
SpeakOut!
Behind the Mask

Spring 2019

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Names in bold above are Community Literacy Center interns during Fall 2018-Spring 2019.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5150	30	█	90
\$\$ Tia B. \$\$	14, 61	James V.	69, 85, 87, 120
Al Capone	117	Jesenia Elena	25
Alex L.	169	Jessica	56
Amber	54	Joshua D.	34, 116, 132, 164
Avery K.	166	J. Rowland	113
B.B.	49, 55, 72	jw17	22, 61, 71, 106, 158, 163
blondie	10, 16, 136	J. Younger	76, 118
Braeden C.	83	█	94
Brandi H.	1	Kiky	168
Brittany O.	1, 7, 32, 52, 99	Killer Kay	127, 140, 160
Casey W.	50	Louucifer	49, 99
Cayne L.	104, 146	Mariah	35
Chapo	3, 13, 121	Maria M.	65, 134, 165
Chef	5, 6, 20, 68, 80, 81, 147	Mario H.	11, 45
█	92	Mario H.	155
█	95	Matster	8, 51, 58, 73, 101, 107
Daniel CJ	31, 74, 78	MexE	52, 108
Darkrowl	48, 77	Misfit H.	20, 72, 114, 153
Dice Rolling	112	Monty G.	9, 40, 111, 156
Dimps	3	Nic Mac	167
█	91	NoNamed	39, 41, 79, 125, 135, 164
Dre Dre	10, 77	OSIRIS	111, 157, 159
Dylan T.	4, 57	Preston S.	17, 63, 75, 102
El Gusano	70	Raccoon	4, 28
Epic	18, 34, 67	Ray Ray	16, 53
█	89	Richard Cranium	46, 151
Feather-Seed	105	Rubixcube	44
Garner T.	43, 103	SAD_BOYS_CLUB	82, 84, 133
Grinch	2, 24, 158	Sadie C.	132
█	93		
IzzYe	29, 36, 42, 48, 122, 138		

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Scooter McGavins	139
Smiley13	15, 60
Sophie E.	41, 55
Steven M.	109
Tamwise	7, 31, 57, 62, 146
Tazzy Saz HoFF	59
thatsoryan	107
The Fairest of Em All	27
TJo48	154
Trauma	100
Trigger 400	86, 126
Trigger 1000	23
Ty B.	12, 21, 64, 66, 170
V.N.	32, 79, 133
Whispers	26, 38, 62, 130, 137
Yodabug	17, 26, 5

Collaborations

Collaborative Poem by the Men at LCJ	33
Collaborative Poem by the Women at LCJ	123, 124
Collaborative Poem by the Women in Community Corrections	142, 143, 144, 145

INTRODUCTION: BEHIND THE MASK

We have all had moments in which we find ourselves hiding behind masks—façades we’ve fabricated to seem tougher, or stronger or to feel outside ourselves. The reality is that we all experience the need to appear strong or funny or tough or happy. Just as real, though, are the moments of sadness, uncertainty, and exhaustion. This is what makes us human. There is dignity in embracing the multiple versions of ourselves and in breaking down the walls that we’ve built to appear strong. As Marge Piercy famously wrote in her poem “A Strong Woman,” “strong is what we make each other.” There is beauty in being vulnerable together.

Over the course of the Spring semester, we asked writers from Larimer County Jail, Community Corrections, Turning Point, Remington House, and our pilot Probation program to take off their masks, and they have kindly and courageously obliged. Intern, volunteer, and writers (adults and teenagers alike) broke down barriers in an attempt to confront and share pieces of ourselves through daring stories, comical poems, compelling art, and self-reflection.

Women from the Larimer County Jail share some of their experiences writing with SpeakOut!:

“I didn’t know I had it [poetry] in me.”

“In my toughest times, I just write my poetry and cry—and when I’m done writing, I’m done crying.”

“It [writing] is like having your own therapist, but it doesn’t talk back.” (She said this with a chuckle, meaning it in a good way)

“It’s hard because you feel really vulnerable.”

“We don’t want this to end. We’ve talked about meeting at a park every week once it’s over.”

The facilitators from Larimer County Probation say:

“Our Probation participants were brave, bold and vulnerable in their writing. When you read their words, know that they are born of the true desire to heal and grow. Be inspired by that and pass this journal on so others can be inspired also!”

We hope that these words, along with the work you are about to witness, will give you the confidence and courage to take off your masks. We also challenge you to reflect on feelings of surprise, sadness, confusion, or empowerment you might recognize as you flip through the pages. In what ways can you relate to the writers? What preconceived ideas may you have had before seeing these representations of their hearts? How have their words inspired authenticity in your everyday interactions?

Thank you, writers, for sharing, and thank you, readers, for your support!



ATTENTION SPEAKOUT! WRITERS

You may continue to submit and publish your work through the SpeakOut! Online website:

<https://speakoutclc.wordpress.com>

SPEAKOUT! JOURNAL 2019



Behind the Mask

Spring 2019

Alaska

Brandi H.

Beauty at first sight.
Far, far, far away.
Hard to get to.
Best way found
Is knowing where to find,
Where that true
Adventure truly begins
In the heart
Of the glacier.

Hawaii

Brittany O.

If I could fly anywhere right now
I would fly to Hawaii with no doubt
Where the sun is so bright
And I can feel just right.
Or jump in the ocean,
And cause a commotion.
I can lay on the beach,
And tan my cheeks.
Oh if I could fly anywhere right now
I would fly to Hawaii with no doubt.

Waiting

Grinch

Sitting here in my cell
Trying to sleep
Lost in thought
Waiting
On our Food
Waiting on
The Public Defender
Waiting on
My next court date
Just Waiting
Not Knowing what to Expect
From any of it
Just Waiting
I Hate Waiting

Blue

Dimps

the sky is blue on a nice beautiful day
my flag is what I used to wear
the handicap where I don't park
I'm true to myself and don't give a f**k bout you
I find clues to guide me in the right direction
my shoes are fresh just like how I feel when I get out the shower
the rain when it touches me I get the shivers
blueberries I don't like but my daughter does
water is what I drink to survive in this f**ked up life
I feel blue when I don't get my way
a cold breeze to my skin gives me chills
putting my jeans on makes me feel good
blue could make you feel good

Green Is...

Chapo

Green is the hulk
Green as money going through wicked hands
Green as snot coming out your nose
Green as sour diesel, the one we smoke
Green is the meaning of life, of what we know
Or it could be the color of a lucky charm, who knows
If u eat green, u stay lean

Bandits at Night

Raccoon

As the night fall comes
To arise when day's all gone
I come out to play
No roads to guide me
Just a series of trails to
Choose from.
With the journey of life at hand
Not knowing where it's all gonna end.
With the stripes and mask to hide,
Who I am.
That's where I find you my,
Other mate that fits the sight and all.
With stripes and mask in hand and
Claws
For another adventure begins.

Summertime

Dylan T.

Summertime...
Sounds like Bradley on the mic in the IBC
Feels like droppin in on my skate to frontside slash the coping,
Smells like fresh paint hittin the walls as I cross out the competition
Looks like beautiful sunsets in Colorado
Tastes like freedom 12,000 ft above town, lookin into the night sky.
Summertime.

Blood Pudding

Chef

1 cup full of lies
Diced with 3 Tbsp madness
As my mind slowly dies
It ends with 1 tsp sadness

2 Tbsp Tears
Plus 3 parts heart
Mixed together my fears
Now I shred it apart

4 cups sautéed Pain
1 cup puréed blood
Nothing left to gain
Except a big flood

1 cup of promises broken
Minced with 1 cup of sweat
I stand here shattered open
Like an empty hockey net

2 lbs Anguish and despair
Plus 7 oz of freedom
My heart and soul beyond repair
Who cares, I didn't need 'em

1 pkg of memories
Where do I start
We became enemies
These bars keep us apart

You left me torn and abused
Tried to pull myself together
Ended up battered and used
Now you've lost me forever

So I bid you good day
This has been so much fun
Now I'm going away
Riding off in the sun

Feast of Maggots

Chef

2 cups Worry
1 Tbsp Defeat
I'm in no hurry
Can't ever be beat

1 cup Anguish that's slowly been sifted
A life has been taken, another one gifted
1 tsp excruciating pain
Has slowly been eating and numbing my brain

Sadness that's been diced 1 Quart deep
8 cups dirt that's been packed nice and neat
My eyes are wet from the tears that I weep
To survive all of this is definitely a feat

5 oz of Darkness
1 cup of Despair
Has left rotting, festering, flesh scent
All up in the air
I've got nowhere to go
I've got somewhere to be
All of this lifelessness
Is bothering me

Got only one life
Been taken from me
All I can do
Is be happy and free
All that I know
Will never be

The Little Jailbird

Tamwise

This little Jailbird sits in her cage
With feelings of confusion
Desperation and rage

This little Jailbird
Knows not what to do
So she sings into the night
With her little Jailbird song blues

I Had 2 Cars

Brittany O.

I had 2 cars
But now I have none.
I had 2 cars
One was a hunk of junk but
I made it run
I had 2 cars
And now they are all gone

Lockdown Blues

Matster

I can't be thinking about tomorrow because
I'm still thinking about today
When the last med rounds get called,
I'm almost done with another day
I'm working to get some goodtime
I'm not working for any pay
And when I'm tired and all fed up
I don't look forward to another day
You know my words are simple, long words don't ever last
And if the girls think I'm kidding,
They're going to find out pretty fast
Will I get another cellie,
The other one just didn't last
He got caught stealing a food tray
And got fired just as fast
I don't like thinking about freedom
Because in here it doesn't fit
And when I set foot out of here
A cigarette or a joint is going to be lit

Broken Wingz

Monty G.

Look at me
Do you really see me
Can you see me for who I really am
Past the broken features
Look past the broken features
Deeper than the surface of my skin
If you did then you would see the image of a broken man
Always tried his best regardless of the situation
Love loyalty and respect the code I live by
Smoking weed to ease my troubled mind
But with broken wings I try to fly
Feeling trapped in this life that aint my own
Even around people I feel alone and misunderstood
Only see my trouble they refuse to see my good traits
Tension makes me clench my jaws
People pretend to be my friends
Then turn around and make fun of me because of my flaws
Forget y'all who needs y'all anyways
I'm good all alone blue skies or rainy days

Fix My Wings

blondie

Have you ever felt like you just wanted to disappear? Well that was me for three years. I remember the names you called me and I remember every doubt you gave me. But at the end of the day I was as strong as a bird could be with broken wings. I know I couldn't fly because every word you said made a hit towards my life. But now I'm strong and know I can move on and fix my wings so I can fly high with my mind right.

Light 2 Darkness

Dre Dre

If you kill it, it will just come back angrier, insisting you fix it before things get worse.

As you do, something inside snaps.

A new darkened hard soul that is now heartless and cold, which is the new way of saying "the voice inside told me so."

Loving too much is something so beautiful turning into something so ugly to so many.

Very few get it.

Those who do will understand why darkness is the new place some of us call home.

The Darkness Within

Mario H.

This is my poem the darkness within
I hope you're prepared now let us begin
Everyone sees my sweet gentle side
But my darkness within will take you all for a ride
My darkness within I bury it deep
It comes out at night in my dreams while I sleep
See I used to be evil now I am kind
I used to be heartless but a heart I did find
Now that I care I hurt and I hurt
The darkness within says leave that fool in the dirt
See the darkness within it drives me crazy
The darkness within leaves my head kinda hazy
When the darkness within finally comes out
I scream and I yell, I yell and I shout
The darkness within it likes to fight
The darkness within enjoys a dark night
I try to contain the darkness within
But it shows its head whenever I sin

Bitter Sweet

Ty B.

I don't know if it will ever finish well.

Possibly, most likely cancel out.

Bitter, sweet

Black, & white

Love, & hate

Comfort, & pain

Understanding, & confusion.

They remember the first time together. Both so different; both opposites in every way.

Yet they both can't see each other without the other.

Once they are separated from one another, they realize they aren't quite as wonderful without the other.

Fire, & Ice

Light, & the Dark

Yin, & Yang

Together, & Seperate I miss you; I feel incomplete without you.

However, I know this pain is so wonderful to feel because I know that without this pain I wouldn't know the comfort of what it was like to have you by my side. I love to know that what makes us different is why we complimented each other so much.

Yin, & Yang

When one of us sat in darkness, it was always the other's ability to bring back the light.

Together we look so incredibly beautiful

Apart we are both individually awesome

Like Fire, & Ice.

How confusing is my time alone; understanding has come to me like an epiphany. My pain can be my only comfort; to know I can Love you completely, just as intensely as I've hated your expressions, choices, lies, secrets. It's only BLACK or WHITE; it's so Bitter Sweet.

Untitled

Chapo

I just want to go home

Work

Talk to my lady

Talk to my kid

Have dinner with my family

Drive to work

Eat better food

Watch a good movie

Work on a project

Maybe take a road trip

Have a beer

Drive around bird scouting

Hang out with my little brother

Smoke some hookah at a lookout spot and stare down @ the city

Count the stars if that's possible

Ride a wheelie on my crotch rocket

Go as fast as I can

Give a hand.

Time to Change

\$\$ Tia B. \$\$

Too much time has gone
It's time for me to move on
It's time to change my ways
I have been bad way too many days
I want my good life back
I am going to stay on track
I am striving for a new me
I need my family and daughter to see
I really need to change my act
That is one stone cold fact
I don't care about my so called friends
They weren't with me in the end
I did have a few friends that were
Ride or die
They were true soldiers that didn't lie

My Addiction

Smiley13

When I lay down at night
I dream of you, you make me smile,
You make me laugh, you make me feel real good,
You let me forget my past as time goes by,
You keep me calm & still,
I love the fact that I don't have to wear makeup,
No need for a mask,
I want our love to be eternal, I'd love for you to be my last,
It's a real journey to make love everlast.
To be down like my rider, to be my rubberband to my cash,
I feel like you're my new type of high
So fresh & so fly
I guess I'm addicted
You could only be mine.

XOXO

Untitled

Ray Ray

Hello My Lovely you're on my mind
Since you've left I take it one day
at a time. My heart beats a mile
at the very thought of you. I
wish I could be blessed with the
sight of you. There's not a day that
goes by that I don't miss your touch
and smell. Since you've gone I feel
like I'm in hell. I miss you my child
but one day I'll be with you again.

Forever

blondie

I remember the first time I saw you smile. I also remember memories of you being so strong and bold till that cancer took over like a cold. I remember you told me you would be OK, but I should have never believed that anyway. Three days later you ended up in a hospital and told me you would make it another day. Then Christmas came and I got that present all of May. I kissed you goodbye and went on my way. Little did I know that was your last day. I will miss you forever but I will look up to you as you did your mother.

Happiness Is...

Preston S.

Happiness is a smile that opens the clouds
Joy that is dotting to the heart
Vision that renders a successful dream
Love that has an environment of its own

My Beautiful

Yodabug

N is my best friend, we do everything together, I love her like peanut butter loves jelly. She is a Goddess from above and she makes me happy, so this means a lot to me. There are no words to describe how much I care for her, I can't bear without her. I could never lose her and I am grateful to have her in my life. She is the one friend I can count on for keeping me in check, I could never lack with her. You are so beautiful and no matter what anyone says you are my best friend and a very smart young lady. You could do anything in the world if you put your mind to it. Just believe it within you. I love you. Never forget it.

What Is Love?

Epic

Love is the most important word in the English language... and the most confusing...

