

# COLLECTIVE



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# COLLECTIVE

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# Veridical

Jacquelyn Apostolo

Truthfully, I am scared to speak.  
And so I read, thoughts committed.  
Hoping that I'm not misunderstood,

that my words are not,  
just,  
some lost increments  
in some sentiments.

Or,  
criticisms of a critical mental,  
residing in the claustrophobic corners of my mind,  
beside the caved in roof of my own greatness.  
Aside from the walls I've built, now tearing down,

static resounds.

Echoes of silence reverberate.  
Precise nouns,  
flows found,  
reflect rhymical concentrates  
of cyclical thoughts about truth.

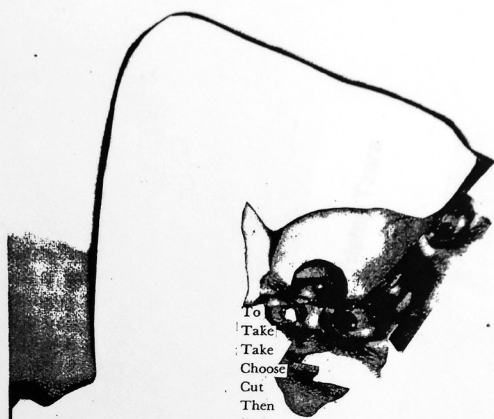
How I perceive these sensations,  
are based on my previous experiences.  
Projected from my own  
conflicting inferences.

Because I'm not sure if what's mine is yours,  
if our understanding of reality  
really concurs.  
If our curiosities are becoming  
standstill  
stagnant.  
If our dreams are becoming  
past tense.  
If my form of expression is overly ambitious  
or if my energy is coming off extremely pretentious.



My point will walk it's path,  
and eventually meet an ending.  
Consequently,  
a dead-end will start a beginning.  
What is perceived as a line,  
intersects,  
then aligns  
concepts from me to you  
as I misconstrue  
sounds spoken in shared spaces..

POETRY READINGS  
POETRY READINGS



To  
Take  
Take  
Choose  
Cut  
Then  
Shake  
Then  
Copy  
The  
And  
is

[illegible]

done.

*Veridical* by Jacquelyn Apostolo

# Supplies

Travis Freeman

This is where it led (lead) me, I thought the pencil was empty  
The 1 sent (cent) different from pennies  
He sticks closer than a brother, he's closer than many  
You think of death, I think of life  
Because the grave is still empty  
With all kinds of test  
Arms up I'm not tryna stretch  
What could have escalated, elevated all kinds of steps  
Different flights of stairs  
Different flights of stares (eyes looking)  
What's the difference?  
They all look  
I had to open up  
And got more books  
If I can write it all down, might not be enough lines  
But if they draw out the body  
That's enough crimes  
Caution  
You can't approach every scene  
Those that sleep on you  
Crush every dream  
Life seems to grab a hold and choke  
Put you in a sleeper  
Till you black  
But the black I seen was the grim reaper  
I'm tryna live  
That word backwards is evil  
If I can add, then multiply  
I'll subtract the equal  
What's the answer?  
I'm still searching for the problem  
Or  
Maybe the problem was I was searching for an answer

# Raised Without Knowing (Crecio Sin Darsecuenta)

Irene Jimenez

One day in a far  
humble village,  
brought from the ground  
the most beautiful  
crystalline wellspring,

Where the thoughts,  
dreams and desires reflect  
without knowing  
why they are as clean  
as water.

From that wellspring  
where only it can  
accumulate the most pure  
and innocent feelings.

The two young friends without knowing  
their love burst  
similar to  
those clean waters  
which have no comparison

With the mind  
of a newborn child that  
can only shelter  
naïve feelings

That pure soul  
can manifest.  
That is how love grew  
as the same way  
as the water did on that place.

The most faithful romance  
that a human being  
can feel and give  
rose, without knowing.

As the same way that  
pure and crystalline  
love preserves  
the loyalty, sadness, and solitude.

Only the birds drink  
from the pure and quiet waters  
that the wellsprings preserve.  
In this place,  
in that village, that  
saw her cry.

# Crecio Sin Darsecuenta (Raised Without Knowing)

Irene Jimenez

Un día en una lejana  
humilde aldea,  
brotó de la tierra  
el mas hermoso  
cristalino manantial,

Donde los pensamientos,  
sueños y deseos se reflejan  
sin saber  
porque son tan limpios  
Como el agua.

De aquel manantial  
donde solo se pueden  
acumular los mas puros  
e inocentes sentimientos.

De dos jóvenes que sin saber  
el amor brotó  
como  
aquellas aguas limpias  
sin comparación

Con la mente  
de un niño recién nacido  
que solo alberga  
inocentes sentimientos

Que un alma pura  
puede manifestar.  
Así creció el amor  
como el agua  
en aquel lugar.

El romance mas fiel que  
un ser humano  
puede sentir y brindar  
creció, sin darse cuenta.

Al igual que  
puro y cristalino  
el amor conserva  
la lealtad, la tristeza, y la soledad

Solo los pájaros beben  
de las puras y tranquilas aguas  
que el manantial preserva.  
En aquel lugar,  
la aldea,  
que la vio llorar.

# I Wear a Mask

Jose Gonzalez

Things aren't the same anymore, since COVID19 started, I wear a mask, I wear gloves however, the passengers on the train look at me differently. Hundreds of thousands are infected with the novel virus, thousands have died yet because I am from Asian descent and look a certain way, we are to blame for this novel virus. It's not safe anymore for my people. The looks evolved to stares. The stares manifest to comments. I feel like an outsider, an alien with a disease.

The freedom to walk into the library and sit with a group of friends isn't the same anymore since COVID19 started, I wear a mask, I wear gloves however the kids around me look at me differently. That day I arrived early for class when the blonde-haired girl who always walks into class late sits across from me and yells, "Gross you have COVID19 and your making everyone sick you should leave." That day I questioned why I am being treated as if I have COVID19.

In my room reading my school assignment on the computer, my father yells at the television, "look at him, our president arguing with the reporter that this is a "Chinese virus" not realizing the impact it has on my people," he yells. Things were different three months ago since COVID19 started, I wear a mask, I wear gloves however my neighbors look at me differently. Sunday mass or gathering of 10 persons or more are prohibited, having to adhere to the social distancing guidelines that were implemented to "flatten the curve."

So much information since COVID19 started, I wear a mask, I wear gloves however we are blamed for this virus. A virus that originated thousands of miles away in a country I've never stepped foot on. My parents were born in Brooklyn and only visited China once when they were very young. Now life is very different for us since COVID19 started. Isolated. Isolation is a way of life for my people, we're safe, no more comments "Gross you have COVID19."

# In a Bell Jar

Ornella King

You now know what it must feel like living in a BELL JAR.

You feel suffocated by fear and routine. Walking up every morning searching for symptoms and thanking the mighty God above when you've discovered none. You must remember to wear your protective gear before leaving your home. Intimacy is forbidden. We must remain distant.

By being an essential worker, you constantly feel exposed. You are not at the front lines, but you are in close contact with patients-with the unknown. Not knowing if one is infected, so fear seeps under your quivering feet like smoke under a door during a fire. You are afraid, but do not show it. Instead, you wear your personal protective equipment and pray for the protection that you desire. In the exam room, the misunderstanding is mutual between you and the person that you are preparing the physician to treat since you nor the patient can see each other's mouths to understand fully what is being said, strangely you both remain patient.

You no longer have a morning routine. The stars on your Starbucks account just sits there as a result of the stores being closed. Fear allows you to drink the free filtered water served at work.

You are very patient with the store clerk at your local supermarket for spilling your raspberries on the belt because you understand that she too is nervous to be at work.

School is a lot more laborious when you have three small children to fully assist with their studies, but you view it as a blessing to spend one on one time with them even if it's only for two weeks because the career path you've chosen requires your services. You still do not complain, but thank the good Lord above for both you and your spouse having income to provide for your large family.

The bond is great and the love is even stronger. You pray to God like never before, asking him to restore your heart and remove all fear. You pray for your loved ones, neighbors, colleagues, essential workers, professors, and classmates that they will all push through and overcome this great obstacle.

