

**resistance** /ri'

(earlier † *résiste*  
*resistent-* pres. p.

**to** /tʊ, tuː, unstre

bef. a vowel (*arch*  
(mainly w. dat.)

**love** /lʌv/ n. [OE

Goth. (*brōþru*) lu  
wk grade of base

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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n of *resistere* RESIST v.: see  
] 1 a The action or an act  
or withstanding Follow by

# RESISTANCE TO LOVE

A WCC Anthology Edited by Tom Zimmerman

## Contents

Maryam Barrie	Abortion 1983	4
	Late January Snow Dump	6
Robin Bodenham	Two Haiku	7
Amanda Bone	The \$25,000 Egg	8
Meg Bowman	Haiku ("The creak of my bones")	9
Carolyn Crane	After the Game	10
Alva Fisher	Atropa belladonna	11
	M.T.F (Father)	12
Esta Grossman	Unanswered	13
Jessica Hale	<i>Resistance and Love</i>	14
Amy Higgins	Dearest Fred,	15
Jake Ingham	Life Among the Living	17
James Kalafus	Three Haiku	18
Diane M. Laboda	Love	19
	Stop Still	20
	Thoughts of Love	22
	The Unfinished Child	23
	What Will We Do with This Love?	24
Daniel W. Long	January Haiku	25
	My Lexicon	26
	Ninety-Nine to One	27
Jane Louise	A Chance.	29
Mona Moorman	The Cleaning Lady	30
	Memorial Sighs	32
Ayowole Oladeji	Love Embodies Resistance	33
Sarah Roland	The Cursed Old House	34
Sarah Smith	Haiku(s): No Room for Deceit	36
	Here to Stay	37
	The Piece That is Resistant to Love	38
	Sonnet: No Longer Afraid	39
Ryan Stubbs	Haiku ("Pepperoni mom")	40
Willow Symonds	Medusa, My Love	41
Yolanda E. Walker	The Genetics of Pain	42
	Love Spell	43
Marion Watson	Skin Deep	45
Susan White	My Dear Heart	47
Tom Zimmerman	I Met Her at a Protest March	48
	Peace Will Not Happen in My Life	49

# MARYAM BARRIE

---

## Abortion 1983

When I told my brother I was pregnant,  
he asked *Why did you do a dumb thing like that?*

I was lonely. He was tall and dark.  
At first, I thought him mysterious.

It happened the first time,  
a day before I got my cervical cap.

He wouldn't wear a condom;  
didn't like the way it felt.

Driving back from a comedy  
club in Detroit, I asked if he had ever

stayed at a motel with a woman.  
*That's none of your business.*

His own comedy act, in every iteration,  
was mostly mean ugly girlfriend jokes.

The kind suggesting a drum roll at  
the punchline, before the strippers dance.

When I saw the pink plus sign  
on the test strip, I became enlightened.

I knew the babe would have been a son.  
I loved that boy. I couldn't let this man be

father to any child of mine – anyone could see his indifference from a long way off.

I knew I burned to be a mother – that this would-be child would not be.

I felt the immense busyness of buzzing cells multiplying and dividing low in my groin.

My girlfriend took me to Planned Parenthood – I had taken her to her abortion the year before.

Crying in the shower before and after, I heard my dead grandfather croon

*the baby's soul will be okay,  
you will be okay,*

*you will get to be a mother.* I was still crying a year later in the arms of the man

who would father my girls. He gentled his hands on either side of my face,

rested his forehead on mine, whispered, *this is my favorite face in all the world.*

n. J. I that state of feeling with a person which manifests itself in con-  
self-re-pleasure in his or h

# MARYAM BARRIE

---

## Late January Snow Dump

I welcome the seasonally appropriate weather –  
tell myself everything will be okay.

I know it is a lie, but I still like hearing it.  
Just the way I like thinking *kindness matters*,

*science is real, love is the greatest power.*  
It might look different were I in Iran,

or Afghanistan, or if I were a black man in our country.  
History always tells a story about privilege.

In Florida, a law makes it illegal for schools  
and businesses to offer instruction that might

cause white folk *discomfort* about their race.  
I still love waking to the snow that finally

made it to southeastern Michigan. Brilliant  
flashes sparkle through the forest as if

diamonds were woven into the drifts. Light  
dances through white dusted trees. The oaks

and maples on my drive to work sing to me.  
In their sleep, they bear the snow as a blessing.

And then I see the woman who stands each morning  
at the edge of the freeway exit, bearing her cardboard

sign. She may be younger than me, but her face wears  
more trouble than I could imagine in twenty lifetimes.

She stands there for hours, in a seasonally appropriate  
coat. She doesn't even glance my way –

she knows I will give her nothing but my attention.  
It is a far journey from my home to this place.

# ROBIN BODENHAM

---

My pen is magic,  
Worlds created on a whim.  
Paper galaxies.

\*\*\*

Winter arrives late.  
My emotions lie dormant.  
Black wings dot the sky.

# AMANDA BONE

---

The \$25,000 Egg

I wrote you a letter on the day you were conceived.  
In a dark quiet laboratory you grew.  
I wanted to meet you so badly I hurt.

On the day we came together  
your Father looked at me with hope in his eyes.  
I wept as you quietly suffocated inside of me.

Now I bleed our future dreams  
in money and tears.  
Day in and day out,  
a shell of the woman I once was;  
when I was filled with vile hope.

