



Vending Machine:

The Poet's Haven + The Love Initiative present "Vending Machine: Poetry for Change" volume 1



Poetry For Change

Wish To See

by Art by [unreadable]

The world doesn't change in one big sweeping moment.
It is a continual journey.
Humanity's awakening.
This journey starts not with thousands but with one.
One.

The world of one person can change in an instant.



It just takes a minute.
This is that minute.



THE LOVE INITIATIVE

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

"Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine."
-- Robert C. Gallagher

VENDING MACHINE: POETRY FOR CHANGE

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introduction by ZACH

Thank you for contributing to this food drive. Know that this is but one way of infinite ways to help each other. I am greatly humbled at the support this food drive has received from the community. As artists, we have a unique voice and position to shine light on bigger situations and troubles. So thank you for lending your voices, and thank you to Theresa and Vertigo for coming up with the idea for this book - you are creating many ripples from the single stone tossed into the river.

Every year, the Cleveland and Akron-Canton Foodbanks, through several hundred agencies, provide millions of meals to people who would otherwise not have access to food. This service can literally be a life or death situation. With our current economic state, more folks are in need of these services, and at the same time, funding gets tougher to come by.

Music for Meals is a compassionate moment, a step on the continuum of compassion, and a step in the challenging spirit of Love. As the winter approaches, we can easily take a minute to think about people who require these services to survive. But we cannot simply give a couple of cans this week and think we are done. The work of compassion is always needed. By uniting as a creative community for this event, we can make the necessary ties to better help more people who are in need of help. Together, we can achieve anything. I hope this to be the first in many full-community efforts for the betterment of us all. When one of us suffers, we all suffer. When one of us is in need, we are all in need.

If we all do something small, but in collaboration, it will add up to any of the largest goals we can create. You are doing this. You are a piece of this peace we are trying to create.

"We can do no great things, only small things with great love." -- Mother Teresa

I ask you to please keep it up. Join me in being the change we wish to see in the world.

Just one moment can change the world. This is that moment.

Namaste.



Degraded, deprived, and caged
Abused, murdered, rampaged
The Earth's fate we will solder
Through this sentient slaughter
Unless we stand up and be the change

"Love Initiative Poem" by Bekey Hewit

This is it:
nothing else you ever did matters
the place where all your words mean nothing
doorway to forever.

"Singularity" by Geoffrey A. Landis

The world
can change
in a minute.
We all know that.
We tiptoe through life
in fear of that minute.
That singular
tragic minute.

We do not fear the
joyous minute.
We do not fear the
collection of minutes
which initiate change.
We do not fear it and
we do not even
acknowledge it as a
possibility.

Let this be
a shot across
the bow of fear.
Let this be a
singular brick in
the foundation
of forward
momentum.
Let this be
one of the minutes
that was set loose
upon the world
with its cowlick
wet down with
mother's spit
and ready for
picture day.

"Wet Down with Mother's Spit" by Steve Brightman

Gather the people
In the name of culture
Don't be afraid to call for change
Sing the songs of compassion
March on the Capitol
Abandon the course of war
Open the hearts of others
Hear our longing for civility
Our desire for peace
Bring justice to our land
And bring forth a new spirit

"In These Times" by Kay Eaton

In the green beginning,
 in the morning mist,
 they emerge from their chrysalis
of clothes: peel off purses & cells,
 slacks & Gap sweats, turtle-
 necks & tanks, Tommy's & Salvation
Army, platforms & clogs,
 abandoning bras and lingerie, labels
 & names, courtesies & shames,
the emperor's rhetoric of defense,
 laying it down, their child-
 stretched or still-taut flesh
giddy in sudden proximity,
 onto the cold earth: bodies fetal or supine,
 as if come-hithering
or dead, wriggle on the grass to form
 the shape of a word yet to come, almost
 embarrassing to name: a word
thicker, heavier than the rolled rags
 of their bodies seen from a cockpit:
 they touch to make
the word they want to become:
 it's difficult to get the news
 from our bodies, yet people die each day
for lack of what is found there:
 here: the fifty hold, & still
 to become a testament, a will,
embody something outside
 themselves & themselves: the body,
 the dreaming disarmed body.

