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## The Easter Lilies

*My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord.*

PSALMS 13:5-6

The snow first melts. Next come March winds with rain,  
And by mid-April, lilies shyly peek  
Like servants who wait to serve God's reign.

His light above cold darkness they soon seek  
And strain to grow straight up and then proclaim,  
"The King's rebirth saves faithful who are meek!"

Green monocots arise, each in His name.  
With pod-shaped drums that burst with life and joy,  
They herald Him who put our death to shame.

Their royal arms sound trumpets and deploy  
All whiteness, beauty, purity to call,  
"Oh hear! He went to Hades to destroy.

He crushed life's death. Faith gives eternal soul.  
Believe! His covenant forgives our fall!"

2012

# My Brother's Keeper

*He who loves his brother abides in the light.*

1 JOHN 2:10

A Caribbean hurricane caught my heart,  
squeezed hard and hurled it with brotherly pain  
for harsh winds once lashed hateful words with rain  
and washed our natural ties apart.  
Now, in the midst of a life-threatening storm,  
I'm left to affirm my worry for you  
and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper who  
must protect him from harm of any form?"

And why must I be his keeper?" I ask.  
Then I see your face and the light in me  
throbs my heart with pain, and I'm out of breath  
for past memories in this tempest bask  
under my soul's bright light that helps me see:  
If I don't love my brother, I abide in death.

Forever I am my brother's keeper  
to live with this truth eternally richer.

2011

## A Debt of Gratitude

A debt of gratitude is love unpaid  
Or owed but never quite rendered in full  
For clichés said sound empty if not cruel  
To families of the dead in graves laid.

A debt of gratitude is a check of blank phrases:  
“Thank you!”, “We deeply appreciate it!”  
“They made the supreme sacrifice.” A writ  
To suffer and die so we won’t be in more mazes.

When the cause is hollow or true but filled with dead,  
We still feel cheated; no debt of gratitude  
Can bring back those killed that keep this country.

The heart and soul feel it, but not the head  
As tears and words pour forth our attitude  
Of a brave land struggling to be free.

This debt of gratitude can never be fully paid.  
Guilt and pain thrust us barefoot to mourn and wade.

2011



## The Cinnamon Left Out

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,  
when it is in your power to do it.*

PROVERBS 3:27

Baklava, filled with brown, ground walnuts and honey,  
layered with tissue-thin phyllo, diamond-scored,  
is served on Grecian trimmed plates before  
eyes which envy it more than money.

I taste and close my eyes with celestial delight.  
You smile sweetly then say, "Taste the Greek coffee."  
Someone else adds, "It's Turkish; it's strong, see."  
But I'm still in ecstasy after my first bite

of God's food for His saints: Greek baklava.  
I ask, "Did you make it from scratch?"  
You gaze at the table and strike a match  
to light the candle next to the halvah.

Our eyes meet, the flame flickers at your fragile pride,  
and I sense my faux pas to question you.  
I retreat with, "Is your recipe new?"  
But my blunder you cordially try to hide.

You reply, "No, it's been in the family,"  
and you offer me a glass of water.  
I feel the air around me getting hotter.  
I ask, "Olga, may I have your recipe?"

A pause and then, "Of course," you say politely.  
"I'll write it down for you before you go."  
I see your sweet smile, no stranger or foe.  
You tuck my awkwardness aside gently.

The others chat, gossip, eat your treats,  
and when it is time to leave, you touch my coat  
and in my palm you slip the recipe note.  
You look at me, the others, then your sweets—

Diamond-shaped baklava, all consumed, gone.  
Spoon-shaped halvah, coffee cups upside down  
tell fortunes of who will wear tomorrow's crown.  
The recipe's mine and the party's done.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many, many times since then I tried in vain  
to match the recipe to your baklava.  
I come close, but it's not like yours, Olga.  
Even with many variations and much pain

something is missing. I can't get it right.  
The recipe you palmed on me is now my curse.  
Every time I bake it, it turns out worse.  
I've asked others for their pastry insight,

but no one has any answers for me—  
especially when it comes to giving up  
their place on the Greek culinary mountain top.  
No one wants to weaken the family recipe.

Never ask for the ingredient list.  
The cinnamon always, always will be missed.

2011 (final)

## Success

*We will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.*

GALATIANS 6:9

With bushy tails they scamper to their goal  
And sniff the wind and search with beady eyes.  
With tufted, cone-shaped ears, they hear jays' cries  
And climb the post to reach the feeder's dole  
But soon release before they scale the pole.  
The squirrels can't reach the bird food with their tries.  
They're baffled by the dome that eats the skies.  
It blocks their climb to frustrate them—this bowl—  
So they give up and look for bird-spilt seed.  
A lively squirrel aggressively stares high  
To see this thing that hides the way to feed.  
Alone it climbs the icy pole with speed,  
Then stops and leaps aside to reach the sky  
And grasps the baffle's round rim to succeed.

11/2011

## The Writer

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water  
that brings forth its fruit in its season.*

PSALMS 1:3

Always with line cast in that river flow  
Where all time carries all and all humanity,  
He grips the rod with persistence and passion  
And casts far out and deep  
Alive in all and aware beyond fashion.

Before him sweep the river's currents—  
Unpredictable, uncontrollable.  
He eyes the details and chooses his places  
To fish the waters flowing.  
Possessed by the river,  
He is wildly obsessed by images and faces

The currents carry to the surface,  
And he tries to ignore the sirens' serenade.  
He does not fear them reflecting silver lights before his eyes,  
Nor does he heed the deceit in their cries.

He fears the end that seasons bring.  
He throws his line out and holds the pole tightly.

2012