

## **As the White Dove flies**

By Usha Chatty

The White Dove Flies,  
Eyes widen and the breath gasps,  
The windows opened wide  
As light absorbs and envelopes all  
Time freezes;  
As the White Dove Flies.

The light reaches out  
Touches its wings, all is one  
The microcosm and the universe  
The yin and the yang,  
The spirit and the soul –  
As the White Dove flies.

Then, as the white Dove flies-  
Gradually the darkness pierces  
Shards of glass with jagged edges  
Find their mark with unflinching certainty,  
Tears of red for ebbing blood,  
As the White Dove flies.

The winds surface with vagaries, and  
Life unfolds, in slow, painful phases  
The burden is heavy and the shoulders sag,  
The journey is lonely and rough  
As the White Dove Flies.

Trudging on, now stopping, now falling,  
But always, Always standing up,  
Surer steps and longer strides,  
Hints of maybe changing tides?  
As the White Dove flies.

Now, walking on, firmer on the ground,  
Walking a path that many have found  
Comfort in loss, comfort in pain  
Comfort in standing up once again  
But wait....

Is that a White Dove that flies; or  
A Phoenix rising from the ashes?

## **Clarity Soothes the Loudest Noise**

By John Di Stasio III

Ever since my early childhood, the noise was loud and clear,  
Most times they seemed so distant, at times harmfully near.  
Sometimes they seemed like voices, speaking words I knew were bad,  
At times the noise and voices, made me very, very sad.

As my age crept up in years, the chatter became disturbing,  
There was no slowing down, I knew there was no curbing.  
Most sunny days did catch my eyes and what I saw was rain,  
My flesh was warm, my eyes saw clear, I was caught in emotional pain.

Oh dear Lord, please hear these words, please listen to my plea,  
The struggle and the chaos, are beginning to frighten thee.  
The noises and the voices are getting louder every day,  
Even sometimes when I'm kneeling, and looking up to pray.

Many moons have past I'm older now it's difficult to rest,  
I'm married now, have several kids, and try to do my best.  
Strange thoughts come to my mind, the voices call my name,  
Telling me to do some things, that would make me ashamed.

Almost daily now the simple tasks are difficult to perform,  
Like living as a normal man and wanting to conform.  
My wife may ask me please, to go get milk and bread,  
But the demons tie me down as their playing in my head.

Oh dear Lord, please hear these words, please listen to my plea,  
The struggle and the chaos, are beginning to frighten thee.  
The noises and the voices are getting louder every day,  
Even sometimes when I'm kneeling, and looking up to pray.

Now that bugle blew it's mighty charge, it's time to take control,  
I'm gunning for you now, my general's on a roll.  
He gave me the command, to fight and never quit,  
He told me that my mind is sound and soon you will submit.

Man this battles tough, you're sharp just like a knife,  
Time will set me free, I'm taking back my life.  
The general wrote a script, he sent me new supplies.  
He gave me great advice, and that's to focus on the prize.

Oh dear Lord, you heard my words; you listened to my plea,  
The struggle and the chaos; with your help are gone you see.  
The noises and the voices now come only from the street,  
With your help and my good general, I was able to defeat.

## **Dark Clouds and Rainbows**

By Shirley A. Todd

The days were overcast by dark clouds.  
And the fat shadows of winter's tall trees looked like  
sticks of gray crayons dancing like ghosts upon  
your youth and smiles that were.

So many seasons have come and gone now,  
You missed the blossoms that crowned the dogwood  
trees. Their fading beauty fell upon your face like tears.

Summer nights are no longer lit by the lightening  
bugs that you chased as a child. It's all dark now;  
Even the moon and stars are hidden from sight.

It was autumn again, and the leaves clung  
to the tree branches like an infant to its mother.  
I closed my eyes and I saw your spirit being blown away.  
Tell me! I am dreaming.

Your soul and spirit are my life line too. It was your bouncing  
laughter that picked me up and tossed my spirit to the winds.  
The laughter stopped; and I wrapped myself in melancholy.  
It covered me like a blanket that has no power to warm the soul.

