

A vibrant yellow bird, likely a Goldfinch, is perched on a thin brown branch. The bird has a black cap and black wings. It is surrounded by bright yellow flowers, possibly Forsythia, which are in sharp focus in the foreground and blurred in the background. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

PROFESSIONAL

encouragement for poets
in traditional careers

A ONE BIRD BLOG DEVOTIONAL BY JORDAN WILLIAMS

THE POSITIVE THING IS THAT
GOLDFINCHES STILL STARTLE ME
WITH AN UNKEMPT, OTHERWORLDLY JOY,
WHICH IS A RELIEF BECAUSE
IT REMINDS ME I AM STILL TEMPTED
BY THE DELIGHTFUL.

LET'S BEGIN WITH A STORY.

Friday afternoon, 2:15 PM. My boss calls me into her office. She wants to discuss some things. Not bad things, I am not in trouble. She wants to tell me about some conversations she's had with various community members. She wants me to help her shore up some strong connections. Build mutually-beneficial relationships. Go above and beyond for the external community. Re-enforce that our organization is a collaborative and engaged community partner. *She wants me to be helpful.*

and it is not that I do not want to be.

She wants me to be helpful

It is that she is relaying the conversation, **buzzword-full** and boring, and my entire being feels like a saucepan left to simmer: slowly, and soon there will be nothing left.

industry

maker-space

collaboration

sector

K-12

THIS DAY, BEING AN OBSERVER IS REWARDED.

A GOLDFINCH.



An exclamation point of gold takes my attention. One goldfinch lands atop a coneflower and lets the breeze bounce her up and down. She is unbothered, taking her portion where she finds it - in what is dying - being the thing of beauty in all that is not.

IN MY HEART, I AM A POET.

But professionally, I have a full-time career in higher education advancement. Maybe this is true for you, too. You ache to commit your days to what has meaning and margin, but find yourself spending the majority of your productive hours at a job that is uninspiring or unfulfilling. Maybe, like me, it didn't start that way. I chose a career in non-profits because I saw the potential for purpose, for making a difference. And there is. But not enough. *At the end of my day, I have nothing left inside with which to create. No energy at the end of the week to write one word.*

When I realized that the 30 seconds I spent watching the goldfinch was the brightest part of my entire day, it felt incredibly important. No task I was developing or building, no bullet point from the conversation my boss thought she was having with a present-minded employee (me), no email sent or received.

My boss uses the word **creative** the same way she uses **problem-solver**.

But I do not want to solve problems. I want to highlight them in **goldfinch yellow**.

THIS IS WHAT POETS DO:
THEY POINT THE PROBLEMS OUT.
A POEM IS A PROBLEM
THAT SOUNDS **BEAUTIFUL**
WHEN YOU SAY IT OUT LOUD.

The best poems end right before the resolution. That is what makes me come alive, which is a curious thing for a woman who struggles with the unknown. I ache when things are unresolved in life. But in poetry? Let the last line be up for interpretation.

EPHESIANS 2:10

For we are His **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (ESV)

EPHESIANS 2:10

workmanship

In the Greek translation, the word used here is **poiema**.
Which is to say, we were created as poetry, and God is a poet.

EPHESIANS 2:10

workmanship

poiema

We have become his **poetry**, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it! (TPT)

THEREFORE, AM I NOT A THING OF BEAUTY,
FULL OF AMBIGUITY AND TENSION? **THE BEST POEMS** ARE.
THE BEST POEMS ARE NOT ABOUT SOMETHING. THEY JUST
ARE SOMETHING. AS AM I. **THE BEST POEMS** ARE WRITTEN
WITH THIS IN MIND: “SHOW, DON’T TELL.”

“SHOW, DON’T TELL.”

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.

The ache. What is my work? How often have I asked this of the Lord? What is my purpose? On the dried coneflower of the earth, can I be the goldfinch? Will there always be seed enough to satisfy?

If God is a poet and I am a poem, what does this mean for my place in the stanza of humanity? What does it say about the meaning I have in the world? What does it tell me about the value the Creator places on what is beautiful and what goes unnoticed by the majority?



What does it say about me
if I am a goldfinch in the window of God?

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