

GLENNA HOLLOWAY  
913 E. Bailey Road  
Naperville, IL 60565

ELF OWL  
(Micrathene whitneyi)

The saguaros lose weight and pleat  
as they enter the death phase. It may last  
for years. It's been so long since water  
made good the sky's promises  
there's a rattle in the desert's breath

not made by the sidewinder.  
Leafless ocotillos dangle blips of red  
against day's end-- one-spark blossoms  
like bobbing semaphores  
signaling the elf owl to hunt.

In midnight sandshine, the tiny raptor  
withdraws to its hollow  
in the oldest saguaro. The cactus tightens  
on its own tall thirst, narrowing its cells,  
its clustered spines hard as medieval maces  
guarding its deep secret moisture.

Twice more the pigmy predator haunts the night,  
silence feathering swiftly over empty silence,  
coming home empty.

--Glenna Holloway  
--NATIONAL FORUM, Summer, 1995

## NEFERTITI

Her name means "beautiful woman."  
Her sculptors made sure we'd agree.  
Her fame rivals most in Bronze Age lore.  
Her appearance is like an omen.

Murals glorify her form,  
paintings, statues, etchings.  
Egypt's eighteenth dynasty  
delighted in Queen Nefertiti.

Each mention of her in history  
makes us want to know more.  
Blank pages surround her latter days.  
Her ending is a mystery.

Akhenaten, her royal husband, sired  
the most exotic king of all,  
now known world-wide as Tut.  
It's said her stepson was inspired

by her. Perhaps she tutored him,  
modeled him to rule (and model  
for his sculptors too) while learning  
life behind the regal scrim.

It's not known who Tut's mother was,  
Akhenaten never told.  
But Nefertiti loved him as her own  
and raised him up to sit the throne.

Both Tut's and Akhenaten's tombs  
were found with all their treasures.  
No mummy, crypt or cryptic measures  
carved in stone reveal her fate.

Somehow her poem failed and faded,  
unsure rhythm, random rhyme,  
then total disappearance  
from all annals of her time.

Perhaps she trod on men's ambitious toes.  
Perhaps she gathered more than she could keep.  
Perhaps she made vindictive, jealous foes.  
Perhaps she wound up murdered in her sleep.

She flared so bright, so brief, a wind-blown flame.  
Leaving just her beauty-- and her name.

--Glenna Holloway

Author's note: The irregular patterns of rhyme and rhythm are intentional to accentuate the unpredictable life story depicted.

## LAST CARD DOWN

Aunt Anastasia drove three hundred miles to take her place in the deathwatch with Jack and me and our old dog. "Don't let her in," said her favorite nephew, my husband, when I told him she was coming. He called her the Queen of Clubs for her lack of tact, her bossy bluntness. "She'll advise me how to die, lay a Bible on my chest, instruct me on eternal protocol, drill me in correct address of angels. Next, she'll move her self portrait from my desk to Jack's, rearrange his paper piles while she's there, then she'll put the dog's bowl and blanket out in the yard." Holding hands, we shared chuckles until she arrived to prove him right.

She told our son he was improperly dressed for the occasion. Proudly we watched Jack refrain from saying what surfaced in his eyes.

Bedside she bid and trumped until the impatient patient feigned sleep. She made a list of things I should do. Then I insisted she get some rest after her long trip. Jack firmly escorted her to the guest room.

My husband and I were dealt another hour, a final royal flush. You might say Aunt A was the ace. Our joker king died laughing.

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## THE TRUTH ABOUT POEMS

Word designs are painted, carved,  
a diverse array to ponder, lighten  
and enlighten, or just make  
the noisy world fade away for awhile.

Do we create them? More likely  
they infect us, incubate in us,  
dividing cells colonizing, expanding  
their claim on our space. And I try  
to be available as a volunteer host.