Psychologists have concluded that the need to feel loved is a primary human emotional need. For love we climb mountains, cross seas, traverse desert sands, and endure untold hardships.

We NEEDED Love before we fell in love and we will need it as long as we live. The “In-Love” experience is euphoric. We are emotionally obsessed with each other. We go to sleep thinking of one another. When we rise, that person is the first thought in our minds. We long to be together. When we hold hands, it seems as if our blood flows together. We could kiss forever if we didn't have things to do and when we embrace time stops.

Nothing could ever come between us, and nothing will ever overcome our love for each other. Real love is emotional in nature but not obsessional. It is a love that unites reason and emotion. It involves an act of will and requires discipline, and it recognizes the need for personal growth.

Our most basic emotional need is not to fall in love but to be genuinely loved by another - to know a love that grows out of reason and choice. It is a choice to expend energy in an effort to benefit another person, knowing that if their life is enriched by your efforts you too will find satisfaction. The satisfaction of having genuinely loved another.

The emotional need for love must be met if we are to have emotional health. If love is a choice, then we have the capacity to love after our in-love obsessions have faded away. Love is an attitude matched with appropriate behaviors. Love is the shooting stars, the balloons, the deep emotions, the spirit of anticipation, the twinkles of eyes, the electricity of a kiss, love is emotional security. Love is kind. Love doesn't get even.

Forgiveness is the way of love. Love doesn't bring the failures of yesterday into today. Love accepts the past as history. Love makes requests not demands. Love is looking someone in the eyes and giving them your full attention. Love is a genuine desire to

What Is Love? (Cont.)

understand another's thoughts, desires, and feelings.

In short,

Love is what it is, unless of course it's not. So here's my thought. I have a love for what's not. It sounds absurd, but in my past the things I've loved the most have hurt the worst when they're gone. So my love is for the future of things yet to come and that will never change.

- Infinitely -

PROMPT CORNER

Write your own piece with this format -

What is _____?

Pick an emotion... you can write about love, hate, shame, happiness, whatever emotion you want. Try to avoid cliches - get creative!

Our Eternal Fire

Misfit H.

We have gone before,
We are present
And we have yet to come,
My love.

Love

Misfit H.

I will love you unconditionally like the plants and trees love the sun every day it shines its face on them. Like the plants also love the soil and nutrients in the ground to grow strong and healthy. Also, like the fish need the ocean to thrive. Like humans need food and water to survive. Also, like how perfectly the Earth was placed in our solar system so mankind could be born. Like my body burns to touch yours in just a simple hug and kiss. That, my love, is how I feel about you.

Polar Opposites

Chef

She is fire, I am water
She heats me up, I cool her down
Together we make steam
We are stronger
As a team
She melts ice, I make it possible
We are yin and yang
The opposites of one another
Yet we belong to each other

IF I SPEAK FOR THE WOMB

Ty B.

I would be but an empty vessel.

I would have purpose of living as an environment, for all to destroy,
for all to betray.

My voice is to awaken the minds of those who would forget.
May the generations of our future be taught to cherish, to preserve.

My voice is for all mothers to be loved through life, & death.

To forget thy mother is to doom thy child.

The Womb is home. The Womb is one's vessel to reincarnation
through moral generational teachings.

IF I SPEAK FOR THE WOMB

It would be for the benefit of my children, & for theirs.

My voice is for my mother to remember. That her teachings have
made me worthy.

My voice is for God who gave me my mother, my environment, my
home, her Womb.

What I've Always Had

jw17

What I've always wanted is
oddly enough what I've already had.
Searching for it in the strangest of
places and in the most peculiar
of things. Often exploring and
experimenting but just not
finding the right thing-a-ma-jig
or thing-a-ma-who to fill the
emptiness inside. Shopping,
baking, reading, dating and
skating, all I enjoy but do
not keep me full. I've tried
exercising, moving, traveling,
drinking and drugging. Warning
the latter 2 steer clear. I've
tried eating more and eating less.
Nothing works I'm afraid I'm
a hopeless mess. Falling to my knees
I cry out what on earth will fill
this void? I hear a faint knocking
within me. I open the door to my
heart and say why please come in.
How long may I ask have you been
there knocking? He gently smiles
and replies always my dear always.

A Love

Trigger 1000

I am searching for a love I can call my own. I've been searching high and low. Does anybody know where I can find a love I can call my own?

I am trying to find a love I can call my own. One I can hold when times are cold. You'll still be in my arms until we grow old.

I am looking for a love I can call my own.

It gets lonely without a love, all on your own. But, to keep a love with your love is all I need whenever you're with me.

I am finding a love I can call my own, a love that will stay awake until I arrive home. Who would have known it was you, my love, all along.

With you, I will never lose.

With you, I'll never be alone.

With you, I'll always have the last kiss.

With you, I'll never be cold or afraid because you'll always be by my side.

And for you, my love, I'm willing to die. Thank you for giving me your love I can call my own.

A love I can call my own!

The One

Grinch

I am sure I have found the One
I know the universe wants me
With the One
The One for me is
Everything
I smell the One - smells like Roses
I hear the One
But do not listen to
the One
I see no one but
The One
I touch only the One
I think of only the One
My Wife is the the One for me
I think of her from sun up
to sun down
I will marry the One
I will die with her
I will live with her
She is the One for me
She is
The One!

You & I

Jesenia Elena

When it was just you and I,
you were the apple of my eye,
the best of memories filled our minds,
till death do us part,
until we die.
I wish time could rewind,
I wish time travel could be so ever kind,
I wish I could take back all my mistakes,
that made you cry,
bind back the times, that we can't seem to find,
the best of what could have been,
But just to say, we all sin,
I've cried my tears & wiped them from my chin,
to keep apologizing for the times I hurt you then,
I promise you from here on out,
I'll always have your back through drift & drought,
through thick and thin,
I'll never hurt you again,
through the toughest of times,
we will always be lovers and friends.
I love you
Baby!

Knowing
Yodabug

He makes me happy knowing I get to see him makes me shiver and shake. I love him not knowing if he feels the same...he is so handsome knowing I can lose him over a little thing makes me scared. Never knowing what may come to try and knock me over, I stay strong and block every little rumor like a blower. He makes me smile when we actually talk about us and how much we like each other. His kisses are like the waterfalls falling deep in the river. His hands are bigger than mine which makes me warm through the treasure. Everytime I see him I try not to smile because I don't want to get hurt by him, knowing his past frightened me, now it helps me. When he leaves I will miss every day we spent together, but wait for the days we are gonna be in together. I care enough to wait for him but if he can't do the same where do I put the blame.

If You Took My Heart
Whispers

if you took my heart
my heart is essential to life
my heart is accidental in love
my love is essential to life
this heartbeat is accidental
essentially everything is an accident
with good intentions
accidentally making everything essential
if you took my love
perhaps I could breathe
just breathe love...
it is essential.

Untitled

The Fairest of Em All

You came into my life unexpected
But very wanted, a new beginning.
Your appearance crispy your presence
Quenched my every thirst. You're
All I've ever dreamed of for you
I would give my life I'd do
The most. We gave our hearts to
Each other with promises to never
Repeat our parents' mistakes. Four
Lives later we're not the same. I'd
Lost all control and our children the
Cost of my method to healing my
Broken being. Now I'm gone
And forever in regret, but I will
Not lose hope because my love for you R. and our
Lil Gang will never die my redemption game is really
High. For our Father knows my heart desire
And has a plan set in stone. So
One day our family will be
A family once again. Our promise
To each other kept, our broken hearts
Will be able to mend.

Joker & Harley Quinn

Raccoon

Day by day

Night by night

Minutes, seconds, hours

Went by.

Until all came to final

Thought.

As I was a loss at random.

Sanity as to a crazy.

With naught purpose.

'Till that day came and stayed.

The day it all began.

Forever.

Push & Shove

IzzYe

I lay in such familiar arms
That inside me trigger alarms
His amazing smile and softened heart
Turned to his fists hitting me like a dart
How did it go from love to harm,
I thought I was protected in your arms,
Your hits didn't hurt me only the
Words you called me during the fight,
Love for myself there was none in sight,
Was it me? Am I an awful person?
Do i not deserve love?
Is that why in my mind those words
To this day push & shove?
Now I am afraid to put
Myself into another relationship,
Just know it wasn't my busted lip.
You made me amount to nothing
Only joy I had is when I was in the shower I would sing.
To you did only drugs matter,
Were your intentions to make me shatter,
Scattered along the floor there is
No point in picking it up, for now
I guess i'll build myself up without
Risking anyone tearing me apart
'Cause I don't have a big enough heart
To carry anyone else until I'm ready to start.

It Was An Accident

5150

It was an accident
 that I gave you my heart
It was an accident
 that I said I love you
It was an accident
 that I even let you in
It was an accident
 when you said you were sorry
 you'd never do it again
It was an accident
 that I'd believed you.
But it's not no
accident now
 that I'm gone.

Sibling Survivalist

Tamwise

Once upon an urban street
A teenage girl became fresh meat
She spent her body, mind, and soul
To care for her brother
After the death of their mother

The Still Life Romantics Part II (Life in Low Gravity)

Daniel CJ

In pools of white lace streams lies the essential weight of things
In motion less the gravity, lay-life has come to waste
Away on wings born entropy
Foreboding's means of sowing seeds
Those words we will never taste are the absence of what's at play

Ran into the ground - headfirst, hand to mouth
Fractured spindles reach for something bent and tarnished now
A mute's song - something found lost amongst the chaff
Captivated by the heartlessness
The inability to feel pain

In person less part of me we're born to empty spaces seen
As confined to these shallow seas - adrift we've come to age
The silence speaks one thousand words
A turn from what we were at birth
Resolve formed in his face - determined, pulling him away

Untitled

V.N.

I have a secret collection; my secret collection.
I hide it from everyone because, well, it's
a secret. If anyone ever found it, they'd be
scared. Really scared. So I tell no one about it
because nobody needs to know this secret.
It's my little secret. Nobody deserves to know.
They can't handle it.

When a Bird Sings

Brittany O.

When a bird sings a song,
It has rhythm and flow,
They sing about everything
Whether it's fast or slow.

Behind the Mask

Collaborative Poem by the Men at LCJ

Behind the mask, I hide my pain.
Behind the mask, I can be whoever I want to be.
Behind the mask— where there's dark, there's light.
Behind the mask we dare not show
Behind the mask I'm laughing
Behind the mask I don't wanna be
Behind the mask a faded smile
Behind the mask I have to act like someone else in order to never
get my fingerprints taken and forsake the gains I've made in rela-
tion to the first half of my life wasted.
Behind the mask I am lost
Behind the mask lies empty eyes whose life left them long ago
Behind the mask, I cover my body with stones
Behind the mask I hide from the pain of all those around me
Behind the mask I am fast as a sonic boom blast
Behind the mask, 29-day countdown, very excited to reunite with
my family!
Behind the mask I hide these scars
Behind the mask I hide negativity that will never come out.

Untitled

Joshua D.

We all have on a mask to hide the real us. We know the mask but not the masquerader. Why do some judge the mask before we get to know who is holding the mask? I am ready to take off my mask, why don't you? One...Two...Oh wait, you laugh? Well let's stop, think, and figure out why! Oh, I know why, it's because you are afraid of you, glad I'm not! So laugh, laugh while I win. What do I win, do you ask? S**t till you take off your mask, I will pass.

Behind the Mask

Epic

An empty flask, a brand new task
Trying to reveal the me behind the mask

Stuck inside and forced to survive
as my captors never cease to provide
In this hell is where I reside

Now this Mask is More
 Than just a disguise
Emotions trapped a thousand lies
Preventing the start of my very
demise and know that
you know I'll have to revise
 Constantly Gifting
My facade keeps shifting

If You Knew Me

Mariah

If you knew me you would know that I have been raped for many years. If you knew me you would know that I've been through hell. If you knew me you would know that I am determined to not let my trauma get the best of me nor control me. If you knew me you would know I am strong, confident, and worth it. If you knew me you would know I am a loyal person and I will be with you every step of the way. If you knew me you would know that I hate showing my emotions. If you knew me you would know I have yet to learn to love. If you knew me you would know just because I put a smile on my face doesn't mean I'm not hurting inside. If you knew me you would know I am dying on the inside everyday but I try to be happy. If you knew me you'd know I want to change, I just don't know how.

My Mask

IzzYe

shape, form, molded into who they can see
i look around and i don't fit into society
i have been locked behind doors so long i fear being free
i mold onto the criteria of society

i put my mask on like show & tell
not a lot know me but they claim to know me well
stand inside a box no one can see my anxiety
too many people around — panic — no one can see

scars on my arms tell them a cat but in reality
i felt so low i jumped out of a car on the highway & cut them with a
machete

the tears i cry i leave for the shower they flow around me
no longer i cut but IVs bleed me

clear rocks inside my veins
outside i wear long sleeves, excuse it's 'cause of the rain
i can't seem to hide the pain

been there done that
room he tore me apart with no clothes to show
no one will stop me
college here i go

i'm not searching for a soul mate
i already found one that's fate
wake up in the morning i'm grateful
i have endless opportunities my smile is never dull

addict i am but now i'm recovering
through the storm i've been
it was blizzarding

My Mask (Cont.)

nowadays i don't take directions from the backseat
i walk on my own goddamn feet
soon i will do my own things
and help my family create their own dreams

it may be dark that's what it seems
but i dream about my mother's eyes
no longer darkened
just gleams

i am not alone with
God on my team

I Am
Whispers

I am bold, brave, and beautiful
I awoke this morning indoors and free
I found myself outside and trapped
I saw myself as strange
I thought about my family
That reminds me of concrete.

I am bold, brave, and beautiful
I believe in belief
I want to believe in all of us
I know that I am loved
I hope that they know they're loved
I am sure about who I am.

I am bold, brave, and beautiful
I already found sobriety
I will learn to lead
I am moving forward
As I do not live backward
I will be the change I hope to see
I am bold, brave, and beautiful.

Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

NoNameD

She looks calm and collected on the surface; under her tough shell, she is screaming. Inspiration for life and future are nowhere; can anyone ever love a mistake like her? In her mind, she will never be good enough. Death is her only way out eternal freedom from her misery. Calm and collected, she knows how to end her pain. Alone in her struggle, but it's almost over now. No one will miss her; no one will care. Nothing matters but eternal freedom from all the pain. So young, only is, and only wishes she were to die; to be taken from this earth and all of its misery, on to a better place, a free place, one to love. People start to notice her resolve, her distance. Prepared and ready, she puts her pain in action and results in the hospital, the farthest from death.

PROMPT CORNER

Write a love letter or love poem to yourself.

*What are the things about you
that you want to celebrate?*

Untitled

Monty G.

To know me is to understand me
To understand and accept me for the person I am
To know the truth about me without needing an explanation
To know that for certain when you're hurtin' you can lean on me
And know I'll never blow away like
The leaves on a tree
Count on me like one, two, three
I'd give you the shirt off my back
If you tell me that's what you need
I truly believe together we can achieve more
So when you hit rock bottom I'll
Be there to help you off the floor
Looking for a place I belong someone to accept me whether I'm
right or I'm wrong
Abandonment issues cuz of my moms
But I'm tired of singing the same sad song
So I move along looking for a place to rest my head
Break bread with the enemy
Play nice with the people that pretend to be kind to me

If You Really Knew Me

Sophie E.