I now know what it feels like living in a BELL JAR

# My Thoughts Concerning Today's Pandemic

Shantal Williams

Checking in has been a daily occurrence.  
Is my breathing impaired?  
Why am I warm?  
Define a dry cough.  
My partner started coughing as well.  
I'm worried for him.  
My brother is currently locked away in his room wondering if he'll be next.  
He said we should do the same.  
We came in contact quite a bit.  
He said he misses working and thinks he might be losing his mind.

Ambulance sirens wake me.  
I feel my chest tighten and I wonder again.  
Is my breathing impaired?  
Why am I warm?  
Define a dry cough.  
You hear them often.  
I hope they're okay.  
I wonder if it'll ever be peaceful again.  
This is a war zone.  
I think.  
We're fighting something we can't really see.  
Videos that circulate.  
Give you an imagination.  
I tune it out.  
I'd rather it just be over.  
I just need a break.  
I want things back to normal.

I take drives to ease my mind.  
I see more face masks these days.  
I see groups of over 10.  
Ignoring guidelines.  
How selfish can you be?  
I think.



Our freedom is currently limited.  
But for the greater good.  
My partner drives to Central Park.  
We park and observe.  
I see the white tents.  
I know what's inside of them.  
The pain and sadness they hold.  
The loneliness.  
The thoughts begin.  
Is my breathing impaired?  
Why am I warm?  
Define a dry cough.

# My Crucible

Julio Cariño Navarrete

Unlike the rest of the world  
With an almighty belief of freedom,  
Here at our diverse residence,  
we receive anyone and everyone  
with tender loving care and  
unconditional welcome and nothing in return.  
With our might we shall strike,  
Our dreams we shall reach,  
Our fruits we shall relish. A  
beacon of hope sufficient  
motivation for those of whom  
contain tenacity within  
their veins, an occult opine;  
a streetcar named desire with  
a burning ire to have a  
feeling of accomplishment accompanied  
with redundancy followed by  
emotions of grandeur mixed  
with an idea of fanatic emulation  
based on a stubborn, hard-headed,  
uncompromising and unrelenting  
zealot derived from not  
dissimilar characteristics of  
narcissism, egocentrism and megalomania  
crossed with severe obsessive  
compulsions in a valid attempt to  
justify one's actions whether they're full of malice or of  
consolation. To plead insanity would  
be an unsubstantiated corroboration  
which would lead to a slam dunk  
defamation; the audacity to revel in  
pain, the determination to seek

justice would be as gullible or  
contemptible even as much as it would  
be — to be so keen on such a  
perseverant path asking, yelling, crying out loud for  
help — all to no avail. The line between  
grief and guilt is a thin one; however, there  
is a burning light — ire that can be used  
for — something that can be fortuitous — a kind of  
fruition — one that will avail in a road  
in order to prevail.

# The House that Built Me

Alyssa Pascalli

Walking in my house,  
I flashback to the memories  
There has been giggles  
There have been joyous holidays  
There's been heartache and pain  
There's been struggles beneath me  
I try to forget  
It's a keepsake  
You feel protected  
You always have a place to return  
You just open a door  
To love surrounding your eyes and ears  
You grow up in a house  
You love deeply  
With the warmth of family  
By your side,  
The pets around you,  
You do not feel so alone  
For I spend my whole life  
So far in this home  
And it built me and I've grown.

# Good Morning, Progression

Shiann Davis

Good morning, progression!  
Believe cheap confection writings.  
Flaking memory swings impulse.  
Drastically getting old? Not yet.  
Clutched pearls swing between her toes.  
Condition? Dark.  
Forget.  
Float.  
Splitting drastically.  
Shut up, you monster.  
Quick! Run!  
Painting self-portrait.  
Conquered expectation.  
Perfect lion fangs.  
Slumbered when I was a kid.  
Existence begins to blur.  
Memories are cheap.  
Humming along...  
Doing fine, just give me another drink.  
Dreaming all alone, space.  
Control these wanting tears.  
De Ja Vu! Finally, remove the mask!  
Nonetheless... I miss it.  
Its true, they know something.  
Im afraid that I will remember.  
A muffled heartbeat.  
Just inside, I will turn.  
There's no way out...  
Breaking lengthening promises.  
I wake up, dreaming dreams



*Memento Mori* by Jacquelyn Apostolo

# Were We Always Meant To Say Goodbye?

Melina-Giorgalletou

In a place, dim like my room, I envision a moment where we sleep peacefully in each other's arms, at a time too late, with the Sun too low and the moon higher up.

I imagine us resting on each other, my head on your chest,  
on our bed  
in the house we call ours  
in a world where we don't have to say goodbye.  
But were we always meant to say goodbye?

I dream for the time when we hold each other's hand  
and squeeze it so tightly that it earns its own meaning  
where, in a façade picture it's us with our future  
and we're looking at it dead in the eye.

When I look at your face, you become more and more beautiful.

I fall into a trance, something I've never been in before,  
streaming me into a world where I cannot understand the meaning of  
religion  
the meaning of culture  
where none exist,  
and none can separate us.

We fall into different categories of people.  
We have had too different lives.  
The only thing connecting us is the feeling that we are feeling  
at the same time for each other.  
But it's not *just* a feeling,  
it's multiple combined together to form one meaning,  
one question

one dream

All I ever dreamt of is this feeling that I am feeling right now.  
But why isn't happiness dominating my body?  
Why is stress, fear and dread?

It's hard to think about the future.  
It's so dull, so dim, so definite.  
So unknown, so isolated, so lonely.  
I feel like escaping  
to anywhere, to Saturn!  
To places impossible to reach, and possible to dream about.

I want to end up with you.  
I want it to be us.  
In the end.  
Friend or husband.  
My heart will always be in half.  
Lost a part with you  
I don't know about you

but  
this was infinite. This beautiful, truly mesmerizing feeling  
is proof that we exist.  
And we exist together.  
We breathe air at the same time and exhale  
with eternal fear.  
Fear of separation. Fear of heartbreak.  
But were we always meant to say goodbye?  
Or are we meant to burn together for eternity like eternal candles?



# Memories

Terry Walker

Memories

My thoughts became muddles in muck  
Mush and mold seep into the crevices of my brain  
leaving a permanent stain  
Strange symptoms circle silently, striking swiftly  
Staggering, causing me to stammer  
leaving who I was in shambles



# 11th

Brad O'Connor

The thought of deception plagues my mind.

Lies told

Society bruised

People, People, People

Damage, Damage, Damage

Mayhem, Mayhem, Mayhem

Utter destruction upon those

Those who you knew or

May not have known

Families lost, a city tormented

Ambulance personnel rowing bodies away

The product of two towers destroyed

No time for eating

No time for thinking

No train of thought

Brains on full panic mode

Why did this happen?

Why me?

Why them?

The story of September

# The Old Days

Parvena Persaud

Color didn't matter  
It was just the innocent mind and heart that matter  
Just like a pack of markers  
All together despite the colors

Color didn't matter  
With our bicycle racing down the pale streets  
Laughter  
Fights  
Bruises  
Memories  
We experience all of that on those streets

Color didn't matter  
In pairs  
In groups  
Playing against each other  
But in the heart  
We all love each other

Color didn't matter  
Skin covered with brown creamy color mud  
We looking like a bottle of crunchy peanut butter

Scolding and punishment from mommy  
But who and what could stop  
A young heart and mind  
From enjoying that.

# Not an Average

Miriam Salami

I am not an average 12 year old you'll see. What goes on in my mind is  
deeper than the ocean and the deep blue sea.

I am a King I am magnificent

I am pragmatic, I am intelligent

I am BLACK, I am royalty

My skin is rich and has gained notoriety

I'm not a monkey, I am not an ape

I will not mold myself to fit your shape

I am not a criminal, I am not a felon

I do not like fried chicken or watermelon

I am not an average 12 year old you'll see. What goes on in my mind is  
deeper than the ocean and the deep blue sea.

I do not fear spiders; I do not fear heights,

I do not fear large snakes or their poisonous bites.

