

WALKING METAPHORS

by Peter Sierra

COURSING THROUGH MY VEIN

I'm searching for your ghost
from a past
I've never known.
I'm trying to find my sane
with our demon
coursing through my vein.
I'm trying to make a lasting
mends
from this scraped and shattered
perspective lens.
Because we reap
what we sow,--
I always reap
prickly thorns.
I built a perfect home
and it doesn't even
keep me warm.
You died of a heroin o.d.
and left me before
I even became a teen.
You beat my mom
and left her open scars
You took her from her
home
and off a school yard.
And, Dad, I'm not looking
for you to blame.
I'm trying to cease
this madness
screaming in my brain.
I can't imagine how
I'd turn out
If I had to live your
truth,
and that's why I'm sorry

for the pain you had
to live through.
For if you took my mother's
life,
I'd have shot you or stabbed
you with a knife.
I would have disowned you
and pretended
I never had a father.
Yet you forgave yours
responsible
for the death of your
mother.
I guess this poem
is for my healing from
insane
because our demon
has a hold on me,
and it's coursing
through my vein.

MY BROKEN BRANCH

My broken branch
lies over on
it's side
severed
at the base
it tells
a story
of many lives
ruined
in a case
of death to
one
in a game
that
one never
even played.
He acted
as a prophet
and told
us stories
of the world
in an offset.
He talked
about his death
and our pains
and sorrows
that never
rest.
He saw
through
the dark
and gloomy
veil;
he visualized
his death
and our

descension
to hell,
trying to cope
burying
our emotions
in alcohol
and dope.
A broken branch
whose leaves
meet a certain
devestation
belongs to my
family tree
and is merely
a generation
that knows
the death of
one of their
own.

I miss you
Rest in Peace
Buck

A CUCKOLD'S CROWN

My first love
is a friend
to my family.
She is ours,
yet she is mine,
thrusting us into
realms of insanity
serving the interest
of mere vanity
to love and to cherish
a life forever somber
and minds never sober
evading our pains
yet absorbing out losts.

My grandma
sold cain,
watched her offspring
phantom hopes and dreams
then watched as they all evaporate.

So willing to die
and worse willing to kill
believing Jezebel's love was real.

Murders and revenge
at every chance,
get high, get laid
then run it all back.

We fill our rigs with heroin,
our glasses with alize
and our pipes with cush.

And something tells us
we're all trying to run away
and scavenge
some peace from the turmoil
that leaves too many
too soon deceased

for this love
we all seem to
fall down
in this echo chamber
of an otherwise loving house
in this scheming neighborhood
that kings us with
this cuckold's crown.

UNTITLED

I was conceived in mischief
by a mother young
and a father addicted
to narcotics

I wasn't born to be average.

In my childhood
I dwelled in foster homes
where I received
daily beatdowns
with hate and neglect
apparent

I could never fit with
the moderate.

My adolescence
witnessed
death of peers
and abuse
by guards.

Mediocre,

I regard not myself
for I was born
and forged lacking wealth
yet, I defy my
lane.

I was born to a storm
and became
a hurricane.

LEARNED, FOUND AND GAINED

I learned joy through tragedy
and found fulfillment
when my heart was empty.
I learned to love
because hate consumed me
and found strength
when nothing was driving me,
I found my voice
through silence,
recaptured
my humanity wrapped
in violence
and when my heart was numb
to an icy chill,
I taught myself how to feel.
When relationships
were ruined past ever
making amends
then I learned the value
of family and friends.
I learned to take nothing
for granted
when I had nothing but the
steel and concrete
I am surrounded.
And I'm committed to maintaining
my dignity
though this place that very
thing it robs of me.

Yes, I've gained a heart
that's truly free
even while my body is
under lock and key.

ONE SEVERED IN TWO

There was one severed in two
creating an unlikely favored
of the dual:

a mind criminally cultivated
and an essential heart neglected.
With that neglect the heart
indeed collapsed.

