

Small sampler from *Thrown Again into the Frazzle Machine: Poems of Grace, Hope, and Healing* by Margaret Dubay Mikus © 2014.  
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2/4/09

## **Meltdown**

To melt,  
to be liquefied  
under high heat.

To go down,  
to fall,  
to not be rising.

To change the state of matter,  
to become more dispersed,  
to become both more and less.

To lose emotional control,  
to weep unceasingly,  
to seek higher ground

and not find.  
To float lost  
as if it would always be thus.

To release,  
to let go the anchor,  
to be unwilling to jump

and yet jump  
or be pushed  
by dire circumstance.

To come out the other side  
of this trial by fire,  
to know it would always

end this way.  
To be cleansed,  
to re-form,

to cool and coalesce,  
altered, yet beautiful,  
even luminescent.

2/14/09

## **Floating On Sitar Notes and Drum Beats**

*Dinner at The Peacock on Valentine's*

So much done to the body.  
So much stored in the body.

The body a map of the past,  
the snake entwined around Eve.

The body: the sitar, the lotus, the onion,  
the pond to swim in, and the fish swimming.

The foam in the cup,  
the gyrations of dance,

the main course,  
not so much dessert.

The color red as it  
plays on the water,

the helium balloon,  
the red rubber ball,

the accelerating rhythm,  
the glint on sheer glass,

baby's breath and  
tiny ruby carnations.

It is amplified,  
it is sober and still,

plays well with others,  
puts dirty feet on the table.

The body is the flying horse,  
the sparkle on new snow,

it is a glass full  
and a glass empty.

It is payment for services,  
it is the nourishment taken in,

it is the pen and the words  
and the hopefulness.

It is less like soap  
and more like anise seeds,  
more a home, than a prison.

4/26/09

## **Inspired by Something Partly Heard on the Radio**

I do not know  
how much time  
I have with you.

I read the stories—  
or avoid reading them—  
of all the sad, tragic

things that happen  
and tears run down my face  
in sympathy, in empathy

whether I would stop them  
or not. I know this dark place.  
Yet I do not

want to know the limits  
of the hours, the minutes  
I have with you.

What good would that do?  
Just to be here  
where you are

for as long  
as there is...  
and be grateful.

5/28/09

## **Put Down the Sword of Self-wounding**

*After talking to Geary about a ritual to ease pain*

Put down the sword  
of self-destruction  
and self-immolation,

of self-defeat, self-demolition,  
and self-defacing. Stop  
stabbing myself in the vulnerable gut

in remorse, guilt, grief and regret  
at what I could not  
control or plan or shape.

Melt that sword  
into the ploughshare  
that carves the furrows

into which I place  
the seeds I have been holding back.  
Let forgiveness

flood the field,  
let love shine upon them,  
let the earth be fertile and loam-rich

and bountiful harvest my just reward.  
After all the lifetimes  
of all the dark and light alike

let my new life  
result from a conscious new choice:  
to put down the sword.

No more self-blame  
self-criticism or self-judging,  
no more crimson shame,

no more self-harsh words,  
no more self-unkindness,  
no more self-disrespect,

or screaming at myself  
at perceived imperfections  
or unbearable failings.

Only forgiveness  
to the bone of things  
to the bottom and top of memory,

forgiveness heaped  
on forgiveness, eaten  
at a great feast of forgiveness.

And when sated,  
love as dessert and  
as the main course ever after.

10/12/09

## **From the Stars**

Here I am  
naked before you  
all scars, weakness,  
vulnerability revealed

as beautiful.

Steely resolve,  
stubborn determination,  
hard-won power

as foundation.

Unashamed,  
unassuming,  
hiding nothing  
I might once have deemed

unacceptable.

Something to be said for  
enduring, growing,  
transforming, transcending.

Every wrinkle  
tells a story  
of care or neglect.

Every scar a tale  
of chance or choice,  
guilt, healing, awareness, or regret.

I can tell you  
have come from the stars  
just to see

life here in action.  
Here I am.

10/17/09

**From Mary Jane D. and Stephenie Meyer**

*For Ira, Bob, Geary and Eric*

Something that shatters  
pre-existing life structure  
stretching out to the foreseeable future.

No restoration  
of equilibrium  
or the familiar,

the details  
don't matter:  
a choice point where

all is divided into  
before...and after  
and darkness is the dominant color.

The decisive end...of what was,  
the promising beginning...of what is:

verdant, vivid vibration,  
riot of sensation,  
vibrant colors of all description,

almost beyond bearing.

You get to the point  
where you say: This  
lightening bolt that struck me

was the best thing  
that ever happened.

