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# **A Thin Book of Poems by Somebody Else**

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## Ages Apart

### the old man

#### I

he was sixty-six

he was sixty-six

he was sixty-six years old,  
and memories were rapidly turning grey.  
his life line was lost in a maze of wrinkles  
and flesh coloured folds,  
and even his dog had forgotten his name.  
wire framed spectacles played tricks on the eye:  
through them he  
looked at young girls  
looked at young girls  
looked at young girls—  
but they never looked back.

#### II

“do you know what it’s like to be invisible?”

he asked.

“who said that?”

they replied.

#### III

his teeth were all gone.

plastic his lot.

plastic all he had got.

during the night night,

as he slept,

in their glass of luke warm water,  
 beside the bed,  
 they would laugh at him.

#### IV

long time ago  
 old man  
 married.  
 long time ago  
 old man  
 divorced.

she hated him.  
 he hated her.  
 they hated each other.

he had loved her.  
 she had loved him.  
 they had both loved the dog.

what happened to that love?  
 had it turned on its heels and fled?  
 was it crushed beneath a ten ton tornado of passion?  
 or was it just in hiding?

more important though,  
 what happened to the dog?

#### V

even old men must live somewhere.

the council house was damp.  
 it was a stagnant kind of place due to lack of ventilation owing to the fact that the windows were never opened rendered by a lack

of will on his part born of years of not having anything to care about and no one to tell him any different since so many times had passed would never come back and not much was left and there was nothing to do so he left the windows closed

## VI

the old man would,  
on occasion,  
visit his friends.  
it was not far to go:  
the cemetery was just down the road.

nothing much was ever said.

## VII

there are two things an old man can never be:  
one is young again.  
the other is old again.

things only happen once.

## VIII

now and then,  
every week,  
sometimes never,  
the old man of an evening takes to pub.  
he drinks slowly.  
if he is lucky they talk to him.  
if they are lucky he stays at home.

no one likes an old man with no friends.  
he reminds them of death.

the landlord likes it though,  
 when he shows his white whiskered face around the door.  
 for some reason everyone drinks much much more.

## IX

the old man reads books,  
 word by word,  
 with economy,  
 with care.  
 not one drop of ink is wasted,  
 sip sip sip,  
 swallows it all,  
 every idea,  
 every event.

he shows a definite preference for romantic adventure,  
 where people are bigger and better and bolder than he.

some inclination, or natural leanings,  
 to sunshine and jungle and violent death.

the old man reads books,  
 but first of all he makes sure  
 that nobody looks.

## the young man

### I

only nine-teen  
 with yes,  
 two score and more marked on the slate.  
 each one—  
 he almost remembers them all—  
 offering that sense of conquest,

power,  
unstoppability.

when he looks at their pale dreamy eyes,  
he can see,  
if the light is bad,  
a reflection of himself.

and who knows what they see in his.  
perhaps the same.

## II

large penis is the most important part of his body.  
it is a hands on device,  
used like a weapon,  
to win his way in wars of will.

he firstly defines the enemy,  
takes note of the uniform it wears,  
makes preliminary manoeuvres,  
and then makes penetration deep into what was once no  
man's land.

## III

he walks a high beam,  
with out the use of a safety net.  
when he falls,  
the ground brakes his fall.

he knows no fear.  
one day he told it to go,  
and away it went.

## IV

saturday is such a day.  
cold,  
damp,  
and winter crowds crowd winter bus.

then onwards,  
like a gathering of happy head hunters,  
through city,  
through street,  
to the jungle sound of marching feet.

he is warrior-  
one of the clan.  
he is a manchester united man.  
he looks you up,  
he looks you down,  
he punches you out.

to the smoke filled after room,  
where the best moments are relived  
in twelve versions of reality,  
his voice is loudest,  
proudest.

"i smashed his face in.  
i kicked him in the balls.  
i made of fool of him."

it is nothing more than tradition.  
there is no free will.  
everything comes at great cost.

## V

for many years yet to come,  
 the young man shall eat the fruits of life.  
 he shall devour the flesh,  
 suck out the juice,  
 spit out the pips,  
 lick its bitter sweet sugars.

and perhaps one day  
 the fool will see  
 what a pig he is making of himself.

## VI

perhaps as well,  
 that boy of a man,  
 will understand something more of life's delicate nature,  
 and will learn the difference between  
 a toy,  
 and,  
 a girl in his bed.  
 for you see,  
 as a young child,  
 he broke everything he ever played with.

## VII

he feels,  
 there is nothing he cannot be.  
 for,  
 there is nothing he cannot be.  
 there is nothing—  
 he cannot be.  
 perhaps one day . . .

## VIII

work is a four letter word.  
 he uses it to swear at his mother, like other people use "fuck."

a volunteer,  
 in the rank and file  
 of the habitually unemployed,  
 he is paid well for services to the queen.

"someone else can work in my place,"  
 he says.  
 "i don't mind."

and he doesn't.  
 but *they* do.

## IX

the young man is someone altogether different,  
 who never reads,  
 but does.

what he wants is what he gets is what he wants is what he  
 gets is what he wants is sex and a good pint of beer with his pals.

altogether the young man is someone different.  
 someone different the young man is altogether.  
 the man, young, altogether, is someone different.  
 different is someone, the young man–altogether.  
 young, the altogether something man is different,  
 but like all of his kind,  
 he is much the same

**the old and young**

once,  
 out and about in the high street,  
 the old man and the young man came upon each other.  
 with a good deal of distaste,  
 eyes met  
 and they both saw fire.

teeth were shown:  
 one set plastic,  
 the other bright ivory white ivory.  
 and the moment lasted i n d e f i n a t l y.

