

PROMPTED in PRISON: A collection of Poetry and Prose

**by Angela Avery
June 2013**

as part of the weekly program writing inside VT at CRCF

The stories and poems I write
may be any person's delight.
They speak to all
both big and small;
and in all,
the message is tall.

- Angela Avery

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June 20, 2013

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Enclosed, please find a poetry manuscript authored by Angela Avery inside Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility in South Burlington, VT. She has been writing weekly with *writing inside VT*. For over three years, this program has encouraged incarcerated women in Vermont to reflect on their lives past and future, to use writing as a tool for self-exploration and change. The program emphasizes and models strong pro-social skills within the circle, and in the process creates a strong sense of community.

Angela has been one of our most dedicated writers. Despite a number of issues which sometimes interfere with her participation, she comes most weeks and always writes diligently and from her heart.

Our practice is to transcribe each woman's writings week to week. When Angela asked where she might get her work published, we learned about your publication opportunity for inmates and went through her writings from the past several months to gather them for her. She has signed off on the project and is eager to hear from you.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact Sarah at 802-310-1770. Angela's prison address is on the enclosed stamped envelope.

Thanks in advance and on Angela's behalf for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Avery via
Sarah W. Bartlett

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah W. Bartlett", written in a cursive style.

History's Hell

All the time it's how I was, not how I am.
I change my life. I change my ways.
Then I look to them in hopes for praise,
but instead they reminisce of my troubled days.

All alone, though I'm in a crowd,
the thought of what they think brings on my shroud.
Some ask what I do; with excitement I tell.
Then someone says, 'she's known for blah-blah-blah;'
back I go to history's Hell.

All through the times I try to prove them wrong.
Once again I'm in jail, I'm told it's where I belong.
Some people here have known me for years; I'll try my best
to set them right. I'll try so hard both day and night.
But some still say I give a fright.

All was well and I was going strong.
And then I blew it. I did something very wrong.
Now the ones who talk to me are the ones who
shouldn't want to and the ones who
for me hung the moon, put me in a cocoon.

All back I am in history's Hell.
Will I ever again get out, I cannot tell.
The guilt, mistrust and anger and pain swell.
And if I give change, they lock me in one of their cells.

All I want is good for people to see.
Why do they bring up shit and embarrass me?
Should they have to know the Hell in me?
Why can't they keep quiet and let good be.

Patiently Dreaming

She patiently dreamed while confined to her room.
The books that she read took her to the opportunities she dreamed.
She could go anywhere, be anything she chose.
At times, her best friends were from many different worlds.
Thanks Janette Okes, S.E. Hinton, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and many others.
You introduced her to so many friends so she wasn't lonely.

She patiently put up with her snobby neighbor.
It allowed her the opportunity to ride horses,
who fulfilled her dream of getting away.
She covered many miles as she cantered all day.
No one could catch her 'cause the horse carried her away.

She patiently put up with those pain-in-the-butt kids.
She went to school to learn so she could reach a life more than was wanted for her.
She'd show them she'd make it, and they couldn't follow her
because she'd forget them and go places their foolishness wouldn't survive.

She patiently waited for her dreams to come true
as they took her and told her she had a new life,
and she would not be stuck with what she knew.

She patiently waited through all forty years.
Her dreams sometimes filled, then ripped away.
Then quickly comes another, and she'll be OK.

Everytime we went Anywhere

"You're breathing my air!"

"Mom, she's pulling my hair!"

"He backwashed in the soda
so he wouldn't have to share!"

Mom turns around; her eyes say, "beware!"

We'd be told we're all getting the belt
as soon as we get there.

"I didn't do it! It was them! I shouldn't get hit—not fair!"

"Then you'll get it for a time you did something before
the one who's to fault, I don't really care."

"Mom, Dad farted again! Put the window down please."

Mom said, "did you have to?" and said, "Oh, geez!"

Baby brother didn't have Kleenex and started to sneeze,
and Grandma passed around crackers with cheese.

Grampa'd get her started yelling as he loved to tease,
then the trip would be over, we'd pile out with ease.

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Haiku version:

"You're breathing my air!"

"I didn't do it! It was them."

"Not fair! Don't really care!"

