

**POETRY BY JOANN BACA**  
**FROM THE WINTERFEST POETRY CHALLENGES**  
**2009 - 2024**

*DESCRIPTIONS OF POETRY TYPES ARE FOUND IN THE WFOL POETRY CHALLENGE PAGES*

**CHALLENGE: FREE FORM/FREE VERSE**

**MOUSE**

Mouse in the Tunnels  
Carrying funnels.  
What are they for?  
Don't wish to know more!

**FATHER'S LIBRARY**

Crisp pages or well-thumbed,  
Mind fresh or mind numbed,  
Love reflected or love deferred,  
Vincent craves the written word.  
Borrowed treasure or found delight,  
He savors books by candlelight.  
When Cath'rine comes, they're cast aside.  
He reads her eyes...and thrills inside.  
Flick'ring candles all aglow  
Reveal recumbent figures low  
Upon his bed. He reaches out  
To close the book on fear and doubt.

**NARCISSA'S VISIONS**

Unseeing, she "sees" all.  
Narcissa's Inner Eye  
Provides a warning call  
To those who would but try  
To understand. No wall  
Inhibits her. No lie  
Convinces her. True sight  
Enlightens her long night.

## PASCAL'S PIPES

Some beat drums, reflecting heartbeats.  
Metronomes keep perfect time.  
But Below all things have purpose,  
Instruments become lifelines.

Witness Pascal, once musician,  
As a youngster he was great.  
His Dad steered his talents wisely,  
Urged him to the Pipe Room late

One calm night when all was quiet  
And their world slept peacefully.  
Gave him sticks, explained the "music"  
Of the codes, how needful he,

And those Below were for a system,  
Metal "drums" were the best plan:  
Tap out warning, word and message.  
Pascal was the perfect man.

Purpose filled him, he was smitten.  
Here was challenge, work he'd love,  
For his drumming could be channeled.  
This job fit him, hand in glove.

Now whenever Father hears it -  
Tappings, calls to those Below -  
Smiling, he recalls the young boy  
Pascal, Master Pipesmith now!

## ARTHUR

Enticing smells in William's kitchen!  
Door is blocked, no way to get in.  
Never mind, my Boy will feed me.  
Forgets a lot, but never eating!

Gizmos make for good exploring.  
Can't do wrong, my Boy's adoring.  
Father growls, he wants to send me  
Back Above. My Boy defends me.

Tunnels harbor Vincent true.  
Well, they can harbor Arthur, too!

## ARTHUR

**Listens without judging.  
Gives with no begrudging.  
Mouse's faithful friend,  
With him 'til the end.**

**Others come and go.  
Arthur's still Below.  
He's a constant friend.  
With him 'til the end.**

**Confidences kept.  
He likes his room unswept!  
Mouse's true best friend,  
With him 'til the end.**

## WINTERFEST

**Love is what leads you  
When your heart needs Below.  
Love is the essence -  
It fills the cool tunnels,  
The candle-lit chambers,  
The spirit of the community.  
Love is what fuels us  
As friends, as a fandom.  
We create the beauty.  
We keep The Dream alive  
For each other -  
Always -  
With Love.**

## DEVIN

**Devin was a scamp,  
Which caused him to decamp.  
If he loved one other,  
It would be his brother.**

## VINCENT'S HANDS

Manual labor has hardened his palms.  
Nature provided the fur.  
Claws sharp and deadly crown long tapered fingers.  
All of them kissed sweet by her.

To others he's "beast," abomination.  
Catherine sees what she sees.  
"These hands are my hands," she once said to him, it's  
What she perceives and believes.

Hands that are gentle, hands that are kind,  
These hands are Vincent's to her.  
Hands that protect and defend the defenseless,  
Beautiful hands, she is sure.

Would that he saw what she saw when he looked.  
Diff'rences from those Above  
Mean less to Cath'rine, who only can see them  
Through eyes of one who's in love.

## WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HAVE A LOVE?

The Tunnels are quite hushed today.  
Mouse says, "It's all good. OK!"  
Lovers are chambered in twos,  
Out of sight, out of all view,  
Keeping their love lights alive.  
Now see his Cath'rine arrive,  
Slipping into Vincent's den,  
Waking him, hugging...and then  
Giving him all she can give.  
He, surprised, now starts to live.  
Dreams of a "Someday" have gone.  
Living the "Now" – both have won.  
Valentine's Day is the time  
Their hearts began a new rhyme.  
This "Now" shall be a new part  
Of their love story – two hearts  
Beating as one, so to wend  
Off to a fairy tale end!

## **JAMIE'S BOW**

"I'm not a kid!" she often says.  
She's treated like one anyway  
By Tunnel dwellers old and gray  
Who don't believe their eyes and bray,  
"You're young, just wait, and then one day  
You'll meet a man, you'll go away."

So off she goes - patrol and guard,  
Her fav'rite chores. They aren't hard.  
Each time she prowls her own "back yard"  
Conviction grows. "They" won't retard  
Her need to help. No song by bard  
Or argument will deal the cards

Another way. "It's Jamie's curse,"  
The elders say. "So much the worse.  
That crossbow she totes like a purse  
When she could be a chef or nurse!"  
She takes it in with smile terse  
Her exploits someday will be verse!

She can't explain, she will not grow  
To love another life. She knows  
The seed that happiness bestowed  
Gave her a passion for the bow.  
That seed then grew - to Help Below,  
To be a guardian, her vow.

