

## Higher Art

Brides and grooms above a roof—  
to Marc Chagall their flight is proof  
of measured journeys, love-filled dreams  
floating past the wooden beams.

Fred and Ginger as they dance  
lifted in chiffoned romance,  
pairs of shoulders meet midair  
as if all humans drift up there.

The Red Sea parts upon the ceiling  
as Israel crosses for a healing.  
I lose myself in the Sistine,  
restored by Love and art—pristine.

Fleeting starlings spray a heart,  
connecting dots... that float apart.

Holly Mandelkern

## **Breathe**

Raising my cup of coffee  
I am drawn into the brown warmth  
swirling away from madness  
into dreams long cultivated.

It's quiet down here  
no voices call, no one intrudes  
no footsteps mar the shore  
of my reverie.

I shall remain here as long as  
my sugary dreams allow.  
Floating, plucking inspiration  
from the slick warm surface.

These are the moments  
I am most at peace  
when all that exists is  
the rest of the world.

Bruce Woodworth

## Shipwreck

I'm floating away—  
driftwood in a raging sea  
riding a wave  
skateboarders would shun  
to a place foreign to me.

I'm lost in the storm  
blinded by prickly splashes  
afraid to shout  
or open my mouth  
to salty life-stealing crashes.

All control is lost—  
my piloting once secure.  
Life's punishing game  
breaking my stride  
Now the future's far from sure.

Is there a safe port—  
terra firma to plant frightened feet  
a place to rest  
and cry for the past  
as I lay my head down to sleep?

I am a victim—  
creator of my own wreck  
thrashing about  
in a world of pain  
seeking some self-respect.

Hiding from my tears  
wiping the star maps clear  
needing to ponder  
the waste of all my younger years  
as a new horizon appears.

Frank T Masi

## **Float Away but be Transformed**

**A** son's college baseball career comes to a halt just as he becomes a lead pitcher for his senior year and dreams of powerful innings just **float away...**

...Backyard workout routines, weekly family bicycle rides, and daily walks become whole family events.

**F**ace to face teaching from March through May for young first graders halts and dreams of returning in a few weeks just **float away...**

...Thursday night bedtime story hour on Zoom becomes a hit with a full class of students, family members and family pets.

**C**ollege Capstone Projects being able to be presented live at Universities just **float away...**

...Living room Zoom presentations are inspiring to watch and give a glimpse to family of the amazing work and systems in place at Colleges and Universities.

**C**ollege debate and essay assignments being presented live just **float away...**

...Dining room table Zoom presentations bring family to new heights of understanding on current events.

**R**egular visits to a 91 year old Mother and Grandmother are replaced with phone calls and Zoom for almost a year...

...That urgency...months later...to drive 2.5 hours for an outside 20 minute masked visit to give an air hug.

**H**opes for an in-person college graduation ceremony and family weekend just **float away...**

A car parade organizes and brings great joy...

**J**ust as so many dreams **floated away...**

**A**long came card games, time for reading lots of books, long walks, a need for bicycle repairs, teacher parades, letters in the mail, friends sewing masks, graduation parades, new dogs, new technology, birthday parades, new skills, new vaccines, new perspectives, family reunions on Zoom, new meals, new ideas for board games that work well on Zoom, online worship services, online classes, friend reunions on Zoom, letter writing, yard signs for special events, bike rides, waving through windows, pictures hanging in front windows, reading people's expression in their eyes, new recipes, smiling with our eyes, healthy students who are great at mask wearing, students who are happy to be at school, new ways of doing things....

