

Prisoner Express
POETRY ANTHOLOGY
VOLUME 16
Summer 2016



Art by Len Whitman

Prison Life



Art work by Brandon Rushing

George Frison

God's Safe Deposit Box

I thank God for saving me
When I misbehaved terribly.
His punishment could've been worse
But Mercy & Salvation came first.

Many have it misconstrued.
What they call being arrested.
Is actually being Rescued,
Or call it being Sequestered.

The world's most precious gems
Are secured in safes and vaults.
Even God has such places,
To correct His children's faults.

Of times we can't focus or hear,
For all the bright city lights and noise
It is only in solitude
That we repent and regain our poise

We must see the Penitentiary
As a haven for saving
Not a satanic recruiting station
For criminalistic cravings.
In all things "appearing" negative,
There lies a positive lesson.

Open your Hearts & Minds,
Be grateful for all of God's blessings.

I thought I was hard as steel,
The craftiest fox on the block.
So I take it in stride, now that I reside,
In God's Safe Deposit Box.

Danny Ray Fammin

More Than A Number

I am someone special and yes I am
More than a number.
I am a father of three,
A soldier of seas,
A singer of love songs
And a cowboy of the land,
I am no number I am a man.

Yes, I know I have to stay in this prison
For a little while but let me tell you this,
There isn't a day I won't somehow shun a smile.
I keep my hope and my faith
I'll never show shame on my face.
I am someone special
And yes I am more than a number.
It's true to know me is to love me
And to love me is to know me.
I know the man.
I'm a little Redneck, a whole lot of country
I'm a dirt road devil and believe me,
I am the man that can get on any level.
I'm not a number, I am me, who am I?
I'm a child of God, I am somebody
I am special, I am strong
I am love, "I am me, myself and I"
A person.

Jacob "Crow" Perez

Multiple Melodies

The headlines screamed, "MURDERER"
Yet I receive letters addressed to "DEAR
DADDY"
If life could be shortened to a soundtrack

What would be the theme
Of Greatest Hits sung about me?
Would it consist of mournful arias
Sung by a kid
About the life that he never did live?
Maybe a heavy metal collage teeming with
Screams of violence gaped
by awkward silences
Country minstrels crooning about a love lost
Excessive booze drank, or flag and god?
Misunderstood rap lyrics
Poetically detailing the journey
Of a man whose reach
Only grasped objects waved past?
I relate strongly
To classic and new rhythm and blues
Tales infused with teeth rattling bass and pure
soul
Could you select the disc
That perfectly sums up your entire existence?
It would be nowhere near close to simple
To relate the story
Of the multiple people that I've been
They'd have to hire a DJ with a D.H.D to host a
party and
Create a mixtape
That captures the very essence of my being.
It'll take several disc
More than that lil guy's carter series
I'm The Game, I'm Drake, Lyfe Jennings and
Jon B.
But to my beautiful little girl
I'm forever "DADDY"
They can attempt to box me in
But always I'll be more
than they've thought of,
Dreamed of, or seen.

Jessica Belue

"Hell Cell"

Brain piercing fluorescence
Incarcerated icepick isolation
Laughs at lacerations

Clawed vision, blinded
Soul-hiss
Rust nails ceaseless
Slowly scrape chalkboard circuitry
Inescapable chamber
Of voices
Putrid cinderblock dungeon damp with
desperation
Barb-wired human dysfunction dumpster
Life waste regret rat
Fermentation of the forgotten
Discarded vertebrae void
Conscience compost

Captive corrupt circus
Come one, come all
Decomposition display case
Seething state slaves sing
Lost cause choir
On demand
For your viewing pleasure
Please do not top on the glass

Death flies swarm skulls
Packed in like live sardines
Bruising, battling relentless
Thump swollen relentless
A frenzied furious flight
In and out
Motionless mouths moan
Decay search
Like night moths hunting
Moon glow, a flame,
The warmth of light
You are an exit

Thick black nostril stinging stench of desolation
Dancing
Through every orifice
An imminent tornado of impending torment

Oppressive carnal crow
Perched at the base of your throat

A sternum of talons
Heavy heart anchor
Learned-helplessness hemorrhages
An unearthly weight
Too much to bear
A velvet doom laces curtain
Clings tight
Like snug skin
Over bone
Dark death matter
Our starless smothering blanket
Filling concrete caskets
Stuffed to the brim
Inhaling exhaling
Hopelessness
Like black ink agony
Flooding a fishbowl
Splitting open the sides
Seeping out, spilling over
Pitch black pain
Suicidal solace swaddles us
Don't worry.
This all builds character
Born with a noose of permanence
Pearls of peril
Waiting for a slip
Asphyxiation atrophies every muscle
Indigestible destiny
Oh, the density
It doesn't sit well

Eaten alive by envy
Exhausted
The undead door
Revolving spitting in the Face
Of second chances
Stifled screams
Silence searing
Even our dreams
Desert us
But we wish not to remember
Minute by minute
Second by second

Tick tock
There's no clock
Mandatory misery music
Of each individual grain of sand
Falling
In the hour glass
Infinite
We slowly observe
Our time running out
Willing it to shatter
With every ounce of our being
We are not hell-fearing;
For we already inhabit it.

M. Kazi

Quietus

My celly died last night.
We'd spent the evening planning a political fight
But it wasn't till this morning that I sensed
Something was not quite right
No. It wasn't till this morning that I realized
something was wrong
It had been only a few hours
Not really very long
And it seemed rather curious when the guard
unlocked our cage
That my celly didn't move. It was really quite
strange.
But assuming he was sleeping I went out to eat
And when I returned with a slab of mystery meat
I told him I'd brought something in case he
wanted to eat
But since he didn't answer I decided to wait.
The morning dragged on and then it got late
Afternoon approached and was fast on the
wane.
Then evening arrived and with it the rain
So as I sat quietly in this dark and dank cell.
I began to notice an odor a faint but rank smell
So then I got up and moved away from the
source
Way across the room over near the door
And here I sit calmly...alone on the floor

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Horace Thomas

Devil's Den

Once inside
a state prison,
The time has come
for a quick decision_

You can be yourself
or you can be a fool.
You can educate yourself
By going to school_

Or you can walk the yard
Playing tough,
then bowing down
when times are rough

You can change
or be a punk,
your man there with you
in your bunk_

So much can happen
Within the Pen,
It's often known
as the Devil's Den.

Alfred McGlory, Jr

Under Cover

When darkness falls, reality strikes
My dreams, they haunt me
In the middle of the night.

Day time is a blessing
Night time is too.

When I'm under my cover
There's peace and a place of refuge.

Under my cover is where I hide
My pain and release my tears.

Cause when the sun arises

I have to be strong and
Show no fear.

Shawn Blake

The Jungle

The prison jungle
Created by hairless apes
Our human folly.

James Edward Nichols, Jr

Concrete Paradise

Palm trees rise above
Concrete walls, prison- with a
View of paradise

John C Elliott

Untitled

The top floor of the unit
Three cells from the end
A box I share with another grown man
I'm sure you already know
I have no friends
Just a blanket, a sheet, a towel and a pen.
There are only three showers
A week by then you will stink
Concrete, bunks made of steel
Sounds of sharpening knives
So they can make you squeal
They throw you in a cage
To release your rage
They say you're no good
In the end they will see
That I have become some *thing*.

William Andrews

Preserved

Whoa! Hold on!
You've got it all wrong!
I'm the one who writes this song.

I maybe in white,
While the state pays the bills,
But it's my mind that only I'll fill.

Yes, you hold the Keys
And control the Lights,
Thinking you know,
What's Wrong and what's Right.

The little patches on your shirt,
The shine on your shoes
Doesn't give you the right
To give me the blues.

So hold what you got
Before you say more
Because only time
Can settle this score.

Your parole means little,
As far as I care,
My mind will be Free,
Be I here or there.

I've got books to still read
And paintings to be done
A plethora of learning
While hidden from the Sun.

I'm being Preserved
And sheltered from crime.
They say no wine
Should be served
Before its time!

So your job is quite safe,
There are others to stress.
Giving false hope,
while they're stuck in this mess

As for me I'll finish out this "ten"
Then head for Carolina,
Never to see you again!

Ross Hartwell

Rap sheet

Ought to be a crime

Missing first steps, first voice

Telling momma "NO"

As if he had a choice

Ought to be a crime

When he's getting on a bus

Not holding his hand

As he puts up a fuss.

Ought to be a crime

Pacing a cell, hoping for a pardon

Begging and pleading

While he begins kindergarten

Ought to be a crime

Not being a fixture

In the little boy's life

Growing up in pictures.

Ought to be a crime

Absent for birthdays, prom, and graduation

Or when he leaves on a plane

To his first duty station.

Ought to be a crime

Missing the happiest days of his life

When the preacher pronounced

"*You are now husband and wife.*"

Ought to be a crime

Not bidding farewell

To him stepping on a ship

Sailing to Hell.

Ought to be a crime

Not being there to soften

The pain his wife felt

Over the flag draped coffin.

Ought to be a crime

For freedoms gave away

We can wish all we want

He's not here today

Ought to be a crime

Spending life out of touch

Since things that matter most

Never seemed to matter much.

Ought to be a crime

Not being a son to a father

Or a father to a son

Was too much a bother.

Ought to be a crime

These crimes we've committed

'Cept the penitence we serve

Is much worse than prison.

