TCPL
Poem in Your Pocket Day Anthology 2022
He's so courageous that he eats rocks for breakfast...and dinner, too!

He has more courage than the devil on a bad night.

He has more courage than he does mismatched socks.

He is more courageous than he does mismatched socks.

He is caveman.

He is me!

Rich Recchia
They are most skilled at loving and at being loved. They are magical, precious beings, journeying through life. Time is their rocket fueled by laughter, and dreams that wait for them in the sky. They peer into tomorrow, and ask, “what new worlds can I explore?” And at the end of each day, they power down and tuck themselves into the arms of those they trust. Their loyalty is stronger than the sun. They twinkle and shine - a gift to the universe - a perfect night in this darkened world.

Children.

Peaches Gillette
You asked me to cut your hair for you, the darkest hair I’ve ever seen piling up on the white porcelain floor of your bathtub, falling from your head, falling from the teeth of the electric razor. It’s still the coldest room of your otherwise one-room apartment, and I think of you now, in the shower, rinsing the stray strands from your shoulders in your cold bathroom, and I think of myself laying in your bed, warm, writing this poem while you’re getting clean, all of it, the hair, the words, you, me, all seashells cast out, washed out to the ocean.

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Swiss Border, December 1938

As it was told to me
Four of them packed hurriedly
At 3am
Stuffed cash in bags
To fund exile in Palestine
Or Switzerland
Or anywhere they could get
When soldiers searched the car
They found in grandpa’s valise
His Iron Cross
Those soldiers
Let
Them
Drive past

Michael Dixon
Between
The pages of
One old library book
Paper songbirds nest waiting for
Release.

Carrie Cuinn
Dream caught and rinsed and fried
Breath blurt bursting through kissing tonsils
A nocturnal ledge step, sit, somersault
Red and blue danger disco dance
Scrunched closed eyes and arm out
Sudden sleep snores
Rising from a familiar narrow, long, white bed, not mine,
Again.

Veronica Haunani Fitzhugh
The bride in me collapses, 
a day-after tent that was caught 
in a hilltop storm 
before it could be torn down.

Now
I have my inner fire, 
which of course flickers 
at the whim of winds, 
blowing shadows at my sins 
and burning in an off-spring.

The stiff fall grass will still be in my 
hanging dress.

Audrey Baker
Kyiv railway station 20 March 2022
Inside the train, fingertips pressed to the window, hard.
On the platform fingertips against the window, hard
against departure.
Wheels turn clockwise west. He trots along westward, fingers slipping, her face in shadow, then gone.
Against the station wall
The news camera sends pixels to everyone to tell
What it is like to go to war.

LeGrace Benson
ptsd

when my heart beat faster
and i held my breath
i heard his pitter-patter
and i begged for death

when i ran to survive
and i never looked back
i sought respite
and i still felt trapped

when i was finally free
and i relived it in dreams
i cried myself to sleep
and i remembered nothing is as it seems

Jane Bowman
Life’s colors

He is blue or red or yellow or green—sad or angry or frightened about life, or envious of his neighbors, his spleen turned toward anger, as a menacing knife. Where does an aging man find peace? “I’ll build some new and greater monuments,” he pleads. He seems to have some plans yet unfulfilled, and wants to find some way to meet his needs, among them finding courage in the mess of what existence sometimes gives to him, the essences which sometimes turn to stress—or accept it all as nonsense, a whim.

Pattern his world with colors which employ other things possible: courage and joy.

Roni Fuller
I think perhaps it is easiest to love someone who clearly needs it.

How do you do with letting this be seen?

Emily Walsh
She fights not for freedom, not for glory, not for gain
The struggle remains internal she fights herself
Who she can be, not who she is, or who they want her to be
She takes to the streets feeling the masses
In a sea of protesting people she finds herself
Strength above all else, caring, bold and full of heart
Fearing only a future unchanged

Jane Doe

Sean McKeen
Portait of a Girl, 1942

Based on a Jan Lukas photograph of Vendulka Vogelova, a few hours before she was transported to a concentration camp.

I am the mirror for one who speaks; these fresh gaps are wind in the linden trees, cotton flowers of life.

I am the mirror for one who is trembling like a child who has noticed too much, eyes hard olive pits. I think about how life cracks when the vanity glass overturns our hands. Sharp pints in bars. Uneven edges of ale. Crisp indignities of foam.

I am the mirror for all who choose not to speak. I crack in the dark. I shine in the snow.

