

A Slice of Life

a selection of poems
by Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper

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Biography



Living in Portland, Oregon, married with four children and six grandchildren, Sharon is a member of the Friends of the Oregon Symphony, Phenomenal Women of the Web and very much a today's woman. An astrological Leo, this lady thrives on poetry and music.

My thanks to my family and friends who have encouraged me in my writing efforts. Without them, *A Slice Of Life* wouldn't have gotten off the ground.

I leave my work as a legacy for my children and grandchildren. Be who you can be.
Reach for the stars.

Within each writer burns the fire of creation, a need to put feelings, thoughts, and dreams into words. I've written to touch your heart and awaken your mind, poems like dreams of love and death and life, with a touch of the sensual.

I find poets to be the consummate travelers. In this book, I reflect on my journey, through facets as diverse as the world I seek to traverse, search through the agony of relationship, look amongst the voices of protest, climb a mountain, seek meditation, or follow a mysterious voice along the way. One poem seems to lead through one journey to another. The imagery expressed in these poems connects, despite diversity, like hidden roots surprising us with a varied bouquet. Enjoy its heady aroma and join me on my journey in search of meaning.

Acknowledgements

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The Flaneur: Thief Of Time, Raindance
The Foliate Oak: Throwaway
The Green Fuse: Desert Sundance
LeZine Poetique: Earthbound
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Tryst Poetry Journal: Migrant Mother
Verse Libra Quarterly: Glass Sunflowers
Westlovian Gazette: Raindance, Tears In The Rain, Champagne Dreams
Wicked Alice: Imp Of The Elements

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If you were born without wings, do nothing to prevent their growing.

Coco Chanel



Dedication

Rosalee Frances Coskey Rothenfluch

Mentor and Mother, read poetry to me
as a child. Without her showing
the way through her love of poetry,
this book wouldn't have been written.

Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper

Exodus

Woes trigger confusion
and fear in young eyes,
speak volumes
about childhood trauma.

Economy once again
focuses on the needy,
spills unwanted humanity
across the land.

Increased violence
brings a new exodus,
mobs rampage at night
causing security hazards.

The border looms ahead,
refugees mass at the crossing,
sights seen by children
haunt them forever.

Imp Of The Elements

Weeks, lush with fragile days,
spawn an ocean lying in wait.
Breakers claw with puzzling tempo
and churn like an anxious see-saw.

Surface sand ruptures
in ragged seams where
wind licks its salty tongue
forming grooved waves.

Grim cliffs climb starkly
against a bleak sky,
pines twist limbs in contortion,
anticipating the elements.

Dazzled by a sense of empowerment,
this imp of nature crooks her finger,
invites me to mingle, mute with emotion,
as image and smell creeps inland.

Fugue And Fancy

Eerie flickers of harmony
float and sweep
the great hall,
brush around me,
hovering in whispers.

Flutes and oboes
lie, museum-cased,
against the wall;
larger pieces sit upright
in cabinets, waiting.

Sounds swell
and rise as one,
a fluid atmosphere
hums and vibrates,
inspiring faraway melodies.

The Old Masters never vanish,
they are heard
in the dreaming hours,
encore performances
to their genius.

Curved Stairs

Vapored corners in my mind
hover in a dream-state.

In vague relief
the curve appears,
beckons through the shadows,
welcomes my steps.

I waver,
doubt sketches my brow,
fear of the obscure inexplicable,
the rerun terrifying.

Gulps spasm in a dry throat,
drops trickle
down my forehead.
Please - no - not once more,

*the dream angles a smile
in anticipation.*

Epitaph For A Giant

James Dean

Dead at twenty-four,
barely a man, this farm boy
charmed his drama teacher
with winning ways;
just Jimmy, a pal, to his cousin.

Loner - outsider - rebel
for all seasons, this boy's
image refused to die,
remained a sullen,
creative, ambitious myth.

In record time, he changed the way
we thought about film and ourselves.
Now he strides the star-walk of eternity,
views his face on a US stamp for posterity.

Visions

Ideas flare imagination,
stir the artistic expressions
of personality.

On a wire form,
resembling bodily curves,
function is turned
aside in expectation
of the unusual.

An array of fabric and color
fires beauty, drapes and pleats
on a live model, the creative
space for talent.

