

Resurrection

By Waldo Hewitt

The lion's hungry. In darkness pages glow.

Sharp teeth stab the light.

In a blackout cheetahs chew a feast,

Tigers emerge, eyes bright.

Hurry to hunt, the oasis a prey,

A dispeller of darkness loose.

Blindfolds lunch, so hunters shine.

War now knows no truce.

Lion's distaste, holders of lessons,

They lick, not bite; Bringers of light

Are Kings worthy. The panther praise

Experiences reflect the night.

Scales of justice tipped the left.

The gavel bangs hurt the right.

Hands wave, since 30 B.C.

Father's been the enemy of light.

Why I Write

By Sailor

I write because I am but one small voice in this world. When I write I can be heard by many.

I write so that the stories of my life can be passed down to my children. When I write, ideas flow, often times better than spoken word.

My writing allows me to escape, temporarily, from this place. I can go to other worlds or just enjoy memories with my wife and daughters.

In my writing there are no fences, no barbed wire, no yellow lines, and no guards. I can go to fields of sunflowers, or a sandy beach, or even have lunch in the park with my wife.

In here my writing is one of the very few things I can call my own. I write to tell stories from behind the fences. We need to be heard.

The reason I write is that I feel I have something to say. Hopefully someone will want to read it.

Why I Write

By Nicole

I write because it's the first thing I ever did that felt like it was right
because there's no use fighting it
I've been a poet all my life; I have to get it out somehow.

I write to establish myself, in light of other's thoughts
to challenge the things that have been said about me
I write to address those things of which I cannot speak
to prove to my mother her pain is real
to show my father that his choices can hurt
to bury my ex-stepmother
the way she buried me.

I write because for a while, my closest friends were characters in books
and I know the joy that comes
from finding friends like these-
magic horses and little girls with secrets just like me-
who stay with you your whole life.

I write because if I didn't, I'm afraid I would go crazy
the way my mother almost did
when she felt the world wasn't listening to her anymore
I write to prevent implosion
the way I'm sure my soul would
collapse into itself
if I didn't-
a spindly tent of twigs and sheets
falling inward on a gaping emptiness.

I write because it's the only weapon I have
that feels good in my hands
the only wave of brightness
in an otherwise dark and dusty
file cabinet of worry and regret.

I write because maybe, if you can see what I mean
you'll know me, the way I grew to know myself in the words
and knowing someone that way is the greatest thing
you could ever possibly give to them

because that's all anyone ever really wants in this life-
to be understood, and to be truly seen
the way that they've come to see themselves.

A Fight for My Education

By Luis Hernandez

I hated school, so I definitely hated to write. Nobody can say they ever saw me write in school or at home. When I came to prison, I only wrote out of necessity. A few letters but mostly greeting cards, because I didn't have to write much. I thought writing was boring, something for nerds, a waste of my time. Years went by, wasted, the pen and paper were dead objects to me. My hand couldn't hold a pen or pencil for more than five minutes.

I remember a friend who used to write letters every day and small pieces of literature. I thought he was crazy, how could he do it?

The day came though when I had to write my first essay. I was worried because I had never spent so much time with my enemy. I couldn't avoid him, I was cornered. I had to face off my laziness, the lack of desire to put words on a paper. If I backed down without a fight, I would lose everything. Because my GED meant that to me. I never got one certificate in all the years I went to school. If they gave one for the worst student or for the one who skipped school the most, I would have one every year. I know a friend who did ten years in prison and went home without his GED. He wanted it but never fought for it. So I picked up my pencil and stabbed my paper with determination to overcome all those wasted years. I went into training and I was coached to do my best when the time came for the final fight. When that day came I got my GED on the first round, and the examiner complimented me on my essay. I came out of the box with my hands lifted high. That was just the beginning. Writing became my friend, we now have an intimate relationship.

The Traveler
By Lesmes Caseres

A traveler forgotten
Unwelcomed and unexpected
Whether worn or untrodden
All roads end connected

To an ego-id collision
Records kept of what was said
He dines with his decisions
All positioned at the head

A visit from the past
The baggage of a troubled man
A spirit-filled flask
Tucked inside a duffle bag

He masters misdirection
Complicates his path
He saddles a suggestion
Without a compass or a map

At a dusty, withered inn
Like a dream he's seen before
He abruptly slithers in
Through a weakened, creaking door

Pay the traveler no attention
Hat lowered and rifle raised
He beckons! Beckons! Beckons!
But silence sends him on his way.

Invisible

By Kimberly Smith

What if I were invisible?

Could you still see the shame through me?

Is it possible to cover what cannot be seen?

What would I have left to punish?

