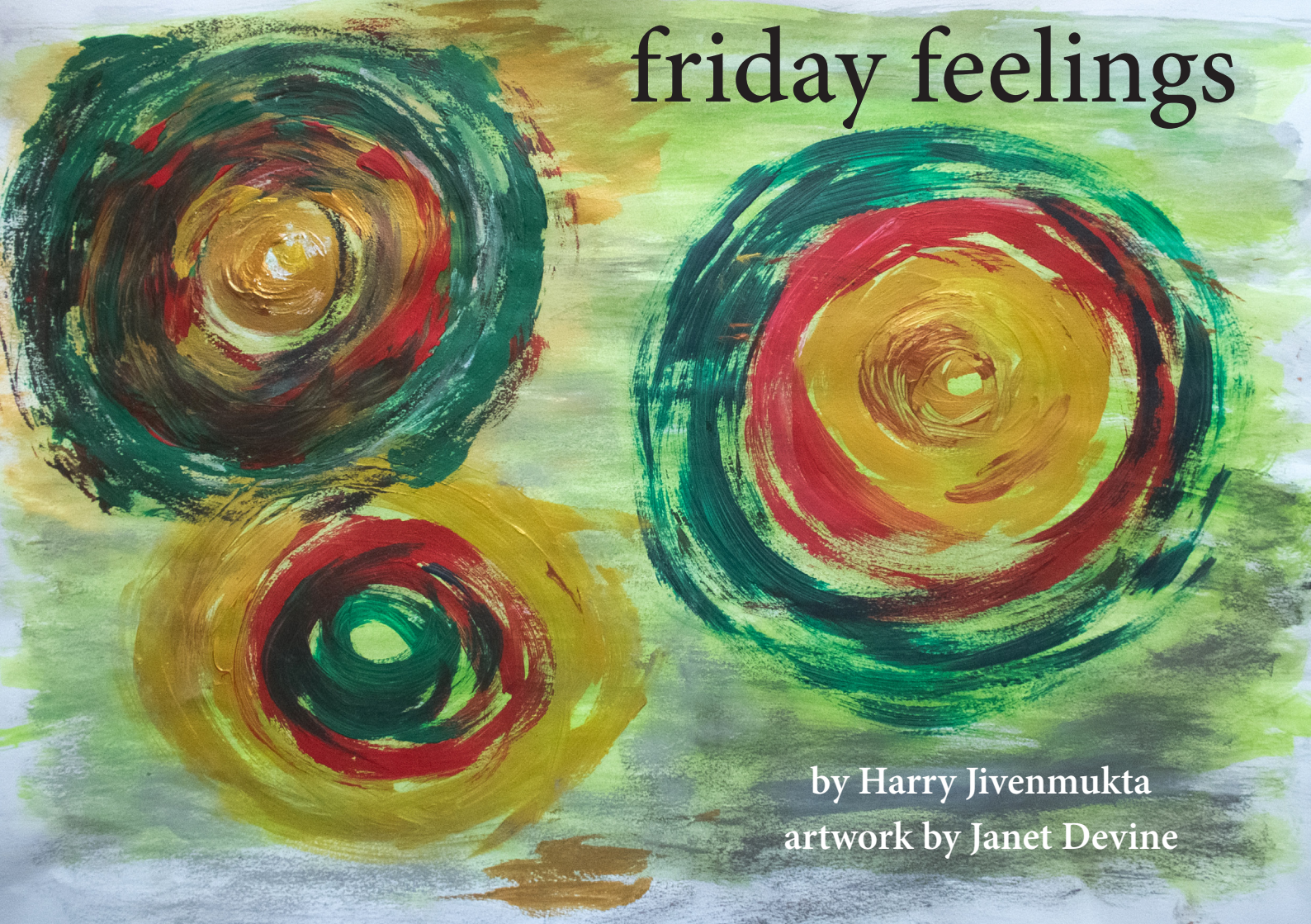


friday feelings



by Harry Jivenmukta
artwork by Janet Devine



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friday feelings

an incidental diary by Harry Jivenmukta

Background

I've been attending a writers workshop called 'The Write Stuff' for a few years now. It's held most Fridays. When I get home from the session I drop the page of poems in a drawer and generally forget about it. One day, being at a loose end, I opened the drawer and found a thick pile of sheets, all handwritten, and realised that I had inadvertently collected a diary of thoughts, emotions, memories and snapshots. And so, I decided to compile them into a collection.

The workshop itself is brilliant, because it allows like-minded people to get together, and there are a lot of writers who attend. This collection is dedicated to the members of the workshop who always inspire me.

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january

Art

Some artists really
have no limits.
I was walking in town
early one Saturday morning
and there it was:
a work of art from
the night before.

