

## **A Brass Ring**

**by Peter Kronos**

I don't know how it came to pass. This  
pitcher of grief pours  
peace and sorrow like a single river  
from its lip into this sea, this me –

legs up, grateful, in the chair I brought  
home six months ago  
to recline my dying wife,  
to lift her to her feet. Silence beats

between each stroke of the clock our  
daughter gave her for Christmas.  
A circular face bound with fair birch  
and a brass ring the color of gold.

Melancholy is a sweet blanket.  
A tear may hang for hours  
before it slips off and shatters.  
There is always another. It's okay.

## ASTERS

by David Radavich

This is a star  
that won't stop.

Blue—or is it  
purple?—

on the edge  
of colors

a green-yellow eye—  
many of them—

staring at me  
with no guilt  
but considerable  
need—not much time—

and dependent  
on a watered  
table that glows

all periwinkle  
in its glass  
infinity.

What a galaxy  
is circling

in cool fire—

## **Cello in Moonlight**

**by Richard Allen Taylor**

The strings pull me  
to a darkened house,  
through a door left open  
to a room, empty  
except for a wicker chair,  
where a woman  
in a shawl of moonlight  
sits weeping, a private ritual,  
her voice the cello,  
the cello her voice.

An intruder, I turn to leave.  
She asks me to stay.

## **Desert Passage at Night**

**by Sarah Archer**

We live in a sky like the indigo skin of the Tuareg,  
bristling with teeth.

A dome, not by fact but by thought:  
views so eternal their only end is to curve,  
reaches so limitless they trap.  
Flexible, bound,  
a lunar net.

The emptiness turns to a maze, winds whip-snapping past  
corners only they can sense at the speed  
that day cuts  
to algid night – the clean, calculable efficiency  
of snapping a neck.

Unfollowed by the nothings that gouge a living here,  
without a track, anonymous –  
these are the ways we move past dunes like dead camels, white, forgotten, cratering  
back to sand.

Sand too is how our skin lives  
in this space, pricks out an armor underneath the chill.  
Prints are wiped memory-clean.

There is too much air to be cold in, nothing to touch.

We don't know how we move.

Maybe we spiral toward some sluggish heart  
at the unpinnable center of this unwalled, doorless room of veering shades,  
this cavity as pitch and pale as the inside of a skull.

**Exhale**  
**by Adrienne Gilman**

Standing at the hem  
Of the woods  
My shoulders lift  
Lighter as I exhale.

My eyes adjust  
To bigness  
My ears reach,  
Catch a call—

Wren, woodpecker,

Leaves

Dancing loose,  
Ready to fly

From saplings who  
Wiggle  
Like children at church  
Beneath parent-trees  
Stretching heavenward.

They inhale  
My sighs,  
Back and forth,  
Our breaths mingle  
At the edge.

## **Little Birds**

**by Christine Arvidson**

All of my old friends  
The women, I mean  
The ones I've not seen in years  
Have changed into little birds.

Smaller, not just shorter  
Shoulders rounded, backs hunched  
Over chests that seem delicate  
And fragile as little birds.

I am shocked when I see them  
Their heads canted downward  
Shuffling along, their hands clawed  
Like the feet of little birds.

Only their voices have not altered  
Their words still weighty  
Their laughter ringing with vitality  
No cheeping or thin songs of little birds.

When I go home I gaze  
For a long time  
In the mirror  
Looking for little birds.

## **The Great Blue Heron**

**by John McGillicuddy**

The Great Blue Heron flies under my legs  
as I stand alone in the middle of a short, wooden walking bridge  
supported by rough and rusty metal beams.

The bird's six-foot wing span allows it to float under the trestle,  
spindly legs dangling, seemingly skimming its feathered breast  
along the top of the careening creek below me.

A lone, slow, powerful flap propels the azure, agile creature,  
emerging in ascent from under the other side of the bridge  
elegant, graceful, soaring now well above the water,  
disappearing in a flash beyond the creek's tight, right bend,  
leaving me in awe and with dashed hopes for another glimpse.

I'm driving in my car,  
morning errands in my rear view mirror, home a mile beyond.  
First my left eye, then my right are filled with the Great Blue Heron  
rising like a fired mortar shell, straight up,  
its flight arc curling from one side of the road to the other,  
blue and white wings extended,  
the left one north, the other pointed down,  
a jet flying sideways in an aerial show stunt.  
The wild bird is above my hood,  
filling my windshield for an instant,  
appearing and disappearing like each Fourth of July firework rocket,  
brilliant and beautiful, fleeting and forever beyond reach.

## THE TIMEKEEPER

by Mary Struble Deery

The clunky plastic clock was a cast-off when it moved into the family cottage—  
passed along from the Maltbys, who left the island.  
This abandoned timekeeper has a prominent position perched atop  
the orange antiqued bookshelf in the great room.

After flipping on the breakers in the spring when the cottage is opened,  
we twist the knob protruding from her back until her hands inform the time.  
With gold curlicue embellishments decorating her face,  
she has hummed away, and pointed accurately for many summers.

But now, after many years, she is entering a new stage.  
Her vocals seem bewildered.  
In her confusion, she rings nine times when it's actually eight.  
The only times the count is right are noon and midnight.

While her voice innocently trips over truthful time,  
her proud face carries on as if nothing is wrong.  
She keeps us on our toes. We take note, tally,  
and tune into the six o'clock news at seven chimes.

We count each ding and then make the mental correction.  
We listen, adjust, and accept.  
This will be our own wish someday—  
gentle understanding when confusion reigns.