

Poet's Choice

Welcome to the Winter 2014 Muses' Gallery. The poets included here found inspiration all around them - weather, architecture, games, scientific journals, and relationships.

Enjoy & keep on creating!



Marilyn Peretti, Photographer

Icy Path

By

Marilyn Peretti

It's heading to Big Rock,
this path covered with snow,
and I won't make it all the way today.
Some melts in sun, then refreezes,
making ice underfoot, slippery
traveling in the woods. Just glory
in the brilliance of the white-out
beneath the slim brown verticals
of bare trees, froth of dry plants'
yellow below, like a bed of hay
to comfort chilled animals.

The temperature is up to 35,
so lovers of trees hurried to
be here, finished their shopping
and filling the tank, to retreat
to this wooded wonderland
speaking its welcome voice
of silence.

Pam Larson
Arlington Heights

snow storm
ducks gather at the
pond...

all flights canceled



Pamela Larson, Photographer

Two White Snow
Geese

By

Joseph Kuhn Carey

Glencoe

Two snow-white snow geese,
standing on a solitary sand bank
somewhere between Muscoda and Boscobel
along the wide but shallow Wisconsin River,
thinking each other's thoughts,
nibbling on whatever's closest at hand,
looking at the colored canoes full of
boy scouts skimming by and later
making camp on a big, flat sand island
across the way, two white snow geese
meditating on the fall, the changing colors
of the leaves on the river bank trees,
the drop in temperature at night,
the need to fly south to survive
another bitter Midwest winter,
two white snow geese snuggling amidst
an avalanche of quiet and soft bubbling river currents,
finally flying off in beautiful long, limber fashion
with majestic high honks and silky smooth wing-flaps,
soaring like tiny white jets into the
clear, crisp, impossibly blue early morning sky.



Ann Lamas, Photographer

Photograph

By

Ann Lamas

Chicago

A boy in the snapshot springs out to squint-eyed mornings. He bounds down concave stairs, heavy steps and thoughts rounding inward, his private and glorious life. Brushing past bright-blue flowers, never looking back at a solitary shadow in the doorway. Every day she waves from her heart the leave-taking of a nearly grown boy running out of view, carelessly changing.



Joe Glaser, Photographer

Nixed

By

James Reiss

Wilmette

I offered my colleague a lift. He said, "I'm good."
Good for what, I wanted to know. For the road?

In my lobby I held out an ad for free donuts. My
doorman
raised his hand like a stop sign and said, "I'm
good."

Upstairs my nine-year-old said, "I'm good" when I
bent
to plant a how-are-you kiss on his forehead.

Only my partner guffawed after glimpsing
my pinecone bouquet. She shook her head, "No
thanks."

Denial

By

Judith Tullis

Indian Head Park



Don't say goodbye, I begged,
my mouth full of medical anecdotes,
biblical quotes and other magical thinking.
We'll meet next month at the Strawberry Fair,
eat shortcake and complain about calories.
Not chemo.

I'll be blind to outward signs,
a forever friend seeing you still
in pony tail and poodle skirt.
Though I chuckle with many,
we always laugh till our sides hurt.
Not now.

Others have vanished with their scents
of lavender or pipe tobacco,
leaving an odorless void.
Don't you withdraw the waft of
sun-dried bedsheets and hot apple crisp.
Not you.

Judith Tullis, Photographer

The Sun Over Lake Michigan

By

Charlotte Digregorio

Winnetka

2013 Second Place Winner (Lake Michigan Category) of Poets & Patrons 57th Annual Chicagoland Contest



James Paradiso, Photographer

Wind strokes us,
a gull cries, tilting
at lake's edge.

On a wayward afternoon,
oars measured like wings,
we sail in tandem over

the lull of ripples,
deepening blue.
Evergreens steady us
from a distance.

Ashore, walking in down boots,
I unspool my memories
of his breezy smile.

Branches, scented yesterday
with cherry blossoms, are
stripped bare.

Sunlight sails over
arctic waves,
piercing the ice ledge.

Sunbeams change course,
soften my stiff face,
awaken my dark eyes.
I melt into winter.

What's in a Name

By

Joe Glaser

Today I learned that
bottle-nosed dolphins
have their own names.

Persons of the sea
I will call them mersons!
these precocious creatures
possess intelligence
to perhaps rival our own.

The sociodolphologists say
self-naming occurs after birth
in chirps and squeaks and whistles
forming a unique signature
and a dolphin will trill back its name
when addressed by other dolphins
or even a lyrical human.

