

WHO AM I?

(A COMPILATION)



THEME FOR THE STORIES AND POEMS



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I AM WHO I AM

Jim Adams

When the people of Israel that were enslaved in Egypt, they cried out to God for deliverance, and God answered using this cryptic expression, “I am who I am”, which supposedly meant that he would deliver their freedom. Moses heard this from God at the burning bush and he was supposed to tell the people of Israel that, “I am has sent me to you”, and the ineffable name of ‘I AM’ has since become so sacred that it is blasphemous to say this out loud, so it should not be spoken.

Meredith Brooks was more forthcoming in her song ‘I’m A Bitch, I’m A Lover’ that she co-wrote with Shelly Peiken and it became a huge hit in 1997. Shelly said that this song was written when she was frustrated with her life, having had 10 years of album cuts without ever having a single. She was coming home from a session one day, full of PMS in a big funk, and wondered “What am I doing?” She thought about her boyfriend who she was living with, and now married to, and how he’s going to have to deal with this when she got home. Would he be able to give her the emotional and physical space she needed and be patient and accept what she was going through? She knew that he loved her any way that she is and then she thought, “He loves me even when I can be such a bitch.”

American singer-songwriter Meredith Brooks recorded ‘Bitch’ on her second studio album *Blurring the Edges* and the single went to #2 in the US and it reached #6 in the UK. The song explores the complexities of being a woman, and how one label cannot define her. By referring to herself as a bitch, this allowed women to re-claim the word “bitch” as a term of endearment. The Rolling Stones wrote a song titled ‘Bitch’, Elton John had a song called ‘The Bitch Is Back’ and Stevie Nicks sang about life’s challenges in ‘Sometimes It’s A Bitch’, but this Meredith Brooks song was ranked at #79 on VH1’s “100 Greatest Songs of the ‘90s”, and it was nominated for Best Female Rock Vocal Performance and Best Rock Song at the 40th Annual Grammy Awards.



I hate the world today
You're so good to me
I know but I can't change
Tried to tell you
But you look at me like maybe
I'm an angel underneath
Innocent and sweet

Yesterday I cried
You must have been relieved
To see the softer side
I can understand how you'd be so confused
I don't envy you
I'm a little bit of everything
All rolled into one

I'm a bitch
I'm a lover
I'm a child
I'm a mother
I'm a sinner
I'm a saint
I do not feel ashamed
I'm your hell
I'm your dream

I'm nothing in-between
You know you wouldn't want it any other way

So take me as I am
This may mean you'll have to be a stronger man
Rest assured that when I start to make you nervous
And I'm going to extremes
Tomorrow I will change
And today won't mean a thing

I'm a bitch
I'm a lover
I'm a child
I'm a mother
I'm a sinner
I'm a saint
I do not feel ashamed
I'm your hell
I'm your dream
I'm nothing in between
You know you wouldn't want it any other way

Just when you think
You've got me figured out
The season's already changin'
I think it's cool you do what you do
And don't try to save me

I'm a bitch
I'm a lover
I'm a child
I'm a mother
I'm a sinner
I'm a saint
I do not feel ashamed
I'm your hell
I'm your dream
I'm nothing in between
You know you wouldn't want it any other way

I'm a bitch
I'm a tease
I'm a goddess on my knees
When you hurt

When you suffer
I'm your angel undercover
I've been numb
I'm revived
Can't say I'm not alive
You know I wouldn't want it any other way

Uuhh, uuhh, uuhh
Uuhh, uuhh, uuhh



ANYONE BUT YOU

Michelle Ayon Navajas

i take kindness on a different level
believing even when the worst is up
against my face.

i have faith in all that is good even when confronted by the bad and by
the worst
around me.

i love to make people happy by means of giving even when they seemed
to be disturbingly arrogant and unforgiving.

i prefer order over chaos as it is what drives me sane the most.

i don't like confrontations as it definitely will lead to nothing but
agonizing shade throwing and blame shaming.

i stay away from nonsense arguments
and discussions because it's even
pointless to begin with.

it's not an issue if you don't like me as i don't expect to be loved by
everyone else it doesn't bother me at all.

you can hate me you can curse, and i remain true to myself.

but if you don't hear from me, which i don't mind being silent one thing
is sure;

your toxic behaviour doesn't have a place in my heart.

but baby know, my rules apply to anyone but you
and trust me when i say

"i can be anything you want me to be."

