

February Wednesday



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Introduction

February is the worst month if you talk to me about it. There are more demons showing up here than any other month. Some are real demons, some are just a mask, some are toys.

How do you tell the difference on a Wednesday in February?

~~

Kim Taylor, February 2023



February Wednesday

Hey T.S.

If you're going to write a book
why not write a book
why all these short lines
that go on forever

At least they don't rhyme
but honestly
I don't have the time
A little warning next time eh?

Not the sort of thing to read
just before work
on a February Wednesday
If Wednesday in February
isn't the Waste Land
I don't know it
~~

The Old Man's Skin

Thunder Bay
end of January
cold
dry
and an old man's skin
chillblained and itchy
legs
don't scratch them
just don't
lotion
and vaginal cream
just in case
it's jock itch
~~

The Meaning in my Room

On my desk here
is a pen drawing
of a bird
Made by my son
and gifted me
Two more of his works
hang in the room here

Three wolves in a frame
from a friend
Two watercolours
and a cross stitch
from my mother
And a watercolour
of a bridge
from another friend
~~

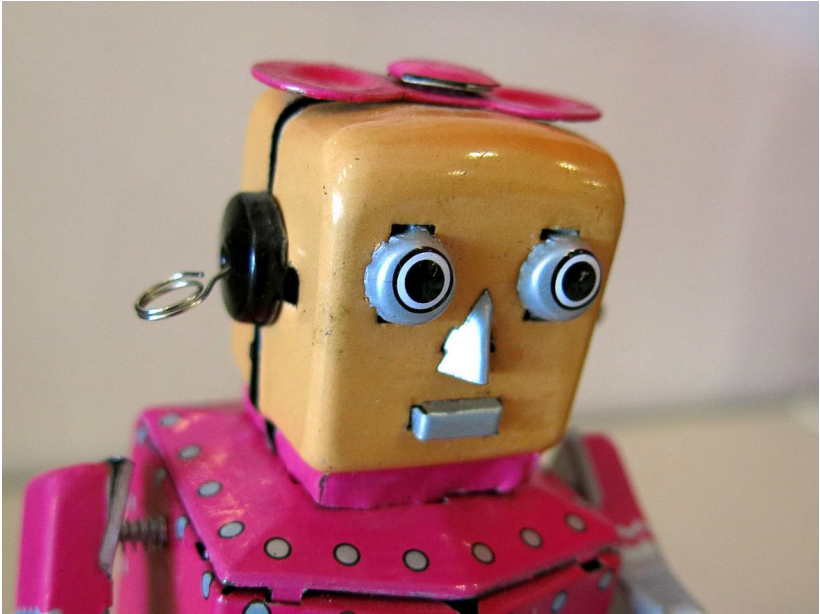
Last Summer

Last summer
surely no more than that
I watched my children sleep
upon the futon in the cabin

Arms flung randomly
dreams creating clouds
on smooth foreheads
That stretch, just before awake

Last summer
I could pick them up
one in each arm
and carry them to the car

Where we would drive to the beach
and get ice cream
and they would race into the waves
and back again, when it was cold
~~



The Organization

This has nothing to do with me
these machinations of administration
these threats and promises
never fulfilled

They have nothing to do with me
They are not my concern
I simply do what I do

and if you say this person or that
is in charge
I will consider

When those in charge
say this or that
I will listen
and if I disagree
I will perhaps say so
but will certainly not do

After all, I am not the administration
I am the guy on the shop floor
and all I wish to do
is work and receive a fair pay

If there is no pay
then I will work
as it pleases me
Argue amongst yourselves
should it please you

~~

Explain it to Me

Will you explain to me
please
what this poem means
for I have forgotten it
Forgotten the reason
I wrote it
and yes, I wrote it
so you would think
I would know what it meant
but I don't

Would you explain to me
who this person is
that I reference
that night, those stars
Where were they
And why did I write it
that would be the thing
why would I write
such a poem
For I no longer know
explain it to me
~~

I Do Not Understand

I am not
an intelligent man
and I miss
what more subtle men
understand

I do not understand
the need for cruelty
the need to laugh
at those who are like me
those who don't understand

I do not understand
the need to be above
when below is just fine
I am happy here
without the note
that says I'm above

I have paper on the wall
that says I went to school
but none of it says
what I did there
What I did mostly
is not understand

~~



Daddy Issues

It was her father
I must admit
that she was searching for
and I was not he

Unfortunate
because I thought perhaps
she was my mother
still, I was not he

~~

Half Grin

I caught her smile
that half grin
and lowered eyes
that hinted at secrets
at deep thoughts
of things behind the curtain

and I wanted to stop
to ask her what

But my grinning girl
is forty years gone
and even that long ago
she never told me
what she was thinking

~~

Free

Free
Finally free
Years of letting go
of giving it up
and the very last piece
is gone

Let someone else
be responsible
Let someone else
try to explain
to suffer fools
I am free
~~

Why Not

Just long enough
between wars
to forget the horror
and to be told
the glory

Just long enough
for the dead
to be forgotten
and the crippled
to die

There's money to be made
there's money to be made
what more reason
to have another war
Why not, why not, why not
~~



Euni's Feet

I would tuck in the sheets
and she would blow them out
at the bottom
so she could stick her feet
out into the cold air

Don't ask me why
I never asked her
I was just happy
to see them there
those lovely feet
sticking out of the sheets

~~

For Maya Angelou

I do apologize
that I have no brave words
no declarations of intent
to rise above the scorn
I am white
I am male
I have nothing to overcome
nothing to declare
I am top of the heap
with no place to go
and so my poor poems
of past loves
and mundane life
are all I can offer
Not much to inspire
Sorry about that
~~

Rage, Rage

As an old man
sick and waiting for death
I have no urge
to rage against the dying light
and a great desire
to go gentle into that good night

Let me go
do not demand heroics
I am not in a war
with the cancer in my bones
They are my bones
and my cancer

Do not ask me to hang on
to fight, fight, fight
save that please
for the high school teams
I would like some peace
some quiet

I will go gentle into that night
I will not rage
at the dying of the light
You do it for me
don't ask it of me
I gave you life, that's enough
~~

I Want It

Because I want it
This is the best I can do
to explain the things
those who have money
wish to have

Because I want it
I can afford it
so I can get it
I have it
because I wanted it
and I could afford it

And that's all there is
No need to think
of need or wisdom
I want it
I will buy it
~~



Kill and Kill Again

Video killed the radio star
CDs killed vinyl
photography killed painting
digital killed analogue
and now AI will kill again

Kill and kill and kill again
but always there is someone
who hasn't heard the word
and somehow, things survive
Perhaps kill is a bit hasty
~~

The Book I'm Reading

The characters
in the book I am reading
have frozen, their lives suspended
until I begin to read once more

The godlike power
to stop and start their lives
is almost intoxicating
almost sickening

I will find the time
to let you live again
I promise you that
Soon, I will return soon

~~

Brick

Three issues of 'Brick'
purchased for a dollar each
and I have them on my desk
Flicking through them
I realize they are literary
and I am not
I look at the pictures
like some kid who can't read
Certainly not going to claim
that I read Playboy for the articles
I will look through them
but won't get much from them
and will offer them
to my daughter
who is more literary
than I

~~

Currently Famous

Who is that famous person?
I don't understand that story
I don't know those people
Is it a TV reality show?

Moving on

There are advantages
to being old
and one of them
is a complete lack
of understanding
of the currently famous
~~



February

Sweat pants
fuzzy slippers
a t-shirt, warm vest
and long sleeved shirt
and I am still chilled
to the bone
Have I mentioned before
how much I hate winter?

