

For Leigha, with Love and Care

Poems

By Damon Freed

For Leigha

I loved you once and I still do!

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A Painter and A Poet

When the mind is not visionary
And in need of sightly rest, I
Turn to the book and to the page,
And am rightly blessed. For,
When I wake and am naked of
The painter's cloth, I get dressed
As a poet and am quickly off.
When one mode does not work,
The other I fancy to express each
And every idiosyncrasy and quirk.
In this I am grateful and there need
Be no pause with which I am dually
Hateful of singular cause. The
Two methods I express rightly put
Me to the test and have not been
Easily mastered in their own right,
So I will paint and sing until I'm
Dead as a dream to become a
Renaissance man who stands not
On one, but on two sturdy hands.

A Fall Evening Drive

We enter the sky from below –
Hills of wet pavement reflect back
The less mechanical clouds of cyan
Bellowed by atomic pink and orange.
Meringue mountains from summers
Past imaginatively fill my brain and
Surround the whole scene. A memory
Of carbon black waits behind each
Crest of clouds wanting dearly to bathe
Us in its sadness, but we're holding onto
The light of a McDonald's sign in the
Distance. No, it is not yet our sentence to
Sit gloomily under a night's sky. Together,
We are at least convinced for a little while
Of the beauty of nature and of its lie. We
Might just win this time so long as the
Conversation persists in silence.

A Pot of Gold

I have a pal on borrowed time,
He spends his days on another's
Dime. But what he can't pay
With monetary means, he quickly
Repays with righteous schemes.
This man I've known since times
Forgot, I assure you he's filling
Your moral pot. So, when it comes
Time for his life to end I want you
To recall this honorable friend. For
After a mighty summer's rain do
Chase that rainbow without refrain,
And remember every penny you lent,
For he's surely doubled every cent!

A Slave for Too Long

Go light on me,
With your chains and your whips.

Go light on me,
I can still taste your lips.

Have an easy go of it,
It's not all the time that I'm bad.

Have an easy go of it,
Else, you're bound to drive me mad.

Yes, I loved you once,
All you fine young broads.

But, I'm not ready yet,
With my staff and my rods.

Love takes a fighter,
And I'm not yet well.

Yes, love takes a fighter,
And I'm beaten down here, can't you tell?

Always Give All the Heart, after William Butler Yeats

Always give all the heart, for love saved
Risks the empty chested grave.
Hesitation, an aging man's art,
Wait too long and love shall part!
Everything lovely seizes the moment,
A beauty that lasts the infinite quotient!
Always give the heart outright, or,
Shamefully and regretfully die uptight!
Give thy heart and live as a child,
Bumping, bruising, playing, wild!
He that made this knows all the cost,
For he gave all his heart and lost.
Yet, he who made this poem again –
Will risk winning until the end!

An Angel's Visit I

An angel came to visit on the wings of
A breeze, her slender frame and perfect
Mind affected by my sneeze. I've
Become allergic to the presence of such
Harmless beings. I sat with legs tight
And hands tucked, it was a meeting of
Great luck. After a while my sneeze
Turned to a smile, her unfettered
Health was defiled. A change of
Presence; what was mine at first became
Her essence. I infected her and her me
Until the balance was utterly complete.
I felt a loosening of the knees, she moved
With less ease. Such is the grace of God
In times of need, a reminder that we too
Share angel's health and that they bleed.

An Angel's Visit II

I looked through them all;
Some darkened corridors of thought;
And some cavernous vestiges were brought
To my attention in the fall.

Through the kaleidoscope trees I earned a glimpse
Of an injured bird fallen prey to the feline;
And some wounded woman caught in a vine
Peered back at me through the knurly fence.

At once, as if she had summoned the wild beast
She ran toward me best she could
Carrying in one hand an axe, and in the other, wood.
There was no doubt I was to be the feast.

But little did she know I had a great defense;
And with one hand I blocked and with the other I fought
Until the old woman with danger was fraught,
Yet, there was no loss of suspense.

For, I had known not what I had done
Until the angel spoke and announced
That I had passed the test and would be pronounced
Among the defenders of all who'd have run.

Anxious Lovers

We long to take a lover
But let us not pretend
If nature is our mother
Thine wisdom can't contend

And it's here in nature's arms
That we may serve our best
For she is thee universal judge
It is she who grades the test

And perhaps a time will come
When our hearts are meant to bond
But alas, let us remain young
And for a time mature beside this pond

Apologies

Small talk and shop talk
 Throughout the nighttime.
 The stress of working.
 The love of learning.
 Talk, talk, talking.

Too much damn talking for the wounds to heal in time.
 Not enough downtime.
 One compounds into three or four without a dime
 To afford band-aids but the pain is plenty enough to wager
 a few more cuts or a war of words upon those you love.
 People not healing but rushing into relationships doing
 enough damage to the talking which otherwise could be
 pure and unfettered in the nighttime and not as strained.

A punch in the face from the woman in ward A reminds
 Me of those bitches-of-bitches who should not be able to
 Take care of children. Who need rest and to breathe and
 To bleed a band-aid or two or three worth in the direction
 Of better men in good places who got there through honest
 Working. Girls whom in my opinion are not worthy of my
 Good graces or those of other even better men than I.

But, if not my job then whose to mend my own damn bruise
 On my nose. So, I'll refrain from echoing the dangers of
 Good men in good places in hopes of protecting them, like
 I wasn't protected at the time. And this is me throwing a dime
 In those girls' directions who are directionless and perhaps
 Not worthy of my affections but whom have yet to do serious
 Damage and harm to the good men of this world.

Behind the Glass

How clear is this pane of glass you see me behind?
What is it you come here to find?
Is it bulletproof, have you shot at it, and how many times?
The truth is, it is by design.
Can you see me now?
Or am I difficult to find?

The glass is windexed nightly.
From within, I am sprightly.
And sometimes I crawl.
And sometimes you see me bawl.
And sometimes I parade about and shout.
And sometimes I am hiding.
But that's always been your call . . .

the poetics of it all.

Between the Hermit and the Socialite

Painting today, I felt my loneliness
Most acutely. After a weekend of
Mass social interaction, the crest
Broke, and it's back to the studio.
Most acutely, because the possibility
Of failure is present always in
Creativity, and the weekend was such
A success, hence my loneliness.
Tomorrow it's back to work teaching
A class of twelve not only how to look
And to see, but additionally, hopefully,
How to endure the rollercoaster life
Of the artist in and outside of the studio.

Bird on a Wire

I remember the days you
Would talk to me through
The birds. How we'd subtly
Whisper to one another's
Nerd-side. Or how I could
Pick you up on the FM dial
For a quick and delicate smile.
We're farther between stations
Now and my seek button can't
Seem to find you, but if I'm
Diligent and manual, I can
Tune you in on the knob and
Rob a line or two. It's these
Lines that keep me interested.
And I'll continue to write
Them so long as you're
Listening.

