

PORTRAITS THROUGH METAPHOR

MY MOTHER, DELORES

She was an owl,
All-seeing and wise;
She was like the starlight skies,
Calming and beautiful;
She was like a soft, wintry night,
All quiet and shadow making;
She was giving without a fault,
To all;
She was like the fluttering wings
of an angel,
So kind, so soft, so loving;
She was the smell of home cooking,
The smell of roses, of all nature's smells;
She was soft, but sometimes prickly
like a cactus;
She was like the taste of cotton candy,
Sweet, soft, and so good;
She was always there, to be kind,
To touch, to love another;
She was my life, my teacher,
my everything . . .
She was my mother.
--DIANA S.

PORTRAIT OF MICHAEL

Michael is the foundation of my life--
He is strong and faithful,
Loving, gentle, kind,
Like a snowflake that
Gently lands on your face;
He is the taste of ice cream, bringing
comfort, strength,
Unconditional love and steadfast
support;
Michael is my sun, moon, stars, earth,
Always present,
A reminder of all the hopes, dreams,
possibilities life may hold for me.
--POTTER

PORTRAIT FOR GRACE

Grace was a solid rock!
Always the foundation for family.
She was every color of the rainbow,
A color for each life she touched!
Grace was the smell of a home-cooked
Sunday dinner,
Comforting, loving, secure!
And the comfort of a homemade dessert,
warm and inviting and welcoming
you home!
Grace was and is the sound of love, life,
death, laughter, Family.
A woman full of love, joy, life,
and family.
Grace was a hummingbird
With every moment of life
In constant motion for her family,
friends, job,
Every moment filled with love
and thought of others!
Grace was a turtle, always putting
herself last;
Grace was and is what love, life, joy,
dreams, family, death
Are built upon.
--POTTER

SHA DIAMOND

My daughter is the love of my life--
I would do anything for her;
She is my pride and joy;
I miss her so much,
I just want to hear and touch her;
I want to see her little chubby face
And hear her little voice;
I want to hold her and never let her go;
I just want to see her smile
And tell her I love her.
--ROBIN D.C.

I'M SOMEBODY

I am like a lion, calmly watching out
for myself
and sometimes lashing out;
I am the color yellow-green,
sometimes bright, yet a little shady;
I am like a snowstorm coming down
softly, but having a heavy impact;
I am the feeling of apprehension,
knowing what's coming . . .
but sometimes not;
I am like the sound of a flute,
high-pitched, but sometimes soft;
I am like a piece of slate,
smooth in the center
but jagged on the edges;
I am the taste of a strawberry,
sweet, yet somewhat bitter;
I am the mother of a cub,
protective and demanding;
My dreams are that of a star,
seeming so far out there.
--AMANDA B.

MY WIFE IS MY SELF-PORTRAIT

My wife is the most wonderful person
in the world--
She helps me when I can't help myself.
She has the loveliest personality
I have ever come in contact with,
Such a soft-spoken little lady,
filled with joy.
Even when she is suffering and in pain,
Her strength is infinity to mine.
She is tasteful, kind to everything
she touches;
She is the wind behind a weak storm
that gives it strength in time.
She is the sound that lets me know
Who I am when I am lost in the waves
of the oceans.
--MICHELLE S.

LORETTA, THE CAREGIVER

My loving mother was like an elephant--
Very stubborn and never forgetful;
She was green as a clover and as Irish
as they come;
She would warm your soul like a hot
summer day,
But if you harmed her own, she would
burn to the sting;
Never touchy or feely, but you always
felt the warmth of her touch
and her presence;
She was the sound of a whistle
in the wind
And the smell of garlic-drenched
meatballs that attracted people to her
from miles around;
She was strong as steel and also shined
brightly;
She was the taste of white wine, sweet
and nourishing, yet slightly dry and
bitter when angered;
She was the daughter of a bull, a very
strong and stubborn foundation
that never wavered;
My dream is that I can ever hold
a candle to the integrity
bred within this woman.
--KATHLEEN D.

PORTRAIT OF BARBARA

My grandmother is a loving and caring
person, never hateful of anyone;
She is the color red,
The true color of love;
My grandma is the best female
God put in my life;
She definitely saved my live
And showed me that she cares
And loves me no matter what happens.
--MARY S.

