

A Celebration of Winter: Poetry, Prose and Photography that Celebrate the Glory of Winter

Edited by Sueann and Chelsie Wells

Spirited Muse Press

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Cover photo by Heather Hockenberry

*This anthology is dedicated to Winter
and all who appreciate its majesty.*

May the Winter Muse inspire you to reflect, create, and hope.

*Thank you to all the contributing authors and artists who made this book possible. Keep
sharing your voices and visions for the world to enjoy. Happy Winter!*

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Editor's Note

This has been an interesting year. Even if you are healthy and unscathed by COVID, chances are someone or some business you know has been dramatically affected by the pandemic. Humans across the globe faced new challenges in the “unprecedented” time, and we have had to make sense of what we can, appreciate and be grateful for who and what we have in our lives, and overcome the adversity instead of letting it overcome us.

Whenever I feel overwhelmed by the human world, I look to the natural world, focus on that which I had pushed to the periphery under the guise of import. What can be more important than nature, though? What can be more important than that which came before us, and that which will far outlast our mortality?! So, when stressed by the weight of the human world, I look to nature and find all the good that can be in the world if humans get over ourselves and our self-importance and trivialities long enough to notice.

As we headed through a tumultuous 2020 and anticipated a particularly long winter season, I wanted to do something to shine a light on the beauty, the power, the peace, the hope, and the self-reflection the winter season invokes in me. I wanted to shine a light in the gray, sometimes bleak winterscape to help raise the spirits of humanity when it may feel we're in our darkest season.

So, with the help of the fabulous writers and artists who have shared their voices and visions with us in this volume, we seek to brighten your winter – not only this year, but any winter season you face. Life is hard. Challenges rise often on our journeys. Breathe. Take time to look around, absorb the glory, the good, around you, and move forward as a human being amidst it all.

This anthology has been crafted with love and care, and we hope each reader finds inspiration within these pages. Winter can be a wonderful season if we let it. May the Winter Muse ever inspire you to find the positive even on the darkest of days.

~ Sueann Wells, Editor

**Winter is Beautiful,
A Winter Wonderland**



Song Sparrows
Winter overture
a cappella
upon
suet.

Daniel Kantak
© Dan Kantak ~ Spring in Michigan

Daniel Kantak

Untitled

Lisa Reynolds

icicles

dangle like diamonds

nature's jewels



Bergen, Alberta

Barbara Baker

Untitled

Lisa Reynolds

ice bell reflections
on moonlit lake
winter's lullaby



Vermilion Lakes, Banff National Park, Alberta

Barbara Baker

December Morning

David Warren

A fresh white blanket of snow draped my favorite pine tree in our front yard.

A smattering of snowflakes lingered in the air as daylight began.

In the backyard, our beloved Golden Retriever romped in the cool crisp snow and stopped briefly to let a couple of the flakes tickle her nose.

It was morning time, just three weeks until Christmas Day.

I couldn't sleep so I got up early with the dog and took in the serene beauty of a new day and the first snowfall of the holiday season.

I stretched to work the kinks out of my fifty-year-old body, and I turned on the lights of our two Christmas trees and admired not only the beauty of the decorations but also the memories they represented. These were memories that my wife, daughter, and I had created. On one tree we had ornaments from our travels and favorite destinations. The other tree had a variety of handmade ornaments from our daughter. The scent of fresh pine lingered on each tree.

Below our fireplace mantle sat a red poinsettia plant. It was still alive!

I laughed to myself as I thought that it was already a Christmas miracle that this plant had survived since Thanksgiving. My wife and I have a reputation for killing plants and goldfish in record time. I thought of my daughter bringing home her first goldfish and how big her smile was and how her bright blue eyes twinkled with joy on that day.

I started a pot of coffee and took in the aroma of fresh hazelnut. I peeked out at the dog to see how she was doing. As I glanced outside I saw a bright red cardinal land on a pinecone birdfeeder. A streak of sunshine grazed the cardinal and made its red feathers seem even more brilliant. It was a simple snapshot of nature's beauty and I felt lucky to see it.

I sat waiting for the dog and began thinking of the upcoming weeks and sighed. No gifts had been wrapped, half of them still needed to be purchased. The cookies had not been baked. Christmas cards still needed to be filled out and mailed. Our final decorations and holiday

plans had to be finished. Work projects would need to be completed before the end of the year. It was all a bit overwhelming.

Thankfully the dog barked at the back door and helped me erase the thoughts of the upcoming chaos. Her fluffy loving face peeked in at me. Flakes of snow covered her golden hair. I let her in and she sat obediently so I could dry off her paws and furry coat.

I pet her lovingly and she wagged her tail as if to say thanks. She was ready for her favorite moment of the day. After she was released, she rumbled back to the bedroom to greet my wife and daughter. The dog jumped onto the bed and licked them both as if to say “Good morning and glad to see you.” From my spot in the bedroom doorway, I watched the proceedings and smiled. It may have been cold outside but at that moment I had a warm feeling inside of me.

The three things I loved most in life were all in one spot. My wife, daughter, and dog all seemed content and ready to greet a new day.

In three weeks, it would be a morning of chaos. Wrapping paper would be strewn everywhere. We would be running around trying to decide what to wear to the afternoon gatherings, cooking last minute dishes, and who knows what else. It would be yet another hectic Christmas Day

The gift I wished for had just come three weeks early. Money could not buy me the beauty of a white blanket of snow, a bright red cardinal, or an unexpected quiet moment in which I could cherish the memories that our Christmas tree ornaments represented.

Having the unconditional love from my dog and the security of knowing that my wife and daughter had slept warmly in their beds and woke up happily on a beautiful December morning was far better than anything found at a store.

Maybe I’m becoming a sentimental fool. I’ve had the fool part down for a while so I’ve always been halfway there. All kidding aside, I now realize what I want for Christmas each year. I don’t want songs or gifts or cookies, well maybe a couple of cookies. All I really need is a simple December morning. One time when everything is just right and those who are closest to me are there to share my moment. That can be my annual Christmas gift. A gift that costs nothing but that means everything in the world to me.



David Warren



Teagan O'Connor

Wow, the snow outside

How it shimmers like glitter

Snow can never go.

Teagan O'Connor

A Dance with Nature and Life

Ndaba Sibanda

They thirsted for a touch of freshness
A touch to wash away their dryness

A new week ushered in: Sunday morning greeted them in style
A pleased pair of ears received pattering sounds: a dream shower

It poured down and enriched the land. Nature`s love was live!
Land was quenched of thirst, plants healed of pangs of dehydration

Rivers roared in celebration, dams hugged inflows in humming ways
Farmers were ready to farm, fauna and flora flourished as if feted



Snowy Hill

Emily Wells

I like the snow this year, where you can see a thin layer of whiteness but also see the grass coming out of it. I think it's pretty like this.

Reflections in Glistening Snow

Sueann Wells

I tramp through the fresh-fallen snow
glistening in brilliant, blessing rays,
watch my girls' eyes reflect sun and sky
as they scoop up fistfuls of
excellent packing, snowperson-making white stuff.
I smile, forget the sleepless night of
mama-worrying behind me,
stressing over the monumental course of
the inconsequential in our lives
All I see now are
three perfect angels,
my girls,
giddy
in one of the season's
final snowfalls.
Seasons change – inevitably.
Don't stress over changes.
Craft masterpieces with them,
giggle alongside,
Soak up each precious moment with them for
tomorrow is never guaranteed

Black Bear Winter

Daniel Katak

Bear, I saw you
first among
skunk cabbage
yellow rainforest
crocus organ to sun;
fiddlehead ferns,
arpeggio of
nubile green innocence
curling upward
under your paws;
then devil's club
white flower bloom
of early summer bouquet
come to wedding
with lupine bridesmaids
dressed in violet, pink
and deep purple
petal gowns;
then with dandelions;
you spent the summer
in meadows above
streams waiting
for salmon to
rush red with lifeblood
twisting, splashing
spun of spawn
to fill your belly
as fireweed
pink-purple troops
flanked summer
into her surrender.

Now you hibernate
in that memory;
curled in hollow
stump of fallen
spruce;
semi-oblivious
to relentless
gray granular
wind.



Don't Kink in Pity or Pain
Daniel Kantak

Why I Went Outdoors in the Snow—Strange Hunger

Rachael Ikins

First morning, new year
warmer out than in.
I open windows,
smoor the fire.
First rain touches my thirsty skin
relapses to snow.

My heart tells me something is
off, Earth, a crooked creature
limping even as Spring surges
from Winter's
exhalations.

Birdsong, no redwings yet.
Skunks, raccoons road-killed, not
understanding asphalt.

Time to smear sun-screen,
hide behind sunglasses, slather tick
spray, socks, jeans tucked in boots
when feet crave mud-to-skin.
I never forget global warming.
Polar ice-melt, plastic continent
floating Pacific. I recycle my coffee can.

Yellowed from February thaw, blizzard,
daffodils push through
Winter's rubble.
Timing slightly off,
Earth, a chipmunk
escaping hawk's stoop.

Just when I feel my own age,
just when I pray that Earth's death
not happen in my lifetime,

flocks of grackles blow, a blue cloud
into the fields behind our deck. Swarm
budding maples, cling, chatter-food, water,
a place to nest.

I hang suspended in horizontal snow
peppered with these endless flocks, flakes.
My heart soars, too;
starling, kildeer, titmice,
nuthatch, chickadee,
cardinals.
For, this year,
there are
still birds.



