

## *The Write Place At the Write Time*

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"Angel with Stand #54" by Denise Morris Curt; www.ctlimner.com

Denise Morris Curt, The Connecticut Limner

The Christmas Angel singing carols wears a gown of lapis lazuli blue, with red sealing wax for

the holly berries. The varnish is beeswax which feeds the wood and helps to continue its life with the movement of each season/temperature change, humidity, etc. and melted amber; the two are heated together to give a high sheen and harder lustre.

### **Fall From Grace**

by Michelle Kennedy

Too much, too soon  
.....we fall from grace,  
innocence surrendered  
in the intoxication  
heat of your lips, the exotic sway of my hips  
to the rhythm and blues  
we find ourselves  
honey coated in, sticky, like glue  
so ripe, full of promise  
and danger  
for me more than you  
I can be crushed and destroyed here

I turn to hold your gaze  
blue eyes soaking in my brown  
I wonder, where will this take me  
burnished colors everywhere, golden red  
staining the memory of the moment  
so tangled, my heartstrings are

Can I survive this journey  
or will I fall over the edge,  
my body floating, crashing,  
to the rocks on the shore below?

Will I crack open upon impact

a half-shell, spiraled out of control  
left with fragments of my former self  
strewn upon the sand?

This was not my intent,  
I simply stumbled upon it,  
choose not to break free  
So I stand here, knowing  
I am on the brink  
but I refuse to move, to leave  
I am a fool, playing with my  
own mortal soul

---

~...a feather~

by Michelle Kennedy

I am a feather  
separated from  
my body, an exotic plume  
of blue, red, yellow and green  
wind-tossed, out of place  
landing here, on your  
polished oak floors,  
not hidden from view  
but lost: brilliant colors  
subdued by the warm brown  
You lift me in your capable hands  
hands that have dug deep in  
the earth of Costa Rica, risen  
in triumph or glory or anger  
against the blue sky in Cape Town  
these hands, who have seen so much  
experienced so much, touched and

held so many things dearly for  
decades, your knuckles bear witness  
to their intense and passionate journey  
And here I am in those hands  
being admired, turned, stroked  
from every angle, I feel you,  
sense your eyes upon me  
But I am just a feather  
no more belonging here  
in this house of brick and sturdy walls  
than the rest of me, scared, lost, seeking  
my way back home  
In those hands you carry me  
outside and let me go  
or set me free, depending  
on whose perspective is told  
Whatever the case may be  
I am airborne again, at the mercy  
of fate, time and weather

### **Untitled 1**

by Simon Perchik

It's been rain and rain covered  
with cinder block -against my cellar wall  
I trace its nest till the moon  
at last remembers where I was born  
-there were two and snowing and the wall

is warmed by moonlight when I turn on my  
side  
following, nearer to the sun  
-they keep watch, a pond must be near  
and a small hill.

It's impossible in the dark

in these blocks holding each other  
by thread-like streams  
-all their tears weighed down  
and never enough light to find  
my birthday scratched with a fingernail  
-there's blood inside this wall.

Someone is being born and the cry  
that goes around from mouth to mouth  
wants to be called by the name  
for cinders held together  
-that first cry has two names, one  
sounds like rain  
the other must be near.

---

## Untitled 2

by Simon Perchik

Again this snow, its cry  
seems to come from a bird  
from a simple sip at the headwind  
and melting cramp --I have forgotten

plant empty jars, opened boxes  
--it's useless! a branch from nowhere  
and the sun's cut through :a scalding rain  
half feathers, half ashes, half gravestones

--I forget, rinsed cans and plates  
still buried, filling with snow  
and the Earth each Spring heavier  
--I water and from my other hand  
an underground stream somehow  
wandering away --I water the lost

and under the snow  
this raging hillside tightening  
--I still collect cardboard flaps  
stuffing lids and bottle tops  
wait at the holes the way I once called out  
sifting each damp shadow.  
You were always thirsty.

---

### Untitled 3

by Simon Perchik

And in the dark my pillow, abandoned  
shimmering --you've heard its cry before  
tell me Try, get some sleep

take something from the night  
even if it's only the continuous rails  
or the train that is invisible  
against the black, drenched mountainside

washing out its sweat or from under my cheek  
the river wider, wider  
--what I think is my arm  
you say is only the window holding on.  
There's room for a real arm.

You say I need more leverage, to sleep  
on my side, that just this simple posture  
props up the Earth till it sees itself  
in front the careening headbeams :each train  
as if all the stars are late  
from everywhere, from nowhere

--rejoice! all this darkness, you say  
from just one shadow :the sky

black all those years --even today  
no one can count and I am older  
than the sun, you say --that's why  
the night is so familiar  
so heavy on the windowpane, on the sun  
and turning --I can stand in front of a star

certain it will come so far and no further  
--I am the waters, the strongman :the night  
and all those ruthless years  
fill into me and I --you say this

--are you sure? I still cringe  
gathering my bedside lamp  
into the darkness that never moves  
that lives forever, close to the divine  
light  
rising toward the sun, close to those stars  
whose light is still invisible  
all its own and dying.

---

### **Along the Unsaid in Flames**

by Cheryl Sommese

I shouted, but you did not hear.  
You, who even heard things I  
never said  
sat silent, deaf  
to sounds that blared like sirens during mock fires.

Hoping to be rescued  
but from whom  
or what  
was a mystery  
produced for children by the  
family channel.

Could my tresses long and petite frame  
render me mute  
to masked men on brainy Sundays?  
Wondering when the heartburn will  
be extinguished  
so we might resume our lives again.

---

### **Hospital Basements?**

by Cheryl Sommese

Shivering—  
the little girl lies flat.  
White pipes race by on the ceiling  
while apathetic walls show little mercy

as the stretcher rushes into  
their outstretched arms.

The steel machine room  
cold with indifference  
presents an even gloomier greeting.

The child thinks about making a run for it  
but isn't sure how,

so she remains frozen on the bed  
as doctors' voices amplify through her head  
and tears zigzag down her flattened cheeks.

With all her might, she utters the word,  
"Mommy."

She wonders if other little children  
have ever felt this way,  
and as perplexed as she is as to why,  
she admits that it makes her feel slightly better  
to think they have.

A perfunctory woman

with hollow eyes and frigid hands

places gooey bands

around her chest and limbs.

The figure

attempts to explain the purpose of an EKG

but the diminutive figure blocks the sound,

the only discernible noise

is her pounding heart.

She wants to be brave

but isn't.

The woman,

sensing the child's trepidation,

declares the test will not hurt

and it doesn't.

That is

until the bands are yanked off and the sticky substance

adheres to the little girl's skin.

Small hairs then pull out at the root

becoming one with rubber:

the scene mocking swaying trees in a forest,

then it hurts.

