

VENDING MACHINE

POETRY FOR CHANGE

VOJDELL
3



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VENDING MACHINE: POETRY FOR CHANGE

*"You must be the change you
wish to see in the world."*

--Mahatama Gandhi

**"Change is inevitable, except
from a vending machine."**

--Robert C. Gallagher

Poetic Provisions Food-Drive

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I must be "peace."
To be "peace," I must be
"acceptance."
To be "acceptance," I must be
"understanding."
To be "understanding," I must be
"patience."
To be "patience," I must be
"calm."
To be "calm," I must be
"stillness."
To be "stillness," I must be
"breath."

I must be my breath.
I must be stillness in
steady breathing.
I must be the calm
found in still moments.
I must be the patience
lingering in a calm mind.
I must be the understanding
patience brews beneath chaos.
I must be accepting
of all that I do and do not understand.
I must make peace
with that acceptance.

And then I can be that which I have made.

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

--Mahatma Gandhi

So, you believe in Changelers? You believe in badass, goodtime über-beings; overlords fair, far-sighted and just; all green-eyed and silver-haired, with eiderdown wings spanning golden shoulders and firm hands gripping blazing swords of hope, financial restitution, and governmental resurrection? Sounds like you've developed an infection, a virus of self-deception, to me.

You have to believe in what gets the job done, and Changelers aren't doing it, from what I can see. Where were your Changelers when factories closed and my husband lost his job of 40 years; why would they hide during these lonesome tears and times of economic recession and American Depression? What kind of prayers do they require? Why put us through the fire? Too many of us have already been brought to our knees. Oh, please, I have faith. Faith in myself, and faith in the power of people like me to effect change, one person at a time, one day at a time, one act at a time. I buh-LIEVE in the divinity of mortal, transformational Man. I believe we can. If you want to trust in the guardianship of Changelers, I think it's futile, but go for it; that's fine. I'll continue to believe in Gandhi, and change my little corner of the world.

a mosque
a mosquito
a mountain
a molecule
an Earth
an electron
a quasar
a quark
a galaxy
gravity
an infinite greatness
an infinite smallness
where lies
the perfect size
the silver mean
the in-between?
a baby orangutan
in her mother's arms
a fireman pulling
a child from harm

a ninety-year old man
driving a thirty year old hippie van
a future President
humming the soundtrack
to "Stop Making Sense"
the middle, the median
a modicum of infinity
the thing that we search
the things that we learn
in the realm of love
a greater Home
suspended in grace
we know
and are known

Sitting cross-legged on a sisal mat,
thatched roof and the equator sun above,
Rebecca holds the 13-year-old girl's hand
*You don't have to marry that old man
even if he is my brother.*

Rebecca goes house to house
*You don't have to have sex with a man
that beats you, exposes you to HIV,
a husband with other wives.*

Shamed by rape then abandoned
Rebecca's women grow a circle of mud
and dung huts in parched and barren grassland
and call it Umoja, in Swahili, unity.

A sanctuary for Sarah's little girl body
from bearing a child that would have shredded
her insides, causing her to leak, to smell,
to be shunned into a beggar's existence.

No men live in Umoja,
a haven for Mary from circumcision,
mutilated genitals that would have forever
brought pain and denied pleasure.



In Umoja, children go to school for the first time,
women work in the cultural center
inviting tourists into the beauty of Kenya,
selling red and white Samburu beaded necklaces.

Rebecca ignores spiteful men setting up
their own village, spying, failing to imitate
Umoja's success but hiring the men to haul firewood
as women change the rhythm, the power of a village.

Rebecca throws back her brown cloud of hair,
laughs at stone throwing and death threats
as she boards a plane to a world conference on
gender empowerment an ocean away.

If you remain silent no one thinks you have anything to say.

Maybe in death I'll stop remembering
your skin that seemed too easy to bruise,
your nails like scales of tiny dragons,
the joyous face of the mother whose DNA
you don't have, holding you as if she knew how,

and I wonder, will she tell you the right stories,
know how to run water over burns,
keep you from falling out of the stroller,
laugh at your little wordless jokes,
be sure you aren't afraid, yet keep you from danger.

I worry she isn't enough, not old enough,
not strong enough, not serious enough, not deep enough,
not me. Not do what I'd know to do, not know recipes
for making a baby a child a man. I know
I am surely not enough. I could not keep you even a month.

