

## *[The Write Place At the Write Time](#)*

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**Come in...and be captivated...**

### **Crushed**

By Lynn Russell

I am hurt, a wound slashed deep through my heart

the pain so unbearable at times, I want to give up

stopping all thought, taking my breath away

Creeping into my mind, caught unaware and off guard

an ache crushing the life out of my soul

the brightness of my days now grays and blacks

Breaking my spirit, knocked down bit by bit

sapping all energy, drained slowly as no words come through

sadness becoming the leader of it all

So do I ask why, as the tears trickle down my cheeks

looking for answers or reasons for it

I am hurt, broken and sad, anxious for words

Daily I wait, watch, and pray, while I laugh and chat with friends  
but the anguish is there every hour of every day  
I am crushed, not him

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### **Path of Life**

By Lynn Russell

You walk along the path, blindly following  
Its every twist and curve  
A hill ahead, making you dig in and  
Climb without a thought  
The master of your ways, the ruler of your road

The turns become tighter, not easy to navigate  
No matter how many steps you take  
The tops of the hills never get closer  
Slowing you down, sapping your strength

Some forks you take become dead ends  
Leading nowhere at all  
Deep valleys come up fast, too wide to cross  
Taking your energy, bit by bit, until it's almost gone

Simple streams soon become gushing rivers  
The roads so narrow you can no longer go on  
The steps in life are never easv. never clear and never smooth

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## **Reaching Out**

By Lynn Russell

Blood dripping from the wounds  
Dark as the midnight skies  
A hopeless look  
Pouring from the eyes

Drops on an old blade  
Job done, falling to the floor  
A tired stare  
Not able to take any more

Shirtsleeve rolled down  
Covering up the truth  
A haunted gaze  
No longer a youth

The body growing weary  
His eyes shut tight  
A defeated aura  
No will left to fight

A silent cry for help  
Longing to be free  
Needing strength to heal  
Knowing he can count on me

**North**

By Philip Fleisher

Driving north between pines

I feel a presence.

Rocks and stones lie scattered

Like open books

Each one whispering a word as I pass by.

My car is a spider

Traveling the length of a black thread.

Houses sit back among trees

Table lamps burn throughout the night

Against the shadows

That approach without warning.

Satellite dishes rotate in back-yards;

Huge metallic flowers

Seeding the galaxies across time.

A meadow unfolds before me

Like a pair of wings

As I climb the curve of the earth

AS I CLIMB THE CURVE OF THE CURVE.

The moon peers down  
Wearing the white mask of the bee-keeper.  
He has come close once again.  
This weathered old gardener  
Who smiles at us like  
We were his children.

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### **Tuning**

By Philip Fleisher

Nocturnal guitar  
Evokes a chilled  
Chord floating  
In dropped silence

Those who remain vulnerable  
nestle within frosted wings

When the body turns inside

The shadow resigns

But does not surrender

To the unknown witness

In the white

Of an observing star.

---

**Birth**

By Philip Fleisher

The aria of the sun comes to an end.

Summer's song fades into the cool

Blue threads of the September sky.

Only the husks of the singers remain;

Their shells line the trunks of trees,

They hang upon the branches, empty

As a closet full of clothes.

The field meditates in the silence

Of its own breath. while life

Continues beneath the dirt  
The grubs of the seventeen year  
Cicada, rehearse in the darkness,  
Waiting for the wings they will use  
As string and bow, when they rise  
Above the curtain of the earth.



"Shell" N.M.B Copyright 2008

### **The Madman's Dare**

By Chris Baratta

you'd be crazy not to breathe  
the fresh, fresh air

*It's like a strange dream where you  
wake up, convinced you're still asleep*

you'd be blind not to love  
the lion in her hair

*the days go by and you feel as if you  
just keep hitting the snooze button*

you'd be foolish not to know  
the simple and the rare

*your experiences are just moments in  
your mind; mental voyages of the  
unconscious*

you'd be mad not to take  
the madman's dare

*aboard a ship with no captain; rough  
seas and eastern winds ahead*

### **The Key**

By Denise Bouchard

An ordinary key...  
it opened an ordinary door.  
To an extraordinary sanctuary  
that doesn't exist anymore.

We dined there on hope  
and shopped for dreams...  
Food filling empty spaces in our souls,  
treasures stifling the lot of unvoiced screams

I had to go there the other day...  
(your condition left no doubt)  
to clean, to sort, to erase a life...to throw it out

What about the memories, the important things,  
the laughter still echoing in the hall..?  
How does a daughter sift through those things  
while watching you fade  
and properly  
preserve it all?

