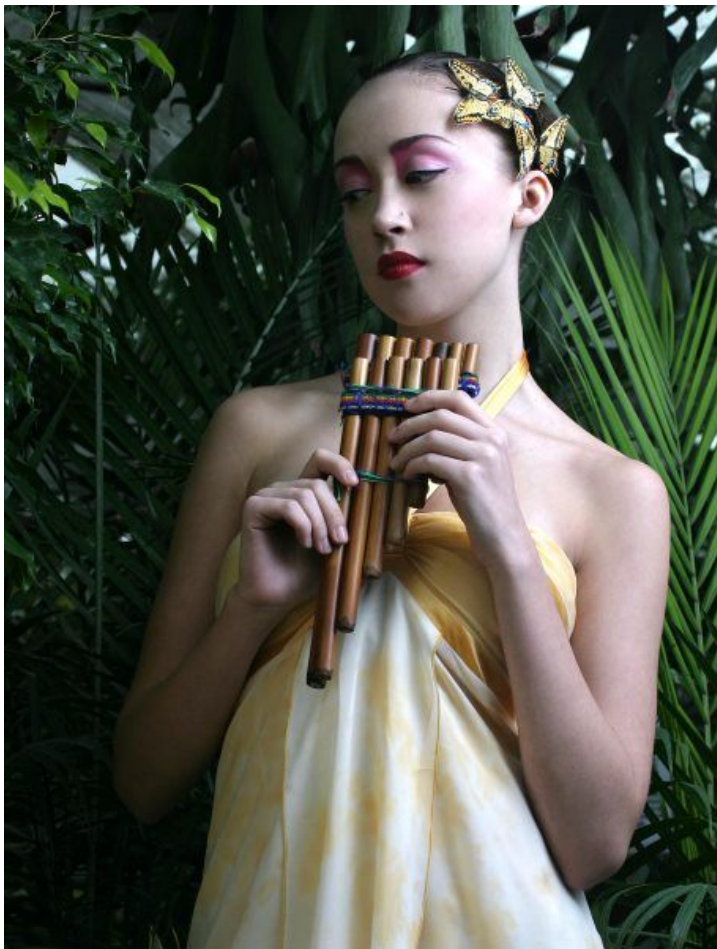


Most of What I Have



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Introduction

The present is never very big, just an inflection between past and future. Now, future is not very big, so what I have is the past. A lot of past, and that lives in my memory.

Most of what I have is the past, and so I visit there often. Here is my past, some of it may have happened, but I remember all of it.

The photographs are from a fashion shoot in 2004, some in one of my favourite places to be in November, a greenhouse.

Kim Taylor, November 2022



Most of What I Have

Where once I was content
to let the past lie
to keep my memories clear
and live here
in the present moment

I now struggle to remember
the long life I've known
for the present grows smaller
the future, who knows
it is the past
that is most of what I have

~~

Tired

They said the radiation
would cause fatigue
But tired I can deal with
a long nap after each zap

But it's the lack of gumption
that irritates me the most
The dull feeling
that I'm fighting something off
~~

Angels

I believe in angels
she said
and she cocked her head
to one side
My angel says you're nice
and I'd be pleased
to go home with you

Tell your angel thanks
but I believe I will pass
I'm sort of looking for a girl
who believes in me
if you know what I mean
~~



Goldfish

I had a goldfish
and a bowl
and the poor thing swam
through milky water
fading into sight
and gone again
as he moved to the glass

He would keep me awake
at night
by blowing bubbles
on the surface of the water
and I would think maybe
I should change the water

I have no idea
how many months
that poor fish swam
from milky invisibility
to brief golden flash

~~

It Was Warmer

We weren't much in love
perhaps didn't even like
each other
but it was warmer in the bed
with two
than with one

We were content to sleep
in each other's bed
never quite knowing
who owned it
and it was warmer in bed
with two
than with one

~~

Planting Trees

Today I planted a Ginkgo nut
down into the garden
Perhaps it will sprout
grow so that I can see it
and in twenty years
perhaps it will bear fruit
But I will not see it.

Still, I have watched trees
grow from seedling
to lordlings
and that is enough
for any man
To know that growth
To know it will happen again
~~

Setting Them Down

To give up the things
the people
we thought too heavy
to set down

But when we do
we see that they are there
on the ground
in no need of being carried

And we are so light
so much less burden
so much less stress
on our poor knees

~~



What It Takes

If only to start
A complaint is permitted

It will begin a move
an urge to go
from one place to another

and what more is there
in life
than to move
from one place to another
~~

Four AM Light

At four o'clock in the night
I wake
and often the moonlight
or the streetlight
outside the window
shows me your face
at peace
at rest

so different than the day
when stress and strain
and complications again
make your so beautiful face
pinched and folded

If only I could capture
some of the light
from four o'clock in the night
and give it to you
tomorrow
~~

The Company in Bars

To think
that at one year
in my life
perhaps two
I waited impatient
for the bars to open

Not for the drink
although I enjoyed that
But for the company
the company I knew I'd find
A woman to share my table
to share my bed that night

Or perhaps
should I be a lucky man
to share my bed that day
early in the afternoon
And afterward
we would return to that bar
for a nightcap

~~

She Held Out Her Arms

The sun had not set
it streamed through the window
onto the bed
onto her, that slim waist
those impossible legs

She brushed the hair back
behind her ears
and held out her arms
and in that golden glow
of sunset
I saw the rest of my life

She lay her head down
onto the pillow
and slept as night fell
I watched through the dark
and listened to the sounds
of the building

In the morning
the grey-blue light
coming in the windows
she woke
her eyes fluttered open
and she saw me
looking out the window

She moved the covers aside
she brushed her hair
back behind her ears
and she held out her arms
and I went to her

~~

I Followed Her

I think I followed her
like you follow a car
on a moonless foggy night
and hope that fellow ahead
knows where the road is

I followed her
in the hope she would know
what was best for me
What would lead me out
of the place I was in

I followed her
like holding a coat tail
in a blizzard
hoping whoever owns the coat
knows the way
Where was the way

She led, all unknowing
she was leading me
and yet she was steadfast
and as she came out of the woods
there was a path
and I was on the path

~~



No Direction

All my life long
I have been listening
watching for a sign
of what to do with my life

All my life long
I have found nothing
no indication what to do
no path to follow

Thank the Gods
above and below
So many paths
I have followed

So many loves
I would have lost
if I'd had a direction
all my life long
~~

Crows

Why are crows on my mind
they are noisy
big, well big for here
and seem to know things

But what has that
to do with me
what do they want
with me, these crows

Cousin to Raven
who opened the shell
and let the first men
squirm noisily out

Are the crows come
to take me back
to stuff me into a shell
Some sort of shell
~~

A Blue Capri and a Horse

I would love to say
that she rode in on a horse
Topper was his name
but that wasn't the way
she rode in a blue Capri

Which, I have to say
was pretty much as cool
That blue Capri
with its stick shift
I'd watch her as she drove

Hand and eye and foot
in perfect coordination
I can't remember
if she ever let me drive
that blue Capri

And then it was gone
She, the horse
and the blue Capri
So long since, on some nights
I hear her still

Riding her horse
or driving her car
I hear it still
outside my window
on dark, cold nights

~~

Her Bed

She is leaving
and I am here in her bed
I watch that back
that neck
those legs
that ass
move away from me
and out the door

This is her bed
and yet I am afraid
that she won't come back

~~

Which is Yours

Use my toothbrush she said
as I walked to the bathroom
After the first desires
the first hungry embraces
are done, and it was time
to pretend we were going to sleep

