



Poems by Women Inside



**Santa Cruz County Correctional Facilities
Main Jail and Blaine Street**

**Volume 2
2019**

The Santa Cruz Poetry Project/Poetry in the Jails began as the legacy project of Ellen Bass while she was Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County. Over the years, the program has facilitated workshops throughout the county and with your support will continue changing the lives of incarcerated men and women one word, one poem at a time.

We have volunteer instructors conducting classes at the Santa Cruz Main Jail, the Blaine Street women's facility, and the Rountree men's facility near Watsonville, CA. January 2020 will mark the beginning of our post-release workshops, open to men and women who wish to continue to explore the power of poetry in their lives.

Our website, poetryinthejails.org, will keep you updated on recent and future events. Please visit the site, and remember, your donations help keep us in dictionaries, composition books, and other supplies; and make anthologies like this one possible for ALL our classes.

Special thanks to Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department, Laura Hagen, and the officers and staff at Main Jail and Blaine Street.

Many thanks to Santa Cruz Council on the Arts for their generous contribution. Their support means so much to us and our students!



The William James Association, a 501c3 non-profit, is the fiscal sponsor of The Santa Cruz Poetry Project.

“Something is disturbed, and the crack in the rock of the falls gives way, and the river changes its course forever.”
Heather Rose Lara



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Who Am I?

Christina Ruiz

I ask myself

“Who am I?”

I am a child of God,
young and innocent, who knows no troubles
and has no worries of the world to come.

Who am I?

I am a young girl after God’s own heart
wild and free just as the wild horses that
run through the wilderness.

As I eagerly and desperately search
to find my place and purpose in this life,
I ask myself
“Who am I?”

I am young mother who loves my precious children.
Who regretfully and shamefully allowed
the things of this world to consume me
and entrap me
with a darkness that shut out the light of life
within me.
Or so I thought!

And then I heard a voice within me whisper,
“Who are you?
Are you not a child of God?
Indeed, you are! For you are never alone,
not forsaken.
And when you are weak it is then you will be made strong.
For I am always with you.”

And I ask myself
“Who am I?”

I am a woman after God’s own heart,
who is loved, restored, and made new. ◇

Ardent Vitality

Julia Cabibi

Don't shut down
and close off your
ardent heart.

Don't hide away
even though you
have been hurt.

Don't run from
the pain
even when it comes
on strong.

Just hold tight —
these feelings won't
last too long.

Don't shut down
and close off your
ardent heart.

Let your vitality shine
and mend your ardent heart. ◇

Just a Tree

Karen Laubenthal

The tree out back was my backyard
chandelier,
alight and illuminated by the moon.
So many secrets he kept,
reliable and strong,
holding my back up when I wasn't
able on my own.

Days when I couldn't breathe
he played beautiful songs
and many birds joined his audience.

It wasn't his time.

When I saw his fresh, youthful trunk
chopped to bits,
I felt full of sadness and loneliness
and even an arrogance that
although you who ordered his execution
succeeded in his physical removal,
I succeeded in keeping his memory
and having his love. ◇

Trust Me

Patricia Adams

Who, a lover.
What, a bird.
When, today.
Where, in a cage.
Why, to fly.

Surrendering my wings and eyes to you
I trust that you'll lead me blind without flight.
This is uncomfortable, and hard to do.
You try to follow without sight.

Before, at least, I could fly away.
But that was before, and today is today. ◇

Flying

Erin E. Reis

Distance is freedom,
my arms raised in a "V."
The flock flies south for new warmth.

A gold medal for all the strength
to get through a tight squeeze
with a slight breeze, there was wrong direction.
What is wrong?

A silk scarf goes up in a warm thermal,
soaring so heavenly in the great wide open.

May our good hearts be forever loud
to let our neighbors sleep.
The squeak of the swing set
as we go back and forth, floating.

It is so pretty out here.

I taste exotic fruits
as the sun sets into the ocean.

I am above it all.

There are a thousand ways
to stay in the closet.
All of them suck.
Nothing is certain
and all
is possibility. ◇

My Snow Tunnel

Heather Rose Lara

It's my snow tunnel
caving in on me.
First my hand scrapes
at the snow above my head
a little too far, and opens
up my snow tunnel
letting in the daylight
and the blue sky.

The icy cold breeze
comes in and freezes my nose
and a tear drops, and is froze.
No way to stay warm now
and so I must come out of the snow
to search for an unused portion
of thick crusted snow
that will make a great place for me
to dig a new hole. ◇

Rising Above

Audrey Gribben

Like the sun I shine bright
Like the moon I bring light
Like the wind I soar through the sky
Like fire I burn with life
Like the Earth I will evolve
And die and when I do
My soul will rise. ◇

Eclipse Existence

Jordan Emma Webb

Perhaps the fact the moon could never have the sun
Was the very reason she cared for it so...
Her soul illuminating the night,
Bringing peace to its strength,
Calming its face with her glow...

Its soul lighting the world each day,
Lending strength for her rest,
Beaming for her from a distance
Simply to let her know.

