

a write around portland ANTHOLOGY

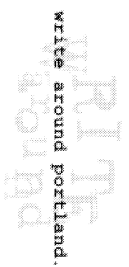
Called to Speak Stories

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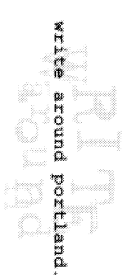


Write Around Portland Press
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Portland, Oregon 97205-2838
503.796.9224
www.writearound.org

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Write Around Portland only publishes works produced in our writing workshops. Authors are solely responsible for the content of their writing in this anthology and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Write Around Portland.



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This anthology is dedicated to *Angela Winningham*,
a Write Around Portland writer who
passed away this spring.

“...when out the hospital window
the moon hangs like a pendant on the sky’s dark lace,
horizon full of news
and boundaries like the tops and bottoms
of trees, the tall black dog standing
under the cedar, like faith
like life continuing.”

from *What I Lost* by Angela Winningham “City. Night. Sky.”
A Write Around Portland Summer 2006 anthology

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WRITE AROUND PORTLAND WORKSHOPS & WRITERS

Since 1999, Write Around Portland has run volunteer-facilitated writing workshops for people affected by HIV/AIDS, people in prison, survivors of domestic violence, seniors in foster care, people in recovery from drug or alcohol addictions, or with physical or mental disabilities, teenagers living on the street, low income adults and people who might not otherwise have access to the power of writing because of income, isolation or other barriers.

More than 1,600 people have participated in 258 of these workshops, unleashing their creative power and accessing the literary arts. The workshops meet two hours per week for eight or ten weeks in the spring, summer and fall and are facilitated by highly-trained volunteers with a passion for writing and an ability to nurture and engage participants in the writing process. To ensure that everyone in our city has access to the power of writing in community, journals, pens, bus tickets, childcare and snacks are provided free to participants.

To promote the exchange of stories and to further build community, we hold public readings and publish anthologies to connect writers and readers.

Called to Speak Stories, our 23rd anthology, includes pieces from writers from the workshops we held this spring. Write Around Portland is proud to partner with the community organizations, social service agencies, the state, county and schools below to provide these workshops, and we are grateful for the dedicated and passionate corps of volunteer facilitators who ensured their success and high quality.

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WRITE AROUND PORTLAND WORKSHOPS/PARTNERS

Human Solutions, Inc.—Arbor Glen Teen Club* Human Solutions helps low-income families and individuals gain self-sufficiency by providing affordable housing, skill-development classes and family support services. Teen club is one of many programs provided on-site as part of the resident services program at Arbor Glen Apartments. This workshop was held for youth in grades 6-8.
Workshop Facilitator: Kevin Fann

Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) Kids' Connection* CAP is the oldest and largest community-based provider of HIV services, housing, education and advocacy in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Kids' Connection, a program of CAP, promotes healthy lives for all families impacted by HIV. Contributions to this anthology were written by participants in their monthly Teen Group, a social/therapeutic group for youth who are infected or affected by HIV.
Workshop Facilitator: Shelly Sweeney

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility—Medium Security is a state prison in Wilsonville. This workshop was held for women serving time there.
Workshop Facilitator: Karen Morgan

Helensview High School is an alternative public high school in Northeast Portland for "at risk" youth and teen parents, ages 12 -21. This workshop was held for students attending Helensview and was held in partnership with Reclaiming Futures/Multnomah Embrace.
Workshop Facilitator: Margaret Malone.

Human Solutions, Inc. helps low-income families and individuals gain self-sufficiency by providing affordable housing, skill-development classes and family support services. This workshop was held for Human Solutions, Inc. clients and other adults living on a low income.
Workshop Facilitator: Rob Freedman

Jackson SUN Community School/ Neighborhood House, Inc.* is a not-for-profit human services organization serving Southwest Portland and Multnomah County, empowering and impacting the community for nearly 100 years. The Jackson SUN Community School program of Neighborhood House Inc. is dedicated to improving the lives of children, families, and the community by bringing together private, city, and state resources to provide creative learning opportunities, promoting school success, and eliminating barriers between Jackson Middle School and the community. In partnership with the Jackson SUN School, this workshop was held for eighth grade English Language Learners working to improve their voice as writers in the English language.
Workshop Facilitator: Dawn Thompson

Kelly Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) School is a project of Portland Impact, helping low income families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency by providing social services, quality education, recreational activities and community involvement activities. This workshop was open to adults in the Kelly community in outer southeast Portland.
Workshop Facilitator: Jana DeCristofaro
Childcare Volunteer: Yvonne Chambers

* Indicates new workshop partner organization, population or workshop

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Multnomah County Juvenile Justice—Donald E. Long School. The mission of this program is to provide and maintain a safe, secure, stable and enriching environment for juveniles in their care, while protecting the community. The Bravo Two pod houses youth 15 and older who have been charged with Measure 11 crimes. These are serious crimes that carry mandatory minimum sentences upon conviction. The programming on Bravo Two is comprehensive and includes high school, Aggression Replacement Training and individual counseling during the youths' stay. This workshop was held in partnership with Reclaiming Futures/Multnomah Embrace, for the boys there.

Workshop Facilitator: Susan Russell

Pathfinder Academy* and Youth Employment Institute—Teen Parent Program*.

Pathfinder Academy is an alternative high school program for pregnant and parenting youth, ages 14-20, who reside in the Portland Public Schools attendance area. Their mission is to provide a safe educational environment in which the youth can achieve self-growth through prioritization of family, education and community. Youth Employment Institute programs offer focused services for youth in a dynamic learning environment with supportive staff.

The YEI mission is to promote self-sufficiency and life long learning by nurturing personal, educational and career development of young people. The parenting program provides specialized services to teen parents offering classes on parenting, nutrition, life skills and additional support services. This workshop was held for teen parents.

Workshop Facilitator: Luke Strahota

Childcare Volunteers: Yvonne Chambers, Robin Sparks, Trina Pember

Portland OIC/Rosemary Anderson High School* was founded in 1967 to provide education, leadership and job-training services to economically disadvantaged, undereducated and unemployed youth in North and Northeast Portland. Over 150 youth attend the school each year to access the small school environment and one-on-one support. The school's mission is to nurture high school students in a holistically-based academic setting that stresses each learner's uniqueness and right to learn in a secure, multi-cultural environment. The workshop was open to students at the school.

Workshop Facilitator: Michelle Nicola

REACH—Ritzdorf Apartments: REACH develops and maintains a permanent resource of affordable housing, promotes healthy neighborhoods, and provides opportunities for low income people through partnerships and community involvement. This workshop was held for REACH residents and other adults living on a low income.

Workshop Facilitator: Matt Swanson

Rigler Elementary School, The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Initiative through Portland Impact brings together city, county and state resources with school districts, parents and neighborhoods. SUN supports children, families and communities by addressing the needs and strengths of each individual community. Portland Impact's mission is to help people achieve and maintain self-sufficiency and to prevent and alleviate the effects of poverty. This workshop for Spanish speaking adults was held at the Rigler Elementary School SUN program in NE Portland.

Facilitator: Minh Nguyen

Childcare Volunteers: Kristin O'Neill, John Whitney Sweet

Translations: Minh Nguyen, Malin Dawson

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El Iniciativa Escuelas Uniendo Comunidades (SUN) de Portland Impact une recursos de la ciudad, condad, y estado con distritos escolares, padres, y comunidades. SUN se dirige a las necesidades y esfuerzos de cada comunidad con el fin de apoyarles a los niños, las familias, y las comunidades. La meta de Portland Impact es ayudar a la gente que alcanzen y mantengan la auto-suficiencia y prevenir y aliviar los efectos de la pobreza. Este taller en Español se llevo a cabo en el programa SUN de la Escuela Primaria Rigler en el norreste de Portland.

Street Roots* and Innovative Housing, Inc.* Innovative Housing, Inc. is a non-profit affordable housing developer serving the greater Portland area. Street Roots is a non-profit, grassroots newspaper that assists people experiencing homelessness and poverty creating flexible income opportunities and acting as a catalyst for individual and social change through education, advocacy and personal expression. This workshop was held in partnership with these two organizations and was open to residents of Musolf Manor in Old Town Chinatown and other adults living on a low income.

Workshop Facilitator: Tracy Burkholder

Veterans' Group was a workshop for veterans, including those living with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It was held at our Write Around Portland office downtown.

Workshop Facilitator: Emily Cooper

Volunteers of America (VOA)—Lambert House East* is an adult day center providing structured settings for adults living with various physical and cognitive challenges, including persons with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's, stroke, brain injuries and other special needs. They provide respite for caregivers and give adults the opportunity to socialize and participate in activities in a safe and caring environment. Lambert House East also provides health services, nutritious meals and a variety of activities including exercise, art and music therapy. This workshop was open to adults and seniors receiving services at Lambert House East and other adults in the community who are living with disabilities.

Workshop Facilitator: Paty Clement

Write On: Returning Writers Group - was the second of a pilot workshop for writers who have participated in two or more Write Around Portland workshops. This workshop offered participants the opportunity to deepen their skills as writers and to explore ways to share their writing with the larger community. Participants created a group zine of their own writing. We are most grateful to Augustana Lutheran Church in Northeast Portland for generously sharing their space to hold this workshop. We would also like to thank Diana Day and the other owners of the Funky Door coffee shop for hosting the Write On reading. Special thanks to the Hoover Family Foundation for funding this pilot project.

Workshop Facilitators: Kristen Steele and Marianna Hane Wiles

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ARTWORK

Only Voices Remain
“The Search Party” by Jared Llund

What a Great Foundation
“Silkscreened Basket” by Leon Chavarria-Aguilar

A Mixture So Entangled
“Healing Fragmentation” by Christina Mauceri

We’re All Different, Were All the Same
“Honeycomb of Prompts” by Jared Llund

Each Day with Stride
“Pen Speaks” by Shadowalker

Forward Steadily
“Sailboat” by Ruggles

Something Sways
“All the Time in the World” by Laura Jameison

All chapter artwork was created by Spring 2007 workshop participants.

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INTRODUCTION

No matter how hard I work at it, I'll never be able to lift 500 pounds or be the man on the flying trapeze. But by golly, give me a pen, paper, and fifteen minutes, and I can write about doing those things: *Carrying this grief is like lifting 500 pounds all day long. Or, My joy finds me, laughing, out over the crowd below.* In this way, writing can be a powerful way to explore the world.

Yet not everyone has the chance to write. I'm talking about the elderly, about adolescents in the justice system, about veterans of war and individuals dealing with HIV. I'm talking about low-income moms, people in prison or on the streets, or anyone with a disability. Many of these folks have never been given the chance to discover the sound of their own voice. They've simply never been asked to write expressively about their lives, their memories, their hope and regret.

—No one, that is, until Write Around Portland came along, offering writing workshops for all those people I just mentioned, as well as many others whose voices often go unheard, all on a budget you'd be ashamed to use as your shoestring. Ten weeks with a trained facilitator, for free. *Ten weeks.* Time to play and grow, share stories, and create a little art. Best of all, the writers get to see their work collected in a beautifully designed, printed anthology like the one you hold in your hands. A real book, sold in real bookstores. Talk about priceless.

As labor activists like to point out, it's not enough to have one's basic needs met. "We need bread," they say, "but we also need roses." And this is true. Getting and spending doesn't refresh. Roses – stories – do. Why? Because we all need them, whether we know it or not. We've been hardwired since before the Stone Age to tell stories, to listen, to respond. It's part of what makes us human.

I've found that when you write something down for the first time, something personal, you're shocked to see what happens to your experience once it's committed to the page. It becomes real, and not just to you, but to others. They read your work, and you see smiles that mirror your own. Or you hear their words of comfort, and notice how your spirits lift.

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Once you've felt that, well. You want to write more and you want to read more too, so you can do for others what they did for you: bear witness. And this is finally what Write Around Portland is all about. Bearing witness. Because they know there's something sacred in the act of writing.
In writing *to be heard*.

This anthology, then, binds us to every one of the writers who appear in it. You and I, we have a duty – sometimes solemn, sometimes hilarious – to listen.

It's not hardship duty. We're the lucky ones, you and I. We get to read these accounts of others' lives, lives that may seem different from our own at first, until we recognize their loneliness, pain, love, hope ...
Your skin will prickle.
Your heart will swell.

And out of the corner of your eye, maybe, you'll see your world. Rocking.

-Benjamin Chambers, Editor
The King's English
www.thekingsenglish.org

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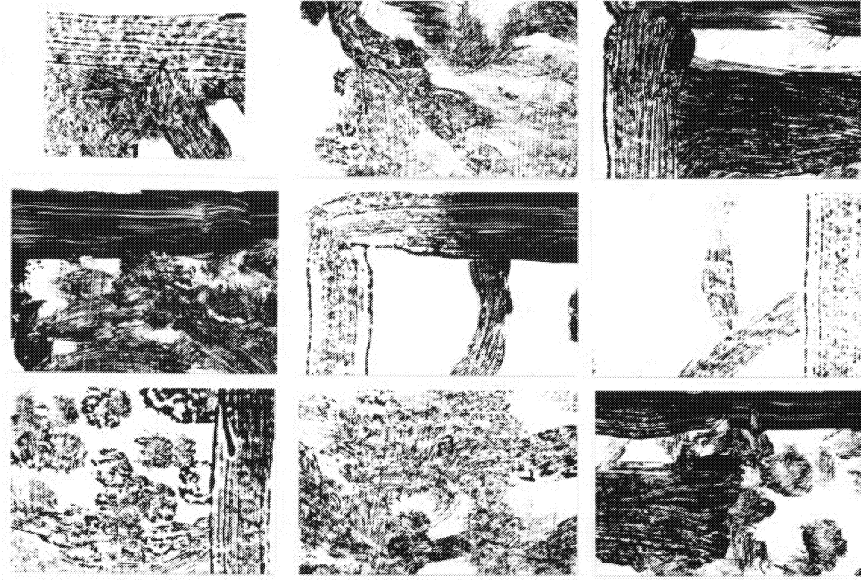
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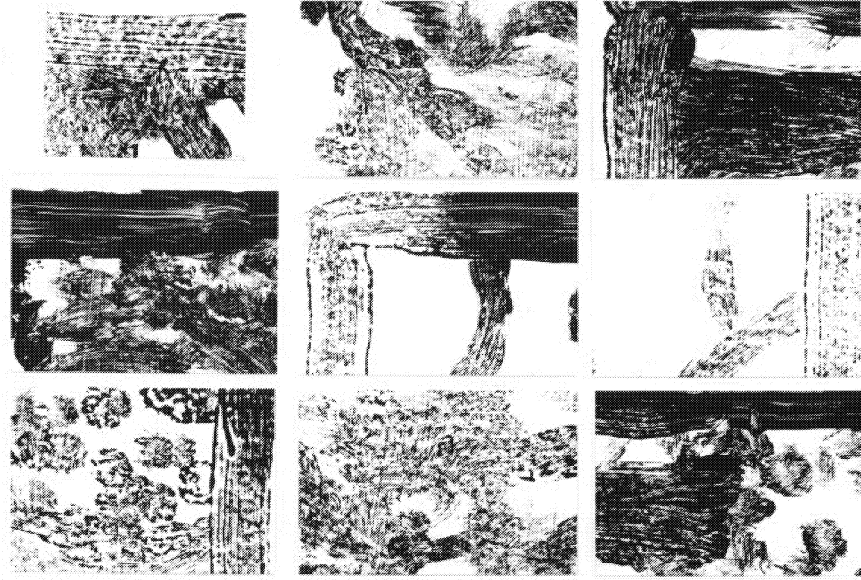
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15

Only Voices Remain



Only Voices Remain



BLACK-EYED PEAS

Picture prompt, a black and white photograph, a close-up, out of focus except for the center, of a pair of hands with a pea pod, maybe more out of focus pea pods in the foreground.

