With love, Lotus

Writings by Lotus employees, family and friends to benefit AIDS care
The proceeds of this book will go to the Philanthropy division of Lotus Development Corporation and will be distributed on a grant basis to a variety of AIDS service organizations throughout the year.

Beliefs and opinions expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect those of Lotus Development Corporation.

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Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142
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Dear Reader,

I continue to be astounded by the ability of employees to exhibit such a high level of energy outside their demanding professional lives. Lotus is comprised of individuals of limitless commitment. Our success as a company is testament to that. The same dedication and vigor that give Lotus products a competitive edge in the marketplace distinguish the company’s volunteers in the community. By publishing *With Love, Lotus*, Lotus employee volunteers have once again demonstrated that a corporation can serve as a locus for community action.

The problem of AIDS is one of health, education, prejudice and fear. Responses to the epidemic require courage and creativity. I would like to congratulate everyone who contributed to *With Love, Lotus*, especially the poets, for their creativity, energy and sense of responsibility. May their work be as inspiring to you as it is to me.

Jim Manzi
President and Chief Executive Officer
Lotus Development Corporation
To our two friends and co-workers, victims of AIDS, who, in life and in death, touched our lives with their light:

This book is dedicated with Love.

Kathie McHugh

When I do count the clock that tells the time, And see the brave day sunk in hideous night; When I behold the violet past prime, And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white; When lofty trees I see barren of leaves Which erst from heat did canopy the herd, And summer's green all girded up in sheaves Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard, Then of thy beauty do I question make, That thou among the wastes of time must go...

William Shakespeare
Preface

Love. A small word for a big subject. A subject that is still not understood in this high tech world where computers play chess and keep careful record of our lives. We talk about Artificial Intelligence, but never Artificial Love. In fact, no one has ever programmed a computer to love. And if someone did, how could we know if the program succeeded?

Yet Love is a most essential if inexplicable human trait. Judging by the folklore and myths that have come to us from every culture, humans seem to have always had a need not only to be loved, but to love. Love links us to our mates, to our families, to our friends, and to the universe that surrounds us. It even links us to ourselves, for in respecting our own self worth and cherishing the value of our being, we gain the courage and the strength to reach out to others.

Writing poetry is also a very human trait. Poetry speaks not the language of computers, which is dry and precise, but the language of the heart, which uses image and nuance to reach those places of the soul that words alone cannot reach.

In this small volume, these two human traits are joined. In the rhythm and flow of poetry, unique voices speak of Love and what it has meant to them. The voices are young and old, male and female; they are American, Irish, Puerto Rican, and more. They speak of tears and of laughter, of contentment and of loss. In the mirror of their words, the readers may see the reflections of their own loves — bright and dark.

The proceeds from this book are dedicated with Love — love for those battling a disease that our technology has not yet conquered. It is a disease that touches all of our lives, but some more terribly than others. We honor their struggle and their courage.

May this book bring joy and compassion to you. May a cure for AIDS be found soon.

Nori Odoi
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Love & Romance
Love is a seeking for a way of life; the way that cannot be followed alone; the resonance of all spiritual and physical things.

Ansel Adams

Love consists in this: that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.

Rainier Maria Rilke

Don’t threaten me with love, baby.
Let’s just go walking in the rain.

Billie Holiday
It was a lovely thing

It was a lovely thing
He was imagining
(not that I was in
his dreams) me.

Elizabeth F. Hendricks

Obbligato I

...we are
travelling now, we
are shaking earth
and travelling, we
are crossing boundaries,
we are leading
ourselves for once
others will follow.

Miroslav Jarek

Obbligato II

My beloved
and I,
we burn.
Our hearts?
A torch between us.
Whose path is lit
by this?

Miroslav Jarek
Shed Your Skin

I roll over in bed and discover you sleeping there.
My eyes come out of a sound sleep, focusing on your bare back and tousled hair.
Your breathing coincides with the beating of my heart.
I don't want to wake you, so I touch your neck gently and do my best to stop my hand from wandering over your entire body.
I prop myself up on my elbow and quietly lean over you, catching a glimpse of your peaceful face.
You have the eyes of an innocent child, with lashes overflowing and skin as pale as a cloud.
Quite a contrast to the leather jacket, vest and earring next to my bed.
When you are with me alone, part of my world, the tough skin peels off, opening you up to drown in my love.
Out in the real world your porcelain features are engulfed by toughness and a hard edge.
With me you let that collapse.

Lisa Levine

If your eyes

If your eyes were brown, I'd love the earth
the earth and sparrows, if

your eyes were green it's the sea and hills of long, cool grass I'd sing for —

I'd thirst for storm clouds, birch bark and rain
if your eyes were grey.

Miroslav Jarek
I think of you —
I think of snow.
I think of how, if we were lovers,
we would watch the snow fall.

It would fall as softly
as your breath upon my lips
just before a kiss.
All night the snow would fall.

All night we would listen
to the snow fall, hear each flake
whisper its secrets to the windowpane
as we would whisper ours.

All night the snow would fall.
And in the morning we would walk
out into the city, clean now, and quiet,
the world made new again, glittering and white.

Helen Betz

First Love

Evening sets soft and I have not forgotten
the way the sun bore down upon us
high up on Mt. David.

This is my love, I said to myself.
His flashing smile, his bent knee, his
steady outward gaze,
all of these will stay in my mind.
My arm wants his waist, he is so slender,
his hair is soft,
his eyes bright.
His voice I remember as I remember waves,
our words incomplete and filling our heads.

This is my love, I said to myself.
Do you suppose that I was merely anticipating
the unfolding of the great world?

Jennifer Nadeau
He wanders down my street every morning before dawn, softly strumming a beat-up guitar, cradling the instrument in his arms like a sleeping infant. His melody saturates the air for miles, illuminating the crisp breeze with dew covered notes that splash upon each blade of grass and soothe the early birds and fuzzy scrambling creatures.

As I toss gently through my dreams this morning, the open window lets in his music. The curtain above my bed flows romantically like satin, breathing slowly back and forth, transporting his soft song to my subconscious. Opalescent droplets of sound fall to my ears, penetrating my body and blossoming in my heart.

Each easy turn between my sheets further meshes dream and reality, as cloudy inner fantasies are populated with nondescript characters that unite with the music that provides the only sound in my head.

With my next breath, I awaken from a sound sleep to slide out of blankets and pillows and wrap a cotton robe around my exposed skin. Through fuzzy eyes I gaze out the window to see the music-maker walking slowly by my house, steps taken in time with his simple tune.

I notice him staring at the fingers that give life to this mysterious melody. His face is hidden behind charcoal black hair, straight and shiny. Dressed in t-shirt and jeans, not quite enough for this chilly morning, with sneakers dragging untied laces across the pavement. His appearance is unassuming and just as gentle as his music.

My town is small so I must know him, but every morning I remain staring at a stranger. Tomorrow I will break the spell and unveil his face to my eyes. No more invisible music-maker.

I wake myself early and wait by the window. He enters my picture like any other morning, walking in a trance, a human music box. The old guitar is worn and plain, but very much a vital extension of his young, slim body.

I take my robe, slip on white sneakers and join him unannounced on the road. Our legs move in sync. I feel unnoticed until he turns his head and opens his eyes, exposing two, cool blue ice crystals that burn with incredible intensity and warm the air around my face. We walk for miles. Not even cold at all in the early morning air.

In the distance I see our town's pond. On the edge, a collection of blankets and pillows softly appears. The music-maker continues on, not uttering a sound except with his old guitar. I understand every word and continue to follow.

We reach the water together. He sits on the edge of the pond and plays his melody over and over. I never tire of it.

The homemade bed is enticing. I lie down and snuggle up tight. Sleep overcomes me right in the middle of this ethereal picture and I do not awaken until a ray of sunshine splashes my eyelids. Draped over my own bed now, I feel the curtain fluttering above. In the distance I can hear the stranger's tune fading away in the early morning peace.

Lisa Levine
Jones Beach Summer

In motion.

The foam scurries in to meet
the feet of the summer lovers.
Retreating at the slightest hint of capture.

Moving with you
holding back.
The confidence of your words
draws the sand
from under my toes.

Settling me in
you move on.

Denise Clancy

A gentle breeze

A gentle breeze, a dark night
A lonely beach
Two people sharing the night
The darkness — no stranger to them
The sound of gentle waves breaking on the sand,
The echo of splashing children in the bright sun is present
in the fading waves
The dark of the night is like a blanket
Covering the day’s events only to unfold in the new sun.
The sand is cool — yet the water splashes and it’s warm
He puts his arm around her as though the breeze were cold.
As they walk along the cool sand, hand-in-hand
with only the comforting moon to light their way...
How much in-love they are.

Leslie Blake
It was so good

It was so good to see you again
A pumpkin smiling
in the window
greeted me first
I hated driving on Halloween
and missing all the fun
of trick or treaters at my door
But the pumpkin smiled
and I smiled back
seeing you
tall, blonde, caring
anxious to see me
warmed my heart
I'd missed you
What a difference
to sleep by your side
to reach out and touch you
a kiss anytime I want it
Boy, it's good to be home

Diane L. McGary

Always

Since the first time that I saw you
My world hasn't been the same.
It seems that the birds sing louder
The air is sweeter, and life is finer.

