

*PRISONER EXPRESS
POETRY ANTHOLOGY
VOLUME 5*



-Joseph Fritz

March 2010

Dear Poets,

This issue of poetry is dedicated to all of you who take the time to write poems and share them with us. Whether your submission is chosen for the anthology, each submission is read and considered. Enjoying a particular poem is a very subjective experience. We ask a team to read every poem submitted, and they independently decide on which poems get printed. Congratulations to all of you whose poems were selected. Your words touched our team of student readers in a meaningful way. Many of these poems were submitted more than 6 months ago. It takes quite a while for us to go from the point of receiving submissions to creating the booklet. We already have a substantial number of poems collected and considered for inclusion in the next anthology. We will collect for that anthology through the middle of the summer and then put out anthology# 6 next fall.

We are also including a number of illustrations in this booklet. We receive interesting art from many of you, and this publication is a tool for sharing that artwork with all of you. I know that it takes extra effort to retain the creative edge while incarcerated. Everything I read from many of you says it is easy to shut down and become numb while locked away. Drawing and writing are a great way to continue to express your humanity. The words and art you produce have an effect on us in the free world. Creating art is a great method for escaping the confines of your daily life. When I am engaged in creative activities, often time and space take on new dimensions. Hours disappear in the creative vortex, and when I am done I usually feel good about myself for the effort I have made. I am hoping many of you get the same benefit from writing poetry and drawing.

Your thoughts and feelings do matter. We are all on the path of self- discovery whether free or incarcerated. Most of us get so distracted by the shiny things in this world we lose track as to the significance of life. This is all but a passing moment, and we are blessed to have the opportunity to see, feel, taste and touch during our brief span. Why things work out the way they do is beyond me. Why are some people born into such privilege and others born to poverty? While some born to poverty can still make it up to the greatest riches, others born to riches stumble into poverty. The world and our lives are part's of a great big mystery. Your words help shed light on that mystery no more or less than anyone in the free world. We are all equal in being human, and in fact your experience may hold keys to self realization that folks busy with free world distractions may never glimpse. Then again, the distractions you face are also great.

We are all part of the human family, and I welcome working with you. It brings out the best in all of us. We are fortunate that many student volunteers are generous with their time, and get involved in the Prisoner Express projects. The poems, journals, art, essay writings and your general appreciation express for the services we provide, touch volunteers in a deep way. They grow inside from their participation and involvement with all of you. Thank you for contributing to the greater good of all. I hope it feels good for you to be productive.

In light and love,

Gary

HOPE

Eric Adnika #1292358

Turbulent

I have driven those roads over the ridges & watched the sun
fight the clouds that make the dark sky cry aloud.
And I have looked at the storm clouds a rolling with lightning
that shimmers & streaks.
Down valleys that never have endings, up mountains that
zoom to the peaks.
I have stood on the jagged escapements where silently the
earth meets the sky. And satisfied many a longing &
answered many a why? If everything was as predictable as the
weather we would always avoid the unforeseen calamities that
always lie ahead.

John Rod Thomas #373600

I look over my shoulder and see
 The boy I once was
 And the man I meant to be

Now the dream is forgotten
 Boy and me, for I'm
 Not the man I meant to be



Jeff Harnden

Roger B. Smith #1288482

The Search

Dull gray walls topped with the glint of wire gleaming,
shining and so eerily sharp
I find myself amongst a knot of like clad men where evil
abounds in a sickly sweet haze
Hatred exudes from lost loathing souls all pushing, shoving
and yelling about

I stand apart alone and with doubt seeking, searching an
escape from this life
Emotions covert from whom those I dwell seeking a refuge
from the furor about
Pursuing knowledge to set me apart a sheltering cove from
anger so rife

Hours alone spent with a book reading, musing, striving to
learn
Thirsting for knowledge to hold my head high while wisdom
sought to free ones heart
Minerva the goal in a sea of rage prudence the tool to keep my
cool

I've been tossed about a sea of strife rising, falling flung all
about
Yet the goal is in sight, nerves are tight peace is near close as a
touch
My focus is rapt vision is straight soul is becalmed from
afflictions of life

Ruben Camberos #V53503 / 308-25L

Moments of Now

Growin' up I could see too far
 Way – up beyond my little play yard.
I could see past sitting all day
 In a school class – listening to what some ole teacher
had to say
I could see even further away
I could see straight through workin a job for minimum pay
I saw myself doing big things – taking care of my family,
buying 'em nice things
And as time flew by, I could still see something in the haze up
ahead, just outta reach
Now, lookin back, I'm ashamed to see that what I saw growin'
up – isn't me
Now I see, I should have stopped to gaze at the moments of
now, so I wouldn't be having moments like these

In this place, where family becomes like strangers and
strangers become like family.

William Chaplar #653141

A Winding Path

I strode a winding path and thought of several different things.
I pondered on the happiness a loving family brings.
I mused upon the satisfaction that can be achieved
When, for one's labors, any recognition is received
I ruminated on the sadness of a life that's spent
Without once having known the thrill of real accomplishment.
And after much reflection, it began to slowly dawn
That, despite all its twists and turns, I like the path I'm on

Intolerance Won't Rule

Stuck in this unaccepting world of ignorance and hate;
With all its shattered hopes and dreams, let's hope it's not too late.
To see life through each other's eyes may offer some insight
Into the worlds we each live in and one another's plight.
But if we're never able to get past our warped beliefs
Then no law will be strong enough to offer much relief.
Like always, then, the place to start is with children in school.
And hopefully not from now, intolerance won't rule.

The Life That Was Lent Him

He that is unjust, living only for lust, and the pleasures he
treasures never does he lack;
Yes, even he must be returned to the dust when the life that
was lent him is demanded back.

January 20, 2009

While walking through the woods, I come upon an open gate
And thought of the historical importance of the date.
How, from a haunted forest, a proud people once emerged
And left behind some of the pain connected to the scourge
The nation once subjected all their predecessors to.
That came to a conclusion through an electoral coup.
But hopefully those people won't discover it's too late.
For everyone to take advantage of that open gate.

As Long As We Both Shall...

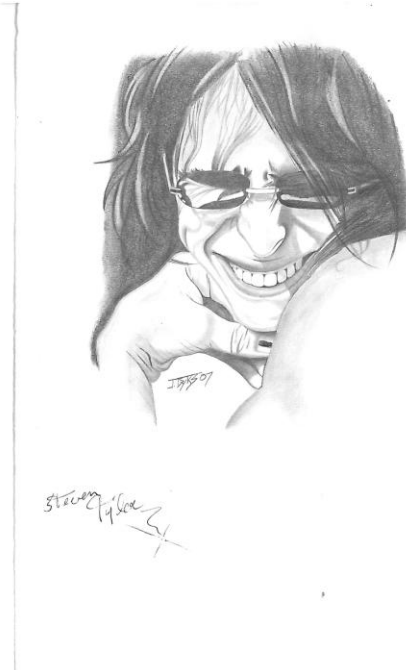
She showed up out of nowhere and gave me somewhere to
turn.
Our troubled past left bridges that perhaps were best left
burned.
And yet, out of the ashes can the phoenix still arise;
As, from the pile of rubble, one may still hear muffled cries.
So we prepare to board this roller coaster once again,
Each knowing it could leave the track the way it did back then.
Why is it that we're both so able to dismiss the past?
Perhaps it's that, deep down inside, we both want us to last.