My body has always let me down.  
Why should I love it?  
It answers every call with cruelty and punishment.

They tell me there is a grieving process.  
They tell me it gets better.  
They go home to their families.  
They know nothing.



# MEG BOWMAN

---

The creak of my bones  
Whisper stories of my past –  
Tales of innocence

## After The Game

At the table Mama brings him milk toast.  
Steamy lactose floods my nostrils as Dad  
inhales hot globby bread—post game ambrosia.  
Mama waits in the shadows to bring another  
helping. I perch in the corner hearing him talk,  
itemize the highlights: how my brother showed.  
“Should’ve had six more, didn’t watch the block.”  
He stoops to glut the bottom of his bowl.

Our mutt, old from begging, sits up against the wall.  
My dad slurps, not bothered by her lack of pride.  
She leans, senile statue, until I call,  
“This time won’t be different!” She turns aside.  
Softly Mama asks, “What honey?” I shrink  
away. She turns to tackle dishes in the sink.

# ALVA FISHER

---

## Atropa belladonna

Hair of flame and venom lips  
A small taste of poison's kiss  
Eyes like coal without a soul  
Where the blade touches red pools  
Held my life within two hands  
But ran at my final stand

# ALVA FISHER

---

## M.T.F (Father)

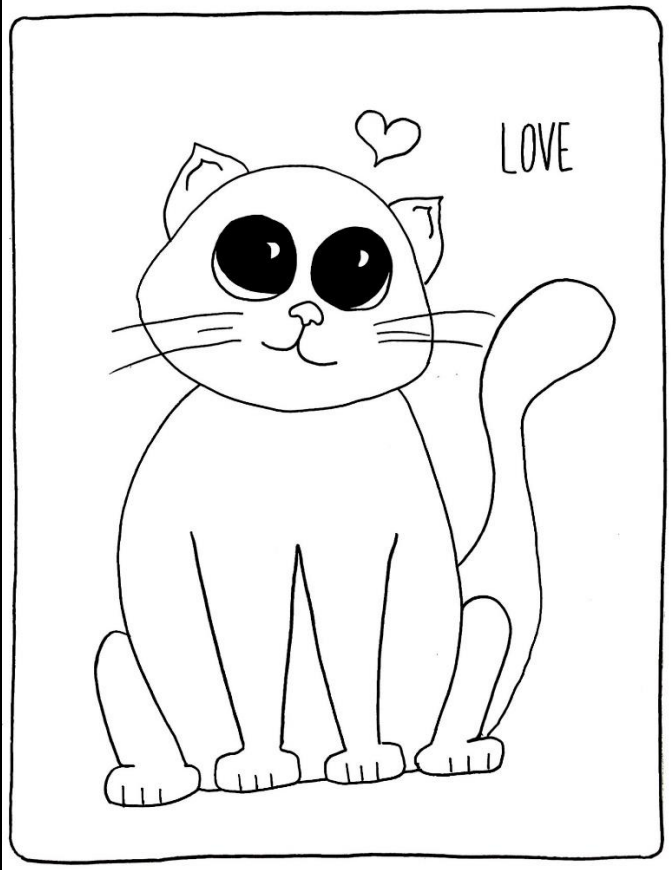
A man I knew planted a seed  
But even a flower can be a weed  
One root turns to many  
The leaves start to multiply and creep  
Creep into the perfect foundation of a family home  
Between the brick and mortar of lies  
he tells himself to feel at ease

## Unanswered

Phone sits there,  
a flat metal rectangle  
with bright red, trauma-proof cover.  
Alone, silent.  
Young teen sits nearby.  
Alone, silent.  
She stares at the red object,  
hopes for some ring,  
some signal of interest  
from the boy who sits  
one row down  
in Algebra class,  
the one with blond curly hair,  
long legs, freckled face,  
who doodles in math class, lost.  
She slipped him a note,  
her number, an offer to help.  
He was eager, a nod silently saying  
he would call—  
she thought,  
she hoped.  
The silence of the red rectangle persists,  
her offer unanswered.  
New strategy is needed.

**JESSICA HALE**

---



# AMY HIGGINS

---

Dearest Fred,

I won't call you Mr. Rogers now that you live  
forever in the Land of Make-Believe  
where, I presume, no kings  
or titles of status remain,  
and it's always a snappy new day.  
Fred, no one deserves that more than you.

I hear the sweet timbre of your voice  
telling me it's not about deserving.  
On those rare days that I truly believe  
*I am wonderful just the way I am,*  
I see your eyes looking into me,  
delighted at what they find.

Do you have a traffic light and trolley there?  
Do you still wear the comfy sweaters  
and sing while you tie your shoes?  
Your routines soothed me so,  
your pleasure in small self-sufficiencies  
made getting ready a song,  
heading out the door less scary.

On my side of the TV screen,  
inside and outside my divorced parents' homes,  
this message played like static  
from every grownup's mouth:  
*Here's what normal is. Be it.*  
Their words rose like vapor.

Your promises were simple:  
*You can tie your own shoes.*  
For thirty minutes every day, I was enough.

My kids—in their twenties—  
call me *That lady*. They're not wrong.  
At fifty-six, I sing when I pull on my shoes,  
wave at every face hooded  
against the world's indifferent wind,  
fall in with children lugging their invisible  
burdens to school. Parents, right beside them,  
signal the same old message: *Be normal.*

My sweet poodle-mix wags her banner tail,  
and a small boy's serious face opens. He's smitten.  
"You can pet her. She loves to be petted."  
It's a good feeling, being his neighbor,  
in this Land of Make-it-Through.

upying forces and  
M20. 2a Power or  
ty to withstand some  
wd. LME. b Ps



## Life Among the Living

This building is made of lifeless matter.  
We sit and gather as humans  
And isolate ourselves from the living.

