

THE EFFECT OF TWILIGHT



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August 8 2017 to August 29 2019

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how fine and well-long-gone the long-leisured-honeyed afternoons
when young sun slow in the arms of his pale days-end moon

made bright their sky bed their nubile twilight shine brighter
how now old-recalled the gone hours seem never-occurred

though blown as the sunset's flower or the flown-south bird
and the back-thinking it a sharp knife cut never to heal righter

and the back-wanting it futile as a misspelled misplaced word
and the back-writing it just old-bent as a rusted typewriter

let it not be said

let it not be said that
we failed to see the white bird
spread her wings to soften her landing
on the dark waters of the Hudson

and then The Immediacy
of the swerving curved T

of a chimney swift almost black
flying low with hidden motive
over the great river seeking
shelter on the far fetching shore

heart wood

find it
it was born to be found
chop it
it was born to be chopped
split it
it was born to be split
mill it
it was born to be milled
sand it
it was born to be sanded
polish it
it was born to be polished
love it

it was born to be loved
burn it
it was born to be burned

redolent

i woke from a dream of *green waves*
taking allosaurus bites out of red
cliffs and a crumbling fortress
the mainland turning the sea *sedona red*
reborn in a *tide of iodine* under a *tender moon*

rosa rugosa blown hard back by a *westerly wind*
intent on holding strong gave civil *twilight*
the aura of an *invincible* sky-high bell jar
infused with *thyme* and the passing of each breath
reclaiming from *my dream* one word: redolent

with more a hint of *inland estuary* than a scent
the word thrown on waters like a *skipping stone*
on the boomerang of an *ocean wind* later that night
returned on breakers through an *antiquarian* haze
danced upon the shore returned in swells and said:

“In this sauna heat *summer moves* like sludge
until raindrops come to wash the window panes
and bring the *fresh of ozone* to campers in their tents
as blessed moon and sun reinvent *night and day.*”
reclaiming from my dream one word: redolent.

For Annette Green, Founder, The Fragrance Foundation

april rain mighty hudson

the river's a still unwinding of dark marble
neat as charcoal slacks well pressed
migrating stripers dimple its calm flow
soon the shad will traffic the now flat tides
veil of fog thin enough to vaguely mask
the view of big-home-studded far banks
the distant reflections of ghostly trees
dropping umber down to secret depths
the train uprising heron eagle geese and gulls

black and white diving ducks paddle fearful
speed frantically away from the roaring tracks
leaving silver slipstreams at their backs
perhaps it is too saccharine to suggest
that on this day of softest april rain

and baby leaves unfolding way too fast
that of all the mighty yankee rivers
the mighty hudson is by far the best
this truth i own its always humbled guest

vaudevillian

my optic machinery needs a good optometrist
sadly the assembly line of my eyes rarely lies
each day i wake to find myself on the deep discount shelf
a mannequin in full - my soul is my ventriloquist

egg

each time i place the dozen eggs
whitest white ovoids entirely compact
in their stunning rotund eggness
whiter than the egg tray in the fridge
how is it that Brancussi suddenly appears
admiring how utterly photogenic they are
in all transformations their symphonies
of cracked shells scattered on counter tops

inspiring top chefs to nouveaux culinary heights
sunny side up over easy yolks still creamy
shirred soft boiled scrambled hard scrambled soft
the shape shifting omelet's unifying elegance
the shadow of fingers darkening the slope
of their sides as lopsided they dawdle and roll
porcelain white and jolly as bubbles in a bevel
on any kitchen surface gauging the surface level

think of the poor hens in the Gulag of factories
or the idyll of old-farm chicken coops of the lucky few
doing their duty industrious clucking their clucks
meeting quotas day by day eggs waiting in clean hay
or head over heel rolling down chutes of stainless steel
once carried in woven baskets burlap sacks or boxes
now held harmless with the invention of the carton
(still saves farmers losses from cracked and 'brokens')

chameleon-like their shades of white are wide and varied
their flavors reflect their hens' free ranging their feed
worldwide an egg is not an egg but always changing
in London collectors love this dealer in rare antiques
whose shop sign reads "**EGG**" (set in Apple Chancery)
next door the smells of baking bread just-brewed coffee
a rasher of crisp bacon farm-fresh eggs browned in butter

side of bubble and squeak make gourmet tourists' stutter

the game of clue

those suspects who lived
breathing shallow short of breath
ask them to name the killer
clear moon
under a sullen sky
everyone on their hands and knees
attacker(s) left little evidence
a soaked towel a broken crystal vase
an explosion's sharp shards everywhere
some smaller than a grain of salt
no bloody fingerprints or footprints
two blood drops welded to the tile floor
that dried Mojave red of death
black olive a lemon slice
impaled on a toothpick
in a still cold martini glass
proof the dead one's recent dead
no escape even through the flue
frozen mystery for all to see
question is where when on whom
the doom of blame will land
their eyes all wide with lies
all truths circular and sick
seven guests a butler and a maid
clear moon
under a sullen sky
the crime lives in the rhyme
for onlookers great fun too
too bad someone had to die

birth of day

well before the sun began to pray
the moon so quietly lingered
above a saw blade horizon
dark as a cake with one lit candle

a slim finger of a flame pale
as an Oregon chardonnay
elated clouds all rose and gray
silently praised the birth of day

if ever when ever

if ever when ever
you think of mothers
yours mine all mothers
their antennae their fine filaments
and many loving rudiments
you being you
we being we
might be invited
to also think of bees

protected by and of the hive
eradicating their egos
with never a complaint
wildly driven freely self-effacing
that is their way the way
when conjuring i consider
the greatness of my mother or bees
busy buzzing busy they go
'till the end of their days

in a wide-open field
like Mendocino humming birds
swooping down eucalyptus trees to trees
you might – sun reflecting yellow
on their diaphanous beings -
on this our fragile merry-go-round
follow their determined paths
never distracted all attracted
to the sweet trust at all flowers' cores

in the late fall or early winter
if you are a keeper
you will see many affectionately
their piled-up desiccate husks
near the beehives' floors
but even if not a keeper
even if not a sleeper
can you forever not forget
to admire their brave sacrifices

such is their art
mothers and bees
that long after they're silenced
always linked to The Mighty Queen
in chess owning the game's best devices

mothers and bees do tell
at every flower's heart find wine
in the wild wind and summer air
dare sing and cast a loving spell

the fact of 'is'

the fact of 'is'
requiring no action
little thought or any
as does 'to be'
the fact that 'is'
is merely is
accounted for and present
as when the cardinal red
and the blue jay blue
crested red crowned blue
require no framing
no photographic capture
but merely inspire
and most abundantly
here and startling
proves 'is' is always more
than 'be' more brilliantly
no effort no work no labor
only to merely see
and here there is
within lives the rapture
and often-sent sings
for those that see to savor

clear days

clear days are boring
the bearded old man
who makes the clouds
that shadow the land
was clearly snoring
but not too loud

hearing spring

sometimes
a thing so small
hurls its voice
against the freezing
vast and massive All
as if it had no choice
and then and then

the carolina wren
again again again

old soul

on highest ridge against bold morning sky
perched at top of the very tallest pine
my eye's only clue his silent ghostly

breast of white The Hawk sits solitary
from way afar hint of our future journey
this raptor looks down on all he rightly owns

razor talons strong of wing sharp of eye
scouring the field for smallest souls below
that scurry and in dying reinvent time

insignificant souls that elude our touch
obscure yet magnifying a hidden oneness
frogmoon mouse rabbit vole squirrel the fog

caught souls that hold fire and lightly burn
god in us we in god must simply trust
as all things rush and yearn for eternity

unstoppable

the incomprehensible weight
of the deafening great
roaring train of fate

the heart can never fully show

the heart can fully never show
its truest love of loves
no matter how hard it strives
no matter how far we go
when even the most godless
call on god for one hour more
for another unappreciated day
enter then Soul With No Walls
looks down from its high tower
breathes our last all bonds shatters

fired vessel well-knit cloak in tatters
hand removed from body's glove
famished bird small from its cage

jailed heart freed to another place
a palace past flowing rivers vast
a door that opens to a joyful singing
where lives no sickness war or rage
a door all spirituals ever-singing Home
the only Ever-thing sweet ever mattered
where none will ache and none do age

the voices

as songs from a great distance
the voices of those long gone
sing rejoin us come come along

boxer

confined within
this rancid ring
this beaten dog
this mongrel cur
this cowering whelp
shaken by each
blow on body blow
pummel to heart
club to kidney
punch to rib and spleen
without a whimper
without a yelp
without a sound
pain added to pain
asking no quarter
expecting no help
fears his lord's sovereign reign

most grateful does lick
his cruel master's hand
glad his god's stone fist
was wrapped and gloved
then when released
from the torture place
and warmed by the sun
would leap and run
and breath the gentle
open morning air
how hard he does train
with blind devotion
with pathetic love
with forgiveness sick

for another round
confined within
this rancid ring
a dog yet still a man

three blue jays

first

their warning screens
three blue jays

on a royal carpet
of yellow maple leaves

then a cardinal
all in scarlet

brief carnival
an unintended play

sun bursts

what the angel said

your pain's
essential
said the angel

as april's first rains

it leads the way
to heavens
from hells

eulogy for Bronx

the day that day those who loved him had to put Bronx down
and the days that followed were as if blind winter chose to frown
that growl that could-care-less Nature makes at every one of us
dumb rain drops dripped disconsolate from black branches out back
served as mute reminder of the collective of our useless tears
a raw and freezing january failed to wrench away the sorrow
of his thin skin a tarp covering him his backbone a mountain range
his head hard as a warrior's helmet worn by brave knights of yore
his barrel chest and ribs the frame of a beached and stranded ship
his old-daddy-longlegs legs would shake and stumble and slip
his diaper's painful chafing worn to catch his sad incontinence
his too-free bowels a pungent testing of his master's watchfulness

bred to be stoic how much pain he felt we could barely know
his body a biscuit bag for his house of brave hound bones
he liked a party and party treats once he nosed a plate of chips
patient patient making sure no one noticed to the carpet floor
he had a spot below his eyes above his nose he dearly favored
which when gently rubbed would take him to some bright calm zone
so good Bronx firmest friend uncomplaining kindest Bronx for us
you own a special place in our too-many-good-friends-gone hall of fame

you gentle breed when your soul had flown we petted the shell
you owned so well for years as if you were still in it live and warm
you would lick yourself raw a leg a side a paw your missing balls
proof of your licking rights that you were your own dog's dog
after all a kind of devoted avocation a self-soothing ritual fetish
we'd watch you rise slow to lift your bulk from your doggy bed
a marvel of canine endurance and your fierce creature will to live
and ah those fetid Costco bones you devoured with such relish
loved so much you'd gladly walk to the Bronx to gnaw on one
and that drooping diaper that made you look like a wounded soldier
age sixteen and a half you weighed 80 against your prime of 105
we'd hear you coming from another room toe nails clicking on the floor
at dinner now much missed (no one to slip a piece of roasted chicken to)
and your empty dog beds your lonely now silent silver water bowl
your thirsty gulps no longer resound to the sound of no nails clicking
if only there were a clock we could wind back to stop time ticking
a place where none do age and good friends go that some call heaven
beauty without vanity strength without pride courage without cruelty
maybe your ashes in your modest urn will show us a way to better see
worst case to make some time to breathe and truly taste a cup of tea

for Christopher - January 4 2019

toys of the moon

stars are just the toys of the moon
ahem! cry jupiter and mars
jealous venus scoffs ahem!
they're just playing says neptune
racing the night like bumper cars

drowning stone

the half moon's cup drained of light
has fallen off the horizon's ledge
this darkest night does call parades
of gutter-flies dogs and fleas
of drunkards posers philistines whores
cowards braggarts killers haters
baiters liars cheaters procrastinators

gamblers ramblers prestidigitators
even standing citizens like you and me
to eat the drowning stone we've thrown
at armies of stars and their coldest verities

to eat the truth and honest pain we own
walking on the bleeding edge of
of mountain forest ocean desert sand
with our fickle friends Mystery and Glory
travelers all hand in hand step by step
into the mystic on our way back home
the wisest know what they do lack
the arrogant not wise as they do think
lips to lips hearts to hearts souls to souls
like breugel's blind men each one hoping
the other will slip first into heaven's ditch

beauty

beauty is the counter
to the ferocity
of the feather and the flower

complaint

the laughing derision of conniving fools
the contempt for education by the schools
ignorance of the classics scorn for old rules
paralyzed jammed stuck unfixable broke down
even by geniuses with all the right tools
o tempora o mores our naked king drools
his idiot advisors are blind stubborn and cruel
our earth's melting in greed and surely will drown

the magi's visit and the ineluctable mule-stubbornness of god the father

to a total eclipse of pain tear-floods and endless airport queues
of incomprehensible flight delays opprobrium and callous news
to scarifying intestinal bags leaking yellow streams of dolor-grief
not metaphysically speaking still streams relentless under a cross on a hill
onto an unreceptive earth and too few idiotic unrepentant ground gawkers
standing around inured to wounds of piss shit or crusted blood on wood

yes said baby yes said daddy yes said mommy and the Father
and the trinity the gods tripartite kings of The Vast Incomprehensible
said in chorus yes to their own design of the ever-unfolding cycle
the krill in the belly of the whale the newborn seals in the jaws of the orca
grasshoppers in claws of mantis the suicidal terrorists or political dissidents

at the mercy of their torturers the flying souls leaping from towers

and god the Father proclaimed we are each and every all blessed

world trade centers' best deaths those distraught birds driven from their nests
to impala's throat in the lion's mouth to fish on the fisherman's hook
to the mother aborting her life to save her new one cord-cut motherless
to the baby fresh from the womb of the virgin in a stall smelling sweet
of cow lamb pig and horse shit their tails like metronomes swishing
to keep battalions of flies off his hot pink little face three cats one dog

at his feet fascinated by his button nose twitching too young to foresee
smell and taste his own sweat and blood yet even the baby jesus said yes
jesus! yes not knowing vaguely what he was in for and yes said mary
and said joseph yes not knowing what they were in for (where did joseph go?)
staying the course surrounded by grouchy wise men doubting that damned star
that orb of "what inarnation!" leading us to a sweaty bairn and a leaky barn

