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by Stu Penn
Hourglass

Ancient symbol of Time,
each grain signifying Life
—ignoring Man, who has
raped the earth
and prostituted himself . . .
Your sand drops steadily, slowly,
measuring quietly,
(never in numbers)

While we run
faster
Faster
FASTER
Sometimes pausing . . . .
then
Speeding

in order to catch up with Time
who can never be captured
yet always seems just ahead.
(muddleheaded mechanistic man)
You are a timepiece
presenting the passage of Time
without pointing
to Past, Future, or Present—
Never pointing
constantly
sliding
slipping
slithering,
as Time trickles away.
When your hour
reaches its destiny
you turn over and begin
a new one, your Sand
never rushing, always moving.
They say that for
those who Love
Time does not exist—
Let us not measure our
Life with coffee spoons.

How sweet:
To measure our Timeless love
with hour-Sifting Sand.

Sally Hill
a speck of dew
tells the secret
of the world
in that moment
when sunshine’s
heat pierces,
illuminating a
crystal on the
blade, and
then falls in
a single drop
to the earth.

Miriam Golff
Albert Camus

He had no right,
No earthly right
To rob the sky
And fill tired minds
With stolen, glistening draughts
Of iridescent liquids,
Giving life
To improverished, empty shells.

He had no right,
No human right
To magnify, glorify,
Or emblazon each stolen glint
With soulful worship
And sacred carvings,
As if a god
Impregnating a sacrament.

He had no right,
No, no divine right
To make an altar
For his stolen nectar
Or to forge the golden vessel,
Less he, too, in turn
Could drink the final dregs
Of black and bitter gall.

Yet, who would dare say
He had not the right
To rob the sky
And encase his stolen shrine
Within a soul-less realm,
Giving light to the infernal darkness?
There is no sun without shadows,
And shadows mirror the breath of life.

Emily B. Sullivan
Morning Feeling

morning light,
bright spring,
green things,
a living sight,
to behold
but the churning
and grinding
of my bowels and heart

go on.

Transitional confusion

Wiley Garrett
rain queen

the sun light
    spreads
    softly
upon the morn
in waves of white

and the rain queen
    greets the dawn
    and touches the dewy earth
    with a tear of sadness
    a tear of joy
    tears of love

now
    she briskly
    comes chilly
and the winds whistle
    their tunes with her
    as the reeds dance wavey

the brows of her forehead
    darken
    and swiftly race across the sky
    in dark array

and she loosens
    her rivers
and flows to flowers
    beckoning the blossoms
    to smile

and the rain queen
    glides on with
    her cloak
    to the driving winds
as the fish
    rise to watch the
    ringlets from the queen’s
    gladness

Leni Selvaggio
The School Mum’s Goodbye

Last days are bitterly cold
And the road is always
Longer than the time before.

But the large brown woman
Smiled on them all,
Looking bright to their future.

Rewards come in short moments,
Too fleeting to count
Though one is remembered best.

Along, the tow-haired princess
Turned her big blue eyes
And blew kisses with mitten-covered hands.

Sweet Ernestine,
You are in my heart.

Miriam Golff
Egomania

The pressure
Of exorcising
My own demons
Has driven me
Into a selfish labyrinth
Of involuted
Questioning.
One escape only,
But one forging
Of feathered flight—
The forgetting
Of myself.

Susan Wright
Running

To run harder,
harder, harder—
Away from brothers,
from man—
Never stop, trade,
talk, barter—
Reject mothers’ breast,
brothers’ hand.
Run, run, faster,
harder, blindly—
Trample the weak
or kindly—
Freedom’s ahead—
or perhaps insanity.

David H. Baird, Jr.
“Lily Pads” by Carol Myrick
Brook Flower: A Sestina

Vanished are yesternight’s castles, those by the moonbeam Embellished, vanished like dew from the meadow Ere prime in sultry midsummer. Yet sighing Nor weeping escape her, crouched by the brookside, Poor pitiful lady, lovely and slender. Whose longing More futile than hers, more unendurable sorrow?

The brook burbles on in its bed, unheeding her sorrow. One tear solitarily falls, is caught by a moonbeam, Flashes like dew and is gone. Whether longing Be bitter or sweet, she is lovely there in the meadow, This little, lithe lady crouched by the brookside, Where, stirred by night-winds, the pine trees are sighing.