Use my toothbrush
And I entered the bathroom
there was her toothbrush
and four more
and five razors
Which is yours, I said

She told me it was blue
and I guessed which was blue
and I brushed my teeth
Feeling my face
I took a razor at random
and shaved
~~



Fall

That time of year
when the rain hops onto
the leaves, barely clinging
and like a crazy god
they send the leaves down
swaying from side to side
like skiers, the raindrops
remain on the leaves
until they skid down
to a stop on the ground

~~

I'm Not That One

Oh girl, don't make me
some sort of hero
someone to rescue you
from what troubles you

I'm not that one
maybe some day
you will find him
but not this day

Don't put on me
the burden of your life
don't make me lift
the unhappiness in you

Don't make me your hero
to save you from yourself
to carry you to happiness
Even as I do that for you
~~

I'll Trade You

I was in my twenties
and my mother, listening
to another of my stories
said to me

I wish I was as young as you
once more
to feel things as deeply
to care as much

And I stared at her
for a long time
until I understood
that she meant what she said

and I wondered
what had made her that way
If you would like this
I told her
I will gladly trade you for it
~~

All I Learned

When you came back
it wasn't for long enough
for me to learn the lessons
your leaving had taught me

It wasn't long enough
before you left again
this time for good
and all I learned was sadness

~~

She Reached Up To Me

She reached up to me
from the floor
where she was lying
and she wrapped her arms
around my leg
as if in supplication
as if in a fantasy illustration
she looked up at me
soft eyes turning to steel
twisted hard
and dumped me on my ass
~~



The Gift

She walks through the crosswalk
and the early morning sun
lights her face then not
as she moves through the shadows
of the trees

Heading for an early class
giving me a poem
as I head for my second coffee
~~

So Many Years After

You will have to pardon me
for thinking so much of you
so many years
after I didn't think enough of you

Do you hear my regret
do you feel my poor words
so many years
after I didn't say enough to you
~~

An Old Man's Curse

It is the curse of an old man

When in a public toilet
one in my regular cafe
I can resist once
the plugged bowl

Not my job, I say
and leave, returning the key
saying nothing

But later, after another coffee
after another piss
I grab the plunger and plunge
~~

You Don't Want That

She laughed
and it sounded like a bell
we laughed together
and drank
and spent the night together

In the morning I looked at her
so sweet, so lovely
and I asked her to stay with me
Her eyes became sad
You don't want that, she said
~~

Blood

In this dream
there was a perfect drop
of blood
and so many men
fought to possess it

In this dream
I longed for you
and not your blood
and you turned your pale face
and said to me, no more

No more blood is there
only what is left
when the blood is gone
Is that what you want
You are welcome to it
~~

Sad Day

Oh sad, sad day
that sad, sad day
when you discover
her sleep is feigned
she is not interested
in you, your conversation
your warm arms
or your prick

There she lies
feigning sleep
and the best you can do
is say to yourself
she is trying not to hurt me
Say it to yourself often
and one day
you may believe
~~



Always Been Trains

It has always been trains
since I was a child
and the lonely horn
from across the valley
matched my own lonely mood

I hear them still
I live beside the tracks
but once very long ago
I lived above the tracks
close enough to touch

That was my favourite train
the one I could touch
but did not try
preferring to touch you
as the cars rattled by
~~

Where You Lived

There are certain roads
long, long roads
that call to me
in special ways

They are roads
where someone lived
someone I loved

Each time I am on that road
I am moving toward it
that place where someone lived

~~

Models

There must have been
women who said no
I don't want to do nudes
Women I asked
but I can't remember those
who said no

Now those who said yes
I have no doubt
here is the photograph
of each and every one
who said yes, of course
absolutely
When?

~~

She'd Laugh in the Shower

I would sneak into the bathroom
and take pictures of her
as she showered
She would laugh and pose
stretching her arms above her head
and going on her toes

The water would stream
down her hair
and run across the glass
and she would take her hand
and rub a clear spot for me
laughing into my camera

~~

What She Said

She said far more
with the tips of her fingers
than ever she did with words

Words were strange twisty things
between she and I
meanings found then lost
but her fingers were never unclear

A palm on my cheek
a finger on my chest
an elbow driving into a knot
on my poor wrecked back
the message was never lost

~~

Strange Street

What if I had never turned
down that strange street
in that ever so distant town

All that pain
all the sleepless nights
all the screaming fights

All the love I felt
all the love I gave
How much was that worth
how much of my life did she save

If I had never turned
down that strange street
in that distant town
I would never have met her
~~



The Spanking

I'm sorry
did I hurt you

She looked at me
saying nothing
but raised her knee
to make yet another
strange shape

Oh, I didn't mean
to hit so hard

She looked at me
saying nothing
but slowly turned her hips
to show me
the other cheek

~~

Without Her

What would my life have been
without her

The trees simply trees
sunset, the earth turning
mountains, piles of rock

The sky would be air
between earth and space
the stars, distant suns
of little interest at all
and I, just a man

~~

What Do You See

I stood at the window
and looked out at the night
the streetlamps glowing
the rain on the window
reflections on the streets

What do you see there
she asked me
and I answered happily
I see you
reflected in the window

Come to bed
in a sort of a purr
can you see this
as she moved the covers
and opened her arms
~~

Back in Brazil

On my shelf
two small bottles
Defumada
Carvalho
and I am back
in Brazil

The early spring flowers
the smell of a city
after a long rainy winter
cold in the air
just like the cold here

No, I lie
the cold there with the promise
of warmth to come
Cane Spirit
and Hot Sauce
Come the darkest days
I will open them
~~

She Will Save Me

How can I see her
through all I have placed
in front of her
all I have piled
on top of her

The expectations
the longing
the hope for redemption
The shit of a lifetime
waiting for her
to save me

Do I even care
what she looks like
what she knows
who she is
Does that matter
to the lifetime of shit
piled up and dropped
on her

~~

That Day

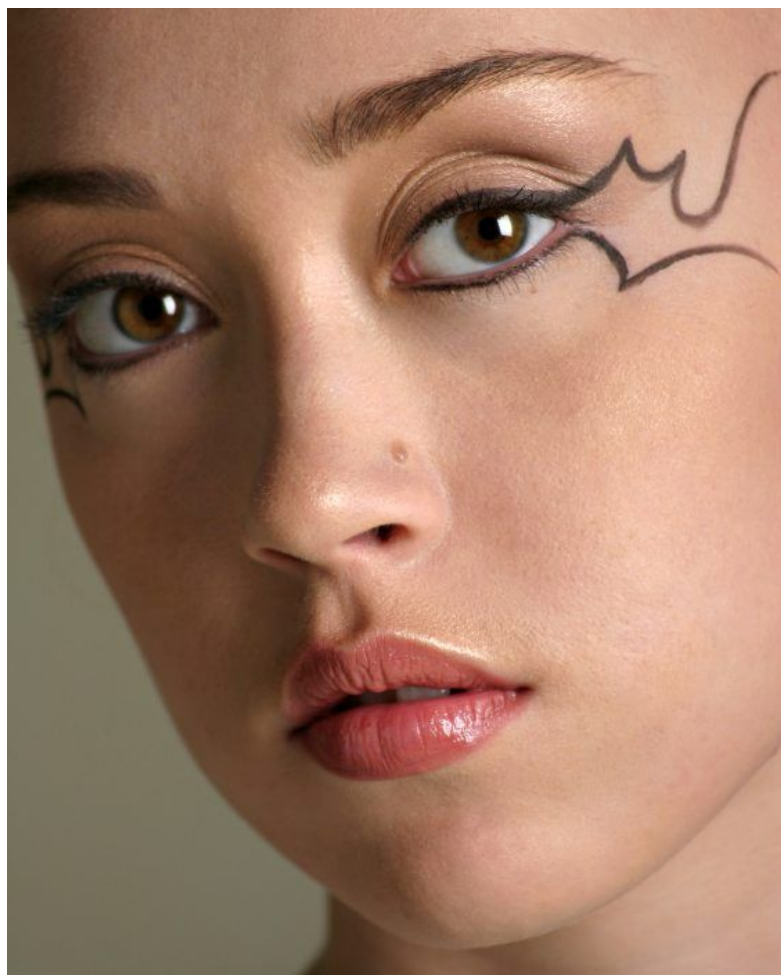
That day when I said
What would you like to do
and I meant it

