

Menagerie: An Anthology of Christian Writing

Edited by Kim Bond

This anthology is dedicated to our Lord.

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A Strange Journey

by J. Ben Avraham

The young man found himself in some sort of tunnel. It was a swirling tunnel that seemed to be made up of radiant light. This radiant tunnel of light seemed to revolve around and around, pointing to some kind of distant vortex which seemed to grow nearer and nearer.

At first, he felt himself being pulled through this strange tunnel rather slowly. Then, the speed picked up. He managed to see through the sides of the tunnel the blackness of the night sky filled with an array of heavenly stars. These were the

same stars he saw night after night, now;
they seemed closer, even closer still.

He thought back to the warm, summer nights when he often lay down in the grassy hills near the olive groves. He would look up into the sky and imagine he was father Abraham, seeing the same evening stars, those twinkling, tiny lamps that gave testimony to God's splendid creation, the same God whose promise was fulfilled so many thousands of years ago, that through him, a nation would be born.

Now these same stars became a white blur as they rushed passed him, or perhaps it was he who was rushing past them through this strange tunnel of light.

As he looked to the far distant radiant vortex, he noticed a star which was brighter than all the others which were around him. The star grew in size as he moved through the tunnel, faster and faster.

The star seemed to take on a certain shape as he got nearer. He saw that the shape took on the appearance of a four-square city of a whitish-golden glow. He saw a wall, a wall that seemed to stretch for miles and miles and appeared to have no end.

Beyond the walls lay the city itself in a dazzling array of multi-colors. The tunnel of light ended suddenly, and the young man found himself suspended high above the city looking down.

Gazing down upon the golden city he observed a multitude of heavenly hosts array in dazzling white tunics with golden belts around their waists. Their feet were shod with golden sandals encrusted with all sorts of precious stones. No doubt these beings were angels as they also had enormous white wings which were folded behind their backs.

The angels were all busy at work, building and inlaying precious stones in mansions of all sorts and sizes. As far as his eyes could see, there was construction work going on. It seemed that this entire city was getting prepared, prepared for some event, a very special event.

As the young man continued to look out over the golden celestial metropolis, he saw one of the angels looking up at him. The angel opened up his radiant white wings and flew upward towards him. In a matter of seconds, they were face to face, both suspended above the glowing city of golden white light.

“Peace and blessings to you son of Adam,” spoke the angel with a resounding voice.

“And to you, angel, blessings and peace,” replied the young man at the wonder of this entire splendor.

“Welcome to the Kingdom of Heaven, the great city of the King,” continued the angel.

“I’ve heard that name before,” replied the young man, “I’ve heard it mentioned by a dear friend of mine. To whom does this city belong?”

“It is the city of the King,” spoke the angel with pride, “The KING of kings and LORD of lords, the creator of the universe and all that is in it. It also belongs to all who are HIS and to all who believe on HIS name.”

“I see,” spoke the young man, “the heavenly hosts down there busy building all those glorious mansions. Are they not for you who believe on HIS name, you, who indeed belong to HIM?”

“Indeed,” replied the angel, “we do belong to HIM and we believe on HIS name who is

HOLY, but this city is built for all redeemed man, for all men and women, great and small who have trusted and who will trust in the complete work of redemption of the LAMB.”

“Redemption?” questioned the young man.
“Redemption from what?”

“From the curse of sin,” replied the angel,
“the sin which all mankind has inherited from Adam, who is father of all who breathe the breath of life Oh Son of Man.”

“And how,” questioned the young man, “is this redemption to be fulfilled?”

“The blood,” replied the angel, “for without blood there can be no remission of sins.”

“But that is the reason for the sacrifices,” answered the young man. “We have daily sacrifices at the temple. The priests and Levites take bulls and goats and...”

“They are but shadows, oh man,” interrupted the angel.

“Shadows?” questioned the young man.

“Yes,” replied the angel, “shadows of things to come, mere shadows of He who has come to fulfill all the prophecies of the Torah and the Prophets. It is He who walks among you this very day.”

The young man stood there wondering, wondering and marveling at the words of the angel. *Just who could this be?* he

thought. Did he know him? The angel seemed to know his thoughts.

“It is He who teaches in the synagogues, the essence of the Torah and of the Prophets. It is He who makes the words of Moses come to life and gives sight to blind eyes and strengthens the legs of the lame. It is He who heals all sorts of disease and raises the dead. He is the one who comforts the sorrowful and who embraces the children.” The angel stood there gazing into the eyes of the young man, hoping that the words would enlighten his soul.