Someone had expressed themselves
by vomiting up
the remains of what looked like
a Chicken Tikka Masala:
a bouquet
of chrysanthemums,
mixed with marigolds,
reds and yellows thrown about,
chilli powder and turmeric,
the smattering green
of coriander leaves.

And for extra effect:
a boot print of staggering
energy,
little drips
leading off along
the pavement.

Unwholesome Pretences

It makes me weary
cold as ice.
Pointless arguments.
Unwholesome pretences.
Eyes crying onion tears.
And parties to
show everyone how
jolly we can be.

Extracting the bones
of a long dead romance,
resolute, like
wedding rings,
bands of imprisonment.

That was most of my Christmases.
None of that this time.
This time was magnificent and for once
very happy.
I was united with myself.
I pulled a cracker on my own.
I won the little toy inside.

Irrelevant Information

13 people died in a car crash in Florida, the foreign
secretary of Australia has resigned, and there has
been a storm somewhere in South America.

Why do I need to know this? Why does the news
continually fill me with this nonsense? I don't care
about the foreign secretary of Australia, or the
dead people in Florida. I don't know them, I don't
want to go to America, and I can't bring them back
to life.

Digging deeper, I have found loads, truckloads
of irrelevant information inside me. I started
to dump it down the drains; the dry bits can be
burned. In the end, all that's left is a big happy
emptiness inside, until I turn on the TV again, or
until I meet someone who does care and thinks I
should care as well.



Dostoyevsky's Pen

The rough quality of my pen,
grating as if the
point is filled with sand,
reminds me of the
pen used by Dostoyevsky
writing in the Russian winter.

Scratching on a worn out
feather tip,
a single
candle flickering ineffectively
in the moonless night.

Alone and cold
warmed only by the vodka
eating away at his organs.

february

Greetings from St Petersburg

I designed a card that read
'Greetings from St Petersburg'
and took it with me.
I was travelling there,
but wasn't from there myself.

We drank champagne and
ate raw fish,
a tradition of mine.
I even pretended that
we had caviar
but that was just a fantasy.

I took my friend Petrovich
down to the café on the
corner of the Kursk Road.
We had hot buns and green tea
with a side order of 40 percent vodka
in tall tumblers.

As we warmed to the day
we watched the snow
building up outside.
We laughed at memories
and the comrades and communists.

This city, the home of writers:
Pushkin, Turgenev
and Dostoyevsky,
not to forget my favourite, Gogol.
Writing poetry in St Petersburg.
My city and my comrades.



Curd

** based on a true story*

He just wanted some
curd with his chapattis
but the curd had finished.

He was finished,
always second best
in the family.

The final straw was
the end of the curd.
'Tomorrow', he was told,
'You can have as much
curd as you want'.