Technology is kinder today,  
children are no longer  
dragged to dungeon-like basements for EKG's  
and gooey suction cups  
waned with corporal punishment:  
progress removed the chill.  
And although it's too late for the little girl  
her inner child must admit—  
this pleases her.

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### **Beautiful**

by Cheryl Sommese

He walked toward me  
with the purity of a child  
and eyes an elder.  
Bracing himself in a backwards walker,  
seemingly unaware  
that he was truly any different.

We spoke about the sunshine  
and the small school bus he would ride  
and how he began each day  
with much anticipation.

But our conversation sidetracked  
almost immediately to Angel.

She limped about the yard  
I was only outside for her.

She must have seemed perplexing,  
a mutt with two hind wheels.  
Her limbs stoutly labored  
to move herself around.

The contraption that she towed  
at least allowed her freedom.  
Her front end still had strength  
so she dragged herself about.

He asked about her troubles,  
I explained she had an illness  
something eating at her muscles  
but she tried hard just the same.

He looked at her with care  
as he stroked her ear so gently  
and serenely professed  
he was glad he stopped to chat.

As he backed away in silence  
he sort of looked right though me,  
then pointed to my Angel  
and said, "Me and your dog, Ma'am,  
you know we're just the same."

---

### **Capital Worth**

by Cheryl Sommese

I know the prodigal, she lived here once.  
The surrounding world was obscure to her:

poverty,  
an odor that stunk elsewhere,  
and war:  
an unfortunate but only casual smell.

She left a while back,  
and mostly I am pleased.  
Her scent became increasingly stale  
as the morning sun bared its radiance  
expecting depth to shine  
on.

Occasionally she stops to visit  
but I confine her to the doorstep.  
And except for momentary chatter  
about this neckpiece  
or that purse,  
I bid her farewell.

---

### **The Chill of Discernment**

by Cheryl Sommese

I drive by  
pretending not to see  
the shivering man perched upon a stoop.  
“I’m hungry and cold” the placard reads,  
“Out of work and out of luck.”

I stopped once to ask what he needed,  
at least it was some variation of him—  
same hat, similar sign  
perhaps he was slightly older.

But the gent seemed less interested in sustenance than  
what I had anticipated.

Still eager to help  
I anxiously bought food  
believing I was doing a good thing.

It was after that I considered I had been  
hoodwinked,  
feeling somewhat like the skeptics who shout  
“bleeding heart!”

And now reflecting  
it was kind of interesting  
to wear a cynic's coat:  
although the incident passed  
like a hot flash  
at which time I immediately tore it off.

But the quandary remains,  
as uncertainty navigates the car  
and my senses short circuit:  
earnestly pondering  
which way now?

---

### **Water's Wine**

by Allison Whittenberg

The balance of bliss is pain  
The balance of pain is enlightenment  
The balance of enlightenment is more enlightenment  
The balance of more enlightenment is transcendence  
The balance of transcendence is alienation  
The balance of alienation is bliss

---

### **Fragments**

by Allison Whittenberg

I tell myself  
Don't  
remind Me  
you are gone

Lies are good

But then I want to see you as  
If  
You are  
But you're not

Truth is bad

---

### **Life Slips**

by Allison Whittenberg

like two weeks like five years like coupon clippings  
From a thick Sunday pull out  
Shiny, vivid  
Promising bargains in primary colors  
Coupons expire  
And expire and expire

---

### **Narrative**

by Allison Whittenberg

Though they are numerous  
I will grant your wishes  
I am your angel  
Though my wings are heavy

---

**Brain Research on Wisdom**

by Richard Krawiec

the words are all abstract  
social decision-making  
control of emotions  
balance of short  
and long term rewards

a putative network of wisdom  
mapped by neuroscientists  
at UC San Diego

almost unnoticed  
like a caught breath  
the quick reference to guilt  
a brief mumble

admittance

then move on

how many faithless lovers

mothers sons proclaim

they don't want to spend

their lives feeling guilty

better to move forward

sitting in the arena

of the anterior cingulated cortex

Socrates and Plato shake

their bald heads in dismay

why not say you don't want to feel

wisdom, don't want to think

harmony, desire, decisions

want only to creep closer

to the dark forest pool

and gaze lovingly

at the singular image

reflected on the surface

**The Garage on Owosso Street**

by Steve De France

We were living in grandmother's house in  
Hermosa Beach. One Sunday morning in  
1946 my father went to the corner  
market for a pack of cigarettes and  
never came back.

Mystery.

Police were called. Missing person's  
bureau. The army. Everybody and  
anybody, still nobody found him.

My grandmother said he was no account.

"A bum. A son of a bitch."

She wished him dead.

Mother and I moved into the garage  
behind grandmother's place. Inside,

we had two roll-away beds and an old pot-bellied black kerosene stove for heating and cooking. Attached to the back of the garage was a giant chicken coop with a couple of dozen chickens. My favorite was Henny Penny, a fat Rhode Island Red, I refused to eat for dinner one Sunday afternoon.

Anyway, the garage, the yard, the whole place reeked of chicken crap. And after only two days, we were infected with a rampaging case of scabies from the chickens. Both of us itching, scratching, and breaking out in heavy rashes.

So each night we made a paste of water mixed with sulfur, and with this coated our bodies. The good thing was it reeked so strongly, you couldn't smell the

chickens at all. Anyway, we'd curl-up  
each on a roll-away bed, encrusted in a  
green and yellow shell, and mother would  
proceed to read aloud as we waited for  
the bugs to die.

She read *The Crater* by James Fennimore  
Cooper. An account of survival on a  
remote island. It seemed exotic and most  
wonderful to me. After our story, she'd  
turn the kerosene lamp down, tuck the  
end of the patchwork quilt under my  
mattress, and then together, we  
whispered prayers.

In a half an hour or so,  
she'd step over,  
check my eyelids, and in quiet  
voice ask if I were awake.

I'd lay dormant as death.

until

From her suitcase she'd take out letters

my father wrote her from Germany.

She'd turn his pages over and over.

Read and reread in a whispering voice.

I'd listen to those letters, and watch

the shadowed calligraphy of the

kerosene lamp write fearsome shapes on

the white washed wooden walls. And

then, after blowing out the lamp, she'd

sigh, breathe heavily, and with quiet

resolute sobbing she would weep me

to sleep.

---

### **High Drifting Alarm**

by Steve De France

The train sways unsteadily, and

rolls over yet another high-stilted trestle.

Couplings clang,whistles blow as  
my nervous stomach does a swan dive  
splashing into a silver string of boiling water.  
a mile or so below.

Out my iron-windowed compartment  
Northern landscape. Trees & water.  
Water everywhere.  
Not like the desert of L.A. at all.  
Not like the harbor freeway.  
Not full of frightened eyes rushing from work.  
No, just trees. So many trees I feel dwarfed,  
drowning in these encroaching trees.