Can it be that she too is audibly sighing, Frail maiden in white, overwhelmed by her sorrow? Let all whispers be hushed, let us steal to the brookside, And gaze on the maiden there, bathed by the moonbeam, By the moonbeam caressed in this wide, lovely meadow: Let us learn what we may of her yearning and longing.

In her nocturnal vigil does she murmur of longing For lover long dead? For whom is she sighing And dropping bright tears to the brook and the meadow, Making for meadow and brook sweet dirges of sorrow? Her white and green raiment gleams fair in the moonbeam, Fairest lady that leans and nods by a brookside.

So have I seen a young child by a brookside, Peering into the depths with the uttermost longing, Desiring the pebbles enjeweled by the moonbeam; Reaching, it discovers dull stones, and with sighing Refrains, relinquishing treasure with sorrow. Can the like be her plight who sighs in the meadow?

Whether for lover she languishes there in the meadow— Happiness dreamed, unattempted, and lost by the brookside Where this nocturnal tryst she still keeps with her sorrow— Unrevealed must remain the lorn lady’s longing, Whereas silent she leans where the pine trees are sighing, As hushed in her mood as the flight of a moonbeam.

Soft as the moonbeam shed on a dewy meadow, Soft as the sighing of pines by the brookside, Muted her whisper of longing, muted her sorrow.

Dr. Charles Eugene Mounts
O lady in rose
   come softly to my night.
As a candle burns and the winds heave
   let me gather into my soul.
In the dark undressing,
   the wool of day
   falls
   in
   a
   rustle
   to
   the
   floor.
Softly now
   come warmly to my arms,
   in silk array.

Billy Dunn
Sweet Belly

belly laughs
are
for
belly dancers
who
have
belly buttons
full of green ice cream
that like to float
on blueberry lakes
coated with
red
whipped cream.

Giddy teen

Wiley Garrett
And I rose from the candle of my birth
Twisting, spiraling, ever towards the darkness above
And then upon the wind of your breath
I became as a child, filling the room, surrounding all within.
Then once again I collected myself into my former thread-like cylinder of smoke that is my shell
And rose to even greater heights for I had felt and tasted and experienced life within that room.
And I owe what am now to your breath.
So be not absent from my candle home of flames for very long
Because your life’s breath brought me to this greater existence
Yet let me warn you of the dangers of staying too long at the side of my mother candle
For her flame is hypnotizing while you watch her dance and glow in the walls of darkness
Because I am growing as she burns.
And I will expand in my depths of darkness that you will not notice
Then in my selfish and lustful jealousy for your attention,
Will fill you to the edges of your soul and being
And here inside you will squeeze the very air that brings you life.
As you breathe I grow stronger, and soon the air that once kindled my mother’s flame and gave you heart beats will be gone
And then I alone will travel in the far reaches of space free from all ties, void of all boundaries!
For I am the smoke, the combination of all things that in air are powerful and deadly
And I long to be free to travel alone in my evil world.
So beware and take heed of my presence.
For even when you douse the flame, my mother, I rise unharmed
And I have but all eternity to wait for you to return.

Leonard C. Fitzgerald
"Close-up of a Leaf" by Susan Stockbridge
The Diurnal Pantomimist

each morning i wash
the tear-stained eyes
and streaked cheek,
i brush the bitter residue
of night's anguished cries
from my teeth
and comb tantrum-tossed hair
to respectability,
i don my mask of humanity
and clothe myself
with the cloak of sanity,
only then am i ready
to face any,
for how can a clown
be a tragic figure?

David Springer
The Chimp

In a bow tie and short pants,
Nature's true trapeze artist
Circles the center ring
On a bicycle,
As overhead
His furless brother
Swings unnaturally
Through blue, red, green,
And purple space.

The Bear

Wearing a clown's hat
And an orange neck ruffle,
The fierce monarch
Of the mountain forest
Lumbers dumbly
Through the steps of a foxtrot
And wins a condescending
Round of applause.

Susan Wright
The Straight Story (A fabled Hollywood Tale)

Once upon a time there was a line called Edgar, who looks like this, Edgar worked with a comic circle called Simon in a nightclub act. Edgar of course was the straight man.