"For the Fifty (Who Made PEACE With Their Bodies)" by Philip Metres

desperate,
or so she seemed,
like one who has her head
held down
underwater
too long.

I did not say a word to her;
better to let people
rise to the surface, I thought,
better to let people
find their own way.

so I enjoyed the transit ride,
selfish as I am,
while people in this world
were suffering.

and as we passed through the valley
with the sun on the train tracks,
I turned to find her
(the gulls flying low to the river,
the river, a miraculous blue)
looking out the opposite window,
a faint, contented
even joyful
smile on her face.

and I knew I could never affect a person
any more than those who have suffered for me,
who suffered (forgive me) needlessly.

"Surfacing" by Marc Mannheimer

i will light	i will light	i will light
haunt the days	phantom limbs	all the eyes
you preached, sloshed	mend the sky	staring, glazed
to wi- dows	gashed w/ blows	that would die
forced be- neath.	from yr tongue.	just to sleep.
i will light	i will light	i will light
blow the dam	emipre's tail	halos flung
where you stand	watch it leap	towards the sea
frozen stiff	blood& gears	for the sake
w/our lives	from dread maps.	of the rest
in check- mate.		

"Torches" by Michael Bernstein

If only
it were that simple
open the wallet
smooth out a greenback
guide it to the slot
and slide it in
like a man into his lover
and out pops change
political change
social change
spiritual change
ecological change
personal change
the denominations of the coins
being understanding
responsibility
tolerance
the ability to respect
and treat with justice
I'd pay for that
I'd shove those greenbacks in
piston-like
and catch change
in both my hands
if only
it were that simple
a vending machine for change
in every lobby
on every street corner
open 24 hours

but I think the machine is broken
the light's not on
and the slot does not snatch
what I'm offering
won't even mouth it
when I try to tease it in
if we want change
we're going to have to look for it
on the sidewalks
in the streets
on the dresser at home
in our pockets
we're going to have to pick up
change
and keep it close
for all those times
we need it
like now
a penny
for your thoughts?

"Vending Machine For Change"
by Dianne Borsenik

I carry you
like a witness
human song
book child
can may and
could did
was not be
depart end grow
in love let night
knowledge new
can will you
always last we you
new ever singing
and perhaps can feel
time move start
this to you
a clear crying
new choice

"Leap of Faith" by William Merricle

I have had red hair
all of my life
(A joke in my youth)
I don't discard
my friendships
as easily as I did
the men
but these years...
those that have
passed through
have taught me
too much
and I stay quiet
I hide regret in
extra sizes and
empty gas tanks
This is where I
prefer it now
This reflection
sometimes smiling
mostly looking away
from the damned mirror

"August of Now" by Cheryl A. Townsend

I look at myself through fun house mirrors
Distorted vision
Is this why you never saw me
Though you were looking right at me
It's the only way
I can look at myself

I look at the World through fun house mirrors
Distorted vision
All I see is pain
& I learned long ago I can't change it
I should be more accepting
Learn to embrace it
But I can touch people one at a time
& they will touch people
We can spread like a virus
Fight the man from inside
We can make beauty
Out of everyday instances

"Fun House Mirrors" by Michael D. Grover

The last you saw me, I was a baby
begging at my mother's breast
as her palm lay bare at your hip
approaching the touch of coins.
I was woolen in my blanket,
my mouth fuzzy with thirst
as she starved her skin.
She went so thin, people did not notice.
She grew so invisible, she disappeared.
Her eyes became small raccoons,
her mouth, a broken snake.
Her body bent and died in the street
with me as her nucleus,
still clinging, tasting her belly
with my tongue: that human ash
she'd become.
And then another of you found me,
said my sucking mouth must release
those dead balloons gone airless.
I tried to mouth the word hungry
in the same way.
(That woman had gone mute
wrapping her voice around my flesh.)
My name was Please-help-her.
You missed the hush;
You missed the panic of it.
You missed the one who grew thick
in the ash of her embrace.