She showed her years, the wrinkled freckled hands knew working in the sun. She'd followed the crops all

her life with her children and husband. She loved work, to fix food for her family, and she loved life.

She holds the pea pod with tenderness as she gently twists and opens it to expose fully ripe peas

almost falling out. They have many names: field peas, cow peas, crowder peas, black-eyed peas. In the South they're

eaten on New Year's Day for good luck, for all the next year. She'd done that too, many times, always putting

a few of the dark green pieces of pod with the shelled peas when she cooked them.

There wouldn't be that many more New Years for her, but she enjoyed every one and didn't think of the future but of

the now.

19

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19

HOME COMING

HE HAS BEEN AT WAR. His son and wife were there to meet him. The pain he has to look into his eyes, to tell the story. How can he put his experience in words? The night—it's hard for him to sleep. Fear of letting his guard down. While his wife will say to herself: Is this the man I married? The long road he has, to try to put the puzzle together. To try to make sense of what happened.

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VISIT MY COUNTRY!

I am from Kenya.
I wonder if I can go visit there.
I hear someone saying are you not coming back.
I see everybody speaking Swahili.
I want to go back and see my country.
I am not so lucky I lost my mind.
I pretend I am in Africa, but I couldn't.
I feel sad for not visiting my country.
I touch my head and start thinking about it.
I worry about my dad. Is he gonna come or not?
I understand that one day we will go back and visit my dad.
I ask my mom, is daddy gonna come?
She says, yes, maybe!
I dream about my country and my friends that live in Africa.
I try not to dream again but I can't.
I hope one day I can go visit my dad.
I am myself.

21

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21

A POCKET STORY

Inside my pocket is a filled abyss.

Sometimes I store in there...

sometimes I seem to lose.

Sometimes I find something I know is there.

This can be useful, like if I'm

looking for my lighter and I find it.

Of course, it can be irritating to look for that
mint candy and not find it.

Inside my pocket are often the dregs of this day
or alas, many days!

So often I think I must empty my pocket,
but I shudder...no, I'll just put this coin in
and it will be there tomorrow.

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TRAVELS

TOO MUCH OF MY PERSONAL PAST has been emotionally painful because of my neurological disturbance—epilepsy...yet I'm almost excited in a positive sense with what's happened in my life. The many things I have absorbed because of where I've lived and the different people I've met. Well, I can't deny that I don't remember where I was born in Spain—I mean the room and lighting—but I will say I had a good time growing up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I started my childhood. My father was a professor in linguistics at the University of Michigan with knowledge of Indic languages, so he taught Sanskrit and we went to Kanpur, India, for two years. After we returned in 1964 several years later, we moved to upstate New York where I started high school. After two years we moved again to Glen Rock, New Jersey, where I finished high school.

Then my health enlightened my senior year in a dreary way, then after a couple of years I started art school in New York: the Art Student's League in drawing. Then I changed my major to graphics and went to the School of Visual Arts but when I couldn't afford to finish my degree I went to Costa Rica to lessen my depression. I was enchanted by the sun and especially the stillness for four years and learned Spanish better than when I jumbled over it in high school. I am sensitively aware of different cultures and numerous people.

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23

FORGOTTEN

Once I was a little girl who played with dolls.
Now I'm a woman locked behind bars.
Once I had a mother who sang to me.
Now I have an officer who berates me.
Once upon a time I was always high.
Now I look back on those days and cry.

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TOO MUCH CHANGE

WHEN I CAME TO AMERICA from Japan, it was really different and I didn't know where to start picking on.

The most thing I thought was the changes in houses and schools. In Japan, people take their shoes off when they go in to the house. Even though I've been here for almost three months, I still try to take my shoes off at the entrance.

In the schools, people wear makeups and earrings! When I first came here, I couldn't believe it. In Japan, every one wears uniforms and you can't wear anything else.

Now, I really think that America is better in many ways, and I want to learn about it more.

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THE YELLOW CLOCK

THE KITCHEN AT MY PARENTS' HOME still looks the same as it did over 20 years ago when they remodeled it and gave it a yellow color scheme. My mom lives alone now since my dad passed away in 1995. The color coordination was her brainchild — yellow laminate cabinets, white tile countertops and backsplash, and wallpaper with small splashes of yellow and black on a white background. The appliances are glossy black. The woodwork is white. There you have it — a blast from the past. My dad just went along for the ride and agreed to my mom's infatuation with the Banana Republic theme.

I visited my mom a few days ago and we chatted while sitting at the table in the famed yellow kitchen. She is too old to be concerned with updating the kitchen now or making over the house. I actually believe she is still in love with the yellow kitchen design. As I sat there at the kitchen table I thought of all the gatherings of friends and family there throughout the years. My parents bought the house in 1961, while I was in high school, and had it paid off five years later. That funky yellow kitchen is the place where all my high school and college friends visited and met my family. It was a staging area prior to my senior prom and then my wedding. There are various family photos taken in that space. Some of them include my grandparents and cousins, my daughter and ex-wife.

26

On one wall is a yellow and white ceramic clock that was handed down to my mom from her mother. The surface glaze has a spider-web pattern of checks that give it character, like wrinkles on the face of an aged person. My mom told me that my grandfather gave it to my grandmother on Mother's Day a long time ago. I guess that makes it a family antique. It became the driving influence for the yellow and white theme chosen for the

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6TH 'N' MORGAN BLOCK

I come from 6th 'n' Morgan the block made me
running from the cops was still a little kid when my brother had his first
baby
now 18 and he got 6
I miss the days we played
man I miss Al Hicks
Morgan was the fun days many nights u heard gun play
but I was a young buck still in the street grandma makin me come in the
house and I really didn't want to
but really there was nothing I could do
but go in the house wait for the next day go outside and play
It seem like on Morgan it was always a sunny day
man I wish there was a day when all of us go back and pay
the respect to the street that made this boy a man that a lot of people
don't understand
1 love to 625 N.E. 6th 'n' Morgan.

28

write around portland

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THE CHEF

THIS IS HOW MY DAYS as a chef started. I was a waitress and the cook came to work and she had had way too much to drink. The boss asked me if I could cook hamburgers and cook hotcakes. And I said of course, so I started. At the end of the day he asked would I like a job to cook. And of course I said yes. He said you are hired.

So a couple of years later I went to San Francisco and applied to Manning Company for a cook's job. And in the course of one year I was allowed no mistakes. But in the course of one year I made one mistake. So I went to the boss and told him I made a mistake. He asked me if it was my mistake or was it the recipe's mistake. And I said of course it was mine, and he asked what it was and I said I forgot to ten-times the liquid. And he said, being as I told the truth and said it was my mistake, he would not say it was my mistake. He would give me a perfect record. Instead it was a good record so I was hired and had a good cook's record.

Then I moved to Portland, Oregon, because my mother was very ill. And I got a job at Calaroga Terrace. And the main chef was Karl Johnson and he sponsored me into the Chefs de Cuisine Society of Portland, Oregon. I was a chef for 38 years. Then I left there and then I went to the Good Sam Hospital for eight years. Then I had to stop working there because of two or three bad surgeries. Then I went to work for my church, it was called PACS, and I did ordering food for the next 16 years, for the poor people that needed it. By then I was 73 years and by then I had to stop working because of other operations. So that ended my working years and that brought me up to 82 years.

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HOMESICK

I COME FROM ALBANIA, which is a country in southeastern Europe. Albania is such a small country, and it is close to Italy, Greece and Montenegro. There are about 3 million people that live in there. Albania has such a beautiful nature. It has a lot of beaches, which are so nice to spend summer at. The people are really kind and humorous too, but the only problem is the government.

I used to live in the city, Tirana, which is nice and most of the people live there. I like my country, even though I've been in France, Italy, and Germany where the life is better and more beautiful. I moved to America last year and I like it in here, but I still miss my country and my people because I spent most of my life with them. I hope I can go there sometimes and visit them again.

HOMESICK

I COME FROM ALBANIA, which is a country in southeastern Europe. Albania is such a small country, and it is close to Italy, Greece and Montenegro. There are about 3 million people that live in there. Albania has such a beautiful nature. It has a lot of beaches, which are so nice to spend summer at. The people are really kind and humorous too, but the only problem is the government.

I used to live in the city, Tirana, which is nice and most of the people live there. I like my country, even though I've been in France, Italy, and Germany where the life is better and more beautiful. I moved to America last year and I like it in here, but I still miss my country and my people because I spent most of my life with them. I hope I can go there sometimes and visit them again.

MY MONTAGE

IT SEEMS LIKE ALL I CAN HEAR IS, “ONE OYSTER,” yowled over the din of my favorite Portland Creole restaurant, The Montage — my playground.

Tucked into the armpit of the Morrison Bridge, the former riverside warehouse’s new owners peeled back historic grime, laid black and white tile, and set family style tables with thick white linens and silver. The waiters, hollering “oyster,” pass behind rows of diners in white dinner jackets, the sleeves pushed up to reveal gloves of tattoos and black leather strap bracelets. They look dangerous and therefore, alluring.

Montage is hip, swank, and open until 4 a.m. It is the nightcap to the Stones or Puccini. Crawfish jambalaya and pot de crème tastes best when stirred with an eclectic crowd.

I received a Montage bar napkin in the prison mail from my downtown prowling companion Lo-retta. It was a jumble of nostalgia and bleu cheese stains. It rekindled memories of days as it-women, babes in our own mind.

Loretta and I would swoop into The Montage, glad-handing like politicians, smug and dripping boutique wear, a bottle of Spanish Roja waiting at table twelve. Jealous younger eyes from suburban Nordstrom girls agape at our full body greetings instead of their Lancôme kisses.

Loretta was holding vigil. The crumpled napkin was the hidden scroll cradling days when we broke hearts as roundish women, perhaps a tad over-ripened, but confidently beddable. It is easier to let go of the past and endure institutional mashed potatoes when, albeit briefly, the world was your oyster.

31

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31

MI MALETA

A MI ME GUSTA mucho y adoro mi maleta. Una de las razones es porque ya tengo muchos años con ella y ella conmigo. Y es que gracias a dios nosotros cada año podemos viajar a mi tierra y pues yo ya le tomé mucho cariño a mi maleta. Otra de las razones es porque mi maleta me acepta todo cuanto yo le echo. Ella nunca me dice “Ya, no me cargues tanto. Ya no me echas tanto.” Y por eso yo pienso darle uso a mi maleta hasta que la pobrecita aguantante y ya no pueda porque como ella nunca va a decir nada. Pues yo me aprovechará siempre de ella pobrecita mi maletita. Discúlpame.

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MY SUITCASE

I REALLY LIKE AND ADORE my suitcase. One of the reasons is that I have been with it for many years and it with me. And it is for the grace of god that each year we are able to travel to my country. Well, I care deeply for my suitcase. Another reason why is that my suitcase accepts everything that I give it and it never tells me “Enough. Don’t burden me so. Don’t give me so much.” For that, I think I use my suitcase right up to the point where the poor thing can stand it and can take no more. Because it never will say no. Well, I take advantage of it, my poor little suitcase. Forgive me.

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THAT SOUND

THERE IS ONE SOUND I will never forget. It comes from local sounds, harmless...yet!

I can still hear them in the night, especially when they deliver the sick and maimed to the hospital across the street. Choppers feathering, hovering over the landing pad, can send me, at the speed of time, to Viet Nam.

Once there I can see the glare of muzzle blasts and the roar of cannon in the night. I'm at the Qua Viet and the evening bombardment across or into the DMZ has begun. There is the smell of spent powder that fills the air and burns my nose with its acrid flavor.

I experience all this while I sit on my back porch or in bed reading short stories or maybe Haiku poetry. I've long lost my flare for the news of today or stories from The Nam. I no longer watch news or listen to the radio and the idea of all those war movies on TV have me banned from watching that thing. Yet those medical choppers coming in can and do send me back 40 years into time and smells never forgotten.

