

ACOSVO Poems

Morning

A newly born November
pulls the sun a little closer,
so that we meet it
eye to eye
as if the sky were a blind
stuck two thirds down.

Everyone's breath hangs still
once it has left their mouths
as if to remind us
that after the death of autumn's dregs
we shouldn't leave
all our living behind us.

It's time to ease out hands
from the cosy cave
of lining in coat pockets,
to grab a hold of ideas
that others were too quick
to drop,
to stop
sprinting,
to dismount a deckchair
don a lanyard
and listen.

Fingers have remembered
their correct colour
that the cold had reported
missing,
as they are thawed
by handshakes
in the first coffee break.

We take our seats.
There's a muffled rush
as the room fills up
with faces you've yet to meet
but names you know
from emails,
and that feeling
that yesterday's problems
are only ours to beat.





Rebels with ACOSVO

What makes a rebel special
is having a cause,
not just causing trouble.

Not carelessly placing bets
but taking measured steps
to make things better.

When a rebel rebels
they use only the letters
contained within themselves,
shift where the stress sits
and become their own verb.

A rebel's wheels
are prone to skimming the kerb
but they don't leave home
without a helmet.

It's not about dangerous living -
a rebel speaks dangerous words
that are sculpted first.

A rebel doesn't scribble inkless plans
they draw lines through
what doesn't work.

A rebel knows not all rules
are built to break,
it depends how they're made.
Are they gloss painted
to cover up greed?
Are their foundations weak?
Are they ancient ruins
of a previous mistake?
A rebel knows what is required
and what we no longer need.

A rebel juggles
while riding a unicycle
but always at a sensible speed.

The Conductor

Silence exists at its loudest
right before sound

I feel like I'm watching the film
of this moment,
impossibly long seconds dragged out
to decades
between each fixed movement
 violin on knee
 on shoulder
 elbow
 and bow

The room is every temperature.
Nerves make palms clam cold
But paint cheeks with heat.

He looks at me
and everyone else.

We all see our names
in his eyes that don't speak,
hundreds of children
have waited for his arm to rise
but he learned each of us
in the space of weeks.

He makes us breathe
at the same time
without a crescendo in his tone,
he makes flutes and oboes
understand the cellos,
he builds everyone a home
even in the solos.

He looks at me
and at everyone else

He could handwrite the music
note for note
but still studies it
as if its answers were infinite,
he can feel every mark
that Tchaikovsky wrote.





He knows when I'm miming.
Sometimes I don't
trust my fingers enough
but keep the bow moving -
not on the strings
just half an inch above,
I think I'm subtle
but he knows something's missing.

I look at him
and so does everyone else.

Under his baton
we are all important,
he never lets the prodigies
get too full of themselves,
he says, listen
to the pendulum of the triangle
or the double bass that plods away
with the same two notes
for the whole first page,
no instrument is more important
than the sounds we make.

When it's time to take a bow
he claps us
with a smile stretched across his face
and he is always the last
to turn around.

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