

## Growing Pains



Poems by Jesse McDaniel

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## The Perfect Storm

It's been raining for months –  
If I said I was dry, I would have to lie.  
The wind has been blowing prior to me  
knowing. People misplaced. Problems  
faced. Dreams chased. Memories erased.  
The perfect storm is brewing. No shelter  
can protect you or me. We will have to see  
what it means to be caught between  
life, nightmares, and dreams. We are the  
eyes of this perfect storm. Together, we  
form chaos and grace in a world we face.  
Rage and elegance: hell bound and heaven  
sent. All we can do is watch our perfect  
storm take shape and hope we can  
enjoy the rain soaking our brains.

## Memory Lane

Today, the car is in cruise control.  
I take it slow and go with the flow.  
Today, I take a ride down Memory  
Lane. I revisit past pain and travel  
through time frames: different days.  
I unravel. I tear up gravel to navigate  
an unknown fate. I carry weight;  
I talk to my shadows: old versions  
of myself. Sometimes, I ask them  
for help – words of advice. Miles  
into Memory Lane, I face pain  
and embrace joy all the same.  
I see old friends of mine the way  
they were before I last saw them.  
I notice houses I used to live in;  
I recognize yards I used to play in.  
I begin to see places I have been.  
Today, I met with Father Time  
and rode down Memory Lane  
before any new memories came.

## The Name Game

**J**ust another name:

**M**ore of the same.

**A** life to be lived.

**C**hances I take.

**T**o be me is to be

**H**ere. Being myself:

**E**ager to become.

**D**eath to my ego.

**R**emember when.

**E**veryone changes.

**A**nd life goes on.

**M**e? I will, too.

## Wise Guys

I know a few wise guys.

They know things  
most couldn't imagine.

They wear sunglasses  
to hide their eyes  
from the sun. Because  
they are wise guys,  
they don't need to  
listen or fall in line.

They do all things  
on their own time.

They wear top hats  
to conceal their brains  
because looking from  
the outside in would  
really just be insane.

These wise guys like  
to get a rise out of  
anyone silly enough  
to get caught in a web  
of complex sentences  
euphemisms, or idioms.

Wise guys wake up and  
fist-bump themselves,  
doing anything that helps  
them begin to win.

I know a few wise guys.

They know how to be  
people I cannot believe.

## Memento

Today will be just another day. In a few days, today will be the past: a shadow once cast. Remnants seem to last and remain the same like a flame that burns away dark times. Every single life is chalk—full of moments and mementos: highs and lows: days and nights: ghouls, goblins, and ghosts. Thus, today I will be able to see memories that have never left me. Wherever I decide to go, mementos will remind me of who I was and who I strive to be. Really, they seem to set me free.

## Drop the Ball

Man, I didn't just drop the ball,  
I spiked that baby. I threw it  
down like Shaq. Did I mean to?  
No. The ball didn't seem to fit  
the mitt. The ball was heavy;  
I was thought to be strong,  
but that thought was wrong.  
I didn't really want the ball.  
I just happen to stumble upon  
it. I did pick it up after all.  
At the end of the day, I picked  
up the same ball I dropped.  
There is no reason to rant;  
I'll dribble the ball till I can't.



## Sacrificial Salvation

Much has been sacrificed  
for you to find salvation.  
Hope salvaged in savages.  
Salvation comes at the end  
of work and sacrifice. Ice  
melts as the fire stays lit.  
The ground that you walk  
on is no place to sit. Foot –  
prints remind you to look  
behind you and remember  
how fires start from ember.  
Sanity, time, and stability  
has been sacrificed just for  
us to play nice – to be nice.  
The life we choose to live  
has been a gift from those  
who did nothing but give.  
Life can be given, taken,  
and mistaken. Sacrifice  
what you must and trust  
you find your salvation,  
so those after us can do  
the same to fan the flame.

## Hourglasses

The sands of time fall through  
the hands of time. Hours, minutes,  
and seconds rain from above  
and shower clocks with love.  
Each grain that slips through  
is a day... maybe two. The grains  
can be blue, black, grey, or green.  
Every second that will pass  
will do so fast. Every minute  
will sink as the timeline shrinks.  
Check your hourglass and see  
what time is left. Stay calm –  
dump some sand in your palm.  
Lend me both of your hands;  
let us stay still as we fill  
space in this mysterious place.