"Refugee" by Tina Puckett

Enormous waves of ocean sea comes strangling my insides
A corpse of dead weight lifted from a sun that knew no darkness
And depth was only spoken about from bits and pieces
of time compressed thoughts
How transit was impossible in this life time
So I wait another day for the arrival of something solid
Something I can hold with my fragile hands
The extension of fingers
Brittle bones of cartilage
And love
How mystery becomes abundant and blurred
A tint of red origami
A sudden impulse of a beating heart that has been
Wrenched through palpations in denial and excess fraudulences
Torn words spoken through a kingdom of great hierarchy and honor
The shedding of light through the translucent skin of such an angel
And I still wait through the filter light
The closeness of darkness
And that in which I can not see as an ending towards a new day
The external tranquility of a thought beyond myself
The way the hands press tightly against each other
Through waves of ocean sea and skies of reflecting symmetry
I can find myself;
Again
On an edge
The great impossible
And endlessness within itself;
Depth

"Depth of an End" by Katherine Zaleski

When we are hungry,
Disgusted with despair.
Hating its stench before garbage days,
Gag. Even vomit overcome by smells of
Rotting places.
Rotting language.
Rotting lives.
We prepare to toss several bags again.
Prepare to close another creative vessel in our brains?
No!

With all our friends of
Friends' friends friends,
Promotions, privileges, plastics, and pearls,
Most are still souls fearing
Life's most imminent appointments.
Not made until
We must.

Ansel, Gordon Parks, Bourke-White, O'Keefe, Picasso
gazed without limits not seeing the trash,
Greeted mornings in naked amazement over and over,
Amazement of happy sad bluez, brownz, purplez. Blackz and
Whitez.
Most lived very long feasting on childhood cloudz.
Wordz and picturez are bubbles. Raising us with them.
Links forever to sunz and windz.

Sometimes buildings block viewz.
Sometimes building stops viewz.
Sometimes parents. Sometimes we all do
By spending our loud daze saluting paychecks,
Concrete, strangers, smartphones, shoes, and smog.
Instead of befriending friendz of skiez.
Like the Bird Men who love feeding sparrowz
And pigeonz patrolling Tower Cities.

Wonder bread crumbs are
Cachet from dumpsters at night.
We award Bird Men pocket change tinged with guilt and pity
while photographing their plights.
Maybe one of them will surprise?
Opening eyes by relocating Southwest like me?
Maybe hitch hike Route 66?
Visit Yellowstone to feed themselves? Show others?
Might stay there. Probably. Probably not.

Too used to policing cities better than policemen.
Bird Men stay committed to commanding traffic on Public Squares
And park bench beds.
These are their homes better than most,
Taj Mahals unconventional
Behind Rock Halls near Lake Eriez
The solace of mountain viewz
Or other territoriez verdant.
Thoz in imaginationz alwayz count too.
Geniuz is not craziness.

We can create Earthly Edenz, not just Five, Ten, or Seven. Infinite
Places where all should linger long as Bird Men, children, poets,
all artists often do
Even when November shivers our urban shoulders
Burdened with sympathy signs, bills, and other garbage.
Nine Levels of Hell not Dante's Heaven.
So we go to man's shelters many times to forget about the dying.
For a little heat, company, abuse, or care.
No positives ever compare with God's
Wisdom residing in park bench beds as
Regal sparrowz fly assurances over our headz that
We all can live to plant Sycamores next spring.

"Sparrowz (A November Poem)" by Marlana-Patrice Pugh Hamer

how do you write
about the power of one
when the world is so divided
fractured and fragmented
torn by war and corruption?
when suspicions hold sway
and dissention is the game of the day?

how do you write
about the power of love
when hearts are divided
broken and bleeding
when only hate and fear pave the way
and prejudice seems here to stay?

religions are meant to join not divide
beliefs are meant to support not malign
who someone loves should be
a cause for joy not derision
why is something so easy... love
made so rigid and hard
unyielding - a cause for division

maybe it's time to be real, to heal
to unite and not fight
begin a new order
where there are no borders
no boundaries
the thinking heart and the feeling mind
is what we need
compassion is the road to action
the pen of choice
the ever responding voice
perhaps it is time
to finally just try to love
and work to make things right.

