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TAKE IT WITH YOU
" POEMS

by
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LOVE SONG

Come embrace me,
Your damp cheek against my careless chest.
I am happy with these things,
The indifference of others, two butterflies, our survival.

Time's a casual rape;
We're fucked, but not bruised.
Screaming brings no rescue:
Don't aggravate the man; he'll kill us.

Uncertainty is graceless;
Can't help dandelions.
Let it go; that's what speckled wings are for.

This is a permit for the present;
Take it with you.
It proves I live.

DAVID, ON HEARING OF THE DEATH OF SAUL

So now we march, old men to watch us all,
 With drum and horn, how bitter is the call
 We hear. This way--

these as burnt offering

calves and rams

I wished it not, but Saul

If you were here to understand your fall
 Is my undoing. They say Jonathan
 Is there with you, on the walls of Beth-Shan.
 I mourn him more--my friend.

bits of glass and worthless beads

that glitter in the hand

Once, at Raman

We had a code of arrows; it was his plan
 To show me your intent. That day we swore
 Our troth, fidelity, and he was more
 Brother than friend.

a sacrifice to death

from these my subjects now

And envy Saul, your war

Against me, was you madness at Endor,
 When rage, blind rage, the manic desert vice
 Seized hold, my life to be your sacrifice.
 The chase, you sought to fight--

death is not an offering

the giver is unknown

I gave you twice

Your life, and looked for love, found avarice.

Now, Saul, I am the one who wears the crown,

And cunning surrounds me like a jeweled gown.

The tribes await below--

but knowing, hides beneath

embroidered robes

I must go down

And speak honeyed words of a dead king's recknown.

On March 27, 1886 the Apache chiefs Nachite, Catle, Chihuahua, and Goyathalay surrendered to General Crook at San Bernadino Springs, Mexico. That night, rather than return to the reservation, they scattered into the mountains.

GOYATHALAY SPEAKS IN COUNCIL

"Apaches. Listen, hear Goyathalay.

Today we talked with Crook. He said there will
Be food at Bowie, that we must live there.

But listen, once we were as wind at night,

The mountain spirits gave us food. Why should

We eat the beef at Bowie. Listen, hear

Goyathalay. I will not go to Bowie;

There is no honor there. At Bowie they

Will hang us all, or worse, with whiskey drive

Us mad and take our women to the fort

And have them. Listen, hear me speak. I want

This day buried. We cannot live in shame.

I will not go to Bowie. I am old.

The eagle's shadow falls to dust in this

Apache village. My brothers, the sun

Is warm upon the mountains. We must go."

LONE DOG'S DIARY

Lone Dog was a Sioux Indian
Who kept a journal
By drawing pictures on a buffalo hide
One each year

Not much is known
About Lone Dog except
He lived a long time (many pictures)
And according to his journal
Survived the pox twice
And consumption once
Before succumbing to the Jesuits

Somewhere near the middle of this journal
Is a series of drawings
Pictured are a saddled horse
A wooden fort a rifle
Growing corn and a running man
Lone Dog's painless history of the Indian Wars

Lessons to be learned from Lone Dog
Jesuits are deadlier than smallpox
You can't grow corn at gunpoint
No matter what you do ever
Remember the Indian Wars

DAWN, ADOBE BUILDING, PIMA RESERVATION

The woman has found a spark
In the ashes of last night's fire
She teases it with twigs
But they will not burn
There will be no fire even though
A morning fire is good to have

Her movements have awakened her man
He watches her in the dim light
She squats by the fireplace
Rocking softly on her heels

The horse outside is very young
And whinnies playfully
At the tickle of light in the morning sky

THE OJIBWA WOMEN GATHER RICE

It is the time
Of the coming
Of the Northern birds

The men are making arrows
Some are hunting

The stalks have many grains
The grains are very fat
We gather them into our canoe

There will be enough for winter

THE OLD ONES

The old ones
Who know such things
Say first frost is near
And soon after
The migration of birds

In pairs
By browning grass
They talk of seasons
Using supposed secrets
Nature gives to age

