



desiring to touch sky

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Old Man Snoring

Don't want to do this day,
want to sleep it away,
want to recover from
wanting too much, and
wanting too little, and
saving my life for
a rainy day.

Don't want to hurt this way,
want to hide pain away,
want to recover the sofa that's
hiding the million dollars, and
hiding the time bomb, and
saving dropped candy for
a rainy day.

Don't want to have my say,
want to write it away,
want to recover old territory:
drawing shiny new maps, and
drawing ancient rivers, old dirt roads,
weather-beaten houses, torn-up tracks,
with brand-new coloured pencils:
something to do on
a rainy day.

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life,
in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month,
the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were
opened.
And the rain was upon the earth
forty days and forty nights.*

Stages

"It's just a stage I'm going through,"
shouts the rock star as the stage splin
ters beneath his feet.

That's a joke I tell silent audiences,
stern people waiting for the fun to begin.
I tell it to remind myself that I'm
setting myself up for a fall, and
almost certainly,
a l o n g , c o l d w i n t e r .

"The way you play, you should be on the stage,"
my guitar hero tells me.
"There's a stage leaving town in an hour."

Shivering on the platform,
I wait for the stage to arrive.
I've been through so many of these towns that
I already know every stranger I will ever meet.

Homeless Man, Queen Street West

Homeless man, Queen Street West,
asleep,
his back against a wall
on a bone-chilling day before Christmas.
His arms wrapped around the dog sleeping in his lap,
his face in its fur.

Walk Ing on Snow

(It's not really walking,
this wild movement
over salt-like snow
and chunks of frozen slush
thrown onto the sidewalk by
sporadic plows.)

It is more like
stumb
ling
in and
out of
potholes filled
with quick
sand,
wonder
ing if
I will ever
get
home.

Disquiet

The stairs,
they creak;
I cannot
tiptoe
forever.

Why do I shush my feet?
Why do I breathe with tightened chest
as if my breath is a life-and-death
secret?
Why do I hide my body in dark corners?

(Every day I dismantle my emotions:
unwanted furniture to be
banished to the basement.)

The stairs,
they creak;
I cannot
tiptoe
forever.

Uncommon Senses

I have seen these three impossibilities:
a castle of sand, a paper star, and once, in a drop of water,
a microscopic monster.
I have heard strummed strings ring loud and clear
for a perfect moment.
I have felt surprised by a friendly hug
from a blue-haired girl.
I have smelled
earthworms, windfall, firepits, and rainwater.
I have tasted the creatures
that crawl the bottom of the ocean.

I have seen these three sadnesses
written on your expressionless face:
loving too much,
and caring too little,
and still waiting for love to find you.
I have heard your spirit weep silently.
I have felt you leave a place not yet reached.
I have smelled your fear;
I have tasted your defeat.

I have seen these three things make you smile:
a sleepy dog, a serious child, and endless blue sky.
I have heard you heal hearts with your words.
I have felt you greet me with a poke in the arm.
I have smelled your jelly bean breath.
I have tasted your enthusiastic happiness.

How Can I Help?

I know something is bothering you.
I hear it in your tone,
see it on your face,
feel it drift towards me like a winter draft.

You have the weight of the
PAST
PRESENT
FUTURE
on your shoulders.

I am not Atlas,
don't even know where I am most of the time.
You once told me what to do
in a situation like this,
but I forget what you said.

So I'll listen to you talk in circles,
whatever good that'll do.

Horizon

Sailing alone, your vision so obscured by painful tears,
you can't see what's on your horizon.
Is that ship flying the lion rampant or
bleached skull and bones?
You can't tell, so
keep your distance until
your breath slows,
your head clears
your vision returns.

Camping alone, so exhausted by the desert heat,
you can't see what's on your horizon.
Is that the Valley of Dust or
the City of Shining Walls?
You can't tell, so
rest awhile at this sweet-smelling oasis
until you dream a telling dream.

And on your horizon sails a prince, so
do not listen to the pirate's alluring love-song.
And on your route thrives a city majestic, so
do not gaze into the beguiling dust storm.
And in your spirit lives noble ambition, so
do not let lesser desires deceive you.
And in your heart live ancient words, so
do not let this new moon hurry you.

Difficult Letter

The reason that I did not write back right away
is that your last letter was kind of awkward to read.

I had to soak it in water warmed by a distant sun
and dry it by frozen moonlight.

You try defrosting moonlight at three in the morning!

Friends in Days

You and your
state-of-the-art biometrics,
and that vast, quiet no man's land,
and those silently circling security drones.

But most of all,
the tall, thin wall
keeping out the sight
of bright blue (wild yonder) sky.

You haven't seen your friends in days!

