The Avocet

A Journal of Nature Poetry

Winter - 2025-26

Enjoy your stroll through our pages to find yourself in nature…

The Avocet

A Journal of Nature Poetry

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The Avocet is a quarterly publication devoted to poets and readers who find meaning in their lives from the world of Nature; poets who write of the beauty, the peace, and the fury of Nature in all its glory…

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Celebrating Solstice

Holding Mommy's hand,
Two twin girls smile, skip
To a Corner table at Starbucks.
Four feet dangle and swing
As the sisters wait for her
To return after purchasing
Tasty treats to celebrate.

Their bright blue eyes gaze
From one cordial customer
To another while keeping
At least two eyes on mommy.
Plush pink boots warm
Tiny toes as star-sequined
Sweaters keep them toasty.

A warmth reigns here where
People gather, escape the cold.
Winter Solstice arrives today
With her partner Arctic Air
Tumbling from the North,
Bringing biting rain to the valley
And pure white cloak to hills.

Soon Mom returns as blue eyes
Brighten at the hot chocolate
She holds in each hand; step
By step the cups reach the table,
Arriving with peanut butter
Cookies for her two charmers
At whom she can only smile.

John B. Swartz - Campbell, CA - johnswartz07@comcast.net

Winter's icy breath

whispers warnings of wisdom
to shelter in place
alerts ground squirrels to seek
warm refuge in deep burrows

Alicia Ann Torres - Windsor, CA - freedom0768@att.net

Roosting crows awake near dawn
Rustling Frost-dusty feathers
Grateful for the Promise of the sun
Mustering, lift to the air, as one.

Tender blue light
Powdering the sky,
Belies Early Winter's Deep Chill
Crows glide over ghostly rows;
Tumble down Grey skeleton
Corn shocks, leaning, lingering still.

Throughout bleak weeks
Following harvest,
Ground crystals crackle
Under crisscross paths
of many feet
Crows in the corn field, gleaning.

Margaret Fox - Middletown, NY - foxblue1973@gmail.com

Red Leaves of Winter

For Cassius

Autumn and Winter meet, at last.
No crystalline edge of crescent moon,
This boldly slashing scimitar,
Cleaving fallen light and tattered leaf, alike.
Winter Solstice moonlight,
Anchors shipwrecked Spirits.
Branches come alive; thrive in the new light.
Congregating cardinals huddle and stir,
Crimson gleaming below the bare forsythia canopy,
And as they moved, he laughed and said:
"I thought they were Red Leaves!"

Margaret Fox - Middletown, NY - foxblue1973@gmail.com

Alabaster apparitions arise, float
like fanciful swans on the wing.
The celestial orb releases its
ephemeral, ghostly glow on
cavernous rocks, mountains,
and valleys below. Rings of light

are mirrored in silvery, spinning
reflections on pools and eddies
in streams and rivers. Panels of
opal-white line forest floors where
obsidian shadows unfold in corners
and mourning shapes slide behind

ancient trees. Dogs raise their jowls
howl wolfen calls of the wild into the
night air. And we swim in dreams on
satin sheets; gills have become lungs,
caudal tails shed. But the ecstasy
and sway of the moon's magnetic pull
beckons our bodies of liquid back
along with the lyrical call of the sea.

Lynne D. Soulagnet - Medford, NY -
LynneSoulagnet@yahoo.com

First Day of Winter

It's the first day of winter.
I'm dancing in the windy sunlight,
Laughing to the sound of wind chimes,
Saluting blue skies.

I am real in this moment.

My heart, open as the sky,
My soul
Rich as this cup of coffee,
My steps light.
My spirit alive.

Gene Hodge - Soddy Daisy, TN - cportolano@hotmail.com

Seasons Slip

Autumn gone to winter
oak leaves now mantled
by a white blanket
that fell over night
cold rain freezing to slicken trees
and roads until flakes formed
coating cedars and those lime green
hedge balls rolled now in white crystals
become a hundred snowballs
Woodpeckers hammer
utility poles and a long gull
flashes white wings above
lacy fields corn stalks
punctuating white stretches
blades of winter wheat
tiny dots icy green reminders
that after this winter will be
yet another shedding as earth
moves into the renewal of another spring.

Pat Anthony - Lawrence, KS - metpvan@gmail.com

December's Solstice

drawing near so many
things gone dormant
while others will succumb fully
roots withering in the wet
ground saturated with its own
darkness not unlike other soil
settling in the cemetery
around a burnished oak coffin
worms and night crawlers
returning to the disturbed ground
from their safe haven
beneath the white picket fence
where they sheltered under
leaves and hedge balls thudding
like bass drums as the sergeant played
taps for him one last time.

Pat Anthony - Lawrence, KS - metpvan@gmail.com

Late December is the month that tells you
who the hardiest trees are.

Redbud, dogwood, crepe myrtle--
leafless, they shiver
while evergreens boast
needles of virility.
I stroll around my garden spaces,
take clippings from cedar, yew,
pine, dwarf holly.

Now garrulous greenery adorns
my seasonal porch display.
White pinecones stand guard,
chatty holly berries embellish
my ode to pagan winter.

Evergreens--Winter Solstice lovers--
thrive through chill and dark, dig deep
like bristlecone and sequoia,
those mammoths that endure
centuries beyond all other flora
of our timeless world.

Diane Williams - Knoxville, TN - dmwilliams5525@gmail.com

First Snow

a cold wind blew
off the cresting
still-warm waters
of the lake
and the rest of the leaves from the trees
barren limbs freed
to receive the season’s
first snow
wet and heavy
overnight it fell
weighing on them
bending but not breaking
with dawn

Dale K. Nichols - Beverly Shores, IN - nichols-dale@comcast.net

The alarm jolted me awake
With a reminder of my early morning run.
My hair swept up in a bun,
Dressed in sweats,
I stepped out the door,
Expecting the ordinary.

Gray clouds hung low in the pink-tinged sky.
The moisture-laden air sent shivers
Down my spine as ice crystals hit my face.
It was snowing!

Pausing to enjoy the first hint of snow,
A blue bird perched nearby on an icy limb,
His color resembling a dazzling blue sapphire
Among the silent winter hues.

His joyful melodious tone sang
Of golden sun-ladened days,
Budding trees and fragrant blooms
Draping the springtime landscapes.

I applauded his symphony of color
As he gave an eloquent bow and flew away,
Leaving me in awe of the brilliance
Of the unexpected.

Tina Robinson - Oak Ridge, TN - justinarob12@gmail.com

Off Into The Woods

seven turkeys making tracks
across the fallen snow
nothing here for them to eat
on hurried legs they go
in single file with wattles wobbling
all in search of food
silently, no squawks or gobbling
off into the woods

Dale K. Nichols - Beverly Shores, IN - nichols-dale@comcast.net

On this moonless night of angels
and kachinas, men stumble and
embrace prayer and ritual while
the fallow frost covered ground
waits for the return of the earth's
three sisters: bean, squash, corn.
Ever humble, your beacon path
flickers with certainty, welcome
comfort as choirs and kiva drums
implore the cold shrouded sky.

Ralph Long - Oakland, CA - rjljr1957@gmail.com

Ode to Perito Moreno glacier

Could Dante have reimagined
frozen hell, if he had seen your
free flow of ice and water or
Rauschenberg mastered deep
black after your infinite white
prisms? One dare not look away
from your ever-changing visage.
Only the soaring condors revel
in your full feral magnificence.
Nothing of man approaches your
natural grandeur, not the Great
Wall nor Giza nor Saint Peter's
nor Mona Lisa in her crowded
guarded room. No bard trusting
in Calliope has words to match
your brilliance. Perhaps, Euterpe
can dispatch a maestro to capture
the thunder of your surging core.

Ralph Long - Oakland, CA - rjljr1957@gmail.com

Be the reason someone smiles today…
Please be kind and write to each other…

Our deer friends have not been
in our pollinator garden for six weeks.
Missing them so much, scattering fresh pears,
apples, and dried corn.
It is a delight to see the fawns prance
around, near the walnut trees.
Curiously trying to fit into our world.
Or maybe we need to adapt to their idyllic world.
It saddens me to see my deer friends deceased
on the roadside.
People driving past without a care.
Even more painful was to come across
our majestic buck.
At death's doorstep--alongside my walking path.
Near the train tracks.
His beautiful brown eyes are steaming with tears.
His pain touched my soul
as he breathed his last breath.
My tears mingled with his beautiful tan coat.
He had once graced our garden--his memorizing stance
was evening magic to me.
What are we doing to our natural world?
Nature has become nonexistent or a commodification…
Shame on the captains of industry.
For treating all of our dear friends with such disregard.

