

# **Prisoner Express**

## **Poetry Anthology 15**



Art by Anwar Tapia

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**AlternativesLibrary**

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### **If Love...**

by Benjamin Rivera

If love was a crime  
I would take life without parole  
Locked inside my cell  
or permanently in the hole.  
If love is blind  
then I would rather not see  
as long as I know  
that you would be there to guide me.  
If love hurts  
then let me feel the pain  
Let my heart be tortured  
until I went insane.  
If love was a star  
then I would shine super bright  
so that you would see me  
every single night.  
If love was a puzzle  
then I would solve it every  
possible way  
by adding new pieces  
every single day.  
If love expresses feelings  
then it would be compassion  
but you must put forth an effort  
and show it with your actions.



**Art by Kelly Frederickson**

### **Linked**

T. Williams

Is there sufficient beauty in this  
world  
To ease the pain of living

For which we all share the  
blame  
Condemning and forgiving  
To feed the frail and dying flame

Is there truth enough in this  
world  
To build a steadfast foundation  
That withstands the weight of  
trust  
That sees not race, appearance  
or station  
And that time will not erode,  
decay, or rust

Beauty and Truth, ever  
intertwined  
Inextricably linked, as body and  
mind  
Where beauty is lacking, truth  
also is missed  
Yet as long as one lives, so  
both will persist

### **Say a Prayer**

by William Nettles

Say a prayer for me tonight I  
hope that God hears your  
plea,  
And sends down his gift of  
mercy and shines his light  
on me.  
Ask God to save me from  
this evil that is the devil,  
And keep me from the depth  
of hell where it's hot on  
every level.  
I know God will hear my call  
but I'm afraid to get on my  
knees,  
And bow my head to the  
mighty Lord and beg him please  
please please.  
It's been so long since I talked  
to God I doubt I remember what  
to say,  
With tears in my eyes I fold my  
hands and to God I begin to  
pray.

I know I left the path you chose  
and started one of my own,  
For every question I assumed I  
had the answer so I let my  
curiosity roam.  
So here I am broken, bruised,  
shattered and all alone,  
Asking you to please forgive me  
and welcome me back home.  
I hope you hear my prayers  
tonight and open up your arms,  
And give me everlasting love  
like the day that I was born.  
I know right now you're smiling  
down proud of what you see,  
That's why I'm asking everyone  
to say a prayer for me.

### **Spring Free**

Justin Begandy

Prison cell—cold concrete and  
steel,  
Makes time slow; slower than  
the free  
Who watch time fly by—Busy  
Bee's.

Sleep late, wake early—  
it's count-time.

Breakfast for some,  
sleep for others.  
Others await the call for work,  
Some will go to the yard, call-  
outs  
For those with appointments  
today;

Everyone's appointment  
is time—

Monotonous and  
repeating.  
Calendar pages turn; repeat  
Another day, a month, a year.  
Autumn has come ever slower;

Soon the fall will end,  
come winter,

And time moves a little  
faster.

I count down the time anxiously  
Until I reach the final page;  
My calendar's about to end.

The end will come on a  
spring morn'  
As my cell fades from  
my mind—FREE!

### **Love**

by Warren Daniels

Love is something we all try to  
find  
Not knowing others have left it  
behind  
Some will give up others will  
keep trying  
Love is not what you ride in  
Neither how much you can  
spend  
But it is something we all need  
every now and then  
Love starts out when you meet  
a friend  
Thank you Prison Express for  
being mine!

### **Father's Cry**

by Jason Adkins

A father's cry  
To help his children  
Caught like seeds  
In whirlwinds twisting  
Violent and uplifting  
Not caring nor knowing  
Where the winds are blowing

Feeling forsaken  
My children were taken  
To a foreign land  
Raised by another hand  
Yet fates left unwritten  
Meaning they are given  
In the light of doom  
Still- potential to Bloom.

### **Feel My Pain**

by Benjamin Rivera

Feel my pain  
My pain  
of cuffs and chains  
chains around my waist  
cuffs around my wrist  
poor blood circulation  
Hips and fists  
can't feel my fingertips  
got no grip  
on this trip  
for trying to get a grip  
loose lips sink ships  
My ship sinks quick  
no bartender but,  
received a tip  
No bills, just dimes  
and for the crime  
I clock the watch  
at 8  
My Time

### **Farewell Summer**

by Chad Frank

Geese land  
in the prison's  
rec. yard; fall breeze whispers,  
"Farewell summer, farewell  
summer"—  
too soon!

### **Limited**

by Daniel Peterson

I count my stamps,  
I count my books, I check the  
rules,  
I can't go over the limit!

the guard scans my room  
numbering, counting  
"does he have too much?  
I have to make sure"  
limited

I know what he's thinking

I see his eyes dart from  
the books on my floor  
to the stack on my desk  
limited

'Damn!', I think,  
I've drawn his attention  
I'm over my limit and  
he knows it

Think fast!