“jesus christ,” thought the young man, “how does someone get like that? it's disfuckingusting.”

“jesus christ” thought the old man, “i was once like that.”

### **the old man**

in conclusion:

even older by now,  
 he spends his days hanging about in shopping centres,  
 watching the girls go by,  
 by,  
 watching the girls go by  
 with old man desire boiling his blood,  
 and the occasional drop of spit oozing from the corner of his  
 mouth—  
 giving away the lust.

even sadder by now.  
 hanging about in shopping centres,  
 the girls never looking back.

## An Old Poem

Death  
 Black  
 Black death  
 Profoundly black  
 Quite black  
 Very very black  
 Dark  
 Dark  
 Gloomy gloomy gloomy  
 Despair  
 Ooh oh oh  
 Tears  
 Sob sob  
 Hearts breaking  
 Crack  
 Blood

Oh no, I'm exaggerating again

## Death

Crick  
 cracking bone.  
 Squish  
 squashing giblets.  
 Bing  
 banging head.  
  
 All this and more.  
 Crish  
 crushing brains  
 Spring  
 spurting juice.  
 Bang

bursting bodies.

The are umpteen ways to take out life.  
And no way to put it back.

### **When I am**

When I was eighteen  
I was twelve.  
When I was nine  
I was ten.

When I was now  
I am then.

Feb. 88

### **My Daughter Stayed Away Today**

My daughter stayed away today  
and waiting  
I saw  
and feeling  
I knew

Another part of me fell off:  
She rips me limb by limb  
and burns the bits

There is a permanent smell of flaming flesh  
—and of smoke  
in our house

I wonder what it's like at her mother's?  
It probably reeks of roses

March 88

## The World As We Know It

And now  
 A few words  
 To hungry people everywhere:  
 "Fish 'n' Chips."

Oct. 88

## Fred and Harry

Fred was a potted plant.  
 Harry was a potted plant.  
 Fred never spoke to Harry.  
 Harry never spoke to Fred.  
 They were well and truly  
 potted.

Oct. 88

## Anonymous

—I want you to climb a mountain with  
 me.  
 —But I cannot.  
 —For why?  
 —For I have never climbed a mountain  
 before.

Oct. 88—To a girl in Saint Lawrence College

## Bacon

Something took someone from a warm slumber and tossed him back into the cold frigid land of the living. For a while he refused to succumb to wakefulness, lay their, eyes tightly shut, trying to dream a dream. It was no good. Those days were gone. It was is.

Suddenly an image appeared, as if projected upon those still closed eyelids; a blind image that insisted on being seen:

A young plump Pig, grunting, frolicking in the mud. Frolicking and grunting. Grunting and frolicking. And then a fumbling fellow came along, a seemingly harmless farm hand, wearing rubber boots wearing, recently disinfected, which hid his dirty sweaty feet. He traversed the fence of the Pig sty in a casual sort of way, pretending that his intentions were of a moral and innocent nature. Then he did something to that Pig.

The someone opened eyes and the image vanished with a splash of something red.

"We kill Pigs before they even know who they are. We kill them more than once. Each time we eat that smooth and salty and youthful flesh, we kill it again. "

The next day the someone opened a new hermetically sealed package. Opened for the first time, ripping, yanking, shoved in a finger, feeling the bacon, pulling and twisting, yanking, feeling the juice, the slippery bacon juice. We do it so well.

And then he warmed up that bacon, sizzle, making it hot for his mouths. He bit and the Pig died again. It died of shame. The room was filled with smoke. Burned singed flesh. Munch crunch gobble gobble gobble. The meal over, satiated, he wondered into the bathroom to wash off the fat which had smeared itself all over his all over.

There he stands, confronted by the present. Glutton. He has eaten like . . . Yes, like . . . No, like . . . yes . . . no . . . like. Looking into the mirror he surely must see, and he does, that he has eaten like a pig. He has eaten one of our own kind. He is a cannibal.

The whole world vomits.

The whole world vomits with pig fat over its ugly collective ugly face.

The whole world vomits pig.

Oct 88

## **Memories**

### **The Mountain**

As I watch the Mountain of Memories-  
 pushed ever upward  
 by the grinding groaning grinding

of monumental drift—  
 the “I” that  
 is  
 now  
 today  
 seems dwarfed by  
 the “I” that was.  
 Dwarfed by its grandeur.  
 Belittled.  
 It grows,  
 pointedly higher,  
 one inch per day.  
 Per one inch day.

So there I stand,  
 at the foot of that Mountain of Memories:  
 small and smaller,  
 shrinking.  
 Now a dog.  
 Now a cat.  
 Now a mouse.  
 Wild.  
 Scuttling and shrinking in its shadow  
 and still shrinking.  
 A speck.  
 I am fading away away away.  
 Soon there will be nothing left.

### **The Earth Quake**

But the photographs were not straight. They hung lopsided as if it made no difference. Their angles were at ones and twos. But I tried to make them right. Like that, you see, they made the walls sad. And it was as if they were thumbing their black and white noses at gravity. One day, in a sunny place far from the living room far from the depressed walls far from the leaning photos, I was busy. Click. Click.

In only one five-hundredth of a second a memory got in and could not get out. I would add the memory to the others. I knew it would tip over to one sides or the other. I knew it would make my living room even more untidy.

