

How To Write A Poem

by Adam Palumbo

-after Bhanu Kapil

First, give yourself a good hard smack across the face. Repeat. Drink a glass of cognac in the bathtub. Do not get out until you rid yourself of the stink of poems.

Build for yourself a workshop. In an abandoned fishhouse, if need be, or a windowless basement room or the passenger seat of your car. Use your thumb as a pen and the wind as your parchment. Keep every word alive.

Something is missing. Find it.

If you have the chance, go to the nearest mountaintop on a clear night in mid-August. Observe with all due patience the Perseids—this is heaven's poetry.

Gather around you those things that will feed your orphan mind: a quarter minted in 1968, your grandfather's leather belt, a brontosaurus fashioned out of tinfoil. Explore the old and the prodigal, all manners of creation. It comes like a dance, the same steps taken with a new partner.

Don't go asking anyone else to do it for you. Write it.