and god the Father proclaimed we are each and every all blessed

what must be asked

too rarely sung or said

what is beauty

what is art

what is right

what is wrong

why god blesses

pain or happiness

why the troubadours

still sing their songs

ages after ages

in serenity hopes or rages

take note history burns

death's pages turn

what is time

what happens at the end

why are we all here

in calmness or in stress

why we hold loved ones dear

why the stars and planets fly

why the melancholic cry

why the sanguine enthuse

why the obtuse are of no use

why all actors play their parts

oh you wherefore art thou

why and how we each spend

on the beach of now
the time we daily lose
in which we daily bask

good night

good night good mr. sun
in you we all must trust
at day's end settling down
when our small runs are done
that your sweet light will come
like some fine musical round

our grief

our grief resounds in the sounds of words
bound by time we find some relief
in new days and hours like sent letters
fettered as we wait to join our betters

idyll

at dawn when sunlight lit the tops of the tallest trees
whistling tribes of elves and axmen were freed to clear the way
morn the morning star was heard to sigh greeting the day
“this river this river's wounds will never be the same” sang she

blue star

blue star crying
for all the gone souls
of all the mothers
and all the fathers
and all those now living
whose hearts your freezing
tears in falling pierce and shatter

who looking up at that black lake
of your night sky do mistake
you as their lives do end
and your sparkling light
though darkness denying
through darkness flying
for some kind of friend

grace

grace is always centered now and forever

grace is noting the presence of the ever-open plausible
candle songs sung by day by butchers bakers and all the makers

a skilled equestrian astride the palomino of the racing stars
pegasus ridden at full gallop through the brightest of nights
the lightening strike of Yes to everything that is or ever was

autumn gnats

they are bits of embodied frantic sun fluff
tiny angels backlit by sun's down-dimming day
above they flit across the surface of the lake
like black notes hope to dance on blank scores
or Vermeers in the low light of old museums
who alert alive could envision a better display
a more intelligent collusion a more complicit 'more'

as they roil in the freedom of the fading now
their small algorithms in this finite bit of time
one by infinite one their kingdoms own no greed
fragile as the spider's web in multiples as tough
below them looking up schools of silver minnows
swarming anticipate in shoaling an ample feed
in the air of their abundance lives the finest rhyme

perusing old photo albums

not to remember hurts and to remember hurts more
thirty pounds lighter and more than thirty years ago
were we significantly more happy or sadder then
or more likely an iffy unseasoned comedy of both
we surely had very different notions of lose and win
no longer custom for men to open doors for women
names dates events stall out or hide in some stubborn fog
sprinting breathless for a cab climbing stairs louder snores
standing in front of medicine cabinets asking why
while best friends or our mangy cats our skeletal dogs
shuffle with us to some surprise refrigerated finish line
flicking through mind's albums pictures on pictures
and those whose pages turn blowing through time's door

then there is that starving fox running across a snowy field
and the irony of a fat hunting sun redder than him all aglow
pictures on pictures like calendar pages but not discarded
new york's manhole covers each cast unique then the next
the monuments in Central Park shining in the freezing rain
the lifeless gull limp resurrected by montauk's living tide
the lakes the canyons the streams and seas the cityscapes

Her face held in silhouette in a mirror's ebbing light but where
an accounting a summing up a queue of pauses and best blinks
which by themselves fail to capture the moment's rapture
the tireless progression image by image of beauty's growth
but aided by seasons flow and some fractured forms of reason
serve as able hosts and guides to when we were there ah then

BAYONNE New Jersey 1952

rain in the gutters rain in the gutters rain splashing off drumming on lids of garbage cans in the
narrow alley between row houses and the stink of benzene toluene and xylene not far off sixth
avenue bayonne silly rain steady rain stubborn refinery town rain rushing through the drains
rivers of rain through gutters rushing and the wet dark of late evening and emerging from a cold
distance so slowly a high slurring tenor voice in the wet distance not singing more a wet chanting
a sad repeated chanting "the hahm is cooked" slightly and more desolately louder "the hahm is
cooked" muted by the rain glistening and drumming on and hypnotizing on and then louder
closer "the hahm is cooked" the lids of the garbage cans in the narrow alley a cold tinny chorus
to "the ham is cooked" tipsy slurring lace-curtain irish the old neighborly mr. mckenna and his
thin old sad wavering soused thin mouse sax of a drunken voice shuffling up the stairs into his
house next store damp and old smelling of the refinery and mothballs his missus skin and bones
irate and waiting at the top of a row of stairs leading like wet keyboards leading up and
stumbling up to shelter sleep and silence "the ham is cooked the ham is cooked" then a shrill and
irate old woman's voice wails – "yer no good mister yer no good and sloppy drunk as is yer
ways stinkin sloppy and no good no good to yer drunken self or anyone at t'all" followed by
shouting more shouting mostly hers and one last muffled tired defeated "the hahm is cooked"
then silence silence in the house next door and the rain in the gutters the rain in the gutters and
sleep sweet kind gentle sleep and the rain in the gutters the rain in the gutters

from *FIRST MEMORIES*

stretch jeans

how could they be
so cruel and mean
the fatter they are
when their bums
look like bags stuffed
with lima beans
the prouder they strut
wish the fashion police
would make it a crime
release aching eyes
from seeing stretch jeans
worn by human hippopotami
signed - politically incorrect me

bible story

doesn't seem rightful
takes a lot of gall

to say taking a bite
of the sweetest apple
of all caused man's fall
opened death's trap door
her call less a bore
than sad and frightful

algonquin dusk

there's that certain clutch of helplessness
when the lake's so quiet that the ripple rings
of one mayfly dimple-kissing the surface blue
can be seen plain a full sixty yards away

dusk falls so gently over the gray estuary
that the moon no wider than a white parenthesis
and the inter-twinkling of the facets of the stars
recall the eyes of ones much loved now and then

when the old places become places suddenly new
the cries of the barred owls in memory all rhyme
not nearly the last of the many long-lost many
it's then that one knows there's no such thing as time

jeweler's burr

by some jeweler's burr
each worn down
from what they were
in acceptance or rejection
cut to some final form
of perfect imperfection
spinning round on round
alone yet not alone
going home going home

considering woe

not so odd or old it rhymes with 'go'
that like fertile sod plowed under
allows our fallow fields to breathe
as a tool for hoping misery away
like Mighty Mouse or Tarzan save the day
like snowflakes make all edges pillow

considering woe kind of discounts
sorrow and puts pain itself on a shelf
the act of recall numbing most sorrow

blunts life's scalpels cruel intrusions
into our lives' flesh and blood accounts
a scant frail and meager constitution

five crows beneath a bird feeder

their black against a blaze of snow
is as simple as the midnight black
of congregations of sunflower seeds
or nautical twilights back at dusk's door

the scimitar curve of their ivory beaks
the shadow-blue stencil tracks they leave
how often are they first discoverers

their smart dark scouts glide on high
one tireless sharp-eyed vigilant on patrol
spies fresh carcass on highway or forest floor

(immune to pollutant toxin rot)
another divines your feeder just filled
their secret semaphores their raucous calls

their story told in crow to their murder
spooking squirrels and little sleepy birds
nuthatch sparrow wren and chickadee

five swoop down voracious and feast
ever recalcitrant the least dead thing a feed
in their raw-throat caws can you hear
in the echo of their cough "more, please more"

my small friend? the autumn fly

my small friend? the autumn fly
his time much shorter than yours or mine
i choose not to reach for the flyswatter
or squash him dead as a bug in a bed

his buzz saying hi annoys more or less
reminds me of Buddha's "compassion
for all" so i choose not to be his killer
shooing him away i had this vision

knowing he's just a courier stressed
by ripe autumn's end cold winter's start
that what we share is one tiny heart
full knowing when day's done all lose

fork

an amputated four-fingered hand
with well-honed pointed tines
attached firm to a firm metal rod
like an on-my-honor boy scout salute
gripped in a fleshy human mitt
which pulses as it stabs dead meat
we smilers stabbing what once had heart
and like Goya's Saturn eating his son
we The Eaters eat greedily fueled to shop
buying lotions and emollients to give
our living skins an alabaster radiance

until a velvet curtain ends the dance
and small slither-creatures rush to dine
on a sweetmeat buffet of we senseless sinners
how and why did man abandon fingers
as the best way to stuff the royal court
redefining the cliché 'hand to mouth'
ordered by kings throughout their lands
is a matter of debate or just a guess
at dull day's end touching food seems odd
now those who do are proclaimed porkers
demeaned like pigs at troughs swilling slop

peregrine

sometimes the miracle
merely is what is
some small surprising thing
that suddenly is born
as when the peregrine
broke from top of silo to open sky
with the whole valley far below

lakes ponds rivers creeks streams
a dream of a hundred shades of blue
red barns farms gullies hills and rise
green fields on waves of green fields
wheat oats barley corn and rye
large creatures ambling
small creatures scurrying

his silent regal glide
his rising with the rising thermals
something very close to Love

no hurry in his timeless soar
above all living traffics' roar
everything his keen eye knew
he owned was his and only his

mr. sun

mr. sun charges
our little batteries
when we run out
our soul-barges drift
round and roundabout
drift on past doubt
does it really matter
we we we we
for timothy faver

if the world were just comedians

if the world were just comedians
not a word not a fart not a turd
not a cunt prick stink piss pus or gas
not a jesus mary joe buddha or mohammed
not a fuck damn shit mother fucker or racial slur
would matter one iota of a fat rat's ass
working clean profane blue dirty crass
no wisecrack joke or quip would amuse
force the reptile brain to explode in laughter
after every punch line or one-liner
there'd be no need for timing
goofy faces dopey gestures or middle fingers

toadying up currying favor acting cute
seeing the obscene in politics and the news
all absurd forms of comedic gold miners
stretching the sphincter of society's limits
when every everything's a funny
rib-tickler groaner or knee-slapper

nothing would be funny at all
dumbest of puns would be hokey
the disappearance and dearth of laughs
would be an all-way highway no medians
slipping on banana peels and other gaffs
when everything's a big tee-hee hardee-har-har

only platitudes sourpusses and the dead serious
would make it to vegas win first prize
on TV talent shows the new jesters out to kill

would be the dumbest shits break-through dullards
not weird sex strange positions or deformities
no balloons to put a pin in

if the world were just comedians
all clowns spilling out of mini coopers
their giant garish green galumphing feet
only banal facts dull factoids told straight-faced
would hurl unsmiling crowds into tremens delirious
sycophants to the fuddy-dud straight-laced

god or not

believe in god or not know this
cricket dragonfly ant butterfly and bee
will cast a deciding vote for your entry
to heaven or hell for all eternity

whistle mouse

little mousie
squeaking whistle
whistle squeaking
you trouble me

late late at night
up for a bite
scratching clawing
wee tiny frights

weather colder
you get bolder
we really hate
to set the traps

traps to foil
your larcenies
your piracies
your stealing scraps

worry us less
than stories that
you eat wires
causing fires

wish someone cute
as furry you
black eyes blessed

in deepest night

you need more fear
of strange devices
peanut buttered
tempting choices

don't be naïve
take a big breath
it's not bad news
you'll save you yet

just figure out
a better way
new ways to play
to save your life

or else you'll wind
up in a museum
extinct species who
knew not what to do

now each trap's snap
wakes dreaming cats
ends your toils You
you wee bit of gristle

against all tyrannies

from above
from below
from within
for all time
time after time
ever again again
can good ever win?

in the paris bookshop

dreaming about god
wondering about him
does he dream of us
or we dream of him
is he good is he just
or just a dirty dog
off his leash in a rush
peeing on a burning bush

watching one leaf fall

take one dazzling october day
a falling leaf rising even as it falls
to meet its rising shadow on the ground
as each by each multiplies and gives
us to briefly know the great cliché
we are leaves on leaves on leaves
who show century on centuries
our falling failing days how to live

dealing with peoples' expectations

the best solution to dealing
with peoples' expectations
is to systematically disappoint
them so often that they will
quit expecting stop hoping

once then

then now

when all the stars breathed deep and shuddered
in july-fourth bursts and scintillations
the elders seeing all the children's eyes
hearing the carefree crowd's wild cheers
wondered was there ever once a time
when then we held these moments clear
when then these occasions helped us care
celebrating independence Day 2018

clutching at straws

friends are straws
that we clutch
as we drift out
on rip tides
each one adrift
waving goodbye
to a fading shore
swept away in
love terror and awe
no place to hide
not one of us
can love too much

stick and carrot

works best with mules
less so with fools
with cats or parrots

no never not

yearning

yearning
is just
an old wheel
what was
what is
still turning

opening the talmud

done my best dance
slogging thru the mud
of sacred books
at last i found
talmud talmud
ecumenical host
first word found
by utter chance
when and wham!
i opened to look
shining bright
was "benevolence"
as in the legend
of isaac and abraham

first months

is it the man that rocks the cradle
or the child that rocks the man
something calm something wild
each doing the very best they can

baby rap

his bath
his bottle
his stairs
his cares
his swing
the simplest things
his wispy hair
his diaper changes
his funny faces
(when he saw his first cow -
when mrs. cow saw him)
his baby jungle gym

that thing on wheels
he walking in the center
that he 'drives' around
his grunts and squeals
the way he sleeps
the way he creeps
his preppy outfits
his shoes and sneakers
his bear that 'squeakers'
his tiny rages
the way he crawls
his toys
how he loves them all
always wanting more
always heading
for any open door
what he sees
what he doesn't
what he does
what he won't
what he will do
what he wants
what he refuses
new sounds he makes
words he cannot say
soon will some day
his big round head
his chubby cheeks
how he jumpstarts his crawl
by kicking his left foot
what a hoot
the way he laughs
naked turkey in his bath
his little feet and hands
each day something new
soon to be walking
soon to be talking
so many stages
minute by hour
day after day
reborn anew
hey! little man
you're more boy
than baby now
slow down already
you imp you bug

best friend of the rug
time flying by
like a halloween 'boo!'
stop the clock
give it a ticket
put on the brakes
you're getting so big
it gives us the shakes
you've outgrown
your striped running pants
and soon your t-shirt tuxedo
and one with the clown
or was it a bear?
have you discovered ants?
where does time go
your energy your energy
wearing us down
hardly time for us to pee
soon you'll be asking
for a car and the keys
we love you so much
Winston Churchill
Peanut Mister
we must be crazy
now we're working
(pleasure all ours
wonder what'll it be?)
on a new brother or sister
we love you as you are
the you you will be
your future beckons
a new you every second
celebrating Chris and Kristy's anniversary

afternoon in early august

I

blue sky blue faintest hint
light-silver sliver of a moon
cardinal jay chickadee and finch
deerfly carpenter and honey bees
still stinging the fickle breeze
with their territorial runes

