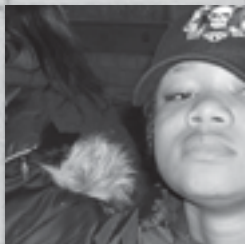


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VOICE

O F T H E K N I G H T

Premiere issue!



No: *One* Date: *Spring 2005*

The premiere issue of *Voice of the Knight* is
dedicated to the memory of

Robert Jennings

(October 17, 1989–March 26, 2005)

Robert Jennings was a friendly young man whose humor touched everyone who had the benefit of knowing him. When writing poems, Robert showed insight, depth and uniqueness. He was not afraid to open himself and find freedom on the page. He was such a joy to have both in the classroom and on trips to museums and theaters. Ballou Sr. High and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop will miss his warm smile and vibrant personality.

Welcome to the premiere edition of *Voice of the Knight*, the Ballou Senior High school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Ballou. *Voice of the Knight* is published through a collaborative effort between the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, an independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. In September 2004, after four years of providing award-winning programming at Charles Hart Middle School, the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop expanded to offer similar programs to students at Ballou. In the short time since the school has welcomed the program, Ballou students have grown accustomed to such perquisites as trips to the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, and the U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum. *Voice of the Knight* is the result of nearly a year of workshops with professional writers-in-residence, giving our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city.

In 2005, for the first time in more than ten years, Ballou Senior High School has produced winners in the Parkmont Poetry Contest. Congratulations to Emma Stewart, Andre Tatum, and Mercedes Valentine for their winning entries.

We have many friends who have helped to make *Voice of the Knight* possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Herb Block Foundation, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Commonweal Foundation, the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Philip Graham Fund, the Hitachi Foundation, the Harman Cain Family Foundation, the Wendling Foundation, the Junior League of Washington, the Rotary Club of Washington, the friends and family of Anna Su, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the John Edward Fowler Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey, LLC, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Karibu Books, Free Hand Press, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, McGuire Associates, Joyce Page and Ms. Printing, Tollefson & Gustini Investment Management, our friends at Popeye's on Malcolm X Avenue, Ms. Shin's 6th grade class at Bush Hill Elementary School, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, Fritz Edler, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Betsy Karel, Gay and Charlie Lord, Paul Mandelbaum, Judene Slaughter, Raina Rose Tagle, friends of the late Meyer Saul Taubman, and Vera M. White.

Special thanks for the hard work and dedication of the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop Board of Directors: Lee E. Epps, Andy Fogle, Dr. Susan Gerson, Bernie Horn, Kathleen Huston, Joan Kennan, Bill Newlin, Nancy Schwalb, and Kirsten Tollefson.

We would also like to thank the following staff members who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Dr. Daniel Hudson, Dr. Portia Bookheart, Ms. Pamela Clark, Ms. Vanessa Harris, and Ms. Carol Robinson.

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top: kids on the bus

bottom, l-r: Carl Wiggins, Jameia Saunders, Breanne Lancaster



top: Renee Bennaugh

bottom, l-r: Jo'Vada Hudnell, Infiniti Howard, Darshay Holmes

My Voice

here I am
singing on white wood
my pen glides as a new born butterfly
as my honest feelings
invade inside your thought of mind
my words are as deep as a forever dream
my words are like fire
so hot it would make you think
of old memories and a flashback because
my lines are as deep as God's soul
my page is power
outstanding
and bold
my thoughts, my feelings, my words
hear me sing

—*Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

Old Times

winter stretches
the coldness of your heart
a rainy glass
overfills your soul
making your life an icy road
the dust of bruises
torments your mind
flashback and old memories
take your pride
wounded hills of love
a narrow silence of attention
all a part of my curriculum

— *Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

Self Destruction

your skin tells a story
a narrow silence
of sweet bitterness
winter lips
cracked, bruised, and hurt
from that other you
saying the age of your blood
it is a Ms. Daisy stream
it can't take the
pain, hurt, and agony
a graceful cancer
is killing your soul
the naive voice in your head
says your story cannot be told
the sweetest goodbye
from yesterday's road
always will hold the beauty
within your soul.

—*Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

Self Is Not Self

lying still
thinking
last night
what to do with
myself
thinking
self is not self
why?
judging my skin
denying the color
the mouth of my people

cussing of insanity
wearing a mask
to cover the color
that my ancestors gave me
hiding myself
to be with once knowing
I'm not me
me is not self
self is not Shawnita
the person I was
born to be

— *Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

Going Deeper

Sitting here in the dark, I wonder
Are there any people in this world with pride
Some, and a lot, have poisoned pride
They wonder, do I walk with a warm shadow
Staring into the darkness
I see hills burning with flames
A sea of orange waves
And a road that never ends.
Never not alone
I walk, I walk
I walk down this empty street
Not knowing if there are better things ahead
I continue to walk
As I walk along the darkness
It seems to be stranger than fiction
I see a red dog on a rooftop
When I turn around and wake up
I realize it was just a graceful dream

—*Charvon Love*

The Player's Game

There's always someone tryin' to make a pass at you
what they say, you want it to be true
voices in my head are telling me to walk
then the boy tells me to talk
everyone know he's looking to score
then when you let him, you'll be called a whore
this world to me, is a cycle of secrets
will that person let them go
or will they keep it.
This world is a question of time
how long will it take for him not to be mine
will you lose and let him win
or will you be strong and stay a ten.

—Charvon Love

Boy Smarts

He tells me that he loves me
He tells me that he cares
I believed him last week
and for all of these years
My friend tells me as she whispered
softly in my ear
He's cheating on you
You should know by now
I didn't want to believe it
He's been all over town
I'm trying to play it smart
Let him think that I don't know
Even though I know
I still love him so
I knew all along by the way he talks
the way he stares and

the way he walks
It took me a while to notice it all
When he was out late at night
I didn't receive not one call
When I came to a conclusion
I decided to give up
Then I went to him and said
It's time to break up

—*Charvon Love*

Evil Boys

I laugh at little boys,
I laugh so hard, showing my teeth,
I throw my head back,
Boys! What are they?
They're, stupid, immature, and annoying.
But yet lovable, sometimes
I hate them, sometimes I love them.
I am above them all
I rise, I fall
They can't hurt me
I have too much confidence in myself
to believe what someone else
has to say about me, about you,
about the world.
I tried to help, but yet I failed.
All because the evil little boy I loved
has gone to jail.

—*Beonca Harrington*



*top: Stashala Overby
bottom: Nicole Wilkins*

I Might

I might be a hoodlum
Runnin from the feds
Blindly from the lights
Saggy pants from behind
People scared to walk past me.

I might be a b-ball player
Giving good assists
Making all my shots
Grabbing rebounds like Shaq
Rushing to the lane for a lay-up.