~~

Grandmother's Fingerprints

It must be long gone and rotted
that old pump organ
that I used to sit in front of
and push the bellows with my hands

Long gone from my life
and long gone from the world
perhaps a key or two
between layers of newsprint
preserved underground

Waiting for someone
a thousand years on
to unearth and wonder at
until some expert sees it

"I know what that is"
and it is tagged and catalogued
and forgotten once more
my grandmother's fingerprints
and all

~~

Off His Meds

He's off his meds again
Swearing and swinging
at voices in his head
and we understand
we really do

but we have our own problems
like trying to drink our coffee
in peace

Still we let him go on
until that key moment
when he throws the coffee
and slams his fist
into the wall

That's when we call someone
but there is nobody to call
no more family
He spent that currency

No more health services
The government books
have been balanced
by tightening his belt

There's only the police
We call
and we hope
He's just a guy
who's gone off his meds
~~

Mwrrrrawr

The cat and I have had a discussion
He says "Mwrrrrawr"
as loud as he can
and I throw him out
into the bitter cold

He comes in and shouts again
immediately
and just as soon
he is out again

Repeated a few times
and with me following behind
to pick him up again
he retreats to his safe place
his warm cubby
where I have been forbidden
to dig him out

Then, carefully quiet
he came out
and jumped onto my lap
to suck up to me
and warm his paws

I swear I've known humans
who are just the same
~~



Wednesday Apology

You know those stories
about gigantic loves
and that delicate mix
between two people
that creates an explosive

I lived those stories
bless me I have
the ones that were shit
and the ones that shone
brighter than the sun

And each of them was a gift
from a woman to me
for no other reason that I can see
than she thought I might do
and I tried

I certainly loved
deeply and truly
if I did not do
did not provide
the other things required

That so many exploded
was not failure
on anyone's part but mine
Still, I tried
as long and as hard as I could

And I love each woman still
hold them in my memory
to various degrees
and not a day goes by
that I don't apologize

~~

A Surprise

There was a time in my life
when poetry was a salve
an antiseptic cream
to sooth the pain

When I was with a woman
and it was going well
When the knives stayed
in the drawer
there was no poetry in me

Somewhere
along the road to death
far down that path
so that I am closer to home
than to my father's house

I became different
The poetry became easier
when life was easy
And harder, much harder
when it was hard

What surprise I had
was undeserved I suppose
most writers are more calm
more pacific when they are old
So it is told

~~

The Way She Said It

It wasn't her words
exactly
or the rhythm of her speech

although I loved that
and the lilt of her voice
and the breath as she spoke
and the musical rise and fall

But that wasn't quite it
No, it was the spaces
the spaces between the words
and the spaces between

If she had nothing to say
she said nothing and I would wait
as long as it took

And when she did speak
a few words, and a pause
and the way she looked at me
those monstrous eyes
boring into me, "do you understand?"

Do you know what I'm saying
I knew
I knew when she said nothing
I knew I loved her always
in speech
and in silence
~~



The Talk

Thank God for the internet
I never had to have the talk
with either kid
Not that I would not have
but seriously what would I contribute
after they had found the videos

My mother told me I could ask anything
but I got my information
in the traditional way
by listening to my friends
and yelling, "No Way"
and then asking Mother
if it was true

~~

Candy Day

Brad Young and I
vowed to visit
every single home in town

It was Halloween
and my grandmother provided
as many pillow cases
as I needed
Deeming it a worthy quest

We started in the daylight
and finished in the apartments
above the stores downtown
I swear we did it
visited every home in Tillsonburg
although I sometimes wonder
~~

Modern Poetry

"Dive into this collection of poetry and prose inspired by modern dating and broken relationships"

So
Then
Dating and broken relationships
Like
Teens and twenties
and nobody is what you want
and you've got lots of time
to find Mr/Ms perfect
and everyone else
is a jerk?

I wrote some of that
in my twenties
I took the lot
and buried it deep
in the back garden
where I figured
it would make good fertilizer

~~

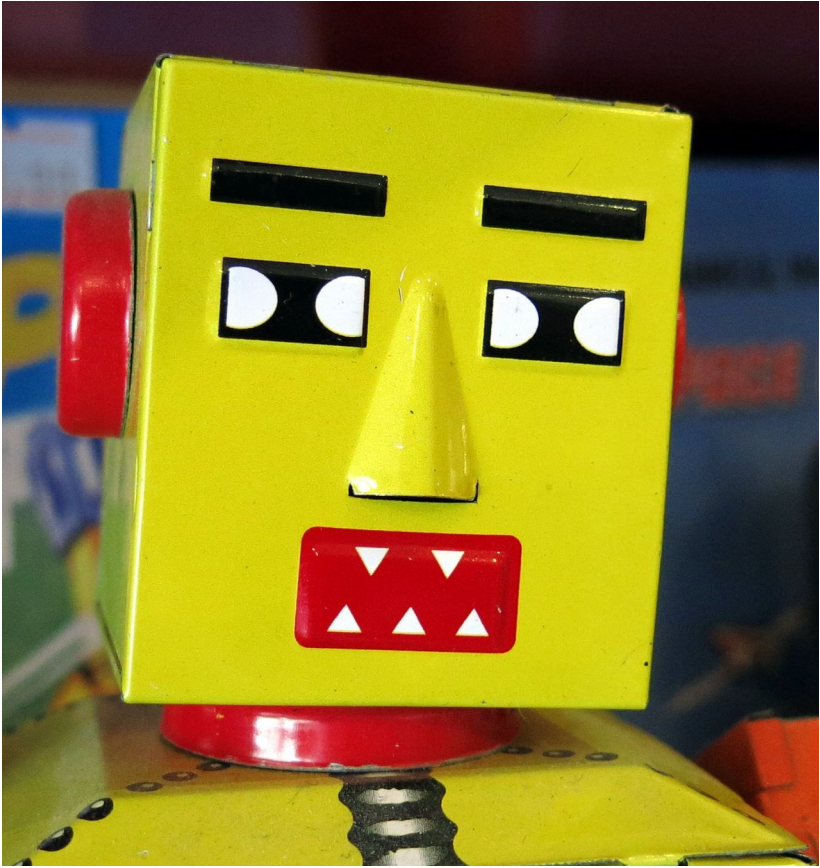
Acidtongue

Acidtongue was just that
a fellow who never said anything
that was kind or considered
or even truthful

He had a little problem
with the old personal interface
If you asked him
he'd say he was a nice guy
with nice things to say
about nice people

But it would come out like
"You fucking shit
of fucking course I'm nice
I never say any fucking thing
to disturb any asshole
who might be listening."

You see what I mean?
~~



My Own Grandma

I usually have a paperclip
on my desk somewhere
but I can't remember
clipping any pages together
in quite a while
Instead it's opened up
so I can use the hook
to dig wax
out of my ears
Yes, I know
One day I'll put my ear out
I am my own Grandma
~~

Ancestral Cringe

To my everlasting horror
my mother found ancestors
who were United Empire Loyalists
which means some of them
came from the United States

I was so embarrassed
I never looked too closely
at the research she did
carrying on from my grandmother
on my father's side

I think she wanted us to have
equal representation
from both sides
but it was on hers
that the UEL showed up

It would have been great
if they were Mohawk or Seneca
settling in Brantford
but they were Quakers
who settled in Sparta

~~

Not Exactly Gothic

Growing up in small town Ontario
I should have secrets to tell
dark violent tales
of Gothic Horror

But I'm afraid not
our little town kept to itself
and we in it
What the neighbours were doing
was no concern of mine

The best I had
was that old Carm next door
liked to fish
in the stream a few blocks over
he taught me how to fish for suckers

Not exactly Gothic

~~

Tap Dancing LOL

Tap dance lessons
in the Orange Hall
and before class
the choice
Beatles or the Rolling Stones

Later, stories of the LOL
the Loyal Orange Lodge
and how they controlled Ontario
No damned Papists
No Irish
would intrude on our lives
as long as the Lodge
ran the place

None of it meant anything to me
we were poor
the lessons didn't last
past the free introductory week
There was no chance we
would ever be in any position
to bother the Orangemen

