

**LET THERE BE NEW FLOWERING**

let there be new flowering
in the fields
let the fields
turn mellow for the men
let the men keep tender
through the time
let the time
be wrested from the war
let the war be won
let love be
at the end

*Lucille Clifton*

**WAR**

each day the terror wagon
passes while elevators
hesitate between floors
and frightened windows
cover their eyes

the bell rings
*bring out your dead bring out your dead*
the bell keeps ringing

we are sad quiet men
in a difficult century

we run our treacherous
fingers through their hair
one last time
and trade our children
for the most expensive
versions of old lies

*Richard Shelton*
Smokey
BY RICARDO MEANS YBARRA

My name is Arturo Jiménez, a.k.a. Smokey with my homeys
You don’t know me, do you?
I was shot in the chest at a birthday party
three days after the Rodney King beating
three days out of road camp
three days back with my girl.
They left me on the sidewalk, called it crowd control
wouldn’t let the ambulance through
I don’t know but I think I was already dead
’cause all I remember is the Virgen
trying to calm the sheriff
trying to hold back his finger.
Nineteen years old.
Poco a poco, I’m getting closer to you.

The Portrait

My mother never forgave my father
for killing himself,
especially at such an awkward time
and in a public park,
that spring
when I was waiting to be born.
She locked his name
in her deepest cabinet
and would not let him out,
though I could hear him thumping.
When I came down from the attic
with the pastel portrait in my hand
of a long-lipped stranger
with a brave moustache
and deep brown level eyes,
she ripped it into shreds
without a single word
and slapped me hard.
In my sixty-fourth year
I can feel my cheek
still burning.

Stanley Kunitz

June Twenty-first

My mother’s cigarette flares and fades,
the steady pulse of a firefly,
on the patio under the chestnut.

The next door neighbors are over.
My father, still slender, is telling a joke:
laughter jiggles in everyone’s drinks.

On his hour’s reprieve from sleep,
my little brother dances
in the sprinkler’s circle of water.

At fourteen, I’m too old
to run naked with my brother,
too young to laugh with my father.

I stand there with my hands in my pockets.
The sun refuses to set,
bright as a penny in a loafer.
Learning English
By Luis Alberto Ambroggio

Life
to understand me
you have to know Spanish
feel it in the blood of your soul.

If I speak another language
and use different words
to express the same feelings
I don't know
if I'll continue being
the same person.

FORD PICKUP

call me the Valiant heading west on Fourteen into the frozen
Dakota January sun and the one suddenly ahead the red
Custom Ranger with Texas plates and his woman taking
their time and all of my eye as he sits straight and high
beneath a white Stetson nodding politely over frost heave
and she has my long my black my favorite hair with a ribbon
exactly the color of the pickup and feeling the cab's air
and now she scoots his way and lays her head on his shoulder
while he adjusts his hat and sways briefly over the yellow line
so when as they talk her hands are a bird's nest in her lap
to which the knuckles of his loose right hand are always returning.

David Allan Evans

TOMORROW

Your best friend is gone;
your other friend, too.
Now the dream that used to turn in your sleep,
sails into the year's coldest night.

What did you say?
Or was it something you did?
It makes no difference—the house of breath collapsing
around your voice, your voice burning, are nothing to worry about.

Tomorrow your friends will come back;
your moist open mouth will bloom in the glass of storefronts.
Yes. Yes. Tomorrow they will come back and you
will invent an ending that comes out right.

Mark Strand
STARS

O, sweep of stars over Harlem Streets,
O, little breath of oblivion that is night.
A city building
To a mother's song,
A city dreaming
To a lullaby.
Reach up your hand, dark boy, and take a star.
Out of the little breath of oblivion
That is night
Take just
One star.

LANGSTON HUGHES

THUMB

The odd, friendless boy raised by four aunts.

Philip Dacey

POCKET POEM

If this comes creased and creased again and soiled
as if I'd opened it a thousand times
to see if what I'd written here was right,
it's all because I looked for you too long
to put it in your pocket. Midnight says
the little gifts of loneliness come wrapped
by nervous fingers. What I wanted this
to say was that I want to be so close
that when you find it, it is warm from me.

