

The background of the cover is a photograph of a dense evergreen forest. Several multi-story wooden houses with balconies are visible, partially obscured by the trees. The houses have a rustic, cabin-like appearance. The overall scene is a lush, green mountain landscape.

Voices Unheard

*A Collection of Unpublished Poetry
and Flash Fiction*

Voices Unheard

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Stage Fright
By Sean McManus

How does this work?
Do I have a time limit?
Genuine question.
I'm not really with it.
Can I be obscene? Gay?
I'm not sure of the norms.
How far can I play?
Should I care what you think
When I'm here on the stage?
I live as I please,
In the limits of my wage...
Some of you are quiet,
But others' opinions are strong
How should I possibly know,
When so many of you are wrong.
I guess that settles it, then.
I'll just start reading.
My poetry speaks for itself,
Whether it cuts you, or stops the bleeding.

An Awful Abundance

By Sean McManus

An awful abundance
Of utterly uninteresting
Poetry protrudes, poking
Through the thin
Layer, lamely losing
Battles beneath brain
Tissue, timidly teasing
New needs, never
Letting loose literature
Found fleeting, flaunting
And acting as
Emotions easily extrude
Dumb dances damning
My mind, my
Grassroots, growing green
After an abundant
Refreshing rain, reaching,
Wishing westerly wind
Blows billowing blizzards
Clouds cover clear
Skies screaming smoke
Thoughts that those
People please protect
Me, my mind
Often overthinking original
Ideas I imagine
Stupid simple stuff
Instead I intend
Crazy complex concepts
Impossible insane items
Put pressure, plug
Those thoughts then
Return run right

Back by before.

Dust
By Sean McManus

From dust we came and to dust we return
From which we came we may never learn
With battle and book we strive to succeed
Who instigates battle should also bleed
We read and we write about battles of old
Of worker and warrior whom which were controlled
The poet and prince may never meet
A prince who looks down on those deemed obsolete
Perhaps one day, maybe someday soon
The poet will produce a song so in tune
That even the prince may hear the weeping
From the innocent souls he sends to their reaping

My Place
By Sean McManus

The night sky has always fascinated me
With its wide open space I feel so free
Through the glistening stars and distant planets
It pulls me closer like a powerful magnet
But there's always been just one spot
Without a single glistening star or dot
That I can't seem to figure out
Why everyone else can't go without
Can they see something I just can't?
They get together to sing and chant
While I stand on the sidelines
With blurry, unsure guidelines
Trying to figure everything out
What is everyone so happy about?
That mysterious blank hole in the sky
Must contain more than what meets the eye
Everyone else has each their own telescope
But without my own I can only hope
That maybe someday I'll begin healing
Maybe soon I'll find that feeling
When I look to the sky in that empty space
I'll see a galaxy in which I know my place

Continue
By Brenna Doyle

It's not necessarily something you can *see*. It's more of a feeling than anything else.

When you're walking alone down an empty street in the dark, and suddenly you get the feeling that you're not alone anymore. You look behind you cautiously, your mind already spinning with hundreds upon thousands of different possibilities. Each possibility is so surreal, so tangible, that you can picture them with near perfect clarity. But your eyes fall on an empty street, nothing accompanying you save for the stray shadow and the chirping of crickets.

You continue your journey along the empty road and it happens again. Your body notices what your mind can't seem to perceive. Every hair on your body stands on end. Your palms grow slick with perspiration and your breath comes out in shorter, stunted bursts. You continue to walk, trying in vain to ignore the danger that your body is calling attention to.

When you're trying to sleep at night, and you hear the creaking floorboards somewhere in your house. And your heart rate skyrockets and your mind starts running wild with possibilities. A robber, or murderer, or rapist. How much longer did you have until they found you? How much longer did you have until they find your loved ones? A shiver crawls up your spine and you burrow deeper into the covers as your mind continues. What if it isn't human? Another creak and you're picturing every movie monster in existence. Something that slinks in the dark, crawling towards you at an agonizing pace that you're too frozen with terror to escape from. You squeeze your eyes shut, begging for sleep, ignoring what may be lurking just outside your bedroom door.

You continue to ignore the made up dangers that lie in the nightmares of children and the twisted minds of horror media makers. And these dangers continue making their way toward you, waiting for your ignorance to turn into complacency.

Familial Bonds
By Brenna Doyle

Deep in the wood, in a rickety old house lived a woman and her daughters...
They had no money.
They had no prospects.
But they had love
For each other.