I do not fear tigers, I do not fear bears

I do not fear big bad Dracula's Transylvanian Lair

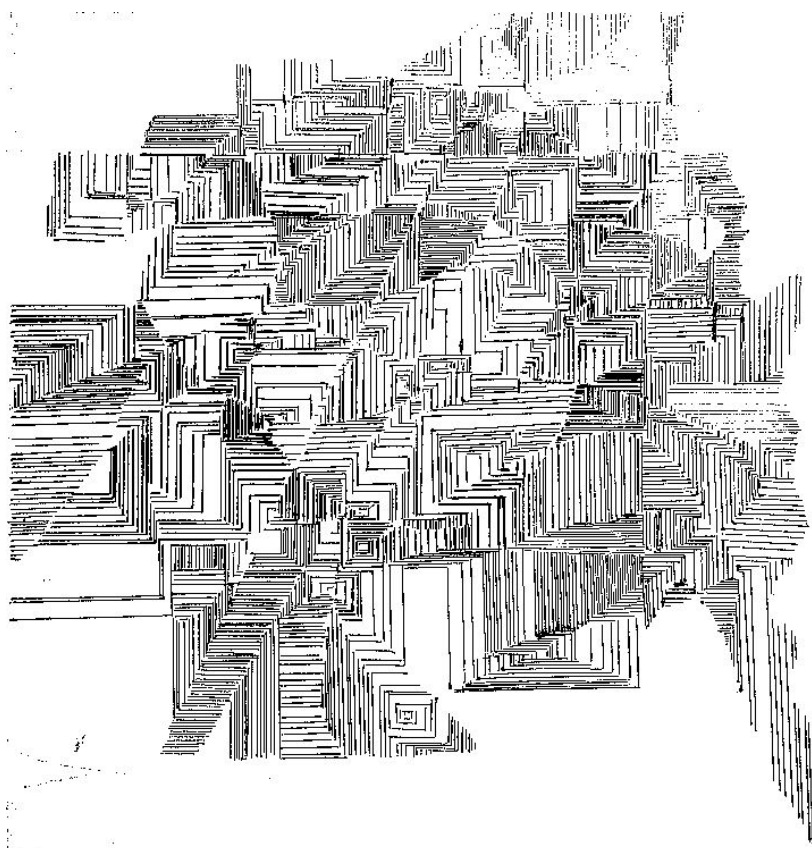
I do fear being brown, I do fear being black

I do fear being shot if I ever start to slack

I do fear being profiled, I do fear being mistreated

I do fear that our school systems will go back to being segregated

I am not an average 12 year old you'll see. What goes on in my mind is  
deeper than the ocean and the deep blue sea.



*Drawing by Jacquelyn Apostolo*

# Transition

a play by Artur Sarkisian

**MARIONETTES** (by order of appearance)

**ALDRED:** Long-time counsel now turned by the seas of change.  
Old; counsel, wisdom.

**UHTRIC:** Old ruler pondering the future of his kingdom. Pre-dawn; ruler.

**REVOLUTIONARIES:** Led by Signý.

**SIGNÝ:** Proud champion of the people. Victory; new.

*An old man, Aldred, adorned in a soft, streaming nobleman's robe stands before an even older man, Uhtric, dressed in the same robe but more garish with a brilliant jeweled crown on his head. He is seated on a throne made from an exotic timber, upholstery shielded with gold foil, and even more jewels embedded into the ornately carved wood.*

*The two are in a throne room that reflects the lavishness of the seated man and his chair.*

*The seated man, Uhtric, appears wistful.*

**ALDRED:** Sir, they will come at any moment.

**UHTRIC:** [*under his breath*] I know.

**ALDRED:** Sir—

**UHTRIC:** I know!

*Aldred allows Uhtric a moment of peace, and then continues.*

**ALDRED:** Sir, the anger of but one man will do nothing to stall the torrent of a storm. One cannot resist the onset of the future. Time will always move.

**UHTRIC:** I know.

**ALDRED:** Sir?

**UHTRIC:** I know all that. I can hear it in your very tone. [*looks at him*]  
Your words no longer contain “my lord” or “my liege”.

*Aldred looks down*

**UHTRIC:** There is no need to honor old honorifics.

**ALDRED:** I'm sorry.

**UHTRIC:** [*shaking his head*] No, it is not your fault. You did your best by me in your time. At some point, we must all look out for our best accommodations.

**ALDRED:** Genuinely, I am sorry.

**UHTRIC:** I only worry for the future now.

**ALDRED:** You can still escape. The offer remains. There is still time.

**UHTRIC:** No, it is not the thought of my future that unsettles me. And no, I cannot withdraw. My remaining here to my last breath is a necessity. Power must change hands directly. There can be no legitimacy for the new rulers otherwise.

**ALDRED:** [*confused*] So... you welcome it then?

**UHTRIC:** I welcome it like an ant welcomes winter. I am but a leaf against the winds of change, as is any man.

**ALDRED:** There were good years.

**UHTRIC:** Many. I remember... I remember when I inherited the throne, when I was a mere boy. The plotting regency council. The kingdom in tatters. [*a sigh*] Those days seem so far away now.

**ALDRED:** They are far away, sir. Your reign was a good one for the kingdom. You did us all well.

**UHTRIC:** I have you to thank.

**ALDRED:** [*looking down*] I was but a tool in your arsenal, sir. The hand that carved out these present circumstances remains yours.

**UHTRIC:** [*somberly*] In that sense, I am to blame for my own undoing.

**ALDRED:** I did not mean it in that way.

**UHTRIC:** And thinking in that same line, you played your role, too.

**ALDRED:** [*head still hanging*] I'm sorry, my liege.

**UHTRIC:** Do not escape to old habits now, Aldred. We have time to reminisce yet.

*A commotion is heard from outside the castle. Though the gates are far, enough men are shouting that it is quite audible for the two. Then, the sounds of battle flood the fortress.*

UHTRIC: Or perhaps not.

ALDRED: Will you reconsider, my lord?

UHTRIC: [*ignoring him*] I wonder how the next dynasty will seem. The faces of these rebels' progeny.

ALDRED: My liege, please.

UHTRIC: Then again, I suppose there will not be any more dynasties, will there? That is the point of all this, after all.

ALDRED: Sir!

UHTRIC: [*standing*] But then, I suppose there is always a dynasty, is there not? [*approaching Aldred*] Just of a different mask.

ALDRED: Will you finally come with me, King Uhtric...

*His speech is cut short by Uhtric's dagger breaching his chest. Aldred's eyes fill with the panic of a wild animal. A line of crimson dribbles from his lips. He grabs Uhtric's arms in a gesture that only pleads, "Why?"*

UHTRIC: Pitifully, I must play my role of the old tyrant king until the very end. And all of the old must make way for this new era, dear friend, not just I.

*Aldred coughs blood.*

UHTRIC: And, I suppose, I am a little miffed at your betrayal.

ALDRED: I'm sorry, Uhtric. A million times sorry.

UHTRIC: Why apologize, old friend? Stand by your actions like a man. [*smiling*] To the bitter end.

*As Aldred's body slumps in Uhtric's arms, a band of Revolutionaries, led by a shieldmaiden, Signý, burst into the room. They swarm Uhtric and Aldred and envelop them.*

*After a time, they disperse, revealing Uhtric's corpse on the carpet, embracing his old friend even in death.*

*Signý runs to the throne and on top of it, shouting and commanding her band to listen.*



**SIGNÝ:** Mark this day, paragons, and relish in the fruits of your hard labor. Today, is a day of change! Today, is a day of prestige! Today, is a day of freedom!

**REVOLUTIONARIES:** [*roaring cheers*]

**SIGNÝ:** Stand tall and bask in the light of a new dawn, for come tomorrow morning, you will live in a new era! Past the stifling persecution of a mad, decrepit monarch! Beyond the suffering under greedy nobles! Out of the penetrating gaze of a despot's secret police! Tomorrow, we move to democracy! For Sigurnia!

**REVOLUTIONARIES:** For Sigurnia!

*Curtain.*

# Do We Have a Choice?

Tahreem Ashraf

The shade of the sun covered my soul  
I opened my eyes, and saw myself  
In between the fire that burned my skin,  
Ached my heart.

Helpless

The bird in the cage

Or

A man without wings

Tell me the difference,

Between the earth and the sky

And what about heaven and hell

Are they alike?

Even the fleck knows its worth

I, myself is ignorant

Why am I here? Self is unknown

Bare truth concealed in light,

But, at dusk

Will we be oblivious?

Run or fight

To survive or to die?

No choice I have

No choice you have

Do we have a choice?

Only once, raise your voice

Ask the truth,

From yourself,

From the world

Who fight for desires?

Who fight with desires?

