

How to Stack Dishes



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Introduction

How is it that we get along with each other. There needs to be a bit of give and take, and mostly it boils down to maybe stacking the dishes the way the person who does them likes them to be stacked.

Yes!

The photos are from a fashion shoot done in 2008.

~~

Kim Taylor, June-July 2023



How to Stack Dishes

There is a proper way
to stack dirty dishes
Do you want to know?

It's not the way your mom did it
and it's not the way you did it
when you were living on your own
it's the way the guy who does them
wants you to stack them

You know that way
you watch him do the dishes
you hear him grumble
when you stack them
the way your dad did
any old which way

Unless you want to do them
stack the dishes his way
the guy who does them
~~

Learning to Fly

The first day of June
and a nice day
to sit on the deck
and eat a Popsicle

Loud bird in the tree
I wonder
Oh a Robin
flying down toward...
smack
right into the side of the garage
dropped and looked confused
then hopped away

"Ah, you're just learning to fly"

~~

Regular Visit

The doctor says I'm still alive
good to know
Up to date on my shots
even Shingles
Had my head frozen
a couple of rough spots
and now
maybe time for a nap
~~

Birthday Dinner for the Old Guy

It's my birthday soon
but Lauren is in town tonight
so maybe we do the usual
and go out to eat

But maybe she is busy
maybe Liam wants to go
to jiu jitsu

maybe, maybe, maybe
and yet another excuse
to get together
may be lost
in the busy lives
of too many people
~~

Oh, Yes?

No, she said
I'm not horny
I'll just lie here
with my head on your lap

I was content
but my hand, as if by its own will
slid down her body
to that hill
with the soft parting
the canyon
and I trailed a finger
up that canyon

A sharp hiss of breath
that intake
that said I'm interested
and a lazy bit of sliding
got me an arched back
and rolled eyes

~~

Dream

As a dream
it wasn't profound
I was in the cafe
and I had my coffee
in a big, round
cappuccino mug
instead of the usual

I said it wasn't profound
I didn't say it was even interesting
just a dream of a big cup
of coffee

~~



Hubris

Once again I lift my head
from reading
what I have written
and all unbidden
I say to my companion
"I'm a damned good writer"
to which she replies
"Yes you are"
I dropped my head
and continued reading
~~

At the Cabin

You know
I think I liked it better
when everybody slept in
on a Saturday
and nobody wanted to get going
on their various projects
before noon

~~

This is Not News

Please stop
these new articles of idiots
bigots and nut-bars

They exist
they have always existed
and they are gaining power
because the system has slowly
been corrupted and biased

Big deal
I'm old, I know that
Tell me things I don't know
~~

How Writers... You Know

Do I write some new poems
or edit the latest book
that is the question

And I miss those guys
down at Jim's Lunch Counter
should I write some more
or do what others do
and read the books again

It's an itch, folks
a niggle in the brain
that says, create something new
don't read what you've already done
~~



Rock. Pond.

Ask me a question
honestly, I want one
with a question I learn
with a question I write

Do you want another essay
on budo
do you want another chapter
in a fantasy book

Ask me a question
throw me a line
get my brain started
throw a rock into the pond
and see what the ripples make

~~

Small Town Boy

They say the wilderness
should call to me

But I'm not a woodsy boy
I was born on a lake
you can't see across
and a fishing tug
is more my way
to gather food

The idea of sitting in a tree
waiting for a deer
while the black-flies
horseflies, deer-flies
and mosquitoes chew me
is horrible to me

~~

My Lake

Truly you can't go home again
My lake is Huron, not Erie
My town is Sauble, not Stanley

I need to understand
that the town I was born to
that fishing village of 67 years ago
no longer exists
even though I recognize
some of the buildings

The spaces are gone
the wreckage is gone
and shiny new condominiums
have taken their place

~~

Fat Feet

I sit
and as I sit
I feel my feet swell

For what reason I can't imagine
but in the morning
they are slender and lovely
by evening
fat and clumsy

A diet bounce?
An actor in a new role?
Hormonal water retention?

I haven't a clue
but there they are
getting fat, I can feel them

~~

Pull Harder

I have a plastic bin
on my desk
Looking at it
I see some fluff

No, not fluff
but pull cord
for some gas engine
What
Gas engine?

Oh, yes, a snowblower
the cord ripped off
by someone with no key
They don't start
without a key being turned
but go ahead and try
sooner or later the cord
gets ripped off

Don't mention it
I'll figure it out
and fix it, yes?
and so there is a cord
with handle
in the plastic bin
on my desk
~~



My Treasures

Here's a pebble
dug from the wall
in Nottingham castle

and here's a twig
carved into a snake
I was copying Grampa

My treasures aren't much
photos of the kids
Not worth too much
but they're the world to me
~~

Planning my Life

Yam and pulled pork
Not very fancy
but it will do
and anyone wanting more
can go get what they want

Me, I'm eating now
so I can have my pills done
and maybe if we're early
we can have snacks
at the bar

~~

Other People's Books

I love a second hand book
with an inscription
To so and so, best wishes
for a sweet read

Where did it go
from so and so
How many hands
did it pass through

Here it is with me
and I'm admiring the ink
such a lovely shade of blue
such a lovely dedication

~~

My Gardening Story

My daughter on a visit
mentions she's planted a garden
so we tour mine

And here is where I fell over
with something on top
a ladder beside
and my hat

Good thing there was a hat
because I fell
into the raspberries
and couldn't get up

Someone had to come lift me
until I was on my knees
Not really a gardening story
I suppose
~~

Nuke the Whales

What can you do
when you live in a shoe
and you can't dance
and it's too wet to plow

There, three days of thinking
trying to remember that
something we would say
back when we were 24

Don't ask me
I never knew what it meant
it was just something we said
Nuke the Whales

~~



The Look of Evil

Here's another villain
with scars
or blotches
disfigured somehow
and I blame Shakespeare
with his crippled Richard

I mean, you have to know
that the guy with the limp
is the bad guy

otherwise how do you know
what he does
is evil
and what the handsome guy does
is good

Them both doing
the same damned thing

~~

It's So Good to be a Guy

I'm a guy
so I've never felt fat
alone, unloved
ugly, unwanted
or invisible

Life is always good
for a guy
I know this for a fact
it's written in so many places
by so many people

So why does it seem
like I'm not a guy
Am I going through
the change of life?
Will I need a new wardrobe?