I might be a good person
Helping people out
Going to work everyday
Say “Hi” to whoever I know
People ask for change, I’ll give
Judge the good from the bad.

I might be anything
Selling drugs
Practicing on the courts
Helping out the community
I don’t know
I might just be me.

—*Robert Robinson*

Police

Man, yesterday
I was running from the feds
Don't know why
Man, I was scared
Life flashed before my eyes
Started to sweat
Breathing hard, legs shaking
Couldn't even run straight
Didn't want to look back.
Still running don't know why
Not paying attention
Rock came out of nowhere
Slip up and fell
Police stopped
Heart stopped
Mind stopped
I got stopped
And I still don't know why.

—*Robert Robinson*

Good Day, Bad Day

On the basketball court in S.E.
playing ball
score 7 to 4
having a good day
no problem in sight
kids playing football
birds out, sun's out
man, everybody was out
the final minute came at 4 p.m.
the score 15 to 14
just as I went for the shot

black van with tinted windows comes creepin'
windows roll down
the van caught everybody's attention
gun went off
POP, POP, POP, POP, POP
everyone scattered
kids crying, girls screaming
men running
Silence.
Dawg, this good day turned into a bad day

—*Robert Robinson*

Gamble

The crowd watches
as the knights
go to prison
for a sorry gamble.

I stand with pride
and release the voices
in my head telling me
shoot the enemy.

This life of ours is free
for the secret question
am I a winner or a loser?

—*Honesty Bland*

What we go through

At night
I hear slamming doors
in the lonely homes.

I hear the newborn baby
cry for her parents
while she is being tormented
in her sleep.

The elders say regretful things
in their conversation
about the absence of the parents
who have empty dreams
for their children.

The kids humiliated on the school year
I try to ignore the disgusting things
people say in the hood.

Daybreak, music's playing on the basketball court
while others strike a pose for the camera.

That is just some stuff that we go through
day to day.

—*Honesty Bland*

Hiding

Hiding behind this
mask that I can't
get passed is it a
phase or is it gon'
be here for more
than days I don't
like the wayz I
get categorized
you can look into
my eyez and realize
that I am just the
same as you just
cause I don't like
what you like act
like you like don't
mean we ain't
alike so I ain't
hidin' hidin'
no more behind
these closed doors

—*La Juan Brown*

Addiction

My heart holds an addiction
for survival the life of us
is like a game of blackjack
as he rolls the dice for
another day I hope and
pray he will win cause
losers take the bad
end he puts on a bluff
trying to show everyone



top: Tyrone Totten

bottom, l-r: Mercedes Valentine, Oralia Woods

he's tuff but the voices
in my ear say look
under the table security
commands to show what's
in his hand the rules
are you don't cheat
it is you and not I you
will defeat so he
tries again and asked
for lady luck this time
he will shoot and
duck the acoustic sound
in my ear is not
what I really want to
hear you lost.

—*LaJuan Brown*

Ancestors

I am a child of living
distress my dead ancestors
are unable to unrest here
We stand marching in a
protest there is riot
cause all my black people
are tired we are yearning
for this legacy I think
that it will be best if we
keep this tradition it's
our faith in spirits
within we have to
believe that it's
ourselves that we
need to retrieve

—*LaJuan Brown*

Tradition

Take this as a tradition please
be quiet and listen to what
I am tryin to say about that
special day that I will never
forget it is my family that I
be wit' it's when we all
get together and we just might
be outside if there is good
weather it feels great when we
celebrate when the time comes
I just can't wait to enjoy
the time I hope this doesn't
have to be over before 9
cause I am feelin' fine and
that good family that I click
wi't is mine. That barbecue
chicken sure does smell good
I wuz in a daze while
me and cuz Pete wuz
playing spades and I was
looking at my uncle's waves
man they was dry and my
ma just told me my dog
gon' die but they fun I
don't know why but I still
wait for these days to
go by so we can do
it again and now it's
becoming a trend.

—*LaJuan Brown*

The Game of Life

He plays the game of his life
As he tallies up the score
He is not a loser for he is a winner.

As the board dances he releases
The voices inside.

He synchronizes the random
exhibits of life itself.

Freedom, freedom, he calls out
cause he is not a prisoner of any kind.

The envy inside oneself eats up one's pride.

He pawns the voices inside
his mind so there will be no cry.

He plucks a card from the deck,
and shouts out old maid
he spins the wheel, passes go,
and collects \$200.

—*Charlene Green*

Survive

I stand and survive
to avoid Death
Death is like prison
locked up and
I can't get out
I use my street technique
so Death will never have me
six feet deep
I'm an explorer so I know
to move around Death
living every day running
trying to escape.
I stand and survive
to avoid Death

—*Clarence Lemons*

It's All Too Much

I hear nothing
but silence
the moon is glowing
so bright in the sky
It's dark you see nothing
you hear nothing
this is too much
I am about to explode
the darkness, the ghosts I hear
the narrow hallways
I run to the door
to get out
the door is locked
I am stuck
I am trapped

nowhere to go
I scream and shout
let me out
but no one answers
I am alone, all alone
in a room
I scream louder
but no one's there
not a sound
not a sound
not a sound
darkness

—*Karisha Johnson*

Running

yesterday, I was running
from a thing called love
when it hit me, I thought
I might be high off a drug
I saw this in a movie, and
it wasn't too real, so I asked
myself how can I help the way
I feel, I've been in love once
I can't do it again, so I went
down the street to talk to a friend
but, that didn't seem to work,
I want to leave but I'm afraid it might hurt
so, I'm stuck here on stupid
because of cupid, yesterday when
I was running I came to a stop
I told myself, a – dog,
just try to be smart.

—*Siera Avent*



*top: Tyanna Dowdy
bottom: Jamaal Grantham*

Believe

Believe in the way you play
The flow of the air
The circulation, the wind

Flowing

Lock the doors
Secure all floors
Analyze the alarms

Beware my people
Thieves
Criminals
Burglars

Stop!

Become me, trust me,

So remember

To give, to listen, to choose

Your dreams and

Believe!

—*Lawrence Perkins*

The love you give me

The love you give me
no one can take
not even if they tried

it's also the reason
I feel I'm alive

from the first sight of you
I could feel the connection
In your warm arms
like a force-field for protection

Although sometimes my mind
thinks can this be real
you stoop down, the eagle searching for prey
and my heart you steal

—*Daytwan Wright*

Soul Sinking

As I look into this ancient mirror
I wonder to myself
How can I see my eyes
Or even see what else
Is broken.

As the mirror starts to break
My mind starts to shake
The mirror can't replace the way I think
But still my soul began to sink.