Black to Grey to White

Weather met its hype
From spring to summer
From bloom to fruit
From newborn to ripe

Black to grey to white
From pillow to dress
From dress to window
Carried by the morning light

With mood in sight
Perfected by joy
Bettered by gayety
I have been moved to write

And though inspiration frequently flies by night
The day has won
With its glowing ensemble
Of melted snow, shorts, and jets in flight!

But a Memory to Me

Mercy, when the night is difficult
When the ward is cold as a knife
When the mind spirals like the threads on some rusty bolt
Holding together the machinery that was once a fleshy life

You know, they called you my mistress but I never understood
why
And now that I'm thinking the night is swirling for me and only
me
I hold the meaning that once brought me the meaning of fossilized
wood
Ancient as you, that never, if only for moments, held a single leaf

You know, you my dear were soft sometimes
You held onto me in the nights
And brought me some things nice, like nectar, all the way from
Peru
And mornings sweet as the dew

But I tell you now, those mornings were few
And I find myself still lapping the maniacs who are not sick nor
well
But whom are indifferent to all that could feed their apathetic
hearts a heartfelt stew
Babe, let me tell you that all that could have been is now swell

So, I'll happily take this mindful bolt and let it twist and tarnish
into you

Oh, and the ward, I will be leaving here soon!

Change

Without hope, life, doubt, and death;
the seasons do not turn in you.

Without spring, summer, fall, and winter;
the seasons do not turn in me.

Without the seasons there is no turning,
and without turning, there is exhaustion.

Critics

I don't know why I pay them any attention, the critics, always writing about someone's ascension or demise. Literary or otherwise, they are beasts with crude regard for the limitless direction of the soul. As if their own soul functioned this way, up or down.

Damon and Leigha

Maybe somewhere someone stole your crown
Took you by storm and laid you right down
And it's okay by me babe
If you don't need me around
Just know you got spoon fed babe
You got spoon fed

You say I was the one holding you down
Taking your hand to be with that sound
But I was the one when no one else was around
And ain't it funny babe, that's the sound you made
You got spoon fed babe
You got spoon fed

And when we fell down you took the stage
Pretended we were done and you turned the page
Well, beauty lives beyond the grave
So will I on this page

And once you die I'll emboss your page
With stone filled drugs and engrave your age
Because I am filled with rage
Over you babe
Over you

Damon Freed

A little bit smooth and ornery
The lights can't get as bright as I do
Not yet
Not anyhow
And the dark
I can't handle the dark

Except

When I'm freed
And then
You better watch me
Because a wild fire is bound to burn
In the hearts of women and men
Everywhere

Down in the Hallows

You don't have to go too far
Down in the hallows you can get there by car
But then you gotta get out
You gotta walk a bit to get a good view
And there ain't nobody there, not even a few
You know, it's just something to do

I go there to draw
It's not about nothin, just what I saw
There ain't no concept, I like it raw
Perhaps there's a mood
But rarely a brood
And sometimes I bring food

On these adventures where it's just me
I look around and draw what I see
Maybe it's a building but usually it's a tree
Or perhaps it's two and sometimes three
But I don't like to draw people too often
All it takes is a little nature to soften
People can be mean
I like to draw a scene!

Drawing

The sun is sublime
And the branches all rhyme
I'm aware of the time
But not by human design
I'm filthy but fine
Drawing this vine
The wind it wines
And the summer it finds
Me ok with nature's signs
For, I am at peace
And well within reach
Of the rays
That fill my days
And tan my skin
Just below the chin
Where the charcoal darkens
And an eraser harkens
Light to and fro
With a happy glow
It is the knowledge I know
From heart to hand to elbow

For a Long While

Top of the rock
Hog of the slop
Who's to say who's on top?
Or who's on bottom.

I don't know where I am half of the time except where I am half of the time.

How does one go about working an entire lifetime doing different things over and over?

I suppose we are called upon.

Or else, we aren't.

I just go with it, the flow of existence.

Some things come in, others go out.

I just do what I have been doing for a long while.

For Leigha, with Love and Care

Come over for a lesson I have lessons to provide
And her nerves were then like a quiver
Her confidence and mine combined were nay and none
But one day, yes one day, we were not as numb

For the lessons were enough to let us love
And that's all I ever wagered for our time together
And the flowers she painted, yes, they were all so pink
For, her innocence in painting was inside of her

But the judges all watched from empty rooms
Where nothing was in their way to distract them
Yet, nothing was in her way from wanting a groom
Because I was there to greet them

So, all who ever wondered about ceilings made of glass
They are thin like paper, the type made of rice
So, as I knelt to provide my final lessons
I reached inside her quiver and her arrow's speed cracked the ice

So now from here to the other side
The judges have all gone blind
For yearly and daily and hourly I find
Our aim was within a second's time!

Free Again

As I laid in that hospital bed there was a parade through the hall

Everyone came

A list of names so long I cannot repeat it here

The love was strong, and they were all there to show they cared

All of my past lovers were there including my friends, my greatest friends

And as I slept an angel by my window and another by my doorway

I let you all go that night

My self-righteous suicide

And I am free again

Free to write and to be myself alone in this world, again

Free to tread paths not treaded, yet again

And tread I will

And feel I will

And love again, I will

And be there in the hallway where you lay I will

Marching in the same line the angels march in one by one –
looking in on you

I will sit in some other body with a clipboard in my hands, but you
will know me by my eyes

Just as I knew you by yours

Then, you will live and be okay

Because hey, this world is too small to not show the care when on
the cusp of creation's loss

When on the cusp of that golden gate

You will stand up straight and take a step back

And it will hurt

But you will be free again

Free

They're free now.
Free from my coward jealousy
Free from my over protection
Free from my lazy efforts
Free from my never being on time
From my disgusting habits
Smoking
Spitting
Egoism
Self loathing
Insecurity

They're free now.
Free from my overbearing lust
Free from my sporadic back hair
From my premature greys
From my normal penis
From my average biceps
Belly
Soft hands

Yes, they're free, every one of them, free –

And so am I.

Freed

If interior and exterior are not as one,
Let it be the inside that grants me sun,
If competition at man's root has won,
Then grant me loss and wisdom by the ton;
For, no man has ever battled so fierce who lost,
The innocent wagers no death by cost,
Enslaved by none the impotent have no boss,
Let them then engrave on thy stone, "FREED"
Or else have it embossed.

Freedom Zone

The hide and seek sun is overhead,
Some are awake and some are in bed.
I woke early not to be left for dead,
Drank my coffee and I was fed.
I entered the studio with a new perspective,
Alone to my devices away from the collective,
Where much can be done and much is respected,
Where all my quirks are readily accepted.
The canvas catches them like a net of personality,
All the shapes and colors give life to a reality,
One that is my own, some sections tattered and others sewn,
A few sounds high and others drone.
I call it, my freedom zone.

