



## **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](http://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*

**H**aunting nights seeping around you  
**A**utumn smells wafting through the air  
**L**ittle ones well prepared  
**L**aughing, playing, haunting, crying  
**O**h how we love the day  
**W**ith each house, indulgence will come the next day  
**E**veryone young and old  
**E**nters into a fantasy of their own  
**N**ovember 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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