

# Who Will Be There



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# Introduction

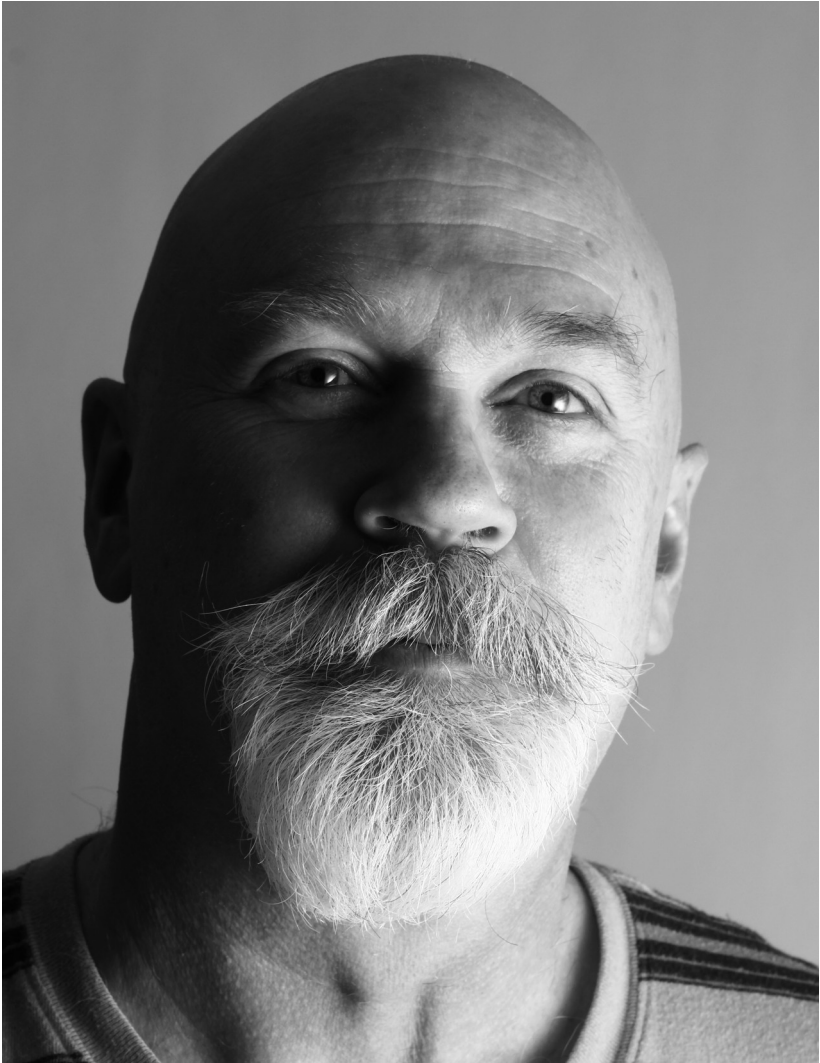
Life is always a chore. Either it's the girlfriend, or you're dying. Seriously, when you get old, you think back on the girlfriends or you think forward to when you're not here any more. In the middle, if you're lucky, you have a few good years.

Sorry, I don't have any answers, maybe "Keep your pecker up."

The photos are from 2015.

~~

Kim Taylor, October 2023





## Who Will Be There

Who will be there at the end  
to hold my hand  
as I take my last breath

Will it be a crowd  
or a single loved one  
perhaps you

Will it be a nurse  
in a hospice  
to turn up the drip  
and chase the pain away  
To call the concerned  
and say it's over

Or could I possibly  
escape to the bush  
to be left on an ice flow  
to drift away in peace  
Upsetting nobody

Oh, perhaps he's still there  
floating  
or in a shelter he's built  
warm and recovering  
No longer riddled with holes  
~~

## Were You Out

For a long time  
I would wait for her  
to come home  
think about her  
wonder what she was doing

Then came the day  
when she walked in the door  
and said hello  
and I replied  
Oh, were you out?

~~



## Neurodivergent

I am neurodivergent  
she said  
Perfectly normal

and I sat, stunned  
I thought I knew the language  
but apparently I was mistaken

To be normal  
and divergent at the same time  
was a trick I didn't understand

a slip of the language  
I had never learned  
~~

## Is It Important

In this book  
on the paper  
just beside a poem  
a mark

perhaps an insect  
fallen into the pulp  
or a bit of bark  
not quite bleached white

like a sign  
from some as yet reader  
to pay attention  
to that line

And so I do  
but I don't see the point  
it is just another line  
in a poem

of no special importance  
that I can see  
and I looked, three times  
~~

## On My Wall

On the most important wall  
of my new place  
I hung the smell  
of your neck  
right at the shoulder

And opposite that  
on the other wall  
I hung the soft buzz  
the crystal sound  
of your breath  
as you slept

On the last wall  
just beside the window  
I hung the soft look  
in your eyes  
as you told me you loved me  
just before you left

~~

## What She Tells Me

She tells me  
once again  
that what I remember  
is not what happened  
and I believe her

because, through long years  
of being told  
I have come to believe  
She has the right of it  
and I the wrong

Even though I can't believe  
I would have said  
such a horrible thing

In my own head  
my own world  
I am not such an evil person  
~~





## **A Wet Dream**

One night  
decades after she was gone  
a wet dream  
left me confused and frightened

What did it mean  
had there been a mistake  
or had my brain simply chosen  
a random face  
from the dark depths of memory

~~

## The Vacation

Excited by the idea  
of a flight  
and a vacation  
I barely considered  
leaving her behind

But the farther away we flew  
the further from her hands  
upon my cheeks  
the feel of her ass  
nestled in my groin

The more I began to regret  
the more I longed for her  
so that even before landing  
I wanted to go back home  
to her forgiving eyes

