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## Poems

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Poems

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POEMS

by

Susan H. Jacobsen

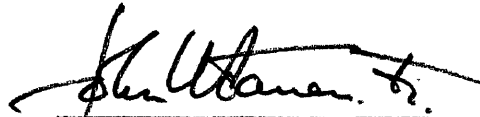
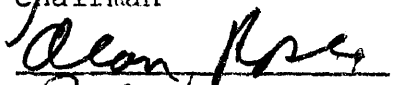
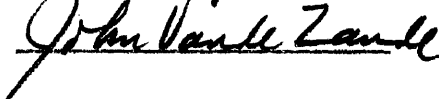
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Part I:  
SNOW POEMS

kitten paw-prints on the snow,  
followed now by  
boots  
and glow in searching eyes--

by swaddled bodies  
plodding slow  
and falling freely over toes  
cradled closely into boots--

gleeful hoots  
rise with the flurries-  
while wispy witches fleetly hurry  
to gobble up  
the whispered prints,

leaving us suspended:

no prints ahead,  
no prints behind--  
only ourselves  
to seek and find.

## ON HAVING A TRIP SOUTH DELAYED

Greedy lover!

not enough that I write

love poems to you?

not enough

that I sing with you

while I plow and part

your whitest offerings?

not enough

that I flaunt

my comradeship with you

before my less fortunate,

though warmer,

friends?

at my first finger move

toward your golden sister,

you twist your angel-lace arms

into chaos...

if I sing your child whiteness,

will you free me

to sing green and gold?



## SNOW-BOUND

snow banks:  
blocks  
piled high  
around the house  
and you and i  
we play inside  
make do for lunch  
drinking wine  
and gladly much  
to be so sadly  
stuck.

plows:  
warriors  
raping wild  
the gentle blocks  
so-so-un-piled  
guards to love  
and quiet-quiet  
stacked now  
neatly on the curbs  
time to jangle  
loose your nerves,  
the wretching blade  
grabs at my door--  
you must come out  
and play no more.

pencil sharp shadows  
of birch on snow--  
february thaw,  
thoughts to summer go.

if I believe in fairies  
will the trees sprout leaves?  
will shadows slip  
on lucid streams?

the sun through the window  
burns my ears,  
though my eyes are shut  
it persists and sears

into my wishes--  
futile, I know--  
only time, not fairies,  
can drink of snow.

snow poems

drift

inside my head

until my eyes

peer out

of igloo tunnels

and my nose

seems

a frozen

fallen log

and only my lips,

gurgling with inane

underground pleasure,

betray

my cotton-warm

river of blood.

aujourd'hui il neige encore,  
and Cora doesn't care...  
she knows the snow loves everyone  
and touches everywhere!

## TRILOGY TO A DAY IN MARCH

1.  
no umbrella  
raincoat lost  
walk to classes  
at no cost

but wetted glove  
and freshened face--  
sudden softness  
slows my pace.

i can let  
the rain plunge in,  
through my eyes it slips  
and then  
like a water fall at full  
it rinses out my tired soul.

2.  
whither went the whispering rain  
that purged my heart of morning pain?

slushy snow flakes slither now,  
through the air,  
the ground endow  
with freeze-dried puddles--

morning next  
the sun will rise  
and what is left is water,  
water, water,  
                    water, water,  
water, water,  
                    wet.

3.  
water wet!  
  
i should more dream  
that mid-March snows  
are instant streams!

this morning's path  
this afternoon  
is cloistered full  
with winter gloom.

morning next will bring the plow,  
scraping dreams of spring from now.

April:  
still winter  
in Upper Michigan.

Farther South,  
the sun  
carries out  
its song.

Part II:  
SKINNY SONGS



skinny songs,

when will you  
take on flesh,  
to bully about  
the earth?

or will you always  
tinker at windows,  
making faces?

Morning hunches in  
on little inchworm feet,  
looking for some way to get  
her spineless body off the street.

She skinnies up the nearest tree,  
pulling on its bones,  
and stands now, holding up the sky,  
straight and fully grown.

The children .  
are playing together  
on the beach.

Practising.

wind chimes,

fey and lawless,  
ruled only  
by the whimsy  
of winds,

singing  
when touched  
by another's  
swinging...

the music  
of spheres  
within.

## UPTIGHT LADY .

woven hair,  
knitted dress,  
pressed,  
compressed  
to useless rest,

woven legs  
descend to shoes,  
laced and cautious  
giving view  
of girdled arch.

fancy,  
if I pulled the lace,  
would you unravel  
to your face?

a thigh  
walking by  
captures my eye...

fantasy of skin,  
thin,...  
thicker, quicker  
than a dream.

it seems.

it was a fight  
between he and she  
over scissors  
and paper

and whether  
to cut or tear,  
and whether  
the pattern  
should be

intricate,

and the only  
thing  
we know  
for sure

is that

when they were  
through  
they were  
covered  
with glue.