Talents

The talents we possess are what allow us to excel,
And each of us can claim at least a few.
So rather than improving at those things you don't do well,
Get more proficient at those things you do.

Listen to Mom and Pop

If "droppin' it down low" is something you feel you must
learn,
You know where on the radio dial that you need to turn.
But if annoying habits are what you would rather drop,
Try listening more to Mom and Pop and less to hip and hop.
If showing off your "grill" is something you aspire to,
There's just one kind of music that you should be tuned in to.
But if false teeth are things for which you'd rather never shop,
Try listening more to Mom and Pop and less to hip and hop.
If drinking gin and juice is how you want to spend your life;
If you prefer five babies' mamas to one wedded wife;
If spinning rims have fast become your most desired prop,
Stop wasting time on hip and hop and turn to Mom and Pop.



- **James Dikes**

Ted C. Eason AKA "Woodstock" #1265238

Untitled

I see the days through tainted eyes
Now biased in their views.
The rosey outlook once so clear-
Ever fading, dingy, blues

The hope that shone so bright each day,
Grim truth now shades in black
Grows darker still, as years pass by-
Never slowing – cannot ever go back...

Reflecting

Thinking of times spent with you,
As the daylight fades away.
Wishing I were with you now,
I feel like this, everyday.

The things we take for granted.
In our lives led "O"-so-fast.
The "If-Onlys," read our hearts in-two,
With torment, sure to last

Some Shades Of

Beauty-
Seen through a broken heart.
The splendor of the sunrise-Glimpsed through words
The words of a poet as spoken to the blind man.
Kindness-
An experience felt by the tormented, ravaged souls of the
humiliated, & abused.
No less any for its obscurity, its rarity-
Maybe "More-So" for its simply being

"I Believe"

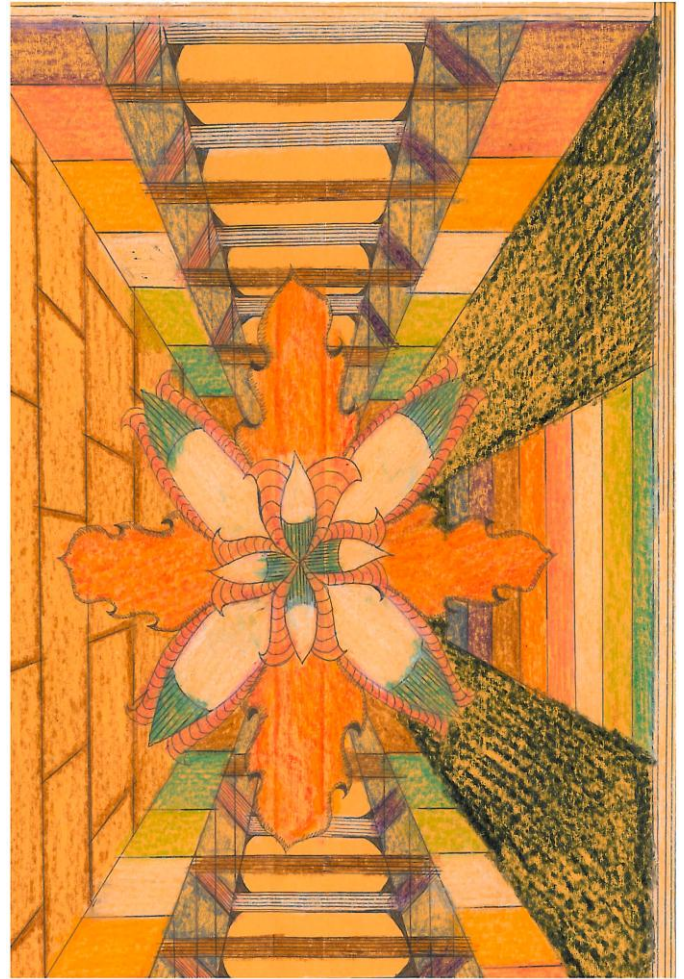
I believe...
That things can turn out right.
I hope...
Somebody tries.
I wish...
More dreams would be fulfilled-
Before the Dreamer Dies.

"Perserverance"

Still we live to feel the pain,
Of damaged lives, as we rise again.
Setting off on our "Merry-Way"
God knows what we'll do, Today.
Something useful – something Bold,
Or waste away, & Just grow old
Ever to be free once more-
Ere' be the corpse, upon the floor

"The Struggle Within"

Shrouded in violence, pain, so severe –
Seeks refuge from its existence, in the ignorance of chaos
Though fleeting, the moment, all consuming in its intensity,
leaves little time to reflect on truth.
So hides the torment – a little longer



- Adam Shave

Danny Welch #1375713

To Run

Why do you Run?
Because I cannot fly
What is it for?
To be one with sky
What do you gain?
The joy of life, here and now
Is this your religion?
It's just to be free
What will you do next?
I will run to the sea

Why?

On a dark and stormy night,
As the rain beats down upon me
My mind screams, "Why must I always struggle"
Then my heart whispers, "Quiet fool, for at the end of this
road awaits a lover of the ages"
With my hope restored, I walk through dark despair

John Engleson #801497

A Letter

You could never know what a letter can mean till you've been
where I've been and seen what I've seen. I am confined to a
world behind 4 walls that nobody sees and nobody calls.
Often I sleep then wake up alarmed that my family or friends
may have been harmed. Just a bad dream I admit as I look out
the window at the barbed wire fence. Then I awake and go on
with my day, I wait for the mail, none for me they say, not a
letter, a note or even a card. When nobody writes it makes my
time hard. So set down and take time to write a letter to you
its not much but it makes me feel better, for you could never
know what a letter can mean till you've been where I've been
and seen what I've seen.

John E. Christ # 734270

Songbird

An egg
The shell cracks
A new life pecks away
First a tiny hole
Then a gap
Pieces split apart
Big eyes goggle about
 Peep
Mom fills a gaping craw
The towering nest is home
Filled with tiny feathers
As the chick grows
Spreading wings
Flapping incessantly
Going nowhere
 Cheep
A miniature of Mom
When big enough
Boldly flings itself out
Into the wide sky
Where dangers lurk
To be learned
 Tweet
Singing melodies
Of generations
Flying free
Spreading joy
End in a trap
 Chirp
Alone, alas
Unable to fly
Warbling sour notes
Pecking dry seeds
Scraping cuttlefish bones
The caged bird lives

Singing of lost freedom

John E. Christ #734270

A Hope

I smell crap when I read it
No gloss of the pen can hide
Unkempt grammar and lousy thought
 The well tuned work flows freely
 As honey pours out of a comb
 The time spent crafting words shows
Sometimes I can taste the heat
Sometimes I can feel the stress
Sometimes I can sense satisfaction
 A piece of work is a mirror
 A piece of work is a shadow
 A piece of work is a soul
If I write for you
I want you to see my hopes
I want you to feel my nakedness
I want you to understand
Least of all I don't want you to smell me

George Warriner # 806308

The Dark Journey

I walked alone in this nightmare.
When I looked around, no man was with me,
So I went forth alone.

Robert McMullen #906702

Questions

Why must we count the time
By the falling of the sand?
Or by the sun, or with a clock,
By each two spinning hands?
Can't you tell the time gone by,
From the age within my eyes?
And how with years, my youth is gone,
As here I stand confined?