Above the trees, hunched clouds  
full of rain scrape their sexual bellies  
across the green canopy of treetops.  
Then  
a patch of sunlight. a sudden furrowed  
field ---a man in coveralls, a jaunty  
straw hat & a bright orange

bandanna tied round his neck,  
as he sits on a yellow tractor.

Wiping his brow, he stops to watch the  
train. We see each other. He tips his  
hat, By reflex, I open my hand in salute.  
We connect.

We watch each other out of sight  
until he's just a distant color  
pressed into the impression of a landscape.

And in this moment, I wish to be him.

To fade away, fade faraway  
atop his tractor, plowing  
this field. I need to take up his life.  
Snake-like I want to shuffle  
off my dead skin, leave my dry life,  
and discard my city dirt.

I could see in his eyes  
or maybe I imagined it---he wished  
he was the haunted one---sitting on the  
train---unshaved & speeding South.

Watching his dot of color  
fade & disappear, I think of  
the many people staring  
right now at someone else,  
wishing it were possible  
to become them.

Needing---  
needing to leave everything--all of it  
behind. To just check out.  
To go forever missing---  
to give up on the harshness  
give up on the pain  
give up on the incertitude of breath  
give up on the fear of eternal night  
give up on a world grinding off its own flesh.

yes and again yes. . .

To live a new life as someone else,  
someone without these damn darkling thoughts.

Unexpectedly, the train whistle  
shrills-----calling me back to myself  
from far across Seattle Sound  
and my train rushes forward---windows  
on fire with the reflected sun.

---

### **October Confessional**

by Kat Farrin

deeper pressed into darkness  
the shift. light loss  
my god/ess is the sun  
i paint on the beach paying homage

in late september  
my neighbor offers me \$10 to submerge  
i take it, yet i've already submerged that morning  
baptism by ocean

yesterday before waking

a downeast i don't recognize  
struggling up a steep slippery hill  
my older daughter driving behind me  
an eagle crouched in a tree flies out  
then another  
the dreams so real i wake feeling healed

vision

the men i meet on dating sites  
one consumed by grief  
the love he never expected to meet at this age  
leaving him for her x husband . . . his girlfriend has died  
another man with four women in his life, none sexual at this point  
but he considers proposing to the one on an island  
the third man his x wife is his forever best friend  
since they split, he's been with an ex-prostitute, a manic depressive from  
alabama,  
and a woman who needed help feeling beautiful again

spare me

my own fantasy a native american man from washington state  
seems to live in a renaissance faire  
his other self, sir rennifer, an elaborate life sized rabbit  
i'll never be part of his tribe

in the city i take a dollar from my pocket for the homeless man  
as i approach, he jerks  
to the narrow alleyway between buildings  
a weak stream of piss crossing the gap  
the dollar goes back to my pocket

space

where oh where that pure love my nineteen year old daughter feels for her  
boyfriend and him for her  
no thought  
as the old tune, ' i only have eyes for you' ... plays on  
i've always been naive, innocent in a way that can be dangerous

now?  
the dregs of old kelp, clanking chains before halloween  
baggage they call it. overweight, sixty one, my dreadlocks turn silvery white

are you still in love? living upstairs while 'she' lives downstairs? heard that  
one, too.

in the city the homeopath honors me with the remedy of eagle as i dreamed  
it.  
her own nineteen year old daughter is off to study with a shaman  
over one hundred years old in columbia

in the dream from long ago i was in the body of an eagle. flying low, close to  
the ground  
along a deep ridged woods path

i crave the island where i lived for seven years  
deer circling me while i slept in a field  
walking through the fire road in an ice storm  
tall firs cracking off with the sound of gun shots  
the smell of fir so strong penetrating my every cell

i felt so alive

i can't go back  
but i'll retrieve the eagle feather from where i've stored it  
found over the body of a dead deer

the vision  
in now  
synthesis/intention.

---

### **Dawn**

by Kat Farrin

three crows wait on the wire  
i toss down cracked corn, bread, catfood  
the ocean is silver  
loud roaring all night through my window

ocean's heart

yesterday's snow turns to rain  
a layer of skim ice covers everything

these dark times to solstice  
inner. outer.  
a wave that could carry me away  
into nothingness

woundings in the inner and outer family  
emotional, physical  
erupting anger  
watch it tire itself out

pema chodron, the buddhist nun  
reminds. there is not always resolution  
gregg brayden, linking physics to spirit  
1% of the square root of a population  
is all it takes to initiate change  
we must feel peace, not think it

ride the wave of darkness  
light candles  
honor earth  
be a living prayer  
willing to change

risk forgiveness  
of your self first

---

**In Stillness**

by Denise Bouchard

On a drive through Vermont  
In the twilight of night  
A beautiful scene is captured

On taking a left instead of a right  
A lake under a starry navy sky  
A large yellow moon  
Renders us enraptured

As the snow begins to fall,  
On the edge of the frozen lake  
We spy a peaceful deer

He seems to be watching us  
As we are watching him  
His eyes enormous without fear

This sacred vision of winter's beauty and  
Stillness fills our souls

It seems a scene within a dream of us  
Crossing over into the northern pole

Gone was the frantic holiday pace  
As we had dinner by the fire on this peaceful night

We realized that in trusting the journey  
And slowing down  
We find the way which is right

---

**1544**

by Denise Bouchard

Don't put me in a gilded cage  
I will only fly away

Don't cloak me in deceitful lies  
For I'd n'er stay

Cloak me in velvet  
Do not cover me in jewels

Cloak me in your warm embrace  
Glitter is for fools

Cover my head with your fortress  
Keep me from the onslaught of wind and gale  
Strong and able

Be the hunter, the gatherer  
The bringer of food  
And I will bring those in need  
And those of kind spirit to gather round our table

Keep me safe from intrigues, rumors and guile  
No longer to feel like a motherless child

And I shall match your passions and humor  
And fill your manor with children and song

For you have loved me well, my love

And you have loved me long

---

**The Apothecarist's Daughter**

*For "Pete"*

by Denise Bouchard

Potions, creams and pills lined the shelves  
As the smoke swirled around my head

Take fifteen cc's of this cream  
And with this flat knife, blend the powder well  
You said.

You were the teacher I was the apprentice  
I took it all in and learned my lessons well

This was the ancient secret wisdom of healing  
The highest form of alchemy  
And as the gray smoke circled  
I was under its spell

Drawers filled with jars  
White porcelain with tight-fitting lids  
A worried mother stands before me  
Waiting  
With three sick kids

I'm not worried for her  
I know they will heal

They watch me mix the contents  
At first suspended

I add a pink liquid from a refrigerator  
With a different powder and shake it well  
It becomes a different chemical once blended

I know all of the Latin abbreviations  
My favorite is HS, it means to be taken at bedtime  
But I know the derivative is taken from the Latin, 'hypnos'  
And its meaning goes deeper than this

It means they will heal while sleeping  
As though by Juliet's kiss

A distraught wife stands before me  
Her sick husband out of work  
And just to get by she must work two jobs

Again I do not worry  
My father, a true alchemist creates  
A special magic seldom seen today  
He hands her the pills and secretly whispers  
The divine words 'no charge'.