The young man just stood there, suspended high above the holy city of God, thinking, contemplating over the words of the angel. As he was deep in thought, only one person

came to mind. Only one person could meet that description.

“Could it be my dear friend Yeshua?” asked the young man, looking deep into the eyes of the angel.

“Indeed,” replied the angel with joy, knowing now that understanding had reached and penetrated his soul. “Your heart has revealed the truth to you, and this same Yeshua will suffer at the hands of sinners. He will be mocked and stricken, he will be despised and chastised with whips, and by His stripes will all mankind receive healing.”

“Those are the words of the Prophet Isaiah,” said the young man, still deep in thought.

“Indeed,” replied the angel, “and that prophecy will soon come to pass.”

“But who would want to hurt my dear friend Yeshua?” asked the young man a little perplexed. “He has done no harm to anyone, only good has he done.”

“Does a lamb offend so that a serpent will strike?” asked the angel, gazing intensely into the eyes of the young man. “Nay, yet the serpent will indeed strike the lamb and the shepherd will be slain, yet the shepherd-lamb will rise from the dead on the third day. Hear this oh man, the serpent’s head will then be crushed.

And only then will the captives that lie in Abraham’s bosom be set free. The Son of

Man will take the key of life and open
Heaven's gate to receive the redeemed.

All those who sleep in the dust of the earth,
from righteous Abel to him that will be at the
side of the lamb will inherit this same city
which you now see.”

The young man marveled at the angel's
words, taking in all this wonderful news.

“And how do you come to know all this?”
asked the young man.

“It has been revealed to me by the Father,”
answered the angel. “It is He who knows all
that will come to pass, and as the Father
thus wills all that is to come, so does the

Son give testimony to the Father by His obedience, even unto death.”

“When will all this occur?” asked the young man, his questioning eyes gazing into the angel’s.

“Soon,” answered the angel, “very soon, but I must now return unto my labors below as you must return to yours, as you are being called back. Soon, very soon we will meet again and this City of God will be your inheritance as one of the redeemed by the blood of the lamb.”

The angel then opened his snow-white wings, aglow with the Shekinah light and flew back down to the streets of the City of God. There he rejoined the rest of the

multitude of heavenly hosts, and continued to build inlaying precious stones in the mansions of the redeemed.

The young man just stood there, hovering above the City of God. He watched the angel as he returned to his work with the others, becoming just a tiny speck amidst the vast multitude of heavenly beings. He stood in awe, taking in the glorious splendor of Heaven. How he wished he could stay, being a part of the heavenly host.

All of a sudden, he heard a voice. It was a voice of thunder, a voice of command, of infinite authority. He felt the air vibrate around him; the resonating voice seemed to engulf him completely, seemingly to draw him away from this heavenly realm. Indeed,

he felt now that he was being drawn away, entering the same tunnel of light which brought him to this city of peace.

He felt himself being pulled away, faster and faster. As he looked back he saw the Kingdom of Heaven growing smaller and smaller until it looked like just another one of the bright stars of the heavens.

Around and around he traveled, feeling an unseen force which he could not explain, a force which pulled him through this strange tunnel of glowing, pulsating light. He observed around him all the stars of heaven going past him, leaving behind them small tails of light.

Up ahead, he noticed a small, round object of blue and white color. The object got bigger second by second. He then noticed brown and green mixed with the blue and white colors. The object then got so big that it seemed to engulf him completely. Then he noticed familiar objects; trees, hills, and mountains. He noticed a familiar countryside of green meadows and date palms. He finally saw something very familiar, it was his own house. Behind his house was a small, rocky hill. He felt himself being drawn into that that hill, a hill that harbored an empty tomb.

Suddenly, everything went dark. He felt confined, lying down on a hard, stone surface. He felt bound by cloth and a horrible stench of death permeated the pitch

dark atmosphere. Then suddenly, a voice rang out, a voice that he recognized the voice of a friend, his master and teacher, the voice of God, saying...

"...LAZARUS, COME FORTH!!!"

Love in the Silence of the Soul

by David Meade

(Inspired by Walter Wangerin Jr.'s book
Reliving the Passion)

As a young boy

Sitting in a pew

The winter darkness pressing down

Candlelight waves from hidden drafts

Shadows danced on the walls

I heard the words destined to me

“Be still . . . know that I am God”

So I listen . . . eyes open

“The Passion of Christ”

I was gone . . .

I saw eyes . . .

