

New Mexico

The mountains loom like dreams in the distance
a white dream suspended in the shocking blue
I am returning to my home here
from the land of barren winters

I have come here to die

my time has reached its fullness
nothing more begs to be done
I have sat at this earthly table and eaten more than my share
of dumbass pie
bellied up to the bar for more whiskey than ten strong men
been a prick
harder than hammered steel
thicker-headed than a rhino

but more recently
I have partaken of this wobbly proposition
that there is something we can do that matters
raced hither and yon pursuing justice
determined to do the right thing

and now I have seen that all this hurrying and purpose
is but a racing toward death
and now the great yawning chasm where all is consumed
beckons

in this brief eternal moment
as the curtain falls upon this final act
I rue those wasted years of feeling right
and feeling wronged

here in this sweet blinking moment
that is our lives
things blink
but don't change

but now I am changing
my teeth rot out
body folds spindles mutilates
the sunset begins and unfolds in an alarm of color

blood reds upon the mountaintop
the gray of winter
enshrouds my hollowed soul

here I read Nietzsche (so difficult to spell!)
on the *Übermensch*
on my toilet throne
wind hisses through the peyote agave dust
the canyon walls stand patient enduring
yet always ready to crack and tumble
at a moment's rumble
ten thousand years hence in the next tectonic

in the meantime we simply abide
like the whispering ghosts of the Pueblo
aged desiccant entelechy
a shriveled pearl of forgotten wisdom

here in my dying I think of you
and you
and all of you

in these final moments I am grateful
here in this rambling lost and final poem
I suffer and weep
and giggle

friends lovers
and my children!
oh ye noble and glorious souls!

thank you for never failing to remind me
that even as the world was constantly changing
I was probably still wrong
thank you for tolerating my depths and elations
you shall hear my laughter ringing down from the mountaintops
still when all is but dust

but most of all
thank you for this infinite blessed moment
of loving you

thank you my beautiful wife
oh ye bluejean-miniskirted cheerleader
my Grecian Amish Jew
lovely urn of all holy waters

amalgam of all desires
and all sorrows
for these forty blessed years of loving you

I stand bestride this gaping abyss
that is the end of us all

and my darlings!
ye suicides
I have borne the eternal flames of your sorrows
in your stead
all these many trudging days
they have clanked like chains
about my grieving soul
and now soon shall we be reunited forever
in that eternal place where none of us exists!
(if it exists)

in these flickering final moments
after all has been said
as I await the rushing flood of blood
into dark and forbidden nether regions
into the moist jelly-fleshy darknesses
as dying life frees itself from proper and venous constraints
an eternal pall of calmness settles shroudlike
over this being
over this longing
over this dissolving

goodbye my loves
I shall not see you in the gentle morning
we will not meet again in that place
where we are wounded
where we rue
where sadness frolics in her ancient dignity
beneath the tiresome plans and doings of youth

here in this darkest night
of my ebony soul
as the pointlessness of our strivings
mocks me
as the eyelid of failing heart bats and flutters
as I prepare with utmost gravity to meet my maker
who does not exist

we shall not gather again on awkward occasions

to brag of the pointless ephemeral follies
that are our designs
or the fleeting shallow satisfactions of our plans

death is coming
my loves
all is lost
sooner than later

I have so little time
left to love you
this is my only regret
and even this is borne off
into the sunset breeze of nothingness

but wait!
another hallowed moment of gentle weeping
sumptuous nectar of this passing life
a mucous waterfall drips down and down this cragged visage
the runneled and weatherbeaten paths of exhausted desire

and a lilting tune drifts from so so far away
cock an ear
what can be that sweet and gentle music...

aha!

I am hungry
let's make some coffee
what's for dinner

why die tonight
in abject grief
there is no hurry
I have a seat at the banquet table
at the repast of the passing eons
death shall come soon enough!

