



**MORE POETRY
FROM
NANCY'S CLASS**

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Forward

What fun it is to come to know ourselves and one another through poetry. As Henri Nouwen says, “Writing is a process in which we discover what lives in us. The writing itself reveals to us what is alive in us. The deepest satisfaction of writing is precisely that it opens new spaces within us that we were not aware of before we started to write.” And as we discuss the poems we write with others and listen to their words, we come to know one another in satisfying and sometimes intimate ways, enjoying and testing our own “spaces within.”

Here is a collection of poems generated by the poetry group in February 2020 at the Arizona Senior Academy. Read them and be inspired to write your own poems and join future poetry sessions.

--Nancy Fitzgerald

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RED FOREVER

Rocks and roses, hard and soft,
Two reds, both favorites,
I wonder if she liked roses first
or was it the red-rock dirt of Oklahoma territory
that permeated her childhood,
I've tried to paint the scene many times
But all I can see are the wide-open spaces
that separated unheard conversations.

Joanne Birdwhistell

THE INTRUDER

It was a silent scene—
No Background Music
No Drumroll to announce
His startling presence

But there he was—
Tall, elegant, imposing,
In his blue-grey finery
Standing on long legs
In the inky-blue water
Surrounded by pink and white waterlilies
And the darting orange-gold shadows
Beneath the water.

A breath of a breeze
Fluttered the foliage,
With the sun illuminating
Shimmering glints of gold.
Then the moment was over.

Not a ripple announced
The departure.
He spread his wings
And was gone
While waterlilies drifted
Unperturbed
The orange-gold beauties
Were no more.

---Gayla Curtis

A song of progress

Unearthly, tyrannosaurical yellow jaws devour all
Gouging, relentless, merciless.
Meerkats scurry from the brutal blighting of burrows, nests,
and food stashes.
Earth in its flow of moving patterns
rendered into symmetrical stationary geometric form.
Satisfying the hopeful.
Terrifying the peaceful.
Emigration forced onto rattlesnakes
Tongues testing, sensing, seeking new safety.
Suddenly, silence in the garden, shifting breeze
What silence?

Rejoicing as they do, descending into the garden
Rouge-chested finches and flame-faced songsters
Sing sweet and sharp of safety and seeds abundant
Cactus wrens ratchet, ratchet, ratchet
Warning the sudden stealthy swoop
Of the Cooper's hawk
A moment of illusory hushing stillness.
Feee shooo whistling of feathers
Surf the air, suddenly vacant of prey.

Stillness, for a fleeting moment.
Shhhhhhhh...
Desert symphony pauses for an eight count.

Lilting Spanish comes in the breeze,
prelude to the belch of the revived diesel engine.
Despite renewed grating of earth, sand, and stone
Finches resume joyful chit chit chit,
Defying the dinosaurs' devouring of dunes.

What symphony will sound out
The opening of the next millennium?

John Evans
02/10/2020

Fence Failure

The rust-patina fence forged with
ocotillo, agave, tortoise and quail,
protects settee, feeders,
wind chimes and rain chains,
a metal road runner,
landscape and lights.

A tall dark-haired specter tips a tin spout into pottery, colored by Arizona sky.
Her shorter white-haired mate floats to the mailbox and back.
Silently, he pushes his portable, garden hose, his broken, wobbling barrow.
They wave for me to cross the concrete chasm.

She repeats the latest presidential offense.
He cracks a joke. Surprised we didn't hear the ruckus,
they tell their nighttime critter tale:

javelinas tunneled under their new fence and into birdseed,
the stand-off with pots and pans and protests,
the escapees squealing back under the fence.

For the reenactment,
he opens the garage door,
rummages in a bin,
hoists a gardening claw
like an archeological weapon.
The peccaries retreated but cancer did not.

A "for sale" sign hangs next to a hollow mailbox.
A ceramic sun face, nailed to the stucco wall,
forces a perpetual grin for prospective buyers.
A skeletal wire saguaro stands but does not wave its arm.

Leslie Evans

And

When they first recognize and light up at your presence
your heart somersaults, you shiver surprised by joy.
You lived beyond their grandfather and he glimmers
through them, his ancient spirit awakened.

Beyond the snuggles comes the baking and the art
paper chains of hearts strung across the room
where you awaken to books, music and dance
crazy, eat junky while the parents are away.

Then suddenly they turn to teens, screens
and secrets, folded buds, they retreat
into burrows of silence, peers, and you
miss them as they work on separation.