Judas under the olive trees - Gethsemane
His eyes . . . cold, darting . . . filled with
manic evil
Torchlights hissing . . . turning eyes yellow
Then a kiss and chaos erupts
I closed my eyes . . . suddenly afraid

Now I see a set of eyes . . . filled with
burning hate
A High Priest screaming . . . B-L-A-S-P-H-
E-M-Y!!!!!!
All around ugly eyes staring with dripping
contempt
Old men spitting with bared rotting teeth
Then I noticed . . . and . . .
And my heart ached . . .
Jesus . . . standing quietly with closed eyes

Then we were off to Roman authority --

Pontius Pilate

I saw his slanted eyes . . . squinting as if too
much sunlight

Loud voices yelling outside . . . “Crucify
him!”

In my heart, I cursed these people – but his
eyes

His eyes were dark, soft – forgiving

A hand washing and we are walking . . .

To a hillside, a place called Golgotha – the
skull

Empty eye sockets . . . a place of death

The eyes of soldiers hard, focused . . .

Spikes, woods – his sad eyes burning my
heart

Closing my eyes, I heard a sharp gasp . . .
soldiers yelling

“Lift”

As I opened my eyes – I was looking out
with his eyes

We were seeing the same things

Angry faces with eyes of burning ashes

Taunting and jeering – a wave of hysteria
hitting us

I heard and felt a deep groan

Fear gripping me – I knew instantly we
needed to go

Now!

Men, women, soldiers, slaves, leaders,
teachers

Eyes filled with blood lust

Evil, hatred I can't breathe

Death coming with the darkness

Jesus! Can't you see . . .

Then I heard him whisper
“Father, forgive them, they know not what
they do.”

My heart sank realizing with horror
Jesus is staying . . . dying
I felt his purposeful breathing
Muscles, bones, joints aching with a searing
pain
My eyes filled with tears

I saw another set of bloodshot eyes
A voice next to me yelling
“If you’re the Christ, get down from the
cross
And take me too! Let’s go!”
NO, NO!!! . . . What is he saying
Those are my words – I am sick
My stomach seizes . . . guilt fills me

I close my eyes

Another voice – on our right speaks

“Lord, remember me . . . ”

Jesus painfully turns, twisting his body . . .
looking . . .

He sees blue eyes – my eyes

I am hanging next to Jesus

“Today you will be with me in Paradise”

We were one – together . . . one body

Now separate crosses . . . I feel crushed by
loneliness

But his words . . . “Paradise” . . . “today”

He loves me – I see him looking at me

His eyes illuminating my soul . . . it hurts

I tried crying out – I love you . . .

But only a sob squeaks out

Gravity pulling down pulling down
Eyes straining against the pain
Joints and ribs stretching . . . popping
Chest heaving for each breath
Body convulsing against wood
Head back . . . eyes wide open . . . he
screams
“My God! My God! Why have you forsaken
me?”

No one answers . . . surprised eyes
In my tears I felt the agony of the cross
The bleakness . . . hell
Dead eyes

Back in the pew
I heard the preacher
“He died for you”
What . . . why . . . no . . .

No, I don't want you dead
Jesus?

Hey, wait for me – slow down
Running hard, breathing deeply
I stuck my head in empty tomb – hmm??? .

. . .

I sat quietly next to Mary Magdalene . . .
wondering
The gardener spoke – “Mary”
But he was looking at me – bright eyes
He said . . . “David”
“David, I love you”

Yes!! Woo Hoo . . .
Look at me . . . I am dancing
With shining eyes
“I love you too”
“I love you”

“Lord Jesus”

“I do”

Yeshua

by Mercy Susanna

Under the argent beam of moonlight, she called out names at the corner of the street. She tried to capture young men with her eyelids. “Come in, let me fill you with the deepest desire you have. Let's drink deep of love. Come let's enjoy ourselves and spend the night together.”

Men walked clinging to their bottles filled half with wine. Watching and waiting, as the dry leaves rustled in the breeze, she saw a man dressed in white pass by. Jingling earrings hanging down her shoulder, she came towards him with her neck outstretched. She put her hand on her hip, a

creep so cunning on the face and rolled her painted eyes, “What’s your name?”

He turned and watched her in silence. His eyes filled with compassion, perplexed her.

She couldn’t look into his for long. A lump formed in her throat, she couldn’t breathe for a while. Her mouth went dry. The lines on her forehead disappeared. Her face calm and still, eyes filled with tears washed her inside out. Quiescent ripples on her lips; with a hushed voice she called him, “Yeshua!” In a flash, she picked up her scarlet robe behind and draped it around, in disguise. Falling on her knees she cried out, “Lord! Lord!! How hast thou looketh into these eyes of a harlot?”