~~



Image in Image

I saw a photograph
of an old flame
and in it
the photograph
of an even older flame
on the wall

How could I have done that
have a woman in that room
and an older love there as well
Should not I have rushed ahead
and pulled the image from the wall

Instead, if asked, "who is she?"
I would answer honestly
I found that most women
knew enough to look and perhaps think
Oh, a model for him
Otherwise remaining silent

~~

Forever February

It is cold today
I'm frozen to the bones
and therefore
it has always been cold
and it will always be cold

This is all I know
the rest is memory, not to be trusted
or fantasy, certainly not trustworthy
The cold has lasted as long as I've lived
and it will last as long as I live
which is always and forever

~~

On Faith

I am not simply
a visitor to this world
having come from someplace
and going to somewhere
I have no proof of that
I could only take it on faith
and faith is not mine

Where would we come from
and if nowhere
Where could we go
I am not a visitor here
I am here
Part of this world
I was born of this world
and when I die
I will be part of this world

This is the source of courage
to know that all there is
is this moment
Nothing else, just this
Look around you, just this
and be content

Live well
Die without complaint
Where does a wave come from
where does it go
And yet, there it is, I can see it
Can you see me?

~~

For Today

If, tomorrow, I am not here
I was here today
There should be no tears
that I am gone, I am not gone
I am here today

Tomorrow, if I am gone
I will not know, that I am gone
but today I know
I know you, and you know me
And that is enough
for today

~~



Reynard My Friend

For many years of my life
Reynard the fox has watched
Trickster that he is
my life has been full of tricks

Yet he is a gentle fox
and his tricks are for laughter
not for sorrow
so I have been a lucky man
that he has been my friend

His greatest trick
was to make me born
and then growing up
he laughed as he watched
He laughed at my children
laughed with me to see them grow

and he will laugh when I die
this brief time in the light
when I slowly came to understand
and as I return to that place
from which I came
Reynard will wave to me
the last thing that I will know
is his gentle face, as he waves to me

~~

Let It Go

What should I do with this
the advice about my hurt, my pain
the confessional poetry of others
of their hurt, their pain
What can I do to help, can I help

Here, let me offer this
One day we will all die
the tormentors, the tormented
and in a thousand years

Not one person will know
they will not know our pain
they will not feel our hurt
and then, and then
perhaps we can let it go
~~

Time Enough To Finish

Sixty-six years, and I feel
I have not time
to finish what I must

An illusion only
I did not waste those years
and I have the years to finish my life

what I do with my life
is how I live, that only
there is no importance
except to me

and when I run out of time
my work will be done
~~

For You To Choose

There will be times in your life
where you don't feel it's worth it
to continue to live

I have been in those places
but as yet, I have not made that leap
I have avoided death
and continued to live
and life continued in me

Things change
some things will always be with us
but like a broken limb
the pain becomes dull
and we may have a crooked limb
but often, we can use it still

There will come chances
to change your life
The gods give those to us
Or chance, if you will
Take them, do not second guess
the gods

There will come a time
when we do not resist the urge
to die
and that will be your choice
as was every other choice in your life
the difference is
it will be your last
~~



If We Wait

If we wait for our life to start
if we wait for the perfect moment
the perfect line
the perfect woman
the perfect life

We may wait long enough
that death comes to us
and we cannot put off death
saying "I am waiting for the perfect time"
We cannot play chess
for a few more moments

and if we wait
if we wait for our life to start
we may miss the chance
to have one

~~

Count to Twenty

Close your eyes, she said to me
and breathe
and be still, do nothing
And I will count slowly to twenty
Before I count twenty
forget me
and when I reach twenty
I will not be here
and I will forget you

Then, after you open your eyes
continue with your life
Know that someone loved you
but forget who that was
Remember only the love
and carry that love with you
Until you find another love
and then, count to twenty
and this love will be gone
leaving room for that love

Now I will start counting
Close your eyes
and breath
~~

Perhaps She Was

My father had some musical instruments
scattered around his apartment
I suspect they were to go on the wall
but they never got there

A zither, bongo drums, a violin
an ocarina, and who knows what else
Perhaps he found an old shop
and had an impulse
or perhaps a woman liked them

I don't think they were valuable
but perhaps she was
My father showed me a tire iron
he kept under his car seat
"In case her boyfriend catches up with me"
~~

If You Find It, Find Me

You would look in the mirror
searching for something there
Do you still look?

I was always ready
for the sound of shattering glass
ready to take the pieces from your hand
ready to drag you away to the bed
and hold you, until you could look
into a mirror once more

I never knew what you looked for
when you looked in the mirror
I never asked and you never said
I was glad that you never found it

Did you ever find it
If you ever find it, promise me
that you will find me

~~



Almost Whole

I glance sideways
into a store window
and a girl looks back

So impossibly young
almost whole
but for that thing
you only mentioned once
and never spoke of again

It was you
so impossibly young
looking back at my old face
and I wanted to cover it

but as I raised my hands
I realized it was important
for you to know that you are looking
at an old man

I made it
If this is you at that age
I made it
and you can too

~~

Your Light

You were bright, brilliant
a light so intense
that beside you I was a shadow
only
You flew out into the night
and I only moved, because you moved
a shadow following its light

It took me years
to become more than just a shadow
at first I felt warmth
and then a spark that lit a small fire
so that now I have my own light
and you
It was you who made me more than a shadow
~~

Living Dangerously

I need to piss
but this poem needs to come
I need to write it down now
and if I don't
it will be gone

And so I cross my legs
and type quickly
and hope
But the thing sticks
there's a line that won't come
and now I've pissed myself
a little
~~

I Did Not Dream of You

No sooner my head hits the pillow
than two hours are gone
and I did not dream of you

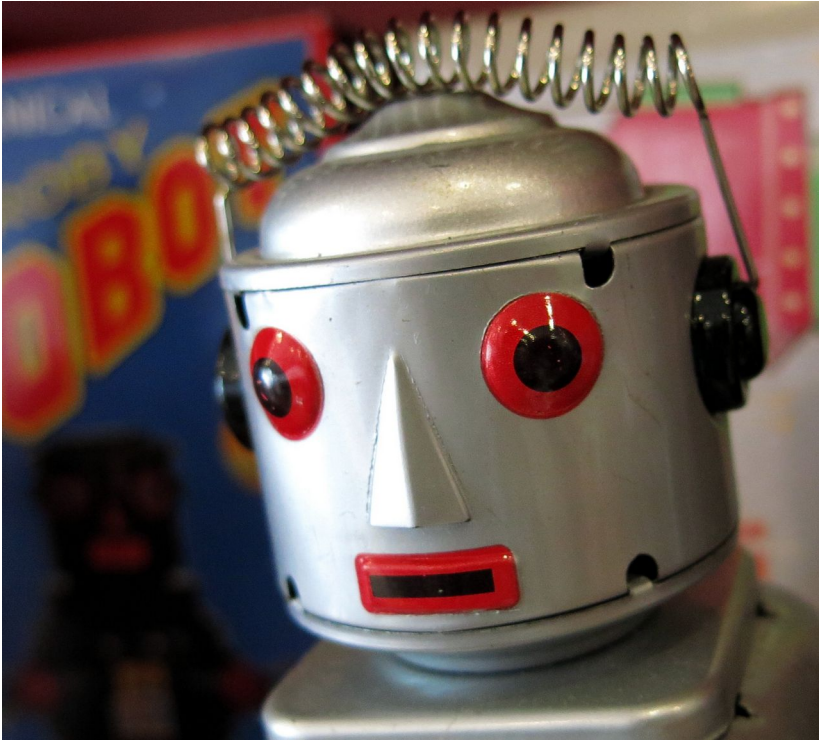
Now, awake once more
my first thought is of a nap

