

## The Dung Beetle

A quantity of  
dung, deftly  
scooped, carved  
and shaped  
ball-like  
from a fresh  
cow manure  
pat, is propelled  
awkwardly, determinedly  
along the  
caliche road.  
Navigating by  
sun, moon  
and Milky Way,  
the beetles  
pilot the prize  
inside their  
tunnel, burrow  
deep in  
soft sand,  
mate, and lay  
eggs within the  
spherical treasure,  
assuring existence  
of the next  
generation of  
recyclers.

## Desert Life in Lockdown

Writing these last couple of  
months has been malaise,  
keeps me from simple

thought on paper, the  
crush of magnitude. Our lives  
in time. I

try to get straight about  
generations, my son, my  
daughter, what lives will

be, or how

I would –  
were I to – lose

them, or

Sam. I have thoughts about

my parents, our country,  
politics. I am thankful, we  
are blessed, a beautiful

home, air conditioning, an  
outdoors to walk around  
in, food we haven't

lost, or loved ones. I  
feel like one of  
those super

balls. Remember?  
Bouncy and  
ricocheting from

surface  
to surface,  
forever. I don't want

a rut. I'll write something  
else soon. I am writing to  
document this dry moon

time —  
okay? — under-  
water.

## ANTICIPATE

I anticipated the kind of life we were promised— an idyllic life with a stable husband, children, home, solid career. At least that's the package sold to us Boomers. That's what I anticipated. And I worked hard, put in my dues, got the great job and husband, had the kids. What I didn't anticipate was praying for the bottle of booze to be empty so my husband would finally pass out, end the outburst, the cruelty and persistence of his rage. What lifetime experience could ever prepare me to anticipate the explosion, criticism, hatred, volume, disgust, duplicity, danger, disappointment, disdain, escalation, narcissism, insensitivity the insanity, the impossibility. I couldn't anticipate the trap. I fell in, completely, each time. I had no time to heal, to process, he knew, he could

anticipate, he  
would accelerate  
again. I craved  
peace, I ached  
for quiet, I longed  
for absence  
of conflict.  
In the end,  
what neither  
he nor I  
anticipated,  
was my  
strength.

## Tall Women

I was walking down a shaded lane in East Texas, flanked by tall, splendid pine trees with nubbly, broken arms and deeply scaled bark, trees of my formative lives, thinking about the poem I needed to start– a poem that would be epic and moving and possibly life-changing – and I began to remember incredible heights, prickly pinecones, sticky resin, carpets of needles, needles caught on fence lines, grass blades, car antennas, dog houses, scattered across rooftops and down embankments, inches thick in flowerbeds, caught on animal fur, the branches and leaves of other trees, deep on the lawn and underfoot and I visualized very tall women, combing their needle hair into the wind over hundreds of years and I imagined myself towering, filled with conifer-wisdom and grace, scattering knowledge, brown with age.