Ted Kooser

BRUISES

paint samples

Coleman Barks

STREET WINDOW

The pawn-shop man knows hunger,
And how far hunger has eaten the heart
Of one who comes with an old keepsake.
Here are wedding rings and baby bracelets,
Scarf pins and shoe buckles, jeweled garters,
Old-fashioned knives with inlaid handles,
Watches of old gold and silver,
Old coins worn with finger-marks.
They tell stories.

CARL SANDBURG

Ode to Le - Gary Soto

They are flutes
When rolled, butter
Dripping down my elbow
As I stand on the
Front lawn, just eating,
Just watching a sparrow
Hop on the lawn,
His breakfast of worms
Beneath the green, green lawn,
Worms and a rip of
Tortilla I throw
At his thorny feet.
I eat my tortilla,
Breathe in, breathe our,
And return inside,
Wiping my oily hands
On my knee-scrubbed jeans.
The tortillas are still warm
In a dish towel,
Warm as gloves just
Taken off, finger by finger.
Mamá is rolling
Them out. The radio
On the window sings,
El rielo es azul . . .
I look in
the black pan:
The face of the tortilla
With a bubble of air
Rising. Mamá
Tells me to turn
It over, and when
I do, carefully,
It's blistered brown.
I count to ten,
Uno, dos, tres . . .
And then snap it out
Of the pan. The tortilla
Dances in my hands
As I carry it
To the drainboard,
Where I smear it
With butter,
The yellow ribbon of butter
That will drip
Slowly down my arm
When I eat on the front lawn.
The sparrow will drop
Like fruit
From the tree
To stare at me
With his glassy eyes.
I will rip a piece
For him. He will jump
On his food
And gargle it down,
Chirp once and fly
Back into the wintry tree.
To Look
at
Any Thing

To look at any thing,
If you would know that thing,
You must look at it long:
To look at this green, and say:
'I have seen spring 'in these Woods,' will not do—you must:
Be the thing you see:
You must be the dark snakes of:
Stems and ferny plumes of leaves;
You must enter in:
To the small silences between:
The leaves;
You must take
your time:
And touch the very peace
They Issue from.

potatoes

Because of each
Knob and knot,
Hump and dimple
And dusty gnarl,

No potato is quite
Like any other—
Until all are pared
Smooth and pale,

Boiled tender, and
Mashed up together:
A single soft beauty
In their bowl.

Valerie Worth

BUTTERFLY SONG

Butterfly, butterfly, butterfly, butterfly,
Oh, look, see it hovering among the flowers,
It is like a baby trying to walk and not knowing how to go.
The clouds sprinkle down the rain.

Acoma

APPLE

At the center, a dark star
wrapped in white.
When you bite, listen
for the crunch of boots on snow,
snow that has ripened. Over it
stretches the red, starry sky.

Nan Fry

THUMBPRINT

In the heel of my thumb
are whorls, whirs, wheels
in a unique design:
mine alone.
What a treasure to own!
My own flesh, my own feelings
No other, however grand or base,
can ever contain the same.
My signature,
thumbing the pages of my time.
My universe key,
my singularity.
Impress, implant,
I am myself,
of all my atom parts I am the sum.
And out of my blood and my brain
I make my own interior weather,
my own sun and rain.
Imprint my mark upon the world,
whatever I shall become.

Valerie Worth

EARTHWORMS

Garden soil,
Spaded up,
Gleams with
Gravel-glints,
Mica-sparks, and
Bright wet
Glimpses of
Earthworms
Stirring beneath:

Put on the palm,
Still rough
With crumbs,
They roll and
Glisten in the sun
As fresh
As new rubies
Dug out of
Deepest earth.

