

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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