

Approved by

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**POEMS**

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### EMPRISONED

The world hangs upside down, her eyes forget  
To set it right. Time loops a hangman's knot;  
The window frames abstractions grossly set  
On canvas sky; dark grotesque shadows spot  
The floor like blood. Green capsule by her bed  
Requires its hour taking. Footsteps pass  
Outside the door; she listens till the lead  
Sounds disappear, while poisoning water glass  
At fevered lips. Soon rumpled head droops down  
On open book; the unread letters crawl  
From off the page, climb down her clinging gown,  
Stand mocking the prisoner from every wall.  
But pampered back to well, the girl must face,  
Though right side up, the larger prison case.

LIGHT

A leaf has not lit upon the tree,  
But waits upon the wisdom of a wind

Each year we bury childhood only deeper  
Within the inner chambers of ourselves,  
Heaving ourselves outward with each limb  
Toward nothing but a losing of ourselves.

How is it we are made our other selves,  
Warped by a world of having known too much?

The prudent Popes once dared to censure Greek:  
The bold fig leaves still mar the marble statues.

The early church, a simple basilica,  
Its beauty blurred by random-need-additions,  
Is hid to all but to imagination.

If house we be, why must we build our rooms  
As though we had lost the blueprint of our days?

We stand in awkward posture, stuttering,  
As if the playwright had forgotten the plot,  
Allowing us to ramble at our lines  
Toward nothing of a climax, act the fool.

Dear God, dear Father, unify our lives,  
Direct us toward the finding of our being;  
Let life become a likening to ourselves--

That when the evening come, and You retire,  
Switching the T. V. off before You go,  
The light which centers there so short a time  
Be witness that we ever had our being--

The light conceived within an embryo.

## LEAF

A leaf has not its life upon the tree,  
But waits upon the wisdom of a wind  
To wander with it once upon a fall  
And curl its being toward a higher curve.

As an amoeba dies in birth of two...  
Leaf lifts itself above the dying tree  
Lets drop the seed, diving upon the cold  
Live wind, then falling upon itself to earth.

Leaves scutter down the streets, after the wind  
As children boisterous follow a fall parade;  
Huddle in herds, then toss into the wind  
With a sudden lifting; then with the wind lie still.

Now guttered leaves left crunching under feet...  
O pity rather those sweet stranded leaves,  
Drooping to dying, so weighted with still air:  
A leaf has lived, has lived upon the wind.

It happened as all sin was once begun.  
The water closed, leaving a reddened trace.  
The sun that evening died, its blood red face  
Stripping across the lake toward the place.  
And he was buried with the innocent sun.

## DEATH OF THE SUN

The sky was ignorant that day: the dawn  
Stretched its innocence across the lake,  
Rousing the speed boats, stirring the houses, "Wake,"  
Said the innocent sun, "Living will only take  
A moment. Wake, the day will soon be gone."

The boy was ignorant that day: he saw  
Only the clear white lake inviting him,  
The pale water rippling as though a whim  
Had brushed it. "Come," it murmured, "Don't mind them."  
It motioned toward the racers plowing raw

Furrows into the water. Believing the lie,  
The boy swam out beyond the warning pier;  
One speeding boat tried frantically to veer  
From its own course, but could not: struck so queer  
A sound as startled the once innocent sky.

It happened as all sin was once begun.  
The water closed, leaving a reddened trace.  
The sun that evening died, its blood red face  
Dripping across the lake toward the place.  
And he was buried with the innocent sun.

## A POET

There was a man with many poem crushed  
Inside himself, each tearing every word  
From some part of his being; each one jarred  
Into existence, loose, dependent, pushed  
Toward expression. Searching their form, his rushed  
Phrases contracted themselves like tight scarred  
Tissue. When quickened seven months, the cord  
Severed internally, they pulsed life. Slashed  
Open, the man was critically observed.  
They wondered at the strangeness of his bride,  
His quivering brood extracted with brass tongs.  
Unhuman that to which the man belongs!  
The judgment this: his words be strained and served  
To the textbook masses; the pulp, cast aside.

UNSPOKEN VOW

The Snow,  
Laced bridal veil  
Besprinkled with glistening  
Icy diamonds.

The Air,  
Liquid ice  
In the fragile goblet  
Of Time,  
Crisp as rustling  
Taffeta petticoats,  
Fresh as a groom's  
Newly pressed  
Handkerchief.

The Sky,  
Downy feathered mattress  
Covered with shadowy  
Iridescent sheets.

The Pair,  
A motion forward,  
Briskly,  
Through the virgin snow,  
Brown leather fingers  
And knit white nylon  
Intermingled.

The Laugh,  
Champagne bubbling,  
Breaking quietly,  
Defiantly,  
Into the dally cold  
Bleached rice  
Pecking at their faces.



SENECTA

EXPOSE

The Moon,  
Dimmed spotlight  
Disappearing  
Behind heavy  
Moth-eaten curtains.

The Trees,  
Silhouetted cobwebs  
Stretched  
Across the silent corner  
Of the forgotten theatre  
Of evening.

The Porch,  
Deserted stage,  
Echoing silent voices,  
Resounding on deaf  
Remembering ears.

The Figure,  
A motion rocking,  
Backward and Forward,  
Forward and Back,  
A sweeping motion,  
A dusty broom  
Sweeping a dusty, empty stage.

The Houses  
Across the street,  
A gaunt, ghost audience,  
Watching a Nothingness  
With rectangular  
Hollow eyes.

