

Summertime Heat



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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Travelling Again.....	2
Wake Me.....	3
Street Sales.....	4
Late For Work.....	5
Some Sentences.....	6
Early Morning Warning.....	7
Pushing A Rope.....	8
Life.....	9
Creation and Destruction.....	10
The Nature of Freedom.....	11
Covid Lessons.....	12
Lazy Bastard.....	13
What Did He Say.....	14
Time.....	15
The Count.....	16
Bumping Along.....	17
Downtown.....	18
Third Wheel Again.....	19
My Paper.....	20
Time to Walk.....	21
Sorry.....	22
I Tried.....	23
Worth It.....	24
A Lifetime.....	25
Suppertime.....	26
Until You're Not.....	27
Sorry.....	28
Be Prepared.....	29
What It's Worth.....	30
That Bush There.....	31

Self Analysis.....	33
Jackrabbit.....	34
I Remember.....	35
Respectable Wood.....	36
Guelph Weekday Morning.....	37
What To Do.....	38
Your Turn.....	39
My Old Room in the Roof.....	40
The Old Underpass Plan.....	42
In For Coffee.....	44
My Model.....	46
He'll Find Her.....	47
Tourist Town Kids.....	48
His Own Ball.....	49
Cottage Weekends.....	50
Rainy Day.....	51
Those Damned Feds.....	52
Wiarion Grocery Store.....	53
Sauble Craft Market.....	54
New Coffee.....	55
No You Don't.....	56
The Blue Jays.....	57
Use Your Words.....	58
Sunday Morning Coffee.....	59
Taking My Medicine.....	60
At My Cottage.....	61
Settling For Class.....	62
Waiting for the Thieves.....	63
Half Way to Somewhere.....	64
First Day Dreams.....	66
Summer Sleep.....	68
Cafe Life.....	70
Class With Pam.....	71
Brenda's Back.....	72

Old Man Downtown.....	74
Existential Questions.....	75
Plugging in the Electronics.....	76
Wrong Generation.....	77
Downtown Traffic.....	78
The Wind is Here.....	79
An Open Door.....	80
The Interview.....	81
Travel Forgotten.....	82
Time to Get Up.....	83
We'll pick you up at 7.....	84
Little Boy Deaf.....	85
Early Morning Meeting.....	86
Approved.....	87
We'll See.....	88
Five Minutes More.....	89
Gonna Be a Stinker.....	90
Little Buddy.....	91
Talk or Walk.....	92
Just Say No.....	93
The Big Fight.....	94
Promises.....	95
Road Trip With Mistakes.....	96
Not the Suburbs.....	100
Remembering Jane.....	102
The Child Who Lived There.....	104
First Nights.....	105
Morning Meetings.....	106
That Nipple I Loved.....	108
I'll Take My Time.....	109
No Fights In Bed.....	110
Irving Layton.....	111
Books and Girls.....	112
What Is Beauty.....	113

You Want Me.....	114
Timelines of Love.....	115
Kitten Feet.....	117
Off Your Ass.....	118
Mixed Blessings.....	119
Forty Years Gone By.....	120
I Made You Lie.....	121
Medical Visits.....	122
She Was Working.....	123
The Fight in the Shower.....	124
Faithful.....	125
The Warmth of Your Back.....	126
A Double Handful.....	127
Silverback.....	128
The Thermostat.....	129
A Literary Character?.....	130
Weak Leg, Bad Knee.....	131
Water Girl.....	132
The Key Around Your Neck.....	133
Time To Go.....	134
Three Dozen Years.....	135
Elora Gorge.....	137
Her Blue Capri.....	138
That Weekend.....	139
You Left Again.....	140
Take My Arm.....	141
A Good Fight.....	142
Can't Play Guitar.....	143
I Was Cold.....	144
Poet's Lover.....	145
Warm Blooded.....	146
One of the Best.....	147
Old Teeth.....	149
Eunice Shows Up.....	150

In Dreams Now.....	151
Not That Man.....	152
I Made You Laugh Once.....	153
Long Legs.....	154
Two Days.....	155
Forget Me Quickly.....	156
I Would Know It.....	157
Used Book Store.....	158
I Have Things to Say.....	159
Kids, Now.....	160
Old in Summertime.....	162
The End of the Visit.....	163
Just Sounds That Way.....	164
My Afternoons.....	165
Frog-Flopped.....	166
The Search.....	167
She Wanted Him.....	168
The Great Teacher.....	169
I Remember it Still.....	170
Once Upon a Time.....	171
In Line For Coffee.....	172
Curiosity Lost.....	173
The Scientist.....	175
Detumescence.....	177
When You're Gone.....	178
Proud Boy.....	179
The Girl at the Mini-Putt.....	180
Saturday Morning is Bored.....	181
Musashi in the Bedroom.....	182
That Long Hair.....	183
Waiting for the Story.....	185
Late Summer.....	186
What I Miss.....	187
May I?.....	188

A Sweet Game.....	189
Hormone Therapy.....	190
How Did It Go.....	191
What I See.....	192
Chances Missed.....	193
The Golden Age.....	194
I Wish For You.....	196
The Surprise.....	198
What You Pray For.....	199
Hard To Sleep With Her.....	200
What Did You Live For.....	202
Looking While Driving.....	205
That's Nice Dear.....	206
Left Over Santa.....	208
Poor, Loving, Trying.....	210
Still Here.....	211
Are We There Yet.....	212
Lick the Spoon Clean.....	213
A Higher Class of Garbage.....	214
A Plastic Ring.....	215
The Sound of a Virgin.....	216
Leave Me Ignorant.....	218
The Girl in the Wood.....	219
The Rose She Gave Me.....	220
In The Pine Tree.....	221
She Had a Bike.....	222
It's In My Nature.....	223
The Old Way.....	224
The Ways I've Been Warm.....	226

Introduction

Sometimes I am naughty, I will step into the sunlight and the warmth of the summer sun on the back of my neck will send me into what passes for an orgasm these days.

A short time, then I turn up my collar, tip back my hat and move into the shade. No more sun for me, not after the radiation that killed the cancer that broke my neck.

Still, sometimes, for a few stolen minutes, I like to feel the sun. These poems are about summertime heat.

Kim Taylor, June-August 2022

Travelling Again

Travelling again
and that dream last night
bus to the movies

No problem
I made it in 5 minutes to go
but what are all those bags
You're heading for the airport
right after the movie

Running to the room
Nothing is packed
And I screamed "Wake up."

Thank goodness it was time
or I'd have gone back to packing

Is it wrong to cheer for the next covid wave?

~~

Wake Me

Wake me in the morning
Oh with pleasure
Pulling back the blanket
seeing that ass
round and soft and smooth
reaching for it
a small pat
a small stroke
and the eyes flutter open

~~



Street Sales

Outside the cafe
some sort of sales
the street people
exchanging clothing

And there, oh I love this town
a fellow with underwear
on his head
considering a t-shirt

~~

Late For Work

I counted sixty seconds
from bell to no bell
at our local train crossing

One minute
Less than some stoplights
and yet, oh, too long

Once again there is talk
of an underpass
at the end of our street
~~

Some Sentences

My brother read a book
and named it odd
But it's like you, odd

And, thinking perhaps
I was upset
"Some sentences
were very well written"

~~

Early Morning Warning

Wading pool closed
Slippery when wet
Do not use
when attendant not present

I knew that girl once

~~



Pushing A Rope

The chimney brush
thirty feet up
and it was getting harder
to push
the fibreglass rods
flexing and catching

It's like
pushing a rope
she said
and my son
had to explain it to me
~~

Life

Three pair
of reading glasses
from the dollar store
all falling apart
at the same time

Life is like that
~~

Creation and Destruction

There is no indication
that the cancer
has started up again
But my thoughts wander
to my inevitable decline
and of course, death

Is it because
I have no book to write
Making things
has no effect
I'm sure, on my health

But it keeps my brain
from wandering toward death

~~

The Nature of Freedom

When I was a young man
freedom was important
the lack of ties
A ride with a fellow traveller
for a night
perhaps a week
and then gone
with no regrets

When I was an old man
my neck broken in two places
bones pinching nerves
I would have given
half my fortune
for a single minute
of freedom from pain
~~

Covid Lessons

When you get old
you are a conservative
said a friend

And yet,
all the old people
seem to be vaxxed
seem to be masked
and the youngsters
figure they're good

Did we fail
we old people
to educate our children
or is it simply
the immortality of youth