He touched her famished soul with His.
Conciliation steadied her fickle heart. He
saw her profound regret and with an intense
tenderness, he said, "Woman! Your sins are
forgiven. I'm making you a pure bride.
Never look back."

Messengers

by Nicholas Froumis

Gentle messengers soar
with white wings beating
over weary waters below.

The first baptism
in an endless expanse of ocean;
the second baptism
in a calm standing river.

Raven, like forerunner,
first prepares the way
until dove brings salvation.

Words of hope drop from mouth,
like the carefully delivered olive leaf.

Purple Waters

by Ruth Asch

Rumour immemorial of purple waters
filtered through my infancy, subtly - a pastel
dream... 'Till the day demons burst out of
their chests, rampaged through the family,
confronting each other - and I fled twisted
faces, teeth of anger, throats of pain – ran
through grey coolness, to the woods.

Was it my breath or first raindrops
pounding? Tears or shadows made me
blind? My chest viced tight by unseen rope,
and talons from our house were reaching,
through the trees... A man appeared.
Perhaps a forester; like the heart of the
wood beneath its tempest - he brought

calm. His eyes warm-green as grass
between the bracken on sunlit days, beard
like twisting vine, and his hug was like a
tree's: rooted.

He led me down a path I hadn't seen
before...trunks gradually clearing 'till we
stood on the banks of a lilac lake.
Spellbound in its mystery of colour I forgot -
everything - a while. He cupped water in his
hands from wavelets. It ran out before my
mouth could reach. I tasted only salt on my
lips, the trace of tears. So he laved my face
in lilac water - and the world was clean. I
could have stayed forever; followed my kind
saviour anywhere - but he took my hand
and turned me back... Moments into the
woods Daddy was there, smiling relief and
wondering, what had become of me?

The man had gone. Dad said the lake had never existed. Delving every inch of forest over years I never found it. But it was.

As I grew, talk of purple waters eddied round me. How they altered those who bathed in them or drank. How you could spot a violet aura in their eyes. People spent lives searching, or following, from place to place - it was said the purple waters did not tarry.

Others pedaled *agua morada* in syringes. Some saturated lonely ponds with iodine, and made a mint as guides to the secret. There were those who had gone to stay beside its banks and were never seen again.

There was an old woman, neighbour from childhood, always quiet, always there. She knitted me cardigans, floral and lumpy. When I paid a visit in her final hours - I saw her eyes were not grey as I'd thought, but luminous light purple - chalcedony!

“Do you know” I asked breathlessly, “where to find them?” She smiled, but did not speak.

There were tales of the wisdom of the people who had drunk; stories of good deeds, their hearts aglow... From time to time I started on exploratory journeys for that lake. Was disappointed. And I wondered – if those waters fill your eyes -is life filtered, for those who drink it? I did not

want to be a purple person. Indigo spectacles – what morose vision!

It was despair, again, which drove me walking. Walking from demons which tore my own guts this time – and another's. I walked to hide, and to find safety far from home. I did not care about the waters. But I wished with all my heart for him.

There he was! Perhaps he had not seen me... he walked away, his shoulders bowed. I could not think what to do but follow... across a no-man's land, dry, dusty and littered, into a thicket where twigs stuck into face and arms. Where was he going? We broke out, suddenly, upon a beach – the shores of amethyst sea. It sparkled, it breathed... I was enthralled....

Suddenly he bounded down before me into iridescent foam – and turned to face me. He was laughing and stood beckoning... but the glistening waves were reeling. Unfathomable depths of purple ocean, felt hungry. I froze. Took one small step, another.

He walked into the water, swept it toward me in one gesture - spray tingled in my eyes. I squeezed them tight. When I opened them – deserted gloomy seaside, was all I saw. One drop of liquid was on my tongue - like scotch and honey: sweet, a dozen layers, burning...numb.

The grey breakers before me gave no answer but the endless usual. And yet... they were filled with colours! Everything

around me hid shades I had not seen
before. Musing upon a rock, I peered into
myself - and saw the same! But to the
pocket mirror... my eyes, were faintly violet.

Night Time Demons

by Kevin Shaw

Please don't turn the light off,
I'm scared on my own.
Talking to my imaginary friend,
Helps to keep me calm.
This house that's full of people,
and yet, I feel so alone.
Looking for reassurance,
That I'll be kept from harm.

The gas lamp on the corner,
Keeping watch over me.
My comfort blanket hides,
The demons from my eyes.
A gentle breeze casts shadows,
From our willow tree.

