



THE TIN CAN MIND

(in search of a voice)

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for Dante and Mica

THE TIN CAN MIND

(in search of a voice)

The tin can mind is the place where I store and search out the voices of creativity. It is the place of dreams, yes, but also that of reality. Both the literary beauty and the poetic wonders come from this place. And on these pages I will do my best to translate what the tin can mind holds.

Tales

It's times like this,
when my hair is wet,
and my thoughts are clear,
that my imagery hunts out ideas,

a thousand tales I store
all ingredients from inside my head,
patience, though, you must require
for my mind to decide which one to tell

and here I warn you
because here
are stories that obscure the mind
and wage war on the tender heart

but together, you and I
like hawks, will slice the blues
with our wings
in search of troubled heroes,
trails of breadcrumbs,
and wounded spirits

we will plug the holes

no need of worry, though
as we'll break for supper
and make our journey home
to regain our strength

but for now, hand me your patience
so shall I return it with a tale
and many more
if you so desire to peel back the skin
that hides the next, and next

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Tin Can Mind

I heard this voice
one Friday night
as I stepped into the parking lot
after a laborious day
of baking crusts
and shredding cheese

it echoed,
this voice,
right through my tin can mind
opening it up like homeless food
and spilled beans

this voice
bouncing off of everything

I don't know what it said
it spoke of
 victory
 disaster
wins and gallowing losses
vowels and consonants
all sounding blurred
like megaphone mechanic

for days and days
all I could think of was that voice

I have to find it

a week went by
when I finally decided I would

The Tin Can Mind

feeling foolish and a little crazy,
I asked Gary if he had ever heard it

“yes, I know that voice,” he said
“there’s a football stadium
just over there,”
and pointed across Banksville Road
to the shallow hill sloping
like an awaiting hand

I would find that stadium
I would find my voice

that night, I hopped in my car
skidded off the parking lot
tearing into Banksville traffic
shifting lanes like a bad twitch,
the noise of the radio disturbed me
I turned it off
I needed complete silence
I needed to hear that voice

what roads I took didn’t matter
all things would point to the stadium

then I found it

the stadium’s sight opened up
like an egg cracking open
toward the sky

I parked the car
and my silent steps walked the street
circling the chain-link fence
that surrounded the field

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it was just an empty stadium
no game was playing
but then things were happening I didn't understand
everything was a voice

the droning muffler to a black car passing by
the walking steps of a stranger in the distance
then a whistle somewhere
like the *whizzz* of spinning firecrackers

that whistle, too, sounded like a voice
everything did
everything was
all was scattered amongst the night
all of it outside and beyond the fence

I left there without even gripping that fence
but it was just a simple
high school football field
turf grass
polished, steel benches
concession stand closed shut

it was all of shiny objects
that followed the eye
nothing about it that circled the ear

composed, and orderly

if I had hopped over the fence
I would have stood
at the center of the world
in the middle
of nowhere

I am Dante

"Say goodnight to baby," she would say each night
before going to bed

I would crawl low
under the blankets
touching her pregnant belly
and hum some silly song
made up impromptu,
off-key and filled with terrible rhymes

I'd finish with a kiss to her tummy
and whisper good night

each time
our baby responded with
"Goodnight daddy.
Goddnight mommy."

and always with,
"My name is Dante"

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In a Seed

I tried to move a mountain once
using just my faith
but it didn't work
instead, the wind spun me 'round
and brought me to my knees
standing up, I tried again

I stared at that mountain
until my eyes bulged out
proclaiming it to move
commanding it to
begging it to!
I even negotiated with it a deal
promising to mow its lawn
for just an inch to the left

but nothing happened

so I screamed at it
I shamed it with fat-mamma jokes
shot out every cuss word I could invent

but the wind slapped me back again
leaving me without a breath
little less a voice to scream with

so I threw things at it
patches of grass
clumps of dirt
branches
logs
rocks
boulders
my shoes

The Tin Can Mind

drenched with sweat and with naked feet
I had nothing left to throw
except on the ground I saw
a seed

--a mustard seed

at first I wanted to launch it
but in loss of hope
I tossed it towards the mountain
without a strain
and as I searched for my scattered shoes
the seed flicked against the steepest side

a sound

~ping~

rung inside my ears

within a second the mountain crumbled
like a stack of Jenga bricks made of mud
only then did the wind caress my cheek
knowing well I understood
that faith requires no force to move