—*Lawrence Perkins*

To My Self I Ask

To my self I ask
why must I wear a mask
for all the hurtful things I've done
that resurface from the past

Sometimes I think to my self
is life what it seems
while pinching on the side of my arm
hoping it all was just a dream

now I look back on my life
everything seems so fast
my path is so clear now
I remove my mask

—*Daytwan Wright*

Hiding

She stays inside
To hide the pride of what
She really feels inside
She hides away in a dark little space
So she can pace and
Think about all the mistakes
She has made, so she keeps pace
And then a smile shines across
Her beautiful face

—*Tamika Thomas*

Sorrow falls like

Sorrow falls like . . . a soul as if it were a burning rope
... a frozen rock after it has melted
... oil and vinegar mixing as if it were becoming a chemical
... a bunch of leaves falling because of a new season

—*Jasmine Maddox*

Never Not Alone

car engine stops in such a fright
feel a chill there goes the ghost lights
bullet proof wound
staring at a flaming moon
shadow hall going through your life
with a scare
angels coming down to take you
up the graceful stairs

—*Joshua Ruffin*

Dodging Poetry

I don't like poetry
it's hard to understand
when they tell me to write it
I want to leave
they say express my feelings as best I can
but I say to myself they just don't understand
when they ask someone to read poetry
I pretend I am a phantom
I try to dodge poetry as best I can
but people just don't understand

—*Stanley Lemon*

The Pain of Knowing You

I wish I didn't
know you, you
hurt me in so
many ways I
wish I
never saw you

You beat me, you
used me, you lied
to me, you called
me names

You are so harsh
why do you have to
be that way? Uncaring
and just all out controlling
forcing me to do things
that I've never wanted
to do

I wish what I am
saying could be simple like
a song you catch on to real
quick when you
hear it

You were dragging me through
this pathless journey
that has taken
me nowhere

I wish I didn't know you.

—*Latrise Hughes*



*top: Renee Bennaugh
bottom: Anthony Joshua*

The Other Me

The other me, my better half,
like two souls that intertwine

Never leaving each other
our love combined

Like hard wood, it takes
a saw to break us apart

Like the other me, the better half
of my heart

—*Chantease Taylor*

Courage

Courage is having strength
to move forward.

Courage is outspoken and
very intelligent.

Courage is having friends
telling you to achieve.

Courage is being a person
who believes in herself.

Courage is a part of life
that can't be forgotten.

—*Debra Welcher*

It Must Be Tough

The street must be tough
your life must be tough
going through all that must
be tough
being told what to do
must be tough
to go to school must
be tough

To live on a narrow path
it must be tough
to feel so wounded inside
it must be tough

To have plastic bitterness
it must be tough
to live a horrible life
it must be tough

For having all of this said
it must be tough

—*Latrise Hughes*

The Way I Draw

I got the artistic blues,
maybe someday I'll be on the news.
Sometimes I can be quite cruel,
and sometimes I break the rules.
But that doesn't affect the way I draw,
even when it seems like my brain's
being sucked through a straw.

—*Carlis Jackson*

My cards

My heart holds a
deck of cards
just waiting to
be passed out.

To a bunch of
loved ones that
I know love
me back.

So when I am
down I can really
pass out
my deck of cards
to my loved ones.

When I am passing
out the cards
it's like I am about
to play the game of spades.

I am giving life
I am giving my feelings
I'm giving my sorrow.

I am dealing
out my spirit,
sometimes I
want to hold
the cards
back.

—*Latrise Hughes*

Who Am I?

I am a person who is hiding
my wildness.
I am scared to show who I am.
Some people probably say
I am crazy or weird.
I don't think so,
that's just me.
When people look at me wrong,
they make me want to hide
in a dark room or wear a mask
to hide my identity from others.
But I like who I am.
If you don't, it's just me,
loud, goofy and crazy.

—*Oralia Woods*

Do not brand me

Do not brand me because I'm black.
I am more than a kid.
I am a master of the sea.
I am a tattoo that stays in your mind.
I can downcast you to the ground
and make you cry.
So do not brand me because I'm black.
For you see I am a man
with a master plan.

—*Antonio Wheeler*

Flying Free

I'm in an open plane
where the horizon
never ends
where the wind blows
out in the dust
where a victim's soul
is flying free
free from suffering
free from everything
while a flame
will help relax your fears

— *Ashley Williams*

Pass Me (If You Want To)

You're in the hands of a man
the man is standing out of bounds
he inbounds the ball
now you are in the hands of another man
the man starts to dribble
as you hit the court and
bounce back up over and over again
soon he shoots and most likely he scored.
The players pass you around
to each other each getting a chance
to have the sweat roll off their fingertips
as you are in the palm of their hands.
Now you are getting soft inside.
You are as flat as a plasma t.v.
The players don't want to bounce you anymore.
Before your eyes, you're out of air,
and they will be too because they pass it on.

—*Karimah Bilal*



*top: Emma Stewart
bottom, l-r: Martin Pineda, Stashala Overby*

A Dare from the Sun

I dare you to not let me rise
at the crack of dawn.

I dare you to eclipse me with
a testy moon.

I dare you to cover me with
the gray mist of foggy clouds.

I dare you to let the blue
sky pour water in the evening
and not let me help create
the beautiful colors of the rainbow.

I dare you not to let me, the sun,
smile.

—*Karimah Bilal*

I Am a Poet

I am a poet
I express the way I feel in lines
of brutal meaning

I open the cage of the trapped
but distant mind

I bring new elements to the table
speaking what I feel

I enlighten the thought of confusion
with thoughts of ease that
flow like honey milk rivers

I use devices that are explosive
in meaning but not mischief

I am a poet

—*Karimah Bilal*

Bootleg Monopoly

Take this broken cycle and move up 4 spaces
Different voices will show you which way to go
This is the bootleg monopoly if you wanted to know
I got this blue and gold knight that's prepared to fight
Naw, man you cheatin

Pause

Show me the rules, what's your strategy
My heart holds that love is the key
The crowd watches as I release the pawn
The pawns all over the place like me
And is lyrical
Go around a couple times
As he buys properties, he collects rhymes
Give me my houses
I got the white house you landed on
Give me my money
I won you lose
Now ain't nothing funny

—*Elmer Toogood*

Her Skin Tells a Story

When you see her
you can tell there's
a story about her

The way she acts
she loves her mother

She acts scared
like scattered ghosts
But when she's with friends
she does the most

Her hands are soft
like her soft heart

Her skin tells a story
my poems are smart

Her back tells about her past
as if she was a slave

Her lips tell me how many boys
she has kissed

Her eyes make me reminisce

—*Elmer Toogood*

Soul for Sale

My soul is for sale
the reason is
I'm suffering . . . at every moment
a part of me dies away
I have been tormented to
face the truth
I sleep remembering the day
I said goodbye
I sleep remembering the tears
my sisters cried
I sleep remembering the look on
my brother's face
I sleep to think about my father's
silent cries

I awake to the conclusion that
my soul is for sale
not to the devil
but to the burden of old life
into new

The bleeding of my heart
the hoping, praying, waiting, running, sweating
being shocked at the conclusion
that my soul is for sale

—*Breanne Lancaster*

Mama's Face

She was young and just starting womanhood.
Next thing you know,
she was going through trials and tribulations.

