"Pennesence"

The Essence of PPS,
(Pennsylvania Poetry Society, Inc.)

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PPS members are invited to submit.
Deadline for receiving—1st of each month, poems appearing in order received
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March
2015
CARDINAL IN WINTER
—by Doris DiSavino

A cheerful splotch of red against the snow; the cardinal is back.
“Signo,” my mother-in-law would say.
“Il signo,” a sign, a remembrance of a cardinal singing on the fresh grave of her husband, a memory of a lost young love.

For me, shivering in a frigid winter wind, signo or no signo, he is a warming sight.
SPRING LAMBS
—by George Friend

My lambs bounce across the lawn, ignoring their mothers. Noses down, the ewes scatter for their first Spring grazing, greedily feeding on bluegrass and, especially, on dandelions. Like a school of bright white fish, lambs dash in one direction twenty feet, then just stop, alert, then run off in a different direction, their tiny feet flashing in the warm sun, their eyes sparkling with the wonder of this new world. The tightly curled lamb's wool is fresh and clean, white, dazzling new Easter coats, Warm against the western wind. Sometimes a lamb will turn, nose twitching, and search out its mother for comforting warm milk and a nuzzle. Then, anxiety soothed, it returns to the rollicking flock, cart-wheeling over the green turf. Sometimes a ewe will call for her lamb, and the lamb will stop and answer. When she calls again the lamb will run to her, and assured, and reassured, will drink and return to the frolic. Every lamb knows its mother; every ewe knows her lamb. And their shepherd knows them all. This is not philosophy but only simple truth. The poet asked, “Little lamb, who made thee?” God made them. The shepherd and his ewes agree.
DUEL AT SUNRISE
—by Colleen Yarusavage

The duel began at the crack of dawn;
two blazing discs squared off in the sky.
No seconds for the combatants now.
The stars abandoned the moon’s rear flanks.
The sun, with arrogance, was alone.
The rivals were equal in courage;
yet the moon sensed strength across the blue.
It sank out of view without a fight.
The sun shone bright in its victory lap
to reign supreme throughout the whole day.
Sunrise and moonset in one shared move:
one coming up and one going down.
FLOWERING DOGWOOD TREE
--by Jacqueline Moffett

every spring, outside my garden window
blooms a white dogwood tree
legend tells us this once tall tree
was used to fashion Christ's cross
four-petal bracts remain bloodstained,
marked with brown, yellow center blossoms
still reminiscent of a thorny crown
placed on his head
young grandson knows not of this legend
gleefully, he tosses the fallen petals
into the air --"look grandma, it's snowing!"
strong breezes carry creamy-white petals
onto our neighbor's weed-free lawn
BEGINNINGS SPREAD BEAUTY —
FRESH START ON LIFE
—by Carol Dee Meeks

When winter wanes,
foliage re-emerges---
the season before summer
brings hope and a fresh start.

Before coats of beauty and autumn,
it’s the season like new-borns
ready to take life in their hands,
and as they began a life journey
with warmth over them---
this period of renewal
sets the stage for survival.

The brown carpet turns green.
Snow has melted,
seeped into the earth
to mix with roots of elms, furs, and pines,
enhancing their color like emeralds,
then stretches their stature.

People dig in as life begins anew.
With dreams restored,
revived,
to face the future and finish
the race, we were called to run.
THUMBS
—by Lynn Fetterolf

Those opposing digits separating our species from the animal kingdom were never intended to be our sole source of human interaction, the only social intercourse accepted by toddlers, teens and contemporary adults. Everyone is required to be attached to WiFi via personal computer, lap top or by phones that hook you up to the world, take pictures, receive and answer mail, act as dictionary, thesaurus and instantly provide more information than a complete set of encyclopedia. In the future, if humans do alter as need arises, I foresee hands looking like mittens with fingers permanently joined and long slender thumbs, pointed like pencils to facilitate silent conversation, and diminished tongues swallowing the silence.
It always happens when our eyes have grown accustomed to the estranged light and the gray despair of the ground. After the snow has gone, the breeze turns lofty and free, the sun is a little stronger, and the first green eruption appears. Birds announce the spreading contagion, and the world turns inside out, unconstrained after dull and dingy February. The whole world ignites overnight it seems, blossoms burst forth in all their glory to tell a story of life renewed. Suddenly we want to touch everything in sight to see if its real or just the pure delight of imagination—the blades of grass, the budding trees. We even reach for the sky, which is now a rare shade of blue magnified by our startled eyes. Like Spring’s harbinger, the robin, our song bursts forth from our winter brooding, “Rejoice, rejoice!” We are like children again, wanting to climb the highest tree to get a better take on this magic, We run and leap with abandon, for Hope has returned, the yearning inside fulfilled.