Unbeknownst
or
Zeppelin Girl

Flying high above me,
you seemed so alive and free.
You flew in the clear air;
I swam in envy.

Unbeknownst to me,
you were flying
a doomed airship.

(Feel free to hate those last nine words.

I do.

They are ineffectual and gutless.

Only an agonized
scream

can express my

retrospective

panic and

terror and

shame at

opening my eyes

just in time

to see you

fall.)

*

Knowing that you were born to fly
only by holding angelic hands,
my heart broke to see
your burning zeppelin
fall from the weeping sky.

Knowing that you were born to reply
to human pain with heavenly song,

my heart broke to see

you *burn* and

f

a

l

l

and *cry*.

*

Unbeknownst to me,

as the zeppelin fell,
a band of angels rose as one.

Unbeknownst to me,
they carried you to the ground,
a band of angels singing as one.

Unbeknownst to me,
a band of angels was watching over you
all along.

Envy

I want what you **have**.

Your face glows
as you talk about your
turbulent relationship.
The depth
(pain and joy)
of it all
is evident in your every word,
inhalation,
and
exhalation.

I am secretly, silently jealous,
watching you struggle
with such energy.
I would be able to handle
neither the heartache
nor the joy
but I yearn for the exuberance
dancing through your veins, brain.
How can you live with a fresh bandage necessary
every single day?

(I sit here counting my dreams.)

Later

I hurt more right now than I did
when you **cut** me two days ago.

But sunlight
is beginning to
heal my wounds.
Kind hands on my
shoulders begin to
heal my heart.

The Mother Ship

You are the mother ship,
I am the rowboat boy.
I leave the ship each day
to roam the ocean blue.
Each evening I return
to the light and warmth of you.

On my rowboat are
two small plaques
I took from your shipshape cabins.
One I welded to my anchor:
"Planning is half the battle."
One I imbedded in my rowboat's prow:
"Look around you
to see what other people need."

And everywhere that I roam,
these two plaques hold true.
(For I took them from the mother ship,
that mother ship is you.)

Never-Un

I have met

the Never-Un Man,

I have met

who lingers

the Never-Un Man,

the Never-Un Man.

the Never-Un Man,

somewhere near.

You leave a compliment never unsaid,
even to the perfume counter girls who scare me.
You stride, dark-coated, and deliver
your compliments, unafraid.

You leave a poem never ungiven,
even to strangers who have inspired you with their
vibrant ordinariness.
You hand them scraps of paper, saying,
"Take this piece of me, this piece of you."

You leave a birthday never unremembered,
even birthdays of professors who, in theory,
construct our meta-narratives.

As mighty as Atlas,
you carry through,
never minding how heavy through is.

I have met

who lingers

the Never-Un Man,

somewhere near.

Resolve

It's high time I resolved
the umteen guerrilla wars
raging like wildfire
deep inside my head.

I've been crawling
belly-to-ground for
far too long:
trouble wouldn't find me if I just
kept on moving.

But now, covered in mud and eating dirt,
I've forgotten how to face
any one, any thing, any more.

*The Yondermen,
steady, solid, men,
and dark-coated,
would draw
loaded resolvers from well-worn holsters.*

*Though besieged,
tall would they stand,
praying for Kingdom Come
with blazing guns.*

Time I stood on a hill and let
come-what-may
come for me.

Would-Be

1. The Fear and the Terror

The wild-eyed young man
scribbling in his notebook
is a would-be poet.

Poetical thoughts are falling on him
like fish from the sky.

He is scared that he will not be able to catch them all;
he is terrified that the sky will never rain fish again.

2. Fear Not

Christ said,
“Cast the net on the right side of the ship,
and ye shall find.”

Would-Be did.

And his notebook was
filled to
overflowing:

Abuzz

I cannot sleep because
my mind is *abuzz*

like a fly

dashing itself

against a window,

buzzing,

*I wrote a poem, I wrote a poem,
I know it's a **real** poem,
I wrote a **poem!***

Yonderman

Leonard Yonderman,
being of sound mind,
and desiring to touch sky,
often launches

himself

from planes,
precipices
and piers
into the
wild
blue
something.

Kristi's Daydream

Kristi Yamaguchi,
Olympic figure skating champion,
stands at the sidelines of the final game
of the 2006 Stanley Cup,
watching her husband,
Bret Hedican,
defenseman for the Carolina Hurricanes,
play his heart out.

She suddenly imagines him,
in red-jerseyed, sharp-bearded grace,

executing
a perfect
triple
lutz.

Dream Sleeves

I know your secret.

You draw your imagination
on your dress shirt sleeves.

There is a cat, its eye a buttonhole,
its body all blue ink and white cotton/polyester blend.
Cat has dragonfly wings, can fly from here
if it so decides.

