

Selected Poems

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Time Out of Mind

Glass willows

by the river

tinkle in the air.

A traveler on the river journeys

On; and somewhere

in the firmament

stars come sprinkling down.

Under the river

glass willows

sparkle in the water; and

sunlight

spills

upon

the

afternoon.

Concealed in This Picture Are

The swallowfly
sites with
8 eyes.

Around the cattails
marshbirds sing
blue.

I ooze where you walk
weasel

Sez ousel, under
water under
sky

Where the yellowtails
fly.

Around the marshes
cattails sing
ping.

I march betwixt your sight
Sez cat with yellow eye
with the eyes of his
9 lives.

And he guzzles ousel weasel woosel
dragon bird and butterfly.

I walk the night
and the moon moves
with me.

On the first spring
evening i walk with
the moon and he wanders
tangled by the winter
winds. We look in
a dark pool of melted
snow. I see my
own face shadowy
and strange. The
moon's reflection is
like a dream.

Thin clouds pass by,
but they move faster
than the moon or i.

We come to a hill
but the moon hides
and i run through
the new grass and
when i reach the
top he is there
and he laughs at me
and i laugh too.

I walk with the moon.

Here Today

The eye of the
Japanese paper fish
watches me
as I
climb the stairs

Red and green willow
shoots stand in
water in the purple
vase and
downstairs the record
stops.

From the ceiling
the hallcord
dangles somewhere near
my hand.

In the kitchen downstairs
light green wax
melts from the
bayberry candle

And as I go into
the bathroom no
one is here.

this shrub
a member of the olive family
ranging in color from blue to white
is a native of southwest Asia.
In height
it may reach as many as twenty feet
The flowers
may be double or single-
and usually have a pleasant scent.

Knowing all these things
how can I yet
find beauty
in the
sweet, dusky grape-clusters
of sun-warmed bud
or love the
lacey
malted-lavender
lilac bloom
so foolishly.

a cabbage

elegant!

What's This?

If you've never thought of it that way

pose the following problem:

articulate a sphere

so round

each part

start

here

hello
you
orange
you apple you
pear

why

it's a pair
of you
still

or moving
a third

whole
whole I say
and there are
three of you
still moving

That foot
has flown
through the open window
with a cherry blossom petal
on for a big toe nail

The other nails are bones
and serve
not in our construction.
They are hollow.

birds
flute
on our lack of marrow

we fly away

Life, No Trope

They hit me hard, the big ones
Sex Birth Death
They punch the wind out of me

Am I dignified, distinguished, elegant?
I double over and claw for breath

It's never happened to any one before
I'm the only one, the first
Just like everybody else

The Spring Dress

for Marti

something mended in me
when I watched you jump into his arms
in your white, bright-flowered dress
you are so dark
as dark as he has always been, hidden,
but you are not hidden
it seems you filled
up his arms with flowers, with the joy
I had always wanted to see in his face
so dark, so shining
and I am one of the old ones now
hope, hurt, and healing
an end
as I see you blossom, I know it
and in me something tears
something takes root

Glowing black to the sight,
In the deep eye all color she keeps,

As the scope of the generous night,
She is gracious and knowing.

All summertime takes its root in her
Without which flower do not blossom not roots
occur.

Say, what is beautiful is not always fair
Nor is what is comely rare.

In her belly rage confusion and doubt
The which clarity and decision cannot do
without.

Know now a grace so common
She is the many from which springs one.

You Appear among the Dancers

for Antonio

Fire-spirit

through you

grow

sun spiral

sea flames

wind crest

bursts to

shower shattering

moon leaves

in

silverlight

forest greenling lily

twines dark where

the white flute calls

gazelle and cobra

at play

on

meadow grass

holding sweet

lavender rose saffron

iris jasmine pink violet

primrose orchid

poppy lilac coral gentian

while
I gaze wide
sky is singing
swallows from
heavenly blue petals
of
your morning glory
face.

susan in the heart

my first poem
about you
didn't work

strangers
couldn't read
between the words
to the heart of it
where
you are

but now I'm rearranging it
crossing out lines
you
are in there
somewhere
i know you are

if i put each word
in just
the right
place
i know you'll be there
won't you

if I make the poem
perfect
i'll find
you
in it

if i can just get it
right

Bitter Colors

she appears to him
after an absence
wrapped in her quilt
daffodils flaring from he nostrils
although it is December
always patching it up
piecing it together
 another woman is his vision
 she his blindspot
hr look into the light-framed doorway
she opens his heart with sparrows and knives
she will take coffee
their talk is as incessant as their fear
she can bear his embrace a moment
he feeds himself scraps of her color
he opens the door
she stands in the dark hallway
what can live on crumbs of her purple and gold?

November 24, 1976

Lope over the hills a
loose scarf flowing

Mountains, bare, bare
Idaho

Silver, gold matte, grey
“Your freckles will go away when you get
older,” they said.