THAT SOUND

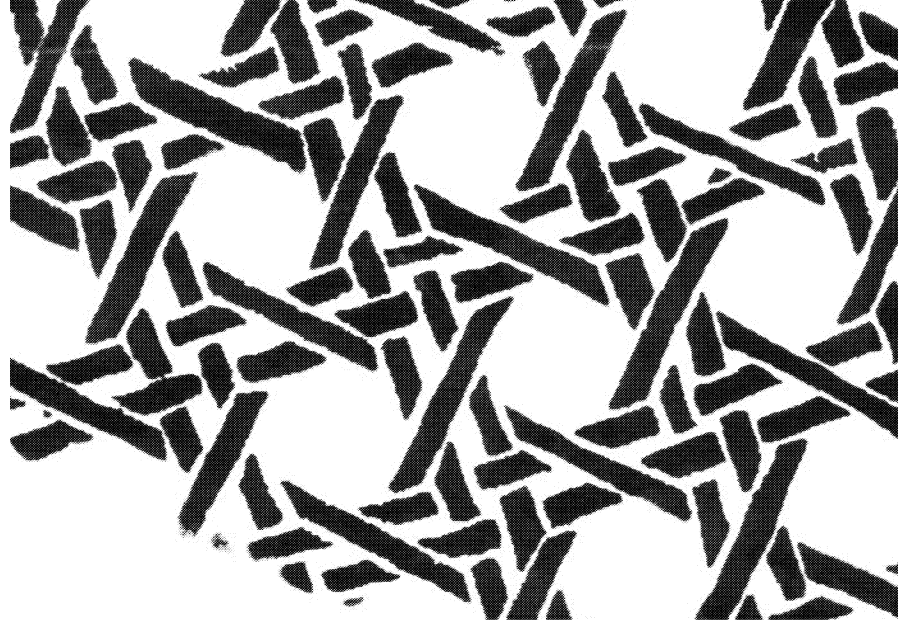
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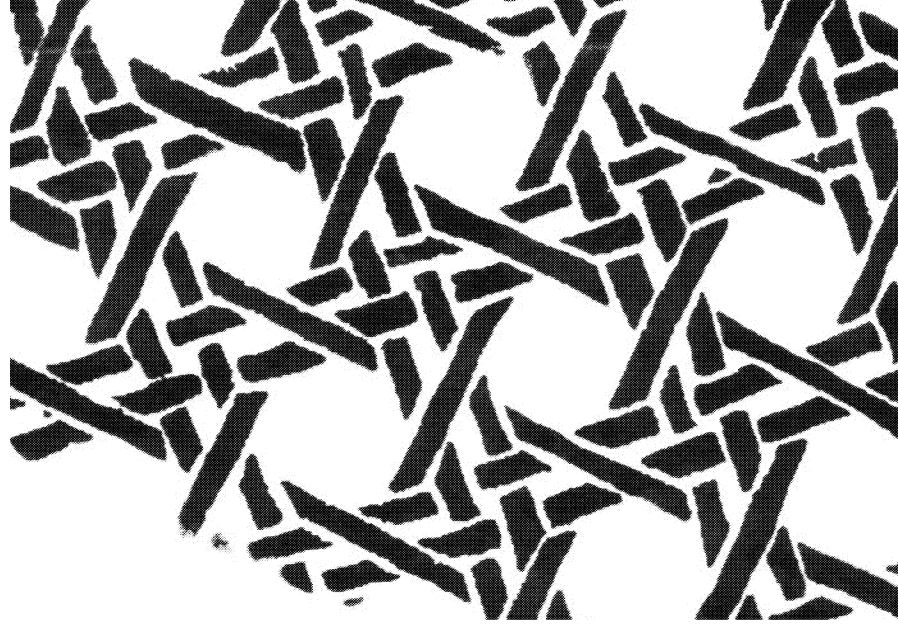
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What a Grand Foundation



What a Grand Foundation



WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT ME

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW is my name is special because the name Faduma came from the prophet Mohammed (peace up on him). His daughter's name was Faduma. And also it runs in the family like my grandmother's name is Faduma. Some of my cousins are named Faduma. I came from the country Somalia. Somalia is a beautiful place to be after the war, but still there are some places that are nice. I never saw my country, but I always daydream about it. My mom tells me about the beach and buildings and so on. There is a lot of things I want to do when I go back to my country Somalia. I am really happy now because Somalia has a new president that can fix everything. What's weird is that he is my grandfather because he is my dad's uncle and my grandfather's cousin so that makes him my grandfather. My country finally has a president and will be a better country I hope.

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TO MY BABY

BUBBLY, POPPING MOVEMENTS coming from way down below my bladder. I can feel you move around, it's like a fish swimming around in my stomach. I would wear pants that got too tight because of how rapidly my stomach was growing. I would come home from work and your dad would make me unbutton my pants. He used to think I was smothering you. That didn't last long though. He became meaner and meaner until one day he didn't even care. I decided we needed to move back home. We needed to get out of New York. It was a long ride home. You made me hungry all the time. I would eat everything that smelled good. My breasts grew and grew, filling with milk to feed you with. Everyone always told me I looked too young to have a baby. I was. I was only 18. I was a baby having a baby. You scared me. How was I going to take care of a baby all by myself? Everyone told me I was strong. They all said I could take care of you, and that you were going to be a beautiful baby. By the time we got home to Oregon, I knew I loved you, and I knew I would do whatever it took to make you happy.

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write around portland

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38

write around portland

NOT THERE

I am sitting here alone
because I don't want to go home.
I don't want to go
because she isn't there
My daughter, she isn't there
because she's grown.

Today she turned 18
and she is gone.

I missed her toddler years
bouncing and tumbling
all over the place.
I missed her adolescence
all talking and thinking things.
I missed her growing pains with boys
hard work and heart-to-hearts.
I fear I've missed it all.
I don't want to go home
for she's not there.

39

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39

WHEN I CAME TO THE APARTMENT

I CAME TO MY CURRENT APARTMENT about nine days ago. I am not really sure. My room in that apartment was in the middle because Mom and I want to share a bathroom; my sister Ashlyn got the master bedroom at the back of the apartment, lucky! We got KFC before we went to that apartment, though Mom had to complain to the employee that handled our food because she forgot two things: my Snacker, and one of my sister's biscuits. That night was very weird.

40

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40

EVERY MINUTE

Irresponsible and loving every minute.
Seventeen.
Full of life.
Late nights.
Getting high.
No fears.
Fucked up.
Just fun.
No cares.

Unplanned Baby.

So scared.
Always judged.
So aware.
Clueless.
New life.
Happy family.
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IMAGINE

ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD I used to see a horse. A big brown horse with its long tail and mane flying in the wind. I used to imagine me on the horse's back, feeling so relaxed, and I felt free. I loved the feel of the big leather saddle with the big horn to hang on to. I never had to hang on to it because I was an expert cowgirl. My family would go on trips to Grandma and Grandpa's house or to San Francisco or even camping. I would look out the window and imagine the horse on the side of the road. I always wanted a horse so bad. I felt like if I had one, my life would be happy forever. I used to beg my dad to buy one. I promised I would take care of it. I would brush it, feed it, clean its hooves and all sorts of stuff. I used to see the struggle in his eyes like maybe he felt guilty or bad, because he couldn't afford it. One time, he even had the police come and get me from my best friend's house when I was 14 or 15. My dad told the policeman that I ran away because he wouldn't buy me a horse. So I would look at the imaginary horse on the side of the road.

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MY FATHER

To my dad, Ron B. I miss him

My father is dead to me because
I do not know him. But if I
did know him my heart would
mourn. I can only wish to talk
to the sky and imagine hearing
his voice. He left me his name
but what is a name! It can't help
me. At night I say *I love you*
and hear no response. I look at the
stars and they tell me to
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WHY?

EVERYTHING CHANGED when my mom ran away and relapsed. My dad was in Mexico, and I was with my Auntly and cousins. We would always call my mom's cell phone but there was no answer. I always wondered: Why would she do this? Is she not happy with us?

My dad had to shorten his trip. He came back and found out what bank she was taking money out of. She was taking \$600 a day. I was with my cousin and my dad and Auntly. We were at the bank to see if my mom would show up to take more money out. But it was a different lady driving my mom's truck. My dad told her either show us where my mom was or he would call the police. So she showed us where my mom was. When I saw her I didn't know what to think. I didn't even want to look at her. My dad was yelling at her. He called the police and it turned out my mom's truck was used in a robbery. The police took my mom, my dad and my Auntly. My cousin and I had to leave to the police station. They were asking us questions.

Now everything is wrong. My mom and dad are divorced. My mom lives in Idaho, and my dad already has a new girlfriend. I sometimes cry at night, but I show that I'm happy from the outside. But really I'm torn from the inside. I wonder why can't I just be normal. I wish none of this ever happened, but some wishes don't come true.

44

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44

CINNAMON

CINNAMON HAS LIVED an adventurous full life, for 44 years now, and is healthy as an 18 year old. She was raised in the Arizona hills by her compassionate parents. Though she enormously enjoys her vast travels, she always returns to the beautiful house she and her husband, Jack, built together just a mile away from her parents. And what a grand foundation her family is!

Her white father, Leon, rescued her runaway Indian mother, El Hawa, and healed her to glowing health. They eventually fell in Love with each other, married and had Cinnamon. They raised her in books, and volunteering in charity fundraisers. These activities brought on her intelligence and compassion. She thrives in exertion of any form, and has the sweetest sense of humor. Her freedom to enjoy the play antics of animals, and the amazingly ever-changing glory of nature, heightens her sense of humor and her gratefulness for this sense of peace.

Unfortunately, while playing with a bow 'n' arrow, attempting to hit countless trees, and riding like the wind on her horse, Fantasy, she lost her right eye, and screamed like a Banshee. But just like the usual Cinnamon, she was down only briefly. Quickly up again, she did not wait for life to stimulate her, but grasped it within herself, circulating her joy again.

She now laughs at herself over the incident. She is still outwardly beautiful, as well, with her high cheekbones and long, thick, wavy hair. And what is most intriguing is that no one notices her loss of one eye, as her stimulating soul sparkles through her one doe eye, circulating you, melting away life's cholesterol.

And that is why her name, Cinnamon, fits her perfectly, and so very well.

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ANXIETY

No was the answer, “I don’t want to walk to school with you.”
Ten minutes later the Principal called to tell me my daughter was ill.
“No temperature.”
I told him, “Let her walk home and I will meet her at the school.
It’s only a block away.”
When we met I looked at her carefully.
She seemed ok.
I had her lie down and told her she could
read or color,
but she needed to stay in bed.
For three days she did not improve.
The fourth day I was going to take her to the doctor.
But she said still “I do not feel better,”
and she was not going to school.
“I know why I am not going but I am not going to tell you.”
I suggested that she did not have to tell me.
Her eyes began to tear.
“I am afraid you will die while I am at school,”
she said between heavy sobs.

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ODE TO ALICIA AND ANDREW

What if there were no rainbows?
Then, you'd learn to love the rain.
Is it to the left? Not yet!

What if there were no rainbows?
Then, it's the sun that you'd adore.
Is it to the right, to the right? Not yet!

The thought of a rainbow
waiting to appear,
will make you lose
what is near.

The thought of a rainbow
blinds your eye,
closes the gate,
and will make you wait.

The thought of a rainbow
is such a thrill.
It will end your worries
but will steal your will.

47

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47

So, if there were no rainbows,
no looming pot of gold,
you'd have more vision
to define your mission.
We all love rainbows
that moment in time
when all is perfect
with the rain and the shine.

It's the beauty we adore,
and the hope that there is more,
that pot of gold
that's not sold.

The thought of a rainbow,
the promise, the dream,
pulls you in a current
way down the stream.
The thought of a rainbow
defines our mission,
dictates our vision.
The what if of a rainbow
keeps us out at sea.

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Be not fooled by the rainbow.
Still looking left and right?
It will steal your soul
for that pot of gold.

If you had no rainbows,
your anchor would be
in what matters the most,
and not in what you host.

Stop looking left and looking right!
If there were no rainbows,
you'd see the view.
The journey's short so go build your fort.

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TYREE MONYAE

THE SMILES AND LAUGHTER fill the room every time she comes wobbling down the stairs. She has her arms wide open saying “Come give me some love.” She runs so fast it seems like her feet are moving faster than her body. That’s telling me she’s ready for a big ol’ bear hug from her mom. Then after that she laughs and giggles as I go run down the dark hallway to the big front green door to catch her as she falls to the tile floor kicking and screaming with laughter as the claw comes down to tickle her every two seconds. Then when I’m done tickling her with my hands she does the same to me. She is the light in my dull living room when she brings the joy and happiness.

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FAMILY & LOVE

What is family & love?

Family is special

Family is there for you

Family is love

Family means happiness

Family is family

Family is love

Love means happiness

Love is passion

Family brings love
and happiness

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and happiness

7/11

WHEN I WAS BARELY INTO MY TEENS, my mom went to Las Vegas with her husband, my father, the only man she was ever intimate with. As far as I can recollect, she didn't smoke, drink or swear. When she arrived there, she had barely a novice's knowledge of the craps table. She knew enough about dice to roll them, and that you either bet your numbers will come or they won't and you bet against their coming up. So, you bet one way or the other. Of course, the game is far more sophisticated than this. The action is exciting and nonstop, so she decided to play. When it was my mother's turn to roll the dice, she rolled nothing but winning numbers for about 45 minutes. She rolled winning numbers, that is, for everyone else at the table. Meanwhile, she was screaming 7/11, betting against all those other rollers making their point number. A 7 or 11 would have wiped out the entire table and forced her to relinquish control of the dice.

One lucky roller, an undertaker from Ohio, made almost half a million dollars off of my mother's most unusual luck rolling the dice. The casino commented that they never saw such a run of the dice before. Yes, mom was on a hot streak. If only my mother was betting in the other direction. Whenever she would shout 7/11, I'm sure the entire table, now growing fat with riches, wanted to feed her strychnine. She just didn't know any better. When, after over 45 minutes, she finally crapped out by rolling a 7 or an 11, before rolling another playable winning number, the big winners at the table, before departing, tipped the staff like a thousand dollars each, and the undertaker begrudgingly threw my mom a hundred dollar chip. She immediately ran to cash it in, and mailed the money back home to her ailing father, who had to take an early retirement.

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A Mixture So Entangled



FALLING (HARD)

IT WAS *HER* VOICE that I heard as I pushed myself with stunned stillness off of the ground in the middle of the crowd. “Misty takes a nose dive,” she sang, emphasizing the southern drawl for comic effect, obliterating my embarrassment, making the group laugh at her instead, and creating for me a caption of the moment.

It was the worst pain to be in love with Kathryn, and it was necessarily suppressed. The love had to be pushed down hard; the pain had to be hidden from the others. My hands and knees took it from the rocks and dirt this time, and that was a relief compared to the silent ache and the pang of being close to her. I needed to be a crow so I could “Cah! Cah!” and fly into her dark and shining hair unnoticed. I needed to shout, and falling made it happen.

Because it was so like me to be leaping, to be spinning on the mountain trail, to be spiky-haired and hiking-booted, with a short silky skirt gently brushing my thighs as we went up and up and up. And it was so like me to be breaking away from the group, taking the place at the front. Running through the woods, turning down a path that led back to the bottom, I spun and danced and it was joy that I felt in those warm woods and it was joy that I felt while falling, and it was breath leaving me and it was blood opening and piercings made by the creek’s stones, and it was Kathryn by my side.

55

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55

UNTITLED

HE DID IT AGAIN, that bastard...I look at him with a narrowed gaze and yank my arm out of his grasp.

"I'm leaving," I say coldly as I turn and walk out the door, slamming it shut behind me. I hear a picture fall off the wall and hit the floor, followed by his muffled cursing but I don't care. I storm down the stairs and out to the sidewalk.

I begin walking down the street. I feel so angry, so betrayed, I wish I had hit him. It would have released some of my anger. Instead, I stop and throw my hands in the air and scream. I don't care who hears me. I stop screaming after a moment and begin to walk again....

I pay no attention to all the weird looks I'm getting as tears begin to stream down my face. I start walking again, dashing to my future.

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MY FOREVER FRIEND

HOW DARE I LEAVE YOU in California? I miss you so very much my sweet. My head and heart hurts so much since June 21, 2000. I even said good-bye to you. I never say good-bye to the people I have loved, not since March 1995. We had many great times together. I loved going to the beach and just holding your hand while we walked along the beach. My hair just blowing in the soft warm wind and your blue eyes just shining brightly as the sun. You know my passion for the sea and we went sailing on your sailboat several times. It was so peaceful and relaxing to be out on the ocean.

