

# INSIDE & OUT

**AN ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY  
CONTRIBUTED BY THE SOUTH CAROLINA  
MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY**



**EDITED BY HEATHER ROSE ARTUSHIN, LISW-CP**

**PRESENTED BY**



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## Foreword

Mental health has long been a part of my story. From battling generalized anxiety disorder and panic attacks as a child, to growing up with an uncle who had a beautiful schizophrenic mind and a heart of gold, I knew early on that I wanted to be a part of the movement to shed light on the common experience of mental health struggles, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, and offer support to others who were suffering.

Writing about mental health, dabbling in poetry, and reading voraciously have all been an integral part of my own mental health journey. As a licensed clinical social worker, journaling and bibliotherapy have organically made their way into my therapeutic practice with clients, a reflection of the way that words connect us, and offer validation and empathy on this journey of life.

The title of this anthology, *Inside & Out*, inspired by a poem contributed by Hunter Barrow entitled *Spit*. (p. 24), captures a poignant truth about living with mental illness – the struggles lie within, where no one can see, and touch our outside world, impacting our relationships, lifestyle, and nearly every aspect of our daily lives.

Curating this collection of poetry submitted by individuals across the state of South Carolina who have lived experience with mental health concerns has been a gift. I'm so grateful to the courageous writers who shared their thoughts, experiences, and innermost struggles through poetry as a part of this endeavor.

I am also incredibly grateful for Dianne Vincent, an art therapist practicing in the Charleston area who generously contributed the beautiful cover art ("A Closer Look") that intuitively captures the theme of this project, bringing to mind the unfolding layers of the inner journey through mental health struggles.

Thank you, dear reader, for spending time with this book, with so much heart, honesty, and boldness poured between the covers. I hope solidarity, compassion, and understanding are discovered in the reading of these pages.

Heather Rose Artushin, LISW-CP

We Had Enough  
by Maria Meury

For many generations, we with mental illness have been kicked out or told that we are demons.  
Y'all refuse to love us for who we are, not for our problems.  
Everyone knows life is hard but please understand that it is extremely harder for us.  
It's not our fault that we have it; we struggle with our trauma and everyday mental health life problems.  
So please accept us and not abandon us, for all we want is love.

More Than One Way  
After Aldwyth's Sleight of Hand  
by Elizabeth Robin

how you see  
the way you look

is it up? down?

miss?  
or drop?

throw, or catch?

My name is Sprat  
I am a cat  
When I walk on ice  
I might go Splat

eyes look back  
inside the sphere

drip perspective  
omnivision unframed

## Withdrawal by Hunter Barrow

It all starts with one taste.

Taste of strength,  
relaxation,  
productivity,  
euphoric feeling.

Just one taste and you have hit the jackpot.

It's the best you have ever felt and why hadn't you tried it sooner?

Pain.  
It's the answer to the question.

You remember all those rumors you heard,  
and things you've seen about people with addiction.

You think 'why didn't I listen?'

Now that the high is over,  
your body hurts.

You think you're going crazy and say,  
"but it was just once".

Wrong.  
It was all along.  
Once turned into more,  
and more it took to be enough.

Addiction and withdrawal go one and together,  
and one would be nothing without the other.

What is normal?  
I may never know,  
but it's time to try.

Because this is life.  
And it is passing me by,  
one pill at a time.

The Swarm  
by Christian Morant

I am in need of a new world  
As this one has become stale  
It is old and rigid  
Well beyond its expiration

Flies swarm as time decays  
Claiming to be friend or foe

Neither of which serve as a proper title  
for the parasites they truly are

Formed from the larva atop the trash they feed on  
The garbage they regurgitate  
The excrement which spews from  
The toxic orifice that is their suckhole

Yet somehow  
rainbows and stardust  
continue to beam

from their shitbox

Insomniac  
by Sabrina Williams

Wide awake tonight,  
Nothing is alright.  
Trapped inside my mind,  
With nowhere to hide.  
My body wants sleep.  
My heart wants peace.  
I've forgotten how to dream,  
And my heart is tearing at the seams.  
So, conquer my mind,  
And make it all alright.  
Take the insomniac inside,  
And drain it of its life.