Mary Anne Abdo - Scranton, PA - Eirinn919@aol.com

Deer Whispers

Deer whispers in winter
grow into a simple "Thanks"
for the pumpkins you left
outside from Halloween
that now have burst open
on Christmas Day.

Brad Vickers - Lambertville, NJ - cportolano@hotmail.com

When winter comes and
spring is far gone, and summer,
even fall, late fall even,
when winter comes and
things are colder, darker, and
there's no real sign of
another spring, or summer,
even fall, late fall even,
there are mostly images of
spring far gone, or summer,
even fall, late fall even, and
late sunrises, early sunsets,
there are mostly images of
late hopes, early reckonings,
with no real expectations for today,
tomorrow, only a fall into early darkness,
winter sun bleak and light yellow,
bright but proffering bare comfort.

J. B. Hogan - Fayetteville, AR - jbhogan22@hotmail.com

Winter Song

I look outside the window.
footprints in the snow
tell me the lynx
has visited the garden bed
that lies cold
as the floor of a cave.

I see the white forest
and wait to hear
the strum of the spring zither
play green songs.

But I only hear a song
about the winter
that has settled comfortably
to make a calm here
in the white, silent cold.

Brad Vickers - Lambertville, NJ - cportolano@hotmail.com

Fall too soon gave way to Winter cold
As Baby, a big boy near two-years-old,
Had watched birds fly away giving up
On the once steady stream of seeds he
And Mommy used to scatter for them.

Now no Morning Chorus awakens him
Asleep in his crib while Mr. Fog soon
Covers the empty sky as a tearful baby
Waits, aching for his chirping friends:
Yet silence, not a trill, song, or tweet!

Soon, lonely cries sound in the Valley:
Baby refuses bottle, shuns a sippy cup
Unlike the starving birds before flight.
Still hopeful, Mommy warbles to him,
So, he'd mistake her song for his birds.

Bereft cries and tears flow until an idea
Dawns for her precious little one: a gift
She unwraps early from under the tree:
His first comfy snowsuit with red hood;
Soon soft, warm, he cuddles in a car seat.

She steers past Chaparral and Woodlands!
His cries subside; for his birds, he longs,
Still sniffling as Mommy drives passing
The Valley to the Sierra Nevada Foothills
Into sunny sky where Toyon Trees grow.

With round-red berries and Baby's friends
At long last, he babbles with wide smiles.
In sky-blue, a Christmas Berry Reunion:
Crested Cardinals and Cedar Waxwings,
Finches, Mommy, Baby: *All Together Now*!

Judith Lyn Sutton - Campbell, CA - jlsutton46@comcast.net

The world warbles in white light
after the storm. Snow decorates
solemn pines; more flakes float
to the measure of sacred winds.
Dark, deep hoof-prints chase us
on my silver-gray in frozen fields
as I pluck her brittle reins, fingers
shielded by gloves from cold but
soul still icy with pain. My angel
canters, neighs, and rings her bells,
a canticle to this wintry morning.
She breathes in cadence, converts
icicles inside me to notes of praise.
Upon crystal cliffs, she carries me
to the church of clouds encircled
by sky, ever blessing, ever blessed.

Judith Lyn Sutton - Campbell, CA - jlsutton46@comcast.net

Winter Wedding

She carries a bouquet
of Christmas roses,
wears a mistletoe tiara.
Arched pine boughs
scent the aisle.
Poinsettias garland the way.
Sporting Grandpa's old bow tie
and rakish hat,
Snow Man spreads
twiggy arms, embraces
his Snow Lady bride.

Katherine A. Hogan - Forest Hills, NY - ednastv@aol.com

Early Winter Berries

Muted in the rising mist, oval bodies bob along
in feathered morning coats and chevron tails,
keep their beaks close to the damp ground.
I count eleven today in a young covey
engaged in good pecking order. I dub them
the 'Grey Guard" as they scour the frosted yard
for breakfast berries fallen from the bountiful ash tree.

Once these daily scatterings spelled NUISANCE,
daily sidewalk sweeping. Now I'm grateful
for this trove of russet nuggets, wrinkled and woven
through withered grass. If this focused platoon disappears
when the gauge holds below freezing, they'll be missed.
I'll not rake nor sweep up their outdoor feast.
With winter dawning, food equals warmth and life.

Pewter cloaked morning
Quiet gratitude simmers
Stovetop cranberries pop

Judith Youngers - Comfort, TX - writingjudi8@icloud.com

First Snow

I walk into my office, and the world is changed.
A life-dividing moment like my first breath,
the first time I rode a two-wheeler,
my first kiss, the time I left home
suitcase in hand and climbed the steps alone,
the first job, the birth of my first child,
her leaving for kindergarten,
the death of my father.
Through the French doors I see
snow like a quilt on the yard,
deadheads of daisies,
rabbit tracks like a message,
skeletons of trees against the gray sky,
and I wonder will I ever be ready
for the last dividing moment,
ready ever to let go?

Linda Leedy Schneider - Grand Rapids, MI - loschneide@aol.com

the frozen pond
in Aunt Edna's backyard
beckoned to me
on the cold day
I approached slowly
one booted foot in front of the other
hoping I wouldn't hear a crunch noise
underneath my feet
"hot cocoa" I heard her yell
and I raced back inside
for a mug of happiness

snowman

can we make a snowman?
he asked with big eyes
looking up at me
I wrapped myself up
in my warmest coat
wrapped a scarf around my neck
grabbed my gloves
and led little Johnny outside
he had already bundled himself up
in anticipation and eagerness
to start the building
of his favorite winter friend
a snowman

icicles hanging

icicles hanging from the gutters
dripping slowly drip, drip, drip
their heaviness scaring me
I take the shovel and knock them down
not wanting anyone to get hurt
if they were to pass by
such as a mail carrier or
delivery driver
icicles hanging on this cold
winter day

I love winter hikes, where the snow creates a stillness that accentuates the gurgling of a stream, the rustling of the wind through the trees, and the call of a bird. -- Steve Gleydura

Today, I would like to hike
through a darkened forest,
see the snow drifting down
to caress scarlet-red clad trees.
to listen to the laughter of a brook,
the wind roaring through the tops of pines,
the sleepy chirp of an unseen bird.

Today, I am nostalgic for clean, white snow
that covers the rich brown of plowed fields,
for icy roads that cause the adrenaline
to pump through excited veins,
for the delicious smell of evergreens
weighed down by loads of powdery snow.

Today, I want to once more hold your hand,
walk with you, talk with you about old times,
old places, old memories,
to laugh as we slip and slide on hidden ice,
to welcome the chance to love again.

Vaughn Neeld - Cañon City, CO - vaughnneeld@hotmail.com

Early Winter

The mailbox leans back on its sturdy post, waits, lonely,
above the still-unmarked snow on the country road.
In a nearby field, fugitive light from an overcast sky
gilts the shorn stalks that remain after the harvest.
A twisted, unclothed tree stands stark,
bark beaded with ice, branches clawing upward
as if beseeching intercession from the leaden sky.
In the distance, blue with chill, farm buildings huddle.
The scene speaks of aloofness, solitude, withdrawal,
a turning of a back. Be not deceived;
note the open gate.

Vaughn Neeld - Cañon City, CO - vaughnneeld@hotmail.com

A rare gift of fleecy snow
covers the yard like a feather comforter.
A set of rabbit tracks cuts a diagonal
from her patio to the wood's edge.
Now a calico cat prances perpendicular
to the rabbit tracks forming an X.
Two frisky squirrels chase one another
in haphazard circles,
then dart up a nearby tree
as three small birds land, stitch the final
markings on what has become
a creative quilting square.
The sun peeks over the trees
and sprinkles sequins onto the project.
Smiling, she grabs her sketch pad
and imagines the colors in her new quilt.

Elda Lepak - Hendersonville, NC - elphotopoet@gmail.com

The Warmth of Winter

In the middle of summer
when the days are hot
and the nights are too,
I wonder why we have
a fireplace.

But come winter
when the temperatures
fall and darkness
does too, I remember
how much I love it.

I dim the lights
and with hot chocolate
in one hand and a book
in the other, I relax
and enjoy the fluttering flames.

(Published in *Song of the San Joaquin)*

Elda Lepak - Hendersonville, NC - elphotopoet@gmail.com

Why was this diamond studded desert night sky still not enough to be called home? My purposeful reluctance was more than a point of pride. I held steadfast to my past home. Even as I enjoyed my cozy patio perch without ice or gusts of bitter cold, I still held this narrow view. Luckily, I ventured out to our town's Dark Sky Festival. That night at the new planetarium's show, I saw a comet race across the desert's night sky, and it left me breathless, in awe.