~~

Lazy Bastard

Bukowski says
he's living with a whore
The best he can do
he says

Lazy bastard
~~

What Did He Say

I lie abed
conversations in my head
but not mine
no longer
"I should have said"

No, conversations between strangers
characters in books I write
and as I slide toward sleep
I try to remember
until the morning
~~

Time

Will I have time
to write a novel
I ask the doctor

Well if you don't finish
someone else will
she said with a grin

~~



The Count

Is there something about fifteen
I can't remember
Ides of March perhaps

Well never mind
fifteen it is
enough for the day
~~

Bumping Along

Where I grew up
bathrooms were gender inclusive
If the women's was full
They would use the men's

And we boys?
we were outside
by the wall
or the trees

~~

Downtown

The city streets shine
puke, potato chips
empty bags
fags
an empty quart
of chocolate milk

A guy sleeping on a bench
These are the things
of my morning walk
~~

Third Wheel Again

Third wheel again
sitting and staring
The after practice beers
passing me by
like the conversation
Old, deaf man
too much noise
and it's all noise

Waiting for the kids
to wind down
I come to the events
to support
but maybe it's time
to simply send money
and stay at home
with my illusion of use
~~

My Paper

Is there anything more sad
than a teacher retired

Perhaps a teacher
not retired
hanging on
convinced
he still has something
to teach

But we need you
the kind kids say

The others point
to that paper on the wall
and say

We will wheel you out
to sit the panels
Pin your paper
on your out of fashion suit
like a child who gets lost

Then back to your place
while those who know
the secret handshakes
the ones newly learned
will carry on

Until we need your paper
~~

Time to Walk

I try once again
to time my walk
so I can report it
to the doctors

"And how long
is your walk"
with pen poised
to make a note

But once again I fail
once again wondering
if it's time to give up
time to let go

If only I could remember
what to give up
what to let go
~~

Sorry

Sparkling in the early morning light
a perfect spiderweb
strung between two trees
on the sidewalk
beside the street

So lovely
I stop to admire it
so much hope for the future
so much effort
and I apologize

Nothing I did
but I know that soon
the web will be gone
Before a fly ever touches
it's geometric perfection
Sorry spider, sorry

~~

I Tried

Stepping over a worm
on the sidewalk
in the sun
frying in the UV

It moves
I stop
carry it to some grass
in the shade
and set it down

It won't help
the worm is fried
but at least I tried
and feel better
for it
~~

Worth It

I look up
she's heading to the door
long hair flying

Time to pull the glasses
down the nose
so I can focus

Ah, worth the effort
~~



A Lifetime

As a student
I sat in a coffee shop
watching the world
go by

Now, a lifetime later
I do the same thing
but somehow it feels
like the world has gone by

~~

Suppertime

It is heading
toward an even bet
that what I pick up
will make it
to my mouth

~~

Until You're Not

You're still a young man
says my doctor
and I bite my tongue
If I ask
whether I have another 20 years
I know I'm going to get depressed

Best to smile and nod
and try not to listen
to things like that
Of course you're a young man
right up until you're not
~~

Sorry

Maybe it's the lawyers
who insist on
"sorry not sorry"
liability issues and all that

But it's so simple
a single word
and we de-escalate
we move on

~~

Be Prepared

New toys
a couple of tablets
to replace the one
I use in the sauna

Slowly, it fries
the microphone stopped
who knows when
the rest will stop

Best to have a new one
sitting on the shelf
books loaded
music loaded
~~

What It's Worth

Old fart
in a V8 AMG
stops outside

You might know
what that is
all I see is an old fart
in a tiny car
with a big engine

I hope he enjoys it
that tuition fee
for his kid

~~

That Bush There

If you're going to play death metal
at least find a source
that doesn't cut out
yo ... don't wanna ... ess with m...

And I'm thinking why

I know they play this
why this cafe
instead of the usual

I'm in Pam's car
so I sit here
across from the University
I don't dare go closer

All my adventures
all that loving and hating
happened just over the hill
and under that bush there

~~



Self Analysis

The bruise on my foot
just behind my big toe
where we put the wood stove
down on top of it

Slowly fades
and I think to myself
there are some benefits
to diabetic feet

It doesn't hurt
but it fades
so blood must still circulate
~~

Jackrabbit

One car
one person
driving fast
hit the brakes
accelerate
like a jackrabbit

and complain
always complain
about the price of gas
which
with a bit of reflection
we'd all see
isn't expensive enough
~~

I Remember

Ah, I remember now
why I sit in this cafe window

She drifts by
purpose shining
on her face

Mid-summer session
has to be a grad student
in her sweet dress
and her big backpack

Yes, I remember now
~~

Respectable Wood

Yet again
my left thumb
says "I'm here"

And I look at the slice
made with wood
that is older than me

waiting patiently
in the shop
ready for shaping

Wood that old
and that wonderful
can still make me happy

It's not as if
I cut my thumb
on a piece of spruce

Cut ten minutes ago
dried for seven minutes
and bundled for sale

Nail it down fast
and hope it dries straight
before it moves away from home

~~

Guelph Weekday Morning

The grocery cart boys
come rattling up the street
behind me
Coming from the centre
full of breakfast I hope

and further on
is sleeping beauty
on his bench
I walk past quietly
he looks peaceful

In the coffee shop again
and a couple of kids chat
with everyone in the place
they're going to centre island
to have a lot of fun

~~

What To Do

What to do
what to do
two days ago I realized
that with her new ranks
I could stay home
and not go out west
to sit a grading panel

Can I back out quietly
or will there be political things
will there be gossip
and the backbiting of several years
Should I be there
to show the flag

I wish I didn't have the choice
To stay home is selfish
I get it
It's always been duty
when I travel
but damn it I could stay

I don't get that you hate travel
said the girl
You hate telephones
No, they're a pain in the ass
And I spread my hands
One day I'll be too sick to go
like I was three years ago

Tell me about it when you get back
~~

Your Turn

Do not tell me
how it should be
do not ask me
to fix it

I have spent my capital
I have lost my supporters
and all that are left
are those who don't care
and those who have been lied to

My bolt has been shot
my essence is spent
I am an impotent old man
pick up the work
or stop complaining to me
~~

My Old Room in the Roof

Once again I look up
to that dormer in the roof
of my old apartment
I loved that room
with the window
over the tracks

The many women
who shared that bed
The golden promise
of the last one there

No matter that she left
she never left
from that room
where the trains rumbled by
at 4:30am

The night I woke up
and wondered
getting quietly out of bed
trying not to wake her
I went to the door
and took down the knife

Only to think
only to realize
what had awakened me
was a lack of train
4:30am was all quiet
and I slipped back
under the covers

I'd like to think
she made a sleepy sound
and shifted toward me
but that was forty years ago

~~

The Old Underpass Plan

Do you want proof
that emotion tops reason?

There is a proposal
to build an underpass
on the train tracks
at the bottom of our street

The same underpass
that was half purchased
20 years ago
when they abandoned it
Not enough train traffic
route the long ones through
at 4:30am

But now those green speedsters
are taking folk to work
in the big city
And like a zombie
"Let's dig"

So I timed it
sixty seconds from bell to bell
and later, at a traffic light
Just down the street
sixty seconds from red to green

Somehow a minute at a light
is not the same
as a minute at a rail crossing
That gate is all the more awful
for being less frequent

Don't tell me the facts
I feel it
I feel it should be thus
there is no fact to give me
when I believe

~~

In For Coffee

She comes in
jeans a bit short
tennis shoes
and a jacket
a blast from the past

Even the hair
and oh my lord
that voice
Her whole life ahead
I'm so happy for her
~~



My Model

Like a Gauguin model
in her sarong
she sways into the cabin
with sausage
and roast vegetables

She pours me a wine
and loads my plate

As I thank her
I think she's out of time
Paris 1925 would be hers
all of the painters
would be after her
What a model she is
~~

He'll Find Her

Riding the highway
I look into the car ahead
and she's messing
with her hair
scrubbing her scalp
and fluffing it

I've been there
He'll be finding her
for months
Each package he grabs
will have part of her

A hair here
one there
lots under the seats
and he won't forget her
not any time soon

~~

Tourist Town Kids

A school bus at the corner
of the tourist town
Is school out?