My hands let you fall. My breasts let you starve.
My voice couldn't keep you from crying.
My love, large as my body, wasn't enough.
She walks away holding you in the blue blanket,
and I watch you fall slowly toward heaven.

Brian loved his band, he loved playing live shows, he even loved seeing other bands play live shows. But there was one thing Brian despised: Ovation guitars.

As a guitarist he'd bought cheap ones, expensive ones, pieces of shit with faulty electronics and rare old slabs of wood with claims to fame; and he knows from experience that a guitar doesn't really play until the player breaks it, fixes it, plays it, breaks it again then uses pieces from his closet, workshop, bedroom and rehearsal space to create an instrument no one's heard before. Then the guitar sings in your voice. Whatever becomes of Brian's life and career, the guitar in his hard-shell case belongs solely to him.

And that's why Brian hates Ovations, their store-bought perfection, pristine Keith Partridge sound - a turn-key guitar for any chump with \$200.

It started one night onstage when Brian broke two strings. His rhythm guitarist handed him his spare, an Ovation, the saccharine-sweet answer to technical problems.

It arrived in perfect tune. This Brian wrote off as his rhythm guitarist's jerk-off obsession with perfection. The first song came effortlessly, but then the second arrived too easy, like using a GPS to find his childhood home. At the end of the third, an old disgust rose in him and he smashed the thing against the floor. "That thing is pure evil," he said offstage. "Nothing should be that easy." He handed his rhythm guitarist two bills. They skipped the encore.

A week later at the Snowman Army show, the boys recognized him and pulled him onstage. Brian accepted the lead singer's Ovation, played most of The Kinks' "Lola" then smashed it. Brian handed back the



broken neck, then backstage handed over two bills. "If you guys are gonna ask me up, to help out, to pass on some of my wisdom, I'll tell you this. You wanna succeed? Be different? Stand out? Build a real guitar and find your voice. Changing the world begins with you. Because there is no other way than the hard way."

Then one night Brian knocked out a guitar and a singer's front teeth. The kid was connected to some music industry investors; Brian was soon unemployed, homeless, and on a plane to Cincinnati starting a new life.

Near the corner of Vine and 5th, a middle aged man sat affront Fountain Square strumming a guitar that offended Brian's ears the way only one thing could. The song was a good one, Neil Young's "Long May You Run." Brian applauded.

"Ever play live?"

The guy tuned. "Doing it right now."

"I meant as a gig in a building for money."

"Not lately. All I've got right now is this piece of shit Ovation and a streetcorner."

Brian nodded. "You know The Who's 'Baba O'Reilly?'"

"Know the words, don't know the chords."

Brian accepted the Ovation from his soon-to-be bandmate. "Oh, here." Brian reached in his pocket for two bills. "That'll come in handy when we start from scratch."

No time for wicked
folk tonight.
This is your night.
Celebrate all that is
no longer you.
It helped you get here,
has served its purpose and
is no longer needed.
Identification is key.
It cannot happen
without being named,
without being singled out:
here is what
has long ago
worn out
its welcome.

They are toys-r-us kids lost
on an island called Neverland—
lost in Afghanistan—with
pop guns and little plastic swords and bombs. Lost boys,
lost army men, lost children,
fighting pirates off shore.
Lost war, lost in Iraq—
the never ending fantasy.
Lost fairytale. Where's the
magic carpet? Where's the
pixie dust? Tinker Bell was wounded
by snipers during an unmanned drone fly-by. The croc is on time.
Tic toc, tic toc.

Peter Pan must die. Let
the pied piper of youth be remembered well.
But before we have peace, the poppies
must lie flat. More widows must cry.
More mothers and brothers, more
girlfriends and fiancées and lovers
must cry. Peter Pan must finally become
Peter the man. R.I.P.

He wanted to live surrounded by beauty.
He didn't find it in the mirror.
He didn't find it in disappearing family.
He didn't find it in health,
Though malignance found him and tried to beat him down.
Tumors winched his legs together.
They couldn't gloom his toothless smile
Under a ball cap declaring him a union man.
They couldn't stop his gnarled hands from outfitting
His electric wheelchair with something new each week.