PORTRAIT OF DEBORA

My mother is a loving, caring person
Who is a great mother to me;
She is caring and considerate,
And her color is purple;
She is a true mommy to me
And I care and love her, as you can see;
God gave me a great mom
And she loves me A LOT MORE
than some.
--MARY S.

PORTRAIT OF RONALD, SR.

(Passed away 4/13/00)
My pap was a VERY LOVING person;
He was kind and caring;
He was VERY CONSIDERATE!
He was the best male God put in my life;
He definitely saved my life
And showed me that he cared
And loved me no matter what happened.
--MARY S.

ESSE

I am an icicle, cold and threatening,
but only temporarily dangerous . . .
I can melt and disappear.
I am the peal of thunder, shocking,
unexpected, foreshadowing
a seething downpour . . . I can quench.
I am a prism, capturing and reflecting
all colors simultaneously . . .
I can display possibilities, yours
and mine.
I am oven-warm steam,
the fog on your glasses as you enter
a sheltering home . . . I can comfort.
I am ocean water, salty, full of life,
burning your eyes but cooling
your body . . . I can refresh.
I am the dream of adaptability,
the serenity of shifting states of being--
I can be content.
--LISA F.

HE WAS . . .
Sandpaper, abrasive,
 able to smooth away slivery shards;
Cotton candy. Sticky. Messy.
 Fakely colored.
Necessary, joy-producing, comforting,
Velvet. Warm. Enveloping. Regal.
Barbed wire. Cantankerous. Protective.
Sparkling champagne. Intoxicating.
Fresh. Elite. Youthful.
--LISA F.

SAMANTHA
I really miss her so much--
She is my oldest daughter
And I really love her so much,
Words cannot express how much I do.
She is very smart in school
And that makes me really happy inside.
One day soon we will be together
As a family again.
I love you, Sammie, so much!
--CRYSTAL B.

SHIPRE
I really miss her so much--
She acts just like me . . . she really does!
She is only 3 and acts 23.
She is growing up too fast.
I really hope she gets in school,
 I really do.
She is my heart, body and soul--
She means the world to me
 and much more;
I love her so much.
One day soon we will be together
 as a family again.
I love you, Pre-Pre.
--CRYSTAL B.

GRANDMA

I really miss her so much--I do.
I learned a lot from her.
She passed away years ago.
One Christmas. I got a chalkboard
and I drew a letter "A" on it, and I called her;
She only lived up the street.
She gave me drama, but she came down
anyway.
I really do love her a lot.
--CRYSTAL B.

PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

My Father is a Father for all,
Never lets His children down,
Even when I run away from Him.
Heaven became His place and home.
He is big and powerful and graceful
And merciful and loving me
unconditionally.
He is always with me when I need Him
the most.
Many times I let Him down with
lies and empty promises.
I want to make it right this time
with my Father,
And I love Him more than anything
on the earth.
Father, thank you for taking me back
once again;
I know You won't leave me or forsake me.
My Father is the most wonderful God
I ever need.
Thank you for taking care of my loved ones
when I can't be there for them,
Especially my son Justin and my husband,
Ken.
--CHUN N.

PORTRAIT OF VIRGINIA

My mother was General Patton,
Never letting us quit on life;
Even when times were rough
And hard times were there,
Her soul appeared.
--CAROLYN H.

PORTRAIT OF CRYSTAL,
THE TRUE FRIEND

My friend was true as a dog is to his master,
never letting us down with her
unconditional love.

Her color was blue and positive and strong
that genuinely matched her convictions
and beliefs.

Spreading her wisdom to everyone
that would listen

In hopes to pass on a message of worth.

My friend could be like a sudden summer
thunder storm, conveying an articulate
lesson to anyone most anytime,

Although, too, she was as calm as a lamb
in March.

Crystal was the fragrance of the earth,
pure for the most part, and yet pollution
could enter in strongly to confuse
the matters at hand.

She was the voice of many, generally
someone in need, and no task was
too large.

Her smell was an array of musk, earthy
and her own.

She was a daughter and sister to most
that she chose to share her life with,
And always a true friend, or no friend at all.

