

# Happy Enough



*Cheese, pickle and a biscuit*

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## Table of Contents

A Good Run.....	1
Forgot the Bread.....	2
When You Were Little.....	4
I Love You Very Much.....	5
Will You Support Me.....	6
It Comforts Me.....	7
When You Look at Me.....	8
Bukowski.....	9
After so Many Years.....	10
You Wrote Me a Letter.....	11
I Think This is the Part.....	12
Happy Enough.....	13
Where is the Sympathy.....	14
What the hell is that?.....	15
There He Is.....	16
Give Me Back my Heart.....	18
Me First.....	19
My Days Trickle By.....	20
Ghost Cat.....	21
Lovely Brown Girl.....	24
More Stories on NHK.....	25
Random Pains.....	26
You Move Your Knees.....	27
Christ, Bukowski.....	28
I Am Ashamed.....	29
The Work.....	31
My Fresh Young Thing.....	32
We Move Into Each Other.....	33
A Cold Freedom.....	34
I Want To Write A Simple Thing.....	35
To Notes on Paper.....	36
When I Think Of The Kindness.....	37

You Are The Rain.....	38
Supposed To Be.....	39
In My Hour Of Solitude.....	40
The Summer Drifts.....	42
She Walked in From the Bush.....	44
The Floor Creaks.....	46
So Little Material.....	47
Etiquette.....	48
I am Done.....	49
The End of a Notebook.....	50
It's Too Much for Me.....	51
Poet Seeks Mistress.....	52
9 to 5 Grind.....	53
Pablo Neruda.....	54
BeeOwowow.....	56
Home Harbour.....	57
I Had To Watch.....	58
I See You.....	60
A Grain of Sand.....	61
Yoin.....	62
Into the Great Desert.....	63
My Dearest Darling Love.....	64
We Walked Together.....	65
I Came to you Drunk.....	66
Deepest Night.....	67
At 23.....	69
Nobody has Fun Any More.....	70
Summer Vegetables.....	71
No More Dancing.....	72
Tree Frogs.....	73
One Day.....	74
Do You Wish.....	75
Old Cat.....	76
At my Desk.....	77

You Pulled My Beard.....	78
Good Luck to You.....	80
When I am Angry.....	81
My Thoughts are Released.....	82
Will You Pay that Price.....	83
To Write of You.....	84
Are We Tired Yet.....	85
How Much Time.....	86
Diesel and Water.....	87
Don't Do That.....	88
Poor Boy Dreams of the City.....	89
What the Hell is an Ode.....	91
There will be Days.....	92
My Father was a Lightkeeper.....	93
Americans.....	94
Everything Disgusts Me.....	95
What Is It.....	97
I Gave Her a Kiss.....	98
It Is Raining in Chile.....	99
A Boy May Dream.....	100
The Bullring.....	101
Oh, Sorry.....	102
I Play at Being a Poet.....	103
Take Out the Garbage.....	104
Watching Your Nipples Grow Hard.....	105
Four Words.....	106
Oh my Children.....	108
Imagine.....	110
You Must Love Yourself.....	111
You Fall Asleep.....	112
Let Me Pretend For A While.....	113
I Loved You Deeply.....	114
Thinking of You.....	115
Of Course You Drop Them.....	116

Nice Sections.....118

# A Good Run

Waiting at a stoplight  
I realize how easy  
it is to slip into my past

Me  
The live in the moment fellow  
the man who can't remember  
what I had for breakfast  
even though  
I always have oatmeal

I suspect  
I am checking  
to see if I've had a full life  
If I've enjoyed it  
If it's been worth living

A few regrets  
that have been with me constantly  
but over all  
it's been a good run

~~

# Forgot the Bread

A snow bank slide  
an 8 year old's fall  
and my wrist was broken  
I sat through an hour of class  
because we had films  
(we didn't have a TV  
I could watch often)

I asked the kid behind  
not to kick my desk  
But, kids, he kicked tears  
into my eyes  
Eventually I was sent  
with the Principal  
to the hospital  
At a stop sign I said  
"I was in a traffic jam  
but I forgot the bread"  
to make him laugh,  
to be brave

At the hospital  
my mother X-rayed my wrist  
(horrible thing for me to do to her)  
and she winced as the doctor  
put his knee on my elbow  
to wrench the bones  
back into place

I haven't thought about that  
for many years  
and now I've told you

~~



# When You Were Little

When you were little  
I would reach for your hand  
half afraid  
you would flinch away  
from your distant father  
with his roaring moods  
and his distracted life  
But you always took my hand  
and squeezed life into my heart  
You looked up at me  
and smiled thank you  
and my heart swelled in my chest  
and I couldn't say thank you  
for fear of crying

Now I, in my turn,  
look up into your face  
as I take your offered hand  
steady, against an uncertain ground  
and you smile  
and you squeeze a little  
And I still cannot speak  
but I smile thank you  
~~

