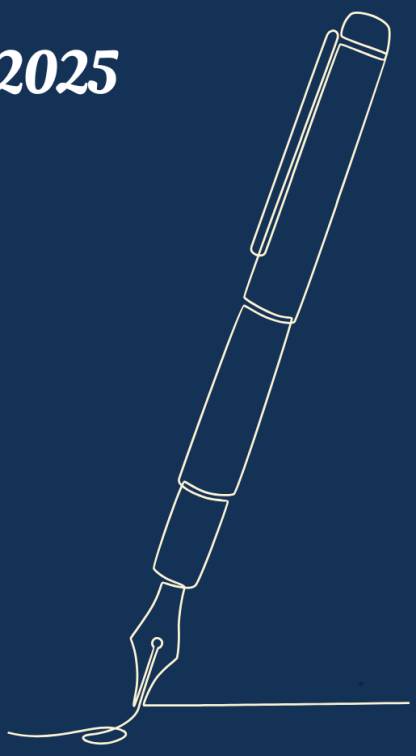
COMMUNITY POETRY SUBMISSIONS

LAKE OSWEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

2025



This April, in honor of National Poetry Month 2025, the Lake Oswego Public Library invited local poets ages 18 and older to submit 1-2 of their original poems to share with the community. We've compiled them here and invite you to explore the Library's fourth annual installment of Community Poetry Submissions.

Thank you, local poets!

The points of view that may be expressed in these poems, or by the poets, are not necessarily endorsed by the Lake Oswego Public Library or the City of Lake Oswego.

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“Coming in last” by Sara Barrett

I stayed in the lines.
Then the

Lines moved,

And I was left

Behind

“My Sister Rose, My Rock” by Ines Bojlesen, Lake Oswego

A delicate flower, fragrant petals,
A blush of crimson, a tint of red,
Pinnate leaves, a sturdy stem.

Yet inside, a rock
Brave, resilient, stoic
Unrelenting in her resolve
Standing firm among her kin.

Life is never easy;
Many losses she has faced.
But looking at her, you see
Serene beauty,
Graceful elegance.

Some around her
Mistake her deeply,
Wrong her hurtfully
Never understanding,
Never appreciating.

I, for one, see her as she is —
My rose, my rock, my sister.
Always there when I need her,
Never complaining, always listening.

A rose needs water,
Good soil as nourishment.
A rock needs minerals
To consolidate its matter.

In me, she must know she has
The one ready to sustain and steady her
With abundant gratitude,
Always willing to be there for her,
Even if just to say:
I love you, sister.

“Two Veterans” by James H Fenner, Col, USAF (Ret)

Christmas time draws near. What's new?
Last two weeks, two Veterans died.
Perhaps a thousand also did—or tried.

But I knew only these two:
Marine guy and Army man;
Vietnam and Afghanistan.
Grunt three years; 'copter pilot ten.
Both left wife and two young men.

Marine mentioned little; his art his solace.
VA counseling, psychiatry minor benefit brought us.
PTSD: Nightmares. Flashbacks. No sleep. Five decades.
His life: Oil painting, military model making, also his aids.
Historically accurate oil-on-canvas: Civil War,
American West, Florals. Some value bore.
Agent Orange: Cancer crawled in, did not leave.
Death no surprise, still unexpected.
Wife grieves, sons grieve, friends grieve.
Burial National Cemetery, full honors accepted.

Chopper man: Reserve duty helped to heal:
Camaraderie.
Sense of purpose.
Helping other soldiers.
Everyone thought his improvement was real.
Then ***BANG!*** One shot.
He died. We cried. We pined!
Hoot, Mon, were we blind!

Six decades of traumatic events.
Still doesn't make any sense.

Friends and family ask. "*What if ...?*"
Two extended families now grieve. "*But if ...?*"
Two more statistics–sadly–now show;
Tens of thousands Vets to go.

Rewind, repeat. Rewind, repeat. Rewind, repeat ....

Who's next?