The vacation felt like work  
and the work left back home  
started to feel like vacation  
and I should have called  
Should have told her so

~~

## Someone to Blame

There was always someone to blame  
if only they looked back  
far enough  
there was a drunken man  
an emotionally frozen woman  
who was the cause  
of the anger and loneliness  
that blighted his life  
ruined hers

There was always someone to blame  
for the family fortune  
frittered away  
the hideous injuries of the soul  
inflicted on the well-meaning  
who tried to help  
who could not help  
For the scars on the wrists  
the scars on the backs  
of the children

~~

## Still My Fault

A week of peace  
and I discovered  
nothing had changed  
It was still my fault

She woke angry each day  
from a restless sleep  
while I thought it was fine  
and slept in an innocent bed

It could not last  
and it didn't  
Starting from sullen looks  
and shouted denials

She finally let loose  
it was my fault  
that he had rejected her  
that she could not have him

My fault  
as her lover, her partner  
for letting her talk to him  
in the hope she would get over him

And she did not  
My fault  
that she slept badly  
that she was angry all the time

And she left me one day  
without saying goodbye  
I came home from work  
and my bed was empty

To my shame  
I got past the hurt  
past the lonely nights  
past her, and moved on  
~~



## The Old Gods

Strange bloody bruises on my skin  
artifacts of my medicines  
or punishments of the old Gods  
whose commandments I ignore

Not that one, the older ones  
the ones who declared years ago  
that a broken neck was fatal  
that Cancer was fatal

I have angered something  
Astarte perhaps  
or Great Manitou  
and I await their judgment

~~

## Can You Help

She hadn't had that much  
to drink  
and neither had I

but when we got back  
to my room  
she fell back  
so very artfully  
onto my bed

Arms akimbo  
over her head  
She opened one eye  
grinned  
fumbled with her pants  
and said softly

Oh, can you help me  
with this  
~~



## Magnificent

Despite much scrutiny  
of the many girls  
who made it to my bed  
I never quite got around  
to arranging them by anything

Not feet, smallest to largest  
or ugly to beauty  
Not faces, classic to modern  
or boobs, softest to most firm

It never occurred to me  
to rate any of them  
they were all magnificent

~~

## Who Taught Me

Who taught me to parent  
There were no courses  
no preparation required  
no license demanded  
Just an unprotected fuck  
and I'm a father

Don't get me wrong  
we decided to have kids  
but that was it  
a couple of tries  
and success  
Eighteen months of...  
well not much, for me

And hey, I'm a father twice  
trying to figure this out  
I never played with dolls  
no action figures  
that ever required diapers  
just guns and cars

But I hope I did OK  
Some things I heard about  
decades later  
but on the whole  
not much has been said  
so maybe I figured it out  
~~



## That Story

We all have that story I suppose  
Mine was Tequila and a drive-in  
smuggled into the place  
in the trunk of a car  
drinking with the Frenchmen

Tequila  
with a full kiln to pick  
the next day

Back to the farm  
in the trunk of the car  
barely containing the puke  
to sleep it off in the bunkhouse  
Bunkie being too cute a name

Home in the morning  
to change clothes  
and eat a bit of oatmeal  
with a mother who said nothing  
knowing we all have our stories

She sent me to work with crackers  
dry, salty  
and that's what I had for lunch  
while my stomach talked to me  
Disappointedly

~~

## A Different Family

I used to be a son  
and a grandson  
part of a family  
part of two families

Slowly, softly  
that has changed  
and now I am father  
to a son  
to a daughter too

Part of a different family now  
Mine, I suppose I could say  
~~

## **Pampered and Loved**

Oh

Oh no

I suddenly remember  
the feel of my mother's hands  
as she washed my hair  
above a basin  
with an antique pitcher

I would sit quiet  
while she wet and soaped  
rinsed and dried  
and I would feel  
pampered and loved

~~

## An Old Love

I try not to read the obits  
what if I find  
as once or twice I did  
an old flame has died

So very long ago  
I might have loved her dearly  
and now she'd departed  
I'm not sure what to do

Should I go  
to stand among strangers  
who will look and say  
Who is that man

Or perhaps they will smile  
she had a life before us  
Perhaps he is an old love  
come to say goodbye

~~





## The Kitten

She bought me a pet  
a lovely kitten  
which was a delight  
to play with

When she left  
I thought perhaps  
she would leave the cat  
but when I came home  
it was gone  
And so was she  
~~

## **New Jeans for Old**

I put on another pair of jeans  
and wondered  
if I had thrown out the old ones  
too soon

I seem to be gaining weight  
slowly, to be sure  
and I'm likely to start losing it again  
due to the cancer

but for now  
I wonder  
should I have given them away  
will I become big enough  
that I could have worn them again

The things we worry about

~~

## No Change

I myself never stayed angry  
although I never forgot  
and sometimes didn't forgive

But she thought my calm face  
meant she was forgiven  
and so  
as always happened  
she did it again

No lesson  
No change  
~~

## **She Was Angry**

For months afterward  
she was angry at me

I had burst her balloon  
I had kicked away the tentpole

I had taken her dreams  
and splashed cold water  
on her hottest desires

Months she was angry  
and I felt no remorse  
It had to be done

~~



## Photo Paper

Just a bit of photo paper  
for a laser printer  
it's all I wanted

I went to Staples  
and they had nothing  
empty shelves

And Best Buy  
more empty shelves  
we could order it for you  
No thank you, I can buy it  
on Amazon

And I did  
and it was stolen  
from my front porch  
so back to Staples  
on the other end of town