Carl Branson

Desert Storm

Orange clad competitors curse the darkening sky

Its ominous rumbling likely foretells

An early return to stuffy hot cells

Joggers, bodybuilders and ball players alike listen

As the hot breath or summer howls from distant hills

Razor wire responding humbly in somber trills

At the base of the chain link fence

A captive sports page flaps rat-a-tat-tat

It's rattle mocking the last crack of a baseball bat

The field's parched mouth sings praise

Dust rising like smoke from a burnt offering

Multiplying many a prisoner's suffering

When at long last

The sky decides without favor or malice

To empty glistening pearls from its chalice

Dismay turns to joy

When each adult-boy plays in the mud

Slippery and slick during this sudden flood

James Olson

Heart Full Of Stains

There's misery inside of me...from the pain that is alive in me...is there resolution

Or am I just too blind to see

My mind is like a river flowing through

The banks of time

Unwilling to release my insecurities

Because there the only thing that's mine

I can't find a silver lining

I can't numb the hurt I feel

I can't find a happy ending

I don't believe that they are real

I feel lost without a purpose

As my days just fade away

I don't know why I deserve this

But my heart is full of stains

Ziggy Sollenberger

Who Me?

I ask myself am I crazy, am I insane?

Could there possibly be

Something wrong with my brain

Some days I feel happy,

Other days I'm so sad.

Is it really my fault little things make me mad.

I'm depressed but don't care, does that mean

I'm strange?

So what? I laugh at myself,

I'm not really deranged

Yeah I might be different,

but who really cares

I'm happy with myself so go ahead and stare.

We all have problems,

I choose to embrace mine.

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I look at this world with an open mind
So I am who I am,
I don't care what you think.
I won't lose any sleep, no not even a wink.

Call me different and I'll smile and say,
Who me?
I love myself; I don't care what you see.
I won't live a lie, be something I'm not.
So be your self don't worry about others,
Let them talk.

Just smile and say who me?

Daniel Matthews

Where I Remain

Burn away summer's day today
Let's face it, this blue sky's grey fades away.
This ashy shade, oh how it burns this day
And burns this way for the world to see
But not for me; I see no sun from inside this
cage,
Am I inside of this place to stay?
My whole world shines and radiates fire.
Oh how beautiful unjustly fates conspire
This crimson sun, these rusty gates
Live cinnamon, with a choking taste
Live magic summer is here again,
Pale and shadowed and graving thin,
Fragmented light years for my sun; nurture me,
my only kin
You are my only, when I'm within
I find it hard, to refrain, my thoughts of hatred,
rage and pain.
All these burnings here to stay, live lifeless
shadows cast in this place
Amber enters from phoenix wings; carry me
through hell, but from this jail
Running rampant in my dreams, inside this
nightmare playing hide and seek
And I know that this world has changed,
because within
My world now the sun is not the same

With all of the wonders that summer brings
I'll be cherishing,
Where I remain
Oh the torment that I inhale.

Larry "Anthony" Harris

I Never Gave Up

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 appeal 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's 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

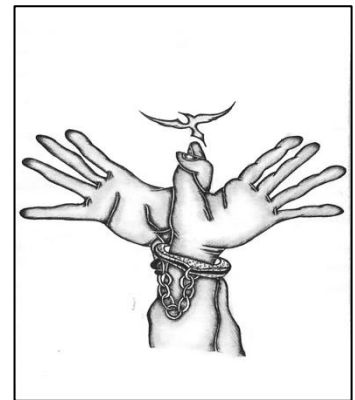
So I fall to my knees, and I thank God in prayer
He freed me from prison, and I no longer am
there

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!



Artwork by West Reggie

Clarence Whitaker-Jones

Everything is locked up

Parents locked in room. Darkness,
candles and jazz as the tune. I'm locked away
in the sack trying to get free as one of a billion
sperm cells locked away in the back trying to
fight past my siblings but my mom already had
eight children so I was the last of the pack
released with parents' moans once they
reached their climax.

Now I'm locked away in mom's womb
a nine month county bid. Mom locked away
from crack and snacks because she wanted a
healthy kid so that's bad for her stomach. Drugs
are locked away until I start giving her pain,
biting the hand that fed me so I'm making her
vomit.

Pop locked outside of the house working for pay, from his boss who holds his salary inside his bank. The bank locked up so nobody won't rob them again or that man will get locked up though he can't provide for his wife and his kids. My birthday I was told I was wrapped up, choked by the umbilical cord so that was a chain around my neck until the doc started cutting it off. I'm locked away from my conscience so mom got to take care of my needs. I'm locked in the hospital, no visitors, four brothers and three sisters all locked away in the D.H.S system, fifth brother got released from prison locked in party thinking now he has to change his life, exiting the back door a cop shot him, now his casket locked in the grave. Cop got off free while I'm locked on momma's milk, locked by her arms.

Was I locked down by a camera? Locked in dada's hands? That tape probably locked somewhere in the trashcan? Free from shyness, nurse taking me to the cradle, locked by screws in case I roam free and get loose that may end up a tragic like Mike Tyson's daughter Exodus. The doc unlocked the vaccines which were locked in a cabinet which was tested on the hamsters' that's caged prove to be safe.

Needles open my pores, drugs locked in my system so I get shots which is a criminal act metaphorically it's supposed to aid me when I grow up, to be mentally and physically sound but Kevin Trudeau would disagree with that now. That was locked in the box until mom went to Toys R Us before they locked it back down. My pop rode a bike, helmet locked on his head? Pop couldn't get a car so I wouldn't be locked to a car seat chair so I was locked in a stroller or the seat back of the rock locked to my head suspenders, locked to my waist buttons locking the left and right side of my shirt but my clothes were once from a sheep but it got killed so the

fur became free. "That's harsh" is something a vegetarian would make known- that animal was locked on a farm free to not roam only released for some corn but soon got put into a headlock or shot with a gun, the bullets were once locked on high shelf locked away from the curious kid that may shoot someone else, those bullets cost little from whomever made it that lucrative, were bought for a dusted off contract.

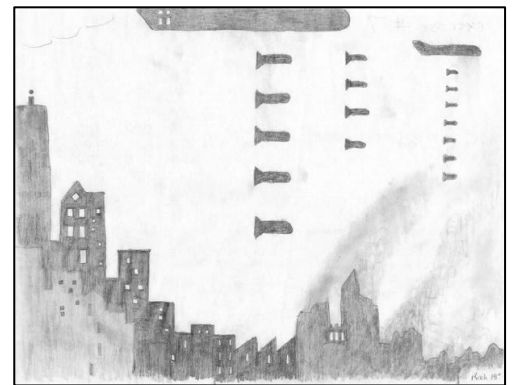
Need protection in preschool, constabularies lock the gun in their holster? Getting ready to lock, load and shoot until it's over so if the bad guy comes they can lock the class doors and windows before he gets closer, hypothetically. Teacher gesturing to lock your mouth because if the intruder doesn't hear you, you can block him out. Days to come your school lunch is locked in a lunch box. You open it then lock the food down on your teeth and realize your teeth are a cage for your tongue and your lips are a cage for your teeth. You realize you release your poop, the toxins and poison in your system.

Remember your first girl didn't want hair in her face so the rubber band locked it away. She locked her secrets putting it in her diary. You tried to open it but she had the key to lock up the page. Teacher had the answer locked in a desk. You got suspended and were locked in your room. You do your time to get the playground and move you got a lock on the ball so you do your time to get to the playground and move. You got a lock on the ball so you can shoot it in the open back court. You release it in the air blocked by the wind that came out of nowhere your team loss. Your pride says "lock away all of the tears" they came down naturally free from pain especially from the beatings over the years come from the belt fascento your pop pants.

You are older and start smoking the weed locked in your locker which is in a Ziploc bag you cut school with your homies and got locked up fast. Phone locked with your password wish you listen to your mom to lock it in your head. High off free delta-9 t.h.c you got from your old head. You lock it in the patty wagon. Locked away from clear views so you can't see ahead as the silver bars are locked on the back of their chair. Cops lock their eyes on the road, friends gossip that you locked up, foster mom want to release you from the bad news but she locked out of her car, no crowbar lock to steering wheel so she is glad she put that child lock on. You in the district in handcuffs, locked on bench. You so high you go to sleep just to wake up to cop keys.

You are finally tired of being and seeing everything locked up so while you were dreaming, you dreamt you died in jail. Not understanding why you were locked out of heaven. Until you wake up realizing your time wasn't ready just yet to be locked up forever...

Social and Justice Issues



Artwork by Richard Gross

Jimmy Murdock

So I learned

I thought I knew wisdom
Because I knew nothing
Until I met fate
Then I learned something

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I thought I knew love
Because I knew fate
Until I met pain
Who taught me to hate

I thought I knew past
Because I knew forgiveness
Until I saw a future
And learned how to live

Kadaron Sledge

When the Wounded Return

I left to fight for you, for patriotism, for freedom
Upon arrival, I just didn't want to die
I returned alive
Overjoyed only because my cup for joy has
shrunk

There are no atheists in the trenches
But you don't understand my faith because
No one has put a gun to your head

I was torn up, ripped apart, shattered
Held together by my uniform;
we were soldiers:
Politics denied me that-
Peeling my uniform like a scab

War is hell
But prettier than watching
you waste the life
I almost died to give you

Give me liberty or give me death!
Is too much liberty death? Did I kill you?
By my wound, I ask you to live
Live! Because you're killing me

Nahbeel Richardson

Quilting Life

Black,
Is the color of thread,
I was given

To hold together, the silk
My fabric of choice, for my garment

One filled vividly
Creatively
Flamboyantly
And Auspiciously, by my designer

Given my chance
I leave nothing,
left to prove
As I watch you, with the backs of my eyes
As I, overcome

Suppressed
Due to the color of my skin
And not, conforming to my born gender
Isolate me- from the mass
As I will not
Let my free will to be rendered

This is not the end
As accomplishments are to be gained
Whereas the fabric of my life's quilt
My dreams will be obtained.