So off each day, each night you'll see  
Bow-toting Jamie, gone to be  
Her truest self. And Vincent, he  
Who understands that only we  
Inside ourselves know our best "me,"  
Smiles, watching her on bended knee  
Become a woman, truly free.

## CATHERINE'S GAUZE CURTAINS

Billowing lightly,  
Beckoning sprightly.  
Curtains that tease  
Blown by the breeze.

Inside he glances,  
But won't take chances.  
Glimpses through gauze  
Tantalize 'cause

Though he may want it  
He is quite daunted.  
"Above" is her life.  
It cuts like a knife.

Curtains prevent him,  
Steal his momentum.  
He views through lace,  
Her precious face.

Until one midnight  
The stars align right.  
He parts the lace,  
Kisses her face.

Billowing lightly,  
Beckoning sprightly.  
They greet the dawn.  
Two become one.

## A POEM FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Across the miles, across the years,  
Beyond the known, despite the fears,  
A Bond was formed between these two  
Which shines a light upon we few.  
More than just love, a passion deep,  
Connected souls - it's WE who keep  
The Dream alive for us to share.  
The world Below is in OUR care.  
We share a Bond ourselves, it seems,  
Filled with our hopes, filled with our dreams,  
A fairy tale of deep delight,  
It keeps us going - day and night.  
So let's all "fan" the flames Above  
To keep Below alive to love!

**AN EPISODE OF YOUR CHOICE (I CHOSE ONE WE DIDN'T SEE!)**

**In the dim light he prowled,  
His cape on and cowled.  
To Catherine's he went -  
An evening well spent.  
Now rock walls closed 'round.  
He loved the pipes' sound.  
Yet, heart beating wild,  
His soul still beguiled,  
He thought of Above,  
Of accepting her love,  
And turned to the door.  
He'd give her much more!  
Once back in her sight,  
He'd go toward the light  
Of her love and her care.  
Let day find him there -  
A Romeo for  
The Rose, love its core,  
And passion fulfilled  
Would never be stilled.  
With doors open wide,  
She bade him inside,  
And all through the night  
They shared their delight  
In love come of age -  
From poetry's page  
To sweet ecstasy.  
And now, blessed be,  
They were fully one  
In the day's dawning sun.**

## WE MUST KEEP ON DREAMING

When all my life is over  
And all my days are through  
I'll think of how we started  
And all I've lived with you.  
One thing I'll know for certain  
When all is said and done  
Is dreams are meant to come true.  
You're mine – always the one,  
The one who gave me laughter,  
The one who gave me joy,  
The one who gave me passion,  
And such a gift: our boy.  
One dream became so many.  
You dreamed along with me.  
And with our magic Bonding  
Dreams spun reality.  
We live within those dreams now.  
We'll live forevermore  
Within the minds of many.  
Our dreams became their door.

## CHALLENGE: SIMILE

Catherine's eyes are like sparkling sunlight in laughter, like smoldering coals in anger, like the hot blue center of candleflame in passion.

The abyss is like men's souls...deep and unknowable.



## **CHALLENGE: LIMERICK/STORY LIMERICK**

*The challenge topics should be easy to spot in each limerick!*

**There once was a man-child named Mouse  
Who considered the Tunnels his house.  
He never did heed  
"Don't 'take' when you need,"  
No matter how Father did grouse.**

**Wary and frightened, apart,  
Young Mouse from poor Vincent would dart.  
No food left could tempt him,  
No kind words repent him,  
'Til Arthur won over his heart.**

**There once was a guy very furry.  
Cath wanted his love in a hurry.  
So she did conspire  
To remove his attire  
And after him, naked, she'll scurry.**

**One night they "rested" til day.  
Awoke much too late. He must stay.  
Up Top now he's fixed,  
His flight now is nixed.  
Her balcony's where he must lay.**

**He once won the heart and soul of  
A beautiful lady Above.  
Though trials were many,  
Their Bond conquered any  
Frustrating roadblocks to love.**

**She once was a mother Above.  
Below now she showers her love  
On each boy and girl.  
She treats them like pearls.  
But Father is her Best Belov'd.**

**There once was a Mouse with blond hair  
Whose cupboard was stuffed, SO not bare!  
He had an entire  
Workroom to inspire  
His making his gizmos right there!**

**Their argument was all too clear,  
Sides taken and told, all could hear.  
With Cullen and William  
In search of dominion  
Of who would take charge of the beer.**

**"I made it myself," Will did say.  
"And that's all it takes? So, okay,  
Well, I drink the most,  
I don't have to boast.  
The person who drinks wins the day!"**

**"I don't accept such a dumb bray.  
This argument's not in the gray.  
I brew it the best,"  
He puffed out his chest.  
"So I get to pour it! No nay!"**

**Now Cullen stood up, toe to toe.  
"Dang, William, you think I'm your foe?"  
They stared for a while,  
Then both, they did smile.  
"We'll serve it together Below!"**

**Pascal, the dear boy, loves his pipes.  
He works there long hours, no gripes.  
When gossip is sent  
He's first, with ear bent,  
To hear every word and all types!**

**The Great Hall is quiet right now,  
But clam'rous it was...a real row  
When Cath'rine and Vincent  
Told everyone they meant  
To finally swear their true vows!**

