

Prison Life



Art: "Jail" by Carlos Contreras

"Prison Pendulum" by Louie Perez

Back and forth we go,
Cutting at the metal.
Back and forth slowly, patiently,
 But with precision.
Blisters on my hand, soreness in my
bones,
Emptiness in my soul, and for what?
For the price of what I love,
For the price of sacrifice... For my
people!
 Iron and blood...
Back and forth we go, it's always back
and forth,
Prison pendulum.

"The Machine" by Michael Reichert

I'm deep in the bowels of a Crushing
Machine.
Grinding gears chew me up and spit me
out,
Only to sink their teeth in again.

This machine eats humanity, dignity,
pride.
Nothing satisfies its gluttonous greed.
Oh! How can I stop its evil oppression?

I'm one of thousands of sheep for the
slaughter
Just a number. Government Funding.
Oil to keep the pistons pounding.

Grist for the mill. Fuel in the tank.
Second-class citizen. Less than nothing.
Insert your on degrading analogy.
A programmed automaton, mindless and
numb,

I line up for meals at the sound of a bell.

I don't laugh, don't blink, don't show my
fear.

The machine squashes the slightest
resistance
Through isolation and forced
segregation.
This fascist system seeks to suppress us

But what if the fodder suddenly united;
Awoke from our stupor to pool our
resources?
Surely the evil machine would
malfunction.

But violent upheaval isn't the answer,
And would only fuel their smug
satisfaction,
Those whose one difference is not
getting caught.

We and our loved ones will beat the
Machine
Through strong perseverance and sound
litigation,
Using its very own system against it.

"Men Behind The Wall" by Bob H. Cook

Some men live for others and make their
presence known.
Some live in seclusion and choose to live
alone.
Some men stand for justice and walk
inside the law,
But of these men, the group I'm in
Is the Men Behind the Wall.

They've given up their freedom; they've
sacrificed their rights.

By day, they walk in darkness, and
sorrow fills their nights.
They've learned to hide their teardrops,
but still the teardrops fall.
They walk alone, and hope seems gone
For Men Behind the Wall.

Some have lost their family; most have
lost their friends.
Today will bring a heartache tomorrow
cannot mend.
Where letters are not answered, where
no one takes their call.
They count the cost and much is lost
For Men Behind the Wall.

Their past is ever with them; their future's
far away.
Their story has been written with little left
to say.
No one to stand beside them or catches
them when they fall,
The debts they've made are never paid
For Men Behind the Wall.

If there is one who's righteous, then let
him cast the stone,
And if you've known perfection, just let
them die alone.
The one Man, Who was perfect, was
judged in Pilate's Hall.
He knows their debt and loves them yet,
These Men Behind the Wall.

“Who We Are” by Matthew Fox

Dissolve into the walls
I am the concrete
Where the shadows meet
Remind us of where we are.

A sentence of years divided
I am the time abided
Where the clock hands meet
Remind us of why we are.

Pain and hatred mired with loss
I am the blatant cause.
The have of where we meet
To remind us of what we are.

In their sight I can see
Suspicion, indifference, and hostility
Pushed to the brink
We are the resistance you meet
That reminds us of who we are.

Inside we wait
For the opening of a gate.
What better emotions you create.
I am the prison
That hides my better half
You are the beloved-wife, child, parent,
friend
That reminds us of who we are.

“Some Say” by Aaron Priddy

Some say this is a December to
remember.
But I’m just like my Grandpa,
So I have to remember to forget.
Some say that I’m a member, part of a
club that lives life without regrets.
Some say my heart is growing tender,
but really how much more tender can it
get.
Now picture this chorus in your mind.
I’m singing this for us, don’t worry, I know
there is freedom we can find.

Now picture this chorus, I’m singing it for
us,
Philippians prisoners, one more time.

They hold us in while containing,
But we grow strong without complaining.

“True Story” by Alexander Vonn

We have names, you know,
behind the numbers and between
the threads of these khaki clothes.
And though some of you

remember that,
with a smile or the holding of a door,
others use “Inmate” like we were born
with it.

So we have names for you:
Dumpy Dwarf
Side Eyes
Goofy Bearded Lumberjack--
he’s the one who barks about “IDs out”
then cracks wise about homosexuality.
Every time.

I don’t know your name, Goofy Bearded
Lumberjack,
but I label you like you label me.
Maybe wittier. Maybe with a grin.
As I cross the yard for dinner,
pulling my ID from my jacket
while you holler
“Get ‘em out, and stay off your knees,”
do you notice that your breath
fogs in the air
just like mine?
That the cold Ohio winter rain falls your
head
still, as I go inside?

**“Prison’s Legacy” by Robert
Taliaferro**

Doors locked and caged, two-legged
animals. Growl at one another
for hours, days, weeks, years, decades
at a time;

Gendered youth, primed for life, placing
one foot, then another,
into the cesspool of a culture, where they
don’t really belong,

Whose dreams are faded, jaded and
defined by the moldy smell
of dusty money, and wrinkled old white
men, who make the laws

and stand in judgment of black, yellow,
red, brown and even
poor, white folks, who just want to live
the promised dream...

That tarnishes spirited women, looking
for future paths, control
of their wombs, and lives, without being
chastised or despised,

Without placements on pedestals,
unattained, or forced to define

themselves by the tenets of a job,
culture, religion, or man.

Doors lock and dreams die, as razor-
topped walls shred sunlight,
And wrought iron doors closet sins
that never die, but compound,

Like interest, in a social bank account,
that doesn’t exist
for the cardholders, just like the
investors, whose credit lines are

Governed by dreams deferred, or ruined
bodies, left with broken
minds, and the mangled souls of families
that no longer exist,

And friends, once had, moving on without
backward glances,
thoughts or cares, as to where a -once
friend- now lives;

From behind locked doors, cries can be
heard, of young men gone bad,
ruined further by forced lost manhood,
lost lives and dreams

And young women, afraid to shower,
fearing that their bodies will be
pierced by wooden rods, that tarnish and
abuse them, once again,

both taken by the legacy of decades,
years, weeks, days, hours of
rotted time, and multi-folded tissues,
breeding wadded genocide,

of generations gone, by the way of
soufully flushed toilets, into the
wombs of bloated sewers, after count, at
the stroke of midnight.

“Allegheny Ford” by Christine Leal

Allegheny Ford, Allegheny Ford,
That’s my view from the A.C.J.
I look out my window when I am lonely
and bored,
Still telling myself, that everything is
going to be okay.

I see the bird fly, so light and free.
Hoping that one-day soon that will
somehow be me.
But I think back to that day when
everything went crazy.

Why was I so hot headed? Why is everything so hazy?

I let my temper get the best of me once again.

Just like an enemy who used to be a friend.

I cry to God to please help, I can't stop.
But I laugh to myself thinking that's a cop out.

I know I can stop if I try hard enough,
Do I really want the judge to get that tough?
I'd better do something now; I'm getting too old
These youngsters are wicked, and really too bold.

So Allegheny Ford will be all that I will see,
As long as I let my temper keep on controlling me.

"Two Years" by Alex Mahon-Haft

Two full-fledged, star-circumnavigating years
Over 730 days since sight-lines began receding,
Perpetually, indefinitely darkening.
An initial shower of surprise and concern, but no real alarm
Giving way to endless cirrus stormers,
Grey like Hades, my only vista now,
Grey so thick it tints toward the purple of decay
Entirely opaque, to visibility.
Entirely opaque, to breath.
Accompanied by haze and smog, particles thickening my air,
Blown in on these eternal winds of empty, silent screams,
Harder duty, hourly, to breathe; so why bother?
A sunlight and oxygen free climate zone of me
A grinding whittling away of
My tenuous fraying grasp on inspiration
Has left this dark, my dark, so dark and dank
That every morning dawn's disbelief
That it's darker and darker yet.
Two years since I've seen the sun, the sun,
Leaving me with emotionally-disfigured arrhythmia,
A metaphysical cancer of the heart,

Due to living in these choking chimes
(darker and darker even since I began).
Entirely opaque, to hope
Two years since I've seen the sun.

"My Concrete Hell" by Katrina Blasing

I sit here and I look around
I can't believe this is where I'm found.
This is my world, in this cold, dark, cell
My concrete Hell.

A tray of food through a hole in the door
There's no chairs to sit on
So I eat on the floor
Nice cold showers three times a week
From a knob on the wall it comes out weak
This is my day
In this cold dark cell
This is my concrete Hell.

The clothing I wear is stained, and used
From my bra, to my underwear, socks and shoes
No one to talk to,
No one to care
So I sit on my bunk, and at the walls I stare.
All alone in this cold, dark cell
This is my life
This is my concrete Hell.

My 3" mat on a concrete bed
A stainless steel toilet
Is right next to my head.
I sit on my bunk, and look around

This is the place where I am found
All alone in this cold, dark cell
This is my punishment
My concrete Hell.

"Concrete Women" by Geneva J. Phillips

I'd feel a lot more comfortable if I understood what we're doing here.
We can't fix ourselves, fill out an inmate request.

From a DOC Program facilitator: "The Department of Corrections does not care about your rehabilitation. You are here to be punished." Let us begin as we mean to go on.

Results may vary

Heavy gauge locks on each door
On a molecular level nothing is solid

Disturbing patterns of behavior evident
Primarily, gender specific violence against women
It is important to finish what you start

People who discriminate
disproportionally against women ... going back to the 1980's policies of mass incarceration
It never would have happened if she had stayed at home

They like to say it's a moral Question
When really it's a money Question
Insufficient funds

Once upon a time, in a land far away
there lived some princesses. They were all locked up, where they belong.

Breaking open scars
and out falls
words disintegrating

State employment opportunities. Great benefits.
Particularly, white straight male dominance
Hatred is an act
All requests must be approved by warden

Communities of color
low income people
and indigenous populations
Must come together, organize,
Remember how to breathe
and fight strategically

There are two kinds of people in the world
Your access is denied

Serious side effects can occur

"What's the worst thing you ever did?", she asked.
It doesn't have to be true
All the pieces lock firmly into place
As long as people believe it

He's a real stand up guy. A great guy.
Only the mother was charged.
I'd take it back if I could

Cuff up
Yield

They seek to make us without resistance
Not even girls want to be girls
So long as our feminine archetype
is deplorably weak and simpers
Always expected to provide service with
a smile
eager to please

"Relentless" tattooed above right
eyebrow

You're wrong about them.
Concrete Women
Prisoners of Hope
They are everything you say
and so much more

Count is Clear

It's not about deserve
It's about believe. And I believe

YOU ARE NOW FREE TO GO

NO U TURNS

The veil was lifted from their hearts
And they all lived
happily ever after

Or something like that

"To Reap" by Brian Yang

Incarceration is a fateful lot
and oft but subjugation of the spurned,
for many thus confined are left to rot
in places few have trod to but sojourn.
Amidst fortifications looming firm,
their serried ranks to herd a nameless
breed,
humanity is hardly of concern,
and men have been reduced to rampant
weeds,
the cull of gardens, cast aside in heaps,
a bitter harvest of a cursed crop,
for nameless men will sow a shameful
seed,
infectious growths we'd be hard-pressed
to stop -
Alas, the fertile soil of the land,
which simple men have plowed with their
own hands.