I will never forget the first time we went sailing and you made a special trip by the seals so I could see them. That was so romantic and loving for you to put yet another smile on my face. I'm so happy that you love your job, new house, kids and your new wife. That brings a smile to my face. Even though we live in different states, we can and will always talk on the phone, e-mail each other and write letters back and forth. We will have a close relationship regardless of our lives and distance. One of the best things to always remember is that we'll always have our friendship and each other's support. The extra added bonus—we'll always be in love with each other until the day we die.

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HIM

What you have to do in life
to find yourself a him
Is eat as little as you can
to make your body trim.
You must primp and curl your hair
and wear shoes that make you numb.
And make him think he's very smart
and you are awful dumb.
You must learn to sneak up on a him
with makeup and clever disguise.
Because a him is only impressed
with what catches his roving eyes.
You must learn to do what all hers do,
flirt and learn to dance.
If you learn to do all these things,
these hims won't have a chance.
Hers are born with him in mind,
that's one thing hims should know.
There's supposed to be a him for every her,
her Mama told her so.
So all you hims out in this world,
I only say beware.
For every her is trained since birth
to find a him to care.

58

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58

CAREGIVER

I LOVE YOU, you know. I'll always love you. You have meant so much to me through all these years. With your actions, I know you cared about me, also.

You have protected me and looked after me for so long and now that our roles are reversed, we still show our affection and caring for each other by touching and with those special looks, and most of all, just being there for one another.

Running, or hurrying, up or down all the steps (front or back) was always a big deal to both of us, laughing as we raced or tried to surprise each other.

Playing in the sun or even in the rain was the most fun of all. Now, you depend on me for help to just simply get up or down these stairs.

Your eating has dropped off dramatically recently. Now you pick at the food. Sometimes just moving it around a little, but not eating—not even your favorites.

You have increased your water intake, due maybe to medications or allergies. Trips to relieve yourself are more hurried to get there in time in spite of the fact you are totally blind.

I bathe you and dry you like a small child and now sleeping together has changed a great deal. I hear you moan in your restless sleep as you turn this way and that trying to find a softer, more comfortable place or position. Sometimes I see that you are not really sleeping because your eyes are wide open, seeing nothing because you are blind, but feeling everything.

59

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59

You can no longer get into your chair. I have to help you into it and again help you out of it.

But it's okay. It's my turn to take care of you. You have taken such good care of me over the years. I love you so very much and I know you still care about me, also. It has all been a very good life and way beyond my expectations for an eight-pound, 17-year-old poodle.

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LANDSCAPE

SHE LOOKS BACK over what once was her now. She sees cities indicating the good times of her life. There were what seemed to be farms (she doesn't know why she picked that description—but accepts it as accurate), maybe isolated incidents of happiness. These were separated by areas of bleak, black pain. In the center of her vision stands a tower, a huge, tall tower with strength emanating from it. Clustered around it are five willow trees. The tower obviously was her life partner and love, and the willows, their offspring being sheltered and protected by the tower. It seemed a long way off. To get there would require her to visit and experience everything else. Did she want to remember—did she dare? Or maybe she'd just stay here in tormented bliss.

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IT'S NOT FUNNY ANYMORE

It's not funny anymore...
It's not funny anymore when the tables are turned
It's not funny anymore when your baby daddy ain't there
It's not funny anymore when he came just to hit and split
It's not funny anymore when thing are going good now and bad later
It's not funny anymore when you go home crying
It's not funny anymore when he goes home crying
It's not funny anymore when you try to take people's friends away
It's not funny anymore when you have no one to turn to
It's not funny anymore when you don't have nobody to talk to
It's not funny anymore when I know all the business and facts
It's not funny anymore when I know the details
It's not funny anymore when you think I'm jailus of you, that's funny
It's not funny anymore...

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TONIGHT I DREAM

I DREAM ABOUT BEING at the beach. Laying down on a blanket with an umbrella over me. I see the waves of the ocean flowing, running my hands through the sand. Watching children play, hearing them running.

I met a nice man, we talked for hours, he asked me to go to dinner with him. I got a little bit chilly and he offered me his jacket. As I was putting it on our lips met. I had goose bumps all over my body. All of a sudden I had the urge to spank his butt. We never met again.

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MMMMM CANDY

Mmm candy. Candy
is dandy, candy is sweet.

candy is hard
candy is soft
candy is chewy
candy is gummy

You can put a lot
of stuff in candy
like peanuts, cherries
melted chocolate, caramel
crispy things.

What would we do
without candy? I
know we would
invent it.
Mmmm candy.

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FRENCH FREEDOM

IT'S 7 A.M. AND YOU are just getting off work. Stepping outside, the fresh air is quite a relief from the stuffy corridors of midnight working. Eyes, having been pinned to the monitors for hours on end, feel crisp and new entering the out-world. You stroll to your truck and slide in. Your head lies back in the seat and your eyes close....

My eyes are dancing and flitting about and my breathing is deep and steady. Calm. Relaxed. Easy. My arms are wrapped around white satin and down. A bare back rises and falls with each intake of your scent....

As you crack the bedroom door, I am still asleep, ready to wake. You are awake, not quite ready for the sandman. Crept to the edge of the bed, you take a careful seat beside me. Your hand touches my face and my eyes open like an eclipse. Half of my mouth is grinning while the other is stretching away from my hand.

“Good morning,” it comes in a whisper. “You’re home.”

I rise from the bed to meet your arms, but still slouched, rubbing my eyes with my palms. I sigh.

“How was work?”

“I left work back at the office. Let’s just let it stay there.”

You sit with your hands in your lap like you’re afraid to move. I slide out of bed as you slip my robe over my shoulders, and I head off to the bathroom. Upon exiting I notice you just smiling.

“Well now, my little rooster!”

We both laugh as I fruitlessly try to smooth my bed head. I take your hand and lead you to the kitchen. From the fridge you snag the eggs and

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the bacon. I rustle up the pans and the bread. Yesterday it was hot ham and cheese and tomorrow it will probably be fruit and pancakes. But for now...it's French toast. The world would laugh at our silly, talkative breakfast ritual. Pans bashing and crashing, grease flying, standing next to each other. You're in charge of the protein while I take care of the sweet stuff.

Our eyes catch long moments together and the bacon starts to smoke. With egg and cinnamon and milk on my hands, I slide my fingers down yours to the fork at the end and take hold. Two hands together turn the crisping bacon and slide the pan off the burner. Our eyes never look away from our locked stare. Simultaneously we turn the burners from medium-high to the off position. The alarm clock sounds in the bedroom and there is a familiar song serenading: Jason Wade of Lifehouse sings a slow, emotion-filled song. Everything.

With you standing behind me, your fingers straddling my own, our hands rinse clean in warm rushing water; our bodies swaying side to side. Intimacy of the hands is so electric, as you watch one fold in and out of the other. A mixture so entangled; it's hard to point out whose hand is whose. Though, they never become one. It's sort of like oil and water rising to fill the cup together; compensating for the other's lacking, but never losing themselves in the mixture.

Your cheek to my cheek and a breath in my ear, my feet dance the floor like lilies as they float without trying. A sturdy arm and supporting structure stable me into a dip, a bend at the back and an ever so slow rise. Noses touch. Eyes meet again. This time our lips lock and eyes fall.

A kiss.

Isn't it strange the way a kiss is constructed? One top lip carefully squeezing another against its bottom twin; the sound of moisture. And then the lip parts, not from the other set but from its twin, and a warm moist connection is made between two oral muscles. Isn't it odd how in dancing one leads and one follows but in a kiss, there is no leader? It's just two separate emotions connecting.

66

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It seems the more our mouths meet the higher the temperature of our breathing becomes. How could it be so hot in here when snow fills the streets? Steam would rise from our bodies if we were standing in the winter chill.

This moment... This moment here is the moment I recognize as a longing and unbreakable connection. See, with your mouth on mine, we breathe for each other. Our breathing patterns must be simultaneous. Does the same thing happen with our hearts?

Out of nowhere my robe becomes loose and heavy, draping over my body even though I never felt the frame of your leading leave my waist. My nails trace the curves on the back of your neck, one finger following the fold of your collar around to the buttons. One-handed smooth motions of twist, pinch and slide. Twist, pinch and slide, one button at a time. And I slide my hand underneath your black-collared shell and gently on the white undershirt revealed. Flat on your back is my palm, pinkie to the middle finger tucked just under your belt line.

Inside the purple that encases my body now exists my support.

What once held me steady and embraced me, providing frame of air for elegant dance, now clenches gently and drags me in.

One more twist, pinch and slide...down to the line of your hips and a feeling of freedom. My arms slide down over your biceps, relieving you of the black armor, a stud's sign of strength to the world. If you want emotion you must first let go of the armor. And you retire my purple drape beside it.

Index wrapped around index, one finger joins us. I lead you back to the bedroom.

Leading you onto the bed with my feet barely on the ground beside it, I urge your body to lie. Somehow, you always seem to perfectly place your head in the pillow. Sitting up next to you, my feet tuck beneath my behind. My knee is at your shoulder and your hip is even with mine. I place my arm down the middle of your chest and rest my hand on your cheek. I droop to your body and plant another kiss; a sweet one. Tender. And I remember the times before now and how the lips parted and twined, like the hands and the oil and the water.

67

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67

But you see, the kiss.... It's like a bolt cutter to locks on emotion. It's sort of the point of flood. So the kiss, I guess then, is freedom.

Beside each other on the bed, your head is resting on my womb. Two trembling hands find a well-known foreign body. My left hand rests on your now sweat-beaded back, still sensitive enough to memorize the changed patterns of your breathing. And your hand rests gently on the side of my right hip.

And here we are, plopped in the open, naked, raw, vulnerable, but safe, worn but embraced. And I get it finally. This is the smell of truth and trust. And this is the taste of freedom.

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And here we are, plopped in the open, naked, raw, vulnerable, but safe, worn but embraced. And I get it finally. This is the smell of truth and trust. And this is the taste of freedom.

A FALL TO GRACE

I laugh in the face of your perceived perfection, glowing with spite. I hate you and the things you express as beauty, discounting all other forms.

This hatred I feel for you is a reflection of my own self-hatred. I am your mirror image in negative. We are two halves of a whole, yet it seems you are unaware of me as the dark side of you.

How can we ever fill the empty places left by the absence of each other, yearning and longing for completion, if we refuse to look in the mirror and accept our reflection as “me” and not “you?”

So, I eat the essence you have no use for, taking it in gladly. As you grow smaller, leaving only a residue of holier-than-thou light, I grow larger in substance, earthy and strong, a force to be reckoned with.

And as you rapture away, ascending with your own kind, I am left in peace to tend my garden.

69

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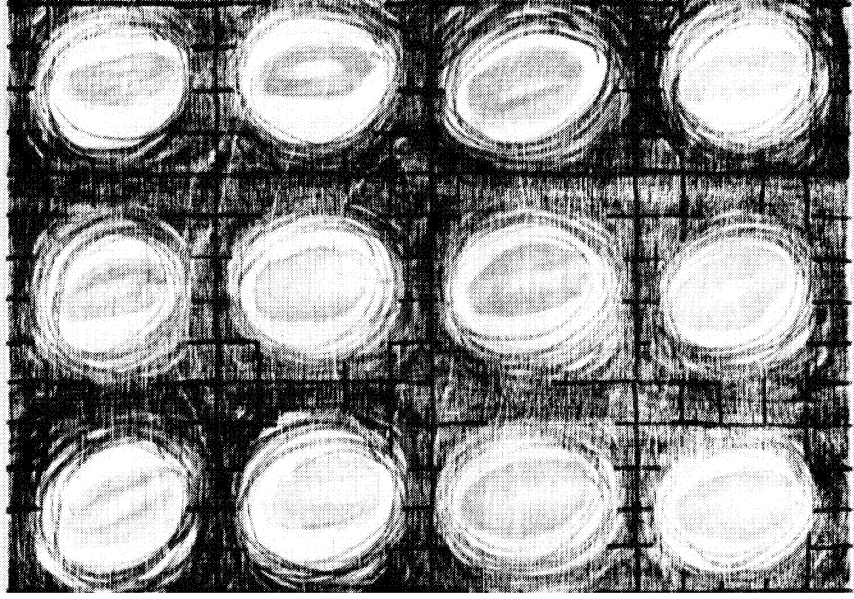
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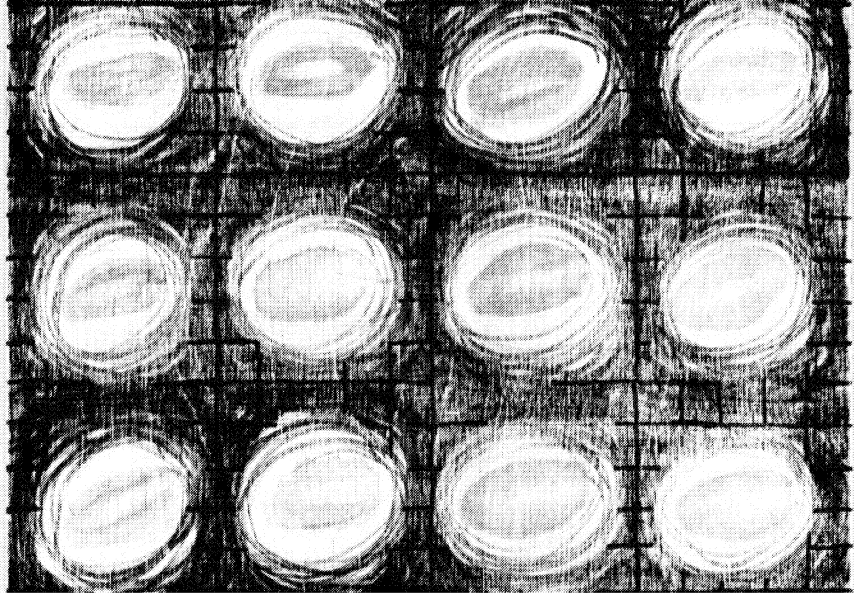
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69

We're All Different...
We're All the Same



We're All Different...
We're All the Same



NORMAL ANONYMOUS

As an uneducated person, you see someone with a disease. You see someone that will die at an early age. You see a contraction through touch and closeness. You see someone you think cannot help themselves. You notice being paranoid when present in places unfamiliar to you.

As an educated person, you see someone who is suffering. You see someone who you feel sorry for. You see someone you want to teach. You see someone who you think should fulfill every aspect in life. You notice at the end of the day you've spent so much energy in nonprofit organizations that you are drained but quickly regain energy when you smile and remember you are part of a process to end this epidemic and even in the smallest amount you are contributing to finding a cure.

As an affected person, you see someone you love. You see someone you desperately want to see happy all the time. You see someone that has bought out all the space in your heart and temporarily your arms on occasion. You see someone you want to take under your arm and care for forever and for always. You notice a certain protectiveness comes over you whenever you see them sleeping.

