

Sweaters in August



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Wear what comes to hand. Sometimes that's a sweater in August, sometimes it's cool in the evenings. Write what comes to hand, this is what you will find here. If you like it, you are most welcome.

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Waste land

A single boot
on a rock
torn cattails
the white pith
spilling out
The cruel tyranny
of a dry stream-bed
under a droughted sun
Rusted bed springs
and brush
not cut but crushed
battered and useless
Plastic fencing
mixed and roiled
with stony clay
Red-winged Blackbirds
calling out a territory
where none shall exist
~~

Wet Sweater

Neruda's torn clothing
from which sea water
is dripping
Greets me with sadness
from an electronic reader
While a pale blue sky
and temperate air
pulls me back
to dull reality
of cars moving by
on a grey city street
~~

Mom

Mom
with cute button nose
and curly-headed tots
in the back seats
Provides me with something
to look at
while waiting in the
Starbucks drive-through
~~

Campanilla

Reaching for a candy
I grab instead
a package of small bells
tinkle tinkle
I'm not sure what that means

I think I'd like it to mean something

~~

New Yorker Poems

I am reading
the year's best
New Yorker poems

They are terribly serious
like the magazine I suppose
but just once
can't someone
slip on a banana
~~

The Mogul

They still
after all these years
put children in cages
and think themselves clever

These men
who do what they will
or do God's will
They flatter, lie and pander
and think themselves clever

The more clever they feel
the more bold they become
in their assurance
that they are above the law
because they make the law
because they are the law
and think themselves clever

I wonder
when the mob comes for them
as it always does
when the door is burst open
and the hook inserted
in the heel
if they will still think themselves clever

~~

Do not ask me

Do not ask me
to write political poetry
I have too little time left

Let the young women and men
fight for justice
fight for a say
in their world

It will soon be lost to me
and I will be done
with fighting

And these young women and men?
let them be introduced
and let them fight together
and let them love together

It is past my time
~~

The Red Squirrel

The red squirrel
outside the window
is as bad as my old cat
howling in the basement
just so he can hear himself
howling

Who are you scolding?
What a wonderfully correct word
Scolding
Who are you scolding?
You can hardly know we are here
to disturb your peace
To feed you peanuts

You are as bad
one as the other
with your yowls
and your chitters

You just want a treat
and you shall have one

~~

Cowichan Sweater

She was my first great love
the love that twists you,
that tears you up inside
every moment you are apart

I remember so much about her,
I remember how her neck smelled
just under her jaw

She wore a Cowichan sweater
in the winter
Grey, like her eyes
with a vest over top

I loved her in that sweater
I loved her out of it too
My grandmother made me
a Cowichan sweater
years later
I must have mentioned I liked them
I wore it for a long time
with a vest over top
in the winter.

My daughter has that sweater now
and it looks pretty good on her

~~

Lambs Wool Vest

It was high school
and I liked her well enough
We went out a few times

She always smelled
a bit of lambs wool
it might have been her vest

There was always something
some hint of something
that I never knew about
Something about one of the teachers

It wasn't until some time later
when this teacher got fired
for getting one of the girls pregnant
(Not only stupid, but stupid)
that I thought I understood

By that time
she was dating a guy
from a different school
Perhaps she was more comfortable
further away

~~



She made me a sweater

She made me a sweater
Grey
I didn't know what to say
I mean, a sweater
it is so personal
so
intimate

Yes we were fucking
but we weren't living together
I can't remember
was I living with someone else?

I haven't thought
about that grey sweater
for a very long time
But I have thought
about how badly I treated her
at the end
How cold I was to her
on instructions
of the one I was living with then

In order to please one
you behave like a beast
to another

This should not be
~~

What is it like?

Instead of recapturing ideas
what is it like to think?
Instead of being trapped
in past styles
what is it like to think?

Instead of going from work
to parties
to your home
what is it like to think?
Instead of doing
what the guy beside you
is doing
what is it like to think?

~~

It's you

It terrifies me
that one day
I will no longer see your eyebrows
move up as you see me
your head tilt
as you wonder what I am looking at

You, always you

It terrifies me
that one day
I will no longer see your fingers
curled in front of your mouth
for all the world like a mouse
as you become suddenly shy

What? you say.

It's you, always you

~~

Poor Wretch

Who am I
Poor wretch that I am
to say that I love you
What is it to you
that I say that I love you?

And who am I
to say that you love me
Have I asked you?
Have you ever said?

And yet here you are
beside me in this bed
Is it enough for you
to be with me
to be in a home
to have children with me

Is that love?
What do I know
Poor wretch who was never good
at knowing what love is
what do I know of such things?

