

## 59. MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

### **Santiago's Vision**

Sea-colored eyes  
Dream lions at dusk,  
Pry a hundred fathoms  
deep,  
Where purple marlin  
feed.

Under the moon,  
La Mar undisguised  
Dances naked  
For his cheerful,  
Undefeated eyes.

### **DARK MOONSHINE**

Beowulf or Grendel, which is which?  
Evil or good, savior or witch,  
Prison or key, lady or bitch?

One and One is always One . . .  
Diamonds and coal, shadow and sun,  
Part and whole, done and undone.

Which is which? Why bother to ask?  
Canvas to paint AND wine to cask,  
Faith to saint AND persona to mask.

Beowulf or Grendel, what's in a name?  
Victor and Victim are one and the same . . .  
Yes and no, puzzle and piece,  
Stop and go, man and beast.

Need a clue? Can't you see?  
You is You; I is Me.

## **Brainstorms**

Watch the way Brutus  
an honorable man  
deceived by wily Cassius  
sticks his knife into  
Caesar's ambition  
then pick up your pen  
and drive the point  
deep into the heart  
of the play.

Now stand in the Forum  
with Mark Antony  
and speak  
for all the noble Romans  
poets and teachers.

Show the slashes  
in your toga  
your bloody hands  
the scars from your battle  
with Shakespeare.

Great-Grandmother Preskitt,  
blind, dying alone,  
in a little room in a nursing home,  
while I swam in YWCA pools,  
busy being alive and young.

## **FAILURE**

bitter metal  
a door slamming  
a bell tolling  
a flooded wheatfield  
a turned shoulder

## **Oklahoma K. O.**

Smitten by the robber  
or the robber's smile  
I'd most likely  
turn the other cheek

Like hell I would

Small bruises to the brain  
An accumulation  
of years  
of being hit

And hitting back

## **Forced Ceremonies**

I have shared  
my life with  
others, and  
like breaking the bread  
and wine, it is ritual as  
only these  
things  
can be.

## **Sad Notes from the Middle Ages**

Last night  
They had a superduper TV show  
All about the Sixties.

My youth has become History:  
Golden Oldies

Peace signs,  
Causes no one cares about,  
Funny-looking pictures  
In the last chapter.

Tie-dyed t-shirts,  
Leather chokers,  
Hand-painted clogs,

Clothing was a **STATEMENT** of belief  
And now finds itself  
Mildewing in Good Will stores.

Double-knit slacks,  
Dacron blouses,  
Wash-and-Wear polyester,  
And sensible shoes,  
Sooner or later,  
Everyone sells out.

## **The Uses and Abuses of Ambiguity**

Trying to say impossible things,  
and I remember  
that words are not enough,  
are impossibly inadequate,  
flimsy stuffing for feelings,  
another form of disguise.

Watch me.  
My actions don't tell lies.

## **Love with an Improper Stranger**

Within my head  
that softly blends with yours  
and with the night,  
there is a part of you,  
like a charade  
I am called upon to solve.

## **Fairy-Tale World**

THE WOLF SPEAKS:

Those rotten, no-good little pigs!  
Don't they know  
that life is savage  
and each animal has his part to play –  
    some to eat,  
    some to be eaten –  
THE WAY THINGS WERE  
until . . .  
some rabble-rousing outside agitator  
came in, organized those little pigs!

“Give us homes! Not pig sties!  
“Bigger!”                      “Better!”  
“Protect us from the Big Bad Wolf!”

Now all Creation,  
is turned upside down,  
    my downside scalded raw,  
and who knows what those uppity little pigs  
    will develop a taste for tomorrow?

I only hope  
it's  
not  
wolf  
steak.

## **Loose Talk and Stacked Cadavers**

Hospital Thoughts

Bright colors –  
Precise times – 7:53, 8:09, 9:47 –  
Old magazines  
Vending machines with Twinkies  
    and smoked almonds –  
Rows of anxious eyes –  
    Life and Death in battle  
    So near.

No one really reading,  
Just looking at papers and magazines,  
Talking in quiet tones,  
Eyes unfocused,  
Aimed at blank walls,  
    cheap prints,  
    and no smoking signs.

