

Early Summer Flowers



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Early Summer Flowers

We move now
into summer
and the spring flowers
that explosion of blooms
are gone
Some of them swelling
into seed pods
Some simply gone

This is the season
of tiny blooms
as you walk through
the woods
Flowers a millimetre across
although often a million
at once

Now is the season
of garden centres
with plants pushed hard
to bloom out of season
The season of planting
into dry and cracked soil
with the hope they will bloom again
as nicely as they looked
on the benches

~~

This Rug

For two days now
this rug has been in my mind
It is grey, I can't recall the colours
so perhaps I photographed it
It is braided, a rag rug

I have nothing more
but a feeling of love
and comfort
and a vague memory of desire
Was there a girl

For two days I have tried
to remember a girl
but it's just a rug
grey
and a feeling of satisfaction
~~

Thrift Store Blues

There, do you see me
In line before the thrift store
The store is already full
and the woman behind me
keeps edging forward
I glare at her
and she steps back
only to edge forward again

Inside the store
are shopping carts
full to overflowing
dozens of them
and wild-eyed women
pushing and shoving
to get to last year's decorative
crap from the big box store

And toys for kids left home
screaming for something to do
screaming to be amused
by a mother who can't handle
this being denied
her daily shopping trip

As I try to avoid them all
I begin to realize
I have made a mistake
I should have left it
for a few days
until those who deserve it
get their pick of the junk

~~



You're Not Here

You're not here
but I do little things
for you

I fill the water jug
and make enough lunch
for two

~~

Social Media Blues

Why am I reading this
is a question I ask
quite often

Why am I wasting time
looking at the silly comments
the biased comments
the uneducated comments

I must be avoiding something
Oh yes
the dishes need to be done
~~

Rainy Summer Day

Brenda walks to work
while Liam takes the car
to school
and me, I'm at home
trying to decide what to do

I could watch a movie
or read a book
but neither makes me happy

I could clean the house
or work in the shop
again, not happy

So I write
and think of how
I could go out to photograph
without getting my new camera
wet
~~

Empty House Blues

My coffee sits
forgotten
while I wander the house
empty
~~



Big Words

How do you decide
how long the lines are
and how long the poem

For facebook
it's got to be long enough
to get into the smaller typeface
because the big one
looks insane

~~

Only In My Mind

Only in my mind
the houses where I grew up
Only there
is the strange closet
that ran the length of a room

The back kitchen
with the floor
covering a well
and a further room
full of who knows what

A huge window
overlooking the harbour
made of tiny panes
A furnace room
with huge dead rats

A bedroom
exiting onto a porch
that exited, if you jumped
onto a tree-covered hillside

Old ashes
where Phlox grew
down a gully
to a stream
and at the bottom
the Borden Milk factory
and a train

All gone now
except in my memory

~~



At My Cabin

At my cabin
you can walk into the bush
and get lost
Eaten by bugs
who tag-team all summer

The midge
the blackfly
the mosquito
the deer fly
the horse fly

and by September
your skin itches
in random places
all by itself

~~

Into The Void

Musashi says
you can walk into the mountain
and if you walk far enough
you walk out the other side

At my cabin
there is a cave
in a limestone cliff
but to walk in
would mean slithering
on your belly
over decades
of Porcupine shit

and inside
you will probably meet
an angry ball of needles
who might eat your face
but more likely
turn around
and stick you full of quills

Some things are not worth
the price of learning them
~~

If Not You

For many years
Even now
I looked around every bar
searched every crowd
for a glimpse of you