And then at 17 one flies across the country
and with a manly hug, "Nana I have missed you."
and you lived long enough for this moment..
and aria and Amen.

Nancy Fitzgerald 2020

SNOW GOOSE

So long a flight

To know the way

Through endless sky

Immense lovely one

Your pleated wings

As high and fine

As Mozart

—Abigail Hagler

OH, MR. MEADOWLARK I MISS YOUR SONG

Tweet Sweet warble down
a twiddle diddle dee with head
held high and open beak your
golden chest black collared V
pumps out your song from
weathered fence post throne
you greet the dawn

No fragrant scent of
prairie grass but strip
on strip of new laid sod
where emerald corn stalks
gently waved now houses
planted row on row, no place
for nesting can be found

You and your mate do
persevere, at last success
one chick you feed he follows
begging hop hop hop on floppy feet
you must move on the food is gone
scraped bare the ground that was
your home Oh Meadowlark
I miss your song

—Marti Heath
February 3, 2020

SoulRise

We were immersed, engulfed in
rawboned truth that only comes
at the end of a life, when
all is finally completed and
there is nothing left to lose.

I had fashioned for her a Tree of Life
necklace of silver and gold
and placed it around her neck
with trembling hands.
She held it close to her heart
and called it a treasure of meaning.

"One by one, my friends have left me,"
she said. "I am bereft with the loss.
I need the companion-comfort
of friendship now, more than ever."
In her prelude to dying, made
tiresome by long, long nights of waiting,
she looked at me, clear eyed and said,
"The truth is, I am very, very afraid."

We wondered then together:
Will there be much pain in the leaving.
Regret for not staying longer.
Something forgotten that should be said, or done.
Is there only eternal darkness
and nothing beyond that
or is there, as some believe, a soulrise.
She held the Tree of Life amulet tightly
as she patiently waited.

Slanted skeleton shadows
of winter tree limbs in the yard
moved silently around the room.
A thin wisp of wood smoke swirled
staying close to the ground
before gently rising
into the endless sky.

by: Mary Mitchell for Diane Holt
February, 2020

Parkinson's Disease: Onset

I was somewhere over the rainbow
When the winds got crazy
And blew my house away.

And my arm stopped swinging
I pitched to the ground.
My face froze.
My hand trembled
My feet carried me away.

And through all the mayhem
I could hear the wicked witch's cackle.
She had come for me.
Insidiously creeping
Shadowing and stalking
She had been waiting.
The house smashed into the ground
Covering me with colorful contusions
The witch's cackle grew louder.
She had come for me
I had to go.

If I wanted my house fixed.
I would have to follow the yellow brick road.

I would have to find the wizard.
He knew the moves that would help me fix it
All I needed was brains, heart and courage.
I waded into the
Dense dark underbrush
Gnarled vines
Twisted trees
Chipped and faded yellow bricks
And nary a lion, scarecrow or tinman in sight.
The witch's cackles followed me.
Can't stay forever my pretty
I'll get you and your courage too.

She threw her lightening
And blinded and confused me
She cast her fire and my feet shuffled and froze.
She cackled an incantation my voice garbled and faded away

The road ended.
A pair of ruby slippers appeared.
One held by the good witch
And one held by the wizard..

“My savior.” I cried.
“No. No,”
“You must save yourself.”
“You cannot kill the witch
But you can tame her.
Hold out your hands.”
A cascade of pills
Erupted from the shoes.
Yellow pink and blue.
“These will hold her at bay.”

“Sing, dance love
That will hold her too.
Now take the slippers, tap your heels and go home”
The witch’s cackle became a snarl.
I tapped my heels and went home.

—Roxy Mitchum-Horn

Next

I won't be able to help you with that
I'm retired

Being retired, a month ago I took the car to be washed on
a Tuesday morning
I rushed home and read a former student's manuscript
In compensation

I never read Jane Eyre
Being retired I picked it up
A chore
To hell with it

"I can't die yet I haven't read King Lear"

—Richard E. Nisbett

She is Here Dancing

You fish around your mind,
hope to hook the perfect phrase;
I shout
“Dive into your heart!”

I am here, dancing.

You surf the endless web,
look for inspired words;
I type upon your heart
“Look here, look here!”

I am here, dancing.

A trickle spills into your mouth,
you know frustration’s saltiness;
I stir your tender heart, invite
“Taste now, taste now!”

I am here, dancing.