~~

Because of you

Ask me not
if I would die for you
for dying is easy
I have done it,
I am already dead

But living
living is hard
knowing what waits
at some corner
in some quirk
of a heartbeat

Living is hard
but I do it
with all my strength
all my will
I live because of you
~~

As you join me

As you join me
long hours after my tired bones
have rested here in the bed
As you join me
my arm goes, by its own will
around your body
my fingers trail
down your stomach
to your sex
and you make a small movement
a small noise
that says "not tonight"

I relax
almost gratefully
back into my sleep
leaving you to your thoughts
and eventually
to your dreams
~~

I wake to your dream

I wake to pressure
as you roll onto me
half asleep
half afire
your hips already searching
for mine
Your lips
close to mine
but you do not kiss me
your eyes are closed
and I wonder
what dream you see

It matters not
I am careful not to wake you
as I rise to meet you
~~

The rain

Through the rain
that drums on the roof
you come to me
and try not to make a sound
but I know you are crying

No rain, no thunder, no roar of waterfall
could hide the sound of your tears

I hold you, gently, as I always hold you
not letting you know
that I hear you crying
I hug
ever so gently
just in case
you want me to hear
~~

The dead poet

The dead poet
sings of his love
to his lovely one
and it is all the more sad
that he will leave her

He will leave her
although he says
he will love her forever

And he does not lie
for leaving
and loving
are not the same thing

Who, at his death
who amongst all his loves
did he think of?

He thought of love

~~

You Defend Me

You defend me
who cannot be defended
You stand before me
facing the world
telling me to stay
telling me I must not go

And when I go
you will keep my heart
in a box beside your bed
and, knowing my heart
is with you
I will go fighting
all the harder because you defend me
~~



Put Your Sweater On

We sat together
in a breakfast nook
facing each other
over eggs and coffee
like an old married couple

We spoke of nothing,
of the weather,
of the leaves in the yard
fled from the tree,
harried by autumn wind

We sat together
like an old married couple
and it was the best part
of a night and a morning
~~

You Left Me

You left me
without telling me you were going
and I waited for you
On the day you returned
your things were ready for you
your bed was ready for you
I was ready for you
and we never spoke again
of why you left, or where you went

But when you walked in the door
again
I watched, I watched everything
your eyes, your feet
I watched your laughter
and your tears
because soon
you would leave again
~~

On the Table

On the table
is an empty bottle of wine
and you are gone

I have looked
at that bottle
for four days
and it does not fill
it remains empty
and you are gone

~~

The Last Breath

In the last breath
that I shall ever take
upon this earth
I will take comfort
that you are still alive

In the last breath
that I shall ever take
do not be there with me
to see the love
go out of my eyes
leaving a corpse
who does not know you

Remember me instead
in the times when you loved me
when we laughed
and talked of you
for you are my life
and you must keep it
close to your heart
do not watch my body die
take my love
and spend it freely

Live, my love
live every day knowing
that I loved you well
remember me
if you must
when I loved you best

~~

To think of dying

it is hard for me
to think of dying
with the dull grey skies
(my favourite)
above the sighing, swaying trees
of my morning coffee

It is hard for me
to think of dying
with my students, recently come
and recently gone
but if I must think of dying,
my dying, or it will be unbearable
when it comes,
and I will not be strong enough
to go.

It is a comforting thought
that my students have recently come
and recently gone

Live forever my students
and I will walk with you
for as long as I can
perhaps you will take my arm
over the last few miles
but when it is time
to let me go
let me go and walk on
never looking back
Walk, assured
that I was content
~~

A Sleepy Time

A sleepy time
makes for sleepy poets
poets of self-indulgence
of small problems
and smaller solutions

Big poetry
come from big disruption
You can tell an age
by its poetry
~~

I want you, I don't want you

Being with you
is like walking
on golden splinters

~~

New Perspective

Today
I parked in a different spot
to drink my coffee
I have a whole different
perspective on life
~~

Testosterone Free

Today I remembered
my legs were hairy
Now they are not
Earlier
I noticed my arms
and then I asked
about my back
(not hairy)

Two months ago
I was going to shave
the moustache and beard
to see what I looked like
but maybe I'll just wait

I think they are thinning
~~

Write for an Hour

Write for an hour
each morning he says
An hour
Thoughts,
in the morning
I'm supposed to have thoughts?