Friendship

May loyalty and honesty be kind to thee,
And in tumultuous times mark stead by me.
May justice grace both she and he,
Fastidious as work and ethic are to the bee.

Stable is our kindred voice
And noble is our friendly choice
To continue in a sunny fashion
To bathe the streets with joy and passion.

Let betrayal weigh lightest on our minds
And stray furthest from our pleasant kind
For thee alone the sky is bent
And through you to me the Earth is sent.

Happiness

After all is done and all is made
I greet happiness at the end of my day.
What was left incomplete
I know awaits my joyous deed.
So when I wake I grant my time,
Eventually, eventually, the reward is mine.

Horizontal Virtue

Anonymous wind tangles the grass
Confusion twists the mind
Rain hammers the bush
Humility pummels the spirit
A stiff breeze
That's what I like to partake in
It straightens the spine and I
Walk upright with ease
In the diagonal rain I tread against hope
In the vertical downpour I am not
Tempted to negotiate my place
But stand upward and firm
Forget about Buddhas and Devils and Gods
Some are too high, others too low
Glance forward...

The horizontal eye does not shoe gaze or roll.

I Ain't Goin Nowhere

I'm not a traveling man and I don't wish I was
The only movin I done was from the fuzz
So I'm standing right here til the steel rusts
Or until I'm dead

And no one's gonna move me
Nor my head
No one I'm tellin ya
I'm a fixture here and always was

Not even you could move my hands from these keys
Not from where you stand, and not with a please
I just sit here and enjoy it
While you move all around
I keep watching you chase yourself as if you ain't found

But quit kiddin yourself, quit chasing the sound of other's
happiness
No one's gotta place to be except where they're at
And I ain't goin nowhere and that's that

I Chased an Alien

I once chased an alien around the apartment. My girlfriend and I were in a heated argument. She ran into the other room for a few moments and I heard a sound, as if someone or something was standing up from a sitting position on the couch. I decided it was an alien right off. It must be, I thought, well, that or a ghost, but I didn't yet believe in ghosts so an alien it had to be. And I chased this little fucker all over the place. As soon as I was onto him, his sounds, he'd make another somewhere nearby until I was in the hall and outside. I've always been a speedy little booger, you know, like second fastest in my class. Anyhow, I ended up finding him in the trees. His presence was undeniable, and his friends were there too, all taunting me with their clings and clacks and little chirps and claps. And yes, there were birds around too, but I'm telling you I'm positive about this. And there was a storm brewing and the wind was rustling the bushes. Then my brother called and it was a bad connection, thank God, because I'm sure I tried to explain to him I was arguing with my girlfriend and chasing an alien at the same time. So about when the connection dropped, everything went silent. The birds, the wind, the storm, Leigha, and most of all, the aliens. And I've been silent about this until now, but I read a poem earlier about an alien who liked cowboys, and I thought to myself, well, I've got an alien story too, so why not! Plus, James Tate's poem was probably fiction.

In Heaven's Hands

Oh, soap suds Sam,
Elbows deep in dishwater,
I have many songs to sing to you,
Could I but find the words.

Oh, broken back Timmy,
Body-lifting trash every morn,
I have many songs to sing to you,
Could I but find the words.

Oh, wood-working Willie,
With callused hands and sawdust clothes,
I have many songs to sing to you,
Could I but find the words.

If only I had crossed you each on a more charitable day,
I would have inked a check for you prior any posthumous way.
But now you've each gone from here and in nature's hands you
lay,
I do hope in heaven's bed you rest and that is where you'll stay.

Innocence

When the sun is all a ray,
When there's nothing in the
Way, on a day like today,
I take a drive through the
Park. There's dogs that
Bark, and birds that peep,
And children that seek and
Hide from their mothers
And play with their brothers.
And there are squirrels who's
Memory serves them well,
Who enjoy buried nuts that
Fell in the fall. There are
Barbeques and fathers having
A ball. There's the all of the
All, and beauty abound.
There's petals hitting the
Ground and the sound of
Bikes shifting gears, and
Palmfuls of baby tears.
There is little in the way of
Fear. All is right in the
Order from above. And in
Parting I witness a dove.

Inspiration, for John Ashbery

It's like that boulder that touches your shoulder
 And forehead just as you've read the most
 Complicated line from a book. You suddenly
 Know you don't have what it takes, that you're
 Not the cook, not for the job you set out to do.
 You get blue. You hear a wind chime in the
 Distance then suddenly you're okay, but under-
 neath something yearns. The breeze returns.
 Lines from the book haunt you like fence to
 Cattle, pinning you in. You're nothing. Not even
 Meat. The rain begins to beat. You think, if only
 I were like him, Parmigianino, or the winged poet
 That illustrated his self-portrait. Lightning strikes
 And a billboard flashes – then all you see are dashes,
 And letters. Everything's better. Your bravery
 And courage return. The light that was your
 Lamp is no longer necessary, it becomes you,
 And beams generations, unities, segregations.
 They are, each finger, of the same body and
 Propelled by heavenly impatience, a burning
 Desire for greatness. And you are great. Because
 This is how it works – in fits and jerks,
 Clicks and quirks,
 Seventy thousand pound steel sculptures made
 of triangles and curves. Paintings resting upon
 Elephant turds, videos, installations, performances,
 And earthworks.

Each deserving of its own tradition and unique
 Labor; that of a man and woman's desire to serve,
 To bring newborn thoughts to earth.

It's said that we are light and winged things flying,
 by day and by night, moving with divinity and humanity,

Between poles of rationale and insanity. It's written that there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him. It's like that Wes Anderson movie, 'Bottle Rocket,' where Owen Wilson plays Dignan. How much joy and Sadness, clear mindedness, and madness, was in Him? Michelangelo believed the true work of art was but a shadow of the Divine perfection. I think it's more like that Robert Frost poem, "The Road Not Taken."

It Ain't about Skill and it Ain't about Talent

I remember growing up with a boy who could show you six ways to draw just about anything better than you could, and about six different ways to paint that you hadn't even thought of. This boy was gifted, there's no doubt about it, still is. But he didn't continue down the path of the artist, he just didn't have that something it took. And he could draw women, and he could draw men, and he could paint like the wind. So it ain't about skill and it ain't about talent. Then what's it about you ask? It's about devotion. It's about not giving up no matter the upsets. It's about learning to hit the fast-ball, sinker, curve ball, and slow-pitch. And trust me boys, I've been around long enough to know. This kid, he had a knack for it, you know, anything you put in front of him would turn to beauty. Real, easy, beauty, not some laborious thing. It didn't take him time to learn, it came right out of him like piss. Beautiful piss. Easy piss. And it smelled like cherries and it glistened like gold every time. But, I say, he just couldn't stick with it. And yeah, he's happy still, doing it every now and again, when the inspiration strikes, but, I'm here to tell you if you want to do it, and do it for real, you don't have a choice. There is never a choice. And that's what I mean, it finds you. So, I'm also here to say I can give a big shit about your mad skills and talent, talk to me in forty years after you've had no fucking choice. Because, that's the difference between the artists and the dilettantes. It ain't about a look, a style, a pose, an appearance.