Millicent Borges Accardi
what’s possible

A long time ago, in an
auditorium lighted orange red on a warm winter’s
night
I heard Maya Angelou talk;
her voice alone was worth the price of admission.

From my cushioned blood-orange balcony seat
I drifted in and out of my own troubles, circling
beneath and above her grave words: take care
she said,
make note of the human spirit, and of its virtues:
kindness, compassion, charity – love;
but regard the greatest of them all – courage,
for without it none of the others are possible.

Gary Rasp
Cause as Case for Courage

James W. Hamilton

But which truly causes what? Let’s blame love’s allure.

Courage to notice correlation is a slick scientistic cure:

Scapegoat theories don’t always make action feel better;

Some spreading plagues, like our brave love

In these sticky viral gobs, claims nagging mother:

So harsh lately, may have made phlegm move

Might come before or after. Such wet weather,

Kissing if this ill came from germs. Scapegoat

Just randomly occur? We may have to quit

Prior cause? Or did my cough and sore throat

Do all true events ensue from your adequate

Theories don’t always make action feel better;

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in these sticky viral gobs. Claims nagging mother:

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The Library Card

When I change my name
The Librarian tells me
“Congratulations.

It's a big step. I've
Never done this before.” I say, “neither have I.”

Matt Dankanich
The Yellow Bus

Nikita is 12 months old.
His mother is a sniper.
She holds his chubby little hand,
stroking it gently with her thumb.
The bus is full of snipers,
waiting for her to board.
Finally, she steps onto the bus,
waving goodbye to her son.
He smiles back at her.
The bus, along with many others,
leaves Kyiv for the countryside and the war.
Who is the most courageous? Him? Her? Them?

Ronda Roaring
Two Bells

A ringing echoing singing and thundering
Over and under and through the air

A jingling thrilling and jumping and cheering
All who hear it in the square

The crashing correlates the creaking clock
Finding the time at the rhyme of the dine

The dancing dresses the denizens dear
With the joy of the season, that sweet summer ear

miles
You still have to show yourself
After you molt

Musty
Odorous
Hot as coals

And if you choose instead
To deflect critique:
Of your pale new wings
Of your reddened leaves

You still have to show yourself
Refusing to molt
Unable to breathe

Ro Adams
Holding the Fox

she remembers how her grandmother died that snow-deep January when she was twelve and knew nothing of how emptiness can call and call for ghosts. The fox is red with a moon-white belly and softly she strokes its winter fur as it grunts and snorfles, then settles down to make a sound like crooning. How to protect a small creature so wild that does not know its own danger? Her grandmother’s hair was warm red, too, and her own hangs like cold fire.

Katharyn Howd Machan
It is not courage

When someone tells you their truth
It is not courage.
When you reach out in the morning to the grumpy teen
It is not courage.
If you lose sight of a plan and make a change
It is not courage.
If a friend offers advice you might not like
It is not courage.
When you learn to overcome that obstacle
It is not courage.
In all of the above it is Love.
Love of self, love of others, love of life that make the choices possible.

Elizabeth Stuelke
old man's small steps — 
how distant 
the bus door

Ruth Yarrow
solid as a red brick wall
deep rooted as a tree,
of which once all were saplings
until they came to be

a newer version of themselves,
wrapped in roots and layers deep
they looked for strength inside and delved
to find the nerve to keep

walking down the dark lit road
what waits there you know not
but know now if you do not go
then this was all for naught

fear may travel side by side

but you will weather, and abide

Claire Fisher
I’ve Got This

I saw her sticking it,
One level up.
I tried and tried,
And my solution came up.
Practice on a line,
Don’t want to give up.
Soon I will be like her,
One level up.

Grace Q
Smiley Face

I was scared and nervous,
But then my fear went away.
I was bright as a cheerful flower.
Maybe the sun will go down,
And maybe I’ll be blue again.
But I will always keep my smiley face on,
And be a happy girl.
That’s how I get my courage.

*Sloan Q*
the tree that ate up the world

it has its roots rather deep
i shudder at the thought of
picking them out of the deep
of the ground

but that tree is sucking
up life up litter up death up critters
it’s a dying thing that tree
and everyone marvels as it
keeps on living

but it’s my job to uproot that tree
and save for these dastardly feelings
i would have been done by now
but still i shovel, i hit, i pummel

at the tree that ate up the world

Ana D.
Bloom
You are delicate, nimble,
Wind is the peaceful music you dance to.
You realize
Your rhythm is different than the rhythms around you.