PHASES OF LIFE

Grace Y. Estevez Reddy



Memories began, when she was five,
with not much care, feeling just fine.
Spending her days, unknotting binds,
most pleasant child, kept within lines.
Her brilliant mind, was masked for thrills,
her deepest thoughts, went unfulfilled.
Naughty but in the purest way,
angry that fun, could never stay.
As sweet sixteen soon came to be,
unmasking lies, for all to see,
her darkest fears and solemn tales,
picked herself up, when all hands failed.
Adulthood swiftly came to play,
removing bows and pretty lace.

Moving away, to a new place,
with no old ties, a new escape.
She met new dolls, gave them fun names,
so paper cut, they looked the same.
They grew up fast, sharing some bonds,
of her strange ways, they were quite fond.
An angel came, swept her right up,
soaking her tears, filling her cup.
He washed his hands, when he was done,
leaving her torn, making her run.
Ran straight into his opposite,
numbing herself, if for a bit,
but realized he was not fit.
He screamed too loud, the walls were hit.
She thought of ways to go off grid,
too late somehow, they now had kids,
did not work out, support all hid,
found inner strength to close the lid.
Sun had emerged, behind the clouds,
love came in fast, it sang so loud.
Enough for two, three was a crowd,
shinning with grace, she took a bow.
It claimed her heart, also her mind,
the love was true, one of a kind.
One small pebble, stuck in the way,
it got kicked fast, it could not stay.
Finally healed, remorse had fled,
her love was real, not in her head.

Followed the paths, to where they led,
so she could sleep, on her own bed.
Her fairy tale was not an act,
epiphanies to re-enact.
Echoes are gone, that is a fact
the best is now, what she attracts.

EPIPHANY

Susi Bocks



questions abound
frustration felt as labels hang in the air
endless lamentations of not knowing who i am
but then i see it clearly
i am left *breathless*

I AM ME

Franci Eugenia Hoffman



my domain is me
complete and absolutely
imbibe the magic
no other shadow owns me
sun sets with the moon

WHO AM I?

Sadje



I want to know who am I? I search high and low and looked everywhere and now I've reached this conclusion;

Who am I?

I am the wind that blows

I am the air we all breathe

I am the earth we walk on

I am the water that we drink

I am you and I am me

Together, I am we and us all

BACKSTORY

Paula Light



I wrote a prose poem about “who I am” that was really “where I’m from” a long time ago for a prompt, though I’m not sure if we called them prompts then. It might have been on Usenet, which we used to deride as a sewer, before every other form of social media became awful too. (I still think blogs are the best of the bunch.) The poem was short and not that deep, but then I pulled it up again and fleshed it out for another venue.

I’ve been thinking about Rory’s question (“who are you really?”). It’s a pretty easy question for most people to answer superficially. We generally give answers about who we are in relationship to other people. I’m a mom. I’m a wife, or not. I’m a good friend of so & so, a loyal employee of XYZ Company, yada. We’re plotting our position on axes of family and work, then friendships, maybe next our relationship to interests. I’m a fan of such and such sports team, rah! Or I love to garden, knit, read, write, pull the tails off little blind mice. Whatever.

We tell the world who we are in this multi-dimensional GPS system. Locate me here, in this spot: mom, ex-wife, legal secretary, poet, cat lover, *Game of Thrones* fan. This

is me, right here. What if there are other humans occupying that position? I might have to refine it further. But does this actually even answer the question? Does this explain **who I am**? Do you know me from these factoids? Could you tell someone about the essence of me from my GPS position?

