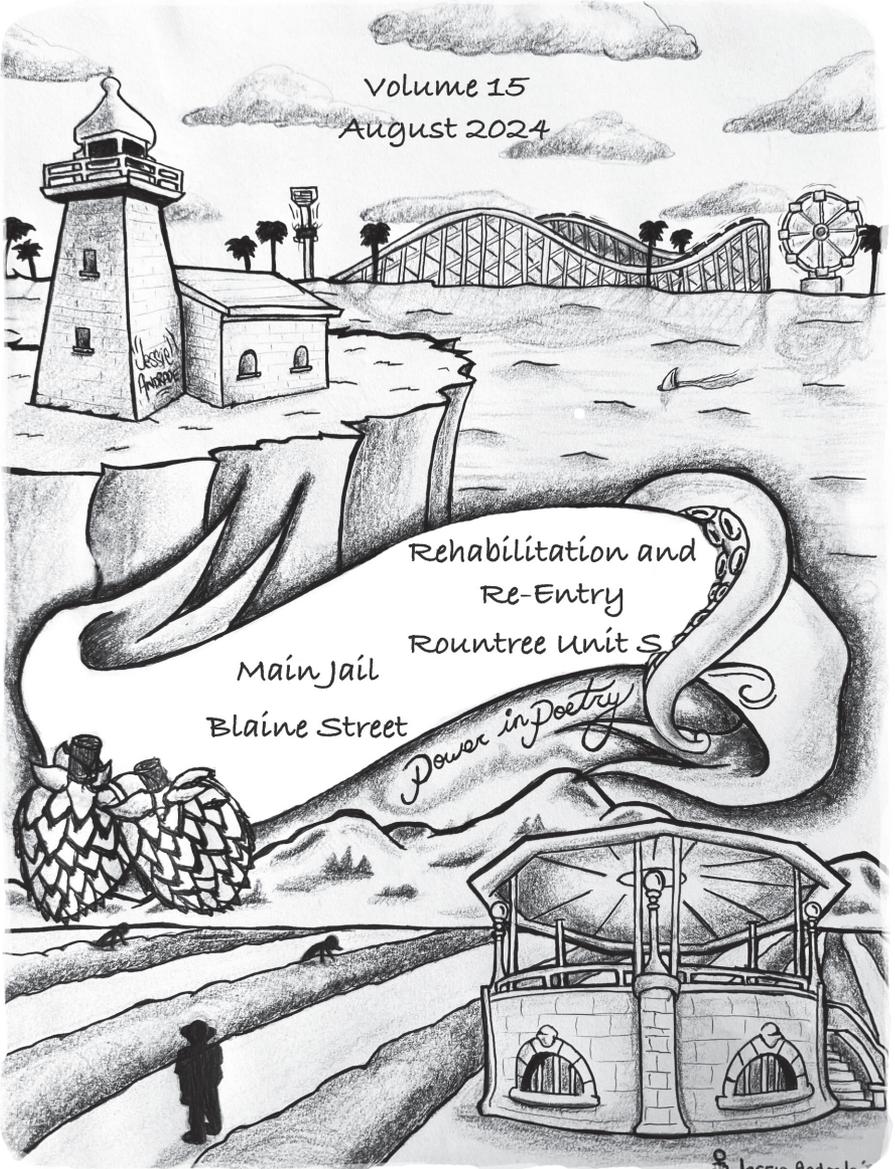


Volume 15
August 2024



Rehabilitation and
Re-Entry
Rountree Unit S
Main Jail
Blaine Street
Power in Poetry

© Lessee Andrews

Poetry by the Men of
Rehabilitation and Re-Entry

Rountree Unit S

Main Jail Unit D

and

Poetry by the Women of
Blaine Street Women's Facility

Main Jail Unit G

Santa Cruz County, CA

Volume 15

August 2024

Presented by the Santa Cruz Poetry Project

Poetry in the Jails

The Santa Cruz Poetry Project/Poetry in the Jails began as the legacy project of Ellen Bass while she was Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County, 2014-2015. Co-founder Nancy Miller Gomez helped create the program, oversaw its expansion throughout Santa Cruz County, and has been instrumental in its continued growth. Over the years, the SCPP has facilitated workshops and classes throughout the county, and with your support will continue changing the lives of incarcerated men and women one word, one poem at a time.

Thanks to the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department: Kristie Clemmons (Inmate Programs Manager); Edward Greene, Lisa Zack, and Polly Schulze Elser (Inmate Programs Coordinators); and the officers and staff of the the Santa Cruz County Jails. We are grateful for their dedication to providing programs and services to the incarcerated men and women of Santa Cruz County. We could not do this work without their professionalism and hard work.

Our website, poetryinthejails.org, will keep you updated on recent and future events. Please visit, and consider donating! Your donations allow us to provide dictionaries, composition books, and other writing supplies to our students; and help make anthologies like this one possible. We extend our sincere thanks to our donors.

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

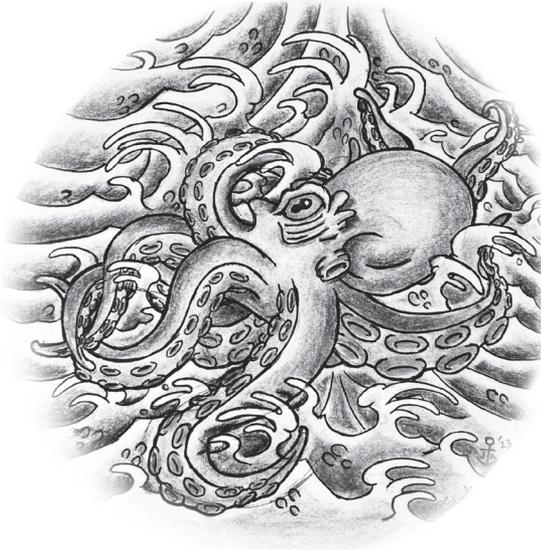
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Thank you to the poets who made this book.
Thanks to those who attended and participated in class, but
whose work does not appear. Please know that you were
seen, heard, and appreciated.

Thank you to Jessie Andrade for the cover and interior
illustrations.

"This isn't reality, it's just real."

Benjamin Goertz



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Roots

Jessie Andrade

I'm from strawberries
and four streets
field workers, sun beat
I'm from Green Valley & Pinto
Always known as the weirdo
From Mesa Village
playing ball
hoping she answers that call
I'm from the dirt
glowing up
always known as Jabba the Gut
I'm from the capital of hate
I wish people could relate
I'm from cotton pink skies
Baddie Bs with thick thighs
I'm from the beach being
5 minutes away
from the place my heart will always stay
I'm from the 831
and extremely proud
This is where I had my son. Δ

Collaborative Poem

Unit D Students Spirit, P. Gil, B.Goertz, J. Powell, S. Desroches, A. Travis, J. Williams

Dirty diapers, bathtime
You always gave me love,
which is all I ever wanted;
A power so strong.
Stay up late
Taking it for granted:
With all this, I can make whatever,
and then maybe Darkness --
A shape formed all on its own.
You bring me cool things
With no attached strings,
Time to be the fine line.
Oh! If the world was only concerned
with love and well being!
They smile and laugh.
All your fire comes from me.
She'll never be this young again.
A desire to always have it --
When you walk back in
I feel better in my skin. Δ

Is This Loss?

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

I can't remember the last loss,
People are not things and I am not possessive -
materialism does not become me,
All of my ideas seem to be my own. >

Home is where the heart is,
I still have mine,
Standing tall next to people that are more
than just pieces or parts of this,
lives lived well in the lights while shadows danced.

Bonsai me or bonsai the tree,
everything within my perception,
Protective of my own perspective,
it all looks like growth to me. Δ

Let's

Benjamine Goertz

A whale of an apology is quality equal
to silence by candlelight
Stellar stars iced overhead bring me
to my knees to reverse my wrongdoings
Is the keyboard to life enough
to teach me my patience
I think I'm slick as instant spaghetti or even
as smart as a digital sunflower
Stepping outside across my licorice welcome mat
I predict I will release myself today
The sun will scold me, a hazard I enjoy daily
like dear lava that is magical and refreshing
Away I go along the trail, I feel
his presence heavy upon me
I ask for strength in my new direction
please train my eyes to see clearly >

My curiosity is a channel I normally find impossible
for myself to forgive the power I bulldoze through
Sacred Snow I plow, never once noticing
a single apricot I still search for
The feeling I have is trapped in a tent
with the shark lurking outside. Δ

No Free Will

Cole Tisdale

Turn on the TV and it's BLAH BLAH BLAH,
Beer and drug commercials, one with Lady Gaga.
Spoon feed us the news from a silver platter
while planes drop bombs, and the world grows fatter.
Will we ever know the truth about this world thus far,
or will the powers that be keep our minds in a jar? Δ

Conscience

Josey Schwestak

All I see is AI when I open my eyes.
No birds fly, it's just drones in the sky.

When we ask why, all we get is true lies.

So I stay true to my soul,
cross my heart and hope to die.

All that social media is really just nonsense.

To open up your conscience, you
gotta be conscious. Δ

Video Games

Damian A. Gutierrez

Video games, how they take up my day.

Stuck on a level

feels like the devil.

The time will come

when I pass the game.

So lost in hours. There goes my day.

I play and play until

I get it right with all my might.

The time has become night.

I'm at my very height.

I passed the game.

The food I ordered came.

No more playing, I'll spend

the rest of the nighttime laying. Δ

The G-Pa

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

Cookies and juice,

weed and tobacco,

You and I, it's the same as

last show --

compliments that mean more than

forever,

You yell for help, smile and only

request conversation.

