

## **Curated poetry from Renee Trudeau**

I love Chelan Harkin's two books: *Susceptible to Light* and *Let us Dance!* Buy them!

This is no time for small talk

This is a time for mythmaking

This is a time for epic poetry

This is a time to tell the tales of life, love, and resilience  
that will become our compass for the days ahead.

A time to remember the grace and celebrate the magic  
that infuses and informs this world.

We live on the only planet where an eclipse is possible.

Doesn't that seem like instructions to you?

To awaken from this self-induced slumber, to emerge from this contracted  
isolation,

We've got to drink down the darkness and dive to our deepest fathoms.

Peel off our fancy garments of presumed protection,

To land at the bottom, naked, cold, and bruised, with nowhere  
to go but up.

Time we shed the venom that got us here, the twisted rage of  
Blame and shame,

And choose instead the anger that rises, pure and clean, up  
Through our feet,

That draws us to our full height, knowing what must be done,  
Clear about what has to stop, igniting us to stand for what we  
love.

How else can we begin the healing?

The web that holds our world together is tattered,

And all our hopes and dreams are suspended in it.

No sutures, butterfly closures, or Elmer's glue can fix it.

Only our tears can begin to mend its torn strands,  
Tears and giving ourselves to feeling, loving, and losing,  
Mourning how much is dying, mourning so that the light can  
return.

The revolution must have dancing; women know this.

The music will light our hearts with fire,  
The stories will bathe our dreams in honey and fill our bellies  
with stars.

Exerpt, Nina Simons, from Moonrise: The Power of Women Leading from the  
Heart

### **The Way Under the Way**

Poems: Nepo

For all that has been written,  
for all that has been read. we  
are led to this instant where one  
of us will speak and one of us will  
listen as if no one has ever placed  
an oar in that water.

It doesn't matter how we come  
to this. We may jump to it or be  
worn to it. Because of great pain  
or a sudden raw feeling that this  
is all very real. It may happen in a  
parking lot when we break the eggs  
in the rain, or watching each other  
in our grief.

But here we will come. With very  
little left in the way.

When we meet like this, I may not  
have the words, so let me say it  
now:

Nothing compares to the sensation  
of being alive in the company of  
another. It is God breathing on  
the embers of our soul.

-MARIE BEYNON RAY

Begin doing what you want to do now. We are  
not living in eternity. We have only this  
moment, sparkling like a star in our hand  
and melting like a snowflake.

### **Chelan Harkin**

There's a love  
Asking  
To open in my heart  
That has no name  
That is vast and tender  
And eternal  
And contains everything.  
It is the shoreless sea  
It is the source  
Of all  
It is the essence  
Of humility  
It is the essence  
Of all  
And in this love  
I meet all of you again.  
In this place, in fact,  
It seems we have never  
Parted.

### **In You The Earth**

Little  
rose,  
roselet,  
at times,  
tiny and naked,  
it seems  
as though you would fit

in one of my hands,  
as though I'll clasp you like this  
and carry you to my mouth,  
but  
suddenly  
my feet touch your feet and my mouth your lips:  
you have grown,  
your shoulders rise like two hills,  
your breasts wander over my breast,  
my arm scarcely manages to encircle the thin  
new-moon line of your waist:  
in love you loosened yourself like sea water:  
I can scarcely measure the sky's most spacious eyes  
and I lean down to your mouth to kiss the earth.

**Pablo Neruda**

WE HAVE COME TO BE DANCED

by Jewel Mathieson

We have come to be danced

Not the pretty dance

Not the pretty pretty, pick me, pick me dance

But the claw our way back into the belly

Of the sacred, sensual animal dance

The unhinged, unplugged, cat is out of its box dance

The holding the precious moment in the palms

Of our hands and feet dance.

We have come to be danced

Not the jiffy booby, shake your booty for him dance

But the wring the sadness from our skin dance

The blow the chip off our shoulder dance.

The slap the apology from our posture dance.

We have come to be danced

Not the monkey see, monkey do dance

One two dance like you

One two three, dance like me dance

but the grave robber, tomb stalker

Tearing scabs and scars open dance

The rub the rhythm raw against our soul dance.

We have come to be danced

Not the nice, invisible, self-conscious shuffle

But the matted hair flying, voodoo mama

Shaman shakin' ancient bones dance

The strip us from our casings, return our wings

Sharpen our claws and tongues dance

The shed dead cells and slip into

The luminous skin of love dance.

We have come to be danced

Not the hold our breath and wallow in the shallow end of the floor dance

But the meeting of the trinity, the body breath and beat dance

The shout hallelujah from the top of our thighs dance

The mother may I?