The walls of our lives are made from the death of our land  
Filled with furniture that forever remains lifeless.  
The floor that holds us is an artificial support.

We glance out this panel of sand, ash, and limestone  
Gray block walls and black rough roads guide our artificial lives  
If it is not made in a factory,  
it was killed for our convenience.

When we gather in the forest we enter the land of life  
Surrounded by critters painted brown, blue, green, or gold  
The trees that guide our path,  
gift us with the breath to live.

I stand among the living  
Grateful  
For in this silent moment  
I am serenaded by the colors of nature  
My escape from the land of the dead.

# JAMES KALAFUS

---

snow-capped bird feeder—  
chickadees on every roost  
struggle to survive

\*\*\*

your heartbeat's warm throb—  
a full moon lights your face,  
our shadows mingle

\*\*\*

walk the winding road,  
defy the darkness within—  
spring's joys will return

## Love

If you come to me naked  
I will strip you bare  
of your skin and mark  
the depth of your love.

If you balk at my probing  
I will cast you aside  
in the shallows of mediocrity,  
no longer worthy of pretense.

I don't want narrow words  
or sibilant sentences that catch  
in your throat like wads  
of distrust. I want melodies.

I want to dive into your heart  
rhythms and never come up for air.  
Flowing forever in your veins,  
a balm amid the carnage.

## Stop Still

I have no reason to want to make a sound,  
reaching out as I do  
from this coma state—  
stop making every flicker of eye,  
wrinkle of forehead  
mean something.

I have never been so here  
through each sun rising, each moon falling,  
here in this mind in this bed, here,  
unable to be anywhere else—  
stop moving my fingers as if  
they are your own.

I have never wanted peace so much  
as I do now. I will not travel back  
up the slope I've tumbled down  
with my aging limbs,  
my echoing voice.

Stop coloring me between your lines.

I am moving toward my own faith,  
stop treading water  
with your cross held out,  
I will not take it.  
I have my own, always have,  
though you've forgotten.

Stop trying to remember.

I will be

in your heart, chinking the cracks

you think will never heal, letting it grow

wild beyond your chest, so you will love again.

Stop getting in your own way.

Stop longing for me.

Long for a new life with new crayons

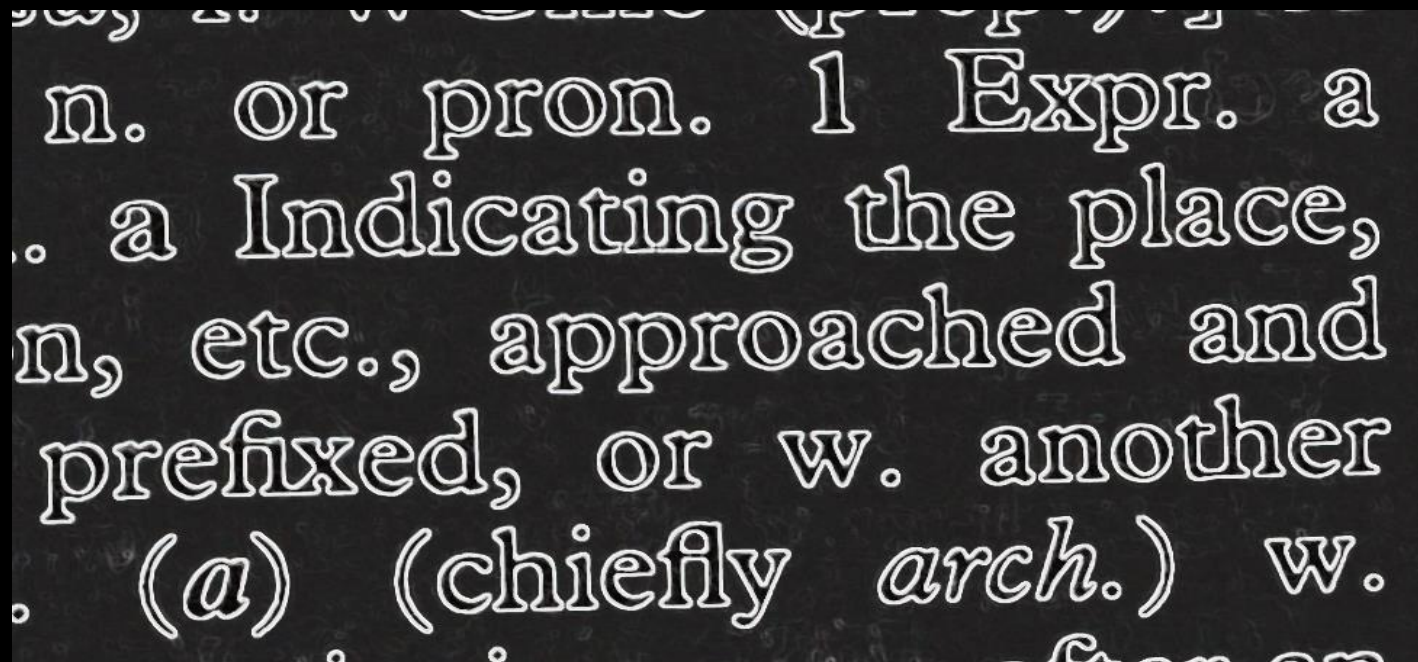
and blank paper

and play.