Since the first time that we danced
Music has more rhythm,
Making love is better
I want you to be mine
Always

Micheal Latimore
Golden Memories

Since in life I treasure all the words my lover says to me,
I always hope that time will bring them with the wind...
When I'm looking out the window and I see that spring is here
I hope there'll be no end to our wondrous love affair...
And all the love, those passions that are untamed...
and time that seems to fly away
When the light of dawn comes brightly shining right outside our door
my eyes wake up and see that you're in love with me,
Since I'm saving all the tender moments both of us have shared
in lonely days of rain, my heartache will be spared...
And all my memories golden they will be,
of all the times that you have spent with me.

Milagros M. Andino

There is a voice

There is a voice
Imitating a love bird
Calling soft and mellow
Trying hard to be heard

There are two hearts
Drawing closer together
Two hearts among many
But alone, just like one

There is a love
Growing precious and stronger
A love, tried and true
Reaching deep, deep within

There is a passion
Springing up from inside me
A wonderful feeling
That won't be denied

There is a fire
Burning bright in my soul
Smoking, red hot and glowing
Almost out of control!

Joyce Williams-Mitchell
Reawakening

A wave of contentment
in the unlocking
Like a yellow butterfly
pursuing thoughts
above a railroad junkyard
A speck of life
amongst the metallic stillness
A finger kissed
and lightly touched against
the cinders of a heart.

Doreen Fleming

Envelop

Crescent moon
glimmering rays
of light and dark shadows
beckoning the night,
and loneliness
without you

My heart's song
sings out to you,
craving you near me,
piercing
the night
needing and wanting
my love,
all of her,
wrapped within me
in endless moments
of tenderness
and joy

Come to me,
envelop me with
your soul,
take me with you
to a place only we
know
where our sun
brightens
the night

Ron Elkin
Just Friends

I stand, yellow rose in hand,
Thinking back to when we began.
If you knew which screens linger
In their fullest color,
Like me, you might not question.
I fade back to your expressions,
Which too often hide.
I revel in your laughter and want
You to turn to me when it dissolves.
Oh, yellow rose, I’ve known you long.
How much longer until your petals
Graduate to red?
Or must I cling to the yellow rose instead?

Amy Carmusin

Yours

Green blue eyes,
endless oceans
of love
within

My heart
my existence
is yours,
to travel through
clouds,
time beyond,
where only we
can be,
together

Press me
into you,
for
I am yours,
wanting to share
each season,
each moon and sun,
each shore of eternity
as it develops,
built
and carries forward,
to life’s paths,
forever more.

Ron Elkin
Richter Scale

Your steps fall
on the hardwood
heavy at first
perhaps softening

I feel the rumblings and see
a question register on your lips
mouth moving
brows rolling in uncertain furroughs or
tentative peaks
mounting in comprehension
still hesitant to overturn
beginning to tumble
on doubtful ground

And then your eyes
drop
they graze the floor
the tremors cease

Kristen Hughes
Ebb Child

Frolicking like shore ponies
you scrawl your name
    shaping the very ground
    on which we walk

Wrestling with the forces that pull you away
to leave bubbly, frothing eddies
Your laughter trickles
    behind you
in damp, mossy strands
Fragrant as your musky wet hair
and the pungent grasses

I walk the disconsolate sands,
dig around,
    poke with my toes,
    pry at the surroundings
for some treasure
you might have left behind
    in your hesitant wake

Bracing myself
at the Sunday swingtide
    against the flood of memories
that rushes back
    in your absence
too soon, when I should be dry-shod
feet already burning on the stretch ahead,
for the spray to return
to my face
(only Tuesday!)

And long before you return to quench
my longing ground.

Kristen Hughes
A Valentine Reflection

In Spring
Winter’s somber sepia yields
To the careless iridescence of life.
About the dainty iris, the uncombed buttercup sprawls.

In jade-green Ireland, two lovers stroll
Along a meadow’s lane.
Two miles down, a patriotic bomb removes the village pub.

Laughter roars and dancers dance
In New Orleans’ bright Mardi Gras
A child cries in El Salvador,

“Mama, they are killing me. My sister is already dead.”

London fests a regal wedding
With red-clad guards and glinting jewels.
In the Sahel, the children starve —
their bellies swollen, their hair gone red.

In gay Paree, they model gowns
Designers toast the new year’s fashions.
In Brazil, they raze the endless forests
and civilize tribes to poverty.
And before the world's kaleidoscope
I stop —
Born unnaturally unblind.

But before the world's kaleidoscope
Are you —
Rooted in the earth and knowing of your path.

You soothe the trembling of my rabbit heart.
You heal the paralysis over me.
And once again, I look up and note:

In Spring
Winter's somber sepia yields
To the careless iridescence of life
About the dainty iris, the uncombed buttercup sprawls.

Nori Odoi
On a Night Like This

In the amber half-light
The final scene of the lottery
Your eyes are cobalt volcanos,
Gypsy Queen.

I am moving through you now
At first slowly
Then, as in the rush
Of dreams at dawn,
Pressing against every curve
Of your warmth
Like the hot lights
Of the tailing car
Fighting them off with his brakes.

"Yes," I agreed,
"You can never tell what will
Happen on a night like this."

Duncan Sanger
The Sea of Honey

Different from oceans of water
The Sea of Honey buoys
A body for longer.
Far from land,
Or hope of rescue,
You cannot be saved from the Sea of Honey.

There are no sharks in this sea,
Circling below shipwrecked sailors,
Nor desert wanderers' vultures drifting above.
The sky is azure, the temperature even here.
No waves disturb the surface of the sea:
And while your limbs are still strong
You tread gently,
Suspending your head
Above the wafting ripples of gold.

Fresh from the hive,
The honey in the sea is sickly sweet.
While treading you lick the viscous surface
Your tongue feeling every moment of the taste.
You swallow;
The honey gives you the energy to go on
Treading.....
.....Floating.....
.....Treading.

Soon muscles tire of servitude.
Resolve slips away;
Hope and irony will soon follow.
You laugh, and cry
For it's hard to believe you're drowning
In a sea of honey.
Something so sweet.

But drown you do.
Slipping beneath the golden surface,
Bright light turns dusky amber,
Your lungs fill with honey
And love dies

Duncan Sanger
Addicted

My love is a drug — it reaches down to my very marrow and pulls me inside out. Aching, blinded, I stumble in the dark hoping for a solution. Back and forth, my thoughts careen crying for relief. With it, without it, the highs and lows play havoc with my numbness. Will knowledge ever come — strong enough to end this madness? But, till then, I have no other master.

*Lyra Ward*
Rowing

Forgetting how the sight of you affects me, I am surprised again and again by my desire.

the force that pulls through my blood in your particular presence. Sexual energy,

you would say, naming it and so containing it in me and outside yourself, but love

is what I call it when I think of you, though you would say that certainly love

means different things to each of us. Still, at the sight of you, I feel that pull:

oars through rough water.

Helen Betz

I think of you

I think of you
And you're alive in me.

Reaching into my mind
And into my soul

As close as myself!
You're always with me.

Just touch me,
And again we'll be as one.

Joyce Williams-Mitchell
She's a vision
In ivory and veil,
We've never seen him,
In ascot and tail.
With close friends and family, from far and from near,
To celebrate with them this day they hold dear.

He's been a rover,
He's done many things.
She's lived all over,
Life's been interesting.
When souls walk the same path, they're bound to entwine,
They walk hand-in-hand, heart body and mind.
When they walk together, no world is as fine.

Through joy and through sorrow,
'till death do us part.
Today and tomorrow
The special joy of sharing two hearts.
Beginning to end,
Imagine the feeling,
To share your joy, your life, your love with your best friend.

So very happy,
They make quite a team.
So very hopeful,
Much more than just dreams.
They face one another, with rings bound to stay,
They whisper "I Love You" on their wedding day.

They whisper "I Love You"

Dave Friedman

Home

I want to thank you for my first week of making a house a home, though it had its ups and downs they were ours and ours alone. The evening ends in your eyes and the night time melts my skin, the morning reflects on shoulders as I let the day begin. As items find their places and we in kind will too, I'll remember our first week and how much I love you.

Robin Friedman
There Will Be More Tomorrows Like Today

It's Saturday in Vermont
The sounds of Autumn are closing in on this August day

Pick some of those tiny pine cones from that tree
We can take them to our son

He would like that
We can include them with the arrowhead you bought at the gift shop

Do you hear the chain saw?
Did you see the daddy longlegs?

Look at that cloud
So white and puffy as it floats past us
As we drift in our world of peace

Oh, and the breeze
Do you feel it as it gently caresses your cheek?