Click. Click.

The smell of chemicals reminded me of love. The red paper grew a red image and reminded me of love. The face smiled up from its liquid womb and reminded me of love. I turned on the light. I was in love.

“Hello. It’s me. I just printed one of the pictures. It looks really good. You look really good.”

But I like them big. The frame made the memory stay put. It meant no beginning and no end. But the nail was waiting. I hung the photo of the sunny memory and I hung it straight. I looked around and saw something strange.

All the other pictures had lost their lopsided dispositions.

All the other pictures were hanging straight.

It was wonderful. But then I noticed: the walls themselves were leaning over, tipsy and turvey and ready to fall.

I

I  
 see  
 feel  
 smell  
 know  
 dream  
 eat  
 breathe  
 cry  
 that I want you.

## Running And Hiding

From Time to time I write and tell—like an exorcism—I write and tell.

I am possessed—

body and soul.  
 I am possessed—  
 by and idea.  
 I am captured.  
 I am prisoner.  
 And the key is hers—for the holding—with only one way out:

Into her.  
 But she keeps the door locked.  
 But she keeps the key in her moist mouth.

This Helen of Troy.  
 Who's ban  
 like gravity  
 cannot fail to hold me down.

"You are too old," she said with a smile."  
 "Too old?" I said with a smile.  
 "Yes."

And so we are separated by years.  
 And when I look they run and hide—showing themselves to others.  
 And never to me.  
 We are separated by running and hiding life.  
 (To a girl in Saint Lawrence College)

## **Autumn**

The trees change their clothes,  
 Change green for a thousand shades of autumn.  
 Then the great annual striptease  
 A thousand leaves each day  
 Gets well, well, gets underway.  
 But all is far from well:  
 The sun displays a change of heart  
 The clouds depart

And sing on the wing sing the birds of summer.  
 The leaves tumble and fall  
 And trees know this is no good at all.  
 Caught in mid-striptease  
 By the sunshine mother  
 She gave them life and raised them  
 What, for this?  
 Oh the shame of doing the wrong thing at the right time.

Autumn 94

### The Haunted House

A haunted house of haunted things,  
 of memories and more.  
 Each door—on tired hinges hangs  
 and shrill that scream of hesitant opening.

#### Scream

Welcome to the lobby  
 where earthquakes quake incessantly.  
 The beginning of the beginning  
 of the end.

#### Scream

A town, a street, and there a store.  
 A **grapefruit girl** lives ever more  
 like a ghost, to see to know,  
 as solid as thin air.

#### Scream

A pebble beach a castle wall,  
 sea that sparkles, bright boats and all.  
 And Spain, over the mountain twisted ahead,  
 like unknown futures' unknown dread.

#### Scream

Cathedral trees and virgin beach:  
 dreams that lie outside of reach:

#### Scream

A living room a living place,  
a normal life and love.

**Scream**

A strange horrific bridge building name  
—This room is hellish, dark as death—  
hidden between the sheets  
And whispered like a phantom's breath.

**Scream**

No more doors nor rooms, I bled.  
they make me wish a wish I'm dead.  
I am not safe in my own head.

6 Nov. 94

## Solitude

me

## Mad

I am going  
 Going am I  
 I going am  
 Am I going  
 Mad

Talk talk talkety talk talk talk  
 Oooh  
 There were words  
 But no listen listen listen to me  
 Ears.  
 Only my own.  
 The words do a loop the loop the loop the loop the loop the loop  
 the loop  
 Caught in endless feedback  
 From my tongue to hear to hear

Am I going  
 Mad  
 Or have I already been?  
 And where am I now?  
 And who what when?  
 And why?  
 And if not why not?

## People are like Pages

People are like pages. I flick those glossy pages, with lively people wrapped in turn around cloths that shout out colours to the silence of the Ganges, with—holy cow, Holy Cows standing in the distance, sharp boned and starving in their holiness; brown dancing Zulu, with their painted warrior faces; and womanly women proudly jutting breasts, seeming to promise a pagey promise or two; Dyacs of Borneo still hunting head, wandering through the ghosts of trees chopped chipped and chiselled

into Japanese building site out of sight ply wood: why would wood make you think of death? An Inuit here and China man there, a Texan, a Frenchman, and Gypsy girl too, German man, Latvian lady, some shrouded fellow from Turin. Those exotic faces and out of reach places: hypnotic eyes that capture your soul; sad souls that capture your eye. And the familiar too. Mostly the familiar too. I flick those pages. Faces and faces and traces of faces, sometimes some text, explaining their graces or greed or things that they need. But then I stop that turning of pages. I stop and I stare. I gasp a breath. I stare. Of all those pages of abstract beauty, of torturous terror, of far away feeling, the much thumbed page of someone seeming close . . . to home, stops my wandering eye. Her image, in all its photographic dog eared glory, examined by many more than I, fondled in it two dimensions, imagined in movement, worshipped in glossy goddess glory, ripped from library volumes and taken quietly home, stops me sitting still. Unlike so many others, this is a picture with text. I read. I revel. I take glory from her sayings. Her words dance from the page, they seem to sing, they seem to bring a chance of a possibility of a hope of a dream of a chance. I am lost in the possibility. People are like pages. So all I can do is wait. She too, in the privacy of some private place, is glancing, flipping, turning, leafing through those self same pages. Where will she stop? Will she skip past my page, skip past the text with barely a glance, only wondering who comes next . . . or before? Looking for someone, looking for distance, a foreign face, fare and fine and most definitely not mine? So I sit and watch her turning of pages, for ages and ages and ages and ages. The book of pages is a thick book of ages; but look: see that ragged thing, right by the spine? See that ragged remains of a ripping deranged? See all that is left of my own bloody page? Torn out, screwed into a ball, tossed away into the giant dustbin of humanity. I am no more. People like pages can turn all they want, but I, at least, will be seen no more; my text never read: no-one will know who I am what I said. I feel like screaming and shouting and demanding: Which bastard bastard monster ripped out my page? I think of ex-lover—could it be her? I'm fooling myself. I'm playing games with my self. I'm playing with myself. I tore it out myself.

