Afghan

Years ago, on chilly days, Grandma would work quietly crocheting an afghan for me. I remember the vibrant blues and purples of the yarn. She would drape it over her lap, as she patiently showed me how to work the thread. My lines were never as straight as hers.

Years later, when life surrounds me, I pull out my well-worn afghan and tuck it in around me to push back the harsh world, and hold in the warm memories. Her gentle voice still reassuring me. Everything about it feels like home.

by Michele Lutz
Alone

Tiny little leaf
Dangling on the tree branch,
Orphaned by the wind.

by Andrea Lorenzano

The Chase

Young gazelle is grazing
While lioness sits gazing
  Predator is creeping
  Prey starts leaping
Gazelle is racing
  Lioness is chasing
  Youngling tumbles
  Stomach grumbles
Mother is sleeping
  As lioness is feasting

Fresh blood
  on claws
  on paws
  on jowls
  drips from jagged teeth
Neck snaps
  organs burst
She rips flesh from bones
  each muscle groans
Until at last
  the lioness is done.
Hungry hoards—
  the little demons of the jungle
  seize their share
  and the youngling
  is no more.

by Michele Lutz
Hidden Soul

In a corner of a room
with people everywhere
I sit and stare and ponder why
I am even here...

I’m not being ignored
and I’m not ignoring
yet the part of me that exists the most
is the part I’m not good with sharing...

It’s my soul
my innermost thoughts
it’s everything I am...
and it’s everything I’m not...

I keep it locked up
for fear of what people will say
when they see my soul & everything
that keeps me going day by day

It’s hidden in my heart
in my eyes you might just see
the spirit that is inside
yet what I am afraid to let free

Anytime I open up
somehow it hurts me more
and so my spirit is behind
a closed and locked door

It’s not always hidden
it’s not always free
God is the only reason
that I let it out of me

When I’m insecure and frightened
the only way it can be
Is if God lets it out
Lets it out of me...

So in the middle of the room
I now will take my stand
My soul is in the open...
and God is holding my hand.

by Angelé Curtis
Unwavering Love

I'm sitting here alone on the floor,
The walls echo a sound I can't ignore,
I stared down at my shaking hands,
Nothing left for any last demands.

This was it I knew it would be,
I couldn't take it, wouldn't listen to your plea,
But I need you now and forever more,
It is you I love and unconditionally adore.

I snap back to and look up and see,
Your smiling face beaming down at me,
I smile back though it pains me so,
Of our love only I will ever know....

by Andrew Carlson

Who are you fooling?

The promise of a better tomorrow lives in the griefs of today.
The sadness in one's eyes cannot be measured when a loved one passes,
But rather a void for hope is present and the promise of the future has space to fill.
You may walk and talk with the joy that you feel should be expressed.

But who are you fooling?

Let the anger be heard, let your tears pour out, let your power be expressed.
Channel your emotions into a stream of passion enraging you, consuming you,

Then simply let go,

Let go of the steam built up in side, let go of the sadness in your heart, let go of the power that prohibits you,

Who are you fooling?

For tomorrow can only be better than today and grief can only turn to joy!

by Kendra Krueger
My Name is Machine

Drawing power, rising self.
Metal heart by death consumed, as
Gears drive, drive, drive. Digging ash tombs.
Hydraulic deceit, fueled by defeat –
This engine keeps burning.

My name is Machine
I am here to...

Annihilate

Steamroll resolve and drill the curse as
Axles reveal mud angels exhaust,
and bring the valves to burst.
Destroying the rest, turn the rust
from iron fist to apocalyptic flood.

My Name is Machine
I am here to...

Annihilate

Dig, Dig, Dig – Drill, Drill, Drill.
Dig, Dig, Dig – Drill, Drill, Drill.
Dig, Dig, Dig – Drill, Drill, Drill.
We are many. Here I stand.

This engine keeps burning.
It may burn it all tonight.
It may all burn.

My Name is Machine.
I am here to...

Create.

Here I stand.

by John Huber
Memories Of You

Pushing past the subconscious in my mind  
To see your face one more time  
Trying to focus on your smile  
But I haven’t seen it in a while  
Looking into your eyes  
Recalling your voice  
Things that have become important to me  
And when you’re gone  
I try and put together the puzzle you left  
In my memories

by Allison Veselka

Behind

Putting you behind me  
Might be hard  
But just trying  
May get me somewhere  
As long as you’re not there

Tearing down your pictures  
Wiping you from my thoughts  
Easier said than done  
When you’re lingering in my heart

by Allison Veselka
Only Human

I am only human
imperfect in many ways
If I was to make a list
you probably wouldn't wanna stay

I am only a girl
one person in the midst
People are better than me
in many aspects...