The day when we slept
and just slept
with no need to fuck

The day when she said no
and I heard only no
and not a rejection

Oh the day she changed her mind
and it felt like
I had changed mine

~~



Still There

Somewhere in the fights
the screaming
the accusations
the cold fury on the edge
of striking out

Somewhere in there
you realize that love is gone
That love that was there
is no more
and you decide to part

And then the years fall over you
and slowly the anger fades
and you wonder what it was
Then it slowly comes to you
the love has never gone
~~

I Forgot

Things get better they say
but for me
they never got better
they just got forgot

To get better
they would have to change
and nothing ever changed
but I forgot

When I got big enough
and strong enough
that it was too much trouble
I forgot

When I got old enough
and smart enough
to go somewhere else
I forgot

~~

Who You Are

Just when I thought I had a handle
on what and who I am
I learn that magical realism
is not what I write
There are too many magicals
and so not enough realisms

This is an important lesson for me
do not look too hard
or too far
If you do, you will lose what you are
Which is a bad thing
if you like who you are
But most, most, most important
Don't read definitions by others
~~

Writing that book

Here I am
writing the poems
I am supposed to write after
I've written a chapter

But I don't want to write
that chapter
and I don't have to
It's a new book

And a new book
is like a new body
in a world of 8 billion
Is it really needed

A couple more days
and perhaps I will write
saying to myself
It's just for me

~~

Here is a Story

Here is a story
two women
in a beach house
and bad guys come

Wait, haven't I watched that
a dozen times
over the years
Maybe I'll pass
~~

What I Miss

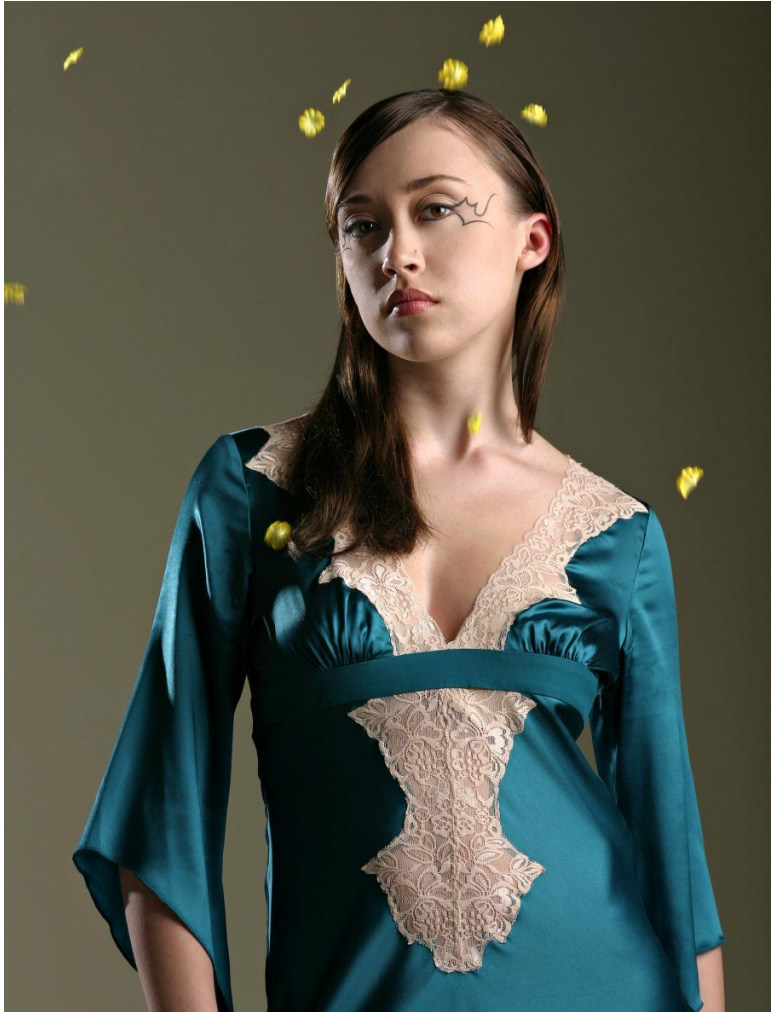
I miss the feeling of your hair
as it blocks my nose
and my mouth
as I breathe into the back
of your neck

I miss your neck
as I kiss it softly
and often
with my head tucked close
into your shoulder

I miss your shoulder
with its sharp small angles
and the smoothness of the skin
as I move my hand
slowly over it

I miss my hand
cupping your breast
or down on your hip
beside the thick springiness
of the hair on your cunt

I don't miss your cunt
Just everything around it
your hips, I could grip
your ass, I could pat
your breath, hissing out
~~



You Walked to Me

When a woman like her
a girl, really
walks by in the bar
The same bar
where you walked to me

My heart lurches
my breath stops
she is so like you
and suddenly
here you are

At this bar, beside me
looking sideways
but mostly
watching the mirror
as I watched you the same way

The stools
at first far apart
slowly, night by night
came together
until our thighs touched

Oh stop, stop
Do not look at her
as she walks by in the bar
Do not let it all out
those long ago nights

~~

No More Games

After the fall
after God kicked them out

why didn't Eve and Adam
walk right back in

Back to the garden
and say loudly
Out, all those
who would toy with us

Out God, out Angels
We have returned
and there will be
no more games

~~

The Message

That open relationship
so important then
The open communication
Her and her and you?
Him and him
Lovely

But that night
when she comes home
with the smell of him
unwashed
and you ask and she says
Nobody
~~

You're Coming Home

For months
no, to be honest
for years
I waited, I wanted
the phone to ring
and as I snatch it up
I think, I scream
Make it her, make it her
Hello
I'm coming home
~~

Perhaps Not So High

You want, you need
you hope for him
He becomes a giant
dominating your thoughts
Each supposed slight
sending you out of the sky
spiralling for the ground

He notices you
and he invites you
You go, happy at last
Or so it should be
in this pile of dirty underwear
this morass of self doubt
he carries with him always

~~

Lace Curtains

Lace curtains
and a spring sun
shining through
illuminating a table
with toast and jam
coffee and cream
her

Such images stay
for longer than calculus
longer than desire
longer than life

The sun
through curtains
her hair
the glow
her
~~



When She Left

When she left this morning
I had trouble doing the chores
Hell
I had trouble breathing

She was the air in this place
the reason I got up in the morning
the reason I went to bed
The one I lived for

When she left this morning
my thoughts turned grey
my world turned grey
She was gone

~~

What She Made for Me

I've had a woman
knit me a sweater
but having mothers
and grandmothers
who knit
I didn't appreciate it then

I do now
and I wonder
where are the men
who get an embroidered shirt
or a beadwork vest
I find myself looking to buy one

I have a wonderful knit hat
and a crocheted scarf
but I find myself looking
at gloves with quillwork
I would wear it all
For the time and love in it
~~