Nothing  
although the shelves were full  
We could order it  
No thank you

With a sinking heart  
went into Walmart  
and I found some

to my shame  
I found some  
and bought it

Now it sits  
on top of the printer  
I have yet to try it

~~

## Ten Pounds

Ten pounds  
all I'm asking is ten pounds

but the constant hunger  
the shifting desire  
some salt  
some sweet  
some hot  
and before you know it

I've polished off too many snacks  
to lose those pounds

~~



## These Religious Wars

Oh these wars  
they're not about religion  
they say  
and they're right

they're not  
they're about power  
and money  
and land

oh yes, land to give  
to those with money  
who will support our power

These wars  
are so much more grubby  
than the small difference  
between two religions

but gosh  
isn't it easy  
to convince the faithful  
of holy permission

to kill for those who  
don't believe

~~

## Oh Thou Religious

The girls I've known  
who had abortions  
I thought to write a poem  
but it would have started

Oh thou religious pricks

And I'm an old man  
too old to fight on the street  
too old to fight a burning house  
as the offended  
come to correct me

~~



## Wait Three Days

Have you ever had a lover  
cry after an orgasm  
the turning away  
the shaking shoulders  
and the confusion  
Was I that bad?  
Did I hit a nerve?  
Am I too heavy

Perhaps the tears  
are for joy  
Perhaps that orgasm  
was the first after years  
of nothing  
of a longing for love  
a longing for satisfaction  
Wait three days  
then ask  
~~

## **An Answer**

Not every poem  
demands an answer  
Some are simply there  
satisfying the poet  
perhaps  
or causing a grin  
somewhere in the middle  
of your brain

But sometimes an answer  
arises from deep down  
and at that time  
feel free to answer  
perhaps  
with a poem of your own

~~

## Buying Gifts

Two days now  
I've shopped for myself  
and in two days  
I've bought things  
for both my children  
and my wife

Nothing for me  
and I'm happy with that  
after all  
giving presents  
is so much more genuine  
than buying shit for yourself

You don't think so?  
Try it the next time you shop  
look for things for others  
Things that will make them smile  
at the whimsy of the gift  
"You think this is me?"

~~

## The Poetic Life

Bet you thought  
that the poetic life  
was all punting  
and parties  
with cute babes  
who admired your wit

Nah  
it's random thoughts  
of eructations  
and erections  
and those idiots next door  
who work on their cars  
at 2am  
~~





## Easy to Clean

The closet is cleaned  
it took five minutes  
all the Hawaiian shirts  
de-hangered  
and stuffed in a bag

I can't wear them any more  
because of sun on chest  
where the radiation was  
where my skin is doing weird things  
bumps and moles

Should probably get that looked at  
~~

## **Another Blank Page**

Home again  
no coffee shop  
no thrifting

just home to wash dishes  
and sit in front of a blank screen  
(no different than a blank page)  
and try to think  
of something to create

Maybe I'll have to clean my closet  
a bit of deconstruction

~~

## **Anything to Do**

Is there anything  
you want to do  
If so  
why aren't you doing it?  
~~

## Right Now

Right here  
Right now  
The cat was on my lap  
my old, old cat  
on my terrible lap  
And when he wanted down  
I lifted him gently to the floor

He enjoyed his lap time  
and the little strokes I gave him  
and I was in no pain  
just a bit of an itch  
on my ass  
and another  
in my left eye

These are the ways  
I deal with the death of god  
who was never really alive  
for me

I define my existence  
my meaning  
without reference to a beard  
in the sky  
or an old man  
in government

Freedom is something  
you have to realize  
It's yours  
With every moment  
of my life  
I realize it

~~



## Not Surprised

I remember  
so very many years ago  
the feeling of guiding her hand  
down to my hard cock  
feeling the warmth  
of her hand  
as she circled it  
and, feeling playful perhaps  
let out a sigh  
or even a gasp

I remember smiling  
at her small joke  
for she was well familiar  
not melting at all  
certainly not surprised

~~

## Clever Poem

Here is a clever poem  
involving the alphabet  
in capital letters  
and it all fits in order

I read perhaps four lines  
and admit that it is clever  
but turn the page  
ignoring twenty two lines  
~~



## Perfection Required

Is there no forgiveness  
for the weakness of others

No sympathy  
for their confusion  
No empathy  
for their pain

Is it all so very hard  
this requirement for perfection  
in everyone but yourself?

~~

## Wait Ten Years

The young poet  
such bitter lines  
from the betrayed girl  
whose boys don't measure up  
to that ideal she made  
from Barbies and books

Wait ten years  
or until her boy-child  
and she will perhaps look back  
and shiver  
at what she expected then  
At how much older she was  
than those naive, hurtful boys  
~~



## Damaged Daughters

Fathers think  
they have little to do  
with daughters  
who stick to mothers  
mothers who take them  
here and there  
more or less everywhere

And decades later  
that daughter, perhaps a poet  
talks of the absent father  
The absent love  
the frightening presence  
of a man raging  
against an impotent life

What could I have done  
he thinks to himself  
so differently  
so as not to damage her  
so very badly

~~

## The Weakness of Men

It's a frightening thing  
the day a daughter sees  
her father weak, forlorn  
a helpless emotional wreck  
and she can do nothing  
but say "I love you dad"

And then one day  
many years later  
she sees the same from her man  
this brave, strong man  
supposed to protect her  
crying like a child  
needing protection

~~

## Stand By

You see someone in pain  
and you want to help  
but with enough pain  
sometimes  
all you can do is stand by  
and get hurt in revenge  
for what someone else  
has done  
to someone else

Sure it's not fair  
but sometimes  
it's all you can do  
to try to ease the pain

~~

## Relationship Advice

I'm going to make lunch  
a fried egg on a bagel  
do you want one  
said Brenda

I had eaten  
but sure, I said  
thank you, I said

It's the little things  
the offer polite  
and the polite acceptance  
that have lasted for so long  
~~