**The Helper's first words uttered now:  
"How lovely the Tunnels are. Wow!"  
But not for the scene  
Or wherever she'd been.  
"I'd love me some Vincent...and HOW!"**

**There once was a lion-faced man  
Who loved her like nobody can.  
She felt his desire,  
Her own heart on fire.  
His Catherine was more than a fan!**

**"A kiss would be more than I could,  
Or necessarily should  
Give to my love,  
My girl from Above."  
So Vincent hid in his hood.**

**"A kiss is just what I need.  
To heck with your so-noble creed!"  
She grabbed his dear face -  
No way he'd go pace! -  
And thereupon they did the deed.**

**"How long have I lived without this?!  
It was...great! It was good! It was bliss!"  
He bent to the task.  
No, he did not ask.  
He just returned one blazing kiss.**

**How could he have guessed Vincent's name?  
He really played her like a game.  
But being a ghost...  
Let Kristopher coast.  
His "haunting" was relatively tame!**

**There once was an artist named Kris  
Who painted perfection and bliss.  
'Round C's dress of deep red  
V's possessive arms said,  
"She is mine, there's no doubt about this!"**

**There once was a Winterfest cold  
When Vincent became very bold.  
He offered his cloak  
To Cath'rine, and spoke  
Sweet words of love, so I'm told!  
She grabbed at the cloak with her fist,  
Pulled it off with a flick of her wrist,  
Tossed the cloak to the ground,  
Tumbled him with one bound...  
And they kissed and they kissed and they kissed!**

**A swirl and a ripple, just right,  
A black cloak of shadow at night.  
She knew to look for it,  
She'd come to adore it,  
And what was INside was delight!**

**Dear Vincent would always just miss  
When try'n' to give Cath a kiss.  
She grabbed both his shoulders  
As sturdy as boulders  
And wrestled that kiss from his lips!**

**When Kanin was new to Below  
A girl there just made his heart grow.  
Her name was Olivia  
He said, "Let me give ya  
A kiss." And the rest y'all know!**

**Temptation to kiss him abounds.  
The lawyer in her has the grounds.  
Yet stubborn he is,  
He shrinks from a kiss.  
She'll argue her point til "yes" sounds!**

**When Devin was young he was bound  
To travel Above, all around,  
For he was just sure  
"The world" was his cure,  
But..."home" was that hole in the ground.**

**There once was a barber named Lou  
Who brought those Below good cold brew.  
They could not decide  
When to drink, when to bide,  
So Jacob, he called it taboo.**

**His Cath'rine on pedestal stood  
Placed there by her man in a hood.  
She'd much rather he  
A bedmate would be  
And fulfill her fantasies GOOD!**

**While tapping on pipes far Below  
Dear Catherine, she stubbed her toe.  
Her mate rushed to save her,  
And then Vincent gave her  
A hug so hard it stopped blood flow!**

**He carved and he polished 'til late.  
What Cullen created was great.  
His goal: to inspire  
The kids to aim higher.  
Their faces on pawns were first-rate.**

**How difficult it was to do.  
She pricked her poor fingers a few.  
But she was determined  
Her mind it was firm, and  
Soon Vincent's "rose" bag was sewn.**

There once was a Winterfest time  
When everyone talked just in rhyme.  
Mouse couldn't compete  
But he said it was "Neat!"  
When Jamie called his gift "Sublime"!

The love of her life was in trouble,  
So Cath'rine, she went on the double.  
To save her Mane Man,  
On her mind as she ran.  
Then she left the bad guys in the rubble.

"Oh, Cath'rine," he cried in delight.  
"You overcame them in a fight!  
"Your love is so strong.  
To you I belong.  
Now let's slip off into the night!"

### **CHALLENGE: ACROSTIC POEM**

#### **FATHER**

Famously grouchy,  
A man who speaks archly  
To anyone he deems unwise,  
He dislikes Cath'rine. It  
Eats away at him. He  
Reproaches her. Damn her eyes!  
Forceful, he rages,  
Against her he stages  
Tantrums quite truly inspired.  
His son fin'lly tells him  
Each smile of hers...swells him.  
Regret makes him weep, but he tries  
For some middle ground.  
At least he has found  
"That woman" does love his dear son.  
His heart somewhat mellows,  
Ends up not as jealous.  
Respectful now, he knows...she's won.

## NANCY

Near to Catherine's heart  
A quiet, supportive presence.  
No friend like an old friend!  
Could she meet Vincent some day?  
Yes, Catherine hopes.  
The picture of a suburban housewife...  
Underneath, a kaleidoscope.  
Creative, insightful, talented,  
Knows Catherine, and speaks truth  
Endearing, trustworthy,  
Rocks a melon baller like a pro!

## CANDLES

Cherish the fantasy.  
Accept new reality.  
Nothing is as it seems.  
Despite what eyes see  
Loving hearts can believe, and  
Ever be faithful to dreams.  
Share the light with your fan fiction dreams.

## WINTERFEST

Winter's hold is strong Above.  
In the Tunnels? Warmth and love.  
No one's lonely on this night -  
Tunnel folk share hugs on sight.  
Every Helper knows it's true:  
Revels here are just the glue  
For daily efforts, caring deeds -  
Each one gives to each who needs.  
So every year they meet as one  
To share their thanks for what's been done.