Three hours of sleep lost
as my brain narrated my book

not the next chapter
but events too many years off
to be of use

and still, I did not dream of you

~~



A Better Life

I have no words to give you
no comfort for a sad and hurtful life
no inspiration
to rise and face a new day
joyous and smiling

I have never believed the promise
from a man killed far away in a desert
of a place beyond death
A promise so much better than life
that his priests must outlaw suicide

I have only the long years
that I have risen from bed
and gone through my life
and the conviction that the alternative
is nothing

And yet, no matter how often
I wished I had never been born
I eventually took back that wish
in the small smiles of my life
the kindness and loving of others

~~

My Back Yard Sauna

It has warmed
and the walk to the sauna
through my back yard
was brighter than usual

I look up
into a clear sky
at a full moon, high above
with icy crystals as you get
only in this season
diffusing the light
but not reducing it

Sweat running from me
I walk back toward the house
and forget all about the moon
as I try not to slip
as I lean on a cane
and carry my robe in the other arm
~~

Sex Every Night

I am old
and I take medicine
that robs me of a hardon
robs me of a desire
for sex
and yet
if I could
I would have sex every night

Instead I must settle
for brief hugs
and the memory of sex
the memory of that connection
with another
Even without desire
If I could
I would have sex every night

I see so many
and hear of so many more
who do not want sex every night
and I think
oh fools
with such a choice
with the ability to choose
to deny that urge
toward connection
~~

Laughter

Those faraway days of childhood
where we laughed and laughed
and could not stop

When did we stop

Was it school, and the desire to fit in
to move without notice through the days

Or when we got a job
and laughter might have meant a broken leg
or death

Or that other kind of job
in an office with air conditioning
where perfume is banned
small talk is banned
and laughing is certainly banned

Was it when we had children

No, that is where we began to learn
how to laugh again

To laugh until we feel
like we are going to throw up
and it's not because of the booze

~~



Outside Her Door

I stood outside her door
I did not open it
I didn't know how
my hand did not work
it did not move to the knob
my legs did not work
they did not move forward
my head did not work
it leaned upon her door
and then my hand touched her door
and I stayed like that
for hours

~~

My Life With Meds

In twenty minutes
I can eat
In twenty minutes
I will stretch my hand forward
to grasp the dark chocolate bar
on my desk
and I will eat
a single piece
as slowly as I can
trying to make it last
as long as a chocolate bar
that I ate as a child
~~

Our Imaginary Band

In our imaginary band
I played the guitar
and drums
and the piano
All those instruments
predictable, comfortable

But you were the singer
with a voice unlike anything else
you were original
uncomfortable, unpredictable
strange
and you were what made the band
~~

Taut

You, face down on the bed
I would put my hand on your back
and try to grip your skin
I failed
~~



Ennui

I could go to her
it's only 8:30
and she will be awake
she stays up late
and I could go to her
but I do not
I cannot get out
of my chair
I cannot make myself
go to her
she would welcome me
but I cannot go

~~

Easter Eggs on Youtube

Someone has helpfully listed
221 Easter eggs
in a movie

I'm sure that is a grand
and generous thing to do
but what is an Easter egg

I watched the movie
and saw none
nor even un-decorated eggs
~~

Australia

Warning
the following
may have images
of persons who have died
~~



My Ceremony

Tea
at one point in my life
tea was very important
Nice pots
nice cups
and many women who visited
to have a bit of tea

I have seen the Japanese ceremony
but that was not mine
I would boil the water
heat the pot
"What type would you like?"
Leaves into the pot
and a talk while it brewed
~~

Her Pony Tail

She wore a pony tail
I had forgotten
until I saw the very one
on the street today

Blond and bouncing
with a quick step

In my memory
her hair is always loose
the way she wore it to bed

I loved her more than I knew
and she loved me more
than she should have, still

It was good to see the ponytail
one more time

~~

Shallow Man

Have I ever had a broken heart?
Probably not, I am a shallow man

I have been sad
that she left me, but around the corner
was another girl

I never looked for them
but they found me

Perhaps once I was a little broken
waiting for her to come back
but she never did
and there was another girl in my bed

No, I am a shallow man
and will never be able to write that poem
about having a broken heart
Still, I can do my best
~~

Cobwebs Again

Cobwebs
I have lived in this house
long enough
that the cobwebs have been swept
forty times at least
and I look up to see them

once more and I think
It's not so bad
to have been here with you
for long enough
to see the cobwebs once more
~~



She Was Hard

The clothing she wore was hard
stiff, canvas and leather
She was hard
and she tolerated no shit from me
or from anyone else

I don't think she felt right
wearing something soft
She once told me
soft clothes felt like cockroaches
running over her body

When she took off her clothes
it was like a lobster
taking off it's carapace
a cactus shedding its spines
inside was sweet, and soft, and juicy
~~

Comments Are On

Oh the brilliance of
a talentless man
the critic
the commentator
the guy with the keyboard
when the replies are on

Such cynical poetry
such biting blurbs
such a waste of time
when I accidentally
read them

Not, of course
on my work

~~

The Silence

Have you been silent today
have you made yourself comfortable
and listened to the silence around you
today

Are you blocked
no ideas
no creativity

Have you listened to yourself
when you have nothing to say
nothing to listen to
nothing but silence
What arises

~~

Falling Snow

Outside, great slabs of snow
are pounding into the eavestroughs
and slamming past
breaking up as they hit the drive

It must be getting warm
maybe the sun is out
and all is sliding
toward the edge

~~



When They Moved On

They came
and they left
and I remained

They moved on
saying goodbye
and I remained

It never occurred
that I would go
it was important
that I remain

There was a reason
a good one
I'm sure

But I can't think of it
still I remained
~~

Darkroom Magic

You never forget the colour
of that red safe-light in the darkroom
especially if your model
is watching her image come up
on the paper
for the very first time

That intake of breath
as she slowly forms from nothing
that glance toward you
some sort of magician
who is making this happen
all under the red safe light
in the dark room

~~

Simply Start

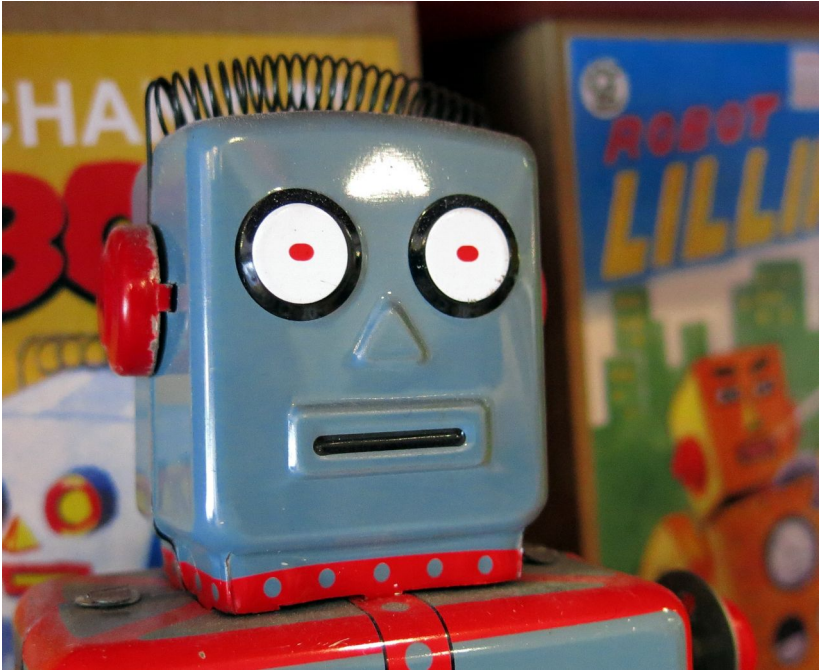
Please don't tell me
what I can't do
I don't want to hear it
I have simply started
and managed all sorts of things
that I cannot do