Some verses are like stars,  
engines of generation  
followed by a trail of sparks.  
Others smoke with modernism.  
Some are fueled with ancient stock  
that simmered for centuries.  
And if the elements survive and fly,  
the sum of each orbit will ember in places  
where nothing else can lodge.

A few scuttle off like scorpions,  
stingers raised, spring loaded,  
patient in dim dusty corners,  
waiting for their chance.

I go after them with a torch  
and a bare hand, no creator,  
not even a capturer,  
just a willingness to suffer  
their strikes for the chemistry  
they transmit:

Potent instruments of thrust,  
animate with shine and heat  
and power to disturb idle apathy.  
Not meant to finalize breath or beat  
but maybe to make each tremble--  
if only for a moment.

## TAPESTRY

My oar wrinkles gray water, ravel the reflection:  
A giant warp of steel crawling with traffic spans  
the river. Miles of bleary borders scratch dirty sky.  
Creeks now gone used to keep my stitches unfrayed,  
kept me close to the patterns of bass and beavers.

My origins were up there in a garden-patch bungalow  
years before that burrowing segment of tollway  
displaced willows and wind chimes. Nothing green  
remains. The new tunnel, breechloaded with cars,  
blasts a volley across the bow of my rowboat.

An oil barge passes me, rocks me under the bridge,  
into its shadow and roar. And I think  
of the old hilly thunder prowling the pinestands,  
unmuffled by stacked concrete bins of people  
thwarting its rounds, teasing the lightning.

The barge shuttles slime around the east bend  
where my fever thinks scraps of my old home lie.  
Too many torn things underweave the weft of the city.  
And I've run out of flosses and strong thread.

## SEARS TOWER

Refusing to concede the title of world's tallest,  
it juts its own big shoulders above Chicago's,  
convincing the sky of its rank, stray clouds  
and leftover moonlight caught in its pylons.

A few years ago, on an infamous day,  
unnatural clouds found their way inside,  
small clusters on stair landings, dark fragments  
in elevators, offices, restrooms. Mostly unseen,  
they still circulate softly, now and then  
fingering neck hairs, changing the texture of skin  
or faintly damping low-voiced discussions.

Aeries of elegant ladies still give luncheons  
for forty, layers of high risers and rollers  
animate the interior, eye level with lakelight  
or lightning.

Contained in 110 stories, life stories continue  
on all levels, encased in custom-made climate,  
flourishing on bilingual premises and promises surrounded  
by glass and pink marble with its own zip code.

Wrapped in its own designer winds,  
the great stack moves denizens side to side,  
dependent on its whims, holding them all in sway.

ASSATEAGUE SILVER  
(Equus caballus, feral)

Wrinkled, shimmering in shallow backwater,  
the moon's image quivers with the crossing  
of a brindled mare. She leaves  
the milling passel of ponies, moves toward  
a curved hump of beach carved by wind,  
fringed with a mane of sea oats.

She pauses on its crest, poses farthest  
from the new master with the white blaze,  
now pounding after a wayward filly. He herds  
her back to his clump of conquests,  
tightens the circle, whinnies soft reprimands.

The brindled mare stays motionless, apart.

The stallion's ebony head raises abruptly  
then lowers and swings like a pendulum.  
Watching from a hummock of salt-marsh grass,  
the old deposed leader backs his wounds  
deeper into the night.  
The victor gallops toward the brindled mare,  
muscles undulating lunar light.  
The mare waits a moment, turns, prances away.

The flat surf is almost soundless  
with the year's lowest tide. The dunes  
are ripples of sheen, dusky shapes. The mare  
snorts at a scuttling crab, an oblique shadow  
crossing her domain. The stallion nears,  
nickers and nips at a moon streak  
on her flank, hurries to block her premises.

Claiming his right to her promises, throwing  
his ardent cry to the ancient salver  
serving light, he declares himself best  
of his remnant kind. Here in their only home  
of barrier island sand biased with silver.