"Oh, I was just donating  
those books on the floor  
to the library."  
I causally say with a wave.  
The guard nods  
"Just make you don't  
go over the limit"  
he seriously advises as he  
walks away  
I need my books  
I want to learn  
I want to grow

My life is so  
limited  
My time is so  
limited

bounded, defined, restricted

The light of day is so  
limited

books are boundless,  
inestimable, considerable,  
vast, unlimited

The nature of prison is  
summed up in one  
word  
limited

The nature of prison is  
summed up in one  
word  
unlimited

I smile to myself  
as I nod at the books



Shoo fly, shoo!  
I shall set you free.  
Cause I know how it feels  
to be a fly in a cell  
and "time" will shoo fly me free.

### **Lonely River**

by Blair A. Blanchette

In my heart a river flows  
Whose waters have been  
poisoned  
By Bitter toxins of broken  
promises

And dismantled dreams;  
Each breathless lie,  
prevaricated  
With every barren kiss  
(screams!),-  
Hammering against its vibrant,  
green banks,  
Swelling the thick, slimey-  
sludge  
Coating its feral shore;  
Staining tomorrow's smile...  
A smile with powerful  
undercurrent's  
Straining to survive –

Resilient, yet restrained.  
Every miles span contains a  
dam  
Resurrected from the remains  
Of another snuffed-out flame.  
Change becomes a crisis –  
Trust, a danger –  
Therefore, I only share my  
water with strangers;  
Drifters camping out for the  
night;  
Visitors passing through taking  
solitary sips;  
Vagabonds, as coy and alone  
as I;  
Forgotten in the twilight  
Of yesterday's moon.  
Yet, in that juncture womb,  
Where our two mouths merge,

The surging waters of our  
symbolic seines's  
Overflow their domesticated  
streams  
Escaping, in an ecstatic rush,  
their embankments  
And, momentarily, flow free;

Free from the prisons of the  
past –  
Daring to - once more – froth  
and foam blissfully

In my heart there flows a river

### **Haikus**

by Michael Lanning

Clock sits on my shelf  
I remove the batteries  
Did I just kill time?

-----  
A black man chasing me  
Banana peel on the ground  
gave my shadow the slip

### **Poetry**

by Steven Inman

Poetry is expression of self.  
The definition of you.  
Your thoughts and feelings.  
Your point of view.  
A reflection of opinion. Your  
lies become true.  
You can be tickled pink, mad  
red, or down and blue.  
Poetry is an escape to free your  
emotion.  
A way to organize your mind of  
commotion.  
To describe feelings, use words  
deeper than the ocean.  
But, never use words that  
exploit erosion.  
Poetry is real and pure. Poetry  
is raw.  
No photographs. Write about  
what you saw.

Poetry is the needle in a stack  
of hay straw.  
Dreams become reality and  
reality seems surreal.  
Don't just say something – let  
your heart spill.  
And just the spelling of a word  
expresses how you feel.  
Death becomes alive and  
broken hearts heal.  
Poetry is the colorful art of  
expression.  
The release of charity and  
aggression.  
Explain an opinion or make a  
suggestion.  
Poetry is a poetic like engulfed  
in confession.

### **My America**

by Debbi Jones

An accidental fire burns down a  
barn,  
The neighbors come together  
bringing  
food, lumber, nails and strong  
backs.  
In two days in new barn is up  
and ready to house the horses  
and cows.  
The tractor is running from  
dawn to  
dusk plowing the burning field  
laying fertilizer, making rich soil  
to grow vegetables and feed  
families.

\$5 fills a #20 grocery bag  
saddle oxfords and bobby socks  
starched and ironed clothing  
playing hide and seek  
black and white TV  
a brown and blue panel station  
wagon  
built to last 14 years  
barbeque grills in the park  
concerts where joints are  
passed

around to one and all.

Tattoos and earrings,  
blue and purple hair,

wearing drops and carrying  
guns  
selling drugs and popping pills  
fake passports and ID.  
Innocent people  
at the wrong place and time  
shot down  
kids with knives and guns  
pregnant at 12 and 13.  
In the street life early, leaving  
a past home of pain and abuse  
countries at war,  
a world of unease and  
uncertainty  
Nothing built to last,  
everything temporary.

Each generation there is  
less stability, people seeking  
happiness in their own way.  
Love and people's hearts and  
acts  
of kindness stay the same,  
they're just harder to see behind  
the masks created and lost  
souls.