Untrue Words

Though the words you say aren't true,
they'll always believe you.
When I tell on you, they turn their heads.
What love they give you! Many tears I shed.
I've lived 40 years. All say I'm strong.
I exist, is all. My life's all wrong.
I run from you; you drag me back.
You get awards. Shame on you; another attack.
Someday the time will come – I don't know when –
you'll be the one sitting in the pen.
You won't always have the upper hand.
You'll get old; what will you do then?
Reality will hit; you'll be like me.
They won't listen to you, and then you'll see.
You won't have a name or authority.
When they do it to you, how happy I'll be.

* * *

Someday will come. You won't be authority.
You'll get old. Reality will hit.
Someday you won't have the upper hand.

We Have a Plan

When I'm mad or in pain, I say He doesn't hear my prayers;
then, when it's obvious He does I'll proclaim, *He does! I'm aware!*
For years I said song was how I felt He was there;
but when out of church a different life I had, I didn't really care.
Last week I felt an old way of life and I opened my heart and let God back in my life.
I still have struggles. I still have pain. But when I scream and yell,
it doesn't feel the same; and I want others to know it's not just a game.
I think in my head, still, *why is it again happening to me?*
Didn't I ask God to take care of me?
Then I remember the good and then pray like I should;
I ask Him to carry me and He lets me rest, it's less scary for me.
I know I'll fall, but I'll get up again, cause I know I love God and He's more than a friend.
It might take time or the rest of my life to show all
when they speak of their memories and I hope they aren't small
Where life takes me I must go, and it tires me so;
but it's what I go through, maybe how He speaks to you!
So remember, all of you, who see me be dumb - that in my heart I'll always succumb.
I'll cry out, *OH GOD PLEASE HELP* and it may seem to only be a yelp
But really, I'm praying; even if you don't think I know what I'm saying.
It may seem small, but I'm giving it up, is all.

I cut my sister's Barbie doll's hair.

I put her toy china in the easy-bake oven.

The homemade play-doh Mom made tasted better than the stuff we bought at Ames.

Those big fat crayons they gave us at first didn't break as easy as the thin ones when you smashed them with three fingers.

My mother had a box of dress-up clothes and would ask me who I was and had I seen her daughter? I'd cry every time and scream, *It's ME, Mommy! Don't you know it's me??*

When I grew up the next day I was mad. I became the mom; I became the wife; I became the hired hand.

I no longer wanted anyone to know. I always had to put on a show.

I ran away but wouldn't go far; except the time me and a friend stole her parent's car.

I liked to read and did so with greed; and found it would give me a way to get everything I'd need.

I'm 42 but don't know the same life as you; but when you talk, I can share a story most believe isn't true.

I've been through it all but wish I had not; I wish I'd planned my life with a little more thought.

What I am not is .. (done) with trying what I'll be

Trying to be what I am not,
it's the only hope for the life I've got.
It takes away the stories that other people have often sought.
They didn't want the truth.
They didn't care to hear my plan.
I don't think they were capable to let me think "I can."
They always tell me "no."
When I try to stay, they tell me "go."
When I say I must go, that's in their control also.
So I will do my time in jail
to some it means I fail.
If they could see what I can see,
they'd see I'd won.
Go to hell, my ship's assail.
I have to work 'cause I get up in pain,
it's hard I know, I shouldn't complain.
When I go all out, it's strength I gain,
it makes heart know why I came.
It will be a long time,
I got another record on my list of crimes,
but it will be over and then it will be fine.
'Cause I'll stick out my thumb where I go,
then the choice will be mine.

They and I

They pulled me from something 'cause they thought they should
and with anger I stood
I didn't take in that they were doing me good
It took five rounds 'til I understood
It was my stubborn time before I could

They taught me to see
They were helping me
They have showed me how I'd rather be
They made it so I could do what to others came more free

We learn what we taught
And so, much better I got
To think what getting by anger brought
Do I want my old way? I think not

Thank them with joy
What I get I'll employ
It is a new mind game with which to toy
I get some good. Yippee, oh boy!