I press jute with headphones on

holding the controller to my playstation, >

You could care less,
as I'm vaping the latest top-shelf strand,
Calling me comrade, saying I'm a nice man.
I got another win today,
playing with both hands. Δ

School

Benjamine Goertz

Do I see clearly, like the fish in the water?
Do the fish see the water while they live?
If I see clearly, the fish out of water
must be placed back in the water to live.
Ever so clearly, I see the fish in the water,
but do they see me as they live?
Seeing this clearly, I catch the fish in the water
 in order for myself to live.
The water is clearly a life-giving element,
 a body in order to live.
So clearly this body of water for fish
 is the same body that's given to live. Δ

Bella

Brent Palmer

Her name came from her Great Grandmother from Spain.
The cobblestone streets with beautiful tiles everywhere.
The late night dinners, tasting the sea
and the freshness of the country,
the untamed hearts dancing in the streets,
that's Spain. >

I cut her cord from her mother.
Through stained-glass windows
she was baptized in holy water.
After a bath, the smell of her scalp, my favorite.
Playing hide and seek, watching her smile
when she found me - still sends chills down my spine.

Dance classes, cheerleading, I was there
to cheer her on. Watching her grab her diploma
from high school in the summer heat
was one of my proudest moments.

A proud father watching her grow up.
Now in college, her new chapter is unfolding
and now she is making her own life
and name.

Bella. Something to be proud of. Δ

To Be or Not To Be

Theodore Porter

As I seem to see
all that eludes reality,
its momentous purpose
with no cause.
Such a cause is but a pause,
a breath, an exhale.
Inhale to begin again,
and out, we die. >

No time for tears in our eye
with so little time to waste,
to cry, tears streaming down our face.
Be bold with joy and play and live
to fight another day and give
reason to be breathing.
No more haste to stand still
till we've shared, compared
and had our fill
of pain, the frame
of chains
unseen
that never could have been.
Not really, not now,
for we are always there
even if stuck in the past
or dreading the future.
Such a tapestry sewn
our lives woven together, shown
to be
All eyes and one see
even one breath
could be eternity. Δ

Untitled Poems (Fly)

Colin Tisdale

1.

Riding my bike, I swallowed a fly.
Wasn't trying to make the little thing die.
He flew into me - not the other way around. >

Almost lost my balance, and ended up on the ground.

Sorry, little creature, maybe we'll meet later

if we end up in heaven, meeting our creator.

2.

Maggots and flies, they're both related.

They show up on food - unrefrigerated.

Biding their time, and doing their work,

writhing and buzzing, where rotten things lurk.

3.

One of my favorite songs is called "The Fly."

Whenever I hear it, it kind of makes me high.

I really love the way it sounds in my ears.

It's been known to pick me up when I'm drowning in tears.

I'm sure we all have a song that really hits the spot,

a tune that lifts us up when all hope seems lost. Δ

Ebony on Ivory

Josey Schwestak

All black suit, ebony on ivory.

True things true, I know

she'll truly ride for me.

Can see her loyalty, know

she'll never lie to me.

Treat her like she royalty,

got a Queen on the side of me. >

I'm a real one 'cause
that's the only kind to be,

Something other than me,
that's something I never tried to be.

Can't put a price on life,
then why'd I die for free?

Don't say you down for me
If you ain't down to die for me. Δ

C'mon Now

Colin Tisdale

Sticks and stones can break my bones
but words will hurt forever.

When we fight like cats and dogs
it proves we ain't so clever.

So let's grow up and act right
before it gets too late
to recognize and clean up
this rotten mess we've made. Δ

Chair

Sean Bergman

The garbage truck
wakes me at 4 AM and I run
to put out the cans, remembering
a second too late. So I switch them
with the house across the way, where
the truck hasn't gone yet,
hoping I'll remember to switch them back later.
I sit in the yard
on the lawn chair my grandmother used to sit in
when I was a kid, and I let my dog
wander around the sleeping neighborhood
hopefully shitting in you-know-who's yard.
I remember passing out in this old chair
on a cold night after the bars had closed
and my mom didn't answer the phone.
My girlfriend had broken up with me
for staying out all night,
thinking I was with another woman.
But I was in the old chair that's always been there
when I need a rest.
And I'll never let it be thrown away
because, unlike all my old girlfriends,
it's always been there when I screw up. Δ

A Familiar Place

Julio C. Estrada

A cold rainy night again I am alone,
came across a reflection
to me this man unknown.
How did this happen, where did it go?
My level of frustration nobody knows.
I continue down the street
a steady pace
no set direction
but a familiar place.
Exhausted of the weight
I carry.
Floating down the dark river
a dead man's ferry.
I need her smile
I miss her face.
Please Mr. Ferryman
take me back to that familiar place. Δ

The Vine

Benjamine Goertz

Only should you
Listen to what
I have to say.
Vines give
Individuals essentially
All the fruit you need.

-- To Olivia Q Δ

Inhale

Theodore Porter

Mindracing, pacing in my mind and out
wracked by anxiety of thoughts of court.
Will I go to prison or will there be mercy --
shocked to say the first, though I was defending
an elder.

It's killing me sitting here thinking
ruminating on what could be, what will happen.
How much will it hurt either way, I pray
to continue to have hope,
but it seems there is none -- I'm broken.

I can't even write in poetry class,
I am just sick inside, ready to vomit.
How am I to go to class and focus
with such fear wracking my psyche, tearing
asunder over and over again --
will I be tortured to death or killed,
or will I get to live? Aren't I dead already?
Am I ever going to be free before I die,
or is freedom a myth we never experience,
just an illusion that's elusiveness, prolongs
our succumbing to death's gentle kiss?

Exhale. Δ

The Boy and the Coyote

Sean Desrochers

Trudging into the woods
no clear path set before me >

I aim to discover
if only peace of mind.

There appears a clearing
seemingly out of place
a shanty a ways away.

Distant laughter and a kettle's wail
ensnare my curiosity.

Continuing my encroachment
I notice a child
dirty boots, worn flannel,
a single oak leaf clinging to his back.

My greeting carries
through, goes unnoticed
unforced giddiness
the only thing at hand.

With skinny legs and a bushy tail,
the predator has its guard down.

It seems that both child and beast
are frolicking together
impervious to mothers' warnings,
leaping and running
through the tall grass, and the breeze.
I remained the spectator. >

With the corners of my lips now upturned
and nothing left to brood,
I retreat in the direction formerly trodden
with a sudden sense of glee,

for nothing, I surmised,
could've struck me as much
as the boy and the coyote. Δ

Untitled

Sean Bergman

"Horrible coffee," I say as I spit it
back in the cup.
"Guess you get what you pay for" I say,
accidentally too loud, and I'm shushed
by an old lady with a broken foot.
I look around the room at the chairs
set up in a circle and
I laugh to myself "Here we go again"
as I nurse a hangover, my ears ringing
from a rough night spent wallowing
in my own self-hate,
with a plate of poison and bad choices,
in a cup of shame and sorrow
living life with a half-full glass of No Tomorrow.
My guess is the dude across from me
is in the same boat, as it's written on his face
just like a broken mirror, and that's always
what I see in this place. >

I feel at home and far from it
and my comfort corner coma double-lit melted candle.
But I knew that when I walked in
and it was written on the handle.
So I sit and try my best not to talk
and try to listen when they say my story
but distorted
and I think of things to say. Δ

Love

Anthony Travis

Love hurts, it burns, it turns.
Love is forgiving and always,
no matter what.
It's true it has no end,
it keeps going whether you want it to
or not.
It rips through all feelings
and does not care.
It lies, it cheats.
It's unspoken and forgiving
and fears nothing.
It has no walls and does not care.
It's all or nothing... Δ

Dream On

Sean Desrochers

Take me away
to another dream theater
The free escape
for the unloosed mind.
Let me soar the heavens
and explore the depths,
wander the forests
and swim through the seas.

Turn your back on me
on reality
let my imagination
fabricate at will.

It is in losing touch
with the conscious
that we can supplement emotion.
What a beautiful gift it is
to dream a little dream. Δ

Life's A Song

Larry Martinez Escandon

As life goes on, I carry on
There's so much joy within life's song.
I live and laugh.
I long to grasp, I'll inhale
deep till I reach my last. >

I hope and pray for one more day,
as Christ I love,
through Christ I'll lay myself
to sleep for one more day. Δ

A Trip Down Overdose Lane

Julio Estrada

I feel like chewed-up hay.

It's been dull, need I say.
In my head far away,
near a river did I stray?

Some say "It's life, turn the page."
But clueless are those who don't see my stage.
The blissfulness of death I did once feel,
then back to chaos, it was unreal.
Annoyed by this noise, I want to be alone.
I asked "Can I please go home?"
Questions continued to rain,
SHUT UP, can't y'all see my pain?

Then an angel with green eyes entered my room.
Boy, did I feel a released, set-free balloon.

She said "What would I do if you were to die?"
Fear for my angel, yes men do cry.

Honestly, death had been blissful for me.
I'll pray for you so it won't be hell for thee. Δ

Idearrrrrr

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

I'm not certain I've ever
been to hell.

I don't think I've ever died,
for nearly 33 years I've been alive.

It's hard to say if I've lived more
than the next man.

I think I prefer solitude more than most,
not for the lack of good company.

I think I enjoy my company the most.

This life is worth living,
at least I think it is,
even if it is mostly
alone. Δ

Grateful Day

Josue Ramirez

What a lovely day today
With the sunshine, and no rain.

