



Thirty Poems

for National Poetry Month, 2021

by Cassandra Pereira

In the United States, April is National Poetry Month. This year, 2021, to participate in the celebration of this artform, my friend and fellow poet, Alison Hurwitz, proposed to me the challenge to write one poem per day.

The following thirty are those poems.

I cannot express how deeply I would enjoy hearing any feedback at all that you might share after reading any part of this collection.

Thank you for your support.

Open Mic for Cassandras (Nightly)

This is how it works, the way I've learned to write:
Every night in my bed is an open mic night.

Backstage await dozens of clambering voices,
ideas, feelings, opinions and stories.

The audience is blank, blank as the page.
The audience is Buddha's expressionless face.

There's no setlist or structure, the mic is just there.
Order is filed by need, by flare!

Just grab it and go, girls, make yourselves known.
I am nothing, a no one; don't care what you show.

Thoughts on love, thoughts on war, philosophies or vague notions
 Factoids and fictions; dreams, questions, emotions;
 Fantasies, fears, complaints – nothing matters.
 Insult or flatter, shatter the patterns.
I welcome all images, untethered or floating,
 Sharks swimming, mules braying, metaphors eroding.
Tricks of language singing on rhetorical whims,
 lost secrets returning as fragments fill in

a lot of nonsense, moonshine, gibberish, baloney!
All connected to something I care about – Me.

With a pen in my hand, notebook belly up bare,
this ritual is freedom to become self-aware.

Who runs for the mic? Who needs to be heard?
Is there anyone hiding, impaired or ignored?

The wounded, the healers, idealists, cynics, too.
Take your turns, everyone, we want to know you.

And I, Cassandras all, just the hand for the pen.
I don't even try – yet – to listen to them.

Listening is for later, when the recording is done,
and I set out to make sense of so many someones.

Reasoning with Ghosts

You, like so many, are a ghost in my heart.

In my waking life you are dreams I can't stop dreaming,
wants I can't stop wanting but neither can fulfill
without you.

To forget you is work, constant work I must
pretend I'm not doing. Jackhammers drilling
all day, just down the way from where
I must do all my other work.

I've had no choice but to grow accustomed to this
incessant, unsettling rumbling. I do my best to forget
the crumbling desires there, that you'll care,
call, text, write me, invite me anywhere.

My love bursts to life in an instant and never dies!

It was not an exaggeration when I told you that, before.

So, though you may be as dead, to me; my love
for you is as alive as the day it was born.

Such is the nature of Truth and all things eternal,
and you who haunt a human heart, unreachable,

unable to grasp how welcome you are
to come back to life, today,
or tomorrow...

When You've Got A Rabbit in Your Hat

When you've got a rabbit in your hat
or an ace up your sleeve
or a song in your head
and the voice
But you freeze –

What you need now is fire
Alchemize your fear
Conjure what cold you'll feel
in ten years
If you let yourself waste away here.

You've got the magic –
You've got the spark –
Grant a fear greater
(of future regret)
To burn you out of the dark.

Water All Over

Drawings of clouds and ocean
Water above and water below

The top and bottom of everything
Sketched in graphite on paper

I tried to save it to show you
But I dropped it in the water

Another interpretation lost.
You'll have to see it for yourself.

Invisible Ink

Tell me who you are
and 'll share with you a code
for knowing me s well
by the letters of my poe s.

A plain detail you'll share
perhap a name or anecdote
before announcing hat's enough
unsure of be ng known.

I' hand you over pages
inked down in lemon juice
if you'll hold th m to the light;
the eaning's in the clues.

In truth, y u'll know you've told me little
while I've everything reve led
but after this you'll eel exposed
while I'll remain concealed.

Morning Snuggle

I kissed a bit of sand
Stuck there behind your knee
What funny beach it was
That we went to in my dream

And what a funny little tangle
That we wake into this morning
Made of arms and legs at angles
One could take from children's drawings.

The Boss

When you were 2, in little velcro shoes,
You didn't need to know what to do.
Everyone else was the boss of you.

Then by 13, skinny jeans,
drama queen, from such injustice
you rebelled, fleeing to be seen.

