

The Rose that Blossomed from the Prison Yard collects poems written in prison by Derrick Brooks. His poems describe the political reality of being Black in American society, the pain of a childhood in urban poverty and the love that sustains him.

The Rose That Blossomed from the Prison Yard

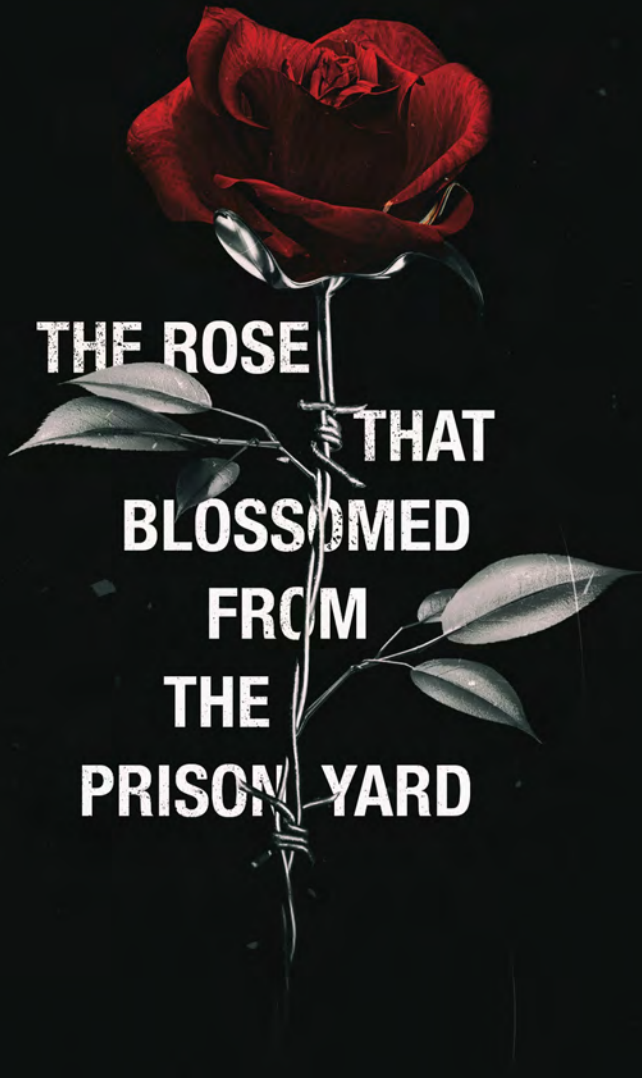
By Derrick Brooks

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DERRICK BROOKS



**THE ROSE
THAT
BLOSSOMED
FROM
THE
PRISON YARD**

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Childhood

Childhood (chīld'hōöd)

The time or state of being a child. The early stage in the existence or development of something: *the childhood of Western civilization.*

Hustle (hūs'-əl) Slang.

1. To obtain something by deceitful or illicit means; practice theft or swindling. 2. To solicit customers. Used of a pimp or prostitute. 3. To misrepresent one's ability in order to deceive someone.

The American Heritage Dictionary

I reread what you said

Dear Susan,

I reread what you said. That my childhood poems don't seem too childhood cause I'm hustling drugs. I started hustling drugs as a kid, my mom use to use me to run drugs. Plus, while she was hustling she never really hid nothing from me.

I knew what hustling was at a very young age but I'd say I started hustling for my step father when I was about 12 or 13. He used drugs to get close to me. I hated him because of the way he disrespected and beat my mother when I was young. When I got old enough to fight him it slowed down at least while I was around, but the mental abuse continued with my mother. While in the house living together I would never talk to him. I'd just look at him crazy I never felt comfortable with him there. I was full of anger and resentment. I hated him.

My mom would always try to get me and him to talk and kick it but I wouldn't. Once he seen I was into smoking weed and hustling he offered to show me how. He tried to kick it with me too. I hated him still but I continued to get knowledge from him because the more he showed me the more successful I became in the streets. I didn't appreciate nothing he was showing me because I knew he was only showing me cause of my mother and he had started smoking crack, so he couldn't sell it. I ended up ripping him off eventually lol lbvvvvvvvs. Then I went into business for myself at around 13 years old. I talked about this in the poem "Father-son moment."

Derrick

Code word

I ain't got no happy place,
I can't even hide in my **dreams**.
Childhood nightmares are like
being set on fire, trying not to **scream**.
Being left out like left-over baloney,
eating sandwiches made of **syrup**.
Growing up from the bottom.
Mama said, "Ain't no way to go
from here, baby, but **up, up, up**."

Then she abandoned **us**.
If I close my eyes tight **enough**,
I [can] still see the roach-infested
crash house in Geneva
where she left **us**,
when she got all dressed up
in designer clothes and **stepped out**.
But she taught **us** how to set up
more booby traps in the trap
than Macaulay Culkin,
just in case robbers try to **step in**.

I got hiding places, chains on the locks,
two-by-**fours** wedged in the **doors**.
Mama say, "If somebody **knocking**,
ain't no talking."
So, when my big cuz Tyrone
came a-knocking and a-**knocking**,
yelling, "It's Ty, yo big cuz, Tyrone,
open the door," we just let him keep
a-knocking and a-**knocking**.

My little brother
accompanied me on the couch.
We stiff as a **turd** cause Tyrone
didn't say the code **word**,
he "Open the door," Tyrone just
a-knocking and a-knocking,
we quiet as a **mouse**,
'till Tyrone bring my
Great Ti Ti[?] Lilly to the **house**,
yelling, "Jesus, Jesus, baby,
I know the code, open the door!"
She moving slow as her old **soul**,
but we let her in along with
the hurtful story she **told**.
She said our mother
was on a dark **road** in the car
with Paulette driving,
that's her **cousin**.
Both often high, drunk, **buzzin'**.
When Paulette said, "Bitch,
ain't you tired of this life we **living**,
selling pussy, drugs, robbing niggas.
You ain't got no **feelings**.
We might as well kill ourselves,
we already going to hell
in the hand basket, no **ribbin'**."
My mother looked at her and said,
"I love this life! Bitch, you **tripping!**"

Before she knew it,
Paulette hit the **gas**.
My mother seen hundreds of houses
and parked cars **pass**,
her life flash
when they crashed.
Like a fly,

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

my mother went **smack!**,
right through the windshield.
The car compacted
like a soda can,
she didn't even think
about her **children**
when she hit the **building**.

