

Winter 2015 - Poet's Choice

For Winter 2015, the Muses' Gallery accepted submissions that are the Poet's Choice. No particular theme or form required. The results are uniquely engaging. Thank you to the poets who submitted poems and photographs - may reading these inspire us all in our writing this New Year.

Enjoy!

Dialogue Between a Tree and a Poet

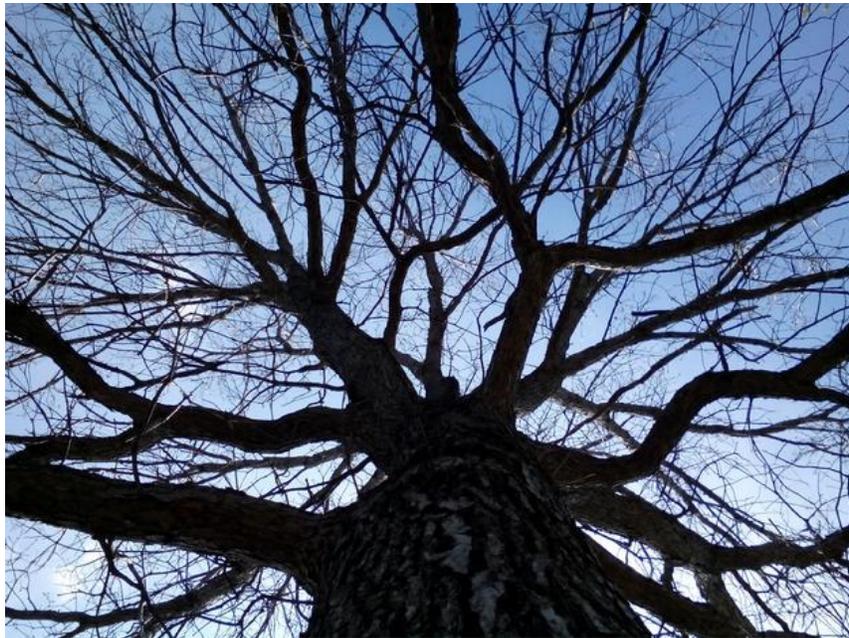
By

William Marr

A tree says
we are more fortunate than humans
Without having to wait a lifetime
for the benefit of transmigration --
we die in winter
and rejuvenate in the spring

Illinois

A poet says
winter and spring
night and day
every heartbeat
every breath
every blink
all are my transmigrations --
I die in an obsolete verse
and am reborn in a brand-new poem



Kenny Sommer, Photographer

A Day in Ohio

By

James Reiss

Wilmette, Illinois

First published in Esquire

The painters began work on the house,
wielding their brushes like wings.
By noon they took off their caps
and blotted their brows with tan rags,
then lit cigarettes by striking wooden
matches on their boots in long slow arcs.

The roof took on the color of the sun
as it broke yolk-like on the weather vane.
They did not see it splatter.
Bronze in their five-o'clock shadows,
they slapped one last gold stroke
and lowered their scaffold and stretched.



Jennifer Dotson, Photographer

One By One

By

Candace Kubinec

Greensburg, Pennsylvania

one silent white flake
followed by another
piling up to cover roads
and trees erasing the drab
of winter

By ice glazes the window...
Charlotte Digregorio our forks clinking
out of sync

Winnetka, Illinois
First published in A
Hundred Gourds, December
2012

Cup, Lip, Pocket

Tasse, lèvres, poche

By Cynthia T. Hahn

Lake Forest, Illinois

The lip calls to the cup;
it arches the mouth's
dark pocket --
pocket of tea,
vanilla, the cup
round and brown;
the mouth sounds
the swallowed bird --
wee vanilla bird on
wings, lifts the lips
up, pursed lemon kiss.

La lèvre appelle la tasse;
son arche entoure la
bouche,
poche sombre
de thé empoché à la
vanille -- la tasse
ronde et brune;
la bouche résonne de
l'oiseau avalé,
petit oisel à la vanille
ailé, soulève les lèvres
pincées, bisou citronné.



Jennifer Dotson, Photographer

Burial at Sea

By

Susan B. Auld

Arlington Heights, Illinois

*Published by A
Hundred Gourds
(June 2013) and
in Contemporary
Haibun, Volume 15
(2014 Red Moon
Press)*

The waters of the Gulf of Mexico glint far from shore at low tide. Wet sand seems to float in tidal pools. The sand memorizes my footprints -- their depth, a measure of the grief I carry with the promise. I walk alone among dead and dying whelk. In a twist of seaweed, a starfish. Broken. Scarred. It is here where I choose to stop to keep my promise.

sunrise on the bay --
my mother's ashes
shimmer

By

Ina Pearl Perlmutter

Northbrook, Illinois

under the snow white ermine carpet
God is working miracles
as each day
He creates the world anew

Fallen

By

Donna Pucciani

Wheaton, Illinois

The leaf, deckled-edged, heart-shaped,
lies between puddle and cracked pavement,
brown-rimmed, red at the core.

