boy for the eternal gap
between wealth and misery,
between taste and morality.

Your creator wields the weapon
of mass deception. What grandeur
his brush gives you, as you tower above
the narrow strip of earth, occupy
spreading sky, are uplifted by clouds.

Carrying your crutch like a toreador
poised to pierce the charging bull,
you need no red flag to demand notice.
You look down at us not begging
for mercy but claiming your right to it.

Link to painting from the Musée du Louvre:
<http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/clubfoot>

Bio- Lee Marc Stein is a retired direct marketing consultant living in East Setauket, Long Island. His poems have been published in *River Poets Journal*, *Still Crazy*, *Miller's Pond Poetry*, *Slow Trains Journal*, *The Write Room*, *Blue Lake Review*, *Blue & Yellow Dog*, *Blast Furnace*, *Subliminal Interiors*, *The Write Place At the Write Time*, and *Message in a Bottle*. He is completing a chapbook of ekphrastic poems. Lee has had short stories published in *Bartleby Snopes*, *The Write Place At the Write Time*, *Cynic Online* and *Down in the Dirt*. He leads workshops at Stony Brook University's Lifelong Learning program on modern masters of the novel.

WINTER ALONE

Each day
 begins in
 snow,
 lingers in
 snow,
 sleeps in
 snow,
 an endless
 whiteness
 of silence,
 but for Raven,
 raucous and
 black,
 clowning
 'umop apisdh
 bringing
 luck.



"Winter Alone" by Jo Motta Going

Bio- Jo Motta Going was raised in a bilingual family in an Italian-American neighborhood in Providence, Rhode Island. She has lived in Alaska for 26 years, but frequently returns to Italia, as the iconographies of both places are mutually inspiring for her creativity.

The Artist's Eye

by Peter Franklin

Same café,
Same view,
Same sunrise on the Eiffel.
Different morning,
As a lone artist on the far corner splashes color onto her canvas.
Each day, a
Different set of characters
Except them.
Two men.
Suits.
One with a tie. One without.
Coffee.
No cigarette.
No croissant.
No verre d'eau.
Nothing else except for conversation...
From here I cannot quite hear them...
I am left to muse on what words make up their thoughts.
But they are earnest.
An occasional passerby glances over...
Perhaps a tourist unable to
Decide what or how to order,
Or one attracted by the cut of
Their cloth.
So typically Parisian with the Tower looming behind them and
Scores of tri-color flags
Leftover from Bastille Day parades,
Lazily stirring in this early light.
Fifteen minutes,
Perhaps twenty.
That's all.
My coffee has resolved itself
To one more cup
But they are finished,
Until tomorrow morning.

Au revoir, mon ami.
À bientôt.

Athenaeum

by Peter Franklin

We the people mill about
In solemn reverie of the history
That surrounds us.
We speak in hushed tones, as if a loud comment or
Chortle will wake the dead...
Or at least wake the drowsy docent
Who has propped herself up in the corner of the
Great Library,
Apparently exhausted from explaining just one more
Time that,
“This time period was one of architectural splendor
for our city...” and her voice trails off as she
checks the next box on my entry ticket.
I’m curious as to what others are thinking...
Perhaps they, too, feel constrained and want to talk in a
Louder-than-acceptable voice...or, as I do, snatch a piece of candy
Out of the candy dish...or take a picture of the Picasso hanging
In the bathroom.
Really?
Or to step off the plastic...
“Please, do not step off the plastic...
Please keep your hands and other extremities within the marked
boundaries.”
Of course, I’m curious as to what will happen if I don’t.
The bust of Lord Byron looms above us...glowering. I don’t know if he was
ever
Happy...or at least not pictured that way.
You, Bob...are insolent.
My name’s not Bob, but I feel that he is speaking to me and not Don Juan.
Surely he can read my mind...for he knows that what I really want to do
Is to step over the velvet rope that cordons off the bedroom
And jump up and down on that big four poster bed that
“is architecturally accurate for the period.”