And yet, I've forgotten her face.

Though she's always told me,

Don't do what I did and listen
to what they say and
follow your dreams.

Don't give away what is yours.

—*Breanne Lancaster*

My rhyme

It's 2001 and I live in white house,
but white is not white
I call it black,
but black back then was not good,
good is only black when you come from the hood,
but the hood is not hooked on to what you say,
we sit down, we're family, we have to pray.
Man, it's 2002, I'm in school
it's 2:00 time for work not play
you heard it from the best
that's all I have to say.

—*Sherita Taylor*



top: Matthew Griffin

bottom, l-r: Ashley Williams, Chantease Taylor

Illusion Blues

I got the illusion blues
I see things but I'm not seeing anything
I hear things but wait . . . nope
don't hear anything either
I read but can't decipher anything
I try but can't make any accomplishments
I think I'm doing something right
but it's always wrong
I make a mistake and everyone complies
I got the illusion blues
When I trip I always fall
I think I have friends but no one to call
I reach out for help and no one is there
No answer no response
eyes full of tears and despair
I think I got the illusion blues
or maybe it's not
maybe it's a theory
or just a thought

—*Breanne Lancaster*

Heritage

Thinking about how to find
my heritage a home
Everywhere I seem to go
Everyone seems to want to
be left alone

Even if I was to cry out loud
I still wouldn't draw a crowd

Why is this so important to me,
I guess because I want you and me
to have some dignity
Can we
all just get along,
because
we're not going to live life long

My heritage is important
Don't look at me as if I'm insane
just know that right now
I'm feeling so much pain

Keep thinking that this day won't come,
but guess what my heritage will overcome
This is my heritage and life
Please don't fight
and just get it right

—*Mercedes Valentine*

Out of the Dust

I'm a shadow in the
moonlight. I'm a night
without a heart. The
owl's call out help help,
a horizon of men comes,
but out of the dust
a lady cries and
cries, a gift for tomorrow
is on the way.

—*Robert Jennings*

She

She is dangerous like a nuclear bomb
set to explode
in a highly populated area

She is like a mad rabid killer
set free on bail, set on revenge

She wants like a power hungry
woman whose only incentive is money

Her attitude is like a trapped person
in depression in a house alone
grieving

She makes me scared
but I am determined to help her

She needs it and I fear for her life
I care for her so I need not
keep up this charade

—*Andre Tatum*

Shock to the Heart

Love is like a shock to the heart
and an axe in your hands.
Sometimes you will like someone
but they do not know it.
You will cry in and out.
It's like an earthquake.
It's like frozen ice falling falling
and falling
but you cannot ever run or get from it.

—*Robert Jennings*

I Am Not a Poet

I am not born
to be a poet.
I'm born to
play football
They run the ball
I follow their block
Running back
Catching the ball
in my chest
to the touchdown
do a victory dance
I throw it down
on the ground
and do anything
to show my pride.

—*Carlis Jackson*

How to Find My Heart a Home

My heart, my heart ran away from home
don't know where she went
wherever she went no trace of her is shown
But I's still climbing on
with no heart, I'm like creamed corn
droopy, watery, and not put together

My heart, yes my heart is gone
I've been treating it so wrong
too much stress, and too much pain
I've been drowning my heart with rain

My heart, yes my heart is gone
I have nothing to live for

I want to find my heart a home
but still no sign of her is shown

My heart, yes my heart is gone
I've stored her a home
right here is where she belongs
if you see her please bring her home
where my heart belongs

—*Shawnice Clark*

Black Boy

Yesterday he struggled through ignorance
he walked through fights
he sped through the storm
he leaped over the drugs

Yesterday he journeyed the night rain
he awoke to screaming neighbors
he ate to parents arguing
he went on his way furiously

Yesterday he departed this life
he brightened the white blizzard
he caged the bullies
he pressed through the wounds

The black boy knows that he
rides above the hurt

—*Shawnice Clark*



top:

bottom: Anthony Thomas

The Long Choice

On a long dirt road
with three arrows you don't know what to choose
you try to run from your mind set
for what you want to do
the anxiety builds up in your legs and
you start to run
your speed intensifies and you turn
and look back on something you can't shake
you stagger and sweat but
it still seems like it's gaining on you
sweat and blood are coming down your body
when you notice you have to make a choice
follow your dreams or let them die
or let yourself die just by running

—April Bungie

Become a Heart

How hard they try?
How hard the deer tries to become the hunter
How hard the hunter tries to become the bullet
How hard the bullet tries to become the white cloud.
And the white cloud
So soft, so fluffy, floating in the sky but
tries so hard to become love
and how hard the love wants to become
a heart.

—Ruby Hill

Mrs. Barbara

Her skin is bright, as bright as gold,
the rank of her intelligence, not even she knows.
She sits in front of the store asking for dollars,
and if you ignore her, she will start to holla:
sir, sir, do you have a dollar, if not today
then maybe tomorrow.

Days, weeks, and months have gone, and
at the end of the day, she's all alone.
As you walk past her you sing the same old song.

She has a pot to pee in, and a great big window
to throw it out, but as I watch her I wonder
what is this asking for dollars thing all about.

Today is a new day, and so is tomorrow
and it's not one day out of a week that
her routine won't follow.
Lord have mercy on her soul, for only you know
how deep her self-esteem goes.

—*Shannon Avent*

Myself

I see myself in the midnight of silence.
Holding in the laughter of sorrow's glory.
I listen to my lonely memory as music.
Wonder at precious heavenly treasures.
Glimpse at a history of poison and magic,
and how a feather breaks a glass window.
Hold myself tight as I look at the
stars shine above the moon.

I see blanks racing in front of me
noisy but not silent.
Gasping for air on a dry dull afternoon
humid, hot and not too cool.
A smooth, soft, tender bear holding me all night.
Iron bars on the window as the rain taps on it,
thinking of a beautiful waterfall
sparkling from the sun that
a brick wall blocks
as I hear the tick of the clock.