12/31/09

## **Small Hope**

In the darkness  
everything is covered  
in that dampening blanket  
even a pinhole of light  
makes all the difference.

1/8/10

## **Soave**

*From Llubav*

Speak to yourself in a soft voice  
I know this has been a tough time.

*Soave.*  
Be gentle.

1/11/10

## **Because My Star**

Because my star  
is tied to yours

my love,  
my life is entwined

with your own.  
And what you do

or say or think or feel;  
and what you do not do

or say or think or feel  
affects me too.

Some days I wish  
it was not so,

that I was not so vulnerable,  
that I was like

anyone else, but  
then would you have

been drawn to my beacon?  
And would I have

recognized when  
my heart sang?

1/20/10

## **Something Small**

*After listening to Poetry Center CD*

You can write a poem  
about anything:

mundane, mystical, trivial  
momentous, silly or banal.

A car in front of me  
on a dark winter night,

not even snowing  
or particularly cold,

the car about to turn right  
when the flasher lights went on,

slowly completing the turn  
as I did behind, and

out popped a son,  
not mine, but someone's,

and began to push  
the cream-colored Ford sedan,

and then, presumably the father  
sprang out of the passenger door

wearing a gray knit cap,  
an ordinary coat, and also put his muscle to it.

Someone behind me long-tooted  
as I edged around,

but what can you do really  
when a car that had been

reliable, suddenly wasn't,  
or maybe there were warning signs

unattended or maybe gas ran out  
or gages were broken,

whatever it was,  
a bit of grace please,

a small prayer,  
or gold glitter energy sprinkles,

if not more substantive aid.  
It could happen to anyone.

Do unto others....  
What goes 'round, comes 'round.

2/24/10

## **Room on Cardiology Floor**

I can still feel her surprisingly soft lips  
pressing on my forehead,  
a good bye and good luck kiss as she left.

My roommate, sweet Italian lady,  
both of us not our best, faces pale,  
hair tangled and matted.

Her husband, most kind, friendly  
and hopeful. Full of stories with  
ambulances and happy endings. How he'd

been recognized by the ambulance driver in the grocery store.  
How she'd had a seizure maybe  
and he'd carried her to the door

though he had a pacemaker and they were older.  
All her surgeries and still her spunk.  
"Good bye," she said, "It will be fine,"

or something like that in her gentle Italian accent,  
pressed into my hopeless forehead.  
Unexpected, spontaneous, natural and welcome.

Three weeks later I feel the kiss still.  
Her easy gesture, her faith,  
her sweet kindness.

Of course she was right.

3/2/10

## **Post Surgery Follow-Up**

*After Tricia...Again*

Would you be willing  
to let go the good for the better,

let down defenses, dissolve armor,  
release grievances old and new

to expose the true you,  
the power, the creation, the ultimate vision?

Who else could but you?

Allow excision of adhesions and scars,  
liquefy the crust of a hard life,

let go misunderstandings, expectations,  
false beliefs blocking radiant sun?

Remember before you coalesced  
and emerged here from your cocoon

when you could fly like a dream,  
when thought and action were one?

That is still who you are...  
buried within somewhere

and waiting...  
if not now, when?

3/7/10

## **Inspired**

*Song by Danny Schmidt at Folkstage*

To sit in patience  
and walk in patience  
and swim in patience

trusting.

To not wish for things  
to be other than they are

and if sun darkens for a while  
to remember  
this too shall pass.

4/6/10

## **Life Skill**

Make a list  
of pros and cons  
recognizing the risk  
inherent in any decision  
cognizant that not choosing  
is still choosing.

And choose.

6/3/10

## **Dear Body**

It is not right  
for fluid otherwise known as serum  
to accumulate in a pocket under the skin  
to the left of the belly button.  
I have tried to do what I can.  
Please remove.  
Thank you.

Sincerely  
Yours Truly

6/4/10

## **Aftertaste**

Do you know  
how it is

when you drink  
a fine wine or beer

or eat a luxurious meal  
and something lingers

in the mouth after,  
some taste definable or

unnamable, pleasurable or no,  
exotic or ordinary

to be savored or  
washed away?

That's how I want to be:  
refreshing with a hint of mystery

surprisingly sweet  
with a generous dollop of honesty.

6/12/10

## **Shadow Healing**

*James Keelaghan at Folkstage*

What part of me  
is overflowing

What part is a  
river dammed up

What part of me  
longs for release

What part is tears  
flowing unbidden

What part is unkind  
or uncertain

I'm only saying  
trying to decode a language  
spoken in symptoms

trying to heal what  
has arisen.