She cannot return to the tree, to the twig
that held her by a thin stem for so long,
to the branch that shadowed her tracery.

*First published in
PoetryMagazine.com*

The wind has had its way with her.
A veined, fleshed survivor.
A lost valentine.



Jennifer Dotson, Photographer

**December in the
Country**

The waiting brown forest greets first light
like sentries guarding the day.

By

Candace Armstrong

Chalky white winter sky frames a quiet stillness
like a life-sized postcard.

Stars and a sliver of moon shine the only night
light
like candles in the sky.

Gray Skies

By

Marjorie Rissman

Highland Park, Illinois

hang around
like Grandma's old sheets on the clothes' line
listless and damp and forever clouding
visions of backyard swing sets and sand boxes
no time to play outside for fear of soiling
the clean laundry
too chilly anyway
rain or sleet forecasted
gray skies yawn away another day
indoors the fireplace warms the air
while mugs of hot cocoa warm hands and lips
marshmallow mustaches to follow



Crest

Filling bird feeder
at daybreak, filigree

By

Nancy Ann Schaefer

breath crystallizes,
breathes in after-scent

Maine

*First published in In Search of Lode,
2012*

of snow, smoke-laced
in winter firmament.

Crested redbird sits
on ice-flecked bough,

his sweet whistle
call - *a capella*

flutters, softens
under sepia sky

turned *Giotto* blue
as we both soar.

The Fairer Sex

By

Curt Vevang

Illinois

His forest green head's a wondrous sight.
The male mallard duck's a good looking dude.
But his female friend has a sadder plight.
With her drab house dress, she's in a foul mood.

The male's called a Drake which adds to her woe.
This frumpy young gal has all the bad luck.
Instead of a queen, or a vixen, or doe,
she's known in the trade as simply a duck.

Clever of nature to paint her so bland.
She's camouflaged well to sit on the nest.
Why nature does this, we all understand,
but not all species can pass the same test.

These roles are reversed in the human race,
where women possess all the style and grace.



Candace Kubinec, Photographer

Circus Train

By

Jill Charles

Chicago, Illinois

You played like a child
When you switched on the circus train
Its toy whistle rang out long and low
As the real Burlington Northern
Rumbling over High Bridge in Spokane.

You let us grandchildren
Throw the switches
Drop smoke pellets
In the black engine
Puffing white steam.

The metal train chugged around
A silhouette town
With plastic grass
Gold lights in flat windows.

Lions peered out
From red cage cars
Giraffe necks and elephant trunks
Of the circus train.

On the canvas big top
Bengal tigers snarled
And clowns grinned
A lady in pink tulle swung on a trapeze.

You took your grandkids with you
To that circus sixty years ago
When you chased the calliope
It's never too late to play.

**Ways to Bless Your
Garden**

By

Gail Denham

Sun River, Oregon

*Honorable Mention,
Category*

*7, Mississippi 2014
Literary Competition*

Pick a pansy, purple maybe. Kneel
and thank the stem, the leaves, and God
for the smiling face before you.

Choose a group of wild bachelor buttons.
Run your fingers over the soft frilled
blue, yellow, white and pink array.

Stoop over a rich gold rose. Breathe
the fumes that feed your soul.
Sit near the flower patch.

Rejoice with bees, birds, earthworms,
and even hungry chipmunks who scold
from their tree perch.

Together, bless the garden, rain, the breeze
tickling multiple blossoms and moving your
hair. Freeze the image in your heart for winter.

**Off to the George
Diamond
Steakhouse,**

By

Jenene Ravesloot

Chicago, Illinois

*Published in the CC&D
Literary Magazine,
2014*

just the two of us, with mother sick in the
hospital—

sometimes three times a week
to dine on bowls of chilled lettuce wedges,
the house's special pink salad
dressing,

charbroiled steaks cooked by the chef
in the middle of the restaurant's dining
room, a side of baked potatoes lathered

with sour cream, butter; heaped dinner
rolls in a bread basket, a soda for me,
a dry martini with a speared pearl onion

for dad while Walter Keane paintings
stare at us. My Mary Jane shoes hover
above the soiled red carpet.

One last drink: his manhattan, a red cherry
for me; a walk down Wabash Avenue at
9 pm, the long ride home on the 'L',

us looking up at a few stars that remind
me of the glowing eyes of those painted
kids in black wood frames.



Joe Glaser, Photographer

Winter Twilight

By

Michael Escoubas

Pontiac, Illinois

***Published in the
December 2014 Issue
of Limited Magazine,
Bloomington, Illinois.***

In the crease of time between night and dawn's first light,
is merely *being* enough?