~~

Math

I left
64 years ago
on a rocket
heading for the moon

And now I'm coming home
in a 1943 Packard woodie
at 32 miles an hour

~~

Water Truck

A water truck
goes by
water spraying
out the top
of the tank
Someone filled it
past the mark
and forgot the plug
~~

Three Hours

Three hours
in a bar, I talked to her
but nothing came of it
I wonder
what I could have become
if I'd had
those three hours back
~~

Jealous

Lawnmower roars past
in front of me
We nod at each other
the driver and I
He has a lovely thick moustache
and a great hat

I'm jealous

~~

In a Sweater

Richard Brautigan didn't die
in 1984

He's right here

He's got a job

cutting grass

at the Mall

~~

So Many Days

So many days
I spent looking for someone
so I wouldn't be alone

Now I hide
looking for a bit of quiet

~~

How to Write a Poem

List a bunch of poets
and say they are dead
List another one
and say I didn't like him
much
~~

Not Compatible

She loved to make love
by candle light
I was always afraid
my ass would get burned
while fucking
~~

Still Want to Got It

Young

short shorts

crop top

cute

I want to stop the car

and shout

My fingers still work!

~~

A Book a Month

Nobuyoshi Araki
publishes a book a month
of his photographs
so I have been told
His own Columbia House Book Club
~~

First Stirrings

As I write
I feel the first stirrings
of an old man's bladder

Better get to the thrift store
before I have to run
for home

~~

Too Morbid

Maybe she's right
maybe I'm too morbid
Every time I back up
I think of that old ad
and expect the thump
of a kid on a tricycle

~~

Other People's Experience

Write from your experience
they say
But these days
I have no experiences

I write from
other people's experience
Today it's Brautigan
~~

This is Going to End

This is going to end
badly
I can see that
But there's nothing
I can do about it

I'm horny
~~

Do You Know

"It's 11 o'clock
do you know where
your children are?"
says the television
from across the lake

Hang on a minute
I said
With some bad luck
they might be in bed
with this girl
and me

~~

Again

Not crying

Wailing

Back slams into the wall

head too

Sliding down

to huddle, knees up

Wondering where she is

Again

~~

I've done it again

I've done it again
I've said the wrong thing
and your eyes shut down
and you turn away
hugging yourself
~~

9:53 AM

It's 9:53
and all the thrifters
are pulling into
the parking lot

Some are getting out
to line up
Sad, really
Now it's 9:55
~~

Interesting Life

"What an interesting life
you've had"

She's 20
she thinks my 60 years
happened at three times the speed

~~

9:58AM

It's 9:58
the thrift doors open
two minutes early
and the cars
are still pulling in
~~

(Y)umm

I reach for a drop of soap
that is slowly falling
from the dispenser
And I see her small hand
reaching for my penis
she stretches out a finger
and takes a drop of cum
She always put it on her tongue
and said (y)umm

~~

Do Not Ask Me About Your Mother

Do not ask me about your mother
you have known her
almost as long as I
I missed a few years
but I never asked

Do not tell me about your mother
I've known her
since before you were born
our fights are in code
small gestures signifying hurt
done decades before

Do not ask me about my mother
I knew her barely 20 years
when I left home
and I never went back
I found another woman
to live with and never went back

~~

Bacall Loved Bogart

Bacall loved Bogart
Hepburn loved Tracy
Nin loved Miller
What is it
about those older men?
Birkin loved Gainsborough
Kahlo loved Rivera
Wilson loved Weston

And why do I know this?

~~

The Mad Vac

Brautigan is on the Mad Vac
today he is cleaning the curbs
He just snuck up beside me
from behind
I didn't look
he didn't look
I think we're embarrassed
about the nod yesterday
~~

Going For the Record

The men in my family
tend to die early
while the women
live for a long time

I have several records
More education
More income
Didn't go to war
But the body
says "time's up"

So the doctors
gave me hormones
and turned me
into one of the women
in my family
~~

I Struggle With This

Neruda wrote of the sea
Brautigan wrote of the sea
and a Captain

I was born beside a lake
that you can't see across
but I was never a Captain
although I owned a boat
and you really can't say
"going to lake"

I struggle with this

~~

Famous People

I haven't met very many
Famous People
a couple I suppose
2 legs, 2 arms, one head
each
~~

Dreaming of Your Grey Sweater

I sat drinking coffee
in a restaurant
in St. Johns NFLD
Looking out over the harbour
dreaming of the sea
dreaming of home
and you
~~

I Suppose I Like Crows

I suppose I like crows
well enough
but they've never been ominous
Ravens now
they impress me
because I've been to the West Coast
I bought a Haida Raven ring
for my wife

Crows are local
People have tried
to explain how to tell
a crow from a raven
but it's never stuck
Something about the beak