Now Edgar was eager to be a star in Hollywood, so he got another line called George to be his agent. They got together and George said “he saw an angle” but they would need a publicity man to try it. George knew just the man, a line called Frank. So Frank joined them and it became a three-way partnership to try the angle.
But Frank was a cautious fellow and he hired a line called Herman as an accountant to make sure everyone got a square deal.

Then Herman suggested a business manager. So they got a line called Harrison, who was good at that sort of thing. Harrison took over and rearranged things a bit, and that is how stars are made.

Next week we bring you the tragic story of Carrie Curve, a fan of Edgar's who fell for a line.

David Springer
Alone Together

Finding our separate joys
In different ways,
We share a common world
Of isolation;
And yet within each
Solitary sphere
Love, flickering, perseveres,
Scattering small
Yet painful
Shadows of worry
For each other.
Through some
Harmonious rift
The two must join
Or die away.

Susan Wright
earth-muddied, stagnant, an
intractable malady at times—
at others
sporadic moments of bliss
raindrop pure sparkling smiles
and age—
an ivory white breath blew
with ocean turbulence heart's
leaves aside
allowing a love seed to carom
downward and nestle itself
beside an all ready yearn for life,
and to be.
an oak today in summer, synonym
of strength, fragility, love, hate and
peace
towers above the more docile.
and the day two redwoods at winter
after-loom hopefully, entwined
above a burgeoning brown eyed spirite
in the lea beneath.
The Eulogy

Shut up, Preacher Elliott, you old hypocrite! If you gotta say a few last words over my bones as I lie here all dolled up in this box midst these smelly petunias, at least tell it like it was.

Eh? What's the matter, Preacher? You're lookin' kind of sweaty. Is that part 'bout Harrison Nottingham's being a good husband stickin' in your craw? You old fool, I was better than you were. Least I never took 'vantage of the women folks; never had them sayin' their prayers at my knees, weepin' and moanin' and gettin' all worked up; never huggin' and comfortin' them in the name of the Lord, as you always put it. Least the women and I didn't beat 'round the bush as to whom or what we were rejoicin'!

I always said it just hain't natural like for a man to have just one woman. Now take my wife Ora—a good woman, I always did say. But after nine kids—well, she just didn't have 'nough of herself left over for me. There shore was plenty of me to go 'round, though; and I never was known in these parts for my stinginess. Take Lottie down there at the Bellemont Hotel. Ah! I always did like to touch up my hair with a little black shoe polish and go pay my respects on a Saturday night. You know, Ora never did understand that, never could see that had nuttin' to do with her and me. I mean, after nine younguns, surely Ora couldn't say I hadn't given her plenty of my bountiful self, couldn't say I hadn't spent some time with her!

Speak up, Preacher! What'd you say? Something 'bout folks will never gorget me? Hell, I bet they won't—probably skeered I'll come back to life. Take old Hank McConnell, I bet he'll 'member me. Hey you, Hank, sitting out there so somber and sober in your Sears Roebuck duds, do you 'member that day when we were blacksmiths down at New River Works? You sneaked in my lunch pail and put that old piece of leather in my sandwich. 'Member come noon when I took a big gnaw of that sandwich? I never raised an eyebrow, did I, Hank? No siree! Just kept right on chewin'. Ha! I guess I taught you the next day, you old cuss. 'Member how you came tearin' in as usual, grabbed up your lunch pail, and kept right on runnin' to your eatin' spot? You were halfway 'cross the shop 'fore you found you were totin' only the handle. Hank, that shore was a whipped look you had when you finally found the rest of the pail bolted to the floor.

What'd you say there, Preacher? Something 'bout my promisin' on my deathbed to give my life to the Lord? Ha! The Lord always had it. How could I give it to Him? He just let me hold the reins for a spell. I always
said that it hain't how you roll your eyeballs toward heaven, sing those hymns, and puff up with them thar good works, but how you really live that counts. I shore didn't skimp on a minute of that livin’, either. God, I shore 'nough did have a right pleasurable time. I thank You for bearin’ with me. I hope You don’t think too harshly of my cussin’ a few church-goers. But, God, that’s all they were—just goers. You and I know where they’ll end up goin’ too. God, I really loved those children, though. I always wondered why they took to me so. We just seemed to understand each other without puttin’ on a big front.