We scoff in passing

A breeze from the north
Ruffles the leaves in gentle lust

A paper cup dances
With idle cunning near a curb

MID MORNING LEAVES

Here in the hardwoods
The leaves are falling all around me
The squirrels are becoming anxious
An acorn falls
A squirrel chatters
Today I am happy
I whistle these lines
And am pleasingly unsettled
Like kicked leaves on a frosty morning

WALKING IN OCTOBER

I walk on a sunny fall day
A large pebble lonely on the street
Is kicked along
Farther on
 a woman sweeps away leaves
 exposing to the sun
 small water from yesterday's storm
The woman eyes me strangely
As if wishing she could sweep me
Clean and dry
I walk on
Through a window I hear Wagner playing
I see a German forest
And think of Christ ascending

SITTING IN AN OAK GROVE

for J. W.

The leaves have fallen
Dry and brittle as hope
The squirrels run through them noisily
Not caring in this late season
What sound they make
One of them is standing up
Holding a huge oak leaf in his paws
By squinting my eyes
I can see him as a stoop-shouldered man
I think of you
Touching leaves in Ohio

COME WALK WITH ME

1. Come walk with me

And see the day, dark

As the color of Stalin's eyes.

2. We have come this far

Only to find the chill

Inescapable.

We can enjoy the ferocity

Of the wet winter;

Don't bother to look

For the driven snow

We might have been as pure as.

Shall we go on?

3. We can go back inside

And leave our muddied boots

Complacent in the hall.

NOVEMBER SONG

I

The mist is fine, it hangs and grieves;
It gathers on the trees like tears.
November lovely moves the leaves,
We thank ourselves for walking here.

II

Once, while the nuns watched,
I made black paper clothes;
Pasted them on the moon-faced
Pilgrims I had drawn.

III

The round pumpkins
Are carved with the surety
Of butcher's knives; they watch
The misshapen ones
Rotting in the fields.

IV

Thousands of Chevies
Drive up to the cornfields of America;
The hunters shoot the cornfields,
Shoot the Chevies, shoot each other,
Often as not
Shoot bright plumed birds.

V

The watchers watch
The starlings gather in the trees.
Some watchers report the flocking.
Some make jokes.
Some think the birds are ravens.
The starlings watch the watchers.

VI

It grows colder.
Hunched, we walk the streets
In woolen anonymity.
We are as invisible
As the statues in the cities of America.

VII

The mist is fine, it hangs and grieves;
 It gathers on the trees like tears.
 November lovely moves the leaves,
 We thank ourselves for walking here.

POEM FOR THE OTHERS

I

A trapped sea died.
The shellfish sank, compressed,
Became stone.

Then time, a glacier
Routed waters, channels,
And seams of stone.

In 1910, a sharpie from the east
Built a cement plant in a hollow
To be near the stone;
And as an afterthought,
Downstream on the little creek
Made West Winfield, Pennsylvania.

II

By 1912 my grandfather, old Paul,
Had left his brothers cropping a rocky farm,
Started working in the plant.
He was, as I have heard many times,
Fourteen years old.

In time
He met a girl from the next county,
Kate, what eyes she had!
Green as winter wheat in March.
For her eyes as much as anything,
He married her; then brought her
To West Winfield, Pennsylvania.

III

There is a curiosity of time.
Kate stands young and supple in a photograph
As dry and gray
As the dust on her grave.

For the dust from the plant
Has always been cruel
To West Winfield, Pennsylvania.

Kate followed into death
Two of her children,
Uncles I have never seen;
They died of pneumonia, or consumption,
Or the Irish Plague.

It was the dust that killed them,
Killed Kate,

And last year in December
Even though she was far away
Killed my mother.

IV

My father and his brothers,
My mother's brothers,
And brothers-in-law from both sides,
Their children, my cousins,
They work in the plant.

When they meet me
They watch me with dust reddened eyes
And say,
 How lucky you are.

They don't mean it;
They wonder why I left
And took up my strange ways.

V

I should answer them.
I should tell them the truth.
I should look at them clear eyed
I should say
 It is killing me.

