

BRUSH STROKES

By Joey Scarfone

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *Here is an anthology you just might want to print and bind. You're bound to love each and every one, find your own favorite. It is always nice to be touched by someone's work, but every now and again I get steamrolled. 'Brush Strokes' does just this. I hope these words have been set to music, Scarfone's meter cries for melodic notes. They are ballads, oftentimes of the sadcore subgenre. (If Taupin got writers block, John could go back on tour with these.) NEWSSTAND, is just such a lyric. (Or break it up with a couple of choruses and make it a Springsteen hit for encore calls.) Both Scarfone and Squitieri have poems about crows. Far be it from me to play favorites, but they are two heavyweights in this issue. "you won't see them gliding up to some silly bird feeder / like those social climbing sparrows" Maybe the bird should be "immortalized on a coin or a stamp" Next! THE MATING GAME: "give me a day without the news / i'll stand in line to pay" Who writes his stuff?! [interrobang]. Isn't it nice when someone's words are just how you're feeling and all the while knowing you could never have said them yourself? Joe does this, unite in his writing...I could go on, but as a tagalong editor, my column gets cut—dare I speak further? Suffice to say, I might just start wearing a sandwich-board, 'READ AT JOE'S' It would improve my apparel and elevate my status. Unworthy of insistence, I can't do it just us, it is a must read...HS (Spacing is poet's own.)*

Senior Editor Charles writes: *If you have ever wondered what Whitman meant by his iconic words 'barbaric yawp'—to be sounded over the rooftops of the world—these poems will make it perfectly clear. As a poet, Joey, is the voice of barefoot reality. It's poetry wrenched from the trenches of experience, blood-washed, wired with nerve endings that fire powerful sonic volts and charged with the compassion blast of pain and joy. The poet's heart beats in every word and in those words life is all a-tremble, extraordinarily ordinary and alive with Monday to Friday grace. Joey prefers the measures of soul to pyrotechnics but in his hands no key is untouched, no melody forsaken. We limit submissions to ten poems but in this case we took all 23. And how could we not? A luminous talent that burns steadily in its own fiery constellation. Five stars.*

BRUSH STROKES

poetry by

Joey Scarfone

2020

NEWSSTAND

when your feelings are too far from anywhere
and the city becomes a stage
when your belly dances with hunger
and you're working for minimum wage
walk within your desire
and you know you're not alone
your passion is your fire
your dreams are precious stones

history sells at the newsstand
tourists flock to Greece
Pavorati starts a blues band

you by pizza by the piece
what it takes to be famous
is what it takes to survive
no one can really blame us
if we're late when we arrive

sometimes it all gets too crazy
and you can't get what you need
and it's not like you're being lazy
or overcome with greed
you're simply not connecting
or maybe it's not your time
your program needs correcting
your meter need another dime

THE CROWS

they sit on hydro wires like punk rockers in the cheap seats at a concert

fashion statement isn't their thing
no pretty coloured feathers or sweet songs
they wear black leather and black leather only
their song is a raunchy blues
with a smoker's cough

that's why i like the crows.....they have no pretenses

you won't see them gliding up to some silly bird feeder
like those social climbing sparrows

they'll eat left over pizza from last night's hockey game

no wonder they don't have the energy to migrate

instead, they brave the winter in their skinny jackets
huddling together like street smart ethnic gangs
body heat is all they need

i admire the crows.....they're tough
they can survive in the city or the jungle
same difference, it's just survival

we'll never see a crow immortalized on a coin or a stamp
there won't be a portion of wetland set aside for their preservation
because they don't need the advertising
they're already famous

refusing to become extinct they dictate their terms to evolution
“pick on the spotted owl, stick it to the bald eagle
but don't mess with us crows
we are here forever”

THE MATING GAME

fresh as blood from a broken heart
it will take some time to get over this one
you had balcony seats for the first three acts
front row centre for the crucifixion

life goes on if you want it to
but it stops when the heart overloads
good thing we have a soul to get us through
these major and minor modes

rock stars comets rhythm and blues
dripping from the milky way

give me a day without the news
i'll stand in line to pay

changes are good for a little while
cities are all the same
on every corner and every smile
you see the mating game

THE RAIN

cold winter day
crows are pair bonding in the naked birch tree
nature repeats herself again and again
while i'm lying with my lover
and listening to the rain

time moves slow
like the cactus plant
clouds colliding
they don't know what else to do
emotions stand silent
waiting to be named

while i'm lying with my lover
and listening to the rain

it will end soon
when winter seduces spring
when young crows are born
when leaves reappear
when history repeats itself again and again
i'll be lying with my lover
and listening to the rain

JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE

Jesus wore leather that night and Mary wore a mini skirt.....very very tight
they had come a long way from Nazareth to the bright lights of Rome
a long way from Babylon
a long way from home

