



Poems to Lift You Up and Make You Smile

Compiled by Jayne Jaudon Ferrer, Editor of *Your Daily Poem*

100 Poems with contributor biographies

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Reviewed by *Michael Escoubas*

In an age of Covid-19, *Poems to Lift You Up and Make You Smile*, takes on special significance. This anthology is needed now, as never before. However, before sinking too deeply into the pandemic season to justify the worth of poetry, it is important to remember that there has *always* been *something* that, as a people, we want and need to put behind us. The collective calling of poets in any age, is to tell the truth, sometimes with a bit of an edge, but always, in this writer's mind, with a view toward finding the best in people and illuminating the path to hope.

This has been Jayne Jaudon Ferrer's enduring passion for the last 11 years as editor of *Your Daily Poem*. YDP is a valued destination for some of the best-known poets in the country. Yet, Jayne is known for her welcoming spirit to new

poets as well. She has a sharp eye for poets on-the-rise and gives many their first significant exposure. Moreover, Jayne's single-minded goal has been "to share the pleasures of poetry with those who may not have had the opportunity to develop an appreciation for that genre."

All of this is reflected in *Poems* and therein lies its appeal. The careful selection of 100 poems, chosen from an archive just shy of 4,000 poems, does exactly what the title says.

As one might expect, the work is comprised of two divisions: "Poems to Lift You Up" and "Poems to Make You Smile."

Poems to Lift You Up

Kevin Arnold's "One True Song," reminds me that, in a world that values big achievements, it may be the simple things that count the most:

Our simple acts may be the warp and weft
Of the substance of our lives, what is left

Beyond the gifts and wills, the trusts and estates
After our *belles lettres* or *plein air* landscapes

What if our day-to-day actions, in the long slog
Of life are our lasting legacy, our true song?

Arnold's deft use of couplet rhyme and understated style draws me in, lifts me up.

"Life Lines," by Randy Cadenhead, contains much of the sage advice I grew up hearing, these excerpts draw back the curtain on the kind of person this reviewer is striving to become:

Walk where you have never been
and wonder at the beauty of the world.

.....

Be moderate in all things,
except goodness.

.....

Read
for a book can change your life.

.....

Listen to the music
you can find in silence.

What strikes me as important about this anthology is the role poetry can play in our everyday lives. The above noted poem, and so many others, remind us that we are neighbors, that we share common challenges, that we are united in our sufferings and in our joys.

Phyllis Beckman's "I Am, for the Time, Being," illustrates the point:

This morning I was musing when
This feeling came along
Reminding me I'm comfy, that
I feel like I belong.

So glad I'm not so worried
About what's next to be
That I miss the present "now"
That life has offered me

When all these special moments
Are noticed one by one
The richness of just living
Can bubble up in fun

So thank you to the giver
Who urges me to take
My time, though it is fleeing,
A mindful life to make!

I am, for the time, being.

Beckman's judicious use of commas made me slow down, caused me to think carefully about the poem's underlying meaning. It's what good poets do.

Poems That Make You Smile

I was already smiling as I reached *Poems*' transitional mid-point! There's just something about being "lifted" that feels good.

Let's lead-off with a poem about America's pastime, Carol Amato's "Baseball in Connecticut." This well-crafted visual poem is about a player at the plate wielding a bat that "was never kid-sized." This is a can't miss delight with an unusual ending.

Michael Estabrook's poem "Laughter," is for anyone who, in their twilight years, doesn't want to be a *bother* to their children:

My mother called today
wants to pay for her funeral
in advance "so you boys don't have
to worry about it."
But I'm not sure how
one does that, who do you pay
after all she may live

another 15 years so I say
just write me a check you can trust me
\$20,000 ought to cover it.
Been a long time
since I've heard her laugh so hard.

Estabrook's conciseness, clarity, and studied restraint is a good example of a poet picking up on how funny life can be. I'm certain there was a measure of seriousness that prompted Michael's mother to phone him with her heart's concern; but it is poetry that elevates it to the level of art.

This collection is sheer delight, bringing out the best in people and in life, illuminating the path of love and hope.

As a sidenote, *Poems to Lift You Up and Make You Smile*, is not a money-maker for the editor. A significant portion of sales revenue is earmarked for *Parson's Porch*, a food, ministry program that provides bread and milk on a weekly basis for those in need. Sometimes a lift and a smile is all a person needs to make life worth living. Yes, yes indeed.

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