

## 7 Stages

*Caedence Jones*

I.

Breathe your first breath—inhale life;  
Open your eyes to a big, bright world,  
Full of new neurotic necessities not known.  
Unclench fearful fists to accept assurance  
Of Mother's love, serenading you sweetly.  
Fragile fingers reach out to the boundless blue,  
To say a happy hello to the sparkles that sprinkle the sky.

II.

Claim your first step with a steady stomp,  
& another & another & another.  
Giggle while you run from the mouth that feeds,  
Spouting gibberish until clarity configures.  
Learn to mirror Mother's mouth and speak softly.  
Whisper the word she yearned to hear.

III.

Skinned knees and sharp splinters decorate  
Your skin from black & blue asphalt adventures.  
The tragic tear of your first toy: stuffing spilt; thread undone,  
Fixed with fabric to join you on that first day,  
Tucked tightly in the comfy crevices of a backpack.

IV.

Colorful cartoons keep you endlessly entertained,  
Creating static that distracts from bitter exchanges  
Surrounding sudden separation of the family you've known.  
Ignore home to swing high & scream loud on the asphalt.

V.

Dance with dreams of the fruitful future,  
Hide the beautiful within masks, crafted from friend & foe.  
D.A.R.E. to be the teen that your youth had sworn not.

VI.

Magnetic melodies with blaring beats stretch deep into the night.  
Until the cries of your flesh ring rigorously, blending with the morning birds.

VII.

Breathe your last breath—exhale life.