



# Seasons/Change

Collected Poems by Linda Lenzke

# Seasons/Change

Collected Poems by Linda Lenzke  
2017

**Published by Full of Myself Productions**

Copyright © 2017 by Linda Lenzke

All rights reserved.

# Introduction

Living in the Midwest in Wisconsin, our lives ebb and flow with the changing seasons. Sometimes winter is unrelenting and it's a struggle just to get out the door for our day-to-day lives. We are restored in the spring when the changing weather brings us hope and quells the itchy restlessness of spring fever. Summer is our reward, a time for leisure and vacations. In the autumn, we reap the harvest of the land and prepare for the long, cold nights again, the cycles of change repeated.

What I've learned, the lessons from keeping and rereading journals, is that I'm a creature of habit. Though I allow my imagination to wander and travel places like a free spirit, I'm pretty earthbound and sensitive to the changing of the seasons, the length of daylight in a day, the heat of the sun on skin, the relationship of the stars and moon to our planet, the color of grass and leaves, the smell of the breeze as it changes from the smoky potpourri of autumn to the chilled neutrality of winter, followed by the musky odor of newly-turned earth and fragrant scent of flowers blooming in spring. And, finally, the conscious and unconscious cycles of life.

Some of the poems included in this collection were previously published in my chapbooks, *Scenes of Everyday Life*, *The Valentine Poems*, and in *Echoes Anthology*.

# Contents

## Winter

Welcome to the New Year  
First Snow  
Valentine II  
Valentine VII  
Valentine XIV

## Spring

Earth Day, 1992  
Spring Fever  
Anthem  
Saturday Morning This Spring Day  
Wistful

## Summer

Waiting for a Friend (this Noisy, Perfect, Bustling Summer Evening)  
Summer So Green  
Wisconsin Glacial Drumlin  
Window on the World  
Breaking Camp

## Fall

Northwood's Retreat  
When the Sumac Is Red  
The Solace of Ritual  
Migration  
November Night

## Postscript

## Author's Biography

*Valentine II, Valentine VII, and Valentine XIV* were previously published in ***Scenes of Everyday Life*** and ***The Valentine Poems***. *Earth Day, 1992, Migration, Breaking Camp, When the Sumac is Red, Anthem, Wistful, November Night* and *Northwood's Retreat*, were previously published in ***Scenes of Everyday Life***. *Wistful* was also included in ***Echoes Anthology***.

# Winter



Photo credit: Miriam Hall/[www.herspiral.com](http://www.herspiral.com)

## **Welcome to the New Year**

We gather among friends, warm indoors,  
as Winter howls outside.  
Candlelight dances while incandescent conversations  
spark and ignite throughout the room;  
a chorus of laughter cancels the sound of wind and storm.  
We are safe in each other's company.

We share a pot-lucked meal and stories of our lives,  
braiding together friendship and family,  
it makes us stronger and connected this ritual celebration.  
We review the past year, mourn our losses, cheer our gains,  
reveal our journey to wisdom of lessons learned  
struggles endured, insights that remain.

We measure time with vigilance,  
counting down from last day to final hour,  
until we reach the closing moments of the current year,  
on the brink of tomorrow and the midnight hour,  
we will hold our glasses to toast and embrace each other  
in friendship and goodwill, our lips sealing the covenant.

We sing good-bye to the past and say hello to the future,  
stepping together from the last year to the next,  
we dream new dreams invoking hope;  
we walk and talk with renewed spirit  
together as a family of friends,  
we say welcome to the New Year.

## First Snow

First snow of the season  
perfectly round, bleached pellets  
bounce playfully off cars,  
as if made of Styrofoam  
or the vermiculite hibernating in the basement  
with the potting soil and peat moss.

As the wind circulates the white frenzy  
it is captured in the amber lights,  
rotating in the indigo night.  
Road crews spread rock salt,  
swirling and dispersing  
marble-sized, translucent polygons.

Angled edges and flat planes reflect light like disco balls  
and dance in the beams of xenon blue,  
navigating the chemistry lesson unfolding in the street;  
the snow packed by tires melts, refreezes, becoming ice again,  
as the rock salt returns it to a watery slush.