I know you are gone
to another city
far away from me
but I look

hoping to see, if not you
than your nose
your eyes
your chin
~~

A Walk With You

I have hiked through
mountain passes
and hitched across
a continent

I have flown
across oceans
and biked
across provinces

But I would trade it all
all those memories
for another walk
with you

~~

Notes On My Desk

My desk is littered
with obscure notes
Here is one
that is headed for the trash

1. Finish Happy Enough
What is that?
a book I wrote perhaps
did I finish it?

2. Working Sept 2020
I have not worked
for a decade
Another book perhaps
should I look it up?

3. Yves Tanguy
Was he the one
that Leonora Carrington loved?
No, that was Max Ernst
Why was I thinking of Tanguy?

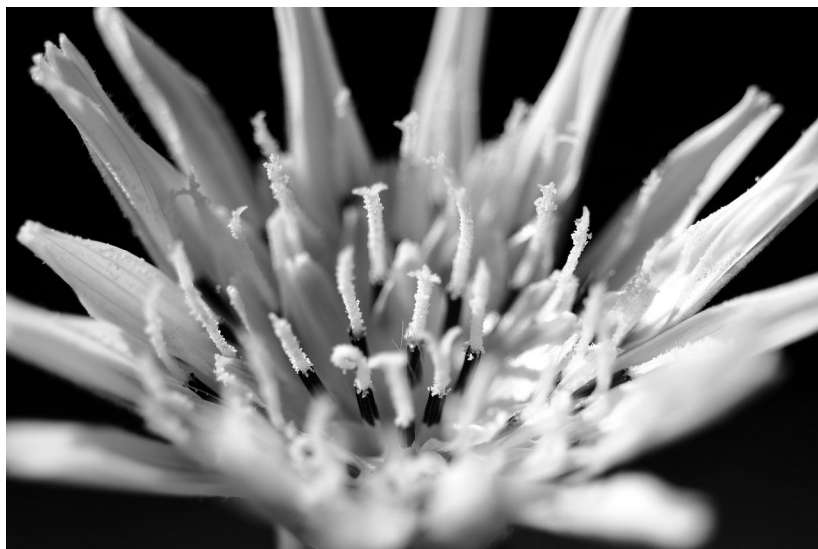
Best perhaps
that I throw it out
and forget about it
before I begin to think
that there is some meaning there
~~

The Chill Winds

I hate mid-June
Summer Solstice comes
and with it depression
as the days begin sliding
toward winter

Yes, I feel the chill already
the icy winds
the long nights
are about to enter my world
as the days begin to shorten

~~



Cycle of Life

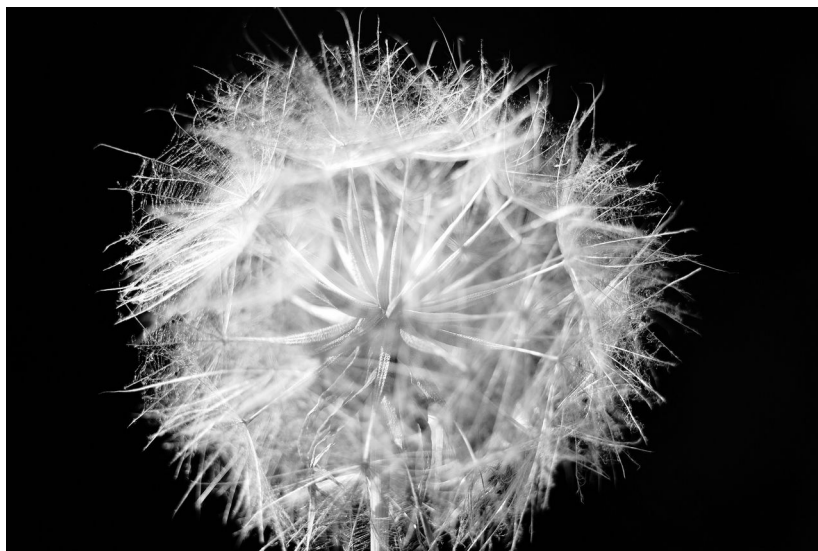
I made another coffee
so I would not snack
and now I have made toast
to stop the coffee
from eating my stomach
~~

Some Other Poet

You write a poem
of Alzheimer's
and Cancer
And Bees

Thinking of bees
I begin to read
but your metaphor
jumps out
from behind a flower

~~



Older, Smarter

You don't understand me
she says
and in the same breath
tells me what I really mean

I say nothing
What is there to say
Once, when I was young
I would have disagreed
and we would have been me

~~

Hummingbird Blues

The neighbour has a metal hummingbird
three or four times the size
of the original

Who made this thing
It looks like it was made
from a photograph
and for scale, the local Starling will do

It is transfixed
upon the end of a metal stick
stuck into a pot of flowers
forever out of reach
of the nectar

~~



The Wind Stumbles

The wind stumbles
bleak and forth
across my back yard

Tickling the leaves of the Maple
but not strong enough
not constant enough
to tinkle the wooden chimes

Poor offspring of a summer storm
with too little rain
and, a while ago
did I hear a little thunder

Growling like a kitten
the power is still on
the sky unblackened
Not even a decent try
~~

That Slap

That slap
you received as a child
did you learn that then
To lean into the hand
to harden your eyes
and clench your jaw
against the chipped tooth

Did you learn then
the joy of resisting
Did you learn then
to love the sudden pain
the flare of anger
that you stored away
deep in your gut