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As an HIV+ person I don't know what you see, but I can imagine you feel like everyone else, only with a secret, a secret that you're riding on in hope that some day you may no longer have. I'd say an HIV+ person may be afraid, we all are, but inevitably we must be. You can't possibly be prepared for something you alone cannot predict. As a mere human being you do not see the future, but are capable of moving forward. You notice you have the same body parts, you have the same hobbies, you have ears, eyes, and a nose—so why are you shunned by people with the same exterior?

Reaction. We're all different souls. But we're all the same people.

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Reaction. We're all different souls. But we're all the same people.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

IN FAMILY STORIES WE TALKED about life in general. After the day is over I like to chill out in my room for quiet time. In this time I leave all my troubles behind, listening to music and relaxing.

I'm the kind of person who likes to have private time and get away from my problems. I usually will go where it is quiet, which is my room. This is my time-out room and, you might say, my Calgon-take-me-away space.

Sometimes I feel like I do not get appreciated from my family. I feel sometimes that I get walked on or just used as a housekeeper. I would like my family to be thankful for what they have and to clean up after themselves when they make a mess. This would make my day easier and make it seem like we are working together as a unit. My thoughts are we are soon going to have a meeting—set some goals for the family with chores and attitude. We are going to strive to become a working unit together so that everyone, not just me, gets their own quiet time. Right now I am taking one day at a time.

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MY TEAM

Dedicated to my coach, Scott, and my team, the Jackson Coyotes.

I REMEMBER MY LAST soccer team, mostly friends. We would talk and our coach got mad and screamed at us. We would get back to our positions and he would yell at us. When we would score a goal our fans cheered while coach screamed. Some players were not so good. Others were. That was my team. Good or bad, win or lose, it was our team.

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DON'T YOU SEE ME

Don't you see me sitting on the curb?
Could you help me with a dime or a quarter?
You go by me all the time.
People in suits.
I know you see me!
Why don't you help?
I'm in need of food or shelter.
Why do you give me those looks of sorrow
Or laugh at me?
I am willing to work if you give me a chance.
Everyday you all walk by, looking.
But no one will help.
Give me a chance, won't you?
Don't keep on walking by.
Don't you see me?

77

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77

NEGLIGENCE

1. If you don't feel my \$!@t, go ahead n kill your self
these other niggas rap game still on the shelf
2. My \$!@t is peelin, n leavin, I'm aimin for the top
like the nose bleed seating
3. My flight just docked, it's time
like 2 hands on the clock
4. I'm a gangsta at his best 91" mike Jordan
92" scottie Pippen, 93" george Foreman
5. I spit crack, when I'm smokin that pot
they spitten trash, so they gums must rot
6. Get it while it's hot, limited time only
ya lips movin, all I hear is boloni

78

write around portland

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7. I gotta purple heart at the age of 15
took a bullet to the back, but no tears ever seen
8. Emotionless king, swagger too mean
I'm a gansta rapper, so my feelin's just sing
9. Get ahead and time me, I'm eating competition
not like I'm fresh out of the devil's kitchen
10. So go ahead and hate, cause a nigga is flossin
stabbed in the back, ya life it's costing
11. Got a flight to Boston, by ya bl@#h, on ya birthday
game so tight, a turn down will hurt me
12. Spitten like a dragon, I need that mouthwash
I'm better than these n!@#\$\$'s, at least by my watch

79

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79

CHANGE OF VIEW

I, JAMES VINZANT, SAT at the round table. And, as I stared at Marry Ann, her looks began to change, and her eyes, warm brown human eyes, changed to the yellow and red eyes of a reptile. I almost lost control of my bowels. I then looked casually over the other people, at the eyes that range warm brown to human ice-cold blue.

When I looked again at Marry Ann, her straight brown hair with flecks of gray. Now, her head was larger than a human's, especially her forehead; her collar was gray and green with spiky fins.

With more tension building, I look again at the other people who still had their normal hair ranging from black, blond, brown and even red. I kept up and even increased my small talk to keep from arousing suspicion.

The third time I looked at her, her human skin was gone, replaced by gray scales. My paranoia and fear must have shown through. Because its eyelids blink from the side way. It had an inhuman noise on its reptilian mouth. I slipped on the table to feel its scaly hand. I didn't know how to feel about it now that I knew it wasn't paranoid delusion.

I wait until all the humans left. Then, I told it I knew what it was. She started toward her pet gerbil's cage. She laughed: What do you think, now that you know I'm going to eat you? I shrugged my shoulders: Yeah I was expecting something like that. She smiled, and asked: When? I've got lunch right here tapping the cage. She flicked open the cage door and grabbed the guinea pig, holding it like a burger, biting its head like eating a burger, bite by bite she consumed the hamster. She took some napkins from her front pocket and wiped the side of her mouth. Second, she said, second and third are it destroys my cover and ability to observe and I don't eat sentient beings, even if they are savages.

80

write around portland

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write around portland

Two questions: Are you going to tell others? I laughed and said: What, end up straight-jacketed in a rubber room pumped full of Thorazine? And will we still be having sessions or do you want to be? No, I said, with a little more zeal than I had shown.

But, I've got a third: Tell me more about you. Teach me techniques to expand my mind and man's colonization and exploration of space. I'll see what I can do. I shook her scaly hand and I realized that it was my most interesting hearts group yet and I was looking forward to anger management class later that day.

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TRUE STRENGTH

True strength is when you can make people do what
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put your hands on them, and before they do or say
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ESSAY OF TRUTH

LIFE TO HER IS LIKE an important essay written in pen telling her story; the pen continues to write and plays as the one controlling everything that happens. Not able to go back and erase or scratch what has been done or said, but to continue living life with no hint of what's to come next. Time goes by and she can only move on, the thing she may do is just have regrets. But regretting does not change situations, it just brings her down even more. She is tired of the ink pen, which is nonerasable and continues to write how she is not always treated with respect even by her own so-called friends and sister and brothers.

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AS THE WORLD

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as the world turns Round
i think of all the things
that make me hate every one
that I see every one that could
not Be like me as i sit
the things that i think could
make kings cry Blood and kids
kill the ones that they Love
every thing Burns in the light
of my mind Just like a
star in the sky Just like
oil on my skin

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MOM'S SONG

Ever green tree.
Ever green tree.
Sure enough cool for you and me.
So it's goodbye stop light post when we leave town,
every one's looking for pine needles falling down.

Ever green trees.
Ever green trees.
Sure enough, bring your heart to it's knees
standing out in the breeze.

Yes my friends, that was the song of yester year.
Now the trees are gone
but we think the artist did a good job
of sculpting metal trees in their honor.
When your ancestors walked the land
there were many trees.

However Big Corp. saw a huge profit making things new.
Remember, *progress for the rich helps us scratch our itch.*

But the trees made the air nice!
said little Billy.

Shoot that eco terrorist!
screamed the thought guide facilitator.

85

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NURSE

From where I stand—I gaze upon you with intelligent eyes.

I see your bruised self, coated with pain.

Trust is lacking in you as the fears of death seem more and more real.

Your fears are unjustified though, as my want is only to heal.

I am here to help reassemble your shattered self.

I search your body—testing all the jigsaw pieces.

My puzzle-solving skills create chance again in your eyes.

Your precious soul understands how we have intervened with fate this day.

You smile a smile of love for life anew.

I do not smile, but clearly radiate a loving smile from within.

I will always now appear to you as an angel.

86

Despite my halo being just a hat, and my wings that do not exist.

I am just a human, living to help others live.

Giving chance to the impossible, and hope to the forgotten.

I am just a mortal, but my grace and goals are divine.

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METAPHOR IS FOR EVERYONE WHO CANNOT COPE WITH ALLEGORY

SOMETIMES UNCLE EDITH'S¹ favorite album was subliminal. He was trying to listen to it while waiting in the concourse. As he watched the terminal's display screen scroll around, the public address system announced that his flight had been delayed for nine years. Fortunately, Uncle Edith's wife had prepared an extra large snack pack for him. It contained *œufs brouillés* *bergères*, a cilantro salad, some maggots from Eisenstein's Battleship *Potemkin*, a wild turkey, *languoustines de Grand Augustine*, pine cones, and the entire stage setting from an adaptation of *The Gingerbread Man on Ice*. Two nearby hibachi salesmen were text-messaging each other about the collapse of the national pension fund. It wasn't your fault, the former asserted, but if you buy our municipal bonds soon you will be on the beach somewhere smiling your head off. I thought there was supposed to be a catch, the latter replied, fending solicitors with a horsefeather. Their twangy mantras echoed from the concourse walls like your downstairs neighbor gargling loud enough to be heard through the ceiling. As they unicycled away to meet their stellar master, Uncle Edith exclaimed honestly, can't one get a moment's peace around here? That is just something you'll have to deal with on your own, the public address system announced. They glared through the dark glass languidly as an inbound express lighter nosed toward them. Flight 29 arriving from 1958, the public address system announced as the elevator music broke into post-deconstructionist Brubeck and a sprightly crowd in button-down shirts, poodle skirts, and wraparound 3-D glasses poured into the terminal, arguing about the fragmentation of society and the price of eggs nowadays. They were agog at the prospect of visiting the future and a nice lady said to her son, don't stare at him, as Uncle Edith used a smelly marker to tack up a sign, declaring the end is near, in hopes of selling more Kool-Aid.

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BEIN' BEHIND BARS

I'm gettin time served and I've been here for a couple months
seems like I've been here for awhile but I still got 80 months
everyday is hell'a boring, there ain't nothin to do
everyday the same, wake up and go to school
I don't wanna be here even if it's for a day
I did the crime, so with my time I have to pay
but fuck man I gotta do years
I can't cry, won't do me good to shed tears
I won't die, I just gotta do this
keep a good attitude and I will get through this
If it wasn't for poppin pills all the time
I wouldn't be here cuz I would have had a sane mind
but now I'm sittin in my cell writin this rhyme
cuz I lost my freedom the only thing that's rightfully mine
back then I never thought I might lose my freedom
have the D.A. put years on my plate and have to eat 'em
and without freakin out or any of that shit
cuz I am, what I am, that's a man, not a bitch
I just need to be patient and get this shit done
I probably won't have fun, but I can't act dumb
I've seen people fuck up from doin stupid stuff
they get sent downtown wrapped in handcuffs
all because they were trying to act tuff
but they ain't so tuff, sittin in they cell with they celly
treatin you like a bitch, pissin on you like R. Kelly

88

write around portland

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write around portland

then you have to take showers with him and other adults
mindin your own biz until they snatch you up like hulk
you ain't down for fightin cuz you wanna get this shit done
get you out on good time cuz jail ain't fun

[chorus]

When you on lock up, it's hard to get used to the way you livin
especially when doin years is a given
but all you have to do is keep your head up and pray
you won't be here forever you will get out someday

I pray that someday I will be free
to see my friends and family cuz that's what matters to me
no more drugs cuz it screwed up my life
it delayed the day I will have a beautiful wife
2 or 3 children and my own buildin
a weekly salary from my job position
a nice yard, nice car, a mini bar
live in luxury just like a super star
and if I'm not gettin my money illegal
then I don't have to worry about gettin cuffed by them people

89

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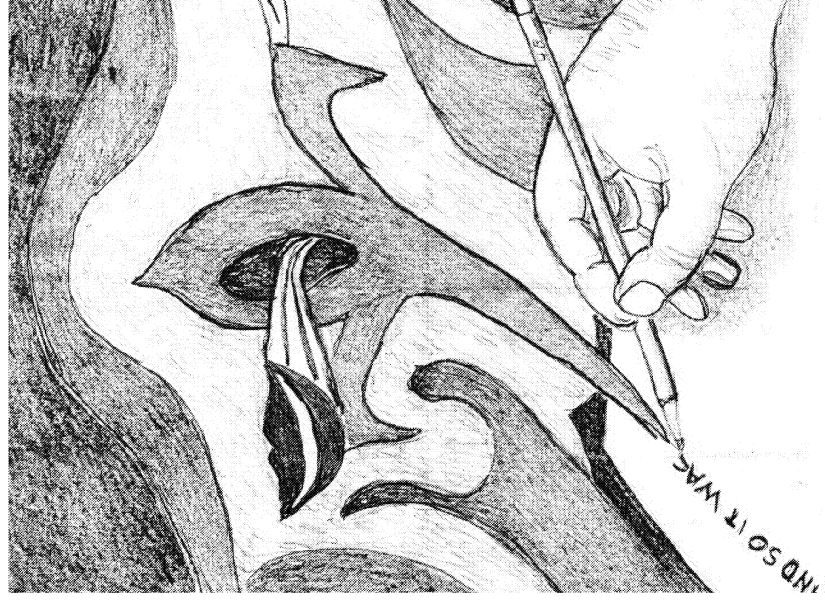
[chorus]

When you on lock up, it's hard to get used to the way you livin
especially when doin years is a given
but all you have to do is keep your head up and pray
you won't be here forever you will get out someday

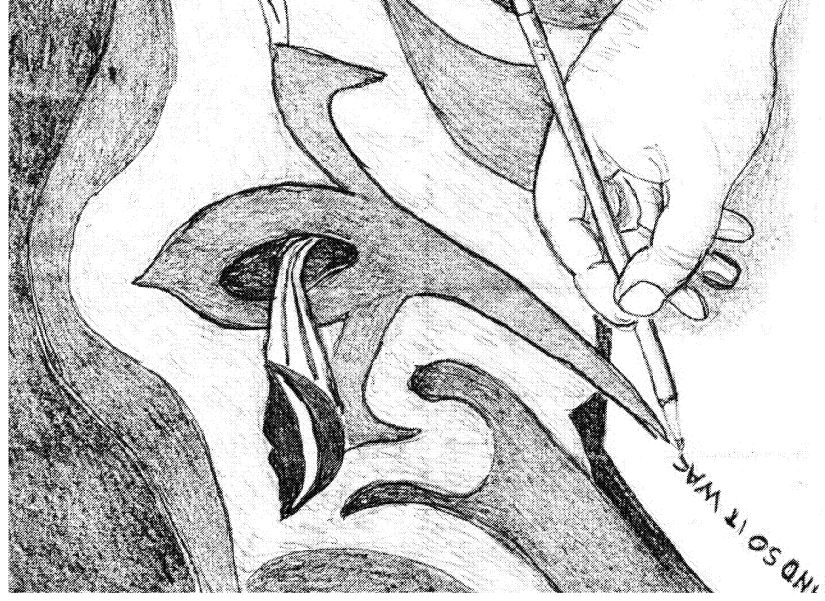
I pray that someday I will be free
to see my friends and family cuz that's what matters to me
no more drugs cuz it screwed up my life
it delayed the day I will have a beautiful wife
2 or 3 children and my own buildin
a weekly salary from my job position
a nice yard, nice car, a mini bar
live in luxury just like a super star
and if I'm not gettin my money illegal
then I don't have to worry about gettin cuffed by them people

89

Each Day with Stride



Each Day with Stride



OCD

Checking, thinking,
Clicking
Tapping—hear
My heart beating.
Counting.
Constantly
Repeating.
Committed to
Seeking,
Some kind of end—
Or treatment...
If I didn't,
Have OCD—
Probably leave it,
Not complete it.
Can't quit.