# I Love You Very Much

I love you very much  
my children  
but it is hot  
and you are hot  
and it is too hot  
to snuggle  
Get away from me  
~~

# Will You Support Me

Will you support me  
my love  
if I go away with you  
for I will have nothing  
I must leave it all behind  
If you want me  
you will have to keep me  
for I will have nothing to give you  
for I have nothing that is mine  
~~

# It Comforts Me

It comforts me  
to hear the creak  
of your footsteps  
in our old house

And when you go out  
I wait  
even asleep, I wait  
like a dog waits  
for the door to open  
and the master to return

I wait  
to hear the creak  
of your footstep  
upon our old floor  
~~

# When You Look at Me

When you look at me  
do you see the old man  
Sad eyes  
and wrinkled neck

Or do you see  
what I see  
when I look at you

Do you see  
the excitement of a new day  
the moist grass  
the fresh air  
the hint of a hot afternoon  
as the first rays of sunrise  
slip over the horizon  
~~

# Bukowski

Child of abuse  
child of alcoholism  
Did he try  
(I don't know, I haven't looked)  
did he try  
to break the cycle  
or did he find an audience  
~~

# After so Many Years

After so many years  
of being inside and outside  
each other  
after so many nights  
of abandon  
of feeling every inch  
of each other  
It's adorable  
that you close the lid  
of your laptop  
when you're masturbating  
and I walk in the room

~~

# You Wrote Me a Letter

You wrote me a letter  
telling me you love me  
that you need me forever  
that you want to be with me  
for a few hours maybe

I don't know  
exactly what was in the letter  
because in my cruelty  
I never read it  
Because you never sent it  
~~



# I Think This is the Part

I think this is the part  
where I tell you to be happy  
with yourself  
to accept what you are  
Your life up to now  
has made you what you are  
and you're perfect

I'm sorry  
I'm a terrible liar  
and if I were to say that  
it would sound false to you

Be whatever you figure  
you need to be right now  
if you need to be broken  
I'll make soothing sounds  
~~

# Happy Enough

I can't claim  
to make great art  
I never wanted to  
Great art  
requires great anguish  
Great pain  
Great darkness

I'm afraid my default setting  
is somewhere between happy  
and happy enough

So my poem is lightweight  
no great truth  
no great darkness  
to wrench you  
from further darkness

Let's face it  
I'm not 20 any more

~~

# Where is the Sympathy

Where is the sympathy  
for those who are happy  
where are the interventions  
for those who laugh

Not once  
have my friends  
ever come to my house  
bringing candles  
and incense  
and tried to talk me down  
from a satisfied feeling  
Never once  
have hey said to me  
"too much joy, dude"

~~

# What the hell is that?

When I think of you  
I don't think about your eyes  
or your lips  
or even your ass  
I seem to think about your teeth  
~~

## There He Is

There he is  
the famous poet  
sitting on his bed  
typewriter in his lap  
dirty, drooping white tank top  
covering sloppy muscles  
Thick glasses  
bald head  
Doesn't look like Hemingway at all  
~~



*Will you die of love?*

# Give Me Back my Heart

Give me back my heart  
it is such a little thing  
and you are leaving  
and I am sure I will die  
without it  
GIVE ME BACK MY HEART  
No, she is gone  
She has left

Umm

~~

# Me First

Who knows  
why young women  
choose older men

But I can tell you  
why older men  
choose young women

It is because they will die first  
it is because they are cowards  
and they do not want to live  
in a world without,  
a world empty of their love

~~



# My Days Trickle By

My days trickle by  
with the dates  
in my notebook  
The pages turn  
like a bad movie transition  
The days getting shorter  
the nights colder  
as I try to put a lifetime  
into a few months  
Winter will be here  
soon enough  
and my soul will freeze

~~

# Ghost Cat

When I wake at night  
always in the dark  
I trip on a rug  
and stumble a step or two  
Scaring a ghost cat  
who leaps across the room  
and stands sideways  
head tucked, looking at me  
"you tried to kick me!"

I see him there  
but never hear him  
Is it one of the cats  
that lived in this house  
or one of mine  
who followed me here

I can't remember all  
the cats in my life  
Certainly not my mother's cat  
that my father  
made her get rid of  
for fear it would sleep  
on my face and smother me

When we left  
for my Grandfather's place  
there were cats  
but most had no names  
I remember only Brain-Hole  
a kitten with an abscess  
Barn cats  
destined for a sack  
and the creek

When I left  
my Grandmother's house  
there was Tao  
pronounced Tay-Oh, with his bob tail  
chewed on by a lawnmower  
Pumpkin Pie James  
Johnathan Tigger  
and others that came and went  
dropped off in the country  
and hit by cars  
or bit by dogs

In my house were hand-offs  
from my mother  
Snowball (pronounced no-balls)  
Stanley (who was supposed to be Sterling)  
OB (for Orange Blossom)  
who decided we were his  
and Tiger  
brought home by my daughter