## Valentine II

You are sleeping on your side this frigid Sunday afternoon.  
I wrap my body around you as if I were a blanket.  
Pretending to sleep, I match my breathing to yours,  
as I did as a child when I napped and spooned with my mother.  
With you my thoughts are far from innocent, as heat and desire  
generate in that space in between the moon like crescents of your cheeks  
and the moist triangle of my body that presses and rocks against you.  
I make futile bargains and unspoken pleas that you will turn,  
open your eyes, halfway, as you spread your lips to kiss me.  
I imagine my arms reaching for you to love as we had the afternoon before.  
In this sweet moment that bridges dreaming and wakefulness,  
I am filled with the blissful thought that passion and serenity  
have conjoined in this bed in our lovers embrace.  
The visceral knowing that you are my mate  
soothes me as I realize the safe harbor and sheltering protection  
of your love, sparked by the hunger and ache for your touch.



## Valentine VII

Saturday morning, Wisconsin winter  
I'm dreaming of our green arbor up north,  
safe harbor and wellspring,  
whose territory we have surveyed with promise  
and will tend with sweat and joy,  
a place for our spirit's restoration and weekend retreats.  
The land is hibernating now, protecting its rich reserves for spring.  
Beneath the frost line dreams of new growth are conjured;  
pine and aspen, birch and maple,  
blackberry bushes and wildflowers  
ready themselves to send taproots deep and branches high.

Our love is like that too.  
It has seasons and times of suspension,  
cycles of change and anticipation.  
Spring fever, cabin fever builds in me.  
I'm impatient with time, restless in my routines.  
I want to rescue you from your obsession with work  
and instead sleep naked under the stars  
to the sounds of loons and the lake,  
snoring dogs at our feet,  
feeling kisses that linger  
and our bodies trembling with pleasure.

## Valentine VIX

Bitter winds and record snowfall  
push us back into our homes.  
Mounds of ice chunks,  
like cold bones stacked high,  
shake and shiver  
in the swirling, darting wind,  
trembling like eerie chimes.

Cabin fever is epidemic,  
yet dreams are on the move  
teasing imaginations,  
speculating tomorrows.  
I am more alone than ever  
yet hopeful for my future,  
embraced by my own love.

My writing is interrupted;  
our house finches  
return to visit last year's nest.  
Dancing, side-stepping on their perch  
outside the window, under the awning  
they sing in full song, knowing  
Spring is coming, new nests to be built  
cycles of life to repeat, futures to be born.

Spring



## Earth Day, 1992

*For Tracy*

Another rainy-day afternoon  
when rain dances in potholes  
like fish biting on a foggy dawn.  
My mind wanders like a dragonfly in flight  
with thoughts of you and the itchy restlessness  
of spring fever.  
I walk in my favorite arbor,  
the piney woods spiking the air like a hot house.  
Green buds reach out like little handshakes  
from fragile brown branches  
welcoming me home.  
I walk the paths where autumn's leaves  
mix with mud like molasses.  
I listen to the whir, the chirp, the whistle  
of resident wildlife.  
I hear their song;  
I dream of you and want to wander in your wild places,  
nuzzle my nose in your musky dew.  
I want to taste the salty softness of your skin,  
lick your tears, stroke your hair.  
I want to know that you want me too.  
I haven't seen the sun for days  
yet I feel full of brightness and light.  
Such a gift to fall in love this spring,  
in your arms, in this way, this Earth Day.

## Spring Fever

Spring tides ebb and flow,  
surge and crest,  
flowering bulbs begin  
to inch their way to daylight,  
dormancy ends as shoots  
break through the frost line.  
The sun's infrared heat  
vibrates with a frequency  
radiating energy, liquefying  
winter's frozen mantle.  
You can smell the earth,  
the vernal muskiness of life awakening.

I wake earlier too and rise before dawn  
to see the morning light in pink  
and periwinkle hues, wispy clouds  
like crinoline scrims across the horizon.  
The sun shines directly on the equator,  
day and night become equal, the Spring Equinox arrives.  
An itchy restlessness overcomes me.  
It's time to be reborn,  
rethink my choices, ask the big questions,  
the who am I, where am I'm going,  
what does it all mean — mind wandering,  
soul wondering.

The natural world ignites  
my limbic brain like match to wick.  
I'm fired up. I burn brighter,  
body memories spark emotions,  
motivate movement.  
My body craves raw foods, nuts and seeds,  
leafy vegetables, red meat.  
I forage for the fuel to drive me.  
Desires and appetites grow unsated,  
I want, I want, I want.  
I am, I am  
alive.