Shaun Blake

A Walk

One day I decided to take a walk
Down into the shadier side of town
So I could see how the other half live.

First it seemed the same as my side of town.
The people all looked like they enjoyed life,
I continued my way down the sidewalk.
Time passed and night crept on me almost
alive.
This is when I saw a group up the walk.
They were young and acted like they owned the
town.

I hesitated. Felt like walking another way

As I noticed that they all were carrying and I
thought,
"Maybe they did own this part of town."

Odyssey Oronsaye

Budapest

Bodies washed ashore; troops cannot be found
Blood on the sands, that's all they all want
See the children pay the price with their dear
lives

A man lost his wife, his three children died
Running away from horror, now there's no
tomorrow
His life died on arrival, memories are all he
remembers
Take me back to Syria, my troubles seems to be
better
Needed love from the world, but now my life is
seized indeed
Wife and children deceased, consequences of a
war on beliefs

Those who create the rain, residing in their
comfortable shelter
From afar they smell the pain; the world is no
more the same
But who sensed this uprising? They stare at this
all wisely

As peace is flying away with every passing day
They say invade Iraq, oh wait! Osama is far
away in the mist
In the mountains near Kabul we'll find him
Obama's great announcement, the navy seals
just killed him
Raise your hands if you saw this coming
Like predictions of Christ and his second
coming?

Evidence of global warming; like a thief the
world it's taking
Aftermath of human decision making
Who said the center's holding? Its surroundings
slowly cracking

Remember the rich man's wealth is nothing
If the poor is all that's around him
He might seem far away, in this castle with
beautiful fountains

Like a surge they come waging, repacautions all
before him
So get ready with shields from afar, the fire,
souls astonished
Religion should be abolished? The true way to
peace before me
But no! It can't be banished
From the beginning of time, destruction of
human minds
Now here we are next in line

How many more must die?
What if there is no train on the rails of
Budapest?

Carl Branson

Lady Justice

Lady Justice, scales held high
Standing guard at the courthouse door
Blind to innocents who die

Meth and coke are drugs to buy
Many kill to get some more
Lady Justice Scales held high

Knives, guns, cars and gangs to try
Fit of rage, he kills that whore
Blind to innocents who die

Call the witness who will die
Anything evens the score
Lady Justice, scales held high

Honeymoon, his alibi
Guilty now forever more
Blind to innocents who die

Victims all, by-and-by
System corrupt at its core
Lady Justice, scales held high
Blind to innocents who die

Maurice Stokes

Revolutionize

I'm all for a revolution for the right cause
But black America needs to wake up because
this is bigger than a law
Bigger than Trayvon Martin no disrespect to his
life
But Zimmerman's incarceration wouldn't stop
the deaths overnight
Nor would it ease the pain or take away the
tears
Of the 7000 black mothers that lose a child
every year
To the senseless violence happening in the
inner city streets
Fighting amongst ourselves over the ground we
put our feet
Our problem's deeper than racism in this day
and time
As 91% of black murders are black on black
crime
That's sixty three hundred seventy black lives
Attributed every year to our self-inflicted
genocide
Yes it was tragic and truly a shame
But how can we scream about it when we're
doing the same?
Gunning down our own brothers over skittles
and tea
It's impossible not to be angry because Trayvon
could have been me
But what's the difference when we die from the
bullet of each other

Does it make it not wrong because he's killed by
a brother?
This is truly an issue I don't understand
A death is still a death why does it matter whose
hand pulled the trigger, to rob him of life
Race shouldn't matter because a life is a life
So if we going to start a revolution we need the
right goal in sight
And start in our own communities teaching
ourselves to value life...

Christopher E. De Rossitte

#24

I set against the stone, like Sisyphus,
And find to shoulder stone, the stone is me.
My torn feet grind the tearing sand-- hopeless
The weight does sometime seem; red-faced
with stress

I strain; exertion, wrack upon ruin
Wrack upon ruin, drips; the stone is me.
My teeth grind as I grunt and throw again
Shoulder raw against stone; eyes and scored
skin

Want blood to weep, blood to water this field
Of death, this death of dreams: the stone is me
Broke grind my bones; tears dried, blood shed,
flesh peeled,

-I strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

I'll die against the stone; won't fail, won't flee,
Enduring seasons' change. The stone is me.

-Cee Vagante

Patrick Hodge

Colors

Young, RED, braves play at kickball at the
Catholic school,
Forbidden to speak their own tongue,
Sacred hair cut short,
Punished for praying to Grandfather Moon.
Taken far from home traditions, replaced by
erudition
Written with YELLOW sticks. Grandmothers
think of lost

Growing, uprooted men
As maternal instincts gravitate
Her towards her own
Son tries to sit motionless
But her emotions flame
Unfamiliar syllables in his body language.
Curiosity forms long creases
On his forehead that draw deeper
Than someone's last breath spoken in a parable
Because nostalgia clouds his sight
Of a little boy of his likeness
Walking beside his mother
A reflection in the mirror to the past
When life meant video games and sleepovers.
 Tight, he embraces his mother
Losing himself in an earthly warmth
A place where their souls had first met.
Tears, a therapeutic cleansing
Loosens and undresses
The penal years of
An abnormal cost of living
 As the child stares with wistful eyes
And a closed mouth full of:
 Are you my dad...?
 When will I get tall...?
 Why can't you leave with us...?
Their eyes dance in a tongue too emotional for
words.
So he hugs his son, his heir
Like a wedding band holds a promise:
Never to unlock his bond.
 Sitting at a table
That is small as their talk
Short as their minutes allowed,
An officer makes it his duty
To undermine their visit
Like missing teeth ruin a smile.
 With a blank finish, sadness
Renders his face
And displays a growing man
Who has misplaced his responsibility

Nahbeel Richardson

The Real World

Guilty is what they found me
Evidence of only words
The physical did not matter
Nor did it match
Corrupt is the system
Biased are its' people
How in America
Are all men created equal?

Taking people's lives
Sending them away
The power of God
Does man attempt to obtain

Innocent until proven guilty
Proof beyond a reasonable doubt
Yet predetermined guilt
Strips one's innocence.

Everyone makes mistakes
Yet, they, are all perfect
Jobs are what they have
But when will they be done?

Miles Washington

True Life

Brother and sisters, wake up and see,
All that platinum and ice is used to deceive.
Keep our people blind chasing material things
When most don't even know what the word
genocide means.
Neighborhood drug dealers are our son's role
models
Because their fathers are gone or hitting them
bottles.
So they turn to a stranger to guide them through
life
But the blind can't lead the blind, so their
guidance isn't right.
That's why so many youth feel lost and alone
Until their names get replaced with a number

A prison their home!
Some get no mail in jail and visits are dead
They stress so bad they lose their hair from the
head
So they return to the streets with a chip on their
shoulder
Their mentality is the same,
The only thing different is they're older.
Little girls fifteen years old
Know how to roll a blunt, talking about smoking
dro,
Didn't receive enough love in her home, so she
chose to roam
Trying to find it with a man that just wants to
bone
Instead of going to school to earn an
exceptional living
She depends on a man and accepts what she's
given.
Mini skirt on her body thinking she's fly
Sleeping around might catch AIDS and die.
You say she's a hoe that needs to get fucked
I say she's our future that needs to wake up!

Love



Art work by Norris Beebe

Barry Taylor

Getting Old

When the ravages of time hath
Of thy brow turnt to creases
Thine eyes mark't with crow's feet
And the sagging of the flesh never ceases
When thy breast hath fallen to thine knees
As the same with thy derriere

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Thine eyes no longer see afar
And thy head beset with thinning hair,
Skin no longer soft, hanging loose
From thy bones which too are brittle
Your gut won't accept most foods anymore
As you betake of tea and toast, both very little
When all that you have ever been, or desired to
ever be
Hath taken wings, fear not my love, come, sit.
Grow old with me.

Leroy Sodorff

Thoughts From The Pen: Melody

When we first met
She had a band
Wrapped around the finger
Of her left hand

We played a two-part harmony
In concert on the down low,
But never made beautiful music
In my lofty studio.
We struck one accord
On every word we spoke
Unlike her two-timing partner
Who always hit a sour note.

Though we both sang the blues
In perfect harmony
I had a band of my own
So a duet could never be.

Now here I sit at these bars
Gulping down a stiff shot of Joe
Having the time of my miserable life
While singing so low.

Robert Martin

Hard Memories

I am not sorry, but I apologize
Not for my actions but my lack of them
Not for the hearts I broke
But the ones I could not put back together

I'm not sorry for the frowns I've caused
But the smiles I did not produce
Forgive me not for time apart
But time not spent on you
I beg of you not to forget the bad
So when you think of the good
You know the possibilities were endless
Know that in this life I carry a curse
And ruin all I touch,
So you will remember
How hard I fought for the memories we shared.

Luis Buchanan

Perdoneme

Madrecita quien me dio vida
De rodillas le suplico
Ya no llores Mama querida
Por un hijo ya perdido
Las lágrimas que derrama de su pecho
Siempre serán mi dolor
Recompensa por mis hechos
Dagas en mi corazon
Que se abre el terreno
Que la tierra me trage aqui
Derechito al infierno
Por lo malo que le fui

Angelita quien me cuida
Le pido su perdon
Por cada lagrimita
Que por mi culpa lloro
No le fui buen hijo
Y me meresco lo peor
Pero le pido a Diosito
Que a Usted le de todo lo mejor
Que la cargue en su ombro
Y le guarde un lugar
Para cuando caiga el fondo
En los Cielos tendra su hogar

*Dedicado a mi AMA quien adoro con todo mi
ser*
Su hijo

David Brian Hayes

Lie To Me

We don't know each other, because we've only
just met
But when the night is over, we'll have no
regrets,
If you cuddle up and hold me, whisper in my
ear,
Tell me all these little lies, you know I want to
hear
I'll hold you close and love you,
Whisper lies in your ear too.
We'll ease each other's pain away
Cause tonight it's just me and you
And in the morning when I wake up,
If you're not here with me,
I'll know we were just two ships,
Passing on the sea.
But, if your soft warm body
Is still here, next to mine
We'll tell each other little lies,
Until the end of time
So, come on and
Lie to me,
Lie to me,
Tell me that you'll stay,
Just don't ever tell me,
When you'll go away.

