



**The Prairie Review**  
**Issue 3**

# **How Sweet, How Sweet**

by H. Harvey Martin

Love knows no knowing,

Knowing diminishes it.

Bite the apple

Savor the crispness

How sweet, how sweet.

I love you because ...

Put a word on it,

I dare you

Bite the apple

Savor the juice

How sweet, how sweet.

I will love you until ...

Put a time on it,

I dare you

Bite the Apple

Wipe the lingering moisture from your lips

How sweet, how sweet.

# Your Music

by H. Harvey Martin

Do not die with your music still in you -play your music now,  
Care enough to sing your song  
To tell your story  
To boast of your triumphs  
To recount your grasping of the Angel at the base of the ladder  
To share your regrets and losses,  
Your hesitations at the precipice of the abyss.

Our frontiers are reconnoitred by your story,  
Our repertoire is increased by the song you sing,  
Your fearsome Angel may not have been subdued,  
The Abyss may not have yielded a single secret, but...  
Still, -tell your story now. How long did you hold on?  
Who blinked first, you or the Abyss?  
Do not die with your music still in you, play your music now.

Do not carry either song or story with you into the abyss,  
The Abyss does not care.  
Care enough for those of us that remain  
To tell your story now, while we can still hear it  
We will sing -and play -and write -and live.  
We will author our own tale, sing our own song, all the better -if you,  
Favor us with your singing and telling now.

# **Dementia**

by M.S.

Remember how you felt in the morning  
When the dust of dawn was not yet gone  
Remember the flashing signs  
Your eyes bright with blinding light

Remember the watchtower and the way  
And the ocean that stole the golden key  
Remember when you still had a memory  
When we strolled through the evenings of the past in that great temple  
Laughing at its strange columns  
Under the shade of its sweet inner trees

Remember when your eyes no longer received light  
When they shined so bright you could no longer see?  
I suppose you don't  
But I do

# Clarity in Stillness

by Valerie Wittman

I don't want life to speed past me like a blur of moving traffic. I want to breathe in all its gifts and let its current run right through me. I want to look at beauty and not just see it but feel it. I don't just want a starry sky, I want it to tell me its story. I want it to lecture me as I gawk up at it from one out of endless perspectives. I want to shut up for once and listen to the purring of the wind while appreciating the way it tickles my skin when it brushes past me. And even if my thoughts intervene maybe I'll still hear its lullaby. I want my next meal to not just be a race until desert. That's all life ever seems to be. I want to admire every hidden flavor as they melt on my tongue. I want to lick my lips between each bite. To really take my time as I lovingly satisfy my appetite with a little sweet and savory. I want to dust off old vinyl records and be swept off my feet by music the right way. With its pops and crackles and perfect imperfections. I don't want to skip to any song, I want to hear them all. Every heavenly instrument and heartfelt lyric. I want to love someone so much I see their face in the clouds. And I want our next kiss to be two spirits colliding. And then I don't want small talk, I want enormous talk. All centered around the cobwebs of our pasts, what keeps us up at night and what makes our hearts sing. I want to stop overlooking signs and start realizing all that's right in front of me. I've already slept through far too many miracles it seems. I don't want my coffee to go, I want to sit and sip it mindfully in the courtyard to the soundtrack of children's laughter. Then I want to express gratitude for that coffee and laughter. I want to drive in my car with no destination in mind. Just an open road beckoning me from beyond. I want the kind of clarity that can only birth from stillness. In a space where the clamor of voices can't talk over wisdom. I want to see the world through a child's eyes, with my mouth agape as if seeing it all for the first time. I never want to acclimate to the trees, the mountains, the oceans, the cotton candy skies. And if I do please let them remind me of their grandeur. I don't want to move so quickly that I zoom past life itself. Because then I'll be an old woman longing for her wasted youth. And she would want me to savor every fleeting moment. She would want me to look. Really look. To listen. Really listen. To feel. To taste. To breathe. To love. To be. She would want me to bask in my borrowed time. To wrap my arms around the many marvels of the world and not just graze them with my fingertips. But to embrace them as the whole that I'm a part of. Because soon everything that surrounds me will be nothing but a reflection in my rearview mirror. And I will have sprinted right past my one precious life.