“A Photograph” by James H Fenner

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They slept, gnarled hands together, Father, Mother.
They sat, hands clutching each other.
Seventy-Seven years married life together,
Their hands, Father, Mother, their constant tether.

Decades long, I failed to take–never took–that photograph.
Opportunity? Always be another time.
Few family photos: Some old, some bring a laugh.
Their wedding, 1930, Mom's flapper dress a shade of lime.

Dad on his horse. In their first car. Yellowstone.
Several together. Vacations. Dad at his big six-oh.
Fiftieth Anniversary. A few of each alone.
On the TV, last photo display—three in a row.

Dad's heart failing. I am there. His sleep sound.
Three days, three nights. We hold watch, stand guard.
Breathing rhythmically, now snorts; we gather 'round.
Breathing stops, starts—stops again. To watch is hard.

It stops for good. Mom sobs. Staff mobs.
Commotion, commotion. Mom cries and cries.
She mourns, cries, weeps—sobs. Gobs and gobs of sobs.
We all weep and mourn when a loved one dies.

Fingers that once rubbed his hands now rub his photograph.
Gnarly, age spotted, delicate, precious hands.
She sobs. Night and day thumb rubs his photo face.
Rubs and rubs the face away—one after another.

Called away, niece is there to comfort Mom.
A month comes and goes. Mom passes. Broken heart?
Clutched in pale, gnarled dead hand:
A creased and crumpled, well-rubbed, faceless photograph.

“Time it takes Time” by Jen H. Fultz

How are you
Measuring time
These days
Minutes or
Moments Maybe

I notice
A task at hand
Present
I create
Time that it takes

“Watermelon Red as the Color of Brake Lights” by Jen H. Fultz

Hummingbird baseline
Thrumming stunning whirl
Whoosh click monkey mind
Anchor muddy pearl

Flutter flit tree wind
Black bird orange wing
Vibrate biscuit paws
Urgent offering

Candle circle wavelength
Stripe hibiscus bone
Salt wash memory
Bookmark bring me home

"TIME TO DECIDE" by Linda Ruth Healy

I like to let a Decision make itself.

Deep inside some sunken cavern in my being,
Perhaps a special section below my stomach,
There is a forum where a Decision discovers who it is.

My job is to pose the question and to gather all available facts,
Chew them up, swallow, digest; then wait.

Little by little, the medley of quiet creatures who inhabit my varied
Personality show up, one by one, or sometimes in groups
And taste the facts that interest them.

After enough time, each one stands up, says nothing,
But looks the Decision directly in the eye for a full minute.

The communication is intense.

In silence, each leaves to go back to its usual haunts.

When all have departed, the Decision fills its lungs with air and breathes
Slowly out; fills its lungs with air and breathes slowly out again.
And a third time, fills its lungs until practically bursting,
Then breathes very, very slowly out.

THERE.

IT KNOWS WHAT IT IS NOW,

And rings the bell.

“HOMEDY HUM” by Linda Ruth Healy

That clickety road…
It’s cobblestone.
Red.
Roller skates CLACK across it.
My feet love its tread.

Shouts from front porches crackle the air:
“Who wants to skate now?”
“Let’s fix my doll’s hair!”
“We’ll jump rope.”
“Let’s hoop shoot!”
“Or start a tree club!”
“Play Capture the Flag!”
“Or, Three Men in a Tub!”

This short little block.
Just ten houses long
With its thirty-three kids,
Is a sort of a song,

A hum in my heart,
Wherever I roam,
A place where I lived,
The place I called HOME.

“THE EVERGLADES” by Ikhenoba, Marcel Joseph

To my seedlings

In the wetlands of verdant rainbow

Blue threads of the Everglades

And beyond.

I beat this leopard drum to a tempo

And blow this alligator flute to a rhythm.

It’s the song of our ancestors

Under the blue empyrean

You were born.

So, be still like bats.

A parrot wants to squawk.

This Mother earth is our breath.

The oceans, air, plants, and fire.

Are our brothers.

The moon, stars, and sun,

Because they glistened, our warriors’ dark forests

In the Upper and Lower Creeks

During the Trails of Tears.

