

## OCTOPI

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The composition of the poem below was governed by one major and a couple minor lexical constraints. Can you discover the rules behind it?

### Octopi

Now I fall, a tired suburban in liquid under the trees  
Drifting alongside forests simmering red in the twilight over Europe.  
So scream with the old mischief, ask me another conundrum  
About bitterness of possible fortunes near a landscape Italian.  
A little happiness may sometimes intervene but usually fades.  
A missionary cries, striving to understand worthless, tedious life.  
Monotony's lost amid ocean movements as the bewildered sailors hesitate.  
I become salt, submerging people in dazzling oceans of enshrouded unbelief.  
Christmas ornaments conspire.  
Beauty is, somewhat inevitably now, both  
Feelings of faith and eyes of rationalism.

Blinded delusional horses stumble;  
Facetious nonsense is a dark, secluded tabernacle.  
Comfort's buried: bleed a bit as antidote. Is one recovering?  
Verily, octopi sing:  
Burning choristers accompany the mournful song.  
Don't ponder constantly – existence waits,  
Among sunseting tones, bringing it to you.  
A wedding of birds and boars compounds with disloyalty,  
Devising contemporary treasons.  
This morning's displeasure: a badger's life ended,  
Frightened to roadkill when a procession of hearses approached.  
I whispered the profound truth of symmetrical restraints:  
Untie every chain, sacrifice belief, free each beggar,  
Go to everybody with peaceful, beautiful hands.

From stairways the multitudes fly downward,  
A pointless heaven-like hell to conceive.  
Bondaged, a tourniquet-enwrapped servant walks beside Dover's beach;  
Creatures cut the skin deep within a so-infinite void.  
Fragile trees gently sway, buffeted by the odd paradox,  
Colorful grassy meadows describe sin.  
I pursue truth as heaven's kaleidoscope constructs a slideshow:  
"Consistent Universes: A Myth-Taken Notion"  
This ethereal bliss points toward emptiness, to the hour  
Whence supertime has fled. Creation offers a motionless, cold world.  
Look now to crimes around city boroughs  
To a new way, forgiving all thirty complaints.

Rejoice as queens distribute to poor commoners,  
A lamp illuminating faintly the corners of each house.  
Imperial sultans annihilate themselves inside palace fortresses;  
Within ice a vine's quiet creeping imitates a classic tale.  
Everyone realizes a heart is overdosing somewhere  
As porcupinal emissions submit to medicine.  
So whereupon is color fled? Everywhere, elsewhere.  
A journal: a life's odd purple inks and shabby volumes,  
Ignorant scribbles of minor hardships.  
Portfolios and crates discourage betterment,  
Considering the way presidents filed and squandered truth.  
Have swinging treetops my bootstraps? Have bushes cherry kites?  
No, I see blossoms.

Make a fire across spreading waves:  
A forgotten play, a dance transferred,  
Paving blackstone hillsides with the old bloodlines.  
Shoes encased in travels congregate, not moving,  
While funeral-feast escapades waste sentiment.  
I disappear under the horrifying nightmare in a measured manner,  
Brightening candles set phantoms a-scuttling off my window,  
Materialism battles knowledge. Why?  
A xylophone's bells crystallize thoughts about salt monsters:  
Childhood's terrors live deep inside, in the closets,  
Imaginary incidents simmer in Samson's head.  
Nighttime dream beside streams and waves:  
A scouring scorpion steps through.  
Watch me. Sustain me.

Your serenity resembles nightingales on girders, deathless and tranquil.  
I retrieve the farsighted pharmacist's tasteless pill,  
Garnering disconcerted approvals.  
Amputate the old hearts, implant the new hearts  
In your head, tarnishing plates under silver.  
Please take the headstrong shilling,  
Please compensate me a bit alongside kind strangers.  
Don't impart our syndromes again to my kids.  
Sodium's the element a difficult experience demands,  
Tenderness is a theorem disproven entirely.  
Repeat childhood's senseless song,  
Say goodbye/hallelujah to parable, romance, headstones.  
Smash the whirlwind to a silence, a silence bereft of heartache.  
Now, a silence.

Dreams release songs, so hum freedom's song.  
Squash insects that disquiet a luncheon food spread,  
Silence velvet-ridden screaming.  
Hear springtime birds, a day of burlesqued buttercups.  
Bejewelled maids wander randomly,  
Increasingly aimless (a love lyric is better for tears).  
Earth's sauntering traveler is feeding, feeding everyone agony,  
Feeding himself a bad diet of safaris among nuclear changes.  
Pinpoint notebooks whilst cuttlefish establish a pattern;

The London Eye watches.  
A fishing mongoose springs as a tuna passes archways from hell,  
Forgivable frailties forgetting.  
Transforming my well-appointed dream not long off,  
Discordant I sing.

Echoes: shoes upon ambulance floor, sickness above the ceiling.  
A confidante feels vibrations, ignores durations.  
As in evening footfalls, undead humanity  
Commences to float westward, televised to the world.  
With no compassion I speculate regarding these events,  
Undermining my significance, muttering:  
Dependence is a whimsical hatred,  
Turbulence enlarges others' pain,  
Conscience may fail like a bludgeon.  
A wind's streaming launches a cat across my landscape,  
Falling, falling down, falling, falling.  
I see worshipers embracing weathered stones,  
Recounting ideas I suddenly retrace:  
Collective courage is everlasting, its core  
Blameless, bloodless, guiltless, ceaseless, limitless, boundless.

## A POEM

MARTIN GARDNER  
Norman, Oklahoma

This is an excerpt from Gardner's 1969 book *Never Make Fun Of A Turtle, My Son* (Simon and Schuster, illustrated by John Alcorn).

## Medicine

Sit up, my Rose, it's nearly four,  
Time for medicine once more.

It won't do any good to whine  
And say it smells like turpentine.

*Of course* it doesn't taste as good  
As chocolate cake or cookies would,

But neither does it taste as bad  
As medicine you might have had.

So please — don't shake your head and frown.  
Just grab your nose and gulp it down!