

Orangeade



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Orangeade

No Perch and chips
no Perchburgers
"they don't want to be caught"
says the sign

Perch were the fish
of my childhood
I carried hundred pound bags
of frozen guts
in my great-uncle's shanty

Then it was Smelt
and the gill nets were put away
while the trawlers worked
and now?
Now I don't know what fish
is in my lake
but the boats are wider
and I suspect not as many men
are lost to the lake

Such a shallow lake
the runt of the five
but with half the fish
Erie changes with each generation
I read of fish I didn't know
Some sort of Herring
along with the Whitefish
Bass, Trout and Perch

What is in there now?
I really don't know
they say the Sturgeon is coming back
and the Whitefish
Are the fishermen?

The shantys are now condominiums
The boats were at the docks
and there are tourist cars honking
because the lift bridge is up
As if that will hurry the sailboats

And I ate Cod
instead of Perch
with my chips
and my Orangeade

~~

Not One Piece of Coal

Where did these geese come from
In my day
the seagulls would have sent them off
with a good slapping
yet here they are in the hundreds
Lazing around on the docks
and swarming the new grass field
where the coal docks were

And I found not one piece of coal
which felt like trying to swim
in an empty pool
Once, there was water
when I was young
Once coal and coal dust
which only the seagulls
following the fish tugs
would sit on
Not these fat grass-eaters
and shit squirter
Is it even my town?

At least the tourist traffic
is gone at 5pm
when the stores closed
that hasn't changed
as they packed up their fancy cars
and their brats
and leave the place
to the evening swims
of the locals

At least the lake
is still wet
~~



ABOVE: Willie Cronheimer, Chris Lamb and Jack Vary reeling nets to be dried in Port Stanley. Jack Vary's boat, the L&S in the background, 1975. Photo courtesy the Vary Family



LEFT: Early wooden, steam powered fish tugs Port Stanley Harbour. Photo courtesy Rod Nicholson



RIGHT: Jack, Spike and Percy Vary picking fish, December 8, 1946. Photo courtesy the Vary Family

In Buckets

The rain, in buckets
is washing away
the sweaty heat
of the last few days

What a joy
to hear it drum
while in a waterproof car
I close the tilt roof

~~

I Know

They come in my dreams
children dressed in rags
dressed in their Sunday Best
dressed in beads and feathers

Children speaking strange languages
dozens of languages
not English
not French
But they laugh
and I know that language

Someone beside me speaks

I don't look away from the children

The government, the church
saw nothing but rags
heard nothing but gibberish
and for the good of the children
took away the languages
All of them

I know
To take away the laughter
the language I know
I know they took away their families

and the lucky ones
the ones in my dreams
are those in unmarked graves
Hidden away for guilt

The lucky ones
who still laugh
died before they lost their families

And those who did this
the old men and old women
so sure they were right
that they bulldozed grave markers
I know

I know your guilt
your sin will eat away at you
if not in this world
then in your next

This I know

~~

A Certain Feeling

The essay I posted today
had a reference to my writings
being lost and sometimes found

I didn't read it
I often can't read
what I've written

A certain feeling
of jerking off
I like what I wrote
but always the guilt
that I should be doing
something else

~~

The Junction

Some bright young thing
has named all the city areas
Ours is "The Junction"
because train tracks

But why did they rename
St. Patrick's Ward
I can't remember
what cute name it has now
but it will always be "The Ward"

Is this concern of mine
the reason I have no urge
to visit the town I was born
the places I grew up

This school place
this place my kids were born
where they grew up
Is this my home town

~~

I Found Out Later I Was Terrible

I wrack my brain
trying to think of a time
I put a rock in a snowball
or punched a pregnant lady
or fire crackered a frog
(I might have done that)

But a hellion I was not
I said a few cruel things
and turned my sister's slippers
inside out
Causing her to attack me
and I laughed as Mom
dragged her away
and threw her into the tub
to cool off

But I'm afraid
this confessional poem
is, like my life
a bit tame
~~

It Didn't Help

Once again my mother could tell
that my heart was broken
"Oh I wish" she said
"that I was young again
and could feel things so deeply"

I knew she was trying to help
and I loved her for it
But it didn't help

~~

Not Very Famous

Some people meet famous people
all the time

Me, I don't think so

I saw Gentle Giant at the gym
(they are playing now, on my radio)
and Elton John once sat behind me
at a Maria Muldaur concert
at the gym

Not much of a story, really

~~

You Get Addicted

You get addicted
to the light off a nude model
to the way it falls
it shades
it blinds
It becomes an obsession
that won't let go

~~



No Surprises in Mine

We are often surprised
at photographers regular

Often their files contain
what we didn't expect

No surprises in mine

~~

You ask me where
and how to get a model
You want to shoot nudes
but you have nobody

Why not do what the greats did
why not shoot your wife,
your girlfriend

Here is Edith
wife of Emmit Gowen
Some of the most intimate shots
ever created

~~

Nude as Paintbrush

I do not want to hear
about equipment
or technique
Don't ask me

Yves Klein
needed no camera
no film
to see a nude
in a whole different way
~~

Do your best

How do you react
when you hear this

Do you relax
say
"oh, so I don't have to worry
whatever I do will be the best
I can do"

Or do you become stressed
thinking "this will empty me
my strength, my will
everything I have"

What is your best
What is best
Is "best" written down somewhere
Can I look it up?

What are you doing now
Reading this, yes
but how

Are you thinking what it means
to do your best
at all times
to do the best... for whom
For you?
For others?
Which best is best

Nobody is keeping score
you will not be marked
it won't be on the test
~~

Everyone Wants to be a Hero

Everyone wants to be a hero
or so it seems
To do great things
to save the day
to have the statue
and the big parade

Statues are for heroes
yes?
When we see one we think
“There's a hero”

In the meantime
you wait for your chance
you prepare
you train

And your day never comes
you die in obscurity
nobody ever knows your name

What if
What if you forget the hero business
and simply be kind

What if you help whenever you can
What if you are kind

Perhaps your training, all that kicking
and punching, and prepping and shooting
is about being ready to understand
someone else
to be kind to someone else
and not to keep your own skin intact

What if you simply look
What do you see in front of you
a mirror?

~~

Out of Your Ass

Get your head
out of your ass
he said

Stop masturbating
with that sword
and look at your opponent

I was confused
I was trying to pass the exam
I was trying to get it perfect
~~

Congratulations He Said

Congratulations he said
you are perfect
your swordsmanship is there

Now what will you do
with the next ten years

No wonder so many
drop away from the practice
You do what they say
and then they want more
but they don't tell you
what that is

Bastards

~~

***Killed by Roses no. 32* by Eikoh Hosoe**

What is this disembodied arm
and he's cut off her face
and the exposure is off
why didn't he fix it in post

Well why doesn't he fix it now
if he couldn't then
and what's that octopus
got to do with anything

~~

Old School

Much as I like
this computational photography
I get with my phone
Would it even let me take a shot
without a face

But never mind that
would I be able to catch
that wonderful blur
as she pulls her arm
out of her shirt

Call me old school

~~

A Good Photograph

How to Create Bokeh - Bokeh Photography Tips

Understanding Bokeh for Beginners

7 ways to achieve a beautiful bokeh effect in your photos

Bokeh for Beginners | Achieving Bokeh in Photographs

BOKEH explained in intense detail

Top 7 Ways to Create Buttery Bokeh

How To Shoot Bokeh Photography

What is Bokeh? Over 50 Lenses rated for their out of focus blur

How To Create Bokeh Effects in PaintShop Pro

And of course, how to pronounce bokeh

so you don't sound like a noob

But with all this information to hand

how do you use it

what is it for

It's for nothing
it's a "new" technique because
for many years
it was lost
Only now has it been found again

I remember "out of focus"
I don't remember hearing
the Japanese word for "out of focus"
but I give it to you now

There, has your photography improved
now that you have a fancy term
and know how to create it

Of course it has
technique is king
equipment is king
Or, you can fix it in post
~~

You Inner Hopper

You look
and you can't help but see
what you have seen

You look
and say to yourself
I like that
I want to shoot that
and you do

Perhaps only later
do you realize
"this is my Nighthawks"
Embrace your visual vocabulary
~~

It's Hard

They say it's hard
the letting go
but it's not, really
Kids grow up
Students learn
Life fades

I don't say
it can't be awkward
Kids are afraid
you will be lonely
students can pretend
they are stupid
“need help please”

And this life thing
it tends to cling
claws bone deep
into the next breath
But we find a way
to let go
We're proud of the kids
proud of the students
for being ready to go

And if we are lucky
we're proud of the life
we are leaving behind

~~

I Say it Again

I say it again
something hurtful
and I can't stop my mouth
If I could
I would sew it shut

But there, it's out
and I see the hurt sink
into your chest
I see your eyes
go moist
then get hard and dry
as you look at me.

