Awaiting the Equinox
(March 2013)
The Presence of Bear

His shadow was there, all along,
Every night, revealed from across the threshold,
Long unnoticed, but inescapable,
A shadow without the tangible creature,
Corresponding.

Technically explicable, perhaps,
But it does not need an explanation.

The Souvenir

The clerk, she thought they all looked pretty much the same,
But opened up the case out of obligation,
Till I found the one I knew rang true.

It sat on a shelf as a souvenir,
Well dusted and admired, till the changes.
Then it had work to do, ringing true,
Through to other truths.
Mining Town

The cheerful cottage gardens
Behind the fence rails along Shake Rag Street
Welcomed the filthy ones without discrimination,
Each day they emerged from the depths...
And would console those remaining
When they didn’t,
With their swaying bells, small suns, and tall spires,
And a need for tending
While never offering criticism.
Arranged Marriage (Year of the Snake)

As the frozen dumplings boil,
Chopped leeks eventually fill the kitchen.
They will soon meet the forest mushroom stock,
Mark the year past,
And nourish us for the one to come.

Hooked on Birding

Redbud in full bloom
Eye-level near the sidewalk
Brilliant warbler flits
On Her Own

seven does searching
under the young cottonwoods
one crosses the trail

onto the prairie
leaving the others behind
a bit more wary

Opening the Shades

the calling dove bobs
on horizontal pine branch
sunrise silhouette
A Fragrant Path

A hard week passed.
I drove down to the river,
Pulled off the road and up to the gate,
Where the muddy trail
Follows a cornfield to the first ravine.

Long years had passed
Since I drove down to that gate,
Where the muddy trail leads west.
I walked the trail and crossed the ravine,
At the layered, blue-gray rocks,
And scrambled up the wooded slope
To a brome field, where...
I almost passed
A wide-spreading cedar.
She had some gifts to share,
Tiny, pungent gray-blue beads.
I took just one.
(You should, too.)
Gently, I pressed it with my tongue
Against my teeth, and slowly knew
This muddy trail was the fragrant one.
Then, I freed her seeds.

A few songs passed
From my heart out to the field
As I followed its edge
To where it approached a more gentle slope.
Fresh droppings were everywhere
And moist tracks impressed
On this narrower trail
That led west to some seeps
Of dead elms and sleeping morels,
And singing bluebirds,
More brilliant than her beads.
Meditations XI & XII

Each day
Call out to your medicine bundle
Someday
It may answer you

perfection can not
be approached from a single
direction, turn 'round
Before Breakfast

The rains that could be heard at midnight were gone,
But their thick clouds remained,
So the den was still dark and very quiet.
Under the sheets, the electric blanket, and a thick comforter,
I began to stretch and then nudged Wolf.

In a low voice, I asked,
“What makes you want to get out of the den?”
He growled and stretched a bit.
Then, in a low voice,
His answer held no surprises.
Boxie at Rest

What brought it to pass its final moments on the golden filagree within the low raspberry bowl?

Now it rests under a perpetual cottonwood leaf; never to be disturbed again.

Gentle Snowfall

The morning snow fell like a child’s fantasy Through a bright sky. Its flakes were a perfect size. They fell slowly, drifting carefree In no particular direction, Just enough to freshen the grimy piles And enliven the day.
Soothing the Soul

Pull out your pruners, make sure they're sharp
Search out the swelling buds on the red elms
Cut off a long branch, one growing in the right direction
Sit down and take out your pocket knife
Cut away the outer bark, peel the inner from the wood
See how long a piece you can get
Slice it into thin strips
Take three strips while they're still soft and green
Braid them together
Tie the two ends together
Set it in the sun to dry
Wear it on your person, under your clothes
Take the other strips, dry them, too
Grind them into a fine dust

What the powder does for your throat,
The braid may do for your soul
Reborn

After the big rains return
to wash away all the snow,
if you find yourself leaving
the warm, moist womb
a second time
and seeing the night sky
like you’ve never seen it before,
then your second self has been awakened.

Gerber does not make a product line
for your kind.

There is no special shop in the strip mall
for you.
But you may still need some new things; most young ones do.