She heard sirens,
seen red, blue lights
and said, "Damn,
I got a **warrant**,"
and made a run **for it**.
Didn't make it a block
before she passed out
in the bushes[?].
Officers followed the trail
of blood stains on the **ground**,
where her blood came
trickling, trickling **down**,
laying in a pool of her own blood
she was **found**.

When she woke up,
bandaged up in a hospital **gown**,
crying to me and my brother,
she said, "Baby, I was dead,
knocking at heaven's door,
just a-knocking and a-knocking.
They didn't let me in."
I said, "Why, momma?"
She said, "Because I didn't know the code word."

Neket truth

Stepfather beat my mother up and down the street,
ripping her clothes off till she had to use me and my brother like a
sheet

to cover her bare ass, Neket Truth
stripping my eyes of my innocent Neket Youth
it hurt me from the bottom of my heart to the roof.

We running from relative's houses to friends
to a battered-women's shelter
where we meet an ex-prostitute name Lisa
with three boys Courtney, Brian, Brandon
and a daughter name.... Kesha.

Lisa was going through so much of my mother's pain she felt her
and promised to help her.

Get her mind off the hand that God dealt her
just to blow off steam, they put on some tight jeans
looking so hot their bodies could
blow off steam.

While they partying drinking bub
shake, shake, shake dancing in the club
they left Kesha to babysit
and I swear
Kesha turned this baby into a man in that seat I sat.
I wasn't even ready yet
I thought we was just playing house
but she was taking me to school.

Teaching me how to be a sexual creature
doing damn three triple X-features.
I wanted to tell somebody

but Momma was club-hopping so hard
even the preacher couldn't reach her.

Before Momma and Lisa make it around the corner
me and Kesha doing it.
Doing it so much
I got tired of doing it!
I said, "Damn, Kesha!" Can my little brother do it?

Now she taking turns on us
no pants burning
making us take off our clothes
so the pants don't burn on us.
Riding us like she doing the worm on us.
I can't erase the images in my mind
of the moves she learned on us.

Every time I close my eyes
I see my bare ass
Neket Truth.
How I was raped of my innocent Naket Youth.
It hurt me from the bottom of my heart to the roof.
Cause my little bro seven
I'm nine
and Kesha...
fourteen years old with no sexual moral compass.
Middle of the night
waking up to her pinching and thumping us
ready to start humping us.
Her little brothers jumping us
trying to stop us
clock blocking us
karate chopping us
cause they're tired of hearing us deep in their sister's guts.

Nailing her so hard
she screaming like we nailing the door shut.
And I can't even bust a nut
but I can feel it tingling.
Momma and Lisa came in late from a night of mingling
and smelt the sex lingering.
Caught Kesha and me cuddled up like a couple.
Courtney said, "Oooww, y'all gonna get in trouble."

Kesha never got in trouble
cause the standards was double.
But she stole the best part of me
the innocent heart of me.
All grown up and it still bother me.
Those are the moments
I have to measure with women forever.
And the sex wasn't even a pleasure
it was a chore.
When Kesha came through the door
I used to take off running like
I can't take this shit no more!
But she would always find me and say
"Boy, what you hiding for?"

Just cause she wasn't hog-tying, duct-taping us
doesn't mean she wasn't raping us.
Cause every time I close my eyes
I see my bare ass, Neket Truth.
How I was raped of my innocent Neket Youth.
It hurt me from the bottom of my heart to the roof.
But I felt so good when we finally moved out of the shelter
till we started going to Lisa's house just to visit.
I hate cause Lisa was so, so strict.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

I remember late night going to take a piss
seeing Brandon in the bathroom crying with a rubber band tied around
his dick.

I ran and told my mother
she confronted Lisa
you wouldn't believe what she said
"Oww, that's what his punk ass get for pissing in the bed."
My mother said, "Bitch, you sick in the head."
We grabbed our shit, we fled.

Months later, parents back fighting,
Momma and Lisa back friends
me and Kesha...back getting it in.
The most horrible night was when
when I finally met her father.
He came in while Kesha was babysitting
and grabbed her by the collar.
Dragged her to the room by her hair
kicking and screaming so loud
a block away you could hear her holler.

When he slammed the door shut
I couldn't slam my eyes closed.
My bad ass peep through the key hole
it felt like I peeped into Kesha's soul.
Cause I saw in her that circle that cycle began
I saw Kesha's bare ass, Neket Truth.
Her father raping her
for her innocent, Neket Youth.
It hurt me from the bottom of my heart to the roof.

This is Kesha's Neket Truth.

Smile

I remember my mother telling me he wasn't biologically our Daddy.
But he's the only father I've ever **known**.
I reminisce on how I used to sit on his lap
like a prince on a **throne**.
How he'd smile and smile for so **long**.
I could see his Colgate pearly whites shining bright for miles **long**.
The Earth will run out of space before his love for his child is **gone**.

I recall the time when I was **10**. I stole from him.
He had so much jewelry I thought he'd never notice a diamond ring
missing.
Until my girlfriend's mother knocked at our door like the police.
Explaining to my mother how I gave her 11-year-old daughter
an amazingly huge diamond ring of her **dreams**.
I lied and told my mother I got it out of the bubblegum **machine**.

As I sat there lying, the first thing I thought was **run**.
I just knew she was gonna to pull my ass out of my **nose** for **fun**.
My mother did the best thing she could of [have] ever **done**.
She took me to my father's house and made me **return it**.
Apologizing to him hurt more than any whoopin'.
Seeing that disappointment in my father's eyes didn't give me a
lesson I **earned it**.

It'll be forever etched in my memories of stone like I **burned it**.
He's gone, but the lesson they taught me is still here.
As I smile and smile for so long
you can see my pearly whites shining bright for so many miles and
miles,
the earth would run out of space before I run out of love for my
father.
Rest in peace JR.

Today

I smiled today,
wiped the tears from my eyes.
Today Momma said, “Baby, your father said he coming around today.”

I was so excited as I waited,
I waited and I waited so long I grewed up!
My father never showed up.
I cried that night. In a puddle of my tears,
a piece of me damn near died that night.

I still couldn't help but howsaine bolt to the door
when the doorbell rang.
Hoping my mother would do her happy dance,
yelling, “Your father finally came, he finally came!”
With disappointment in my eyes
and a sad face frown,
I sat at the window waiting
from sun up to sun down.
Waiting, waiting, waiting so long
I wondered would he ever come?