It was late summer – almost autumn again, and your arms  
hung from your frame like branches that were never strong and full  
of life. Like your strength, the leaves withered and kissed the ground.  
Like trees tossed by howling winds, your spirit was broken. The sun  
Fell behind the fat clouds. It is winter now, and you begged  
the long shadows to hold your hands. The first flakes of snow fell softly to  
match your tears. So much has been broken, too much for the mind to heal.

I watched your dancing legs, radiant laughter and sparkling  
eyes bid me goodbye. They are hidden behind winter's dark clouds now.  
Oh! You bounced across the chilled landscape with purpose.  
I think you knew that you were leaving beautiful and graceful imprints behind.  
Rest easy now. Winter is long.

Spring came, and your warm smile melted the misery of winter away.  
I am waiting. I know you will bloom again. Once again, you are ready  
to meet the warmth and beauty of God's gift – bright days and sunny skies.  
It will kiss you full on the lips, and life a charming princess,  
You will come back and stand strong,  
like old trees with deep roots and ancestors that never die, you will dance again!

**Healing Journey** [Second Place]

By Jennifer Freund

Sometime I get this unexplainable feeling,  
Like lying on the ground in the pouring rain  
Feeling cold and empty  
On the verge of tears, unable to cry  
In a place where the sun never shines

Then I realize  
The rain drops could be tears  
Of someone crying somewhere  
And I do not feel so all alone

I look up and see a hand  
Reaching for me  
The rain had stopped  
The sun is out

And I am able to stand  
Knowing that I am not alone  
As I travel through this  
Journey of healing

**I KEPT WALKING [First Place]**

By Jyoti Singh

I kept walking on this lonely path  
All alone, or so I thought  
Sunrises blended into sunsets  
But I could appreciate them not  
Nature lost its colors  
And black was all I sought  
Dark and comforting was my loneliness  
And lonelier was what I got

Then came a day when I wanted to give up  
And no more could I have fought  
You held my hand and still stayed on  
Being silent as silence was what I sought  
You watched with me the sunrises and the sunsets  
Painting away the black with colors that I'd forgot  
And as I walked the lonely path, all alone or so I thought  
You walked right beside me and didn't let me stop...

Your step matched mine as I walked that long lonely night  
You my friend were the comfort in my darkness  
The quiet presence in my solitude  
No you didn't let me stop  
Till I could see the light in the sun and bask in its warmth  
And nature's beauty touched me once more  
Till I could look in the mirror & love what I saw  
Till laughter filled my life and my spirit started to soar

And while you held my hand through that night  
Little did you know, how close I came to giving up...  
On a life less lived, on a promise unfulfilled  
On a future that hadn't given up on me yet  
Your helping hand and loving heart  
Brought me back from the depths of despair  
Stronger than before and with the firm conviction  
That 'I' was worth living and loving...

**Misophonia**

By Maithreyi Ravula

Within us burns a candle,  
Mine glows a pearly white.  
It has been doused a thousand times  
It might not last the night.  
Some glow a fiery color,  
Some glow a passive blue;  
Some said I had no flame at all,  
Although I burned the purest hue.  
I lived inside a house of glass  
People peer within  
"Her candle burns the darkest black,"  
They said. "Whatever was her sin?"  
They jeered and leered and cast a sneer  
I clenched my teeth in might  
They closely watched as I gathered tears  
"That woman has no light."  
But dark must end and dawn must come  
And as I bathed my candle in sun  
Their silence meant a thousand words  
And though I could hear no more,

I won.

