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Table of Contents

Jim Atterbury <i>Anguish on Albany</i>	1
Karla Bellatti <i>Soul Caress</i>	7
Casie Herb <i>Passion Burns</i>	7
Mary Lou Spengle <i>The Darkness</i>	8
Chris Weiman <i>Requiem for a Dark Angel</i>	10
Charles John Harris <i>Pasta and Kraut</i>	11
Carol Spratt <i>Turning to Salt</i>	15
Ida Johnson <i>The South</i>	17
Diana J. Cherryholmes <i>Rebirth</i>	18
Jon Bell <i>A Pearl of Great Price</i>	18
J. Donovan <i>Lyle</i>	19
Kris Padget <i>Pap Smear</i>	21
Ida Johnson <i>Love Replaced</i>	22
Karla Bellatti <i>Mary's Tears</i>	22
Ann Keran <i>Ways Gone By</i>	23
Gary Smith <i>Sounds from Another Room</i>	25

Table of Contents

Ida Johnson <i>Triumph</i>	29
Deb Herndon <i>Notes from the Kitchen Table</i>	30
Kurt Kincaid <i>Whisper My Name to the Valkyries</i>	31
David Lisnek <i>The Boogie Man Cometh</i>	40
Diana J. Cherryholmes <i>Have you ever seen a peacock fly?</i>	41
Judy Mogle <i>Naming the Darkness</i>	42
Charles John Harris <i>The Beagle Poem</i>	47
Charles John Harris <i>Jackson Creek</i>	48
A. Elizabeth Harris <i>Her Falling Season</i>	49
A. Elizabeth Harris <i>On Walden Road</i>	49

Ida Johnson

The South

How can you
Conjure my affections
With your luscious greens,
Peach trees, Magnolias,
And sexy star-filled nights

And yet—

Raise those ghosts
Of men in white sheets
With bloody hands,
Of men backed with cotton
And tired lives
Making difference in
Black and White.

This is where
Heat is more
Than temperature
And my hand-packed
Homemade ice cream
Has blood in it.

Ida Johnson

Love Replaced

I am braiding love
Into my grandmother's
Almost-Creole
Midnight black
Hair
To give back
All the love
Someone stole
From her stoic form
Sitting here in
Her handmade rocker
With fixed eyes.
I wonder
If braiding love works.

Ida Johnson

Triumph

Sarah Mae's life is no Cadillac experience
But she wears a tongue wagging red dress
With red satin high-heel shoes.
Mae carries herself a day's ride ahead of trouble.
And straightens her back with pride.

She is fitted tight with satin and pride.
Though loneliness is her familiar experience,
Mae victimizes Kid Trouble
When she wears that bright red dress
While those with eager eyes clearly see
How well she stands in red shoes.

Mae steps UP with high-heel shoes,
To conceal scars, to preserve pride.
She sees what some can't see—
A way to win over sugarless experience
And make one bright red dress
Restrain the hand of trouble.

When life serves Mae raw trouble,
She finds resolutions in red shoes.
She moves her mood with her red dress
Strutting right then left with pride.
She lies to hide what none may see

Her unchurched life is what we see.
Uneasily, she tip-toes from holy to trouble
Filling her reservoir with earned experience
So she may slip her soul into red shoes
Well-fitting and warmed with mother's pride
Well-fitting inside her bright red dress.

Would you gawk at her red dress?
Judge the wearer? Fail to see
How on parade is her pride,
A fortress against unrelenting trouble
Assisted by matching hope in red shoes
Bought and paid for with experience.

Wisely dress yourself with her experience.
See one truth in Mae's red dress and shoes—
Better to be lost in pride than in trouble.

David Lisnek

The Boogie Man Cometh

I am the infant confined to this space
 searching salvation for my father's face.
Alone I must stand in this prison black
 until Mr. Sunshine brings Daddy back.
Branches are tapping the window outside,
 in fear I fall in my blankets to hide.
Here I will be safe from his teeth of steel,
 and daggers of ice he plunges at will.
His appetite craves the taste of my skin,
 marinated lightly with Desitin.
His hands are sharp claws that tear at my sheets,
 punished am I for not eating my beets.

Outside my door he is given away,
 by smell of wet fur and body decay.
The scraping of claws against my door knob,
 sends my heart pounding and makes my feet throb.
A train in my room rumbles my bed,
 collapsing the cave on top of my head.
In agony I rose feeling his breath,
 the Boogie Man has come looking for death
His claws were strong but they did not slice skin,
 patting my bottom again and again.
There in his arms in a thick coat of fur,
 he rocks me to sleep with a soft murmur.

As my eyes closed and I drifted away,
 I smiled that he might come back some day.
Some scary night when I feel the creeps,
 Boogie Man come back and get me to sleep.
If you are hungry and wanting a bite,
 my daddy is next door with a night light.
He tells me about you each night in bed,
 painting these images inside my head.
So when you eat him and chew on his bones,
 show him some mercy and stifle his groans.
Make it swift so not to utter a peep,
 because I will be here trying to sleep.