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Clouds in the Water

Into those abyssal ponds of yours
I see the clouds
 ...floating in the water
like a Walden discovery
nurturing the trees and life around

an existence beneath the existence:
your eyes carry me through the rain

standing still and moving forward
we breathe deeply our parching tempest,
with blazing Lightning
striking lit the world around us

holding still

just...

about....

to tip...

but we escape its fall
through those eyes of yours
those pools of water

they change
not only in color
but in understanding
because
those clouds were not there yesterday
nor the day before
yet today they float
and allow me do the same forever

One Sword

forged as one
with the shining blade,
our bodies merge
to the worded tongue

one sword we form
cast and struck
by the creative breath
of the triumphant swordsmith

let us shape ourselves
to the undivided steel
stone-hard
against the world
of those devices
lost in corroded flesh

oh Master

bring down the sword
that carves our love
away from lust
besides emotion
untouched by fear

meld two single lovers
along your sword's engravings

bring our embodied spirits
upon the scripted blade

sharpen our creative minds
with your razored speech

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we carry forth your word
oh Master,

these two, poor beloved souls
destroyed to join
one sword
cast to scribe the lives of lovers,
cutting down legions more

but ours remains
in You

slash through our sorrows
deliver Truth
maintain us righteous
in your authored contract
written by your guided pen

your spoken sword
forging two lovers lost
now found as one

Like Sheep

Subsequently following in Indian fashion
the crowd sways to a single motion
a voice calling
a voice telling
and they do more than listen
they mimic
this voice, without distinction

they become one
like sheep
plowing the land
that leads them toward the cliff

a lie of labor meant
not for oxen

but sheep

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Distinction

the sheep is not the sword
the sword cuts down the sheep

to be one with the sword
is not to mimic the world

one with the sword
is to cut away oneself

from the world of sheep
hiding out the cloak of wolves

The World

The world is your enemy
and yet
you keep trying to make friends
convinced that you
yes you
can change its ways

but it always the world
that captures you first

it does not change you however
it does not make you any more evil
than you were from the beginning

it numbs you instead
to your very ways

this friend

he's a teacher of sheep
masking the body of wolves

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Giving

God said

I will give you this child

but I was undeserving

so he gave me a nephew instead

Child, Hold Me

The first time I held
my baby nephew
the world spun around my head

for a long, long moment
it didn't feel as though
I was truly holding a breathing life
in the cradle of my arms

it felt more as if
he was the one
holding me

he was the uncle
I was the child

he had me in his grasp

*I will fall if you let go, I told him
I will fall if you leave your eyes
and look away,
hold me tight, Mica
hold me*

he was a tiny person
holding a tinier man

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Thankless Nation

tucked in the underbelly
of folded flesh
our thanks reside
in paper notes and forms of speeches

like a message inside a fist
tightly creased
pressed within our grasp
held before us
at the podium

first of all
we'd like to thank the human tissue
which allowed us
of our fall
lie and crawl amidst the dirt
making up our very grime
that turns to powder
as we die

we'd like to thank
our grey hair of knowledge,
our suffering teachers
for munching apples,
since without them all
our skin might never turn to ashes

thank you mother
for your sacrifices
and for your callous knack
of bringing guilt right back to mind,
wrapping 'round our necks
that umbilical cords of life

thank you father
for our thankless worries
and for leaving us
inside the crib,
which allowed us to pretend
that your leave has made us stronger

we make metaphors of our thanking
forming speeches
of deafened meanings
cast upon the broken ears
vibrating
with stilling drums

graduations
matrimonies birthday parties...
all occasions
that give us chance
to show our deadened thank-you's
gratitude on paper napkins
spoken from within the cage
of curling ribs
and hardened hearts

we thank you all in today's occasion
we mention all your names
making note of every face
except
but one

He alone, we forget

we give thanks with love, of course
but only for the sake of love itself
using the word in its own defining
like cannibals

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eating up their young

all the while we forget the name
that gives true source

to our very love
a name
which screams inside that cage
from outside the heart within
taboo stained
hushed and hated

only initials
can the best of us muster,

J and C

mustard seed or not
faith just weighs a mountain

in all our courage
in all our thanking
we fail to mention
the One who stands beside the Father
above the mother
and beyond the bodies
who fail
to mention those two initial letters
like bookends on a lonely shelf
with only breadcrumbs in between

forgetting His name
in all our celebrated thanks
is like lighting a fire
that produces no flame

When I Grow up

I want to be a grandfather
so that I can tell children tales
and they will know them as truth

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The Blue-Ring Octopus

Gather 'round children
come close
closer so that you can hear my voice
and know that this old man
was not always the brittle grand-pap
you see today with a cane