~~

Not Twenty Now

Several times I have thought
that I would put my thumb out
and drift across the country

But there are pills to take
appointments to keep
shots to take
I could maybe squeeze in a week

~~



The Hunter

Every so often
when I'm feeling a bit down
I go through social media
and kill the memes

Such an oddly satisfying thing
and yet, they multiply so often
that there is never a danger
of running out of targets

~~

Getting Long

Old men
and their eyebrows
Messy, tangled
tickling the lashes

They just haven't the eyes
they once had
and you can't trim the brows
with your glasses on

~~

My Sister Learns to Save the World

When they paved the gravel path
in front of my grandmother's house
they put cement curbs in
as they tend to do

One day my mother
hurried out of the house
and down the cement path
to gather up my sister

She was on the road
trying to save the toads
hundreds of them
who were crossing the path

The path that was no longer there
just a paved road, hot in the sun
and curbs too high
to climb over

~~

The Rotifer

24,000 years
that Rotifer sat
frozen in the ice
until a Scientist melted it
and watched the tiny thing
begin to swim again

And because it's 24,000 years
and because it was a Scientist
there will be people
frightened for their lives
of this creature from the past
who will bring to us
some horrific disease

Or who will, perhaps
eat us in our beds
as we sleep
And all our guns
our fences
our survival caches
won't save us
from this disaster

Brought upon us
by Scientists

~~

About This Town

What I like
about this town
is the weeds
in the lawns

It wasn't always so
there were grass patches
free from any plant
that could survive
four days without watering

And there were those
who owned these patches
who would scold anyone
dirty enough
to have weeds in their lawn

It wasn't the weeds
that were the problem
but the owners of grass
who poisoned the weeds

Today, half the town
looks like my lawn always did
green, even in a drought
long rooted dandelions
round leafed creeping charlie
and plantain with its jellyfish roots
searching deep and wide
for water

Mow them all to the same height
and they all look green
Not the green of a golf course
but green enough
on a hot summer's day
careless of the hissing
of summer lawns

~~



We Know Now

We know now
about the masks
and the gloves
and the disinfectant

We know now
about the social distancing
and the isolating at home
and the Zoom-dates

This is the world
those blue-stockinged women
those pulpit-thumping men
said we should have

This is the world
of refraining from sex
and they were right
Weren't they

Physical contact
is risk, sex is risk
we open ourselves
to whatever the other has

Love, covid,
racism, fear
it's all there
for us to catch
~~

She Laughed

My daughter toddled
toward the steps
beside which my desk

I looked up to see her smile
to see her step off
into the air

I dove out of my chair
and like some high school
football hero

I caught her
she laughed
I checked my knees for damage
~~

Oh Woe

Oh, oh, oh
These fellows with the power
with the money
They don't care for us
they don't share with us

They be bad fellas
we be sad fellas
That they won't care for us
they won't share with us
they just take from us

And we let them
because that's the way
it's always been
it's tradition
That's the right way
the free market way

But oh, oh, oh
it hurts to have an empty belly
it hurts to have no medicine
Still, save us from them commies
from that social safety net
Those lazy bastards
who want a free ride
instead of a free market
~~

Asphalt Waves

The empty mall parking lot
wet with overnight rain
punctuated by yellow dashes
moving in waves
with carefully calculated drainage

~~



Cockeyed

My chair rolls
toward the middle of the house

my wood shed
is sinking toward collapse

and I, with my new camera
with it's green horizon line
I seem to list to one side

~~

Old Dead Philosophers

Good and evil
is such a dusty idea

We're all the same
is the modern cry

Those guys do it too
the modern motto

And "how shall a man act"
Cobwebs, ancient fossils
~~

Land of the Free

Ah thou rugged individualist
so self sufficient
so anti-establishment
your role is to disrupt
to disturb
that society that nourishes you
that nature that feeds you

Look what you have wrought
this cruel and selfish life
this dying earth
All for the sake
of your freedom

~~

My Private Place

It's been a while
since I've parked here
facing the utility boxes
facing the plaza
across the street

I will stay until the coffee
or the shade runs out
And then, adventures
I will go to the grocery store
Oh the excitement

~~

History Sucks

Beware O writer
of reading too much
lest ye find
your clever wit
is but an echo
of that already writ

~~



Inspiration Waits

There is a temptation
to flit from book to book
looking for summat
to ignite my mind

Not the way
that way
Push on, push on
with what's in your hand

Only let that mind roam
let it float
as the words wash over
the sand that fills your head