Can you tell the miles I've walked
By the wear upon my shoes?
Or is it by the tired look
For all the hell that I've been through?
Can you tell the tracks I've made,
By the impressions I've left behind?
By all the hurt I've cast into
The hearts of those so kind?

Do the stars that lead one's way,
Lead to my destiny?
Or should I walk a path my own,

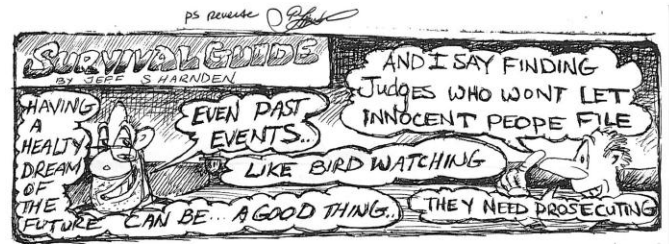
And set the stakes I seek?
Is my fate a road to hell,
Without the gift of choice?
A road I'm destined to walk alone,
With hate as my only voice?

I search my mind to find a way,
As I question more and more:
What is life, without a life,
That's not worth dying for?
These are the questions I seek to find,
Not knowing where they may lead.
And it's always hard to find the key,
That opens the door I need.

Gary Gregory #T66532

The Coyote

Where is the silent sentinel who guards my hill
No longer any habitat for him to roam at will
These strange aliens have invaded his territory
With their hard gray rivers and smoking trees
Their strange gray bushes and branches
That try to keep my out
While their traitor dog dares to yap at me
If I could only lure it out
And show it origins unpolluted
All they bring is noise
And small moons at night
While I'm trying to hunt
Any small scrap left
They blind me and foul the air
Whit their stench and their ruin
These were my hills long before they came
Long before they cut and burned
There are too many of them
They enclose from all sides
I'll go deeper in the canyon and hide
And if I lay down to die
I hope my bones nourish the soul.



- Jeff Harnden

Richard Harris #1196943

Days & Nights

Days and Nights I fight to stay strong and so far through my struggles I'm still holding on. I think of all the events I went through and when I replay them all over it seems untrue. What is my destiny? Why do I still live? Is this what God gives to me as a gift? If it is, it's not right cause I'm not well pleased... All the pain always tortures me! Living poor, neglected at birth, abused by men, and aching with revenge. Mother strung out, raped and beaten, but on and on the same men she's seeking. Days and Nights cursing and screaming, mamma in the tub naked crying and fiending. She holds me rocking saying "Everything is alright," but I know that tomorrow will be a similar night. As I got older it was time to strike, mamma has no boundaries, to get dope instead. I was stealing out of stores just to get fed and getting water from hoses just to bathe. Stealing is wrong, but I felt since it's to survive it's right. No friends to cling on, no love insight. The families untrusted so the only way I lasted was to get my own cash. Days and Nights I try to sleep, but the tragedy of watching or knowing they died eats at me to the point where I weep. I can lie to others but never myself, cause deep down inside I know I need help. Many say "I understand

and been through it too,” but no matter how hard they are, they would cry too. Father’s on lock, when will it stop? It’s a traditional curse on everyone’s block. So now, I must concur all my temptations to lead my flock towards a better destination.

Steven C. Hatfield #1247190

Sage Advice

A fool never knows what he is missing.
A wise man never misses what he knows.
But if you take a close look,
Like the pages of a book,
Both stir whenever the wind blows.

The moment one boasts of wisdom
Is when one becomes one’s own fool.
Fools are never free
From chains they cannot see
For wisdom is seen only as a tool.

A fool only lives for the moment
Yet longs to change what has been done.
But one who is wise
Will never try to revise
That which is past and gone.

When one hears the sounds of silence,
One knows the wisdom of unspoken words.
Fools the sun blinds
While on sages darkness shines
For the wise perceive what fools never heard.

A fool never knows what he is missing
A wise man never misses what he knows
But wisdom she sings
Of the beauty life brings
When we nurture the seeds she sows.



The Blues

David Martin #1423370

“Willow’s Weep”

I’ve stared and watched the willow weep
for years it was my childhood friend
It’s branches blown with ever God’s breath
It’s arms reaching out embracing the wind
The silent tears that it did shed
The heart meant to be all alone
But life without the willow’s sweet face
Is cold and lonely as a stone
So keep the willows and remember their worth
They only weep to make you smile
Just living and trying to gain one’s love
And still they’re weeping all the while

“The Looking Glass”

Desires building up to conquer me
Look in the mirror to see what I’ve become
There’s nothing I recognize
A man stares back who is a stranger
Who can he really be?
Surely he is someone that I know

I have to remember this strange face
 That stares back from the glass
 A wisp of smoke called a memory
 So what can I do to solve the puzzle?
 Look into his eyes more deeply?
 I almost feel sadness and loss
 Maybe if I stand here long enough
 Perhaps I can remember his name
 Only to forget again
 I have to go on
 To continue life today
 There are people waiting
 So for now the man will wait
 He will remain lost
 Along with all that he is.

J.S. Slaymaker #634548

Chrissy

Sorrow and loss are their own albatross,
 Where loneliness reigns in the end.
 A last quickened breath lies between life and death,
 Then into it's darkness we descend.
 Ev'ry childhood dream comes apart at the seams,
 And lovers and friends disappear.
 Except for the love and the memr'ries thereof,
 Nothing remains but my tears.

Jon Merrill #J-31977

Where's our democracy?
 Where's our chance to be?
 Are our people free?
 Not that I can see.
 Where I come from there is no race
 We're not even considered human in race
 It's a slap in the face
 To the world we don't expect
 To them we're nothing but a numbered list
 They use weapons, we use fist
 Maybe we'll soon see
 We might have a chance
 Maybe we'll get a glance of what could be
 Maybe there's a chance for democracy
 (Light grows low)
 Maybe dark places is what I deserve
 I feel too old, too weak maybe...
 ...we'll see.



- *Kelly Frederickson*

Jeremy Lowrance #1236724

Portrayal

A Tear drop slowly falls
 His emotions caught thru watery eyes...

The One Thing That Belittles Him,
 Nonetheless The Truth Encircles Him,

The very inconceivable facts
 By which This Man Lives,
 Thrives on The Personality of Himself.

Looking At This Man,
 You can see the brutality He's accepted By
 His Conscience,

When I stare into His Eyes,
 I See The Agony & Pain of what's registered
 Inside...

He's A faker & Puts Up A Good front,
 Can't fake me; I see Thru.

See Thru To A World of Indifference,
 See Thru The Coldness in His Eyes,

This Man has fought,
 Scars & Wound Too deep to ever be healed.

He Wishes To Be strong,

But on The Inside He feels Hopeless &
Scared,

Although This man may Never Admit
To the Sadness residing in His veins,
I Know The Truth...

He keeps a smile on His face.
Plays the role as if Life is Grand...

Suddenly My Eyes begin to fade,
The man before me diminishes
As Cigarettes to ashes.,

Ironically,
My Vision becomes clearer,
I see this man again
In the reflection of the mirror...

Mike Owens #J-25599

Momma's Song, 1979

I remember those
twenty cent scoops
of black walnut ice cream.

They were fresh from Thrifty's.
We were fresh from running errands.

Just you and me
in our lime green Mercury.
We didn't talk, you just drove
nibbling at your ice cream
watching city streets slide past.

Sam Cooke
filled the space between us
telling you what you already knew,
schooling me on what I didn't.

A change is gonna come.