The older sister, with hair like a raven's wing and eyes like the midnight sky,
Walked around street corners,
And lured men to her bed.
She cut out their throats
And stained her sheets red.

The younger sister, with blind milky eyes and a sweet pleading voice,
Sat in the town's square,
And communed with the dead.
She'd connect you with loved ones,
For a loaf of bread.

The mother, weathered, wrinkled, and knobby-kneed,
Spent all day at home,
With a cookbook spread.
No fingers to turn a page,
She kept her kids fed.

Deep in the wood, in a rickety old house, lived a woman and her daughters.
No money, no prospects, but love for each other.
They did what they needed
To keep each other alive.
They feasted on flesh and on loafs –
On fingers and throats
Spread over pieces of toast.

Sensing You
By Brenna Doyle

I haven't slept.
I close my eyes and I see you;
Your glowing face,
Your sense of grace,
 Your restless haste
 To leave me behind.

I found your old sweater,
It smells like you still.
Like beaches,
Like peaches,
 Like secrets
 That broke my heart.

The radio hurts;
I hear your voice in every song.
Your pitchy notes,
Your silly quotes,
 Your noisy boasts
 Of affairs outside of us.

I tried new candy
And it tasted like you.
Like riches,
Like wishes,
 Like kisses
 That didn't come from my lips.

Your side of the bed is cold,
But still, I feel you:
Your light,
Your fight,
 Your lies
 That tore us apart.

With a Heart Too Big
By Brenna Doyle

There once was a girl with a heart too big for her chest. With every beat of her vast, heavy heart, she felt her sternum crack, felt the muscles and the skin and the bones shudder with the effort it took to cage the enormous thing.

One day, she discovered a way for her to ease her pain, to rid herself of this huge heart: she could take pieces of it and give it away to those that needed it.

She found herself a woman with shattered hands and a dark, slow-beating heart. She gave away a piece of her too-big heart and watched the woman's darkness begin to fade. Her own chest ached a little less as she took the woman's ruined hands in her own and helped her break the barriers that had once trapped her.

She came across a man with storms in his eyes and an empty, fractured heart. With a wave of her hand, the clear skies had returned and she poured pieces of her heart into his until it was nearly brimming. His smile had almost felt better than her chest, which no longer struggled under the weight of her heart.

People came to her. They told her of their woes and their misfortunes, and not once did she ever hesitate to guide them through. They left happier – and with pieces of her heart. And the more people that visited and left satisfied, the weaker she grew, the duller her shine became. But never did she turn a person away, never did she fail to give a piece of her away, no matter how little her heart had become.

The last was a man. Her kisses lifted his spirits, her smile had warmed the empty, aching cockles of his darkened heart. Upon seeing what little was left of her heart, he promised to stay by her side so that she would not be without the last piece of her heart.

And as he left, as all people do, he took that last piece of her heart with him. And the girl that once had a heart too big for her chest died with nothing left within her – tears still dripping from her eyes and a smile upon her lips.

Truth
By Ian Ocampo

Beneath the shade of this great oak tree

I sit with a decision already made:

To speak truth and let come what may.

Don't be afraid and don't get dismayed

The truth is a lion let out of its cage.

It needs no protectors it needs no defenders.

It's hard to hear and harder to say.

A simple lie Couldn't be so dire?

But when a false reality gets created

Your true opportunities get abated.

You close your own doors and go down a false path.

Too much of this and you will see

That what you created cannot be undone

By any trick. Oh, save but one:

To tell the truth and let come what may.

Little by little

You'll unravel your maze.

Self Reliance
By Ian Ocampo

Be who you ought to be and hold nothing back.

Be unafraid to be disliked.

Be unafraid to be misunderstood.

Speak your mind now and speak your mind tomorrow.

Let your contradictions fly and let them wonder why

“This man, this woman, is hard to understand.”

Be who you ought to be and hold nothing back.

Pleasantries and niceties can turn into atrocities

When you speak em but don't mean em

Because you thought you needed them.

Be who you ought to be and hold nothing back.

True friends and true relations can only come this way;

When you Speak your mind and let come what may.

Be who you ought to be and hold nothing back

The past and the future only exist in your head

Look straight and dictate your words based on now.

No right, no wrong, no time to hesitate,

Speak your mind and let your true self find its way.

Oh Baby
By Ian Ocampo

Oh baby, oh baby, oh what can I say
That hasn't been said before?