Strange people, strange smells, a strange place...  
I'm wondering if you'll remember my name...  
It was bittersweet today as I packed things away knowing it'll never be the  
same

## **The Green Slopes of Solace**

By Adam Bright

Each breath creeps slowly on  
as I put one foot in front of the other.  
A stiff wind peels my eyes open  
to see the staggering beauty before me.

As sweet sounds enter the space between  
my ears

I know that I am trotting upon a Heavenly  
landscape devoid of  
confusions and worries of decadence and wistful  
dreams.

The swift rush of running water  
the cold of late spring's icy shores of the North  
against my skin  
I am truly a baptized Mountain Man, servant to  
none, protector of the realm  
and a pilgrim looking for photo opportunity  
salvations.

And at last, above treeline I seek shelter;  
sanctuary from the long upward road from Hades  
surrounded by other pilgrims waiting for our last  
supper before the summit

shrouded with quilts of clouds and painful majesty  
like a gorgeous song composed for travelers of  
these  
the green slopes of solace.

### **Dreamscape Withdrawal**

By Adam Bright

As the remnants of my dreams  
shake themselves awake,

I am awake  
deep conscious thought

still reacting to calm fantasy of  
epic proportion

A walk in cool green gardens of  
grandiose genderless payloads of  
water leads to the surface of the moon where  
I can look back at home with  
a semi-nostalgic feeling of longing

Hope for redemption  
fall in love  
disengage from any challenges and pray for a  
rendition of reality to reflect its rays on me.

All those things flee in the face of day and  
I am left with a sweet taste in my mouth  
like cotton candy ecstasy and the scent of  
summer softly swathed scant upon a woman's  
skin.

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### **Night Vision**

By Mark Barkawitz

he says: "i can see in my dreams."

i ask: "color or black and white?"

he says: "i don't know. both maybe.

then i wake up and remember i'm blind."

he uses an expletive

to describe such a morning.

i try to empathize:

"my little brother was in

double traction with two broken legs,

but always walked through his dreams."

he says: "weird, huh?"

i answer: "yeah. weird."

but really,

it's not.

**Early Sunday Morning**

By Mark Barkawitz

i have this dream:

bridget fonda—jane's daughter  
and an actress in her own right—  
stops by our house.

she looks a little stoned.

we're in the kitchen  
and i'm doing dishes at the sink.

i tell her an investor has offered to put up  
four million dollars to produce my screenplay.

she grabs me by the back of my thigh  
and coos: "ooo, that's great."

searing sirloin in a frying pan,  
my wife looks over from the stove.

but before this intrigue  
has a chance to play itself out,

i'm rudely awakened by the barking

of my dogs in the backyard.  
my wife sleeps peacefully  
on the pillow beside me.  
but bridget is gone  
and my movie deal  
is dead.

### **Impressions of Paris**

By Danielle Ash

I find myself in a culture where it is actually taught, (I'm told) that it is much better to be discreet and go unnoticed.

See the thing of it is; you're allowed to be happy. You're just not encouraged to make public displays of it.

Before moving here to Paris, I knew Parisians weren't my forte. It's quite simple really, we think they hate us, and they think we hate them, and nobody bothers to ask.

So when I got here I pretty much said "\*\*\*\* that", and continued to live as though I were in good 'ol Canada. Where the people are friendly, individualism is encouraged, and if you want to give a stranger a warm smile or a bum a quarter then god bless ya.

This did not last long. I actually feel foolish for even having thought that France, a previous Super-Nation that has existed for centuries longer than my own, needed my help.

In the midst of my typical, "I'm North American, don't push, we can all

live this way" haze, I noticed that things around me were not correlating with the philosophy of do unto others...

My inner joy and passion for sharing it was tucked away safely. Like special china, only to be brought out on visits home, or vacation.

These days you'll find me wearing neutral colors, walking quickly to my destination, and of course, always avoiding eye contact. But don't try to talk to me because my earbuds will be in (though my ipod is rarely on).

So recently the city of Paris has been pissing me off. Not enough that I've yelled or smacked it, but enough to make me long for the motherland.

Thus in the interest of trying to be involved in the widely-rumored opinion that Paris is the best city on earth, I decided to create a personal moment in which the two of us could bond whilst on the way to work.

You see, I haven't given up on Paris yet. So many others rave about it, many can only dream about being in my position, and so naturally I have started questioning my entire belief system.