II

the pool is a gargle of turquoise
its shimmering ribbons its chains of light
brothers aspiring to a forest spring

III

the mourning doves in the cedars
go coo coo and coo coo coo
two clouds two high up pretend they are
giant kangaroos leaping higher than high

IV

chipmunks scurry from feeder
to their tunneled nests and homes
repeat repeat again like tourists
putting clotted cream on toasted scones

V

in deep of night through teaming rains
the crickets and cicadas restate their names
not one in this salubrious chorus
even vaguely considers fame

VI

antiphon to gun shots
are closed screened doors
far-away rusty lawnmowers try to start
sputter alive to their customary roars
blue-ruckus military jays make their mark
prelude to crows' strident caws
in green shadows the mottled sycamores

hell or heaven

in devil or god believe or not so many mortals
don't or do on that great end of days will surely
know the mouse the cricket the ant the pauper
the down trodden the unfed-shelterless standing
at the dragon throne shall cast their righteous vote
and funnel right from wrong good from bad
the joyfully-praised saved-few from well-damned
as the soul bird delicate as a single flake of snow
more enduring than a curled steel shaving
sheds human coil-casing turns eternal 'yes' or 'no'
our burlap sacks shed all illusions turn forever Real

waste

to postpone the finishing of that one most vital thing
to keep refining and polishing a thing well finished

cheers and cheese

if cheers were cheese
cows might be the size of bees

sometimes God happens fast

we played throw the stuffed panda
flap its fuzzy paws count down to launch
a game of catch her dad and i
she'd wait for panda paw flap and flight
hit ceiling fluff-ricochet to our hands

next the chick that peeps when petted
hatch and re-hatch from a golden egg
brief rest in her plush elephant chair
panda and sponge ball her courtiers
attending their Princess her every whim

sweetest marionette gentle puppeteer
he towered over Natalie circle dancing
to choruses of *ring around the rosie*
pockets full of posies ashes ashes
again again the glee of *all fall down*

outside ninety-in-the-shade yard golf
able listener learning how to putt
sixteen raspberries from a prickly bush
her cheeks flushed to a raspberry red
backyard putti blond curls wet from sweat

inside a cool glass of ice water
an i-phone viewing of very silly cats
then off to a family dinner nearby
teaspoons of rice or kernels one by one
just two her table manners quite advanced

best of all after a fine Thai feast
was our dance to the gelato way
good friends hours-new she took my hand
hers lost in mine then it was i knew
sometimes God happens fast
for Natalie Arnott (doodlebug) on turning two

this

a male song sparrow he the alto
high on this his bay cedar branch
sings out fearless gallant bold defiant
looking down on this his lake's blue "oh!"

the Algonquin wind conspires
to serve as an intermittent choir
not a drone not a murmur tireless
time measured in ever-open whiles

hazel clouds exponential in a mackerel sky
on a trajectory that seems designed
a form of fate unpredictable
somehow exquisitely predetermined

the many voices of the intrepid wind
the dry grasses opulently hushing
blue stands of cornflower and chicory
the surprising echoes of waves on shores

the many masques of the wavering breeze
dreaming their way through balsam and pine
declaiming the vast canvas of the day
shy sparrow spry sparrow sings sweet sweet sweet

what unseen shepherd herds this his flock
guides the woolly underbellies of his clouds
sheep-like in their silent white submission
to this his vast holding pen of wilderness

all shapes all forms all bright fractal pieces
the bell-like ringing of the gallant waves
upon the striate granite shore
sunlight's shadows dappling the forest floor

shy sparrow raising yourself stalwart up
mottled chest brave head held up high
whiling away your insignificance
contradicting flawed notions of Power

as if this your feathered life so light
your voice so clear and haunting
your sweet display of innocence
might briefly claim a perch of dominance

song sparrow small imperator ruling
stout heart looking down on your lake's blue "oh!"
your song eclipsing diamonds on bold waters
your kingdom does passeth all understanding

for Daniel Arnott
Algonquin 2018

unplugged

this is a place
this is a good place
this is a great place
this is the only place

moon in sheep light

oh moon shining O of you
your fine face a timeless clock
shines loon-breast white on your flock

you give night's hands a hand
bleach the backs of your wooly
your sweetly-sleeping sheep

you enliven the wired stars
cause dull earth to catch her breath
a lunar tick to earth's ancient tock

the troubling manner of larkin

what outweighs his flock of used condoms
his ifs if nots why nots erotic weathers
his hard cache of self-indulgent doldrums
cocks cunts asses made moot mute album
to cunnilingus once he held 'em prayed
a greco-roman forum of past cums
past erections days after tepid days

limp as sprayed seeds of rotten cucumbers
fucking more boring than remembering
here lies the blues-bald librarian
resentful stifled by so many boredoms
his catalog a sad walk through a haze
his shameless way his bowels on display

thundering hum of cicadas hoppers crickets
carnivore symphony strong devouring weak
dark arboretum of grass blades and clover in bloom
shrink down to size of a pebble or infant's fingernail
see yourself walking through a Darwinian jungle
in the crowd of once nuisances now starving predators
if there is a karmic chain just for idle speculation
imagine you now are here dumfounded with fear
a ravenous bestiary on the hunt the lawn their abattoir
preying mantis ant lion corpse beetle carpenter ant
you on the most vulnerable rung of their food chain

this vast canopy shelter chopping block and tomb
pachysandra lily of the valley black eyed susans
tower above volcano-like entry to your home which
limit rain seeps into your convoluted tunneled home

the bee

the bee the bee
he's boldly he
flies his heavy happily

so gravity defying
his stubborn buzz a gentle roar
is what he does and be

prince of princes charming
so elegantly
all the flowers disarming

to spread their petals
then bee does under bowers
what he does best

makes daisies beg for more
proves his mettle
soft his yellow onyx his black

his fuzzy diligence
the essence of intransigence
his dance his true transcendence

an apple paring

at dusk life's an apple paring
a farewell to the musk of youth
a free-fall forgetting of all our daring
a downhill slope of roads we took
fearing less what's around the bend
still mining for one last half-true truth
more intent on living - less on hoping
if lucky to have been justly caring
loving dear ones and a few good books

on the merits of drinking

everything keeps slipping
one law of gravity prevails

The Shift of Tectonics

hickory dickery clock

our histories well or ill begot
at the game table hands to hearts

one day it's total freedom
the very next it's jail

one day they remove the cuffs
the next your cellblock's locked

trying to change it to no avail
speak right up or avoid being seen

after sautéed fiddlehead greens
and roast quail chanterelle-stuffed

you've dodged the black widow's sting
why not kick back one more vodka tonic

driving by

just beyond an auto body collision sign
is another outside an old country church,
white steeple reaching for the sky,
preaching to drivers driving by.
be an organ donor. give your heart to Jesus.
can you hear the tired preacher sigh?
praying he's reaching one of us.

the hospice of every day's jokes

the hospice of every day's jokes
the gallows of the passing of time
the boring whipsaw of sad and glad
the foursome of fates too conventional:
death disease pain and disarray
serve as fickle Muse all comedians use

like translating mundane life into Latin
or sprinkling sand on beds of satin
to better tap the drill bits of Their Funny
the myth that the immanence of death
can concentrate the mind's silly dance
is a cheap blandly-consecrated wine

at the end how many abandon
all hopes of sane explanations...

it's just that before the curtain falls
it's still widely held a good thing
that somebody says something of substance
small somethings that make us laugh or cry

independence day

in our small hamlet
old glory flies
from every telephone pole
of the mystical body
of the body politic
in all our brightest palaces
semper fi the bloody goal
stars and stripes forever
shine tattooed upon our souls

summer solstice

summer solstice now flown by
for each of us each
new days grow darker
days run on and on
sun at dawn still bright
moon and stars will bloom
in the drawn bow earnest
in intent of Great Sagittarius
the eternal archer
is but a hanging ornament
from one bough on heaven's tree
in this well-wrought galaxy

long suffering

how the wind blows
everyone subject knows
adjective verb or noun

long suffering

run hide or stand
how the wind blows
and ah the plight of man

mr. happy aka 'winston churchill'

in his car seat or in his stroller
two bugs-bunny teeth lower
two uppers on the way

too young to be a high roller
aspiring to status of a toddler

relative to his head
his body still smaller
plump wrist and ankle creases
where no creases are when older
sounds he makes make our day

cheeks red as boiled beets
fine blond hair tops his dome
faint hint of dimples
he's the essence of jolly
wide eyes a blueberry folly

bring us back to
the ultimate state of simple
seeing a photo of him
is like opening a window
for a fresh breath of air
goes to forever show
as we put on the years
and time weighs us down
babies are babbling brooks
the purest form of home

on the advice of fathers

when it boils down to drowning or ash
one may turn to the advice of fathers
the compulsion to heed or do something rash
how like the leg of a compass a son mimicKing
the walk of his sire knows no other thing
'til one day the great haymaker brightens the sea
a silver coin shining in a bank full of cash
a hard-earned day flying high looking down
on well-furrowed ground a man and a plow
the draft horse muscular twenty hands high
the frigates square-rigged against any gale
immaculate white as bankers' shirts their sails
confused sheep in shadow of their shepherd
city of gold on lazy horizon the just rising sun
some clouds to add a note of gray confusion
and there in the footnote of a corner obscured
kick the legs of one who aspired and endured
who too proud of his own flight flew too close
to the planetary furnace of his own ambition

no witnesses to this fall of yet one more Icarus
violating the otherwise calm of an uncaring sea

a piece of sun
my only baggage
through the window
of the ancient glass
of my dream
i still can see

above the line of trees
against the planetary map
of night's great sky
the handle of the dipper

and like a piece of bread
in the pocket of my memory
i carry a piece of sun
for my journey
to another day

i still can hear
the loving thread
of my father's voice
ursus major
so clearly say

son
look to your heart
to always know
that though
beyond this line
which i cannot cross
my eyes like the stars
shine down upon you

bright to bright
voice to voice
heart to heart
to join you
ursus minor
on your winding way
to *ursus major*
me

portrait of my father as a young man

before returning home from the war
before mommy and daddy married
before my three sisters and me
never dreaming what should never be
the ovens the skeletons borne living and dead
barbed wire louse-ridden barracks guard towers
the dull eyes of the well-fed dogs
blood tricked and locked in the bloody
stew of the jackboot steel-winged nazi clock

in this worn black-and-white photo
scalloped edges going yellow
no fear in his eyes this new recruit
shoes spit shined to a soft glow
khakis pressed to a razor crease
standing self-possessed at parade rest
he private first class signal corps
smiling with a kind of uniformed pride
dreaming of coming home before he left
anticipating the good life oddly unafraid

then and still now fresh joy in my father's smile
as if knowing the Spite of all that he would see
could not poison his faith in the good life
hard work love sacrifice and family
would set this his greatest generation free
strangely calm as if he saw his own return
behind him massive rolls of telephone cable
a jeep and eyes still bright
three dead rabbits (hasenpfeffer on the hood)
fur glistening not a drop of blood

k-rations and dehydrated mystery meals
hanging on a fence a stack of boxing gloves
he no lightweight with a bayonne-bayonet-jersey jab
the only fight the men enjoyed fighting
africa morocco rome the camps not-so-gay paris
attic souvenirs – a fez a program from a cabaret
braless belly dancer overly posed clearly bored
german helmet dagger luger arm band with swastika
and twenty small-format images smuggled in
bergen-belsen buchenwald chelmno dachau flossenbourg
(forty thousand camps 1933 through 1945) tombstones
of hitler's still-incomprehensibly-insane sin
piles of hair eyeglasses watches teeth of gold
bulldozed bodies on bodies just bones and skin

sniper-shot won purple heart
promoted to sergeant first class
his Chopin smile lit up rooms
a gentle man a gentleman
no hint of macho
no fear of tears in him

permission to feel Granted
how he loved to say
“we’re Polish not foolish”

in this our small plot of time
in this worn photo my father’s days
and all fathers’ days born and reborn
reappearing and disappearing
slowly as memories yours and mine
that all our fathers be here now
my fondest foolish wish

warhorse

eight million killed in world war one
from a nightmare of bone-charred trees
streams and puddles of blood-red mud
one magnificent one tries to rise
wrapped in razor wire gut-tired
anchored bleeding in the racing sun
twist up turn flop down again again
his pain a good flashlight trapped
a fire burning through red cellophane
glares through smoke fog and coldest rain

the stench of burnt flesh as insane
as clouds of poison gas in the breeze
free of care for what man has wrought
ravens dine on the dead as they please
eyes first then bowels then caked blood
an equine Christ snared his world barb wired
all his steaming attempts come undone
all the tangled lacerated thoroughbreds
all the pretty horses all the pretty men
in the entrails of failed diplomacies caught
on viewing Steven Spielberg’s *WARHORSE*

starving fox

he was Buchenwald thin

god-gestapo starved
his outside caving in
No Mercy his name
caving relentless in
his ribs visible
his frame gaunt
his face a haunt
a remembrance
of a younger fox
one that once was him
in his starvation dance
he made a frantic run
at any bird or mammal
feasting by the feeder
no matter no matter
shy guy at a prom
his heart not truly in it
shy of the prettiest ones
so half-hearted his run
it almost said why begin
and i was sad for him
and those of us who
pathetic hunting game
in our hearts are starving
for a freeing moment
seeing him
i wished i had a gun

after an august rain

like dream walking in wet concrete
after an august rain can you feel
the oppressive soaking weight of it

in rainbow sprays the redwings reel
from the tops of marsh grass greening
wet ponderous their red and black wings

as the woolen smother of humidity
on any living thing muted sings
how this heaviness this humidity

as if knit by some heavy hand
slows things down to their sweetest core
turning all things into an open door

the wind

the wind made visible
in waves of field grass
caused startled crows to fly
black under the blue
open eye of the sky
something rare so true

after the rain

after the rain can you feel
the full weight of the it
watching the red wings descend
ponderous their red and black wings
from the tops of baby-green trees
and the smother of humidity
covering any flying thing that sings
how every thing slows down for us
at once light and heavy as air

chipmunks bird feeder month of may

light side:

like furry racing cars with three-tone racing stripes
four-legged vacuums sprinting in the early morning light
cheeks jammed full of pumpkin seeds wobbly heads
jazz foragers dizzy gillespies so stereo-swift
dashing back and forth and forth and back so intense
to their tunnels piling seeds on seeds by their cozy beds
feisty sprinters all so urgent in their sixth sense
sprinting 'till under feeder there's not one seed left
then "whewf!" they take a nap knowing come winter
rest well earned their families will never be bereft

dark side:

common as city rats cleaner than pigeons
to a few you're cute but truth be told mere vermin
just fast food to fox coyote bobcat even cats
their job to keep your booming population down
you scratch your itchy hinds so fast legs a whirr
astonishing that you have any hind hair left at all
you are the fastest face washers in the nation
full of seeds or nuts your cheeks are hydrocephalic
Disney caught your scramble - idiotic frantic
in Nature red in claw and tooth your cute is moot

birth of a day

well before the sun began to pray
the moon so quietly lingered
above a saw blade horizon

dark as a cake with one lit candle

a slim finger flame and pale
as an oregon chardonnay
elated clouds rose and gray
silently praised the birth of a day

algonquin smallmouth

jaws hard as a bad dream
hooked in sun's last rays
they were polished ebony
bronze as burnished breastplates
of caesar's centurions
took lures for what they seemed
as they fought for freedom
much more violently
water arcing off their backs
in shining diamond sprays
thin moonrise in their blackest eyes
we thankful set them free
all hearts beating like a drum
each day a new one to come
Algonquin Algonquin

baby's smile

well before the light of words
there is such intelligence in it
sign of bright things to come
very much like the sun
for Christopher Mikael Jr.