Will Van Sant

Beauty Unexpected

*(Dedicated to the lucky ones who find a true
and trusted friend behind bars)*

A flower blooms in a junkyard
Delicate-hued petals
Velvet to the touch
Breathtaking
In their simple, perfect
Beauty
Where it's least expected
Rusted wrecks and
Ruined relics

Stand silent sentinel all around
Like the dried bones
Of beasts long dead
Broken glass covers the ground
Sharp, shattered, waiting to
Cut
Cause pain
And still a flower blooms

The air is thick with
The reek of piss
And shit
From faceless bums
And feral dogs
The sun is blocked
On all sides
By metal mountains and
Trees of trash
The rainwater
Dirtied by debris
Pools in
Stagnant puddles
Incubating
Poisons, pests, toxins
And still a flower blooms

The earth itself
Barren, unnourished
Weighted by
Waste and
Wearied by
Want
Moaning in
Anguish and hunger
And still
A flower blooms

Nathan Zimmerman

Untitled

More precious than diamonds
And finer than gold
It's rare and exciting
When all truth is told.

Sweeter than honey
And like a good wine
Yes, it only gets better
With the passage of time

Softer than satin
Yet stronger than steel
It banishes darkness
And brings sorrow to hell

Warmer than sunlight
Gentle as a breeze
It quiets the spirit
Placing all thoughts at ease

Can you tell what it is?
Have you figured it out?
What this wonderful thing is
I've been talking about?

This perfect creation
Made right from the start
The most beautiful object
That's known as your heart.

From within it flows freely
That gift from above
The purest of all things
Is your perfect love.

Scott Pleasant

Forever and a Day

I was born from a glimmer of hope
And that's the story of my life
Just like a sailor and his boat
I find my way home each and every night.
Though I've been down and I've been out
I'm never lost without your love
From the smallest space inside my soul
To the faintest star way up above.

Stay- with- me
Even though you're not here with me

I know you will always love me
Stay- with- me
Through the darkness comes the light
Our courage will help us see the right
Forever and a day
It seems like forever and a day.
And now we're growing old
There's not much left to see
But my love's just as strong as then
It's safe deep down inside of me.

You said I was your rock
And you're mine just as well
These walls won't last forever Momma
Protect me from this hell.

Raymond Haney Jr

"Ghosts"

I see you in my dreams at night
And find you in my thoughts by day.
Memories of moments past
Wondering of possibilities to come
Fantasies of times that never were
Some stately, some scandalous
These visions fleetingly satisfy yet fail to last
I lose myself in joy imagining being beside you.
But find myself in sadness when I return to
lonely reality
Three words far heavier than "love"-
They bend my shoulders beneath their weight
...
I miss you

George Frison

Man's Woman

Kinky, curly, straight,
Afro, pony or locks
Your hair is beautiful
No matter the style you rock.

Bulging, squinted, beady,
Brown, hazel, green.
Your eyes are sensual

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Especially when you're mean.
Wide, pudgy, aquiline,
Hooked, curved or flat,
Your nose is unique
Worry not what others think.

Full, pouty, thin
Lipstick, lip-gloss, plain
Your lips are tantalizing
Your kisses...insane.

A, B, C, D
Any size suits me
Your breasts are succulent
May I partake of thee?

Virginal or mature,
Hairy, trimmed or waxed
Your mysterious tunnel of birth,
Is the softest place on Earth.
Fertile, plump, wide
Hips protruding from the side
Your buttocks are alluring
Sashay it with pride.

Long and lean, short and thick
Bare or clad in fishnet.
Your legs are soft and sexy
On that you can bet.

Pedicured, polished, natural,
Sandals, sneakers, stilettos,
Even toe rings if you got 'em
You're the bomb from top to bottom!

Carl Branson

First Love

It's been two score and more we've been apart
Now memories swarm like moths to a flame
Flitting and fluttering round 'bout my heart
Separate lives spent with just me to blame
Constant as the sun rising in the east
Reliable as phases of the moon
Images of you provide a mental feast

In dreams we're coupled again none too soon
As your wind song scent tickles through my
mind
Recalling the warmth of love's true embrace
My fingers in your chestnut locks entwined
Whispered words heard only by fantasy's grace
In the netherworld of dreams I off'pine
For your warmth and true love that once was
mine

Lawson Strickland

For Emily

I tried to write you a poem but it ended up a
song,
Tap-tapping a plastic pen (the one I chew on)
Against my desk's wooden corner, sitting alone.
You said I could not have you as you were
Another Emily Dick, unreachable and remote,
High up in your dormered garnet, incising
Long sheets of fine linen with the sharp stylus of
your wit.

You would not be called down
I must come up.
(I heard you sigh, "If you must.")

So I tried to write you a poem, to construct a
ladder,
Made a pentameter, I could climb foot by foot.
But at the top, my words propped
Against the wall of your indifference,
I found you gone. Run off to Marseilles
With those two jokes Rimbaud and Baudelaire,
Barefoot and wearing (for them) the sundress I
first saw you in,
When I fell in love.

Now I imagine you feeding the fisher-wharf cats
tinned sardines,
Wearing a beret and striped socks (yellow and
green)
Tickle muse. Erato's coquette.

Distressed. Undone. I wrote you a song and
Out of respect for your aesthetic (to which I've
always aspired)
I did not send it to the radio but instead
Hired a busker (you'll recall, Spanish gent,
guitarra, Dressed like Depp's Cap'n Jak)
to play the tune and sing
While I hid in amongst the cobbled shadows
'cross
From where you sat. The open-air cafe *Chez
Les Mots*,
Beneath a striped (red and blue) Gitanes
umbrella.

Ah! Dear Melpomene.
To see my love so.
Happy.
Tap-tapping her foot.
Thinking herself so far from home.

Lucas W. Whaley

Abyssal Acrobatics

In which future
Is there less fear:
The one of woven threads?
Or that fateless spin?
What life is more fulfilled?
A path blazed on your own?
Or a pairing meant to be?
Is there freedom in the netless tumble?
Or simply an endless fall?

Roberto M.Cruz

Together Forever

I told you. I couldn't live without you
I told you I would never let you leave me
I guess you weren't listening
You didn't wanna believe me
I didn't want it to come to this.
Now look, at what I've done!
I knew I should have listened to you
When you told me to get rid of that gun.
I fulfilled all your dreams

But that wasn't enough.
You never took me seriously
You called me on my bluffs.
I would have given you the stars and the moon
All you had to do was ask. And now just
To think, never again will I hear you laugh
That beautiful smile, I'll never see it again
Neither will your mother, your father or any of
your friends
Ten years of our lives will never be the same!
I always said you look gorgeous when you
sleep.
Now even more so, lying in a bloody heap!
I'm sorry baby! I was just trying to stop you from
leaving!
But the only way I knew how was to stop you
from breathing!
The pastor said, "Till death do us part,"
But I know that's not true.
I think it will bring us closer.
Don't you?
Now what the hell did I do with that gun?
You ready baby?
Here I come!

Larry Robinson

Good. Bye

To this devotion. I say goodbye
Leaving emotions to wither and die
As my hidden love run so deep
And tears affirm eyes that weep
As darkness comprehend true light
To dove in spiritless flight
This reality so hard to face
To memories left in place
Angels sung as a ride died
As we kissed and said goodbye.

Brandon Gene Rushing

By The Time

Oh no!
You gasp. As you carelessly brush me from the
world. An accident, you claim. But you pushed

me! And still I fell. And now in the motion filled
void I plummet. The pale translucent reflection
of my porcelain veneer blurs. I am compelled!
Some yellow ray of light illuminates the ivory
skin of my too short existence. But what am I? It
seems not to matter now, or least ways never
did. In my own imagination though I am
something spectacular! Something precious and
simple in its creation. And you have thrown me
into hazard! Now that yellow beam of light that
was once perceived to be but a life giving ray of
the sun dwindles. Its expedience mocks us two!
With its flashing death so too sums the
culmination of this existence for me. It leaves
me in stasis only a moment before in
suspension eternally against the ebon backdrop
of nowhere. This is my time. This one tragic
instant that passes briskly from the lines of
Fate's Weave. One last moment. One last
memory in consciousness before I shatter. And
even then I am sure that you will regret that one
absentminded error. When in some fevered
haste, some fire rush to conclude the business
of living, you forgot about me. You will cry and
wail your woe. Even as you search vainly for all
the tiny pieces scattered upon the floor you will
feel the sorrow of the loss. But you will see then
that it is this gathering of stones and mementos
that was done some time before. Long ago.
When your passion for the beat of your own
heart drowned out mine. It was then. Not now!
You've just seen the shadow fall...Too late.

Scott Pleasant

I Surrender

About a 1/2 a day's drive just south of Dallas
There's a new sunset that's waiting for us.
It might've taken us forever just to get here
But darlin', it was well worth the fuss.

It's so peaceful that the Milky Way is humming
Or maybe that's just you while you smile.
Either way, I'll take this over Heaven

Just promise me that we'll be here a while.