Am I good enough, is it me?
I look just like him,
so why doesn't he like me?
I heard the stories about how hood he is.
Maybe he don't come around cause I'm not as hood as him.
Crime I'm not as good as him,
I show him, I'll show him!

My eyes light up today
with the joy of a new day,
I've finally found my way.
I ran the streets, wherever the streets ran,
through the mean streets of Racine.
Where if you stare too hard,

the streets will mug you back.
I never joined the gangs,
they joined me and I lead them like
the blind leading the blind.
You would have thought
I was in the streets blindfolded.

The way I was a surprise party
to a crime, thieves, shootings and deaths,
didn't know my right from my lefts.
That wasn't enough for me to see
I was on the wrong path.
It took for me to almost lose my life and get shot
for me to get on my knees
and pray for the Heavenly Father to send me a life line,
to pull me out of this destructive life of mine.

I told God I've had it up to here,
with my dad not being here.
I felt like he didn't give me a answer,
so I chased drug money like a cure for cancer,
ended up in prison like somebody in heaven said,
"Take that, you'll see you're not him
or who he was, you don't need him."

I smiled today,
wiped the tears from my eyes today
with the joy of a new day
cause I've finally found my way
and I'm my own man
today.

Dedicated to my homey, "Reo" Mario Woods

Kidnappers

My father dead
mother arrested
Social Services snatched me up
like they were soul snatchers.
They services ain't social they Kidnappers
kid smackers
back smacking me till I have flashbacks
like back flashes
of going in and out of so many foster homes
they don't even seem foster. I'm still ready to make a run for it
they could see it in my posture.

Years later I'm a grown man
sleeping with the light on scared of monsters.
Terrified of the bogeywomen
that use to play dead in the middle of the night.
Come from under the covers
and do the unthinkable to me.
Threaten me if a word was said
she'd beat me till I didn't have nothing
but a back and legs.

Nine-years old
my kidnappers dropped me off in hell
no guardian angel
my guardian was the devil.
He'd lock me in a dark room
like a animal that had been buried underground with a shovel.
After he lock me he'd smack me
like he fly swatting me.
if I looked at him funny
over and over he'd sock me.
Then I fought back like Rocky.
.
That's when he kick me out
left me on the doorstep
like I wasn't even worth a blanket.

Then I met a kidnapper
so horrible in my brain her face is stitched.
Hate her so bad
when I close my eyes I see her
and yell, "bitch!"
He ran off, left me with her
so fast bystanders would of thought
he was ringing the doorbell playing ding-dong ditch.

He might as well hung me upside down
over 1312 Michigan Blvd balcony and drop me
rather than leave me with some strangers like they adopt me.
All I had to do was eat my food sloppy
and she'd tie my hands to the back of the chair
and double knot me.
Whoop my ass with a wet extension cord
that was worse than the belt.
Have me in so much pain
I'm screaming for help
like my ass about to melt.

I needed to be guarded from my guardian
she leave me the house with her demon child
while she out partying. Her daughter making me play house,
I'm running like we playing cat and mouse.
Ten-years old
thinking killing myself is the only way out.
Then all of sudden my mother got out
and told me I was going home.
My heart had been so uninhabited for so long
it had turned to stone.
I couldn't get over the way she done me
she shun me
if love was money
I felt so broke I could of done a GoFundMe.

I got older
and met a woman that was so good to me
it felt God sent.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

She tell me she love me every chance she get
I can't even say it back
cause I still suffer from issues of abandonment.
What really stun me
is when my mother came back like she won me.
Pick me up
hold me like a trophy
won me over
cause she had a couple months sober.

As if I was to just look over
the kidnapers that beat me over and over.
Yet I tried to forgive cause deep down
I really love my mommy.
In six months she back on crack
homeless dressed bumby.
Social Services snatching me up like soul snatchers
they services ain't social
they kidnapers.

Dedicated to all those kids who've been kid napped by Social Services

Two faces, one tear

They say lightning don't strike twice
in the same place.

My stepfather hit my mother twice in her face
it look like lightning struck her twice
in the same place.

I felt a sharp pain in my heart
like a spear
as if it's two faces, one tear.

I'd trade one night of my childhood
for a nigga doing one year.
He went through a rampage
after one beer.

Hit her so hard
she can't even see clear.

My worst fear is to get older
and be just like him.

Drinking so much it felt like
I was inside the bottle taking a swim.
It made me feel like I was just like him
just like him.

I carry my mother's struggles
on my back like heavy weights.
How she used to cry about him
like she opened floodgates.

I used to gather up my guys
and we'd come running to her rescue
like they opened hood gates.

I try to forgive her for my past
cause I know everybody makes mistakes.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

But I'm thirty some years
old and the tears from
my horrible childhood
still seem to run down
my face, her face like
it's two faces, one tear.

Ti Ti

I admit when I was younger
I didn't know much
but I knew my Ti Ti was my favorite.
She'd humor us through the misery
laughter was the medicine for the pain
made it easier for us to live through the shame.
Only thing is
she came and went so quick
we never had a chance to savor it.
One minute she'd be running in and out the house
locking herself in the bathroom.

Next I'd notice the smoke when she came out fanning it.
So high her eyes big as headlights on a Volkswagen Beetle.
Doing professional dance moves in the kitchen
like she could of made it.
Making us laugh so hysterically it cleaned our souls
then it's gone as fast as she gave it.
She having emotional breakdowns
holding me close
crying her eyes out, filling a void.
Minutes later, she yelling
"Be quiet, set down, boy!"
| Peeking out the curtains, paranoid.

When her high go down
she back making us smile
and that's the Ti Ti I enjoy.
It don't last long before
she feigning on her hands and knees
meticulously digging through the carpet
yelling, "I know it was right here, this is where I dropped it."
Everybody shaking their heads mortified
wishing she'd just stop it.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

No matter what
in my eyes my Ti Ti couldn't do no wrong
cause she always hit my funny bone.
Even if she sold pussy out of both pants legs
she kept a roof over our head.
When we were hungry
she made sure we got fed.
Car broke down on the highway
she fix the fan belt with her pantyhose.
When I need advice
if anybody knows
my Ti Ti knows.

