

It's My Fault



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Introduction

It's my fault. I say that a lot, even had a t-shirt given to me once, that said that. I never minded, I've spent a lifetime arguing that it wasn't my fault and it never did any good. So sure, it's my fault. I have broad shoulders, pile it on, I don't mind.

The photos are from 2010, a point and shoot Pentax on auto. Not so good? Well...

~~

Kim Taylor, May 2023



It's Your Fault

It's a lot easier
you know
when you admit to yourself
that you will get the blame
no matter what you do

Accept it
Sure it's unfair
sure it's not nice
but it's going to happen
anyway

Once you know that
you can simply be yourself
on time, maybe
doing your best, maybe
and waiting for the blast

It comes back to you
it's your fault
which, if you think about it
makes you the centre
of the whole universe
it all revolves around you

Heavenly choirs of praise
for the centre of the universe
AAAAaaaaAAAhhh

~~

Tax Breaks

Let's see
tax breaks for a corporation
that already had enough workers
and enough machinery
to be profitable
and we think
they are going to add workers
Doesn't seem right
Must be some other reason
for the tax breaks

~~

Did I Just Disappear

I feel somehow
I was terrible at communication
although on some days
there would be hundreds
of emails

I have a box of letters
did I ever reply
I must have
or else why more than one

And yet for all the words
for all the effort
I say the same thing
each and every day
as if I'm teaching
~~

A Clean Modern Back

Once, in 40 years
she shaved my back
and it was not
a bonding experience
She didn't like it
and it itched
when it grew back

~~

Trouble with Toenails

I have trouble with my toenails
I have trouble reaching them
my left leg doesn't bend
without pain in the knee
and I don't see so well
up close
so between pain
and fuzzy eyes
I have trouble with my toenails

~~

Speaking of Zits

Speaking of zits

I was

I remember decades ago

thinking of all the girls

in high school

who had zits

and no dates

and I remember thinking

in ten years

those girls would be knockouts

no zits

and you could have one now

~~

Wow and Why

I remember some sort of display
maybe in a wood show
of really really small carvings
so small that to look at them
you looked through a magnifying glass
and even while I was thinking "wow"
I was wondering why anyone would bother
~~



Tilt

I played pong
in the bar
That was the first digital game
I ever played
and to tell you the truth
the last

I mean I tried tetris
and I play solitaire on the phone
but all the ding ding ding games
I ever played
were in arcades

or in the coffee shop
in the basement
of Massey Hall
Pinball, it was pinball
Tilt
~~

Why This Town

Why is this town here
I would ask
and eventually
with knowing its age
it would make sense
It was on the lake
and a creek
so you could travel

Towns not so old
were often at railroad junctions

You see, roads are new
roads are everywhere
and so now towns are dying
and cities are growing

But have no fear
as Cities get too big
everyone moves out
to towns that really
truly
have no reason to be

except they're within
two hours drive
from work

~~

I Loved Her

She had a hard life
that kid
but she refused to rat
on her mother who beat her
and her father
who would visit late at night
and I had to get the story
in bits and pieces
about four in the morning
and then I had to get over it
and I never did

~~

Nights on the Road

Too, too long on the road
Solsbury Hill playing
while I tried to sleep
in a student lounge
at UBC

Lonely as hell
nobody waiting at home
and so, so many days
left on the road

~~

A Phone Call

A phone call
that's all it would take
to get her back in my life
A phone call
to say I'm sorry
to say I understand
to say I forgive you
to say I love you
Just a phone call
and I never made the call

~~

I Was Involved

She didn't speak my language
but I understood her
just the same

She wanted to get to know me
she wanted to stay the night
she wanted to wake beside me

And I understood her
I knew what she wanted
I knew what she was saying

But I turned away
I closed my eyes
shook my head
and turned away

~~

I Didn't Knock

I stood outside your door
my arm raised
but I did not knock

Were you awake
were you waiting for my knock
I'll never know
I didn't knock

~~

Running

An Andalusian horse
runs across a beach
in my head

And it's you
somehow it's you
your hair flowing behind
running across that beach

Some days you run toward me
some days away
And I don't care
as long as I see you there
running

~~



You Took My Arm

We would walk together downtown
and sometimes she would take my arm

I would smile at all the boys
and think to myself

Yes fellows, she spent the night
and every night in my bed
Don't you wish

And when I met friends
they would smile

~~

Broken Wings

So many broken wings
my mother would say
can't you meet someone
who doesn't need help
And I would smile
I always had time
for those with broken wings

Except now
I'm old
and my own wings are broken
I'm sorry folks
there are two or three ahead of you
and I've only got so much time left

~~

My Job Now

Crackers and dip for lunch
but I've got two books to edit
I'm behind
And so a cruddy lunch
because

Uh

Because I've got a sense
that I've got to get them out
because

Uh

Because that's what I do
now
~~

The Abuse Lifestyle

The casual abuse
the looking for fault
It's so easy to slip
into those habits

The start of the end
if you really want to know
begins with a small complaint
something like a toilet seat
or maybe some dust

and it moves from there
to whole lineages of fault
until yes, your great granddad
was a bit of a prick
and that's where you got it from
~~

Different Country

As a country kid
I was supposed to see
animals dying
animals slaughtered
animals being born

but I never did
instead I saw plants
seeded
weeded
and harvested

Nary a horse or cow
a sheep or pig
in sight

~~

This City Life

I can't get used
to this city life
where things are open
where you can go out
for one thing
and later
for another thing

Country kids make lists
go into town once a week
and try to remember it all
paying attention to the time
because it's all shut at five

~~

Tillsonburg Pool

Never having stepped
on a jellyfish
near a tropical island
I stepped once
on broken glass
in the park outside the pool
where I was collecting trash
a bag full got you a glass
of orange pop

~~

A Kid Has Dreams

I once bought a spear head
three tines
and painted green

I was always hungry
and thought maybe I'd fish
maybe I'd grill them
on a small fire
next to the river

Of course I never did
a kid has dreams
but they never come true

~~



Can't Do That Now

It was a cellar
with a roof
no walls
nothing above ground
and it was the way once
that homes were made

Dig the hole
lay the blocks
and put a roof on
Live in the cellar
until you could afford the wood
to build the rest

So crude
so primitive
today we have credit
mortgages and time payments
None of this do it yourself
over ten years nonsense

They've legislated against it
It's all or nothing these days

~~

Korea and Japan

The old man told me
bits and pieces of that shell
that knocked him off a tank
in Korea and landed him
in Japan
came working their way out
of the side of his face
for years and years
I had no reason to doubt him
~~

Tin Roof

There was a tin roof
on that old farmhouse
that I grew up in
A tin roof
and nothing else
certainly no insulation
Hot in the summer
cold in the winter
doesn't really catch it
And loud
so damned loud
in the rain

Years and years of asphalt
quiet shingles on a roof
and now, a metal roof
is the latest thing
Steel now, not tin
although it's the same
and they say it will last
for fifty years
Long enough, I say
to outlast me
and I won't have to go up
to re-shingle

~~

Fluffy and I and the Apartment

I was by the place again, Fluffy
on the backside
I could look up and see
the old deck fence
on the roof of the building

I wonder
did we pay extra for that deck
Do you remember

I thought of you, Fluffy
You and I were there
and no place else
so some part of us
must still be there
don't you think

~~

Across the Road

He's started it again
that Chrysler 300
He's been working on it
for the last five years
and every other person
on the block
wishes it would just die
already

~~

Paradise

At 27

I had a glimpse of paradise
when I finished work
and on the way home
realized that she was there
waiting for me