Her dreams were to help the earth
and portray her world through the lens
of her cameras and the words
of her mouth,

Always to succeed in whatever
she endeavored until she died.

--KATHY P.

PORTRAIT OF MY AUNT

My only aunt, I adore you,
My only aunt, I respect you,
My only aunt, I take care of you,
My sweet aunt, I know I love you,
 though I can't find a word to express
 my love for you.
My aunty, help me to find a word to express
 my love for you.
I can't wait to take care of you again.
I have feeling for you,
Feeling for all the pain in your body.
My aunt, I want to give you all the love
 that I have for you.
I really do, I really do love you.
I can't wait for us to be together again.
My lovely aunt,
You are beautiful;
My lovely aunt,
You are my only aunt--
I want to keep you forever.
--ANONYMOUS

PORTRAIT OF ME

I am a woman never letting go of an idea,
 hope, deliverance and success;
I am in this long, suffering battle--
It seems like it is never going to end,
But the voice of the Lord says,
"It will end soon,"
And another voice is saying,
"It won't be ending soon."
I always listen to the Lord's voice
Because He always tells the truth.
I am fighting a spiritual battle
With the Lord and Satan.
My faith for the Lord is building up
 each day
Because I choose the Lord, not Satan.
I know I will win, because
The Lord who has the power is on my side,
So the voice of the Lord will come to pass
 soon.
--MAXINE G.

PORTRAIT OF A QUEEN

She was like every wild animal
with strong instincts to survive.
She was the color of red,
flirtatious, bold and to the point.
She was like a hurricane,
strong and beautiful.
She was made up of every emotion,
especially with the passion to love.
She was like no sound at all,
but always there.
She was the smell of all women;
to me she was every woman.
She was the taste of apple pie,
sweet and filled with spices.
She was smooth in texture,
very easy, but could never be bypassed.
She is the mother of my mother;
She is somebody I will only see again
in the sweetest, most special dream.
She was a Queen;
She is and always will be my Grandmother!
--CATHIE D.

A PORTRAIT

My children are my responsibility that will
be all my lifetime--
I will not ignore them for the comfort
of this life.
They are the colors of the rainbow,
so innocent and perfect when hanging
in the sky.
My children are the fragrance of a home-
cooked meal, with taste that never
leaves you.
They carry the sound of laughter and cries
that melt a mother's heart
With their feelings of different emotions,
steaming, cool, yet calm and warm.
Their ambitions are unmeasured--
no areas can compare.
Caring for my children is a battle
that I must win;
I love the duties of a mother--
It's like the air that one breathes and needs.
--A. DUVALL

I AM SOMEBODY

I am the color Gold that shines
like nothing else . . .
At times I don't know how to let
my feelings show . . .
Inside of me is a great deal of caring--
And yet there's also a part of me that's angry . . .
How can I become a more balanced being?
Beginning to examine myself is one hard
cross to bear,
And yet it's enlightening me
and revealing to me
The person I truly am.
I am the daughter, sister, mother
of a strong bloodline . . .
There must be a great plan for my life--
on earth and the hereafter . . .
My destiny lies in the Creator's hands . . .
He can't do wrong . . .
Keep striving . . . Life's great . . .
--DAWN B.

PORTRAIT OF KYUNG

My friend is someone whom I cherish
and respect to the utmost . . .
She's always kind and giving,
not looking for anything in return . . .
There's something she possesses
that keeps one close to her;
I feel her sincerity very deeply
within my soul . . .
Not having her around has placed a heavy
sadness within me . . .
There's a very special place in my heart
that's empty . . .
Her smile generates such calmness
and tranquility to those who know her . . .
My friend is like a *breath* of fresh air
to the soul . . . you must take in
all she gives out . . .
I can taste her *spirit* . . . *such Freedom* . . .
One day again we'll meet on our *Plane*--
quietness and peacefulness will always
remain our source of energy . . .
Our bond is unending--Infinity . . .
--DAWN B.

SENSES OF FEELINGS

INSECURITY

Feels like a long tunnel that never ends;
It makes its sounds over and over,
 never allowing any answers
 to come through,
Or it taunts you like a continuous
 whisper;
The taste of insecurity is the souring
 of one's stomach, resembling
 the smell of vomit;
The feeling I feel from insecurities
 is like a slow death;
My thoughts go back and forth
 with no resolve;
I wish every day to have the peace
 and love deserved . . .
I ask the Lord?
--KATHY P.