What to Give Her

You love her dearly
but you are young
and she is young
and you see a day
when she will leave

Yet you want
to give her a gift
Chocolate or flowers
she will be delighted
but you see them here and gone

Something you make yourself
a piece of art
that has nothing of you in it
but the love you have for her
It will be with her when you are gone

~~

What It Was For

A bottle of liqueur from my gran
brought back from a trip
and I said to myself
I will put it into a macrame
and save it for my wedding

I put a plant
in the macrame
watched it grow and die
and another one

eventually the macrame
crumbled to rot
on the basement floor
and the bottle dried up

This whisky was bonded
in 1962
and I've saved it
for your graduation my son
too bad you don't drink rye

Things have a habit
of losing their meanings
as you get older
You forget what they are
you forget what they were for

Somewhere around here
or in the cabin
is a bottle opener
from the Clifton Hotel
long gone with bottle caps
that don't twist off

~~

Covered All In Silence

She dressed before dawn
covered all in silence
and she was gone
out the door and down the stair
~~

Someone Half As Good

So much of his life
was spent longing
chasing
grasping
at what might be better

He never knew
what was in his bed already
She cooked for him
made his lunch
kept his house

And he looked
young fool that he was
he looked for better
not knowing

that decades later
he would be looking
for someone half as good
as her
~~



Will It Work

If I change the alarm
and all the clocks
put them all back
two hours

Do you think
she will miss her bus
not take her bags
out of our front door

Do you think
she will shrug and say
I guess I'll stay
Do you think it will work

~~

I Shall be Strong

In a world
of instant messaging
and email
and social media

It is even more hard
not to send a note
Hey, how is it going
so far away from me
as I sit here checking
all the ways you might say hello
all the ways you might tell me
you're doing fine

I shall be brave
I shall be strong
I shall not send that note
but give her space
that space nobody has
in this day of instant messaging
and email

~~

The Old Writer

Retired and on pension
he writes, he scribbles
to his heart's content

Instead of getting up in the dark
to go to work
to earn his pay
he gets up in the dark
to do what he wants

And what he wants
is to write longer and harder
than he ever did
for a pay cheque

~~

Not Like You

I bedded a perfect girl
perfect hair
perfect body
perfect skin

And in the morning
I didn't mind
when she left
Probably for good

She wasn't like you
somewhat mussed
somewhat rude
a few scars

She wasn't you
eyes rolled back
and unfocused
toes curled under

hands reaching for the air
shaking the bed
in an impolite way
Not like that at all

~~

I Want a Divorce

What would it be
to be divorced by your wife
in your 70s
Long past children
Long past the things
that would seem to be a problem

But one day
she wakes up
stretches, looks at the sky
listens to the birds
and says
I want a divorce

What can you do
except agree
You have been together
for long enough
that you indulge each other
If she wants a divorce
you give her one

~~

When a Child is Born

When a child is born
you must cut a rose
and put it in the room
Close to baby and mother

When Death comes sniffing
sniffing for milk
sniffing for afterbirth
he will find the rose

Such a nose he has
he will smell the death
growing inside that rose
although it is freshly cut

Old Death, sniffing around
take that lovely rose
collect it for your house
and leave my baby alone

~~



The Mountain of Salt

Here is a mountain of salt
freshly unloaded
from a freighter
onto the dock beside the harbour

A mountain of salt
with which to preserve things
What things
Many things, all things

Quick, take my hand
and we will jump onto the salt
we will lie down flat
preserve this love we have

~~

Your Wild Hair

You wake suddenly, early
and wander to the kitchen
Naked as your birth
looking for water

I cannot help myself
I go to you
and embrace you
for a long time

Feeling the warmth of your skin
stroking your back
squeezing your ass
holding you as long as I can

And when you draw back
I touch your wild hair
more intimate than your nakedness
that hair you show to only me

~~

Splits

What is this thing
between a man and a woman
He seeks only to split her legs
and perhaps she allows him

But often, more often than rain
she splits his chest
and from within
she pulls his heart

~~

Where I Always Arrive

I have sung all afternoon
and have arrived at the place
where I always arrive

Crying into your breast
as you rock me once more
like a baby, you croon to me

Until an old man's fear
has passed once more
into a woman's breast
~~

Her Father

I could never compete with her father
although I tried
I explained for hours, for days
that she could not see me
without seeing him
and his shadow was immense

You are wrong, she said
you are not serious
if I am cold to you
it is because you are too hot
it is because you deserve my coldness
but because of my father, it's not

And so it went for years
and so it ended in tears
which was unfortunate because
Between her father and I
we got along
Perhaps, I began to think
it was not him, but her
~~

The Razor She Gave Me

Today I scraped my face
and my head
with a razor she gave to me
a year ago Christmas

And now my face is smooth
my head shines
and she is far, far away
too far to see

She usually checks
for all the bits I miss
she turns my face this way
and that

She holds out her hand
and I give her the razor
she scrapes, ever so softly
and declares herself satisfied
~~



And Silence

The slap of windshield wipers
the hiss of tires on the road
the brief, painful flares
of cars as they pass
and silence
eyes full of silence
as they go

She sits beside me
as I drive
eyes full of silence
staring straight ahead
I know she saw me look
at her
yet she stares ahead
arms folded

I regret my temper
I regret my moods
I regret everything
that she has ever noticed
she hates about me
I regret she hates me
as we drive through the black
Wipers slapping
Tires hissing
~~

What I Could Do

I wanted so badly to help
to give her the words
that would comfort her
as I watched her each night
restless, twitching, mewing
like a frightened kitten

I asked
and she said I could not help
and I asked
knowing certainly that I could

I asked
and she told me her tale
That summer when she was fourteen
And she was right
I could not help
I had no words
only hatred for those who hurt her

And so I never asked again
only held her each night
A little more close
on those nights
when she began to twitch
~~

Penny For Your Thoughts

Tell me what you're thinking

I'm thinking that you're a dick
a jerk, a pompous twit
Someone who needs a boot
buried deeply up your ass

Oh

~~

A Single Tear

She woke
pulled back the covers
and leaned over me

I opened my eyes
to see her looking at me
and a single tear

A single perfect tear
fell from her eye
and landed on my chest

It was cold
so cold it burned
as it ran across my chest

I could not move
I could not wipe it off
I watched her close her eyes

When I woke again
she was gone
her side was cold

I closed my eyes again
and listened
She was cooking breakfast
~~

Sometimes

Sometimes, once in a while
occasionally
I will talk to her out loud
telling her of my day
or the thing that just happened

She never answers
she is forty years gone
but I don't mind
she never talked much
and telling her makes be happy
~~

The People in This House

So many people
inhabit this house
in that corner my grandmother
the painting
the embossings
that hung on her wall
There the prints
bought by my stepfather
Above my desk
three restless wolves
drawn by a friend

If I turn my head
paintings by my mother
a painting of my mother
drawings from my son
I am here too
a mirror, furniture
A lamp
that looks like a campfire
And the walls, the very walls
repaired and painted

~~

Two Poems

Two poems
The second one there
I remembered the first
I went looking for it
and lost them both

~~

That Photograph We Made

Again and again
I return to that photograph
the one I took of you
so very long ago

It gives me comfort
that I found that moment
that instant in our lives

where we worked together
to create an image
that I will remember perhaps
in the moment of my dying

~~



Come Home Soon

Alone once more
in that long lost apartment
I would speak to the tap
the door, the floor
the table

I would describe my day
or ask for advice
Ask about the health
of the fish in the tank
the plants in the window

