

A Few Words

from Jan Carroll

Summer 2021: Friendship

“No person is your friend who demands your silence,
or denies your right to grow.” — Alice Walker

To a Friend Who Invited Me to Lunch

I will try to come in like carrot juice fresh
from the blender set on the banquette,
stress the rinses we recognize in each other
washing our gutters clean. When you seed
the conversation with sprouting questions
I'll try to follow the arc and the ache
that moved you to say *that* today amidst
the stew of possibilities seething
in the primordial soup of your brain.

I will hold open the door for you, the threshold, half
daring, half coaxing you to cross into the unfamiliar
room, the one begging for furniture and a glass
half-full of water hosting a handful of daisies,
all along the walls empty shelves longing
for your particular collections, for pictures to prove
what pierced you to the heart, what rescued you
stranded on the reef struggling to remember
those lines from Keats, that chorus that came to you
in the backseat riding through rolling farmland
the tornado left its mark on. And if you get lost
in the talking, I'll do my best to make sure you know
it's ok, we'll find our way again, casting our crumbs
together on the café table, seeing where that leads.
Failing that, tea leaves, reading our tentative meaning
into the pregnant space between us.



“It’s not a waste, this face-to-face,
that artistry plays on the stasis.
That we open the door again and again,
each other’s stop-action motion.”

—from “To a Pink Tulip, Midwinter”





Have you ever had a friend who was like a fire escape? Someone who pointed out to you both the benefit of getting out of your own head sometimes *and* pointed to one very obvious path to that? Someone who suggested other ways of seeing things, other ways of connecting with others and interacting with the larger world? Sometimes we can get so stuck in who we think we are, in what we so stubbornly believe, in the rut of how we've always done things, or in our own shaky confidence. It's good (a gift, really) to have someone in our life who embodies possibility, hope, and courage, and who encourages us to be our best, who nudges us to try, who reminds us there is always a fire escape, even if the building (you) isn't on fire (or if it is!). Wonderful, too, a friend who, in all that, can make us laugh—at them, at ourselves, at life!

To a Fire Escape, Not Just in Case of Flames

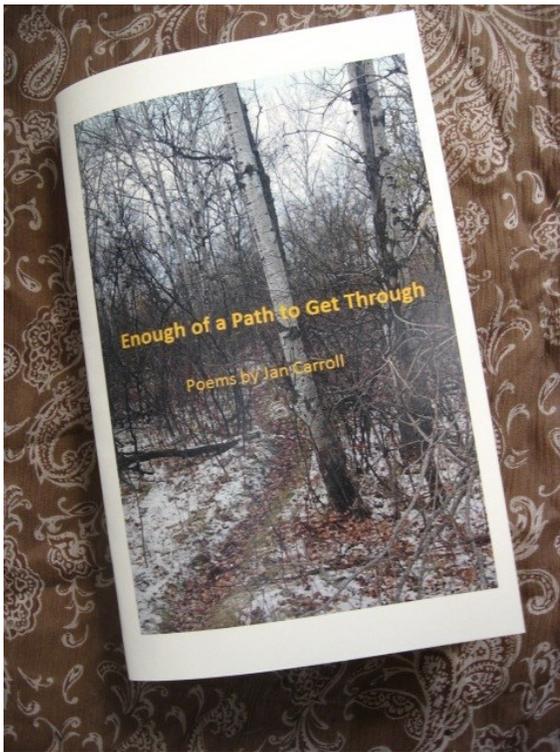
All that humid summer, the burning fall, winter coming on making things even more hard-pressed, me so often staunch in myself, so home-bound, so agoraphobic, so no-I-won't-go, won't come out of myself, out of my used-to a-part-ment, you like a fire escape were always there outside the bolted egress door, an alternative way to leave the premises, a zig-zag of flights and landings that snaked down to the ground, to the walk, to the boulevard, to the street where traffic flowed freely, to shops and bars, art installations, benches, cars, cars, cars, all those makes and models of who we think we are. Meanwhile inside the tenement, inside my delicate life endeavor, the elevator always in disrepair, residents who dared that route getting stuck in its ups and downs calling emergency, needing to be pried out. Even the stairwell grim and interior, dangerous past certain hours, sticky and dimly lit. In the rationing out of those weeks, though, you'd ring the bell, announce yourself over the intercom in humorous voices, enter in once I flipped the switch, opened the latch—what you brought to the party, to dinner, not flowers or wine, not an invasive presence, invasive species that we are, but a mind that looked out from its perch to all the windows through which it could possibly lift and stretch its wings, a concentrated gist that hovered in a kind of church and after the blessing, sent its congregants out infusing the world with flavor.

About This Newsletter

There are three ways you can receive these quarterly poetry musings: 1) via Facebook Messenger, 2) via your email, or 3) via a snail mail black & white hard copy. If you'd like to change the way you receive them, **email me at jan.carroll333@gmail.com** or private message me on Facebook. If you would like to discontinue receiving them (no questions asked, no hard feelings), just let me know. If you think someone you know would enjoy receiving them, suggest they email me.

They are free and humbly offered. Thank you for reading!

