

THE FIELD OF ME
and other poems

SARABANDE WRITING LABS, VOL. 2

SARABANDE WRITING LABS

An Arts Education Program from Sarabande Books

Sarabande Writing Labs is an arts education program serving under-resourced communities in Kentucky through creative writing workshops.

OUR MISSION

- **REACH** communities in Kentucky with traditionally fewer arts education opportunities.
- **TEACH** creative writing workshops characterized by enthusiasm and excellence.
- **CREATE** opportunities for positive, experiential learning in a supportive and respectful environment.
- **PROMOTE** diverse voices through free community readings.

Visit our website for photos, updates, and upcoming events:
www.sarabandebooks.org/swl

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THE FIELD OF ME

FOREWORD

I am fortunate that I am sometimes able to travel around the country and read from a book to a room full of people. Sometimes there are more people than other times. Sometimes I meet more famous people than others. Sometimes they take me to better restaurants than other times. Some audiences like me more than other audiences. But never have I been more affected by an event than when I read at Hotel Louisville with the beautiful women participating in the Sarabande Books project, Sarabande Writing Labs. Every poem struck me down. Every woman splashed a smile across the podium to the audience, an audience full of peers, comrades, and compatriots in a common struggle, humanity. Through elision of texts, erasure poems, and through their own words, these women took an idea from my poem and created a field of their own. After the reading, I spent over an hour speaking with these remarkable women, their stories mirroring my own in many ways, and was left embedded with their words and stories, but mostly their encouragement for life. The ablutions of *mujeres firme*, *badass ladies*, *femmes courageux*, are in these words. Let it cleanse you.

—David Tomas Martinez,
author of *Hustle*

voices

heard

agile and clear

Then

flat

a language that

could be gentle one moment and

knotty another, yet

seemed briefly

a single voice

a poem

—Schnita McElroy

THE FIELD OF ME

My field is a quiet and most soothing place, with a big oak tree full of colorful leaves. The birds love to come by and sing me a quaint little tune, "O how beautiful." From time to time a wonderfully soothing breeze comes about, the children from up yonder on the hill also from time to time come through with their baseballs, frisbees and kites in flight, to simply run and scurry about in my field. O, my field is such a soothing and quiet place.

—*Tia Winston*

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] create [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] my [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] dance [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Imagine [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] butterflies [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

—LeeAnn Mudd

LIVING IN THE MADNESS

It was like driving down a winding road with all your personal belongings, and at every curve in the road, you lose an item.

No. It wasn't.

It was like being on a merry-go-round, spinning faster and faster, holding on as tight as you can. Yet the more you pick up speed, the more you begin to lose your grip, the harder it is to hold on to your bearings.

No. It wasn't.

It was like putting together a detailed puzzle. You find you are missing the last piece, so you forever search and search to try and find what you need to complete it.

—*Brittany Fields*

THE FIELD OF ME

There is a storm growing
in the field of me
strong wind it must be
powerful within me
God calm the storm
pick up the pieces
and I will see
there a storm in the
field of me

—*Felicia Bently*

[REDACTED] home [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a [REDACTED] powerful place [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] moved [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] so close, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] almost human [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

—Helen Dandridge

LIVING IN A FOSTER HOME

It was like being in a real family
being loved
not having it all but being there
with certain ones of my brothers
and sisters to love me

No it wasn't

It was like being alone
something missing
after Daddy died

Everything gone
when Daddy was gone

The flowers died
birds stopped singing
world stopped revolving
the day Daddy died
and I knew he would never
come back.

—*Tina Bell*

GROWING UP ALONE

It was like
being in a desert
no one else around
wind blowing sand

No it wasn't

It was like
drifting alone on a canoe
far away
into the sunset

No it wasn't

It was
having family
feelings
hugs touches
people who cared

but I was still alone

—*Melinda Bayorek*

THE FIELD OF ME

What's growing in the field of me?
Resentment that I have to be in this place
I don't want to be. Let me go
so I can grow
thorns and thistles in this field of me.

—*Flossie Johnson*

ALONE

It's like sand through an hourglass,
this life I live without my mother.

No it isn't. The sand is gone.
The glass is clear and I would
like to see her on the other side.

I would like to have my mother back.
I just can't let her go.