Valerie Worth
WAR

each day the terror wagon
passes while elevators
hesitate between floors
and frightened windows
cover their eyes

the bell rings bring out
your dead bring out your dead
the bell keeps ringing

we are sad quiet men
in a difficult century

we run our treacherous
fingers through their hair
one last time
and trade our children
for the most expensive
versions of old lies

Richard Shelton

City Blockades

Lee Bennett Hopkins

I feel so small
standing beneath the tall
buildings that wall
me and the pigeons in
from the light of the
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Red Flower

Ann Turner

I went by this building,
brown, mostly gray
like all the city smoke
and noise got ground
into those bricks,
the window glass so black
it looked like tar.

And I thought, Nobody
lives there—too quiet,
too dark, too gray,
when I looked up and saw
one window open,
the curtains blowing in
and a red flower blooming.

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

Langston Hughes
From: *Meet Danitra Brown*, by Nikki Grimes

Danitra says my skin’s like double Chocolate fudge ‘cause I’m so dark. The kids at school say it another way. “You so black, girl,” they say, “at night, people might think you ain’t nothin’ but a piece o’ sky.”

I never cry, but inside there’s a hurting place. I make sure no one sees it on my face. Then mama tells me, “Next time, honey, you just say The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.” Now, that’s what I do. I sure wish I had told them that before. Those kids don’t bother teasin’ me no more.

Hot
From: *Pocketful of Poems* by Nikki Grimes

(Haiku)

Hot days send me to the water fountain where my face goes for a swim.

Other

Janet Wong

We notice each other right away. We are the only two Asians in the room. It does not matter that he is long. It does not matter that I am fat. I look at her like I look in a mirror, recognizing my self in one quick glance.

The Term

*William Carlos Williams*

A rumpled sheet of brown paper about the length and apparent bulk of a man was rolling with the wind slowly over and over in the street as a car drove down upon it and crushed it to the ground. Unlike a man it rose again rolling with the wind over and over to be as it was before.

Stars

*Langston Hughes*

O, sweep of stars over Harlem Streets, O, little breath of oblivion that is night. A city building To a mother’s song. A city dreaming To a lullaby. Reach up your hand, dark boy, and take a star Out of the little breath of oblivion That is night Take just One star.
Ode to La Piñata  
Gary Soto

It sways  
In the tree  
In the yard,  
This paper pig  
Bloated with  
Candies, this  
Piñata, my father  
Bought and hung  
On a low branch.  
I'm Rachel.  
Today's my birthday.  
If six fingers  
Go up, that's how  
Old I am. I'm going  
To strike the  
Piñata six times,  
And then let my  
Six guests swing  
A broom at the pig.  
Dad works the rope.  
Mom blindfolds me  
With a dish towel  
And turns me six times,  
My lucky number  
For my lucky day.  
When she stops,  
I keep going,  
Dizzy and sick—  
Inside my belly  
A merry-go-round  
Of hot dog, chips,  
Pink lemonade,  
And cake with ice cream.  
I stagger and swing.  
I fall to a knee,  
Rise and swing again.  
I'm more dizzy  
Than when I started,  
And then, wham

The stick explodes  
Against the piñata.  
My friends laugh  
And squeal, and I hit  
It again, the first  
Rain of candies.  
I pull away  
The dish towel, dazed  
By the sunlight.  
I give the stick  
To a friend,  
And more candies  
Rain to the ground,  
Kisses and jawbreakers,  
Tootsie Rolls like  
Chocolate worms.  
My six friends  
All take a turn,  
And then baby brother  
From his stroller  
Whacks a plastic bat—  
Candies rain down,  
And by magic, one falls  
Into his squealing mouth.

Money Order  Janet S. Wong

We eat salt fish and rice,  
night after night after night,  
to save some money  
to send  
to cousins  
I never have seen  
who used our money last year  
to buy a color TV,  
so they could watch  
rich Americans  
eating  
steak and potatoes.
There are no coaches at funerals. No practice to get ready. No warm-up. There is no last-second shot, and we all wear its cruel midnight uniform, starless and unfriendly.

I am unprepared for death.
This is a game I cannot play.
It has no rules, no referees. You cannot win.

