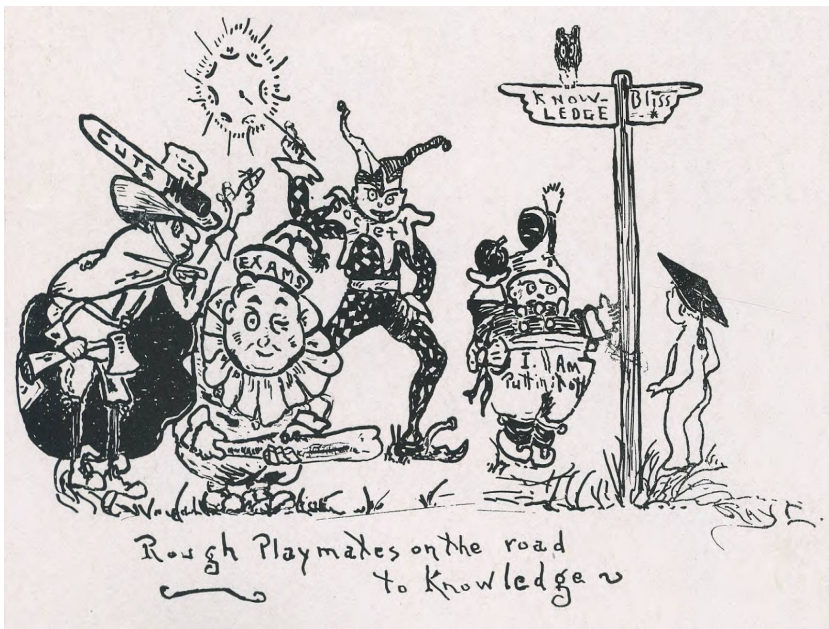




The Road I Chose

Poems by *Jesse McDaniel*

Which road will you take?



The choice is yours...

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## 1. Against the Grain

I've never been normal in this life.  
I've been creating my own light.  
In this life, I've never felt right.  
I've run so far to escape sight.  
It has never been easy to be  
in a place that can't be seen.  
No matter what, I swim upstream;  
I love to play on the other team.  
I've always been told to go left  
but going left never felt right.  
When told to talk, I held my breath.  
When told to quit, I knew to fight.  
I've always gone against the grain.  
I've learned to endure life's pain.  
I've walked miles in my own lane.  
I've walked alone in my own brain.  
The path I chose has one red rose.  
The rose can only be picked by me.  
I've felt some highs to find my lows.  
I swim upstream. I fight the breeze.  
I've stayed when I was told to leave.  
I've gone against the grain to be free.

## 2. Without the Dark

I cannot see what's in front of me.  
It must be very dark and shady.  
I could never live without the dark.  
There's something about not seeing  
the evil that lurks on this planet.  
Without the dark, there is no light.  
There are no beams to be seen.  
Darkness lets our demons run free.  
We need the dark to see our light  
that flickers throughout the night.  
I need this darkness so I can see  
how my light shines on your face.  
I reside in darkness: the unknown.  
When I left, I got myself lost  
trying to find my way home.  
The light I carry helps me out  
when the sun doesn't come out.  
In life, I appreciate the darkness.  
There's no way to explain it.  
I need the darkness so I can see  
beams of light that create sight.

### 3. Another Fall

Every season,  
I take another fall.  
I climb so high  
to plummet down.  
I have traveled  
to the very top  
just to know  
how it feels to drop.  
I have fallen  
when I was all in.  
I have fallen  
into the deepest pits.  
I have fallen  
when I tried to live.  
I have taken  
many falls in my life.  
I know how it feels  
to drop below.  
It's the best feeling  
to be high in the sky  
where I can fly.  
When I take  
another fall,  
I stand tall.  
I get up.  
I start climbing.

I stand tall.  
When I am tall,  
the fall feels  
Like nothing at all.



#### 4. Writing in the Rain

Rain dripped from the rooftops.  
No one brought their umbrellas.  
No one could see the rain coming.  
People couldn't handle being wet,  
yet this is where life was set.  
For a second, everybody felt  
the same way about something.  
Rain touched every person there.  
As others felt the rain turn to pain,  
I wanted to write in the rain -  
to wash away many of my stains.  
I wrote in the rain and got soaked;  
Writing in the rain helped me grow.  
I felt at ease with the rainy breeze.  
I knew I was different; You did too.  
My paper got wet; I didn't stop.  
I wanted to feel every raindrop.  
I wanted to feel the rain as I knew  
that it would pass. It didn't last.  
Not before long, the rain stopped.  
The sun arrived after some time.  
My wet clothes dried quickly.  
I looked down at my clothes;  
I felt happy to see and know  
the rain washed away my pain.



## 5. The Ghost of You

In this life, I've seen you at night  
haunting me and my dreams.  
I don't go a day without seeing  
the ghost of you. You left me,  
but your spirit did not leave.  
I've heard your voice. I've tried  
to say hello. I've tried to touch  
your shadow that always shows.  
I've been haunted by memories  
that only you and I would know.  
The real you couldn't be found;  
yet your ghost stayed around.  
As long as I live, I'll be able to see,  
the ghost of you, in front of me.

## 6. Into the Night

I live for the night. I always stay up.

I stay up as others lay down;

I find peace in a sleeping town.

*The night time is the right time  
to face the dark side of the day.*

I like staying up deep into the night.

I feel alive when I walk empty streets.

I love sitting in a row of empty seats.

When I stay up, I see lights turn off.

I am awake to hear something  
quickly turn into nothing. I am awake  
to bring the only light into the night.

I am here to do my work out of sight.

I live for the night: What can I say?

My light can't shine during the day.