This must be a dream,
Because here we are together.
I almost can't breathe.
It's so wonderful in this life.
Darlin', I surrender.

Now there's a thousand stop signs left behind
us
And we're still just trucking' along.
We could've slowed down just outside of Austin
But Luckenbach never did Love that wrong.

So the Hill Country can roll on forever
But it's with you where I wanna stay.
Like the hummingbird that searches for the one
and only flower
I can't wait to wake with you another day.
I surrender

Sarah Julie Spencer

For My Special Someone

For the someone
I never found in life
I hereby wish you well
Whatever you may be doing now
I hope you're not in hell.

For the times we missed together
Forever we will mourn
We will grieve the loss of moments
Emotions tossed and torn.

For my special someone
I know just how you feel
You dreamed of much more love
But our love was not quite real.

Here & there, a random glimpse,
Of a love you hoped could be
Over the years, through doubts & fears.

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You hoped for a life made of you & me.

Though it's what we've both been missing.
It's almost too much to bear.

Knowing I went through life alone
Without your warmth & cheer.

For my special someone,
All my love I send.

If you can read or hear this,
I wonder where you've been.

Eric Whisnant

Detox From You

Late one night while trying to sleep, my body
threw a fit

I tossed, turned and broke a sweat, as cold as
ICE could get

A hint of your perfume, suddenly draped around
my nose

My eyes tightly shut, suddenly were all but
closed

I heard a noise, I thought was your voice, I set
up fast as Hell

From top to bottom, front to back I immediately
searched my cell.

Under the bed, to the door and back, not a soul
around

I would bet my life, I smelled my wife, I know I
heard her sound

With one more search around, it's clear that I'm
alone

Her presence I thought was with me, was now
suddenly gone!

Timothy Alunkled

My Life

My life is passing

One day I will go

Today is worth living

Tomorrow who knows.

My life has a past

Locked away in a box

Unable to be opened

The key I have lost

My future I know

I can not predict

Like a candle I'll burn

Till I run out of wick

For now I shall live

One day at a time

I'm never alone

With you on my mind.

Raymond Swanson

Our Home

Our home is a small town

Where dishonor does not live.

Our home is a front porch

With music on Friday night.

The sounds they echo in the hills.

Our home is a heartbeat

One for He and one for me.

Our home is gen-u-ine

Like rain on the roof, apple pie.

Our home is strong enough

That love will get us by.

The midnight moon glimmers through the trees.

Our home is hard work

Days in the dusty fields.

Our home is a small town

Where love always persist.

Brian Meegan

Killing The Past

I want to walk into the water

Swim in the sea we once played in

Explore the deeper reaches

Now that you are not here to distract me

Letting the blue of the water

The white ripples engulf me

As I dive beneath their waves

And the commotion they cause

I swim far then and deeper

Until all familiar to me disappears

The expanse we used to play in

Is becoming a cloudy remembrance

The water embraces me as you never did

Filling my mind, holding back no secrets

I escape my own thoughts fully now

Letting the cool calm of the deep penetrate me

I have made the ocean mine again

Returning myself fully

Let the current wash away my sorrow

Free me and make it all a distant memory

Cesar Martinez Hernandez

Definition of a card to my children

Here is a double sided rose

For love has no end

It's wrapped with a banner

Coz much like a family

With life's twists and turns

We still have each other

It says missing you

Coz I really do

It also says

I love only you

Coz let's face it girls

We're stuck with each other

Like a bunion of glitter

Mixed in with glue

I guess what I'm trying to say

Is simply I love and miss

All of you.

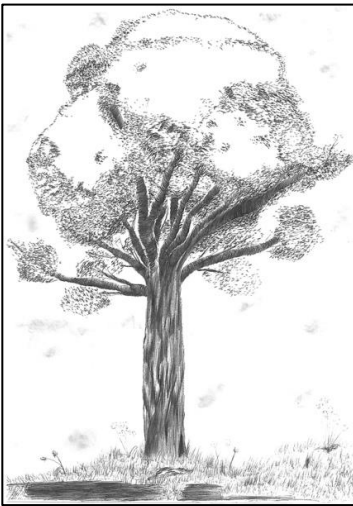
Frank Sweet

Before it is too late

If you have a tender message,

Or a loving word to say
Do not wait till you forget it
But whisper it today;
The tender word unspoken
The long forgotten messages
The places you never went
For these some hearts are breaking
For these some children wait;
So show them that you care for them
Before it grows too late.

Nature



Art work by Braxton Bowers

Burl N. Corbett

Choka For A Daughter

As we sat in the
tree's cool shade, my young daughter
asked its name, eager
To identify the things
sharing her world.
"It's a red oak," I replied,
And she smiled--
Another stranger was now her friend.
That was long ago.
Today I put its last chunk
In my stove.
The smoke will write
Its own epitaph,
Published in the wind.

Lucas W. Whaley

Failing Stars

I satellite boring in
Alone in the dark, gravity sore
A guide in your skies
Guarding your core
You turn away
And lead me along

Crack and crumbles, this crust of me frays
This break-up pulls closer
This orbit decays
Plummet and fall sere away fear
As pieces of me
Ignite your atmosphere
Falling stars

A quake and a fission,
A fractious decision,
A million new lights
A million collisions
Hammering heads
Precede holocaust tails
Your vacuous heart
Tipped delicate scales

Crack and crumble, this crust of me of frays
This break-up pulls closer
This orbit decays
Plummet and fall sere away fear
As pieces of me
Ignite your atmosphere
Falling stars

Murders committed with every embrace
Descending bombardment
Are in apocalypse grace
Once your reflections of beauty and light
Now a blank sky
A burned away night
Crack and crumble, this crust of me frays
This break-up pulls closer
This orbit decays

Plummet and fall sere away fear
As pieces of me
Ignite your atmosphere
Failing stars.

Chris Charney

Untitled

Oh beautiful beautiful water weeping away from
the sky
Seen through my coin slot window, very few
drops meet my eye
Oh were that I weren't in prison
I'd jump in your puddles and sing
I'd try not to run or take shelter
Let my fresh shaved head feel your sting.

Shawn Blake

Starry Sky

My starry sky can
Not be seen by looking upward
But inward my soul.

Armando Lopez

A Swaying Leaf

Once, I felt something spark
As the universe showed me love.

As I slowly watched a leaf tenderly dropping
From a swaying tree,
into a journey upon itself.

It swayed this way and that
Silently tumbling down to the leafy ground
How beautifully it descends
As the wind gently swayed it so

And in this gently swaying leaf
A spark anew inflamed my heart
To a remembered love
Lost amidst a windy tempest

Where time nor space succeeding
In diminishing it's comforting embrace

And as the falling leaf
Came to rest upon the ground
I gently picked it up
And seen within its veins--
The journey of an everlasting love
That you and I have always shared.

Raymond Swanson

Untitled

The current could carry you away,
It's been here since the beginning.
Log rafts and destructive floods,
Not to underestimate in the spring.
Through big cities and little towns,
Its winds, its way hardly slowing down
Cast a line or float on a tube,
Some days there's nothing I'd rather
do.
Tuesday morn or Sunday Afternoon,
I sure do hope you'll make it someday
soon.

For you'll be gone before she stops,
So hurry up and make the walk
Wade right in or row across,
Just enjoy the day 'fore it's lost.

Joseph Hudgins

Paradise Lost

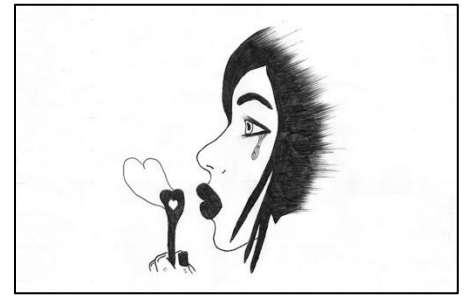
I am compelled to explain how I feel
when I watch the
flight of birds
You might expect to search my mind
within this shaken
Cocktail of words
Never stirred.
Far beyond the misconception of love,
hate and all things
Considered, I am.
The twice forgotten bird of paradise,
plucked clean and
Whittled down beyond broken.
Only a man.

Haunting the sacred edges of sanity
begging at the temple's
Golden Gate.
I have no love affair with this gravity
nor shall I embrace
This twisted fate.
Applause from beyond the clouds, the
beautiful beating
of wings I embrace
Countless wild flowers mock in a
plethora of color
And textures blossoming before my
down casted face
Identity unknown within an ill-fitting
human suit
Of flesh and jointed bones.
Against an azure backdrop birds rest
upon a wire
Preening and I drop a tear and dream
of home.

Robert Andrew Barlett. Sr

Recognition

Out beyond the drifted snow
Bib reflecting wintry glare
Shaded from the darkened sun
Once I saw a shadow there.
Far from wood or garden shade.
Where the windswept grass broke through
Without warning he appeared
As a friend I'd thought I knew
With a shout I threw a ball
Begging, pleading, "kisby, here!"
Ears erect but lowered tail
Signaled some unspoken fear
Should I come or should I go?
Do you ever know or care?
Kneeling down, I call your name;
Silently you stand and stare.



Artwork by Chaffin, Jamie

Brandon Rushing

Captain's Lady

Weep,
Weep yourselves to 'morrow's shore!
Tallow candles, wax and swain.
Bent backs broken every one
From thy pull lanyards, yards and sails
Knotted ropes of every size.
Aye, aye, for me it 'tis the helm.
And to the deeps with Gale I ride!
And to the deeps upon the tide.