So many cats  
that may have followed me  
or cats that lived here  
in this hundred year old house  
(part of it)  
I'm surprised  
I don't see more of them  
late at night  
when I trip and stumble  
over a rug  
~~

# Lovely Brown Girl

Lovely brown girl  
walks by  
for my enjoyment  
unknowing performer  
for an old man's heart  
Skinny jeans and black top  
her phone  
an excuse for her lithe arms  
to weave stories  
into the air

~~

## More Stories on NHK

More stories on NHK  
of addicts in Dixieland  
and Japanese in Japan  
who are having a hard time  
dealing with the hardship  
of being alone in the pandemic

And here is this old man  
happy with coffee in his car  
thinking of building a new shed  
so he can escape from the house  
and write in solitude

I suppose that fish  
have a hard time understanding  
the problems of the squirrel  
who has fallen into the pond  
~~

# Random Pains

Random pains  
strike me in odd places  
Too sharp  
to be real  
My foot is not broken  
if I can move it about  
so I mostly ignore them

I would call them  
phantom limb pain  
if I didn't have all four  
of mine

~~

# You Move Your Knees

You move your knees  
away from mine  
on the edge of my sleep  
You roll over  
and put your butt  
on my thighs  
then, in your sleep, you fart

I move my arm  
from under the covers  
and press down the sheet  
in self defence

~~



# Christ, Bukowski

Christ, Bukowski  
how did you make it  
to 73  
before you died?  
I don't think  
my old man  
made it to 60

Was your bar  
further down the street?  
Did you get more exercise?  
~~

# I Am Ashamed

I am ashamed  
to read the poems  
of Pablo Neruda  
without knowing his biography

But then again  
If it is necessary  
to know the woman's name  
and the address of her bed  
and where her jealous knife was buried  
so that I can understand the poem,  
perhaps I should read nothing

It has been scores of years  
since I was in an English Class  
Is it important to know the grandfather's trade?  
So much society page nattering  
"And who are your people"  
"Ah, then you shall sit  
four down from the host"

Perhaps the poem  
should be allowed to speak  
and if I understand "woman"  
and "love"  
and "fear of the jealous knife"  
Perhaps that is enough

Oh, see what I have done there  
clever fellow I  
You will have to read his biography  
to know about the jealous knife  
~~

# The Work

The work  
should lead you to the man  
Read the poem  
See the painting  
and say  
"who did that?"

If you must read a book  
to appreciate the work  
it isn't speaking to you

And when  
you read that book  
Look often  
to the work  
~~

# My Fresh Young Thing

My fresh young thing  
which will you give me  
Flesh or Soul?

The delicious question  
that appears after "yes"  
and before "good morning"  
You will give me your skin  
and I will give you mine  
Will you ask for more?  
Will I give you more?

By the morning  
we will know  
~~

# We Move Into Each Other

We move into each other  
knowing it will end  
in tears  
Knowing it will end  
in death

Tears and death  
find us anyway  
but perhaps not soon  
if we sit alone in the darkness  
of our rooms

Can you look at a woman  
and know  
that in fifteen years  
you will lie in your bed  
afraid to sleep  
because you are afraid  
she will cut your throat  
while you dream?  
Is it worth the risk?

Yes  
it has always  
been worth that risk  
~~

# A Cold Freedom

A young man  
knows he will live forever  
and wants  
more than anything else  
his freedom

As death drifts closer  
riding his broom  
that sweeps up the dead  
the young man  
may learn that freedom  
is the silence of an empty room  
and the sick stink  
of an old man's bed

That young man  
may wish to cling to life,  
may wish to trade  
a little of that cold freedom  
for the warm arms of another

~~

# I Want To Write A Simple Thing

I want to write a simple thing  
a simple thing about you  
but the black ink  
dissolves the white paper  
and it all flows together  
the lines swirl  
crossing and recrossing  
spreading, fading  
into grey

~~



## To Notes on Paper

Wanting to say  
that the women of my life  
were like a Bach toccata  
or perhaps a modern work  
Glass or Reich  
each building on the other  
becoming richer  
by memory and anticipation

I lift my pen  
and throw it down in anger  
The women of my life  
were not lines in a tune  
created to delight my ear  
What monster of arrogance  
could reduce their lives  
to notes on paper

~~

# When I Think Of The Kindness

When I think of the kindness  
you showed me  
and how I repaid you

I am reduced to tears of regret  
for that boy who treated you so  
that boy, selfish and scared  
who is with me still,  
while you are not

~~

# You Are The Rain

You are the rain  
that falls upon the field  
and seeps into the ground  
inch by inch  
finding cracks in the rock  
working slowly through the clay  
until at last  
you find the salt  
buried ages ago  
by ancient oceans  
dried and dead

Little by little  
you dissolve that salt  
taking it once more  
to the living ocean

May I whisper in your ear  
I am the salt

~~

# Supposed To Be

This isn't how it's supposed to be  
You tearing into me  
Me tearing right back  
into you

It's supposed to be you and me  
against the world  
against anyone who dares  
to come against us  
to come between us  
We close ranks  
and have each other's back

At least that's what I thought  
when I was a kid  
and I looked at happy couples  
Are we not happy?