But what really catches my eye, as we enter into what
Appears to be the Gift Shop is the pen and ink caricature of
Uriah Heep.
Schemer.
Humbler than you.
Hypocrite. You Dickensian rascal.
At least Uriah is honest with himself, and
Seems to sum up the irony of my day.

Bio- Peter Franklin teaches English and Creative Writing at Swampscott High School (Swampscott, MA). Peter received a BA in English & Creative Writing from the University of California, Davis, and a Juris Doctor degree from Concord Law School. Peter has been published in *The Write Place At The Write Time*, *The Camel Saloon*, and *A Long Story Short*. He has penned one anthology of poetry, *Quiet River*, available as a chapbook, and is working on a food-related collection of ekphrastic poetry, *Eating With Your Eyes*. Peter resides in Marblehead with his wife, two children, and Zorro, a dog of many talents.

The Depot

by Katie O'Sullivan

I wait on a bench for the 9:26.

I am early this morning, in the brown, brick depot room,
in a California city that tries to find sun under a marine layer mist.
Lamps glow orange inside the ticket seller's booth.
The agent, her white badge stark against uniformed black,
with surprising smile brightens the gloom while checking my bag
and jump-starts my sleep-numbed spirit.

One by one, passengers
arrive, resolute, silent except for discordant sounds
of wheeled luggage. A woman settles beside me, weary. A long,
milk-colored pony tail hangs limp while from jeans of dirt-dried
rims, her crooked toes poke through flip flops like wooden pegs.
A giant backpack, with pillow shoved between straps, slides
unaided from shoulder to floor.

Still the sun holds back warmth
allowing this thirsty land to quench itself

of fog's small offer. Through the Depot's window,
two Asian girls materialize, black hair in neat braids,
satchels at their feet. Young but seasoned, they time
the arriving train in seconds. Fast on, they will
have the best seats.

Bio- Katie resides in Houston, Texas but was born in California and studied for two years at UCLA before her marriage. Due to her husband's career, she and their seven children resided in Lebanon for 15 years where Katie completed her BA degree at the American University of Beirut before the family returned to the United States. Her poetry and short stories appear in various print and online publications such as *Dogs Singing Anthology*, *The Caper Literary Journal*, *Writers Abroad*, *Cell 2 Soul*, four *Texas Poetry Calendars*, the *Dana Literary Society*, Knoxville Writer Guild and several issues of *The Write Place At the Write Time*.

Forced to Let Go

by Randy Martin

his swimming slows to the point that
the sorrow he runs from will never let go,
submerged with force by the self-ostracized aloneness
that screams the concert of songs that everyone hears
but no one seems willing to sing
his metastasized cancer
another unfair and almost bare branch
not likely to see spring, his hopes
for a family and partner no longer the 39 year muted
shadow his mother prods him to see;
their ideas of bountiful crops now crippled
by tobacco black frosts,
chilling his rattly wheezed breath already slowed
in the drone of ever present pain, leaving him that look
of near acceptance, as the only thing he has left;
tortured to feel that
he can't even
share that.

Alone On the Outside

by Randy Martin

He murdered not only his freedom when he murdered
his girl, lost to the rage that dozens of bounce around
homes couldn't control, the alcohol used
to hide his foster child pain of being used and not telling
how his favorite scout leader behaved,
being told it was how little boys who were special
got touched, this secret, feeding the wrath which made
what he did into something much worse, the killing
of his girlfriend without meaning to go nearly that far
the slamming of his car against hers as
she pulled out of the driveway, the rage of
being told he should get over his past,
the words being something she knew she
shouldn't have said, both 27, born three months apart;
that the 20 years spent behind bars were the best he ever had,
caged in cinder block hallways with men like himself
who, tortured and flawed, made him feel less alone
than when released, a feeling far from being free
his midlife crisis, amplified when seeing
what he missed out on, 47 years old
with no partner and no kids and parents who died
while serving his time; a man limited in knowledge of
how to be emotional in the world of technology he just doesn't know,
denied easy access as always to the worn simple
pathways he wanted as his well-intended desires get blown
by a temptation to drugs, his lies to the probation officer easy
when compared to telling the truth, knowing he's likely
to see another woman he's interested in walk away
when he tells her what he's done, when he tells her
what he knows she just needs to hear.

