

# Awen

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## The Queen Has Passed

*By Celine Rose Mariotti*

The Queen has passed  
The news came fast,  
We are all in mourning,  
Her passing came without warning,  
She was a noble soul,  
She took care of her fold,  
She was Great Britain's Royal Diplomat,  
Travelling the globe  
Queen Elizabeth enjoyed doing that,  
The bright lights of the British realm stoked her fire,  
They were always dressed in some form  
Of regal attire,  
They both loved their country with pride and honour,  
The people's love for them grew fonder and fonder,  
The Queen and Prince Philip adored and loved their family,  
Nothing made them happier than being with family,  
The Queen has served her country since her youth,  
She spoke words to the British subjects to calm and soothe,  
Those of us in America treasured her friendship,  
Her warmth and smiling face were kinship,  
The Queen will be remembered always in British  
And world history,  
She brought the Monarchy into Modern Times  
She was always so refined,  
God Save the Queen!

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## A Modest Saga

*By Duane Voorhees*

Would I were that arctic skald  
whose songs of ice, flood, and fire  
I sang in your Valhalla  
had ignited your desires  
and whose poems were vikings  
that left your towers burning  
and not these runic writings  
that drowned in their dry yearnings.

## Once Upon a Time It Really Happened

*By Howard F. Stein and Seth Allcorn*

Bad news!  
The draft notice arrived;  
It was 1968.  
Halfway through graduate school  
Deferment ran out.

A recent cancer diagnosis  
Not likely good enough  
To keep me out of the draft.  
Enlisted in the Navy  
To avoid the killing fields of Nam.\*

Boot camp north of Chicago,  
Assigned a ship in Florida,  
Sailed through the Panama Canal,  
Stops in San Diego, Pearl Harbor, Gaum,  
Subic Bay on the way to the Gulf of Tonkin.

Follow the aircraft carriers  
To rescue fallen pilots from  
Their planes that crashed off the carrier's deck.  
Sea and air rescue near Hanoi,  
Gun line near the Mekong Delta.

Long days, long watches, short on sleep,  
Refuel and replenish mid-ocean,  
Smooth seas, rough seas, ports of call,  
Liberty and adventures ashore.

Home again in a year –  
Had anything happened?  
1970 – a military build-down.  
Discharged for knee injuries,  
Back to school to finish the master's degree.

Did any of this make any sense?  
Does it now? Hell No!  
Can't make it up!  
Life is different now, never the same  
Or even similar, not even close.

Yet you can't unlive what you experienced;  
You also can't live life forward when  
In the relentless embrace by the past  
That refuses to let go.

*\*Vietnam War, 1955-1975.*

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*By Jane Hutto*

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## Fall as Usual

By Ute Margaret Saine

autumn afternoon:  
bitter smell of leaves tumbling  
down through chilling air

shimmering white bark  
a birch with scattered black marks:  
magic hieroglyphs

I stick around you  
I linger and I smile to  
pick up your magic

on this foggy day  
your uncertainties dance with  
my trepidations

you're complicated  
you say: is that to prevent  
me from thinking worse?

light in your grey eyes  
and that considerate smile  
rescued from the night

behind the drapes of  
curtains, in clouds of sheets I'm  
your floating woman

luminous autumn:  
now my heaven is the earth  
you illuminate

---

## Two Old

By Sally Plumb

I have eaten the cake,  
Sally,  
along with a Christmas  
whisky.  
We are old timers,  
and celebrate  
In our own style. ....  
while young ones  
dance and sing  
we take wing  
with memories  
and a sentimental tear,  
Clear headed, still,  
we consider  
our short future  
with slight humour.

Rumour has it  
we are still  
above ground.

Not sure  
about  
one of our feet.

Hahaha!

## Arkhangelsk II

By Christine Despardes

I quickly got the office job here  
where winter is a block of ice  
covered with deep snow.

I came here to be let alone.

This foreign latitude  
makes slanting sidewalk fragments hard to navigate  
heaving one like in a turning bus.

Snowbound in sub-zero temps  
where morning looks late afternoon,  
time is absolutely at a stand-still.

There was nothing here at first for me  
but drinking, TV and a slow dissolve.

I run a giant transport office now  
and build a second family, from Helsinki,  
have quashed my demons,

no longer need to tell my grandkids  
(one look at the Books and I was out),  
"I used to be prime minister, once."

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## Interrupted Samba

By Jane Stuart

A melody we have not heard –  
a twinkling wind and breezy star  
created by bold harmony,  
a soft drum and silent guitar  
mixed with sadness that drizzles trees –  
but yet we dance on summer nights.