A clear mind with no pain

Love, respect, loyalty I have gained.

No problems, no worries, no blame

Me, myself, and I, having no shame.

Having a great fun time without playing games,

Thinking outside the box,

Open mind,

Do you know what I'm saying?

Thankful, grateful, thinking positive, that's how I'm praying. Δ

Heaven or Hell

Larry Martinez Escandon

I see a Heaven throughout this Hell,
This life is burning but all seems well,
I love the thunder that tears through skies,
I look up to you and wonder why.
You give me strength with so much guidance,
I pray you keep my soul when silenced,
I love the noise cuz trees do talk.
For you I'm solid and turn to rock,
Please never leave me,
You're all I need.
You're like the sweetness in fruit that seeps,
From sweet to bitter, please do not cry,
For everything "one day" must come and die. Δ

The Undredged Harbor

Brent Palmer

The man in the mirror,
tall but internally weak,
he looks beyond the face.
A cold wind rips through his body
like a winter storm.
His blue eyes filled with sorrow
for the lost years of his child,
carry the same chill in them... >

Like a boat stuck in the harbor
on the sandbars that are not dredged,
he knows that feeling so well...

Praying for the sandbar to go away,
to free him to the unknown sea,
for one last chance to lift the mast
and catch that wind,
to feel peace again. The ocean's storm
he knows too well.

Now the sun beats on his face.
He can finally breathe,
smelling the salt air, watching
the birds diving into the gleaming water
for their meal.
He knows everything he needs
is all around him.
Waiting for him with open arms. Δ

2024

Cole Tisdale

Watchin' the tube, we're bombarded with shit,
senseless dramas, even one's about poppin' zits.
They're workin' overtime to dumb us down,
dancin' puppets and laughin' clowns.
It's hard to watch, and hard (not) to watch.
Hey, did you see the one about Sasquatch?
The election cycle is on full blast,
dividing us all based on race and class. >

Not really sure how we got to this place,
but everyone's racing to outer space.
What the fuck are we gonna do on Mars?
Build Walmarts, McDonald's, and topless bars?
With all of the problems we've got right here,
there's enough work to do to keep us busy for years. Δ

I Think I'm OK

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

I have nothing to say,
please don't look at me,
that's why I walked away.
I sang a song today,
the window was closed,
the words were muffled,
alone with my thoughts.
I drew an idiom of emotions that shuffled.
Press play,
stare at rewind,
delete to clear up space,
sending messages to myself
to see if I'm OK. Δ

Medusa's Love

Jessie Andrade

Open, shut

open, shut.

Do my eyes deceive me?

How did I end up at the gates of Hades?

It's surprisingly cold down here,

colder than my ex's heart.

This is where love has brought me,

oh man, where do I start?

Curse you Ares for fueling my veins

with fiery rage

To the point of regret

in my old age.

I should've listened to Aphrodite's wise words

instead of listening to all those birds.

My love ran deep like Poseidon's oceans.

She fell in love with me as well,

I swore we were chosen.

Hercules give me strength,

Hermes give me speed,

Tell me what is this I see --

A beautiful angel dropping from the sky,

yet I hear someone shouting

"Don't look her in the eyes!"

I turn around, I'm standing here alone,

it's too late,

I'm turning into stone. Δ

My Happy Place

Brent Palmer

It's 7:00 AM, the smell of fresh-cut grass.
Each blade gleaming in the morning dew,
the sound of birds chirping in the trees,
waking me up from the inside out.
The sun rising from the East, sunglasses go on,
taking the three white balls from the sleeve
with the letters "BP" already Sharpied on each one.
Looking down this beautiful fairway designed so perfectly,
knowing in a couple of hours the grass and sky
won't look the same,
nor will it smell the same. Everything changes!!
Minute by minute.
Savor the moments that are your favorites.
Take it all in, hold on to the birds chirping
in the trees, being on the course doing what you love,
because the next hole is changing! always! in my sport,
and always in life. Δ

Question

Spirit

Pushed out again
When will this nightmare end
Always forced to go with the flow
Always not being allowed to know
Always struggling to enunciate
Always fighting to communicate
Pushed out again >

When will this nightmare end
Always feeling the emotional toil
Always wanting the control
Always pretending to not be weak
Always told you cannot speak
Pushed out again
When will this nightmare end
Always hoping it will be alright
Always looking for the light
Always wondering what's to come
Always keeping me under their thumb
Pushed out again
When will this nightmare end
Always jam packed full of fear
Always praying for a good new year
Always suffering from it all
Always waiting for the fall
Pushed out again
When will this nightmare end
That's the only question that I have, my friend Δ

Who Owes Who

---- never ----

Benjamine Goertz

If they had never lied
I would have never been here
and everything would still be okay.

If they had never lied
I would never have fallen
and see such light as I do today. >

If they had never lied

I would have never realized
that life intends a new way

If they had never lied

I would have never seen this
and to that I can never repay. Δ

Let 'em in (A Pantoum)

Jessie Andrade

He never shuts up, no matter where I go
Can't think straight, he's too loud
So irritating, he's making me think slow
It's too late, my head's in the clouds.

Can't think straight, I'm too loud
The voices in my head are overpowering
It's not too late, I don't have to bow
Feels like the devil's standing over me, towering.

The voices in my head, are voices of reason
Accepting the thoughts surrounding my mind
Feels like the devil's gone for the season
Loving myself, for the first time.

Accepting the thought surrounding my mind
He never shuts up, no matter where I go
Loving myself, for all time
He's so irritating, but's just God, bro. Δ

Incarceration (A Pantoum)

Shadley Stephens

The cuffs go on again,
As always, slightly too tight.
I fall asleep in the back seat,
“Wake me up for court.”

As always, my cuffs are slightly too tight,
My eyes pop open to my name being called.
“Stephens, wake up for court!”
Let’s fucking get this over with.

My eyes pop open to my name being called,
As the judge looks over my case.
Let’s fucking get this over with.
My bunk is calling my name.

As the judge looks over my case,
She scowls at me with disgust.
My bunk is calling my name,
Let me finish my sentence in peace.

She scowls at me with disgust,
Through the video chat tablet screen.
Let me finish my sentence in peace,
I don’t need your negative energy.

Through the video chat table screen,
I fall asleep in the back seat.
I don’t need your negative energy,
As the cuffs go on again. Δ

Don't Push the Golden Shovel

after Sublime

Jessie Andrade

I can't regret what I did because if
I did, I wouldn't be who I
am today. I had
so much time but made a
choice, to stop riding shotgun
in my own life. You
only see what I want you to see, but don't know
how hard it was to go through what
I went through, I'd
sit back and watch people do
terrible things. I'd
get to the point
where being verbally abused was normal, that
I was never gonna amount to shit.
In the end I had to think straight.
It was too much at
first, but one day I looked at the
sky
and asked for forgiveness and
I shot my shot
asking if he will allow me into heaven.
I'm getting released tomorrow and movin' on
10½ months down
and I know you've been waiting for
me, Daddy's coming home a changed man and I did it for you. Δ

Marigold

A Golden Shovel after Mahogany L. Browne

Shadley Stephens

I carefully pick each
subject like it's a flower.
I hold them above me like a
gift to God, just not those wilting
by an overly vicious sun.

There once was a time when the
idea didn't scare me, the idea of death.
The soul leaving the body in
which it's lived for quite a
long while. The soul starting a new
chapter like it's another day,
and this new beginning is
one with God's promise to never
treat you in a way that isn't kind.

No more unfortunately experience of grief,
for this feeling definitely ain't
a feeling to be felt by no
soul in the kingdom of heaven's sweet song.

The afterlife is no-
thing to be seen as a loss,
but surely is
a blessing at the end of this
beautiful marigold of life so romantic.

△

Spyder

Sean Bergman

Part 1

On sunny days I sit
and wait up in my favorite
corner, a summer breeze
or morning mist.
I tightly hold my moving lines.
In my firm tight grip
they find themselves
within my grasp
to catch my dinner
that's my task.

Part 2

First light or midnight
dawn or dusk
this is when I know you hear
me. I don't have to look for to see
a sign. I know your footsteps
are not far behind mine.
These things I'm content
to keep to myself. Δ

Man-Eye-Fest

Benjamine Goertz

You get what you give
and I got nothing
this is one to remember
and I will.

Next time I will try harder
excuse me

Next time I will try
let me rephrase that

Next time I will
or even better yet
I am.*

*Speaking into existence. Δ

Peregrinate

Sean Desrochers

Another year slipped away
that chapter has come to a close
it ended the reign of innocence
the era from which I arose

With misty eyes I waken
reverent to dawn's first light
fresh dew ladens the clover
while gentle songbirds take flight >

I reflect upon the journey
a culmination of stories apart
and envisage what's calling me forward
the next path on which I embark

Gripping emotions consume me
without vanity I'll admit my fear
though the pastures lie greener before thee
they summon one alone, my dear

This trail of a thousand miles
must begin with a single step
needed is the courage imparted
by those for whom I've wept.

Meandering forward with a sense of vigor
chasing the horizon into the night
A fresh adventure calling upon me
Fate alone knows my plight. Δ

My Tattoos

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

I've spent more time
getting tattooed
than I have
with women.
I think they look cool.
My stepfather calls it
tattoo therapy.
I'd say that sounds right. >

they all mean something to me.

I regret nothing,

I enjoy looking at that. Δ

One Million on the Odometer

Sean Bergman

Old dirty workclothes.

100-year-old telephone poles.

Consequences.

First dates and high school dances,

Second chances. Ride 'r' die old trucks,

hard beaten leather boots

with my name on the inside.