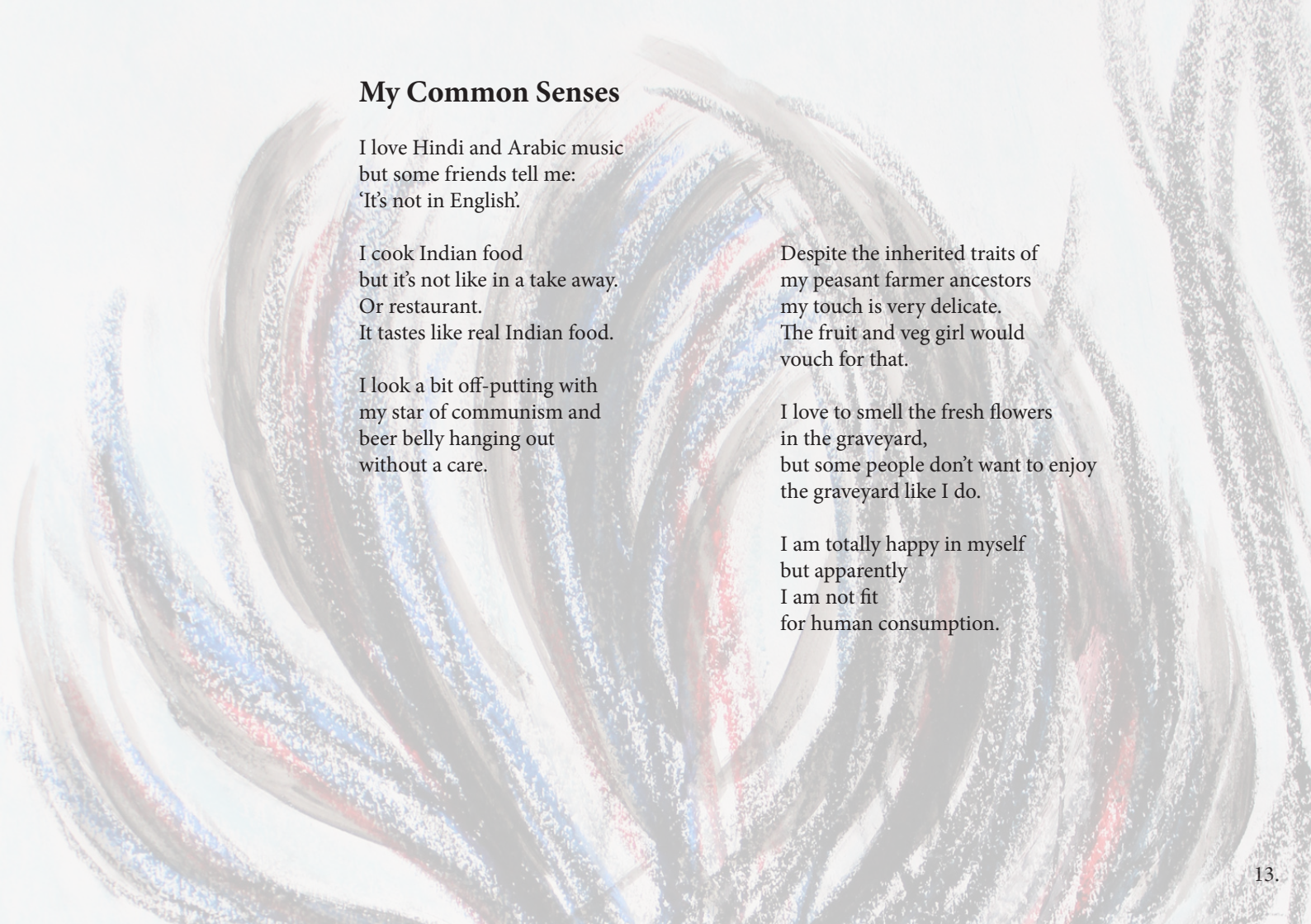
Tomorrow was a
long way away
so he put down
his tray,
chapattis half finished,
stomach half full,
and walked off
to the fields.

To the well that
had snakes
but no walls.

He paused to look
up at the Panjabi sun
and plunged to his
death
because there was no curd.

Five Die in Afghanistan

Walking in the park yesterday
I passed four TV crews.
It's a long way from Afghanistan.
Even Harry Gration
was wondering why
he had to wait
until 6.30pm
to report live from
Greenhead Park.
In any case,
by the time he did report
there would be nothing to see
except darkness.
Afterwards he might engage himself
in a warm cup of coffee
and reflect
briefly on the story
before going on to
another story.



My Common Senses

I love Hindi and Arabic music
but some friends tell me:
'It's not in English.'

I cook Indian food
but it's not like in a take away.
Or restaurant.
It tastes like real Indian food.

I look a bit off-putting with
my star of communism and
beer belly hanging out
without a care.

Despite the inherited traits of
my peasant farmer ancestors
my touch is very delicate.
The fruit and veg girl would
vouch for that.

I love to smell the fresh flowers
in the graveyard,
but some people don't want to enjoy
the graveyard like I do.

I am totally happy in myself
but apparently
I am not fit
for human consumption.

march

Lies

I've been lying every day
this week.

I didn't apply for any jobs
but said I did.

I told someone I still loved her
when I didn't, but didn't want to
smash her dreams to smithereens.

I said I wasn't sad
when a friend wanted pity
but instead I gave him
a verbal kicking to
keep him going on the
straight and narrow.