## Alcoholics

I never had to wait  
in the car  
or in the bar  
to collect my father  
and take him home

I never had to drive  
and pick him up  
from some dive  
where he was too drunk  
to drive

That was my mother's job  
and she did it for years  
One day a girlfriend asked  
if I was an alcoholic  
and my mother laughed

~~

## **There Be Dragons**

Surely, they thought  
a high speed ferry  
across the lake  
and those folks from Toronto  
will come to Rochester to visit

Sad, really  
the folks from Toronto  
can barely make it to Mississauga  
for fear of Dragons  
The lake?  
There's nothing on the map  
~~

## The Wilderness

Somewhere some tourist  
is putting honey  
on her baby's face  
and rolling down the window  
so the bear will lick it off

Somewhere a Japanese girl  
is standing next to a moose  
for a selfie

And somewhere a girl  
is convinced that he loves her too  
if only she could approach  
and tell him so

~~

## The Q-tip

Digging around in my ear  
with a cotton swab  
I think of her

the girl I knew so long ago  
who punctured her eardrum  
with a broken swab

~~



## **Another Chance**

Shaking my head  
I thought  
I'm going to give her  
another chance

Shaking my head  
I knew that she wouldn't change  
but I liked her  
and so I lived for a while  
in hope

~~

## Ghost Cat

There is a ghost cat  
rubbing up against my shin  
I can feel it  
but there's nothing there

There were certainly enough cats  
that have lived in this house  
and many before us  
I suspect

It's a friendly brush  
against the sock  
that's trying to shrink  
my swollen feet  
~~

## Ghosts of Past Residents

There were ghosts  
in that old place  
long moved away  
but something remained

Passing from hand to hand  
that apartment stayed furnished  
Books from her  
a painting from him  
a strange statue  
from someone else

Pick one up  
Can you see them  
happy perhaps  
or crying  
but always there  
still there  
~~



## **Make me the Heel**

I was sad to see her go  
I liked her quite a lot  
but she had decided  
she was going

Fine, I said  
I wish you well  
feel free to make me the heel  
if it helps you

You see, her other boyfriend  
played her along  
using her when he wanted  
and then pushing her away

She didn't quite understand  
she said she loved him  
And she must have  
to take that abuse

But I was safe  
she wanted to stay with me  
so she could be with him  
and throw her frustration at me

Like I said  
I liked her  
I tried to help  
and so my offer  
~~



## Liar

You don't trust me  
she yelled at me  
for the hundredth time

and for the hundredth time  
I said quietly  
No, I don't  
You lie to me often  
and not very well

What's that got to do with it  
you should trust me  
don't you love me

I do, but I'm sorry  
I don't trust you  
haven't for many years  
because you lie to me

~~

## First Girlfriend

My first girlfriend  
and some guy shows up  
all of eight  
and says  
"Pam wants us to knife fight for her"  
That was her name  
Pam

I never got his, because I said  
"She wants a knife fight?"  
I don't think so  
Tell her she's all yours"  
And that was the story  
of my breakup  
with my first girlfriend  
~~

## Been Here Before

Years and years  
we had been together  
and then  
just like the cliché  
she said "I choose another  
he is nicer to me than you."

Fine, off she went  
cursing me all the way  
and decades later  
someone said the same thing  
along with "You don't know me"  
and I thought  
I've been here before  
~~

## Once

Once  
and once only  
forty years ago  
I laid hands on a woman

Walls  
headboards  
oh lots of things in my anger  
but only once  
in my long life  
did I have my hands  
around a woman's neck

I did not squeeze  
I let go  
She didn't know  
that it was over  
in that very instant  
it was over

She thought she could fix it  
that we would go on  
her pushing my buttons  
to get me angry  
so I would talk

But no, in that instant  
it was over  
I was not going to wait  
until the day I squeezed  
because you see  
it gets easier  
I knew that

From that day to this  
many more women  
I have never laid a hand  
on any  
And I won't

Forty years of martial arts  
I could do some real damage  
But forty years of martial arts  
means I will never do that

~~





## Stray Cat

She would vanish  
leaving no note  
no word  
just gone

Days and weeks later  
she would show up  
at the door  
and I would let her in  
this stray cat

I would worry about her  
wonder where she was  
if she was still alive  
but she didn't care  
being a cat

One day she left  
while I was looking away  
I didn't miss her  
until her dinner time  
and that food went stale  
and dry in her bowl

~~

## Ripping Off the Tape

Am I just a band-aid  
to be ripped off fast  
she asked me

Frankly, I replied  
I've never been one  
to peel the tape slowly  
and feel each hair rip out

I didn't tell her  
about the pain that I felt  
in the years before that tape  
was ripped off quickly

How that final act  
was such a long time coming  
She wouldn't have believed me  
anyway  
~~

## The Rules

Fifteen minutes  
on the internet  
looking at the rules  
of writing  
and after the five  
ten  
six  
and eight rules  
I still haven't got anything  
I want to write about

But if I had an idea  
I know I could do a good job  
of writing about it

Now that I know the rules  
~~

## **A Certain Balance**

There's a balance of the mind  
that lets me write books  
not too laid back  
not too irritated

Just enough of a poke  
to make the brain work  
Not too much distraction  
to scatter the thoughts

~~



## The Right Side of the Grass

Waiting for the girl  
watching people drift past  
through the window  
nibbling on stale lemon loaf  
and drinking my dark roast

Not a bad way  
to spend a Wednesday morning  
I can't think of another adventure  
to top this one  
I woke up  
on the green side

~~

## **Planet Bean**

You're here every day  
the barista greeted me  
Not quite  
but a lot

I've been drinking your coffee  
since you started, decades ago  
around the corner  
and were stinking up  
the entire downtown

