

Poetry Series

**Sheila Burns**  
**- poems -**

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## Sheila Burns(April 22,1950 - April 22,2050)

Born the 4th child in a Catholic family in Grand Junction, Sheila made her first move at the tender age of 3 weeks to a 2 acre spread in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. She has young and fond memories of their life close to the land, raising chickens, cows, goats, making butter in a churn, growing vegetables, having a little brother added to the family, attending church and participating in processions. She also had wicked memories of her father's violent temper. His inability to support his family adequately enough selling insurance in that small community caused her family to move to Kansas City, Mo., when she was 4 yrs old. Some of her mother's family lived there and Sheila was put in the care of her Great Aunt & Uncle, while the rest of the family lived in a basement apartment of one of her mother's cousins family home. After about 1 year Sheila moved back in with her family when they moved into a home of their own in Kansas City, Kansas, but they again soon moved back to Colorado and into the home of her paternal grandmother. When Sheila was in 3rd grade her parents bought a home of their own. It was in that home and as early as 4th grade that Sheila was told she had a talent for writing. However, she recieved her one and only F grade in journalism in high school. A tragic and consciousness-changing event occured when Sheila was 14. Her little sister, the 6th child of the family, died at age 3. Although everyone hoped and prayed this would be the event that stopped her father's alcoholism it did not. Sheila moved out after high school graduation. She attended Mesa Jr. College one year, then at 19 met and married her first husbad. They lived in Santa Fe, , Denver, Santa and El Rito, having 3 children along the way and as many do she divorced her husband, and met the first real love of her life Joseph at a Native American Church meeting in El Rito. After a short time she moved back to Santa Fe again, where she worked for architects and builders. She and Josephs had a child. 3 of her 4 children were born at home w/midwives and when her 3 older children went to Hawaii to live with their father, she moved to Las Cruces, NM to study midwifery. After 5 months she decided this was not the right profession for her and she moved back to Santa Fe. By this time her older chilren were also living in NM again. She raised her 4 children, as a single parent, continuing to work for building contractors, attended more college but never graduated. She is now grandmother to 3, works for a custom builder, and as she has done all her life writes sporadically.

# Building The Shrine

How do we honor and love  
Our formless, beloved, departed ones?  
Those whose eyes we loved  
Whose lips, smiles, skin, voice, smell, touch,  
Sound, laughter brought  
So much joy and love to us  
Until they were gone  
Whose bodies now are lifeless  
Beyond our sight  
Memorialized only by  
Photos, tokens,  
Some cold engraved stone  
Or perhaps transformed by fire  
Into smoke and ash.  
To have nothing else physical of them  
No breath, no sound or stroke  
To love the departed in spirit alone  
Breaks our hearts apart  
Cracks our minds  
Enflames our guts  
Transfers our psyches  
To unknown realms  
Where we can only feel lost  
Until through and with our forlornness  
We find we have built a temple  
Within ourselves where we  
Love and honor the now formless one  
In spirit.  
And we find that not hurting,  
But laughing and loving  
And feeling alive again ourselves  
Does not mean forgetting  
But whispers to us that we have taken  
The love of our beloved  
Now formless one  
Enshrined it within  
And in the making of  
That holy grotto, that sacred altar  
Built with the salt of our tears

The ache of our heart  
The memories of both good & ill  
And the fissures of foundations forms  
We learned to love the formless  
In spirit  
And our formless spirit is satisfied  
As our starving senses can never be.  
And our satisfied spirit  
Manifests life again loving and losing  
Other forms  
Manifesting laughter and joy,  
Tears and sorrow  
Hurting and crying  
Catching our breaths  
In moments of beauty  
All the while  
We revere the departed  
With the deep silent  
perpetual devotion  
of  
Living  
In Spirit

(April 2004)

Sheila Burns

# Cosmic Dementia

Everything blends  
Dissolving and combining  
Before my eyes  
Within my head  
Another's name comes out  
Of my mouth when we meet  
Letters become numbers  
And numbers swim and switch  
Colors change  
How do I read traffic lights  
Shapes change, faces melt  
How do I know  
If you are man or woman  
My relation or a stranger  
I cannot distinguish  
Pleasure from pain  
Sensations flow  
Sometimes get stuck  
Momentarily  
As years fly by  
I am young again  
And usually happy  
Sometimes sad  
Without thought  
Glad there is  
Becoming  
No difference  
Between living  
And dying  
Always curious  
Filled with love  
Even when I must  
Mock up anger  
More amused  
Than anything

Sheila Burns

# Creativity

To look at me, you might say  
"Linear accountant type  
No creativity, no way, "  
In spite of my sloth  
My unorganized piles  
My many hours  
Swirled away reading  
watching listening  
Procrastinating  
I am creating  
Orchestrating  
The symphony  
Of my existence  
Singing my survival  
Play-writing my life  
Screen-playing my dialogue  
All on the cuff  
Not complaining  
It's not all that rough  
It's rather a jolly hobby  
It's more than enough.  
More than a Sunday  
It's a month of them.  
More than a sundae  
It's a banana split  
With hot fudge dripping.

Sheila Burns

# Dark Clouds

Dark clouds drifting by  
Throughout most days  
Are easily ignored.  
But some days completely  
Block the sunshine and yet allow  
No rain to bless my plough.

However as few know  
I have the power to control  
But usually prefer  
To let the clouds determine  
Allowing me to feel the burden.

Sheila Burns

# False Identity

Holding in high esteem  
My false self image  
The granules of that image flow  
Slipping thru the hour glass

Turning the hourglass  
As many times  
As repeated deceptions  
And reincarnations  
I insist upon,  
The sand in unique arrangements  
Slides thru the glass every time  
Until I release the sand  
Or the turning and be  
The transparent glass.

Sheila Burns

# Road Rage – Confession And Absolution

My vehicle has become defective  
From my intolerance  
Of others driving habits.  
My pet-peeves are gravel in my gasoline.

My tires are nearly bald  
From the blistering aggravations and annoyances  
Of this tedious road full of obstructions  
And misleading maps.

I am stuck in neutral, my engine racing.  
Unable to accelerate no matter  
How many times I pump the peddle,  
Wishing I could abandon this journey.

My transmission cannot get beyond  
The cog of others' splinters  
Unless I power forward with hot rage  
Blinded by this god damn beam in my eye.

Did I curse?

Oh Lord, let me accept that which grinds  
And gristles against my every nerve  
So it becomes grease instead  
In the mechanisms of my Home-bound chariot.

Grace me, Oh Master Mechanic,  
With compassion that turbo charges  
My transport into blissful detachment  
That allows me to soar above my rabble-babble.

Infuse my engines with the fuel of love  
That conveys my consciousness  
Into the transcendental here & now  
That I may instantaneously hurtle home to Thee

Sheila Burns

# Writer's Block

Sometimes, too often lately,  
Now when my vocabulary  
Has grown quite large  
I cannot recall a specific word  
When no other one will do.

It wisps about my mind  
Like butterfly wings  
Kissing a blind person.

I can feel it, almost hear it  
But I cannot see it much less  
Grab hold and pin it down.

So I ignore it, throw my thesaurus  
At it if it's handy hoping to down it  
Or ask someone else to grab it  
For me and we have a hide & seek  
Because I can describe by its relations.

Or, I have to just wait, sometimes a full day,  
For it too settle on my index finger  
After I have forgotten I even wanted it.

Eventually it comes to me  
And tickles my attention  
And I say, "Ah, yes! "

Sheila Burns