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Enough of a Path to Get Through

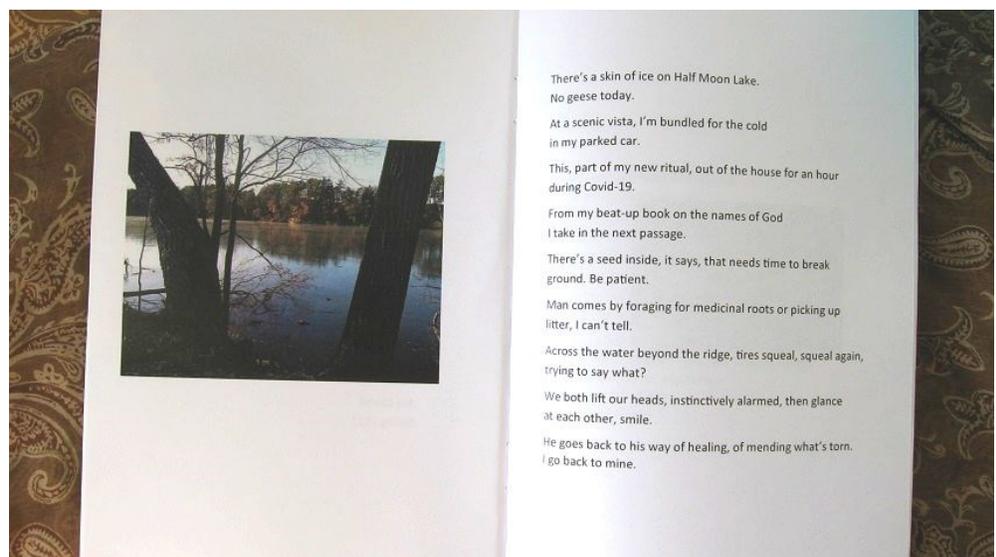
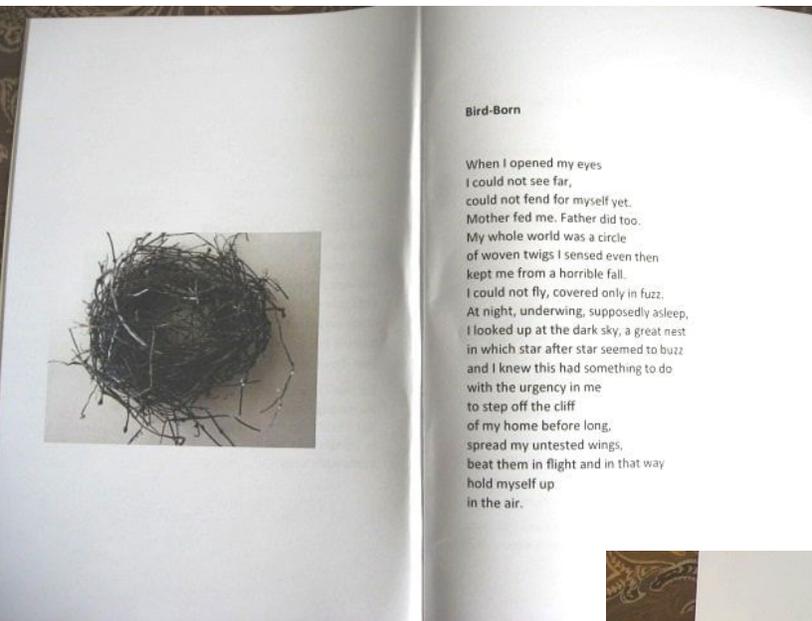
I've put together a collection of the nature-inspired poems and their accompanying color images I've posted on Facebook over recent (and not so recent) months, with some new poems and images added—21 poems in all. It's called ***Enough of a Path to Get Through***.

If you would like a copy, email or Facebook message me. \$8 each plus \$2 shipping (Cash, Check, or Paypal.)

They are also available through The Local Store (www.thelocalstore.org/enough-of-a-path-to-get-through.html).

For each book sold, I will donate \$1 to local organizations that work with those experiencing homelessness.

Thank you!





Fog lingers over the bay,
a homesick visitor
wanting to say
to someone far away,
"I miss you—the air, the lake,
the mist like this
make it seem—for fleeting minutes—
you are near."

Not knowing for sure, the answer unclear,
has its own kind of light, its own panoramic vision.
As you frame the question, what comes to you is
another kind of gift nudging you to envision
an array of what's possible, what's true, what's best—
ponder all these maybes and then make your decision.
But first sit with uncertainty, with its opaque cloud.
The fog isn't a barrier or a punishment, it's a provision.



Fog, don't lift yet, I like you here,
hovering above the river like a chimera,
a phantom, a jinn. I like you shimmering,
shapeshifting, taking in the scenery,
fiddling with it, then letting it be,
making the seen more as you make it less clear.

Today the fog is like a joy that's moved in
taking up temporary residence.

A grown-up cotton candy-ish,
fairytale-like resonance.

I'll breathe it in as, even damp, it kind of sizzles,
welcome it without the slightest hesitance.



From where I was then, standing
at the Half Moon Lake boat landing
I couldn't see you across on the other side.
The fog had settled in, making us play hide
and seek with each others' figures and faces,
our voices, though, clearer, sharper in the spaces.

Fog said to me, "Wait a minute,
wait a minute more" as it held
presence, held mystery, just above
the water all along the shore.

"Be, here, awhile as if
you were a conjuring, the spore cloud
of a miracle borne by a newly whispered
legend, a newly lofted lore."

Introducing **The Fog Series** greeting cards.

One of the images above shows the six covers of the 5.5 X 4.25-inch cards. The other one shows the six poems. Each poem is in the same position as its matching photograph. Shown below is a set of six cards before and after packaging, all ready for you.

Give your loved ones the gift of non-digital correspondence, personalized with your own handwritten, heart-felt note. I also have cards with the same photographs but blank inside, for when you have a LOT to say.

I'm using as much recycled and re-used materials as I can source, and the cards are printed locally.

\$12 for a set of six plus \$3 shipping. If you'd like a set (or more), email or Facebook message me.

For every set sold, I'll donate \$1 to Feed My People Food Bank.

Thanks so much!