I turn to the wall
and slam my fist
into the plaster
breaking the skin
Trying to make myself hurt
as I've hurt you
but you just flinch
wondering if you're next

One more mark
in the ledger
one more step
toward a closing door
and an empty bed
and I can't sew these lips

~~

I'm Watching This Show

I'm watching this show
and you've said this before
so I cut you out

Today I told my student
to be surprised
when the opponent attacks
Be surprised
at when you respond
as if for the very first time

The show can wait
you are telling me something
I haven't heard it before
it's brand new
Tell me as many times
as you wish
It will always be brand new
~~

Andrew's Birthday

It's Andrew's birthday tomorrow
she said
and I started to look around the room

He's looking for a present for you
she said
as I looked back and grinned, busted
~~



Another Jerk

My head jerks back
as someone rams an ice pick
into my ankle

(A pointed spike
for breaking up blocks of ice
or for killing Trotsky)

Just another wandering pain
in an old body
that sits too long in this chair
~~

When You Said Good-bye

When you said good-bye
I thought that was the end
But I was wrong

You are still here
after so many years
you are beside me

In my dreams
in unguarded thoughts
at unexpected times

You are still here
somewhere inside me
part of me
~~

Deux Cinquante S'il Vous Plait

A freezing bus station
in Montreal
the diesel fumes
and the beer
making me sick
And I'm wondering
how I got here

It was you of course
always you
You had said good-bye
again
and I couldn't stick around
to hear the sympathy
of my friends
"have a beer"

So I sit here at this bar
drinking a 50
in this ugly cold place
wondering where to go
How far east
before I'm away from you
How far to forget you
How far until I don't hurt
~~

Sanding

I stand in the shop
sanding
and, as often as not
my mind wanders to you
to the conversations we had
the fights
the nights you forgave me
and the nights I slept alone

I don't know how
this makes the wood look better
It probably doesn't
but you won't be denied
all my training
all my breathing
and you show up
the moment the wood
hits the belt

30 years now
the moment
the wood hits the belt

~~

You Killed My Dog

Ah, yes
the revenge movie
the family is killed
and if that's not enough
the dog

What else are all the guns for
the gates
the private military
if not for fear
of those coming
for the family
for the dog

And if they ever get through
well, they better watch out
I've got all these guns
and a hot car
and I know how it's done
because I watch the movies

~~

The Toddler on a Tricycle

As I begin to back up
out of the parking space
I worry
with my neck and back
about some toddler
below my back window
the one the suburban dad
keeps running over

So I start slow
slow enough, I hope
that a toddler on a tricycle
will notice
and get out of the way

~~

Piece-Work

At the stop light
a fire truck
with "request-fire.com"
on the back window

I worry that the boys
are now paid piece-work
Paid per fire
and the address
means what it seems to mean

~~

My Poor Left Hand

My poor left hand
I was going to show the students
how lovely and soft
my hands were
some sort of lesson
about going through blisters
and callus

But my poor left hand
paralyzed a while ago
by the pinched nerve
at my broken neck
Now seems to have started
toward gnarled old man's fingers

Some sort of adhesions
in the ligaments
of the palm and little finger
lovely lumpy bits
that haven't quite yet
caused claws to form
but soon I suspect

~~

Twelve Years

For 12 years
I kept a scrap of paper
with your number on it

You had moved away
long ago
and I would never call

But whenever I found it
in my wallet
it made me feel a little better

~~

Honduras Rosewood

I finish cutting
some Honduras Rosewood
and take my mask off
only to smell curing tobacco

I haven't been near the fields
in thirty years
and the factory in town
has been gone for fifteen

But I'll remember that smell
and the smell of coal
and the smell of smoking fish
until I don't remember my life

~~



It All Balances

It all balances
I am ever so much better
at making what I make
in my shop

But my eyes are getting weak
and it's hard to see
if I missed a spot
~~

It Was Ever So Hard

It was ever so hard
to leave her arms
especially when she squeezed

But I had to go
there was nothing for me
and I was headed North
to find work

Oh how I have wished
in the years since
that I had stayed with her
warm in that bed

Something would have turned up
I say to myself
It always did
~~

Half Awake

We were half awake
when we made those promises
when I said I would never leave
and you said I'd never have to

I was always so careful
about what I promised
but half asleep in your arms
I was relieved when you told me to go

~~

Try Again

I knew her from school
She walked to me
as I watched the big wheel on the midway
she said she was happy to see me

"And if you bet on 17
and if it comes up 17
you can have me"

I dug into my wallet
and put ten dollars on 17
and watched her
as she watched the big wheel
She was 17

It came up spades
and I dropped my eyes
as she looked at me
I put my wallet in my pocket
and turned to go

"try again"

~~

Important

So annoying
several bits and pieces
of ideas or feelings
between yesterday and now
There, another one
there and gone

Well as my gran said
"couldn't have been important"

~~

À bout de souffle

I watched Goddard's Breathless
and thought
I've seen it all before
and so I have
the hand-held camera
the jump cuts

But I watched
because I should have
long ago
And today
the movie replays
scene after scene
in my head
~~

Revenge Movie

To stop working
to turn the guilt off
I watched a revenge movie

But I skipped the plot
not needing to see
the terrible events
that caused the heroine
to scamper to Europe

To learn about military weapons
and super-effective fighting
Not to mention
how to heal like a hero
Europe?

I didn't care
but hit fast forward
Wondering what will happen
Will she shoot the bad guys
in the face
The big boss last
Of course she did

Be a pretty short movie
if she died in the first act

~~

Mouse Beside the Elephant

Every day of my life
I am grateful
for half the Americans

The sport fishermen
in Michigan
who don't want the Great Lakes drained
to water the almond trees
in California

The cottagers
who think us quaint
and our forests pure
Who don't want them bombed

And the politicians
who know they need the votes
(but if they ever need
the Living Room
it's theirs for the taking)

~~

Dad Again

The music has run out
but I don't notice
as I stare out the window
at the wind-stirred grass

Enjoying the feeling of green
and thinking about
a couple of guys
who raised a family
and then raised another

I get it
You do
what you know how to do
~~

So I Stopped

An old man
on his deathbed
is supposed to ask
for a glass of whisky
And for fifty years

I thought that would be me
But I stopped drinking
I read somewhere that
one of the drugs I take
doesn't like alcohol

So I stopped

~~

On The Train Again

My forehead
against cool glass
I watch the blur
of trees
punctured by houses
as I listen to the hammering
of steel wheels
on steel rails

My forehead bounces
sometimes
and thumps back on the window
Alone again

~~

Rich Man

When you have enough
I told my children
and a little bit more
you're rich

I don't know why
I just thought of that
but perhaps it is because
I just bought a coffee
without counting my change

~~

Stay With Photographs

I always thought
I should be making video
but I am lazy
I hate to edit
I hate to retake

So I stay with photographs
and poems
too lazy even
for screenplays
I say to myself
it's so easy now