~~

# In My Hour Of Solitude

In my hour of solitude  
(exactly one hour  
each day)  
I drink coffee  
read poetry  
and listen to Jazz

For an hour a day  
I am a Beatnik  
From that age  
before my age

Snap your fingers  
~~



*The End of Summer*

# The Summer Drifts

The summer drifts  
to its close  
The nights are more cold  
than cool  
In the morning  
there is moisture  
on the windows

I am more and more  
filled with melancholy  
feeling cheated  
the sweat of summer  
ran down my back  
only once  
it seems  
and now the ground grows cold

And you my love  
as we turn to your season  
as you become active  
your thoughts coming alive  
like some reverse hibernation

I am afraid  
that your eyes will open  
and you will see a poor  
old man  
shivering on the beach  
and you will get up  
and walk across the sand  
beginning your travel  
to the mountains  
and snow

~~



# She Walked in From the Bush

She walked in from the bush  
naked  
unafraid  
and she entered the world  
of Man

These men  
drunk, mouths greasy with flesh  
hands grasping  
Surrounded her  
their breath stinking  
of alcohol and rotted meat  
They encircled her  
and they reached  
for her skin

She looked at them  
each with piggy red eyes  
sunken in their piggy faces  
Saw there was no love  
no mercy, no justice  
nothing but greed  
their only lust  
the lust to own, to possess

She saw them  
and spoke the secret word  
and through the open door  
unbarred in the haste  
to grab, to pinion, to get hold  
of their portion  
through the open door  
came the wolves

~~

# The Floor Creaks

The floor creaks  
and I turn  
a smile on my mouth  
words of greeting  
on my tongue  
but it is not you  
gone for so many years  
away from me  
away from this house  
it is not you  
it is only my heart  
reaching out to my love  
it is not you

~~

## So Little Material

Must every poem  
be a part  
of my biography?  
How unfair  
that I  
with my poor memory  
should be allowed  
so little material  
with which to work

~~

# Etiquette

You were my brother  
my best friend  
living in my house  
and I would have given you  
all that I had  
If you wanted  
to sleep with my wife  
I would have put new sheets  
on my bed

But you did not ask  
you slept with her  
behind my back  
in shadow, in dark corners  
and I in my innocence  
all unknowing, confused  
did not understand  
the holes in our house  
the absent spaces

You did not ask  
Never mind what she wanted  
she was her own  
she could decide for herself  
but you, my brother  
my best friend  
you did not ask

~~

# I am Done

I am done  
I am almost spent  
but you are welcome  
to what little I have left  
It can't be much  
but if it is worth something  
to you, it is yours

~~

# The End of a Notebook

For a poet  
to see the end  
of a notebook approaching,  
is a sad thing

Each final page  
a sort of death  
Often the words  
will become crabbed  
and the lines longer  
to put off the ending  
~~

# It's Too Much for Me

It's too much for me  
all these demands  
in modern poetry

You must pursue me  
and convince me  
that you love me

You must accept me  
as I am  
warts and all  
billygoat and silly coat

I, me, what I want  
and you, you do what I say  
How do... no wait  
the birth rate is declining

I get it now  
~~



# Poet Seeks Mistress

Established poet seeks mistress  
object: obsession and inspiration  
No previous experience necessary  
but ability to cause turmoil  
and strife an asset

Physical contact strictly optional  
but alternation of  
come-hither eyes  
and withering scorn  
will be expected

Apply in person  
this laundromat  
Tuesday mornings  
10-11:30am

~~

## 9 to 5 Grind

This morning  
the overcast sky  
echoes my grey mood  
Not so sad  
as Neruda, when he wrote  
the saddest lines  
but lacking in spark  
My lines forced  
the humour gone from the ink  
Today, writing is a job  
9 to 10 grind  
~~

# Pablo Neruda

Pablo Neruda  
she told me  
Was not so good for women  
She might be correct  
but neither was Picasso  
or a dozen other artists  
whose biographies are littered  
with sad, abandoned women

Neither, in fact, was I  
Not having the right  
to speak for others  
I will speak  
not in my defence,  
(I am, and was, an asshole)  
But I will speak  
for the women in my life

First and most important  
was the lack of chains  
Not even economically  
were they chained to me  
I was poor, with few prospects  
Not a great catch  
but each saw something

Some wanted to change me  
Some wanted to save me  
Some simply liked the sex

All, every one, gave  
as good as they got  
Some were there a night  
Some for years  
Some wanted to stay  
Some were happy to go  
But they all saw something  
worth the time spent

My life spans  
more than half a century  
and there was not a revolving door  
of women passing each other  
in and out of my life  
Well, not always  
(I did say I was an asshole)  
Some did replace others  
but there was one to leave  
and one to arrive

