

Three Poems by Laura Bayless

Long Lost at Sea

At the ocean research facility
I push reading glasses down my nose
to see beyond plate glass window.

Two fishermen cast lures at shoreline
where sandpipers pierce scallops of foam.
Tangled kelp ropes collect on the beach.

Beyond distant breakwater
phantom party boats ride invisible swells.
A hundred gulls circle filmy mist.

Just outside tidal inlet, Moss Landing's
mournful horn croons to ravenous
harbor seals feeding on anchovies.

Winged silhouettes sketch telltale patterns
along barren strand this October day.
True stories dissolve in churning froth.

Dark canyon out past the continent
melds into subterranean shadows,
drags me deep where my lost ones reside.

Left Behind

I regret what doesn't get written,
words that arrive while walking,
yet vanish by the time
I return to pen and paper.

I forfeit landscape narratives,
a dragonfly as it washes
its slender front legs,
journey of a caterpillar with black face
and twenty miniscule legs,
glitter in sand and stone,
images that sigh and murmur
with symbolic metaphors.

Fat bumblebees drone above
patterns of tumbled leaves,
cause me to slow down,
mindful of what's left behind,
suggestions of significance.

What doesn't get written
is harder to catch than sunbeams.
I toss phrases out to the tempo
of my steps, hope rhythm
will bind them to my mind.

Take It To The Limit

One story in a book about long-lived women said the oldest members of a garden club were seated together at one table. They were placed there because they *only* talked about what they can't see, can't hear, and where they can't go.

As my mother's caregiver for the last ten years of her life, I observed the collective indignities, loss of driver's license and medical calamities she endured. It's a frightening thought to grow old as I begin to notice certain changes in my own mobility and memory year by year.

Sometimes it's annoying little things, like mis-hearing what someone said or dozing off sitting up in the daytime. I used to be able to hike up and down trails in the woods, but in the last year I run out of breath on steep sections. I ignore the marginal clues of aging, sun damage, thin skin wounds that take forever to heal, an alien face in my mirror.

Poor Margaret, others in the club decided she was past her prime when they sat her at the old folks table. Maybe someday I will have to agree to live in a pigeonholed adult community or antiseptic skilled nursing facility.

I refuse to think about *where*
I might end up, disregard signs of decline,
confine my table talk to lively topics.

Laura Bayless is the author of three collections of poetry, *The Edge of the Nest*, *White Streams and Touchstones*, and *Persistent Dreams*. Her poems have appeared in local and national publications, and anthologies, including *Dancing on the Brink of the World*, *Selected Poems of Point Lobos*, *Porter Gulch Review*, *The Homestead Review*, and *Blue Heron*. She is co-editor of an award-winning compilation of stories and poems about the Carmel River – *Passion for Place*. She participated in seven *Women's Voices* readings at the Carl Cherry Center in Carmel and multiple *Women and Food* art and poetry presentations on the Monterey Peninsula. In addition to writing poetry, Laura explores creativity through collage, photography, and absurdity. Formerly shy, she now delights in requests to read her poems to strangers.