No Printout  
by Alex E. Daley

They speak of imbalances, as if the brain is a manmade apparatus, calibrating electricity. And, somehow, this scale is shifted, and the light of the mind has grown dim as a frozen firefly, the brain's impulses waning with it. What laws guide these signals? Chemicals is the only word on the entire string of definition I understand. But I don't see the brain as being diminished to such nameable, predictable parts. I, instead, imagine something parasitic is fattening inside me, disrupting the brain's circuitry.

I want it beyond me, to wrap it in Kevlar and tie it to the nearest elm tree until I don't feel the brainial scrap anymore. Contempt does not describe it, and yet, it is not an orphan clinging to its origin. The damn thing is part of my inscape, humming we are one.

If we are the same, then I am devoid of myself, have slipped outside the span of dirt my toes dig into. Or perhaps I've stepped off the earth into the upside down: sky hardened beneath our feet, butterflies repelled by marjoram, the body offering itself.

But when I asked to see this parasite, the doctors said it is unmet with sight; it has no definition, no printout.

Sonnet of a Schizophrenic  
by Jeff Skinner

Needing relief from insanity as children sometimes do  
we laughed when we recalled my father's double screw.  
Dropping down on both knees he would thrust  
two middle fingers, extend them towards the TV  
and let out a maniacal "SCREEEWW YOUUUUUU"  
to the voices he heard coming out of that box.  
It was a dance move reserved for that boob tube.  
He hated entertainment that allowed us to escape him in any way.  
He needed us to answer the questions he said were asked  
but we could not hear the voices of his schizoid gods.  
The conversations he had with them right in front of us  
as they told him how to squeeze out the breath of our lives  
with a slew of violent angels we never could tame  
until they went silent in that ground where they and he now lay.

noticed  
by Heather Rose Artushin

I'm feeling anxious,  
because I have so much  
on my plate  
right now,  
that time of the  
month  
lurks  
near,  
and  
I have a history with  
anxiety.

I am here:  
the weight of  
gravity  
pushing me  
rooted  
to the earth,  
heavy,  
slowing down  
the moment  
with my  
attention.

breathe  
in,  
breathe  
out.

this moment's  
safe.

anxiety  
lifts me off the  
ground,  
helicopter thoughts,  
spinning  
invisible,  
carrying me  
away.

it's safe to  
land.

Redeployment  
by Bailey Pierce

Jets streak across the sky, thirty-six hours of cramped flight across the Atlantic  
Desert colored boots touchdown on American soil  
Rucksacks packed with remnants of another world  
The cost of freedom is bought with toil

The internal clock ticks, already but not yet  
Will reconnection be a friend or foil?  
Carides across state, across town  
More than a face in the crowd we struck oil

The screen door opens, and slams shut  
Clean white walls encompass the room without turmoil  
Turn a hallway corner to bump into a ghost from the past  
Eleven months anticipation comes to a boil

A shocking embrace filled with salty tears  
Clean water splashed on your face without roil  
A fresh breath of air releases in and out of labored lungs  
Stars and stripes sway in the breeze uncoil

The Waltz  
by Christian Morant

My heart aches everyday  
Waking up, same pain  
From friends who don't get it but insist that they do  
Lying to themselves just to try to get through

Yet, we continue to dance  
Waltzing about a toxic romance  
Tiddling and teetering our tolerance  
Until one of us breaks and falls off the edge

But Pride steps in, says "Not just yet

I have other plans for your ego instead"

So, she takes my hand  
And we begin to dance again

Like fools with gold who sold their souls  
As a jester's gesture to atone  
For this joke that we call life  
Where death is the  
Punchline

The Definition of Suicidal Ideation  
by Alex E. Daley

It's been static for years, born out of the bad neighborhood my mind is. A place where barred windows aren't metal enough to contain, protect – the buildings' foundations sinking into sewer-swaddled weeds. Did my parents' genes knit this into me? Or did I develop an allergy to living? Punishment lies flat on my liver: black bile rolling brakeless over yields and stop signs. Everything here is filthy, I saw it become this. But I wait, wander bullet-holed streets that beat blue and red sirens, wondering if there is a lesson tangled  
in the wild lawn  
or an answer taped to a door.

Wanted to Die  
by Samantha Carroll

I never wanted to die.

I just wanted the pain to stop in my mind.

I was tired of the voices that yelled I wasn't enough because I had heard it enough times before.

I was patching my walls while trying to learn how to trust again.

I was holding out a bloody and beating heart in my hands.

I was thinking someone finally cared and saw me for me.

I wasn't pretending but maybe you were.

Did you tell me sad stories to reel me in?