**Float away...** and catch the wave of **Transformation** that comes afterward...

## Hope Floats

I was asked to speak  
To some middle-school kids  
About poetry,  
And I did,  
But it wasn't what I expected.  
I thought children  
Of eleven to thirteen  
Would write about simple things,  
But these kids were deep.  
I wasn't prepared  
For what they had to speak.  
Adult problems stalked  
Their young gazelle frames,  
Divorce, abuse, lost siblings.  
A poetry slam veteran,  
I thought I'd heard it all,  
But never from mouths so small.  
They bravely forgave my tears,  
And went on their way,  
Too old for their years.  
But one girl stayed after,  
Shrugged with nervous laughter,  
Said, "I feel like my life is an ocean,  
And I think I'm drowning in it.  
I need to write myself  
A boat,  
Put all the best parts  
Of me into it  
So I can float away.  
Do you know what  
I'm saying?"  
I nodded, not knowing  
What else to do,  
And we sat down in that space  
And wrote.  
We wrote about things that float.

Jerri Hardesty

## **Haiku**

Float away with no paddle  
Water washing south  
Ocean wide but I'm so small.

Al Pergande

## **Song of Being**

On a gray day such as this  
listlessness and pain settle in.  
The sin of despair  
lends weight to my bones.  
Alone.  
I am alone.

But I'm not.  
I stop, silence my mind,  
suddenly find myself  
in cherry blossom hills,  
follow the rondeau  
of nightingale trills  
until

I look up  
and the flourish of feathers  
unbinds what tethers me  
to small existence.  
I let go of resistance, float away  
to another dimension—  
no tension, no sadness, no me.  
A glorified we  
enraptures my heart and I start,  
again, to be.

Tom Kelly

## Memory Sea

Rock me to sleep, you cradling wave.  
Rock me to sleep, you gentle swell.  
On land I've never slept as well.  
How I dream of fin-flecked blue.  
How I dream of sailing through foam.  
In this place I feel at home.  
Each dawn the air tastes salty sweet.  
Each dawn the sun smelts liquid gold.  
When I'm here I never grow old.

Louise Cooper

## **I Am Here**

dropped like Robinson Crusoe  
on this Florida beach where everyone is happy—  
Salt air/salt life.

One t-shirt I pass on my beach walk shouts, *I never want to go back.*  
But I do, even though at Chases, home of the famous bikini contest,  
the bartender makes a mean Bloody Mary to my spicy specifications—  
a dash of cayenne pepper sprayed from his tanned hand.

I want to brave the sharks, and float away with the dolphins  
back to NYC where the only turquoise is the color of my toenails,  
I would exchange my copper tone for SoHo gray.

If the dolphins aren't heading north, I'll hitch a ride with a hawk. Harnessed  
to talons, we will leave this phallic-gun peninsula and fly to Manhattan Island.  
I will provide fresh kill, per our agreement, upon my safe return.

The colors are too vivid here. The pinks are salmonella, vaginella,  
the yellows cause optical migraines. If I can't float away with a bird of prey  
I will eat a periwinkle angel trumpet, trip back to Bloomingdale's on lower  
Broadway, pay the price for ingesting deadly flowers, collapse on Water  
Street become fish food for the dirty swimmers.

Vicki Iorio

## **Let The Darkness Float Away**

Be the first one rises the sun,  
Rises the hope from the heart, not with a  
pun...  
Hear the birds, touch the grass, feel the  
life;  
Be a part of the peace, but not the  
strife...  
Do not say impossible, just look for the  
right way,  
Untie the rope, let the darkness float  
away...

Take your coffee, have a walk in the  
morning,  
Ask yourself how to be upstanding...  
Spread every nice piece of you, like a  
seed;  
It will sprout, if you keep 'love', as your  
creed...  
Do not say impossible, just look for the  
right way,  
Untie the rope, let the darkness float  
away...

Hasim Bozkurt

## **Float, Aweigh**

I choose to float on streams of thought these days,  
where consciousness is optional – a raft  
that has no rudders, only poles and draft  
of wind or current in the flow. Aweigh  
all anchors from reality! Allay  
your fears, mold courage in poetic craft.  
Ignore the critics! Those who call you daft  
are simply jealous of your mind's ballet.  
Where words stain paper, darken shapes on screens,  
they speak to truths and lies, each argued, fought  
without concern, no empathy, no heart,  
as if the letters justified the means.  
No nuances, beliefs are tied in knots  
And choice is torn from us – no love, no art.