I needed new gear for my new year, a telescope. An amalgamation of Stardust had me looking nightly widely searching as my new hobby. I loved the sense of floating within it, a natural release. It set me free. During this peaceful wave of relaxation, I had a flashback of lying on my back rolling in beach waves. A sensation I deeply crave; I thought it was my main reason for holding back feelings for my *new* home of 23 years. Then I saw that burst of a comet's tail and a delightful flash of an insight came...

It was my youth; I couldn't let go which made me hold on even tighter. My youth was somewhere else, yet this gentle nighttime filled me with new breath. It had me looking forward not back much like my new fascination. Being outside in a natural setting had always ignited my senses and filled me with the promise of new life, like only Nature can do. Once again, a highly personal reflective insight came to me while outside. So, with my new insight, I say: Bring on the night in my delightful *new* home.

Vivian Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - cportolano@hotmail.com

The Cardinal's Song

The cardinal with crimson wings
Waits for springtime as he sings,
For signs of life as yet unseen,
For tender grass and leaves of green
He waits for bright and sunny skies,
For daffodils and butterflies,
He waits with all his forest friends
For warmer days when winter ends.

Lorna Volk - Cincinnati, OH - cportolano@hotmail.com

With the wicked, winter wind
wildly whirling outside
the large opening to the cave,
a boy falls while playing,
standing up to balance himself,

he places his palm upon the cave wall
and there his palm-print-made-of-mud
magically appears before his eyes and
his older sister is taken completely
by surprise, so, soon she does it, too.

Each dances a happy dance,
giggles with glee
for they had left their mark…

So, soon the other children stand
in awe and amazement before
the art upon the wall for all to see,
so, soon their hands are in the mud
and placing their prints upon the wall…

Each dances a happy dance,
giggles with glee…

Their mother and other older women,
who were tending the fires
and preparing the night's meal, while
waiting for the men to return, soon
are placing their prints upon the wall…

Each dances a happy dance,
giggles with glee…

When the men return with firewood
for the long, hard winter ahead,
they drop the wood and stand
in awe and wonder of what
has happened while they were away…

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - cportolano@hotmail.com

Orange jacket, tan work pants
a dark cap. Outside, in front of the
land office, he smoothly works
the long wood-
handled snow shovel. Its blade looks like
a section of a circle.

Steel, painted green. Just specks of orange
and green,
the only colors
in a scene of white. The sidewalk but
sidewalk
grey. The bare tree branches, black.
The snow is smooth, even, over the
lawn, walk, and
every
thing. He works the shovel
deftly with just his left hand pushing
it about a foot or so under
the snow scraping along the side

walk then flipping
the handle with just a twist of his wrist,
he tosses the snow
in one easy motion to the right
side of
the walk. A neat row
piled
by the side
of the road. It's fascinating to
see so much grace in so ordinary a task.

Six feet, twelve feet, a clean path,
neat edges. He pauses holding the
shovel upright and
leans on it,
right hand on the top end of the handle.
Resting his chin on his hand,
he surveys what he's done. Pleased, he takes
a breath and continues.
Just him and his work.

Fred Briggs - Lake Mary, FL - fredbriggs15@gmail.com

My grandma blows out the lamp, blowing across the chimney,
and, for a blink, the room is dark, then light from outside

floods into the room through a window, moonlight brightened
and heightened by snow that covers the ground and shrubs.

I sleep in the living room with the tall black stove.
The stove was stoked with coal, now banked down for the night.

I sleep on a black horse-haired divan because my bedroom is cold.
The divan folds out, but I sleep on it folded up,

my small frame comfortable under quilts and comforters.
The divan has large, curved, wooden arms, and at its end
is a table with a kerosene lamp, its warm glow
casting dim shadows around the room.

But then my grandma blows out the lamp, and for a blink,
the room is dark, and then the snow light fills the room,

almost as bright as the lamplight, and all the familiar things emerge,
the lamp, the table, the slant-front desk with the clock, the rocking chair,

everything where it was, where it should be, and I am, too,
just before I fall asleep.

Richard Green - Pleasanton, TX - rc.green@hotmail.com

Dawn Surprise

gently falling.
Drifting, covers handrail.
Wrapping garden wall.
Fluffy blanket,
winter tuck in.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com

As I walked home alone
Down the dark city street
In the cold night rain,
I noticed something
Sitting in the gutter
Of the corner ahead.
As I got closer, I realized
It was a racoon. He looked
Up at me with his dark eyes.
He seemed unafraid, and
When I stopped, he didn't
Move. We just looked at
Each other for a moment
Before we both moved on.
As I walked on home and he
Returned to his storm drain
I got this feeling that it was
Going to be a good winter
For both of us.

Bill Peck - Santa Clara, CA - bwillysjr@aol.com

When I Was Eleven

The library is a few blocks from our Bronx apartment.
I walk catching snowflakes on my eyelashes, climb the steps
and pull open the big door. I am home.

Meandering up and down the aisle of high shelves, in the adult section, I stand on tippy toes to reach the big book with a ballet dancer on its cover. Sitting on the floor, I turn the pages and I fall in love with Anna Pavlova.

I look up, surprised to see my Uncle Saul who is smiling. *Why are you here,* I ask. *Your mother sent me to walk you home.*

The sidewalk is now covered with inches of snow. In this white world, hand in hand the big book tucked under his arm, I feel warm.
in the silence ancestors

Norma Bradley - Asheville, NC - normabradley1@gmail.com

Still a small boy with holes in my gloves
with muddy shoes. All wet and sitting
In the back of Mr. Carter's class.

All these arguments make no sense
to me: talking, thinking, pretending
that we're smart.

There is only one reasonable way to deal
with cold fingers and it has nothing at all
to do with school. I think all the old people

forgot how it is to get warm on a winter day
by holding your breath out loud, gritting
your teeth and reaching for your hands.

Samuel Wells - Cedar City, UT - samuelwells@suu.edu

Mary's Keep

Her epitaph is getting thin.
The ground around her grave is
buckled by the elms.

There haven't been real flowers
here for years. Forgotten underneath
the fallen leaves and snow.

I hope they keep her warm and that the
northern air can sing her lullabies, now
cradled in her casket by the trees.

Samuel Wells - Cedar City, UT - samuelwells@suu.edu

Be the reason someone smiles today…
Please be kind and write to each other…

Winter arrives at its own pace
with its face powdered.
Tonight a moon-tagged,
birch tree glistens,
is illuminated,
its bare branches frozen.
Bare feet on a bare wooden floor,
an icy chill branches upward
bites into veins and arteries;
causes my teeth to chatter.
We're both waiting out
this season of brisk cold.
I shudder to think how long
it will take till the sun comes
to melt winter's arctic shell.
I hide beneath covers and quilts,
dream of warm, kind, temperate days
when I smile at the moon
and it smiles back,
but tonight it just looks like
one great big giant snowball.

Rosemary Marshall Staples - Eliot, ME - roeystaples@netzero.net

It Snowed Last Night

It snowed last night.

The rabbit has scrunched itself into a ball.
The wind has stopped.
The withered grass has stretched its stems
Over the thin layer
That has been left on the open ground.

Harold Sneide - Indian Hills, CO - haroldsneide@comcast.net

Awestruck, I watched, counting the herd of
15 large deer, several with spreading racks
of antlers, stopping on their trek across
the corn stubbled field, then eating from my
hayrack, stuffed with corn ears as well.
I stared at the young horse squeezed in
the middle of them, pushing through recent
snow drifts, he ate greedily with them, the does
pushing him forward, sheltering him, as they
too ate with the bucks. Getting closer, I
assured myself, verified it was indeed a
small, young horse, not hurt in any way,
staying close to the fawns and does.
Questions raced through my head:
Where is his mother? Why did the deer claim him?
Is he safe? Is someone looking for him?
Should I leave it alone and trust it was for the best?
I knew if he belonged to me, I would be frantic
trying to find him. I turned back to the barn
where I left my cell phone to make a call.

Dianna Walston - Kokomo, IN - cportolano@hotmail.com

The Sunlight Fades

The sunlight fades earlier now.

There will be no sunset behind the hills
Only a gradual turn into darkness.

Harold Sneide - Indian Hills, CO - haroldsneide@comcast.net

As the World Turns Colder

As the world turns colder
The deer come in
They settle down in the sheltered spaces
Basking in the sun.

Harold Sneide - Indian Hills, CO - haroldsneide@comcast.net

The faint chorus of stars,
singing not to us but to
one another. The ratio of
their orbits long a subject
of magic and math,
their harmonies still lost
in the slow light of dusk.

Above the eastern horizon
of an Adirondack winter, a density
of them wells up, a salt lick
in moonlight, patient for creatures
that hide in constellations before
making their hunger known.