~~



## Girls Are Like the Bus

What do you do  
after you're done  
and you're still together  
Yet one more try  
to figure it out

This never happened  
when I was young  
It was Katy bar the door  
see ya later  
have a good life

and there was another one  
along in a few minutes  
Just like the bus

~~

## Scrawny Old Man

Scrawny old man  
t-shirt hanging off of me  
but this morning  
I found one x-l  
and now I look pretty good

I guess what they say  
Clothes make the man  
might be right after all  
I certainly feel better  
filling out a shirt  
once more  
~~



## Canadian Gender Confusion

That time of year  
where the girls cover up  
light jackets and sweaters  
the hint of those summer days  
when the shorts and crop tops  
were out in their full glory

Soon the winter jackets  
will disguise everyone  
boys and girls together  
and the Canadian gender divide  
will once more be unisex

~~

## Old, Tired, Skin

Performing contortions  
to scratch my own back  
much easier  
than it used to be

I find a bump on my skin  
with my thumb  
an itchy little bump  
to match the ones  
on my leg  
and thigh  
and chest

What is it about old skin  
that grows so many things  
brown spots  
moles  
skin tags  
itchy bumps  
and wrinkles  
don't get me started  
on wrinkles  
~~

## LED

That neon sign over there  
isn't neon, is it?  
It's LED  
and my brain just jumped  
what's led stand for?

Light Emitting Diode  
I'm old enough to know that  
and old enough to forget  
Now I'm depressed  
this poem is over  
~~

## **So Good**

A museum coffee shop  
in Sao Paulo  
coffee in a little gizmo

No,  
a contraption  
with a cloth filter  
and water we pour ourselves

So good  
~~





## **Don't Screw Up**

She sits across the room  
absorbed in her computer  
as I watch the back of her head  
wondering what she's thinking

Probably just numbers  
and a bit of swearing  
when someone screws up  
I'm careful not to screw up

~~

## Productive Day

Across the intersection  
the train is pulling in  
and the commuters lined up  
will be heading down the line  
to their jobs in the big city

I'll sit here  
with my second coffee  
and wave them off  
wishing them a productive day  
while I sit and write  
hoping for my own  
~~

## **Downtown Planet Bean**

This place is pretty flash  
compared to where it was  
around the corner  
Funky tables and chairs  
refugees from the sixties  
and the roaster there

The roaster is gone  
miles away  
in its own room  
and the smell of coffee  
comes now from the brewing pots  
and the occasional pound of ground  
~~

## My Space

It's a left wing space  
this cafe  
Definitely not Timmies

Old white men?  
Well, there's me  
and a couple of homeless  
that drift in for a coffee

Rainbow signs in the window  
plants crowding the aisles  
Alphabet couples here and there

and polite  
good will exists here  
The old white man is tolerated  
and doesn't feel the urge  
to slap anyone

~~



## Over Populated

It's all in the timing  
If you get up early  
before the crowds  
you can find a parking spot  
and a half empty cafe

You can sit far away  
from anyone else  
and pretend the world  
has enough space  
to live in still

~~

## **That Much Closer**

Back in the cafe  
working on the book  
looking out at October  
half way through the month  
that much closer to dead  
that much closer to winter

~~

## Old Men Playing Music

Drifting through the internet  
I come across music videos  
old bands I loved  
But old men  
with bent necks  
and grey hair

Is this a joke  
some sort of geezer cover band  
I look until I can find  
some clips from my time  
when they were just kids  
~~



## Geometry

I'm a visual person  
she said to me  
and so I think mostly  
in images

Doesn't that make it hard  
to think rationally  
to reason in straight lines

Of course it does  
but look around you  
do you see a straight line  
except for what you've built

No, but straight lines exist  
we made them  
so they are here  
in this world

Sure they are  
Now try to put that tree  
into a straight line  
or a puffball mushroom  
into a circle

You know I can't

And yet you think  
your linear world  
your geometric world  
is real

She shook her head  
and was gone  
I looked, but she was gone  
and I never saw her again

~~



## Snuck In

We snuck into that warehouse  
just kids  
bored  
looking around  
It was old  
boarded up for years  
but like rats  
we found a way in

Who knew what was there  
what had been there  
but I hope it was cattle  
because in one room  
off to the side  
there were chains  
hanging from the roof  
and stains on the floor  
~~

## Getting The License

They would come from far away  
just to get their license  
They would practice here  
a small local industry  
on how to pass the exam

That's it  
not how to drive  
not how to be safe  
just how to get the license  
Thank goodness they went home  
to drive  
~~

## Code for Talking

She had me up for tea  
I drank a lot of it back then  
it was sort of a code  
for talking

That's what we did back then  
a lot of talking  
hours, sometimes all night  
we would talk

Whoever offered tea  
would listen  
It was tricky  
you had to read the signs  
~~

## **My Shadow**

I was never sure how  
she was there  
each time I turned around

Eventually I realized  
she wasn't always there  
Just in the sunlight  
or a hard indoor light  
enough to throw shadows

Years later  
I made some comment  
about her being my shadow  
She got real quiet

~~





## The Closet

There was a closet  
in her room  
I looked hard at the door  
which was locked  
no simple folder, this

I never saw her open it  
I asked once  
and she just laughed  
Clothes she said

Locked?  
The door swings open  
don't worry about it

But I looked at the walls  
paced it out  
That closet was the size  
of another bedroom

When I slept there  
I always slept  
facing that door  
I wanted some warning

~~

## Just Friends

Just friends, she said  
We're just friends

But every time she thought of him  
her eyes would drop to the ground  
she would get depressed

