

A Pathway To Dreams

A Collaborative Poetry Collection

James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

& Other Poets

A Pathway To Dreams

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*One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze...*

*I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...*

*My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...*

Foreword

This is a very unique book--and not one I ever intended to write. It falls into the category of what Bob Ross so lovingly called "happy accidents."

When the world was shocked to its core during the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us suddenly had more time on our hands due to social distancing. We also had a stark feeling of isolation and as such were turning to more virtual means of communicating and staying in contact. For my own part, I had a lot of poetry communities scattered through the USA and other parts of the world, who it was my job as publisher to provide activities for and to keep the creativity flowing. And through a concept that came to be known as *Bard Con Virtual*, an Online Poetry convention, myself and others affiliated with the Bards groups and Local Gems Press were able to provide activities, free eBook downloads, workshops, seminars and all sorts of distractions which seemed to work as it kept many poets writing.

But then there was the hidden truth (or not so hidden) that I was having extreme writer's block myself. I kept trying to write that poem, over and over, and ended up with nothing but a half-dozen half-finished or less pieces.

During *Bard Con Virtual* one of the activities we did focused on a particular poetry form, the Japanese Mondo--which is a collaborative poem written between two poets in the spirit of Zen. We had a wonderful workshop with 40 poets, and produced a full anthology from the results. So, seeing how my

own poetry was hopeless and I was only writing pieces of poems I decided on a whim to post the first verse of a poem on my personal Facebook wall asking other poetry friends to "write a poem with me."

Reponses came in almost immediately, each one starting a new poem based on the first verse I had provided. And then, almost immediately, my responses to their responses came! Each poem ended up being four stanzas--two written by me, and two written by them. I contributed the first stanza and the third, and they contributed the second and the fourth. The collaboration had completely ripped through my writer's block and what's more, I was amazed by how many different directions the simple starting stanza I provided the other poets had taken--so many different branches coming from the same stem.

I posted two more starting stanzas over the next week, all told, I had managed to accumulate nearly 60 complete poems with over 30 other poetry friends--some of them having kept coming back for more! I couldn't believe the success of this little exercise I had done on a whim, or the amount of poems it produced. What's more, the three starting stanzas I had provided as the inspiration, linked together, form a complete poem themselves! So I had not only written nearly 60 collaborative poems with friends, but completed one on my own, a success all around.

Seeing what was there, I had to record it and put it together in this book. This is one of the most unique poetry collections I ever worked on to date (and certainly the only one that came entirely from Facebook posts!) I've published many anthologies and single author collections in my time, but this one falls squarely somewhere in the middle.

I'd like to thank all my poetry friends who share these pages with me, as I (obviously) could not have done it without you. Thank you for lending me your creativity, and I hope everyone reading this not only enjoys the poetry, but enjoys the story behind it.

~ James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

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James P. Wagner (Ishwa) Verse 1

*One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze...*

& Katherine Mercurio Gotthardt

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

 this is how the days go, now,
 fast food stops, playgrounds, window shopping -
 all have turned to cravings

And yet each craving gave way to the next
incomplete wish
each one a star on a cloudy night
wanting so badly to shine through

 that is the way wanting works
 the way I want to see you again,
 moon a halo behind your head

& Cristina M. R. Norcross

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Arms extended—
branches reaching for the future.
We journey without a map.
We wander the unknown trails.

When the forks in the road multiply
when the paths ahead are winding
I wonder if my guide
that little voice inside, will be enough

A bird appears on a branch—
sits with my anxious soul—
soothes the flame of uncertainty.
Each cell within now sings.

& Bethany James

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Dreams of old and times before
The tree blows gently
The heart's desires come forth...
And, fade away just as quickly.

And yet, uncovered
In a box in the attic
an old journal, decades old
the words preserved, untouched.

A shattered cover opens
Secrets of a scribe
Memories flood in the moment
Tales of fields and fruit unripe.