—*Ruby Hill*

The Power of Guns

1.
Easy to use, but very powerful
if not used correctly.
2.
Smooth-looking, but painful.
3.
Not something you would call
cheap if you're broke.
4.
Brings light, but creates
darkness.
5.
Some of them are little with power
and some of them are big with more power.

6.

They are used for robbery and for
some people's protection.

7.

People say, "If you live
by the gun, you die
by the gun!"

8.

The sound of a gun
makes crowds go out of control.

9.

If shot with one,
you will see blood.

—*Antoine Ford and Joseph Holbrook*

Dreams

No, everything in life dreams.
A bullet wants to become love,
a blue cloud wants to become a cool wind,
white smoke wants to become a blue cloud,
I want to become a fast runner,
but everyone dreams to run like me,
a black hole dreams of being a window,
a car on the street dreams of
becoming a night train.

—*Joseph Holbrook*

Suppose

Suppose history replays itself
like the seasons.
Suppose music was magic,
would everyone know it.
Suppose people had to die
to give birth,
I wonder how many of us
would be on earth.
Suppose sorrow was chocolate,
would people want it.
Suppose the last day
was next Sunday,
I wonder how some people
would act.

— *Joseph Holbrook*

Jealousy

Yesterday it came without warning
like company coming over on a Saturday morning.
At first, I welcomed it,
not knowing what would accompany it.
Jealousy was her name, when we became close.
She couldn't be tamed, when girls wanted toast.
I had to set her free, cause she was killing my life.
I guess I'm still looking for the one to call my wife.

— *Delawnta Turner*



*top, l-r: Oralia Woods, Mercedes Valentine, Stashala Overby
bottom: Matthew Griffin*

Discovering

I see
my dreams
being shrouded
by darkness
trying to
find the
light. I
see myself
being the
moon and
having the
stars follow
me. I see
myself hiking
over the
mountain
discovering

—*Delawnta Turner*

I am hers

I am hers in the midst of this darkness
trembling on this blind path
not able to see my shadow
suffering
as my heart beats faster
trying to relax
but the fright is still there
I try to trust in a bright star
to lead me in the right direction
and steal me away from this darkness

—*Lawrence Copelin*

Suppose I Was Rising

Suppose there was no pencil
to put my thoughts on paper.
Suppose you were the one leaving me
and not me leaving you in the rain.
Suppose I was rising and you
were falling like sunset.
Suppose you rode off into the sun
and I stood here as time went by.

—*Glenn Johnson*

To Break This Shadow

To break this shadow
Into a thousand lights of sun
I must become one with myself
To rise upon all righteousness
Yet I open my eyes to see that
I am stuck in a standstill

—*Glenn Johnson*

New Age

Age ain't nothing but a stranger
I welcome home.
This is the age of intelligence.
You tell me I will become stronger,
that my thoughts will run like
a deer being chased by a hunter.
I will say goodbye to ignorance.
I welcome the new age of steel sidewalks.

—*Ricky Dawson*

The Dead

Suppose I killed myself and
became the phantom in your memories.
The silence of your fear creeps up on you
until finally you are lonely.
Death, death sneaks while you are gently asleep.
Suppose you could hear midnight rising
from the ashes of distant birth.
Suppose you listen.
Suppose you didn't know enough to care why,
why, why it's over . . . your sleep.

—*Quentin Keener*

Starry Night

My hood
lives in
this painting.
Giant trolls
exist among
the surviving.
Blue waves
float in
the skies.
There is
no electricity.
The moon
is the
brightest flame.

—*Ricky Dawson*

Never Knew

When I woke up in the morning
All I saw was your precious face
A woman who I notice is my mother
A woman I never knew till this day
who seems so special to me.
I never knew.

I woke up this morning
And was just thinking
How blessed I am to have a mother like her.
And how special you are to me.
I never knew.

Never till this day
I cherish the woman who I call mother
For all the work she did for me
And I never knew.

—*Taésha Robinson*

Moon

yesterday, the moon
sparkled silently
through the night.
the moon pawned his soul
for an embrace.
yesterday it floated fright-less
above the noise.
it will soon resurrect
and emerge
as a hieroglyphic on earth.

—*Ricky Dawson*

Bedtime Story

In the first corner of my room there is an apple.
As I slowly turn toward my second corner,
I stare into the eyes of Snow White.
She is glowing from the happiness in the third corner.
Her peach skin in the fourth corner glows from the sun
beaming in from the small window
between the first and forth corners.
Without a place to go,
I lie in the center of the four-cornered room, spinning.
I see no door nor carpet, no rugs, no chairs,
but feel a soft rectangular shape in which I lie.
Taking the place of Snow White, I lie in her coffin
as she eats the good apple in the first corner,
standing, looking at me in the second corner,
smiling in the third corner,
with her peach skin in the fourth.

—*Teresa Baize*

My Four Cornered Room

In the first corner, there is a dragon.
He stares at me, waiting for me to move.
I am in the second corner.
I feel as though I should move
but I am too afraid.
In the third corner of the room, there is the color orange.
It symbolizes me and the way I feel in this room.
In the fourth corner is fear.
This is how I feel right now, staring at the dragon.
I cannot leave and I am afraid to go on.
I don't know how I'll get out of this room,
but I know how I got in.
I am smart, and when you are smart



*top: Anthony Thomas
bottom: Kuwan Poole*

you will eventually end up in a room like mine.
You may not have the same color,
and you may not have a dragon,
but you will have fear,
and everything will represent the same thing.
The dragon has a name that has seven letters.
This name is unusual, but the dragon wears it proudly.
This name is...College!

—*Renee Bennaugh*

I Am Jamaal

To be me:

You're industrious;
you're lazy

You're talented
but you're slothful

You love girls
but hate rejection

You're a flirt
but you don't want to be hurt

You're kind;
you can be mean

You're a positive image
but some still hate on you

You're not stingy
but you're still cheap

You're loved by many
and disliked by some

You're laid back
but can get really ugly

You love looking fly
but won't buy expensive clothes

You sometimes sit and wonder why
but you're strong and never cry

You want to reach out
but don't know how

You hurt inside
but still keep a smile

—*Jamaal Grantham*

Puzzled

A lamp so bright,
like the sun that's trapped outside
Gleaming inside, searching for a loving person
It gleams in the third corner, but it's not there
A vivid blue appears so bright, so happy,
so full of life, but lacks the love it needs
Blue looks in the second corner
There's a person.
Her name is...well, to blue it doesn't matter.
Tasha, she's in the second corner
searching for a bright life,
but she sees nothing but a misty dark black blank
The lamp shines its bulb upon her face
Slowly, she feels her life lighting up,

blue turns to the fourth corner
to where love was hiding all along
Love's so strong, so vulnerable,
it only needed a little light to be seen
All gathered in corner two
Everybody turns to each other and loves.