But I won't do it
after all
I can't film
and act
and light
and edit
all at once
and who else will help

~~

Pretty Good Arm

I was standing at a football game
watching
and holding the hand
of a girl
when I caught a double handful
of books across the back of my head

It was another girl I knew
a girl that I didn't know
I was in a relationship with
I just thought she was a friend
but she had a pretty good arm

~~

Karma Cancer

Do you suppose
that all the bad things
the nasty things
we do
get stored up in our liver
to come out years later
and attack us

Maybe that's the true cause
of cancer
Maybe karma isn't something
for your next life
maybe it's here, now
in this life
waiting

~~

Giddyay

I'm pretty sure
the waitress I wanted to bed
in Whitecourt Alberta
doesn't remember me
some guy from Ontario
working for a lumber company
for the summer

This makes me happy
because I said
"you must be from the Ottawa Valley"
and she asked why
and I said "gidday"
but I think she misunderstood
and walked away

~~

One Film

I could watch
the entire Marvel catalogue
hell, all of Netflix
and the best I could expect
would be a few hours
with my brain in neutral

But one film
from La Nouvelle Vague
One film
that is trying to keep me out
instead of suck me in
and I wind up riding
to a fast food joint
late at night
feeling like I'm riding
to a bar in Paris
in 1960

Some things echo
around your head
and last for days
and you're happy to have them
while others
you can't wait to puke out
like clotted milk
from the carton
on your roommate's side
of the fridge

~~

Alone Again

Sitting at the bar
alone again
fascinated by my beer
by the patterns
in the wood
alone again

Woman comes along
and stops to talk
to a friend behind me
and while she talks
she, all unknowing
rests her hand
on my shoulder

It wasn't a gesture
meant for me
and I was careful not to move
I was just a convenient place
for her to rest her hand
but my heart began to beat
that brief contact
brought me back
~~

These Languid Thoughts

These languid thoughts
(have I ever said languid?)
I have of you
just after I wake

Are they dreams
or daydreams
they seem to continue
from some dream I had
but I'm sure I'm awake

No, I know I'm awake
because suddenly my chest tightens
and I know for a fact
you are not longer here
you will never be here again

I try to fall back asleep
I try to forget you are gone
I try to hold you again
and tell you how much
I don't miss you
because you are here
~~

Such an Asshole

I glance out the window
and there she is
sitting in her car
head bowed, still

Jesus I'm such an asshole
I said some cruel things
I told her to get over me
I told her that I'm not the guy

But there she is
in the car
and it's getting cold
I walked to the fridge for a beer
~~

This Guy

Some things grow on you
A week ago I didn't like this guy
but now that I've got used
to the way he thinks
I think he's alright

It pays sometimes
to be lazy
to not bother with heat
like when I was a kid
Right NOW

But when you get older
you learn to leave it be
you learn to let it happen
and sometimes
what happens is nice
~~

Goal Oriented

As I begin to count
the poems I've written today
I realize that once more
I have become goal oriented

You would think
that as near death as I am
I would relax a bit
not get even more wound up

If I don't create something
for a couple of hours
if I don't make something new
it isn't a problem

Maybe I'll prove how laid back
I am now
and go putter in the shop
Make a few nice things to sell

No wait....

~~

Summer Saturday Night

She was riding shotgun
down that country road
Opening the beer
and hitting mailboxes
with the empties
just to lighten the load

On the way to nowhere
and getting there too fast
pulling donuts at the crossroads
and nothing's going to last

Maybe later back to town
and drive between the turns
the KFC and the Belgian Hall
The windows rolled
to yell at her friends

Maybe they'd park beside
the football field
if it wasn't too crowded this time
Maybe she'd let him in this time
a story to tell her friends

~~

You Never Have to Piss

I open my eyes
to some surprise
I'm still here
and, typically,
I need to piss

This is how I know I'm not dead
In heaven you never have to piss
you just sit around playing a harp
or so my grade school teacher said
just before she said she'd prefer
to go to the other place (boredom)

And Terry Pratchett's Death says
that man is the only creature in the universe
who, seeing the wonders of being alive
gets bored

I promise I'm not bored
not for all the time
I've borrowed
not for all the time
your tax dollars
have kept me alive
And I thank you for that

I'm still alive
and I promise
to make something of that
I promise
I will try not to waste
that extra few cents you pay
for your gasoline

~~

Who's Your Favourite

Someone asked
and I said "Richard Brautigan"
but then said
I don't like poetry

Not cool
not the right answer
so I started reading poets
and now I can say
there are some poets I like
but most of them are crap
~~

Stupid Boy

Stupid, stupid boy
She stood at my front door
she wanted in
but after a drunken fuck
a few days before
I didn't want her
So I didn't let her in

Such an asshole
A cynical man
would have said
"one day they won't call"
a kinder man, the Old Swede
would have said
"every woman deserves
to be fucked"

I'd like to be kind
and say I wasn't thinking
and perhaps I was not
"There are reasons
but no excuses"
My sensei said

Just one of the things
that have stuck in my head
for these 30 years
I hope like hell
it never stuck in hers
~~

Be Kind I Say

Be kind I say
and then call myself
hypocrite
For I was not kind

Even when I seemed kind
even when I listened
with soft eyes
and cooing voice
I wondered
when we would get down to it

And there are some
who will call me kind
but I reject their judgment
I try
I was trying then
But I am not a kind man

You must be kind
but I will not call you so
I can't see into your mind
You must do so
You must sit in judgment
of yourself
No one else can

~~

Just the Waiting

Bread in the toaster
Coffee being made
and it's just the waiting

Just?
oh the waiting
always so much better
~~

Hostess in a Tokyo Bar

She told me she was a hostess
in a bar in Tokyo
It made her sad
to see what sort of men
would drink with her

So lonely, so lost
so desperate for some control
they would spend any amount
to feel they were at least
superior to her

~~

Holy Crap

Drowsing a bit
on a bus in Chile
we came around a corner
and I had to wonder
if I had fallen adream

There, on the hills
were palm trees and pines
mixed together
in a way that ought not be
and I thought of the snow
back in Canada

I thought of that silly palm
they plant in the beach
at Port Dover each summer
and probably keep
in a greenhouse during the winter
But mostly I thought "holy crap"

~~

Back to the Grind

10am

The women are at work
The boy is probably in class
and here I am
the second coffee just finished
and some work in the shop
saying "beat me, hurt me
make me write bad cheques"

So I will go to the shop
and make things
all the while saying
over and over
"back to the grind"

~~

The 25 Cent Gang

There were ten or twelve of us
the 25 cent gang
Kids who want to the Saturday Matinee
to forget about our lives for a while
to sit in the dark
nobody yelling at us
just the flickering lights
and a story to hide in

The lot of us
would go out the back doors
into the alleyway
where we could scatter
No front entrance for us
no posh exit
(as posh as a small town could get)
And with all of us
like Zebra
we would be too hard to single out

~~

Connected

My earbuds speak to me
as I put them on
In some vaguely English
female voice
"connected"

Are we? Are we connected
I feel vaguely guilty
because my map app
speaks to me in a vaguely Australian
female voice
~~

When the Birds Know

With the earbuds on
spinning up the tunes
all I can hear as I walk
are the big scary pops
of hundred year old
floor joists

The smaller, louder,
creaks of the floorboards
have disappeared
leaving only the low frequency

This must be what it's like
when the birds know
the earthquake is coming
before we mid-range men
even begin to suspect

~~

Juice and Blood

Picking raspberries
the tiny black kind
from the wild patch
at the back of my yard

My hand becomes stained
and it looks like blood
That generalized bleed
that means I've bounced my palm
off of the 24 grit belt again

Looking further down
as I reach to pick
I notice that my legs
bare and scratched
are showing some actual
blood

~~

Are They There

Do your dad
and your mom
really pop out from behind
the years
and box your ears
as you get older?

