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Prison Powwow

Chippewa, Duwamish, Blackfeet,
Sioux, their backgrounds sit
like hills behind their American names:
Nicholson, Shay, Wheat — blood-
thinned, and the hills cut by bars
at every window.

Under the glare of fluorescent lights
and guards, the elders' feet stir
up thunder and dust, the elders and one
young straight-nosed man, whose pouches
and belts, beads and thongs puff him twice
the size of any man, his feathers twitching
the air to a whirlwind
of his own making — an eagle
born out of the brick and cement.

Time stands like a ring of trees,
men dancing in place
in their white man's shoes, dancing out
of their dreams, dancing
for the eagle
shadowing the ridge.

—Susan Landgraf

A writer and photographer and former journalist, Susan Landgraf currently teaches writing and media classes at Highline Community College. Her poems have most recently appeared in *Nimrod*, *The Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Riverwind*, and *Kalliope*.

**Simple: On the Reservation
at First Beach, La Push**

Termites: “Their civilization, which is
the earliest of any, is the most curious, most
complex, the most intelligent...”

Maurice Maeterlinck

This is the day after the great hatching
males and females coming out
of thin slits in a wooden gallery of wingless
nymphs, soldiers, workers

Earharts and Lindberghs sheathed in wings
longer than their bodies, looking clumsy
but flying high as 19,000 feet
living in the warmth, dying in the sunlight
emerging at sunset and mating before
Cro-Magnon, board feet, the Ortho man

Gulls snap a quick meal, hundreds
of termites slipping out of the log
flying a gauzed sky
but one rust-red grub transversing
the silvered beach log, a soldier
in the dusk before Venus, before the moon sets

on the day after
the great hatching.

—Susan Landgraf

**Norma Before She Moved
to the Reservation**

The happy times she spent
playing on the plains
wind sweeping her face
when she believed
when she knew every burrow
when the grass stung
her legs and the sun burned
her neck and she spread
her arms around it
all — grasses, berries, scrub brush
wind spinning round
and round like a gyro
when there was no day better
than another.

—*Susan Landgraf*

Norma's Gift

*They are letting the tribes
take crab, she wrote from the coast.
Ben has found Jesus. He has given
himself to Christ. Ben tried to forgive*

his dog that ran away and his grandmother
who died. He wanted to know
why he felt alone, why the Crab Nebula
is one of the brightest radio sources in the sky.

Inland, my grandson was forbidden
to eat crab, a parasite and foul because the Lord
told Aaron: "all in the seas or in the rivers
that do not have fins and scales...

they are an abomination." My grandson
studied dinosaurs. His church does not give
communion, and his pastor said that birds
could not have evolved from a small bipedal

dinosaur during the Jurassic.
On the coast, lights of the crab boats marked
the horizon like low stars. Norma wrote,
Enjoy the crab, cleaned, ready to eat.

—Susan Landgraf

Two White Men on the Quinault Indian Reservation

1.

Scales shine under the ice and fluorescent light
in the fish house, the morning's catch
at Tahola done, cleaning begun — hot water
washing the conveyor belt down, the metal
tables and cement. Gulls outside circle,
crying for their share of the innards
and heads. Some fishermen go out all their lives
to bring in these sea-caught trout, these fighting
fish, go out and come back if luck mans an oar
in their boat — Quillayute, Makah, Quinault.

2.

The big man, in his calico skin, came from Boston
a long time back, the other from Sweden longer
than that to end up here, initiated as a member
of the Makah, living on the land of the Quinault.
He knows the heart of the man from Massachusetts
who has been homeless. They watch the ocean,
walk among the driftwood seeing their lives.
Each has been visited by a crow and benedictions.
Look at their hands with stubby fingers
that have made music and havoc.
They lived as if they wanted to die.

3.

The land of the Quillayute, the Hoh and Makah
has died back to protected pockets.
The big man runs his fingers down the length
of one of the steelhead. Its scales shimmer. It arches
for a millisecond, as the ice settles.
That afternoon when the weak winter
sun breaks through, he will lean against
a log to bless himself with the sea.
He will make a pyramid with his fingers.

—Susan Landgraf

The Meeting

*"If it isn't broken...
fix it 'til it is."*

—Coda: *Psychodynamic Psychotherapy*

Doodling on the pad before you—connect
the ham-handed fist of my grandfather
to my frail grandmother's squaw-jaw.

At the far end of the table sits a girl, young
& pretty (like a daughter).

She is here, telling us it's okay
to be not okay. For now.

Really, she is telling herself.
And weeping.

Truth connects
like ammonia. Then,

I am weeping. And so are you.

Twelve of us—gathered round a table
this muggy July afternoon. Enough for a small tribe.

And there is a certain comfort—no,
freedom—in all of this: being broken.

Not in need of a fix.

—*Robert Nazarene*

Robert Nazarene is the founding editor of *Margie/The American Journal of Poetry*. His poetry has appeared in *Callaloo*, *Crazyhorse*, *Ploughshares*, *Quarterly West*, and elsewhere. He is a graduate of the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University. His first full-length collection, *Church*, is forthcoming from Intuit House.

Postmodern

what more could
i ax
thanalone
2b left from
the disturbing
androidance
of thee?

from beemeracudas
& foodfast &
shoeless & the
chaff 2 my
Siouxciety

o'tay
can Youse see?
(that sausage
are we?)
o, whenwilly
never be free?
(howzaboutit?)

when lincoln
starts blinkin' &
joriestops
t-h-i-n-k-i-n':

3 jeers 4
the redwhite
& brie!

—*Robert Nazarene*

**The Declaration of Indepestilence,
July 4th, 2002**

We hold these spoofs to be felt
elephants; that all men are created
equal; that they are cow-towed
by their cremator with certain
intransigent mites; that among these
are strife, gibberish and the pursuit
of crappiness; that to abjure these
lice, governments are substi-
stupored among men, deriving
their glowers from the resentment
of the governed.

—*Robert Nazarene*

We Are, After All, Americans
(*A Reading: from the Book of Revelation*)

Glory to God in the Highest!
And damned good shots.

Ask the Dakota.
Ask the buffalo.

If you find one:
let us know.

—*Robert Nazarene*

Rice & Sand

RICE & SAND Dip the ladle into *Tha Hood*, the
fresher-the-batter : bone & blood. Black & browned, yell-
ow & red : stacked onto ships like cords of wood. At The
White House, *His Majesty* orders the
goose : oiled & fattened. *Camp Le-*
jeune. From *Pendleton, Bragg, & Fort*
Leonard Wood : through rice & sand, **GONE FOR GOOD**

—*Robert Nazarene*