Count the times
Say the rhymes
Therapists, psychologists
Psycho analysis
Say it's:
Obsessive compulsiveness.
It's no disorder—nothing
In my world is out
Of order.

OCD

Checking, thinking,
Clicking
Tapping—hear
My heart beating.
Counting.
Constantly
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THE UNDERSTANDING OF A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

WHAT I THINK OF HIV/AIDS...

Well for one I don't have it, for two my mom is someone I care about and she has it and close friends to me have it, they say their lives are hard and I feel it for them but I can't do nothing to help them but try and be there for them like I am for my mother....

Well I feel if you do have HIV/AIDS don't give up on life because you have what you have just have fun and enjoy your life and take good care of yourself and make sure you take your medication and get enough rest and use condoms *Lol I'm Serious* so you don't give it to someone else because when you give it to someone else that's not right because how would you feel if you got it from someone you loved then they die from it and then you find out you have it do you think you would like it if people were talking about you I bet you anything you wouldn't so don't talk about people with HIV/AIDS! One thing you could do is care about someone who has it and thank them for everything they have done and try to be there for them....

I know it is hard for me to see my mom going through all this pain and hurt and when everyone is asleep me and my mom stay up talking together and we cry together and she always tells me never to give up on anything and she also tells me to believe in myself and I tell her to believe in herself and not to give up on life because only God knows when you are going to die and that is why I feel it for people because my stepfather died from HIV and I miss him because he was one of my closest friends to me and we understood each other like me and my mom do I love my mom and I care so very much about her and I don't want to see her die soon I want her to be there for me forever but she can't, doesn't that make you want to cry that the one person you love is slowly dying and you can't stop it from happening....

94

write around portland

THE UNDERSTANDING OF A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

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94

write around portland

BIRTHDAY TEARS

I had a birthday party for a
baby I will never see.

I made a rainbow into a blanket
with a touch of sky for a
baby I will never see.

I found a wooden cradle for a
baby I will never see.

I sit in a family rocker for a
baby I will never see.

My precious, precious baby Danny Joe,
as I hit the wall I felt you go;
it was from your father, just another
blow.

Danny Joe, I never saw you but
I loved you so and love you still
and will love you always but
you will never know.

The ache in my heart you will never see.

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WE SAID

THEY ALWAYS SAID, “We are all in need of improvement.” Being human, for them, could never be quite enough. Anyone, they believed, not seeking the enlightenment of perfectionisms was doomed to dwell in a dank, dark bargain basement.

He always said: “Look here, child, be like me. Charm the bees whenever possible. Become overwhelmingly positive with personality. Everyone should like you...everyone should respect you. And, always, let ‘em know who’s boss!” Yes, he personified the perpetually competent salesman. He was the alcoholic.

She always said: “Always look your best and you will be the best!” She made my clothes for me, made certain my toes touched the bath water on a daily basis. She, herself, had cluttered collections of acquaintances and friends; she socialized in herds; worshipped the Greek System in college, hung on the words of our Reverend Minister. She was a queen: dairy queen, home-coming queen, and most of all—the Queen of Expectationsville. She suffered from depression all of her life.

I was the unwilling vanity project. I wanted to be left to my own imagination. I despised being made to answer and talk over the phone. My ambition was to soak in the massive comforting silence of my room. Perfectionism, I knew, would be the eraser that would make me disappear. I became the bulimic.

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A LIFE OF ITS OWN

I CARRY DESPERATE SECRETS with me all day. You can't see them but they sit deep inside and scream to be let out. So much of what I do and say is affected by these desperate secrets that I sometimes wonder who's running the show—me or them?

They were created in the usual manner. One thing leading to another, to another—and then all of a sudden I ended up in something way over my head. Somehow I pulled myself out, dusted myself off, and continued on with my existence...but now I have this secret sitting inside, eating at me, trying to get out.

What would it cost to let it out for some air? Would it clear the room like an unpleasant smell? Would it travel faster than I can run from it, carried on the lips of those around me in a whisper? Would it let itself be shoved back down deep again into dark safety? I think not. Once spoken it will develop a life of its own.

These secrets are better left alone. They are too dangerous to exorcize. They will have to sit and simmer until their power has faded with the passing of time, until they are too old to travel faster than I can run. Until their destruction can be contained and minimized. Until they have lost their desperation and are simply secrets that have been kept for too long.

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LYFE

Lyfe is hard especially behind bars
Sleeping and waking in the same room
I been in anguish for so long
And I know what I did is so wrong
I regret and repent what I did
But if I flip time back I know
I'll do the same shit
My thinking is wrong my mind
Is in space
And if a cat flashed something
I'll take it for myself
I know it's bad for my health
To do this to people
But that's what I do
I'm a stick up kid
And I ain't going to stop it
Till I get rich

98

write around portland

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98

write around portland

“COOL”

These kids today misunderstand
the word “cool.”

Spreading your legs isn’t cool,
you would just get overwhelmed with a baby.

Drugs are not cool,
it’s an addiction for life.

Skipping school isn’t cool,
losing a chance of making the big bucks.

Take my advice, don’t follow my footsteps,
they’re too deep in the ground.

Full of
prostitution,
addiction,
a drop out
and losing a child to the state.

If I only knew what I’m telling you now
my steps wouldn’t be so deep.

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NTC

DURING WINTER OF LAST YEAR between Christmas and New Year's, I was ill with sinus trouble, which began in my nose, went to my throat and then to my chest, all in a matter of about two days.

It brought back memories of that lovely winter I spent at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri...at that time the doctors called it URI (upper respiratory infection). Really it was probably a combination of bronchitis, flu, and pneumonia. Never really had this condition before the service. Since then I seem to get it every year.

I don't have a coffee maker in the cave—(a.k.a. my apartment)—so I headed up to the VA for a supply of medication and also a cup of coffee from the excellent shop in the lobby. Coffee shop and pharmacy right next to each other. Jam up boy, 'tis the season—whoopee!

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SAD GIRL IN A SAD WORLD

She cries at night after lights out and
most of the other women are asleep.
She'll just lie there till the early
morning hours, with her face buried
deep, and weep.

The hollowness she feels is so
depressing, it's like she's been stripped
of her spirit and soul, left forsaken
by all who claim to have loved her,
though they'll never know.

She'll stand at the window looking
out into the free world
choking back the urge to scream and cry,
wishing for one more chance to fix
her life, taking each day with stride.

But, everything seems so
far-fetched and it hurts her inside,
Sad Girl has 8 more years in this
penitentiary where she resides.

Sad Girl in a sad, sad, world.

101

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101

IT'S HOPELESS, I'VE TRIED

My favorite time of day is when the sun slowly sinks into
the horizon.

Then, creating a melting pot of color, the sky fills with
tangerines, lemons, and strawberries.

The colors entice my eyes calling them out to play.

I gaze out a panoramic window that is framed by cobwebs
and tinted with dust.

I wish just once I could truly see what I want to see and not
a depicted image my mind forces me to see.

My mind makes me sick, the presence of nausea floats in
my stomach and head.

He teases me with such beautiful things, dangles them in
front of me, tied to strings.

He bites me with words of insecurities and regret. He
keeps me chained to this metal floor.

Stripped of all my pride, my bare ass numb from the frozen
ground.

102

write around portland

IT'S HOPELESS, I'VE TRIED

My favorite time of day is when the sun slowly sinks into
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102

write around portland

I feel no pain, just weakening of my soul.

I want so much to be free, but his cold friends are clenched around my neck.

Letting me breathe just enough to stay conscious, to make sure the tortures penetrate.

I just want to break through this window and linger into the array of color in the sky.

It's hopeless, I've tried.

103

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103

SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS

Arms stretched to the sky.

Face basking in the warm sun.

Roots digging deep down.

Cement on the left.

Squeezing through the cracked sidewalk.

Cement on the right.

Breathing CO2

From the many cars that pass by.

Exhaling O2.

A thing of beauty,

Face of purple, hair of gold

Robed in leaves of green.

How many walk by?

How many do not see her?

She sits there alone.

104

A flash of nature

In a frame of grey stone

For all to enjoy.

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A flash of nature

In a frame of grey stone

For all to enjoy.

Her days are numbered
Destined to die by rubber
Of tire tread or shoe.

Once in a great while
Like a pansy by the road
Some people emerge.

105

Her days are numbered
Destined to die by rubber
Of tire tread or shoe.

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Some people emerge.

105

SHHHH!

One hundred and seven women
Talking
All the time.

Some laugh
Some cry
Some bitch
Most gossip.
A few tell jokes.
They all argue
And debate
Analyzing
“The ISSUES”
To Death.

The Din
of their words
seeps in a sinister fog
under my door
Permeates

my cell
my head
my space.
In an attempt
to have quiet

I Puncture My Own Eardrums.
Ah—The Silence.

write around portland

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NOT APPLICABLE

THE MAIL BROUGHT the form. It came with an itinerary of events to celebrate the 20 years since high-school graduation.

Those 20 years had taken me down paths rarely traveled, ones I never thought I would take. At 18, I had no inkling of the mental illness that would strike. Nor did I understand all that would mean.

The form started out with my name already filled out as was my address. It was the blanks that caused my realization:

Occupation NA

Spouse NA

Spouse's occupation NA

Children NA

I was non-applicable. I was part of society's fringe—one of those that did not—that added not to the weave or web. My function was a reminder that you should fear what may happen to you or a loved one. My function was to be pointed at as a drain of resources—a meaningless life form.

I threw the pieces of paper away. The not-applicable has stayed with me.

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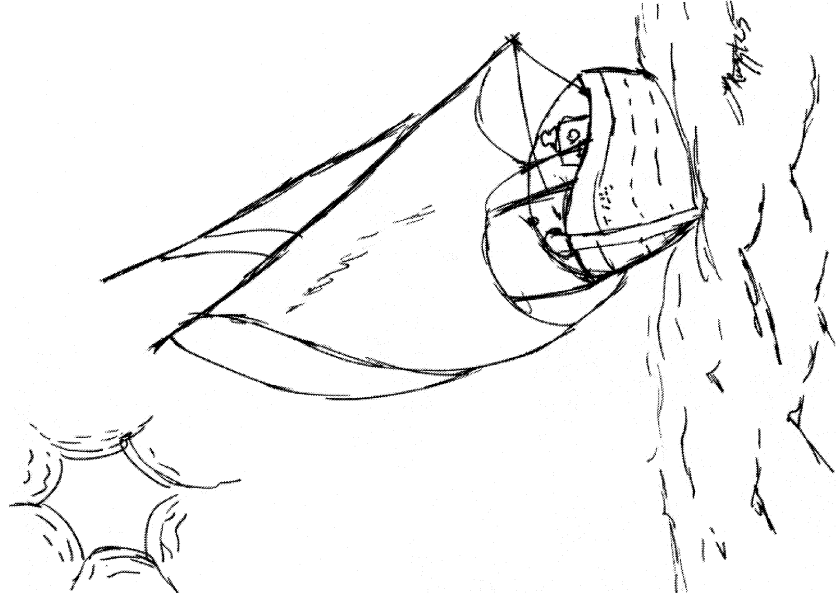
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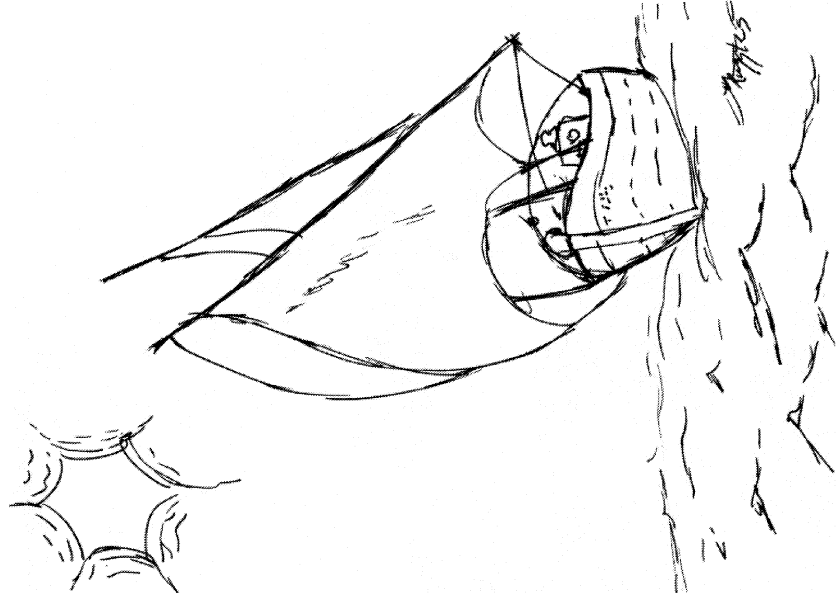
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Forward Steadily



Forward Steadily



MY FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

I'm Luis.

I speak Spanish and I talk little English.

I wonder why English is complicated as a second language.

That day, September 13th, 2005.

That day was a bad day.

It was my first day of school in America.

I'm a person

who at that day I feel scared.

who come at school without knowing any English.

who say I don't understand to people that was trying

to talk with me in English.

who at that time wish that he know English perfectly.

who at the moment hope to understand English at all.

who try the best he can without knowing English.

who see people having fun and talking in their language.

who at that moment thought that it was impossible to learn

things as second language.

who one day want to learn complete English.

who is worry that he can't understand high school.

Now you see that nothing is impossible if you try.

111

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111

ALMOST TO FREEDOM

I'm not going back
no
I can't turn back
I'm almost there
almost to freedom
an unreachable light
in this dark abyss
I'm not going back
no
I'm almost
there
almost to freedom
from this dark room
this black hole
I'm almost out
no
I can't
I won't turn back
I'm so close
I've taken this long
road of life
just to reach its end
I'm almost there
almost to freedom.

112

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I've taken this long
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I'm almost there
almost to freedom.

112

AFTER WORK IS DONE

HOW I YEARN FOR RELAXATION and freedom. The luxury of time to spend in my comfortable easy chair while wrapped in a warm blanket. Sitting cozily next to a fire. Blazing warm. Orange and yellow flames licking around the logs. Crackling softly as if musically playing with my ears. Surrounded by the darkness and security of my room. A room lit by the dim light of a television playing softly in the near distance. A showing of a black-and-white, vintage movie playing memories of days gone by. Feeling the warmth and softness of the fire against the equally warm, soft, fuzzy blanket. My feet propped up on the tapestry of my ottoman. Legs stretched long, lean and even, to hold the large bowl of buttery popcorn. The delightful scent of which fills my nostrils. Competing for time with the wonderful scent of the fire and the flavorful richness of hot chocolate. A warm, delicious, chocolaty brown drink topped with a large dollop of white, creamy, vanilla-flavored whipped cream.