A new day I'll marry
It changed my life so contrary
It took not as long to be less hairy
It scares me some. I'm still wary

Confusion is what lies
And it never dies
But longer time to learn it certainly buys
And the longer my lessons so naturally survive

I Don't Think I Could have Wished my Life as Me

I used to think I was cool
when actually I was a fool.
Perfect was when I wasn't me,
when actually it was me people'd see.
Now for things to only get better is what I seek;
my self doesn't like it now any better than it did then.
This is my life. It's the sometimes fictional me,
because one me wants to be better than me.

I used to think my mom was the queen,
I thought on her I'd always lean.
Perfect was when she'd allow me to pretend;
I could then be an individual, even without her consent.
Now, her arms around me is what I seek –
but she's the one who behind sickness couldn't fake.
The sometimes fictional me is the longing I see.
I'll think of memories of her and me.

I used to think adulthood was it.
Now I wish on those thoughts I could spit.
Perfect was what everything it would be.
I don't think I could have wished my life as me.
Now young is what I seek –
it's impossible. It's a goal I'll never reach.
The sometimes fictional me is absurd.
It hurts all those who in It I've lured.

I

I move from you
I beat you back
I let you go
I look at the show
I feel down low
I think I hate and love you so
I care, but I don't. I want you to know.

I sing the song
I can't see myself wrong
I don't feel I'm very strong
I don't feel I will breathe for very long
I reach out and struggle along
I need reassurance to feel I belong
I want life to know I want to go.

I reach out for God, I want Him, too
I wish when young I could see what me as an adult knew
I think my mind wouldn't be so see-through
I would know me and all I know is true
I wish I could mind the same as you
I wish I could walk with more than two shoes
I like you and I can be.

I raise holy hell
I come out of my shell
I make you think I'm very well
I won't say a lie, but the truth I won't tell
I'll go take a hike
I'll make all you yell
I'll look for the bargain and try it to again sell.

I speak what I want and you see what I need
I make you aware of my every good deed
I'll leave a surprise, it's called my greed
I step on your toe and make it bleed
I think I love you
I pick you and dispose of you like a weed
I sprinkle what you are to make a seed.

I talk a big talk
I can barely see to walk
I make you laugh and then I balk
I am myself

I give you a shock
I make you think as I put on the lock
I cover it under the weight of a rock.

Seeking a Valentine

Seeking a Valentine
Just want you to be mine
Seeking more than a card
Even if the work is hard
Seeking to be well also for you
It's what brings hope to see me through
Seeking to know why
I just want to cry
Seeking your thoughts
I know the good ones can't be bought
Seeking a Valentine
I pick you and I want to make your
day until night shine
Seeking a way to show you
I'm capable to get us through
Seeking a Valentine
To be only mine

Birthday Party for my Mouth

My favorite thing to do is bring attention by what I say.
Phrases like "I ain't got no . . ."
People go, "can tell you're a hillbilly."
I'm really not, but I used to be. Many, many, many years ago.
When we were kids in school our teachers had a field day.
Here you are in a boring science class.
All of a sudden perfect, the good escape.
You raise your hand, quickly yell . . .
"Teacher, can I go to the bathroom?"
Response: "I don't know, can you?"
"May I go to the bathroom?"
"Yes - but walk!"
That's smart. They without thinking gave permission to be gone longer.
Today I am trying to better my life.
I don't want to be a hillbilly.
I like to be grammatically correct.
I think what you say can be what you are.
It's important to think before you talk.
Don't swear, don't whine. I do and it isn't fine.
I used to portray myself as someone I wasn't.
I still do, but it's harder.
It brings pain and shame.
I do it out of habit.
I just seem to let my mouth blab it.
Many times it takes its toll.
It seems to goes up like air.
Then everyone judges, and they often hold grudges.
My history of words is like heavy luggage; I'll unpack it and discard it.
I'll have a birthday party for my mouth.

Mr. Winter Makes us Blind

The dark of winter, it blinds many of our sights;
it's a way to tell us the cold winter bites.
In darkness it slows us and keeps us in tight
so the dangers we won't have to fight.
The ones of us who do have quite a plight
usually only do so when the day is light.
Still, then we must work with all our might
so we won't have the fright
of being stuck out at night.
The safest time of tough winter is when the sun is bright.
Most know when it's wrong and when it's right.
It also draws us to its awesome delight
because the snow shines like diamonds, it is so white.
Winter also has its side that makes our hearts light.
let us go on a sleigh ride through the fields tonight!
Our jingle bells will guide us; the sound it is quiet.

