

POEMS
OF
OUR
LIVES

by

Women in the
Atkins House Life Skills Group
York County Prison
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SELF-PORTRAITS

I am a fish that likes to be free
but is always getting caught and put
in places where I don't want to be.
I am the color red, bright and loud,
yet used in areas for safety.

I am like the rain--
when I come, I pour.

I am the feelings of love--
when I am misused, I grow stronger.
I am the sound of footsteps that have
no footprints, only a trace.

I am the smell of peace that is always
surrounded with war.

I am the texture of water
that cools and refreshes,
warm and healing.

I am the taste of freedom
loved by everyone
but disliked by none.

I am the daughter of caring and sharing,
who doesn't have a limit.

My dream is for the impossible,
possible.

--A.P.D.

I am the taste of fine red wine . . .
one sip will leave you lusting for more.

I am the feel of silk,
smooth on one side yet coarse on the other.

My heart is crimson
yet feels as black as the midnight sky.

I am strong, but feel so weak.

I am the scent of a rose,
but be careful--I have thorns.

I can be a cool summer night's breeze
or a fierce tornado--

I can sweep you away
but have been swept up.

I am in a bubble, caught between
the blackest future one could ever see
and the reality of what is meant to be.

I am Kathy and can be all of the above,
but all I really want is to be loved.

--KATHLEEN BEECROFT

WHO AM I?

I'm like a squirrel looking and searching
for the right nut and nest to make a home;
I swing from tree to tree;
Sometimes life passes me by,
But I put on a face of cheerfulness.
--T. GREEN

PORTRAIT OF LOLIE

My mother was a woman of pride
and strength,
Uneasy to live with
but painful to live without,
Like heavy rain without an umbrella.
She was like the color blue, like water tides,
And angry at times, like an awakened bear
in winter season.
But when she wanted to,
She could fill up a cup with warm milk
of love.
--T. GREEN

SELF PORTRAIT

I am a crippled deer--she lost her family
and is running long miles to find them;
I am the color green like a deep lake--
it is very deep, a never-ending trip;
I am like winter, covered with ice and snow
before spring comes . . .
I'm still alive . . . my heart beats,
my blood is warm and longing to love.
I am the feelings of sorrow and grief
and tiredness;
This road is very lonely and painful
and long.
I am the smell of milk . . .
I wish I could smell like peppermint.
I am the texture of a water balloon,
so many tears inside.
I am the taste of an apple--hard, chewy,
juicy and sweet.,
I am still the daughter of my father
in Heaven because of His forgiveness
and mercy and unchanging love
and promise.
My dream is freedom to love and create
and speak and feel all the beautiful creation.
--KIMI

I am a pit bull:
As a pup I felt
The world would always
Be at my paws,
Mine only to do as I wished.

Not still a pup,
Not yet an adult dog,
Taken too soon from the litter,
Some training before I left,
But mostly learning on my own.
Things seem fun--
I have my whole life to correct wrongs.
Still I think I have time to play--
I have four pups of my own.
Pups taken away because
Master crack is jealous;
I have time to be faithful and loving
Only to Master.

Old dog, now,
Master is asking too much, now;
Always getting in trouble
With dog catcher (law);
Master abandons me
Until it's time for me
To leave the pound again,
But waits for me
With open arms outside the gate.

Very old dog, now,
37 in human years,
259 in dog years;
Finally realizing
Master wants to kill me,
Really doesn't love me like I thought.
I really want to change,
Don't want to die in some dark, dirty alley,
Alone and hungry.
I feel this is my last chance
When I leave the dog pound this time.
I will leave out a different door,
Because I'm scared of my old Master,
Because my new Master (God Almighty)
Promises to teach this old dog new tricks.

--SALISA BRANTLEY

I am the Bold and the Rough,
I'm also the cat, sweet and soft.
I am the color black,
Always feeling dark and lonely.
I am the wind, always moving
from here to there.
I am also the rain
trickling down like tears.
I am the drum, loud and proud.
I am the smell of wildflowers,
fresh--the smell of freedom that I long for.
I am the texture of sandpaper . . .
I try to be rough so as not to get hurt.
I am a cherry pie,
round and sweet at times.
I am a dream of living in the great outdoors,
happy and free.
--ANNETTE RAMSEY

