

Thirteen Poems

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Alone

A silent knell resounds, rebounds
across the empty city of the night,
stirring the whispers of dead lips,
of hands that once caressed but now lie still,
waiting for a touch that will no longer come.

The smell of roses lingers in the air,
sweet blossoms once whose petals
now lie brown and wrinkled in the jar.

A tattered newspaper scuttles across the street.
A window rattles, old bones knocking at the door.
The ringing of a far-off phone that goes unanswered.
The dying whine of a distant car.

Now quiet once more.

Lava Dreams

Stones are a frozen flowing,
broken from the Mother mountain,
from the stony, stormy molten maw spat out,
spewed and strewn o'er mangled meadows,
lost lodes of wandering neglect,
schemes of future architects,
a rubble of rock castles,
pieces of possible cities,
peeking up between the weeds.

Vineyard Vistas

Windless byways
Vine-rowed
Wine roads
Winding skyways

Twisted arbors
Mystic pastures
Rustic raptures
Vineyard vistas

It was beautiful out last night

It was beautiful out last night,
standing at my back door,
wondering where my cat had gone,
and not blaming him for his absence.

The air was inundated with fog,
lying in light wooly blankets,
covering everything with unnatural stillness.
There wasn't the faintest whisper of a breeze.

Misty beads lay like gossamer,
clinging to the wooden surfaces of the houses,
white with the evanescence of filtered moonlight,
so still there was a delicious feeling of warmth.

I went out nude into the cool dampness,
my bare skin bedewed and bedevilled
by the sensory touch of the enchanted night,
to celebrate a ghost birthday party.

My mother, long dead, was there,
and had made me a giant birthday cake
of cotton candy.

The party was made up of a bevy of young women,
their fair, bare skin twinkling in the watery night,
giggling in the glow of youth and the magic
of infectious madness, a gay party.

We tore off huge pieces of the cotton candy cake
and laughed at the extravagance of it, tasting the sweet wisps
that condensed into nothing in our mouths,
allowing the faint stickiness to cling to our skin.

A frolic of brief fairy interlude,
low murmurs of laughter, strolling languorously
arm in arm through the icy night,
a phantom party disappearing into my dreams.

To Jerry, With Love

I feel as if I'm in a church
as I wait for Jerry to complete his search.
The rustle of pages fills the air
as he looks for a poem that maybe isn't there.

Or perhaps another one will do,
but at last it seems he's found it.
Still, I must wait a minute or two
before he begins to expound it.

He, taking time to clear his throat,
and, starting on a quiet note,
chants with sing-song intonation,
a passionate pastor to his congregation.

His words resound, rebound around
the empty echoes of my mind.
The rising, falling pitch entwines
my failing brain with metronomic lines.

What did he say? I ask, but then forget,
the meaning lost, to my regret,
between the rhythms of the rhyme, I guess -
a victim of his alternating stress.

Life is sweet

Life is sweet
since you came walking down my street.
It's been great
that we could easily relate.
It's been grand
that you could really understand.
You're so rare,
beyond compare.
I walk on air.

Life is neat
since you swept me off my feet.
Life is good
like I always thought it should.
I don't despair
now I know that you are there,
that you care
just for me.
I am free.

Old Age

In old age we become
museums of our past lives,
buildings walking around on stilts,
eyes looking out of empty rooms
filled with dusty junk,

Pictures of pompous papas on the walls
waxed apple faces of ancient aunts
dried flowers of unsuccessful love affairs
written in the forgotten language of youth.

Old victrolas fill the air,
tinkling melodies of childhood dreams,
remembering when life was fair.

One day in antique Italy

One day in antique Italy,
while Eve was swimming in the sea
she was bitten in the heel
by a smitten Italian eel.

She dismissed it as trite,
no more than a love bite,
an amorous foray of errant foreplay,
explaining "That's a moray."

Whimsy

This afternoon I shall sleep
while I listen to the laughter of maidens
picking flowers from the field
to place in their hair as they smile
at the sun, glad to be alive
and considered beautiful by young men
who swim rivers and scale mountains
in strange countries where they do not belong.

Vortex

All around is sound -
The tumult of the world going round.
In this cyclone's silent center
Where nobody else may enter
Hidden in this hurricane's eye
The two of us in safety lie
Lost in each other, you and I.

On The Road

On the road.
Heavy load on my backpack,
feet makin' tracks,
goin' from here to there,
not knowin' where and who gives a damn?

Catchin' a ride,
standin' by the side of the road like a toad.
Cussin' , just disgusted
breathin' the dust of folks passin' me by.
Where to, Sam?

Sometimes I go fast and sometimes slow.
Meet folks I don't wanna know.
Guess it's life - people I might like
won't pick me up - 'fraid of a stick-up.
Sorry, Joe.

Eighty miles an hour three hundred horsepower,
jerky snot-nose kid, back-talk, hot rock, holes in his socks,
dreadlocks or punk hair, doesn't care.
Where you from, man?

Antique bible hustler, mean old cuss.
Thin stringy hair slicked back over bald head underfed,
drivin' a beat-up old Plymouth straight six, never been fixed
high squeaky voice, speakin' in a whisper,
Where to, Mister?

Old rodeo cowboy, loudly says howdy,
drivin' a dusty old Cadillac, horse trailer in the back,
leather face, teeth a disgrace, gnarled hands
rollin' a home-made from a tobacco sack,
Goin' my way, pardner?

Sometimes it rains.
No window panes to protect my neck when it's wet.
Got thick shoes to protect my toes when the wind blows,
so what the heck!

On the road.
Pissin' in the wind with no commode.
My way's the highway, footsteps in the dust.
Maybe it's Reno or bust!

Star Things

I ponder, as I gaze in awe
upon the billion beasts that wing
and swim and crawl and claw
across the trackless sands of time forgot,
or deep beneath the windy waves
of ancient oceans, or upon the sunlit rocks
of frozen mountain tops -
the intricate and subtle things
which ennoble every niche and nook,
and, through their very being,
write a book of life
that dazzles every eye
and transcends every intellect
which seeks to understand it.

Yet stranger still must be
the wondrous creatures
we shall never see,
which dwell upon the planets
that circle round a farther star,
beyond the endless wastes
of interstellar space -
phantasmic forms of life beyond
our imagining or ken
which surely, I persist,
must, by the sheer immensity
and vastness of our universe,
exist.

No Plain Path Traverses

I am going to him there
in that empty land beyond the mountains.
He has come for me; he is waiting.
I glimpsed him from afar,
when I rested,
a dot upon my retina,
an old stick figure, lone,
resting upon a cold stone.

I heard him calling long ago,
back in the green times,
when all was fresh and new,
but his voice reached me
only seldom in my stormy sleep,
as deep in distant dreams
when one has wandered too far afield,
lured by phantom sirens
to seek the true light.

I knew him in the first place.
I remember his eyes, like the father, his face,
radiant and at one with all and great sadness
upon the woe of the world,
and I knew him as I knew
the mother from whom I was torn,
like the face of an emperor
upon a worn and ancient coin.

I forgot him in the otherness,
in the diurnal motion of the planet,
amid the din of danger and caprice,
and the heat of bodies upon bodies,
entwining and seeding,
fulfilling the will of Adam,
God of the farmers,
God of the gold-glutted state of Empire,
God of Mammon.

He sent for me,
from that chill spring of the winter of my birth,
across the frozen towers
of the twisted cities of my past,
from that empty land beyond the mountains,
where there is no river,
and nothing grows but the cold,
and no plain path traverses.