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**Poems by Andrea Nicki**

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**Caterpillar**

You're back to caterpillar, going inch by inch,  
but this time you have a strut, bolder colours,  
bristles, are less appetizing for predators.  
You have more courage to be out in the open,  
to hang by a thread in the winds of chance,  
more trust you will be blown to an opportune perch.  
You are more worldly. You have learned better places  
to hide and when to go underground or blend in  
with your surroundings. You feel a new sociability,  
attunement to others on the same journey,  
follow the lead of a mighty procession.

**Autumn Leaves**

This tree has completely lost its pride and joy,  
now lying across the wet ground, an intricate, golden mat  
for others to step on. Things that you do that are undignified,  
but unavoidable. Bills need to be paid. There is no hearth to return to,  
no heirlooms to sell. You had hoped for something better than this,  
but, in truth, not in childhood, too depressed to think  
beyond the next year. The glistening leaves remind me  
of leaf collages I made as a girl, and of how I liked to iron and preserve  
leaves between wax paper. The barren tree like my girl's body  
dancing in the wind in the back yard to my own songs, odes to autumn trees.  
Joys you rediscover later in life when others are taken away.

### **Daffodils**

Their heads hang low  
from weeks of battering rain.  
They must find it hard to trust,  
meet the gaze of the new sun.

Still, they hold their mouths open--  
a faithful chorus with perfect pitch yellow.  
Perennials, you planted the bulbs years ago,  
teach us to love again and again.

### **Last Day**

On my last day of lecturing at the university  
for six years, I drive home feeling unhappy  
about the lack of severance, gifts, positive relationships,  
think about starting a home business  
teaching children and adults.  
On a corner sidewalk four beautiful chairs  
with multi-coloured cushions:  
Sky blue, Earth brown, Sea green, Fire red  
I transport the chairs to my house,  
set them in my living room across from my couch:  
a new community to start.