Harold rumbled into the community meal in the park.
Barbie dolls in shiny dresses and bikinis
Hung from the corners of his homemade umbrella.
"Harold, are these your girlfriends?"
"Nope! They're my guardian angels!"
Harold beamed.
Too bad Mattel didn't make a Robin Hood Barbie.
A vigilante to pillage their ample coffers for Harold's hospital bills.
A shabby, senior-discount apartment passed for his home.
When he wasn't in the hospital,
Harold never missed the Sunday meal in the park.
Barbie dolls, Christmas lights, and streamers
Adorned his chair and attachments.
Denim coveralls masked his depleted skin and overmedicated body.



Guardian Barbie,
I wish Harold may
I wish Harold might
Have no pain at all tonight.

We cooked lunches to soft, barely chewy perfection.
Harold was hardly the only guest with dental issues.
"Wheelchairs go first! C'mon, man, move back."
Harold would need extra time with ill-fitting dentures
Before the hot meal ran cold.
Then came September, and Harold didn't.
His apartment building neighbor
Said Harold had eaten his last supper.
Hang a Barbie from your umbrella.
Call it an angel, and remember
To let the wheelchair people eat first.

"Musée Picasso"

mixes Roman and Greek L'histoire
with the Renaissance
and your own Art Nouveaux.

Pablo, I sit before your oil portraits
watch eleven-year-old children kiss
this wall. Your almond eyes

pierce, multiply across the room.
Another blink snatches reality
transposing arms into legs,

fingers into toes, Guernica shrouds another wall.
But, the voluptuous apples, pears
are too sweet to bite,

and I am too still to resist. Your ninety-one year
voice dares. Your palette exhausts.

Revolutions are always verbose,
so let's remember to take a moment
to talk about the Sunday morning stand-up comics
preaching for us to hate the laugh
but not the laughter, how they twist
our foreplay into for-profit prop comedy
and fodder for campaign cash donations.
Every fund raiser is a fundamentalist
at heart, a broken barracuda
beating in the chests of PR specialists
and misleading questionnaires.
By the time I was born, Assata Shakur
had fled to Cuba and Harvey Milk
had been dead for years.
At the same time Reagan and
his white propaganda were backing
Contras in Nicaragua, Fidel Castro
gave up smoking cigars.
Let's remember that a sledgehammer
breaks glass but also forges steel.
Artists are reclaiming foreclosed homes
in Michigan and there's a Pussy Riot
in Russia so rebellious
I can see it from my house in Ohio.
Like fair weather wayfarers,
fellow travelers on this toll road
of heartache and hunger,
let's pray the prayer of a secular humanist:
As long as I breathe I shall fight for the future.

hands that
pry fists
open and release
The Seeds
the change
the greed
the rage

scatter throughout
fertilized expanse

from nickles and dimes
trees arise for the purpose
of transmuting to pulp
and mass-creating
numbered paper
cause of mass-destruction

from seeds sprout ideas
Contagions when impregnated
with ill
Enlighteners when soaked
with pure will
to change bags under Universe's
eyes into
tree rings to aid in flaunting
her wisdom attained
through boundless time
∞eternity∞

beneath sunlight
on the forest floor,
pick up a leaf
consider it
becoming brittle
nourishment gone,
fall giving way to
winter,
snow will soon
draw itself about,
consider the leaf
each fragile veined
once borne on the
breeze,
held aloft on branches,
now shed,
cast off
scattered about,
none remembered
by the tree,
as it prepared to
grow some more

More than man, more than anything else
Fears control everything around us
They stop our advances, quicken our pulse
A never ending dark paralysis

Our fears are different, strange, powerful
Making us feel weak, vulnerable
Slowly, from inside to out, it devours
Making us shadows, each indistinguishable

Parts of us want to defeat it ourselves
But some of us can't face the evil alone
We grasp and clutch at others, looking for comfort
But they're just as lost in the unknown

Depending on others, hoping for change
Begging for structure as it melts our will
Our fears feed the flames of ignorance
Through the ashes, hate is born

She scraped up her knees and she cried
Daddy picked her up to make it all better
Mommy got the ointments and the gauze
Brother got the cartoon Band-Aids

Once it was this simple
Some cohesive family unit
White picket fence, kids 2.0
The house, the car, the job, the marriage

The life
Forget hunger and homelessness
Poverty and burdens
Those exist on some other block in some other TV life – not here

Not here

And now

Now family has been redefined to include
Stepbrothers and stepmothers
Shirely's with two daddies and Shawn's with two mommies
Grandmas rearing tiny tots
while fathers pay child support to kids
they may or may not see