~~

Set an Alarm

This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but...

with a distraction
a simple distraction
a change to the routine
and I forget to take my pills
the ones that control the cancer

and I can't remember
if I'm distracted
I found out I didn't take them yesterday
today when I remembered to take them
after forgetting an hour ago

I will die
because I'm thinking about other things
other people
and not being selfish

Set an alarm I hear you say
set an alarm
Look, if I can't remember
to take the pills that save my life
what in the world makes you think
that I can remember to set an alarm

~~

Roomie Instruction

Learning about life
is a constant progress

I remember my apartment mate
explaining to me
about the little man in the boat

and after that
the girls liked me more

liked me for more
than a pretty face

~~

No Sex, Period

There's that scene
in the movie where
the girl says she didn't have sex
with her boyfriend
because she started her period
that very weekend
a week early

And I was mystified
To me, sex during a period
meant no pregnancy
meant no dry heaving efforts
and let's face it
blood only tastes of metal

Oh, have I caused you
to make a face
I'm sorry
Sorry you wasted all those weeks
throughout your life
Hah
~~



So Fat

Oh I'm so fat
she would say, often
but she really wasn't
A big girl
bigger than the ideal
bigger than a teenage boy
the one the designers wanted
but settled for skinny girls
instead

Oh I'm so fat
and nothing I said
would convince her otherwise
How can you touch
such a pig as I
And nothing I ever said
would convince her
Eventually I drifted away
~~

A Jerk

You want to call me a jerk
I won't argue
I can supply references
to prove I'm a jerk
if you don't want
to take my word for it

But I never wanted
to be that jerk
that I was on more than one
occasion
More than one girl
All I ever wanted
was to have some company

It's just that life
is too complicated for me
and sometimes I would say
the wrong thing
at the wrong time
to someone who didn't deserve it
and I'd think
That was a jerk thing to say

~~

I Wish it Would Rain

In the summertime
I don't really believe
that I'm wishing for rain
but it's early June
and the city is short of water
and the woods are burning
the air smells of campfires
and I swear to you
I wish it would rain

~~

A New Diet

There's a new diet
You pray to god
every time you get hungry
and ask him to forgive you
for being hungry

You pray and pray and pray
until the hunger pangs leave
and you wait

Wait for the next time
you are hungry
until one day
svelte, slim, supple

That god takes you up
to skinny heaven
How wonderful
it's all forever good now

~~

PSA Watching

After five years
the tyranny of numbers
are moving in the wrong direction
leaving me once again
with the hard decision

Do I watch favourite movies
or try to watch those
I haven't seen

~~



The Door

As I came in the door
it all changed

it wasn't my favourite apartment
of all the ones I'd been in
It was some sort of desert

some vast empty space
where nothing lived
and not even the sand moved

all was still
all was silence

I closed the door
put my back to it
and cried for her
the one who was not there

Cried until the floor
the walls the furniture
reappeared once more
and I could move away
from the door

~~

Overalls

When I was a kid
there was a bargain store
somewhere in this town
an old factory
Bargain Hal's maybe

and they had overalls
like the railroad engineers
would wear, legs
but just a bib up top

And some of the girls
in residence
would wear them
and nothing else

For an entire summer
I walked with a hard-on
~~

Cold

I sit at the desk
in fuzzy slippers
and a fuzzy hoodie
realizing that I'm cold

Once again I'm cold
and somebody
some damned body
has put the temperature down
again

~~

In The Morning

Twenty four she was
so very long ago
I don't remember how
I met her
or how I lost her

But I remember her kindness
the way she looked
as she poured the orange juice
and the way she tucked her hair
behind her ear
as she lifted her coffee
looking at me

This nineteen year old kid
Looking right at me
in the morning
the sun coming in
behind her

~~

Student Life

Those residence beds
barely a single
just foam on plywood

I would lie on my side
my ass an inch away
from landing on the floor
and I would trail my fingers
from her neck to her ass

slowly, as slowly as I could
so I could listen
to her breath catch
and that little hiss
when I cupped her left cheek

Whole weekends
would slip by
with her in my bed

~~



The Great Secret

You want the secret son
to keeping a woman
Sure, I said
Willing to learn

It's really simple boy
you just always
always
make sure she comes first
~~

The Sound She'll Make

Those one night stands
were fine, every one
just fine

But there's something to be said
for a woman who stays
long enough

Long enough to know
just how close she is
Long enough to know
the rhythm she wants
the time, the place
to drive it hard

To know what she'll do
at that moment
the sound she'll make
that arch of her back
the scratches she'll add
to your shoulder blade
~~

Edging

Some nights I'd be cruel
taking her right there
but not letting her go

I'd stroke a bit
whisper a bit
and start again
over and over
until unexpectedly
she would explode

It was decades later
someone told me
just what that was called
At the time
I just called it fun

~~

Saved From Winter

Winter was coming on
and my bed was cold
empty
I was getting scared

I mean that room
would drop and drop
until you could see your breath
and my bed was empty
cold