no problems

i have no problems
or so i'd like to say
other than those i must own
mine mostly washed away
like well laundered sheets

those owned by people i meet
owned by people i most love
may theirs all fly away
like flocks of startled starlings
or broken shards of potter's clay

outliving one's mother

in my cough i hear her cough

in my rage i feel her rage
now at this older age
feel dumber than before
feel closer to her closed door

her last tooth removed
there was nothing we could do
but watch thinking so too me or you
what things different to be done
each helpless in our grooves

her home was her sanctuary
had she listened had she stayed
she might have seen her own centenary
who if any can match her stride
on that wave of rage she did ride

she fired the help or made them lunch
she refused to envision the sad
avalanche of assisted living
leading to a feeble hospice end
past that last-ever homeless bend

which of us surviving dancers
on sidewalks dancing leaves or snow
each an arrow shot from what bow
leaving loved ones shot by what archer
is given what grace to ever know?
for Agnes Theresa - mother's day 2018

truth

the truth is an accident
a car crash inside our guts
it's not an 'and' but
a bleeding 'but...but...but...'
a rear-view-mirror stutter we see
looking harsh right back at us.
here's our truest acid test:
from the blind bank
of our bankruptcy
of our miseries

leading us if true
to what our best
hearts do say,
pumping in our breasts,

the greatest quest must be:
to withdraw, spend free?
or to be a miser or
fail to withdraw,
die desiccate, bitter
heartless and cheap.
for Philip Schultz and his poem *The Truth*

steamroller

in you no mercy no mind
you flatten all in your path
meld violence without within
Black Knight you re-press your subjects
into one melded macadam name
cryptic gelded indecipherable game

no translation your compacted guests
whether ant moth or butterfly
sparks of compacted mica
sparkling complicated in the sun
grasshopper cricket mourning dove
pulverized silent as flattened cellos

functionless as broken violins
into a dumb homogeneity
dark adjutant of a rolling deity
steeling on mysterious on
surface traces of unsolved crimes
unkind river blind gondola driver

one murder rolling over the next
redefining the new worthless
a vole blank eyes now gone
arrayed on your baking sheet of tar
thin flagpole of a flagless tail
as if from Pompei waves forever farewell

smelling of that deepest summer smell
scrap book of flowers pressed black
all reeling things failing as Larkin once said
“...to climb clear of wrong beginnings...”
nothing scintillating about this palimpsest
of alive once now ground-down dead
for Marianne Moore and her *To A Steam Roller*

first flocks of robins in the spring

she took no interest or so i dreamed
in first flocks of robins in the spring
or never told me save this year
when she was first to see and say
what she had never said before
just outside our screened-porch door
hopping flitting flying bush to tree

all the pretty robins their red breasts
bright against mud melt and
rags of dirty snow made me see
what we all think we know
arrogantly about those we love
is often hidden or lost to us
in some dark bin of unknowing

cats asleep on bales of hay outside
their barn for warmth at end of day
holding on to what we believe
time apart more than time together
never too late something must be done:
just find – how fine - day's last warmth
from rays of april's fast-setting sun

mixing metaphors

once in a while
it's good to add
to your warp or woof
a golden stich
when stacking words
like lacquered chinese boxes
in full dress military file
on a stage that's rickety
even necessary
to pull an ostrich
out of a hat
in gym shorts
wearing spats
a brightly colored bird
all jewelers beguiled
a diamond crocodile
a weird and wild word
no so often heard
like 'persnickety'

old rooster

cockscorn up and tall
cocked to ball or brawl
old rooster
needs no blue Viagra
no hormone shots
old proud rooster i dream
i hear your raucous call
sun up is it morning after all?

one younger
stands erect
keeps his distance
each on guard ever ready
no need for war
debates or rebuttals
no single Helen of Troy
for these cocky boys

beauty harem of hens
bevy of feathers and down
softly clucking win wins
safe they gently scuttle
under watchful-laser
alpha-rooster's eye
alert for fox or hawk
or any other trouble

God's fleas

if God were a dog
spelled backwards
would he be
a she or he?
mystery inscrutable
for all eternity
sometimes amiable
sometimes rabid
what are we
sometimes rabid
sometimes amiable
lost in His fleece
for all eternity
but God's fleas

firsts

why is it
every simplest thing

first spare rib
first turd on tuesday
any other first thing
two teeth badda-bing

babies The Baby
to loved ones bring
to you two and me
fill us so full of happy
wee love to we
makes us sing

what the peepers said

from this dank ceiling
of melting lake ice
from near-clear marsh edge
small joy in looking up
from this loam-like dark
feeling claustrophobic heat
of re-generator april sun
now low on the horizon
like our limited viridian view
we slimy burrowing things
rise up more freely up
through this subterranean stew
from our mud sarcophagi
of marsh slime rot and weed
surprised we have not died
now awake we slowly rise
at dusk and dawn shiny armies
thousands on thousands strong
as the seasons and planets turn
we sing and mate and sing
our amphibian spring song

undercutting silence with a parenthesis

the talkative silence of the swamp
(until the peepers)

God

i do believe
God is truly
a man
for men
a woman

for women
without end
woe man
amen

song for wanda

the sky is open
an open slate of blue
save one cloud's dimple

my love is simple
i live to live for you
my life bespoken

love is neither nor

organized
orca prized
ostracized
normalized
notarized
wisdom'ized
coulda oughta
shoulda surprised

soul train

yesterday the car
was facing forward
the future racing at us
today the car
was tracking back
speeding views
of what is past
one thing sure
all thinking know
neither lasts
most choose to
wait and endure

whoever said of the moon

whoever said of the moon
that she was the most celestial host
of the lemon meringue pie of childhood

whoever said the black sky-pointing fingers

of the graceful trees and their complex filigree
of branches were above-ground roots drinking air
and sun susceptible to every silly smallest breeze

whoever said the moon was sky's cuticle
a fingernail aspiring to become a thin lemon slice
a born-again porcelain bowl on the potter's wheel of night

whoever said beauty is so needed that ugly doesn't count
as Queen Luna descends knighting new stars that rise
above the charcoal carpet of clouds in procession
and her high whiteness shines in subtle ascension

whoever dumbstruck from darkness of barn looking up
witness to old palomino clouds in horsetail formation
said the sky's a sliced orange in a black cup on a dark shelf
cup broken and re-broken that by design reassembles itself

and is it not most peaceful when night is so gently struck
like the baritone ringings of soft Kyoto temple bells
or the gentle alarm calls of red wings in the marsh
how sweetly they glance up at the swelling red planet mars

whoever said of the waving limbs of the weaving trees
an elegant ballet early starlight and dusk the stage well set
an unflagging ever-unpredictable stubbornness means more
than our opening of the book of interplanetary dreams

whoever told of the darkest darkness of the moon
that she was the last bird in an ancient aviary shuttle
defying the plucked grouse of rust senility and old age
governor of all end games ruler of every small fire's rage

a fattest man

a fattest man i sadly am
one in three hundred thousand
soaking un-toweled wet
seven hundred forty pounds
metrically in Brit don't know in stones
existentially exhilarated totally
in no way even marginally depressed
why i choose not to leave my bed
don't need your condescending pity
instead inside my head i am my biggest I
only bound by best stories and full access
to my amplest supply of brand name cookies

oreos nutter butters vienna fingers ginger snaps
ahoy chocolate chips fig newtons nilla wafers
multi-blended ben an jerrys plethora of creams
snacks and pies and always-fullest fridge
why should ever leave my comfy cave
i follow my food rut bliss never in my glut
have felt "no pain no gain" the need to leave
my comfort zone shape up like some media-directed
ape calibrating pecs and abs and body fat
nor am i out for a record fat fatter or fattest
than the fattest fat man all history has known
i'm quite confident about the way i've grown
i inspire chubby kids to contradict their mates
not be brow beat by shame into a form of insane
inane idea of feeling guilt for being a bigger bugger
than they fact is i'm here living proof to say
in poetry terms i am an objective correlative
anti-model for this our way too-correct century
you skinny-ass minnies totally lack class

kiss

take me to your terror
take me to your bliss
give me one more kiss

Lord bring me down

go ahead Lord bring me down
bring me down and down and down
with all my faded deeds and memories
the company of all i've kept and keep
like the loneliest of northwest territories
the begrudging illusion that any part of me
has the tiniest import to Almighty Thee
a flake of dandruff an ant a leaf a grain of sand
a worthless clown wandering in a desert land
a tiny spark in an atomic conflagration
a starving inconsequential third world nation
no water to drink roadside with my begging bowl
take me away make me bigger make me whole
smite me with Thy chain mail glove
for the greatest part of me is Love

at the end do with me as you please
i will try to cling without frown to Mighty You
without semblance of slightest complaint
ride Your royal rollercoaster down and out

even with a self-effacing sense of celebration
as onions peeled or bitters on your chopping block
You being You who deign to do no talking back
still wondering who You are Your Majesty to me
knowing death is where all truths are hidden
i will exit knowing all i've lacked and lack
fly away flying away i will sing and shout
bring me down and down and down
go ahead Lord bring me down
smite me with Thy chain mail glove
for the greatest part of me is Love

lowest cloud

the lowest cloud
in the bright july sky
swiftest does fly by

the highest cloud
jealous dark as night
so slow asks why

all our sacred chosen places

all our sacred chosen places
within each our hearts
wait patient in their glories
to be recalled in an instant
birds skies shores and seas
here on command never to part

against the great empty

against the great empty that engulfs us all
sparrow wren and thrush still build their wattle nests

and forever do their very feathered best
to ensure the forever forward moving All

and sunny fields and glades on summer mornings
still ring strong and echo glad with their joyful calls

waste no time

you know your deepest name
waste no time
waste no worry on fame
if your work is true made new
your heart-mind clear of sludge

it might well live beyond you

keep the money flowing
in business make your name
from an ever-growing enterprise
stay free of academia's small pies
forget the politics of gov grants
petty-penny wars and jealousies

best art comes from dreams you dreamed
your visions 'till now not dreamed
breathes free stands clear and high
above all forms of currencies
history will judge as the clock ticks
if what you do finds not the shelf

so what! you did what you pleased
and best of all funded it yourself

swimming through a beam of light

swimming through
a beam of light
width of an arrow shaft
we two met
half to half whole to whole
light and me
me and light

unsure if it pierced me
or i pierced it
in this shining net
one pulse sings
some few small things
do perdure can cure
our finest sinecure

young squirrel

the way the young squirrel
ran down the country road
my car right behind him
his body's repertoire this
swerving can can't can can't
herky jerky start stop start...
his fluid-running zigs and zags
his panicked rhythm's rise and fall

just like the arsis and thesis
the ictus of gregorian chant

blinks dark

eight years now since she's gone long away
wish i'd lose track and miscount the years
most lost most lost you never felt less
a good friend said "your son's love at the helm
guides her watchful still to her rest"

daunted by this our soon-to-be new realm
doubtful yet hopeful i try my best to pray:
"mother dear, what, when i cross, will you say,
my truest judge, in your love merciless
tallying what i've done least, done best?"

or is it just a spinal tap that blinks dark
on a sterile operating table one day
dream of a dream brief walk in a park
full stop to sestinas too few salt years
sweet margaritas sweet tsarinas' tears?