For now it is content to sleep against your warm wrist,
hidden by your graduation gown.

Your other sleeve, the left one,
contains a drawing of a Spring-windy day.
Must have taken you (left-handed) hours,
yet the details are clear.
You drew smells carried by the wind:
fallen rain, winter-trodden leaves, coffee (sugar, two creams).

You are a sly, sneaky one.
After today, they might make you wear a business suit,

but you will always wear dream sleeves underneath.

How to Recharge Your Soul

Soothing euphoria,
maybe because of the ocean's rumbling surf,
or the sinking of my tennis shoes into damp sand.
Maybe it's the smell of eroded rock,
or the taste of sea salt,
or the touch of the undecided breeze.

My heart sings,
maybe because of the tranquil azure sky,
or the retreating cloud that invites, "Stay all day!"
Maybe it's the sight of the imposing Atlantic butte,
or of its pines clinging to the precious soil.

My mind soars:
this oft-remembered beach is tangible again!
"Build a sand castle, fly a kite, climb this dwarfish Everest!
Invest your dream currency, that pent-up energy
carefully hoarded
while slumbering at winter bus stops."

The castle has one tower, then ten, flying seaweed flags.
The kite reel whirls in my hands,
yanked by a captured rainbow.
Every movement I make
banishes the lethargy of hibernation.

All the while I hear an echo from childhood,
"Save the best for last!"
Walk toward it, a mountain of future sand,
an imagined siren singing, "Climb, hero!"
Ocean, sand, sky, time fade.
This otherworldly boulder fills my vision and my mind.

Feet and hands welcome the quest.
Eyes, fingers, and shoes search for crevices in rock.
Muscles ache, and sing, as they labour.
I fly. Halfway up. Almost there.

My hand grabs the final rugged ledge.
A few more footholds, then over I clamber.
Victory, exhaustion, an effervescent soul.
I rest, leaning against an impossible evergreen.

Exhilaration,
Maybe because the deep sky is so much closer,
or because the ocean has grown wider.
Maybe because I have chiseled

a memory with my bare hands,
and have surmounted an almost-fear.

Essential

When I let my armour fall away,
I find myself on Mavillette Beach,
jumping waves with you.

Ceilidh

So you think that
filling this kitchen
with singers,
guitar players,
a fiddler or two,
a mandolin player,
a bodhrán player,
an accordion player,
a harmonica player,
a harpist,
a snoring dog
and a purring cat

will keep out the *dark*?

Play on, all! Seems to be working so far!

Paper Heart

This poetry thing sometimes requires
pencil on paper
instead of pixels on a
glowing screen.
Don't really know why.

Except, maybe
my heart is a tree,
hand-written notes tied to every branch.

My heart doesn't beat;
it rustles like
paper scraps in the wind.
It feels the way
paper under pencil nib feels.

Counter-Intuitive

She was very pretty
until the acne
spread across the

left side of her face.

Then, somehow,
she was beautiful.

Your Silence

Do not waste your silence
on those who don't know you:
the stony conquerors of bus seats,
the standing, clinging ones,
the familiar driver.

Let *me* feel your silence,
listen to your face,
hear your soul breathe.
Let *me* learn to read
between your lines.

Teach me by silent lips and living eyes
who you are.

Hot Chocolate After Dark

I listen to you & relax
believing almost every warm word
this is my safe hour
tell any sweet story
share secret intuition
surprise my hard heart
trust is strong after dark

You Are, as Usual

I stay silent
while you talk so excitedly to me
about your ordinary life.

I watch your face shine as you say
you watched a movie and started your essay
yesterday.

You are, as usual, happiness personified.

I joke, and you laugh and
make fun of me
so gently
that I never want to live a day
without making you smile.

If I don't love you already,
I soon will.
Maybe your next smile will *trip* me.

Evensong

Music resounds around the crowded room.
Many voices raise praise
higher than the sky.

I glance at you:

head raised
eyes closed

hands raised
palms open

mind full
heart overflowing

(I glance away.

Daughter of Eve,
you are never more beautiful
than when you worship your Creator.)

Like a Version

If you love me, read me like a book.
Study the cover for a while, then
open me up and begin.
Be an attentive reader,
read between my lines.
Think about me, question me,
write in my margins.
Read me cover to cover, skipping nothing.
I will be a rewarding read, but
you've got to read every word.

Don't put me down until you're done,
and even then, don't put me on a shelf.
Keep me beside you, treasure me,
reread me.
My Author keeps working on me
when you least expect it.
The next time you look at me, you will
discover pages have been added.
You will find that I am dedicated to you.

Envy 2.0

You and your podcast!
You and your blog!
You and your shameless self-promotion,
you and your stupid labour of love.