While sitting and silently congratulating myself for coming up with such a Robert Frost-esque way to both kill time and make a little love with the city that boasts being full of it, I ran through my mental magic moment checklist;

Fresh produce? Check

Scenic seat? Check

Open, euphoric state of mind? Ha-ha! Double check.

So before taking a bite of my genetically perfect apple, I had one last lingering look around. And that's when I saw HIM.

Him, of course, being the old French man puking all over a green patch probably coveted by little French kids.

Was it night-time? No.  
Was I in a transient neighborhood? NO

Unfortunately, this is all taking place right before my very eyes.

So... Are the forces that be trying to communicate with me that, although Paris is an attentive lover who means well, and I want it so bad, the orgasm is just never going to come?

As the bench that shows movies from hell and I parted ways, I stepped in shit. You be the judge.

---

### **Recovered Memory: A Nocturne**

*for T.P.*

By Vince Corvaia

1.

The ancient Romans had no word for “volcano.”

My father

Came into my room

At night.

The eruption happened

On the 24th and 25th of August, 79 A.D.

He said

It was my education.

Pompeii and Herculaneum

Were buried beneath ash and pyroclastic deposits.

He asked

If I wanted more.

I said yes.

Pliny the Younger compared the eruption

To a pine tree

Because “it shot up to a great height

In the form of a tall trunk . . . .”

He said if I told

I would die.

o

2.

Pliny the Elder was among the dead.

Agrippa and his wife were among the dead.

My schoolwork suffered.

I never got enough sleep.

I became contentious in class.

The population of Pompeii was 25,000.

The population of Herculaneum was 5,000.

I only wrote one paper

That ever got a decent grade.

3.

Pompeii yielded 1,150 bodies.

Herculaneum yielded 350 bodies.

When I was twenty-three

I remembered everything

As if leaving a trance.

Archaeologists called a skeleton they found  
With two bracelets “Ring Lady.”

I told my therapist I had no feelings.  
It was like unspooling a foreign film  
With no subtitles.

“Garden of the Fugitives”  
Is peopled by plaster cast figures  
Running for their lives.

Then the anger came.  
I told him I knew.  
I asked him if I was still going to die.  
I asked him if he wanted to.

Pliny the Younger was a survivor.  
I am a survivor.

More than anything,  
I am haunted  
By a dog  
Forever pulling on its chain  
With its teeth.

What memories remain  
Lay buried beneath.

---

**Sunny Isles Twin Theater, 1971**

By Vince Corvaia

I sat on the other  
side of the screen,  
eating popcorn from  
a hot dog wrapper and  
watching the audience  
through tiny holes.

Two giant speakers

on either side of me  
played Leonard Cohen  
as people who were  
looking right at me  
watched the movie.

Oh what I could have done  
with Linda, the usher  
in the other auditorium,  
if we didn't have to  
stagger our breaks.

But I knew from habit that  
as soon as Warren Beatty  
left Julie Christie's bed,  
it would be time for me  
to put on my red blazer  
and go back to work.

---

### **Darkness**

By Vince Corvaia

Audrey Hepburn lighting matches in the dark.

Alan Arkin tapping the floor with a cane.

It was our first date movie, ever, with anyone.

I didn't know how to get my arm from here to there.

Neither of us knew, when we kissed during previews,  
how to part our lips, who first, or why.

I found the soundtrack forty-one years later.

She might have been twice divorced or more by then,

perhaps with children older than we were  
when Arkin leaped out of the darkness,

and she found her way into my lap (trembling  
with fear) for the first time.

---

**Cheri**

By Vince Corvaia

*Ixora, Flame of the Woods,  
Jungle Flame, Jungle Geranium . . .*

Cheri pointed out the hedge to me  
on a walk in the suburbs  
of Miami Beach.

She plucked one red flower  
at the base of the stem  
and pulled the inner stem  
from the outer one  
with two fingernails.

When the inner stem's tip  
reached the edge of the outer rim,  
a tear of sap appeared.

She lifted the stems to my tongue  
so that I could taste the sap  
that welled between them.

It was delicate and sweet. . . .

*Indigenous to subtropical Florida.*

*Blooms year round.*

---

### **My Mother's Hands**

By Amanda Halkiotis

They play piano as if by reflex, a constant flutter  
of knuckles. Shoulders erect, she emulsifies sound with  
essence, like a chef searing wine and butter.

I saw them baking over that shoddy stove for hours  
while her Eighties soaps played from the TV atop the freezer.  
Custard squares, still warm, stacked on ceramic plates like towers.

On Saturdays they carried a boiling bucket of bleach water,  
scouring crawlspaces, thresholds, and baseboards.  
Maybe I don't use enough Pine Sol; each week I try harder.