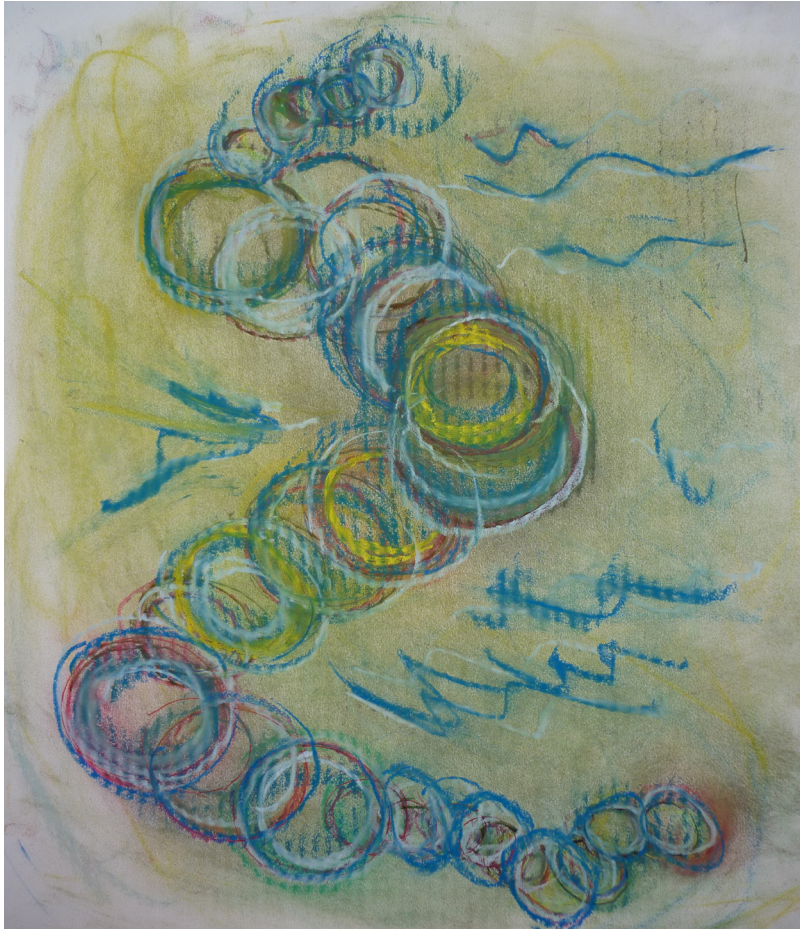
I lied when I said
I never lie.

I told the truth
only once when I saw
a rainbow
in the morning sky.

Found Guilty

The authorities have finally
caught up with me.
This morning I was found guilty
and sentenced to 13 weeks.
But because there is so much demand
for places
they released me
and told me to report back
at 9am on Tuesday May 3rd.
I have five weeks left
including the interruption of
the things I would rather avoid,
like that wedding.

So I will surrender myself
at 9am on Tuesday May 3rd
and lay down my freedom
and liberty.
I will ask them to take me
and remould me into
a better machine.



Spring

Springs are very useful
especially in mattresses
and in spring-loaded
hinges.

Springs are like life
with an endless descending
or ascending number
of circles
all under pressure
and then allowed
to relax.

Only to be put under
pressure again.

We are like springs
but we aren't made
of metal.
That's why sometimes
we collapse and
can be crushed.

april

Waiting

Sometimes waiting
can be better than starting.
Waiting to get in,
to start.
The expectation
raises blood pressure
and eyebrows.
Where is Simon?
Did he forget?
Did he forget?
And what is the time?
But waiting can be
as good as starting,
exchanging small talk.
All along
there is glancing out of corners of eyes,
and looking past the person
you're talking with,
and the doubt
about the small realities
and expectations.

Friday the 13th

I chased a black cat
until I was out of breath.
I had to stop and retch.

I found two ladders
to walk under
but never got caught
by splashes of paint or
drips of water.

I did get bird shit
on my shoulder
and someone told me it
was very lucky
but it would have been best
directly on top of my head.
So I walk around trying to
get a pigeon to do the business.

Friday the 13th doesn't know
about me yet
but I have the rest of
the day to keep trying.

Power Play

Impotent people
seek orgasm through
power.
Their pound shop batteries
run down
like a bucket of cold
water splashed on
an intertwined couple.

Imagining her to be
more like the porn star images,
and for her,
he might really be a hunk
instead of twenty stones
of flab and gristle.

Turbo charged with Viagra
it's easier to be virile
by proxy.

Remembering Baku

The sun was rising
as I stood on the
quayside at Baku
looking out eastwards
over the Caspian Sea.
Soon to be in Asia,
my heart still stretched
in longing.

She had decided to stay
behind in the
ancient streets of Tbilisi.

Dal Lake

People dream of going
to Kashmir,
of setting out on
a Shikara* on Dal Lake.

We were told it was
too dangerous.
It would be dark
by the time we returned
and the 'terrorists'
would be on the loose.

A once in a lifetime chance
missed
as we turned and left.

** a boat found in Kashmir*

may

Chasing the Pot of Gold

I missed the bus
by seconds
and so I turned
away in exasperation
and saw, in the sky,
a curving rainbow.
I decided that today
might be the day to
follow it and find the
pot of gold.

And I did.

Although the pot didn't
have gold in it,
but fruits.
Dates from Morocco,
oranges from Tunisia,
raisins from Algeria.
At once I was in a speedboat
on the Mediterranean Sea
with the sun on my back
and the hot African breeze
Racing along with me.

I was nudged back into Huddersfield
by the next bus that came
calmly to a stop to collect me.



A Waste of Ink

Sometimes it's good to be blank
like a blank piece of paper.
I wasn't blank until
I sat down here today.
I was full of it.
But then the blankness came
like a sheet of heavy rain
and soaked me with bucketfuls
of barriers until
I was stopped.

