SANDY SHREVE

Marbles

Perhaps it is spring, the air clear, an after-rain morning
Friends gather in the street, take for granted the slip
of distant ocean scent into their lungs
the hint of first green in its chill
One among you begins to grind her heel in the dirt
tentative at first

It is a casual question, when you crouch
for another turn, the edge of your forefinger stained
mud embedded in gravel scratches
So, what do you want to be

You remember your father, your mother
insisting: anything, anything at all, whatever you want
So today you say, lawyer, tell your friends
one of your aunts thought of it because
you are talkative, always arguing, and for some reason
this reminds you of your mother saying she can't stand
women's voices on the radio
how that soprano-sound grates on her nerves

and you can't imagine a day thirty years later
when the newspapers you don't read yet
will report that women's voices are lower than thirty years ago
because of all their new careers
Reading that story you will remember
today, your mother working at home
you and your friends dreaming up a different future
for yourselves while you play marbles
in a small Maritime town on the edge of an emptiness

when the thought of your mother's dislike makes you think
of cheddar cheese, how it ribbons against steel
to a shredded pile for the soufflé she makes
how its sharp flavour will rise to mysterious heights

Your friends are laughing now, one has already
lost all her marbles, the game barely begun
you want her to stay, scoop a handful from your bag

and you see her face, then, the way it was in winter
the uncomfortable cold of it, walking to school
she asked what you planned to do but that time
your mind was as blank as a snowman's
so you tossed the question back to her

I'll be a nurse. Her certainty sank into your heart like a stone
in a snowball, it was nothing you ever imagined
but she is your best friend, you want to stay together forever
Me too you enthused

Today her face is that frozen as she turns and strides
away from friendship again, her independence fierce
against translucent globes in your outstretched hand
all your precious colours trapped in glass

Marg Yeo

pour all over you like rain

when i get my
arms about you when i
fold you and hold
you right up tight and you are kissing my
earlobe or the back of my
neck in a discrete and
neighbourly sort of spirit and my knees
buckle a bit and my heart's going
whump whump and kicking my breath out
what can i
say

don't
do this to me maybe just for a few
minutes while i learn to stop


grieving and get back to being in
here and alive


what's in
me is so much love and no


place to put it so much


love no one could stand up


under if i were handing it


out i keep


hold of myself


and still our eyes


meet over the table and right


away my heart's off


again with me just rag
tagging along after it it's a kind of
disco beat a little


latin i wish for


you i could be twenty


one again and relatively


harmless but i'm forty


five and think when a car backfires in the next


street they're killing


children my hands are so


angry they would talk to you in


flames


i wish i could


pour all over you like


rain


that


easy


but i'm


thunder and lightening and the whole


sky goes dark and everyone


waits you


too wondering what


i will do


Sandy Shreve's most recent poetry collection, Bewildered Rituals is published by Polestar Press (1992).

Marg Yeo's most recent collection, Getting Wise, was published by gynergy books in 1990.

Our apologies to Sandy Shreve and Marg Yeo for errors in their poems which first appeared in the Spring 1994 issue, volume 14, number 2.