The local kids
riding the bus together
playing euchre in the back
as they head for school

Waiting for summer
waiting for 5pm
when the store closes
and they can get to the beach
~~

His Own Ball

A young boy
walking alone down the street
bouncing his basketball

Wondering
if he'll spend a week alone
at the rental cottage

Or can he find someone else
to play with
He's got his own ball

~~

Cottage Weekends

Two teens drift by
hand in hand

Which family has the cottage
Which of them sleeps
in the spare room
waiting for the other
to sneak down the hall

~~

Rainy Day

Mid week, good week
the cottagers are here
but not the day trippers
with their coolers
and their blankets
bitching about the parking fees
Beach, bitch, back

But the cottagers
drop in for coffee
buy that new dress
order lunch
and maybe have time
to say hello
~~

Those Damned Feds

Limping guy says hello
do you need a bag
We've got paper for ten cents

Big sign on the counter
The government has banned
plastic bags

Well hell, it's the country
we can find an excuse
to bitch about the Feds

Just find out what they do
and say it's wrong
Politics is easy

Even if it's good for us
bitch, boys bitch
but hope they don't listen

~~

Wiarthon Grocery Store

The tanned woman
in the grocery store
runs her cart up my heels
three or four times

I'm not moving fast enough
I look her over
obviously got lots of time
to lie around in the sun

Maybe she's dead keen
to get back to the patio
with some of that ice cream
and a beer.

~~

Sauble Craft Market

I hope everyone sells out
the tourists supporting
the local artists

Make it about that
because not every hand made thing
has worth

~~

New Coffee

I buy the mega-size
Starbucks ground coffee
and when I open it
It smells of despair
and exploitation

But it was cheap
and ought to last the summer
so I'll hold my nose
and pour the hot water
over the grounds

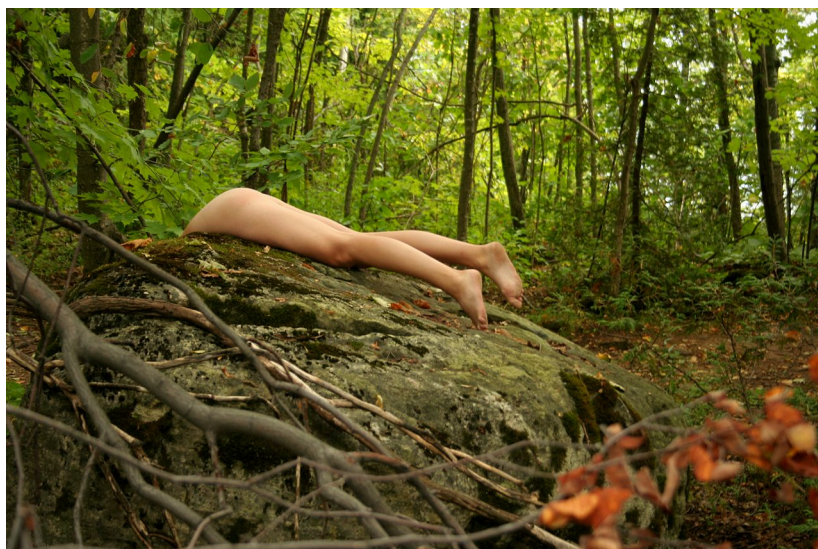
~~

No You Don't

Pam is in the hammock
showing her legs
watching from the corner
of her eye

I look over
to check out those legs
and she covers them up
A little game she plays

~~



The Blue Jays

The blue Jays are messing around
in the top of the ash trees
Stop your talking birds
and eat the Ash Borers

Off they fly
offended at my shouts
only to come back later
and peer into the windows
~~

Use Your Words

I've lost the word for this thing
yet I know what it is
and I know how to use it

Does the name matter so much
still Pam waits
maybe says, "use your words"

I have no words
I point
"Fine, I know what you want"
~~

Sunday Morning Coffee

Sundays at the cabin
are always bittersweet
jobs not quite done
that urge to get up earlier
always a failure
but sometimes the sun is out
and there's coffee
there's CBC
There's three hours
before packing up.

~~

Taking My Medicine

The CBD capsule
is half way down
and I can taste it
Dark Chocolate helps
but I think I'll need
microwave re-warmed
bitter dark roast
to wash it down

~~

At My Cottage

I have no reason not
to live up here
and yet, like I still have a job
I only visit briefly

I've got students
who have spent more time
in this place than I have
Still, I keep it

~~

Settling For Class

An hour to class
and I should be packing
but I sit with a coffee
and write

The jobs that didn't work
that were sworn over
Doors that were slammed
are moving into the past

With luck, class will arrive
and a new, fresh mind
will take over
frustration forgotten

~~

Waiting for the Thieves

Where is my mother
she would putter and putter
cleaning, tidying and arranging
this cabin

Now it accumulates
Junk, broken screws, dust
old magazines
old canoe paddles

Perhaps someone will come
and sort the place out
it's just not efficient
to wait for the thieves

~~

Half Way to Somewhere

In a restaurant
somewhere along the lake
she sat opposite me
She must have had enough contact
the night before

She sat opposite me
and looked at me
I looked to my left
and saw the small repeated panes
of a large window

Did the cross pieces stick out
enough for knick knacks
She would remember
and I followed the sunlight
to her face where it fell in stripes

Another year and a different place
it must have been a different town
not too far away
for she likes the places she knows
This time she sat beside me

Did she drink then
I certainly did, there were bottles
on the table in front of us
I seem to recall a low wall
separating us from the locals
at the bar

We were half way to somewhere
I know that for certain
for these places are half way
no matter where you talk about
they are half way

~~

First Day Dreams

Three or four nights now
dreams of forgetting
forgetting my uniform
forgetting where the dojo is
forgetting the class time

And my students think
I'm a bit crazy
they love to travel

I don't mind
once I get going
but it's this waking up
with a bad taste in my mouth
morning after morning
It's right back to that first day
of high school

~~



Summer Sleep

Half way through July
and it's hot
but all I can think about
is the days getting shorter
and winter coming on

Last night we slept
with the window open
to cool down the house
and it works
I was cold

Then I was hot
(hot flash)
and cold again
Add in my old cat
stepping on my head
to get to the window
to look out

Is it any wonder
I'm tired today
Is it any wonder
I'm looking forward
to my nap

Oh the luxury
of being an old man
The luxury
of being left alone
"He's sleeping"
It's almost worth
getting old
~~

Cafe Life

What a luxury
in the time of coronavirus
to sit in a cafe
that isn't crowded

Take Paris in the '20s
with its shoulder to shoulder
and it's blue air
from cigarette smoke

I'll take the clean air
and the spaces
between bodies
and being left alone

~~

Class With Pam

Don't tell Pam
she's getting cookies
for her snack
as she rushes to class
tonight

Every Tuesday
she comes back
from her own class
and her parent's house
rushing into class

Every Tuesday
I start the class
saying "I wish Pam was here"
to demonstrate
but I puddle along

Tonight she gets her cookies
and then she gets
to tell me I'm wrong
I've forgotten the bit
that goes right here
~~

Brenda's Back

I'm cold
and her back is there
I start to shuffle over
but she sees me
she flips over fast
to face me
and says "I'm hot"

I stop
my arm in mid air
heading for her waist
and I shuffle back
to my own side of the bed
the side that's cold
to wait for my own hot flash
~~



Old Man Downtown

Fifteen minutes
to the stores opening
Should I wait
or walk home

What do I need?
Nothing
What do I want?
Nothing

I have no excuse
to wander the streets
no excuse
for a longer walk

Once exercise
was a thing in itself
I loved it
but sadly, no longer

I don't run, don't walk
unless to something
I need a reason
to get moving
~~

Existential Questions

What is this
thirty five years
after a philosophy degree
and I'm reading again

Did I just forget that stuff
am I getting worried
that I don't know how to live
An entire life without meaning?

What meaning, life itself is meaning
My life's meaning happened
with each choice I made
for sixty years

Maybe I'm just tired
of reading the same old thing
After all I'm writing
those same old things

~~

Plugging in the Electronics

There must be enough lithium
in this house
to make someone happy
for the rest of their life

And I've got to remember
to charge it all up
each evening
for use the next day

~~

Wrong Generation

My daughter has a couple more tattoos
and I thought, I'd better catch up
with that single dot on my chest
the aiming point for the radiation

But damn me, I can't think
of a single tattoo I'd want
the closest I ever got
was challenging my mother for a design
at the county fair

She declined
and I remained markless
To this day
there is nothing meaningful to me
that I'd put on my skin

~~

Downtown Traffic

Downtown in the city of Guelph
the traffic has stopped

twenty or thirty geese are wandering
Back and forth across the intersection
and down the street

Nobody is honking
nobody is pounding their dash

In fact we're all smiling
at these stupid birds
so convinced they are superior
to all those ugly, smelly animals
that stop for them.