"Beautiful Butterfly" by Michael

Mosley

Butterfly,
Beautiful butterfly
please don't fly away
just stay on my window-sill all night and
day
I know you can only live like 12 weeks
but I promise it's worth it right here with
me
Butterfly,
Beautiful Butterfly
please don't fly away
just stay on my window-sill all night and
day
be wonderful and colorful in a world so
grey
I can smile while you play
just spread your wings and make my day
Butterfly,
Beautiful Butterfly
please don't fly away
your my only friend I want you here to
stay
right on my window-sill all night and day
Butterfly,
Beautiful Butterfly
I'll love you even after you die.

Family

"Lullaby" by Shaun Blake

A sad lullaby,
Sung by an absent father,
Is never recalled.

Art: "First Steps" by Brandon Rushing



"Home" by JD of NC

The word of old, many use to define
A place of comfort and those better
times.
Safe, shared nostalgia, with peace of
heart,
Reminiscing of that innocent start.
Oh those charming whimsical ways of
youth,
Love from within was known only as
truth.

A place where Dad's hands never held
too tight,
Knowing when to let go was just and
right.
The magical healing of Mother's kiss
Always made better, of that I should
miss.
Ah the siblings, whether follow or lead,
No anger forever, there when in need.

Grandparents with wisdom ever to share.
Endless in patience, proving love and
care.
It's where family is found, hearts would
bond.
Laughs are easy. Remembrance is fond.
A passing life is a fleeting sorrow.
Warm memories are shared on the
morrow.

Anchored in love as examples of all,
And there to lift you up in case you fall.
Loved defined by actions that should
reveal,
Depth of loyalty and character real.
Each and everyone dearest and true,
Not the home I had living amongst you.



“Walking in her Dreams” by Efrain Alcaraz

Walking in the desert, carrying thousands of images in her mind. Observing the sun that plays peek-a-boo behind the mountains. Taken with him her dreams. Elevated them in the air, like a telegraph of an Aztec King! Getting lost in the clouds, like an indigenous smoke ring. Walking in the winds of the phoenix, like an Aztec Queen!

Estranged to this foreign land. Emotional fears escape her mind, but with her solid steps, she left behind the fears of her mind. Not so far behind the phoenix wings it erases the backs of her mind, taken with him her old dreams.

I was able to capture her eyes, always front ways. Her dreams started to take root in her mind, changing the way she spoke over time, because she was walking through the land of her dreams, where we cross the border of her mind. Tears were flowing down her eyes. I was able to see her mind, reflecting like photos taken in her tears, reminding the sand in the desert of old times, trying to retrace her steps.

I was able to hear her thoughts. She doesn't want to be identified as an Aztec Queen!

Now, in the United States, she is called Yasmin.

“Immaturity” by Bobby Ball

Your love and compassion,
didn't bend or break
#hashtag# you still can love despite mistakes

Now that I'm equipped to tap into my brain

A mistake is feedback
the guide to navigate one forward

A huge portion of my totality
becomes a craved sensation
with every breath and heartbeat
this life, my life, this moment
Authentic History

8:13 AM
has carved it's identity
internationality

With love and support to my parents

“Family” by Patricia G. Rhodes

You had me since the age of two.

You was nervous, wasn't sure of what to do.

I asked every woman if they were my mother.

You would hold me and love me like no other.

I felt like a little lost duckling looking for love,

Not realizing I already had it, from Heaven above.

I was so confused on why I kept getting moved around.

You told me not to worry no more, my home has been found.

Over two long years I was waiting for this
Now every night at bed, I get a hug and a goodnight kiss.

I finally found someone who loved me.

It took a while, but it was still before the age of three.

You would always say, I was not flesh of your flesh

Nor bone of your bone,

But no matter what, I would always miraculously

Be your own.

At that time, my life was so great,

Now there is just so much hate.

We haven't talked since October two thousand thirteen

I'm sorry I'm an addict, a drug fiend.

I hope someday we make amends
Remember that time, we were actually friends.

I miss you Mom. I want you back.

I don't want to lose you like Dad, to a heart attack

I love you Mom, I really do

And I know deep down you love me too.

“A Prayer to and for all Mothers” by Joseph Simmons

Dear mothers, moms, my prayer to you.

On my bunk or on my knees my Voice cracks.

My personal message to mama, the message

to every mother in the world:

Blue clouds, floating so free, so far, won't

You carry this message, this prayer, for me.

Dear mom, mothers, tired, weary, left all Alone, torn from her child, children, filled with

Sorrow and pain.

Please gently touch her, please gently kiss her, bring

Her my love.

Tell her how I miss her, feel her pain, feel her sorrow.

Please tell her, my friends she must live for

Tomorrow...

If you see her tears, please wipe them.

Tell her

Soon, soon will come the day when together

Again we will be.

A mother, her child, her children, a Family all free.

Soon your empty arms, your Child, your children will fill, the sorrow will turn

To joy.

Tomorrow is near, please

Live

Be strong

We'll weather this storm...

We'll find you, dear mom, mothers please do not

Despair, we will live, I will live to be free.

Love, your child.

“I Don't Know” by Kevin Murphy

How old was I Dad
when I got the chickenpox that time?

I don't know my Son

I can not bring it to mind.

What about the time

that I broke my foot,

how was it Dad

that I managed to do it?

I don't know my Son

I wish that I did,

all I know is

you were just a kid.

When did I learn

to ride a bike?

When was the first time

that I flew a kite?

I don't know my Son

I do not have a clue.

I wish that I did

that somehow I knew.

I am your Son Dad

how can this be?

Why don't you know Dad

anything about me?

I don't know my Son

because I was not there.

Those memories you have
we do not share.

I missed your life my Son
I am sad to say.
I missed it my Son
because I was locked away.

"Reflection of Me" by Deadrian Gainous

Have you ever seen a face, and the reflections is you.
It takes your breath away; do you know the feeling? I do.
The birthday and the first day was all in one,
I should have known in the first place I'd fall for something.
The day you were born it gave my life direction,
I kept my eyes on the prize: knew I found a treasure.
You're an angel from heaven cute as a holiday sweater,
You kinda look like me, just a little bit better.
You were ten minutes old, and I was only sixteen,
Holding my seed felt like a big dream.
I made a vow to myself not to be like Larry,
I know you don't know him sweetie, that's my daddy.
Your age is progressing and I'm learning a lesson,
I don't need a mirror just to see my reflection.
You have eyes like your mama, but lips like me,
You have legs like your mama, but you're me to a tee.
Everybody says they see your intellectual side,
And they see your temper too, it ain't no surprise.
They say you sweat on your nose, even when it's cold,
And everyone knows your daddy sweats on his nose.
Everybody know your daddy has a beautiful smile,
But yours is better than mine; you're a beautiful child.
I know you've missed me during critical times in your life,
And I'm sorry that I've committed crimes in life,
But there were times in life I had to get you a new shiny bike,
Or that toy with the shiny lights.

No excuses about the climbing price,
I refused to see your crying tonight!

"Eliana" by Daniel Montano

Eliana I believe is her name, at least that's been stamped on my heart behind my shame. God brought her into my life as a light to guide me to the right path, away from the darkness, which lay ahead.
I was young and dumb, instead of taking that little one by the hand and being a man, I walked away and things have never been the same. She has been my biggest cross to bear; through the years I've seen her face everywhere, on a cheerful baby girl, to a hopeful teenager and even now on a smile of a strong beautiful woman. I pray someday I will see that smile on Eliana's own beautiful face, along with a warm embrace. Look into them eyes, see a little bit of me and everything I failed to be. Eliana forgive me.
Through the years behind the tears I've asked God, through your fears, to look out for you. Something I obviously failed to do. For when I walked away, I walked into that darkness and it's been a struggle everyday, mistake after mistake where I even lost my freedom at such a young age. Nonetheless, Eliana, if you are happy, strong and with faith, I will bear this cross for however long it takes. If things have been rough, you have my blood believe me we are tough, I have no doubt you have persevered. Besides not knowing me all these years, please know you have had a voice blowing in the wind, sending you a father's love, not only from within, but more importantly from the heavens above.

Life Journey

"Chaque époque rêve la suivante" by Katie Virginia Hidalgo

The night falls upon the land; the lark sings
a melancholic tune as stars come out.
Night is a beautiful time and it brings
with it more wonders than the day affords.

About this time, poets have written many words.

Yet more can—and must—be said of this time.
With night comes sleep—and with sleep comes our dreams,
which take us to realms unexplored; we climb
to new heights where nothing is as it seems.

All of our worries and troubles drift off.

When we awaken to a bright, new day,
we can apply what we learned as we slept,
which is that nothing can take hope away,
save our own doubts. Dreams are where hope is kept.

Dreams create the future, lack thereof breaks.

Dreams, create the current era, and yet -
Chaque époque rêve la suivante.
"Each era dreams the next"
and it all begins—when the lark sings.

Art: "The Journey" by Jon Cashion



Hello Wine by Alex Mohov-Haft

Your hellos ring of nuance
carved in subtleties
like the good wines that they are,
Some are oaky, throaty,
deep on the tongue.
Summer tones fruity, flirtations
hints of blackberry and the sea.
No matter the tannins,
in every one
I taste the fertile hillsides.
Depending on the blend and season is
the temperature at which their served.
Regardless, I sip and savor
paired with any meal or mood
from which these grapes do grow.