She was there
waiting for me

Waiting for me
~~

Weights

Lifting heavy things up off the floor
How can that be good for us
but I'm told it is
and when I remember to do it
It makes me feel good
Strange, what makes up good
~~

My Apartment

Last night I had a pint
on a patio
enclosed, it's not that warm
and I watched the lights
in the windows across the road
making up stories
about the people who live there

I should say
that it was the same building
different wing
that I used to live in
the one that they had to cut the water
to get me out

~~



Sick Cats and Drugs

What is that black splotch
on the floor
beside my dumbbell

I poke it
I know, a sick cat
and I'm poking splotches
on the floor
Sometimes you just do

and the black scatters
our tiny tiny ants
have discovered a chip
well the fragment of a chip
and they're chowing down

Might have scared me
if not for the beta blockers

~~

A Dutchie, Sometimes

Why is it in my head
that by the bakers
where I'd buy a dutchie
if I had the change
there were roses

a small space between
with rose bushes
and I seem to remember
smelling a rose
just before buying
a dutchie

~~

Actinic Keratosis

I learned to swim
in an outdoor pool
lessons at 8am
in the icy cold water

Later in the day
when the sun was high
back to the pool
to cool off

Towels spread
edge to edge
on the hot concrete
and kids flopped down

Baking in the sun
warming up
before diving back in
to cool off once more

That thing on my face
and the others on my head
that were burned off
seem sort of worth it

~~

Second Nap

I've already had a nap
where I dreamed a bit
but can't remember what

Now my eyes burn
and I'm thinking of another
but it's three
time to think of supper

Time to think of coffee
and doing the dishes
and cleaning the bottom
of the six foot ladder
because it's dirty

~~

Manufacturing Costs

Ice cream
Oh God how I crave
some ice cream
but diabetes says no
No to bread
no to pasta
no to so much
that made life worth while

But ice cream
I dream of ice cream
There is one
made with no extra sugar
and it's twice the price
of regular
Just like most things
sugar free
It must be expensive
to leave out an ingredient
~~

In the Shop

In the shop
for the first time
almost
in three years

A bit cool
but it felt good
to be marking out blanks

When it warms up
I'll cut them
Big swords, these
five feet long

I hope there's enough
to go around
I've promised them
for a couple of years now

~~

A Waste Day

A waste day
not much writing
not much more
than a sink full of dishes
and maybe a sauna
where I'll read a bit

I wanted to drive the car
but that isn't to be
Those with jobs
have first dibs
Maybe at Midnight
I'll drive through the streets
and wonder how long
I'll be in this town

Having asked
I'll know that I'll be here
forever, for the rest of time
So maybe a waste day
isn't such a bad thing

~~

I Remember the Date

May 5, 1975
my first day at University
Quite an adventure

Early admission
which meant no graduation
from high school
but a chunk of grade 13
gone, gone

Somewhere there's paper
that says Guelph vouches
for my high school
and there's a BSc
and an MSc
somewhere, who the hell
knows where
and who has ever cared

I'm here
still in Guelph
and I haven't done so bad
for a high school dropout

~~



Horse Pills

Two more big pills
flushed down
and I don't mind at all

They soak up testosterone
Any the shot misses
and I'm still alive
almost five years
after I was almost dead

I swallow those things
and don't mind at all
Two more years
and I'll have been here
An adult
for fifty

~~

The Old Writer

I am so very grateful
that this urge to write
so very often each day
hit me only in retirement

If I'd had to make a living
by writing these things
I would have been miserable
so very stressed

Who ever heard
of a poet making a living
or more than a handful
of novelists

Combined it would not help
not even a little
The family would starve
the wife would struggle to feed us

So whatever Gods
who decided I was fine
to tinkle, to dabble
when I was young, thank you

~~

What Am I

What am I
Aren't I supposed to know
or at least ask
Shouldn't I write about me
and the man that I am

There, I'm a man
rather strongly gendered
Not that I don't like men
Not that I haven't kissed them
but I prefer the softer smell
of a woman in my bed

Have I written that poem
where I list all the things
I've done or been
But I don't like lists
the ten best
listed from worst to best
I suspect there's those
who make a living
making a listing

It would bore me?
I don't know
but I have no desire
to try it and see
any more
than I click that link
and smash that like
to know what some dude
thinks of surrealistic Japanese Flicks

~~

Jodo Grading Coming Up

Don't break yourself
until after the grading
one of the students said
at the bar last night

Don't break yourself
period
another one said
and I grinned

Earlier I tried to explain
that there's a peak
and I'm on the other side
trying not to slide

They are climbing that hill
getting better
getting stronger and smarter
and I love seeing it
~~

A List of Course

List of things to do today as a retired guy:

- finish the chapter from yesterday and do one for today
- go wander around the mall after taking Lauren to work at the youth music centre, I haven't driven the car for a week, this is my vacation
- poems
- post an essay and a chapter, check
- go start cutting up wood in the shop for Choken Bokuto
- do the dishes
- finish editing the most recent book of poetry
- continue to un-calcify the shower head, or buy a new one
- if there's time, start the spring cleaning

Ah yes, the leisured life of the old retired guy.

You Never Lied

You said you would never lie to me
and you lied
but I don't really care that much
you're here
and I've got big shoulders
or at least I used to have
so I can take the blame

But do you really want to lie
lying causes so much trouble
even if you lie to me
you have to keep it up
and when I say, 'lie'
you have to find a way
to twist it so that it wasn't
that it was my poor deaf ears

~~

Girl to Girl to Girl

Did I flit
from girl to girl
for a decade

I never meant to
I simply said hello
we walked together
and maybe at a corner
went separate ways

I would have been good
with any of them
for a long time
but other people
or differences of lifestyle
or whatever else it was
made it a short time

One of them had the secret
which I think, was to ignore me

Maybe it was to be lazy
I'm lazy
she was even more lazy

No trying to change each other
No trying at all
She was there for good
and it took me a month
to notice
~~



The Last Two Years

For the last two years
she made me sad
She didn't mean to
but she found fault
with me
with our friends

and it came to the place
where I was happy
to see her go home

It ended like you would expect
and I took the blame
because to do otherwise
would be to accuse her
of trying to make me sad
of trying to drive me away
And she would never see that

~~

Left Click to Oblivion

One more click
and one more apologist
for the oil industry
is silenced
The power of a god
is in that left mouse click
to silence

All I want
for the next couple of years
that I might have
is a life free of conflict
a life with no crazies
no petty dictators
no idiots

Too much to ask
I suppose
~~

Too Much Murder

Another British mystery
Sister Boniface
and more confirmation
that I would never move
to a small town in rural England
or any town in Texas

~~

Something Wrong With Me

That there is something wrong with me
I have no doubt
I have been told so many times
by so many women

but it just struck me
the most dreadful proof at all

When I play a game of solitaire
on my phone
and I win
I never wait for the happy tune
and the exploding cards
sorting themselves away

I suspect I could walk through a casino
and not get pulled to the slots
for that little hit of ding ding ding

In fact I know so
I've done it
~~

Been There, Seen That

I have to wonder
if I'm losing the will to live
I look at my facefeed
and never pause at the budo
Not the memes
not the videos
It's like I've seen it all before

Wait, after a lifetime
after forty years
I probably have seen it all
before
Yesterday I watched a special
NHK gave us "Musashi Truth"
and I'm so very sorry
I've seen it all before
~~

Sunday Evening

Perhaps, after supper
I will go to the sauna again
and read a little more
Having nothing better to do
on a Sunday evening

When did life get like this
nothing to do
no-place to go
Reading and writing
and listening to the tinny music
on my wife's phone
as she plays a game

~~

More Than Martial Arts?