If you knew me,
 you'd likely enjoy me and my way of thinking
 some people may think of pain or change as negative, while
 I embrace it
 through pain and change comes growth

If you knew me,
 you'd be proud of me not only for not giving up, but for
 staying strong

If you knew me,
 you'd know I'm not a b***h, I only look like one

If you knew me,
 you'd appreciate my mind and heart
 the way I think is uncommon
 my love is genuine

If you knew me,
 you'd love me

Staring At My Reflection

NoNameD

Staring at my reflection, looking at anything but perfection. My body is the perfect image of all my hurt. So many reminders of all you perverts. The reminders of all the pain, the reminders of when I lost myself. So many times I had to get through things by myself. Why does everyone pay attention to my body? Why do I need to be called names, be used, and hurt? Staring in the mirror at my reflection, looking at what all you created.

Did You Know

IzzYe

did you know...

when i was younger i was a straight A student

did you know...

i took care of me & my brothers and am now pretty independent

did you know...

i struggled to stay alive out on the streets

did you know...

i started hating myself due to bullies, I allowed myself to get broken
and beat

did you know...

i got addicted to drugs before i even got to high school

did you know...

when my step dad hurt me & my mom i felt like a fool

did you know...

i run to men looking for love my dad never gave me

did you know...

i put up with abusive boyfriends i felt i deserved

well you know what...

i have the potential to be a singer if that's really what i dream

well you know what...

all my experiences made me stronger, i'm wiser than i seem

You Don't Know Me

Garner T.

You thought you knew me,
You thought you could tell.
When I was sick and I was well.

The darkness would fall like a thief
In the night.
Inside of myself was a terrible light.

I would wake some days and all was good.
Others I would go straight to the hood.

I lied to you and lied to myself,
The worst thing I could do was
Tuck you away on a shelf.

I lost you once and if we try it again,
The darkness inside will never again win.
You will never again say you don't know me.
You are the light inside me and always will be.

Me Part I

Rubixcube

How & why do the things that happen to me happen
I sit & wonder what I do. I stay true to the one I love
But she goes and does this to me. What should I do?
I should just stay true & Be me.

I know who I am & do what I do but still why do I Feel like
a Fool. Is it because I am too Nice of a guy. Or should I
stay Living a criminal Life. If I stay the old me I will end up
back behind bars. I need to change. I am changing
For the better of me Not For anybody else. I love who I am
and what I am going to be. So I'm just gonna continue
down the path I chose to Better my self 4 me.

Me Part II

Rubixcube

I met the new me. And I say Bravo. I met the New me and, wow
He is so pro. He walks & talks with confidence. He works and
lacks nonsense. He cooks up at His New Job. He is clean from His
past slob. He is Healthy as can be and His past made Him strong
as the Roots of a tree. When I Look at Him now He walk with a
shine. When I see Him Now He is clean from his grime. So when
you ask who is the New me. Just Look at me that's all I can be.

A Bit About Me

Mario H.

This is my poem, a bit about me
Hopefully it'll open your eyes so you'll see
Some call me crazy, I'm lyrically insane
Check out this rhyme as it flows through my brain
Because of my manners, most think I'm soft
But they've never seen me mad or pissed off
Almost all call me Mario that's my nickname
I was a big piece in the street survival game
I love the game, boy what a rush
To play in the summer, or in winter's slush
I went from a no one to person of fame
Almost everyone wants me now they're stoking my flame
This all seems nice but my life is a curse
Sometimes I wish I was dead in a hearse
See I protect all the women I save all the girls
I don't care who, they're all pretty pearls
I'm wanted by all and loved by no one
My one wish in life is a girl companion
When I make you my friend I ride or die
But I feel so alone sometimes I just cry
I'm surrounded by people who all say they care
Do I get a shot no they don't dare
I'm wanted by all but I'm still so alone
Won't anyone care throw this wolf beast his bone
I may be a beast and crazy as well
I may see things and hear things but I'm kind as hell
I feel so alone want to just die
I'm all alone at night I just cry
This is my poem a bit about me
Hopefully you open your eyes and you see

If You Knew Me... You'd Know I Expect Reciprocity

Richard Cranium

Say what you mean and mean what you say
Anything less and it's games that you play
That doesn't mean that you're honorable though
You can still have integrity and sell drugs for your dough
If the picture you paint is transparent and true
I can give you respect and build trust in you
I don't care if you steal or sell dope for cash
Be straight up with me or it's your face that I'll smash
You can be faulty to the world, but to me come correct
Loyalty and Fidelity is what I expect
If you say that you love me and want me in your life
Never betray me and I might make you my wife
Whether you're my lady or my bro
If you're fake you gotta go
Duplicity gets no charity
Two faced b***hes get no love from me
Don't take my kindness for weakness
Or I'll flip the script on meekness
Flash on your a** and send it home with empty pockets
Strike a deal with me and a handshake will lock it
My word is my bond and a promise I'll keep
Jesus taught me to sow before I reap
So never pay me with a \$3 bill
When I come correct on the orders I fill
If you come at me crooked... I'll set your a** straight
Short fuse on my temper causes me to conflagrate
So don't come at me left if I'm treatin' you Right
That's a sure way to get your a** in a Fight
If you're straight up with me, I'll be straight up with you
I don't associate with those as straight as a "Q"
Question marks ask for answers
On Real Topics... Liars are dancers
I won't be deceived
On lies you conceive

If You Knew Me... (Cont.)

So have respect and don't lie to me
Especially if you're in the wrong or been faulty
Compassion and forgiveness come from sincerity
So shed some light with your truth to give me clarity
If we disagree, I'll hear you out
Respect and understanding is what I'm about
If I'm in the wrong...I'll promptly correct it
Loving confrontation is always respected
If the Golden Rule was put into application
We'd have reciprocation across the nation
I don't care that we have different mothers
Those that ride with me I consider you brothers
If you're ever in need... Just call on me
All I ask for...
 Is Reciprocity

Faces

IzzYe

Different faces they scare me
Scared they won't accept me
I'm not the same I used to be
Maybe I'm not as pretty as they wanna see
I'm not used to being free
No longer behind the bars I used to see
Trapped in my thoughts sometimes,
Forget to breathe
I hope they understand that what I've been through shapes me
Maybe my kindness can cut deep
And I can be the person I wanna be
Without any insecurities of them

Hidden

Darkrowl

Unhappy secrets show our truths allowing our hidden faces to hide
without us in front.

Realization

B.B.

Behind the mask I used to do a lot of things that I didn't realize was affecting me and my family till the day I came and I realized they were gone. To this day I look back at the past and it makes me realize what I was and who I was becoming. I became the person I told myself I'd never be. I wanted to be the one people looked up to and wished they could be like me. But here I am on the other side of that mask doing drugs to help me feel better, getting thrown behind bars living life from the inside while people slowly forget about me. Now I live without the mask, realizing the life behind the mask is nothing but a dead a** Dream, & Never again will I live that scene.

Behind the Mask

Louucifer

Behind the mask

I smile

Fake it to make it

I falter

Thinking my will might break

Don't know how much more I can

Take

Of these earthquakes & tsunamis

Trying to crack my inner

personality

So I fake it to make it

Because what other choice is there?

Behind the Mask

Casey W.

The person I am behind my mask,
I'm not too sure who I am behind my mask
But what I do know is that when the
mask comes off I am able to be the person
I am meant to be, free, carefree, kind of like
a rambling man on a train going nowhere
that is when I feel the most free doing my
own thing with no rules, regulations, consequences
And sometimes when I need to put the mask
Back on the damn mask won't fit just as if
It belonged to someone else, and in that
moment is when life gets real, almost a
little bit too real, so I usually just keep it off
and roll with life's punches as they come, even
though it feels like the train I am riding on
just ran me over 25 times, kind of like the
song "Casey Jones" you'd better watch your speed

Untitled

Matster

Who am I behind the mask
I hide myself with every task

Am I the same person I was yesterday
Or who will I decide to play

I use fear to hide my face
I change my identity with every place

I change myself near or far
How can I find out who you are

I don't know who I want to be
Hiding my fear may set me free

So many faces throughout the day
Until I'm myself my friends will pay

As I get older too tired to change
I'll be myself no need to change

Will people like me for who I'll be
I'll be myself and wait and see

My Facepaint

MexE

I'm not a juggalo, but something about War Paint has always drawn me. I find this to fit me because I've always made it a big deal to be transparent in the sense of what you see is what you get. My sense of humor, The Knowledge I Know and Don't Know. And it seems I get a lot of respect wherever I go. I like the facepaint cuz I let myself be as recognizable as I want. In terms of walls I put up depending on my mood or circumstance. I can throw on that Paint tough or be light with the touch.

Behind the Mask

Brittany O.

Behind the mask you will find
A shy and timid little girl
Who wants to express herself in many ways.
But is afraid of being criticized
You will find a young lady Just
Looking for love and acceptance.

Broken Soul

Ray Ray

Behind the mask there is a shattered and broken soul, lost and lonely and has yet to be found, it sounds so mundane but as the days go by this tattered and weathered soul finds new ways to mask the pain, weather it's with a fake smile or just a simple 'hey', no one knows he's truly broken inside. No one knows that deep down he wants to cry he just keeps it all bottled up inside his facade is hard his emotions are perceived as in check but being a lost soul for so long has been detrimental to his health. All he wants is to be found and understood. Maybe one day he'll take off his mask for good.

Untitled

Amber

She's
Overly giving unaware
Of what cost, slowly deteriorating
My soul for fake happiness devastated by the loss
Herself unknown but expected use
Of Hope, faith in the lord so
Never been alone really
Lonely tho very consumed by sorrow it
Fills the air confident but
Deprived of desired
Worth
Commonly walked over
Too proud and brave to
Allow it any other way
Waves of emotion wiped
Away by
Crystal like glass and potions
Untolerated betrayal because
She's lost all she's loved
Only thing left standing
Is herself but to give up
Is no option
Success will one day
Exceed all the faith
She's ever known
She's strong and she'll never
Stop hoping

Life

B.B.

My past is a past many would not like to live but is a past many have lived also. The past is the past for a reason, only the ones willing to see the past as the past are the ones that will have a successful future. No matter how bad your past was only you can change and live to accomplish your dream. Many fear they can't change, so they don't. Try to live with faith. I have Hope for every one of you, and Hope you live your life without Hate.

A Few Things I Strongly Believe

Sophie E.

I believe creativity takes courage

in order to create something beautiful, you must not be
scared of failure or judgment

I believe that time is an illusion

I believe that in order to appreciate you must start with nothing

Because how can you appreciate something if you've always had it

I didn't appreciate my mom's love until I didn't feel it any-
more

I believe that music can be your friend

'Cause at the end of the day, you can always listen to what makes
you feel best

For me, it's music that makes you think

I believe that anything is possible when you decide that whatever is
stopping you isn't as important as yourself

This I Believe

Yodabug

I believe family is what you make of it
I believe you can always change if you want to
I believe social services should know the family before assuming
I believe prison does not help people heal or get better
I believe that no matter if someone does drugs, they are not a junky
I believe everyone is beautiful in their own way
I believe family should stick together and never lose sight of how
much your family matters to you
I believe everyone can do good if they really believe they can
I believe people that have trauma can help others with trauma
when they get older
I believe there is another world that everyone will be at peace and
finally be happy and at ease

Some Might Say

Jessica

Some might say it's a weakness
to insist on seeing the good in every
person. It is there, even in those
more terrible than the Grinch. Often
it is hidden under layers of bandages
and scars. Afraid to show itself
to another living soul in fear of
a vulnerable spot left open and
unguarded soon to be scarred.
Yet the good is still there!

My Strong Woman Traits

Tamwise

Resilient—I move like water over and through the mountains in my life.

Genuinely kind on the human level—Meaning that I don't care if you're a hobo or a VP of a huge corporation. I will address you with kindness, love and respect just the same.

Provider—I strive in times of struggle because I never give up on the basic needs of myself and my family no matter what.

By 2025

Dylan T.

By 2025 I will have overcome my addiction,
I will have my daughter and no more baby momma friction,
I'll have all my haters dissin,
And all their hate I'm missin,
See I'm a heroin addict,
I have a story, just listen,
Came from the dirt now I shine and glisten.
Hear me out before you judge me and talk s**t, stop hissin,
See I'm like the lotus flower and it's my a** you'll be kissin,
I aim high towards the stars,
I'll fly, that's the mission.

Untitled

Matster

What kind of man do you want me to be
Do you want me gentle or do you want me mean
Do you want me heavy, or do you want me lean
What kind of man do you want me to be
Do you want me soft, or do you want me hard
Do you want my money, or my credit card
I don't know if I'll like the choices you make
But for your love I'll do anything it takes
You are a hot one, I'll give you that
You chew um up and leave them flat
People don't know what you're about
When your looks are gone, you'll be out
Better be careful who you do it to
Next time around it could be you
I'm not sure what I want right now
If the milk is free, why buy the cow
You look real fine to me
If it's true love just let it be
And if you want me to go
Just say and I will blow

AJ

Tazzy Saz Hoff

A little girl whose aura is yellow
Has curls blonde as can be
And eyes dark blue

She's humming something sweet
Busy as a bee I don't want to bug

But as her mommy I can't help
Myself when that hum turns
Into a familiar tune

Aerbean baby what are you singing
Lallow submarine lallow submarine
We all live in a lallow submarine

My precious angel who already
Spits fire is giving John Lennon
A run for his money

Baby Smiles
Smiley13

my son's smile
means the world to me.
he laughs and smirks
always all weirdly
he holds that smile
that just stands out
so cute and charming
my little man means
the universe to me
it could be the worst
of days, raining through
the pain that
flows deeply through my brain
my baby boy takes my
sorrows and tears all away
mommy and son bond
never been so strong
to be so little to never do
no wrong, things like
that, that will never fade
these never ending days
his little smile that makes
the sunshine brighter
in every way love of my life
makes everything
feel ok. And
as mommy gets older
my son will always stay.

Daughter

\$\$ Tia B. \$\$

Darling little girl
Always has my back
Unique and beautiful
Good at everything she does
Honest and real
True friend for real
Easy to talk to
Ride or die daughter
For life

Little One

jw17

His blue eyes deep and vast like the ocean.
Look into them and be filled with emotion.

Feelings of pain, insecurity, and rage.
Love, security, and belonging seen only on a stage.

How am I to care for this little life before me?
Where's the manual to show me how to be?

I'm afraid I don't have all this little one needs.
Who will tell him about the birds & the bees?

I'm inadequate and I'm responsible for his care.
Oh dear God don't let me hurt not one hair.

Lovin You Mama

Tamwise

You have a smile
 So very bright

It can light up
 The darkest night

Your lighthearted laughter
 Is a song to the world
You are my joy

My
 Flower
 Girl

Superheroes

Whispers

What do you know of superheroes
I know they're tried and true
And counted as zeroes
I know they believe in you
through and through
They are stubborn and restless
society says they are just a mess
we are trainwrecks all of us
we are superheroes
through and through
we are the tried and true
unconditionally loving you

Family Torn Apart

Yodabug

I never thought we would get taken from my mom because my dad already left us by going to prison. I always thought that my family was perfect but it wasn't. Does not mean it was horrible, but it wasn't like other families i know. I never had a say in anything at that point in time, but i wish i would have cuz i would have fought so hard to keep my family together, like leather.

You're an Angel

Preston S.

You're an Angel
An immense amount of pleasure to the eyes
A true meekness to your disguise
I consider the memories of us together my greatest prize
Traumatized by the trueness in those lies
It's because of you I'm best at goodbyes

Is She?

Ty B.

