

CUTS

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This poem was born out of a small action that shook me with such magnitude, it stays with me today. I had been waiting in line for hours, feet sore, legs tired, a symphony of complaints surrounding me. We were in line at a standstill—hardly moving at all—when I heard snickers and jeers coming from the front. People were hopping under and around the ropes organizing and guiding us fairly to the front. Whatever forced smile I had managed to plaster to my face slipped away instantly, and I began to wonder desperately, “Where is their respect for the rest of us?” It bothered me so much that I threw the question towards one of the strangers cutting me in line. “You know it’s not fair, so why? What are you doing?” Cuts explores that instinct, the human tendency to conform, the temptation to comply, and the bravery of resisting.

It’s just a line
at a concert
That shouldn’t matter if it’s cut
But it does.

It does because when I ask why,
The man that cuts in front of me screams,
“If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” and
smirks smugly at the sky.
And I have one of those moments where my mind stumbles,
as I try to grapple
with the whats and whys—
The strange place between disbelief and disappointment.

It’s a phrase I can’t shake from my memory, a phrase that
reminds me of oh, too many of humanity’s failures.
If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.
And so, they joined in killing millions of people.
If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.
And so, they killed some more.

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.
And so, it became separate but equal.
Why was that ever fine?
If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.
So, they bullied him or became bystanders.

And one more sob story later, they said
their apologies at his grave site—
Not knowing he'd jump,
shoot,
hang.
Not knowing that joining in the masses was the
exact thing that was tearing the world apart.

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.
And so, nothing bad changed
and nothing good ever happened.
And we continued with our sad little lives,
believing that change
does not
exist.

But it does.

Because someone like you exists.
Someone like *you* doesn't join 'em.
Someone like *you* dares to be different,
dares to challenge the crowd,
dares to stand out in it.

So, dare to lead.

Because God knows we need someone
to shine a light on our errors,
someone to voice what we've never given a voice to,
someone like *you* to lead us in the right direction.