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Collection of Poetry

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Collection of Poetry-
Honors Thesis-Christine Bentley

Collection of Poems

T.V.

There is always silence
in the room when my step-father
is present.

He sits on the couch after work,
motionless, watching old cowboy reruns
in his dark flannel shirts and gray blue jeans.

Sometimes I want to talk to him.
maybe ask him about his day,
always pausing under the living room door frame,
I turn away scared of his wordless answers.
I stand there wondering if he knows I am there,
if he cares that I wonder about him,
and worry if he loves me.

I turned fourteen last month,
ten years in his house,
ten years of silence.
My mom always tells me I am too young
to understand.
I guess.

Collection of Poems

Fourteen with Braces

How awkward we are
in my purple bedroom,
music drowning out
our heavy adolescent breaths,
air heavy with his musty cologne.
I can't escape the smell.

My wide eyed cohort reaches for the condom,
fumbling with the airtight wrapper,
"Don't you want to take your shirt off?",
I nod anxiously, trying not to think of my mother
and her after church talks around our dinner table.
"no sex, no drugs, no drinking....."
The smell of old rubber begins to drown out the cologne.

Motionless I lay,
listening to my boyfriend's heavy breathing
and Ozzy Osborne on the radio.
I wonder if this is really sex,
as his youthfulness jerks ignorantly over body.
He looks funny with his blue eyes
rolled back into his head
and usually serious face contorted.
I wonder what I look like lying here, numb,
as blood stains my purple sheets.

Collection of Poems

THE MOON

"The moon is following us," my four year old sister cries
from the back seat of my old grey station wagon.
Logic cannot calm her curiosity as she turns to look back
at the brave face painted high in the sky.
I look at the yellow bulb in my rear view mirror and smile at the innocent thought.
The face on the surface seems to grin at us as we drive.

Young fingers paint at the hazy winter windows, outlining our circular friend.
Endless chatter and questions fill the stuffy car: moon, stars, earth, clouds?
I answer in my twenty year old knowledge.
We drive on, snow begins to fall, the lights from above brighten the streets,
each turn bringing us home.
I look back at the sleeping four year old and see her there,
brown hair in pig tails matted to her face.
She has forgotten her friend in the sky and the mystery he gave her.
As I carry the dreaming child into the house I glance up curiously to see him,
to see if he had indeed followed us home.

Collection of Poems

LOST TWIN

The razors edge glides smoothly,
cutting her skin like skates on ice,
movements that are slowly calculated.
She tells me in her drunken state that
it feels like a drawn out
paper cut, purposefully done.
She enjoys the pain and representation
it causes in her deteriorating mind.
The wound opens, blood turning
red in the open air, seeping slowly
down her arm.
I watch her doing this,
trying to speak kindly,
as she holds me hostage with her movements.

I watch the blood trying to find
some type of meaning
into her morbid moves,
I am just a confidant,
called in to calm her mania.
She say it lets the pain out,
a way to sooth her fears.

I look at the permanent marks bleeding on
her arm, as she begins to make another,
slowly it cuts, splitting painfully.
I do not know what to say.

Collection of Poems

Schizophrenia

I don't know where my brother went.
I think he is hiding up in his room behind his dresser,
probably lost in a game of legos or Starwars.
Yes, that must be where he is.
He could be outside high up in
the trees playing with his friends.
I miss him wherever he is.

He would be surprised with the man I just met
lost within his mind,
a frazzled man scared of the slightest thing.
He told me of voices and visions as he
frantically searched the streets
for some hidden spies,
twisting his fingers anxiously in a lonely untrusting way.
He looked at me with pleading eyes and suspicion all at once.

I was frightened by this man I met
and I am scared to visit again.
I am scared to find myself one day,
also, losing from within.
I must find that brother of mine
so he can soothe my fears.
His youthful laugh and mischief
will be the perfect cure.

Collection of Poems

1954

I found a picture of my grandmother today
buried inside a musty chest.
She sits with her friends,
talking on their college lawn,
looking very young.