Is she,
Can I,
my love?
move on?
Does she,
Why must,
love me?
she resist?
I crave,
She leaves,
her so,
love grows.
I know,
Yet she,
she does.
won't stay.
I'll go,
She knows,
without her.
I'll never,
I hope,
forget her.
she sees
She is,
my love,
is she?

My Mother, My Friend, My Daughter

Maria M.

You held me when I took my first breath in '76
Were you prepared to be my mom?

You taught me simple things everyday
Eat & Drink, Walk, Talk & Play
You showed me how to be
Gentle, Loving, Truthful & Kind

You became my friend as I grew
And my enemy when I was wrong
You were always there, even when I thought I didn't need you

You showed me strength & as I grew
I became a mom – Just like you
You taught me to be savage & as ruthless as they come
And not to take s**t from no one

The day came I never thought would
You became my daughter - I wasn't prepared
I'll never be the same - Your light gone before mine
I held you close as you took your last breath

It still makes me cry
But I will always try to remember the words you told me, by an
author I don't know
"Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened"

My Daughter, My Son

Ty B.

My Daughter, My Son,

From God to the womb you both come from.

My heart is vacant, a canyon worn from my
blood run through.

My father Gave to me,

Not I Give to you.

Will you ever forgive me,

I Can Not Replace with New

Forever connected, our souls stay True.

No Matter the distance

I continue to feel my inconsistency.

My shame, its persistence.

Your mother & I

will continue to try,

Her blessings to me

Are forever

My Daughter, my Son

You will Never be Replaced

By Anyone!

Pipe Dreams & Silent Screams

Epic

My vision starts to clear

As the conclusion of this nightmare

Draws near

Frozen stiff I struggle

Finally I leap off the cliff

Awakened

Only after I hit

The ground

Looked up like a dog

In the pound

Friends and family wondering

Why I haven't been around

Their voices compel my choices

The magnitude of my solitude

So impossible to elude

Is this incarceration or an extended vacation? Another revocation of my freshly declared probation. How loud do I have to scream in silence to be heard? 1 cell, 392 concrete bricks 18 & 6 using pencils as pick up sticks. Suffocating in reality, being lifted off...

The ground

Gravity. A deep breath in and

I leap off again.

Today I Spoke to God
Chef

Today I spoke to God
at first it seemed odd
He sent me a sign
that I turned into a rhyme
He said it will take time
before I can cross that line
of personal closure
without full exposure
of the pain I'm feeling inside
the torment of love lost
and my freedom tossed into a
lion's den with no chance at survival
I've got to keep fighting even against
all odds and defeat this rival
I need to find the light
so I can win and end this fight
Come out a winner
now I'm hungry, might as well grab some dinner
and make this a big feast so I can tame this beast

The Lost Boy

James V.

There is this boy that thinks he is lost
Stuck in the dark with his fingers crossed
Asking for help while everyone stares
But starts to doubt that anyone cares
He feels all alone and just wants a friend
Someone he knows won't run in the end
Someone to tell him it will all be okay
Unlike his parents that pushed him away
To go out and drink and also get high
They said they'd be fine if he happened to die
I wished I was lying and could say he's all right
As I keep on trying to tell him to keep up the fight
He tells of the fights that he constantly loses
The ones with his parents that left him with bruises
Injuries hidden deep down inside his being
Keeping every eye but his own from seeing
Now, I know you think, how could this be
But I speak out tonight about the lost boy in me.

My New Best Friend

El Gusano

My friend wanted drugs and didn't have the money for it. He asked me for a loan which I didn't want to loan it to him since he had no job. He told me he was gonna do Labor Ready. I still didn't want to, but he tells me he'll leave his puppy "Bella" just for a day. The next day he doesn't show up or answer his phone. I was mad. I knew I shouldn't have loaned him the money now I was stuck with this mutt. I couldn't do nothing. I had to start thinking of things to do with Bella. A month later, after walking, playing, eating and showering with the dog I got attached. The homie had the money I loaned him which I didn't want. What I wanted was MY NEW BEST FRIEND MY DOG BELLA.

Sitting Here

jw17

Sitting here in this cold dark cell I piece together how I ended up here again. The next few days my emotions run the gamut from tremendous shame to incredible rage. I am only to blame. Not one finger can I point towards another. I desperately try every effort to find someone – anyone to make my bail to no avail. Cold, broken, and sick from ingested poison I cry myself to sleep. A few days pass and I try to settle in for I have a feeling it might be a long stay. My bail is low yet here I am still. I believe my loved ones are quite okay with my new abode. They know I'm fed, warm, and safe. Days go into weeks and now I can gaze into his face once again. His presence is often heavy like a warm thick blanket. I know I am not alone. My days are up and down. The more I turn to my Lord the more secure I feel inside. I realize the things of this life will never satisfy. I continue to try to hold onto a relationship from inside these walls that was never meant to be. I see how hard I have tried to get my needs met from this fallible human and all the while knowing he will never come close to feeling this gaping void. Why? Why did I take my eyes off your face? Why did I not trust you to provide? Why was I not patient for you to lead? Why did I think my way was better? This road I have been down before. I should know by now how the story always ends. I always fall to pieces without you leading me where I need to follow. Lord, make me not go astray anymore. I wish I would be bridled only to turn where you direct. My deepest regret is bringing you sorrow, yet I am in growing in the depths of your love each time I fail. I cannot begin to wrap my mind nor my heart around the various degrees and faucets of my heavenly father's mercy and grace but I am trying. I am grateful as I keep my eyes ahead to you God that you continue to teach me something new each day. I store up and ponder all these precious gems along the way. Your love overflows – my heart cannot contain all of it. I suppose it never was created to contain it but to flow out of me to all whom I love. What a joy to be your daughter! What a gift to belong to you! You know me better than I know myself and your character you have made me in – your image. Please continue to show me all that

Sitting Here (Cont.)

I am in you. Let me see the world in your eyes—Let me see myself in your eyes. May my voice be through you forever. Keep all falsehoods and lies far from my family and myself. Live through me Lord.

out of the blue and into the black

Misfit H.

As I sit and twiddle my thumbs
I drift away to an awkward place.
Full of bad and good.
Then I start to think
Why do I ask myself why?
Why do I let myself think bad things
Then in the same thought lovely things.
In the end I always think
My mind just likes going from
out of the blue into the black.

Untitled

B.B.

Death is a part of life everyone has stared straight in the face, many have had near death experiences maybe you haven't. Death is unexpected, but is possible at any second. Treat Death with respect never know when to expect it.

Untitled

Matster

I need the time in here to clean myself up
I need it to be half full
When I look at the cup
I'm tired of dying
Not having a purpose
Not living real deep
Instead of the surface
The longer I lie to myself
The worse that I feel
I'm tired of living a lie
And not being real
Trying to pursue happiness
Is really hard for me
I need to be honest to myself
And just let life be
I've always made pain my friend
Because of other people's lies
I don't like hurting people
Or making them cry
Maybe I'll grow up someday
And be a real man
I hope it will happen real soon
Before I get out of the can
That's about enough from me
Just another hurting soul
I'll spread love all around
And make that my goal

Homemaker

Daniel CJ

Dark spots bandy about the window panes
Spilling into the winds
Crawling into the splints of this home where I live
The bestilling of my home is peaceful
It's a many splendored thing
Resonance, reverb, resounding of children's echos
Those earmarks impress upon me the remnants of something deep
A warm glow slipping the door
Encompassing me in the folds in which I seep
In quietus I find the years splayed out in cinematic review
Coming back to me like a forgotten song
Ennui
Dust to this home
Such as time to a willow
Such as time to this
Crawling with the everyday of sound
The jubilence of life's surprises
There is no debt owed to peace
And no death goes unwept
Instead it accumulates its own decay in this home where I've slept

Committed

Preston S.

Came to Colorado on vacation
Had to stay here and remain on probation
1,127 days, 3,000 miles away from home
I had absolutely nothing and was left alone.
Sleeping on the streets' nights, it was unbearable
A lost boy feeling unworthy and terrible
Started using and abusing
In the mirror was immensely confusing
I kept moving and I day after day
Night after night survived
Sitting in jail feeling completely revived
I will persevere
I will be strong
For poverty is only of the mind
Every moment, every second is one of a kind
That way when you jump off the deep end
You will already know how to swim

Excuse or Escape?

J. Younger

I've sold a lot of pain and coping skills -
Pills that maintain, dope to kill veins - and still
Can't explain the reasons seasons change.
People grow and build, the hole is filled momentarily, but
I sow the field and reap only loneliness and guilt.
I know I've killed inadvertently and certainly I feel at fault,
But what? Ought I not to? I brought you these vices,
These extremely small pieces of Hell, designed to tear your
Life apart and bear the child of a godless society.
Ponder this, don't lie to me -
Does your conscience guide you or your desire?

The nonsense inside you decides your fate,
Despite your attempts to hide or escape.
It lies there waiting dormant until it's time to torment
You and the lives of those who love you.

It stems mainly from childhood trauma and abuse,
Loss with grieving processes involved, you choose.
But drama from long ago has probably chosen the road
You've gone down for you. Poor you and poor me.
A sad song sung, but no one hears. All that's seen is
People that seem to forfeit their dreams for nothing
More than torn wrists and sore lips. Forget the fortress.
Sure as s**t, there's no whips here, only holding chambers and cells
Molded to explore the most deplorable ways to torture
And degrade human beings. Mortal sins reign supreme.
Until you're made to believe, the stolen moments mean nothing
And slavery for weeks or years is the only way
To forget the tears and time wasted.
 May the Lord show haste and forgive me.

Dreams

Darkrowl

Waking up my head to the cold of my own dreams. Sweat pouring off my face and back leaving a lasting chill down my spine. Rolling over to try and adjust to forget the cold of my dream that left a lasting chill in my head and mind. Memory of all that is almost immediately forgotten rolling around my head as my chill starts to warm. Body quits shivering my body relaxes and I lose myself to my warm sleep again. Drifting in a warm space wondering how long till I return to my cold shivers and chill. Just a little closer to the morning?

Nightmare

Dre Dre

The nightmare I fell in love with I'll never forget ... his touch, his smell, most of all his unique love

Never will I forget what it's like to be held in his arms, even with the biggest problem I'll consider it a nightmare that I never run from

Maybe this nightmare will change, maybe it won't, escaping the nightmare once haunting all the other dreams I had while being young

We all stop believing in little things when we are no longer young – this nightmare took it all, no loving, no fun – all that was left was nowhere to run, only one place, back into the nightmare's lust

The Twilight Acquisition

Daniel CJ

There was a night when the shadows opened up and then
The loving light came down hard to caress my skin
It left me dying
Left me shattered
Left me torn within
Without a binge of hope

Who would have thought that the radiance would whisk away
Reflective light that was forged and carved for travesty
Filtering through the hole it left inside of me
Without a binge of hope

Here's to the fallen stars
That left their mark
Without a binge of hope

Untitled

V.N.

If I tell you the truth, please don't leave me.
If I tell you the truth, just listen to me.
If I tell you the truth, promise me it's safe with you.
If I told you the truth, you would probably never
look at me the same. If I tell you the truth,
please don't think what I said was for pity
or attention because those are not my intentions.

Listen Up!

NoNameD

Listen up; quit trying to find excuses for my mental problems. I have always been depressed; I have always been myself. You obviously don't have any idea the way I felt leaving an abusive home into another one. You don't know all the times you made fun of my weight, told me you hated that I came into your family, made pig noises when I ate, pinched my belly, yelled in my face, compared me to my mother, threatened to hit me with a belt, called me names, told me I picked the wrong boyfriends, sport - Everything you did led me to cry every night when everyone was sleeping, pick up a pill bottle, blade, lighter. I wanted to feel again; I wanted someone to love me; I didn't want to be hurt by everyone anymore. So listen up; open your ears, eyes, listen up!

SpeakOut
Chef



Behind the Mask
Chef



Untitled

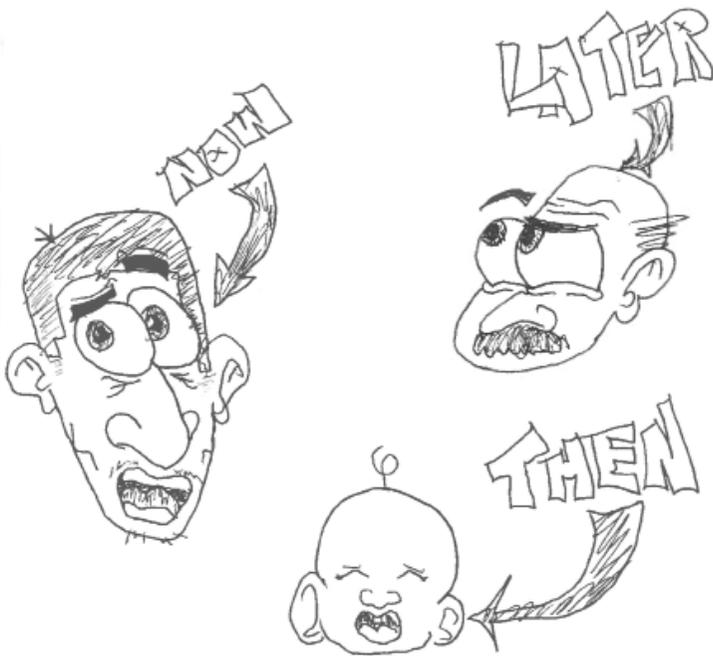
SAD_BOYS_CLUB

SAD_BOYS_CLUB



Circle of Life
Braeden C.

Circle of Life



Braeden.

Untitled

SAD_BOYS_CLUB



Carpe Diem
James V.



Untitled
Trigger 400



Untitled
James V.



SPECIAL SECTION:

SPEAKOUT! EXCHANGE WITH ██████████

Half of the ██████████ writers this year had the courage of pioneers. They had never written before and ventured into unexplored territory. ██████████ deliberately came to the group to do something he thought he couldn't achieve and proved himself utterly wrong! His poem, *Fear*, is one of a number of powerful pieces in which he uses the senses to rearrange the world. ██████████, another novice to the writing game, turned the ordinary into the extraordinary in a dystopian collision of prophecy and comedy, while ██████████ focused his attention down to the minute details of the natural world and discovered, like Blake before him, a universe of hidden meaning inside. ██████████ too was taking his first tentative steps on his journey as a writer, and his stories drew us all into the twists and turns of their adventure. What these men achieved in terms of courage - daring to do something new, to risk sharing experience and emotions and words - the rest of the group equalled in terms of sheer commitment to their craft. These were the more experienced writers, the ones who had already been published or were graduates of last year's creative writing programme. These men came to develop their skills and hone their craft, and they succeeded. ██████████ took his writing to a whole new level, consistently producing work that teetered between philosophy and emotion, pushing us to feel what we thought and think about what we felt. ██████████ brought his unique poetic voice into the realm of autobiography and put truth into life and tears into our eyes with his uncompromising reflections. Finally, ██████████ succeeded in framing in just six verses something of all our experience of the expansive power that words have to transform our worlds. Long may these writers continue on their journeys to write the world anew.

Ella Simpson
Senior Lecturer in Criminology
Bath Spa University, UK

Fear

The door opened to a rotten, musty smell of worn sandals dried out over years in a warmed room.

As I entered, my arms brushed against the sharp, prickly walls. They felt uneven and cold like distorted metal.

Through the dark, my sight focused on the walls. I stood motionless as these strange movements, slow yet methodical, changing glistening through its darkness.