How will we ever know
the seasons of our lives
if we do not open
our mouths to the heavens,
or question why it is easier
to write a poem about love then
pen the lines of a love poem.

(*Previously published in Nothing Divine Dies: The Poetry of Nature)*

Joel Savishinsky - Seattle, WA - savishin@gmail.com

Hope for Mother Earth as the Year Turns

Times Square ball descends
in farmer's field snow settles
bear sleeps in its den

and so we begin again
another year, new choices

Kris Rued-Clark - Arpin, WI - kruedclark@yahoo.com

Old trees are witnesses:
Their simple religion is forced into the cold,
No intermediary gives them rules of conduct:
All day without a minister they hold Primitive services.

--Thom Gunn, "A Kind of Ethics"

The trees are bare branches now,
the fields fallow. Soon the snow.
But not yet. The skies are clear
and unconcerned, storm clouds
still far off. Peaceful all is.

Standing still, the line of trees,
as if to know how quickly sky
can change. Traffic on the distant
highway hums, a train or two
freights cargo to its destination.

Everything is staid and as it should:
no fracture, no release of panic,
yet, over the trouble men might do,
their callousness and longing to destroy
for an idea, because they can.

Eugene O'Connor - Columbus, OH - emoconnorphd@gmail.com

Snow Play

Last week's ice storm glaze
covers melded flakes.
I kick globs of snow
watch them slide downhill.
Winter's stone-skipping.

Kris Rued-Clark - Arpin, WI - kruedclark@yahoo.com

Sonnet to the New Year

The New Year stretches out before me now,
a broad and shining clear expanse of time,
unfilled as yet with rhythm or with rhyme,
a snowy road before the stroke of plow.

What will be written, what describes each page
as it is filled by moments passing by?
What images will draw the gazing eye?
What happenings emerge, what battles rage?

Each moment has its beauty and its grace,
as well, its terror and its frightening face;
together they will form the year's design,
the pattern of its strokes, both broad and fine;

and then the moments of the year to be
will form an album in my memory.

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

The Winter of my days

I am in the winter of my days.
Like frigid water I move slower now;
I've had to change the rhythm of my ways
I cannot do what I once did somehow.

When wintry winds blow up a chilly breeze
I stay indoors. I do not brave the cold.
My achy bones creak like the leafless trees,
alas I fear that I am getting old.

Yet I rejoice in sitting still to see
The little birds that gather at my feet,
The dance of life that brings much joy to me,
The love of those who make my days complete.

Though my winter won't be followed by a spring,
I would not change this time for anything.

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

Gazing out my window
on a wintry night, I
notice hoarfrost swirling
in patterns on the glass.
I think, oh, how like
a modern art painting,
or sand that you shift
into shapes. Taking
out pencil and paper,
I attempt to copy the
pattern. By the time
I draw one line,
image on the window
shifts into frosty
spirals.

In the center of
the window, a charcoal
cat mewls. My heart
flutters. Clad in pants
and shirt, I scoop up
the shivering ball
of fur, and bring it
indoors. After much
coaxing, the kitten
takes tiny sips
of water, and a bit
of tuna. He has found
a home with me. Soon,
he becomes my companion
for gazing out windows
on wintry nights.

S. McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablonde49purple@gmail.com

wintry solitude
wind brushes over
chalk-white landscape

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - suesurette@gmail.com

It's a winter watch… I don't have time.
It's a warning… I have doubt.
It's a nor'easter… the shovel, in the shed.
I struggle through the blustering white-out
barely able to open the door to retrieve it
and shift-shovel and shiver through drifts,
as an old oak bows toward my home
and waves with ice-packed sleeves.
1st shift . . . all I could think about was
life frozen in time, nature's harvest
buried under a blanket, sparkling white.
2nd shift . . . shovel, scrape and salt.
Hours pass, sirens howl and more snow.
Heavy-weighted eyes go back inside.
I watch crystalline reflections off the moonlight,
grab a book off the shelf
and become infatuated by Stevens' *Snowman*.
A few winks later I wake alongside a cold fire
greeted by the sun, brighter than ever before,
the wind carrying his voice to beginnings of the melt.

Robert Savino - West Islip, NY - dynsus@aol.com

Gobbler

A lone turkey goose-steps
across the road near my cabin
in the woods covered by light snow.
He is beautiful/ugly.
He knows he wasn't
eaten for Thanksgiving.
and might find a wife
and create new chicks.

David Blackey - La Crosse, IA - funkyjubu@yahoo.com

Winter Light

A blade of afternoon sunlight
unexpected this late in January
has carved a silver filigree
out of the dark woods
by the side of the North Road.
Long trunks of beech wood
bare and unadorned
slant westward toward the low-slung sun,
a basket-weave of light and shade
checkered on the ground below.
I pass this way two times each day
but not until this afternoon
was so much darkness shed
and this stark wood made bright
by a subtle glaze of sudden sun
like Grace.

Peter Leverich - Manhasset, NY - peterl@techsoftinc.com

Oracle

A giant heron makes her home
in the tallest trees around Brick Cove.
A great slate blue bird
she wades in the shallows
on stilt like legs,
her neck a graceful feathery ess.
She can be still for so long
that she seems in a trance
but finally takes a practiced step
without causing a ripple
as she stalks fish for food.
Because of her size
she is left alone,
if you come too close
she will burst into night
and leave you in awe
without even one answer.

Peter Leverich - Manhasset, NY - peterl@techsoftinc.com

At Winter

The moon's a fat convict
behind the stick-stalk trees
then escapes, a desperado
loose in the desolate yard,
a bruising undresser of
raw light, naked of color.

How sensual then
the tangerine and azure
flames dancing behind
the fire-glass proscenium,
the shining paper, the
glitter of Christmas lights
framing the hollow scene
outside.

At winter
we go into humanity's cave
to feather our interiors
with dreams. Become
fetal guardians of the flame
rearrange the bones.

Cynthia d'Este - Oak Creek, WI - destino@aol.com

New Snow Moon

New snow reflects silver moonlight on woods.
Stillness is complete, no wind, movement
crystal air hangs, icy,
sleeping birds huddle long for dawn.
Nature holds its breath.
Coloring sky with eastern glow.
Snow sparkles,
reflecting light.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com

The music of winter whispers like the wonder of newly falling snow powdering the chilling earth. Icy crystals glimmer on the needles of pine trees, glistening like stars inside tiny diamonds.

The heavy air breathes damp stillness before the clashing of cymbals as the sky darkens, cascading into the full-bodied uproar of a tempest.

The storm thunders on like kettledrums pounding. All of nature shakes in its rising crescendo of fury.

As quickly as it arrives, it vanishes. The earth gives up its quivering as the havoc slowly diminishes into hushed stillness.

In those first moments of silence the air is energy filled, electric with remembered chaos.

In measures of calming comfort, the music of winter decrescendos into the sound a single wind instrument exhaling the healing intonations of peace. For now, at least, all again is serene.

Randi Woodward Larsen - San Juan Capistrano, CA - Randi@randistories.com

Wolf Moon

Winter night on Isle Royale.
Unbroken snow drifts,
Northern lights, dark moon.
Moose herd, two wolf packs roaming.
Predators and prey,
wolves circle a moose calf.
cow bellows charges.
Gray male is tossed, in snowbank.
Shaken, retreats, pack follows.
Safe this time.
They return to the herd.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com

Walk far enough down the rough path
you'll see a tree, bent from harsh winter,
listing to one side in need of a crutch,
top heavy, swaying in moonlight.

Down low on the trunk, stars, 22 of them
create a ring with room for a few more.
They are etched into the first layer of wood
so as not to damage the bark, barely there,

yet each star represents a year of our love,
365 days of devotion. I dreamed of filling
the entire tree, but of course, realized too
well into our 60's when married, time might

fall through an inky dusk of winter's nightfall.
Moon sneaks through louvers into our bedroom.
I feel the outline of trees, dream of a rough path,
while the tree adorned with stars, waits.

Stellasue Lee - Knoxville, TN - stellasueL@aol.com

Winter Backyard

The bull snake in the hole beneath
the junipers' feet, thinks of the lady who
gestured to him, on a spring day,
to go down the slope before her;
he moved aside, startled, to let her go
down the slope; she insisted he go first;
oh, such a civility of her;
would it live even in the winter
the rabbit's empty burrow underneath
concrete porch, after, one day, the neighbors' dog
chased them away to the bog;
the Russian olive tree that spies the neighbor,
with a bough hanging over the fence;
now, they all watch the snowflakes, in silence;
how harmonious they look in a glance.

Byung A. Fallgren - WY - byungfallgren@outlook.com

What's this old world coming to when I sit,
pen in hand, to plead my case

only to find bluebirds on our feeder, three of them,
which makes me smile, content for a moment.