David Bowie flew in from Japan
or so the papers said
he just couldn't miss a party like this
so he decided to come back from the dead

never shy of the spotlight, they really lit up the town
David, Jesus and Mary Magdalene really knew how to get around

they drew a crowd wherever they went and record sales were great
from the sistene chapel to the big apple
the media just couldn't wait

one miracle followed the other but the politicians weren't impressed
Jesus in his leathers and Mary in her cute little dress

Jesus was definitely out of control
he was getting too much power from his rock and roll
his fans adored him while the clergy deplored him
what would they do with this soul

now Jesus and Mary Magdalene had to cover their tracks
their following grew and so did their crew
they needed security to cover their backs

David had left for Amsterdam
he could see the end was near
Jesus and Mary were close to his heart
but they wouldn't last a year

everyone wept for Jesus when they saw what was done to him
turning water into wine was just too big a sin

they should have stayed in Nazareth and just settled down
but Jesus and Mary Magdalene wore a very thorny crown

THREE SHORT POEMS

THE CROSSING

may the stars of Orion guide you on your journey
may the wind and tides be in your favour
may the light of the moon guide you through this uncharted darkness
and when you have made your crossing
may you land on the shore
insight of the fire i will have burning

BLESSING

may the love you radiate

come back to you
as a hundred suns

LULLABY

close your eyes little child
rest yourself from a world so wild
may all the dreams you dream tonight
be filled with love and hope and light

NOMADS

cement sidewalks dry as the desert floor
cross the street and stand on the edge of the world
the thin line between beauty and danger winds like a snake
among the disasters and success stories

perfect moments slip through greedy hands
how much is enough? how much is too little?
it's a question of survival in the lowlands

the budhists say "stay empty, a full cup can not receive"
tough concept for an empty belly
even tougher for one that's full

unions demand a living wage
while beggars beg for spare change
and at the top of the food chain
it's all free

sometimes the nomads move in caravans
secure in their numbers
united in their hunger
but then the rebels desert their tribe
and set up camp on the edge of the world

TWO POEMS

THE DANCE

i think i get it now
life is a dance in slow motion
and if we can move like the flowers in the wind
we can grow with every season
then the trials of every day would not be so hard to edit
they become a source of energy, making us stronger
giving us legs to dance every dance
sing every song

i think i get it now

life is asking something of me
my response is my destiny
my chance to give
growing a garden from my experiences
however small the plot of ground i have to work with

i think i get it now
life is about dancing in a dream
like the pappus grass on the shore
like the hummingbirds of summer
like waves breaking the sound barrier

SOUL CANDY

breath connects the spirit to the body
music connects the body to the soul
a smile connects beauty to the heart
a song connects one heart to another
heart inspires vision
vision reinvents joy
joy attracts love
love connects everything

DOWN AND DIRTY

it's been a long time
but it doesn't matter now
funny how loneliness fades whenever you're around
still, i'm wanting more when the clock says 10:30
still i'm wanting more
after we're down and dirty

trust this awkward process
if in fact there is one at all
you look so pretty in that dress
let's take one more fall
i wouldn't want to lie

my emotions aren't sturdy
i'm afraid that you will cry
after we're down and dirty

so crawl with me on this jungle floor
let the quick sand suck us in
it's fun being where we've never been before
it's fun committing this sin
let's be kids again
let's pretend we're thirty
let's go on the skids again
let's get down and dirty

TWO HEARTS

promises get broken and fade away
but when a heart breaks it becomes two hearts
twin seeds planted side by side
waiting to grow.....welcoming the elements

rain and tears soften the soil
reaching for the warmth of the sun as they break familiar ground
only to be greeted by the cold of the night
the mystery of the moon

the wind blows
two hearts touch like flames in a fire dance

climbing, falling, flashes and sparks

now it's morning
the dew is asleep on the flowers
patiently waiting to quench the thirst of the sun
the cycle starts again
love is renewed in the forest, in the city
and in the space between two hearts

TOUCH ME

put your hands between my scars
play the strings of this fragile harp
until the music breathes the words of the shaman's prayer
over and over
healing every wound

i sit beside your soul
watching the sun rise in my heart
it floods my earth
fallow from the long days of despair
anxious to grow and give

lay with me like paper and kindling
our spark will melt the poisons we have endured

touch me
touch the corners of my body that are yours
touch every colour within your passion
touch the light of stars that no longer exist
touch your dreams until they are real
touch me.....touch me

FALLING STAR

the sky was so clear
success was so near
then a cloud blocked the moon
and i had to do something.....real soon

it would be nice to just stare at the stars
such a hypnotic sky
but destiny doesn't stand still
it dances with when and with why

move now on another road
hope i can handle this unwanted load

no time to wonder just get in the car
no time to wonder
it's just another falling star