I explain things all through my day  
This expectorant will loosen the phlegm  
This ointment for a sty in the eye

Codeine to soothe the cough  
A cream used  
t.i.d for hives

I learn all of this and add skin care and  
Naturopathy to my repertoire  
This cream with hyaluronic acid will keep your skin young and firm  
This mascara with polypeptides will make your lashes longer  
And thicker than they now are  
A lot for a seventeen year old to learn

Now you stand beside me no more  
Smoke from your pipe no longer swirls  
One thing I did not learn was how to live without you  
For without your special brand of alchemy,  
it will always be a lesser world

---

### **On Finding an Old Picture of You**

by Mark Barkawitz

wouldn't it be nice  
to be together again?  
as knowing as we are now,  
as attractive as we were then.

---

### **Anticipating Waves**

by Mark Barkawitz

we sit on our surfboards,

out past the breakers,  
awaiting the next big set.

---

### **Playing the Straight Man**

by Mark Barkawitz

so i'm painting the interior  
of this single mom's new home,  
when her twelve-year-old son,  
who's playing "super mario" on  
the television across the room,  
tells me in all earnestness:  
"i'm gonna be a marine biologist  
when i grow up."  
  
"really?" i continue my brushwork,  
somewhat surprised and impressed  
by his particular ambition.  
the kid has a learning disability—  
attention deficit disorder—  
or some other politically correct term.  
his ritalin prescriptions stand like

sentries on the bathroom counter,  
so i guess i expected less  
of his expectations for himself.

“yeah,” he says,  
pressing the controls in his hands,  
which dictate the animated character’s  
movements in the videogame.  
“all my teachers say my grades are  
below c level.”

my brush stops on the doorframe  
and i stare over at him.  
sitting cross-legged on the floor,  
too busy to look back at me,  
his round face smirks like a buddha’s,  
as little mario in his cape  
flies across the screen,  
alive with calamity.

---

**Routine, 1964**

by Vince Corvaia

The scrape of wooden clothespins  
at the bottom of a metal pail  
as I followed my mother  
down the line, sheets  
pregnant with Florida wind  
billowing away from us  
as she reached out to me  
for the next pin without looking.

Forty-five years later, gaunt  
in Southern California,  
she waited in her wheelchair as  
my sister and I changed  
the linens of her hospice bed,  
pulling the bottom sheet taut  
so it wouldn't come loose.

"This damn wind," she said  
as we walked back to the house,  
pushing her hair out of her face

as I trailed behind her, proud  
of the clothespins I handed her  
to keep the sheets from blowing away.

---

### **The Lost Hotel**

by Vince Corvaia

We were scared  
to be so completely together  
for the first time  
in the room reserved  
for employees only.  
She worked the switchboard  
part-time and went to my  
high school, where  
her voice in the chorus  
was like a child's pleading.

It didn't work out.  
I left her on the rumpled covers  
and walked to the lifeguard stand  
on the beach beside the pool area.

The moon dripped its borrowed light  
onto the Atlantic as it rose.

MiMo, the hotel's design was called,  
Miami Modern, doomed  
thirty years later to be razed  
for a deluxe establishment promising  
everything but nostalgia.

Just before catching my bus home,  
I saw her standing by the pool,  
looking out at the glittering lights  
of a ship on the black horizon,  
heading for countries  
that would always be new to me.

---

### **How Not Like a Poem**

by Vince Corvaia

How not like a poem  
this poem is.

How rather like a bulb  
whose cord still swings  
  
casting a crazy shadow  
against the brick basement wall  
  
it is.  
How instead like a lover  
  
pulling up the blue sheet  
across her glistening body  
  
it is.  
How like anything  
  
but a poem  
this poem is, this poem  
  
that would rather be  
a light bulb

or a naked lover  
than these words  
  
that mean nothing  
until somebody turns them on.

---

### **Keeper of Secrets**

by Nicole M. Bouchard

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, such an intrepid master of discretion  
and a guarded noble heart worthy of trust are you...

A gem in dark worlds, a well-spring of comfort... no one, no one, my love is  
as lovely as thou art true

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, with you I feel so safe... I'll let loose my lips  
and tell you everything-

All my mind's unwindings, my most deceitful will's findings  
discover a most gentle, undisturbed place in your ears and memories...  
landing softly light on wing

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, you've hidden my secrets away... tucked them  
into bed behind that sturdy, moral stone wall

Within the protective circle of your virtue, your innocence, your youth, your  
voice and sweet manners, I'm certain I'll never fall.

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, you've been most loyal throughout the long  
years

Possessing a dignity refined, almost royal, erasing my fears

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, did you really ask something of me in return?..

Oh, come now, naïve one... no matter how small the favor, you know I'd let you burn

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, I grow so very tired of you now... you trusting, sweet, sweet little thing

Didn't you guess that I'm the scorpion, dropping you as I please, relishing in the pain I've caused you with my sting?

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, how dull it is to know you'd actually expect any equal goodness from me.

You must think the world just and fair but I'd sooner take and take before I'd even consider giving back to thee.

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, for all of your generosity I owe you nothing and now I'm going to turn my back and ignore

Whatever bond we had is in the past and I'll make it clear right this moment that I will never give to you as you gave to me before

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, I don't mind betraying your gentleness and watching you bleed... What's truth anyway? I'll say it was all your fault and I shan't lose a second of sleep over that which is through...

But Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, you'll still be there for me, keeping my secrets, fulfilling my needs, keeping me from the judgment of others, making certain I look good to the outside eyes... won't you?

**There Will be Peace**

by Nicole M. Bouchard

The wind has spun herself out of control and she  
Won't be spoken down to anymore  
Won't be commanded  
Won't settle down  
Won't be quiet  
Can't be called to go to the fore

There will be peace when I'm done  
I promise there will be peace  
When heart and freedom are won  
But not until...

Affections will come again,  
I'll buckle down and remember you well  
My friend  
But not until...

Not until I press you hard  
into the fine sharp corners you pressed me

Not until you feel the pain of what  
Your absence caused the months to be

Not until you're pushed down by words  
And heavy tears waking you  
To the waking of your innermost anguish  
And fears

There will be peace when the false fabric  
Is torn away, discarded from us  
And unsewn  
When the thread is broken and  
Secrets I hold, the secrets I've told  
My life, is my own

Though it seems destructive,  
Very strange and out of turn  
We will learn  
To smooth this crease  
and  
When my neat hands are done  
I swear  
There will be peace

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## *The Write Place At the Write Time*

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Come in...and be captivated...



