

## THE DELICACY OF WEARINESS PLUS FOUR

### THE DELICACY OF WEARINESS

Weary has hijacked my  
every intention tonight,  
clings to my shoulders  
like a succubus and occasionally,  
snakes its long fingers round  
my head and covers my eyes  
in a macabre game of peek-a-boo,  
presses just a little too hard  
on these orbs that want nothing  
so much as they do sleep.

If I wasn't so punch-drunk tired,  
I might try to remember the last time  
I felt this fatigued.  
As if remembering could help me do  
something about it.  
That's part of the problem with being  
out-of-my-mind exhausted—  
I start imagining I know things—  
like how to fix what's going wrong  
in my life.

When the sun's disc slides out  
of the day, leaving coral streaking  
the horizon, the bats begin buzzing  
beneath the back porch.  
They've amassed quite a colony  
there. A full strawberry moon sets  
them vibrating so loudly, I swear  
they're howling.  
That's when I imagine  
I'm the most accomplished.

I know it's when I lose the most sleep.  
Who'd want to miss that spectacle?  
All those tiny winged wonders filling  
the night with their magical murmuring,  
as they take the sky. I become convinced  
I can fly too if only they'd take me with them.  
It's also the most delicate time: exhaustion  
coupled with delusions of munificence  
has landed me inside the gates of crazy-land  
too many times to keep recorded.

Once locked in—an easy enough  
feat—getting out is another concern  
entirely. I am back to wondering about  
fixing my life. Being over-tired in such  
a place should be the perfect pretext to pass  
out for days. But no, unless I am sedated  
to the gills, and sometimes even then, I am  
compelled to ruminate, sure again I should  
be able to fix everything wrong in my life,  
but still unsure of the how of it.

The things I worry over aren't novel:  
the people who've left me, and the ones  
I wish would; they blur together when  
I'm spent.  
I know I'm not asleep, but I'm moving  
through a nightmare just the same.  
I see things I don't believe are really  
there—like dead people.  
Wasn't there a movie where someone  
kept seeing them? Dead people?

Maybe that *is* what's happening.  
Being so exhausted has me hallucinating  
Or, maybe I've got it all backwards.  
Maybe *I'm* dead and everything  
I'm seeing and feeling is what *that* feels like...  
Maybe, maybe not - I'm too tired for words  
Rumination, speculation - tranquilization  
Is there no escaping this delusionation?  
Oh, weariness you are drowning me  
in maybes.

## **LOCK DOWN ON THE PSYCH WARD**

It has been too calm, too hushed.  
An overcast sky gives way  
to pitch, punched through  
with sequin-sparkly rips, arranged  
like constellations, if you squint hard  
through the wire-netting on the windows.

There's a ripple through the place  
and a trace of a scorched scent wafts  
as now, the black dog burns,  
then howls a fingernail moon up  
high. The silence breaks loud  
with the moaning of lunatics  
caged inside buildings,  
and heads.

## MENTAL HEALTH HOLIDAY

They are camping  
in our rickety old tent-trailer  
somewhere near the  
Saskatchewan-Manitoba border.

The air here is thick and muggy,  
feels like Toronto's, not prairie air at all.  
And I fear it might swallow  
me if I shut my eyes.

So I stare into my dimly-lit room  
— there is little true darkness here  
this time of year—try not to feel guilty  
about staying home.

Trapped by a dread so overwhelming  
it buckles my knees just to go from  
soggy bed-sheets to lumpy couch,  
holding onto the wall all the way.

Unbidden, the smell of sweet, blackened, marshmallows  
fills my senses—I glimpse my daughters' faces  
in the glow from a dying bonfire—  
sun-burnt platinum blondes getting drowsy.

Except, oh except—I can see directly into the guileless  
wide-eyed gaze of my youngest's China-blues; the sadness  
crouched there belongs in a much older set of eyes—I know it.  
It shrivels me like nothing else.

The theme from “Out of Africa” sweeps over me  
from my TV, pulls me back from them. I hug my knees,  
only too happy to be distracted for a couple of hours,  
even if the music makes me weep.

## **SANITY TRICKS**

Morning rushes into her  
on a wash of coral  
Filling her up with something  
akin to hope or what she thinks  
she remembers hope feels like.

Just as quickly as it comes,  
it is gone. She mistrusts herself,  
knows bleakly how easily  
deceived her trickster mind  
tends to lean lost.

The world fades to shades  
of gray, and the sun falls  
from the sky tearing  
the future from her  
tenuous grasp.

Her fingers are left opening  
and closing on air  
too humid to breathe.  
She begins to plan  
ways to stop.

## TO ONCE AGAIN BEHOLD THE STARS\*\*

Dear Ms. Poet:

“..I’m so glad that my experience - especially the part regarding the hospital - could have been valuable to you...”

Sincerely  
William Styron\*

Were I able to rally the troops,  
I’d gather about me those  
in the know, the ones who lived  
through the war but *didn’t* come out  
unscathed. Their numbers are  
astounding and of such celebratory  
status, most today, I fear, would think  
I exaggerated, if not outright lied as I filled  
my auditorium with the likes of: Plath,  
Teasdale, Celan, and Woolf, plus  
Hemingway, Hughes, Lowell, and Sexton  
too and on and on, too many to list.

And that’s the truth of it. Should you need  
confirmation, visit Wikipedia’s, *Writers and  
Suicide* section. You’ll find 100’s of names listed.  
Think of the troops I could rally if I included  
all of these within my army to get the word out.  
I believe were that illustrious number assembled,  
we would hear them say, "Don’t despair. And *don’t*  
follow us. There is no need. Trust us when we tell you,  
life *is* worth living, worth doing whatever it takes to get  
yourself back on track. Keep on keeping on," My army  
would tell you. They would insist, I’m sure,  
"The struggle *is* worthwhile."

And while jokes abound about those dreaded  
edifices: Psych Wards, Loony Bins, Ha Ha Hiltons,  
Cuckoos Nests and the like—don’t make the mistake,  
as many do, of writing them out of your options.  
As Styron allowed in his book, he should have been  
inside a hospital long before he was, and staying out  
almost cost him his life. I believe he saved mine  
by tacitly giving me permission to go into one myself,  
when I read *Darkness Visible*, and learned  
of the possibilities...  
Learned that I might not have to die, after all, to live.

\* ( A portion of a note received from the Pulitzer Prize winning author in reply to a brief thank-you sent by the poet, regarding Styron’s candid memoir, *Darkness Visible*. Styron details his

own battle with depression and suicidal ideation, as well as describing the lives of many other writers and artists coping with the same dark disorder, in this slight volume.)

\*\*A slight rephrasing of the last line in *Darkness Visible*, it is also a rephrasing of the last line from *Dante's Inferno*.

Styron, William. *Darkness Visible - A Memoir of Madness*. New York: Random House, 1990. Print.