

Odd Simple Beauty

By

Chiemi



As with my first book, “Karma Bank to Following By Listening,” 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 continue to be ever grateful to you.

One of my songs in this book, “Always Time to Climb” contains the line “Wonder born, of odd simple beauty.” When I first posted the song, in February 2022, someone said to me “I like the odd simple beauty. That would be a great title for something.” I agree. Thank you, Leah.

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I. Chasing Light With Darkness

We're still emerging from the darkness of quarantine and isolation. Hopefully, we can move into the light without forgetting the parts of the experience of darkness that make it now so much brighter. Darkness gives light contour, so much more depth than we realize. Recognizing that is what these are about.

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2. Things You Don't Expect
3. Much More Than Shelter
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Photo by Ari Goodman



Photo by Ari Goodman

Never Exactly Here Again

We want to chase the light, yet retain the darkness,
The dark that brings light, so much depth
That it's brighter now, than before,
Brings new dimensions, opens doors.

When you've been through fire, you come out with less innocence,
And a love of life, a knowing one, each moment at once,
Pleasure heightened by the thought,
That we'll never be here again.

We want to measure time, in a way that's poetic,
Feeling this strange energy that's chaotic,
Flickering from below, stitching back
To our melodic overflow.

With hands on my knees, notes spilling out on the floor,
There's a stillness and power, vitality and what it means,
For survival to soar.

We want to re-mix music, with the reality,
That there's always a noxious side,
That we're mortal, can't save the world,
Must submit to greater forces, turmoil.



Photo by Kira Seamon

Things You Don't Expect

Birds on sand, together and apart,
A dolphin's tail past the reef.
To retrieve pieces of the past,
Our songs are charged and brief.

Desert and water, an iceberg tip,
To retain them's like trying to catch light.
But a melody, we'll recall,
Adheres to our inner sight.

Where we were, how we felt,
Tunes wind inside our heads.
Notes answering or asking questions,
Magic present when they're things you don't expect.

We keep contradictory truths,
Iconic, ironic, real and fake.
Those that change and fall apart,
Mind bending moments for their own sake.

Life's inherent cadence, seeps in like milestone memories –
Your childhood home, a concert with a friend, the scent of candy from a factory.
They're shapes within shapes, eyes and ears changing focus,
Moving them through the world, part of your locus.

We yearn for transformative times,
Healing words swerving into lushness.
For universe, sound, and nature,
To converge, as sustenance.



Photo by Ari Goodman

Much More Than Shelter

There's a path to the house,
Through the sticks of all sticks,
Woods surrounding and enlivening, a rare chance for solace,
With a rush of freedom.

Technological noise, cannot penetrate there,
So you must open your eyes,
Glimpse water, a dividing wall,
Stone like an accordion.

Human habitat's much more than shelter.
It's happiness in space fulfilled,
Emotional equilibrium in a chosen place,
Belongings left where those held close can stay. Can stay.

Dematerialization aesthetic,
Creates a pleasant uncertainty.
Where does the building stand?
Home an outgrowth of the land?

Sorrow can render experience large and strange,
But can also help us find, our common story,
Tears landing like jazz chords, on resonating memories.

It's hallucinogenic realism,
And who or what it possesses,
The pressure that grief,
Exerts on expression.



Photo by Werner Schroffner

Airspace

There's an airspace laced, with placid coral strokes,
Palm frond silhouettes, buildings like lavender pegs,
In the shadows of the city below.

Gilt-edged, fading warmth, slips beneath the horizon,
By darkened trees along the ridges,
Water serene and surrounding.

When you're left to do what you can't avoid,
You do what's helpless and vital,
Lose the distance between thinking and saying,
Connect what's viable and can't be set aside.

The luminous view from the top of a roof, imparts a bewildering sense,
Of being in touch with things bigger than yourself,
Where everything and nothing is fixed.

If a new tale can transpire, perhaps we require, a different language,
One not fraught with cliché and anger.
If a new tune's made, to carry the day, maybe it can be wrought,
From sounds that convey, a better sense of play.

Re-natured prose, words like petals,
Open portals to another kind of world alongside us,
Visible, invisible and understood.



Photo by Ari Goodman

Leaves in Life

So many leaves, bright in the light,
Falling, turning, disintegrating.
We catch them, save them, let them go,
While their birthing tree remains.