Families of 3 generations under one roof
Marriages struggling with definitions and acceptance
Children still hungry for knowledge in the classroom and food in their bellies
Teens considering suicide on the playgrounds
Jumping from rooftops, playing with guns
While soon-to-be victims crouch behind desks and doors and movie seats

We drive faster, more reckless, work harder for less
Bradbury knew what 451 was really all about – about what is happening to us

Now



We fight over boundary lines, political party aisles,
genders, orientations, religions
We fight about money and sex and taxes and death
We fight about life
And we wonder why discontentment resides in the hearts of American folks
who grew up with the dream that we are all great
we can all achieve
we can coexist
we can be – happy

We are the melting pot, the melting point for change
We know the way
Yet the futility of being one in the system, one among many
to stand out, stand up, reach out, accept, forgive and help
is overwhelming
Fear and disillusionment keep most silent, closed up, heads down, hands in
Just one single drop in the bucket of change
is all we need
For one drop inspires two
drops grow into a drizzle
a drizzle into a storm
that overflows the bucket and seeps across the land
One small change at a time
it's possible
There is a middle ground for us all to stand on
we have overcome so much already
If we arm ourselves with courage and acceptance,
an open heart and an honest mind
for growth and change to take hold and take effect
take root
We shall see it happen
Revolutionize our Melting Pot of uncertainty and doubt
and make changes for the betterment of all
one drop at a time

For months now we've been shooting blanks at nothing, fat in loss. We crack us up when we're useless. We stand for taking up space. When we're bored we stay up all night rearranging the somnambulant funeral procession. We wait, fingerprintless, for self-discovery to dangle before us like succulent grapes. We chew hard and swallow air. The treasure map we find leads to where we're buried. We await the sudden tapping of the Ctrl-Alt-Delete keys. We toss and turn and rave in wavy water bed reminiscences. We babble. We lug a lunchbucket called Pretend. Our wounds perfumed. Our eyeballs linoleumed. Our bones are lenses. We continuously, obsessively police the perimeter of our bliss. We punctuate "cruelty" with "forget." We try to think of one good joke. We listen, entranced, to the bug zapper. Come the dawn, when our dew claw's still dry and our brain's under the bed, all that remains is instinct, immune to purity, enamored of cosmetic surgery, indifferent to identity, tongue in cheek, having a wonderful time, prone to false symbolism, wish you were here, rejected like a heart, infected with sorrow, perfected by emptiness, reflected by a broken window, sinking into mirrorhood when we least expect it. We wait – the pleasure of the fall leaves a permanent dent in our head. The wind twists up from somewhere inside. A white dot blinks in the corner of our dream when it's time to awaken.

B the b u want 2 c
from long ago
to now and go
trussed truth
cooks the goose
grokking gander
grating grinder
never minder truth and dare
be ware you care
for wrong so-longed
and right fought fight
with light not might
persuade b 4 forbade
so spare some change
rearrange the lane
from take to give
to talk to live
let's get this getting going

Pain is an interesting mistress.
Much like cheating,
it is straying from where you're meant to be.
Pleasure is where you are,
pain is where you choose to stay
and always end up visiting too long.
Pain entices you through its spilling intensity,
so pain is where you choose to stay.

Nothing hurts more than when pain and suffering
land upon the innocent,
when we are innocent in what we've done
and yet we find pain thrust upon
us. What then could be worse than the
inner conflict and turmoil
that finally leads to realization?

Interestingly, trees remain
the most innocent living beings.
They are beautiful in their divinity
and perhaps the most enlightened in their
stillness. Why then do we hurt the innocent,
if and when we are aware
that there is nothing worse than levying hurt
and pain on the innocent and unsuspecting?

But trees stay quiet and still,
like the most enlightened beings of all.
A tree will accept its downfall.
It will take your pain and rage,
your anger and disdain. It will
allow you to cut its roots
and its trunk. It will
do so with peace. Is there any
purer form of love?



Why do we think that because they don't speak
that they cannot communicate? Why do we think that
because they cannot move that they do
not feel? Why do we think that because we
can think, that they do not feel?
Are they not sensitive to life?
Don't both of us breathe?

Why, when pain is what we hate to feel?
We don't want to cross paths with it.
We certainly don't want to meet it.
The only thing we often consider
worse would be death itself.
Yet, we bestow pain upon pain
until we finally relieve the tree
in death.