A breeze from the west
scours the night with cold.
I remain with the river
to haunt these stones.

The blade of the moon
harvests smoke from the village.
Out of their windows, people
see only clouds and snow.

"Late Autumn" by Joshua Gage

5 p.m. The trees invite blue china clouds
They forget the sun cannot light the lamp
5 p.m. You are drinking tea with honey
Inside a penumbra by the Radhachuda tree
You can wait, then bring the oil lamp out
Circumnavigate the non-existent tulaxi
The Namghar's 5 p.m. silence will soon erupt
Its tranced kortaal dueting with the khol
5 p.m. You will know that time has struck
Gooseberry dreaming the shadow of a home.

"Evening Things" by Nabina Das

The woman grabbed my arm
a block from my Chicago hotel, Oh!
I dunno what I'm gonna do! I told her
calm down, (I'm from Ohio,
everything will always be fine), tell me
what happened. Her car, her purse,
towed away. Security guard at the hotel
told her to take a bus to the impound lot
but how can she pay the fare—her purse,
her car, and Oh! she sobbed her car
was towed, all the time shaking, sobbing and I

listened to the midnight city sidewalk
dark between two streetlights. But she shook,
so I hugged her. Can I pray for you?
She raised her hands, "Praise the Lord!
A Jesus follower!" I blushed but she couldn't see,
I don't think. Oh, courage, peace,
talk out loud to a god and ask
how much she thought she needed.
Two folded bills leave my purse
and given, walk away. She checked her hand,

let out another cry, clicked her heels
like Dick Van Dyke in Mary Poppins,
and I am Jane Banks, deliriously happy
to keep pretending it is possible to hop
off city streets into sidewalk chalk parks,
to believe in floating tea parties
and the power of tuppence.

"Let's Go Fly a Kite" by Sarah Wells

there are whispers with no sound
and we lie with greater truths
than our being
we cusp with need
petition in flesh
speak in shadows
& harbor sincerity
the candor of our moments
our primary casualties
and though causality demands no servant
we subsist
indentured to a barren master
refracting growth
ignoring plausibility
we thrive en mass derision
simultaneously loathing and worshipping
the preferential
a negligent accountability
and then we wonder
why

"En Mass" by Michelle 'Mikki' Williams

Men like me, grew from concrete as winter born roses.
Misplaced scenery, made to stand out.
Plucked out of our homes until our dirt cried abandoned
And we stretched back,
Dropped petals as tears, dropped petals as blood,
Dropped octaves as baritones because we had to grow regardless,
Of broken homes, of broken backbones
No one can question why the male's blood runs red,
As he tries to rip understanding from in his veins,
Through us runs Adam, the apple in our throats,
We dig, for understanding of why fruit,
hangs between our legs disconnected from our truth,
We struggle, to grow in tune with our bodies—
if only our minds could move at the pace of fast twitch muscles
At the speed of orgasms, we might be able to avoid... mistakes.
But we appear as monoliths, with closed fists
Closed minds we have to be taught how to learn,
As if contradiction were easy to break out of once you let them sink in,
Pardon my chromosomes,
Two disjointed siblings of the alphabet, Trying to dominate,
X before Y, X before Y
A female is XX, born twice before us...
no wonder it seems like they are always right,
The alpha I bet, in this mastered piece of broken abstract speech,
Piece me together with crooked sewing needles,
I've been bent out of shape since my shape started twisting.
Testosterone should be outlawed. Strength shouldn't be celebrated,
Parade around the mishaps of our mistakes,
Most of us say sorry... through closed lips—
And we complain about women expecting us to be psychic.
I would apologize for my gender...but my mind is never in sync with yours
Is it... ladies... is it... crazy that I'll sit in silence,
And try to listen to my own heartbeat,
wonder what makes our lives so different,
Insane for me to sit in silence,
and try to listen to the part of me that makes life,
Something has to be pure in here, Inside this chest, and broad shoulders,
Why are we made like we protect things? I've only seen us break them
Like concrete bones, hold us up, that must be why we are so rigid,