I nodded my head to the beat
but couldn't understand truth rhythms.

Had I known then that things
like years could melt away so quickly,
I would have sat closer
Held your pretty brown hand
and ate my cone a little slower.



- **Kenneth Warwick**

Jason Allen McCurry #752704

"Our Sun"

The storm instantly rages upon surfaces of fire.
Piercing through quiet worlds, absorbing darkness.
Roaming free across the planet, silently undisturbed.
Laughter survives, a voice absent, lingering among ancient
trees.

A calm breeds to settle over space, inside our comfort.
Rivers of sentiment, sensually sparkle between distances
of physical separation.
Consumed in fire, We born as One...

Rickey (Tex) Jones #1376631

As I travel through each passing day
In my 6 by 9 painted in gray
My mind can't help but to go a stray
Thinking about all the things I let
Just slip away
Like my Beautiful wife's hugs and kisses that
Would light up my day
Or when my children came home from school
and would go out to play
Or at night when they would go to bed
and always take time to Pray
I can't believe I just let it all just slip away
But now I have been gone for way to Long
My Beautiful wife has moved on
And my children are all up and grown
And now they have children of their own
I have never seen the little ones they have
at home
So every night I sit and pray all alone
Knowing I will never hold those little ones in
My arms
So each night as I sleep and Dream
Of all the love ones I have never seen
And of all of those I will never see again

I can't believe of all the things
I Just Let Slip Away

William H. Davis Jr. #731707

Lost Words

So very sad when words of love
are captured by the wind,
blown away and gone forever
and cannot return again.

So very sad when words of love
are lost, swept far away,
a heart will break when those we love
can not hear the words we say.

So very sad when words of love
are drown'd out by a gale,
the words that someone needs so bad
that now can never tell.

So very sad when words of love
can not reach the needy one,
when with a mighty gust of wind
and gone, the good we've done

So very sad when words of love
are lost, in weather bad,
for words of love, so hard to find
when lost...so very sad.

Dedicated to my ex-wife wife Joy...

Mike Owens #J-25599

Apology: the flavor of u and i

This may seem a check written with water, a
hindsight attempt to extract our DNA from the
tears shed along n. beale, home to secrets and
bad politics. We were never in a good place,
but it's all I have now: somewhere to begin.

Orthodoxy has not been my strong suit. You
deserve your own personal catechism, but
for all your questions I've only one answer-
I was just learning the slow smother of youth,
comfortable under the weight of all my masks.

Our fashion matched things that shouldn't go
together, like your devotion and my chaos life.
I know you tried harder than I, to stop the
clock's ticking hands, come to push us into
past. That battle shouldn't be fought alone.

You wanted something better than we were
used to. Separate from the world like gazebo
island, I heard you there, eager as the waves.
I never wanted to be the moon to your ocean,
holding you back from where you wanted to be.

I'm to blame, and that adds a vertigo dimension
to the regrets pooling liquor cool in my heart.
The flavor of our days lingers with me still-
bittersweet as dark chocolate. I think that I
have told you as simply as I can, I'm sorry.

Mary Jane Hentz #L44040

My Name is Mary Jane
And I got the Blues
I wear blue pants, blue shirt, and blue shoes!
The dorm I live in – it's painted blue
And all the women here, they are blue too
We wake up each morning under blue skies
We stroll- It's getting old.
Till they call Happy hour! And off to the
Blue pill line we all go.
My name is Mary Jane! They can't get it right.
And I got the blues from morning
Till night time comes around and
Off our blue jackets go.
We bathe away our troubles with our
Blue bars of soap. Can't help thinking what
a dope what a dope,
Climb into bed- say some more prayers of Hope,
Wake up the next morning to do it again
Put on my blue pants, blue shirt, and blue shoes!
Im'a fashion icon and off I go
In my fancy prison blues

Willam H. and Mary T. Davis Jr. #731707

"OL THANG"

I wondered who the rider was
his accent had a twang,
and about the coldness in his eyes
and what he means by "ol thang"

I remember my first day here
as the heavy gate went "clang"
I did not know about these fields
But I sure do now, "ol thang"

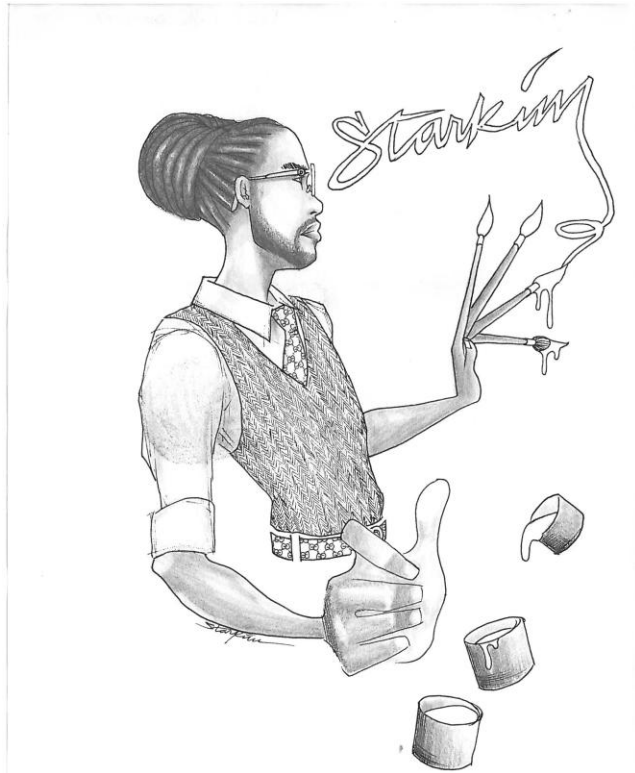
At first I could not understand
but you helped me learn the slang,
I know now, what I didn't then
I understand now, "ol thang"

You told me I must keep my cool
because they have me by my yang,
from you I learned to stay alive
and I'm grateful to you "ol thang"

Your eyes got misty watching
that field lark as he sang,
I don't like that look you got
I know you're lonely "ol thang"

We were working by the woods that day
in the distance, the echo's rang,
"Now what's that boss man shooting at
and where is that 'ol thang?"

The air is crisp this morning
and in my chest, I feel a pang
our squad is one man short today,
I will miss you, "Ol Thang"...



- **Lamarr Little**

Miscellaneous

William H. Davis, Jr. #731707

I AM MAN

I am man, born of clay
Brought to life on a chosen day;
Given dominion over mother earth
Made to suffer human birth

I am man, the truth I seek
But when I talk, it's lies I speak;
I long for the love in a woman's eyes,
Then I laugh when the fire dies

I am man, with lust for gold
My temper is hot, my heart is cold
I cheat my brother, steal his land,
Make jest of honor when I shake his hand

I am prone to wound and kill and burn
I make war and will not learn;
You can not weigh the price of war
I beg forgiveness, then kill more

I am man, this earth I've marred
You can not count the lives I've scarred;
There is no way to know the pain,
The tears I've caused to fall like rain

I am man, with bloody hands
I stand at shore and watch the sands;
Washed by water both night and day
And I wonder, is there a way

To wash clean these sins of mine?
Oh Lord I pray, give me a sign;
Please tell me Lord, where do I stand?
For after all... I am just a man.