Something can be a miracle, and a trick all at once,
But changing your life is the ultimate one,
Touring within your transformed self,
Dropping old tools, remembering how you felt.

Things on a slope, must keep their balance,
Watching, sensing, adjusting.
We move, we dance, hold each other,
Even a tree has roots underground.

When things happen, who knows what's good or bad?
We only know that they did, and whether we're happy or sad.
Feelings inspire empathy, open us to something else,
Survivors until others survive us.

Rituals should help us break patterns,
Musing, testing, trying as we may,
We connect, reflect, become different people,
Letting life improvise, the music we play.



Photo by Katrina Winzeler

Well of Wonder

Shadows beckon, black fully chromatic,
Melodies confounding, and natural.
Though it raises you up, love also sustains,
Lights you from inside, on empty days,
A well from which to engage.

Soft ripples on water,
Glisten as they still.
A climber nearby, projects its pattern,
Propelling the vision, an intersecting dance.

We take the unvarnished,
Make it familiar, pristine,
Find similar sounds in these spaces,
Deeply, slowly, invite the unseen.

It's like a call to prayer, haunting, sudden, unexpected when it ends.
Like an old poem, in the final act of loving,
Bare, unburdened, full of wonder, again ... wonder again ...

Striations orange and pink,
Cross the sky, fringed by trees.
Knowledge feeds the stories we see,
Which sets the powers free.



Photo by Ari Goodman

Sequential Selves

(You) compare yourself, to yourself, yesterday.

(Or) maybe years ago, when you were here,

As if a window to infinity's been opened.

(You) see your selves, as they are,

In and out of sequence, unbroken.

There's a journey, I am still on it, still going, God willing ...

Leaning against trees, using my body to see,

How things form and recede.

There are places, where beauty's born of gentleness,

That seems to stay the same, while we come back, changed,

Always something to attain.

There's rushing wind, here, tossing the foliage,

Stirring sounds that connect you, to other stories, different selves,

Things that weren't in view.

Travel's in the soul, not just space and time,

And also in dreams, where we absorb what's real and learn what's true,

Where the invisible's revealed, the hidden debuted.

There are movements, here, certain rhythm created,

The stories that emerge when you play, chord and earth vibrations

That line your pathway.



Photo by Chuck Sheehan

Tracking Goblins

If you sit, long enough you'll see,
Light, carve a life across the sand.
Silhouettes become acquaintances,
Telling time by the shadows that land.

Clouds in this place, of sandstone creatures,
Render them cryptic and wise.
It's a landscape of dulled quietude,
Teeming with glyphs, hermetic sky.

These symphonic forms, enthrall on their own,
Like visual equivalents of sound.
Stages of liberated dance,
Energized strands, geometry bound.

Each one's a whittled moment, like scrimshaw,
But messy, cultivated by wind.
While the beating radiance of the sun,
Rises up, like a living thing.

Goblin figures merge, like liquid stone, static and changeable as bone.
What's visible conveys, a parallel premise, together while apart's got benefits.

It's an atmosphere where everything mixes,
Without melting into one.
A paradigm of vital immersion,
Where identities aren't undone.



Photo by Ari Goodman

Always Time to Climb

Stillness can be your best weapon.
For permitting yourself,
To experience rather than produce.
To engage, rather than control.

When the sun's in your eyes,
And you'd rather fly,
Enjoy the view on the way.
'Cause there's always time to climb ... always time to climb.

When you're still, you can channel,
The ineffable, the intangible
Strings of experience, into something good,
Auditory and shared.

Tranquility and notes, can prompt introspection,
Conjure feelings, with or without words.
Music can be, a higher revelation,
Than all wisdom and philosophy.

Regardless of whether you're productive,
Life is happening,
Unveiling passing sparkles,
Wonder born, of odd simple beauty.



Sometimes places people love can evoke them. My father-in-law, who passed away in the fall of 2021, adored Mt. Desert Island, which this painting depicts a part of.

Painting by Leah Salow

Mental Missives

Grief's an emotion so large
It has no edges.
Roles we think won't be us,
Balancing on ledges.

To send a letter's to
Believe it will be read,
Not a time and place,
When someone's dead.