We try to find that ecstasy  
that lingers after love is gone.  
And still we dance! There is no song  
but life is lived in twirling time,  
sometimes mixed with golden rhyme.

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## This Traitor

By Duane Voorhees

Where I grew up  
no one had a future,  
no one a past.  
The alarm cocks  
signaled their whens  
that a stalwart  
was on the way  
to supplant that  
adventurous one,  
that traitor, who  
had decamped  
in the night.  
Oh, how in my mind  
I rehearsed that sun.

## Retreat

By DJ Tyrer

“The entire valley is alive with them,” PFC Tomas said.

He was right; the ground of the valley below was an undulating carpet of ants and other invertebrates. The warning signs had been there for years: the destruction of the rainforests had sent a cascade of creatures northward. Others had made their way onto boats and been carried to new homes across the ocean, infesting the unlikeliest of places. But, the discovery of displaced colonies was a mere hint of what was to come.

The devastation of Bogota was the first revelation of the real threat they posed as hordes of spiders, ants and snakes poured into the city as if under the direction of a general. Incredulous, the world watched in horror as the city was overrun, leaving only clean-picked skeletons and empty homes. Other cities fell in turn as the creatures advanced north.

Now, they were here.

Sergeant Warner called in their location.

“Bombers are on their way,” he told his unit, meaning ‘get down and take cover’.

Without the threat of anti-aircraft fire, the bombers could come in low and slow, raining down devastation into the valley below. Canisters of napalm released their contents in mid-air, raining down sheets of flame. Within seconds, the entire valley was ablaze, a sea of fire. It was the only thing that had any effect on the massed ranks of invertebrates.

But, as the bombers swept away northward, bomb bays empty, Sergeant Warner could see swathes of blackness sweeping up either slope of the valley, bypassing the flames that had claimed their kin. The advancing mass seemed unending. He’d heard the rumours that satellite photos showed such masses covering hundreds of square miles. From what he’d seen, he couldn’t doubt it. No matter how hard they were hit, they just kept coming and mankind kept falling back, powerless.

Suddenly, PFC Tomas shouted, “Watch it, Sarge!” and Warner’s head snapped up.

An outrider of spiders had popped out an area of scrub and was heading straight for them. It was uncanny how they seemed to plan such pincer movements.

“Fall back,” ordered Warner, scrambling to his feet, but the order was too late for Corporal Hall, who fell screaming to the ground, beating at himself as they swarmed over him.

Retreating to their waiting hummvee, they sped back to the rally point. That was the lot of humanity in a microcosm. Retreating again and again. Only, they were rapidly running out of land to retreat through and the advance showed no signs of stopping.

Warner dismounted the hummvee, dreading to learn the latest news in the fall of humanity.

Ends

## Field Trip to the British Museum

By Matthew Wilson

So there it is – the unholy tome  
The one to bring about men’s doom  
This trip to the museum sucks  
The air potent with the stink of books.

But the hardback piece is a thing to see  
When monster hunters had their victory  
Burning their home to the evil ground  
Where in the ashes this book was found.

I do not like the jewels upon the spine  
Taken from kings dead from poisoned wine  
So a trip to the zoo I think is best  
Not a museum stained with blood from a demon’s chest.

So here it is – the unholy thing  
The tome that makes the church bells ring  
For that what sleeps is not yet dead  
Like the spells this book sings in my head.

---

## Lucky Scarf

By Aeronwy Dafies

Is it just foolishness  
To believe  
That this tatty red scarf is magic?  
I wore it when I grabbed a prize  
On a trip to the seaside, long ago  
And, on the day I won the lead  
In the school play.  
After that  
I wore it to every exam  
Even though it was a boiling summer’s day  
And, the times I didn’t  
I didn’t do well.  
Later, it went with me to interviews and appointments  
And, always saw me right  
But, now it’s tatty  
And, I feel a twinge of foolishness  
At wearing it.  
Now, I wonder  
Is it really magical  
Or, was it just ‘the power of positive thinking’  
Its positivity lost now it’s tatty and frayed?

