We were counted not in thousands, nor millions, but in billions. 
Billions we were, numerous as the stars in the heavens 
As grains of sand at the sea, as the buffalo on the plains. 
When we burst into flight we so filled the sky 
That the sun was darkened and day became dusk 
Humblers of the sun we were! 
The world inconceivable without us. 
Yet it’s 1914, and here I am 
Alone caged in the Cincinnati Zoo. 
The last of the passenger pigeons.
Maytime Magic
by Mabel Watts

A little seed
For me to sow...

A little earth
To make it grow...
A little hole,
A little pat...
A little wish,
And that is that.

A little sun,
A little shower...
A little while,
And then- a flower!
Consider the auk:
Becoming extinct because he forgot how to fly and could only walk
Consider the man who may well become extinct
Because he forgot how to walk and learned how to fly before he thought
My grandmother is white as milk,
    And smooth as ivory;
She wears a little gown of silk,
    She sings a song to me,
Soft as the leaves that rustle down,
In autumn when the woods are brown.

She is so old, she is so frail,
    You’d hardly think her able
To pull a drawer that fits so close
    Out from her little table.
But yes, she is; and oh, it’s full
Of goodies the most wonderful.

There’s barley sugar, red and white,
    And figgy paste and all;
Burnt almonds for my heart’s delight,
    (I wish they weren’t so small!)
And lemon drops with sprightly zest,
I almost think I like them best!

And “Take one!” says my grandmother,
    “For two is one too many!
Say ‘thank you!’ nicely, dear, or else
    Next time there won’t be any!”
(For me, she means; because the drawer
Is always full; it is the law!)

She’s very small, my grandmother,
    And very, very kind;
But when she says, “do this?” or “that,”
    I somehow have to Mind!
For if I didn’t—well, you see,
I don’t know what would come to me!
What I Want
by Noni Bookbinder

When I found her poem
on the back of a 3x5 card
in her rusty flowered recipe file
I never got a new one, her hands touched it
when I found my mother’s poem
it ripped my heart out

Ripped the scab off a ten year old
wound. Tears flowed like blood
as I read it, I knew she was
in pain.
Ten years isn’t even ten seconds
when it comes to the worst hurt
you’ve ever felt.

Shocking evidence
she could have been a poet
But she had to support us
so talent became the
(dreaded) Public Relations

No wonder she encouraged
nurtured
pushed
(loved!) my work
I still hear her voice
“Noni~ anyone can hack. Imagination
is your gift”
in my adolescent way, I’d say
“Mom, anyone can drivel~ making the bucks is
making the grade”. Then she looked so sad.

Now that I am Ms. Corporat VP
how wrong I know I was
how sad she must have been
giving up her dream from necessity

I wish I could stop
missing her in my poems, I wish
she hadn’t died in pain
I wanna be her little girl again
just plain old starving poet
That’s what I want!
Every so often, my father tries making bread.  
He’s too impatient though.  
He puts it on top of the radiator to make it rise faster  
And I doubt if he kneads it as long as the books say he should.  
He likes to see results.  
When it’s baking, the whole house smells like heaven.  
But you do have to hurry and eat it while it’s fresh.  
The next day, it’s almost too heavy to lift.  

The mood only strikes him once every couple of years.  
Mother shakes her head and geys out of his way.  
But I sit around and cheer him on.  It’s exciting!  

I’ve no idea what starts him off on bread-making.  
But I’m glad he does it.  
It makes him ridiculous, mysterious and my own particular father.
I wrote a poem about Emily and spring~ and it was right.
Exactly what I meant was there on the page.
I read it to Mother. Her face lighted.
“Oh Kate,” she said, “I do like that.”

Shyly, happily, I turned to go away.
Then I turned back.
“How can you stand it . . . .
I mean, never, ever making a special thing all your own . . . .”

I stared at her.
I felt as though we were two entirely different kinds of beings.

She smiled at me.
Her face looked . . . . I don’t know . . . . unguarded.
“I’ve had you, Kate,” she said.
“I’ve worked over you and you’re special
And my own.”

We were both embarrassed.
I was surprised, too, and disbelieving.
I stood, tongue-tied, my cheeks reddening.
I wasn’t going to say anything.
Then, the words just jumped out of my mouth, bang!

“I thought you didn’t want me.
You didn’t either. I’ve even heard you say so myself.”

Her eyes went wide.
All at once, she laughed.
“Oh, how I didn’t want you!” she admitted.
“I was so mad.
But when I think of life without you . . . .
I did want you, Kate.
I didn’t know it right away, that’s all.
Be reasonable.
How was I to guess, ahead of time, that you were the one who was coming . . . .
Have you brushed your teeth?”
She hasn’t asked me that for years.
She usually forgot even when I was little.

“No,” I said.

I had to clear my throat before I spoke.

“Then go brush them,” she ordered.

So I went.
But it was almost as though I’d written another poem.

Or she had.