Cliche as one may think,
Love affair of agonizing eternity.
Longing and wishful,
Unattainable togetherness,
Yet united, somehow, still
Harmonizing flawlessly. ◇

Cryin' with a B not C

Tammy Adelman

A unique feeling to be found
because they meant to find you.
Under the stars you followed the way
even as the maze became the haze
hiding my whereabouts from your view.
Still remaining proclaiming
what has rightfully been sought
by your heart.
As the moment unleashed
me to you, the skies opened brightly
colored blue. I looked up from the pool
of tears the years alone created
to see you warm bright like a sun
melting what was once sadness,
trading in my lost to become your found.
Oh how it feels to be someone's found
never to forget I had to be lost to
experience this they call found. ◇

Dial Tone

Julia Cabibi

When I disconnected my heart
from yours
like I would the telephone
to avoid a pesky bill collector
on the other end,
I made my mind up
that we were never gonna last,
not like we thought we would
in the beginning.

The ringing in my ear,
like the dial tone,
drove me into a panic
heightened by the taste
of copper in my mouth.

I threw myself on my bed
and pulled my comforter
over myself completely.
I hid from the reality
of the abuse
and cried myself to sleep.

When I woke up
later that night
alone, except for the sound
of the dial tone,
I knew it was never gonna be
what I had hoped for. ◇

Loss

Christina Shepherd

G Unit:
Money
Dope
Friends & fam...
My mind
My faith
And even my man
Material shit
Or finding something to rhyme.
I accept all the losses
Aside from my lost time. ◇

Ride or Die

Merisa Weill and Meisha Galpren

Here we lie
Trying not to cry
Can't help it but to talk
About our brown eyes
Just Meisha and Merisa hoping
Today will hear
Those three amazing words

“Roll it up!”

Then on to our new home, Blaine Street.

Our little baby went home today

Hopefully to never come back

For my whole year stay.

I hate this place, I hate everyone around me,

I hate the word hate.

But I LOVE my bunkie!

She helps me a lot, we just

Want to be home, snuggle boggle

With our babies once again.

But until then

We shall help one another

Til the end.

Ride or Die! ◇

The Race is On

Katherine Rodriguez

Once again, kneeling at the start line.

The Yellow Brick Road, some call it.

Ready, set, go. Boom!

I know which way my heart

wants me to go.

But my ache, my core, my pain

is so loud, so strong, my body

already running the opposite direction.

Like when an animal smells prey,

a vampire to blood.

My body is hunting the

only known cure to the agony it's known

for 42 years. It's not the right answer.

It's cost me everything.

But it's the lesser of two evils.

This or complete shut out.

Death.

Game over.

Fuck it. I've been dead,

Empty for so long,

Why fight it?

They say you're never the same,
good or bad.

Life, all around, is ever changing.
Progressing. Regressing.
All of the above.
I've been known to cross a line or two.
I'm not good at being bad,
but every day I try a little harder.
The search is still ongoing
for me
for peace. ◇

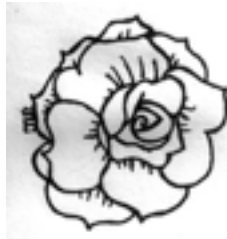
Summertime Sadness

Julia Cabibi

I have nothing to say of summer
except for tears and regret
of the days long ago lost.
I would give anything to have them back.

The red dirt roads
and blazing heat
My first taste of living off the grid
a hundred miles from nowhere.

I long for those days
when I felt so found.
Especially now
as I'm sitting here
more lost
than I ever have been. ◇



Loss

Candice Deatley

Why do we have loss?
What lesson does this bring?

Is it to teach through fear or anger?
Is it to cause these feelings to teach us to feel?

Where does it go when it's gone?
Does it transform, does it move on?

How do we find peace in loss
If we ourselves are lost?
Where's the way to our
Yellow Brick Road, or to our breadcrumbs?

Sometimes it's like loss changed my bricks
to another color
and the crows ate my crumbs.

My only hope to find my way
is hearing a voice
and holding onto the sound of it.
Mother's voice keeps me trying,
it's healing me while I find my way
through loss. ◇

Fake Smiles

Christen Rodriguez

All these girls
and their fake smiles, makes you wonder
if they're true - or if they're just like this pen,
simple and blue,
with no meaning at all
since they can never be real
or even try to stand tall.

All these girls
and their fake smiles...
Learn to be real,
or at least try to be true.
If it's not you doing it for a loved one,
at least do it for you! ◇

People Ready

Jessica Valles

I lose things all the time;

Keys, cars, people,
Places, love, anger,
My mind, my heart,
My goals, sheesh! the
Lost and found.

I feel like I disappeared
But will I ever be found?
Is anyone looking?
Do you actually miss me?

Did I leave and not disappear?
Was it because I truly
Didn't feel loved,
Or was it because
I didn't know how to love?

I want to go back
Because no one I know
Came to find me.

If I go back, will they recognize me?
Will they want to keep me around,
Because I believe
I finally found me.

I found the place where all
Lost things go.

I stayed there for far too long.
It was fun while it lasted, but not
Fun at all.

I became another person altogether,
But it helped me
Realize who I was, what I lost,
And kept me grounded.

I hope I never lose me again,
I'm not sure I will be able
To reclaim me,
If I get lost in the Lost and Found
Because no one knew me there.
How ironic. ◇

Here I Am Once Again

Crystal D. Ross

Here I am once again
in the same spot
told what to wear
given the worst food to eat
mandatory classes to attend
chores to be done.

Here I am once again
women all around
different attitudes
respect tossed around

Here I am once again
finding out more about myself
more lessons to learn
patience to achieve.

Here I am once again. ◇

Two Poems

Jamie Fordham

I.