~~

The Wind is Here

The stairwell creaks and cracks
but nobody is on the stair
I look outside
The wind is here, ahead of the storm

Now I can hear
the wooden chimes
tock tocking together
on the back deck

~~

An Open Door

I go in and out the door
re-potting some plants
and the cat follows

Content to be where I am
Bored, moving with the tide
Moving because the door
is open

~~

The Interview

The young men
from the woodworking class
interviewed me this morning
for their business case

Forty years of grinding wood
and they will find things to fix
I won't fix them
My ambitions are long quiet

But I am happy they have what they need
I'm sure their ideas will be wonderful
and my advice
Find yourself a niche, find a monopoly
~~

Travel Forgotten

No dreams of loss last night
no lost uniforms
no lost weapons
no lost class locations

Or perhaps the dreams
were buried behind others
I don't much care
it was nice to wake calmly

~~

Time to Get Up

The yap yap of the seagulls
coming from the alarm
The tap tap of the oatmeal
as the bowls hit the table
I guess it's time to get up
~~

We'll pick you up at 7

and at 7:30am they pass me
A girl with a backpack
and a speaker playing something
Two boys pulling wheelies
on their bikes

Heading I don't know where
just heading
No school, that's enough
to get on the bikes

Maybe to the beach
Maybe into the bush
As long as it's somewhere
because half way through July
is no time to sleep in

~~

Little Boy Deaf

The little guy is stomping
across the floor
his crocs half on his feet

Dad says sit down
I'll bring you the croissant

But he's little boy deaf
with his shoes on weird
wandering across the floor

~~

Early Morning Meeting

I kick a stone
and it scoots behind her
enough for her to turn
and wonder who's there

She turns back
but I'm not letting it go
I love your shirt
perfect to keep out the sun
and let in the breeze

Definitely, she says
A tiny affirmation
that we're on the street
early morning, muggy day
~~

Approved

I tap my card
and wait for the word
My affirmation for the day
as the machine says
Approved

I'll take what I can get
and each morning
with my coffee
I get the message
Approved

~~

We'll See

Pam says remind me
when you wake me up
that I want to go running

I wake her
saying it's time to run
the sun is hiding
but it's going to be sunny

The fog burns off quick
It's going to be hot
are you awake?
We'll see

~~



Five Minutes More

Two girls waiting
for fancy drinks
Dressed in short skirts
looking comfortable

I'd like to think
they are a couple
They woke up
not long ago

Hello you
Hello yourself
Ready to get up
Ready for coffee

Just five minutes more
come here
and let me cuddle you
just five minutes more
~~

Gonna Be a Stinker

I can hear grandma's voice
It's gonna be a stinker
Not 8am yet
and I'm sweating
the sun hurts my eyes
as I walk toward coffee
as I walk toward AC

I've followed this cafe
around the downtown
from where they roasted
in a tiny space
with just a few chairs
to this new space
with air and light
and AC

~~

Little Buddy

Little buddy wanders over
looks at the screen
of my laptop
Hello kiddo
I'm typing
He looks

Oh sorry says dad
Are you kidding I say
it's been 20 years
since my boy was that size
looking over my shoulder
I love it
~~

Talk or Walk

If you don't talk
you're going to walk

I spent too many relationships
not knowing this
I'd get quiet
I wouldn't look at her
and soon she was gone

~~



Just Say No

I've done it again
promised to do something
I really don't want to do
and of course,
what I agreed to
A bit of text
wasn't what was expected
Photos, captions, life stories

Suddenly I remember
why I stopped writing
for magazines
my own or someone else's
~~

The Big Fight

Mr. Meowface
yells in the next room
I want to go out

At dawn this morning
he fought the bratcat
from across the road

He must have won
or at least a draw
because he wants out
~~

Promises

Working on three books at once
Must be time
for a nap

I promise, for sure
when I get up I'll work
I promise

Just like I promise
to lift some weight
each time I pass the gym
~~

Road Trip With Mistakes

I was to keep her company
on a long trip
but I didn't want to travel
the four lane insanity
So the scenic route was selected
It was the wrong route
I heard the wrong city
and I woke her too soon

I talked
She was tired and
I talked
I talk to stop my thoughts
I talk to stop my pain
I move about when I talk
and keep things lubricated
I talk because she doesn't

I annoyed her
and eventually that last straw
the one that broke the camel
That nonsensical phrase

She was distracted
Her brain could not cope
with driving and my nonsense
We almost hit a car
in a line of stopped cars

The things in the back went forward
hitting the back of our seats
She looked
She pulled over violently
She got out
rearranged things
slammed the door hard

When she got back in
she told me it was my fault
that I had distracted her
By that time I was angry
and so "I will not talk again"
If hitchhiking was still a thing
I would have got out

But I sat quiet
and didn't move much
and my pain increased
and my thoughts went to her
As they often do when let loose
to my first wife
and all the other women
that I had pissed off

And I became angry
I wanted to strike something
If I had been 25 I would have
but I shut up

The items delivered
I said "I have to piss"
and we went to a chain
because where we were
in the middle of middle Canada
that's all there is

I said I felt sick
and I did
I didn't know where I was
the houses were the same
the fancy fences were the same
the names on the fences were the same
the plaza's were the same
The people were the same

Home by the shortest, fastest route
She asked
and I asked why she asked
Home by the shortest, fastest route
and so another two hours
in a silent car
with only my thoughts

Home thankfully
and I still wanted to hit something
I lay in the bed
hoping my pain would go away
and thought, I could hit the bed
and no damage done
nobody any the wiser
But I did not

As happens, the anger drained
over many hours
with nothing to trigger it
and eventually I returned to me
and there I will stay
until the next time it's my fault
and that anger rises
out of the past and takes over
~~

Not the Suburbs

I live in an old part of town
thank the Gods
I never considered the suburbs
My house doesn't look
like every other house
on my block

I walk from my house
downtown
where the chains don't bother
I sit with my coffee
and look at the new condos
down by the river

I hope those who move in
only use their cars
to go to work in Toronto
or even better
to walk to here
and take the train

My heart is soothed
every time I come downtown
and if the street sleepers are scary
I thank them
for keeping the frightened away
For keeping them inside their gates
in their ticky tacky houses
with the rest of the right sort

Me, I'll stay where houses look different
where people think different
where the buildings are older
than last week
Where I'm happy

~~



Remembering Jane

In my cottage closet
are a pair of work shorts
and to hold them up
a woven belt

Blue and cream
maybe yellow
Brought to me from Mexico
Forty years ago
by Jane my roommate

I lived with Jane for a while
and I loved her dearly
once in a while
she would sleep with me

But I was distracted
I was a fool distracted
and I doubt I ever told her
how much I loved her

Surely she would not have left
Not moved on from me
if I had told her
I loved her

Isn't that the way
it's supposed to go
But I was a young fool
and never said a word

Today, looking at that belt
frayed, unravelled
rusted at the buckle
I thought a bit, about Jane
~~

The Child Who Lived There

As I drove nowhere with her
she would say "gee gee"
She liked horses
and I would smile
at the delight on her face

She would come to me
not often
and stamp her feet
look up at me with closed eyes
and say "kiss"

We fought and fought
and fought some more
She drove me crazy
She told me I was a jerk

But every so often
often enough to keep me there
for many years
I would look at her face
and see the child
who still lived there
~~

First Nights

Oh God how I miss
the first night
that first discovery
of her neck, her back
the curve of her thigh
as it blends into her ass

How many years has it been
since I've been an explorer
carefully making my way
along delicate paths
all the while watching
for booby traps

And the morning
that lazy look at her face
in the dawn light
searching for the score
was it good enough
would she be back
Would there be a second night

~~

Morning Meetings

Those early morning meetings
waking naked
beside her
and the look of horror
on her face

How do I explain this
to my boyfriend
to my husband
how can I get away
as soon as I can

Away from this boy
who talked so sweet
and led me here
to this early morning bed
Can I sneak away

No, he's awake
and he's looking at me
he sees my face
"Go, it's OK,
I don't mind at all"

"Call me later
if the urge strikes you
It's OK, Go"

And she is dressing fast
and out the door
and I go back to sleep
hoping to dream of her
~~

That Nipple I Loved

Sometimes, random times,
the image of her nipple
the one that went in
but came out when I sucked it
will appear in my head

If I'm not driving
or talking
or otherwise engaged
I will sit for a moment
and from her nipple
I will look upward
to her face

If it is a good day
I will see there
the moment when she came
the way her neck arched
as if to say
bury your face here