## GREAT HALL

Gorgeous tapestries abound  
Room that's filled with sound  
Every heart is lifted  
As Winterfest presents are gifted  
Tunnelfolk share their love  
Helpers come down from Above  
All celebrate this community,  
Life, friendship, their unity.  
Let's meet here in perpetuity!

## BEAUTY

Bathed in light,  
Emerging from her threshold:  
Aphrodite's equal.  
Unutterable love  
Thickens his throat,  
Yearning for her touch.

## NARCISSA

Nobody knows where she came from,  
A woman of singular deeds.  
Rather than live with the others,  
Chambers apart are her needs.  
In Vincent's corner she stands strong.  
Sight beyond eyesight, her role.  
So, when the Fates reveal fortunes,  
A mirror she holds to his soul.

## WINTERFEST

When cold winds blow  
In caverns vast  
No one is left  
To walk alone.  
Each dweller comes,  
Repasts are served,  
Fellowship abounds,  
Everyone dances!  
So come inside  
To Winterfest!



## ORPHANS

Good-hearted boy,  
Ever helpful and kind.  
Orphaned but not alone.  
Freckles galore!  
Fond of Catherine.  
Remarkably compassionate.  
Essential member of the community Below.  
Young with an old spirit.

## CANDLES

Cuddle  
And  
Nuzzle,  
Dear  
Lovers.  
End  
Suspense!

## CATHERINE

Cut and beaten,  
Afraid and dying,  
Til rescue materialized.  
He brought her Below  
Even though Father objected,  
Renewed her spirit,  
Imparted hard-won wisdom.  
Now she is his light  
Even in his greatest darkness.

## TUNNELS

Threading within the city's bedrock,  
Unknown by the dwellers Above.  
Night forever inhabits Below.  
No light, no life intrudes...except...  
Ever and always...what our hearts create:  
Light and love and beauty and possibility...  
Such stuff as dreams are made of.

## **LIBRARY**

Long rows of shelves.  
Inspiration in small packages.  
Books on every subject  
Reflect life, describe dreams.  
All contain a kernel of the truth.  
Read and contain multitudes!  
You want to borrow one?!

## **CHALLENGE: ALLITERATION**

### **MOUSE**

Merry meddler, magnificent machine manipulator, masks mature mind.

### **BEAUTY**

By bowers Below:  
"Bewitching breasts," blushed Beast.  
"Bountiful brawny boy, bring bedding before business!" burbled Beauty.  
"Bossy!" breathed Beast.  
"Because brassy bride!" boasted Beauty.  
"Bare bottom?" begged Beast.

### **CRYSTAL**

Carefully collect copious quantities of colorful quartz contained in the  
Crystal Cavern.

### **MARY**

Marvelous Mary makes a magnificent macaroon and macaroni mash-up,  
mainly for the marriages of mature maidens and malleable males.

### **CATHERINE**

Catherine can calmly catch and cajole a cagey, capably caped cat-man to  
capitalize carnally...and carefully... in a cave.

### **FATHER'S LIBRARY**

Fiery flights of fancy fill folios. Studios scholars shelve scores of scripts.  
Father firmly focuses fervent followers of fiction.

## **CHALLENGE: ROSES ARE RED**

### **CATHERINE**

Roses are red,  
Catherine is blue.  
She got a red rose.  
What she wants, Vin, is YOU!

### **LOVE**

Roses are red, and also are white.  
You kept me satisfied all through the night.  
All I can think of the whole workday through  
Is returning Below, to your bed and to you!

### **SILLINESS**

Roses are red  
Or purple or pink  
Vincent and Catherine  
They have a link.

Roses are peach  
A gift from Above  
Vincent and Catherine  
Share a sweet love.

Roses are black  
In gardens they grow  
Vincent and Catherine  
Are hidden Below.

Roses are nice  
And very in fashion  
Vincent and Catherine  
Unleash their passion.

Roses are yellow  
Or orange or white  
Vincent and Catherine  
Have a great night!

## **CHALLENGE: CLERIHEW**

### **JOHN "PARACELSUS" PATER**

**John "Paracelsus" Pater:  
Brilliant once, crazy later!  
The name of "Father" wasn't enough?  
You just HAD to call Father's bluff.**

### **EDIE**

**The woman is a friend and a computer master  
She's saved Catherine from many a disaster  
She's got it going at work, but one look in her eyes  
Tells you she's a closet jokester in clever disguise!**

### **JOE**

**Joe Maxwell's his name  
Fighting crime is his game  
No cape...just law books  
He's a knight among rooks**

### **MARY**

**Mary, dear Mary, smiles sweetly.  
She loves Doctor Father completely.  
It's sad that he's way too oblivious.  
She needs him to find love contagious!**

### **ELIZABETH**

**Elizabeth's past was quite naughty!  
She wasn't always so dotty.  
Her nudes appeared in Playgirl.  
Drawn males that made your toes curl!**

**DEVIN**

**Devin's got a secret love,  
One who lives far up Above.  
A fan who'd give her heart to him...  
Sadly, he's a fictional whim.**

**DEVIN**

**He left as a child.  
Tough kid - a bit wild.  
Came back. Was he ready?  
He TRIES to be "steady"!**

**MOUSE**

**Like his namesake,  
Stealing's a "take."  
His heart's in the right place;  
His ethics lag snail's pace!**

**FATHER**

**Father is a scold  
Whenever Devin's bold.  
But he loves his son...  
Even the "other" one.**

**CHALLENGE: FIBONACCI**

**CULLEN**

Skilled  
Shamed  
Cullen  
Carves his way  
Into restored trust  
Guilt replaced now with dignity

