

November Thoughts



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Do I know that I will see another November? Is this the November of my life? I am pleased to say that I don't know that, any more than you do, but I do know that this is a month where my thoughts tend to go to my past.

Kim Taylor, November 2020

November Waiting

In November
you don't expect
temperatures in the teens
and I feel guilty
sitting inside, writing
instead of going for a walk
or exercising on
my ancient thrift-store stepper
Twice repaired
and tucked
into the shower enclosure
beside the sauna
Waiting

~~

November Projects

My student apartments
were always projects
an empty space
to be painted
wood floors sanded
and refinished
Macrame to be tied
and hung
and filled with plants
My spaces
made so by my marks

Later, as girlfriends changed
their influence was felt
in dead fish (noisy pump)
and rotted macrame
on the basement floor (too ugly)

But all of it a mark
in the passage
of my life
~~

She Would Sit Still

She would sit still
for hours on the couch
Often staring into space
or doing her nails
And I would walk around her
like I walked around the cat

~~



A Good Stare

We called it
"having a good stare"
We would sit still
quiet and unmoving
staring at something
at nothing
unseeing
And the other kids
would respect our space
~~

Rootless

How many places
do you live
how many schools
one per year
to make a kid rootless

Say to me "childhood"
and I am likely to think
of three towns at once
Perhaps, as a student
I was looking for roots
I stayed in residence
in various houses
and apartments
for as long as I could
Never the first to move out

Half a lifetime ago
I bought a house
not for investment
but roots
When we needed room
I built more house

I will die here
rooted into this lawn
that covers asphalt
other people's dogs
and the ash
of the foundry this place was
a hundred years ago

And my children
are they rootless
for sharing cribs
and bunk beds
and then half a room each
and finally an upstairs
added to our tiny house
Their own room
in their own space

Are they rootless
for different ceilings
despite the same address
and un-split parents

~~

I Learned About Death Early

I learned about death early
it wasn't something secret
something to protect the kids from
Pets died
sometimes spectacularly
Killed on the road
or bitten through
by a neighbour's dog
and they were buried
in the garden
perhaps with a stone
and a name painted on
by a sad child

~~

I Never Saw

I never saw
my grandmothers cry
or my mother
It wasn't done

People die
and life goes on
Make the bed
clean the toilet
and cook the next meal

Who knows
perhaps in the night
quietly
so as not to wake anyone
a tear or two

~~

Erie Dreams

In the summers
I could smell the lake
from about ten miles away
as I rode toward it

I didn't know then
just how much
I would miss that smell
when I moved away to school

~~



Am I The Sand

I sat for hours
on the beach
watching the waves
come in and out again
pushing the grains of sand
around the flat smooth stones
And I thought
am I the sand
the stones
or the water
~~

A Car Crashed

A car crashed
three days ago
and through some sort
of time dilation thing
We still watch
unable to turn away

-Nov 6, 2020

~~

200 Copies

A poetry book
edition of 200
with the warning
"Contents may not be reproduced
without permission from the author"
200 copies

When you find these books
in the thrift shop
they are always signed
from author to reader
or to family
and the copyright warning proof
that man is an optimistic animal
~~

His Own Life

Liam walks through the room
and into his
Closing the door
with not a word
for his father
watching him go

Well he has his own life
his own space
and I feel no obligation
to make sure
he knows me

~~

Stanley Seagulls

My grandmother loved
the seagulls of her port town
At one point
she had seagull-wing glasses
Perfect

But here, too far inland
here in Guelph
are the land-gulls

Where I would watch them
following the tugs
looking for scrap fish
Now I watch them
following the tractors
as they plow up the worms
and the grubs

Same raucous circus
of fights and flights

~~

Those Old Men

Those old men
living alone
were a constant worry
to the church ladies

They must be lonely
they need a good meal
once a week

And those old men
living alone
would smile
and say thank you
and wait
until they were alone again
~~



Uncle Bruce

Uncle Bruce
lived in a one room shack
No water, no phone
an outhouse
He lived there
until he died

Other places
were basements
with a roof
Norfolk County
was like that

~~

My Mother Smoked Cameos

My mother smoked Cameos
for most of her life
My father smoked Rothmans
and his mother smoked Macdonalds

After they were gone
and taxes went up
my mother smoked strange brands
Spirit, Canada Goose, des Count
smuggled across the border

She was always an outlaw

~~

The Sun Waxes

The sun waxes and wanes
through baring branches
bringing less heat
than a month ago
But joyous
nonetheless