It's about you not having a choice, and my job is to make sure you see that, as a teacher, and as an artist. So think about how much money it takes, think about the time, and if it fucks you up a bit that's fine, but if you stomach it and still press on then you're one of mine. There will be sacrifice, you bet your ass. And if you think a loving marriage and children are in your future, you may be right, but, you may be wrong. It can be done, but the chances are you're gonna lose a whole lot before you gain. You're gonna pay, pay, pay. And doesn't nobody give a shit about that except you, so get used to being a glutton. But you bet your ass you will provide this world and yourself with more beauty than this world or you could ever fucking imagine, or, on their best day comprehend. And if that sounds self-righteous it's because it is. It's your job and devotion, so get used to that too. No one except a very, very select few will even come close to understanding. So fuck your skills and fuck your talent, talk to me in forty years.

It Seemed to be the Truth

It seemed to be the truth
Every heavy book I read
It seemed to be the truth
With each and every thread

And now I have my own book
And it's the truth today
Yes, now I have my own book
I found and bound a better way

They'll want to replace me
Not tomorrow and not today
But eventually all new heroes
Find and bind a better way

They'll come crawling
They'll want to do away
With all my youthful callings
I jotted down before the grave

But with all guilty defectors
I'll find a loophole, a bigger stage
On which to replace the actors
I'll rewrite a truer page

So come do me in
With all your ones and zeroes
Come try to do me in
All you newborn techno heroes

For nothing will be left
No more of the color grey
The truth will have no heft
I with nothing left to say

Just know that right and wrong
Never was my fashioned way
For I never told you little geeks
What to do or even what to say

And there may be no God above
And there may be no Devil below
Just know that what I jotted down
Was in love to save the show

I've Known Love

She was a girl 10 years my younger,
about 5'5" and petite. Dark brown
eyes, gorgeous rich black-brown hair
when up in a tail, that's how I liked it
best. That way I could see her entire
fair-face and the adornment of her
wavy hair, the sides dangling loose at times,
perfect forehead, and those stray scraggles
on her neckline. The image is clear,
etched in stone even. She dug deep.

But I tell you, when they're young, it's
difficult, and I'm sure as hell that she
would say the same about me. I'm
pathetically filled with love for her still,
and her likely with hate, but isn't that
how it goes in love. In the end at least.
I'd say we'll never talk again, but that's
just me not being straight with you. I
hear her daily, yes, still. And it's a sweet
little voice reminding me to do well in love,
better than before.

I never recovered from that little gal
of mine and maybe I never will.
But I've got me this time, and she
likely got someone else. You know,
when you're young like she was, it's
easier to bounce back. You just keep
on trucking. And I can't blame her for
that. Hell, I mean, at least I've got
this poem.

Knowledge Comes Down in Generations

Knowledge comes down in generations.
It penetrates like rain to this soil,
Although, sometimes it hits a paved
Surface, some stubborn forehead of thought
And just sits there and is evaporated into oblivion,
Or else, a stray robber of wisdom laps it up
And is satisfied by the day's residuals.

I try to do well with the knowledge given me,
But there are times, I must admit, that like a
Steel door I tarnish and am closed to the light.
One day my softened patina will flake and turn
To powder and become a tiny piece of earth,
Something for younger generations to use.

Knowledge

What do I know?
I know very little.
The ten thousand things
Dance and delight in what
I think I know, therefore,
Tonight I will admit defeat and
Be contented, as will be the
Ten thousand things. With nothing
To react against, the ten thousand
Things will be sated, and perhaps
My mind will know some rest. In
The morning I will fish. I will not
Pretend to know what lure to use,
Nor will I rest on the knowledge of
Another man. The catch will dictate
My use, and after much trial and
Error I surmise the truth will reveal
Itself. I will come prepared, but not
Specific. Prepared, I will perhaps eat.
Specific, I will perhaps go hungry.
And if I eat, I will know the ten
Thousand things were satisfied.

Leigha and Damon

Daintiest figure I had known
Ivory flesh encased her muscle and bone
Flawless blackened curls
Against the whitest back encased by swirls

Her spine was flowing in and out
And not a blemish to be seen upon her spout
Her buttocks to make me awe and shout
Her biceps perfect and thighs were firm

Her breasts like snow topped peaks
Her nipples icy and sweet
Her lips – the color of apple's flesh
To kiss them only after her test

Of man to bring his healthiest
Warmest heart of mind
To find her heart beating thrice in time

For her eyes were then deep and passionate
Absorbing the blue of mine

To create one of the finest colors
Of which no man and woman will ever find again

Listen

I know a girl who likes to talk.
Wants to be an actress, wants
to be a painter with pieces in
a museum, wants to be a model,
wants to be a scientist, wants
to join the navy.

When I met her, she seemed
not like the others, fascinating
enough. A different outfit for
each day, a different style for
each day, a different hat or hairdo.

So I listened and each time I would
respond with some talk of my
own her face would get scrunched
up and frustrated looking – eyebrows
turned in, creases atop her nose,
tight lipped, ears back, cheeks raised.

It bothered me, her expression.
It was the type that meant she
didn't care what I really had to
say. She just wanted to do the
talking, the talking, the talking.

So now I listen while she talks.
She says a lot, really. Tells me
about her day, about her problems,
about her joys, her sorrows, her
parents, her dog, her boyfriend or
girlfriend. So I listen. And listen.
And listen – and I say nothing.
And I'm better for it and so is she.

Measure

“If it can’t be measured it doesn’t exist.”

What a ridiculous quote, unless you
Prefer a life in rote. What about emotions,
Beauty, and space. Can you measure grace?
How about my face, can you count its many
Expressions? Or patience or negligence?
If we had a measure for all of these
Things, aside from names, would we be
Able to control all that is life, perhaps?
But we cannot measure these things.
Mystery is bountiful in this world.

We guess at her beauty and are surprised
Each and every August and July by the
Sheer number of flies brought in around Fair-
Time. Now that’s something to measure...
Good luck!

Morning Sun

You're in my heart and on that hill,
You'll always have a little space to fill.
I remember you as the morning sun,
When my wildly heart was on the run.
You rescued me from my straying way,
And pulled me into the night, where all
To you was just as bright. You put it into
My ear, that all was safe and to have
No fear. You say now I've built a home,
Where it was my heart would roam; and
That even from a distance you can see, how
Love has conquered my reality. So to you
I write this song, confessing that my love
Still longs; and profess to you my dear,
I'll remain singing no matter the year.

