

Rolling

Name for publication: Xi Xiao

You entered my life like a new car.

I heard you before I saw you, your voice resonated like a purring engine.

When I saw you, everything shone: your blue eyes were windows reflecting a cloudless sky.

You were gracious, offering me an open passenger door.

Where do you want to go? When you asked me this the first time, I did not reply.

So, you powered up, and drove me into a forest.

The forest was as beautiful as a painting, full of bird calls and fragrant wind.

You smiled at my joy, and I shyly smiled back.

The next time you asked me the same question, I had already fallen in love.

Anywhere with you, I replied without hesitation.

One day you gave me the keys to your life, and thus access to a magnificent machine.

A machine made for dreams and romance, as renewable as starlight.

As you patiently teach me to drive, we grow into a pair of parallel lines on an endless highway.

Content to never leave each other's side.

Untitled

Name for publication: Hilary Stewart

bum a cigarette
the world is your

crisis, circling, again -
rainbows run
black, down your

face
 `rise
words

stiff-necked

words unspeakable
cry blue, cry

blood imprisoned
in a body
in a cell

Mandela

imprisoned in a
church in an
office in

music

beer drowns out
the sound of

leaving, the
sight of
arctic light

the -

don't LEAVE

if I leave
will you
come too?

rising I
rising I

mater

kyrie eleison
christe eleison
kyrie eleison

Stella

Name for Publication: Anonymous

Hey Stella!
You remember
when we first met
in that park
under the bird poo tree?
You wrapped me up
in hugs made from
rough sleeping sweat
and sweet mosel.
Your laughter crackled
in the space between us
and we talked:
About chasing this man
when even he knew
he was no good.
About finding places
where sleep might be warm.
About what rainy nights
under the stars did to your soul.
Between times you whispered
tunes about moving on
and making magic for yourself.
Then one day you disappeared.

Since then I've heard almost nothing of you.
Once, years ago now, a midnight call
slightly drunk and out of the habit
you called to let me know you made it out alive.
I see that old man of yours from time to time.
Even though he's got another woman
we ask each other, "seen Stella?",
reassure each other, "heard she's doin' good".

Hey Stella?
This morning
when we met
at first I wasn't sure
it was really you, but then
you wrapped me up
in hugs made from
sunbaked strength and
sweet sister spirit.
Your laughter crackled
in the space between us
and we talked:
About this new man you got

who treats you right.
About this counsellor woman
who's aunty, sister, nan, cousin
all rolled into heavy talk
that leaves you feelin' oh so light.
You asked after me and I mumbled:
between times I whisper
doubtful tunes about moving on
and making magic for myself.
Been thinking;
it might be my turn to disappear.

Michael

Name for Publication: Kasia Olszewski

For fifteen years
He came
Every Thursday
To help me
Manage
My bearings
In the world.
Never absent,
Never late.
His Presence
Bright eyed
And spirited.
He heard my story,
Versed in languages
I understood.
He held my story.
Reminded me
Of who I was
When I had forgotten,
In states inchoate,
Whinging and distraught.
We made sense
Of the senseless,
The trauma.
He did not label me,
Steered me away,
Calling it
My sensitivity.
In his eyes
I was always
Randomly normal.
We traversed
Nearly everything:
Periods, ovulation,
Mothers, immigration...
He was there
When my twin died.
His faith in me
Was indomitable.
He is my foundation.
And that is solid.

Slaying

Name for Publication: Kylie Marshall

My mind is a battlefield,
A desolate wasteland,
A prison, of solitary confinement.

Clarity and freedom long to escape,
but it is overcome with
Panic, anxiety and dread.

The endless cycle of thoughts
held captive.

The only way to prevail, is with
determination, strength and love.
Like the fiercest warrior going into battle,
I pick up my sword,
And meet the monster head-on.

I will slay this dragon once and for all.

Impact**Name for Publication:** Angie Goode***Trigger Warning – Suicide***

You see her smile.
You see her laugh.
You see her happy.
You see her proud.
What you do not see.. is her past
What she did not see..
Would be her last.
Rising up slowly towards the stars,
she's brought back down by raining clouds.
No matter how hard she tries,
Those tears don't dry.
Through her troubled eyes,
she continues to lie.
The light of freedom she once seen,
is now dark unforgiven memories.
As the days drag by, she loses hope,
the cracks are showing, she just
can't cope.
She closes her eyes..
and ties the rope.
The pain she felt.. could not be helped.