“Divine Chaos” By James Jackson

I brought a rake to the beach
To rake up the broken glass
That somebody placed as a joke
But is unavailable to laugh.
Children are playing in the water
Close to shore
Next to a sign that says “No Swimming”
While their distracted parents
Scratch of lottery tickets
They are not winning.
I’m trying to hurry up and cook hot dogs
On a wooden barbecue grill.
My girlfriend ran off with her husband
And the reporter wants to know how I
feel.
I’m looking at her stomach
Because I’m in the mood for chitterlings
As she pulls her skirt down nervously
She’s worried about the wrong thing.
One of the children is missing
I’ve cut myself on the glass
The parents won forty dollars
They spent twenty-nine.
They’re happy
Good news for the reporter
My hot dogs are ready
My girlfriend’s husband returns.
He has a six pack of beer
And covered from head to toe in blood.
We drink four and watch the sun set
God has been very busy today.

“Anti-intellectualism” by Jonathan Kaspar

I’ve been getting lost in daydreams
I’m not a very good captain
Sailing toward oblivion
Or through it
It’s making me all numb

Or
I’m making myself
And I’ve found myself in a place
In a position that is all
Together undesirable
But not altogether unexpected
I have no North Star
Adrift
In a storm and rough seas
Far, far, far from land
I sometimes wish lions would rise
From the floor
And tear me to bits to the sound
Of cheering
Elysium
I’ve been getting lost in daydreams
Just look at the flowers

“Navigating Life” by Carl Branson

Trampling a map already faded and worn
Searching for society’s magnetic north
Sets my moral compass a-twirl

Tracking gods claiming to light the way
Zeus, Thor, and Poseidon reign through
Punishment wrought in the guise of
nature’s power

Aphrodite and Venus rule and sensuality
Spawning catchy slogans meant to allure
For pleasure’s gain: make love, not war

Meditation and contemplation are the
Roads claimed by many and varied
cultures
Allowing for redirection each new day

Nihilists are daily gaining ground claiming
The “if it feels good, do it” mantra is best
with
All but a few old standards abandoned

Little wonder that I am lost in the
Uncharted forest of moral quandary

“Girl Lost” by Christine Leal

She was just a child, who wanted love,
From a mother that wanted nothing but
drugs.
She prayed to a God that just didn’t hear,
While every night on to her pillow, flowed
endless tears.
By daytime her mother would beat her
with belts,
She wondered just who gave her the
cards she’d been dealt.

So she’d run to the streets to get relief
from the pain,
Only to find herself caught up in the
game.
She’d hustle just to make it day by day.
But the law said that’s illegal so they put
her away.
But once again when she’d hit the brick,
It would just start all over, just like an on
and off switch.
The hustling and drugging were bringing
her down.
And every time she’d go in front of that
judge, all he would do is frown.

All this had to stop before she died,
But all she could do was bow her head
down and cry.
She was shooting her veins, this, that
and the other,
Thinking to herself she turned out just
like her mother.

“What Happens to a Dream Deferred?”

By DeQuion “Infinite” Barker

Dreams are real. That’s what I’ve heard
So tell me what happens to a dream
deferred
Does it get lost in the Clouds, for a
moment, like a bird?
Then randomly appears, getting hauled
in a hearse?
Or is it postponed until it no longer exists,
Disappearing from the story like Black
Wall Street did
Is a dream deferred, is a dream short
lived?
Just to be spoken about like Harlem is
A reference of greatness passed down to
our youth
Are dreams simply dreams? Do dreams
come true?
Or is a dream something you wake up
from?
I wish I knew!
Maybe one day I’ll get the chance to ask
Langston Hughes...
What happens to a dream deferred?

“A Storm” by Jacob Baladez

Far in the distance,
Where the storm begins.
Lighting flashes,
Thunder rolls.
The smell of rain,
And wet earth.

Crystal raindrops fall,
And the beauty of it all.
Hands raised high,
Howling winds,
Screaming why, o why!
Asking for a miracle,
And the storm goes on,
Out of control.

Deep into the heart of you,
I scream a little louder,
Scream a little louder.
Shout out to you.
Heal this pain inside,
Deep in the heart,
I scream a lil' louder.
I scream a lil' harder.
Heal this pain inside.
All I hear is howling winds,
Rain beating me down.

Washing over me,
Passing storm.
Off in the distance,
Wind whispering,
I don't heal your kind.
I don't heal your kind.
Never could heal your kind!

“‘Radical Acceptance’: Embracing the Inevitable”

By Sarah Spencer

Light,
Not the shadow
Of a cold night,
Prevails
On earth's last day.

Brilliant colors
Supersede
A sky of grey,
A night of need.

Lavender and purple hue,
Crimson and pink
In black and blue.
Our hearts in sync.

This marks the grave display,
Of our very last day,
Of a life we have known
Where love and hate were shown.

Across the borders, and the miles.
Now, all we see is
The happiness of smiles,
that life at last is done.

Life as we knew it
Is being transformed.
We knew someone would do it...
We had all been warned.

But spirits live on.
so, speak not of the devastation created
For life here has always been
Ill-fated and over-rated.

“The Perfect Place and Time” by Bobby Ball

The pressure of the blade pierced the heart
Life is temporary with no control over the choice
Memories of Mother Nature madness
massaging the mind
balancing compassion between the dark
and the light

If everything happens for a reason
History repeats itself

Fire and flame in the sky
looking for a way out of this maze

The capacity of tragedies
suffocating the youth

Father Time on vacation
now the babysitter is Death
When it rains and the sun shines
The Devil beating his wife
where will the ladybug land

“Light Bears Darkness” by William Armistead

I.
The wrong are done, never undone.
Always there in fresh rawness.
Memory's prodding pitchfork.

II.
So this dude is flying right.
In a craggy world made soft.
Where the heart remembers the song.

I.
Is this how darkness must feel?
Stained, irreparable, unpardoned?
No guarantees, no second chances.

II.
Beyond the 'damned' a dry riverbed.
Beautiful fresh-faced children.

Fearless naïve hands beckon.

I.
Light the smoke, contemplate the match.
Whose flame craves to consume me
Whose justice I am fit.

I & II
The librarian cocks an eyebrow.
Offers the next book.
What if Satan...I am truly sorry?

III.
It has served its purpose.
When crags become lush forest.
When living love fills the riverbed.

“The Ripple Effect” by Timothy Lattimore

I cried as I watched
a youngling in the park,
watched him awkwardly fight,
defending himself from several others
as best as he knew
as they surrounded him,
trying to steal his possessions,
his livelihood -
his dignity.

He fought hard
and called aloud for help
while trying to retain
his possessions.
To no avail -
there was no response,
no assistance,
just dead silence
as spectators watched
the older, larger bullies
taunt, attack,
and rip the youngling's flesh.
Should I do something,
say something? -
Do nothing? Say nothing?

Tired, weak, scarred,
the youngling
succumbed and collapsed -
almost outlined in blood.
Horried, I leapt up
and shouted -
“Yaaaahh!”
they all scattered,
including the wounded youngling.

Though weak and bleeding,
the youngling returned.

With cautionary approach -
head twisting side to side,
he offered me a shiny pebble -
a gesture of gratitude, perhaps?
Perhaps. I accepted.
I made a friend, I think.
He took off,
carrying his possessions -
never to be seen again.

Twenty years have passed
since I returned to the park.
Not much has changed,
But, on a nearby bench,
I take root
to enjoy the warm sun,
the fragrant flowers,
the centralized water fountain,
and Nature's soothing lullaby
of hypnotic silence.

Just moments into tranquility,
a raucous ensued.
I began crying as I watched
a youngling in the park,
defending himself from several others...
Suddenly, to my surprise,
in a commanding swoop,
like a superhero
a much older, larger one appeared,
scaring away the others.

As the youngling
retrieved his scattered possessions,
the larger one offered me
a shiny pebble.
Quickly, my tears of sorrow
became tears of joy.
I had been wrong;
a lot had changed.
In this small, big world,
I've made a difference -
I've changed the world.

"Natural Alchemy" by Samuel Paul Pereida

The need is greater than the cause, the
want is
Driven by the need, a need and a want
that has failed
Us, it's okay to let your mind race, a race
to the
Finish that is anything but finished,
because as
You stare into yourself, you discover that
you are

Not you, the "real" you is tied down,
weighed down,
Face down, and there is no one around
to pick
You up or the pieces of a broken past,
heart is
Beating so fast and there is nothing there
to
Slow you down, you crash into
everything that
Gets in your path, you cannot smile, you
cannot
Laugh, too far gone, too attached, this
won't
Let you go, you are stuck on it, it calls to
you,
It screams for you, you try to push it
away
But it craves to be inside, an old familiar
push,
No you can't hide, the desire is ever
much a part
Of you and it causes you to fall apart,
forget
Everyone and everything, just feed the
need, the
Need that is greater than the cause, the
want
That brings you to your knees, the need
and
Want that has failed us all...

"Daffodils in the Summer" by Bayete Komunyaka

I heard you say that you would reside
forever,
That nothing could remove you from
eternity.
Promises of enduringness were made.

I knew you
From the first promise to the last.
Never once giving thought to doubt.

Even among distractions,
And frustrations never spoken,
The illumination of our eyes never
dimmed.

Expressions of bare naked truth
Sentiments of adornment afresh
Could not be extinguished.

However, time plays the most unusual
games,
Setting apart the things that are,

And remember, once removed, twice
forgotten.

Why now,
As fate would have it,
Does the memory linger
Leaving nothing but anxiety.

The vision of everlasting, exonerated,
Nothing left to feel, nothing to partake
Nothing left to hold
I now embrace emptiness.

Misguided behavior had been my trill
Ever since your departure
Nothing left seems to shine
Not even daffodils in the summer.

Recreation is born, but in another life
Colors of hope, but not as bright
Only thing left to do is assimilate
The times we shared together.

"Choices" By Shand Nash

They say that "Broad is the way that
leads to destruction,"
But, "Narrow is the pathway that leads to
righteousness."
In life, we're faced with choices, chaos,
confusion...takes over my mind; As if I'm
waiting on the train with so much noises.
With the door closed behind me. There's
peace and solace,
As I'm seated, I'm pondering if I'm on the
right train.
I see people getting off, to their
destination,
Here I am, stuck on this train,
because of desperation.

Invite Me by F. Buler

Put off those excuses
And invite me to come in
And repeat these applauses
That the party is about to begin

Thrust away that burden
And attribute yourself strong
And don't let adversity harden
You are goin' to like this song

I come to exert you with good influence
You don't have to hide behind that
curtain
Comfort and kindness contributes to
happiness
My fantastical songs will entertain

I come to exert you with good influence
You don't have to hide behind that
curtain
Comfort and kindness contributes to
happiness
My fantastical songs I am dead certain

Get up a little quickly
And give me here that sadness
This surroundin' distributes wrongly
Don't tempt the sadness by loneliness

You can surmount this obstacle
And you must believe me firmly
Turn the heart your side untypical
Don't put yourself unseemly

I come to exert you with good influence
You don't have to hide behind that
curtain
Comfort and kindness contributes to
happiness
My fantastical songs I am dead certain

I come to exert you with good influence
I come to restore your good liberty
Comfort and kindness contributes to
happiness
Invite me to come in and you will see.