Only to turn me in the minute I told you that sometimes the thought of dying made me feel like I could finally breathe.

Did you ever look back and realize you only made it worse?

Months of wanting to hide in my car and looking at my skin remembering how nice it was to bleed.

Months of painting my face and pretending nothing fazed me, not even you.

I was better, and I could be better.

So what story do you tell them?

That I was crazy, and you were sweet?

Played me like a guitar string.

Know my secrets but keep me away.

Are you angry?

Because I am.

I atoned for a lifetime of sins.

I sobbed on my knees.

Wouldn't it have been easier for you to say you never gave a shit about me?

Blood is Not Thicker Than Water  
by LA Winkle

Candles in the tapers  
drip...drip...drip.  
Conversation wanes,  
the coq au vin cools, red wine,  
I sip...sip ...sip.  
On monogramed linen  
I discreetly dab  
at my lip...lip...lip.  
Hands clenched in my lap,  
I tell myself,  
“Get a grip...grip...grip.”  
Decades I’ve waited,  
anticipated, this moment.  
The clock tick...tick...ticks.  
“I’ve a bone to pick.  
I was a child you beguiled  
with your sick, sick tricks.  
To you, I feel no kinship.  
With you, I formed no relationship.  
Like water, our blood  
is not thick, thick, thick.”

## Spare Parts

After “Parade of the Cyborgs” by Janet Kozachek  
by Elizabeth Robin

abuse comes at a price  
paid in pain, parts resewn  
into amalgams that whisper  
ghost limbs, repatched selves  
set on display in god’s arcade

for Mrs. Cyborg pain runs through  
that bolt skewering the right  
breast that pinions a screw-arm—  
her lipstick, deep-red defiance

the Elder, a square-chested  
amputee, lights the holy  
promenade for the Younger

hobbled by an eye-hook  
leg, he fosters a pet duck—  
evidence of a family’s dysfunction

and their transcendence

but the Mister, chest impaled by a croquet mallet  
weaponized his screw-driving tool-arm  
part human, and no part divine, he betrays  
in a wall-eyed gape his defect—  
he envies Mother’s bulging pubis

like the gothic arches above, they stay  
separate from the cavernous nave  
where worshippers kneel and chant

oblivious to the damage

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The National Institute of Justice, nearly 25% of women experience at least one physical assault during adulthood by a partner. At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year.

My Deepest Melancholy  
by Samantha Carroll

She's back, she says.

"I hope you enjoyed your extended vacation because I did." I roll my eyes.

I saw her return brought in on the wings of sleepless nights spent clutching my chest.

Climbing the walls, pacing the halls.

Ripping the flesh off my bones.

All for one second of calm.

My train of thought leaves the station and travels in circles.

Wearing lines on the floors.

Hopeless monologues.

They know me, but they know nothing at all.

She knows my deepest secrets that I keep bottled.

She exploits them every single time.

She could go anywhere, but she loves to share my mind.

She's the dark cloud that ruins all my parties.

Giving me all the reasons to not even try.

The longest relationship I've ever had.

She takes a good day and instantly turns it bad.

I'm screaming, and of course she is the only one that really hears me.

She digs in her nails deep into my spine and pulls me down into her black hole.

She merges us together another time.

Never Be Alone  
by Sabrina Williams

Holding my breath.  
Biting my tongue.  
Donning my mask.  
Is this what it means to never be alone?

I used to feel.  
I used to love.  
I used to trust.

And now I don't know myself anymore.

Hear me cry.  
Hear me scream.  
Can't you hear my pain,  
Because it's deafening to me.  
See my brokenness.  
See my loneliness.  
Can't you see my hopelessness,  
Because it's obvious to me.  
Suffocating to death.  
Biting my tongue.  
Becoming the mask.  
This is what it takes to never be alone.

Reckless Driving  
by LA Winkle

Truth be told I'm not angry  
with you.

I am angry with myself.

You took nothing more than  
I freely offered.

And I gave it all:

my home, my buttery biscuits,  
my body, my dearest friends,  
my fears and my secrets.

You took all that I gave  
with reckless abandon.

And you drove us over a cliff.

I lay at the base of a ravine,  
battered, barely able to breathe,  
staring through bruised eyes  
at the path I must take,  
at the climb I must make,  
just to return  
to the place I occupied  
before I gave you the keys  
to the car.