~~

Don't Tell Her

She chased me for years
from room to room
in our tiny house
I would empty boxes
Paint the walls
repair the ceilings
and set up an office

She would move in her things
and I would start
on another room

Today I am sitting
on a folding chair
writing on a TV table
in our back entrance

But she doesn't know
I have a little heater
against the opening door
and the sun
is shining down
on my notebook
~~

I Love You

An independent boy
on his own
fending for himself
"don't need nobody"

Didn't want to get hurt
Afraid she would be gone
when I went home

So I never said
I love you
I should have said
I love you

~~

Not Very Affectionate

Not very affectionate
is your mother
I chased her
She let me catch her
and that was as exciting
as it got

One day I looked for socks
and found panties
That was when I knew
she had moved in

~~

Two

I wandered the country
for years
Never fitting in
leaving a trail of destruction
and I gave as good
as I got
as good as I could
one against the world

I met her in a small town
she was coming the other way
leaving her own path
one against the world
She found me in the bar
last man standing

In the morning I told her
I was moving on
one against the world
She took my face
in her hands and said
Two

~~

Nothing To Say

When I would catch her
half naked
I would stand and watch
She would look at me
for a moment
thinking I had something to say
but I wasn't looking
at her eyes
and she would giggle
~~

When I Go To Bed

When I go to bed
I listen to your gentle snore
one quiet
one a little louder
and one louder still
on that third snore
you wake yourself up
and move a little
which puts me to sleep

~~

Another Stupid Dream

Another stupid dream
of being at a seminar
but wandering the city
unable to find the location

It feels like the time
I wandered New York
looking for a belt
while 400 Aikido folk
practised
Not one had
an extra belt

But wandering a city?
Today all I need do
is find the room
upstairs
~~

It's a Bit Stressful

Do you know
what it feels like
to wonder each night
if she is going to knife you?
It's a bit stressful

~~

Trust

It wasn't that I could not
love

It was that I could not
trust

~~

Standing Silent

Standing silent
before you
I had no words
to make it better
No words
to make you stay
I lifted my eyes
to memorize your face
~~

The Might-Have-Been

Hard to believe
it was forty years ago
I watched those elf ears
peek out from your hair
as you tipped back your head
to be kissed

And now an old man
sits thinking
of the might-have-been

~~

It Looked So Good

It looked so good
that apple
so red and shiny

As I reached for it
my fingers sank
into the rot
and released
the smell of death

~~



Click... Click

Click... click
The other folks
on the party line
are saying they would like
to use the phone
And I am talking
with my girlfriend
That awkward talk
of kids, the long minutes
listening to the breathing
This was country courting
when I was a kid

~~

Life in the Country

The next year
I was in a different school
and I heard
she had a new boyfriend

The next month
I heard
she had died
in a car crash
This was life
in the country
~~

I Bump Along

I have never been
very relevant
I rarely understand
the current slang
or the latest cultural reference

Even the books I've read
are beyond me
I don't know which volume
has the story of Gandalf
and the Balrog
But I bump along

~~

The Golden Age

Oh yes
I remember the golden age
When women knew their place
In the back alley
bleeding to death
from a coat-hanger abortion

Where kids could play on the streets
unless they were in the church
with the priest, the pastor
or in the teacher's car

When men could beat their wives
until she took a fireplace poker
to his head as he slept
or the village men
took him out behind the bar

When youngsters died
or were crippled
by a dozen diseases
And their fathers died
on the job
And everyone died
coughing their lungs out
from the cigarettes they were told
were good for them

I remember it
I remember the hunger
and the cold
I'll stay here
thank you

~~

I Missed You SO MUCH

I missed you SO MUCH

I said

jumping up to give her a hug

and as I was wrapping my arms

around her, she said

I only went to the damned bank

~~

How Did You Sleep

She sat on the couch
and I asked
"how did you sleep"
She looked up from her work
put her finger on her chin
a small frown
and her eyes searched
back and forth
"I dreamt of Sumo"

~~

False Summer Gone

The false summer gone

The cold returns

But the sun

~~

The Junction

Across the street
the tracks lie waiting
During the day
the commuter trains
crawl through town
four or five cars
And the local freight trains
are assembled
with their deeply satisfying booms
Ancient sounds
in a digital age of pings and dings

But the very best
is when, late at night
the freights come through
heading to the West
Slow through town
I still love the rumble
of the engines
But here, just here
at the edge of town
those diesel turbines
start to wind up to speed
and for long minutes
I hear them scream
The cars moving faster
over that last street
Ta-Dun Ta-Dun Ta-Dun

~~

I Am So Glad

I am so glad
to be alive at this moment
and watch her walk
naked across the room

~~

Deep Into the Bones

As a child
I learned the word no
and it sank
deep into the bones

As I grew into a man
I heard yes more and more
until I rarely heard no
But there it was
deep in the bones

It has taken me a lifetime
to understand
that what is bred in the bone
will remain
until we become boneless

Or did I learn at all?
Was it the cancer
that ate holes into my childhood

Has the medication
allowed me to fill those holes
with today,
with yes

~~

Throwing Stones

My mother
loved having kids
"How else, as an adult
can you spend an afternoon
sitting on the curb
and throwing stones
into the road?"