I can see now, with peeled back eye lids, with support beam legs
That men... aren't made... to be good lovers
I can see with straightened spines that, we are not born...
with soft hands, and soft voices.
None of us is born... mature. And then I stop, look around and I can see...
That men like me grew from concrete like winter born roses
Learned to shake snow from our leaves,
Produced our own heat
We had to learn not to be cold...
No child is born man,
No man is made whole
We are forever twisted in our own DNA
To find the balance between the strength of a man
And the warmth... of a woman...
That's why... most roses... don't bloom in winter...
Just a few that the world says have grown wrong
But these are the ones, with seeds that will sprout
With dawns that will break through.
For the others... they will fuck... and wilt... until their death.
Trying to find
Completion.

"Men" by Eric Odum

I can't won't make a
poem food for hungry folk.
They need cans, not can'ts.

"Can It" by John Burroughs

Love is intangible
A possible chemical reaction
But never the less, love can breathe
And love can see
Love is the one thing we can not touch but all strive to find
Because love makes us think blindly
Often keeping us from seeing the lies that we are believing
Love is naught but a pleasant dream
 that veils the unpleasant reality
And when we wake we find it's nothing more than a memory
But a pleasant memory not
For the pleasant memories are the most painful to recall
Like the bottom of a lake so beautiful
But dare not dive for thou will not resurface
But love is so addictive
Like a sweet poison
Like Snow White's apple
So beautiful and tempting
But deadly
Love is the only reason people can seem to
 justify this pointless existence
A witty response they tell to me
But from love and lies One of the same
We will never be free
Because love is naught but a fading dream
 in which we grasp at
to keep the veil over reality

"Love Is" by Arija Lee

Whitman knew
the stroke of a
man, as well as a woman.
He knew no decry
of either embrace.
Wilde, across the ocean,
sang his song,
one from the mists of Clock bells,
though leaves in the grass –
this too was his delight.
Men's men, women's women
women's men, men's women –
only the lonely cancel
one by the other.
Girls and boys,
are only
boys and girls,
when playing in the school yard.
'You're gay!'
'You're straight!'
Those afraid of their shadows
line them up,
like picking sides for a ball game,
changing it into a dodge ball suite,
picking off one by one
until the winner is the only
normal one. –
Losers, one and all,
stick together, throw our fists into the air,
there's only one race, one grace, with many faces –
one people.
Time to run in the grass' leaves.

"Whitman Knew" by Timothy R. Gates

Distant thunder rolls ever closer and moves
 into the sacred space around me
I hear pain in the growling voice of the storm,
Brooding and angry... so hungry for attention
The winds whip around in a fury,
 crashing loudly into all that stands still.

Shifting and bantering in a loud dispute,
the clouds come alive above me.
I hear screams of terror once held deep within the earth.
And I know that the time has come for release.

The residue can no longer be carried
 for the sins of a sleeping world.
Pain inflicted has grown so thick it needs clearing.
Our Mother Earth now throws the heavy energy
 into the atmosphere.
The blood of our brothers and sisters long soaked
 in the soil where we walk.

Cries of anguish and hunger that no one has wanted
 to hear still ring out.
Ignorance and time aren't magicians that make it all disappear.
The energy stays on waiting for acknowledgment.
So intense now it must rise up for us to see.

Huddled like children and vulnerable
we look up in fear searching for meaning.
The message is clear but requires an open mind,
 an open heart.
To see we must stop hiding and open our eyes.
It is time now to open our eyes.

"STORMS (It Is Time Now To Open Our Eyes)" by Leah B. Beck

Mystical measuring
brings edges together
and forms an illusion of corners -
those places where fantasies flourish
with feelings of privilege
where we dine
at our very own tables
in our very own corners
of the world

In such a proud place we live
sipping imported wines
in our affluent homes
built only on prized corner lots

We corner the markets
embargo the efforts of others
and embellish their faults
all to keep them
from joining us
in our corners

These corners belong to us
were handed down to us
by our families who
lived in these corners

So we send the message
dare not to cross our borders
or stow away on our ships

There is no room for you here
in our imaginary
inherited
corners

Words, how you have carried me
 held me up when I lost my own tongue
 tip no longer tasting life
 but bitterness, poison and dirt.
 Thirsting for something more and you
 you whet my appetite again.

