

A writer and artist all her life, Jill Evans Petzall began to publish her poetry at the age of 77 in response to a recurrence of the cancer she'd survived twice before. In this collection, she explores themes of mortality, love, and joy.

For The Time. Being.

By Jill Evans Petzall

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FOR THE TIME. BEING.

A rattlesnake inside

my insides

jerks me around

tongue flickering at odd moments

it samples its direction, tastes all

the secret substances

it wants

of me

buries itself behind my flesh

for years

sucks up my time.

It slithers

shedding skin

slicing paths along the corridors

of the viaduct that I am

looking for

a bolus of its own kind to belong to –

to cluster, to nuzzle

to grow wilder

and wait it out so that

I cannot flee when its feral tail begins

to quiver

so far

this serpent gives no warning

how it wakes

when it winces

what it wants. And where?

I grow cold-blooded in its silence.

Each time it finds a fresh position

I flinch, newly pregnant

with my mortality. It believes

it belongs

to me forever.

That's the only certainty about your own birth and death.

You don't know what you're getting into

from either direction.

Except

there's no going backward.

For the time. Being.

That's how it lies

in wait

killing time

a someday away

mouth open wide

it feasts, grows fat

stutters

on that further edge

while it promises

to use

the only thing

it has

to save its own life.

Mine.

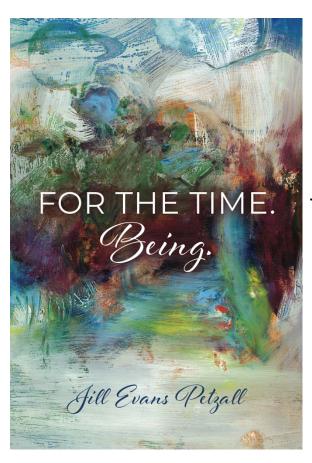
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jill Evans Petzall was a writer, photographer, and filmmaker. She holds a BA in Philosophy and English Literature (Magna cum Laude) and an MA in Philosophy from Washington University in St. Louis. Known for casting a balanced light on social issues and subjects not often represented in mainstream media, she wrote and produced over forty award-winning documentaries that offer poetic and uncommon insights about human beings speaking within the grip of their daily lives. Always a strong supporter of causes that benefit women and children, she served as the chairwoman of the Square One Foundation.

Jill modeled a fierce independence and courage to build a life according to one's own vision. She was a photographer who found visual stories in the laundry of India and the mannequins of Southeast Asia. She was a jewelry maker who created dazzling pieces of wearable art. Her synesthesia meant she saw words and sounds as colors on the page. She played a mean hand of poker. She was one of few people in the world who loved anchovies on IMO's pizza. She was "allergic" to parsley and the color red.

After a crippling cancer recurrence, Jill began to publish years of her poems at the age of 77. She passed away in 2024 at the age of 82.



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