"Angel with Stand #54" by Denise Morris Curt; www.ctlimner.com

Denise Morris Curt, The Connecticut Limner

The Christmas Angel singing carols wears a gown of lapis lazuli blue, with red sealing wax for

the holly berries. The varnish is beeswax which feeds the wood and helps to continue its life with the movement of each season/temperature change, humidity, etc. and melted amber; the two are heated together to give a high sheen and harder lustre.

### **Fall From Grace**

by Michelle Kennedy

Too much, too soon  
.....we fall from grace,  
innocence surrendered  
in the intoxication  
heat of your lips, the exotic sway of my hips  
to the rhythm and blues  
we find ourselves  
honey coated in, sticky, like glue  
so ripe, full of promise  
and danger  
for me more than you  
I can be crushed and destroyed here

I turn to hold your gaze  
blue eyes soaking in my brown  
I wonder, where will this take me  
burnished colors everywhere, golden red  
staining the memory of the moment  
so tangled, my heartstrings are

Can I survive this journey  
or will I fall over the edge,  
my body floating, crashing,  
to the rocks on the shore below?

Will I crack open upon impact

a half-shell, spiraled out of control  
left with fragments of my former self  
strewn upon the sand?

This was not my intent,  
I simply stumbled upon it,  
choose not to break free  
So I stand here, knowing  
I am on the brink  
but I refuse to move, to leave  
I am a fool, playing with my  
own mortal soul

---

~...a feather~

by Michelle Kennedy

I am a feather  
separated from  
my body, an exotic plume  
of blue, red, yellow and green  
wind-tossed, out of place  
landing here, on your  
polished oak floors,  
not hidden from view  
but lost: brilliant colors  
subdued by the warm brown  
You lift me in your capable hands  
hands that have dug deep in  
the earth of Costa Rica, risen  
in triumph or glory or anger  
against the blue sky in Cape Town  
these hands, who have seen so much  
experienced so much, touched and

held so many things dearly for  
decades, your knuckles bear witness  
to their intense and passionate journey  
And here I am in those hands  
being admired, turned, stroked  
from every angle, I feel you,  
sense your eyes upon me  
But I am just a feather  
no more belonging here  
in this house of brick and sturdy walls  
than the rest of me, scared, lost, seeking  
my way back home  
In those hands you carry me  
outside and let me go  
or set me free, depending  
on whose perspective is told  
Whatever the case may be  
I am airborne again, at the mercy  
of fate, time and weather

### **Untitled 1**

by Simon Perchik

It's been rain and rain covered  
with cinder block -against my cellar wall  
I trace its nest till the moon  
at last remembers where I was born  
-there were two and snowing and the wall

is warmed by moonlight when I turn on my  
side  
following, nearer to the sun  
-they keep watch, a pond must be near  
and a small hill.

It's impossible in the dark

in these blocks holding each other  
by thread-like streams  
-all their tears weighed down  
and never enough light to find  
my birthday scratched with a fingernail  
-there's blood inside this wall.

Someone is being born and the cry  
that goes around from mouth to mouth  
wants to be called by the name  
for cinders held together  
-that first cry has two names, one  
sounds like rain  
the other must be near.

---

## Untitled 2

by Simon Perchik

Again this snow, its cry  
seems to come from a bird  
from a simple sip at the headwind  
and melting cramp --I have forgotten

plant empty jars, opened boxes  
--it's useless! a branch from nowhere  
and the sun's cut through :a scalding rain  
half feathers, half ashes, half gravestones

--I forget, rinsed cans and plates  
still buried, filling with snow  
and the Earth each Spring heavier  
--I water and from my other hand  
an underground stream somehow  
wandering away --I water the lost

and under the snow  
this raging hillside tightening  
--I still collect cardboard flaps  
stuffing lids and bottle tops  
wait at the holes the way I once called out  
sifting each damp shadow.  
You were always thirsty.

---

### Untitled 3

by Simon Perchik

And in the dark my pillow, abandoned  
shimmering --you've heard its cry before  
tell me Try, get some sleep

take something from the night  
even if it's only the continuous rails  
or the train that is invisible  
against the black, drenched mountainside

washing out its sweat or from under my cheek  
the river wider, wider  
--what I think is my arm  
you say is only the window holding on.  
There's room for a real arm.

You say I need more leverage, to sleep  
on my side, that just this simple posture  
props up the Earth till it sees itself  
in front the careening headbeams :each train  
as if all the stars are late  
from everywhere, from nowhere

--rejoice! all this darkness, you say  
from just one shadow :the sky

black all those years --even today  
no one can count and I am older  
than the sun, you say --that's why  
the night is so familiar  
so heavy on the windowpane, on the sun  
and turning --I can stand in front of a star

certain it will come so far and no further  
--I am the waters, the strongman :the night  
and all those ruthless years  
fill into me and I --you say this

--are you sure? I still cringe  
gathering my bedside lamp  
into the darkness that never moves  
that lives forever, close to the divine  
light  
rising toward the sun, close to those stars  
whose light is still invisible  
all its own and dying.

---

### **Along the Unsaid in Flames**

by Cheryl Sommese

I shouted, but you did not hear.  
You, who even heard things I  
never said  
sat silent, deaf  
to sounds that blared like sirens during mock fires.

Hoping to be rescued  
but from whom  
or what  
was a mystery  
produced for children by the  
family channel.

Could my tresses long and petite frame  
render me mute  
to masked men on brainy Sundays?  
Wondering when the heartburn will  
be extinguished  
so we might resume our lives again.

---

### **Hospital Basements?**

by Cheryl Sommese

Shivering—  
the little girl lies flat.  
White pipes race by on the ceiling  
while apathetic walls show little mercy

as the stretcher rushes into  
their outstretched arms.

The steel machine room  
cold with indifference  
presents an even gloomier greeting.

The child thinks about making a run for it  
but isn't sure how,

so she remains frozen on the bed  
as doctors' voices amplify through her head  
and tears zigzag down her flattened cheeks.

With all her might, she utters the word,  
"Mommy."

She wonders if other little children  
have ever felt this way,  
and as perplexed as she is as to why,  
she admits that it makes her feel slightly better  
to think they have.

A perfunctory woman

with hollow eyes and frigid hands

places gooey bands

around her chest and limbs.

The figure

attempts to explain the purpose of an EKG

but the diminutive figure blocks the sound,

the only discernible noise

is her pounding heart.

She wants to be brave

but isn't.

The woman,

sensing the child's trepidation,

declares the test will not hurt

and it doesn't.

That is

until the bands are yanked off and the sticky substance

adheres to the little girl's skin.

Small hairs then pull out at the root

becoming one with rubber:

the scene mocking swaying trees in a forest,

then it hurts.