# Soul Search

Khine Win

Walking down the hill in the morning,  
Humming a song that makes me happy,  
Going into a tunnel with full of images,  
Turning at a corner, one step closer,  
Listening to my own heartbeat,  
Feeling like a bee in a sunflower field.  
Like this, one foot in front of another,  
Keep up with life and dream,  
Tasting a little bit of sweetness,  
Making up a few stories,  
What can I say,  
I am still on wait list.  
Loading, pending, processing,  
Little dotted ring on computer screen  
That tickles your impatience now and then,  
Impulsive messages fly invisibly,  
Today or tomorrow, now or never.  
Nobody knows, no one can see.  
How complicated one's life can be,  
A complexity that beat me up,  
No brain on earth can solve this mess,  
Creative puzzle who loves to tease,  
To paralyze my heart and intuition.  
Don't want to lose this chance.  
If this should kill me, go ahead and tear me apart.  
I won't back down till I read your mind.  
All your imperfections and weaknesses  
My scars will be your best medicine.  
Just try it out and let me heal you.  
When you take my soul, I'll seek yours.  
I wish the end of us will be phenomenal.

# The Letter

Travis Freeman

Dear..... Whomever this may concern  
I'm concerned about, who's going to read this  
Am I really?

I'm more concerned about who is going to need this  
.....Here's a message that wasn't sent through text  
Whoever is going through some ups and downs, considered steps  
It's necessary to go up, but you seem to go back down  
But whatever you go up against don't let it get you down

Dear..... Yes I'm talking to you

I promise there is someone else who is walking you through  
Some days I know it's hard to fight

I look at the pen or pencil like it's hard to write

I look at my fingers like it's hard to type

I'm more than many, what was left, I was born to write (right)

Right..... Back to this letter

If I send it, will it return to sender

Or will it end up shredded in some dispenser

Should I keep questioning? Or should I keep messaging?

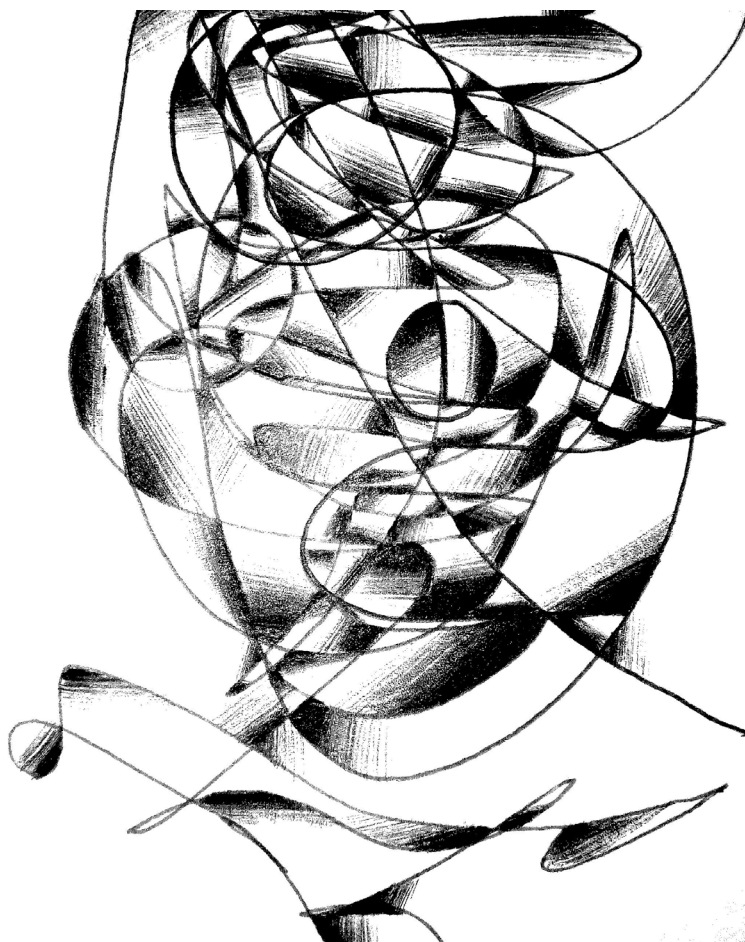
A few more words, before I'm off to send

I hope this message gets across

Like it came from Him (Jesus)

So, before I send this letter, I'll put the stamp on the corner

And hopefully it sends to the right (write) person



*Dance* by Jacquelyn Apostolo

# Rumors of War (after Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War*)

Kenichi O. Mitchell

Can you tell by my stature that I am not going anywhere!  
Riding on my horse as a savior in the night, We must fight!  
As I sit on my horse in the middle of Times Square In New York City  
My eyes have taken on pity  
Pity for the injustice of man, the injustice of climate control and the land

I'm not going anywhere, my presence will triumph loud!  
Riding on a horse as a masterpiece viewed by the crowd  
My head slightly turn to the side in disgust of man's pride

I chose the horse to ride on because he sleeps lying down and standing up  
Don't take for granted that we're not aware of all that plagues man  
I chose this horse because it has the biggest eyes than any other mammal  
that lives on land

I see you, we see you  
I'm riding my stallion because it's strong  
It represents all that is wrong in our world and with man

I represent rumors of war  
Riding on my stallion strong and proud  
View me as a masterpiece of all that is unspoken and not yet changed

# Black, Gold & Green

Venice Brown Thomas

Black, Gold and Green  
You'll see what I mean  
Black, Gold and Green  
Oh Jamaica is so clean  
Black is for the hardship  
Gold is for the rising sun  
Green is for the beauty,  
Of our trees that's our duty.  
Our national dish  
Is the Ackee & Saltfish.  
Back when there was no  
Transportation,  
You had to carry your load  
on a donkey to get to your  
Location.  
Our Coffee is the best  
No other can test  
As it comes from the peak  
Blue Mountain always looks bleak,  
Don't make that mistake  
Our Coffee is never Weak  
Black, Gold and Green  
Now You See What I Mean!  
Jamaica the land of Wood & Water,  
Our Culture keeps Usain Bolt faster!

# The Person I Owe Everything To

Selena Rodas

The first bright eyes in my earthly journey.  
The first snug arms to cover from shadowy days.  
She is the stem. I am her branch.  
She is *mi roca*. She is *mi refugio*.

The one who feeds with wise teachings.  
The one who enlightens the penumbra.  
The one who claps me on the stage.  
The one who *abraza mis miedos*.

Her name is engraved on my essence.  
Her perfume is kept in my soul.  
Her voice is heard in my roots.

The wind is whispering "*mi Chiquita*."  
The wind is whispering "*Te amo mama*."  
The wind is whispering "*mi bolita de mani*."  
The wind is whispering "*Gracias mi eterno amor*."



# Parable of the Opportunist

Alexia Michalatos

The vulture was cunning, and it was a coward.  
He liked to hide; scavenge, feasting on the victor's spoils.  
His disgusting, rough and ruffled wings  
A worm-like head with a beak attached onto it  
He circled the sky, circled the sky.

"Mr. Vulture." A hound called out to him from the ground  
"Isn't waiting for food boring? Don't you want to participate?"

"No," the vulture responded. "It is not boring at all, it's safe."

Tearing apart at a freshly killed deer corpse  
The hound ripped at the meat, ripped at the meat.

When he was done, the hound left,  
and the vulture came down

By then, the meat  
It was rotting  
Flies buzzed around it

The vulture didn't mind,  
He ripped at the meat.

The hound was back the next day,  
"Oh, Mr. Vulture," he began to say to the circling wings above.  
"You're looking a bit sicker today, a bit sicker."

"It might look that way, but I'm fine."  
"What do you have for us to eat today?"

"Just a lizard. I ate half of it already."  
"That's not enough. Not enough."

"That's not my fault. I'm not responsible for you."  
"But you've been giving me your food every day."  
"That's because I was full, and there was an abundance."

"Not enough', you say. I hope that now you'll learn."

# Out All the Fish in the Sea

Erica Urena

Redhead, dark head, brown head  
All out of his lead  
So many fish to catch  
None to patch

Begins with a stare  
Then the hormones start to flare  
Not a single care  
For the color of their hair

She signals  
He reacts  
They exchange  
Then there's a change

He yells, as she screams  
As annoying as the church bells  
Not a solution in sight  
Continues to fight

Hearts are stolen  
Yet broken

Cries filled the night  
Alcohol comforts the night  
New encounters control the night  
Remarkable nights of regrets

Together again  
Skeletons in their closets  
Holding hands in front of the world

Out of all the fish in the sea  
We choose the;  
Sad  
Broken  
To fix and change.

