

ANN GOLDSMITH



AS THE DAY SHORTENS

POEMS

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I started writing poetry a few months ago, when I joined the Life Story Group run by our local hospice at Dorothy House.

Since my illness, I found I couldn't paint any more - physically or emotionally - and I thought my creative life had come to an end.

It was wonderful to see other people also recording poignant moments in words or snapshots, whatever; and to watch their creative spirit come alive. For once the emphasis was off the medical side of Cancer Care. I commend the philosophy of Dorothy House.

Attempting to write poetry has helped me to think beyond my illness. It has been a completely new challenge; I have discovered a different way of layering thoughts and feelings.

In most poems there is an interplay between those two inseparable companions - hope and despair. Blame the Birds is a response to our planet in crisis. As a passionate environmentalist, this theme will haunt me. The life-affirming force of the human spirit breaks through in *Theresa's Dance* and in *Ingrid* - both tearaways in their own right!

When I could no longer look after my four tortoises - parting brought so much pain - a poem was necessary! I could now see this marvellous ancient creature in a more universal light. Making the drawing also helped me to come to terms with the loss.

I feel there are a few more creative avenues to explore and recently I have started to experiment with paint again: some of the poetic ideas have filtered through.

I have met some wonderful people along the way and am very grateful for their encouragement and support.

During the last few months I have gained more insight into the feelings surrounding those of us facing cancer. The negative soul-searching can be transformed into a more creative realm and I am sure that we all have something to say; some precious fragment of our lives to record - in such a way - that our family and friends will remember just who we were and what we believed in.

Ann Goldsmith

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POEMS and IMAGES



by

ANN GOLDSMITH

SINCE KNOWING

And when I knew - my mind went to
A distant place. A steady voice droned on,
Laconic explanation shattered hope;
So much for fact - the awful side of truth.

In pain, I share a bay devoid of
Land or sea where pebbles are frail faces
Chiselled out of shadows. Our boat is
Moored a breath away from where we lie.

And now, I live in moments squeezed from
Fragile days. Always in defiance
Of this Thing that changed our lives.
My space is where the gods and fear are one.

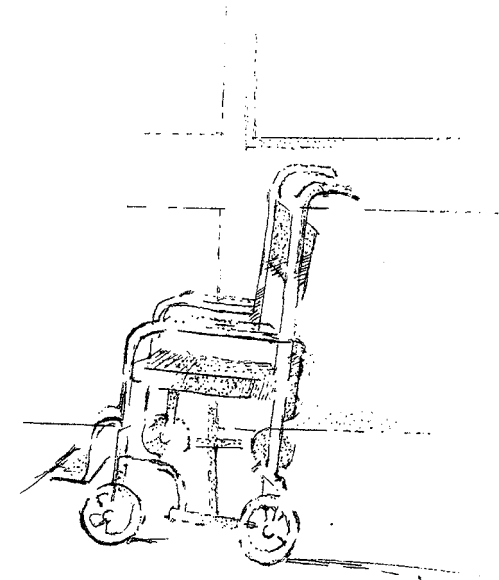
FRIEND

A chair can take you,
On its wheels, beyond
The space of your defeat.

A friend can push you
To a patch of warmth
Where frozen hope can melt.

The thing that matters
Most is the friendship,
Unswerving over four decades.

staring *giggling*
downhill *weeping*
forever *uphill*
laughing



HOPE

Today the bird of hope has flown
I can no longer hear her cry.
Above the multi-storey and the spires
Her feathers form grey clouds.

The black dog stealthily appears
He whines to make his presence felt;
Although I see him slink away
His shadow lingers on.

On brighter days my spirits rise
The pain has eased, my mind is strong,
But like the fabric of this tortured earth
My body is still frail.

THERESA'S DANCE

Theresa hates school so she changes the pace.
Craving attention she sings songs in Science.
disconnects the computers and other appliance.
Her peers applaud but teachers lose face.

Mistrust of adults goes back for some time.
She often feels hurt even when they are kind.
School is an anchor so why rock the boat?
It's cool to be naughty so hide the remote.

Turn up the sound in IT, there's a roar
Answer them back as you take to the floor,
Nothing is fair so there's nothing to lose
Swear if you must or take off your shoes.



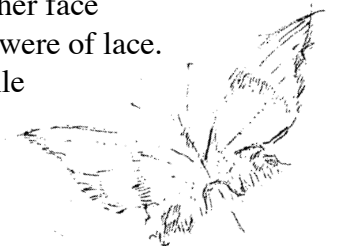
Banished from class Theresa shows scorn
Put in detention she's often forlorn.
She shouts at her elders and screws up her face
But Theresa well knows she was setting the pace.

At 14 she feels the pain deep inside
It's almost three years since her Mother died.
The gas was full on when she came home from school.
How can a mother be so cruel.

Something has changed - her teacher is new
Shimmering colour the Art Room a party
Theresa's attracted by anything arty.
Should she join in and play the game too.

Paintings of figures and dazzling designs
Terra-cotta clay pots, plastic and wire
Rows of clay hedgehogs and models of heads.
I will give my performance at once she said.