Invention, a visual game
of artistic endeavor,
ends on the runway
for fashion finale.

Memory Tricks

For the Korean War Veterans, 5th Regimental Combat Team, US Army

Battle gore is gone,
tamped down
into forgetfulness,
kept in its place
by memory tricks.
We reunite
to remember
the humor in hostility;
a patch over wounds
best hidden.

Our long line
has thinned
to just a few,
eyes not as clear,
stride slower,
emotions stronger.
We clasp each other,
glad to have survived
events we can't seem
to quite remember.

Conclusions

I'm a voiceless fountain
ready to spew forth
resplendent reasoning,
fanciful notions,
wondrous calculations.

Parched thoughts
wither in the wind,
an open pit swallows intentions,
sucks tangible views and tangles
webs with incoherence.

Mindless mush, nothing more;
visions pause for another day.

leaves hang all alone
brilliant hues of red and gold
memories are made

Winter Rapture

Feathered flakes
shadow ermine drifts,
wind embellishes
autumn remnants,
erases carbon
in a whirl of wraiths
that strike the air
like a swirl of devils.

Caught in crystal filaments,
fragments murmur their silence
as seraphim whisper in elation
with breathless silent reverie.

Allure lingers in stillness,
shimmering around
a child swaddled in awe.
Innocence heals my hands,
sighs of infant delight

infuse nerve fragments,
transfix memories
with a pulse of dreams.

March To Oblivion

We carry nothing,
have nothing,
expect nothing,

no beginning or end
in the trek to nonexistence,
only constant movement.
One step shuffles, then another,
hopelessness not even
a conscious thought.

Hungry children
follow our pace,
weaken and perish.

Silent shadows
in our minds
grieve their loss,
but escape becomes
our blind purpose.

In the muddle of the deranged,
we advance
towards obscurity.

Metamorphosis

Time's measure erases
the grace of youth,
knees torment, need a bit
of oil to smooth their way.
Skin puckers, inner moisture
a thing remembered; once elastic,
it now sags with abandon.

...but the mind...

swallows knowledge
like a sponge.
It swells each year,
feasts on morsels;
splendid drops
of gleaned learning.

As I soak up these things,
I know how much more
the intellect can consume.
The blotter drinks deeply,
capable of absorbing it all.

Earthbound

Clouds hang low,
olive hues reflect,
frothy curls of seawater
dance on the unspoiled
beach around my feet,
lick my face with salty kisses.

Walls of green assault the shore,
constant interaction
with the atmosphere.
Gulls perform acrobatics
as they swoop low,
dip slender wings in the air.

Raucous cries resound,
a wild cacophony
echoes on the wind.
They seduce me into believing
I could fly free on wings,
catch the roll of waves
with my knees, then...realize
I'm grounded to this surly earth.

Spent Illusions

My inner notes
have been lulled
to a whisper,

the twin flames
that ignited magic,
flicker low.

I remember
exquisite vibrations
filling the corners

of my being.
A mute thief stole
our symphony

and I'm left
with haunting
echoes of the refrain.

Desert Sundance

Heat bombards
this stern land,
bleaches color to triviality,
wilts travelers with intensity.
A different palate
dominates the landscape.
Plants and animals
integrate thoroughly.

Green mesquite veins
and patches of yellow
bloom a desert portrait
with sage surprise. Monoliths
mingle in sandy desolation,
hover over the shriveled scrub.
Dust puffs rise, wind scours
our sensitive eyes.

A graceful arch pierces the rock,
forms a picture window.
Framed in stone, backlit
by the dipping sun, faint flashes
cast mango highlights
on the burnt earth. Shadows shift,
another world emerges at twilight,
a mirage in the moonlight.

Life Cut Short

I've a grandchild in the heavens
that I didn't get to know,
life cut short by those around him,
never had a chance to grow.

So I'll meet you when I get there,
little one who breathed no air,
then I'll rock you back and forth
with a Grandma's loving care.

warmth seeps slowly past
nature's subtle voice beckons
summer finale

Migrant Mother

We come in droves,
voices eager, bodies willing,
parent's graves left behind.

Climate calls,
extended seasons
with crop diversity
and staggered cycles beckon,
a utopia of wealth
this munificent land.

