

Math Test and other poems...

By Jennifer Jesseph

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *Charmed, Charmed, Charmed. These could make me smile on the rainiest of days, in a monsoon. If an asteroid was destined to hit earth, I would re-read them on its way. They delightfully describe all our foibles and follies: MATH TEST enchantingly and un-calculatingly expresses all the angst we felt before we were prescribed pills. And who could resist FLY WAKING FROM HIBERNATION MID MARCH from the POV of an insect. Revel in the introspection of BIG, FAT POETRY. If you skip this one you've missed someone who could brighten anyone's daze. And, LAWN ARTIST—now who could dare say the gossamer of the quixotic is without depth, something that breathes, something with breeze, join Jesseph and I, in her language of ease...
'Now, spring / brings green tongues of grass / poking their way from dirt / whispering gossip.'* (Spacing is poet's own.) HS

Math Test

In 6th grade, I remember taking
a math test for decimals, variables, ordered pairs,
and possibly even long division,
but I didn't know any
answers.

All I could see were the problems
set up in little rows
like soldiers or dominoes.

I heard the tick on the clock
and the radiator hissed
steam.

Then all I heard was the scratching
of pencils on paper sounded like insects
scriff scriff scriffing
all around

the room. Everyone else
huddled over their papers
rapt in their answering. Oh, I could feel it.
They were all running and winning the long marathon
of this test and stretching and straining toward the finish line-----

while I waited to remember any solution

I made each unanswered problem
into a math bug
with legs thin as eyelashes

and bulging eyes marching across the paper
into the land of solvation.

Fly Waking From Hibernation Mid March

Who turned on the heat? Where
did my winter sleep go?

Wings? *scuttle, scuttle.*

Are you ready? *No.*

I want to finish that dream
where a spider was about
to die in her own web.
Delicious, right?

She was coming
for me! Hairy legs, horrible
eyes. Then her own web
attacked her. That delicate
awful web
grave bed to Grandma Jam Jam,
and Mother Zizz.

Oh! The sun is out. It's a yellow
zing zing lemon, but too much
too soon.

Wings? *crinkle, crinkle*. You ready?

No. Only one wing

sort of wishy, swishy moves.

Any flowers up? No. How do the trees smell?

Tired. Alright, I'm sleeping in.

Wake me when the leaves

are new emerald green,

and you smell mud. Wake me

when dragonflies lace

the pond. Wake me

when that spider

is dead in her own web.

Poetic justice, right?

Big, Fat Poetry

Oh, my poems are flabby and gabby now. They're no longer sleek, fit, and tight, but heavier, richer, and robust. I trust my word flow and let it go.

I suppose I could try stuffing them into some smaller,
starker stanzas
to slim
the word count.

I could diet them down to the fine bones of a honed, toned, youthful poem, like a sprinter
on its mark with chiseled muscles, taut, and ready to pounce.

But I won't. No thanks. No girdles or Spanks for my overweight, wordy poems.
I'll take the heavy words, all their pounds and various sounds and let them waddle free
on the page.

Some younger, thinner poet will craft sleek, slender lines. Those used to be mine.
Those poems can sprint to the finish. They'll be the winner, the new writing wonder,
while I will blunder and barrel along with my curvy songs. I'll be with my words spilling
and filling up pages.

Let my poems be great with wonder. Let them be voluminous and billowy.
Let my writing be fat. It has thickened with age and renders me in middle sage.

Oh large, lovely words!

You are home. You are home

in this fleshy, plump, and meaty poem.

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Lawn Artist

My wife left me just as winter
poured out its gifts
and chilled everyone with
ice. It was fitting
she'd leave me then
and without words, so I hunkered
down all winter while the neighbors
watched and wondered. Now, spring
brings green tongues of grass
poking their way from dirt
whispering gossip.

Every day brings more green
in the buds and the seedlings I planted
and though I try to forget her
by immersing in planning
the vegetable garden, reupholstering
a chair, even learning to sculpt, nothing
relives me,

until mowing. Every tongue blade

wagging at me gets chopped down. Then I mow
messages in my lawn. STOP, GO HOME, PUKE. The lawn
is my canvas and I am an artist in grass clipping.

My neighbors believe I am lost and lonely. They don't
talk to me anymore, but, I've never been
better. I mow words and they read my lawn. FLY, FREE,
REACH.

THE POET SPEAKS: *I get ideas from my life, such as taking math tests was stressful for as a young learner, I did observe a fly waking up too early one day on the back stairwell at work, and I wondered how climate change impacts animals. I also really enjoy writing persona poems which is what "Lawn Artist," is, and I like to add humor into writing.*

Influences: Anne Sexton, Mary Oliver, Amy Nezhukumatathil, Tracy K. Smith, Mark Doty, Edward Hirsh.

BIO: *Jennifer Jesseph is a poet and fiber artist in Pine Island, Minnesota. Her poems and flash fiction recently appeared in the publications The Talking Stick Volume 28: Broad Strokes, Upon Waking: 58 Voices Speaking Out From the Shadows of Abuse, and the newspaper Post-Bulletin in Rochester Minnesota. Some of her fiber art is on her website www.jenniferjesseph.com*