Originally published in [Tigershark](#)

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Retreat originally published in [Siren’s Call](#)

# Splashings

By Howard F. Stein

*Dedicated to three generations of Michael*

Forty years in the steel mill,  
From laborer to machinist –

His father, a struggling farmer  
In eastern Slovakia, could not make  
A life for his young family with such  
Rocky soil, brought them  
To America in mid-1920's,  
Settled along the Monongahela River  
Flood plain, rich in steel mills, and jobs,  
Got work as labourer in the mill  
To escape the squalor  
Of unyielding earth  
And no future, only to be  
Ridiculed as a lowly "mill hunky"  
By fellow steelworkers, who traced  
Their roots to northwestern Europe,  
And did not know the difference  
Between Slovaks and Hungarians.  
Much of his work life orbited around  
Sweltering blast furnaces  
And basic oxygen plants,  
Where molten steel was  
Poured into ingot molds –  
And a blessed paycheck.

His young son, later my friend for decades,  
Took a job in the mill, joined families  
Of three and four generations of steelworkers  
Like his own – but had aspirations  
Beyond a lifetime as a manual worker.  
He went back to school to learn a trade,  
Became a machinist, returned  
To the steel mill, carried  
His phone with him everywhere –  
He had the run of the place –  
Drove his cart throughout the mill  
Called to repair blast furnaces,  
Cranes, and railroad locomotives,  
With ingenuity beyond belief,  
Improvisation his alchemy  
That few understood.

At heart he was an artist –  
Long evident in the ingenuity  
With which he fixed things in the mill –  
Metal sculptor, painter on canvas with enamels  
Of mill life and of tools of every kind,  
Filled sketchbooks with charcoal drawings,  
And filled thousands of pages of notebooks  
With dreams and yearnings about  
Nature, the Universe, God, love,  
His Slovak land and people,  
His life from childhood in a village between  
The Tatra and Carpathian Mountains,  
To his eight decades in the Steel Valley  
Of western Pennsylvania.  
He never thought aloud of himself  
As chronicler and witness,  
But through his art, he was;  
Art was his door to freedom.

He built an extensive workshop  
In the basement of his own  
Young family's home, then  
Later an adjoining additional  
Space to work, write – and store.

Dozens, then hundreds of boxes  
Of all sizes to house his collections,  
Some for current projects, most  
For the future. His wife and son  
Lived with and watched his unbridled  
Imagination, his endless projects,  
Most unfinished at his death  
In his nineties. He could not  
keep up with his accumulations –  
Nor could they.

In the mill, during the long spaces  
Between calls and urgent repairs,  
He sat and wrote and sketched  
In his notebooks. Every place he drove  
He would stop his cart, get out,  
Keep a safe distance  
From the hot metal,  
Then pick up several  
Shapeless metal splashings  
Strewn all over the mill ground,  
As molten steel was  
Being poured into ingot moulds  
And transported by ladle cars.  
Splashings were his  
Prize and treasure –  
Testimony to the searing heat,  
Dirt, toil, imminent accident,  
And death only a second away.

Steelmaking's precision was  
The twin of chaos and disaster.  
His splashings were the raw material  
For transmuting ugliness and peril  
Into beauty and form.  
Imagination and welding tools  
Were his paint brushes;  
With them, he could turn  
Random shapelessness  
Into his own design. What had  
Begun life as liquid metal on filthy ground  
Could be shaped into art,  
Suitable for display on a bookshelf  
Or a table.

Late in life, he gave me  
One of his sculptures and several  
Of his raw, slowly rusting, splashings.  
I keep them close in the room  
Where I write – an assortment  
Of nails holds the splashings  
On walls. His sculpture reigns  
On the low windowsill  
In front of my favourite chair.

I knew that behind these gems  
Lay his massive collection  
Of boxes of raw splashings piled high  
In his workshops and garage,  
For a someday, perhaps, if...  
When he died, his son, now my cherished friend,  
Gave away several tons of his father's  
Accumulation of splashings.

Maybe splashings are metaphor  
For much of his own life,  
Though he never said so.  
Cast about in time and space,  
This machinist and artist and dreamer  
Took into his mind and hands  
The chaos life had given him,  
Gave it shape and form,  
And turned refuse into art.

# Giants – A New Start

By Celine Rose Mariotti

Written in anticipation of the Giants-Packers game in  
London on October 9th

The New York Giants have a brand  
new start,  
Danny Jones will do his part,  
A new coach by the name of  
Brian Daboll,  
He is a coach who is very able,  
Sterling Shephard and Saquon Barkley  
Will play once again  
New players have joined the Giants team,  
Giants TV is now on Stream  
Some of the new players  
Sandro Platzgummer, David Sills, and many more,  
A bright future is in store,  
The New York Giants Story-  
Back to their Glory!

.....