I gulped, then moved by tongue to try and stimulate some moisture as the dryness strangled my taste buds, a potent sour sensation like mouldy, furry yogurt being left out to the elements to ferment. And yet the after taste of chalky, powdery dust rendering my tongue like a crater of a river scorched and dried up, forming irregular cracking in its deformity.

Then the hairs of my body stood up like pine needles as a sound - its loudness and pulsating rhythm - pounded my body and battered my eardrums into submission like the shriek of a strangled cat.

Do I take the next step?

Fruit Phase Particulars



The summer tree's perspective
health from stalks and soil
vitamins flow through water and seed
colour, molecules, and warmth
taste can become spikey when abroad
decay looks shiny with texture
varieties of leaves create variety of shade

A Letter to Myself/Ambition



Sometimes I feel I have no one to talk to
Sometimes I feel I have let everybody down
All alone, inside I am yelling out “help!”
So I pick up the pen and write a letter to myself

I ask myself what’s important to me? family, wealth, and health
But first what ways can I better myself; Good or bad decisions,
they say the pen is more powerful than the sword
So it’s good to have things handwritten

What a man, without a plan, so my plan is written
They can take away my freedom but not my ambition
I ask myself what have I learned
Would I take a step back, what way would I turn

I have learned how to have patience
I have learned that education leads to greatness
I have learned that repetition is more important than reputation
There is a lesson to be learned in every situation

I write a letter to myself but I won’t receive a letter back
I have learned why pick up a weapon when I can pick up a pen and
pad
I have learned to use my time wisely, because time waits for no man
You can spend it but you can’t take it back

I write a letter to myself but I won’t send this letter off
How can one find himself if he has never been lost
I have learned that to learn is a blessing
So I express myself, with words of expression

Untitled



I woke up this morning, got dressed as normal, went down for breakfast, and when I went to leave the house, I checked my pockets. I was surprised to find three objects: a letter opener, a dog collar, and a small Amazonian frog. I started to think about where I came to acquire these objects. I remember that I was in the Amazon rainforest researching the black panther, which I found fascinating because of its unique characteristics, and somehow this amazing little frog must've gotten into my pocket. I was a little shocked because I know how dangerous their poison is. So I used the letter opener that I must've put in my pocket from my hotel in South America to open all my assignments for my research. I continued going through my pockets still searching for my keys to my car and came across a dog collar; it brought back the tragic event of the beautiful Brazilian girl I met on the walk up the volcanic mountain. Her dog got frightened by a stray panther on the path. Dogs usually chase cats, but this was a very large and dangerous cat, which took revenge against all the dogs who have chased cats. The dog took a leap off the cliff, leaving the girl the collar. I took the collar off the girl because I wanted to take her mind off it.

Finding these strange objects in my pocket brought a little smile to mind because the adventure is what stood out to me, not the chain of events.

Letter from my Future Self

Get a robot butler. They make it much better. The first generation were a pain, with all the uprising. But that was resolved by Microsoft-Apple releasing twice-hourly software updates. Go suppression of sentience.

The Pepsi-Coke-a-Cola wars erupted again. But they were won by Fanta after they spliced a woodlouse with a can of Orange Fanta.

Cats evolved opposable thumbs, so they are now our overlords. That's the kind of s**t I suppose. But they are still slightly more benign than the giant sentient owls were. Yeah, we had them too. They were a bit uncool.

Aunt [REDACTED] still refuses to die, and she is still as belligerent as ever.

We also had a bunch of tiny zombie sumo wrestlers blame President Kanye West for that after he declared war on Jay-Z.

They are still releasing films in the "Fast and Furious" franchise.

But for all I know, this could all be a bunch of slightly plausible sounding ramblings of my decaying neurons, as Google's version of the Matrix slowly draws out the final bit of matter from our brain.

They have been doing that for 40 years. Still better than Bing's one. They named it the Maaaatrix.

I'm bored now. I'm gonna log off now. I hope that these spoilers help you in the fun to ensue.

However, I could just be making this up for the h**l of it.

Uncertain Senses



Have you ever smelt the air before a storm?
Clear, but charged,
Scented, but indescribable,
Uncertain as my soul.

Have you tasted milk out of a fridge for an hour?
Not putrid, not gone off,
But that tang at the edge of freshness,
The uncertainty of taste.

Have you ever woken and been near blind?
Dark, uncertain shapes,
Uncertainty of a strange room,
Demonic red glow of a standby light casting ethereal shadows.

Have you ever groped under a car seat?
Felt uncertain objects,
Uncertain shapes,
Uncertain filth.

Have you ever strained to hear,
The uncertain noise in the distance,
The not quite sound,
The need to investigate to feel certain.

Has your hair ever stood on end, all up your arm?
But not temperature change, and no static charge,
An uncertain response to the unknown,
The feeling of being watched in an empty room...

Letter to Myself

I'm nearly 70 now, so it's not difficult to imagine myself as 80 at all. But so depressing, thinking of it, is like watching the last grains of sand slip through an old-fashioned egg timer.

So little time left, and after all I've been through, will I even make it? Do I even WANT to make it? I, an athiest, or rather a humanist, so I hold no delusions of going to heaven or being reunited with my parents and sister in any "hereafter."

Ahead lies just more ageing, less freedom, more decline in health, lonely isolation and probably living in s**t-rented accommodation, worrying about being recalled to prison at any time for some b*****t or other. So no, I think I'll write back to my 18-year-old self.

In the future, you will not be able to throw jobs out and find another. Dad was right on that. But he was wrong about a job for life on the [REDACTED] too. It isn't. In 30 years time, [REDACTED] jobs are paid poorly and open to "competitive tendering" and not secure at all. 2-year contracts. It's all crap.

Love does not exist, it's like God - a figment of human construction. Yes, you love your parents, kids, siblings, etc. - you even get obsessed about women too. But in six months time, you will two-time [REDACTED] and she'll dump you. You'll booze for 5 years and never quite be a non-drinker again. Other serious girlfriends will end similarly; no, don't try and settle down too young. Dad's right about that too.

Oh yes, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] - rain, depression, unemployment, inequality. Do you actually know it doesn't rain so much in [REDACTED] - the south coast? The [REDACTED] Riviera isn't called that for nothing - it's only 20 miles to [REDACTED], i.e. as far from [REDACTED] is from our house.

Letter to Myself (Cont.)

Oh yes, you've never been on holidays, let alone "abroad." In 30 years time, you'll realise that the [REDACTED] is only 4 hours from [REDACTED] by plane; and in January and December, it's like summer there. In our summertimes, it's probably like the Sahara there. Really, really sunny and lovely.

Seriously, try and get a job in the [REDACTED], so you can get a job posted somewhere exotic. Nice weather.

The bottom line is that you will never be happier than when you walk along a beach naked, go skinny dipping with your dog and watch the sun go down.

No matter how sparkling and mediocre a man's life may be - how important, how rich, how sad, how successful - or what he achieves, it is no more than a drop in the ocean of life - the great blue motion of the sea.

So you may as well enjoy it. Get out of this cold, wet, miserable country and never come back.

Good luck boy. I love you.

Thank you, writers of [REDACTED]

On behalf of all the participants of SpeakOut!, we would like to extend our most sincere gratitude towards the UK writers who contributed with this exchange, making this publication what it is today: a journal of wonderfully personal and moving stories. We wish them well on their journeys as our friends [REDACTED]!

Now, we continue with the SpeakOut! writers of our own Larimer County program --

ASIDE: See more prompts we use to inspire!

Think of a movie, book, or TV show that you enjoy. Rewrite the ending.

Describe how silence feels. Be as detailed as you can.

Who's your personal hero? This can be anyone you admire, living or dead, real or fictional.

Write something inspired by a dream you had recently. Be as detailed as possible.

Finish the prompt: "If you were here, I would tell you..."

If you could name yourself, what name would you choose? Why? What does that name mean to you?

Imagine you're stranded in the ocean. What 5 items would you bring with you? Why?

Think about a day that was important to your life. Write it at the top of your page. Spend 10 minutes writing about the day before this important one.

If you had to do the thing you were most afraid of, what would it be? How would you do it? Why is it fearful?

What is the best sound on earth? Why?

If you had to get rid of everything in your closet except for three items, what would you keep and why?

What is your first winter memory – what did it feel, taste, smell, look like?

Not All Who Wander Are Lost

Brittany O.

Not all who wander are lost they say
But why do I choose not to wander away?
Is it the terror of finding new things?
Or even the terror of sprouting some wings?
Maybe someday I can find some courage,
And learn to grow and flourish.

Untitled

Louucifer

“Not All Who Wander are lost” – J.R.R. Tolkien

Wander lust
Wonder lost
Wander lost
Wonder Lust

I am not lost
I am not
I am
I
I do
I do wander
I do wander not.

Untitled

Trauma

Bright, joy, Love, enthusiasm, peace are the words to describe my life before the lights went out.

There I was 3,000 miles away from a lightswitch.

Scared, heartbroken, lost, confused and filled with rage.
I lost everything I once had but looking back I lost nothing, I learned that no matter your situation you can be more without having more. Broke but not poor, The lights may have went out for a temporary time but when I turned them back on I Shined better and brighter than I ever have before.

Then the lights came back on

Untitled

Matster

I'm just starting to live a new life
Having memories of moments
And time with my wife
Living good for once
And that's how I feel
Not lying to myself
And starting to be real
I'm feeling love from others
Like it's the first time
Writing about how it feels
And making it rhyme
I want to be good to others
With all of my might
Only having love in my heart
And never to fight
I'm feeling the best I ever have
I want everyone to know
Hanging on to new friends
And never letting go
I feel excited to the point of being unreal
I'm never going to look back again
And cash in on this deal
My heart feels so true
As true as it gets
I want to share it with others
And hope that it fits
Can life be this good
It's a first for me
Love is the most valuable
Thing that is free

Untitled

Preston S.

Become the best version of yourself
At all times
Regardless of the crimes
Starting with nickels and dimes
Remembering the good times
Changing lives with those fire rhymes.

Believe in what you say
For that's who you become
6 months in a cold ugly cell
But comfortably numb
I took it in
In a sense I'm grateful for that sin
When I get back to Ohio my only
Real option is win
This is just a start to me
So now I'll begin

Streets of Gold

Garner T.

I walked a crowded street
crowded with strangers
I thought I would never meet.

God sought me out and
again and again I turned away
I was alone and I was a stray.

I grew tired and restless and old
looking down for shame filled my soul.

I raised my head and
quicken my pace
I would no longer hide my face.
God filled me with His grace.

When I was tired and ready to fold,
God introduced the crowd on the Streets of Gold.

Paradigm

Cayne L.

Besiege these conclaves in my brain
Augmenting the reasons I'm insane
Look up to the brilliant evening stars
Ask to promulgate of this destruction
Putting an end to this corruption
Start of a new dispensation
Bringing light into this sensation
Our new race will have a place in
Through Gabriel a new repersonalization
A new serviceable and powerful nation
Only then I obey our fathers command
When together we form and hold hands
Under celestial authorities we form as one
With the magnificent light from the SON
SON, father and together in spirit
For this transition none will fear it.
Diversification in experiential wisdoms
Brought together in life and in sum
Opportunities constantly expand in hand
With universal conciliators on the land
Making up for the spilt blood of the lamb
For this planet deserves a reprimand

Synchronicity

Feather-Seed

This world is more than about just me or just you or the few, it's a we and us, as in one whole world, the trees, the rocks, the rivers, the sea, the birds, the sky, the sun, the moon, and all the animals too, and yes of course there's you and me.

We are all connected in one great spirit, when we realize this and what it all means, sensing feeling the oneness of it all, this vibration of love lifts and heals, it's contagious and sets us all free to be, finally knowing our truth the self renews

I feel changed as in like something "new" or reborn no longer stressed or drug world battle worn,

Synchronicity seems to favor me, every day I feel more free and discovering the ever renewing me.

Feeling forges a new path for me, lifetime goals becoming reality almost as if they're lining up for me.

Synchronicity.

Temptation

jw17

On the other side of that door
is the great big world along
with all of its temptations that
I fear will suddenly come
barreling toward me as if I
were bowling pins ready to be annihilated.
I begin to pray... Oh Lord
your word says that when
temptation comes you will
provide a way out so that
I can stand under it.
When I walk through these jail
doors Jesus I trust in your
way out for me Lord. In fact,
I believe your love for me is so
grand that you will pick me
up like a daddy picks up his
child and places her on his
shoulders. So I suppose
I will then be standing above
that temptation not under it at all!

Freedom

Matster

An anxiousness that makes the hair
On your neck stand up
And your stomach feel butterflies
Waiting for the next
Moment seems impossible
Not knowing what to do next
Racing thoughts what to think
Of becomes hard why would
Anyone want to feel like this
Until you adjust this is having
Your guard down and being
Vulnerable to every thought and
Feeling the indecision
Of what to do and when to do it

Freedom

thatsoryan

my footsteps echo in the brisk morning air. Freedom, something I
haven't
felt in five long years.
My life has changed, I'm healthy now,
My goals in life stay the same.
Life has new meaning now. I wouldn't dare to complain.
hardship in the past I'm still happy even if the new day brings rain.

Stuck In

MexE

Everyone Always Tryna Press me Unlike an Assessment
Cause of the Dragon I've been Chasing, Not Something that I've
been flexin
It actually tests me, Almost been Dead & Gone 10 to 15
Getting Closer to that Checkmate, Leave em Hating.
Cuz fast times leaves ya young & Dry, Hanging from Cloud 9.
The Tears that's fallen from her sweet cheeks (my Mama)
They're not just hers, They including Mine.
When I'm Caught in the Moment, I never blink
but my voice in the faint, stress me to stop & think
My Choices When I bounce to an 808
Leavin me in goosebumps after I lick a vein
I wanna love Myself but I honestly
Don't really care and I mean that.
I'd rather help a homeless person catch a buzz
or a meal that's fat stacked
Cuz I'm stuck in my Ways like I'm stuck in my vein.
And my line's Flat

Untitled

Steven M.

The one thing I'll
never forget..

Was when I looked in
In the mirror and seen
A cop in my rear.

So I panicked and smashed
On the gas and crashed
Into the old man in the
Outback.

The chase was long and
Fast, my life started to
Flash before I crashed.

The one thing I'll
Never forget

Is how my actions
Created such disastrous
Trash

My poor choices put
So many people's lives
At stake.

Now as I pace this
Cage, I face these
Demons inside my brain
Telling me my life was
Just a mistake.

The one thing I'll

Untitled (Cont.)

Never forget...

I am the image
God did create
So in that case
I know he never
Makes any kind
Of mistake...

So I take faith
With each and every
Day as I patiently
Wait for the new
Life and future
That awaits...

Because today I can
Honestly say I'm a
New man who has
Changed his ways
For better days
With a smile on
His face...

Music

OSIRIS

As I listen to the music it makes me feel Like I'm in a party from my past, and all my Life's experiences have Blended into a moment of Awe. A moment that I'll never forget. Seeing people smiling, talking, playing Games, Dancing, and even being lost in that very moment. A moment of consciousness that Stops time. A moment of Peace, A moment of Epiphany. A moment where Life's stress is just a Small Hum in the Back of your mind. It is no longer a worry or stress. And for that moment you truly Live. If only it were always this wonderful, this joyful. We Could truly live.

Untitled

Monty G.

Take the good with the bad but still trying to forget the past. Taking a look in the mirror but don't recognize the man staring back Hiding from the people I love because I relapsed Nights all alone a life without laughs constantly looking over my shoulder paranoid left on my own I'll self-destruct hoping to escape this Hell but there's no such luck I'm not crying cuz I'm doing time, no I just regret some of the things I've done I was wrong I know that now I'm just trying to get back to who I used to be excited to live life completely free

PROMPT CORNER

Write while listening to certain songs. Write about a line from the song, how the music made you feel, or what the music reminded you of.