Scent of sagebrush like no other.

A vista remembered
encountered
the heart leaps

Mao is dead in China

Freckles, freckles on arms,
hands.

Persephone

August watches the summer sun
fall down to a death on all-flower's day
down to the marrow of the winter moon

cry of green stalks
root curl
maple and sycamore
 their red and bronze
 on the ground
tree trunk sinew
 gone to pulp
great groan from earthgut
the whimsical field flowers
 heard shrieking
summer falls with the sun
 and on all-hollow's eve
the unparalleled crash

summer
replete, round-bellied
smelling of velvet peaches, black grapes
summer departed
 when the sky is scalded with blue

at the hilltop the basket of white currants
crisp as pomegranate seeds
overturns, and autumn
steps out of the chokecherry bushes
than a green green moon
hangs in the trees
as the red berries roll down.

Mother

watch
how many
spoonfuls
of sugar
you take
how many slices
of cheese
are
on your plate
how thick
you cut the cake

where is the haystack?
I've looked in every room
searched the corners
of all the cupboards
in drawers and
boxes
and closets and
chiffoniers and cannisters and
all I can find are
needles
needles
filling up the whole house

close each door
after you
turn off
all the lights
when you are
not using them
'will you please

in the forest
where I wander
the trees are invisible.
Little birds have

eaten up

the crumbs
on which a
moon might shine
the path
of going
or return.

Five-Wow Poem

Some days
I go out
The door
And I wonder
Who am I?

Other days I walk out
Into the world
And I don't know
Where I am

Days when I stay in
A switch
Stings
Against the back of my legs.

Red as the scratch
Of percussion
Keeping a beat. Some day
I'm going to turn
Around

Face that jazz
Yank
The brush
out of the drummer's
Hand
Smash it
Into a hundred heartbeats

Run out the door
Down the front steps
Yelling

Here I am
I am

Caterpillar Insouciant

Sans souci

How appealing life would be.

Would life be?

Sure it would

Don't tell me

We need to feel bad

To feel good,

That we'd never know light

Without dark.

Sans phooey

We're out on a limb:

It's leafy

We're leaving

We're still

Branching out.

poems with colons

Larynxes and lungs
chock full
o' breath and beans:

poems with paddywhackets, pickled pears,
femurs, toes, and curly
hairs

pray a poem into the air
it falls to earth I know not where
but may a hummingbird be there
and candlelight and love and lore
and more and roses, moons and
cats-come-back and you and tea
and me and we

prayerful poems and
playful prayers
Sunday mornings unawares
kick off you shoes and come upstairs

we'll pray a poem.

The Wandering Girl

There it was, the creek of all childhood.

There were the ratty poplars of old

Catching a host

Of cawing crows

In the skeins

Of their wind-leaves.

There were the minnows

Moidering between shadows and rocks

In little pools

Stranded by the summer.

And what could she do

But follow

That stream

And those leaves

And those crows,

What could she do

But ramble?

And
What could she do
But angle
For those little silver trout
With her tin cup,
And what could she do
But follow?

Going on

Dispersing into our lives
Great-Grandmother's silverplate

Imprisoned by parents, aunts,
second cousins once removed, children

The end of the last credit card
City streets or open road

Dogs think I'm a pat; cats, a lap

To children I'm a crone
Old people think I'm just a young chickie
They plot for my help in
Taking out the garbage

Apple trees observe my petals in the long grass
Cattails watch me sway in the breeze
Telephone poles look on

Well-shod I and the sparrow
How beautiful...

rhymes with lover

when all this is over
will greenback finches
fly to the feeder
flock to the thistleseed
feast

will a jar
hold blossoms
of fuchsia and green

time over time
and time and time over
will raindrops
plink
puddles and eeny-einy-overhead
chime

across the mossy
slabs
of our garage before
Red Rover sends
you
right over
and we run for cover

in the clover

will we roll

when it's over

and will you stay with me

when all this is over

what else will there be

Counting-out Rhyme

This is what she knew
(Elderberries, oranges, apple pips and lime)
It might be true.

Especially when from his canoe
He paddled in and out in rhyme
and this is what she knew:

That every time they stuck like glue
Th'ensuing slime was not a crime.
It could be true.