If you should feel compelled
to tell me it can't be done
or if it can, not by me
Please don't feel slighted
if I seem not to hear you
I didn't hear you

~~

I'll Live

As I move, there's a pain in my back
"that" part of my back
and I say out loud
"I'll live"
Not, "I'll live" but
"I'll live"
Funny how language fails us
sometimes
~~



I Don't Watch Sport

Like I don't watch sport
although I played
I never read poetry
beyond what I had to
in English classes
and some places else

Poetry never came to me
never ambushed me
never demanded to be let out
never consumed me whole
I write a bit

~~

And There You Are

Half asleep
looking toward yet another nap
trying to read Naruda
drifting off

And there you are
a sort of Otto Dix painting
of you when you were young
hell, when I was young
when we were young

That look you would give me
that told me I'd screwed up
the one I never figured out
the one that drove us apart

Is that it? You ask
is that all you have for me
At this stage, anything is more
than what I had three years ago

and surely it's more
than what I had for you
An Otto Dix painting ago

~~

Already Fragile

She would slip lithely
out of my arms
and out of bed
with the full bloom of youth
She stood up like a flower opening

And I, anything but lithe
already the careful movements
of those who know they are fragile
I would follow, as best I could
while she raced on ahead to the day
~~

Your Own Research

What if you really were
as knowing as the experts
what if you actually knew
as much as there was to know

What if you were the internet
all that crammed into your head
Imagine what you could tell
Imagine what you could know
Except

Except for the bullshit
that is always there
You would know that too
you would have to know that

How would you separate it
the bullshit from what is real

The internet is vast,
full of things, but
like a toilet and your car fob
it's hard to separate what's useful
from what is just shit

~~



Twenty Five Dollars

That twenty five dollar car
that had switches, levers and slides
which, if you were clever
would give you some heat
inside the car on a cold winter day

Twenty five dollars
and as my mother drove us
the eight miles to school
my sister would slide down
under the window and hide

Me, I never really noticed the car
except for its English eccentricities
of airflow and warmth
of scraping the outside of the windscreen
and the inside as well

~~

Before You Know It

Long cold rain
melting the snow
and the sump pump is working
doing its illegal job

of pumping the water
out of the basement
and into the drains

Things grow and are modified
laws change
and before you know it
you're illegal

~~

Exotic Wood

I would come to you
reeking of exotic wood
and you would complain
about the dust
that I would shed
as I shed my clothing

And reaching for you
you would object
to the red or black
or yellow stained fingers
and what they did to your shirt

And you would complain
that you didn't like the smell
and you would
you would
you would sigh
as my palms reached your breasts

And you would surrender
as exotic wood dust
and the smell
would cover us both

~~



They Let The Companies In

How swiftly we come to rely
on wires strung between poles
or glass, run underground
and carrying photons or electrons
or whatever it is
that brings the net to us

The original intent
was to allow communication
between fighting men
and the old ones safe
far behind the front lines
but they let the companies in

For years it was used in the university
to flash messages and information
here to there and back again
and no commercial use allowed
but they let the companies in

It will be so much better
private money is so much better
they can do it for less
and now I play the music
that lives on my hard drive

Nothing works
but thank god I own stock
in the companies that run the net
for they are making money
and so, so am I

~~

Not Good Enough

How many years did he hear
only his faults, never a good word
He tried his best
he worked as hard as any man
but never enough, never enough

And so here he sits
in this hut in the woods
alone for years
never another voice to hear

And never does he hear
"Not good enough
You pathetic man, not good enough"

~~

Dirt Farmers

Those who first came to this land
between the lakes
The first Europeans came
and cut the trees
burned the grass
and discovered sand

Dirt farmers they called them
the sand blew away
to reveal more sand
and a generation
my grandfather's all
planted trees against the wind

and the sand settled
the soil slowly grew again
until the tractors came
industrial farming, so very efficient
and cut the windbreaks
so the tractors could turn
monsters, wider than a roadway

and the sand moves again

~~



Oh Canada

Oh Canada
the swamps, the bogs
the dark bush of cedar and spruce
the blinding mosquito
the blackfly crawling
into every nook and cranny
raw, red, bloody skin
by the end of the day

Oh Canada
it's a wonder
any good Englishman
any bon Frenchman
ever entered your lands
If not for understanding
of what was there in England
in France, to be left behind
~~

Only a Woman

What keeps a man in the bush
or on the rigs
It's a woman, has to be
if he's there for the drugs
he don't live long

The fishing tug that breaks the ice
and charges out the harbour
It's got to be a woman
The booze may warm him up
but too much and he's over
into the freezing water
sliding under the ice

Only a woman will keep a man
out where death is close
in the cold, the wet
the lonely days and nights
Only a woman
or the hope for one
~~

Man of Few Letters

I am flipping through old copies of Brick
a literary magazine I found
in a thrift store, three copies
Curiously, all are winter
Perhaps the original owner liked
the summer issues
or maybe never bought them
preferring instead to read only in winter

As I flipped past the interviews
and the published letters of the famous
it occurred to me
that I had no correspondence with the smart
the lettered, or the rich
Only a shoe box full of letters
from old girlfriends, and not even my half
of the conversation
How was I to know I was supposed to save copies
~~

There Must Be A Story

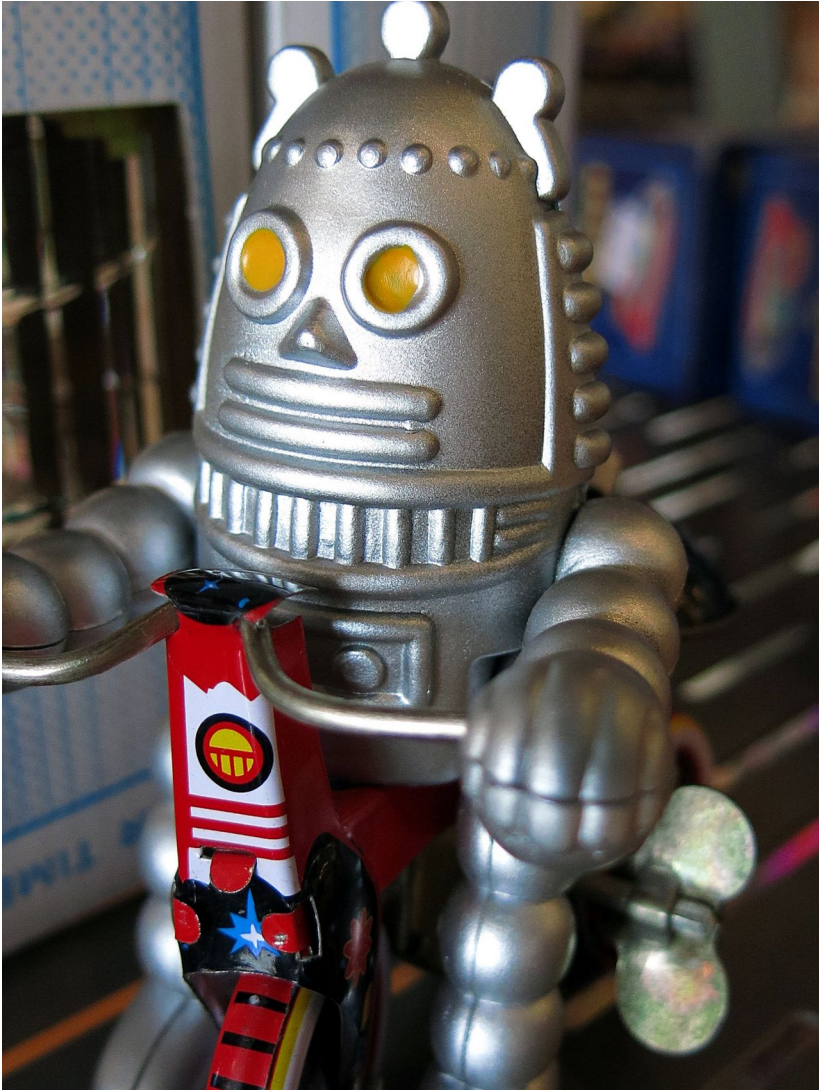
An old photo of a woman
on a hill
camping equipment laid out
ready to stuff into a pack

or just pulled out
ready to be assembled

Her face is toward the camera
but being backlit
you can't make out her face

Still, when you look at it
you have the feeling that
there must be a story there

~~



Children on a Road Trip

The mixed pleasure
of children on a road trip
The good, mostly, is in the memory
the trip often complainy and whiny