--Glenna Holloway

the Piedmont  
Magazine  
(Jared)



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INFRA/ULTRA

Jealous of how light lies on you  
slant-sharp  
probing deep  
beyond my sight  
beyond my touch  
Long rays pattern you  
seeking you out pore by pore  
circling you claiming you

Shadows are not as possessive  
Not like shine melting over you  
sliding glorying adhesive  
your skin taking it all in  
radiating reveling in it  
reflecting it magnifying

New day flirting through the windows  
lamplight neon lunelight  
you make them worshipers  
Even candlelight becomes potent  
winding you as an icon

How can I compete  
with sun moon bulb  
or flaming wick?

"Air Traffic Personnel Resign in Protest, FAA  
Insists System is Adequate"

--caption, Chicago Tribune

CONTROLLER

5 Today will be his final day. Today  
4 the screen will not go home with him,  
3 will not cast blips astray  
5 throughout his troubled thoughts, awake, asleep.  
3 Forget the box of wires  
4 too old for constant overloads,  
5 the fragments of blown whistles, little fires

he lit beneath their apathy, the static  
of officialdom-- to hell with it,  
he tells himself. His attic  
clear of chaos, he will walk away,  
forget the scope, the strain, the weather.  
His mind replays a recent night--  
how cursing close the blips had come together

when he went blind and silent, and his voice  
acquired an edge as if to pierce  
the pilots' phones. No choice  
in his remembering the iced sweat bath  
before his sound and sight  
were backup-patched. Now, two airliners  
near a wayward Piper in his light.

Three planes, a quick synapse away from trouble,  
a rain squall filling up his glass,  
they speed across his bubble  
parenthesized by left and right brain, judgment  
held between. These dots  
are why he's giving up the job,  
a part of his own viscera, these spots.

He vectors them through mazes drawn on time,  
each factor hung on unseen threads,  
on fallible junctures, rhyme.  
He prays against a failure-- mechanical  
or mortal-- calls the courses,  
covers odds with everything  
he's got, his skill, his cells, his inner forces.

Wet turbulence outside repeats on skin.  
His data banks project four million  
flights this year, a spin  
of numbers winging past the warning signs.  
Round brightness claims him now,  
his eyes burn only for these three--  
for whom he knows he must provide the how.

7 lines per  
stanza

1+3 rhyme  
5+7 rhyme

"A Dorn septet"

Amazing! This flows  
very nicely, but I  
sure it took a lot of  
effort to write.  
As always, I very  
much enjoy your poems.  
-Caroline



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*not a poetic point, but I don't think it's that easy to  
put these images aside - not even  
the poem, with its omniscient  
perspective, can do it.*

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*standard is without  
spaces on either side -  
however, my preference is  
to put a space on each side  
of the n-dash (here represented  
as two hyphens).*

when he went blind and silent, and his voice  
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*again  
not so easy -  
the guilt being  
avoided is not so  
easy to avoid*



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*a wonderful piece*  
*Satan*

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*A Wonderful  
Poem - Leave it alone!  
M.*

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*Wonderful!*

*Jim*



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*a tour de force!*  
*Genius!*  
*Wunderful!*  
*Banking*

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*I can't imagine a more  
respectable or more demanding  
job. You get the tension  
across totally as who are  
made perfectly such case?  
Maggie*

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acquired an edge as if to pierce  
the pilots' phones. No choice  
in his remembering the iced sweat bath  
before his sound and sight  
were backup-patched. Now, two airliners  
near a wayward Piper in his light.

Three planes, a quick synapse away from trouble,  
a rain squall filling up his glass,  
they speed across his bubble  
parenthesized by left and right brain, judgment  
held between. These dots  
are why he's giving up the job,  
a part of his own viscera, these spots.

He vectors them through mazes drawn on time,  
each factor hung on unseen threads,  
on fallible junctures, rhyme.  
He prays against a failure-- mechanical  
or mortal-- calls the courses,  
covers odds with everything  
he's got, his skill, his cells, his inner forces.