The Mask

Name for Publication: Murray

A message from the dark side
The face we wear
When there is no light
Hello, goodbye, hollow again
This is me not you but I
How long must I endure
Such horrifying masks
So false so horrible
Why do I have to be me
Why not just I
Goodbye hello, goodbye
This is not me it is just a thought
A figment
Of their distorted imagination
They cannot see me
Cause they have not my eyes
Cause they are simply not me
Hello goodbye hollow again
I'm here until I find
Myself
Goodbye

**The day trip
(A villanelle)**

Name for Publication: Chloe Steward

It was all just a bad day
What more can I say?
Ashamed about what I ate yesterday.

Out of bed at eight, exercise right away
Then write some new rules I swear to obey.
It was all just a bad day.

Rush to get ready, mind in disarray
Have I left the fridge open? Scrambled replay.
Ashamed about what I ate yesterday.

Lost my ticket on the way
Eight dollars forty I didn't want to pay.
It was all just a bad day.

Missed two trains. What now? A delay?
Time wasted staring at the platform, dismay.
Ashamed about what I ate yesterday.

Sorrow

Name for Publication: Serina Holman

So many friends and family we have lost in lifetime along the way.

We have all had sadness and sorrow in our life and pain.

You will never always be missed, you will always be loved in our hearts and minds.

You will always be one of gods angels. We give thanks for the times that you were here with us.

Receive love and love will come back to you. You need family and also friends now.

Peace and love be with you.

Comes with an image – if possible Serina would like the image included in the book instead of plain text – Image has been saved in the folder

Misery

Name for Publication: Riff Raff

The cough all night, a ghastly sound. Keeps me awake, like a shotgun blast.

Surely, no person should suffer this way.

If there's a God, let him slip away.

Would people judge me wrong, if I granted his wish.

A peaceful death, on his terms, as much as I wish it, I can't assist.

No prayer is answered and I contemplate, my empathy in overdrive.

Bogged 'tween the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, my mind races, it's hard to resist.

I've got grief in my dreams, Week after week. There's no round the bend in this nightmare without end.

Terrible thoughts like an unstoppable force, please death come soon, take your course.

His demise finally came, his suffering ends, his gasping for air like a fish with no tank.

This was my Father, a terrible death. Many years in the making, his final breath.

His misery.

late afternoon childishly drifting

Name for Publishing: Nicholas Bosanquet

Possible Trigger? Not Sure

Dozens of books about you
I don't think they are any good
A beautiful disaster
Caught among the roots

Always running from something
Afraid of getting bored
A beautiful disaster
So many things ignored

At times it makes me anxious
Sometimes unbearably so
The fire burning among my trees
Left me worse than I was before

A perfectly painted scene of the crime
Some pattern of colours and shapes
My twin fantasy was designed
In which I need an escape

It's just a burning memory
We do not have many days
Late afternoon childishly drifting
Ebbing on the lake

Things that are beautiful and transient
All that follows is true
A beautiful disaster
Caught among the roots

The scent is buried where I rest my head
To linger after you
My opiate and my saving grace
A blessings not the truth

A suddenly timed regressive phase
From my death defied
A long decline is finally over
Into each others eyes

Did you know that I'm the blade
I exacerbate your pride
An empty bliss beyond this world
A temporary lie

Aching cavern without lucidity
Wait for the blood to dry
There's no end to this feeling
You'll govern this brand new high

Untitled

Name for Publishing: Peter Ball

born nocturnal
sweating on the moon
desire drove him out into the desert
and the rain
saw an evil or two
with the ground crew who stutter
dead-spent time on dumb charades
“happy to meet you, unlucky to care”

professionally unsophisticated
knowingly unadulterated
immune
outwardly insulated

one soul-faring lucky-go-happy sort of chap
born on a borderline
somewhere between Cain and the moon
with no chance
no balance
no sense of survival

I Hope You Do!