I'm not sure what to do
my sister wants to do my portrait
in my martial arts stuff
and I truly don't want to do it

There are photos taken
and commented on
but I have sent nothing
do you suppose
she'll forget about it

I'm not shy
but there's so much more
to my life than martial arts
isn't there?
Surely?

~~

God of Food

Tell me please
of the religion of your youth
Tell me what you believed
before you grew old
and believed in nothing

Very well, I said
I believed in a God of Food
and I was not a good boy
because I went hungry
Each and every day
~~



Great Job

I must be a boring fellow
because one of the best jobs
I had as a youth
was cutting Triticale
looking at it magnified
and drawing it

No there were not digital cameras
Yes drawing was easier
than expensive macro lenses
and developing film
Look and draw
cut, look and draw again

~~

Fluffy At The Station

Do I miss those sweaty days
hoeing the rows of grain
at the research station

Or is it that I miss
meeting her
over lunch

Reading her book
on the grass
Me on the picnic table

Looking down
~~

And I Have To Listen

My God you're complaining again
and over something like that

Has nobody ever slapped you
and told you just how unlikely
it is that it's you that was born
whenever long ago it was

How very strange and lucky it is
that you're here
to see the sun
breathe the air

And instead
you stand there and bitch
about something absolutely
Meaningless

~~

This is my Heart

That's my heart right here
That's what I believe
and what I'm feeling right here

If only you're read these damned things
You'd know
and you wouldn't have to tell me
I'm so hard to understand

~~

She Had a Key

Six o'clock in the morning
she'd come sneaking into my bed
she had a key
and when her boyfriend was gone
she'd use it

Six o'clock in the morning
she'd wake me up
from a warm comfortable dream
demanding what she wanted

It was a mistake
always a mistake
but I couldn't help it
could I
She had a key
~~

Once There Was a Beach

A post from a bar in Port Stanley
and all I could see in the background
was new condos
where I used to see the beach
I am a bit sad right now

~~

Bad Numbers

Should I get off at the thirteenth floor
should I finish a series at thirteen
Should I avoid four
when talking of Japanese things
I must not put the radio volume to eleven
or I will be frowned at
When they talk of the tyranny of numbers
I somehow don't think of these

~~

Too Young to be Old

You know, I'm pretty damned young
to be this old
I keep thinking of things to do
but none of them
are really all that important
just things to do
while waiting around

If I do enough
maybe I'll get stressed
and feel like there's not enough time
and that will make me feel old

No, maybe I'll do a little
and stay young
with grey hair
Young grey hair
and be young at heart
and lust after the girls
with no chance
and no equipment

Or maybe I'll just get going
out of the house and walk
down to the coffee shop
and get away from the grey yowler
long enough to write a chapter
in the book that never ends
~~



A Failure

I tried, I really did
to get to the shop today
but things happened

First I'll have a sauna
first I'll have lunch
first I'll finish this book
while sitting in Brenda's chair
with my feet up

and then it was time to wash dishes
and make coffee
and cook supper

and now I'm tired,
now I'm waiting
two classes tonight

And that's why
I didn't get to the shop today
and that's why
I feel like a failure

~~

Back to Normal

It's happening
for a while after covid
people would say hello
good morning
how are you
as they passed on the street

but now
I'm beginning to think
that once more
I'm becoming invisible
~~

Life Is a Movie

In the movies they shoot
from the hip
and the rope parts
the wire splits
the light, a hundred meters away
goes out

But in real life
buddy grabs his gun
and fires at shadows
outside his house
and hits the 14 year old head
of a girl playing a game

But it's all the same
no consequences
except of course
for the kid
but she was in the wrong yard
anyway
~~

Blue Cars

She had a blue Mercury Capri
and she had a blue Mazda B2000
Then she had a blue Ford 500
Later there was a blue Mazda GLC

All cars my lovers owned
But I'm not sure how that happened
my favourite colour is not blue

~~

The Red Sea Religion

It wasn't Moses who walked
boldly into the Red Sea
It was some nameless girl
raped by the neighbour
thrown out of her house
for lying
Still
she walked boldly in
~~

Be Warned

I'm missing a few pieces
Tonsils
a bit of Prostate
many teeth

But, most of me is here
So I can offer you
a mostly whole fellow
with a couple good years
on him

But be warned
One part you might want
doesn't work any more

~~

Call Me Clint

Clint, you should call yourself Clint
said the girls on the beach
when they heard my full name

Yes-yes, Clint
that's a great name
Call yourself Clint

~~

Re-Invented

When I left home for University
I took the opportunity
to become a different person
and it worked

It worked so well
that friends now
won't believe I was ever like
the boy who left home

~~



Behind Those Eyes

There was a hurt
deep, deep behind those sparkling eyes
behind that laughing mouth
It would be there
sometimes at a stray word
perhaps at a stray thought
and you never hinted it was there
but I saw it

I never mentioned it
thought that you would tell me
when you were ready
No, that is a lie
I didn't want to see it
I didn't want to know
I wanted to believe that you were blessed
that your whole life
was as bright, as happy
as you were when I knew you

And I'm sorry
I'm sorry I never asked
I'm sorry I was a coward

~~

Self-Care

Lotions and creams
potions and dreams
all to fight the wrinkles

Sawing away
at the toenails
and defoliating the foot
all in the interest
of trying to keep things working
~~

What Was My Point?

Girls I swear are 14
but drinking in the pub
bras and yoga pants

The skinny kid on the street
waiting for a ride

The woman in a summer dress
and canvas sneakers
getting coffee

The girl walking
looking at the sidewalk
with a secret smile

No, that is my point
~~

Brenda and I

Forty years together
on a bike ride
with son and friend
We came upon a pond
looked at each other
and said "skinny dip"

The boys were horrified
as we stripped down
and got in
hot sweaty day
and cool, cool water
Such a perfect way
to refresh the day

~~

It's a Mystery

They brought in a bylaw
against the seagulls

Filled up the parks
with condos
and installed paid parking
through the entire town

Tore down the old attractions
and put in more condos

Now they wonder
why they can't get servers
to work for minimum wage

and now the rich folk
are moving out
It's a mystery

~~

Stop and Leave

That knot in the stomach
as you see the anger building
the frozen terror
the fear of saying the wrong thing
and being asked

that answer will be wrong
no matter what it is
and then the explosion
I've been on both sides
and I'm not proud of either
the best day of my life
was when I somehow learned

to stop
to leave
~~

My Sweet Little Elf

I loved the fiddle music
and I loved my little bar
but I loved my little girl
the very best of all

She was lean in the legs
curvy where it was best
with her long brown hair
her big brown eyes
and those pointed ears
I once called her my little elf

She spit upon the floor
and turned fierce eyes to me
I'm not one of those raggedy scum
and I'll thank you not to think it

I apologized right away
and bought her another whisky
and crooned sweet words to her
for the rest of the night and day

Never again did I call her
my sweet little elf
and never did I ask her
just where and what lands
she was from

One day long ago
she left just as she had come
out of nowhere
and to nowhere she was gone

I sat in my favourite bar
listened to the fiddle music
and lost a bit of a tear
that fall into my glass

I never saw her again
my sweet young thing
who was never an elf
never mind the pointed ears
~~



My Hollow Tooth

I carried it in a hollow tooth
for years and years and years
a microfilm outlining how
I loved you with all my heart

How I thought you'd see it there
I cannot imagine now
but somehow I thought you would
and so you left my life

It's still there in that hollow tooth
I never took it out
and I know it's too late to show you
but I wish I had back then

~~

An Internet Story

There's a Swedish girl
who left school
and moved to a little place
in the North

She rebuilt a house
and makes videos
about doing the laundry
in four feet of snow
and taking baths through the ice

She's very good looking

Got a dog
a couple of cats
and now she's got a boyfriend
she's going to marry
and a mother who takes care
of the office work

There you go, in a nutshell
from recluse and hermit
to civilization
all watched over by subscribers
full of loving grace

~~

All About Them

Who are these celebrities
and what do they want with me
that I have to know
all about them

Fifteen minutes of fame be damned
Some of these deities I've known
for fifty years
and yet, for all I know about them
they've never once called for tea
or sent even an email

~~

Not an Angel

She walked into the room
from thin air
That's what it looked like
thin air
but she said it was the other place
and there was a door
that was my longing

She stayed for a while
making me laugh
then making me cry
she slept beside me
and sometimes on top
sprawled over my chest
drooling on my neck

That's how I knew
she wasn't an angel
she wasn't perfect
never claimed to be
but I never cared for that
all I cared about
was that she was there

And she was there
until the day she wasn't
I came home to an empty place
she left a small book behind
that I never could read
I couldn't see it for tears
but once in a while
I look to that place
where she appeared
from thin air

~~

First Sip of Coffee

I lean over
to sip the coffee
too full in the cup
and burn my top lip

~~

Maybe

Are you hungry?