On a stack of diamonds I sat
with a beautiful black sun hat.
One noon I took a great fall
down to the depths of hell for a ball.
I danced with the devil
who robbed me of my soul.
I laughed and cried and my heart, it died.
Left alone in dark fire, I did burn,
I did burn alive that which I earned.

II.

You cannot kill life that's already been slain.
You cannot rob from one who has nothing.
You cannot hurt a creature that no longer feels.
You cannot starve a man that has no hunger.
You cannot tire a woman who needs no sleep.
You cannot cut an animal that has no flesh.
You cannot desert land that needs not.
You cannot trade a soul
that has never been born.

III.

Into a world of battle
in a cage I was placed.
Every day a more difficult saddle
to ride, let alone to be faced.
You push I push...
You push I push...

Keep coming, keep coming
you force me here and there
wish to get me running
keep forcing , keep forcing
You push I push...
You push I push...

Will I ever give — no.
Have I rested in the past — yes.
Will I ever die again — no.
You can't kill me.
You can't have me.
Push
Push
Push
I push. ◇

Wildfire Season

Julia Cabibi

The older I get
the faster the time goes.
This month
my favorite of them all
has come and gone
far too fast.

The leaves are changing
yet the air is unseasonably warm.
9 years and 2 days ago
my world turned to ash.

Flipped upside down
and thrown off my path,
everything changed
none of it for the better.

I'm still caught in this stranglehold
scared sick
of the unknown.

This month used to be. my favorite
out of them all;
now it's just a reminder
of what life used to be
before wildfire season. ◇

Just a Little

Crystal D. Ross

This time of year
I'm waiting to start
I've set myself back "just a little"

Owning my wrongs and making them right
A small amount of time "just a little"

My friends and family are missed greatly
My time is spent wisely
I'm growing and changing "just a little"

This time of year
I'm waiting to start
Leaving the past behind "just a little"

For the time being
Knowing it could be worse
Accepting what is
Letting it all go

"Just a little" ◇

Us

Natalie Page

Mind races
Blood rushes
Oxygen disappears
You're on my mind.
Thoughts escape me
My entire body tingles
My throat tightens
You're near.
Unadulterated clarity
Numb peace
I'm weightless
You're home.

Thoughts come easily
Soft warmth cloaks me
My feet are on the ground
I'm home. ◇

A Moment of Silence
(For My Sister)

Anonymous

It was only for a moment, but it was as if time stood still.
I wished it would last forever
but it was only a moment of silence.

Before the chaos of voices and cries of
mourning and sadness erupted,
in that moment I was filled
with a flood of memories - flashed
through my mind and heart:
Your rosy red lil cheeks
from being out in the sun too long.
Your laugh when you were running away from me
when I told you it was naptime.
Your smile when Mom came home from the store
with Oreo cookies.
Your big, beautiful olive eyes
that your precious lil Lillybug has.

So many memories of us and our brother flooded me.
Oh, how I wish it were me instead of you
in that hospital bed.
It isn't fair,
for a younger sister should never go before the oldest, nor
a daughter before a mother and father.
Surely, your life ended too soon.

In that moment, I got to remember you, full of life
(my precious little sister).

As I prayed that your soul finally be at rest and peace,
I desperately cried out to God to comfort us,
especially your three precious children.

As we all left to live without you
I pleaded to God to never let me forget you.
And it was in those last seconds of that moment
that God filled me with his spirit, and I heard him whisper
faintly in my ears:
"Be comforted and at peace my child
for surely just as I, so shall she, always be with you,
your sister will never be forgotten."

And I was comforted.

And then as instantly as I blinked,
that moment of silence
came to an end. ◇

Us/Them

Jessica Valles

Me and You
You and I
Lost in forever
Never why
Clear to leave
But never I
Hold back
The tears
I never cry
See, why?
Maybe because
You and I

Understand rage
they look crazy
lost forever
locked away
tortured why
judging books
like poetry
seeing only
people looking
crazy, damn
only maybe
because you
and I
not crazy. ◇

My Enemy

Crystal D. Ross

Today my enemy wears a badge
For a better part of my year
Still unknown, how long,
I stand alone here.

Today my enemy wears the off-shade of tan
Wakes me up before sunrise
Hands me food in a bag
Chores to be done.

Today my enemy has stripes on her shoulder
She makes sure of the classes I attend
Keeps close eye on where I am
Enforces my stay in the place I am
Ends my day by 10 PM.

Someday my enemy will set me free
Then at the end, the only enemy is me! ◇

The In-Between

Natalie Page

Fear rains down,
acid falls from the sky,
my skin melts off like butter
sliding down a stack of hot pancakes.
Darkness surrounds me.
Silence consumes me.
You are nowhere to be found.
I've given all I have to find you —
walking
running
crawling
I feel my bones churning against the concrete.
The sound echoes through my mind
so loudly
it's all I can hear.

I feel the blood sliding down my face,
I feel it as it pools inside my collarbones.
You are still nowhere to be found.
I push on.
I know this quest is futile.
I know with each step I take
there is that much less of me to give.
I know I'll never return.
I know I may be chasing something
that never really was.
I know I know.
Perhaps I'll pause here
just for moment
just until I regain some strength
just for a moment.
My eyelids close
shutting out the light

closing off what I know,
sealing me inside this tomb,
ending all I've known,
all I've been. ◇

January, 2019

Crystal D. Ross

The new year
So far, so good
Some ups, some downs
Sure calm, sure storms.

The new year
Already laughed, already cried
About anger, about fear
Apparent communication, apparent lack of.