Alone once more
I realized what silence is
and how I hated it
Come home soon I would say
to the plants she left behind
~~

Those Nights

That soundless scream
directed to the ceiling
the wail nobody heard
as I fell back
against the wall
and slid like a rag doll
to slump on the floor
weeping

I miss her
this is true

but I do not miss
those nights alone
those nights without her
where life fled from me
and all was blackness
those nights I never told her
when I slumped weeping
for the absence of her
of the fear she'd not return
~~

She Was Gone

And how is she
my friends would ask
and I would say fine, fine
although I didn't know

I didn't know
where she was
or how she was
or even who she was
any more

What I knew
was that she was gone
and although she had gone
I was the one who was lost

~~

Three Girls Later

It was years
and three girls later
when I saw her
in a bar

She said hello
what's happening with you
I'm happy, I'm healthy
I'm so glad to see you

I must have said something
because she smiled
and kept talking
but somewhere, somewhere

I was dead
my heart had stopped
when I saw her
and I'm not sure it started again
~~

It Took Years

It took years
I wish we had fought
I wish you had said
things you regretted later
I wish I had hated you

It took years
but I finally felt warm
I breathed again
I loved again
but it took years

Short, sharp, a stake in the heart
that takes no time at all
and when the stake is removed
one can live again
But you, it took years
~~

I Saw a Picture

I saw a picture
it was a party
you were selling the business
and moving to the west coast

I never meant to look
but a single glance
and forty years later
through blue jeans
under a sweater

I recognized your ass
~~

A Tiki Bar

Marimbas
and a rum drink
at some Tiki Bar
in some small town
in the middle of Elgin County
the year I was born

That's what would be perfect
on a day like today
Walk in out of the snow
out of the bright sun
and into a dim room
a Tiki room

Cheap round tables
smelling of beer
neon lighting
and a bartender with a book
to make me a drink
of rum and something

I want to stand at the bar
put my foot on the rail
a brass rail
and look around the place
for a girl I've never met
from a place I've never been

~~



Into The Depths

We say oh please, please
look beyond the surface
see into my infinite depths

But once we get past the skin
once we get within
We are as likely to try
and wrestle our way
back up to the surface

That perfect skin
that perfect smile
Please, let that be it
leave depths alone
let me sink into your skin

~~

If You Knew

If you had known
how much you would miss her
how much it would hurt
when she was gone
Would you have acted the same

If you knew before you knew
that what you would do
would drive her away
That she would not stay
Would you have acted the same

Yes
sadly
Yes
~~

Brief Glimpse

A creek, in winter
frozen over
save one small stretch
where the water runs
over the stones
Icy clear and fast

Looking into that window
that brief glimpse
of the creek below
I thought of her
and how much of her life
I ever knew

~~

Damn All Photographers

Damn, damn, damn all photographers
With an urge, a hankering
to see Monica Vitti's nose
that equine, aquiline monument
to the human form

And every damned one of them
decided it was too much?
TOO MUCH?
all I find is full face portraits
not a single profile
~~

Away on Business

Reduced to begging
searching through the nets
looking for scraps of information

There are photographs
blow them up
look in the background

is she there
is she there

~~

Hitching Across Canada

Standing on that road again
listening to the wind hiss
through the rye in the fields

Hot August day
No place to go
But I wish I was going

Nothing left here
No cars
No trucks
I am alone on that road
listening to the wind hiss
~~



Watching

The streetlight shining
through the lace curtains
inside the block walls
hits the bed where you lie

My arm over your body
I hold you close
warming you
wishing you peace

Slowly, you relax
your eyes close
and I feel your breathing
slow

I watch in the light
from the city outside
Nothing but you and I
on the inside, on this bed

I watch, waiting
and late in the night
the light goes out
you fall asleep

~~

Driving Beside Her

We drive through the night
and beside me, she sleeps
trusting me to drive
she shifts a little
I can hear her

We drive in the afternoon
and she closes her eyes
trusting me to drive
her breathing slows
and she sleeps

Is there anything more wondrous
than a woman asleep
beside you while you drive
trusting you
to deliver her where you go
~~

Real Women

First time in a week
I am outside
watching the women
real women

They look so lovely
different than those
I live with
those in my memory

Yet I have no poems
for these new women
They are faces only
that I cannot touch

I have not lived with them
I have not breathed with them
beside me on a bed
I have not touched them
~~

Night After Night

Night after night
I would lie awake
beside her
and wonder why
she was with me

I lived each night
in doubt
Would she see me
for true in the morning
would she finally see
how low I really am

Would she open her eyes
and see who I really am
So far below her place
so undeserving of her grace
I lay awake at night
and looked at her

It might be the last time
it might be the last night
and in the morning
she might flee
going away from me
as the night flees the day

~~

All The Magic Of Her

Of all the miracles in the world
of all the magic I cannot perform
the greatest act
the one that humbled me
was that act of magical creation
when she made my children

Out of nothing at all
she made my children
and I fall to my knees
before such magic, such a miracle
I fall to my knees and weep

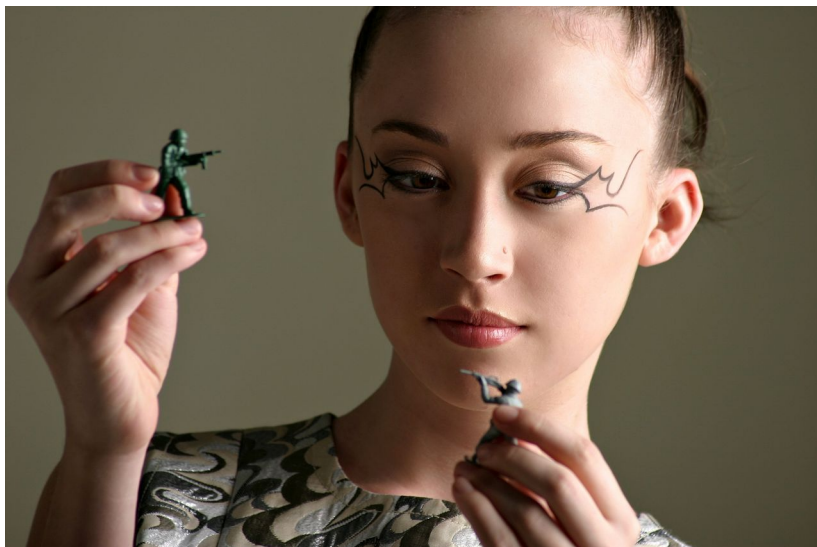
~~

Rocking

That strange rocking I have
that back and forth movement
first learned with my first born
taken from her mother's arms

rarely was I granted
such a pleasure
and I learned, I learned to rock

~~



Thanks for the Help

The meat doesn't need that long
in the microwave

Once again, one of the many women
who have kept an eye on me
for my whole life
has informed me that

I'm doing it wrong

~~

Graduate School

Another day gone
another long working day
I am exhausted
but as I leave my work
as I walk out
into the first crisp air of Fall
The thought of her

I am going home
to our apartment
to her
with a spring in my step
and a new hunger for life

Let work begin again
in three hours
as long as I have seen her
beside me at our table
as long as I can eat her food
and kiss her neck goodbye
I will happily work
another twelve hours

~~

In The Wood Tonight

Come with me
out into the wood
there is enough moon
to find our way

Come with me
we will travel the paths
look for elves
follow fairy dust

Come with me
for no reason at all
but to be together
out in the wood tonight

~~

The Seagulls

So very long ago
I would drive my grandmother
down to the docks
to visit the seagulls

They would scatter
from that field of coal
and hover in the breeze
to amuse my grandmother