~~

I'll Take My Time

It took a lot of years
but the day arrived
when I thought I knew
every sound she made
every face
the way her toes curled
like a Japanese shunga

And when that day arrived
I would see
from the corner of my eye
a motion I had never seen
and I thought
perhaps another ten years
and I've seen it all

~~

No Fights In Bed

I would start each new relationship
with a simple rule
We do not bring arguments
into bed

Of course they went to bed
each and every one
showed up between us
in that icy void of a foot

I would have had many less women
many less relationships
if only one of them
had listened to me
~~

Irving Layton

Used book store
Irving Layton there
just lying there
of course I bought it

And to read it
I must hold it in my hand
and when I do that
I catch a glimpse

A wrinkled hand
with age spots sprouting
where only smooth skin
once spread out

Young Irving
is talking someone
into his bed
and all I see are age spots

Please, just for an afternoon
let me melt back into youth
let me remember my girls
and forget my old man

~~

Books and Girls

A book of love poems
and I catch a scent
old books
despair and hope

A book of love poems
and I expect
to catch that scent
of a young girl

Shampoo in her hair
youthful perfume
on her neck
Soap on her wrists

Sweat in her armpits
and further down
that most wonderful
unforgettable moist grotto
~~

What Is Beauty

I never thought
that beauty was one thing
that dreadful symmetry
the computer discovers

That Barbie skin
never interested me
Barbie is too cold
too small to warm me

Looks appeal to me
of course they do
but the phrase I remember most
"she smells clean and fresh"

~~

You Want Me

It was never supposed to be
that the women I wanted
would tell me what I wanted

All my youth was filled
with a search for a woman
who would say "you want me"

I found them
over and over
and I cried

Sometimes for joy
sometimes for sadness
but always for her

You want me
Do I want you?
You must guess

~~

Timelines of Love

When oh when
I would sometimes think
can I move my arm
from under her head
the poor limb is almost dead

And when oh when
how many nights together
is it fine for me to leave
go from the bed to the toilet
and piss out half this beer

And how many weeks
I swear I can't wait
how many weeks
before I can fart in the bed
and not endure this pain
of a distended belly

~~



Kitten Feet

She would come on kitten feet
Not cat feet
because our old cat clicks
his old claws sound like a dog

So on kitten feet
she would come into the bedroom
and softly, slowly
she would rub my back

And when I was awake
And when I had rolled aside
she would leap into bed
and hug my arm around her

And sometimes when I hugged her
and she had put her head on my chest
she would put it there again
and sigh

~~

Off Your Ass

I walk back from the Doctor's
and just too many twinges
on the knee, it was getting sore
so I called for a ride

Take the damned brace
and take your damned cane
and get what exercise you can
even if you've no desire for it

So very long ago it was
when I would deadlift to a drop
and feel as if I was floating
at the top of the world

So very long ago
I would run and run and run
and at the finish, sprint
so that I swallowed down puke

Listen to the old man
get off your ass
you don't want to be me
with no memory of endorphins
~~

Mixed Blessings

With all these hormones
to castrate me
the only stiff wood I've got
is my cane

I'm a nicer guy
I have to admit
much less prone to explode
much less desire to fire

But less desire to exercise
and muscle size
is rather like my penis
small, not likely to get bigger

But I guess I'm alive
still able to desire a woman
if I can't do much about it
Sort of like life

Mixed blessings

~~

Forty Years Gone By

Dance with me
under the disco lights
around the Bullring pole
Dance with me
and we'll work up a sweat
this August night
and at 4am
we'll skinny dip
in the Arboretum pond

Later we'll stagger
drunk and wet
happy for the chill
downtown to my place
Up the stairs
trying to be quiet
and to my room

You can meet the roommates
tomorrow morning at breakfast
then scurry back up the hill
to that class you hate
with promises of 'later'
which might happen

~~

I Made You Lie

Woman you lied to me
and when I caught you
You told me it was me
I made you lie

Later, you stood silent
'I'm not lying' you said
technically not a lie
And I made you silent

So very many years
before you told me the truth
and when you did once
I was angry

'See, you see
all that time
I was right to lie
I was right to be silent'

~~

Medical Visits

My doctor likes his canister
of liquid nitrogen
He likes my head
with its keratoses

Six times we've done this
and six times he's explained
Blister, maybe blood, scab
This might sting

Today I have three blisters
up there, with the wound
caused by my bald head
and our low stairs

I rather hope the nurse
who gives me a shot today
asks about my head
'Who did that to you?'

Then they leave me alone
for another month
to pretend all is good
To pretend I'll live forever
~~

She Was Working

Wake me at 8 she said
or 8:30 perhaps
I have work to do
and I agree

Come the time
I sneak the sheets up
from toes to rose
that lovely flower at her hip

And kiss her ass
loudly and often
both of them
so neither feels lonely

And hearing no response
a tiny nip
with the barest of a bite
to get an 'oo'

My job done
I go back to my work
back to my coffee
Another smile to remember
~~

The Fight in the Shower

Oh she's so cool
washing her hair
ignoring my hand
scrabbling there

Her hairy mound
that just fits
the finger on the place
that just fits

So cool she is
hands and brush
ignoring my good work
and so more is needed

I lean in close
I breathe hotly in her ear
a catch, a shudder
and she is mine once more
~~

Faithful

She demanded nothing
that I recall
but faithful I decided
I would try and see

Two years it was
that I turned away
from all others
my eyes only on her

Two years they beckoned to me
and I stayed with her
And in the end
she left unhappy

It wasn't enough
I gave her what I had
and it wasn't enough
She left unhappy
~~

The Warmth of Your Back

I get so close
to your wonderland
see my face pressed
against the chain fence

Your so lovely back
spread from shoulders to toes
so warm and soft
and I'm pressed tight

But nothing, nothing stirs
no prick appears
to complete the circuit
to penetrate the fence

Forever condemned
to wait with face pressed
against the chain fence
and watch the rides

Your wonderland denied
I take what comfort I can
from the warmth of our back
the contact of my limp dick

~~

A Double Handful

So many years ago
and at her pleasure
she pulled a double handful
of hair from my chest

Her eyes grew wide
'oh I am so sorry'
but I was young
and I laughed

She didn't know what to do
with a double handful of hair
I took it from her
and dropped it on the floor

She laughed
and I laughed
and I held her tight
'shall we begin again?'

~~

Silverback

A single hair
plucked from my chest
'What was that' I said
And she held it up

A single grey hair
she blew it away
and leaned against me
with a sigh

Somewhere below
did I hear her say
'I'm too young
to fuck a silverback'

I stepped away
'what did you say?'
'Nothing, oh nothing
Did it hurt?'

That grin on her face
that tilt of her head
as she settled her hair
and I gathered her in
~~

The Thermostat

Twice now
I am suddenly soaked with sweat
another hot flash
Have I missed a pill?

I check my container
I have taken the evening pills
in the morning
A strange combination?

I don't even know
what half of them do
Nor do I care
I am still here to sweat

My feet have not rotted
off of my legs
My heart has not exploded
no clot in my brain

A bit of sweat
It seems ungrateful to complain
To compare with my wife

Hers short but often
Mine long and deep
The eternal fight over the thermostat

~~

A Literary Character?

That would be Nutt
the Orc of Unseen Academicals
I seek worth
I am most comforted
while creating something
it doesn't matter what

Just to create
And who decides this worth?
I do, of course
so I seek no approval
from others
Like Nutt I have finally learned
that I am the one
who approves

~~

Weak Leg, Bad Knee

Small victories are important
yesterday I didn't walk home
but today, further, from the hospital
I got here

The knee, injured in grade 9
football
and it showed up
in University 'you will stop running
or need an operation'

Silent through 35 years of iaido
it spoke up again
at the end of my career
and now I live with it

Counting small victories
My doctor says
'if you can walk, we don't cut
It's a crapshoot if it helps'

~~

Water Girl

She walked out of the sun
sweat glistening on her arms
water cascading
down her back with her hair

I held a towel for her
and she said 'thanks'
I patted my towel
and she sat down

You are the most perfect
creature to come from the water
that I've seen all summer

Nice of you to say
I've not heard it before
What is your name?