A scratching in the woodwork,
The cat outside that cries.

Headlights from motor cars,
Criss-cross the ceiling and walls.
I start counting slowly,
Which helps distract my mind.
I hear a loud man's drinking song,
Including crude cat calls.
These sounds all around me,
Becoming more defined.

A young boy on the edge,
Frightened by his own reflection.
These feelings of anxiety,
Are difficult to explain.
Want a restful, peaceful night,
To sleep away the tension.
Letting go of this anxiety,

That has no physical pain.

Overactive mind at night,

and tired mind by day.

I want to wake up confident,

But accept it will be hard.

The farmyard rooster sounds,

Morning alarm in the usual way,

Dad shouts up the stair,

“Off now, early start in the yard.”

Daylight emerges slowly,

My monsters, will run and hide.

The new day brings a promise,

To take away my fear.

The house awakens slowly,

Before bursting into life.

But as a new night draws close,

Will my demons reappear?

The Last Sunset of October

by DT Richards

The meeting had been billed as a healing session by a group calling themselves "Elijah Ministries". Roland was not exactly sure why he found himself interested. The poster on the events board of the suburban Presbyterian church he attended up until that point gave little more than a date, time and driving directions. Perhaps it was just the orange color of the poster, like pumpkin but easier on the eyes.

*

The directions led him to a small church, one of the old country churches scattered across the landscape north of Toronto. Outside it was sheathed in plain brick,

closer in style to a Presbyterian pointed steeple than the traditional Ontario Anglican Norman tower. But inside it was as rich with religious and community iconography as only an Anglican church can be.

*

The pleasant color of the poster was what Roland remembered that Thursday morning. He remembered the color, and then the date, just as he opened the day's calendar on his network computer. October was almost over. In a little over a week, daylight savings time would end, and with it his last chances to leave work before sunset.

Don't even consider it, he told himself. These chances never pan out. Always something comes up.

That thought was both comforting and life sapping. He wondered how long it would be before the chains of his routine would be too strong for him to break.

*

The sanctuary of the church had been paneled in dark brown, almost black walnut, which found its complement in the high-back pews of the nave and railings of the choir. The legs of the pews supported levered, padded rungs for kneeling. The ambience spoke to Roland's Presbyterian heritage as something soft and dangerously magical. But it was too late to leave, now.

He chose a seat along the north wall, far enough back to make him inconspicuous yet not so far back that he looked uncommitted. An impressive bronze inlay

listing the dozens of parishioners who had lost their lives in the Great War towered over his left shoulder.

*

Nothing came up. Roland had been expecting the draft of an MOU from Eçzey all day, and it never materialized. He walked over at five to find Eçzey's desk vacant. A bout of anger rose to his face. But, as he strode back to his desk to grab his phone, he remembered Eçzey had a baby son, only a few months old.

He sat at his desk, the anger still rising and falling. He flipped open the McCauley-Henderson brief then closed it.

Too late to start that now, he thought. It would take at least to eight to make

headway in it. He grabbed his coat and was on the way down to the car park before he realized he had actually broken free.

*

About twenty people had scattered themselves over pews of the country church. Most were older than Roland, in that relaxed, oft-washed attire of people who no longer work for a living. The women sported the frumpier, disheveled style that differentiated Anglicans from Presbyterians. A couple of the men clustered behind the overhead projector sported knit cardigans and ties. They nodded to Roland when he entered, and flashed a tight but polite smile, but they didn't walk over to introduce themselves.

*

Roland thought of the meeting again, just before he got on the highway. He had forgotten it during the day, but had glimpsed an orange poster on a lamppost standing by the entrance ramp.

With a sinking feeling, he realized he no longer had any excuses. Yes, he had not taken Yonge Street, the route the directions had given, but he thought he could continue further north up his highway, past his exit, and then cut across.

*

The Elijah Ministries meeting started without any formal introduction. One of the older wiry men turned on the projector to display a song lyric on the stand-up screen located to the opposite side of the pulpit, and they started singing, without accompaniment.

The songs seemed familiar to the group, though they weren't the kind Roland's church ever sang. They spoke of a loving and tender God, one who loves and cares for His people and gathers them under His wing. Roland found the thought odd and strangely comforting. He wondered about their use of Bible verses: he would have to look it up when he got to a Bible. His pew had none.

