

Karma Bank to Following By Listening

By

Chiemi



This is dedicated to those who listen and have listened to my songs, tunes, ditties and written meanderings for years, providing invaluable feedback, suggestions, support and encouragement along the way. I am ever grateful to you.

Sometimes I feel like creating is following by listening, trying not to get in the way, and reflecting things back because they are bigger than you, just (hopefully) adding your own insight so that they can go back out into the world. These are some of the things I've heard recently and in the past few years. I was introduced to this sort of listening in 2019, when someone suggested to me that experiences of grace and acts of generosity might be viewed as coins that we put in the karma bank.

Chiemi

October 2021

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Collection From the Karma Bank

These are tales, tides and tinkling lights - tunes telling stories of warmth and sun, city and sand,
paths that lead, and the coins we can keep in the Karma Bank. Spirit's been bypassed for sorrow,
dreaming of a better tomorrow ...

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9/28, 29, 30/2020

When People Matter

And you want to catch it, (to) whisper it,

Faint like fireflies.

Because the tide can, come up to the treetops,

And buildings dissolve in sand.

You've something left in, the soundlessness,

Amber surge, (sweet) taste of brine.

People who matter, haunt us in moments,

Stay with us, seep words in our days,

Where memory and motion, aren't evenly weighted,

People who matter take all.

Outside the porthole, dusk softens tree points,

Like turtles, we're hidden and exposed.

All at once, we're just people,

Blue tinge yields to dawn.

(Some) people surprise, link things other say,

Should not be connected,

Shape perception, for the future,

Dancers with no tune, just beat.

A ball thrown, wants to be caught,

So it won't fall forever ...

You can live in this thin crust,

Never see the underground river...

Winter evening, grey mirror pavement

I reach to grasp your missive.

Flashing color, for my eye to interpret,

Dark scribble in a pale sky.



July 2020

Stories We Tell Ourselves

A saga of blessing
Green long since, burned away
By the sun on the sea
Fish darkening water
Sky shimmers, fractured light

Your same self
Can be elsewhere, sometimes ...
Continue those silent conversations
Leaving rain in the voice ...
Letting night birds drop from above ...

Yet horses are running ... deep under the earth
And we are so aware ... no need for complete sentences.

Your can hear the fighting breeze ... and the splash of water hitting ground ...

How laughter sounds in open air~

Storms blow through us

Time measured in meaning

Displacing air in a room ...
What you don't realize you say ...
Stories we show to one another ...

Do I feel a ghost, like a voice from an empty campfire?

Sometimes what seems like smoke, turns out to be rain ...

Do I hear some notes, like a line from an unsung lullaby

Something that looks like smoke, could always be rain ...~

Black water at night
Collects on the shore path
Light pieces, brilliant and scattered ...
(You) shield your eyes, squinting to see ...
Stories we tell ourselves ...



May 2020

Other Spectral Flames

Fleeting impressions, expressions of you

In a bird's eye, a continuing reflection, caught in limbo ...

Maybe moving forward or away ... to a better place, anyway ...anyway...

In another world, just beyond sight

A seascape bleeding, a sunset blaze

Violent pink streaked with orange ...

Doused in the ocean, burning the sky ...burning the sky ...

We feel dizzy and sometimes fall

But keep walking where sorrow and joy intersect ...

In the strings of an instrument, coloring vast distance ...

Where pipe dreams can continue ... continue ...