By 25, truly alive, for yourself alone
you'd decide. Untethered, off you'd fly,
through city lights, boots laced thigh high.

Come 31, freedom'd become less fun.
Responsibilities added up,
so you settled down, small town.

At 36, fixed with your own kids,
Who pays for those shoes?
Those jeans? All that school?

Miss Independent, Mrs. Lucky Lou,
Now that you grew, tell me:
Who's in charge of who?

Written In The Warmth of A Cloudless Sky

I had a plan today but here I am
laying in the grass not doing it.

The spring is too lovely,
the field too empty to not drift into.

Every blade of grass looks happy,
standing tall with proud endurance,

stretching, catching and holding the sun.
The return of green has begun.

Lost Art

If I saw it,
it was for only a pause –

the tap out of an outline
to fill-in a heart,
an idling like for idling art,
then zoom –

all gone.

If art's a numbers game now,
we're playing it wrong.

How Do You Explore a Wilderness?

Do you walk heel-to-toe in parallel lines,
pressing neatly your tracks on the surface?
Do you mark your path with coded flags?
And record your progress in bullets?

- Field notes &
- Cartography &
- Other diagrams
- Samples of soil &
- Samples of sand in
- Tiny bottles stopped with tiny corks
?

Or do you just go r

u
n
n
i
n
g, chasing butterflies,
fleeing bears?
tumbling
down
hills into
beds of wildflowers, blueberries, sorrel, and ant hills;
r o l l i n g in the mud
and splashing in the creek,
until your body becomes
a JacksOn POLlOCK of all natural dyes,
miXed Media of Wet LeaVes & splOtched raShes &
trackS Of bLood ruN doWn scRaTches
from thistles and briars,
until all of the wild
has made its mark on
you?

The Strong Arms of Love

It was easier to write poetry for the lovers I didn't love.
Lust was liquid creativity I mainlined like smack into
the crook of an elbow or between my toes, anywhere,
just touch me, and off I'd go, dizzy and inspired,
drooling out love poems for a man no more than a spoon used
to cook up an idea and feed imagination.

He didn't have to make me cum, just lead me on!
Give me a dream to roll and jones
where I am so loved and I am so known.
Loan me the look that makes me feel seen
to the bone, stripped to my soul, then
leave me quivering in unsatisfied delight.
(He always had an early meeting,
and me a poem to write.)

Oh, reticent stranger, I will love you forever.
My husband, however...

We're not high on hard drugs—!
We're eating meat and potatoes, scalloped and baked with
butter and sage. A good source of iron. I thank Pinterest
for that entire meal and for our place settings (cloth
napkins, glass chargers,) the guests of our wedding.

We hold hands and share plans at a table of wood,
here built by my man for our humble home.
We're not fancy, but holy embraced and
We really are one:

An ecosystem of love, of the same
food, same soap, same skin-to-skin
sleep in the same bed, our own, same day-
to-day routine: laughing at each other's
jokes, filling in each other's' words,
bracing the whole when the other stumbles.

His, my reflection, as much as my own, known
though forever outside of me, filling
me, my world, my arms, my veins with real life, real love,
& whether or not moved to write, moved always to hold.

Standing Today Swimming Tomorrow

Your feet sink readily into wet sand,
stood at the shore, held still
and beholding the tremendous power
of all the world's water churning
right before your eyes.

This ocean is
the force
that carries all of life
This ocean is
love.

Beside you, I whisper
Where is it going?
and you say
No where.

But slowly the secret life
of the ocean floor
reveals itself to us;
veil lifts as she reaches
for the moon, exposes (treasures)
a spray of shells and sea glass,
sea plants and little crabs.

Marriage means falling in love many times,
always with the same person.
That's the part we were told.

Never that we might sometimes
get washed out of love
before we could
get back in.
That we had to learn.

Better we stand and sink
into the strand when the ebb pulls back,
behold what's there exposed,
collect driftwood to build our boat,

and pocket the pearls at our feet:
Loyalty, Trust, The Truth of Us:
a basin strong enough to
contain an ocean of love.

Love,
never far away, it
always comes back.

Just like the tide now rolling in, and
we're swimming in it once again.