~~

The Canadian

West of here
is my back set
and the North
is to my left

I feel like these directions
should mean something
to me

~~

Eight Days

I drove and hitched west
across the country
to see you

I didn't say I was coming
and when you opened the door
I could see
that it was ending in tears
and a long hitch back
to the east

~~

For Safety

I sit in my car
reading
drinking coffee
with my seat belt buckled

Watch out for turbulence

~~

I'm Not Your Mom

If I turn and walk away
If I stop reading
your social media posts
If you think I'm ignoring you
I probably am

My lifespan is measured
like yours
in uncertainty
But it could be months

If I have months
I don't want to spend them
trying to explain to you
that the Universe is against you

It is
but you telling me it is
just makes me depressed

Is life unfair?
Life is unfair
to complain is natural
perfectly understandable
I get it
But if I can't fix it
I'd rather you told
someone else

~~

Early to Bed

Yesterday, I went to bed
early
I had had enough of that day

Today
I woke with the sun
and I am trying
two hours later
two coffees later
to reach an accommodation
with today
~~

Maritime

Head thrown back
body arched
The low growl
of a wave over pebbles
driving up the beach
spending itself
and retreating
with a light tinkling

You open your eyes
The sound of a seagull
far away

~~

Summer Tinnitus

Cicada's hum
building until it's all I hear
The promise
of another August day
~~

Tap Tap Tap Tap

I woke to tapping
and prowled the house
finding nothing

Trying to find sleep
I found a thought per tap
instead

~~

Coffee in the Parking Lot

I punch the radio off
and wrench my head around
looking for the source
of a hammer on a pole
and the ear-spikes
of a backing truck

No quiet centre for me
today

~~

FM Radio

No more news
Please
Just leave me
for a little space

Ah
Music, and in French
Let me live in that
for a little space

~~

The Mirror of Nature

Right wheel drive
Japanese van
drifts by
The mirror of reality
said Fox-Talbot
jolting my thoughts
Some sort of re-set?
~~

The Met Hotel

I would be a poor writer
if I didn't have
another pen in my bag
as the last one runs out

Ah, the Met Hotel
in Vancouver
Jodo seminars
Walks by the river
Oatmeal and coffee
two blocks down
Night porter shakes his head
as a bunch of teachers
who should know better
stumble in from the bar
~~

Isla Negra

I cannot read Neruda
without being in his house
rambling, room after room
by the ocean shore
in Isla Negra

Tour guides and signs
commenting on the bottles
in the bar
and the desk
where he wrote,
salvaged off the beach

These are not Neruda
Where is his wife?
Where is his mistress?
Show me his craving
for justice

His bed
is just a bed
for all I imagine
that his poems
were truly written there
and only copied
at the desk downstairs

~~

Cat With Grey Sweater

Ah my grey cat
named Tiger
by small girls
whose real name
was once Scooter

You never liked me much
and, catlike
I mostly ignored you
But here you sit
frail bones
soaking some warmth
from my lap

We have a bet
you and I
which will miss the other
Our morning greeting
"still alive?"

~~

Not My Job

I want to live forever
of course I do
But for what?
To complain?

Let me live a few weeks more
in the summer heat
with joy in my heart

You fix what is broken
and tell me afterward
Break the habit
of a lifetime,
it will soon enough
be your job

Leave me to smile
and say
"great job, thanks for that"
~~

The Walking Stick

Old man
walking spread-footed
on some errand
Too proud for a cane
Remembering his youth
strong, sure-footed

Me, I love my cane
that young, strong fellows
look at, but never see
That weapon in my hand
~~

Sorry, Just Sorry

You are young
just coming into yourself
finding your way
You cannot apologize

I am old
with no ego left
with no need of one
Nothing left to prove
I will apologize

~~

And I Must Go

It is late and I must go
my love
A thousand years
I would stay protected
in your breast
but I must live my life
I must leave you
I must leave this warm bed
and go out into the world
I do not wish to go
but I must leave
for it is light
and I must go

~~

Two Sweaters

I write here
in my shack
and the ink is frozen
in this winter wind
I hold it in my hands
until it has thawed enough
to scribble another few words

~~

Simple Man

Truly, I am sorry
but I cannot write poems
with beautiful metaphor
and surrealist imagery
My poor life is simple
and my thoughts
linear

~~

Suddenly

I read a poem by Vallejo
about his brother
I read it through
and suddenly
as I finish
I am wracked with sobs
~~

We Heard a Wolf Howl

She looked at me for a long time
Turned, walked down the shore
and somewhere
moved into the woods
Shortly after that
we heard a wolf howl