Bio- Randy Martin when not writing about and interesting himself in the world of other people's traumas, enjoys exploring beauty through woodworking and the aesthetic use of well designed space. Examples of such undertakings can be found at his website, www.finelinecarpentry.ca Beyond that, he just enjoys being on the fringes; cabin life in the woods suits him just fine.

Portrait of a Day

by A.J. Huffman

I see the world with pointillist's eyes,
all amalgamated spots and dots
of haphazard color colliding in hope
of creating some semblance of sense.
I take a step back, then another, then another,
until I too am a distant speck of anonymous
gray, blending into the clamor,
consumed by the fray.

The Pier was Missing a Plank

by A.J. Huffman

At the edge of the unrailed walkway waited a well-lit hole
the exact shape of the board that once held it in solidarity
with the rest of the wooden passage. I knelt beneath
the streetlamp's eye, peered deep into foggy depths, imagined
I could see my future floating beneath me. I waved
at it in passing, pretending I was unmoved by its presence.
Returning to upright position, I dug in my purse for a coin,
closed my eyes, dropped it into the open mouth of this abyss.
Its tiny splash echoed with my silent wish for closure, understanding
completeness is just another splintered reminder of the dangers
of planed sight.

Bio- A.J. Huffman has published five solo chapbooks and one joint chapbook through various small presses. Her sixth solo chapbook will be published in October by Writing Knights Press. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee, and the winner of the 2012 Promise of Light Haiku Contest. Her poetry, fiction, and haiku have appeared in hundreds of national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *EgoPHobia*, *Kritya*, and *Offerta Speciale*, in which her work appeared in both English and Italian translations. She is also the founding editor of Kind of a Hurricane Press:
<http://www.kindofahurricanepress.com/>

Fat Spiders

by Michael Jerry Tupa

A rusting aluminum can
is half-buried in the dirt.

Time was when the can sold
10 for a dollar,
waiting to be plucked
from a company store shelf,
and carried home—
destined for a spotless pantry,
which reeked of cinnamon
and other pungent spices.

Now, the pantry is no more,
the house, itself, is collapsed,
a Kubla Khan paradise for slimy bugs;
nearby are fallen, crumbled walls,
roasting on bright July afternoons,
and a naked, warped board,
hosting a family
of irritated, bristling nails.

Two sun-blistered boots,
are tangled in a yellowing clump
of angry weeds, close at hand,
boots that no longer recall
the ecstasy of wriggling feet—
boots that used to brush against
friendly fence posts,
on top of which,
neighbors used to lean, and talk,
and listen, and pause to watch
the bees dance on the breeze.

A new generation of bees
buzz around the same posts,
which are now only splinters,
and crumbling logs,
convenient hiding places
for fat, lazy, lounging spiders,

Lilliputian lords of the forlorn ruins,
overseeing their vast, sphacelated kingdom.

Where now are the missing neighbors?
Where now are the children
who used to prance on the grass—
while the sun drooped low
on the western branch of the sky,
like a ripe orange ready to drop?

How long has it been
since these dirty-faced tots
left their childhood behind,
mixed in the churlish rubble
of unmolested, gnawing decay
and rotting, smoldering dreams?

One wonders if, on certain spring evenings,
when these children of yesterday,
smell the aroma of fresh-cut grass—
and hear the whistle of a lonely bird—

they remember the old neighborhood,
and their knee-scraped days,
and the wind-tickled flower bushes,
as fresh and alive as they were then,
before the unrelenting gales of progress
destroyed their town,
leaving nothing but
eroding remnants and rustling ghosts
moaning in the dying dusk,
whispering of life passed by.

Ashes And Blossoms

by Michael Jerry Tupa

We hear the sound of living
echoing above our heads,
babies crying, old men sighing

life's rolling cycle
pushing forward—ever forward.