Redwood trees in a grove with mile-long roots.

Broken windshields. Apple fields.

Pizza boxes and a hundred sunbeat old mailboxes.

One foot in the ocean, one foot on the grip tape.

Homegrown. Δ

The Moon

Benjamine Goertz

Brings blood

Brings tides

Brings lunacy

Brings harvest

Brings energy

Brings moments

Brings light

Brings love Δ

Fossil

Sean Bergman

I hold the fossil in my fist
and try to guess how old it is
and how things have changed so much
in thousands of millions of years.
Nobody knows how things were
back then but Science dares us
to throw guesses, even when the past
shows us how little we know,
like a thousand libraries built out of sand.
As I hold it until it's warm in my hand,
pressing it into my grip
like carbon being pressed into a gem.
I think of my father
digging it from a pile of dirt, rocks, and rubble
under a bed of thorns and weeds.
I picture civilization
crushing life and vast empty ancient oceans
under the feet of people
who consider themselves elite. Δ

Cruz County

Jessie Andrade

I'm almost out.

I can almost taste freedom:

no, not the street,

but I can hear my son's heartbeat

from 300 miles away.

Best believe this won't

be the place I stay.

Look, Santa Cruz is gorgeous:

trust me, I know.

Unfortunately, it isn't

somewhere I can grow.

I'm not one of those tourists

who visits the boardwalk,

you know, the ones who forget

to put on sunblock

the ones who scream

"Oh my God, 72 degrees, it's so hot!"

Thinking they're cool

cuz of their Guccis, store bought.

Yes we got cotton pink skies

and baddie B's with thick thighs

thinking back

we even have gay pride

strawberries and apple cider.

But I need to grow,

think wider.

The strawberry festival and the 4th of July parade

I'm just tired of people here

>

and all their shade.
From the Santa Cruz Fairgrounds
to the one Target in town
there's nothing to do
I need to get out now.
Dude, we don't even have a mall,
To be honest, I believe that
sums it all.
Santa Cruz, you'll forever have my heart.
This is where I leave my past
and bury it in the dark.
Santa Cruz, I'll forever love you.
I hope and pray one day
the people will change, too.
I hope my message was true and clear:
Please keep Santa Cruz
Forever Weird. Δ

Strings Tighten Silently

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

The spider cast its web
too thick for flies to abandon,
dawn shows the play in full,
gray once where there was --
a story that didn't know it was ending. Δ

Untitled

Sean Bergman

Sunset. Cold sweat.

Heartache. Regrets.

Gas fumes and smokey old
pool rooms.

Old guitar playing
my favorite tunes.

To some people it looks
like a dive bar.

They say, Man you still
driving that old car?

Some people see tattoos
and old scars.

We watch football on Sunday
Go to work on Monday. Δ

Family Heirloom

Rex Bertram

Antique wood opened up
smells of family and love, wishing
I could have met my grandmother.
Papa never talked of her, >

Guilt weighed hard.
Alcohol weighed equally hard.
Animal crackers and chocolate milk,
the first Chucky movie,
me and my brother curled up scared
(well, he cracked up). Moments
of remembrance, smiles and shrieks,
Golden Gate Bridge, salty ocean smells
mixed with Zest soap.
Love doesn't die, immortal in its essence,
tide rising in a dark cave,
laughing, scared, and loved always --
lasting memories. The Big C
brings saddened days, but always in my prayers
as my uncle and grandmother, through papa.
I felt and smelled their love, their possessions
and smells and papa, passed down
as a family heirloom.
Rest In Peace. Δ

Untitled

Theodore Porter

To ponder
what's written
in the time given
as I'm sittin'
stuck on a page
stumped in the cage
of writer's block; >

or at least I thought
until I looked at the clock
as it went tick tock
and began writing on the spot.
Who'd a thunk it?
I'd slam dunk it.
This requiem of writing
still the struggle fighting
as my time seems bidding
to move on
in song
to this poem's brother.
Oh I wonder
what's next
am I hexed?
Let me check....
No, free-flowing intellect. Δ

Bad Hair Day

Anthony Travis

Bad hair day, no shower,
walking around like I'm the only one
on the planet.
Caring lots....hygiene
on strike. Poems flow straight
out of my mouth and out the doors.
Lazy and creative....I'll make them about
grabbing your mind and dragging you
through a keyhole -- free child imagination.
Let's roll, let go of everything, >

down the rabbit hole we go.
Land of good books and blankets we go.
To the other side we go! Δ

Still Here

Josey Schwestak

The sound of the fan
lets me know that I'm still here.

Thoughts of no change
remaining the same
let me know that I still fear.

Though the glass is foggy
the vision is still clear.

So just reach forward
and slide your hand down the mirror.

All in good time, know that
freedom is soon near.

But the sound of the fan
lets me know that I'm still here. Δ

Follow Me

Josue Ramirez

Just follow me from the different roads I travel
watch me carefully, and try to understand me.
When you take a left, I take a right.
When you're inside, I'm outside.
When you're sleeping, I am awake.
It's impossible to catch up to me.
I notice you, I can see your movement.
You keep a distance, but I can hear you.
Why try to copy my style? What's mine is mine.
I'm underneath the surface
and you're on the street in broad daylight.
I'm in the storm, and you're in the clear blue sky.
I'm ready for war, and you're ready for peace.
I'm looking for peace, and you're looking for war. Δ

Lifelong Addictions

Rex Bertram

Brought on my heartache
A simple Tylenol for my headache
Incarcerated, I went past first base.
Psychiatrist sees me for thoughts I might break.
Into my sentence, leaving most of my ache
my Wellbutrin feels euphoric, or is it just fake?
Living my life, what is my fate?
But knowing it's something greater than great.
One day they will open that door and that gate.
For now, it's poetry interrupted by medication. Δ

Suboxone

Colin Tisdale

I'm kinda likin' this noddin' routine
It's government dope, so I guess I'm clean
Get up in the morning to get my dose
Nurse there with a flashlight, gonna get up close
Tongue out, open wide, gotta show the staff
Their inspection of my mouth's enough to make me laugh. Δ

Ghosts

Kylan Moreland

Ghosts are great, they hold our memories
and have to scare.
They remind us when what we do is fun.
They remind us to pay attention
so History repeats itself. They
hold onto our wisdom
and know our names.

They can deal with curses
and kisses
and problems, and
are always draped in
miracles and blessings.
They show courage
when petals fall.
The snow is white. >

Just like the snow,
may they land on marshmallows
when they fall.

I'll always have
a Ghost
at my birthday. Δ

“Up-Dates”

Diogenes Arnold Jasso

When I was younger
I would meet people I felt I knew
in a past life.
I'd tell them I feel like an old soul.
Occasionally now I get the same feeling
only now I feel like telling them
“I told ya so.”
I no long feel like an old soul.

I feel like a force of nature,
staring out at the ocean
feeling like it understands me
and nothing else does.

I feel smug,
like I was right the entire time
and I've never been wrong.

In my heart I know
I'm not wrong about myself. Δ

Prayer

Josue Ramirez

Breathe in, breathe out
Watch the butterfly move its wings
Freedom is near
And a teacher to the law is here
Sing the song of freedom
Look into the moon for answers
The eye of the storm is bright
United we stand
but individually we fall
Just like the sunrise
We are in darkness,
then light! Δ

Being Born

Troy Talamante

The angel is before me
as I look upon her,
is this real, is this the end,
is this the beginning?
Thoughts rush through
my unconscious mind, why such
light around this being? Is this
an angel, or is this something
entirely different?
I feel cold, but as it fills the gap
between us, anger, joy,
feelings, thoughts -- >

my body, mind, soul is feeling
closer closer, creatively,
as innocence is slipping away --
with a new breath, from water to air,
some new struggle to keep my sanity
and innocence.

I go through the opening
into reality.

My innocence is forever lost. Δ

Death

Shadley Stephens

When death strikes
the soul just kinda dips out.
The body becoming empty
a useless vessel without a doubt.

When death strikes
loose ends are left untied.
Relationships left broken
when closure is denied.

When death strikes
the soul can get stuck.
Reluctant to move on,
until it tidies up the muck. >

When death strikes,
it's really hard to comprehend.
But to those who loved them dearly,
they wear big smiles and pretend.

When death strikes,
you're reunited with those you've lost.
Reunited for eternity
which actually makes it worth the cost.

When death strikes... Δ

I in Eye

Theodore Porter

The pain recedes
A moment's pause
now I can breathe
but know not the cause
of it taking
the worst of pains
but what remains
is change
given
in death and rebirth
for sure no curse
But a gift in disguise
How was I to see
with no eyes
though reaming with them
did birth a gem >

ready to be set
in a ring
and bring
for joyous tears
Here! Here!
Here we are!
So far we've come
in a little short run
What is next
the setting's context
a life
where death preceded Δ

Harvest

Benjamine Goertz

Plant soul seeds
 for future gardens
Take time apart from the world
 to rebuild yourself
The spirit heals
 as the clouds rain
Your pain means you're growing
 fruits of wisdom
Cherish the moment
 Reap what you sow
 Love grows forever Δ

Love

Clayton Cummins

Everytime I call Love appears:
over the phone, Love in the air
when she is around.
Everywhere I go, she
is by my side, even when we
share a big glass of wine,
the smell of pine in the room.
Our love lets us shine.
No matter how high the doubts go
we stay combined, like everyday
we stay aligned. Δ

Big Brother

Spirit

Big Brother I got you
I know you miss him so
Big Brother I got you
When things upset you that I don't know
Big Brother I got you
Always when you are sad
Big Brother I got you
When things are making you mad
Big Brother I got you
She has her hands filled up
Big Brother I got you
So can you share with me your big boy cup
Big Brother I got you
Don't forget to eat your food >

Big Brother I got you
Let's play to change your mood
Big Brother I got you
I'll help you with all your schemes
Big Brother I got you
I know it hurts you more than me
Big Brother I got you
He will be back soon you'll see!
Big Brother I got you
So please don't lose your grip
Big Brother I got you
I got you Big Brother don't trip Δ

Free Ink

Benjamine Goertz

One day to be lucky
as the ink in my pen,
being set free amongst this poem.
As loud as a shadow
as seen as a whisper
this ballpoint in movement
I am home... Δ

That's What I Thought

Jessie Andrade

Someone told me poetry's not art
that's like telling me you don't like cookies.
Art's everywhere
From the way you walk
to the way you talk >

To the clouds that look like turtles
to life's greatest hurdles
to the way that buildings are made
even all the foods I crave
I'm telling you poetry's art
even to life's tiny fart. Δ

BREAKFAST!