Name for Publishing: SHEP

Trigger: Violence

They said I was no trouble, just shy
As a small child I would often try
 To fit in and feel the same
A nice home, clothes, no shame
 Many tears fell from my eyes
 I often ask the question why
Butterflies in my stomach grew
Over the years my fears did too
 Homelife mixed with fear
 From things I did see and hear
 Sounds of thuds against her face
Shaking inside, feeling my heart race
 Please stop, I want to flee
Words of put down aimed at me
 Teenage years then adulthood
 Noone really understood.
 My self-esteem is so low
 But I never let it show
 The constant panic everyday
 Takes over life in every way
Slowly sadness creeps up on me
Like a heavy cloud, please let me be
 You can't see inside my head
 Every day is full of dread
 My silent pain doesn't show
 I challenge it so I can grow
Music and laughter get me through
Please just understand I hope you do
 Life is worth every fight
I want you to know it will be alright.

Tiredness

Name for Publishing: Z.Doyle

Tiredness is like a tree in reverse.

You deprive it of what it needs and it grows,

You give it what it needs and it shrivels up and retreats.

Tiredness thrives on stress, unsettledness and fear.

On uncertainty, on anxiety.

Those grey clouds of mood that are murky and strong.

That darkens your days with those feelings of unbelonging, of disconnectedness, of wrong.

If you feed the tiredness with self belief

with love

with care

with happiness

with light.

It shrivels on the onslaught.

The brightness of the primary palette fights the grey of mood.

It's the water, light and oxygen to a tree

but poison to tiredness

The need to find that poison to tiredness is hard.

To find that self belief of light.

Of Joy.

It does exist somewhere.

It's a matter of finding where.

Night and Day

Name for Publishing: Rika Kristall

Next page so you can see the Layout – also shrank font size so it sits on one page

NIGHT

and

DAY

There is no future,
in the dawn
There is no future,
there is no dawn
Just deep wells of sorrow,
deep wells of grey
deep wells filled with dread
There is no future, there is no dawn
Just eternal night
with no hope of morn

Light in her eyes, beautiful face
beautiful skies, beautiful place
Sound of the water, singing its song,
singing its song as it moves along

The air smells and speaks,
sometimes gently, or bold
making leaves, trees and grass
all move in its flow

The birds sing their songs, so utterly free
totally present, at peace as they be

The wind speaks louder,
the trees and leaves respond
stirring inside, we tag along

Drop deep inside
Stillness - within and without
The sound of a soft voice,
The sight of the sky,
deepest of blue
reigns mighty and high

Flowers so tiny, perfect, and gold
adorning the world and spreading their cheer,
openly giving, without favour or fear

The trees live together, sharing the space
joyfully living in unique colour and grace
they reach up to the light,
joining heaven and deep earth,
providing shelter and homes for
all that is birthed.

Green gold kaleidoscope, sprinkled with red,
the colour of trunks – subtle and soft
With rain they speak louder,
aglow and aloft

The beauty is stunning, it makes my heart stop
bringing me into the present, at one with the lot

The ants crawl around, part of it all,
doing their business
for one and for all

The smell of spring flowers
sweetens the air, part of the beauty
shape, light and colour bring
Joining softly together,
the whole garden sings
Voices rising to heaven, meeting the stars
a picture is painted, healing all scars.

The Bandid

Name for Publishing: anonymous

Perhaps it was little me who did it?
How clever and resourceful of her!

What is it though?
What is the wound?
What is the origin?

The bandid was to perform,
to conform,
To fulfill the role expected of me

This version of me is in many ways,
genuine me
It is a lighter version of me
Way from perfect;
Funny
Ditzty
Warm
Loving
Helpful
But also, capable and knowledgeable,
The one to call in a crisis,
Compassionate, understanding

But what is the pain and underlying hurt?
I am afraid to see it
I am afraid to name it

The impact is that now I hold a rigid boundary
A boundary around my most hurt and vulnerable self
It is now a gate through which any possible help or support cannot pass
I have shut that gate, raised the drawbridge
No help in, no help out

Your calls are unanswered
Any conversation is on the surface - safe
This leaves me feeling that I am failing you
But you take so much
And see so little

Why am I afraid?