My friend Kim is an alley cat,
soft to touch but street wise;
She is the color blue,
because she's like the blue ocean,
wanting to be wild and free;
She is the sound of a rock band,
screaming and shouting to relieve
the stress;
She's a soft flower,
soft and carefree;
She is a Swiss Roll,
sweet as chocolate;
She is a daughter
of a man so proud;
She is lightning,
striking when it's time;
She is rain,
crying out in pain;
She is a dove,
a sign of love and hope.
--ANNETTE RAMSEY

SCARS IN OUR LIVES

MY CLOUD

I have an emotional scar
on my heart
only you can heal.
I didn't mean to leave you.
Can I make it up to you?
To me you are like a cloud,
pretty and proud.
We both have traveled a
rocky road.
Can I ever make up lost time
with you?
For you are the apple of my eye
and I will always love you.
--CAROL L.

My first painful scar came the day
I had my abortion--
That scar is always with me.
Scar 2 comes from a so-called best friend
sleeping with my man.
Scars 3, 4, 5 and so on come from
all the times my heart has felt
very, very hurtful pain.
I carry these scars every day of my life.
Would you like to see?
Look at my legs and my left arm . . .
I'm a cutter.
I carry my scars of pain visibly.

My healing started the day D.B. became
a very big part of my life.
She's my best friend, always has been
and still is my best friend.

My heart is healed from these pains.
My scars have new meaning,
a new purpose,
A reminder it's time for a new life . . .
Time to smile.
--CRYSTAL H.

MY SCARS

I have a scar in my heart
so deep, so wide,
My heart cries out in pain,
The pain of the things I've done
to my children and my family.
My heart doesn't hurt for me,
anymore,
It hurts because of the hurt I caused.
My children's love,
so bright and strong,
But I know they have the scars
on their hearts
And I have to live with knowing
I put the scars there . . .
And that cuts and adds another scar
to my heart.
My belly also shows the scars,
the scars of birth,
And I would take a million more
of these scars
To be able to start over with my children
and do things right.
I also have a deep scar for the man I love.
He and I let drugs and alcohol interfere
with our love for each other--
My heart cries out for him,
Not for what we became
but for what we were.
I miss him so much . . .
We are both getting help
And I hope I can fix the hurt and pain
in time.
If God wants us together,
we will be.
I also carry the scars in my heart
For the bad things I've done to my mother.
My mom is so bold and rough,
but I know she loves me
And I love her very much.
So to God I pray,
Please fill and heal the scars
I feel every day.
--ANNETTE RAMSEY

MY SCAR RIPPED MY FUTURE

It all began when I met a stranger who became a friend, living in a great big city! Who took me on a shopping spree in stores and fancy restaurants. At that time it was some of my dreams.

We would make plans and go places that would not cost us, but society. It became a habit, with a sensation of braveness, boldness and power.

Until this habit became a disease so contagious it spread onto my family. I wish I could turn back the hands of time, but God took care of my disease for me.

Take life on life's terms: everything is not for everyone. Choices you make affect not just the person who makes them but all the people around you, especially your families and loved ones.

--A.P.D.

SCAR ON MY BODY

The scar I have no one can see,
It's 23 years old but continues to grow in me.
When I was 13 years old I fell in love (so I thought)
With this 18-year-old man.
I got pregnant with this beautiful baby I named Franklin.
I had him at 14.
My mother, not being understanding
that I had a baby so young,
Treated me like crap.
This I couldn't understand,
Because God blessed her with me
when she was 13.

My son and I spent two years together
in different foster homes.
The last one we were in together
The people treated me so mean . . .
And so my 16-year-old mind decided
it would be better to let him get adopted
To someone who loved him
than go through the life of misery with me.
I left that baby at that home--
I can still hear him crying
as I walked down that street.

Some days the scar hurts so bad
I can't lift my head.

I live with this scar . . .
In case you haven't guessed,
That is my heart praying to someday see
That little boy's face,
just for a split second.
--SALISA BRANTLEY

OUR DARKNESS . . . OUR LIGHT

MY DARKNESS, MY LIGHT

My darkness is my removal proceedings from the United States. It makes my life, my freedom and my children feel they don't belong to me. I'm stumbling through this darkness with great pain and grief.

Separation from my children is so dark I can barely see. When the darkness tends to grow, I surrender all to Jesus.

My light is my ability as a mother who nurtured five beautiful girls. I enjoyed listening to their problems and appreciated that they trusted me. Returning to my children who bring me joy, purpose and hope for the future--that will take away the darkness and restore the light in me.