### **Regarding Nature's Fury** by David Joseph Kiluk

"This one was not meant to  
perish so young..."  
Nature storms her vengeful  
wrath  
Thunder over the corpse's path  
She swings her arms, the winds  
run  
Dark cloud race and cover the  
sun  
She blinks her mourning eyes  
Electricity lights the skies  
She had plans for her beloved  
son  
He was to learn, evolve, have  
fun

She sobs, lets her tear ducts  
flow  
Rain plummets the earth below  
Now he will never grow old  
Never have a hand to hold  
Never glance that wondrous

high  
In his newborn son's eye  
The same he once possessed  
In his mother's warm caress  
She frowns, exhales, glares  
Hail blasts the window where  
His murderer sits and stares

### **Alive?** by Damion Jackson

The nauseating buzz of a  
florescent bulb  
Drilling a hole in my frontal lobe

Killing me softly with songs of  
silence  
Boxed in a cell filled with vibes  
of violence

My friendship bracelet attracts  
no friends  
Only sounds of slithers and dark  
dead ends

My mind fills up with joyous  
thoughts  
Only to be rudely interrupted by  
the sound of cops

To hold my son is all I ask  
Instead of this torture behind  
the glass

Brick by brick and day by day  
I watch my old self fade away

I only hold on by a thread  
Am I still alive or am I dead?

Because if I'm living then I know  
hell

The fucked thing is – you can't  
tell

### **Love is...** by Kent D. Simon

Love is remembering  
Love is patient  
Love is blind  
Love is compromising  
Love is forgiving  
Love is happiness  
Love is unconditional  
Love is a stage  
Love is trust  
Love is blissful  
Love is having no idea  
Love is not dying alone  
Love is honesty  
Love is everything  
Love is caring  
Love is special  
Love is not to be played with  
Love is 23 criminals knowing  
what love is to them

### **Love's Summer Breeze** by Michael Winkler

Just the other day  
I walked quietly  
Through the fields  
As a summer breeze  
Spoke gently  
Of love  
& I was caught up  
In the wondrous unity  
Contained within  
Beautiful diversity  
As each step I took  
Reminded me to be grateful  
Of the love  
Spoken gently  
By the summer breeze  
That floated beside me  
                    Around me  
                            & through me  
As I walked quietly  
Through the fields  
Just the other day.

## **Welcome to the Fort**

by Huett Johnson

Let me tell you about a place I  
know  
That's filled with broken dreams  
and lost hope,  
A place if visited within your  
dreams;  
Would turn nightmarish by  
thoughts provoke,

A place that was created many  
years ago  
When a father was taken from  
the only son he knew,  
Now he's stuck in memories as  
time goes on,  
Trapped in a world where  
thoughts never move,

A place you need to see in  
order to believe,  
Filled with desperate cries and  
dreamy screams,  
A city where angles turned dark  
and cold,  
Now demons plundering for the  
hope of lost souls,

A place where children are  
stripped from their youth,  
Left alone with no direction and  
confused,  
As time ticks forward, away  
from its past,  
They run backwards towards  
time they never had,

This fortress was built to  
captivate souls,  
Whose burden on society was  
way overbearing,  
Within it are worlds residing in a  
timeless space,  
Which humanity has chose to  
ignore.

## **Haikus**

by Lou Tompkins

### **Reading Braille**

Your fingertips are  
like my eyes – they read letters,  
words, sentences, worlds.

### **Always Today**

What if eternal  
life is just like today but  
it lasts forever?

### **How Much She Means To Me...**

by William T. Floyd

How I wish I could send her a  
dozen roses,  
Just so that they could all see...  
How beautiful she is both inside  
and out,  
And how beautiful she is to  
me...  
I wish I could give her beautiful  
diamonds,  
Sapphires, emeralds and  
pearls...  
To show her the clarity of  
undying love  
From a heart as big as this  
world...  
Ill give her clouds with silver  
linings,  
A world made of platinum and  
gold...  
A painted sky with comets and  
rainbows,  
With millions of stars to  
behold...  
White sandy beaches down by  
the ocean,  
Where we could walk and hold  
hands...  
We could sit beneath a beautiful  
moon,  
Just so that she'd understand...  
How I wish to tenderly kiss her,

And hold her up close to my  
heart...  
Wrapping my arms gently  
around her,  
To insure that we don't drift  
apart...  
Beautiful mercy with sweet  
surrender,  
A gift from the lord up above...  
A beautiful angel to call my  
own,  
For me to hold close and to  
love...  
How I wish I could send her a  
dozen roses,  
Just so that they could all see...  
How beautiful she is inside and  
out,  
And how beautiful she is to  
me...