**BRIGIT**

Frank  
Bruised  
Astute  
Talented  
Woman still in love  
Her heart speaks truth – Vincent listens

**GEOFFREY**

Sweet  
Kind  
Quiet  
Freckle-faced  
Empathetic Boy  
Brings Cath'rine tea and sympathy

**NARCISSA**

Shells  
Bones  
Mystic  
Uncanny  
She sees all, though blind  
She shows Vincent his mirrored soul

**WILLIAM**

**Gruff  
Stout  
He cooks  
Fills stomachs  
It's his way to help  
His food offers love, warms their hearts**

**TOGETHER**

**Gaze  
Kiss  
Embrace  
Bold caress  
A Bond that transcends  
A joining of bodies and souls**

**TOGETHER**

**Vincent  
Climbs  
To her.  
Catherine  
Waits patiently for  
An embrace to banish the dark.**

## **CHALLENGE: CINQUAIN**

Winterfest  
Candlelight, Camaraderie  
Sharing, Enjoying, Encompassing  
One big evening-long hug.  
Joy

Nameless river  
Murky, indifferent  
Chills, rushes, ignores, twists  
Magnifies Vincent's darkest moods.  
Aloneness

## **EDIE**

Extraordinary  
Dynamic, Charismatic  
Enterprising, Outgoing, Diverting  
The friend we all would love to have.  
Open-hearted

## **NARCISSA**

Seer  
Mysterious, otherworldly  
Questioning, answering, mystifying  
Possessor of ancient wisdom.  
Sage

## **SAMHAIN**

Freedom  
Unmasked, Liberated  
Everything, anywhere - Options  
Nothing is out of reach.  
Possibilities



## ROSE

**Perfection**

**Delicate, precious**

**Budding, blossoming, filling the senses**

**Like the beauty of their love**

**Symbol**

## FATHER'S CHESS SET

**Antagonists.**

**Structured. Clear.**

**Obeying. Mastering. Defining.**

**No shades of grey for Father.**

**Worldview.**

**Catherine**

**Compassionate, Altruistic**

**Learning, Aspiring, Bewitching**

**The woman of his dreams.**

**Beloved**

## BELOW

**Chambers**

**Rock-hewn, candle-lit**

**Welcoming, Sheltering, Nurturing**

**Safe places for the bereft**

**Home**

**Carousel**

**Spherical, Contained**

**Looping, Encircling, Orbiting**

**His life until he met her, then...**

**Revolution**

## CHAMBER OF THE FALLS

**Cascade**

**Magical, Towering**

**Flowing, Flooding, Surging**

**A place where water imitates the force of one special love**

**Waterfalls**

## PIPES

Durable, interminable  
Extending, enveloping, informing  
The vocabulary of the Tunnels.  
Voices

Entrance  
Secret, Hidden  
Wait, Climb, Embrace  
The place where two worlds and two lovers meet  
Threshold

## CHALLENGE: PERSONA POEMS

### THE ABYSS

His secret is: he loves me.  
For in the darkness, in the dead of night.  
We are so much alike.  
His emotions swirl, howl inside him,  
As the wind within my pitiless chasm.  
His unknown essence exists  
Within a dark, forbidding core.  
He sees it reflected in my stony depths –  
Frightening, unfathomable.  
Others avoid me,  
But he senses a kindred spirit.  
And so he comes,  
When his world slumbers,  
And weeps in my stony arms.

### ROSE

Delicate petals not born on a plant  
Accompany him Below when she can't.  
I offer him proof of her undying love,  
A reminder of Beauty still living Above.

## FOUNTAIN PEN

I have served him  
A long time,  
Felt the emotions surge  
As his grip tightens, loosens...  
As he writes in his journal.  
For years, I have been privy  
To his deepest secrets,  
His most desperate desires.  
I feel the beat of his heart  
Through the pulse in his fingers  
Quicken as he writes of his beloved,  
His Catherine.  
One day, perhaps,  
He will transfer the beat of his heart  
From me  
To her...  
Let his fingers encompass her body,  
Stroke his words to life on her warm skin  
Instead of cold paper with me.  
It is my fondest wish for him:  
Realization.

## FATHER'S DESK

They say a messy desk is the sign of a brilliant mind.  
I am proof.  
He clutters and abuses me mercilessly,  
With heavy loads of books,  
With over-filled drawers,  
With tea spilled from forgotten mugs,  
With ink stains from leaky fountain pens,  
With sticky spots from the hands of countless children,  
With piles of maps and plans and drawings,  
With half-dried glue on handmade cards.  
He is brilliant, yes.  
And loved – by everyone, including me.

## VINCENT'S BED

I am his refuge from the world each night,  
His place of silence, of contemplation, of tears.  
I am the only comfort he can take at times,  
When his life feels barren, his heart unfulfilled.  
I am a consoler, I am a giver of warmth.  
I am a keeper of secrets whispered in the dark.  
I wrap him in dreams to take away the pain.  
At least, I was.  
I am...something else now, something new.  
I hold a treasure for him, a different form.  
I am her place of silence, of contemplation, of tears.  
And when she leaves me, he will weep again.  
But also, he will hope...and dream different dreams.

