

Poets from across the country and around the world share with us their moments of the soul...

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*Spirit First*

Moments of the Soul



Spirit First

# Moments of the Soul



poems of meditation and mindfulness  
by writers of every faith

2010

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*Spirit First*

a softer ride

asphalt streets were made to make it a  
softer ride.

flatten out weeds, rocks  
flowers, growth and all impediments  
to our getting there  
faster, easier, better.

i am like you i  
want it too  
roads without potholes  
smoother curves, wider shoulders  
robust guard rails  
a G.P.S. and clean stripes.

you are like me  
beating down tireless native paths  
wearing old shoes  
lost in thought  
wondering how i got here?  
and where can i be going?  
knowing  
that all roads are in essence  
dirt roads.

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## BEING

Being apart is  
an illusion we  
all share  
together.

What is us?  
What is we? Is  
it the total  
And some of its parts?

My soul lives  
In old  
Hand-me-downs  
From another wardrobe.

## BETWEEN THE BRANCHES

There is knowledge to be had  
In this world.  
Not like pouring liquid  
Into a bucket.  
Not like collecting  
Small round tokens.  
Not like amassing anything.

Knowledge is admiring  
Beautiful tiny veins  
Of a small soft leaf. It  
just left the tree And  
now lives  
Between these two fingers  
Pinching it together.

Knowledge creates a smile  
Aware that the leaf  
Looks back.  
We two have broken away.  
We two are falling slowly and gracefully.  
We two have touched  
The earth.

The leaf turns over.  
It shows its face  
That sees through me,  
The tree,  
And the infinite blue  
Lost  
Between the branches.

## BREATHE OUT

Breathing every second of every day  
Winds sweep through my life.

Hidden behind these eye sockets  
Is the deep impression

Of a small infant.  
The beginning of motion.

Stretching out time  
Into a vast chasm.

Slowly, slowly  
I am reminded that

All people, things and  
Accessories of this world

Will one day ache of heart  
And lose their breath.

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## DEAR LIFE

When the heels of my hands  
Press together  
Into the shape of a cup  
They possess almost anything.  
Water, sand,  
Tears.

Two hands form a cloak  
Around my face and shade the room  
As the sound Breathes  
louder Through cracks  
Between my fingers.

Unshaven cheeks  
Rub like sandpaper  
On tender palms, various life lines  
And personal astrology.

It must be time  
For these bony knuckles  
To turn the handle  
And go  
Into the next room.

## Floating Buckets

I call out.

A silent song. No more words. No music. I  
dip my toes in  
Empty space.  
There is a vacancy. I  
like it that way  
So my trembling little heart  
Can feel the chords  
Of rushing waters  
Vibrate and ebb.

Silent songs.

Quiet stares. Deep regrets  
Move along  
To the next generation.  
I cross over to grey-haired shores  
Over flooding streams and  
Flowing rivers filled to the brim.  
Rivers that hide their tears  
Buried in the currents.

Rivers that

Once sparkled with hope,  
Awaiting to catch  
Old fisherman buckets and  
Tangled nets,  
While freshwater fish  
Swim silently free.

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## HIDE AND SEEK

Empty street  
Remember me.

You helped me find  
An empty house  
And hear the creaking of a door  
Whisper in my ear.

I Ran and hid  
I Counted to ten and dreamed  
With my heart pounding  
That I would be first to kick the can  
And win the chance to play again.

Walking home  
Sidewalk of solitude  
You stayed close by  
You held my hand.

Empty street  
Wait for me  
Make a space that I can  
Stroll and linger  
And remember what it was like  
Not to think  
Of the end of the road.

## ISENT ME AWAY

Vehicles are shiny and new at first.  
Even so, new tires can become flat tires, as I stand over the culprit nail  
And look at the horizon ahead, on this random strip of road.

The same horizontal line of rocks and lakes  
That cave men and wolves saw  
On land that is home to both hidden relics and speeding tickets.

I am now a pedestrian.  
All that can be carried, I at best prop on my back  
As I leave the car, the junk, the weight.

I am on a pilgrimage  
In search of an an old sleepy bench.  
That sits quietly in front of the gas pump.

When I get there I may forget the reason I left,  
Set the knapsack down and take a rest.  
Then I will drink.

Electrolytes and energy drinks were once called water.  
A plastic bottle  
Was once called cupping of the hands.

I will drink then and look back at the road I walked on  
For what felt like an eternity.  
I will see the horizon stare back at me

And smile.

## OLD MACHINES

A wooden porch  
A dinner plate  
A rocking chair  
To contemplate.

A gust of wind  
A wooden creak  
A falling leaf The  
one I seek

In little moments  
Captured here  
As sunset slowly  
Disappears.

Then I'll step out  
On grass of green  
And say hello  
To old machines.

## PAPER EARTH

My footsteps make odd-shaped dots  
That are unmapped.  
Nameless stones and rocks  
Are kicked forward and  
Skip along the concrete blocks  
Like choppy notes  
In a short jingle.

Unrecognizable portraits  
Are painted beneath stony ground  
Where people wait patiently  
For us to wake up,  
Look with our true eyes and  
Embrace the mystery  
With two arms  
Wide open.