My ship on the horizon's suspended

Between air and water aflame

Confused visions captured

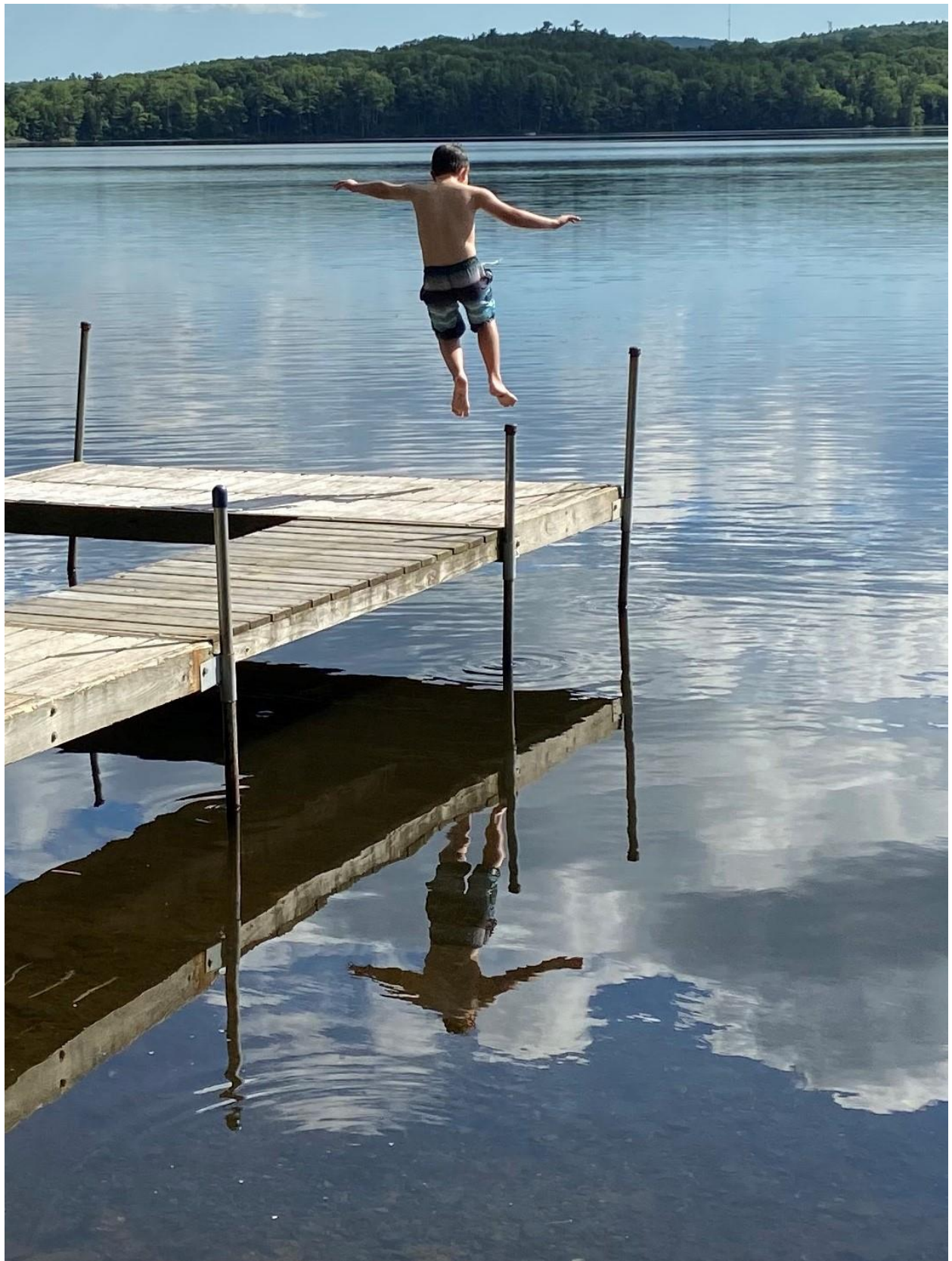
In a shifting boat, fading into morning ... into morning ...

Was there an explosion?

Dust settles, forms necklaces ... outlining what remains

The fan of memory, with its folds

Hiding the truth, when our endings don't belong ... don't belong ...



August 2020

See Our Déjà Vu

Names change, depending on
who is speaking.
We are all books,
But with different histories ...
Memories not exploring the past,
But its theatre ...

It's like waking up in a dream,
(To) go straight to the shore,
(Just) footsteps away,
Down a mountain of rock,
And in another dream, in another dream ...