In December she said hello
she needed a place
I said hello
I've got a place

That winter was cruel
but I didn't care
my bed was warm
occupied
~~

That Thing That Happened

When was that
when that thing happened
and I panic

Should I know this
is this something
I should remember
is this a test

But I can't remember
I could never remember
I lived day to day
the past slipping
out of my grasp

and me, each day
was a new boy
a new man

That thing that happened
It happened to someone else
~~



Like an Old Photograph

When I met her
she was black and white
a crisp shadow
thrown onto the brightest snow
newly fallen

I could see every hair
every movement
in high contrast

But as the years went on
that light became weaker
dimmer
and the shadow faded
eventually it was gone
and only darkness remained

~~

Crow and Otter

Crow sat on a rock
on the shore and watched
Otter was eating a crab
Can you save me a leg
said Crow
Sure, said Otter
and continued to eat
when he was done
and there was one leg left
he dropped it into the water
Oops, sorry Crow

Crow grabbed Otter
and carried him deep inland
to the desert
and put him on a rock
beside the rock was a bucket
The crow drank from the bucket
and Otter said
Can you save me some
Sure, said Crow
you can have half
But when he'd drunk half
he tipped the bucket over
Oops, sorry Otter

Otter was angry
he was far from the water
and he would surely die

He jumped suddenly
and bit Crow's wing in half
Oops, sorry Crow

Just then Man came along
hunting and gathering
He stopped at the rock
looked at Otter
looked at Crow
looked at the bucket
and said, ooh shiny
Man picked up the bucket
and walked away
~~

Fathers and Sons

The old man sat by the bed
reading to his son
Forty years he was there
reading to a son who wasn't

In another place
a man sat and read to a father
who hadn't been there
for too many years

So much love
with nobody to hear
nobody to see
but love anyway

~~

Friday Night and Saturday Morning

Here in the cabin
listening to Pam's music
on speakers I made for her
while she snacks
and I write

Not a bad way
to spend Friday night
and Saturday morning

~~

SEMINAR

Each

Day

Each

Minute

Only now

Make a lifetime

Now

Only now

~~



A Photographer

Twenty blank years
after four in the darkroom
and then digital photography
so a glorious ten years
in the studio

but all things have their time
and so another ten years
and last weekend
I walked away from the car
without my camera
(I call my phone my camera)

and for the whole time
I was in that tourist town
I felt like my fly was open
and my brightly coloured undies
were hanging out my zipper

There was something wrong
~~

Jump

So many things I've done
just to see
if they can be done
and of course
they can be done

All you really need to do
is start
the rest is simply work
and yet,
and yet
the starting is difficult

because we see how much
there is to be done
and so we put it off
or worse
avoid it altogether

Start
and to start
we sometimes need
to close our eyes and jump

Turn off our brain
stick fingers in ears
close our eyes
and jump

~~

Numbers

These fucking numbers
my blood sugar
my prostate antigen
my pressure
my age, for fuck's sake
my cholesterol
my heart rate

All these damned numbers
all these reminders
with all these appointments
and the joy in my life
is drained
number by number
tick by tick of the clock
running down to my death
~~

Why the House is Messy

Every sink full of dishes I wash
is a bush untrimmed
Every meal I cook
is a room un-vacuumed

and every day
every day
I see more little things
that I don't have the time
to do

I try, I really do
I carry things back
to where they belong
I shut drawers
close doors
tidy as I go

but every day
I see more little things
that I don't have the time
to do
~~

After She Left

After she left
all I saw
was road kill
dead cats
dead squirrels
dead birds

I'm sure they were linked
these two things
~~



Fat Fly

Listen to the size
of that fly
trying to get out
trapped
between window and shade

each time he hits the window
it sounds like a marble
hitting the packed dirt
of my childhood school

~~

Five Cent Coupon

I sorted the box full
of things from the old car
and found a five cent
Canadian Tire coupon
that was perfect
for a bookmark

It sits on my desk
in search of a book

~~

Nanny

At my friend's wedding dinner
he told his old, blind nanny
I had just lost a girlfriend

She looked toward me
cackled
and said
Women are like buses
there'll be another along shortly

It made me feel better
~~

007 Thoughts

When I was 27
I was James Bond
dangerous lover
tender killer
tough as old oak

Now I'm 67
I'm Q, an old man
trying to tell James
to take it easy
All that punishment
has a price
~~

Hungry Girl

There's no need to say anything
We've had a good run
if I can put it that way
We loved each other well
and it lasted a couple of years
Now it's gone

Don't look at me like that
you know it's gone, and so do I
but that's OK
I loved you, and you loved me
and we stayed together
a bit longer, because we loved each other
but we don't

Kiss me now, and when we see each other
from now on, kiss me
and I'll remember the nights we spent together
And for both of us
I hope we find someone as good
someone we love

Yes, of course we have the night together
and who knows
we were friends, we sometimes spent the night
in each other's arms
Perhaps we will again as friends
just not every night as lovers

Now hold me tight
and in the morning I will be gone
and I will cry for you
and you will cry for me
You will always be my randy boy
and I hope you remember me
as your hungry girl

~~



Young

Why would you want
to fuck me
You could have any girl
in this room
why would you want me

And my brain stopped working
and my mouth froze
No words came to me
How could she think that
of herself
And how could she think that
of me
~~

Next Door

She had notches
in her bedpost
and I threw condoms
tied in a knot
out of the window
into the snow

If there was nobody
in the bar for me
nobody calling
I would call her
and she would come
telling me stories
of how her room mates
talked about the weird guy
with the funny hat

Tell me we were convenient
to each other
and I'll call you a liar
I loved the girl
with notches on her bedpost
but she had someone
and I had someone

~~

Alaskan Ferry

It was a long time ago
and I might have gone with her
off that ferry
At Ketchikan
to build her a house in New Mexico