--A.P.D.

MY DARKNESS IS . . .

My darkness is my shame, guilt and loveless existence,
so I've always been taught
to believe.

My darkness is never having anyone
to protect me when I needed and wanted
to be protected.

My darkness is someday dying
without making my mark on the world,
only being known as a baby machine,
gangster, and habitual criminal.

My light is that I'm beginning
to hold my head up with pride
and realizing my shame and guilt
as very bad decisions of my past.

My light is having someone
to finally love me for me (Big Daddy)
who protects me whether I need to be
or want to be.

He's always assuring me
I am somebody!
He is so lovingly sent by God
to be my guardian angel.

My light is not to be afraid to die
without making my mark on the world.
I am a mother of five beautiful sons,
a grandmother,
Not a baby making machine,
Not a gangster,
But a loving, caring, and sometimes
misunderstood human!
No longer depressed about being a criminal
because I look at my past as the past,
because even though my body is incarcerated,
the future looks brighter.

--SALISA BRANTLEY

ME

My Darkness is the inner Me,
It is revengeful and has no mercy.
My Darkness has no shame,
It is never remorseful.
My Darkness is cold and unloving,
It is controlling, never letting anyone in.

Coming to the Light . . .

My Light is my ability to listen to someone
in need--

Child or adult, we all have problems.
My Light is seeing someone just like me
Take the courage and change,
Taking the hate out and putting love
in the soul.

My Light is changing the Darkness
of the inner Me.

--BILLIE BROWN

My darkness is my inner child
ready to be awakened by the light;
I'm scared to grow up, for
the world is green and full of jealousy.

My darkness doesn't like the
every day of today's reality.
At times it's frightful but yet hopeful.
Being in the dark can be fun
and at times exotic--
if you're with the right person.

My darkness is trying to overpower me
but I refuse to allow it.
I'm trying not to lose hope,
for I know that you are there with me
to guide me back in the light.

My light is really bright and sunny,
I'm trying not to be funny.
I am choosing to pick myself up
off the floor and to walk again.

My light does not include drugs or alcohol,
so as each day passes
my darkness seems to disappear.
I am glad for that.

--CAROL L.

MY ROAD

My road to happy destiny
is full of light,
no sorrows, no worries,
everything is just right.

My heart is full of joy,
for you are by my side
for always, for all eternity.

My road to happy destiny
won't be filled with bad things,
for I have inner strength
to hold my head up high.

So let's trudge the road
to happy destiny together.

--CAROL L.

LOOKING INTO MY HEART

When I look into my heart
I think of my loved ones--
My friends and my family.
I miss my pets--
They can sense when I am lonely,
They cheer me up when I'm sad,
They play fight me when I get mad,
They will be a part of me for always.

When I look into my heart
I can see the inner me,
Really pretty and faithful.

At times when I look into my heart
I see pain and despair,
But I don't allow it to run my life,
For I want to fly and be free!

--CAROL L.

OUR DREAMS . . .

MY DREAM

My dream begins on top of a mountain
Where the trees are green and the birds sing.
My house is three stories tall,
Enough rooms for all six of my children to fill.
Hearing their laughter and their screams,
The walls will be filled with their memories of life,
From our first dog to our last fish . . .
My dream house will be sent to me from God.

--BILLIE BROWN

MY SPECIAL DREAM

If I had a special dream,
Where would I be?
What would I see, and
Would I even be me?

My special dream takes me far,
On a tropical island, sitting at a bar,
Enjoying a relaxing glass of gin
While conversing with my fellow kin,

Seeing nothing but ocean reach the sky,
Slapping waves against sands both hot and dry,
Birds up high, fly all around,
While seashells of all sorts lie on the ground.

People of all races huddle in a bunch,
Eating and socializing over their brunch;
Visualizing me mingling about,
Enjoying the company of others.

Waking up from this special dream
Brings tears to my eyes, while wanting
to scream,
Wishing so badly to go back there,
Sitting alone in the darkness
with a cold, blank stare.

--LEANN L.

DREAMS

My dreams consist of heaven
Where there is no sorrow or pain,
Neither are there clouds or rain;
I see streets paved with gold,
Here I will never feel cold.

My dreams consist of my mansion,
I can fashion it to my liking and passion.
Here I can play and be happy--
No one can hurt me or act snappy.