30 November 94

## As Much As

As much as I hate you,  
I love you.

I will always want you back.  
Always want you.  
I will always dream of you.  
Cry for you.

As much as I love you  
I love you.

9 December 1994

## The Howling Wind

The howling wind  
Howls round and round the rim  
Of a red bloody red damn red beer mug.  
The beer is red—the mug, transparently transparent—half empty.  
A tempest in a tea cup turns  
Maelström in beer mug.

Oh the angel i have lost.

How the wind does howl  
How the wind does even cry  
How the wind does lament—in a minor key.

My father was a miner—  
Half his life was black as coal  
Half his life was the white of a married martyr.  
My life is the death black of a burnt offering.

i am the mug.  
The wind howls about me.  
Inside me.  
i—the half empty mug  
Half full of sorrow—  
The rest is red bloody red damn red regret.

7 Feb. 95

### Wonder

In a world full of wonder  
I wander no more.  
There is no wonder  
No knocking of questions  
Knocking upon my door.

No roving of my mind  
No mutable thought  
Nor nothing of the kind.  
No hanging doubt  
No seeking no sought.

In a world full of wonder  
I wander no more.

Jan 95

## Ode To Nadia

I will willingly and wantonly exchange . . .  
 all the words of the world;  
 ten thousand thousand philosophies;  
 the pages of ages of history;  
 dreams;

the sing song sound of the seasons—  
 for you

(A light-hearted Ode written to a casual acquaintance 95)

## Spring 96

All alone in lonely self:  
 A lost winter  
 With cold snowy words—  
 It rambles on.

Robins have stayed away  
 —Staying on their holiday—  
 Tulips, tight lipped,  
 Keep heads low and hearts dry.  
 While lame lambs to the slaughter  
 Stay hide inside.  
 And bare branches dangle, throwing  
 Black skeletal shadows on side show walls.

A lost winter  
 With cold snowy words—  
 It rambles on.

But then,  
 Two lovers,  
 Locked in an arm hold  
 Locked in love

Locked in springs embrace—

Bring back the snowy words.

April 96

### **Sitting on a Staircase One Night**

On that North American  
 Metallic hanging American  
 Emergency staircase,  
 Staring down,  
 Through those bar-beam stairs  
 Ten stories down,  
 Wishing to tumble  
 Down the lot  
 Wishing  
 To have it done  
 To end the story  
 With those teeming teary  
 Drops of rain  
 Dribbling down,  
 Wiping out the ink  
 Like the last drop drop dropping  
 Of life blood,  
 Thinking of all gone before  
 —All remains untold  
 Laughing in the laughing face of eternity,  
 Laughing at me:  
 I look, and looking know,  
 There is no face  
 Only that sense of powerless energy;  
 Only that sense is pointless as emergency—  
 Call 999.

April 96



## Another Nameless Poem

I am dying  
A minute of this pain——  
A year of life  
taken.

Stop stealing the moments I have left.

The video clock counts on,  
but there is no film to see.  
The screen is painted black.  
For some time I've pretended.  
Too much time I've resented  
your Arab:  
His black dirty filthy Arab skin against yours.  
His Arab eyes in yours.

Shall I play *your* song?  
We never had a song.  
So I'll play your song.  
What are the words?  
Listen:

"And she recalls the day that she left home.  
Long good-byes, make me so sad,  
I have to leave right now.  
And though I hate to go  
I know it's for the better.  
Long good-byes make me so sad,  
Forgive me leaving now.  
You know I'll miss you so—and days  
We spent together."

I thought it was about the past.  
It was about the future.

It was about now.  
 A shadow on the blind.  
 Is it you? I cannot see. No. The wind. A shadow of wind.  
 Come home.  
 Come home and find me drunk.  
 Find me crying.  
 Don't let me be the falling tree in the forest—  
 falling with no-one to hear . . . Questioning if I really fall, or think I fall or fall  
 thinking.

So what is this all?  
 All this tears and terror and torture?  
 A show?  
 Is it just showing showing show?  
 Am I too clever for my own good?  
 Am I too dumb for yours?  
 Am I bathing in my misery—  
 hoping to burn,  
 hoping the agony will singe my  
 skin  
 skin  
 skin  
 so it can be seen?  
 Look.  
 Where have I been?

Is it just a show?  
 The video clock clicks silently on.  
 There I am.  
 On the screen.  
 Nobody is watching.  
 You are not watching.  
 The show plays to itself.  
 I plays to itself.  
 I plays alone.

(No Date)

## A-tat-tat

### Rat

Stand back  
 be gone  
 I feel an attack coming on.