A Couple Falls, Winters, Springs

The first snow was a funny time.
I got to watch CO MacDonald slip down a hill on his behind.
I stayed inside in the dark cave of Alpha. It was a long time.
I only saw winter in my mind.
On New Years Eve they let me out and in the yard my dear snow I'd find.
Say joy, but the dark was also about; there's also a sadness during that powerful time.
Now spring will come, leave the sadness behind.
The presence of the sun will bestow my tired mind.
I'll enjoy the mud season, but in these walls the good mud I will not find.
But the next year, I will have a good time.
I'll have left for a different spring; I'll walk in August, leave this place behind.
I'll look forward to winter time;
I'll feel like this year, not alone in my mind.
I'll pick all the leaves that I'll find.
Then I'll see spring at a later time.

To my Friend Chena

My friend Chena, do you know?

I gave up my pride
I didn't care if I was alive
I guess my moral values took a nose dive

My friend Chena, do you know?

They took my dreams
They tore my heart at the seams
They made me get by through other means

My friend Chena, do you know?

My eyes sunk in and were as heavy as bags
My stained ugly clothes were ready to be rags
My body from idleness is flabby and sags

My friend Chena, do you know?

I'll now stand up straight
I'll put aside my hate
I'll try to change what's served on my life plate

My friend Chena, do you know?

When you came to see the real true me
When you shared the days and dreams of when we're both free
When you get to see it how awesome it'll be

My friend Chena

We'll take the whys and the answers we'll know
We'll see the pains squished small by our little toes
We'll find the dreams and follow when it tells us to go

My friend Chena

You will grow from what you've learned
You will find some of your old paths have burned
You will go places your hard work has earned

My friend Chena

We may not see us when our time comes to leave
We may be friends still I do believe
We have to keep our wits when we do leave

My friend Chena

Think for our hearts
Think as our life starts
Think all we've learned that gave us smarts

My friend Chena

Thank-you for being my friend
Thank-you our memories in my heart will not end
Thank-you for your strength that makes me say I'll keep going instead

My friend Chena

I care
I want you to be aware
I want you to know my heart's with you and all that you bear

Amen, Lord!

God, my prayer is for a best friend.
I really need a dog,
but I won't own it, I will love it.
It will be a part of my life,
it will be my friend.
It will help my heart mend.
I wouldn't own something whom I'll love and depend.
I will thank God for my dog 'til the end.
I will share with others with whom its love will extend.
It will be quite the Heaven-send.
I won't own it. You don't own a friend.
I will hug and kiss, it will lend.
I want my dog and I can't wait 'til when
I'm connected forever to my four-pawed friend.
Amen
My Doggie Lord! Amen
Lord, please let me have a doggie, Amen
I'll be good; can you let me love a doggie, please? Amen
My want won't bend; I need my friend. Amen
Please! Pretty Please! Won't you please? Amen
Love ya, too; but you know I'm not through, Lord.
I know you'll give me the best doggie friend. Amen
Now it's Really Amen. AMEN!

Let's Imagine This

Imagine this . . .
a cave at night.
You can't see the stars.
And you're protected by angels.
They fly with wings
and even their heart sings.
Let your mind be opened before, in real life, they arrive.
The miracle of these images will outlast all of our desires.

Hello, I'm Dolly and I'm all Yours, by Golly!

Hi, I'm Dolly the Beagle.
I'm here at the shelter, my person did something illegal.
So I came here.
Now it seems I've been here a year.
But one day a person will take me home
and to my joy! Maybe they'll give me a bone!
I'll sit pretty as can be
and the best one of you will pick me!
I found you! You're here!!
I bark and I cheer!
You're going to love me; you don't know how lucky you are!
Just hurry up, get me out to your car!
Her we go! We're on the way!
Soon we'll be home where we can play!
Don't worry, I won't chew on none of your shoes
and I'll use that black and white paper! Isn't that good news?
You've got the best doggy, I'm gonna show you;
and you're the best person, I can see that too!
Licky! Licky! Slurp! Kissy! Kissy!
I'll even love the mailman too (so he won't get pissy).
I'm going to love you most!
And your friends will love to hear you boast.
We'll sleep together tonight;
don't worry, I don't have fleas and I don't bite!
Thank you for caring, not just walking by and staring!
It's one big heart together we're now sharing!
I love you! and I know you really love me too!
You make my jolly!
Your loving beagle named Dolly.