### **Goodbye and Hello**

by T. Williams

I said goodbye to life several  
years ago. In another handful, I  
will say goodbye to purgatory  
and go out in search of  
whatever is left of that life, and  
fill in the blanks with who-  
knows-what.  
I knew when I said goodbye that  
some pieces of that life would  
be set aside to be picked up  
again in the not-too-near future,  
some pieces would be  
reshaped so as to never again  
fit into my life's puzzle, and  
other would essentially vanish.  
What I could not know,  
however, was the level of gut-  
wrenching pain that would  
accompany this parting.  
This pain would grow into a  
sentient and sadistic being,  
ever-present and always ready  
to give a small jab or, as  
permitted, to fan glowing coals  
behind heavy eyes; to  
eviscerate, stealing strength



from both body and will, breath  
from the lungs, and hope from  
faith.

After nearly 40 years of life,  
already having endured some of  
the greatest losses imaginable,  
I was “reasonably confident”  
that I knew a thing or two about  
this life. I could not have been  
more wrong.

Since that time, things I had  
thought once unshakable have  
not only been shaken, but have  
crumbled to dust. I have  
witnessed a part of humanity of  
which I would have preferred to  
remain ignorant (and, as I am a  
part of humanity, this includes  
me). The most surprising thing  
is that this rewrite of my portion  
of life’s script took only a few  
short years. It does not escape  
my notice that these  
“reformatory” years have  
coincided with my incarceration.  
Sometimes I’m not sure  
whether to be grateful for this  
fuller understanding of our  
world, or upset at having  
decades of experience and  
understanding polluted by this  
microcosm of negativity  
operating under a network web  
of misinformation and deceit.  
One thing I believe I have  
learned in all of this is that I  
never truly know anything until I  
realize I know nothing. At least,  
I am “reasonably confident” of  
this.

So for now, I wait. Tomorrow  
will bring what it will. I look  
forward to my next goodbye,  
knowing it will not be my last,  
and stubbornly hoping it will yet  
lead to another hello.

**It**  
by Craig J. Tooney

I have no right to be happy,  
It only gives me pain.  
I cannot see the sunlight,  
Its always pouring rain.  
I try to keep my sanity,  
It’s a life for the insane.  
I even prayed to god,  
Its shown me there’s no such  
thing.  
I try to think of family  
It keeps their words from me.  
I dream of days of freedom, as  
it  
It mocks me in my dreams.  
I’m convicted by my nature,  
It feeds upon my blood.  
I was sentenced by the system,  
It’s the system where I live.  
I’ve done my first sentence,  
It’s taken that and more.  
I keep my secrets hidden,  
It will never let me free...

**Gray Sublime**  
by Tony DuPree

My days made Confederate  
gray, there are enemies to  
blame, but no use to say.  
I pray and pray just to hear from  
family such as cousin Kay. Our  
story is written like a wartime  
novel ‘The Mocking jay’.  
There I see it in the clouds a  
trace our kindred’s loyal ways.  
Swept through the wind on  
southern pines is their voices  
and mine.  
Searching and pacing back in  
time, for a place of rest that is  
sublime.  
Feeling and finding a sign of joy  
and laughter in warm sunshine.  
Ways with both rhythm and  
rhyme, spinning and spinning  
me back through the echoes of  
my ancient wealth of mind.

Cotton tops with blazing blue  
eyes filled with honest down  
home love, sweet as grannies  
home made pies.  
I see Granddaddy’s gray  
whiskers, and hear his words to  
the wise. “We all must live, love,  
forgive and die.”  
Ravens fly under the Owl’s  
dangerous vine, true to legend  
short was cut the time.  
My princess daughter Jennifer  
Marie DuPree. She is now free  
on a breeze, sweetly she moves  
on the fragrance of the  
evergreen trees.  
Our beloved ones welcome her  
to our lords paradise, so to glory  
is her soul from this old gray  
male.

**The Unseen Hand**  
by Leonard C. Williams

I once read a poem about a  
Panther cat held in captivity, like  
me. This regal and majestic big  
cat paced in cramped circles,  
like me. Cramped spaces and  
pacing over and over being held  
in  
By hunters of men  
I see nothing but endless bars  
and locks  
And good people held in many  
of these blocks  
My movement in my cell or  
cage is like a ritual dance my  
soft strides and glides  
Are filled with a black prisoner  
pride  
Upon deeper observation one  
would come to realize  
On display is a mighty will that  
stands paralyzed  
While I’m not free to roam the  
ghetto’s, barrio’s, or my city  
streets  
Yet I vow my thoughts,  
opinions, hopes, and dreams  
C.D.C. will not defeat

They roam the concrete jungles  
and beyond  
Its my faith that is my engine  
and drives me on  
I genuinely once believed I was  
free to dissent religiously and  
politically  
My mistake back then was just  
not thinking realistically  
Now I'm locked away by a smug  
class of people, C.D.C.  
superficially  
California department of  
corrections is not just a set of  
institutions, it's also a hell bent  
state of mind. Lock them up,  
lock them up, and lock as many  
of them up as we can, that's  
their plan  
But not aware are they? Of a  
much more powerful hand  
Any joy or suffering collected  
from this wrongful captivity or  
imprisonment they may not  
understand  
Was not just mere chance  
But what I believe is an evident  
plan  
For a spiritual dance  
And while I've been  
disregarded, tossed about like  
garbage, and banned  
My divine shine and life's true  
work is guided all along, by an  
un-seen hand.