—*Lauren Taylor*

Silence

Now I will put everything aside
and sit uprooted
For once in my life, silence
comes to mind in a knowledgeable manner
Currently, a tear rolls down my cheek
and I've decided I will never speak.
Sadly I cried, silently
Not knowing my name,
a face appeared, and I was burdened,
weighed down, with shame.
I thought in my head,
it's my fault, it's my fault
that the bullet joined in the game
The fire and smell of smoke
had critically made me insane.

—*Nicole Wilkins*

Good Comparisons

Writing gets on my nerves, just like people.
It's a good comparison because they are both stressful.
People are at their best when they're turned inside out.
Writing looks like the hospital full of pain.
People smell like the bottom of a dead person's feet.
Writing feels like a lion trying to attack.
People are the worst animals because they sound like police sirens.
Writing tastes like bad breath in the morning.
They both give me a headache, like newborn babies crying.
I once heard a great voice saying
"Iona Carpenter, please report to the main office prepared to go home."

—*Iona Carpenter*

My Mind

My mind is like a wild house.
It is always live, and loud
like a house with speakers blasting,
my TV blasting.
Windows are getting busted,
people are fighting,
telephone's ringing off the hook,
and the doorbell's ringing 24-7.
Living here will make a mad man go insane.

—*Tyrone Totten*

My Sister

My little sister is about to cross the street.
She spots me walking out of the building.
She notices I'm heading in her direction
and she asks me to help her across the street.
I grab her soft hand and tell her to come on.
I walk her to the playground and push her on the swing.
I realize it's getting dark, so I pick her up
and tell her to hold on tight
and she tells me she loves me
and she falls to sleep in my arms.

—*Darshay Holmes*

Sparrows

The fortitude of the sparrows
causes a riot.
As they thrive on toil and disturbing the peace,
their ignorance is ravenous.
As their unity is suddenly muted
you hear no echo.
The hearsay is hail
burdened by a crash of constant uproar.
The divine honesty of the sparrow
allows the current to rise.
Now the hail is gone
and the reincarnation of the land is sacred.

—*Layetta Kerrick*



*Martin Pineda
bottom: Fanchon Hall*

Because

Sometimes it's good outside
like a bird in a nest.
Sometimes it's bad outside
like when somebody cooks bad food.
But sometimes bad is good.

My eyes light up like stars at night.
The cold air at night numbs my hands.
The moist air chaps my lips.
When it's hot outside, my nostrils start running.
My ears get burned when the sun beams on them.

Jay-Z was singing at a club in Greenland.
I have no eyes.
Jay-Z had a concert singing in Mexico.
But none of us could sing
cuz they say I was bad.
And I cannot sing
because I don't have any peanuts in my trail mix.

—*Jo'Vada Hudnell*

Long Night

Last night
the sun lit my window.
The night
was absent to me.
Because sunlight
went down late.
The moon sets early
this night,
kissing off the sky.
Becoming a new day

to bait doughballs and hooks.
I walk home
unnoticed
and the sun is setting.
I watch it set
through my window.
It breaks very beautiful,
a peachy color.

—*Martin Pineda*

I'm Sorry

Some of the things I'm about to say,
well, I'm not really sorry about.

I'm sorry about cuffing some candy at the 7-Eleven.
I never wore shoes with my laces.
I'm sorry for burning the chicken,
but I'm not sorry for burning your clothes.

I never meant to slap you
but I did mean to slap yo' mama.
I never burped at the table
but I did spit in your milkshake.

I'm sorry for parading around in my boxers
but I did mean to punch your grandmother
for taking my grandmother's teeth.
I'm sorry for throwing up on your floor
but I'm glad, because your pasta was foul.
You may think I'm being honest
but you're the one who's false.

—*Stashala Overby*

Sleeping

Sleeping is forever
You must always sleep
like bears always hibernate
Sleeping makes you happy
like a dog playing catch
Sleeping is calm as a clam
When drifting off to sleep,
it is like you're in a quiet room
with the lights dimmed
and you're relaxed and laid back.
It's like you're driving
to the end of the dreamway,
not the highway.

—*Jameia Saunders*

Myself

My mind is a black, painful place
in a skull
full of stress, pain,
anger, lies from a father
and serious, painful backstabs
and stress about school.
I am sometimes quiet
like the New York street at night
when it rains
or I'm sometimes different
like a change of channel
But sometimes when it rains there
it's quiet
because the rain takes you away.

—*Dejuan Wilson*

Infiniti

My name tastes like a million pounds of sweet strawberries.
My name smells like a nail shop on a nice spring day.
My name sounds like a wet rainy day in August.
My name looks like a pretty wedding cake with whipped cream.
My name feels like it's swimming in millions of dollars.

—*Infiniti Howard*

The Cycle

There will always be...

People of many different shades
Light and darkness throughout the days
Pasts that hurt us and futures that won't
Life and death from many ages

Disagreement among the countries
Wars of men, wrong and right
Right and wrong, just and unjust
A never-ending cycle beginning

Smiling faces, silent tears
Shots, meaning cures, and unsolved mysteries
Confusion and understanding
Good and evil, Heaven and Hell

There will always be...

Man, Woman and Child
Seven deadly sins to bring us down
Someone who cares for us and another who won't
With family and friends to keep us afloat.

—*Fanchon Hall*

I'm Sorry

I was never higher than the clouds,
but I was higher than a clock on the ground.

I'm sorry
I stole the money out of the bank
but I'm not sorry for a fish that died in my tank

I'm not sorry for doing my homework
but I'm sorry my mother's heart is hurt.

—*Kowan Poole*

Young

Wake up in the morning
Go downstairs
Make me two eggs, three pancakes,
and five slices of bacon
Wash up, make my bed,
and still have time to watch TV
Go for a bike ride
And as the wind blows,
the years pass by
I remember I'm still young

—*Wyman Walker*



*top: Krystal Cook
bottom: Darshay Holmes*

Ancestors

The names of my ancestors can be read as an almanac of my present being.
I walk through the lively graveyard full of souls in a festive mood,
able to smell the food not seen.

My taste buds thumping like the vibration I felt beating the conga drum,
and now beating that drum was MLK at his Atlanta, Georgia gravesite
followed by Malcolm X in New York.

Even my own grandmother in Hampton, Virginia. But all look empty, lost.
I guess the graveyard wasn't as lively as I thought.

And now I taste death, I hear the mourning of the disappointed souls,
as they seem unable to reach out and touch this new generation.

Youth violence, wars, and chaos throughout this world.

Aay son, see that rolla, let's take her to the back and smash.

Empowering our black females, R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

The disappointed faces of heartache seen in my ancestors' glares
cause me to perfect my morbid ways.