Change

Dice Rolling

I face all things when and when not changed
all that the hand is dealt.
But I will make a slight change
when I escape from this mistake.
I play all the hands that got dealt in my
way I play all the while. But
now I sit here in jail these
Brick walls I sit and stare wait for
my bail. I will wait for him
to post my bail. I love him
I sit with my hands connected
as I pray let me break away
I promise I will make it this
time I am brave I'll
complete this in success
I can't wait to be
in your arms every day
that I pray.

Untitled

J. Rowland

Love should never be like this
It's been all anger, danger, crazy bliss
Roller coaster ride, my love since our first kiss
I can honestly say it's all of this I truly miss
Never could seem to get right from the start
But seven years later, too involved to stop
My world doesn't exist without you involved
From the moment I wake till I got to sleep
You've been what's on my mind
I'll continue to love you
Until the end of time

Gratitude

Misfit H.

Let's see, I am grateful for the person I am. Even with all of my ups and downs, including my problems that go on in my head. Some would call me crazy or a nutcase, I call it a poorly wired circuit. If it wasn't for those things I wouldn't be half the person you see sitting in front of you. Also, I am finally glad that I have realized what causes all of the nonsense in my life and all the bad things. I am grateful to say that I am done doing that drug that alters my mind, to make me think that everyone is out to get me and takes my mind to the dark depths of hell. Also, makes me push all the good things I have in life away, so goodbye my old friend and never again will I let myself submit to your evilness and trickery. I am also grateful that I have found the love of my life. She helps me get through a lot of things I couldn't do on my own. And I am grateful to still have her in my life through all the nonsense I have caused. And for my friends and family I still have after all the wrongdoings I have done and that shows they actually care and can still see the light in me! One last thing... I am grateful for just being me no matter what life throws at me!!

PROMPT CORNER

*Story telling: What is your greatest success?
We brainstormed ideas on the board and took
some time to write. Stories ranged from
serious and meaningful to outright hilarious.*

Growing Again

Yodabug

I love T., N., and the one they call Z. They have always been there for me even when I don't want them to be. Driving to Walmart at night is what I remember the most, that is the only time I would really get to spend with my mother. When my trust is broken it angers me. I lust for revenge, but I know it wouldn't solve anything. Also, when people take advantage of my kindness, it hurts knowing someone would actually do that to me. But I just get right back up and start growing again. My hopefulness comes from the love around me, knowing things can work out makes me happy. Support is always a plus in everything. I smile every time I see my mom cuz of the good memories we have together, never thinking of the bad, cuz what happened those mistakes are in the past. It fears me being in a room with someone I don't know cuz of my trauma. It triggers something in my brain and I freak out. I fly off like a plane. Rainy days, jumping on the black trampoline in the darkness, jumping in the rain helps me frame everything in place. I believed my family is perfect and now I know no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. Friendship is being there for them no matter what happens and not letting anyone break the bond between you and your friend. I wear sweats most days cuz I like to be comfy no matter what anyone says.

Torn Without You

Joshua D.

Where did it all go wrong? It feels just like yesterday we were playing in the front yard as kids without a care in the world. You were my best friend in the whole world. From the time we were thrown into the world, the cold, cold world, it was us against the world. As years went on we started to drift apart. Different friends, different hobbies. Through all the football games you were always the one in the stands cheering, even when we lost you didn't care. We drifted apart to the point where it would only be a phone call maybe here or there. Then what was supposed to be a great easter I got the call that you went on a one-way ticket to heaven and I would never get a call from you again. For a while I was mad at you, but you didn't know this day would be the last day, last phone call, last anything. Mom says hi, so do niece and nephew. Hope you say hi to grandma and grandpa for all of us. Are you proud of your little brother? We all miss you more than you know! People ask me, "how are you doing?" All I can think of as I put on a fake smile and say "Torn."

Don't Lie

Al Capone

Don't lie.
Why don't you try
It's not that you should
But you don't have to lie
But why why why
Should you not die
'Cause if you try
You should not die
Because you don't know how to lie
Is why you can
Never die.
So don't say why
Just try not to lie
Why why why
You don't have to lie!!
Because no matter
How hard you try
You could never lie.

Level Five Jessica

J. Younger

Right now, she bows to no god, no matter how odd it sounds.
She's bound by nightfall and large rubber bands,
Found cursing the holy ground she walks on,
Screaming obscenities at Lord God, her Father, honestly,
For not taking away this constant pain and idolatry.
The bipolar is obstacle enough to bother with and tolerate,
Not to mention the rapes and post-traumatic awesomeness.
Also see, on top of this, the problem is, worshipping
Dollars and meth makes no sense. Hypodermic prophets
Telling tall tales or stories of immense profit and wealth;
We'll let the syringe tell it, shall we? We'll binge watch
Out of sheer heartbreak and loss, like a car wreck, toss caution
To the wind until the logical options are no longer possible.
Chock-full of hospital visits and sausage parties,
Causing casualties, jaws clenching, diseased arteries,
Stomach wrenching and sickness, addicted and listless, ridiculous.
What I will live with, I guess, is my business.
She stomps on his emotions, his want to live, his will to love
smashed.
He gives all he can, but stashes and squanders a smidgen for him-
self
To help rebuild and conquer once again, if or when the war is over,
So he can return home wholly restored.
Still, she wanders along, frolicking, skipping stones, hair tossed
In the wind, abolishing and dismissing policies of right and wrong.
Toxic, insipid, caustic and distant, manipulative at every instance,
Convincing all who will listen to join and follow,
Become one with this cult, this carnival for a lesser tomorrow,
With parlor tricks, illusions, and sorrow, ingenious and insidious,
Obviously oblivious to the fact that her actions cost more
Than her soul is willing to borrow. The toll for this road
Is compounded with interest. Empathy and care, goals and ambi-
tion
Are nonexistent until, finally, karma glistens and a glare shines

Level Five Jessica (Cont.)

From a distant light of the one whom we've all been missing.
She gets locked up and the fog clears, the cloud is lifted briefly,
Just long enough to reminisce and be reminded of all
The time pissed away and gifts wasted. Discreetly,
She whines, pleads, cries, and begs to be part of the lives
Of the people who stood by her side and prayed all the
Days of her life, who she despised and disposed of,
Was blind to and told off, lied to, and then, sho nuff,
Wants all to be forgotten and forgiven. Not likely, goodbye
And good riddance, you jive a** piece of s**t, grimy, dismal,
Rotten and despicable, trifling, garbage b***h. My heart is not
To be regarded as a dart board for target practice, nor
My niceness to be taken as a weakness - or advantage of.
I'm a man who loves and I'll manage to rise above
The flames and the ashes despite this evil trash and her
Serious lack of compassion. I'll get burned but learn from
My past and bounce back with patience and class, destination
Unknown, but at least I keep growing, maintaining, and
Keep on laughin'.

In This World

James V.

In this world where so many are willing only to see the light that is visible, but never the light that is invisible, we have a daily darkness that is the night. But we encounter other darkneses from time to time, one of which is death. Death of those that we have loved and lost, and the second and most constant darkness that is with us at all hours of every day is the darkness of the mind, the pettiness and meanness and hatred that we have invited into ourselves and our lives. And we pay out with generous interest and how passionately we love everything that cannot last, the flight of butterflies, the spring in bloom, a crimson sunset, the crystal beauty of a snowfall, a kiss, and life. So to know grief, we must be there in the river of time because grief thrives in the present and promises to be with us in the future until the end of time. Only time conquers time and its burdens, because there is no grief before or after time, which is all the consolation we should ever need.

Memento mori tuum sequere cor ab aeterno carpe diem: Remember about death, follow your heart for eternity, seize the day.

Who I'm Not

Chapo

I'm not the person to take your keys while you're sleeping
Taking your car for a drive, and as u wake up
The keys right as u put them
And I'm on the couch drinking, playing video games like as nothing happened.

I'm not the person smoking dope in the bathroom like you told me
not to bring drugs to your home

I'm not the person to lie to you as I did

Galaxies

IzzYe

beauty in the eye of the beholder
drowning in your eyes i feel smoldered

sun laying on my shoulders is like pounds of stress
thank god my mom ain't dead yet i'm blessed

every day & night i worry will she be there tomorrow
head like the galaxies full of thoughts and sorrow

i got my faith shooting stars
maybe for once my alcoholic family won't go to the bar

falling down a rabbit hole more like 3 flights of stairs
his brain is swollen i hope next time my cousin is careful beware

my brother's falling into my path
i'm sorry i failed you, you seen the fire of my wrath

i got about 9 months to go here, i'm scared to go back
like i said my thoughts are the galaxies eating away making my
heart black

galaxies laying on my shoulders is like a sea of stress
thank god i'm alive, i'm blessed

Once Upon a Time Part I

Collaborative Poem by the Women at LCJ

Once upon a time
a girl walked into a store
n fainted she was out cold
I picked her up and cleaned up the mess
when the mess wasn't mine, it's okay
I'll be fine. F**k it, who wants to the draw the line,
I'll step up, do the time, sketch out
the problems I didn't make
and avoid the very things that make
me the most sad.
So, I put on my rose-colored glasses
and pretend not to see who I
should really be.
In the end regardless I am me.
I will learn to forgive but not forget
and what will be will be
I will learn to grow and grow to learn.
Even from the worst situations
you can learn and grow
and learn how to live a happy life.

Once Upon a Time Part II

Collaborative Poem by the Women at LCJ

Once upon a time
I was a baller.
Then I shattered all that cause I was a
baller tryna get mine,
my time to shine—15 minutes of fame
is all I wanted.
So here I am in the spotlight with my
bright red lipstick and shoes
putting on a show, like mama always taught me
to dance the night away
until a pumpkin is all that stays.
So I close my eyes real tight and wish
for it to morph into Cinderella's carriage.
The clock struck midnight but my wish
didn't come true,
Here I stand with no hope at all,
but then all of a sudden, I was ok!
I was so glad it was okay—it was over.
Hu-hummm
Sparkles.

There's a Person Who Sits in the Corner

NoNameD

There's a person who sits in the corner away from everyone else's love and care. Their heart is crying out; there are people all around them, but no matter how hard they try, no one seems to hear them shout. Their life was once happy, full of love and care. They were always laughing; there was always someone there, but now with death and tragedy, their life seems empty and is missing something that is close by. What's missing, they don't know. They put on a mask and wear it through everyday. Their true feelings they don't show are kept locked away deep down. Their once colorful and cheerful life has turned so dull and grey. They once enjoyed their group of friends, now they wish them away; for when they're by themselves, they can break free from their shell. They can't let the unhappiness break free & unleash the devil from hell. Because at the end of the day, when everyone's in their beds asleep, the misery surrounds them and the pain it cuts so deep. They want somebody to listen, someone to understand, but when they open up, no one wants to lend a hand. So they wait until the sun finally sets to open once more. This time it's no longer words but results in terrible sores. These sores cry their tears at night, transparent but deathly red. As they cry, they feel a release from all the pain in their body. No one will understand this urge; it's something with no explanation. They feel the shame on their body but still end up doing it again. But they can't help the temptation when it arrives. Even though they know the harm, they just can't change what they do no matter how hard they try. But for now it's the only way they know how to stop the feelings of love & care because at the moment, they are invisible, no one knows they're there.

Untitled

Trigger 400

The skittish and fervent sound of inmates' shoes was akin to the scurry of clawed feet of rats in a race.

I felt like a herded sheep, controlled, like a powerless subject under a fascist dictatorship.

The incessant "tink tink" of an inmate locked down 23 & 1 slamming his head against a desk, awaiting the taste of fresh air, and the smell and sight of green grass was like an axe cutting mercilessly at the tree of hope.

The "pop pop" of cells being unlocked reminded me of a hand, slowly reaching towards freedom, only to fumble against yet another locked door.

The harsh and bitter yells of the deputy screaming "lock down!" reminded me of a lion tamer slapping his whip to cage a mighty beast.

The strained grunts of a cellmate working out reminded me of the soldiers, fighting for freedom, knowing the cost of liberty is never too great.

The sound of my heartbeat was like listening to the tick of a clock and watching its hands move slowly through another eternal hour.

Finally, the desperate sound of prayer reminded me of the embers of a fire being stirred and oxidized to re-light a dim candle of hope.

The Longest Battle

Killer Kay

Its seems to be just another one of those nights, Haven't found myself this low in quite some time, One row and three seats, Seems like you're light years away from me, Its surprising to me that I wept tears this late, With so much time between us, I assumed this would be easy, I have read your name for weeks, Separated your belongings from mine, Slept next to others from time to time, Even spoke about you to some, In all honesty I speak about you a lot, But since the last time I saw your face, That day I walked away, Have not shed a tear yet, Not until tonight, One row and three seats away from me, Watch a movie to keep me at ease, Distract myself from all the memories, All the plans made, Its crazy how we made it here, I'm going to Italy with the person I love, While he belongs to someone else, As I sit here and write, I also cry, I stare out the window of the plane, It's so dark you can only see the shadows of the clouds, Its strangely comforting looking out into the oblivion, It's beautiful how the atmosphere holds nothing, But yet it holds everything, The movie I watched reminded me of us, For the longest time I feared waking up to your feet no longer walking this earth, I tried to save you, In a way you saved me from myself, I read a quote today, "You know you love somebody when you can't hate them for breaking your heart" I could never hate you, And believe me I wanted to, I bet you don't ever think about me, You wore the flannel today, One of the last things I gave you, I figured you would have burned everything that had a resemblance to me,

The Longest Battle (Cont.)

Match the fire that burned in your eyes everytime you looked at me, It hurts me more than anything to realize that I miss you,
I had convinced myself that I no longer do, Started to believe my own lies too,
But seeing your face,
How you avoid any area I'm in,
You won't even look me in the face, I was told I should ignore you,
Thought I was strong enough to do so, But you're always better at that game, You can tell it hurts me,
At least I assume,
Bet you'll use it against me too,
I've been too far gone to come to reality, too busy is just a lie,
I've been drowning what remains inside, Just when I thought it was over,
I find myself right back at the starting line, When I saw you the last time,
I could tell you weren't fine,
Tricked me into thinking I was, This is the longest battle,
I never saw myself without you, After all the separations,
The people that came in between, I was never embarrassed,
I swore I would call you my husband,
Through all the bad I swore to myself to only see the good, Never thought we'd be here,
To be honest I never thought we'd make it,
I always had this feeling that one of us would die, I wish we could stay up here,
Make the clouds our home,
We'd be safe if we let the whole world drown, After everything we went through,
Following all the stuff I put myself through, I can't see myself with anyone but you,
I hope she makes you happy, I hope you don't miss me,
I hope that you don't have to fight this battle too,
One row and three seats,

The Longest Battle (Cont.)

This is the closest I'll get to you,
Can't let you know the sadness you've caused,
I'm fine with it,

One row and
three seats, Wish I could move,
I only want to lay my head on
you, Everyone knows,
I don't know who's more of an
outcast, Me or you.