### **The Door in Cell A-21**

by Michael Chris Morales

It was kind of cold, and lonely,  
in my prison cell that night.  
I had a funny feeling, like  
something wasn't right.  
I tried looking down the hall, to  
see what I could see:  
It was only the shadow of a face  
looking back at me.  
He reminded me of someone,  
but just who, I couldn't tell.  
I heard him quoting scripture:  
he knew the bible well.

His still small voice was  
soothing: and he even called  
me "son",  
As I tried hard to see his face,  
over in cell A-21.

I stood there and I listened. He  
said he had a plan,  
A way to escape from prison  
that will work for any man.  
He said, "I know the only way  
through the only door there is."  
That's when I told him my  
name; but he never told me his.  
He said, "The door is called  
Jesus." Then I sat down on the  
floor,  
And asked if he would tell me  
more about this Jesus door.  
All night we read the bible until  
he said, "Did you want to pray?  
Son you can be completely free  
before the light of day."

He led me to this Jesus door  
and now I understand.  
I began by reading scripture,  
and soon was "born again".  
For the first time in my whole  
life, I did not feel alone.  
I felt so free and happy that it  
felt like going home.  
I wanted to tell someone, so  
when the first guard came,  
I told him what had happened  
but did not know the old man's  
name.  
The guard said, "Are you crazy?  
Look, now all the lights are on,  
For three days and nights  
there's been nobody, in cell A-  
21.

### **Jesus Still Weeps**

by Jeff Keeran

We've all bowed our head in an  
attempt to ignore the poor  
strugglin' in the storm  
That we've titled life

Scorned, adorned in rags but  
thankful for clothes though worn  
and torn  
We've winked blind eyes to the  
fact that he lives in the cold and  
lonely streets  
We've called him a freak but  
really we've only looked skin  
deep  
We've judged him for the bottle  
he holds yet its manifest his  
only friend  
He hits the bottle in hopes of  
drownin' the sorrow  
Prayin' that tomorrow he'll  
experience peace again  
Shunned in his defeat by the  
world's elite  
No hand has ever reached  
except to mistreat the Jesus we  
cast to the streets

### **Jesus Weeps**

There's an imprint of Jesus  
somewhere in our world  
confined in a pen  
The guilty one that we've all  
condemned  
We've forgotten him now he's  
lonely, so afraid and in need of  
a friend  
He faithfully prays everyday and  
into the night  
Please dear lord, let somebody  
write  
Late night regrets perpetuate  
and keep the prisoner awake  
So many nightmares, scares of  
abuse, abandonment and  
heartbreak  
We've labeled him a menace,  
declared him a thug  
But if we looked through the  
eyes that see  
Then we'd see that it has been  
Jesus we've been hiding our  
face from

### **Jesus Weeps**

We may not have seen the  
orphan abandoned by all the  
love he never knew  
The one who's been prayin'  
"Dear Lord" hopin' to find love in  
me and you  
He's the boy that's never known  
the arms of embrace  
He's never been absorbed in a  
hug  
He's never been cradled in the  
aura of love  
He's never sensed lips upon his  
cheek  
Only the impression of tears  
week upon week  
As he beseeched the only God  
he's ever known  
But lately he's been sensing  
that the God of Love has  
abandoned him too

Jesus Weeps

The book of God's love has  
somehow been misread  
Maybe misplaced, but it's God's  
love that pours from this pen  
When does it end? When will  
we obey?  
The Hand of Love that we solicit  
every day  
Why do we take but refuse to  
give away  
This is the conundrum that my  
pen ponders today  
We live in a world that worships  
ice  
We make it rain leavin' the  
homeless cold, but hey, our  
necks look nice  
We have dough but we break  
no bread  
So many families go left unfead  
All in search of fulfillment that's  
only found at the Father's feet  
If we'd just kneel down there  
then we would meet  
The destitute man that we've  
cast to the streets

The prisoner we threw away  
who's still prayin' we'd manifest  
in his life today  
The orphan still longin' for a  
home  
And the widow we left to fend  
on her own  
Still praying we'd call so she  
could just answer her phone

Jesus said that whatever you do  
to the least of these you do unto  
Me  
Now we know why Jesus Still  
Weeps

### **Where I am From**

by Bernadette Bradham

I am from closets big and small,  
From belts and broken glass.  
I am from nightmares that are  
way too  
real for a child to feel  
And many darkened corners  
with prayers of  
not to be seen or heard  
I am from the oak trees that  
surround our house,  
whose mighty branches held a  
battered girl  
grown before her time.  
I am from broken dolls and  
broken beer bottles  
From Kish to Howard  
And from my immigrant  
grandmother's  
courage and my Cherokee  
grandmother's  
strength to endure.  
From walking everywhere and  
many places.  
I am from Christmas midnight  
services and  
a loving God who loves me no  
matter what.  
From murders and rapists,  
And from Adam and Eve who  
started it  
All.  
I am from the moments...