## DIARY

One word.  
Another.  
A trickle...  
Then a torrent.  
He pours them into me,  
He fills me to overflowing.  
Surging, crashing waves of words  
Flow upon my white shores.  
I am awash in his emotional torrent.  
I am fulfilled.

## CATHERINE'S BALCONY

I wait  
The night falls and I wait  
The wind blows and I wait  
The rain falls and I wait  
Then...a footfall...the sweep of a dark cloak  
A woman steps out  
An embrace  
Brief moments  
I hold them  
If I could nurture, I would  
But sometimes holding is enough

## ELLIOT

To look at me now, you'd never know  
The transformation that makes me so.  
I wasn't always this suave and slick,  
But you'll never know what makes me tick.  
One woman alone has seen through me.  
For her I could change what I seem to be.  
But she will not save my desperate heart.  
So "Elliot Burch" will remain my part.

## FROM JAMIE'S POINT OF VIEW

A stalwart friend,  
A dead-shot aim,  
Loves without end,  
For when she came

To seek her fate  
Below the streets,  
There was no hate  
Just bonhomie,

Acceptance true,  
And purpose-giving.  
So here's the clue,  
What keeps her living:

Love, friendship, and  
A fearsome pride.  
She lends a hand,  
She doesn't hide.

When Jamie walks  
The Tunnels dim,  
For sure she'll stalk,  
With purpose grim,

Who seeks to pierce  
The peaceful glow.  
For she is fierce  
For all Below.

## **CRYSTAL**

He gifted me to his Beauty, his love -  
A piece of Below to wear when Above.  
I carry his heart in crystalline form.  
Upon her breast, her heart keeps me warm.

## **CHALLENGE: ACRONYM**

Those Above who assist those Below are organized into a variety of chapters, including one of the largest: C.H.A.M.B.E.R. - Confederacy of Helpers, Allied Manhattan Brigade, East River

Catherine belongs to A.L.W.A.Y.S. - Association of Lawyers Wantonly Attracted to Yearning Superheroes

## **CHALLENGE: ABC POEM**

### **THE DA'S OFFICE**

Copiers grind, telephones ring and must be minded  
Deadlines loom, loud voices pierce the noisy room  
Everyone rushes, the workload crushes  
Frantic keys clack, briefcases get packed  
The cool and quiet Tunnels beckon, a respite and a sanctuary.

### **CATHERINE**

Guess his secret?!  
He loves her completely.  
It's plain to see.  
Just can't find the words.  
But Catherine knows.

## ABYSS

Lowest point Below  
Mysterious chasm  
No other has plumbed its depths  
Only Vincent knows its secrets  
His soul feels an affinity with these deeps

## CHARACTER WITH ACCESS ABOVE AND BELOW

Oldest of friends, devoted secret-keeper  
Putting those Below first, alert to needs  
Quietly efficient, supportive, caring  
Rational, reassuring, resourceful  
Sharing medical books, knowledge, equipment  
Dr. Peter's companionship is cherished above all.

## A HAPPY LIFE

Their future looks bleak  
Unless something changes.  
Vincent and Catherine struggle  
Without each other.  
A dream clarifies their Dream: it's worth everything!

## CATHERINE'S BALCONY DOORS

Fluttering curtains beckon.  
Glimpses of light and love peek through their panes.  
He is being lured to cross their threshold.  
If only they could speak to urge him within.  
All you ever desired lies inside, Vincent!

## LOVE

Doubt not that I love you.  
Ever since we met  
Fire burns in my heart,  
Gives me more than I ever dreamed.  
You are my world, Vincent.

## **NAMELESS RIVER**

Lethal waves and rocky shores  
Maelstrom dangers, thunderous roars  
Nomad waters, icy cold  
Opaque, remorseless, length untold  
...Yet Vincent's soul finds comfort here.

## **WINTERFEST**

Come, join us!  
Dance (your fingers over the keyboard)  
Eat (from tasty morsels on every page)  
For each day inspires and refreshes us.  
And it will be Winterfest in our hearts all year long.

## **CHALLENGE: LIST POEM**

### **THE PIPE CHAMBER**

Lifeblood  
Communications  
Heartbeat  
Messages  
Arteries  
Tubes  
Veins  
Tapping  
Soul  
Pascal

### **PASCAL**

Tappings  
Code  
Warning  
Silence  
Greetings



## **FATHER'S CHAMBER**

**Plans**

**Dreams**

**Thoughts**

**Schemes**

**Arguments**

**Nooks**

**Compliments**

**Books**

## **FATHER**

**Stern**

**Judgmental**

**Responsible**

**Kind**

**Generous**

**Accepting**

**Planner**

**Ruer**

**Savorer**

**Leader**

**Parent**

**Friend**

## **THE BOND**

**Complicated**

**Awe-inspiring**

**Treasured**

**Honest**

**Enviably**

**Remarkable**

**Incomparable**

**Noteworthy**

**Essential**

**Vibrant**

**Invincible**

**Necessary**

**Ceaseless**

**Emotion-charged**

**Nuanced**

**Timeless**

**DA'S OFFICE**

**Prove your mettle  
Never settle  
Meet your match  
Try to catch  
Lots of files  
Extra miles  
Determination  
No vacation  
Some frustration  
The rare elation  
Work to be done  
Case to be won**