"My Mechanical Angel" by John Dutes

I slept on buses,
napped on trains,
used both to be shielded from the rain,
And the cold, the heat and for peace
soft seats of buses,
sticky and dusty.
Hard seats of trains,
also sticky and dusty.
Both always crowded, either—
people or noise, oh and me.

I began to name the transit acronym—
Darelle, Anthony, Randy, Thomas—
Wasn't the flash of guys,
but as friends, always there to be:
Sat on, leaned on, laid on, or
whatever on you could think of—
'Til the wreck, it never hurt me.
Never paid me when it hospitalized me,
but the most trusted friend I knew
was still driving me on.

Sometimes letting me hop a ride,
without paying my fare.
Even took me sightseeing several days

Over the massive DFW Metroplex;
was the very one who showed me life,
my dreams were dreamt with you,
my nightmares, too.
But I don't blame my demons on you,
for my only encounter with an angel
Came from being introduced by you.

Sometimes I don't mind,
calling you my most trusted friend,
but I knew in my heart
I've lied to you, my friend,
never seen what you were worth.
You're my friend, my Mechanical Angel.

"Life in Life" by Derek LeCompte

Sitting on this pancake
of a mattress on a metal bunk
Desperately trying to snap out
of this stressful funk
Nineteen years in
no day longer than the other
Missing my family
fiancée, sister and mother
Doing LIFE
or should it be "LIFETIME"
What happens if I change my life
removing all grime
Then, I should start anew
fresh beginning birthing an
upgraded me
Would my sentence be over
could they really see
That brings about worry
raising new fears
Each day I'm behind bars
Death draws even more near
That's less time
For my second chance
So, when will I get
my time to advance
If LIFE is relative
and I started mine over
All I need is my shot
I'm a new version...
This poem's the sign.

"Words" by Zoaan Shipp

Something we use everyday, all day,
We use them to communicate.
We use them to express ourselves.
But words are so much more than that.
Words are very powerful.
They're a spiritual force that can speak
things into existence.
Words are life, they're very creative.

Once you say them you can't take them
back.
Words that are spoken are still out there.
They have the ability to hurt and destroy.
None of us can change our past,
But we can change our future.
One of the ways we can change our
future is by the words we speak.
With words we can create our own
destiny.
We take words for granted but we
shouldn't.
We should learn to be careful with the
words we speak,
And remember that if we can change the
words that we speak,
And the thoughts we think,
Then we can see a positive change in
our lives.

"Colorblind" by Krishna Maroney

A beautiful spectrum of color
In the beginning, so vibrant.
Reduced to a scale of black and white
With a splash of blue.
Anything to be given, for certain,
To see the rainbows again.
To see the leaves change with the
seasons,
To feel the warmth of red, orange, and
yellow.
This scene of blue skies and muted
foreground
I'm grateful to see, for certain,
But to see the rainbows again?
That would bring me such joy

"Death to a Kite!" by Brandon Rushing

His kite in hand he ran. His face, now red
From laughter matched its bright,
whipping tail.
And then they parted. He earthbound,
the toy
Carried high aloft. A bird of prey that,
By his imagination, could swoop and
Wheel. Its sharp avian wings now holding
Some unseen draft as it climbs to higher
Heights. Then, there is streaking! Golden
wings flash!
Talons sink and rend! The boy sees it all.
As both plummet from the sky, locked in
a
Fatal embrace, until at last, they too
Are parted. Eagle skyward, the toy now
Earthbound, its streamers forever frozen.

His kite in hand, he ran, red from laughter!

Background Noise by Amanda Hancock

There is a rumbling, a distant roar below
No matter where my focus is, the sound will never go
It can be a handful of things
 A car driving past
 Crickets chirping
 A fan bellowing as it spins
It becomes a battle for peace, who will win?
To find that center, where quietness lives
That's the challenge we each face
 Day to day, place to place
You can be out running, or laying in bed
In a prison or on a beach outside
The setting doesn't change what always exists
Moments come where its forgotten
Others come where its overwhelming

Most people forget its ever there
Till a raging headache stats to appear
One can expect to find it anywhere
Without it becomes something to fear
True stillness would mean death
So come to appreciate each breathe
And take a moment to detect
Know its there even when ignored
Make a game to name it when you're bored
And pray it never does cease
Even if some ask it to,
 please

"Poetic Justice" by James Lee Jackson

As diamonds are forged under pressure,
and gold is tempered by flame:
Character's forged in the hardships of life,
and experience tempers and trains.

Life is not that complicated - but it's sure as hell not a game.
If you give every minute the attention deserved
You'll see that things can be changed.

You're in control of your destiny: that's your privilege as well as your right...
You have the power to stand up right now
and take over control of your life!

Don't ever let yourself be content, to let others dictate your moves.
You're the God of your circle, and you have every resource
to decide if you'll win or you'll lose.

Do lift up your head, and stand up straight:
Keep striving in pursuit of your dreams...

You're royalty's banner so conduct in that manner
and show the whole world you're a King/Queen!

I know it's not easy, and it's not just that simple -
Nothing in life ever is -
but how much you get in return for your effort
is determined by how much you give!

If the truth were told: you have a beautiful soul -
but I'm not sure how much of it you see...

Because it's hard to determine when you don't understand
that the waters of beauty are deep!

Sometimes in life,
you'll have to sacrifice -
take your time...
There's no need to rush it.

That's the beauty of living: when you look, learn and listen
You'll witness it's poetic justice!!!

"The Storm" by Tonie Future

Jesus, take the wheel
No, Jesus take over the boat
Cause though I don't know about man,
I once heard that hope floats
And I'm not sure if I even know how to survive
Bu they said that if I believe in you
I have no choice but to win
So go 'head and walk on water

Or turn this water into land
Because this storm's got me crying out
Reminding me I am just a man.

"Burial of A Friend" by Burl N. Corbett

I
In the small country
churchyard, mourners temple the graves
of friends and strangers
alike, but in anticipation
of gaining another
comrade, the confederacy of
the dead decline to
object, forgiving instead
the living of their trespasses.

II
A lone hawk high above-
a fierce speck of sentience in
the blue iris of God-
scribes lazy arcs in the autumn
sky. Might its shrill cries
be His reassurance that my
old friend still lives and
waits for me in that unknown
land that will welcome us all?
The end.

Love



Art: "Study of Rene Margritte's Les Amants"
by Thomas Whitaker

"Searching, Searching 4 My Baby" by Louie Perez

"I love the way a woman's braided hair
looks when it morphs into 3 dolphins.
Dipping smoothly into one another.
Surfacing in a continuous dance..."

From the darkness of their eyes. Their
luscious lips and sexy little noses.
Kissable cheeks... Their shy breasts
peek out at me as an invisible finger tugs
at my soul. Playing with the strings of my
heart. The song of love, a song I forgot,
or perhaps never heard before. I love you
and I don't even know you. I was created
in the image of my father and raised in
my mother's embrace by her loving
touch.

But you, oh "woman", are meant to be
mine, forever my partner and forever my
lover. Forever my comfort through the
stormy nights and my bridge over
troubled waters.
I navigate the perilous seas looking for
her.
Looking for you.
"Searching, searching 4 my baby."

**"A Picture of Me... Without You" by
Gary Farlow**

Have you ever seen a world without
music?
Or a night without a shimmering moon?
Have you ever seen a sky drained of
blue?
Then you've seen a picture of me without
you.

Have you ever seen love remain
unspoken?
Or a heart so totally broken?
Have you ever seen tears shed so true?
Then you've seen a picture of me without
you.

Have you ever seen a church without
praying?
Or a summer with no gentle breeze
swaying?
Have you ever felt lost without a clue?
Then you've seen a picture of me without
you.

Have you walked in a garden where
nothing grows?
Or seen a Christmas with no
ribbons or bows?
Have you ever seen a morning not dawn
all anew?

Then you've seen a picture of
me without you.

"iCANDy" by Jerome DeVonni Wilson

When you need to know that

You are loved but it
Seems as if no one
Is able to show
You that you
Are...
I can

When it seems as if no one
Can remember who mothered
Our tribe and weathered
Our storms with
Food and shelter
...I can

When you realized that we never
Stop growing...and so the
Growing pains never stop
Coming, but no one
Seems to be able
To relate...
I can

When they don't...i will
What they aren't; i am
What they can't see,
We are...what they
Haven't reached,
We've passed;
Like only
You and
I can

"Elle" by Pete Gonzales

I'd do anything
For you
I'd do this, I'd do that
I'd do something I couldn't take back
I'd care for you

Carry a burden for you
Carry you
If you couldn't walk
Write me and you forever
On the sidewalk with chalk
And people would walk
By and see it
And they would believe it
Because they would think to themselves
Why would someone write it
If it wasn't true
And then they would wish they were
Me and you
No, really
Do you believe me
I'd do things I wouldn't normally do
Like I was under the influence
A bloodstream filled with you
Just say the word, or give me the look

Wiggle your finger
My heart on a hook
An obsession
I'm obsessed with
Way too much
Send me flying
With just a touch
I'd
Kiss you and
I'd melt in your arms
Let myself get into trouble
Let you use my jacket to walk over a
puddle
For
You

"Love's Way" by Carlos Harris

Love has a way,
Of appearing...
As a groundhog,
Checking weathers of the world
Or perhaps,
As a snowflake,
Landing in your palm...
Alone.

Love has a way,
Of disappearing...
As a rainbow,
With no promise of returning,
Or perhaps,
As a leaf,
Fallen amongst others...
Lost.

Love has a way,
Of lasting...
Like the sun's fire,
Beginning each day,
Or perhaps,
As the day,
Soul mates are introduced,
Two become one.

**"Women Won't Mistake and
Understand" by Daniel Mishow**

Who would ever
Want to fix a man's broken heart?
It is obvious
She still holds it if he's torn apart
But if the shoe was on the other foot
He would understand she's just mistook
He will try to sweep her off her feet
Trying everything he can to put her heart
under lock and key
I am that broken man's heart
If you try to love me

In the peaceful solitude preceding dawn
Before the Sun's first golden ray
Tenderly kisses the awaiting sky;
Arousing half the world,
While the other is gently tucked into bed
There exists a moment
Full of potential
Where hope meets eternal choice;
She sits there
Silhouetted in the fiery glow
Of her fifth cigarette;
It's pungent smoke billows,

Framing her face
 As the moon's silvery beam
 Catches the waft of acrid perfume;
 Glints off of her glazed, brown eyes...
 The chiseled set of her jaw
 As she sits there,
 Unaware that I am watching...
 Unaware how deathly still
 My heart has fallen
 As I hold my breath;
 Stricken by her beauty.