Yet I am chosen
Hand selected by God
to be a strong Christian
and not follow the crowd

I've been pushed
and I've lost track
I've been shoved
had knives in my back

I've gone the wrong way
I've been lost
I've been a bad example
I know I've lost some trust

I am only human
Not perfect in any way
I am only human
but God has chosen to stay

I can't promise to be perfect
I can't promise not to fall
I can promise you I'll try
if at first I have to crawl

I am only human
but inside I've got the strength
of a Spirit within me
with whom I can go the whole length

Only Human is what you see
imperfect and incomplete

Beautiful woman is what He sees
with Jesus I am complete

*by Angelé Curtis*
Bloody Rain

My eyes are dead, seeing nothing more than red.  
There is no safe haven from the piercing gaze of the Raven  
For the world is ugly, void of sanity and beauty.  
People, ignorant and stupid, no longer believe in Cupid  
For the more people think, the closer they come to the brink.  
You cannot escape the pain when caught in the Bloody Rain.

The years pass me by; I patiently wait to die  
With God I must speak, so I climb the highest peak  
The climb weeds out the weak to grant the strong what they seek,  
But no matter how hard I try, God turns a blind eye.  
I carry the scars of failure losing sight of a savior.

I saw the darkening azure, in the distance I heard her,  
"Open your heart to see the truth standing before me."  
"I can give you eternity if only you'll stay with me."  
Death is every man's fate from the insignificant to the great.  
All will be judged for their Hate, and most will face Hell's Gate.  
"I am the master of time. You have paid in full for your Crime."  
"Come sit here under the Tree and feel what it means to be free."

"A clear day thunder cracks like burning tinder.  
Listen to the wondrous splendor.  
Think outside the realm of possibility.  
The world turns to hide its insanity  
Where the purest flower becomes stained,  
But even the iris blooms beautiful beneath the Bloody Rain."

Trapped within a dark prison, staring at me are eyes of crimson.  
Singing a lullaby of destruction, demons chanting in unison.  
Always marching forward with my sword past the demonic hordes,  
I linger in a sweet nightmare. Reason gives way to devil-may-care  
Risen from out of the Pit, escaping through a fiery slit  
No longer a mere puppet, I break loose of my metal straight jacket.  
"Those who seek happiness are also burdened with unpleasantness."  
"Fear not, brave soul, for you can reach your goal."  
Branded a murderous traitor by the Almighty Creator,  
No one can stop the carnage unleashed by a corrupted sage.  
"You again rest here. Lose your shackles of fear."  
"Come to this land far away. I shall light your way."
"A clear day thunder cracks like burning tinder.  
Listen to the wondrous splendor.  
Think outside the realm of possibility.  
The world turns to hide its insanity  
Where the purest flower becomes stained,  
But even the iris blooms beautiful beneath the Bloody Rain."

To pay any amount of gulden, to have the taste of the forbidden,  
Search for the ravishing maiden that God keeps hidden  
In the depths of Eden to the realms of Poseidon.  
Traverse the plain of death in search of the one and only truth.  
Where did I cross the line? When my heart was no longer mine?  
The first time you came, I was never quite the same.  
“Follow the trail of my song. It will never steer you wrong.”  
“For it is my light that will guide you through the night.”  
The Rain falls like red cherry blossoms, and nothing is more lovesome.  
My lost wish is a haunting requiem sung by the seraphim.  
“Come hither unto my altar to have your sins cleansed in Holy Water;”  
“To defy your human Fate and see with Eyes unclouded by Hate.”

"A clear day thunder cracks like burning tinder.  
Listen to the wondrous splendor.  
Think outside the realm of possibility.  
The world turns to hide its insanity  
Where the purest flower becomes stained,  
But even the iris blooms beautiful beneath the Bloody Rain."

Up and over the hills where grow the wild daffodils,  
A place where my heart was torn and where it was reborn,  
Rain Clouds come to destroy, leaving absolutely no trace of joy.  
I know for whom I seek, even if the path is oblique  
We are connected by the Red String that is brighter and stronger than lightning  
For even if we are world’s apart, we are connected by our hearts.  
“Even though love is often brief stolen by the Immortal Thief,”  
“One cannot be afraid of the knife fearing the uncertainty of life.”  
I must stay on track, no time to think, just act.  
I can’t think of how I must keep my unbreakable vow.  
“Drink of the magical Chalice to flush out the body’s malice”  
“So you might enter the echelon and meet me in Avalon.”