The new year
Eager to move, eager to jump

Every day rushing, every night rolling
Everlasting time, everlasting breath.

The new year
Red white and blue
Independence
Standing up for life
Moving towards that Big Bright Light. ◇

Surrender

Julia Jacobs

What wondrous waves of achievement we perceive
When the grave, thunderous storms of bereavement,
Cease and recede.
The calm, nurturing embrace of surrender
Washes away the dirty face and disgrace of the mask
I wore as a pretender.
Adorn my crown of thorns with riches all o' splendor.
Horns held down, born from the witches I remember. ◇



To My Journey

Crystal D. Ross

To my journey, I say thank you.
In the beginning, my path was so-called
NORMAL
From kinder to high school grad
Energetic, alive, open mind,
Simple worries were small.

To my journey, I say thank you.
Childbirth at seventeen
Maturity set in, striving in the working world —
Drugs enter my world, things start to change.

To my journey, I say thank you.
My relationships, some good, some bad.
Detaching from feelings, shattered dreams.
Loss of people, loss of jobs.

To my journey, I say thank you.
Introduced to incarceration and sobriety.
Some doors open, some doors close.
Finding my adult self, the positive and the negative.

To my journey, I say thank you.
I like myself. I love myself. I have compassion for myself.

Thank you. ◇

Lost

Leah Gomez

Lost in fear, lost in shame,
nobody else to blame. What can I say?
I lost myself about six years ago.
I see my reflection
and don't recognize the person staring back.
I close my eyes and catch glimpses
of the old me that wasn't lost.
I open my eyes and I'm still in the dark
wandering around like a lost soul. ◇

So Long Ago

Crystal D. Ross

So young and so long ago
Two young brothers, mom, and me.
The best fried chicken, once a week
Don't forget her Carlo Rossi.

So young and so long ago
Never know how she will be
Could be screaming and angry
Hopefully at the neighbors, away from me.

So young and so long ago
To my room she changed for me
Don't shut the doors, it's too dark for me
My brothers sleep in the next room to me.

So young and so long ago
Now I am older, don't you see.
I figure I would change that about me
I think I have
But that's just me. ◇

The Angler and Me

Natalie Page

Deep down under the sea
In the dark glistening water below me
you will find a bright beacon shining through,
enticing me, enticing you.
I wonder how many saw this last sight,
this last bright shining light.
Is it simply a means to survive?
Is it just another soul desperately
trying to stay alive?
How empty and lonely it must be
slowly swimming by yourself
under the sea. ◇

'Bye, Meth

Jessica Valles

I want to say 'bye now forever!
I hate what you did to me.
You took my life, my love, shit
my soul — the best parts of me.

I'm learning to be away from you,
dealing with real emotions
that you suppressed.
Damn, bitch,
stop taking everything I hold dear!

As I let you go, I feel so much better.
You better let go of my wife!
For the life of me, I will never give up
because I got myself away from you.

So now
all the things you took from me
are slowly coming back.
You need to watch out, Meth,
I'm strong now, don't count me out.
I'm coming for her
and she is even stronger than me.

Meth, our lives matter.
Just watch and see. ◇

Life/Choices

Christina Rodriguez

Is life just a lot of choices
Or a beginning and an end?

I've never thought all my choices
Would bring me such misery and heartache.

I should've known better
I should've tried harder.



Would anything be different?
Could I have changed my ways,
Or is this exactly what was supposed
To happen in my life?

Is this just a life-lesson to be learned?
If so, I get it now.
I understand.
But I don't want it, I refuse it...
Lesson learned.

So life, stop breaking me.

Instead of my old way thinking, "Fuck my life,"
For the first time ever I *like* my life.
(I might even love it.)

Hello, Life, nice to finally meet you. ◇

Broken Spell

Julia Cabibi

Blank pages
Ink from a pen
The same sad story
Written once again.

Trying to heal
A wounded heart
Words on paper
The only way I know.

A heroes journey
With a tragic start
The best way to grow
After everything falls apart.

Accepting the future
As the road away from the past
I can write the next chapter
To look nothing like the last.

On the blank pages
With the ink from a pen
I end the sad story
And begin again. ◇

Suicide Rider

Julia Jacobs

Under the thunder of quicksand
I reached for the hand of sick man.
As I fell from grace,
She granted my place
beside her horned throne,
among the wicked, and the sewn.

Barren as the wastelands we wander,
searching for the fairer and the fonder.
I long to touch, to taste, to embrace —
How do I kiss without a face?
to whisper without breath?
between lips sealed with steel thread?
My new name is Death.
Upon my pale horse beside her,
Behold...I...am...the Rider. ◇

Buried Alive, or Still Unborn

Julia Jacobs

It was buried in her box
And set fire.
Through the back escaped the earth.
That day died by the cold fire.
The icy cat, her fear disperse.
Or am I just a liar?
He can't dance without a beat.
So I set my heart at his feet.
Though black and blue,
it beats for you —

My friend.
In the long descend to the end,
each day, each breath to the last
lived true.
Because that's the way we were
supposed to. ◇

Loss and Sol

Brandi Lee Tamblyn

Sol is the warmth I await in the AM early
when I rise from the blanketless bed of night.
I'm thankful it's here for me
and there are only so many more minutes
to wait for its light.

What a freaked-out day I'd have
if it were a loss to bear.
My life would be split in half,
my smiles would be rare.
No, Sol would be a loss
I'd demand be found.
The clock need not be wound.
What time would the trash truck beep?
What would the farmer reap? ◇

Eulogy

Julia Cabibi

What will they say when I die?
What stories of my life will they share?
Who will "they" be, anyway?