What They Left Behind

Rachael Ikins

Treasure the Endless White: Linked Cinquains to Soothe the Winter Cynic

Sueann Wells

ice storm –
glistening white
crystals glimmer in sun –
winter wonderland; cliched scene?
brilliant

brilliant
swirls in purple
swish, swish, swish of snow pants
as she parades around the house
so proud

so proud
of designs made
in snow, yells *Mommy see!*
at every opportunity
childhood

childhood
hot chocolate
dreams glisten through pristine
white mountains and caves, echo in
Dad's laugh

Dad's laugh
swallowed by the igloo
we tunneled out, mittened hands
turn purple, but we haven't
a care

all care
disappears as
we whoosh down the slope, our
discs and toboggans screeching through
the snow

the snow
doesn't let up
Snow day! the children cry
as they gulp down breakfast before
dawn breaks

dawn breaks
snow boots laced high
nose snuggled behind scarf
parka wrapped tightly against such
cold air

cold air
tickles my nose
high step to keep up as
we make tracks in thick snow blanket
few sounds

few sounds
as my heart pounds
as we journey through the
balsam statues in search of night
wildlife

wildlife
silent as oaks
wave in silent reverence
shadows swallow human folly
heavy

heavy
snow clouds hide moon
as delicate flakes twirl
to earth, treating my tongue to bliss
arms spread

arms spread
around we spin
faster and faster 'till
we fall dizzy in a heap of
laughter

laughter
breaking silence
the earth sighs as we catch
our breath, freezing winds whip through us
endless

endless
whiteness, Mother
Nature's winter blanket
proves human triviality's
futile



Sueann Wells



Winter's Walk

Kayla Wells

Metaphors for My Body in Midwinter

Ellen Webre

I am cherished here, fed risengrod in appeasement,
in pleasure, for my hands, a hearth; my kiss, mistletoe.
My tongue is a dumb cake's silent ceremony,
and every dream that passes this frozen river wears
a wreath of cherrywood and myrrh, cuts down
every illusion of helplessness with a birch switch.

I move as deer, as jackrabbit in hawkflight,
a red-breasted bird, a bonfire of oak and holly.
I harness the sky with a cinnamon broom.
I sweep away the blighted root, the sorrow choke.
I make a speech of suppertime, bring milk and almonds
enough to feed the beasts of every hollow.

With ornaments for eyes, I horse dance
on every threshold, demand a serving
of red mandarins, a sip of buttered rum.
Let me ring your home with bells and ribbons,
let me partake in the blessings of this house,
this communion, a shelter from the snow.

Gays Dashed

Laura Felleman

Under a white hat
Maybe in a whim of snow
Piling on rail an inch
An hour

To keep a warm head
She said (though I did not ask)
The growth now made it tend
To trend cold

Attempt to befriend
Number seven hundred ten
That hard husk of my heart
Means it failed



Laura Felleman

Winter

McDonald Lameck Jairos

When the sun crawls away
From the poles of the earth
Eclipse of the solstice haunts, the
Surrounding of imprinted footsteps
Of the sun in months of million miles of smile
As faded rouge of the sun lost to the slumber of the sky.

Diamond dust dance down
The arithmetic rhythm of happiness
In the tender mist of harmonious tone
Tuned in the vernal equinox
Where sun's tears tied
In the eyes of ice

Scary mesmerizing season
Where tintinnabulation of life bells echoes
In the atmosphere of brief shower,
As flowers blossom blooming forth
Hours of the day dies, in

The ocean of ice in Antarctica
And night predominate
Married to hibernation
Dancing in air of frost fair
As icicles circle the circumference
Of the solstice twice a year
Wintertime is primed every year

Winter is Powerful

Eons and Mountains

Daniel Katak

Divisible by
only but one and themselves
eons and mountains



Daniel Katak

Mountains literally sit in the lap of time, eons nurse them; they seem like prime numbers only divisibly by one and themselves.

Photo taken at Eagle Beach, Juneau, Alaska.

Ghost Apples

Caroline Collins

February weather
opens a portal
onto a fairytale realm

and Demeter's pain
comes again,
blighting the earth

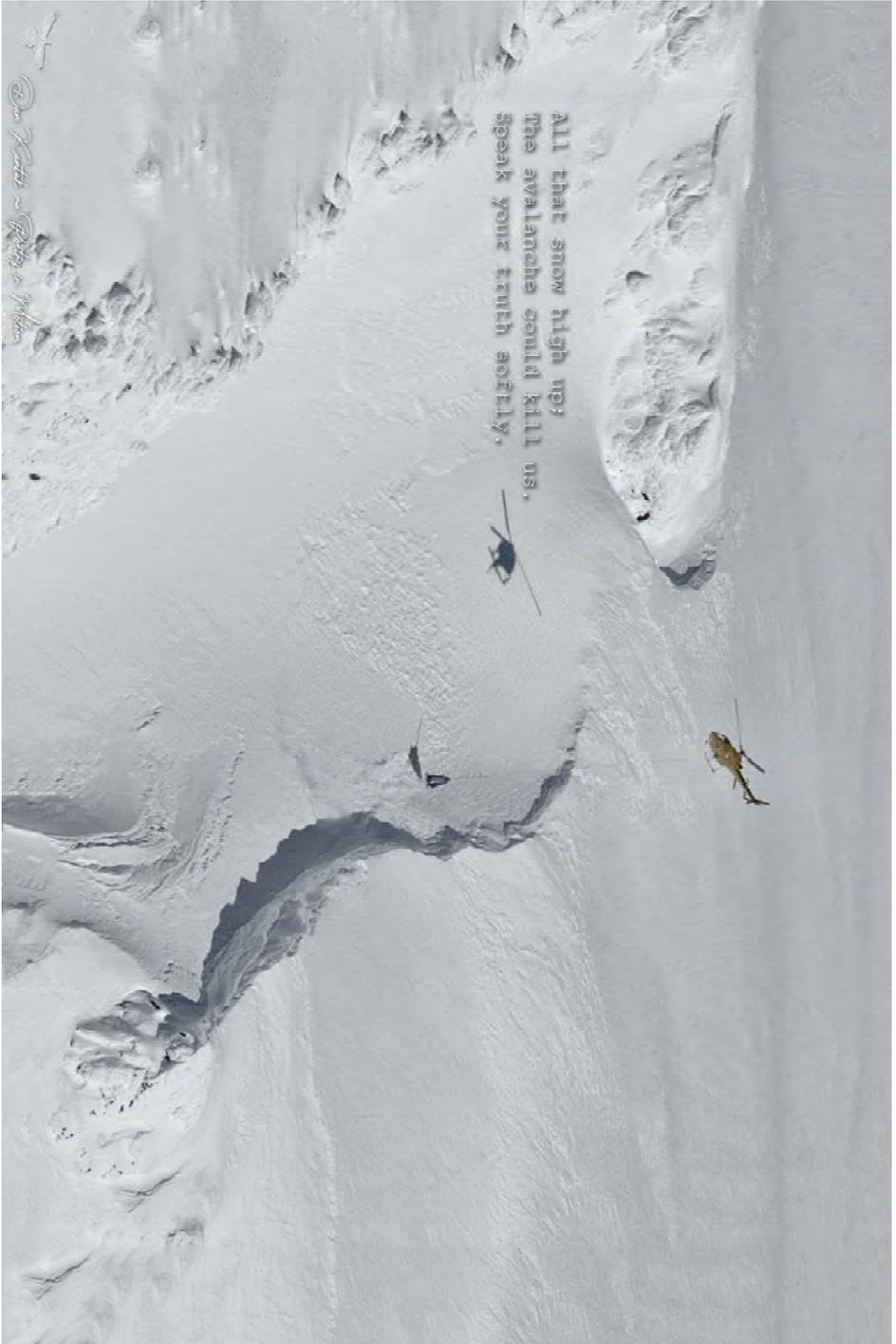
with bitter cold
and freezing rain,
stringing the trees

with clear globes
where the ripe fruit
sheds its icy coat

and plummets,
leaving only shell
and stem

and air, a semblance
of what was, stark
beauty only

the grieving understand,
having tasted
life without sweetness.



© Dan Katak - *Winter in White*

All that snow high up,
The avalanche could kill us,
Speak your truth softly.

Daniel Katak

Winter Watch

Joan Mc Nerney

Tangled...one ragged
leaf clings to the bough.

Stopping to see the
shape of a snowflake.

Winter storm warning...
headlights beam at noon.

Came home just in time
for the first dizzy dance
of December flurries.

More amazing than
redwood forests...
your ice blue eyes.

Simmering soup fills my
kitchen with aromas.

All day my windows
chatter like nervous teeth.

Crystals spin together in
joyful pirouette...a cool ballet.



Range

Carolyn Adams

Shadow Lake Snow Snakes

Carl Palmer

not the inviting cotton candy snow
scene on a holiday greeting card
or sparkling fluffy flakes floating
softly in the shaken crystal globe

these wind-whipped ice shards blown
thrown stinging not sticking hurled
swirled across bare brown ground like
long white snakes slithering on the sand

Gray Owl

Lisa Reynolds

silent predator
perched on forest edge
hunts for prey in snow



Water Valley, Alberta

Barbara Baker

Wind Lives Here

Ann Privateer

there's a howling
through trees
tops blow sideways
against the mountain backdrop

everything holds
while sea oats bend
whistling through the canyons
limbs arching toward heaven

a powerful force filled night
delighting raccoons to roll over
not hide, they kick constrictions
there's freedom lurking in the breeze



Ann Privateer

City Lights

Akinmayowa Adedoyin Shobo

How their eager eyes blink coyly
Something electric 'bout multicolour irises
The way they dance before the eye
So rhythmic -
Their songs make the heart sing.

The greenish old phantoms have arrived
Donned in their customary white hats
Who can sleep this night?
The entire city shivers
It's a feastful fever.

Many adorn our ceremonial attire
Even smiles stored away,
Slated to be spent
On the days that make these an unforgettable period.

Emotions
No one can contain
Smoky glitters of snow set the stage
Up and up we fly
Among the stars and down
We dance all night
Like these City lights.

The African Sees Snow and Shivers

Obinna Chilekezi

The world in a deep freezer, very cold
After days of heat and summer burn
Here am I an African, I walk, I freeze, I shake but smile
A newcomer knowing that the world needs this cold too
To further live, so that we can live too

I stand here a newcomer to snow, staring at this wintry love

Do I claim to love this cold, not at all, but great love for the grayish
sights?
Hope this scene be transported back home but without this killing cold
So my kinsmen too may share this shock of walking in earth's deep
freezer
As here the day walks in a cold smile from dawn to dusk
And the lonely newcomer befriends more loneliness across the streets

I stand here a newcomer to snow, staring at this wintry love

Yes here the day smiles with a cold smile
The African on a strange journey dreams of nothing but home
"Take me home, to Africa, our land of perpetual sunshine"
As the bald-head man walks along the wintry street, receiving strange
slaps of snow
"Take me back home, to Africa, to our land where the sun never fails to
show its teeth each day"

I stand here a newcomer to snow, staring at this wintry love

Here the weather is a god, especially during winter
Here the weather is part of the daily devotions,
The people draw their timetables of to go or not to go with the
weather in mind

Here in this cold weather, a lonely newcomer dreams of his sun
The lonely newcomer shivers as snows falls, buzzing, blowing very cold
sirens across.