There is no guarantee
that every merson
addressed by a person
will answer to its name for
he or she may be snooty
or still nursing a teenage sulk
or even flirting for an inter-species tryst.

Watch the scientific mind spin
as the egg of alien intelligence
cracks open right here on Earth.

And watch for vast computers to be datamining
the myriad sounds of the seven seas
in search of linguistic insights
while sea creatures fret their loss of privacy.

Like a Cathedral Arch

By

Jill Charles

Chicago, IL



Jennifer Dotson, Photographer

The old professor scolded her
"You can never be an architect
Women have no sense of spatial reasoning."

She showed more sense than he.
Studied her way into two colleges,
Under cedars in Seattle,
By Denver's Rocky Mountains.
She sketched and unwound lines
On her easel pad and computer screen
Sure as threads on a loom.

She made her own way to Rome
Prayed in the Vatican garden
Traced the curve of the Colosseum
Smiled at Bernini's elephant.
She sipped espresso and wine
And fresh water bubbling
From fountains built two thousand years ago.

Under the Space Needle mushroom
She went to work on the courthouse
Added wheelchair ramps,
Equal entry for all.

She designed a rain roof
Across a school playground
For hopscotch under drumming drops
And a science lab
Between four old pine trees
With windows on three sides
Where other girls and boys could look out and
dream.

Her small white hands
Raised buildings up
With hidden strength
Like a cathedral arch.



Kathy Lohrum Cotton, Photographer & Artist

My Seasons

By

**Kathy Lohrum
Cotton**

Anna

Two pale-green decades
of limber shoot unfolding,
stretching skyward,
lean and windblown
in mottled shade of family canopy.

A pair of glossy, frenzied decades,
sturdy limbs claiming space,
toiling every sunlit moment,
turning light to leaf. Then decades

of letting go, shedding
the emerald mask to reveal
deep red and glistening gold,
finally tossing even those last
trinkets to the wind. Now this:

thick, deep rooted winter,
my bared frame, its storied scars,
its initials carved in heart shapes,
clear at last against a vast horizon,
my old treasures tucked inside,
ring within ring,

unafraid of axe blade
or blaze on an unknown hearth.



Laurence Segil, Photographer

Winter Ghazal
Variation

Stale words hang in the evening air.
Hours of light are rare; thoughts drift.

By

The river mirrors one flying crow.
Things come and go; thoughts drift.

Jenene Raveslout

Slow black smoke rises in a clearing.
I comb your lovely hair; thoughts drift.

Chicago

A locust tree is stripped. Light is gone.
You say *I never cared*; thoughts drift.

To think you said you would never leave.
Gray snow begins to fall; thoughts drift.



Carol L. Gloor, Photographer

Chicago: Late
February

By

Carol L. Gloor

Savanna

At five the afternoon sky is still
a fading, miraculous blue;
in the next hour the day shifts
through seven shades of gray rose twilight.
Even the shrunken, filthy snow
piles glow.

The Poles flock to this city,
at first cleaning houses, hanging wallboard, saving money,
because its climate is like Warsaw's:
cold snowy winters and hot humid summers,
the climate of a city embedded deep
in a land mass too big for it to understand,
its only beauty the brief transitions,
the way one utterly forgets
the other season, so it comes always as surprise,
a new lover with strange caresses,
right now the longed for, light touch
of that ever returning strumpet,
Spring.



Cynthia Hahn

Lying in Wait

By

Cynthia Hahn

*Inspired by Herb
Berman*

Cool winter sun
rises a clear blue,
Its rays lie on the snow.

Bone-white moon
sows the ice,
skates in its own light.

Neither sun nor moon,
I tend the spring simmer,
crackle of green shoots.

Grapple

By

Marjorie Rissman

Highland Park

I have been grappling with grapple
Envisioning white coated botanists
Grafting the globes of holiday grapes
With honey crisp apples
Making the new fruit
Round and shiny, juicy and sweet
Red on the outside
Pink on the in.
There is a Washington apple
Claiming to taste like a grape
Stealing this word for it name.

Here in Chicago
When weathermen do not know
What is falling from the sky
They also grapple with grapple,
A mixture of rain, snow, sleet and hail
Falling in irregular pellets
Like rabbit food or its aftermath,
A fine English mixed grill
Of frozen precipitation
That sting on contact
With human skin
And pings upon landing
On car rooftop or hood,
We grapple with grapple
Sometimes by the shovelful.