A woman walks by,  
    carrying a brown-and-white stuffed puppy,  
and I hear something about cantaloupes,  
    gasoline prices, Obamacare – loose talk,  
    then a loud voice paging  
        mysterious people on the intercom,

And  
behind this wall  
against which I lean  
    the slash of the scalpel,  
    blood, wounds, guts,  
    pain not felt yet.

## **Star Trek Again**

Do you remember  
lusting after the alien,  
just devilish enough  
for a teenage girl  
to know it was so wrong  
to want his hands on her,  
to ache to see yearning  
in his cold intellectual eyes?

How might that first forbidden desire  
have encouraged  
other adventures,  
other dark quests,  
for reluctant passions?

## **Say that I wanted you**

that cold night  
starless and dark with shadows  
my cheek soft against your chest  
myself suddenly small  
safe in the circle of your arms  
nuzzled against that spot  
where your neck meets your shoulder  
and you smell just of you

Say I wanted you  
inside me  
touching all the right places  
in all the right ways  
passions reborn  
pleasures re-discovered  
old wounds healed

Say that I wanted you  
but it wasn't enough

## **Words from the Edge**

Now  
How can I capture  
the moment of such  
contentment,  
sitting here, jotting words  
as though I owned them,  
forcing out the voice next door,  
the grumble of my stomach,  
proud as this power  
captures my pen and let's me  
lock the door on all the things I am,  
writing a hole  
in the universe  
that is mine?

## **Embrace**

How did I fool myself  
Even as I told myself  
I see you  
I know when I lie?

What I felt as passion  
Hot enough to burn,  
Pleased me,  
Deceived me.

Not heat,  
Ice, ice, ice,  
A burning embrace,  
Hurt, hurt, hurt,  
Hidden as pleasure.

Cold, cold, cold.  
Something empty  
Where your heart would be.  
I'm done.  
I will not embrace ice.

## **Six-Word Memoirs**

Honeycrisp apples are proof god exists.  
Kiss me like you mean it.  
Curl my toes, if you can.  
I believe in life before death.  
Doneness counts, but not done yet.

## **Text Poem**

How cn it hurt so much  
2 say bye 2 somethng  
I nvr evn had  
Just held in memory  
cherished like life  
wanted like sun  
needed like breath?

## **Metapoem**

my poem is a  
small sound,  
an empty road,  
rain,  
a shadow,  
a gauze curtain  
fluttering in the eyes  
of an abandoned house.

# FOUND POEMS

## A LIVING DOLL

Mommy, but I don't want to go.

I worked all night on this stupid costume  
and you're going to smile  
and dance  
and have  
a good time!

Mommy! Don't tie my shoe so tight.

"Children should be seen, and not hurt."

--McDonald's slogan, 1979

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### A M.A.S.H. Note

When a doctor will cut into a patient  
and it's cold  
-- like it's cold today --  
steam will rise from the cut  
and the doctor will warm himself  
over the opened wound.

Could anybody look on that  
and not be changed?

\* \* \* \* \*

"Why don't you feel what I feel when I care?"

-- "Pleasant Valley Sunday," the Monkees





before he was my father

a young man  
barely 21  
loose-limbed  
jug-eared  
gawky  
in his bombardier leathers

lined in fleece  
even his boots  
were designed  
to keep him warm  
as he clung

to the belly  
of the plane  
in his gunner's bubble



an Oklahoma boy  
in an English field

not yet limping

his wartime souvenir

dark-haired like my sister  
dusky like my brother

what kept him alive  
to die estranged  
50 years later

I look for myself  
in his hooded eyes



Sandra Effinger  
Quartz Mountain Fall 2002

## Adopt a Relative 25¢

by Sandra Effinger



The faces change, the houses change,  
but the form of the family group photo  
is eternal. A visual tradition.

The row of relatives,  
trying to look unposed,  
as they pose, in front of the house.

Careful notes on the back of a photo  
you've seen hundreds of times  
in your own family albums.

Written in that beautiful script  
our grandmothers learned,  
Those crooked back r's  
and curlicue ascenders,  
Must be a copperplate nib.

Did blue ink fade to purple?

*Wesley, 2/2/85  
October 2, 1985  
Mary Jo Brumby Home*

Home

from an OWP presentation by Freeda Richardson