This New Year I Want . . . But . . .

I want to do good, but I wish I was understood.
I want to have joy, but people mostly say I annoy.
I want my friends back, but they won't give in; there's some I wish would fade to black.
I want them to talk of my good things, but they insult and pick and it really stings.
I want to dream, but they break them, it seems.
I want to joke and play some cards, but there's no one who will. It makes it hard.
I want to be heard, but they ignore every word.
I want to be strong, but what they do is wrong.
I want to ignore, but they get to my very core.
I want to laugh, but instead I'm at the tail of their wrath.
I want to not complain, but I can't pretend there's no pain.
I want not to always be the one they blame, but they let them off so it seems to them a game.
I want not to resent, but I can't at present.
I want to hug, but they rule like a thug.
I want to be warm and safe, but I can't find my way.
I want to trust, but they make my heart bust.

The Scavenger and My Heart

Long ago some scavengers took off with my heart.
They plucked away my ability to love and care,
I don't know where they took it that day.
I'm thankful the church people took time to pray.
I've rummaged over the years through deep debris of torn hearts,
the wanting to find my lost one really smart.
I find ones that are used up and ones still raring to go,
but if I'll find mine, I may never know.
Those scavengers, they come every now and then,
when they come to steal, I'll never know when.
They take my sight, they take my will to fight,
they pull up with huge claws, and they hold on tight,
I think I might find a different plight,
I think I'll linger through another night.
Why would I do this?
Perhaps the next try will be a miss,
and I'll get what I want from all of this.
I'll catch on to the scavenger's wings,
and it will pull and scream,
they will see if I too can be mean,
they will see the side no one's hardly ever seen.
I'll fly under its wings
to the place its thefts it brings.
I'll get my heart and a brand new start,
my deception I'll play is very smart.
Rise up, you scavenger,
I'll climb high with you.
It'd be dumb to question why,
it's 'cause I no longer want to cry,
so I'll stare down the scavenger
and look right in its eyes,
the scariness has been a lifetime of lies,
so I'll cling to its nails,
and my heart will be my prize,
it's been so nice a fight I realize,
but now it's grown to a larger size,
and I have a plan to keep it safe,
'cause I'm smart and at the same time very wise,
I won't allow it again to go to demise.

Mommy and Daddy Scared the Scaries Away

As the small girl peeks from beneath her blanket, she screams!!
The ghosts! The Goblins! The evil-looking men!
All those Scaries!
They all close in on her as from the darkness they come.
"Ah!h!h!h! Ah!h!h!h! Mommy, help! Daddy, help! Ah!h!h!"
"Hey my little one, what's the fuss? Daddy says
as he plops down on the bed.
Mommy's there too standing close beside her head.
"The Scaries are here. I saw them!" she cried.
"Now dear, don't cry. Look around, nothing's here."
The child looks slowly at her Mommy and Daddy's encouragement.
"They're gone! You scared them away! I knew you would!
"No, it wasn't us. It was you, my little girl. When you
called out to us, you scared them away."
"I did? Mommy, is Daddy telling me a story, or is it true?"
"Your father's right as always. Now lay down and pray again.
Ask Jesus to only let good girls and boys come the rest of the night.
But remember, it's sleep you need, not fright."
"I already prayed inside my head, and I think He'll keep
the Scaries away from my bed."
Then she let out a yawn as she lowered her head.
For the rest of the night, not another tear was shed.
But she knew it was Mommy and Daddy who scared the Scaries away.

I Thank Abby Hale

Think of the woman who lived outside.
Think of that winter she almost died.
Thank the woman who reached out her hand.
Think of the woman as she got up and ran.

Think of the woman drunk and alone.
Think of the life of a drunk she has shown.
Thank the woman who reached out her hand.
Think of the woman who drank again and couldn't stand.

Think of the woman who screamed and yelled.
Think what she thought when in their strong hands she was held.
Thank the woman who reached out her hand.
Think of the woman as a patient in the nut ward again.