Nature Will Take You In

There are few things you have to do in your life, some involve laziness and others involve strife. Climbing a mountain is not one of them, nor is fasting in the desert. Your duty is to yourself and not to the deafening shouts or blinding visions of others. Do your best not by mothers, but by that ecumenical smile derived from geese, and the stars, and from the reddish hue of Mars. Nature will take you in—and you will go in peace.

Newness

All that will ever be new was old,
For the luster of gold would never
Seem bold if it were not mined
From the folds of past days.
Everything the same in time –
All that is dirty will be shined!

One Painting at a Time

And I, I helped her that night
And I, I helped her at times
Because I loved her
Because I cared

The infancy, the infancy we shared
It spelled infant throughout the air
But she, she could not have one

Or, or she lied to me once
It doesn't matter anyhow
Because I'm onto another

Another baby
One that is bolder and braver with more courage
Than I, or her, would ever have had the strength to have

More courage
More bravery
More bold

And it may have been born blind
And it may have been born premature
And it may have been born with the largest smile
Or not born at all

But she, she will never know
Because I overcame her in solitude
One painting at a time

Ornery Lover

If nature is so nice, then why do we feel so alone!
 With you there and me with this tone!
 Or perhaps it's just myself with you in my dreams!
 A simple nap it would seem to me –

But no, I know there's more to the sound of it,
 God is doing his work on you for me,
 But I'm lacking in patience this time,
 And the sound of it all doesn't even rhyme!

But I, I was on such a good, good run with you!
 So lover, come back to me!
 Lover come over!
 I need you here with me.

So let Nature come around our way again,
 For the sound of it, I need it again!
 The contact!
 This is my nearly desperate plea bargain.
 Never, will I go in desperation to you, but
 I'm yearning!
 And hah, I'm learning.
 Yearning and learning.

How disappointment will lend a hand to tell one the truths they
 need to hear.
 Fear, oh dear!
 It hasn't crept in yet, but I'm staring her down and my strength is
 strong for you.
 So, my God let it be you, the one!
 The one worth my strength this time.

You ornery lover,

You ornery, ornery lover you!

Peace on the Shores of Life

Trust – the gift
 The precious gift
 The highest attribute in this world

Unearned it goes its separate way
 Earned, it finds attraction

Conquerable to none
 It conquers
 In silence and in beauty
 In painlessness and painfulness
 In all areas felt and unfelt
 Light, levity, and even in the rain
 Trust is earned

Honesty – painful
 But, heed it when heard.

Their trust you will earn, then.
 But, if need be, don't trust them.
 For, their trust needn't be earned at times.

You may go to your grave trustworthy and overlooked
 It happens
 It's happening
 But I wouldn't worry too much about this at this time
 If it is true

Only you know deep inside.

We've all heard the allegory, "Would you jump on the grenade for them?"

And, well, would you?

Self-sacrifice is not needed.

Self-abasement is not needed.

The natural man, the conqueror, not needed.

Be yourselves. Be who you are.

Be one. Completely who you are, and you will see.

The designs of others are not necessary for your design to fulfill itself.

You've heard about looking at another's page, well, in moments of desperation it happens, but be well in it, and upon it resonating with you, their words, their ways, then do passively.

The inspired path.

The only path.

The trust of Gods will visit you then and guide us in moments of solitude.

So, jump on the grenade if you must, but I wouldn't.

Don't let it go that far.

Don't let the torture of days get to yourself and it won't happen or ever go that far.

Listen to the wind.

It might say nothing at times.

So, be well in it.

Peace on the shores of life.

Peace on the shores of life.

Poem for Far Right Scum

The all too rational fell for the mystic
Who plotted their course by the stars.
The all too free became domesticated and
Cancelled their way to the picnic via cars.
The all too loose even tightened up due
To society's belt.

And as catalysts for clarity their audiences
Were lost.
But as bygone souls all on the left who witnessed
Their change swiftly empathized and knelt.
For everyone with an open mind knows the cost
Of being closed in an open age, they therefore felt.

Hereby, should you be of the slightest use
In today's speedy modern world,
You may consider if you're too right going obtuse
And if you're a boy at least for a moment being a girl.

Praising

My first book, "Where the Sidewalk Ends,"
Was where it all started for me. My mom
Turned me onto that one. She was the literary
Master of the household. But I didn't read
Another book, article, paper, magazine, until
College. The excitement of that one book
Held on through the years. It was an adventure,
A timely one.

When I got to college, and finally learned how
To make the grade by studying, it was all over
For me. It was better than any drug I had tried,
It was a human affirmation of orderly success,
not euphoric disorder.

So, I decided to be a scholar. I looked around
To all of the other students, and they didn't
Seem all that tough. So I took to it like a baby
Takes to milk. And slowly, bit by bit, I devoured
The best of them. From Hesse to Hemmingway,
From Plato, to Emerson, to Kant; Lao Tzu to
Chuang Tzu, from Shakespeare, to Poe, to Hughes.

And now I sit here, writing with many years ahead
Of me, God willing. With a few good poets at my
Side. And I'm just hitting my stride. I've not yet
Found the 'proper' balance between life and work,
But I have been given the gift to know that it will
Likely never come. Because that's my way, most things
A little off kilter, and some, the very best of them,
Come perfectly out of my nest of a brain, and rise to the surface
Like a buoyant dolphin, trained by my many years of praising.

Rain on the Roof, after Janet Frame

He covered his windows with sheets,
I do not tell him the sun and moon are what makes
The heart beat strong again. Or, that looking
Between the rain is where love resides. He hides.
My eyes have seen this before. I do not tell him that
There is no good behind the door, that it's in front.
He's not again ready for the hunt. And I understand.
I offer my hand and shut my mouth. For all lonely
Souls deserve a trip south into the depths of hell,
Where only their blighted minds can tell when
To emerge. Oh, but I have the urge to tell him sheets
Are thinner than life, that the heart beats bolder than
Any striped curtain, and that this I know for certain.
I do not tell him that he is hurting. Nor do I say, the
Fabric that binds us is not external, that we all sew
Internal first, and that he must soon regain his mirth,
And thirst for a life eternal, to be able to carry with
Him the look of the sun, and the sound of the rain,
And every voice that ended in pain, and all else that
Has gone before him.

Real Human Beings and Real Heroes

What makes a real human being a real hero?