I tried to shelter under
my rainbow creativity.
It was futile.
I have just wasted
lots of ink and a
sheet of paper
to say nothing at all, really.

Speechless

...like when one of my
plants, dying,
sprouted a new bud
against all the odds.
Like when my brother
had a heart attack.
Like when a friend of mine,
after 23 years, found me again.
As I sit, I realise
that I find myself
not speechless
at all.

A Chest of Drawers

20 years ago someone
bought a chest of drawers
and decided it would look
better painted white.

10 years ago someone
bought a chest of drawers
and decided some idiot had
painted it white,
and they spent a week
rubbing it down and
returning it to its original glory.

Yesterday someone
bought a chest of drawers
and decided it would look
better painted white.

In 10 years time someone
will buy a chest of drawers
and some sandpaper
and hopefully will slip
on a banana skin,
break their leg
and stop this madness.

Six Bananas

I just wanted
some bananas,
six for 10 Rupees.

When I turned to
go, I bumped into
someone
behind me
in the queue.

Six bananas are small
compared to a
patient elephant.

june

The Mannequin's Thoughts

When no thoughts come
does it mean the moment
is empty
or is emptiness
something that fills the moment?

Is an empty moment
full of something that
you can't simply put
your finger on
but exists nevertheless?

Does anyone care as long
as I stand the way I am
supposed to?

On Holiday

I've been away,
although I didn't
go anywhere.

Once I didn't write for five years.
I have only written
six poems
in a month.

Egypt is freer,
Tunisia is free.
Bahrain is ready to fall.

Nectarines are 10 for £1
and Curry's has extended
its sale for another week.

Tranquillity

If you want tranquillity
never tell the truth.
The truth always hurts
and the hurt person
hurts you back.

When someone hurts you
it's like throwing a
jigsaw puzzle in the air.
You will be in tatters,
angry, disjointed and
drained with exasperation.
All you wanted to do
was help.

Tranquillity and wholeness
comes when you mind your
own business and keep
your good intentions
to yourself.

Sanity

Last night I had
a really bad stomach ache.
The last time I had one
was in December 2003:
the catalyst
that led to losing
my marriage
my children
my job
my home
my sanity.

This morning,
when I woke up
my sanity was still intact
my possessions
my flat
were still mine.
The ache was gone.



Replay

Today, someone will be sitting
where I once sat,
on Juhu Beach, in Mumbai.
And when I sat there
I remembered the time that
others had sat there before me.

Once, in 1939, a poet
fell in love with
the famous Indian singer
Shamshad Begum.
As they were sitting on the sand
watching the huge red ball
setting on the Indian Ocean
after the heat of the day,
the poet looked up
and saw,
in the collecting darkness,
the moon becoming visible.

He said:
'If you want the moon
I can pull it down for you.
If you want the stars
they will sparkle in your hair.
Or if you want to know
how much I love you
I will cut my heart into slices
and spread them in front of you.'

july

Retch

Do we retch when
we have too much
of life?
Or does life make
us retch
so we don't absorb
too much of it?
So we don't enjoy ourselves
too much?
Or have too much fulfilment?
Or feel so exuberant
that we start to become
ourselves, to the point
that we no longer care
about the pain and misery?

I Am

I am by my absence.

Not on the electoral roll.
Not replying to the Census.
No bank accounts.
No credit cards.

I am not as they
want me to be.
But for myself,
I know
who I am.

Reflections on Love

1
Love is mushy
and comes
with peas

2
Friends come
to your
Facebook account

3
Love comes
between childhood
and cynicism

Marriage Counselling

He was purple from
anger as the old
man said:
'Perhaps you should
separate for a few
weeks and think over
what you want to do.'

Very sensible.

The man with the
purple face replied:
'Old man, keep your
mouth shut or I'll
rip your moustache
off and stuff it in
your pocket.'

Very reasonable.

Square Pegs

When I got up this morning
I felt distinctly triangular.
Yesterday I was a circle.
Who knows what tomorrow
will bring?
I might be a pentagon, a hexagon,
an octagon, or even a
dodecahedron.

Stepping out into the world
I have to saw off the sharp bits,
sandpaper down the edges.

Yet, when I am with
my friends,
I always feel I fit in.
They are as
misshapen as me.



august

A Poem by My Friend

A friend of mine always spends his weekends dressed in his pyjamas, pottering around his home. Apart from feeding the birds, he has no interest in the outside world. One Sunday morning, I visited him and he was full of energy, telling me that he intended to get out of his pyjamas and do lots of things. I was very impressed and left him to get ready. At some point after I left, his enthusiasm waned and he ended up doing nothing. Later that day he sent me this poem:

After all the
mouse laid plans
my day hangs
fruitlessly
abandoned

by Eugene Ramsden.