They spun fine white thread into diamonds and roses.  
Seventeen summers spent counting stitches,  
a bedspread too graceful to invite afternoon dozes.

They've never had a manicure. As a Christian no one's read her palm.  
Smaller than mine but somehow stronger, when she resigned the ring  
after the divorce, I noticed for the first time, they looked calm.

---

### **Leaving**

By Amanda Halkiotis

We should all be so lucky to die like leaves,  
the colour drawn out of us slow so we acknowledge as it happens  
each step closer to meeting our maker.

To savor final moments like the end of a month, the bittersweetness of  
 past actions mixed up with the prospect of starting anew.  
 To be missed before we're even gone.  
 To enjoy an easy, painless decrescendo  
 floating  
 down  
 down  
 down  
 as we're watched by the remaining standing below, awestruck and envious,  
 we give ourselves back to the earth  
 first as a blanket  
 then as parchment  
 then dust.

---

### **Something Like**

By Amanda Halkiotis

I want something like what it used to feel like to be in love  
 he tells me after a couple glasses of wine.  
 I can tell by the way he says it I don't bring him to that place.  
 So I match him drink for drink to ease the ringing in my ears.  
 I don't want to start that conversation. Please, not tonight.  
 Don't let it be the beginning of the end, the I'm sorrys, the I'll miss yous, the  
 we'll talk soon,  
 the empty compliments I didn't believe the first time around when  
 he tried to get me into bed and don't even smile at now that he wants me out.  
 I know what he'll say next. Maybe not tonight, but next in terms of us.  
 He just realized he can't find any of his ex-girlfriends beneath my skin.  
 Now the relationship feels too real and nothing can shake him  
 free of his memories. He can't be around me right now.  
 He just realized.  
 Because he wants something like what he had back in college, the butterflies,  
 the rubber knees. I know. Every guy has a story. Angela, Jessica, Amelia,  
 Sabrina. My name has the same assonance, it always does.  
 But I'd rather walk than have that conversation again

~~But I'd rather than than have that conversation again.~~

And I have.

For once I want to ask him to ask me what I want out of this before giving up.

Because I'd tell him. I've been waiting years to tell someone.

I've got all my collected answers ready.

The best damn anthology ever.

I want someone that gives me something like a constant brandy buzz,

a warm liquid hum that keeps me jazzed

all day long even when cold, merciless clouds hover above

like giant squares of sheet metal.

I want something like what I read about in a recipe for double-chocolate angel

food cake from my mother's Joy of Cooking once:

earrings for an elephant with no apologies.

And yes, the no apologies part would be f#\$%ing fabulous on its own.

But I can't help but wonder what the earrings themselves,

hanging off of that silent, royal creature,

would look something like.

---

### **Progress?**

By Cheryl Somnese

Their nameless faces lined the city sidewalks,

searching desperately for opportunities offered.

Callused hands and a weathered brow

without a sound

spoke of struggles;

and eyes—devoid of tears,

wept in corners

where none could see.

The dingy rooms with steel machines  
cold with indifference  
consumed most of their waking hours.

Long days, little recompense,  
appreciative nonetheless:  
dressed in the fashion  
of an idealist's dream,  
happiness found them.

And now, from the sweat of their labor,  
a dawn of prosperity has evolved.

Poised in a time  
where many can pick and choose  
their own destiny.

But how much do we see,  
and what are we grateful for?

Fixating on bigger and better,  
bewildered if it is not attained,  
only too willing to profess

the pain

the pain.

Is it merely human nature  
to lack gratitude when life is plentiful,  
and value the meager  
when there is little to go around?  
In this land of abundance,  
do we recognize the groundwork their toil provided;  
or has wealth—  
incarcerated our dignity?

---

### **Holiday Spirits**

By Cheryl Sommese

A ghost visited for the holidays,  
manifest in all his regalia.  
Peeking at me through the doorway,  
following me to the dressing table--  
and then dining room  
and parlor  
and thoughts.

He didn't speak  
he didn't have to,  
it was not as if it was his manner to  
criticize while chatting.

His countenance  
said everything  
I really did not want to know.

I wished to greet him kindly,  
to have him sit and sip tea;  
but his mouth was not fashioned  
and the liquid would have splattered  
everywhere--

Illuminating,  
what was better left unseen.

So instead I glanced cautiously,  
and then helplessly,  
and then fearfully,

and then curtly  
and then angrily,  
and then sadly,  
and then compassionately.