Think of the woman who picked up a drug.
Think of the woman in the hole she dug.
Thank the woman who reached out her hand.
Think of the woman she couldn't help as she planned.

Think of the woman in the prison cell.
Think of the woman who was scared as hell.
Thank the woman who reached out her hand.
Think of the woman who was in a different land.

Think of the woman who picked herself up.
Think of how she learned to stop fucking up.
Thank the woman who reached out her hand.
Think of the woman hugging and shaking her hand.

This woman's name is Abby Hale
and the other is me.
It is a memorial of Abby's life
for all she had done for me.

Abby was a medical provider
but her career reached out much wider.
It was sad to see she'd died that way,
that something like Alzheimer's took her away.

I cry my tears,
I remember all those years.
I thank Abby for reaching out her hand.
I celebrate the memory of the one who did all that some needs would demand.

Put on Some Shoes & Run Away

Right or wrong doesn't matter,
they'll stick you either way
If you hold your temper,
it seems they get worse, yes, I say.
It's bad for me to have to hate,
it keeps my life in this hellish crate.
I will though until the end,
because it would take a miracle
for my heart to love again.
No, my heart is beyond the ability to mend
I don't care to be a person's friend
'cause now I have the usual pain to tend.
I don't care, the baloney I'm told,
it's safer for my heart when it's cold.
Be thankful for what?
that they're a pain in the butt.
I'll take a ride straight through my life's accrue,
then I won't have to pretend I don't hate you.
I won't have to say "I'm sorry," when it isn't true.
I think I'm sick,
my heart's as heavy as a brick.
I don't like it, no,
but here's the pain atop my big toe.
Put on some shoes
and run away,
do it quick before there's any more to say.
I'll go home someday to see
my dearest friend
with all four paws,
my dog, the one and only
who will help me mend.

Me Unglued

Once again I'm coming unglued
It leave my morals as if they were nude.
Why can't I share my issues and
not bring the day crashing down.
Shut up! Screw you! Our friendship through.
The stress is loud. My anger, sure
isn't what makes me fit the crowd.
I reach out, but I don't take hold.
Then I yell and push all progress away.
Then I have nothing about you that's
good to say. I'm stuck with myself
and it's not very good for my health.
I sweat, I shake, I wish it were fake.
What brings this to me,
what's this wasteful story only of me?
The better road is to trust,
I throw that out the window to dust.
It ricochets right back
because of karma.
I'm going to climb this hill
if it takes the rest of my days,
I'll try it in all of my best ways.
Why I don't need no one but me,
I don't need to be pushed or
pulled or have instructions told.
Hell, I'm 41 years old
I'm strong, I'm told,
They say, "rely on yourself"
they say, it's the only way.
Professional idiots at their best,
is what I say.
If I could give them my life to do,
I think they'd fail the test.
It comes down to "not me"
I'm stuck in the shell,
I don't have much more
to say than, "oh well."
Life stinks and it does without smell.
'Cause it's only shit that we see
when can I reason with even me.
I wander to and fro, and I'm never free
Even in a crowd I'm alone,
I become unglued.

Part of My Tattoo Story

In this day I need a reason for all that I do.
For that reason, my tattoo hides something from you.
It shows an artistic beauty – with deception, it's true -
it's with good reason that it's what I show you.
It's a pretty good story of a life that is new
and it covers the scars of some days that were quite blue.

I love to sit as the artist does beauty to me.
It opens doors up for freedom for me and I thank him.
It's so much more a pleasure for you and me to see.
It's kind of a way to hide the unpleasurable me.
I think a future one is a funny one; yet
some may disapprove; but I won't fret, you can bet.
Cookie Monster eating cookies sitting on my right breast
with Elmo sits on the other flipping him off 'cause he can't get a cookie
even though he begged his best.
A dragon will climb the length of my other arm
that attests it will cover the last scar of self-harm.
No more questions will come.
No more stories of it to tell.
No more wanting nosy people to fall off earth straight to hell.
No more having to yell I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.
I will have questions and complements to respond to.
I will have something more blessed to share with you.
For those who then still know truth,
I hope you'll keep your mouths shut.
If you can, I'll be thankful and if you can't . . . well, screw you.

My Jokes aren't Nice

I remember jokes being mean.

They seemed funny then.

Now it makes me sad.