I was, and am, an asshole  
but to assume the women  
I mistreated  
were helpless and forlorn  
their lives destroyed  
by my poisonous touch  
is to give me too much power  
and them too little

~~

# BeeeOwowow

That fog  
famous little cat feet  
used to pat my father's nose  
and wake him  
He was the lightkeeper  
when that job existed  
before sensors and machines,  
like dogs,  
hunted down those little cats  
and began to bark

~~

# Home Harbour

The sound of the fog horn  
the shushushush of the fishing tugs  
as they moved from waves  
to stillness  
entering the harbour  
The sound and smell  
of the coal boats unloading  
making black mountains  
on the dock  
The potash and corn  
moving in and out  
I was born in this port

As I have travelled  
my small tracks  
around this world  
Often I have found myself  
at home  
St Johns, Halifax on the east coast  
Vancouver, Victoria on the west  
Valparaiso in Chile  
Montevideo in Uruguay  
Always the harbour  
Always the ships  
connecting me to my birth  
All of them  
my home town  
~~

# I Had To Watch

The interviewer  
being one of the know-it alls  
began to recite  
“You met the great artist  
as a model  
and you stayed on  
as his confidant, companion and nurse  
(can you hear his eyebrows  
go up and down?)  
You were lucky  
to spend your time  
with the great man  
in his final years  
and now he's died  
he left you with quite a bit”

Her eyes flashed  
as she seemed about  
to leap  
But her eyes slowly dropped  
to the floor and she said  
"don't forget  
I had to watch him die"  
~~



*Arm and Arm into the sunset*



# I See You

I see you  
or at least I feel your poem  
There  
I put down my book  
but before I pick up my pen  
it is gone  
But  
I remember a thought  
a thought that led to the poem  
So I think it  
and it too is gone

It is like watching you  
walk away from me  
down the beach  
into the sun  
You  
A silhouette of you  
black against the glare  
Blurring  
Only a dot  
Then nothing  
but still I watch  
~~

# A Grain of Sand

Every kiss I gave you  
Every glance  
Every remark  
became a grain of sand

Each turn in bed  
Each time I walked  
into another room  
Each time I cooked  
or washed dishes  
sand

Until one day  
you buried me  
in an avalanche  
of sand

~~

# Yoin

You were a bell  
struck lightly  
a lifetime ago  
but the long reverberation  
of your memory  
Remains yet in my ear

~~

# Into the Great Desert

The ants move  
into the great desert  
that is our driveway  
I can see at least three tribes  
making their way  
from shade to the burning wastes

Not for here  
at least not so far  
has that world-straddling super colony  
taken root  
Let them not come  
Let our tribes pursue  
their separate cultures  
at their separate speeds  
The global view is boring  
as it must be  
The dullness of one world  
~~

# My Dearest Darling Love

My dearest darling love  
I worship you  
I will love you always  
If I could have one boon  
One small favour of you  
it would be this  
If you find a bit of food  
on a fork that has been washed  
just put it back into the sink  
to be washed again  
rather than tell me  
I suck at washing the dishes  
I know I suck  
I don't like washing the dishes  
But you could wash them, yes?  
My love  
My dearest love  
~~

# We Walked Together

We walked together  
down the street  
and, wanting a shortcut  
to our bed  
we entered the alleyway  
At first arm in arm,  
we had to go single file  
You went first  
and at a bend  
in that laneway  
I glanced behind  
only for a moment  
When I looked again  
you had gone  
Perhaps you had other business  
I looked for you  
but you had gone  
and I went alone  
to our bed

~~

# I Came to you Drunk

I came to you drunk  
and full of turmoil  
Storm crashing on rocks  
so quickly  
it was continuous thunder

You stretched out your hand  
and stilled the waters  
With your other hand  
you touched my cheek  
and I slept  
No longer spinning with drink  
but calm, a child  
in his mother's bed

In the morning  
you said nothing  
My wet clothing dried  
no mess to be seen  
all swept, all tidy  
You fed me  
Touched my cheek again  
and said  
"go back to her"  
~~

# Deepest Night

Deepest night  
alone  
still drunk  
I went to you  
lifted your covers  
and entered you

You did not welcome me  
as you often did  
and I stopped,  
asked why  
"If you need this  
you may have it"

It was I  
who was outraged  
who apologized  
and returned  
to my own bed  
~~





*What to do with 40 extra years*

## At 23

When I was a boy  
the goal was University  
Just to get in  
I saw myself at 23  
in University  
and never anything  
beyond that

An extra 40 years  
Not too bad

~~

# Nobody has Fun Any More

Nobody has fun any more  
said my daughter  
breaking my heart  
Life should be fun  
I know  
mine was not  
But I had hoped  
for different, for my children

I offered her pretty copper earrings  
She countered with silver  
Of course she had them

~~

# Summer Vegetables

Late summer,  
the garden vegetables  
are moving from house to house  
family to family  
Blood, money,  
oaths of fealty  
None of these  
will ever be as strong  
as feeding each other  
cucumbers, zucchini and carrots  
~~