I FEEL IT TOO

who would have thought this would happen to me
who would have thought this would happen to you
here we are in each other's arms
'cause it feels like the right thing to do
ya baby.....i feel it too

i don't really care how long it lasts
i don't really care about your past
we're just two happy lovers
embracing something new
ya baby.....i feel it too

it doesn't really matter who works the controls
it's more about body than it is about soul
i promise i'll like
whatever you do
ya baby.....i feel it too

RUNWAY MODEL

runway model.....hottest thing in town
see through dresses.....is that a sequin gown
you kill it every day without even tryin'
and your manager loves you 'cause the customers are buyin'
they're buyin' what you wear and your sexy stare
and the money's so good that you don't have to care

fashion leader.....you're in demand
got a thousand photographers
in the palm of your hand
you look good in silk
you look good in jeans

they might even put you on a can beans

THREE WHITE ROSES

petals fall from the roses that sit in a vase
that bathed in the sun
that laughed in the rain and stared at the moon
they fill the room with beauty.....it's all they know how to do
silent sweet innocence plucked from the vine
look at us, we are beautiful, we are pure

feel the softness of our skin but hurry
we will soon be slipping into the mystery of the spirit
we are only roses
our life is short

petals lie on the mantle beneath the stems with no flowers
each one a chapter in a life spent without fear, without malice
each one a brush stroke in an impressionist's painting

NOT FOR PROFIT

hello.....i'm soliciting donations for my tropical vacation
it's really overdue and i can prove it too
you see.....i've been working very hard
every day and every night
to make enough money
for my southern flight

i was on the wagon but fell off it
so i started a non-profit
and before my very eyes
money fell from the skies
so i'm taking a vacation

thanks to your tax deductible donation

Psychedelic Highway

psychedelic highway
a road that never ends
imaginary conversations
with imaginary friends

i feel it comin' on now
it's startin' to kick in
spirits start to call now
it's flyin' time again
i know my feet are on the ground
i know i don't have wings
tryin' to measure every sound
it's such a crazy thing

on the psychedelic highway

polka dot street lights
squinting through the fog
subterranean jazz sounds
cutting through the smog
i'm walking and i'm listening
but i can't see very far
the streets are all deserted
and it's beautifully bizare

on the psychedelic highway

day three
of a three day run
i gotta' admit
i got high quite a bit
but i sure had a lotta' fun
mountains appear on the horrizon
getting larger every mile
it won't be long 'til i get home
and see my baby's smile

paychedelic highway
a road that never ends
imaginary conversations
with imaginary friends

Desperate Dogs

grey sky blocking the sun
streets are deserted but there's no where to run
the first day of spring
feels like the last day of fall
and the desperate dogs are watching it all.....

they watch from the markets that have emptied their shelves
they watch from the shops that are closed
they watch from their balconies, afraid for themselves
they watch from their kids who need clothes

it happened so fast.....like wind through the trees
no one knew what was going on

the whole human race was brought to its knees
something was really wrong

so the dogs stayed at home 'cause being alone
was the only thing they could do
they needed a plan, or maybe superman
would help them make it through.....

through the war they never fought before
through the losses they would endure
through the jobs that aren't there anymore
through the hope they'll find a cure

and then the dogs did what they do best.....

they went for a walk and started to talk
and eventually got a grip
the desperate dogs howled at the moon
and got on board with the trip

THE POET SPEAKS:

As for my inspirations I will begin with....everything that surrounds me. The current crisis has me dealing with a lot of anxiety, hence "Desperate Dogs". I feel like a desperate dog when I see my neighbors lose their jobs and worry about how they will feed their kid and pay rent. I feel a guilty compassion when I see how large our homeless "tent city" is growing. I feel grateful for my comfortable apartment and food in my fridge. I am also inspired by my own experiences.....good and bad. A lot of my poems have become lyrics to songs. The music and lyrics don't always happen simultaneously so that process can take years. I just wait for the chips to fall into place. Sometimes things happen quickly. Desperate dogs was written in one hour. I started it....we went shopping for groceries....and when I came back I finished it.

I did publish a book called "Vintage Cars of Victoria". I did all the photography and paid a graphic designer to do the layout. I wouldn't say took a bath on it.....it was more like a cold shower. It did lead to producing TV shows for Shaw TV which was a very valuable experience. They can be seen on youtube (vintage cars of victoria). It was like going to school for two years only I didn't have to pay. That has led to my current hobby of video. I took some computer courses and learned how to do facebook. I have a few projects on the drawing board but right now everything but my imagination is on hold. My page is simply under my name (joey scarfone). Lots of my videos are there including newsstand. Truth be knownst I'm just a frustrated musician.

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Joey Scarfone lives in Victoria, BC where he owned Lazy Joe's Vinyl Emporium—a store devoted to classic vinyl. He devotes some of his time and all of his interest to poetry and music.*