ABANDONMENT

How does it look? Like a mass
 confusion of who does what next;
Fear, and yet strength, comes to me
 to go on;
As it sounds of everyone feeling
 in charge,
I tune out whatever to survive;
How does it taste?
Like a clam steamed and out of its shell,
And thoughts of where did it go?
How does it feel? Rough, like a tennis
 match, and you have missed the last
 chance at Love . . .
There never was one.
--KATHY P.

FRUSTRATION

The splattered paint on my pristine
hardwood floor;
The phone not ringing, the conversation
denied and unspoken;
Soapy, fragrant fresh-mown grass,
a fleeting aroma as I return to my cell;
Spoiled milk, life-affirming nourishment
turned deadly;
Gritty uncleanliness remaining
after a thousand showers;
It's an unwelcome visitor, arriving
unannounced, asking too many
probing questions
and staying discourteously too late . . .
Frustration.
--LISA F.

IN MY FAMILY . . .
Sorrow dresses in an impeccable suit
but wears two different socks;
Sings out church hymns, but doesn't
remember the words;
Smells of gardenias and freesias,
but smolders like charred dead wood;
Tastes of convivial coffee, but turns to
bitter acid bile 10 seconds later;
Feels anticipated, expected, but always
is an exposed nerve, an untreated
toothache.
--LISA F.

BOREDOM
Boredom looks like mud;
It sounds like a trombone;
It smells like a wet dog;
It tastes like lumpy, sugarless oatmeal;
It feels like walking in a swamp;
It makes me feel stuck.
--SDU M.

ANXIETY

Anxiety moves up and down,
left and right;
It is shapeless but encompasses
and fills every shape, corner and space
in a matter of seconds;
It sounds like a buzzing bee;
It smells like an extinguished match;
It tastes bittersweet, like a Sour Patch
Kid;
It feels like a slippery snake;
Inside it makes me feel like a baby,
curious and insecure.
--SDU M.

HOPE

Hope is like the air in the earth
You can't see but you can feel.
Hope is like the plants that need
the sun to grow;
It is like when you are lost in the desert
and you suddenly hear the airplane
sound;
Hope is the sound of a loving voice
in your ears, telling you to never
give up;
Hope smells like perfume
when you thought you smelled skunk;
Hope taste like honey
when you once get bitten by the bees;
Hope is like beautiful roses in my
garden--when someone gives them to
you, you know it is love;
Hope is the best feeling to experience--
if you need something to survive
and to trust, the one and only God
can give you the hope you need.
--CHUN N.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is like a rainbow of colors,
some soft like pink, dark as ebony;
Forgiveness is like the sound of a baby
crying you want to hold and protect,
but cannot;
Forgiveness is like the smell of the calm
waters, musky, but still clean and clear;
Forgiveness is like the taste of
an orange, tangy but sweet and juicy;
Forgiveness is the feel of Silly Putty,
all soft and being able to change
its shape;
Forgiveness comes from the heart
and your inner self,
making you feel whole again.
--DIANA S.

ANGER

Anger is like the color red,
rage and uncaring;
Anger is like the sound of a thunder
clap,
Booming, loud, and echoing on and on;
Anger is like the smell of rotted flesh,
pungent and always there;
Anger is like the taste of rhubarb,
bitter, sour;
Anger is like the feel of a porcupine,
all hurtful and prickly;
Anger makes you feel uncaring,
no direction, and all so destructful.
--DIANA S.

HURT

Like a dark, long tunnel with no way out,
It sounds like an endless cry;
The smell of s*** you can't wait to
throw away;
Tastes like dirt you can't spit out;
Feels like an everlasting trap
that my heart can't escape . . .
No way, nowhere, here it is.
--MAYRA

JOY

Joy is like a child unwrapping its Christmas
presents,
The sound of their laughter;
Joy is bright but hot as a sun shining
its light;
It's like the taste of cold ice, so good and
refreshing, quenches your thirst;
It's as soft as a baby's bottom and running
through my fingers;
Yes, so refined and kind, but still it's not
found or isn't to be found, or did I find it
yet don't know?
--FLACA

HATE
Hate feels like when someone jumps up
and attacks you;
Hate is blank;
It makes you see zigzags;
It sounds very noisy, like a chainsaw;
It's very bitter and smells like trash juice;
It feels like the chickenpox on you;
It makes me feel like I just want to burst!
--GHAN K.

