

Darrell Petska

Make Like Dandelions

On the third day, it's been reported,
the creator strewed dandelions hither and yon
to cheer his forthcoming wunderkinds—

untold legions of festive yellow heads
to greet humanity and the sun, little
spindle-legs polishing our feet with dew
and occupying endlessly our children
who gather bouquets and launch heavenward
an infinitude of dandelion young for a blessing
before they alight again to gladden our lives.

Cheer apparently isn't for everyone. Adam and Eve
fled their paradise, it's also been reported, because
they wanted a barefoot lawn rather than bright soles—
from that day, humans have waged war with the little
flowers that could. Pulled, hacked, mowed, poisoned
and cursed to hell, the doughty little smiley faces
stay true to their charge to propagate and delight.

May we, like dandelions, fulfill our charge
to love and protect our paradise and each other,
lest it be reported, by some advanced civilization,
that our species poisoned or wantonly plucked itself
from its once-promising moment in the sun.

Prayers the Old Folks Say

Earnestly the gray heads said "I'll pray for you,"
but we were teens, twenties: prayers seeming
invocations to an imaginary god.

One by one they passed, leaving us,
the old ones in the room, to realize
their "Our Fathers" or "Hail Marys" said

"I love you, I care."

Generations shimmer by, bright faces
stumbling, rising, living,
impatient to pursue life's butterflies,

and as they pass we long to touch, hold,
protect, so we cry out as best we know:
"I care for you!"—

love's prayers to go in grace, in peace,
at the ready in some pocket for later
when finally the young know more of time.

Darrell Petska is a retired university engineering editor and a 2021 Pushcart Prize nominee. His poetry and fiction can be found in 3rd Wednesday Magazine, Amethyst Review, Verse Virtual, Buddhist Poetry Review and widely elsewhere (conservancies.wordpress.com). A father of five and grandfather of six, he lives near Madison, Wisconsin, with his wife of more than 50 years.

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