You mine your memories;
there must be treasure there;
I cheer
“You’re right! You’re right!”

You know you must show up,
and here you sit;
I whisper in your heart
“Bring us your soul love, as well as body.”

I am here, dancing.

And I will be here dancing all the hours
Til the day your soul can come

And we will be here, dancing.

In the meantime, for god’s sake, keep bringing your body.

—Dawna Petersen

Hummingbird Medicine

You knew, didn't you...?

You knew exactly how to make us give up our
thoughts,
hold our breath
and stop time.

We were merely standing in our circle growing our
visions
And you just flew in from outside time
Trailing wonder and awe.

You hovered in our midst
All purple iridescence sparkling before us
With your fragile fierceness and resilient joy
Your retrograde dance full of purposeful play.
Our heartbeats mated with the hum of infinity in your wings.

We were awash in your healing

Drinking in the nectar of your medicine.

There was no thought, no breath, no time

Only Awe...and wonder... and silence.

Then you were gone
Vanished...back to the divine realms
Leaving your fairy dust hanging in the air.

A wispy memory...
Were you really there?

By Kellie Poulin

WAKING UP TO LINE AND COLOR

The sun
glides up the back
of the massive row of dark gray
three-cornered mounds, painting the tallest
with bright pink caps. An orange glow separates
the range from the dark sky then shifts to bluish white.
The interplay of light and shadows reveals smaller shapes
that mimic the triangularity of their hosts.

A lone black raven enters the dawn
soaring high above his domain
in ever expanding circles
hoarsely calling
“KrawKraw”

The sun
still rising
pours a golden glaze
over the waking mountains
and the day
begins.

—Virginia Richardson, 2020

Australia Burning

The Sound Spirits, the White Ibis, preen solid bright,
Soothing burnt, sobbing land:
Mixed media dreams: drums, earth, heat, cries, smoke, sky, berries, rocks, rhythms
Walking. Walking. Step, step.

Angels and gulls together circle sky, crying, crying for reef, for forest, for desert.

Old, solid, complex earth is left,
Splayed sideways in the constant wind,
Trees and brush too bent, too rugged for tourists or even cowboys.
No graffiti on sacred stones,
nothing like that in Time as Aboriginals know it.

No 'X or Y Ego-no ones' who need to prove that they 'was here.'
They weren't. Not in Spirit.
Source space, so not there, never there, never,
wistful hopes...

In this Time panel, lightly padding along,
Stop for gentle digging,
One foot, then another. One foot, then another.
A pile of rocks, scuffs, and prints say more than any graffiti
About the trail, the conditions, who really,
was there.
The true trials.

Here, Cattle hooves split native lands, and then horses did, then sheep.
Lands overtaken by silent, seductive creeping demons, beautiful,
awesomely marauding infinities of invasive flowers:
Straw kindling with no enemies, heavy
With a lust for lightning, a burning lust to become fire, a stray spark...

There, sky-splitting didgeridoo soundings,
like whale song, it creates in ocean-currents,
spread poultice on the hard chest of the land.
Mimic the desert breath. A sound oasis- there and not.

100s of deep, cooing double-breathing reverberations
Dance with sky gods, play with Fire gods -
Too lightly.

Seasoned, sacred, drumming, drumming, dancing, rhythms, drumming, drumming
As old as the primordial skies,
as full as Breath. As full as Dreams.
As full As death.
Can Sound Spirit eat this fire? Water Spirit.

Air Wave Sprite revels in her red skirt all around the massive island.
Can Split Sky spill and soak in the suffering the land, the animals?
Wombats are sharing their safety with deer, with rabbits, with kangaroo.
This is not Wombat nature.
Maybe this kindness is not enough.
Maybe it is.

Laurie Sherman
02/2020

SOUL'S LAST SIGHTING

**You gave me No Choice –
but to Live Without You.
Departure - invisible -
Assent, never granted whole heartedly.
Your lens on time's downward bent –
now refracting *in absentia*.
Age, to age, to age - my ages –
Umbilical – rifts, separation, in degrees.
Yet
the sun derived cyanotype of your being -
imprinted onto mine -
Remains clear,
Sustained by my breaths.**

—Anne Saetren

Pets

Like Adam, we name them,
that acquisitive gesture
creating a species of one.
With ecological firmness
we sever them from the gene pool:
childfree children,
they replenish our homes.
When they pass on, we mourn them,
then browse the cacophonous shelter
to authorize another.

Marilyn B. Skinner