She danced on the work tops and painted her face
Her hair shone with diamonds, her wings were of lace.
Her teacher stood still and gave a wry smile
As twelve painted ladies fluttered in style.



A TORTOISE KNOWN

Terrestrial Chelonian
She thrives in the torrid heat
But if the Gulf Stream slips away
Her torpid limbs may freeze.

No epitome of slothfulness when fine
She marches through the dandelions.
Energised by solar rays
She balances to reach their heads
Snapped off with razor gums.

Spur thighed moving stone
Sealed in her leathery carapace.
She has a timeless beauty of her own
Unlike the millennium dome, she lasts.



When it rains the geometric ridges on her
Shields stand out
Mottled black and ochre daubs revealed.
On three inch scaly legs she crawls away
With ease she bears her six pound weight.

After thirty years does she still dream
Of colonies and winter heat,
Of Moroccan or Tunisian miles
Where long ago she trudged her youth.

Towards the sun before it sinks
She very slowly turns her shell
Savouring the latent glow.
Heavily she leans against the wall
To yawn her huge pink yawn.

Her ancient shadow brings to mind
A wilderness which once was hers
A place devoured and modernised
But where she somehow still belongs.

BLAME THE BIRDS

Blame the birds
For deadly spreading of disease
For strutting mottled precincts
Defiling sacred dream machines on streets.



Denounce the ghosts of feathered game
Deserters from the field of fire.

Ban the screaming gulls in towns
Where litter binned is strewn again.

Beware the Jubjub bird and shun
The Crane for spearing Easop's frogs.

Blame the great Heraldic wings
For hugely spreading Imperial Power.

Condemn the ragged beak which rasps
Darkly grating in the soul.

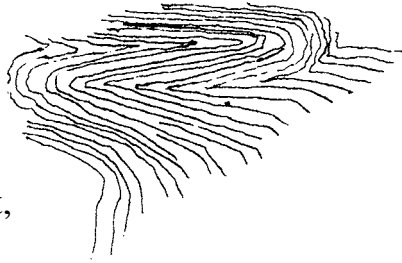
Fishermen must shoot to cull
Their ocean rival as he dives.



Dismiss the ashen bird who fades
Before his plumage thrills the eye.
As twelve per cent of species wane
Blame them for their silence.

RIVER

River,
Oily clear,
Slides beneath the precinct,
Shrinking at the edges,
Bathed in acid heat-
Leaking sediment.

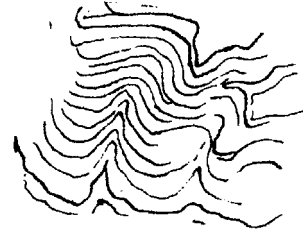


Surface -
Shifting skylines -
Mirrors geometric clouds
Above the edifice,
Skimming depths of
Blue - black darkness.

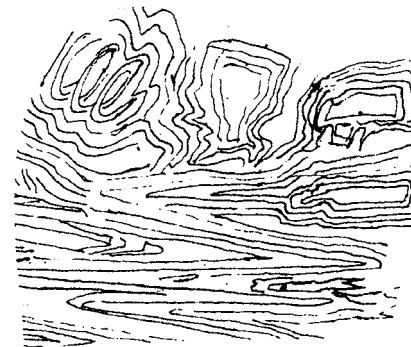
Wind,
Carving ripples,
Dries out shoals of flotsam.
Plastic tatters stream
From half-hung branches
In a frenzied dance.



Glimpsed
In sunlight,
Iridescent feathers
Weave a floating garland.
Fish outline themselves
In silver.



Dawn,
Glitzy lemon,
Filters light shafts
On the early stillness,
As River takes a breath
The day splits open.



Shorewards:
Pellucid water
Curving as it dawdles on,
Humming to the birdsong,
Longing for the rushing
Of the tide.

Ingrid

Death will not erase your sparkle;
In our midst we see you now
soul mates in a snapshot
delicately framed.
Your flash of lipstick
softening defiance
with pain on hold
but still a cheeky frown.
For love of cats a Cheshire smile.

Whilst others in upholstered
comfort sat, you packed your bags
to up and go, by rail or coach -
Scotland, Blackpool or
anywhere you fancied.
Running almost empty
pushing boundaries -
your intrepid spirit
fuelled by willpower.

Death will not erase
the essence of your being.
Welded by a common web
cruelly spun by fate
we shared your drive -
the upbeat moments
and the rest.
Each inspiration passes
to the next - until
the throb of life removes itself.



COLOUR MOODS

Self-pity has no colour.
Like slanting rain it
Fills the air and
Seeps into my being,
Drizzling over days.

Umber is the mood
That deepens anguish.
Bands of indigo and brown
Stain my canvas darkly,
As the day shortens.

Envy is the green
That taunts the soul.
Just another cliché -
Drowned out - as colour
Washes over words.

Blue sedates the clouds;
Cool vapour quells the
Planet's rage and mine.
I wear blue linen when
The morning smiles.

Translucent moments
Paint a vast expanse -
Yellow under Red on
Orange, filters through my
Veins - Exhilaration.

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