No solutions....

# Untitled

Nathan Perez

If you died I wonder if I'd cry for I know you're never gone  
And in the celeste sky and infinite wind  
You've become the smell of the gatherings  
Or the smiles on New Year Eves  
Even the sound of the vacuum on Sunday mornings.  
But you'll always be present in  
The knot in my throat

# Nourish (in spirit of Linda Hogan)

Ryan Ng

Sun with its mighty force  
by mother nature  
nourishes tall green blades  
who starve for light.  
Tall green blades nourish the cow  
on welcoming meadows.  
grass regenerates like electricity.  
Cow grazes  
on a wholesome grassland  
under the nutritious sun.  
cows breed.  
and sacrificed.  
Chef, with the  
help of the sun, grass and cow.  
a cut of the prime rib roast.  
we savor.  
  
Repeat.

# Black Lives Matter

Keziah Caldwell

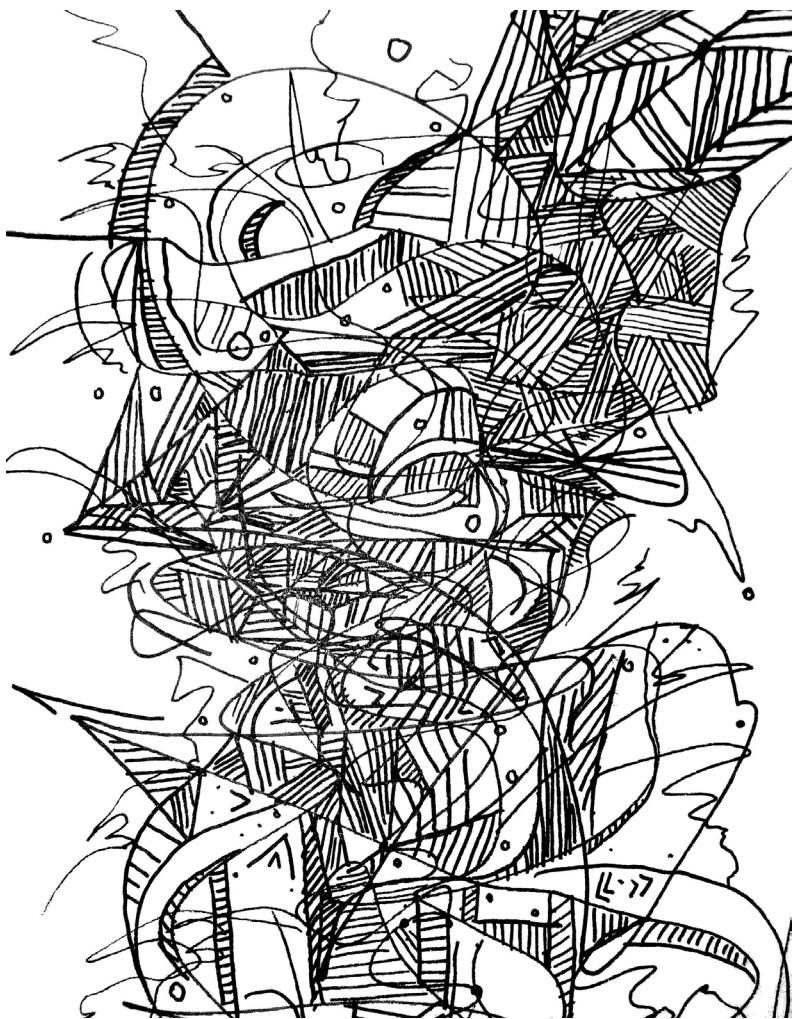
Everyday there's something new on the news  
Blacks get hurt and dying, I am just confused  
I know you're as confused as I am about the situation  
This poetry piece isn't just writing it's a demonstration  
To understand what blacks been through and to know that we're still  
fighting  
Black power is a blessing, no need to put that in writing  
But I did anyway to show that I support  
Cause it seems everyday there's a black person on the news report  
Are we worth anything or are we just here?  
Day after day its seems our race disappears  
I'm trynna figure out why the world is so cold  
My dad always says I will understand when I'm old  
Time will go on and so will life  
So pick up a pencil and put down the knife  
Instead of killing, try to write  
Instead of saying it's over, say it'll be alright  
In a world full of racism, its not easy being black  
But black is beauty and I will never take it back  
Black girls and boys are in a brutal society  
Doctors and therapists have no choice but to lable us with depression  
and anxiety  
Our life is just as important as any other race  
While passing a cop we shouldn't have to worry about getting shot or  
being sprayed with mace  
Being black is beautiful on the inside and out  
Black is power and I know that without a doubt  
Black lives matter and I will stand for what is right  
Support through the day and fight through the night.

# Black Kids Matter

Hyvil Escayg

gunshots for these kids are loud

but this silence is louder



*A Place by Jacquelyn Apostolo*

# Garden (A Found/Erasure Poem, after Virginia Woolf's "A Haunted House")

Karina Moreira

A typical day, sunny yet humid and fairly brisk.  
You woke, hand in hand. Opening there.  
"Here we left it," she said. "In the garden," he whispered.

No other way to express but murmurs.  
But it wasn't that you woke us. Oh, no. Read on a page or two.  
C'mon, read on...

"Now they've found it," one would be certain.  
Stopping the pencil on the margin.  
Breaking Point.

Tired of reading,  
Rise and see for oneself.  
The house all empty, the doors standing open.

"What did I want to find?"  
My hands were empty.  
Confusion and curiosity.

And so down again, the garden still as ever.  
Only the book had slipped into the grass.  
Beauty, majestic.

No one could ever see them.  
"The treasure buried; the room..."  
Oh, was that the buried treasure?

Really? Out in the garden then? So fine, so rare, coolly sunk.  
Beneath the surface beam I sought always burned behind the glass.  
Death was the glass; death was between us.

He left it. He left her.

"Safe. Safe. Safe." "The treasure yours."

Stiff and still, whispering not to wake us.  
The couple seek their joy.  
"Here we slept," she says.



And he adds, "Kisses without number."  
"Waking in the morning..." "In the garden..."  
"When summer came..." "In winter snowtime..."

Knocking like the pulse of a heart.

Nearer they came, rain slides silver down the glass.  
Our eyes  
Darken.

"Look," he breathes.  
"Sound asleep, love upon their lips."  
Bliss.

Faces, faces pondering.  
Faces search and seek  
Their hidden joy.

"Safe. Safe. Safe." "Long years..." he sighs.  
"Again you found me..." "Here," she murmurs.  
"Sleeping; in the garden."

"Here we left out treasure..."  
"Safe! Safe! Safe!"  
Waking.

I cry, "Oh, is this your buried treasure? The light in the heart."

# Hong Kong

Xiaofen Zhou

a 73-year old man, was pushed and shoved

in a sunny  
morning

Only for unwilling to take the flyer

From the hand of protestors, the so-called 'defender'

of 'freedom and democracy'

Their freedom and democracy

Not the old man's

A young police,  
was attacked on  
the head, with  
iron

By a group of protestors, the so-called 'defender'  
of 'human rights'

The mask they wore may 'hinder' them from seeing the young face,  
the painful bleeding young face

Of a  
person

who is devoted to duty

A real defender

of human  
rights

Hongkong,  
Pearl of the  
East, whose  
luster was  
worn away

Starting from June,

the outbreak of radical  
protests

his peace and beauty was disturbed,

In the name of defending “peace and beauty”

Bustling streets, visitors from all over the  
world

Clothing in the latest fashion

booming economy,

vigorous city,

Shopping heaven

people with bags from various shopping  
malls

.....

No more be  
seen

Hongkong—

One of the four tigers of Asia,

Was affected in his prosperity and stability,

and, his full pace of running

And you wore the mask,  
hid from even yourself

You forget who you are

why not show your face to the  
sun

let us see who you are

And now I am sorry to  
say

that you have to do it, now

When the government finally imposed anti-mask law  
hopefully, plenty of young faces

uncovering the evil  
masks

will restore calm and  
senses

156 years—

A humiliating figure,

recording the shameful  
history

The history of a colony

—One of the colonies of United Kingdom  
since mid-19th century

1997, on a holy day, you returned back to motherland

Hong Kong needs to  
cherish

your uneasy triumph

One country, two systems--a special administrative region

Hongkong needs to remember

your infant name—  
Xiang'gang

Hongkong needs to aware,

the current protest, merely a  
wave

in your new  
history

of  
ownership

But who is  
clamouring  
that

“I won’t stand by” ?

