

TENACITY & RESILIENCE

POEMS FROM INSIDE

Inspired by the art of Jerry Pinkney

Taconic Correctional Facility

FALL 2022

Writers

Jennifer B.

Jennifer H.

Susan

Jina

Taylor

Julia

With

The Katonah Museum of Art
Rehabilitation Through the Arts

Pamela Hart
Joe Giardina
Charles Moore

Dream

By Jennifer B.

He had a dream that all would unify
and I can't deny that through my eyes
I see the same vision.

The world we are living in
leads us on a journey where we
get tripped up on roadblocks
detours and complacencies
so that we too often peak
at a dead end.

When faced with life's challenges
it's hard to find a balance which leads
to trails where stories are untold
talents are tenfold
and all we can do is stay bold
to live out our dreams
Can you feel what I mean?
Just imagine living the entirety of
your life feeling like a caged bird
feeling like the fulfillment of your destiny
is absurd

and giving into a depression that
has you believing everything you've
ever heard about yourself
the inner most part of your soul
breeds the purity
that lies in your heart
and the most innocent of intentions
but your actions lead you to believe
that your worth is as much as the dirt
you walk on.

Being stripped of everything you've
ever known, love, and for most
of your days neglected.

Gives you a better appreciation of even
the smallest things
that too many take for granted.

And throughout my incarceration
my life goal remains true
Since I couldn't save the life
I was blessed with I can only hope
my words and mere presence



Jerry Pinkney, "Tell them about the dream, Martin!" from *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, 2019, by Barry Wittenstein. Watercolor, collage, and graphite on watercolor paper, 14 1/8 x 21 13/16 in., Courtesy of the Estate of Jerry Pinkney ©2019 Jerry Pinkney. Photography by Peter Jacobs

can maybe save you.
I believe in every one of your dreams
and I can only hope
one day you might
believe in mine too.

Ella

By Jennifer B.

All I wanted was to go to the ball
to be the most envied of the land
the one who had it all
the bad romance, turned love
unconditionally requited.
I took one look and I
knew I had to win you.
We danced through the ages
turned fairytales into fables.
When I had to run away
I knew you were too good
to be true.
That clock struck midnight
and that was my cue
to run from all I ever needed.
Felt too good for this world
The once-in-a-lifetime feeling
it was you I deserved.
You fought to find me.
Now I know it has always been you
mystified blue is now in my hindsight
I see my path in a whole new view.

Dreaming Beyond These Walls

By Jennifer B.

When I look up at the stars
it's a reminder from heaven
my dreams are there
Free waiting for me to claim them

It's a reminder from heaven
that beyond these walls
my dreams are there
no longer bound by chains

that beyond these walls
dreams still exist
no longer bound by chains
I am free

Dreams still exist
My dreams are there
I am free
when I look up at the stars

Swallows

By Jennifer H.

You always break me down
Every time I close my eyes
I still go back
Back to a different time
A time where I can feel you
holding me
I fall, I fall so hard
back into the memory of us
Then I fall into the darkness
and the immensity of it all
swallows me whole
The loving you
The hating you
The missing you
All of you
swallows
me whole

Fighting For

By Jennifer H.

Your love was everything
all at once
The kind I never wanna fall back from
Never want to, never try to
A love so big
A love so strong
It never dies
It never fades
Never loses its electricity
The kind of love you fight for
The kind of man you fight for

Letter to a Distant Galaxy

By Susan

I decided to write a letter to a distant galaxy
To seek refuge from what we have called home.
Here on Earth
We have woefully evolved...
Into ashes.
The air is melancholy
The ground is frail...
And we are dying.

I'm sure you're thinking you never thought you'd
hear from me
A single entity, light years away.
Existing for the time being, on an ill-fated planet.
And by the time this letter breaches your solar
system
I may just be another collapsed star
Inconsolably reduced to dust.

Our civilization has unquestionably lost sight,
And our dark adaptation is no longer,
It is merely Dark.
An inescapable Black Hole
Where gravity is so strong,
It has taken all of our light with it.
This letter contains the last of its light,
A pleading Aurora of salvation.

Somewhere in the span of our time
Our purpose has been lost,
And in turn a suffocating Hate resides.
A Hate so thick
It resembles a gaseous Nebula
That can no longer sustain its own reactions...
We are drowning.

I write this letter not in an attempt to save us,
For we are destined to answer for our shortcomings,
But for you to decipher its Love.
Love is contagious,
And multiplies,
Like the Northern Lights over Norway in late September,
It is bigger than the vastness of the entire Universe,



Jerry Pinkney, "I want to be old but not so old that Mars and Jupiter seem weak" from *I Want to Be*, 1993, by Thylia Moss. Watercolor and graphite on watercolor paper, 9 x 7 3/8 in., Courtesy of the Estate of Jerry Pinkney, on loan to the Woodmere Art Museum, L.2018.62 ©1993 Jerry Pinkney

So I'm sending you what little of it we have left
Before it dissolves into Infinity.
And in turn
You Will Heal.

