

Slice Literary Writers' Conference Bridging the Gap Competition (2016) - Poetry

**Emotional Eater**

I am an emotional eater -  
Of words.  
I can binge myself for hours,  
gobbling them so fast I sometimes have to  
flip through the pages in disbelief of  
the quantity I have consumed.

Indigestion,  
Burning in my throat like a swig of bad whiskey,  
Fearing all the while that they will regurgitate within me  
And come back out in a burning gust of release,  
Smelly and disgusting,  
Leaving me weakened on a cold bathroom floor.

But I cannot resist eating more.  
Finding those morsels of sweetness that soothe me  
Phrases of Kaopectate that slowly crawl down my throat  
Coating my insides  
Protecting them from another batch of fiery phrase.  
Words to be chewed,  
mashed between my molars  
mixed with the acids in my digestive tract,  
Becoming part of me.  
Their spice  
seeping from my pores  
so that I may smell  
of Shakespeare  
or Dickens  
or Angelou,  
Depending on the day.

And so -  
I become a chemist.  
Wanting to mix my words,  
Turn new phrases,  
Develop a scent that will be uniquely mine.  
Serve a salad with a casserole of words  
That are not ever truly mine.  
I can only use the leftovers to reconstitute a new meal.

And if my guests do not arrive,  
I will gorge myself on these new concoctions.  
Savor some -  
Spit some out.

Rejection is not a judgement,  
Just a realistic way of sorting words,  
Of finding sustenance.