I used to do things like

- give ExLax and say it was chocolate;
- put someone's bra in the freezer because they fell asleep first;
- tell someone to come over and give them the wrong address;
- pretend to be a friend, then laugh when they cried;
- tell a person their horse was calm, then laugh when they got bucked off;

There are many more. Many I won't even share
because they were ones that caused real pain.

A lot of my so-called 'jokes' I did after they were done to me,
or someone who I took for granted did it to someone else.

I still say jokes but they aren't good.

I wish I could find something else to bring attention to myself.

I think, *is that the example I want to be?*

Is it what God would say to me?

But still I say it again. The wrong it does not end.

It seems I'd grow, and learn a new show;

and say something funny or do something that earned an honest laugh.

One worth something other than giving someone the shaft.

I remember some being took away in an ambulance
and I was still showed to laugh.

I hear jokes of people dying, and they were nice to us.

Why did I have to be taught to find these funny?

My parents would joke and say, "It's alright, honey!"

[26 poems]

PROSE

I can't 'just let it go ...'

"Do you hear voices?"

"Yes."

"Do you see people or things others can't see?"

"Yes."

"What do they say? What do you see?"

"They're scary but not at first. They look kind and friendly. Comforting as can be. They say they'll be my friend or take care of me. Then, as it progresses, everything progressively starts to change. They turn into monsters and then I know they're evil and want to take my soul from me."

"Why don't you relax? Don't worry so! You'd feel so much better if you'd just let it go."

It's always the same. I cry in shame. I'm a joke and excuse for others to bitch. The resentments and worries are what people see and profess and describe me. Again I'm the ass and it's stuck in my heart and mind and torments me.

There's so many people both inside and out and they all got big mouths without a doubt. Then there's the little of me that is real. Some people get to know a part most don't see. Experience. Things I still enjoy and sometimes get to share. I get to show I'm human and make them aware.

Homeless Person's Interview Process

"Where do you live?"

"Gosh. I don't want to say."

When you say *I'm homeless*, they always look with dismay.

"Where was your last place of residence?"

Now it's getting intense.

"What's the address of yesterday's stay?"

"How long did you stay there?"

I look down. "Just a day."

"Do you have any close family?"

I look up. "Hell, yes! I've got many."

"What's your means of income?"

The look she gives says she thinks I am dumb.

"I fly a sign I put out on a can."

"Isn't that a crime?" "Not where I sit. It's just fine."

"What's some of your goals?"

"I'd like some shoes without holes."

"What's your future plan?"

"it's to be just as I am."

After making my collage, I found the following connections between my earlier writing and the collage:

Everything does up

They are strong and can hold themselves up.

They can bring benefits to many.

They require time.

They are something to watch.

With love and respect, they go far.

They start at the bottom, then rise.

They relate because people judge by looks and what they see; that's how they decide whether it's good or bad, instead of history; and what they miss may be sad.

People gawk at them.

Seamus

She was just 15 and knew what she wanted to do. That she is me. I knew I wanted to teach young children. I had worked at this daycare for two summers now, and once a week and vacations during the school year.

I loved my job working as the one-to-one aide with Seamus. He was a wonderful little boy to work with. He had autism and the teachers didn't really like working with him a lot. They tried to treat him like a baby even though he was five. They made him be in the two-year-old classroom because of his special needs. They put him in diapers and wouldn't let him play with the others for fear he'd hit them or something worse. I tried to include him whenever I could get away with it. He never hit me and he never hit any one of the other children. The teachers that weren't the best and would yell or be rough got hit a lot. With me, he'd smile and sometimes squeal out something like *drr drr drr doo*. He couldn't speak other than stuff like that, but I could tell what he wanted.

When we went for walks, they put him in a baby carriage. I hated that and so did he. I was so glad when I went to a different daycare to work and surprisingly, his parents moved him there, too. This daycare was more into including all kids. He got to be in the four-to-six-year-old class. We worked on potty training and no more baby carriage. He walked on the rope the same as the others. He was encouraged to do his best in whatever the other children did. He wasn't treated like a baby anymore and I was so glad to see how much he grew. He was doing everything I knew he could do and even though he needed a little more help than the others, I knew he was happy. I miss him so much.

[3 prose pieces]

[31 pages total]