I stood confused
 darkness sucking me down
 sucking my lip
 hips held with frustrated hands
 having a Crisis of Lesbian Identity.
 Thought I was bi
 but I
 I was g-a-y.

Remember the crush on my fourth grade teacher
 how she never wore the same outfit more than once
 All those skirts and long hair and heels and--
 Even then I was, Even young I was G-A-Y

Kicking myself out of that
 dark and dependent closet
 The door opened by those who did it first
 Pat Parker
 Audre Lorde
 Staceyann Chin
 seeds of revolution planted within me,
 {revolution begins within the self}
 Your words were like sunlight that fed my soul and nourished me.

Closets are for clothes, not human souls.
 And that closet was like a prison.
 Solitary confinement. The Soul Breaker.
 29 years served in fear.
 No one could understand.
 I had no words. I had no voice.
 Felt like I had no choice.
 Silent suffering. Suffocating. Disappearing.
 Even then I was, Even young I was
 G-A-Y

Refused to slowly die
 To be complicit in a lie
 I am here, I am queer
 I am G-A-Y!

Can't hold me down
 can't pin me down
 Because I'm binding my breasts.
 Now your eye is seeing this "I"
 that says that gender is a lie

Rebelling gender
 Destruct construction
 Revolution of the mind
 Doing drag, going stag
 Bravado and pompadours
 Girls, sex, rock n roll
 Femme hidden by a greaser's strut
 I become Johnny Angel
 with a motorcycle screaming between my thighs
 Making all the girls swoon like Elvis is in the building

Binding my breasts brings Liberation
 No power in your structure
 No truth in your categories
 Buck the system
 Fuck the system
 I am a gentleman
 The staccato of my leopard-print stiletto heels
 on your assumptions

Words, how you have moved me!
 Giving me something when I could not speak
 When I was invisible
 When I was lost
 When I was in that dark closet
 When I found that life was not life
 When I felt burdened by lying
 Dying
 and I could—not—go—on...

And I need my words now
 have to use my voice because I am a
 Second-class citizen
 Denied the American Dream
 Where all men are created equal
 Not safe where I live
 Not safe where I work
 Not safe in the closet
 Not protected under the red white and blue
 Not protected like you
 The line to liberty and equality is not always straight and narrow
 I fought so hard to stand here
 Fought to be me
 Fought to be seen
 Clawed my way out of that closet
 Don't you dare try to hold me back!
 I'm fighting still
 For my right to be
 For equality

Love is never wrong.
 Hope is never silent.
 Don't be silent.
 Refuse to shut up.
 Don't be locked up in
 hang-ups that aren't yours
 Divorce yourself from
 oppression
 Refuse to collaborate
 Accessory? Not me.
 Speak up!
 Use your voice.
 Start a revolution.

Unleash a battle cry!
 My voice is a shield
 My voice is a sword
 My voice is a banner waving in the wind
 Carried into the fray
 My voice screams

Before the sun's last setting hour
when time and space do cease,
I'd wish upon the world a flower
that symbolizes peace

Her stem of velvet, never creased,
stretched tightly, would stand guard
in any weather, eyes would feast
upon it in my yard

her petals would reach out to God
with fragrance sweet, yet mild,
soon, frowns would turn to smiles, each pod
could heal the inner child

just one small breath, our problems piled
like snow, would melt; we'd pour
our hearts out, cry a river wild,
feel free, like never before...