*

The highway changed just after his exit. The factory boxes and giant-sized cardboard mock-ups for upcoming subdivisions disappeared, leaving only fallow, content fields on either side. The carriageway, reduced to two lanes, rose in gentle waves until it entered the forested slopes of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Roland left the highway at Stouffville Road, still unsure if he were going to attend the meeting. The anger in his chest seemed to flare out at strange things, like the particular way the road dipped into a valley, turned, and rose again. He was no longer sure it led all the way across to Yonge Street. He might end up getting lost, in the dark.

He pulled to the side to check his map. Just then the sun chose to set down the roadway, not directly ahead, but close enough that it cast a warm orange glow across the back of Roland's hands. The fall haze had rendered the sun weak enough that he could actually watch it settle into the trees.

The beauty of what he had seen wrapped him in a sense of awe and wonder that lasted all the way to the church.

My Brother, A Valiant Soldier

by Judy K. Haught

(Dedicated to my brother Alan Layman who died on September 10, 2016)

You were so young and oh so ready,
Nerves of steel, young and steady.
One day you chose to step forward and
said,
"I am going to be a soldier," you kept your
word.
Mom and Dad had no idea what you were
going into.
You said, "Don't worry, I do this to protect
you."
You were gone for only a short time,
to learn the basics, to learn the soldier's
rhyme.

You came home proudly, all dressed in blue.

The hometown cheered as you passed through.

Then the orders came, they said your time has come,

Your orders: "You are going to Vietnam."

You fought a war so valiantly, you lost so many friends,

Never in a million years, did you know how it would end.

After much fighting, blood, sweat, death and tears,

You were spared among others, never forgetting those years.

Nights you cried out for your fallen comrades,

Family feeling helpless, worried we would make you sad.

So many memories you have locked up
inside,
Feelings and emotions you have tried to
hide.

My brother I know you, it was not what you
planned when you left home.

You came back strong and proud knowing
no more you would roam.

You see today, the images of your fallen
friends,

Their belongings boxed up, what was left of
them.

The boxes sent home for family to see,
belongings

of those who fought a war so valiantly.

Praise God today, we understand your
heartache and why

You sometimes sit and ponder of the days
gone by.

We love you for what you have given to
others over the years,
While deep inside you fought so hard not to
let your memories
give way to tears.
Be proud for serving your country, the lives
you have saved.
It is a road to freedom, for other you have
paved.
With love forever and gratitude I send this.
Forever in my heart, I love you, from your
sis.

"If we ever forget that we are one nation
under God, then we will be a nation gone
under."

— Ronald Reagan

Beyond My Years

by Wanda J. Burnside

On the walls of my mind
Are photos of memories
That has been left behind
They are of moments and days
With my family and dear friends
The years haven't faded my memories away

My eyes are the windows of my soul
With each passing year they help me
To see what to cherish, as I grow old
No longer do I see life from my point-of-view
I have learned to care more about others
For surely, this is the right thing to do

I used to open the door of my mouth

To release whatever was on my mind
But now I think before I speak out
Considering others is right and fair
With time has come wisdom
I'm well-seasoned with my gray hair

There are pains and aches in my back
My bones are stiff and muscles are sore
But, I press on with youthful days in my
flashback
Time has blessed me to listen and hear
What is spoken from lips and whispered
from hearts
I am thankful to receive these messages
beyond my ears

My feet are not as steady as they used to
be

However, I stand firmly on what is honest
and true

I will not waiver or sway against humanity

Age and time want to stiffen my hands

But, I pray that I will always use them to
help,

To love and rescue those from life's
quicksand

I will smile whether my teeth are here or
gone

For I must encourage others to have hope

When they are discouraged and feel forlorn.

Life comes with changes from day to day

But it is up to you to choose how to live

Do it now... without further delay.

The Magnificent Islands

by Kim Rodrigues

Yanked right out of my easy chair into a boat and I was sailing to Anywhere But Here. The turquoise fluidity slapped against the boat. I did not understand any of this but I was glad to be Anywhere But There. For there in my easy chair my thoughts were restless. Each new thought brought me to a discontented place.

So I have charted this voyage to the Magnificent Islands. The warm sea air blows loose my hair and I don't care. My cheeks are on fire, looking healthier than they've looked in ages. I smile at the other

passengers. Each has a tropical drink before them so I order too.

We land on Cotton Candy Beach where the sands are pink and blue. My bare feet laugh as my toes touch the sea water. And I laugh out loud as dolphins suddenly appear, talking to us in their squeaky voices and doing tricks.

Suddenly, the sand becomes sticky and I find myself slipping as quicksand pulls me under. Frantic bubbles hit the surface of the waves. A dolphin swims to the rescue but before he can pull me to safety, I slip out of my chair onto the floor landing Back Where I Began, but a little less tired. Curious, I look at the blue and pink sand clinging to my feet and my thoughts are swimming toward

contented places. I giggle like a schoolgirl
and call up my travel agent.