& Igor Goldkind

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

I wonder how long it takes
To write down a thousand dreams?
What if one forgets one?

What if one remembers all one thousand
but in the course of transcribing
one or two or many more of these dreams
transform?

What is remembering if not transforming?
Our dreams are woven by 3 threads.
The dream,
The memory of and
The telling.

& Damien Bettinger

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

A million seeds of fire
Fallen from above
Passionately inspired
And Contagiously spread,
like love... With ease...

93 million miles
between here and the sun
but despite the distance
I am warm

A billion little birdies left to believe in a better view...
South was the place to go...
Evil people mending needles meant to needlessly
deceive you...
Yet still, there's something you should know...
...we are the storm...

& Mary C.M. Philips

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

My fear floats too
and scatters like ashes
allowing me to catch the breeze
sailing unafraid

With each new wave
the map seems smaller, less complete
what was once just legend
is now my reality.

precision now required
clouds no longer opaque
stars may burn, but yet I reach, reach

& Jamie Colangelo

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Some were old, some new
Many remembered
Some forgotten
Lord, speak new life to these dead dreams

The spirit rises from the grave
inspiration long since forgotten
now has life again
moving me to action

My lungs fill
Expanding with new breath
Life is resurrected
Life, more abundant

& Joanne Esposito

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Life is in the eye of the beholder.
What you behold comes to life.

Death is also in the beholder's eye
once you stop the vision
it all stops in turn.

A tree appears to have bare branches.
Life is present.
Activity lives beyond the eye

& Sheri Lynn

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

brushing grief across my cheek
watching their sun set
feeling their shore's retreat
time pauses, whispers, lifts each life's grace

With each sunset comes a new sunrise
doors close, doors open
yesterday and tomorrow
comprise the same circle.

one thousand dreams and desires
ever in poetry
ever in arias
enduring, stirring our passing breeze.

& Linda Trott Dickman

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

She planted them in clusters,
in the last century,
she has left us, and yet

Legacy is planting seeds in a garden
that you will never see
and her legacy is strong

she is popping up in yards,
and yards,
and yards.

& Mindy Kronenberg

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

A murmur of words
spreads across the clouds
tucked into fists, opening as hands
that beckon song to give it voice.

Singing like a choir
that same wind pushes us forward
each step
one step
closer to the destination

Music bursts and burns
on the horizon,
exhilaration uttered
in a newfound lexicon.

& Hope Terris

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Revealed right now
In this very moment
All I've ever felt for you
All kept hidden
Look in my eyes

You will see ghosts of moments
a day, a week, a year
forever ago
coming back to haunt you

with what could have been
all the moments missed
faded into forever

& Kevin Rabas

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

a parking ticket, a receipt for a six pack
of seltzer in cans,
and that Valentine card I bought,
but never gave you, already
gone, moved on

That billion dollar idea
the recipe for grandma's Italian style meatballs
incorrect mathematical formula's
for cold fusion...

All gone, swept with
the leaves, and out
into the street,
where I hunt with my hands
for all I've lost, all we've lost
to the wind.

& Janet Wade

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Hidden deep within the crevices of the mind
Revisited again and again, time upon time
But never put to paper for in the mind it stays
Lost to the world, and the wind that took it away ...

Perhaps these desires lost to me
shall be picked up by someone, somewhere
like a message in a bottle
that ignites something deep within

Creating dreams that surpasses basic imaginations
And allowing the finder to gasp the truth
That while some plant others will reap
And when unite we'll dance like leaves
falling from the
trees during the Fall

& Sandra Feen

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

or a quill pen
without ink to dip,
but red, intentional
as a tickle.

And yet ink and paper
can be found in many shapes and sizes
in many places
if one chooses to look

If one will focus, peel layers,
not scratch them.

& Maureen Daniels

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

You are the only person I know
capable of performing chemistry
beneath the magnolia tree.