# No More Dancing

Do you want it to be easy  
this bedding of a woman?  
When you look at her  
is all you want the fuck?  
Boy you will learn  
that fucking is easy  
and jerking off  
is easier still

But that slow dance to the day  
she grabs your shirt and says  
"no more dancing boy  
I want you in me"  
That is a dance worth your time  
~~

# Tree Frogs

The windows are open  
to cool off the house  
making ready for another hot day  
The crickets and tree frogs  
compete with each other  
The night breathes  
with their calls  
reeeee reeeee reeeee  
~~

# One Day

One day I came home  
to find her in my bed  
and the next day  
and the one after that

No more thrill of the chase  
no more wondering  
if I would sleep alone  
Not one moment of regret  
for some sort of lost freedom

~~

# Do You Wish

Do you wish  
you'd done things differently?

No my friend  
If I feel I should have slowed down  
I slow down  
Now I have always been slow  
I might think I was once young  
I might remember years of life  
where I could have drunk less  
or more

But that is illusion  
if I drink now  
I have been drinking forever  
What I do  
I have always done  
Is this not so?  
~~



# Old Cat

Mrrreaaww he says  
and we realize  
we're in the way  
of his routine  
Our old cat  
~~

# At my Desk

At my desk  
reading  
listening to speakers  
I made myself  
This chair  
is two years old  
I know  
because I recovered  
from a broken neck  
in this chair  
I wonder if somehow  
the bones  
moulded themselves  
as they healed  
I don't get tired  
of this chair  
and I don't get tired  
of these speakers  
~~

# You Pulled My Beard

It might have been  
Comparative Vertebrate Physiology  
where I sat down beside you  
and introduced myself  
Later I met you again  
at a party  
where you sat on my lap  
and pulled my beard

Somewhere in the conversation  
you told me you were a virgin  
I wasn't interested  
but when I walked home  
you were with me  
As we passed your place  
you said "come in"  
I said "I have no protection"  
thinking that would end it  
you said "I'm on the pill"

A couple years later  
we separated  
I can't remember why  
It may have been nothing  
or it may have been everything

I heard you got married  
had kids  
and I was happy for you  
and then I read you had died

It pleases me  
that you moved on  
that you didn't bother  
to tell anyone about me  
but I would have liked  
to say goodbye

I wrote your name  
in my breath on the window  
and watched it fade away

~~

# Good Luck to You

Waking, as I always do  
at 4am  
I listen to the peeper  
singing his sad song  
Pleeeese, pleeeese, pleeeese

Good luck to you  
my little friend  
I hope she hears you  
and comes to visit soon  
~~

# When I am Angry

When I am angry  
or worse  
when I feel nothing  
I don't look at you  
I don't speak

I don't want you  
to see what is in my eyes  
I loved you dearly  
and I know you love me still  
I don't want to hurt you  
and so I turn away  
and so I hurt you

~~

# My Thoughts are Released

My thoughts are released  
to chase themselves  
one after another  
through labyrinths  
and down rabbit holes

As they go  
I reach out  
and pin one  
to paper with the sharp tip  
of a pen  
There it struggles  
trapped and alone

I close the cover  
of my notebook  
and all uncaring,  
Think no more about it  
~~

# Will You Pay that Price

"so close that your hand on my chest is my hand  
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep"  
Pablo Neruda - Sonnet XVII

What would you pay for this?  
What would you give?  
All you need do  
is melt into each other  
to lose yourself  
Even as you know  
you may become yourself again  
Will you pay that price?  
Will you give yourself?

~~



## To Write of You

The porch light  
cannot be seen at noon  
and it does no good  
to shade the eyes  
on a moonless night

I must be away from you my love  
to write of you

And when I write of your eyes  
your hair, the arch of your back  
I describe shadows at midnight  
fireflies under the blazing sun

~~

# Are We Tired Yet

Are we tired yet  
of this foolishness  
that creates no wealth  
this useless striving  
to understand ourself  
or to express a feeling  
a feeling, alone,  
which turns no head  
gives no advantage

Unprofitable words  
good only to be given away  
Should I not turn my hand  
to the Jingle instead?

~~

# How Much Time

Not a day goes by  
that I don't wonder  
how much time I have left  
Two years so far  
Another two?

You would think  
that I could leverage  
this borrowed time  
into something  
Some little thing  
"Can you do this for me?  
I'm going to die"  
"Not today, do it yourself"  
~~

# Diesel and Water

The smell  
of diesel exhaust  
and water  
Takes me back  
to those summer days  
on the dock  
the thrum of a fishing tug  
the fish being picked  
from the nets  
The hiss of a freighter  
unloading coal

When I was a child  
my swing was a drying reel  
waiting for that day's net

~~

## Don't Do That

Don't do that  
she says, slapping my hand away  
Don't speak of death  
and dying  
while you reach for my boob  
What's wrong with you?