### a-tat

I thesaurused my name  
 and there, on the terrible page  
 in black and blacker  
 Keith:  
     A left handed compliment  
     (I complimented myself)  
     A castigator  
         desecrator  
     A caustic twit  
     Abusive  
         conclusive  
     Diatribal dim wit  
     A loud mouth

### tat

bigoted and  
 opinionated  
 and lastly it said:  
 But *harmless*

### Rat-a-tat

Harmless?  
 Ha! tell that to the corpses.

tat

who said that?  
oh you!

**Rat-a-tat-tat**  
**Rat-a-tat-tat**

I said  
stand back  
be gone

**Rat-a-tat-tat**  
**Rat-a-tat-tat**

My words—like bullets  
I feel an attack coming on.

If only I could turn them

**Rat-a-tat-tat**

upon mys . . .

(No Date)

### **Shadows In a Cave**

For all the painted portraits  
hanging by the neck,  
with lovely canvas eyes eyeing lovely eyes—

For all the sculpted statues  
suggestively inclined,  
with alabaster bosom bare to the elements—

For all the sing song music,  
sensible love,

conducted by almighty harmonic rule—

For all the sauntering sonnets  
wandering the thin wondering line,  
between what is and what might be—

Paint peel.  
Stone crumble.  
Sound silence.  
Page fade.

For all the artful schemes—  
copied copies  
the ceaseless search—  
The original, the real, the best:  
Cast your shadow on the rest:  
———You are the only one.

Feb. 97

### **If I Could Write**

If I could write how I feel:  
my words would be engraved on gold leaf—  
but who—besides you—would understand?

If I could write what I feel:  
my lines would be endless—  
but who—besides you—could read so much?

If I could write when I feel:  
my spelling would be bloody awful—  
So much for the pen.

Feb. 97

## The Royal Throne

### Canto the First

*A Canto brief, though well Proportioned,  
Where Princely Schemes, duely apportioned,  
Are made to measure by the yard  
For dainty King—a right galliard,  
Perfectly suited for such Modern Times  
Of awful verse and worser ryhmes.*

The forecast was for frightful Reign:  
Darkly clouds, darkest disdain.  
With Princes, dregs of Incest Born  
With seeds of Justice all forsworn,  
Aborted hope, with infant cry,  
Calls in vane for fair ally.  
Princesses too, were hardly better  
And with that Reign perhaps were wetter:  
Moist and meaty, though they were—  
And gave new meaning to royal coffer—  
'Twas all for fun, they knew at least,  
Off'ring themselves as royal feast.  
Protected by befeater and guard,  
The parade appeared a right charade.

And so lies our Queen, in failing health,  
The death bed now her Commonwealth.  
Woe is she and woe the Nation  
Woe is all in anticipation:

“When I depart, who then might Rule?  
Oh, surely not my Princely Fool?”  
Her eldest son she thinks but little:  
If he should Rule she thinks that it'll  
Bring down the Nation; and the age d'or

Will ne'er be as it's been before.

Outside Prince Charming, most apprehensive,  
Through key-hole hears and turns all pensive.

"A Prince *and* King, 'tis Truly me!"

He's twice the man he used to be!  
Twice said twice done, twice contemplation,  
But half the man to lead a Nation?  
No such thing—he knows his mettle,  
Some Stratagem he needs must settle,  
To show the world his High Born importance  
And win the Nation's fixed allegiance.

"Oh woe is me, and me is woe!"

For not one notion apropos  
To drearest dirth and dire dread,  
Sits anywhere within his head.  
A vast and spacious place it seems  
With crooked windows, crooked beams,  
With chairs and table—though still no guests.  
And some might think that this attests  
The inhospitality of his mind,  
That no idea there can he find;  
But no, you see, one comes a-calling,  
Sits down with limbs relaxed and sprawling.  
A handsome fellow, a Smart Idea:  
Prince Charming greets him with Good cheer.  
They wag their chins in idle chatter,  
Until the guest gets to the matter  
Of his coming here, of his coming hither  
To forestall all that stormy weather.

"Oh Charming Prince"—Prince Charming he—  
"To Charm the Nation: your cup of tea.  
Sugar sweet, and piping hot,  
Rest on your Laurels you should not.  
Make them like you, love you too,  
The Nation must be your Choicest Brew.  
A man of the People, show yourself to be

A man of great Knowing and Philosophy!  
 A man of Wit, of Politics well versed,  
 A man of Courage in that all he durst.  
 A man of Taste, schooled in Aesthetics,  
 A man of Skill, expert in Athletics—  
 Be sure to conceal your varied prosthetics!  
 All these and more show yourself to be  
 As Second Nature is to Pedigree.  
 And then your Reign 'twill be quite fine!"  
 The Prince invites his guest to dine  
 On food for thought' "Eat all you will."  
 But scraps ne'er could an Idea fill.

And so Prince Charming, that very day,  
 Puts Plot and Plan well underway:  
 To quit his castle and vast entertaining  
 And off he went political campaigning.  
 Like Knight of Old: Sir Hudibras or some-other,  
 Anticipating the bountiful death of his mother:  
 His business was Earnest, an Arthurian quest,  
 Soliciting the Nation—their Wealth in his chest.  
 A task, no doubt, daunting, that spurred consternation,  
 Prince Charming must contend with his Ill Reputation:  
 A steed most unruly, never canter but run,  
 A Hobby-Horse that he sooner wust shun,  
 That barely could carry a Knight and his Armour  
 And hardly could help Prince Charming feel calmer.