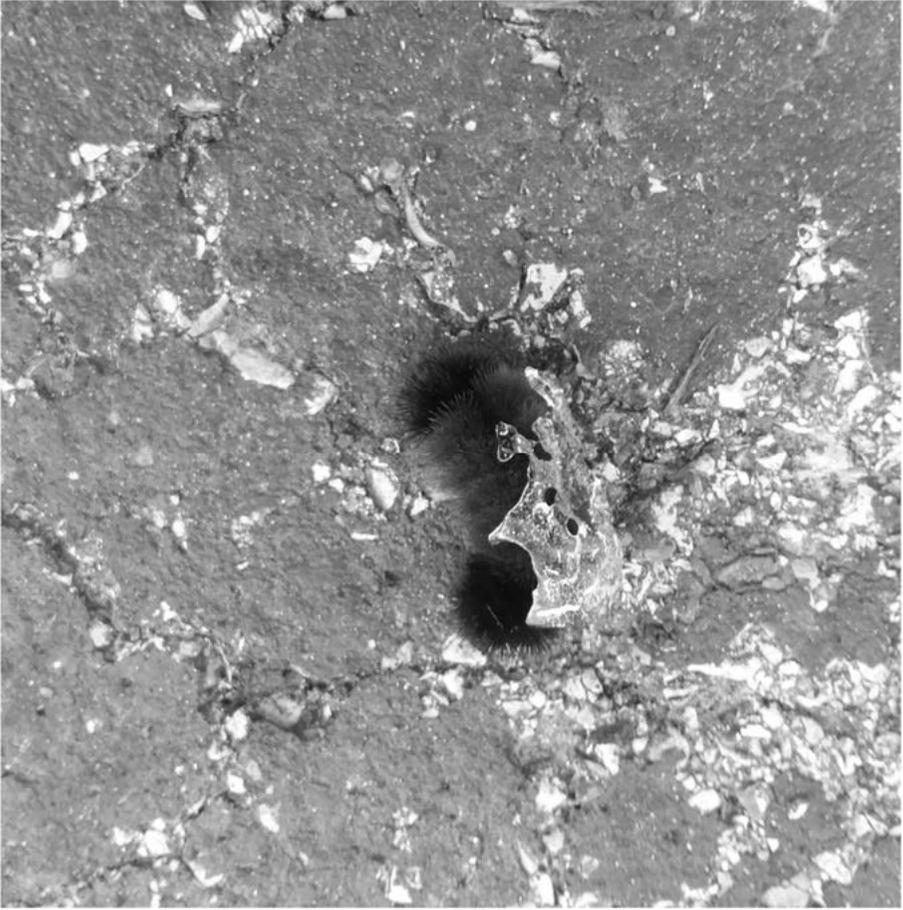
Kayla Wells

The Cove

Karla Linn Merrifield

Downpour! Then sun. Then rain and sun. Then stillness, leaves falling one by one from hickories, beeches, oaks; hemlocks, white pines bide their time for holding forth in evergreens on the shores of Lake Lanier abiding snow flurries, snow showers as a flock of ground doves takes sudden, silent flight, the only sounds—buzz of titmouse at the feeder, water droplets' delicate plink on woodland duff and backyard gravel walks, at work at the business of late December, by evening light, molten, golden.

Tonight winter's loons
calling to one another,
this night's winter loons.



Jerri Lynn Sparks

Warm Creatures In Cold Places

Jerri Lynn Sparks

He was always going to die
Someday, maybe not this stint
but Life has an ending in store
for all of us, except our imprint

For the anhinga I could see it was sooner
rather than later in this cold and northern place
he'd mistakenly flown into
blown off his intended southern race

I stayed far in the back of the barren woods
watching gazers as much as him
wondering if one of them would make a move
closer for clarity or an impossible whim

I wonder if that's what he wondered too
as he perched on the side of the still swift creek
hungry for fish and perhaps love
which he'd been separated from at least a week

Bitter winds had preceded the bird's arrival
forcing his flight to this seemingly safe place
blowing him away from all he'd ever known
forcing *our* fight over 'Never leave a trace':

"Nature will be nature."

"Survival of the fittest."

"These genes won't be passed on."

"We'd be wrong if we did this..."

A part of me wanted to save him too
so I came up with schemes and tailored words -
"A long trip back South!" I'd written
for *A Safe Home for Wayward Birds...*

I could envision it too
this gorgeous bird basking in the sun with cheer
grateful that somehow he'd been spared
unlike so many who haven't this Dark Death year

Suddenly the sun hit his big black wings
and it seemed as if he was waving
Brilliant rays glinted off his sleek body
and I knew this was a creature worth saving

I'd fall asleep thinking of this strange and beautiful boy
needing to save him since I couldn't save anything else here
needing to show wild creatures we are a kind species
needing a good story for a bad year...

Here we are locked down in winter and pandemic
with the invisible danger and the certainty of freezing
Weary of the world and its misguided ways
while he was just trying to survive A Misguided Season

And He sat with powerful silence
indifferent or unaware he was inspiring yet doomed
turning his long neck to see short threats and possibilities
a bird really doing what any bird would do

And I never knew a bird could break your heart
or haunt your dreams night after night
that a winged creature would refuse to fly
away from the cold and away from its plight

But Winter would be cold and swift and decisive
for there is no stopping Nature from arguing its cases
and its cruel judgment on wild birds who dare break the rule:
Life is not meant for warm creatures in cold places

Dark Winter Storm

José Rafael Castilleja

Sitting on my comfortable chair
In South Texas lands.
I take a letter from my bag,
I read for an hour.

En los ojos oscuros de la tormenta de nieve
Pases quickly en El Norte of the Rio Grande,
One day here
Next day gone.

Light snow fell in December 2017
Winter flakes
Winter ice
Winter snow.

A rare event has reached our door.
Silver streak on the ground
Head to the sky and a frown

So cloudy is the sky
Nothing guided my fall.

Snow and ice
Oh how I hate you more.



First Frost
Kayla Wells

A Winter Bear

Jerri Lynn Sparks

I woke with the taste of honey on my mouth-mind
so naturally I had to go and find it
the real taste and feel of sweet pleasure on my lips

I tore through thick vines and tall trees to get to you
hacked down branches and shrubs and marched through snow
wrestled briefly with a dragon until I arrived
standing with an aching hunger outside your door

But there were still barriers to knock down
first around the cold, wintry edges of your life
a distraction here, a threat there
until I bear-swiped them away with the thick claws of determination

I foraged through the trash of your life
its detritus no deterrent for a wild beast like me
who eats bugs for breakfast and dirt for dinner
no mere maidens could ever thwart my desire

For I am a hungry winter bear awakened from hibernation
hell-bent on capture and consumption
obsessed since first sight at the edge of my forest
a fellow lusty bear traipsing through my wild woods

No one else could ever understand our hunger

Harmattan

Baffa Hussaini Gantsa

The howling cold breeze
seeps fiercely into the pores
and leaves it dried and ravaged

Body calls for apparel
of thick kaftan
to escape this harmattan.

The hazy dawn welcomes
the day with its chilly kiss
biting the skin deep
with its sharpest teeth.

This is the time
when men curl under blankets
waiting for the soothing warmth of sun
to pave their way to work
Children cling on their mothers' backs
or line at the fireside
caressing the warmth with joy.

**Winter is Pastoral,
so peaceful and idyllic**



Jerri Lynn Sparks



Something
golden
every
dawn
seeks.

Daniel Katak

Winter Haiku

Denise Thompson-Slaughter

Icy twigs shining
'neath full February moon.
It's time for hibernation.



Denise Thompson-Slaughter

Winter Sunshine

Allan Lake

Sons and daughters of Nature,
along with pigeons, enjoy winter
sun on their backs while feeding
along this cool urban cafe strip.

Elderly human without shame,
like pigeons, quietly holds out
his hand but receives crumbs.
Pigeons in luck! Some saint
shares golden flakes of warm,
buttery croissant.



Jerri Lynn Sparkes

Winter

Fatimaꝓabra Yusuf Wasili

Winter is here

Perched on my windowsill

Before starting its laps of the race

In my screeching delight I forgot the cold

My sentences locked in my throat

My breath floating around

A monarch of feelings brewing in my chest.

Winter is here with all his friends

And oh! What a warm season it is.



Kayla Wells

Winter Solstice

Joan Mc Nerney

Hurry, short days are here,
too much to do.

Get ready, find gloves,
hats, scarves, sweaters.

Stopping to see the
shape of a snowflake.

Hurry home to luxuriate
in dim light listening
to heat hissing finding
warmth from hot teas.

Bundled in bed comforted by
mounds of blankets, books.

Finally succumbing to
our northern goddess,
whose black nights are long
and silent as evergreens.

Red and White Delight

Holly Strickland

Cheerful little bird
All vibrant in red
Your feathers brilliant against the bright, white snow.
Tell me, little messenger, where do you come from?
Where do you go?
You linger at the birdfeeder and share your melody.
Tell me little messenger
Have you a message for me?



Holly Strickland

Enveloped in White

Sueann Wells

If I twirl and twirl in the middle of the snowy path, fifty feet from the major country road, but hidden by barren trees; if I drink the majesty around me, intoxicate myself in the stark wood, roots ripped out by blizzard winds; if I back flop onto the snow with little more than a soft plop of polyester on snow, will anyone even notice? In such frigid temps, the lackluster sun doesn't even peek out like it did on yesterday's brilliant sunny day. No one is out; no one would see.

Today all is just ... gray. Skies, trees, snow. All gray. Some white to contrast. Some brown. But mostly gray. I could lie here for hours, letting the cold permeate my being, and no one would notice. Hours pass. Fine, ten minutes. I hear life. Canine life beside human. My neighbor. Pet ownership means she'll brave the cold to walk them. Good for her. I guess I'll get up. Brush myself off. Smile a greeting. Pet the dogs. Onward. Homeward. Back to humanity.

If not for need of sustenance, companionship, warmth, I'd stay all day in the woods. Human trials are folly. Who really cares at the end of the day who wins a match, what theology, economics, or government foolish humans cling to? All that really matters is out here. In these woods.