And could the world stop making war
before the sun's last hour,
then brotherhood would be the law...
I wish on all that flower

"A Wish For Peace" by John A. Todras

You are all oomph and spunk directed outwards. You run me in circles, sleep still in our eyes. Energy like light filling curtainless rooms. Today I am six again and digging for gold in the sandbox. Our filthy feet banned from the house. Instead, we dip toes in the river. Secret handshake marks the spot. The language of hands another current. Christians (like you?) imagine God with hands, but I am not so sure. Even monkeys are taught to speak with their hands. Babies discover their hands when they are six weeks old. They ball them into tiny fists, slowly turning them back and forth before their eyes, amazed. My own hands dug and dug and came up with only this: Silt and sediment once buried deep now carried on wind and water. Fast flowing rivers and freshwater lakes. Reminders of home. Chubby clouds in crowded skies. Springtime. The grass lush and lime. Lilacs already browning. But they're still good. Enough to explain a little of the world and life to you and tell you why it should be lived. Like musk. Persistent and penetrating. It is closeness and the memory of closeness.

An aroma that smothers with thickness. It is locker rooms, babies' skin and feet. Sweet smelling, earthy and unctuous. Even now I remember the musk of men I loved and nestled.

Babies do this too—tuckling tight against mothers' necks. I smell you even after you're gone. Life moves on without you and I have only these words to give. Some are sodden. Flimsy balled tissues from Papa's funeral. Bones like silver hidden in the earth. Here, touch the evidence: coins, jewelry, swords. All burdensome to hold. Even the word itself is soft:

~ s i l v e r ~

Shout it and no one runs. But be weary--one could crush all you love with other soft words. Like no. Like yes. Like gone.

"Meditations to The Max" by Amylia Grace (for Max, b.2002)

Unable to envision tomorrow,
my dreams so dulled by meaningless work.
Sleep is only a remembered blessing,
like a long lost lover's kiss.
Having no courage to act upon uncertain fate,
I sell my soul for a weekly paycheck with attached self-loathing.
The new American dream is to own a home among the
HOMELESS.

On a field trip to The Statehouse Rotunda,
my daughter tells me of an old discarded woman
walking up and down the entrance steps,
implanting her history on the venerated marble stair,
again and again,
mutterings in constant motion.
"Glad" trash bags tied around sad feet,
she retraces her footfalls in exact cadence.
I imagine her self-imposed penance absolves
murderous thoughts against elected representatives,
NONE OF WHOM REPRESENT HER

"Amina's Field Trip" by Judith Fanny Rose

she says

all light is fire
all fire is light

embrace and drink deep

fade to white

fade to white

"Becoming Light" by J.E. Stanley

pale ribboned sky,
draped over rooftops,
that view the sea,
held at the window
eyes pointed gray
absorbed it all
a heart beat slowed
a solemn beat
deflective of the cause,
closed mouths
issued no voices,
as without a whisper
it came to an end.

"Re Routed" by Chris Lawrence

Hear the clash, clang, cling
Of the metallic repetitions
A bird of sorrow in my pocket
Singing sad lullabies of
Ignorance, and oppression
Marooning in the limelight
of a small child's unselfish love for humanity
Taking the hand of the colorless
Singing the song of the voiceless

See the croon, swoon, soon
revealing the distorted shadows
Of the once heard voice voice voices
Ghandi sewing seeds of fate
In a field of impoverished mouths
Growing leaves of change
In the unfortunate lullabies of hidden dreams
Transforming darkness in to ever voidless light
One mother lifting her voice
Above bombs bursting, erupting hatred upon
innocent eyes
Hear her song, as she swoons in the nuclear light
Holding words of peace upon her breast
Taking in the chemical reaction
That leaves the heartless unscathed

>>>

Breathe in the sweet, sticky, spice
Smell the earth between your fingertips
Smell the brine of heart and hearth wafting through your pores
Like tears of angels, raining down upon lost souls
Breathe in the scents of India, and Moraccan Night
Taste the dew and cinnamon upon your tongue
Quiet, Unselfish, Moving
Charity knelt before you as
A Monk
Who kneels before the begger
Washing your feet
Clothing your body
Tending your wounds
Feeding your soul with honey and melon
Chanting words of love and zen in breathless speech
That only one may speak

Hear the words of wisdom and peace.
Feel the pain of the unnamed.
Taste the hunger in the mouths of the hungry.
Hear the cries of the motherless child in the night.
Breathe in the love of the countless many.
Speak the words of comfort and reform.
Hear the clatter, clatter, pattern
Of the shiney metal coins
As they travel
Journey, palm to palm
Love to Need
Stranger to brother
As one becomes many
In this journey of change

"Journey of Change" by Jenna Arthur

and then I sprayed them with lye

for they say in the village
bury the pickle-in-brine jar
deep into the earth;

let it be;

till you unearth it
for all the soaking in,
for setting it apart like good wine
the longer the tastier.