Illusions

When I looked out of my window
all I could see
were the monsoon rains.
The warm full drops
that bring rebirth
and life to everything.
I played love songs in Hindi
and drifted off to a
different reality
of sunsets, stars and the ocean,
hot curries, lotus flowers
and ecstasy.

Despite the cold awful
British weather,
it hasn't rained a drop
this week.

If I could be Anyone for a Day

If I had to choose
I would be myself.

Right now I am an Inuit
from Yellowknife in Canada,
so that I
can enjoy my
North Pacific caught fish,
Yellow Fin Sole,
and a bottle of
Australian Chardonnay.
A sort of
Inuit Aussie, I suppose.

The Dandelion

You don't have to buy the seeds
or plant them.
You don't have to water them
or feed them.
Or prune them.
And one day,
having forced itself
up through a tight gap
between flagstones,
there it is:
big, round and yellow
like the sun.
The dandelion.

The dandelion doesn't ask
anything of anyone
yet still people step on it,
kick it or poison it.
All the dandelion wants
is for you to look at it
and smile.

The dandelion is not like a rosebush that
has to be fed and watered
and tended.
And when it decides to flower
the rose presents itself like a
member of the aristocracy.
And we have to
stand around
and ooooooh!
And ahhhhh!
And sing its
praises.

The humble dandelion,
the proletariat
of the flower world,
just wants you to smile
and feel good.



september

Codes

If you get the code
wrong, sometimes
all you suffer is an alarm
going off.
But what if you get
a dress code wrong at a party?
Or the telephone code wrong?
Or your PIN code wrong?

What if you don't support
a war?
The government's code:
an enemy of the state?
An undesirable?

The best thing is to have
just one code
or no code at all.
Like me,
anonymous.

Out of My Window

I wanted to be in Egypt again.

I look out of my
window:
the canal is the Nile,
only about a millionth of the size.

Castle Hill becomes
the foothills of the Himalayas.
And stretching to the corner of my
window the dark peaks become
the high mountains.

I play Virtual Pool on the PC
and remember the game
played in Thailand with the
Bay of Bengal lapping up the beach.

Everything I ever want can
be seen through the window of my
flat, or the window of my PC.



Desert Sounds

Intricately carved window shutters
thrown open to bring life.
Particles of dust
cycle and wash around
like words from a love song,
an influx of guitar rhythms.
The language of a lazy afternoon.

For the Lives I'll Never Have

I have walked away
from many deaths.
Situations
that make me cringe,
feel embarrassed,
fearful or breathless.

An accident like
a motorway pile-up.
Making love in a graveyard.
Racing through the streets of Kashmir.
Waiting for roadside bombs.
Watching old people die
in the custody of people
I don't like.

The lives I'll never live.
I'd rather not have had them.

See You Upstairs

I can't see you
upstairs
because I live
in a one storey flat.
So we'll have to
do it here,
downstairs.
If you're shy
there is a bedroom
although I prefer it
on the sofa.
You can pretend
we're upstairs
if you want
and then pretend to
come down
afterwards.

october

** In October and November I was infatuated with my vegetable girl, and so the poems offered on these pages are all about that infatuation.*

How It All Started

I fall in love five or six times
every day.

At the market the lovely girl
serving at the fruit and veg stall
caught my eye.
About five feet tall,
brown hair tied back in a pony tail,
about ten years younger than me,
very slight protuding teeth
that make her even more attractive,
and dressed for the cold
so there are no bits and bats
to evaluate.

Like all lovely girls
when I put all her
attributes together
there is music in my heart.
Not a 108-piece orchestra just yet,
but growing
from a single recorder
into a string quartet.

Loose Words and Good Onions

I went to the market
as usual to get
some onions.
But the sign did not read
Onions 27p lb
as it normally did.
Instead it said:
Good onions 27p lb.
And that threw me into a spin.

Did it mean I usually
bought onions that weren't good?
Or were these particularly good?
Did it mean she also sold bad onions?
And how much were *they* for a pound?
And what makes an onion good?
Or for that matter, a bad onion bad?

I asked her
what was so good about her onions?
She looked at me
with a sideways glance,
as she continued
to stack pineapples.
She didn't say a word.
I took this to be a sign
of repressed passion
and imagined
that she would now
fill her nights
with extended fantasies of me.

At home
the meal I made was delicious
with bits of good onions mixed in
with a nervous uncertainty.

Tangerines

I heard her say
to a customer that
there were ten tangerines
in each bag;
'I know that because
I packed them myself'
she said.

Back home I hummed
with a growing warmth
as I peeled a tangerine
handled personally by her,
for me.