The mind grew wicked
and along came an eclipse
which buried it's essential light
in the darkness of a fostered psyche
until the night touched the depth
of the soul

fight, violence and gun blasts
from a bulldog forty-four.
Certainly, it's the deafening
screams of insanity

that drowns out the whispers of
a heart rooted in humanity.

So what more can come from
such botching of the soul
unless the two emerged again
to become one complete whole
but misery, hate and violence
committed in the dark
void of the shimmering light
derived from the human heart.

I NEEDED

I needed a prison
to reconcile
with an innocence
found only in my
healing
from the nightmare
of endless killings.

I needed a place
where the value
of empathy can be
perceived
and a place where
compassion can be
reached.

I needed to heal my hands
from reaping thorns,
to mend my heart from
being torn.

I needed hope for a life
much more
than murdered friends,
in an endless intrigue of
hate and revenge.

I needed to drop my mask
and let go of facades
I needed to see all
the pain and destruction
I caused.

I needed a place
where I can reconcile
with humanity's shine
but most of all
I needed to get back
in touch with mine.

MAKE ME CRY

Prison has taught me
to hold deep inside
my feelings,
but you,
you make me cry
and make it hard
to keep in check
emotions,
especially when I feel
comfortable in
conversations,
when I feel the door of
my heart is open.
You have me pleading
to god!
Please, help this child
sentenced to life
at fourteen.
I hear you
and I wonder
if you too feel alone,
or if you too feel pulled,
by longings for home,
or if you too fight back
tears hearing your
mama cry over a phone.
You make me cry,
a prisoner by cold
walls confined
realizing more and more
everyday the coldness
reaches inside.

Until those times,
reflecting on children
hurt and abused
growing up in an era when
they were washing up the
youth,
Though no form of tears
glisten in warmth
ever appear the image
is clear:
When I hear your struggle
for life
you indeed make me cry

THE GOD OF THE LOST

Before the altar
the preacher
of retribution
I pray for peace
within this institution.
Staring at walls
I pray
they somehow fall
and illuminate the day
they fall and widen the space
they fall and free
the spirits contained
of men lost in fears
too fragile to shed
hobbling fears or admit
a spirit spent
swimming against the tides
that never relent.
Everything is still,
yet there's immovable motion
because everything is steel
and buried behind notions
the ways of the far right
the ways of truth
built on lies in which
hate from spirit
materialize
in cruel indignation:
barricaded borders
the crisis of deportation
and wrapped in phrases
of rehabilitation.

It's a guise for police brutality
isolation gang violence
and welcomed fatalities
washed away in stained
crimson towels
from children long incarcerated
the black and the brown
cut off and set adrift
before the altar aloft
to worship the unholy god
of the lost.

TREE OF TENACITY

They say the world is a ghetto;
I say especially Boyle Heights,
for the hood is a place and a
perpetuating state of mind.
We're the sapling when Brown Pride
prunes into Chicano Power
because we idolize he that told us to
prefer death over living a coward.
Our seed is that of pride planted
in our zuitsuit days
and our leaves consist of cholos
rockers paisas and brown berets.
Our flowers are gorgeous, thick
buxom cholas
they're George Lopez's comical jest: I know huh?
Our streets reflect the consequence
of poor on poor crime
and cause us to wonder why our
leaves fall to the floor and die.
Our mothers struggle but afford
us the buds of true love
they're the epitome of sacrifice
even taking chances selling drugs.
Our fathers are rendered busy,
incarcerated and sometimes dead
and our role models are prisoners
drug dealers and even base heads.
The tune whether corrido, rock or rap
drugs and murders spawn themselves in our song
engender our lives and led to the
devestation of the youth offender laws.
Yet it's the Boyle Heights pride that
afford us not these things to talk
though it's hard as fuck seeing our
Raza stuck in the juggernaut.

TREE OF TENACITY

Continued...

It's our pain and sorrows from the
deep impression of poverty that
becomes the soil from which our seed
grows into a tree of tenacity.

LOVE, HATE

Love is easy; hate is hard-
for only love heals
what hate tears apart.