J.D Frandsen

Zona

Stretch your eyes out and up towards the
prehistoric banks. Cool water once covered all
that we hate here today Joe. It was a long time
ago when the winds began to carve the Indian
nosed monuments high above this dry lakebed.
As the years passed and their faces were
smoothed and defined, they watched the liquid
ghost away and the sage brush crawl to carpet
the hollow flat.
When our prison was built the carved giants
began to frown, and the phantom trout that slid
between the chaparral had less play; so the
winds mighty and wise lay siege to this
cancerous
Construction and the howling drives us mad as
the invisible panics to free us. She is strong and
she pities us. She will clean this awful mess.
She will push this beast to Nebraska.
Now the dark thunderheads gather from the
west to help her, and the waters swell the rich

crimson clay, cracking the cellblock foundation;
and the sands understand they must shift to
bury the buildings.

When the cold has her turn she brittles the
beams and pesters the vanquishers sitting
pompous. She blocks off the roads- thwarting
their trespass- icing the glass in revenge.
Springs thaw spills new water on her task,
rutting scars into the square asphalt burdens.
Seeping through, and rotting the roofs that were
set to cap our screams. Load Bering walls
recede from the halls, folding the rebar in
tangles. I've prayed for this homunculus of
concrete and steel to split and sink like a ship
wreck, down, down...deep into the molten core.
One-day Joe all of this will be no more, and the
stone elders above will smile. The prairies in
unique patted shapes of sponged canvas will
have crept and strangled the pock-marked
remnants of human nuisance. Her critters and
raptors will dance for the watchers; and the old
Jurassic walleye spirits and self-noosed
convicts in mourning will wander and wane
encircling each other in the great decaying bowl
of time.

Shawn Blake

Spring

Melting snow soaking the ground
Heavy rains soaking everything else
Both bring spring flowers.

Jeffrey Burt

Safe?

The darkness wins again today.
Will tomorrow show it's light?
Does the wise owl ponder
Why it stalks the field mouse?
I think not.
Do I wonder why I bleed in this darkness?
I wish not.
Can a soul be saved?
I fear not.

My head and heart clamor with a pain they
cannot bear.
A pain I slice from the flesh.
Will the next slice be the last?
Do I hope not?

Scott Ball

Untitled

I hear birds outside bragging bout
The freedom's they've got

But their nests are built on limbs
In trees weakened with rot

The most precious gems, have fallen from
The jeweled string.
No one in our city seemed to notice a thing

Beneath a molten sky in our world of lies,
Have you seen the sadness in your mother's
eyes?

Do you want to see, the end of suffering and
pain?

I just want to see humanity unchained.

James David Proctor, Sr

Winter's Edge

Upon the precipice, perilous I stand,
Spying a deadly, glorious land.

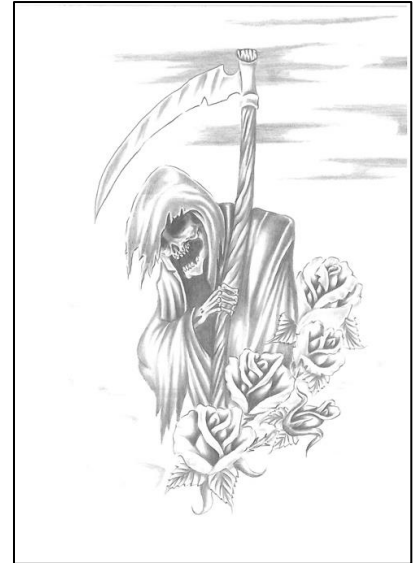
Trees, as death's cold fingers do appear,
Not a sound...nor whisper do we hear.

Skies flush with elaborate, ardent colors, from
the god's own breast,
Symbolic, of the inevitability of man's eternal
rest.

Do we, deny the winter in us all?
Should we, forget man's fateful fall?
Ignorance at its best, can indeed be bliss,

But it comes, at a terrible risk.
For history, which too often repeats,
May yet yield a day when man can't exist.

Life, Time, Death,



Art Work by Angel Juarez

Lucio Shadow Urenda

Sparks of Life

Old and cold He walks alone
Staring at the moon
His bones with hurt trying to keep warm
He takes another sip from the boom
He huddles up to his favorite corner
To feel the heat rise from the drains
Hoping, praying to make his bones warmer
He sits and makes his last request
As he closes his eyes and breathes his last
breath
Another spark of life is burned out.

Out on the distance a cry is heard
A woman's pain, another spark of life
Her baby's cry is full of life
Another spark is born
This life's continued cycle
For sparks burned out
A many they do
At day and night on New Year's too

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But just like all the ones that go out
One sparks up to take its place
For God never leaves an empty space.

Jeremy Dunlop

The Dinosaur

As a child I was a Dinosaur,
A large carnivore of course,
Roaming the ancient world,
Of my backyard in search of food,
Roaring my challenge at my competition,
A pair of disinterested calico raptors
Who would either calmly saunter off,
Or twine around my ankles and purr
Which is odd behavior for velociraptors,
But since I was a Dinosaur King
I suppose it was okay.
I roared and ruled until sunset,
When mighty mother beast,
Called me back inside,
Where I prayed on spaghetti and meatballs.

James Edward Nichols, Jr

What Time Hath Wrought

As the eyes grow dim, and the body weakens
and withers with age,
So, too, my soul in like manner doth bow down
upon itself.
As the hopelessness grows with the weight of
the burdens loaded upon my soul
I seek to find a semblance of peace to ease the
burden which time hath wrought upon me;
To find peace and joy, once again- if ever it
were to be found within.

Edward Homer

BURIED TREASURE

Try to visualize a color that's never been seen
Think hard. Can you see it?
That color best depicts my state of mind,
Pacing between this cradle and coffin called life.
Like snails navigating through salty roads,

Dissolving as we grow more certain about
uncertainty.

Irony is my spiritual guide
And she guided me to a fork in the road,
Then left me for dead
But Death didn't want any sloppy seconds.
Road kill reincarnated into second chances.
I paid my fair share of humble taxes,
Keeping my head down blending in with the
majority
A blue lobster thrown back in the ocean.

Get me back to my apex if there ever was one.
To hell with all these scales and equilibriums
Cliché struggles of the misguided souls if you
will.
Human stories told to ghosts that scare them to
life.
Let the lightning strike you twice.

Cesar Hernandez

Around The Corner I Have A Friend

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end,
"Tomorrow," I say, "I will call on Jim
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."

But tomorrow comes- and tomorrow goes,
Around the corner,- yet miles away,
"Here's a telegram sir, Jim died today."
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

Matthew Smith

Life's Journey

I stumble and stagger down life's bitter road;
Burdened and weary from my heavy load.
Clouds of dust mark my path;
I taste the fury of the "Grapes of Wrath."
Desolate and bitter I carry on,
Striving and struggling for whatever lies beyond.
From sunrise to sunset I trod my path alone,
Aimlessly searching for a place to call home.

Sweat streaks down my face soaking my neck,
Fatigue overwhelms me and I am short of
breath.

Exhausted I stagger; walking on dead feet,
Plodding slowly to whatever in life I shall meet.
No longer able to walk I sit and rest,
Patiently waiting to be taken by death.
Once in its embrace bliss I shall find;
As the wearies of life are erased from my mind.

Matthew Smith

Blood

Blood spurts from my wrist and splatters the
walls;
Dripping and running, I watch my blood fall.
I lay consumed by agony as my life source
drains,
From the shredded and mutilated remains of my
veins.
The steady drip of my blood as it falls to the
floor,
Takes me closer and closer to the threshold of
death's door.
The more blood that falls the more my soul
fades,
Burying me deeper in the depths of my grave.
The pain that consumes me is slowly replaced
with bliss,
As I gradually slide deeper into the abyss.

Jack E. Dyson

Despair

Despair,
Is my best friend
This loneliness we share,
Her shoulder she lends,
She takes my hand,
And together we rummage
Through this wasteland
Nothing but rubbish
If only I could discover
One nice thing
I could leave my lover

And take back my ring
But all for naught
So we're destined to be
Mistress despair has got
Every last bit of me

Anthony Billings

Insatiable

Give me just one and I will want two
If you gave me a couple then I would want a few
If I had a bunch I would only want more
Yet if I had it all I would only be bored.

Barry L. Taylor

"Brother" Death

Time- do not bring me back from my old age
For I have earned my end to life's long song
And having reached that final yellowed page
Do not say I must have got it wrong.
I wish not to continue with this joke
We call life- surely someone else can take
My place, while I step out to take a smoke
Never to return- for joy, no more this heartache.
For fickle hand and shifting sands
Take more from me, come every new day,
Till I can no longer recognize he who stands
In the mirror- I've gone so cold, so small, so
grey.
Yet were I to compose for me some curious
wasting legacy
I would then gladly follow you to your home
across death's sea.

David Gingrich

Another Year

A mist of fog engulfs the air,
And the water stands calm and still.
A flock of birds take to the sky
To the sound of a whirlpool.

The roaring noise of cars go by;
Buildings in the background stand tall.
I can see some animal tracks

On the ground where the snow did fall.

The wind is light yet briskly blows,
The trees are swaying back and forth.
The atmosphere is full of geese
That have migrated to the North.

Spring is slowly taking its place;
Warm weather bringing up the rear.
In passing time flowers will grow
And chirping crickets you will hear.

And just as the seasons take place,
And the rebirth of life's spawn,
I know my freedom is closer
Because another year is gone.

Miscellaneous



Art by Christy Latham

Janice Funk

Mathematics

I once understood the formulas,
The mathematics of timing
The algorithms of risk
The calculus of forgiveness
Now I'm not so sure.