Later I'll try to repeat the sensation
When I touch you and hold you close

You say it's been half your lifetime
We've been together

It's not long you know
Compared to what's ahead

There will be more tomorrows like today

More pine cones to pick
More arrowheads to buy

And clouds to pass our eyes
And yes, the breeze to touch your cheek
When I'm not with you to do it myself

It's Saturday in Vermont
The sounds of Autumn are closing in on the August day

There will be more tomorrows like today
I promise

Leo McCloskey
love you two ways

love you two ways
in my mind
and in my soul
oh how i wish
i could keep
this love under control
the love in my heart
boy, it burns and it cuts deep
but i'm afraid it's a love
that you won't want to keep

a love that you won't want to keep...

now what about my mind
and the love that hides there?
i suppose it's because
to me, girls like you are so rare
you keep me going round
pick me up when i am down
you show me light when there is darkness
and banish all my frowns

banish all my frowns

somehow i go to work
somehow i go to sleep
even though the days, to me
man, they seem to creep
i've asked you the question
i'm waiting for your call
staring at the telephone
hanging on my wall
waiting for your answer

waiting for your call.....

Fergus MacGettigan
Reaching

Standing here
  under the moonlit sky
  watching tall,
  slender fingers
  reach out

Crying,
  hoping,
unsure
  what tomorrow will bring

Tears light my eyes,
  of thoughts,
  of touches,
  of warmth,
  of you

As the arms and fingers
  of nature
caress the moon,
  my mind
caresses you,
  reaching out
  through the vastness,
  looking,
  finding
  our star.
  its brightness,
  my eternal light,
  inside me,
will always
  be light for you.

Ron Elkin
The Price of Freedom

Used to spend our days together
At night my thoughts of you
But now I spend my days alone
And wonder what to do

You meant the world and more to me
And none shall e'er compare
Our love was something wonderful
Till you felt pangs of fear

You could not bear the thought of it
You chose to turn and run
And now I'm left with empty heart
And love to give to none

I'd give the world to have you back
And say that you love me
But since I truly love you dear
I'd sooner set you free

For if our love is truly there
Well this we shall soon see
'Cause then my darling one true love
You will come back to me

Sandy Smith

As No Other

She had loved him. Even when he slipped away for a short psychic coffee break. Only a strong hug pulled him from some thin obscurity. Then he returned in another dimension holding a tall glass of milk. After that, no splendored rhapsody. Only she quivering paced a path across the floor. Stars scattering. Everything as before but different. Staying home nights, he looked for warmth from the tv and sharpened knives. Occasionally throwing a typewriter across the lawn. As a means of quality control he carefully swallowed: the car key, her heart, remembering, love exquisite.

Elizabeth F. Hendricks
The day you packed

The day you packed and went away
The sun left, too; it rained all day.
The sky cried down its tears of rain.
And I cried, too, in silent pain.

I wandered, lonely, in the daze
Feeling lost and in a haze;
It was as though a part of me
Were missing — and you held the key.

I long to have you touch my face,
To know your soul with warm embrace,
To find you by my side each night,
To be as one, and know we're right.

You left with me a treasure rare —
You gave yourself and we did share
A unity of brilliance bright
That lit up Montreal at night.

You told me time could be a friend
Or enemy — it did depend;
But time will be my enemy
Until it brings you back to me.

Judi Lazerus Karras
Lovesick

Never thought I'd have such energy
I'm such a slug-like thing
Never thought my face would glow
Unless from oil slickering

Never thought I'd feel adrenaline
Without a crisis near
Never thought my eyes would shine
Without shmutz that made them tear

Never thought I'd feel so alive
I've been physically fitter
Never thought I'd be whistling
Whilst cleaning kitty litter

Never thought of life as blissful
While doing mundane chores
Never thought I'd be delighted
Hearing nasal, grunty snores

I'm in love, a walking grin,
And it's all because of you
You're my little sugarplum
And I'm your kissee-poo

So let's bottle this feeling
And hope it never passes
Market it as an Eau-de-Pew
And sell it to the masses

-- Bonnie Eve Gosset

Let's Try

Let's forget about our foolish pride
Let's not hold back the feelings inside
Let's run away together, if only for
a moment, if only for an hour
Let's get lost in the love we both
so much desire
Let's walk together through the fire
Let's take the path that leads to this
Let's not slow down, there are no clocks
in heaven
Let's forget about our foolish pride
Let's just touch each other's heart
Let's try.

-- Micheal Latimore
Now That I Have the Chance to Tell You

I don't know how to tell you this, but you said that you wanted me to write you a love poem. I wanted you; to be with you forever, plus you talked with me about eternity. "The long of it and the short," you said, "is love and trust." Now is the time to say you are the only one I ever loved without a reason. Now is my chance to tell you that I love you. My love for you is from the heart, the only place I know now, love may start. I love you now as I have never loved before. And not because of this or that. But just because I love you.

Elizabeth F. Hendricks
My Love for You

I love you more than words convey
And always beside you I will stay
For I am yours today and forever
Creating a bond we will never sever

In your arms is where I belong
Holding each other all night long
I give to you all of me
To join together and become we

We through life, you and I
No one else need apply
For I have found true love at last
All my heartache is in the past

So take me when the time is right
And make love to me all the night
For nothing has ever been so true
As the need and love I have for you

Sandy Smith

One Cycle

the poems shared, the song sung low
the whispered words from Cupid's bow
the stolen touch and glancing eye
the muffled struggle, final cry

the swelling and the sudden rush
the suckling and the gentle hush
the nights awake, the tears to dry
de "love you" and the question "why?"

the "I" who speaks and simple shames
de dollar made and little fames
de door that shuts then opens up
de stranger that is all grown up

the other one upon the stair
de held concerns, the offered cares
de proposition, mine, but not
de future memories I sought

Jonathan D. Lettvin
Your heart is broken

Your heart is broken
You’re holding back
Tears of hope, yet sorrow
It’s funny how feelings are as simple as that
I’d like to
Take your hand
Lead you away
From all these clouds of darkness
There’s no turning back
Now, there’s no turning back...

And we would see
Bright clouds on the horizon
White clouds floating across the sky
The sun shines through, one beautiful moment
And its peaceful beauty lights up your eyes
Its dancing rays clear away your darkness
As a calm cool breeze blows away your sighs
And as the moments pass, your spirit rises
We leave our troubles and woes behind
I’d like to take your hand and lead you there
To a dream world full of surprises
Out of the shadows and into the brightness
In the lush green meadows in fresh country air
To wipe the laughter back into your blue eyes
To see again the smile that once was there.

Fergus MacGettigan
Alone

This morning
I reached
for you
and you were
gone
leaving only
a hole
which opened wide
its jaws
and swallowed
the world
the people
the buildings
the trees
leaving only
me
walking through drifting snow
encased in fog
pierced by
winter's
sharp
blade

Nori Odoi
Something Lost

It's a Saturday
And the wind is up
And I seem to have left something behind
Somewhere.

A lock, a trunk
Decayed and forgotten
Some key perhaps
A girl

Maybe
Some serene lift of bird
Some hypnotic stare open-mouthed
Fragile snow against still water
Somewhere.

In the meantime
I will hold myself firm in the wind
A candle, a small, sure light in the night
And wait for her return some deep day in Spring.

Chip Carter
Family & Friends
There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well.

All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

Walt Whitman

Long were you a dream in your mother's sleep, and then she woke to give you birth.

Kahlil Gibran

One's friends are that part of the human race with which one can be human.

George Santayana
To My Father, Farmer

What better occupation than
writing poems to my father?

What could better serve.
the glory of the hazel field

as it looked on the evening when
we inspected the ripening crop

conscious always of the river
close behind the wavering elms?

Old Sam Haney's shed
still smells of bootleg wine.

My father's father watched his boys
reeling in the wet grass.

Let's drive down there now.
Smell the potato dust!

Remember how hot we were
planting them last spring,

bending, groping in the bucket
full of clammy wet seedings,

mud on our hands, dry mouths,
till our mother walked down

and we ate lunch under
that skinny little ash?

How did we all fit! Andy
threw rotten spuds

at the dog who slept
with his feet in the air.

Let's drive down there now!
Is it different? It's raining.

It must have rained before
or those seeds couldn't have grown

but I don't remember
this much mud. Let's go.

This is not the same place,
though there's the ash tree

a little bigger than before,
and there's the sack —

"Spaulding" seeding spuds—
caked with earth.

Jennifer Nadeau
A Mother's Prayer

Sit patient my child
your turn will come,
your feet
that barely touch the floor
sway anxiously
awaiting more...
So small your sneakers
seem to me
housing your tiny
growing feet.
Yet they performed
when called upon
to carry your being
to and from
investigating
all affairs
peering down halls,
round corners, up stairs.
Let loose like a pigeon
you always return
to the place in my heart
you've reverently earned.
You fold softened hands
in angelic praise,
but I know the trouble
I read on your face.
Sit patient my child
your turn will come,
there's plenty of time
for the world beyond.
Allow me a moment
to study your soul
In love with the person
I helped to grow old.
Sweet tears salt your cheeks
when often you find
you can't always have
the things on your mind.
Silver blue eyes
enrapture my love,
pleading and speaking
my innocent dove.
Please stop the tears
and smile my child,
uncover the soul
so tender and mild.
Your golden heart
brings joy to my being
in sorrowful times,
in morning and evening.