~~

These Kids Today

Now perhaps
the sex is too free
free of consequence
no baby
no disease
need be feared

So where is the effort
where the reward
for mighty wooing
Is it only to be
an itch that is scratched
barely noticed

Ah the new consequence
has appeared
the morning after
the month after
the yes becomes no

Oh happy circumstance
a new consequence
to make the act fraught
with anxious foreboding
Such sweet piquance

~~

Nobody Likes You

Yellow beaked grackle
dirty brown feathers
bane of the old women
Invader of the feeder

Here you are
busy amongst the grass
on the verge of the road
Trying to find a bug
without giving offence
Poor ugly thing

~~

The New Newspulp

WCW wrote of the stupid ears
plugged by wads of newspulp

No more
We save the trees
by bankrupting the papers
and now

we blind the stupid eyes
with fake news
And so
the progress of Man
~~

How Poets Get Laid

I never figured how
to use my poetry
in the lists of love

What good then
the pretty words
on paper
that I could not bear
to watch being read

Best to leave it
casually on the desk
beside my bed
Oh that? Just a journal
Some odd thoughts

~~

No Photos

Willow thin
coffee skin
She parks beside me
and walks in

I wrench my shoulder
groping for my camera
but she is gone

~~

A Working Prick

I don't miss
a working prick
or the muscles
of my youth

I don't miss
a body pain free
I was a jock
never pain free

But I do miss
going through an hour
without having to piss

~~

Too Civilized

This town is getting
too civilized
Since the pandemic
closed the toilets
I'm finding fewer places
to pee

Too many people
on the walking trails
and fewer corners
in empty lots
with a bit of brush
to water

~~

Lunenburg

It's raining
and I remember mussels
picked off the rocks
and boiled in seawater
A decent meal
for two travellers
who had run out of money
but not out of time on the road

~~



Original Sin

Sin, you talk to me
of sin
If a newborn
is born of sin
we will speak no longer

but if you say metaphor
I might forgive you
If you say the potential
for sin

I say to you free will
If you say god's plan
I say go to your reward

If you say the need to strive
toward the reward
of the next life
I say ignore the reward
of this life
at your peril
~~

Lazy Afternoons

Those lazy afternoons
on rumpled sheets
sun from the window
falling across

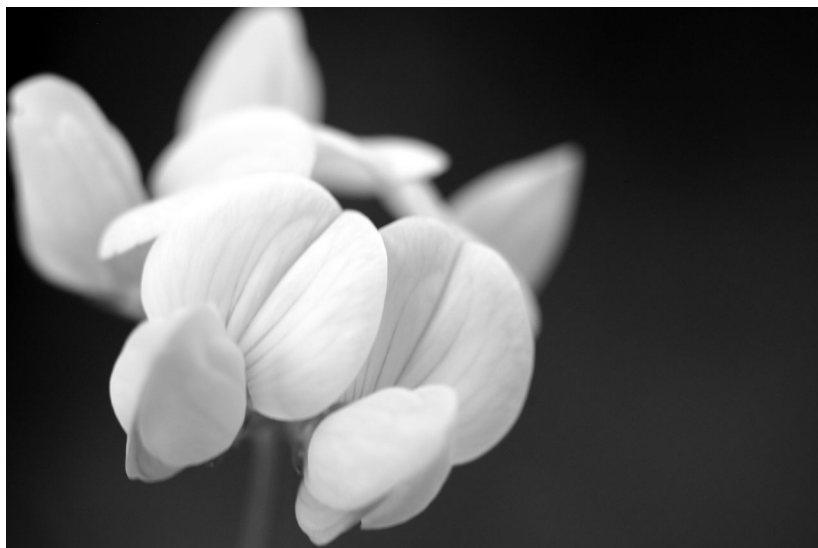
I watch as my trailing fingers
make shadows on your stomach
make shivers flow
toward your fluttering eyes

And downward
to your thighs
parting little by little
with each dragging stroke
~~

Mighty Hunter Returns

Mouth stuffed full of mouse
Cat stands outside the door
and with muffled yell
demands to be let in

~~



Surfactant

The rain
must wash clean

What more proof
than the soapy foam
all over the parking lot

The asphalt will gleam
tomorrow

~~

Matters of Honour

The daughter soiled
by the men of the next village
and shunned
by her father and brothers

Is it because she reminds you
how you failed to protect her?