Everybody says she be panhandling
prostituting on that corner where she be standing.
Friday wearing a veil praying at the Mosque.
Sunday singing in the Baptist Church choir
conning people in the name of God
she a compulsive liar.
They say one morning
she gon wake up in a gigantic ball of fire.

She smoke so much dope
she smoke until she can't get no higher.
Family beg her to go to rehab, she said
"Hell, naw, Bitch, that's for quitters, I'll never retire."
They told me it was a side of her I never seen
because she humored us through the misery
laughter was our medicine through the pain
made it easier for us to live through the shame.
But I didn't care about the glass tables full of choy boy pipes
baggies, burnt spoons and syringes
the month-long drug binges.
No matter what, my Ti Ti
the most beautiful woman I ever seen
and she never lost her appearance.

Then one night
she appeared at the door
hands full with bags of groceries.
I opened it, she rush past me like she didn't even notice me.
Sat the bags on the kitchen table
ran to the bathroom in a hurry.
I just stood at the door waiting for her to come out
my face full of worry.
I waited so long my hands started sweating
body shaking, eyes watery, vision blurry.
Then I heard a loud thud, as if God pulled a rug.

I called her name as loud as I could
"Ti Ti!" She was unresponsive.
After a couple knocks
I panicked and picked the lock.
The sight I seen made me freeze up in a state of shock.
Caused so much pain it made my eyes sore
but if you haven't been through it
you could never understand the magnitude
of what seeing this done to me.
My favorite Auntie was overdoing right in front of me!
It hurt more than classmates poking fun at me
being the butt of all their jokes
embarrassed cause my Auntie smokes.
It scared me deeper than her going in and out of jail
her exchanging our Christmas presents
for drugs with thugs.
Hearing stories about her doing sexual favors
with drug-dealing neighbors.
Nothing hit me worse than this.
I cried as she lay there convulsing
eyes rolling in the back of her head.
It was like a fire was lit inside her chest
spread through her lungs
as she squirmed her skin was purple

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

rubber band around her bicep
long needle sticking out of her arm.
Foaming at the mouth
reaching out until her last breath seeped out.
She stared at me with a tired look
like drugs took her spirit.
That's when I knew that unforgettable laugh of hers
I'd never get another chance to hear it.
She'd never again humor us through the misery
her laughter wouldn't be our medicine for the pain.
And nothing would make it easier
for us to live through the shame.

My brother's keeper

This poem is dedicated to my little **brother**,
different fathers same **mother**.
Our favorite T.V. show was
in **Living Color**.

We name our first pupper Homey, after Homey
the **Clown**. Most courageous thing
I've ever done was jump in the
lake head first when he broke
the ice and almost **drown**.
He been trying to rescue me **ever since**.
Since we robbed the corner store
they found our **fingerprints**
and I took the case,
told the cops, I
move alone.

First time I went to prison I wish I
would of listened when Lil Bro said
"Don't do it Bro, this move feel
wrong!"

Everybody else that was there **told**. My
Lil Bro was the first to get interrogated for hours,
and never did he **fold**. He was only
fourteen years **old**.

He cried his eyes out when the police handcuff me,
wrestled me down and **took me**.
At sixteen I was sentenced to fifteen and a half years.
He screamed so loud as they courtroom **took me**.
That it haunted me in that match box size
cell, broke me down like a **cookie**.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

Though I wouldn't crumble I stood so tall in that
maximum prison you would of never known I was a
rookie.

My immediate family was at the prison before they
even **book me.** When C.O.'s yelled Mr. Brooks
visit. I didn't even have to ask who is **it?**
Cause they wrote letters, sent money,
pictures, and made it to every prison
through rain, hail, sleet, snow,
blizzard.

It didn't stop the feeling of heartache knowing I
wouldn't be there to rescue him from drowning
in life's **lake,** take the **case,** run a bag up
with him like we in a **paper chase.**
A **paper chase. R.I.P. Sem (?) City**
every night in that cell tears fell down my
face. Because I wasn't there to be my
brother's keeper my
brother's keeper.

Dedicated to my brother
Albert Dunn
aka Al Jezzy the Great

Father-son moment

Teaching me how to hustle was my only **father-son moment**.
He only taught me cause the drugs had him turned out on it.
Sucking that glass dick till his lips was burned out on it.
Addiction had him by the balls [house?] hold he couldn't hold even **if he wanted...**

In the stash he kept dipping, pipe gripping, his hustle slipping.
He sees me as a way to get back in it.
I went from bags, balls, to ounces in a **matter of moments**.
He mad I was soaking up the game faster than he was showing it.

I'm getting money but he the only one flaunting it.
I bought a expensive car, shined and creamed it.
But he driving it around town like he owned it.
Getting so high his face look like **Jesus himself stoned it**.

On my innocent, impressionable fourteen-year-old mind, he took advantage.
Raping my intelligence like a pervert that's [mannish?].
Used me till my brains was damaged like damaged goods.
He bought me a semiautomatic, now I'm damaging hustlers in the hood, robbing them for their goods.
I'd take it all back if I could, if I could...

Nobody can feel my pain even if I loaned it.
Through the thickness of it, my mother tried to hot comb it.
But he kept picking and picking away at the stash.
Money coming up missing, I couldn't keep brushing and brushing it off, felt
like he was flipping me off, ripping me off,
[kidding?] around the block showing it off,
so we faced off, went head to head.

I told him with his blood I'm ready to paint the whole city red.
I'm hustling till it's sweat and tears.
You celebrating, toasting with yo partners like **cheers!**

I'm tired of it, cause when it's time to [recoup?] he ain't even got half of it.

But that ain't even the half of it.

He the only dope fiend I know that wake up to a wake up.

Living like he got his cake up, like he got money up to here and I've had it up to here.

Started getting my own piece of the pie, went from crumbs to making my own cake.

Now I'm caked out like my nigga **R.I.P. Caked Out Tang**.

It was the money he never taught me how to maintain.

I caught a sweet tooth from getting my cake and eating it, too, cutting slices for my whole crew, then they got greedy, threaten to blow out my candles if I didn't show them stash.

They robbed me, left me down bad.

My step-father came around just to look down on me, like he my opponent.

All he had to say was, "When somebody give up on you, it hurt, don't it?"

He could only teach me what he knew...

As much as I hate my stepfather, I love him.

He raised me, poured everything in me he knew...

So, I... his son.

