

California

A collection of poems by Ryan Wilbert

Day 1, Entry #1 / Half Moon Bay

A faint buzz is heard when I allow myself to inhale
Breathing in a foaming of an experimental air
The kind they bottle up, hidden from coast to coast
The kind you have to lift yourself up from the sea,
Drift down the streams,
Find it submerged under a float.

Drifting past the darkness of an artificial lake
A way to mask your lack of scheduled breaks
With a light sigh, I decide,
It's time to open more than my eyes.

Flaking of my skin peppers away from fresh salt
A breeze blows by, tickling your nose.
Dropped down on the sand, following others as they go
I become acutely melancholic,
Quietly reflecting, "It's not your fault".

Long ago at the beach, I stopped to agree
That I'm nothing like the men and women I praise
But coming full circle, reinforcing what I believe
Seeing what's beyond the sea,
Learning of all I can come to be;
To that, I lift up my soles
Above the crinkle of sand caked on my toes.
The waves wash over
To my amaze.

Day 1, Entry #2 / Behind the Blinds

Down on the street
Flowers find their way
Some curl up against the walls
While others alone, wither away.
I saw two buds bursting from the rubble
One a vibrant sunshine yellow and, well, the other
Was a deep teal full of past mistakes
But this one hung close, seeking old age.

Their thorns bred another life's concern
Poking into the other with a careful caress
From up here, I feel that the pain I once worn
Lingers in the growing garden I observe to represent.
It's a little demonstration that even the brightest of hues
Can make it in this world, so deeply confused
On how to accept when it all washes over
There will be nothing greater than love that remains.

To show him or her
The flowers, I mean, the rest of the world
We need to get out from behind the blinds
And find our own pot to blossom
I'll shout loudly, filling the streets
My decree I am lucky to be
A part of their lives,
All of them.

Day 2, Entry #1 / Pier 39

Hop in the back
Be ready for what I hum
We're coming in hot, knowing our place in this game
In my bag, I'm prepared
Name anything at all
I've certainly got it packed.

Wrote it down in a couple of notes
That my power comes from the heat of my soul
My naivety carries weight as son of the Sun
But your eyes are the only thing that sets deep in my blood.

Emerging from the portside attraction of a store
I see it again, how easily shoulders can get cold
Ready to step forward, have a chance to play lifeline
But then I feel a hand pull me back,
Cautioning with a light tap,
"Is it the right time?"

Hanging on to the edge of a cliffside pool
The moistness loosens my fingers,
Those that once gripped with ease,
Before I lost all hold.
If I can only dip the ends of my feet
Into the bottom of the deep
I'll never be ready to let more enter my heart;
There'll be no switch to click,
A button to kickstart.
Embrace the dripage in heat of the burning of your soul
Become greater than planets as a whole.

Day 2, Entry #2 / Concerns

Getting prepared for the countdown
It all ends, eventually.
What choice do I have
Letting tension hang in the air
Or am I not seeing this so clear?
Am I not acting as the man
I know I am?
Reliant upon the littlest of signs
To illuminate the paths I newly find;
Coincidences are no place to rest my case,
But surely you can see why it starts off
Igniting that voice questioning,
“Are you really good enough?”

Day 3, Entry #1 / Document It

At the latest hour, you must document it
Freeze it, put in a box
Or you'll never remember it
It's like closing your eyes on a playground's balance beam
Teetering between what's real
And what you manifest
I snap my eyes to stay away from dreams
If I don't take a picture
Did it really happen?

At the earliest hour, you sit up to adjust
Become the future you envision
Do it, you must
My balancing is now a tiptop along rooftops
The bustling of the streets
Inform me of my senses
To utilize every part I own
I'll sing a long forgotten song
It goes like this:
"Tis the essence of the heart
That gives out true direction".

Day 3, Entry #2 / Life

Branches coat the trenches like eyelashes
I start to get concerned, asking,
“Where did you go?”
I’m cornered at the edge of the woods
And people ask me to cough up what I know.

There isn’t always a backdoor
But you’ve gotta find a way in
That’s better than the front gate
One where you map out the way you came
Engage in the content you thoroughly appreciate.

Am I out of place?
I’m wired to think beyond a social climb
Dancing as a one-man republic
I function as the artist
Stuck inside the mind.

Although we all run a different cognitive system
There is an underlying string tying the human condition
We’ll never be entirely sure of the forest we travel
So while we’re on the ride, try to pick up a few skills.

Be capable of seeing to the end of a vision
On sight they can scream
On-site they can teach
But they can't force you to act passionately.
Sink your feet into the depths of a sinkhole
Allow it to overwhelm
Do it for yourself
After all, no one forced you to go.

Day #3, Entry #3 / Love

It once was cold, but that has passed
Something emits the right amount of warmth.
Maybe I'm just falling over sick again,
As I so often do,
Yet, I feel a strength surge up my veins
When I see a new flower curl up without pain.

Seeing deeper than my limited sight
Who knew a pile of flesh could be so nice?