In my youth I questioned
The square root of sacrifice
The bleeding radical abundance
Nailed to the tree of algebraic

Marvels. Now I wonder if I can
Spare some change.
Then we relied on the multiplier
A token of kindness seven times the
Reciprocal of grief circulating like
A lucky coin, the currency of children
Now my pockets are empty

If I open a book from my youth
And discover a page of arithmetic
Homework, would I recognize the numbers--
The confidence of the sevens
The passion of the nines, of primes of eleven?

Now and then I seek proof in the missing
Pieces of equations, something less
Than the sum of all its broken parts
Across the gap of time, spectrum of
Differentials, this rage of all things
Being equal, I find myself on one side and you
on the other.

Sarah Luedecke

Destinies

The destinies of crimson
I know are filled
By such brokenness
From crimson hearts
And things left
Without speaking
Should complacency
Snuff out the spear
In my side
And blind me to
The pain that thrives
Sweetest kisses
Filled with crimson metal
But unknown effects
Left behind on its absence
Insanity manifests quickly
Insecurity screaming
Inside my head
They take the form

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Of silence
The kind that screams much too loud
Is this the monster
My own monster fears
Or the torture
That gives birth
To agony inside
The rush of blows
That are not physical
Are quicker than any
Deadened eyes
Could know
Because without this
I became tempted
To give into the
Vast permanence
Of crimson destinies
Would it hurt
To know I'm gone
To better understand
The pain you've caused
Am I a fool
For giving into it
Without reserve
Or not better thinking
Of you before hand
True nature
Are we not alike
In every aspect
You and I
Both once hated
Things withheld
From us
To have no thoughts
Of such a need
For these things
And now it's all
I crave and need
To the point past
Obliteration of all
My being
I contemplate too many
Undisclosed variables

Ones that make me
Wish I was asleep
Wrapped in crimson sheets
Do you want me to long
For such crimson destinies
Does it hurt to be away
Because I know for me
I cannot
Begin to comprehend
I try to hold onto the edge of this
Blackened mountain
Covered in ice
But my finger tips
Are numb and
My resolve is breaking!
The only thing
I think of is
The hope preventing
Such permanence
Of thoughts I cannot hide
Do you see the pain
Or truth
That lines my words
Can you understand
My name now
When once upon a time
I fell like the angels
I don't mind falling
Because you are the cause
But I don't want to
Be here in the city
Of the lost
I dwell in small place
Where only you are
To keep at bay
Such crimson destinies
Is fear.

Robert Deninno

Gratitude

Sometimes all we have
To look forward to is how
The bar's been set so low

Expectations as well anyhow
The day seems to bleed
From one into the other
They blur from one to the next
Swear from one to another
But prisoner Express allows me
To shelter this monotony
And allows me to be
The person who I might to be

Shannon Guess Richardson

This Pain

This pain is so deep,
It has completely consumed my heart
There's no-one to talk to
And where would I even start

I've cried for so long
Have had many a sleepless night
My life is so dark and lonely
Without a hope in sight

People all around me,
They tell me to stay strong
But how do I keep doing that
When I've been doing it for so long?

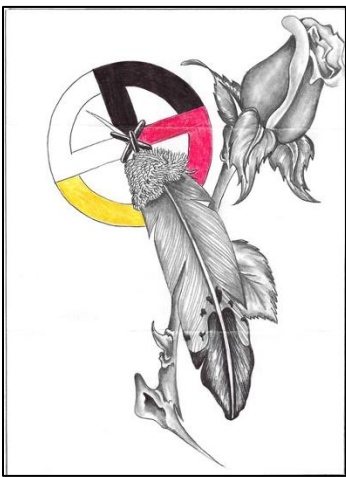
This pain is breath-taking,
Completely consuming.
How do I go on?
Is my life even worth resuming?

I prayed to God to please just end my life
This pain is way too deep
It cuts way worse than a knife
Why can't He understand
This pain I feel inside?
I can no longer cover it up
This pain I can no longer hide
Fine, God, you win!
You refuse to let me die
But I need for you to help me
I need you to hear my cries

My heart is completely broken,
Shattered in little pieces
I need the kind of peace
That they say never ceases

But how do I even get there,
From such a dark and lonely place?
How do I get there from where I am
To the peace that is supposed to come with
God's grace?

Writing



Artwork by Reed, Christopher

Jerry Jackson

The Penman

To the Penman ink is as prized
as a soldier's ammunition at war
And letters more important than a soldier's rifle
by far
Understanding this, who will grant the penman's
wish
To let such things lie as such things fall
To let such things be as though they were
In wonderment the penman writes and writes.
Using letters and ink to express his life.
When thoughts of creativeness creep up from
within
The penman calls upon his trusted friend
When duty calls and night befalls upon empty
halls

The penman is there. The penman is aware.
Therefore he writes and writes expressing his
life
But strange things happen time and time again.
To the penman's amazement and that of his
friend
No matter how much the penman writes and
writes
Strange things happen night after night
At the strike of twelve and midnight's delight
All the penman's letters take flight. Take flight.
Leaving the penman's pages blank and
unobscured
Through vision blurred and speech slurred
The penman awakes to last night's missing
words
As a polar bear's wish for fur
The penman's wish is that things be as though
they were
So he writes and writes. Never writing the same
thing twice
He writes and writes until the diminishment of
light
Then on the eve of the new moon
Asleep was the penman in his room.
But before father time could sing his song called
midnight's delight
The penman stirred awake before the clock
could strike
With eyes wide it was clear for all to see.
All the letters on the penman's pages were
preparing to leave
Brushing off dust, packing bags and rolling
sleeves
Caught in the act as the clock struck twelve
The penman couldn't believe his eyes even
though they seen it themselves
All his precious work and talents
Hanging on the thread of a seconds balance
Astonished in a stupor he began to speak,
"Oh cherished letters for you I fight
Never has a thought evaded me for you I write

But oh letters let things be as though they
were."
A recurrent of the night before.
All the letters aligned and headed for the door
With silence of heart and a conscience core
Suddenly the letters stopped and began
rearranging themselves
Shuffling and baffling as Santa's elves
Spelling out.
Honorable penman.
Your love for literature has brought us thus far
But through pages and centuries we live in
fervor
We have been cursed not to live forever
Unless the ink you use is your own warm blood
And the tablet is your heart. If this you truly love.
Without hesitation the penman replied
"This is my one and only true love
To write and write on heaven's clouds above
If the spilling of my own blood is what I have to
do
Then that will be done to drive the love for my
craft is true"
Standing upright and removing the knife from its
sheath
The penman reversed its angle and thrust it
upward into his abdomen
Into the perfect spot for immediate death
As the penman's warm blood spread over page
after page
All the words and letters previously written
reappeared
And before the penman entered his final sleep
His eyes once more fell upon letters rearranging
themselves
Slowly reading as he lost consciousness
"Honorable penman
With your blood still warm spreading over page
after page
You have released the caged and decreased
the rage.
Now the ties to an eternal curse will finally
sever.

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And we can now live forever.
So all things shall lie where such things fall
Rest in peace honorable penman.”

Lawson Strickland

When Bars As These Won't Read

When bars as these won't read, a villanelle
Cold fashioned to restrain, what never frees,
Then what their meter measure must rebel.

The thing within the heart of every cell
That beats the poem racking for release,
When bars as these won't read, a villanelle.

Devised, such silent strophes never tell
What truths they hide, that languish in-between,
And what such meter measures must rebel:

From metal scansions poor contrived to quell
By rigid time what death alone does cease,
When bars as these won't read, a villanelle.

What lacks all prosody, despite how well
One reasons rhyme, it offers scant relief.
And what it falsely meters will rebel:

For stanzas writ in steel only compel
What's trapped within to reject what they teach;
For what their meter measures must rebel,
When bars as these won't read, a villanelle.

Mark Miller

Something Written Something Read

Loneliness is setting in. My pen dances
Across the page in lyrical and rhythmic effect.
A rhapsody.
Later on the story goes, something written
Something read of the letter you never wrote to
me

I'm stuck inside this prison with feeling of
remorse, sad and woeful

The concrete so cold without knowing you,
without you knowing me.

I'm lost. Forgotten within the pages of the letter
You never wrote to me.

One paragraph. Just a line or two, would it be
too much to ask?
For even a postcard with love?
You go on living in silence as if I don't exist.

I stay here bitter and unkind how sweet,
because
I'm waiting for the letter you never wrote to me

Hello, how are you? Do you need anything?
Would seem nice. Something written something
read

Like this poem to you.
Hey there, "Robert Frost". Today I know why
"There is no tears in the writer, no tears in the
reader."

"No surprises for the writer, no surprises for the
reader

I breathe, I turn the page it's the same ol'
phrase
Something written something read of the letter
you never wrote to me.

Why?

Yours Sincerely,
Patiently Waiting

Anthony Montecino

Untitled

I write to quell the rage
I am feeling the effects of this cage!
Insanity is not far behind
He is catching up and he wants my mind!
Loss of memory is a sure sign,
Is it your apathy towards me that causes you
not to see
Or are you just blind!
How is it that I am supposed to be reformed?

