Algorithmia
Into the valley of death

They rode
Six thousand women
Poised for Battle
Protected by breastplates
Believed to be steel
But actually crafted from
Tinfoil
Polished, embossed
And sold for a hefty sum
At 227 Westmore Drive Sharron wipes the steamy mirror clear
and stares at breasts she thought she would lose.
Then she had mourned the loss of body contour,
a source of arousal and intimacy, nourishment,
a soft resting place for tired little heads.
Then she had wept at the thought of their removal
but now she wept at the removal of hope.
The devastation of her initial diagnosis,
merely a pre-shock to “the big one.”
Then came the cancelation letter;
a nuclear mail bomb obliterating life
in a convenient, time-release form.
Fighting meant finances drained by lawyer fees,
the expenditure of precious time.
Medicaid’s only an option after the poverty point is breached.
Either choice equaled loss, all fiscal security, the family home.
Sharron opens the medicine chest.
She examines the contents as steam from the bath
erases her image in increments.
Excision  A Found Poem

Tens of thousands rescinded.

Companies fight proposed

Legislation protecting patients;

“Get rid of policyholders with expensive diseases”

Control costs and boost profits.

Profit margins target breast tumor patients,

Tens of thousands of patients removed.

Specified criteria trigger investigations;

Employees receive bonuses based upon

Post diagnosis termination.

Termination of “unconscionable practice”

Urged by head of Health and Human Services,

Tens of thousands of lives dropped.

Investigation showed no justified rescission

Not patient fraud but profit as the cause.

“Because you did not provide vital information”

Because you were once treated for acne,

“Your coverage is terminated.”

Tens of thousands of lives lost,
“They do this to stay in the game.”

The game is profit by improper practice,
Algorithm generated corporate wrongdoing.
Executives of health insurers claim
Three hundred million dollars in five years,
Tens of thousands of lives rescinded.

“And The Moral Is …” Part 1

When Jill fell down and broke her crown
the doctor was reserved
“She must have been a lazy girl
who got what she deserved.”

This Ol’ House

This is the medical bill
That caused the “For Sale” sign
to stand in the grass
mowed by the man
who leans on the porch rail
next to the swing
that rocked his children
who played in the yard
containing the garden
tended by hands
that baked the cakes
eaten each birthday
marking the years
lived by each person
that made up the family
forced to leave
the home that they had built.

**Personal Assets**

She remembers the guilty twinge upon receiving that first bonus
spent on a toaster, electric toothbrush, and new VCR.

A second and third substantially raised her balance,
the wide-screen barely wedged between the Nissan’s worn seats.

Her skills improved for finding flaws, minute with magnifying glass;
digits in address or zip code, mistakenly transposed,
or forgotten minor cut or cough. Eventually she grew bold
slyly slipping in discrepancies when records proved too clean.

At fifty policies canceled she was in the dealership
testing how far seats reclined, high off that new car smell.

She test drove past her dream home, gables peaking over porch swing
It would soon be on the market, the owners forced to sell

With the arrival of a sofa she removes the rising mound
of home delivery cartons making one Glad Bag too many.
Crunching insects underfoot she drags the sac and doles out refuse
into neighbor’s cans unconscious of the scattered trail of debris left behind.
Residents of Shady Tree Station observe
the spring assemblage of tattered pick-ups
as timely tree trimmers pour in to tackle
thickening overgrowth.

Sprigs are weed wacked, twigs hacked at,
branches slowly sawed with
stainless steel teeth or severed
rapidly amid the buzzing of cycling chains.

Trucks drive away when the day’s work ends
and pay by pile or yard is doled out;
then residents of shady tree station retreat
into the refuge of safe and unmolested homes.

In mounds of refuse amassed at the curb
fluttering frantic wings dart
away and back, over and through
the tangles of twisted foliage concealing
tipped and broken nests.

Hysterical chirping eventually fades
along with muted cries as chicks
and fledglings, collected with brush,
are conveniently crushed into mulch.

Assurance

Crushed under a corporate coin press
stamping out deadly facetious smiles;
awaiting the cavalry limping along
on shoeless, hamstrung horses.

How many years must pass
before accumulated anguish
is nakedly perceived;
how many die of thirst
on the shores of a hoarded reservoir?

Another day, another preventable lament
in the land of the right
to liberty and life
granted by lottery to the singly insured.