I was once quite peppy
and had more fire in me
than the blazing hell itself
I had adventures
many of which I've told you already
but this one
this one is best saved for last

Hapalochlaena Maculosa
was his fancy name
for the blue-ringed octopus
a monster of the sea
but we called him The Blue Ringo
and sometimes Happy Macky
my mission
this time, children
was to poke it
with a stick

so I traveled out to the Indian Ocean
shackled into a pair of spandex
and armed with this very cane
that was then no more than just a stick

we had no air tanks then
no fancy scuba gear
so I had to do

with just the air inside my lungs
I dropped from a combat jet
hundreds
--no, thousands!--
of feet in the air
spiraling down like a demented squirrel
and splashed into the center of the ocean

I swam back to shallower waters
finding my nemesis slinking around
over a rock like a delicate lover
waving his tentacles in silken swoops
to let the world of the ocean know
that this
was one smooth predator

--suddenly--

he sparked into high alert
forming electrifying blue rings all over his skin
and I knew that now the time had come
to either poke
or to die trying

ole' Blue Ringo jet himself backwards
sucking in water and forcing it out again
spearing through his liquid medium
quick'r than a bullet in air
"You mad whore, you" I thought
confident that his tactical maneuvers
were no match for the inborn stalker
that still resides in me today

I jabbed at him with a forward thrust
but the invertebrate was too quick
too smart

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too sly.
he whirled like an insane ballerina
pimp-slapping his tentacles across my face

one of his umbrella
stuck onto my cheek like a kiss of death
two of his tentacles lashed around my neck
but I whacked him across his big dome
he screeched to Poseidon for divine help
but noise travels slow in water
so we were left alone in battle

its blue rings glowed like satanic halos
hypnotizing me to a dream of numbness
but as soon as his beak lashed for my nose
I jabbed the stick into his radula
"Taste that, you willy-munching bitch!"
and tore his rubbery tentacles from my neck

I pinned him against a rock
with both my knees
and it knew it was defeated

-poke-

our fight was over
he had been defeated

we stared into one another with swells of respect
and I let that beautiful creature go
with both pity and pride holding my heart

In Futility

Those who wish God dead
are nothing but ants
angry at man
for building a house
on his own land

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Touch

We float in our lovemaking
and press —
 not only against each other —
but up against the boundaries of infinity,
with our water
dripping into the darkness,
our sweat scratching
the upper crust of our skin
where nerves and pleasures meet
to dance and tangle,
to soothe and tingle,
taking over sight and sound
— this touch —
it wraps us closer still,
turning a lap dance
into more than just a waltz,
skin to skin
we've come to make
as our creator made with us
through passion,
 shapes,
 and vague imaginations

we falter for just a second
only to keep pushing again
moving strong under a clouded moon
— our only witness —
 yet...
from even there,
from far, far up there
she's not even whole enough to stand against us

but our muscles twitch

The Tin Can Mind

we come together
the way it happens in all our dreams
and refuse to reach any one conclusion
with our toes still dangling in the air
 still high
 and floating
never wanting to touch ground again
knowing well
we will crash against it hard, instead

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Resistance

Made of plastic,
a cup stands on the table
posing an empty threat.

A glorious bottle is raised
containing prestigious fluids,
aged for the lips of wealth.

The wine pours down and aims,
reaching to flow inside.

The drinking tool then shifts,
pushed back by the liquid thrust;

And it is only when
the glass fills halfway up
that it decides to stand its ground.

He's had enough.

But the wine is perseverant
and the wrath will tip the cup,
spilling the contents to the table,
spreading out to reach the edges
and flow off to drown men's feet.

My Kingdom

With total sovereignty
I rule this kingdom
of but one window

To the entering palace
is a single gate

Ridding of what I just ate,
I relieve a groan
above my throne
of imitation marble,
sitting so, I hum a warble

About astute concentration
I try to govern this unruly nation,
none to rule but a single man
who has come to finish a simple plan

And once my term has ended
as unseated king
there will be another
who, this throne he'll cling

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Smudges

Streaks of smothered rainbows
dance and twirl around the street
but none show in the sky,
where drops of rain fall down
like business men awaiting failure

tumbling with precision
these raindrops hit their targets,

without a choice the ground swells up
rejecting what it cannot absorb,
puddles forming in swampy grooves,

here is where your feet will splash,
the liquid rain will rise
and cover grounds of retouched land