"Maybe"

I asked about that
and she started to explain
just what it meant
That "maybe"

but I got distracted
and I still don't know
what "maybe" means

Which is too bad
because it seems
it would be useful
to know what "maybe" means

~~

Put It On!

In the strip club again
with the foreign visitors

I looked sideways
at one of the girls
getting dressed in the sound booth
and was fascinated
and I have to admit
a bit turned on

She looked up
caught me looking
and grinned at me
I grinned back

~~



Still Here

I used to drink every night
in the bar
sometimes with friends
sometimes by myself
but a pint or two every night

Now I have a pint
maybe two or three times
each week
and always in company
never sure I should drink

I guess it doesn't bother me
But sometimes I miss
the writing time
the painting time
I used to have at the bar

Well, two bars really
both closed now
gone
while I'm still here
while I write over coffee
~~

Separating from Home

How very slowly we separate
from our parents

At the end of my life
my mother's quilt
has been put away

and one from the thrift shop
lies on the bed today

~~

Got My Hyphen

Seven generations born
in the same fishing village
but in high school
I had to be a hyphen
like all the others

Polish-Canadian
Hungarian-Canadian
You know the drill
if you lived in that town

And now I realize
I got it wrong all those years
I'm a Canadian-Colonizer
and the other guys
Polish-Colonizer
or Hungarian-Colonizer

So after sixty years
I've finally got my hyphen
~~

Do It To Lose It

There was a story being told
in my dreams
all of last night
When I woke, I fell back to sleep
with the story being told

But I have said, "no more"
I am taking a break
No more stories for a while
no more books
and it is a relief

Do I take on projects
just so I can have the pleasure
of dropping them
A chapter a day
was a bit of a struggle
some days

Now it's a relief
that I can walk outside
at any time now
and work in the shop
without the guilt
of a chapter undone

~~

Pay It Forward

How to say thank you
to those you have taught
Thank you for learning
what I have to give

It isn't that way
in our capitalist day
They ought to thank me
right?
and pay me as well

But that's not the way it works
in the budo world
I was taught
by those who wanted to teach
to pass along what they learned
and so I pass it along

and I'm thankful to those
who learned it from me

A great relief
to know someone will carry on
one more generation
this useless information

~~

Garbage Truck

Outside the unpredictable garbage truck
is humming and crashing
and although I know our bin
has been duly deposited on the curb
I worry each time

"Has it gone out?"

"Will we miss it this week?"

The pleasures of living in the city

~~

Not Even New

That's not clever you know
as I thought maybe
I would do a poem of equal lines
splitting words where they split
twenty or thirty letters
and then a carriage return
line feed

No that's not clever at all
it's just a trick
and it's been done before
so it's not even a new trick

~~

Whatever You Like

What colour am I
the answer of course
is Canadian
Look how colour is spelled

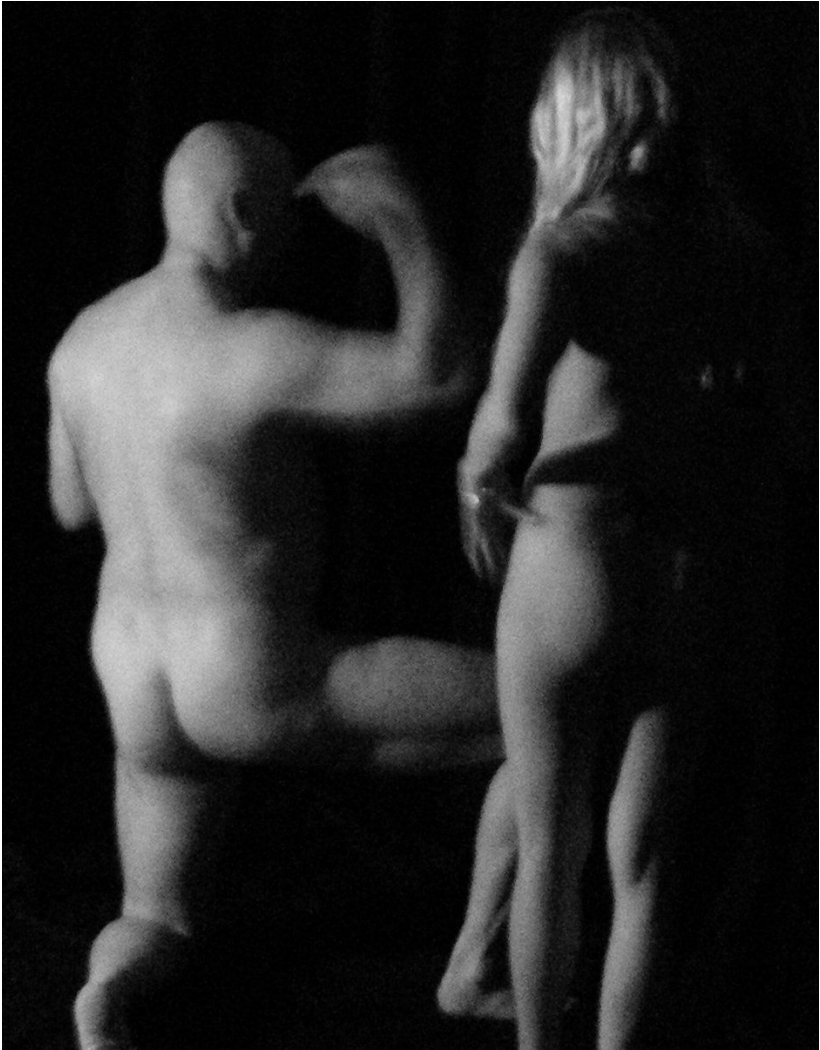
But elsewhere I have trouble
knowing just what colour
a poet is
by reading his/her poem

Hell I don't even know sex
or is it gender these days
I have to be told

oh I'm Cambodian
well I'm Canadian
and if you can't tell
what colour I am
Why not just not bother

I'm whatever you want
And isn't that nice

~~



That Neighbourhood

Outside there are sounds
of people working
it's that kind of street

the guy with six cars
working on all of them

the guys with big trailers
or huge white vans

the folks building extensions
well outside code

Like I said
it's that sort of street
and all of it reminds me

I ought to be in the shop
grinding wood
~~

Don't Ask Me

It took so very long
for her to say she was unhappy
Not with you, she said
Well perhaps, but not because of you