Emily's Snow Angel
Sneann Wells

Snowflakes in Winter

Sierra Lind

Water droplets waiting to fall and paint
themselves with diamonds and design.

Broken fairy wings spiral down to kiss
tiny lips and melt upon warm tongues.

A dove's white feathers dusting an ashen land
coated red, the cardinals finally at rest.

Tears that travel through time to transform
and comfort grief-stricken hearts.

More than a thousand white crystals reflecting
the sun, the picturesque of winter's beauty.



Winter's Geometry

Carolyn Adams

In Winter

Ramachandran M A

In winter
that little bird
built its nest
on the doorsill,
spring went away
unnoticed--
summer too,
and heart no longer
bled for love,
autumn was all grey
and yellow,
you walked miles
and miles in the dark,
night came
in your absence--
fireflies in mist,
someone wished
a hut on the hill--
a table and a chair
and an earthen pot
of water which
his mother filled
from the deep well.

Jack Frost

Peniel Gifted

Big Ben glides into Jack Frost,
Where cotton sprouts,
And shrubs twinkle in arctic breath.

Kith and kin, scooting here till
Sunday, in suppling strides,
Blue skull with silken livers.

Streets in leeks and beefsteaks
Fairy glosses netted in bambinos' smiles
Angel Nicholas's nectars and groceries in scepters.



Mark Tarallo

The Hillslayer

Maureen Maas-Feary

He's the guy with the red sled,
the cheap plastic Kmart sled that goes 100 miles per hour.
Easy.

He gives rides to kids, grandkids, friends' kids,
who thrill whizzing down snow-covered hills on his back.
Speeding.

His runs outlast everyone else's,
even younger, stronger sledders with high-tech mounts.
Unbeatable.

He's asked, how do you do it, man?
and he can't resist boasting about his lightning ride.

Joy.

He's aging, but still flings his stomach on that sled,
streaks down hills; hums to himself on the long walk back.

Repeats.

He's thinking about his red sled today,
anticipating taking new grandbaby for a ride.

Miles.

He can almost feel the toddler clinging to his neck,
pink-cheeked, clutching grandpa's coat as he navigates the slopes.
He smiles.



Maureen Maas-Feary

Cleveland Haiku #614

Michael Ceraolo

Backyard---
deer drink from a pool
of melted snow

Cleveland Haiku #615

Michael Ceraolo

Winter solstice---
a squash sits atop
a guardrail post

Cleveland Haiku #616

Michael Ceraolo

White Christmas---
a foot-and-a-half snowfall
overdoes it a bit



Jerri Lynn Sparks

Will melt soon
Inside by the fire
Not forever
Tobogganing
Everyone has fun
Really cold

Kaylee Duda



Frosted

Carolyn Adams

Christmas Cookies

Kaylee Duda

One of my favorite things about winter is when I get to go decorate sugar cookies with my mom, grandma, aunt, brother, and great aunt.

We have been doing this for as long as I can remember, and I guess it has become a tradition. One day near Christmas, we go to my great aunt's house in the late morning, then stay through lunch and most times longer, decorating sugar cookies. My great aunt has already made the cookies and bought the frosting, so all the rest of us have to do is decorate.

Well, normally, my grandma and aunt will only decorate a few, then spend the rest of the time sitting and talking. My brother is always asked to decorate at least three cookies, but he gets bored easily, so he spends most of his time transferring the cookies my mom and I have decorated from one table to the other.

When we do this, it takes up the whole living room and dining room. There are two fold-up tables in the living room, which is where the 'decorating station' is, which includes all the cookies, sprinkles, and frosting. Then, there is the 'finished table,' which is the dining room table.

Every year, there are so many different cookie shapes, Santas, Christmas trees, stars, and hearts. One year there was a cookie that was Santa holding his bag of toys, but when I held it sideways I thought it was a lizard sitting on a rock. So I decorated that cookie as a lizard sitting on a rock instead of Santa with a toy bag. Everyone laughed at that, especially my grandma.

I always spend lots of time decorating cookies, and honestly I think because of this memory, it has become my favorite thing to bake, because it reminds me of the joy of spending time with family, and of course decorating and eating cookies.



Submitted by Kaylee Duda

Four Days after Science Broke the News

Karla Linn Merrifield

Waiting for winter owls,
hoping to summon them,
I went off on a tangent.

Multisyllabic microbes
took over the poem.
Nanoplankton muscled in.

Choanoflagellates!
Choanoflagellates
of forty tentacle-like filaments!

The one-celled ones,
obscure, harmless,
live a humble existence.

But they are colonists.
They are our animal cousins.
They are a clue.

They are miniscule predators,
mouths full of miracles,
who call for the wintering owls.

for Michael G. Smith



Erin Sandle

Winter Magic

Chelsie Wells

A snowball hits Emma in the face. She laughs, and throws one back at Bella. Arianna creeps up on them and hits them both from behind, then runs away, giggling. Their mother calls from the doorway, and Kaylee is the first inside.

As they are pulling off their boots, Bella says, "I love winter. It is always so magical, with the snow pouring down the windows. And it is just so much fun too, with snowball fights, building igloos, sledding, and baking cookies. I also love to come inside and curl up by the fire with a nice cup of hot cocoa after a busy day of play. And figure skating after school is always fun."

Arianna grins. "What about hockey? I think we should all go to the rink after dinner for some more fun. Me and Kaylee are so going to beat you two."

"Girls, I think that you have had enough fun for the day. How about we have some family story time after dinner, by the fire?" Mrs. Cattle opens the cupboard and pulls out some pots to make dinner.

Kaylee looks over at Arianna. "We are too old for story time. Isn't that right, Arianna?"

"You are never too old for story time. How about the traditional *Brave Irene*?"

Later that night, all cuddled in their beds, their mother says good night. "And tomorrow you can have more fun. You are so lucky that school has been canceled due to the blizzard. How about a family sledding party? You can each invite a friend?"

They all agree to it and fall asleep to the soft tapping of snowflakes on the rooftop.

The next morning their mother fulfills her promise, and a friend appeared on the doorstep for each of them. There is Lizzie for Kaylee, bundled up in purple snow gear. Moments later Ashley appears, and Arianna runs out the door with her. Their dad agrees to drive the four, and meet up at the big hill once Bella and Emma's friends come.

Once their friends came, Jessica, Bella, Anna, and Emma all piled into the old truck. Down the road they drive, singing carols all the way.

Jessica and Bella slip down the hill, reaching the bottom just in time to join Kaylee and Lizzie on their sled.

A few hours later, when the girls can't feel their toes, they go home for lunch. After some cocoa and chili, the girls are all ready to go back out. Their dad drives them to the pond. Kids are already there, sliding around and laughing. The girls lace up their skates and push off onto the ice.

Laughter fills the air, and the four girls skate around, holding hands with their friends. It's clear that winter magic is in the air, and the sisters have added to it. Snowflakes fall around them, and the image looked just like the photo on a postcard. Winter magic is something that comes every year, but only some acknowledge it.



Home

Carolyn Adams

Snow

Ann Privateer

One, two, three
big balls rolled
into being like
Grandma did
on her floured board
Only Sunshine
in our town of light
Suitable snow suits
mittens and such
and we filled with joy
cuz we made it.



Ann Privateer

At That Pat

Joana Chiwongola

The created low
Temperature had to bow
And extend its breezy hand
Coating mine membranes

After high soul craves
Low brightness of the light
So sun following such
Initiates a magnificent blush.

Low temperature and light
Mingle and become tight
I smile at that pat.

Winter is Hopeful



On the Way
Carolyn Adams



New puppy bringing in new life, joy, peace, family, and Hope for the Future - to our World

Amie Wagner

Winter

Chelsie Wells

Winter is the time of year
for all to enjoy and cheer.
For now it's the time to give the gifts
of laughter and joy.
Winter magic and holiday wishes
pull together like a blanket
keeping us warm and happy.
Children laugh outside,
and snowflakes drift by.
Hopes and dreams will come true
during this wonderful time.



Sueann Wells

Winter Memories

Renee Zastrow

I plug in my little artificial tree that stands on a table decorated with only a few ornaments my children made long ago in pre-school and kindergarten, popsicle stick stars, unevenly cut stockings with tops of cotton balls for fur, and foam snowflakes with glitter, all bringing back memories of a time long ago when my children were little. Oh what memories.

I can still see their sparkling eyes as they peered out the window at the first snowfall of the season, their little bodies jumping for joy at the snowflakes coming down from heaven. There was barely snow on the ground when they asked, "Mom, can we go outside?" Then I would search through the closet finding their gloves, hats and scarves, push their feet into last year's boots, and send them off into the yard where they would stick out their little tongues and catch snowflakes till lunch time. Oh, how their faces lit up with the arrival of the first snow.

Over the next few days, as the snow became heavier and fell more rapidly, they would venture out to build a snowman, all of them working together to get the body and head in place. My youngest had the job of attaching sticks for arms and pebbles for buttons on his coat, while the oldest was sent to the house to beg for an extra scarf and hat and a carrot for the snowman's nose. Oh, how I remember those days of long ago, such fun I had watching them constructing their prize snowman to show daddy when he got home. And I remember their bright red cheeks and wet clothes as they trudged through the kitchen for a snack of hot chocolate and cookies.

On some days they would stay outside for hours making snow angels and grabbing a cardboard box or plastic sled to go sledding. We had a small hill in our yard and they would go up and down it for hours, laughing when their make-shift sleds went fast and tipped them over. I was always leary about fort building, and ice skating (lest they get hurt), but my kids seemed to survive all that as they played in the snow, loving every minute of winter, the cold temperatures never stopping them

I'm not a fan of winter with its icy sidewalks, howling wind, and barely visible road conditions. But now as I look back, my children are all grown and have moved away, but the tradition of that first snowfall still lives on in my grandchildren. Children of all ages love winter, they love the snow, they love being outside, they love the simplicity of it, the beauty of it, and all the excitement of throwing snowballs, building snowmen, and sledding. Their child-like innocence and carefree attitude are evident as they watch those first snowflakes hit the ground. It's winter, a joyful time to play outside and let those pretty snowflakes dance on your tongue.

So to all mothers and grandmothers, no matter your age, take a few quiet moments, grab your coffee, and sit by the window to watch those precious snowflakes drift quietly from the sky and enjoy all the memories of winters past.



