

A Thank-You Note

By Michael Ryan

For John Skoyles

My daughter made drawings with the pens you sent,
line drawings that suggest the things they represent,
different from any drawings she — at ten — had done,
closer to real art, implying what the mind fills in.
For her mother she made a flower fragile on its stem;
for me, a lion, calm, contained, but not a handsome one.
She drew a lion for me once before, on a get-well card,
and wrote I must be brave even when it's hard.

Such love is healing — as you know, my friend,
especially when it comes unbidden from our children
despite the flaws they see so vividly in us.
Who can love you as your child does?
Your son so ill, the brutal chemo, his looming loss
owning you now — yet you would be this generous
to think of my child. With the pens you sent
she has made I hope a healing instrument.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Source: *Poetry* (July 2013)



Michael Ryan was born in St. Louis, Missouri in and was educated at the University of Notre Dame, Claremont Graduate School, and the University of Iowa. While at Iowa, Ryan was the poetry editor of *The Iowa Review*. Ryan has taught at colleges and universities across the country and is currently on the faculty at the University of California—Irvine.

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