Yes you may take 10 giant leaps dance

The olly olly oxen free free free dance  
The everyone can come to our heaven dance.  
We have come to be danced  
Where the kingdoms collide  
In the cathedral of flesh  
To burn back into the light  
To unravel, to play, to fly, to pray  
To root in skin sanctuary  
We have come to be danced

### **If You Want a True Friend Mark Nepo**

Just open your hands and say, "I don't know."  
  
Say it softly and wait, so your other can see  
  
that you mean it. Give them a chance to  
  
drop what they think is secret. Let them  
  
come up with a cup of what matters from  
  
the spring they show no one. Let them sigh

and admit that they don't know either. Then

you can begin with nothing in the way. Go

on. Admit to the throb you carry in your

heart. And let the journey begin.

**Nepo: The Friend** There is a friend older than birth who danced with you before you had a body, a friend who stays close to your life the way heat stays close to a flame. Can you feel it?

### **Love after Love**

*Derek Walcott*

The time will come

when, with elation,

you will greet yourself arriving

at your own door, in your own mirror

and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was your self.

Give wine. Give bread, Give back your heart

to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored

for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf

the photographs, the desperate notes,

peel your own image from the mirror.

Sit. Feast on your life.

**Chelan Harkin**

It's not so much that I want  
to know God

As to be close to the spiral  
in the seashell,

To feel the wind  
as my own breath,

To let birdsong all the way in  
to my being,

let my bones  
be the ledger lines

for its dancing song.

It's not so much

that I want to know God

as to be reacquainted  
with the intimacies of the stars

through remembering  
they've always shone from within

the expansiveness of my own chest



It's not so much that I want  
to please any Cosmic Authority  
as to be strong enough  
to finally hold every little girl still inside of me  
as she weeps old tears  
that were never held.

It's not so much that I need a particular  
place of worship—

I want to flee less  
the majesty of each moment  
that the humble door  
of my ancient heart  
be more willing to open  
to the wide beauty  
of the world.

My only prayer is to be excommunicated  
from ideology  
and join the congregation of morning dew  
shimmering with enlivened mystery  
and freshness,  
replete with sparkling wonder

It's not so much  
that I want to worship God  
as for my devotional practice  
to be opening  
my body to the living scripture  
of Life's movement  
as She dances Her desires  
through me  
and to remember

to say thank you  
with deep recognition  
for every small act of love  
that finds me.  
It's not so much that I believe in God  
as it's been taught  
but that all I desire  
is to serve  
the One Great Heart  
that lives within us all.

### **Chelan: Cracked Open**

"She's having a total breakdown,"  
One put together  
and very self-satisfied seed  
with no cracks in it  
whispered to another  
about a third seed who had begun  
to germinate.  
"She's completely falling apart—  
her life is a mess!"  
They gazed superiorly  
at the smooth, intact facade  
of their shells  
so perfectly upholding  
expectations of the status quo.  
Clearly, compared to that wild,  
sprouting seed

disrupting the peace,  
they were doing something right...right?  
But now and then,  
they secretly looked up  
with longing  
at the tall stemmed  
beautiful and bravely opened flower nearby  
wondering if there might be more  
to themselves.

And one day,  
when the inward agony  
of her outwardly perfect  
and tidy life  
became too much,  
one seed scooched herself  
close to the flower  
and asked in hushed tones,  
“How do I become more like you?”

And the flower smiled,  
“You must first be willing  
to have a total breakdown  
of every identity you’ve known  
and then you must be so bold  
as to let your previously predictable life  
become a wild, sacred mess.”

## **A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted**

BY JOHN O'DONOHUE

When the rhythm of the heart becomes hectic,  
Time takes on the strain until it breaks;  
Then all the unattended stress falls in  
On the mind like an endless, increasing weight,

The light in the mind becomes dim.  
Things you could take in your stride before  
Now become laborsome events of will.

Weariness invades your spirit.  
Gravity begins falling inside you,  
Dragging down every bone.

The tide you never valued has gone out.  
And you are marooned on unsure ground.  
Something within you has closed down;  
And you cannot push yourself back to life.

You have been forced to enter empty time.  
The desire that drove you has relinquished.  
There is nothing else to do now but rest  
And patiently learn to receive the self  
You have forsaken for the race of days.

At first your thinking will darken  
And sadness take over like listless weather.  
The flow of unwept tears will frighten you.

You have traveled too fast over false ground;  
Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up  
To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain  
When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,  
Taking time to open the well of color  
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone  
Until its calmness can claim you.  
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.  
Learn to linger around someone of ease  
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,  
Having learned a new respect for your heart  
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.