



UU ORIGINAL VOICES

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse

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A Collection of Our Writings



My Mom's Toothpicks

Assembled, on the ready,
Props for the glitter and magic:
Swizzle sticks, maraschino cherries,
Polished toothpicks, embossed napkins.
Prepped for the party to remember
Ready to conjure the old happy days to rise again.

Alas, my mother's plans lacked critical mass.
It took decades for the cherries to go bad.
The swizzle sticks and yellowed napkins got thrown out.
But the toothpicks' plain utility allowed them to enjoy
A surprisingly long collective life.
Their ranks dwindled, but the survivors hung together
Through many moves, many cupboards.

All the estate now dispersed,
To family, strangers, landfill.
The last few toothpicks now rattle in their worn paper box.
A fragile sarcophagus holding Mom's desiccated dreams.

-The Northwoods Writrix



Chess Champ Scouts Rivers

Sis pulls sweater around her shoulders
stares at the Hudson from high in her townhouse
scouts the meandering flow of her mind,
while chess pawns rattled by the Metro-North line.

Taps her laptop:
sandbagged-monks-in-khaka-
guard-U.P.-monastery. Thinks
Michigan, the currents of siblings.

I jerk upright when iPhone flashes

texting my Manistee River retreat
still drenched from taking a dip,
attention snagged by Chess Champ.

My peace of mind, rooked by Reuters.
Monastery, whaa?! Society of St John ?
Skete in Keweenaw ?
but she is gone before I focus.

Impatient always, already bored
so emails our brother's Galaxy
quotes The Guardian: *Clearwater-Seafoods*
-gives-Mi'kmaq-first-nation-fishing-deal.

Ottawa River is flooding, he has a bucket
underfoot
but reads: *anti-bribery-rule-bungled-by-*
Ontario-lobbies.

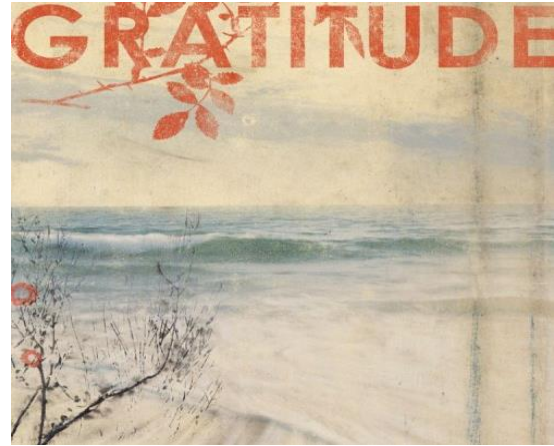
Abruptly he moves a bishop, then cross-
checks,
retorts: *win some...lose some.*

but Chess Champ has vanished.
She wants a Kenyan chat, our sister there
roasting figs with marlin, salt-water catch;
Nairobi River tainted.

WhatsApp chimes with snippets, NY Times:
in-Kenya-cherished-fig-tree-gets-a-reprieve.
Hunggrily that sibling considers castling,
a quick-send pics of steaming figs

and fishermen with barracuda cooked
crowding through door,
then wogs a knight
before Chess Champ can move.

C J Lee



My Gratitudes

As soon as I turn off the lamp, I begin;
The list often starts with how grateful I am
To be warm.

I'm grateful, every night for the companionship
Of Honey, my sweet lab curled up beside me,
Sometimes twitching in her dreams.

That I am comfortable, without pain when I lay
down
And that my mind works, and serves me well,
My gratitude includes these and also, the rest of
sleep.

My level of energy is sufficient for what I want to
do
I have things to do that are satisfying to me,
And I am thankful for hands still able to work.

Hot showers are high on my Gratitude list,
Hot and cold running water that is clean and
indoors,
Air to breathe that is fresh and sustaining. Thank
you.

Friends care to know me and be known by me,
Allowing us connections that even hold us up
During the isolating year of a pandemic.

The garlic that grows in my neglected garden

And adds flavor to my soups this winter
For the ease of cooking, indoors, without
smoke...usually.

For the dependable patterns of nature that
Bring the stillness and cold of winter, only to be
Turned into pink lady slippers and loons calling.

The shiny spot somewhere across the lake, close to
Omena
That picks up the morning sun that I cannot see
And announces the coming of a new day.

Sometimes I fall asleep before I finish my list of
gratitudes.
To sleep that easily is a blessing!
And to wake to Honey's nose lifting my hand to pet
her. Ah.

Two healthy sons and their healthy, thriving
families.
A sister and a niece and lots of cousins
I'm grateful for family living and family still living
in me.

Barbara Ann is safe in Tanzania, Lucy dreams of
going to the
Air Force Academy, and Eric still loves his work
and play on his
Computer. Ethan likes art, and Casey likes girls.

And I'm grateful for human tendencies toward
kindness
In a world dragged off course.
I'm grateful we have examples of love winning.

December 6, 2020
Mary Van Valin