### **Symphony in Prozac**

by Heather Coffey

Petals decorated with the  
lavender shade,  
A pressed flower alone on a  
stage.  
Leaves swaying to a light  
breeze,  
drinking the sun like a  
strawberry freeze.

I watch quietly not wanting to  
distract,  
this exotic bloom performing her  
act.  
She dances erotically as if for a  
lover,  
oblivious to me watching from  
deep undercover.

I am drawn to her like a moth to  
a flame,  
wanting to take possession;  
staking my claim.  
My fingers grasp the stem of my  
new friend,  
As her sugar plum dance  
comes to an end.

### **Prisoner**

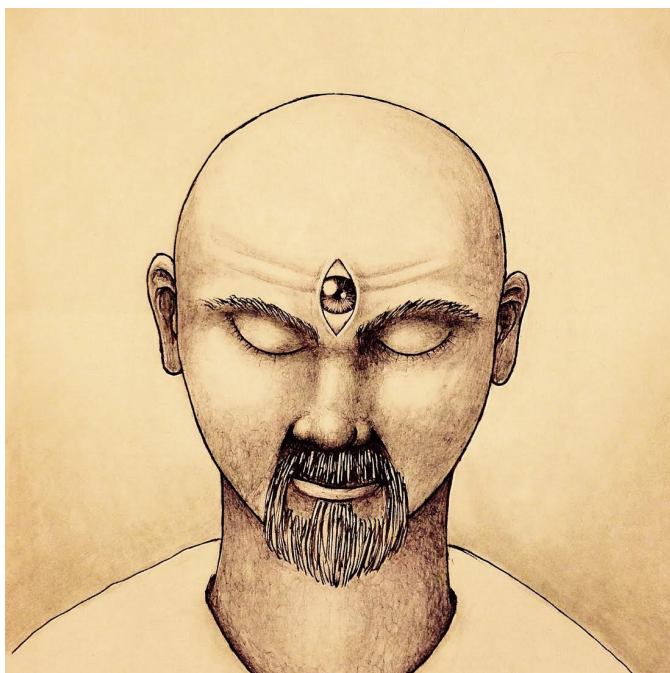
by Brandon Pierce

When I think of you,  
I remember what I lost that day.  
I find myself a prisoner,  
spending, life locked away.  
When I fell for you,  
truly, I fell hard.  
Now every door is shot,  
and every window barred.  
Within the memory of you,  
all the pain is the warden.  
My heart now guarded,  
ever since the end.  
Put in solitary,  
threw away the key.  
Waiting now,  
for someone to set me free.

### **From Father to Son**

by Brandon Rushig

Do not fear the grey whisper of  
the wind  
as it prowls within the dry bush  
and grass.  
Or those pale, streaked,  
savages of lost kin  
that glide like ghosts behind the  
mirrored glass.  
Hold steady your heart as it  
pounds away,  
in shadows and moonlight that



**Art by Robert Dennino**

cross your path.

Or give up all hope of  
tomorrow's day!  
And moan, or grope about; but  
never laugh.  
Stand tall like green pines  
against the sky  
that howls and rumbles with  
such sad fury.  
Or those two brothers who  
swore they would fly!

And held true to a dream. One  
day surely!  
Do not go quietly from life to  
dream.  
Or accept that it is, not what it  
seems.

### **Finding Me For The First Time**

by Terrylee Nelson

In the barren wastelands of this  
mind  
Somewhere is something I left  
behind

Is there anything  
to quench this  
thirst?  
I went through the  
bad can it get any  
worse?  
All I see is  
desolation  
All I know is  
isolation  
Each step is more  
labored than the  
last  
How much time  
has really past?  
This sun over me  
seems to never go  
away  
Burning into me  
this bitter betray  
As my lips crack  
and fingers start to

bleed

All I want is all I will ever need  
As my vision dances before  
me  
Embodied apparitions is all that  
I see  
As I collapse and fade away  
Only to awaken in better days  
As I question as to why I got  
here  
This complacent comfort seems  
like fear  
As I realize the tribulations are  
weathered and gone  
In this peace I gaze upon

A pain birthed in serenity  
Filling the no longer empty!

### **Dark-Thirty (check if this is the title)**

by Stephen D. Laud

Who to write to. What to say?  
Why?