Diane Neff

## FLOATING AWAY

My words slide,  
or burst past lips,  
emotions are set in motion,  
touch and return.

Dandelions release  
parachutes puffed  
into breezes and  
carried to new gardens.

Glassy bubbles,  
rainbow-painted by the sun,  
sail on invisible seas soon  
to disappear in droplets.

Fingertip kisses  
blown on wind arrows  
aim at targets  
yearning to be caught.

Lungs' final exhale  
releases breath  
on which my soul  
floats away.

Carolynn Scully

## **Long Lake, Harrison Maine**

Alone in a dark blue inflatable rubber boat on an August day  
Rowing out a good distance from shore  
    a spit of sand that my father called "The Strand"  
Pulling in the smooth, shellacked wooden oars straight across my  
    body, leaning back, lifting my knees as high as I could  
    and stretching my legs forward over the oars to keep them  
    in place  
Sun hot upon my face, closing my eyes, floating away  
A far off motorboat sends attenuated waves that rock me  
A gentle breeze cradles me as a loon cries "remember"  
this place, this time, soon to unravel  
Thirty summers  
Dad carries the luggage to the car  
I hear the screen door of the cabin slam for the last time

Seth Shire

## **Ingenuity's Flight**

Below a billowed nylon sheet  
descending whisper-thin dry air,  
you're like a joey tucked in there  
within the rover, yet discrete.

It's bittersweet, your view of earth—  
that spec of light seen from your berth.

Reconnaissance above you spins,  
your link to Mother NASA's voice,  
but she, she gave you Hobson's choice  
to wander Mars like Bedouins.

“Go lens for microscopic clues.  
No quid pro quo. You can't refuse.”

A callus cold, the Martian night,  
no comforter to wrap you in,  
but as the sun rays singe glass skin  
they'll rev your rotor into flight.

Be light, the first in history  
to fly beyond that mystery.

Oh little one, you'll find a spot  
that's nice and flat where you can rest.  
Will proof of life there manifest  
for you, robotic Argonaut?

Our bot in acrid air of Mars,  
you'll bring us closer to the stars.

Mark Andrew James Terry

## **SEA OF DEMENTIA**

His memories are floating away,  
Tugged by the rip tide in the sea of dementia,  
Buried in the deep sand like megalodon teeth,  
Unearthed by a sudden strong wave of insight,  
Tossed to his wife by the shore.

She waits like a lifeguard to rescue him.  
Vibrant vest in her quivering grasp  
Filled with pills, charts and loving memos.  
Not knowing if they'll provide the buoyancy  
To lift him from the towering waves.

Throughout the tempest tossed journey  
Their love remains the anchor.  
Kisses, hugs, terms of endearment,  
Lifelines tied to their aging bodies  
Binding their souls before one sinks.

Ann Favreau

## **I Have Noticed**

I have noticed when  
I am in a pool  
floating on my back  
arms outstretched  
ears submerged  
I see moving clouds  
vultures gliding  
and palm trees sparkling  
in the sun

I have noticed  
in this state  
that you can only hear  
yourself breathing  
and the strange  
echo of splashing feet  
returning  
from the sides  
of the pool

Deborah Simpson

## **Dissociates**

I see you starrng out there again  
I wonder what it is you perceive  
Is it something hopeful approaching  
Or a specter from your past causing you to grieve?

I know you have wounds from another  
And between us  
They create a schism running very deep  
But I have past scars too  
And now, losing myself in you  
I find my own mind is drifting off to sleep

Starring out there  
Somewhere lost in space  
At whatever it is so far away  
A new hope or past lamentation  
It's difficult for me to tell  
And for you to say

So we spent the afternoon  
Biding fleeting time  
Starring off into the distance  
Tending to the wounds  
Somewhere within our minds  
You out there  
And me following with my heart  
Floating away from the present  
Ever further  
Ever faster

...And apart

Gary Childress

## *Cascades*

Cascades

falling, drifting,  
downward spiral  
into the depths of Love's Desires

you seem to float  
holding to the sides  
of the abyss

afraid of letting go  
as tears stream  
warmly down your face

Cascades  
of things left unsaid  
of feelings left unopened

Why float?