~~

# Poor Boy Dreams of the City

I have worked on the water  
and in the forests  
I have worked on the farms  
and in the factories

Please excuse me  
if I don't feel the same way  
about mother earth  
and the working man  
as you do

The romance of the sea  
ends all too often  
in a sudden storm  
and a broken hull  
The majesty of the woods  
ends all too often  
in a pile of brush  
and a mighty tree  
kicking back at waist height

In the northern Alberta oil country  
my fellow drinkers  
held beers with hands  
not fully five fingered  
Farmers late for supper  
may be pinned by their tractors  
and I, in the factory,  
suffered psychosis  
from booze and the lacquer fumes  
of the tool handles I dipped

There is no romance  
outside your cities  
no more than you find  
in your crowded streets  
You may dream  
of working with your hands  
while I  
fish guts dripping  
across my frozen shoulder  
or waiting for stitches  
in my bandsaw-ripped thumb  
dreamt of a warm office  
and nothing more dangerous  
than a spilled coffee  
or a sharp tongue

~~

# What the Hell is an Ode

What the hell is an ode  
do I want to write one?  
I won't  
I don't know an ode  
from an Ood  
that telepathic slave race  
Dr. Who knows all about  
And how does a telepathic race  
become enslaved?  
That seems odd to me

~~



# There will be Days

Let me tell you my son  
there will be days  
when you will say  
only the wrong things  
and she will snap at you  
and if you defend yourself  
it will turn into an argument  
Maybe several days  
of feeling confused  
and a little bit sick  
to your stomach

My son  
on the days when you say  
only the wrong things  
it is best to shut your mouth  
as quickly as you can  
after you have apologized  
for whatever it is  
you just said

~~

# My Father was a Lightkeeper

My father was a lightkeeper  
he never put match to lamp  
but instead  
drove to the base of the pier  
and threw a switch

Looking at that box  
you could see the end  
of lightkeepers  
and so there was no job for me  
when machines learned  
to see the fog

In my life  
I have seen many jobs  
jobs I have done  
gone now, forever  
and yet  
I continue to work  
~~

# Americans

We are perhaps  
the only country  
in our half of the world  
who do not claim  
the title "American"

In the darkness  
of a soul-searching night  
when we ask  
who we are  
we will answer  
"not Americans"  
We do not share  
the outrage of the Latin,  
the South, the Central Americans  
when they are told  
"you are not Americans"  
by the "Muricano"  
(can you blame them?  
What else can they claim,  
"we are United Staters")

When we too are told we are not Americans  
we say instead "thank you"  
Perhaps the only people in the world  
to understand us  
are the Japanese when they say  
"we are not Chinese"

~~

# Everything Disgusts Me

Everything disgusts me today  
I will get little work done

Never mind today's news  
I am not looking  
But other stories  
those I hope will divert me  
do not allow me  
to get beyond the headlines

The novelist who was polyamorous  
who shocked, with his critique  
of marriage  
That naughty Bloomsbury Group  
who had affairs  
complete with illustration  
showing married, slept with and  
who cares what  
all with linking lines.

Can we not grow up?  
Does each generation  
need to remain children  
longer than the one before?

I had hoped  
as a lad  
that we would progress  
Instead, we regress  
returning to the good old days  
of might being right  
and human sacrifice  
to a cruel God's spokesmen  
~~

# What Is It

What is it  
that makes me miss you so  
Is it your huge, sad eyes  
or your hard, sharp tongue?  
Your small perfect hands  
or the way you hit me with them?

For every good thing  
that I remember  
that drew me to you  
I can add something  
that drove me away

Is it you I long for  
or what we could have been  
if we were not so determined  
to be ourselves

~~

# I Gave Her a Kiss

I gave her a kiss  
that she never returned  
And I feel it still  
on nights like this  
when the stars run  
like a river across the sky  
When Cicadas trill  
their sad plea to the night  
hoping to find a mate  
before they die

On nights like this  
when my heart, my soul  
bursts outward, upward  
into that lonely universe  
I still feel that kiss  
she never returned  
And, just a little  
it keeps me here  
on this cool ground

~~

# It Is Raining in Chile

It is raining in Chile  
the beginning of spring  
And I am here in Canada  
watching the days grow less  
and the night grow more

I swear I can hear  
the leaves on the maple, dying  
My garden is scruffy  
the weeds choking the seed pods

I will throw my mind  
Southward  
far southward  
Take off my jacket  
and tip my face  
to the rains of Chile

~~



# A Boy May Dream

A boy may dream  
of what he will become  
when he is a man

But an old man  
looks back  
to that boy he was  
Thoughts turn  
this way and that  
Memories half forgotten  
of long summer days  
and the girls he loved  
who loved him back

~~

# The Bullring

On hot summer nights  
we danced in our underwear  
past last call  
We would sweat  
and laugh at each other  
as we tried to climb the pole

Each night  
at midnight  
the Stone's "Satisfaction"  
was played  
and the girls were sent off  
to watch the boys  
dance with each other