You and your night owl hours,
you and your "Heard my latest episode?"
You and your online community,
You and your "I blogged about my cold!"

I'm sick of you constantly telling me
how all this new media is
giving people real choice.
I'm so tired of hearing
how many people visited your website
and how many downloaded your voice.

(Say, do you mind helping me start my own podcast?)

You and Your Pod of Whales

You and your
pod of whales,
pack of wolves.

You rule both earth and ocean,
pod and pack tirelessly patrolling
the Atlantic and the Great Plains.
You speak diverse mammal languages
and all the dialects thereof.

You whisper commands
carried by wind and wave
to wolf ear and whale brain.

This is all I have:
my imperfect thinking
written on scraps of paper.
My only audience is a
shivering, distracted city crowd
hustling down concrete sidewalks.
How to get warm, true words into *them*,
that's *my* quest.

Animal whisperer or people whisperer?
I think my task is the more difficult of the two.

Writer's Lament

It's written, it's written,
it's out into the air.

It flew
out of me
like an arrow
from a slingshot.

Nothing I can do to get it back now.

Other

Anger, and other bright fishing lures,
I would cast into your waters
hoping for a bite, hoping for a fight,
some sign of
"You're alive!"

Love, and other bright clues,
I hid from you
for fear of what you would do,
how you would chew.
(I've seen you eat Innocent Infatuation alive.)

Suspicion, and other how-to manuals,
I stole from your bookshelves.
You've never read them,
but they were becoming
the air you breathed everyday.

Poetry, and other insidious devices,
I built in your workshop
using the odds and ends I found there.
Then I just left them;
theyweretoheavytocarry.

All this have done for you,
never realizing you had moved away
a yearn and a daze ago.

Settled

You and your myriad of stars.
You and your endless choice of worlds.
You and your oh-so-useful starship.
You and your faster-than-light.

According to all reports,
you've travelled light-years since you last stopped here;
you've stayed nowhere for long.

I've dismantled my starship,
piece by piece.
Piece for peace,
I've settled here.

I don't want to fly faster than light.
I *like* light catching up with me.
I'm content to live in the light
of this yellow dwarf sun.

The Way You Like It

I like the way you put words together.
It's as if you're building your own bedroom from scratch.
You don't worry about people not understanding it all.
That chair goes there,
that poster there,
and the whale tank goes in the centre of the room,
because you say so.

You build your room the way you like it;
after all, it's where you spend those occasional
sleepless nights.

Now That Old Linden Is Leaving . . .

Memo to Residents of the Pondview Terrace Apartments:

As of June 30th, Old Linden will be retiring from the position of Groundskeeper and Caretaker of this simple apartment complex. He is leaving to travel to and fro across the globe, pursuing Various Obscure Knowledges. Those of you who regularly engage Old Linden in conversation will know that the pursuit of Various Obscure Knowledges is his hobby and ruling passion.

This evening there will be a Send-Off at 6:00 PM in the Communal Activity Area.

Old Linden has been working here since the time of your great-grandparents. Many of you have childhood memories of playing in the dusty ditches dug by Old Linden. Old Linden's imminent departure forces us to ask some difficult questions about our very way of life here at the Pondview Terrace Apartments:

Who will kick the confectionery machine when the confections are stuck within?

Who will repaint the DANGER signs?

Who will light the jubilation lanterns?

Who will quiet the hurdy-gurdy man?

Who will prop up the elopement ladder?

Who will tack up the ceilidh posters?

Who will patch the old rowboat?

Who will watch the watchmen?

Who will untangle the chimes?

Who will feed the goldfish?

Who will greet the sunrise?

Who will be unobtrusive?

Who will take care?

Who will give a hill of beans around here anymore?

Sandbar

Nobody is an island,
but I am convinced that *you*
are an ancient sandbar.

Wild horses roam your sandy length.
Sandpipers scrounge your endless shore.
Ships in full sail
break themselves
on your unexpected thereness;
you are surrounded on every side
by shipwrecks and their scattered treasure.
No tree dares take root on you,
but tribes of wild grasses reign free.
Wind, ocean shape and reshape you.

You are inhabited by those who *need* your sparseness.

Goldfish

Still waters run deep,
but *this* is ridiculous.

I've never seen someone
sit so quietly,
(straight-backed wooden chair,
pen still in hand)
in the face of
waters
this
deep.

Everything is being destroyed
in a few long minutes at your kitchen table.
Flood waters roll,
they stroll
so leisurely and with great violence
through the respectable life
you've wrestled from cruel, stony-faced fields.

Farm signed away,
yet you sit.
Uncomplaining.
There is something going on inside you
that I sure don't understand.

Goldfish
flash and shimmer
near the surface of your eyes.