Below, lies  
Passion and Dreams  
Let go and  
drift with me  
stay with me  
make love to me  
we will become  
what we already are

among the Cascades

Thomas Lee Rhymes

## **Hereditary Blues**

for some years now, you lay out your blue-coated pills & thank them for their taste buds: the dilating seas that neatly occupy your bed with a living dream. the sky today is made of your lover's breath. you realize your love for him is like a city on fire: mother of all balm & each growing desire is a wing shaped by time. you dream of homeland only in your poems. this is always what you wanted: to hold your breath when no one else will. all day you watch for the mail—lost in the reverie for some news from a distant place. you are an un-happy thing—a grey country quietly waiting for the catastrophe of its own beauty. haven't you travelled enough—to end the chore. to be lost in a suspension of time. it maybe the coldest month of the year— & you are an odd spot of calm misled by want. how your imprecise side stayed up to watch the sun eat the moon. this morning you woke up to snows & skies of laughter not enough—

Ojo Taiye

## Shells

Hell's bells, a pile of shells  
A graveyard sure this picture tells  
Inside a pair true life dwells  
A sea creature with special cells

A food-chain rung, perhaps low spot  
For recipes some are caught  
For crafting needs shells are bought  
Still, food prevails for most their lot

But did you know once in a while  
They can cause quite a smile,  
For inside some, made from bile  
Comes a gift that's quite tactile

A speck of crud within the whorl  
The creature now cannot untwirl  
So hence encasing nasty burl  
It creates a lovely pearl

Su Gerheim

## **Driftwood**

From the business and busy of keeping a job,  
She had prayed to be finally free.  
She imagined her boss as aggressive as shark  
From aquarium back into sea.

Although sand was as white as an egg in the snow,  
It remained as a desolate key.  
She endured the monotonous drive to the beach  
As she ogled cerulean sea.

She had called in as sick although healthy that day,  
But the price of excuse was a fee.  
She would worry about that tomorrow. Today,  
She would swim with the dolphins in sea

As her day was as perfect as Florida fun.  
She collected a shell from debris.  
It was beautiful, purple, and valuable find  
From a generous bountiful sea.

It was natural energy Lee had desired.  
She was tired without vitamin B,  
But an energy drink wasn't a match for the strength  
She would get from the foam of the sea.

She'd delight in the sun as her lethargy left  
With emergence of vitamin D.  
She derived a renewal of sorts from the air  
As she tasted the salt from the sea.

It was easy becoming disgruntled with life.  
She didn't draw from the power of three.  
She was stranger to soul like a bird without flight.  
There was peace by the side of the sea.

From the busy and business of keeping a job,  
She would pray to be finally free.  
As a positive answer was found with the tide,  
She would drift like the wood in the sea.

Ryan Tilley

## **When I float away**

I am quiet, a mollusk under  
this ocean of time, letting in air

for time, exhuming time for still  
more air. I lumber along, I float,

tickled by warm currents. I am just  
a clam or mussel or other bivalve

hoping for a ride from a passing  
tug or skiff. This is my life

out of kilter, perhaps, but firm  
as I float along through this indigo

ocean of mystery, this manifold  
change from the terrestrial

to something airy illuminated  
by the underside of stars.