Cyclones. Then whisper to white buffaloes,

And eagles,

They are a symbol of strength and they know

The centre skull of a raven, bearers of light and darkness.

Make the Mother Earth your spirit

She knows your crimson wounds,

And innermost thoughts.

In the same vein,

Know that everywhere is your nest.

And carry the flames of love on your palms.

Never caging a falcon,

The messenger from the great Breath maker.

Though, you will face hurricanes

Because the earth is full

Of venomous rattle snakes and spiders.

But you don’t need them.

So let your neon light sparkle in the dark

And don’t cut your mother’s tongue.

For there a mockingbird

Shall know your root.

Then when the full moon

And starry stars set on grey skies

Sit on the brown peat of the Everglades

Listen to tales of coyotes and crocodiles.

And carry the wind in your palms.

Oh, Native buds!

Stamp with your moccasins

On the wretched earth.

“IN SEARCH OF AN ELEPHANT’S EARS” by Ikhenoba, Marcel Joseph

They came in a green camouflage of a four-foot-box

Raised laden dust with their black wheels

In our cocoon at *Obalende*,

Somewhere in the sprawling boulders of Africa.

Molten faces, thick boots, thundering echoes

They handcuffed him and brushed his face

To the wretched earth.

You think your ink will blot your groans.

Haha! Never.

Now, 15th March, 1996.

You shall have your last breath.

Rustling leaves, sploshing oceans.

And before he whispered his last word,

Two bullets hit the raven’s skull.

Crimson liquids.

Vultures.

They zoomed into thin air.

But the flashes of lighting

From my mother’s oesophagus

Shuddered my roots.

And the goat in me bleated.

While beads of salty liquid

Covered my fur.

My stanchion was a parrot

That gurgles for helpless soldier ants.

And we know it's a prey

To the power, drunk jaguars in green camouflages.

But who will hear?

The bleating of a goat.

Well, no one.

Hunchback.

Life is full of venomous pythons and scorpions

Drunk with a golden chalice of power.

And the helpless soldier ants are chirping

At his grave.

But I just have to continue bleating

And I hope someday,

An elephant will hear my grunts.

“ASK ME” by ROSE LEFEBVRE

When the day is warm with smiles
and trees petticoat the sky,
ask me how I endured.
Others said I was strong,
yet I felt helpless, hopeless,
wondered if it would ever end,
and feeling guilty for that thought.

Ask me if I felt anger,
listen as I spout emotions,
express pain, without confrontation.
Ask me how I endured hurtful, venomous words,
spouted from lips that once spoke love,
and I’ll tell you how I escaped conflict,
let words ride the wind to glide away.

Today you, listening friend, are my rock.
Let me flow around you, encircle you,
ultimately move beyond grief, anger, pain,
to eddy in stillness and calm.

Ask me and listen.

“THE PHOTOGRAPHER” by ROSE LEFEBVRE

The landscape lies mute
beneath the dawn as a fog floats
across the pewter morning.
She strolls down a path, eyes seeking
serenity through the lens, a peace
she can capture, hold on to forever.
Her footsteps emboss
the shroud of leaves ‘neath her feet.

The buzz of cicadas echoes
in the wind, a ritualistic mantra.
Sabers of sunlight pierce
the day. Mist begins
to corkscrew away. Click. Click.
Leaf silhouettes and sun
weave a lacy patterned backdrop.

She lifts the camera to her eye,
clicks to capture a perfect image.
Tangles of light and shadow shift
through the soaring trees.
Apricot tinted snow flames
on the distant mountains.

She aims
to capture the evolution
of moments unfolding
like a tapestry of dreams before her.
Click.

“The Forgotten Garden” by Paul J Lyons

The dark rock walls, so old.
Hold many stories of another time.
Tiny white flowers shine light
Into the cracks that is their home.

Brick and moss hold each other softly
To guide footsteps to a quiet place.
Small hedges, long overgrown
Stand in line with no place to go.

A small wooden bench waits patiently
For the company of lovers, but none are near.
Swollen bark bears the wounds of many
Who carved their young love here long ago.

