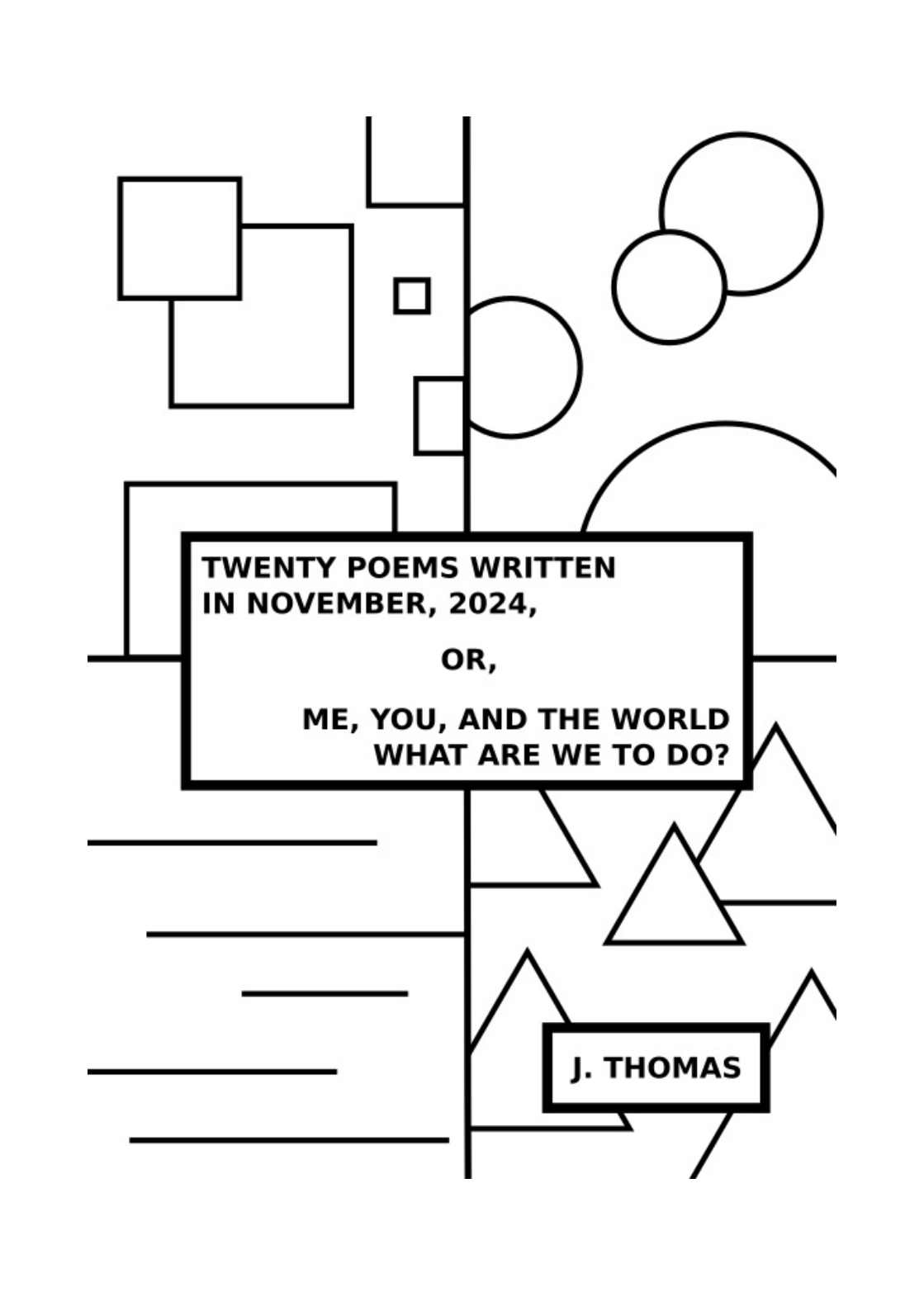




**TWENTY POEMS WRITTEN  
IN NOVEMBER, 2024,**

**OR,**

**ME, YOU, AND THE WORLD  
WHAT ARE WE TO DO?**

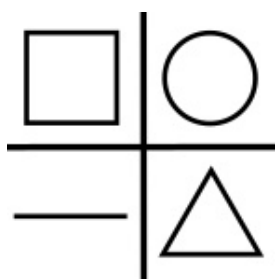
**J. THOMAS**

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twenty poems written in november, 2024,  
or,  
me, you, and the world  
what are we to do?