Snow Montage

Martin Willitts Jr

1.

Snow laid out, a garment waiting to be cut.

In the back pasture where snow edges on the fence,
my footprints disappeared.

Even when my footprints turned back,
they were reclaimed, taken into the shape of
whatever vanishes.

The question remains:
was I ever there?

2.

A trifling of snow never landed.
All of yesterday's snow has been erased.
Every moment splinters what just began.

In the vernacular of snow,
among its hundreds of names, this one is
gangly, sprinting across the field,
high-hurting over the back fence.



Snow Light
Carolyn Adams

In Case It Works Out

Jerri Lynn Sparks

The snow has come
and you've brought out the sleds
The eggnog's been made
and you've bought them new threads

The scarves are set out
and knit hats are there too
The mittens are paired
and the boots are brand new

The Winter Season has arrived
and bundling and wrapping are done
Hot cocoa is waiting for them
once they've come inside from their fun

The feast has been had
And the children gone to bed
You've called your mom and dad
And left with thoughts in your head

Such as 'How did I end up here?'
And 'What's this all about?'
'Would life be better elsewhere
In case this doesn't work out?'

Then the world gets quieter
And your load gets smaller
Your outlook grows brighter
As your kids grow taller

Years ago you snapped pictures-
Budding belly and anticipation -
You adorned their walls with fixtures
To build a room for imagination

There were pinks and blues and little stars
Satin and fleece to make it warm
There was a dollhouse and trains and little cars
All designed to make little kids swarm

And it worked so well all the kids came
To our house to play and have fun
Each day was a wildness you couldn't tame
Until suddenly they stopped playing in the sun

Crushes and computers replaced Hot Wheels
Blushes and Couture took over their table
Gone were sleepovers and giggles and squeals
Replaced with young adults ready and able

To start their own lives someplace else
To leave the nest for another rout
So before the time they're here melts
I take more pictures in case it works out



Heather Hockenberry

Sunday Storm

Barbara Murphy

We wake to the work
of tiny snowflakes that in
an all-night flurry
dissolved driveway lines, road.
Dizzy and confused,
we begin the excavation,
snow surpassing our old knees,
wondering why we live here until
a knit-masked god
revs up his front loader,
shoves snow, builds us
a curbside mountain
as our backs stay aligned.
We breathe easier in the ten-degree air,
clean up the edges,
a chorus of scraping shovels today's hymns,
hear another neighbor
digging
one
scoop
at a time,
lend our snowblower,
quickly tell which knob does what
and how to aim the shoot.
Able now to move our steel beast,
we carefully drive with extra gear and gloves
to our son across town
where the well-meaning street-plows
wrecked
any hope of him getting out.
We three dig into brown crusted pellets of ice
as his roommate clears the sidewalk

and another savior, this time in a Jeep plow,
appears, motioning us to step aside
while he paves the way to heaven,
wheels suddenly spinning,
but rocking it out.

As we hand him a few bucks, he tells us of his
heart attacks and stroke,
but there he is, smiling and
helping.

We finish the job, freeing buried windshields and tires.
Late afternoon, invited to a neighbor's,
we tell stories of travels to warmer climes,
pet the dog who keeps going to the window,
watch the cat eat popcorn.

In the dark on the way home,
sharp angles again define driveways and road,
and chimney smoke, a kind of incense,
rises above this place where today
kindness has reigned.



Jerri Lynn Sparks

Make Your Own Sunshine

Rosemary Zepp

Make your own sunshine,
That's what my mother used to say
On these cold dark winter days
Time can seem to drag.
So turn on a light and grab a cleaning rag
I know how deep the dark can get
But God is with you yet.
So get on your knees if you can
Or just whisper a prayer
Tell Him of your yen
You're looking for a brightness to cover your soul.
You're looking for His whiteness to make you whole.
So, quit that sniveling
Get outta bed
And talk to Jesus.
It's good for your soul and good for your head.



Lisa Hochgraf

I'd Like to Become a Bear

Jerri Lynn Sparks

I've sat up all night long wondering
why winter is so long and my patience is so short
why I seem to be the only person awake
on this complicated yet maddeningly simple planet

Even the birds are asleep at this black hour
much to my chagrin but even more so for the crimson cat
who slinks around the back of my house like a red demon in the white
snow
ready to consume all who enter here

I stay up and decide to have words for breakfast:
'chicory' and 'echelon' with my chamomile and honey
so sweet I think I'd like to become a bear
who takes whatever it wants with no regrets

growling and stuffing its ravenous and pointed snout
into yesterday's dinner and last week's dumplings
a layer of magazines dampened by steady sleet
obscuring the faces of those who 'made it'

frantically grabbing and feeding my own hunger and nothing more
rummaging through the curious things others discard or take lightly
and thinking to myself 'What a lucky day'
to find gold in the junk of other lives



Heather Hockenberry

A Mouth Full of Flowers

Jerri Lynn Sparks

I dreamed I had a mouth full of flowers
as I slept late at night
and I don't know if they were roses
or daisies in black light

What I do know is I spoke petals
of honesty, love and longing
Every word descended warmth
and a hungry sense of belonging

My arms were wild and strong vines
but my legs controlled neat stems
my hair soft and loyal leaves
my voice extolled sweet hymns

In Winter my tongue lapped snowflakes
but it never grew cold or frozen
for every flake falling was Love
and I was whom Love had chosen

Then I grew all around Love
and became an endless garden
planting seeds of renewal and forgiveness
and growing the fruit of pardon



Denise Thompson-Slaughter

What the Dawn of a New Day Means

Ndaba Sibanda

A new day gives birth to efforts and expectations
A new day heralds an opportunity for experiences

A new day is a providential bonus and blessing
A new day could mean a promising turning point

A new day beckons to be greeted with power
And positivity if not with hope and happiness

A new day may present new horizons and heights
And foundations for renewal, rebranding, or rearming

A new day is reason enough to celebrate a heart's palpation
A new day sets a platform for the mind and soul to jell together



Heather Hockenberry

Winter In My Hair

Jerri Lynn Sparks

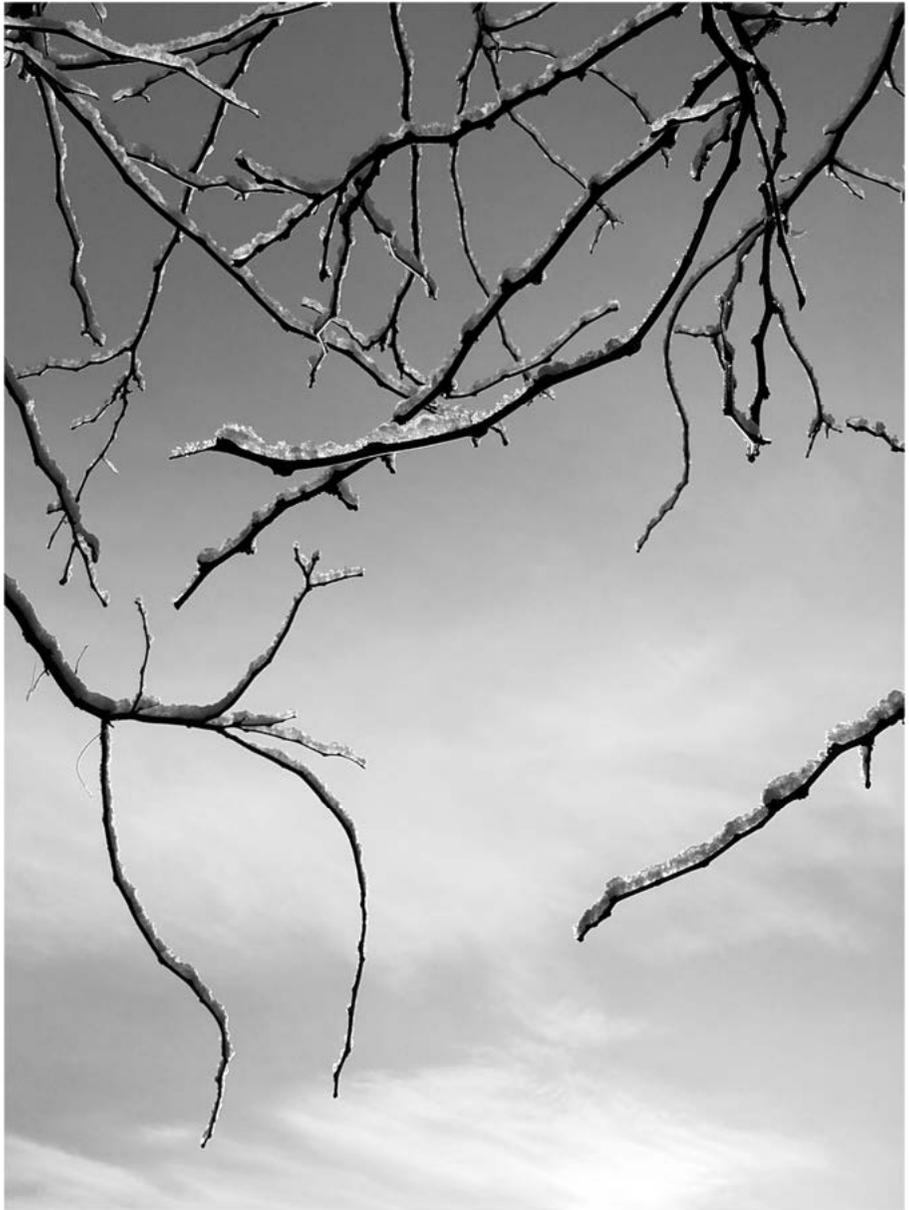
There's more Winter in my hair than Spring
more heroes underground than above
and here I am still wondering
why hasn't Time granted me Love?