**FATHER'S CHAMBER**

**Books  
Chessboard  
Kaleidoscope  
Books  
Steps  
Meeting place  
Medical bag  
Maps  
Books  
Interruptions  
Teacups  
Clutter  
Candles  
Swan statue  
Books**

**EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING**

**License  
Credit cards  
Jewelry  
Her heart**

**THE WHISPERING GALLERY**

**Windswept  
Haunting  
Indistinct  
Susurrations  
Piercing  
Echoes  
Reverberating  
Intelligible at times  
Not quite fathomable at others  
Glorious**

**CHALLENGE: NONET**

**WILLIAM**

**A wizard with an old spatula  
Creates wonders in the kitchen  
Feeding all Below so well  
His beer is tasty, too!  
He's gruff, no-nonsense  
Squishy-centered  
Large, in charge  
William  
Chef**

**MOUSE**

**A man-child, mind filled with invention  
Particularly prone to theft  
Taking what he needs Uptop  
Using it for Below  
Cheerful, friendly, wise  
Arthur's pet boy  
Vincent's friend  
Loyal  
Mouse**

## **THRESHOLD**

A wall between worlds was breached one day  
It was born of necessity  
Then...broken bricks were transformed  
Now it serves as a bridge  
Two worlds intersect  
And two hearts meet  
Above and  
Below  
Here

## **A CHAMBER BELOW**

It's "for guests" but mostly for me now  
He's filled it with my favorites  
Things special to me, to us  
Our books, our poetry  
An invitation  
You are welcome  
For always  
You're loved  
Stay

## **CHALLENGE: SHARDORMA**

### **VINCENT**

Safe Below  
He chafes against it  
Walls press in  
Circumscribe  
Life is big, Below is not  
He dreams, desires more

### **NANCY**

Her best friend,  
Closer than sisters  
In the past.  
Things have changed,  
A casualty of secrets  
Kept – even from her.

## **CHALLENGE: STRAMBOTTO**

### **SOMEONE IN THE TUNNELS**

The guttering candles cast wavering light.  
A metaphor, surely, for what lies ahead.  
He tosses and turns, but he's sleepless this night,  
His sheets soaked with sweat. He abandons his bed.  
Awakened or sleeping, just lingering blight.  
Dreams once were his refuge - elusive now, dead.  
She promised herself to another. That might  
Save him, all the tunnels - a cheap price, she said.

How could he agree to her plan? It's not right.  
Decision comes swiftly now, but he still dreads.  
It might be too late to confront her, to fight  
For dreams they once had that are now turned to lead  
He runs to her, quickly now, scaling the height  
Another way found, a new plan lies ahead.  
The flame of their love shines now, bright with delight.  
The man with the tower is not who she'll wed!

**CHALLENGE: DIAMENTE/ANTONYM DIAMENTE/SYNONYM  
DIAMENTE**

**INTERNET/PIPES**

**Internet**

**Boundless, Contagious**

**Skepticism-inducing, Overwhelming, Intimidating**

**Avalanche, Overload. Staccato, Precise.**

**Truth-telling, Specifying, Simplifying**

**Indispensable, Time-proven**

**Pipes**

**WINTERFEST**

**Candles**

**Multi-colored, Splendid**

**Flickering, Glowing, Illuminating**

**Invitation, Gratitude, Companionship, Memento**

**Charming, Enchanting, Inspiring**

**Memorable, Treasured**

**Winterfest**

**No One**

**Empty, Bleak**

**Despairing, Resigning, Surrendering**

**Journal, Pen...Balcony, Arms**

**Loving, Accepting, Transforming**

**Beautiful, Adoring**

**Catherine**

**Darkness**

**Absolute, Intense**

**Crushing, Isolating, Imprisoning**

**Below, Vincent...Above, Catherine**

**Life-saving, Embracing, Fulfilling**

**Brilliant, Beautiful**

**Light**

**Darkness  
Eeriness, Oblivion  
Muffling, Choking, Frightening  
Despair, Dejection...Illumination, Insight  
Revealing, Permeating, Heartening  
Realization, Understanding  
Light**

### **CHALLENGE: INTERLOCKING RUBAIYAT**

#### **A SITUATION FROM THE SERIES**

**He dreams of her throughout the night.  
Ahhh, dreams that give him such delight!  
But morning sings a different tune.  
He struggles to accept his plight**

**Those dreams are fantasy's cocoon,  
His yearning granted ev'ry boon.  
Time out of time with her so near  
And always over much too soon.**

**She holds him close, no doubts, no fear,  
Her deep, abiding need so clear.  
He touches skin with heat aglow,  
Her words the ones he longs to hear.**

**To move from dreams, could it be so?  
Does Cath'rine dream the same? To know,  
To know! Oh, how to make it so?  
To know! Oh, how to make it so!**

**CHALLENGE: VILLANELLE**

**THOUGHTS ON THEIR LOVE – VINCENT’S POINT OF VIEW**

I've got lava in my veins  
Piercing heat flows, thoughts incite  
Lust for her drives me insane

My desire is all in vain  
I can't take her, her I'd fright  
I've got lava in my veins

Need for her must be restrained  
Dreams of her plague ev'ry night  
Lust for her drives me insane

Aching drives my fevered brain  
Passion sears, my dreams take flight  
Lust for her drives me insane

"Only friendship" do I feign  
How can I relieve my plight?  
Lust for her drives me insane

It gets harder to abstain  
When her eyes say it's all right  
I've got lava in my veins  
Lust for her drives me insane