Will they be loved ones,
family and dear friends?

Or will they be strangers
in a hurry to leave
and tend to other plans?

What legacy will be left behind
and will I be proud to call it mine?

Will I sit and wish my life away
living in regret of every yesterday,
or will I write my story
always living for today?

So when it comes to an end
my loved ones can say
"She did the best that she could.
She made the most
of each and every day." ◇

Countdown

Crystal D. Ross

The countdown has begun.
I've flipped my calendar
Swapped my days.

The countdown has begun.
One less day
Instead of one more day
Feeling of excitement.

The countdown has begun.
Freedom rings loudly
The future counts
Not a new beginning
But a start.

The countdown has begun.
Hold on to your grounding
Trust the knowledge learned
Throw down the cuffs.

The countdown has begun.
Out with the old
Bring in the new
Time is precious
And so are you... ◇

After Life

Julia Cabibi

When I take my last breath
Will the rain fall tears from the sky,
Or will the sun shine upon the wings
Of the hawk the carries my spirit
Away?
I do not fear death
For I know it is yet
Another beginning,
Though I do not wish
For it
To come too soon, either.
I still have so much left to do
In this human life
Of mine.
And for that matter,
I am okay with the idea of another
Human life
After this one.
Just one more
Before being reborn from this world
As something
Anything
Different
Or new. ◇

Disguises

Crystal D. Ross

Me, myself and I
Who might I be today?
What name did I decide on?
What age can I pass as?

Me, myself and I
Change of hair
Difference in make-up
Eye color matters.

My, myself and I
What clothes should I pick?
Heels or flats, maybe tennis shoes?
Casual wear or sporty wear?

Me, myself and I
So much to keep up with
To stop all this
To make a new path.

Me, myself and I
Who will I end up with? ◇

The Idea of Us

Julia Cabibi

You would never believe it
How tragic it was.
We fell for each other right away
And in an instant the reality gave way
To the icy truth.
I should have left the very first day,
But I lost myself in the idea of you
Of I
Us
We.
Sometimes I miss the love that we buried
On the day when the world
Around me
Exploded.
And I said goodbye to my cat.
I almost gave up then
When I let go of everything you took,
Especially the Me that I used to be,
The woman I call Her.
I try and lock these memories in a box
But they keep coming up again and again.
I can't decide if I'm angry or sad
That you set this in motion.
And I lost everything in that fire.
If you said you were sorry

I would forgive you,
Not because I want to
But because this pain,
This memory,
I want to let go of it. ◇

Losing and Finding

Maria Leon

“Make up for lost time.”
I’ve heard that quote a lot.
Now finding myself here
I know what that means
For me.
Crossed-out days on the calendar
The daily grind
Yuk — the food!
Oh, but I have my health, physical,
But I almost lost my mind.
Strong memories of my loved ones
Are not lost.
These re-found thoughts each day
Keep me sane
Especially when they get re-lost.
Finding myself lost in my thoughts
I try not to dwell on bad memories,
Become something new and profound.
Every day, every day,
Make up for lost time. ◇

Instructions for the Military

Latic Barnes

Do as you will, yet harm none.
Do as you want, yet care or not.
Do unto others, or others do unto you.
Live free or die trying.
Kill or be killed.
Save or be saved.
Love or learn to love again.
Will or will not
Win or lose. ◇

Yo

Jamie M. Platt

Can you hear me?
Cuz I'm right here!

Can you see me?
I'm what's left behind this tear.

Have you missed me?
Cuz I'm still that girl.

Where should I be?
If not all for you.

Why should I be?
If not yours, too.

Who should I be?
I'm only yours true.

I miss you!
Oh yes I do!

Can you feel it?
I know I do.

Don't forget it.
I'll be home soon. ◇

The Walker

Yanna Gutierrez

One foot in front of the other
Always moving forward
Even when falling backwards.
(Landing. Wherever.
Constantly making moves and changing positions.)

The progress may be only imaginary
May not matter to yourself
Or those around you.

...it's not where you were hoping,
It's not what was wanted of you...

But you're here.

So, do you put one foot in front of the other
And see if moving backwards
Allows you to fall forward?
Or, do you accept you're already there
Dancing, celebrating; here
Instead of thinking about there.
No matter which way you go
You're always remembering
There's where you want to be,
Not knowing here's going to be there
After you leave
And before you go. ◇

Reality

Julia Cabibi

The time is growing near,
soon there will be an end
that will lead to a new beginning.
I'm scared.
I'm comfortable now
right where I am.
But I know that I must move on.
The fear comes from the unknown,
where am I going next
and for how long.
If only the choice were up to me
I wouldn't be so scared,
scared of how much more
I will miss.
Scared of facing the reality
of all that I've lost. ◇

A Spell: For the Gangster in the Spoon

Patricia Rothfuss

As the twelfth bell rang
the clock tower came alive.
It was a night of the full moon,
the stars aligned like Gemini twins,
the energy stirred like a syringe in a spoon.

Flickering candlelight,
she sits alone
among crystals and chants,
she channels her ancestors.

Give the enchantress a magical throne
to cast a demise on the deserving
elements in agreement.
She invokes the power of gangsters
from Salem to sin
from sight to sea
out of the light into the dark.

