

# On the Front

by [Susan Shea](#) (November 2023)



*Apples*, Paul Cézanne, 1878–79

On the Front

You asked me to come to your office to  
speak with your student in crisis even  
though we had the same training

you told me I never got nervous  
you told me I could handle it better

I wanted you to feel safe, to believe  
experience would make wartime easier

so you only saw me sitting in front of  
one mouth speaking, but I was swallowing  
generations of hostilities, a stampede of  
piercing wild wounded families whose  
truths had just escaped from their zoos  
by word of one mouth

God gave me words to build a soft  
corral, to slow some running down

to fetch some food some drink  
to begin some ways of sanctuary

for you for them for me  
to have a taste of our serenity

### Ins and Outs of Analysis

While I was examining apples through their  
plastic bag, trying to outsmart, leave  
bruised and battered fruit behind

I saw a woman grab a sour apple  
Granny Smith bag from my sweet  
Gala apples section without even  
looking at her bag

so I had to call out, warn her  
*hey, that's a Granny Smith bag*

and without looking at me she said  
*an apple's an apple*

leaving in no hurry

leaving me to  
analyze her  
mindless tranquility

## Last Stop Before Heaven

My daughter runs a full-service  
scar wash of her own invention

she cleanses people of their wrongs,  
their slights, their chains they drag  
behind them from unfavored times  
when love was no where to be seen

she finds a way to lift them up onto  
pedestals, all polished, speckless  
with only their customized gifts featured

she spotlights them in her literary  
journal stories, making them look like  
heroic figures history needs  
order to flourish  
into better times

she prepares them to be valued  
in ways they have been waiting for  
all of their truly sorry mortal lives

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Susan Shea is a retired school psychologist who was raised in New York City, and is now living in a forest in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Since she has returned to writing

poetry this year, her poetry has been accepted in a few dozen publications, including *Feminine Collective*, *Ekstasis*, *Persimmon Tree Literary Magazine*, and *The Avalon Literary Review*.

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