by J. Thomas



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***twenty-third november, 2024, or,  
benediction***

i want to paint with water  
colors, careful strokes  
that bring to life the  
hidden truths, concealed  
behind the pallet and the  
brush

i want to sing the sacred  
songs, the burning heart  
gave wing, with harmonies  
wrapped deep within, the  
chorus bloom and solo  
hush

i want to see, with radiant  
eyes, the beauty all-surrounding  
behold as new each crest of  
dawn, each day become its  
mirror

*second november, 2024, or,  
pituophis catenifer sayi*

bull-snakes possess  
neither rattle nor venom  
but you'd be forgiven  
for thinking they did

standing before  
its clear glass enclosure  
my face reflected  
it coils, strikes again

***twenty-first november, 2024, or,  
poor alanis***

there must be a faster,  
a smarter, a better,  
a right way to push  
this boulder uphill

i've sought the opinions  
consulted convention  
the depths i have plumbed  
for wisdom to see

the sum of advice  
of paperback sages  
is lost, fully wasted.  
my brain's wired

backwards  
it seems

***twenty-second november, 2024, or,  
metal heart***

this machine kills fascists  
or it would, surely  
given the chance

this machine mostly  
turns labor into profit  
for a larger, more abstract machine

this machine does not dream  
of electric sheep  
rather, safety for the small machines that  
turn and whirl  
clang and whine

this machine would stretch  
its belts, tear its gears  
and run its pulleys raw  
if that could mean a  
better, kinder world

***twentieth november, 2024, or,  
forty rings, how many more?***

i am an oak tree, grown in  
a field, seed carried along  
by the breeze, or some  
beast. deep and unseen,  
roots reach underground  
as towering limbs touch  
the sky. the rains through  
the seasons have mostly been  
kind, though the soil more  
silt than sweet loam. the  
gentle winds rustle this  
vast, verdant canopy, their  
whispers announce nearing  
autumn. that i could be spared  
the withering hand, fell winter  
let slip through its grasp. but  
i must endure, survive for this  
season, someday surely i'll be  
transformed.

***seventeenth november, 2024, or,  
i did not ask for this conversation***

the phrase is worn  
i've found it true  
we want what we can't have  
some wish for money, power, fame,  
some youth, ever anew  
there is but one  
thing i desire  
friend, i  
crave solitude

***fifth november, 2024, or,  
love (at the end of the world)***

what future  
bright and shining  
new, sold to you and me  
progress now  
forevermore  
the end of history

what present  
light of morning  
dawn, din of rising sea  
jackboots hail  
the empire shakes  
with endings yet to be

what can be  
done, but grasp your  
hand, as once on bended knee  
dearest love  
your sparkling gaze  
e'er here will i, to see

***thirteenth november, 2024, or,  
sixty percent by volume***

tricking slow  
are mountains hewn  
i should be so lucky

gentle rains  
a welcome boon  
i should be so lucky

silver clouds  
through blue skies dance  
i should be so lucky

falling snow  
beloved, perchance  
i should be so lucky

a quirk of fate  
or random chance  
i truly cannot say  
how i have come  
to be with you

and i should be so lucky

***twenty-fourth november, 2024, or,  
if you ever leave***

it's not the giant things i fear:

the moving house  
what's yours, what's mine  
who's christmas the kids choose

it's all the tiny heartbreaks that  
i know i'd never shake:

the absence of the  
wordless hours, the silence  
warm and healing  
forever gone the rituals  
our daily ebb and flow  
shared meals prepared  
shared worries soothed

in everything, a ghost

***twenty-eighth november, 2024, or,  
to you, dear***

we count the revolutions  
mark trips around the sun  
with cake, balloons, confetti  
rooms packed with our loved ones

this year we light more candles  
than i know that you would like  
but age is just a number  
you believe that, right?

