Three Poems

by Gene McCormick

Home Alone

Drowsing fully clothed on the family room sofa
under a quilt barely covering her feet and head,
random words run through Alice's mind:
abyss—transitory—fused—arithmetic

Rumbling rolling big bass thunder shakes
through the walls and soon enough the rain
comes, bouncing off resistant windows
as her head presses snug against the decorative
throw pillow, its embossed design rough and
uncomfortable against a blank face.
Shrub—clothesline—pushbutton—dirigible.

Rain water trickles down from the roof gutters,
dropping through downspouts to grassy puddles.
It is a dark sky; tree branches are still;
robins and sparrows hide in cover.
Apple—office—migratory—curb—motorcycle.

The room is gray dark. Pointless to turn
on a light with her eyes tightly shut.
(The dim 25-watt end table lamp doesn't count).
Scent—jackhammer—zebra—helmet.

An invasive ringing, ringing, ringing.
She gets up to answer the doorbell.
Rain, thunder and mind words have ceased but
the pillow leaves an imprint on her left cheek.
Hello, who's there? Who stands there?

The Day the Earth Stood Still

They were promised an outing on the first spring
day that was clear, sunny, and at least 75º.
The Pleasant Valley Retirement Center transport,
a rattling converted yellow school bus, hisses
to a stop in the forest preserve parking lot.
Attendants exit first, pulling out assorted
walkers, wheel chairs and other aids
for the baker's dozen band of privileged
octogenarians on leave from the Center for an
afternoon of plein air painting in the park.

William, the chief attendant, sets up easels—
some on tripods, though most are easy access
desktop models. Materials are distributed:
nobody paints with oils; watercolors for those
whose hands don't shake uncontrollably, crayons
for those that do, a few pencils and pens.
Two wooden picnic tables get pushed together
so the entire group can face the small lake.
Cloudy eyes sense the wind gently prodding
the water, reflecting a reclining sun;
those with 20/20 can see fuzzy baby goslings

paddling beside hooting protective parents;
near-mute ears tune in vocal Canada Geese.

None of the 13 golden age guys and dolls
have an iota of artistic talent but their
colorful canvas daubs are fixed in time:
images that stop the revolving world,
graphic insights to be pinned on the
recreation room cork board for fawning visitors.

Exiting the bus at the retirement center,
they all know that the clock has not stopped
for them, or for anybody else.

The Colors Of Noise: Still Life

Bread crust-colored shutters
bang in slick blue wind
as cherry red awnings flutter and slap
against the tobacco brown restaurant
while a billowing grey rain rages with
orange thunder and lightning to
illuminate the dark back street.
A black steam hammer shatters
a vanilla concrete sidewalk,
unheard inside mustard yellow
interior walls where
gold-gilt trombones drown
out dusty street noises
and all but faint hints of
raspberry flute notes
and silver violin strings
from a lavender orchestra.
Waiters speak in beige
wearing red vests, white shirts,
and mirror-sheen shoes,
serving from transparent green
bottles to sequined femmes
escorted by black-and-white tuxedos
at checked tablecloths.
A festive pink champagne
bubble bath of a rainbow
paid for with green.