The refuse dumps
of wasted time and resource
alone would serve to ease
needful masses but until

The corporate liberty to falsely
collect on combustible contracts
is forcibly eradicated. life
and liberty dangle precariously
from the fingers of a shady puppeteer.

“And The Moral Is …” Part 2

Sing a song of six pence
The farmer’s in the dell
If his little Bo Peep’s to die
Then surely it’s God’s will

A Simple Story

Said Portly Pieman to Miss Simon
“Give me a shiny penny
everyday to ward against
the day you haven’t any”

“then you shall get a pie a day
to keep away the hunger;
you’re healthy now but heaven knows
that none of us grow younger.”

Though she made but four a day
Miss Simon gave her penny.
till after years disaster struck
and left her without any.

Miss Simon in her deep distress
sought Portly out and cried
“I’ll starve without my promised pie!”
To which the man replied

“By the terms of our fair contract
I’d be forced to abide
but see a portion of one penny’s
partially tarnished on one side.”

She took sly Portly to a judge
who smacked him on the hand
and preached that Portly’s practice
should be banished from the land.

“Tut tut Miss Simon” said the judge
“the news will spread about
and Portly’s Pie’s will soon go out
of business, don’t you doubt”

Poor Miss Simon slogged on home
and starved within the year.
Her neighbors sadly all agreed
she’d been a lovely dear.

Though some say Pieman, bent in shame,
went back from whence he came
the truth is that his business thrives
he’s simply changed his name.
He casualty regards the wince of his minion
who sits in the courtroom and grasps
the rippling devastation of her
seemingly simple actions.
Murder at her fingertips,
the tap tap tap of her keypad
like the click of a trigger.

She is an iceberg.
Ten percent still exposed to sunlight,
still residing in the human realm.
This last connection
sensitive to pain
throbbing in contrast to
the vast numbness hovering beneath.

He has long had a seat
reserved in hell,
long ago broken away and submerged himself
in a self-absorbing sea
separated from all emotive stimuli
he lures others to feed him
with the promise of pocket change.

Exposure to awareness is unbearable; 
dual existence results 
in splitting pain.

She slips her new phone from 
a starched suit pocket, 
navigates to Games and sighs 
as the last remnant of humanity 
melts away.

“And The Moral Is …” Part 3

Eeney, meeney, miney, moe, 

We’ll cast you into the sea, 

Then merrily we’ll roll until 

The finger stops at me.
Ice Flow

Primitive Inuit
on northern
ice crusted expanses
stalked, foraged, fought
relentless scarcity.
Stories tell
of elderly and infirm
tribal burdens
set adrift,
left to fate.

United States,
modern expanse
of “fruited planes”;
robust citizens
sit in silent
fat abundance.
Look away
from infirm burdens
set adrift
and left to die.
In A Galaxy Far Away

The mother-ship

ignored like any

inanimate object

is stunned by the

reverberation of

her own anguish

as the life line

linking her to the being

who had resided in her womb

is snipped

like a troublesome

hangnail
Posted

Just a note to keep you posted on how the trial’s going. Though growing pale and fragile, our Yevette seemed strengthened by family that flanked her on the bench. Corine carried in her eyes the anguish of all mothers suffering the slaughter of the innocents while Orlen, like any loving father, wore the face Armageddon, willing the four horsemen unleashed on that company CEO and her shameful legion. Grandma Eloise looked a riot as she gave them all the evil eye, face all screwed up and bulging like a constipated Popeye. She fingered her satin nation bag and uttered an incoherent hoodoo chant, her curse on every cowering corporate witness. Little Brendon, well behaved, eased his mother with soothing strokes and gentle pats. Will he remember each face that robbed her every month for thirteen years before leaving her to die?

The defense attorney proved that she’d never missed a payment, that her forms were free from fraud. Executives sworn in and under oath responded in straight forward statements. Policies are routinely dropped when diagnosis deems costly treatment necessary; it improves company profit by sizable sums.

Needless to say, observers sat dumbfounded, even the judge was stunned. Sadly, no settlement will stop the spread of this cancer.


Saving Gas

Once upon A dark day in Germany
Blacked out bus windows hid the faces
of infirm fellow humans rolling
toward their point of termination.
Each clang and lock of steel doors,
Each hissing release of lethal fumes
Equaled substantial sums of money saved.

On this dark day, within our nation
the same is achieved at the thrifty expense
of letter, envelope and stamp.

Algorithmia

Embedded computations trigger
fingers tapping
misbeats of the heart.