Drip with so much game

my words are covered in street blood that blue

thanks to you

Remember nights

I remember nights

nights with no electricity
candles burning
and my parents still turned on
light in my life I been trying **to turn off ever since...**
No matter how many times I flick that switch it won't cut off.
Slightest sign of adversity
light bulb goes off in my head
illuminating an even larger light in my brain
like a chandelier.

It's a shining reflection so exuberant
it's like it's yelling **I'm here! I'm here!**
This beaming glow **outlines me**
so bright it **blinds me**
when I seem lost it **finds me.**
It wasn't just my family
it took a whole neighborhood to screw this bulb in my skull.
Once I seen how this phosphorescence
attracts others from wide and far
I carried it like a torch on my dark path.

I remember nights

with just talk of the beacon in my life
I light up with joy of laughter like **a hyena**
Ha, Ha Ha feeling me
with an immeasurable amount of **bliss in ignorance.**
Street smarts brighten up in my eyes
like a sunrise of **intelligence.**
I talk, eat, sleep, shit, and piss a radiant light the same color as the
sun.

This light weighs on me
weighs on me so heavy I can't come from under it.
Wrapped around my cranium
digging in my flesh
burning my inside with passionate fire
seeping through body and words
sounding like **brilliance**.
As it lives through me
like it owns my **exuding soul**.

I remember nights

I wish I could black out in an unfathomable obscurity
fall down a hole like a long tunnel of nothing
hoping when I reach the bottom
the darkness would cave in on me like an eclipse.
Bury me in an eternity of abstruse fog
overshadow my dreams with nightmares of gloominess
Dim my light
let me bump my head
til I'm light headed in the murkiness of the night.

I remember nights

before there was light.

Troubled soul

Growing up
I was shy
as the clouds
when out came
the **sun**.
Middle child
always in the middle
of **some**
soaking up game
like a **sponge**.

I squeeze
the game out
like I'm wringing
out my hair
but my eyelids
still low and heavy from a
guilty conscience
weighing a **thousand tons**.

Flashbacks of my step pops
sucking that glass dick
till he can't **function**.
Stepdad stepping
on my **mother** till
the whole family
dysfunction.

Beat myself up
about it like it's
a **punching** bag
I'm **punching**.
Thirty-some years old
I'm still **punching**

and **punching**.
Household? couldn't hold,
full of alcoholics
and weed **heads**.
Planted a seed
so deep in my brain
weeds growing
out [of] my head.
I call 'em **dreads**.
I shake, shake,
shake 'em off
like I shake the **feds**.
I try to stay
out of **trouble**,
but **trouble** won't stay
out of my **troubled** soul.
I'm at the end
of my **trouble** road
as far as **trouble** goes.
I still drink like
I'm watering a **plant**.
If I don't get enough shine
I tend to lean and **slant**
back to being **crooked**
I **made** the pretty good girl go bad,
but she **didn't even look it**.
Till she bent that ass over
and shook, shook, **shook it**.
I stole her heart of gold
and she been breaking hearts
ever since **I took it**.

Now she just a bad girl
with some **good**,
I'll take it all back **if I could,**
if I could.

Born to be a king,
all my life I been **rooking it**.
Going sideways,
I don't know who to praise
till I got saved.
Dope man bless me,
taught me how to **cook it**.
He used to be the man,
caught a terrible habit,
now he don't even **look it**.

Now I'm going even
harder in the streets
and I know I **shouldn't**.
Even if I could stop,
I **wouldn't**.
Nine years old,
I run the dope
when my mama **couldn't**,
run and gave it to Aunt **Puddin'**.
Been real since I was 'lil,
thirty bandz
two chains,
four bracelets
the proof is in the **puddin'**.
I try to stay out of trouble,
but trouble won't stay out
of my troubled soul.
I'm at the end
of my trouble road,
as far as trouble goes.

Waiting on my phone to hit

I'm waiting
I'm waiting
on my phone to **hit**,
riding in my foreign **whip**.
Doing circles around the block
dressed so **fly**
so **high**
I'm hitting laps round the **sky**.
Waiting on a call from a customer
like it's the most special **girl**
in the whole wide **world**.

My yeahs on cashmere sweater
the jeans are **denim**
around my neck a chain
of gold and **platinum**
with a charm hanging like a heavy **emblem**.

From the galaxy **phone**,
I can hear the **ringtone**,
so I know it's a call from one
of my begging-ass **siblings**
wanting to borrow some money and
pay me back on the first of the **third**.
I pulled over to the **curb**,
counting **stacks**,
googling **apps**
driving through gangways like I'm lost with no **map**
I'm waiting, I'm
waiting
on my phone to hit.

Cruising in a luxury car
pushbutton start
leather **interior**
twenty-four-inch Forgiato rims
make a grown man feel **inferior**.
It's the limousine **tent**,
bailing ball paint,
enticing youngsters to hustle
like they can knock down **pens**.
Get caught then snitch or take down their **friends**.
That's why real hustlers like me can't **win**.

I'm waiting, I'm waiting on my phone to hit
I'm waiting, waiting on one **serve**.
I ain't got the **nerve**
to hustle with the new millenniums
who don't live by their **word**.
If we cross paths I get out of there!
Make a hole in the wall like a Jordan sign
doing the running man,
running man because I got my **mind**
on my money, my money on my **mind**
Riding solo comfortably **nestled in**.
Pedal to the medal
if I see a new hustler on the block trying to **settle in**.

I'm waiting, I'm waiting on my phone to hit
hoping it ain't a call
from one of my no-good customers wanting **credit**.
Praying it ain't my side chick **texting**
my little brother Jizzie **flexing**
wrist which automar **presidential**
hitting corners in a neighborhood that's **residential**.

Waiting on my phone to hit in my foreign whip
with a foreign dip

giving me head like she's psychic
My favorite cousin Monique
calling me, talking regular,
but I only speak **loud**.
That Kush that put your head in the **clouds**.
Had to kick the foreign chick to the curb,
she was getting to car **booty**
got me another **cutie**
named Big Booty Kyra
her ass sit up like it got insomnia
got rid of **her**
she a gold **digger**
ridding no L.s.
Sipping Remy,
with one hand I steer,
looking out my **rear**,
to the street I keep my **ear**.