Icicles drip from a hood over the feeder,
protected birds, plentiful berries, sunshine--

Ah, the *bluebird of happiness,* and I--I no longer
have a case to plead. When I was a child of three,

more than once I put on all my clothes so that
my mother had to cut them off to free me.

I think even then I wanted to run away,
take what was mine, leave behind

the childhood of so many years ago that molded
this me who thinks there is a case to plead--

only to find nothing sad when life is a paradise
where bluebirds feed in morning winter sun.

Stellasue Lee - Knoxville, TN - stellasueL@aol.com

Winter Sunshine

Breezes buffet clouds
Across slate sky,
Shiver naked trees, and take
My leaf smoke in their draft.
Earth-bound trees heave twig fingers,
Scratch heaven--
Each ring brings them closer.
I toddle barked shins
In paling dusk,
Mount rungs of cold sun--
A gray-brown mist,
An essence of leaves.

Dr. Emory D. Jones - Iuka, MS - pianot@bellsouth.net

The concrete path through my garden needs fixing
it's on my long list of to-dos
but today there is still snow and now our first rain of winter
and I discovered a Roman bath
in the big puddle of the broken path

Grackles, starlings, even two robins fussily bobbed their wings
and dipped their heads, steam rising around them from the warmer
air hitting snow rotund bodies they could be Roman senators from
millennia ago the broken concrete a temple to a deity only they
know these little winged architects conquered the land below.

Susan Oleferuk - Buchanan, NY - oleferuksusan@gmail.com

Quiet Sacred Snow

The snow has fallen all night long.
Across my icy window it scrolls
an encrypted promise in swirling frost
of magic manifesting without.
My child's heart can hardly await discovery.
I open a bedroom window
to welcome some of the enchantment.
Then, snuggle under covers to slumber.

In morning there's snow under my window,
and Jack Frost has painted the pane.
Outside everything is pristine quiet.
The Earth is new without a footmark,
silent as a holy cathedral
with sounds that add to this sacred feeling--
a dog barking in the distant void--
a crow cawing on a telephone line.
I stand at the open window in wonderment.

Leonard Tuchyner - Barboursville, VA - tuchyner5@aol.com

Snow cannot erase the cardinal
Or the blood red berry
Pinched in his bright beak.

Snow cannot erase the berries'
Bloody remnants, scattered seeds
Splashing through his seasonal dung.

It is not easy to erase anything
Red in snow. Even the purest
Snow won't hide

Bloodbaths in the ravines.
Below, even now, blood-tinged
And feather-furious,

The red-tailed hawk drops and slices
What cannot be hidden:
A vermillion flash, feathered

Helmet the woodpecker
Bears; garnet breastplates
Unseasonal robins don.

The snow cannot erase
The hawk's bloody beak
Or the bodies scissored there.

Mattie Quesenberry Smith - Lexington, VA -
mattiequesenberrysmith@gmail.com

Silent Caw

Dark stark shadows in quiet winter morning
cut across snowscape, like ink on paper,
from tall sentinel trees on border land.
One dark crow watches from perch on fence post.
His cawing calls contrast in silence,
intensifying the silent stillness.

Leonard Tuchyner - Barboursville, VA - tuchyner5@aol.com

I generally prefer oceans in winter.
Some atavistic tick.
Flat like a pancake & blue.
An 18th century landscape painting.
Hardly moving, but omnipresent.
Like those eerie portraits who's
eyes follow you around the room.
I quickly peek behind me,
keeping the sea truly in sight.
Just in case.

Last year at this time,
I was up north watching
my friend's garden putting on
winter clothes:
Snippets of grace:
black-eyed Susans half naked,
faded rose bushes
valiant lavender still perky.

Just in case, I have put
peppers, basil & turmeric
in the ground.
Waiting for an angry sea day
to toss my friend's ashes in the surf.
Winter seas can carry them away.
Winter seas carry them away.

Tone Blevins - Bal Harbour, FL - Matocca22@yahoo.com

Winter Crystals

Six points catch the light,
gently fall to earth, and
create a mesmerizing world.
Like a fairy's dress, it
shines and glistens
in moonlight and
casts shadows through
its crystal beads.

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

Somewhere a rusty swing creaks
porcelain plates clink, stacked atop one another,
a furnace clicks, then groans, giving warmth,
while icicle daggers melt, fall fifty feet from wires
and trees, miracles they miss passing cars.

Our world is noisy but silent too.

Cardinal pairs return to snowy North,
dot the white world with their vivid red,
sing melodies of syncopated trills
while above, a majestic V of geese honk.

My neighbor's dogs bark, separate, and in unison.
The train at the top of our road trundles past,
And the windows rattle in their frames.
Our cat is strangely quiet this morning.
The ticking of the kitchen clock, reassuring.

I have sought this place while never leaving.
The gentle flicker of the candle reminds me.

Kathy Smaltz - Nokesville, VA - kathysmaltz@gmail.com

We Struggle Through Winter's Stillness

(An Etheree)

Snow
flutters
in white flakes
cascading down
from a milky sky.
In the silent city,
cars slip and slide through slick streets.
Sidewalks, grass, trees are swathed in white,
while falling flakes obscure our vision,
as we make our way where we need to go.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY -
abbietaylor945@gmail.com

What's in a name? That which we call winter
is fickle in attire and mood, deftly changing
aspects as she travels throughout the country
while we finish out the year and start anew.
Far north, she dons extended darkness, deepest
ice and snow, conjuring an air of desolation.
At higher elevations, she wraps herself
in thick layers of glistening snow, daring
the heartiest to test their endurance out-of-doors.
Across the northern plains, she cruelly chooses
ensembles of freezing blizzards and driving snow,
forcing inhabitants to stoke their fires inside.
Along the coasts, temperate yet inscrutable,
she shrouds herself at times in fog and rain.
But farther south, she appears in finer raiment--
mild days, cool nights, sparkles of precipitation--
enchanting all with blossoms that belie her whims.

Gay Marie Logsdon - Oak Ridge, TN -
gmarielogsdon@gmail.com

Arctic Fox

Why are you so white in winter?
Gray-brown in summer?
How can your fur be so soft?
So bold to endure such cold?
How can you bark, howl, & scream?
Sniff food miles away?
Below snow?
Do you love your lemmings with lemon?
I doubt they thrive where you survive
Arctic Fox, so few in certain places
Arctic Fox, how much longer do you have?

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

Mullioned windows divide the outside world
into vignettes, as misty fog halos fir and maple,
and stone-gray clouds sift pale rain onto foliage
silky from last night's storm. Tender fingers of
mist streak thoughts on windowpanes, evoking
memories of all the lost words still left unwritten.

Let silence be surrounding. Let warmth envelop
sleepy air, squeaky chair, desktop cleared of all
but a spiral-bound notebook and black pen that

deciphers every scribbled thought. There are so
many languages. For Gaelic Ogham, imagine
words written in an alphabet of trees, inscribed

upon the very wood that they arose from.
Instead of the ABCs, recite Apple Birch Elder,
Aspen Broom Hazel, Rowan Willow Yew.

Then picture every name spelled in the language
of trees: Aaron Owen Rory, Fiona Grace Sara.
Moving through a time of change, sometimes
past hope of affecting change, imagine that
every word one hears still echoes a native tongue
that all, even the listening trees, can understand.

Daphne Clifton - Portland, OR - daphneclifton@gmail.com

Sounds of Winter

February, stark and cold
Sends a message brisk and bold.
Brown leaves brittle on the tree
Rustle, rattle, wild and free.
Crinkle, crack, your footsteps sound
Clearly on the frozen ground.
Rat-tat-tat above your head
A bird is pecking, black and red.
In the dusk the blackbirds cry,
In the deep grey winter sky.

Lorna Volk - Cincinnati, OH - cportolano@hotmail.com

Respite from cold rain as the year begins:
sunshine, high fifties, thin daffodil spears
poking out from muddy ground.

A handsel of blues, token of promise,
reminder to embrace frolic and festivity
in nature's new season of hope.

Bluebirds, vibrant visitors in winter,
flock at a feeder, seeking sunflower seeds,
dance to the music of rustling wind,

triggering chime clatter, metallic, high pitched.
Bluebirds, capture movement in indigo beats,
silenced by my perch behind glass.

Revealing hints of flight as one bird hovers
in solo dance, then relinquishes sky
to the next, an interchange of wing and perch.

Bluebirds, a spectrum of blues, turquoise
to violet, a flourish of feathers embellishing
austerity in rusty throats and ivory breasts.