~~

The Key Around Your Neck

That key around your neck
the one you never took off
the one you never explained

I was clever
I found out things
but never enough

An old flame
was it the key to his heart
or to yours

A terrible crime
a lock box somewhere
with some evidence there

When you left
the last time I saw you naked
There seemed to be two keys
~~

Time To Go

I wake
she is still softly buzzing
beside me
It's time for me to go

I leave as quietly as I can
replacing the covers
so she'll stay warm
At her door, I look back
and she is still

Still asleep, or pretending
I smile and quietly
close her door
~~

Three Dozen Years

We walk in the shade
but as we move out
into the sun
You tell me to put on my hat

No skin cancer for you
you said, when I frowned
looking for a fight
You're not my mother

Three dozen years later
She tells me to put on my hat
and I smile
Someone cares enough to bother
~~



Elora Gorge

A deep gorge
and a fast river
a steep path down
and at the bottom

I said "would be nice
to do some nudes here"

She undressed quickly
looked around sharply
and hopped out onto a rock

I shot as fast as I could
the rocks were warm in the sun
the river cold as it moved
in and around the rocks

She moved in and around the rocks
bold as brass
the admirers gathered
and applauded at last
~~

Her Blue Capri

Her family cottage
She drove me there
in her blue Capri
I loved that car
almost as much
as I loved her

Her family cottage
and late at night
the mosquitoes flying
I remember rough timber
under my back

A picnic table
perhaps the dock
My eyes were closed
I paid no attention
to anything
but her sweet mouth
as she mounted me

That was always the best
she loved her horse
she could ride me forever
those thighs tight
as she posted
as I rose to meet her

~~

That Weekend

That weekend
at your parent's cottage
we told them
you were pregnant

I thought so, said your mother
I thought you were getting fat
teased your father

And that night
those thin walls
those trellis doors
we slept together

We giggled as we listened
your parents fucking next door
and we were quiet as mice
I'm sure they listened too

~~

You Left Again

It was not the day
it was never the day
but that day, I was warned
Whatever I said, brought a storm

And storm it was
you raged
and I fought as best I could
but this hopeless fight
was not to be

You left again
for the, what
tenth, twelfth time
You left me

And when the rain had stopped
when the streets had dried
you came back
and I opened the door

~~

Take My Arm

As we walk, I sigh
and you ask me
Just because I'm old
just because I wish
that I was not

As we walk I drift
balance is perhaps there
but the legs are not
Untrustworthy things they are

You take my arm
pull me away from the street
push me away from others
and we walk

And as we walk
I sigh
Once mighty
once god-like even
I am returned, circled around
to the state of a child
~~

A Good Fight

He fought until the end they say
that brave young boy
so very long on life support
and finally, that long legal battle
another fight among fights

He fought until the very end
against pain
struggling to breathe
struggling, hopelessly struggling
This brave young man
Not a very good death
but a great fight
~~

Can't Play Guitar

I woke this morning thinking
there is much more behind
than in front of me
Have I done enough
Or have I wasted my life

I lay still
and ticked the boxes
Looked into the bucket
and thought
Yes, it was enough

Not wasted
but there could be more
I never learned
a musical instrument
And then there's

No, that's all I found
All the other things
I wanted to do
I've done
Not time to go, but
~~

I Was Cold

Why so hesitant
was I, with her

She knit me a sweater
and I was cool
She drove me to the island
and I was cold

What was it, a madness
a sickness in my brain
Or was it that I knew
I was not the one for her

Did I think she didn't know
She wanted only a night
and I gave her a shoulder
cold as a winter's day

Forgive me the insult
of not giving you my heart
if for only a week
Nobody would have known
but you and I

Surely it was a sickness
some cruelty deep in my soul
Such a small thing
to lend my prick to you
~~

Poet's Lover

You are there
a poem from 1960
and I was four years old

I want you now
aged that I am
I want you here with me

You were someone else
with someone else
but your new lover waits

No longer four
no longer forty
I still want you here

Forget the years between us
we will make it happen
forget that you are long in your grave
~~

Warm Blooded

I woke with the alarm
and it was no longer light
That time has come
summer is slipping away
and with it
another year

With each month now
until next May
I will become fragile
my moods brittle
as the warmth fades
and life bleeds away

~~

One of the Best

She would come to me
for a hug
and she would rub her nose
in my chest
like a pet, snuffling

Briefly, she would pull away
look at me
and then back again
to bury her face
in my cotton shirt

Of all the things I miss
in my old age
that is one of the finest
one of the rarest
one of the best

~~



Old Teeth

Another broken down crown
another tooth
repaired too many times

I was born in the age of dentures
of perfect teeth
cleaned nightly with peroxide

Twenty years of bad care
and pull them all
Get the new set in

It seems unfair
somewhere along the years
it was decided that teeth last

And so these poor things
several missing
through poverty
through pulling

Must serve a brittle mouth
I eat with care now
for fear of losing more

~~

Eunice Shows Up

A photo comes up
on my screen saver
set to random
and there she is

She sits on a couch
the one upstairs
but this was three places back
sits with her perfect legs
her perfect face
looking upward
toward the camera
in the act of saying stop
don't take my picture
I look a mess

Anything but a mess
she looks like a dream
I can remember her smell
the feel of her skin
at the base of her spine
as I pull her in to me

And I stop remembering
Hello you, I say
it would be a year
before she left me
and another year after that
before I gave up hope

~~

In Dreams Now

I live more in dreams now
than in the waking world
in dreams I still fly
Running the winds
swimming the tides

Today I walked
and stubbed my toe
caught myself by an inch
did not break my neck again
I want to thank someone

But who to thank
for saving me from a fall
the doctors who keep me alive
if not really living
as I try hard, to be strong again

I would like a nap now
to go into my dreams
to feel twenty again
with seven women ahead
with six behind to love
~~

Not That Man

Where is that man
who could have lifted you
and shaken your spine straight

I tried
and for a week I felt it
in my healthy knee

You're not that heavy
but I'm not that strong
and I sometimes forget

I never told you
your shoulders would slump
once more disappointed

Once more that look
that says, careful old fellow
you're not that man any more
~~

I Made You Laugh Once

When I met you
I made you laugh
and I made you laugh in bed

As the years went by
I became less funny
and you didn't laugh
~~

Long Legs

As I walked this morning
a fox was finishing the night
she walked on the other side
pretty, dignified
her tail perfect

As I watched her walk
her long, long legs
took me back to you
back to your youth
and those impossibly long legs

The fox looked once at me
lifted her nose a bit
and went on about her day
I had as much importance
as I ever had

those long, long legs
so long, long ago
~~

Two Days

When you left
you said, as you always do
"It's only for two days"
and now the two days are gone
and you're not coming home

I miss you already
even though you said
it's only two days more
Just two days
I've been here before
~~

Forget Me Quickly

I am so sorry to leave you
my young, young girl
so full of life
so full of love
and here am I preparing to leave

May you forget me quickly
may you love another soon
may you never think of me
when the June moon tune
drifts over the summer lawns

~~

I Would Know It

When she passed me in the hall
I would know it
even when my eyes were closed
that smell, so distinct, so clear
said she had passed

No longer mine
I let her go
Why I would never know
but when she passed in the hall
I would know it
~~

Used Book Store

With each page turned
I smell again, the book store
where I found this gem
hiding in plain sight
who would ever find it
amongst the bric
amongst the brac

It sat on top of others
and the cascade when I found it
announced another book sold
through guilt
Through a mess on the floor
so here it is
and with each page turned
The book store again

~~

I Have Things to Say

There are things I wish to say
to you
such wonderful things, jewels
shining

Can I go back to before
Before you and I
back to when we were we

Ah, I cannot
too much water under the bridge
and you
So many years you have lain
underground
~~

Kids, Now

So many years
so very many years
spent trying not to conceive
not to impregnate

And then suddenly
"get home now
my temperature has spiked"
along with my anxiety

Is it too late
am I too old
but no
A new tale to be told
~~



Old in Summertime

Not even kittens
lying on their back
asleep side by side
Fluffy kittens
can lift my spirits today

So much cloud
on a sunny day
so much ice
inside
while it's warm out

I have no reason to cry
why then, do these kittens
not make me smile
what is this weight
in my heart

~~

The End of the Visit

Here is something for you
said the old man
A plastic bag handed over
Mom, dad, two kids

There are a couple of books
and some other things
maybe you can use them
And mom nods

A book on Canada for kids
very nice, thank you
as they got up
to catch the train to Toronto

The old man goes with them
and comes back
with limp and cane
to the now empty table

Can I get a refill he says
as he walks to the toilet
and he sits alone
drinking one more coffee

~~

Just Sounds That Way

Very nice, I think
as the sporty car
goes down the hill
special muffler
backfiring all the way

Very nice, I think
I bet that's a special package
you pay extra for
to make that thing
sound just like the old man's

