

**Mother**  
*By Rachael Buckallew*

All the things  
I'll never tell you-  
how sorry I am  
for pulling your hair  
when I was little and brushed it  
For all the nights you stayed,  
awake while I was out, scaring you  
Of course I could have stayed  
and just talked it through  
until I knew you felt well enough to rest.  
Sometimes I still stay  
awake waiting for you to come home  
your daughter wants you to come home.

It's been awhile  
Since I last professed that I miss you  
but my father knows anyway.  
He needs his baby and yours needs you  
When you crossed the street, from this life to next  
did you look both ways?  
I still look for you and wish  
I could've held your hand  
so that you'd cross safely  
It's like kindergarten  
when I went to school and cried  
because I never wanted  
to leave you alone  
Doctor said you never wanted  
to leave me alone.

But I know you wanted  
The last piece of cake  
that I only partially ate.  
It's okay if you watch me  
When I sleep, like when I was a baby  
I'll leave the light on for you.  
All the things  
you'll never tell me  
like how you were sad because I was,  
that you miss me too  
or that you can smell the flowers I leave,  
trying to make do  
You'll never tell me that  
if you could  
you'd come back and do it all again.

**Pensive Man**  
*By Mia Hoffman*

It was the suggestion of the sidewalk  
That guided to the fountain's mass.  
The bleached white bones of cobblestones  
Lighting up the path.

The sun sank behind the rose skyline  
Silhouettes of crooked teeth.  
Urban decay's rot had created.  
Those towering black cavities.

On the lip, near spigot, skin paper mâché  
A lone man sat unmoving, thinking.  
Slumped elbow to knee in a stance of defeat  
Bathed corpse blue by fade of evening.

His leatherbound face waned thin from exhaustion  
Eyes eclipsed by furrowed brow knit.  
Pox on his arms mimicking stars  
That dotted the sky like pincushion pricks.

Somewhere a musician's guitar case was open  
The chords drift distantly throughout.  
Notes won't sway his concentration  
They curl at his feet like sleepy old dogs.

You pensive man, your statuesque posture  
Makes opportune a photograph.  
Demeanor so somber I can't help but wonder  
What trouble of which you arrived on behalf.

This pensive man, serendipitous Atlas  
Shoulders strained with weight of the globe.  
Parkgoers mount their bicycles  
To chase the daylight into night's unknown.

The pensive man is unconcerned by this,  
Stoic as the fountain spurts silent.  
I adapt his posture in an unconscious movement  
Comprehending the world in increments.

**Galley Slave**  
**Anonymous**

I am the dregs of humanity.

I've tried not to hear that  
Shouted a thousand times,  
But it's been rubbed in my face with spit,  
And hurled at me with curses,  
And written on my bare back with a whip  
Until I almost believe it.

Last night our rhythm-keeper –  
Who pounds his drum all day and watches us sweat –  
Reeled up to me, drunk,  
Slapped me hard, and jeered,  
“You've got nothing to live for.”

His eyes were holes of desperation.

But I live  
For the chink in the hull  
That was made for my oar,  
For the sunbeams that struggle through it  
To bathe my blistered hands.

I live for the way my muscles ripple and swell  
And grow in strength like the ocean beneath,  
And for the rare moments when they do not ache.

I live for the music that rises in my soul  
And throbs through my veins  
And tells my heart to keep beating  
When my will wants to die.

I live for a wordless look from my benchmate,  
A cord of understanding stretched between us  
Because we suffer together.

I live for the dreams that come by night  
And by day  
In which I am free and safe and home with those I love.

I live for the small hope  
That our ship will be captured,  
And its new masters will be human  
And give us our liberty.

“You've got nothing to live for,” he says.  
I live for life!