Bluebirds of happiness, harbingers of spring,
arrive too early in the darkest of winters,
teasing a smile, transient, still masked,

testing faith, discipline, patience,
inviting premature celebration before peace
emerges from heartbreaking crosscurrents.

Cathy Hailey - Manassas, VA - haileycp@gmail.com

wan winter sun glows
casts lengthening blue shadows
over shrouded earth

Kris Rued-Clark - Arpin, WI - kruedclark@yahoo.com

The gray chill of winter season claimed the pastures
beyond my house, but the Pacific Ocean winds soon dispersed
dense layers of morning clouds.
By afternoon, the sun's golden tendrils and warmth scattered
the last remnants of fog that had obscured the distant fir trees.
The sky's bright blue told me this would be a rare day in February.

I threw on my jacket, mittens, and scarf to venture out
to see if other creatures might feel the tug
of the unseasonable warmth and leave the comfort of their abodes.

Close by an old wire stock fence, a cottontail bunny nibbled
on the dried blackberries lingering on their vines.
The bunny assessed the moment and gave me
a sideways glance before standing as still as a garden statuette.
When her timidity of the moment passed, she vanished
into a thicket of sleeping weeds.

Nearby, dark-eyed juncos, purple finches, and robins
took turns calling with their melodic notes, inviting
others to share in the profuse bounty of hawthorn berries.

In time, the sunlight began to ebb,
and I gazed as the sun set in an array of changing hues:
scarlet red, crimson, and amber.

From my window, I sipped tea and watched the last hours
of the day mauve into velvet moonlit darkness.
The full moon appeared to hang like an ornament
on a naked birch tree limb.
A few snowflakes from wispy cirrus clouds swirled
as they floated down, scintillating in the pale lunar light.

Though the day hinted of the coming spring season,
weeks of winter would be with us yet as the earth
appreciated a time of dormancy in preparation
for the season of renascence.

Wendy N. Bell - Edgewood, WA - wendynbell1990@gmail.com

I remember
a white heron stalking
the edge of a pond
one early morning.

I remember
swimming in a
Sierra stream,
alone except for a red-tailed hawk
flying through a noon sun.

I remember watching a single swan swim
over a lake's moon reflection
in silhouette.

They come,
hunting me at the edges
of my winter reflections,
stalking me in these late days.

(previously published in *Whispers in the Wind)*

Greg Gregory - Antelope, CA - greggkg@gmail.com

Night Freeze

Stepping out
into an icy evening
I wrap tender vines
and young lemon saplings
in old blankets stored
from my student days.
Half a century later
they still protect
sensitive, immature things
from frosts and hard nights.

(previously published in *Brevities)*

Greg Gregory - Antelope, CA - greggkg@gmail.com

Four large pine trees
lining the gravel road running
past our farm, a large lawn
between the road and our house.
From the kitchen windows
we could watch snow pile up
on large pine branches
adorning these trees already there
when my grandparents were young.

When the wind rose high enough,
swaying boughs would sprinkle snow
to the ground like my mother diligently
sifting flour in her baking.

One was our climbing tree
where generations of children
had reached high and then higher.
Even in winter, glove-covered hands
and boots not made for climbing
propelled me upward until
I could gaze outward through
snow-covered branches to view
my world again turned white.

Edward J. Rielly - Westbrook, ME - erielly2@earthlink.net

Primary evidence

While you and I sleep the suburban sleep…
The great horned owl has left her calling card
on a pocked sidewalk by the city yard;
creamy, rotund feather, sextuple-barred;
portal to midnight assassinations.
Skunks, raccoons, Virginia opossums
shrink in the wake of this taloned assassin.
Silent as radar, shrouded wings, scarcely
displace the air. Strigidaen banquet,
effaced by dawn, betrayed
by a brazen-faced feather.

Jackie Fellague - Torrance, CA - cportolano@hotmail.com

1.Thoughts
Berry and rose-hipped bushes skirt the pebbled path
clearing the walker's thoughts of summer and fall,
especially where a grove of winterberries
undulating white like banks of fresh
fallen snow, freeze before falling to the icy ground.
2.Revenge
Three nutrias like a squadron of naval vessels
speed, heads turning, glaring
in righteous anger at the
migrating Canada Geese--
oh, they showed them! As a red-tailed
hawk sliced through the flock,
flap-screeching, their wings
smacked one against the other
in shocked disarray.
3.Color
Fernhill's winter colors
are but two:
the tiny rosehip of wild roses pretending
they are berries
to bring themselves some drama
alongside the bright,
clustered winterberries.
4.Wisdom
Mustard yellow and rosy bushes
raise up their spindly arms
to capture the faint light.
They store nutrients all winter,
gestating leaf and blossom.
Patiently, knowing their power,
they stand together,
glowing against
decayed cones and muddy reeds.
5.Blanched
Winter bleeds
the wetlands--
the bleached sun
melts silver rays
on the duck-scattered ponds.

April B. Heying - Forest Grove, OR - heying.b.april@gmail.com

Look at this day.
February, nor the solstice cannot dictate to Mother Nature
that it's suppose to be winter.
I, a veteran of many seasons,
a vacationer of warm sunny days,
indolently observe from my front porch
a spring day in mid-winter.
To heck with signs of global warming,
repetitious phrases like,
"Everything's gone-ah-bloom-out too early,
a hard freeze will kill it all."

The warm sun smites my face,
the day dissolves into afternoon shadows.
Across the field, down by the creek,
a frog digs himself from his winter abode…
I smile at his joyful croaking.

In tune with the wind chimes, hanging from the porch,
my soul sings the song of blue skies,
as a distant dove coos me into rapture.

Gene Hodge - Soddy Daisy, TN - cportolano@hotmail.com

Playful

roly-poly
pandas waddling fresh snow
clumsily performs somersault
snowballs
showing off acrobatic stunts
of furball cub cuteness
barking bleat sounds
of joy

Alicia Ann Torres - Windsor, CA - freedom0768@att.net

Hanging on like ancient stalactites,
The ice cycles residing on our porch eaves
Await another nourishing drop of water.

A few last afternoon rays of the sun
Warm enough snow to send a small stream
creeping down the ice cycles.

Slow drips continue for several minutes
Until the temperature drops again.
The last drop feeds and adds length.

Much like our porch partners,
My life has gathered Experience, Wisdom,
Love, and Appreciation.

When I gaze through the stalactite of my life,
One thing clearly shines through.
Nature has had a major role in my journey.
Thank you, Mother Nature

Fred Vogt - Laguna Woods, CA - fvogt45@comline.com

Jane

My ranger father helped to bring
Jane Goodall to The Junior
Museum in Palo Alto in the 70s
I was very young
But she left such an impression
Beautiful, benevolent, intelligent
Jane showed how chimps use tools
How they are social & emotional
Just like us
The positive & not so much
The tragedy of Flint, his mother Flo
Jane told us that we can learn
From each other
How fragile our planet is
How frigid this winter & world
Are without you, Jane

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

Daddy was a jeweler, but after WW II ended
and he came home, photography was his passion.
He often took me with him on photo shoots.
The winter I was five we had a heavy snowfall.

The two of us went to his old college campus
to make pictures in the snow. He was shooting
with his big, boxy camera down a long, straight
road lined on both sides by bare, snow-covered

winter trees perfectly matched as though they'd
been sculpted by an artist. As we stood all alone
in cold, magical air of winter at the entrance
to campus, a doe moved silently between two trees.

She stopped in the middle of the road, raised her head
quizzically, and stared at us as though to ask what
in the world we were doing here in snow during
Christmas break. This was my first encounter

with a doe. Daddy clicked his camera. It didn't
scare her. She was on her own territory and knew it.
She didn't budge. Daddy got a few more shots until
the doe wandered toward a clump of grass stretching

itself out of icy snow toward the weak winter sun.
She foraged for a while, her smooth brown coat making
me want to go pet her. We waited. When she'd had
her fill of grass, she looked at us again as though

to bid us farewell, then with a graceful swish of her tail,
ambled off toward the campus post office, an elegant
white building that stood at the far end of the tree-lined
road. We stayed still and quiet--not to intrude upon her.

Emily Black - Gainesville, FL - eblack@asrsystems.ws

frigid daybreak
newly fallen snow
catches between dead grass

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - suesurette@gmail.com

Sledding on pieces of
Cardboard down plowed
Mounds in the parking lot
Across the busy road

Skating on the ice at
Arnold's pond, where
Joey would charm us
With his figure eights

Snowball fights coupled
With laughter, I think that
You always, somehow,
Made it so I'd win

And later, hot chocolate
With whipped cream and
Cinnamon, memories that
Will live forever

Dawn McCormack - Plainfield, CT - djohnson8251@yahoo.com

Twilight

Shadows deepen,
Frosty limbs scratch
On closed windows
As the Snowflakes dance
Merrily throughout
The long, frigid night
And, in the distance,
One lone owl calls
Signaling day's end

Dawn McCormack - Plainfield, CT - djohnson8251@yahoo.com

Be the reason someone smiles today…
Please be kind and write to each other…

It's been decades since I wore mittens
clipped to my coat so I wouldn't lose them.

