



a tiny inkling  
of things  
far beyond me

poems and photographs  
by Jana Kelsay



I'll pay attention long enough  
to one day suck in my breath  
and close my mouth around  
the whole wide world.

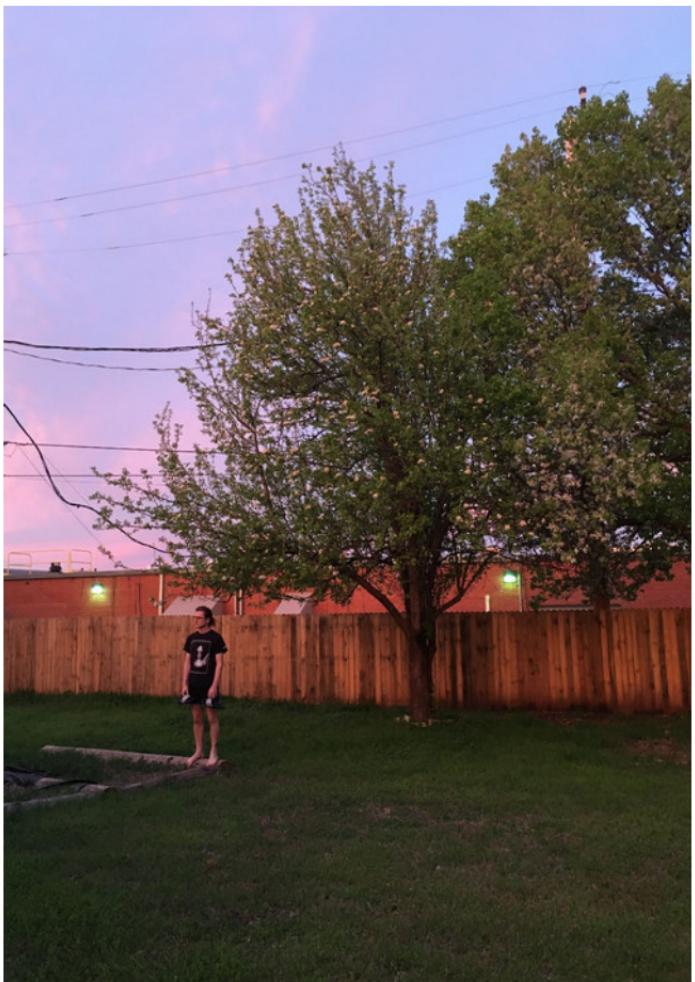
Inside me at the center of it all is this reverent belief that I am Someone Extraordinary. From this center comes the voice that writes.

I knew it when I was a child sitting in the grass in my backyard. Sitting in the grass in my backyard as a child I could feel my whole life happen, and it felt important. Monumental, even. The voice from the center whispers to me, hoping to expand, to realize its potential.

The rest of my body around the center doesn't believe it. There is the pragmatic constitution of my head and limbs to work a job. I can't be convinced that the feeling in the center of it all is true, if it means anything. I can't interpret the feeling into the movement of my hands or the direction of my thoughts. I am unsuccessful in the conversion of my ability into currency.

I am now an adult looking from the window into my backyard at the overgrown grass. This day looking into the backyard from the window where I, an adult, notice the overgrown grass, I am on the opposite side of the feeling that my life is Extraordinary. I confess that I am of no use.

But here You are,  
Someone Extraordinary



To write a poem

To write a poem  
I become solemn,  
Serious and still,  
Quieting my mind.

Rushing at the door  
Of my head  
pleading to enter  
Are feelings I have never felt  
And bad metaphors.

I take note of these  
Showing them through the house  
And out the back door  
As quickly as possible,  
holding my breath  
For the guest of honor to arrive.

And when she does,  
As we embrace, I'll say  
I've missed you and I'm listening.  
Truth will take my hand,  
Lead me to the bedroom,  
speaking sweetly,  
Calming my heart with her touch.

Before we begin  
I'll have a final glance  
At my reflection in the mirror.  
Put my hair in order,  
Note the clothes I chose.

My lover responds.  
Without a word of protest,  
She'll stop removing my clothes,  
Retreating as quickly as she came.

My face will grow warm  
And Shame, unannounced,  
Will break up the party.

There will be silence  
In the house I occupy alone,  
And a blank page, void of use.



## Eating my days

I'd like to sit down to a feast  
Of all the days I have lived.  
See them in solid form  
Examine each one by the light  
Note their purities and  
Certain imperfections.

To eat my days  
Would be an experience  
Of time that I can digest  
More sensibly than by  
Living.

Tasting, consuming, inhaling,  
Serve as senses more useful  
For knowing than  
Being.