Spring only comes to those who have suffered the blight of winter. Hope reignites our inner fires, inviting all to participate in the unveiling that comes from the heart flooding all the passageways of the body like the arteries in the earth which have been subdued for so long, but are now infused with the delight of a Spring Song.
Neon crimson, fluorescent green,  
as reflections gleam in the old oak bar  
where liquid flows to a rapping beat  
and outside the night is split by the squeal  
of revved-up chrome-bright "Hogs."

The smell of leather mingles with sweat  
as loud conversation duels with the sound  
of attitude voices belting out tunes  
accompanied by three brash guitars  
and the slosh of brew into glass.

*     *     *

Bright silver lamp posts gleam in a blur,  
a backbone of highway double curves,  
a hundred glaring reflector eyes,  
and the lanes are suddenly funnelled down  
by an army of orange cones.

Decibels dance in the silent night,  
accelerate in the blue-charged air.  
Then a squeal turns into a siren song,  
and one "Hog’s" magnificent chrome vertebrae  
lie mangled on the road.

*     *     *

A siren shrieks, lights flash in the dark,  
soon plastic tubes are flowing with red.  
A monitor bleeps its monotone,  
through rainbows of hope as she prays for him  
in a desperate blur of tears.
THE BLACK VELVET GLOVE
—by Carmen Martucci

If you don't have some heartache you have nothing at all, and the things that you've gathered will be lost in the Fall. If you've saved all your anger by dismissing the pain, you have lost the incentive that you once had to gain.

There are clues to the secret of the black velvet glove; and I've never been so sad as when I've been in love. If you don't have some heartache you have nothing at all, and the things that you've gathered will be lost in the Fall.

Now the cat's on the window, and the soup's in the pot, and the sky's bright above us, but my passion is not. I have saved all my anger and I've opted for peace, but the truth of the matter is I need a release.

There are clues to the secret of the black velvet glove; and I've never been so sad as when I've been in love. Now the cat's on the window, and the soup's in the pot, and the sky's bright above us, but my passion is not.

Shall I love once again, and risk all of my joy, or would it be so much better to stay put and be coy? It's a question of passion and the heart to be brave, when the option is there to grasp all that you crave.

If you don't have some heartache you have nothing at all, and the things that you've gathered will be lost in the Fall. There are clues to the secret of the black velvet glove; and I've never been so sad as when I've been in love.
CONTRAST
—by Maureen Applegate

Winter—a world of dark and light
reduced to mostly black and white,
a land of scars and desecration
covered in snow that is so forgiving,
snow geese in matching white and black,
pure again as in the beginning,
tree bones showing in silhouette,
harmonious contrast so revealing.
Startling now is the cardinal bird
crimson against a blank snow slate.
Blinding is the orange sun,
blue the shadows on crystalline lawns.
Cleansed is the earth awaiting its thaw,
half frozen creek beds beginning to run.
The call of the robin returns to the dawn
awaiting the crocus, watching for spring.
THAT LONG BORING STRETCH BETWEEN
—by Henry Spottswood

The growing good of the world
is partly dependent on unhistoric acts.
—George Eliot, “MIDDLERMARCH”

A black speck
half a mile ahead.
I steer into the fast lane.

A crow, busy with a morsel.
He steps to the berm as I approach
and waits with courtly patience.

He’s there in my mirror, smaller
and smaller in hindsight. Crow nods
toward me, I think, in homage
to the wordless courtesies,
wishing me Godspeed
to Home Camp, PA.
ODE FOR ARACHNE
—by Marilyn Downing

Minerva, acclaimed among Olympian deities,
for weaving beyond compare,
took umbrage that a young peasant woman
was known to weave tapestries just as fair.