I VIBE

My consciousness
like a light
that guides ships
stranded at sea
brings to me what
I provide from
my state of being
into the unseen ether
of the entire universe.

I vibrate
for thoughts
perpetuate thoughts
alike
whether good or bad
happy or sad.
I vibrate.

MY PASSION

My passion rises like a spring

My soul within a box
finds relief.

A writer is me
confined no longer
to bellowing seas
or tossed about the
tempest by a pulseless
beast;

for before I drowned
I awoke
and now I'm free.

For imagination
knows no limit
and a writer's pen
knows no silence
and freedom I find
in a voice
that speaks.

The bird / the man

If we were to take a bird ;
clip its wings ;
domesticate it for years ;
then let it go free, -
will we not sympathize
with its enfeebled ability
to adapt to the transition ?
Yet will we not ignore
the conditioning of man
familiar with an institution ?
when we take a closer look ,
we'll find the scenarios
are one and the same ,
for there's not too much
different than the bird
from the man being released
from a cage.

The odds are stacked against
the both to a dire effect :
the normalized dependency ;
The crippling of cognitive sense
for the bird's domestication is similar
to that of a man's mind
and the bird's cage effects parallel
the circumstances of a man doing time .

FEARS

One day
on a darkened
street of L.A.
a banger enquires
of another
where he's from.
The one looks
around to find
nowhere to run
with an enemy
at his front
packing a gun.
Fear resides
in the moment
when unhealthy pride
collides
with a mind bent
on homicide,
and for the miniscule world
the two minds revolve
there's no positive outcome
no resolve.
The two recall
(if they could)
the breath
suspended in the chest
and the flood of thoughts
in excess
thoughts of death
and swollen pride
laid asunder
with glimpses behind,
glimpses of families and
especially mothers.
And in that fear

the two find
that to what the heart
values
the other subsides.
And in that fear
lies the expiration of
both lives
one to foolish pride
and the other
committing the homicide
for two sides
that are really one
conceived in fear
and fueled with guns.

WILD ROSE BUSH

So intoxicating your beauty
so wild and free
one is tempted to confuse
you a poppy
though you're a rosebush in
constant bloom.
Your flowers need not a man's
abled groom
yet you're enveloped in his
vexation
with his hands around your throat
he's in control
and both
are instagnation.
And everytime I
hear about his abuse
I wonder if you see
things clear
or indeed these matters
remain obstruse.
Do you see you're the
embodiment of beauty
and he's a stand still
riddled with insecurities?
O wild and free rosebush have
you ever stopped to see
it's the cycle of abuse that is tearing
away at your self-esteem(?)
and with every put down
calling you that or this
followed by blows from his feet and fists
he's ensnaring you under his control
and he's plucking at the beauty of each
and every single rose.

CULTURE

Culture is a living
organism
that we create then
work to cultivate
culture revolves
around all human affairs
it's the lens we see through
whether blurry or clear.

Culture is mind
it determines how we deal
with strife
how we deal with struggle
and how we live our lives.

AZTEC PRINCE

I awake
an Aztec prince
against a treacherous
array
clinging to words in my heart.
Will I obey?
We must
even in bondage
never lose our way.
Heart sacrifices
and incensed aromas:
Gun shots ring out
and leave peers
in graves and comas.
Long stretches
and over sentenced youth
indoctrinated at church
and in school with
knowledge void of horrific truths:
stolen land and
broken truces all to
establish the wealth and power
of the few
and subject us to a life of
stress
the factors to our mass arrests.
Their vested interests
in wars of the poor.
Be ready for the stigma:
we're animals,
we're whores, we're drug addicts
with ties to drug traffic.
The air is tight
I need a breath to convert

gang bangers to revolutionists
who call prison yards
their homes to not just stop
but to never condone
a normalized life
confined to stone.
Generations of slavery,
botched bodies
and the advancement of armies
not aggravated
yet concentrated
to ensure future generations
to inch ever closer to
cultural annihilation.
This we must fight
not by normalizing this
alienable plight
but leaving our hearts at the altar
and in their face
just rise.

