AGAIN, AGAIN
By Bohdan Piasecki

Watch Bohdan performing his poem on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1xzS65-lWk

1.
It looks like nothing much. Dead leaves.
Torn up paper. Egg shells. Mulch.[1]
Coffee grounds[2]. A damp mess.
Sounds like a swamp.[3] Hot like a fever.
Textures change as you push deeper:
slime, then grit.[4] Smells like
a guilty secret. A sweaty beast.

But under the surface
tiny beings feast.[5] The rods, spheres[6]
and spirals of bacteria. And bigger:
roundworm. Pill bugs. Springtails.[7]
Roaches. Ants. Beetles. Mites[8],
breaking things down. Each of them
a speck[9] of nothing. Near non-existent.
Abstract. Little more than an idea.
Together though, together they put carbon
back in earth, which feeds the soil, so plants
can grow, grow, and then die, die, and then
fall, fall and decay[10], so they can feast,
the specks of nothing,
turn the wheel
again, again

2.
It looks like nothing much. Small plots
of land[11], surrounded by brick houses.
Raised beds.[12] Patches

of flowers, patches of veg.
Allotments.[13] You know:
a place to while away the hours.

But under the surface
is the story of a man who found how hard it is
to watch a world decay. How risky: you might
try to save it. You'll feel like a speck of nothing.
Near non-existent in the face of abstract threat.
Instead he found his place was where he stood.
Spoke to his neighbours. He found out that people
don't need saving but if you show them
how to grow, they will. They'll grow
gourds[14] heavy on the ground, and they'll grow
flowers.
They'll grow potatoes, and sour cherries,
and cucumbers. They will grow happy.
Ask the man now and he will tell you
this is how we win: by getting a group of
schoolchildren
to dig in compost bins, disgusted, jubilant[15] in
mud
and rain, shouting in each other's faces
again, again

3.
It looks like nothing much. Just people
milling about[16] in a garden. Some sit, smiling
at the sun. Some push wheelbarrows.[17]
Some chat, shifting buckets from hand to hand.
A teacher helps students put on gloves.
Harmless.

But under the surface
they know there are more gardens
just like theirs, where others also
ask the weather what to eat,

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[1] A cover, often made from natural materials, that protects the earth
[2] Coffee leftovers
[3] A wetland that is (partly) covered by water
[4] Little stones
[5] Eat something with great enjoyment
[6] Rod = little stick, sphere = circle
[7] A type of bug
[8] A small, spider-like animal
[9] A tiny spot
[10] Break into pieces and decompose
[11] Piece of land
[12] Plants contained in a wooden box
[13] Piece of land/garden that you can rent
[14] Bottle-shaped pumpkin
[15] Very cheerful, celebratory
[16] Hanging out, walking around in a relaxed way
[17] Vehicle, usually with one wheel, that is used for carrying small loads

like before. Under the surface
they feel it, that this is more
than an idea: together, ah, together,
they help put carbon back in earth,
to feed the soil, so plants can grow,
grow and bear fruit, ripe like a moment.
Under the surface
they've found this truth:
that nothing matters more
than this small boy
who, right now, bites
through the skin of
a tomato, for the first time
eating something
with no barcode,
straight off the vine.
He swallows. Juice
drips from his chin.
He giggles, says
the red globe
looks like a brain.
Something happens
under the surface.
Again, again

Bohdan Piasecki ist ein polnischer, in Birmingham lebender Dichter. Sein Glaube an die Stimme als poetisches Medium hat dazu geführt, dass seine Gedichte von Undergroundclubs in Tokyo bis zur Hauptbühne des Birmingham Repertory Theatre, von Pariser Straßenbahnen bis zu Berliner Flugplätzen und noch weiter gereist sind. 2023 wurde ihm der erste Forward Prize in der Kategorie Best Single Poem: Performed verliehen. Er unterrichtet Kreatives Schreiben an der Universität Birmingham. Am wohlsten fühlt er sich im kreativen Chaos von Festivals oder der ruhigen, fokussierten Atmosphäre von Lesungen in Buchläden. Bohdan arbeitet auf Polnisch, Französich und Englisch und nutzt das Übersetzen als kreatives Tool, um Menschen und Sprachen miteinander zu verbinden.
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