Yes, these are the secret thoughts, passions and joys of life on a day when all is quiet. On a day after all work is done. On a day when relaxation can be had. No one would ever guess that little old me can take a little time to savor what is good. What is fun. What is enjoyable to me. After work is done.

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HOW I YEARN FOR RELAXATION and freedom. The luxury of time to spend in my comfortable easy chair while wrapped in a warm blanket. Sitting cozily next to a fire. Blazing warm. Orange and yellow flames licking around the logs. Crackling softly as if musically playing with my ears. Surrounded by the darkness and security of my room. A room lit by the dim light of a television playing softly in the near distance. A showing of a black-and-white, vintage movie playing memories of days gone by. Feeling the warmth and softness of the fire against the equally warm, soft, fuzzy blanket. My feet propped up on the tapestry of my ottoman. Legs stretched long, lean and even, to hold the large bowl of buttery popcorn. The delightful scent of which fills my nostrils. Competing for time with the wonderful scent of the fire and the flavorful richness of hot chocolate. A warm, delicious, chocolaty brown drink topped with a large dollop of white, creamy, vanilla-flavored whipped cream.

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BLACK MAGIC

A little woman,
magically capable of influencing
all that is around her, by using
the energies from inside of her.

One of the chosen ones?

She marches forward, steadily.
Educating others, quietly.
Giving them the true teachings
of the universe.

She wants to please her Gods!

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She wants to please her Gods!

PRAY AND BELIEVE

MONDAY WHICH IS APRIL 2, 2007 is my last day in JDH & I've been in here 3 months plus 6 days. To me JDH ain't no place where I want to be. The reason I came in here in the first place is b-cuzz I robbed & assaulted somebody. For a minute I thought I wasn't getting out b-cuzz on a Measure 11 u can do up to 5 yrs & 10 months. But I turned to God I prayed every night. That's one thing I learned in this place is believe in God & have patience.

Being in here 3 months can drive a mad man crazy especially if u don't know when ur getting out. But things worked & I will be getting out on probation even though I was already on probation. I think they're just going to extend my probation. I know I've been blessed b-cuzz I couldn't have done it without Jesus so my advice to people out there in the world who's strugglin' ain't nothin' worser than being in a cell all day trust me. So stay strong & pray b-cuzz God works in mysterious ways and he has plans for all of us. So pray and believe.

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TRANSFORMATION

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So much has changed since I've
been away.
I'm off drugs now.
I can think straight.
I know myself now.
After all these years searching for *me*
wanting to find me, hating me,
wallowing in self pity,
being sad and down.
After all these years I'm found.
I did this myself.
I'm 26 years old and know who I
am now.
Like I said so much has changed.
I'm a different person. I love.
I try to do what's right now.
I care what my family thinks now.
I actually care about what happens
to me now. I care. And I'm not
hiding it no more. I want happiness
and I know what road to take now.
So much has changed.

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116

SOLILOQUY

Sweat and tears, they earned their change.
Sweat and tears, they made their way.
Today's the day that I step closer to my goals.
Today's the day that I am comforted by her calls.
Even when things seem constant,
constant always shifts.
When will the calm return?
Life is full of rocky boundaries.
And I had left her last year.
Her sadness weighed me down.
Yet even when I'm alone I'm hopeful.
Even when her crying is a soft full weeping in my heart.
For, everyone from every land
wanders a new road in their mind
before they ever decide to leave.
And America,
she alludes to wealth and possibility.

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JUMP

Jump, jump, I must now jump! In a hurry with a shout,
must get in must get out. I am now on my own. See me now,
going home. In the rain in the sun, I must go, go now. I
must jump, jump, jump.

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write around portland

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write around portland

THE NEXT STAR

I am Juan
I wonder what's going to happen in 5 years
I hear people telling me to get good grades
I see teaching
I want to play college football
I am number 92
I play for Wilson High
I fool around sometimes
I feel worried if I'm going to make it
I touch the grass
I worry about what's going to happen
I understand if I don't make it there's other things to do
I say I will be the next NFL player
I dream that I am going to make it
I try my hardest to win every game
I hope I'm good enough to make it all the way
I am the next star

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FINDING ME

I was so happy when I began to find myself.

It seemed like I was lost for a while, lost into a sea of influences that changed me into someone I didn't even know.

I began to be confident, walk with a stride, head up, chest out.

I made my own choices, continuing to live my journey my way, my time, and my limits.

I was untouchable to the words of others. I was becoming the person I always wanted to be.

My dreams became bigger with the possibility of achieving all.

I was happy when the process began, and I will feel even greater when it starts over.

Finding yourself or at least finding me became a regular thing. I will continually change and find myself over and over again.

It's a never-ending process in which I will learn something new every time, because every time there is a new me and a new beginning.

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THERAPY

I write my words to get them out,
and when I do 'tis with a lively need.
I cannot do it for grace or gratitude,
I just crave it to pray proceed.

I try to write about the things I know,
whether it is beauty, or is pain.
But, once it's out, how they got there
I'm not so sure I could explain.

Please, don't ask me then to memorize,
or ever to recite.
Mostly, it's over in a moment, and
the moment's a ghastly fight.

I write myself into my words, and
then write them out of my heart.
Rainbows or clouds, softly or loud,
they're out now, and must now depart.

If I'd done it well, while into my spell,
it'd be misread as a creativity.
All that I know, 'tis with it I grow, and
I just call it *Therapy*.

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IF I HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

SHE ASKED ME to write starting with, “*If I had all the time in the world...*” If I had all the time in the world? Lately, I have been thinking who knows how much time, or how many healthy days I have, and I’ve been feeling a bit of urgency to get things done. I haven’t thought about this other idea. Suddenly I realized if I had all the time in the world I would do the same things I am trying to do now. What irony.

If I had all the time in the world, I would take my daughter camping as much as possible. I have not been able to take her camping all these years. I took her for the first time this spring break. We heard hundreds of frogs and dozens of coyotes vocalizing as the sun went down. We listened to a countless number of birds singing as the sun came up. Sparkling, chilled dew was on everything and our simple breakfast tasted great. I may not have that much time, so I will take my daughter camping as much as possible.

If I had all the time in the world I would lavish my children and grandchildren with small gifts of favorite things, with unconditional love and with endless kisses. I may not have that much time, so I will gift them with these small expressions of love every moment that they let me.

If I had all the time in the world I would stand in a warm grassy meadow or a forest glade with fingers of sunlight reaching through the branches and listen to bird song, clutching my field guide, finding each species, learning each melody and every harmony. I may not have that much time, so I will stop and listen to bird song each day.

write around portland

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write around portland

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If I had all the time in the world I would fearlessly enter into and help build community around me. I always said, “Friends make better family than blood relatives.” I may not have that much time, so I will nurture that chosen family, and attend every gathering.

If I had all the time in the world I would do all I could to be a support to those in community who are struggling with issues I once struggled with. One survives oppression all the better when one gives support to others who struggle against that same oppression. I may not have that much time, so I will do what I can to help these sisters and brothers.

If I had all the time in the world I would sit down and write every time inspired words came to mind. There would be no struggle to sort out each imagined project, and I would complete each project and fearlessly submit them for publishing. I may not have that much time, so I will write every chance I get and boldly submit the finished projects.

I may not have much time before the lack of mobility and the struggles to think clearly agonizingly slow time down. And so, I will do all I can to live every moment *as if I had all the time in world*.

123

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AUSENCIA

Yo, mi alma, mi ser siempre solo, con falta de algo.

Que paso, no se hay un vacio, pienso en la soledad.

Que me paso, no lo se. Sera asi toda mi vida?

Busco algo que no encuentro, algo que no se que es.

Solo se que debo seguir buscando.

Mis caminos se acaban. No se donde ir pero sigo buscando.

Es mi busqueda de algo que no se, es mi causa y debo seguir.

No se que es lo que debo hayar, me siento agotado.

Mi ser y mi alma estan cansados, pero la derrota no llega.

Debo seguir busca, busca sigue buscandol

124

Solo sabras que es hasta que lo encuentras.

Que esa ausencia no te hiera, que esa ausencia no te mate...

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ABSENCE

Myself, my soul, my being always alone, with something missing.

What happened, I don't know, there is an emptiness. I think about solitude.

What has happened to me, I don't know. Will it be like this all my life?

I am searching for something that I don't find, something unknown.

I only know that I must keep searching.

My paths are ended. I don't know where to go but I keep searching.

It is my search for something unknown, it is my cause and I must continue.

I don't know what I must do, I feel exhausted.

My being and my soul are tired, but my path does not appear.

I must keep searching, continuing the search!

One only knows what it is once one finds it.

May this absence not brand you, may this absence not kill you....

125

English translation of text by Malin Dawson

Called to Speak Stories

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English translation of text by Malin Dawson

Called to Speak Stories

1992

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW is that I have been playen ball since I was born in '92. I rep my number when I play my games. People know me as my number 15, the kid who dropped 16 in my last three games. I wasn't that good when I first picked up a ball and tried to make it go in the hoop. I was hell a awful and got too many air balls.

I played ball with the toughest kids in my hood and I wasn't near as good. But I didn't stop from there. I tried and tried. I even got my lil' step bro into basketball. I took 400 shots a day 'til I got better on my long range.

Homies tell me I suck. They say "Go play girly ball. You ain't neva gonna be as good so why try." Forget that. I ain't no show stopper. I'ma try and try 'til I become the best sooner or later. I'ma become the toughest kid in my hood and all da hoods is gonna be watching me one day on TV hoopin with the best.

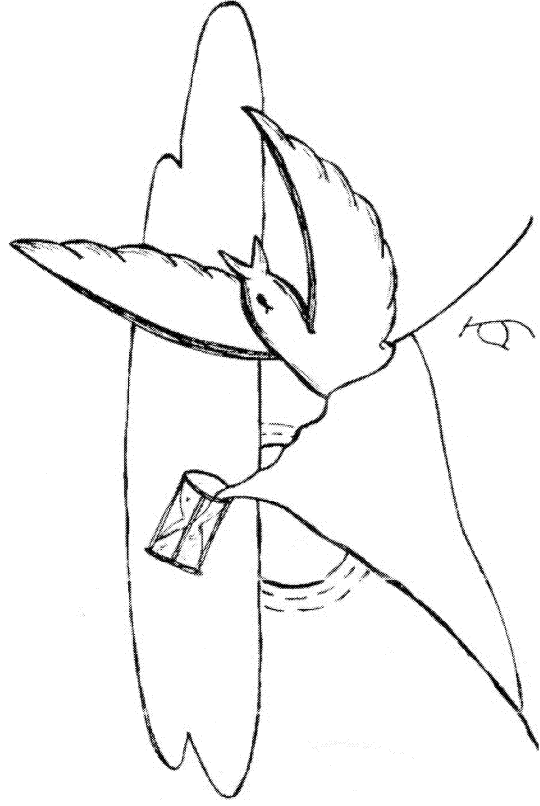
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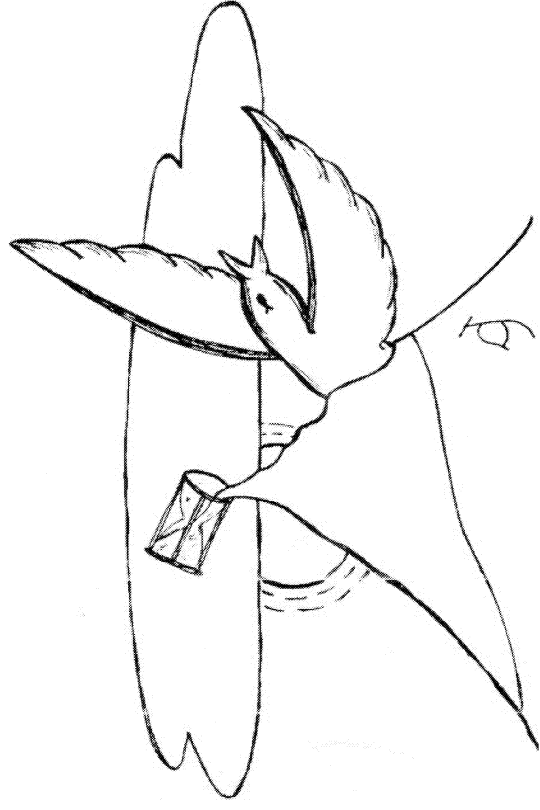
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Something Sways



Something Sways



FREEDOM

Freedom is, being at peace with me.
Freedom is, not living in the rage, hate, and
chaos that once polluted my soul.
Freedom is, no longer fighting against the
negative forces of “self.”
Freedom *isn't*, outside these prison cages
True freedom *is*, inside this ribcage of
mine.
Freedom is, not so much to be loved by
others, as it is to be loved by me.
No longer do I seek freedom outside
these walls,
it is in here that I’m finding true
freedom. It was out there that I was
truly in bondage.
Freedom is here, now, and in the spirit
within me.
Coffee Creek puts limitations on me
and the gates may be locked, but it
has likewise opened so many doors in
my life.
Freedom is where I’m at.

129

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129

WHAT I UNDERSTOOD

Someday I will understand what I understood.

Then forgot.

Then realized.

Then tried to recapture.

Then captured me.

Then let me go.

Then I let it go.

It's beside me.

It's in front of me.

It's in me.

Yes, it's a part of me.

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LAST NIGHT I HAD A VIVID DREAM

I WAS SITTING on a high, high hill looking out over the majestic mountains below. The trees and the blue lake seemed small next to the setting sun on the horizon.

The purple and powder-blue sky disappeared into a magnificent color of orange and pink hues as the sun lost its delightful glimmer at dusk. The blue lake reflected the snow-capped mountain in the far distant valley below.

I could smell the fragrance of the honeydew, as it lingered among a spider's web and the dew drops lost at dawn.

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MY SECRET TALENT

Every day is the same routine, you wake, shower, brush, dress, and out the door you go searching for your secret talent.

You don't stop and appreciate, you don't stop and experience, you barely live. Have you ever tried to love, or feel?

Have you taken a moment to look through the clouds or go beyond the heat of the sun?

Is it possible to stop and let your nostrils flare and breathe in the freshness of the air?

Have you ever stopped and smelled the scented petals that fly by?

Can you notice the red and how it's painted on a rose, or how green is splashed on a leaf?

Why are we constantly running from beauty?

132 We are used to wanting and receiving, which gives us hope that there is something beautiful waiting.

But once at hands' reach, will we be able to grasp or understand the realness of life?

We are capable of completing our talent search but not until we zoom in on the definition of the earth.

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LOVE IS FREE

THE BOUND WAS OF HER own making. She spent a lot of time captured, never knowing she had a key. At times she could clearly see through the cracks of hope, but the wall of hopelessness and despair seemed too high to climb, too heavy to simply push to the side. During her years imprisoned this way, there was a constant. Empty bottles, empty soul. The fermentation process had soured the temple. Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor, my grace is sufficient for you, my grace is sufficient in weakness. She always assumed that in order to live free, she must first pay. Nothing to pay, love is free.