The question should at least be asked.
Don't escape thinking, just because
the thoughts unsettle you. It is these
very things you should consider
before you encourage
the wooden rocking chair,
the sheet of white paper,
or the luxury resort's veneer.

But what the question should
finally tell both of us
is that we shouldn't feel bad for the tree
that is living a life of divinity
and bliss. It can lose its life
without blinking twice. How many of
us so called developed beings
can say the same? Stare death in the face
and remain peaceful within?

Think not for the tree
but you who hurts that beautiful beast.
It is you who needs to be saved,
mother nature has imparted it
in her legislation. The contract clearly states
we shall fall if we destroy all the trees.
So think not for the tree,
but for you and me.

**Before the world can be truly healed,
energy must be focused on our actions**

**toward one another. This way our living can
have a positive effect on everyone around us.
Everyone needs to contribute to truly achieve traction**

**collecting friction building power
heavier and heavier until the weight is tremendous –
amazing – blazing and ready to roll – an avalanche
needing just one push to make kinetic
growing energy into powerfully pushing force
eagerly absorbing every positive contribution even a fraction –**

**yin versus yang. Every light has a bit of dark
or more accurately for every reaction is a response
understanding the idea the idea of ebb and flow**

**waves of energy can wash over all of us
if we just focus on focus. Bringing us together – hands
strongly held – the energy of change perpetuating
heavily charged balance bringing serenity to all of us.**

**Today, let's start with something small we can understand,
our pain can be alleviated inside an ensconced**

**sanctum of what the universe could be.
Everyone can be one leg towards balanced action.
Every day can be one step towards satisfaction.**

That day in the field
where the bomb was hidden,
it was like a star had fallen,
struck him burning,
and exploded in his hand.
There was a shock
that followed the gauze
and anesthesia,
the sick feeling of that room
and the oddness that followed
when what seemed to be there
was indeed not.
But in that room with the brightly tiled floor,
he dreams of catching the moon,
of the stars softly twinkling
like sweet soft lights.
He is an astronaut
flying through the air
as he did on father's arms
when he was very small.

The girl in the hospital room next door
was too small when it happened
to remember the sudden snapping entrapment
of the landmine against her two plump arms.
Curious as she was, she had crawled
from her mother's watch,
and then the howling wail
that made her mother's heart go cold.
She dreamed now of being a teacher,
of stretching a beautiful arm like a dancer
across the music of words,
of teaching the children to pine for peace
and to wage war against bitter war.

Unspecified change
is an all-you-can-eat buffet
from some random
genie

Unspecified, a spectrum
and ya
might
not
always
like
what appears

But change you actually
WANT
is a table
at the restaurant
of some kind of rapport
knocking at the door
of Reality
maybe at the house
of God and Goddess
and wow
do they want
LOTS
of work

Respecting the HOW
of harvest

Respecting the WHAT
that is harvested

Respecting the WAY
of cooking

With investment
we co-bless

The change we want
is not manifest
without
that
investment

Whaddaya want?
Reality asks
Gotta know
before I can serve you

So whaddaya want
at that table,
society?

Whadday want,
peace?

Setting the table
over and over...

Deciding what
to prepare
and what
to prepare for...



Are you an approximation
of the best you can be
in the current
situation?

Are you a waiter?
Are you a cook?
Are you a host?
Are you a guest?

Are you having fun?

How much time
do you spend at the table,
and if not, do you care
for yourself
enough?

How's your table talk?

What's all the good stuff
to you
if not between people
and if you don't sit down
to eat?

When's it going to happen?

Are you preparing
for the next better best,
slowly?

Are you stopping
the hurrying?

Hurry up that slowing down!
Let's get to that slowing down!

Do you sit down
to talk
and eat?

Are you taking
your good time?

Please take your good time
and have good times
and then

Are you laying
the tablecloth
for the next
creation?

We live and breathe
within the womb –
a black and boundless ocean.

Motes of floating dust
with our eyes shut –
nude and changing slowly –
and suspended in motion.

Swimming with our limbs.

Our pulses
echo to the edges
in all directions.

until the end.
we are no more.

Travel through canals of time and space,
our souls are born --
into all that is
was,
or will ever be.

A granite boulder
A narrow crack--
That's how you broke my heart

The sky grows bright:
sunrise,
or the end of the world?