~~

Happy to Join You

Being a friendly guy
and a bit of a mimic
I've always been happy
to join in the mood

So when you finish your work
and come to me snapping and snarling
Remember

I will be happy to join you
and the house will fill with noise
and outside the windows
the neighbours will once again
think that a Lynx is fighting
a Wolverine with a Fisher
cheering from the sidelines

~~

Late

Late
And the warm purr
of the drier
the random brush and thump
of the clothes
is a friendly companion
as I sit reading
~~

The Colourful Socks of Summer

Time to put the colourful socks
of summer

away

And lift down the box

of grey and black

with a little prayer

that I will switch them

once again

Again

~~

Plus One

She came again today
slipping through the cabin door
and into my bed
her hands and feet icy
as she folded herself
around my back

I left her there to sleep
as I made breakfast
I almost dropped the coffee pot
as I noticed the wolf
curled up on the rug

~~

The Rain is Blown

The rain is blown
onto the screens
and through
to run down the windows
a double layer
of melancholy
on a Sunday morning

~~



Where is the Mattress

Where is the mattress
on which you were conceived
Where you slept
between your mother and me
I can't remember
when it was thrown out
like so much stale bread

Wait
Even the bed
I made for your mother and me
a bit long
and not so wide
to fit the room
Even the bed
is gone

I blinked
and you are grown
and the bed is gone

~~

My First Summer Wages

My first summer wages
Boat driver on a tobacco farm
were spent on a stereo,
a radio and an 8-track

At the Uni
I carefully watched the Sunday Sun
waiting for those Toronto sales
and got a receiver
a turntable
and a cassette deck

My mother bought me
some damned fine speakers
And music became my life
Later I bought my mother
a system of her own
to replace that 8-track

Somewhere, someone, and
the music became too quiet
to hear

~~

The Patsy

She came in
like a film noir doll
all danger and smart lines
And I was the patsy

~~

Sometimes You Stay

Sometimes you stay
because it's less trouble
than leaving
when there's no reason
to leave
Perhaps you wait
for a reason

Perhaps you start fights
Hoping she will hit you
or you will hit her
Hoping it will be
the push you want
There, it's not on you

~~

Just in Case

I came in from the cold
some errand or other
and slid into bed
with you
Cold hands and feet
into the warm cocoon
of your dreams

A bit of a cuddle
until I warmed
and then
Just in case it was the last time
I ran my hand over your body

~~

What Would You Say

What would you say
if I published your picture
from forty years ago
Would you remember it?
Would you think
"I once looked like that"
or would you think
"You Rat Bastard"

~~

She Had a Voice

God she had a voice
In the three years
we were together
I only heard her sing
a handful of times

Once when she thought
I had passed out drunk
and the others
when I came home quietly
~~

Fat Squirrel

Fat squirrel runs
along the fence
to check out the deck
for apple cores
Sorry dude
just the one today

A few days ago
it was pot-stickers
and the squirrels ate
the wraps carefully
leaving the meat
for the skunk

~~

Twenty-Three

23 she said
you get them at 23
keep them for five years
and get another at 23

I looked at her
didn't know what to say
or how she knew that
~~

What's Wrong

What's wrong with you
my friend said

She's mad at me again
I don't know what I did
but she won't return my calls
I went to her place
but she wasn't there
and I don't know what I did

You're such an asshole
my friend said
~~

Always Me

Not once, not ever
did I think it was her
It was me
of course it was me
it was always me
~~

Hello How Are You

Hello how are you
Great, and you
Wonderful, it's been years
Must be what, twenty
Oh don't say that
Well we're still young
Good seeing you again

As she walks away
I wonder
what her name was
did she model for me
work with me
Did she sleep with me
~~

Winter Coats

I'm supposed to be
too old
too sick
to notice women
Hell I'm what they call
chemically castrated
Can't get it up

