

The Meeting

Beige and wrinkled
Your London Fog raincoat
Rushed onto the bus
In a torrent of hurry
With you wrapped vaguely inside.
Hidden away from the downpour that deluged
The dingy grey city outside,
Making rivulets run in the gutters
And a pool that formed in the fold of your hat.
It swished back and forth as you tipped your head
Then spilled as you dropped in a coin.

Balancing yourself down the narrow black aisle,
Avoiding umbrellas that jutted,
You sat down beside me, the only seat left.
The swelling highway swept us down
Past unreadable road signs
And trees that groaned and flung their arms
Like leaf-clad professional mourners
Bewailing a world that dissolved on the windows
As we watched insensibly, sniffing wet wool.

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The Catered Affair

The veal Cordon Bleu drew raves
Its Gallic accent quite lost in a sauce of indefinable origin
With bits of blue green surfacing.
The snails snuggled close.
The silverware wore a sovereign look
Lined up lengthwise,
Full of regal aspirations,
Forgetting that its basic task was servile,
Though the dance of chandelier light on the culinary tools,
Lending a museum perfection,

Would appear to belie this fact.

Champagne, Sir? Cavier?

No.

Wait; perhaps a bit of port.

The pillared columns paid mute respect to the king of this catered court.

He arrived at ten, respectably late

But fashionably on time.

Arranging his boutonniere, he peered out onto this proper feast

That had come to pass with a sudden demise,

An uncle twice-removed

With no one in between.

He hadn't had to do a thing ugly or dishonest,

Just show up at the reading of the will.

It had all been so easy, he thought as he hid

Behind the hydrangea, trying to rid

Himself of a feeling of nouveau riche,

Fiddling with his cufflink, wondering what to say, worried that the butler would know he was wearing a toupee.

After all, it wasn't fair

That he's lost his hair

So young.

Gerald! Come out and greet your guests.

You know the rules.

Yes, Dear.

I fear my cufflink fell between the potted plant and porch.

Not "porch" my Sweet, it's no longer a "porch"

Say "veranda" or nothing at all.

So he said "veranda"

And then hello and how are you and charmed I'm sure

And how lovely you look and, yes, I've read that book

And what do you think he was thinking when he wrote that

Perfectly devastating phrase about the butler not always

Doing it or knowing everything.

He touched his toupee.

He discussed coronary occlusions with a Doctor Devone

And occult revelations with Mrs. Devone
Who had gotten quite silly on Dom Perignon
And sick on the porch...no, veranda.
But she swore on Tara's grave that it was nothing more than mild dyspepsia.
Then she told him of Tara, her Lhaso Apso who had died,
And he cried
Right in the middle of the catered affair
Though heaven only knew why,
For he's never even met the cur
Nor ever once inquired after her health.

When the last guest had faded away, he shivered out of his tie,
He lay on the veranda and starred up at the sky.
He ate a bit of escargot and a piece of mincemeat pie,
Thought about his old Ford that he'd sold and wished he hadn't.
He tasted the squid and preferred his boutonniere.

He closed the gilded doors behind him
And turned to face the tunnel,
A tapering length of hallway
That would bring him, if carefully followed,
Back to earth again.
Away from this planet
Where there were no porches,
No old Fords, no old friends,
No Gerald.
The clack of his heel taps in contact with marble
Ricocheted down the deserted void.
Click-click-clack
Click-clack-click...
Clack.

Life's Q&A

Between the question and the answer

There lies this vast nebula of ivory-winged possibilities, dirge-gray fears and floating anxieties with pointy hats and scary clown makeup.

“Yes” pins your life to the corkboard of normal,

Your future pasted in an album of memories to be made,

Templates already created, waiting to be filled: my first job in Corporate Speak, your retirement award,

Here we are going to find ourselves in Bali, there they come to descend upon us, and remember this one, the party from hell?

“No” unleashes the rabbits of possibility, as they multiply and divide (but is *more* better?)

Some offspring are dressed in fashionable black, singing arias and elegies,

Others dance toward a dewy rainbow in the distance, wearing nothing but a smile.

Some tell overlong stories on the road to Oz,

While others stop to write a letter, build a school, bake a cake

And a few stare into their mobiles until they are blind.