And we would park by the harbour
to watch the fishing tugs
come home for the day
followed by gulls, so many gulls

My grandmother would laugh
to watch them dive
for bits of fish, taking them
from the hands of the fishermen

~~

A Cotton Dress

A hot summer day
with a cooling breeze
You wore a cotton dress
over your body
covered with sweat

You turned
to face the breeze
you lifted your arms
and that dress
curled around you
revealing all of you

~~

Only Two

When I looked at you
I saw two women always
I saw daughter
and I saw lover

Daughter to your father
lover to me
Always two women
I never had the one

Only two
~~



The Knack Of It

I cupped my hands to the rain
hoping for something
to wet my parched mouth
to sooth my parched throat

But try as I would
there was never any rain
in my cupped hands
I had not the knack of it

You laughed at me
told me it was easy
and I tried again
Laughing, you walked away

~~

The Place I Liked Best

We made love in many places
in your bed and mine
in sand and on pine needles
against trees
and on office carpets

But the place I liked best
the place I treasure most
above all others
is the bed we called ours
in the place we called ours
~~

Who Will Remember Her

Who will remember her
when I am dead
when there is no one
to know what I know
about the secret places
she loved to have touched

Who will remember her
when I have died
when no one is there
who knows the lies
we told each other
the secrets we shared

~~

Another War

Generations of kids
grown up in bunkers
all for the glory
the pride of old men
who want to live on
in the minds of
who...

Generations of kids
who never grew up
and we will remember you
Evil old men
oh yes, we will remember
for the child who cannot
who...

~~

She Worked in a Bar

She worked in a bar
she lived with me
I had a spare room
and was waiting for a girl
who would never be back

She worked in a bar
and I would go to bed
long before she finished
sometimes
when she was very tired

She would be confused
and after she came home
from working in the bar
she would climb softly
into my bed

~~

Gone

It tickles upon the brain
an idea, coy
shy as a virgin
although I've never known them
shy

I sit carefully
trying not to scare it away
looking at nothing
hardly breathing
waiting for a sight

But alas
like a shy virgin
it has made itself vanish
there is nothing more
to be said

~~

Wednesday Afternoon

The loneliness
of sitting at a bar
writing in a notebook
half pint drunk

Is not the same
as the loneliness
of sitting at home
eating pudding

Typing with a keyboard
searching for words
to best describe
Wednesday afternoon

~~

They Expect Pay

There are photographers
who see things
the rest of us don't see
and they show them to us

There are poets
who see things
the rest of us don't

But like photographers
they are damned scarce
mostly they show us
exactly what we want to see

and for that they expect pay
For being so carefully
unoriginal

~~



I Wonder

I wonder
did I ever wonder
who would read me
like some OxBridge oik
Have you read Him
Oh yes, why just last eve

Right, I wonder
did I wonder
if anyone would read
the things I write
There, is that sufficiently
UToronto
~~

They Rhyme

Reading a mid-century poem
it takes me a while
twenty or thirty lines
before I realize
the fellow is rhyming

I'm not keen on that
that rhyming
it seems such a lot of effort
to scan and ping the ring
of the rhymed thyme

Bah, rhymes should be accidental
What about the translators
do they have to rhyme it too
Selfish bastard
~~

This Mirror

This mirror
The last time I looked
in this mirror

a young man, naked
fit, healthy, good looking
held a naked girl
fit, healthy, good looking

they were both looking
at themselves in this mirror
Why do all I see
is a lonely old man

not good looking
but at least naked
~~

Easy

Must be easy then
to write
with all that retired time
you have at your dispo

Oh yes, very easy
those twenty minute long
searches for the right word
can be extended to years

~~

A Dead Monkey

Even a dead monkey
lands on the ground

I think that's what he said
as he talked about my photo
I wasn't sure
but I think by that
he meant he liked it

Not sure I liked it
but I thought maybe
it was better than his
which wasn't saying a lot
~~

To Be Alone

There were times in my life
when I didn't want a woman there
I just wanted to be alone
like some sort of Garbo clone

Not often, certainly not often
but some days
after a long, long week
I would wish that she was gone

So I would make myself gone
leave, go someplace else
or stay, go someplace else
and be gone

It never took long
half a day, a day
when I would yearn to return
Where the hell are these rhymes
coming from

~~

To Five Years

Four years now
past a stage 4 diagnosis
A year or so
past a broken neck
and a withered arm
and I'm running
on borrowed time

Nobody expects
to get out of here alive
but I'll take every year
of good health
and I am in good health
measured by pain
that I can get
So here's to five years
~~

Leaving Content

I have looked hard
looked for regrets
looked for anger
at the uncaring gods
but there is nothing

I did what I did
by following my heart
There is nothing undone
I leave the world
a better human
than when I arrived

And I am content
~~

Spending Time I Don't Have

Sometimes I sigh
impatient with myself
scrolling through garbage
spending time
that I no longer have

But the discipline remains
and the minimum done
each and every day
with few exceptions
What more can I ask
of myself

~~

Women Growing Up

Several women I have watched
move from the fury
of longing youth
The frenzy of lovemaking

Through the mellowing of time
the easy sliding of hours
In the comfort of experience

To the rather startled rarity
that sudden shiver
of lust in old age

~~

Romance In My Twenties

I watch another movie
in a spy franchise
all about the evil masters
trying to kill the innocent murderers

And after the chase scenes
after the gunfights
after the explosions
the hero gets the girl

And next year or so
we start the whole thing over
which seems to remind me
of romance in my twenties

~~

Steel Grey Eyes

Rainy November day
just before dawn
and my thoughts wander
to her steel grey eyes
that would look into me
at about the same time
just before dawn

She would say goodbye
I have classes
I have to look after my horse
I told him I'd have breakfast

Always just before dawn
I would see those eyes
and as I reached for her
she would slip back
away from me

And in those eyes the message
One day this will be the last
but perhaps this evening
we will meet again
As I slipped back to sleep

~~

You Took My Dreams

You took my dreams
she said
you left me with nothing
Empty
as the beer cans you leave
for me to pick up

Your dreams
he said
you had dreams
You never told me that
what were they
when did I take them

Oh never mind
she said
if you never knew them
when you took them
How can I explain
just what you did to me
~~

The Skull

The skull under your skin
doesn't see the acne
so why do you bother
with your creams and your soaps

Don't you see
that all problems vanish
when the skin is gone
and the skull
all that is left

~~

Sex As Soporific

You use sex
as a soporific
because you fear death
she said

Soporific?

You know what I mean
so you can fall asleep
and forget
that you will die

Yes, I know what you mean
but sex is not that
to me
It's not a way to forget death

It's just sex
you understand
just groin to groin
and the great release

Ah, she said
then carry on
in fact
we'll both carry on
~~

Oops

We finish
full of sweat
the final spasm complete
and she stays atop me

There we lie
content with each other
she is no burden

And I wait moment by moment
until my prick
drops out of her
and she says
Oops

~~

Once I Watched

Once I watched
as she lay on black satin sheets
with a black pillowcase
for her blond hair
spilling out and over
onto those sheets

Once I saw
her pale skin so luminous
so milky white
spread out on black satin
and I thought myself lucky
to have seen such a thing

~~

In The Mirror

I was staring into a mirror
when her face appeared
toothbrush in her mouth
her eyebrows arched
she said
"whatcha looking at?"