The King of Spazz

Neurotic, psychotic, paranoid
Anti-social and all that jazz
If a label is what you are looking for,
Then label me... King of Spazz

They want to get inside my head,
But no one ever has
Many have tried, but all have failed
I am the King of Spazz

Bearded chumps with spectacles,

Their questions make me sick,
They try in vain, they ascertain
Just what it is that makes me tick

Want to play a mind game, Doc. ?
I can play with great pizzazz
You have no chance of winning,
As I am the King of Spazz

I do not want your damned advice
People's sympathy, or their razz
I live alone inside my head,
I remain... the King of Spazz

Miranda Bentley #E29125

Journey Through My Eye's

Journey with me to the Past
Look into the eye's of a Killer in a Mask

Standing over top of me he appears to be the Grand Reaper
Listen to my story cause it get's a little deeper

The orchestrator of death in the Form of a Dealer
Satan's Paparazzi pulling on the Trigger

Feel the heat of the Iron penetrate my Flesh
Watch my blood drain onto the Floor and leave a Mess

Watch My Killer wait to bear my final breath
Watch me crawl to the door to save Myself

Hear the Voice of the lord whisper in my ear
"have a little faith and I'll save you from despair"

Watch as the Medic's zip up the Body Bag
See the victim wear his toe tag

Witness the Third Victim shot up
and hiding in a ditch

He was shot like I was shot
Thank God we both lived.

Craig Garber #643337

Reality in Texas

Innocents enclosed in razor-wire
jailhouse lawyers are in throne

Gospel songs being sung by the choir
we're all dressed up white as snow

Everybody knows some checkers and some dominoes

helps us all to pass the time

All the cops with their eyes full of snow
are trying not to sleep tonight

They know the captain's on his way
he has lots of bogus cases to run today

And every snitch's eye is gonna see
if he can tell on you... or maybe me

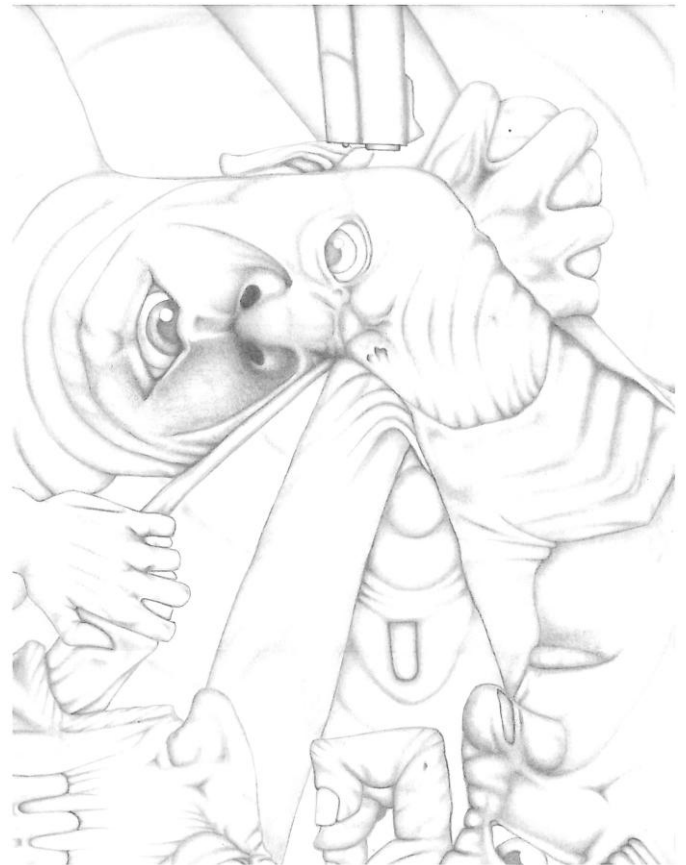
So I offer you this simple phrase
whether you're serving one or ninety-three

although it's been said many times, many ways
Mind your Business!

Mind your business!

Mind your Business!

Puh-lease!



- Jason Day

Daniel Sparks #809092

"Poot in yer snoot" (No Shame)

White I contemplate what's worth a hoot, I think perhaps, I'd like a toot to make me go, "Hoot, Hoot, Poot in yer snoot ya big gahoot, Give me the loot so I can scoot"

I told some youngsters a rhyme in time, about a poot in yer snoot ya big gahoot, Give me the loot so I can scoot. They didn't seem to comprehend, that a fart in the face is no disgrace, as long as I'm out the door once I score. So, the moral of this tale my friend is, as long as you get the loot before you vamoose, "they" can blow smoke up their ass and hang down their heads like Tom Doolay and Cry, Cry, Cry and ask Why, Why, Why? Who gives a shit, ya nit-wit, PAY ME! ...Would you like fish heads with that?

"More" (For Shame!)

Hippy, Zippy, Zock! The duck got screwed on the dock. Sailor Sam had to scram, quick and slick he dipped his wick, the feathers flew and the spectators Booed. The duck shit on his shoe and his dress blues too. Wanna buy a duck? Anchors awaigh, Ship a hoy, Ain't no joy, oboy, Join the Navy and See the World.

Brian Daniel Benefield #765908

A SHORT POEM

Glaciers like marshmallows
Whipped on top of the world
And the world a cherry
On an intergalactic pie

Realizations

Michael Sparks

Can't Do It Alone

I can't go back and make it right
I can't change any of these things
But still my sleep
Is consumed by those memories
I try to go ahead
To look beyond
So turn my worries over to my maker
And always the thought
Of taking that easy route
Lingers within those unwelcome dark thoughts
What makes me do the things I do?
Doing the things I hate
Never ending, the same mistakes

Just when I think I've won
The devils fool jumps into the game.
And once again I lose
Where and when does it end?
Are the never answered questions
When I find myself here
At the end of this long beaten path
No one at all to blame but me
Except of course my non-friend Satan
He will surely take credit
I can't let him beat me
And I realize...
I can't do it alone.

William H. Davis Jr. #731707

Archipelago

I was determined to remain an island when I came here...a man alone, here in this loveless hell I am confined to.

So many groups one can fall into...the gangs, hate groups, skin heads, black radicals, the gays... the poor confused bastards that don't know what sex they are, or the deviant monsters that don't care.

There are the "bad asses," men who have only some badly misguided sense of pride that must be protected at all cost.

The poets, the artists, the writers, the performers, the thieves, the killers, the game players...all here.

It is sometimes hard to tell who is who...so I remain an island in this sea of confusion.

I can identify with some, but never lose my sense of aloneness...I nurture it, feed it and it sustains me.

It doesn't take long to see who is who in here and each man falls into his place.

Oh, some pretend to be what they are not, or pretend not to be what they are, but it is far too small a world in here for any pretense to last.

One is forced to keep his eyes open, least he be caught off guard.

In doing so, you see much more than you wish to. Some things you can ignore, others you can't.

But look you must, just as I was forced to look. In watching, I noticed something very strange... that among the many here, there were others that fit in no better than I.

What was even more surprising, they didn't seem to try.

Then I realized, I was much less alone than I ever perceived myself to be.

Still an island I am...one of many

James Embree #1079690

Relinquished Dreams

Travelling through this world of tainted sorrows
Wading past the pain and the misery
I find myself escaping like a sparrow
Taking flight I lift off to the sky

I'm free now
The pain I've left behind
The troubles of the past are just a dream
I'm free now
I sail towards the sky
What lies ahead has yet to be foreseen

The riddles of tomorrow stand before me
The problems of today entangling
The wisdom of the past is just a whisper
I can't ignore the soft, silent calling

I'm free now
The past was left behind
The challenge of the future beckoning
I'm free now
Or so I thought at first
I fly back down and rest upon a tree

I stop and watch the scene laid out before me
The others in the dance that we call life
With troubles, pains, pleasures, and interacting
We manage to grow strong despite the strife.