~~

What I've Learned

Young and handsome I was
beautiful the girls said
and now I am old and grey

What was that beauty
but youth and potential
Time has taken that
and what have I gained

~~

Doubling Up

With you my love
with each passing year
we gain two
What a delightful surprise

~~



Ten Thousand

We know that ten thousand
is the bomb
it's what we need to do
ten thousand and we're there
a real expert

So what of the ten thousand
advertisements
we see every day
what perfection
what expert knowledge
do we gain from those
~~

Don't Try Too Hard

Is this me
shutting down
this entropy
this disinterest
in the repeated offerings
of facebook and youtube
the same items
month after month

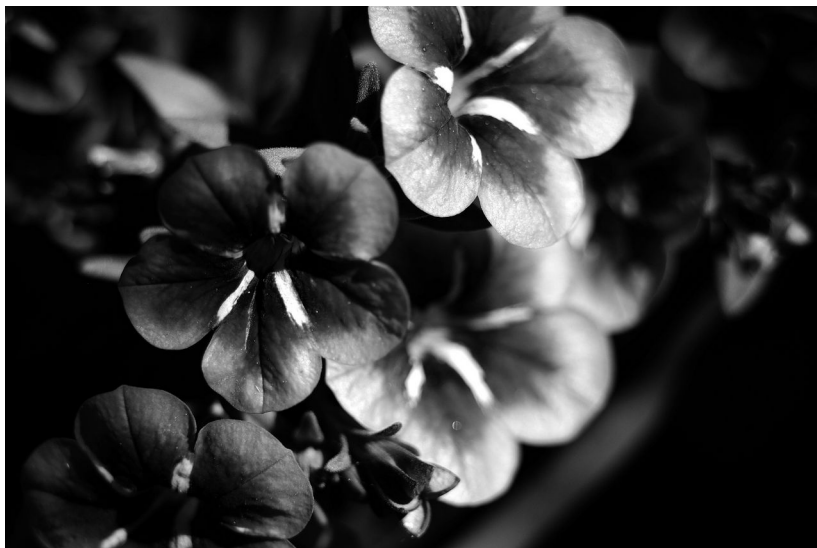
Do the algorithms know
that they don't have to try hard
I won't complain much
soon not at all
And what I once looked at
is of course, all I want to see
~~

Wallpaper

Does anyone
wallpaper any more?
I learned young
that wallpaper hides
a hundred holes
from a hundred students
before me
Dali prints
and Che

Time is Dried Glue

I look around my house
and decide I've been here
too long
Wallpaper curling from the seams
the glue long past sticky
~~



How to Reserve Space

The spot on the shelf
where I put the coke
was empty too long
and now someone
has put the ketchup there

This is a law of survival
any horizontal space
left bare for more
than a few moments
will be occupied
with whatever is in the hand

This is the true origin
of kitsch
of knick knacks
of snow globes
~~

I Love to Sleep

I love to sleep
because in sleep
I dream
and when I dream
you are often there

Cold enough last night
to pull the covers right up
one hand between the legs
one under the pillow
and thoughts of meeting you

~~

The Bear

Onto the slash fire
went the bear
Snuffling around
the lumber camp
in North Alberta
Looking for food

Although no-no-no
someone on the cook shed roof
shot it with a rifle
and before the wildlife boys
could find out
Onto the slash fire

Neither food
nor fur was used
but old snuffles
would bother the trash cans
no more

~~

High Tech Voodoo

An electronic strip
of plastic, very high tech
appears under a notebook
on my desk

Used, my dried blood
seen in the sensor channel
I throw it
with disregard toward voodoo
into the trash

~~



A Mirror is Not a Treasure Map

Ah the sunken chest
of the old man
I see you there
in the corner of my eye
as I walk past a mirror
~~

June 22

Oh dear
the days are getting shorter
I can tell
so depressing
this slide to winter
This morning it's cold

~~



Stop Motion Dinosaur

My little grackle friend
is here again

Each morning
jerking through the grass
like some bad stop-motion creature
that Harryhausen would disown

Glad to see you again
hope you find a fat bug
~~

Modern Education

For the last months
I have been watching video
of photography tips
Nothing new found
just a vague urge
to get outside

Yet I stay at my desk
saying
"I must finish another book"
and I search for another video
instead

~~

Not My Legs

Some TV star
has stage 4 prostate cancer
and, like the idiot I am
I read the story

His has mutated
and lesions on the spine
have robbed him of his legs

My legs!