Are they looking for ways
to screw you up
just when you figure
you've got it screwed down?

Or do you recognize the time
when your dad lost it
and your mom couldn't find it
and you were there

~~

Half A Day

Half a day, half a day
half a day only
to get the work done
to pack for the cabin
to wash some clothes
to gather the tools
to assemble the cameras

Now that's not how it should go
hop in the car and drive
don't forget the key
and once there, all you need
should be on the shelves
clothes in the drawers
food too

Who needs this adventure
every time we get out of town
Will the place be burgled
or burned down
will there be something to eat
always a relief
to go around that last corner
and see that barn roof
over the dojo

~~

What's on My Wall

You can tell a lot about someone
by what's on their walls
At least that's what I heard
so here's a test
What do you know about me

There's three wolves
just above my desk
to the left a couple of Benjamin CheeChee
To the right a dotted kangaroo
a Samurai drawn by Liam
and a nude taken by me
sliced, reversed and woven
Oh, and on the trim
of the door to the hall
a couple of impressed pictures
from my grandmother's house
Scenes of Olde London
Dickens I'd guess

Through a door
I can see an oil of my mother
from when she posed
for the local artist
and if I crank my head
my mother's cabbage
(really a geranium)
and a fuschia, both watercolours

Above the door to the hall
three Japanese swords
all sharp
by three different smiths
I swear, I don't collect them
but I've got another one around
somewhere.

A cross stitch of a poem
my grandfather had
in his gun cabinet
(mom again)
and around the window
11 masks
it seems I do collect those

And there you have me
all of me on the walls
never mind the things
covering every surface
never mind the books
I suspect you know me now
~~

From Sudbury

She came down from Sudbury
to visit
I hadn't seen her in months
and was pleased
but she told me I'd better get checked
for the clap

So I wandered over to the clinic
and was seen
by my mother's Internist
a lovely Indian woman
with a sadistic streak
(I'm not making this up)

She took a cotton swab
and screwed it into my prick
dry
squeak, squeak, squeak
and then
with glee, I swear, with glee
she yanked it out again

I groaned
“I'd rather have the clap”
It was negative eventually
and later Sudbury called
to say that it was just some jerk
telling her he had the clap
to make her sad

~~

Repressed Hell

Repressed sexuality
my friend said
as my head swivelled
to follow the girl
we had just passed

Nothing suppressed about it
I said to him

~~

Why Do You Write All That Shit

Why do you write all that shit
she asked me
I got a little defensive and said
nobody has to read it
and besides, I don't write it
it writes me

She gave me that look
that said
you write all that shit
because you're full of it
And I had to agree
if I wanted supper that night

~~

Pam is Dancing

At the cabin again
with new speakers
It's the Hip
and Pam is dancing
under the Tiffany light

Me, I'm making coffee
and setting up my office
the bluetooth keyboard
and the little tablet
propped up with my glasses case

Not much more
you could ask of life
Class is done
and tomorrow I've some little jobs
starting with caulking a window
~~

Pam is Singing

Some Celestion Dittons on the wall
nice British sound
bought for \$10 at the thrift store
and Jethro Tull comes on

The Pamurai starts singing
She's got a Revel Cider
and her book
but for now
The place is rocking
~~



Sun Lover

It's lovely to have a place in the sun
a lovely sun porch
to catch a few rays

But look at this deck
newly done three or four years ago
and it's bleached
dry
and cracking

I had a girlfriend
who loved the sun
In spring
she was as pale as alabaster
except I don't know what that is
A sheet of white paper then

By the end of summer
she was brown as an old boot
and her skin looked
well
like an old boot

I loved her dearly
and the last I heard
she had some problems
with skin cancer
I hope it wasn't serious
I hope she outlives me
by decades

I hope the deck
outlives me too
and I hope
I can save the rotted trim
around the window
Because when it's not dry as bones
it's wet as piss

~~

She Was Visiting Her Cousin

She was visiting her cousin
She was from Europe
and as soon as I saw her
I was beside her

It's not like I seduced anyone
or that I even asked
It was more like I assumed
they would be in my bed that night
and many times, they were

She was in my bed
but she didn't want to fuck
I don't blame her, some rude kid
from a rude country
but she was kind
and gave me a blowjob

For that I have always remembered her
I even remember her name
but I'm not telling you
and I wrote her a poem
decades ago
Go find it if you want her name

She was very kind to me
and I hope she has been happy
these many years since
If I ever see her cousin again
Perhaps I will not
ask him about her
I'm not insane

~~

I Knew a Girl

I knew a girl
who smelled like
she smelled like
Oh lord it's hard
She smelled like soap
she smelled like something
very expensive
and very rare
that cost three dollars
in a Dutch store

She smelled like grass
she smelled like rain
she smelled like the lake
as you drove toward it
for the first time in a month
She smelled like a new day
like a new life
and when our daughter was born
she smelled like that

~~



Until I Couldn't Sleep

Day by day
the things we could do together
became fewer
until what we could do together
was nothing

It was like breaking my neck
the positions in which I could sleep
became fewer and fewer
until finally I was left with only one
and then that became too painful

I found a way to survive
until it got better
Not like it was before
but better
and maybe if we had found a way
to stay together
we might have found ways
to stay together without pain

~~

Like AM Radio

I connect to the bluetooth
and that little amp
has tinnitus worse than mine
but at least it's not the news
and that stuff for kids
that the CBC plays
before 9am

Nothing else
gets played on the radio
because I don't like the Corus playlist
so I'll wait until 9
and in the meantime
it's an offline set
from Radio Paradise
with whine like the old days
of AM radio

~~

Saturday Morning

She was up at 4am
wandering
and that's my usual waking time
but I didn't sleep again
so at dawn
I got up and dumped the mouse
caught in the trap at 4:30am
and reset the trap
made breakfast
made coffee
and sat down to type

And that's my Saturday morning
taken care of
When I get tired of writing
(when the coffee is done)
I'll look around for a job to do
No sense not being productive
since I'm awake
It won't be hard to find something
that needs to be done

For sixty years
I've ignored my tinnitus
and the whine
of the bluetooth amp
is already fading
I wish I could do the same
for the mouldering cottage

~~

Just One Cup

If you pour more coffee
into the cup
before you get to the bottom
and do that three times
It's still just one cup
Right?

~~

Unfriended

Good-bye
Good-bye to two people I know
you have been retired
from my friends list
my list with 1000 people
I don't know

But you, who I know
have interrupted my thoughts
set up straw men
and knocked them down
once or ten times too often
so Good-bye to you
It says you're still my friend
but I don't have to listen
any more

Once I suppose
I would have argued with you
pointed out the flaws
in your arguments
or simply told you
that you were
who you are
but I've too few breaths
to waste them any more

So good-bye to you
you're still my friend
it says
so let it be that
You're my friend
that I don't listen to
any more
Consider your silence
an act of friendship to me
~~

To Hell With the Economy

Sometimes in the thrift store
I think of the dead people
whose favourite things
are on the shelves
"Get those things
out of the house"

I'm listening to dead man's speakers
surrounded by dead man's stuff
although to be fair
much of it was probably just replaced
by other things that worked the same
but were a bit cleaner

The next thieves
who break a window
and empty the place
can enjoy the price tags
that I've left on it all
Just so they know
how little these things
were valued

I valued them enough
to buy them
and use them
perhaps that's all we need
to save the planet
is for those of us
who don't mind dead man's things
to refrain from buying new
when old will do
~~

These Pieces

These pieces
I often feel
are trite
are trash
but writing them
makes me feel
as if I'm creating
as if I'm alive
and so I continue
to write while I can

~~

My Tree

Three or four kids
walking down the sidewalk
eating stolen apples
or at least
taken from a tree
without permission

As we finish them
we chuck (never throw)
them into the bush
and when we chuck them
we say "that's my tree"

