

Finding the Words

The Poet's Path

By Anne J. (A. J.) Fotheringham





*Poetry often begins in childhood.
This is how it began for me.*

What the Poet Hears

Why do the pine trees sigh in the rain?

Hush, child, it's just the wind.

No, Ma, it's lost souls,
Crying out in pain.

Don't be silly.
It's only the breeze.

No, it's the grieving ones
Seeking hearts' ease.

Stupid nonsense.
Stop, now.
Please.

I cannot block my ears.
The solitary sorrowers
Are mourning in the trees.

Come away from that window.
Listen, I say.

Why can't you hear their sadness?
How can you turn away?
Am I their lone witness?
The only one who hears?

Come, child. It's just the wind.
Why do you shed those tears?



Searching for the Words

I know
All the numbers
In my life.

How
Do I find
The words?

*Growing, reading and learning
to write it all down.*



I learn from the classics.

Mining my bookshelf

Poetry spills out of pages
Golden images
Vying with emotions
Run rampant
Heading straight for disaster
Or is it love they find
Or happiness
I always sought the drama
In the words
The angst, the passionate hurting
And yet now
I discard such horrors

Reaching instead for the light
That comes from seeking, finding
The joys that keep me sane
The pleasures that lure me
Ever onwards
Make each day an oasis
In the maelstrom in which we live
I run the words through my fingers
Revel in their touch
Garb myself in their beauty
Store them in my mind and heart
And remember some
As old friends I had forgotten about
Companions of my early years
When all seemed possible
And I had not been touched by pain
Pain that never truly goes away
But where medications do not work
Words do,
Their healing powers
Carrying me on a wave of hope
And depositing me in a safe haven
A place where the poetry and I
Can live in peace
If only for a little while.



I have the words; I learn to use them.

Learning to Use the Words

Words tumbled,
Shaken,
Spread across a page,
Allowed to ramble,
Set free to split apart
Or combine,
To choose harmony
Or harshness,
Depending on their joining.
Punctuation marks,
Freed from grammatical constraints,
Wander aimlessly,
Not sure of their role,
Unable to think for themselves,
Lost in the ragged crowd
Of sounds and syllables.
All language tools
Are at the mercy of a crazed scribe
Who strives for metered, rhyming lines
And fails spectacularly
Even at free verse.
Poetic chaos ensues
Confusion deepens.
In desperation,
The exclamation points
Call for a time out,
Writers block,
Anything to end the insanity.
Defeated the poet drops her pen
And leaves the room.
For a time,
Both writer
And the written word
Will rest
Before the struggle for perfection
Begins again.



Can silence lead to inspiration?

Waiting for Inspiration

Silence

Can you hear it?

Beautiful, wondrous silence

Uh oh

What's that noise?

Damn the furnace is kicking in

Now it will rumble away

Until the house

Is the right temperature again

Meanwhile

I will sit here

Toasting my toes

Over the heating vent

Enjoying the winter sunshine

Streaming through my window

And wait for the muse to return

And listen

Softly,

Not daring to breathe,

For the words to arrive.



Seeking focus and learning to deal with distraction.

Inspiration Disturbed

Stillness
Except for the refrigerator's mumbling.
It stops
Silence returns
Then a distant car rumbles past
On the road below
And is gone.
Stillness
It surrounds me
Cocoons my thoughts
Helps me to focus
On what I must do
The poem must continue

I must write what comes next
I place my hands on the keyboard
And break the silence with my typing
My hands move swiftly spilling words
My brain is on fire with the images
I seek to describe
My whole body,
My brain included
Is in flight,
No longer caught in my office chair
But far away in another place
The stillness protecting me
I am set free.
Then the doorbell rings
The silence is broken
The focus fades
The noisy world rushes in
And disturbs me
I sit ignoring the ringing bell
In mourning for the creative thrill
Which has faded away
While the strident bell keeps on and on
Perhaps I should go and see who is there
But no it finally stops
Ah I say. I take a breath
Stillness comes back into the room
I place my hands on the keyboard
Ready to fly away
Damn
Now the phone begins to ring.