Yet the apple tree helped discover gravity
each tree, attached to the Earth, is matter
like you or me
separate but not separate at all.

Why not call the hurricane romantic.
Could such insanity last, or is that
Simply a blossom's hysteria?

& Sharon Dockweiler

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

They dance with leaves,
Get tangled in trees
Rub on bark and branches
Whisper to the wind

And the wind sends them back to me,
scattered, different than I remember them
but in some ways
exactly the same

and now that they've danced,
now that they've whispered,
now that they've rubbed,
they're ready to be written.

& Chryssa Velissariou

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

I love you my wind
My turmoil my cyclotic despair
I'm passionate about the illusions
you inspire in my soul

And with no mind I trust you
letting your gust pull me up
and take me where your subtle will
desires

Oh my wind!
Intruding into every part of me
Every option of my reality
Every deserted little entrance of my body
Keep me uneasy
Keep me turbulent Keep
me flying with your strong wings!

& Nick Hale

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Until finally, they land
and germinate
ideas to action.

Each action leads to another
another pathway forms
leading to two more
and then four...

Infinite paths
some crossing, some not
meant to be taken
one at a time.

& John Dutton

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

All will be forgotten
in the blink of an eye
when Death visits the one
name written on the card.

All the more reason
to take the first step
on the thousand dream journey
for there is no promise of the next awakening

Death remembers it all:
Towns whizzing past, the blur of faces,
each face in its own personal picture frame.
There is no promise of his next awakening.

& Jeff Santosuosso

One thousand dreams and desires
never written down
never spoken aloud
fleeting, floating, like a passing breeze

Some forgotten some remembered
some recalled
glints of light in a darkened room
some requited with gusto

Some have changed shape
over the years
some remained consistent,
but each one elusive

Sixth-sense dwellers
imperfect memory
Stand on your head
Untie your tongue

James P. Wagner (Ishwa) Verse 2

*I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...*

& Megan McDonald

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

But steps did not evolve
Into a staircase
I stood at the top of the hill
Silently you held out your hand

Thankful for the company
remembering that every epic journey
needs a guide...

We stroll the red lined path
Free from outside lines
To dance into sunglory

& Cristina M. R. Norcross

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

It was a road of burnished gold.
Red leaves like confetti fell to my feet.
Light through low branches leading the way—
I walked with hope and reverence.

Each one of those falling leaves
held a message for me
but was I wise enough
to decipher them?

Parchment inscribed by the forest—
the wisdom of trees.
I walk with tender feet towards tomorrow.

& Katherine Mercurio Gotthardt

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

Each leaf, crunching beneath my feet,
leaking color, art of the season.
What a time to be alive!

And what a time to take in the view
each step brings me closer to my vision
but each glance reminds me of the treasures
alongside me as well

I treasure the leaves, treasure the vision,
that forest ablaze with orange,
those things that carry me forward,
sweet autumn of my dreams.

& Jamie Colangelo

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

My eyes opened wide
My ears became sensitized
The wonders of a new world
Sprung open and became alive

New world, new rules
new possibilities
definition and declaration
two under-utilized miracle-makers.

The spirit in me
Lives and flows freely
All that is within me
Boundlessly bursts forth

& Joanne Esposito

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

As my foot reaches out
I fight doubts, fear
My sole connects Peace, faith
What lies ahead a mystery

Each step a leap of faith,
each breathe filled with new inspiration
every venture is a gamble
but you are betting on yourself.

To find myself
I lose myself
My heart enlarges!

& John Dutton

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

A dark figure emerged on the path
I stood frozen with fear
His dark hand drew forth
I placed my goal in his palm and wept

But as my goal touched his hand
it slipped from his grasp
try as he might, he could not hold onto
a dream that was not his

The dark figure gestured for me to proceed,
his dark fingers pointing the way.
As I passed, the harbinger whispered,
“Until we meet again, Old Man.”