Who’s that sittin’ out there on the front pew weepin’ and carryin’ on and shoutin’ amen? Why, it’s old Mrs. Spillers from down in the holler. She’s never cried for anyone but herself, that old two-facer! Look at her puttin’ on that act. I’ll bet Preacher Elliott will have to comfort her this evening. Those two birds never missed a camp meetin’. I still can’t figure out why they all had to go troopin’ off into the woods for two weeks every summer to praise the Lord. The Lord and I just talked any old place.

Take for instance that morning I overslept. Jasper, the shop foreman, had warned me he was goin’ to give me the boot the next time I was late. Well, like I said, I overslept, had five minutes to get to work. I called loudly, “Lord, help me!” as I slapped on my breeches and tore out the door. Down through the neighbors’ yards I scrambled, out into the street I raced, and smack dab into an oncomin’ car I crashed. But I just yelled a little more loudly, “Lord, help me!” and kept right on runnin’. He heard me. In fact, I got to work one minute early. The Lord never was picky ‘bout my gettin’ dressed up and gettin’ down on my knees when I had need of a chat with Him.

Hey you, pious Preacher Elliott, standin’ up there enjoying’ the sound of your own voice, would you please turn off that mournful music? That gives me the creeps. You know I’ve always been a little partial to the banjo and fiddle. If I’d known you’d go and have such bad taste, I’d have asked Clarence down at Alf’s Cafe to take Charge of the music for this affair. He had some right perky numbers on that nickelodeon.

Hush, Preacher! I believe I heard God callin’. What’d you say there, God? You’re tryin’ to call the roll? Yes, sir! Nottingham present!

Cynthia Stanley
by Mike Reese
RED:

When loneliness bleeds from the back of your jaw
And pieces of glass
   books and shoes
   are thrown against walls;
When madness grips country boys' minds for no reason
And yesterday's joblessness is no longer meaningful;
When wandering has gone far too long without rest
And longside
A roadside
Or riverside
   sliding
You find yourself biding
Your time without reason
Until there is no spot on your soul left unpainted;
The wielding of brushes from ten thousand paint cans
   or spray guns
   with powerful bullets of scorn
Have covered your being with bleeding red curtains
   you find that you never have travelled
   at all.

Hartson Poland
she was
five and a half feet
of green-eyed
smother me
love
and
she
fixed my soul
with bewitching
words
and
became
my five
and a half
foot
world.

Life long love

Willey Garrett
A hymn to Aurora

sun burst brightly
on this day's forehead and bring the darkness of caves and myths to the south
burst this dawn in scarlet on velvet beat the pulse of the universe and delicately balance the earth in its cyclic path

Leni Selvaggio
Our Next Hero

Oh, how we loved the refinement of his golden mind . . .
The fluid product of wisdom beyond his years.
   From lips that spoke diamond truth,
We gleaned the life that was for us divine.
   Yes, and the beauty of his silvered heart . . .
Loyalty that was without peer, the essence of his heart.
   And did we not, from his thighs of brass and
Legs of iron, draw strength for our own feeble lives?
   It was to be expected, I suppose, that he
      proved to be too human . . .
Feet of clay, you know.
   And so we judged him,
      From the height of our superior mediocrity . . .
Unforgiveable . . . On to our next hero.

Rev. Roland Mullinix
Watching A Three-Year-Old

When I can
Without detection
Watch him play,
The sight of wispy
Brown pencil marks
Of eyebrows,
Flicked upward
At the ends
Above blue innocence,
Gives me a delight
Equaled only
By my joy
In his small lips
Parting to permit
A pinkly pointed tongue
To explore the lipline.

Susan Wright
Visions

I have
Visions of ethereal
In smoke and fairies' wisps.
A dream's dream and
Mystic's misty mystique,
Tempting senses with
Tantalizing frustrations of otherness;
Lost even before gained,
A tragic existence of elsewhen and where,
More even than Xanadu.
A never-never-land of promise, hope, and heaven.
A bubble that pops at being sighted.
A film of mirage, gone.
The glimpse from the corner of the eye sets ripples
To banish the reflection of magic,
A child's eye is slightly quicker, but then,
The world grew up and died long ago,
And now a universe of perverse ghosts
Plays games to tax the mental facilities of God.

David Springer
Haiku in Sequence

Imagine the world
In seventeen dabs of paint
Put on one canvas.

