

Paper Houses & Punctuation Marks

A writer's world; my created world. A poet's home; my written home...

I always want this poetry inside me.
I never want to lose my desire to rhyme.
I have to use the letters and words to see
How we all use the meaning of words to define our time.

Life always has a question mark at a chapter's end.
Its exclamation points can be both good and bad.
We try to figure out the message we really want to send
As we lose track of the sentence structure we once had.

As we learn to live and read, we're given rules and syntax.
But just as we take on the task of diagramming verbs and nouns
We find that punctuation has left one too many cracks
In the foundation we build our paper houses around.

We pour our stories into the ink flowing between the lines
Which become our erected walls separating the past from the present.
We pray to God that the jumbled letters won't collapse as we climb--
Over our own run-ons-- leap over fragments and hide under dents.

The ink runs, the pen bleeds, and the marker smears.
Life rips the paper, burns the edges, and crumples the best.
But through it all, the faded pages still wear our tired cares
So that the imprint of our thoughts can give us denotation and rest.

Words form every thought, frame each emotion, and display
All the mysterious meaning we say comes from above.
Letters make up every question in every language and so we ask
How each question and answer crease and fold but point back to love.
So we try; we write. We add pages to our lives of loose leaf paper.
All the while we pray to simply stay clear, concise, and on task.

Radiance of the Moon

I'm watching the clouds
Roll past the moon
Dark and Gray
But they don't dull its shine.

Down below there is
a lightning storm
But those bolts illuminate
This hazy horizon line.

I have a cup of coffee resting with me
On the back trunk of my car
I hear the whisper of the highway
Saying strangers aren't too far.

The sky lights up for a second
Then fades again just as soon...

The thunder echoes to remind me
That wherever we look up from:
We're each just a split second
From the radiance of the moon.

Intertwined and Undone

There is life to be lived, breathed in, exhaled and sung
After the storm has come and gone...

You're lying in my bed
Your close are strewn across my floor
And for the first time in years,
I'm not alone anymore.

There is life...
There between those sheets, beneath our feet
Between these apartment walls:
Life that no past pain can forestall.

I've been lying right next to you
For days which makes my mind and heart
Intertwine, combat, and separate
As I find myself choosing—able—
To reopen the bolted gate.

There is life...
In the worst and the best moments of our years
Pulling us, spinning us, morphing us
in and out of our own fears.

You listened to my stories—my past—
And you tell me I'm strong;
I know this is true.
The worst has come and gone
What has been will help me get through.

You're lying in my bed
Partially unaware of everything
I've come to adore:
You're the one who makes me want
To face my fears and step through my man-made door.

I see you; you see me.
We see imperfections, frailty, strength,
And beauty all mixed together
Because now I see...

There is life to be lived, breathed in, exhaled, and sung
Even after the storm has come and gone.

Pulled Back to the Good

Everything is going to be just as it should.
I sit here and write another poem by the waters:
More thoughts under the night sky we've withstood.
I don't have all my problems solved on these shores
But the tide always pulls me back to the good.

We fight and reach and bruise and try so damn hard
In the midst of the waves turning us, moving us, pushing us around.
We get pushed away and pulled back in by the problems we've barred
The tide drawing us into the deepest water-- to deep to always see the ground.
But the tide also teaches us to swim when the shores been marred.

Another year passes, and I ask what the hell I can say
About this crazy world filling my heart and soul with rain.
I come again and again to the decision that life's worth every day:
It's worth the days when my strength is drowning in pain
And life outreaches the ocean's bottom where death may lay.

I can smell—I can sense-- the water's sweetness
And I can touch—I can feel—this lake's depth.
This moment reminds me I'm just one small wave in this mess:
The tide will rise and fall with those who've laughed and those who've wept.
At this transient beach, I find peace from everything I've counted as less.

The You I Knew

“This isn’t the you I knew.”
The girl cries but can’t even look in his eyes.
Because all his lies have collapsed
Along with the respect she had built
for the cold, steel man not at all
Standing tall and stainless before her now.
Before his warm hands held, entwined,
Every hope and dream for which she now grasped.
But now his cold palms pushed away, snapped,
All the love their bodies had once formed.
So all the girl says as his figure, his stature, disappears
Is a broken-hearted whisper:
“This isn’t the you I knew.”

“This isn’t the you I knew.”
The son can’t forget as he peers into the casket.
Because lying on a silken pillow
Within the wood that holds his hollow frame
Is the fallen father of a boy who had grown up holding his hand.
The eyes which before had brightness behind the lids
Now lay closed so the old man can’t see.
The old man’s shrunken body: once strong and limber,
Then frail; now lays lifeless with no pulse or warmth for the boy to sense.
The boy’s memory reminds him of all the years which passed by--
Every hug, joke, laugh, and outing the two together lived.
So the son, no longer really a boy, whispers one sentence in his head:
“This isn’t the You I Knew.”

“This isn’t the you I knew.”
The teenager steps back from her friends’ reach,
Realizing for the very first time in her time
That she’s bleeding from being stabbed quietly in the back.
The person before her was once her friend
But now is just a thief who she sees used a dagger.
The hands which had before thrown baseballs or painted nails
Now throw shards of glass, painted with blood.
The teenager turns back one last time
To see a mirage of pictures deflected in the shattered glass.
Pictures of the two had always wrapped them both
Like a blanket, pulling them close, giving them warmth.
But now the pictures smother, strangle, and bleed her
Due to their meaninglessness to the one shattering them in her back.
So the teen whispers, as she stumbles away:
“This isn’t the you I knew.”

“This isn’t the you I knew.”
The churchgoer kneels against what he feels
As he covers his face but looks up to the painted top.
The God who had given rules for black and white, right & wrong,
Now didn’t seem bright, but a fading, dull gray.
The God who as he grew, had always made clear what to do
Now seemed as circular and dizzying as the earth’s spin.
The God who was supposed to be close, seemed distant.
The Savior who had conquered all seemed disinterested in his war.
The believer who had once believed he was guided by God’s hand
Now could just barely believe there was a drawn-out plan.
“What could he?”-“How could he?”- “What should he do?”
The adult lay down on that pew his idea that life could be without pain
And he didn’t know why-- not at all—but accepted there was still life & love.
Though his view of God and man would never be the same,
He whispered a confused, hurt, but attempting prayer above:
“This isn’t the you I knew...”
The barely audible whisper shook with his eyes wet and red,
His body exhausted, his heart stretched, and hope thin.
But he attempted once again the acceptance
He could just very barely find the strength to win:
“This isn’t the you I knew...
This isn’t the you I knew.”