Letting my body work to remember  
Each morsel of who I was  
On any given day - last week, years ago -  
Until I've had my fill.





crystal structure analysis

and so a gleaming shape emerges  
from a set of rules

a terrifying match of fates  
this is how the story goes

what isn't molten into what is

owed to divine transfiguration  
out of mythic schema

and so I face myself, go to work  
break the rock, eat the fruit

this is my promised life

what is forty years to Moses  
what is modernity to molecules

## Questions over coffee

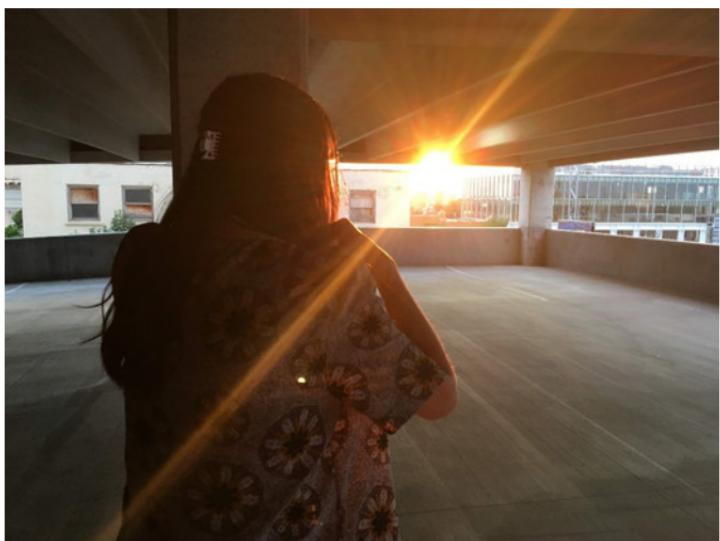
Is there something in my buying and spending  
and smoking and going?

Is there something at the bottom of the coffee cup?  
less fear? is it at the bottom  
of a bottle of beer?

Is there something in the work my hands can do?  
can my head, my brain, come up with anything  
new? does it matter if I do?

Is there something about my friends becoming scarce,  
becoming too much, becoming their own?  
did we grow up?

Is there something I left in a previous year?  
is it essential to my being?  
can I get it back?



Asleep on a bench

*Til human voices wake us  
And we drown*

I know that I'm experiencing a chemical imbalance  
But I wish you could feel the intensity of life that I feel.

I feel everything.  
The sun warming my thighs,  
The wind brushing my ankles  
Sleeping on a bench.

The leaves gracefully dance on the backdrop of the sky  
As it turns from gray to blue, then blue to gray  
While the clouds play tricks with shadows.  
I wouldn't notice this on any other day.





There must be something in the coolness of the air,  
The cool remembrance of another somewhere.  
I'm not here, oceans away the train is taking me to  
Shoreham by Sea.  
Then I wake up, alert to the feel of the wooden bench  
planted firmly beneath me.

I want to textualize everything.  
I want to take a bite from today  
And devour it for the rest of my life

I am dancing the expression of every moment.  
Watch my shadows on the concrete  
Conduct the shaped you've never seen before  
Like the waves that Eliot's mermaids  
Comb back and drown in. Wake up! Join me!  
Take my hand and take a bite of life!

## Preserving hands

I.

When I am old,  
Let my poems go.  
Float them on the water  
In the pink evening.

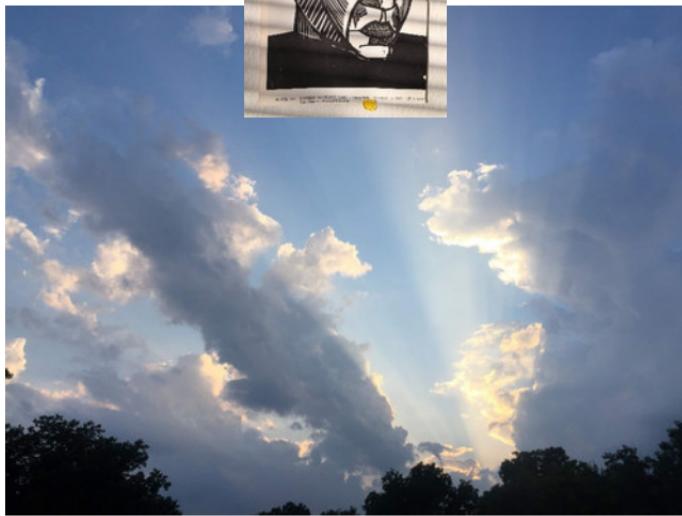
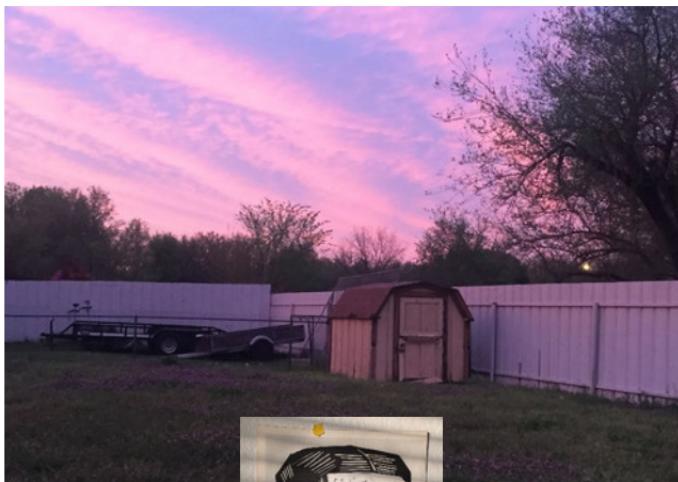
When I am dead  
Give my hands to the ground  
Return them to their birthplace.