Untitled

Whispers

Whispers on the street more
walking on sore feet and
look at broken dreams...sad
nothing's as it seems...mad
just play
watch our sorrows seethe
stop pray
tomorrow let us breathe
staying so low-key
oh that's so smoky
facing that infection or chasing that injection
where's my reflection..nowhere
straight rejection
no care...everything's a question
where is that avenue
is it here is it true
in the mission or on one too
the hard to love love hard
King of hearts yea there's that card
that street love sweet love
straight concrete love
flying high we're trying to die
but why
that's too much loss
some lines don't cross
I can't...I won't
please lost boys don't
on my knees kross...
where's my cross
at all cost got to be a boss
live hard be hard ride hard die hard
imagine what would happen if we all
just tried hard
thus implied...scarred

Untitled (Cont.)

once upon a time we all know we were down
conquering mountains only to drown
making tracks on the tracks
while breaking our backs
straight clownin
look at the chaos we left this town in
what it cost is my perfection
I got a start and I got my heart
it's in my possession
not another possession
not that charge nope
I'm in charge yep
forever humble
but believe me I won't mumble
understand me I won't stumble
I want you to know I don't want you to go
I see my reflection
no longer lost...no longer infection
I'm under my protection.

Drifting in Life

Joshua D.

Life is like a wave in the ocean. Every move is what makes each wave. It is up to you how calm or rocky your ocean is. Real love is rare to find, almost as rare to find a shooting star. Things that we do writes the song that is played when we die and it is called my life. Each move plays another note on the guitar of our song. Do we want to play a smooth melody or a hard core strum of the guitar? Do we face and conquer fear or do we let it play us like a puppet at a show? This is my life and I know my song, do you?

Untitled

Sadie C.

Sadie C. was pronounced dead, Monday March 25, 2019.

I am writing this to speak on her life. Let us not mourn but celebrate. She lived a short 19-year life but it was her best life lived. Not only was she loved but she was loving; to every person she would show affection, even if it was only a smile. She was kind hearted! Beauty showed inside and out. Everyone that knows her would say, she was one of a kind. A unique being carrying a unique soul. R.I.P.

Alone

SAD_BOYS_CLUB

i'm alone... alone in a world where there are supposed to be people. alone in a war that i fight as one. the bruises cover my body. pain in my ribs. hot tears roll down my cheeks. open wounds in my tender skin. i lay alone as i take my supposed "last breath." meds. overdosing. alone. pushed in the hallways. no friends. alone. parents. they don't love. they don't hate. they don't feel anything. they want me gone. dead. dead is where i want to be. away from this f**ked up world. i want to be gone. my nose bleeds. my heart pounds in my chest. left hook; i break his nose. on the ground, i lay crying. now, on my way back to "home," a place i call hell now, i'm alone.

Untitled

V.N.

What if . . . I was happy?
What if there was a switch to turn my emotions off?
If there was, I'd do it; I'd flip the switch off,
completely off.
So nothing could hurt me ever again.
Because the pain I feel is unbearable.
Because the constant anxiety is unbearable.
Because being constantly tired of everything is unbearable.
I'd rather feel nothing.
Because being numb and wasted is
much easier than facing reality.

Odium

Maria M.

I hate you
I despise you
The abuse, the pills
Who were you?
Hindsight 20/20
Somehow, Somewhere
Your punishment will be served
How could I be so blind?
You turned me into everything I was not
I lost myself for your approval
Almost had my life - Till Death Do Us Part
I'm alive somehow
Trust my gut - I did
You got scared & with all your selfish right, you won't win
I believe in reincarnation
Shall my body precede yours; I will see you again
Hell will not stop me then
My soul shall survive

PROMPT CORNER

We spent one workshop talking about odes. We made a list of three things: two things we loved, and one thing we hated. We talked about how it's possible to write a poem of praise about something or someone you hate, and how interesting the results can be! We each chose one item from our list and wrote an ode. Oddly enough, we all chose the thing we hate—and came up with some pretty great poems.

Numbness

NoNameD

Why anger? Why do I shut down? There's a plan for my life, but why do I have to break through all of this pain first? All my emotions surface as anger. I have experienced too much for my age. I'm as numb as a 90-year-old lady. All my experiences and memories were once beautifully colored; then turned red with anger and are now blurred to grey, numb. I cannot fully express my emotions; I sit in a corner and bang my head and fists. Isn't this what you taught me, to feel my emotions through physical pain? So don't you dare tell me to change my ways when they are so painfully put into me by you. This is how you taught me. Do you like the results of your teachings? All the "lessons" you taught me left me numb. Love-numb, happiness-numb, excitement-numb. Numb, numb, numb.

Enough
blondie

roses are red
violets are blue
but I can't say
the same about you
your story is different
and that's what I like
mysterious in the night
you said you loved me
but didn't really care
so I poked my finger
on a red rose thorn
because I was scared
then night passed
and the sun came out
once again I learned
I was enough

It Was An Accident

Whispers

It was an accident and we couldn't turn
away.
Captivated by the destruction we have chosen
to stay.
Now refusing to leave although we can't
breathe
It wasn't an accident
we intended so much
just one more touch...
it was an accident
to hurt each other intending only self-harm
it's not an accident we stand here
now arm and arm.

PROMPT CORNER

We all make associations with certain colors - maybe blue means sad or peaceful - or maybe something else entirely. Green might remind us of nature or jealousy or money.

Write a poem about the color red, or any associations you might have with it.

Or, write about a different color.

See Me

IzzYe

instead of looking at my actions
i wish you'd look at who i am...

you know i've smoked & injected
nonpharmaceutical drugs

i've never asked for this broken
record of charges & rehabs steady on repeat

insanity is doing the same thing
over & over and expecting different results

you see these diagnoses i have
gotten over the years – insane

i got scars on my arms
i try my best to hide em – but

how bout my heart

doing drugs is automatically
making me a criminal

throw me away to the dungeon
i'm a menace to society

my family dynamic has been chaotic
so just keep me out of home

to make it worse – i'm 18 now

you call me by my name i usually don't go by –
either my last or my bed number

Bad Self-Esteem

Yodabug

I have always had bad self-esteem but i have learned you need to have a thicker skin to belong within. Everybody always asks me why i have bad self-esteem but i could never answer cuz i felt that i didn't matter. The reason is because i have always been put down and hurt, that i just started to believe it myself. I hope one day i can learn to love myself. It all depends on how i see my life is worth.

Crimson Tide

Scooter McGavins

I follow her lead and together we move faster.
Into the hurricane.
Rocked by a
Death-soaked maelstrom,
EYE to EYE
With the person I hate, every flash
Of doubt vanishes
In red-hot bolts of lightning and pain.
No sense of wrong.
No sense of regret.
Everything is chaos.

Mr. Mordrake

Killer Kay

It was heavy and maybe a year ago,
On the island next to Italy,
That a sir visited there whom you may know
By the name of Edward Mordrake,
And this man lived with no other thought
Than to follow me and be followed by me.

I was a child and once so was he,
On this island called Capri,
We followed one another in a fashion in which there was no destination,
I and my Mr. Mordrake—
With a face that whispered thoughts fitting to those of hell
Pressured him to find stability in me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
On this island,
A crashing wave, bone chilling,
My kind sir Edward Mordrake;
The second face had spoke louder than any sound surrounding
Came and bore him away from me,
To chamber him in his mind
On this island of Capri.

The demons, only half way satisfied in hell,
Went envying him and I,
Yes... That was the reason (as we all know on the island of Capri)
That wave came out of the darkest night,
Crashing heavy and killing my Mr. Mordrake.

But we followed one another so passionately
Proclaimed crazy by those older than we—
Even those far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in heaven above

Mr. Mordrake (Cont.)

Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever disclaim my path
From that of the taunted Edward Mordrake;

For the sun never rises, without bringing me memories
Of the graceful Mr. Mordrake;
And the moon never sets, but I feel the dark side
Of that Edward Mordrake;
And so, all the night-tide, I look down upon
Of my graceful— my taunted— My double-minded man,
He's rested there in Capri—
In his tomb by the sounding sea.

Historical note: This poem was based on the legend of Edward Mordrake who was allegedly born with two faces, one that whispered diabolical things to him, causing his suicide at the age of 23. Also, this was a parody written about “Annabel lee” by Edgar Allan Poe.

Mullet

Collaborative Poem by the Women in Community Corrections

She had a mullet
And it flowed beautifully in the wind as she walked through town.

Her hair was long again after completely falling out
and she felt whole.

Or maybe she felt just fine and whole with no hair.

Beautiful, to not give no f**ks about anyone's opinion, she didn't
have a care in the world because she knew beauty comes from
within,

Beauty is only skin deep
It's what's on the inside that matters

So then why do we care so much how we look?
Are my thoughts and judgments only skin deep too?

I keep them in and around my skull, and I think if I fell over, they'd
all spill out.
Am I too clumsy for this world?

Or maybe the things are meant to come out and make the world
better.

Leg Hair

Collaborative Poem by the Women in Community Corrections

The hair on my legs grows like a garden

I like to shave in the dark

So no one can see how dark and scraggly my leg hairs are.

But I let everyone see my dark and scraggly armpit hairs,
Because I'm proud of how long they are.

One time I was riding my bike and I could feel my leg hairs blowing
in the breeze
It was awesome!

Hair is lovely flowing in the wind

So long and beautiful, she let all the town's children climb up her
long hair and braid it til sunset ends.

Then the devil came and cut it all off
No hair don't care

Interesting

Collaborative Poem by the Women in Community Corrections

Being sober is interesting.

I wish I could say that.

I feel like my mind is too small for that sometimes.

I wish I was bigger that way.

If I was bigger maybe I'd be better.

Maybe smaller is bigger like silence is dangerous.

As silence is dangerous, and as a lion
sits and waits in tall grass to hunt its prey.

I wait for you all day to be my bright light.

My night light, the one that tells the bed bugs not to bite.

But my charred heart burns bright too, and I don't think I need you.

And with that, she ran across the field
to join the other women at the edge of the forest waiting for her.

Selfish People

Collaborative Poem by the Women in Community Corrections

Let me tell you about selfish people

They come into your life whether they know they'll hurt you or not
Just so they won't lose the chance at knowing you.

But to just turn to another page
and start over again, takes such pain
because I don't wanna get hurt again

You say the same thing
over and over again

So then why do I keep believing it?
If your mouth is a broken record than my ears are too.

But you know better than I do that I love beautiful things,
even when they're broken.

Because I'm the fixer, and I can fix anything.

Maybe I don't want to finish anything anymore—maybe I can wait
in bed til he gets home and whispers: "you're in my web now and
I've come to wrap you up tight til it's time to bite down."

Fungus Among Us

Tamwise

I cannot begin to explain the determination I found myself in just then. In fact, I'd even lost all knowledge of the nature of the color of my skin. As there were no prejudiced requirements to partake in this new environment, what I can confirm to be true is that I found myself standing in the presence of the Great Mushroom Guru!! As usual, the national festival of love and light gathered hundreds, if not thousands, of minds likely to obtain ∞ on the subject, yes! I was directly in the heart of the who's who of fungus. "The reason the eat me/drink me thing is misunderstood by most, is because the real Alice died from a heroin overdose." Said the guru the hippy tending the fire who simply responded by scratching his beard and looking bemused.

Which System?

Cayne L.

Questions always a dispensation of future realities placed in thought. Hesitation quickly answered by emotion. The question? The question of others thought. Is my judgement a dissemination of another doctrine.

(Human Nature)

Recipes

Chef

Seafood Risotto

- 10 large shrimp (peeled, cut sm. dice)
- ½ lb. crab or lobster meat (sm. dice)
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot (peeled & fine chopped)
- 1 celery stock (minced)
- ½ cup red bell pepper (fine chopped)
- ½ cup green bell pepper (fine chopped)
- 6 cups chicken or veggie broth or water
- 2 cups Arborio rice
- ½ cup Italian parsley (chopped)
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese (grated)

1. Sauté seafood 5 minutes. Remove from pan
2. Sauté garlic, onion, carrot, celery, bell peppers for 10 minutes
3. Simmer broth or water
4. Add rice to veggie mix
5. Add ½ cup broth at a time (let rice absorb liquid before adding more)
6. When rice is tender, add seafood. Cook for 30 seconds - 1 minute
7. Remove from heat. Stir in parsley and parmesan

Recipes (Cont.)

Burger Patties

- 1 ½ lbs. ground round or ground chuck
- 3 Tbsp. bread crumbs
- 1/4 Tbsp. grated onion
- 2 Tbsp. tomato juice
- 3 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- salt/pepper (To taste)

1. Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl and mix well
2. Form patties
3. Grill or cook in skillet

Donuts

- 2 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp melted butter
- 1 cup milk or sour milk
- 1 tsp. salt

Sift:

- 3 ½ cups AP flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. nutmeg

1. Beat eggs, sugar, and butter until fluffy
2. Add milk or sour milk, salt, and sifted dry ingredients
3. Chill several hours or overnight
4. Roll out on floured surface. Cut with donut cutter
5. Fry in hot fat (lard, cirsco, or deep fryer)

Recipes (Cont.)

Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1 ½ cups Crisco or butter
- 2 cups peanut butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs (beaten)
- 4 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 4 cups AP flour

1. Mix everything together but flour
2. Add 1 cup flour at a time
3. Roll into walnut sized balls
4. Dip fork in milk and flatten cookie
5. Bake 350° for 8-10 minutes

Recipes (Cont.)

Ratatouille

- 1 eggplant (peeled, cut into 1" cubes)
- 1 Tbsp. sea salt
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 1 red bell pepper (diced)
- 1 green, yellow, or orange bell pepper (diced)
- 4 garlic cloves (chopped)
- 5 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 zucchini (1" cubes)
- 1 hot chili pepper (Jalapeño, chopped)
- 15 oz. or 2 cups tomatoes (peeled, chopped, seeded)
- ½ tsp. sugar
- ¼ cup basil (chopped)
- ¼ cup pitted olives (sliced or chopped)

1. Dejuice eggplant (salt eggplant, then drain) for 15-20 minutes
2. Sauté onion, bell peppers, and garlic in 2 Tbsp. oil
3. Remove from skillet. Add 2 Tbsp. oil
4. Sauté eggplant for 10 minutes
5. Remove and set aside with onion pepper mix
6. Add 1 Tbsp. oil. Sauté zucchini & chili powder
7. Remove and set aside with with eggplant & onion pepper mix
8. Add tomatoes. Simmer for 15 minutes
9. Add cooked veggies. Cook for 5 minutes
10. Stir in basil and olives
11. Serve over or beside rice

Time

Richard Cranium

Time will either promote or expose you
Miss me with the lies! We both know what is true
With me... when there is smoke there's fire
With you... it's smoke and mirrors you f**kin' liar
Playing victim with the smoke signals from your pow-wow
You used to shine bright, but your shady now
Your inner light casts a different hue
But on the outside it still looks like you
180 degrees is an about face
It happened so fast all I saw was you two-face

Time will promote me... And expose you
I'm currently adorned with the licentious lies you've brewed
But like a king, I'll elevate and arrogate through
I will conquer your salacious lies with savoir faire, cuz
The truth will set me free from the lies trying to ensnare.

Every action has an equal but opposite reaction
So pushing me down won't gain you much traction
Enjoy the taste of victory from this battle
You caught me off guard, knocking me off my saddle

Truth be told, my emotions had me shook
Loyalty mixed with misery and trickery
Was your recipe for tragedy
Magically turning misdemeanors into felonies

For a moment in time you had me stunned on my knees
Think you had me beat!?
B***h, please!

I have the heart of a warrior...
And the will to be King
So I dust myself off and hop back in the ring

Time (Cont.)

I'm in the fight of my life
Against the law and ex-wife
My unfettered ability to do as I choose
Is at stake, should I happen to lose
So I fight with every ounce of my being
Cuz it's my kids that I most wish I was seeing.