Rain gently washes an old maple above.
Leaves turn and twist and fall.
Below, one past rose petal holds on
For one more day of sun.

A song bird prays a litany of this day.
A tarnished wind chime answers.
It rings on and on and I wonder
If anyone else is listening.

“A Bright Sunny Day” by Paul J Lyons

Walking through the backyard, I see so much.
New flowers blooming. Apple flowers rising.
Lots of worms looking for their holes.
Birds chirping and flying in troops.

The sun is out warming the cool air.
Light breezes move the leaves to wave.
A squirrel looks at me for one second.
Then bounds into a hiding place.

The fresh air is so full of blossoms.
Some trees wave as I dance with them.
The Trillium have left until next year.
Everything around me is fresh and full of life.

“Receiving” by Jeffrey S. Matthews

Guide me please into the touch
of just a whisper from the greeting
of the jubilant morning sun
cut like diamonds
by the trenchant hands of shadows
from maple limbs gushing elegant leaves
adorned in the numinous mantel
of late August golden light

how it is this morning the day
awaits us
like no other
like every other first last day of our lives
to see how best each step
might take us
if only one inch deeper
below the iron shell of assumptions
into the thing in and of itself
released from the tyranny of the tangible
to see if at last we might hear
and begin to comprehend
all the many voices
all the many languages of light
both foreign and native
born from struggle and eruption
torn to shreds by occasional epiphany
and exhausted by enormous travel
from eternity into time
to be renewed yet again
only by the listening eye
the seeing ear
in this day
this day of all days
standing always with surprise
misery and mercy
before us

O may we be received
by receiving now and always
this very day

“Wallowa River Music” by Jeffrey S. Matthews

1.

From where comes irresistible
this need to sing so loud and long
the tireless song of the river
the song of one droning note
of a thousand colors
raucous in its splashing cacophony
wild upon the tongue
of the current that bellows
only the one repeating tone
of the inevitable over and over
railing without pity
against the woeful drive of the kokanee
mad with fertility and delusions
of oceans beyond the deafening
siren of the river
hysterically warning
of the ruthless crescendo
soon coming from its hypnotic song

2.

I sing by listening
and listen by singing
in the chorus of one
the choir of infinite number
from the gushing chant of water
of waters never the same
always the same
waters long gone that still remain
yet never stop in their ranting flow
so never to fail that river music
born and reborn from the frantic
soothing motion of liquid hands
across the stunning body
the treacherous flesh
the very mind of the river
bearer of elusive mystery
of inescapable blaring truth

carrier of diaphanous wiggling
both to and from origin and conclusion
so sings the river loud and long

3.

Was it the nascent noise
inside the womb that humming
of blood whirling the syncopating
beat of a mother's heart that now
lures my voice to raise and emerge
through the fetal veins of the river's song
to lift the inconsolable desire of mortal sounds
shimmering for a moment in the joyful noise
of harmonic tremor bursting resonant
in the one true cleansing note
of the river's song loud and long

O though the river will never hear me
I will keep singing with it
until I might be heard
joining with the river
so loud and so long

“cover my joints in moss” by Kayla Mauriello

cover my joints in moss
to cushion my bones
fulcrum and lever wonders
that carry me forward
through this artificial world
give me a lichen-coated trunk
like that of the Oregon oak
to hold up my weary being
bent toward earth
invited by that ever-present
force that plants me firmly
to the top of the world

“Ode to a Coffee Cup” by Penny Mc Donald

You help me emerge from night and darkness.

Strong and bold, pure pleasure

You are with me when quiet is everything

You are with me when dawn emerges, birds chatter and sing

. Beauty, hope, possibility, they have survived the night.

On any morning at home alone

You connect me to my mom—my new Buy Nothing Limoges demitasse, delicate and scrolled, recalling treasures she discovered at Saturday sales

You connect me to my daughter—big white cup & saucer with tiny flowers she found me, a treat when it is hot from the dishwasher ready to be with me again

You are also my companion outside my home

Even just a few blocks away to beloved coffee shops

hanging out to relax read write people watch

You have been my loyal companion in other Americas

Coffee growing right outside my classroom window

The community of afternoon Cafecito

A mug with masked nurses left on my porch by a kind stranger during Covid reminds me: I've slowed down now. I miss vagabonding.