**The Hourglass**      **[Third Place]**

By Colleen Wermuth

I stuck a nail in my own coffin cause I forgot to wear my sunglasses at night  
Around here blood isn't thicker than water and the brightest star is a flickering street-light

I took a gamble as a human, ended up as an animal  
Trapped in an asylum party run by sheep with fangs  
In disguise they emptied my body, mind and soul  
Yet my imagination somehow escaped their hunger pangs

And even when I sleep the sweetest dream, I can still hear the serpent's rattle  
Cause the devil needs to slaughter a lamb, and society needs to herd the cattle

But I remember a time when I saw the cosmic turtle, and I didn't view reality as foe  
Nature opened up its doors of splendor to me-of a world free of duality, where your spirit's free  
to grow  
And I accepted all my eccentricities, all my flaws and idiosyncrasies  
Cause every inch and piece and speck of crazy, is without me and within me

Now I walk blindly through the dark forest, but I'm still chasing that feeling-  
The one where even when I fail and stumble, I know that God's love has no ceiling

But for now I'm destined to sit and watch  
As the last few grains of sand fall through  
The hourglass is almost empty  
Unless an angel turns it upside-down...  
Will it be you?

**Unclaimed Freight**  
by Janet Lynn Berkowitz

People are leaving unclaimed freight wherever they go.  
When asked to look and own their shadows, it's a sudden no show.

They call it baggage and deem it bad,  
Hoping it will disappear or they'll go mad.

To them it's a burden, heavy indeed.  
It must be removed like an overgrown weed.

They pray to their God to take it away,  
Before their ego starts to snap and fray.

Anger's the bad guy, sadness leaves you weak.  
Fear must be avoided, while shame's just so bleak.

Yes, feelings do mask the Love living in the heart.  
Yet until we embrace them, they will rip us apart.

Treat them like treasure, with a message from Spirit.  
Commit to the process, slow down and hear it.

I say that message is get back to Love.  
Notice the angels caring from above.

Become the solution that you want to see.  
Know that all the answers are stored within thee.

There's no wrong or right and nothing to judge.  
You're fooling yourself when you hold a grudge.

I'm not saying don't have your feelings, oh no.  
Notice them, embrace them, let them flow.

Claim that baggage, claim it as your own.  
Discover it's lesson, teach what you've been shown.

Make communication clean and accountable.  
So the human race won't live in separation, fracture or wobble.

Unclaimed freight will be a thing of the past.  
We will fear not our feelings, wouldn't that be a blast?

## **Untitled**

By Steven Kotopoulos

How long has it been since I've fallen in here,  
this gaping chasm that muffles my screams?  
It grows ever larger and feeds off my fear,  
while it slowly dissolves my hopes and dreams.

It seems that no matter how far I can climb,  
just one slip and I'm back in the pit where I started.  
I'm starting to think it's a waste of my time,  
and I feel like this place has left me fainthearted.

I start hearing whispers, they're subtle at first,  
they tell me escaping this place can't be done.  
I keep telling myself I won't be coerced,  
but these maddening whispers have only begun.

They gnaw at my mind, I can barely relax,  
the whispers have turned into screams in my head.  
How long can I stand these ceaseless attacks,  
before my will to go on has been torn to shreds?

One thing is certain, I need to break free  
and escape from this torment once and for all.  
But how can I climb when I barely can see?  
The path laid before me I can only crawl.

I'm climbing so slowly it feels like forever,  
every part of me aches and wants to give in.  
But each time I move forward in my endeavor,  
The whispers turn ever more quiet within.

Nearing the end now, the light shining through,  
I look round and see what the darkness was hiding.  
So many others, the same goal to pursue,  
and those at the top, in whom they're confiding.

I've never been truly alone in this place,  
only blind to the help that's always been there.  
If I just reach out my hand, I can find grace  
to help me escape from this pit of despair.

If you've found this note, it means I've survived  
that abyss of darkness and fear unending.  
I only hope this will serve as a guide  
for your journey along the path ascending.

**Untitled**

By Shanna Milligan

Where does this journey  
Of recovery begin  
It's when you've been knocked down  
But you get back up again

You do your best  
To hold on to hope  
You use the skills you've learned  
To do your best to cope

You use the strengths  
You hold inside  
And thank the Lord  
You haven't died

Throughout the years  
You've overcome  
And to this illness  
Did not succumb

You've fought depression  
Mania and anxiety  
And somehow made it through  
Even when they wondered  
What was wrong with you

But standing strong  
On faith you did surprise  
When like a Phoenix  
From the ashes you did rise