When my eyes were blind, I had to transcend my feeble mind.  
Scars of the past will heal, a reminder of life’s ordeals.  
Hate used to rule all. Oh pitiful shadow heed the noble call  
For in your darkest hour, You shall be granted Absolute power  
For she is still there, even if I know not where.  
For even if the flower is slain, Beauty will remain Beneath the Bloody Rain.

by Dalton Streiler
I do not write poetry

For many a year, I envy and fear
He who writes poetry.
I could never do such a thing,
Put a word and a line together and bing,
A poem. But I do not write poetry.
Dickinson and Plath, Poe and Hesse,
These authors are steps above me.
They expect me to write a poem.
I do not write poetry.

by Kyle Vareberg

This gets a “D”

Let me just start by saying, I'm an individual.
Yes sir, yes ma'am.
When faced with an issue, I always say,
I sure do, I sure can.
I take the task and break it down,
Present it as a happy challenge.
Like the burning pit called school,
Where they always want to bring me down.
I work and work and for what,
A letter on a piece of paper that tells me,
I am just not good enough.
You ruin my passion. You ruin my spunk.
Tell me I'm not there yet,
Tell me I suck.
Well, all I can say is, I do what I want,
Live to fight another day,
(Oops, was that a cliché?)
In the end, I don’t care,
About a paper with your approval,
Because I know I’m good, in my own unique way.
I work for my own approval,
To make me into a better me.
All I need is my grade, and I give myself a D,
For “Dammit, I’m ready,” no matter what you say.

by Kyle Vareberg
Drink it away

Drink away your sorrow and your tears
Drink away your sadness and your fears
Put them in the bottle where you can keep 'em for years
Cut away your pain
Cut away your life
End it all now and give up the fight
Never have I seen a better tomorrow
Never have I heard of better days
The solution is ahead of you, just drink it away
Laugh away your problems
Laugh away your success
Just laugh it away until you are the best
Problems come and go
Good things should never end
These are things I am told
But never happen again

by Miranda Mae Beier

Salt Shaker

the simple
glass taper
waits patiently
to taste, the metal
capped tip's generous
sift holes clear and unmoist,
poised to fulfill a uniform function,
king of the diner table's checkerboard
cloth, conduit of sea stuff and mine haul,
a marker in the cure-all of time, crystals
in clear crystal, the very shape of tip-of-the-tongue tautologies.

by Lee Kruger
Coffee Junkie

I’m an addict
who needs a fix.
I’m desperate for my
next shot of coffee.
I would do anything for
another pot of java.
This craving
overtakes me.
I seek out
the scalding black drink.

I love to watch it
swirling inside
my stone-ware vessel.
The first intoxicating sip
hisses between my lips.
I’m compelled to
take another hit.
I can feel
my anxiety building
and then slowly,
relief washes over me.

I drag my fingers
around the battered mug,
where the bitter drug
is neatly contained.
Caffeine courses
through my veins.
I can never get enough
of this revival feeling.

by Michele Lutz
With His Early Leaving

The scarlet satin sheets spill off the bed like a rich merlot, revealing a pale thigh, the hint of a navel, and idle fingers, before slinking to the chilled hardwood floor, which lays listening, savoring the sins of the night before.

by Shannon Leppert

Curious Dangers

Swirling in the wind as they fall to the ground, are flakes carved into wondrous designs. Neighborhood kids wonder outside, tongues at the ready to catch the first shaving. Adults unwillingly oversee the damage with shovels at the ready to push the powder away.

The wind gusts and causes large drifts. The plows driving by clean the streets off. The dense snow, packed into ice, is dangerous. How is snow so seemingly innocent in town, yet deadly on the open roads.

by Brittany Shape
The ‘G’

The lumbering door slides, grudging along its rusted groove,
while somewhere inside the sagging shed
a pigeon flaps angrily.
   Squeezing into the cold darkness, the smell of grease and oil
   overpowers from years of absorption
   into the dirt floor.

The windows emit slivers of gold through their dusty cobweb curtains,
exposing the empty parts boxes that litter the floor.
A hay rake, sans tines, bares a toothless grin,
while a grain drill, ancient with its steel wheels,
leans its back against the wall.