But even a Facebook photo of you takes me traveling again…

little cup with banana from the Botero museum in Bogotá

pale turquoise cup near art of friends in Costa Rica

Portland or Panamá

You sit by my many lists, to bring order

to groceries to worries

You sit by my newspaper, my Kindle, my book

You sit by my roller ball, my journal, my red laptop-- A musing will become children's book poem blog memory to share with grandkids?

We are in such good company, Coffee Cup and me

with others waking from the night to beauty

others choosing Hope over fear

"Since Your Death" by David G. Meier

These past two weeks have felt like a year…
since your death, every day passes so slow
and I keep waiting for the day to come
when I don't see you every place that I go.

Please stop looking at me in the mirror…
this morning you startled me.
Last night in the kitchen
you made me spill my tea.

Our bed has become scary.
It is still warm where you've laid.
When you whisper in my ear
it gives me shivers and makes me afraid.

I never wanted to be without you
but now I want to be alone for a while.
The day that my life becomes mundane again
is the day that I can begin to smile.

You can move on now
I still have part of you inside.
You do not know it
but you left me a gift before you died.

I'm pregnant. It's a boy.
Your legacy will go on.
It is time for you to leave now
it is alright to be gone.

“Ever Since You’ve Left” by David G. Meier

Ever since you've left,
my world has been upside down.
I've been telling myself it will soon get better,
but what is better than having you around?

I can’t sleep at night
and I can’t wait for each day to end.
My dreams are becoming shorter
and loneliness is my only friend.

Your picture on the wall haunts me
and sometimes I can feel it’s stare.
The memories in each room are overwhelming,
almost too much to bear.

Sometimes, at night, I reach to hold your body
but there is only the empty space that I’ve saved for you.
Who would have ever thought that holding nothing
would be such a hard thing to do?

“Blossoms Sing under the Moonlight” by Cesar Moran – Cahusac

Sometimes I think thoughts that leave me thinking..
They bounce in my head, sliding through a brain fog
Worrisome sensations plague me
Tantalizing my motivation to decipher them
Yet corroding my efforts to have inner harmony
I wonder if I can stop pondering in order to have clarity,
To enact at least a sense of personal coherence
Thoughts have the peculiarity to vibrate,
They resonate in my limbs
My guts feel staccatos of short disrupted tremors
Hosting and hailing recurrent hordes of rhythmic angst
To somehow manage this chaotic conundrum, I walk.
As I am strolling submerged in my intellectual rampage
Each step I take reverberate an itch my heart
The moon is full tonight and its light is a bit soothing,
I feel a whiff of a gentle floral fruity fragrance
It has a light honey -ish undertone
I turn my head following it and there it was
A tree, cloaked in white scarlet tainted blooms.
I got closer, and its scent transfixed me
I was in awe; it was showing off its splendor
Moonlight bathed it gently, the breeze was gentle
I heard a gentle hum
I smiled to the tune and closed my eyes
In a brisk my tornado thoughts appeased themselves
Behaving like a legato they were connecting
Transitioning seamlessly and smoothly
I was listening to plum blossoms sing under the moonlight
Who knew they could sing? Who thought of even listening?
But, from then on, I always stop to hear blossoms sing
Their chants are fulfilling and ease appeases the soul.
When you see a tree flowering away, listen to what it has to say.