From flute or viol
Just seventeen notes to sound
A whole symphony.

Infinity squeezed
Till seventeen syllables
Tell all that there is.

Charles Eugene Mounts
Ward of the Living Dead

I'm not afraid of death.
I'm young and not afraid of death.
But here in this Ward of the Living Dead,
I see Dantesque visions,
That scare me to my very soul.

I am surrounded by old men
Who whisper and gasp
And foul their beds,
And for some reason won't die.
Their minds are twenty years dead,
But their bodies still cling to life.
They have not the courage to die,
Nor the strength.

Dylan Thomas is all very well;
But at least the light was dying,
And he did love his father.
I find no pity for these ancients,
Who in their hospital cribs,
Have nurses and orderlies for tombstones,
And flowers to cover their smell,
For the early wake of visitors.

Yes, I am frightened.
Old men in white sheets are more scary,
Than children at Halloween,
Old men are the real thing.
And I'll follow Hemingway's way,
Before I'm like them.

David Springer
“Dead Flame” by Bill Donald
i just barely had time
to close my eyes and
roll over
before you tugged and
persuaded me into waking
as i glance at you
with your sleepy eyes and
ruffled hair
to match your mood—
i begin to laugh inside
you make fun of me in
the morningtime.

Jeanne McCauley
sleep

sleekly, swiftly, we stroke side by side
thru the silent waters of the night

stony shores we spy,
silent shores,
with small sailboats
bobbing up and down

silvery does the moon shine on our skins

suddenly all seems to slow,
and the sunlight inside us shimmers

still
time
slips
on

K. Lee
"Project" by Linda Jones
Dreams of a Promise Almost Seen

During the passing of time and of substance,
while encountering realities within the
Lost spectrum of our own self illusion,
there comes within the eternal inkling of
An instant a longing to reach out, to touch
the love of life, to love her.
And loving her, dreams soaring, you'll crash
to the lowest ebb of your disbelieving mind,
While you search for strength to carry on:
and of giving without measure,
To finally seize the illusive dreams of a
promise almost seen, you'll search endlessly
For her presence and for the love she once
gave you, and for a time you know will
Surely come when she turns in hushed melody,
"I could have loved you."

David H. Baird, Jr.
running wildly
    in summers green
your smile warms
    the fields
and your cloak of golden
    meadows
caresses my neck
    and groin
growing glowing
your warmth pressing mine
    our blood flows
more than warm
    and words cease
    to the rocking wind of
    our depths

Leni Selvaggio
Smaze

The Mist hangs.
The sun is suspended
like a pale orange falling
from its lofty security,
destined to float beneath
and above our own fruit’s curvature.

The orange seeds bury in the loam.
A new orange is born.
A heavier Mist prevails.

The orange falls further.
The embryonic seeds strive upward.
Their hands and souls stretch to
be enveloped by the sun’s arm’s.

The seed’s slender shoots are smothered
by the Mist’s asphyxiating intolerance.

The seed’s failure is the Mist’s success.
The Cave’s population is renewed.

Tom Blevins
"I kiss your hand, Madame" by Bill Hegland
In times of clay and young wood
We sat by waters whispering of laughter and kisses.
  O what a faceting stream
  sparkling and crisp
  Believing that robins
  would always be red.

As the leaves blossomed of hardship
The willows tempered
  in the chilling day
And Spring came quiet
  to the ashes within.

By the sun's constant rising,
  The clay hearth turned stone.
  Ashes were gray
  And the frost came early in August.

Now April crashes with dread
  And rains wash her earth,
    and mine.
  Fears of the sunset
    trail me all morning.
  And the owl's night howl
    haunts
      all
        my
          dreams.

Billy Dunn
Almost Over

old wrinkles
old age
old times
when the
sun soaks
into
cracked bones
soon to be dust
but still
breathing
till
souls
need
nothing
from
this
side
of
the
clouds.

Near the end of life

Wiley Garrett
Be Still and Know

A steady Hand upon my arm,
    “Slow down, My frantic child.
Breathe deeply of this stirring life,
    The breeze so warm, so mild.”

A gentle Touch against my lips,
    “Be still, My anxious man.
Behold the crocus just reborn
    Unfolds My wondrous plan.”

Cynthia Stanley