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133

STONES

A stone with wisdom imprinted on the front
this is my kind of stone.
I have always been in search of enlightening stones.
I found one at Beverly Beach in Oregon
that was a large agate rolled over and over in the tumbling surf.
Then there were fossilized stones that I found near a creek
at the end of a country road in Dingle, Ireland.
Maybe I had been searching for the evasive wisdom
their stones share with me.

134

write around portland

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write around portland

IN MY WILDEST DREAMS

In my Wildest Dreams I can fly.

Not in a steel contraption, crowded, swirling with odors of unwashed bodies and strong strange perfumes, tinned voices of the captain speaking and babies screaming, being so close to someone they are halfway on your lap and no leg room, but alone.
Just me.

In my Wildest Dreams I can fly.

My bones are hollow. My wings are full. The snowy white of a virgin bridal gown. Cascading down my back like a billowy veil. Or maybe sleek small feathers. Ink black and glossy. Flowing like a liquid river from my shoulders to my feet. Tightly held in until the glorious moment when I take the first stroke and feel the pull, feel the wind stream past my face and over my wings so smoothly. Speeding through the night. Elated. Reveling in the freedom.

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THE TUNNEL THAT HAS NO END

This Tunnel you can go in and think that
you can never get out for one second you
can breathe but thinking that your life can
change just by going in. By putting a foot
in and following the path to darkness never
knowing what will happen life can change in
one second. So never give in to pressure never
let in to the darkness in your life follow
the path that shows you the light not the
darkness that is inside your life not the path
that will never show you life and that is
the tunnel that has no end.

136

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that will never show you life and that is
the tunnel that has no end.

136

INTO THE AFTER-NOTHING

WAITING HERE FOR SO LONG one gets the feeling that your mother was a liar. And your father and your whole goddamn family for that matter. Lights. Aren't there supposed to be lights? And perfume and flowers and gold-plated babies hovering in clouds of cotton candied goodness? I'm cold and wet. And things keep getting into my eyes, my ears, my skin that I can't brush off. It smells like the towel you forgot was wet and left in the trunk of your car. I wait in fearful anticipation of what is next, hoping it is something more fulfilling than the dirt and decay that is my reality. Who knew there could be such wanting in death? Had I known, I would never have taken that last step.

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137

MY ROCK

As I lay on a huge flat rock, soaking up the hot
summer sun
It feels like time has stopped.
Life is happening all in this current moment.
I can hear the birds singing.
The wind blowing in the trees above.
The sound of the water rushing by.
It's like a guided meditation...
My mind stills as my body becomes
one with the rock.
From time to time I rise to dive into the clear fresh
water to cool off.
Each time I return to my rock I take the time to see
and absorb my surroundings.
Green leafy trees, mossy rocks, wild flowers, and ferns.
Birds darting on the water, blue skies with fluffy
clouds passing slowly by.
Crystal clear running water, small waterfalls cascading
off the surrounding rock ledges.
Then I return to my meditation on my rock.
All that's missing...
Is the reality of this vision...

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138

HOW WOULD YOU SPEND YOUR DASH?

I READ OF A GIRL who stood to speak at the funeral of a grandparent. She referred to the dates on her tombstone. From the beginning... to the end. She noted that first came the date of birth. And spoke the following date with tears. But she said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years. 4/14/44-12/24/04.

For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth... And now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own—the cars...the house...the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard...are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real, and always try to understand the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger, and show appreciation more and love people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect, and more often smile... remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy's being read with life's action to rehash... would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

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139

UP FROM THE EARTH

Up from the earth the flowers and trees push
Up from the earth a worm comes but Oh No! a foot smoosh,
Up from the sky birds sing
Up to the sky voices ring,
Up in the hills deer roam and feed
Down in the ground sprouts seed.
Something in the woods has captured me
And I'm still wondering what it could be.
In the air something sways
Smells and sounds in all ways.
Forest what secrets do you hold?
Keeping them from me as you grow old.

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write around portland

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CONNECTIONS

Do not wake me for I am not here.

I have been released. Gliding, tumbling from the earth.

Unshackled, unchained, set free.

Spirit unyoked from its earthly bound.

Colliding, emerging and unfurling.

Particles of light speeding past time, past destiny, into infinity.

Suspended, motionless unity of creation.

Do not wake me for I am not here.

I exist in a new plane on the other side of the universe.

I have met infinity, and we have conversed.

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QUIET VOICES

I COME FROM A LONG LINE of peoples stretching back to a dim beginning. We were tribes with names and languages of melodious strains, and a certain knowledge of all things in the world. There were particular ways to tend to the rounds of the day, the seasons, the years. And moments of knowing the sure joys and inevitable pains of life. But those voices are quiet now, long dead and mostly forgotten. I am the last of the lone scouts, working my way to the far distant shore. I carry memories of things I cannot know, and am called to speak stories I never heard. The old ones wait to see if I can find my voice before my sweet short passage ends. Knowing that they are listening gives me hope and a kind of strength that I can lay claim to. The Grandmothers are sure I can do it; the Grandfathers have their doubts. I turn in the direction of the grandchildren and move with faith.

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Write Around Portland is proud to partner with **Reclaiming Futures – Multnomah Embrace, Funded by the Reclaiming Futures Initiative-A Project of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation®**. Reclaiming Futures Multnomah County is one of 10 pilot communities across the country to create a new approach to helping teenagers caught in the cycle of drugs, alcohol, and crime. The program is reinventing the way courts, police, detention facilities, treatment counselors, businesses, schools, families and others work together with teens in trouble with the law and encourages and assists adults in mentoring teens.

Write Around Portland has facilitated numerous workshops with youth through this program, including two this spring, and helped create an anthology of stories by adults and teens about how an adult made a difference in their lives, featuring prominent Portlanders and many Write Around Portland writers. For more information about the anthology and about how you can get involved, go to www.whenyouwere15.org.



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A to Z Wineworks	Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
The Autzen Foundation	Peet's Coffee & Tea
Bland Family Foundation	Powell's Books
The Equity Foundation	Reclaiming Futures/ Multnomah
The Richard & Janet Geary Foundation	Embrace – Multnomah County
	Department of Juvenile Justice
Gerding/Edlen	Regional Arts and Culture
Development Company	Council and Work for Art
Greenberg & Associates Insurance	The Renaissance Foundation
Hoover Family Foundation	Salvatore Molly's
Jackson Foundation	The Standard
Peter H. Michaelson Foundation	Stoel Rives LLP
Multnomah County	Tazo Tea
Cultural Coalition	Trader Joe's
O'Callaghan Family Foundation	Trust Management Services, LLC
Oregon Arts Commission	US Bancorp Foundation
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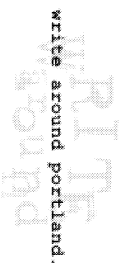
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MICHAEL & DEBORAH AIONA	SARAH GLOUD & ANDREA WOLFF	COLLAINE PADDIS	JAMI HART
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PETE LEE	JOAN & JOHN SHIPLEY	TANYA TULLOCH	TANYA TULLOCH	PETE LEE	JOAN & JOHN SHIPLEY	TANYA TULLOCH	TANYA TULLOCH
SUE LENSKI	SARAH SHUTE & MATTHEW SMITH	DOROTHY TURCHI	DOROTHY TURCHI	SUE LENSKI	SARAH SHUTE & MATTHEW SMITH	DOROTHY TURCHI	DOROTHY TURCHI
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KETZEL LEVINE	RANDALL & BESS SILVERSTON	MICHAEL VAN KLEECK	MICHAEL VAN KLEECK	KETZEL LEVINE	RANDALL & BESS SILVERSTON	MICHAEL VAN KLEECK	MICHAEL VAN KLEECK
MIKE LINDBERG	ELIZABETH SINCLAIRE	JUDY VARNER	JUDY VARNER	MIKE LINDBERG	ELIZABETH SINCLAIRE	JUDY VARNER	JUDY VARNER
TODD LINKNER & BECKY KESSLER	ANNA SKINNER	B VON SCHLUMPERGER	B VON SCHLUMPERGER	TODD LINKNER & BECKY KESSLER	ANNA SKINNER	B VON SCHLUMPERGER	B VON SCHLUMPERGER
CHIP & ROSA MARIA	GARY SLAC & MARY	KAREN WABEL	KAREN WABEL	CHIP & ROSA MARIA	GARY SLAC & MARY	KAREN WABEL	KAREN WABEL
ERIK PETERSON	MAYTHY SLAC	KRISTIN & NICK WALROD	KRISTIN & NICK WALROD	ERIK PETERSON	MAYTHY SLAC	KRISTIN & NICK WALROD	KRISTIN & NICK WALROD
BONNIE & DONALD WC	TOD SLOAN	KIMBERLY & DAVID WASSERMAN	KIMBERLY & DAVID WASSERMAN	BONNIE & DONALD WC	TOD SLOAN	KIMBERLY & DAVID WASSERMAN	KIMBERLY & DAVID WASSERMAN
PIESCHEL	ANN SMITH & MARIANNE BROGAN	KEVIN & GAIL WATKINS	KEVIN & GAIL WATKINS	PIESCHEL	ANN SMITH & MARIANNE BROGAN	KEVIN & GAIL WATKINS	KEVIN & GAIL WATKINS
MARIBEL PINYAS	KAARIN SMITH	PAMELA WEBB & JAY MARGULIES	PAMELA WEBB & JAY MARGULIES	MARIBEL PINYAS	KAARIN SMITH	PAMELA WEBB & JAY MARGULIES	PAMELA WEBB & JAY MARGULIES
PAULA PLEIN	LAURA SMOYER	MELANIE WEIDNER	MELANIE WEIDNER	PAULA PLEIN	LAURA SMOYER	MELANIE WEIDNER	MELANIE WEIDNER
MICHAEL MADIAS	MIRIAM SONTZ & JOE WALSH	KATE WELCH	KATE WELCH	MICHAEL MADIAS	MIRIAM SONTZ & JOE WALSH	KATE WELCH	KATE WELCH
JANE MANCHEE	MICHELLE SPENCER	AMELIE WELDEN	AMELIE WELDEN	JANE MANCHEE	MICHELLE SPENCER	AMELIE WELDEN	AMELIE WELDEN
JULIE MANCINI	ELI SPEYAK	PATTY WENTZ	PATTY WENTZ	JULIE MANCINI	ELI SPEYAK	PATTY WENTZ	PATTY WENTZ
ANDREA MANNING	MARY CARTER SPIES	HOWARD WHITE	HOWARD WHITE	ANDREA MANNING	MARY CARTER SPIES	HOWARD WHITE	HOWARD WHITE
DIANE P MASON	KATHERINE ANNE STANSBURY	BARBARA WHITE & ALLEYN YASSKIN	BARBARA WHITE & ALLEYN YASSKIN	DIANE P MASON	KATHERINE ANNE STANSBURY	BARBARA WHITE & ALLEYN YASSKIN	BARBARA WHITE & ALLEYN YASSKIN
KEVIN MATHENY	SCOTT STARBUCK	BETH WHITE	BETH WHITE	KEVIN MATHENY	SCOTT STARBUCK	BETH WHITE	BETH WHITE
CHRIS MATSLER	SUE & MIKE WILKINS	SUE & MIKE WILKINS	SUE & MIKE WILKINS	CHRIS MATSLER	SUE & MIKE WILKINS	SUE & MIKE WILKINS	SUE & MIKE WILKINS
MICHELLE MCCLELLAN	CATHERINE WILLET	AMY WILLIAMS	AMY WILLIAMS	MICHELLE MCCLELLAN	CATHERINE WILLET	AMY WILLIAMS	AMY WILLIAMS
JAMES T. MCDERMOTT	THOMAS WOLF	JANET & DON WOLF	JANET & DON WOLF	JAMES T. MCDERMOTT	THOMAS WOLF	JANET & DON WOLF	JANET & DON WOLF
ELAINE MCDONALD & STEVEN HALL	DONNELLA WOOD	RACHEL WRAY & DANIEL HALL	RACHEL WRAY & DANIEL HALL	ELAINE MCDONALD & STEVEN HALL	DONNELLA WOOD	RACHEL WRAY & DANIEL HALL	RACHEL WRAY & DANIEL HALL
PAUL & SHEILA MCMAHON	ALLEYN YASSKIN & BARBARA WHITE	ALLEN YASSKIN & BARBARA WHITE	ALLEN YASSKIN & BARBARA WHITE	PAUL & SHEILA MCMAHON	ALLEYN YASSKIN & BARBARA WHITE	ALLEN YASSKIN & BARBARA WHITE	ALLEN YASSKIN & BARBARA WHITE
RICHARD MEEXER	ALAN VODER & JULIE SMITH	ALAN VODER & JULIE SMITH	ALAN VODER & JULIE SMITH	RICHARD MEEXER	ALAN VODER & JULIE SMITH	ALAN VODER & JULIE SMITH	ALAN VODER & JULIE SMITH
BARBARA MENDIUS	LAINA YOUNG	LYNN YOUNGBAR	LYNN YOUNGBAR	BARBARA MENDIUS	LAINA YOUNG	LYNN YOUNGBAR	LYNN YOUNGBAR
TAMARA METZ	SUSAN SWARD	SHERRY & TIM SWEENEY	SHERRY & TIM SWEENEY	TAMARA METZ	SUSAN SWARD	SHERRY & TIM SWEENEY	SHERRY & TIM SWEENEY
VERONIQUE MEUNIER	SAAD & KHATEREH ZALTASH	SAAD & KHATEREH ZALTASH	SAAD & KHATEREH ZALTASH	VERONIQUE MEUNIER	SAAD & KHATEREH ZALTASH	SAAD & KHATEREH ZALTASH	SAAD & KHATEREH ZALTASH
ELLEN MICHAELSON	GREGORY ZWART	GREGORY ZWART	GREGORY ZWART	ELLEN MICHAELSON	GREGORY ZWART	GREGORY ZWART	GREGORY ZWART
CATHY MILLIS	ANONYMOUS	ANONYMOUS	ANONYMOUS	CATHY MILLIS	ANONYMOUS	ANONYMOUS	ANONYMOUS
FERN MOWYER				FERN MOWYER			
BEN MOORAD				BEN MOORAD			
KAREN MORGAN				KAREN MORGAN			
JOHN MORRISON				JOHN MORRISON			
CHELSEA MOSHER				CHELSEA MOSHER			
JOANNE MULCAHY & ROBERT HAZEN				JOANNE MULCAHY & ROBERT HAZEN			



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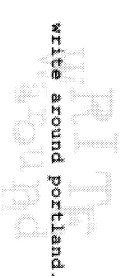
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