Once more I must remind myself
of a broken neck,
That I should be dead

~~

Never Stole a Woman

As I thought
"I never stole a woman
from another man"
I remember a summer
where I drifted to the Northwest
and she went back to him

"Not if you're going back to him
when he comes back"
And yet she did
when I did

Making me think
She was not owned
by either of us

~~

Rites of Passage

WCW on his 65th
kissed her while she pissed
and wrote 11 lines

I remember the first time
a woman walked in on my shave
and sat down to piss

Be cool, be cool, I thought
but there it is
seared into my brain

Another step toward something
I was never sure what
Perhaps 12 lines

~~

Why Must I Watch

Why must I watch
as your hair thins
and goes a little grey
Life is so unfair

I never change
(I never look in the mirror)
but there you stand
growing older before my eyes

~~

My Own House

My son
a man now
remains with me
in our house

As I, perhaps
should have stayed
with my mother
to care for her

But I understand now
how a parent does not age
or perhaps
how the child remains a child

I left home early
with no thought of return
but always with the thought
that I could

This was my generation
the houses of my family gone
Things change

Houses are now investments
for the rich
they do not come easy

I will die here
Will my son
live here
~~



Equivalents

Later on
Stieglitz photographed clouds
calling them equivalents

Me, after decades of nudes
I now photograph flowers
Curiously it was flowers
I saw with my first
digital camera

Colour then
Black and White now
Reflecting perhaps
some equivalence of my own
~~

Damn Cat

The cat
from across the street
got one of the birds
from the nest in our bush

I made noises of sympathy
but not outrage
I am not a bird fellow
to be shouting
about the feline on bird apocalypse

Not much of a cat fellow
either
To want the free-range fur-ball

But I suppose the bird
was ours by way of the bush
and the cat was from over the road
~~

Helping the Old Man

The more you help
the less interested in life
I become

Take the struggles away
and they cannot be given back

Rather find your own struggle
and leave me to mine
It is the struggle
that makes us attend
~~

The Sea Is

The sea is a woman
and the boats
drag their hulls
across her skin

While the submarines
suggestively shaped
penetrate deeply

~~

Our Friends Inhumed

Does there come a time
when those who died
outnumber those we know
Has that time arrived

~~



Teach Me Teach

Spare me now
the clever technique
The latest style
The fanciest equipment
Leave them be

Stop telling me
my words make no sense
of course they make no sense
I am trying to tell you
what cannot be told

Stop being clever
and open your eyes
while you close your mouth
There it is, There!

~~

Social Media as a Loud Bar

My own fault really
I know better

Half a lifetime ago
I stopped going
to kiddy bars
and suddenly life
became more pleasant

Do not go
where you know
the stupid grow
It really is that simple

~~

There's My Boys

There's my boys
I found a pair of PSB
Passif II speakers
Thrift store gold

They were obviously loved
repaired at least twice
I owned a new pair
bought for me by my mother
and decades later
gone to a nephew

So nice to hear them again
I wonder
I've even got the amp,
it's in my daughter's room
No, too much nostalgia
is not good for you
~~

How to be Rich-like

Amazing really
what not saving
for old age
gives you in pocket change

Yesterday I used
a new macro lens
on my walk

Mind you
it is Chinese
and cost less than \$200
but still bought
without a second thought
~~

The Villain

The thing about memory
is the way it gets edited
without conscious decision

All those women I knew
are gentle angels
of my better nature
and I the villain

Somewhere, tucked into my head
by a loving mother
is a saving grace note
"It takes two people
to have an argument"

~~

Those Who Rip Books...

The first time I heard the advice
to rip a book in half
to save weight on a plane
I was stunned

To -- rip -- a -- book --

Who could do that
Certainly not me
Not this buyer
of used words
Mostly read
and then stored on shelves

~~

There You Are

My soul ripped and pierced
like the eyelets of a sneaker
and there you are
laced through
and pulled tight
the ends in a double knot

No simple bow
so I will need to force
the sneaker off
Never to be worn afterward
~~

Don't Stand There

Once again you stand
behind my shoulder
as I sit working

I never liked it
but now, with a neck
half frozen
Your casual assumption
that I can see you
is all the more unnerving

But I should trust you
you say
You say you would never
hurt me

A lifetime of cuffs
across the ear
argues against you
And so once more
I twist my body toward you
~~

My Very Own Menopause

Yet another hot flash
propels me up
out of my chair
and to the sink
to rinse my hands
in cold water