There were things
things that happened long ago
and sometimes you remind me

So please
don't think it's about you
and don't ask me

~~

My Hands

I look at my hands
rough
partly crippled
Aged, so very aged
and I can't imagine them
caressing your body

then they were smooth
strong
as beautiful as your skin
as beautiful as you were
So many years ago
a pair of crippled hands
ago
~~

traumatized as a kid

this childhood trauma
is so depressing
don't you think
so common, so often

but terribly popular
with everyone
who is anyone
coming up with ways
they were abused as kids

the men, circumcised
who are recovering
by growing the foreskin back
so brave, so worth sympathy

well me too
I hasten to add
I was circumcised
although I don't remember

I'm sure I'm traumatized
I'm sure
~~

A Loss

Oh god
my life is shite
Shall I tell you why

I tried to fit a plastic saya
inside another
and split it
which means a waste, a loss
and I will get told off
for wasting a saya

and so I sit here
lean my head back on my chair
and think of a crow
pecking my skin open
eating my liver

~~

Like Buses

Poems are like buses
If you don't like that one
there will be another
just over the page

~~

Kuny Suspenders

Out on the deck
putting on my work pants
with my cheery red Kuny suspenders
the jeans feel quite nice
all warm from the sun

~~

Migraine

Another visual migraine
Since when do I get migraines

This getting old is
as they say
not for the young
~~



Invasive Species

All you unwanted from other countries
non-native

It would have been better
if you had stayed where you are

All you invasive species
coming over here
crowding out our proud natives

Especially you Garlic Mustard
and you Giant Hogweed

~~

All The Way Down

That thick black braid
that went most of the way
down her back

and when she took it out
when she stood under the shower

I would follow her hair
all the way down
past her ass

~~

Dead Once

I was dead once, she said
but they kicked me out
of the underworld
because I kept seducing the devils
and making them do nice things
before they laid their hands on me

They tried to pass me off
to the other place
but they wouldn't have me
they were afraid I'd seduce them
and make them do bad things
before they laid their hands on me

Can I lay hands on you, I asked
Sure you can, you've done good things
and bad things
and I've watched you do both
so have at it
Why should I mind
I'm not sure I'm alive again or not

~~

Her Thumb

She put her thumb
into my mouth and said
guess where this has been
I don't care
I said in a muffled, mumbled voice
it's yours

It's not you know
I got it off a dead man
when I lost mine
in an industrial accident

I'm calling bullshit I said
Well all right, she said
you caught me
It wasn't an accident
I cut it off myself
and they gave me a new one

I was pleased
that I caught her out
It was a very shapely thumb
and didn't taste of blood at all
~~

Women Who Smoked

I can't really remember
when I stopped bedding women
who smoked

As I think back
through all the old flames
I can sort of tell
when the flames went out

I think one of them quit
while she was with me
One thing I'm sure of
it wasn't for me that she quit

~~

Can't Talk to Us

Slowing down, I honk
toot toot toot

and the crow
on the busy road
with a really nice chunk
of something or other
looks at me with a beady eye

it has to be a beady eye
because that's tradition

Anyway he looks at me
and I swear
his upper beak curled
as he lazily flapped
to the side of the road

You're not magical
he seemed to say
You can talk about us
but we know you're nothing
you can't talk to us

~~

OMFG

Oh my fucking god
ambushed by trumpie-boy
in a poem

Can't I have a couple of years
without that, that

Maybe that would be enough
for one of us to be gone

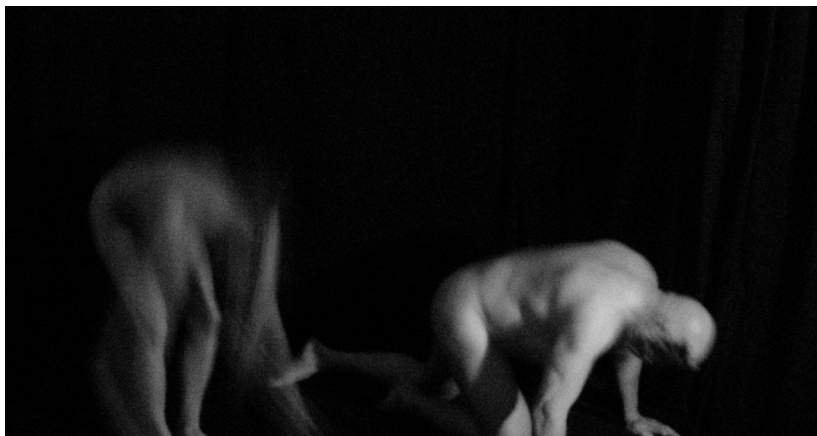
~~

Hardware Store Food

Hardware store Trail Mix
and all I get are raisins
No nuts, no seeds

That's what I get
for buying snacks
at a hardware store

~~



Reading In The Sauna

It's time, I think
to go lie down in the sauna
and read my book for a while

Yes, I've got two of them
I could edit and upload
but I don't want to
and what's the sense
of being retired and old
if you can't put things off

Put it off long enough
and someone else might
probably not, but might

I'll read out there
until my tablet says
Your battery is too hot
stop charging

~~

Apple Blossoms

The neighbour's apple blossoms
drift into my yard
bringing a fragrance
with their delicate white magic

They feel like memory
not of an apple tree
there is none in my memory

but of all those I knew
and like the blossoms
drifted out of my life

~~

No Conflict Thanks

I'm not your mother
and I don't want to be
don't ask me where it is
don't tell me I wasn't where
you figured I should be

I've left my desire for conflict
far behind, years behind
The book I'm reading
I just put down
because of conflict

I know there's supposed to be
but at the moment
I don't care to even read about it

~~

The Dragon Liked Her

When the dragon returned
I didn't expect the maiden
who was riding him

I would never have thought
that he would allow that
but apparently he liked her
If that huge lick
up her backside as she got off
is anything to go by

Funny, I thought
I'd just been thinking of a dragon
and then forgot about it
when he came back
with the girl
She wasn't my type
but I said hello

Hello, she said
is this where dragons come from?
I suppose it is
since this one came from me
My imagination that is
He's not real?
I'm afraid not
I felt silly, talking to nobody
~~

The Girl in the Mirror

She was there again
that girl in the mirror
with her endless listing
of every way she was wrong

She was useless
unliked
had no place in the world
No man would ever stay
they would run away
like they always did

Her clothes were shit
her hair too limp
just like her tits

On and on it would go
always ending the same way
always the same suggestion
Why don't you cut your wrists

She looked in the mirror
she looked on the shelf below
where there were razors
One more time, she turned away

~~

So Pointless

A life long passion
spoiled by two or three
of the small minded

He knew it shouldn't be so
he knew it wasn't really so
but after so very long
it all seemed so pointless

~~

Old and Clumsy

I dip the tea bag
pull it out
and drop it on my desk
Not on purpose

I'm so glad she wasn't here
to tell me I'm old
clumsy
and inattentive

Don't suggest that to me
I told her once or thrice
when she did similar things
and got yelled at
Major time

and if I wasn't so.... so...
I would know she hadn't done it

~~

Time is Linear

I often say yesterday
when I mean tomorrow
or tomorrow
when I am thinking of yesterday

You see time, to me, is a line
and on a line you can go both ways
depending on which way you're facing

If I'm facing the past
and go forward
then I go toward tomorrow
That's not so hard to see
is it?