Does it go fast?
It certainly sounds like it
but looking at it
I somehow doubt it's fast
it just sounds that way

~~

My Afternoons

Is it time to get up
is it spaghetti today
have I made the coffee yet
done the dishes

These are my afternoons
stumbling, confused
groggy from my nap
I turn toward the kitchen

~~

Frog-Flopped

Every so often
maybe once a week
I would have an out of body
and see myself
on top of a girlfriend
in my residence room

No I didn't have a mirror
It was just my imagination
seeing that skinny ass
pumping up and down
between her legs
frog flopped on the bed
and I would fight like hell
not to laugh

~~

The Search

There seemed nothing she desired
and nothing she would deny me
It was up to me
to find something to shock her
and she was never shocked
something she would not do
and she did it

In the end, I would admit defeat
I found what I would not do
found what I could not do
and eventually, I could do nothing
Still I would not have missed those years
for another ten of boredom
Some things are worth the effort

~~

She Wanted Him

He refused her
he denied her
told her he wanted nothing
to do with virgins

It inflamed her
it enraged her
she pursued him
she abused him

Inevitable, that evening
she found him at a party
drunk, annoyed, nasty
and she wanted him

~~



The Great Teacher

A great teacher he thought
so many fresh ideas
so many inventive girls
given out to the world

Yet they taught him
each one gave to him
and took very little
these students of the flesh

Still, student or teacher
He had hope they moved
from his bed to another
kinder, gentler, wiser
~~

I Remember it Still

That black-haired line
from belly-button to mound
that full, hairy bush
between your legs

And yet I resisted
foolish boy, I resisted
you the sister
of the one I chose

There was nobility
or so I thought
that manly resistance
oh foolish boy

In the end, all is dust
and memory remains
the regretful remnants
of what might have been

~~

Once Upon a Time

Tired, legs so tired
there was a morning
where I'd bound from bed
and climb mountains
wrestle bears
and carry huge packs
over raging rivers

Now I struggle down the street
to the coffee shop
to write a chapter in a book
and drink a coffee
eat a cookie
and walk home again
hoping the knee lasts

~~

In Line For Coffee

I stand behind
watching her shorts
move up and down
What is she scratching
at the front

~~

Curiosity Lost

The commuter trains pull in
once an hour
and the people drift in and out
of the coffee shop

Carrying their drinks
to keep them company
on the trip into the big city

Once I wondered
what they would do
when they arrived

Now I just want a refill
please, the train is coming
run across the street
get out of my way

~~



The Scientist

Sometimes I miss the lab
There, there is no believing
and no search for facts
There is only a speculation
and an attempt to disprove it
Here is something that may work
can I prove that it doesn't?

If it works all the time
maybe it is useful
The preponderance of yes
over the no
With me to prove it so
So much less need
to wonder how foolish the world
of blind belief

I left the lab many years ago
and now I write
and in my writing I can think
still not believing
perhaps a being can fly
or move
from one place to another
instantly

Yes, magical realism
But I find no conflict
between a character who can fly
and an experiment where blue
is actually red
after all, if it's blue one thousand times
it might be red the next time

You see, I have no need
to believe anything
to assume there is a fact
there is only what I have seen
and what might yet be seen
A belief, a fact
neither are of much use to me
instead, tell me the odds

~~

Detumescence

For three years now
my pecker has not stood up
Somehow that should matter
shouldn't it?

But the reason it doesn't stand
is that there's no testosterone
and with no testosterone
there's little body-based desire

It's all in my head
these days
and what's in my head
can be controlled

Finally, Huxley's detumescence
freedom from the urge
freedom to pick and choose
and decide what is desired

No more greed
no more lust
just a waiting
for what comes next
~~

When You're Gone

I'm not very good
when you're gone

The place is too empty
and in the silence
of your absence

I hear the sound
of Death's bony heels
sneaking up behind me

~~

Proud Boy

A decade later
I met her again
and mentioned that time
I resisted her fine bush

She laughed
You may have admired it
but there was no way
you were getting inside my bush

Oh the hubris
of being a pretty boy
with a golden tongue
and a success rate

~~

The Girl at the Mini-Putt

Decades, I had regretted
not talking to her
the one I spotted at the mini-putt

Decades later, I saw
a photograph I had taken
without her knowing

And I no longer longed
for that long ago conversation
The photo and the memory
~~

Saturday Morning is Bored

A Saturday morning, early
and I'm thinking of a girl
who would notch her bedpost
like some guys would

and she had more lovers
than I would ever see

Why would my brain do this
Present these memories of her
Is it bored, this Saturday morning

~~

Musashi in the Bedroom

She was delicate, so fine
and she walked into my room
naked, offering herself

She scared me so
I could not touch her
and she grew angry

Taking hold of my nerve
I for the first time in my life
found mushin

Not thinking at all
I walked forward confident
that I would do something

It wasn't for years
that I knew what that was
Musashi in the bedroom

~~

That Long Hair

In the shower
that hair
so black, so tightly curled
would run down your back
to the top of your ass

I would stand in awe
of that thick black blade
cutting into your body
the tip of that sword
resting, where it split your ass

I would not touch that hair
preferring to leave it perfect
I would run my hands
on either side
down to that ass

Gripping your hips
just where the sword tip lay
I would pull you toward me
while you sighed
penetrated by my own sword
~~



Waiting for the Story

I am alone with my thoughts
for the first time
in several days
I wait, patiently
for them to settle down
for my thoughts to find a topic

I must be patient
I have no idea what is in store
which mood will come out
which story will be told
I hope it is a good one
filled with old and new loves
~~

Late Summer

An hour or more with a book
on the porch
enjoying the summer air
the warmth of late summer

The dying hopes
of ten thousand kids
realizing school will soon be

And I wonder
how many more of these days
I will sit on this chair
and breathe the summer air

~~

What I Miss

I woke, and you were there
in a beam of moonlight
through the window

You sat on a chair, facing me
not in the bed
as you usually are

You watched me for a time
and I waited, fearing bad news
Is it now, have you come for me

Finally you shook your head
and said, in your soft voice
It isn't me that you miss

You call me here
but what you really want
is your twenty year old

Look at me
I'm twenty
and you were twenty

Grow up my love
you can't have me back
you can't have us
~~

May I?

Those nipples were perfect
and so erect
so very hard
that I had to ask
May I touch one?

You laughed
turned your breast toward me
and said
Go ahead

With trembling hand
The tip of my finger alone
I touched it
and then, wholly satisfied
I said
Thank you

~~

A Sweet Game

Kneeling at the origin
of the world
Kneeling between those legs
I admire so much

I bend toward you
and you twitch
I back up and look at you
to see a shrug
to see you look at me

I lean forward once more
and your breath jumps
your knees close
and I back up once more

Do you like this game
my sweet girl
Shall I tease you again
or is it time

~~

Hormone Therapy

Once I thought
I would die in the saddle
Between the legs
of a freshly showered girl

It will not be
I have traded that dream
for a few years of life
Wondering if it was worth it

I have said my goodbyes
to young girls
and elegant ladies
Not even embers remain
~~

How Did It Go

I have a photograph
of you looking
from this very spot
at what I am seeing

Here I stand
in the exact spot
where you once stood
waiting

Will you possess me
across these many years
will you speak to me
from inside my head

I have so much to ask you
did your life go well
did you love famously
and live uproariously

Tell me please my girl
I am an old man
getting chilled
Tell me your secrets

~~

What I See

A grey and wrinkled face
looks out at me
from the mirror

Oh silly boy
to have got old
to have missed so much

You apply lotions
to fight the wrinkles
where once you bathed

That special elixir
produced by special lust
dispensed by that loss of control
in some few special girls

I would look up
beard dripping
and she would grin
as I would grin
~~

Chances Missed

So many chances missed
to embrace her
Any woman
The woman I love
And I would turn away
put on my coat
and say "let's go"
and "we'll be late"
Barely glancing at her
the woman I love
Any woman

You will not be late
for the length of one hug
One hug that perhaps
is the last one
Do not miss your chance
to embrace her
Any woman
The woman you love
There will soon be no chance
~~

The Golden Age

I did not know
post-pill
post-penicillin
that it was pre-aids

I did not know
the golden age
was my age
when women liked me

Could I have done more
a bit more effort
a few more girls
Should I have tried harder

No
It was never about that
those nights dreaming together
never involved a score sheet
~~



I Wish For You

I wish you the best
the feeling of a woman
nestled in your arms
as you fall asleep
with the smell of her hair
tickling your nose