Anonymous
Childhood

Mud pie parties every Saturday.
The little Jewish boy down the street
brought
bouquets of dandelions which stained our faces.

And our Daddy Long Legs danced
in the glass jars.

The trick was to see how long
you could walk
along Mother's garden edge before falling off.
Then run to pick snails off the neighbor's house.

Denise Clancey
Flower Nymph

Flower nymph, child of the stars
Come sit upon my knee
And sing a song of universe
In rainbow melody.

And tell me all that you can tell
Of something that you know
Or show me how to touch the sky
And teach myself to grow.

Come touch my mind and kiss my soul
We'll swim upon the dew
And I will learn eternity
As one will merge from two.

Judi Lazerus Karras

The Boogey Man

The shadow the old tree made with the moon
used to send me under the covers.
Silhouettes of the Boogey Man
reaching to put a hex on me
The minute I closed my eyes.

But I showed him.
I helped my father cut away his limbs
And buzz his trunk away.
Now his stub is my haunting ground.

Denise Clancey
My Daughter's Hands

My daughter's hands are indeed a treasure of warmth and beauty. They are little, delicate and very active. They move in a funny way like the wings of birds in their first attempt to fly.

Her hands are soft as cotton and slippery as silk. Like tiny little stars in the sky, her nails are always shining. They possess a special, mild and unique fragrance, which inspires love and protection.

The humidity on her hands reflects sparkling lights that involve tenderness. Oh yes, oh yes....

My daughter's hands are a fountain of life.

Isabel M. Vargas

Mother and Child

Mother and Child, a sight to behold,
With loving understanding, a lifetime to mold.
From a painful birth, to joy of heart,
Inseparable love, right from the start.

The savage hunger upon your breast,
To peace and contentment, then time to rest.
An angry disposition, reckless and wild,
To Angelic beauty, serenely mild.

Endearing love, nurtured with time,
Tried and tested, sweeter than wine.
A growing beauty, ecstatically styled,
Warmth and love, Mother and Child.

Edmond Catania
A Boy

Some of those Brandon Boys
Still love to drink and smoke.

Fugitives from public school
They built quick, flimsy hideouts in my shop
(A dangerous, familiar place).
Afraid they would be torn down,
Afraid they wouldn’t,
These zit-faced manipulators,
Black-belts in moral Jiu-jitsu,
Guffawing masters of protection and provocation,
Already knew about buttons and switches.
They knew nerves could be unsheathed
Like delicate hickory shavings off a hard plank.

And they knew I built, too.

One day Darnell got in my face and said,
"I hate your fuckin' guts"
And then he wept.
Before he escaped
My arms were around him.
I do not know
Who needed the most
But I do know
That for one brief moment
I woke from a dream
Of spurious self-isolation
And I have remembered this shining-sun of a boy.

So when my dirty purple boy breathed —
little old man forehead pressing puffy eyes shut —
I thought
He, too, had arrived in a dangerous place.
I hoped
He would teach me the Darnell lesson
Over and over
About tender, vulnerable hard wood
And the live oak in Louisiana.

Then
I saw
A guileless boy with head raised up
And I wept.

Chip Carter
The Moon and the Star

Tonight I saw a star dangling from the moon.
I could imagine the thread that bound the two.
They were bright lights against the blackest sky,
And the moon's cycle was only one-quarter old.

I remember a little boy's hand wrapped around his father's;
Each held shopping bags proportioned to their sizes.
The little boy looked up and waited for his father's face to smile.
Only then did his do the same.

The ducklings were half the age of their mother.
But they glided just as smoothly as she.
They completed their swim single file behind her.
Not a peep from their beaks although their journey was long.

Tonight I watched the star, but I fell asleep.
I envisioned its birth in space.
I dreamt the star shimmeyed the thread to the moon.
When I woke up, daylight had drowned out all the night's lights.

The next night, I half expected two —
Two moons, side by side, each with a trail of little stars,
Who strove to be what they wanted to be.
We all need to learn from someone.

Amy Carmusin
To Brother on Your 26th Birthday

When I was one and three years old
And you were one and five,
I remember your teasing, smiling face
Our souls had come alive.

Your head was always closely cropped
like quills of porcupine,
I remember the day behind Jeff's house
You threw the burrs in mine.

That night you bravely used a scissors
to cut my silky hair,
I remember the lie we told our dad
"Some gum got stuck in there!"

Revenge had come one winter's day
I threw a snowball straight,
Smacking the shield of a passing car
And the beating was your fate.

Beneath the covers late at night
A flashlight would appear,
I remember your quest for the book of knowledge
Which so often you would share.

Sneakily one Maine summer day
We found a cigarette,
I remember my first grown-up smoke
A tree-house fire was set.

Time flew by, so did the years
Some cruel, some harsh, some neat,
The hours together in our dad's house
Were often bittersweet.

We fought and hit and kicked and bit,
We shoved, and pushed, and swore,
We kissed, and cried, and smiled, and lied
Engaged in a love war.
One day his home was closed to us
No place to call our own,
God sent his workers through the land
To find us a new home.

At mom’s again we were united
In and out of time,
But together we saw hardships and fights
For this was our design.

Your sorrow was my sorrow too
Your happiness my joy,
I turned my eyes to follow you
For you were the older boy.

Like bird in hand we went together
With tears, and smiles, and fear,
When distance places us apart
Your soul is always here.

Anonymous
To Grandma, Love, Liz

She is someone who is another mother to us.
She is a bundle of love.
She is homemade spaghetti sauce and meatballs.
She is the family doctor.
She is the family seamstress.
She is someone who changes all the furniture around when she comes to your house.
She is someone whose whole life is built around the home.
She is someone who makes you homemade chicken soup when you’re sick.
She is someone who tries to fix you up on a date with someone you don’t like.
She is someone who buys out Jordan Marsh.
She is someone who forces you to eat more than you can possibly finish.
She is someone who embarasses you when you go shopping because she talks to everyone she meets.
She is someone who can make you laugh until you want to die.
She is someone who cares so much about other people besides her family.
She is someone who never buys anything for herself.
She is someone who has worn the same clothes for years.
She is someone who will do anything for you any time of the day.
She is someone who is always there when you need her.
She is someone who is loved by so many people.
She is someone who raves about her garden.
She is someone who has patience for everything.
She is someone who loves to read her grandchildren’s school books.
She is someone who gets upset if you don’t start the morning off with a fresh glass of orange juice.
She is someone who is as strong as a bull and is never sick.
She is someone who says she hates the family’s cats and dogs but always feeds them and saves them leftovers.
She is someone who can never keep a secret in the family.
She is someone who is always comparing cousins to each other.
She is someone who is very proud to be Italian and wishes everyone could be too.
She is someone who cooks the biggest meals.
She is someone who says that our things won’t shrink when they are put in the dryer until they come out tiny.
She is someone who carries messages between cousins.
She is someone who never gets mad at you.
She is someone who is always helping her children.
She is someone who is very close to God.
She is someone who has gone through a lot.
She never forgets anyone.
She is someone who always comes back with things for you when she goes shopping.
She is someone who appreciates anything you do for her.
She is someone we all love and we appreciate her just being here with us.

Elizabeth Corsi, age 15
Runaway

the years of anxious
anguish
melt away
at the sound
of your sweet
southern drawl
at the touch
of your
loving hand
and the generosity
of your soul
we revel
in the knowledge
that you are
ours
our lost child
alive
and vibrant
you take us by storm
flattering us
with an outpouring
of love
and we
so flattering you
with acceptance
matching your love
with a force
you couldn’t have possibly known
existed
our baby
has come home
at last
and we
like a flock of proud parents
gather around
showing off
our prize
marveling at the
beauty
of our rare find

we aim to treasure you
for always
in the warmth
of our love

Chris Swarms
My Mother's Hand Upon My Shoulder

It's been a long time that you've been gone
The days and years have passed
My life has changed but somehow I am the same

I walk through two sides of life at the same time
I drift from one world to the other

When I am awake I find myself with you
Doing those things we used to do
Saying those things we used to say

When I am awake I also find myself in a world of needs
I am a wife
I am an employee
I am the servant of God

I do all that life requires but I am still with you

At night when the world is mine, however
It is only you that I spend my time with

I can't let you go because there was so much
I didn't say
I didn't do

I am still your little girl
I don't want to grow up in the world without you

It was funny, the other day I went to Maine
It was a beautiful day and we went to a lighthouse

As I climbed the stairs
I suddenly grasped for air when I felt a hand gently touch my shoulder
When I turned to see who it was
I realized it was your hand, guiding me safely to the top

When the day turned to night the stars filled the sky
The milky way was so crystal clear
My only thought was for you to see the beauty that filled my eyes

I didn't see you looking at the stars
But I again felt your gentle hand upon my shoulder, reassuring me it was OK

No one understands how I feel about you passing
I am a soul filled with endless pain

But I must survive this life

For the world of after
When we will again be together
Until that time shall come again
Your hand upon my shoulder shall always be our sign
Our bond of faith and understanding