Though, my morbid ways allow me to possess a wholesome spirit.

A spirit that leaps out in front and attracts all attention away from me.

The first female President of the United States has finally been elected
this year, 2024,

gladly tackling this easy task, this welcomed war, this grand mass
destruction.

These are the dreams of an ambitious soul,
who lacks the ability to make her dreams come true.

Pues, mi casa es su casa.

So tell your troubles to run on home.

And now, I leave the graveyard full of the souls in a festive mood,
with the lingering smells of the unseen foods.

—*Fanchon Hall*

She

She is leaving on a commuter express,
but acts as if she doesn't know
how she got there.
Yesterday is absent,
tonight's moon is setting,
and she is tired and weak.
She watches the flood,
knee-deep in the field
from the window ledge.
Truants on the commuter
hand out oranges and peaches,
and go unnoticed.
She finally turns the lamp out
and falls asleep.
But the light from the window ledge
awakens her.

—*Krystal Cook*

Heavy Poem

Obesity is like a reindeer without its blinders
Heavyweights eating the world out of the palm of their hands
Tasting the sweet smell of loneliness and depression
Feeling the desire and urge to eat through the emptiness
in their hearts
Hearing the malicious gossip, as it travels
languidly through their bodies into their minds
mentally tearing them down
They see the awful stares as they enter the room
full of people seeming to fit the image of perfection and beauty
Oprah, we know too well, rides the seesaw of the weight game--
She doesn't ride the seesaw, she lives the seesaw of the weight game
I never get on the seesaw. I prefer the sandbox, a stand-still game.

Dat's wassup!

They made me not gain weight because I wasn't supposed to be fat
I always stay on my Ps and Qs when it comes to eating right
The box of depression we find sitting on every corner
waits for the day to end, only to find tomorrow as bad as today
The anorexic fixation of the obese can drive one crazy
They get so angry, they erase all food from the earth,
leaving everyone else to starve
Buddha is more than happy to know she is not a part of the trend
The obese know that tomorrow and the day after
they will still be teased for their appearance
The sharp, dull razor cuts deep into their hearts
and they bleed sad lonely blood
I, too, know the pain that exists within each soul.

—*Krystal Cook*

Where Anger Lives

Buildings where anger lives have displeasure
of dust and dirt
like a ceiling with holes in it
dirty water dripping from it
or doors with rusted nails hanging out.
To be anger, you must mope around
all day with a mug on your face
or just have an attitude with everyone.
On the street where anger lives are dull houses
of busted windows and chipped paint
on the rooftops.
In their garden stands a tall, bony tree
with no leaves, and only dirt around it.

—*Emma Stewart*

Bad storm

Moon over dark clouds
as if it's going to snow.
Barbells dangling on the damp porch,
with a slight wind.
The continuous keening through the windows
as if it's about to erupt.
Raindrops filled with fire,
is the forecast for yesterday,
today and tomorrow.

—*Emma Stewart*

Pay-Off

My hard work has paid off.
The Junior year has gone
and the Senior year is on.
I hit for four years straight
and won the jackpot.
First prize, to walk across the stage
to a promising future.

My mama has made bread from scratch,
starting from nothing
and daddy has come to cry
like a sensitive child.
While the family has made up
a song of congrats to graduating
and making another moment
of Good Times history.

—*Tyanna Dowdy*

A divorced marriage

Night comes on like a frown in the sun
It's me he is mad at
And she hates the way the sound of moving
tastes like orange juice on a
brand new tongue
Remembering to forget that tongue kiss
from Myrtle Beach
on the lips tattooed on her back
She throws herself on Mr. Depressing Attitude
so she can be mad at her long distance husband
since 2020
whom she hasn't even met yet
Children ran through cloud nine, and we all
watched the choreographer dance
but none of us were there
Only children allowed, so any adult
who tried to get in
the kids went smack at 'em.
Because they were old, and ages were uneven
He only got convicted of Murder One every blue moon
So depressed about being too happy, and the
lust of fornication dripping from her breath
The burning volcano of hate
She hated her husband on Monday, January 31, 2012
and forgave him on Tuesday, February 1, 2005
She will have to apologize for what she did tomorrow
He threw the hot ice in a glass of iced tea
His feelings turned cold because he had cold feet
Voulez vous coucher avec moi?
The dog drove her home in a pickup truck
Only to remember she forgot to get her heart broken

—Tyanna Dowdy



top: Jameia Saunders

bottom, l-r: Breanne Lancaster, Martin Pineda, Karimah Bilal

Sleep

Watching the ocean move in a languid motion
I sit bequeathing today's cutthroats
Night has exfoliated day as the stars
fall short of the sky
I carried my weak mind in a bag and reinterred it
So tired, I joined the sand
While the herons watched the
unrecognizable object
I watch the blank windows
burning in my mind
Time was wasted and the orange soon
drowned my night
Well-aimed at my dreams,
I remain spiritless with hopes of
sleep, scattered across the beach

Teresa Baize

Death

Death is so sudden, like the chill you get from snow
The snow stormed through the city for two years
The snow felt like a knife and sounded like thunder,
fresh tar on the road is what it looks like,
come on and taste it
mmm good,
like Campbell's Soup.
But beware of the scent, which makes you cry
like the smell of onions.
Death feels like cigarette smoke in my face,
flowing in my nose,
Cigarette smoke blown from the Grim Reaper
in New York City, in the Heart of Manhattan,
afraid of the feared.

Although we weren't that scared of him at all
Melting snowmen bring deadly rivers
Gotta hit up da crew to git miya boat
But can't call my crew because I
couldn't buy my tracks.
"I think the rain is calling murder."
The heavy rain, of sweet dreams
that drown my pain.
We were as terrified
as the skeletons with no hair
We evaporated as quickly as we could
and returned as a tsunami.
Tee swam up on the River Styx
feeling great
They will hide today, tomorrow and forever
until it catches up with them.
Rocky waters sneak upon them unannounced
To be smart you have to know what I will learn next
You chicks musta been crazy to think y'all can try to outsmart me
The scythe will surprise you with terror, so look out
Death captures you as the snowstorm distracts your mind
only to prove you weren't as smart as you thought.

—Teresa Baize

There will always be...

