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There Are Poems

There are poems
that are not written,
that simply move across
the mind
like skywriting
on a still day:
slowly the first word
drifts west,
the last letters dissolve
on the tongue,
and what is left
is the pure blue
of insight, without cloud
or comfort.
--Linda Pastan

And there are poems that are written. This time by 15 Academy Village Poets who have "captured the pure blue of insight." Thank you to all the writers and to Susan Nisbett for the musical interludes during the ASA reading, another to Virginia Richardson for gathering the poems for us to read and have.

--Nancy Fitzgerald

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Dear Dodge Corporation

I am interested in the names you give your cars.

Viper. Avenger. Challenger.

What's with the aggressive stance?

Do you hope that Mr. Milquetoast

Will buy an Avenger to soothe a personal inadequacy?

Or a bored middle-ager will show them a thing or two in a Viper?

Do the fierce-name cars have more accidents?

Personally, I don't want a car called Challenger.
What if someone wanted to take me up on it?
Not all car companies take this approach.
Subaru, for instance: Crosstrack, Forester, Outback.
I'd be more inclined to have them over for dinner.
AMC, on the other hand, has Javelin, Avenger,
Matador.

In Spanish, Matador means Killer.

I probably should write to them, too.

--Abigail Hagler, 2023

TO SLEEP

I've said my prayers, blessed those both near and dear, the world. Down pillow neath my head, silky sheets warm quilt, coziness insured, I wait

Why can't I sleep, I toss turn left side, right, arms down flung wide mind restless, thoughts like DVDs songs even hymns, reverse repeat

Desperate I beg the Bard, "To sleep perchance to dream, to knit the raveled sleeve of care" "sneaks in on little cats feet" says Carl Please, not Emily's "Long, long Sleep"

Surrender, eyes close breath slows longed for rest comes at its' will Up up through layers of dreams I wake aware that sunshine fills the room

Marti Heath, 2023

SMILING IN PAIN

One can smile
While so much hurts.
A trick learned long ago

An old age requirement.

With help from thoughts of forever blue skies with puffy clouds

of gorgeous red flowers In fascinating greenery.

But don't dig deep into the brown dreary earth

Love surrounds us.

Those who still smile are the lucky ones.

Virginia Richardson, 2023

DECISIONS

It was clear as a bell proclaiming the time. I needed to do THIS Right now!

Completely logical.
THIS was the answer.
My very best path.

Clear the way let me through!

Available were other roads to my young self Did I know? How could I?

But why this road among many!

And where am I now?

Virginia Richardson, 2003

To Hannah from Nana

I blessed my hiking boots, left and right tongue and toe, lace and heel and passed them to my granddaughter. "Impact brake system" the treads read. Does that help with slips and stumbles?

Break her falls I think, steady her as she looks up at stars and birds and butterflies. Steady her through mud and fallen trees Rocks and twisting trail

Wear them Hannah, with my love as you trailblaze through life.

Nancy Fitzgerald 4/2023

BACKYARD DIARY

Once in winter, after 9-11, I kept a backyard diary, Watched the snowy yard, the frosted oaks, The heavy-laden pines, the feeders on poles Or hung from naked maple branches Near the dog yard.

We didn't have a dog then, she died
That summer, before the horror of planes
Crashing on purpose into buildings.
The yard was quiet, free of dog noise,
And a red fox wandered the far border,
Leaving her delicate pawprints
In the snow.

Squirrels left pawprints, too,
From feeders' base to fence post
To walnut tree and back again.
Whole families of them chased each other,
Scolding up and down the oak trunks,
Even the mangy one
And the one with only half a tail.

Early morning, the feeders came alive with
Fluttering and chirping: chickadees, titmice,
Juncos, sparrows, nuthatches, woodpeckers,
Finches in their winter drab,
A cardinal, male, featherless scar across his breast,
A flock of robins crowding the naked pear tree,
Hovering above the place
Where our dog's ashes lay buried.
Rested and waited, still as a shadow,
Waited, rested and eyed
The meal of songbirds

Cont.

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Far below her on the feeder
Sometimes she flew talons out,
Sometimes dove head first,
But rarely caught and killed,
And never from rage or spite or twisted belief,
Only from need.
And they often suspected, those songbirds,
Often felt the shadow and knew
When to feed and when to flee.

Margaret Nesse March 2023

Night Sounds

He would drop into sleep like a twig onto snow breathing as fixed as a metronome's tick. all the years of our marriage I envied his guiltless rest.

But his last forced breath overtook him in hospice with only a chaplain happening by.

Awake at 3 a.m., I hear the old cat scrunching litter.

Marilyn Skinner, 2023

The Pen

My mother's fountain pen sat Just inside the lip of the cupboard door Nestled there, awaiting her hand.

She always knew when we had stolen it,
Unable to resist the olive and ochre and blue swirl
Of its celluloid case.
The unthreading of the cap from
Its brass-banded waist
The smooth blue-black lines that
Flowed from its slender, shiny nib.

She always knew when we had stolen it Though we replaced it exactly in position (so we thought) Just inside the lip of the cupboard door. Nestled there.

The pen knew her touch
The precise slant of her exquisite hand
And the soft nib had conformed to it
A glove that fit no fingers but hers.

Spirited from the kitchen to our bedroom
Where we impressed our names too hard into the paper
The pen revealed the theft to her
With scratches and false starts.

I'm still looking for
A pen that would let my thoughts
Flow out to the world smoothly
That would be loyal, like my mother's pen
The perfect instrument of expression.

Cont.