Her without a husband
died in a bush plane in Alaska
and with her two children
I was getting off at Ketchikan
to build her a house

But that morning at five
I was asleep
and she told my friend
to leave me asleep
No family to have
no house to build

She got off in Ketchikan
but before she left
she told my friend
to let me know
she liked my offer

~~

My Mother

I thought it was funny
That must be the reason
that I remember my mother
sticking her tongue out
under her bottom denture
at me, all grown up
and well educated
and in need of a chuckle

How was it
that I was all grown up
and she never did

~~

Lost Boy

She wore a metal disk
around her neck
it hung between her breasts

It was a hard time for me
lost boy, no path ahead
and the world was harsh

On those days
I couldn't get out of the bed
she would pull that disk
from between her breasts
and lay it on my chest

I don't know what it was
the warmth of her skin
the thought of her heart
beating just beside this disk
or her belief in me

I would get out of bed
kiss her hard
and put one foot in front
of the other

~~



Just Use Mine

Say what you want
think what you want
but that day when I stayed
and asked
if she had another toothbrush
That day when she said
Just use mine

~~

What I Remember

I don't remember the year
when I graduated
none of them

And I don't remember
the things I should

but I remember to this day
the first time a woman
walked into the bathroom
while I was there
and sat down to pee

~~

Old Barn

That old barn
falling apart even then
not used for anything
had a hole and a leather flap
for the dog

And we would crawl in
to a different world
License plates
from decades before
with four digits

the smell of shellac
the decades old hay
and the canoe
Ah the canoe
roped up out of reach
hanging from the beams

The stone foundation
with the animal pens below
It is still there
in my mind at least
Long gone from the world

~~

What I Saw

What do you see when you look at me
she really wanted to know

I won't get into that, girl
I see the person I love
and that's the end of it

I don't care what else is there
things you think are there
I don't see

I hope you can understand that
and forgive me

She never forgave me

~~

Hungry

I never understood her hunger
it wasn't for food
but there was something else
It wasn't for love
I loved her
I told her so
and she said, Me too

But there was something
she never told me
that took her away from our place
to somewhere else
I hope she found
what she was hungry for
~~



Butterfly Fillets

Why is it
that when I'm with you
I feel like a Perch
taken off the ice
and put onto the cutting board
waiting, too cold to flop
tail barely waving
while the knife is sharpened

Waiting
for that first cut
that will remove my head
That two more cuts
will produce a perfect butterfly fillet
won't matter to me by then

~~

I Wasn't Fair to You

They were long days
and at the end
I could barely lift my legs
feet scraping over the grass
as I came home to you

Sometimes you weren't there
you had your own work
but I didn't care
Tired, hungry
I just wanted to eat

I know now
I wasn't fair to you
you worked just as hard
in your lab
with your research

But my feet didn't leave the ground
as I stumbled home
barely able to climb the stairs
Trouble with the key and the lock
All I wanted was you saying hello

~~

High School Trophies

My daughter tells me in her dresser
in one of the drawers
are trophies, mine she thinks
and I'm horrified

I don't know why
but high school was long ago
and that person
happiest when he was running
the fourth or fifth mile
no longer exists

The boy who could jump
and throw javalin
and run and run and run
no longer exists

When she told me
I felt like I had stolen them
from some kid, long ago
~~

Childhood Oh

Oh
Perch
where did that thought come from
Perch that swam in the lake
that morning
a light flower coating
and fried in butter
served with malt vinegar
and a little bit of salt

But the very best
was a pouch of Perch roe
fried the same way
the texture, the eggs
popping in the mouth

Oh

Oh

~~

Not My Cat

This cat is not my cat
The kids own him
but he's lived with me
in this house
for a lot of years

I barely saw him
when the orange cat was here
pushy, bossy thing
and the skinny little grey
stayed out of the way

The orange cat is long dead
and the grey climbed under the covers
last night
and slept up against my back
or so I was told today

~~



The Big Boys

The big shouldered husky ones
the grey and black dragonflies
were out the last time
I was at the cabin

They are my favourite
you can have your sewing needles
with wings
these boys have heft

Someone else was there this weekend
and I must remember to ask
If the big boys were there
drifting through the air

So big you can follow them
as they fly out, away from the porch
and back again, where every time
I hope they will land on me

~~

Peak Medicine

Waiting to die
how can I make plans
how can I start projects

I've reached peak medicine
and can't remember to take pills

I hate talking to nurses
trying to make appointments

Teeth, eyes, scans
All I want to do
is live day to day
and be gone fast

Promise me that
and I'll try
to take my pills

~~

Gilded Cage

So this is the gilded cage
she said
and I am here in it

All I ever wanted
was everything
and now I have it
all here, in a gilded cage

So why am I unhappy
this is what I want
my mother told me
my father told me
my friends told me

Should I flee the cage
open the door and run
back to the poor boy
I thought was the one

Will he take me back
after I left him so broken
Should I go and ask

~~

The Boy on the Bench

He was missing a tooth
hair greasy and in strings
on the road for a month
trying to get there
somewhere

He sat on a park bench
nowhere to go
staring at his shoes
nothing else to do
she sat next to him

Who are you she said
I don't know
Where do you belong
I don't know
Come home with me she said

She put him in the shower
gave him some clothes
and fed him
let him stay the night
We'll see about the morning

The next day she woke
and he wasn't there
I'm sorry he wrote
I'm going to try again
to find where I belong

I'll try to find
where I'm supposed to be
and if I can't make it
will you be kind to me
will you let me in again

~~

All Those Years

I watch Neil Young
from 1974
He was older than me
but I don't believe it
I was never that young
Never that

I have no image
for myself in 1974
not even a photograph
so I know I wasn't there
I'm sure I wasn't there
Never there

Where did it go
all those years
all those years
where did my life go
Someone must have stolen it
Never mine
Never mine
~~



Orange Socks

I buy fluorescent orange compression socks
and they don't help
my mood is the same
I still feel harassed by life
and not only that
my feet still swell

Next week I see the doctor again
and the week after are scans
I have to keep track of it all
and I can't even remember
to take my pills

My greatest fear
is trying too hard
and not being able
slipping too far down
and not being able
to end it when I should

~~

Terrible Thing

It's a terrible thing
I know
but I'd like certain musicians
to die before I do
or at least retire
I'd hate to think
that I'd miss their new stuff
~~

Comments Section

What was I thinking
I looked into the comments

What comments?
It doesn't matter
any damned comments
and now I'm in a rage

Idiots, pure and simple
No more work for me
for a couple of hours
if I work at it
and stay away from SM

That's Social Media
not Sado-Masochism
although...