Fables of our lives may be  
Passed around like a dollar bill  
From one pocket to another,  
Before they are buried  
In memories  
And gusts of wind.

## PRECIOUS METALS

I feel your hand  
Still all I feel  
A beating heart  
And sifting sand.

I know you're there  
Yet all I see  
Are kindly eyes  
And soft brown hair.

I hear your voice  
Though what I hear  
Are children playing  
With their toys.

I stop and look  
I close my eyes  
Recall our lives  
A treasured book.

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## PRODUCT OF PEACE

I long for quiet moments  
And cold beverages. I  
smile and  
Enjoy the little things. I  
feel alive and well.  
I celebrate every day. I  
am the product  
Of peace.

I am the one  
My grandfather and my uncles  
Fought for,  
Killed for,  
Wrecked their soul for.

They returned  
Numb  
Staring at their own futures  
Bleak,  
Yet hopeful  
That some of us  
Would appreciate  
Their willingness to face,  
Bend down in a low Squat,  
Then spring out Into  
the black void Of  
war.

## SEA OF GRASS

One second is all it takes  
To crash a plane and  
Turn your head skyward.

If my mind were quiet  
For only one second, It  
would fly away

To another continent  
To a small village  
To become

A supple green blade  
Yielding to winds  
In a sea of grass.

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## SNAPSHOT

Frozen in time,  
Pure joyful innocence  
Captured on slick film.

Shutter speed  
One-sixtieth of a second  
I was told to smile

Not to think  
I will have to look back  
At dulled grey evidence

That we really do  
Change, grow  
Get older.

This photograph  
Is a mere swipe card  
For the after life

When the mind  
Is finally quiet,  
When we can move no more

Than the fragile rigid image  
In this faded  
Snapshot.

## STUFFED TOYS

Great monuments  
Have been built  
Over ten ponderous years  
Little by little  
Inch by inch.

That is just enough time  
To become a small child  
Not quite eleven.  
Even twenty is foolhardy  
As a new adventure is begun.

In that time,  
Two golden pets  
Each in turn are gone away

Along with the fish,  
The aquarium and  
The childhood toys

Stuffed with  
Memories and laughter.

Stuffed with  
Silly little things.

Stuffed with polyester,  
Granite,  
And the earth's core  
Spinning ever so slowly  
Beneath our feet.

## THE CHEMIST

Which chemical engineer  
Made this soup, So  
it doesn't taste Like  
gobbly goop?

Who was the chemist  
Who made this pie,  
For newborn children  
With just one eye?

Who was the genius  
That developed cake,  
Flavored to taste  
Like pepper steak?

Who made the drinks  
Deep purple blue, And  
expanded them To  
stick like glue?

Who was behind  
Enriched white bread,  
That sits in stomachs  
And weighs like lead?

What scientist cooked  
A decent meal,  
Made completely from  
Banana peel?

Who are these modern  
Chemist druids,  
Who extract the food  
From lighter fluids?

Are we now  
Genetically charged,  
With electrolytes  
Grown extra large?

Does our body compass  
Turn around,  
Then stop and point  
Towards the ground?

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## THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNIVERSE

If an ant had a voice  
What would it say,  
Would it tell you its name  
That it's busy today?

If a squirrel could talk  
What would it tell,  
That it has no time to chat  
It is doing quite well?

If all creatures conversed About  
fellows and friends, Would idle  
chatter and gossip Ever come to  
an end?

Would they want to observe  
The comings and goings,  
Then recount what other Little  
creatures are doing?

Would they finally get bored  
Of other's affairs, Return  
to their business Have  
peace in their lairs?

Would they sleep under sky  
Work, gather food And  
always be in Quite  
cheery a mood?

Would they speak the language of the universe  
And be there to teach The  
rest of us creatures With the  
power of speech?

## THE RIVER IS EMPTY

Hold my hand next to the dark, fast-flowing waters  
Of this river that wishes to remain nameless.

River that twists around, moves and hides  
Behind goldenrods and cleared, sunlit fields just ahead.

Go down and stroll along the banks of fine sand.  
Take my hand lightly and test the cold, gushing water with foot and toes.

River that forever polishes broken bones into smooth wet pebbles.  
River that carries away wayward thoughts on thin-skinned kayaks.

River that races into my heart and fills these rushing veins  
With a thousand splashes.

River that is empty  
Of memories and delusions.

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## TRESPASSER

Feeling strong,  
I trample on leathery trails  
That have felt my silent soles  
A thousand times over.

Feeling strong,  
I am carried away by thoughts that  
We can venture out  
Into wild fields and  
Touch the tips of milkweeds.

Feeling strong  
On winding trails  
That have never complained  
Of dogs, deer or  
Occasional bellyaching  
About unnatural weather.

Feeling strong.  
I return home with  
Cold cheeks and frozen fingers. I  
remove my hat and scarf.  
I roll them into a ball and  
Slam-dunk them into the bin  
Five feet away.

To the right,  
I notice broken lines are  
The withered face  
Of a trespasser  
Who lives in the full-length mirror.  
His self-portrait was etched in glass  
Just for me  
Feeling strong.