So please don't stop putting your hand upon my shoulder

Sarah G. McCloskey

We Are Not Alone

In life we all must suffer the pain of loss
We feel at times like no one else can understand our burden

But we are not alone, those of us that hold the sensitivity
To care
To love

We may be few but we do exist as does the silent majority
We bare our grief and cry in silent testament

To the one we loved and lost to life's greatest weakness, death
But we are the winners, you and I, in spite of our pain
For we can hurt because our hearts were open to love and sharing

God knows our burden is unbearable
So he has given us the vision to see the good in the bad

Whenever our thoughts fill us with pain
Thinking of the one long passed

God helps us think of the good times
And the love given and taken in life's course

God has allowed us to blend our tears with a smile
or a lump in the throat
as we recall the happy times

We have pride and dignity in our knowledge
That we loved our special person in life

We have no regrets in what might have been
Our knowledge keeps the love alive and the memories returning

In life we all must suffer the pain of loss
But we are special because we have the sensitivity
To love
To care
To miss
To go on

Leo McCloskey
My Husband

I watch him
wheel his Dad
slowly down the hall
carefully out the back door
over by the car
he set the chair
as close as could be
"Ready, Dad?"
The old man
grabbed the car
and slowly
painfully
pulled himself up
His son
in one motion
grabbed his Dad's belt
gently pulling the old man erect
while pushing the wheelchair away
"Straighten your leg out, Dad."
"That's good."
Slowly patiently
he eased his Dad
into the car
such loving caring strength
in each motion
that must be why
I love him

Diane L. McGary

Last Leaving Thoughts

I left you in the cold ground
and I prayed a fevered prayer
May your blanket of earth
keep you warm inside
your black, eternal lair.

I left you in the cold ground
but I see you everywhere
Pictures and letters,
cherished testaments,
to the bond we shared.

I left you in the cold ground
but you're here with the family
Forever illuminated
in my mother's eyes
and locked inside of me.

Bonnie Eve Gosset
Friends

I used to wake up daily wondering if God would deliver the blueprint of my life today.

Who will I become? What will I do? Where will I go?

I have come to know that life is a journey, a series of experiences. Some relationships will flower, others will wilt. Some goals will be reached, and others will remain distant.

I know now that I will not simply wake up one day and have arrived at a fearless, all-knowing state.

God has given much and taken away much from each of us. Life is not pure.

But for this day, I will be grateful for what he has given me. I will accept people, places and situations as they are. And I will reach out to my friends, for they are truly God's gift to me.

Don Roche
Eyes of Hope

I never thought much about
the steps I took or the
air I breathed.

They didn't seem to require much thought,
and so I never gave them any.

And then the accident happened.
The car had been demolished;
her life had been crushed.
My soul had been taken.

I felt loss, I felt hurt,
I felt anger.
And I felt each deeply.

Friends helped.
They listened to me,
cried with me,
feather for me.

My questions were many,
while the answers were few.
I felt the weight of being alone.

Then my best friend's
little boy came over to me.
Neatly groomed and uncomfortable.
He smiled and took my hand.
He didn't say anything, but my
unnameable hurt seemed to step back
a bit.
I saw life and innocence in his eyes.
His world was full of hope.
And I decided mine should be too.

Don Roche
Michael

Friend of the friendless, you held bread in one hand and
Laughter in the other.
Soup kitchen minister in shabby jeans,
You would always be good for a hug no matter how bad somebody
Stank.

Looking at you was a contradiction. Cock
Eyed, you always looked two places at once. What did you see?

You hung out at street corners, at home with the homeless.
You saw the spirit still dwelling in the dispirited
and with many small breaths you would puff it back
To life, sometimes.

You were not a saint. You yelled at Tom in
noisy fights, and danced and drank in
the bars all night
when young.

All your human
grief and joy
Died last year.
Your pillaged people, your alley dwellers
miss you, miss your bread and laughter.

Anonymous
Fast Friends

She saw him searching for food.
He saw her looking.

She had heard it was difficult feeding the likes of him.
But it couldn't hurt to try.
If he was truly hungry he would come.

She slowly and gently approached him.
He became stiff and wide-eyed.
Smiling, she extended a delicate hand containing the intriguing morsel.
He wondered if it was worth it.
A cracker or safety?

He was hungry and she did have a cracker.
He started coming closer.
She sensed his trust and started to smile.
Her heart was beating fast and so was his.
Probably a lot faster than hers.

He touched the cracker with his quivering mouth and took it.
Looking into her eyes he found a friend.
Instead of running away, the squirrel remained in front of the young girl
and enjoyed his gift with pleasure.

Lisa Levine
For Geoffrey Jones (1959–1988)

He celebrated life,
always attuned to festival!
In touch with the dance...
riding on a laugh.

He understood the off-beat
and he understood the downbeat.

He understood the love and suffering of women,
and he loved the music that they made —
Billie Holliday,
Dakota Staton, Dinah Washington,
Randy Crawford, Semenya McCord.
He shared music with his friends
like a sacrament.

He was as comfortable as a bowl of soup
on a cold winter Sunday
with a friend and two good books.
Yet he was wild as an open car
in sunswept hills above Barcelona.

He loved my wife.
In subtle ways, like a cat,
he helped me to love her more.
to see her in new lights —
in the bawdy reds of carnival,
and the smoky sheen of midnight R&B.

When Geoffrey got sick
he encountered Christ.
We will not forget his eyes.

Goodbye our friend.
Now we mourn our loss — but later,
we will celebrate the peace you’ve reached,
the living love you leave.

Frank Ingari
Unchaperoned Cat

I had set a date with Dr. Death for six o'clock that night for my little catty, for my sweetest little girl, to get a ride to heaven on the floorboard of a Saab.

Yes, that's how Death will come here, as absurd as it seems. We'll hear the Saab's alarm beep on, and then a grating as the gate out front crushes any snow that's 'neath it.

The doorbell will scream and Dr. Death will come in, bearing Newman blue eyes and a needle. They both will be piercing, my heart will be leaping, as if jumping in ice water and sinking.

But in the meantime my little muff and I sit closely and wait in the warmth of our bond that's like a fire's ruddy glow. But time circles closer and Dr. Death soon arrives to keep his date to take my sweetest girl.

Bonnie Eve Gosset
Her Buddy

Like worn comfortable shoes
they grew old as a pair,
alone and together,
each fitting the pieces of a solitary life
into the empty spaces of the other:
a mutual dependence
based on separate needs.

And the years passed.

She,...slipped into slow infirmity,
and ventured little out-of-doors,
(though there was nowhere to really go),
her rooms a familiar map,
the rugs tread into trails,
comfortable and comforting.

And the years passed.

He,...slipped less often out-of-doors
and for shorter forays
(he had certain places he had to go),
his paths familiar only to him
across streets, through bushes, under porches.
She and he, reunited like sweethearts,
when his faint mew sounded at the door.

And the years passed.

Their habits, blissfully entrenched and routine,
become their lives, their life,
alone and together.
Reading and sleeping, she and he,
in their bookend chairs, close, content.
She,...pillows stacked around her back,
lap quilt covering her knees.
He,...curled into the space he had pressed
with his presence into the threadbare cushion.

And the years passed.

The car that hit him
left him there on his final trail,
cought between peace and chaos.
She missed him for a day...and knew.
She could never sit in her chair again
across from his empty one
so she sat in his and joined him
on their new trail to the stars.

Christine Stuart
Ode to My Tercel
with a Broken Fuel Pump

Alas, my friend,
What haunted you?
What cracked your heart that day?
A sure, dark vision of your death,
Of youth that fades away?

I felt you wince
Beneath my feet
I heard your wondering sigh
As rusted flanks — once bright and blue —
Trembled, as if to cry.

You shuddered next
As deep as fear
As gentle as despair
And though I called you to hold on
I felt your brave heart tear.

200 thousand
Faithful miles
You bore me in your steel
Could you have guessed my fickle hands
Now seek another's wheel?

How brief is love —
Though bright its flame —
Its glory is its pyre.
How soon we turn to newer joys
And light another fire.

They towed you
Forty miles and more
To men skilled in repair
They opened you, replaced your pump
You drive again without a care.

And so, my friend,
I envy you
The ease with which you healed.
The pain of broken human hearts
Is not so easily repealed.

Nori Odoi
Life of Angels

Dedicated to Edward C. DeRenzo

more and more
I feel you

pulling at me
a
lonesome
dark night's anxiety
before
winter's first snow

my dreams
buoyed up
which hung like anchors
now bobbing
wake and
sleep

you are here
in this underworld dream
life of angels

Joan Carroll
Life's Thirst

My friend:

We cup our hands
like beggars
ragged at the desert's edge
to catch our Time
like water
trickling
with
crystal
clarity
from hidden springs.

And though we gulp it
deeply,
greedily,
like water
it seeps
through our grasp
escaping
to the arid breeze
and vanishing
quickly in the sand

Even as those things
we prize:
homes and cars
plans and dreams
and
even
that sweet treasure
youth
seep through our lives
and disappear.
Yet you
will I remember
when
I forget
those homes
and dreams;
when youth's
bright shine
shall fade at last
into my darkening memory.