THE UNIVERSAL ASPHALT PAVING COMPANY

Take the tar
That trapped
Dinosaurs
Mix it with stone
That has
Been broken
Chipped and washed

Take men with
red arms
and shovels
Put them on great
Machines
That scream be-
tween red flags

Cover dirt
and grass
with black stuff
The animals laugh
at you
They aren't your
Stockholders

SCOUNDREL

Red: Today

Properly mustached

I was beset by electric eagles

On Market Street

White: A copper

Holding his stick like a Pharisee

Parted the crowd

And pulled the plug

Blue: The people were dismayed

As the buildings slowly crumbled

And the eagles flew away

ELEVEN O'CLOCK NEWS REPORT

Last week

in the Capital

an epic poet

was found

starving

in the streets

In his possession

was a four volume Gibbon's

decline and fall

gilt edged edition

and a Shakespeare's

one volume complete

Gibbon he said

contained minimum

daily requirements

but was often bland

the gilt however

added some flavor

Shakespeare

he added

was stringy

and tough

but when boiled

made a tasty gruel

He stayed

under medical care

for two days

before he escaped

by impersonating

a novelist

He was later

stoned to death

on the Hill

by an angry mob

of lyric poets

and short story writers

LOST IN A RESIDENTIAL SECTION

The people on this Monday morning street
Pack rat their trash out to the curb;
They act as if, if they didn't put it there
The big gray garbage truck would
Come crashing in to get it and catch
Them living better electrically.

I know where I've got to get to and
I can get to where I've got to get to
Sooner, or later,
By taking three right turns.

In the driveway of one old house
Three old brown dogs are lying in the dust.

STREET MURAL IN CHICAGO

These men stare down
With icebergs on their faces
Where shadows should be.
Their eyes drill the heart of the Republic.
Stick men wave their arms
In the background of buildings.
An orator with upraised arm
Stands on steps that look like cities.
The bricks of course
Add some force.
And that is all
Of a painted wall.

THREE CITIES

Palermo

Morning: From the monastery I can see
The old section of the city
Still crumbled and twisted
From the bombs.

Afternoon: Swimming in the bay
I think
Unexpectedly
Of the war.

Evening: I am nervous
A boy tries to sell me
A switchblade.

Naples

Morning: A man tries to sell me
A machine gun
But Laughingly (by then)
I could ask for his sister.

Afternoon: I become drunk
In a wine stall
For sixty-seven cents.

Evening: A girl I met cried
When I left even though
I never gave her anything.

La Spezia

Morning: Perversely

I buy a woman because
She has hair on her legs.

Afternoon: In a restaurant

I become savagely drunk
And puke on her dress.

Evening: At the train station

A German spits intentionally
On my shoe.

THREE MONTHS

June: Driving through Virginia

Poisoned two centuries ago
The wolves are still howling in the Appalachians.
Near Roanoke, the moon traps a limestone quarry
Between two hills;
The stone was discovered by the Continental Army
That lies buried farther north.
Listen the wolves goddamn their graves.

July: Kill Devil Hills, N.C.

Five hundred yards offshore
The parachute flares drift gently down to sea.
At midnight, the lost swimmer
Was presumed dead. Nevertheless,
The flares keep falling;
Tomorrow is Independence Day.

August: The return

The expressway has been difficult,
But finally, we are surrendered to a side street;
Our way is through the drawn up ranks of buildings,
Past half lots of new construction;
The old houses have been razed.

VISIT

It's so good to see you
Have some rhubarb pie
How have you been feeling?
Are you nearly finished?
Aunt Mabel is expecting
Her boy Joe is the one
More coffee?
You to visit her
With the goiter
Aunt Mary your pie crust is just
He's the one who exposes
It's so nice having you
As flaky as
His privates in the library
It's no wonder his brother Henry
It ever was. Blood tells.
Killed himself in the cellar.
They say the note was
Well she wouldn't let anyone read it
Two pages long and spattered
You won't believe this but
With blood
He blew his head off

There's more to that story

Every family

Than meets the eye

Has its strange one

They look at me and how their eyes

Are like the blown out ends of shotgun shells

SUMMER FLOOD

I

The young girls are swimming in the creek;
Their bodies flashed in dark water
Are eclipsed by shadows of trees.
How like a herdsman is the heat
When girls go gently down by water.
The creek is filled with the prophecy of dog days;
Tomorrow it may rain.