Fine, leave her alone to brood  
But she would tear into me  
biting and chewing  
Her anger gnawing at my bones

If only he'd have just fucked her  
and been done with it  
I'd have been good with that  
Really

~~

## Get In

I had my thumb out  
trying to get home  
trying to get ahead  
of the storm I saw coming

As I looked at that cloud  
black and tall as the world  
there was lightning in there

As I looked  
not believing I would survive  
the battering I was about to take  
a car appeared

Out of that storm  
tcoming straight down the road  
Out of that storm  
I swear it  
above the road  
and then on it

She stopped beside me  
"get in before it's too late"  
~~

## **The Interview**

All these pat answers  
well rehearsed  
shared once again  
with the interviewer  
and the audience

So comforting  
so cosy  
And nobody learns  
anything new

~~



## Coffee's On

Coffee's on  
enough for one cup  
Nobody expected  
Nobody invited  
Just me and the cat

Me  
He's asleep  
So much to look forward to  
Don't waste time  
Write

~~

## Thoreau's Laundry

Walden pond  
Did I read that?  
I suspect I did not  
although it was the kind of thing  
that I would have read  
had I the time and the book

Still, Walden pond  
wasn't far from home  
and I hear Mom did the laundry  
Like moms tend to do  
~~

## **A Nap**

I want to write a poem  
I want to edit photos  
I want to do an essay  
I want to make a coffee  
I want a nap

~~



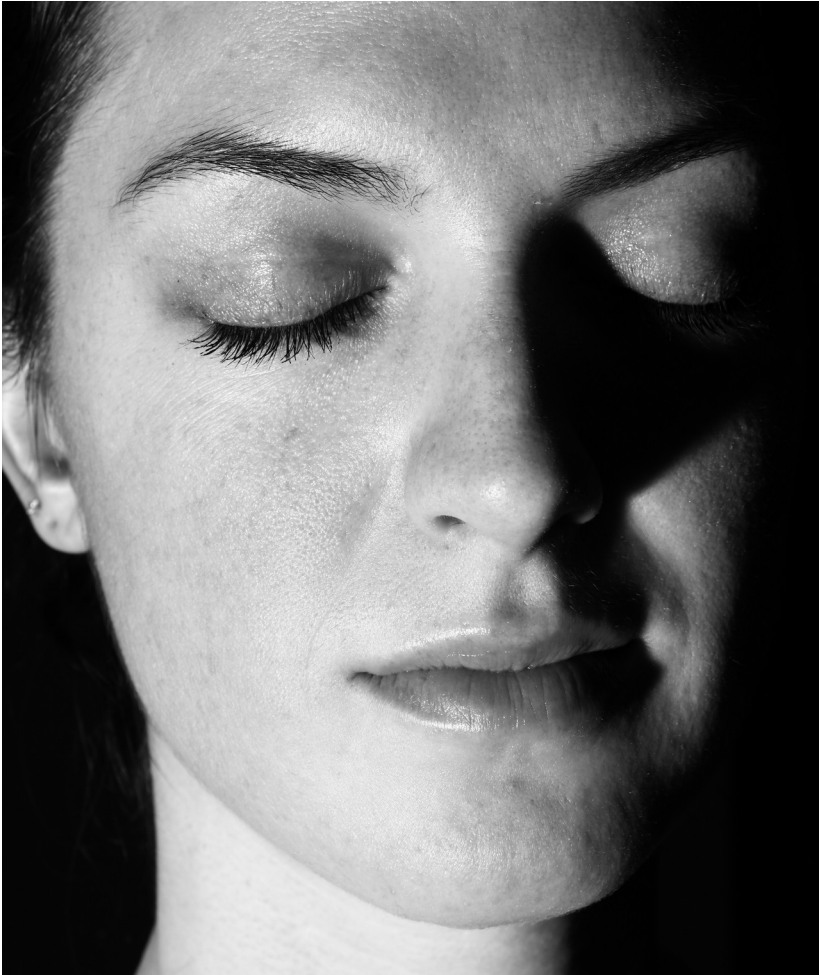
## Writing Advice

Don't accuse me of writing  
I really don't  
I listen and transcribe

The best I can say  
is that for a poem  
I have the first line

For a book  
Oh hell, I don't know  
I maybe have the first sentence  
but mostly, I sit down  
and listen to the chatter  
in my head

And there's your advice  
from me  
on how to write  
Useless  
in the extreme  
~~



## The Wild Child

She was a wild child for sure  
always running from  
running to

When it was me  
I was the happiest boy  
and when it wasn't  
I waited for a long time

to see if she turned around  
to see if once more  
she was running to me  
~~

## **It's Quiet Now**

It's quiet now  
just me and the cat  
and he's settling down  
to sleep the morning away

Me, I'm at the computer  
hoping to put words together  
Soon I'll have another coffee  
soon I'll turn on the sauna  
and find another book to read

Yes indeed  
life in the fast lane  
Yesterday I was irritated  
too much company  
Today it's quiet here  
~~

## **A Gift of Glass**

I gave her a glass sculpture  
very delicate  
very precious  
and she dropped it

The look on her face  
made me love her all the more  
as she picked up the pieces  
one by one

I told her it was nothing  
and went for a broom  
but she picked them up  
one by one

Later I realized  
she had glued it together  
bit by bit  
each and every piece

~~

## Her Magical Car

That car of hers  
was magical

She would drive us away  
into the strangest places

where our shitty jobs  
and our empty fridge  
didn't matter any more

~~



## The Sign

I never had to look  
to see if she was coming  
the window would light up

even when it was raining  
sun would pour through it  
onto the wooden floors

where we sometimes lay  
when it was too hot  
in the bed

~~



## Her Family

She told me the family was coming  
and they did  
hundreds of them  
all six inches high  
and swarming all over the apartment

But they cleaned like the blazes  
and she got them out  
in time for bed  
so I was never upset  
at a visit

~~

## Chuffie Her Cat

Chuffie was her cat  
a strange little thing  
with no fur

and it would make sounds  
like a little train  
that were so real

I swear I could smell smoke  
~~

## Her Name

It took me weeks  
but I finally realized  
it was lavender  
at the base of her neck  
right where I tucked my nose  
next to her shoulder

Is that perfume you put on

She looked at me  
with that look

You remember my name  
don't you?