Poised, she sits and
 Contemplates leaving...
 The emotional battle clearly etched
 Upon her creased brow,
 Concentrating...
 And, stubbing out her half-smoked cig
 In the coffee can ashtray on our porch,
 she turns and our eyes meet...
 She smiles uncertainly
 As if caught going something naughty,
 then joins me inside.
 There are several moments
 That I knew that my love for her
 Would never die;
 Many times her beauty,
 Radiated in ways that I cannot
 Give life to with grasping words;
 Warming my soul
 Like the sun's
 Solitary golden ray as it kissed
 The sky as she stood;
 Yet that moment,
 That glance is,
 Forever fixed
 In the prison of my heart
 Eternally enslaved;
 Cherished above all others.

“Wake Up Call” by Alex Mahon-Haft

Ever been asked
 By a goddess
 To wake her from her
 Lucid dreams,
 With which she foreshadows
 The next Big Bang?
 Otters splash in giggle pools
 And owls hoot in whisper
 As her hello croaks a bit
 Those first words do blend
 Desire, tired, and a smile
 Fresh strawberry mango
 smoothie
 On Caribbean beach
 During blue dawn

A butterfly coasting down
 To kiss my first sip.

“My Love” by Perry Patterson

Life will always have its ups and downs,
 We both know this is true.
 But because I'm gone and not around,
 Don't ever let it make you blue.
 The memories and joys we found,
 Of things we did and will do.
 Should make you smile and never frown,
 Because I left my love with you.

“Little Things” by Leland White

I'll always remember the little things
 Her smell after a morning shower
 Sunlight as it passed through her
 platinum blonde hair
 The cool liquid pools of shimmering blue
 that
 Passed her eyes
 The perfect curve of her hips
 The ultra whiteness of her flashing teeth
 The viciousness of her smile
 And the penetrating numbness of her
 deadly sting
 ...Oh yes, I remember the little things.

Religion/Faith

Art: “Broken” by Christopher Newhouse



“Untitled” by Angelena Miller

The pain. Oh the pain which was sliced
 upon your gentle face. Three spikes
 piercing flesh and wood to hold you in
 your place. The need for blood, I
 understand your sacrifice, I embrace. But
 the bitter sponge, the cutting spear, the
 spit upon your face? Did it have to be a
 cross? Did not a kinder death exist? Six
 hours hanging between life and death, all
 spurred by the betrayer's kiss. “Oh
 Father” you pose, heart skilled at what
 could be, “I'm sorry to ask, but I long to
 know, did you do this for me?”

“Despair” by Alan Newberry

In this jail cell, dark and lonely
 You express your love for me.
 In my darkest hours of sorrow,
 You bestow your peace.
 Doubt and fear torment me hourly.
 Shame and anger share my bed.
 I'm no longer seen as human,
 Yet you've never left.

What have I lost?
 What can be found?
 What have I thrown away,
 Forgetting who I am?
 Who will be left?
 Who will walk away?
 Will you be the only one
 To never leave or forsake?

This, my heart, a crumbled fortress,
 My dreams shattered on its floor.
 Crying out to you for hours,
 What can you restore?
 I strain my eyes to see a future.
 Hope is not a ready friend.
 But you, O Lord- you are able
 To hold me til the end.

“Star's Dancing” by Will Syken

Have you ever witnessed the stars
 dancing in the sky?
 Every morning I awoke, I bid them a hello
 They'd wink in return signaling out hope
 A few went on vacation from my view
 A few new ones arrived to the stage
 All to reveal their brightness
 Who of us stopped long enough to
 witness the miracle?
 How many felt compelled to buy a ticket?
 So amazing still. God's scratch art
 By the sky's brightness, I unlocked a box
 and discovered consciousness

Possessed the key all along
Just hadn't remembered where I put it
That is until the stars reminded me
Shone a light right upon my heart
I looked and saw the key nestled
between my heartbeats
Picked it up and realized what I had
All this time, I held the wonders of the
universe
By such, I possessed the answers to the
world's paradox
It convinced me to look love right in the
eye
Love stared back
Hey God, I said. Hey World, God said.
Hey World, the angel's sang.
There instantly, rebirth revealed itself
All because the stars kept dancing in the
sky

**"I Said a Prayer for You Today" by
Regina E. Finley**

I said a prayer for you today
and know God must have heard
I felt the answer in my heart
although he spoke no words
I didn't ask for wealth or fame
I knew you wouldn't mind
I asked him to send treasure of a
far more lasting kind. I asked that
he'd be near you at the start of
each new day. To grant you
health and blessings and friends
to share your way. I asked for
happiness for you in all things
great and small, but it was for
His loving care. I prayed
the most of all.

By Eric Hassl

Your honor,
I would like to present my case
before
the most honorable Judge, Our
creator.
I have been wrongly accused
and convicted
by a jury of my peers who are
no substitute
for your Infinite wisdom.
I seek the justice of the
righteous which can
only be administered by One
whose All is True.
I place my life in your hands,
desiring Love,

Mercy, Forgiveness, and Peace
- as I devote myself
to your everlasting care.
I desire to live a life of Holiness,
pleasing to
you in every way - reciprocating
the Love you
have shown me throughout
eternity.
I pray you look favorably upon
my appeal, that
I may enjoy the Blessings of
Freedom you give.

**"I Never Gave Up" by Larry Anthony
Harris**

I was wrongfully convicted; to prison I
was sent
Armed guards on towers, surrounded by
fence

All hell broke loose; some inmates came
undone
But within this nightmare there's nowhere
to run

Some blood was shed; some of it was
my own
I shouldn't even be here; I should be at
home

This is not who I am or where I should be
Satan's trying to take my life before I'm
set free

So many days have passed; this still
makes no sense
I'm still stuck in this prison and behind
this fence

After so much waiting my answer finally
arrived
And it's a "NOT GUILTY" verdict. Thank
God I survived!

A new start at life, a new path at my feet
Some nights I feel calm; some nights I
can't sleep

People said not to worry; that I will be
just fine
But they can't see my pain and they can't
read my mind

A living hell is what I suffered; I wish this
on no man
I know God is by my side; I will do the
best that I can

In the morning awakening; early light in
the skies
The memories of prison as tears fill my
eyes

So I fall to my knees; and I thank God in
prayer
He freed me from prison, and I no longer
am there

So remember this, Satan, when you
knock at my door
I am ten times smarter than I was before

For the sin that you fed me when I was at
my worst
You're no longer in the picture. It's Jesus
Christ that comes first!

"The Answer" by John Barton

Engaging non believers in a rut
Imparts the wisdom of our Father. But
It's not to make for us a punching bag.
And not to shine our pride, to brag and
nag.
Let's keep our focus helpful and sincere.
And share the love of God we're holding
dear.
See we were lost ourselves at one time
too,
So let's enlighten them. Here's what to
do.

Question.

"I just don't know, who's God
supposed to be?"

The Interpenetrating Galaxy.

"Where is He then? My eyes
work, I don't see!"

He's all around us

Omni-presently.

"So is He smart, or simple like a
seed?"

Superior Intelligence indeed.

"Then why is trouble all I seem
to see?"

The reaping of an immaturity.

"I did not do it, it was done to
me!"

Deflection of responsibility.

"If life is sad and hurt, then why
the sting?"

Required Holy Spirit quickening.

"But that is pain, I thought that
love is kind!"

The bigger-vision comprehension blind.

"So how am I supposed to see
the whole?"

Become a paladin of self-control.

"To focus life on God is
then the goal?"

Exceptional submission of the soul.

"And knowing God is what
my life is for?"

Forever He's been knocking on
your door.

Answer.

"Free" by A.L Griffin

It's amazing to be your servant to
preach your will to those who never
heard it. How can I be so naive?
Thinking you were beyond my reach.
Then one night I sat blankly, praying
silently, God if you exist come inside of
me. I felt His presence immediately. Oh
how my Lord has redeemed me. Jesus,
he hears you if you seek him seriously. I
placed this question to you how bad do
you want Christ to be with you? They say
it's like being in the midst of the sea. His
presence feels like the ocean breeze. I
felt his peace, it's serene power, filling all
void with no room to be sour. Oh how
wonderful his love truly feels. Every day
my smile expands knowing his warmth is
right there. He rolled away my heart of
stone, so I can share his eternal life to
those who wants to be free.

"Joy Inside These Walls"

By Christopher Vehhyusen

Joy inside these prison walls?
I never thought I could
be grateful for this (time) in here,
and say it's for my God!

But it's my father's plan,
to use us just this way;
so much has he done
as I seek his holy face.

The world is not my home
and neither is this place;
but I know I can (bear) it
by Yahweh's sufficient (grace).

The time I've spent in this prison,
however long that may be,
will find me (faithful) to Him;
his loving (spirit) leads,
even waiting right beside me,
keeps me from overwhelming grief.

Art: By Kristopher Storey



Art: By Kristopher Storey

Self Reflections

"What I Feel" by Sarah Julie Spencer

I felt the sting
of the label you gave me,
fourteen years old,
you labeled me before

I never had a chance
to know the error of my ways
throwing me out of the nest
before I truly learned to fly

I don't mean to dwell
on the fact that you sent me to hell
for a few minor teenage oversights
for indiscretions that were really light

You took from me guidance and support
Love that I needed to grow
Living with success, help in how to
change
These were things I did not know yet

An Addict's Tale by Michael Marotta

The first hit is just for fun
I can stop it if I choose...
After the second puff I'll be done,
There's nothing left for me to lose...
Toking for the third time is nice,
You'll see that I've got total control...
A fourth drag hardly fools me twice,
It won't stop me or my goal...
Only the fifth dose makes me cry,
Giving me plenty of time to think...
Sadly the sixth syringe enters my thigh,
Making my self-esteem start to sink...
Swallowing the seventh tab makes me
grin,
But I swear it'll be my last...
If the eighth high wasn't a sin,
Then I wouldn't be having a blast...

As I drop the ninth chalky pill,
I'm not sure of what I thought...
Snorting that tenth line isn't a thrill,
Suddenly I hate the drugs I've
bought!