She has on a violet dress,
that hugs a slender frame,
with white Keds.
A funny face looks at the camera,
tongue sticking out,
with two fingers forming ears on her friend.
This is different than her usual polyester suits,
warm colored pants, and T-shirts.
She looks so youthful and hip
in her violet dress.

I wonder what she would do at night,
maybe she was going out that evening,
I can't imagine her drunk and wild,
ancing all night in the campus clubs,
flirting with the boys,
sashaying her hips.

She looks pretty in her violet dress.

Collection of Poems

FLUGZUG

Twisting nervously in my seat
I look out the window of the plane,
trying not to think of the statistics I have memorized
40% of all accidents happen during take-off,
30% during landing,
10% in flight,
or the plane crashes listed in the almanac.
I purposely repeat the quick instructions the stewardess
casually motioned from her daily repertoire.
My husband's thumb gently caresses my sweaty hand,
as we fly above the hazy blues of the ocean.
The flugzug shivers slightly against the wind,
I sigh, trying not to think that I am
flying in a stranger's hand for ten hours.

There is silent beauty to the sky as we pass
into nothingness.
Yellows and reds from the sleepy sun
tickle the wobbling wings
allowing me some comfort for a moment.
I see clouds moving into our space,
a deceptive barrier between us and the ground,
they cover the plane in their pillowy illusion.

In my rucksack I have a book
of psycho babble, on the fear of flying:
"Count to ten",
"bring your favorite novel",
"remember that driving in an auto is actually more dangerous".
I think of the absurdity inside the tan and green cover,
close my eyes wishing
I had taken the sleeping pill mother suggested.

Collection of Poems

AUPAIR

Marielle, Isabelle, and Eugene swim relentlessly,
with energy only children can have,
as I watch from the concrete patio.
Their home sits in the lazy foothills of the Austrian Alps,
a glass home built from a king's empire.
I am the nanny,
greeted by my foes with cut up onions in my bed,
and toilet paper fire bombs from the upstairs floor.

Creativity is encouraged in this home of wealth,
as I look at the red soccer field lines,
painted over the perfectly manicured emerald grass.
"They like you", their young and hip mother reassures
as she returns from shopping for the weekend in Milan.
I fear that they do and wonder what my
next surprise will be when I return from my weekend trip.
As the weeks have passed,
I have become an expert at Legos and candyland,
gradually breaking my tiny friends
down with mud pies and water balloons.
I have learned how to discourage their pranks
by inventing my own.

Blonde heads bob up and down in the sunken pool,
as I relax in the sun,
learning to enjoy the creative minds of children,
as one sneaks from behind me,
pouring ice cold water over my head.
He grins like the Cheshire cat, testing my patience,
while he makes sure
I join in on the pool party.
Smiling, forcedly, I stand calculatingly,
thinking of the months to come.
There is a green hose that sprays deliciously cold,
freezing cold water,
resting a few feet from the pool.
I grab it, turning my young foes blue
from it's misty spray.

Collection of Poems

DACHAU

The gravel snaps under my feet as
I walk the once hidden space,
wondering about lives that were cut short,
due to preferences of another group.
Cold German air chills me in my wool coat,
a sharp contrast to the paper thin pyjamas
worn in dreary photos.
I hesitate to button up my jacket,
feeling in some way,
it would show disrespect to those ghosts
that lived in the stripped sheets.

I walk the museum that documents the lives
of Dachau's victims.
There in photographs,
walking, looking, even grinning .
Bedroom-style slippers grace their feet as they work
in the freezing snow.
I see a picture of a woman and a little girl
walking toward a building,
"mother and child on the way to execution".
I pause, a silent lump forming in my throat,
the small face so gentle,
her tiny hand holding her to her mother.
Pictures of hungered faces and withered bodies,
continue to fill the museum's walls.

The brick incinerators, loom over the other buildings.
There are roses inside, brought from a new generation,
laying on the ground that took the lives of millions.
Long rows of skinny wooden beds slammed into chilly rooms,
a hundred crammed together where only fifty were intended.
Beds so frighteningly hard, piercing at me,
making me want to run far
from my ancestry.

