

Three Poems by Lynn M. Hansen

Carcass Island

In the Falklands
eerie sound of kelp gulls drift
along white sands of Carcass Island
where I sit watching Magellanic
penguins body surf ashore when yells
interrupt the maritime calm.

With fire drill urgency, a grim boat captain calls
for immediate boarding— light breezes are gathering
into gale force. I lean into the rising tempest, stumble
to the zodiac, a rubber boat bucking in the surf,
our only transport to the mother ship, *Polar Star*,
pitching and rolling on her anchor offshore.

The steely captain drives the zodiac
headlong into mountains of icy water.
Each grey-backed wave, a thundering
avalanche, deluges us. Flexible tubes
and self-bailing keeps us afloat.
White knuckles hold us in the boat.

The zodiac twists and bends
at the card table sized landing,
an elevator of waves thrusting it
far above then below the platform
attached to a staircase clanging
against the hull of safety.
Bobbing and lurching, the captain orders
me to “jump!” I know that missing the target
means five minutes of numbing cold,
then unconsciousness, even death.
Shivering, I jump.

Elegy for Mama

The raw ache of grief seizes me as I watch
you fumble with your silverware, take captive
the pepper shaker, hoard butter, forsake
your skin care, wander outside your room
scantily robed. You are unable to complete
a sentence and forget my name.

For years you were the Mama Bear, single mom
providing food, clothing, shelter –we were never hungry.
You are the central ingredient in my stories, our laughter
leavening the heavy dough of our lives. It was you
that insisted on college for me first, *then* if I wanted
to be a hairdresser I could –I owe you my career.

Though you were resistant leaving your home,
I was consoled when you said you were happier
than you had ever been. You laugh easily
at our stories, carry memories only you can access,
trust me as your overseer –
call me Mama.

Our Beginning – August 1991

We lean against rough
white tufa spires, gaze
into sunset glow over Spartan
landscape of Mono Lake,
plan a future.

At midlife we identify
with the harsh reality
of survival we see here –
California gulls run along shore
gather brine flies with a snap of their bill,
phalaropes twirl in salty water
stir up brine shrimp suppers
on their refueling stop.

In solitude of this place we embrace
mutual interests in nature, glide
our kayak past a flock of avocets
sweeping the water for food,
empty ourselves to each other,
relish in our camaraderie.

In the late summer of our lives
our beginning is simple – we open
ourselves to joy, sorrow and peace.
Isn't this how beginnings
are when your companion
is your best friend?

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*, *The Song of the San Joaquin* 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*.