At four  
we would be in the pond  
mud between our toes  
trying to cool down  
Groping blindly in that dark night  
Hoping to grasp a girl  
and not our buddy's ass

~~

# Oh, Sorry

Oh, sorry  
no no, it's fine  
Did I hurt you  
yes, but it's fine  
I'm...  
look, you know you had me  
over the top, yes?  
Yes  
well when you bit my nipple  
you put me over the top  
and shoved me off the cliff  
Oh, I...  
shut up boy, and hold me  
~~

# I Play at Being a Poet

Every few years  
I play at being a poet  
I don't know what need I'm trying to fill  
maybe it's the chance to start lines with "I"  
This urge  
and it is an urge  
seems to last a few months  
and then I'm fine  
~~

# Take Out the Garbage

Who would think  
that watching you  
take out the garbage  
would be so fascinating  
With your bare shoulders  
and your swaying hips  
I watched you  
all the way to the bins

~~

## Watching Your Nipples Grow Hard

Watching your nipples grow hard  
as you look at another man  
I feel like a voyeur  
watching things I should not

You would be angry  
then sad and confused  
if you caught me looking  
So I look away

You say you are mine  
and you are  
for as long as you want to be  
But the body sometimes wants  
what the heart doesn't understand

~~

## Four Words

Four words  
in a poem someone else wrote  
four words  
I can't seem to get past  
"your waist in my hands"

Perhaps if I write them down  
I can move on  
~~



*Oh my Children*



# Oh my Children

Oh my son, my daughter  
I did not need  
to go to war  
like the generations before  
and I had hoped  
you also would be spared

Twice, three times  
I assured you  
that war would not come  
But too many rich men  
are saying  
"the poor will always be with us"  
which means the rich  
are ever more greedy

Oh my children  
In our country  
I see the infection creeping North  
toward us  
and I see a future  
where the poor will rise up  
to be crushed  
by those who see power and greed  
to be Godly

Let it not be so  
Let it be an old man's fear  
Let other old men  
who remember industrial slaughter  
be reminded  
of their own sons and daughters

~~

# Imagine

Imagine someone who loves you  
fully, wholly, desperately  
loves you forever and ever  
loves you to tears  
loves you to frenzy

Imagine the pain  
the damage  
you will inflict  
And you will

Better to search  
for someone who likes you  
Better to read  
love poetry  
as a dangerous text  
Like "how to make napalm  
from household chemicals"  
~~

# You Must Love Yourself

You must love yourself  
the books say  
before you can love another

Is there fast  
without slow?  
Is there tall  
without short?  
A mountain simply is,  
neither tall nor short

You, alone  
are simply what you are  
you can accept that,  
you can be happy  
or dissatisfied with that  
but to love  
There must be another

There is no near without far  
Love is the space between  
the path you walk  
from "here" to "there"  
~~

# You Fall Asleep

You fall asleep  
and I wait for the thunder  
of your forehead  
to smooth  
and I wait for your fists  
to unclench  
showing me once more  
those delicate fingers

I stroke your hair  
as many times as I dare  
and silently kiss your forehead  
without touching it

Sleep my love  
for in sleep you are not angry  
Time enough for anger  
when you wake  
Just let me watch  
for a little while  
your calm beauty

~~

# Let Me Pretend For A While

Let me pretend for a while  
the life of a writer  
Let me have no more worry  
than putting pen to paper

For this, I can be hungry  
For this, I can wear clothing  
patched and torn again  
Only leave me to my dreams  
for a short time

Before I must return  
to earn what pennies I can

~~

# I Loved You Deeply

I loved you deeply  
dearly, fully, completely  
for many years  
while we were together  
and now, when we are not

You are gone  
we could not stay together  
Does that mean  
as some say  
That the love was never there?

It was there my love  
every moment we were together  
It is there now  
it is here  
as I think of you  
it is here  
~~

# Thinking of You

Thinking of you  
my eyes fall upon this and that  
and nothing at all  
I notice the fan  
in the window  
its blades, unpowered  
turn first this way  
and then that way  
and all I see  
is the way the breeze  
stirred your hair

~~



# Of Course You Drop Them

You know  
when you take your glasses off  
and think  
"I'd better hang on to them"  
Just before they go into the pond?

I felt that way  
the day I met you  
I saw you and thought  
"this will end in tears  
don't introduce yourself"  
Just then you smiled at me  
~~



*Doppelgänger Glasses*

# Nice Sections

Some people  
like their poetry books  
to have nice sections

1. introductions/beginnings
2. love grows
3. trouble in paradise
4. love fades
5. parting
6. memories

But life isn't like that  
sometimes it's over before it begins  
Sometimes love never grows  
Sometimes it fades and grows together  
Sometimes you remember a girl  
before you meet her

Life doesn't flow  
it flashes  
brief glimpses by lightning-strike  
with after-images  
making it hard to know  
what's happening

~~

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