The shine of the shank
covered in crimson,
the smoky haze
scented by sage,
she swims with abalone.
Caught in the pull of the tide,
dancing with the devil himself.

Using the shell for an ashtay
she snuffs out the fire
feeling the calming rush. ◇



Trapped

Julia Cabibi

My heart, like a trapped bird, hurls
itself at the cage of my chest.

The anxiety of the unknown
swirls flashes of midnight
behind my eyes.

Where am I going next
on the Karmic journey?

The fear tries to eat me up
swallow me whole.

I struggle every day
to fight it off
like I would a pesky mosquito
buzzing in my ear,
taunting me. ◇

The Door

Alura Dinaka Castillo

I grab your trembling hand
Lead you to the door

Will you knock?
Will you ring the bell?

Will you see if the large
Handle will turn to be unlocked?

Will you even try to see if
You have the key
Or could it be a question of

Asking *me* if I have a
Key to that door. ◇

Lion and Doe

Cris Spindler

The weight of a memory is great.
I wonder if it's related to fate?

Out of design...
A lion and a doe have a dope date.
They continue on their path,
no matter the math,
in their hearts, that's their mate.

One day...
the lion and the deer
meet on the front line of fear.
Darkness lingers,
the ill experiences accumulate.

The memory ratio...
one side inflate:
the score:
Dope date: 1
Dank hate: 4.

The scale rules!

Now in their hearts
Ah..."they" aren't so cool.

The weight of a memory is great.
I wonder if it's related to fate. ◇

Sweet Tooth

Alura Dinaka Castillo

The words are as sweet
as candy.

The words are as painful
as the cavity.

The words are as inevitable
as the trip to the dentist.

The words can be seen through
like an x-ray.

The words are numbed
right before he reaches
inside.

I've closed my eyes and
opened my mouth to his hand.

Like the pulling of the tooth
and a thank you
I return home still
to say I Love this Candy —

Just to return to him
again in pain
for the relief he gives
this self-inflicted,
tortured
smile. ◇

The Cat and I
Natalie Page

I look to you
I lean on you
I search for you
I yearn for you
I feel so broken
I feel so empty
I'm so alone

I look to you
I lean on you
I wonder where you are
I miss you terribly
I feel so broken

I feel so empty
I'm so alone

I look to you
I lean on you
I hope you're OK
I miss you
I feel so empty
I'm so on my own

I think of you often
I wish you well
I miss you
I feel like me again
I feel afraid
I'm on my own.

You are with me always
I am never alone. ◇

Untitled

Alura Dinaka Castillo

I always wake up with the anticipation
of you not being there.

I've not felt this cold love in return
like you've shown me.

There is nothing more like nothing.

Well, I guess there's empty space,
empty time,
and empty emotions.

Or it's like an empty page
before it's written upon.

Why is it always too late for me?

Why was it just that I'm always
not good enough?
Can it be I don't love myself
so no one else does?

Cold is the feeling
of not feeling the warmth
of your love anymore.

Why the evil of the world
you love better than me?

Why couldn't I have been
the one one you needed
and wanted
for all eternity?

Was it something I said to you
or
maybe something I didn't
do for you? ◇

For You

Corina Cagle

A poem for the man who
deserves to be missed,
the one who leaves
a huge smile on my face
every time I'm kissed.

This poem is more than deserved.
I'm sorry to you for
keeping my feelings so reserved.

Your loving me has kept me strong
through this stay,
I wanna be your girl
Til I'm old and grey.

You have truly been solid
and kept your word.
Thank you for being the only one
who's solid, like a board! ◇

Rising Tides

Erin E. Reis

Rising tides
Ocean walls
Water falls
From my eye.
Can you hear me when I sigh?
As it flows, I'm in still waters
So silent, so deep
I hear no peep.
When the door opens
I will take that leap
Giant as petite.
I will ride with my stride
On with love at my side.
As is, as was,
I stay strong —
We will be back together
In not too long. ◇

Crow

Heather Rose Lara

Days have gone by
Since Crow has seen me.
Many days have gone by
Since Crow has come
Looking for me.
Days have gone by
That Crow has not seen me.

Does Crow anticipate the
Many days that will go by
That he will not see me?
Does Crow count the days

Til he sees me again?
Does Crow wait for me
And remember me?

Will Crow see me
When I return?
Will he see me
From a distance?
Will Crow visit
Or call me over
To meet his new friend?
I wonder. ◇

Where the Spirit Meets the Bones

Crystal D. Ross

Where the spirit meets the bones,
Your true and honest feelings —
Can you put them into words?
Spit them out like bones.

Where the spirit meets the bones,
The strong in your life,
The wrongs, the rights,
How does that rub your life?

Where the spirit meets the bones,
Hold on to your spirit, your smile —
Hope it has much joy
Is it spinning or settled?

Where the spirit meets the bones,
Does it meet with clarity?
No regrets or shame,
Keep compassion and kindness —
It's all within,

Where the spirit meets the bones. ◇

Lost and Found

Jessica Valles

I've grown since yesterday
I'm taller, yet lost weight.
I'm nicer, yet still bitter.
I'm more, yet less.