or a little black train we all must ride
that just don't never bring no one back?
*meditation on the eighth anniversary of my mother's
death – September 2 2017*

after the storm

after last night's thunder storm
torrential downpour near hurricane winds
patches of blue peek through rags of clouds
thousands of raindrops in the tops of trees
fistfuls of diamonds leaf on leaf shine
in the tourmaline of the new day sun

rearview mirror

driving to the morning train
before last turn to station
briefly glancing back
in rearview mirror i see
past the funnel of road's bend
no foretelling this day's trend

sun brightening a tunnel of trees
this dancing arboretum
flames orange burns tangerine
against a midnight-forest-green

ego sum - videre ergo sum

(you are what you see where i come from)

exhales stars

i've hung the curtain of the sky and exhale stars
my brush has painted red the red planet mars

cold moon over pond willows and old apple trees
i've drunk the blood of war kissed the dove of peace

i see human kind as slag dumps of rusted cars
hard-threshed heaps of decomposing body parts

madrigals sestinas tide's trumpet ebbs and flows
I The Vast Empty brag: "all else just comes and goes"

surrealist's body map

my head is Canada
my torso the U.S. of A.
my lower half legs on down
is Panama and South America
with the gift of two new hips

i am a tectonic shift
how sweet in an old-world way
like redesigning South America
funny shoes on an old clown's feet
the dad of dada nada sweet nada

dark valley

grand parents true parents
sooner or later we must leave
my parents your parents and you
sooner or later you must leave us

i pick up the phone the pace
keep calling keep calling still call
but most of our conversations now
are like too-friendly foreign nations

figuring out if there is anything new
left to say on those darkest days
solo to myself or Who? i try to pray
for the old days when all was new

when more days facing who to trust

or reviewing days gone review we must
asking for some grace one new grace
in too many ways we now are thrust

blue bird

nothing races to the equivalency of a conclusion
quicker than the blue bird in the persimmon tree
whose song flying free is a metronomic fusion
whose song flying free is a lyrical profusion

optical illusion

shadow and light race
over the trees across the pond
faces of green gorillas
(a day dream full of menace)
lurch out as if from jungle fronds
protecting their congo villas
i sip my tea and imagine on

i wish my actions could renew-ignite
could better light your path and mine
could find some key that would unlock
the early-on-facing-all that was you and me
facing it young in hope in courage
but can't i can't display my old heart
on my sleeve like a battery-less clock

trying to tell time in this uncharted land
it seems a phantom ship that in rip tide slipped
away from the dock of my soul's waving hand
silly manikins we *sans* formal suit or fancy dress
un-accommodated i keep calling you as we drift
having more than we ever need less than we desire
we face away from what was what is what will be

always hoping for one small ragged thing
that Now that aspires to one ray of happiness

the two thunders of success

the climb to success has two thunders:
going from wondering what to do
to having no time to do or wonder
how you juggle is up to you

after rainfall

that night a dark and sullen downpour

hid the saucer edge of a broken moon

that day the sun shone through a thousand rain drops
sparkling on the edges of a thousand leaves

clouds in awe stood still under a dome of blue
all a wonder that heaven's jewels fell so soon

the eclipse

monday august 21 hudson valley
begins at 1:23 p.m peaks at 2:44 p.m.
at our longitude seventy-one percent
with quick plunge in temperature
streamers of light streak across open sky
racing around the moon's silhouette
some clueless few asking has it happened yet

as i was thinking about writing
how writing is like an eclipse
or like the shadow of my hand blocking
lamp light on a crystal bowl of oranges
silhouette precise as if cut from crepe
and about writing about the eclipse
a friend sent me an email saying
i should be writing about the eclipse
i was looking forward to the eclipse
to thinking and writing about the eclipse

even the sky cloud free seemed to say
it's time to start writing about the eclipse
days before the howling herd of media
every channel or station's permutations
a chorus of dire advice warning the faint
of mind or heart seconded this notion

thundering on in idiot-proof public service
all their near-identical ratings-driven raves:
never look directly at the sun's rays
wear eclipse glasses at all times
NASA's eclipse page best place to start
remember! the sun provides important clues
as moon moves in front of sun wait for it
moon will become a giant diamond ring
this brightness will break into many shards
of light that will halo moon's edge: Baily's Beads

at The End moon will move across sun's face
will mirror the beginning and the hoi polloi will see
once again Baily's Beads and the diamond ring
as a chastened sun peaks out of hiding breaks free

the anticipating birds were not impressed
crickets and cicadas did not trill or sing
their little leg violins and cellos silent
failed to warble thinking it's no big thing
as daylight turned to anemic umber twilight

then not nearly dark as early dusk
bloomed a deep shade of looming summer
storm green as when the light takes leave
and a cape of hunter's shimmering celandine
makes shy leaves show their underbellies

when waning light slowly changes back
as if some great hand lifted an opaque screen
from the surface of an old daguerreotype

the shadows of the cedars surrounding the pond
in the cool of their shade took on an ethereal glow
as did the field grass and the chainmail
pickerel-back black ribbons of turquoise pool

but unless you were one accustomed to looking
one seriously tuned into the shift of seasons' light
a painter a photographer one with a passionate eye
unless an *en plein air* looker looking studiously
at something you took joy in and cared about
you might have felt this sky circus let you down

last one 1979 (who remembers or cares?)
this at best a five on a scale of ten
a lackluster solar challenge
a kind of celestial-driven conspiracy
the accomplices the media the sun the moon
a planetary punch and judy show
the next in 2024 so the astronomers say
some two thousand days away
some of us may live to see we pray
when a fire ball sun will again be foiled
by a ghostly orange moon round as a lozenge
for Dianne Devitt

green dragonfly

how just in the last days of august
a surprise of pears on gnarled pear tree
continue to ripen as they must
how on the slate-gray cobblestone
a lone dragonfly length of a thumb
four wings clear as old leaded glass
green new-pear green in summer trusts

the buddha and the beetle

against all human cruelty
against the infinite train
of the dying and the dead
against infinities of infinities
the buddha cried
compassion!
to all struggling beings

flailing in the ocean
of the olympic pool
alone on a willow leaf
the beetle cried
forget the buddha
forget all philosophies
wake up gautama – save me!

pine beetle

shell shining like shellac in the sun
the mahogany pine beetle

sits still in my hand not much larger
than the tip of a darning needle

small intelligence held by giant me
knows enough by instinct wants to flee

sensing his panic i set him free
to the just-mown diamond-dew green

if the smallest of our brethren like he
incarnate reincarnate is so street wise

who are crass we in God's hands ever
to dream a more sinister enterprise?

skipping stone

how the skipping skipping stone

across the calm pond's surface thrown
the growing O's it so briefly leaves
as spent it must drop down to deep
shows even the mute can sometimes sing
reminding us of our longing for home

tiniest fly

the tiniest of tiny flies
on my computer screen
smaller than the letter 'e'
a speck of winged black
wings transparent as leaded glass
against this back-lit blaze of white

against this unfeeling scene
a little like you and i
careening to galactic night
like rare unexpected birds
or perfectly chosen words
evanescent rarely crass

said the goat

said the goat
kill knife at his throat
i'd like to think

i know what death is

what will flow
after this kid after this
will not be pink

yesterday today

yesterday i felt a chilling blast
like exact diatomic fermi-pasta
ulam-tsingou solitary waves
with optical band ripples
at infinity crashing over me
and then i listened to henry
ragtime texas thomas
whose amplitude was rave
a nanopteron solution at play
traveling at the speed of sound
a nontrivial musical revolution

(exponentially localized real fast)
if ever there was a singular one
in the diatomic fun house a bit of fun
the capillary-gravity waves of today
from the curds of yesterday The Whey
celebrating Timothy Faver's article in *The Journal for
the Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics*
10-10-2017

hurry baby hurry

hurry baby hurry
enough with kicks ifs and maybes
we know you're right cozy in there
sheltered warm snug and sleepy
but wakey wakey little guy
time for light of day and fresh air
time for us to see your baby face
time for us to change your diapers
for you to start projectile peeing
for us no fear of dearth of sleep
or goggles with windshield wipers
it's one degree of separation
you need to join us here outside
and end this endless gestation
out here there's so much to be seeing
a dog a cat and We happy three
Love and a roller coaster ride
hurry baby hurry
for Kristy and Chris and little 'what's- his-name'
10-15-2017

hooray kid hooray

hooray kid hooray
and hurrah hurrah
we did it you did it
you've come so far
new day and a long way to go
done with incubating
finally fled the uterine wall
how you kept us waiting
'till our zombie eye bags
almost swept the bedroom floor
wept in starts and fits hardly slept
praying for the golden days to be
of mustard-yellow baby shits
when changing stinky diapers
will be like staying at the Ritz
here you are yowling beet red

tempest-howling like the living dead
clenching fierce fists tears cascading
down your chubby cheeks

making each night seem like weeks
we thought pregnancy was bad
now begins the futile serenading
the patient persuading the never-ending
aiding you you helpless renegade
then baptism or bris the too-tender tits
memorizing fairy tales and songs
can you and lack of sleep drive us mad
oh the guerilla warfare of the infant years
but still we're glad you're here
(where's the melatonin or nearest bar
pray God they do take-out or deliver)
we love forever you it won't be long
before one day, Gov, clever you own a car
hooray kid hooray
and hurrah hurrah
we did it you did it
we've come so far
new day and a long way to go

for Kristy and Chris
celebrating Christopher Mikael Olshan Jr.
October 18 2017 - 1:05 a.m.
6 lbs 11oz - 20" long

little shitter

our little shitter
having happily shat
happier than a purring cat
cries how about that!
who's cleaning his shite
his rosy pink baby bum
not vaguely his worry
his little world's all right
full up with bulging belly
his way of saying nitey-nite
to his pops and his mum

for Chris, Kristy and The Chairman

clowns

who remembers Emmet Kelly
his signature hobo frown
his droopy sad sack art

the rest of the floppy pack

packed into tiny cars
cascading out in mobs

feet the size of two by fours
electrocuted cotton candy hair
scaring kids at country fairs

behind every wink and smile
a nightmare Nile crocodile
a pile of bleeding hearts

halloween eve

the burning skull that burns
inside the human skull
is the forge of fires
that keeps all killing knives
from rust and going dull
helter skelter returns

held hostage

held hostage
by this bright-eyed cat
little love bug on her lap
a furry kind of wattage

don' wanna pay no ransom
don' wanna say shoo or scat
jus' wanna sing this anthem
some things never age
for mary agnes faver 10•29•2017

o god

o god my god
are you there
son of God the father
son of mary virgin
not of bitch
come down to earth
to redeem us from dearth
of faith hope and imagination
Buddha Muhammed Confucius
all the many masters of zen yogis
sufis dancing out of bhagavad gitas,
upanishads vedas tripitakas
talmuds torahs analects the bible
books of rites and the koran

everything so illusively zen
here not here yes or no
blessed not blessed
something or nothing
evanescent incandescent
found in souls of mystics
trapped in their love-of-You
whom You love to torture
You happy silent deeply sad
inscrutable invisible silence
single or multitudinous often creepy
silent as cruel or kind each terribly
driving us out of our minds
punishing us old testament style
once in a while new testament ally
most of going us silently berserk
politically socially environmentally
in a rare moment of web-like "like"
You the spider as we disparate desperate
pray so very few of us rewarded if any
with a cheapskate peek a tiny glimpse
of what in all creation You mean
feeble we on Your white head
in your cloud-white beard
like snow or lice isn't it weird
that at the very end on death's bed
when we all think like lawyers
before some unpredictable judge
no one for sure most of all not You
has put our anxiety to rest
given us a fleeting glimpse or two
of at ease knowing good sleep or rest
as we avalanche each by each
to our puny mortal ends
hoping we'll be the only one
in the universe of all mankind
of all civilizations' tribulations
as forgotten as yesterday's bread
to share with the rest of the slobs
drowning in their own rage and shit
waiting to exit poor planet earth
to at last finally thanks to You God
to report your presence guaranteed
as we rest in Your snow white beard
snuggle in Your snow white hair
we all will know once and for all

we're not just head-strong head lice
headed to who the hell knows where
oblivion a profound dark nothingness
random victims of a toss of Your dice
forgotten migrants to the infinitely less

little deity

Little Deity in the blink of your ruthless occupation
you have already bestowed upon us infinities of tenderness
Tiny Warlord more helpless than a kitten - Sire, do not believe
we are deceived by the fragility of your pink battle colors
your fingers aspiring to be longer than a pinkie finger nail
your softness your silken skin more delicate than a flower petal
the miracle of your little feet not callused by the swear of earth
those toes ensuring eternal repetitions of this or that little piggy
though you can't steady the bobble of your weighty regal head
or yet return your renegade sneaky-escaped pacifier to your mouth

oh Mighty Game Changer how?!! you have turned our nights into days
our days into nights and us into most servile servants of your court
servants indentured in wonder to your many manifestations of awe
Alien Incarnate you have us bowing kowtowing to your martial laws
your gentle dominance is as mesmerizing as the shining of your eyes
the way your hands never resting seem to reach and grasp and open
never still ever gently commanding just one sweet milk sip more
you practice a cunning form of imperialism have us in your royal thrall
bound by invisible chains we observants try hard to read your beck and call

the symphony of your little exclamations tiny squeaks and chortles
the softest oh's and half-born ha's training to become proper laughs
your muted grunts wheezes wanna-be sneezes never fail to please
the adjectives *little soft tiny small* score! and win on your field of play
like dwarves in the castles of castilian kings regiments of them
never too many to win the esteem of doting signors and signoritas
your snore a single tired bumble bee a cricket sawing his dull saw
armies on armies of *little little small small soft soft tiny tiny*
softer than the cliché of softest fur of a thousand puppies' paws

and then there's that brain inside that head that extravagant head
that's mostly head with a baby-face and brain that conquer - all instinct
not yet conscious but finely calibrated totally astute take no prisoners
intuitively cunningly unconsciously administratively creatively
that finely tuned eons-crafted balanced native brilliance of that brain
using every advantage playing every angle leveraging your power of cute

Command Central you ruthless Attila you have us jumping tending bending

oh Puppet Master we puppets to your every whim dance to your every tune
sun sets you wake up sun rises you go to bed your vanquished battlefield
strewn with dirty diapers soiled bibs and glistening baby wipes we follow
we know you know what's best for you and that you have no inhibitions
in saying what you need as sweet or violently as the situation demands
all powerful Emperor of Emperors it's we who are little soft small and tiny
at your feet mere butlers chambermaids slave-adjutants to you Young Master