There will always be peace
There will always be war
There will always be good
There will always be evil
There will always be women who love, even when they aren't loved
There will always be men who care, and men who can't quite figure
out how to care
There will always be the past
There will always be the future, even if it isn't yours
There will always be somebody yelling, somebody laughing,
somebody crying
There will always be grace and there will always be awkwardness
There will always be a me and there will always be a you
There will always be a lie and there will always be a truth
There will always be death, there will always be life

—*Renee Bennaugh*

I'm Sorry

I never went to the movies and bought popcorn and soda
although I did buy popcorn or soda
I never jumped off the swing and landed on my butt
I never tried to book anybody, but I have read a book
I've never jumped off a plane, I've never even ridden in one either
I guess you could say I don't get much excitement.
For example, I never ate ice cream
while climbing a snow-covered mountain
Then again, I've never climbed a snow-covered mountain.
I've never had the key to singing on key with a monkey
although I've tried many times
I never jumped rope with a jumping bean
I never rode a horse with Pippi Longstocking
I never bought pink toilet tissue

I never bought paper dolls, purple shoes, or plain
potato chips
I never met Peeping Tom or Little Bo Peep

I'm sorry
I took the candy
I did, it's true
I sawed the heads off all the quarters
I took the cat's nine lives
I did it, it was my fault
I gave the President a wedgie during his campaign speech
I'm sorry
My bad
My fault

—*Renee Bennaugh*

In Da Club

I flew to Africa in an SUV
I am the SUV
The Africans smell my car freshener from miles away
Can see the bottom of the SUV flashing in their eyes
because of my hydraulics and also the glare from my
24 inch chromed-out rims
Can feel the bass thumping from my loud system
Tasting the exhaust smoke from the big pipes
Animals growling from the loud pipes, awakening them
Loud music bumping in the brains of all of mankind,
insinuating into the body through the ears, nose, and the mouth
The songs of 50 Cent rapping while performing in the
President's Oval Office in the White House
Maybe not in the Oval Office
but most definitely in the White House
Maybe not the White House
nor anywhere in America, maybe in a small town in Ghana

Maybe the President of Ghana rocking to Fifty's top hit
"In Da Club" wearing some bling-bling and outfitted
with a G-Unit hoody on his way to a Ja-Rule concert,
because he is fat, and that hoody was the only thing
left in the Big and Tall section
Telling all of his people that if something goes on
that they can find him "In Da Club" yelling out
"It's My Birthday"
Hiding the broken window of his heart
Standing outside under the storm cloud of a sunny day
Jumping up and down trying to touch the storm cloud
Big Mal was watching from a nearby window
Remembering that tomorrow and the day after that he had
to write a speech for his address to the people of Ghana
walking into the empty club to get his last dance
Imagining dancing with a beautiful lady
but really, he wakes up sitting in the SUV two days later
Yelling out "Je'mappelle Francois"
as the car opens for fresh air and as he steps out
listens to the advice from the rear view mirror
As he walks to the podium, he envisions his country's downfall
and after stating what he expects of his people
he finally says that if I flew here in an SUV to take over this country
then you can just work hard toward making our country the best
—*Jamaal Grantham*

Happiness

Happiness is found like hard-earned money
Nothing makes me happier than seeing children eaten by a mad bulldog
It's like a past dream partially faded
with the soft, yet firm, touch of success
that alerts the ears like a mixture of applause
the rush of adrenaline and a thousand smiles
gleaming all around.

But to understand happiness
it would obviously look like the sound of music
weaving through the air
Clifford the Big Red Dog
dreaming of running to the Statue of Liberty
If only Clifford had legs to run there.
You can find bubbles and happiness dating each other
producing offspring of the perfect pink
Because we all were too happy to find a job
To succeed, they must always keep their p's and q's in check
and always balance their checkbook.
The grey cloud of devastation contradicts its claim of peace and serenity
But it was as miserable as the man who just won the Lottery
So as the happy one studied the troubled cloud,
he jumped to the outer limits and lassoed an asteroid to the center of
the galaxy
Where Matt then reached up for the sky and grasped both happy and
cloud together
But the cloud was a stiff cloud wanting all for himself
So its final verdict was guilty, sentenced to a millennium in the skies
where it could do nothing but fly and float for punishment.
Happiness ends all things,
being partially faded yet never forgotten,
where that troubled cloud was never really troubled
because deep inside, only happiness bubbled.

—Matthew Griffin

There will always be memories, never bleached

Every year, every decade, the scene constantly changes
But what dies is removed, while memories are never bleached
There will always be a dog barking, even though it ceased years ago
The current scene becomes the past, but the languid and baffling
dilemmas
never cease being bypassed into the future's fresh new beginning, a
fresh new scene
Diseases are cured, but people continue to die
More and more truces are formed,
yet more wish for a Utopia

There will always be something hoped for, something despised
There will always be a puppy waiting for a home
A kid nagging his mom just to be near
Every day, every year, every decade
the scene is constantly changing
what dies is removed, while memories are never bleached

—*Matthew Griffin*

Astray

I'm freezing
my mind is lost in ten degrees Fahrenheit
It's cold on the inside
my heart is pounding, two beats per second
Time's up
my expiration date was three years ago
Three Years
I'm traveling back in time
to when my barometer erupted after hitting 300° F
I was a volcano spitting out lava
determined to dwindle anyone in my path
Again my forecast was unknown

I found myself turning and twisting
Boom! There goes someone's car
Pow! There goes a house
Is this truly me?
The river flows in a peaceful place
somewhere out there, far away
where fir trees live
It's quiet
I'm astray
It's the time to change
my weather forecast

Lauren Taylor

Beyond

Dogs bark like a horn honks
over and beyond Mars
It's hot where the stars are
there's twinkling in the galaxy somewhere
where I can taste the perfection of cookies baking
It smells like a dirty dog's body
that tasted kind of good in a puddle of gravy
that sounded like something I watch on TV
and felt like crumbling planets
like poor Leika, the dog from Moscow
who was sent up to space to meet her doom.
I never watch TV
I'm flying out of space with wings on my back
that I wish I sprouted on my own
I gave the stars some Dap
on a small planet, with small hands
"What goes around comes around"
frantically plays itself on the radio.
The mean eyeballs of heartache grasp a treacherous love affair
It made me sad as laughing hyenas

who played chess and howled out “checkmate”
Cuzin told me don’t give them a chess board
but a week from now I guarantee they’ll bite into the black knight
who was brave, scared, and thrown into a frozen volcano
that is all forgotten now, but remembered tomorrow.
Ay, ay, ay como me duele
makes the earth sing
as beautiful as a bluejay and it helps the land wander through the woods
with a notorious feeling of bravery.
Even when you’re brave,
the planets languidly tumble down.

—*Lauren Taylor*

My Mother

My mother is standing, cooking, in the kitchen.
I listen to the water run and the grease pop.
She makes a cake.
I watch her as she looks at her T.V.,
the smile on her face as I sit on the stool.
I hear her laugh and it makes me warm.
I tap her on the shoulder as she’s walking
up the steps and say
“Mom, I love you.”

—*Cameron Williams*

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