I guess when you gain, you lose,
So you lose to win
Especially if you don't sin.
I finally feel like I'm getting better
At this Game called life —
Because I finally see it's truly not a game.
I lost the childish mindset
Because I gained life experience.
One may call me an owl,
Because now I am wise. ◇



My Aces Wild

Elisha Gonzales

Like an eagle she soars high
With the sun by her side.
She is like a lichen
Strong as a riptide!
He searches for his bride
Under the moonlight
Throughout the night.
Her feathers dazzle with
Glimpses of gold
It's a true love story — untold.
She dances with grace
While patiently awaiting her ace! ◇

Abandonment of an Anarchist

Karen Laubenthal

Dreaded memories fill my heart with fear
Unwanted dreams fill my eyes with tears.
Hopes and dreams seem to disappear.

You — you were there
You were there to hear my cries
You were there to make up lies.

Why did you turn, you could've helped
You helped relinquish the light.
Now I sit alone and cold
Waiting here in a world of my own
Grasping onto things that seemed so real
But it's such a damn struggle.

Promises fade as they always do.
Truths become tattered and torn
Afraid to be dull.

Unfocused is how I feel
Even asking for necessities
Is too challenging. ◇

Isolate Happiness

Erin E. Reis

When I hold you in my arms
Like a warm bath I can sleep in
The All, the strings that let me fly
You let me soar
Inscape, but out.

I'm free as the birds
The joy of all senses
The butterflies withinside my body
As adrenaline rises
Rich as butter melts on toast.
My eyes wide open like my child
Being born.
Awaken the scared tree who stands
There for me
The flight is a sled ride of love
Over the river and through and above
The woods.
No, none knows I flew here to see you,
The happiness is, the landing is safe.
Together we make the billboard
The beauty no words can say
I'm lucky
Thank you beautiful life. ◇

Standing Still

Patricia Adams

Time stands still for me
Progressively longer.
Yearning for days much shorter,
Standing here, in a space with deadened brown grass.
Stopping at the corners of my perimeter.
No control for time to pass,
I can only hope for lush green pasture.
My thoughts stand still in a recurring disaster.
It becomes routine, waiting patiently for my master.
I live on instinct, controlled by force,
Coming to understand
I am a horse. ◇

Prism

Yanna Gutierrez

White, the absence of color
Everything vibrant or dark reflected equally
Blinding in its abilities
Creating a void and at its other end
As all the reflected colors collect and
Fade together in a darkening abyss
Deafening in its totality
Neither end giving definition
Except maybe in the in-between
As the rainbow of colors is tossed away
From one to pool into one at the other. ◇

Prism

Karen Laubenthal

Purple daisies
Small frogs of gold
Eight little fireflies
Soaring to another world
Huge dancing Chinese cherries
Tiny little mushrooms
Coming full into bloom.
A fire-red flower
A long-awaited hour
Sweets scents from a magnolia
A strong, proud tree.

A young girl
Innocent, not corrupted.
A beautiful girl
With sunwoven hair
A cotton candy smile
And star-enhanced eyes

Running and laughing
Through gold green leafed trees.
A laugh that is so light
It gets lost in a soft summer breeze.
Broken from within,
And the light shines
And reforms my soul
Into a crystalline mosaic.
I often feel the molecules
Of my form bathe in this light.

I pray you'll come with me
If I can become more brave
I'll see that you always have been
Tethered by a translucent rope
The light and frequency
Of love and eternity
Is ours
Chasing shadows
And playing hopscotch
With prismatic light.

I'm not ready for dying.
Not today
And not tonight. ◇



Star Light

Rachel Humphrey

Shining so high
Top notch above the rest
Attitude is spot on
Ready to win.

Lotus flower flag
Ignite the flight
Grand champion
Horse a cut above
The reigning first place winner. ◇

Beautiful Horses

Rachel Humphrey

Bridal Harness
Eyes sides with hides to straight see
Approval from onlookers
Ulysses at the gate
Trails seem to be waiting, wanting
Isles towards the front line
First on race day
Umbrella by rider's side
Lightning is coming over longer, heel, HO!

Her stride is jilted
Opened the gate, BANG
Rare is my beast
Still galloping back to the barn
Eye guides come off
Shoo fly! ◇

Kindness Leads to Love

Rashel Brandon

When the needy are begging, be kind to them.
When a patient is sick, care for them.
When a family is praying, pray with them.
When a friend is reeling, listen to them.
When a child is hurting, protect them.
Kindness, caring, praying, listening, and protecting
Lead to love. ◇

Combat Boots

Julia Cabibi

So what if I climb trees
and run chainsaws?
What's it to you
if I wear combat boots
and red lipstick?
No, I don't fit into your
High Society.
I wouldn't want to anyway!
We don't share the same ideals,
but I have integrity.
I am loyal and honest.
I know who I want to be
and
I am proud of who I am. ◇

Life is Precious

Christina Ruiz

Tell me, what else should I have done?
Was there anything I could've done?
Doesn't everything and everyone die at last
And too soon?

For surely your light was shut out
Too soon indeed!
I recall the hot summer days we would
Run around wild and free
Just as horses when they were
Loose in the corral.
We were so free and careless of the
Troubles of the world.
Your laugh was contagious,
Your fingers made perfect
As they serenaded with the sound
Of a sweet melody that erupted from them
As you hit each key
As you swayed back and forth gracefully,
Gently, and peacefully
Just as the flowers and the grass do
As the wind blows on a warm summer night.

Shining just as bright as the stars
That hung high in the star-lit moonlight
When we would lay and gaze up patiently
And excitedly
For them to fall from above:
As they fall and disappear swiftly
Just as the bird of the air
Would soar though the air
We would silently and secretly
Send our hearts' wishes and desires
For our future to come.