Let Their Turn Come

an exterior light shines within
to spoil our inner secrecy,

our dreams and hopes are then exposed,
projected on the wall for all to see,

as they munch on their bowls of popcorn,
and judge you, and your subconscious,
the audience ridicules your outmost desires,

but wait until their turn has come,
so that *their* thoughts spray-paint the walls
in a color shaded by humiliation,

then the judges will become the judged,
and their insecurities will be for all to view,
it is then that you must play the role of man,
the way he was meant to be,

then shall you close your eyes and keep them shut,
silencing sight and blinding your words
from committing their same mistake
of following satan into the role of critic

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Distortion

Crouched in a ball
the lonesome man has time to think
to wonder

to hope and dream
reshaping this world in his mind
into something that it is not

grappling the truths and wonders
he twists them in a knot

wrought, scrapped, and stretched,
these thoughts reform his sight
into something he much more desires
into a fluid essence of veiling guiles
into lies of peaceful ties

he denies himself
who he really is

he forgets that his jacket straps
tell the story of his mind

a shunned, lonely, crazy man he is

but the world has not a clue
of the man he wants to be
one of peace
of calm
and Harmony

denying the brutalities he's committed
both to those he loved
and those he simply hated
those he liberated upon their deaths

The Tin Can Mind

a wreathed distortion takes up a toll
a roll of thoughts that pull his mind
to find, to know, to feel
the reel of his disguise

surprise, surprise

no remorse for what he'd done
gun at hand and framed with smiles
bile and rage condoned these actions

he had saved them all
they had wanted it

all lies

like a guiding light amidst the darkness
that guides the ship to the seashore wreck

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Sadistic Enjoyment

To find satisfaction
in the sound
of a porcelain doll shattering
is one of the more disturbing things
that comes to mind

what created so much hate
within the psyche
of a madman,
who destroys dolls
to fulfill this pleasure?

a sick addiction

was the madman's own
porcelain doll broken in
his playful, innocent past?

or was he born
without childhood treasures
without love of his own?

what creates a madman
perhaps
is none other than a madman himself

one who destroys
porcelain dolls for fun

When I Grow Young

I will revisit my adulthood
and remember
how it was better
to be a child
because the lies
were never meant to hurt you

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The Trolls

They were in my closet,
a thousand of them,
stacked and packed from wall to wall.

I went to my Daddy
and tapped on his shoulder,
by the hand I guided him back,
and asked *him* to turn the knob,
so he did.

We peered inside,
and all of them were gone,

“Where’d they go hiding?”
I swore I had seen them

“It’s shadows,” dad said,
but shadows don’t dance,
nor do they echo or sing.

Then, just as dad turned,
a green one showed up.
I yelled for my Daddy,
he turned a bit shocked,

poof!

and the troll was gone,
unseen by his grown eyes.

Pregnant

“it’s only flesh,” I had said
because I was a fool
and wanted to believe it

but later

“this is a life,” I said
because I had learned
that *this* was the truth

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The Pea

We went together for our first sonogram
our boy only eight weeks in the womb

too early to know the sex for sure

that was the first day
Heather and I smiled together in months

in the parking lot
we each held our own
printout copy of our child

this little gray, fuzzy image
of a pea

he was our child
as big as the universe

so we called him Dante
giving him the name
of the great Italian poet

Mistakes

gone into a cool infinity of disaster,
a plaster of thoughts begs to please
for a breeze to lift me high,
where only a cry can bring me down
to drown and sort through my mistakes-
but it shakes me too much
as such I fail to stare in the face,
so I brace myself, and await the worst
from first, piling all through the last,
aghast! they attack in a rush
and crush at my bones,
stones and sticks, skinning my soul
their goal, one that is single,
leaves a tingle without hope
like rope gnawing my neck
with speck of spit damp on my chin,
to win, I cannot
the knot tightens, and my escape is defeated
cheated by something I myself have created
rated to judge me and to impose my own guilt
and a quilt of prayers, scarcely stitched,
pitched here and there, asking, "*just please!*"
these are the last chances I've got,
brought as a beg from my own pain
like a cane guiding the blind
to find the sight for which he has searched
so, perched like a bird I go back to my nest
to rest from the wrongs that none other has made
and I fade, but know it'll begin once again
with a pen rewriting the mistakes I have drawn...

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Morning Beach

I awoke this morning to the sound of waves
splashing their secrets to the sand
I overheard the secrets
gentle
smooth
without a rush
the sand lay silent
absorbing what it was being told
and then it gave a sort of smile
white with foam and laughter
and I couldn't help but laugh myself
giving a voice to the sand and water