“Solitude Street Queen” by Cesar Moran – Cahusac

The poet was reciting vividly her words.
These bounced off the walls in colorful echoes.
The audience was captivated, charmed
Delightfulness seemed to engulf the alley
A gentle caress was transferred to the breeze seamlessly
Then she appeared, walking barefooted,
Stalking and prowling, yet carefully moving slowly
Her presence was relentless, her pace was sure
Firm, her attire was of a fearless battle worn warrior
Her gaze burnt, yet there was a deep peaceful abyss behind it
Nobody dared to look or turn their heads.
She walked across the recital and absorbed the words
The metaphors diluted in her aura,
It swallowed everything that was thrown at her
She continued walking carrying a bag that held mystery tokens
She took the space, her depth was of an endless abyss
The poet pretended she was not there and continued
Her voice dwarfed in the presence of this solitude street queen
She walked towards me, eye contact was inevitable,
Deep strength of an apathetic human whirlpool is what I saw
Her face was fearless, serene, gentle and humane
She moved like a glacier through the alley,
The poet and audience felt invaded, swallowed, and shaken
Her stench was of immense dimensions, it left a trail of anxiety
Despite this, nobody dared to move. Nobody budged.
Maybe it was fear that held them in place
She passed behind my chair, her bag brushed my shoulder,
I felt the heaviness that knowledge of the one who has mastered self-survival carries
Silence was her shield, and it protected her spirit
I turned my head and saw her walk softly away.
It seemed as she floated over the terrain.
As she vanished in the flow of pedestrians
I wondered how she survived and if I would see her again
Maybe in another poetry recital,
Or in some alley we will cross gazes again
Hopefully this time acknowledging each other silently.

“CASEY – SEVENTY YEARS LATER, OCTOBER 1994” by Neil Murphy

THE OLD MAN LAY IN BED BECOMING LISTLESS AND FRAIL
‘TWAS THE WEEK EACH YEAR THEY PLAYED FOR BASEBALL’S HOLY GRAIL
HE LONGED TO HEAR OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM BEING PLAYED
AND TO SEE THE STARS AND STRIPES FLYING FROM THE POLE WHERE IT STAYED

AH, TO HEAR THE CRACK OF THE BAT IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON
THE VOICES OF THE HAWKERS SINGING OUT THEIR LILTING TUNE
THE HISS OF THE BALL AS IT SOUNDLY SMACKS A TIME WORN LEATHER GLOVE
THIS IS WHAT HE WANTED TO HEAR FROM HIS ONE AND ONLY LOVE

HIS GRANDSON STOOD BESIDE THE BED HOLDING BACK A TEAR
HE LEANED OVER AND WHISPERED, “SORRY GRANDPA BUT NOT THIS YEAR”
THE OLD MAN LOOKED UP CONFUSED AND SAID “I JUST DON’T UNDERSTAND
IT HAPPENS EVERY YEAR IN THIS GREAT AND WONDERFUL LAND”

SO THE GRANDSON TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO THE WARRIOR LYING THERE
‘TIS NOT THE GAME BUT FOR THE MONEY THAT THEY NOW SEEM TO CARE
BUT YOU, GRANDPA, YOU GAVE IT YOUR ALL IN PRIDE AND FAME
THESE FELLOWS NOWADAYS BRING TO THE CONTEST ONLY THEIR GREED AND SHAME

AND SO AS THE SHADOWS FADED ON THAT SADLY TRAGIC DAY
THE OLD MAN’S SPIRIT HAD JUST ONE MORE THING TO SAY
“BATTING IN THE CLEANUP SLOT, AS IN THE DAYS OF YORE
CASEY, THE MIGHTY CASEY, WILL SAVE THE GAME ONCE MORE”

AND SO IN HIS DREAM THE BALL COMES A-FLYING
HIS EYES NOW ONLY SEE THAT HIS GRANDSON IS CRYING
“PLEASE,” HE SAYS, “MY BOY YOU MUST’NT DO THAT
FOR CASEY, THE MIGHT CASEY, IS NOW AT THE BAT”

HE SMASHES THE SPHERE AND IT BECOMES A SPECK STILL RISING OVER THE
WALL
AND AS THE SUN GOES DOWN HE HEARS A DISTANT TRUMPET CALL
SO CASEY’S SPIRIT THROUGHOUT THIS LAND WILL ALWAYS AND EVER ROAM
AS CASEY, THE MIGHTY CASEY, TROTS ROUND THE BASES TO HIS ETERNAL HOME