Reflection  
by Sabrina Williams

She looks at her clear reflection, a picture of perfection.  
She hides behind her mask of lace.  
A tear slides down her perfect face,  
And as she stares her eyes widen in sudden revelation.  
She remembers everything: the hello, the love, the goodbye.

But in the end he left her, why?  
All the times she wanted to die,

And the thoughts and sobbing for nothing more than a stupid lie.  
She turns away from her reflection, ashamed of her sadness.

Her eyes blur with tears of hatred.  
The mask no longer seems sacred;

She tears the mask from her face consumed with anger and madness.  
Enraged, she hurls a vase at the mirror shattering the glass.

Her anger fades leaving her drained.  
She trembles and aches from the pain.

She walks slowly back to the mirror, hours seeming to pass.  
She looks up at her broken reflection, no longer perfect.  
Her face now bare and her eyes dull.  
Her tears begin to dry and lull,

And as she stares her eyes start to gleam as her hope resurrects.

Hi Friend,  
by Abby Duran

I'm not sure when I'll say this again. Would sending you a letter cause unease? Would a text or phone call have you pressing ignore me? I'm not even sure if you need me. Patiently being present, sitting with you in silence that was once a symphony. Equally understanding if you choose to stand or lay down. I'll repeat what you once said to me on a cold, rainy eve,  
please, please, don't disappear.

That's all you said but I'll add don't disappear like clouds we cannot see that come back with wet weight. You once asked why I wasn't selfish, believe me underneath all that giving, I constantly crave unspoken assurance. If not wanting to lose you falls into that category, then I am tremendously selfish. It would be like losing the innocence of befriending someone on the first day of school. As a woman who once stood on the beach holding a trigger, betrayed by those she thought truly loved her, I understand.

I'm not sure if you need me but I'll be here whether you need to breakdown into ash, I'll bring the match. Or rebuild, I'll bring brick. Some soul mates are simply a friendly happenstance. Someone that cosmically aligns with our progression to solve problems within ourselves. Or be that second pair of eyes to bear into the soils of our souls, remind us we are home.

Or simply say, HI FRIEND, I understand.

As a woman who once stood on the beach holding a trigger, betrayed by those she thought truly loved her, I understand. Even with all the copious amounts of opportunities, I too, struggle. Feel free to borrow a piece of this heart while yours is breaking. Don't hide for your affectionate affirmation glows. Behind the darkness you are what the world gains in growth.

One thing I won't say is

how are you?

How heavy those words weigh when you want to slip in the door be unrecognized yet seen. Be heard yet not having to speak. HI FRIEND! I'll keep saying it until the end. Because I won't say these three words: I love you seems saturated or miscalculated. I don't need to say it because I'm right here to let you know. To stand right here is living proof these depressing thoughts, my friend, you can slay it.

the sound of water  
by Elizabeth Robin

i listen at lower falls today  
a rush of autumn leaves  
a steady ocean surf  
breaking over a distant reef

and i hear his voice  
in a whisper

at upper falls he roars  
a concerto in b flat, soft breeze  
and songbirds falling into harmony  
a hissing mist rises above: percussion

what aria does he sing to me  
in his crystalline tenor?

that voice shakes me still  
a rumbling love song  
just to me

at fish creek water laps, soft  
yet insistent  
a constant, humming  
come to me

sirens may lure and kill  
but the danger is his song  
inside the water

music calling me back  
the pull, as magnetic as the moon's

plays everywhere

Precious  
by Suzie Eisinger

I spill out a puzzle box,  
swirling and smoothing its pieces across the table  
like frosting on a cake.  
Tangled and clumped, they are a meaningless mass,  
blurred colors mixed with the muted browns of those yet unturned.

I search for patterns and commence my work.  
Finding and testing until bigger pictures form.  
Tiny islands floating in wide, empty spaces;  
the spaces shrinking as the islands grow.

In time, my eyes discern slight differences  
in the shades and contours of the pieces I hold.  
The leftovers dwindle and my anticipation grows,  
until I press the final piece into place and discover...

One space left unfilled.

A glaring hole in an almost-finished world.  
My fingers brush the space, eyes searching for what belongs there.  
But the piece is gone.  
And the world that awaits, it must remain incomplete.

There is no substitute for this tiny player.  
Nothing can take its place.  
Each piece tells its own part of the story,  
Its contribution singular and priceless.

You are that puzzle piece.  
A story only you can tell, a place only you can fill.  
In this immense puzzle of humanity—8 billion souls...  
You are precious and unique.