Bricks, steel, pipes  
Exit doors,  
And lights bright enough to read  
by.  
Steel boxes of specimens in  
cotton beds.  
Concrete, bricks of floors  
Steel table of powder  
toothpaste, deodorant, pictures,  
soap,  
water in a bottle, non-aspirin,  
chapstick

Pictures-- Lynn, Mom...

Radio-- Sublime in the ears;  
Love is, is what I got

Once, long ago, Lynn is  
standing  
next to the singer of this song. A  
picture  
taken. In a locker box of steel  
under a  
bed of cotton.

### **Poem (untitled)**

by Santiago Duran

I look up to heaven for the first  
verse to my poetry.  
While worms are feeding on  
apples that grow on trees.  
The bad apple has fallen though  
nobody seems to notice,  
When the seeds are planted  
and up sprouts the newest poet.

I triumph over adversity and  
understand the very  
essence of life.

Just like those who lived in  
complete darkness know the  
true value of light.  
And I can't even begin to  
express to you my truest  
feelings,  
Only that at sometimes in my  
life death becomes appealing.  
I've looked for my way out all I  
hit are dead-ends and  
sand storms..  
And friends who've turned foe  
and dark roads with land  
thorns.  
But something is stirring,  
awakening deep feelings in my  
heart.  
While foreign words are dotted  
on letters when we're ap-  
art  
And it seems that your genuine  
affections have fostered  
these feelings that seem brand  
new  
With a love that mends hearts  
and makes life as  
sweet as you.  
And it's quite a change from  
jagged roses that've been  
frozen by cold emotions.  
Still they fought to live on even  
though love came  
in small portions.  
And I really appreciate the love  
that you've given me  
without conditions.  
So I thought I'd write you a  
poem with respect  
and one mission.  
To express my gratitude 'cause  
it's important for me  
that you know this.  
Thank you for picking up this  
bad apple,  
that no one seems to notice.

### **Trapped in the Cage** by Lawrence Stewart II

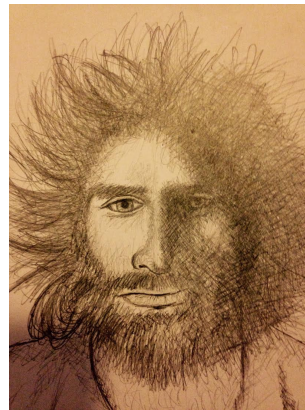
Every day it eats away  
I feel it though I dare not say  
Inside me a burning fire  
Fueled by my vengeful desire.  
This fire, it burns my soul away  
More and more each passing  
day  
My heart, mind, and soul  
consumed  
By the flames of wrath and  
doom.  
The blaze burns me and knocks  
me down  
Pinning my true self to the  
ground  
My true self tries to fight  
But is blinded by the fire's light.  
This fire inside is my rage  
I tried to lock it in a cage  
One day it stole the key  
Now I'm in the cage where it  
locked me.

### **Silent Nightmare** by Bradley A. McMinn

Dark eyes of liquid  
night,  
Watching you all  
through the twilight,  
You feel their gaze  
and tremble with  
fright,  
Begging for the air  
you know comes with  
the light,  
You fear the things  
hidden within the  
silent dark,  
You hope the bleakness doesn't  
leave its mark,  
You envision the horrors of an  
endless hell,  
Wishing for the dawn at the toll  
of the bell,  
Praying for a guide to come in  
your time of need,

Your ravaging appetite for hope,  
a guide would feed,  
You compel the intolerable  
darkness to disperse and  
unbind,  
Quoting the most comforting  
bible verses within your mind,  
You begin to lose your sanity in  
the deafening silence in your  
ears,  
You'd be happy to hear  
anything for alleviate your fears,  
You hear a voice from far away,  
You fear that it might lead you  
astray,  
Your feet are stuck and you're  
gasping for air,  
You are not alone...someone  
else is there,  
You hear your name from a  
voice that you  
know,  
The sound so gentle...like  
falling snow,  
You open your eyes to a painful  
stinging,  
The light is like the sound of

angels singing,  
The dawn is here  
and now you are  
safe,  
The next night is  
looming...it  
doesn't mind  
the wait.



**Art by Jimmy Coleman**

### **Untitled** by C'Leo Michael Pavia

I was but a child  
fighting a war not mine.  
He was my partner in death,  
my co-murderer,  
my associate executioner

in the decadent art of killing;  
my teacher of debauchery  
in life and death.  
He taught me to hold my breath,  
To aim,  
To gently squeeze,  
not to look at the  
lifeless bodies  
we daily left  
in our path.

Remembering Michael, my  
Vietnam, M.S.M.C.-D.D. partner  
– may he rest in peace.