I've courted the moon and kissed the sun
I've twinkled brightly among the stars
Yet here I am all alone
as cold and deserted as the planet Mars

Years ago I was promised Summer
all hot and colorful and fun
A season that would last forever
if only I'd found the right one

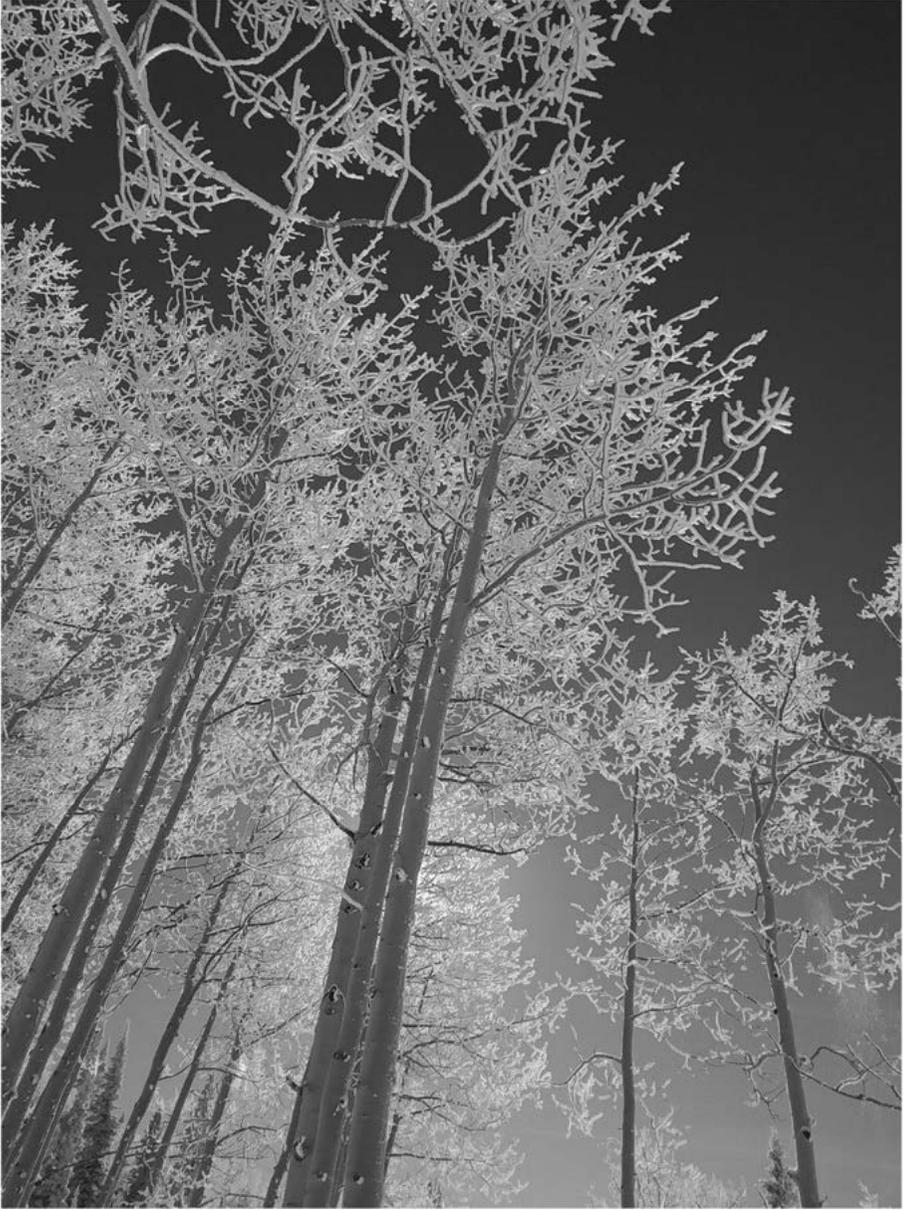
But here I am in the ending season
wondering where my co-star could be
not knowing I had to be my own light
for now and for eternity

Yet instead of feeling sad about my fate
I've learned a blessing can be disguised
For now I'm free to roam the world
And live not one season but many lives



Touching Sky
Carolyn Adams

Winter Prompts Reflection



Heather Hockenberry

Winter Roads

Taylor Terrance

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS

To grandmother's house we go!
My dad knows the way to fix the sleigh
When the radiator decides to blow, OH!

Growing up, my favorite part of the holiday season is the road trips. We have family all over New York and Canada and my parents are adamant about packing us all up, throwing us in the van and taking us on an adventure.

Road trips were guaranteed to be an adventure because our trusty old Chevy conversion van had a wonky radiator and a penchant for overheating. In addition to the radiator issues, the van is aging and it is NOT going gently into the night; it constantly challenges my dad's skills as Mr. Fix It.

We take so many holiday road trips with my dad at the helm that they all blend into one another in my mind's eye. The ones that stand out are the ones where other people join us in our traveling van hotel. One year in particular, my aunt Paula and cousin Heather hitch a ride with us on Thanksgiving so we could all drive back to Mecca--to the homestead--together.

(Our mom often travels to Mecca separately with another sister [she has like 4,000 sisters so she certainly has her pick]. I can imagine the two of them as they gossip and chat and giggle the way sisters do when sprung from the burdens of domestic responsibility and get sacred one-on-one time. As full-blown adults, my own sister and I often do trips together, just the two of us, and we both know the golden equation of the road: Two sisters + one car = Jackasses Assemble.)

As usual, something goes wrong with the van and we stop so my dad can crawl underneath it: mid-winter, on the side of some nondescript, desolate country road and patch everything together. I was young so I can't remember if it is the time the van overheats and he has to do Radiator Fluid Things or if it is the time the exhaust

system is compromised and he MacGuyvers a muffler sling out of a wire hanger. Whatever it is, he always manages to find a solution and get us where we have to go. (And us kids never doubt his abilities. We just sort of take it for granted that dad's got this handled; it might take an hour longer than expected, but we'll be snarfing Grams' homemade cinnamon rolls faster than you can say "diabetes.")

And so, as we sit there in the cold van; under the grey obscura of winter's evening lens, Aunt Paula thinks it might be a good idea to sing some Christmas Carols of Distraction. We run through some classics and then, inevitably, she gets to the Ultimate Ode To The Holiday Road Trip. I remember singing along "...to grandmother's house we go" and thinking, "How funny! Long, cold road trips to grandma's during the holiday season must be a timeless tradition that transcends decades, class status, age."

Looking back, I can only imagine my dad's muted misery as he battles our van once again, the cold and dark closing in all around him as he triages the undercarriage. The frustration floating under the van is matched only by the excitement bubbling within it. Our flirtation with adventure is his chore list. But an experience is an experience.

Thus, it's easy to be Grinchy during the holidays. They're full of so many painful chores: the buying, the crowds, the tedium of wrapping, the anxiety over disappointing someone with your shoddy gift choice. Traffic. Flights. Greedy, materialistic behavior. The back aches from baking the flinging flanging cookies. How mall Santa smells both like beef jerky and the inside of moldy hockey equipment. That annoying way the scotch tape always gets wrapped around itself or how actual scotch makes you hungover.

Pay attention to the nuance. When you hear someone yell, "Stay out of that bedroom I haven't wrapped your present yet!" What you are really hearing is, "I love you and I want you to be surprised." When someone is berating you for wrapping presents with all the grace of a blind T-Rex, they're saying "make it perfect, love means perfect seams!" When your aunt diffuses a tense car situation with songs; when your dad turns a random accessory into an improvised mechanical godsend. Life is rushed these days and we all have to work harder to find these pockets. But doing that work is the love. Hidden in these

details is the love. Searching for these details is exhaustion. That exhaustion is love.

And, unlike so many things in the modern world, love will travel any road.



Fresh snowfall in Chicago, Illinois. November 2018

Taylor Terrance

Least of All

Mark Tarallo

This winter there are one or two ideas in everything,
the cold is dead-on and the colors of the cold strike a pattern
resignedly representational, with a fin-de-siecle clarity,

the cityscapes correlate not with inner realms but somehow
cop their own attitudes, the quiet confidence of a long curve
(and burning with the evanescence of a well-schooled heart).

In this way all the earth is a history of thinking,
the sum total of spaces exploited to their fullest,
like a painter suggesting space by defining its absence.

It takes a while, I know, to realize the promise
of this sloppy liberation. How many more times must you endure
that silent specious argument that it never happened at all?

Stay brave. Believe me you will know it,
or can know it, the next time you're sitting in your car
in a thick coat you could almost sleep in,

feeling small and weary before the bare trees.
The wind is a mocking murmur and beauty
such a quaint conceit. How slowly you raise

the key to the ignition. You are empty
but not completely so. You wear the emblems of age
and show clear signs of a struggle,

have some thoughts on disassociation,
and dreams for ballast and cud.
But unbeknowst to you, there were changes.

So stay with me, forget the sun,
avoid the self-changing effects of every room.
Maybe, just maybe, the arrangements are worth following,

and perhaps resignation is a pretty cheap commodity after all.
For if there is more and more to learn from these arrangements,
from these views that lack the preponderance of evidence,

then more and more should you treasure your perch
from the corner of the balcony -- magnificent observer,
juror of the spring.



Mark Tarallo

The Question

Rachael Ikins

Day break—breaking dawn shatters sky,
a thousand scintillant pieces.

Early morning peace
before the ruckus.

Single bird sings a strange song.
Singer stitches clouds, a silver melody.
Sky-high, up high lone seagull scrolls
a scavenger story, fairy tale repeated

in the ditch-green below; heron stalks frog
princes. Princess pines swirl white skirts,
greenwheels promenade, fragranced
sap. Sap-sticky fingers, resin my palms.

August morning resonates cricket cadence.
Cadences tick, a clock, songs long as hours
follow sun into the trees, August itself, 3:00
in the afternoon, seasons' time. Time's

cooler shadow leads me down the road, trail
darkness to winter, viral winter.
Last Arctic ice shelf shelved its rotted self in hot deeps,
my deepest concern;
is there enough cold left
for December snow?



Sunset of the Season

Kayla Wells

Pensive Frolic through Winters Past

Maggie D. Brace

A pensive frolic through winters past we'll take:
Muffling silence greets me as I awake,
The slanting brightness confirms overnight snow.
Toes curled, anticipating, ready to go.

Layer upon layer bedecks my wee frame,
rendering me hulking, unhappy, and lame.
Enrobed to the satisfaction of mother,
I trek outside, with big and bigger brother.

Ginger precedes us, her moist, black nose kept low,
leaving paw prints and hot, steaming yellow snow.
Stepping carefully in my brothers' boot marks,
I listen to her steam-spewing, joyful barks.

Merriment ensuing is etched in my heart.
Angels, sleds, and snow forts all play a big part.
We frolic and hoot till we can't feel our toes,
we gambol for hours with dripping wet nose.