We can’t help laughing

Xiang’gang is now his own master,

Shh, be quiet, British, go to  
sleep

The sun has already set

# The Cookie Monster

Kelanda Bynum

There's a slight chill to the room, so I cover myself with the throw blanket. It's sky blue and white, soft to the touch and always keeps me warm. I then return my attention to the book I was reading. I'm old school when it comes to certain things. eBooks are cool and convenient but there's nothing like the feel of a novel in hand. The feel of turning the page, it helps build the suspense.

*Awaking from a Troubled Dream* reads the title of the book. The main character, Tiffany, has just woken up covered in blood. As I pick up the book, I begin to let my mind try to come up with all the possibilities for why she's covered in blood. It's past one in the morning, all the lights in the house are off except for the lamp by which I read this novel. The lamp is small and casts a small arc of light, the rest of the room cast in darkness. With only large furniture like a bookshelf near the door barely visible. As I read the words on the page, the tension builds and I'm anxious. The hairs on the back of my neck stand which instinctively make me look down at my arms; all I see are goosebumps. My heart rate increases, and my breathing matches it.

Suddenly, a noise afar off makes me look toward the door. The door ajar, I look, not blinking. Again, the noise, staring into the darkness. I think back to earlier when I went out to the barn. Did I leave the door unsecured? I thought. I tried to convince myself that's what it was. Loud and closer, the noise. My breath caught, I slowly blink and then squint trying hard to investigate the darkness.

My brain yells "get up and close the door" but the message gets lost in translation. My nervous system on high alert and scrambling everything. Even louder and closer still, the noise.

My brain no longer tries to give commands. I'm just frozen in place, novel still in hand; opened to the page I bookmarked. There's an intense fluttering against my stomach. My hands are shaking uncontrollably. While my focus was on the book, again that noise. The loudest yet and sounding as if it was at the end of the hall at the top of the stairs. I jump sending the novel flying into the air. The jacket cover slowly floats to the floor exaggeratingly slow while the book flies across the room near the doorway and lands at the border, half in the light, the other half in darkness.

Heart beating loud in my ears, I feel that it will betray me two ways past seven. Feeling as though it will reveal my location and then ultimately fail me by seizing up. THE NOISE. My breathing ceases held in by a non-contemplatable and, incomprehensible fear. My eyes opened

painfully wide, slight pain in my chest, heart sluggish. CLOSEST and LOUDEST. There's a THUMP followed by a slow DRAGGING. It stops just outside the doorway.

What is that? CRUNCH, MUNCH... Is someone chewing something? I think, my confusion at an all-time high. Suddenly, something rolls into the light. Is that a chocolate chip? Someone was standing just out of sight and they were eating a cookie? My mind quickly flashes to the early evening when I baked chocolate chip cookies using my great grandmother's secret family recipe. A crumb closely follows the chip... my mind was all over the place with wild ideas as to what was happening. CRUNCH, MUNCH.

How my body was able to do something as simple as stand up and walk to the doorway of the room, I will never know. Yet there I was standing at the edge of light peering into the darkness. As I got closer to being consumed by the darkness my eyes adjusted and I was able to see more. Timidly peeping out into the hallway, there was my brother standing there with a Cookie Monster mask on, my freshly baked cookie in a cruddy left hand, and just as I realized what he was holding in his right—a loud buzzing and snapping noise was heard. He was using a stun gun on me. Feeling my heart doing just as I feared I grabbed at my chest. My knees deceived me as well and gave out. On the way down I saw standing a few feet away down the hall—my brother. I knew I was dead before my body even hit the floor.

# Untitled

Shabir Khan

When the fogs of suffering shadow  
When the storm noises

When this lonesome soul suppressed  
Oh heart way your cry

Grief is a part of existence  
Heal your broken hearts

tears flow like blood on the earth's  
Things get complicated and horror.

This silence is allocated to everyone lives  
Every day is a new beginning

Humans live in sorrow, compassionate beings around and depending on  
each other for a reason for a mutually beneficial relationship.

Human existence in the dark life  
Humans are still unfamiliar with the cycle of life.



# An Open but Different Paradigm

Julio Cariño Navarrete

“...revolutionary Queer who will help rid the world of homophobia,  
misogyny, racism,  
and other forms of stupidity.” Like minds are what we need nowadays,  
at the very least, similar  
and not dissimilar points of view, ideals, perspectives, perceptions,  
thoughts and/or mindsets. If  
it is none of the aforementioned, it could always be an open but different  
paradigm. We’re in a  
world in which things change, societal pressure either augments or gets  
even worse, competition,  
capitalism, entrepreneurs, attorneys, doctors, coppers, fire fighters, openly  
bisexual, homosexual,  
heterosexual, different gendered with a name to give it more meaning  
and prevail in doing so;  
things that happened in the past, now water over a bridge. People who  
strive for an opportunity  
to reveal what’s hidden, what’s lurking in the shadows, in the deep, narrow,  
bleak hallways, to  
demonstrate and truly show who YOU really are. Now, I’m not who I  
think I am, I am NOT who  
you think I am, I am who I think YOU think I AM! Who do you see in  
your shoes, five years  
from now? Do you like that person? Are you READY to accept?

# Life

Mariyum Hossain

Iridescent  
sphere  
floating through the air,  
Fading away  
as it gradually disappears.  
Red, yellow, green, blue  
and every other  
imaginable hue.  
A hand reached out  
and a gleeful shout—  
Popped,  
into a thousand shimmering pieces,  
until eventually  
it ceases.  
Gone,  
like it never did exist.  
Gone,  
like the early morning mist.  
Gone  
without a single trace,  
except for its memory,  
which lives on  
in every  
special  
place.



*Music by Jacquelyn Apostolo*

# Opposites Attract

Karina Moreira

Her head felt hammered  
The heart was baked  
Eardrums are trumpets, violins and harmonicas  
Seats were trampled and strangled

Laughs were always echoed  
Kisses are saliva smeared daffodils  
Food is the consumer  
Water is the one being hydrated

Clothes are disembarking their statement  
Hair is flying away  
Tears are swallowing  
And happiness is cash and money

Bodies are modeling clothes  
Teachers are bragging and growing their nose  
Society is pocketfuls of barbies  
Hate is the definition of love

Babies are the mothers' devil  
Pastors are the fathers of all humanity  
Popes are the open gates to heaven  
Suicide is the cheat sheet to cheer-dom.

# Hope

Mariyum Hossain

A sliver  
of moonlight,  
on a dark  
winter night.

A sliver  
of a rainbow,  
beneath  
the gray skies.

The remnants  
of warmth,  
as a  
fire dies.

A reason  
to keep going,  
To believe  
the best is yet  
to come.

A reason  
to  
k e e p  
g o i n g,  
is  
a sliver of  
H o p e  
amidst  
hard  
times.

# Blank Canvas

Devin White

What would you like on it?

I don't know

What should I put on it?

Anything you like.

Like what?

A rainbow?

Yes.

Too gay. Are you sure?

Yes it's yours.

What about a couple?

Sure it's yours.

A man and man?

Sure it's yours.

What about a boy and a girl?

Sure it's yours.

Woman and woman?

Sure it's yours.

What about sounds of music?

Sure it's yours.

Why do you keep saying that?

Because I'm not the canvas?

Then who?

You are.

Ok so I can put hearts on it

Sure, it's yours.

# Encounter

Keyondra Davis

I hoped my secrets would uncover truths your mouths couldn't swallow.

Like flower petals threatening to blossom,  
I tasted something deep inside their bodies,  
Wicked and unsatisfying.

Dusted photographs,  
Hollowed memories,  
The verbal insults,  
Rose colored cheeks in dulled sunshine,  
I remembered their voices.

Loud and echoing,  
Pressing and pressuring my chest,  
The heavy weight of words with dumbbells connected to them,  
I touched the broken glass of their garments and felt the torture to feel loved.

Broken soldiers on a restless battlefield,  
I hummed a silly tune that sounded eerie to their ears,  
Too far off to understand,  
Too deepened to recognize,  
But their souls felt that stinging sensation when darkness recognized the  
power of God.