Time, invisible
like the bitter winter wind
blowing autumn leaves

Carved stone gods
no one worships now
Still they watch and wait.

Just a thin crack, but
a flower has rooted there--
That must be my heart

It's not that I don't love America because I do. You have to love the land you were born from of no matter how that land was obtained, who bled from it for it. That's all a part of you. You have to love and Respect that, don't you?

I think part of loving it is being okay with admitting that sometimes we get things Wrong like how we got here in the first place and telling people no matter how perceived powerful they are that shit's all bad and for it to get right they've got to change the way they're thinking, doing, Being.

I love this Democracy thing enough to say that Capitalism is like diabetes. You don't realize at first how many other conditions disorders it creates. We've been bought and sold the idea that we only suffer because we don't work hard enough, struggle long enough, but bus drivers and lunch ladies tend to be some of the hardest working people I know. The disease is thinking you need More. More than your mama's cooking or watching your three or 16 year old dance, really, for the first time or a walk under thick trees in a light rain or a chance to throw stones into a clear creek or slipping into a warm bed after a Real Hard Day's Work. No, the disorder is thinking you're entitled to filet mignon, that an in-home hot tub will bring happiness instead of momentary amusement.



I love the wealthy enough to let them know that if you are busy slicing into said rare filet and your neighbor's neighbor's children are hungry and you spend one minute blaming it on his father's lack of a work ethic instead of making sure that baby has some food ...then something ain't right with you. And you think that it's okay that some folks are homeless because they probably drank away their paychecks and we should knock down these vacant homes so they're not an eyesore like the poor brown black yellow red white folks who could live in them. Who makes a profit off of a shelter anyway? If you are more worried about a free market and the health of insurance companies' portfolios than guaranteeing that any who are sick and could be healed will be healed then, I'm not a Woman of God, but maybe you should ask yourself "What would Jesus do?"

It's not that I don't love America. I love the idea of being founded on Revolution, Change, the Need to Stand Up for What's Right instead of the need to be it. If we have a land capable of giving us not necessarily all the things we want but the basic things we need to Live, shouldn't everyone feel entitled to –and love- that?

**"So I Guess This Is a Love Poem Too"
or "I Love Mitt Romney"
by Carla Thompson**

Nothing stays
the same and nothing
changes. Until
you change, and be
until you same. Same

feces, different
earth-rotation. Same species different
motivational speaker, the wrong
get strong and the meek
get weaker, and weaker
by the week, the corruption reeks,
and the reek gets reeker, but the stinkolution
will not be televised. Without
Odorama will not be
advertised, 'cuz
the ownership will not be
outed, or abouted. The alone-ership
will not be touted, and clout will take you
anywhere you wanna be,
or not to
be.

Hone thee
alone: in the isolation be, be-
yond the designer
emptiness, stethoscope-flat
to the inner ear of a welling
tear, believing then only
in what you here
and now know. Go, go, go
before the thought
incarcerates
the aspiration.

"The cow is a poem of pity."

--Mahatma Gandhi

It looks like a cow,
has all the characteristics
of the deepest kine – true
stomach, thick skin, hooved
feet, an udder. It acts
like a cow. Eyeswide,
grazing in bottom-land,
it swallows tender
field grasses, swats flies, cuddles
speechless. It gives plenty,
as cows do, feeds the hungry
people, pulls its draught,
dungs its plop, licks
afterbirth from its offspring,
stimulating life. A ruminant
is a sacred cow. A thought to chew
till the cows come home.

and after one day,
She moans her whale-song distress,
singing all clover edges, bargaining
chips of foil for water
against her parched tongue.
iridescent pinwheels mock
the surface's orange-blossom thirst.
anklet shackles carve purple silhouettes
into each of Her cinnamon-bruised steppes.

and after one week,
powdered, red buds blossom,
pin pricks, salted blood droplets,
until cats shiver near
from subversive cycled angles,
scraping the spokes with hooked tongues.

and after one month,
hawks powder the dirt clouds
with their cry-greetings,
missive drops into
thick-furred quilting patches,
until the greenery releases them
with meat between their claws.
they build their eyries
between severed pipelines.



and after one year,
lanternless nights, crowded with
black enamel filings and unlidded eyes,
swap fear for comfort,
yielding putty knife swatches of grey-glow.
corrugated wall mountings
wrap every germinating shelter.