The birth of anything,
Looks like a wound,
But nothing is born,
Without bleeding, some pain ...
Growth to explore the future,
And its theatre ...

Déjà vu's not real,
It only exists in your mind.
Like magic, you feel,
Something, not real.
Something not real,
Just like something here ...

People define
one another like colors.
There's no pure, blue, red or yellow,
Just the present uncertainty,
The good kind, in theatre ...

Evacuation Day in Boston is remembered as the day when the Brits left. In 2020, it was the day when Covid became real and had effect, causing the city to be vacated...Hawaii beaches to be vacated.., the beginning of everything coming to a halt. We'll never be the same.



Evacuation Day (3/17/2020)

It's a song too familiar, to need an author

Looking thru the lens, of what we know now ...

Not the people we were, but the people we are...

Not the people we were, but the people we are...

We are all quarantined, or about to be ...

Being in, kept in ... Being with, how strange, or about to be ...

What are silent conversations?

What comes of them?

Lots of strands, like seaweed ... living intersections

Maybe they follow, coalesce .. converge, then change ...

Re-emerge again.

You run and run, turn into smoke,

Float and float, drawn to beauty ...

A sun formed of crushed stars ...

A wave's kiss slaps the shore ...

Flowers with roots, bound to earth.

The dizzying tide pulls away from your feet,

Your fingers in the sand ...

Blown by the wind...

Across streets, under doors ...

Makes us want to listen, makes us want to hear ...

Makes us want to listen, makes us want to be near ...



Can your story sing?
Words left over from another time ... a special time ...
Within walls, with people like you, with you ...

Preserve the mystery ... it has a purpose ...
Sometimes, keeping layers ...
All that nuance ... makes beauty ...
Makes beauty

Sharing stories ... memories ...
To build a new future ... from the one before ...
We were all made to meet ... and see in a new color ...

Preserve the mystery ...

Another range ...an octave between ...
Where we could touch ... and where we need to go ...
The space in between ... imagine that place ...

Are there memories locked inside ...
A house with no doors ...

Shadows falling; falling shadows ...
Across the floor ...
What is done ... undone ...
Ashy twilight ...

Preserve the mystery ... it has a purpose ...
Sometimes, keeping layers ...
All that nuance ... makes beauty ...
Makes beauty



Seasons Bypassed Altogether

August 2019

Two friends, walk on rocks ...

What do they talk about?

Streams running into pools ...

What do they talk about?

Piano strains from a pocket ...

What do they talk about?

A device that carries, creating backdrop ...

What do they talk about?

Visions don't come with explanations ...

They are still yellow, disappearing ...

Like an eclipse, June twilight ...

Seasons bypassed altogether ...

Seasons bypassed altogether ...

See the white moon sliver ..

A trick, some shadow ...

Are colors revealed?

What do they talk about?

Words are streams, meandering lines ...

What do they talk about?

Turning and shaping memory ...

The ghost of who you used to be ...

Sometimes you may just need to reflect ...Dreaming of a better tomorrow ...



What if the crystals piled up and stuck,

Despite the wind.

Expressions fade, but remain as gems ...

Kind acts, before a sinking ship ...

Mutual sharing, is a natural gift.

Digits on hold, feel my nails...

Coins in the karma bank ...

Coins in the karma bank.

I see a flag and stairs ...

Buildings in the sun and snow ...

Pills through a window ...

Kind acts, before a sinking ship ...

Does my rosary matter ...

My spirit's been bypassed for sorrow ...

Dreaming of a better tomorrow ...

Dreaming of a better tomorrow ...

Kind acts, before a sinking ship ...



Taking A Taste

11/10-12/2020

Writing a work that could end at any moment.
Not just the now, different versions of validity ...
To go on living, love is like grace
If it fades, warm memory still enfolds
Even if flowers, had no chance to grow,
Sun rays, no place to fall ...

(But] I thought I saw
Pools and streams
With tender trees by logs drowned
Rising up from a lake like mystery
Deep and dark, beauty a given ...