He stared at me through it all,  
scrutinizing my expressions—  
filled with anticipation:  
then toward the end,  
formed lips to smile.  
And I knew as he vanished...  
I knew it would all be okay.

---

### **Another Year**

By Cheryl Sommese

Another year has come,  
forging forward without a hearing or trial,  
dulling the pain our missteps have created  
destroying some guilt--so we may tread another mile.

And in this passing of our life's repentance,  
we stop a while to count the heavy cost,  
of all the dreams, however earnest, not fulfilled,  
and the many promises, though sincere, somehow lost.

Too many stories we live but do not write—  
our pens become barren, never giving birth.  
Failing to inscribe the smile, or sacrifice, or kind word,  
as if these simple acts possess no worth.

But if these gestures do not define us,  
and the grandiose dreams, we rarely attain,  
then where can we turn for our perception of "happiness,"  
and who is to blame for our definition of pain.

My compatriots, be not fooled by the images around you;  
the "grand" things seem small when an end may be near;  
it is you who draw life in the pages you've lived,  
and you who will judge the coming New Year.

What will be your criteria?

---

### **Spurned by Europe**

By Cheryl Sommese

So much about you made me glow,  
almost everything about you made me smile.

Feeling like a small child

immersed in the thrill of

simple pleasures

I became captivated by your romance,  
mesmerized by your style.

I wanted you to welcome me with happiness:

to bestow air kisses at the doorstep

and utter cheerful hellos

because you believed I was worth it.

The awe of ruins I came to see,

the adventure of passages I grew to know;

your beauty fulfilled my every expectation.

So much so—  
I still hurt as I reflect  
that no matter what I did,  
or how hard I tried,  
you saw me as little more  
than a nation gone astray.

---

### **Stillness**

By Nicole M. Bouchard

Through a snowy wood under a tepid gray sky,  
our minds ask the questions,  
though Nature wonders why

There are truths present and ancient but mortal souls  
go on seeking reason.  
Nature answers in her wise way that we simply are;  
we grow with the season

In frozen stillness we reflect on our purpose, feeling the cold  
amidst glittering fortresses of white.  
We become part of the trees for an instant- reaching toward the sky,  
but realize we have no roots to the Earth, even if we attain their height.

Majestic season of winter, keep a dream for me.

Fulfill in great sanctity  
what lies in my frozen reverie.

---

**Taciturn**

By Nicole M. Bouchard

Honey faith  
no longer kosher  
*twisted*  
by puritan prerogative...  
Crescent moon  
hold it closer;  
enraptured  
by daring dreams...  
The things we keep  
the things we hide  
defying the things  
meant to lessen our lives

---

**The King and the Poet**

By Nicole M. Bouchard

They looked out upon the same star from the earth wishing for what the other possessed.

The King wished freedom, private passions of language, travels to depths of the sea  
in imaginary finery and the importance of verse. The Poet wished himself  
material  
comforts, fine adornments, the love of a queen, removal even of the constant  
flow  
of words struggling free from his soul, bloody need like a curse,  
and a kingdom to summon at his behest.

They thought themselves so highly different as night and day;

The star saw fit that they behold each other in a new way

And so each man was directed by the hand of moonlight to what they were told was an enchanted mirror in the realm.

Looking into it they saw not their reflections, but one another. "You have the life I want, thus I call you my brother. You are not as I am, but as what I could be, had I the purest character and courage to take my life by the vessel's helm."

The King told the Poet how only he stood just below him in importance throughout the land.

"You write the people's history, bearing the truth of the times as does glass enclosing the sand."

The clever Poet in turn, told the King how only he stood above him in importance throughout the land.

"You reach over earth and water to guide the people and create history divinely with your own hand."

Thinking on this, the King responded to the Poet, "If we each admire each other's work so, then we each, as men, must, in our current positions, do great things. Would we be as great if we chose to take each other's vocation?"

"Perhaps not, though our heart's still ache for more," was the Poet's answer.

"Can a King not write?" the King inquired. "Can a Poet not rule to some regard, hearts of men, queenly women, summon an audience, and find satiation with release of his pen? Yes, I should think, by God's illustration."

In answer, the Poet raised his hand to the glass to meet the King's. Upon their palms touching one another, they saw that the frame they stood on either side of, was not a magic mirror at all, but a mere open doorway under which they could cross the threshold at any time.

The rule of the King was poetic, the words of the Poet did reign, all was ever as it should be in their hearts in every vein, as men, women and children prospered in a place over which stars presided, rhythmic and guiding, blissfully unaware of their gold rhyme

unaware of their gold mine.

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