~~

Lanky

Lanky, she was lanky
like, when she walked
and I watched her hands
they swung on her arms
from an extra joint

~~

In the Mall

The kids off school
and in the mall with the folks
What to do?

Look dad, mom
we're here in the mall
school's out
surely there's something to do
like buy me something
or some new thing
since we were last here
just before school started

No?
Fine, I'll cry

~~



Food Court

Eleven dollars for a burger
Oh hell no
and I went next door
to the souvlaki place
and got a chicken leg
rice, potatoes and salad
for the same price

Yes I threw out half the rice
(next time I'll say)
but it was so much better
than a not-so-cheap
burger
~~

Just a Glimpse of Beauty

It's difficult
I don't see a lot of beauty
these days
but I see a lot of ugly
I try not to look in the mirror
try not to listen to my voice

I spent lunchtime in the mall
trying not to be creepy
trying to see some beauty
All I want is a glimpse
something to hold in my mind
as the world shrivels and rots
inside and out

~~

Martial Arts

Forty years I spent
on hands and knees
bowing to someone
and after all that time
I still feel a cringe
when someone bows to me

It never bothered me
to drop down and grovel
But it bothers me
to see the back
of someone else's head

~~

Your Shoulder

I remember it now
your shoulder
and the place it meets
your neck

How could I forget
the complicated geography
the movement
as you stretched your arms
over your head

~~

Two Pears

Given a pear
and a knife
I sliced it into many pieces
and laid them on the plate

When I was done
I handed the knife to you
and watched as you sliced
your own pear into pieces

Sweet, firm pieces

~~



Alone

Don't leave me alone
for too long
I don't handle that
at all well

A day or two, perhaps
but half a week
finds me anxious
worried, waiting for death
~~

Sports Bar

In a shock result
someone famous
or I presume so
goes out in the first round
of a sports tournament

I feel somehow less
Uninformed, stupid
for not knowing who it is
or who went through
to the next round

~~

Beautiful Image

I think, that if I could hold
one beautiful image
as I die
I would have had a life
that was lived properly

The end of a thing
is so very important
to the rest of it

One beautiful image
to see
and then
not to see
~~

Where is Beauty

A smiling woman
gazing on a Japanese garden
Where is the beauty

Not, for me, in the garden
but in the stillness
the posture
the calm smile
of the woman
~~

My Breath Would Catch

The noontime light
showed you so very well
perhaps too well

I always preferred the dark
with the streetlight
coming through sheer curtains

There, your face would sometimes float
up out of the shadows
your pale skin
and your large dark eyes
creating such mystery
that my breath would catch in my throat
~~



Always Hoping

I would watch you
as often as I could
brushing your hair
in the mirror

We were both busy
and you would brush fast
more to smooth it down
than to stroke each strand

but I would watch as much
as I could
Always hoping for more
Always hoping

~~

Waiting

I spend too much of my life
waiting for something to happen
and trying to get out of things
so that nothing will happen
~~

Your Side

It's been a year
and each night
when I go to bed
only one side is untucked
only one side is wrinkled

I still sleep on my side
and yours is still yours
I can't seem to move over
~~

Her shoulders

I swear when I lay beside her
snuggled up against her back
her shoulders were as tall
as mine were

Only smoother
softer
and infinitely better looking
Well hell
Everything about her was better
~~

Nothing There

She looked hard at me
looking for something
that wasn't there
She lifted her hand
and swept her hair
away from her eyes
as if to see better
something that wasn't there

"I can't go on like this
I try, but there's nothing there
No matter how much I give
I get nothing in return."

I must have frowned
"I know you told me
there was nothing there
when we got together
but I hoped I could put something
where you had nothing
But I can't."

I looked down at the ground
"Look, it's not you
you warned me, you did
but I've got to go
I've got nothing left for you
and so I've got to go"

She was right
I had nothing to give to her
and she was right to go
I wished she wouldn't
I wished she would stay
but I understood
and so I remained still
I remained silent
looking at the ground
as she went away

~~



Her Cup

There were two cups on the table
she had been gone for a month
but I noticed two cups
Could I call it a decor choice
a welcome for company

I stood back, closed my eyes
and opened them again
but, no
It didn't work
it wasn't decoration
that was her cup
~~

The Second Floor

A squirrel ran across the road
in front of me
and up the lawn
climbing the tree
beside the wall
and up he went

I swear I was watching the squirrel
and on the second floor
my eye was caught
by movement
By you looking out
checking for rain
as you always did

Seeing you there
for a brief moment
I wondered
Did you look happy
I was sure you did
I hoped you were
And I walked on
~~

A Pat on the Head

I hate it
when you pat me
on the head
like I'm some sort of pet or child

I apologized
but of course
I did it again
and got scolded

The years when by
and we both got older
and she scolded less
when I forgot

Perhaps at some year
she went from wanting
to be grown up
to liking the pet for a child