B. M. calling
yelling about my baby
need this and need that,
when I know she don't need it.
She just trying to see who I'm **with**.
I'm switching lanes like killer
slashing faces with buck **fifties**.
Pull over for the pedestrian who looks so pretty
to help me take a **selfie**.
She say I look hood rich
asked my name
I said thirty bands,
two chains,
yacht master
tri-billion cut **Rolex**.
Gave her my number
pulled off
told her to shoot me a text

I'm waiting
I'm waiting
then mom's call
telling me to go get her something to eat.
I said I'm too busy
she said you ain't doing nothing
but riding around selling dope and **shit**.

Hang up
turn the music up
my theme song
Tupac "All Eyez on Me"
in my dream car
touchscreen digital **dash**
see seven-inch flat screen in the headrest
when I fly **past**
your rent money couldn't even pay for the **gas**
I'm top-flight player going so **fast**
If I crash and burn and die
all they'll find is a black **box**
with more women numbers
than messages in my **inbox**
most won't even come kiss me in my **casket**
too busy with the next hustler getting money the **fastest**.

Leave behind pictures of fashion
wads of cash flashing
can't take it with me
so the money never lasts.
missed so many special moments
with loved ones because
I was always chasing a bag
all I can ask myself is
what was all the hustling for?

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

All the times I was waiting,
waiting on my phone to hit
riding in my foreign whip
doing circles around the block
dressed so **fly**
so **high**
like I'm in hitting laps around the sky
then my phone finally hit it
finally hit
I picked up
and the police answered
trying to buy some **shit**
I threw the phone out the window
and said I quit.

Hold on me

It feels like this drug has a hold on me, a hold on me, like a love affair with one of my no-good weed head *dread-lock hoes*. Feels like she's got me in a leg-lock hold, locked between her legs, with my good wife on hold. Even though I know it's bad for me.

Through the coughing, burning red eyes and smoke it makes me lose sight of what's sad for me. Because it comforts me, like I'm setting comfortably on blueberry kush cloud of marijuana smoking a beee.

Despite the way it depresses my immune system I still blow smoke illegally like I'm immune to the system. This drug got my heart racing searching my thoughts for answers. I never knew granddaddy Kush was increasing the risk of heart diseases and lung cancer.

It's got a hold on me, a bear hug, pull, puff, puff, pass tug till I'm shaking like bronchitis got me coughing so often. Not knowing I'm one step ahead of my coffin. I think it's the hydro, but it might be emphysema that has me wheezing like a weezel. My favorite kush is sour dezil, makes me feel like I'm dressed in a sour apple shirt by Ephizzel.

When I mix weed with Hennessy I really feel some type of dependency. This drug has a hold on me, hold on me, tighter than headband marijuana. Cause it bands problems from my head sending me to Nirvana. Which it makes me believe, it takes me to a place of make believe, a place out of this world, consisting of rainbow colors, abstract objects moving, thick clouds of kush smoke, with humans flying so close to heaven, you wouldn't believe. You'd have to indulge in a session to make you believe.

I really didn't come to my senses till I realized this high I'm feeling is just make believe. Soon as this white rhino high go down,

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

my depression goes even downer. Now they say I need an upper, not a downer. But no, I need to leave this drug right where I found her.

I'm tired of it having a hold on me, and every other minority. We spending more money on drugs and alcohol than any other nationality. Destroying ourselves, lungs lack as our skin just to escape reality. Modern day slave masters, use drugs as a way to lock us up, internationally. Mentally as well as physically they have a hold on me

Instead of the chains being on my ankles they're on my mind. But marijuana is such a mind-altering drug I'm blind, I can't see my brain is in bondage, and my body is doing the time. I'm blind, well, I was blind. Are you still blind? Does marijuana have a hold on you?

Unseen me

I seen so much suffering
I wish I could've blindfolded
tinted sunglasses
hand over my eyes
unseen it.

Unseen

the violence, drugs, poverty, unemployment
domestic abuse, dysfunctional families, and addiction
passing down from generation to generation
breaking out like an infectious disease.

seeing muzzles flashing bright
bullets ripping
through steel
glass shattering
bodies dropping
football size bullet wounds gaping
pools of blood in the street
tires screeching
bystanders screaming
kids running
goons disappearing
into murky nights
like dark **shadows**
living with everyday **gun battles**

It really hit home when my 17-year-old friend had his whole life to
live.

And it was cut short before he could **give**
all the life he had to **give.**

I wish I could've blindfolded
tinted sunglasses
hand over my eyes

unseen it.

When he locked eyes
with a rival gang member.
Staring like they trying to burn holes
in each other's **faces.**
Then both went for their weapons
like they were **racing.**

Seen the explosion from the gunfire,
his body drop, the blood.
Then that intelligent spark
In my friend's eyes vanished.
His brilliant StreetSmarts splattered
on the ground next to him.
It froze me in the state of shock
grief hit so deep
I couldn't sleep
cried for weeks
I couldn't organize my thoughts
channel the pain
the frustration of seeing my friend killed
right in front of me.
I just wish I could have unseen it
unseen the dark place it put me in
unseen this seed of retaliation it planted in my mind.
Made anger move through my body
like a virus in my blood
tearing up my insides like **cancer.**
There's no way to treat it,
there are no **answers.**

It spread through me and my homeys like **madness.**
I'm mad they mad we mad at you
locked and loaded
ready for **madness**
to bring family **sadness**

with semiautomatic assault rifles
handguns
making myself the judge, jury, and executioner
shooting
stabbing
paralyzing
colostomy bag being
wheel chairing my enemies
over petty squabbles
beef never squashing
I co-op adversaries over
argument
disagreements
rejection
misunderstanding.
I even peer pressure my peers
to get it popping with me.

No matter how many people I get down on
it's never enough. Anybody mugging get shot
in my sleep I see mugshots
of the tortured
hanging up in my brain like portraits
the burglaries
carjacking
robberies
stick ups
stick out like pictures in a frame
the murder
deaths
kills
are on a shelf of my thoughts
like street awards.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

When I finally hunted down
the one who killed my homey
I still felt lonely
depressed
it didn't feel that empty space
that place
that hurt
every time I thought about his face
never listening to the voice of reason
stripping hustlers for no reason.
Never listening to mothers
older brothers
grandmothers
school
teachers
counselors
preachers
no matter how many O.G. leaders
chieftains come to my community
it's immune to me
I ain't shit
they ain't shit
no respect for life
no regard for humanity.
Since I lost my friend
I pinched off the emotional cord
I fan niggas down like fat dat dat dat
dat down bringing so much pain and suffering
adversaries wish they could've
blindfolded sunglasses
hand over their eyes
unseen me.