# Who are You?

By Valerie Wittman

Who are you really? I don't mean your name or where you're from. And I don't want some condensed list of self-described personality traits. You cannot attempt to sum up the complexities of any human being with just one or even twenty adjectives. Tell me about the real You. The You that surfaces when no one's watching. When the sky melts to black and shadows can't tiptoe across the pavement. What mulish thoughts are rattling around in the cages of your mind? Do you ever feel hopelessly alone amongst the stale clutter of a sardine-packed room? Do you question your very existence and find yourself baffled at the thought of us floating on this rotating orb somewhere in the abyss? And what about the stars? Do they humbly remind you just how small you are in comparison to their infinite wonder? Or, do you sense an inexplicable connection? I want to know the questions that sear your core. Do you sometimes feel like an anomaly unworthy of the love you crave? Or is your face the last to be cropped from the portrait? Do you ever find yourself teetering over the brink of destruction and choose to witness your own demise? Or do you find your way out of the debris without a scratch on you every time? Where is it you wander when your spirit yearns to be lost? Does it look for itself in faraway lands with tribes of people who look and speak nothing like you? Or perhaps it seeks the warm comfort of a suburban home and a dopey golden retriever. Does your heart throb achingly for a timeless romance? Or is it too timid to give itself away? What would your younger self think of you right now? Would a time machine tempt you to unravel your destiny and weave it into something else? Or would you keep your story exactly the same? I want to know what ignites your fire. What makes your hair stand up. What happens to the whole of you when the fragile foundation of your universe collapses. Do you scramble for the pieces? Try and reassemble a pretty picture? Or do you let it be? If you only had a year left to live would you start living differently? Would you trade the familiar montage of copy machines and cubicles for the unknown? If I asked you what purpose beckons your soul with a gravitational force, could you tell me without hesitation? Or do you splatter your colors across a blank canvas hoping to have made something worth noticing? I want to know You. The real You. So tell me. Who are You? Or did you not think to ask yourself?

# Depths of an Old Soul

by Valerie Wittman

Your depth makes you an unwelcome visitor in these shallow waters.

You're misunderstood by the human ensemble

And yet so in tune with the hymns of every passerby.

You inhale emotion, eat it raw regardless of the pungent aftertaste.

You speak in metaphors and see in throbbing technicolor

Where everyone else sees in black and white.

You're surreally aware that the trees are like wise ancestors

Connecting an invisible thread to every living thing.

You've witnessed it in your dreams

A place your body and soul separate like oil and water.

You're the ghost inhabiting a vessel you don't remember selecting

And it's here that you'll learn heart-wrenching lessons that thaw your insides.

Mistakes teach you in shaky rhythms

And you feel them like an earthquake in your bones.

To you, beauty exists in everything that's overlooked by man

And love never ages the way man does.

You believe in destiny even when you're scolded for it

And despite your stab wounds you keep fighting to heal others.

Every sunrise is a whisper of opportunity

Which is why you think all humans that walk the earth are capable of greatness

So much so, that you won't ever stop trying to add color to a gray world.

# Maude and Frank

by H. Harvey Martin

*(Circa 1975 -Somewhere between Pittsburgh and Topeka)*

Maude was quite independent and gentrified,  
Until her sons moved away and her husband died.  
Maude suddenly realized that she could not even pump her own gas,  
Necessity required her to put appearances aside,  
Soon she was fueling her own mower and cutting her own grass.

Frank, in his day, was a real man's man  
But when Maude took ill, he took the Hoover in hand  
And donned Maude's frilly apron, and became the boss  
Of the kitchen appliances -of the pot and the pan.  
He tied on that apron faithfully -before he attempted to fry the sauce.

While Maude was ill, the neighbor men with a squint of glee  
Observed in manly tones -quite down to earth,  
That their man Frank took to the apron a bit too eagerly.  
Meanwhile the women neighbors, with equal mirth  
Were commenting that Maude now knew what a good man was truly worth.

Each frilly-aproned woman or rugged macho man  
Adjusts their behavior to the task at hand  
They rise to the occasion, as we all must do.  
Pray you have good neighbors who will not mock you  
If you have a pretty apron -and a good gas can.

*(For Mr. Maravilla a retired steelworker (bless his soul) who was accused of "moving around the house like a woman" while he was taking care of his bedridden wife of forty plus years; a wife who had raised six sons and two daughters while keeping a spotless house and a backyard garden that was fit to host four stylish weddings.)*



**End of Issue 3**