& Linda Trott Dickman

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

There is no where I can go,
that you have not been already,
no where I can walk,
where your voice can't keep me steady,

There is no feeling i could have
that you did not have before me
your spirit pulls me
like a guiding force

I follow by faith,
in these easily dissolved footprints,
I lift my feet out of the muddy safe footsteps
that I can see.

& Bethany James

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

Steps became my vehicle...
And, goals formed themselves
Success became believable
Solid goals that stand the test.

Each step easier than the last
each success building on the one before
the stride in my walk in full force
the hardest part, was getting started

The test of strength is sacrifice
Some steps are costly
Yet, step... regaining your life...
& victories that are lofty.

& Chryssa Velissariou

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

But as a baby I tumble
Not paying attention
To the wicked obstacles your stubborn heart
Puts shamelessly in front of me
My sweet and careless frenemy...

Yet like an explorer in the jungle
I trudge forth
through the weeds that form
not letting myself be stopped

I cut and get rid of the
Fern and the bindweed that block my way
I smell the air like a wild animal
Following your footsteps
Then suddenly I plunge and suffocate
In the moving sand of your will

& Susan Meyer-Corbett

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

This path, obscured by clouds takes me step by step
in a new kind of wilderness,
an invisible force held my hand
as inner peace flames burned fears away
heart and mind becoming lighter now

Each step quicker
each movement easier
as if the walking
turned to running
turned to flying...

Alive and closer now I am become the vision of who
May take the throne of days and sing the
Heart of humanity.
With a rising and falling and rising again
we embrace that Oneness beyond borders and
social distancing.

& Patricia Mason-Martin

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

Not seeing but believing
Sensing the magnitude
Of possibilities
In every direction

The abundance of choices
temporarily overwhelming me
to take no action
as I contemplate which fork to take

but my desire reignited
my taste for passion
I stepped forward
And never looked back

& Sheri Lynn

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

to live life brimming whole
in embracing both remiss fractures
with buoyant success moments
sewing vivid fabrics...

Into the coat that shields me from doubt
and second guesses
as instinct takes over
my mind's eye knows the truth

with each brave stride into
the chilling yet exhilarating
ocean froth spray to reveal
where our fragile hearts thrive

& Melissa E. Filippelli

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

It began with loving myself
A trail unmarked, unknown
Cautiously I tread at first
But then...I run...

Faster and faster
each successful step
building on the last...
as I fly towards my destiny...

Remembering the magic is in this
The journey
Each brave move forward
With my eye on the goal
But my feet on the ground.

& Sarah Ritter

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

I walked with arrows pinched in my fingers
My vision encompassed by my new goal
Which loomed in the distance like a target
As my heart burned with my written desire

My bow hand steady
the string drawn back
the dreams, like the arrow
flew far beyond where I myself could reach

I could no longer see the arrow
But I pictured the flight it had taken
As I continued on towards my goal
My vision of the target grew stronger

& T'challa Williams

I wrote down a desire
and it became a vision, a goal
a path materialized
and I took my first steps...

the holy grail of epiphany
journey to the known unknown,
the desire's home; fruition
manifestation is the mission

Each new step
brings new transmutations
like an alchemist of old
turning lead into gold

And truth into legend told
Metaphysical pinnacle
A grand scheme view
Mountain top visions, growth askew

James P. Wagner (Ishwa) Verse 3

*My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...*

& Marc Rosen

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

There was no path to travel
Nothing behind me but footprints
Nothing ahead but virgin soil
Untouched land on either side
No obstacle to traverse

And I realized that the path
had never actually existed
an object of my vision, a mirage
and yet how far I traveled

I never sought a path
I merely walked
The distance was irrelevant
The distance is irrelevant
I continue to walk

& Sandra Feen

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

April's mask doesn't muffle
possibilities that linger.
Nothing will stop
pussy willows growing.

And the squirrels keep gathering
the birds keep flying
the moon keeps setting
and the sun keeps rising

even in a different Spring
showered in gloom
beginning in heartache.