I stepped aside
looked aside
looked at her
and said, "You"
She smiled
and spit
~~

Real Magic

Do you believe in magic
she said, trailing a finger
across my chest

I believe you bewitched me
I said with a grin
as she pressed her nail down

And it went inside my chest
and she tickled my heart
I could feel it flutter

Ah, I said breathlessly
you mean real magic
she squeezed

~~



I Wonder Now

She lived with me
to share the rent
while I waited
for another to come home

She lived with me
and sometimes
shared my bed
while I waited in vain

When she said
she wanted to study
to become more
she went with my blessing

She wrote a bit
and I answered a bit
but met another
before she returned

Just now, forty years later
I wonder
did she intend to return
did she wish to stay with me

~~

The Difference Between Her and Black Friday

Where once I looked for email
for a word or two
from him or her
I now find ads
Black Friday ads for stuff
and I don't care

For him, for her
I would leave the house
and meet somewhere for beer
but for a crowd
to fight
for the chance to buy something
No, I'm sorry, not me

~~

Making The Stranger

How I wish
we had been older
not of the generation
that pulled on the jeans
and out the door

I would have liked
to watch you take your time
put on your makeup
consider your wardrobe
and transform before me

From the woman in my bed
to some stranger walking out
someone completely else
How exciting it would have been
to sleep with one woman
and say goodbye to another

~~

The Memories in this Town

I wander this town
and think of the past
how could I not?

In that place
I lived with her
and in that
with her

Over there, she lived
and I would visit
and there, she moved in
with her boyfriend
in with me and my new girl

The place is a graveyard
the whole city
of old residences
old relationships
~~

Why Haven't You Called

I left him for you
she would say to me
as if that meant something

And why did you leave him
I would say to her
Because you promised more

And have I delivered
I would say
Not in the least

Perhaps you should return
I suggested
and she did

Then, three months later
she would say to me
Why haven't you called
~~

Sleep, Real and Not

She would be asleep
when I went to bed
or she would pretend to sleep
which was all the same to me

We didn't argue
when she was asleep
She wasn't disappointed
in me
I wasn't angry
with her

We would both lie awake
and pretend to be asleep
until, late in the night
we would fall asleep
~~

She is Not There

You have spent a day
walking from place to place
Every place you know
she sometimes goes

She is not there
nor there, not there
you have not found her
has she left town

You keep searching
for you have no idea
where she would be
if not in town

Here, no yet again
you have failed to find her
but you search
and in the evening, the bars
~~

Water Safety

Standing on the harbour
looking at a life ring
I wonder idly
would I throw it
if you were in the water
~~

My Special Mask

I have a mask
a replica of my twenties
clear skin
lots of hair
no wrinkles
no blotches
no sun-damage
just clear and sweet

I wear it always
except in one place
the place that rips it away
and shows me
what is under that mask
I wear it always
except in front of the mirror
~~

My Growing House

Part of our house
is over a hundred
the office shed
of a foundry

And the basement
was dug out afterward
and the kitchen
was added on after that

and the upstairs
is younger than my children

I have always lived
in places like this
places that grow with a family
grow larger

and perhaps when no longer needed
are knocked into the basement
and built on once more
~~

Should I Mention

Whimpering, shivering
afraid to die
afraid of what is to come
the eternal damnation
to everlasting torment

And yet, and yet
how will that be different
than the lifetime spent
afraid of that eternity
A lifetime spent in fear

Should I mention
that there is nothing more
nothing beyond that death
Would that be a comfort
or just more damnation
~~

Years of Wear Yet

My pants are all too big
I wear a belt that is too big
and stretch it tight
but the pants slip down

Why not buy others
ones that fit your now slim hips
ones that are not made
for the fifty pounds you lost

But these have lots of wear
they have years in them yet
how can I cast them off
I have not worn them out

Give them to someone else
someone who can use them
you can afford new
why not buy new
~~

You Don't Cry

You do not let them
see you cry
I learned that early
hold on
clench your teeth
burn them with your eyes
but never, ever cry

And my father is gone
my mother is gone
my grandfather
my grandmothers
and I didn't cry
You don't cry

But later, years later
alone, no one to see
a chance word
the memory of a hand
brushed along your cheek
The smell of a pipe
Later, years later

~~

She's Somewhere Else

Good morning
she wrote
a lovely day
to walk around

Not a letter
just an email
but it was light itself
a warm sun
on a cold winter's day

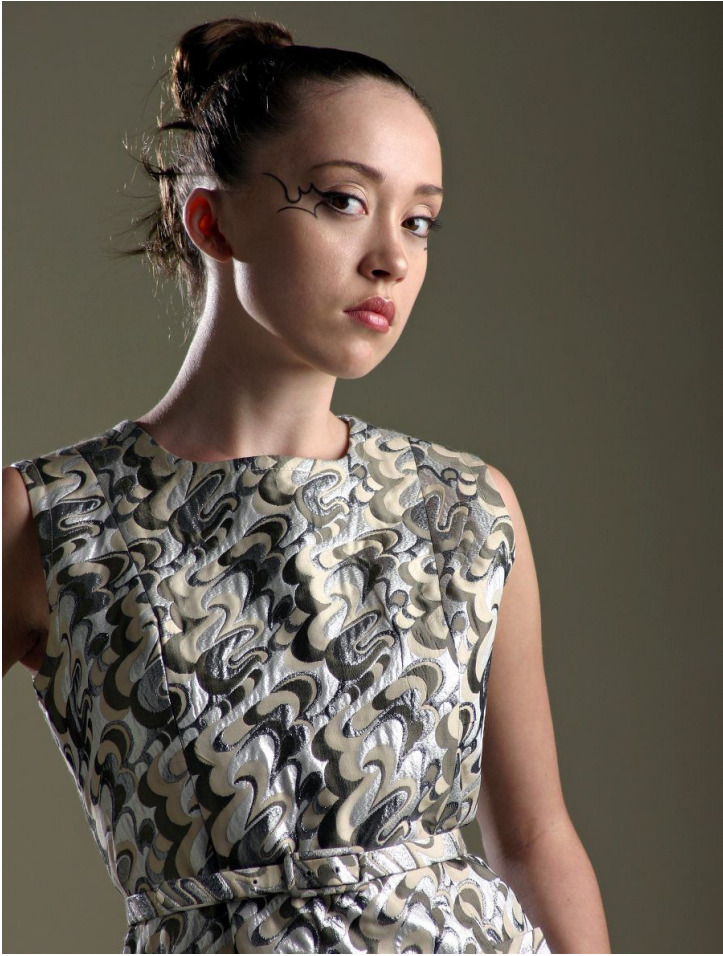
Good morning
I'm thinking of you
and hope that you
are thinking of me
~~

The Meaning of My Tattoos

My children have tattoos
and I don't understand
My son designed his
my daughter had an illustration
from her grandmother's hand
then more

Me, I have four dots
aiming points
for two rounds of radiation
and I wonder at the meaning
of my tattoos

just an old man
trying to live
~~



I'll Be a Sailor

When I was a boy
I was determined
to go to sea

Perhaps on a freighter
Perhaps a Coast Guard boat
A life on the water
like so many men before me

But I moved away
Away from the water
and got distracted

Now when I see the lakes
when I see the ocean
I have to be careful
of the skin on my head

For the sun is too strong
for a boy who didn't go
down to the sea
in ships

~~

Papa Legba

Papa Legba sits
on a rock beside the crossroads
his hands folded
on the crook of his cane
his dog beside him
panting in the heat
tongue lolling out

Who does he wait for
surely not for me
my days at the crossroads
are long behind me
maybe that's why I can see him
sitting quiet
hat slouched over his eyes
pipe lit but unsmoked

That stuff will kill you
he says to me
spying me standing there
watching him
Just as surely as everything else
and he laughs
his big booming laugh
the winds down
into a cough