That loving him might make her blue
(Daisy petals, dandelions, star light, and cherry
pie)
But this is how she knew

That that was what she had to do.
(Three, five, seven, and eleven, but two is not a
Prime)
It must be true

He loves her if the sky is blue
(Nanoseconds, half-hours, eternities of Time)
This is what she knew
He's ever true.

here yesterday

sometimes it falls on you
this is all there ever is really
and all there ever will be

she won't ever go to all that trouble again
of simmering plumpest pinto beans all afternoon
for burritos or
salsa tomatoes we
planted in may

we won't sit around my table
the one I loaned them
at their house
again

their baby won't pester daddy to be picked up
and he won't tickle out jazz riffs on the old piano
after dinner

we won't read each other's poems
wait she won't read mine

even if she hadn't died
our children wouldn't be children any more
although they're always only ours
each one our human child
they'll go no more
to the prom or take the SAT
or tack up posters
of nirvana or james dean
or play in the youth philharmonic

she won't fill her gardens
with tall slender plants

she loved things
that sway in the breeze

For a Long Love

Of all the sky-eyed

Guys

Who've crossed my life,

First off, you

Never rhymed with wife. Still

I married

to the clear quick way

you changed a tire

or honed a knife,

deliberated over nails or shears

Not showing off for anyone. Just

Figuring out how to mend a step

or prune a rose inclined to climb,

how slick and sure

You made the cut

Or measured glass

To wood tight fit

And fumbled words

Until the touchdown

Sprawled all over the field. Fans

Howled;

The way you tuned your ear
So you could hear
What I was saying way down
Here, eight inches
and a couple of octaves
Distance. Guess
You liked to chat
With me
Even standing up.

Apart from derry derry
Down, you liked to cook and often did
Making sure
To rid me
Of my only cherished household chore.

No doubt while you have
Grown older, I have
Not, and if we passed
Each other
In the street, you'd
Zap me with that
Blue before I quite
Caught on to you.

No matter how you are
Or where you aren't
Today you're
On my mind. Now

let's just say
I like the way
Your long legs jangled
In the hay.

Bloody Tongue Club

Giving advice is good fun
And we have grown older now;
In us resides hard wisdom won
Although the children notice how

We've grown old and foggy now
And find the normal world a trial.
The kiddies always notice how
We're clueless to click on that file.

The modern world presents a trial
And there's the screen up which to boot
Before we click on to that file.
There's something here does not compute

Since asking kids we'd like to boot
To click that mouse makes us old shoe,
revealed is what does not compute:
We're older now, we're wiser too.

Though moving mice may make us blue
And life goes on without our help,
We're wiser, now, we're wiser, too/
The children leave without a yelp

And life goes on without our help,
Still we are heroes, though unsung,
although the kids we've slaved to whelp
Will usually wish we'd hold our tongue.

Heroes even though unstrung,
we often turn the other bun
and while we strive to bite the tongue
Giving good advice is fun.

The Dolphin Wizards

Dolphins in the dark of night
Play below the dawn of day.
Seek the sun and give us light.

Turning deftly motion sleight,
Dip and giggle in the bay,
Dolphins in the dark of night.

Alter over twisted flight,
Hide below the wide moraine,
Seek the sun and give us light.

Slash with sintered crysolite
Eyes athwart the break of day,
Dolphins in the dark of night.

Splinter white, the rainbow strike,
Leap into the quickening day,
Seize the sun, reveal the light.

When the prism shatters sight.
Dolphins in the dark of day,
Dolphins in the dark of night,
Seek the sun and give us light.

Two Spring Poems

1.

all winter
the cherry tree the pear tree
the plum trees
were there
in the abstract
design
of their
branches
january sunday casts darkness
into the corners
hope accosts me in the street
says
where have you been
so long?
Longing sits
on damp ground
under the cherry tree
in a cocked hat and a
green vest, says
i've been looking for

you
acid sun of spring
etches a braille of flowers
across my fingertips
and i read it
inside-out
love, love i cry

2.

Knowing now why the bones are hollow
with breath in my bones
I rise now, I fly
on the construction of air
the blossoms
the petals at my fingertips
orchards of me singing
my head glowing with the weight of flowers
my feet also, sailing steady
in the breathing soil.

The window is open
in my bones
and in my heart
is the air, the day,
the live scarlet substance.

Friends in Springtime

for Shirley and George

again

my life breaks open

on love

sorrow, sorrow rushes in

until I am filled with it

and what more could I want

friends

more sustaining than loves

you eat at my table fill me

with your taking of me

and still there is more

opening in me and turning

friends, friends

after a winter

they come up greenly

among me

and when I am broken

broken and hollowed

they spill into me

filling me with the feast

I would give

The Planting

Circles
spherical stratum
of the hairstone
augmenting
in the pond
from morning to morning
meal to meal
breath to breath
intersecting, closing
patterning a Venn diagram
maze of circles, round,
and irregular, but all
eventually closed

Returning again to the desert
after an absence I was encircled
by years, and I was jailed or
shielded from the old desert
while, still another circle
closed.

Da capo, this spring, I am planting morning
glories
Clear, round, tiny seeds, again and again with the
spring.....

Your garden under the cloth of sky
an embroidery of strawberries, iris
and sunrise roses

slim sun and birdsong
in the morning trees
after witchery of stars nightlong
and
in dawn-fresh twilight
to the blue west of the poplar tree
curls the old moon in the new moon's arms

all light sweet honey to the fingertips
the day an unearned song upon the lips
where earthy paradise surrounds you
when shall I be free