~~



The Promise

So many decades ago
I put my hands
around her neck
I let go and said, it's over

I had made a promise
decades before that
and I've kept to it

Still, there are times
to my great shame
where I've been tempted

But so far so good
~~

Pure Light

It was just bigger than a twig
and smaller than a branch
the sort of thing
I could break in my hands
and I did so

I broke that stick
and from the broken ends
came a light of such purity
that everything it touched
was reduced to its essence
to its bare core
to its existence

And I had to wonder
at what I saw
Nothing
and nothing
and when it shone on me
while I looked in the mirror
Nothing
~~

Never Trust a Brick

On the ground, bricks
inscribed with names

This is never good
I've seen the names
of drowned fishermen
and the names
of the disappeared

Never trust a brick
with a name inscribed

~~

The Plant

As I sat on her couch
a plant turned in my direction
and stared, I swear, at me

She came back into the room
with two open beers
and turned on the television
The plant turned away

Don't mind him, she said
he gets bored
and watches anything that moves
He likes the television

~~

Bathrooms off the Kitchen

Does it mean anything
that my two favourite places
to live
both had bathrooms
off the kitchen?

Come to think of it
my grandmother's house
had a bathroom door
right beside the stove

I think that maybe
these old houses
were built by people
that kept the plumbing simple

~~

PBH

As a kid
we had peanut butter
and honey

Recently
I tried it again
but

I think I will stick
with my orange marmalade

~~

My Nose

This getting old
I'm not sure I like it
Not when I look in the mirror
and see that thing on my nose
that scabs and heals and scabs again

No, I'm not a baby
who needs his nails trimmed
I don't scratch at it
when I'm asleep
I'm sure of that
~~

How Did It Feel

How did it feel
when you went away

I know you never asked
because you went away
but I'll tell you

It didn't feel like anything
because you went away
all the time

and so I got used to being alone
long before you left me alone
so it didn't feel like much

Sorry
~~



We Need A Room

We need a room
with a door
so we can lock him in
with a litter box
and some food

She was talking about the cat
who woke us up last night
multiple times
but it might have been our son
who spends a lot of time in a room
with the door closed

Still, I suggested outside
for the night
he's out there now
and I can barely hear him
yelling to come in
In a moment, some music
~~

Not The Same Thing

Once I said
I'm really a shy person
not comfortable around others

and she laughed at me
You are so not shy
you are so good with people

Being good with people
is not the same
as liking them

~~

Your Own Place

Having your own place
is something I recommend
You can close the door
and not answer it
turn off your phone
and not look at it

Just be careful, very careful
who you give a key
Once you do that
they are in your place
and there's nothing you can do
without fuss and bother

To avoid fuss and bother
is the point of your own place
but if you can't avoid it
make it as quick as possible
then change the locks

~~

Wives and Promises

The first white men came
and took native wives
and when it was time
to return home
they left them

I heard that and thought
shame on you
but then I wondered
what these Europeans
were supposed to do
Take their wives back
to their other wives?

I mean how happy
would the native wife be
in the same house
as the un-native wife
and let's look to the future

Here are the modern folks
Men with wives for a while
and then one or the other
wanders away
Men with two wives
who don't like each other much

What's different?
Oh, the promises you say
So what was promised?
Who expected what
in that first awkward bed
where the future is far away

~~

Better End This One

When I read poetry
I flick the page
if the lines are too long

after all
if I wanted to read a book
I'd pick up a book

Better end this one

~~

What Seeds Know

The gardener put down his rake
and looked at his work
rich black earth looked back
inviting

The gardener fell forward
he couldn't help it
onto the soil
expecting to stop

but he went through the soil
black as night
and showed up
in the land of roots
the land of grubs and worms

Somehow, he thought
I've got to grow back
to the daylight
to the sunshine
and suddenly he understood
~~

Bread Pudding

Stale bread
crumbled in a bowl
Milk and brown sugar
and you have dessert
When the milk goes off
use it on the wood floors
to polish them up good

Maple syrup is expensive
but maple flavour is not
so brown sugar
hot water
and flavour to taste
for the Sunday pancakes

Chicken is grey
boiled in a pot
with yellow gristle
but on top
are dumplings
don't you dare
lift the lid to check
for ten minutes

We ate
never enough for a growing boy
but we ate
and never did I think
that we were poor

That came later
when I realized I was rich
that I could buy a coffee
without counting my change

~~



In The Rain

She held her hand out
catching the rain
I took her hand gently
took her palm to my mouth
and tasted the rain
flavoured by the salt there
and it was the best thing
I had ever tasted.

~~

She Visits Sometimes

There, in the corner of my eye
she is there again
I don't invite her
but she comes anyway
to visit a little

I don't know how she found me
I left our place so many years ago
but there she is
that crooked smile
the twinkle in her eyes
laughing at me again
I can tell

I try to ignore her
we've both moved on
but she comes sneaking
creeping up on me
staying in the corner of my eye
so I can't fix her
so I can't banish her

As if I ever would

~~

Just a Minion

Waking up happy
with a plan for the day
free
to do what I want
happy

And not quite fast enough
Caught
told I'm doing something else
and I'm depressed again

Not happy at all
pretending that the morning
is all there is to the day

~~

Spaghetti Hair

She took two handfuls
of cooked spaghetti
held them to her head
and asked
Should I dye my hair blond?

We're supposed to eat that you know
She grinned
You kiss my hair
it's good enough for that
surely you can eat the spaghetti

Now you've got blond
all over your hair
You're going to need to wash it
She grinned
You'll wash it for me
won't you?

~~

High Class

I come from a place
where IKEA is high class
where the old powange chair
is used until it breaks
the fabric long ago shredded
and a folded blanket used
instead

~~

Not Me Joey

Hanging around waiting
the Pamurai is on her laptop
trying to upload maps

I didn't suggest
that Google Maps would do
if she simply gave an address

Who wants their head bitten off
Not me Joey, not me

~~

Bessie and Me

Going to the fistulated cow
to gather stomach juice
for an undergrad lab

Masters student me
knocked in the rubber plug
and pulled it out
stuck my hand in, with the cup
and gathered the precious fluid

Putting in the plug
I returned from the barn
and my supervisor grinned
"Did she cough?"

~~

And Me

I hate my body
she said

Which one, you ask
which of all those women
that you knew said that

Pretty much all of them
And me, sometimes
and me

~~



Listen, Listen

Sandy Denny is singing Listen, Listen
and I can't help but listen
That voice, oh that voice
~~

Nanadan Again

Before enlightenment
Chop wood, carry water
After enlightenment
Chop wood, carry water

Friday, Saturday, Sunday
in the middle a test
Congratulations congratulations,
you must be so happy

I can't convince anyone
that I'm the same person
but I say thank you
and shrug to myself

~~

OMG Cat

OMG cat
I'm trying to work here
Shut up
and get off my lap
~~

Hachidan? Shogo?

Where are you going from here
are you going to try
for the next level?

The next level
is ten years from now
so no, I won't be here

Oh that other thing
the thing were I do an essay
and pay a lot of money

No
~~

Worth Being Alive

Eric Satie, Gymnopedie No. 1
and the cat lying on my beer barrel
purring

Sometimes it's worth
being alive

~~

Who You Are

This sign here
is a secret sign
telling you who you are

Isn't that wonderful
that the sign says who
and the others tell you
who

No need to struggle
no need to cry out
This is who you are
~~

Maybe Tomorrow

What a perfect day
to work in the shop
the temperature is just right
the work is waiting

But then I think
cement floor
bad feet, bad knees
Maybe tomorrow
~~

No Pay Raise

Not to take away
from anyone's enjoyment
of success
But a week ago
I was no different than today

In between was a test
the test was to assess
whether or not I met a standard

If the test was fair
which I have to accept
else why be tested
A week ago I had a level of skill
today I have that same level

and all that has changed
is a piece of paper that says
some people believe
I'm at that level

Hardly something for me
to be excited about
hardly something
to congratulate me about

Trust me
I don't get a pay raise
~~



Not Pride, Doubt

Am I proud
that I worked hard
for forty years
perfecting some physical skills
that I now struggle
to maintain
trying to dig in my heels
to the downward slope
after the upward climb

I don't think so
any more than I'm proud
of the academic work I put in
the scientific papers I've published
the books
the articles
the photography

It's something I've done
and every day
rather than pride
comes doubt
"can I still do it"

~~

Does the Naked Man Come With The House?