You may seek them out alone, but if you find the best trackers, the sharpest eyes and keenest memories, they can point the way.

And do not overlook the old, dusty books, reports written when this world looked so different.

You never know where it hasn’t changed a bit, till your new you is out there seeking.
It was too late.
I already had put on my warm coat, saying good-byes, when...
By the cash register sat
The layered Hummingbird Cake, perfectly intact.

One warm Spring night,
After beers and BBQ on the screened porch,
We shared a slice.
Looking out into the darkening forest,
Celebrating the hummingbird and all its friends,
It was sweet and rich.

And just yesterday I learned
That a new friend is leaving town
To spend her days searching for bears
In that hummingbird’s forest.

Another taste would have been oh so sweet.
Not in the Minutes (for S.R.)

Friday's staff meeting was fairly routine,
But we (the sons and daughters of Flora)
Were examining ceramic suns and moons
And decorative metalworks ornamented
With crystals.

I glanced across the table to the far corner
And met her eyes – She was holding
A copper spiral – On it,
Hung a small glass globe.

Her eyes were so bright,
Her smile angelic.
It was almost too much joy for that room to hold.
Five minutes later,
She shared the fine news.
Senior Year (to A.C., A.M. & W.C.)

In the incredible year;
when forked candles were burning
for months from all ends,
two Crosses converged:
a golden one, almost ancient,
who taught the Carboniferous
and led field trips to the proper, prehistoric outcrops
(that caused my path to cross with a single mom
from the beautiful smoky hills,
who knew the Dillards’ songs by heart);
and a modern one, almost ancient in his own way,
who taught very different stories
crossing many streams of thought
that led back to a land before history.
The candles have mostly flickered out.

The golden one became ancient first.

The mom left her daughter some fine sketches.

And the modern one took off for the lake, never to be seen again.

But, somehow, their lessons live on.
The Ides of March

They would be wary and stay in their den with the new pups that morning. But we were not from these parts, so we packed up and climbed east from Patagonia after breakfast.

Snow began to fall. It turned heavy, sticking to all the signs. We were headin' for Ramsey Canyon to watch for hummingbirds. But none would fly in a whiteout, and we were almost lost.
So we turned towards the valley
and came on down.
The sun broke through momentarily
shining brightly on storm clouds to the north
and an amazing view that spread out
for almost ever.

We met up with them
southeast of Tucson,
when their hail poured down on us,
and we could only wonder
what would happen next.
Riders of the Healing Road

You should come out for a visit
When the pink milkweeds are in full bloom.
We can talk of tea olives, of gardenias and white stephanotis over tea,
Then step out the back and watch the bumblebees
Taste thick nectar on each swaying pink ball and touch them.

Ask their forgiveness for taking a few.
We’ll put them up in the extra room.
It’s quiet up there, and there’s a fine view of the trail.
Know that as you sleep the deer will walk that trail and watch over you.
In your dreams, they’ll let you ride on their backs (if you promise not to tell).

In the morning, we’ll go a calling after breakfast.
When you taste the first roasted pecan in the cereal bowl,
You’ll recall your dreams and begin to speak,
But a spider will distract you,
And you’ll spill a drop of milk.
There are many healers in these parts,
Who work in different ways.
One knows the deer, another the bumblebees.
A third knows all of bunting's songs by heart.
And then there's the one who touches the rocks
And can take us (in our nakedness)
And walk us towards the healing road.
(It may vaguely look familiar).

When the day is almost done,
We'll light a little flame and play a few songs.
A few slow dances may be in order,
Till it's time for you to retire to that sweet-scented room,
With the view of the trail,
Where you can always go a riding.
Important Work

At the end of that day,
The sun fell due West and I missed it.
The half moon rose in a cloudless sky and I missed it.
Constellations emerged more and more clearly and I missed it.

Then she called, rather late
(I was hoping she would).
But it wasn’t quite what I expected.

Her burden is heavy.
The load strains as she pulls it upstream.
No matter how much she loves it,
It hurts.

And, then, in the weary middle of burdensome darkness,
She mentions the stars.

I walk out the door, phone in hand,
Look up straight to the moon.
And, then, her burdens seem smaller somehow,
But more important.

The million stars and the half moon shine on.