These Feet of Mine:

Ode To Ten Toes

by Molly ~ wound dresser

I've given all my heart, my hands, my lips to
speak for You,

But now I'll add, on morning fair, these feet!

Now they're Yours, too!

~~~

I pledge to You, right here and now—I want  
to make it clear;

These feet of mine, are Yours to guide,

Whether traveling far or near.

~~~

Though often Lord, in days gone by, they
wandered where they would;

I want to state, for them—(and me...)

They'll now go where they should!

~~~~

These feet of mine, they often pine, for  
paths of “greener” grass,  
No wonder then, I raise my chin,  
To heavens made of brass.

~~~~

O Lord, how patient You have been, with
them (and yes...) with me!
And sought us out—You heard our shout...
Came running at our plea.

~~~~

You rescued us, from all our fuss; You  
showed us where to go,  
And now these feet, (both right and left!)  
Will follow—high or low.

~~~~

“Dear feet of mine, don’t fail me now!” our
Lord has sovereign plan;
Just follow Him—He knows the way,

(No side-tracks made by man!)

~~~

And we will see, when we get there, what  
joy to go His way!

Straight paths He'll make—no spills we'll  
take!

We'll celebrate and say...

~~~

“Dear Lord above, Your patient love, has
taught us how to prance.”

And now these feet, to all they meet,
Will ask to join their dance!

~~~

“Come follow us!” they'll sing and shout.

“His will makes all things new.

He's given wings... what awesome things!  
For skimming rainbows blue.”

