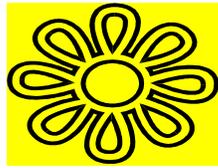


KALEIDOSCOPE



Poems by June Stepansky

*The many colors and patterns
of living and loving*

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In loving memory of Joe,
and for Lee, Norman, Gina
and Alex, who are an integral
part of my living and loving.



*Life has its own hidden forces
which you can only discover by living.
Soren Kierkegaard*



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EXPLORATION

I will dip into
the depths of myself.
Am I not marvelous?
I am one with the grass
and the crustacean.
Are they not marvelous?
I know that in me
is that which
I do not know,
and can only guess,
but I marvel
that I am the key
and the gate.



AT THE MUSEUM

On the way to the museum
you tell me about your divorce,
your illness, your poverty.

At the museum, your misfortunes
invade me like a malevolent mist
mixing decadent Russian opulence
with Los Angeles angst.



IN PRAISE OF LILACS

We had no flowers blooming
on our block when I was six:
just one small plot of fenced
and well-defended grass,
and wild and rambling sunflowers
in the empty field behind the house.
But on the way to school
along untended walls,
as if by chance,
some lilacs grew.

My life was filled with jump ropes,
grown-ups, cats, playmates, marbles.
Then on the way to school one day
I found the fragrance, and the color,
and the magic of lilacs,
and my world enlarged
and changed.



TOURIST

Sometimes in the night
I can still feel the heat of a man's eyes
from across the plaza in Nauplia , Greece.
It was the softest of summer nights,
and he watched with his hot eyes
as couples strolled the promenade.

Or was it in Granada, Spain or in Morocco
that I saw, or thought I saw,
a furtive glance, a quiet fire.
Or yet again around a rooftop pool in Tel Aviv,
someone watching
from behind his sunglasses.

The memory of exotic eyes in exotic places
sometimes, in the night,
can still cause
reverberations.



SEA CHANGE

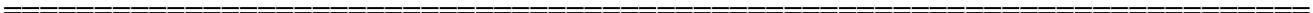
I am allergic to scallops.
Therapy will not help me.
Medication will not ameliorate it.
Meditation cannot change it.
Many people can enjoy scallops,
but I am not one of them.
It is hard for me to accept
that there are things about myself
which I will never be able to change.
I know that one day I must acknowledge
my particular and peculiar uniqueness,
like my allergy to scallops, and
be ready to change to shrimp



DICHOTOMY

Sumptuous
pink and orange satin
sheathe round my whiteness
in heavy-scented folds crushing me.
Breathless, I raise to one elbow,
and through a blurred crack
look at mountains of gray concrete
making an arc over my head
closing off the sky.

The perfume deepens.
I fall back on caressing pillows, faint,
and into my receding consciousness
one slim, white birch
with scattered russet leaves
cuts through the concrete
and stands strong
against a small, sweet
blueness.



POVERTY

We had no costly toys
when we were small.
We had penny candy.
We had marbles.
We played hide and seek,
and captain-may-I.
We jumped rope,
double-Dutch.
We listened to
the accordion man
down the street.
We sent in box-tops
to radio stations
for code badges
and code rings.
We sent to magazines
for free miniatures
of cereals and lotions.
Our neighbors were kindly.
Our friends were gentle.
We never even guessed
that we were poor.



THE CASBAH

We round a corner,
and look down a web of dark alleys.
On either side old stone buildings stand
as they have for centuries.
Nothing has changed.

We are well-fed tourists
looking for the exotic.
We snap our pictures
of the dirty cobblestones,
and the dirty houses,
and the dirty children.
Our guide says,
“Don’t touch the children.
they have lice.”

We move on.
We have not touched the children,
and they have not touched us.



KARMA

It was sunny
just a moment before:
then darkness,
the crashing of thunder,
lightening flashing
through the downpour.

A few blocks from my house
just before the sun reappeared,
a young man leaving his office
was struck by lightening.



POETRY READING

Our coffee pot emits
a reedy sound
like some Andean flute
penetrating, melancholy,
setting the mood.

The poets
empty their unique visions
into a common pool.
For two small hours
our visions meld,
and then
each poet
disengages.



THANATOS

I found a dead rat
when I came home today.

It was lying
in the middle
of the lawn,
its head gnawed,
bloody.

I took my shovel
and threw the rat
into the bushes.

It's still there
under the ivy
rotting.



GREEN THINGS

There were always
green things in my life:
small wild flowers, lilac bushes,
arboretums where lovers walked
and children came to play,
forests edging round a lake
where we would go on Sundays.

And loving so these wild things,
I planted in my yard a forest too
which now, full grown,
repays me
with its healing.



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