Years since my snow boots
crunched my way to school

on snow packed so hard
I didn't realize it was six inches deep;

so long ago since an open-mouthed exhale
formed clouds I, along with schoolmates,

imagined our pretend cigarettes released.
Now, snow is an inconvenience--

mornings started off by a run to my car
to get it started to warm

as I chop off ice and snow from last night--
cautious drive to work, turn into the slide,

hands and nose so cold they ache.
When did winter turn into an enemy?

I think today I'll miss work, stay inside,
stand at a window, hot cocoa in hand,

wait for the first snowflake of a forecasted storm,
dawn my coat and head out the door

for a walk in wonderland—
perhaps blow "O's" into the air,

see if I can't skate a bit in my regular shoes,
imagine a "fort" built of snow, throw snowballs,

purposely lose a glove--
not caring who might see my reach into yesteryear.

Sandra Rollins - Nashville, TN - sjrollins@comcast.net

The Gray One

The gray one will be out tonight
hunting slowly in the waning light.
A phantom few will ever know
but for his footprints in the snow.

Before starting his nightly prowls
he gives vent to mournful howls.
He announces he's in this place
and then he's gone without a trace.

The leaves rustle and he cocks an ear.
He tests the wind to allay any fear.
Caution guides him on his way,
to ensure he'll see another day.

Long blamed by men for taking what's theirs,
He's been the aim of poison, guns, and snares.
But he persists, a testament to his kind.
Against all odds, the safe path he finds.

With nose in the wind, he breasts a storm--
a magnificent animal in his finest form.
And here he comes--more careful than most.
I so admire this winsome ghost.

Jim Story - Corvallis, MT - Jstory4689@gmail.com

Ice Storm

The wide glass glove
of winter's hand
slips onto thin skeleton fingers
of trees and shrubs.
Each time a perfect fit.

Brad Vickers - Lambertville, NJ - cportolano@hotmail.com

I love the sun
on my shoulders
my trees
my rocks
my grasses,
but it is in the dark
cold
long nights
where I rest
hibernate
so when spring comes
I am ready.

The sound of darkness
soothes me,
saying
rest
rest
rest
enjoy the darkness
the light will come again.

Beth Cash - Howes Cave, NY - bethjeancash@gmail.com

Hungry in Winter

A Sparrow Hawk perches on the electric line.
Black streaks frame her beak,
rust feathers cover her chest and back.
She crooks her neck
looking for Mice and Voles
that have emerged from the snow
to look for food.

Beth Cash - Howes Cave, NY - bethjeancash@gmail.com

Winter sun radiates warmth
Clumps of snow
Nestled in tree forks till
Like a falling scoop
Of ice cream, plop
Ivory, fairy dust drifts

Shrinking blanket on
Decaying log in slumber
Snow draped Azalea bushes
Doff ermine's fur coat

Jolly snowman
Gradually leans
Altered features
Now undistinguishable

Water droplets trickle
Down translucent stalactites
Drips splash, pitting snow beneath

Slabs of snow crack
Slide off roof tops
Avalanche cascades
Creates mounds below

Silence of powdery snow
Transforms into slush
Freezes overnight
Morning footsteps
Crunch on icy crust
Boots break through

Daily temperatures warm
Melting snow and ice
Inch by inch
Day after day
Till only shimmering
Pools remain

(Previously published in *NatureWriting*)

Suzanne Cottrell - Oxford, NC - cottrell_suzanne@yahoo.com

Beneath alabaster clouds in blue ribbon skies,
beneath hardpacked crystal crust and crunch of snow,
bright enough for sun blindness, beneath foot deep
powder-swallowing boots, treads imprinting
rock-hard earth, sparse grass, dead leaves--
Winter sleeps.

Rabbits, bears, and groundhogs hibernate, as do
snakes, bats and bumblebees too, who knew.
We bipedal creatures who work to keep
our burrows warm, must seek a middle way.
When winds howl, blizzards obscure our sight,
cocooned in fleece and flannel, we find diversions.

We feed our minds. Lost in words we escape into
realms of imagination, where anything's possible.
We might trip down memory lane, curl up by
a blazing fire, consider mortality, ask questions
not to be answered this side of the river.

And watching the sky we'll observe migrations, in what
direction do the geese fly? Snowdrops and Iris, have
they pierced rich loam? Can we hear the stream yet?

And we wait until Spring's green bursts forth,
and every leaf is shining.

William Scott Galasso - Laguna Woods, CA -
scottgalasso@yahoo.com

She sleeps

She sleeps; I sleep.
She under a white winter cape.
I under a soft warm duvet.
Dark nights and sun weakened days
wrap around us with the chill of winter
until earth begins to warm.

Madalin Bickel -Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

A pale sliver is slipping,
slipping
from the Beaver Moon.
We interrupt
her stellar conversation,
dragging along our dinosaur bones
and air pollution.
Our steel and glass scrape the skies;
our bunkers hunker down,
down.
Rising tides,
revolving wars
rearranging boundaries,
shores…
Beaching whales,
mass migrations,
dying bees,
decapitations…
Evil breeds in darkest places,
in broad daylight
behind doors.
Atrocities, velocities,
slowly spinning her into
our vast cone of loss…
Will we
on some future night
shadow her
with shards of light?

Cheryl Miller - Cañon City, CO - camcraig49@gmail.com

If

If only two letters
With strength to change history
The eternal wish

Iris Levin - Rockville Centre, NY - idlevin@aol.com

A washed up bottle
a plea a point a life
waves pound the shore
Time lost sealed
Who and why?
A wish not heard
Grains of sand slipping
So many lives intentionally
unheard drift bottles
Generations pass
In and out released
Like tides they come
They go snuffed
Send a package
A note a gift
Expect no
Acknowledgement
No semblance of joy
Waves wash away the precious
Ripples low tide stagnant
Grit at the edge a tribute forgotten
Take the hit ask not
Gratitude out to sea
Flotsam debris
Trash taken out
Cold dark waters of life
Engulfed
Who remembers
Consider it a bottle sent out to sea
Expect nothing
Throwing life's collections
Adrift in the ocean
No legacy a prolonged decomposition
A thought gone
A life floating
bobbing in a bottle.

Marilynn Deane Mendell - Fredericksburg, VA -
mmendell@winspincic.com

One sharp pinch
on the end of my tongue
and I spat my water
into the sink along with
the small brown house spider
leaving a taste of blood
faint, metallic
and I apologized as she
scurried under the dirty plates.

As the sting abated in the
piercing mint of mouthwash
my mind turned to her message,
this tiny housemate
also wanting a bedtime sip of water
and facing attack,
biting to survive.

Spiders spin webs to live, eat, and
it is said
to create beautiful tales in the threads
(who said daily life had to be dull)?

My own tongue perhaps too silent these days
required, perhaps, a jolt
from this Queen of Story--
reminder to weave what I can
in service to my own life
and to remember that
if we are to survive
sometimes the words need to bite.

Stacey Murphy - Ithaca, NY - staceycmurphy@gmail.com

Winter Meditation

Winter sun a gift
like a flower my head turns
to the light of life.

Iris Levin - Rockville Centre, NY - idlevin@aol.com

Stationary camera tied to a tree
a half mile from the house, images sent
back to me in black and white and tones
of gray. Mountain moon illuminates
snow-decked evergreens swaying in the wind

Predator appears, eyes glowing globes,
mountain lion dragging the body of a doe
across a patch of powdery landscape,
teeth clamped to the neck, muscles straining
to move the beast three times her size.

From the comfort of my living room,
I watch the big cat labor at burying the body,
pushing with her jaw, pawing at the brush.
She doesn't eat, but moves down the mountain.
I know she'll return, maybe not tonight, but soon.

Camera continues to roll, more visitors--
now a skunk, now a fox, a racoon and a packrat.
Each sniffs at the hidden treasure, partaking
of an easy meal in winter's harshness.
For an hour all is quiet.

Then suddenly, a frantic flock of golden eagles,
talons grab, sharp curved beaks tear open
the belly, entrails trail in the snow.
They batter one another with their wings,
knock into the camera turning it upside down.

Tomorrow, in daylight, when predators sleep,
I will walk down the path, listen for rustling
in the bush, hold my nose against the stench
of death, scare off the vultures, adjust
the camera, wipe the blood from the lens.