But like poppies in June,
You will bloom, little flower,
If they do not nourish your power,
Get louder-
You will tower
Above all the ordinaries.

Zadie Wang
Chesterfield

He walks beside the green-running shoes: gray tangerine
a fading cadence born
in Chesterfield

Not an OPEN sign in sight
'tneath the stitch 'tween day and night
in his mind he strides alight
through Chesterfield

His pale shadow soars the 'walk
glides the buildings like a hawk
as it chalks its final flight
yon Chesterfield

Jan Best
Can't you see?
Denying your heat
Is to muzzle the tides.
There is more than one
Way to be strong,
And you—
You are the roaring ocean.
Passion and fury overpouring,
tempests seething ice.
Deep below, vents hydrothermal,
The beginner of life.
So let your heart roar loud,
Loud, for all of us to hear,
And take what the water gave you.

Andreas Candelario
APRIL SNOW

In the dim early sun I saw their mark—
Diffident, dizzy imprints in the snow
On the back porch, where breakfasting they go:
Chipmunks and finches, cardinals and larks.

Here in the fragrant kitchen, warmed with tea
I with ungrateful thoughts rebuke the cold
And am in turn rebuked by blue and gold
Feathery flighty things content to be

Fed a few nuts and seeds this April day
Dusting their wings before they fly away.

Susan Weitz
Refugee

You crane your neck to see again what once you did call home.

Ellen Hirning Schmidt
The Call

We cowered
behind electric screens, doors, masks,
isolation stretching the very limits of sanity.
In our long torpor the old rules were forgotten.

But now the time has come—
The herald's horn beckons us to emerge,
abandon our barren husks,
burst forth with new life!

So we begin again with fresh and liberating purpose:
Bravely meet all beings with kindness.
Never recoil from the spectre of fear.
Help the helpless.
Embrace your dream, trust its inspiration.
Boldly plant the seed of love.

Eva Marques
I know which had my name on it, kissed it with my eyes. The old pool
on the grass, inching Jenga blocks on the windiest day in March.
No glass in the windows, not since 1971 or before. Your brickwork

Castle on the Hill

Rachel Coye
Courage Built for Two

The child pushes on the pedals
The shiny new wheels go round and round
The father, holding tightly from behind
Smiles as he finds that he can
Let go and watch his five year old
Dare to ride into the future.

Linda Keeler
Prevention

One more day
providing a lifeline
through the phone,
Praying
once again
my love will banish your demons
just long enough
for long, slow breaths
so the day will end
with tears unshed,
and you still alive
for a goodnight hug
and muscles
that have forgotten how to relax.

Suzanne Brody
Courage is the last to jump.

Brave goes first
with lion's heart and james brown swagger
two-timing the gritty treads
bending the board like a ruler for a slap
leaping broad, flying high, splashing hard
exploding in laughter.

Courage goes last,
with fish-gill breath and victim's heart
owls eyes and turtles feet,
a step, a drop, a splatter,
a cry of relief.

Leo Tohill
Ekphrastic on a Starbucks cup sleeve

They cut off her fins
when she discovered she could swim
past the slimy green jetty to find
more of her kind.

Now steeping in vile reminders
of what they've taken — why the sly smile?
Funny thing...
She hasn't told them she can sing.

Emily Cotman
Courageous Fighter

She paved a path for feminism
A leader in the women’s suffrage movement
Tirelessly fighting for the 19 Amendment
While flags with purple, yellow and white soared high

One day she went to the poll and tried to vote
Flies through the sky flashes the words “VOTE”
She marched along while birds of blue and yellow
While flags with purple, yellow and white soared high

Susan B. Anthony is courageous.

Allegra LaFalce

Courageous Fighter
Ocean Blues Yellow

Yet strange things have been known to occur...a child’s coloring book, the play of light and dark against a wall, may spring out in hardy bloom, ignoring colorless boundaries to climb sea cliffs in heliotropic health. But for too long I lived as a pale, yellow foraging sponge upon the ocean floor. I didn’t know that yellow was also a color for a rose, and noon and lions.

Carolyn Clark
AT LEAST

If you try and fail
At least you are trying
If you sing and forget the words
At least you are singing
If you walk and stumble
At least you are not sitting and doing nothing
If you have a goal and do not reach it
At least you are doing what you can
To make your dreams come true
At least keep moving
That's the best thing to do.

