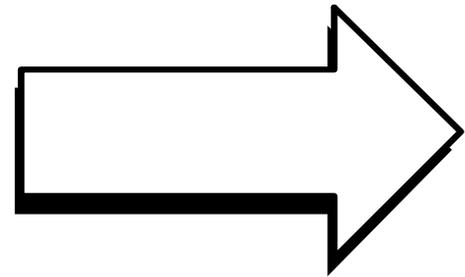


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## On Quarks and Quirks

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*"There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." - Albert Einstein*

When stardust, quarks, and mystery combine  
to make a human, nothing can compare  
to possibilities. Some say beware  
of ultimate betrayal to confine  
the breath of life where tangled roots entwine  
with evolution. I can only stare  
in utter wonder, blinded by the glare  
of dazzling supernatural design.

For wedged between the elemental ash  
and sentient entity, surprises lurk  
in hidden crevices of every hue  
across the spectral plane, and in a flash  
all heaven is exposed. It's but a quirk  
the miracle of promise can renew.

## Beyond the Veil

---



Beyond the mist, a veil adorned a bride  
whose brimming eyes were mirrors of her pride  
in him. Reflection from a golden band  
could not outshine the future that was planned  
together; they were wholly unified.

Because he was an anchor, rock, and guide  
who cherished her, she'd happily abide  
within his shadow on a sunlit strand  
beyond the misty vale.

Their bond was never tested or denied  
for sixty-seven years, and when he died,  
her life was over too, its spark unfanned.  
In language age-old lovers understand,  
he whispers to her from the other side,  
beyond the mystic veil.

## Introduction

*My interest in writing original poetry may ebb and flow, but I never tire of seeking, studying, sharing, and discussing the subject, considering myself extremely fortunate in finding circles of online friends and family-by-choice to keep that appetite fed since 1995. Despite an occasional personal creative surge, I am usually more inspired to showcase the talents of others through my multi-site web domain, [poetscollective.org](http://poetscollective.org), or anthologies from PoCo Publications.*

*To Jean Walton, one of my few living dear ones who has known, loved, and encouraged me by all my names, I hereby dedicate this nostalgic little friends-and-family chapbook recounting moments real and imagined, because she asked for it.*

*-Mary  
January, 2023*

## One

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I am your wife, unwavering  
mate  
mirror  
witness  
and welcome home.

This door is not the destination;  
it is the journey  
that begins anew  
with each re-entry  
from rock-strewn paths  
and ecstatic escapades  
that bring us mindfully  
into the Gift of Presence.

You are the air I breathe  
in the unrelenting  
Realm of Reason  
where metaphor melds  
with matter  
for I can be neither  
better half nor weake

My mama's laugh, her stylish bangs  
(like Mamie Eisenhower's),  
the way I learned to cook and sew  
by watching her, the flowers  
I counted on the bedroom wall,  
the smell of line-dried sheets,  
the poodle skirts, the hula hoops,  
and soda fountain treats.

The 1950s musicals  
where folks burst out in song  
and dance right in the middle  
of a dialogue, the strong  
and rugged, square-jawed heroes  
of The West whose sense of right  
was always unmistakable  
because their hats were white.

As simple things contributed  
to who I would become,  
a gentle rhythm underscored  
each breath. (ta-DUM ta-DUM)  
If everyone conversed in  
metered rhyme, like me, I'd think  
I'd died and gone to heaven.  
Here, I'm resting on the brink.

## Nostalgic in Advance

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Examining a single shoe  
(as packrats are inclined to do)  
I acted somewhat surreptitiously  
and stuffed it in a dresser drawer  
lest anyone should ask, "What for?"  
and chortle at my eccentricity.

I contemplate my daughter's son  
whose foot had filled the other one;  
he's snuggled in my lap as if immune  
to loss. Perhaps in future days  
some stories of his toddler phase  
will entertain him for an afternoon.