~~



Seeing and Not Seeing

The chipmunk
emits a single squeak
and dives for the grass
beside the path

All unseen by me
as I walk
searching for contrast
light, shadow, and form

Poking my camera
into the brush

~~

I Like Naps Too

Little grey cat
sleeps often during the day
I wish I could ask
if he, like me
at the end of our lives
is multiplying his days
as best he can

~~

What Good is a Poem

Rainy Saturday morning
coffee
a piece of dark chocolate
and two (oh decadence)
two sugar free cookies
while I wonder, idly
what good a poem is

I don't know what
a poem is for
or why I write
but I have written them
since I was 20 (no, perhaps 14)
Is that it
is a poem for being 20
~~

Especially the Ethnic Aisle

Brenda has gone off
to the grocery store
and as usual
I am told to stay home

She doesn't like it
when I follow behind
and comment on what she is buying
or worse
when I wander off
to buy who knows what

Shopping is important
not for the likes of me
an amateur, a buyer
of impulse
"Let's see what these taste like"
"I wonder what I could make with this"
~~

Hiding From the Monster

Frog jumps in
turns around
and, nose showing
watches me

He doesn't know
that I can see his body
under the surface
to him, it's separate
one world from the other

~~

Lawn Flowers

There are dandelion in my lawn
the neighbours frown
but once, this jaunty, jaundiced flower
was on the other side of "weed"

All edible
root and flower
stem and leaf
except perhaps the bitter sap
on the flower stalk

Strange how something
once valued
can descend into
something reviled
A weed truly is a flower
out of place

~~

Third World Religion

I look atop the fridge
and see a bag of pills
None of which I paid for
and once again
I am thankful to live here

Born thirty miles south
and I would be rationing
those medications
trying to stay alive
with half the expense
so my kids could eat

Thirty miles south
I might be asking
what I had done wrong
that god turned his back on me
did not provide me with the money
to live a few years more

~~

Conditioned Air Blues

In the stinking heat
of late June
(Something that rarely happened
when I was a child)
we keep the windows
carefully shut
and a fan blows
across my chair
Just enough to keep it bearable
except, oh damn, here it comes
another hot flash
I can't pull my shirt off
fast enough and now it's wet

No AC in the van
the plan is to go for lumber
before the thunder storms hit
later in the day
when it is supposed to rise
rise little needle rise
to the 30s
and I think to myself
better than the West
poor bastards
driving over the 40s
to new records
thanks to lots of AC
thanks to burning dinosaurs
as fast as we could

So I will get into the van
and roll the window down
risking skin cancer
until I'm told it's too much wind
and then I'll roll it back up
wishing, yet again
that we had the little triangles
of glass we had as a kid
The air vents you could push
until the air blew into your face

Cars now rely on the AC
Buildings now have windows
that won't open
and so AC
With AC you can build anywhere
any way you want
No cooling trees
no cooling towers in the roof
to let the heat escape
and pull in the air
that moves cool across the grass
The AC that browns the grid
so we all own million dollar saunas

Oh damn
here comes another hot flash
but the fan on my shirt
cools the sweat
and it feels good
even if it sticks to the chair

~~



High School Boys

High School lunch hour
in the cafeteria
It starts with arm wrestling
and soon arrives
at slap fights

You first, and then me
across the linoleum tables
harder and harder
until someone says enough

I wonder why
just testosterone poisoning
just another proof that Boy
just that bad male conditioning
certainly not video games
they were decades in the future

But then again
so was testosterone poisoning
and socialization
As far as we knew
it was just Boy
testing the limits

Perhaps some darker season
like cutting
or chewing the nails
pulling out the hair
or scratching until it bled

Perhaps the pain of the slaps
gave some sort of release
to inner torment
to stress from expectations

In a country high school?
Nah, it was just Boy
Just young idiots
seeing who could take the most
I'm sure of it
because I don't want it to be more
~~

My Godfather's House

My godfather's house
was owned by my grandmother
Set back from the road
with no access somehow
Perhaps just a cottage
on someone else's lawn

It had a veranda
not just some puny porch
but a real veranda
under the roof
that wrapped two sides
and a tall crawlspace
behind white latticework

You could sit on the veranda
with the painted boards
like a floor
and look down the hill
to the village main street

It had few rooms
A small kitchen
and bathroom
It smelled a bit of must
and a single man's house
as you walked in the place

A main room with stone fireplace
and big windows
behind that the bedroom
and between the two
a stairway behind a thin board door
leading to narrow stairs
up to the attic

I only snuck up those stairs once
and looked greedily at the boxes
not daring to open them
before scuttling back down
and closing the door quietly