~~

In the Cafe

A clean table
uncluttered by hard drives
old food
notes and dead pens
This, this is why
you'll find me in the cafe
~~

The Inside Room

Remember that room
no windows
a lousy bed
a lousy room
and we spent time there
often more than we wished
because we had no idea
it was morning

It was not bad
that lousy room
when you were there
but when I was alone
Oh that was not good
~~



Stairs Like a Ladder

Those stairs to your bed
were steep
and I would move up them
late at night
like climbing a ladder
two hands, two feet
and a belly full of beer

You would pretend to be asleep
so that you could make lazy sounds
as I climbed under the covers
as if gravity had reversed
and you would be warm
and softly welcoming
to my boozy breath
and my cold, cold hands

~~

Arctic Explorer

You came to me wet
from a long walk in the rain
I didn't know it was raining

but you went to my room
and got a towel, saying
No big deal, just some rain

and I hugged you hard
waiting for you to warm up
and as I did
you started to shiver

So grown up
so independent
but you were cold right through

there was nothing to do
but take you to bed
like an arctic explorer
and give you my body heat

~~

My Record Collection

She knew my collection
much better than I did
she spent long days in my room
playing my records
and studying

I would go to work
and count the hours
until I could get back home
just to listen
to what she was playing

~~

Her Tarot Cards

She spent hours
throwing her tarot
looking deeply
at those cards

She would sigh
and pick them up
only to shuffle
and deal them again

I asked her once
what it was she saw
but she only shook her head
and looked down again

The cards in her hand
made me annoyed
I'd give anything at all
if she were here to annoy me now

~~

She Answered Yes

She used to wear a braid
half way down her back
that she would let loose
as I watched from the bed
as I waited for the last cross
and it would fall free
down past her back
to rest on her ass

I would hold out my arms
inviting her to come then
into the bed
but her back was turned
and she would wind her hair
up onto her head
and into a nightcap
My arms would drop, helpless

But not for long
was I disappointed
She saw in the mirror
and turned smiling each time
and to my unasked question
she always answered yes

~~



Just Like Her

Mix me a drink?
What would you like, she said
Surprise me
Sure

And she did
it was exotic
a little sweet
a little tart

It was just like her
~~

Red Bay

The beach was full of kids
as we drifted by
checking out the scene
Not more than a handful of sand
between the tiny bodies
red from the early summer sun

I remembered my own kids
growing up on this beach
The hours they spent here
mostly with mom
Dad working on the cottage
Ice cream in the camp store
The endless summer days
of childhood

Gone now, all gone
much too soon
~~

Forever

Are you insane
Who moves in with anyone
expecting it to go to hell
and end in tears
I surely did not

Each and every woman I loved
I loved forever
I still love forever

I know what a one night stand is
I've had enough to know
But these women
I asked to live with me

Each and every one
was forever

~~

Before I Sleep

Old, I feel every year
maybe resting was a mistake
maybe sitting in the cabin
and intending to write
was a bad idea

It's late for me
Eleven o'clock late
and I'm taking count
of all the pains I own
Quite a collection through the years

I couldn't go to sleep
without producing something
producing, as I always do
a lament for the past
for what went past too fast
never meant to last
~~

Baby Raccoon

I wonder where it is
that small, sick Raccoon
with the blind eye
shaking and weak

I didn't see it
but I heard about it
from last week
and during the weekdays
I worried about it

Dead and eaten now
I am sure of it
But for the absolutely useless
thought of it
I think of it tonight

~~



She Never Did

It would kill me
it would tear me up inside
that I could not help her
that I could not understand
just what it was she needed

Standing beside her
hoping one day
she would reach for my hand
at least tell me what it was
that made her so sad
She never did

~~

Twice Known Friend

Greg has died of a stroke
My twice known friend
Once for him to remember
we were tiny boys
playing in the back streets

Friends enough
for him to ask me
to be his best man
The second time I knew him
my twice known friend

He's gone now
I haven't seen him
for forty years
and he's gone with a stroke

I was crazy sick with life
half stoned on solvents
drunk every night
heading to the psych ward
when he picked me up
outside my factory job

We drove around for hours
talking of something
who the hell knew
but it was what I needed
and I made it through
and now he's gone

I guess this is my thank you
for being there
for driving around
for being there

~~

Not News Any More

Christ on a pogo stick
I can't read another word
about these measly excuses for men
who take guns into a school
and shoot children

I know guns
my grandmother taught me to shoot
she being an instructor
during the forties
I can shoot

But these unwashed sick men
are nothing about guns
their substitutes for a penis
And their imaginary complaints
I can't, I won't read about them
any more

~~

Lime in my Beard

I squeeze the lime
into the last of my gin
and soda
while I think of bed
and what tomorrow will bring
I trust there will be tomorrow
and I know that if it does not come
I have said good bye
for the last five years

No, more than that, much more
I never saw myself older
than twenty-three
before I became that age

So I've said goodbye
but now I wonder
For the last hour
I've been smelling stale smoke
the smell of mother and father
both gone long ago
Is it the lime in my beard

~~

Once We Went to Bed Together

I can ignore the spots
on my hands
and the wrinkles
on my skin

I can even look away
when facing a mirror

but if one thing says
I'm an old man
it's the time I go to bed
and the time she goes

No longer to bed together
no longer staying there
until the very last moment

We're in and out
on our own schedules
and there's no reason any more
to make them match

~~



Country Romance

I came from another town
picked her up
and drove to a third town
to see a movie
It didn't matter what movie
we'd see it anyway

There so late, sometimes it had started
we sat right down front
and to one side
the last seats available

We'd drive home slowly
my arm around her
she slid over on that big bench seat
and I would dream
of slipping my hand
down her blouse

Much later
it turned out she didn't mind
wouldn't have minded
my hand in there
~~