Day #3 Entry #4 / Fear

I'm terrified of tearing myself apart
Making up a version of you that doesn't exist.
Am I filling a temporary hole
Saying, "please hold"?
Regardless of my doubt
I continue to persist
It's not like some weird animal dynamic
Where you play a game of catch for days
What's good will be good to come to me
For another day, we'll save the play.

Day #4, Entry #1 / Wunderlich Park

Reminding you of one with blood ties
Upon beginning to put my heart on the line;
Under the foundation of all that we walk
Is an awareness of prescience
Forewarning of how much you can bear.

I stay with your eyes when we talk,
A touch of red as you linger in the shade,
A trifecta of towers looming over head,
All come together to print out a message
Retelling a dark and tragic tale
About losing it all
Cutting off your hair.

Day #4 Entry #2 / Intentions

It's not enough just to think
Praying to a force you can't see;
When it comes to a head someone has to slice
The string that wobbles with your stride.

Heading to a land of "I'm not sure"s
Knowing you have much more to share,
But it's easier to deny
There was ever a thought worth it to find.
Card reading can't provide the branching I desire,
So fuck it,
I'll ignite my actions into fire.

Day #4, Entry #3 / Compensating

I've put my body and soul out on the table
Out of my control for you to accept
What degree of respect you choose to emulate
For my surgically removed chest;
What remains of my sense of humor?

Ironic it is when I was at my lowest
Another convinced me to find some shade
Unintentionally the one out of reach
Breaches the Sun
Incinerating the doubts I hung over my bed
The ashes fall on my head
Brewing up a rising ph-
Pha-
Fear.

Cycling in the old for the new,
I wonder if I'm better off letting no one hear
My plan to construct a structure to support
The integrity of one's face persisting
As a great beam made of
Indestructible nerves
Facing forward
Less rotations you turn.

There isn't anything at your feet

(Stop staring)

And there isn't anything at the center

Of her face to greet

(Stop staring).

I'll empty more sand from my shoes

I've got one shot at best,

Myself to love,

What more can you do?

Day #5, Entry #1 / Relationships

Pushing past genre to agency,
Providing the tools for total control
As the nexus of unlimited creativity
Is the greatest concern of accessibility.
There's a hill that's impossible to climb over;
Funding a venture without human emotion
Won't provide the right equipment to arrive
To an infrastructure confirming trust in the others,
Those who are rising stars in the sky.
Over a barren wasteland lacking forestry,
A need to know basis for solid foundation
Is in deep desire to flourish conversation.

Day #5 Entry #2 / Good People

I could sail out the rest of my years
From the map I built
With advice from peers
And I'd follow the wind
That blows through my palms;
The crevices in my hand guide me along.

Cut! Chop!
The blades do cripple.
Yet, a lingering anger of how we perceive
Burns on my back, piling up a stack
Of forgotten, basic etiquette
Taught through recorded DVDs.

Day #5, Entry #3 / Final Confessions

Life is too short to pretend I couldn't care less
Hubris, I deny, I've never tried to impress
Spoken out loud, no words are forced
Drawn like a moth to a flame
Pull out my guts
Do what you please with my final report.

I mean, seriously, I love every acre of land
I occupy using the craft I tend to;
Brushing up old artifacts
That stood the test of time,
Deliberating the cause of me or you;
How do I provide a meaningful connection?

What metadata encodes all that you hold
As a memory to stress the tests they graded?
Have I passed, addressed as "dear"?
Has my expression been interpreted wrong?
Have I checked off your list,
Bullethead "no cruelty"?
When this day is over,
Will you be long gone?

Day #6, Entry #1 / Goodbye

I hope at the end of the line
My jacket just misses the hook this time
And I won't be forgotten, left in the dust
Like my bike chained in the winter building rust.
It'll stay bright out for the next few months
Sun only sets when I'm starting to have fun
But at this rate, I don't anticipate
A need to turn off the engine we began to create.
Yeah, I'm feeling a shade of blue
Soon I'll see it change, walk it off too
But you know me best, lit up unlike the rest
I've gotta make it clear I'm not here for a test.
In a few hours, I'll get back in the van
Stare past guardrails, worried I've changed little as a man,
And I might even forget to wish you a safe flight
Insecurity takes hold, I'll replay it late tonight.
I'm withholding true stains upon this blank page
Don't let the sounds from my brain be a waste
When I'm miles above the pool of red
I don't want my eyes to leak, consumed with regret.
Albeit all that I like to request
Can't be granted by three fingers on a hand,
Weighing my options, seeing what the odds are
That I'll become my definition of a star

I'm drawn out like a syringe squeezing juice
Into the pores of my optimistically obtuse
Crevices in my skin building up the hive
I've created writing notes for my mind.
When studying statistics in a classroom
To rationalize the way humans move
I begin to dissect whether it's fair to use
Theory and science to explain the complicated view
Of how the unexplainable may always remain the same
No matter the funding we inject into the game.
We play with an unfortunate lack of rules
How do we connect? How not to lose?
In total, I count a great sum of signs
That a deeper conversation is certainly worth my time
I'll put self-pity logic to the side
What's good for me will come to be mine.