The other week I was playing a board game with some good friends I've known for a long time. It was called ImaginiFF. A question came up: "ImaginiFF Paula were a movie. Which movie would she be?" There were 5 random movies and then *Doctor Zhivago*, which was obviously correct in my mind for a variety of reasons. Everyone chose it, and this surprised me. I wouldn't have expected them to know. But they did. And this made me unreasonably happy because most of the time I think people don't even understand me at all, not even people to whom I'm closest. But I don't think you would get the correct movie from a bunch of disparate facts about me; you'd have to spend years orbiting my weirdness.

Anyway, here is my GPS poem about who I am via where I'm from. I take the long way around.

Backstory

I am from the Big Apple, take a bite, glitter lights, lemon ice, museums, zoos, art and news, Coney Island hot dogs, Jones Beach sandy sweets, sharp shells stab soft carpet feet.

I am from the place where you pull the blinds, someone's looking, where you smell your neighbour's curry cooking, he makes you sweet tea with cardamom, next day Jamaican barbecue mon, the Filipinos have one record, sugar sugar aw honey honey, your father brings home Saturday pastries from the German bakery, "schwartzwalder kirschetorte," it sounds funny, say it again, and the Japanese girl doesn't know your words but can show you how to fold paper squares into gentle birds.

I am from the thorny Jersey berry bushes, black purple bursts against tanned sun fingers, slipping stones in backyard creek, crick, algae slick, willow fronds sweep redwood table pirate ship, hopscotch sidewalks toss a chip, Sunday French toast sausage brunch, leaves turning orange crunch, rubber masks hiding smiles fake, the quick melt of perfect crystal snowflakes.

I am from big city and small town, remain unclaimed, cheer for no team, believe in no crown, blood flows only down, I look out to starless airless zero dark, time past seems tissue-thin, walk back in, an afternoon of bubble toys, uncaring joy, turquoise dresses rhinestone sunlight, just once, golden flash, one more pass, because I am from a yard of girls with summer drip popsicles, before the apple, before the crash.

I am from disconnect and strife, feud glue of life, mashed crookedly together, a puzzle I failed to see until I broke apart, alone, jagged on my own, and now I know why people stay, bicker low and graceless, get physical red angry splash wine in faces, because they can't bear the abyss, yes, I missed, I get it all now, too late.

WHO AM I?

Laura



I am a body aging in ways I do not like
The number of places with arthritis have started to spike

I am a target for mosquitos, the one they like to bite
No matter how much I want to, I don't go out at night

I am a grateful woman, for the places I have seen
My favourites were New Zealand and Ireland, I loved all the green

I am a mind bursting with creative ideas; I'd like to explore
Exercising my options until I find what I adore

I am a heart overflowing with love for my family and my friends
There is no limit to my caring and my love never ends

I am a woman filled with memories of pain and of joy
I keep reviewing the good ones and don't let the bad destroy

I am an old soul, still searching for inner peace
I'm hoping that my yearning for joy will never cease

TRUE IDENTITY

Empowered Women – Reena Saxena



The old man takes time to weigh his words carefully. The young woman has lashed at his wife for interfering too much, and might target him next.

“We are your well-wishers. It just makes us curious to know why you do things differently.”

“I sense dislike and disapproval. Maybe because I’m not like you, or others in your circle.

But accept the difference. I’ve invested a lot of time and effort to not be like you. It is a culture, mindset and attitude I don’t approve of....”

Eyebrows are raised in silent thought, “who is she to approve or reject?”

Unfazed, she continues,

“I’ve been fighting the battle against patriarchy for a long time, and will continue to do so.

I’m more of an individualist than feminist, if you care about labels. Don’t try to tell me what to do, and all of us can co-exist in peace.

But whenever you step on my territory, you awaken the fighter in me. I feel like terrorists have invaded my space, and I do everything to defend it. You see it as over reaction, claiming that you did not mean harm.

It's just that we define 'space' and 'harm' in different ways. My life is not a shared, common space. You are entitled to your opinions, but have no rights to make decisions.

If you believe you are born with certain rights which can't be taken away, you are in the wrong place. Find your way out."

She dreamt of shadows surrounding her that night – trying to engulf her existence. She desperately wants to break free, in a space where there is no opposition and no need for defence.