In those last droplets
that I savor —
diamonds
in my empty palms —
revealed again will be
your eyes
dancing with your inner light,
your lips that laughed
and arms that held;
the shoulders that did share my grief.

For when I leave
reluctantly
for greener lands,
with gentler stars
I will look back
on this dry desert
And know
that here
my thirst
was quenched.

Nori Odoi
Humanity & the World
If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem, but I arise in the morning torn between the desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.

E.B. White

Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice.

William Wordsworth

Autumn’s bright moon,
However far I walked, still afar off
In an unknown sky.

Kaga no Chiyo
The Path Beyond the Meadow

What lies down that path we didn’t travel today
What if we didn’t stop along the way in that meadow
If we hadn’t rested on the cushion of soft green grass
What would we have seen

In the meadow we saw the blue sky with the tide of changing clouds
We heard the crickets’ symphony providing us with their song

We felt the breeze that brought the scents of nature
We saw the woodpecker, with its multicolored coat, pecking the solo

Would our lives have been different if we didn’t stop
What mystery was missed on the path we didn’t choose to follow

I guess the mystery we found in the meadow
Was too precious to ask
What if

Perhaps tomorrow we can try the path
But our devotion will remain in the meadow

There is a path beyond the meadow
We didn’t choose to follow

But the mystery we found
Was what we were seeking

Leo McCloskey

69
On Tools

The glazing shine of a porcelain cup reflects the hand that touched it up and hands so sure from practice long carve the handles smooth and strong to hold the blades of scythe and hoe. I quietly hum, and till my rows so certain all the tender strokes will draw forth all their craft evokes. No craftsman I, with patient care to carve clay, wood or metal dare but on a recorder bored to suit I'll play sweet music to my fruit. Or spade to turn the garden soil, then pause, with cup, between my toil and leaning forward, thank my friends, their loving works held in my hands.

Kristen Hughes & Walter Kittredge
On Sassafras Rock

Mid-stride
we pause
to commune with each other
pouring the season
deep into ourselves
to taste the promise of spring
in a mood of dazzling leaves
as summer’s incense
trails away out of burning trees
stirring
even as
the moorish cloak gathers to settle
on the piles
and to drink in a simple moment
brimming with life
the draft of an early harvest.

Kristen Hughes
Today the sun

Today the sun through the trees suddenly yellow! yellow! what are you sun star locked in immeasurable embrace with another spherical fellow?

Sun when did we first fail to honor you? That day Eve and Adam felt their heads hot upon the thorns?

Sun I see now that you have been as steady as the seasons your children and we have banished ourselves from your garden our paradise.

What is this moment still tugging at mind-self this eternal moment as I speed along dirty winter road in late day?

Who is responsible for this endless travelling always in transit?

One moment alone stands out in my mind and it is a moment as familiar as breath.

It is the sun shining on the earth.

I could not stop to worship because I had to “get” somewhere. But a moment’s recognition is the beginning of love.

Jennifer Nadeau
Prayer

We are not here by right
Nor She by chance
We are here as a privilege
And She as a miracle

She is Earth, Air, Fire and Water
We suckle upon her take her strength
She is Mother, Father, Lover and Friend
We steal from her and drain her

She is a life body
We are visitors upon Her breast

She loves us by giving Her gifts freely
We hoard them and claim them for ourselves
She loves us by blessing us with all Her wealth
We take it from her like thieves

We must learn to love Her more
Must She love us less?

For we cannot thieve from an empty house
And She cannot love skeletons.

Christine Stuart
The Fire Burning

Wander down
dark staircases,
shadowed halls,
through twisting passages
and past closed doors,
to reach
the depths.

Ablaze with light
from a raging bonfire;
so bright it fills the eyes,
yet its silence is overwhelming,
wells of soundless fire
disappear below,
tracing veins of heat
and passion.

Hidden from all,
this room inside me
is the source
of my being,
with fires too deep to see,
waiting,
for the spark that sets
them free.

Lyra Ward
Saltwater Tears

Degrees of love forever expanding
Some so casual, others demanding
True feelings aren’t obvious all of the time
Some we harbor and keep inside
So as not to confuse these thoughts of mine
I walk with whispers by the seaside
Exchanging secrets with this vast blue ocean
While its waves surround my every emotion.

My sea is calm-quiet night
Glistening water such a delight
Cool sands, warm breeze, beams from the moon
Unfortunately it will be daylight soon
Sand ripples will remain in memory of
My goals, my dreams and all that I love.

And if by chance storm waves should crash
Upsetting my reason for being
I will not despair from its splash
Instead I will look for its meaning
Having faith the fury would soon subside
Is all that I could do
To see the debris left in the tide
Would show me how I knew
That nature’s course takes its toll
Through experiencing life’s joys and fears
Hidden lessons taught to fill one’s soul
To remain throughout the years.

Diane Marie Williams
Self, I Said

I feel safe within myself, yet seek solutions
There are corners of my life I need to fill
The short confusions are the paths on which to travel
The paths are open now and travel them I will

Some of the calendars of my life passed by, they passed too quickly
So many more, I feel the interest in them yet
I'll need protection from the days that lose the sunshine
So I'll fight to accept each day that dawns without regret

I am small upon the earth but I am feeling
And if I cut, it's life that seeps from within my veins
So it's adjusting to my life as simply being
And accepting proof of birth with its pleasures and pains

If I could advise and reach one open mind to listen
It would be gratitude I would feel if they could hear
That the only pathway towards the apex in a lifetime
Is, take a step, it must be up, and consent to the fear

All the right words have been written before, there have been many
To me it's enlightening to know I'm not here by myself
Yet even the writers expressing themselves in moments of wisdom
Must remember that even the classics return to the shelf

I know that the ways of the world are not all of my choosing
For if they were then all of my questions would need no reply
And a tiresome lifetime with perfect solutions is simply boring
So it's the challenge for living through ducklings and swans
that gives me a high

Sandra Ferolito
Comes the Dawn

After a while you learn the subtle difference
Between holding a hand and chaining a soul.
And you learn that love doesn’t mean leaning
And company doesn’t mean security.
And you begin to understand that kisses aren’t contracts.
And presents aren’t promises.
And you begin to accept your defeats
With your head held high and your eyes open
With the grace of a woman, not the grief of a child.
You learn to build your roads
On today because tomorrow’s ground
Is too uncertain for plans, and futures have
A way of falling down in mid-flight.
After a while you learn that even sunshine
Burns if you get too much.
So you plant your own garden and decorate
Your own soul, instead of waiting
For someone to bring you flowers.
And you learn that you really can endure.
That you really are strong
And you really do have worth
And you learn and learn...and you learn
With every goodbye you learn.

Anonymous

Game of Life

I go through life playing this game
The people I meet are all the same
They say they always try their best
To me it’s like a game of chess

For the pawns are my body, which work and fight
The rooks are my eyes like windows, let in light
The knights are my voice, which speak of pride
The bishops the kindness that lies inside
The king is the brain, which controls this game
But the queen is my heart that feels the pain

Each day is a move in this game of chess
Like the game of life, I try my best
So why do I even play this game?
For the queen to be happy and not feel the pain

Robert Anthony Williams
Breathless (Fear and Joy)

Puddles of light, 
framed by darkness, 
pass slowly, 
then gather speed, 
blurring... 
I try to focus, 
grasp 
at reality, 
but am swept up 
by the rush 
of wind 
and speed. 
Breathless, 
eyes tearing, 
I gasp, 
torn by the joy, 
craving more, 
yet I reach out 
and try to stop.

Carried along 
on wings that beat too swiftly
for my aching heart, 
I laugh 
and cry, 
terrified to stop —
lest I return 
to the 
empty dark, 
and yet fearful also 
of the light 
that may await me.

Lyra Ward
Helen to Aphrodite

I wore the boredom of my days
content enough in my husband's house
until you swept from heaven
and wrapped me
in the shimmering robe
of your voice
You told me
whom to love
whom to follow.

Sister, it is you
I love,
and I follow
mortal men only because
you wish it.

Lust and greed will drive them to war.
My beauty will bear their blame.

I do not care.

Your love is worth
all the men
of Greece and Troy.

Helen Betz

Said the Candle to the Flame

Pert little flame,
Approaching my graceful form,
Thinking with your brightness
That my cold heart you can warm.

Bright little flame,
Your heat will melt me you surmise,
But look down on my long slim flesh
As cold and hard as ice.

But fire, you’ve found my quick, my core,
You burn with heated passion,
My flesh is softening, pliable,
Relenting to your fashion.

Fire, see me melt beneath you
As my cold hard flesh you warm
Look and see my thick red blood
Run down my graceful form.
I am yours, little flame.

Sara-Jane Porter
Today I'm great

Today I'm great
How long will it last?
It won't last long
I'll think of the past
And maybe of the future
And what might be
Life's pretty tough now
As far as I can see

And in through the door
A bright light shines
And it comes in quiet movements
It doesn't make a sound
We engage in conversation
But I don't say out loud
The words on my conscience
Maybe it's because I'm too proud
Or am I too lazy
Or too scared to say
The words that plague me
Both night and day?