I see now
We're caught up in the cycle
Enmeshed within the call of humanity
I see now
The only way to grow strong
Is living with the pain yet remaining free

Returning to the life I had relinquished
I realized there was nothing left to fear
Instead of finding pain I gained perspective
Eagerly, the future drawing near

I see now
It's living through the sorrows
Untainted and washed clean by the rain of tears
I see now
The joys that lie before me
The pleasures and enjoyment of many years

Mike Owens #J-25599

Like That

Any artist must expect to work amid the total,
rational indifference of everyone else to
their work. -Ursula K. Le Guin

And doors slam constantly
And bowels watery from sub-par foods
And the anger
And cellmates drug-ghetto-asshole crazy
And cons shouting up and down the tier
And the isolation
And correctional officers barking orders
And bad news from lawyers
And the despair
And radio on the left blares hip-hop
And radio on the right blares country
And the regrets
And yardtime indiscriminately cancelled
And frustration of chattering mind
And the realization
the universe owes me nothing

David Martin #1423370

"Rotten Souls"

Little boxes all in a row
Filled with anger and hate
Separate little worlds all their own
Longing for fresh air
But for them it's too late

Little boxes all in a row
Filled with depression and fear
Distorted minds all to themselves
Yearning for real love
They must remain here

Still more boxes in a row
Each one carries a different story
One lived for others
One had the fun of life
Some searched for glory

Dark boxes all in a row
They've always been forgotten
Becoming only little shadows
A world long lost
Their souls become rotten

Patrick Snider #S-64793

I Do Not Choose to Be a Common Man

it is my right to be uncommon-
if I can
i seek opportunity- not security.
i do not wish to be a kept citizen.
Humbled and dulled by having
The state look after me.

I want to take calculated risk
To dream and to build
To fail and to succeed.

I refused to barter incentive for a coin
I prefer the challenge of life
To the guaranteed existence;

The thrill of fulfillment
To the state calm of utopia

I will not trade freedom for beneficence
Nor my dignity for a handout
I will never cower before any master
Nor bend to any threat.

It is my heritage to stand erect
Proud and unafraid;
To think and act for myself
Enjoy the benefit of my creations
And to face the world boldly and say,
This I have done

Heath Burgess #6125729

"Iris"

Have the eyes of the deceased ever stared into your own?
Did you shutter?
I have looked into the eyes of the dead.
They tell of history and future all in one penetrating look.
They bring complete fear and immense peacefulness, hate and
love, the
 meaning of life and a show of death all in the
illuminating
 meaningful conversations that take place without
words
Threats. Praises. Anxiety. Destiny.
I see death, I see it in the eyes.
It frightens me, but not without immense interest.
These eyes I see are not of the ordinary.
Great rivers of ancient wisdom flow through them, yet they
are new to the Gods
Their cold blackness haunts my sleep, yet I cannot help to
look into them.

To try to peer into the unknown
The range of emotions brought on by their stare is relentless.
I wonder if these looks will be the death of me, yet I'll gladly
be the euphoric recipient.
I must live with these soulless haunting depths until I either
banish them, or they I.
Until that day they will continue to look back at me through
the mirror everyday.

Christopher Lee Walck #FQ5224

A New Day Can Give Light

 Today is a day, it gives you a new day.
When hearts break,
And people forsake.

When love happens, but then falls,
While I am in jail, all I see are brawls.

I wish to see the outside once more,
For I see no true happiness while I am locked up in this gated
core.

I am or was like a wicked shadow to some,
But they are the ones that don't truly know me nor where I had
come from.

Most have never seen the things I have.

I hope they never will,
It would only cause them pains, suffering and loss of will.

But today is a new day as I see it,
I shall make something of it.

I have changed my ways, to show those who think me evil,
A new side of me that will shock all, for they would have
Never thought such a side would have come from my old black
pit.

But now the black pit within me has been lightened,
The shadows flee, the emptiness filled and finally my
fists are opened instead of tightened.

Now I have made something of myself on this new day!

In memory of his mother and Debbie Anne Smith

Khayree Smith #1524124

Birds that don't fly

A mass of the enclosed at it's worst.
A mass of those, these, them, and us.
All mixed together without reserve for the outcome.
All dying for that moment of reprieve.
A constant pain dwells within all of them.
Some handle it and some become its victim.
Many become fallen soldiers of self destruction.
Birds that don't fly was once the saying.
They are now souls that refuse to prosper.
Days of oppression and nights of regret that won't fade.
Contemplation of the events that will be the next.
Repetition destroys the anticipation of a new day.
No more dreams and no more wondering.
A world within a world that is well beyond corruption and greed.
If I recognize it then I shall grow.
But If I remain in the mass I shall fade in character.

John Paul Rickerson #1162323

Dope

Come one come all, step right up come on in
When its through with you your life will never
be the same again
 inside is an insane freak show
 with a freight train that will take you where
 you want to go
What awaits is a wild beast you cant tame
And an intimate lover that will forever call your name
 Some will say it has you on bended knee
 but when it grabs a hold you'll swear it sets you free
The price is high and its yours to pay
Just remember it will cost you every day
 I can't tell you what to do
 the choice is yours its up to you
It's like walking on thin ice that's ready to crack
But don't turn around because you'll see the monkey on your back

Untitled

He'll find you
Rich or poor when your time comes
you'll find him at your door
you can spend your money down to your last dime
but it won't buy you any time
you can run and hid but no matter what you do
he'll still be able to find you
It could be night or day
but when he comes your gonna pay
some people sit in fear on bended knee
and others smile and wait for the day when death
comes to set them free

Cecil Everett #V92397

...What Truth I find

In the pure black recesses of my mind,
 This perfection of my essence
Takes me into the beauty of
Of being, into the realization
Of consciousness, into the
Life of awareness,
 This truth I find
In the pure blackness of
The universal mind, that
I am nothing, yet in
My nothingness I am all
If I can touch to this
Truth for sure shall I
Never fall,
 It's only one
Year that's all...

Chavez Price #821134

Window Pain

Hypocrites run cold like reptiles. You gotta file em down
Erase them. Expose ya'll like a view through a Window Pain
I done seen betta days- I been bone deep in tha game. And
I-45 is calling my name! 2 million dollars on tha church alone.
Yet I suppose I'm wrong when I grind 4 mines. But so long as
I bleed tha lame, me and preacher boy still the same.
Parasites or hustlers, blacks pantha's or Klukkers? Both
Committing genocide- I sell crack- He sells lies- But when
I'm
Legit, I don't see no dollars – and since money go round. This
Could be yo dolla-just ask Creeflo dolla,
And Jim Bakers son- he committed the sin- wit a smokin gun-
And tha people still came- so what did we learn- Big Dollas
make
Cents-and they pave way-Aint no sense in slaving day
By day. Coz good intentions pave the road to hell, with blood
On my hands my pockets swell.

Derrick Corley #90T1984

Two Windows (in Philly)

Two windows in this cell
caught between makes it hell
one cut into the prison wall
the second in door to prison hall
one is open, freedom to see
the other closed, needs a key
both must be open to see within
through two one sees clearly indeed

one looking out, one looking in
both view something of want and need
that which heart desires to win
when chains cut, of boundaries freed.

