

You Smell Like the Outside

(→) *Verb* 1. As in, to ride sky home 2. As in, to stick to the air 3. As in, to open to spring, or 4. be opened by spring 5. to persuade the sun to hand over its extra hour

(→) *Noun* 1. As in, you, making the world generous 2. As in, bushes blushing yellow roses 3. As in, rock-rubbed palms turning into palm trees reaching for good weather, holding still birds, or 4. dragonflies or just 5. a shade of green, deep as kin

(→) *Adj.* 1. As in, black: hopscotched and freeze-tagged and returned “it,” touched, fragrant as if the day chose you 2. As in, wild; your hair, mud-mopped by play. 3. I bury my nose in it, and your laughter calls me *strange* 4. As in, your youth grows long instead of old 5. Alive; your beautiful skin keeps what the wind let go

Alexa Patrick

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On Disappearing

Look!
the men
crowd corners,
gather like
anomalies
bloomed,
a constant
spring, thaw
what tried
to take them.

They clap
their hands
to Go-Go,
and embers
leap
from their palms
to emphasize
the point,
signal
the choir
for when one
don't show up,
the matches
of their fingers
Strike,
lighting memories

like loosies.

And this is what I excavate in the minute it takes to walk by
I, still smelling like the small town I came from, still staring
the way my mother taught me not to, but they're all uncles,
sweat and father's shoulders;

Certainly, their mamas worked alongside their mamas
Certainly, I've sat next to their sons on the train
Certainly, they are my cousins kissing teeth at falling buildings
pouring liquor for the fallen people, buried only to grow
into our own faces

My people stubborn; die soon and become heirlooms,
legacies screaming like streetlights, tell you to *go home*
the same way they tell you to *come here*

And there:
salt water, summer tar, slow dance,
bible verse, birthmark, bad temper
flat tire, flat line, funeral feast;
Sunflowers opening wide like a fire

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Joy

a constant wave, a rippling tide
cutting loose all kinds of silly
splashing against new shores

creating oceans of possibilities
caverns, riverbeds in sand, not
afraid to change course.

Toppling waves of hilarity, lifts its
roar, it spreads laughter's cymbals
crashing against air

an orchestra of joy

Kimberly A. Collins

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We Hatch Ourselves

Circling grass lined paths, minds pacing, side stepping
crumbling tar, we park our bodies on benches
cock our heads in wonder at that red breasted bully
chasing a house finch, stray blue jays, cardinals, flitting
perching from limb to limb. What newcomer is making
phonetically, complex, idiosyncratic whistles from tree
tops, camouflaged behind green and brown leaves?

Ash trees, we rename wishbone, tripod, clawfoot
because of what they look to be. Their majesty shocks
us with four leaf clovers, stringy green shoots springing
out trunks made into flowerpots, creating new life.

In this dogwood, chrysanthemum scented place, where
we spy cracking eggs nestled in thatched homes, we
hatch ourselves. Awake, we listen to our separate
harmonious songs liberated from caged breath

Sprung free.

Kimberly A. Collins

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HOW TO KEEP GOING

Unwatered lips touch the baby's face.

You admire the way she dives into a field of purple flowers,
arms opened as wide as her ginger eyes.

If you dive your large bones into the mess of lavender,
they will surely break; underneath the brush, there is soil
as hard as half-dried cement to discourage your frolicking.

She is giggling and rolling her softness
over the blue-violet spikes as if they were thick,
white clouds losing not one speck of joy to the promise of bruises.

Plump, clumsy, fearless, she mashes pudgy fingers into calices,
rubs her nose in the calm of mauve, snatches up
a bouquet and offers it to the sky.

The vert stems break many times, in many places.

- not one fist of petals is raised in defense
against her small weight.

There are only whorls of surrender,
and dye in her palms.

Melanie Henderson

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Joy

sifts for black
in the blush of a summer lily,

the fat style in my upper chest,
breath given to sun,
out of light, lung plucking,
windless, spiraling,
a cork breaking cylinders
for berries, wine

if you knew, anther,
how strong the absence
of your skin,

touches, unsettles
pollen, sprinkled flour
in this yard, seeking to
properly break color,
mush petal & peduncle
into dye.

