

## Lynn Hansen

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### Aylan Kurdi

If you want to feel the claws  
of grief gouge into the meat of  
your memory, look  
at the photo of Aylan Kurdi—  
three years old, dressed up  
for a big travel day  
in his red T-shirt, blue shorts  
Velcro sneakers – as he lies  
lifeless,  
face-down  
on the beach  
near Bodrum Turkey.

He will never taste  
Tabbouleh or lamb again,  
never know the joy of swimming –  
only the terror of drowning –  
never make it to Canada  
where he could play soccer,  
go to school, marry, give  
life to children. No!  
Like the napalmed girl of the 60's,  
running and screaming  
down a country road in Vietnam,  
Aylan is the poster child  
for refugee flotsam  
washing ashore –  
desperation that ends  
in tragedy.

## **A Date With DaVinci**

On a day when the stiletto call  
of a Northern Flicker pierces  
morning stillness, when I might shop  
for groceries or get my hair cut, I enter  
the large block building – fortress  
of hospital magic -- to meet DaVinci,  
the robot that will surgically assist  
in removal of my womb, constant  
companion for over seventy years.

It happens that this day is also my son's birthday.  
Forty-five years ago all eyes gathered  
on the performance of this muscular  
basket, when three injections of Pitocin  
were given to coax the birth process  
into fruition. Years later this same womb  
rejected fetal disarray with miscarriages,  
my balloon of holiday joy deflated  
with attendant sorrow. But today,  
its red flag warning, got my attention,  
demanded center stage.

Childlike, I trust my attendants,  
masked and capped in surgical green,  
as they check my identity one more time,  
wheel me into their sterile suite.  
The surgeon holds up two fingers, asks  
me to squeeze them when I am anxious –  
invokes a moment of calm – like a father  
giving assurance to his toddler.  
Gratefully, I grasp his warmth, slip  
unafraid into darkness of anesthesia,  
embrace my loss, grateful  
for the comfort offered  
by two fingers.

## **Betrayal**

The spill of dark wine  
soiling the front of my best  
dress betrayed him,  
revealed his infidelity.  
While I was away, she  
pretended to be me,  
wore my clothes, jewelry,  
fur coat as they bar-hopped  
the weekend away.

Confronting him sealed  
my resolve – leave this marriage,  
pull away from the constant pain.  
So I acted.  
He threatened to leave.  
I took him up on his offer.  
He drove off in the antique auto.  
I kept the house.

Once single, I took my turn  
to correspond, telephone, visit,  
travel with husbands of others,  
begin my own secret life, buoyed  
by bundles of letters tied  
with red ribbons, photos hidden  
upside down in a drawer – taste  
forbidden love.

## The Cat Lady

Everyday I watch her shuffle,  
spine curved like the first letter  
of scoliosis, her hammer toe begging  
pardon as it gouges neighbors.  
The roots of her hair once dark,  
now a patchwork of white and grey  
grow an apricot color at the salon.  
Most things make her *so mad*.  
Disappointment reigns on her face,  
a smoldering anger  
that hasn't aged well.

She drifts in isolation  
from neighbors and  
the three husbands  
she is glad are gone.  
Instead, her affection focuses  
on feral cats— twenty-five at last count —  
their dependence and endless cycles  
of kittens she does not control  
surrounds her. If asked,  
she denies the cats are hers,  
but names them.

Her home is a carpet of cat hair,  
magazines pile high in the chair,  
and on the table letters, bills,  
cards and junk mail languish.  
Space heaters scatter their warmth  
into two darkened rooms  
her life fulfilled by feline transients  
and afternoon episodes  
of *Days of Our Lives*.

## Flurry

In the dream it is cold,  
overcast, snow flakes  
drift in slow motion.  
I am running.

Everything is black or white.  
I am chasing a dark mare,  
running away  
from me.

I carry a whip for control,  
snap its command, keep  
her galloping –  
merry-go-round of motion.

With each crack of the whip  
she accelerates.  
I am surprised by  
her obedience.

Flurry of motion continues until  
I awake, clammy with realization,  
it is not obedience that  
keeps her running,

it is fear.

**Lynn M. Hansen** is a retired community college professor of marine biology. A member of the Ina Coolbrith Circle, Orinda, CA, and National League of American Pen Women, she has been published in *More Than Soil*, *More Than Sky: The Modesto Poets*, *Quercus Review*, *Rattlesnake Review*, *Stanislaus Connections*, *hardpan*, *Modesto Poets' Corner* and has two nominations for a Pushcart Prize. In 2013 a collection of her poems was published by Quercus Review Press entitled *Flicker, Poems by Lynn M. Hansen*.