~~



## **You Think I'm Alice**

She had this mirror  
sort of dark  
sort of dusty

but once  
as I came in the room  
I saw her foot  
moving into it

I asked her about it later  
and she laughed

You think I'm Alice?  
~~

## A Cottage

What is a cottage  
without a family  
bouncing around inside  
games on the table  
food on the deck  
laughter and adventure  
out in the bush

Mother says don't go far  
Father says if you get lost  
we'll hunt for you  
in a week or so

But kids grow up  
and the cottage is work  
and the cottage is far away  
from friends and video games

One day it's just father  
come up to repair the pump  
or paint the logs  
For no reason he can think of  
~~

## The Last Job Done

Outside the window  
Is it the sun  
or a leaf turned yellow  
I'm lost in melancholy  
No urgent projects  
just some wood to stack  
and not much of that

What happens  
when the projects are done  
the last book  
the last poem written  
Will I simply fade away  
like a ghost  
whose time has come

~~

## Her Grey Eyes

Beer in the afternoon  
when, last, was that a thing  
Rainy day blues  
and the oldies playing  
on the stream from my phone  
by bluetooth  
to the speakers I made

Red checkered tablecloth  
reminding me of a cafe  
so very long ago  
sitting with her  
on a rainy afternoon  
looking at those grey eyes  
so much like the skies  
above me now

~~





## He Believed Her

He sat  
hunched over a bowl of tomato soup  
Eating occasionally  
mostly just breathing it in  
that tomato smell

Not like the scent he knew  
from the base of her neck  
Or the shampoo she used  
on her hair  
The smell of her sweater  
with its lanolin shine  
The one the water bounced off

She was gone somewhere  
perhaps with someone else  
his imagination ran on  
even though she said  
she'd be back soon

He believed her  
but that didn't help  
~~

## A Dangerous Ride

I need your help, she said  
I need someone to take me  
to a dangerous place  
and make sure  
I get back in one piece  
or take my body  
back to my folks

What the hell are you talking about  
I couldn't believe this story

The mall  
I want you to drive me  
to the mall  
Come on bro  
You can do it  
~~

## My Hero

My hero, she said  
You're my hero  
I blinked

I'd never seen this woman  
and I wasn't sure  
I was seeing her now

She was sort of transparent  
Kind of wavery  
so I couldn't really see  
what she looked like

I wondered  
if she saw me the same way

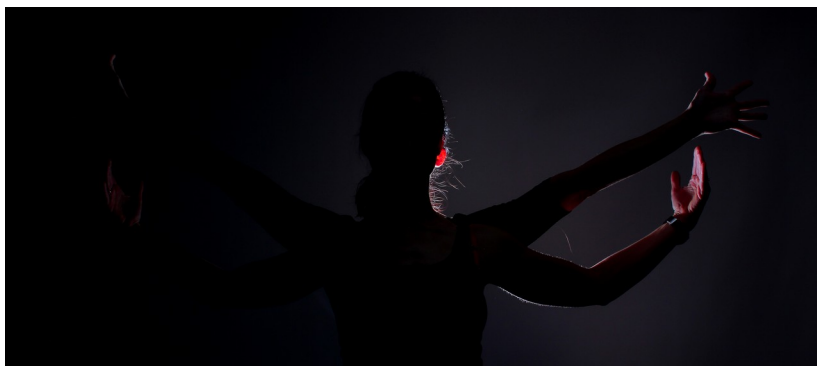
~~

## Which One

As I woke in the morning  
she looked worried  
What is it, what's wrong

Which one are you

~~



## I Can Give It To You

Whatever you want  
she said  
and I can give it to you

You want to fly  
You want to be strong  
Anything you want  
I can do it

I thought about it  
for a few minutes  
but I couldn't think  
of a single thing  
that would not be  
a royal pain in the ass

I looked at her  
She was eager  
She wanted an answer  
I'd like a beer

~~

## Outside My Window

She told me not to leave her  
because she didn't know  
what she would do

I told her she'd be fine  
that she'd get over me  
I wasn't good for her  
I was holding her back

She tried to argue  
but I was gone  
Later that month  
I heard something  
outside my window

~~

## She'd Find Me

You're supposed to learn  
from your relationships  
from your mistakes  
But I never did

I think it was because  
I had the same relationship  
with the same woman  
for centuries

I'd grow old with her  
die  
and then she'd find me  
in my next life  
What's to learn from that  
I surely never knew  
~~



## **Meow**

She stood there  
in a Halloween mask  
beside her cat suit  
naked and unashamed  
behind her mask  
Meow, she said

~~



## When She Lost It

She never knew I knew  
but late at night  
when she was drunk  
she'd lose it a bit

I would wake up when she did  
and I'd find a big cat purring  
in the bed beside me

I'd scrub the fur  
under her chin  
just a little  
and go back to sleep

I didn't know what she was  
or why she was here  
or why she was with me

~~

## The Gremlin

It was like that Shatner episode  
the Twilight Zone  
or the Outer Limits  
The one with the Gremlin

What the car  
No, not the car  
geez how old are you

Older than you  
and I remember the episode  
did you see it on the Simpsons

Look, I saw one  
out the window of the plane  
on the way back home

Did you do anything  
Yeah I walked out on the wing  
and kicked it's ugly butt  
right into the jet stream  
~~