I listen to my father's teammates tell funny stories about love and basketball. I hear the choir's comfort songs. They almost drown out Mom's sobs. She will not look in the coffin. That is not my husband, she says. Dad is gone, like the end of a good song. What remains is bone and muscle and cold skin. I grab Mom's right hand. JB grabs her left. The preacher says, A great father, son, and husband has crossed over. Amen.

Outside, a long charcoal limo pulls up to the curb to take us back.

If only.

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December

Sanderson Vanderbilt

A little boy stood on the corner And shoveled bits of dirty, soggy snow Into the sewer — With a jagged piece of tin.

He was helping spring come.
Autopsy ©2017, Sherman Alexie

Last night, I dreamed that my passport bled.
I dreamed that my passport was a tombstone
For our United States, recently dead.
I dreamed that my passport was made of bone—

That it was a canoe carved out of stone.
"But I can't swim," I said. "I will drown
If I can't make the shore. I'll die alone
In the salt. No, my body will be found

With millions of bodies, all of them brown."
I dreamed that my passport was a book of prayers,
Unanswered by the gods, but written down
By fact checkers in suits. "There are some errors

In your papers," they said. Then took me downstairs
To a room with fingernails on the floor.
I dreamed that my passport was my keyware,
But soldiers had set fire to the doors,

To all doors—a conflagration of doors.
I dreamed that my passport was my priest:
"Sherman, will you battle the carnivores
Or will you turn and abandon the weak?

Will you be shelter? Or will you concede?"
Last night, I dreamed that my passport was alive
When it entered the ICU. It breathed, it breathed,
Then it sighed and closed its eyes. It did not survive.

won't you celebrate with me
Lucille Clifton

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

When It Is Snowing
Siv Cedering

When it is snowing
the blue jay
is the only piece of
sky
in my
backyard.

Sisters
Janet Wong

She calls me tofu
because I am so soft,
easily falling apart.

I wish I were tough
and full of fire, like ginger—
like her.
I was in the basement when my brother came home without a shirt covering his hungry chest. He saw a fight by the river, eight-track tapes stolen from somebody’s car, a broken bottle jammed in the armpit and blood shooting out, so that even my brother’s shirt wrapped around the wound did not keep the startled boy from dying. That summer my brother stayed by the river, passing the lukewarm wine or a pipe of hashish, bragging about refrigerators of meat plundered in unguarded garages.

I saw him slip the bills from my father’s wallet into his pants. When I told my brother this, he promised a kitchen knife plunged between my ribs as I slept. “Go get it,” I said. When he turned to the kitchen, a wave of blood crashed in the chambers of my forehead. Too quickly, my knuckles in his hair, his skull thudding off the wall. I wanted to see the blood irrigating the folds of his brain; I wanted to crack open the piñata painted with a face like mine.

Only amazement could have stopped me. Amazing was the sight of my father’s face. He stood before us, a man with hands forbidding as tarantulas, and cried.

After twenty years, one brother cannot sleep waiting for the other. I wait for him, the cool knife sliding against my skin. And he waits for me, my knuckles in his hair, to finish cracking open the piñata painted with a face like mine.

When the kids in my class ask why I am not allowed to pledge to the flag I tell them It’s against my religion but don’t say, I am in the world but not of the world. This, they would not understand. Even though my mother’s not a Jehovah’s Witness, she makes us follow their rules and leave the classroom when the pledge is being said.

Every morning, I walk out with Gina and Alina the two other Witnesses in my class. Sometimes, Gina says, Maybe we should pray for the kids inside who don’t know that God said “No other idols before me.” That our God is a jealous God. Gina is the true believer. Her Bible open during reading time. But Alina and I walk through our roles as Witnesses as though this is the part we’ve been given in a play and once offstage, we run free, sing “America the Beautiful” and “The Star-Spangled Banner” far away from our families—knowing every word.

Alina and I want more than anything to walk back into our classroom press our hands against our hearts. Say, “I pledge allegiance . . .” loud without our jealous God looking down on us. Without our parents finding out. Without our mothers’ voices in our heads saying, You are different. Chosen. Good.