Janie E. Bibbie
On Surfing

What does being afraid do for you?  
...it does nothing.
I see you from below, 
you see me from above.  
I am the wave that I create  
Within fear and emotion.  
The churning blue from underneath  
Lifts us all in the end.  
A blue line of life and death,  
Beauty in a wave.  
The deeper I go, the more I see  
And my balance breaks  
On the hazy line between the known,  
And the wild.

Jenni Kivisild
THROUGH FEAR

Talking is hard
Especially around others,
Walking about like
I actually belong,
Not erroneous in
Nature, burdensome to
All, crushing weight
Of loneliness, doubt,
Fear, anxiety chained
Bones, but I
Can’t stay hidden.
I must venture
Forth, every single
Day, despite everything.

K. Young
Turning Earth

Beneath the moon, rain, and starlight,
I bend.
Kissed by my feet, between my toes,
There among humus, black and brown,
Turned in red clay, my ancestors,
Inspired courageous seeds to open.
Dreaming me.

bev abplanalp
More than slaves, the enslaved
You want me to forget, to erase history
They were human beings
Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers
A few kin to their masters
They were human beings
You want me to forget, to erase history
More than slaves, the enslaved

Francine Wilson Jasper

They had the stuff heroes were made from
Travel surreptitiously from Ol' Virginny to upstate NY
My God, how did they do it?
It was a lie
You said they were dumb like animals
Carpenters, ministers, great orators
Seamstresses, innovators, farmers, charitable Givers
Self educated, writers, rhetors
A few kin to their masters
Father's, mothers, sisters, brothers
They were human beings
You want me to forget, to erase history
More than slaves, the enslaved

Francine Wilson Jasper
Brazen

When the chaos starts, it startles the cat awake. Two blue jays are losing their minds among the dying maple trees in our backyard. Their furious calls burst like fireworks. If the jays were human they’d be frat boys, jeering, preening, swinging baseball bats and holding these small trees hostage until the red tailed hawk that perches just beyond flies away to menace someone less enraged. Even as the raptor glides off on a current, the echo of their screams remains in the chirping cat. Take no rest, no prisoners, take the world hostage if it means protecting what small part of it is yours.

Melanie
Prowl

Suspended from its shoulders the cat stalks the grasses
Too short to hide it
Seconds ago the birds escaped
Squirrels sprang, mice disappeared
Now is the test of patience and stupidity
Menace and need
No sunflower is worth a life
Sprinkled on the ground risking the spring
Of claws grip and teeth.

Maude Rith
At the zoo, I notice animals speaking to a reflection. The panda says:

"You're not smart enough,"
The mole-rat says:

"You're not attractive enough,"
The meerkat says:

"You're not tall enough,"
The hyena says:

"You're not funny enough,"
The fox says:

"You're no lion,"
And the owl says: "You're alone."
The fox says: "You're no lion."
The hyena says: "You're not funny enough."
The meerkat says: "You're not tall enough."
The mole-rat says: "You're not attractive enough."
The panda says: "You're not smart enough."

And so I look back, and say:

These quotidian beasts look at this mirror and say: "That's you."

"And the owl says: "You're alone."
The fox says: "You're no lion."
The hyena says: "You're not funny enough."
The meerkat says: "You're not tall enough."
The mole-rat says: "You're not attractive enough."
The panda says: "You're not smart enough."

And despite them, I speak to the person at the next exhibit,

"You are clever, and you are wise."
You value community, and you love your family,

"You are fun-loving, you are resourceful,"
And so I look back, and say:

Kal Smith

Because courage is looking at yourself through someone else's eyes.

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At the zoo, I notice animals speaking to a reflection.
New month, new me?
Ha ha we'll see.
Truthfully, I feel upended...
I'm drifting through a dream.
The days pass, the numbers rise.
When I look at myself, I see fear in my eyes.

And so I seek nature,
run to sense it fast.
Thirsty for my antidote,
it helps the anxiety pass.
Birds warble, creeks gurgle,
tiny blooms are peeking through.
Nature perseveres and I know we'll make it too.

S.M.C.
Celebrate National Poetry Month and put a Poem in your Pocket.

Tompkins County Public Library
101 E. Green Street, Ithaca, NY

Library Hours
9:00AM—8:00PM  Monday—Thursday
9:00AM—6:00PM  Friday
10:00AM—5:00PM  Saturday
1:00PM—5:00PM  Sunday (seasonal)

Curbside
11:00AM—6:00PM  Mon / Wed / Fri

607-272-4557
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Virtual Poetry & Prose Open Mic
Thursday May 5, 6:30—7:30PM
Zoom

Come share your poetry with the community!