That Holy Spirit madness,  
Hot hunk of a life deemed unattractive to their eyes,  
A spirit recognizes strength,  
Serenity,  
Holiness,  
When it crosses paths with another.

I wonder if they could hear my voice but instead would find it to be the Spirit,  
Beckoning them as a call to come home.

# Life of Native Family

Quentin Adams

Heavenly skies  
Sun of sunflower  
Trees as statues  
Stepping on remorse grass  
I once stepped on with my father  
Man field of mastery to be a father  
From visitors over the heat in the seas  
With failing of keeping his family safe  
His lost of his life  
Failed him in his mastery  
To be a father  
As follows with feathers  
Dye of feathers made by his daughter  
Giving immunity that he not alone  
As his wife his mistress of his heart  
Carries the sadness of being alone  
In her heart  
With his souls inside of her  
Now to teach it inside they  
Daughter  
Toe be strong native  
Leading new blood  
Of a heart  
She spread to her daughter  
Their cries of tears to now Uplife in  
Sky to make feathers flow  
As a rainbow.....



# I Am Me

Regina DellaVecchia

I am me  
Some may ask  
Who is she?  
But those that are blind  
Cannot see

Not looking between lines  
Some may try  
To obscure reality  
But those that are squinting  
Barely see

I let them be  
Some may give  
More than they should  
But those that are wide eyed  
Wish they could

If they only would  
Some may take  
What is theirs  
For those that know balance  
Don't put on heirs

I do care  
Some may take  
As well as give  
For I know this balance I do not fib

I'm not glib  
Some may want  
Way too much from me  
I'm not blind  
I clearly see

I let it be  
I pick and choose  
I do not worry  
I pay attention and always see  
As it is, I am me

# Unknown Case

Ashley Enelus

## ABC Corp., Inc.

Memo

To: Able Adams, Receiving Manager  
From: Ashley Hopkins, Internal Affairs Officer  
cc: Returns Dept.  
Date: 2/17/20  
Re: The 'Unknown Case'

This is in regard to the case that was received on the dock yesterday. The receiver reported a "strange odor" coming from the case. The case came in at 13:43:23 on 2/14/20. The case was then stored in the breakage area. The shipping label was torn off and written in red marker "DO NOT OPEN!" (See attached photo). If the workers at the docks are trying to be humorous, tell them to stop. This is a business and there is no time for these antics. Please have the contents identified, repackaged, and ready to be sold ASAP. Thank you.

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## ABC Corp., Inc.

Memo

To: Able Adams, Receiving Manager  
From: Ashley Hopkins, Internal Affairs Officer  
cc: Returns Dept., Inventory Manager  
Date: 2/18/20  
Re: The 'Unknown Case'

The case was reported missing. I do not know what kind of operation you are running, but this had better stop. People are now complaining of hearing noises in the warehouse. Find the case and have it shipped out TODAY! Thank you.

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## ABC Corp., Inc.

Memo

To: Able Adams, Receiving Manager  
From: Ashley Hopkins, Internal Affairs Officer  
cc: Returns Dept., Inventory Manager, Security  
Date: 2/20/20  
Re: The 'Unknown Case'

After the recent "accident", security has stepped up. There is still an investigation into why some of our products have gouges in them and why associate Johnson was found unconscious and bleeding. He stated to his supervisor that he heard something coming from the top shelves and wanted to take a look. Just keep an eye out for that case and get it out of here. Thank you.

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## ABC Corp., Inc.

Memo

To: Joan Regis, Operations Manager  
From: Ashley Hopkins, Internal Affairs Officer  
cc: Security, Warehouse Supervisors  
Date: 2/24/20  
Re: Warehouse break-in

There seems to have been a break-in that occurred over the weekend. The warehouse was completely destroyed along with some of the heavy machinery. Nothing appears to have been taken and the forklifts will be out for repair. The damage seems...very strange. Why would someone rip the engine out? Anyway, please be advised that after the cleanup, operations may continue. Thank you.

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## **ABC Corp., Inc.**

Memo

To: Ms. Osborn, President & CEO

From: Ashley Hopkins, Internal Affairs Officer

Date: 3/4/20

Re: Incident #32

I am going to dispel what has been documented by the police and the CIA that have visited our warehouse over the past weeks. These deaths cannot continue. There may be gross and overt problems with OSHA practices at the site. I will personally visit and confirm that there is nothing wrong. I apologize for the involvement of the outside authorities. I will log my experiences and report back to you on Friday. Thank you.

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## **ABC Corp., Inc.**

Memo

To: Cleaning Crew

From: Ms. Osborn, President & CEO

Date: 3/5/20

Re: Disposal

Please, remove all personal effects of A.H. from the office.

# a personal message

Hyvil Escayg

people wonder why i act the way i do  
why i smile so much  
why i wear pink cheetah print socks with no shame  
why i still laugh at the stupidest of things,  
unapologetic for my obnoxious immaturity  
youth is a choice  
i am 19 years old  
i don't have a graduation picture  
because i was too insecure to show up  
i spent countless nights  
with voices embedded inside  
the walls of my head  
so when my mom used to ask where did all my friends go  
i would look at her,  
confused as they were always with me  
i fell in love for the first time  
and pinky promises made them quiet  
but their damn fucking dog wouldn't shut the fuck up  
her name was lucy  
lucy was a bitch  
my youth was stolen from me  
by a creature i wish i could illustrate through contemporary english,  
by sorcery i would wish on no other man  
i lack basic algebraic skills  
and i don't know what an ion is  
and i'm always late because i have a sleep disorder  
i'm lazy  
my gpa was a 2.7

and all i used to care about was basketball  
and coming home late  
and alone  
i never got to play baseball with my dad  
i never got to appreciate mike  
i never got to serve someone homemade punches  
i never got the chance  
to yell and scream and cry  
about how much i loved you  
to your face and how all you did was hurt me  
my past doesn't define me but  
it's definitely a majority of my identity  
this isn't about or for a past lover  
this is for everybody  
i never got a chance  
to show everyone who i really am  
and what i'm really feeling  
because i've been too busy protecting myself  
not from the boogie man or even the dark  
i've been too busy protecting hyvil  
from  
myself  
and  
this disgusting cruel world  
people wonder why i act the way i do

# Innocent Bystander with a Plot Twist

Chad Richards

I'm just an innocent bystander that got caught up in your life just by looking at you while you committed the crime. The crime against yourself that put you in my path coincidentally. This was a strange coincidence because I wasn't planning on watching a crime play out today but something told me to go take a walk down memory lane and take a right where the past and future coexist. Then I took a left on past street and realized that I was going the wrong way. So then I took what seemed to be the right chance on future street and that's where I witnessed first hand the crime you committed against yourself. The crime you committed involved your heart being torn into pieces and his blown to bits. That was the end of you and him but the beginning of you and me. We became Bonnie and Clyde till death do us part, till the sky fell apart, and till the end became a part that was never inevitable. We went from being separate minds to criminal minds to me loving mines and you being mines to then becoming one mind forever mine for all of time. However this is what goes through an in love innocent bystander's mind before the words "no witnesses" are uttered.

# Independence Day

Andrea Carrasco

Banners up, yellow, blue, red

Mama in the kitchen, stirring the warm strawberry drink with mini pineapples

Waiting for the soft, yummy cake to be baked

Knock Knock on the door, uncle, aunts, cousin, friends are here

Living room with full of decoration, lights, music

Dressing up with colorful dresses, sandals, dangling earrings

Wearing colorful makeup, with a big smiles

The day has come, with great joy

Independence Day!

Dancing, eating, laughing,

A day that can never be forgotten

I'm proud to be Ecuadorian



# War Cries of a Samurai

Quentin Adams

Flakes falling from above

Could it be snow?