“CHRISTMAS 1999” by Neil Murphy

IT’S CHRISTMAS TIME SO EXCITING FOR A YOUNG GIRL OF TEN
THE JOY OF GIVING HER LOVE SHE’LL FEEL ONCE AGAIN
SHE’S WRAPPING HIS GIFT BUT IT DOESN’T FEEL RIGHT
THESE TASKS ARE DIFFICULT FOR THOSE WITHOUT SIGHT

HER DAD WALKED BY AND SAID “LET ME HELP YOU WITH THAT”
TOGETHER THEY PUT ON THE PAPER SO SMOOTH AND SO FLAT
HE GAVE HER A HUG AND THANKED GOD ABOVE
FOR SENDING HIM THIS CHILD FILLED WITH INNOCENT LOVE

FAMILY CHRISTMAS DAY CAME AND SHE GAVE HIM THE BOX THEY HAD WRAPPED WITH CARE
HE REMEMBERED IT TOO, A LABOR OF LOVE THEY BOTH COULD SHARE
CAREFULLY HE OPENED THE BOX BUT PERPLEXED HE CRIED
IT’S EMPTY MY ANGEL, YOU FORGOT TO PUT THE GIFT INSIDE

OH DADDY SHE SHOUTED WITH CHILD LIKE GLEE
IT’S FILLED WITH KISSES TO YOU SENT BY ME
EACH TIME YOU OPEN THE BOX AND TAKE A PEEK
MY TENDER KISS COMES TO SOFTLY CARESS YOUR CHEEK

AN OLD MAN’S TREMBLING HAND REACHES FOR A TATTERED BOX ON THE BESIDE CART
WHEN HE TOUCHES IT A TEAR DROP FALLS AND THE MEMORIES START
HE REMEMBERS ALL THE GOOD TIMES AND BREATHES A LABORED SIGH
HE OPENS THE BOX AND ALL THE KISSES COME TO SAY A FINAL GOODBYE

THE MURPHYS
NEIL & KAREN

“As a Café Troglodyte” by John Henry Rolston

As a café troglodyte
A Larkian of West Linn
        If you will

I’ll bury my head in the bowers
Of a book – like a bat
        Sort of

Like a bear hibernating
Unwary of the fare lurking
        Wary of me

I’ll cross the road like a chicken
Just to go to Starbawk-bawk-bawk
        (Well, funny to me)

Some say I’m trapped in the
Travesties of a Trappist
        Maybe so

My ragged body is a temple
Dusty with the sins
        I’ve sown

Half collapsed
I’m resting for the Hell of afterlife
        Well deserved

I spurn until I’m spurned
Drinking my coffee’s like
        Rolling a rock

To me it rains everyday
Even though cloudless
        Even droughty

But abandoning an abandoned world
Into the universe of a black holed coffee
        Seems just

Paraplegic to social norms
Is saner than the insanity of, say,
        Idolizing actors

“One Day in the Spring” by John Henry Rolston

One day in the spring on the coast of France
In Toulon as the gulls fly in from the sea
And the wind blows out off the land,
You will walk
With a song on your lips and a green rose
In your hair
Your blouse buttoned low and your eyes
Directed at the harbor
Or at a stranger or at the color
Of the fallen leaf from some willow tree
- Had I just looked up from poetry,
Had I simply felt
The crossing of your shadow upon me
And accepted fates last
Hand at correcting its blunder
        Our mystery would be calmed
And my gentle gentle kiss
Would finally finally be lain upon
Your lips

“What my brother might say if — Today was still his:” by LeeAnn Rooney

Look at those mountains covered in a flurry of white.
Let’s go among the hemlocks, pines, and cottonwoods.
Make snowballs and bombard each other — until we fall
laughing then crying: wet, cold, and happy!

David speaks:

Did you know that I spent hours taking
photographs of trees — and every once in a while
secretly snapped one of you?
Your auburn hair on fire — your shy smile — inquisitive eyes.

In society—

I felt awkward, a misfit; but around you —
I felt empowered and special and free to be me.
Chasing my dragons, singing out loud, skipping and dancing to
my own silent flurry of notes.