Preserve the hands of those  
Who were better than I,  
Who could force the universe  
Into a ball, probe it with questions,  
Make words of the answers.

When my poems are written,  
Will I no longer feel this urgency  
To interpret everything I perceive  
Into words that mirror what I feel?

When I am dead  
Will I live in books?  
If you miss me will you find me  
In the words that I spilled,  
A product of buried hands?





2.

I feel power in my hands.  
If buried, they may spin and crawl,  
Move the dirt to find the light of day,  
Move until they find another way.

There is power in my hands.  
If I do not write the truth,  
If I do not pen the universe  
Into an essay, a poem,  
They will find another way.

Now  
I can taste it in my mouth,  
The Need to Be Alive.

Pay no attention to me until I am dead  
Then bury my hands.

From above the carpet tiles in your room

Out of my smokestack shoes,  
a billowing cloud.

My head, full of smoke  
Vaporous, my thoughts

Through a mist I see  
your face, familiar to me.

The height and depth  
of your chin, your nose, I know.

I plant my gaze  
on your whirlpool eyes,

I just noticed we're rising.





sitting idly by

my brother welcomed his son into the world yesterday

this morning I saw a train pulling along  
a hundred tanks

his lungs weren't clearing on their own,  
he's got tubes through his nose

someone is mobilizing some effort, somewhere, but I  
can't know it for certain

I know it's his care in mind, this tiny baby,  
but the tubes in his nose make me wretched

everyone along the path of the train slowed down, I  
wonder if they thought of war as I did

## My mythology

On an evening when the sun did not set by a contrasting glow a multitude of unfamiliar colors were made known and I might have time traveled

I visited an upsetting moment of regretful hesitation and from it I have formed my own mythology going blonde and blindly following it I am a hero with zero accomplishments and someday everyone will know that

I'm also a good guesser I think if you sit beside me on this bench forever you'll understand what I need but don't let me tell you come and see tomorrow the sun will rise indifferently and I'll think up a new story never write it

And that's mostly how I guess we'll exist in a soft romantic glow feeling every color shadow absence texture and change in the weather and then this show is over but not before we've come up with the best way to spend the light between sunsets

I have an idea of how it goes you and me thinking of everything and doing nothing



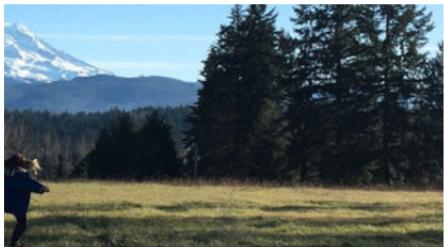


When I am alone

When I am alone,  
When I am surrounded,  
When I think,  
And in my thinking am alone  
While surrounded,

Stillness,

The pulsing of the world,  
The minute details of life,  
A shoelace, meal preparation, cartoon  
animation, commotion, the ocean,  
Envelope my senses,  
Pounding and rushing,  
*Give us attention.*



Stillness,

I am full of love:  
The stuff we collect  
And that we are collected from.

I am scared for the rest of my life  
If this is my resting state,  
My circadian rhythm, this pounding  
And rushing of life within me.  
When I am alone and idle. Hot. Sad  
And finding no reason.  
Feeling this and finding no source.

Aren't we beautiful on the trail for a moment?

It's half our lives we spend passing by  
us without seeing us.

Then autumn comes,  
and is not to be ignored.  
red yellow orange green blue  
today we cannot take away the tree's beauty,  
  
and aren't we beautiful, too?

If you took notice of me  
as you brush your toe across fallen leaves,  
to stop your parade along the waterfront,  
rest in a colorful pile,

and if you knew I was seated here  
with my sketchbook and pen  
writing a poem to you  
on your beauty...

The canopy's light rests on your shoulders  
giving you a hug.



On a retreat to the mountains, I escape  
to step outside of regular life for a time.  
The peaks dressed in winter white,  
time refrigerated by the falling flakes,  
and lovely folks around me, old and new,  
alight all the artist parts of my brain.

On a shelf in an old bookstore, I meet myself,  
a mixture of the past and future,  
and she is disappointed, mournful.  
While browsing poetry titles, she cries.  
I listen to her, and she says,  
you're running out of time.





On a separate shopping excursion,  
I adopt a pair of sunglasses -  
two perfect black circles to conceal  
the passing of time that my eyes can't hide.  
I show my friend of photo of me at 16,  
she says, you look exactly the same.

On my return flight, all that I am  
packaged back inside my bags, inside my body,  
my appetite for life appeased for the moment,  
I decide I like myself, and I can change,  
as everything will mix with time,  
coming out the other side, beautiful.

I cannot be certain what kind of life  
these poems may live,  
but they won't be staying with me any longer.



Jana Kelsay is a writer and maker residing in Austin, Texas, with beloved family members: husband and cat.

All photos, with one film exception, were taken with her iPhone.

More of her work can be found at [plebpoet.com](http://plebpoet.com).