It seems impossible that one person could offer  
Something that all others can not.  
But, unlike those lifeless puzzle pieces,  
Defined only by their colors and shapes,  
For us, it's what's inside that sets us apart.

From the blood that made us, to the villages that raised us,  
we are an infinite mix of passions, strengths, and sensibilities,  
shaping us and the roles only we can play  
in this spectacular pot of humanity.

Every human has their place.  
And when they are missing, that void is felt and mourned.  
It cannot be filled by another,  
No matter how hard one presses it into place.

So, come.  
Offer up the gifts that make you unique.  
And take your rightful place in this puzzle we call home.  
The world awaits your arrival with relief and anticipation.  
One step closer to becoming whole.

Spit.  
by Hunter Barrow

Head over heels,  
get rid of it.

Hopeless emotions.  
Hopeless devotions.

As long as I have two peace fingers,  
I'll never see peace again.

Let it go,  
Let me be free.

One day you'll see,  
you're worth something.

Look through the glass and finally find that peace.  
Flaws make you who you're supposed to be.

Inside and out.

Fuck society's standards of beauty.

Overloaded  
by Christian Morant

I tried to be tied down  
But couldn't quite figure out  
What I really wanted out of life  
So I shut down  
Abandoned everybody who trusts me  
And tried to love me  
Cuz I couldn't bear the thought of them  
Knowing that I was strugglin'  
Mentally, financially  
And everything else in between  
As pride got the best of me  
Tempted me and then tested me  
By asking my ego  
What kind of evil makes a lesser me  
Then using that knowledge  
With full intention to make a mess of me  
Embarrassing to say the least  
Having to cope with everything  
On your own inside your dome  
Feeling like you're so alone  
But never wanna rock the boat  
So you do your best to hold  
It all together  
Til one day you explode  
From emotion overload  
Airing out your whole soul  
And bearing down to the bone  
Where you're finally exposed  
To be the human  
That you've been pursuing all along  
As you hid behind a monster  
Just so he could write some songs  
Turning rights into wrongs  
And replacing your thoughts  
With a little idea  
That you don't belong  
Like what's the point of livin'  
When you've already given  
Up on everybody in your life  
That you ever claimed to love  
...

...

Well, I'll tell you what the point is  
No more avoidance  
Time to stand up and speak out  
For the voiceless  
For those who feel joyless  
For those who feel poisoned  
For those who feel like they're trapped  
And have no other choices  
But to work and fade away  
Fake a smile and behave  
While the money that you make  
Goes to someone else's bank  
So they can live happy lives  
Off your efforts and your time  
Til you're no longer needed  
Then they simply cut your ties  
Like a puppet, they say fuck it  
Use you then kick your bucket  
As they throw you out  
With the bathwater like you're nothin'  
But the bottom of a barrel  
So you go and grab a barrel  
Making sure to grip it tight  
As the muzzle meets your temple  
Cuz they got you going mental  
Thinking that you're worthless  
Hoping that the metal's  
Gonna solve all your burdens  
When all it's gonna do  
Is leave your loved ones hurtin'  
So I'm here to beg you  
To stay determined  
To live a better life  
To ignore all the lies  
To put down the bottle  
Step away from the knife  
To look deep inside  
And try to realize  
That each and every single one of us  
Deserves  
to  
survive

Always Tomorrow  
by Hunter Barrow

In a big city.  
I'm big city thinking.

The night is young,  
but the soul is old.  
Truth be told,  
I've never been this bold.

Under a shield of sanity.

Dream big.  
Live bigger.

Everyday get better.

But what if,  
just me living is enough?

I showered.  
I fed the cat.  
I fed myself.

Should I go back to bed?

Get rid of yesterday's sorrows,  
and embrace a better tomorrow.

Even if the day is no better,  
I keep saying,  
"it's worth living for."

So no matter what,  
I know,

there's always tomorrow.

edicius

by Alex E. Daley

A lethargic flutter stirs in the brain, then two,  
branching signals that say: think. Unsilence  
regenerates into a hum that starts  
the lungs, rolled-over limbs of the mind refill  
with buoyant air. Everything is fading in so fast.  
Headstones no longer block my windows, but sink  
into the earth where elms grow out of their ashes, grasp  
the loosestrife sky, and I can taste the green peeled back  
from brown. Dusk coheres into day, immersed  
in halo-light that shatters the dark still lingering on the irises.  
Bit by bit I remember falling a long way into despair's dark O-gape, thinking  
unplugged. I wasn't here but now I am—reaching life.

