



**RANCID IDOLS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS**

# **RUST**

**24-HOUR CHAPBOOK  
CHALLENGE VI**

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## Foreword

Welcome to the sixth instalment of our sporadic poetry challenge series: we send out a one-word prompt and an image to participating poets, they reply back with a brand new poems, we collate and have it online, available to download in a free digital chapbook, all within 24 hours!

A bit about our chosen image: the rusting shopping basket was found hidden deep in the undergrowth of a garden after being cleared out of bramble, dead shrubbery and rotten fence posts. Long forgotten, surrounded by bits of barbed wire and other scrap, it felt like an appropriate symbol for our current cost-of-living crisis: how people can barely afford to fill their shopping baskets anymore. Rust also suggests decay, ageing, obsolescence, rich veins to tap into for poetry.

Our poets not our explored these themes, but went into other unexpected realms and tangents, which is one of the rewards for setting such challenges as this. Thank you to all our poets who took part and responded so well!

Colin Dardis, Editor

Jack Caradoc: *Ask the Statues*

Everything that is discarded,  
disappears never to return.

All things bright and dull. All things great and small.  
All things wise and dumb. All birds stop singing.  
Even gods slide into the mythology of memory.

These days the gravestones under moss pile up,  
aware of the names of those whose remains  
they bookmark in the library of the lost.

Other things intrude: objects, toys, parents, children, pets.  
They rush in at the same time: broken, corroded, counted out.  
All time is an agent of rust, of loss, the verdigris is on its way.

Ask the statues. Ask yourself.

Miriam Sagan: *Rust Never Sleeps*

I lie in the expensive bed  
in the airport motel, serene  
in hypnogogic state. In the middle of the night  
awake, feeling trouble  
multiply within my cells  
in the body's tender parts, I dream  
a friend of mine, a mediator,  
is trying to mitigate a quarrel  
between a man and a woman. Numerous  
people live within me, along with disease  
and even health. I see you in the early morning light  
carting your entire personality  
through security, and on to elsewhere.

Ashley Todd: *Corrosion of Time*

Thoughts carried so long in my head now corrode,  
a crust of moulded time creeps  
like a hoar frost  
that will not thaw, even under a July sun.  
Shades of faded blood crowd  
where life was once new and bright  
dulling the eyes  
hiding the dreaded truth,  
the vividness of colour long since gone.  
I lost you, not to death  
but to the awfulness of life,  
a cessation of hope  
looking back on withered days  
and rusting daisy chains.

## Sadie Maskery: *Basket Case*

He creaks. Funny how people  
get lost in long weeds, corrode.  
Sense leaks through cracks  
with sly edges, memories scraped  
to flakes, crumbled dreams -  
he wonders if he ever wakes.  
Winter will see that body sprung  
to parts, disintegrate and be  
dumped, he feels the rot.  
Fear tickles his eyes to tears  
oozing red as he shambles  
and mumbles 'time for bed'.



Jacqueline O'Neill: *there's so many things we  
do not need, so let's discard of them all, baby!*

right here, in this parking lot,

leave the basket  
to bake in  
the approaching wildfire

and eat the soil instead;

it's only when  
we empty ourselves  
of consumerism

do we find the world we really need.

look at all the trolleys  
holding hands as they rust -

imagine, we were even once charged  
just to dance with them.

Marcus Kelley: *FaceTalk*

I can feel the grinding in my head  
As your mouth moves to make syllables.  
I register the reality while my eyes flutter unfocused,  
Between the middle distance and middle face.  
The moment is absorbed, not experienced.  
My limbs hang frozen,  
strained in place by crepuscular strings,  
chest twisted tight,  
wait a beat,  
nod,  
reply - "Hi."  
And relax.

Louise Machen: *Exposure*

Pincered by black rocks of the headland,  
an anchor, chain-links the shape of praying hands,  
is pummelled by tide and time –  
the illusion of solidity burnished with an umber crust.  
Its fixings are worn away; its friable edges decay  
with each salt breath, weathered and sunblasted,  
iron heart on fire: a transmutation  
where briny air turns my skin a reddish hue.  
Rust-flecked, it eats away at itself,  
leaning from the edge, anticipating collapse,  
tethered by gravity alone –  
reminding me of you,  
of us.

## Jenny Cleland: *Rust*

I didn't know old voices rust.  
They told me I'd be better here  
with company, people to talk to,  
meals and warmth, help when  
I need it. My house wasn't clean  
and they washed their hands

so when that little girl bounced in,  
red in a snowstorm, among us  
slowly falling flakes, she pipped,  
"What are you doing? What  
are you all waiting for?" and we  
frozen, staring; could barely part our lips.

Colin Dardis: *Oblique Obsolete*

Forty-three years  
has rusted off the calender:  
I'm beginning to feel  
the pinch of time  
on my bones. I didn't think  
I would scour so soon.

I see the oxidised statues in the park  
streaked green from witnessing so much,  
feel I must climb up to the plinth  
and offer myself for display:  
don't put me in a coffin,  
let them see my reckless mortality.

Ankur Jyoti Saikia: *rusty stanza*

analogous to their states  
homologous to their existence  
my grandma in a wheelchair  
that rusted trolley in a dumpsite

memories are of two types  
patina of a copper bowl  
rust of an iron knife  
what clings to you, and  
which would you cast off

when the steel trolley  
corroded without a sign  
were you aware of the  
impurity that gave way  
to its condemnation

J.A. Crooks: *Rust Tanka*

oxygen and sunlight -  
such perverse mortality,  
damaged as we live

a house plant fossilises  
by staying within the house

## John Caulfield: *Breathing*

But a glance brings unholy theft  
A fateful vision veiled existence  
All lies crooked in worn penance  
Sit with me -

Questioning life of love bereft  
To seek to discern true purpose  
The breath of emptiness draws close  
Talk with me -

What then service at your behest  
Must I perform to grant us peace  
Too late my brother for release  
Walk with me -

Stealers of days we are but one  
Memory consumed it is done.



Stuart Beveridge: *The Clockwork Couple*  
(you know who you are)

Photographs show us  
a once pristine, well-oiled machine.  
Turn the key, watch them go,  
automated routine  
dance and spin in unison.

Insufficient maintenance  
changes in circumstance  
fewer words in future tenses  
just misremembered lust  
under layers of dust  
and irreparable patches  
of rusty cliché  
irritably squeaking their way  
through the days.

Wendy Sinnamon: *Handstands in  
St Stephen's Green*

He is murderously jealous  
of the discarded shopping basket.  
Its handles proudly intertwined.  
Yellowing. Counting brown time.  
Awash with vainglorious decay.

His ignoble knees pull on the corners of his mouth  
as he struggles to sit cross-legged.

Arms akimbo goes the girl.  
Plants hands on ground, chucks feet from Earth and in  
that moment

her world      her world  
her grass becomes sky  
her land is blue  
but her clouds remain clouds, never puddles.  
And in that moment, her father is smiling.

Brian Hasson: *Over Time*

Once I was silver,  
a glaring shine.  
I sat by the door  
happy to be of use.

My strength demonstrated  
with the items I held.

Now I lie abandoned,  
mother natures symptoms  
has taken its toll,  
I've grown old and weak

Despite what they say  
rust might look vintage,  
corrosion will destroy me,  
I'm no longer of use.