At last, we trek homeward, too tired to go on.
We yank off our wet layers, stifling yawns.
Mother serves us cocoa and cozies our bed.
Fond memories remaining in heart and head.



Mark Tarallo

Wintry Bouquet

Joan Mc Nerney

This December
during wide nights
hemmed by blackness,
I remember roses.
Pink yellow red violet
those satin blooms of June.

We must wait six months
before seeing blossoms,
touch their brightness
crush their scent
with fingertips.

Now there are only
ebony pools of winter's
heavy ink of darkness.

Dipping into memory of
my lips touching petals
tantalizing sweet buds.
My body longs for softness.

I glimpse brilliant faces of
flowers right before me as I
burrow beneath frosty blankets.
Bracing against that long, cold
nocturnal of wind and shadow.



Frozen Red
Carolyn Adams

Who Chose the Seasons?

Jerri Lynn Sparks

Who chose the seasons?
Who decided that the twenty-first of anything
was a good time to start anew?
Who was bold enough to decide for us all?

Was it when the world grew cold
so they decided to give this season a name?
Was it when the flowers pushed through the hard and barren earth
and defiantly decorated the dark and frosty ground?

Was it because of someone's need for order and planning?
Or was it to exact even more from the masses
than the greedy have already taken while we worked?
Was it so we knew when and what to celebrate?

Well allow me tell you this:
I can see when something is over
just as well as any scholar or politician
I can watch the moon, the sun and stars as well as anyone

And I don't need anyone to tell me what to cherish
or to tell me when to harvest the crops of life
I can feel when I'm weary and need something new
like a bird who migrates to warmer places

The only season I know and need is Survival
and the only change I need is within these walls
which I have been confined to for years
in this most long and artificial of seasons



Mark Tarallo

Before Sun and Strangers

Jerri Lynn Sparks

I wake up before sun and strangers
in winter and wander
Before duties and dangers
and things that I ponder
creep up in my yard with light and with lists
To just think quietly about the last time I was kissed...

Thursday, November 19th, 2020, 6:45AM sunrise



Jerri Lynn Sparks

Fatback

Jerri Lynn Sparks

What I remember most is the sizzle
of fatback as it hit the cast iron skillet
The scent of bacon filling the tiny places
that comprised my childhood and distill it

She'd be standing there in her house coat
on some cold winter morning in this simple shack
long brown hair pulled back from her face
exposing fine bones and a sturdy back

She bore many children and many sorrows
the deepest of which lays buried at the church
She made fire out of rolled up newspaper
with some cherry wood and a bit of birch

A potbellied stove warmed the house
and sometimes I'd see her pick up the coals
with her bare and calloused hands
toughened from a lifetime so exposed

to loss and poverty and daily hard work
but none of it ever took her beauty
She was a quiet woman with a quiet way
who always honored her sense of duty

The last time I saw her was Christmas Eve
gathered 'round the table with crowded cousins
four generations of hardscrabble descendants
from a single quiet woman, these rowdy dozens

Sometimes I see the daisies I picked for her
twisting them into a necklace or a crown
learning how to turn acorns into silver
or whatever magic she had lying around

And whenever I'm feeling sorry for myself
in Winter's cold and with men who are hateful
I remember the lessons of my grandmother
who had so little but was always grateful

When I was
ten years old
I thought
what a trip it
would be
if Orion's belt
let loose and
the whole firmament
was left bareass.
Now I am seventy
and the same
thought
remains.



Daniel Kantak

California Sonnet Missing Snow

Andrena Zawinski

I missed the snow again this year, its white
sift, deep shifts, tufts of fluff, the silence it
slips over night, missed waking up to its
soft blanket unmarred by footprint or blight

of shovel or plow. Years pass, not one flake
dissolving on the tongue or webbing down
from eye lashes, no arms and legs grounding
angel wings. I am missing that which may

not endure yet returns, in one place a gentle
flurry, somewhere else a raucous burst,
all the simple condensations of cold,
filling fields in a love affair with earth,

desire locked in ice crystals, meltwater
for spring's returning and riotous blooms.

A Year of Fruit

Ellen Scherer

I.

summer

When she found him,
he was a sprawling sunflower.

Stalk bent toward sun
& a tender wave that washed her in sweet pineapple nectar.

II.

spring

When he found her,
she was a dreaming daylily.

Seeds shaking out flower
& pressed against him in the night under warm papaya skies.

III.

fall

When they found each other,
they became a sea of crisp chrysanthemums.

Roots racing to heel
& hum together while they sorted through socks; a pear of practiced perfection.

IV.

winter

When I found her,
she was a shriveled sweet pea.

Petals dyed indigo
& pinned against damp pant-suits, stiff collars & lash lines.

When I found her,
she was curled up tight.

Trapped by the chipped linoleum
& the sharp edge of sympathetic Hallmarks slapped with mass-
produced emotion:

thoughts & prayers...
sorry for your loss...

When I found her,
She sniffled & choked twice on a cough.

I pretended not to hear
& squinted through the fluorescents of this funeral home bathroom.

When I found her,
I crouched down to hand her one last cut of cardstock.

A leftover scrap
from the photo collage they made together last winter when he was still
here.

The torn edges of the paper scraped her fingertips as she saw the large
scrawl in pomegranate:
I miss him too, mommy.



Tiny Crevasse
Carolyn Adams

False Memories

Marc Gijsemans

I remember

an extreme cold.

The Scheldt completely frozen,
ice-floes at its banks, pinning
the barges against the quay.

I remember

the Suez crisis,

oil shortage, first car-free-Sunday,
gendarmes on motorcycles,
my mother under escort.

I remember

cozy in the back of the car
wrapped in a blue and white blanket,
looking out the rear window
at the building where I was born



Submitted by Marc Gijsemans

Winter Grew Up

Balogun Ayoola Joseph

Remember when winter was a cock?
And he would arrive before dawn calls?
And I as a little child, will be
hidden in my blanket's long arms.

Later delay became his best friend
They would play till the evening cries
Then feed their bellies when the sun
slumbers, only to move like snail.

Now it appears winter is married
to negligence, and she's pregnant
Who knows when she will put to bed?
Yet he's blessed with anxiety.

Hiding his eyes from our skies and trees
Her wills first in his To-do list/
Though joy burns in me for him— how
do I wake my dear fireplace?

From Tight Jeans to Baggy Comfort

Ann Privateer

Tight, tight, and tighter
from belts for everything-
if I couldn't feel it
perhaps I did not exist.

From tiny cars to regal
Mercedes Benz XKE
Actually, a double car
an inside and an outer shell.

And so, I grew wider
than before, and shorter
on the outside, but more
fulfilled in a gluttonous

haze of words, filling
cloudy space with smilies
and metaphors the likes
of which could raise a cow.



The Cardinal

Rosemary Zepp

As I gazed out the window, on this cold snowy winter day
I noticed a bright red cardinal.

What a beautiful bird, out to play.

Against the snow, his bright red plummage,

gave a glimmer of hope for the spring.

'cause as the snow melts and the trees turn green,

The birdsong, the newness and joy of spring

bursts forth in joyous song.

Babbling brooks and the hope of new life

ring out true.

They say God loves you.

the Creator, sustainer of life touches

our hearts and spirits to renewal, to joy of the soul,

to hope where blessings overflow.

We praise you, Lord, you are adored.



Sisterly Love
Sueann Wells



Heather Hockenberry

Authors and Artists

Carolyn Adams' poetry and art have been published in the pages, and on the covers of *Wend Poetry Journal*, *Steam Ticket*, *Apercus Quarterly*, *Calyx*, and *Kansas City Voices*, among others. She has authored four chapbooks, with one being a collection of her collage art, entitled *What Do You See?* Select pieces of her collage art have been featured in #YourArtMoment, a program of the Beaverton Arts Council in Beaverton, OR.

Photographer, **Barbara Wackerle Baker** (Alberta, CA) and poet, **Lisa Reynolds** (Ontario, CA), are both captivated by the beauty of winter in Canada and collaborated to create the poem/photo pairs.

Maggie D Brace, a life-long denizen of Maryland, teacher, gardener, basketball player and author attended St. Mary's College and Loyola University, Maryland. She has written *'Tis Himself: The Tale of Finn MacCool* and *Grammy's Glasses*, and has multiple short works and poems in various anthologies. She remains a humble scrivener and avid reader. Now her favorite thing about winter is cross-country skiing in the silently slumbering nearby woods.

José Rafael Castilleja is a writer, poet, and community leader. He was born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley and has worked in Texas and California.

Michael Ceraolo is a 63-year-old retired firefighter/paramedic and active poet who has had two full-length books (*Euclid Creek*, from Deep Cleveland Press; *500 Cleveland Haiku*, from Writing Knights Press) and several shorter-length books published, and has two more full-length books in the publication pipeline: *Euclid Creek Book Two* and *Lanyers, Guns, and Money*.

Obinna Chilekezi is a Nigerian poet whose works have appeared in several journals and anthologies. He has published two books of poetry: *Songs of a Stranger at the Smiling Coast*, and *Calligramme*, and writes here on his experience of winter in one of his travels.

Caroline Collins' poetry collection, *Presences* was published by Parallel Press in 2014. Her poems have recently appeared in *Blue Heron Review*, *Jalada*, *The Hopper*, *Tiny Seed Journal*, and *Whale Road Review*. She writes about Vincent Van Gogh's paintings, American blues music, and grief, among other things. She currently lives and works in Illinois. Her favorite thing about winter is how quickly snow changes the landscape and puts extra oxygen in the air.

Kaylee Duda is an 8th grader in Henrietta, NY, and when she is not writing or reading, she loves spending her time doing art projects, playing basketball, and spending time with her cat, Nora. She has been writing since she was seven, and she mostly writes short stories, although occasionally she writes poetry.

Laura Felleman started writing poetry in 2016, and credits the Free Generative Writing Workshops with her growth in the craft. To give back to the local writing community, she organizes a writers open mic at the public library (via Zoom during the pandemic) and serves on the advisory council of Iowa City Poetry. Her favorite thing about winter is the way freshly fallen snow smooths out the harsh.

Baffa Hussaini Gantsa was born in Gantsa of Buji LG, Jigawa State-Nigeria. He is passionate about reading and writing. He was the first runner up in the Poetic Wednesday Initiative's fourth anniversary poetry contest and a joint winner of Poet in Nigeria Initiative's 10-Day Poetry Challenge (October 2020).