The world is quiet. Snow is a white blanket trimmed
by fence posts and broken cornstalks.

Boughs of trees bend low bearing the weight
of accumulated snow.

A rustic barn stands sturdy in the white field, red paint
peeling dried by summer's unrelenting sun.

Its door is ajar. Snow has drifted into soft swirls
like piles of whipped cream.

We pause to ponder the barn's rusty hinges,
peeling paint and weathered look.

We ponder our own bent bough; the weight
we carry--how much longer can we bear it?

Yet, the twilight bids us anticipate the moment of dawn,
as our friend the sun, climbs resolutely above
the horizon pulling himself up, promising warmth
like the glow of fireplace embers that dissipate
December's cold.

In this crease of time we embrace nature's encouragement.
The white seam of sky blends with the soft pink
that lies beyond the tree line.

In this twilight moment, is it possible that we need nothing,
want nothing but to behold this meditation
that is greater than ourselves?

By chlorinated pool
Michael Schoenburg frog leaps in
croaks

Feral Curriculum

By

Tom Roby IV

Chicago, Illinois

Winter! It's cozy enough inside the barn. There are plenty of mice to eat. Why not stay here and let the kittens learn how to hunt vermin? Look how the mice skitter across the hay-strewn barn floor, run in and out of the hay. Easy pickings! And anyway, the kittens have had enough of my milk. It's time for them to learn how to survive on their own. I won't be around forever, and I don't want them depending on humans for food. Don't get too close to the farm kids, I caution my kits. Watch out! Suppose you accidently scratch one of them. Then you would really be in trouble.

Yes, it's time, time to give them a real hunting lesson, but I'll wait until night falls. In the moonlight, I'll tell them, you can see mice-shadows dancing. Then you must move quickly. Strike!



Joe Glaser, Photographer

When Winter Comes

By

Jo Stewart

Chicago, Illinois

When winter comes as it must
do not hide
and do not grieve for song birds

The earth cannot stay green
nor can you fuss over loss of tone
Celebrate with me
the hardy pines
fire in the hearth
kindness that was not foreseen
visible now that the leaves are gone

When winter comes as it must
embrace the albums
enjoy the soup
Summer is done
let winter come because it must

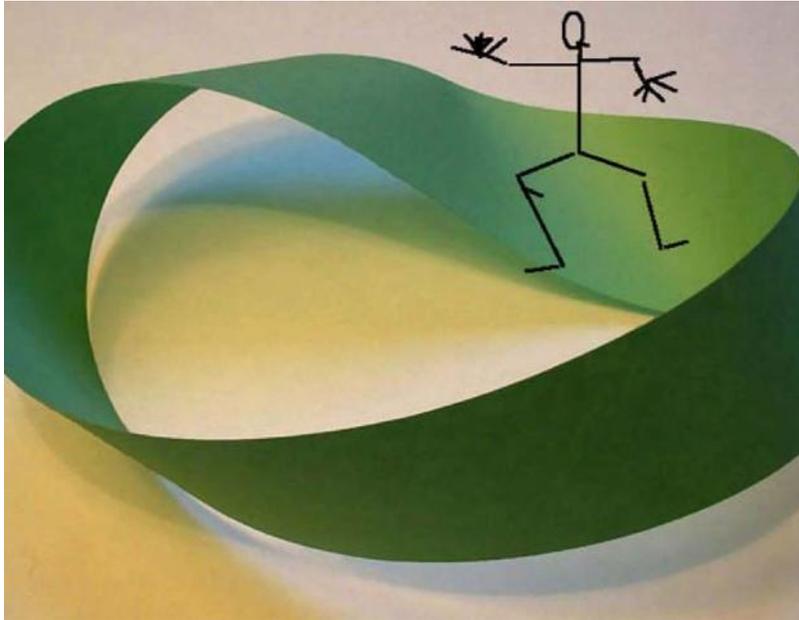
**All These Things
For Our Mom "Dolores"**

By

Jill Angel Langlois

Yorkville, Illinois

All the medications and home health visits
All the state of the art medical equipment
All the meals we cooked and ate together
All the naps taken on Sunday afternoons
All the visits from friends and neighbors
All the church going and soul searching
All the special food and shopping trips
All the love we pressed into her hands
All the care and concern we gave her
All the meows from Baby and Dolly
All the hospitals and there were four
All the trust we put into technology
All the questions for all the doctors
All the time spent in hospital rooms
All the days since her first surgery
All the prayers for her well-being
All the times we cried out of fear
All the times we said I love you
All the cleaning out of catheters
All the doctors and surgeons
All the fun we had together
All the laughter we shared
All the talking and sharing
All the plans we had
All the hope we felt
All the hugs
All the tears
Could not
Save
Her