The love songs and love poems
Done took the words from me.
there ain't no half steppin or Patty cake playing
when it comes to you.
So, therefore, I must pour my heart out to you
In a manner that's quite unheard.

Them songs and poems ain't done it like this
What I'm 'bout to say might blow you away.
Straight to the point, no use in waiting.
I Can't keep it up, all this rhyming
The end of poem is drawing near
Lend me a moment and your ear.

Oh baby, oh baby. Oh dear me!
The words I need won't come near me.

It's a good day to have a good day
By Arati Angkananon

Grasses so green, flowers in bloom
With the whitest clouds, bluest sky
Your summer may passed but mine just came
Like rainbows after heavy storms
It's a good day to have a good day

Sun shines on you, sun shines on me
Sun shines on three of us
We sit on a bench by the fountain
With cool breeze blowing our lunch
It's a good day to have a good day

Ducks are swimming, dogs are running
Birds are chirping and we are giggling
We can wipe the food off our mouth but not the smiles on our face
There is no better picnic place than Sundays in Balboa park
It's a good day to have a good day

Historical buildings, mesmerizing gardens
We stop by a museum to admire some paintings
Don't really know about art but we all agree,
What a great sightseeing in San Diego
It's a good day to have a good day

Sparklings, glistening, shimmering ocean lights
The great Pacific appears within our sights
With the bluest sky and the happiest minds
I'm so delighted to be here in Balboa Park
It's a good day to have a good day

Fall of a Vicar
By Jack Deane

The vicar waded through the humid stench of the city. His robes obscured the growing stain hidden beneath. Alone, though surrounded by the sick and the destitute, he shuffled into the church. He placed his hand on the veiled head of a woman. His fingers, wet with holy water, traced a cross on her forehead. As he said the words he'd uttered countless times before, the cold hands of death fell upon his shoulders. The shackles of mortality loosen around his wrists and ankles as his body sank lower and lower.

The Desert Palm
By Jack Deane

A desert palm stands resolute
against the orange sky
the last soldier standing
after the battle is won
the tree remains
the soldier returns home
its leaves wither and fall
a memory of battle returns
its roots invading the ground
fear claws into its mind
as the grip of despair clasps its heart

*Goodbye***By Emily Lopez**

In the window I see my reflection
Eyes the color of a storm cloud
Accompanied by pools of water
My lashes fought vigorously good
Though they lost the battle
The tears begin their trek down

Looking at the glass I focus on him
His lungs expand
He opens his mouth
A word at the tip of his tongue
His golden eyes cast down like the hurricane approaching
His lips shut
His chest compresses

Time freezes
Thunder rumbles in the sky
Lighting dances to its beat
The pitter patter of rain drums on the window
I follow the rhythm
Tap. Tap. Tap. Deep breath in
Tap. Tap. Tap. Deep breath out
“I guess this is goodbye”, I said
Clearing his throat he says
“Unfortunately it has to be”
Once my lover, forever my friend
It all ends.

About the Authors

Sean McManus - He/Him

Sean McManus is a senior undergraduate for Literature and Writing Studies at Cal State University San Marcos. He has had a passion for writing poetry since early 2020 and has evolved through forms and processes—stretching into a myriad of genres and styles. In addition to creative writing, He is also a journalist writing in the beer and brewing industry and has his sights set on a career in the automotive industry.

Brenna Doyle - She/Her

Brenna Doyle is a 27 year old literature and writing studies student and senior at CSUSM. She has been writing since she was eight years old and dreams of one day being a published author. When she is not writing, she can usually be found reading, baking, or playing with her two children.

Ian Ocampo

Ian Ocampo is LTWR student attending his final year at CSUSM. Ian is a relatively new writer who has recently found his passion for poetry. He hopes to grow as a poet as time goes on.

Arati Angkananon

Arati Angkananon is a passionate exchange student from Thailand, now attending Literature and Writing Studies at CSUSM. She is using poetry to record the good memories she made during her time in the US.

Jack Deane - He/Him

Jack Deane is a senior Literature and Writing Studies student at CSUSM. His primary interest lies in the fields of Rhetoric and Literary Criticism but he enjoys writing pieces of his own. Jack is also a musician and this inspires his work greatly.

Emily Lopez- She/Her

Emily Lopez is a third year student at CSUSM. All her life she has spent her life with her nose in a book. Through reading, she had found her love for words and the literature world. She hopes to continue to be a part of the literature world and one day have her words published in a book of her own.

Photography by Sean McManus