

My friend has no idea + (4)

By Kate LaDew

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes* ...*She lives in Graham, NC with her cats, Charlie Chaplin and Janis Joplin (who could resist a mew-lodic pairing like this? And can't you imagine her calling them in at night?). Kate is uniquely endearing "and we smile at each other, plaster in our hair" This is the last line of her first verse...explore what you're in store for preceding/before...What could possibly distract from smiling back. [Bye-the-way, K. thank you for inserting your name in front of your entry-attachment, it assists the outstanding standing out. And, stating the number of lines in each piece boards on stupendous for one stupefied, surrogate editor. What caused you to do that? I find that people who give rather than take are offered so much more...] It is a privilege, for me, to read your (et alls' [sic]) thoughts. (As it is, I have never been able to anticipate what anyone is about to say next—even when they're finishing my sentences)...Read on as LaDew gets incidentally metaphysical: '4. I put on my turn signal' // "say out loud to the car behind me that means you have to stop / because two objects can't exist in the same place at the same time" This lady can even make road rage raspberries digestible. One more, for my sake: '5. I believe people sink into walls' //... "and if you dug your fingers / into the softness of a chest, you would pull back love" What if the human race, and humanity at large, had the sense to embrace her words? She is our best chance to advance...(Spacing poet's own.)*

1. your hands grasp the top of the door frame,

tensed, as if you're holding up the whole house
I've never seen you relaxed, not once
and I want to poke you in the belly so your arms fall,
I do, and your grip loosens
making you step back, surprised.
as the house falls down around us,
your palm flattens over where I touched you
and we smile at each other, plaster in our hair

2. we're going to hang out

for the first time in a long time
and it rains

of course it rains

as we sit under the umbrellas of the coffee shop

legs tucked criss-cross apple sauce

on damp wooden benches

I say, *did you know, there's the same amount of water
on earth now as when the dinosaurs were here?*

you don't say anything, but I can see inside you

you're imagining triceratops in aviator shades

velociraptors rocking chuck taylors,

brontosauruses with scarves wrapped around and around

did you know they're real? I say

and you look at me,

brontosauruses, they're real, they did exist

they used to think, I lean forward, drops of rain ghosting past my eyelashes,

they were a mistake, just more apatosauruses,

but it's not true, they're real,

I touch my fingertips to the inside of your wrist, press, soft,

as real as you or me

your eyes sweep down, and our pulses sync

I'm glad, you say, a smile in your voice

and we look out at all of the everything

3. a friend of mine has no idea

about a monumental thing
that has just happened to the country
and I am incensed beyond all reason
that one could have no knowledge of this thing
that had kept me up at night,
the articles I've read and reread,
the frantic texts, can you believe it?
pictures everywhere, everywhere
bloody faces, heads bashed in, eyes gouged
that one could not know,
people died, I repeat to myself, they died
and she does not know
asks what happened and why
the world fell apart, I want to shout
it's fallen apart and keeps falling
and I do not know why anymore than you do

4. I put on my turn signal

say out loud to the car behind me *that means you have to stop*
because two objects can't exist in the same place at the same time
I turn into the cemetery even though it's raining
even though sitting in a car outside surely can't count as being outside,
not the 20 minutes a day we're all supposed to be in it
based on a study that asked some people somewhere some time
if they felt better or worse for breathing air in an open field
instead of an office or an elevator or an airport
and almost everybody said better
you have to think the few who said worse
felt like being contrarian in that moment
might tell friends somewhere inside with a drink in their hand
and get this, I said worse
it's people like that
who've kept me from spending 21 22 30 47 minutes outside at a time
when I might've seen anything, felt anything
but on a day like today I'm grateful 20 minutes in the morning,
watching dead stone over dead people in the rain, feels like enough
but what about tomorrow or the next day?
you're supposed to live in the now
but tomorrow is what makes you put up with today
I squint my eyes through the rain as it carves circles in itself,
patterning my windshield and remember yesterday my dad told me it would rain
I'd forgotten and it was only a little while ago
how much else has slipped through my fingers?
momentarily inconsequential things that become important
once they can no longer happen anymore
I read the name PLOTT in big block letters on the back of a tombstone
and think, that's funny