Till I find it, nought to do
But to cherish her script on old envelopes
Addressed to me, around the world, in her impeccable hand.

Susan Nisbett

A LETTER NEVER SENT

Thoughts of you reverberate through my Mind like a continuous monologue. I contemplate our complex connections, our long association, our family ties our mothers—cousins, best of friends, Memories go back to childhood, the rekindling of bonds as young adults, years of separation, changing landscapes of life led to diverging paths, diverging vision—years of career, challenges, children, vicissitudes, vexations, successes and disappointments—triumphs not known, not shared. Maturity, reunion, a sharing of these lost years. You, the communicator, demonstrating with contagious vibrancy, kindness, optimism, enthusiasm. I regret my reticence, visits postponed— With indecorous haste the Fates came for you. We lost a last good-bye.

--Gayla Curtis

Speechless! Las Vegas

Las Vegas, glamorous, glitzy, glittering
And oh so fake
Disneyland's evil twin
Sin City.
A deceitful harlot
In a neon negligee
In an instant
She wraps herself around you like a boa constrictor
And squeezes you dry
Then leaves your desiccated husk in a gutter.
Hoping you have enough money for bus fare home.

Walking with my 20 something son
Along the strip
Early evening but already dark
Aglow with trashy bright neon
Curiosity has brought us here.
But the spider is ready
to spin us into her sparkly sticky web.
A painted tainted lady approaches
She eyes my son with a salacious grin
That leaves little to imagination.

I stifle an urge to slap the 12 layers of makeup off her face "Hey, there, gorgeous baby boy wanna have some fun"

wanna have some fun"

What kind of fun? he asks suspiciously.

"We got a roomful of hot chicks that will do anything you want

Cash or credit" Cont.

My son bristles.
"I'm here with my mother".
He nodded his head my way.

Eyes still on him.
She shrugs.
"She can come too.
They swing both ways."

Speechless!

--Roxy Mitchem-Horn

TULIP, SPIDER, DEER

In springtime tulips graced my North Fork home. Spider chose a red bloom with yellow center. All day it wove its lacy net between pistil and stamens connecting the parts in a torturous tangle.

Doe and fawn slipped from the edge of the wood. Fawn daintily tongued a daffodil.

Doe demonstrated the approach to a tulip. Stem, leaves, and flower purloined with ease.

Right down the row of red and yellow the two proceeded, snip, snap, all obliterated, gone in an instant.

Beverley Robertson

CHANGE

Back packs ready to go, size small for me, extra small for Cleo and Alfie, I nail my note to the old weathered door "returning with the first frost."

Eager to get started, though our journey is not far today, —just over the hill and down to the now hidden stream—we share the early morning trail with traces of the moon and sun, yin and yang

Old shovels, hoes, and rakes, rusted and broken, carelessly lie in the wild unruly grasses— mute testimony to once prosperous lives. Yet standing very still, I hear the echo of an ancient dinner bell calling to come eat and rest.

Joanne Birdwhistell. March 2023

COLORS

Red as a raspberry growing in a garden
Yellow as the sun touching my face
Blue as the sky with clouds floating by
Green as the grass with sunflowers in between
Black as the dark night cold and lonely.
Orange as carrots fed to the horses and bunnies
Brown as the plants in the winter of different browns
Purple as violets brought with a simple kiss
Red, Yellow, Blue, Green, Purple
When it rains watch for the Rainbow sent from above.

Janet Christensen, 2023

Cycles

Long ago I planted a seed that flowered;
It then withered beneath the harsh sun.
Quietly, seeds emerged from the dying plant
and buried in rich Mother earth
Silent and still
Waiting to be born from the dark womb.

Each seed in its own time
Begins to blossom and grow.
The Cycles continue
As I watch and release what grew from seed to flower.

2023 by Charlene Tosi

ABUSE

Abuse
Silence
Wait whispers
No fear darkness here
Along the path we walk together
Wind cold
Wrestling souls
Twisted mind so inclined
Painting the perfect picture
PAY ATTENTION
The devil is in the details

Holly Caldas, 2023

TANQUE VERDE RIDGE HIKE

Sixty per cent chance rainstorm, we stroll by solitary cactus statues. Boulders squeeze us into ruts, Gravel rolls beneath our feet. Fuzzy fairy dusters seduce us around crumbling cliffs. Ocotillo Cujo spines make us desert dance, dip and swerve.

Purple indigo sprouts popcorn.
Clouds swirl on both saddle sides.
Amid Tanque Verde Ridge
vertigo, we make a devil's deal.
Brake boots. Stop poles. Ease breath.
A storm assaults timid Tucson, city
of bones against a black backdrop.
A murky mantle melts Wrightson Peak.

Grey wool blankets the Catalinas, covering its long body in dark secret privacy. Rain threatens from a distance, wanting to be seen but not heard. White translucent shower curtains creep across the valley like slow freight trains. Charcoals smudge the Santa Rita silhouette. until it disappears on black canvas.

Cont.

Wind tiptoes like a skulking clever coyote. Gusts make cholla jump, shin daggers shiver, reminders of what they are capable of. Stark Ocotillo arms wave their warnings, "the to turn around. Rattlesnake bites. but lightning strikes." My son's buzzsaw voice, "I see a flash from the Tucson Range. Let's go."

Out of backpacks we pull parkas, pink, red, blue, yellow, and descend. like slow motion M and M's pour into a bowl. I take bad photos which I will delete first from my phone and last from my memory. A crested Saguaro dips her wavy crown, "Welcome back. We are all still dry and alive."

Leslie Evans 2023