WALKING METAPHOR

I am not a stereotype,
nor a cliché
though I have tattoos
on my body and my face.
I'm not just a statistic
for you to abhor.
I'm a brown-soul,
a walking metaphor.

Untitled

This is for mi hente -,
the ones I hold dear :
the chicanos that pass
through the rabbit hole of poverty
and reflect it like a mirror.

This is for those who experience
systemic struggle, discrimination
and strife.

This is for the gang bangers and hustlers
who live in the darkness of night
and those who bury friends, develop
drug habits and are stuck converting
darkness to light.

This is for those whose mere survival
is counted as a win,
those not prone to whine
for it's a violation of pride
and a family's irredeemable sin.
this is for those who idolize
Che, Francisco and Emiliano,
this is for the south west raised
brown - skinned chicanos.

Grains of sand

Distracted, my eyes dart across the room to the reflection in the mirror. Slowly, my consciousness expands out from the task I sought to do. Something changed in the iris of my eyes. A sadness can be felt beneath the pupils, for the eyes are definitetly the windows into the soul. Yet, I never speak of the laughs and smiles that deprive me maney hours sleep. Everything has changed yet nothing has.

An hour glass manifests in my intangible, and its grains of sand are nearly finished, concluding the hour it represents. The image provokes thoughts of a better me, a better me when I was'nt just coping.

I laugh in the confinements of solitude.

For a grain of sand, it's me and my primo Buck peddling our hearts away from stolen Bikes. In that moment, I'm lost in his contagious laugh and love of life. I take a deep breath. My lungs along with my heart expand. The grains of sand, which was that moment, disappears. I'm still a kid, but instead of joy, I'm swept up in mourning, for a stray bullet took my primos life, and at sixteen he's become a statistic.

With that moment, I blow out my breath trying to maintain my composure in a community tearing itself apart over street - corners and bad habits.

The hour continues. Another grain of sand has risen where the one has fallen. It's me, Spooky and Spanky blazing it behind the bleachers of the Wallbash Recreational Center. The cloud of smoke is large enough to shield us from the pressures of the Hood, and in that moment, there's no where else I'd rather be than there with my two homies. A gun shot shakes me from the moment and the grain of sand has passed. Blood spills from Spooky's mouth and indicates to us he's going to die. The grain of sand, this time, represent how fragile life is and how quickly things change. Though nothing ever does. I open my eyes to see the sadness disappear under the guise of a cold stare from a child who vouched to never shed another tear as he talked to his roaddog through a vent in the hole in juvenile hall. The child changed, and I mourn for what will become of a mind that embraced gang warfare endorsed and paid for by the blood of his peers.

The grains of sand never cease to move, to change though it's not to the value of good friends, but of excellent foes that appear in this reflection. In and out of the hole, we're rushing each other on sight. Those that relent or hesitate are labeled bitches and lames. I smile and laugh in the confinements of solitude. These are my defining years. Pepper spray, fights

and alarms define these years. Yet them too are gone along with the grains of sand they represent.

For a moment, I reflect on the expiration of childhood nemesis and mourn a time when we were just kids.

I'm alone. I stare across the concrete and steel enclosure into the mirror. The grains of sand are gone along with youth offender laws, both friends and foes and a time when everything was so different.

The sadness I see reflecting on these moments stay hidden beneath the eyes but radiate out. I snap back to the present reality, back to coping. I watch my rig fill with dark brown heroin from the cotton and spoon lying on my desk. I can't help but look up again at the mirror as i find a vein. The brown substance turns crimson red. I look. The hour glass is empty. I cough. I withdrawl the point. My eyes are flooded red. The sadness disappears though it's never gone. I shake it off and smile, for I beat it. I'm an addict. I'm coping with my life of crime.

