



## The poetry slaves

by Rick Belden

One day at work, I daydreamed an alternate reality in which techno skills were considered valueless and everyone had to write poetry to make a living.

The techno people in my alternate reality were not pleased. Every day felt like a final exam in a class they never wanted to take.

Every morning they woke up remembering exactly who they were, what they loved, and what they wanted to do with their lives.

Then they had to forget all about it for another day so they could live and have a home and something to eat for a while longer.

Every evening they dragged themselves home exhausted and discouraged, knowing that another precious day of their lives had been wasted.

They found it frustrating and unacceptable that they could not support themselves doing what they did best and loved most.

They couldn't believe that they lived in a world in which their most unique and valuable gifts were considered worthless.

Forcing themselves to do something they didn't like day after day used them up. It took everything they had to get through every day.

They had almost no time or energy left over for what they loved. Their best ideas rotted on the vine as the years went by and their lives slipped away.

They were angry and frustrated all the time. They kept trying to find another way to live, but nothing changed except that they just got older and older.

I know that life. Getting better and better every day at being what you're not. Hollowing yourself out with "positive attitude" until you feel like a human jack-o'-lantern. Hope and humanity shedding away day by day like sheets of ice sliding down the side of a melting glacier.

I've been living that way for thirty years now and I wouldn't wish it on anyone.

In my alternate reality, I'd be the one who was happy to start another day, but in this, the all too real world, I'm just one more monkey doing tricks in a cage.

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Rick Belden is a respected explorer and chronicler of the psychology and inner lives of men. His book, [Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood](#), is widely used in the United States and internationally by therapists, counselors, and men's groups as an aid in the exploration of masculine psychology and men's issues, and as a resource for men who grew up in dysfunctional, abusive, or neglectful family systems. His second book, [Scapegoat's Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within](#), is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas.

More information, including excerpts from Rick's books, is available on his [website](#) and [blog](#). You can also find him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).