I am

two hands reaching
 and one mouth biting;
 two eyes reading
 and one heart writing.

Making Me Up

 Consider the eyelash,
the earring, the side-part pinned –
 Lips the red of marvelous
 Mrs Maisel, a fiction –

 Facts of appearance,
 mutable, changing, within
my control for rearranging –

 Cleavage, glitter or
 a double-breasted blazer? Gold,
string of pearls, or chains of plastic?
 Contact lenses, or glasses?

 How long the nails? How short the skirt?
How many hours in the mirror playing flirt?
 How many questions must be answered
 to learn, to discover, to see

 Who is it today
 that I choose to be?

Forgiveness

Things shouldn't hurt like
they do but they do.

Is it a magnesium deficiency
or compassion I'm missing?
I use only half the words of my
vocabulary, statistically

they're mostly forms of
"want" "can" "go"

food and places. I'm average
in this way, but I average
higher counts than most of
"dream" "imagine" "try"

just keep trying my best to
"evolve" "heal" "forgive"

and take my supplements
with lots of water, wander
towards new light and
remember

(regardless of the outcome)
they're trying their best, too.

Senegali River Dream

It was beautiful as only dreams can be beautiful. Too beautiful. Impossibly. My family was there: the tv family I wish were mine, plus a Senegalese child who laughed at our fear of snakes. He'd once napped in a clay pot of pythons; slept all in a pile.

I wanted to learn from him how to be fearless. I wanted to impress everyone. So many dreams of being worthy.

Docking at the widest part of the river, I decided to jump the six yards of snake-filled water. Bare feet hit the muddy bank strong. I spun around: yes, everyone was impressed.

Back up to get back.

Halfway across the river, however, I took a turn towards gravity. Swiftly, I dug my foot into the sky, pressed down and launched upwards elastic, up and up, until at last, high in the thinnest, most cloudless air, I curled my body into a ball and began my fall.

Seconds passed, still, silent and black. I opened my eyes in search of the water. How far below? How much longer?

The void spun around without answer. But there was laughter.

Pet Love

Your little warmth
and weight
beside me in our bed

is all it takes
to sate
my need from you,
my friend.

Your Heart Has A Field That Touches Others

i.

I once
dropped a pebble
12 feet into a quarry
and marveled long minutes
at the rippling and rippling extend-
ing until the edge of once-still waters' plot.

Don't forget the strength of your heart, I thought.

Sixty to a hundred pebbles dropped per minute, what then?
What happens when I erupt from within – not water, but
a body made of mostly water, whose rippling
doesn't end at skin, but issues endlessly
through what really holds us in:
space and time
and – end?

ii.

On a hot day you wave your hands to fan a friend.
The air moves with your effort, towards her, past her,
a zephyr to cool the space all around her pretty face,
and you, director of this weather, hardly notice when
the stranger to her right leans in, beholden to the un-
intended dividend.

iii.

Your skin is just your outermost organ,
it neither ends nor begins who you are.
And certainly skin's no boundary
for the power of your electrical heart.

IMPORTANT REMINDER!

You have to do everything you want because one day
it will be too late but it's not too late right now.

A Sick Society

earn More !
buy More !
do More !
smile More !
take More !
travel More !
make More !
Win awards !
Get published !
Get noticed !
Get and have it all, and ...
only then, Maybe,
you'll feel worthy afterall.

A Sane Society

If you do
what you need to do
each day, to
breathe easy,
to create peace and safety
in the chaos around you,
so that other beings
passing through might
feel a touch of that
peace, too, then
you've already done
all you need
to do.

Value Exchange

A girl at the park with a ukulele sings
about squirrels, how they gather acorns.
So I find some and other tree nuts
walnutlike and itchy balls and place them
in her case with change.

Then I
 just sit
 near her

and listen.

Young Again

I look out my window and see new buds and leaves,
every morning a little greener, and I'm jealous.

In the mirror, I'll never see another Spring.
Just one long Autumn, beautiful or not.

So the mirror's a liar.

I don't require tinted glass to confirm what I know are facts:
There are countless more fruitings to grow and fall through me.

I close my eyes and turn my vision inside,
where I really live. I see countless shoots blooming.