Eclectic treasures — things to wear,  
a tiny tooth, a lock of hair —  
are stored in preparation to ignite  
these ever-changing memories  
from "Yee-ha horsie!" on my knees  
to "Look, GranMary, did I do it right?"

Too soon he'll learn to tie his own  
shoelaces; pathways unbeknown  
to former generations will be braved.  
But should it ever cross his mind,  
"Do you remember me?" he'll find  
an answer in the little things I've saved.

## Family Labor of Love

---

With hammer, saw, and simple plans,  
our daddy brought the skillful hands  
to build a cabin in her pride  
plus all the furniture inside.

Our mama had a role to fill  
in hauling lumber up the hill  
as she and Uncle Buddy rode  
on back to anchor down the load.

Once, perched atop the pickup bed  
while Daddy drove full-speed ahead,  
the boards slid off and so did they —  
haphazard surfing all the way.

With many hands, all work is light.  
When time arrived to clear the site  
of lumber scraps and small debris,  
they all pitched in; not so with me.

For Daddy said that none of us  
must help unwillingly, and thus  
I once invoked the right to shirk  
my contribution to the work.

But seated on a log I squirmed  
as, soon thereafter, conscience burned.  
I heaved a sigh and pursed my lips,  
then joined the crew to pick up chips.

## Caveat Emptor

I remember the moment a package was brought  
and the words the delivery man said.  
Though he carried the treasure I'd eagerly sought,  
his advice went way over my head.

"Sorry lady," he said, "but I'm only consigned  
to deliver it into your care.  
Now it's fit for the purpose for which it's designed  
and, with maintenance, won't need repair."

"But as for the way it will work, don't ask me,  
for that isn't my job to explain.  
You received what you ordered, but no guarantee  
that it won't give you cause to complain."

So of course I accepted the package "as is"  
for I wouldn't have thought to do other,  
not knowing that only experience gives  
true claim to the title of Mother.

I would wager no woman who's ever been blessed  
with a heart full of love for a child  
was completely prepared for the ultimate test  
of going beyond the last mile.

But I also suspect almost anyone could  
successfully hurdle obstructions  
and rise to the challenge of good parenthood . . .  
if children just came with instructions.

"Tradition, humph — the bottom line:  
You earned it, preacher. Pay the fine."

~ ~ ~

It was a new millennium.  
A couple celebrated  
their golden anniversary.  
A trip was due; they made it.

Rejoicing in the fellowship,  
like beans with macaroni,  
they thanked the man who'd joined the two  
in holy matrimony.  
The erstwhile groom, a preacher too,  
proposed a toast. (He'd planned it  
for fifty years.) "Now listen up,"  
he winked. "you'll understand it."

"I offered money once," he said,  
"for services well rendered —  
ten dollars, half of what we had.  
You turned around and tendered  
it back to her." (The woman's eyes  
were misty.) "We still owe it  
with compound interest due, so here's  
a hundred bucks. Don't blow it."

A proud tradition needn't stop.  
You've earned it, preacher. Reap your crop.

## Passing Through

*"We're all just walking each other home." -Ram Dass*

We are fashioned of stardust and moonbeams,  
with each particle numbered and weighed  
in the heart of Creation's unwavering flow  
where the substance of everything's made.

Then we're hurtled unborn through the cosmos  
to be nurtured and challenged and taught,  
with our origin mostly forgotten except  
when ethereal whispers are caught.

We experience natural beauty  
tinged with sorrow and pain as we burn  
with unquenchable passion for clues to explain  
our existence. We long to return.

But that glorious lightness of being  
in the lap of eternity's source,  
is reserved for escape from the passage of time  
with a watchful, benevolent force.

## Second Grade School Play



In the purchase of Louisiana  
Davy Crockett played second banana  
to Lewis & Clark  
but his fame lit a spark  
in American history's arcana.

I was cast in the pivotal role  
because I had the cap. Then some mole  
came and rifled my desk  
when we went to recess  
and the theft left a wound on my soul.