But there is a photograph
taken in a put-together village
in a relocated church

a large window
my daughter leaning back
in an antique pew
looking dreamily out
her blond hair floating
around her shoulders

~~

Did I Really Do That

At a certain age
at a certain weight of memory
a certain distance
"I did that" becomes fluid
Did I really do that
or was it my friend
or a story I read somewhere
perhaps a television show
None of it really matters
if you dredge it out of your mind
it was in your mind
and part of you, therefore true
Only I don't really believe that
in fact
anything dredged from my mind
is suspect, to my mind
But perhaps there is a story there
somewhere in the muddled past
or in the dreams half remembered
A story to explain that thing
that happened today
to make her walk out
or make her stay away
I really can't say which

~~

Family Thoughts

He had a bad eye
my stepfather
and an enlarged heart
as well as a fondness
for the booze
like so many others
in my family

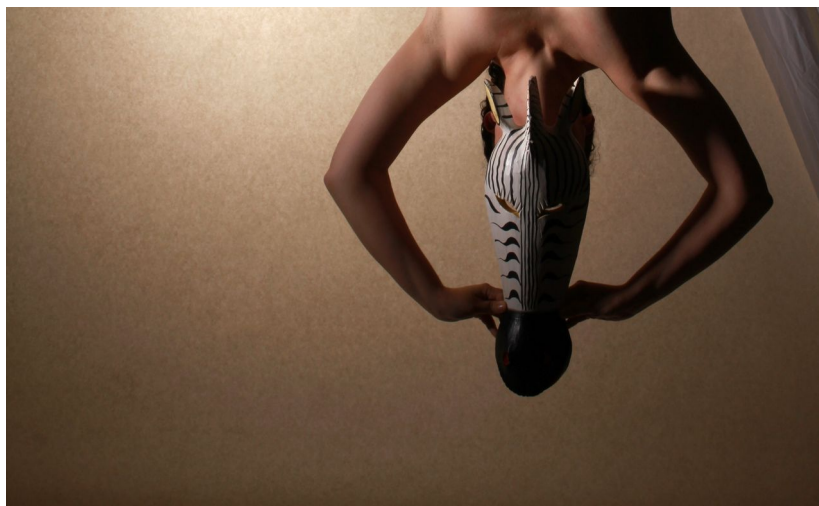
Gone now
with all the rest
mother, grandmothers

And soon I will be gone too
with my fondness
for booze
for women
for writing
for so much more
that filled up my days
and the nights too
~~

Advice

Strike while the iron is hot
Make hay while the sun shines
Seize the day
If it flows, let it flow

~~



Save Me, Don't Save Me

Please remember
that none of my writing
well, almost none of my writing
is on paper

Once there is a blip
in the electricity
or a plug is kicked out
of some hard drive or other
out there in the cloud
it's all gone

Unless you have saved it locally
maybe on your e-reader
or your backup disk

Feel free to print it out
on actual paper
and store it in a vault
or hide it in a library

Then someone half a thousand years
from now
might discover it and say
"This is the crap they wrote then"
At which time, perhaps
another PhD might be awarded

~~

What's On Your Mind

What's on your mind?
stares back at me constantly
like a Sunday school teacher
wanting you to tell the story
of some bible dude and a whale

Yes, I write on Facebook
which waits for me patiently
but with an accusing look
arms crossed
foot tapping

What's on my mind?
often not a damned thing
deal with it

~~

Look At The Sky

A large cardboard box
cut off the flaps
cut an arch in one side
cut a square hole in the bottom

Now go outside
lie down on the grass
and put the box over your neck
Now look at the sky

~~

Chips and Chocolate Bars

She drove for two days
eating chips and chocolate bars
pissing on the car seat
stopping only for gas

He was a long way away
and she needed to get to him
and so she drove
no need for drugs to keep going

Pure, blind, rage kept her awake
he would be gone soon
and she had to be there
or he would be gone

~~



The Invitation

You want to come for dinner
she asked
Sure, always up for a meal
I said
And so I arrived at her place
a bit ahead of time
I knocked and she called me in
She wasn't in the living room
or the kitchen
I could hear the shower running
And so I sat to wait
Come on in, she called
and I went to the bathroom
the door was open
and so I went in
she was there in the shower
she swept the curtain back
Join me

~~

February Sun

The geese wing over in a V
honking
As if they've just returned
from their migration

It's mid February
the lazy sods have been nowhere
and a couple of them land
on the parking garage roof
honking down on the cars
Rolling through the intersection
too loudly to hear the birds

Suddenly the sun
but it doesn't mean spring
the sun is usually behind cloud
and when the cloud isn't there
we notice the sun

Which is rising into cloud
so that only those who curse it
driving up the hill to work
at the university
and those who sleep on the streets
and me
will see the sun today

Oh, and the fake migratory birds
who stay here all winter
because they fight the pigeons
for the scraps of the city

~~

My Budo Organization

Over forty years
I've dedicated to it
and now nobody cares
or rather most nobody cares
and those who want it
want nothing that I want

Over forty years
and its time to hang it up
who does anything
for forty years?
Only those who love it
and I don't love it
any more

Time to say
they split on amicable terms
none of this viciousness
you sometimes see
But he left for some reason
I wonder
I wonder

Oh I'll keep doing what I love
after all, what kept me so long
was a love for what we did
I'm just not into her any more
It's not you, it's me
You've changed too much
and I don't want to play that game
~~



Dead Man's Books

I read a book I bought
from a thrift store
and in it a hair
Certainly not mine
Not long enough
for the family
and so it must be the hair
of whoever read the book

Grey, thin, I wonder
was he, was she
grey and thin at the end
barely able to read
without glasses, strong light
and a magnifier
Or were the books
just in the way
piled on tables and shelves

Swept into boxes
and donated
so that I could buy one
and reading it
discover a shortish grey hair

~~

The Poet

She's young
oh lord she's young
I've got t-shirts older than her
goes the old saw
(Old Saw: dull, old, useless)

She's in emotional agony
this kid
Her life is over
already
and I wonder if this star
will stay in the firmament

or, we hope
she grows up a bit
and finds a nice boy
to settle down with
instead of the jerks
she's been using
for all that poetry
~~

Better Than Alone

She never liked me much
that girl who thought me slow
but I was better than being alone
so she called on me

I answered and out we'd go
to the movies, or to dinner
and always end up at the bar
she would drink until I was smart