A lady—old—a Mother figure  
 His life-long love that love ne'r shall wither.  
 A secret affair, though now divorced,  
 The Prince seemed free to run his course.  
 Yet Tabloid Stories, with naught for plot,  
 Took peeping-tom pictures of the lot.  
 The Nation talked of Scandal still,  
 With Catholic taste, divorce judged ill.  
 A task that would tax the bestest of men,  
 Prince Charming must o'come the poison of pen.

If flogging a dead horse as metaphor comes easy  
Think not of such scandal, the Prince is not sleazy.

So Royal court Prince bids, "Adieu."

The Royal throne his point of view.

The gates all close, Prince Charming rides,  
And to his trusty steed—Ill Reputation—confides:

"Something amiss, I feel something missing,  
Something that halts my forward progressing.

Ah, now I have it, a Trusty Companion,  
With whom I might share my knowing opinion,  
To travel with me this mendacious dominion."

Just then he espied one of uncertain station,  
A loitering dandy with due affectation;

A coxcomb well versed in self-congratulation.

"Yon fellow," calls Charming, "your name and pedigree?"

"Jack to my friends, skilled in Repartee,  
Though my Mother ne'r was quite known to me."

"A bastard then, is that all your worth?"

"A bastard indeed, but only by birth."

And so Prince Charming, impressed by this Sense,  
Took Jack as his squire—no mind of expense.

'A yeman hadde he and servants no mo,'

The likes of which Chaucer could never have bore.

"Good fellow, together we'll ride through this Nation  
Take high road and low without discrimination."

Like Hudibras and Ralph, they set on their way,  
Seeking the fame of Fortuitous day.

Poor Jack, without steed, pursued on his bike,  
Peddling hard: he'd much rather hike.

And all of a sudden, Jack calls to the Prince,

"I have such a Plan, with which I envince  
A moment of glory for you and your steed,

From which all the Nation will have to believe,  
Your mettle, your worth, your high ranking birth,  
Are fit for a Ruler of such solemn mirth.

Look there," pointed Jack, "you see the sign:

'The Polo Nationals' are starting at nine.  
 And you such a player, you'll surely be best:  
 All Glory to win, without much a test."

With Ill Reputation between his legs,  
 Prince Charming rides onward and Good Fortune begs  
 Some small assistance to help in the game  
 And show all the Nation the right of his claim.

"That fellow plays polo like no man on Earth,  
 Thank God for the Glory of his Royal Birth."  
 Indeed he can hear the future acclaim  
 That hangs like a Parasite onto his name.  
 And so almost heady with anticipation,  
 The Prince gallops in to great jubilation;  
 But then, loathsome Fate, with so wicked a smile,  
 Has something in store, Prince Charming to rile:  
 In terms of mistake, this one is a whopper,  
 And almost at once the Prince comes a cropper;  
 Almost at once he feels like a Fool,  
 His steed and his pride both fall in the *Pool*.  
 We see from this tale the importance of reading,  
 As well as the value of public-school breeding:  
 Poor Jack, hapless fellow, "Polo" he read  
 The prefix "Water" n'er entered his head.  
 "Prince Makes Great Splash," the headlines all said.

A Sunday of months were soon all past by,  
 All Pious and Solemn all Pleasures deny—  
 Except for one morning, a tampon considered  
 A dream from which he ne'r was delivered.

"Enough of this idle, a new formulation  
 Some cunning idea to impress the Nation!  
 A Man of the People, ho, that's how I must seem,  
 So think, dear old Jack, a new cunning scheme."

"I have it in one," quoth Jack with nonchalance,  
 I have such a Plan to set them off-balance.  
 A job you shall have: so humble a living,  
 And think pennies are tanners and tanners a shilling,

And shillings are guineas and guineas a fiver:  
I suggest you become a London Bus Driver."

"A spiffing idea, what, they'll love me for that—"

"And perhaps you can live in an old Council Flat."

"Good ho, my Good fellow, my Squirey Jack—"

"And eat fish 'n' chips from a newspaper that  
Speaks ill of the royals, reports laced with scorn:

Then who can deny the right of first-Born?

And drink Tetley's bitter from containers with widgets."

"That's going too far, a Prince with some midgets . . . ?"

We grant, though Blessed with Some Understanding

The wit of the Prince was far from expanding;

Indeed, it was kept in an old plumbers box,

That once was a store for Royal Ballcocks.

He kept it secure, seldom taking it out,

Except for those times when, no one about,

He'd pull it and tug it for all it was worth

And often increase it by Length and by Girth.

So soon they quit the Ritz-Hilton-Carlton  
Moved to a bedsit near Tooting and Fartem:

And soon as he was ever quite able,

He joined the rest of working rabble.

A Double-Decker was his choice:

An Omnibus; he did rejoice

Of honest labour and simple folk,

Though soon did really quite provoke

These simple people, coming and going

By changing the route, the intent of showing

The architectural sights, both here and there:

Buildings of which they were hardly aware.

"Hey love, where ya goin'? this ain't the right way?"

An elderly wench was forthright to say.

"This ain't my street you made a wrong turning."

"But learn my Good dame to be more Discerning.

This street is renowned for the finest of building.

Look yonder, and see? the *breadth* of the guilding.

Good British Architecture at its best:  
 Corinthian Columns along with the rest:  
 Fluting and Scotia and Torus and Plinth  
 What more could you want from a bus ride to Finch'?  
 Corbeled Arches and Splendid Cupola,  
 Nothing like this in France or Angola.  
 Typanum, Louver window, Rococo Embellished—"

"Those bloody old buildings, they should be demolished!"

