

Cristina Norcross

You Might Need to Hold My Hand

We walk over sand mounds,
once temporary castles,
bulldozed by bare feet.
Tiny legs rush towards the water's edge.
We choose a slow, deliberate route,
small dunes that lead to the lake.

You might need to hold my hand, you say.
In this moment, I glimpse the slow decline
that is coming.
I know that you have entered a new building,
one with scaffolding, power outages,
and more frequent repairs.
The hand that once held mine
to cross the street
has less weight, needs direction,
entrusts me with knowing what comes next.

Like a turtle moving with great care,
you turn onto your back, quietly smiling,
while you float effortlessly,
occasionally doing the elementary backstroke.
Buoyancy makes you strong,
nothing to trip over,
no stairs to navigate.
The afternoon sun casts a blanket of light
in a diagonal line.
The before time of your youth co-exists
with today's slow swimming self.
You are whale-like and majestic,
only exerting enough energy to float
and occasionally move closer to land.
Which shore are you swimming to, I wonder?
Which side of the mountain waits to welcome you?

Cristina M. R. Norcross lives in Wisconsin and is the editor of *Blue Heron Review*. Author of 9 poetry collections, a multiple Pushcart Prize nominee, and an Eric Hoffer Book Award nominee, her most recent collection is *The Sound of a Collective Pulse* (Kelsay Books, 2021). Cristina's work appears in: *Visual Verse, Your Daily Poem, Poetry Hall, Verse-Virtual, The Ekphrastic Review, and Pirene's Fountain*, among others. Her work also appears in numerous print anthologies. Cristina has helped organize community art/poetry projects, has led writing workshops, and has hosted many open mic readings. She is the co-founder of Random Acts of Poetry & Art Day. www.cristinanorcross.com