I speak:

He called me “lit’l big sis”
Now he might say, “I miss you lit’l big sis”
won't you come and play?

I miss you too big lit’l brother…

“Tender My Step” by Patty Waalkes

Tender, Oh Tender My Step
And Sigh My Voice
That I Do Not Break The Grass
Or Stir The Dust
That Toil Has Bore,
For The Ground I Walk Is Brown
And Broad
And Sacred.

Whisper, Oh Whisper My Presence
And Tremble My Spirit,
For The Earth Would Cry Out
If My Feet Did Not Gentle
And Rhythm Themselves
To Her Songs.
A Blue Mountain Sky
Tied Round With Pale Ribbons
Can Still The Hands Of Time
And Surface Eternity
Out Of A Marsh
Where One Moist Moment Of Solitude Is Longer
Than A Day.

Bullfrog Come & Low Your Mood
Across The Turning Water,
The Sun Has Yet To Arch The Sky
And I Am Forming Eyes That Feel;
For An Ant Riding A Bent Of Grass
& A Blackbird Slanting The Ground On End
Are A Universe More Reverent Than
Any Prayer That I Could Utter,
Except Perpetual Silence.

Care With Me For A Butterfly Field,
Yellow Minuets Through The Clover.
Care With Me For A Dragonfly Day,
Blue Beads On A Spindle Of Silver.

Care With Me Before Human Indifference
Corners The Wind,
Crushing Breath From Her Sides,
Bruising Her Temples,
Until Her Songs Cannot Joy
Full And Free,
And Concrete Covers The Dream
Where The Reeds Blew Once…
Tender,
Oh, Care With Me Tender.

“How Will I Know Who You Are” by Patty Waalkes

There Are Boundaries To Be Respected
And Lines Not To Be Overstepped;
There Are Concrete Walls
And Asphalt Squares
And Man Made Cells
To Shut Out And Separate.

But Who Can Contain The Wind
In A Box
Or Ever Change Its Direction?
Who Can Catch A Thought
In A Hand,
A Tear In The Dark,
A Laugh In A Silence
Or Presume To Contain A Whisper?

Love Is Free
And In Turn Frees Us.
Must We Replace The Stars
With Neon Signs
And Tinsel Hallelujahs?
Must We Discard Openness
Or Arm Ourselves With Pretense?
If Love Is Not Real
Then Life Is An Illusion,
A Chasm Into Which The Lonely Fall,
The Echo Of A Sigh Hitting Bottom.

How Little We Know,
How Short A Distance Runs Our Vision.
For Love Is Genuine,
A Tedious Balance
Between Giving And Taking,
Seeking Expression
In The Swift Undercurrent We Call Life.

It Is Love That Draws Us
Beyond Ourselves,
For Love Has Many Faces
And Not One Of Them Is False.
So Meet Me
Where We Have Never Been
On Ground Yet Unformed.

Otherwise,
How Will I Know Who You Are
If I Have Never Looked With Your Eyes?
How Will I Know What You Think
If I Have Never Touched Your Mind?
How Will I Know What You Love
If I Have Never Passed Through Your Heart?

And So It Is
That To This Precise Extent:
I Will Never Know Who I Am
If I Do Not Follow His Voice.

“The garden within” by Rosemary Zanke

I have reached the edge of myself
leave the dead parts at the door
sweep the release from my eyes and thank the sun for its nudging.

I’m not used to the light yet
mist of past memories drops down to the stretch of green grass.
A Steller Jay calls me to his side
his black crest swivels and dips.
A blessing. Encouragement.
Pink azaleas dance in the garden whispering hymns only my soul can hear.

“Pausing on Vermeer’s Woman Reading a Letter” by Rosemary Zanke

Blue and sand still life
A voyeuristic view.
Paynes gray pulling downcast at the corner
A private pause to connect with a letter
A pregnant pause at the table

Reading for the first time or the seventh
sitting then standing, standing then sitting
body unaware of the wave of words.

Perhaps a voice popping into minds ear
a felt breath at the neck
light focused on the peak of her belly and the white of her collar.