Ms. Masochist

Last night I tried to stop a malicious attack
It was no use no use
my mother push me away
as if she grew accustomed to the domestic disputes.
My father is like Castro
I felt kidnapped
held hostage like Amanda Berry.
My sister felt like Gina DeJesus
we victims of child abuse.
I watched him beat my brother
with an extension cord
until his skin was bloody, broken and loose.
But nobody can feel my pain
not even a masseuse.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander
backhand him like he open-hand her.
He hit my mother harder than Evander.
Gave her two black eyes
no peas
left her stewing in her own tears like hot soup.
Soon as she think it's blowed over
cooled off
he back wielding on her like a welder.
Kicking us out the house with nothing
we moving from shelter to shelter.

Watching my mother beg for a place to stay
made me feel like I failed her.
Every night living in those strange places
she cried on my shoulders as I held her.
But I can't lie
the more I grewed up
the more the resentment built up, I blowed up.

Screaming at my mother
“I can’t stand ya,
why you keep going back to him, Sandra,
why you keep going back to him, Sandra!”

Even if she wore a mask
she couldn’t hide she’s a masochist.
She set there as he beat her and beats her
like she ask for it.
One day we get away
the next night we come right back to him.
I yell, “Stop!”
but he a candle, I can’t hold a match to him.
Even when he stumbling in the house
suffering from alcoholism.
Yelling, calling my mother out
like she against him.

She terrified
about to run through the wall
just to get away from him.
I’m fed up standing up to him
he stomped a mud hole in me
that sounded like a stampede.
My mother spoke up
and he opened up a full assault of mental abuse
insulting her intelligence with insult after insult.
Felt like he adding salt to my wounds
she tried to protect me.
He turned up.
No elevator, he Ray Rice my mother in the living room.
Thought she was dead
panic spread
faster than the piss running down my leg.

He beat her in the face
until it was Ms Potato Head scrambled
whole house in shambles.
Over and over, I hear my mother ramble
“I love you, I love you!”
while she’s being trampled
I try to help
but he’s too much for me to handle.
My little brother back me up
he smacked my little bro until he black and blue.
He never wore that color well
so he locked him in the room like a cell.

I felt neglected, abandoned
hurt, afraid
embarrassed
balled up into one child on an emotional roller coaster.
My feeling up and down like wheels on a ferris.
I have no childhood memory I cherish.
The night my innocent eyes
seen my father rip my mother’s clothes off in public
made me so angry
like I video record dubbed it.
We fought him off
got away
but she went directly back to him like she loved it.

That was the last straw.
I yelled, “Fuck it!”
I hit him
hit him so hard
I know he felt it.
So intoxicated, he stood there screaming
“Enough is enough.”
He had the nerve to run and call the police on us.
She chose him over us

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

she chose him over us
over us, over us....

Even if she wore a mask
she couldn't hide she's a masochist.
Setting there as he beat her
and beat her like she ask for this.
One day we get away
the next night she come right back to him.
I try to stop her
but he a candle
I couldn't hold a match to him.

Snowball

I'll never forget when my sister said this:
"I want you to remember this...
When the world get cold and you
feel like you gonna freeze.
You have nothing to be afraid of...
You already been through
hell on a snowball."

Dedicated to Jessica L. Williams

You wrote this in the
first letter you ever
wrote me while I was
in prison. It meant so
much to me. It gave me
confidence, because I knew
you believed in me.
I love you.

Lifestyle of a hustler

You thought I was a wolf in hustler clothing,
until you undress me and seen a muscle-built lover
wearing tattoo tears and a fearless heart of **gold**,
showing you unmeasurable amounts of affection like it's **cold**.

Overcome by your sweet fragrance during our first conversation,
I knew communication would be the link to our future.
It's the way we hang, hanging on to one another's words by a thread,
giving you a new, wondrously exciting vision of **life**.
Vision of new colors, shapes, sounds, words and feelings
as you witness the **life**, the lifestyle of a hustler.

My whole life I've searched for a woman like you.
A woman with so much **loyalty**,
it makes me wanna spoil you like **royalty**.
You say you've looked high and low
for a hustler of my caliber,
that now lays right under your **nose**,
asleep on your huge breast like **pillows**.

I'm sound asleep after the humpteenth police **chase**,
your lips lift the pressure I **face**.
We lay face to face, a flame starting in your cheeks from you
blushing.
I'm drawn to you like a painting of your beautiful **face**.
Other women couldn't trace the glow in your **face**
if they swap shot your **sculpture**.
I know these petty hustlers have tried
to eat away at you like **vultures**.
I'll protect you, I'll defy Heaven just to bring haters hell
who simply talk about harming you.
As you witness the life, the lifestyle of a hustler.

Always taking you to get yo nails done, hair done, toes done.
Taking you shopping, buying you a ballroom gown cause you with a
boller.

Opening doors for you, house doors, presidential suite doors,
penthouse doors, mansion doors, open foreign car doors
because the world is yours turning up
playing Drake “What are you so afraid of?”

Entering an upscale, five-star luxurious restaurant
with a view of the city, lighting up your face,
making you smile brighter.

Walking past onlookers looking on as we proceed
through velvet ropes, arm in arm.

Your necklace glowing, my platinum and gold chain blinging,
your elegant gown dragging along the red carpet.

We even got hustlers in **awe!**

Hustlers wives dropping their **jaws**,
waiters gawking, chandeliers sparkling
as you begin to fall, fall in love with the life,
the lifestyle of a hustler.

It’s the upper class, the upper cash,
the upper **swag**, securing a **bag**.

You know I adore you, pull out your seat for you.

I know you touched by the floors
with ocean water fish beneath us.

I’m so [payed?] you thought you saw a mermaid.

Toasting with expensive champagne
you giving me a head nod saying,
“**Impressive, impressive.**”

I wanna ask you a question before
you get to **impressed**.

It’s another part of the lifestyle that’s the biggest **test**.

Where the feds kick in the door,
snatch me up like they committing **theft**.