I've spent my whole existence grieving a lifetime I do not remember
A sky that is different in color
And I unexplainably empathize for an unknown planet,
For life I'm not sure even exists.
Maybe after our Revelation we will return to Orion's Belt
And exist among the stars, Delicate and Blazing.
I've come to the realization that Hope is just a state of mind,
And the only time wasted
Is the time we spend thinking we are Alone.

White Rabbit

By Susan

Ringin' bells
startle me from unconscious sleep.
I'm awake.
How long have I been mad?

Your blue eyes flash
in my memories
triggerin' time before
our house of cards
became a deserted tea party.
Empty cups
broken hearts
The Queen of my heart.
I'm late but I'm awake.

If our forever was just one second
I wasn't looking
at the time.
These hats I've been wearin' –
mad
like a nursery rhyme
Tweedle Dee, Tweedle Dah
and a lifetime
of Abracadabra's.
I'm late, but at least I'm awake

Don't drink the potion
and expect an easy way back
when I claw my way out
of this hole
you'll smile at me
like the Cheshire Cat.
You'll know while I was gone mad
I still held you in my heart
ringin' bells,
rabbit holes apart.

Roots

By Susan

A tree lies inside the fence
outside my window
still among the ins and outs of security
unbothered,
as if it were not here at all
sort of like my mind
escaping, unnoticed

I'm aware of this tree
and how it just is.
Accepting
that it too will never leave.
Changing with the seasons
like my moods
sometimes beautiful
other days frozen
not allowing anything in

How deep do your roots flow?
Do they stretch out far under the wire?

Then comes the realization
We are not so different
this tree and I
both confined
yet reaching to hidden depths
that no one else can see.
Times when we are free.

Persistently seeking
Forever transforming
Still.
Simple.
Every day I learn to be more like you.

The Beauty Within Music

By Jina

I see you and my eyes shut
from the excitement I hear.

The music notes in my life go
around and around everywhere we go.

Feeling free, my body moves
to the sounds of joy because there is
beauty within the song.

Like the petals of a white flower
you feel out the woman who is
really within – soft, kind and powerful.

Like the feathers of a white bird
you feel the softness of your
caring soul.

That which brings pops of colors
into life as well as the music's
notes that play all night.



Jerry Pinkney, "Prayer for Peace" from *Sweethearts of Rhythm*, 2008, by Marilyn Nelson. Graphite, color pencil, watercolor, and collage on paper, 10 3/4 x 13 1/4 in., Courtesy of the Estate of Jerry Pinkney, on loan to the Woodmere Art Museum, L.2018.172 ©2008 Jerry Pinkney

The Beast's Beauty

By Jina

Growing carrots, peas and chickens
in the gray old town.
Started a new adventure to seek
my lost and found.

Daddy, I finally found you but
also my worst dooms.
To see all the dishes, cups and rugs
talking, tossed me down in a loom

The beast, oh the beautiful beast.
With deep voice that makes my heart tremble
And those devouring eyes
that make my insides melt

To harm is not the intention
to love is his demise
Suddenly color is found
and gray views turned upside down.

Our Special Day

By Jina

My body curves like petals of a rose
Butterflies fly freely like the air that flows
A memory of our special day
The path we will walk every day

Butterflies fly freely like the air that flows
The greenest grass and the bluest skies
The path we will walk along every day
Soft leaves touch me along the way

The greenest grass and the bluest skies
Soft like feathers of a baby bird
Soft leaves touch me along the way
The park reminds me of our union

Soft like feathers of a baby bird
A memory of our special day
This park reminds me of our union
My body curves like petals of a rose

Colors

By Taylor

I hate colors
Color is what got me here
in the first place

Color, is negro a color.
Why am I judged
by color.

I want to play with other
children my age, run through
the fields, not work them.

Colors, I love the color
of my grandmother's eyes, brown like my skin.

I don't like Grandmother's scarf
Same color as the men who beat
me if I don't work fast enough

Colors, I can't stand my color
Is it possible to change my color.



Jerry Pinkney, "I know what you're thinkin'," Amanda whispered. "I can see it in your eyes. You're fixin' to run away, but they'll catch you—and when they do..." from *Minty*, 1996, by Alan Schroeder. Watercolor, graphite, gouache, and colored pencil on watercolor paper, 12 1/4 x 19 7/8 in., Courtesy of the Estate of Jerry Pinkney, on loan to the Woodmere Art Museum, L.2018.14 ©1996 Jerry Pinkney

Fairytale Fantasies

By Taylor

Rapunzel, let down your hair he says
He wraps his hand around her hair, entices
her, pulls her close and devours her mouth

Rapunzel, turn around he says, let your hair
brush against your lover's back, tickling
your ass crack

Rapunzel, look into my eyes he says
you see your beautiful reflection
staring back at you

Rapunzel, look at your curves and your
voluptuous hips, so hypnotizing

Rapunzel, Rapunzel he says, her name
dripping off his tongue, this woman this
beautiful specimen of a woman

Rapunzel, he says how grateful I am
to have you, all of you, Rapunzel be
mine forever, Rapunzel.