~~

Put Out the Light

Put out the light
she said
and I did

thinking
is it me
she doesn't want to see

or is it her
~~

Just an Itch Scratched

What else do you want from me
she said to me
You've had me three times
in one night
and this morning you're still talking

What do you want from me
you know I've a boyfriend
you know I've no interest
beside getting an itch scratched
and you scratched it

Well, I said
I was just wondering
if you wanted breakfast
before you go
~~

The Cut-up Poem

You know the cut-up poem
of course you do
you're as old as me

Well that's what I feel like
you took your scissors
you snipped up my sentences
and rearranged them
whatever which way

You taped them down
and turned them round
and showed them to me
saying
here's you for free

~~

The White Feather

When he was very young
a woman on the street
gave him a white feather
and my great great uncle
went to the war

The woman loved him
but she wanted her man
to be a man
and so he went to war
and shortly died in a trench

Now she loved a man
who would never get old
and slowly, as the war went on
she realized just what
a white feather could do

~~

A Present

What shall I do
what shall I do
I'm most terribly blue
and so missing you

I'll buy you a present
as if you were present
and give it to you
while I'm terribly blue

~~

Death Left His Cloak

Death was in the room next door
and when he left
he left behind his cloak

So very black it was
as I put it on
and disappeared from view
So cool, I said
and the nurse turned her head

I went on out the door
and fell through the floor
right down to the basement
where death was waiting

So good of you to come
and bring my cloak to me
so much bother these days
to get into those places

~~

A Favourite Place

There is a gap
between two buildings
in downtown Guelph
one of my favourite places

There are stairs
and a door at the top
that must lead
to an apartment

I never knew anyone
who lived there
but it feels to me
like someone did

An old girlfriend maybe
and we danced together
and went home together
in the morning she made coffee

It's that kind of a place
all warm memories
that you get
the first time you see it

~~

A Full Belly

I can't describe to you
the feeling I got
when I realized
a loaf of bread
could be had
for twenty-one cents

When I was that age
I would occasionally
have enough money
to buy that loaf
of bread
and eat it all myself

~~

Train Whistle

A very long train whistle
tells me another motorist
has started to cross the tracks
while the train is doing the same

I can hear the engine
four thousand horsepower
and tonnes of steel
to roll along

What is the car
maybe two hundred horsepower
and barely the weight
of one of the wheels

Oh yes, please sir
exert your right of way
the one you think you have
in the face of that engine horn

~~

Your Turn

We thought it would work
that we could change the world
and we gave it a good push
but nobody helped

And the money pushed back
and kept pushing
and now we're too weak
to push any more

~~

The Cafe Visit

Come from the local high school
the lot of them
but her, with that face
and those impossible legs
How do they hold her up

There he is the greybeard
grey? Whitebeard
and his brain
has just shifted to sixteen
and he's thinking of her
~~

Three Crows

Three old ladies in black
with black bonnets
looking like crows
and moving like them

Waiting for someone
most certainly
uncomfortable in the cafe
but warm
waiting

How much for the water
It's free
May I have some
Help yourself, it's there
Why does it taste like that

It's reverse osmosis
nothing but water
in that water
How much for a coffee
Over two dollars

I listened no more
but I suspect
no coffee was purchased
by the three old ladies
who moved like crows
~~



A Year's Worth

I'm good, he said
when I asked him to sign
a petition to ban the bomb

You're good?
Oh yes, we all are
all the family

You see, we have a shelter
in the back yard
and a big-ass gun

Big-ass gun I said
Oh yes, to shoot the neighbours
they know we've got a shelter

And what if we all lived
you and your neighbours
I pushed forward the pen

Now wouldn't that be a waste
of a perfectly good shelter
with a year's worth of food
~~

They're Not Nuts

You would think
that patriots are nuts
they want to kill folks
far away and with prejudice

But they're not, you see
it's the rich old men
who are patriots
the children dying are not
~~

Time Punch

I punched a card
a nice long one
for the privilege of working
at the worst place in town

The factory where you went
when you couldn't go back
to every other factory
in that sorry state of a town

I clocked in and clocked out
losing money
each time I was late
Never gaining if early

But it was work
and there wasn't much of that
so I punched in and punched out
And forgot who I was

~~

Tired

Two days walking
after two weeks off
and I can hardly keep
my head upright

I may have to nap
before my work is done
A very good thing
my work is never done

Just a few moments
rest for weary eyes
just a few moments
just a few...

~~

She's Coming Home

Alone again
for a few moments
until Pam gets back
from the airport

I should have some gift
but there's been no time
I thought of taking her out
for lunch
but she's eaten out
for two weeks

I suspect she'll take a nap
and I will make her lunch
I hope that will be enough
to say welcome home

~~

Promises of Money

The poor men of Syria
are heading to Ukraine
to fight for Russia
on promises of money

One of them is going
so he can buy legs
for his sister
But he is already gone

Old men love the poor
While they fight and die
the old men get rich
How else can it be done

~~

Box of Comics

My comic book heroes
were a motley crew
a cardboard box
of hand me downs

Odds and sods
over twenty years
that were good enough
to teach me to read

Good enough
that I could catch a story
in the middle
and guess the end

~~

What Was Your Name

Somewhere after
sex-on-the-beach
when you drove me home
to cars and parents and police
I turned to you and asked your name

~~

The Wind Outside

I hear the wind outside
driving the rain
against the bricks
and I think of Argentina
of Chile where you were
just a day ago

Summer days
sun lively enough
to make your shoulders red
while I sit and listen
to cold rains
driven by the wind

~~

At Woolworths

At the Woolworths lunch counter
I would sometimes have enough
to buy a banana split

and sometimes there were balloons
that you would pick and pop
and once, miraculous day

I had my banana split
for half price
for ten cents

I remember that day even now
the pretty girl
reading out the folded paper

the festive look
of balloons on a string
all down the lunch counter

And I remember watching
as she split the banana
and scooped the ice cream

on that miraculous day
~~

Bell Bottoms

I remember the sound
of tight jeans
with bell bottoms
sliding on legs

I remember sweet toes
on those bell bottoms
so the legs, when lifted
came out of the pants

So tight I always thought
I heard a pop
as the toes came past
the zipper at last

~~

The Yowler

The cat
having been ejected
into the cold rain
for noise offences
follows me to my chair
and wetly sits
upon my lousy lap
nuzzling my bare elbow
warming his paws
on my legs

He never sits here
It's a lousy lap
Except when he is wet
and smelling like wet cat
waiting to warm up
waiting to dry off
before he jumps down
and yells once more
poor, old, thing
~~

Warmish Coffee

The poor unsatisfying feeling
of the last half sip
of warmish coffee
as I try to type
my arms on either side
of a wet cat
~~

Good Enough

Long drunken night
in a sticky-floored bar
that has emptied out
and she looks at my table
she looks at me

From across the room
I can hear her think
Good enough I guess
for one night
Good enough I guess
until tomorrow

~~

The Reunion of Zero

I wonder how many
of the old teachers still live
how many
of the old gang survive

I was never one
for going back
for living in the past
at a reunion

What reason would I have
for saying to anyone
why you don't look a day
when they are looking a decade

I don't really wonder
if anyone is left alive
that question is answered
with enough time

~~

Home From Summer

She closed her eyes in Summer
and opened them to Fall

Such cruel tricks
our modern age can pull

To board a plane in a shirt
and leave it with a coat

~~

Remembering Her

At nineteen I was sure
I could rescue her
and I gave it my all

She wasn't there for long
so I wonder
was it any use at all

~~



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