so close your eyes, make a wish  
blow the embers down  
we'll sing the worn notes once again  
alight the birthday crown

***eleventh november, 2024, or,  
light pollution***

the pre-dawn air is cool  
and crisp, autumn leaves  
lie sleeping  
and in this dark, this holy  
morn, a choir of stars  
is singing

but i cannot, though straining  
try, make out their sacred  
message

"progress! progress, ever more!"  
the diode glasses scream  
what beauty must we leave  
behind  
to wake from nature's dream?

***twenty-seventh november, 2024, or,  
ode to the vast, secret, and blue***

along the beach i hear the roar  
the swelling tide, the ancient score  
that calls to men to quit the shore  
i'm carried by the song  
in equal parts, i fear, adore  
that i could hum along

***twenty-sixth november, 2024, or,  
i park outside***

cascading crystal  
fractal blooms  
etched in  
darkness' hand  
dawn discovered  
and dismissed  
this beauty  
inconvenience

***twenty-fifth november, 2024, or,  
green children***

here upon the window sill sit  
plants within their pots  
i've tended to them now for years  
pruned, watered, rained with care

their emerald leaves drink in the sun  
through tempered panes of glass  
and there they thrive within the soil  
so separate from the earth

paternally, i've showered them with  
time and my attentions, still  
i cannot but wonder, wince  
do they ever miss their mother?

***fifteenth november, 2024, or,  
prosopagnosia***

there exists in the bounds  
of an emerald forest  
ancient and vast, without  
name  
a path and a clearing  
set deep in its heart  
marked and encircled  
by stone  
within this green grotto  
a graven bust sits  
upon a grey alter  
rough hewn  
the carver, with skill,  
produced each detail  
with deft hand and  
worshipful eye  
a likeness so true, and  
a beauty so great  
its truth no live soul  
could deny  
now lost to the world  
this wonderful grace  
for time and foul nature  
have worn  
what delicate lines  
the careless winds smeared  
indifferent rains have  
erased

***nineteenth november, 2024, or,  
safe travels***

seated in an exit row are  
you prepared to help  
your fellow passengers  
in the event of a water  
landing, this inexorable march  
to the sea, i'm afraid  
you cannot be resealed

*twelfth november, 2024, or,  
la démocratie*

i would  
feel better  
if better  
could mean  
moving up  
moving on  
but alas  
every time  
you say  
it means  
picking tails  
on a  
double-faced  
coin

***sixth november, 2024, or,  
here is my advice***

hold each-  
other  
    close  
and carry a  
    knife

keep your eyes open  
keep the edge true

aim for  
    the heart  
        in both cases

***twenty-nine november, 2024, or,  
frustration***

strive for excellence  
not perfection  
repeat it like a mantra  
as i vibrate out my skin

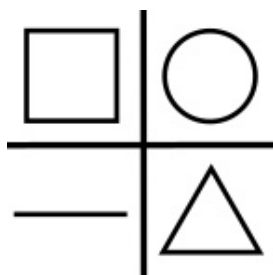
inner turbulence  
exhale slowly  
remember, keep perspective  
dust off, begin again

***thirty november, 2024, or,  
what must be done***

no rest for the wicked  
no sleep for the saints  
they say take it easy  
lord knows that i can't

no pause for the weary  
no stop for the hurt  
the sunrise comes early  
hands back to the work

no time for the waiting  
no call for the pause  
with singular vision  
march on, no applause



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