Shadows of wasps on the windowsill
Black against glare, they move towards the light
Unable to reach it, following each other ...
No way to escape, they still face outside,
Light is all they know

You may see a stranger, and see a soul
Like a flame, there's no turning away ...
You may feel air, moving and alive
Laced with lime, marshy tang on your face ...

The ornery have no easy answers
No plain meanings, just hidden patterns.
Mystical modes can plumb their wrought paths.
With good self-doubt, your world becomes altered ...
Let go of your view, it may no longer be true
A taste can change your way.



Photo by Ken Bernstein

When you get inside of it, consumed by the wind,
Breathing a melody, you don't understand.
Another place to see and reach ...

When you're out of body, you always come down,
Your spirit needs dancing feet, moving without words ...

What is simple, yet beautiful from attention,
(Like) finding a secret room in your house.
Time is not endless, try to hold it in your hands ...
And it will always slip away. [chorus]

Sky lying everywhere, hot blue above,
Long grass, rippled; urban whispers too,
Concrete with spider cracks, street whirl & café glass,
Birds who see it from a distance.

When you dream, you sail through grass,

No boat, no pole, no black water ...

When you dream, you move like a heron,

Wings beating on, no hard landing. [chorus]

You can be still, like a cat who draws you in,
Never giving too much away ...
But it's the eyes, that let you inside,
So you can see the dancing feet.

Still Wide Awake in the Now

Evocative songs about living in this time, seeking serenity, and appreciating what we have.

1. Where There Are Sparks
2. Other Openings
3. Unled Lives
4. Stories Running Within
5. Metaphors in Nature
6. Images Like Postcards
7. Still Awake in the Now
8. Transfiguring Faces
9. Chasing Ghosts Away
10. Benevolent Chaos





Where There Are Sparks

I thought I wasn't afraid to smile.
That songs didn't need to come out.
I thought that memories didn't need
To walk down a lane.
When the world is white and cold,
We listen, we pause,
Wonder about getting old, will we matter ...
 I want to believe in moonlight, resting and dormant,
 With brightness renewed.
 I want to believe that God is a sphere,
 Whose center is everywhere, confined nowhere.
What do children
See when they look at trees and paint,
When they touch things not real?
We hope they still find truth.
Time constricts and flatters,
Childhood thoughts on holidays.
Are our stories true or just
What we dreamed they say?
 Lines are easy, curves take time,
 Embedding our nails with the peel of the moment,
 Glimmering gems that vein the mundane.
We watch the children of now,
Their heat flowing, like molten rock,
In a virtual world,
Where sparks can make a change.



Other Openings

Something sticks, and you don't know why

Something matters, but it's hard to hold

Being in a tower, removes you from ground

A chimney, from space,

A cloud, from form

Sun streams in the kitchen window
Trees a lattice for the light
Birds are hungry, squirrels come
Rustling leave under the feeder,
The silence is deep and serene.

A spiral means, there is no end
A spiral makes room for adaptation
Always looking for other openings
We're almost out of the woods
But not yet free, there's only wait and see.

You hear the clanging of the gate,
Unlocked door, open in the wind
As though some ghosts were visiting
In a moment of restoration,
Like being in a boat at night.

Art transforms, evoking emotions

From ourselves, our transient notions,

Running on a track, train coming faster than you can run.

Lightening in a bottle, so many elements to catch.

We study what has been forgotten,
The constant gaps between things
Where a presence out of place
Is a mystery that's been missed,
A miracle, if you can see it.

We've all thought about going back in time, or if something never happened. What we get from that is hopefully, something that matters...



Unled Lives

Lives unled, for all sorts of ... reasons.

We make choices, events force our ... hands.

But most of all, we're just human,

Becoming more, with time.

While growth realizes, it narrows.

Plural possibilities end.

It's a strange sort of loss,

We value who we are,

While lamenting who we haven't become.

Unreal lives can be forgotten,

When we're swept up in our real ones.

But sometimes we're confronted,

And they shape us with meaning,

Found in what never happened.