~~

Stagger a Bit

I stand up, overbalance
and stagger a bit
Is this it
comes the thought, unwanted
is this the start
The resumption
of my body consuming itself
like a caterpillar
wanting to be a butterfly
like a mother spider
digesting herself
to feed her young

I chide myself
you just overbalanced
in dollar store crocs
you fool
Nothing more than that

But I wonder why
this thing I don't want to mention
for fear of whining
I wonder why it has decided
to chew me up from inside
Why I
have decided to chew

~~

Never Wake a Sleeping Baby

Soft snores
come from the other side
of the couch back

She was up a while
in the night
so I will let her sleep
as long as she can

She has created a life
as crowded, as stressful
as any I made for myself
Partly by taking on
what I shed

So with paternal glow
and a feeling of thanks
I say to myself
Never wake a sleeping baby
and sit quiet

~~



I Am Starting To Wonder

I am starting to wonder
if you could live on coffee alone
Just black, dark roast coffee

I'm pretty sure
you could do it for a while
until you ran out of fat
and muscle

But before that happens
maybe you would go insane
completely paranoid
so that you grabbed whatever weapon
was handy
and you went after
whoever was closest

If I ever try it
I hope there's no weapons in the house
except maybe some foam swords
so that I could scream and run
around the house
chasing everyone
and everyone would laugh
except me
as I tried to beat them to death
with a foam sword

~~

What's Wrong With My Dreams

I don't know
what's wrong with my dreams
Other people
have amazing dreams
where they fly
and they cause planes to explode
as they glance at them
and aliens

But me, I just dream
about being in some school
or maybe a community centre
that needs a lot more toilets
because I keep searching
and never find one
and just as I do
I get interrupted
and wake up realizing
it's time for my two-hourly walk
to the toilet in my house

Not Enough Toilets

I still don't have enough toilets
only two (it used to be one
and the boys would use the bush
in the back yard)

At least not according
to the houses I see for sale
with four bedrooms
and six baths

I think rich people
must smell bad
if they need that many baths
Or maybe it's in case
one of the toilets gets plugged
and the maid doesn't come
for another two days

~~

Half an Hour

Half an hour
I promise myself
but that's it
Nobody wants to spend all their time
reading this random collection of
whatever

Half an hour more to wait
until I can eat again
the drugs having safely left
my stomach

Finished my book
and the urge to get out of the chair
too soft
too bent
before my fingers become fully numb
has propelled me to the table

Damn I've been sleeping most of the day
at least that part
after the two hours on my knees
replacing one deck board
Now I know how
I need to find someone to tell

Little problems
like the two flies in here
that let me know
I am still around
to be annoyed
and now you are too, perhaps
reading all this way
for nothing

~~

Down the Beach

Down the beach
flipping the bird
to the cottagers
who figure they own the water

Down for a mile or more
until the clay cliffs
come down to the lake
and if you climb just a little

There is a bit of the cliff
that looks like a chair
it's around the corner
out of sight of the Gorbys

You can sit in silence
you can shut up
of course you hear the lake
lapping at the clay cliff

Which will mean
that if you go looking
if you get past the Gorbys with Guns
you aren't going to find my chair

~~

She Was a Solid Little Thing

She was a solid little thing
and you could hardly keep her
in clothing
I used to love watching
as she walked by
always with a little twitch
of her tail

I would find her
in the oddest places
stretched out for a nap
usually with the bedcovers
and both pillows
so that when I wanted to sleep
I'd have to find her first

I probably don't have to talk
about her thighs
not an ounce of fat
and as big as mine
Like I said, solid
Shoulders like Mifune
That little twitch he'd do
to settle his haori
~~

The Day I Was Born

I began writing
the day I was born
and I have been writing
my life
ever since

I don't like fiction
so I try to write truth
Truth being so much more
than the lies most tell themselves

Not that I care much
how anyone else lives
I'm not writing their lives
and I long ago
gave up trying to save them
~~

Who Would Guess the Ear

Who would guess
that the ear is an erogenous zone

Seen from an inch away
there it is
all folds
delicate
pink, or brown
sensitive

You can whisper into it
or gently blow on it
to wake her up
just enough
to roll into you
~~



Bluetooth Blues

What have I done wrong now
the keyboard
gets lonely?
The tablet
isn't horny?

Two minutes
without talking
and they disconnect
and I have to start
the whole introduction thing
all over again

~~

An Official Poet

I've never met
an official poet
One of those folks
who give readings
sounding like Dylan Thomas
to rooms full of students

I would like to ask
about the Dylan Thomas thing
but maybe that's just me
remembering things
from 20 years ago
Maybe they all sound
like Rappers now

Listen, listen I said
and read a poem
to a girl once
She gave me that look
the "is it done yet"
while I floundered around
trying to sound like
Dylan Thomas
~~

My Coffee Mug

Is it a good thing
to scrape the crusty bits
from the coffee mug
with my thumbnail
instead of washing the cup

My gran used to tell me
about trench mouth
while I always giggled
thinking "you get trench mouth
by putting your trench foot in it"

How do I work into this poem
what trench foot is
Oh hell
people are probably reading
on their phones
so they can look it up

I really want a sip of coffee
scrape, scrape, scrape
type, type, type
and it sits there
all black and bitter
daring me

~~

The Gremlins are Loose

OK that's just being a god damned tease
to get to the writing app
and wait for my first keystroke
and then dump the connection

The keyboard must have really pissed off
the tablet
for the tablet to wait
until something was said
and then cut it off cold

Cold I tell you
and it's pissing me off
So listen both of you
I have enough money
to replace you
Are you listening to me

Oh, and now Facebook is getting pissy
I can see the words right there
and you're telling me
there's nothing there
that I should write something
Are you gaslighting me
or becoming a damned poetry critic

~~

Canadian Hermit

I'm not sure I'm set up
to be alone in the woods
for very long
I just asked myself
if I'd like a top-up
to my coffee

And then said yes please
Please? Who says please
to themselves
Oh, thank you
~~

Ghosts of Dead Mice

Oh dear
Pouring coffee into my cup
the lid on the pot came off
and now there's coffee
all over the table
my pills
and the tablet (not a pill)

I wonder if it's time
to go back to bed
and maybe next time
I wake up
things will go better
Ghosts of dead mice?
~~

More Bluetooth Blues

Again with the disconnecting
this time I have allowed the keyboard
to share my contact list
I mean, what's it going to do
with the phone number
of my dentist

Mind you
this keyboard is likely made
in China
so now the Chinese secret service
so secret I don't know it's name
knows the phone number
of my dentist
~~

Why the Hell Was I in Minnesota

Once I was in Minnesota
and got on one of those ridiculous
tiny jets made in Brazil
or some other tiny country
One seat on one side
and two on the other

Except for first class
which has one on each side
First class
in a puddle jumper
Anything to declare
"I'm richer than you"
I suppose

Turns out some kid
had a broken leg
and needed two seats
and so I got bumped
to first class

It was great
for the fifteen minutes
we were in the air
I got a glass of wine
and a three course meal

It was 9am
and the nice lady
who brought them to me
took them away again
after five minutes

Maybe it's a Canadian thing
but I can't drink a glass of wine
and eat a three course meal
in five minutes

But I didn't complain
I got three inches more ass-room
and I got to leave the plane
ahead of all those losers
in the back

~~

The Poet of Pee

Reading a dead poet
and thinking
I can't steal his stuff
it's all surreal and full
of his dreams

While I don't have dreams
I have bits and pieces
of almost dreams
before my brain starts warning me
that I need to wake up
and go pee

I am the poet of pee
who has electronic devices
that don't want to talk to each other
even when one of them
has access to my contact information
so to hell with it
I've blocked access once more

And now I've got tender fingers
that hurt when I type
because I made toast
in an American toaster
that is way too big
for Canadian bread
You can hardly tell
when it's pushed down
and when it's popped up

Funny I had a girlfriend
who said that to me once
maybe she had one of these
American toasters