LOVE
Love is red--vibrant and hot as fire;
Its heat can warm and comfort you
in the middle of the night,
Or it can burn the hell out of you
when used with cruel intentions;
It tastes like your favorite meal
or your first day out of a long prison bid;
It sounds like the melody from a harp,
when heard, leaves you in awe;
It's like being able to smell again
after having the flu;
It looks like the first sight of someone
special to you after being apart
for a good while;
It makes me feel like nothing else matters
except the source of it, the force of it . . .
I love love.
--ALTHEA S.

HURT

Deep inside soul grabbing,
Grabbing onto my heart,
Squeezing out love and joy,
Letting the heart breathe in pain
and agony.

Hurt

Putting chains on my body
Inside and out,
Never being free of depression
And grief.

Hurt

Holding back happiness and stability,
Grabbing onto insecurity and anger,
Letting myself open to confusion.

Hurt

Hurt myself once,
Hurt myself twice,

Do I really have the strength
For more

Hurt?

--SARA H.

LOVE

Love is such a warm, pleasant, quiet
feeling and should be held in highest
regard,
Not only to others but mostly to ourselves.
Love wants to share and love needs to care,
like the smell of a chicken BBQ--everyone
wants to taste it--
or a song they will sing along.
Love is protecting, yet it will not smother.
Love can set you free from the blackness
of loneliness.
Love is contagious, because it always
wants more.
So when you love, let yourself be loved
and never let it go.
--SARA H.

SICKNESS

It tastes like dripping blood,
It sounds like lightning hitting a pole,
It takes over your body,
It looks like a pit bull ready to attack,
It feels like you just got off a ride
 at Hershey Park that turned you
 upside down,
It feels like it's never going to stop . . .
Sickness.

--CAROLYN H.

UNKNOWN

The unknown is as flat as the desert plains;
It sounds like a soft breeze
 never really ending;
It smells like vinegar . . .sour;
It tastes very bland--not much to it;
The unknown feels like ice,
 cold and slippery;
Inside it's relentless, never going away.

--AMANDA B.

SCARED

Scared is dark like the midnight sky;
It echoes through and through;
It smells nasty, pungent;
It tastes like an ice cube, cold and hard;
It feels rough and bumpy, like sandpaper;
Inside it's like a strong vise grip
 holding on tightly.

--AMANDA B.

LOVE

It's the look on children's faces
 on Christmas morning;
It's the sound of a strong heartbeat;
It's the smell of nature;
It's the taste of pure sugar;
Love is the feeling of complete contentment.

--CATHIE D.

COMPLETENESS

The look on a puppy's face,
The sound of a child's cry,
The smell of home cooking,
The taste of lovemaking,
The feeling of being needed!

--CATHIE D.

I LOVE ME, MYSELF AND I

I am a very strong person,
Never giving up hope,
And I have to be strong in this life;
I am not here to make friends,
I came in by myself and I am going to
leave by myself;
First things first--
I have to see my beautiful children,
Samantha and Shipre, so we can
work on being a strong family again;
I really do love my children so much--
They mean the world to me and much,
much more;
I hope they never forget how much
I really do love them.

--CRYSTAL B.

MY MOTHER

She is a very caring person,
And I do love her so much--I really do;
Sometimes she makes me mad,
And most of the time she makes me happy
inside and out;
I really do love and care about her so much,
I really do;
Without her I would not be here;
She really brings joy to my life--she does--
And she really is a very special
grandmother;
She does whatever she can for her
eight grandchildren, she really does;
Bottom line: I love my mom more than
words can say.

--CRYSTAL B.