Peniel Gifted is a young Nigerian poet and writer. She has great enthusiasm for reading, writing, and learning, and is also an adroit lover of nature and God's word. What she likes most about winter: Winter's breeze brings back good memories with friends and families.

Marc Gijsemans was born in Flanders, Belgium and currently lives in Ireland. This newspaper picture from 1956, the year he was born, shows the Scheldt near Antwerp. It inspired him to write this poem about memories from what happened in 1956, but he couldn't possibly have remembered them because they are from before and straight after

he was born. Hence the title of the poem within this volume: False Memories.

Lisa Tyler Hochgraf loves sledding and snowshoeing. She is glad to live in Honeoye Falls, NY, where the temperatures are milder and the snow deeper than in her hometown of Oregon, Wisconsin. An editor in the credit union industry, Lisa enjoys dancing, cooking, and practicing the Feldenkrais method.

Rachael Ikins is Associate Editor Clare Songbirds Publishing House, Auburn NY <https://www.claresongbirdspub.com/shop/featured-authors/rachael-ikins/>. She earned 2020 NLAPW Biennial Letters Competition 3rd prize, was 2019 Faulkner Finalist, 2019-20 Vinnie Ream semi-finalist, 2018 Independent Book Award winner (poetry), 2013, 2018 CNY Book Award nominee, and a 2016, 2018 Pushcart nominee. www.writerraebeth.wordpress.com

McDonald Lameck Jailos is a Malawian poet and writer.

Balogun Ayoola Joseph is a budding poet in Lagos, Nigeria, who explores worlds with his pen, writes to correct wrongs in the society; other times to free his mind.

Originally from Saskatchewan, **Allan Lake** has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton I., Ibiza, Tasmania & Melbourne. To his credit are the poetry collection *Sand in the Sole* (Xlibris, 2014) and the chapbook *My Photos of Sicily* (Ginninderra Press, 2020). Lake won Lost Tower Publication's (UK) Comp 2017, Melbourne Spoken Word Poetry Fest 2018, & publication in *New Philosopher* 2020.

Sierra Lind's works have appeared in Francis Marion University's literary journal, *Snow Island Review*, in issues 26, 27, 28, *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art and Healing* Issue 5.1, and *Cathexis Northwest Press Our Poetica* issue. She currently lives in Florence, South Carolina to see the sunrise stretch across the summer corn and fall cotton; and also, watch as it reflects the rare snow that falls here and transform the snowflakes into a glittering diamond showcase that stretches for miles. This is what Sierra loves most about Winter.

Daniel Katak is enjoying retirement as it enables him to practice his photography, poetry, without time constraints. His favorite part of winter are Father Frost's fractiles upon the window; and it is said that every snowflake is unique--my favorite thing about winter is both the day it arrives and the day it leaves.

Ramachandran M A is a poet currently based in Kozhikode. He writes and publishes poems in English. He loves winter and its foggy hills.

Maureen Maas-Feary lives in Rochester, NY. She's a professor and chair of the Humanities Department at Finger Lakes Community College. Though primarily a writer of creative nonfiction, she enjoys playing around with all types of writing.

Joan McNerney's poetry is found in many literary magazines such as Seven Circle Press, Dinner with the Muse, Poet Warriors, Blueline, and Halcyon Days. Four Bright Hills Press Anthologies, several Poppy Road Journals, and numerous Poets' Espresso Reviews have accepted her work. She has four Best of the Net nominations. Her latest title is *The Muse in Miniature* available on Amazon.com and Cyberwit.net Her vision of a perfect winter evening is watching snowflakes dance in the air while hugging a cup of hot chocolate.

Karla Linn Merrifield has had 800+ poems appear in dozens of journals and anthologies. She has 14 books to her credit. Following her 2018 *Psyche's Scroll* (Poetry Box Select) is the 2019 full-length book *Athabaskan Fractal: Poems of the Far North* from Cirque Press. In early 2021, her *Half a World of Kisses* will be published by Truth Serum Press (Australia) under its new Lindauer Poets imprint. She is currently at work on a poetry collection, *My Body the Guitar*, inspired by famous guitarists and their guitars; the book is slated to be published in December 2021 by Before Your Quiet Eyes Publications Holograph Series (Rochester, NY).

Barbara Murphy assembled her first book of poems when she was in high school in Rome, NY. She has continued to write poems, plays, and essays wherever she has been living, even more so since retiring in

2018 from a teaching job she loved for 27 years at Finger Lakes Community College. Winter's cold doesn't keep her down.

Teagan O'Connor is a middle school student in Western New York who likes to make snow forts, snowmen and any snow-sculpting in winter. She loves poetry and thinks it is a great way to express yourself. She also likes to act and sing.

Carl “Papa” Palmer of Old Mill Road in Ridgeway, Virginia, lives in University Place, Washington. He is retired from the military and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), enjoying life as “Papa” to his grand descendants and being a Franciscan Hospice volunteer. PAPA’s MOTTO: Long Weekends Forever!

Ann Privateer is a poet, artist, and photographer. Some of her work has appeared in Third Wednesday and Entering, to name a few.

Ellen Scherer is a writer and co-founder of Green Buffalo Productions, based in Buffalo, NY. Her short play, *Well and On My Own*, will premiere this Spring with Equity Library Theatre. Other writing credits include *When the Party’s Over* (Cone Man Running Productions), *I Was Here* (Equity Library Theatre, Open Space Arts, Inclusive Theatre of WNY), *Scary Monsters* (Green Buffalo Productions, Inclusive Theatre of WNY), and *I’ll Drink to That* (Inclusive Theatre of WNY).

Akinmayowa Adedoyin Shobo is a life science researcher, writer and volunteer for community development projects in Lagos, Nigeria. As a resident of Africa, Winter bears a sort of commonality with the Harmattan. It’s usually a period when everyone far or near gets to come home. Friends and family have an opportunity to bond and share happy memories again.

Ndaba Sibanda is the author of *Notes, Themes, Things And Other Things, The Gushungo Way, Sleeping Rivers, Love O’clock, The Dead Must Be Sobbing, Football of Fools, Cutting-edge Cache, Of the Saliva and the Tongue, When Inspiration Sings In Silence, The Way Forward, Sometimes Seasons Come With Unseasonal Harvests, As If They Minded: The Loudness Of Whispers, This*

Cannot Be Happening: Speaking Truth To Power, The Dangers Of Child Marriages: Billions Of Dollars Lost In Earnings And Human Capital, The Ndaba Jamela and Collections and Poetry Pharmacy. Sibanda's work has received Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations. Some of his work has been translated into Serbian.

Mark Tarallo is a Washington, D.C.-based writer. His poetry and fiction have appeared in, among other places, Abbey, Beltway Poetry Journal, Innisfree Poetry Journal, Manorborn, Red Mountain Review, Vine Leaves Literary Journal, as well as the anthologies District Lines, Insulatus, Cold Shoulders, Evil Eyes; Connected: What Remains As We All Change; Surprised by Joy; and Goodness. His awards include the Washington Writing Prize for poetry and an Artist Fellowship Award from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities. What he likes best about winter: Snow hikes in the jewel of D.C., Rock Creek Park. Glorious.

Taylor Terrance is a freelance writer for a web marketing agency. She is a 2013 graduate of Second City Chicago's Comedy Writing Program. She has performed in Rochester's 2019 cast of "Listen To Your Mother." Her favorite thing about winter is holiday traditions.

Denise Thompson-Slaughter was born in Washington, D.C., worked her way through college at the University of Maryland and Rutgers University, where she received a B.A. in English. She spent a number of decades after that as an academic editor, mother, and writer, and, now retired, lives in Brighton, NY. Her published work includes two books of poetry (*Elemental*, PlainView Press, 2010, and *Sixty-ish: Full Circle*, Spirited Muse Press, 2017); a mystery novella set in Nova Scotia (*Mystery Gifts*, Spirited Muse Press, 2018), two short stories, and a handful of brief memoir pieces, the latest of which has been published by Iris Literary Journal. Her favorite thing about winter is staying home watching the snow fall outside when she knows she doesn't have to go out! It also gives her a chance for the unhurried reflection that nurtures creative seedlings.

Fatimazahra Yusuf Wasili is a young poet and a spoken word artist who finds solace between the pages of her notes and her pen. She's

born and bred in Maiduguri, Borno state. She currently studies medicine and surgery at the University of Maiduguri. She's into photography, graphic design, and videography. She volunteers in her free time. She's an avid reader and loves educating girls. She loves most about winter that she'll use her nice collection of sweaters again.

Ellen Webre is an aspiring teacher and is a social media specialist for the Two Idiots Peddling Poetry Reading and Moon Tide Press in Southern California. She loves celebrating the end of the year with food and friends, the coziness of taking shelter from the cold.

Chelsie Wells is an 12-year-old 6th grader in Western NY state. She loves reading and writing adventure, poetry, and fantasy. She has been published in four anthologies. Her favorite thing about winter is playing in the snow with her sisters and friends, whether it's sledding, snowball fights, building forts or snowmen, or just having fun.

Kayla Wells is an 8th grader who loves photography. She especially likes to take pictures of beautiful skiescapes / landscapes / naturescapes she sees. She loves to ski and sled with her sisters. Her favorite part of winter is when she looks out the window and sees big, fluffy snowflakes falling to the ground.

Sueann Wells is an adjunct English professor in Rochester, NY, who loves to muse about the natural world around her and the idiosyncrasies of the human beings within it. Her poems, prose, and academic writing have been published widely, including two poetry collections by Foothills Publishing. Her Spirited Muse Press publications are available via www.lulu.com/spotlight/suzphone. She loves the beauty and serenity of winter in the woods.

Martin Willitts Jr, a Comstock Review editor, has 25 chapbooks including the Turtle Island Quarterly Editor's Choice Award, *The Wire Fence Holding Back the World* (Flowstone Press, 2017), plus 21 full-length collections including the Blue Light Award-winning *The Temporary World* (2019). His forthcoming book is *Harvest Time* (Deerbrook Press, 2021).

Renee Zastrow lives in North Chili, NY, and has four children and nine grandchildren. She enjoys the beauty of a gentle snow fall and memories of winters past.

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