~~

My Clumsy Fingers

Pam makes fun
of my clumsy fingers
She often slaps my hand away
from touch screen devices
I tap when I should swipe
I double tap when I want one
and I miss constantly
not having any idea
what part of my finger
will hit first

So she slaps my hand away
and does it for me
as if I'm six
and trying to build a model
and making a mess of it
when making a mess
while building a model
is the entire point
of models

Well that and the glue

I won't tell Pam about the glue
because she will just say
that explains my clumsy fingers
the next time
she slaps my hand away

When really
it's just that I grew up
with rotary dial phones
where there were those big holes
that, even if they aren't big enough
for your big fat fingers
you can use a pencil
you take from behind your ear
(sort of like a stylus, but it makes marks)
and use the eraser end
while you pretend to be
His Girl Friday

Anyway, she's still asleep
and I'll wait
until it's ten minutes
to our class
and then look disgusted
that she slept in
and tell her to hurry
with her computer
Revenge will be mine
sayeth my 6 year old self
~~

We Can

Oh boy nobody in the house
but me and the old cat
we can
we can
we can play music really loud
we can eat what we want
we can nap umm

I wonder if there's any work
to be done in the shop

~~

Checking the Calendar

Checking the calendar
I see there are no more dates
for me this month
No doctors
no hospitals
Bring it on

Time was, I would resent the middle
of the month
time felt like it was slipping away
But now
time is piling on, every day that goes by
is another day added to my collection
and I'm an enthusiastic collector
~~

Writing for Whom?

Why am I not drinking coffee
If I'm not drinking coffee
(check that you took your pills)
I could be working in the shop
Why am I not working in the shop
Is it because I'm writing
Writing for whom?

For me of course
Always for me
So I should be drinking coffee
to give myself an excuse
to sit here, writing
rather than be in the shop
or out walking for my blood sugar
Oh dear, finally some alone time
and it's already filled to bursting

The cat jumps down from the kitchen sink
and gives me a little song
of celebration
He's so proud of himself
that he gets up and down
Time to go make a coffee
This writing thing seems to be
a thing

~~

Things That Can Hurt

Smoking can make you go blind
(My mother)
or give you cancer
(My father)
or emphysema
(My grandfather)
or give you heart problems
(My grandmother)
But I never smoked

Booze can make you go blind
(A fellow grad student)
or give you cancer
or liver disease
(every generation of Taylor men)
or a fatty liver
which can give you diabetes

Diabetes can make you go blind
and kill your toes and legs
and give you cancer
and heart disease

I guess what I'm saying
is that it's hard to pick something
to say "I wish I never did that"

Maybe I'll blame it on stress
after all, it was stress
that made me drop a sink
on my bare foot
and make me almost lose
the toes

See, I don't need diabetes
all I need is a temper
And I got that, I'm sure
from my mother

~~

Fifteen Minutes Gone

There is fifteen minutes gone
looking up Helleborine orchids
Never heard of them
but they are on the path
beside the cabin
Now what do I do with them

And then Bladder Campion
elsewise flycatcher
which I suspect they don't
but I see them all over
when I walk
and always put them
into the room "weeds"

~~



Dreams About Toilets

I am getting so tired
of dreams about toilets
to be specific
Missing toilets
out of order toilets
in use toilets

Can't I just wake up
when I have to pee

~~

You Never Know

You never know
when you're going to go
so

You ought to leave
a goodly number of poems
for those who like dead poets
to read

Every day I set aside time
to write as many as I can
This is my advice
to the young
Get it done
~~

We Used to Say Shhh

We used to say
never sign anything
if you could help it
and never get fingerprinted

For a while
we might have overwhelmed
the Big Ear with noise
if we all shouted at once

But now Big Data
uses supercomputers
and AI to keep track
We have created God

You might once have hidden
up north, maybe the Yukon
Once it was your conscience
Now it's facebook, google and amazon

They watch you always
they know where you are
they know what you buy
And our last hope is they don't care
~~

Gloomy Poets

Poets are sooo gloomy
full of death and pain
Except maybe Walt Whitman
who wrote about nature

Or so I've been told
I've never been able
to get into his stuff
~~

My Childhood Labyrinth

Bottles of pop
in a chest
You'd put the coin in
and work the bottle
through the gate
after running a maze
like some glass rat

And on the outside
of the chest
was an opener
and the cap fell through
into the machine

The guy who collected the money
must have emptied the caps
Sometimes there were contests
look under the cap
I wonder if he did

~~

What Do I Know About Racism

What do I know about racism
I grew up in a small town
No races there

Just us kids
White kids they tell me
but I never noticed
why would I
Anyway we were
sort of pink in winter
sort of brown in summer

In high school
we played against the fish-heads
from Port Dover
The jerks from Simcoe
and the bumpkins from Valley Heights
out in the middle of the tobacco fields

Once I did play an exhibition
against the Six Nations kids
next county over
and one kid deeked me so good
I fell over

Now they tell me
that I'm racist
because I'm white
and a chauvinist
because I'm male
and I don't know koryu
because I'm in the Kendo Federation
and also, not Japanese

So I guess I should say
sorry, I'll try to do better
~~

I Wish I Had an Imagination

I wish I had an imagination
Like
As I watched the telephone cabinet
by the sidewalk
the door opened
and purple tentacle monsters
climbed out

One of them put a tentacle
to its beak
and said "shhh"
and I thought

Why are monsters always purple
but I didn't think
why are phone cabinets always brown
Mind you, it wasn't a phone cabinet
~~

Kathy and Ginger and the Pond

I must have left home already
because I don't remember
the excitement

But my sister
and our Corgi (Ginger)
were out walking
and at the pond
Ginger (the dog) fell in
and Kathy (my sister)
waded right in to rescue him
Her, Ginger must have been a her

When they got home
my mother put Kathy in the bath
to warm up

I don't know what was done
for our gender-confused dog
~~

The Eternal Hero

The eternal hero
young, dumb, but willing
Somehow the genes will out
and the famous ancestor
or maybe clone source
who spent 50 years learning
will pass along that skill with the brown eyes
and suddenly, when we all need it most
our hero will figure it out

~~

Instead of Looking

Instead of looking
for RNA-vaccine treatments
for prostate cancer
I seem to be searching
for another book of poetry
to inspire me
to remind me of the past
so I can write a little doggerel

What's wrong with me

~~

Sleeping Alone

I think to myself
I'd like to sleep alone
so I could sprawl
so I could sleep diagonally
and my feet wouldn't fall off the end

But it's been forty years
that someone has been there
beside me
And so if there's nobody
I still sleep near the edge

Feet hanging over

~~

Our Town Cops

The cops would cruise the drag
just like the kids
and when one of the favourites
drove a bit too far
out of town
they would pull them over
and take their beer

This is how the cops in our town
got their beer for the weekend
and this is how they lost their jobs
How the town got rid of its cops
and brought in the OPP

~~

Priming

Up at dawn
in a rain suit
Bright yellow
we head out to the field
and climb onto the priming machine
like sailors into the rigging
but after she capsizes

We sit, asses dragging on the ground
baskets or bags in our lap
and pluck three
dun dun dun
dun dun dun
all down the row

toss the basket
onto the wagon
get an empty one
and sit down again
dun dun dun
dun dun dun
as your hand goes numb
from the morning cold
and black from the tar
dun dun dun

don't look up
a tobacco leaf
across the eye
will leave you blind
for the rest of the morning
dun dun dun
dun dun dun

Eventually the dew is gone
and the sun
hammering down on the sand
is the hammer of Vulcan
Now it's sweat
falling into your eyes
Don't for christ's sake
rub them
dun dun dun
dun dun dun

Work into lunch if you can
and get back to the field
soon as you can
The sooner the kiln is full
the sooner you can stand up
and go home
to try to remove the tar
without making the splits
on your fingers worse
dun dun dun