But don't get too down
Who knows what's ahead?
Right now you're aching
Your heart feels like lead
But maybe in time
This light will shine through
Who knows the answers
And why people do what they do?
I've asked myself that question
And believe me it's no lie
If you were to ask someone these questions
Instead of the truth, I think they'd lie

So sit back on your chair
Or look out at the night
And in that bright light of darkness
You'll find out what's right
You'll pick up your spirits
Your heart will feel free
And in dark moments like these
As you watch shadows cast by trees
As the pale moon rises and
You feel a light breeze
It's then you'll find the answers
To life's mysteries.

Fergus MacGettigan
Bounded

Uninvited yesterdays are knocking.
Greet them like Stallone.
Hello, missed chances and old friends!
Like the tulips in my garden, you erratically reappear.
Yet sometimes I'm remiss on how to care for you.
I act as a slave to you, icons that guide me
Through my ruin, scene by scene;
I close my eyes, but his light up;
My bedroom's scent is his;
The FM dial stops on our song —
Snapshots of a life fighting pieces of you.
However, the sequel exploits your defeat.
A rematch finds painful memories
Neatly tucked behind promise.
And tomorrow rings even louder than today.

Amy Carmusin

Springtime

I look upon the springtime hills
Rolling through a great blue sky —
The wind caresses reborn trees,
And for its beauty I could cry.

The birds, I see, come back to nest
And build their homes among the trees
The greening grass begins to dance
And sing upon the gentle breeze.

My senses pick up many things
That all through winter seemed to die
But in the Spring I am reborn
And in the sunshine I am high.

Judi Lazerus Karras
Martin and the Jew

You and I
Played like the Man with the blue guitar,
A tune beyond us and yet ourselves.
We clung to them, we made them;
Selma and Nazareth.
Ordinary flesh and mind —
Our highest affirmation —
Demanded not that we transcend our times
But that you embrace Israel and I Mississippi.
We learned to accept our finiteness
To accept the nakedness and mortality of all people.

Our bonds with the suffering world
Showed a few
The spectres of temptation and exploitation.
Your Pharisees were my police
And if they are seen as less than normal men
Who needed normal healing.
Our truth has not been served.

Most still do not feel our embrace;
You have been cursed with uniqueness,
With taking nothing from your rich past,
And I have been dismissed
With the pettiest aphorism
Of political envy: “the right time and place.”
History selects for its own purposes —
A friend said truthfully
That your message has been disfigured
And has become a religion of Kings.

Rome and my country could have surrendered completely.
A ripe fruit nourished us
For detachment in our movement among creation.
Such detachment, an attachment to all things,
Is not born of the world of half-truths.
We were guided
Persuasively and painfully
Toward an adhering participation
That molded new life
From the existing and relative one.
We are not unfamiliar with the pain of birth.
Our reluctant readiness to suffer made clear
The blue guitar's voice during many Gethsemane's,
And our unwillingness to inflict suffering
Gave our opponents the freedom to live fully.

Even as your disciples in the world nod unbelief,
As you and I have done on occasion,
Maybe the Truth of your tree can be discovered
In this readiness and this rejection.
I am certain that you discovered it.

Chip Carter
Back to Basics

Going back to basics
It's easier said than done
Because it probably means
Mass re-education

Basic things like kindness
Sometimes basic mildness
Young ladies' basic shyness
Are gains no longer won

From the biggest to the smallest
From the richest to the poorest
We just can't seem
To get basic things done

Basic things like caring
Basic things like sharing
Basic things like
Honesty and pride

Basically, love thy neighbor
Basically, help a stranger —
Basically, lend a hand
Where and when you can

Joyce Williams-Mitchell
Lend a Hand

Lend a hand
Help people out
Isn’t that what life’s all about?

Give a smile
A ray of hope
And soon we’ll all learn how to cope.

Don’t turn your back
Don’t look away
Often the worst can turn out okay.

Don’t be afraid
To give it a try
And if the worst happens just breathe a sigh.

Pick yourself up
Start over again
And tell yourself, “I know I can.”

If you follow this rule
This rule of life
To help everyone through times of strife

You may find yourself
In need some day
And that, my friend, is when your kindness will pay!

Sandy Smith
The Meaning of Life

What is Life? Is it jumping up out of bed
Every morning, and feeling always
In a hurry, with lots of worries?

Is it waiting for the weekend
To have your beer or your wine
Or to invite your friends over
And have a good time?

Perhaps it is watching TV or videos
Late at night,
Or hearing on the radio that tune that
You like?

Well, listen to me, friend,
What Life is all about
You don't have to agree with me
But listen, please, for awhile.

It is looking at my children run, play and laugh,
It is hugging them against my chest and
Saying, "I love you" and hearing them
Answer, "Oh, Mom, I do too."

It is knowing God loves me
And is always by my side,
It is knowing I have his blessing
No matter if I am good or if I am bad.

It is knowing he created everything
Thinking of me,
That he was there when I was born
And will be when I am dead.

It is the birds, the trees
The sky and the sea
That is the meaning of Life for me.

Isabel M. Vargas
Beating — Cancer

Woke up that morning
To mist and drizzling rain
Thought the sun
Would never shine again

The whole day was gloomy
Life seemed in despair
Clouds of uncertainty
Hung in the air

That night seemed longer
Than “from dusk to dawn”
Sad lifetimes were lived
Though the night lingered on

Then slowly, the sun broke
Through the mist of despair
Shining brightly upon us
In the fresh morning air

The birds were a-chirping
To welcome the dawn
Of a bright and beautiful
Summer morn

Hearts and hope seemed to rise up
And sing with the sun
“Thank you, thank you, thank you,
A better lifetime’s begun.”

Joyce Williams-Mitchell
Remember

The sun’s not shining like it did before “Why?”
Because he’s stirring up his world’s nest,
Trying to tell us it’s our final test.

The whale and the dolphin are leaving the sea,
But we can’t see, what is coming to be.

The wind is blowing too cold for you and me.
Can’t we see, what is coming to be?

Too many people are dying, because they can’t
get enough to eat; instead, we make Whiskey and
Vodka with tons of nature’s wheat.

Yes, the rich are getting richer and the poor
are getting poorer.
The child doesn’t listen to his mother anymore.
And surely, there are no families like there were before.

God’s earthly creatures are being misused and abused.

The water we used to drink, is the water we now refuse.

Can’t we see what is coming to be?
I hate my brother, and my brother hates me.
And the trees, the trees today do not bear
the same fruits of yesterday’s seed.

The sun’s not shining like it did before.
Can’t we see, what is coming to be?
Wars and rumors of wars are now here for us to see.
Oh why can’t we see what is coming to be?
Yes the lion soon will walk with the sheep.
Why, can’t we see what is coming to be?
Why, oh why, oh why, can’t we see?
Why can’t we see, what is coming to be?

This poem has nothing much more to say
except, REMEMBER GOD, he works in mysterious ways...

James Anderson, Jr.
Freedom

The birds’ rising crescendo up
over the river over the pines
solitary on the rise
above the town, beyond the tracks

make her think of freedom, somehow
remind her of something never experienced.
They seem to know what they are for.
But they are in the sky, that
great stage of freedom,
canvas of God and angels.
Because they have wings and
sun moon stars and clouds

are after all untouchable, and blue
never looks the same on earth.
That airplane godlike did he
pray before he thrust himself

so imperial there
where only musical creatures
have gone before? Is he free?
He is only as free as the people in him.

Altered by sleep, we dream
our sins upon our selves, we
pray we think words like
freedom, truth, beauty,

echoing dimly beyond the curtain
torn once and then forgotten
deeper deeper sweet sleep —
blind dreams sweeten the fall

Freedom. A word.

Jennifer Nadeau
An Argument for the Existence of a Supreme Being

Atoms interact with other atoms whose polarity are opposites. This creates a force between the two. The two pull together to unite. Therefore for matter to exist, space, mass, time, it must have these forces. For everything to be motionless, would be nothingness. No opposite forces pulling together, no law of today says that there is a continuing force in nature. But what or whom creates the force? Who created the atom, pure life, and who created the electron whose charge pulls other particles together? The electron, a particle, a force, that exists infinitely. Yet as we think in terms of infinite, then finite becomes obsolete. Yet finite is the word that we are looking for. By using finite we are able to say that there is an origin, a beginning. A beginning force that created or continually pushes the electron through time and space. This force is the beginning of all forces, alpha and omega.

The Beginning and the End

Brian K. Griffith
Amen

He lifted us from sorrow and despair
He brought the word of our Father to our ear
He the keeper of good, He the deliverer from sin
To His spirit we say Amen!!

Amen for He is our faith
Lead us through the wilderness
To a land of milk and honey
We thank You Father
And we pledge to You our faith
In Your hands
Are peace and eternal joy...
Amen!!