Swing a circle,  
swing it sweet,  
until it has  
my heart complete--.

I'll ride its brim  
'till brimming full  
I tumble back  
to center,

full  
of sweet  
and swinging.



children off,.  
I prop my breast  
inside my hand  
and  
nipple under thumb  
read myself into noon.

the snow,  
trying to join me,  
tinkers  
at the window.

Part III:

WILLOWS

grey,           .  
it comes stalking,  
fog-like.

grey,  
only grey.

it cannot even weep.

if I could be like the snow bank  
and lie cool in the hot sun  
and let my body drift into the earth  
and let my body be the tree roots  
and let my arms rise with the sap  
and my fingers be a leaf,

It is at night,  
when frightful Blake  
hides behind the door,  
that I shore my body  
close to yours  
and,

grateful for your disbelief,  
pray that reality is perceived.

I have traveled this road before,  
in the winter with you,  
and the snow was at our windows,  
and the snow banks rose full into the sky  
and settled over us.

Today I left you  
and I travel this road alone.  
The grey sky bends away from me,  
and the grey twigs  
make their leaves look the other way.

Again

I am sitting  
in the living room,  
thinking of you.

There are shadows.

high,  
and hollow,  
the cry follows  
the  
tracings of my heart.



the sun, .  
yet two hours  
from your horizon,  
has brimmed mine,

leaving  
copper-orange rags  
snagged  
on an empty oak.

I see a room  
with windows,  
(there must be sun),  
with a table/desk,  
bread crumbs,  
salt and pepper,  
a white cupping  
sugar bowl,  
and pencils,  
waiting.

may 14.

I have not written a poem  
for two weeks.

underground streams suffice.

future sorrow:

you must wait  
for future.

today,  
I must fly..

Dust in the morning sun:

I float

on the opaque petals

of contentment.

words are not your way,  
but Touch,  
and I will sway;

a willow  
weaving sun-dust  
into song...

I gather air,  
and bid you,  
                  come along.

Part IV:

POEMS

Today the hills west  
are crippled with fog.

The howl of a wolf  
crawls toward me.



There is a pine tree  
in the field,  
it stands among the snow,  
accompanied by broken wheat  
and drifted-over stone.

It casts a shadow  
to the wheat--  
its singing's not returned.  
It sweeps the sky  
and keeps the ground.

There is no more to learn.

I sit on the western brim  
to watch the morning's thin  
line crawl closer  
to the forest.

It will be re-born  
on the eastern wall,  
soft and ragged,  
dim to the call  
of wavering plains.

What sunrise wrought  
can be forgot:  
sunset casts no shadow  
on my side of the morning.

## GENERATION

1.

Sipped into the earth,  
her snow swells branches  
nipples for birth.

In a last white rage  
she bears the bitch  
she'd carefully hidden  
with restless drifts

and,

freshened, glares  
while the newborn  
suckles.

2.

She doesn't hear,  
for giving sound  
is the gift she bears.

A bit of ice  
screams against a leaf.  
She cracks it  
with her delicate reach.

Grandmother:

Sunday is for letters home,  
Karen says you won't remember,  
or even know I wrote.  
My poems, too, she says,  
will go by,  
lost in the trickle of water  
left on for the bird  
that flies freely  
in your room.

I have not seen you in a year.  
Though in his cage, the bird  
was there.  
I'd come for luncheon  
and you had filled the table  
for a child's appetite.  
Afterwards I read my poems.  
I didn't know if you could hear,  
and feared you would be lost.  
You barely held your tears.

continued...

I touched you then,  
and will again,  
but not in simple sentences.  
And when your quiet curtained eyes  
beat an echo  
to your yellow bird's wings,

touched,  
I will sing.

Father:

This summer blue sky is a deceit:  
my feet still grapple  
with snow and ice;  
the winds whir by  
from west to east.  
A metaphor is broken.

I'd stitched it well,  
that you had sent the summer blue,  
my heritage, on westerlies.  
The fact that you live  
to the east  
was not a problem,  
for metaphor is malleable,  
and, after all, you  
are  
closer to sunset.  
I moved you with a pencil stroke;  
it broke.

continued...

It was the blue,  
the summer blue,  
its solid lightness  
that pulsed through against the winds:  
I prevail  
by virtue of your opposition.

A metaphor begins:

## MEETING A LONG-TIME FRIEND...

a finger touch-  
then the palm,  
then bone and muscle twist.  
our hands become a single rock,  
a bond within a fist.

the surge now spent  
my brimming hand  
filled with fingers  
fine as sand,

restless with peace  
as a candle flame,  
my fingers like earth  
in your hand remain.