There, buried amongst this forlorn and forgotten array stands the old ‘G’.
Once the flagship of the fields, a worn tarp now drapes
the long nose of the tractor. Its years of toiling
across the acres, of give and take from the land,
of feeding family and nation
long since forgotten.

The 34 horses that once powered the family farm now sit in silent darkness,
their long and lingering death still not complete. A battery,
points and plugs, fresh gaskets and fuel and maybe
it could run again. But to what purpose?
A parade perhaps?

A spectacle,
where tired old townsmen drag their dreams back from the dust.
They parade them down Main Street in the blinding
summer sun, past oblivious youth who stand
shading their eyes while waving flags.

by Steven Petherbridge
Disease

My sister’s smooth skin and hair
cover the surface,
hiding away all abnormalities, all scars.
They had got it all years ago, or so we thought,
and now we know
the dangerous, dark reality.
Our formalities are all that lie
between us and the truth.

Tears reveal the fear within,
familiar to the channels they now dampen
on my face.
Although her tumor may be benign,
our manners are malignant. This sinister sister
spits out negativity, while I try to support her
by avoiding the possibility
of death.

Soon,
the mask will fall, her cell
will divide until we both will be left,
alone.

Alone with the root.
The root of the tree.
The root of the tree
that won’t stop growing.

by Alyssa Pitura

Ash Tray

I quit smoking when I quit him.
The ashes remain
in their chamber.
But, somehow
they escape.
Mutilated butts
fall to the floor,
and the stench,
stronger now than in its making,
saturates the air.

by Nicole Hedmark
Moon Over Mumbai

As the moon rests on India, the sun rests on me.
You've gone to the home that won't set you free,
bound by duty and a need to repay
the mother from whom no love was conveyed.
Perhaps atonement will set you at ease.

I owe her too, for that which she
bore to the world, and the world to me.
So I'll be patient with these long days
as the moon rests on India.

Though, to your purpose I must concede,
my fears resound internally.
That which holds you might keep you away.
So return, Love, without needless delay
to idle with me in the summer heat
as the moon rests on India.

By Nicole Hedmark

Mittens

Once again as we pass through the door
my niece tosses her mittens to the floor.
Her loss of exactly nine pairs previously
makes the process really spendy.
I scold her without expecting a thing
to happen, bending into the snow ring
that loops behind us,
I swoop them up without more fuss,
fold them into an awkward ball,
walk down the hall, and
let them fall
into a basket nailed to the wall.
Maybe tomorrow she will remember
or I could wait until next December.

by Brittani Goldader
Summer’s Brine

All the way upstairs and I could still smell it. All summer long mama’s dill festered in the garden, growing next to the sweet peas, which had been aided by wire fencing.

It grew tall and strong, without such help. The dill’s strength in growing only matched its potent stench, for it was all I could smell when I arose from rest.

The sweet peas were an aroma that couldn't be sought out because the dill for mama’s pickles was already making my nose wrinkle in distaste.

Here now, gone shortly after, the sweet peas did not linger. Yet the smell of the pickle brine lasted days in my house, drawing out its stay like an unwanted guest.

by Sasha Miller

Hoping for Spring

Hurried, with backs tensed against the cold of the blue-black night,
We rush for solitude.

Hunching, we breathe warm air onto fingertips, in attempts to thaw frozen flesh.

Ice breaks beneath our feet as we pass under the glow of the campus lights.

Escaping from cracked lips, a breath casts shadows on amber tinted snow.

by Sasha Miller
**In Decline**

I. Mukluks
The thin hides of a reindeer  
Once hunted to survive  
Adorn feet that used to dance  
But now only walk.  
Rabbit fur lined the sides  
Of these mukluks, now commercialized  
And common. Useful  
Is out of style.

II. Whispers
Legends of warriors' bloody battles  
Passed down in whispers. Our ears  
No longer hear the foreign tongue.  
Cartoon images paint a picture  
Untrue, motivated by  
The flash of the cash  
That controls and confines  
This great country.

III. Dreamcatchers
Willow circles around  
While feathers hang  
To the ground.  
Beads take the place  
Of a spider whose webbing ensnares  
The dire dreams and overflows  
Like a river whose stream  
Is swollen.

IV.
After the flood,  
Fish carcasses lay rotting on the banks,  
In the heat of the mid-day sun.

*by Alyssa Pitura*