II

There are strangers in the flood plain,
Downstream, far from us.
They work on the levees of the impotent river,
The passionless river that gropes at their town.
News of our storm is of interest to them.

III

We bathe in circuitous waters;
We do nothing but endure.
But O to find a small canoe,
Escape the rains,
Float in wonder through the cottonwoods.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, V. A. HOSPITAL

For most, it is a respite from the tests.

The flesh rests.

There are no probes, or proddings,

Indelicacies concerning failures of the body.

They shuffle guiltily along the corridors

As if by being there they had become unmanned.

Others, helpless and embarrassed in their beds

Suffer nakedly as they are washed;

Though the other patients, looking on,

Are as discreet as General Washington

Peering through the bushes

To watch the Hessians cross the ford.

As the Hessians, dour dutch,

Stop and look downstream two hundred years

Where the Republic is splashing

In the dark and swirling water.



LOVE SONG FOR THE PORNOGRAPHER'S MODEL

Just you, wrapped in cellophane,
Four by five colored glossies,
Assorted poses, eight dollars the dozen.
You're on your back
So the breasts won't sag.
You have dirty feet.
You are a woman.

Would you be sensual?

Kiss a bat's wing.

Would you love me?

Kiss it.

Can you love me?

Damn you.

POEM

I walk
down the lane
to get the mail
a grasshopper
motors coolly through the air

There is no mail

I look
at the red porch swing
and smile
even if there were no men
there would still be poems

KEEPING MY PLACE RESPECTABLE

I cut the grass today
Displacing many ants
They were lost in new terrain

Later I swept the porch
And tumbled a fat brown spider
down the steps

While trimming the hedge
I found a robin's egg
broken
On the ground

LIBRARY WORK

Someone takes inventory in the next room

The sound comforts me

Occasionally a breeze

Comes through the window

Like the breath of a young girl

warm

and sweet as blossoms

The inventory goes well

Nothing is missing but my innocence

MINUET

After twisting by the double hairpin turn
On the road to Bristol, we come suddenly upon
A steep hillside meadow, and in it,
A sorrel horse and a young collie
Caught at play.
They trot daintily side by side,
Each nipping at the space
Around the other's body.
Their feet are like guitar picks
Playing the grass.
If I were a field of spring clover
They might dance on me; but
I am only a man, unable to tell you
Which is the gentler beast.

BLACK CAT POEM

1. Listen.

My downstairs neighbor's black cat
Questioned-marked on the street
Punctuated by a hit and run.

2. There was no blood.

I stopped the traffic
And picked him up,
A bag of broken glass.

3. You think I'm humane?

Listen you;
Don't you ever lie broken legged on the street
And cry to me for help.

WHY THE INNOCENT MUST SUFFER

I. Her parents believed everything,
Even childhood, should be earned;
Through all of her twelve years
She paid her way with chores and errands.

One day as she went to fetch the mail
She was knocked senseless and carried
To a nearby farmer's field where
Only the birds could watch.

After, twice raped and beaten,
She watched the swallows swoop for prey
While her broken bird hands
Fluttered on her split lips.

II. This is an unpleasant business,
For all my two-bit murmurings
I don't love that girl;
I'm raping her with words.

Damn you, reader, as I am damned,
Curse us both for thinking

If she had died

This would have been a stronger poem

SESTINA

Ends

Forbodings

Never

Are;

But

Beginnings.

Beginnings,

Ends.

But

Forbodings

Are.

Never,

Never,

Beginnings

Are

Ends.

Forbodings.

But.

But

Never

Forbodings

Beginnings

Ends

Are.

Are

But

Ends,

Never

Beginnings,

Forbodings?

Forbodings

Are

Beginnings;

But

Never

Ends.

Are never

But beginnings'

Ends, forbodings?