—*Paula Hailey*

[REDACTED] people

[REDACTED] roving [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Moving [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] modernist [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] master-planned [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] They staged [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

walks, built a village of driftwood
and dropped paper from trees. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (This interview
has been edited and condensed.)

—Lara Bowman

GROWING UP

It was a nightmare at first being taken advantage of, unable to take up for herself. But the day came when she could. One day she did it alone.

No one listened to her, like she made it all up. But she didn't.

She took matters in her own hands when she got strong enough and saw the light from that day forth.

—*Rochelle Phillips*

A coat like that [redacted] is a beacon of
swagger [redacted]

[redacted] I loved
it.
[redacted] more now than ever

ponder who you might yet become with
just one or two sartorial tweaks.

—*Tonnette King*

GOING HUNGRY

It was oodles of noodles
and hot dogs.

No it wasn't.

It was
bread no butter
Kool aid no sugar
peanut butter no jelly.

It was
cob no corn
salad no dressing
strings no beans.

—*Carol Branch*

THE FIELD OF ME

growing out of me
greens, beans, onion
and tomatoes, corn
kids, happy people
my granny, my
happiness, not grown
out of me but
one day it will soon

it may be that
my family and me
we'll be happy
again in my
clean time soon
to be

—*Tenika Thomas*

ONE MISSING PIECE

It was like coming to a four way stop
with no traffic
but stopping anyway.

No. It wasn't.

It was like getting into the car, buckling up,
adjusting the seat, and starting the car.
But there were no tires.

No. It wasn't.

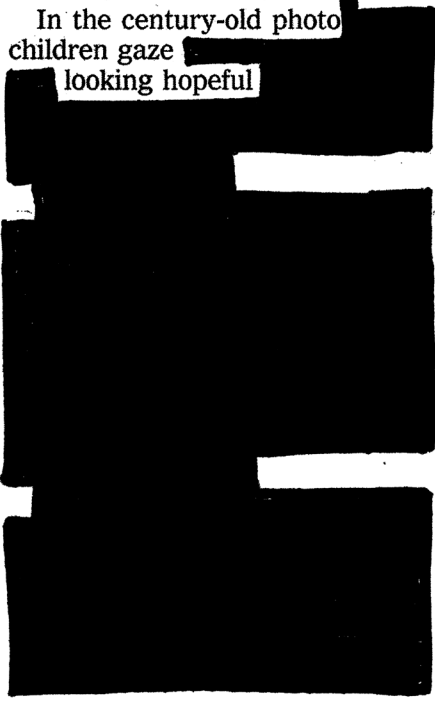
It was like running a race,
putting on your jogging suit
tennis shoes and number
no one else running or watching.

No.

It was like going out in the snow
putting on our hat, coat and gloves.
No boots just sandals.

—*Patricia A. Cowherd*

In the century-old photo
children gaze
looking hopeful



—Lisa Dillingham

BODIES

Bodies are things we find in the dirt.

Some are put there by families
and others are put there
to hide.

Whether by natural causes
or not
we all end up there anyway.

Hopefully we all get to see the heavens
one day.

—*Kamica Fowler*

THE FIELD OF ME

I'm a field of sunflowers
blowing in the wind, with the
shining down on me. And the
grass growing between my feet
making my sunflower field
lovely and beautiful.

—*Tina Wood*

FALLING IN LOVE

Falling in love, such beautiful words
sound like a song sung by the birds—
chirp, chirp, chirp, tweet, tweet, tweet .

Love can be wonderful but it can also
make you weak. If you fall in love
you should stand strong with the belief
you will carry on.

Falling in love can make you
stand proud and shout to the
world, shout it out loud.

I'm in love oh yes I am, please
understand it doesn't have to
always be with a man!

—*Janet Hicks*

THE FIELD OF ME

The field is sweet
and tall, the smells
so inviting and strong.

When the wind blows
so do my long legs.
Skinny and strong
that's what it's all about,
jumping and playing
moving all about.

—*Robin Rudd*

CIRCUSES

Yes, families are supposed to be circuses
We need a ringmaster to follow

We swing from the trapeze wire
and need to be caught—

life on display for all to see
but in the end we take a bow together

—*Cindy Brown*

THE FIELD OF ME

The field of me
it feels so free.

My recovery
is my field!

The field I
need is just
to be me!

The field is my
son knowing that
I can be the mother
he wants and needs
me to be

and we will be
our field!

—*Marla Coleman*