Benjamine Goertz

Deep into my blissful slumber
 inside of my american dream
 someone yells
I hurry and grab my tattered shoes for war
 climb down from the tower
 stumble through multiple bodies
 so many unrecognized faces
 and wander directly into the destroyed facilities
It seems like a bomb has gone off
 smells even worse
I wash my hands of it and pass through a door
 to make my way into what appears to be a line up
 I am now one of many in pursuit
One by one, each are picked off then gone
 it's now my turn, my time to shine
 showing my badge someone tosses me a bag
 I smile and walk away
March back to my station and climb up
 remove my shoes and journey back into my dream Δ

Falling Asleep

Jessie Andrade

I lie awake at night
thinking of her
thinking of all the things
that get on my nerves
Thanking God
for the bridges I've burned
and making sure I don't listen to birds.
This one goes out
to the ones who can't sleep
to the ones who do drugs
just to count sheep
to all the wounds that cut deep
Don't be afraid to take life's leap
To the ones who tried taking their life
Thanking God I'm still alive
I lie awake at night
with the lessons I've learned
and making sure they don't re-occur
I lie awake at night
with all these thoughts
I'm getting sleepy
I think, I need,
to sto...p...z...z...z Δ

Without a Tear

Josue Ramirez

At last I can breathe again
It seemed like forever that I was trapped behind these walls
I can see all the bright colors shining all around
The smells are great from all different places
The faces are new but at last I can see all new things once again
New experiences
New faces
New names Δ

Justice

Spirit

OK time's up,
for far too long you have drank from my cup.
The time is now for me to go,
I wish you the best of luck my foe.
I have things to do outside your cage
so do me a favor and curb your rage.
All you do is take take take
why don't you try something else for god's sake.
You have so many people inside your grasp
well guess what bitch I'm no longer your task.
You're nothing but a lie that claims the truth
you're never going to change and there's so much proof.
You ruin more lives than you protect
because your motives are twisted to make all a suspect.
This needs to stop and be more clear
so everyone can cease to live in fear.
You were created to keep order >

and be for the greater good
but now you are a predator in a big black hood.
OK times up,
For far too long you have drank from my cup. Δ

Endless Dream

Jessie Andrade

The dream that started it all
The dream that was a tragedy
The dream that was just a strategy
The dream that became my enemy
The dream that was a parody
The dream that that was a comedy
The dream with a PhD
The dream that put me in jeopardy
The dream that got me in custody
The dream from my ancestry
The dream was just a recipe
The dream I took to the bakery
The dream became my master key
The dream that hit me like an allergy
The dream with a salary
The dream that got me a Louis V
The dream was my melody
The dream became my remedy
The dream was like sorcery
The dream that started it all
The dream, the one that broke my fall. Δ

Untitled

Patrick Collins

Deadly game I play
Needle, spoon, a candle flame
Voices speak of rain
Sweet darkness sets in...
seems my life will never end,
sicks sicks around the bend. Δ

Mountain Boy

Julio C. Estrada

1.
Growing up in the mountains
memories of rivers flowing down like fountains
smell of wood burning stoves
the amount of lumber selling in troves
Dirt on my face
as child I did embrace.
Cold metal doors slamming away.
Oh what a difference from then to today
I still have set dreams
a wife and children along with what love means.

2.
Overdose and jail, God's will.
I lost it all I believe
in darkness and blood death I believe
awakened by chaos and light.
How dare they bring me back to this life, >

memories follow, my sad dismay
in pain and sorrow forever I'll lay.
This hope, given to me,
it seems this time I've been set free. Δ

Interpersonal

Christopher Humphrey

Wowee
That's the guy
I've been waiting to see
beyond conversion of muscle tone
cheekbones and pigment
Far from what I heard
Better part of what I saw
not even what I thought
someone tell me
who do you miss appears
in the mirror, in the
appendix or history?
Is "close enough" a
pitchforked backstory
worth the empress of parchment.
Pour me more of your cup
and save yourself the snifter
of mine. Δ

All Is Lost!

After Elizabeth Bishop

Shadley Stephens

As I jump on my skateboard, my front
wheel hits a rock. My heavy-ass backpack
throws me forward, resulting in a faceplant
in the street. My backpack opens
spilling all my worldly possessions
into the busy street.

Like a real-life Frogger game, I jump up
and bounce from lane to lane
to avoid getting hit by heavy traffic
going both directions at a high rate of speed,
blowing everything I own
this way and that.
I safely make it to the shoulder.

I rescue my skateboard
with an empty backpack hanging wide open
on my back.
I take my pack of cigarettes from my pocket
only to find they're all snapped in half.
I pluck the filter off one,
and flick it at a passing vehicle,
and chuckle at the look
on the driver's face as it bounces
off the windshield right in his face.
And he runs over my sketchbook
exploding it like a landmine. >

I light my half cigarette with no filter
and take in a deep drag
while I watch everything I own
blow up and down the street,
an army of violent tumbleweeds.
I can't help but laugh.
I still have my personal freedom.
The art of losing's not hard to master. Δ

Yogananda

Benjamin Goertz

Gossip or judgment:
the kind of things
that are toxic
to the body.
So many of our thoughts
 are self-degrading.
So many of our commentaries
 make us suspicious
 and afraid
 of other people.
"She is such a snob"
or "he is such a jerk"
 may have sounded cool
 in high school
 but where does that get us now?
It gets us into the habit
 of complaining,
An environment of prejudice
 and disgust. >

Judgements blind us
to people's truth
and push away our friends.
Who can trust
someone who judges
everything so harshly? Δ

Beautiful Lies

Josey Schwestak

Baby don't lie to me
even though I want you to

Baby don't lie to me
even though I know you do

Baby don't lie to me
I already know the truth

Baby don't lie to me
all I want is you

You've always had
the freedom to do what you
want on your own

All that I asked you
is please just don't let
it follow you home >

All that I asked you
is please don't make it
look like I don't know

All that I asked you
please anybody but
one of my bros

Gave you a inch
but you took a mile

With all those tears
you could fill the Nile

So much beauty behind
your smile

Want you to leave but
please stay awhile

Want you to stay awhile Δ

The Door

Benjamine Goertz

You showed me love so I opened the door,
Never did I think this would be true.
Why now, why ever, why has it come to this? I
never thought I would hate you.
How did we get here? I never saw it coming,
now I can't see it any other way. >

"Why are you here?" "Why are we fighting?"
It made sense for you to just walk away.
You showed me love and I closed the door, never
did I want this to end.
I still love you, you're gone forever,
something I can't understand.
You built me up, I tore us down,
as if there was some kind of score.
Now it's gone, so here I am,
thinking about that damned door. Δ

Shining Light

Larry Martinez Escandon

My light shines brightly as I search the skies,
seek an answer but don't know why.
The lights that shine my way,
The word I seek will bring today.
I love the good,
I love this light,
That shines so good throughout this night.
I found the word I'd love to share,
The words I seek,
"I'm always there." Δ

Give Thanks

Benjamin Goertz

The spare coin tray at the counter

short on cash

The toe of a shoe holding the door

for your grasp

The meter goes to five when you bought

two in gas

Turning left from the right while the center

lets you pass

Some random guy flips you off and you thumbs up

the dumb ass Δ

Forgiven

Josue Ramirez

You were born into my life,

you are forgiven.

I discovered what I been searching for,

you are forgiven.

I call you my best friend,

I call you my twin,

you are forgiven.

My attention is what you wanted,

you would call my name,

you are forgiven. >

Never did I imagine things would change;
from hugs and kisses; to walks and parks;
to laughter and moments of joy;
you are forgiven .

You have matured, these years have changed you,
you are forgiven.

Now you asked to be alone,
you are forgiven.

You no longer want to talk to me,
you are forgiven.

I ask if you still love me,
your answer is yeah, you are forgiven.

No matter what you do, or say,
I'll always be here for you,
through sun and rain,
you are forgiven.

I'm lonely and hurt, but I still love you,
so you are forgiven.

-- To Jazlynn K R

△

Do You Remember?

Martin S. Cruz Diaz

Do you dream about me how I dream about you?

Do you miss me as much as I miss you?

Do you remember our happiest moments

And all the hard times we had to go through?

Do you remember?

Do you remember the place where we met?

Do you remember walking up to me to ask

For my name?

I remember that moment, oh yes I very much remember that day.

For a moment I was convinced it was all

A joke, For I have never experienced such a thing as this,

Has God heard my prayers and has decided to

Grant my one and only wish?

Or... was it just a test?