"My very Good wench, you surely must see  
 The remarkable worth of this fine Apogee  
 Of Culture and Taste and finest design,  
 Those crumbling walls are an architect's shrine.  
 Oh, Marvellous Manaras, with Many a Story  
 The beauty of which is *a posteriori*  
 The best of Britain, Designed and Invented  
 Fixed in time, well placed and cemented."

"That's all very well," the wench did say  
 "But the road you are taking, 'tis right out my way.  
 I live on a street quite different by far."

"Then 'tis time that you movéd from where that you are."

"You cheeky young stripling, you insolent lad,  
 I'll complain to your boss—he'll be ever so mad."  
 A moral indeed, 'tis really quite clear:  
 Bus diver, chauffeur, chief gondolier:  
 Pay Goodly attention to where thou dost steer.

In great melancholy the Prince and his Squire  
 To public house—on public feet—a drink to acquire.

"Try Tetley's Best Bitter 'twill cheer you upeth  
 LandLord, Good fellow, fill up his cupeth."

The cupeth filled, the Prince with no shame,  
 Asked Vintage and Beeryard from whence it came.

"A 90 indeed," the landLord did quip,  
 "From Stoke-on-Trent, and please leave a tip."

Next day, when Jack explained this and more  
 Prince Charming, resigned, reservèd and sure:

"Enough of this 'man of the people,' Good Squire

'Til some future day when the people are higher  
 In birth and breeding and fine etiquette;  
 I'll lower my-self not by one half a step."

"I have a new Plan, with such engineering  
 'T'll surely *turn-coat*, and so endearing  
 You once and for Good and Truly for all  
 Prince Charming, indeed, thou shalt go to the ball."  
 By which he meant, the great Coronation  
 Thinking it some kind of dancing formation,  
 With movement all Planned in Choreograph  
 No place for a shuffle, chuckle or laugh.  
 Where Lords and Ladies, all decked in their best,  
 With Spingles and Spangles a-loose on their breast  
 Make dainty foot movement from life-time of learning  
 For Royal Preferment: the goal of their Yearning.

"Good fellow, my Squire, my Jackery man  
 Tell me indeed, what is the new Plan?  
 And prey, make it smart and wearing red boots."

"Indeed my Prince, 'tis so smart it hoots.  
 This epoch exceeds others, clearly by far:  
 Mass communication will make you a star  
 That hangs in Elysian Fields high above  
 A heavenly body the Lord that we love."

"But how can we do it, what Gift shall I show?  
 What Talent, what Calling what dainty *morceau*?"

"I have it, I know it, all praise and Eureka  
 We'll make you a high-brow Radio Speaker:  
 One of those fellows who blabs Philosophic  
 And teachers the Nation things telescopic.  
 Distant Notions, vague Hypotheses  
 Thou shalt bring them close with the greatest of ease.  
 Explain to the people Aristotle and Plato  
 Calvin and Hobbes and the greatest Horatio.

No sooner said—'twas done much later:  
 Goodfinger, RS's finest curator,  
 And Oxbridge, great Poet Laureate,

Were gathered like some learned conglomerate.  
 And so the Prince, in darkness sitting,  
 Betwixt these men, 'twas quite befitting.  
 And BBC Radio Four all a-ready,  
 The Show now began: the Prince feeling heady.  
 A Goonish idea came into his mind . . .

“Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to *Mankind*:  
 The show that explores what can't be defined.  
 And welcome this week our own Royal Prince,  
 Who joins with our panel the world to convince  
 That Rules of logic, in things of morality  
 Bring order and sense and certain finality.  
 Prince Charming, Plato's cave, what's the meaning?  
 We know of the wall, but what of the ceiling?”  
 Replies the Prince, though with uncertain usage:

“Enter Bluebottle, pauses for applause, not a sausage.”

“I beg humble pardon, could you be *less* clear?”

“Where's Minnie Bannister, she's such an old dear.

And Bloodnock and Eccles and Gry Type Thyne,  
 They're late for the show, it started at nine.”

“This isn't the *Goon Show*, it's *Mankind* by name.”

“Well Goodness me, I thought it the same.”

We see, by now, a moral in store,  
 True in this case as heretofore:  
 Wireless Goons will live ever more.

Ignominious, 'twas *the* final word  
 Though seldom so loudly and clearly heard.

“The failure is taxing, I must abdicate.”

“Your mother's still living, you'll just have to wait.”

“Indeed, indeed, but what can I do?”

“I have such a Plan to offer to you,

'Tis likely will meet with some ballyhoo:  
 Quit the city, to country we'll go,  
 'Tis more to your Nature; besides we will show  
 Your insight, your foresight, your *farsight* as well  
 Pertaining to farming and growing in general

Teach yeoman and tenant such Good Husbandry  
With all your vast Wisdom and Pedantry."

"Good Squire, my Jack, my fellowy man  
You know I shall do the best that I can.  
Onward and forward, the direction I seek  
Lies surely beneath my own very feet."

For Ill Reputation 'twas a three day ride,  
(Especially with the Prince ne'er astride);  
And certainly sure, it could have been longer  
But with each of these Plans he grew daily stronger.  
A glorious steed, nowhere was his equal—  
Well, not in this story, though perhaps in the sequel.

In Home County they came, just after mid-day  
A curious lane on route to Bombay,  
No more of the Empire, though we still possess  
Cardiff and Belfast and all Inverness.

"Good Jack, my fellow, my Squire, my man  
The strangest of feelings begin to began.  
I suddenly notice a thing most Sublime:  
Whenever I speak the words come in Rhyme."