"Untitled" by Gonzalo Pacheco

Feeling of helplessness
Like a bad dream
I can't move, run or hide
A heavy instrument, knocking on the
inside
Darkness surrounds me

I'm falling and screaming, but my voice is
no more
Can this be real?
Will I awaken?
My body is sinking into the floor

Suddenly, a feeling, a sign
In a sea of darkness, a ray of sunshine
I push through with all my might
Damn I feel spent
But I find it in me
Just enough energy
To make it out safely
Almost there, the helplessness fades
This is real!
I am awake!

The will to live
The will to overcome
My battles are many
A journey undone
Long will I live
Even after I die
As my story helps others
So too, will I.

"Identity In the Mirror of Time" by Robert S. Visintine

I'm one,
just a person,
but there's so much:
of me,
to me,
a smile,
a laugh,
I just wanna have fun.

I'm here,
alive right now,
this moment of eternity:
I see,
I hear,
I feel,
I touch,

this life so dear.

I'm all,
not just a part,
but a part with all:
air I breath,
earth I eat,
water I drink,
sun for heat,
I'm summer, spring, winter, fall.

I'm yours,
just as I am,
but here's what's due:
a friend,
a fight,
close and near,
far and apart,
I'm walking with or closing doors.

I'm a choice,
one, here, all, yours,
but here's how lives touch:
a love,
a hate,
a give,
a take,
we all chose angry or joys.

I'm a mirror,
a reflection,
the past and the now:
we were,
we are,
where we've been,
where we're at,
see together as time brings nearer.

"Mirror Man" by Robert Patnoudé

I see the reflection in the reflection in the mirror
But this face I do not know
Who is this man
Looking back at me?

Mirror Man Mirror Man
What is it that you see
A world of hatred and death
Where children die every day?
OR
A world where everyone lives
In Peace and Happiness?

The blank look in your eyes
Gives me my answer
The paleness of your skin
Confirms my deepest fear

Mirror Man Mirror Man
What is it that you feel
The pain of life
And suffering everlasting?
OR
The joy of burden
Consummating your every word?

The paleness of your face
Gives me my answer
The way your mouth trembles
Confirms my deepest fear

Mirror Man Mirror Man
What is that you taste
The souls of unborn children
Being ripped from their wombs?
OR
The preciousness of life
Given to deserving parents?

The way you lurch
Gives me my answer

"Untitled Number 2" by Sherman Kapp

One day at a time I manage to get through this.
My release is a World away,
At least that's how I see it.
I'm a galaxy away from the ones I love.
I've said I'm sorry,
But it's never enough.
See I know, and they told me they don't hold grudges,
Though in the end it's myself who's the harshest of judges.
I lay here angry and bitter at my past decisions.
Haunted by regrets and re-occurring visions;
Visions of the past and what lies around corners.
And, I know it does no good to be an incessant mourner,
So each and every day I grow when I can,
Acquiring the skills of a successful man.
Finally I'll find the ability to stand,
Through life's trials and tribulations,
Frustrations, and temptations.
One day I'll succeed beyond people's wildest expectations,
Bringing smiles to my loved ones and possibly a nation.

"The Girl of Yesterday" by Sandy Blazinski

I'm trying to find my way
Back to the girl of yesterday
Back to the girl I used to be
Back to a time when I was free
Free from the darkness of today
Free from the sadness inside of me
How I get there I'm not quite sure
I only know I have to try
I won't give up, lie down, or die
I'm out there somewhere, I know I am
So I'll keep on looking and I'll find my way
Back to the girl of yesterday

"Untitled" By Jesus A. Padilla

This time that I've wasted is my biggest regret.
Spent in these places, that I'll never forget...
Just sitting and thinking about the things that I've done,
The crying... the laughing... The hurt and the fun,
Now it's just me and my hard driven guilt,
Behind a wall of emptiness that I allowed to be built...
Trapped in my body... wanting to run...
Back to my youth, to its laughter and fun,
But the chase is over... with no place to hide.
Everything's gone, including my pride,
With reality suddenly in my face...
Full of remorse, and stuck in this place.
Now memories of the past, flash through my head,
With the pain so obvious, by the tears that I shed....
I ask myself why? And where I went wrong?
I guess I was weak when I could have been strong.
Living for the drugs and the wings I had grown.
My feelings were lost, a fraud to be shown...
As I look at my past, it's easy to see.
The fear that I had, afraid to be me,
Pretending to be bugged, so fast and so cool...
When I was actually lost, like a blind old fool,
I'm getting too old for this tiresome fame,
Of acting real hard, with no sense or shame,

It's time that I change, and get on with my life,
 And fulfill my dreams, of family and a wife,
 What my future may hold, I really don't know...
 But this time that I've wasted...
 Is starting to show.

"Self Portrait" by Perry Patterson

I'll paint you a picture, not of boats on the sea
 My memories are the paint and the canvas is me.
 I will use bright colors for peace and happiness
 Though black and gray will my grief express
 So many bright colors, but even more dark shades
 Like beautiful flowers placed on a grave.
 Born to die with short life in between
 Death is the nightmare, life is but a dream
 Dying each night when I sleep, to dream while awake
 moving closer to death with each breath that I take
 I've painted a picture with many colors to see
 Outlined heavily in black this portrait of me.

"Praestigium" by Brandon Landreth

Splayed. The kaleidoscope of my miseries, my cruelties, my innocence, laid bare before you. Oh you masses, like demented children, have peeled open my cocoon and feigned disgust at the mangled pupa within - my organs, my passions, turned inside out. HOW - I - OFFEND - YOU when the blackened sack of my gut dare burst upon your crooked spears! HOW
 UNFASHIONABLE my sickness! HOW PRIMAL my scream! Am I not the face of your blushing terrors? The voice of your tortured innocence, calling from the dungeons of your desires? I have heard the screeching violins of your hearts and I have seen you unmasked; the wasted savages torn betwixt snarls and whimpers.

I see the wicked gleam in your eyes as you raise your collective shoe above me and I hear your startled gasps as I pop

and squirt thereunder. HOW BOUNDLESS my repugnance! HOW GROTESQUE my inner being! As from a distance, I know... I know that you must sate your ingenuous curiosity, to gaze at the sticky mess of my broken frame - my juices - plastered to the bottom of your shoe. Oh, the frantic darting of your eyes, seeking... seeking a patch of grass upon which to smear my filth; to free yourself, in public, of your own secret illness - the nausea of a self imagined, but unbecoming; to cover the unquiet grave of a dream repressed, as a child covers their eyes and declares, "You can not see me! You can not see me, I said!" And the whole world plays along.

"Yes Man" by James Newman

This empty-shell, you call me,
 Is a robot preprogrammed to please.
 Repeating all you expect to hear;
 My mechanical voice tone weird.
 Still, you haven't the slightest clue,
 That my emotional response is a spool.
 Nod-smile-laugh and repeat.
 Pretend to give a shite, quite a feat.
 For someone who hasn't a single care,
 Of what you say, think, or even wear.
 How long can I last remains to seen.
 Doubtless someday I'll say what I mean.
 But for now I will continue to be,
 This empty-shell you call me;
 Nod-smile-laugh-nod-smile- ...

"Don't Need A Glass" by Jesse Clasby

There's a bottle, sitting lonely on the table
 Is it there, surely this is no fable
 My very cells are stretching out my skin
 Urging, pleading, and screaming,
 'Go find a glass'.
 My heart beats, begging an addicted mind
 'Look to me, and the strength you will find
 To resist that devil, and stay on a better path'.
 Not today, don't need a glass, to escape life's memories.

"A Prisoner of Hope" by Ken More

I'm peering upon the day,
 from recesses in the night.

Tugging at my fetters;
 for comfort and sight

Might I taste Heaven.
 Before I'm eaten by decay?
 If I could grasp happiness,
 would it quickly slip away?

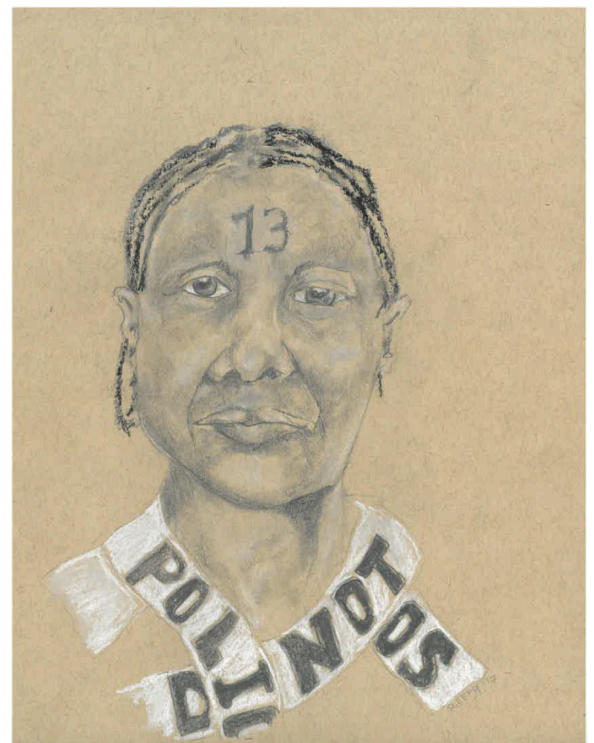
Should I take a step back.
 Before hope knows I'm here?
 There's got to be a where and when.
 for what I would hold dear,

Are my fetters saving me,
 from myself, or from my fate?
 And will they release their hold,
 A little too soon, or much too late?

Social Issues

"Still a Life" by Amber Swann

The pull up his mug shots
 and previous charges on the screen-
 anything to throw off or demean.
 Just another Bragg Street Boy
 gunned down.
 Let's have a moment of silence for the south side of town.
 They try to vilify him in the most thuggish way -
 His past overshadowing the sad fact
 that he died today.



Art: "Witness to Change by Jesse Osmun

“Ignorance: A Poem” by Aaron Freeman

Hate,
Smashed through my window today.
The scene resounding the past of
yesterday.
Hate,
Racially charged discriminating words,
The very real signal of our country's hurt.
Hate...
All the struggle- the tears- the pain,
Backs broken from freedom: her strain,
To breathe once Her life giving air,
To soon realize with freedom...
Comes fear.

Why do we hate?
Surely we aren't born with it.
How does hate change tomorrow?
And where is FREEDOM?
When hate only breathes imprisonment-
And ignorance.