Joe Glaser, Photographer

Mobius Life

By
Joe Glaser

Chicago, Illinois

infinite horizon twists back into itself
top and bottom different yet the
same
pathway to the future
pathway to the past
walking over time
walking through time
halfway round sort of
back again
upside down
...hello!
Alice's mirror at your feet
do-over dreams
stirring
moving forward
overtake another self
lazing rightside up
...beep, beep...make way...coming through new!
sort of circular yet not
sort of younger yet not
surely wiser maybe not
the continuum of consciousness
twists through time
each of you still out there
some dozing
some hiding in ambush
some just waiting to be scratched
many yet one
you

The Sugar Trap

By

Khalid Mukhtar

Northbrook, Illinois

I'll pay you a dollar to build me a palace,
And fifty cents more if you build without malice;

Its walls crispy brownie, its window frames
cream,
The couches are fondant in layers that gleam
With marshmallow cushions of various shapes;
And don't forget drapes cut from strawberry
crepes,

And when I have run out of candy to eat,
Returns it the favor with practiced deceit,
As each of my organs it slowly consumes;
I am now its palace with hundreds of rooms.

A dollar and fifty has bought me disease,
And now I'll pay thousands in hospital fees.



Joe Glaser, Photographer

The Chill

By

Roy Blokker

Lakeside, Montana

Our moody lake is icy blue,
The clouds are filled with rain,
And though May fast approaches
There's a chance it might snow again.

The sound of music filters through
My seeking, silent soul
So safely tucked inside my home
Awaiting the dawn patrol

And seeking hymns not tied to God,
Secular songs, if you will:
Profound, profane, melodic noise,
Hand made quilt against the chill.

Rainy Platform

By

Mark Hudson

Evanston, Illinois

Oh, days of Christmas glory,
why does snow refuse to drop?
The rain becomes the story
drizzling on window shops.
It keeps the children home
waiting for Santa to appear.
But rain becomes the poem
does not reflect my cheer!
I sit on the wet platform
the train which I commute.
If Santa's wonders he'll perform
the chimney will bear soot!
The rain came pouring down all night
as I caught another bus,
the people were so uptight
and causing quite a fuss.
On the left I see police
among some great confusion
I always pray for world peace
but tonight it's a delusion.
The night was like no other,
seemed like it was hell.
Can you sing a jingle, brother?
A song of jingle bells.



Kenny Sommer, Photographer

Spirits of Wonder

By

Caroline Johnson

*Previously published in
Where the Street Ends,
2012, and won an
honorable mention in a
Poets and Patrons of
Chicago contest*

Kicking ice balls, we listen to the snow melt
on each tombstone, names etched in granite
like fingerprints or fossils. The memories
of the dead lie hidden. We can only imagine,
close our eyes in the dark, feel the mystery,
the wisdom of their lives. And you run to me

with muscles of youth, and I glide with the deer,
towards flags and flowers, each moment holding
power as we circle round headstones.

It seems to me I have lived my life
walking along graveyards, not dead
in a casket, musty and cold, but fierce
among the ghosts, free and bold,
spread on a canvas.

And as joy pulses through our scars,
the clock tower strikes eleven,
a full moon is rising tonight,
while our ancestors dance in heaven.

On The Loom

By

Kathy Lohrum Cotton

Anna, Illinois

*First published in Deluxe
Box of Crayons (2012)*

The warp of me
is Quaker gray,
a quiet woolen thread—
modest, utilitarian,
looped simply
on my frame.

But, oh, the weft,
the vibrant weft of me,
weaves in and out
those sturdy strands
with shocking shades of
peacock and cockatoo
and shimmery hummingbird.

Co-mingled:
the whisper
and shout of my life.



Kathy Lorhum Cotton, Photographer

The 49ers

By

Kenny Sommer

Highland Park, Illinois

Crushing our streets on bikes, on foot
Stop at the river fort base
Snow ball fight, Tommy you alright?
Little sunlight left
Mini Olympics time
Surf the hill
Race to your home
Atari Battle, war, poker, ping pong
Truth or dare
Did you ask her out?
Pizza's here
Clash of the titans, ding dong ditch
Penthouse, Sports Illustrated chatter
B96 boom box breakdance
Flashlights, fake sleeping, being strange
Whispers, farting, and laughing
20 degree blizzard penetrates the windows
Am I cool, smart, good looking, a loser?
There more popular, talented, richer
2 papers due, sports, and all the homework
Go home, no tough it out
Walk man, good time, fading, dreaming
Boy's breakfast is ready, good morning
Yes off to Wilmont Skiing the 49er's go!

Artist's Dilemma

By

Jennifer Dotson

Highland Park, Illinois

Published in Clever Gretel(2013, Chicago Poetry Press).

The gifts you bring
come from
passion
inspiration
illumination
The gifts you bring
are often
unseen
unknown
unappreciated
Do not let your spirit dim
Bring your gifts anyway
You are radiant



Jennifer Dotson, Photographer