Technology is kinder today,  
children are no longer  
dragged to dungeon-like basements for EKG's  
and gooey suction cups  
waned with corporal punishment:  
progress removed the chill.  
And although it's too late for the little girl  
her inner child must admit—  
this pleases her.

---

### **Beautiful**

by Cheryl Sommese

He walked toward me  
with the purity of a child  
and eyes an elder.  
Bracing himself in a backwards walker,  
seemingly unaware  
that he was truly any different.

We spoke about the sunshine  
and the small school bus he would ride  
and how he began each day  
with much anticipation.

But our conversation sidetracked  
almost immediately to Angel.  
She limped about the yard  
I was only outside for her.

She must have seemed perplexing,  
a mutt with two hind wheels.  
Her limbs stoutly labored  
to move herself around.

The contraption that she towed  
at least allowed her freedom.  
Her front end still had strength  
so she dragged herself about.

He asked about her troubles,  
I explained she had an illness  
something eating at her muscles  
but she tried hard just the same.

He looked at her with care  
as he stroked her ear so gently  
and serenely professed  
he was glad he stopped to chat.

As he backed away in silence  
he sort of looked right though me,  
then pointed to my Angel  
and said, "Me and your dog, Ma'am,  
you know we're just the same."

---

### **Capital Worth**

by Cheryl Sommese

I know the prodigal, she lived here once.  
The surrounding world was obscure to her:

poverty,  
an odor that stunk elsewhere,  
and war:  
an unfortunate but only casual smell.

She left a while back,  
and mostly I am pleased.  
Her scent became increasingly stale  
as the morning sun bared its radiance  
expecting depth to shine  
on.

Occasionally she stops to visit  
but I confine her to the doorstep.  
And except for momentary chatter  
about this neckpiece  
or that purse,  
I bid her farewell.

---

### **The Chill of Discernment**

by Cheryl Sommese

I drive by  
pretending not to see  
the shivering man perched upon a stoop.  
“I’m hungry and cold” the placard reads,  
“Out of work and out of luck.”

I stopped once to ask what he needed,  
at least it was some variation of him—  
same hat, similar sign  
perhaps he was slightly older.

But the gent seemed less interested in sustenance than  
what I had anticipated.

Still eager to help  
I anxiously bought food  
believing I was doing a good thing.

It was after that I considered I had been  
hoodwinked,  
feeling somewhat like the skeptics who shout  
“bleeding heart!”

And now reflecting  
it was kind of interesting  
to wear a cynic's coat:  
although the incident passed  
like a hot flash  
at which time I immediately tore it off.

But the quandary remains,  
as uncertainty navigates the car  
and my senses short circuit:  
earnestly pondering  
which way now?

---

### **Water's Wine**

by Allison Whittenberg

The balance of bliss is pain  
The balance of pain is enlightenment  
The balance of enlightenment is more enlightenment  
The balance of more enlightenment is transcendence  
The balance of transcendence is alienation  
The balance of alienation is bliss

---

### **Fragments**

by Allison Whittenberg

I tell myself  
Don't  
remind Me  
you are gone

Lies are good

But then I want to see you as  
If  
You are  
But you're not

Truth is bad

---

### **Life Slips**

by Allison Whittenberg

like two weeks like five years like coupon clippings  
From a thick Sunday pull out  
Shiny, vivid  
Promising bargains in primary colors  
Coupons expire  
And expire and expire

---

### **Narrative**

by Allison Whittenberg

Though they are numerous  
I will grant your wishes  
I am your angel  
Though my wings are heavy

---

### **Brain Research on Wisdom**

by Richard Krawiec

the words are all abstract  
social decision-making  
control of emotions  
balance of short  
and long term rewards

a putative network of wisdom  
mapped by neuroscientists  
at UC San Diego

almost unnoticed  
like a caught breath  
the quick reference to guilt  
a brief mumble

admittance

then move on

how many faithless lovers

mothers sons proclaim

they don't want to spend

their lives feeling guilty

better to move forward

sitting in the arena

of the anterior cingulated cortex

Socrates and Plato shake

their bald heads in dismay

why not say you don't want to feel

wisdom, don't want to think

harmony, desire, decisions

want only to creep closer

to the dark forest pool

and gaze lovingly

at the singular image

reflected on the surface

**The Garage on Owosso Street**

by Steve De France

We were living in grandmother's house in  
Hermosa Beach. One Sunday morning in  
1946 my father went to the corner  
market for a pack of cigarettes and  
never came back.

Mystery.

Police were called. Missing person's  
bureau. The army. Everybody and  
anybody, still nobody found him.

My grandmother said he was no account.

"A bum. A son of a bitch."

She wished him dead.

Mother and I moved into the garage  
behind grandmother's place. Inside,

we had two roll-away beds and an old pot-bellied black kerosene stove for heating and cooking. Attached to the back of the garage was a giant chicken coop with a couple of dozen chickens. My favorite was Henny Penny, a fat Rhode Island Red, I refused to eat for dinner one Sunday afternoon.

Anyway, the garage, the yard, the whole place reeked of chicken crap. And after only two days, we were infected with a rampaging case of scabies from the chickens. Both of us itching, scratching, and breaking out in heavy rashes.

So each night we made a paste of water mixed with sulfur, and with this coated our bodies. The good thing was it reeked so strongly, you couldn't smell the

chickens at all. Anyway, we'd curl-up  
each on a roll-away bed, encrusted in a  
green and yellow shell, and mother would  
proceed to read aloud as we waited for  
the bugs to die.

She read *The Crater* by James Fennimore  
Cooper. An account of survival on a  
remote island. It seemed exotic and most  
wonderful to me. After our story, she'd  
turn the kerosene lamp down, tuck the  
end of the patchwork quilt under my  
mattress, and then together, we  
whispered prayers.

In a half an hour or so,  
she'd step over,  
check my eyelids, and in quiet  
voice ask if I were awake.

I'd lay dormant as death.

until

From her suitcase she'd take out letters

my father wrote her from Germany.

She'd turn his pages over and over.

Read and reread in a whispering voice.

I'd listen to those letters, and watch

the shadowed calligraphy of the

kerosene lamp write fearsome shapes on

the white washed wooden walls. And

then, after blowing out the lamp, she'd

sigh, breathe heavily, and with quiet

resolute sobbing she would weep me

to sleep.

---

### **High Drifting Alarm**

by Steve De France

The train sways unsteadily, and

rolls over yet another high-stilted trestle.

Couplings clang,whistles blow as  
my nervous stomach does a swan dive  
splashing into a silver string of boiling water.  
a mile or so below.

Out my iron-windowed compartment  
Northern landscape. Trees & water.  
Water everywhere.  
Not like the desert of L.A. at all.  
Not like the harbor freeway.  
Not full of frightened eyes rushing from work.  
No, just trees. So many trees I feel dwarfed,  
drowning in these encroaching trees.