DAD, I MISS YOU

It's been three years since you passed;
I miss you, want you and need you;
Please, Daddy, come home;
Within so many years,
Why did you make me shed so many tears?
Please come home, I need you near
To complete me and to love me;
I didn't mean to wish you were dead,
Please come back--
I miss you each and every day;
Since you've been gone,
My life hasn't been the same;
I'm so confused, so lonely and so sad,
So before I end, please, Daddy,
Come home--I need you--and please stay.
--MISSY W.

DRUGS

I don't like drugs, I hate drugs,
They messed up my life
And separated me from my wife;
As days go by, I sit in my cell and cry,
Wondering why;
I don't like doing time,
But I keep doing crimes;
I miss my family--they're sitting home
with tears in their eyes,
They don't know whether I'm dead
or alive.
--MISSY W.

I'M A POET

I'm a poet, you better know it,
And I'm afraid to show it;
You blew it, so how are you going to
prove it?
Don't think you're mine, 'cause you're just
a little time,
You don't know how to rhyme,
You're just a waste of time;
Take this time and go buy you a new rhyme;
Please don't think you're fine,
'Cause I'm the dime, you are slime,
And that's my rhyme.
--MISSY W.

I'M SORRY

I've hurt this person so much,
She tried to help me, and she tried
to love me;
I've caused her so much pain, hurt,
and sorrow;
If you can hear me, I want you to know,
Mom, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cause you
so much pain.
--MISSY W.

LIFE

I never understood why my life turned out
to be this way;
I've wasted my life in and out of jail
for the decisions that I've made;
I wish that I could turn back the hands
of time;
I hope it's not too late to make things right,
'Cause I miss my family, my life,
and my wife.
--MISSY W.

MY WIFE

My wife, she's my life;
She puts me up when I'm down,
And when I frown, she puts a smile
on my face;
Her name is Marsha and I hold her dear;
I picked her up in jail, but she's so real;
The C O's try to separate us so many times,
But she won't leave me, 'cause that's my life;
We play together, laugh together,
Even sometimes cry together;
So Marsha, if you ever read this poem,
Know that your wife in C pod loves
and misses you dearly.
--MISSY W.

LONGING

Each day creates a more deep
feeling of sadness--
Sometimes I sink deeper and deeper
into a pit of aloneness--
Knowing there's someone in my life
needing me gives me a great deal
of happiness--
To separate oneself from everyone
around you is needed so I
can have peace--
My sense of longing creeps up on me
when least expected--
What captures me and holds me still is
the serenity I get being alone
and yet surrounded.
--DAWN B.

MY FRIEND, MY LOVER

Somewhere I met a very pleasant woman . . .
As time passed I grew to become closer
to her and felt emotions I never knew
existed in me . . .
There seemed to be such a great deal of pain
in her that she didn't know how to ease . . .
My friend and lover is always there for me,
no matter what others say . . .
I've learned to let go of my feelings
through becoming her lover;
A lot has happened to us during our drug usage,
And yet we still remain in each other's lives;
My heart can only release much love
and caring towards my friend, my lover;
Our lives are experiencing all new emotions
which we lost along our journey;
Somehow, I've come to realize that
I'm the person she need in her life
to sustain her stability and growth;
Having my friend, lover in my life
has given me so much peace;
To conquer your fears is growth
of the deepest depths anyone can touch;
Believing in us keeps everything bright
and so complete.
--DAWN B.

UNSURE FEELINGS

It looks out of place, with no sense
of direction;
It sounds very boisterous
and at the same time quiet;
The smell permeates a bit of awe;
it's taking me far away from here;
To taste it is to acquire a taste
of different blends;
The feeling is very cunning and powerful;
you must take time to seek out
where it's coming from;
This feeling can leave you in a very
dreary mood --- *unbalanced*.
--DAWN B.

DEPRESSION

Depression is something I understand;
It is hurtful, lacking, sad,
and drives you mad;
Look into my window, because my eyes
hold the key to the maddest, saddest
person you will ever see;
It sounds like ringing and falling from
the use of cocaine,
Pain that never ends,
Like the wings of birds soaring
To the beat of her pain.
--MICHELLE S.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a feeling I fail to appreciate,
Especially when it's most at work in my life;
Just today I took a look at my ungratefulness
for the blessings I get,
Hurting the ones I love, with the sound
of my voice, loud, nasty and belittling to others,
Breaking them down like crumbled rocks;
The smell of rot that kills from within,
Wasting away the innocent that goes to
any length to see a smile on your face;
Tastes of joy but really knows what it is
that you miss and could enjoy;
The feeling of blessing--penetrating the soul
with a great understanding from within
the mind, body and soul.
--MICHELLE S.