and after one decade,
the bears leave their black marks,
writing their stories
on the doors of our houses.
the wolf and lion quarrel
over concrete and asphalt cliffs
about their first tenor solos in requiem.

and after one century,
we forget the land-innoculations,
unreliable vaccines against
liars and covenant thieves.
we forget birds with twisted bills and
skin-porous eggshells, forget the frogs
bearing too many eyes of oracular warning,
forget the drowning fish, the tumor-laden deer
who tried to speak.
we wonder, we can't understand, we ask
"how?"

and after we have spoken,
everything begins.

this fetus-is/was/am/are-her.
I-were/be/being/been-him.
over-here/there/everywhere;

simultaneous in the world.

living-yesterday/today/now,
minutes away-tomorrow...
ever evolving, spinning

changeling, cocoon child

blooming, existing, brave,
in a forceful life-force
crashing wave-like,

of nurturing nature

and yet also
destruction paving
way for new growth,

undulating through

universal corridors,
experiencing every history,
maturing to the ultimate birth,

before stepping off to the next adventure.

"It's Against the Rules"

to dance on a bus
but go ahead and try it

let it be your Chayra
it will do your talking
as you get hauled away
by the transit police

embrace that two-thirds
create an urban myth
as you go to pay your fare
let saffron shirttails fly and henna tattoos
advertise the cosmic down the isle
pretend you are getting married to God

Robert, did the medicine take your mind away?
or your disease?

I remember your coming and your gratefulness
your rosy lips spewing waterfalls of praise
it was hard for me to ignore your oozing, bleeding sores,
your bloody hand always itching them,
stuffing subs and chocolate donuts
into your lips with those blood-stained fingertips
I couldn't ever seem to clean.

Robert, I'm sorry, despite your gentle words,
it was hard for me to look on you with love
but then a few days passed, and you began to heal,
I began to see the gentle spirit beyond your broken skin

but then your mind seemed to fade away
was it the medicine, Robert?
was it the parade of nursing homes who told you you were hopeless,
my coworkers who looked on you with disgust...
the coworker who called you a thing not a person...
was that it?

or did you just give up? was the pain too much?
did your wife encourage you when she visited?
or did her eyes fill with the same disgust or pity as ours?

you would lie in your own filth
I would come in and scold you for not telling me
I wanted you to be clean!
you looked at me glossy-eyed
I didn't know if you were speechless from shame
or drugged



I wanted you clean!
but your mind faded away
although your wounds had begun to heal
I wanted you clean!
but the illnesses that were ravaging your body
remained on their firm course
and the blood in your throat from those bloody doughnuts
infected you too

I feared you were leaving
and wasn't surprised to hear when you were gone
- though it seemed too fast
- and you were far too young...

no, what disturbed me was the nurse with the acrid voice
who told us the gossip when we walked in the door:
"Stanky's gone," she kept announcing,
laughing at her nickname for you...

No. You're Robert.
I won't call you by your last name
and make you a case study
I won't call you insults
I'll remember you, Robert,
a sweet, gentle spirit seeking help in desperation and tears
though it was much too late

I am a force invisible, continuously moving
in time and space, resonating
looking for a place or a face to find a home
like a child I have a voice
sometimes a single, quiet voice
one not everyone can hear

like the face of new born child
or the tongue of a shaman
I call out to your spirit
calling many times before you listen

as a voice I travel, move
fall into hearts that resonate with truth
I quake like slow thunder, a low rumble
a building avalanche, momentum
this voice of change you often
do not recognize

I transform myself again and again
looking for opportunities to be seen
looking for a time when I can be heard
like a dove I land on the shoulders of those
with the ears to hear, and hearts that listen
I become the invisible leopard's cloak
that imbues them with courage



sometimes I become an old man or woman
sometimes I am a teacher, mother or child
you hear these voices but then forget them
you do not know all these voices are my voices
so I move and change hoping you will recognize me

At one moment I am a young merchant
only wanting the opportunity to make a living
to support his family
At another, I become the face of a young boy
walking home in the dark and shot
over a bag of skittles
In another, I become the voice of a young girl
targeted and shot by terrorists
because she only wants an education
in all of these I wear my leopard's cloak and you
call me simply truth or justice or equality.
But I am all these things and more, I
am the change you wish to see in the world.
So hear me, embrace me, be me.
Let my voice speak through yours...
let me show my face to the world through you.