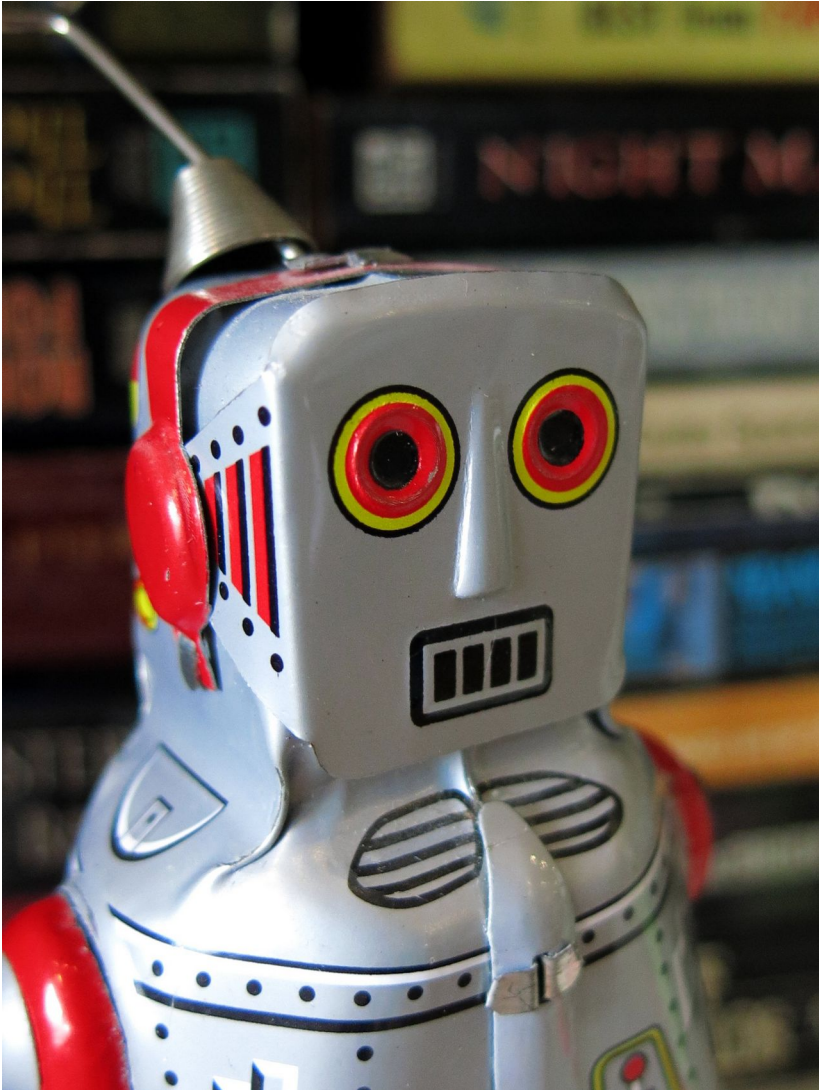
Then home to her place
never to mine
where she would bed me and in the morning
feed me and kindly push me out the door

I would wander home, happy
Happy and fed
and there I'd fall into my bed
and sleep until she called

~~

No White People

In Canada for the first hundred years
there were no people
only vast plains
and dark woods
Mighty rivers
and swamp
But no people
and such as were
wrote poetry that rhymed
making sure that all who read
knew that in Canada, for a hundred years...
~~



A Terrible War

All who ever lived
died just before a terrible war
such is the plight of all of us
to live during a time of war
and to die, missing the next one

How many years of peace
would there have to be
for a man to live not knowing war
and then die just before
Never were there enough years
~~

Bush Woman

Her long braids
were tinted with red at the ends
as she sat and worked
back bent over the knife
and the rabbit skin taken
not a nick to be seen
She laid it aside
to be stretched and dried
and then she flensed no more
but butchered the flesh
and left the bones for the fox
A city girl, once, with tinted hair
she did what she must
and her hair was tinted with blood

~~

Raindrop

That
single drop of rain
that I chose, out of a flood
that single drop
I chose to capture on my finger

and I turned to you
and I held out my finger
and you opened your mouth
and you gave me your tongue
to receive that drop

That single drop of rain
that I had selected for you

~~

Satori

I think of life
of that impossible knowledge I felt
that all things, me, the farthest stars
are certainly the same
certainly one

And then I feel my foot
sharp pains in the sole
On the top of my toes
and I come back to myself

Always and forever
back to the stubbed toe
the burned finger
the lost love

Yet I know
for certain I know
that I will return to the all
the impossible joy
that is the universe at play

~~



Promise of Spring

The door thrown open
a warm day in winter
the sun burning the snow
and I smell it

I smell that snow
sharp, it smells like a knife
newly put to a steel

All my life
I have loved that smell
the snow being burned
by a returning sun
and that sharp knife

~~

Toward the Cottage

For decades I have watched
that small house
with its small barn
return to the earth

A defiant separation
from the ground that was worked
by whoever built it
and then, abandoned

to a swayback roof
broken windows
birds nests
and rotting walls

The man who built it
the woman who built it
are long in the ground themselves
as is fit and right

And I watch that small house
Year on year
and think of the earth beneath

~~

If Only For Her

I look into the mirror
and would look away
if it were not for her

I am old, so be it
but if only for her
I see how old I am
the wrinkled neck
the tired eyes

Hell the hair on my ears
As for me, I don't care
I have lived long
and so I am old

I would look away
if it were not for her

~~

Those Who Wish

Those who wish fame
those who wish power
or titles, ever so grand

Those who wish to win games
thinking that to win means
that you are better
in anything other than a moment

are welcome to their lives
as long as they live them
far from me

~~



Why He Fought

What is all that fighting?
Why do that
when you say you want peace?

Oh my child
there are those who study fighting
and those who use fighting
to discover peace

I will not say which your father is
but I ask you to look closely
see clearly and for yourself

~~

Mushin

The years have fled
long years where I studied
in order to forget
in order to become stupid

I cannot quote
chapter and verse
but I can tell you
what the books mean

I have studied kata
for decades now
in order to forget kata
something I have done

All that I have read
all that I have studied
all gone now
leaving only an empty head
~~

All You Have Is Your Word

If a man say he will
and does not
He is not worth trust

If a man listens to one
and not to the other
He is not worth respect

To that man, you owe nothing
you need not consider his words
but consider instead, the source
~~

Your Ghost

Nowhere in this blasted town
can I get away from you

No bench in the park
no stool in a bar
Nowhere we have been
noplac you've been seen

The place is not that big
and I have been here far too long
I cannot escape your ghost
I cannot forgive your ghost

Ever at the front of my mind
and I've no place to go
that doesn't remind me of you
~~



A Would-be Boss

Poor man
who thinks he can bid me

Do this
or that will happen

It is unfortunate
that my first art was Aikido

No target
No target
~~

South Ontario Winter

They say it is a mild winter
no skating on the canal
in Ottawa

But here in south Ontario
we may not have snow
it may have melted some

but when it rains
and freezes
well, that's an Ontario winter
~~

Sing Me A Song

Oh poet
sing me a song of her
that delicate face
those ears, so perfect
the eyes I fall into

The scented skin
the arms that wrap me
in love each night

Sing me a song
of all the love in the world
sing me a song
of her

~~

Her Apartment

I entered her apartment
with my own key
and went to her fridge
helping myself to an apple

I sat on her couch
and picked up the book
I had been reading the day before
Took a bite of the apple

After a page or two
I looked at my watch
wondering where she was
Delayed no doubt

I looked around the place
took a deep breath
and thanked whatever gods
had sent her to me
~~



A Perfect Image

A long hike that day
the pack chafing my shoulders
my legs, young as they were
ached with the effort

Topping the hill
stopping to catch my breath
I looked to a field
and there, a curious cow
come to the fence to say hello

and I moved to her
and rubbed her wet nose
so she could lick the salt sweat
We understood each other well

~~

City Geese

A honk from a goose
and I look to see it
I look on the ground
expecting perhaps
to see it in the river

but these are city geese
and finally I looked up
to see, perched like pigeons
Geese looking down
calling us groundlings
~~

How Useful

How very useful it would be
for these tough young men
who will live forever
fighting whoever dares
to challenge them

How useful to be helpless
to have someone gentle
put their socks on for them
to lead them into the shower
and stand by them

How useful for them
it would be to understand
just what love is
what kindness is
perhaps they would learn to give
~~

Her Ritual

The daily ritual
of making coffee
the grounds
the water
the filter
and the sound
ever the sound
as the smell slowly
percolates
through the kitchen