The sight of a woman
putting on her lotions
after a long slow shower
the glance she gives you
as she sits on the bed
to do her legs

The sound of a woman
brewing coffee
making breakfast
because she wants to
as you laze in a bed
still warm with love

I wish you long quiet evenings
you in your chair
she in hers
as you read together
your separate books
The chance meeting of eyes

The sudden disturbance
as she reads you a passage
that delights her
and your thumb on your page
as you listen closely
and the smile you give her

~~

The Surprise

Every woman who granted
me favours
every woman who shared
my bed
Surprised me

Me? Why, because I asked?
Me, fortunate fellow
to have such as you
in my bed
It was beyond my imagining

And yet they stayed
some few for a night
some for years
Most for long enough
that I thought myself lucky

To have the attentions
of any woman at all
was gift, beyond possibility
Gift and surprise
for a fortunate young man
~~

What You Pray For

And one day God said
I feel good today
I will grant all prayers

So he twisted the athlete's limbs
scarred the beauty's face
destroyed the clever boy's mind

All at the behest of the faithful
all in answer to their jealous requests
because he was in a good mood

The atheists were all poked
The woman next door was doxed
as the faithful rejoiced

But now they turned on each other
and the competition increased
the prayers flew heavenward

And one old lady
who had lost her family to God's will
asked God to go to Hell

~~

Hard To Sleep With Her

It was ever hard
to fall to sleep
with her in my arms

My eyes would fly open
as soon as I would get drowsy
to look
Is she still there

For long minutes this
Until my eyes
heavy from the beauty of her face
would give up and sleep would come

Yet in the night
urged on by a bladder of beer
I would wake
slowly, carefully remove my arm
from under her head
and stand, piss-hobbled
looking down at the bed

Finally forced by pressure
I would walk softly
empty that bladder
and walk back quickly
to look down once again
at that beautiful face

To slip my arm once more
under her head
and fold her gently to me

Only to have my eyes fly open
in a few seconds
to make sure she was there

Softly breathing
beside me in that bed
~~

What Did You Live For

What did you live for
What made you go on
Questions from a young fellow
met in the bar, drunk enough
to be rude to an old man

I thought a little
and drank a little
and finally said

What I lived for
what kept me looking forward
was the glance of a young girl

The look of those eyes
as they held that softness
you see as a lover looks
at the object of her love

Not the conquest
not the notches in the bedpost
but only that look
that was always enough

The fellow shook his head
crazy old man
How could that be enough

But this old man was deaf
looking into his beer
with a soft smile
and softer eyes

~~



Looking While Driving

She unhooked her pants
and slid them down
taking her panties with them

This I had requested
and this she did
Much to my surprise

As I looked
the car turned toward her
as it would
and we hit the bank
a great lurch upward
and back on the road

Thank goodness
we were not going the other way
for then the car would have been
down the bank and in the river

~~

That's Nice Dear

Many years later
she grinned and told me
that once, in a bar in Toronto
while she sat beside me
he put his hand down her pants
and played with her cunt

That's nice dear, I said
and didn't ask more
Now I wonder
did she undo her button
slide down her zipper
Did she wet his finger
as she came

Only an idle curiosity
It is of small importance
to my life
But these encounters
are the very heart of life
to those who are playing

What warped morality
says you must be faithful
you must remain
with the one who tore your hyman
What fragile manhood
What fearful womanhood
requires such denial

To have the memory
of a hand down your pants
in a crowded bar
A memory that makes you smile
many years later
Is that not moral
Is that not right
Is that not life

~~

Left Over Santa

Glancing up
I notice a Christmas decoration
an abstract Santa
hanging on a curtain rod

Ah well, I think
every house should have one
left over year to year
to remind us of the illusion of time

Every day is Christmas
and New Years
and every other day
It must be this way

But still
as the days get shorter
my thoughts are dragged
toward the darkness of winter
And this Santa will smile
~~



Poor, Loving, Trying

Robert Mapplethorpe
and Patti Smith
So fascinating
Not because they became famous
but because they weren't
Just two people
trying to make it
rooming together

What were the best years
of your life
Were they when you were young
just starting out
not much money
but the two of you
against the world
The two of you

~~

Still Here

We are still here
although you wish
we were not

We have survived
and our culture
as much as we could save
was not eliminated
by your culture

We are still here
~~

Are We There Yet

Here, in this issue
we celebrate native art
and in this issue
art from asia
and before that
art from the queer folk
We celebrated
art from women
art from the disabled
art from children
art from a small obscure island
between Britain and France

Are we there yet

~~

Lick the Spoon Clean

She came to me
as I looked out to sea

She had a pot
neither small nor large
but it had a lid

She opened her pot
and with a ladle
poured soup into a bowl
Corn chowder
for those who now ask this

She handed me the bowl
and a spoon
Saying nothing

I ate the soup
what else could I do
and as I handed back the bowl
she said "lick the spoon clean"

~~

A Higher Class of Garbage

This time I cannot appreciate
Was a time
when I needed a cord
and found it on the dock

If I needed a door handle
there was a cork in the shed
A cork being a wooden float
for a gill net

If I needed a board
there was one piled
used, welcome to be used
in a pile somewhere

Now it is only plastic
fast food cups
old face masks
and shopping bags

There was a time
when there was a higher class
of garbage
And it lasted
~~

A Plastic Ring

I gave my mother a plastic ring
and she declared it
the most beautiful thing in the world

I was so proud
I had found something she wanted
something she thanked me for

She wore that ring all that day
and by the next
we had both forgotten

Except, here, six decades later
I remember it
and the smile on her face as she received it
~~

The Sound of a Virgin

What is the sound
of a virgin
in this town
He said

And I shrugged
He was silent
for a moment
and then laughed

Such a good joke
he declared
and I asked
What was that sound again?

~~



Leave Me Ignorant

Bother me not
with vaguely anatomical words
for they remind me
of the things happening inside
and I want to forget

Let the things that happen inside
remain inside
and happen if they must
but I prefer to be ignorant

~~

The Girl in the Wood

There is a shady wood
and in that wood a house
not a big one
but enough for the girl

She lives there alone
and has been forty years
she never ages
never grows old

I know the way
through the wood
to her house
and I visit her sometimes

She is always pleased
to see me
She never ages
never moves on

I am pleased to see her
I have loved her always
for forty years
a love that never ages

~~

The Rose She Gave Me

I told her once
"You have a rose
that I can make blossom"

But did I tell her
what she did that for me
made me blossom
made my heart open
like the petals of a rose

and she a butterfly
she a bee
straight to the centre
of my heart

~~

In The Pine Tree

We sat in the boughs
of a huge pine tree
growing on the edge
of a cliff

We sat, dangling our feet
looking out at the distance
and wondering if we'd make it
from where we were
to there

Sometimes holding hands
sometimes nudging each other
we sat with our feet dangling
daring each other

Such dares we had
Do you love me
Will you stay with me
Will you go with him
Do you love her more

For months we sat there
on that branch
poking each other
in the side

~~

She Had a Bike

A rain-washed street
cobblestones glistening
a sluicing sound
as a car drifts by

This was the street
that she lived on
and I used to ride my bike
my boneshaker bike

She a heartbreaker
would meet me outside
and join me to ride

The rain has come down
for many years
and the blood is gone

my heart's blood
that stained the stones
is gone these many years
~~

It's In My Nature

She told me the story
of the frog and the scorpion
but I misunderstood
Thinking myself the scorpion
I promised that she
would be safe
on the other side

She smiled at me
and stroked my cheek
and I misunderstood
Thinking she was comforted
that I would never harm
my little frog
that she would be safe

Came the day
we had crossed the river
and I found the truth
She looked at me
with such loving eyes
she said to me
with her soft voice
"it is my nature"

~~

The Old Way

Red bricks
on a wooden frame
and inside
plaster and lath

This house I grew in
this house I left
only to buy one
just the same

Cold in the winter
Hot in the summer
I tell myself
it should be this way

Shall I overcome
the cold with fuel
the heat with fuel
as so many do

Naked in the summer
sweaters in the winter
Is this so hard
It was not when I was young
~~



The Ways I've Been Warm

When all we had was wood
we warmed the place with wood
Then with a clever grate
we warmed it with coal
Another clever trick
and that wood furnace glowed
with fuel oil

This is the moment
when I left that house
to move to a place
with electric baseboards
then a heat pump
And I moved from there

To a house with fuel oil
then natural gas
which was burned
high efficiency
and then higher
so they say

At least I don't have
to shovel coal any more
~~

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