Collection of Poems

Wein- Vienna

Time is frozen in Vienna.
Ashen bodies and silhouettes
playing their part in mythology,
statues of Gods and Goddesses,
drape the corners of buildings,
where construction has begun.
They hang on to the poured concrete
grasping it as if it were a lifeline,
holding it there for better or worse.
The orange and black striped printed signs
slap into the faces of history against
the ancient skyline.
Interrupting the story that is being told
on the corners of streets,
forgiving as they are,
the statues hold on.

Collection of Poems

VENICE

Wistfully longing for a sultry serenade
along the mossy banks,
hundreds of camera weighted
tourists stroll to see the island of Venice.
I watch them, enchanted by their variety,
each representing another place.
Streamlines of colors drape around the city
blending it all into a perfect portrait.
You can get lost in the crowds and nameless streets,
each turn bringing you deeper into the city.
Flowers sit calmly on windowsills,
coloring the starchy whites that hang out
to dry over watery lanes.

Collection of Poems

Nine Months

Where has the little girl gone
who once thrived inside my mother's womb:
the doll collector,
Barbie fanatic,
evil Keneval on the red bike?
I ask myself how have I become a woman,
imaging my mother and grandmother
in their high heels, warm colored lips,
and scented perfumes
.I think of their reprimands,
stand up straight,
cross your legs!
Advice given when it was or wasn't needed.

A woman.
I am not a woman.
I am that child who refuses to come inside for dinner,
those Indians are more important,
I am Princess Lea on an adventure to save the planet.
For nine months I have waited
for the life that hugs my own.
A little girl inside a woman.
A little girl soon to be a mother.
I have a future filled
with moments of uncertainty.
Tiny questions:
why does the Moon float in the sky,
where do ants live,
why do dogs bark?
Correct answers needed.

I am scared of this girl
who will soon be mine.
Her life depending
on me,
still a child's life,
a woman's.

Collection of Poems

SEPTEMBER THIRD

My white cotton robe grips tight
around my nine month waist.
The strap binds me to the pain,
my girl inside,
ready for the world.
She finds no time to waste,
anxious to change my life,
contractions surg through my body
like a tight band of rubber thorns, one for each vertebrae.
Introducing us.

Bach's CD plays in the distance,
listening to the music, trying to soothe my fears.
I lay on the brown tweed couch,
pillows between my legs,
eyes glazed, distant, towards her father.
He is looking at me from his post on the coffee table,
with eyes of early morning and disbelief,
timing the beasts as they rip into my being.
I pause, my body taking over,
my lips pinch together into a thin line.
Silence overwhelms us, we wait, listening
to the concerto and the footsteps of sleepy cats.
Her tiny limbs twist slowly inside my womb,
unaware of the calm they interrupt.

I watch the ice melt on my sweaty skin, as the next contraction begins.
They are getting closer, only two minutes since the last one,
and an hour since the first.
Slow breathing, as I rise from the used tweed sofa,
one last nostalgic look around our youthful apartment.
I am ready, it is time.

Collection of Poems

BIRDIE

her newborn eyes
peer at my chest
with hurried anticipation,
as the lunch hour approaches.
I see a sweet desperation
in her little face as she realizes
her stomach is empty.

my breast hidden beneath
the layers of clothing,
taking too long for my tiny bird.
my fingers fumble clumsily
at the white bras binding snaps.
while she begins to nurse my shirt.
quickly finding the cloth unappealing,
her mouth turns upward,
searching for nourishment.

Collection of Poems

Four A.M.

The rocker's legs hit the oak floor,
sending a wave of nausea up my throat,
we continue to move in a monotonous game.
Lazy lids awake anyway.
We rock.

A rhythmic pact begins,
as the child silently gives in
to the wooden movement.
Tiny limbs tumble over the arms
of the chair.
She finally molds into me.
My weary size nine feet carry
the small infant to her crib,
the moonlight seeming to illuminate
it in an almost celestial way.