Above the trees, hunched clouds  
full of rain scrape their sexual bellies  
across the green canopy of treetops.  
Then  
a patch of sunlight. a sudden furrowed  
field ---a man in coveralls, a jaunty  
straw hat & a bright orange

bandanna tied round his neck,  
as he sits on a yellow tractor.

Wiping his brow, he stops to watch the  
train. We see each other. He tips his  
hat, By reflex, I open my hand in salute.  
We connect.

We watch each other out of sight  
until he's just a distant color  
pressed into the impression of a landscape.

And in this moment, I wish to be him.

To fade away, fade faraway  
atop his tractor, plowing  
this field. I need to take up his life.  
Snake-like I want to shuffle  
off my dead skin, leave my dry life,  
and discard my city dirt.

I could see in his eyes  
or maybe I imagined it---he wished  
he was the haunted one---sitting on the  
train---unshaved & speeding South.

Watching his dot of color  
fade & disappear, I think of  
the many people staring  
right now at someone else,  
wishing it were possible  
to become them.

Needing---  
needing to leave everything--all of it  
behind. To just check out.  
To go forever missing---  
to give up on the harshness  
give up on the pain  
give up on the incertitude of breath  
give up on the fear of eternal night  
give up on a world grinding off its own flesh.

yes and again yes. . .

To live a new life as someone else,  
someone without these damn darkling thoughts.

Unexpectedly, the train whistle  
shrills-----calling me back to myself  
from far across Seattle Sound  
and my train rushes forward---windows  
on fire with the reflected sun.

---

### **October Confessional**

by Kat Farrin

deeper pressed into darkness  
the shift. light loss  
my god/ess is the sun  
i paint on the beach paying homage

in late september  
my neighbor offers me \$10 to submerge  
i take it, yet i've already submerged that morning  
baptism by ocean

yesterday before waking

a downeast i don't recognize  
struggling up a steep slippery hill  
my older daughter driving behind me  
an eagle crouched in a tree flies out  
then another  
the dreams so real i wake feeling healed

vision

the men i meet on dating sites  
one consumed by grief  
the love he never expected to meet at this age  
leaving him for her x husband . . . his girlfriend has died  
another man with four women in his life, none sexual at this point  
but he considers proposing to the one on an island  
the third man his x wife is his forever best friend  
since they split, he's been with an ex-prostitute, a manic depressive from  
alabama,  
and a woman who needed help feeling beautiful again

spare me

my own fantasy a native american man from washington state  
seems to live in a renaissance faire  
his other self, sir rennifer, an elaborate life sized rabbit  
i'll never be part of his tribe

in the city i take a dollar from my pocket for the homeless man  
as i approach, he jerks  
to the narrow alleyway between buildings  
a weak stream of piss crossing the gap  
the dollar goes back to my pocket

space

where oh where that pure love my nineteen year old daughter feels for her  
boyfriend and him for her  
no thought  
as the old tune, ' i only have eyes for you' ... plays on  
i've always been naive, innocent in a way that can be dangerous

now?  
the dregs of old kelp, clanking chains before halloween  
baggage they call it. overweight, sixty one, my dreadlocks turn silvery white

are you still in love? living upstairs while 'she' lives downstairs? heard that  
one, too.

in the city the homeopath honors me with the remedy of eagle as i dreamed  
it.  
her own nineteen year old daughter is off to study with a shaman  
over one hundred years old in columbia

in the dream from long ago i was in the body of an eagle. flying low, close to  
the ground  
along a deep ridged woods path

i crave the island where i lived for seven years  
deer circling me while i slept in a field  
walking through the fire road in an ice storm  
tall firs cracking off with the sound of gun shots  
the smell of fir so strong penetrating my every cell

i felt so alive

i can't go back  
but i'll retrieve the eagle feather from where i've stored it  
found over the body of a dead deer

the vision  
in now  
synthesis/intention.

---

### **Dawn**

by Kat Farrin

three crows wait on the wire  
i toss down cracked corn, bread, catfood  
the ocean is silver  
loud roaring all night through my window

ocean's heart

yesterday's snow turns to rain  
a layer of skim ice covers everything

these dark times to solstice  
inner. outer.  
a wave that could carry me away  
into nothingness

woundings in the inner and outer family  
emotional, physical  
erupting anger  
watch it tire itself out

pema chodron, the buddhist nun  
reminds. there is not always resolution  
gregg brayden, linking physics to spirit  
1% of the square root of a population  
is all it takes to initiate change  
we must feel peace, not think it

ride the wave of darkness  
light candles  
honor earth  
be a living prayer  
willing to change

risk forgiveness  
of your self first

---

**In Stillness**

by Denise Bouchard

On a drive through Vermont  
In the twilight of night  
A beautiful scene is captured

On taking a left instead of a right  
A lake under a starry navy sky  
A large yellow moon  
Renders us enraptured

As the snow begins to fall,  
On the edge of the frozen lake  
We spy a peaceful deer

He seems to be watching us  
As we are watching him  
His eyes enormous without fear

This sacred vision of winter's beauty and  
Stillness fills our souls

It seems a scene within a dream of us  
Crossing over into the northern pole

Gone was the frantic holiday pace  
As we had dinner by the fire on this peaceful night

We realized that in trusting the journey  
And slowing down  
We find the way which is right

---

**1544**

by Denise Bouchard

Don't put me in a gilded cage  
I will only fly away

Don't cloak me in deceitful lies  
For I'd n'er stay

Cloak me in velvet  
Do not cover me in jewels

Cloak me in your warm embrace  
Glitter is for fools

Cover my head with your fortress  
Keep me from the onslaught of wind and gale  
Strong and able

Be the hunter, the gatherer  
The bringer of food  
And I will bring those in need  
And those of kind spirit to gather round our table

Keep me safe from intrigues, rumors and guile  
No longer to feel like a motherless child

And I shall match your passions and humor  
And fill your manor with children and song

For you have loved me well, my love

And you have loved me long

---

**The Apothecarist's Daughter**

*For "Pete"*

by Denise Bouchard

Potions, creams and pills lined the shelves  
As the smoke swirled around my head

Take fifteen cc's of this cream  
And with this flat knife, blend the powder well  
You said.

You were the teacher I was the apprentice  
I took it all in and learned my lessons well

This was the ancient secret wisdom of healing  
The highest form of alchemy  
And as the gray smoke circled  
I was under its spell

Drawers filled with jars  
White porcelain with tight-fitting lids  
A worried mother stands before me  
Waiting  
With three sick kids

I'm not worried for her  
I know they will heal

They watch me mix the contents  
At first suspended

I add a pink liquid from a refrigerator  
With a different powder and shake it well  
It becomes a different chemical once blended

I know all of the Latin abbreviations  
My favorite is HS, it means to be taken at bedtime  
But I know the derivative is taken from the Latin, 'hypnos'  
And its meaning goes deeper than this

It means they will heal while sleeping  
As though by Juliet's kiss

A distraught wife stands before me  
Her sick husband out of work  
And just to get by she must work two jobs

Again I do not worry  
My father, a true alchemist creates  
A special magic seldom seen today  
He hands her the pills and secretly whispers  
The divine words 'no charge'.