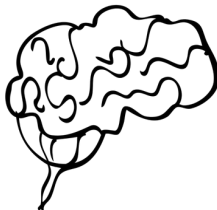
## 7. New to You

It is new to you - something strange.  
I know you're unsure right now.  
Just take it slow as you adjust.  
I've been you before and you must  
walk around and hear new sounds.  
You can do this really anywhere.  
The new will soon become old;  
a burning heart eventually turns cold.  
You can turn old silver into gold.  
Soon, you will feel safe and happy  
as what's new to you will soon be  
nothing new. You will soon see  
something new to help you through.  
It is new to you: something bold.  
It is new to you until it becomes old.

## 8. Open Mind

It's time to open  
the door and see  
something more.  
There's so much  
on the other side -  
a place where  
the sun shines.  
A closed mind  
leaves one blind  
to the beauty  
others offer.  
Be someone  
who minds.  
Don't be captive  
to old thoughts -  
to old lessons  
still being taught.  
The open mind  
has endless time;  
It creates boxes  
without lines.  
To open up  
means to live  
without worry.  
To close down

means to stay  
in a place  
far away.  
It's time to  
open the mind.  
It's time  
I open mine.



## 9. Around the Block

I've been around the block  
to take walks or kick rocks.  
I've seen the block get hot.  
I'm also there when it's not.  
My people have been around  
the block and are down  
to work around the clock.  
This block has four sides  
and I've seen them all.  
I know everyone here. I do.  
When people see me,  
it isn't anything new. It's true.  
See, I know this block well.  
Each person here has a story  
to tell, some about a block  
or some about a cell.  
I've been around the block  
and others like me have, too.  
This life is nothing new.  
If I can't be found. Look around  
the block, where I always walk.

## 10. Looking Back

Looking back, I can tell you that  
I wish I could do things over.  
I look back and feel sad;  
I think of the life I once had.  
There's a lot of pain in the past -  
pain that is sure to last.  
Looking back, I see what I lacked.  
All I can do is look back.  
I can't change the past,  
especially since time goes fast.  
Looking back, I have done a lot.  
I have done more than I thought.  
When I walk forward, I look back.  
Now I am sure to never backtrack  
as I have a brand new path.



## 11. Our Song

I play our song  
when I'm alone.  
I hear our song  
on my way home.  
Track 24 plays  
almost every day.  
Our song will last  
as long as I do.  
Life goes fast,  
but our song  
slows the time.  
I am happy  
when I hear our  
song. Dear,  
it won't be long.  
I hear our song  
and I think of us.  
It brings me back  
to a simpler time.  
I hear our song  
to just rewind -  
to just unwind.  
I hear our song  
as the sun shines.



## 12. Without a Doubt

Without a doubt,  
I love you.  
I love the way you are.  
Without a doubt,  
you help the sun  
come out.  
I love the way  
you are. Pretty  
and witty. I love that.  
Without a doubt,  
you make me  
crazy - just crazy.  
You make me  
feel amazing.  
Without a doubt,  
you are my love.  
You brighten  
my day. I say,  
without a doubt,  
I love the way  
you are. You  
should know  
my love for you  
will always grow.

### 13. Rain Check

How much will I get  
for your rain check?

Can any amount  
of money buy  
my time back?

We can't make up  
time. We have  
so much down  
time and before  
we know it, it goes.

Is your rain check  
valid or not?

Because it rains  
a lot. Who thought?

We both know

I can't cash checks  
you write because  
to me, there's no  
rain in sight.

## 14. Broken Home

Those who come from  
a broken home know  
they have hands  
stronger than stone.  
Some don't know  
about the broken  
home. Those familiar  
with functional families  
are all too lucky. Only  
some know about it -  
the pain of picking  
up pieces, putting  
them all together,  
and hoping they fit.  
Those used to  
being used have it  
tough. Either way,  
the broken home  
can help others  
build their own.  
The thing about  
a broken home  
is that it can be  
fixed. When love  
is missed, fix  
the home, I insist.

## 15. What's the Point?

Can someone explain  
the point of this?

I'm curious. I don't  
mean to be rude.

I cannot be  
the only one here  
asking the same  
question. Can you  
point out the point  
of this? Tell me  
why we are here.

I'm sincere. I start  
to think; I figure  
out the point  
of this. The point  
of this is whatever  
I wish it to be.

## 16. Midnight Flight

The clock ticks.  
It's almost midnight.  
I look at the sky  
and I see stars  
light up the dark.  
I want to be  
like them. I want to  
take flight - be free.  
I get lost looking  
at stars. I feel small  
when I see the sky.  
The clock ticks.  
It's midnight;  
I close my eyes.  
I see a sky  
frozen in time.  
I feel alive  
as I get lost  
inside my mind.

## 17. The Rise and Fall

I get up every morning  
and I rise to my feet.  
I get ready for the day –  
just as people do.  
I rise for another time.  
I don't see the signs  
of any future decline.  
I get dressed. I walk  
towards the front door.  
I swing the door open  
and I take a big step,  
but I slip before I leave.  
I start to fall to the floor.  
Just like that, my mood  
is under attack. I rise  
again, not before I tie  
my shoes. After the fall,  
I learned to rise.  
I look to the sky above  
and I rise to my feet.  
I like standing up to  
the faces of defeat.

## 18. Cruise Control

I shift gears. I run past  
mirrors fast. I just go.  
Ya know? I will not lie;  
I can fly. I can jump high.  
Sometimes I don't ask  
why. I must be on autopilot.  
I am not driving the car  
that got me far. I must  
drive and not leave the car  
on cruise control. Just know  
my car will carry my soul  
after the tank becomes full.