“Keep Flowing” by Terry Lytle

Incarcerated, keeping me incapacitated
This terrorization is outdated
Legalized slavery -- checkmated
See all the past -- in the present?!
(Jim Crow Now -- Jim Crow, how?!)
This is how I like
Publicly hated -- just because I'm in
prison
While the chaos and destination
Leads the masses into a schism
But who am I to rhyme?
My heart
Beat...to the life of crime (so they say, so
they say, so they say)
While my eyes
Shed tears of shame...
What's a name?
What's in a name? (What's in a name?)
What's a name?
What's a name?!...(What's a name?)
What's a name? What's a name?!)

“A Teacher's Ode” by Michael Griffis

Indeed there are beautiful creatures
With loving and life saving features
They quickly do master
Whatever disaster
The heavens themselves sent us
teachers
Our schools and classrooms are filled
With mentors are gifted and skilled

From Newtown to Moore
So much to adore
This too from the heavens was willed
From Sandy Hook then Plaza Towers
Displayed were the greatest of powers
Honor and strength
Beyond width and length
A light in the darkest of hours
In Moore it was brick and debris
In Newtown a gross shooting spree
It seemed not to matter
The former or latter
The love and the sacrifice free
When death and destruction come
knocking
The teachers with bodies were blocking
Bullets and bricks
Like a hen with her chicks
When trials and times rather shocking
Our teachers a gift and a blessing
Heroes in times that are pressing
Reading and writing
And times nail biting
Never in doubt or left
guessing!

Felony by Donald “The Jay Hawker” Rayton

I've served my sentence and paid my
debt
to society.
Yet on every application they ask me
about my felony.
How do I now; become a productive
member of this exclusive public body?
I'm a cast out, no longer allowed to vote.
My mistakes in life have set my
constitutional
rights back 100 years.
No more jury duty for me. You're not
my peers.
My debt is never paid.
I want to work but all hope of work fades.
I can't find a home because my felony
speaks; telling a sobering story of a
past lived life.
My debt cuts deep and bleeds me of my
humanity.
Anger creeps in as I slowly lose my
sanity.
I want to do what's right, but it seems
crime is my only true friend.
We're intimate, he knows my past.
I always get out;
But it never will last.
Is there a way to be more than an actor
on the stage of the American dream?

I have to find a way out of this
nightmare and overcome my felony.
To the lost, may we find our
way!

“Wonder of Words” by Nathaniel Lindell

Wonder if
words can
--like a knife,
a club,
like a hard boot to a tailbone
wound someone
to their heart
leave it scarred

or

if words
can
--like a child's giggle,
the fragrance of
a wild rose
fresh cookies
sighting a
lost/found lover
warm
fill
a heart

then

wonder what you've heard
what a murderer's heard
and his judge said.

Then
tell me
can words change a life?

“We Are Brothers” by H.D. Johnson, Sr.

You know they gave their all for Uncle
Sam
When he sent them down South to
Vietnam
When they came home - they were all
alone
Just one among some forgotten men
We are all brothers.

The eyes of strangers and the eyes of
friends
Broke their hearts and they would not
mend
They were alone - no welcome home
Just one among some forgotten men

We are Brothers

They've seen the worst of all mankind
Bloodstains and death have filled their
minds

Those days are gone - they wander on
and on
Just one among some forgotten men
This self same band of brothers

I see countless men living without a
home
They sleep in bushes and wander on and
on
There's wind and cold - no hopes they
hold
Just livin' among those forgotten men
We who are still brothers

What do they seek but cannot find?
Where is some comfort for their kind?
They sometimes cry - but don't know why
There still her among us forgotten men
Yet we are still brothers

They live their lives, what lives they've
got
The real victims of the war they fought
It was a lie - too many died
There's too many forgotten men
Look around at this Brotherhood of
forgotten men

This country's the greatest of them all
But too many want to see it fall
They sit up high - they talk and lie
They long forgot the forgotten men
All these long forgotten men
Too long forgotten -Men.

There are new wars and new places
Yet one thing is still constant we are still
A very hard knit band of Brothers
We Are Brothers all of Us.

"Revolutionary" by Darnell Smith

Your instinct assumptions deprived
repetition of egotistical assholes to
eradicate those beneath their feet, in a
prison jail cell reaping repercussions of
various miscalculations of a diabolical
menace that's detrimental to the mindset
of a criminal evolutionist.

"See," I wish I could tell you that the
enemy is all of one tribe, but I'd be a liar
if I did; "Look," the terrible truth is all that

death is a "legacy" of the great crimes
that came before are shattered families
stained these rich fields (Red) for
generations, but nothing is simple.

"Psychologically," see some people
argue that our community is destroying
itself, and that our children are killing
each other. "Accomplishing" a "genocide"
that the slave masters never could, and
throughout that "History" we drew power:
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Elijah
Muhammad, Malcolm-X-Shabazz,
Minister Louis Farrakhan, Rosa Parks,
Harriet Tubman, Noble Drew Ali, Marcus
M. Garvey, and throughout those
struggles we drew knowledge, strength,
and perseverance of who we are as a
"race" metaphorically speaking a full
proof method.

"Mind & Pocket" by Joshua Maiden

To those who do not have any, it is
everything. Yet to those who have it in
abundance, it is nothing.

To be in its possession provides security,
but in its absence, vulnerability is
revealed.

Its presence shapes personalities,
creating confidence. Where as its
elusiveness exposes doubt. No facade to
hide behind.

Greenbacks. Dinero. Moolah. CASH!
It makes the world go round.

To those who say money can't buy
happiness ... I declare, you just don't
have enough.

I know the feeling of being broke. And I
know what it feels like to have a pocket
full of money. I never feel better than
when hundreds of presidents lay in their
grave that of my pocket.

Superficial and materialistic. I am.

Broke; a state of pocket. I am not.

Poor; a state of mind. Am I?

"To Walk in Our Shoes" by Albert A. Grayer

You have both parents I have one
We are both better off than those who
have none
You were given everything I stayed on
my feet
We both had it better than those raised in
the streets
What about the one that just needed
some new kicks?
I don't condone stealing, but I don't judge
him one bit.
And you say you know what it's like.

Have you ever been pulled over & feared
for your life?
Covered the wound of a person stabbed
with a knife?
Gunshots ring past you filling you with
fright?
Or decades & decades of fighting for
your rights?
And you say you know what it's like.

You have four siblings with mine I had
fun
My friend's whole family was mowed
down by the gun
You inherited love there's nothing wrong
with that
I just want you to see that you've never
been where we're at
And you say you know what it's like.

You ever been homeless living under a
bridge?
You ever been to prison with thoughts of
losing your kids?
What about prison in general for
something you didn't do?
Oh wait, never mind because you have
always been you.

Well I've always been me is it money that
I lack?
If America's mostly white why are the
prisons mostly black?
You went to a great school I went to one
in the hood
Despite the school's limitations I think I
turned out really good
You had a good upbringing many envy
that
I just want you to see you've never been
where I'm at.
And you say you know what it's like.

When you lock us away it's usually for years
You say it's justice but you just create more tears
Our families are victims too of this mass incarceration
Your jury isn't our peers, they convict without hesitation
You think you do us a favor when we're forced to take a deal
It's still too much time for a crime that's not real
You've been to court too, but you say where the public sat
That still doesn't show you that you've been where we're at
And you say you know what it's like.

When cops kill us we must have did something bad
Now we're taking back something we forgot we had
Our love for each other will bring you to your knees
And show you what it feels like with your hands up & you can't breathe
Your lack of care for our lives will never be without fuss
My people can see that it's not justice it's just us
Even some of your people join in our strides
Because they see the truth of your bigotry & lies

Times are steady changing please remember that
Even on your worst day you've never been where I'm at.

"Now They Know Why We Run!" by Mark Webster

Now they know why we run...
Not because we got guns, but because we know the white man's justice is never far
Why do we run? Probably because we got sons,
And you just wanna see him one last time before you're hung
Why do we run, cuz you're never innocent when your black
And when you lose years away you can never get it back

I run from the man in the mask, packing a badge, who pulls on yo block with a gun
And robs yo for yo last
I run from all the bad ones, hoping to find a good cop,
But good cops ain't the ones patrolling the hood blocks
They get guns, but all we get is roses
Now they give us bullets, when we used to get hoses
You can end up chosen, decapitated and frozen,
Just for simply holding a tablet like Moses
We been running for years, and they say it's because we're guilty
They claim that we're dirty, but the cops are the ones that's filthy
We run because of fear, but no one ever believed
When we run we escape grief, if you stay then you can't breathe
Used to live to see 21, now we can't even make teens
I visited the suburbs saw cameras on every block
Put cameras up in my hood you'll see who's taking the shots
It's illegal to mind my business, so I run when you get in it
If God gave us life why shouldn't we run with it
I'm high off the souls of the sacrificed protester,
Destined for a cap cause black is never protected
If a brother got to run for just stopping to piss
Imagine the risk if they get stop and frisk as a gift!

"Hunger Strike Season" by Spencer "Jelly Bean" Butler

Today I decided no more to eat
On my back or on my feet
Not tomorrow and not today
No time soon, nor yesterday
If it comes to me I won't eat a bite
A battle of hunger is my fight.
Since those with power think they've won
Maybe they have all but this one
They have no right. This life is mine.
And I live my life on my time
So since you won't listen to rhyme or reason
Today begins hunger strike season.

"Political Mosh Pits" by Adrian S. Mariscal

History moving too fast
Values like a kaleidoscope about to crash,
Into right wing ditches,
Stop acting like bitches (I mean cowards)
Ignorant sheep empowered by dogs barking
Bells ringing. I prefer the voice of revolution singing.
Is madness related to evolution?
Political pollution mutated hope into votes casted
Like brothers blasted by cops,
Change brought by truth caught in a cage
To domesticate our rage, unborn flames trapped
In a waterlogged stage, unfazed and aware
That you don't care for unity, killing the sense
Of community on any scale, failsafe redistricting
Drawing lines like flat lines,
Who gots the mind to ignite the collective shine?
Collected sacrifices by generations that saw past
Color lines, pushed past hunger lines towards
Prosperity, a forward mindset disgusted by disparities,
Greatness is not a rarity just unrecognized by the
Delusional and hypnotized, no time to think
Kitchen sinks being thrown hatred being sown,
Sinking under the weight of a clone generation
What makes you American?
Desperation, debt,
Alcohol and chemical addictions, digital frustrations
Posted up low wages and lame ducks choose to give a fuck,
Cause when you justify silence you justify violence,
And I don't cling to absolutes, my ideas are rooted in the
Proof of love, grassroots regeneration, Mexican-American
Modern day manifest destination, a patriot and a sun

Willing to burn for the next generation,
 take my sins as
 Fertilization and make my glory look dim
 in comparison to
 Yours, as you grow higher and higher
 inspired by fire
 You were born battle tested, spawn of a
 pawn that turned
 Into a queen, killer of kings, keep alive
 the sting of not
 Being free, keep alive the courage born
 from standing united,
 Every state every face hand and arm
 linked singing,
 God bless our beautiful constellation!