When daily torture is the norm!
I struggle and strive with all of my might
I speak out because what they are doing just
isn't right
I remain in the darkness I have never seen the
light
I'm tired I'm weary I'm ready to give up the fight
There can be no point
When the oppression is nowhere in sight!
DON'T-GIVE-UP

Santiago Duncan

Unbroken

It's been a while since I put this pen and paper
together
I've been marching through landmines hoping to
weather
The storms that hail winds and heavy rain drops
That weigh down on my shoulders hoping that
the strain drops
A soldier treading footsteps on a trail that's
been barren
And bearing the burden of another soul trying to
hold the bear in
Deep in the depths of the lake of a thousand
sorrows
Hoping to make it, hoping to see tomorrow
My will is unbreakable, my strength comes from
within
And my strength is nourished by family and my
willingness to live
So I'll keep pushing past the lost souls and
twisted
Frames that the fires bend
Cause I'm only getting strong, thanks to this
desolate environment

Raylon Shane Attebury

Untitled

I maybe a caged beast
Who finds his freedom
Through creative art
It's at those moments

That I find self-government
No restraints to keep me
From developing my perception
Just because I live
In an antagonistic world
Where inhuman energy can thrive
Does not mean
I have to absorb its maliciousness
Hopelessness is to look
Outside of yourself
For serenity and contentment
I strive to become
A perspective, functional mind
That can conceive the complexity
Of my own depth perception
Then from there, immeasurable possibilities

Religious Subject Matter/

Prayers



Artwork by Barnhardt, Marcus

Jamie D. Chaffin

“If I Pray Will He Forgive”

If I pray will He forgive?
All of my greed, all of my sins?
If I pray will He forgive?
That I've cursed my mother and forsaken my
kids?
If I pray will He forgive?

That I've hurt many many men?
If I pray will He forgive?
That I've drank in so many sins?
If I pray will He forgive?
All of my lusts for different women?
If I pray will He forgive?
That I've hated my father, for leaving me
In the snow in 92', when bitter cold was
negative two?
If I pray will He forgive?
That I've cared for none, but killed for food?
If I pray will He forgive?
That I've never known love, so I say love's not
true?
If I pray will He forgive?
Please tell me, If i pray will He forgive?

Nathaniel Griffin

Ask For Help

The pain that I have taken
Has led to destruction
From deception to temptation I have fallen to sin
Then confusion on what to do has quickly set in
Should I ask for forgiveness?
Or not even give in
My pride took over told me it would be fine
Now I'm slowly walking
Being left behind
In darkness of torture with no way out
I'm locked behind a door
And I can't get out
I scream and I shout
But my voice is not heard
I cry and I pout
Still nothing to be heard
So I kneel on my knees and begin to pray
Father please forgive and listen to me today
I've realized it's your way or none
The road I have lived was not so fun
I was full of pain and heartache and shame
I'm asking you lord please help me change
I know I am a man. But I can't do this alone
Please surround me with your mercy

And help me through the pain
Forgive me of my sins I ask
Deeply from my heart.
I pray all this in Jesus' name
Amen.

Johnathan Holeman

A Divine Envy

Sometimes I really doubt
That there's any kind of God
At least not like a Bible says
Never an all compassionate one
I don't even think it thinks
I do know it's an it
Never a He nor She
Just an energy source
That's all we are
Used up till we're done
Don't care so much of forgiveness
It's all come and gone
Don't think very much of Heaven
Or some burning pit of Hell
Living for eternity
Is eternally much too long
Though I envy some believers
In this happiness they've found
But for me I'm not convincible
There's no special meaning
To my life or endless fall.

Nathaniel Griffin

Another burden

Another Burden
That I carry
Another sorrow
That I hold deep
Another place
And I shall succeed
Won't fall victim to these streets
So many people hold in their pain
Falling victim to almost anything
Keep your eyes open
We got to stay strong

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This life isn't easy
So pick up your cross
He shall up your cross
He shall lead us
To everlasting peace
Just don't fall victim to these streets.

Brendan Bohannon

Inner Struggles

Dead to the world, but I'm still here
Secrets of the past coming back as I draw near
Ghosts of a different time haunt me today
Waiting for their chance to sweep me away
I'm hoping for my chance at tranquil
reconciliation
Only to be struck back once again by my own
deviation
Am I my own worst enemy?
Or is it the dead who wish to steal away my
harmonic legacy?
Two questions, if answered, could seal my fate
My battle with the Dead I will leave for a later
date
Subterranean intervals have caused my woes
A crucial fight to the death I've delivered my
foes
Is this inner-battle against an unforeseen entity?
Or am I just searching for a greater divinity?
The maker created me for a valiant cause
My actions thus far, however, deserve no
commendable applause
No more drama, no more pain
Oh, Maker, please use me as you've
preordained
I've battled the wicked tooth and nail
Ghosts and demons from some treacherous
horror tale
They cut at me with their scythes, but I'm still
alive
And waiting for my chance to live a life with you
as my guide
No more anger or useless misery
I'll be alright in the Maker's Company!

William Andrews

Focus

Open your hand...release those things,
Feel the joy...which letting go brings
Break the lock...snap the chain,
Release the thoughts...which bred only pain.
Turn, look away...unfix your stare,
Drop the blinders, which held you there.
Focus your heart...upon the unseen,
Then you will find a Greater Being

Ross Hartwell

The God Job

Monogamy to God; I must serve
Gives me less than I deserve
Ideas/ options alleging power
Yet to him I must cower.
Wants and needs are complicated
His gifts to me are underrated.
No petition for world dominance
Just a portion of what's promised
Rein in hand leading this dark horse
I could do better than He, of course.
"Son" he speaks, bursting my bubble
"It's your will causing the trouble."
So I'm in control, I'm really God?
He smiles and winks, giving a Nod;
Along with a week for me to straighten
Things I hate and blame on Satan
First making Sabbath special to heathen.
But that extra day is essential to feed them.
Sought to reconcile Muslims and Christians
Then Buddhists and Hindus feared I'd leave
them.
Everyday should resemble spring season
Yet no foliage grew, without a reason.
Need the summer, winter and fall,
Deaths a part in the cycle of all.

Sunday fishing: tempting? Waste of time,
That is serving your interest, not mine
Proving my power; all would be caching
Sport becomes chore when fishing called
fetching

Your favorite team, any you choose
Will always win and never lose.
Champs are chumps, since losers will never
Play again in the wasted endeavor.

The crippled, poor, blind and weak
I cured them all by end of week.
Now premature gray, those with no hair,
Made accusations that I didn't care.

"Do what I say and always listen!
I'll lead you to what you are missing
Your ideas, of mine are wrong
You are weak while I am strong"

No alternatives, Ideals of perfection
Reduced music to just one selection.
Now to decided which music to stop
Maybe Tchaikovsky, Beethoven or Bach.

Without choices no use for color
Without voices no need for another.
Good or bad there is no gray
Black-n-white and no money.

The books you read, no need to edit
There's only one. You've already read it.
No Steinbeck, Nietzsche or Hemingway
No Faulkner, Fitzgerald or Tragedy.

People I love begin to rumble
From Empire State to African Jungle
Collectively ask "Why pray-n-serve
You're not giving what we deserve."

All starts to crumble 'cause of no choice
"God, please take it back, I will rejoice."

Ought to be thankful waking from this dream
And the God I serve still reigns supreme.

What would I do if I had control?
Pull my hair out corralling lost souls.
Not enough benefits, not enough pay
Not enough time or hours in a day.

If up to me and I had to keep 'em
They'd swear up-n-down I'd mistreat them.
So it's better to stay a repentant voyeur
And let God do his job

Robert Gulbranson

Heretic

So all of these people came from Adam and
Eve?
Is that what Genesis would have me believe?
No mention of dinosaurs or Neanderthal Man
All facts I'm supposed to ignore if I can
In a world full of starvation and kids with
disease
They can call find forgiveness if they fall on their
knees
But what good is forgiveness if it won't get them
fed?
Didn't bring them relief while they've suffered
and bled
It's all on blind faith or so that's what they say
Hoping I won't need proof to show me the way
All controlled by a giant man in the sky
My questions need answers not just a blind eye
"Give me your money" they shout in the church
Cash for salvation it seems that's how it works
I can't believe it and I won't accept it
I've heard what they say and I still reject it
I can't even see it yet I'm supposed to fear it
My problems feel so much more real than a
spirit
You expect me to believe that all those good
folks
Were cast into a lake of fire when they croaked
Just because they didn't go for the word?

I'm good on all that, it's completely absurd
Tell me anything, yeah man, whatever
Guess I'm destined to be a heretic forever.

Bruce (E.D) Feaster

Unwanted Prayer- Psong Poem

I sit alone on my knees at night
Whispering words I hope will ignite
With cold eyes I despair
Praying to a God who doesn't care.

Forgotten all of these years
Please Father take my fears
As you beat me down with pain
Unwanted prayers is all I gain.

I claim with hate unwanted prayers
As I partake in my affairs
Spoken only to be cast away
Tell my heart why do we pray.

Unwanted prayers on my lips
Every step I take I slip
Why does God hold me down
Better still He can't be found.

Afraid of a God with no face,
Fearing Heaven is no place.
My soul carries little weight
Death is a thing that can wait.

This is all that I have seen,
That religion is a beautiful dream
But truth is so far away
Tell me why must I pray.

Unwanted prayers on my lips
Every step I take I slip
I'm hoping I can't be found
Praying God won't come around.

Vote of Thanks:

Prisoner Express Program received hundreds of brilliant entries this year and it was a pleasure to read each of these wonderfully penned pieces. I would like to thank all the poets and artists who sent in entries for consideration for Vol.16 and encourage you to keep writing and sketching! As Nelson Mandela who was wrongfully incarcerated for 27years said, "Freedom is not merely to cast off one's chains but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." The life lessons and experiences shared through your art and poetry displays that freedom truly does start in the mind. I am just now starting to reading poetry for Vol17. Send in your submissions.

-Yvette -

**Prisoner Express Program Coordinator,
Summer 2016.**



Artwork by Adam Baird

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PRISONER EXPRESS

POETRY ANTHOLOGY V. 16

Thank you to OADI, CPSC, Ithaca College's Off-campus Community Service Program for helping to support Prisoner Express and its programs.



Artwork by Daniel Reichert