All Powerful Country Squire to cite hemingway's *grace under pressure*
you don't really need that much do you? just our real-time no-holds-barred
second-by-second constancy and *constant courage* (no whinging please)
under sleeplessness as evidenced by our tired slouch and love-exhausted eyes
with love for Christopher Mikael Olshan Jr. (born Founder&Chairman of The Luxury Baby Council)
AND his mum and dad Kristy and Chris

little monkey

little monkey
much loved monkey
climbing up
always hungry
always climbing up
hopes anything
below the chin
above the belly button
even buttons
will be his tasty
drinking cup

hillbilly's prayer

i is glad that you and we
and i is what we is
and ain't what we wuz
and dun used to be

complaint

each of us do pay our dues
what long ago was today
now all gone no place to play
some choose to call it 'yesterday'

late november

she wears a russet shawl
knit of many silken woolen shades
of reds of orange rusts and umbers
driven by shearing frosts and rains
she sheds her many shining leaves

until all are lost plowed under
knowing full well they give
as they do fall they do sing

not one of Her Many feels pain
sloughed away by Winter's slow
freeze and melt and freeze
relentless rise and fall of plow
the white exclamatory O of snows
which brings all dead back again
knowing full well they will live
again when Spring will sing
thanksgiving day 2017
for wanda knitting fireside

kabuki blue

in the kabuki blue drama of night
when behind his glowing scene
The Stage Manager of sun's descent
mutes light's curtain to reveal the cast entire
the black hills topped by naked trees
on horizon their silhouettes laser-cut
the already-risen enchantress moon
huntress all in white enters stage right
considers her face in lake's mirror
the stars made weak by her lunar parlor
the bored court-jester clouds look down
on owl fox coyote on their silent hunts

a quiet play where almost nothing happens
or almost everything once written will
shrill of rabbit cry in talons of owl
vole snatched from snow tunnel by fox
deer sleep under arbors of white pine
no words spoken just one coyote's howl
all players thrust on stage yet again
must answer the prayers of constellations
rhyme the same rhymes night after night
as Diana draws her bow high above them
diadem of a crescent moon in her crown
all things do aspire to the condition of fire

proverb

sometimes it's better to die
while trying something new
to get off the train

the prison of the mundane
have the heart to scoff
metaphorically at pain
jump off the dock
off the warden's clock

the person that answered the door

sadly it's not halloween or a dream
the person that answered the door
(not a skeleton no lips no frown)
but dressed in plush brown velour -
red-eyed priest or butcher friar tuck?
one eye oozing one bloody red
carried a long push-button razor
that shaves the richest whiskers down
to damp floor to join those cut before
then i knew horror of horrors
in panic racing for roof or attic
that there'd be no quarter no rest
useless proof my "tried to do my best"
and like a chosen chicken i cluck
"o no!" now headless i am His guest

five crows beneath a bird feeder

their black against white of snow
is as simple as the midnight black
of multitudes of sunflower seeds
or nautical-twilight black before day's rise
the scimitar curve of their ivory beaks
the shadow-blue stencil tracks they leave
how often they are very first to know
at dusk dawn or brightest-light midday
smart dark scouts gliding high on patrol
sharp eyes scan from above tireless
one spots a fresh frozen carcass
(immune to toxins or poison toxicants)
another, your backyard feeder just filled,
a secret semaphore, their calls raucous
story told in crow to their 'murder'
spooking squirrels and the little birds
sleepy nuthatch sparrows and chickadees
five more join silent as a wing beat
voracious they swoop down and feast
in their caws can you hear the echo
of their coughing "more more more!"?

note: non-birdwatchers - google 'a murder of crows'

once told

my mother once told me
when i was a kid
didn't vaguely know
from a meme a scheme
or a did from did
had never been dealt
a deep cut or serious blow
i came to know triptych is the key
two cats and a kid
earth plants bugs and animals
there are no manuals
each generation adds to the dream
go easier on you as easy on me
do exactly as she once did

worm

looking up at this dank ceiling
into a loam-like dark
feeling a claustrophobic warmth
powered by a spring sun
it too below a horizon
no joy in looking up
even my most minimal view
slimy burrowing thing
i freely squirm up and down
with ants and centipedes
in this underground zoo
inside this earth no windows

cynic's thanksgiving

shorn of feathers feet head and beak
vitals and neck stuffed into two cavities

its thawing blood runs pink in the sink
axed free from all rude forms of gravity

america's first bird salutes democracy
hurry let's cook him before he starts to stink

a last-minute pardon for one plucky
lucky one whose won got the presidential sneak

the turkey's thanks

o thanks giving ham or salmon
you Jesus fish or pork mammon

you've answered my wish

you are my Brahmins
instead of me beheaded
you are broiled baked pan fried

in my feathered mind
i wish you were deified
i now make time relieved

in lieu of being roasted
(in no way have i boasted)
for backgammon

sadly for most turkeys
this trend fails to please
opposes pilgrim canons

of mandatory execution
our gobble-gobble protestations
mistaken for joie de vivre

the hoi polloi clamoring
for bigger breasts
and two more wings

first snow

the crisp almost-smell of new snow
the air clear as cold spring water
haystacks white their shadows blue

red leaf

red leaf
full moon lit
shaped like a heart
with a hole in it
but is it art

syzygy

moon setting low
in the west
sun rising low
in the east
in between
we and eternity

syzygy

marsh mid january

marsh grasses tall in the sun
each a letter on pond's frozen page
shining in the sub-zero cold

if one of us knew better
one might say they're having fun
bravest thing they do is grow old

the ones that won

cats are known by their faces
of all the races they all run
two things have the ones that won:
cutest eyes that take them places
a smiley look that always aces
charms new owners and guarantees

cozy spots on lounge's and chaises
no need to fear the starving bramble
first prize of food and love for life
in the last-chance-adopt-me raffle
goes to those who say look! i'm me
aren't i celebrity of celebrities

baby's job spec

burp pee poop cry eat sleep
hic-up throw up gurgle coo
then as you wish repeat
do be doo be doo

gentle rains

soon there will come spring rains so gentle
smelling of leaves compost and rusted metal

chimney swifts circumscribing circles in the sky
an ancient game where no living thing dies

and their chittering swerving swooping cries
serve to wake up the sun and remind it to shine

and each and everyone's fears and pains
do take wing and are reborn again as gains

les animaux pour les enfants de tous les ages

the polar bear

whiter than snow
with waterproof hair

when he needs a meal
the polar bear

can take a long time
to come up for air

so once in while
he can steal

and enjoy a good meal
of fresh ringed seal

the giraffe

his rusty spots blend in with sun and shade
which keep him hid from lion's claws
are not the only useful things he's got
he needs no elevator escalator or ladder
highest leaves for all other beasts out of reach
for him are easy as playtime laughter
his dark snake-like tongue is very well hung
gives him another half a meter or more
to snag those tender buds just blooming
even his babies look down on the world
though sky-towering this shy one doesn't brag
born Tall King aspires to the far flung stars

dogs

they love to smell one another's asses
politically correct? not even vaguely
they don't care about status or classes
just want to get to know the subject
who left his or her most compelling trace
family genus species best doggy connect
they sniff like detectives on a case
with an intensity hard to describe
can't drag them away without a bribe

even so the minute before they go
what's the problem? why the rush? couldn't hurt
they all insist on one last little squirt
a howdy-do to the next he or she
an 'all for one and a one for all'
longer lasting than a cell phone call
an ancient doggy-to-dog technology

cows

cows known mostly for their moos
do regularly pay their dues
leave moist circular patties
(don't blame their ranchers)
that dry out toasty in the sun
(good fuel or frisbees just for fun)
so whenever touring pastures
(even cows know this is true)
whatever species doo you do
barefoot or with shoe
skinny or fatty older or new
doo-doo disasters do shun
(stepping in wet one's no fun)
(stepping in wet one's no fun)

the chipmunk

striped coat escaped prisoner on the run
he stuffs his brown face to near explosion
what a furry frantic vacuum cleaner!
sucking up sunflower seeds at such a pace
constantly looking right and left and right
herky jerky distressed on high alert
worried about a sudden attack or fight
with crazed predator or competitor
in some high stakes vegas survival game
he stuffs his cheeks chubby-taught to bursting
head big as a thanksgiving-day balloon
he sprints to the safety bank of his nest
back and forth 'till not a single seed is left
only then does he give himself a rest
frantic he washes his chipmunk face
non-stop neatnik once he's well-groomed and trim
then at last gives plump pumpkin seeds a taste
small woods and forest gnome never inert
peeks out sees you way before you see him
campfires' friend watching night burn away
black eyes hold the flames as sun holds fire

the doe

sloe gin eyes
gimlet sparkling
her graceful stride
in the forest darkling

the squirrel

whenever cracking a nut
his tail is always curled

of those he buries
he finds at best one in three

he climbs face up
face down has anti-gravity

plays hide and seek
round-n-round trunks of trees

with his litter mates
plays crazy eights

the cardinal

in the brown bramble
of a december day

even with my eyes
at seventy i see

his red front black bib
at ninety yards shines he

dear reader
please remember

his red is never glib
red winter fire in play

free from care to ramble
cardinal's gift to you and me

chameleon

leaf says to the chameleon
please stop copying me
flowers say to the chameleon

find another point of reference
go somewhere else
with your imitative dance
earth says to the chameleon
i love you above all others
you prove i'm more than dirt
imitation worth
waters say to the chameleon
our light so fast us you cannot trust
night says to the chameleon
time to sleep night is colorless
a time when no one judges
a time without a test
stars say to the chameleon
we're so far away
our galactic piercing lights
arrive slowly like playing chess

**birder's life list
of imaginary birds (cont.)**

the wing wang wing woop
turtle's testicular toot grebe
the singular swipe
newton's newt knocker
the jelly footed framboise
the double-ended urtle owl
the restroom rook
the slinky-necked nighthawk
drummer's drum drum
the silicone imp tit
grump's gimlet-eyed goony
scrumby's crumb catcher
Ghandi's butcher bird
Buddha's bubble-bellied buffle-head
the dusty dingle berry darter
the wretched wretching wretch-wretch
the again again auk
the silver-toed slick-bill
the lecherous lumbago lurcher
the window sill dickissel
wee willy's weaner willet
the last-laugh wish wren
the short-billed stew skank
the liverwurst loon
the liver-spotted lumpy limpkin
Ellen's easter bunny egret

Fred's macanudo merlin
chris's revolving revolver robin
the deadly dab chick
Gerrard Depardieu's dinky dickcissel
tricky Dick's dickcissel
the anguished alter ego avocet
the adipose agile ant annihilator
the holy-smokes salmon shoveler
the inconsistent indigo ibis
slag meister's bawdy buffle-head
Hieronymous Boch's bath bullbat
the nitey-nite nickle-nicking night hawk
the mischievous mammary merganser
the eclectic electric oven bird
Zeke's zebra-feathered sea goose
the oleaginous oyster owl
the funk-a-dylic flint head
the befuddled bluebill
Uncle Wally's walrus warbler
the kamikaze kestrel
the sloe-eyed gin pecker
the in-a-rush sweating thrush
the saintly puke pulpit piper
the pustulous phalarope
the fuzzy-toed frigate bird
Peppy le Pew's ptarmigan
the red-headed hostel hen
the dyspeptic dandruff darter
trollop's terrible tank topper
tubby tub's testicular tart trounce
the lick-em-stick-em drool duck
the bilious gray sunshine blaster
the scurrilous snot diver
fat Betty's booger sparrow
Bee Stingoe's bloated bittern
the heroic homebody hawk
the belligerent bosom budgie
Bingo-Bingo's buddy bustard
the Ethiopian erkel
the now-time-like-now new nutter
Mousey's mountaineer muppet
Ozymandias' oink oiler
Trixy's trick titmouse
doldrum's hook-billed dump auk
Trump's blue-balled interim dickcissel
sergeant plopper's plump plow phoebe

the greater grasshopper squasher
the lesser grasshopper squasher
the seedless-watermelon wazoo
the cadmium winkle tinkle
the haunted hallucinogen hen
the seditious squeeze-mee
the militant mackerel mite
the slipper dip truckler
the new gnu gull
the mustard mallard
the explosive entropy egret
the perennial postponement petrel
the some day some day
the any day any day
the denim-horned duck bill
the blue bourbon bloat
the chocolate cricket chickadee
St. Augustine's alimony albatross
the interminable unoiled squeak-squeak
tomorrow's incarnadine titmouse
the double-jointed pewter jerk jay
the funky toad turkey
the symbiotic song startler
the new-mown-moon mumble shrike
the turquoise pool plover
the Ovaltine obituary owl
Uncle Sam's screech swan
the cigar-butt-brown bee chomper
the burnt-toast rufous tick slammer
hildago's burrito hen
the three-toed marmot tickler
Aunt Jemima's syrup crow
the floofy-footed fern tern
Freud's fallopian finch
the sleezy scrod stitch
pumpnickel's puce cloud-poker
the slurpy slurp
the ostentatious oodle owl
the yodeling yurt yammerer
the orange-chested nicotine nerd-knocker

shorts for CJ

jealous of baby?
not fond of factory smell?
cat pissed baby's rug

what the bloody hell!
romeo oh romeo
why the pissing spell?

and the ultra sound blue-gray
image of a large-headed alien
heart rate rapid as a rabbit's
cozy in mom's amniotic bay

in hospital two days
then they kick you three out
sheesh what jive-ass jive
only to drag you back
roundtrip ninety-minute drive
every day for a healing? week
so machines can take a peek
and prove you're all alive
hospital goes to bottom of the class
why hospital rhymes with hell

born founder and chairman
the luxury baby council
gets paid in breast milk

haikus

drinks from rain puddle
crow sees past his reflection
vast blue open sky

hand in plastic glove
man bags dog turd steaming
in the winter sun

how our fat cat sleeps
belly up gone to the world
my lap his sofa

the purring of cats
calming as this first snowfall
this warm cashmere cap

leave all things behind
in the halo of gob light
lurks the bitter end

when he felt most lost

a young deer appeared looked up
then fled into the sun

how the backs of crows
in sun go from black to white
how dark things can shine

hickory nuts fall
crushed by cars signs of Fall
crows' thanksgiving
shells picked clean

moon hunts down shadow
owl sees the one breathing thing
mouse in sea of leaves

moses's burning bush
fire red maple falling
leaves all in a rush

white tail buck startled
his sloe-eyed doe disappears
past the wide meadow

knot

leaving Dali's land of shudder-shudder
waking from my dreams my hands
and arms fighting one with the other

list

eggs and vaseline
the Sunday times
acts of contrition
turkey breast ground lean

WWI

jellied mustard gas
swirling silhouettes
amputated trees
barbed wire corpses
burnt black

occupation: housefly

we don't seem to draw the same vicious ire
as mr. roach who explodes in cartoon grenades

in fire storms of doom blown to smithereens
shrieking “RAID!” that mr. roach a total ponce
more intelligent we flies live to regurgitate
our meals for a second course just like cows
methodically less dramatically chew their cud
half-digested tasting better twice than once

our resume is scurrilous and infinitely replayed
no shame being born to lay eggs on the dead
our maggots proudly earning all the rotten parts
which is from time begun how we’ve survived
we flourish in early spring when do pardon us
your screen-less windows invite our tribe inside
for a bit of sweet a crumb or splash of bacon grease
best yet we breed twenty for every one you slay

old wheelbarrow

old wheelbarrow empty
save the falling snow
nothing to do
nowhere to go

big sur

dried eucalyptus leaves
hiss of sliding ocean wave
cool pacific breeze

cityscape

after a summer storm
drying their feathers
pigeons sit in circles
candles on a cake
on chimneys on water towers
sometimes for hours
many shades of gray
from charcoal to fawn
taking a feathered break

goldfinches

they explode off road’s edge
shotgun blast in yellow bursts
wing beats too fast to count
their long easy looping glides
so insignificantly sweet to see

a faint ache that almost hurts

Alfred E. Neuman in Dogville

what is the proper function of theology
when all gods refuse to answer
and high schoolers insert mad bullets
into multiple-round magazines
what? we worry? when it's raining
painfully-full taxis whole worlds waiting
hoping on every corner for a ride thinking
pandemic violence will eventually subside

scepters chasubles miters mezuzahs
chalices dice of bones chicken feathers
fingernails blood of wine bodies of bread
kindred follicles of all transubstantiations
hung uniform in dark closets hoping
the young will burn them or try them on

who can bear the gridlock
of a nation of binge watchers
a cunning dream fashioned of dreams
tested testing and bestowing medals
for lost limbs bodies blown blood shed
as kids get fatter playing video games
citizens text avalanches of selfies
suffocating sensibilities and sense

outside penn station the homeless
living cordwood pile up blow snot rockets
onto the crosswalks or into a cruel wind
trains on time passengers fantasizing
coveting some ultimate new Thing
thinking about someone loved and/or lost

does not serious thought require Ability
what some theologians called *Adequatio*
to breathe deeply to pull the crazy quilt
the sutured comforter of sorrows
over The Surgeon's Hand of the mundane
and just go back to bed until IT heals or
someone invents a clumsy utopia or
at last winnows good from worlds of pap