## **Anthem**

Springtime, I plant stakes,  
mark boundaries,  
delineate the path to my heart,  
post “keep out” signs where appropriate,  
no trespassing on the tender places,  
mulched and fertilized for growth.  
I sing my new anthem while I toil,  
reminding myself how the earth is turned first  
to make a soft place for the seed to grow.  
I pray for the sun and long days  
to work their magic  
on the tendrils of hope  
as they take root, bloom and reach for the sky.  
I sing my new anthem,  
repeating choruses like a mantra  
to center myself, anchor, establish gravity;  
I breathe through my feet.  
and sing my new anthem  
in hopes that the heavens will hear.

## **Saturday Morning This Spring Day**

Saturday morning this spring day,  
my senses take in the sounds, the smells,  
the spectrum of blues and greens as dusty white,  
wispy clouds streak across the new day's morning sky.

In the distance, I can hear a jack hammer  
pounding concrete in metered blows;  
a parking lot becomes a demolition site,  
then a foundation, finally condos and lofts for artists.

Railroad crossing alarms sound, tenor bells create a symphony  
of whistles, chirping bird song, jack hammer percussion,  
joined by a freight train's rolling thunder below my window,  
first slow, speeding up, gasping a throaty exhalation.

The air is crisp and clear, no moisture to hold the aromatics  
of the musky earth, yet the wind carries the hint of flowers,  
fragrances of the season. Bulbs begin to bloom, trees bud,  
rebirth and new beginnings, Saturday morning this spring day.

## Wistful

A nesting pair of house finches visit this morning,  
perch on the balcony railing,  
lift their heads skyward,  
sing their song, claim territory.

I wonder if they know I'm here,  
a few blocks from their nest under the awning  
where I lived so many seasons,  
watched generations of finch pairs  
survey the sheltered corner, build a nest,  
lay a clutch of eggs, protect and incubate,  
feed a brood of hungry blind mouths,  
teach to sing then fly.

The parents withhold food to coax the fledglings  
out the nest, first to the perch, next the garage roof  
and finally, to the cables that connect the house to the grid  
and the trees to the earth.

I'm convinced they've followed me here,  
know my watchful eye, recognize the smile  
that answers their song as they greet me.  
I too feel connected to the earth,  
grounded by nature yet wistful,  
as the breeze that lifts them aloft  
returns them to their brood,  
the nest under the awning a few blocks from here,  
my home, seasons ago.



# Summer



## **Waiting for a Friend (this Noisy, Perfect, Bustling Summer Evening)**

*for Sara*

Reggae music streams overhead  
this sweet summer day,  
as I sit at the sidewalk café  
snug against the urban neighborhood street,  
decaf, pen and paper in hand, waiting for a friend.  
The windows and glass-paned garage doors opened wide.  
In the background baristas pound  
and espresso machines hiss  
in a call and response.

A barefoot mother with baby slung to her breasts  
steps gingerly in the street, as if sticking toes in water,  
while end-of-workday rush hour traffic rolls by.  
Moments later a father and son dodge cars  
in the crosswalk, as drivers intent  
on reaching destinations and dinner  
appear unnecessarily annoyed.  
A shirtless runner in Day-Glo shoes,  
gazelle-like, keeps pace with the parallel traffic.

A bicycle parade of children with red flags  
and crayon-colored plastic helmets  
traverse the traffic confidently, while car mufflers cough  
and engines sputter, stopping and speeding up again,  
as skateboard wheels turn and tumble  
in scratchy, percussive rumbles on the concrete pavement, as they hit  
the perpendicular strain-relief grooves, while an uninvited refrain,  
“Step on a crack, break your mother’s back”  
plays in my head.

My friend arrives; I shout her name to get her attention,  
not once, but twice, this noisy, perfect, bustling summer evening.

## Summer So Green

Summer so green you forget its absence  
when followed by the burnt colors of autumn.  
Leaves take flight and signal arrival  
of the Midwestern winter; cold moons,  
inky nights and bitter winds  
transform newly fallen whiteness  
into peppered piles curbside  
stuffed with trash and sand,  
stubbornly refusing to melt,  
after which tender shoots rise again,  
blooms open in hopeful pastels  
and the primary colors of spring,  
awakening us from our somnolence,  
as the sun burns bright  
and longer, the sky bluer,  
and the grass is green again,  
so green you forget its absence.