I will be beside you

as I am now—

still.



n. or pron. 1 Expr. a  
. a Indicating the place,  
n, etc., approached and  
prefixed, or w. another  
. (a) (chiefly arch.) w.

## Thoughts of Love

“Do thoughts of love fall into extinct volcanoes?”

—Pablo Neruda’s *Book of Questions*

Thoughts of love may fall like virgin-maidens—  
sacrifices to their great god, hoping  
for continued life, and rain, and harvest  
and peaceful living.

Thoughts of love fall like un-kept  
promises into broken hearts, hoping  
for palliative relief from the dark  
beats they hold, wishing the ache away.

Thoughts of love fall like pebbles  
into the cold, clear waters of the river of life,  
taking the tumble, raising ragged edges  
over and over to be smoothed.

Thoughts of love fall into deep crevasses  
of the mind, reaching for the matching shapes  
of hatred and scorn, searching for the right fit  
to make the spirit whole again.

Thoughts of love lift the aged, the infirm,  
the lonely, the down-trodden, the misunderstood—  
lift them up in respect and compassion,  
give them legs again to walk.

## The Unfinished Child

The unfinished child sits alone  
with no one to care for her.  
She feels as if she has wings,  
but cannot use them, stuck as she is  
in her dark corner.

The shades and shadows  
surround her, taunt her,  
but never listen when she wants  
to play, make up her own rules,  
breathe easy and smile.

The unfinished child still holds on  
to fears she never conquered,  
guilt about being the reason  
everything bad happens, a heart  
hurt by harsh words.

She fears she'll never grow up,  
never grow old, never be happy, never  
be needed or enough. She walks  
with a limp, she stutters, she shakes.  
So many tender spots still hurt.

The unfinished child sits alone. Her voice  
is never heard so long as the shadows spread  
their presence around her, and the person she'll  
become doesn't see her light shine through  
her playful, curious eyes, denies her existence.

# DIANE M. LABODA

---

## What Will We Do with This Love?

It's been sitting here on the table  
between us like a lazy cat,  
this love we avoid speaking of.  
We've tried sugaring it to sweet,  
and salting it to brine, but still  
it sits there between.

We've both gone from it and returned,  
hoping that we'd see it differently,  
shape it into a model romance,  
but neither of us has embraced  
its sloppy shape or tied a bow  
around its long, luxurious mane.

Occasionally, it jumps up and dances,  
trying to capture our festive sides  
and get us to join in, take a turn  
around the kitchen, nothing formal,  
just a jig, but touching each other  
about the waist, swaying close.

I try to clean up the mess it's made  
but you interrupt and ask too many  
questions about what's this for  
and where did it come from  
and what we should do with this  
unruly thing we refer to as love.

Eventually, we tire of its pestering  
and paunchy body lounging there  
as if it owns us, as if we couldn't exist  
without it, as if it were a minor god  
acting out a passion play  
we can't take our eyes off.



# DANIEL W. LONG

---

## January Haiku

Dawn breaks on crisp snow.  
Earth slumbers under until  
Spring awakens her.

# DANIEL W. LONG

---

## My Lexicon

My lexicon is rooted in the language of the worker.  
In my day it was side jobs, not grind;  
we clawed our way up the path with joints and sinews  
lubricated by blood, sweat, and swearing.  
Never tears!

My lexicon was informed by the tongues of others;  
some shouting from Appalachia, some singing in AAVE.  
Around me were beacons of Black and White excellence  
pushing all children ever higher and forward while  
still allowing us grace and gentleness.

My lexicon received lessons in privilege by 14  
from counsellors who rarely provided guidance  
and educators whose hands were tied by red tape.  
Where it was clear those who were dissuaded from vocations  
and those being funnelled into penitentiaries.

The lexicon of my 20s was steeped in over-indulgence; distilled  
in nights of shots and beers, selfishness and cigarettes  
until the prominent theme was hopelessness, and  
darkness crept in. It was in that despair  
I learned the word "help."

These days my lexicon has expanded to include.  
Inclusion of the previously excluded; my lexicon hears  
the voices of the unheard. Baldwin, hooks, Erdrich, Goldman, and Malatesta  
my lexicon continues to bloom and grow. Roots in the struggle  
hands & eyes to the sky.

# DANIEL W. LONG

---

## Ninety-Nine to One

We currently live in the Anthropocene,  
the era and age of human  
But ninety-nine percent exist as machines,  
with only one living as man

Now some of the ninety-nine don't know they are cogs  
and some are content to be springs.  
But what of the gear who yearns to be free,  
whose heart says "but I'm not a thing!"

And what of the cog that's been ground down?  
What of the spring that is broke?  
What of the gear gazing out a window,  
which opens but don't let in hope?

And what of the gear that gets stuck?  
What happens to the discarded spring?  
How do we address a mind in the muck,  
or why we treat people like things?

But the ninety-nine together are stronger  
than the one percent ever will be.  
'Cause community's been around longer  
and Brotherhood makes us all free.

What if we claim our own time back,  
and we used it to learn and create?  
We could build a new world that would not lack,  
and teach people to love and not hate.

Now, we must unite under 1 cause,  
not divided by color or creed.  
If we fight together, the elite will give pause,  
and we'll take back the wealth they have seized.

