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Cover painting, *Untitled*, by Jacquelyn Apostolo
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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 rymical 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.
Veridical by Jacquelyn Apostolo
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.”
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
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 feeing 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
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
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
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 allows Uhtric a moment of peace, and then continues.

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.

Sir?

Aldred looks down

Sir—

[under his breath] I know.

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

I know.

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”.

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?
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.
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 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.”
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....
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…

“You 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.


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.

“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 exaggeratedly 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.
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
go 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.
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
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
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.

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.
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.

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.
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.

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.
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 disor-
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 yours 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
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.**
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.
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.
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
Breakinggg
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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