## Wisconsin Glacial Drumlin

*For Gail*

Like a half-buried egg, or inverted spoon,  
glacial ice changed the Wisconsin landscape,  
sculpted the moraine below,  
creating curvaceous landforms,  
rising above the horizon,  
waves of green and heather.  
The Irish called them "littlest ridges."

New love is like that too,  
years of hardened, cold reserve  
give way, release and flow,  
softening the bermed base below,  
which once was solid, now liquefies and heaves,  
a tide of change, an exhalation  
deep from its core.

We travel by highway from our homes,  
past Lake Mills, traverse the Kettle Moraine.  
You give me a geography lesson  
as I drive, we talk, we share a day.  
A summer festival of music ahead of us,  
people-watching, storytelling, the unfolding  
intimacy of friends or more.

## **Window on the World**

*Or, the backyard of my imagination*

Coffee in hand, fingers on keyboard,  
eyes peer outside the windows.  
Three windows at my desk look out to  
guest parking behind my urban home,  
railroad crossings, trains and traffic.  
The morning commute awakens,  
car tires thump, jumping the tracks,  
street lights dim, sun rises, moon sets.  
There's green too in this city streetscape,  
tree sentries salute at attention, swaying only  
when the wind catches them surrendering.  
Sunflowers stand tall with enthusiasm  
as finches sing, darting between trees,  
perching on cables and balcony railings,  
while spiders dance and dangle  
between the window screen and glass,  
catching the insects blown their way  
into webs. I weave webs too,  
words that will live in the cloud,  
words born in the backyard  
of my imagination.

## Breaking Camp

Into the woods  
where aspens quake, and birches and maples  
crackle and creak in the wind,  
we arrive in the wilderness.  
Loons wail, calling their mates home  
as the sun peeks, reveals itself, then hides  
behind a gray cloud  
like a mischievous child.  
Pileated woodpeckers, katydids and frogs  
create a cacophony of percussion, strings and bellows.  
Smoke curls from the fire pit  
and your mouth as you exhale.  
I turn the pages of the local paper  
reading the police call report  
and church supper menus to divine  
a sense of place before breaking camp  
as you and I drift apart as if afloat  
on the clear, still lake  
untethered without an anchor.

# Fall



## Northwood's Retreat

*For Elth*

Greeting my Northwood's retreat  
I say hello to the lake as it laps at my ear.  
In whispers, it tells me of the season's changing song  
as it bids farewell to the neighbors travelling south.

I watch the sun's reflection shiver in the rippled tide  
that reaches the shore where dogs play with shadows  
who beg me to throw a fetching stick,  
tails wagging like metronomes.

Autumn invites me with its splendor of color  
to reflect on what is passed and what approaches.  
A year is measured in seasons and so is a life.  
I am living my fall time and in this moment serene.

As the sky changes from dusk to dark  
the smoky amber ember of light on the horizon  
winks at me  
before its fire burns to ash.



## **When the Sumac Is Red**

*For Laurie F.*

When the sumac is red  
I remember you and the time we shared,  
the season, the reasons you fled.  
Grief and healing happen in small steps, sometimes a minute,  
a day at a time, in the end it felt like I survived an amputation,  
my love for you a phantom limb, like you,  
still alive, yet no longer visible, still here, but not.

Time heals all wounds, some scar,  
some disappear leaving only sense memory.  
I've let you go, but not forgotten  
my debt unpaid, the amends not made.  
I can't know how you've resolved the past  
or filed me away,  
a brief chapter of your life.

All I can wish for you  
is love and dreams fulfilled.  
Like a leaf transported by the wind  
and a migrating bird in flight,  
life is a marriage of randomness and destiny.  
I'll always remember you  
when the sumac is red.

## The Solace of Ritual

September's sun filters through blue translucence  
day and night becoming equal.

Temperatures rise and fall like tides;  
ebb and flow between dawn and twilight,  
gears of my Circadian clock adjusting.

Nesting urges permeate my behavior.  
I swap out summer for winter bedding,  
prepare for long nights and cold days.  
Cupboards are filled as I squirrel away provisions.  
I can smell leaves and home fires burning.

The changing season, trees ablaze,  
transformation before dormancy, so begins  
the hibernation of winter.  
Golden, auburn, crimson, tawny shades of brown  
fade to a grayscale palette.

I can hear the crisp sounds of leaves  
dancing on sidewalks, and the wind begin to whistle.  
Soon the swan song of September surrenders  
to a calendar of holidays: Halloween, Thanksgiving,  
Hanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day and the New Year.