Not just sold
but gone now
the neighbour wanted a driveway
~~

“The Building”

The old man had "the building"
half finished
flat roof, covered in tarpaper
the whole thing leaning
for lack of siding to stabilize it

I used to wander in
and look through the boxes
of 50s men's magazines
Men, Stag, True
True Men, Real Man
His, a certain pattern there
Combat, Adventure, Real

All filled with illustrations
as good as my War Comics
all grist for the mill
of a young man's mind

A place where I could learn
how to beat killer sharks
and killer gorillas
and killer snakes
with just a knife
and a cigar

~~

The Secret of Budo

Shall I tell you a secret
Shall I give you the key
to wisdom, and knowledge
Not the same thing they say

Know yourself
Oh trite, who hasn't heard that
But wait
this is not a matter of spelling
your name
Not a matter of remembering
your address
You must know why

Painful, brutal, pitiless gaze
upon all that you do
Why did you do
what you just did
And if you see
something you don't like
A selfish act
A cruel thought
A cravenly accusation
"It was someone else!"

You need to see it
to know what you did
and if you can live with it
if you can do it again
Well so be it
You will know who you are
~~

Life lessons

When I was a child
I had a helium balloon
which, as children do
I lost hold of

It floated up into a tree
and I climbed up to get it
only to run into a hornet's nest
and get horribly stung

Did I get the balloon?
I don't know
Did I fall out of the tree?
I don't know
I barely remembered the story

Climbed the tree for the balloon
got stung
The End

Anything more, any enduring trauma
I am happy to say is absent
along with most of my memory
of the events
The End

~~

Kan and Ken

Musashi asks us
to see
and to see into
Ken is the surface
the shiny paint
the lovely lacquer polished
and we say "ooh" and "aaaah"
amused and fascinated

Kan is what's behind the shine
what broken spars
what crumbling cement
what greed
has papered over the cracks
with distraction and shiny baubles
and promises

I will move over here
so you should go there
Oh, I didn't, too bad
now you lie bleeding on the grass
More fool you
to have seen but not seen into
~~

An Old Game

I look up to find the magnetic mouse
its second magnet long lost
So old it's tail has fallen off
the plastic long ago become brittle

My grandmother bought me the mouse
and after I had run it around
on a piece of paper
I put it somewhere

Months later my Grandmother found it
and moved it somewhere else
so, when I found it I moved it
and the game lasted for years

When my Grandmother died
the mouse moved
to my Mother's house
She and I found and lost the little mouse

My mother is gone
but there is the mouse
Now it's only me who plays
and now I will move him

~~

My Grandfather's Stone

I went to my grandfather's graveyard
where my grandmother said
"he's over in that corner somewhere"

I looked
and looked

~~



Never Thought to Ask

Did I know gay kids
when I was in school
I don't know
I never asked

Never thought to ask
We were all adolescent boys
frightened of girls
or boys, as the case may have been
together

Somehow I begin to feel
somehow the less
for not caring enough
to ask

~~

This is the Way

The world was about to end
when I was a kid
Nuclear war was certain
at any moment
that siren would blare
(not Thursday at 7pm)
and the flashes would appear

We somehow survived
and now, again, the world ends
Not suddenly
but on little cat feet
Not a fog, but heat
that will drive off the fog
drive off the water

Little by little
for fifty years
we have watched it come
and have said "someone should"
and those who could, said
Turn down the heat
drive less
Turn up the heat
in the summer

But each year
a new model car
houses, houses, houses
to be heated in winter
and cooled in summer
as we watch that cat
hot footing it across
that brown lawn
avoiding the sprinklers
padding toward us, slowly

Tomorrow, tomorrow
will be soon enough
some scientist
will save us
someone else
will turn up/down the heat
Someone

~~

Saho

We bow with the sword
edge out at the start
said the old teacher
Because we start the practice
because we warn
because we protect ourselves
our family
our country

I stopped listening
Our country? With a sword?
With the spirit of Bushido you say?
No, nor will I fly the Maple Leaf
Forever
Please understand
I know the history
I know
But I do not wish to repeat it

I will simply say
that the sword is placed
edge out as I bow
because you said it should
The explanations
can be saved for others
For me, it is enough to know
that I will not pass
my next exam
if I do not place it so
~~

Early summer brings warmth, and joy, but it also brings sadness as the first enthusiasm of spring growth begins to age, and the days, growing longer, begin to get shorter. “Not for a while yet” has never comforted me, I have spent too many years imagining what could go wrong to forget.

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