## AND HAVING TO PART AGAIN.

my arms  
your shoulders  
now are one  
and wrestling in between

our want to help each other lift  
the bulging of our need.

continued...



then,  
fall apart  
like sand from rock  
and push a smile out,  
"take care" and kisses  
hang like dust,  
a stagnant drawing cloud.

we turn to go-  
the challenged air  
screams against the wall,  
then settles full upon my face-  
and tears recover all.

Newsreel: Vietnam refugees, boarding a plane,  
to be settled in "more fertile  
Southlands."

I.

the color on my set is not good,  
the mud on her bare feet  
is green-grey,  
and the baby, slung  
on her back  
along with her  
household goods,  
is more red-yellow  
than tawny.

she waves and smiles,  
the gaping places in her mouth  
less hollow  
than the child's eyes.

II.

the winters are so long,  
I said,  
and it is necessary,  
if you are to live in Upper Michigan,

to get out .  
into the world  
and re-establish  
that there is Civilization somewhere.

after all,  
in Marquette  
they do not even have a ramp  
to convey me to my plane.

I must walk across  
the iced runway,  
soiling my shoes.

pictures you unrolled...

aerial photos  
of target sites,  
the careful circles and cross-lines  
slicing the landscape  
with quiet objectivity.

beneath the lines i saw  
the lacy look of poplar trees,  
seen from above,  
and toy houses sent out sidewalks,  
white and gently curved,  
like water-soaked angleworms.

from picture to picture  
the scene hardly changed.  
a slow moving animated movie,  
it gathered in my thoughts  
and i could almost hear  
the quiet clicking  
of leaves,  
the slam  
of a wooden screen door.

continued...

the last picture  
had no lines  
only dwarfed puffs of smoke  
that made a sporadic pattern  
over the neat angles  
of streets and fields.

words,  
like leaves on a tree,  
sprout  
and blow away.

i know you  
only  
by the way you grip the earth,  
by the way your branches  
grapple  
with the wind.

the jack pines stand  
each one alone,  
each has a meaning  
of its own.

but underneath  
below the snow  
where skies don't see  
and winds don't blow,

the jack pine root tips  
feel around  
and there inside the quiet ground  
hold hands with roots from other trees:

so it is  
with you and me.

the top ridge.  
of the hills west  
poke up a row of trees  
like keys on a typewriter.

my eyes plink on them  
sending messages  
from root tip  
to root tip  
across maybe a million trees.

the pine tree outside your window  
is ringing.



## TO CARVE A PINEAPPLE

gently

part the foliage

near the base

and insert the knife carefully,

moving it slowly back and forth

until it is all the way in.

continue moving,

but with a persistent

downward

pressure

until the first cut is complete.

repeat.

then slip the knife along

between fruit and skin

to free it completely.

note:

it is best to keep a towel underneath.

the juice almost always oozes out.

I found a rock along the path,  
I held it in my hand-  
I brought it to the fire hearth  
and that is where it stands.

The crevice rising up its back  
had fit into my palm,  
the coolness that it held within  
had yielded to my song.

Resting now on the heated slate  
away from the wind of woods,  
it dares me still to pick it up-  
to test its latest mood..

The heat it gathered from the hearth  
sears into my skin,  
my fingers lightly cradle it  
to let the coolness in-

and blood that on the outdoor path  
had warmed its sandy skin  
flows now to cool its restless heart--  
to touch the stone within.

JEFFREY: 1964-1971

to his mother:

the car  
had not quit screeching  
when it began:

inside,  
in the rawness  
of your belly,

then exploding  
into your womb  
and into your eyes,

seeping,

until its noiselss  
metal waves  
wracked and tore  
even at the bodies  
of those seeking to soothe  
that fatal edge:

he did not carry you  
into his death.

## CLOCKS

1.

the long hand  
sweeps through  
the kitchen;

widening eyes  
tangle with the hour;

mother-hands circle  
weave and wind,  
gathering faces  
toward the door:

the tiny door,  
finger them toward  
toward  
the telescoped door.

2.

the door sweeps out.  
eyes wind tight  
against the sun;

continued...

the sun leaps in  
and strikes my face:

my hands burst;

their faces spin  
around,  
pupils opening  
to the inside light:

swallowed,  
I leap into their eyes.

If a child is as a mushroom,  
then, indeed,  
make him sit still,  
'ere he lose his roots.

But if he is as a caterpillar,  
let him creep about  
this grainy leaf,

to find its edge,  
to tumble forth.

Driving west this spring,  
it was in Wisconsin  
that I saw the first furrows,  
fields being ripened,  
and tractors plodding  
as on those ancient Sundays.

My children had no time  
for my cries--  
they have seen pictures.

The Minneapolis sky line  
scooped toward me:  
granite wheat.

I tried to write  
a poem  
on a little  
piece of paper.

It shivered.