The ancient planks begin to creak
drowning out her whispering breaths.
Tip toeing doesn't bring silence.
I, finally, lay her into the heavenly space,
gently, calculating each motion.

Collection of Poems

LULLABY

Tiny quivers shake her chin
while her eyes float gently beneath the lids,
a struggle to fall asleep.
Her face shines
in the soft nursery light,
as I sing my off tune beats.
She lies so tiny in her
pink birdie pajamas.

Our lullaby,
visions of dancing bears and flowers,
has finished.
The stillness stirs her.
Her hand reaches out to find mine,
a tiny dimpled version of my own.
She whimpers slightly
at her sudden insecurity,
her grasp wraps around
my large finger.
Momentary calm,
her hand in mine,
as I watch her drift back to sleep.

Collection of Poems

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Collection of Poems

Kunstschmeide(blacksmith)

Blazing red and oranges dance
wildly in the fire, my husband,
Hephaistos in disguise,
bends the melting iron.
His hands grip the hammer,
with each blow
he creates a vision.
Steam forms on his glasses as
sweat permeates all that stand near.
The inferno surrounds those indoors,
allowing only moments inside.
Marks of labor,
stain his clothing,
the heat laboring his breath.

A marked strength in his arms
and fierce determination
attract me.
I watch, mesmerised by the repetition,
fascinated by the burning coals.
Ringing rhythmically the sounds
from the anvil seem to penetrate
into my ears.

Collection of Poems

Beauty-the cat.

My cat can find comfort anywhere,
curled up on top of a wooden bookcase,
breathing rhythmically,
her weight balanced in a way only
a magician can conjure up.
A tiny hind leg wrapped up and around her neck
in gymnastic style.
I find an open paw to tickle,
the smooth skin exposed to my girlish trick,
tiger eyes wake and look up at me in a serious gaze.
Perfect markings outline her hazel eyes,
pure white fur swirled into misty grey.
My tickle is forgotten as she decides
me unimportant and falls back into symmetry.

Collection of Poems

Green Light

My curiosity turns to
the man on the corner,
as the cold winter air
chills me in my car.
He stands there, quietly,
in a ragged flannel shirt
and ripped blue jeans.

I squirm, at the stop light,
looking at the cardboard sign.
"Will work for food",
it claims quietly.
His need threatens me as I wait,
guilty, in my heated car,
with my hundred dollar bag of groceries,
and ten dollar bills.
His want is apparent
in unkempt brown hair
and a dirty face of
a thousand leathery wrinkles.

Hardened hands clench the sign.
I glance into empty eyes,
turning quickly to avoid their fallen gaze.
I pause, thinking of the bag
of apples in the back,
The light turns green.

Collection of Poems

BLUE PAJAMAS

Filled with pale-faced
hypochondriacs,
I sit in the emergency room
looking at them, wondering what it is that
brings them here.
No obvious signs of illness.
My brother sits beside me clenching his midriff,
complaining of stomach and headache at 3 A.M.
He looks frantically about,
in his bedroom hair and blue pajamas,
angry at the lack of concern from the staff,
frightened at the idea of germs.

His hands clench the tissues,
as he murmurs his rhythm,
a barrier between himself and his companions.
"One two who are you,
three, four, five.....
germs germs stay away,
germs germs hide."
The repetition reminds me of the reason
for his 3 A.M. calls,
his need to wipe down the hospital seats,
inability to let go.

I grit my teeth
holding back angry words,
shut up you crazy weird idiot.
These words my mother says are insensitive
and close-minded.
The nurse comes down the hall and calls
his name.
His blue eyes look at me,
sure that she is death
hidden inside starched clothing.
I sigh, do not offer a hand to assist him,
but walk ahead to wipe off the door handle.