Harvest travelers,
we uproot constantly,
pray each move will be better.

We all labor,
money never stretches
to support ourselves.
Meager food, tattered coverings,
irrigation ditch sanitation;
our children sicken.

Square box for a shack,
level roof with one door and window
makes the inside heat unbearable.

We sing when we aren't too weary,
drink to swamp fatigue.
My brow is drawn before its time,
bitterness drags at my mouth.
I consider my life of misery,
the taste of bile harsh on my tongue.

Children have tragic eyes,
baby nuzzles at a shriveled breast,
whimpers in need.

I mull words meant to fire my spirit;
*I will not accept riches
and sacrifice the rape of my soul.*
Whoever said that
spoke with a full belly
and hope for a future.

Tracks

Slashes ravage
nature's attributes,
criss-cross the landscape
with rusted iron,

hodgepodge patterns
of tangled circuits.

Random confusion
spreads like a canker,
it crowds creation,
sanctions snarled disorder.

Technology's revolution
leaves brazen footprints.

Attitude

Some people grow old
and die old.
Others, grow old
and die young.

Clone

Sparkle your way
into the big city,
Holly look-a-like,
grab a slice of the good life,
if only for a time.

Go lightly into Tiffany's world
in your couture gown
and elbow length gloves.
Sweep away the angst
with feathers escaping
from your Lily Dache hat,
absorb the smell of Chanel,
eelskin and money.

Quiet and proud it stands,
a visit calms better
than a lude, drink or joint.
Dream about the high fashion world,
then peel away the mask
to find your true self.

spray down rocky face
forms a splendid waterfall
viewed in milky haze

Bridgework

Feet grapple for a foothold;
a high-wire walker
groping my way
across corporate bridgework
to snatch the next rung.

Choices find me holding
steel cables, a human skyscraper,
erect one day, poised precariously
the next, or, lying down on the job,
ready to fall into oblivion.

My mind is stuffed with clutter;
clients blur into oneness
until I hang by my fingertips.
Tenuous grip slips further
with each determined day.

No one to toss me a life
preserver, but there's always
someone prepared to push me down,
grab for my ring of success.
Fate raises her capricious hand.

Eternal Strength

Wind drifts over blazing sand,
etching patterns everywhere.
Harsh this land for weary travelers
underneath the scorching glare.

Flowers delicate, cactus rugged,
extremes are there for us to see.
Stark the scenery - stern - severe,
eternal strength and majesty.

After Hour Blues

Smoke, stale and heavy,
veils the light under
a low-slung ceiling.
Stances are relaxed,
paying customers drift away.

Collar buttons hang on shirts
dampened with sweat,
lazy horns wail,
soft and saccharine,
the kind of music

that languidly pours
from private places;
loose, unrehearsed,
rarely heard by others.
Wee-hour music,

a style that is felt, flows,
then seldom plays again.
Opportunity lingers,
soon swallowed
by the moment.

The Ache Of Autumn

Air changes suddenly,
warmth bleeds from the day,
bit by bit, crispness creeps
in lengthened shadows.

Leafy masses spill
gold, wine and flame
into the lake, disturbing
its perfect reflection.

Sunset grows more fiery;
bright poetry in the sky.

Blue Fog

Shadows waver,
float across my vision.
Slow motion figures
have voice-muted
whispers in the haze.

Tangled reflections
are strewn like blue fog,
scattered fragments
drift – blurred,
lost in the throng.

Marked by wispy fingers,
an ethereal time
soothes mental confusion,
calms my trifling thoughts
with Camelot reverie.

Throwaway

Blossoms rise on bruised legs.
A child of circumstance
rubs blackened eyes with tight fists
to scour away blistering streams.

Dejected and dirty,
emotional hurts continue
to throb, tear hopelessly
at society's bastard child.

Innocence violated,
he faces a resigned future.
Silent cries foreshadow
the death of childhood.

Christmas Angel

Gossamer gown and gilded wings
match her burnished hair.
She carefully ponders
the gift she has to share.

This baby must have
a unique contribution,
thoughtfully presented,
for His special day.

Gently she opens the pearl
and gold mesh cover on the bag,
releases the laughter
of the children of the world.