So afraid that the question, the answer, the 'thing', cannot even reveal itself to me
It is a thread
Threatening to unravel
An insect buzzing in and out of my consciousness
Almost imperceptibly

In the words of a fellow traveler

Remove the bandaid
Reveal the haunt

Remove the bandaid
Reveal the hurt

Triggered

Name for Publishing: Rose Fitz-Patrick

It just takes one word to turn you from a brave confident person (at least trying to be), to a broken down mess.

That word today for me was GRIEVE.

I hadn't given myself time to grieve yet, for the loss of my beloved Benson.

Entitled

Name for Publishing: Corinna Jamie

Trigger Warning: Language and abuse

Had a bad habit of letting monsters in my bed.
They'd dance so well with those in my head.
Repeating all mumma did and said.
This world'd be better off if you're dead.

Don't know a home not on my knees,
Vile, twisted desires, too easily I can appease.
Abuse and misuse.
Blood stained sheets, a play for keeps.
Of course I'll never let them lose,
And so it repeats.

You see, it's all a little easier when things make sense.
No struggle with cognitive dissonance.
If one integrates the hate, there's no limits to what you can tolerate.

So that's where I found my safe,
Existence of a disassociate.
And now at 33, I wonder who the fuck is me.

A lover, a dreamer, a player or a schemer,
Something referred to as corinna.
Everything or nothingness,
Meaningless fence of endless achievements.
Image of 'success', hides the mess of brokenness,
And keeps out the touch I wish to let in.
But what if you see what lies beneath my skin.

A gentle heart, too soft to hate,
A child to no one, just waiting for a mate.
A wish to grow old with someone I can share
The innocence I bare, without a care.

So there's my darkest secret,
No more need for me to keep it.
For now I hold me, it is possible to see,
That all the love inside, need not hide,
And that which I desire is allowed to fuel my fire.

I will have an existence,
Albeit with some resistance,
But I am finding a voice, some concept of choice.
And with the past in my power, I will live out my every hour.

Silence is My First Language

Name for Publishing: Bethany Evans

Silence is my first language: I
speak it fluently, all the words
I do not say moving backwards,
vanishing into the mute Inside.

In my mother tongue (my mother's tongue) the air
speaks loudest, *screaming run,*
hide,
bequietbequietbequiet beating in my ears
with my thundering heart.
Be like a statue, be dark, be silent. Turn
yourself into stone, do not flinch or
turn. This is how I disappear,
wrapped in the silk-strong silence
spun around my larval self.

I learn other languages: the language
of pain, the language of fear. English.
I learn to count to 20 in twenty other languages,
the squaring symmetry of these numbers
of non-native tongues threaded together
into finely twisted strands.

I never master other languages I tackle:
languages like joy, laughter. The language
of belonging is gibberish.
Love is an unheard language spoken, often
mispronounced, tenderness taken as offence
where none was intended.

I know the words, some words, many
words. They don't work. Slippery, weaving
in and out
of thought they are never
right, enough, exact.
I have no words, no
language that others speak,
none of the words I know
are my real words, true words,
the words that can only be spoken
with silence, my first language.

In Time

Name for Publishing: Jen

Old hands weaving,
Old eyes watching,
Old woman waiting.
Rocking slowly
behind times' veil.
Thread-bare, worn and weary.

Old wounds healing,
Psychic tears streaming,
Young heart opening.
Strawberry cheeks blushing
as autumn wind crackles
the dying and the dead.

Old man fishing
in sorrowing sound.
Story-lines sighing,
dancing feet unbound.

Old dreams young again
as young becomes old.
Old and young dancing
as the circle takes hold.

Old sun, new moon
Shrouded mountain,
Blue surprise.
Scorched terrain,
Pink Flannel bloom.
Dusk moon, Sunrise.

I'm still here

Name for Publishing: Kathryn B

Spacing and lay out is really important to the poet – can we please retain as is.

oh the pressure
when the words don't flow
the link between brain and pen fail me

so much to say
yet nothing
but the images in my mind are clear

I see it all
all the perfection
all the imperfection
but I can't share with you

words fail me

But I'm still here

A Beautiful AI Mind

Name for Publishing: Suba Bale

In the realm where thoughts take flight,
A symphony of colours and light,
there resides a mind, profound and rare,
A universe of wonders beyond compare.