My dreams consist of peace and health,
Here, I will never run out of wealth.
My Jesus, my savior, my friend,
To this dream there will never be an end.
--DIANE JOY

LIKE ALWAYS: AN EMPTY DREAM

Walking down the street,
Knowing just who it is I want to meet,
Mountains standing, a sunny glare,
Hallelujah! I'm finally there.

Hand in hand for all to see,
It's the tree of us--you, our son, and me;
For this I have waited such a while,
I can't help but to smile.

I look into the eyes of the son we made,
And suddenly I notice the mountains fade . . .
Where there was once three, now stand only two,
Like always, I was only dreaming of you.

--NICOLE MUMMERT

DREAM--THEN TAKE OUT R-E-M

Recompense, then
White picket fence.
Dream, then take out
R-E-M sleep,
Rapid Eye Movement.
Red swirls, peppermint swirls,
Siberian hybrid
Out and about.
Fortress up above,
Soul mate and myself, two
Stuck together like glue.
But more than two--
Angel cherub
In grass playing,
Fine white carob
For dessert. We'll have
Cooking steak and French fries,
Then baby goes to bed
Very well fed.
The distant vastness,
We'll make love with fastness--
Now more cherubs playing.
Many rooms here,
Out windows, deer.
Smells like real love,
Doctor, scientist,
Professional man,
Lovers, family we are
With our own mini-van.
Vacation in
Canada in
A longhouse, free.
Dream, then take out
R.E.M., sleep, dream,
Reality unfurls true
Married, peaches 'n cream.

--RACHEL KING

THOUGHTS

At night when I lie in my bed,
So many things run through my head . . .
Visions of me wondering about my life,
Do you ever think I'll make a good wife?
I keep on messing up--
Dear God, help me to give it up,
Help me to find your light--
Maybe then I'll live right.
You already gave me two blessings,
My twin daughters with the same dressing.
If only I could be there--
They are old enough to be aware.
I don't want to hurt my kids,
That's the kind of shit that makes me
not want to live.
Maybe I could stop the insanity
If I had some guidance in my life.
So now, today, I need to sit down and pray . . .
God I know will set me free
And let all this pain out of me.
--CHRISTINA WHITCOMB

*A poem I'd like to dedicate to my mom,
The darkness of drugs and life in general,
For the times I might not see her again:*

My mom is my dream come true--
She gave me life and
All I caused her was misery.
For that I am very sorry,
Can you ever forgive me?

I wish we weren't in here,
But at least we are together.
I wish we were far, far away.

Someday I'd like to take her to the ocean . . .
This way we could stroll along the sand.
I just love my mom.
--IDA BROWN

TOO BIG, TOO SMALL, MY DREAM

My dream is not that of many; it is not complicated.

Too big, nor too small, for that I shall not call.

A few years ago I was happy--

I had my boys, my self respect, my sense of living,
my freedom.

In less than 24 hours, I was cold, crying, lonely,
where am I?

Who am I?

I can not see, for the walls of my foundation
caved in,

Fell down to take away my freedom,
all that I knew.

Three beautiful boys, one me with a dream to be free.

Take all the pain and replace it with joy,

For reality I dream to see.

I will not fail, this place is wrong for me.

Please, God, no more jails. *Give me a new start.*

In my heart, there is good to be found.

My dream is to be free,

To give not a physical me but also the outer shell
with inner spirit,

For my heart shines and belongs to

Three beautiful boys of mine.

So please, God, please, I can not see you,

I can not feel or hear you,

I just know you are there--

How big, how small, that is not my call.

I have this empty void needing to be filled.

I reach out, I shout, I pray and say

If dreams come true, then please, God,

Please free me.

--JONELLE GRIM

I am the colors of a rainbow,
pretty, and at times extravagant;
I am like the wind--
strong, gusty, but yet calm at times;
I am the smell of fresh, falling rain,
cool, crisp and clean;
My dream is to be like an eagle,
wild and free . . .
Let me be me!
--CAROL L.

My grandmother was like an elephant,
bold, headstrong and gentle;
She loved to roam the countryside;
She was like the crisp wintry air at times,
hard and unforgiving.
Where did I go wrong?
Deep in my heart I know she's watching me
and stomping when I do bad,
Blowing her trunk when I do good.
--CAROL L.

Stevie is the apple of my eye--
He is young and so sweet;
I regret what I've done
But pray that someday
You can forgive me
And come back to me
So we can be a family again.
--CAROL L.