What do they know
my eyes still work
my brain still works
And I still hate winter
which covers up
all the sweet young things

~~

It's Not Mine

It's not mine
but I said it anyway
as I walked behind her
"two puppies in a blanket"
I've always liked that phrase
and I guess she did too
because I heard her giggle

~~

It's a Mood Thing

It's a mood thing
Sometimes I loved brunettes
sometimes blonds
and sometimes
I didn't notice her hair
for a week or two

~~

Useless Dreams

Useless dreams
all night long
Oh, oh, I can't find:
People
Phone numbers
Who knows what else

The sort of dreams
you don't want
to start again
because they are boring
uninteresting
and useless

About all you can get
poetry-wise
is a complaint
~~

Past Time

I feel like the last leaf
on the tree
hanging on past my time
afraid to let go

~~



Looking For a Fight

Cardinal in the bush
tail flicking
bouncing from branch to branch
as he looks in all directions
He's looking for a fight
~~

Years Afterward

For years afterward
I would see her
that curly hair
the way she would stand
hip shot
The way she would breathe in
as she said yes

But it was never her,
some other girl
Until one day
I started to think
"is that her daughter?"

~~

The Women Who Leave Me

The women who leave me
really mean it
Not one
has ever called again
"let's try once more"
Even though my phone number
is still the same
~~

Bike Shed

I made a nice bike shed
two big doors
and room for four bikes
to be taken in and out

I finished it
and we put the bikes in
and locked the door

~~

Unexpected

You spend months
charming, wooing the girl
to come live with you
and then spend your time
trying for a moment
alone

~~

Cozy

I sit in the corner
of the entry room
amongst the coats
and boots
Writing at my TV table
and under my folding chair
is an electric heater
Quite cozy
~~

Fat Squirrel

Our fat squirrel
comes onto the deck
and twitches around
looking for an apple core

He looks at the door
as if to say
"well, I'm here, where is it"

I don't want to tell him
that his buddy
beat him to it

~~

Broken Wing

My mother told me
I picked the damaged girls
the birds with a broken wing
I didn't like the sound of that
it was like I pounced
when they were vulnerable

But if that was true
those birds with broken wings
healed damned fast
and I was soon the one
with a broken wing

~~

Sticks

I never met
these women
who wanted a bad boy
who would stick around
to be abused

I suppose
the women I slept with
were used to sticking up
for themselves
and at the first sign
I was getting above myself
would stick it to me

~~

Half Cut

Half cut
she was a treat
Up on her toes
she would prance
into my arms
tuck her head
under my chin
and squeeze as if
she would never let go

~~

Don't Whine, Don't Rhyme

When I was young
I hated moustaches
and so
when I'd shave the winter beard
I'd leave a moustache

I hated poetry
all except Brautigan
hated rhymes
never even read my own

But lately I read a little
if it's between
1940 and 1960
as long as it doesn't rhyme
or whine

~~

On My Stomach

On my stomach
as she tries to sort my back
and there
she's set her elbow
just beside the spine
and drills it in
sliding it up
toward my neck
And I grit my teeth
and moan
and try to swat her
But she's out of reach

~~

Too Selfish

Too selfish to have kids
that's what some girl
once told me
But I had two of them anyway
and they seem to be alright

Not living rough
and begging on the street
Maybe one of them
will change my diapers
when the time comes

~~

Things Disappear

Things disappear
Mess
Junk, dust and dirt

But I'm cursed
with an occasional eye
for the details
~~

Cut-Throat Razor

I bought my son
a cut-throat razor
My old man
used a safety razor
But all I've ever used
are plastic disposables

Which is probably a good thing
It got me through my 20s
you can't cut much
with a disposable

And before you say it
My son has a beard
and he's never used
the cut-throat

~~

Lazy Writing

I need an editor
some of these things
are OK
but a lot of them
are shit
and I don't care enough
to sort them out

~~

Stop Talking

Walking downtown
I look up
at the building
across the street and say
"I think I went to a party there"

But I stop talking
That was the place
where I was drunk
and she dropped onto my lap
and yanked my beard
and followed me up the hill
and made me angry,

I wanted to go home
and sleep
and she wanted me
and I took her cherry
in her bed

~~

Student House

I don't think my life
ever got more organized
than the back yard
of a student house

~~

The Sun Has Come Out

The sun has come out
from behind the November clouds
and you know how rare that is
A strip of my TV table is lit
and on it
the dust and crumbs stand out
like the plains
seen from some mountain

Not quite Man Ray's "Dust Breeding"
on Duchamp's Glass
but it catches my eye
as I search for words