Building Bridges  
by Jefferson Black

Bridges build bridges we don't burn them down  
Who's the boss they say no cross no crown  
We wish to see you live a better life  
Good times begin when you embrace strife  
"This Too Shall Pass" it won't last forever  
Seize the opportunity it's now or never  
Negativity won't get you anywhere  
There already "I Am" "Already There"  
Don't fold under pressure "Pressure" won't fold  
Be brazen eschew silver win the gold  
Everybody has a "Place in This World" it's true  
It was made for me just as much as you  
Before you play the game gotta learn the rules  
All we can do is give you the tools  
That will take you to the next level  
Take cover GN'R "Sympathy for the Devil."

Breaking Silence  
by Abby Duran

These words must escape me.  
To provide and prevent the realization that depression is.  
I am no better than the next suffering soul,  
What I am, though, is a survivor of soul-altering thoughts.

Some seek professional help.  
Some become addicted.  
Some never crawl out,  
and some of us overcome.

In essence, it is one invisible civil war.  
The big picture is that depression is a formality of being alive.  
We struggle to have enough  
to keep us sane, to survive.  
And for those of us who don't rely on substances,  
We use art and sport equally as illusions to escape.

It always pained me whenever someone of immaculate talent  
struggled within the realm they were so chastised in.  
Only to be honored after death.  
How dare these people who claim to have souls,  
claim to see the soul they slaughtered—these pretty, privileged people peppered with  
perky personalities proclaiming perfect poise.  
Not surprising that "our heroes" are dying, putting on a favorable position so that we,  
as admirers and critics,

do not see the reality of "living the dream."  
Try coping with all eyes on you while staying true to yourself.  
Truth is the purest form that we all wish to ignore.

Their search hides within their lyrics, sculptures, ability, humor, and character.  
We forget to view the other side of the mirror.  
As spectators, we hold visions of what our inspirers should be  
and turn the cheek if they are not...  
...if they chose to be themselves— this act we do to our loved ones and thus ourselves.

Depression is like our blanket,  
We will always go back to it until we can face it.  
We choose to take social media as medical entertainment.  
Our consumption of being behind a phone or camera lens  
covers up the little imperfections that are our best attributes.

It is the ability to accept mistakes, be human, and learn to live with it.  
Not letting it consume you or otherwise change you into not you.  
Finding peace is a universal journey we all share, whether you are under the spotlight  
or behind it.  
I implore you to take a step back.  
Listen to someone next to you.  
Throw away your assumptions.  
Dare to be yourself.  
Dare to be genuine.

Battle Scars  
by Emily Kirkland

Her soul soaked up the bleeding reeds of life and the contents of her heart bore the ashes of despair. Her past holds strong against her, holding her down, like a leaning tower of heavy stone. She tries to fight her way through, but to no avail, she fails. Again and again, she fails.

Her scars run deep, and her fears and thoughts run rampant. Through the terror, she pushes through, but still, no relief of distinction or illumination in sight.

She is exhausted and battle worn from her fight, but she still pushes herself through the murkiness that is, her life.

To what extent must she go to reach happiness and content? She wonders how long? How long will I have to jostle and fight? Where is the ecstasy and exhilaration?

The weight upon her heart gets heavy, and the thoughts in her head grow thick. She is damaged.

What kind of redemption is there for someone who is damaged?

Her heart longed for the adversity to yield. She grows tired and weary. She's ready to give up. Her soul is tired and broken.

She feels indignant and oh so exasperated. Has she not been through enough tribulations?

No! No more! Long enough have I suffered and no longer will I allow this bile and poison to tear away at my soul and eat away at my insides like a wild beast!

Suddenly, a flame of light builds in her heart, and she knocks down the wall that was built by shadows and twisting vines of her painful past.

What was dark and ominous is now growing vibrant and beautiful. She starts to see her worth. She starts to feel her strength.

She pulls herself up off the ground. The billowing coldness she felt from the shadows of her soul seemed to melt away.

She still wears her scars from battle, but she now wears them triumphantly.

What was once buried in ashes and torn apart, her heart is now stitched together with strength and courage.

She learns that her hardships are what created the warrior that was hidden inside herself all along. So now, she can polish her armor that she dug so deep to find, and move through life's devastations, with her sword in her hand, and fight.