Everyday starts a new day
Another chance to love and be loved
Just as every step can lead to a new place
You've got the chance to make it right

Its heavy stuff to talk about love
And to try to change your ways
But it ain't so hard as it seems today
Take one step and you're on your way

Be the change that you wanna see
'Cuz only you can be what you can be
Be the change that you wanna see
'Cuz it's the dreamers who create reality

Every smile gives you a chance to shine
Every heart could use a little light
Just as every tear that is shed in pain
Can also in happiness rain



Its heavy stuff to talk about us
And to look past all the games
But it aint so hard as the grudge you keep
With a simple breath your hands can be clean

Be the change that you wanna see
'Cuz only you can be what you can be
Be the change that you wanna see
'Cuz it's the dreamers who create reality

Whoa oh oh even if you don't believe me
Whoa oh oh what's it hurt to try
Whoa oh oh if we weren't meant to soar
Oh oh oh there wouldn't be a blue sky

Be the change that you wanna see
'Cuz only you can be what you can be
Be the change that you wanna see
'Cuz it's the dreamers who create reality

contributor index

- Lynne Albert - lynnealbert.tumblr.com - page 38
Eric V. Blanchard - ericvblanchard.blogspot.com - page 10
Dianne Borsenik - nightballetpress.blogspot.com - page 2
Steve Brightman - www.facebook.com/steve.brightman - page 9
C.M. Brooks - www.facebook.com/runewarrior1 - page 40
Skylark Bruce - www.facebook.com/skylark.bruce - page 11
Satyn Bulchandani - www.indianpen.webs.com - page 22
Shelley Chernin - www.facebook.com/shelley.chernin - page 33
Diane Vogel Ferri - dianeferri.blogspot.com - page 4
Clarissa Jakobsons - www.facebook.com/clarissa.jakobsons - page 13
T.M. Göttl - www.buffalozef.net - page 34
Azriel Johnson - www.writingknights.com - page 24
Courtney Keirn - www.facebook.com/courtney.n.keirn - page 17
Lori Ann Kusterbeck - www.sincerelylori.com - page 18
Geoffrey A. Landis - www.geoffreylandis.com - page 29
Chris Lawrence - flavors.me/clawfish - page 16
Marc Mannheimer - marcmannheimer.blogspot.com - page 3
Matt McGee - page 7
William Merricle - www.facebook.com/william.merricle - page 20
Rebekah Moss - www.lillianpoolan.com - cover artist
Jen Pezzo - www.facebook.com/kerowynrose - page 36
Terry Provost - zinnzen.blogspot.com - page 32
Tina Puckett - tinapuckett.wordpress.com - page 25
Andrew Rihn - arihn.wordpress.com - page 14
Alexis-Rueal - alexisrueal.wordpress.com - page 1
Dan Smith - www.reverbNation.com/deepclevelandtrio - page 37
Lady K (Kathy Ireland Smith) - thecitypoetry.com - page 26
Steven B. Smith - www.agentofchaos.com - page 21
B.M. Stroud - www.bmstroud.com - page 28
Carla Thompson - www.vaticmuse.com - page 30
Mary A. Turzillo - www.maryturzillo.com - page 6
Eva Xanthopoulos - www.theartisticmuse.com - page 15
Zach - www.zachmusic.net - page 42



Poetic Provisions is a food-drive held during the months of November and December at poetry events across north-east Ohio. It originates with several poetry shows that took part in 2010's Music for Meals food-drive. In 2011, the poetry shows decided to band together once again to help feed those in need, and Poetic Provisions was born.

Donations collected go to the Canton Sunday Picnic and the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank.

The Canton Sunday Picnic is a grassroots meal that feeds the homeless and those in need every Sunday at Market Square Park in Canton, Ohio. Volunteers cook donated food, often supplementing from their own kitchens, for 80 to 100 people each week. In addition to non-perishable food donations, the Canton Sunday Picnic also needs items such as cooking oils, herbs and spices, aluminum foil, paper plates, napkins, and plastic eating utensils.

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank provides food and other essential items to member agencies in Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas, and Wayne counties. Foodbank lists their most needed food items as; breakfast cereal, peanut butter, canned tuna, canned vegetables, and canned soups.

Thank you for your supporting the Poetic Provisions food-drive!

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