“Beautiful Peace” by Christopher Blanks

Beauty like peace is a virtue that extends
 far
 beyond the flesh. As such images of
 beauty
 and peace are stained in the hearts and
 minds
 of the compassionate.

How could hate be so cruel, how could
 violence be so blind, and how could
 nature
 not make a beautiful place mine?

True indeed,

Fate is something that we as people
 cannot
 Control. For you are a portion of me and
 as
 a fraction we become whole.

Until Mother Nature's justice corrects a
 wrong,
 and place me with beautiful peace is
 where love belongs. I'll continue to keep
 the
 beat of one people within me, and
 listening to
 John Lennon songs.

Writing

Art: By Wade Garrett



“Embalm My Words” by John White

When my inevitable and unavoidable end
 comes
 Dispose of this body properly - without
 regard
 It is y body that has housed me,
 transported me
 But it will fail and lose all of its purpose
 Upon my last breath my body will have
 disowned all value

Instead, when I have tripped my final
 time
 Upon this fleetingly ephemeral excursion,
 I would prefer my words to be embalmed
 To have the ink paths i have laid
 preserved for posterity
 For it's my words, not my body, which I
 have valued the most

My physical being is temporary and
 easily forgotten
 Embalm my words for they have been
 my life's ambition
 And through every dot and tittle I would
 wish to be memorialized

Discard my failed and lifeless body at my
 end
 Instead
 Embalm my words

“Trying to Compose a Poem” by Cory Lambing

I'm Trying To Compose A Poem,
 Something That Is Truly Mine.
 Should I Just Write What I Feel?
 Should I Make These Words Rhyme?
 Should I Write About My Life,
 All My Victories and Defeats.
 Should I Write About Being In Jail,
 Or The Life I Lived Upon The Streets?
 Should I Write About My Love?
 The One I've Left All Alone,
 How I Sit And Wonder Why...
 She Never Answers The Phone.
 Should I Write About My Son?
 Who Is Living Life Without His Dad.
 Or Should I Write About My Daughter?
 And The Birthday She Just Had.
 Should I Write About My Brother?
 And How He Always Makes Me Laugh.
 Should I Write About My Future?
 Or Reminisce Upon My Past?
 Should I Write About My Sister?
 How I Adore Her Oh' So Much.
 Or Should I Write About My Grandma?
 And How I'll Never Again Feel Her
 Touch...
 Should I Write About God?
 And How I Found Him In A Book.
 Or Should I Write About My Mom?
 And How Cancer Made Her Look.
 Should I Write About The Drugs?
 And All The Scars That They Have Left.
 Or How My Own Dad Used Them,
 Until The Day Of His Death...
 Should I Write About Myself?
 And All The Flaws That I Possess.
 How I Never Seem To Fit In,
 How I'm Different Than All The Rest.
 But If I Write About Myself,
 I'd Have To Look Within.
 And It's Been So Long Since I've Done
 That,
 I'd Have No Clue Where To Begin...
 I'm Trying To Compose A Poem,
 Something That Is Truly mine.
 But If I Just Write What I Feel,
 I'd Never Have Enough Time...

“Oblivious Poets” by Michael Marotta

Writing bad poetry is a curse,
 So some just shouldn't do it...
 Using no logic makes it worse,
 Leaving verses sounding like absolute
 shit...
 Some things are better left unsaid,

Your mistakes should make you blush...
 You've clichéd words until they're dead,
 With terms like smooches and gush...
 Let true poets be your guide,
 They won't ever steer you astray...
 It's so cute how you tried,
 But you've driven the readers away...
 Needing to learn how to write,
 Should be your step number one...
 Rhyming words doesn't make it right,
 Drop that pen it's a gun...
 Just once use expressions that excite,
 Calling that poetry is a lie...
 Quit using phrases that totally bite,
 Because reading them makes me cry!

Nature

Art: "Owl" by Conor Broderick



"Rebirth: Seasons and Tears Falling" by Blair Blanchette

Bluebirds and red robins sing
 Welcoming spring's rain;
 Washing winter's chill away
 In rivulets of pain.
 Flowers unfold blossoms' bold
 Fragrance of life;
 Devastating death's icy grip
 With strokes of bring green stripes.

Valley's croon, veranda's bloom
 Swimming in streams of light
 Our tender years we'll remember dear
 As perfect and polished white.
 Tales and frosted remembrance,
 Having tasted its golden kiss,
 And in the transformation found
 The meaning of pure bliss.

"Bird's Nest" by G.L. Morris

Dead bird. Empty nest.
 What come of you, small remaining one?
 Your little life gone, scarcely begun...?
 Lone grave. Pose of rest.

Dead bird. Empty nest.
 Said you goodbye to the ones you love?
 Before they soared away and above...?
 Peace made. Feelings pressed.

Dead bird. Empty nest.
 This came of you, my little friend who
 Unaware that feel now I for you...
 Still mind. Heavy breast.

"On the Autumn Rains" by Kadaron Sledge

On the autumn rains,
 Life is rejuvenated,
 Ants duck for cover.

"A Butterfly Feeling and a Spider's Dance" by Aaron Freeman

"I will never forget that butterfly..."
 One day I was sitting on a front porch
 swing and the weather began changing
 from sunny to gray as rain clouds rolled
 across the sky; in seconds they shrouded
 the sun's brilliance. My eyes caught sight
 of a butterfly trekking just above the
 lawn, when suddenly a gust of wind hit
 the butterfly, lifting it up chaotically and
 tossing it directly into a black widow's
 webbed nest, which hung below the
 porch awning. I watched with eager
 fascination as a shining purple-black
 black widow ran across her web with
 amazing stealthy speed and began to
 dance rhythmically, back and forth, over
 her victim, pitching her sticky web to the
 beat of the butterfly's anxiety as it
 frantically beat its wings trying to free
 itself: the more the butterfly beat its
 wings, the more entangled it became. A
 frenzied-fearful cacophony of beating
 chaos, slowly become a quivering
 tremble. The black widow's wet silk, in an
 instant, became the butterfly's pillow
 coffin. The tremors quieted to cold
 vibrations; a muffled butterfly's racing
 heart. The black widow then attached
 herself to her ritual construction and soon
 the reverberation from within grew
 silent...nothing except for the pattering
 rain.

"Cane Poles" by Thomas Buchanan

Cane poles light and longer than any
 winter's night
 Line of old white kite string still wrapped
 and rolled
 Waiting for the warming of a new
 morning's light
 And that wonderful sound of awakening
 bird calls.

An old dirt road will lead us all the way
 back
 To our favorite pond of greens and blues
 Cattails, duckweed and there's a quiet
 quack
 Lets us know that the fish are still there
 too.

Red worms and big old night crawlers in
 a rusty can
 Crickets in an old milk bottle wildly hop
 around
 There's a splash and that gulp where the
 weeds still stand
 Can't wait to watch this piece of cork run
 and go down.

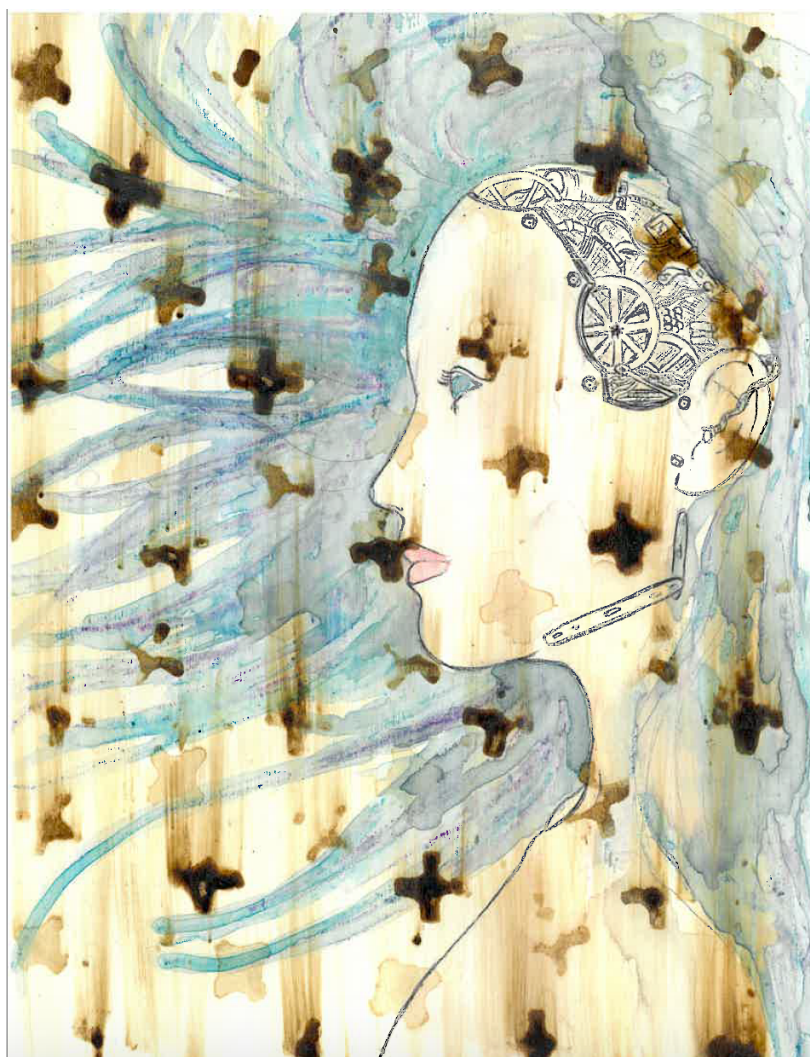
Off to walk that bank to feel that sun
 once more
 To hear my Dad laugh as a big old blue
 gill came swinging in
 Looking back I see Grandpa sitting on
 that grassy floor
 Just once more I wish to hear his loving
 voice again.

Those were the days of cane poles and
 easy pleasures
 Of running, laughing, and best of all,
 plain old fishing
 There's no way in my heart I could ever
 measure
 How much I want to hold my old cane
 pole again,
 So I'll just cross my fingers and keep on
 wishing
 To go back there, a-fishing.

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