But the answer time is now – (no, please, just one more day)

Close your eyes, breathe deeply, say O-o-mmm,

Think only: Is this me? Me?

Or the lady in 6B?

Then leap and, firmly, with confidence

Say yes!

Or no.

Gifts

Fireside sitting sets me to thinking
As the prancing light dabbles all over my face
Its fickle impressions in red-yellow flashes.
It warms my hands and hastens back memories
I didn't know I remembered anymore.

Weeping willows swaying like weary angels,
Tired of their task,
Wishing they could run away like me.
Their drowsy branches tickled me
As I ran through
Away from you
And all I knew
On my way to...
Where?

Something out there, somewhere,
Waiting for me.
Something that called me by name.
It wasn't the same as the voice from before,
The one I had learned to ignore.
It made me stop and listen and look
Even when I'd rather not have.
When I tried to turn my head
It said
Hello, I'm still here
And when I looked 'round
I could see it was me
Or what I could be
If only I could let go of where I was at
And grab on somewhere else.
Could I? Maybe,
Try, it urged.

So I drove a truck to Texarkana
Sat in university lecture halls

Where apathetic rhetoric rose,
Went running down the walls
And filled the room to lobe level
With litters of pale discourse...
Help, I'm drowning!
Move on, the Thing said
To the School of Life.
The sheepskin will help
But you'll need a knife
To cut through the pomp and platitudes
To get to the only truth that matters,
Your own.

So Life was met, its terms negotiated,
And love made the difference like yeast in a cake
But this Thing came again and it spoke another language.
What do you want of me now?
Come and find me, I want you to find me,
Don't think you can though, ha!

I pursued the Thing in temples,
Corporations and sisterhoods.
It teased me in books and on battlefields,
Mocked my intensity as I made furious love to people
And ideas
And words.
Flitted 'round a corner as I grasped the silken hem of its garment.

But it showed me glimpses of secret understandings
As I kissed dead faces
And coped with the living.
It whispered in my ear when I wasn't looking
And spoke of things that made me laugh and cry
And wonder.

I ran down the years chasing it,
Always a step behind.
And when I was upon it, ready to pounce,
It would drop a rose petal,

A gift wrapped in rainbows,
A jewel to cherish on a rainy Sunday.

I would stoop to gather the tempting tokens
To pocket their brilliance and secrets,
And rise to find the Thing had slipped away,
It laughter and challenges ringing the hills
Calling me on.

And on I went to follow the laughter,
Cursing the wiles that ever outwitted,
But I fingered the jewel in my pocket
Warm against my thumb,
Anticipating the time that I might rest
And rejoice in its luminous depths.

Time thieves your suppleness, sight and sound
And leaves you to make do with less.
But I still stalk my Friend;
With limp and cane I wend my way
After whatever it is I've been following for so long.

But this Thing is kind.
It too has slowed so I may not lose sight
Of that which I used to fight, fear and cry out against in frustration.
But no more.
Willingly I follow,
Plucking the treasures it leaves me to find along the way.
And this I pray: that I will never capture what I have so long been seeking.
For, when I do,
I die.

Frog

I'm a Frog Prince, kiss me quick before I hop away

And you will see me in all my glory

Just the way I looked that day before the Wizard made me pay

For my "*supposed*" misdeed.

So, alright...

So, OK...

For so long I've been this way...

I can't remember whether I was *Prince or Princess* before!!!

When I think on the pink satin skirts that I wore...

...Or was it britches? *DON'T KNOW ANYMORE!*

Well, I could just cry and –

Oh wait... there's a *fly*.

Now If I could just creep very softly and keep myself hidden until I can leap,

I'll dine well today, have a nap in the hay,

Swim 'cross the lake to visit friend Jake,

A gentleman, a scholar...and a bit of a rake!

You'd never find a pal so loyal (he also thinks *he* was a Royal).

We'll dance with the fireflies, croak at the moon, and generally make the little toads swoon,

Then it's back to my log in the cranberry bog, and...

...Oh, are you still here? Look, to tell the truth, dear,

It's not all that bad, bein' a frog!