5. I believe people sink into walls

leave what was inside them inside
I believe every person who looks
finds the last person who looked
I believe all the memories of all the memories
are part of the air, and if you dug your fingers
into the softness of a chest, you would pull back love
I believe every thing that every one has ever lost
is stacked under the earth, waiting
but do you believe in god? you ask me again
I close my eyes, keep them closed
isn't that what I said?

THE POET SPEAKS... *All of my poems were inspired by seeking a 'return to normal' after I was vaccinated for COVID 19. Most of my family members, though not all, and most of my friends, though not all, have been vaccinated. During the beginning of the pandemic it was jarring to see people in masks and now it's jarring to not see people in masks. I still wear one indoors, though I have been to the movie theater twice in the past month and thought, me and at most five other people in a very large room? It'll be fine and went maskless. I'm still not sure if it was the right thing to do and am fairly confident in the vaccine, but— I remember the months and months of anxiety and stress as I struggled to keep myself safe and somehow continue to have a relationship with people whom did not share my views. I even have to admit to feeling annoyed that while I went out of my way to stay away from people and lived a very sheltered, anxiety ridden existence for almost a year and a half — and did not get sick — a lot of my friends and family took no precautions and did not get sick. It's not that I wanted anyone to go to the hospital but I wanted something to happen to prove I was right and they were wrong. And maybe that's an unkind way to look at things but it's how I felt.*

The poem 'my friend has no idea' is about a conversation I had where someone I'm close to had only a vague of what the Capitol Riot was and why it happened. She thought it had

'something to do with a podium?' and I was so upset by this I didn't speak to her for a week. When I resumed texting her she honestly had no idea why I'd gone silent. I end the poem by pointing out that she doesn't know why bad things happen and neither do I. Is my anxiety over it helpful in any way? Would it be better to stay ignorant of events if I can do nothing to change them? I'm honestly not sure. In the end, the people in my life who cared about keeping others safe during the pandemic, who followed the rules, watched the news and its daily death tolls ultimately lived through the worst part of this ongoing pandemic and so did the others who still don't understand why any of this is a big deal.

The poems "your hands grasp the top of the door frame and "we're going to hang out" are both about how the little interactions you have with people are what you ultimately remember. Not being able to just go to a coffee shop or even be in the same room as my friends and now suddenly both options are open to me made me realize how much I missed them.

"I put on my turn signal," and "I believe people sink into walls," both deal with death and how we come to terms with the fact that we and every person we know, along with every person we don't know, will die. Every morning I go to the cemetery a few blocks from my house and walk. I started doing this during the pandemic because it was the only place I could be sure I would be alone. At first I just looked at the trees and the sky and after a few days started reading tombstones. I was struck by how I could read a person's name, the day they were born, the day they died, how the presence or absence of flowers and upkeep might tell me something about their family and yet that little dash between the dates would always stay a mystery.

I read a lot of poetry as well as fiction and unfortunately don't seem to keep up with the names of each writer as well as I should. I can remember almost word for word a poem I really liked and will have no idea who the author is. This year I've tried to read more poetry by woman and people of color after I realized the names I did remember invariably belonged to dead white men. Currently I'm reading Crazy Brave by Joy Harjo.

Poetry helps me to make sense of the world. Whenever there's been a crisis in my life, big or small, I've taken time to just sit and read and that reading almost always inspires me to write. I've written more consistently during the pandemic than I ever have before. It's a way to order things and help the day make sense. I always feel as if something is missing if I haven't written at least one poem. Maybe nothing else of importance will happen during that 24 hour period but I can feel as if I've accomplished something by reaching into my mind and finding something worthwhile to commit to the page.

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