Collection of Poems

ANOTHER

I hate the way the ground feels when
I go to visit my grandfather's grave.
The grass crunching beneath my feet as
I walk the even aisles to his plot.
Carefully I trod back toward him,
his headstone a beacon
in the grim forest.
I hate to think of him there, alone,
buried in the solid earth.
I look around the vast dead space,
holding my vibrant green and yellow plant,
an anniversary gift.
Planting another life
while oddly celebrating his death.
A chill runs through me as the cold dirt
wraps around my hands.
I realise once again that he is there, within the cold.
My repose begins to break,
my hundredth tear.
I finish planting the shrub in silence, feeling
a sense of betrayal as I look around
at the others and their blooms.

Collection of Poems

CLOCK

The air conditioner chills me
as I pace the room.
My family gathers down the hall,
with a seemingly controlled happiness.

The rooms all smell like pinesol
somehow comforting me with the aroma of cleanliness.
The stillness frightens me.
I hum softly to hear some noise,
while goosebumps cover my arms.

I still haven't looked at my father;
instead I find comfort in the front room
with its plush velvet cushions
and dishes of hard mint candies.

I'm sure he has been cleaned, prepped.
I wonder if his hair is neatly parted to the side
and if he'll be dressed in his Sunday suit.
He never looked good in gray.
I hope they put a smile on him.

I think I like him best when he laughs.
The corners of his eyes wrinkle up when he smiles,
a hug usually to follow.

I just didn't know I'd be here today,
listening to the hums and echoes of the old Grandfather clock,
its hands that seem to tick-tock too much.
I realize it will be ticking tomorrow just as it was yesterday.

Collection of Poems

Egypt

She looks at me
from the crisp white sheets
on the hospital bed.
Her flawless oak skin contrasts
sharply against the starched sheets

The monitor's soft, repetitive,
beep unnerves me
as I wait next to her.
I wait,
listening for the rasping cough to leave,
she talks gently to me
as the nurse brings in an I.V.
bag full of anti-biotics.

I hear her talking through the mucus
that has coated her lungs,
taking her life to live.
The unwanted thriving inside the loved.

She seems better today,
the color has returned,
there are hints of rose in her cheeks.
She has even mentioned the future.
She is talking of Egypt,
her graduation present to come after
commencement.
A childhood dream come true,
an adventure to fuel her wanderlust.

I look again at her,
wrapped up in her plastic tubes,
and I.V. feeder.
Unable to sustain her own life,
her own life,
at twenty.

Collection of Poems

My Tenth Anniversary, Four poster bed.

Leaves fall,
a circus of colors,
a show,
another year.
Brilliant reds and yellows
held in the wind,
twirling and twisting as they fall.
One last performance before
they are placed down.
Our girls rake them up
into a pile upon their landing.
They giggle happily outside
in their wool jackets and mittens,
unaware of the opportunity
their absence provides.

I can see them all from the
rocking four poster bed,
flaunting their freedom from outside.
My wood trimmed bay window,
frames their show of life.
I hold my vow of silence.
I can barely feel the repetition
that pins me,
the breath surrounding
my face stings with misty lust.
I feel the wind
from the open window
chilling my tears,
as fall comes again
marking my tenth anniversary
on the four poster bed.

Collection of Poems

BLACK SUEDE SHOES

My wife had a pair of shoes like those,
black suede with heels,
they brought her eyes to mine.
A part of her favorite ensemble,
tight fitting black dress that hung to her thighs,
with a slit revealing legs
that would floor any man.
Her dark black hair was
styled high on top of her head
and secured neatly with a turquoise barrette.
She smiled at me seductively
as we left the house.

I always knew where to go on our
night off from the kids.
The Trance Disco.
The smell of heated sweat
and alcohol permeating the rooms,
as bodies moved in a rhythmic motion,
to the flashing club lights.
We danced for hours
in those lights,
to our own lusty rhythms.
She held on to me,
her breath caressing my cheek,
during every song.
Her eyes said what her body couldn't.
She shone on the dance floor
in those black suede shoes,
a woman in every way.

It is odd to see those shoes in the closet,
along with her black dress and turquoise barrette.
The last things to be put into boxes,
I reach for them and slowly put each away,
as I think back to the Trance Disco and
those black suede shoes.