Wet turbulence outside repeats on skin.  
His data banks project four million  
flights this year, a spin  
of numbers winging past the warning signs.  
Round brightness claims him now,  
his eyes burn only for these three--  
for whom he knows he must provide the how.

*Can't imagine your  
patience and  
perseverance  
in writing this.  
Great!  
CJS*



"Air Traffic Personnel Resign in Protest, FAA  
Insists System is Adequate"

--caption, Chicago Tribune

CONTROLLER

Today will be his final day. Today  
the screen will not go home with him,  
will not cast blips astray  
throughout his troubled thoughts, awake, asleep.  
Forget the box of wires  
too old for constant overloads,  
the fragments of blown whistles, little fires

he lit beneath their apathy, the static  
of officialdom-- to hell with it,  
he tells himself. His attic  
clear of chaos, he will walk away,  
forget the scope, the strain, the weather.  
His mind replays a recent night--  
how cursing close the blips had come together

when he went blind and silent, and his voice  
acquired an edge as if to pierce  
the pilots' phones. No choice  
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*Wonderful  
vocabulary*

*I am totally  
unaware of this  
form*

*but it doesn't  
matter*

*This is a  
great piece*

*John G.*



WOMAN BEHOLD YOUR SON

The little boy was hungry,  
the little boy was cold.  
Not more than nine or ten  
with eyes so tired and old.

His coat was torn, his shoes outworn.  
His face was pale and gaunt  
with deep sad eyes designed to haunt.  
His stance defined forlorn.

He looked at me so pleadingly,  
this young boy so alone.  
The facts I learned had churned my heart  
out of its comfort zone.

My plans aligned to make him mine.  
I'd give him love, security,  
a family, warmth and shine.  
Adoption was the answer.  
And in return for hearth and home,  
he makes my heart a dancer.

--Glenna Holloway

TO THE IGNIS FATUUS

She lives in swamps where darkness swallows day.  
Men say her hair is like the sun's corona,  
The color of a waning winter moon:

A beauty strange and wild, a child of night,  
Who loves to dance where twilight lurks at noon.  
I followed her until she disappeared

Through sedge and brackish pools up to my knees.  
I glimpsed her far ahead where ravens jeered,  
Then lost her as I dodged a diamondback.

For hours I stalked her in footprintless mire.  
With burning wisps she cleaved the devil's black.  
She led me faster, luminous and lithe.

Sweat stung my scrapes, exhaustion stole my breath.  
Behind me walked another-- with a scythe.  
And still I could not let her get away.

I thought of quicksand, silent cottonmouths;  
My feet entangled in a vine, I lay  
In shadows, lisping ferns above my face.

Who could know my folly? Where I was?  
Who would think to look in such a place?  
Panic overtook me, but it passed.

I know the stories of the foolish fire.  
With luck I freed myself, went home at last.  
Before sleep came I vowed to try again.

Come searcher, learn the real will-o-the-wisp:  
Sweet alto calls from deep within the fen,  
Intoned with promises still undisclosed.

Come slog among mutated mud-grown trees  
And wait for wind's unwinding tongue imposed  
On wrinkled water ringing cypress stumps.

Where latent evening alters natural time,  
Few fronds of morning filter down to humps  
Of moss and hummocks pocked with sinking holes.

(cont.)

Your myths and struggling gods, your snarled concerns  
Are mimed by strangler figs, green aureoles  
Surrounding rotten logs suffused in weeds.