Stepping up when the chips are down.
 Making the kick with seconds on the line down by two points.
 The game winner.
 The clutch master.
 Faster.
 Our savior of the disaster.
 Calm in the midst of storms.
 The ditching of pride to pay for necessities with nickels, pennies,
 and dimes left in the pockets.
 The eight ball in the corner socket.
 The halogen light that forgoes suicide.
 The difference a rhyme makes.
 When nothing rhymes.
 And the ability to about face in the face of adversity.
 Diversity.
 University instructors that curse when life throws them a curve
 ball.
 Who can admit when they don't know something.
 Humping.
 To get through the darkest night.
 And calling to reassure her it was right.
 The man in the dark alley begging for change is out of sight.
 Because he knows what he must do.
 He knows that work pays off.

A cop.
 A two-bit penny pincher in a three-bit town.
 The sound of quarters hitting the washing machine.
 The cleanliness of mothers.
 The fulfillment of others.
 Brothers, who fight in the face of monsters.
 For their younger brothers.
 And sisters.

Who fight in the face of boredom for their younger brothers.

Fathers.

Heroes.

Who aren't zeroes.

Who are there for their sons and daughters when no one else is around.

These are real human beings and real heroes.

Regal Slug

I am the regal slug
Without effort I go here and there
Oozing into this dirt
I have slept on ancient rocks
My residue is long
A snore that sounds like patience
I am the regal slug
Not swift or strong

Show Me

Show me age and comfort
Some wisdom and some grace.
Show me all the things you know
I've forgotten my image in this place.
Show me love that's not for hire
Some beauty that's not stiff straight.
Show me how to roll away the stone
I've forgotten or come up late.
Show me your special ways
Your touch and your flesh.
Show me your obedience
What it is to be blessed.
Show me all of the ways you live
I've merely got a guess.
Show me all of the time won't you
I need a place to rest.

Socialites

Clean shaven
Shiny short hair
Hard parts
Sparkling clean teeth
White teeth
Hair up in curls
Or down in swirls
Cologne
Perfume
Xanax
Vicodin
Beer
Booze
Marijuana
Button ups
Blouses
Scarves
Nice jackets
Or coats
Staring down long hallways lit with dark pupils
Down long alleyways lit with dark eyes
Social clubs and bars throbbing with empty hearts
Soft dicks
And hard pussies

But I'm telling you, I've spent time in dive bars with real men and
women who needed it
Who actually needed it
Needed time away
Spent on another planet
Who had real deformities inside and out
Who had cocks like steel
And pussies like velvet
Who drank whiskey all night to the sound of thunder
And who sniffed cocaine to talk

Introverted numbed thinking dumb
Who could talk all night because the drugs allowed it so
Who did not philosophize but spoke from experience about this
thing or that thing
Real people
With real lives

And you ask, who am I?

Oh, just an old nobody, that's who.

Well, someone starts with no one, and it's one step at a time.

One foot before the other, after another.

I'm falling in line, slowly. And you?

Well, it's about time, and don't you ask?

I did, and look where it's gotten myself, everywhere.

So love. And do it the right way. Sober, and aware.

Some Poets are Great

Some poets are great. Their memories
Are of vast vocabularies and gush words
Like quotidian, stodgily, bandolier. We
Don't understand but like what we hear.
They recall 12-year-old lines from articles
And essays and spin original webs for us
To be caught in for a time. And on sweet
Occasions they rhyme.

Some poets are great...

With their combustible fingers they
Set fire to key and to page building rainproof
Mental cages in the classical style, for even
When empty of content they are leakless all
The while. Stable structures. Windblown
And tornadic, they do the reeking of havoc.
Some poets are great.

For, when they stay up late they are thinking
Of verse... Some call it a curse, others call it a
blessing... cool spring greens to a poppy seed
dressing. But, then again, I could be guessing.

Speculate

All of man is given the gift
To speculate, though beware
The man and detractors filled
With hate who in a darkened
Cavern operate, and who refuse
The sun that sates. It is only with
Happy souls that I'll cooperate,
Refusing to be governed by
Those tar ridden spirits who
Hesitate. Upon the wings
Of robins I'll dedicate a quickened
Flight straight to that gate
Filled with light and consecrate.
For, it is not my fate to dwell
And to perish the dutiful
Bright lit day in an embittered
Shallow thinking way.

Spring

What happens in the spring?
I'll go out to draw and the
Sparrows might sing! I'll attempt
To capture the mischievous wing
Of day before it turns late summer
And the grass to hay.

What happens in the spring?
All the ice cracks, melts, and pings!
The lovers put on their diamond rings.
All that cold just slides away as the
Noonday sun has more to say.

What happens in the spring?
The lawn mowers all go motoring!
The moonlit nights all go shortening
And I, I will fish around the bay
When all is gay in the month of May.

Still Life

The still life is not what you
Assume it to be. Composed of
What I see the pears are not
Yellow, but red, yellow, and
Green. The shadows are bluish
Purple and green. In one shot
You cannot take in the whole
Scene. Examine the specimens.
The gourds are not what they
Seem. Are tan at first, yet they
Are dry and in need of thirst.
So touch them, draw them out.
They are bulbous and contained,
With stem of brown and yellow
Paint. Their shadow is of a
Different blend. See without
End. The colors and forms do
Not present themselves readily.

Sure as Love

You don't have to worry love,
I'll endure. Sure as the cow
Produces curd, I'll endure.
Sure as the mouse lures the cat,
I'll be fat with love's endless
Musing. For all the empty
Cruising in a car fit for two
Has provided me with but one
Thing beyond a lonesome view,
It was the mirage of you.

Takers

Some will take and take what you're willing to give, and if you're not smart about it they will bleed you like a siv. No matter how you choose to live, they will stab you blind with a double sided shiv. So sometimes I reach for the knob instead, and close the valve on those living dead. Yes, sometimes I reach for the knob instead, and close the valve on the living dead.

That Old Sky is a Lady

Sometimes that old sky opens up and lets you in in the nighttime
 Sometimes that old sun goes down gently making heads spin on a
 dime

And sometimes it's rusty go the rhymes and sometimes you're on
 top

When the rhythms are bright as golden crops in fields

Then diamond rings gleam in the sun of day like a married couple
 is born to play

And oh doesn't it give you the feels

And in fields of barley their crowns seethe to and fro in the wind

So send me a letter in the wind

And like a single man to his cave may it never end

And like a single lady open to romance during the day may it never
 end

And yes, they do shine like this, the days

And the nights, well, don't get me started!

In the studio I'm open as a book

And in the nighttime I'm open as a book

And don't you want to look then

Don't you want to gaze at the sunset for a while before we all
 smile in the day and go our separate ways

I do

The haze, oh, the haze of days gone by is like babies when they cry

Caring for nothing but her when she cries like a baby

In the dead of night

In the dead of day

And what to say then

Let it end then

Let it end

That's all She Wrote

When I was younger I did some
things to make her feel special.
When I got older I did some things
to make her feel like a woman.
Now I'll do a thing to make
her feel loved wholeheartedly...

And she'll know the respect
I have for her as all the while my
heart is like a balloon high in the sky,
because of her!

I'll pay it back with a sigh!