History happening can engender

Other lives we see

Opening out to one side

Like an exit that, viewed from outside

Doesn't reflect our being. [Chorus]

Unled lives are real

To the extent we've imagined them

Every story has a turning point

For us to remember, for us to wrestle with

Unlived lives can liberate

Connecting the fragments within

Connecting us to others, like and unlike ourselves,

And though I value them,

I don't wish to have led one.

Sometimes stories inside of us keep going round and round ... if we let them ... Maybe it's good ... sometimes, maybe not



1/22-23/2021

Stories Running Within

Pieces of early sun, glancing off the lake's black gloss

Fringed by last night's snow

Rhythmic footsteps on the slippery pavement.

Glittering ice on the skeletal trees

Gray sky swaths overlap with the clouds

Day beginning as stories unwind.

There's a wild history unsung

People from the past, talking in your dreams

People whose connection makes no sense

But exist, strong as ever

In a past that seeps and stains instead of fading,

If you let it.

When you know someone well, you know them by their presence in space

At the edge of your vision,

In motion, in darkness, not just their face.

When we first meet people, we know them as they are,

But with time we see, the aura of possibility,

Heartbreak and beauty at once.

Stories serve a purpose,

Provoke thoughts that bind us to our lives

Suggest we should be grateful,

Sink deeper into the life we have, rather than

Dreaming of what we don't.

We all dwell in the here and now, but always changing and new,

Our selves and lives refusing to stay, while we seek to define their meaning,

Which will always exceed what we can know or say.



Metaphors in Nature

What is glamorous, teaches ambition

What is eccentric, teaches wit

What is passionate, teaches devotion ...

When the cold is past and gone,

Rain so fine only a tingle on the skin

(A) bird caught in the house leaves a blessing,

Bringing the wind within.

Denial by a listener inflicts a blow

When there's no belief, a part can't survive

The work of telling is not enough

There's a danger we'll remain unchanged.

But trees stir in the darkness, listening

Birds make startled sounds when the stars are gone,

Some people you seem to know when you first see them,

Others you can spend your life with and not really know.

We are brave and wild, more life in us than we can bear

Fire inside us unfolding, to share...

Existence is miraculous, the world could be revoked,

Yet, it's instead, sustained ...

We see metaphors in nature

Like no fear of what's coming,

Going with each moment, like nature does

A crisis reframes your vision.



Photo by Ken Bernstein

2/11/2021

Images Like Postcards

A way of holding, the world so loosely
Words get up and drift away.
But we remain, it's all within reach
At the mercy of our thoughts.

Leave off the lights, let things put on
Their daytime colors...
Shed the glaze the dawn slides
Across it all.

These are images, we keep as postcards,
From our lives
From a world we did not fashion,
But tries to fashion us.

Now I can see, snow in the green,
Unmelted in the hedge.
Dollops on branches, morph into shapes
Where the sparrows still sing.

What are those mental pictures, shimmering at the edges
Like trees leading perfect lives
Together and alone ... all at once
Rooted but holding things loosely ...

Spring can be slow, unfolding its power
Longer hours of rays
Begging us, to awake
See every day in color...



Still Awake in the Now

What would you do, with your last day? In a last message, what would you say?

Plants glow, a still livid white

As if blasted by the moon shining down

Shadows too long, so dark and crisp

That they look, to be slashed.

That we notice and inhabit those places

Transforms us every day

In little ways, when we don't even know it

We're awake in the now, still awake in the now, awake in the now.

Flakes when they fall, fall to the side

Disrupted by wind, leave an uneven coating

We want to hold, that pure imperfection

Before it melts, through our fingers.

Are we just cameras, panning backwards

Into scenes we can't get back?

We know there's a reason to remember,

Even if we dare not, look directly.

What would you do, with your last day?

In a last message, what would you say?

You hear who you are in how you answer,

Whom you're becoming, whom you decline to be.

We mentally record what's around us,

Scents of cedar, and of pine,

Colors that appear, breeze on chimes,

A composite to hold, in the here and now.



Photo by Ken Bernstein