### **The Tortoise, In the Air** by Jonathan Holeman

Swimming in the sandy dunes  
of deserts and dusty dawns  
To arise upon the horizon  
A phantom moon, full,  
will soon be gone.  
Shadows stopping at high noon  
A tortoise cries inside his shell  
Waiting for the fire of life  
To pass across his hidden  
room.  
Fading warmth, and gusting  
wind  
Push violet hues amongst the  
clouds  
The tortoise pushes out from  
underneath  
A buried tomb of stale air  
Into the night, and frozen cold  
Of quiet, ice, and solitude.

### **Today We Die** by Robert Richter

They landed out by Allentown  
out in an open field  
We're gonna die right here,  
today we are not gonna yield  
We don't know where they  
came from and we don't know  
why they came  
We're gonna stay right and kill  
them and die just the same.

The Army said they're coming  
but they can't make it today  
There's no one else to do the  
job that's why we die today  
My wife and kid are hiding, or  
they're running to the west  
I'll stay right here and die today  
doing what I do best.  
I've got a little water, but I don't  
have any food  
Don't matter won't live long  
enough to do me any good  
I've got six hundred bullets,  
there's no way they're gonna  
last.  
One thing I know is that I'll die  
before I let them pass.  
I see the one, I see the ten  
thousand I must kill  
I'm gonna die right here today  
right up here on this hill  
I didn't travel overseas, invade  
some foreign land  
Don't fight for politicians or for  
oil out in the sand.  
Can almost see my house from  
here, but I won't make it back  
There's no damn way for  
anyone to live through this  
attack  
I've got three hundred bullets  
and that will not be enough  
When they run out, I've got my  
knife and that's when it gets  
rough.  
No history will ever be about our  
doomed last stand  
Tomorrow will there even be a  
single living man?  
If anyone survives to find these  
words I wrote today  
Remember that we died before  
we let them pass this way.

### **No Regrets** by Daniel Grunvold

I have no regrets for the pain of  
life, for it has given me strength.  
Nor for the sorrow, for it has  
made me real and helped me to  
understand myself.  
Nor for the despair, for I have  
cast off illusion.  
I have no regrets for the  
loneliness, for I have made  
friends with the night.  
Nor for the rage of anger, for I  
have found inner peace.  
Nor for having made enemies,  
who taught me what not to be.  
I have no regrets for the death  
of loved ones, for they showed  
me how to live.  
Nor for rejected love, for I have  
learned to love myself.  
Nor for the passage of time, that  
which has given me my  
memories.  
I have no regrets for the  
shackles of deception, for I  
have broken through the walls  
of the prisons of my  
mind.  
Nor for the wandering, which  
has led me home.  
Nor for the road taken, which  
has opened my eyes to destiny.  
I have no regrets, for life is born  
of struggle, and the will to  
survive.

### **Perversity** Jacob Blue Baladez

The perversion of my sins,  
feels the pleasures of the skin...  
filled with blood, skin of fire...  
pleasure in pain, tears of  
desire...

## **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**

By Uhuru B Rowe

It sings because it is trapped in a life of hell, inside a tiny cage, unable to move but a few spaces in one direction or the other.

It sings because it is alone, treated with indifference, held captive in an unnatural habitat against its will.

It sings out of pure desperation, hoping that someone or something will hear its cries and liberate it from its unjust enslavement.

It sings while patiently waiting for its captor to slip up, make a mistake, and leave the cage door ajar...

Them, it will escape, fly speedily away, only briefly looking back to behold the misery and torture of isolation that it was fortunate to leave behind.

It will fly to the land where its ancestors dwelled, and dance in the fields where its distant cousins socialized and sung freedom songs while collectively foraging for food.

It will warn them of the horror, terror, and genocide that awaits them if they suffer the unfortunate fate of being captured for entertainment, consumption, or capitalist profit.

I know what the caged bird is singing...

It is singing songs, not of joy and contentment, but of rage and REVOLUTION.

## **Broken Promises**

by William Huddleston

Broken promises are more common than not,  
Lies can be forgave but never be forgot.

You solemnly swore but you lied to my face;  
So much for the code or the oath we embrace.  
What happened to honor or the pledge you gave?

Or binding words from the cradle to the grave?  
Where the ways of an oath are commonly spoke  
A traitor must pay for promises broke.

So you crossed your heart and you hoped to die.

But the fear in your eyes reveals one more lie.  
Death before dishonor; that's what the vows allege.  
But your vows are worthless; time to uphold your pledge

## **Traditional Spelling**

by Anthony Tinsman

One time  
in county jail  
an old black man  
writing a letter home  
sat beside me at the table  
he stopped  
and shook his head and looked around  
then he  
asked me to spell

T H E

"Well, I believe it's  
tee  
8che  
eee."  
He wrote it down painfully  
certain  
both of us somber  
sensing it, waiting for it  
then he looked at me again  
I joked  
this had better be a short  
fucking letter



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