

By the Same Author

The Things I've Got Growing Deep Down Inside.
stories by Jo Van Arkel, Aegina Press

Give Me a Hat to Wear

Poems
Jo van Arkel



Stormy
Weather
PRESS

1996

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Dedicated to

*Anyone who works in favor of honesty, trust,
and consistent acts of love.*



Open a Book

not just to any page
but *the* page

read more
than just the
leaves of this
tree

find and follow
each branch
to the
source

distant story
rivers
feasts
animals of
all kinds
gather at
the edges
an entire
forest!
wild whispers

let me rest
my head
in the crook
of a mysterious
life song
(for instance
outside the
glass
rain falls)

we look at
form and
light as if
we know exactly
what we
are seeing

scribble out maps
to each other —
as if we
believe some
one will pass
this way
again

Because of Wrinkles

I have been applying tape to my face
Just as the article says

Above the eyes
and between them:
I've made furrows from
thinking and thinking

Small bit of tape
on my cheek

here
and on this side too

See these lines running down
from either side
of my nose
to the corners of my mouth?
(Smiling too much I'm told.)

I'm not laughing. The little bits of
tape remind me to
hold
my
face
blank as
sheets
dressing a bed in which no one ever dreams.

My Blue Heart

I wear it on my wrist,
a bracelet.

At thirty-five
I am too old for this,
not old enough.

It is not yet summer
still I hear a hum
something singing

blue sky
blue heart
thinking of you
wherever you are

everywhere.

What He Said

Okay. Listen,
girlfriend.
You are

winter fruit
your skin
raw sugar

strong coffee
and milk foam
anybody who
drinks you
hot
better drink
you down
fast

you are mad
dance I've
seen you angry
the taste of
something wild
on your
lips

and you
resist
won't give

without a
fight
somebody has
to pay

I've seen
your dark
wine soul
the moment
after

a laugh when
you can't
hide

That's the
only kind
I drink

something
with body
something
with edge.

When Walking into a Quiet Room

make as much
noise

as possible
rattle
the door

bump into a few chairs
and take your time
finding a place
to sit especially

if other people
are in the room and

Something
Important

is going on
say excuse me
more than once

laugh nervously

drop a pencil
several even
make a solemn
vow to anyone
who will listen

you'll never be
this late again

once seated
wait at least
five minutes before
you open
that noisy
candy wrapper

but right away
start asking
questions.

Remembering the Divine

Once I rode in a
small plane piloted
by Jimmy Devine

who wore a cowboy
hat the entire time
and I think sang
to us from the cockpit

I had no fear
of flying then.
Since that time though

I've wandered
airports alone
and lost

myself. I've
sought mirrors to
make certain my face
was the same one I
wore

when I left. It's
because I met no
recognition losing
face again,

which has nothing
to do with
Jimmy Devine
except that
somewhere
I need to say

read about him
very next week.
Flew his fine plane
and a friend into a
hillside
simple as that

simple enough to
never forget.

We Begin By

adding water to
the powder of
our broken
souls.

You may
use your
own tears
if you
have no
other source.

One
drop
at
a
time

So the heart
doesn't overflow
with the
passion of
it all
(loving and losing.)

Once reconstituted
drink from
each other's cup.
Learn to taste

the bittersweet.

*While Swimming One Day My Friend
Has a Womb Experience*

I confess I am selfishly grateful
for the sound of my own breathing.

Roads suit me very well the
up and down of them and how
they lead me past someone
else's secrets.

But we do not always remember
that which we love best.

And some wheeling ways of motion
carry us further past
our current selves.

(Take a moment to
float in a color that's
not quite blue.)

"I could see my hands and they were tiny,"
my friend said. Water was all around
and that sound that

comes with water the roar
of something unfinished or
perhaps the other kind of
seminal sound:

another beginning.

*Even Though It's Getting Harder,
I Appear to Be Normal*

In elevators
I stand and
face forward like
everyone else

and on roadways
I still follow the
flow of traffic

at movies I
see in the dark
remain
in my
seat

I take off
my clothes
only in
private
places

(mountain tops,
old growth
forests and
mall parking
lots count
here don't
they?)

This Is the Open Space in Between

think of
fire of
words of
humming some
thing humming
think of rocks you
dig out of the ground
until your fingers
bleed think of water how
you move like water flowing
give yourself color I'll
give you blue and
yellow the blue is for
your eyes think
of motion the dance
running crying
no apology
a Yes.

Vacancies

Motel rooms

houses old ones
where the
occupants have
all gone on

stores out of
business

abandoned vehicles
of all kinds

eyes they
can be
vacant
too

motel rooms
did I say
that?

my heart my heart my heart

Stop. Start Over.

Drink something
that will wake
us all up.

We're looking for
instruments
something we
can use.
I'd like a
horn that makes
a loud flat sound.

Or maybe something
thin and wavering.
Stuff a sock in
the bell — muffled
that's how I feel
wanting to sing
but can't get the
sound out.

So let's not think
about what we want
to say. Remember
a dream that is
not sufficiently
finished — one with
windows one with
people who are whole
and not in danger
of losing their limbs.

Trade dreams like cards
with others who need them.

Give up on fear.
Eat enough.
Sleep enough.
Each day swallow
all the colors
around you.

Practice

Until you can look
without shame into
the eyes of the
ones you love.

Without Even a Compass

I have driven myself off the edge
of the map. Beyond bridges
and rest stops.

Where I have gone, there are no scenic views.

People say, "Where is she now?"
My mother calls again and again by phone.

I have taken all the highways
in both hands, the red ones
and blue. They wind like snakes
up my arms but I don't
mind. This way no one
can find me.

I have driven myself off the edge of the map.
(don't look for me)

Someday maybe I'll find my way back.