Her true identity would emerge at that point.

IT'S HIM AGAIN

Gal of Words



When I was 4, I stayed awake to see the Santa Claus. I tried hard not to fall asleep. Because, I don't want to miss the chance again, just like the previous Christmas. So I waited patiently on one of the beds in the orphanage, holding my parent's torn wedding photo.

I was freezing. I covered myself with an old blanket and waited for Santa's arrival. Windows were covered with foggy mist and snow. I saw a vague image of someone. Soon a shining beam entered into my dorm through my window. Will you believe me if I tell you that it was the Santa Claus, passing by, with a new blanket, jacket and socks for me, just like I wished? (Actually, it wasn't my first wish. At first, I wished for his help to find the other piece of my parent's wedding photo. So that I could see how my dad looked like. But Santa told me that it'll take more time to find that and he was in a rush to deliver gifts for other kids, so I asked for the latter). I believed he was a real Santa Claus and I even considered him as my grandpa and sometimes I really do call him that. He used to visit me on every Christmas and deliver me whatever I wished for, until I started questioning him. So I'm also not sure about his true identity.

When I completed my schooling in a school for orphans, I requested 'sister Mary' to help me in joining a college. I knew that was something big for an orphan to ask for. So, I wasn't that surprised when she rejected my request within a blink of an eye. It was on the next morning that I've seen Santa again, but in another form. He looked like a gentleman, with a clean shaved face and dressed in a neat outfit. 'May be, because, it wasn't Christmas', I thought.

I was shocked when I heard that he chose me to sponsor for my higher studies. "Off duty huh? "- instead of conveying my gratitude, this was the first thing that literally

came out of my mouth. And I remember how confusingly he stood staring at me. “Um, I am sorry and thank you for the sponsorship”- I giggled.

I was admitted into a top university for the course that I wished for. And that was the last time I met him. He remained invisible. All he was doing was sending me money orders. He didn't even write me anything, me either. But whatever, I considered him as my uncle. And whenever someone asked about my family, I used to make a short story about my only family member who was working abroad and sending money every month.

After my graduation, I got a good placement in a reputed company with a better salary and I wrote a big thank you letter to my temporary uncle for the very first time. I posted it according to the address in the money orders that I've received before.

When I was 28, I decided to get married to someone and dreamt of starting a family. But I felt discomfort whenever I went for a date with someone. On a March, I got transferred to another company with a promotion.

I was shocked. Will you believe me if I tell you that my temporary grandpa or I can call him my temporary uncle, was one of my new colleagues? He looked like a 58 years old man in a well and neat suit, but of course not a clean shaved face. He was gentle and affectionate. I called him 'Dad'. And I told him about my temporary grandpa and uncle, who looked exactly like him. After listening everything, he laughed aloud. I thought I was foolish. Because he was living in that city for nearly 30 years with his family. Above all, he wasn't that rich to sponsor an orphan. Anyways, a big gratitude to that man! I found a partner because of him. But again, the last time I saw him was on my wedding. I asked about him to my husband, but I realized that my husband doesn't know anything much about that man. (Actually, my husband met me first, and was trying to find me (yes love at first sight, of course!) and I remember what he always says “we are destined to meet each other. Or else how come I met your colleague accidentally?”.

Again, it wasn't the last time. I'm not going to elaborate more. But I saw him as a soldier, once we were attacked in Kashmir (We went there as part of a family tour) . He saved my whole family.

And, now, I am 65 and died of tuberculosis. I saw him before I took my last breath. He was in a white attire. He was stroking my hair till my last breath.

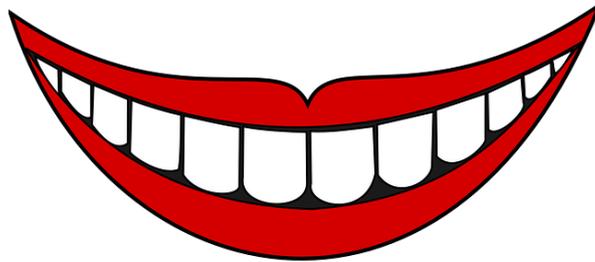
Oh my Gosh! Wow! Will you guys believe me if I tell you that I've been taken by the angels to the heaven? Oh! It's so wonderful here and I'm back to my youth again. Huh? Why is this scene looks exactly same as that in the wedding photo of my mom and dad?