## **CHALLENGE: THE FIVE “W”S**

### **ELLIOT**

**A transformed man  
After meeting Catherine  
At a turning point in his life  
By the power of her belief in his good heart**

### **OZYMANDIAS**

**An ambitious man  
Displaced a neighborhood and threatened a world  
As Tunnel dwellers watched helplessly  
In the heart of the city  
To become immortal.**

### **DEVIN**

**A master of many roles,  
He's been all over the world.  
On his own for twenty years,  
He's now back in the Tunnels  
To master his favorite role: brother**

### **GEOFFREY**

**A child never chosen,  
He offers comfort once denied to him  
As Catherine learns to live with loss  
In the world he has come to know,  
Hoping his place of sanctuary will be hers, as well.**

### **GEOFFREY**

**An orphaned child  
Offers tea and empathy, open-hearted.  
Catherine's nightmare of loss is lessened.  
Below, the light comes not just from candles  
But from caring souls like Geoffrey.**

## **CHALLENGE: HUITAIN**

### **A PLACE BELOW**

No door, no curtain, free to all  
His chamber entry beckons you.  
But who would have the utmost gall  
To blunder in when Cath'rine's due?  
Why, Father would! As if on cue.  
"Oh, hello. Nice to see you, dear."  
She cannot say the words she'd rue:  
"Go 'way, old man! It's MY time here!"

### **MOUSE'S CHAMBER**

All I see when I look around  
Are gizmos, thingies, doohickeys.  
In Mouse's lair this stuff abounds  
He finds, he takes, for what he needs.  
His kind of ingenuity  
Makes Father tolerate his quirks.  
He shrugs, pretends he doesn't "see"  
And hopes like heck some of it works!

## **CHALLENGE: CHANT**

### **A B&B COUPLE**

Vincent's advice still rings in his ears  
Follow your heart  
Her name from his lips - love's all that she hears  
Follow your heart  
Cullen smiles at Rebecca, his eyes begging now  
Follow your heart  
Rebecca responds, three words are her vow  
Follow your heart  
First step meets first kiss. They've learned to somehow  
Follow your heart.

### **LIGHT AND DARK**

We have had hard times before, but  
Even the greatest darkness is nothing

We must remember that in unity there is strength, and  
Even the greatest darkness is nothing

We will go forward with hope in our hearts, because  
Even the greatest darkness is nothing

We will build a world where all will be welcome, for  
Even the greatest darkness is nothing, so long as we share the light.

## **CHALLENGE: TANKA**

### **AN EVENT BELOW**

**Candles blaze  
Flickering light smolders in his eyes  
Birthday desire  
Her fire scorches, flaming within  
Bring that heat to me**

### **APRIL 12<sup>TH</sup>**

**Their anniversary  
Soft, rumpled sheets beckon  
Love-making  
Intense, passionate, delicious  
His chamber glows with their heat**

### **NANCY**

**Sister-friend  
Profound compassion for Catherine's turmoil  
Mothering and soothing  
Her own pain still clenches at such distress,  
For squandered gifts, squandered time**

## **CHALLENGE: HAIKU**

### **ARTHUR**

The secret is out.  
Arthur's ways of "take not steal"?  
He's Mouse's teacher!

### **DARK SPIRIT**

Fear overwhelms her,  
Black magic infects her mind.  
But love is stronger.

### **STAINED GLASS WINDOW**

Illuminating  
Through myriad colors of glass  
Filtering light glows

### **SAMHAIN**

Night of mystery  
Cloaked in shadows, spirits roam  
Masked, together...free.

### **A PIVOTAL MOMENT**

Orange, yellow, cream...  
She's proud to make candles for  
Winterfest – for you.

### **A PIVOTAL MOMENT**

A new path to forge  
Scary, unknown, difficult  
His faith gives her wings

**JAMIE'S CROSSBOW**

**Sharp, swiftly piercing  
Extension of Jamie's soul  
Love flies with its shaft**

**VINCENT'S DIARY**

**Secrets bared within.  
No one else will read his pain.  
The words cry, voiceless.**

**JAMIE'S CROSSBOW**

**It bends with effort  
As she must do, to fit in  
Both are strong, pliant**

**BALCONY**

**It shields the lovers  
Cradles them in nightly trysts  
Their vantage Above**

## **CHALLENGE: RONDEL**

### **CHAMBER OF THE FALLS**

The Falls Below, they beckon to me.  
Hovering mists send chills up my spine,  
Breezy air brings a hint of fresh pine.  
A rocky perch to just sit and...be.

I come here alone, a devotee.  
To think and reflect, here time is mine.  
The Falls Below, they beckon to me.  
They give my soul room, the space to divine

Everything's well, and my soul flies free.  
If only his heart would give a sign  
A life together - a dream entwined.  
It's what I wish for on bended knee.  
The Falls Below, they beckon to me.

## **CHALLENGE: TERSE VERSE**

Once Devin took his real last name and started a retail business, what did he name it? Wells Sells

When Catherine wraps her Daddy around her little finger, what is that known as? Chandler Handler

What you call finding lots of steamy fanfic about Vincent's brother? Devin Heaven

What Catherine replied when asked where she'd most like to find Vincent? Said, "Bed!"

How do you describe Mouse's bestie when she makes an accusation? Blame-y Jamie

How is the Tunnel's carpenter usually described? Sullen Cullen