

Outside, Standing on a Stake

by Stephen Measure

The people are all together inside a massive tent, giant ropes tied tightly to its stakes, holding the tent secure. The people are all together, living, laughing, enjoying the company,
all of them warm, all of them together inside.

Then the wind rises, pulling at the tent, pushing at it, causing the tent walls to stretch and the tent walls to sag, the stakes slowly losing their grip on the earth.

And the people cry: If the stakes come loose, the tent will fall! Someone must secure the stakes!

But not I, each one says. I don't want to go outside. I don't want to leave the warmth. I don't want to lose the company. I don't want to miss the laughter. Not I, each one says.

Then who?

There, the people say, there! See, in the corners. See, those who aren't socializing. See, those who aren't one of us. See,
the loners, the hermits, the weirdos, the freaks!

Send them outside.
They don't mind the cold.

Send them outside.
They won't miss the company.

Send them outside to stand on the stakes. Send them outside to hold them firmly in place.

Send them outside.
Their skin is rough, as if made for cruel wind.

Send them outside.
Their feet are steady, as if meant to hold still.

Send them outside, so the tent will stand strong in the midst of the wind.

Send them outside,
and we will be happy,
in here together,
warm and safe within the tent.

Send them outside,
and they will be happy,
standing on a stake,
their face toward the stars.