

FIVE POEMS

CHANGE OF HEART

Think transplant

but no scalpel

Think parting of the ways

but not sternums

Think rhythm

slow steady breaths

beats on worn dance floors

one two three one two three

but no machines

Think stethoscopes

hanging from metal hooks

listening to pipes in walls

Think blue gowns, masks

at Halloween parties

but no surprises

Think rubber gloves

delivering the goods at

Jewish delis all over town

latkes blintzes knishes

Think sacred hearts

filtered through stained glass

rain drops

myopic violet eyes

Think school girls in church lofts

singing off key

triggering pace makers in pews

but nothing a few rosaries won't cure

Think delicate crystal rib cages

wrapped around chalices

containing nothing and everything

Think

but

NO REASON NOT TO

write about cats

walk in the rain without a broolly

run through new snow in bare feet

row a liberated canoe on Lake Superior

sleep on pine needles in the woods

step up to the plate at a pizza joint

circle the wagons round peace and quiet

suck raw egg yolks from their shells

add rye to morning coffee like grandpa in the old days

arrive late for all appointments

admit age and inspiration in casual conversation

abort the blues

no reason not to

nod off mid-afternoon

notch trail markers on trees

nab bread crumbs from the grocer's for birds

sit in lotus position watching TV

sieve the past through dreams

savor the sound of wind chimes

saxophones steady hearts scotch tape

pulled from paper wrapped around unexpected gifts

NO REASON NOT TO

move to a new place
make double chocolate
muffins meander in the
midst of photographs brimming with

contentment
quiet wisdom hung on
crimson walls crowned by
cathedral ceilings

wander into unknown spaces
wean familiar faces
wave from lost and found
weave a mystery or two

direct cranial traffic jams
dive into the deep end
do the breast stroke
dye meditation deep purple

meet Japanese tourists
munch shrimp tempura
marinate in spicy ideas
molt tired skin fill

a glass book shelf with amethyst geodes
a goblet with cabernet
an open palm with leftover wishes

no reason not to

FRAMES

cafe breakfast
lox and bagels
communal table
bearded face at far end bugles
disappointment in wife/daughter/friend
rocky road voice
pebbled skin
eyes nose mouth
framed by time
troughs
landslides of memory
talk turns to missed
appointments
reliance on old women long gone
propositioned by
promises of heavenly
rewards in return for
perennial denials of pleasure
trench warfare against all
comers
coffee's not what it used to be
bugle boy says
gimme grounds boiled in a metal
pot on a wood stove any day
yearning for his wife/daughter/friend to
do her duty

ONE THING AND ANOTHER

Pastiche. Pantomime. Plant – an idea, an iris, a carrot, a spy.

Barbed wire fence distracted by Aurora Borealis collides with snowmobile, driver spread across crystals. Red tentacles reach the road. Daylight tells the story.

Girl runs out of party in tears, drives away, no headlights or seatbelt. Boy needs something to hold, grabs another beer. Girl's engine dissolves into centenarian cottonwood tree, setting it on fire. Cross, burned bark, plastic flowers mark the spot.

Dining room table, rarely used. Father in high backed chair with arms. Mother to his left between twin daughters, grandparents across from them. Dessert plates stacked next to white birthday cake decorated with pink roses. "Happy Sweet 16," says the cake. Girls stand, lean forward, blow out candles. Their wishes join a long list of family secrets. Applause.

Do or do not, Yoda says. There is no try. What's that supposed to mean. No try, no failure? No fear of failure, or success? Despite unanswered questions, try drops from dictionaries, psyches, team sports. Binary choice triumphs. Hurrah for ones and zeros. Ticker tape parades ensue.

Six a.m., working class street, circa 1950. Paper boy, milkman sleepy eyed at their jobs. Gray haired woman labors up steps to a porch, paces in her black thick soled shoes, keens late husband's name. John, John. Man in overalls and steel toed boots unlocks front door, calls her name without seeing her face. Gracie. She's done this at every house on the block since John died. The same thing happened when Ernesto, father of her three children, put lye in his

morning whiskey. Late for his shift, the man walks her home, feeds her coffee and toast, leaves her next to the radio for company.

As they walk through the small town park, Kate takes Anna's hand. Anna's pleased. Isn't this better, she says. Let's enjoy the moment, Kate says. Don't try to spread it like butter on toast.

All hands on deck, manicured, painted, swimming in lotion. Half moons at the base of each rounded nail wax and wane, though not with the tides. Horizon lines traipse across flat knuckles, disappear when fingers curl around ropes, pull up anchor.

Thumbs up. Thumbs down. No thumbs at all. Tom Thumb, Thumbelina. Joy to the world.

Change of heart. Barnard and DeBakey. Rejection a thing of the past. Scars kinder and gentler. Perspectives enhanced. Cliffhangers bypassed. Bandwagons reinstated.

Mad hatters. Hidden everywhere in plain sight. Coins from fountains enough to buy day old scones and curdled cream for high tea. Free advice for fictional characters. Takers depend on time of year and number of empty seats. Donations appreciated but respectfully declined.

Like a postcard from *Better Homes & Gardens*. Precise rows of patty pan squash, zucchini, rainbow tomatoes. Heirloom beans wind around willow poles. Blue pea blossoms draw sky to earth. Marigolds repel rabbits. Weeding, watering unwavering. Invitations to harvest, parboil, pack freezers ready. Wish you were here.

Travel Dreams

tickets to revised

self-portraits

red moons arctic

circles inchoate land

masses undulating purple dancers

naked except for dog tags

create new vocabularies

alter syntax change

circadian rhythms breathing

patterns rearrange

inner ears loosen

grips

sharpen retinas calm molten

temperaments reduce

spiritual tremors patch

fault lines in the

comfort of levitating feather

beds