Oh my gosh, It's really at their wedding! I can see my dad. They turn around.

What! It's him again!

HAVE YOU HEARD?

Benjamin



A boy of
Teeth so big as if with secrets
That two lips could not keep together
Teeth so long
They made the day of all kids that met them
You can imagine the relief of the little boy
When Babylon finally fell

When Mother Nature fired those clowns
Oh, what joy!
Those incisors have fallen
But in their place
Things have grown over the years
Making me a source of laughter

Sometimes for reasons I'm proud
Sometimes for reasons I'm ashamed
But I've come to realize, that
The shame is where the biggest fame is

DEFINED BY WHAT I REJECT

Reena Saxena



Today, I found myself thinking again...
how much of me is built by what I reject
like Michelangelo chipping off everything
that's not David, but it goes unchecked
it's the artist's vision, and how he sings
What he chooses and what he flings

By medical records, do not assess me
heredity neither defines nor confines me
I'm not what I was some time ago
I don't let taped voices play in my head
my own or those that sing a different note
Tradition, culture does not float my boat

Wisdom is not another's struggle, nor
imposed values from a different range
Savoir faire – how to deal with my life
Now but keeping it open to change

Today, I found myself thinking again...
how much of me is built by what I reject
acceptance is not easy though
It's where I truly exist, but
It's only in the here and now
appropriate is what I allow

you may or may not see me again
in the same form or dissimilar one
what I do or say today will remain
true to the moment when it was done
if I live, I'll say and do much more
and it need not be an encore

If I learn to code, I'll reinvent keyboards
3-D prints of digital art have me floored
Painting tools may go, it's not blasphemy
A skill still learnt, a point still scored

Today, I found myself thinking again...
how much of me is built by what I reject
Did Michelangelo throw all the chips?
gave up the chance to take a dip
into what shaped David as we see
what made him flinch, what made him flee

I AM KINTSUGI

Sylvia

I am Victoria Falls
Nothing stops my flow
No man can ever keep me
From getting where I need to go

I was raised in the Mojave Desert
In low-income housing
Got my first full-time job
At McDonald's, age 15
Fell in love with the line cook
Working with me

He didn't speak English, but I quickly
Learned to speak Spanish fluently
Four years later, I am the one who miscarried.
We hadn't even known I was pregnant
His family said it was punishment from God
From cohabiting before we were married
But I know that that's not true
It's just the course of nature

I don't feel guilty
I am *not* the tormenting pain that followed
But I am the one who tried to escape this life
The Universe decided that it wasn't my time
So, I am the one who got back up
And faced the world again

I am a perennial succulent
Blooming year after year
Even when I look wilted
I'm still coming back to life
I'm the young woman who got into the UC
When it felt like the world still believed in me....
But I'm also the one who dropped out

And yes, I picked up an associate's in the humanities
I always forget but, I think it's in social studies?
I still feel incomplete without my bachelor's degree
Which I've wanted since I was four years old.

I am the source of life
Who created another inside of mine
Nine months of illness, surgery
Six months of hair loss, restless sleep
All worth it to watch her grow from nothing but
The power inside me

I am the one who went back to school
Who held her baby, staring at the screen
Noticing I had the highest grade in the class
While he ranted in front of us, throwing things, screaming

I am the one who left
Even though it felt like murder in my chest
My network helped me leave him in the middle of the night
While he was upstairs, fast asleep

I am the peace that followed
That first night on our own
She and I watched the thunderstorm in silence
Grateful for how tame it felt, compared to his cyclones

I am the one who got into the competitive nursing school
When people were saying it was too late for me
I'm the one who held hands of men who were dying
I'm the one who held their children when they were gone
I'm the one who got kicked out of nursing school.