"'Tis Normal my Prince, with Vastest Dominion  
Even your words respect your Opinion.  
Like soldiers who stand in line on parade,  
Your language is likewise also arrayed.  
(And some might say, profoundly clichéd)."

"Ah look, a farmer, hard at it, I'd say."

"The wench is most willing, and in some disarray."

"No wonder, they do it right there in the hay.

Oh, simple pleasure, oh country life."

"Not quite so simple: here comes his wife."

In some other field, Enclosed for a Century,  
A tenant was working his land most exemplary.

"I say," calls the Prince, his opinion to offer,  
"That's not how you do it, not fitting, not proper.  
The Poison you spray keeps your crops nice and healthy  
But the cost of it all, thou shalt never be wealthy."

"What else can I do, to protect 'em from insects  
And air-Born virus and all Nature's defects?"

"'Tis simple indeed, make Nature your Lord  
For he is bountiful, God this has assured.  
Rotation for one, diversification another  
And Good Natural Compost will keep it together.  
I preach what I practise on my Vastest Estate,  
The success of which I shall shortly relate.  
Insect, Bacteria, Virus, and Fungus  
Are not such problems though seeming Humungous  
Set one on the other and be rid of the group  
Without the expense of a pesticide soup.  
Prevention is generally better than cure  
And constant vigilance success to secure.  
Chemical sprays and all hydrocarbons  
Will not in the end help your Fortune or Gardens.  
Noxious substance and prickly practice  
Are to the detriment of homo-erectus.  
Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane  
Will never replace old ways that stay-the-same."  
The Prince gave all kinds of laboured ideas  
So convincing was he to the labourers' ears,  
A Town-Hall meeting was soonest Proposed  
Where farmers from far were all unopposed  
To such as the Prince decreed they should follow:  
Organic Farming the Nation did swallow.  
'Tis Good that they did, for food was soon rare:  
And Hardly a crust for peasants share.  
Famine in vengeance swallowed the Nation:  
    "'Tis Truly a cure for all constipation."  
And so, thus showing, Good taste to be lacking  
Peasant and Lord sent Prince Charming packing  
Off to France, in utter exile  
Better off there: the Frenchies to rile.  
And so the moral, we freely admit,  
Is mind your own business and *nurture* your wit

Or else all the Nation will think you a twit.

Jack the Jack, a book of his story  
Describing those Travels—with full count of his Glory—  
With hapless Prince, well written with art,  
And concealing the guilt of his own guilty part,  
Became a best-seller, a publisher's dream,  
*The* final Chapter of his cunning scheme.  
Goodly young Jack, now cast in gold,  
A wond'rous sight, the Nation now sold  
On his manly strength and all certitude  
No doubt of a doubtingly doubt was imbued.  
A fellow Born of an humble green-grocier  
The future, for now, could hardly seem rosier.  
Such humble oranges, such breeding to lack,  
Such power, such foresight, such contemptible knack:  
And now, all hail: God Save Good King Jack.

Feb.97

## An Old Married Couple Cross the Street

The Golden Years,  
By some perverse reverse alchemy:  
Rusting solitude,  
Riveted silence,  
A junk yard of could have beens,  
All wrapped up in silence.

Italian by virtue of birth—  
A foreign tongue in a foreign land—  
Cross a Canadian street:  
She, with a trail of varicose veins  
Walking down her leg;  
He, with the superfluous poundage of waiting  
Baseball cap on his head.  
The late summer spot-light:  
Hand in hand,  
Hand in hand,  
They cross from one side to one other side,  
Hand in hand.  
Golden sun sunshine.  
Golden.  
To beg, borrow, or steal,  
A nugget or two . . .

## the final chapter

silence  
silence  
no one talks to me  
any more  
all future:  
history  
everything  
history  
no plan  
no game  
no love  
just pain:  
spinning me in dizzy silence

there is no forward  
onward  
only backward:  
everything has already happened  
only  
silence  
silence  
remains untold

July 2005

## And Ode to Wine

Does "ode" mean smell?  
I think it does 'cos the wine I drink is very odorous.  
And when I drink it,  
Finally sorrow makes sense.

Finally I can grasp imaginary happiness  
And squeeze it to death.

Finally I can cry into the glass  
And it's half emptiness becomes brimming.

And finally I know there is no hope but I don't care.

4 11 2006

### **Authentic Voice**

Creative writing class,  
Where they said I must find

My authentic voice.  
I racked my brains to the point of pain

Only to discover

I have no voice  
Of any kind.  
Even when I shout.

May 2007

# Help

help

3 6 2007

### To What Depths Have We Plunged

Her Love was like walking on water  
A final miracle after a stream of false prophets  
An adventure yet safe and secure and sure  
the future held no fear

And then she took some kind of twisted step  
and plunged downwards  
The surface broken and there was no support and I followed her down down  
down  
To what depths has she plunged?  
In the cold deathly cold cloudy cold depths I can only guess.  
I can only say she sank faster than I  
To what depths have I plunged?  
I can only say I hit rock bottom  
A lifeless soulless hopeless place  
where much later and quite alone  
I found myself surprisingly grubbing around for lost or stolen treasure  
Friends and acquaintances said the sharing of treasure was fair  
But deep within my barely beating heart I knew  
The offer to share was fair  
The declination fairer  
But this was just grubbing around in murky waters  
For lost or stolen treasure

Her love was like walking on water  
To what depths have we plunged . . .

November 2007