& Ushiku Crisafulli

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

My feet are anchored to a town that isn't home
while at night my soul's a journeyman.
Diligence breaks the chains,
the summit is a breeze.

But where now is home?
on the road, in constant transition
I might look for a place to hang my hat
if I had one

To some it's bricks and mortar,
yet these easily crumble while true bonds
are the keystone
in the bridge that binds hearts.

& Chryssa Velissariou

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

Cause every travel is a dream
And dreams wish to continue flying
They have little impatient feathers all over
Lightweight and frivolous and hovering in their
Natural environment: A thin luminous layer of hope

And how much father could I have gone
as the crow flies...
no twists and turns or winding paths
just a straight line...

And how much blood
can be shed from a winged heart
Perforated by the arrow of passion for life
Pale but freer
I keep flying

& Katherine Mercurio Gotthardt

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

I used to look too far ahead,
anxious, envisioning the worst.
But then I looked behind.
How far I've come.

I can say with some shame
I don't remember the steps that I took
to get here,
how many miles, have I forgotten?

I wish I'd taken pen to paper,
a few moments at the keyboard,
tapped out memories like a song,
sung my victories.

& Cristina M. R. Norcross

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

Footsteps in the sand
speak of many travelers.
How can I make my own path,
yet still hold hands
with both time and the eternal?

And how many footsteps
that came before me
have been lost to the kiss
of water's waves?

I glide forward with grace—
patience leading me by the hand.
This fragile day holds many offerings.
My hand an empty cup—
gratitude awakening me to all that is.

& Janet Wade

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

From Rome to Australia in the blink of an eye
Now, unto other places so much to see in one night
This journey before me detailed and so well designed...
Was an optical illusion my escape from a
quarantined mind

The imagination
can take you to more places
than a car or a boat, or a plane,
or even a starship yet to be invented...

To top it all traveling is free...
And the places visited creates history ...
I'm truly limitless when I close my eyes ...
And floats away to a new Paradise

& Mary Ray Goehring

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

With each footstep
The sands of time part
As they always have
To accommodate now

This moment, just another grain
flowing down the hourglass
towards an ultimate
eventuality.

That what I seek
Is deep within my intention
Waiting for me
To set it free

& Jamie Colangelo

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

The vision draws me in
Exciting all my senses
Breaking free of the past
Melancholy has no hold on me

And as the chains break,
my pace increases
many fold
many more steps, lie ahead

I run with great expectation
Launching out
With new found freedom
Welcomed in by a whole new world

& Jim Landwher

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

When you were taken from me
I was left to walk alone from here to Santa Cruz
a journey without a compass, directionless
seeking to give those moments new breath

Straight paths felt like circles
not sure where I was going
only that I was going
and that I had to

winds could not defeat me
nor the relentless beating sun
my sights set on the falling horizon
looking for apparitions of your voice

& Linda Wlodyka

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

I ran, walked, even traipsed onward
The foreboding was not as real as I
Had dreamt, it was the periwinkle that
Spoke out to me like a psalm, a chant,
Not melancholy, instead melodic rhapsody

The beat of the music dictating my steps
possessing my body, mind and spirit,
thinking without thoughts
moving without conscious movement...

An idle soul resists the unseen
Remembers the past, takes refuge
Amongst the weedy furrows beside
An untarnished garden never trod upon

& Megan McDonald

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

The past unseen overlooked
Remains a map
To what should be
Always remembered

The backwards map is 20-20
as the past often is,
but going forward,
in some ways, I feel blind.

In the dark the moon
Rides up the sky
We in darkness
Retreat to the unknown
Earth connections

& Bethany James

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

The path less likely to tread
It may be daunting
Knowing not how I will fare
My inner compass guides me.

Always pointing true north
the heart and soul speak to me
in whispers
if I quiet myself, enough to listen.