EXPOSE

The sun rose up and stared  
At the lovers stretched beneath the bending pine,  
As if he cared

How long they lay  
Or whether they were drunk with love or wine  
Or knew that it was day;

But they ignored the sun  
As he peeped between the pine needles and laughed  
To know that none

Of it would last.  
But later, when the straw floor had chafed  
Their legs, they saw the past

Rising with the sun,  
The future sinking with the fading moon.  
They had begun

The search for love,  
Ignorant as the sun was wise; but noon  
Exposes the darkest grove.

The Venus Tower translates lovers' souls—  
If Venus does indeed exist—and blends  
The harmony of mass--composite Soul.

If not, no matter--let the word go forth;  
I need no name without you--nor a soul.

TOWER NADA

As wave length shadows deepen into evening shore  
One white star beacons brightness from the heavens.

My body closes off itself in silence.

From some far place, you, too, may watch the star  
And wonder at its sudden twilight brilliance.

Yet, here in quiet, your remembered name  
Is harsh and brittle sounding, even as  
It throbs unuttered music on my brain.

Or has the welcome word been said aloud?

It is as if from somewhere you have spoken  
Your name--and breaking silence, oral word  
Has flipped the dial and sent forth music-soul  
To blare its trumpet blast through wireless waves  
And seek me out, convey some coded message.

But tower of my soul cannot decode  
The music--static Time has intervened.

Perhaps the planets have their towers, too.

Perhaps... by playing out my oboe name

My soul will follow strains of violin  
And fluted note will rise to Evening Star:

The Venus Tower translates lovers' souls--  
If Venus does indeed exist--and blends  
The harmony of names--composite Soul.

If not, no matter--let the word go forth;  
I need no name without you--nor a soul.

NADA

The night draws nigh  
And in the sky  
An island there I see,  
A delicate pink  
Upon the brink  
Of evening's azure sea  
Stands off so bright  
I think it might  
Heap evening sands on me.

A little shore  
On ocean floor  
Suspended in the air,  
That bids me swim  
And come to Him,  
To Death, who waits me there,  
As evening throws  
A little rose  
To catch up in my hair.

A lilac hue  
On azure blue  
Volcanoes in the sky,  
Eruption red  
Upon my head:  
The lava question, Why?  
Why are we here?  
What do we fear?  
And for what purpose, die?

(If I be trite  
To think of night  
As Death--then let it be;  
No difference makes  
To Him who takes  
This little soul from me.)  
The question--Why?  
The answer--Die!  
From Unreal Something, flee!

We live for what?  
I quite forgot,  
Or else I never knew;  
And what we fear  
Is always near--  
A Something, sifting through...  
When evening falls  
A Nothing calls  
Adieu. Adieu. Adieu.

I breathe the breath  
Of life in death,  
A evening lullaby,  
A quiet birth  
From out of earth;  
To Holy Nothing, fly!  
As sunset be  
The dawn for me  
I lay me down to die.

BOTTICELLI'S JUDITH

THE SCAR

Why are your eyes so sad, your step so slow,  
And looking back, what is it there you see?  
We chiseled a hunk out of the moon that night  
And dropped it in the glass,  
Added a pinch of a star so white  
The moon looked dull as brass.

We laughed to see so much of life  
Left empty by the gap,  
And clutching hard upon the knife  
We speared the midnight up.

But as it crushed by its own weight  
Or with its heavy dust  
The white star flattened into plate;  
The knife dulled into rust,

And dulled it scrapes beneath the band:  
Has chiseled there the scar  
Of that sliver of a moon and  
That pinch of a star.

BOTTICELLI'S JUDITH

Why are your eyes so sad, your step so slow,  
And looking back, what is it there you see?  
Your maid finds it not difficult to go.

So dark and dumpled like the cakes she made,  
Your face as sweet as His nativity,  
Your blue and pale green garments billowed so--  
Is it the sadness of necessity?  
"They're going home to see their Lucys, Mama."

Why look you not upon the field below?--  
Your people wait, as you have set them free.  
Your firm maid bears more fruit than they can know.

And sometimes harpessed in the ocean tree,  
Forget him, Judith, look upon the tree;  
Remember not the blood you had to strow  
Upon his sheets as he lay drunkenly.

It is your people's seed which now you sow;  
Lift up your yellow hair, your eyes and see  
Your maid finds it not difficult to go.

Her Lucy saw to that, kissing the thush,  
It is the same fruit as on Adam's tree;  
It is the sadness of necessity.

Her Lucy showed her anger only once--  
The new word that she learned from down the street--  
Two girls taught 'Tricia Lucy was a "nigger."

The day that Lucy left, Patricia cried.  
Told that she might not kiss her Lucy's face  
She kissed her wet cheek through the back porch screen.

Will cherish that blue scar upon her thigh  
And wonder and the bond wrapped in a cobweb.

## HER LUCY

Patricia loved her Lucy for no reason  
(Much as she loved her doll, her dog, her grandpa)  
But that she was her Lucy and no other,  
So dark and dumped like the cakes she made.

Each day she watched her daddy leave the schoolyard  
And watched the children climb into the busses:  
"They're going home to see their Lucys, Mama."  
"They have a mother to go home to, dear."

Patricia played alone within the yard,  
And sometimes harnessed to the pecan tree,  
A rope around her middle--as a cow  
Is held within its compass of a limit;  
The highway seemed a perfect playing place.

The yard was not so perfect: clay and grass  
She stuffed into a can into an oven--  
And slipped, slicing her thumb down to the bone.  
Her Lucy saw to that, kissing the thumb,  
And snuffed the bleeding with the blue cobwebs.

Her Lucy showed her anger only once--  
The new word that she learned from down the street--  
Two girls taught 'Tricia Lucy was a "nigger."

The day that Lucy left, Patricia cried.  
Told that she might not kiss her Lucy's face  
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