Gabriel Gonzales #1146989

"The Invisible Letter"

The strangest thing happened today;
An invisible mail man passed my way
He gave me something that was...
Not quite there
And to receive invisible mail is quite rare
So, I opened this, real wide
To find more of nothing inside
The scent was so sweet as I recall...
So sweet in fact, it was nothing at all
So, I'm writing you back; with love you can bet
To say "thanks" for the letter I never did get
So, maybe next time; you think twice, and...
Pay close attention to this advice
Yes, I sit in my cell, so lonely for now,
But things will soon change
If God will allow; I'll be out
Where things are much better...
And never again worry about...
The Invisible letter.

Love

James Hooks #1448417

Beauty

Roses are known to grow everywhere,
in stems of bushes and even in the air.
But when I think of you, I think of
rosepetals. How soft your lips can be,
when you finally kiss me. The beauty,
In embrace, the quality and grace. I
wish I could keep you in a safe and
only take you out when I'm feeling down.
Because you my love are the only one who
can lift my face up off the ground and
you my precious angel are the only one
who knows my only weakness is your
love. So my love, you should never be
ashamed of yourself, because "Beauty
and true Beauty," only has one
name

Gerry Lynn McAfee # 98799179

Ray of Sunshine

This morning
When I finally
Saw you again
Your eyes
'sparkled'
With a smile
It was like
A ray of
Sunshine
Had penetrated
Through these
Walls
Of concrete
And steel
Lighting up
My moment
Come again
Ray of sunshine
And light up
My dark moment

Marlon "Sir. Capitalize" Bradshaw #1096209

Just Another Day of Missing You

When the sun rise and shine,
I never feel the warmth of this heart of mine.
The coming of every tomorrow,
Brings just another day of sorrow.
Everytime the sky return to blue,
Its just another shade of me missing you.
Everytime the wind blows by,
Is just another whisper of you saying goodbye.
When the earth has spun and the day is through,
It was-just another day of me missing you

William H. Davis Jr. #731707

Flashing Eyes

A torch of fire in my soul,
and the burning never dies;
fired by your womanhood,
when you flashed me with your eyes.

My want for you now blazes,
though I try with all my might;
I am lost, with no control,
since I have fallen to your sight.

This heart of mine you own,
so easily possessed...
I saw you look inside me,
I felt my soul caressed.

Our bodies locked together,

as I look deep into your eyes;
the love we make, pours out as one,
and I hear your desperate cries.

I feel your nails now piercing,
and you tightly squint your eyes;
I feel your body's rapture,
and we will not be denied...

This love you caused to happen,
my heart, an easy prize;
won by you, with a single glance,
with the flashing of your eyes.

Dedicated to my precious wife Mary Theresa...



- James Dykes

Elmo Leal #1146476

Untitled

Her beauty overcomes all,
As I dream of her soft touch.
The amorous affects wouldn't,
couldn't break free from my eyes.
For her soothing grace
warms my callous veins.
Bringing my heart
to life again
I frolic in her evergreen
grass and wild flowers.
I feel the sensuous flow
of her rivers
under the fires
of the night
Benighted
with her daughter,
Desires burns deep
within my soul.
To feel her again
with every touch, step,
and breath, I take.
Fantasia,
her arms embrace
my exposed neck.
Her whispering, breeze
Softly in my ear
as I lay amongst
the willows bosom.
Birds sign
with majestic voices,
That can match
their songs, so lovely.
Even the willows weep
tears of joy.
Her companions
sit and listen in awe
of the melodious tunes
of their world,
Yet, I can only awake
to their dreams of mother nature,
and her daughter...
Freedom.

Michael Shane Hayes #446929

"You're on My Mind"

I find that you're on my mind more often than any
other thoughts. Sometimes I bring you these purposely to
console me, or warn me, or just to make my day a little

brighter, but so often you surprise me and find your own way
into my thoughts.

There are times when I awake and realize what a
tender part of my dreams you have been and or into the day.
Whenever a peaceful moment seems to come my way. And
my imagination is free to run it takes, me running into your
arms and allows me to linger there, knowing there's nothing
I'd rather do.

I know that my thoughts are only reflecting the
loving hopes of my heart, because where ever they wonder
they always take me to you.

I love you more than life its self and always
remember with you, I'm, always with you in my thoughts and
heart. You're on my mind Forever...

Marcos Salas #642699

The Kiss

If but a single moment could be revisited,
I'd recall the first time my lips touched yours.
Even now, when remembering that delicate kiss,
My body trembles and my heart still ????

Your very first kiss upon these lips of mine,
Was a momentous instant I'll never forget
Your lips were warm, sweet, and gently,
Lusts were kindled... appetites were ????

One momentous little kiss changed our lives
In ten zillion caramel, sensuous ways.
The genesis of impassionate, lustful love
Ignited ???? and set our hearts ablaze.

As our love ????, ???? and matured
Gentle kisses became wild, frequent desires.
Eager tongues hat with passion, explored deeply,
Frantically craving more... igniting sexual lives.

Your touch awakened every cell of my being.
Nor the remainder of my life, I shall recall,
The sweet wetness you placed upon my lips.
Always, I'll dream of that kiss from behind this wall.

"Doors Rolls"

Doors roll.... To a job with no pay
Why did the bus leave me here to stay?
Doors roll... to men and women in gray
But we mean nothing to them just another days pay.
Doors roll... to concrete walls
What I wouldn't give to roam my high school halls.
Doors roll... to a room full of faces
Who can only dream of them far away places.
Doors roll... to an empty fate
And in I go to a cell with no mate.

Doors roll... to hate and despair
Why did life treat me so unfair?
Doors roll... to crying eyes
That pray for a mother's sweet lullaby.
Doors roll... to a jungle with no trees
Lord help me I'm asking you please
Doors roll... soon it will all end
Doors will roll and I'll be free again.

Avian Sengstock #1437238

Till Pen-Meets-Paper

Lonely days and Drown out Nights
Seem to be all that's in my life
Until I receive that envelope
Which contains inside that letter of hope
From the one person I hold close
You take me back to the days I remember the most
Suddenly things ain't so bad
All of a sudden I don't feel so sad
I want to thank you for being my raw of sunshine
When my days are dark and cloudy
I read your letters and felt just fine
When I close my eyes, I picture your face
But when they open its replaced
By Guard Towers, razor wire and inmates in white
It's a shame whats Become of my life
But there's still hope at the end of this ride
I thank the lord every day, your still by my side
You never know what this life has in stone
Soon I'll be back in your arms once more
I want to tell you I love you, and pay my respects
And to let you know the best
Till Pen-Meets-Paper, I'll see you in my Dreams
Will be kissing and hugging
And everything in between!



- **James Dykes**

Daniel Daiggen #1258569

Falling Star

While lying alone feeling sorry for myself one night,
off in the distance I saw a star on its earthly flight.
It has been said that a star falls to the ground.
Disappears forever and can never be found.
The magic it holds while it flies through the night.
Ceases to exist at the end of its plight
Others have said that if you wish upon that falling star
That your wish will be granted no matter what you wish for
So I thought to myself why not give it a try
Cause I know a falling star doesn't last long traveling across
the night sky
So I closed my eyes and in a silent wish I spoke. Starlight.
Star bright, falling star I'm wishing on tonight, I wish I may I
wish
I might have this wish fulfilled I wish tonight. Send me
someone
to complete my life someone to be a friend and also a
beautiful wife.