Once more the old illusions take command,  
A bog trick, unrelated to your needs.  
Stay braced for total dark and call it right:

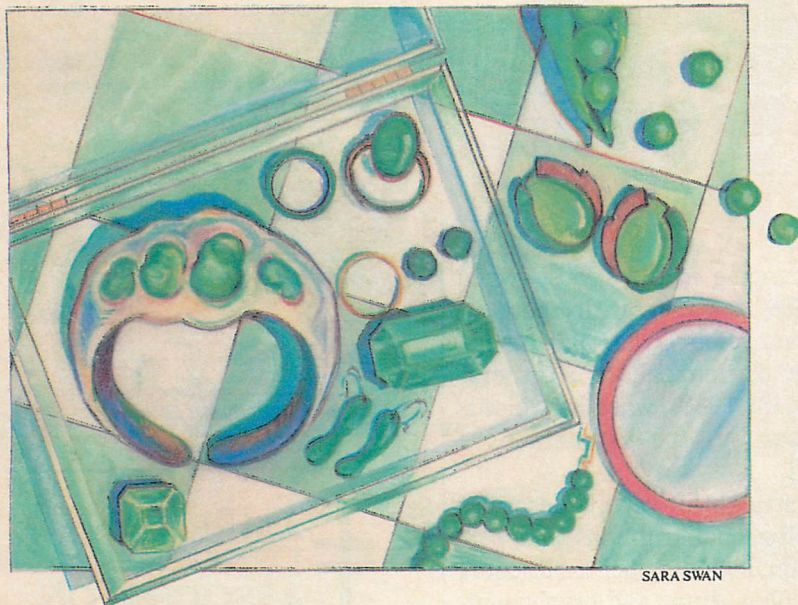
The ignis fatuus, the apogee  
Of all you seek, the great elusive light.  
Hold fast to scientific explanation,

Don't dwell on legends, just remember facts  
As lambent flares ignite mind's conflagration--  
But look! Her eyes fluoresce with blue-white flame;

A dream could live on such cold heat forever.  
I must embrace her once, must stake my claim  
Before she flees, before I learn her name!



# Verse



## *Fortieth Anniversary*

You gave me my first ring when I was ten,  
an oval dome of bull's-eye malachite.  
You'd learned to cut and polish stones so when  
you learned my birthday, you could expedite  
the present problem in a unique way.  
I don't remember anything I got  
except that gem accented with a spray  
of aqua swirled around a deep-sea spot.

I never thought I'd be so fond of greens:  
Demantoid, prase, and peridot's pale limes  
still stir up the excitement of my teens—  
aromas, songs, the feel of special times.

For graduation you designed me jade—  
two exclamation points for new-pierced ears.  
Each time I fondle all the things you made,  
they unwind pastel images from years  
still green as what's inside a June pea pod:  
Aventurine and tourmaline so skilled  
in workmanship that people stop to nod  
and gaze at how my jewel box is filled.

You learned to facet, understand the rough;  
today you gave me emeralds in a ring.  
But, oh, your gift of self has been enough  
To circle life with green fire from a king!

*Glenna Holloway  
Naperville, Illinois*

## *S.R.O.*

Stand and wait for  
rapid transit;  
when it comes—no  
place you can sit.

*Virginia Baker  
Salt Lake City, Utah*

## *Horse Sense*

A froth of blood  
means nothing to a horse.  
A horse will munch  
ignoring fists and cries,  
placidly chew and crunch  
one foot on yours.

Your insults and curses,  
brimming eyes,  
don't much affect  
that force.  
The nicest horse you know  
will flick and knock you down,  
or prance and kick  
and go on chewing,  
cozy at the bin.

Permit me to explain:  
This loveliest of animals  
has one wee, dinky brain.  
*Dodie Messer Meeks  
Houston, Texas*

## *The Competent One*

Calm and efficient, capable and quick  
She never makes me feel I should be, too—  
She cultivated long ago the trick  
Of doing all the things she had to do  
Without a lot of fuss. I never feel  
Reproved, rebuffed, or put the least bit down  
If sometimes fumbling—for she never deals  
In sarcasm, or frowns a weary frown.  
There is a motive underlying this:  
A choice she must have made from early on  
To overlook whatever seems amiss;  
To recognize the good and then be gone.  
Her competence is so adorned with grace  
She leaves a benediction in each place.

*Doris Kerns Quinn  
New York, New York*