I decide for myself that I age like a tree.
My body is just one part of me.

I have more flowers to perfume onto pages,
press into frames and conversations,

More eggs to hatch between my branches,
to birth new songs and dance new dances,

I have more heat to yield and shade,
to ignite my growth and harness –

More fruits to pluck, gobble, preserve
and sustain me till next harvest.

It is Spring and so am I –

A little wider around the middle,
a little thicker in the skin, it means nothing.

Look at all these blossoms!

Why Am I Here?

i.

Barefoot, book in hand, sun on face:

These are my choices.

These are the choices
that make my other choices.

To notice a moth the color of cream:

Ordinary, alone, ephemeral,
and rejoicing.

This is a priority for me.

I am this fluttering.

ii.

There is a heart beating.

There is a chest.

There are cells
that self-assembled
into being from specks.

All evolution guided by laws, which,
to this day, I don't understand
but I obey.

The Girl With No Shoes

"Ask the girl why she's not wearing any shoes,"
A boy baseball-uniformed yells to his twin.
The girl, I smile. These boys could be my babies.

If they were they'd know to walk barefoot in grass
is what we call essential self-care.

I was half their age when I first discovered it.

In one corner of a quiet, oak-lined suburb,
where two rather ordinary streets crossed,
there lived a big rock covered with moss.

I didn't understand it, nor did I fight or doubt – the longing,
the need to stand barefoot out on that rock and just breathe.
I was only six, but I knew peace. The thrill

of sneaking off to my special spot down the block.
It was not perverse, but the pleasure a shock.

A little statue of strangeness for commuter observation:
A little girl on a rock in a state of meditation.

Now, only bigger, mountain-posed in park grass
before bewildered looks of overscheduled youth,

She hopes it's enough to raise questions,
perhaps to raise answers too.

The Dream (by Bane)

I would do things differently if I were Bane: celebrity performance artist of my dreams. I almost met him once but I woke up.

This is Bane's next exhibit:

We use real smoke and mirrors, theremins, harps and helium gas, light projectors and sculpture off-scale, transparencies, living actors in aprons scolding, "You're late for school!"

We use every device we can to induct you into The Dream, wandering, floating towards climax, scents of chocolate and flowers luring you towards birdsong, fading, rose petals swirling in kaleidoscopic charm... and just as you near the final portal

FLASH! go the floodlights

and RING! the alarm.

You Want to Read a Poem

You want to read a poem.
You want authentic experience:

Just you alone with a feeling-idea,
made by a poet approachable.

You find the poem on a white page, perfect. But
this page's owner has the poem surrounded:

It's every swimsuit you've ever wanted.
It's nothing personal, the owner says.

Somebody's gotta pay
to keep all these lights on.

It's okay. You're too smart to be
influenced. You read:

I really do want that bikini.
My skin looks good in green.

But maybe I'm too old for that. Maybe this.
How much's it? Look away. But

it's too late.
A new tab is spiraling.

You fight its hypnosis.
Close it.

You want to read a poem.
You go back, line one:

"January, with its harmattan winds,"

but now
Just a quick click to the dict-

harmattan
noun

a dry, dusty wind that blows
dark a season on the south
of the Sahara Desert.

The poet gives you the weird word twice;
If you really want to understand it,

you should at least see a photo.
Command-N YouTube.

Between the 9 letters and "enter" you must press,
Your eyes scan 8 suggested videos.

David Mitchell had to return his cat because...
[hover]
their personalities clashed.

Well that might be hilarious.
You deserve a good laugh!

Later, later.
You want to read a poem. Here,

this video is under a minute.
Hi, I'm Nicole Huckley asking you to act

because now is our best chance to pass
meaningful bipartisan legisla-Skip Ad.

At last, you watch,
half a world away,

a wall of dirt and rust fill the Nigerian empyrean
like a bowl pushed through by a wave.

Steadily the breaker thrusts clarity from the sky,
whipping crops and faces with pelts of dust.

The sun disappears in red haze.
So that's harmattan.

Now you want even more to read that poem.
You are ready to understand:

I couldn't find the knob to the front door,
for my living room was littered..

You read a poem online today.
You weren't sure you could relate.