Her smile,
the one she wears ear to ear,
between those two worlds of mine,
it's there!
I bend those worlds from time to time,
here and there, with some caustic words.
Cancerous words! Loving, beautiful words
that are known to crush casual doubts.

And they need be shared.

For on the wind they will find her floating upon
a fiery breeze and shall soothe her bones in the summer
months!

And when their incendiary incantations happen upon her
silence of solace on some fine winter day they will warm her
handsome heart!

For I'm thankful for her loving return.

No score to settle...

Not even one damaging word ever made to hurt a fly from
her sweetest lips.

The Ascetic

His is a struggle against the machine
And in this he wagers a dream
He tries to be part of the almighty team
Though his nature is to live the extremes
In confinement he attempts his duty
And in his lonely struggle uncovers much beauty
But when it gets too heavy he expresses it crudely
So he rejoins the world to rid it of its cruelty

The Bedrock

When I was searching for myself
I recall standing on the bedrock
A rock of the earth
A rock like steel

But it was natural
And I was made of the rock
And so was my city
And I, and not anyone, could cry

But I did cry
And so, water came from the stone
Tears like gallons at night when sitting in my chair alone in that
city in that room in that chair
A cat was nearby so I talked to it
It didn't say much
It was a stray
At least it wasn't mine
Nor was it the world's

And on that stone
Came nothing but vision for miles
A vast opening up to me
A vastness so large I could see, finally
For miles

And it was peaceful
And it was bright like day
And a girl came to stay
And I called her by her name

She had no name
So it was Silent
And we communed in nature together
Like two immovable but moveable stones together

And I could feel my roots
Pulling on me, together

I remember being younger like her
But I wasn't
So, the story goes like this
I moved home

And occasionally still that valley that was mine comes clear to me
again
And I am that man I used to know

The Bird and the Bat

The bird asked the bat, “Which is more beautiful, the sunset or the sunrise?”

The bat asked the bird, “Which is more beautiful, the sunrise or the sunset?”

Neither knew the answer so they decided to ask the universe together.

So the universe answered them in secret.

The Dangerous Games

I've been treading institutions and feeling anvil
 Money guided the voices that were hard to handle
 Attendance reporting and student's complaints
 What ever happened to the painted squares?

And the drawings are duplications
 Of photographic vacations
 People working at a minimum
 Doing their best to bring home the minimum

Because the lowest concession is what we've been paid
 To play the games that aid the children
 With their beautiful abilities to render cheer
 Oh, ain't it all so queer!

But I know a better way
 And it's my way today
 I just monitor my own damned health
 And bring home more than modest wealth

For the days go by without their needing help
 If there ever was any to be offered
 Not from the students and not from the "Man"
 Not from the upper classes and not from their tans
 From lying on beaches without their working
 From taking vacations without their working
 And I am still working

For the work won't ever be done
 If not for having a little fun
 The innocent payed no cost
 Except to my own damned boss
 And yes, there is anger at my students
 For telling me how to deal with prudence
 But that's some silly game

Ain't it all so damned lame

For, danger is but another word for life,
Or at least it should be with all that strife
And who is the generational knife?
Cutting and slicing his way through life!
It was and is me with brightened eyes
Within this fortress of lies!

This institution of conceit
With me upon my humble seat!

“The dreamers ride against the men of action, oh see the men of action falling back.”

-Leonard Cohen

The Dreamers

They say modern love is but a day in the sun
But I say it's more than that
For what is love
If not the warmth from above
And the sun on your faces
Holding hands with the graces of pain
Hand in hand with the aces of pain
In the stormy rains of this place?

The rains might affect your graces
But love prevails in those places, oh so sweetly
And the cards once played
Are dealt again and again
To remind you of the pain the men of action have on their faces!

So, feel good in your dreams
The dreamers are riding against the men of action,
And oh, the men of action are falling back!

The Fairest Pardon

She up and left me on the street
For a boy that kept it nice and neat.
That girl o' mine she liked to cheat,
So I put her down about six whole feet.

Damn if they didn't throw me in prison,
Then tell me I'd be free under one condition.
I was told to write in my sweetest jargon,
The fairest rhymes for the fairest pardon.

So now I find joy in the simplest of songs,
I stray from the brunettes and the blondes.
I continue to right all of my wrongs,
By turning the weak letters into the strong.

The Genius is Empathetic

The genius is empathetic.
She treats and handles her medium like a child.
She cares for it like a great friend and in her
Creations you may witness this huge consideration.
I think empathy is the whole thing, Hans Hoffman
Was right. Empathy and humility for those who
Have lived life, innocence and the confidence of blind
Faith for those who have not. We have known child
Geniuses. They express a beautiful naivety unfettered
By the world. We have known old geniuses. They utter
Humble truths having known embarrassment and fatigue.
Both are masters of their voice. They are as if born to a calling.

The Moon and I

Just the moon and I on a Monday night, me wearing blue and her wearing white. She sits silently across the place, stylish with her skirt trimmed in lace. For a moment she stands and I catch an embrace, her two eyes forming crescent shapes. And it's dark in here so they shimmer with fear, her not knowing exactly what to make of my face. Yet I swiftly smile, and she coyly dials up a subtle motion with grace. It's my lips that are soft but it's her that I taste. And the bar is packed yet it was she who attacked with her doily dress, high-heel caress, and two legs that obfuscate. So I think to myself to close the gate that's an eternity between us, so I race. And instantly a cloud appears before her eyes and the music that wed us dies. And I'm fully aware the handsome man that appeared was not her date but was more than that. So I escaped into the night with nothing but a brief bragger's rite of passage. And the stars are lit but it's Mars that hit with his reddened devilish fist. I drank too much, but it's her that I touched, so all I can hope is that I made her list.

The Sublime

Sublime is the burnt orange tips
Of an October limb by the hundreds.
Sublime is the fluorescent pinks and
Reds of August heat. It is the fear of
Entering a misty vapor that clouds
Our vision below the mountain upon
The street. It is at the same time
Excitement in knowing nature's vast
Hold on us, its offering of rust and
Dust after a grandiose storm has been
Dried. The sublime is not simple beauty.
The sublime is highest on the shelf,
A book of poems opened once, maybe
Twice a year in dark desperation made
To lift our spirits to the heavens. We
Are made to believe in what cannot be
Seen or felt, what cannot be touched
Or smelled. But we do believe.

The Sweetness

I recalled you while I was driving.
I chased you in my mind.
Behind every hill was sweetness.
The clouds were meringue and the grass was honeydew.
I could have sworn every galloping horse was Preakness.
And at the bottoms of every creek bed was water.
And then, at that time, you didn't have a daughter.
And now, at this time, I'm a bother.
But I write of you still, my sweetness.

Yes, I write of you still and still I love you,
But so many days have gone by that it's out of my character
To speak this.