~~

Morning Oatmeal

My eyes move
over the words
but the thoughts
won't give me the space
to read

Thoughts of nothing
of discussions
and arguments
long finished
ever repeated
like morning oatmeal

Far less comfort
but sticking to ribs

~~

Still Sleeping in my Mother's Arms

Still sleeping
in my mother's arms
So many years
since I left her
So many years
since she left me

Still sleeping
in her arms
the quilt
of pretty maids
sun shades
and dresses

The quilt
she sewed for me
~~

Come

How you hold back
not wanting us
to finish
Wanting to ride
that long wave

And I
in my cruelty
lean close to your ear
You shake your head
no, not yet

And I
in my cruelty
breathing into your ear
I whisper a word
~~

Someone Should...

Regale me not
with your cowardice
of complaint
You see the foe
you know him
and you sit still
pointing your finger
Point your spear instead
and regale me
with tales of your deeds
instead

~~

When They Come for Us

When they come for us
to drag us from our bed
into unknown places

As we shout our names
to those who watch
so that someone knows
we have gone

Will we say
I knew this
Will we say
I told them this would happen
and
someone should do something

For this has happened before

Someone has done something
and someone has come for us
because too many said
someone should do something
and thought that,
enough

~~

I Woke to Pain

I woke to pain
my wrist twisted cruelly
and I lashed out
slapping my love
into the wall

I woke, and asked why
"I have to practice"
and she fluttered
her eyelashes, those eyelashes
I can still see in my mind

God that woman frightened me

~~

Icarus

Ah my sun-browned girl
that delicate skin
like an old boot
by summer's end

Are you happy still
with your life
You left me to fly
to get closer to the sun

Are you still smiling
above the clouds
turning your face
to the sun

Still, away from me
and toward the sun
~~

Time to Get Up

Her long sad face
framed by two long hands
like she's looking out the window
on a rainy day.

Mother of my children
she still works to support me
Over 30 years, we've shared a house
but the backwoods bureaucrats
say we're not married
and want more money
to rearrange the deed
to the cabin

Still, better to watch that sleeping face
so cute with her hands
one on each cheek
than to think about the bumpkins

Nope, thinking about the bumpkins
time to get up

~~

When She Said

When she said
"I love you"
She really meant
"you love me"

I love you
I would do anything for you
I would move mountains for you
I will give everything to you

Do you see?
~~

Oh Teach Me, Love

Oh teach me, love
how I will forget you
Teach me
how your face becomes soft
and your words no longer linger
and your body
your arms, your legs
drift further from my mind

Teach me please my love
for I still smell your hair
I still see the flecks
in your eye
I cannot forget
the last thing you said to me
or the first

~~

I Have a Photo of You

I have a photo of you
in a drawer
that holds my socks
and my underwear
It is at the back
under my old passport

It has always been there
since the day I developed it
and I suppose
if I were to go look
it would still be there

The women
who have washed my socks
in the years since you left
have never asked about it
Did you ever see it there
while you tucked my laundry away?

I find it
once in a while
~~

You Stood Naked

You undressed for me
removing layers
until you stood naked
but never
in all our years together
did you ever stand exposed

All I ever got was your skin
All you ever gave me
was the warmth of your body
~~

One Day

One day
the world will not begin again
after the confused worlds
that are my dreams
have finished their lessons

One day I will forget you
I will forget
because the world
will not begin again
and I will forget you

~~

My Persephone

Where you walk
roses grow
and springs appear
they become streams
that water those roses

Is this coincidence?
You tell me it is
you tell me
not to put the fate of the world
on your shoulders

You tell me
the price is too high
You will not live
in Hell for half the year
Just because I adore you

~~

To Love Myself

I must learn
to love myself
you said to me

Can you do that
before you have learned
to love another?

Never mind
you keep learning
to love yourself
and I will keep loving you
~~

You Tell Me

You tell me
not to take your love for granted
that it may not always
be there

Fine
Do we have a price list?
Or am I once again
to guess?

~~

Autospace Blues

Can you be
a concrete poet
in the digital age

Can you imagine
the amazing spaces
that used to exist
in this poem?

~~

Time to Let Go

The stepper I bought
from a thrift store
when I found out
I wasn't going to die
Is dead
I fixed it once
by tearing off the handles
and replacing them with wood
but today
a critical piece
has failed

I don't have a welder
even though
I remember how to weld
from high school

Perhaps it is time
to let this piece of metal go
even though it has accompanied me
on my journey
if not to health
at least to strength

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