When the pledge is over, we walk single file back into the classroom, take our separate seats Alina and I far away from Gina. But Gina always looks back at us—as if to say, I’m watching you. As if to say, I know.
leaving Columbus

Jacqueline Woodson

When my parents fight for the final time,
my older brother is four,
my sister is nearly three,
and I have just celebrated my first birthday

without celebration.

There is only one photograph of them
from their time together
a wedding picture, torn from a local newspaper
him in a suit and tie,
her in a bride gown, beautiful
although neither one is smiling.

Only one photograph.

Maybe the memory of Columbus was too much
for my mother to save anymore.
Maybe the memory of my mother
was a painful stone inside my father's heart.

But what did it look like
when she finally left him?

A woman nearly six feet tall, straight-backed
and proud, heading down
a cold Columbus street, two small children
beside her and a still-crawling baby
in her arms.

My father, whose reddish-brown skin
would later remind me
of the red dirt of the South
and all that was rich about it, standing
in the yard, one hand
on the black metal railing, the other lifting
into a weak wave good-bye.

As though we were simply guests
inviting Sunday supper.

Having a mother

Kwame Alexander

is good when she rescues you
from free-throw attempt number thirty-six,
your arms as heavy as sea anchors.
But it can be bad
when your mother
is a principal at your school.
Bad in so many ways.
It's always education
this and education that.

After a double-overtime
basketball game I only want
three things: food, bath, sleep.
The last thing I want is EDUCATION!
But, each night,
Mom makes us read.
Don't know how he does it, but
JB listens to his iPod
at the same time,
so he doesn't hear me
when I ask him
is Miss Sweet Tea his girlfriend.

He claims he's listening to French classical,
that it helps him concentrate.
Yeah, right! Sounds more like
Jay-Z and Kanye
in Paris.
Which is why when Mom and Dad start arguing,
he doesn't hear them, either.

Garage Sale

After she had
that last big
garage sale
she floated
off into
the sky

& I
heard her
say there was
nothing keeping
her here anymore

& I was much more
cautious about the stuff
I got rid of after that.

BRIAN ANDREAS
First Love

Trained to return to my hand
like a yo-yo with no strings,
you burn nets to cinders,
kiss the backboard.

At night on the floor
next to me,
you press against desire,
waiting for the even rotation
of my touch.

I hear your voice calling me.
I am only twelve but
I can still grasp
the motion, the smoothness
of your bare skin,
how you love the way
my fingertips slide
softly across your body.
I am hypnotized every time
we touch.

This is not love, but addiction.
You blaze past my opponents,
but I am on fire.

Stephan Johnson, age 17

Black Hair

At eight I was brilliant with my body.
In July, that ring of heat
We all jumped through, I sat in the bleachers
Of Romain Playground, in the lengthening
Shade that rose from our dirty feet.
The game before us was more than baseball.
It was a figure—Hector Moreno,
Quick and hard with turned muscles,
His crouch the one I assumed before an altar
Of worn baseball cards, in my room.
Cracked  
Sarah Crossan

I cannot make Mama whole again.
Tata stole pieces of her
And now she is Jagged at the edges—Cracked.

When I get home I take off my shoes
To keep the carpet clean
And do my homework
Without asking questions.

I tiptoe.
I am silent.

She does not look at me Anymore.

She lies in bed
With a book and a Glass of wine
Held to her heart.

Sometimes she drinks Half a bottle,

And maybe she drinks Even more.

And then she goes to sleep
Without saying good night,
Without turning off the light,
Without checking I'm all right.

Good Hot Dogs  
Sandra Cisneros

Fifty cents apiece
To eat our lunch
We'd run
Instead of home
Two blocks
Then the store
That smelled like steam
You ordered
Because you had the money
Two hot dogs and two pops for hot dogs
Everything on the hot dogs
Except pickle lily
Dash those hot dogs
Into buns and splash on
All that good stuff
Yellow mustard and onions

Any Morning

Just lying on the couch and being happy.
Only humming a little, the quiet sound in the head.
Trouble is busy elsewhere at the moment, it has so much to do in the world.