So join with me now fellow laborers  
let's take back the Anthropocene.  
We'll break the grip of those holding the purse  
and prove we are people not things!

*gilob* precious, OE, C  
, f. IE base also of  
desire, Old Ch. Sl  
Skt *lubhyati* desires. R  
That state of feeli

# JANE LOUISE

---

## A chance.

You don't even give love a chance.

You're in New York, you're looking at pictures of San Francisco.

You're in Kalamazoo.

You're in New Jersey.

You're supposed to be in Livonia.

Your head is 93846837458634 miles away.

You're on the moon.

You're in another galaxy.

You're supposed to be in Livonia.

Your heart is light years away.

Your mind is dissociating.

You're leaving your body.

2023 isn't a real year.

You're in a parallel universe.

It's year 24 and you're emotionally available.

# MONA MOORMAN

---

## The Cleaning Lady

Saturday morning

My mother awaits the cleaning lady

Tuna salad, slumbering on a bed of lettuce

Chilling in the fridge

“She’ll have lunch first,” my mother plans

From the floor where she is scrubbing

Her hands unprotected, red, and scaled

Bare knees, pressure dented, and sore

The front door opens softly and Mary walks through the hallway

With unnecessary caution

Little Zenobia toddling behind on a vapor trail of Mr. Clean

My mother rises in sections, knee-hand, knee-hand

And directs Mary and the child to sit at the formica table

Reservations not required, but strongly felt

They sit in gracious wordlessness

Hands folded like artichokes in their laps

While platters of food dance from the fridge

Tuna, bread, cheese, milk, and “Oh, would you rather have tea?”

The chew and swallow soundlessly

My mother excuses herself to put clothes in the dryer

To start another load

Mary’s minor protest is indistinct through a mouthful

“Don’t rush, eat, eat,” my mother says from the cellar stairs

She drags her weary bundle of body back upstairs

Returning to the floor, knee-hand, knee-hand

Scouring deep into the corners and under the trim

That holds captive crumbs and assorted oats of past Saturdays

Knee-hand, knee-hand, my mother returns aching upright

“Can I get you something else?”

Without stopping  
“You must finish this cheese.”  
No slowing down  
“I’ll only have to throw it out.”  
Threatening. Conceding.  
“I’ll wrap it up so you can take it home.”  
My mother gives Zenobia my favorite childhood doll to play with  
Or ravage as only children can  
With great apology, my mother asks Mary to help her wriggle  
The tired ironing board out from the slender broom closet  
Pieces of old sheet used as a cover catch and tatter  
In the cumbersome event  
My mother says, “I’ll have to get a new cover, but first  
I’ll take care of the dishes.”  
Over the clink and chink in the sink, my mother half-turns toward  
Mary, deferring  
“I’ll iron and you can vacuum, okay?”  
Mary nods in assent for at last,  
the cleaning lady would be cleaning  
My mother shouts above the explosive-sucking machine  
“I already did the upstairs and the living room.”  
Maybe Mary heard. Maybe she didn’t care as she maneuvered  
The Hoover  
Waiting to be paid.

2. [OE *lufu* = OFris. *luve*,  
*bru*) *lubō* (brotherly) love,  
of base repr. also by OS

# MONA MOORMAN

---

## Memorial Sighs

Highway 10 out of Tucson to the copper mine curling into the desert floor  
Along the 401 of highway sighs  
Reminders of those who once were  
Drivers and passengers compelled to say their names out loud to give  
them breath and perception  
Their lives left to be imagined with the loss inscribed  
Standing silent tribute  
staring at the sea of paddle ears and green plops of shrubs  
We will miss you, Randy "The Snake" Rogers  
Eroded columns of sandstone sepulchers  
Remembering Aurelio and Mike Piaz and Frankie Delgado who may  
have been the life of the party  
The empty brown beds of river remnants  
In memory of the water that once ran through the black valleys  
Dropped rocks Are in our Hearts Forever  
Ramon Jurado "Mon" Forever under clouds peeking  
Sneaking and then gone but not forgotten  
Our Precious Baby Boys Sammy and Steven  
Nothing is without a spiny prick in the desert  
Gullies running with rocks  
In Memory of Mark Skinner who is Safe in Heaven  
Along the roadway  
Always in our Hearts  
Raindrops evaporating before they feed life  
Apache tears cooled too quickly  
Like a breath "In the Hands of the Loving Father"  
We Will Miss You, Bailey Smith  
Tony Ruiz, Our Rock stands on slender metal alone along the miles  
Fire agate concealed in the mesas, watching over these signs  
Waiting to be unearthed  
to be held and adored  
forming in pockets eroding reveals



## Love Embodies Resistance

Love is like the sun that soars into the clear blue sky. Knowing that resisting from love embodies the motivation to resist from the love of passion to break the chains of Pandora's box. It's so hard to resist love just because it's a powerful tool shield from the clutches of Calarbus cave.

Love never fades no matter how hard you try to fight love. Its resistance to capture the beauty of love travels through time and space then disappears into the dark valley of destiny. Love of resistance slowly and maturely sparks power to love and resist temptation.

Knowing what you know about resistance of love tells a story of how you resist from love of resistance. It's like a song with lyrics that make it stronger and more intense to bear the fruit of the labor passes through the bright sunlight up in the hills and disappears into thin air. Love, love resistance flows like the Golden Eagle. This is my piece on resistance of love.