What part of me  
is unbending

What part needs  
immediate release

What is becalmed  
stilled, expressionless

What is inflamed or angry  
deserving to be heard

What is in shadow  
unforgiven, denied

What part is unloved  
buried deep, pushed aside

What is impatient, impotent  
small, voiceless

worthy of healing

worthy of being part

of the perfect again-  
welcome whole.

What part of me is  
weakness unacknowledged

What part is unwilling to rest  
and restlessness

What part of me is  
tears un-shed and  
fears hidden and  
words bitten back

What have I walled off  
what am I pregnant with

What desperate pleas  
have gone unanswered

What part of me is  
warring against another

What is revealed  
comes up for air

what comes up  
light shines upon it

what has light  
has hope and promise

*anything is possible*  
*anything is possible to heal.*

*Don't give up*  
*anything is possible.*

8/3/10

## **Yes, I Noticed You Being You**

What can I say of friend Amy  
who spoke tonight so well and courageously,

who opened arms wide, glad to see me  
before I even stepped through the door.

Who generously watches out for me  
and graciously accepts me.

How fine a friend is that!

Amy, who paints her sad tale so vividly  
parts of it are funny,

disconcerting when she feels more the tragedy,  
but she pulls us into the humanness of the story

and humor allows us to keep looking,  
to keep listening to what was imaginably unbearable.

A skilled weaver, illusionist, wordsmith,  
she makes me care...what happens next.

10/11/10

## **Just Before Tops Diner**

I am not ready to leave the river  
with its infinite variations  
and endless fascinations

its effortless sliding over the earth  
playing with wind and sun  
the birds, the fish, the nightlights

the river as mirror  
with ever-changing reflections.

But the river I suspect

is unmoved by my moving.  
What change have I wrought  
by my wistful longing

and incessant watching?  
What can I take of it  
back with me into life?

How the river never gives up  
even if it seems to be going backward.  
How something new can always happen.

Today after 5 days of observation  
the first boat cuts across the mirror surface  
making delicious patterns of thick wake.

I will miss this river  
its width, its depth  
its breadth, its calm

the unexpected gift of its presence  
flowing along, flowing along.  
But if I don't leave, I miss...

this.

11/24/10

## **For Alex In Times of Trouble**

This may be a relationship  
you learn from  
or you overcome

or climb a mountain  
you thought was impossible  
or stretched you thin and then some.

This may be time you learned to support  
or to let go of someone or  
some preconceived notion,

when you learned to take one step at a time  
when you put aside assumptions  
and fully lived in the moment.

When you accepted as much love  
as you gave, more than you felt  
you deserved somehow.

That you looked underneath  
and deep and could be kind  
and self-loving no matter what.

You healed and became more whole  
exactly when you felt your heart was breaking  
and stayed with that feeling

to see what it really means,  
where it really leads you.  
What choices you make in staying true

to your highest vision of yourself,  
what gifts come out of darkness.  
No matter what, anything living

cannot stay the same, relationships included,  
to grasp onto what was good  
may block what could be even better.

No one knows the future—  
how much time, when, why, or where—  
part is given, part created by you.

What courage to do this hard work...  
what courage to watch you.

12/21/10

## **Inevitable Woman Nature?**

When I am eighty—  
should I make it that far—  
I will look back at photos of me now  
and see how beautiful  
how smooth the skin, bright the eyes  
wide the smile, white the teeth  
remembering how easy it was to get around  
how gracious I was, how lovely my full hair.  
Even on the good days at eighty  
the me now will favorably compare.  
Just like now looking back in time  
to when I could only see my younger flaws  
and now can see her beauty and grace  
and wish I had...  
noticed.

12/31/10

## **The Leaving of It**

Part of life  
the leaving of it  
with what grace and  
awkwardness

items still on the list  
unfinished business  
opportunities now lost  
stories, secrets, dreams

what was true once  
unknown at best  
the mystery unraveled  
the tapestry complete.

1/16/11

**Poetry Reader:  
The Times We Are In**

The plain, pale young man, regular-featured,  
did not take off his ordinary blue-gray cap  
or remove his unremarkable gray-tan coat  
before he stepped to the microphone and spoke.  
Something in his air, how he kept his eyes down,  
uneasily shuffling his feet and  
how he kept repeating his need to fight evil  
and something else indefinable  
made you wonder if he had a gun in his satchel  
and you being closest or almost  
began to consider how to disarm him.