MELANIE HENDERSON

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Ode to a Pencil

Inside the splintered wood
of a pencil are knotted words
that have never been iterated

hiding like truths
caught in the dark shadows
of a spider's web

words suspended in the pitch black well
of a morning cup of coffee

the word does not emerge
from the pencil point

the pencil only listened
to our wars
and daily gripes

The word never came out
not for rain drops or moonlight
not for a baby's laughter or heartbreaks

Would I be able to open myself
and follow the real names of everything

that may hit the white page
like a blizzard?

it could be that there's only one word
and it's all we need

It's here in this pencil
every pencil is a person
waiting for a story

Every pencil is like
a person saying, I am here...

and in whatever depths
that we have found ourselves

I know that the pencil says to me,
Regie, you can write yourself
back to joy

Regie Cabico

IG: @regieguy

joy mantra

joy is a wave
that washes over your feet

the zen bell
has rung out
the broad daylight
nightmare

breathe that light in
and say i do

say i do: a gong in a butterfly

say i do: a garment of light
that scrubs the tombstones
of the tough months past

say i do: & belt jubilant sestinas
compose symphony of ivories
cascading dominos streaking
the shadows of doubt
with flamboyant percussion

say i do: & i will dance the filipino shuffle
today i will make the impossible possible

say i do: so the snake double dutches
backwards to eden

say i do: to snap the strings
of the devil's ukulele

say i do: like dumbstruck tongueless bells

say i do: a 2 syllable haiku to freak out
basho & shake the pagodas & the silk road

say i do: as the cosmic clock
ticks to your heartbeat

say i do: & come with vision & health,
fire & color, holy books & sacred sheets

say i do: & so slides another day,
another chapter with thunder
& bells, tin cans & raindrops, fig leaves
& lemon trees, good feelings & calculus,
vision & health, fire & color, holy books
& sacred sheets

say i do
to keep
the slot machine
of commitment
Singing

Regie Cabico

IG: @regieguy

Ukulele

The vessel is simple, a rowboat among yachts.

No one hides a Tommy gun in its case.

No bluesman runs over his uke in a whiskey rage.

The last of the Hawai'ian queens translated the name
gift that came here, while Portuguese historians translate
jumping flea, the way a player's fingers pick and fly.

If you have a cigar box, it'll do. If you have fishing line,
it'll sing. If there is to be one instrument of love—
not love vanished or imagined, but love—it's this one.
Fit a melody in the crook of your arm, and strum.

“Ukulele” appears in *Count the Waves: Poems* (W. W. Norton, 2015).

Sandra Beasley

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The Vow

*But never for us the flitch of bacon though,
That some may win in Essex at Dunmow.*

So promises the old wives' tale,
a covenant according to Chaucer:
that if tomorrow I trek to Dunmow Church,
and swear before God and congregation
not a fight, no single quarrel,
in 366 days not even once wishing
to be un-married to you,
that salted hog is ours for the taking.

My love,
what a limp victory that would that be,

sweet silence of perfect agreement
as we swing a pork trophy between us,
walking the many miles home—
the fatback won; the battle lost.

I reserve my right to a good spat,
to the meat's spit in flame:

I take joy in choosing you, again and again.

“The Vow” appears in *Made to Explode: Poems* (W. W. Norton, 2021).

Sandra Beasley

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BC

Have you ever found
yourself in the rain
scented wake of a woman,
leading you through
a cornfield at dusk, singing
her favorite hobo song. Wilted
leaves in your way brushing
your arms like paupers
putting you on. A waning
sun that beams on the bright
madness of the round brown faces
of sunflowers that stand
guard of the wheat. A barn heard
before seen in the distance,
its ember heart beating,
silhouetting dancing revelers
on their second wind,
after biking over roller
coaster pastures for days.
The woman, reaching back,
without looking, finding your

hand with the first grasp, to pull
you into the dim lights of the barn
and swerve you by the waist, churning
your world into a streak of passing
smiles, wooden rafters, fiddlers
and pickers, and whirling laughter.
Son, that was once every other day.

Zein El-Amine

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Raised Beds

What were Friday nights before this?
The sun-yellow batik curtain flapping
in the open window, one moment
ululating your song to the street,
the other, drawing in to wave
at all of us gathered in your living room:
singers of Son Jarocho, our Columbian host
and me, the Lebanese Vecino. Before us,
Kofta with pine nuts, Chiles en Nogada,
fried plantains, and a bottle of Mescal.

On a Sunday I climb up to the deck
and lean over the rails to watch you bend over
the raised beds to plant the first summer seeds.
Ximena plays the Jarana, and a call and response
begins between you. The dark fertile beds
breathe back their warm promise to the atmosphere;
sunflowers bud in that sad way where you don't know
if they are coming or going; and in the center of it all,
a small Japanese maple transplanted from your home
sprouts red after years of stagnation.

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