People who might judge are mostly asleep; they can't monitor you all the time, and sometimes they forget. When dawn flows over the hedge you can get up and act busy.

Little corners like this, pieces of Heaven left lying around, can be picked up and saved.
People won't even see that you have them, they are so light and easy to hide.

Later in the day you can act like the others.
You can shake your head. You can frown.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

And French fries piled on top all
Rolled up in a piece of wax
Paper for us to hold hot
In our hands
Quarters on the counter
Sit down
Good hot dogs
We'd eat
Fast till there was nothing left
But salt and poppy seeds even
The little burnt tips
Of French fries
We'd eat
You humming
And me swinging my legs
SPEAK UP!
by Sara Holbrook

Speak up.
Who you talking about?

Speak up.
It could be me!

Talking only takes two,
but gossiping really takes three... Two people dishing it out and the one they got cookin' about.

Gossip is antisocial, not everyone gets a fair turn. It sparks like a match in the trash and more than one can get burned.

So.
Speak up.
Your whisp'ring's making me mad. Besides, if you're talking 'bout Chris? I just might have something to add.

I NEVER SAID I WASN'T DIFFICULT
by Sara Holbrook

I never said I wasn't difficult, I mostly want my way. "why?"
Sometimes I talk back or pout know-it-all. and don't have much to say. when I'm bored?

I've been known to yell, "So what," when I'm stepping out of bounds I want you there for me and yet, I don't want you around cards, to hide. I wish I had more privacy hard to live with and never had to be alone. inside. I want to run away. I'm scared to leave my home. I'm too tired to be responsible. I wish that I were boss. I want to blaze new trails. I'm terrified that I'll get lost. I wish an answer came every time I asked you, I wish you weren't a Why do you question I won't be I hate to be ignored. I know, I shuffle messages like some to show and some But, if you think I'm you should try me on
Pretty Ugly

I'm very ugly
So don't try to convince me that
I am a very beautiful person
Because at the end of the day
I hate myself in every single way
And I'm not going to lie to myself by saying
There is beauty inside of me that matters
So rest assured I will remind myself
That I am a worthless, terrible person
And nothing you say will make me believe
I still deserve love
Because no matter what
I am not good enough to be loved
And I am in no position to believe that
Beauty does exist within me
Because whenever I look in the mirror I always think
Am I as ugly as people say?

(Now read bottom up)

by Abdullah Shoail
My Accent
by Anna Yin

It is charming.
I assure you.
I assure myself,
and choose to believe so.

Languages have colors.
I want to show you my tender blue.
But you cut off with fork and knife,
quicker than my chopstick taps.

My accent grows trees,
trails and winding roads
to west coast landscape.
It points to the open sky;
yet clouds are too heavy
and form raindrops.

My papers collect them
then dry in silence.
I have hesitated many times
before I speak;
now it develops teeth.
Even with gaps between,
I decide
...this is my voice.

THE STORM THAT WAS
by Sara Holbrook

Me?
I rolled in like a storm,
darkening the room,
ominously rumbling,
then erupting with a BOOM!

I HATE PEOPLE.
I HATE SCHOOL.
I HATE WHAT'S HOT.
I HATE WHAT'S COOL.
I CAN'T STAND RIDING BUSES.
ALL MY FRIENDS ARE MEAN.
THE WORLD IS GUACAMOLE
AND
I HATE THE COLOR GREEN.

And you?
You didn't run for cover
or have that much to say.
You listened to my cloudburst.

And the storm?
It blew away.