## The Dumb Idiom Bum

I think he caught his second wind.  
He keeps his cards close to his chest.  
His back to the wall, he does his best  
to weather the storm. Most thought  
of him as a dumb idiom bum. Yet,  
He was richer than the rest. He lives  
in a house of business cards. Bet  
He is a cat among the pigeons.  
He buries every hatchet and burns  
every bridge. He goes out on a limb  
in cold blood. When life seems dim,  
He looks on the bright side. Life is no  
picnic, but it doesn't get out of hand.  
He writes his poems in a black book  
in front of black cats with black caps.  
He may give you the cold shoulder  
or a skeleton from his closet. He is  
the only human in a room full  
of elephants wearing tight pants.  
He raises the bar outside the lines.  
He stays in the loop: has the scoop.  
He will not drain his swamp.  
No pain. No gain. And, he is here  
to stay. The dumb idiom bum  
chooses to live against the grain  
because he is a free-spirit up to  
no good for God knows how long.

Because

Because of my past, I see  
a world unique to me.

Because of my experience,  
I have seen life from  
the other side of the fence.

Because of the times I hurt,  
I learned to be aware: alert.

Because of the times of joy,  
I rebuild people, places,  
and hope once destroyed.

Because of the past pain,  
I learned to train my brain,  
and welcome pouring rain.

Because of the steep slope,  
I found new ways to cope.

Because of the challenge,  
I have found my balance.

Because of people like you,  
I know to push on through.

## All Work / No Play

All work and no play makes Jack  
a dough boy, but a dull one at that.  
With no time to play, Jack will still  
talk shop on the way to the shop.  
Jack plays no games. Jack came,  
he saw, and he worked. The same  
thing everyday. Jack forgot how to  
play. Nevertheless, he does his best  
to work harder than the rest. Yes,  
Jack has lost his way. He forgot  
who he was but also remembered  
that he must get back to work.  
Jack doesn't have time to think.  
For that, he is a very dull boy  
who doesn't feel very much joy.

## Overtime

During regulation, the game was played without fear or hesitation. Both teams fought, blocked, ran, stole, and shot lights out. Fans almost had to get their lighters out. Empty the gas tank and tie those shoes tight. One ship will sink. One team will win, right? One team will take flight straight to Disneyland, and the other will go home with a fine-tooth comb: looking for what went wrong. After all four quarters, overtime is a tall order. After long, the game was stopped after one coach threw a chair. The other coach pulled the ref's hair. 50-50 with 50 seconds left in overtime lit on the sign. The game was delayed, and no fans stayed. Anyway, both teams left the building before overtime was finished. No one won, but it is fine; only some of us are lucky enough to live and see overtime.

## Father Time

Don't hit fast-forward.  
Don't press rewind.  
Press play and watch  
memories from the past  
come to life. Take it  
slow and pay attention  
to the days that pass by  
most of our closed eyes.  
Look too far and miss  
today. Don't look at all  
as our doubts grow tall.  
Don't rush. In our lives,  
things may come and go,  
yet we will come to learn  
there is more to know.  
Father time has his hands  
full with grains of sand  
flowing to his sandals.  
Only he knows when  
his palms are empty.  
Only we can know that  
this life is a blessing.

Dear NASA,

Give me space: more light years:  
enough time to chase the stars –  
more chances to face my fears.  
I am a space cadet with ears  
that tune into alien frequencies.  
You see? I hear what most don't,  
I see and believe that there is a  
roaring breeze above the clouds:  
a galaxy that is made just for me.  
I see energy, atoms, and matter  
for what they are. Life is strange,  
but here we are. I want to space:  
all the space in the world, and all  
the space outside of it. I admit;  
I want to take lift – take flight  
deep into the cold, still night.  
I want to see life's gift from afar:  
the gift that most of us cherish.  
I wish to travel past the confines  
of my thinking and view my life  
next to a shooting star's light.  
Sometimes, I seek outer space  
when I just need inner peace:  
enough strength to be free.