## Propaganda 1

By Christopher Barnes

Clamouring in pasture  
riflemen mass,  
seizing our bungalow -  
roadsides flip.  
We leer  
from the ancient oak.  
Parish pump mayor  
vetoes insubordination.

\*

in pasture  
mass  
our bungalow  
roadsides  
We  
from the ancient oak  
mayor  
vetoes

\*

Clambering in pasture  
liberators mass,  
sharing our bungalow -  
roadsides correct.  
We cheer  
from the ancient oak.  
Valorous mayor  
vetoes effort.

.....

Robin in the tree  
Overseeing garden work  
Beneath piling clouds  
Branches shiver in chill breeze  
Robin eyes the coming snow

By Aeronwy Dafies

# Complete

By Joyce Walker

How can I convince you?  
What can I say that will  
Make you let me stay?

How can I convince you?  
What can I say to end the hurt  
I know you feel?

How can I convince you?  
When I've been away for months,  
Shared a younger woman's bed?

How can I convince you  
That though she made me smile  
Kept me happy for a while

I never said those words  
I've often said to you?  
How can I convince you?

How can I convince you  
That you're my only love,  
That though Monique was sweet,

We were a jigsaw, when you reach the end  
You find some pieces missing.  
How can I convince you?

How can I convince you?  
How can I convince you?  
I guess I have to tell you

That it's only when I'm with you  
The jigsaw is complete.

.....

## Ruth

By SchiZ

Her flowers is still blooming  
Though, it has been several months  
Since she tended them  
Actually, I haven't seen her at all  
But I know her house is for sale  
What happened to her?  
Did she get fed up?  
Or did her kids think to get  
Their inheritance sooner?  
No one knows  
She was a good, kind woman who  
Enjoyed gossiping about others  
Though nothing bad  
Just the good stuff  
Oh how she loved her little garden  
She took pleasure in it  
She spent the day weeding it  
And the scent lingered with delight  
Too bad, she's gone  
She was good neighbour

## Sweet Cacophony

By Howard F. Stein

Post-Oklahoma ice storm, 27-29 October 2020

Random entrances and exits  
Of baritone, tenor, contralto, and alto voices  
Pile note upon note –  
Simultaneity soars into din,  
Orchestra without conductor,  
Musicians from every direction,  
Play their chainsaws,  
Upon fallen tree limbs  
Strewn throughout the landscape –  
A battlefield laden with corpses.

Like German V-2 rockets  
That rained on London,  
Three days of freezing rain and ice  
Assaulted us from the sky;  
The siege finally ended  
When the front moved east.  
Today sun and warmer air  
Melt thick ice  
From the remains of the fallen  
And from the trees that prevailed.

Sweet cacophony, shrill sound  
Of sawing until wood yields –  
Stubborn reclamation  
Of the land of the living  
From the fields of the dead.

---

## Believing in Winter

By Ute Margaret Saine

before I knew you  
I feared alike the silence  
of night and of day

you came from the dark  
inside you a calm glow  
and then we were light

out on a tangent  
I'd go there looking for you  
a tangent's a kiss

clasped and tightly held  
bodies: our closet drama  
about to begin

I strive and thrive close  
to your skin, make me believe  
in wintertime heat

---

Politicians row  
Ignorant of history  
Bungle border talks

By DJ Tyrer

## The Blind Painter

(Creswell, Notts, UK)

By Ed Chaberek

It's a measure of the old man now  
that the cataracts have closed  
all but the last dusty light

still he goes daily to his 'painting  
field', sits before canvas hours, knows  
colours by bits of Braille : "I

was young, so young, and blazing  
light was all there was inside,  
outside. I was but a rush

but light has gone, here I stay." Some  
spin fingers by temples, worship  
eccentricity in other ways. But

this old blind painter merely  
stumbles across canvas fields, urges  
slag heaps into roses dancing.

---

## Morning Moments

By Jane Stuart

Autumn mornings –  
warming hearts with sun-sprinkled  
golden hours

An early mistral  
blows under roofs and doors  
bringing winter rain

A silver-rimmed moon  
in a sky of indigo  
clouds and glistening stars...

Red and yellow leaves  
wither in the sun,  
wind-blown, rain-wept  
covered by a snowdrop...  
autumn's farewell

---

## The Bravest Man

By Joyce Walker

He was the bravest man I've known.  
A soldier, prepared to lay down his life  
For Queen and Country,  
Most of all, his family.

The bravest man.

He was the bravest man I've known.  
When he learned that he was dying  
He fought for every last breath,  
Made sure his family were okay.

The bravest man.