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

First upon arrival at campgrounds
Stretching feet and feeling woodchips
Scents of pines and oaks
Filling my whole being with joy

Strolling through the woods
Brings back the connection to the natural world
Opens wide the space all around

Trees that have undergone burns
A reminder of responsibility for every exchange
To care for in return for this beauty that it gives

Nighttime falls with cooler temperature
Bundling up and sitting close to campfire
The crackling sound of woodchips
Along with surrounding voices and laughter
As we settle into the night at Mountain High.

Natalie Warren - Laguna Hills, CA - nataliepwarren@yahoo.com

Happy Feet

King penguins waddle lazily
on the ice and think about
dinner while sea gulls
glide around screeching.
They are hungry, so
they go the ice's ledge
and dive. Within moments,
each has a fat char.
With power they launch
back onto the ice and
enjoy their meal.

David Blackey - La Crosse, IA - funkyjubu@yahoo.com

We left the oceans behind
We left the oceans behind
We paid no attention
We gave it no mind
We left the oceans behind.

We dig up the animal soil
We use dinosaur swamps for oil
We fill oceans with plastic
deem Nature elastic
We left the oceans behind.

We make oil and plastics crawl
We keep them at our beck and call
We drill through shale beds
We turn on our heads
We left the oceans behind.

We ship plastics all over the globe
We give rivers a garbage robe
We make 'em an island much bigger than France,
a watery bridge where plastics can dance
We left the oceans behind.

We made this world what it is
We made all this mess from Big Biz
But the rivers en route,
will soon give us the boot
'cause we left the oceans behind.

We left the oceans behind
We left the oceans behind
We paid no attention
We gave it no mind
We left the oceans behind.

Carolyn Clark - Newfield, NY - cclark707@gmail.com

On the Decision to Allow Oil and Gas Drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

In the north, where the sun lingers and the cold itself seems to breathe, there is a land untouched, a white sigh beneath violet skies. The caribou move across the horizon--silent, woven into the ice and grass--while the polar bear dreams beneath the aurora's gentle fire. This is a sanctorum without boundaries, and it listens to secrets older than memory.

But across the continent, in rooms filled with golden light and the thrum of distant ambition, a pen hovers above paper. A decision is written, and the words echo: The refuge will open. Oil. Gas. The veins of the earth, snaking beneath the permafrost, will be invaded, drawn out into the thirsty world. His signature is bold--and it presses upon the tundra like a boot upon snow.

The machines will come, metal giants against the hush, and the heart of the refuge will stutter. Yet in the static of news and debate, the land is not silent--it mourns and resists, its beauty refusing to be measured in barrels and contracts. The wind carries voices: of those who fear, those who hope, those who remember. The animals do not vote, but their tracks bear witness to their presence.

What is preserved, what is sacrificed? Is it progress, or is it hunger that bends the will of men toward the Arctic's promise? This story will blossom in headlines and courtrooms, but also in the ferociousness of those who protect all creations. This is an Arctic wildlife refuge, and we cannot fathom the disruption and rape of this sanctuary to so many of our animals and fauna that are struggling to live.

See arctic cotton in bloom, muskoxen holding the line against the cold. The decision is made, but the tundra is not conquered. It waits, ancient and patient, beneath the watch of the northern stars. We must keep it sacred and fight its death. The soul of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is more valuable than giving into the thirst to birth black liquid gold.

Betty O'Hearn - St. Petersburg, FL - mimiohearn@gmail.com

for Stephanie and Emily

A delicate hand put me down
by the sea.
Stephanie said,

"Emily fell asleep on my chest.
I was in the rocking chair.
I had my Kindle next to me, read
for half an hour to make sure
she was in a deep sleep
before moving her."

In Venice there is a dividing line between
the Grand Canal and all other canals.
When I hear your voice through the wall
It puts me at ease.

Walking on boards in San Marco Square
to get above the flooding, we pass
St. Mark's Basilica. Before they put the boards up
we bought two small watercolors
from an artist painting in the square.

At Harry's Bar
waiting for the sink water to get hot,
I let it flow over my hands.
Looking out the window of your childhood bedroom

a lightness washes over me.
In early morning
a cleansing rain comes down
deep, spiritual. The wind is music.

Stuart P. Radowitz - North Bellmore, NY -
stuartphilip777@yahoo.com

The morning mist rises
from the ivy-covered forest floor
where deer appear drinking
from the swift stream
that cuts across the valley.
The small Neanderthal band
of 20 men is gathering up
the calorie-full walnuts that line
the trees in this lush valley,
their own tiny paradise.

As far back as their cave stories tell
their clan has always harvested
and hunted in this hidden forest,
where they built an altar
to give thanks to the Goddess, Gaia,
but unbeknownst to them,
envious eyes have watched,
banded together with others
of their own *kind*, their own clan,
planning when and how to attack

for envious eyes have watched
every move the Neanderthals made
for weeks, watched how they entered
the forest and how full their baskets
of fruits and nuts were when they left.
The slaughter was swift and savage
without a sound from those others
as their bodies fell to the forest floor,
their blood drains into the earth,
and the bounty is there for the taking.

Within weeks these Homo sapiens
are at each other's throats for
the right to own this paradise. Killing
one another for their greed is far
greater than their good could ever be.

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - cportolano@hotmail.com

Is good enough good enough?
Greatness may be a phantom
a fleeting chimera,
impossible to attain,
and cause for many unending frustrations
especially for the industrialized world.

So long as we focus our energies on material ends,
focus all our energies on attaining trophies and blue ribbons,
or focus all our energies on the proverbial distant stars,
using up our natural capital to attain such proverbial ends.

And this focus may cause us
to live a world of fevered imaginings,
imaginings that are only chimeras
that impinge on the world all around and about,
imaginings that may cause others to have less,
imaginings that assume an endless frontier,
imaginings that often require conquest and war.

Now we never seem to have enough things,
shiny toys that fill our lives and strivings.
This constant need to acquire ever more and more things
requires that we always live for the future
to acquire more and more and more stuff.

Yet all that the future holds may be death and dying as
the world, Gaia, necessarily resists our grasping for ever more.
Maybe good enough allows a focus and enjoyment of the here
and the now, good enough may be the end of all we need?
Good enough may indeed be good enough!
Changing our behavior to strive for the good enough
maybe all that can save Gaia.

Sam Doctors - Petaluma, CA - samdoctors701@gmail.com

We should have known better,
knowing there have been in the earth's history
five world-wide extinctions,
almost total die-offs
of all types of flora and fauna.

Now just small alterations in atmospheric gases is
causing climate change here and there, there and here
we are monitoring these alterations in atmospheric gases
and its effects on ice and arctic tundra
created over many, many, many millennia.
We are measuring as glacier after glacier
shrinks and shrinks, calves, and then dissolves,
simply becoming one with the world's oceans.

We have chosen or by accident have chosen
to change the atmosphere around us,
burning ever more and more and more fossil fuels,
that have allowed those of us in the industrialized world
to enjoy the fruits of ever more material things.

Yet we should by now be aware
how delicate the balance
of our atmospheric gases
as our home planet,
the only planet yet found for sapien life
teeters on the knife edge,
about ready to fall off this knife edge,
and create the latest, the sixth great extinction,
create of the Anthropocene,
when of most of earth's flora and fauna,
most will become extinct,
and maybe this time including us?

Sam Doctors - Petaluma, CA - samdoctors701@gmail.com

Be the reason someone smiles today…
Please be kind and write to each other…

On The High Trail to Winter

The days, they thud like apples,
from a tree that's near-clean picked.
Some inefficient feast was done,
but what remains has kick!
And now the sky has wayward birds,
and happy are the squirrels,
while autumnal leaves all join the dance
in wind-carousing swirls.
A semi-temperate, final flourish,
of all the fauna-born.
…A last 'hurrah' from flora pals,
soon cut-back, bereft, forlorn.
For the winter comes, oh creature-dom,
to every tree and branch!
The crunchy leaves and green-rich plants
all see their colors blanch.
Know cold, you lakes and mountain streams!
Know ice-storm, frozen land!
If nature has provided naught,
then Death itself at hand.
Fair food becomes a scarcity
concealed 'neath mantled snow,
or holed-up 'gainst adversity
where sight and smell don't go.
With this in furry mind -- you beasts,
to keep fit, fed (and unhurt),
store nuts, or fodder, and learn the trails,
and keep yourselves alert!
Beware the mighty, and fermented, berry,
and the apple-jacked-up fruit**;**
don't slur love calls, or walk askew,
or be any less than astute.
Attend to business, as ages taught,
for a serious season descends**:**
Beg off that demon boozy bite, and,
stick with the herds
…or your flocking friends.

Steven P. Pody - Fredericksburg, VA - s_pody@msn.com