Possibly the best tangerine
I have ever eaten.
I sucked
the sweetness, inhaled
her perfume.
Her orange aroma,
packed into a tangerine.

For me.

Capsicum Peppers

She was sorry
but this week the peppers
were more expensive
than usual.
I told her not to worry
and almost blabbered out
that I was in love
with her.

She turned to take money
from someone else for
half a pound of mushrooms.

I compared the green pepper
to her earthiness and honesty,
working long hours
with no time to stop to think
about anything,
let alone falling in love.

The red pepper made
me catch my breath:
passion, heat,
sweating bodies
intertwined.
No time to serve other customers.
No time now for winter woollies,
instead flimsy silk,
stockings and blushes.

The yellow pepper didn't
raise anything in me,
so I put it
in the freezer,
for now.

november

Healthy

She didn't realise
that she was turning me
from a beer swilling also-ran,
into a fruit and veg-eating
health freak.

I am a poet by vocation
but even I cannot think which
words,
in the few seconds it takes
for her to serve me,
will tell her,
inform her,
fill her heart with my love.

What can I say in between
'£2.54' and
'Here's your change'
that might shock her
into a split second of realisation
that I want more than her plums,
at only 50p a pack?

Four Days

The market is on
four days a week.
For three days there is
no point in walking
to the empty shell of
cold metal stall posts.
There is no sign that
she had ever been here.
No cauliflower leaves
scattered around the floor.
No whiff of
fresh tangerine.
No regiments of leeks.
No call of her voice
to impatient customers.

I miss her on those cold
windblown days of
emptiness.

Cheese and Onion

I can see that she is flagging.
What makes a fruit and vegetable seller
eat crisps?

She must be pining for me.
Perhaps she is too shy,
unable to break out
for a single moment
from her routine
to tell me
the things I dream of telling her.

She flashes glances at me
and must know that I only
get served by her,
that I wait until she is free,
to graze her palm,
with my coins.

And is it me
or does she touch my hand
and linger for the split second
longer than it takes to
give back change?

My Vegetable Girl – The Final Chapter

My mother wanted aubergines and so I hurried on to the market. Everything had been a bit dodgy with the Vegetable Girl ever since the incident with the oversized potatoes, but my heart still sang when I thought about her. I saw her standing there and slowed down so she wouldn't think I was too eager. With a sinking heart I realised that she had no aubergines on her stall today.

'Excuse me, but do you have any aubergines?' I casually asked.
She locked eyes with me and replied, with more than a hint of venom in her voice:
'If they're not out, it means we haven't got any.'

I looked down towards the other vegetable stall. They had aubergines. I hurried over and grabbed two. As I held them in my hands, my eyes automatically returned to her. She stared back, desperation and abandonment in her eyes. I put the aubergines in my carrier bag and turned to walk past her.

Spying her sideways, secretly, I saw a single tear in her eye. Her look spoke to me: 'This was the last betrayal, the last time'. I stopped and turned and told her with begging eyes: 'I would never have bought aubergines from anyone else, but you didn't have any'. She replied: 'You could have had anything from my stall but you deliberately chose the one vegetable I didn't have'.

With a last spiteful look that lasted a second too long, she turned to serve a man who was fingering her mushrooms. If only she had kept her aubergines for me.

december

A Visit to My Father's Village

She was slicing carrots
when we arrived.
Having not seen
her brother for 13 years
she simply looked up and said
'So you're back'
as if he had been
away for just a few hours.
He replied,
'Yes'
and sat down.
No tears, no hugging,
no questions.
The tea was nice,
and a passing young lad
was given 10 Rupees
and sent to
the local shop
for biscuits.