# SARAH ROLAND

---

## The Cursed Old House

For 30 years she slept untouched, like a castle in a forgotten country,  
My old Tudor house remains original, circa 1936.  
Her boarded up windows beckoned me years ago,  
Surely I was cursed the moment the half-round door opened;  
The first to know her after all that time,  
Entrusted with her care.

Her grandeur showcases a time that dazzled in the details.  
A grand wrought iron stairway sweeps and curls across the living room,  
Glass doorknobs shine over filigree brass plates,  
Large iron framed windows set in heavy gray marble sills,  
Plaster crown molding holds the hand-shaped profile against her towering ceiling,  
Polished wood floors reflect the bursts from art deco sconces and chandeliers,  
Pocket doors with beveled lead glass peek out and align perfectly,  
Wood cabinets with glass doors run floor to ceiling in the butler's pantry  
(Best admired from the seat on the radiator with a cup of cocoa),  
Tiles of soft violet flowers over a lime green base glow against salmon-pink  
    fixtures,  
Original sinks and toilets operate a series of special gaskets and outdated  
    mechanisms,  
The porch in hibernation mode with wooden storms  
Fitted seasonally into special frames with care.

The many details of her craftsmanship are familiar art to me;  
While the work of her upkeep is a continual dilemma.  
Many would update her features with the new, quick, and plastic;  
Forsake the work of the depression laborers, artists long since passed,  
But I cannot part out her soul- so rare, and intact.  
Yet our heat on the lowest setting costs more than a new car,  
And from under my blanket I try to make sense of our relationship.

I have tried to leave her, visited more houses than I can count,  
All far more practical, more affordable, with air conditioning and a sensible layout.  
Yet I am held by her,  
Scraping and muttering, a slave to her care,  
And worshipper of her beauty,  
Bound by a dream, struggles, and memories,  
Not visible to anyone but her and I.  
Our story another chapter held in the shelter of her walls,  
The castle, no longer forgotten,  
Both curse and blessing,  
Our home.

also desire for his  
ion, strong emo  
for, to, towards.)  
(now rare). Form  
E. c Affectionate s

# SARAH SMITH

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## Haiku(s): No Room for Deceit

Unconditional  
love is transparent. For love  
to be true, a strong

foundation is what's  
needed to help cultivate  
a real connection.

There is no room for  
deception in real love. It's  
not really love if

it's cloaked in deceit.  
True, real love is genuine,  
with no room for lies.

# SARAH SMITH

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## Here to Stay

When you came into my life, you brought true, unconditional love with you. You helped me believe that I was worthy of the love I had been resistant to all these years. You helped me see my light through your eyes, rather than basking in the shadows of my own pain.

You helped me believe that I am not my past. I am not my trauma. I am someone you love, with no conditions attached. Just as I see you for the incredible man you are. A man I didn't think existed until you showed me that you do. The man who is loyal, dedicated, taking any and all commitments seriously.

The man who shows me each and every day that love and loyalty do exist in the real world and not merely in my dreams. The man who brings me joy with every encounter. The man I see myself building a bright and happy future together.

Every time we are resistant to such an authentic, palpable connection, with old stories resurfacing and past ghosts attempting to separate us, our souls are always pulled back towards one another, tethered, like magnets coming back closer than before. No matter how we try to resist this love, we can't. This love is real. This bond is true. This love is here to stay.



Sarah Smith *The Oasis* (Acrylic Paint on Canvas, 1/29/2023)

# SARAH SMITH

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## The Piece That is Resistant to Love

The piece of me that is terrified of being loved. The piece of me that believes I don't deserve love, unless there are conditions attached to them. The piece of me that is terrified of abandonment, scared that the one I love is going to leave me, while simultaneously shutting down and shutting them out, when life gets stressful. When life gets hard.

The piece of me that becomes emotionally numb as my spark becomes duller and duller, burning out with every stressful encounter, every overwhelming moment, as the pressure increases and increases. The part of me that is working overtime to manage my anxiety while my anxiety is working overtime to protect me, even in situations that it is not warranted.

The piece of me that developed in the first place to protect me from any and all potential harm. The piece of me that yearns for nothing more than to sit back, relax, and soak up the sunshine. To get a much-needed break from the chronic fight to feel human, to feel happy. The piece of me that aspires for true alignment between my heart, my life essence, my soul, and my thoughts.

The piece of me that is cloaked in shadows, yet, yearns to be showered with light, compassion, acceptance, understanding, and most of all, love. Unconditional, true love. The piece that yearns to be receptive to love in all the different forms it takes on in this life. The piece that has been resistant to love for quite some time and wishes to evolve into something greater, someone healthier.

The piece of me that stares longingly into the distance hoping for another life, an easier way. One where I believe in myself. One where I know that I am worthy of love by simply existing, rather than pushing it away only to fight to get it back. One where I can find real peace and utter serenity. This is the piece I've come to know. This is the piece I've identified as resistant to love, when at its core, all it wants, all it needs, is love.

# SARAH SMITH

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## Sonnet: No Longer Afraid

The longer I've come to know you, the more familiar you've become. With each moment shared, I know that together we can soar. Time becomes nonexistent. We're present. The longer we're together, the less I resist this real bond. The less I fear that a foundation so strong could break. Good-bye? More like "until next time." Together, at heart, I carry my love for you. I don't ever want to let go, of you, of "us." I let down my guard and promise I won't give into fear; I would rather live. Plus, I'd prefer to embrace this life rather than resist. Time to love one another.