Carlton Johnson

## **Probing the Sea Floor**

I search for you along the  
bottom of the ocean  
sifting through bits of shells,  
debris and seaweed

ribbons of light barely  
slanting through the depth  
blackness hiding my grief  
fusing me to the sea floor  
the need to breathe long since gone  
gills form along my neck

this is where I belong  
gently swaying with your ashes  
with the currents  
with the jellyfish and anemones  
tiny fish nibbling at the barnacles along my back

I have no need for legs  
they are only objects d'art of the vertical world  
my life now is to drift in a world of suspension  
with milk-clouded eyes  
and the never ending movement of fingers  
reaching for your remains

BJ Alligood

## Weightless

My hair, lovely auburn hair floats  
soft tangles lifting to the surface  
as the rest of me, encased in  
heavy satin, made heavier  
as water attaches to fibers  
Settling amongst the nibbling minnows  
misty trails bounce against the rocks  
rocks securing the echoes  
Seaweed embraces limbs  
twining round thighs  
slim green lover exploring  
where no one has explored  
Roses for memory  
Mary for virginity  
I shall die as I was born  
undefiled toothless unknowing  
shade trees flicker on eyelids  
fallen leaves decorate ringlets  
like sapphires, al the blues and yellows  
filling the rainbow of innocence  
There are clouds  
I can smell the clouds  
As I float deeper into sleep

Robyn Weinbaum

## **SINK OR SWIM**

Feathers float on wind.  
Clouds float in the sky.  
Leaves float in the water.  
Boats float on the tide.  
I love a float of root beer  
with yummy ice cream floating.  
The fleet forms a flotilla  
of floating fierce design.  
The toilet's float gets stuck  
and then I have to unstick it.  
I need to pay for repairs  
and so I'll float a loan,  
but nobody will help me pay  
so I must float alone.  
For when computing interest  
the bank's number are told  
in floating point precision.  
Fleet flying insects flit  
and float around my face,  
while melodies from flutes  
float gaily past my ears —  
fairy flotsam in the air.

Marc Davidson

## **I Float Away In**

an anomalous thing, something  
sometimes it is a jarring blur  
sometimes it is an abstract night  
but, only when essential calls  
but, only when desires arise.

I float away in

an ascending secret, a fatigue report  
sometimes it is the name of a film  
sometimes it is unsolicited drama  
in the soul of masked gentle, hungry eyes  
in the soul of a calm indifferent face.

I float away in

an unauthorized nation of feuding profiles  
sometimes stories untelling themselves  
sometimes conscious of a connected culture  
in lyrics that call and repeat, call and repeat  
in sermons that stand in traffic, stand in traffic.

My blood feels like silk floating beneath my skin of sleep.  
I'm treading a night locked in by strange shadowy dreams.

Mary Rogers-Grantham

## Cast Away

We built a boat today, wooden  
and without a power motor.

Rudders, transoms, and hulls,  
father drew dimensions for us.

And we made it with a wheel  
of cedar and steel handholds.

Stern to bow, hull to mast, it rises  
like wakes in naval attire.

It is better than us, our ground  
of pavement and cracking driveway.

Slingshots, slides, inflatable pools  
fill cave in here, like sealant.

Lounges, mattresses, mothballed  
pillows, all stuff our land cancer.

Radials, transmissions, oils,  
sparks, they plug in ages, bankrupt.

So we seal our past, sails  
hoisted, naming it *The Away*.

Andrew Jarvis

## **Lifetime Flotation Devices**

As I reach through the thick bars of my crib,  
My mother passed our nightly bond of love;  
She gave me a lifetime floating device,  
And so I clutched it tightly for dear life.  
I memorized A Child's Garden of Verses by H.W. Longfellow.

During one scorching Florida summer,  
My sister devoured all lives of fame;  
I watched her do it every day and learned.  
And two summers after, I did it too.  
We borrowed and read every biography in the library.

Those years of high school at the corner store;  
We talked about these devices and boys,  
Yelling out numbers to view for their impacts,  
It was all about sharing and bonding.  
Hawaii by James A. Michner was a high school favorite.

I was so afraid to speak about it,  
And I needed something to rescue me;  
Like a flotation device, I grabbed it.  
I felt the safety and empowerment.  
My peers loved my book report of Miracle at Carville by Betty Martin.

