Life As Art:
Poem At *Ground Zero* *1)*

We suffer in black & white
& we rejoice
in color—
* * *
That thin spectrum of light
which extends beyond our fingers
buffers
the length
of our joys & fears...
... Beet red, Mood Indigo...
How *green*
we turn with envy, then implore
the Blues
to raise us
like bold banners, or the Dead
beyond years
which certainly
would have done worse
if they'd only had their way; but
impasto or *impostor*,
the Impossible presents itself
with or without
our permission—pale
water paints
trickling
down
like the fetid drain
of a wound's dressing, thin wash
of time
escaping how it may; or
-- *conversely*--
Sorrow heaped upon sorrow
like heavy paint,
thick as that brick hurled
through windows of *krystalnacht*
that shatter as swiftly as the eye
of a camera,
lens snapped tight...
Spectacular shutters of light--
Un Chien Andulou
in street vernacular:
a blinded caravan of steel
has thrust it's sad cargo
in the harbor of a city—

(cont'd)

Eye for an eye
Every star a sharp tool
*Everything &Nothing what it seem*s:
The Moon, a dromedary
carting his harsh hump like a prize
or bad dream--
a Cross or curse to be
borne, or quickly gotten-rid-of;
but-- camera
or caravan,
a deeper eye opens
to reveal a fatted calf--animal, idol
hastily pressed
through the eye of a needle
as the omnipresent-dial
moves swiftly out of focus,
reels
to document the sudden demise--
A fleet of gritty angels
ominously balanced on the head
of a bloody pin?
Oh-- What saints
& fools we all have been!
... Odd job,
this business of Creation...
... At the crossroads of our pulse,
where veins
converge like junctions to map out
the heat of our passion,
the feral light
plays tricks on our eyes,
itself a legacy...

What else can it say of the tints
& tones
that shape & shadow
the smoky sinews of our skulls
& bones, skyscraper skeletons
like collapsed lungs
riddled
with remorse, disease or desire,
lofty greed or blind ambition,
their insufficient innocence/
vast indifference
not nearly enough to keep
the ghastly checks & balances afloat...

(cont'd)

... Fast forward to *Nowhere:*
a nation under siege
by an inimical ghost,
one stealthy as gas,
prolific as human need--
a Nation
Noble & Base as no other...

* * *

How right they were, the Old Masters!
How well they knew about suffering--
Yes...
We divine each disaster
in black & white
but we *Survive*
in *Primary colors--*

* * *

Yellow, our Faith, its beacon of Light;
Yellow, our gold--
our cowardice & greed;
Red our blood & *estranged Father;*
Red, our wars
& demon-lovers;
Blue our Hope, our Wisdom & need--
the Virgin's Mantle & starry dome;
the Shadow-Self, inverted *Other*
our *Pseudonym*
or *Nom de plume--*
the *Womb & Tomb*
of the Devouring Mother.

Pinata

... With spit & spittle, with flour & paste
I hone this hard shell
to the shape
of my love: *Like an empty heart,*
I fill it
with good things for you--
Things to please, silken parts;
things that feel / taste/ smell
of Light...
its grace, passion, heat;
-- a middle
emptied of all that would not do.
It
greets.
It summons you, as if to a party; yet you,
as if blindfolded, grope in darkness
by choice, remiss to unveil
the obscured view & value
of such simple gifts-- an offering.
... If you cannot see, at least hear its voice.

O break, now, my dangling heart, strung
as if from a gallows: It swayed
to your every breeze, knowing
what you refused,
negotiating all that you fail to see
-- an oeuvre filled with life complete.
It is not hollow: It overflows. It glistens
with what treasures may come
from abandoned, yet undiscovered
places-- *A tell-tale heart*
with secrets to share. Listen:
... You can almost hear it beat--
Like love itself,
it is fragile, yet hearty.
...So take
now, your brutal bat & pummel
the confounded air: Swing, thrash,
smash with all fury
those mysteries revealed in unknown space:
It holds wisdom, like an ancient face.

... Break open
the heart, *the light*; let them cover you
with healing salve
which you don't want, but will not share.
Then feast on leftover shards of memory:
They're all that you will have.

"... Love
that shines from within
cannot be darkened
by obstacles of the world
of consequences..."
--Pythagoras

Pythias

The geometry of the Heart
is greater
than Death.

Clutching your breath
like a crucifix
years
before Christ,
you still believed in miracles.

...Miles persist:
You
do not seek their approval:

Already they know
the answers you impart,
unfurling them
like bandages--
disarming each
like a fist.

The Climb

Old women, tangled in their breath,
are prisoners of the stairs:
It's a long way
from *here* to *there*--
Often not worth the trip.

... They pause on the landing, agitated
as a bride, 'though not so merry.
They tug their collars like a ripcord;
& inevitably, they will slip
into the heaving & hawing
that marks the symbol
of their age,
taking each step as it comes, careful
not to slip, inching their way home.
How easy it would be if they
could slide UP
instead of DOWN
(with Mary Poppins' flair); yet
they are not magic; & indeed,
it will take a while before they ascend
to the next stair-- *too breathless to speak,*
too breathless to smile, too breathless
to believe in anything
but the cruelty of the climb.
Maybe next week will be better,
when the check arrives in the mail
& they can afford their daily
ration of pills that will raise them,
like saints, to the top of their heaven;
But, for now, they must content
remain transfixed
between this step & the next--
like ancient but lyrical poetry
taken out of context--
... They are prisoners of the stairs...
... Soon (*somehow, soon*) they will inch
their way back to their kitchens
to prepare a pot of soup
or some stale toast, & busy themselves
with remembering what they used to
enjoy doing most--

(cont'd)

knitting a hat
(before the eyes went bad), chatting
with a neighbor on the stoop...
Now the neighbor's gone,
& the stoop's too far away--
They are held at bay by the years.
Old women, tangled in their breath,
dining alone, or with Death--
... They are prisoners of the stairs.

"*Beauty shall save the world...*"
--- Dostoyevsky,
fr. *The Idiot*

An Artist's Invocation

O poetry of Spirit
who waters & blooms that bouquet
called my eyes, ignite
the silent voice of your vision
so that even the distracted dead
may say,
"We sense, we see & hear it!"

... *Call the Light Home;* enter through
each portal-- tissue, flesh, bone.
Summon each thing in every way
to bespeak all that I am, so we two
may revere this gift, this grace
which flows through me
from you, then germinates within.
It steers me to our port of call, each
a Twin
who knows & shares, bears
each other upwards, towards home:
... It is that which, together, we will
have be-gotten..
Come break through
this blank page; hone & manifest
as Muse
that which truly inspires:
Call the Light by name.
Then let me grasp through intuition
what time would force to be
forgotten--
Creator/ Creation
One & the Same, indistinguishable
now, each from the Other,
answering One
to the Other's name, just like *Fire*
& its Brother/Sister, *Flame*.

Marlene M. Tartaglione, Poet

A BRIEF BIO

Born in NYC, **M. M. Tartaglione** manifests poetry, children's literature, visual arts, a voice for social justice, spiritual/ personal transcendence. Ms. Tartaglione has received **4** poetry awards, recently nominated for a 2025 Pushcart Prize. Her work, published nationally & abroad, presented at the Brooklyn Museum, MOMA & Society for Ethical Culture in New York City; it is archived in the libraries of Emory & Buffalo Universities. Ms. Tartaglione's graduate studies at NYU focused on documentary film, juvenile literature. She holds a B.F.A. from Cooper Union, where she studied with poet/ scholar, Dr. Brian Swann.