



Title: OBJECT LESSON
Author: JENNIFER JEAN
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Jennifer Jean (photo credit: Masao Okano)

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A CRUCIAL STEP, TOWARDS ENDING HUMAN-TRAFFICKING, IS KNOWING THE STORIES OF ITS SURVIVORS. – OBJECT LESSON by JENNIFER JEAN

"We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake," said Fredrick Douglas about the abolitionist movement in 1852. Jennifer Jean's latest poetry collection **OBJECT LESSON** answers this call to action as it explores sex-trafficking and objectification in twenty-first century America. Jean uses relentless, dire, vital language—often tinged with hope—to pull us into these latest, darkest stories of our homeland. Her intensely crafted lyric narratives and persona poems are based on poetry workshops with sex-trafficking survivors through the Free2Write Poetry program. Other pieces are based on in-person, or researched, interviews with survivors of what is definitively modern-day slavery. -Available for purchase at [Lily Poetry Review Books](#)

PRAISE for OBJECT LESSON:

"...[T]he power of this amazing collection rests with how the ear collects and shifts through the rough and tumble facts, and lands, not as bleak non-fiction, but as arresting, lyrical truth. **OBJECT LESSON** is a record of trust won, respected and honored. Jennifer Jean has written a book where women get to look us in the eye." -[Cornelius Eady](#), author of *Headheaded Weather* (Putnam)

"This powerful and stunning collection dives deep [into] stories where what is wounded is holy, is important, is surviving. This is an important book... These voices need to be heard and [Jennifer] Jean's poems need to be in the world." -[Kelli Russell Aqodan](#), author of *Dialogues with Rising Tides* (Copper Canyon Press)

"[Jennifer Jean's] voice echoes the heart-wrenching experiences of those who have survived some of the worst that humankind has to offer and also serves as a staunch reminder about the marginalized and often forgotten 'constant, gorgeous / soul of us. The eyes of us, the Thriving.' This is a must read." -[Enzo Silon Surin](#), author of *When My Body Was A Clinched Fist* (Black Lawrence Press)

"My hope is that you will read these poems with an open mind so you can try to understand what it takes to come out of a life like that... [So you can] get a glimpse at just how resilient and brave these survivors are. I also recommend reading other survivors' stories so you can share what you have learned with friends and family." -[Jasmine Grace](#), survivor advocate, founder of *Bags of Hope*, author of *The Diary of Jasmine Grace*

ABOUT the poet: JENNIFER JEAN

Jennifer Jean is a poet, translator, editor, educator, and consummate "literary citizen." She was born in Venice, California and lived in foster-care until she was seven; and, her ancestors are from the Cape Verde Islands. Jennifer's poetry collections include OBJECT LESSON (Lily Books) and THE FOOL (Big Table). She's also released the teaching resource book OBJECT LESSON: A GUIDE TO WRITING POETRY (Lily Books). Jennifer is a co-editor and co-translator of *HER STORY IS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY POETRY BY ARAB WOMEN* (press TBD); and, has been awarded: a [Peter Taylor Fellowship from the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop](#); a [Disquiet FLAD Fellowship](#) from Dzanc Books; and, an [Ambassador for Peace Award](#) from the Women's Federation for World Peace. Her poetry, prose, and co-translations have appeared in: [Poetry Magazine](#), [Waxwing Journal](#), [Rattle Magazine](#), [Crab Creek Review](#), [DMQ](#), [Green Mountains Review](#), [On the Seawall](#), [Salamander](#), [The Common](#), and more. She is the translations editor at [Talking Writing Magazine](#), a consulting editor at the [Kenyon Review](#), an organizer for the [Her Story Is collective](#), and the founder of Free2Write Poetry Workshops for Trauma Survivors. Jennifer lives in Massachusetts with her husband and children.

Bird

For survivors of abuse & trafficking residing at the Breaking Free safe house in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Rock Wren, Godwit, Bobolink?
What are we looking at?
What's beaked & broken
free from
a classic, iron
bell cage? With a blown-out hole
opposite a latched door? No

thickened keratin could peck that well. No
claw-turned-fist
busted up that joint.
Inside, she was key,
she was *cheep*, she was a flipped
bad finger. Now—this bird wings

as every bird
stepping out of "the life."
With no credit,
no reference, & a little self
love. What are we looking at?

A second wind. The flight
inside the creature
that is the holy, eternal
verb. Is:
who bent the metal. Is: the mother
of a lighter

bone. The kind
that terror
cannot allow.

((originally published in Rattle Magazine))

When I taught poetry at the safe house,

a kitten was lifted by the scruff
by one of the safe women.

She stroked, & stroked, &
it whirred,
& we read "Bitch"
by Carolyn Kizer.

& later I thought about how
that stroking woman once stirred
from an occupational
blackout & found a poem
in her scrawl.

She'd pressed its soul into memory—
then burnt its remains
in a Chinese bowl.
The smoke whirled from thieves.

She spoke the whole
in class today, to me
& to the other
sex-trafficking survivors.

She looked up & to the left.
Her tongue out at the corner
like a schoolgirl, like
a lioness. & I
liked it.