But mental missives come
When you're in a spot loved by someone.
You feel the person there,
In the seaweed, rocks and air.

You can make writing
A form of dialogue,
The intimate texture of conversation,
With no memory to jog.

Remembering makes the world vibrate with humor, wit and tenderness,
Feelings recognized in others, 'cause we're not so different ... not so different.

It's a lovely fantasy,
Turned into a shared reality
With others reminiscing,
Messages sent out with the sea.

II. Finding Space in Brightness

We seek the light and are sometimes blinded by it. Stunned. But when you close your eyes, you can still feel the warmth, see the glowing golden tint behind your lids – your own space in the brightness. These songs are about that.

- 1) Not Blinded
- 2) Built From Time
- 3) Barefoot View
- 4) Sunlight
- 5) When We Begin
- 6) Swan Sentiments
- 7) All That's Left is Zen
- 8) Woods and Faces
- 9) Haven Space
- 10) Illusionary Grace



Photo by Ari Goodman



Photo by Ari Goodman

Not Blinded

There are moments when we wish
We could stop time or slow it down,
Faced with something so divine and deeply joyful,
We wish it were prolonged ... prolonged.

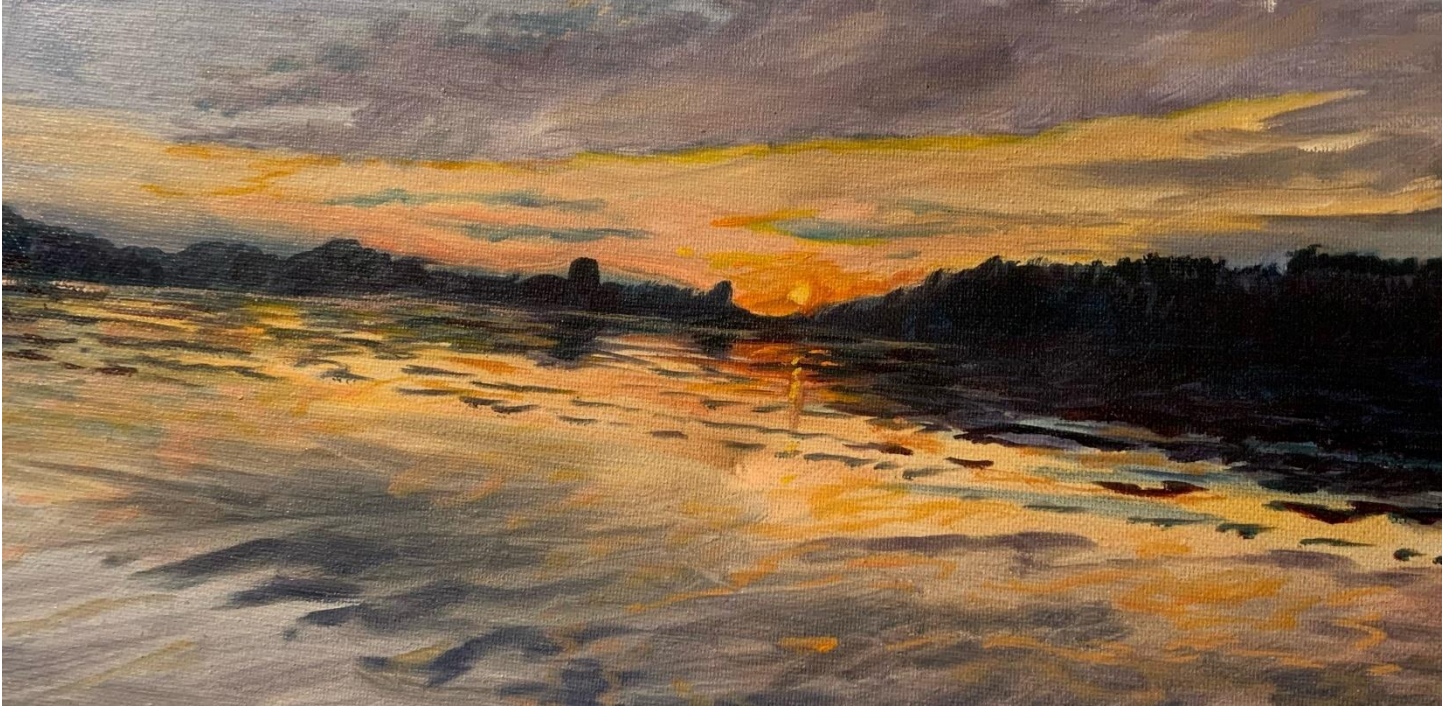
We seek the light, and can get blinded.
But when you close your eyes,
You feel the warmth, primed.