They say in the city

that the dearness of wine
the tenderness of the virgin mango
increases with the years.

I do this with my poetry
spray them with memory
and a little lye, and let them be
till one day they become candle eyes
floating on my computer.

"Virgin Mango Pickles" by Sivakami Velliangiri

Oh Love,
that which You will find
beyond Your front doorstep,
that which will enter
Your circle of existence
in times of necessity,
in times of plenty.
There is no coincidence.
Life touches Life.

In this vivid day-to-day
You are not
the only one who needs,
but You may be
the only one
who has the opportunity
to fulfill a certain dream.

Each situation,
each person unique,
each skill and ability drawn
from different wells; these separate are fine,
apart works okay...
but stir them together
and The World will change.

"Embrace It" by Jen Pezzo

Let us make unmitigated joy unto the noise
rising up with offerings from our lungs
cranking the music louder than lions
playing unfettered beneath egyptian
stars and moonbeams bright with bits of
powdered particles of pyramids
showering down on sphinx's hint of smile
holy as any mona lisa's laugh

"Celebration" by Barbara Moore

Who has time for a daydream?
Or a sun-kiss on the cheek?
Who has time to smell a flower?
Or enjoy a small treat?
Who has time to wonder?
Or imagine the finer things?
Who has time for laughter?
Or to suddenly begin to sing?
Who has time to think?
Or drown in a lovers kiss?
Who has time to be aware?
Or realize what we've missed?

"Busy" by Elisha Aglioti

Would you walk with me
if I were hungry?
Would you have eye contact with me
if I were hungry?
Would you listen to what I had to say
if I were hungry?
Would you help me spiritually
if I were hungry?
Would you share your food with me
if I were hungry?
Would you?

"If I Were Hungry" by Peter Hessman

some people say
love is the answer to everything
and when I think of it
I don't see any problem with that
everyone keeps saying
just be a better person
and when I consider it
I think why not

If you are just a little better person tomorrow
the world
will be just a little better

"Hard to Disagree" by A. Molotkov

She laid there, unfocused eyes
covers pulled up tight, as dawn
shrieked through the windows,

that's when weight absorbing motion pressed down on her,

she's just trying to travel the distance across her bed
to put one foot on the floor, reach out, open the door,

papers in a pile filled with tiny numbers
grinds down on her smile, makes her bones ache,

no amount of knowledge can change
the simple math needed for a roof, heat,
feed her babies,

simple math can't calculate the look
in her child's eye as no not today
echos into tomorrow,
before her toe even touched the wooden floor.

"Solitaire" by Steve Thomas

The road between pain and peace,
One littered with the potholes of anguish and struggle.
This road called life, traveled an infinite number of times,
Worn away by the feet of all of those before and still to come.

Walking, I remember every stone,
Every rounded, marbled piece of gravel.
The smallest, and most seemingly inconsequential, I remember the most
For they are the ones that gave me hope and propelled me
Out of the holes I fall in,
Over the hills of struggle
And toward our desired destination;
The freedoms to love unequivocally, hope immeasurably
And the strength and guidance
To lead even the unable through every road way journeyed
For it is the journey that makes us who we are;
More than human, more than soul.

We are the journey; we are every road we travel,
We are every person we meet; we are every stone and pebble,
Every blade of grass that is dispersed amongst the cracks we trip in.
Traveling toward the journey's end looking inside
Our hearts beating in symphony with the tides,
Our souls blazing brighter than any supernova.
Both, heart and soul, knowing the truth
Of that which we are, always have been and always will be,
And that is simply:
We are everything; Past, present, future. We are
Whole.

"The Road" by Craig Firsdon

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