Can you embellish what you've abolished?

What if I were invisible?

Could you hear me better if I were?

Would you notice if I walked away?

If I just vanished?

What would be left without the visible?

Would I be finished?

What if I were invisible?

Birdcage

By Israel Martinez

Cool metallic posts brace the ceiling and push the floor
There are no sights to see through windows
And no exit for a door.

Trapped within and trapped without
There is no freedom, there is no doubt...

That imprisonment is not a choice,
No matter how far you lift your hands or raise your voice.
It all falls on deaf ears that would bleed first
Than heed your fears.

Trapped within and trapped without
There is no freedom, there is no doubt...

That without my mind, zombie I would be,
Walking aimlessly, cannot see.
The true potential and what I'm worth
To all of them, to all of earth.

Trapped within and trapped without
There can be no freedom, there is no doubt...

That imprisoned only means freedom-less
When I can close my hand over a pen and make a fist.

The Gate
by G the Seer

Floating— in the ether of the primary dimension
Traveling— with digital precision among the
pylons of the universe.

— Here —

Sound is, and is mingled with— color.
Color is, and is mingled with— smell.
Smell is, and is mingled with— mood.
Mood is, and is mingled with— sight.
Sight is, and is mingled with— sensation.

The body— astral— perfect— Travel,
effortless as adding |+|.

Your name — new, a vibrant, vitriol, visible
cinematic commingled manifestation of
All the senses.

Your essence — discernible — identifiable and knowable.

This is what it means — to be— reborn.

This is what it means to experience — the gate.

So I was told — by— a— voice— whispering— in— my— head.

Just Because....

By Ernesto Brady

Just because I'm quiet

Doesn't mean I'm without something to say

Doesn't mean I'm comfortable this way

And doesn't mean I'm not.

Just because I stand alone

Doesn't mean I only like myself

Doesn't mean I can stand myself

And doesn't mean I always want to be by myself.

Just because I'm in Blues

Doesn't mean I have to be blue

Doesn't mean that I am mad

And doesn't mean a smile can't be had.

Just because I am here,

Does that mean I can't be there?

Do you think that you can't share?

Or have you thought that I won't care?

Assumptions!

Why I Write

By Echo

Talk. Text. Skype. Type. I write because it helps me remember and forget. I write hoping someone will listen and do something about it. Enliven or repress me. Slander or flatter me. Let me know that I got your attention. That my words aren't stagnant and dormant, but enormous. That they moved you mawkishly and mellifluously from left to right. Tell me that what I've written is contrary to whatever the hell it is you're thinking or tell me you just don't care. At least I'll know my words were read.

I write so you can chew on my thoughts and let your feelings digest the letters I fed you like alphabet soup. Spin my opinions then spit them back out in your own words.

I write because the current reality of this unreality is that freedom of speech in prison is prohibited and forbidden. However, writing enfranchises me. It grants me permission to trespass, as I disguise myself in pseudonyms and hide behind the paper lines. Or touch untouchable issues, and cross the lines with pride.

I write to satisfy an urge and craving that is never satisfied. Writing is the truest and purest voice I have these days. It's intimate and personal. It's as natural as the layer of tree skin I scribble these life sentences on. I write cause I can, and they can't stop me from doing so. They can censor it, only to a certain extent. Their handcuffs don't fit my pen. They can't shackle these words or confine my thoughts. Shut me up, hush, shhhh... and silence me. Cause words written will scream, shout, yell, howl, laugh, cry, live, whisper, comfort, console, love, hate, and worship all on a single sheet of paper, stone, screen, or, glass. Words can do everything but die. You can't kill what's been written.

Why do I write. Because if I didn't you wouldn't know me. Besides, this pen lets me vent til all the ink is spent. I write so the letters of the alphabet can meet and intermingle with each other and create words that make worlds that circumvent yours. So therapeutic, the penicillin of my penmanship.

I write cause I have way too many good reasons why I should and I'll have way more contradicting ones in the next few minutes. I write, cause I want you to write back. Where is your pen?

Why do I Write? By Distraction

Why do I write?

You'd think that would be an easy question to answer given its personal nature and yet my mind goes blank.

Why *do* I write?

It's not usually something I plan to do—I don't sit down at a desk and say to myself, "okay, it's time to write." In fact, I hate writing. It's stressful and time consuming. It keeps me up at odd hours with its refusal to let my mind rest. It makes me short-tempered and anti-social, buried deep in my own thoughts as I usually am. It drives me crazy. The Muse has no concept of appropriate, whether it comes to time or subject matter, or of just how hectic the life of an average, everyday human being can be; doubly so for a student.