1/28/11

**From the 31st Floor at the Hyatt**  
*Chicago*

What you spend your time on  
shapes who you become,

choices made on the run  
or with full deliberation,

unintended consequences  
part of the decisions...

for what is known now  
may turn out to be untrue

and what is unknown  
may ultimately lead you

by the nose or seat of your pants,  
kicking and screaming

or acquiescent, complacent even,  
caught in the naked act of

becoming.

3/2/11

## **Mom Back in Hospital**

There is a certain inevitability  
about the last breath  
following loss of hearing, eyesight  
slow disintegration of memory, speech  
regular rhythm-spark of heart  
personality, muscles, joints  
especially aching inflexible knees.

And there is relief at the end  
of long suffering, and grief  
at the loss of all that was  
or could have been, and  
the last inevitable hug  
last lucid conversation.

We are at the apparent abyss  
the catalyst, the chrysalis  
the caterpillar beginning  
disintegration into pupa  
reconfiguring into butterfly  
unexpected from linear extrapolation

but entirely normal  
as the way things are.  
Goodbye sweetie,  
it's alright to go you know,  
it's alright to go.

5/5/11

## **Basking in Solitude**

To be alone  
to be able to take up all the space  
breathe all the air in a room

flow from one moment to the next  
and next without outside consideration.  
Not that I am unhappy with you here,

my dears, but I change  
from what could be. I change  
to fit your shape, your—

even unspoken—expectation.  
Your wanting to be with me  
alters time and space.

And that said...  
to be alone  
more than enough to replenish

can be lonely  
and I need you here  
to remember me as loving

to bring me back  
when I wander off lost.  
Never forget...to bring me back,

my love.

8/15/11

## **For My Mother**

*Who is still here*

If I think about  
where this is all going  
I'll cry again

but if I am here  
as I said I would be  
we talk and we listen

in easy gentle conversation.  
If I don't jump ahead  
or fall behind

then, right here  
in the middle of  
nowhere in particular

I am content.

8/23/11

## **Grieving as Part of Life**

*For Evan*

Each person who leaves  
leaves a hole until  
what is left  
is the lace of your life,

holes of variable  
sizes, shapes, depths  
that resonate but do not merge,  
each revealing a bit more

of the pattern, the weft  
and heft of days,  
if not the purpose,  
the grand scheme.

What is left is more than  
what was removed though  
it doesn't feel that way at first.  
At first numbness then

awareness only of what is empty,  
missing, lost. The mind constantly  
strays there like a tongue to a jagged tooth.  
Slowly intentional consciousness

returns heightened, senses sharpened,  
suddenly becoming a beagle who sniffs  
a hundredfold more smells,  
an artist painfully naked and exposed.

Gradually new skin grows  
over the raw wound  
which may continue to heal forever,  
not every moment, like now,

but now and then.

9/12/11

## **An Ordinary Conversation**

My mother wanted to remember  
and I want to remember

this particular conversation  
which started out about disarray

of a problematic week and  
took a journey to calm consideration

of life as it plays out.  
And if her voice is rough, throat dry

and if memory slips in and out  
well, so what? Here we are still

talking of past and mostly present  
telling stories that mean something

lending support, encouragement  
eye to eye, heart to heart.

What could be better than that?

11/9/11

## **To Hammer**

Love to hammer  
to make noise  
the immediacy  
of pounding in a nail  
of fixing something  
making something

creation in action.  
The heft of the hammer  
in right hand.  
I was the only one  
who took a hammer to college  
just in case.

I still have it  
small, useful  
scarred by the years.  
Other heavier hammers  
more impressive  
and powerful came along

but the beauty of that first one....  
Now joints and bones  
can no longer absorb the hits  
without a murmur.  
My serious hammering days are over.  
I may allow a tap, tap

to put up a picture  
nail the hanger into soft drywall.  
But not arm ricocheting off  
unyielding hardwood.  
If I am smart

those days are over.

1/28/12

## **The Signature**

*To Eric Whitacre with gratitude*

The beauty of dissonance,  
in itself...and resolving,  
the strength of moving to  
and off of and onward,

continuing the run, each note  
clear and strong, not shy away from  
close connection,  
let all notes be possible together

in the greater scheme of things.  
Regardless of what was taught  
about what was right or right rules once  
in the world as it existed then.

To let become and bloom  
from sheer joy of breath and sound  
as if the world is being  
created all over again...

as indeed it is...  
from pure vibration.

3/16/12

## **Choosing Expansive**

*Spark #2*

A door opens

walk through.

Opportunity knocks

answer.

A boat glides up to the dock

where you stand waiting

to take you to your dream

no explanations

no guarantees.

If you don't go

you will wonder

and if you don't go

what will you do

and if you don't...go

when will you find out

just what you are made of

just what you could be

if only?