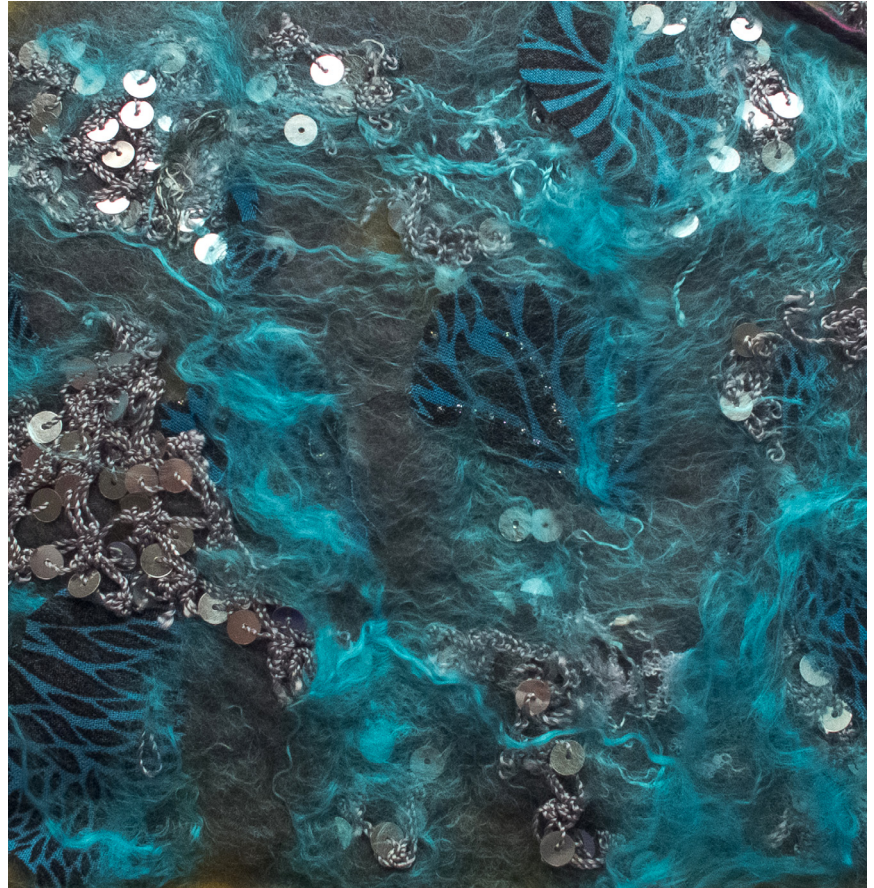
Two Sisters

The two sisters were excited.
A trip to the Himalayas!
They screeched and beseeched
until we all relented.
They piled into the van and were breathless
until we started the
climb into the mountains.
Curving, spinning, bend after bend,
rise after rise,
until both sisters were yellow.
Then they started.
Spewing up everything
it seemed since their birth.
How these girls had
so much inside them to spew.
Bucketfuls.

After ten hours of
travelling we arrived at the hotel.
They went straight to
bed and saw nothing
of the mountains
until it was time
to spew all the
way back down again.

Yekaterina

I never really saw
Yekaterina's home
because just outside Moscow
the snow was eight feet deep.
All I can say is that the
roof was pointed
and inside it was warm.
Her mother made
a hot pork meal
and we ate it with
sour cream and bread.
Yekaterina tried to educate
me about her country
but all I can remember
is the white-out,
and the blue ribbon
she wore in her hair.



Pot Noodles

When I am tired of laughing
at the antics of the world,
the people I know,
and the processes of the every day,
I eat crap food.

Pot Noodles are funny.
Funnier than people slipping
on the ice,
rushing to spend their last penny
on Christmas presents no-one will like
but everyone will pretend:
'It's just what I always wanted'.

Silly, like waiting in a queue
to pay the bills.
Like telling the girlfriend you love her
whilst ogling the girl in the tight skirt.
Pot Noodles are my favourite
until January 1st when maybe I'll choose
discounted luxury mini mince pies.

Tranquilisers

I thought the end was nigh
but then watched
Fleabag Monkeyface
on TV.

Thomas the Tank Engine
always gets there in time
in the end
and Amanda's Goldfish
can cross the road
on its own.

The end isn't nigh at all
just suspended
from 6 to 9am
during
pre-school TV.

After that
something is always at hand
to numb the rest of the day:
propranolol, wine, whisky, weed,
or for odd balls,
chocolate and cake.

Seasons Greetings

If I give you a
shop bought Christmas card
you can be sure
I don't like you.
Lazy, standardised
commercial drivel.

If I really like you
the card will be home made
with love and possibly
a few lines.
Words that mean something.

If you don't get a card
at all
it means you really mean
something to me.
I don't want
to love you just one day
a year.

bios

Harry Jivenmukta

The following story sums me up to myself. It is both true and blasphemous.

The girl scoops rice into the empty skull and the tantric is grateful for some breakfast. She, innocent, goes on to the temple to offer the rest of the rice to Shiva. The tantric smiles at her innocent ignorance because he is Shiva.

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Janet Devine

I have held a studio space at AiM (Artists in Mind) for 4 years where I have specialised in abstract illustration and exploration of landscape and nature. I have exhibited at Lawrence Batley Theatre, Batley Library and Packhorse Gallery, Huddersfield.

As a member of the Write Stuff collective for over 4 years I have had poetry published in the collections: *Write Stuff 2*, *Write Stuff 3*, *Remembering - A Creative Journey to Wholeness* (AiM) and was short-listed in the Leeds Peace Poetry competition. I have performed at Huddersfield Literature Festival, Ilkley Literature Festival, and the North Light Gallery. Currently I am working on compiling my debut collection of poetry.

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Blurb