No, the Muse is only concerned with snatching up all of my time and attention—whatever little I have left at the end of the day.

Unfortunately, I also love writing. It's cleansing. It frees up my mind. It's a creative outlet for when I can't find any other way to express myself. It allows for me to arrange my thoughts in such a way that they *make sense*—like connecting the dots and finally seeing a concrete image. I find that I'm better on paper than I am in person, and so writing is also an excellent means of communication. It connects me to writers like myself. It keeps my mind busy when I don't want to think of other things.

I write because I can. I have the leisure to do so (sometimes) and it's something that I ultimately enjoy despite our love-hate relationship. I write because there is a lack. If it hasn't been done, I try to do it. I push the boundaries of my imagination as far as they will go. I write because I'm fascinated by language—spoken or written. I love the way letters work together to create words, words work together to create sentences, and so on. Sprinkle in tone and context and words can mean different things entirely.

I write fiction. Fantasy, usually, though I dabble in slice-of-life if I'm in a mood. I write of dragons and dungeons; witches and wizards; hexes and curses; true love and the foolishness of young lovers. I write about adventure and conquest. Sometimes, I write about grand battles and the generations of strife that lead up to them. I write about what I know. I draw from what I've seen and read and experienced first-hand. I add my own twist so that they're a little less mundane, a little more attention-grabbing. I also write about things that I know nothing of. I've never travelled cross-country, but the dragon slayer in one story has. I've never broken a bone in my fragile human body, but my characters have known true agony.

I write because I dislike the sound of my own voice.

A wise man once wrote to me—"Why do I write? Such a stupid question. Why do fish swim?" He made it seem as though writing is, much like breathing, necessary and instinctive—not just something someone can learn.

And I agree.

Two Tears by Christopher Malec

It was still dark outside; the smooth steel of shackles suffocating my ankles made the Florida morning seem cold. The long ride through early morning Ft. Lauderdale traffic was like many I had taken in the 21 months leading up to that day. No windows save for the driver's, no lights on the bus to hide nail-biting and restless leg syndrome. 99 JAMZ played in the background and without realizing it I found myself singing along as Drake crooned, "*Caught in this life/I can't let it go/ Whether that's right/ I will never know.*"

From the moment I made it into the holding cells beneath the courtrooms, time ticked by grudgingly. I spent hours curled on a bench with my head against a pale, yellow wall carved with hundreds of name of prior unfortunates like me, listening to conversations sprinkled with hopeful overtones, like naïve, last-minute dreams that the executioner, instead of lowering the axe, would suddenly tear off his hood and scream, "Gotcha!"

Once in the courtroom, things moved quickly, a flash of sharp and creased designer suits disputing my fate in a rushed and uncaring manner. Moments later the judge banged the familiar wooden hammer in the stereotypical way they all do, saying what I knew he would: Life.

I had known it was coming when I lost trial a month before. I had even called home and warned everyone, as much as myself, to walk away with dignity intact. Up to this point I hadn't shed any tears. Not one. Instead I smirked in utter disbelief that the system claimed justice when in my mind and heart I knew it had not.

Then I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder. I turned to meet the compassionate gaze of a bailiff who'd been seeing me in the courtroom since I was a juvenile. Two tears streamed down her light ebony cheeks, glistening in an obvious display of public affection. .

I had to look away, my own eyes now watering. I sucked up defiance, determined to be strong, now not just for me, but for her, this bailiff whose affection for me defied her professional interest. The water of her tears held the vitality which gave life to a thought I hatched at that moment - a thought that instantly grew into a fully formed pledge. I would never give up the fight, no matter how long or exhausting, to give my sentence back to the ones who dealt it, or I would be living the life they wanted me to serve, a life other than my own.

Unauthorized and Violated

By Catherine LaFleur

A woman boldly steps
out of the bathroom
named. Wrapped only
in a tiny thread-bare
towel which is not
nearly enough
to cover her
width
and girth.

Flesh jiggles, giggles
all over. She
prances along the
tier, dainty hoofed
as any gazelle dancing
on African veldt.

No one can look
away. Or stop laughing.
As her buttocks
disappear with a slam
behind her cell door,
I think
of your favorite song
lyric.
Don't look!

But it's too late.
We've all done
been violated. The
officer looks down
into the dayroom
and notices

we are watching t.v.

at an unauthorized time.

August 9, 1986

By Carl Shuck

I shiver in fear on the wet tiles
Smelling the mixture of hair grease and feces
Several ribs creak with each breath
A button trailing a piece of thread
Floats across the floor to the shower drain
While steam collects in drops on my cheeks
I close my eyes and forget