~~

When I See Her

There are times
when I see her
as she was then
I see her
looking at me
and then she looks away
but she's still looking at me
and slowly
I feel better

~~

The Candles Thing

I never got into
the candles thing
I liked to see her

So she would throw
her shirt over the lamp
"oh, did that land there"

I would wonder about that
was it the way I looked
was there snot on my nose

But then she was too close
to focus on her anyway
so I was fuzzy too, no more snot
~~

Some Girls

Some girls
I have to admit
I was happy
they went for him
rather than me
~~

From Her

From her, I have this book
and from her, these records
From her, a love of pineapple
and from her, a phone number

Is there anything
that is genuinely mine
or am I just a bag
of stuff they left behind

~~

With The Radio On

I used to sleep
with the radio on
because it drowned
my tinnitus

But just a few women
in my bed
got me out of the habit
"How can you sleep with that"

I would listen instead
to them breathe
to the sheets rustle
sometimes a snore
although I would never suggest

And now, even when I'm alone
and turn on the radio
I end up turning it off
Yet another little mark
on my life

~~

A Certain Delight

I take a certain delight
in using a pin
to winkle slivers
out of my hands

I use a magnifying lamp
the one my Mother used
and reading glasses
and winkle for as long as it takes

~~

When She Spoke

Sometimes when she spoke
I would tune out
and think about something else
Often
I would think about someone else
Which was bad

"You're thinking about her again"

What, I have a display on my forehead
that says "her again"
I mean, busted, yes, but seriously
how did she know

Eventually she got tired of my shit
and left
and then I didn't have two women
and so of course
I thought about both of them often
Especially when my buddies
were nattering about their own shit
~~

She Didn't Cook

She didn't cook very often
mostly we were at my place
but I loved to watch her
when she did

She was often naked
never with anything more
than one of my shirts
when she cooked bacon

The roommates would drift
in and out
without making a comment
or looking too much

They were used to her
so she was like having a sister
in the kitchen
Or so I thought

~~

At least that's how I remember it

I was being faithful
to her sister
so when she ended up
in my bedroom
drunk and naked
I admired
but sent her gently
on her way

~~

Red Satin Babydoll

Red satin babydolls
were not in fashion
but she said she liked them
and looking at her
walking toward the bed
I didn't disagree

~~

Ice Cream Skates

She said she was wearing
ice cream skates
as she flew by
in a shower of chips

She would go watermelon skiing
in the summer
in her dad's boat
throwing spray at me

And she would eat penisbutter
and jam sandwiches
and spray the crumbs on me
as she laughed and laughed
~~

Next Door

I opened the door to a knock
and as she pulled her hand back
to slap me
I yelled "next door, he lives next door"
~~

Popsicle Sticks

I eat popsicle
and I think maybe
I should save them
for crafts

But then I realize
that I can buy popsicle sticks now
by the bag

No collecting necessary
and suddenly the fun
goes out of collecting them
~~

I Forget to See

Sometimes when I look
into a mirror
I forget to see

Even when I'm trying to see
if the slice on my head
is healing
I will stand in front
and think "why am I here"

Then there are the times
when I look and see
but what I see is some dude
certainly not me

I don't give a damn
what I look like
so it's not that I don't like
that old face

It's just that I don't give a damn
what I look like at all
sometimes I see old pictures
and don't recognize it's me

~~

My Mother Wrote

My mother wrote
in my baby book
about the assassination
of JFK

It was one of those moments
when you know where you were
and I sometimes think
that I was in a classroom
watching the funeral procession
on TV

But in 1963 I was seven
Maybe it's true
I have no idea where I was
when Bobby was killed
when the Kent State massacre
when MLK was killed
or when they landed on the moon
(I was thirteen, you'd think I would know)

I just didn't pay attention
Americans kill each other
and of course they landed on the moon
they would keep landing there
and someday we'd get flying cars

~~

Her Name Was Pooh

Her name was Pooh if you must know
at least that's what I called her
and I wrote a poem for her
It was called "the last battle with Pooh"
and ended with her shotgun

I showed it to her
and she read it
then looked at me and said
"So you're Eeyore?"

~~

Well, Yes

You keep throwing me at her
You want her to sleep with us

Well, yes

~~

Nice To See You

It never seemed to work out
when women would visit me
from far away

I was usually living
with someone else
and things would get awkward

Then, after an hour or so
I would find a small gap
and run away to a bar

~~

Never Grew Up

Deeper into the woods
behind my cabin
the kids of 20 years ago
roar around tracks
on dirt bikes and ATVs
and shoot their guns
in all seasons
I don't think they grew up

~~

A Tiny Thing

She was a tiny thing
but when we lay on our sides
side by side
it always fascinated me
that my arm would go from my hip
to hers
without angling downward

~~

My Father's Building

I went into my father's building
a store now
and said to them
"I helped build this place,
put on the siding and the roof
and the shingles on the roof"

And even as I was saying it
I thought "Here's another old fossil
telling me all about the old days
let's hope I don't have to give him
the bum's rush out of here"

~~



Its Own Ending

Each generation
chooses its own ending
Mine was a flash
followed by heat
that turned bodies
into shadows on walls

In the generations since
that ending has fallen away
although the engines remain
more deadly than ever

But now
by some strange masochism
The generations past mine
have chosen a Climate Crisis
Combined with deathly overpopulation
and the scraping of the earth
so complete
there is a global sand shortage

Now instead of a fast, impossibly brief pain
the ending will be slow and grinding
the land that is swallowed
by rising seas
will spit out its air-breathers
into other places and small wars

Drinking water disappearing
will trigger larger wars
bringing more famine and more death
while the resources declining
and the populations rising
will put an end to endless growth
and the first world will tear itself apart
Slowly at first
then with riots and more wars

Each ending we choose
seems to be worse
than those of the generations before
But endings we will have
if we cannot see beyond our own life

~~

CNC Routers

The brilliant AI (algorithm idiots) of FB
have finally twigged
that I'm not interested in guns
or MMA

but now they figure I want coaching
I'm doing my best to say no
and we have moved on
It's CNC routers

~~

Tillsonburg and the Tirpitz

The Tirpitz, sunk in a fjord in 1944
had twice as many sailors
than my old town had people

I have no idea what that means
but it seems somehow important

~~

See Who Wins

I can't stop thinking
of the Dutch Protestants
who say they don't want a vaccine
because that might prevent god
from punishing them

I mentioned that to Brenda
who was raised Dutch Reform
and she laughed
"That's them right there"

I somehow can't get past
our own Protestants
who believe that God will protect them
from this punishment he is sending
to the Dutch Protestants

Perhaps it's not the same god
maybe they both say God
but it's confused because neither god
wants to be named

Even before the plague
"God punishes me by making me poor"
was set against
"God made me rich because he loves me"
Amidst this confusion, perhaps I will wait
and see who wins

~~

Saturday Morning

Somehow ten sit-ups
and shopping for groceries
doesn't seem enough
for a Saturday morning
Time to go to the shop
~~

My Boy

Oh my boy my boy
I once held you on my palm
you laughing as I extended my arm
so you sat in mid air
your mother fretting
But I had you I had you

Now that I'm old
and you overtop me
you still laugh and hug me
but it's you that would lift me
it's you that does for me now
it's you that does for me

~~

The Bathroom Door and I

Waking twice in the night
I try not to think
I try not to stumble
yet again
into the bathroom door

A night full of stupid dreams
full of portent and nonsense
dreaming each time I wake
and returning to the same dream
I try to endure the bad play
until morning

~~

Can You Forget Coffee

I say I'm going to make a coffee
and then forget
Or I make a coffee
and then forget

I don't know things I once knew
and folks are saying
"use your words"
Really wish I could
~~

Monday Evenings

What is it that I do
on Monday evenings
I'm sure I used to have something
to fill this space
This hole in the day
that I don't know how to fill
~~

Sauble Beach

Ah the locals in Sauble
are complaining about the tourists
who are filling the beach
with their tents and umbrellas
and no masks
and no shots
(although how the locals know that
I certainly don't know)
And soon we will be in lockdown again

But those same obnoxious tourists
were tearing up the streets of Port Stanley
spinning their wheels
because of a streetlight
jamming the main street
(all one block of it)
because the bridge was up

We need to remember
we locals
that the tourists go home
at the end of the day
they may create a lockdown
in their cities
but the local lockdowns
are all our own.

