

On Leaving My Sister

Ever since I left you at the airport,
I keep seeing you -
the woman ahead of me on the street
with white hair short and smooth,
the woman in the bank
whose shoulders tilt forward
when she walks,
the woman in the store wearing the
same navy slacks and white button collar.
Each sighting brings that brief
fluttering joy. You've come back.
You never left.
When we were children
you were the good one, the thoughtful,
generous one. I was the selfish, messy,
rebellious one.
Your bedroom was always neat,
your bed made, the spread pulled smooth and tight.
To rile you, I sat on your bed,
my weight dispersing wonderful
wrinkles of ill will.
I whispered so only you could hear
the wrong names you hated most to be called,
"Myrna, Muriel, Bertha, Gertrude,"
until you wept with rage.
Now grown elderly and orphaned,
you and I talk long distance
multiple times each week,
sharing successes and worries
in the loving scattered phrase-fragmented
code of sisters.

Give Me the Day

Give me the day

when the sun blazes hope
on every shadowed spirit,
and compassion brings purpose
to all who are lost, and
serenity triumphs over fear and despair.

Give me the day

when humanity shines upon weary
hearts,
where lilac and morning glory and
autumn moon
embrace me, sustain me
in vast pastures,
amidst the scent of
wildflowers, down, and green.

Give me the day

when clouds roll leisurely,
full and round, like porcelain angels
with skin as soft as Reuben's ladies,
and I recall in them innocence and trust,
and the sky cleanses me
and I am light.

Give me the day

when forests grow from forgotten
volumes,
and impossible dreams pierce the stars,
and there is music and song and endless
bounty.

Give me the day

When we are blessed
with family and friends,
and we want for nothing because
greed is unwarranted and we are alive.

Give me the day

on a heaven-high mountaintop,
where silence swallows time,
and my heart drums through the
stillness,
and I leap from its peak
to join one million gulls floating like
snowflakes
above a gilded blue ocean.

Give me the day

when the earth is healed, and weapons
are dust,
when rivers run pure, and children are
sacred,
and air gives strength,
and there is no guilt,
or hate, or sadness or remorse.

Give me the day

when love lifts every soul,
and all life matters,
and we are cherished for who we are,
and happiness is as real as
words on a page.

-Tony Ricciardelli

Pelican Party

Relaxing on weathered boards

Low tide, shells popping

salty scented air cozy as a wool blanket

A bevy of birds appear

A flash mob crashing splashing

Scooping up air before bulleting into the water

A few breaths pass and the pelican party concludes

Gracefully departing, mere whispers above the marsh

Gliding silently onward.

-Catherine Mainous

White Fragrance

Lou and I climbed the dirt road to the cemetery,
where we found gardenias planted by old graves,
knelt to break off a few white blossoms,
breathed in the sweetness,
too intense for perfume,
perfect n soft June air.

Now, the smell of gardenias
takes me back to thirteen,
the threshold of womanhood,
where I reveled in possibilities---
love, education, children, career,
veiled, but waiting.

-Carolyn Noell

The Color of Our Sins

What if we were painted in the colors of our sins?

What color would you be?

How about your family, neighbors, friends?

Would the man next door be yellow-faced?

Greedy, greedy, greedy?

Would your sister be colored green all over,
full of evil envy?

Would you be surprised at your grandma's black eyes that
reveal she's filled with hate?

How about the little white-haired boy bubbling
with lies, though only eight?

Would your best friend's hands be purple
from carrying all that pride?

And your dad's lips stained orange from
hunger, not satisfied?

What if the girl with the rosy-red cheeks
had everlasting rage?

And her older brother's feet were blue
from sloth at a young age?

If you were the color of your sins,
what color would you be?

My guess is that when you pass,
it's a rainbow that we'd see.

-Hannah Brawley

The Artist As Prowler

Don't gimme no vase of flowers,
Or fruit for that matter,
No damned cute pets, as well,
Don't want any of that clatter.

No Mona Lisa smile, no portraits,
Nor bucolic landscapes, either,
No semi-nude regardless of,
The drapery round and beneath her.

Gimme instead the artist as prowler,
The town in the dead of night is the scene,
The storefronts by moonlight, the recesses in shadow,
Check out Edward Harper and you'll know what I mean.

-Tom Czerwinski

Respite

Once again, our weary, battered, wounded warrior,
with the help of his Sancho Panza,
returns to Sanctuary Lane for recovery.
The latest windmill has exacted excruciating pain.

Each succeeding battle grows fiercer, taking a greater toll
on his body and spirit, but irresistible calls to duty still urge him on.
As he peers into the quiet woods and across peaceful grounds
of this place, he senses he will recover and fight again.

Yet he also knows that strength dwindles
and time marches on. New strategic ploys
must replace sheer will power for him to continue.
Yet, current exhaustion and pain urge the end of his battles.

The sound of a small tractor beyond the trees
draws his attention. He sees the snowy head
above the bent body of an elderly neighbor riding his mighty
steed, a 65 year-old Ford tractor, pulling a disk harrow

across the garden, preparing the bed for new crops.
Slowly our Don Quixote feels resurgence begin to stir.
The smell of fresh earth begs him to join
The old man in the planting and tending new tomatoes, beans,

peppers, and beets. The desire to nurture new life
leading to the fruits of the Earth helps
restore his battered body and soul ready
to flail against perceived wrongs of others.

A spell at a house named Tranquility at the end
of Sanctuary Lane and the help of friends
always heal what ails, bringing
new energy to endless tasks ahead.

-Peter L. Fenninger

Hurling

ceaselessly

through the universe.

After forty years

The scene still lives,

Pristine as ever,

At the center

Of my consciousness.

-Mike Cox

Yes of Course the Glass Has Broken

Leaves twirling downward
On magical strings,
Swirling and whirling
In total acceptance
That this brief journey,
Branch to ground, is both
The first and the last.

A slow waltz on a harpsichord;
The invisible hands
Of an accomplished master
Crafting a masterpiece
Of fate and resignation,
Witnessed only by one
Sipping tea on the porch.

-Benjamin Pressley

Rain

Sheltered, I sit
beneath a saturated sky.
A hundred perfect watery circles
pound politely on the windshield.

Once, we wandered
Spring Garden Street
while it showered, giddy,
high in every sense.
Your Aphrodite hair
clung to freckle-flecked cheeks.
We skipped to the Citgo,
bought beer as dawn broke.
Smoking, I waited at the sidewalk,
watched you pour yourself
over the counter at the poor clerk.
I craved your thin bones,
envious of elbows, hips, ribs,
pelvis jutting from dripping jeans.
Walking back, our clothes held us earthbound.
We released them at the apartment door,
floated into the room in our underwear,
the wet wind following after.

Surely we loved then,
two tender, curveless girls drinking,
soaked with new rain?

Now, the clouds hover overhead,
pattering tempo swells against glass,

traffic surges forward,
slick with water
as I sit inside
bone-dry.

-Kelly Wisdom