

Excerpts from *Scratchings 4* by Scribble Sisters

I Write by Kathy Wagenknecht

when I try to recall what happened
or why
if I want to remember the look
of the sky
if I think my opinion has value
or bite
I write

if a memory describes a corner
I turned
if it captures the truth of a lesson
I learned
or reclaims the glory of the ocean
at night
I write

If I love it or want to care nothing
at all
If I hate it, despise it, demand
that it fall
to sharpen my focus, to pull it
in tight
I write

I write to declare, to announce,
to defend
to unbury a quarrel, to describe
an old friend
when it's time to reveal what's out
of my sight
I write

A Cross Old Lady Grieves by Susan Blandy

September 2, 2021

I found the button on the recliner without groping,
Once his, now mine.
I folded the laundry in half the time,
Only mine, not his.
So, has grief now come to this?
The presence of absence,
Without the sharp slice of sorrow
As though the pain is scarred but far from healed.

I could stop to remember grief,
To rub salt in the wound just to feel
Its obstinate reality.
But dull and numb are honor enough today.

Oh, To Fly! By Judy Kniffin

She was holding on tightly to her friend, who walked mindfully, gingerly pacing the roller skate wheels that threatened to take over and launch them both off the sidewalk and into the street. The skates were deceptively lovely—four small glistening rubber wheels, neatly in a row, undergirding her elegant leather shoes.

My thoughts shot back about 65 years and some 270 miles south to the Philadelphia suburban sidewalks that grated under my own roller skates. Not nearly so elegant, they were basically 4 metal circles, lined up 2 x 2, and strapped onto whatever shoes I was wearing that day. But they served the purpose.

At that time, roller-skating was mainly a “girl” thing to do, and I suppose it still is. There just isn’t enough intrinsic mobility to do the leaping circles, splayed landings, and near crashes that boys enjoy—no near brushes with death. It wasn’t a particularly social activity either. You didn’t see gaggles of girls on skates, outmaneuvering each other with sly grins or deadpan expressions. The greatest danger we encountered was the occasional unleashed dog that ran across the street to snap at our heels...or a panicky squirrel dashing out in front of us on its way to some destination. It was generally a one or two-girl activity, keeping pace with each other, sharing gossip, and giggling down the street, around the corner, and eventually back home.

But of course, there *is* more to roller-skating. It can feel preparatory to launching into thin air, if we push our imaginations full throttle. Then suddenly we are in full flight, like the birds and flying insects, like jets and (gasp) space ships! And isn’t that really what basketball, football, tennis and badminton, bike riding...and even ping pong secretly long for: the ultimate launch into flight?

Is there anyone reading this wandering scribble who has never in sleep dreamed of bodily flying alone in the air, looking victoriously down at the life on the ground you have just escaped? What a delicious feeling! What power! I want to go back and say to the girl and her friend, “Absolutely, take care while you are getting the feel of this activity; but then launch into the sky and seize the wind! This is your true destiny!

The Ruby-throated Bird by Wilma Ann Johnson

Yes, I was used to the whirr of their wings,
but this one is beep, beep, beeping
at me sitting in my deck chair
below the hanging pot of red flowers.

It is as if it is saying
“Give me more space.”
This hummingbird, no doubt,
would approve of wearing a mask
and social distancing.

Busted By Berta Winiker

I wouldn’t call collecting seashells a useless habit, more like an imperative pull. How often do I get to a beach after all? Not often enough. There’s something soothing and mesmerizing about the hunt for more shells from my travels. I have an enormous, glass lidded jar full of shells along with some rocks and pebbles. I imagine them before they came into my hands, swirling and whirling in waves, at the mercy of changing tides. A mass of eye candy, these shells transport me back to some halcyon days.

Costa Rica, April 2005. My then boyfriend and I were at an all-inclusive resort and our amenities included the use of kayaks. We were eager for some adventure beyond the confines of the resort and the hustle and bustle of the pool crowd. We kayaked to an attractive secluded beach and within no time I was gathering shells. For once, I found myself without any baggie or container for the shells. My hands filled, I looked around and my modest self hit upon a plan. With no one in sight, I threw caution to the wind and dropped my bathing suit top. Bra cups, perfect.

In seashell pursuit, I was in the zone. Suddenly the silence was broken by Rich's voice. He had spied some locals off in the distance, trundling along and laden with bags of food. Perhaps returning from a local bodega? He was pointing to my exposed chest and just in case there was any question as to what was in their line of sight, he offered an Americanized version of "poco blanco montanas."

In a flash, the bra cups were smashed northward and were followed by a scream. Not by having been spied with my girls hanging out, but with having been bitten in the tit by a denizen in the shell. I think I dropped the goods from all the excitement.

When I walk by the brimming jar of shells, I remember another day when my cups indeed did runneth over!!!