~~

My Old Man's Car

Seventeen is not
the most worldly of ages
We were driving slowly
down a country road
and I asked her
to pull down her pants

She did
and I drove my old man's car
half way
up the embankment
~~



Suddenly

What the hell
was that

I wipe the bottom
of my nose
in a different way
and suddenly

I'm in Isla Negra
in Neruda's study
looking through the window
and down the beach

~~

Girls with Horses

Ah the girls
with horses

You knew
you could not compete
But while she was there
she could pop your ears
with her thighs

~~

Long Enough

Every woman
I've ever been with
has a child-habit
Big eyes with surprise
A heel stamp with pique

I always thought
it was my job
to convince them to stay
long enough
to discover it

~~

Catchy Title

Obscure reference

Rhyme

Semi-rhyme

Pithy observation

~~

Williamsford

We stop at Williamsford
for lunch
on a day full of promise
of winter to come

We sit in the car
pandemic-booth
in the modern cafe
eating sandwiches
as big as your eyes

~~

My Definition

What's the word
for no testosterone
but after puberty

Pre-puberty

Puberty

Post-puberty?

~~

An Older Woman

I was probably 8
and she was an older woman
maybe 12
We were in her bedroom
in our swimsuits
She said "take it off"
But I spotted a box of comics
~~

Bad Joke

Prop. of KACCT
was engraved
on the anklet
The jeweller said no
My mother said no
But I was sure
it would be fine
she would like it

Might have been
grade 7
and she liked me
But when I gave it to her
she gave it back

I wonder how deep
that lesson went
~~

In My Dreams

In my dreams
I am forgiven
for being a callow boy
selfish
faithless
hurtful

In my dreams
the beautiful women
come to me once more
open arms
open hearts

In my dreams
I can say thank you
for chipping away
at the ice around my heart
that frozen soul
who didn't know
how much he hurt you

~~

Grey Morning Light

There is something special
about the curve
of a shoulderblade
as the grey morning light
slides over it
and she is warm
all along your body
and your hand
moving from her stomach
over her breast
to lift the sheet
and start your day
as you lean in
to kiss her gently
so she doesn't wake

~~

Last Night

She came to visit
last night
She doesn't come often
but she was there
smiling, laughing
The same beautiful girl
olive skin
that chin

And she smelled so good
when I held her
I wondered
"have I slept with you?"
But I should have asked
why she was 20

When I woke
I knew why she was 20
and I am 60
and why she was with
this old man
walking toward
that student bed
~~

Cheap Blinds

I bought ten dollar blinds
because nobody else did
and put them into the windows

Now, ten years later
the cheap plastic slats
sag and twist
and I'm told
they are ugly

And there they are
~~

Meds

Nine cups of coffee daily
for a lot of years
and then my heart
decided jazz was better
than classical
and the doctor said
"maybe the coffee"
and I said "no more"
and he said
"no need for extremes"
But I quit anyway

I drank every day
for decades
at least a couple of pints
often a lot more
and then the doctors said
Diabetes, heart problems, blood pressure
oh, and stage 4 cancer
I looked at the medicines
and one said
"stop drinking"

So I quit
Also sugar
and bread
and pasta
cookies, cake and pie

One of the meds
takes care of my jazzy heart
so I'm up to three coffees
a day

A man's gotta have an excuse
to sit still and think

~~

Let's Do Lunch

Thinking back
it might have been
about a girl
but I can't be sure

Some fellow got in touch
and said
"I'm a ninja and you're full of shit
and I'm going to beat you up"

I was in one of those places
no woman
bored
and more than a little sick
of peacocks
with fantasies of fights

So I invited him to lunch
to discuss time and place
~~

My Tablet

My tablet
slid off my notebook
and went bouncing
across the floor
followed by shouts
appealing and cursing
the old gods and the new
Brenda, in another room
asked if I was hurt
Bless her heart

~~

Cannibal Bunnies

Sometimes my dreams
are a little odd
Last night
seemed to be about
cannibal rabbits
from the United States

They didn't know
they were cannibals
those elite bunnies
but eventually I knew
that they were getting fat
from eating poor bunnies
suitably prepared
so no one knew

I wonder what that was about
~~



The Kitchen Dance

The kitchen dance
is important
I came home yesterday
and went into the kitchen
Pam and Brenda came in
and we crossed and recrossed

Microwave, cupboards
Sink, oven and fridge
all play their parts
It takes years
to perfect the dance

But it takes at least two
you and your partner
If she cooks and washes
and you eat
You will never dance
~~

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