RETURN TO HAYNES MINE: JEROME, ARIZONA  
Reflections 8 years out  
by LA Winkle

Climb amid brokenness,  
and return to the scene of the mend.  
Years become moments,  
moments a lifetime,  
that wavers and borrows and bends.

Yielding, mining, unearthing the past,  
circling the ruins of the whole.  
Days become minutes,  
minutes a lifeline,  
as my story unfurls like a scroll.

Shape me like silver and copper.  
Dry me like riverbed sand.  
Fire me into the purest of gold.  
Let me heal...  
in the palm of your hand.

Beauty and the Waiting  
by Luanne Vinson

As I was driving  
for a scan of the brain –  
now I already know  
I have a brain illness –  
as wondering what they  
might find anew,  
I see God's creation  
line the interstate.  
Flowing green hills,  
bright sunlight,  
a big sky.  
I know  
my God will  
make the scan  
come out  
alright.

## Hope

by Martah Chisolm, MC Poet

When you feel alone and no one's  
around  
when your down is up and your up is  
down  
hope is there so don't you frown.

When your road is dark and you feel like you can't see  
hope is like a light so don't worry.  
When you feel like giving up  
and your world is filled with doubt  
hope is there so don't stress out.

When work gets you tired and kids are kids  
don't you stop 'cause hope never did.  
When food is gone, money is low  
and the stakes are high,  
remember you'll be okay because  
hope doesn't die.

When you're up on a hill and it's a  
real steep slope, if you so happen  
to fall get back up because there  
still is hope.

multiplicity.  
by Heather Rose Artushin

you are an expert  
and  
there is much to learn.

you've come a long way  
and  
the road ahead is long, and unknown.

you've found your soulmate  
and  
the work of love has just begun.

you've built your dream home  
and  
one day you may outgrow it.

you've read the books  
and  
you still don't know the answers.

you love me as I am  
and  
hold space for who I might become.

the world is plagued with brokenness  
and  
painted with beauty.

you are not perfect  
and  
you are enough.

## About the Artist

Dianne Vincent, MAT, ATR-BC, is a board-certified registered art therapist in private practice in Mount Pleasant, SC, with over 30 years of experience. She sees adults, teens, and children. Vincent has worked in institutions for substance abuse, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, and a learning disability school, and has volunteered in Bosnia and Haiti with the ArtReach Foundation to help victims heal from the trauma of the war and the earthquake. She founded HeArts Mend Hearts, a non-profit art therapy organization in Charleston, SC, to provide free art therapy for the community six months after the Emmanuel Church shooting. Vincent is a permanent CE provider for the state of SC Board of Examiners for therapists and counselors and has given 40 workshops to mental health professionals. As a professional artist, she feels that to be an effective art therapist, she must create art herself.

### Artist Statement about "A Closer Look":

“I was inspired to paint this orange lily in a very close-up view, using it as a metaphor for focusing on my emotional interior. While we present a carefully cultivated exterior persona socially, like a stunning image of an entire lily flower, emotional growth can only occur if we take a closer look at the interior.”

Learn more at [www.artconnects.us](http://www.artconnects.us) and  
[www.arttherapycharleston.com](http://www.arttherapycharleston.com).

## About the Editor

Hailing from the blue-collar suburbs of Detroit, Heather Rose Artushin, LISW-CP is proud to be a social worker with a passion for the power of the written word.

Holding a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in social work from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, she has contributed to newspapers, magazines, and websites for over a decade, applying social work competencies to help people in need and address social problems through person-centered storytelling and solution-focused reporting.

With a background as a licensed therapist, sharing evidence-based mental health information using peer reviewed sources is her specialty, as is partnering with nonprofit organizations to tell stories that highlight the important work they contribute to the communities they serve.

Whether she's writing a poem, an article, or a book, every word counts.

Learn more at <https://heatherrosewriter.com/>.

## Mental Health America of South Carolina

At Mental Health America of South Carolina (MHASC), our mission is to improve the lives of people with mental illness in our state, promoting mental health, preventing mental disorders, and achieving victory over mental illness through advocacy, education, and service.

MHASC has proudly served the state of South Carolina since 1954 as a private, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization.

Learn more and donate to support the South Carolina mental health community by visiting <http://www.mha-sc.org/>

Online screening is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. Access Mental Health America's free online screening tools [here](#):