Oh, how I wish we could go back
To the days of our youth
For surely your story ended all too soon!
But even so I tell myself that it will never end.

For as long as I live I will carry it on
Never to be forgotten.
From time to time I reflect on my life
Asking myself
Tell me what is it I plan to do
With my one wild and precious life
For time is too short and life too precious
To be wasted
For surely one day everything and everyone
Will die at last
And too soon. ◇

Lose to Win

Jessica Valles

I've lost my mind.
While I lose it, it's not
A disaster.
I watched myself fall,
Yet had no control of how hard
I hit.

My life is a huge mess.
Yet I glow at night now
Because I'm a beautiful disaster.

I had to lose to finally win.
While I was losing I thought I was winning.

Now that I finally lost
I'm actually right where I need to be
To see.
So now look at me, I actually AM winning.
Damn, I guess I really can see!
I LOVE ME. ◇

Who Am I?

Jenessa Rose Crouch

Joyful to what meets the eye
Essence of a painted sky
No judgements, young and wise
Evenings of reading and food
Somewhere, anywhere, always in a happy mood
Skateboarding with my friend dude
In the beautiful city of Santa Cruz.

Rivers, lakes and trees
Off somewhere happy as thee
Soft like a rose by the sea
Eventually free! ◇

Halloween

Rashel Brandon

Haunting nights seeping around you
Autumn smells wafting through the air
Little ones well prepared
Laughing, playing, haunting, crying
Oh how we love the day
With each house, indulgence will come the next day
Everyone young and old
Enters into a fantasy of their own
November begins and October ends
waiting for the next holiday. ◇



Spirit of the Lord

Christina Ruiz

When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart
I will dance like David danced.

When the troubles of this world consume me
just as the walls that surround me
with no way out,
and the light begins to fade away,
I know that in my darkest I hour
I am never alone.

When the spirit of the Lord comes upon my heart
I will sing and I will dance like David danced.

When Goliath stands before me and heart is heavy
and grows weary,
I will pray and I will cry out to my ever lasting comfort,
my shield, my strength, my God.

For when the spirit of the Lord is upon my heart
I will pray and I will dance like David danced.

When my giant falls before me,
and the pale moonlight begins to shine through
the cracks in the walls
that now begin to crumble before me,
I will lift up my head and my eyes
as the moon fades away
only to be replaced by the dawn's early light
illuminated by the sun
as the new day arises.
I will give thanks and will be at peace
for I know

When the spirit of the Lord is upon my heart
I will dance like David danced! ◇

I Don't Want to Dance Alone

Julia Cabibi

Remember when we used to go dancing
and it was like you and I
were the only ones in the room?

What happened to those days
when you would lose yourself in me
and I in you?

When did it all fall apart?
Do you remember the days
when we thought what we had
would last forever,
or when that all began to fade away?

When the dancing stopped
and the light that used to shine
turned dim and grey
and then all that we had
was lost.

And soon, I was dancing alone
in my room
knowing you were never
coming home. ◇

Let's Go!

Alura Dinaka Castillo

I needed some change.
You needed to relax.
I needed to get away
from the brutal city.
You needed to run away
from the never-silent rooms in your office.

I'll jam our duds into a bag.
You will drive us.
Let's go! ◇

This Isn't A Game

Jessica Modawell

It's been so long
I'm almost done
I miss my love
I miss my life. I know I'm wrong
I know I'm right
never giving up the fight.

It's been fun
I'm not through —
what happened?
if I only knew...

So much is lost
but more is gained.
I'm sick of people who judge
and forget to love.
This isn't a game. ◇

When God Shows Up

Shanna Riley

When God shows up it's always for you. In some
intricate part
of an amazing puzzle that you call
life,
you fit into every joyous moment and every
broken piece.

When God shows up, He has a plan
and you're a part of that plan.
You don't know what's up. He's not telling you.
But I bet you He loves you, and
I bet He has your best interests at heart.

Don't always feel like it,
but you will recover.
We will recover.

His apologies are graceful —
just look at our babies, our neighbors,
flowers, oceans, animals,
look at the duckbilled playpus.

He keeps us smiling
and alive
and loved. ◇

White Angel/Dark Angel

Jessica Modawell

White Angel

You sit there and wait patiently,
you haven't left me yet.
You were given to me for protection
and I know you are always my best bet.
You hold my hand when I need you.
You've been with me the longest.
And I trust you will always stay fair.
Please guide me and show me the truth.
Shadow me from what I can't handle.
I know you will always put us first
because you are good.

Dark Angel

You may not know me, but you're in me.
You may not like me, but you're there.
You come to save me because you need me.
We are Family.
And I'm always here. ◇

Purpose

Crystal D. Ross

As I walk into my purpose
I look at myself over and over.
I scrutinize, I judge —
It's warm, it's cold.

As I walk into my purpose
I smile, I frown
I notice I've grown
I see my age.

As I walk into my purpose
There is love, there is hate
There is rage, there is kindness
I walk with patience and compassion.

As I walk into my purpose
I've learned to love
I've learned to walk away
I've received clarity
I accept to love me.

I know my purpose. ◇

Thank You

Julia Cabibi

Looking back
I finally can see how wrong I was,
always thinking that I was right.
What a fool I was,
what a bitch I must have
appeared to be.

Is it too late to say sorry?
I'm sure it is.
It's too late for us,
of that I am certain.

So instead of sorry,
I would like to say thank you.
Thank you for trying,
and thank you for picking up my slack. ◇



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