

Lenore Tetkowski

Artist Statement

I am very old. I don't know how it happened because part of me is just like it always was. My kids are getting plans to celebrate my 99th birthday, and I think I will make it. I was born before the big depression. I didn't realize it, but I was a child of the depression. I had two pairs of shoes. I became an art teacher. During that time, Pearl Harbor happened.

I remembered that intimately.

I was already in love with Clem, who I was married to.

The Red Tree

The tree stands strong and brilliantly welcoming me,
Placed just right to mark the high color of October.

I enter the house, after my sad time with Clem,
Ever less and less of what was my beloved, my friend.
Now unable even to make any part of his body respond.

A tiny faint "yes" the only word from him today
To an offer of another grape. No smile. No kiss.

Sad, so weary, I look up and it greets me.

The perfect red tree greets me.

A gift from Clem.

He found it. He noted it. He marked it.

He returned to get it at transplanting time.

He placed it perfectly

In front of the tall dark evergreen,

In back of the orange maple.

Wonderful RED.

Healthy!

Immortality!



The Popcorn Tree



Beneath the cherry tree,
We bared our souls.

Petals mingling with your snow white hair,
You threw caution to the wind
And wrapped my hands in yours.

Now your hands have gone back to the earth,
Gently encouraging the flowers to grow.

I came to visit the tree where I thought I might find
left over bits of your soul dangling from its branches.
Instead, I found a fresh cut stump with a note attached
in handwriting so elegant, it must be yours:

"'You can't take it with you,' they say.
But you sure can try."

Somewhere you sit under your cherry tree,
Guiding me to one of my own.
And so life goes on in circles and cycles,
And trees that bloom and fall.

Tele-Stories Reflections

Lenore, you and I shared a lot of strange similarities. During our talks, I couldn't write fast enough to capture everything you shared, and that was okay because I was glued to your every word. You lovingly shared this poem about a red tree in your yard, which you wrote on Columbus Day, October 14, 1996 for your dear husband who passed. Shortly after we talked, my beloved grandmother passed and her cherry tree fell in an unexpected April snow. Inspired by your poem, I wrote a poem dedicated to my grandmother about the Cherry Tree in her yard. Thank you for sharing yourself and your stories. I cherish our time together!

-Christina