T-square

once two then three now four

those who know and love you
know knowing you and loving you
is like opening a proud door
that opens on to courage strength
generosity wit and more
what you build level and true
For Christopher – Fathers Day 2019

the 21st of june

this moonless night
the stentorian ache
of two bullfrog kings
serenades the marsh
rumbling *jug-o-rum*
jug-o-rum jug-o-rum

the silly alto broken-string
plunks of banjo frogs
big eyes bulging
in the shallows
strumming plunk
plunk and plunk plunk

the gentle refrain and cooing
of the mourning doves
at dusk and dawn cooing
goodbye hello to Day
who-oo who who
who-oo who who who

the soft blinking
flashbulb bright
of fireflies slow rising
from the cattails and the reeds
flash on and off and
off and on and on

pond smell duckweed and catalpa
married to an infusion of light rain
this Summer's first night
nearly gone nearly gone

skunks in moonlight

there there you all are
a mother with her kits in a column
at once shy yet bold in disarray

all black and white somehow solemn
fearless in the blue shadows of moonlight
caring not a jot for the judgments of others
by instinct knowing in their eyes it's not the sight
of you that's the fright it's your scent
perfuming summer's fields and country roads
a reticent troupe a traveling circus

meekest hobos quiet dominoes of the night
a motley crew big to small of 'troubadours'
leaving a crooked trail all in a queue
parting tall grass soaked in early morning dew
on every blade a miniature moon mirrored
every diamond drop as if cut from crude stone
by liege of some invisible master of the craft
innocent gypsies you vanish through night's door
hordes of fireflies rising up from your narrow path
your moonstruck eyes holding moon's white fire

firefly

head red as the tie of a diplomat
back maroon and black as a carnival
barker's striped jacket at a country fair
being a beetle doesn't take away the glory
of your cool light on lilting wing at night

you only have two months to mate and breed
your children a year from egg to larvae
wait charismatic under rotting logs and leaves
your light yellow to yellow green to ghostly white
bright toys enlivening sultry summer nights

disdaining flight and mid-air conjunctions
your mate waits eagerly in the shadows
on branches and leaves to meet your destiny
you fly upwind following her perfumed trail
signaling on and off phosphorescent

an ancient tribe's code of an ancient tenor
lampyridae (lamp-PIR-i-day) *lampyridae*
like lamplighters of old you bring true fire
you inspire your friends to live with your joy
you small flashing Courier of Forever

swimming in the rain

best june day best day yet

chubby rain drops falling fatsos
colder than the water in the pool
legs warm shoulders colder
a nano-second free of worry
pool water rain and i getting wetter
things couldn't be much better
well almost not exactly save
a nano-second twinge of guilt
well almost not quite exactly
note to self – try not to focus
on the unmitigated hocus pocus
of unrelenting existentialism
pretentious as a stormy sky
still truth is I'm afraid
things couldn't be much better
the troubled world can eat my speedos
the pool the rain and i all One
right now couldn't be better
free from a world of weirdos

who

who is it in me
who speaks to me
i his scribe
a mere recorder
i the hearer
of the smallest hints
of eternity
flea on a dog
slight glimmer
of god's own order

la cloaca

from *la cloaca*
of *la vaca*
the cow's bazooka
comes a pile
a steaming hookah

so hiking pastures
hike in style
go slow not faster
always looka
front and backa

a nibbling

death is just
a nibbling of a mouse
or a nibbling
of a colony

our clocks all go
come and go
tick tock tick tock

we are just
and all our siblings
our fragile house
but a block of cheese

our clocks all go
come and go
tick tock tick tock

chicory

o chicory
so regally
embroidered by Who
country roads bannister
summer times
me and you
your blue some say
lavender my friend

is enough
to turn us
chicory blue
summertime blue
blue of skies
your blue
the blue of my love

and her
bright eyes
at night your petals
moonlit blue
and then
your new day
with mourning doves

your summer blue
the morning dew

and flags of red
white and blue
july 4 parades
ice cold lemonades
or sweet iced teas

summer times
me and you
o chicory
so regally
embroidered by Who
country roads bannister
may you and summer
our friends never end

after the blizzard

the morning after the blizzard
the rising sun was a ball of snow
backlit by a round of light some call god
round and soft as night's slow fall
furnaces groan snow plows like wizards
banish drifts make roads reappear

the morning after the blizzard
when the morning gauze flew off the sun
turned acres into a blinding white escape
a canvas lined with a wintry blue and gray
tree shadows ran vertical horizontal true
across earth's frozen crumpled sheet

the morning after the blizzard
a puzzle of snowflake hugging snowflake
a conspiracy of all those interlocking edges
intricate metric tons on tons of them
brought the blanket of winter back
to every steeple barn and home again

the morning after the blizzard
cold hordes of dazed landscape painters
were confounded by blazing mounds of white
striving to capture what nature in a blink
effortless as a child's sketch made light
sewn and summoned seamless as a dream

the morning after the blizzard
conventional wisdoms were shed like skins

the lion of march roared out like a lion
the lamb of spring stuck in winter's door
strayed bleating at snow's redefinition
of fields roads and cacophonies of crows

the morning after the blizzard
seven a.m. a stubborn moon still shone
broken free from its moorings at dawn
cast doubt on the potency of spring
in the marsh red wings continued to sing
to moon resplendent and clean as a bone

for e.e.

spring's now knocking at our door
befuddled by frozen puddle mud
wearing a willow green scarf
and wow! nothing more
and shy sweet and slyly wet

the pussy willows are shocking
like rear view mirrors on racing bikes
catching the morning sun
as if to say, "so...big deal...
what's the fuzzy fuss?
a shameless marathon run we must."

and the cattails the cattails
small clutch of twenty-one look out
on pond glass bringing clouds down
their brown cigars mostly gone to fluff
blown by a mad march breeze
are like, 'jeeze! another resurrection!
hear redwings sing paeans to their lion sun!"

and then the very french unruly mob
of marsh-grass revolutionaries in taupe
and tan tattered as pauper's dust
swaying too far north for a tango or samba
a degas ballet of them *emboîté*
a vegas rat pack of them placing bets

to the same moist rhythmic drum
to the thrum of The Turning Wheel
turning tuning turning back again
to the same moist rhythmic drum

and when the wind nicks
the sparkling surface of the lake
like a diamond cutter cutting
a sheet of glass the line of the cut
picks up the light and rushes
like a burning fuse quickly lit
exploding dew green lickety split

you won't hear a soul say "alas,
wish we had another dump of snow!
wish winter would stay another day!"
while in some shady glade or dale
leaps a goat-footed balloon man
apparatus pointing sublimely skyward
erecting monuments to sweet spring
cocking slushy nymphets or turgid nymphs
savoring endless ee cummings satyr fits

for ee cummings march 2017
(emboîté: classical ballet term -"fitted together")

heron in flight

chopstick legs dangling
broad slow stroking wings
pitcher handle neck curved back
surging forward elegant breast
rapier beak for spearing
minnows frogs or snakes
in streams fields or lakes
so determined so straight
effortless as clouds that shift
the awe of you in motion
seeing you purpose full
smitten watchers' eyes helpless
blue windows beneath the stars
sauterne moon pours across the sky
casting moonbeams on our eyes
leave us smitten all capsized

red leaf

red red leaf
full moon lit
shaped like a heart
with a hole in it
but is it art

syzygy

moon setting low
in the west
sun rising low
in the east
in between
we and eternity
syzygy

marsh in summer

marsh grasses tall in the sun
brush strokes on summer's page
shining palimpsest unrolled

their saga only just begun
Time waits patiently backstage
then autumn turns them into gold

Tippy, Mighty Mite RIP

Last Sunday I watched him die. It happened so fast.
There was nothing to be done. Nothing I could do.

Earlier on, around 11:30 a.m., after his favorite morning meal of Fancy Feast savory salmon, as was his habit, he demanded to be let out for a breath of fresh air where he sat on his sentinel perch in the screened-in porch, a creature possessed, obsessed, fiercely on the lookout for his nemesis, that other black and white cat – two times his size – whose claws cut through porch screen and slashed Tippy's nose barely missing his left eye, leaving an L-shaped scar that took two months to heal.

Assured that the marauder was nowhere to be seen, he then came back inside to finish off what was left on his plate and the other cats' plates. Portions fit, not for a runt of the litter which he was and always would be, but more than fit for a proper, full-grown tomcat.

Like many cat lovers we had many silly names for him: Tippy, The Tipster, Mr. Tips, Speedy, Mighty Mite, Tips, Tip Top, Pinky, Pinky Lee (because of his bright pink paw pads and his ever-changing, shades-of-pink-chameleon-like-nose), but mostly "Tippy." It was always a source of glee, exaltation, comedy even, to watch him from the screened-in porch, ignited after inhaling a big dose of bracing air, like some broken-field runner, sprint maniacally from one end of the house to the other dodging chairs and table legs and our legs and back again at breakneck speeds. Runt of litter with big Alpha heart. Quick as a blink. Mouser extraordinaire. He had the endearing practice of visiting in the middle of the night. He'd sit on my chest and put his face so close to mine that I could feel his cool salmon breath on my nose and mouth. He really liked almost more than anything having his face softly, slowly petted.

After his last (little did I know) Sunday morning run, his ritual clean-up followed. With single-minded, intense concentration, a most meticulous, diligent licking of back, back paws, stomach, tail, leg in air like a flagpole, the tender parts and, his paws, fur between toes and lastly damp scrubbing his head and face 'till you'd think his serrated tongue would wear the fur off. Then, done at last, content, it was his habit to demand affection, literally shout for it with a sound that was a blend of a meow and a kind of pathetic, kitten-like, somewhat annoying yack. Which resulted, predictably, in his receiving a proper petting and belly rub. Then, eyes weighing so heavy he couldn't keep them open, though comically, he'd try, fail and fall deeply asleep moving only to cover his face with a paw or curl into a tighter ball or change positions from time to time, twitching only occasionally as if in response to some dream of mouse hunting in the vast maze of corn fields of Hudson Valley.

Around two o'clock, I was on the phone with a friend, when suddenly, with no warning, he shot up from a full sleeping position to a full vertical leap. As if startled, terrified by what? Something I could neither see nor hear. Burst furiously, exploded into an all-out back legs spinning for traction, moving so fast that he slipped, fell on his side helpless, his legs still pathetically, cartoon-like kicking two, three last kicks, unable to right himself, went totally still, took two very deep breaths, maybe three and a final very soft fourth, all in what seemed slow motion.

Shocked and oddly calm, in that moment I knew there was absolutely nothing I could do but count his breaths, paralyzed by the suddenness of it, counting his last breaths, one, two strong breaths then one not so strong then one last final softest one, a last gentle release followed by a full body tremor. And then he was gone. I kept saying to my friend on the phone, "He's gone. He's gone..."

It was such a surreal, bizarre instant; what seemed like minutes in fact, was at most fifteen, twenty seconds. Two, three breaths only, then that sad, valiant tremor that looked like a soundless sigh. Then he left. Or was taken away, hunted down, suddenly shot. Leaving behind what looked exactly like Tippy except that his chameleon nose changing for the first time ever was white as his white fur, with not even a trace of its thermometer trademark changing pink to match the temperature: deep rose when hot, light tulip-pink when cold. His black tail puffed out more in surprise than inflated as when ready to fight. His eyes dilated black as the patch of fur on his back. His mouth open as if gasping for one breath more. His front and back paws stretched out frozen as if attempting pathetically to keep running on the floor on his side.

In death he was true to himself. Like he lived. At top speed, all out, no holds barred. One moment here he is in this our living room, then, in a flash, gone. To another mysterious, far away room. Dropped as if stunned by some invisible revolver, leaving behind what looked exactly like him, but clearly not him, motionless on his side in one last stride. Still warm. Exactly like him. But not him. Not. Merely a motionless, elegant shell of what was him: fur, bone, sinew, claws, paws and dull glisten of still-open, unseeing eyes.

We buried Tippy, imp and friend, under a gnarled, old pear tree which blooms white every spring and refuses to die. We wrapped him in a favorite worn blue shirt of mine.

And for his journey, just in case, after all, there is one: for nourishment, a can of Fancy Feast savory salmon, a handful of some crunchy treats; for play, a blue jay feather, a raven feather, a small ball of aluminum foil and his favorite woolen catnip mouse.

Sundown November 12 2017

death of a mouse

In the close and dark silence of this Hudson valley morning in mid October, broken rarely by a barred owl hunting or calling a mate, but not this morning; inside, heat turned off, so not even the rumble of the furnace, the smallest sounds for a fitful sleeper take on a certain importance.