I explain things all through my day  
This expectorant will loosen the phlegm  
This ointment for a sty in the eye

Codeine to soothe the cough  
A cream used  
t.i.d for hives

I learn all of this and add skin care and  
Naturopathy to my repertoire  
This cream with hyaluronic acid will keep your skin young and firm  
This mascara with polypeptides will make your lashes longer  
And thicker than they now are  
A lot for a seventeen year old to learn

Now you stand beside me no more  
Smoke from your pipe no longer swirls  
One thing I did not learn was how to live without you  
For without your special brand of alchemy,  
it will always be a lesser world

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### **On Finding an Old Picture of You**

by Mark Barkawitz

wouldn't it be nice  
to be together again?  
as knowing as we are now,  
as attractive as we were then.

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### **Anticipating Waves**

by Mark Barkawitz

we sit on our surfboards,

out past the breakers,  
awaiting the next big set.

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### **Playing the Straight Man**

by Mark Barkawitz

so i'm painting the interior  
of this single mom's new home,  
when her twelve-year-old son,  
who's playing "super mario" on  
the television across the room,  
tells me in all earnestness:  
"i'm gonna be a marine biologist  
when i grow up."  
  
"really?" i continue my brushwork,  
somewhat surprised and impressed  
by his particular ambition.  
the kid has a learning disability—  
attention deficit disorder—  
or some other politically correct term.  
his ritalin prescriptions stand like

sentries on the bathroom counter,  
so i guess i expected less  
of his expectations for himself.

“yeah,” he says,  
pressing the controls in his hands,  
which dictate the animated character’s  
movements in the videogame.  
“all my teachers say my grades are  
below c level.”

my brush stops on the doorframe  
and i stare over at him.  
sitting cross-legged on the floor,  
too busy to look back at me,  
his round face smirks like a buddha’s,  
as little mario in his cape  
flies across the screen,  
alive with calamity.

---

**Routine, 1964**

by Vince Corvaia

The scrape of wooden clothespins  
at the bottom of a metal pail  
as I followed my mother  
down the line, sheets  
pregnant with Florida wind  
billowing away from us  
as she reached out to me  
for the next pin without looking.

Forty-five years later, gaunt  
in Southern California,  
she waited in her wheelchair as  
my sister and I changed  
the linens of her hospice bed,  
pulling the bottom sheet taut  
so it wouldn't come loose.

"This damn wind," she said  
as we walked back to the house,  
pushing her hair out of her face

as I trailed behind her, proud  
of the clothespins I handed her  
to keep the sheets from blowing away.

---

### **The Lost Hotel**

by Vince Corvaia

We were scared  
to be so completely together  
for the first time  
in the room reserved  
for employees only.  
She worked the switchboard  
part-time and went to my  
high school, where  
her voice in the chorus  
was like a child's pleading.

It didn't work out.  
I left her on the rumpled covers  
and walked to the lifeguard stand  
on the beach beside the pool area.

The moon dripped its borrowed light  
onto the Atlantic as it rose.  
MiMo, the hotel's design was called,  
Miami Modern, doomed  
thirty years later to be razed  
for a deluxe establishment promising  
everything but nostalgia.

Just before catching my bus home,  
I saw her standing by the pool,  
looking out at the glittering lights  
of a ship on the black horizon,  
heading for countries  
that would always be new to me.

---

### **How Not Like a Poem**

by Vince Corvaia

How not like a poem  
this poem is.

How rather like a bulb  
whose cord still swings  
  
casting a crazy shadow  
against the brick basement wall  
  
it is.  
How instead like a lover  
  
pulling up the blue sheet  
across her glistening body  
  
it is.  
How like anything  
  
but a poem  
this poem is, this poem  
  
that would rather be  
a light bulb

or a naked lover  
than these words  
  
that mean nothing  
until somebody turns them on.

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### **Keeper of Secrets**

by Nicole M. Bouchard

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, such an intrepid master of discretion  
and a guarded noble heart worthy of trust are you...

A gem in dark worlds, a well-spring of comfort... no one, no one, my love is  
as lovely as thou art true

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, with you I feel so safe... I'll let loose my lips  
and tell you everything-

All my mind's unwindings, my most deceitful will's findings  
discover a most gentle, undisturbed place in your ears and memories...  
landing softly light on wing

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, you've hidden my secrets away... tucked them  
into bed behind that sturdy, moral stone wall

Within the protective circle of your virtue, your innocence, your youth, your  
voice and sweet manners, I'm certain I'll never fall.

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, you've been most loyal throughout the long  
years

Possessing a dignity refined, almost royal, erasing my fears

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, did you really ask something of me in return?..

Oh, come now, naïve one... no matter how small the favor, you know I'd let you burn

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, I grow so very tired of you now... you trusting, sweet, sweet little thing

Didn't you guess that I'm the scorpion, dropping you as I please, relishing in the pain I've caused you with my sting?

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, how dull it is to know you'd actually expect any equal goodness from me.

You must think the world just and fair but I'd sooner take and take before I'd even consider giving back to thee.

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, for all of your generosity I owe you nothing and now I'm going to turn my back and ignore

Whatever bond we had is in the past and I'll make it clear right this moment that I will never give to you as you gave to me before

Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, I don't mind betraying your gentleness and watching you bleed... What's truth anyway? I'll say it was all your fault and I shan't lose a second of sleep over that which is through...

But Secret Keeper, Secret Keeper, you'll still be there for me, keeping my secrets, fulfilling my needs, keeping me from the judgment of others, making certain I look good to the outside eyes... won't you?

**There Will be Peace**

by Nicole M. Bouchard

The wind has spun herself out of control and she  
Won't be spoken down to anymore  
Won't be commanded  
Won't settle down  
Won't be quiet  
Can't be called to go to the fore

There will be peace when I'm done  
I promise there will be peace  
When heart and freedom are won  
But not until...

Affections will come again,  
I'll buckle down and remember you well  
My friend  
But not until...

Not until I press you hard  
into the fine sharp corners you pressed me

Not until you feel the pain of what  
Your absence caused the months to be

Not until you're pushed down by words  
And heavy tears waking you  
To the waking of your innermost anguish  
And fears

There will be peace when the false fabric  
Is torn away, discarded from us  
And unsewn  
When the thread is broken and  
Secrets I hold, the secrets I've told  
My life, is my own

Though it seems destructive,  
Very strange and out of turn  
We will learn  
To smooth this crease  
and  
When my neat hands are done  
I swear  
There will be peace

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