Life Restored

Come, bring me your
shadowed, shattered dreams.
Seek my warmth
and draw away restored.

Perpetual Motion

I squat in the sand at the edge
of the mysterious sea,
breakers curve and surge
with blue-green clarity;
a sweetness of transparency.
Waves form around rocks
as twilight and fog
form a blur at the edge
of water and stone.

Pelicans plunge
into the choppy surf
hunting their dinner.
Currents of air
catch the spray,
whispering my name.

Sharp scent of sand
and evergreen needles
greet my senses,
from stubbled ridges,
as trees crouch low
against the cutting wind;
a marriage of ocean,
rock and pine.

Cinquain

Quiet
settles on land
promises the moonglow
a sweet escape from life's pressures
Light fails

Epiphany In Concrete

Rubble screams,
stained and shattered,
shipped away
to parts unknown;
constructs new foundations.

Restless ghosts haunt the structures
with painful memories,
determined clamors heard
until retribution
calms their cries.

Bands of time
crack future's window
to exhibit a vigorous city restored.
Haunts are laid to rest,
appeased in silence.

A dot in the universe
sleeps with a watchful eye.

Sadness

I ache. I ache so bad
that sadness fills my world.
He yells and screams,
no thought of words he's hurled.
I walk away, the tears
drown out my soul.
A wife I am,
but I don't feel the role.

I hide away within
my room you see,
the only way
to save my sanity.
Communicate? He doesn't
know the word,
won't listen
to a single thing he's heard.

I'm losing it,
each day the pain is more.
In feeling this,
what good is marriage for?
To turn for help
is not the answer now.
What can I do,
more to the point is how?

The Memory Box

I'd like to keep summer
locked forever in a special box
full of freshly mown hay,
glossy wings,
fragrant petals,

a deserted eggshell that held
the promise of continuance,

bottle the smell
that's uniquely its own,
cherish evening hours
of kindred pleasure,
enjoy BBQ aroma,

relish breakfast surrounded
by delicate zephyrs.

I cling tenaciously
to particular
portions of time,
hold them greedily
in memory.

Cold Ashes

Creative themes
well-up
to birth inspiration.

Parched thoughts
wither in the wind...
open-mouthed intentions
swallow tangled words.

Notions freeze
inexplicably; visions
pause for another day.

Appalachia

Retreat to the misty hills,
follow worn footpaths
atop a windblown summit,
walk the beaten tracks,
sample the floral richness.

From mile high eminence
I view the surrounding countryside
through a milky watered haze.
Mountains stretch to infinity,
one piled on another.

There is surreal beauty
in everything I see.
Behold creation's
splendid wonder,
a stage for raw emotions.

Green Tomato World

Indifferent stone chambers
support savage hearts
fired with greed
in a green tomato world.

Worms crawl, eat their way
through the core of a country,
devastate conscience,
hide ill-gotten gain.

Cooked-books open;
truth trickles from broken spines,
lays rotten on the vine,
withered at our feet.

bright to dull they change
brand new patterns come to play
day soon disappears

Epiphany Of Hope

You stand towering
against the nightscape,
lift a lighted torch
to fuse exploding skies,
ignite the world with vision,
your luminous crown
gives out steady welcome;
a beacon for the weary.

Silhouetted in blue,
depths hidden in indigo,
hold out your palm
and extend democracy,
offer principles and prosperity
to seekers dreaming of a chance
to blossom in freedom.

Lady – you represent hope,
symbolize a new start,
boldly promise shelter
for the crushed.
Sky-fire celebrations
offer a fresh beginning.

Enchantress

Fluid music, floats and haunts,
voice entices, beckons
with a powerful potion
to the unwary.

Come and join me,
I'll give you ecstasy
with restraint
for eternal seasons.

Pleasure nods sensuously,
offers transport to rapture.
Menace hovers, arousal
drowns prudence.

I press forward with haste,
die with anticipation
on my lips, sweet sirens' song
ringing in my ears.

Grieving Loss

Brave men, committed to their ideals,
plunge planes into buildings
in Washington and Manhattan,
killing many thousands,
including themselves.

Brave men, committed to ideals,
plunge a plane into a deserted field
near Philadelphia, carry out
a deliberate action to save lives,
lose their own, and die heroes.