TOUCHSTONES

TOUCHSTONES

Enveloping comfort of words on pages,
another's story
in which I can escape, losing my troubles;
Crackling firewood in the hearth,
glowing chimney red
and candy corn orange,
Spitting its own protests, urging me
to express my own anger;
Sweet puppy's breath, recalling the joys
of innocence and wonder--
and welcomed neediness;
The rose-petal brush of lips on mine,
awaking me gently from slumber
to start anew, live again.
--LISA F.

TOUCHSTONES

Photographs I have taken,
wormholes into my universe,
framed for others to view--
Do they understand my soul laid bare?
Click of my Nikon's shutter,
sheer anticipation of my vision to be,
Acrid scent of developing chemicals,
stagnant, awaiting the yet-to-arrive
pictures;
Magical appearance of my silvery
black and white image,
my breathless wonder at a vital
combination of chemistry and
imagination;
Photographs I have yet to take,
gateways to my imagination,
simple mirth of creating.
--LISA F.

STRENGTH FROM

Knowing his words before he speaks them,
Understanding his concerns before he
 voices them,
Sharing his laughter in joy, his tears in pain,
Observing our growth together . . .
 symbiotic,
Believing in forever,
Knowing,
Just simply knowing.
--LISA F.

ALL THE DIFFERENT TOUCHSTONES THAT GIVE ME JOY

My touchstones are: sitting by the ocean,
 hearing the calming of the waves,
Smelling the smells from all the salt, sand,
 horseshoe crabs,
And feeling the stickiness of the air
 in my hair and on my lips;
Being with friends and family,
 knowing at all times their love is with me;
The smiles of joy from relaxing or eating,
 playing or interacting with each other
 is my happiness;
The memories of the wonderful gift of food,
 smells, friends, exquisite surroundings,
 textures . . .
God truly blesses us with many memories
 to always cherish;
Knowing the answers when I'm anxious
 and having the intelligence
 to figure them out;
Last, true happiness is the success
 of all the children--
They all achieve in different ways, but all
 are healthy, happy and moving forward,
Some smaller steps than the other, but to me
 all their accomplishments are indeed
 success--
May they all grow to their potential level.
--KATHY P.

Food is like the smell of apple pie,
The sounds of a baby's cry,
Seeing the beauty of the birds in the sky,
Tasting some cooked after they fly,
Touching a soft kitten that's about to die.
--KATHY P.

TOUCHSTONES

My touchstones are the pain I felt
when my mother left me,
My family splitting apart,
My smoking habit to an outrage,
My prostitution going wild;
When my grandparent passed made me
feel unsure,
When I lost my pet made me feel too sure;
I calm by reading the Holy Bible,
Talking, laughing with friends,
Singing, dancing, reminiscing about having
my kid;
My touchstones can change by one thing--
Me, myself and I;
My life is like a shade of dark,
But soon light will make it right;
Unsure can be difficult,
But too sure is not enough . . .
My "toughstones."
--BEVERLY R.

MY TOUCHSTONES

The sight of a new life of any kind,
unknowing what its purpose is;
The sounds of soft music, so calming,
not like the slam of jail doors;
The smell of a sunny day,
like the flowers, mown grass;
The taste of a Bing cherry,
so juicy, sweet, and oh, so delicious!
The feel of a warm blanket,
soft, covering, protective;
And most of all the memories
no one can take away.
--DIANA S.

I'm calm around my starry nights, so bright
along the river banks;
I'm anxious when the jail door slams,
sounding so, so loud and echoing;
I'm scared, with my heart attacks,
never knowing if I'll come back
from death;
So I wrap myself up like a cocoon
hoping I'll be safe;
When I need to laugh, my friends make
funny faces, act silly, and do outrageous
things--
They pick me up to make me strong,
to make it right . . .
the fear then goes away;
When I'm myself again, whatever that
may be, that's when I think of
my memories of my life--
The joy of my trip out west,
watching the dawns and sunsets,
The early morning with a tiny flower
opening up,
a new bud and a new life;
I just know I'm here for a purpose,
whatever that may be;
I'll take this challenge, with my head up
and my walls crumbling,
And hope that my purpose will be fulfilled
with the grace of God and His blessing.
--DIANA S.