Pamela Larson, Photographer

Hidden Order

By

Khalid Mukhtar

As I indulge the prairie, sipping tea,
I spy my book in insect company,
For trudging through the plain of open page
Is but an ant an eye can barely see.

I wonder how the letters must appear
To one who is to them so very near,
Like patches of the earth about the snow,
Irregular and varied in area.

But crawling so, my little friend can't tell
That every page is framed in dual el,
All bound into submission by a spine,
All born and cut from one material.

I swallow all this prairie with my eye,
These golden, yellow flowers swaying by
A stream that seems to stop, then flow again,
To mirror well the canopy of sky

Where floats a fleet of clouds upon a breeze,
Some gray, some peach, some white of foamy seas,
Some left behind a soaring eagle's flight
To humbly bow and kiss the tops of trees.

I find my crawling friend is much like me,
Admirers of versatility:
He cannot see the order that I do,
And someone sees an order I can't see.

Truthseeker

By

Terry Loncaric

Adrift without a map,
I burrow through
superficial sound bytes,
manufactured manifestos,
cyberspace slogans,
still I crawl over hot sand
to feel despair,
sleep in a valley of tears
to soak in sadness,
stumble over madness
to understand humanity.
I surrender all fears,
stepping into the thrashing
eye of the storm
to bare my naked flesh . . .
to embrace the planet's fate
as all truth seekers must.



Asif Khan, Photographer

The Winter Wind I lean against the winter wind
By the wind insists
Herb Berman on screeching my name
 etching my fears against
Deerfield clouds boiling high in the west
 encroaching every daylight dream
 my face is mottled
 pink and gray
 with small yellowing furrows
 I'd be out of the winter wind
 if I found my way
 to my front door warm and bright as spring
 a few feet away
 but it's closed
 and the wind sings
 you must lean on me
 I'll take you wherever
 you have to go

Lighting the Way

By

Caroline Johnson

After our family went caroling
from house to Victorian house
my brother lined up luminaries
paper bags with candles and sand
we bought from our church
with my Dad's donation.

Breezes seeped through his thin skin.
With scarlet cheeks, foggy breath
he carefully bent down in the wind
to light each one, not wanting
to start a fire or wake up the ire
of my father or Santa Claus.

We looked out the bay window
as he worked in the snowfall
and we hung each ornament
each angel, each strand
of tinsel, lights.

Christmas is light
after all.



James Paradiso, Photographer

Beloved

By

Asif Khan

You are close to me like light is to moon,
Make a promise and come to me soon.
You are close to me like night is to day,
Make a promise of not going away.
You are close to me like wave is to sea,
Make a promise to stay with me.
You are close to me like pearl is to shell,
Make a promise in my heart to dwell.
You are close to me like rain is to cloud,
Make a promise and say it very loud.
You are close to me like tear is to eye,
Make a promise before I die.
You are close to me like smile is to lips,
Make a promise of sending spiritual gifts.
You are close to me like beat is to heart,
Make a promise that we may never part.
You are close to me like lyric is to song,
Make a promise of a blissful bond.
You are close to me like fragrance is to musk,
Make a promise of loving dawn to dusk.
You are close to me like body is to soul,
Make a promise and fulfill my goal.
You are closer to me than a jugular vein,
Reveal thyself and take away my pain.



James Paradiso, Photographer

**Thirteen - the
Number of Bad Luck**

By

Mark Hudson

Evanston

Some people hated the year 2013,
they're hoping for a much better 2014.
I guess I always roll with the punches,
but for many, there were no free lunches.
A headline of the local paper states,
"Unemployment benefits axed from this state."
What, are people, going to do?
We can't protest, and we cannot sue!
It's David vs. Goliath, and we're the ants,
They say to be happy, but some people can't.
For some, 2013 was a disaster,
as New Year's Eve approaches faster.
So don't spend New Year's Eve whining in a tavern,
In Afghanistan, we buried the dead in caverns.
As much as this country is in the red,
In other countries, people are just dead.
So on New Year's Eve, be grateful you are alive,
there were people this year who didn't survive.



James Paradiso, Photographer

Passing the Crown

By

Jennifer Dotson

Highland Park

Scrabble is not just a game for our family. It is history. It is a code of conduct for fair play. It is a heritage of word-wise women and men who place their "X" on a triple word score and vault their tally of points far above the other players. It is knowing how to survive when the bag of tiles gives you only vowels. It is a measure of maturity to play with the adults, anxious to compete but absorbing the blows of superior skills. Yesterday, I beat my mother after decades of losses. She smiled, sighed and handed me her crown.