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

In front of you and the kids,
they put me under **arrest**.
Only time we flesh to flesh again
is three-hour visits,
only hear my voice
through fifteen-minute phone calls.
We show love through love letters,
cards, pictures and money orders.
Just like I **guessed**, you're no longer **impressed**,
that loyalty I seen in your eyes has **vanished**.
Now you looking at me like I'm speaking **Spanish**
because you only in love with the lifestyle,
not the hustler.

Kryptonite

Hustling faster than a speeding bullet
Getting the money up in a single **bound**
From quarters, halves, ounces to **pounds**.
You were my kryptonite
The woman who set me **down**.

You defused my diabolical scheme
When I went bent on cornering the **world**.
You remind me that I have a beautiful little girl.

Opened your arms, spread your legs
You let me smell your super **flower**
feel your super **powers**
like you had a super nuclear **weapon**.

No half **stepping**
when I was down
your motivating words were my energy **source**
Showed me the streets have run their **course**
Told me even with God's **speed**
I can't continue to sell crack and **weed**.

You the heroine, my super woman in the movie
Making this bad guy feel **good**.
Got me thinking about leaving the **hood**.
Anytime I'm with you I feel an electrical **surge**
An intimate **urge**
Like our souls were **merged**.

You were my kryptonite when I was
Hustling faster than a speeding bullet,
Getting money up in a single **bound**

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

Quarters, halves, ounces to **pounds**
You were the superwoman that set me **down.**

Caralina

Similar to a cold can of
orange **Crush**, Caralina
was my first **crush** every
time she entered the class
room my blood would **rush**.
Every one came to a complete
hush. I never had the
courage to say **much**.

This lasted from the
days of Olympia Brown
Elementary until I was
months away from going to
the **penitentiary**. I squandered
my chance to ask her **out**. It
left a bad after taste in my
mouth. I wanted to tell her
how beautiful she is and the
words wouldn't come **out**.

Similar to a cold can of Crush
I've been crushing
on Caralina since I stayed
across the street from her
on **Geneva**. Wanted to tell her
I was too nervous to say a thing
then **either**. I remember in
elementary I use to sit next
to her on the school **bus**. Hoping
Our hands would **touch**. In
middle school I wish I would of
spoke up. It could of been **us**.
Us against the **world**. She could
of been my **girl**. I would of

bought her diamonds and **pearls**.
We would **quarrel** the way lovers
quarrel. By the time we was
In high school I was **locked up**.
I came home and seen you
Looked even more beautiful all
grown up. I bought her
A cold can of orange
Crush and still didn't tell
her **how I** had a
crush. A crush on her.

Whisky

You know how to **whisk me**
That's why I always fall for you **whisky**
Cause you know how to whisk me out of my **seat**.
Have me dancing to my own **beat**,
like I got two left **feet**.
I love the way you **whisk me**
you whisk my pain away from me
whisky

I'll never forget
how I tried to drink away my own tears.
By the time I was at the
bottom of the **bottle**
I was drowning in my own **sorrow**.
When I felt life playing me like a **lotto**
you made the pressure disappear
with every **swallow**,
even when I got pulled over on Jacoto
the police **knew I drank like a fish**.
It's the way you **whisk my**
my car in a **ditch**.
You had me so high
I could give God a high **five**
during the sobriety test
I couldn't count to **five**
& barely make it out of there **alive**.

Whisky,
you know how to whisk me
that's why I always **fall** for you, whisky
cause you know how to whisk me out of my seat.
Have me dancing like I'm moving to my own beat.
Like I got two left feet
I love the way you whisk me

The rose that blossomed from the prison yard

you whisk my pain away from me
Whisky.

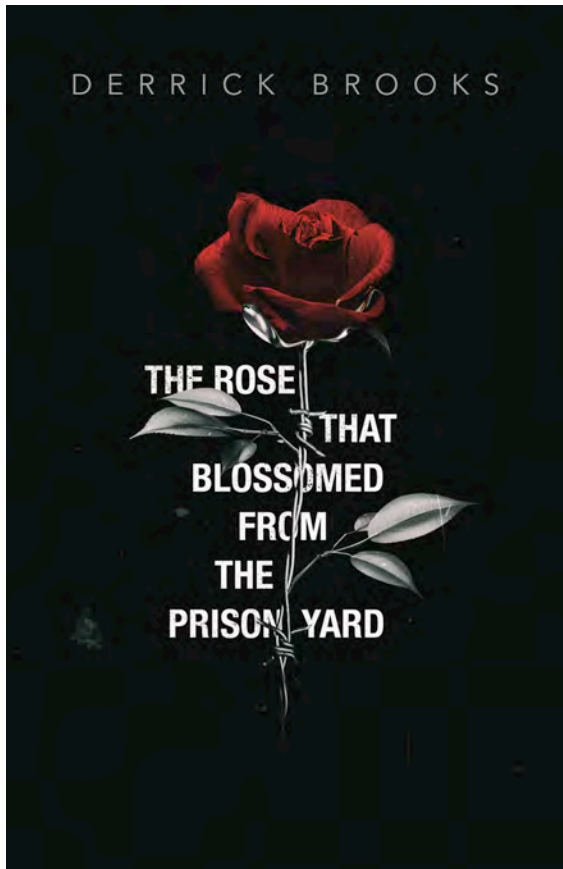
I woke up in a bull pen
a drunk man speaking a sober man's **thoughts**.
I wasn't sorry for what I did.
I was just mad I got **caught**.
You heard me mumbling at the mouth
fumbling at the house
stumbling just to get my words out
but don't nothing make me talk slicker
then that malt liquor.
My nigga
Then my high went **down**
the whole room started spinning
around and around I fell **down**
when I got up I realized
they about to split us **up**.

I'm gone miss you baby
the way you always whisk me baby
whisk me out of my seat
have me dancing to a beat
like I got two left feet
I just wanna wish you
wish you good bye
Whisky

Author Bio



Derrick Brooks is a 38-year-old Black man who was raised in Racine, Wisconsin poverty. He so succumbed to his tragic living situation and the streets that by the age of 16 he was sentenced to 15 1/2 years in prison. Instead of letting this stop him, he used writing poetry, meditation and mindfulness as vehicles to move himself forward towards change.



The Rose that Blossomed from the Prison Yard collects poems written in prison by Derrick Brooks. His poems describe the political reality of being Black in American society, the pain of a childhood in urban poverty and the love that sustains him.

The Rose That Blossomed from the Prison Yard

By Derrick Brooks

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