# RYAN STUBBS

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Pepperoni mom

There is beauty in chaos

Pouch French toast harumph



# WILLOW SYMONDS

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## Medusa, My Love

Medusa, my love,  
I need not eyes to see you  
in this cave of ours

Medusa, my love,  
Will you cut the strings that tie  
me to my last grave?

Trapped in Godfire,  
Two women, too different  
in this world far gone

They grieved my beauty,  
buried your humanity,  
my sight for your curse

Sun-starved yet still strong,  
you snaked through sunken shadows  
in this mind of mine

Medusa, my love,  
I'll clear your moth-bitten heart,  
shield you from the hunt

Medusa, my love,  
I'll be your flesh among stone  
in this life of ours



Photograph by the author

# YOLANDA E. WALKER

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## The Genetics of Pain

Beautiful, melanated goddess, mad and misunderstood.

Why is the Black Woman Angry?

The whole world wants to know.

Generational pain passed down the line.

Stayed silent to protect her life.

She is not angry just, low.

Until she heals from long ago.

# YOLANDA E. WALKER

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## Love Spell

Longing for companionship and the divine masculine touch, I cast a love spell—my first. The spell will have my dance card full. I envisioned men climbing over each other to date me. I looked at YouTube for directions and gathered the materials to cast my love spell.

The spell required:

1. Rose petals and oil for romance, love, beauty, and courage. Red rosebud signifies beauty and purity.
2. Jasmine for purity, sensuality, modesty, and inspiration.
3. Carnation for love, captivation, and distinction.
4. Essential oils made from cinnamon, patchouli, and frankincense for attraction and healing feminine energy.
5. Sage stick for spiritual cleansing.
6. White and pink candles for unconditional love.
7. Burn your favorite incense to bring thoughts to the present.

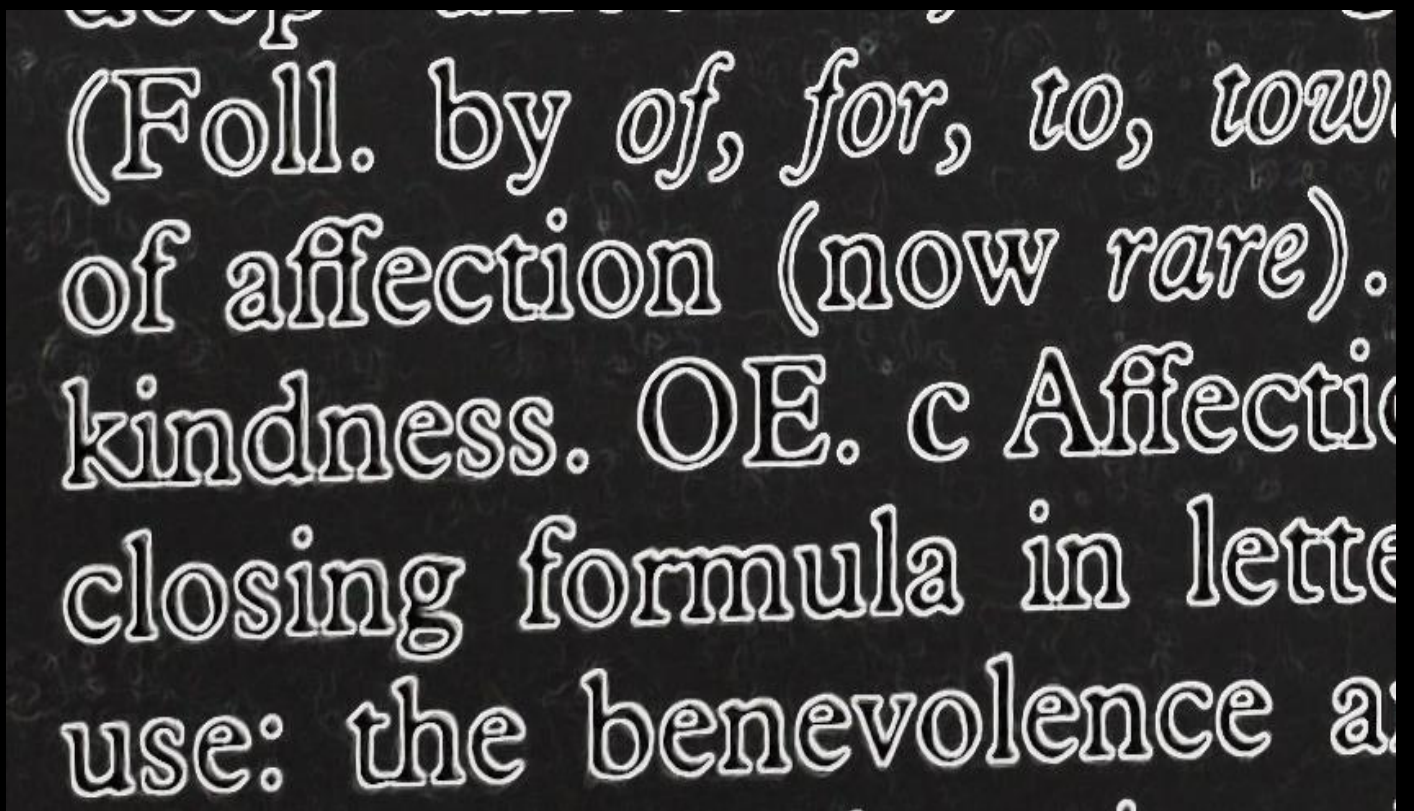
These items are available at your local spiritual store.