My life's work became one of sharing it.  
Like a good salesperson, I urged its use,  
And I did just that for thirty-five years.  
Its use seemed so obvious, necessary.  
Every book I used and shared as a teacher had impact.

During the experiences of life,  
It helped to reach for safety and love;  
It gave me the way I like to live, free.  
I can solve problems, and some are my own.  
Lots of the books I borrowed or owned taught me life's story.

I share my books; they are flotation devices,  
And they saved my life many times.

Nancy Fuleihan

## Summer Stock

Every seven days we memorized a new musical. One week performed *Grease* each night, rehearsed *Yentl* daytime, with volunteers from local Churches of Christ filling our chorus of Russian shtetl Jews.

West Branch of the Susquehanna River curved around our theater parking lot toward downtown Lock Haven, old mill town surrounded by Amish farms. After ten hours inhabiting

souls of singing Greasers and Talmud scholars, under a hot tin roof, no air conditioning, we'd rent rubber rafts and inner tubes from Ted's on Riverwalk, float toward Jersey Shore, small town a mile downriver.

Drifting through old growth forest, watching wisps of clouds cling to rocky hill tops, restored us so we could go back to block "The Way He Makes Me Feel." During our last week I played Curly in *Oklahoma*,

dreamed of nineteenth century America, navigating river highways, current carrying me to Harrisburg, where Susquehanna's West and North branches converge to create an estuary one mile wide through southeast

Pennsylvania, joining Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace. Oh, to float away from that physical grind of performance, wearing as milling grain once was in those stone, ruined buildings beside the river. We're all adrift

on life's currents, searching for a safe harbor, harmony to hit, right line to say, a follow spot that catches us down center, so we can shine.

Peter Gordon

## **The Joys of Cruising**

Do you want to relax,  
And eat very well too?  
Then cruising the high seas  
Is now meant just for you.

The locations flourish.  
Some are far, some close by,  
That'll render you spellbound  
And so eager to try.

These sailings will offer  
Magic days on a boat,  
Where pleasures await you  
While the vessel's afloat.

The food is abundant.  
Every day and at night.  
Whatever your fancy,  
It will surely delight.

Activities vary  
From trivia to sports,  
And fun for the youngsters,  
With events of all sorts.

If dancing is your thing,  
A disco can be found,  
And there's a diverse mix  
Of music all around.

With shows every evening  
That will certainly please,  
From comics to magic,  
They can handle with ease.

If you like to gamble,  
Be it tables or slots,  
Head for the casinos,  
Where you'll win the best pots.

Excursions a plenty,  
You can get off the ship,  
To check out the countries,  
That will make the best trip.

A cruise that goes nowhere  
Allows work on your tan.  
You'll spend several days  
Never touching the land.

Let the staff plan your day,  
Or you chart your own quest.  
They'll be many short ones,  
But the long ones are best.

You can choose hot or cold,  
The Wild West or Mid-East.  
It's not just the climate;  
Every culture's a feast.

The sights you'll see thrill you,  
How they showcase their best.  
You'll travel all over,  
And still have time to rest.

They'll do all your laundry  
If you're feeling the need,  
Then it's back to your room  
With the utmost of speed.

It's all there included  
In that one special price.  
Unpacking the one time,  
Really makes it quite nice.

We'll look for you on board  
The next time that she sails.  
You'll soon impress your friends  
With all your shipboard tales.

Alice Klaxton

## **The Red Balloon**

A child carries the universe  
in her red balloon  
which weaves and waves over her  
    like a guardian angel.

Star systems catch the wind.  
Galaxies mirror her steps.  
Constellations orbit tiny hands.

Like the Milky Way,  
her arms fling open  
as she runs to her mother.

A carefree moment  
releases the red balloon  
she struggles to reclaim.  
Mother soothes her child's mischance  
with the wisdom of prayer.

As stewards of the Universe,  
they witness the red balloon float away—  
    a luminous ruby orb  
        of everything  
            adrift in space.

Sonja Jena Craig