We are the ones left behind,
the lonely unforgotten—
forever young.
our lifetimes swallowed in a flash,
our gravestones a monument
to what might have been.

We require no more tears,
no mourning—
we miss you too.
Our last thoughts, as we died,
were of you.
And, our souls wept.

We only ask you to remember,
on bright, spring mornings,
that we lived,
we believed, we tried.
We found solace in service,
family in our fellow soldiers,
and in hopes our sacrifice
would be worth the cost.

Only the living
can judge such a thing.
Only the giving,
can understand our hearts.
Only God
can grow blossoms out of the ashes
of our offering.

Bio- As a poet of nearly 40 years, Michael Jerry Tupa has drawn on his eclectic life's experiences, which vary from doing church work for two years in Italy to spending four years on active duty with the U.S. Marines to working a quarter-century as a sportswriter. He also has known frustration with love to learning how to endure with self-illumination (the calm).

All of this seasoning has sharpened his emotional observations of life and humankind in its varied shades of truth and reality. He also believes true poetry is not fashionably obscure

or for personal interpretation, alone, but must have clarity that speaks to others who have hearts with big ears.

Love's Not Like Water

by Robert Joe Stout

fluid, yes, but water's tangible to fingers' touch,
lips' taste. Lovers, yes, so tangible they dance,
embrace, strike out in anger, pain.
But love is like the Hindus say,
a force like air invisible, *atman*, soul
—not of a self tied to the mortal plane
but soul, all that exists (and all is change).
So one seeks *an other* to fill one's needs,
a being, tangible, that one can touch, describe,
that others see. By so doing one gives
a clumsy less-than-perfect knit of nerves
and thoughts and bones and memories,
transforms some other knit that is not God
but shares that breath, that everything that is,
the soul, in its imperfect way.
We call it love. It can be beautiful:
not always ours to keep or give away.

Smudges/Love

by Robert Joe Stout

First the feeling then the thing to stick it on:
hunger, pleasure, need and fear; storms
within the nerves, the memory, the mind,
push through to want a world created
by imagined gods and ghosts more tangible
than habits, words and shoulds. But still
the impulse, need to touch, feel things, hear
and see as hurts bang up the outer world
and veil one's eyes that want to see
but cannot lose the things inside.

Wishes, thoughts and memories merge
touches, kisses, hopes and fears into reality
that is not real but deeply felt for feelings
are a primal force the mind distorts
and pegs against a wall inside,
sometimes to stay for years,
sometimes to peel away and leave
mere smudges: Love that might have been.

Bio- Robert Joe Stout was born in Wyoming but has lived many years in Mexico. He is a freelance journalist, novelist and poet writing from and about Oaxaca.

Feux de la Saint Jean à Arles

by Geoffrey Heptonstall

Here we may speak freely
Of the many things seen
In a Southern sky.
The clear Moon cradle curves.
Each star a grain of sand.
The Earth an oasis.
A paradise of a kind
Quickening in the dawn cool
Call to remember
The incomplete creation.
A prayer that has no end
But in unexpected fortune.
The bread is broken,
A promise kept for the time
We share the earth's essential
When fires are lit across the World.
Ever flame a redemption
That is a window and a wall
Of an easy deception
In a shattering of stones,
A scattering of embers
Where we can imagine everything.

Intensive Care

by Geoffrey Heptonstall

Watching her old life close in pain,
This much is clear:
The inevitable often happens –
Not once, to prove a point,
But in countless repetition,
Intimating infinity.
A looking-glass labyrinth
Of a kind that leads a child
To questions no-one can answer,
To face, in fact, an early lesson:
Life must end in endless wondering.

Never can she be young again.
But naturally we want her
Perpetually to be here
And not where she is going...

Snow does not fall in summer
Except on the eve of war,
Falling as a rumour
Seeps through the streets.
And in the morning
There is nothing.

So we imagine winter
As a whisper of invasion
When something happens
Out of season,
Near to silence.

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