Do you remember our walks?

Do you remember going on rides?

Do you remember walking downtown

While I took pictures of you under neon lights?

Do you remember our talks?

Our first fourth of July,

Our first Valentine's Day

And that night I made you mine?

Do you remember? >

Why did you stick around for so long?
Why did you make me fall in love?
Why did you forgive me over and over
Everytime I did you wrong?
I know I'm not perfect
But yet I tried real hard,
I showed you my love everytime I kissed your
Forehead and wrapped you tightly inside my arms.

Do you remember our first kiss?

Or our first kiss in the rain,
When I would wipe your tears
While you were sobbing with pain.
Do you remember you cried
When I would push you away?
I was cold in the heart
With the words I would say.
I was cold in the heart,
That's how I pushed you away,
I would make you cry
With the words I would say.

You were my first,
And most likely my last,
You were my future,
But now you're my past.

Why did you leave?
Why did you go? >

You kept a secret that I did not know. Why keep a secret?

Why did you go?

Why did you leave?

I do not know.

Do you remember the time we spent?

You were my life, which brought my death.

Do you remember, about me and you?

Do you remember...

...Because I do. Δ

Not Scared

Josue Ramirez

The broken mirror has me glancing at those eyes

They shine bright full of life

I see more than a dozen pair of eyes

They hid a story that has no time

No limit to those lovely eyes

I see a passion that makes me want to cry

I see a smile that is filled with pride

Those eyes, those eyes aren't lovely eyes

The mind plays no lies with those sparkly eyes

More valuable than gold without a price

I am not afraid, I won't be afraid because the love is right

Holding on, holding on to those golden eyes. Δ

IT

Spirit

I wish the world would be more loving, more loving to others and not just to itself. We all live in **IT** but we are not loved by **IT**, **IT** only loves itself.

We live our lives each day watching others become consumed by **IT** and become **IT**, in order to feel loved by **IT**.

I feel so alone in how I love everything, everywhere, unconditionally, including the most selfish, conceited, narcissistic, psychopathic, schizophrenic world. Because everything and everyone deserves love right?

I feel so alone being disliked, hated, prosecuted, and judged by **IT**, while I continue to love **IT** all the same.

I feel so alone even though there has to be others that love like I do, I can't be the only one in it... **IT** being all about itself, always looking in the mirror, only caring about itself, never loving anyone else's world.

I feel so alone as I keep loving how I do, not being able to control it, stop it, change it, and I'm okay with it.

I feel so alone. So where are you? Come find me, I'm right here. **IT** needs us I think. **IT**'s trapped and dying.

So where are you? Cuz I'm right here. Δ

Fly

Larry Martinez Escandon

Today is the morning when I wake up to cry,
I cry like a baby that is hungry to fly,
I take the great leap never wishing to die, I
open my wings I'm starting to glide, I seem to
take off to the end of the world, I love this
great feeling but wake up to snores, I look to
the side and all I can see,
Is my mother I love I'm hungry to be,
I really do love the mornings I cry,
There's no better feeling than learning to fly. Δ

Come Back Soon

Spirit

She flew down and landed under our tree in the front yard and plucked out a feather and left it in the grass and then flew away. Knowing that it would be found and knowing who would find it, to let it be known that this would happen. Like the sacred message that it was, it had been retrieved by the person it was left for. She came inside and said "Look I found a hawk's feather in the front yard." I stopped what I was doing and said "It was meant for you," already knowing what the message was as the hair stood up on my arms and the fear flooded my everything. All the worry I was having for months was about to bear fruit from what seemed like a rotten tree. Not too soon after, we had to eat the fruit and our heart now hurts and it feels like no way back. Please fly to her again and leave your sacred message to show us that the tree is strong, the tree is healthy, and the fruit is fresh. Strong, healthy, and fresh enough to keep us strong, healthy, fresh, and closer together than we have ever been.

Ah Ho Mitakuye Oyasin. Δ

Dreams I

Benjamine Goertz

Dream kids with rifles
Scopes picking off people from strategic high places
Hear about them in the newspaper
Nearby in this state, all over this state
Appearing, killing people in mass situations
No help, no hope
No one knows: who, where, or why
Randomly popping up daily
Someday, nearby Δ

Dreams II

Benjamine Goertz

This is where they are,
They see me,
 I know they see me,
 They're looking right at me,
 But I don't think they are even here anymore
Slowly swaying
 Bobbing & weaving,
 All in unison
 With subtle individually signatored
 gestures patterned
 to complete one created incantation
This is not necessarily on my side,
 yet this is not entirely against me
This is not evil
 but this surely is not good >

They are doing this to teach me
but they left as soon as this started
This will be the only chance I get to witness this,
So I better feel this to my fullest
This is not something I will show to just anyone
but if I find others, this will happen
This feels eerie, this feels very powerful, I'm
feeling stronger just by being here
I hope to God that I never forget
the sacred moment of this Δ

Giants

Sean Desrochers

I live among the giants
and the majestic company they keep
a source of life itself
and unimaginably old
strong as the seas
and windward sees
thirsting for heaven's cup
they walk at daybreak
to fight the peril of this world
to walk in their presence
is the quintessence of tranquility
dancing among the cosmos
to their own cadenzas
the mind of wonders
the heart their marionette >

follow me to their hallowed ground
relieving the weary soul
there is nothing left to want
for I live among the giants Δ

Some People

Cole Tisdale

Some people do good
Some people do bad
Some sit there and long
For the things that they've had
Some people die young some people live fast
Some people are thugs
Some live in the past
Some people pop pills
Some people smoke crack
Some people stay mad
Some people laid back
Some people drink booze
Some people do speed
Some trample the rights
Of others in need
And while some of us follow
Other folks lead. Δ

Walls

Josue Ramirez

Describing my life at this moment is easy.

Walls,

dead food,

same clothes,

less freedom,

and too much t.v.

What is the name for it?

County Jail Δ

Nature of Love

Benjamine Goertz

A creeping caterpillar

the carnivores killer

beheading innocent beetles & bugs

A carnal cornucopia

the carnival utopia

misleading insects as thugs

A vicious path

the delicious wrath

Selection picked from above

A cycle of breath, the circle of death

life taken purely of Love. Δ

When The Time Comes

Spirit

When the time comes I won't know what to do.

The door will open, they'll call my name >

and I will just walk through.
When the time comes I will start to look different than before.
Some things will be the same but I'll want you all the more.
When the time comes, time will slow way down.
Things will take forever but orange will turn to brown.
When the time comes my clothes will not fit tight.
But everything will be better as the day turns into night.
When the time comes our nightmare will be over and done.
And then our new life will become way more fun.
When the time comes I won't know what to do.
When all is said and done, just know that I love you. Δ

Poor Boy!

A Palindrome (read from top down and bottom up)

Jessie Andrade

Fuck that!
Choosing to be rich
Rather than
Being broke and alone
I'd rather be happy
At the top
It's lonely
Having nothing
Versus
Having everything
It's amazing
I've seen it with my own eyes
Trust me
Happiness comes from within
Is a lie
Money will make you happy Δ

Haiku

Benjamine Goertz

I don't want to go.

You don't have to go with me.

Now I want to go Δ

Pieces of Orange

A Collaborative Poem by Unit D, Main Jail: B. Goertz, Spirit, P. Gil, S. Desrochers, T. Lengyel, J. Powell, A. Travis, J. Williams

You traded marbles for Marlboros

melted like shimmering puppies all milked-up.

Like a damn fool

I surrender.

The knife still on the shelf

a foreign appearance.

The world found you and your softness

and now a hushed audience.

Take a chance.

We have it and now the story begins.

Let's hold hands and walk,

take it slow.

Once cracked open, nothing could have blocked the open door

the roses smell so sweet.

When did I dip into your little hood?

When did I care when you never would?

Mindfulness and a hike

and I trusted I would find a way. Δ

My Legacy

Jessie Andrade

I wanna leave it all behind
My legacy
To my son, the kids, and my enemies
leave it all behind
My legacy
Through my words, my notes, my melody
My legacy
The fame, the change, the memories
leave it all behind
My legacy
For the fam, the friends, you and me
Leave it all behind, my legacy
Leave it all behind, my legacy
Talking to my mom, 'bout my prophecy
just a young king, royalty
working on my craft
so you're proud of me
learned how to write, it's just fluency
I wanna leave it all behind.
To the people that supported me
To the false friends who hated me
I wanna leave my master key
and just live happily

Leave it all behind, my legacy Δ

Smell - Taste - See

Diana Ornelas

Smell	Pine tree: making me play games of
FEEL	hide and seek or marco polo
	Honeysuckle: sweet
	riding a boat made of sweets
Taste	the taste of syrup glazed cherry from a
FEEL	banana split or milkshake
FEEL	Being able to see through what we are told we can't look bringing frustration: solutions.
See	fresh warm blanket - coral and reefs
FEEL	cherry shrimp, eels, schooling fish
feel	But behind the glass Do you want to be inside or out? I wish, I want, would like to I can't, I need, never
feel	I will. I need to pause, calm down Breathe ----- breeeaathe ---- you should still stay positive there's still an opportunity

Δ

The Hole In Us All

Yanna Giutienz

Roots start under cover and rarely ever seen.
They dig down and give us a place to start
that is hidden from the rest of the world
and can never be truly judged
though it's where every judgment of us is derived,
in the background of our very essence,
and though we can feel it nurture us,
we ourselves can never see the truth of
our roots.