Micheal Latimore

In Search of a Miracle

What is this calmness I feel when close to it?
This quietness, so deep.
At first I'm nervous. This feeling is new to me.
I cannot see a cord evolve which leads to God.
It has touched me to my core and I am never the same.
I'm restless for want of it and begin my search.
My brain is spent.
Name thy name and speak to me, my spirituality.
Ahh!!....It is humility.

Helen Corsi
Talking About AIDS

Here at Mujeres Unidas
we always have a theme
And this month we still
have a lot to say about AIDS

It's a theme about life
and it's a great concern
so we are united
learning about AIDS

Listen, my friend,
about this problem for many
If you use a condom
the easier your life will be

This is a protection
for you and your partner
Your life is what is important
and about that, there is no question

Drug addicts, by using needles
shorten their lives more —
with the problem of AIDS
for them there is no solution

A little understanding
and knowing how to talk with them
could be the beginning
for them to overcome addiction

This is a problem for all of us
Look for more information
That way you'll have the knowledge
and you won't forget
Remember that with AIDS
prevention is the solution

Genoveva Galarza
Hablar Mucho Más del SIDA

Aquí en Mujeres Unidas
siempre tenemos un tema
y este mes aun nos queda
hablar mucho más del SIDA

Es un tema sobre la vida
y es una gran preocupación
y estamos en unión
aprendiendo sobre el SIDA

Escucha amiga mía
este problema del montón
mas si usas un condón
mas fácil será tu vida

Esto es una protección
para ti y tu compañero
pues tu vida es lo primero
y de eso no hay discusión

Los adictos por la inyección
acortan más sus vidas
con el problema del SIDA
para ellos no hay solución

Un poco de comprensión
y saber como hablarles
podría ser la base
para dejar la adicción

Es un problema de todos
busca más información
asi tendrás más noción
no tendrás la mente ida
y recuerda que del SIDA
prevención es la solución

Genoveva Galarza
Pensando en el SIDA

Ahora con este virus
Igual que una maldición
Debemos sentirnos seguras
si actuamos con precaución

Ten cuidado amigo mío
si no te quieres contagiar
con la enfermedad del SIDA
que es una escolta moral

Si quieres estar segura
intentá usar el condón
Dale información a tus hijos
acerca de esta infección

Ayer en la clase de Inglés
informaron en Mujeres Unidas
de como debemos actuar
si contraemos el SIDA

Si quieres estar informada
investiga en Mujeres Unidas
donde tienen información
acerca de la Inmunodeficiencia Adquirida

Al llegar al hospital
insegura y muy nerviosa
dejando atrás a mis hijos
sin poder hacer otra cosa

Qué tristeza compañeñas
hablar de esta enfermedad
pero más triste es verlos morir
y tener que lamentar

Instruye y habla a tus hijos
acerca de esta enfermedad
y así estarán seguros
que se deben de cuidar

Delfina Rentas
Thinking About AIDS

In this poem, Delfina Rentas put her thoughts in writing regarding how this deadly disease is affecting her community, the future generations, and family relations. She believes that parents should start talking to their kids about protection and they should begin to inform them about AIDS, because it is harder to see them die due to the lack of knowledge and negligence.

She considers mothers an instrument of education in battling this disease. She is grateful that through the AIDS educational month at Mujeres Unidas she learned about AIDS and now she is able to pass the information along to her children and family. In one stanza Delfina writes:

Instruct and talk to your children about this disease so they themselves will assuredly know that they have to take care.

Delfina Rentas
Last year my father

Last year my father almost died. One man from Everytown, NJ saved his life. I don’t know who this man was, but what he did was so gracious, so wonderful, that all I could do when I heard about it was say, “God bless him.”

Last March 10th, my dad was taken to Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center at one o’clock in the morning. His ambulance had a police escort from his home in South Orange, NJ all the way to the Harlem-based hospital. His brother followed in his own car, and my sister and mother rode anxiously and excitedly in the back of the ambulance with him. My dad was on the way to his heart transplant, thanks to one man in Everytown, NJ.

This man who we will never know and had never met saved at least two lives that night, my father’s and another person’s in Boston. My father used his heart and now is living wonderfully again. The other person in Boston took his liver and I hope is doing just as well. This anonymous man from Everytown had died, but in dying gave very much. More than any of us who are living could have. He gave his organs, a very generous gift indeed.

He wasn’t any different from the rest of us. He didn’t have any special training or background. He may not have known first aid or life saving, but he saved lives just the same. He was Protestant, Catholic, Jew, working class, executive, caterer, White, Asian, Black, Hispanic, married, single. He had brothers, sisters, a wife and children, he was an only child. He was every man believing in everyman. My dad said after his transplant that at first he wanted to know the donor, but then, he said, “I know him, he fears and loves God as the rest of us. Why else would he do this?”

Why else, indeed? I was thrilled when I found out not just that my dad’s transplant was finally happening, but also that this man in Everytown gave all his organs. All of them. What a gift this man left behind. I wanted to tell him — to tell his family. “My dad wasn’t ready to die and you saved him.” But maybe he wasn’t ready to die either — that might not be the most tactful thing in their time of mourning. But ready or not, when his time came and he heard “Ally, ally oxen free,” he still gave. He gave a gift of life, a gift of love, to his fellow man.

Last March, a man in Everytown, NJ saved my father’s life, anonymously and with great love.

Diane L. McGary
All you need is love.

John Lennon
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Afterword

The planning, coordination and publication of this book have been a joint effort by a number of Lotus employees, all of whom are making a difference in the community and in the lives of our relatives, friends, and others affected by AIDS. The writings themselves have been only lightly edited and reflect the diversity of thought and experience in the Lotus community.

Kathie McHugh's vision for Lotus employees to submit poems, publish and market this book to benefit AIDS care, came out of her desire to get involved and to make a difference. After Kathie, Susan Smith took over as coordinator of the publication and contributed her organizational skills to further the project. Nori Odoi and Jennifer Nadeau brought the book to publication with dedication and love. Diane Williams is carrying the project forward into the future.

As Corporate Giving Specialist in the Philanthropy Program at Lotus, I had the pleasant job of supporting the project from infancy to publication. I felt that my task was simple, but even though I am so involved, writing this Afterword has been extremely difficult.

Should I talk about the need for ALL of us to get involved in educating others? Should I discuss the statistics that say one out of every ten babies born at Boston City Hospital tests HIV positive? Should I discuss the potential devastating effects of AIDS on the continent of Africa or the island of Haiti, or maybe review condom distribution and AIDS education by Cambridge Rindge and Latin School students? Because all these issues are important (and not being addressed) I thought I should touch on these things; however, I still had a hard time trying to figure out what to say.

A conversation with Paul Paternoster, a Lotus Volunteer Alliance Outstanding Volunteer of the Year, 1989, gave me the inspiration I needed to complete my task. Michael, Paul's friend and buddy of three and a half years, died recently. Paul's strength and courage in coming to terms with his loss impressed and motivated me. "There is a lot of grief in dealing with the death of a friend, but when that friend dies of AIDS, there is also a great deal of frustration, isolation and anger. Getting involved with a project like this is a creative, healing way to channel that frustration into positive action."
AIDS has had a major impact on the lives of individual Lotus employees as with the community as a whole. Lotus and its employees have responded, like Paul, with care and compassion. We want to thank the management and staff of Lotus for its honesty and openness in dealing with the issue of AIDS in the workplace, and for supporting the volunteers and managers who went out of their way to make this publication a reality.

Very special thanks to all our employees who have been and are buddies to AIDS patients, for the care and love they impart. Special thanks also to our project coordinators, past and present, and their committee members — Helen Betz, Jim Calderone, Paul Camuso, Chip Carter, Helen Corsi, Shoshanah Ferziger, Claire Rizzo, Bryan Simmons, Christine Stuart and Diane Williams — whose commitment, expertise and sense of humor were responsible for the production and distribution of this product; and extra special thanks to the poets — Lotus employees past and present, relatives and friends worldwide — for making this project exciting and possible.

Joyce Williams-Mitchell

Credits

In addition to those people mentioned above, the following people and organizations have contributed their time and effort to help produce this volume:

- Alpine Press
- Interstate Container
- Mujeres Unidas en Acción
- Sir Speedy
- Reg Aubry
- Janet Axelrod
- Bob Calla
- Edmond Catania
- Suzanne Chamberlain
- Pat Christo
- Joanne Cunningham
- Rebecca Curzon
- Mike Devejian
- Chris Douglass
- Jim Foley
- Norm Jones
- Brenda Kelly
- Polly Laurelchild
- Jane Lensen
- Margene Lockwood
- Ann Marcus
- Nina McIntyre
- Judy Mooshian
- Paul Paternoster
- Alma Powers
- Ann Quenin
- Jackie Schick
- Al Stoddard
- Wanda Washington

With special thanks to:
- Keith Authelet
- Michael Balloch
- Woody Benson
- Russ Campanello
- Steve Crumme
- Michael Durney
- Frank Ingari
- Stu Kazin
- Frank King
- Pam Lally
- Jim Manzi
- Bob Schecter
- Heidi Sinclair
- Susan Yeomans
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