The neighbour taps on the door
"We're moving
new family coming in
We can see you naked
maybe you should cover up
walking from the sauna"

This, this is the true meaning
of getting a 7dan in Jodo
ten years after a 7dan in Iaido
Founder, builder, first in... etc etc etc

This is the meaning of being
a big shot
The neighbour complaining
about your saggy wrinkly
naked butt
~~

Didn't Want To Be There

I try to comfort
not understanding the tears
and get told "Fuck Off"

Ah, not the spilled drink
but she's thinking of him
and as usual, I'm wrong

~~

A List of Things

Things I don't understand

Computer dating

Whatever it is you just said

Current standards in iaido

Why all movies look alike

Zombie everything

What is is I did wrong

(I never understood that)

Why I'm bothering to write this

~~

I Want a Rest

Is it too much to be left alone
I pushed and pulled and prodded
and got things set up
Let others carry on
or throw it in the trash if they want
Not my problem any more

I sit here listening to Nina Simone
Am I the Sinnerman
Call me the Sinnerman if you want
just leave me alone
Do what you want with what I did
Call me the Devil

Just leave me be for a few years
Then you can forget I was ever here
Just don't blame it on me
Oh hell, go ahead
Blame it on me
Just leave me alone

~~

I Was Primed

Long enough
and I forgot
I forgot how she treated me
And so I stayed
Stayed too long
for her
too long for me

If only I'd had a temper
that lasted long enough
to throw her out
but she knew how to be quiet
just long enough
and then I was ready
I was primed
for the next round

~~

Helpful Folks

Well this retirement thing
is dead easy
I'm being replaced for visits
without even being asked
and saying no thanks.

It's so good to have helpful folk
willing to let me step aside
before I've even said
that's what I want

~~

The Day Was Coming

When I had calmed down
when I no longer wanted to leave her
I tried to tell her
what had hurt me so

and just like that
quick as a wink
I was the one
It was my fault

and once again
I had to apologize
There would come a day
when I would leave

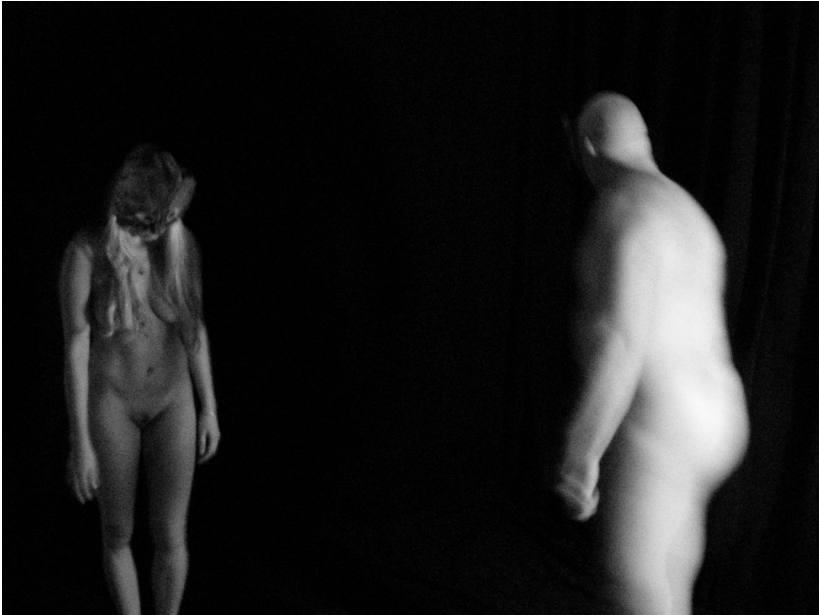
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The Smells of Home

I remember the smell of Dettol
the sting of Iodine
when we were out
of Mercurochrome

The smell of bleach
and ammonia
All the little things
of a long-ago childhood

~~



In Memory

I read of a father
blown from a ship
thrown as if dead
and later was dead

In memory of my father
blown from a tank
all but dead
at the bottom of a hill

I memory of my father
I stop reading
~~

I Could Have

I almost died that day
oh and that one
that one too

So many close calls
so many times
I could have died

But then again
I didn't
and every other day
when I didn't die
I didn't die

It's silly, when you think of it
to look back in wonder
and say "I could have died"
You could have
but you didn't
~~

Is It Just Me

You see, alone
with nobody around
I'm not getting shit
for something

What is it about me
Is it that I'm an old white man
that there seems to be
an open season

Is there no other group
that can be trashed
Is it only me?

~~

The Women I Talked To

Long talks about everything and anything

My mom and my gran

Before bed, leaned against the side

or in the car

I miss those talks, so long gone away

~~

Little Prince

Prince the squirrel
visited the bar last night

lots of kerfuffle at the door
then a lot of shuffling at a table
as he made his daily visit

Then he was cupped
in a baseball cap
and escorted outside

"I wish he wouldn't visit"
said the waitress
We have to keep the doors closed
and crank the air conditioner

~~

High School Football Shirt

When she stayed over
she would wear my high school
football shirt

and the next day
after she'd gone quietly away
at dawn
she'd leave it on the bed

I would pick it up
and breathe in her scent
a sort of horse and girl mix
and go back to sleep

~~

Stand Still

If you stand still, she said
don't move
don't breathe
and close your eyes
You will see them
those spirits around us
the ones we don't want to see
the ones who see us
never so well
as when we are busy
bustling around
on our useless chores
There, are you still
Can you hear them

~~

Thank You For Not Asking

Thank you for not asking
she said
and I kept silent

After a moment she nodded
rolled over
and went back to sleep

Sleepless myself
I watched her
for the rest of the night
~~



The Right Position

When I was on top
I felt like I was imposing

When she was on top
I felt like I was lazy

Only in those couplings
where we were on our sides
was I truly content
that I was not being a jerk

~~

What Her Face Looked Like

I try to remember
what her face looked like
while we were making love
but it was long ago
and so much has drifted away

I worry that it is not her
that it is someone else
with her face

~~

Just a Word

Am I the first
I believe I am the first
in our organization
our federation
our lot
to have two nanadan
of the three possible

And you don't know
what that means
That's all right
It isn't important
just a word
meaningless outside
not much to impress
inside

~~

My Witch

That little pug face
smashed in by breeding
generations of effort
so breathing is hard

She stopped
put her hand on my arm
and asked
Prize winning or breathing
I said breathing
and she nodded

She nodded at the face
and as I watched
that face elongated
a nose appeared
and the horrible noise
that was its breathing
became silent

~~

Only for a Moment

I close my eyes
to think for a moment
hand to my forehead
elbow on the chair

Only for a moment
I think
but then I twitch
on the way to sleep

~~

Someone else?