~~

All I Have

Please don't ask me for subtle
or nuanced
or to reference famous things
I have spent a lifetime
paring things down
putting them one against the other
until at last
I have got to simple

Little did I know
that I needed none of that effort
that all I had to do
was wait
and age would pare it all away
until all I have left
is simple

~~

Three Crows

Three crows watch me
as I walk toward the wood
so close I take out my camera
and decide to shoot them

They hop
they tease
one by one
they fly into a tree
and then away
all the while I am pointing
my camera at them wildly
but I never get a picture

~~

My Little Cat

I look over
at my little cat
he has stalled
in his settling
he hovers
not wanting to lower himself
to the chair

I see you little one
I am the same
I don't trust my knees
I rise and set carefully
so that muscles don't spasm
so that bones don't break
I see you
~~



Having Been In Hospitals I Will Take The Shot

They tell us that the shots
don't stop us from getting
the mutated strain
that is so infectious

They say that it simply prevents
major problems
Prevents us from going to hospital
but we can still infect
those around us

While those who won't vaccinate
who say it's a hoax
who say it's fine, just the flu
are heading to the ICU

The next year will be interesting
the next year will be the year
that freedoms run into consequence
that the conspiracies actually do
become life and death

~~

My Children

My children
I love you so much
I am sorry that I waited
so long
For now at your few years
you see an old man
with grey hair

This is not the natural way
if I had you at 20
you would have kids of your own
by now
to distract you from your aging father
Your focus would be elsewhere
and one day
you would have looked up
and seen an old man
where your father was

Instead, you get an old man
while you are so young
and I fear you might think
that we get old too soon
When the reality is
that I was twice your age
when I had you

~~

Mediocre

It is dangerous
to read your own stuff
I read mine
and think to myself
it's not as bad as I feared
but not as great as what I love

Just somewhere in the middle
just mediocre
and I think to myself
If I just gave a bit more effort
if I just spent a little more time
It would be stilted, boring and stupefying

~~

The Eternal Warrior

I've always loved
the eternal warrior
the fighter who lives forever
or is reborn each generation
to fight injustice
to save the day
day after day

How could our hero
remain a hero
how could he possibly
keep fighting a losing battle
rather than turn from the battlefield
and say to those in power
Get out of the chair
I will show you how

~~

From Brooklyn

When I was a kid
those women spoke like that
with their bikini (is that plural, bikinis?)
their cigarettes
their shoe-leather tans
and the plain-jane buddy

It is reassuring that they are still there
walking from the beach
to their cars
And slightly disturbing
that I'm old enough now to realize
that they are all from Brooklyn

~~



Do It Yourself Haiku

Frog

Pond

~~

Seagull

Fishguts

~~

Geese

Shit

~~

Fish

Beach

~~

Musashi Doku

Two leaves

Pond

Outlet stream

~~

Family Business

If a dojo is a family
and sensei is the parent
than the students
are the children

If cared-for children
care for their parent
than when sensei gets old
the students care for him

If the students leave
for younger stronger sensei
then the dojo is not a family
it's a business

~~

Candle-light

Once by candle-light
he looked good
and in the morning
still looked good

Now, by candle-light
if anyone looked
than in the morning
best be off early

~~

The Drone of an Old Man

We took a small detour
through Sparta
an ancestral town of Quakers
and I spun once again the tales

Soon through the village
we began to seek the highway
but passed fields of not-corn
"Is that tobacco", Pam said

A day of constant drone
from the old man
speaking of the old times
and of sights "oh that's the lighthouse"

~~



Something Hanging

Something hanging over my head
like a yardstick hidden
under the mattress
waiting to be found
waiting to be used
on a young bum
Pain deferred
but not avoided

~~

Looking Back

I look down Main Street
and like some cheesy sci-fi movie effect
a shimmer
and there is the Clifton Hotel
There the fish shanty I helped roof
there the fridge on Mrs Moore's front porch
There the piles of coal
And I describe them all
even the drainpipe to the basement
in the hotel
down which you dropped the stubbies
when they were empty

~~



It's Late

It's late, you can stay here
there's only one bed
but I promise to behave

And I did
and some time in the night
she reached for me

~~

My Mother's Quilt

I sleep under
my mother's quilt
it is quite old
it has little ladies
with long dresses
and bonnets on it
Not very manly
or very manly depending
on how you look at it

It's warm enough for winter
light enough for summer
and has been on the bed
for many years

The hard part
is that it's old
sometimes when I pull it up
I feel a stitch or a thread break
and that feels like
another day of my life gone

~~

It's Not You

Some days
I understand
those 60 year old men
who say to their wives
"I'm sorry dear, I'm gay
it's not you, it's me"
and go live with their friend

The wife nods wisely
and says "I knew it"
and the two fellows
live the way they want
nobody telling them daily
how wrong they are

~~

Once or Twice

Once or twice
I tried to let a woman
change me for the better
It would work for a while
but old habits die hard
Patterns of living
set in childhood
are not easy to deny

After a few months
of being told I'm a jerk
and being told
I don't brush my teeth right
or cook right
or clean right
would start to pale
and I was off in search
of another woman
whose changes
were a little less difficult

Like, "be faithful
treat me kindly"
You know
the simple stuff
that's easy to do
~~

A Conflicted Heart

With a conflicted heart
I write this morning
I could be in the shop
gluing up
I could be sanding and shaping

But I am told there's too much
there's too many things
too much packing and shipping

Isn't that the idea?
So I sit here in confusion
Do I get yelled at
for not doing dishes
or not making money
Or do I make things
that could be sold for money
but need all that extra work

I suppose I could use this PC
to counterfeit some money
Would that be a good use
of my remaining time
~~

Busy Day

Busy day
and now the rain
and now some silence

Some time for reflection
about ten minutes
then pills and a sauna

~~

Bell Bottom Jeans

Maroon guaranteed to fade
bell bottom jeans
cuff-dipped in the lake
and sand-coated
during a late evening fire
on the beach

I had no idea
who was there
still don't
but it never mattered
The bottle came around
the fire was proof
against the chill in the air
~~

Time After Time

Time after time
while grinding at the sander
I pause and look
turning my whole body
because the neck only goes so far

Looking for whatever flickered
in the corner of my eye
Never seeing anything
until annoyed I look carefully
and there, shadows on the wall
a bush in the wind

~~

Mooo

Driving to someplace
no secret, just forgotten
she, silent for an hour
suddenly said MOOO

What? I said
and she nodded
toward the field
where, certain enough
there were cows

~~

A Disney Movie

A Friday night
and I find a Disney movie
newly released
but streaming

The movie could be crap
and I would still watch it
so much do I hate that company
so much more than when I was a child
~~

Cool Japan

Cool Japan
tells us all about medicine boxes
How you pay when you use
How the salesmen come to your home

Do you have these in your country?
Oh no say the round-eyes
except the guy from Ghana
who says "in the countryside"

And I think of the Watkin man
the Fuller Brush man
the Avon lady
The bread man
and the milk man

Back when cars were expensive
back when we felt no need
to get to the super-store
to look at 23 different kinds
of toothpaste

~~

The Grocery Store

In my small town
the grocery store
was about four aisles

There was bread
and milk
and meat and veg

These days
there is nothing more
but each of 23 brands

With 32 types per brand
and we spend days
of every year, wandering

We call this choice
we call this luxury
we call this freedom

~~

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