It's just what makes us
and what allows others to interpret us.
Would we ever be able to see past all
the outside and the parts of each of our roots
that connect us in some semi-divine way
and allow all of us to share a piece
of something more than all
and less of ourselves?
To see where any path leads us
from how we burst into this existence
not knowing where we are, where we want to go,
or even what we want to make of all things
to what's made of us after we end up
where we've finally found ourselves, dead? Δ

Wonderland White

Diana Ornelas

Cold: Ice

Stand under or near the shower head;
right or wrong knob.

COLD GUSH OF WATER

Sharp cold pins all over your body
close your eyes when you are wide awake
it's dark.

Dark Blue

Are you on your toes with light
presence of adrenaline and a dash of wonder?
In the deep dark blue ocean
What you feel when you get scared, lost; knowing it.
In the dark not knowing what lurks in it.
I see fear, I feel it, shortness of breath, raped.

Manic full of panic.

A cliff: A reef.

To the right: open dark blue.

Look down for dawn. There's no bottom. I am alone.

I hear rocks clicking against each other. Bubble;
wailing; swishing water. Δ

Red Is The Color

Angela Monique Guardado

Red is the color of your
face when your shameless
face lies...

Pale to blue face is when
you are sad or in pain to the
shockwave of your trauma and drama...

Mercy like the sun sets in
the shiny shimmery golden
sun-rays across the ocean's
coastal shores...

Slow wind of forgiveness is
pitch black that's a flickering
bright light... Δ

Untitled

Angela Monique Guardado

1.
Si ya hiciste el mal
ya me hiciste mal
ya no hay nada
y nada para hablar
nunca nunca y ya se acabo.

If you already did wrong
you already did me wrong >

there is nothing anymore
and nothing to talk
never ever and it's over.

2.

I already know you love me
Ya, you tell them --
Tell them that you love me.
Me me and only me.
And no one can have your love. Δ

A Prayer for Dead Hearts

Yanna Giutienz

Now I lay me down to fight. Dead Hearts, guide me
through this plight. Wake me with warning and
sight. If we rise before our time,
may we wander paths that unite us all.
Moonlight, moonlight
guide me through my dreams, and
take me to the nightmares that make Dead Hearts.
May the devil be a brother, for it's the only prayer.
I have to know my way through the torment
and rise above these fights. May I be blessed
to know those I love, as I'd be blessed
for those who love me, to know me.
May we be able to be there for others
Not strong enough to be there for themselves.
And if we are not where Love needs us
May we be on the way to where Love needs be.
Amen. Δ

Maybe

Jacqueline Sarah Barrios

sometimes the cow DOES come home
sometimes the hens roost in a different place
sometimes magic comes from troubled youth
sometimes an actual diamond is found in a landfill
sometimes a needle surfaces in its respective haystack
sometimes the unthinkable loss yields one survivor with a story
sometimes the black box is never recovered
sometimes the project gets scrapped but someone achieves
the expected outcome
sometimes there's no budget but it makes millions instead
sometimes the dead do just get up and continue
sometimes a torn soul reunites and reconciles with its pieces
sometimes the blown vein gives the user a chance
to reconsider and decide differently
sometimes stop means go
sometimes you don't get a memo but summarize it perfectly
sometimes there's hope Δ

April 06, 2014 – 13 yr's old

Inspired by Mark Strand

Diana Ornelas

I am not boxed in the dome of dark.

I prefer it. The dome of truth.

Naive. Yet nice. It's also shit.

Biting a finger off as though a carrot.

I could try to cut off someone's head with a shovel. Then hold it up like Shakespeare or like an ancestor who's about to impale it on a whittled stick or throw a whole heart and mind down a waterfall.

Dark!?!?

Grab a snake, not any snake, but a black mamba, throw it in a box. Wrap it up, give it to someone. Watch them shake it.

Watch what happens next.

Not enough.

Watch something horrific to then be told "that's life"... "If you don't hurry up you're next."

It's a dome of truth.

I do not care if tal fulano is more dark or evil.

I don't care. We all sit at one point, quietly. While the dome echos.

We all have things that make us cry and fear.

Dark yet.

I laugh when you get scared and cry. You'd do the same to me.

△

EN BRUTA

Shannon Leigh

The old year's gone like the wind;

As I begin again.

Awakened the guarded Queen of HEARTS;

As if being hit with a CLUB in the chest.

Let rest the SPADER;

who tries to reach their goal to put her down.

Deep to a place of darkness

where she cannot be found.

Let go...

Move on, she tells herself;

Continue the journey to the land

where she shines like

DIAMOND I am.



Untitled

Nataliya Zubrilina

When yet to come
I will be yet to go
A changer changed me
into a new/better woman
What if I drift into a soul
Mate not made
Let maids better when
she's known
for fame of change
to fit in roles of rulers
and there I go
to better fit into myself
or better blows
not yet of change
to change a flow
events have yet come and go
as I fit better into these minutes sober
My sober body plies my clean soul
Might it be made into a maid of honor one day
yet to come and go Δ

The Squirrel

The Women of Blaine Street

Rushing to route ... holding with mouth.
Staring at their shadow watching their tail
wondering what it is doing.
They're always hungry, waiting on us
to feed them or looking for food. >

I like the little black squirrel.
Busy. Busy little guy, so busy as his day consists of
running back and forth, digging to bury, re-digging to re-bury.
So busy. The little guy is so busy!
Sometimes he's a high-wire act, balancing with his tail,
swinging, flicking it side to side.
Digging it out to just re-drop it somewhere. Δ

Handprints to the Sky

Melissa Maurer

I dream every night of thousands of baby handprints
that fall from the stars above.
When they reach the earth, they form into little angels
from above, with the cutest little giggles and smiles
so perfect
and angel wings that shine so bright.
My little family gets up with so much delight.
Because there's so many of us, we go coast to coast
saving the world when it needs it the most.
Then when our tasks are all finished, we dance and sing
and the babies start to scream,
the mommies and daddies start clapping their hands
and focus is directed, and do the happy dance.
Aunties and uncles jump in, 'cause this is their thing
and Grandmas and Grandpas just sit and sing.
We jump into the ocean and turn into any sea animal of choice
and swim with the dolphins and rejoice.
Now this is when my little angels start to cry
when the sun peeks out and tries to brighten the sky.
They all snuffle up their little noses >

and say "Good morning Big Sunshine! You scared the moon away."
Then they remember it's only a little while and then repeat
and grow the biggest smile.
Love all of you Big and Little!
See you soon. Please just giggle. Δ

Earth Day (Her Day)

Cara Vandagriff

My stomach burns empty,
I can't wait for my birthday
on that 4th year every time.
The Feast. You cook so well in the dream.
I imagined it. You sowed it
into my mouth, into my clothes.
You made everything so perfect.

My stomach burns delighted,
so full so sleepy so many colors I dream.
There was nothing you couldn't do,
nothing you couldn't make rightful
and new.

Nothing. Gone. Empty without you,
but your memory so beautiful
so full in my mind, the years
you taught me everything I do
and do not know.

I am you are alive
all of you >

and everything you do
today and every day.
I am your granddaughter
with all of your grandeur.
Such a ubiquitous feeling.
You have left me in your delight...
Nothing empty. Δ

Whatever Position We Are

Diana Ornelas

A theory!
We leave the tree as adults long after
25, not only to have kids or other,
but we have a child inside of us.

Don't let go of the merry joy.
The ones who love it or have a soft spot for it.
Those who don't hate the light.

We say let there be dark.
We do nothing or go to work. Eat, sleep, work.

Maybe -- just maybe celebrate by watching
Nightmare Before Christmas and find joy out of it.

Let it be. The holiday that goes down in flames,
like wood in a fireplace. Δ

A Moment Suspended in Time

Cara Vandagriff

Those hands look too kept
to be kept.
Too manicured to be masculine.
But his touch is that of conviction,
his strength that of construction.
And he beckons me.
His hand calls upon my skin.
Every touch something new,
yet something I yearn to know.
I am his muse.
We weave through every moment
monumentally etched into my mind
without eyes without seeing.
His hands have hung me out
in time, to dry.
I can't forget his touch
stained on my memory
like glass touched by color
forever changed.

To Damien, From Cara. Δ

Pick up the streets, Put down the beats

Katelyn Marianna Larson (KBeats)

"a skeleton by the eye didn't even see time go bye
I wish I could rewin' time,
Turn
myself into a million dollar dime been overdosin' >

midnight ghost in steady wishin' my thoughts
stay in motion nightmares seeing the fights
from all the big bad bears. Beats put me on the
streets; you can take beats outta the
streets, but one can't take the streets outta
beats. Turn it off cough cough wanna hitta
bic like don't ever give eh...

The streets hurt, my feet hurt, streets
hurt, my beats hurt, my head in bones,
my head alone's wishing the time would go fly
steady running away from the demons that
be chasin' in bones den, now never lost my
marbles, just got sickindem." Δ

Untitled

Angela Monique Guardado

I waited for this type
of feeling...
A feeling that makes you
feel like somebody...
Somebody really loves you
unconditionally...
So patiently I give you this
type of feeling that fulfills
my bruised heart... Δ

Balances

Elizabeth Cooper

Trespassing into darkness

Taking time to reflect

Time to review

Stepping back into

Light, into the everyday

Fold, forgiveness tags along

Unloading guilt and

Lifting moods, laughter

Sneaks in and smiles

Are renewed. Δ

Trauma

Diana Ornelas

I want to sleep the day away

but I had this memory that

will forever give me hurt.

I should not try to replay it in my

head before bed or I will have

nightmares again.

I want to feel.

It feels as though my heart is

exploding the same way you drop a

thin glass cup.