GOOD GRIEF?
by Sara Holbrook

Grief gets worn out by grieving.
Pain's a coat I must put on
and wear around the house
till it no longer feels so wrong.
I can't leave it in the box
and claim it doesn't fit.
I can't bag it for the coat drive
or wait till I grow into it.
Not a color of my choosing
And nothing to brag about.
The sooner
I try grief on,
the sooner grief
will get worn out.
Dribbling

Kwame Alexander

At the top of the key, I'm
MOVING & GROOVING,
POPping and ROCKING—
Why you BUMPING?
    Why you LOCKING?
Man, take this THUMPING.
Be careful though,
'cause now I'm CRUNKing

Cris CROSSING
FLOSSING
flipping
and my dipping will leave you
S
L
I
P
I
N
G
SWOOP in
to the finish with a fierce finger roll...
Straight in the hole:
Swooo00000000osh.

Josh Bell  Kwame Alexander

is my name.
But Filthy McNasty is my claim to fame.
Folks call me that
'cause my game's acclaimed,
so downright dirty, it'll put you to shame.
My hair is long, my height's tall.
See, I'm the next Kevin Durant,
LeBron, and Chris Paul.

Remember the greats,
my dad likes to gloat:
I balled with Magic and the Goat.
But tricks are for kids, I reply.
Don't need your pets
my game's so fly.

Mom says,
Your dad's old school,
like an ol' Chevette.
You're fresh and new,
like a red Corvette.
Your game so sweet, it's a crêpes suzette.
Each time you play
it's ALLLLLLLLLLLLL net.

If anyone else called me
fresh and sweet,
I'd burn mad as a flame.
But I know she's only talking about my game.
See, when I play ball,
I'm on fire.
When I shoot,
I inspire.
The hoop's for sale,
and I'm the buyer.
Foul Shot
by Edwin A. Hoey

With two 60s stuck on the scoreboard
And two seconds hanging on the clock,
The solemn boy in the center of eyes,
Squeezed by silence,
Seeks out the line with his feet,
Soothes his hands along his uniform,
Gently drums the ball against the floor,
Then measures the waiting net,
Raises the ball on his right hand,
Balances it with his left,
Calmes it with fingertips,
Breathes,
Crouches,
Waits,
And then through a stretching of stillness,
Nudges it upwards.

The ball
Slides up and out,
Lands,
Leans,
Wobbles,
Wavers,
Hesitates,
Plays it coy
Until every face begs with unsounding screams--
And then
And then,
Right before ROAR-UP,
Drives down and through.

Caged Bird
BY MAYA ANGELOU

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the
sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn
bright lawn
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave o
dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare
scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are
tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.
ALONE
by Sara Holbrook

Alone
doesn't have to be sad
like a lost-in-the-city dog.

Alone
doesn't have to be scary
like a vampire swirled in fog.

Alone
can be slices of quiet,
salami in between
a month of pushy hallways
and nights too tired to dream.

Alone
doesn't have to be
a scrimmage game with grief.
Alone
doesn't have to argue,
make excuses or compete.
like having nothing due,
sometimes.
Alone
is a relief.

From I Never Said I Wasn't Difficult
Boyds Mills Press
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NO
by Sara Holbrook

When I say I'd rather not
and you try to change my mind,
when I say that I don't want to
and you ask me
one more time...

When you tell me
that I have to
and I start to squint my eyes
in firm determination
and your volume
amplifies...

When you turn your voice to scream
because you think that works,
you're wrong.
I can turn my ears to numb.
Your yelling
makes my stubborn strong.

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ANGRY
by Sara Holbrook

You can't hold me, inside,
angry, angry.
When I'm angry,
angry, angry.
you tried.
There's no comfort in your touching when I'm mad.

anger can't hide.
If you talk to me, I'll fight you.
If you reach for me, I'll bite you,
'cause I'm angry,
'cause I'm angry,
'cause I'm mad.

Though at first it wasn't you,
I was mad,
but not at you,
till you held me, or you tried,
to push my mad aside.

I'm a raging storm
You can't hold me and you tried.
Now I'm angry 'cause

Now I'm angry with an
you can't hold and I
Angry, angry,
angry, angry.
Can't control me,
angry, angry.
You can't hold me
angry, angry.

So don't try.

Hope is the Thing with Feathers
by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.