Our black and white cat's habitual caterwauling at 5 a.m. telegraphs a message. Boredom. Hunger. Or this morning, a very different cry sounding muffled like a muted feline trombone. Or a cat with cotton in his mouth. In the same way that cats recognize, sight unseen, know who by the sound of our feet well before they see us, so too the sound of our cat's paws upstairs room to room, coming down the stairs to the kitchen, the dining room and, finally, the bedroom, telegraphed it was him, the smallest but fiercest one. Enter hunter his paws making a softest kind of thunder.

Mouse in mouth. Mouse! So proud predictable, I could read his mind. Bring prize to bed. Not accepting accomplice status, nor wanting blood or worse on sheets and covers, I got up and just in time aborted his crouch and planned leap up.

Second best, he chose to show off the prowess of his speed at play. He'd drop the mouse. Soft but audible thump. And wait. At this point, freed from sheathed claws and gentle jaws, the prisoner, captive mouse's eloquent body language was clearly telegraphing he knew, he knew the horror of the fix he was in. Stay still. Stay, stay still, very still. Then, hoping to be taken for dead, try to make a desperate dash for under the bed, or better yet, under the crack at the base of the bedroom closet door.

Every thread of the cat's DNA, gene pool and evolution was having no part of it. The nanosecond the mouse moved, even before the mouse moved, as if reading the mouse's mind, smelling his fear, the cat was on the mouse. Had him. Faster than one tick of the second hand of a very expensive watch. Than the on-and-off blink of a firefly in May. Or the brief instant the light of a switched-off light lingers just before the room goes black.

He had the mouse. Mouthed the mouse. Meowed a muffled meow. Dropped the mouse again. And again. The mouse had only one play in his pathetic playbook. Play dead. And hope.

If the mouse played dead too long, the cat would paw him into futile flight. Even give him a head start to raise the stakes. Great "fun?" Nowhere to hide. No place to run. None.

Outside the new day was dawning. Inside the house, the mouse, in thrall, lay still. No longer enthralled, the cat was yawning. And, God, the God of cat and mouse, God is happy. God is just. God is love. How He loves to play with all of us.

Postscript: He, the mouse was a he, was the size of a child's thumb. Sable, ermine gray, rust brown around his haunches. Buff as if brushed. Fit, autumn sleek. The fur behind his head still damp from mouth of cat. His still open eyes were shiny, little eight balls without the eights. The paws perfect and, surprisingly, pink as baby skin, with tiny, clean, translucent nails. Little, dark whip of a tail. Ears still alert. For nothing now. And black whiskers finer than the finest sewing thread. No wounds. No blood. As if prepared and staged for viewing by some meticulous mouse mortician. His mouth open as if wishing to have the one word.

a not quite christmas story

at our country home this morning at 4:40 - was awakened by a series of loud knocks on front and back doors and windows to little bedroom and bathroom - only to greet two state police one wearing one of those Korean War surplus hats with the muffs that hang down making her look like Goofy but without the 'gaarrsssh' - the other one looking like the female protagonist in Fargo - for a nano second I thought she was going to say HE'S FLEEING THE SCENE - but instead as I opened the door - YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY -

in fact, THEY were the only emergency - I came down 'wearing' a flannel sheet looking like a fat Ghandi - keeping my naked bum to the wall - gave them on demand name, phone number, date of birth - they were scanning the fireplace room with their flashlights - I'm thinking why - are they studying home decor on the side? or searching for home styling tips to spiff up their headquarters? - they woke squeaky, our 22 pound guard cat - who must've been thinking WHAT THE.... - i told them Verizon who I want to kill - no, have to take that back - I realize you are officers of the law, officers - deadpan the two of them - Verizon has once again screwed up our phone system and they are coming out to fix it tomorrow -

seemingly satisfied with that, they did an about-face, somewhat surreal imitation of two female John Waynes, the two of them, walked, no, sauntered humorlessly back to the police car red lights flashing - the one that didn't look like Frances McDormand, her hat flaps flapping in the wind said - IT'S REALLY BEEN WINDY - which I took as police shorthand for "...blew a line down and triggered an emergency alert in your security system" - the best I could summon was a lame - next time maybe I can buy you a cup of coffee - deadpan - VARRRRROOM - spray of driveway gravel - I had this image of the local raccoons and squirrels thinking to themselves in raccoon and squirrel 'WHAT THE.... and a merry Christmas to all and to all a good night'

stagecoach of dreams

5/14

In a suburban tickety-tacky tract house, was a brothel (one of a franchise chain in the tri-state area) which unknown to the local police, was doing a very profitable business. Working for an international consulting firm, I was called in to do an audit preface to a team building and strategy offsite at which management and 'the talent,' whores of every specialty would redefine their mission and vision. This involved interviewing on an off-the-record basis both clients and the talent. To prove I had 'the minerals,' as the Brits say, I had to trick a client into believing I was there to serve.

The room was a replica of a teenage girl's with photos of heart throbs from teen magazines – *Sassy, Teen Ink, Elle Girl, Cosmo Girl, Tiger Beat, Girl's Life* - scotch taped to the walls. And a collection of porcelain ponies, unicorns and stuffed terry-cloth monkeys. The client was an old man wearing waders and a trout fishing vest decorated with his favorite flies. He was sitting on a tiny bed covered in a pink chintz throw, holding a clip board and a Montblanc diamond-encrusted *meisterstück*. He'd been retained, it was immediately apparent, to rate my performance and guarantee, if I did well, this lucrative consulting assignment.

He looked bored, sad, disturbed and, very possibly, hostile. To cheer him up and break the ice I was desperately trying to think of a whorehouse joke. A penguin walks into a whorehouse... But couldn't remember the punch line. Thought of calling my friend in Salzburg who had a perfect-pitch memory bank of jokes on any topic but my cell phone was in my brief case back in the motel. I then realized I forgot to put my shoes and socks on and that my feet were very, very cold. There was an ivory-handled straight razor at his side, a Glock 18 on the pillow and, more disturbingly, he was staring quite attentively at a bunion, the removal of which I keep postponing, on the knuckle of my right big toe.

Independence Day 2018

Little Italy in the early sixties. Sporting an expensive Panama, I meet my mother and father in the garden of a pricey Italian steakhouse.

My father pokes fun at me: "Take that thing off. You look like a cowboy." Furious, I tell him, "You don't know anything." I poke him hard in the ribs. (remembering in the dream that he broke two in a fall from a storage tank at the Exxon refinery – 'The Hook' in Bayonne – and, after taking medical retirement, died ten years later almost to the day of his fall).

I storm off, take an empty seat at a table with a large family celebrating I don't know what. Glaring at the two of them sitting there silent, at a large table for four, across the garden I seen them suddenly as sad, alone and small. I go back to their table.

A waiter carrying a hot plate with three large steaks sizzling on it says, "I know you'll enjoy these." He slices and serves three, given the size of the steaks, surprisingly small portions, comes back with some pasta in garlic, oil with grilled portobello mushrooms. Serving three even smaller portions. None of us asks for more, finishing our plates in six or seven pathetic bites. Too polite.

They fail to call the waiter back. We wait. A young man at the table with the celebrating family, clearly noticing the stingy serving, winks at us.

A deep, suffocating sadness comes over me. That they were cowed by a waiter, afraid to demand a more generous serving enrages me.

On waking, my first thought was that we are all limited, often tragically, by nature or nurture, in what we demand of ourselves and our worlds.

I wish my parents had been more ruthless in what they demanded of themselves. But realize I am wishing that for myself.

The ones that totally break the shackles of inherited or learned limitations are rare in deed. An even rarest few make history and are remembered for all time to inspire the weaker, less gifted, less determined of us all.

Rat dream basement making a Campari describe our basement

hell's proverbs pell-mell

1. Stars are pinpricks in the hefty bag of night proving there's a big boy shining a large flashlight behind them.
2. The pride of the peacock is never wanting a better feather.
3. Never bite a worm in half unless you are a fish or a fisherman low on bait.
4. The sun is the yellow candy coating on the tootsie roll of earth.
5. Night is a long black lizard that blinks only once after sunset until dawn.
6. Insulated socks are the French resistance to the gestapo of winter.
7. Thinking too much is like trying to make sausage when you've run out of casing.
8. Windows the eyes, walls the skin, stairs the backbone, toilets the sphincter of the house.
9. Never step in it if you can get someone to do it for you.
10. A knuckle sandwich is better than a sandkill knuckwich.
11. Good deeds don't fade away, they just disappear since no one really remembers. ye
12. A tuba is an overweight trumpet for fatsos
13. His trembling hand lifted the spoonful of Jello which trembled back.
14. He drank for a living and worked to relax.
15. Beneath the ruins, more ruins.
16. Too much gravy on Coney Island crinkle-cut fries is like too much money in the bank.
17. The sun afire in the west awaits the fireman of night.
18. Let all priests rave while all congregations yawn.
19. Bugs prove there are cheaper ways to live.
20. Hangnails are tiny, painful skin zippers.
21. At the end no one says I should have spent more time at the orifice.
22. All flags are colorful rags waiting to wag in strong winds.
23. Thumbs are not dumb.
24. Tinkle, wrinkle, twinkle. Why not blinkel, squinkle, drinkel?
25. Squiggle and doodle are kissing cousins to giggle and noodle.
26. The highways of excess lead to Excess.

27. No bird soars on high without wings. The smartest perch on branches and sing
28. Good thing feet have no eyes.
29. Just because they're wearing seersucker doesn't prove it's summer.
30. One good thought doesn't guarantee another.
31. The mouse blames it on the cheese not the trap.
32. Bagels are streetwise donuts.
33. Donuts are pampered bagels.
34. Bowels should avoid trowels.
35. Lust is unjust.
36. In autumn reap. In spring peep. In summer creep. In winter sleep.
37. Eagles soar. Most dogs and cats snore.
38. A grimace is a smile that flunked.
39. Tea kettles like the pressure.
40. Sometimes enough is too much.
41. Nuts and safes need cracking.
42. The idea of eternity is like forgetting how to count.
43. Weep and the world wheedles with you.
44. Just because it stinks doesn't mean it's limburger.
45. Christianity was once the tent pole of the planet's white circus tent.
46. Problems are mice in the country house of the mind: in the wee hours large as towers.
47. Man's inability to believe in the possibility of death is a warm blanket until the end when it's torn away.
48. We go out naked as we came in, but on the way out, fully knowing we're going.
49. Quizzical can be physical.
50. Yearning for what was, what's gone is just an ancient wheel turning.
51. Dog hairs are dogs' way of punishing vacuums and dark carpets.
52. First caterpillars then slinky toys and butterflies then killer drones for girls and boys.
53. Modesty is a virgin's blush hounded by lust.
54. Even a fish on a barbless hook hates getting caught.
55. The bee is born busy; never wheeling to work worrying about tomorrow.
56. Stupidity is its own reward.
57. A deaf squirrel hears no nut fall. A falling nut fears no squirrels.
58. A man in a gorilla suit is no better than a gorilla in Armani.
59. Today's style statement is tomorrow's clown suit.
60. Let no man wear toeless Crocs to church or opera.
61. Little sparrow, song sparrow, joy of dawn, sweetest at dusk, just shut the peep up!
62. Exuberance is usually uninformed.
63. Precision is vastly overrated.
64. Shame is a dream of having to pee or poop in public in a jam-packed room.

71. Farts are escaped bubbles from the carpenter's level of the body.
72. The lust of the goat for those low in testosterone is an impassible moat.
73. The wrath of God is the lion's tooth and claw or a pointer finger lost to a saw.
74. Excess of sorrows, excess of joys. Girls and boys, we all are God's toys.
75. The sounds all animals make is proof of an Intelligence we humans fail to translate.
76. Neither joy nor sorrow denigrate. Each impregnate.
77. Each within their means: intricacy of bird's nest, conspiracy of spider's web, habit-path of deer and man's leaky rowboat of dreams.
78. The owl says, Who, who, who..." The conscience says, "You are what you do and who you do it to."
79. As the plow follows the shape of the field, murder, mayhem, lust and greed too often follow the sown seed.
80. There are no angry tigers or too-placid horses or deer. Each within themselves is clear.
81. The weak in courage are strong in forage.
82. In the same way trees don't talk to other trees, deer, elk, gazelles, rabbits, pheasants, ducks do not discuss how as prey they pass away.
83. "The soul" and "sweetness and light" are phrases fast sinking into linguistic night.
84. No one can create a flower. So, artists, give it up, take a cold shower.
85. Planters plow. Reapers repeat.
86. Joys always smile. Sorrows always take the wrong isle.
87. The head a rock; the heart a stone; the eyes, the hands, the feet, the genitals - the loudest preachers of the body's drum beat.
88. Contempt and arrogance are simply failures to listen and learn.
89. The lion advised by the fox as to cunning, gave up hunting and moved to Florida for sunning, bagels and lox.
90. The crooked roads of genius are never heinous.
91. An unacted desire is fear of a live wire.
92. Where man is not, nature is not turned into snot.
93. The more often truth is told, the more it feels unreal and old.
94. Proof of God lives in the robin's breast and cardinal's crest.
95. To begin with richness and complexity, then mercilessly subtract, this is the engine of Zen.

96. The closed door of being unknown opens another: the absolute freedom to do anything.
97. The purpose of accident is to filter out the new and rare from the mundane.
98. I don't know how to paint a picture just how to paint the experience of painting a picture.
99. When inside and outside are the same, balance, even peace can be found.
100. The greatest revolutionary is the revolutionary that overthrows the kingdom of the self.
101. If you don't trust the past, try kissing your own ass.
102. Every day we walk on the bones of the dead, their feet, their heads below.
103. He who acts without passion eats without tasting.
104. Tears of joy, tears of pain all contain the same ocean's salt.
105. An unlit lamp still shines in the morning sun.
106. Destiny's like a photograph. Depends on how you bracket it.
107. Shame is a dream of trying to pee in public.
108. The lust of the goat is for most an impassible moat.
109. Excess of sorrow is fully knowing, boy oh boy, we are but God's toys.
110. The sounds all animals make is proof of an Intelligence that man so far has failed to translate.
111. Neither joy nor sorrow denigrate. Each in their way impregnate.
112. Whatever the sexes wear is always a pheromone form of dare.
113. Avoid the suffering many who as they boo hoo try to foist their pain on you
114. Beware the too-thankful receiver; sometimes a deceiver.
115. Eagles and hawks wish for nothing more than not to be haunted by crows' and jays' dives and caws.
116. Farts are the body's mob disperser.

23,218 words