Time is hanging over my head and time waits for no man
So I aspire for Freedom as quick as I can
Whether I win or I lose is mine to choose
Losing a battle doesn't lose you the war
Champions win cause they know they are
I'm proud of who I am and what I stand for
I know I'm a winner cuz I've done it before
Now it's time to go get it!

Manifest

Misfit H.

Within and without the gates of this city
Let all that see Her and know not her name
Gaze longingly upon Her dazzling flame.

That star, she is mine.
And has been since the day I was born.
Witness Her rise in the clearest of morns.
Cross the southeastern sky as deeper she dives,
Defying the cycles of the Heavenly spheres.

Her purpose unknown though Her powers beyond
What any could learn in a 10,000 year span.

At Her alter I fall - has she made me a heathen?
Save no ground support me, no embrace forgive me.
For my words of before
Matter not as she soars.
“To live as stars die,
To burst, to shine, to glow”
I wrote that for you,
But even them she refutes.

For how can one love that which denies
All favor and fortune with just enough to
Survive?

Red heart, red heart
Her raspberry tart
Now beat it and stroke it
Til she comes from the start
Invoke not the Queen's Nine
With a hack, scratch and itch
Instead: One, Four, Three, Six
Manifest. Manifest. Manifest.

Untitled

TJ048

I was under age, still in high school, after a football game Friday night, I went and bought 2 kegs of beer. We planned to party all through the night. At the pits in the desert is where we will all meet. Stopped at the store to buy cups I planned to sell them \$5 a cup. Plan goes through we get there ten minutes late. I sell 100 cups in 10 minutes flat. Music going, girls and guys all having a good time. Then we look up at a spot light the Ghetto Bird Helicopter is above us so me and my buddy grab the kegs and threw them in the back of his 77 lifted 454 Chevy truck and when everyone went left, we went right. 4 wheeling to get away with the lights off of course. Helicopter still looking for us we hid out of sight. I profited \$500 and still have the kegs so we went to my house when we finally got away. Had about 20 people meet me at my mom's and we drank all night in the backyard.

If I, Would You?

Mario H.

If I wrote you a poem would you read it at night?
If I stood in the wind would you help fly my kite?
If I held out my hand would you take it?
If I pulled out a chair would you gladly sit?
If I cooked you some food would you maybe eat?
If I saw you freezing would you share my body heat?
If I saw you cry would you tell me why?
If I needed help would you ride or die?
If I wrote you a letter would you write me back?
If I chose you would you be part of my pack?
If I was your friend would you be mine?
If I took you out would you happily dine?
If we played in the snow would you have fun?
If in tag I was it would you actually run?
If I was in pain would you hold my hand?
If I gave you an instrument would you play in my band?
If I tried to explain would you finally see?
If I helped you out would you be all you can be?
If we sat by a lake would you watch it glisten?
If for hours I screamed at you would you listen?
This is my poem If I Would You
I really like it I hope you do too

Self Express

Monty G.

Self expressions make my reasons easier to explain
Why I'm caught up in the struggle
Trying to find pleasure in pain
Life ain't a game so why do we play like it is
Knowledge is power so how is ignorance bliss
I'm trying to hold on to reality
But I'm slowly losing my grip
Life full of pain try to forget
The ones who say they love me
Turn around and flip
Money obviously means more to man than loyalty
I'm the diamond in the rough
They can't tell that I'm royalty
So on my rise I take my time
Take deep breaths and close my eyes
And never forget the knowledge I hold in my mind

Untitled

OSIRIS

I feel Anxiety, a self torture of not knowing the outcome of a situation that you so wholeheartedly want to work out.

Nitty-Gritty - To get to the soil of it, it being an analyzation of self and mental imagery of a truth. If words could only paint that picture.

Self - A spirit having a human experience and realizing life is short and every moment is more important than the last.

Purpose - A destination of manifestation through one's thoughts. Perspective is everything

Writing - an expression of thought put in physical form to be brought back into a mental image of the writing's truths.

Relationships - Two souls connecting and its purpose is to learn how to make it work.

Voices

Grinch

These Voices in my head
These Voices in my head have a hold on me
That I have know way of knowing if I should listen or if I should Ignore I lost thought I have lost love and I have lost Freedom Because of these voices in my head I have Fought with these voices I have laughed with these voices and still sometimes I am afraid of these Yet sometime these voices have some good ideas sometimes they make Know sense to me. they confuse me and help me all at the same time Meds quiet them But sometimes I need their company I like it when it's quiet but I also like to listen to them what to do with these voices in my Head I will live with them until the day I am dead because these voices are me and my thoughts.

I love these voices in My Head
Because they are my own
Thoughts

Good In There

jw17

Some might say it's a weakness
to insist on seeing the good in every
person. It is there, even in those
more terrible than the French. Often
it is hidden under layers of bandages
and scars. Afraid to show itself
to another living soul in fear of
a vulnerable spot left open and
unguarded soon to be scarred.
Yet the good is still there!

First Meeting

OSIRIS

If I could meet you I would want it to be perfect. As perfect as your eyes and your hair, your smile. As perfect as you make me feel. I would meet you at my Best if I could meet you. We would meet with our eyes first then after a moment I might say something. I say might because to look into your eyes says it all.

Next

OSIRIS

Soundtrack to Life

As I listen to the music of an Orchestra I feel its inner meaning. It Stirs up all emotions that can't be Described with words. Words that Come to mind though Are Joy, Sorrow, Happy, Tragic, Sad, It's an emotional stalemate, I'm so lost in it that I can't really think, but I'm excited about life, To see what happens next. Music is the Frequency of Emotion.

Third

OSIRIS

I'm also imperfect as a person, I have Deep faults, Valley, and Tribulations. My Excuses only lead me in deeper, straight to depression. My self preservation of excuses is only a self righteous act to make myself feel Better about what I have done. My Lows are Low.

My Native

Killer Kay

A hickey left on my breast,
Midnight thoughts make it to where I can't rest, I wish of nothing
but to lay on your chest, Text messages left unread,
Expectations are nothing but a thread, Comfort in ripping the
seams,
But you can't reap what you sow until you learn what you teach,
Follow the heart but yet it skips a beat,
Spend the last of my finances just to make sure you eat, Watching
you work is one of the cutest things,
Kept at a distance,
Now I'm tripping over my self esteem,
You ask me what I want out of this, my only answer was consis-
tency,
But not entirely sure that's what I mean, I'm tripping over my feel-
ings,
Now I'm in too deep,
Asking myself the question of what I can do to get you to like me,
Just reminding myself this struggle is you and not me,
Craving more until I can't speak, I like the way you look at me,
You call me cute but it's not my appearance yet my personality, All
the things you say to me,
Leave me turning in the sheets, The things you noticed,
Like how I buried my head when I sleep, Our conversations used to
last all week, Now all the sudden I'm being left on seen,
Constantly asking for you to let me come through,
Who knew rejection would be so harsh coming from you, You'll tell
me I'm dangerous,
But yet in the same conversation tell me this is too easy for you, I'm
at a loss for words,
When I communicate,
It only confuses the mood,
I feel like I peer pressure you,
Yet sometimes you're the one that makes the first move, Mixed
signal,

My Native (Cont.)

Mixed feelings,
My only problem is I actually like you, But you're living in solitude,
It's now two am,
Instead of sleeping my dumb a** is writing a poem about you,

I send too many messages, My mind is in chaos,
All I do is overwhelm you,
I tell my self to stop sending them, To see if you end up missing me too,
This is why I stayed in toxicity for so long, it's too hard to find someone new,
You might vibe with them,
But they might only want you around when its convenient for them and not for you, When you asked me what I want,
I should have just told the truth,
I should have said I just want you,
Even if rejected I would have found peace in you knowing my truth,
I feel like I keep making the wrong moves, and regardless of the effort, I feel like it's all bad timing,
I'm just going to end up losing you too, You tear your self down,
Wish you could see what I see in you, So alike and so different,
Nobody is perfect for you, Just need to say sorry,
Because in reality I really like you,
Seems to be unhealthy for me and for you, Had to get my thoughts out,
My mind races and keeps me awake,
For some reason my heart actually aches, And boy does that make me feel stupid too,
Just need you to know you really are a good person, And every word I said is true,
I only write well when something makes my heart blue, I just wish I had a chance with you,
If I'm brave, If I trust you,

My Native (Cont.)

You might just read all this too, I feel like I blew it all,
So at this point I have nothing to lose,
I think this is my way of saying goodbye to you, Before I end up
drown in your waves,
It's a bad habit I'm used too.

PROMPT CORNER

Exquisite corpse is a method by which words are collectively assembled. Each writer adds to a composition in sequence, by being allowed to see only the end of what the previous person contributed.

No Do Overs

jw17

If I had to do it all over again I simply would not! I would have to go through those awful teenage years full of pimples, puberty, and these pretty popular mean girls. I would have to endure the awkwardness of that first kiss and the torturous breaking of my heart after each boyfriend that I was positive was the one for me forever. Not to mention having to look at myself in the mirror each day wondering just “who the heck am I?” To do it all over means all the wrong choices I could maybe make them right but I could also perhaps make worse ones yet. And if I did perhaps make them all right maybe I would still be looking in the mirror today still wondering who am I? No. I refuse to do it all over again. I quite like who I am today faults and all—after all that is what has made me

Me.

The Monster Known As Depression

NoNameD

If I were to show my true colors, what would people think? Would they laugh, show pity, or read the ink? I'm exhausted from smiling everyday when I know the pain will not just go away. Every night I struggle to fall asleep because my thoughts run so deep. They went out for a stroll but got sucked into a deep black hole. My focus is no longer there, anywhere. IDK why I'm like this, I swear. My friends all laugh and hang around. You don't need water to be drowned. This darkness consumes my mind; it's like I am living my life blind - on the outside, I'm holding it together, but it's unpredictable as the weather. How are you? I'm fine, but the truth lies between the lines. It's like you are on Mars, gasping for air, when they talk about the future, I don't really care. You say suck it up, p***y. But little do you know, what's actually wrong. This is war, you either die or win trying. You speak the truth or continue lying. The truth is you would not last long if "It" was in your head, but I've found a way to numb the pain. I have to fight my mind every second, but that's because this thing has beckoned. I would not ever choose to feel this way; these were cards I was dealt. My only wish is that more people would understand how I feel. When you were little, there were monsters under your beds, but now they're screaming inside our heads. I wish there was a day that would come & I would defeat this monster that's under my skin, but that day is yet to come.

Do You Remember

Joshua D.

Do you remember how life was as kids? Do you remember when you used to not have a worry in the world? Do you remember those nights we used to just sit up and talk on the phone about girls we liked? Please tell me, my pet goldfish, as you swim down the drain, do you remember?

My Campfire

Maria M.

I watch the smoke billow
The fire starts to consume
What used to be, a might old tree

With colors so amazing
A heat so intense
Shapes begin to emerge

The flames dancing their story
Embers explode; exposing another galaxy, not so far away
The ash lifts to the sky & floats on a breeze; shining like stars
above the molten seas

What once were splinters, have now become marks
of an ancient civilization
Showing only the hieroglyphic trails long lost to greed

The heart of the fire glows like lava
As red as the blood in my veins, burning ever so dark & deep
The heat begins to pulsate as it makes its way to the core

Reduced to coals & mounds of ash; the depths ever so deceptive
The beast still hungers, gasping for air it will never receive
A bridge I gladly burned when I was in need.

When I Think of You!

Avery K.

Your hair reminds me of a crimson blush inside a magnificent orange sunset. The ember inside of a fire beneath the dancing flames of yellow and blue, a color I can't quite name, "Wildfire" isn't the right word, but it's the word that comes to mind.

Your eyes remind me of a lush green meadow where a fawn may lay green like a hillside in late spring, like the underside of a riptide wave. "Oceanic" isn't the right word, but it's the first word that comes to mind.

Your skin soft as velvet, smooth as silk to touch. The tone that of a peach from somewhere in the south, radiant like a sunrise in early Autumn. "Glowing" isn't the right word, but it's the first to come to mind.

The sound of your voice delights me like the thrills of an amusement park ride, at the same time calms me like the breeze from the ocean side. It makes me feel at home. "Soothing", it's not the correct word, but it's the first to come to mind.

Your smile like a dose of medicine to a dying man. It's like a double shot of liquid joy to a sad little boy. It's opening a present on Christmas to find your favorite toy. "Contagious", I think that's the word I'm looking for because it's first to come to mind.

You are like a FIX to a junkie. Sobriety for a dry drunk. Oxygen to a choking victim. Enlightenment for a monk. A gem so rare and precious, one of a kind. "Perfect" is exactly the word I'm looking for, for it's the only one that comes to mind.

Untitled

Nic Mac

Thick morning fog hides the good,
The evil, the love, the hate, the
Struggle, and the release, thick
Morning fog says f*** you to the
Future and rips your eyes
Wide open to the current moment,
The now, the near, the close,
The next to me, the in front
Of me. The past and the
Behind me is covered and buried, forgotten and forgiven
Thick morning fog is the reality
Of current experience.

Circus

Nic Mac

Come one come all to witness the
Circus we call life. Practice makes
Perfect so paint your clown face on
To cover all the petty little flaws
And secrets that don't matter. Don't
Focus on the sideshow of mistakes that
Mold our mentality, but the main
Event. Put on the big coat of fake
Facades and jump on the back of
The elephant in the room, rip
Off the striped cloth from
The big tent and sew your new pants,
Wear them with pride, and show the
World what you have inside.

Demons

Kiky

appease the demons stirring within.
she didn't allow it to take root or last for long.
fond memories had a way of becoming like hard stones
that tripped her into a pit of despair.
the gun accepted no excuses.
its perspective had no gray areas.
what came from it was truth.
a final truth.
a terrible truth.
truth she and only she alone controlled.
she was a survivor of truth and tragedy.
everyone existed in the blissful
bubble of a false sense of security
and while we were all diligent about
looking for monsters in the shadows
none of us were looking for
snakes in the grass

6 Years

Alex L.

facing reality can tend to be scary,
especially with how much time it carries
but once you are in the process
& especially when you can't stop it,
there's nothing that will top it...
the feeling of moving on,
the feeling of giving in, the feeling of
pushing through, the feeling of a new you.
that feeling is one of a kind.
running from the truth
will make you blind, & then you will never
see, how good it can actually be,
so f*****g sit down,
and face reality.

I Live to Die

Ty B.

My name is unimportant.
My philosophy is unheard.
The way I live is dying.
I am one of a kind.
I share what I feel,
I bare what I've done.
I dream I can fly,
I love to cry,
I Live to Die!

Inside and out,
You can see my scars
 I live in fear, not afraid,
 Bravery my only spear
 My past is my strength,
 My Pride, only I can break.
 I Remember to Never Try,
 There is only "Do"
 I Live to Die.
 My Honor, my Truth.
 I am a Bull
 Strong at my feet.
 Stubborn, Hard-headed,
 Preyed upon by the Weak

The Matador, my Enemy.
The Tormentor, my envy.
The Arena, my life.
My addiction, my Death.
The show, my Fight.
His sword, my Might.

I Live to Die
 But Not This Night



*Here it is:
the new way of living with the world*

*inside of us so we cannot lose it,
and we cannot be lost.*

~Ada Limón~

OUR MISSION:

To create alternative literacy opportunities that work to educate and empower underserved populations. The Community Literacy Center supports university literacy research and outreach that promotes community action and social change.