At This Moment You Are A Myth

Artist, you are at the feet of the muse.
An angelic presence visits you.

Bow. You cannot bear her beautiful face.

She is the mother who bakes the cake,
and you are only a child

not asked, but allowed
to carry it to the table.

We have a family to feed.

The Time of No More Hiding

Alexa said it's only 52
But I feel real heat out here
Wishing I'd brought sunglasses
To plan the day's to-dos.

The daffodils will die soon
The crocus are already gone
And I too consider shade for
bathing longer on the lawn.

But Spring is too young
To jade me yet against sun
I'm going to stay in these
wide open skies.

Over I, all this light and color presiding...
It has only just become the time of no more hiding.

Alphabet of Beautiful Things

Amphitheaters, amethyst, artifacts and artifications-
Billowing bedsheets, blonde hair, books bound in linen-
Cattails, campfires; crystals, caves and caverns-
Dogwood blossoms, deer and doves, dreamscapes, dancing dancers-
Easter eggs colorfully dyed, electric eyes, the Earth-
Frank Lloyd Wright's fantastic oeuvre, French doors, forgiveness, fur-
Groves of great trees, giggling babies, gift wrapping, gratitude-
Humble hands, holding hands, handprints of early humans-
Initials innocently carved in trees, inchworms inching by-
Juxtaposing January's juniper with juleps in July-
Kind eyes, kitchen warmth, kites in the sky-
Letters in the mail, letting go; lovers lingering in low light-
Morning dew, Mozart, the Moon in all its phases-
Nebulae, Nabokov, newly written pages-
Opera houses, ocean landscapes, outdoor chandeliers-
Presence, picnics with gingham and baskets; pedestals, potters' wheels-
Quiet tree-lined streets, quaint abodes, quantum entanglement-
Rain, rivers, realized potential, rainbows evanescent- the
Shimmering surface of the sea, the sun at all times, silk-
Tender touches, trellises, tulips and their ilk-
Umbrellas with blue skies painted underneath; utility and unity-
Verandas, verve, veracity-
Wildflower bouquets, winding walkways, wishing wells-
Xanax dreams, xylography, Xmas cards and bells-
Yoga practice, yarrow, young love and all that's youth-
Zephyrs, zingers, ziplines zizzing over waters zaffre blue-

April Flight

One by one the scarves of my warm nest fall away and I beg myself to fly. Do not stay shut inside. Your winter's hibernation incubated much creation. Fly, don't stumble into the world abating. Run, don't walk, time's a'wasting! Hold your gifts out in offering like that saint who carried her own tits around on a plate. So what if philistines see stones? It doesn't matter what they see. It matters what you show.

A Word to the Wise

Leave no stone unturned,
For seek and ye shall find.
The truth will set you free,
It's only a matter of time.

Postmodern Romantic

I fled the house on fire
journal in hand
and hurried
to the park
to write.

Yet when my feet found the grass
it was instant relief –

I had cooled
and discovered
the poem had
fled
me...

and with it the pain,

the pain...

If only I could express the pain
properly, I believed, to atone,
at least to turn into beauty,
an object to behold,
a poem...

Such was this poet's impetus then, influenced
by a collective unconscious penned into the outdated
yet ever-strong grip of what Romanticism said
of art and pain's relationship.

It's high time this die, this sick neurosis:
Romantic Age artists were dying of tuberculosis!

Their philosophy formed when 3 in 10 heads
collapsed dead beneath the steady squeeze
of a grotesque and savage disease.

What else could we expect from artists living such death?

But we are not them.
Our pain is treatable.
We can heal, and even better,
Treatment's very feasible.

Better-learned than that stale image hung in universities and culture, the wise woman at the helm of my impulse knew not to indulge the sick habit; in her well-nurtured wisdom she rushed me to the nearest garden before I could have at it.

You don't have to do anything special, she said.

Don't write a poem.

Don't draw it out.

Just walk...

barefoot,

and bare

of thought...

Then later, relaxed,
convalesced by the sun,
I sat down to write for fun,
a poem of hope, this one.

[Untitled]

And here the day
with nothing to say.

Sometimes it's
better this way.

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