~~~

“No longer stuck —in mire and muck, of
going our own way,
Instead we fly! Above the sky!
And this is what we say...

~~~

“Though we were once just feet of clay...  
Who longed for only their own way...  
We follow now where ‘ere He goes...  
(...His ways past finding out you know!)

## The Coffin of Clay

by Annieve Leonardi

It was a big fete adieu  
of course it was  
she was the daughter of  
honorable judge Milton  
He may have been a little  
mouse from Kentucky,  
but he was her only pet  
She had named him "Lucky"  
and he slept in a shoe box  
next to her bed.

The red carpet was rolled  
the prayer shawl imposed  
the candles lit and burned  
before a little coffin day old  
The father in his court dress

draped her and said,  
"He was old, that's why he died"  
The whole town arrived  
to pay their respects to  
a little wee mouse in a coffin  
of clay...  
"Even mice get coughs and die,"  
Elizabeth said with a sigh  
she was saddened,  
of course she was,  
but she never, cried...

## Surprise Gift

by Saranya Sridharan

Rosy went to the shop to choose a gift. She searched through all the shops to get the best one. She spent a lot of time choosing, taking one by one and analyzing it with care. A sweet playful smile decorated her face. It had almost become her routine for the past few years. It was always fun to do. At last, she took a cute greeting, looked at it with affection.

When she reached home, she began to fill it with her feelings. It was the best part, pouring out her feelings. After a lot of thinking, phrasing and rephrasing, she finished it and ended with her favorite line:

“Even waiting is fun, when it's for you.” She admired it for some time and opened the drawer. She placed it beside the other gifts.

Her eyes longingly went through each gift. There was a teddy bear, wallet, calendar, scrap book, photo frame, greetings, pen, smiley ball, many love letters, and much more. But each one had one thing in common. It was not specifically addressed to anyone. Along with those gifts sat the greeting she brought today, patiently waiting for the right person and right time to come. Years and years with loads of love and affection, like her.

## Horror Night

by Saranya Sridharan

I was sleeping peacefully. Suddenly I felt uneasy. Something was coming near me. Its shadow was becoming huge, something scary. I tried to move away but couldn't. I was confused, too scared to even scream.

When I tried to turn around, I realized something was actually near my feet. I kicked hard and was sweating badly. And then I saw something jump off from my bed.

When I saw clearly, the cat meowed in a complaining tone. I laughed at my timid nature.

## Mirror

by Kim Bond

It was our first day on the job. Our masters had finally moved into the new Tudor house. We worked in one of the most popular rooms of the house, the bathroom. It was a small room with an elegant marble floor, bamboo planters with lush emerald ferns, and a gold framed mirror. Oh, I should introduce myself. I am the honorable clawfoot tub. I do not like to brag, but my all of my parts were made of the finest materials—acrylic construction, chrome lion paw feet, shower enclosure, and a thermostatic shower head. In spite of our prestigious appearance, trouble was afoot.



It was my colleague—the mirror—who initiated the disturbance. Our master entered in a finely fitted suit. He checked his reflection in the mirror. The master looked outstanding, but do you know what the mirror told him? I could not believe what I heard!

The mirror said, "Look how old you are! Ugh! You look close to death. Get some plastic surgery or something."

Just when I thought I was the only one who heard, our master leaned closer to the mirror and said, "I could use a facelift."

Did I say anything to the mirror? No, nothing at all. I stayed calm and cool. A few minutes

later, his wife walked in wearing a crimson cocktail dress.

"You look fat in that. You should just stay home," said the mirror.

I hoped she had not succumbed to the mirror's wicked influence.

She smoothed her dress and said to her reflection, "Yep, I should stay home. I will just tell him I don't feel well." Then she walked out.

About thirty minutes later, their teenage daughter walked in. She removed her black jacket to wash her hands.

"What is that rash on your arm? It's hideous. Put the jacket back on immediately. People will think you have a disease," the mirror said.

She inspected her rash and put the jacket back on. Then she left.

I could not take it anymore. I finally said, "Mirror, your job is to reflect the beauty of this family. It is not to make judgment!"

The mirror replied, "What do you know about my job? You are such a drip."

I walked the master's eight-year-old son. I refused to let the mirror continue to abuse the family with her harsh opinions. Before

the mirror could say a word, I turned my shower head on all hot.

My shower head kept flowing and flowing and flowing until the whole bathroom steamed up. The condensation on the mirror was so thick that the young boy did not bother to check his appearance. When the mirror opened her mouth to criticize, she just coughed and coughed. He ran out the door calling for his mother.

I felt the moment was right to make a deal. "So, Mirror, can you be quiet and reflect beauty?"

Finally she choked out, "Yes, yes. Just turn off that steam!"

So I shut off the water. From that day on, the mirror did not make a peep. The toilet paper was stocked. The soap dispenser was full. And we all lived happily ever after.

## A Note To Readers

Thank you for reading *Menagerie: An Anthology of Christian Writing*. One great benefit of reading anthologies is the opportunity to enjoy a variety of perspectives. Some writings in this collection move us to savor some lighthearted laughter while others motivate us to plunge deeper into a relationship with God. Please take a moment now to reflect on how this literature may have impacted you. Do you want to meditate on more positive thoughts instead of worrying? Are you ready to surrender more of your life to God? Will you dedicate some time to encourage others? Take a moment to ask God to help you. Maybe you want to take a bigger step. Are you ready to accept God's

love for you and join the redeemed so that your final destiny will be the city of heaven? Join in prayer with me:

Lord, I admit I have sinned. I believe You are the Son of God, and You died on the cross to pay for my sins. I accept Your unconditional love for me and give You my love as well. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to walk close to You, Lord. Thank You for the free gift of eternal life in heaven. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Congratulations on making a great decision. I hope you will continue to grow in Christ by praying, reading your Bible, and attending a local church. May God bless you with abundant life and many wonderful opportunities.

## Draw Near Books

If you enjoyed this publication, you might also enjoy other Draw Near free ebooks like:

*\*Never Forsaken: A Testimony Collection* presents the most compelling Christian testimonies from the internet plus fresh new true-life stories. Stories include first-hand accounts from a drug addict turned pastor, a Hindu woman turned Christian through a supernatural experience, a prostitute turned pastor's wife, and powerful visions. This book offers insight into the reasons people choose to believe in Christ despite their different backgrounds.



*\*Spiritual Citizens: A Christian Fiction Anthology* includes short stories by Jan Ackerson, Michael Austin, Joseph Courtemanche, Voni Harris, Judy Haught, Nancy LaRonda Johnson, John Mark Miller, Tolulope Popool, Esther and Richard Provencher, Chong Shipei, Charles W. Short, Gerald Shuler, and Lynn Wehmeyer. Stories vary from literary to adventure.

*\*Creator: A Christian Poetry Collection* includes over 20 incredible poems by poets Jan Allison, Jeanne Beaumont, Faye Gibson, Jay Harding, Judy K. Haught, Joyce Johnson, Richard Lamoureux, Robert Lindley, Antony Mark, Stephan McBride, Liam Mcdaid, Brenda Meier-Hans, Casarah Nance, Kimmy Nelson, Regina Riddle, Isaac Thomas, Leon Wilson, Dave Wood,

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You can find them on [Smashwords.com](http://Smashwords.com) or at [www.drawnearthochrist.com](http://www.drawnearthochrist.com).