## The Ticket in Her Book

Look at this, she said  
I found it in my book  
I must have used it as a marker  
It's a ticket to the Princess Theatre

That thing closed  
and was torn down years ago  
when they built the mall  
I remember going there

Me too, but this isn't a stub  
it's an actual ticket  
You want to go downtown  
and check out where it was

Bring the ticket  
what the hell  
maybe it will be there  
and we can go see a show

~~

## **She Had a Box**

She had a box  
a tiny one on her table  
She never touched it  
and I never asked  
It was her box  
why would I ask  
Why would I care  
what she had in there

I was making dinner  
when I heard the crackle  
of electrical discharges  
coming from the bedroom  
I ran, she was in there  
When I threw open the door  
she was gone  
there was smoke and ozone  
and the box lid was closing  
~~



## **I Need to Go Home**

I need to go home  
back to the sea  
Do you mind, she said  
No, but you never go home  
why now

I need to go  
please don't ask why

Is it because of the baths  
you won't let me see  
Where I hear you splashing  
that tail of yours  
~~



## The Rent Was Due

Years of work and study  
and we were let go  
No more pay  
The rent was due  
the food was low  
and our parents didn't like  
who we were together

It was then that woman arrived  
asking for Chris  
When I told her  
Chris said no, never, not again  
I walked back  
and said no, Chris isn't interested

The woman stood silent  
for a long time  
and then said to me  
She's a witch  
I need a witch  
It pays well  
~~

## **The Box on the Porch**

We moved into a house  
a big one  
but we didn't want roommates  
We were both working  
so we could afford it

One morning there was a box  
outside the door on the porch  
as I left for the school  
I took it in and locked the door  
heading up the hill

She had gone ahead  
so there was nobody home  
She stayed late  
and I was home first  
The box was gone

I looked around the rooms  
most of them empty  
not even furniture  
but it wasn't there  
Was I crazy, was there a box

Then I remembered the attic  
a pull down ladder  
and a hatch  
I climbed up  
opened the hatch  
turned on the light  
There were boxes

~~

## I Called Home

I said goodbye that morning  
and walked to school  
Dropping into the coffee shop  
I saw her again

How did you get here so fast  
I'm sorry, do I know you  
Come on Chris, don't mess around  
Seriously, who the hell are you

She wasn't kidding  
she didn't know me  
and so I got on the payphone  
and called home

~~



## That Young Man

Sunday morning early  
thinking about another coffee  
thinking about writing  
It's quiet enough  
to start some music  
just to fill the space

I come across some photos  
from forty years ago  
when I was just a man  
and the world was new  
my life before me  
It makes me smile  
to see that young man

I can't complain  
I've had a lot of years  
and more yet to come  
before I get old and sick  
before I start to wish  
for an end to it

~~

## **You Will Know Where I Am**

It doesn't matter that I'm old  
that my hormones are suppressed  
there's nothing wrong with my memories  
of the women of my youth

They drift in and out of my mind  
at the oddest times  
A scent on the street  
the sight of her once more  
(we all have doppelgangers)

I'm there, with her again  
and the brilliant, sad, feelings  
are there as well  
If I suddenly stop on the street  
and close my eyes

If my mouth opens a little...

~~

## This Stranger

I reached behind  
in the crowded room  
to this stranger  
this woman  
who welded her crotch  
to my bejeaned ass

I hadn't looked yet  
but lifted my hand  
high enough  
and slipped it into her pants

She backed off  
just a little  
Far enough  
and popped the button  
on her own jeans  
as she spread her feet  
~~



## **You're Doing Fine**

I asked her once  
if she ever faked it  
and she frowned  
looked me right in the eye  
and said, Why would I?

In my defence  
I was pretty young  
not sure at all  
if I was good enough

She saw that  
and smiled at me  
You're doing fine  
Thank you very much  
for asking

~~



## The Signal

She was so very quiet  
when she came  
so calm  
that I never knew  
until one day I found it

She became ticklish  
So when she would quiet  
and go still  
I would brush my fingers  
along her side

She would jump  
give a little squirm  
and giggle  
That was my signal  
to come, myself

~~

## She Wore Me

The first time  
she stayed with me  
she woke early saying  
I've got a class  
But I've got no clean clothes

I opened my dresser  
and there clean and folded  
she selected underwear  
a t-shirt  
socks  
and in my closet  
a shirt

Did I ever get them back  
I don't know  
and I don't care  
She wore my clothes  
she wore me  
for the rest of her day  
~~

## The Sweater

Always she wore  
one of my sweaters  
the sleeves rolled up  
the neck a bit sloppy

It was white  
a cable knit  
from my Granny  
and I like to think  
she wore it for my smell

But whenever she took it off  
I would put it to my face  
and gather in her smell  
as deeply as I could

~~

## Be Interested in Me

Did I have one of those  
torrid, behind the bleachers  
love affairs in High School

Not so much  
I had a lot of trouble  
believing anyone would be interested  
in me

One day, as I left that place  
for a new town  
a higher education  
I decided on a new mask

One that said, worthy  
that said, fearless  
that said, be interested  
in me

~~



## **I'll Look Worried**

You're gas-lighting me girl  
and it won't work

I have lived long enough  
to doubt my own sanity  
and I've said it all before  
to myself

But please go on  
maybe you'll come up  
with something new  
something I haven't heard before

and if you do  
I promise  
I'll try to look worried

~~



## The Door is Right There

You have to forgive me  
she cried

I don't, you know  
I'm not your father  
and the door is right there

But you forgave me before  
Yes, several times  
but this time was the last

I told you that  
and the door is right there  
~~



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