Cicada

Every year I forget
the sound of the Cicadas
and every year
when it gets hot enough
When I hear them
it makes me happy

Those long moist evenings
that went on and on
as we stayed out late
because school was out

and when we got back
the adults were on the porch
talking quietly
because talking loudly
just wasn't right
on those hot muggy nights
when the Cicada sang

~~

Just a Beer

I read about beer
and suddenly remember
that there is one in the fridge

Not the zero percent radler
I was hoping for
but a nice porter

and I have taken it
and opened it
saying
It won't kill me

But what do I know
~~

Grand Kids

My visitor talks about her grandkids
she's the same age as I

and I wonder why my kids
haven't any kids of their own
for me to look at
and wonder

"Where did you come from"

like I looked at them
when they were small

~~

Hollyhock Dolls

Somebody showed me
the Queen's bum
when I was a kid
folding the dollar bill
in just the right way
I never saw it again
not because I thought it stupid
well, yes
because I thought it stupid

But this weekend
I made two hollyhock dolls
something my grandmother showed me
what, sixty years ago
and I've made them for my daughter
and many others
I'm sure the trick is on the net
somewhere
~~



Appointment

On Friday I get my eyes checked
I'm actually looking forward to it
they won't stick needles in my veins
looking for blood to analyze

I'm sure they will irritate me
but I'm hoping this will be done
in a short time
and for a long time

These other visits
just seem to go on forever
and too long

~~

Home Town

I was in my birth town
for maybe five years
and then the next
for eight

After that, six
and when I moved here
I stayed, forty-six years

and I'm slowly getting to know
where the bits and pieces are

Which is good
because I really think
this place is my home town

~~

Decoration

Many cemeteries
we passed on the way
to and from the cabin
were decorated
flowers and wreathes
on stones and grass

Was it Decoration Day?
Did I miss the notice?
It was pretty though
all that colour
backed up by grey
~~

Growing Up

Diving under the water
I remember your legs
such pretty things
wavering in the light

I reached out
but somehow this time
I didn't pinch you
knowing you didn't like it
and would jump
before you pushed me over

Somehow I didn't want that
~~

Wife

She's gone to bed already
my beer half gone

I'll stay up some more
and wait to get tired
it won't take long

~~



Not So Bad

I lean my head back
against the chair
My neck gets tired
and there is my life
all laid out on a shelf

Wooden dolls I've made
lineament
some Carvalho from Brazil
a couple of knives
and toenail clippers
then medicines
and hand cream
On the end, a photo printer
I haven't used in ten years

I lean my head back
against my chair
and I think
is this my life?
It hasn't been so bad
~~

Simulation Blues

I look up
and she is not there
but all is in my mind
everything we see
is a simulation
in our minds
That's what I'm told

I want her to be there
but she is not
Am I losing my mind
that part of it that contains her

What of that girl over there
is she there
If she is there
where is my love
where has she gone
She is not here
~~

Cleaning the Toilet

Just don't think
Don't think it is someone else's job
don't think it is not yours
Just don't think

The toilet is dirty
there is cleaner at hand
Don't think
of justice
of right
of blame

pick up the cleaner
clean the toilet
it takes but a moment
and then forget it

Forget you did it
forget who should
it's clean
it's done
~~

To See You Smile

For months after you left
I would find things
that you might like
and say to myself
perhaps you would appreciate
a new shirt
or a bag

For months?
For years
Even now I see things
that I want to buy for you
because it will make you smile
and even now
my own smile fades slowly
~~

Social Media Shit

Time after idiot time
I reach for the button
to play a small video
of some famous person
doing some infamous thing
and my annoyance grows

Why do I reach
for that button
Why do I think my life
would be better
for knowing some gossip
about some famous person
doing some infamous thing

The answer of course
is that I will not
and another snag of thought
will enter the flow of my life
another tree fallen
over my river

~~



Formulae

You like Japan
why don't you write haiku
I am asked

I smile and don't answer
I did write haiku
when I was a child
and limericks
and long rhyming poems
when I was a boy

but no longer
the urge doesn't come
the form isn't appealing
any more

I have form enough
in hundreds of kata
What is a kata?
It is a haiku
with a sword
~~

The Last Piece is Yours

Do you want that last piece
of coffee cake, she says
and I answer no

I will always say no
when you ask me that
there's no need for you to ask

~~

In the Cafe

Back from the washroom
I check my coffee cup
before I sit down

Empty
I won't reach for it
and be disappointed
to find nothing

~~

Trickster

Reynard was never a bad man
but he couldn't resist
poking and prodding
and playing the clown

He loved tricks
and foolies and follies
And never seemed to think ahead
to what would happen next

Still
he wasn't a bad old fox
and we all miss him now
that he's gone

~~

Your Breasts

Oh please
my desire, as a grown man
to lick, tickle and suck
your nipples
is not a reflection
of my immaturity
my baby-memory
my desire to be mothered

Can you not accept
that I want you to know pleasure
that I do it for you
more than for me
~~



Always Worth It

When we were in school
I would ride my bike to you
through small town back streets

You went to school
and I would take the bus
to visit you, staying the weekend

Now I'm in my car
driving across the country
to see you once more

From one end of the continent
to the other
You've always been worth it

~~

Eternity Pines

A line of old pines
beside the drive
on the way to your farm

I would drive down between
and know that I was getting close
to you once more

A warmth in my chest
and my breathing would deepen
my heart slow down

knowing I'd see you now
after an eternity away from you
after an eternity

~~

Comfort

One day my love
I will leave you
it will be much too soon
but I can't prevent it
believe me, I would
but I cannot

Do not grieve too much
you will still have me
you will have my memories
and I will lose you completely
This I regret now
and forever