We all knew it would be someone
But none of us thought it would be us
And especially not me.
I was the class president.
I had the highest grade in med/surgery
I worked so hard to get there...

I had just been diagnosed with MDD and GAD
They said it was unrelated,
That it was because I turned a paper in
Three hours late.
Who would have thought that nurses
Would illegally discriminate?
I am the one who fought back
Who got re-instated, but then left anyway
It broke my heart to fight for a home where I wasn't wanted

Again
I am the one who went back to work

Fixing computers, waiting tables, working the register
Whatever I had to do to get by
Even some things that I barely survived
I am the one who broke down
Job after job, loss after loss
Life getting darker every single day
That's where the wolf found me
Desperate for salvation

So, he promised me salvation
Then sacrificed me
Ended up
In the emergency room
With PTSD

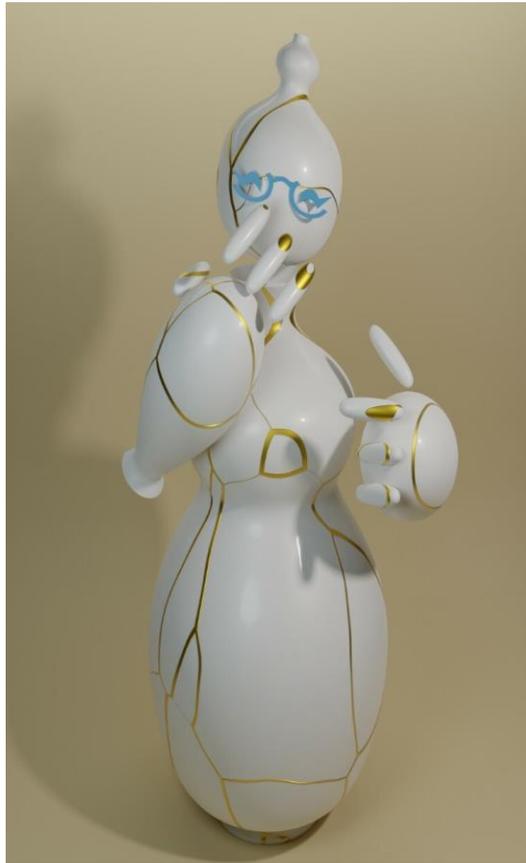
The whole world just went black
I was the crushed little victim girl
Surrounded by the mother hens clucking,
It's going to be alright
Labelling me a "survivor"
As if that made it a good thing
Labelling me a "warrior"
As if that made it all okay
Calling me "brave"

As if I'm the one who chose this fate
"Resilient" every nerve in my body is on fire
"Strong" I wake up wishing I didn't
"Inspiring" as if you want this for yourself
"Powerful" when the world has pity in her eyes
All these pretty labels
Were ugly little lies

Why was I expected to feel warm
Under those gas lights?
Yet, I am *brave*
Because I chose to walk through the lies
I am *the warrior*
Who stayed alive through those dark nights
I am not the flashbacks
I am my own nurse
I take the best care of myself
Because I'm the only one who *can*
I am not the dissociation
I am the gentle voice who calls me back
I am the powerful one
Who holds her mind in her body
When it's bursting through the seams

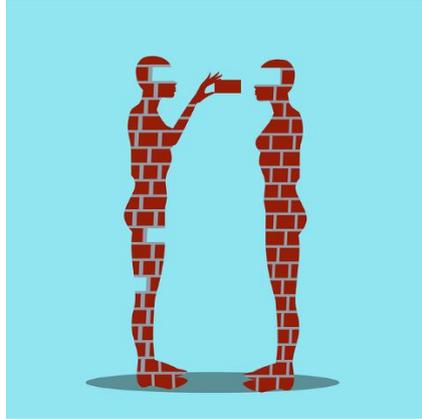
I am the healer

All those years I spent
Wanting to care for everyone else
I now give to myself
I am the one
Going back to school
Again
This is my story
A mini autobiography
I'm broken, repaired, and still growing
My name isn't Sylvia
It's Kintsugi



WHO AM I?