I awoke the next morning and then I knew it was true.
Because after I wished upon that falling star not long after
along came you.
Years have now past and many stars have fallen from their
flight.
None more important than the one that fell for me that night.
I would never have dreamed that my wish would have come
true.
But I thank my lucky falling star my wish was you
So if by chance you look into the sky one night
And see a falling star on it's earthly flight
You too will know there's a reason that star falls to the ground
That it doesn't just disappear but in somebodies ????, can be
found
There is magic it holds while it flies through the night
Granting someone else's wishes at the end of it's flight.
Thank you for being the wish that night come true
I don't know when I'd be if it wasn't for you
No one else could have completed my life
You're more than just a best friend, I could wish for nothing
more in a wife
You are my falling star.

Jimmy White #1286864

Leaves In The Wind

We are but leaves blowing in the wind
Twisting and flipping as we slowly descend
And all to soon it comes to an end
As we lie upon the ground where it all began
So utterly alone and left to decay
Lift as we know it fades away

A Lonely Story

Hello my only lonely friend
It looks like its only you and me once again
So come a little closer and let the story begin

On a summer night underneath the stars
I held an angel in my arms
She whispered my name and kissed my lips
And the taste I shall never forget

Cotton candy mixed with a little cherry
Her lips were sweeter than any berry
Her eye's they looked deep within my soul
And I know all my secrets she would know

A single tear fell from her eye's
And I knew what secret made her cry
For that same secret has kept me up most nights
And to keep it hidden has been a constant fight

To know you will lose the one you love
And the time you have will never be enough
Brings forth a sadness to your heart
A sadness so strong it will tear you apart

How do you go on knowing all is lost
And if you do what is the cost
For it would kill me to see her hurt
And the misery would haunt me underneath the dirt

So I turn and look into her deep brown eye's
Kiss her lips and say please don't cry
For even though our time is short
The memory's we've made can't be ignored

Any time that your heart feel's lonely
Think of me and our memory's as a story
And the memory's shall lessen the hurt
So love can once again feel your heart

Then my Angel we shall be together
And live lost in love forever
She turned away and looked off into space

I could see the pain etched upon her face

Carefully she wiped all her tears away
Then turned back to me to say
Since our time together grows so short
Would you lie with me once more

I gathered her into my arms
And we made love underneath a blanket of star's
We released our passion like a wild horse
And it ran through our hearts with a powerful force

We stared into each others eyes
And at the same time let out passionate cry's
Afterwards we lay spent upon the soft green grass
With the hearts in our chest still beating fast

No need for words as we held each other
For our heart's knew the love we felt for one another
And as the sun slowly began to rise
We looked once more into each others eye's

I could see that she was fading away
As she whispered one last time her love for me
I lie back upon the soft green grass
And ran through all my memory's of the past

I watched the last stairs slowly fade
As tears filled my eyes and fell away
I wept for my lonely life
And the Beautiful Angel I dream of every night

William H. Spayberry Jr. #1541709

Megan = A Poem

I saw Megan at visit this past weekend.
She's not only my wife, but my beautiful best friend.
I saw her sitting there in that chair.
As I walked through the door and gave her a stare.
It happened like that in the blink of an eye.
I became so happy that I wanted to cry.
I gave her a hug and a great big old kiss.
I've been waiting all week just for this.
I brush my hand across Megan's cheek
I think of our love so warm and unique.
Megan and my mom traveled all this way.
I'm so very lucky to have her in my life
I'm so very lucky to call Megan my wife.
We sat there at visit and talked for a while
When I'm with Megan it's so easy to smile.
Megan and mom told me about how their trip went.
About how long it took and how much money was spent.
The time went by, it flew so fast.
It seems like those visits just never do last.

We talked about anything and everything under the sun.
That's what makes those visits so much fun.
At the end of the visit, it was time to go.
My mind knew we had too, but my heart said no.
As tears of sorrow filled up my eyes.
We started to exchange our sad goodbyes.
The four hours were over, I wish we could stay.
But the guard came and got me and pulled me away.
I'll see Megan again soon, I know that's true.
But until that time, I'll be sad and blue
I think about Megan all of the time
I wish I wouldn't have committed this crime
But Megan when you get sad just think of me.
And know that one day I will be free.
Then I'll never ever come back here again.
I'll be with my Megan, she's my wife and best friend.

Note from the Editors:

Dear reader,

We wanted to thank and congratulate everyone who submitted poems; all of those that we read were heartfelt and unique. There were so many different categories and emotions expressed that organizing your works in this anthology was a very difficult endeavor. Nevertheless, we structured the poems into sections corresponding to the themes: hope, blues, miscellaneous, reflections and love.

If you have any questions about the set-up of the anthology or the poems we chose, please feel free to contact us and let your voice be heard. Don't forget to submit more of your work for the next anthology so we can read more of your amazing poems!

Sincerely,
Bennett and Deanna

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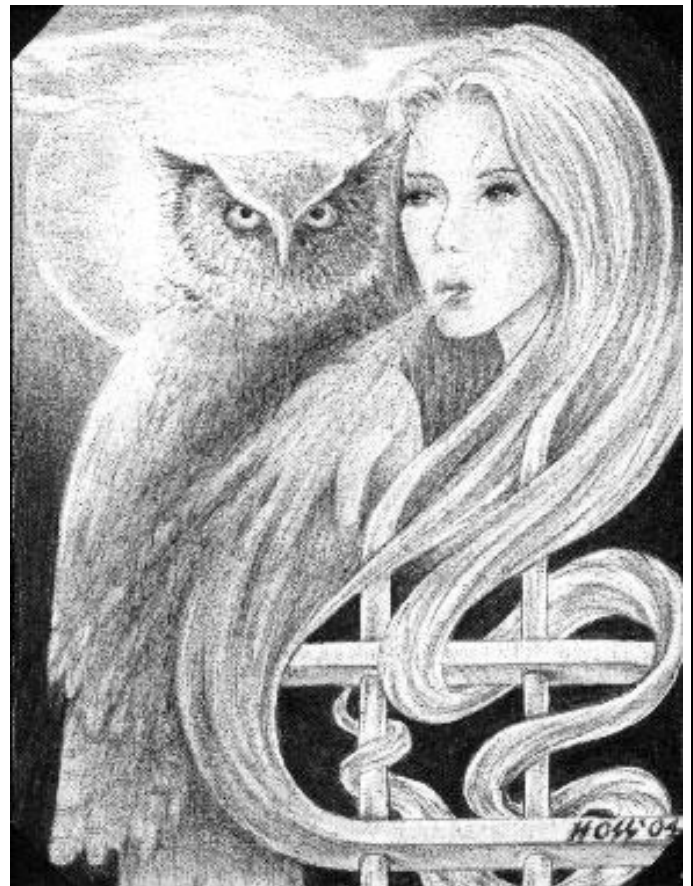
Prisoner Express promotes rehabilitation by providing information, education and opportunities for creative self-expression to incarcerated individuals throughout the United States. Anthology free to prisoners. All others please contact Prisoner Express for rates. All proceeds are used to fund programming

The Durland Alternatives Library, which funds Prisoner Express, is a project partner of the CRESPP Center for Transformative Action. Additional support comes from the Office of Minority Educational Affairs (OMEA).

-Jesus Cadena



-Mike Mincey



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