When you close your eyes, there's a glowing tint,
Your space in the brightness,
Safe behind your lids.

We seek inspiration, without burning in a flash,
How to stretch the present minute,
Save it from slipping into the past.

Recovery's about personal discovery.
Behind the boundaries of a comfortable reality,
Being transformed by imagining with clarity,
Being transformed to really see ... really see.

We seek to turn, the moment into a lifetime,
Because what you love, seizes your passion,
Affects everything.



Painting by Leah Salow

Built From Time

You feel the intensity,
Painting the water and sky.
No boredom in the silence,
Just a feeling of being alive.

Notes of shade and luster,
A monstrous, angled blaze.
Caught in time, like all of us,
Just a moment on the stage.

Time's the fourth dimension,
What makes a square a cube.
How we travel to the future,
Based on what we choose ... based on what we choose.

Do we turn from a sunset?
Look away to the trees?
As much as we are pushed by the past,
Hope affects what we see.

Time can be a building block, and also a measuring stick,
And the substance of everything in existence.
Time travels through us, as we travel through it –
We're built from time, bit by bit ...

What's terrifying about time,
Is part of its design.
While our bodies reside in the present,
Our past reveals the sublime.



Photo by Ari Goodman

Barefoot View

You want to take a barefoot view,
Step into the scenery,
Exercise absence of logic,
Slip away through the greenery.

The appeal of unrequited love,
Saves you from the act.
There's no real threat of failure,
Keeps the glamour intact.

It's impossible, infinitely irresistible,
Emanating silliness and love.
Sending out notes in the air, creates an atmosphere,
What dreams are made of.

Do you want to chase a mirage,
That won't give the promise it held?
Better leave it, intricately balanced,
Floating with, surprises where we dwell.

Don't be afraid of dark places, patchy scattered shapes and spaces.
If you can find a light to shine, treasures revealed might be divine.
Surfaces have an intimacy, begging to be touched.
If you can reach them with your hand, things that are hidden say much.

We all have our own deserts,
Where the sands are not the same,
That we're compelled to cross,
Nor forgetting from whence we came.



Photo by Katrina Winzeler

Sunlight

Some things we don't see, until there's sunlight,
Or some mysterious agency, brings form to sight.
Nonetheless, they are there,
Coming to life in the glare ... in the glare.

Gold flickers against blackness,
And we've left the city,
It's labyrinthine alleys and secrecy,
In rearview mirrors of what's to be.

Now there's light in the kitchen,
Weak and geometric,
Landscape ablaze, a photo to take,
The illusion of control and transcendence.

Precarious peace can be shattered in an instant.
Tragedy can lurk and bleed,
Hurtful words said or screamed.
But weaponized middle age can pause and see.

It's an age when we don't have to be wise, but know, at least, what's ill advised.
When we're stubborn enough to stay the course, too vain or practical to feel remorse.

When you pause and see, those words can just be,
Sounds taking them, somewhere free... where love is always the key.
The connections that bind us,
Are astounding and invisible,
Pulling in places we can't see or feel,
That only, make sense in time, when they're real.



Photo by Ari Goodman

When We Begin

It's impossible to hide from yourself.
The sound's already in your ear.
The hardest part is listening,
And it's possible to find yourself, anywhere ... anywhere.

You, the camera and subject,
All become one in an image.
If you're adored from behind the lens,
The viewer can sense the tenderness.

How do we look at a rainbow?
Or waves much greater than anyone?
We're tangible beings and revel in that,
Capturing moments to retain when we're done.

So we try to create things,
That will outlive the experience,
Exist without us, out of time,
Pictures and stories for others to find.

Invisible connections, exist that can be read, messages sent by the living and the dead.
Art can be a vessel, for use as a mirror, entryway to the past, who we are and what might last.

And how to tell it, so
It's not just a shared delusion?
As once said by Didion,
We know how to write when we begin.



Photo by Kira Seamon