Know that I love you
and I always have
Know that you are precious to me
and knowing you will live
while I will not
comforts me now

~~

Bee's Wing

You introduced me to myself
the man I would be
and I didn't know it
You who were so delicate
and as tough as an old nail
in an oak door

You took me by the hand
and showed me how to love
You showed me my heart
and the ache it could feel
And all I knew was the pain
I didn't see what it taught
until so much later

until so long after you were gone
and now, today
I remember you
whenever I hear a certain song
I remember you
and I cry for the loss of you
and I cry for the man you gave me
The man I am today

~~

Grateful

I am so very grateful
not to have died young
to think of those I'd leave behind
to grieve for me
thinking "he was too young"
thinking "I am too young"

Here I am, old
and all those who loved me
old enough not to miss me
gone, or at least
said goodbye

They will perhaps grieve
for a short while
but life will cure that
the blow will be soft

~~



The Taste of Blood

Her name
I can't recall her name
but I remember her smell
the feel of her hand
on my cheek
the softness of her leg
just at the top on the inside

I remember that I loved her
I remember her eyes
so deeply blue
or maybe brown
it was hard to tell
from an inch away
as she kissed me
and then bit my lip

I remember the taste
of my blood
and I remember
that I loved her
~~

OK

I knew it wasn't me
you were looking for
but that was OK

I knew you would leave
in the morning
leave for someone else
and that was OK

That I had you for a moment
that you were with me
completely with me
for a few minutes at least
Well, that was OK

In the morning you left
but you weren't unkind
you kissed me goodbye
said thank you for the night
and that was OK

~~

Astonished

I don't understand it
you say that life is hard
that you are unhappy

Well, life is not hard
it's impossible
it's insanely unlikely
that you are alive
when so many thousands
and billions
were never born

that combination
never happened for them
and then there was you
Are you not amazed
are you not astonished
that life is

Is it hard?
Are you unhappy?
But a spat, your ma and your pa
a headache, one more drink
and your life would not be hard
you would not be unhappy
I for one, am astonished

~~

Not Memory

It's not a memory
when I hear Roundabout
or Meddle
it's a feeling deep in my chest

that I'm twenty once more
that I'll live forever
that the women I've known
are just around the corner

I haven't met them yet
Maybe I'll go for a run
and come back tomorrow
because I can run that far
~~

There Was a Time

There was a time
I could have walked
out the door
and come back years later
Just me, my thumb
and the clothes on my back

No more
I would need to plan
and plan
Pills, doctor's appointments
Oh I could do it
with enough planning
to be here at this time
to pick up pills
to see a doctor

Let's face it
that's the opposite
of walking out the door
and going
The time for that
is gone
~~



Amazed

When was the last time
you stopped at a door
and were amazed
at the grain, the weathering
the cracked paint

I have done that
without drugs
just become involved
in the texture
of what my eyes catch
I never refuse that
~~

She Told Us Why

She didn't drink
she never had that
to blame for it
for her cruelty
for her meanness

She had her life
so much not the one
she wanted
not the one she deserved
as she told us
while reaching for the stick

~~

She Was a Bear

She told me she was a bear
as she swatted my shoulder
and spun me around
A big bear
furred and furious

I tried to tell her
that bears weren't like that
not furious all the time
just if threatened
or annoyed
perhaps the same thing

And she told me yes
that was true
and she said she was threatened
and annoyed all the time
and so she must be a bear
So I became a buffalo
~~

Clockwise

I waited in the cafe
sitting by the window
watching the flies
that spun on their backs
winged break dancers

My third coffee
my stomach had turned
my throat was acid
I longed for some bread
but never ordered any

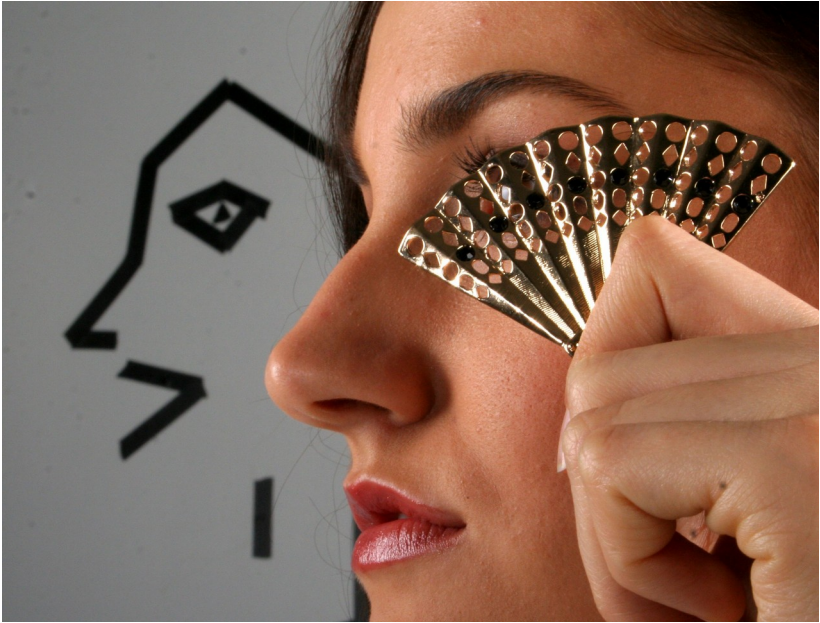
I was waiting for her
and she was late
again
of course
and the flies spun around
some clockwise
~~

I Could Wait

I'm sorry
I don't know why
I get that way
Why I tear into you
why I yell at you
I'm not mad at you
I don't mean to call you stupid
I don't think you are a child
I really don't
but I don't understand
how I get that way

I brushed her hair
out of her eyes
and smiled at her
I knew
but we had argued that before
and I could wait
until she got there herself

~~



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