Sometimes little things make a big
difference,
Like the smell of a rose blooming
in the spring,
Like the feel of suction pulling from within,
Opening up for the world to taste,
Of a beautiful blessing only given by grace,
With the touch of dream turning color
in you from within.
--MICHELLE S.

THE LIFE I TOOK

How sad it was--just thrown away,
Lost in a happy world of death,
Losing its sight to the touch of faith,
Crying for help but dying in the wind;
How sad it can be not to know thee,
Sally, Sue, Jane and me--
All one person dying in me;
To grab a gift of life after the wind
has calmed--
Search the earth's surface to find
a true gift of me;
Grabbing so fast, 'cause I don't want to live
my past;
In hope of touching something sweet,
not bitter,
Soft and warm, fluffy like a pillow
Carrying a dream in the hope of learning
Who the hell is me.
--MICHELLE S.

My touchstone was a little sharp at the end--
I just wanted to buy it,
Knowing I didn't have the money for it,
But I put it on and I looked at it
in the mirror--
Darn, it looked nice--
But I couldn't afford it . . .
But bought it anyway;
I wished I could take it back,
but I wore it . . .
And I looked nice in the pictures!
--CAROLYN H.

MY BROTHER, DASHAN

I know I can open up to him--he is my
favorite brother and I really miss him
so much--I really do;
I will always love and respect him;
Years ago he was on his death bed twice,
mind you--now he is doing okay;
His friend just had a baby with him and it's
a boy and he looks like my mom for real.
Dashan, I love you, my brother, my friend
till the end.
--CRYSTAL B., A Sister

MY CHILDREN, MY TOUCHSTONES

They are the most important people
in my life--they really are--
Without them there is no life;
I know what I have to do is keep the focus
on me . . .
Then I will have to step up to the plate
and make a better life for us;
When I do get out of here, first things first:
I have to find a job, then a place we can call
our home;
And when that is done, I am going to get
a puppy so I can let her grow up
with my children;
Bottom line is I just want my children
and me to be happy in this life.
--CRYSTAL B., A Mother

EARTH'S TREASURES

A warm blanket of flowers
stimulating my senses,
massaging my every nerve.

Cotton cocoons of rain
capturing my fear in wonder,
hugging my heart.

Bongos and bird songs
coloring vibrant all I see
like golden breezes
upon the ocean tide.

My grandmother's blanket
scaring the monsters away,
a child's laughter
giving life to decay.

Sunlight shining through trees,
a rose in full bloom
lifting me into the heavens
like the morning dew of June.

The dirt of a garden
caressing my toes,
the tired eyes of a cat
soothing my restless mind.

The smile of a stranger
in a hateful town
like rainbows
over love's waterfall.
--TARA S.

TOUCHSTONES

My touchstones are a little
rough to the touch . . .
There's also a smoothness
in which you just don't want
to put it down . . .
You can skim it across the water--
it lands with such quiet sound
and leaves ripples
throughout the water . . .
Having the strength to go on
brings such good feelings
inside of me . . .
Sometimes they tend to plop--
and leave such tremendous waves . . .
There begins to be a whirlpool
beginning in parts of my life . . .
Life will either bring you great joy
or great pain . . .
Just try not to remain stagnant;
Maturity reigns when you truly
seek growth and really want
to become a better person . . .
Don't sink--keep on an even keel!
--DAWN B.

ANXIOUS

Not knowing the end result of one's fate
is very challenging--
What do you do to maintain
a sense of peace?
Peace comes when I leave it all
in God's hands--
and not in man's!
Being anxious can bring about
such stressfulness one can imagine--
Be still and learn to receive
what's yours!
To be too anxious leaves you much more
susceptible to negative forces--
Time alone can bring about
so many things--
Music gives me a great deal of solace--
calmness--especially when I'm anxious . . .
Relax your entire self.
--DAWN