The Web

The problem with this interwoven web of life and death is undeniable. As the conundrum of this condensed and conspicuous circumstance confounds the contemptible, children grow up in fatherless communities contributing to the cycle of crime, feeling as if this is their place in this interspersed web of struggle and poverty in this society based on race and class indifference. Drug addictions interlaced with crime and childhood traumas is the quagmire this woven web has become, for when one is relieved of one of its webbings the one realizes they're stuck to another.

AN ARTIST

Transfixed by the images portrayed before me I began my artistry, - though a limited one. I transformed the child I was to the character I created to fit the statistics. I converted my attitude and my views on the world to convince myself of the role I was playing.

The plot thickened many times, and each time I came out on the other side more involved in the role until pain and anger created chaos and destruction in the storyline of my life and within the backdrop of my community.

I was falling. I was falling for the melodrama led by the character's ambition to make a name for himself in a lifestyle where you are a nobody until you become a somebody in an intrigue of gang violence. I saw heartbreak, violence and murder engender themselves within the plot.

And I was falling, falling until I landed before a twelve member jury audience and a critic equipped with a gavel and a black robe. I sat, a bulgey eyed puppet of my own creation strangled by the strings used to fiddle me about. The horrors of my storyline laid bare. The monotonous melodrama, I realized, captured my entire life within a role and plot I lost control over.

But I awoke. I discovered my art and my life as an artist. more importantly, I understood the endless possibilities of my artwork. I ascertained my limitations were mere reflections of how I see the world, myself, others and my community.

The power to change the direction of my deficient art was in my choice to create rather than to destroy, to see friends rather than foes and to love rather than to hate.

Art, life and beauty are synonyms to envision for my future and though the horrors of my previous work remain a stain and blot on my self, I can always reflect on them to assist my artistry.

My life is my instrument. My mind is the canvas and the world around me is my studio.

Let's create.

LOVE SINVERGUENZA

She grinds her pelvis into his crotch when he pauses breathless from his vigorous thrusts. She complains not about the pain; instead, she moans and pants. She repeats she loves him over and over again and gushes of amorous excitement.

East Side Story Volume IV serenade the lovers that know this moment is unlike those times of sexual casuality.

Her lips taste sweet to his. She's sensual soft and curvey. His build was forged during his many years incarcerated and his tattoos are all gang related.

He's a gee devoted to his streets and a dedicated to his vice junkie. She's a hoodrat that draws men into the flame by her intense sexual aura, which makes her a potent siren.

Who is to say the couple don't love each other? Although by inclination, both are incapable of a loyal love with restraint for the desires of the flesh, he loves her and she loves him.

Maybe in another world, a perfect world where they understand their lives choices and are not images from the projectors of past experiences, - they'd marry and have kids.

But likely outcomes to choices made in a whirlwind will divert their routes and abandon them both to a cold and distant road in between no where and what could have been. Yet the couple know deep down inside the moment isn't about sex. It will forever last. At least for that special night, the two will know love and grasp the eternal, if only just to lost it, if only just for a moment.

It's the agony and the ecstasy. It's the love sinverguenza: the love meant to last for just one moment thats a breath in the canals of eternity but is one with that infinite.

I am honored and humbled to write these verses. Purpose will do that.

I wrote Walking Metaphors in my personal search for the light I lost in my life of crime. I bare my heart for others to grasp my personal struggle, so that maybe in understanding my pains, strife and darkness- we can find ways to reconcile the humanbeings behind bars with those in society. Personal struggle is always a struggle of humanity.

Humanity is our essence and the highest acheivement of any of our individual efforts. Love is not something abstract from who we are; it is who we are- beneath the surface of even the most tumultuous and hostile social relations.

Light expels darkness. In finding my light, my darkness flees. The more I become one with that light the more at home I feel. The ghouls fiends and demons of the darkness, I allowed to encompass me, seem to be evaporating.

So to my peers: find your light again. Hold onto it, and cherish it- because it's precious. To those involved in the social reform movements: Keep on believing in us, forgive us when we're lost and trust that we fild our way home.

Everybody be great. Be human.

Love,

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CLOSE