Memories recycle of seasons past  
of people absent and places far away.  
I soothe myself with the solace of ritual.  
There is comfort in repetition  
and wonder in change.

# Migration

*For Cindy*

As the Canadian Geese  
return to the marsh  
finding respite as they journey south  
so do you and I stand  
in a familiar place  
of ritual and body memory  
seeking sanctuary and answers  
in a fallow field with duck blind sentry.

We stand like tall grass  
holding each other  
silent except for tears  
and the rustling of cattails.  
We are buffeted by wind and desire  
pulled together by nature's magneto  
of flesh and spirit  
love on the wing.

We hear the plaintive cry  
a lone goose seeking her flock  
and the popping recoil of a shotgun,  
then silence.

I too am lost.  
It seems like I'm always leaving you and returning,  
yet in this moment we stand together  
like an oak in an open prairie  
swaying gently in the wind.  
We are safe,  
rocking cradled in each other's arms.

We are creatures of habit  
and we've come here like the geese  
this season of the wing  
another migration of the heart.

## November Night

Driving in the car this November night,  
windows open to capture the Indian Summer air,  
spiked with hints of hickory and maple burning in fireplaces,  
smoky tones of leaves smoldering in backyards,  
pricking my nose like a cloud of pepper,  
as the wind drafts with a finish of pine and evergreen.  
I feel light-headed, tipsy, that moment of sweet surrender  
when candlelight flickers and I am warm, relaxed inside  
while my skin feels awakened by the brisk breeze of autumn.

The sky is indigo black, the moon porcelain white,  
stars seem close and far, reachable yet elusive destinations.  
These days and nights between Halloween and Thanksgiving  
evoke memories of grief and transition. Summer holds on  
in one last, futile effort before opening its clenched palms  
and releasing its grip, breathing in deeply  
then signaling a truce in its slow whispering sigh and exhalation.  
This November night may be the last before the wind chills  
and embers transform into ice crystals and pillowy flakes of snow.

# Postscript

Additional Reading from the blog **Mixed Metaphors, Oh My!** features the following essays on ***Seasons/Change***. To access the content, click on the following essay, ***Seasons/Change*** <http://www.mixedmetaphorsohmy.com/2017/08/27/seasonschange/> or visit the blog: **Mixed Metaphors, Oh My!** at <http://www.mixedmetaphorsohmy.com/>

## **Winter**

Living the Mole Life

Snow Days

Winter Blues & Spring Fever

## **Spring**

The Itchy Restlessness of Spring Fever

Light & Shadow

Spring Has Sprung

## **Summer**

Summer So Green

Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes

Road Trip

## **Autumn**

The Pleasures (and Lessons) of a Staycation

The Changing Seasons

The Impermanence of Life

## Author's Biography

Linda Lenzke lives in Madison, Wisconsin and has been writing poetry, prose, comedy, spoken word monologues, plays, and screenplays for the past 35 years. She has co-edited a poetry and prose feature for *Our Lives* magazine and is a founding member of LGBTQ Narratives Activist-Writers. Linda is a writer and producer of *Conceal & Carry: Queers Exposed* monologue play and has also authored, *Jenifer Street*, a short play in three scenes. In addition to *Seasons/Change*, she has self-published three poetry chapbooks, *Scenes of Everyday Life*, *The Valentine Poems*, and *Crush(ed)*, Linda is currently working on a memoir entitled, *Perfectly Flawed*, and an original on-line web-series, *Hotel Bar*.

Linda's current work, including reminiscences, activist-essays, political commentary, and film reviews are featured on her blog, *Mixed Metaphors, Oh My!* Earlier in her writing career, Linda wrote and performed stand-up comedy and was a member of improvisational comedy troupes. Her poetry and prose has been published in print and online in the *Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets 2011 Calendar*, *Our Lives*, *Queers Read This Too*, *Echoes Anthology*, *[un]*, *True Stories Well Told*, *Forward Thinking*, *Tales of the Pack*, and *A Voice of One's Own: Twenty-Five Years of Readings at A Room of One's Own Feminist Bookstore*.

The poetry chapbooks are self-published by Linda's freelance publishing and production company, **Full of Myself Productions**. To download the chapbooks and access Linda's work and contact info visit her blog, <http://www.mixedmetaphorsohmy.com/>

# Seasons/Change



Collected Poems by **Linda Lenzke**  
2017