The goddess challenged the upstart maid
to a contest for all the world to judge
whose weaving deserved highest accolade
to end the vain challenge and rivalry.

With equal looms warped for contest so bold
Minerva and Arachne wove elaborate skeins
of rainbow colors laced with silver and gold
completing equally marvelous designs.

The goddess in a fit of jealous rage
slit her young opponent’s web asunder,
驱动 Arachne to suicidal disgrace before
she repented her hateful blunder.

Lifting Arachne’s body from the fatal noose,
Minerva changed her into a spider queen
whose descendents weave for all of us
exquisite webs jeweled with dew or sun.

We marvel at the spider’s artistry
to construct a gossamer habitat
from out of herself for all to see.
Arachne lives on. Minerva forgotten.
DINNER PARTIES
—by Michael Bourgo

Not to talk but to listen
is the trick to these things.
You’ve learned this after many years,
and having had so much of life,
let’s face the facts:
you know what you’ll say.
You know yourself--
you’ve heard the tape
played over and over again,
and it’s unlikely you’ll change,
or find some new corner
along those well-traveled roads.
What a bore! There’s no news here,
nothing you haven’t heard before,
nothing to put in a poem:
but among other voices,
you might discover a verse.
SECRETS
—by Gail Denham

In a rock’s life, his size says nothing of his heart. He knows things; secrets he carries could stop the world, make it skip a beat and turn slightly. Those tales might make everyone cry and protest, “We’re sorry. We’re so sorry!”
THE ROOT CELLAR
—by Lucille Morgan Wilson

Mingled smells --
cobbler potatoes
stubby orange carrots
purple-top turnips --
cling to my nostrils.
The rough boards
separating the vegetable mounds,
raw slabs from the neighborhood sawmill,
have long since yielded woody fragrance
to the damp earthiness
claiming the underground room.
Cool darkness
circles the lantern I hold
while Mother skims the cream
from big stone jars of yesterday's milk.
In the wavering light
pumpkins ranged along the wall
like disembodied heads
while ranks of Mason jars
file past on the shelves above them.
Welcoming each escape to daylight,
I was never quite free
from the fingers of apprehension
that stiffened my neck
every time I was sent
for a pan of potatoes.
The grimace of today's jack-o-lantern
comes as no surprise.
DIFFERENT CONCERNS
—by Prabha Nayak Prabhu

The tired hospital worker
waits at the bus stop
after taking care
of patients all day
wonders if she will have
enough time to finish
all that she needs to do
when she gets home.
The well coiffed socialite
flashes by in her Mercedes
after spending several hours
at the beauty salon
wonders what
she should do
to kill time
when she gets home.
On the Lighter Side

March 2015

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"SAFE" BOATING
—by Ann Gasser

He tried so hard to do what's right,
he never drove through a yellow light.

He left the tag on the mattress he bought,
he threw back all too-small fish he caught.

He always watched his cholesterol,
replaced his butter with olive oil.

He was never known to walk under a ladder,
he never messed with a rattler or adder.

He always came in when thunder was booming,
he kept his head when stocks were zooming.

He always locked his doors each night,
kept close to his bed a large flashlight.

And it makes me sad to relate to you
how this good man met his Waterloo.

He practiced "safe" boating, but it finished him--
the "safe" sank his dinghy and he couldn't swim.
THE ERMINE
—by Michael Bourgo

Ermines are short-tailed weasels:
unlike you, they can't get the measles.
I've heard for a start
they are fond of art,
and when sketching, they always use easels.
MATCH MADE IN CYBERSPACE
—Marilyn Downing

The divorcee was bold enough to try an internet search. She adapted to the modern style to avoid getting left in the lurch.

She chose a flattering photograph to market her personality. She listed versatile interests slightly enhancing the reality.

He sent a glowing resume of a middle-aged bachelor. He looked a veritable movie star, the kind she was hoping for.

When the couple finally made a date, they saw what each other was not. They realized photos can distort and LOL really means “laugh a lot.”

So they seized the opportunity and laughed all the way to the JP. So, this modern fairy tale ends with two people as happy as they can be!