All these brave men believed
their cause righteous.

Cowards hide in caves and councils,
direct others to do their evil work
in the name of Allah.
Muslims turn faces away
from men who slaughter in His name.

The world community mourns
the loss of life in the name of God,
Budda, Allah; all one in their sameness.
A grieving God watches his children
destroy each other – and weeps.

Freedom Of The Windrider

Explore heroism with me
beyond the stars, a unique vision
of an indefinite future.

Bound by a knot of tradition
I ride my steed across time
and space, journey to confrontation.

Signals herald a battle of the Blades,
I challenge the elite,
using powers beyond measure.

Braided ropes of hair hold strands
from eyes, sorcery seizes them
securely. I ride with self-reliance.

Dark magic rules this realm.
My destiny, to overwhelm, free my subjects,
throw off these mystic chains.

Star Walk

A serene voice summons,
it's time, follow me.

My wearied body lies wasted,
Its spirit ascends joyfully
Impatient for a new life;
promises beyond mortality.

I grasp the offered hand,
tender farewell
to earthly labor,
journey to faraway splendor,

fade in swirled mist,
swallowed by destiny.

bright colored patterns
dappled light on paving stones
shifting in the sun

Mood Magic

Cocoa simmers on the stove,
comfort teases my nose,
lips anticipate the taste
of the peppermint-stick stirrer.

Wind-torn branches
thrash against the pane,
make scratchy noises
like tomcat claws.

Leaf-stuffed gutters
tumble water with a rush,
hiss down, play drum rolls
on garbage can lids.
Tufts of grass dance
bravely in the breeze,
whomp along like wave
in a wild Flamenco.

Ominous creaks grate
as I tuck my toes
deeper into the coverlet;
hot chocolate works its magic.

Mind Wanderer

Footsteps pause
as one foot lifts
then reluctantly
moves forward.

My thoughts stray,
caught in the vast
network of nerves,
lost in a maze of impulses.
Distractions short-circuit
the simplest reflections,
distort the obvious
out of proportion.

Overworked brain cells
take a recess,
in sync only
with my faltering feet.

Bleak House

Moment by moment,
year by year,
I'm dying.
Skin turns gray,
flakes and peels,
sluffs off in the breeze.
Back porch sags with age,
spine curved and twisted.

Soughing wind
blows my shingles on end
like stubborn cowlicks.
Ancient afflictions
creak in unison.
These windows,
faded with film,
see little through
the clouds of age,
view my condition
with finality.

My existence
bends towards
its bleak end.

Hourglass

In heaven's arch, a mango moon
is enclosed in aquamarine.
Smudged stars gain myopic size,
reflect the lunar ring,

a futuristic view
where time tumbles,
hastens forward,
slips sideways, then reverses.

What will the cosmos
view next, when
the hourglass empties
the dust of my existence,
a review of the past
or preview of a parallel destiny?

Descent Into Limbo

There's a deep place inside
my mind that claws brutally,
steals my very essence,
drags away, then buries joy.

In spite of intentions,
I protect myself in darkness,
wallow in weakness,
somersault further into depression.

Totally withdrawn,
I retreat in fetal position;
lack of direction
carries me towards oblivion.

Hidden from loved ones,
separated and removed,
I drift in pathetic nothingness,
not *caring*, never wanting,
just *being*; an existence
trapped in lifeless limbo.

Pinwheels

I stare mesmerized
into the undiscovered layers
of the universe...constant
flickers emanate outward.

Pinwheel sparks breathe in orbit,
send flares of transitory light,
traverse the system in skewed
paths toward the unknown.

Time has no framework.
Undetermined durations
drift through eons
of celestial explosions.

My life – a *blink*
in the scheme of stars.

Broken Halo

Her cold bed lies in a perpetual
row of voiceless graves.
Years spun their days,
observed her silently as she grew.

Paper dolls watch
this anguished burden
unravel in my hands
as it saps away my courage.

Haunted eyes stare unseeing,
dry hollows that have
burned away my tears;
thumbnails bitten to the nub.

Where was her guardian angel
when I appealed to her?
This broken halo lays across my lap,
lost symbol of divine influence.