Finding my own style.

Poetic Differences

We are both poets
You and I
Your words hard
Cut to the quick
Burn the brain
Make passions boil and surge.
Mine soft and sensitive
Arouse emotions of regret
Lost loves
Changes missed
Or the sense
Of overwhelming romance
The fulfillment

Brought on by images
Of nature at its best.
You bring down the roof
Rail at inhumanity
Celebrate sorrow
I raise up hope
Cherish memory
Whisper of tomorrow and
The opportunities
To love again.
We are opposites
We clash at the borders
Of our lines
Repel
Each other's sentiments
And yet
We are both poets
You and I
Writing down pictures
That fill our minds
For others to read
And value or reject
Both poets
From different
Viewpoints.
Using the same language
In conflicting ways
Yet both artists
Filled with passion
For the written word.



Poetry influences our dreams.

Poetry Read at Bedtime

Trying to read poetry
Before sleeping
Is like diving into an ocean
A huge swell
Of emotion, thought
Imagination run wild
The author's inner child
Running away
With her ideas
Dragging you along
For the ride
Tearing you
From your carefully chosen
Bedtime routine that

Guarantees the elusive
"Refreshing" night's sleep
Stripping away
Your comfort zone
Making you taste
Yet again
The joys, the agonies
Of life
And when the words
End
You are left reeling
Fired up by the images
Surging in your mind
Keyed up by your feelings
The intensity
The urge to do
To be, to experience
What she has shown
In her writing
Elusive refreshing sleep
Seems further away
Than ever
And
When you finally doze off
All night
You dream
And relive
The poetry
Read before sleeping.



My muse calls; I respond.

Writing at Dawn

It's 5 a.m.
And my body
Craves a return to sleep
But my mind has other ideas
While my arms and legs
Flounder in a sea
Of sheets and blankets
Trying to find the perfect pose
In which to lie
Waiting for oblivion
My mind turns
To events real or imagined
Embroiders truths
Deals with what ifs and maybes
Handling them
With the gift of irrational thoughts
Of what can or will be
In my mind's eyes
I struggle for control
To achieve that moment
Of relaxation
When thoughts will still
And dreams carry me away
To rest
And yet I cannot win

My mind has run amok
Trying new ideas
Daring me to
Rise from my bed and write
As the day brightens
And birds begin
Their morning song
I yawn
Wrestle with my pillows
Try to banish the need for pen and paper
Leave me alone I cry to the empty room
Let me sleep again
And leave my cares
Trapped in this bed
While I soar above
Into realms of calm and delight
But no, the muse rules
The hand begins to reach out
Seeking a pen it cannot find
And my thoughts hover on the edge
Of my consciousness
Sighing
I turn on the bedside light
Blinded by
The sudden brilliance
I fumble for my notebook
And write these words
Finally
Exhausted
My work complete
My brain allows
A brief return to sleep
I wake scarcely an hour later
The light still on
The notebook and pen at hand
And the alarm
Blaring in ecstasy
As it signals
The start of another day.



*The future is poetry, stories,
books. I have found my dream.*

Living My Dream

I love the soft edges
That make up my life today
Hard edges, tightness
Tailored business suits
Shoes that pinched
All designed to show the world
An image that was not the real me
They are gone now
Fluffy sweaters and shawls
Have replaced form-fitting blouses
Leggings taken the place
Of sharply ironed tailored skirts
Slippers and running shoes have banished
The high-heeled torture tools
That used to house my feet.
Hash words, the slings and arrows
Are pushed aside, cast away
Good thoughts positive acts
Focusing on the way ahead
Towards the light
And the door slowly creaks closed
On the troubled past
I cuddle into my soft corners
Let their gentleness caress my spirit
I reflect, I think and then
I turn my laptop on and write
Stories, poems, novels
Pouring the real me out onto the screen
And sending my imagination
Into the world
Sharing with others
And living my dream

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