The whispers become a groan...
A unsettled growl
"Travel open space and new zones...
Spaces where coyotes howl."

& John Dutton

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

Wiping the sweat from my brow,
I ventured forth towards destiny
following her footprints in the desert sand.
A Harbinger will never give up his prey.

But who is the predator, and who the prey?
am I chasing my destiny
or is she chasing me
and is our meeting a foregone conclusion?

After months of cat and mouse,
we met on a warm summer night.
I vowed, she cursed.
Our blades brought forth a wonderful cacophony.
Alas, it would be our final dance.

& Donna Allard

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

Off to the beach plunger in hand
gulls dip, soar, tides tickle toes
as I plunge for salt pissin' clams.

Underwater I see a whole new world
a whole new life, a whole new journey
one so different, yet so similar
to my own.

With plunger & sack tied to the waist
I waddle & doddle by crouching seas
pirate clouds govern my way, how far
have I ever traveled is the question that be

& Linda Trott Dickman

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

even in the dark, I am guided
Fireflies, street lights, a waxing moon
The light inside me answers
It is well with my soul

For once one finds their center
and accepts they are one and the same
with all around us
how is it possible to remain lost?

I lift my eyes, my voice
My hands toward the hills
I know where my help
comes from, I am found...

& Patricia Mason-Martin

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

I turned a blind eye
forsaking who I was
now a futuristic shapeshifter
without a compass

Where will I go
what will I do
who will I become
and if I met my past self,
would I shake my own hand?

I turn around
there are myriad mirrors
reflecting me 360 degrees
I reach out to touch myself
All of me, at once

& Ann Marie Murzin

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

My hands unclasped
from praying to wandering
outside my mind into a world
moving without me.

Millions of complex pieces
fluid in a brilliant symphony
to the tune of an invisible
conductor

Who directs the baton to me
opening a space for my solo aria
tiptoeing to high notes and resting
while sailing to islands in an archipelago.

& Joanne Esposito

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

The road twisted
Sorrows, delight
I hear God call
New roads
Mysteries to unfold

The sand path
now turns to paved road
each step more deliberate
I am heading home

Peace fills my soul
I cannot contain
Comfort awaits
I am already there

& Sarah Ritter

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

My feet pointing forward
Towards the unmarked future
My mind racing with possibilities
Yet I could not help but glance back

Did I really go that distance?
One step at a time?
How many miles pass
without conscious thought?

How many deliberate steps
Were also taken to bring me this far?
I wonder if I'm now the same person
And I hope that I no longer am

& Jeannie E. Roberts

My eyes looking forward
at all the places yet to go
overlooking what was behind me
and how far I had already traveled...

Even now, I see beyond
waves of darkness — light,
ever light, appears in ripples
across the night sky.

Even during the rain
when clouds cover
we still believe in the existence of the sun
and even now I believe as I venture forth

into the forest,
past creak and topple of pine,
over clods of dirt, scatter of clay,
where understory lives,
will continue to live, in the light.

About the Author

James P. Wagner (Ishwa) is an editor, publisher, award-winning fiction writer, essayist, historian performance poet, and alum twice over (BA & MALS) of Dowling College. He is the publisher for Local Gems Poetry Press and the Senior Founder and President of the Bards Initiative. He is also the founder and Grand Laureate of Bards Against Hunger, a series of poetry readings and anthologies dedicated to gathering food for local pantries that operates in over a dozen states. His most recent individual collection of poetry is *Everyday Alchemy*. He was the Long Island, NY National Beat Poet Laureate from 2017-2019. He was the Walt Whitman Bicentennial Convention Chairman and teaches poetry workshops at the Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site. James has edited over 60 poetry anthologies and hosted book launch events up and down the East Coast.



Local Gems Poetry Press is a small Long Island, NY based poetry press dedicated to spreading poetry through performance and the written word. Local Gems believes in building local poetry communities through publications and events.

Local Gems has published over 250 titles.

www.localgemspoetrypress.com