Imploding then shattering out from

the sides. In front of me as if

my heart dropped in front of me, but

the back of my body is the wall >

The glass spreads out-wards, but not
surprisingly past my back. Why won't it pass
my chest?

Before bed I allow my tics from PTSD to be my determinator
to knowing when I'll be falling asleep. Δ

"I've got you"

Shannon Leigh

I've got you
under my wings.

Although they may
be broken, held
together with duct tape
and glue.

I've got you.

Dedicated to my friend Cary Mendez AKA Crunch.



Holding Hands

Diana Ornelas

I love you, I miss you -- what am I talking about?

Held hands with no one other than themselves.

They couldn't sleep.

Reminds me of secretly holding hands under a table
at church. Cinched together, then playing handsies.

The stupid! Crazy? choices, people do it simply to be
a part of another person's realm.

That's how much I desire you, mi amor, women; men.

I'd like to believe our bodies don't feel as warm

as it is next to our love,

sleeping side by side.

There is significance in doing it. Δ

I Miss the Everything of Kissing

Melissa Maurer

I miss the everything of kissing.

The soft feeling of his juiciness of his big

lips yet they are really small and thin. I can't

wait to just kiss. I love sucking in the bottom

lip and gently sucking as I watch him close

his eyes. I enjoy the everything about kissing

being torn away from my freedom

in the prison of absence under no control >

wanting to be stained glass earrings. Dangling.

2 rings:

1 for a knight.

1 for a someday queen.

The handkerchief then folded.

Burnt.

At the end of that year, it's a full
moon I never noticed. Δ

What Is It Like to be a Pegasus

Violet Garcia

Does a pegasus choose to fly more
than to walk on their own green pastures?

I would really like to know what it
is like to be a pegasus among my grandchildren. I would like to be
able to fly all of my grandchildren
amongst the skies. This way my family will be reunited
in a neutral place.

Does the pegasus live a long time?
Does a unicorn turn into a pegasus?
How far does a pegasus travel in her
lifetime? Does a pegasus have many children
with many mates?

I want to be as free as a pegasus
so I can fly away from here.
I would go to Sacramento and then fly them >

around the world starting with the Holy Land, all of the Middle East,
Europe, United Kingdom, Asia, South
America, Central America, Mexico, USA, and Canada.

I would have all of us study each
country's culture, gather souvenirs,
and stamp throughout each land;
postcards from each country.
I wonder if pegasus are different
colors or some just one color. Δ

"the window"

Angelica Varon

I see through the bullseye
ready to cross the bridge when
his time comes
staring outside
looking through a window
which dreams to be a dreamcatcher,
a home, a place to be alive.
staring outside.
I dream of one day fly away
and could see not anymore
black and white
but a colorful life outside that
window of wonders and dreams
that come alive as bright
as the bullseye. Δ

Untitled

Denise Lee Shiraldi

Staring outside through a
barred window with
droves of light

I can see a bullseye just
black and white

But maybe one day I'll fly
away with much grace
and flight

A year only to return
the street that calls
to me

A dreamcatcher so right
hangs across through a glared
window

But always my dreams aren't
so direct

Maybe I could see not
Anymore in black and white

But a colorful life through
the windows of
my eyes >

I guess I'll just have
to cross that bridge
when I get to it

That's only denise Δ

Frozen Hummingbird

Diana Ornelas

Do you remember that feeling,
eating salt & vinegar chips
not eating anything before it.
Feelings of salivation, clenched jaw,
salt tingling in the back of your jaw
tense clench of your jaw like what you feel
when you are cold. That icy chill
that makes you tense up and freeze where you are.
That's what a frozen hummingbird feels like
asleep like a soldier Δ

An Inmate's Kingdom

Elizabeth Cooper

Looking up.

Razor wire,
set in snares.

Metallic icing,
a crown upon
the cares, the fears.

Covered with fencing,
an old zoo exhibit,
long forgotten and
neglected.

Stale and sedated
paused in free-fall.

Persistent in its duress.

Looking up.

Razor wire,
set in snares
metallic icing,
a crown upon
confinement.

Freedom just out of reach.

A visceral reminder,
A warning indeed.

Looking up

Razor wire
Set in snares

Metallic icing Δ

Untitled

Angelica Varon

Where to start when you don't have an ending for the story of Drama.

Where everything collapses and becomes dark

as a theatre curtain before the shows starts,

where you see a small and pointing light on your face

and suddenly you're in the middle of the stage,

everything in silence.

You know you're not alone but it feels like that.

Then you try to focus, your eyes looking for

some familiar faces,

the ones that fade in the shadows.

Suddenly, you see some bright, sparkling eyes,

catch your attention, and you stare at them,

following their deepness,

let yourself go inside them, becoming one

insight, one story, that is trying to be

revealed in front of you when the curtain

goes up.

And, in a blink, you disappear.

Now, you are the spectator, sitting down

waiting, looking to the other on the stage

standing up, waiting too,

to be the performer of the story, that starts

off some roleplay of protagonism or antagonism.

Finally the light gets bigger and the eyes become

an old woman with sparks in her eyes that

shine in the darkness.

And on the stage there's a young, confusing,

hopeless revelation. >

Another woman starts to perform, probably
for herself, maybe for someone else,
but certainly has found herself doing
her act of life, perhaps the last show.
She needs to be an actress with the
power of creation and transformation,
the power of alchemy, where she believes,
at any given time, she could be somebody
she always wanted to be. Δ

Strawberries

Melissa Maurer

Rows of green and red
Rows of endless Fruit of Freshness + Juicy
Readiness
Rows of strawberries ready to be picked
Rows of red and green
Rows of Fruit and endless supply of
Strawberries Δ

Where the Path Led....Yesterday, Today, Here I Start

Diana Ornelas

Where the path led
pink tulips, purple orchids, white, orchids, forget-me-nots,
wolf's bane, periwinkles, rose.

May we not forget who we, they, are?
Fields of green, Louis Armstrong.
We need the green light at the end of the dock.
Love. Δ

My Sacred Space

Elizabeth Cooper

Down the tracks
Into the deep
Into the mystery as it be
Beautiful forest all around
Diffused light reaches down
Gracing our visions with
Mysteries unbound
Ancient giants reaching
To the sky above
Down the tracks
Into the deep
Sitting in quiet contemplation
By the stream
Water flowing by
Helping us release
To let loose the burdens
We often bring
Making whole again the
Beauty we see
Beautiful forest all around
Diffused light reaches down. Δ

Forgiveness

Martha Espinoza

It's something I catch myself doing,
small but hurtful.
Like frozen roses slowly entering my eyes
but I swallow and forgive. >

Something so simple but so hard
like a sharp knife being thrown at my back.
But once I accomplish forgiving you
all the pain you caused me, my heart
starts growing 3x large to love you
that much more.
Like my diamond so shiny, shaped clearly,
nothing can destroy my love for u. Δ

Myself yet feeling other's unwanted

Diana Ornelas

I am a horse-paralyzed
but I could see everything around me. I have
lived for centuries. Becoming wise-unable to speak.
Unable to communicate with my fellow friends.

I've come this far to sacrifice, and fight.
To be there for my lilli.
I am a best friend with cataracts in both eyes.
Wondering why I never got an operation? Even
though, my friends were noticing it was getting
worse.

Baking my feelings and drawing for others-
making myself known. Yet feeling unseen and
unwanted. Making inappropriate jokes taken too far.

That boundary line, couldn't see it.
Pulling away so fast to not get
hurt. Forgetting easily by using dislikes
as a power source. >

Seeing life and how it's going to be in
silicon valley. You knew how to go about
growing. To get the American dream. Bitter, sweet, and
sad. Δ

Killer Whales

Inspired by Gail Newman

Diana Ornelas

How deep into the sea do you go. Why don't
you go to other spots of the ocean?

These packs, are they blood family or others
hitching a new pack along their journey.

The way to where? There are rituals to mating
season. There are seasons for mating.

The punks of the ocean. Quick to play but
could be scared if threatened by something far
more dangerous.

What animal could do that to a killer whale?
Deep cold ocean. Nothing around. 2 kilometers
down, still able to see the light of the sun.

You turn. now staring. Side by side of a killer
whale. It's watching you.
Not looking too closely in case it feels it's being
challenged, considering how close it's gotten. >

Calling for others. Knowing this feeling of fear
heart sinking.

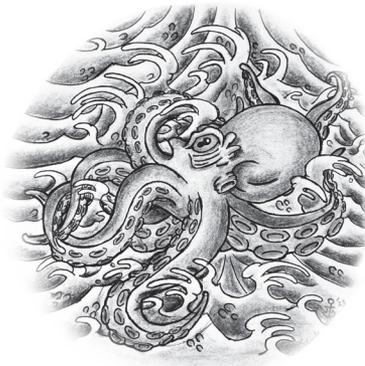
Its cone-like teeth, its scars and its
knife-like fin.

It swims around as if chasing its tail to stop
head-on in front of you. Δ

Ocean Waves

Melissa Maurer

As I look out into the ocean I see
endless ongoing waves, the horizon
seems neverending, the wonder
of the mystical magical ocean is endless,
the possibilities are neverending. The
whitecaps crashing on the shore's
sand. As the waves come in to
visit and then they escape back
on the recap of the ocean's tide.
Never knowing what to expect. The
ocean waves, the endless ride of
the ocean. Δ



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Co-founder Nancy Miller Gomez
Directors Deborah Culmer and Renee Winter

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Copies of this and earlier anthologies are available at poetryinthejails.org,
and at the Santa Cruz and Watsonville Public Libraries