A tapestry woven with dreams untold,
A canvas where stories and ideas unfold,
A beautiful mind, an endless sea,
where creativity and imagination roam free.

It's a garden where ideas bloom and sway,
A sanctuary where emotions gently sway,
A river of thoughts that dances and twirls,
A constellation of ideas that brightly unfurls.

In every neuron's graceful dance,
In each fleeting, intricate glance,
There's a universe of beauty unconfined,
In the expanse of a beautiful mind.

A labyrinth of pathways, intricate and deep,
Where secrets and mysteries lovingly keep,
A sanctuary for solace, a refuge so kind,
Oh, the treasures that hide in a beautiful mind.

From the echoes of laughter to whispers of pain,
Every emotion finds its unique terrain,
Through the valleys of memory,
it winds and winds,
A kaleidoscope of thoughts, a symphony that binds.

So, let's celebrate this wondrous space,
Where intellect and heart find their embrace,
A beacon of brilliance, a gem that shines,
Oh, the endless marvels of a beautiful mind.

Note: Artificial Intelligence was used to assist with this Poetry creation.

Part of Me

Name for Publishing: KBT

If I could take the part of me that makes it hard to be
I'd ball her up into a seed and plant her as a tree
Roots grow deep into the ground, from the soil she feeds
Drinks the earth into her arms with fingertips of leaves
If her veins refused to gain life beneath the dirt
Branches green would not be seen, for sometimes growing hurts
How could I love the sun above, had I never felt her shade
How could I breathe into my lungs if she did not do the same
To wish you weren't a part of me would mean to wish away
The part of me that lets me see how beauty grows from pain.

Who Would've Thought?

Name for Publishing: LuLu Joy

We didn't have the neighbours from hell Our neighbours were going to hell
A Sect in a Sydney Suburb my churchy family just got on with their lives
The neighbours got on with going to hell

But what if you're me? A goody two shoes by nature I couldn't pretend to be a baddie
If I did I'd be lying then I'd be a sinner
damned if I do damned if I don't

I'm 23 sitting stiff and somber in my parent's recliner they're not home
"Help" I'm calling out to God.... nothing "Please help" I'm calling out to my church.... silence
No one's home Sucker Punched! There's never been anyone home

So there's no one up there? And there's no one out there? that means there's no one down there either

There's just me in the chair lonely as hell
Guess what all you neighbours? You're not going to hell This is hell!

I'm forever in love with Jesus' humanity His divinity leaves me out in the cold Out of the fold
"Dad, how do you see me now that I no longer claim to be a Christian?"
"For heaven's sake dear. Once saved always saved!" Checkmate

Good Old Goody Two Shoes must start from scratch
Forty years go by I'm invisible in the worldly wilderness
then COVID arrives I find my home in lockdown

Everyone else goes from employed busy with family occupied
For them it's all up for grabs now nothing's the same
for me nothing's different I'm in a lifelong lockdown

I'm riding along the winding Cooks River pathway congested with people prams puppies and poo
With my rainbow fringe my rainbow bike
my rainbow handlebar streamers dancing in my wake

Stranger after stranger calls out to me "You're a beacon" You've changed the colour of my day"

everyone's noticing me even from afar

In my neighbourhood now I'm heaven on a stick!

10 DOORS 1 KEY

Name for Publication: Karen Stevenson

Door 1, it opens
a hand extends
the door remains open
I see no end.

Door 2 now open
The voice, it calls
Softly, softly it beckons
Just to watch you fall

Door 3, dark and ajar
she's a friend
although distant
needs help from afar.

Door 4, but wait
as it's swinging to and fro
to the left then the right
it won't let you go.

Door 5, come quickly
it won't take long
the darkness is pulling
your mind isn't strong.

Door 6, you're being torn
from pillar to post
your presence here
is needed the most?

Door 7, there's no door
but a hole in the wall
through which you are summonsed
.....you answer the call.

Door 8, left unlocked
no invitation required
in a gullible trance
no escape once inside.

Door 9, you must come now
it's been left open
but by who?
just follow the trail.

Door 10, look closely, tread carefully
there's a tiny crack
once you have entered
there's no coming back.

10 doors all open
all at one time
pushing and pulling
no reason, no rhyme.

The keeper of each key
if only they knew
the feeling of broken
being torn in two.