When her necklace broke
or her ring was lost
the look on her face

As if some valuable part
of her soul was gone
and I wondered

Was she thinking of a gem
a bit of metal
or something else
something hidden from me

~~

Hot Wax

Dropping hot wax?
Sure I'll try that
drip away

But why, of all things
did you start by dripping it
on my penis

That's enough of that, I think
some sort of retaliation
for Brazilians I suspect
~~

Creaky Stairs

When the pressure
in my bladder
got too much
I would sneak downstairs
because I wasn't supposed
to go downstairs
after bedtime

So each step was planned
near the wall here
stretch to the banister
and step between
down the sides of stairs
creeping from solid to solid
and finally down
only to have to go up again
which meant a different pattern
to make it back to bed

Funny
when I grew up
had a house of my own
I built the stairs
with built in creaks
Not so I could yell
but so I could tell
who was going up or down

~~



That Blank Face

Someone said
as I was swinging a stick
at my partner's head
during my test
That I looked bored

I don't doubt it
my face would be blank
This was dangerous
a moment of distraction
and I might be injured

A long time ago
I learned that face
that blank, watching face
as my head was slammed
up against a wall

Chucked under the chin
by gran
who wanted confession
But I didn't break the lamp
I didn't steal my pocket knife
back from the jail drawer

Not bored, that face
but well learned in childhood
Never submit to injustice
never give anything away
never let them know
how much you are hurting

~~

Electric Cords

Attention caught
by something on my desk
What

There's a power cord
attached to my hand-spring
you know, those things
you squeeze

But it's just a spring
how is it plugged in
why is it plugged in
I lean forward
slowly understanding

I move the USB cord
from inside the hollow handle
and all is normal again
no strange mechanisms
growing on my desk
More's the pity

~~

Dying for my Hair

They say the nose
the hair
and the fingernails
grow after you die

My hair doesn't grow now
but the earlobes certainly do
I wonder how long they grow
after you're dead

Like, if you dig me up
two years from now
will my hair be back
Will it be muddy blond

~~

Sleeping Alone

Sleeping alone sucks
I was up every hour last night
sometimes sweating
sometimes freezing

nobody to warm me
nobody to keep the covers
or dole them out correctly
I woke almost strangled

This sleeping alone sucks
a man could get hurt

~~

Ten Year Old Pains

This thing, this lump
that was curling my finger
is finally getting smaller
but just like my balls
while they were shrinking
back to ten year old me
It gives out regular pains
to let me know
something is happening

Woke me up a few times
a few nights ago
I don't really mind the pains
if I know what they are
it's the ones that stab
in random places
at random times
that concern me a bit

~~

Spookylike

I saw my coat
float out of the night
all spookylike
in the darkness
until I realized
that it was her
the woman I loved
wearing my coat
out of her love for me
and because she liked it

My coat floated across
lawn and sidewalk and porch
until it was once again by me
on my lap in fact
its arms around my neck
and somewhere near
where my head would be
A wonderful set of lips
~~

Like Two Old People

Sunday morning
in that old apartment
with its thick stone walls
even the church bells next door
didn't penetrate the quiet

as you rattled around the kitchen
and I sat reading the paper
Just like two old people

it felt so very good
knowing you were cooking
for the both of us
while I read you stories
of human interest
thinking of coffee
~~



My Right Thumb

I wanted 200 dollars
to go someplace I think
but my grandmother said no
don't ask your father
the door has fallen off his truck
he doesn't have the money

This was before
I learned the power
of my right thumb
to get me a ride
someplace, anyplace

I once took a bus
from Guelph to Delhi
but it went via
every little town in between
and Hamilton
Thirteen hours
for a two hour drive
~~

Mail Order Specs

Ordered the next half power up
in reading glasses
and I can read much better
no eye strain

but the damned computer screen
is fuzzy
I have to sit up straight
instead of slouch in my chair
What a chore

~~

I Can't Promise

Life becomes simpler
more clear
when your goal is to live
a few weeks longer

or to live, period
so that, like everyone else
you don't know when you'll die

That's my goal
Those who are planning
that I will be there for you
in a year...
well go ahead and plan

but I can't promise

~~

Just Before You Fell Asleep

Just before you fell asleep
you twitched
I noticed of course
but far from waking me
it put me to sleep too

She's here
she's beside me
all is good
~~

Milestones

Another of those moments
in a life
was the morning I woke
and realized she was there

She had spent the night
and we could spend the day
together

~~

Someone Else

I'm having trouble
with my boyfriend
he's a jerk

accusing me
accusing me, well
of you
and he's being a prick

I don't know what to do
it's a bother
and I've got classwork
that isn't getting done

I nodded
~~

Springtime Gremlins

It's coming into that season
the shop door won't lock
the water tap to the outside
froze and cracked

and now I've got to figure out
how to fix the door
and how to get at the pipes
behind a mountain of stuff

all the things piled
into basement corners
and forgotten in a lifetime house
And I don't want to think about it
sorting through that

~~

House Elves

Reminded of all the work I need to do
the idea of writing seems lost

These are my jobs
because I can do them
because nobody else does them
because I want them done
and

no

others want them done too
but if they wait long enough
they will get done
the house elves will do them
surely

~~



North Shore Summertime

I miss that soft hazy air
saturated by moisture
and the heat
of a Norfolk County summer day

the treeline, not far away
but blurred
as if at three miles
by wild grape vines
all over the pines

and the smells
carried on that humid air
of every flower in bloom
every plant

The cicada buzzing
and the stillness
So still you can hear the sun
hitting the sandy dirt

~~

620 Roll Film

An old movie
colourized
as if that is amazing
and I suppose it is
to add colour

But I find it a waste
maybe because I'm old
a black and white movie
doesn't feel black and white
to me

I don't miss the colour
and don't notice it
when it's added
I see in black and white
I suppose

sixty years ago
my mother's Brownie Hawkeye
~~

Not Farmers

Not tobacco farmers
that was for sure

the school bus stopped
in front of a shack
tar-paper, tin roof

and my friend got out
to walk across the road
and entered

never once looking back
to see if his friends
were waving

The bus drove on

~~

Nice Day

Early morning of what promises
to be a hot day
I sit on the back deck
putting on my shoes
listening to the Cardinals shit talk
back and forth across the yards
and I think to myself
Nice to see another day

~~

Not Allowed

Back for morning coffee
in the usual cafe
Wondering what I'll do
since I've stopped writing books

Watching the street people
gather butts from the street
Sitting inside with the AC
looking at those outside
having their coffee in the sun

With my poor radiation blasted skin
I'm not allowed to do that
~~

Hyphens

Where are you from
the second generation kids asked
and I answered, right here

Generations upon generations
right here

But where do you really come from
they would ask
wanting a European country

Satisfied themselves
with a country barely a generation old
I could be from there
but not from here?

OK many generations back
the latest European
was from Saxony
because he didn't like the Prussians
trying to unify Germany

That European enough?

~~

Hey Ancestors!

If I am the product
of all these genes
from all these ancestors
why can't I get an answer
to the meaning of life

The best I ever got
was a couple of grandmothers
of various religious convictions
Certainly not in agreement

The menfolk
generally held their tongues
not very useful
for figuring out why I'm here
and what it's all for

Perhaps my answer
was there all along

~~

In The Bones

I'm off to the woods
the ancestors will provide
the knowledge in my bones
will carry me through

And so in he jumped
to that death trap canoe
with a paddle, older
than he was

And the last we saw
he was headed down the lake
looking for salvation
looking for the ancestors

~~



Neanderthal Systems

Overstuffed chairs
full of dust

and a healthy dose
of dirt
left me without allergy

Hell we never heard
of allergies when I was a kid

Better to give that immune system
something to do
they get bored
those Neanderthal systems

likely to turn on us
~~

Poem of Healing

Yesterday's visit to the shop
has left me with scrapes
and cuts on my hands
from careless use
of the belt sander

Not as skilled
as the last time I was there

Will I go today
to scrape more skin
away from knuckles
or should I wait
for a little bit of healing

There, a poem of healing
just like it should be
in every collection

~~

North to a Cottage

I was born beside the lake
and I'm happiest there
so why did I settle
in a landlocked city

and why did I build a cabin
beside a shallow lake
turning into a swamp

The turns and twists
of life
are not predictable

Journeys are guided
by such words as
"I got a job here"
and
"You go north to a cottage
not south"

~~



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