## Beam Me Up, Scotty

The humans have figured me out;  
they know about my earthly mission.  
Scotty, bleep bloopy. Bloopy bop. Bleep.  
Only you will know what that means.  
Anyway, the humans will try to keep  
me here. So, I need you to beam me up,  
Scotty. It's different here. People hurt  
others for being different: alien. Sure,  
some don't wear disguises, but most  
hide behind a face that will change.  
Before most sunrises, humans dream  
of being part of the winning team.  
There are too many surprises. Beam  
me up. I can't live in this human  
body. Send the mothership, Scotty.

## Souls and Spirits

Life is full of surprises, new heights,  
and sunrises. Life can shine a light  
that will follow us through the night.  
Life is full of lost souls and spirits.  
The energy those put into the world  
will stay around, make sounds, and  
will never die down. The feeling  
we are left with provides healing.  
Souls and spirits roam free. Souls  
and spirits attach themselves to  
those who don't quite feel whole.  
These aren't ghosts. They're friends  
from the past: those who once lived.  
They are gifts providing support  
we were never given. Those living,  
feel your soul. Never stop giving  
spirits your attention. Keep living  
a life that will leave a mark. Now,  
know you are never alone as we  
are with those we will never see.

## The Great Escape

You don't have to do much  
to get tripped up. The mind  
contains chains that hold  
down brains. The mind  
can wander down on trails  
derailing trains of thought.  
The mind is a cage holding  
in memories once caught.  
Inside your mind, find time  
to escape the cage keeping  
you from chasing dreams.  
When the walls start closing  
in, breathe in the care-free  
air. Close your eyes and look  
inside. Free yourself – believe  
there is more to every life.  
Break free from yourself.  
*Run! Flee!* Find happiness:  
a life full of freedom and bliss.

## These Feet

These feet keep moving on streets  
that I seek until I become weak.  
These bare feet move on beat  
to music that my soul creates.  
I make haste for time I don't waste.  
These feet are on the move like shoes  
that didn't choose to be put on.  
These feet have been moving along  
like they have nothing to lose.  
These feet have paid their dues,  
been on the news, beat cases,  
and have said "no" to shoe laces.  
Step by step, these feet remain  
the same: adventurous and free.  
These feet are still on the move  
because there's no time to lose  
when there's new places to see.

## Flip-Flop

My feelings flip-flop. They don't stop.  
My feelings hop right out of socks.  
My feelings don't care. They come  
and go with very little to show.  
Good, bad, happy, sad, mad, or glad,  
my feelings flip-flop and flop-flip.  
My feelings take me on more trips  
than Ken Griffey Jr. had hits.  
My feelings take form and assure  
me that I am still a life-form.  
My feelings are real; they can heal  
and can hurt in the same storm.  
Will my feelings flip or flop?  
Will I slip and lose my grip?  
Will I be able to carry and lift  
this gift of life to the finish line?  
My feelings will flip and flop,  
and I will keep feeling them  
until the light in my eyes dim.

## Step-Poet

These *words* aren't mine. Well, the configuration, the arrangement, and the manifestation of them are mine to tell, yell, or sell. The rest falls on me. I own nothing. I just borrow letters and words that were said, used, or abused in old worlds. I rent these words – these phrases: these upper and lower cases. I use these words. They don't go to waste. These words help me save face. They can tell you things that my mouth won't. I will never dishonor these words as they are sacred to me. They provide light: the insight that does me right. Like eyes that envision better days, these sentences help me create early mornings and dark nights running late. These words aren't mine, but I treat them like they are. They carry me through the day when I don't have anything to say. Anyway, I use these words to tell you to stay true to yourself and to never forget about things that will help you through all of the pain.

## The New Me

Take a look at the new me.

*Don't I look so different?*

I couldn't tell you where  
the time went or how  
commonsense was spent.

The current me is new,  
and I live to be better –  
more refined and defined.

The old me helped me see  
what could be. The old me  
didn't care about me.

The new me believes  
it takes a village to set  
all free. Me – old, young,  
fresh, or rotten – can't  
be forgotten. The old me  
wanted what I now have.

It is time for the new me  
to have the last laugh.

***Hahaha*** – *Blah Blah Blah.*