Beautiful Blossom

By Taylor

Beautiful Blossom, ready
to be plucked so she thinks

Petals falling and disappearing
with the change of seasons.

Buffalo, cold and gloomy
not sustaining her growth

Beautiful Blossom, ready to be plucked
so she thinks

Handsome boy comes along chosen to
pluck her flower

Confused little Blossom, destroyed and
ripped from the ground, roots dangling
in the palms of his hands

He handled her with so much care at first
but then he let her die

Beautiful Blossom, she should have stayed grounded
waiting for the right boy to come along
and pluck her

Beauty was My Friend

By Julia

Beauty was my friend.
She always let me in
and shined bright on the night.
Never afraid, never shy.
She chose life and
had reasons for why.

Everlasting love
an overwhelming friendship
Knowing not of what
lay far beneath

Sensational values
always put to tests
forgiving like none of the rest

Storms giving way
silenced from her presence
She deemed herself worthy
to herself at best

Shattering news
from an unsolved mystery
Becoming afraid
she chose to flee
hiding from a darkness
she found with thee

Silence, peace to the core.
Not one interruption not one sore
A beast lay hidden beneath
unsure of when to finally unleash.

Surprised, held steady
a curious eruption
Unleashed and fast
There lay a beast
in the aftermath.

Such honorable ways
that Beauty had.
Whatever happened

to all she possessed.
Who would have known
she was like all the rest.

Lesson to be known
for all to see
Don't you understand
Beauty was none other
than the Beast.

Awakened by the Sunlight

By Julia

Awakened by the sunlight
alert for a new day
My mind spoke to me
Adventure

I must get to her
Our hearts are connected
I know she is waiting for me.

Carelessly dressed, hair a mess
I sprinted down the stairs, grabbed my sack then
Straight for the door
I catch a glimpse of her
and smile brightly
She smiles back

Tail wagging, excited breaths,
she paces the pit she is
chained to, waiting to be released

Crossing the long green grass
I shout praises at her
Ariel, my wolf, my husky
telling her how beautiful she is

Released we ran
Headed towards the tiger lilies
sprouting through the rock wall,
up to the willow free of wisdom

of truth, hope, love and forgiveness
Admiring, taking a look back
we break for the forest.

Making way through thorns and thistles
trudging through the mud
to be reprimanded by Grandma Beba
Soon enough...full giveaway of my travels
brought upon her floors she will have to clean

Clear and fresh, the crick
graces our presence
As we climb up,
the crick runs down
back the way we came.

Imagining the things I can't see
how much I truly believe to really be.
Sprites, fairies, homes in the trees,
in the water...so much dependency
in this world I admire
I want to stay forever.

Ariel laps up her last sip
before we head to our safe place
Sun billowing through the trees,
hinting and sneaking
strong streams of light

Birds singing, talking, playing
Welcoming us into their home
Sensing we are friends, not foe
Protecting us from afar as we go.

Leaves rustling about,
more life in the mist, no doubt
Sending chills down my spine
Believing I found where I belong
This has to be the divine.

Flowers relinquish their beauty
such confidence, such energy
Marvelous energy
I must have some of it,
to carry with me always,
and so I collect, and press.

Arie on my tail, climbing higher
we arrive.

My most favored place
among all this, how did
I ever survive before knowing
it seemed to exist.

My father read to us here,
Sissy and I,
under the most wonderful of skies.
“To Kill a Mockingbird” was my
favorite, just hearing my Daddy
say Boo Radley, while we giggled,
every time, his booming jolly voice!

The boulder held the three of us,
but now it holds
Arie, my woods journal
and I

Retreating to tell my secrets
influenced by my mind, body
and soul.
My spirit...as I told them all
Doodling and carrying on...also about
A boy! Oh gosh, About a boy.

Oh, how disappointed my father
would be!
To know how foolish I must be!
Carrying on and such over something.
So consumed.
Arie knows, rest assured, and my secret
is safe with her!
Safe within the safe place.

Time the least of my concerns,
I press on, arriving at the quarry,
just in time.
The herd of deer are in sync
dancing, running, awful quick
Mesmerized I watch,
relentlessly.

Making my way to the clearing,
the horse farm, landing in my

neighbors' backyard, hoping not to be seen.
Arie and I trail to the highway road.
Rounding back toward my grandmama's house
Just Arie, me and our adventure...
coming to an end. Until the sun greets
my eyelids again.

Haiku Group Poem

By Jennifer H., Susan, Julia

Darkness, screaming right
Blood on our hands
This won't go away

Shadow movement on
Heart showing little sustenance
Bursts out the last blast

The body lies still
A single red bullet hole
Buried in the hay

Guilty strides incapable
Still persisting to will for

Falling falling
I can't stop myself
From falling

She's dancing under the stars
Her heart blurs out the darkness