

there was never enough

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Not after the girls came and you breast fed them.
Not after all the years of nursing them through chill and
fever, administering advice, keeping track of their friends,
where they snuck off to, and checking on who they were dating.

Oh, I got a good meal many a day. And my clothes got washed.
But buttons were my problem, because you were too busy
adjusting hemlines or thinking up projects for the den.
When I worked second shift and came home after midnight,
you were beyond exhaustion, cursed me if I woke you....

Oh, we held hands on occasion ... mostly at Disneyland or the zoo.
And for the most part, you were a good mother, and I was
a good father. But as spouses, we were shipwrecks.

Even after the girls left for college, there was never enough left over.
You had your shows to watch, your career, and I understood all that.
It didn't help that you disliked sports, sci-fi, playing hostess,
my sense of humor, just about anything I liked.

And in the summer you had flowers to tend and weeds to pull.
There were other weeds that needed pulling and other flowers
that needed tending, if you'd cared enough to catch my drift,
but no thank you, you didn't. And the sun was going down and
I was standing in your light and there was always just a bit more
work to do, so there really wasn't enough time left in the day, was there?

I've travelled to Italy, Scotland, and Ireland without you.
It's a kind of independence, isn't it? Though that was never the goal.
In Italy, you wouldn't be the type to sit up half the night
sharing bottles of wine talking crap. In an Irish pub, you wouldn't have been
worth more than a sip of beer, and there was always too much walking.
Anyway, we shared all the adventures together we needed to share
(a safari on the African savanna, Ngorongoro Crater, Dar es Salaam,
the Red Square, the Parthenon, Dubrovnik, Pompeii, the Colosseum,
the Ponte Vecchio, The Rubens House, Notre Dame Cathedral, Mexico City,
and the '84 Olympics in L.A.) before the girls came, right?
Still, I can't help but wonder, who's the drifter now?

And now that you're retired, there's so much to do with the grandkids.

You are a wonderful grandmother, sweet and tender, caring and loving.
And I admire you for that too, love you for that;
but when the day is done and you prepare a meal,
it's not about satisfying me, so in a manner of speaking,
I go hungry. And I find I'm hungrier than I used to be.

I never wanted our marriage to become a cliché,
but where was I when you turned your back
to the headwinds that set me adrift?

Burning UP

My wife says she's burning up
though the AC has been running a marathon all day.
As for myself, I'm freezing,
so I shuffle out to the front porch where it's warm
and the air pleasantly breezy.
If I could, I'd lie down on a lounge chair
atop a cool, cottony cushion,
let the afternoon settle over me
like shade falling from an elm tree, take a nap.
That sounds good. And so very tempting.
But ... there is no lounge chair.

Soon bored,
I find my wife again,
ask her if she'd like to mess around a bit.
That sounds tempting too.

But my wife claims she's still burning up,
and not in the way I am hoping,
so it's a good time for me
to forget that idea
and chill.
Which is right where I started.

How silly is that?

ZERO TOLERANCE

I

In the middle of the night, you fluff your pillow
punching the down into the flat space under your head.
In the morning, your wife slams her pillow onto the bed,
her eyes smoldering. As she storms out of the bedroom,
her footsteps whisper: How do you like it?

II

That favorite mustard of yours, the one that costs \$7 a bottle:
three times in as many months you've discovered
a teaspoon in the kitchen sink half-full; you retrieve it,
lick it clean (thinking: god does this taste good!)
and for just a moment you're a kid again at your mother's side,
enjoying the leftover cake mix she always saved just for you
as a chocolatey treat. But there's no evidence of your wife engaging
in spoon-licking, nor any suggestion from her that you enjoy
the leftover mustard before it goes to waste.
No, she just pitched the delectable leftovers of your favorite
sweat/hot/creamy/brown mustard, which costs \$7 for a small 10 ounce bottle,
like refuse. How thoughtless and oh how wasteful!
You say something to her about her profligacy.
Deep down, she's insulted, and without her saying so
you have reason to believe that she thinks you're a nasty/bossy/bully
AND you should mind your own f***in' business.
Secretly you think: BUT this is my home too
and I love that mustard and you are wantonly wasting it!
Refusing to let it go, sometime later you suggest
she use a knife in the future.
And that's when things get really ugly...

III

At a funeral visitation, a long-time family friend asks:
Where's your wife? You reply: We got a divorce.
No really, she says, where's your wife?
You repeat the claim. She knows your sister quite well, so she doesn't bite.
The next day at the funeral service, to lighten the mood,
your friend tells your wife what you said. And once again the joke falls flat.
And like an upright piano tumbling out an upper apartment window,
in your wife's eyes, you can see that
you're as good as dead.

Copper

My son-in-law asks my wife for “copper” ideas,
his & our daughter’s 7th Wedding Anniversary
less than a month away.

“Smashed souvenir pennies? A yard ornament?”
she suggests. She’ll check Pinterest she promises.

Funny, for years I’ve remembered our day,
but my beloved seemed always to be clueless.
Far too many times I’ve heard her say, “Is it really?”
barely a smidgen of interest in her voice.

A wedding anniversary seems to me the kind of thing
a woman would remember. Should remember. I do.
Certainly my daughter remembers her date, expects some token of affection.

Has the day, for my wife, become a day not worth remembering?
Maybe she’s ashamed I popped the question
only after she was four months into her pregnancy.

Maybe too she had more in mind for her big day
than a trip downtown, although my father called a judge
he knew and that dressed things up a bit.
While we waited to enter the judge’s chambers,
I had my brother, serving as best-man, take of photo
of me and my bride-to-be standing under a sign that read:
“Civil Disputes.” That’s kinda funny, right?

Afterwards, my dad took us out to lunch for our honeymoon.
That was about it, really.

I admit, I never made a big deal of our anniversary.
No linen. No lace. No silver. No copper.
Just flowers and such.
Eventually, given my wife’s indifference, however,
I gave up even that simple gesture.

The 7th Anniversary is the Year of Copper?
Who knew? (Well, my son-in-law obviously.)

I wonder what gift is apropos for year thirty-five?
Is that the year you surprise your wife with a wedding ring?

Merry Me

Call me Honey if you want
And smile when I come into view.
Caress me like you're ravenous
Whatever you desire, I will do.
Merry Me

Take me to a movie
Make a play for me.
Trip my tongue with lascivious laughter
Give me reason to dream in "happily-ever-after."
Merry Me

Joy resides wherever we may tarry
And love's a silly dangerous dance,
I'm daring you to make me merry,
Don't you think it's worth a chance?
Merry Me

Brush your lips across my shoulder
Press your fingers on my back
Whisper something naughty just loud enough to hear,
Fashion plans for keeping, and vanquish all my fears.
Merry Me

I've been blind much too long, but finally I see,
Shape me as a man now who thinks in only *we*.
Be my love and I pledge you'll see
Your love-times-three returned to thee.
Merry Me

Make your love my shelter for basking,
Brighter days with you is what I'm asking.
Grant me the love I shunned before
My heart is kneeling at your door.
Merry me. Merry me.

Marry me.