~~



On The Road Nowhere

Sitting in a diner with an empty coffee
the cup cold on the counter

No place to go, nothing to do
except to sit here and wait for tomorrow
Watching the car lights grow bright
and disappear behind me

Going who knows where
Going I don't care

No place where I will go
except maybe if I pass tomorrow
on my way to the next all night diner

~~

Time Lost

Once more, the little death
of washing the dishes
Every day, without fail
there are dirty dishes
and I am the one who washes

The time spent doing dishes
still counts against my life
I wish it did not
I would gladly do dishes
if it was outside time
~~

That Questionnaire

Here is that questionnaire
for the study I said yes to
Mostly because the doctor
who radiates my bones
asked me to
and how smart is it
to say no
to the man with the radiation

And here that question
how many hours a day
do you sit
I write, but that's not there
I write
and so over ten hours a day
I sit, guiltily
knowing I'm dying faster
~~

Wishing Well

I saw a man
look into the wishing well
and walk away
He did not throw in a coin
he did not make a wish

I walked to him
as he stood smiling at the woods
and asked him why

I have no need of wishes
my life is my life, no change
I will die when it is time, no change
I have a family who loves me, no change
and a wish is cheap, others can wish for themselves

~~



Morning Oatmeal

It is not often
that I have eaten my oatmeal alone
I will sometimes eat it first
while my companion sleeps
but rarely alone
My mother fed me oatmeal
and her mother before her
and so I ate my oatmeal
under watchful eyes

There were times
after I left my mother
that I ate oatmeal alone
but more often than not
there was someone with me
at the table
room mates and girl friends
Later wives would make it for me
and we would eat it together
~~

A Few Moments

It doesn't take long
a few moments only
to get something down

but those few moments
are hen's teeth
rocking horse droppings
a month of Sundays

And I fight for each small moment
where I can sit quiet
and get it down

~~

Elephant Eyes

Those old sad eyes
as they stood
on the bare ground
scrubbed clean of grass
simply by the weight of her walking
from side to side
in the fence

I stood looking at her
and she looked back
not interested, simply something
for that eye to rest upon
She raised her trunk
but stopped, let it drop
and then turned away

~~

The Contest

As I woke during the night
and this morning
I heard nothing
no noise from the cat

Was he finally dead
after twenty years
Did I win the contest

But no
he saw it was morning
and he yelled at us
to be fed
~~



Need to Create

Strange
that sometimes
when I am alone
I feel free, peaceful
at one with my life

But other times
there is an unrest
an un-quiet in me
as if I am bored

No, not bored
but there is something
something undone

~~

It Brought Me Comfort

In Sixty years
(don't count the first six
when I knew nothing at all)
I have not believed in God
Yet when I was dying
(four years ago)
I found a silver Haida cross
that I have hanging by my desk

It tickled me, I've never seen one
The cross has Raven
(and Raven, I believe in)
But looking at it
brought me comfort
Not because I wish for heaven
but because I imagine a Haida carver
("M" it is)
working on it

~~

Home With Brenda

We tried a new restaurant
for lunch
It had just opened
for the day
and the place was filled
with smoke

We ordered out
and went home
with enough from two meals
for four

I am content
looking at my food baby
and thinking of a sauna
some time soon

~~

High School Poor

A sign in the window
"please be respectful
and not bring pizza
into this restaurant"

We thought of high school
and kids too poor
but a slice of pizza
isn't much money

I had a summer job
it wasn't nice
but I could buy fries
at the dairy bar

Brenda had a bag lunch
not enough for fries
but we survived
and thought of the pizza kids
~~



Another Stupid Dream

God another stupid dream
last night on top of sleep
disturbed and fitful

All the cliches
a school
where I couldn't find the room
a bathroom
where I couldn't find the pissoir

a phone
screwing up big time
and I can't fix it
and my daughter says hello
and I woke up

~~

Kissing Now

Once, she taught me to kiss
but it didn't take
I was never good at it

Until now, when it's too late
I never liked it much
didn't want to bother

But now I can't fuck
sorry, can't make love
Kissing isn't so bad

I'm still bad at it
but what the hell
it's the thought that counts

~~

Her Reason to Stay

Your poetry is shit
she said
Did you read that last one
it was for you
You're kidding, that's me
that's what you think of me

On and on it would go
but one thing saved it
kept me with her
kept her with me too

I asked her once
If you don't like what I write
why are you here
And she smiled
patted my cheek
and said
You're good in bed
~~

Counting the Bottles

Baby do you count the bottles
in my trash
then you know I drink a lot
And yet you complain

Do I beat you when I'm drunk
Do I miss my job
Do I keep money from you
And yet you complain

I'm having trouble with life
and the booze let's me go on
If you look closely you'll see it
If you bothered to look
instead of counting bottles

~~



You Were Gone

One last time
I wrote one last line
and slipped it under your door
in the hope that you would read it
and come back to me

But it was no longer your door
You were gone
beyond my reach
beyond my poor poems
beyond my life

I do not regret
that note slipped under a door
it was from my heart
and because of that
my heart was a bit lighter

~~

The Country Door

She never ever, not once
came in the front door
she always came in the side

The front door
is for carrying in
or carrying out
and you ain't going to do either
to me, my boy

She had a key to the back
and I'm not sure even I had a key
to the front

~~

I Notice the Wind

The wind has come again
howling down between
the neighbour's and mine

Lifting the vinyl roofs
making a jarring rattle
as they flex and resist

The wind is compressed
and chills me to the bone
as I walk back from the sauna
carrying my robe
covered in sweat

~~

Night Vision Goggles

I want one of those things
that soldiers put on their eyes

because I can't believe
I can see all of you

What I see is perfect
what I see is beautiful
but what if there's more

What if there's something
that I can't see

~~



Taught By Leaves

What I thought was still
was slowly moving
this I discovered
as two leaves, touching
floated toward the outlet

I watched
and as they approached
the water grew faster
a little rough
and the leaves separated
the first moved away
the second followed
desperately

I ran across the road
where the outlet stilled once more
and there I saw the two leaves
touching once again

~~

Talking In Your Sleep

Late, late at night
I would listen
and it broke my heart

It broke again
when I understood
there was nothing I could do

~~

How to be Enlightened

One says
nothing of animals
another says
a paleolithic diet

One says
starve for forty days
another says
chemicals set you free

One says the sutras
are the only path
another says blind faith
will bring you to it

And yet that place
that they all desire
came to me on a bus
as it went around a corner

I was thinking of nothing
looking at the sun
shining on the dirty rim
of the window

Nothing more
and everything, everything
shot through me
and I spread out
into the vast universe

The bus rolled on
~~



I live in a city

Crossing bells
Train horns
Ambulance
Fire trucks
Police
all wailing sirens

And the waterfall
that is made of cars
running down the road
past the strip bar

And yet, as I walk
I can hear a wren sing
his lovely piping tune

Here I am
This is mine
Come mate with me

Are we any different
~~

Small Things

I hear a garbage bin
rolling up the drive

perhaps the neighbour
has brought mine too
back from the road

I will remember
to thank him

~~

Thank you

Is such a small thing
costing nothing
can you not give it?

You tell me
there is no obligation
to thank anyone
for doing their job

Is there not?

Two words
to ease someone's day
and you cannot say them

Good Bye

are two words as well

~~

I Carry That Image With Me

Tokyo in the rain
I hated that trip
hated the lie
that got me there
hated the pain
in my knees

But Tokyo at night
in the rain
the lights reflecting
off of the street
One thing
one thing
~~



A Small Request

Feeling like total shit
clearing the driveway
with a snowthrower
nice heavy snow
packed by many cars
and then a quick lunch
collapsing into a nap
then dishes and dinner

I'm supposed to be creative?
I'm supposed to grind wood?
I'm supposed to sew belts?
I'm supposed to practise jodo
I'm supposed to
For fucks sake, I'm dying
pick three of these
and give me two hours
awake, quiet, let me write

~~



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