Thief Of Time

Time tiptoes, slinks silently.
I yearn to hold him suspended,
lasso this fleet fellow
as he unfolds transparent wings,
steals my golden minutes.

Foot poised in mid-air, narrowed
eyes glance over his shoulder,
mouth smirks a knowing smile,
catch me if you can.
Wall clock ticks with steady monotone.

I walk, he runs,
I race, he flies. Intervals pass
in a whirl, catch-up impossible.
These significant moments
slip through my grasp forever.

Intangible Perception

I stare unseeing,
draped in the scenery
of stark memories
best forgotten,
skin pallored
by overwhelming grief
that tosses restraint
like thistle-down.

Vacant eyes drop damp petals,
control abandoned
in blue-white anguish.
Chained – addicted to panic
and fear – my life's textures
ground to bits of gray.

Scratched surface
of my being
is forever damaged
by broken courage.
I struggle for direction,
step hesitantly towards survival,
press my control button.
Tangled threads restored...for now.

Raindance

She strides confidently,
forehead angled to receive
damp falling mist.

Whimsical air shatters,
rhythmic sound washes over her.
Rain speaks in enchanted dialects,
beads her pony tail
with gentle insistence,
settles on sooty lashes.

Sweet-water showers
moisten her warm lips,
coax a questing tongue.
Spiked branches are adorned
with bits of magic,
leaves tattooed with liquid luster.

Puddles flow into
a stream of chocolate,
braid gravel channels,
spill willy-nilly into
the river, merrily ripple
in blended hue.

Fresh-faced laughter
bubbles upward as she
experiences nature's cleansing.

Game Decision

I rub my forehead,
chew my lip,
run fingers through my hair,
drum nails on the table,
cross and uncross my legs.
Think...make up a meaning,
hurry, hourglass empties quickly.

Foogle what, foogle when, where, who?
Who? Maybe who. Dr. Seuss character.
Nah, too predictable.
What? Musical instrument. A horn;
not sure if that's how it's spelled.

This silly game is driving me crazy.
Others are finished writing. Duh.
Oh well, here goes,
A brace on the stand of a xylophone.
How perfect!

Midnight Mistress

Past midnight, her tap
awakens dream's reality,
the paper race begins.

She brushes my shoulder,
whispers inspiration,
directs palm to pen.

Snatches shape,
thready skeletons rise,
grasp and fashion fancy.

We blend harmoniously,
words of wonder
mold a miracle.

Big Blue

Alive with electricity,
she crackles with animation,
spins slowly, guides movement
with dark and light cycles
around her energy source.

Earth, a blue beauty
moves majestically
among siblings in the sky.

Gut Wrench

I'm not a football fanatic,
you know the kind;
screamer, stomper, swearer,
would-be jock reliving his youth,

but...

I am a gambler;
you know the kind; win or lose,
eyes light up with excitement,
the possibility of success.

With the new year
out pops my compulsion.
Be lucky, score this quarter,
put money where your mouth is.

I watch the points avidly, not the game,
numbers burn a hole in my pocket,
waiting burns a hole in my gut.
It's a long four quarters.

Gray Lady

I drape sorrow,
create a protective shield.
Melancholy eyes squeeze,
lips bow dispiritedly.

Beneath my feet, an icy sheet,
the headstone glazed.

Mom's final fear,
forever rests in the cold.
Her only request,
a warm place,
a small plea
from a heroic lady.

I reflect on her need,
live with regret
for failing her wishes.
The church can be a callous father.

(The Catholic Church has since changed its rules on cremation)

Phantasm

Inherent power spins our universe,
springs forth with fervor,
circles ever faster,
eats time in huge mouthfuls.

Destiny hastens, now at hand,
then fades into yesterday.

Time marches, keen-eyed,
reviews the past
survives the present
fabricates the future.

Cosmic particles,
animated with intensity,
swirl their energy with ours,
press forward...eagerly,

lift our existence
towards the unknown.

Tears In The Rain

Slippery cheeks shine
in arc light. Sobs flutter
like frightened birds,
start and struggle
as emotions throb.

Breast swells then collapses,
solemn sighs echo sorrow.
Stripped of complexity
I hone in on your words,
candid, flying at me like painful darts.

I search this moment deeply,
offer my whispered gift,

freedom,

as the wind
carries your farewell.