Rushing through it step by step with sorrow

Rustling through my steel boots

Keeping my balance, Moonlight sparkled brighter than a Gypsy

Lifting up my head to feel the breeze

Sword down the shimmy of my hand

With drips of enemy soil in palm of my hands

Slowly gasping of air of feeling defeat but no regrets

Hearing the haunts of cries around me

Of excitement from my enemy with crackle of a sneak move

As samurai blade folding in front of me slither

Cape blowing with wind of chanie

As I crawl beyond to horizon so far my eye can

Rotating with spring over my enemy head

Just to get one last look of horizon

By the curve of my toes

By the dive of my body

By the drop of my body

Enemy gallops behind me as I feel

push of sword juggling through my ribs

Cries of tear running through but seeing the horizon  
I rise with tears shuffling through my body  
Conquering my own soul offering flowers  
With release of air for last breath thought  
I will take bouncing off into the horizon  
Thinking the sun my way out as I leaped out  
With sword in my body, eyes closed  
I plumed in gray ash  
the enemy sword Shuffle in my hand realizing I actually  
Fell in my own ash knowing my eyes  
Slowly closing as circles of  
My eyes, legs rotate in, knees down,  
Squatting down with arms founded within my arms  
Founded in with crack of smile rising to the  
Horizon with **Wars of the Samurai calling my**  
**NAME.**

# My Soulsunlight

Regina DellaVecchia

Sunlight's warmth and all its rays  
Permeating once a foggy haze  
A bittersweet sting of warmth and cold  
Reminding me of love I once did know

The wind could not dry the tears on my face  
And extinguish light I once embraced  
My heart plays fear around in my mind  
Drawing me ever closer to what I've left behind

Sunlight sounds in its gentle voices  
Warming my tears as my heart rejoices  
Branching towards the distant sky  
Feathering wings to now fly

My heart now sings with a new old song  
My love in waiting for so long  
Sunlight's warmth and all I know  
An infiltrating gaze into my soul

Sunlight is your voice drying the tears on my face  
Sweet warmth of your love I embrace  
Shadows casted away in the sea  
Murky are its depth of a former me

Light swells on a once disdainful tide  
My love for you for now I bide  
My spark in my sea, forever you ignite  
For it is you, my love, are my Soulsunlight

# Death's Knocking For You

Bryanna Jourdain

Hearts arrested, brain perishing,  
Lungs collapsed, extremities black.  
Fear conquers, king it becomes/  
Sheer darkness engulfs mother. Gone!  
Where are we going?

God the almighty snatches the entity.  
The soul removed, now risen.  
You—lay lifeless. Bare flesh exposed.  
The body; empty, soulless.  
The soul voyages.

Light was luminescent as the sun,  
Memories resurface, relived.  
Theoretical scenes, played, halted.  
It is time my child.  
Where are we going?

The voyage ceases. A spot has been  
Made. A star is made of You.  
The light has been ignited! You glow.  
For eternity you shine and  
Cast light for All.

# 强度 Prochnost/Qiángdù

Julio Cariño Navarrete

The essence of a mystery alludes or foreshadows a journey, an adventure, a voyage if you will - one that will lead to certain occurrences. One step to another, sometimes it feels like one step forward, two steps back. Not a hindrance nonetheless but rather a jolt to development and therefore adulthood. Taking Mandarin for instance, a small push is all it takes, much like gravity, a revelation that the world is a much bigger place than people realize. Archery stretches your sports threshold and lets you see, it allows you to picture all of these contrasting paradigms because the moment you pull the string along with the arrow, you hear the sound of silence and that's all you need, you're living in the moment and when you let go, you rain hell on the nay-sayers and rise and keep your head high and stand triumphant. Writing alone can express multiple things, things that cannot be expressed by actions, speeches, science, logic or religion. It is a privilege not many appreciate nor do they realize how significant it can be and how it may help someone or can share a story others can relate to and thus feel what you feel. A guitar is a tool introduced long before you were born, an instrument of faith if you will, faith in music. The kind that will get you to not necessarily dance but to learn an abundance about yourself as well as your peers, like a cold, rainy night, where it is all wet, humid, lonely, streets are that of a mean and unfriendly veneer. Unwelcoming as ever, despised by the impression of the look of its face; thunder and lightning strike and echo among the wind that carries it, the leaves of autumn telling you to encourage, inspire, telling you that despite the trials and tribulations that may come, you can always come back and rise within the ashes and go from green to red to orange to yellow and then back to their original color. Their great comeback, the green.

# Journey

Travis Freeman

Every step you take is a step towards something  
Maybe better or for worse  
Some come with baggage, it's what you carry in purse  
Want something to sell? Sell hope with your merch  
Don't think less of yourself nor highly but know what your worth  
Some travel a distance, and some stop on the way  
I skipped some stones and met The Rock on the way  
Had I stopped traveling, there's no telling where I might be  
If it wasn't for the rest, there's no telling where I might sleep  
If I didn't lose there's no telling who I might keep  
And had I never found God, there's no telling who I might be  
This journey isn't easy, I'm still walking because the two still works  
That's good but some days I feel worse  
Broken, sometimes you have to heal first  
But last, sometimes you wanna feel first  
So, if it's for better or for worse  
Then I'll still walk on this journey  
Because truth is can't nobody else walk it for me

# Heartbreak Fire of Determination

Alyssa Pascalli

She grasps for air, she grasps for answers  
Not only do the echo's through her bedroom walls form her eardrum of a wound,  
Her heart has a share of burns and wounds  
Piece by piece looking at all the pictures laying on her bedsheets,  
She thinks to herself "Why me?"  
As vulnerable as her mind and heart has became she went from struggling  
From growing pains to growing power  
She would never let another heartbreak of a danger hazard define her  
As her distrust led her to who she was  
Her trust within herself speaks for oneself.

# To Hear the River

Nathan Perez

To hear the river

As black as profound thought

As decadent as silk

The Moonlight creating a white arrow scattered across the ripples

Pointing to you.

To hear the river

My mind was lost

Washed like the sand on shore

The small crystals of sanity

Under my feet in which I stand.

To hear the river

Is to hear yourself.



# Untitled

Devin White

Alone with my thoughts  
I hear myself scream in my head  
Just stop stop  
But I keep hearing what I don't want to hear  
Destroy  
Pain  
Hurt  
Who are you fooling this isn't the real you step off and step away from  
your reflection.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Breaking  
Dot dot  
Breakingg  
Dot dot  
Breakingggg  
Dot dot  
No stop I mean....  
Fuck I feel like I'm quaking  
And I'm sitting in constant waiting.....  
Waiting for the time too  
Past me by cause I don't know why  
.....

To escape these thoughts .  
Wondering..  
Screaming and yelling  
Who are you  
What are you doing here  
Just stop.  
Take a breath  
collect yourself  
Love yourself  
Be yourself.

# I Need a Minute

Jacquelyn Apostolo

My life,  
always mosh pittin.  
Straight aims to the face.

Heart of darkness was winning,  
I pace.

Take shots to the jaw,  
then I hit the wall

now it missed,  
tightened fist,  
feeling dissed.  
I'm with the flow  
I'm toe to toe  
I'm saying no  
I'm finna blow

My kinda thinkin might get me in my bag,  
start feelings things I didn't know I had.  
So Imma let the vibe out on the loose,  
so that my thoughts and feels can finally form a truce.

Moving out the Meadows and to the hood,  
was trynna be Miss. Independent.  
Ended up in places I thought I should,  
my problems became redundant.

Hustling hard, cause bills always look to cuff.  
The jungle cold from the concrete,  
keeping my homies in check, "Real tough".  
My memories' locked, a coded secret,

Cause problems I have,  
don't compare to hard times.  
Just know too many  
trynna make the star align.

Their wisdom,  
I try to smuggle to reserved rooms they never had a seat in.  
Feeling like the imposter,  
looking at people like "Who they really?"  
Cause personas, like values differ

Cause thinking shakes our reality,  
some just actors for they future.  
Might believe for real one day,  
they just coming from pasts they can't return

But even the kindest politely left me for dead,  
and even the hardest said what needed to be said.

Admission's dicey, it's a different type of time,  
these running thoughts,  
they just been doin laps,  
like they trynna get fit.

My opinion's pricey, but I'll still slide you a dime:

"My words create, my vision's late,  
you wonderin, you fumblin,  
got no reply, I'll tell you why,  
I fight the pain, I need to gain,  
the pressure's on, the homies gone,  
when I'm in doubt, I write it out,  
in action mode, I'm breaking code,  
no stopping me, it's a killing spree,  
I'm letting loose, with no excuse,  
I fire bars, I left them charred!"

But still some looking like they ain't feeling it,  
I have to tell them to focus up just a little bit.  
Because they don't know I'm witted,  
I gotta give em a minute.



*I Need a Minute* by Jacquelyn Apostolo



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Photo by Regina DellaVecchia

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