I prepared my tub by cleansing it with a cleaner and smudging it with the sage stick. I filled the tub with water and added the ingredients. I surrounded the tub with white and pink candles, lit the incense, and said a prayer. I submerged my body in the love potion. Vigorously rubbing my moist skin with the floating flowers repeating *I Love You*. Soaking for thirty minutes felt like paradise. Rinsed off, air-dried, and hopped in the bed. I slept like a baby the whole night.

The next morning, I woke up, excited about what the day would bring. The day passed with not so much as a tweet. However, my mother's driver stared at me for the first time in two years. *That was it?!* My spell turned out to be a dud. *So much*

*for my love life.* As the days passed something strange began to happen. I began setting boundaries, accepting my body “as is,” liking what I saw in the mirror and enjoying spending time with myself. The most profound change came in my relationships. Anyone who was not on the same path disappeared from my life.

*This is not how it is supposed to happen—is it?* In hindsight, it all makes sense. If you do not love yourself, then you cannot love another. The spell worked. I fell in love with myself. No one ever beat down my door confessing their undying love for me. Prince charming never arrived, but I have not kissed a frog since.



(Foll. by *of, for, to, toward*  
of affection (now rare).  
kindness. OE. c Affectio  
closing formula in letters  
use: the benevolence and

# MARION WATSON

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## Skin Deep

I look at my chest and hear the voice  
“Behold your great work”

I think to myself

My friends make art

They make beauty,

So I must make the ugly things

That balance it out

But I am wrong

My friends do not make beauty,

They make art

I do not.

Hiding in a stark lit bathroom

Scratching out of my skin

Glazed eyes and a sore back

I slip out of my body for a moment

Or three hours

Is it night already?

Bare and exposed

A raw nerve before my phone flashlight

I mine my own veins

Tapping a dry tree over and over

And over and over

I know it is hollow

I know.

Anxiety compounds  
My imagination betrays me  
What will be thought of,  
When people gaze at my tortoiseshell flesh  
Will I spy the discomfort in their eyes?  
And the next time I, in vulnerability,  
Reveal myself before a lover,  
Will I see the disgust in their eyes,  
Or will I feel it light the air between us  
Forging a barrier between their hands and my body  
I lament the connection between my self esteem  
And being desired  
And what of my desire?  
I want to be wanted  
In the way that people want joy  
And in the way that people want to create  
I wish I was wanted in that inescapable way

I smile and say I have gotten better  
But while my demeanor lightens  
The scars on my skin darken  
I fear I am determined to remain scarred  
And will take action to ensure it.

e in his or her presence  
or his or her approval  
emotional attachment

# SUSAN WHITE

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My Dear Heart

hold fast, my dear heart, hold fast  
for love has come knocking  
and awaits for your answer

lingering in the shadows  
as if it longs for the moment  
your heart opens a bit

shocked by its arrival  
scared by its bliss  
does it not know  
how we feel about this

peeking through to see  
is it safe? is it real?  
peeking through to feel  
the warmth of the sun  
shining through the veil

what is love but a mere existing  
heart that beats as one  
seeing the soul, not ours  
but like our own

two become as one, so they say  
or one becomes two  
but right now all I want to do  
is tell it to shoo

hold fast, my dear heart, hold fast  
for love has come knocking  
and awaits for your answer

# TOM ZIMMERMAN

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## I Met Her at a Protest March

It was a No Nukes thing, in '79,  
so years before #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter.  
I was gawking. Apolitical,  
I thought. Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne, James Taylor:  
not exactly my aesthetic. She  
had dropped her sign. Green eyes, red hair, and dirty  
toenails. Sexy. Righteous with the cause.

“So everything’s political,” she’d say.  
Including, and especially, sex. I played  
her records that I loved: The Clash, Ramones,  
Pink Floyd, and Talking Heads. I watched her smoke.  
She let me shave her legs one night. But not  
her armpits: “Subjugation.” She was right.  
More passionate than I, and I was one  
of many. Women too. I didn’t mind.

Of course, it didn’t last. I landed post-  
post-post ironically: an English teacher  
writing poems. Ambiguity  
my muse and spoiled mistress. Years ago,  
I read she’d married: some religious guy.



# TOM ZIMMERMAN

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## Peace Will Not Happen in My Life

And I don't want it. I prefer the battle metaphor: to fight the good fight, join the fray. A running gag between my wife

and me: strap on the saddle, skirmish with the locals. It's the yang in us. My writing this invokes the yin, my bearded witch.

And in her rest-home days before she died at ninety-four, my mother-in-law endured an electric razor's stumbling buzz that smoothed

her jowls to baby skin. And now I leap to middle-aged men who grow their beards because they see their mothers in the mirror. I

will die before my wife, who's still appalled she's aged into her mother. I don't mind an early death. Longevity genes are weak

on both sides of my family anyway. I know this struggle is a luxury: Romantic in my night sweats, I can dream

that even my cold ashes will be restless.

connected with being  
relationship between  
enthusiasm or liking  
omato; love beads  
worn as a symbol of  
(*arch.*) (of a child) i  
various small parrot  
affection for their  
chiefly African genus  
(*b*) *ioc.* & *colloq.* in *t*