Indira



Why waste your time?
Why worry day and night
In search of
'WHO AM I'
What if you learn
You are not body and mind

but
A soul
Will it help you to live and survive
Save your breath and energy

There is no dearth of problems in life
Live and let live
Make hay while the Sun shines
God doesn't help one
Who whines and resigns

ME, MYSELF, I

LadyLee Manila

Me, myself, I, love being me
Born and bred from the Philippines
Got a degree in Chemistry
Left home when I was twenty two

Visited Europe, such great place
Me, myself, I, love being me
First time to see snow and wow
Great to see but feeling the cold

I've met Him Indoors in the lab
Action and reaction, that's us
Me, myself, I, love being me
After two years we got married

Moved to Munich and had the son
Cosy in our house with garden
Love travelling with Him Indoors
Me, myself, I, love being me*

* *Quatern*



If
I were me
I would find myself
Not get lost among others
By trying to please them
I'd be authentic
Truly me
|**

** *The Joseph's Star*



I am me, I am my own person
Inasmuch as I am happy
In snow, rain, wind or the sun
I can climb hills and swim in the sea

Am I cool or what with my glasses?
Anyone, anywhere I can be
And the same goes with my bandannas
Add sugar and milk with my tea

Moments come and moments go
Make me think of my priorities
Man, give me something that glows
Macaroni and cheese, please

Over the hills and far away
One story, one book for each one
On such a fine day
Only me, only one***

*** *Trolaan*



Me, myself, I
Passion through poetry and fiction
Glad I could do what I've chosen
Passion in doing everything fully
To swim and snorkel in the sea
Passion in learning new things
Life is full of swings and zings
Passion in teaching English
Don't worry, I'm also British
Passion in meeting friends
Being me, don't do pretends
Passion in shopping till I drop
I like my top, don't do swap
Passion in ringing my Mom
Like giving myself a balm
Passion in skyping the son
Telling his pun, it's quite fun
Passion with cycling with Him
Sometimes going to the gym
Passion in seeing the world
Kaleidoscope as it whirled
Passion in experiencing life
I think I'm a good housewife
Passion with different culture
Eyes not covered with a blinker
I think I'm living my passion
I always feel that I have won
I'm grateful to this brilliant world
Such dazzling and wonderful world

LA CALMA

Jude Itakali



The air is foul with discontent
Yet soul is rife with good intent
These withered shrubs are heaven-sent!
My tears drip life upon what's lost
In me I find what I need most
I trim and prune forgotten gifts
with pain and hope I seal those rifts
Like floral blooms through barren cracks
I water gloom with joys once stacked
To scent the air at any cost
In me I find what I need most

The scent of hope beckons lost joy
Want and Will cajole bliss gone coy
What's within I long to enjoy...
Who am I if not things I do
my hands and lips will tell it true
This vase of life I'm meant to fill
where nature moulds, then nurture heals
Let go of fear and share your dream
'Dreams beget dreams' – fate's secret whim
The old and new are one not two
My hands and lips can tell it true

In my works my spirit resides
Yet home is where heart truly lies
why then do eyes scour night skies...
Who am I, where must I belong
For everywhere, I sing my song
If you listen, then you become home
If you share, then you can find home
Nature – micasa sucasa
different souls yet same stature
I am for all, yet for no-one
For everywhere, I sing my song.

TURNING SOUR

Aishwarya



traps,
laid,
unknown-
shield broken,
familiar terrain,
vulnerable barriers breaks,
affection turns hostile with familiarity.

WHO AM I?

Ami Offenbacher-Ferris



I am love

I am rage

I am compassionate

I am merciless

Aid the young

Assist the old

Coddle the injured

Oppose the aggressor

I am weak

I am firm

Use my voice

Fight right and wrongs

Shy to speak
Bold when needed
Introvert to most
Extrovert to others

Mother
Lover
Enemy
Friend

Strong as an arrow
Quick to bend
Patient and kind
Relentless and cruel

Never just one
Always each one
Much more to decipher
Who am I to you?

COMPILED BY

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