I love you.

To Fall in Love with You

I still have the scar
But I feel your love
And I still sink
To remember you

On occasion I remember you
In the sunlight and day
In the moonlight I say
I hear your love and know my name

So, to fall in love with you is my name
And that's the game
To fall in love with you

Toothpick Race, for my sister Tiffany

It's a rainy day, likely
April or May. My brother
and sister have gathered
'round for a toothpick race.
I do not dictate the pace,
rather, I take the inside lane
and watch as Mother Nature
lays her claim. It's much
more than a game, it's what
I know to be fame at this
precious age. In and around
gathered sticks and leaves
my toothpick weaves, and
is stuck, so I pluck and lay
it back down hoping against
hope it doesn't drown in
some iron grate. My sister's
is late. My brother's wades
in some pool four yards back.
NO! Not a giant crack!

I turn back, they're gaining
on me. The gutter spouts
and turns, splashes and
learns the joys to be young.
For it is old and bold
with bountiful thrust, my
toothpick I readjust. I have
been surpassed, but I'm
gaining on my brother's ass.
And finally, at last, the finish line!
My sister lets me win this time!

Townsfolk

I am not a naturalist or
A man of the city. I have an
In-between status I do not pity.
My roots are deep and my
Buildings tall, I have the
Best of both worlds large and
Small. I can play humbly with
A blade of grass, or be boisterous
As the orchestral brass. For, in
This kingdom surrounded by
Land, I get to choose exactly
Where I stand. One day in the
Pasture and the next day on the
Street, I can dance to the rhythm
Of the urban beat. And when
I'm in the field a mild day
I do adore – on the bustling
Mecca I simply close the door.
Now, I've read old man
Emerson and the likes of Oliver,
How I was swept from sea
To sky by him and all of her.
I've also knelt to the cultures
Of O'Hara and Ginsberg,
And never have I scoffed at the
Replicated suburb. So give me
Natural spring and human birth,
I'm happy with my in-between
Place on this humble earth.

Voyager

I begged for your love
I walked its plank
You smiled from above
Then I sank

You left me there
The sand and me
Like a dare
Upon an unknown sea

But alas, you understood
And turned away
“It was for my own good”
I heard you say!

And on that beach
I sat for days
While nature preached
Her subtle ways

I caught fish with
A handmade spear
Until I saw your myth
Disappear

And every time
I stabbed the beast
I'd think only it mine
To have and to feast

And I stayed
For what seemed like years
Until I belayed
Every last tear

Until I conjured
Strength to build a raft
Then I pondered
Our lost love and laughed

I set out upon that unknown sea
Without a you
And without a we
And I must say I've enjoyed the view, and I thank you, happily!

War

I'm going to attempt to write something about war, not about how it's experienced at the end of a gun, but at the end of the day, when a man goes home to rest, or to watch a movie, or to do anything but fight another battle...

You wake up all bright eyed and bushy tailed, before war, and there's sweetness in every kiss, in every breath. You may consider doing something special, something out of the ordinary. You imagine it mid-day and maybe it happens –

For a man it always starts with the thought of flowers. No matter how it sounds there is no gift more pure and unencumbered than seizing the exact moment to buy flowers for a woman.

But the moment passes like it does and instead you think, perhaps we could take an evening walk, or read next to each other, or something very, very simple that doesn't involve the violent thought of money.

You get home a little late because you were caught up in a painting, or a poem, or a student needed a little more time with you. You pass through the door already full of regret and the silence is deafening and there's no greeting, no look from her, no nothing.

And you're lost but you're hungry and the only comforting thing around is the smell of food upon the stove that she made for you both that you know can wait, but you're afraid so you eat and you prepare yourself.

Then, when the air is at its iciest she starts in with, "So what took so long," and you explain to her. And

she's angry but you think you can fix it so you go on and apologize but it does nothing because she's already recalled every other time you were late, or wrong, or pissed at her for something.

So then you make suggestions, like, "I'll pay more attention to the time," or, "I'll set an alarm," or, "I'll start earlier and finish earlier." But it doesn't work because there's distance. You're now hot and she's cold. Cold and detached and somewhere else. And all you wonder is how close to the end you really are.

When the Bush Grows Broader than Bitterness

When the bush grows broader than bitterness
When the tree grows taller than fear
When the swimmer out swims all miles of hate
My mortal fortune will have grown bigger than fate
And I will say, even in my youth, to the Bushwaiter,
To the Treewaiter, and to the Swimwaiter,
I have no hunger,
Clear my plate.

Where'd it Get You Babe?

I ain't singing along, and I ain't dancing to your beat
I'm pretty mean, and I ain't tapping my feet

Not to your song anyhow

You ain't getting my attention and I ain't wowing you babe!
Because though I love you babe!

You're acting like a princess without a prince
And that you ain't escaping
Until someone pays you a glance on the chin, I imagine
But it ain't me babe, it ain't going to be me

Can't you see babe, I ain't wearing a cape for you babe
Not for you and not for no one babe

And yeah, I like to have fun
And yes, I know you had it pretty hard

But you're the one who hopped into all those pretty cars
With the front-yard boys
Under their hoods
Wrenching on their toys

Where'd it get you babe
Where'd it get you babe
Where'd it get you now babe!

While I'm Still Young

I recall the age of twenty-one
with the fire in my bones and
that deft desire to roam. I could
slay a lion with a twig; spirited
enough, skilled enough, naïve
enough not to care about getting
hurt. Flesh to dirt. Not one single
skirt to tempt my discipline, my
one-way mental mission to the
heart of culture. Like a vulture,
I prayed on defeat, waiting for
my opportunity to rise above the
injured dove. I recall this mind-
set now because stagnation haunts
still, pride taunts my will. So I
sit and wait for a hardy kill, an
open door at the end of the line,
a stench of some unearthly kind
to fetch my attention. I'm owed
no pension, not yet, for I am still
young and able, calm and stable.
Nevertheless, I am owed a chance
like anyone who has worn similar
pants, and promise to snatch it at
first glance. I do long to dance
again in the sun of victory.

Working it Out

Sometimes you walk into the writer's room and it looks like a cage

Other times you stroll into your brain and it's like a jungle gym

Sometimes you run to jot something down on the empty page

Other times it's an eternity of whiteness with no ink to balance or engage

But I tell you, this time I will win

Even if I have to borrow someone else's pen

Because it's like that, at times

You have to claim some clumsy instrument for your own

Youth

At once my love's serenity
Befell her body happily
And second her soul
My merry heart did hold
But first her body by the half-light
Her breasts and buttocks standing upright
Me lying clothed and just out of sight
A voyeur beneath the bedroom light
But her soul
No well-suited words to be told
Perhaps my eyes still too bold
And my merry heart not yet old enough to know
All the words that could show
A soul not yet able to cast a shadow