The Game

Here in this fraught fleeting interstitial moment
caught between before and after
with only the Scrabble board set resolute between us
all the things left unsaid are screaming
the old wounds weep
like abandoned children
and though I love you like water flows
my anger
seeps

The kettle
whistles

the tea
steeps

we sip and speak of our need for sleep

Then huddle again
o'er the evening's pitch
you tip the egg timer
and I contemplate
my stubbly beard
and this daunting clusterfuck of entangled letters
trickled forth and interstitched
like the woven straw of the miller's daughter
an aurum hoard in morning's light
when the unnamable thing comes knocking

"Your time is up"
my time is up and
I carelessly toss out the pieces,
building upon FINAL and DEADEN
to spell ALONE

This Is What I Am

I am headed to a cave in the Himalayas
in the hills across the Ganges above Rishikesh
where I smoked hashish and consorted with monkeys
and flirted with enlightenment when I was twenty

after surviving the opium sickness
while still infested with the flagellate Giardia lamblia
I hiked in these hills with my barefoot sunyasin friend Brahmachari
and the boy Mahesh

in the temples the gongs resounded
calling us to dinner
a heaping plateful of hot curried rice
we ate with our right hands
and in the still of darkest night I fled beyond the temple walls
to vent the butt-sickness
and wipe with my left hand

at every turn in the climbing paths they spoke another language

but that was then

and now
this is what I am
I am in love with the fair maiden Sarah Seidwoman
I smile when I contemplate upon her
here in my holy aerie
above the tears and laughter of the world
I have left behind

I never eat anymore
I have left that behind also
but there is something tugging at my belly
there is something trying to rip my guts out
there is something I cannot leave behind

and it is my fond memory of you
and of you
and I am so
lonely here in my enlightenment

the peasants have begun to come here
the world has discovered that I am the simplest part of it
they leave garlands of lotus flowers

that wilt in the jungle heat
outside my lonely holy cave
I cannot speak their language but
when I grasp their brown worn hands I weep
I weep for you and me
I weep for us
and yes I weep for them

the watching monkeys scream their childish jealousies from the treetops
and so of course I weep for them
as well

my soul is a river of tears
the holy Ganga is my tears fallen from the mountains
and rushing through the canyons
I am a monsoon of sorrow
except when I am laughing

in the steamy jungle night you will hear me laughing
in the screaming monkeys you will hear me laughing
when your heart is broken you will hear me laughing

I am keeping something for you that no one can ever give you
I can never give it to you
but if you come you just might take it away
though I would not wish it upon you

to stand and face the awful abyss without flinching is your birthright
though I would never wish it upon you

all I will ever have to offer is comfort
there is no sparing us from the sorrow we must feel
when we behold the mystery
that is this flowing river
and there is no sparing you from the sorrow
and terror
that comes
from knowing
that there is no god
and now you are free

Husband

I told him this morning when we argued again just before he left
I want to feel this house is a sanctuary when I get home

But he sprawls there with the newspaper sections scattered across the table
guzzling milk from a gallon jug and eating meat nearly raw
and the house stinks of hamburger smoke
and the TV is on too loud even when he isn't watching it

He is a large man of larger appetites
with a vibrant mercurial nature
although there is an immense calm at the bottom

Sometimes I weep when I think
how easy life could be if I could just
live alone

He can go from enraged one moment
to giggling the next
I'm baffled by people who can't hold a grudge
can't really quite trust them
can you?

Many times I just want to be left alone
with my crisp and tart apples suffusing delight
and the uncomplicated and fine
tomatoes and kale from my garden
and the simple trudge to my farm and chores
and fog-breathing nickering horses
so happy to see me
in the crisp and tart pre-dawn
when I am alone and everything is so simple
without his needs
without him parked in his holey socks
reading his calculus and making his squiggles
while watching TV
and eating Dove bars
in his T-shirt
with the chain-saw dust
dirtying my couch

Hospice

At Florida Christmas in the gated community that year
her old white Beetle convertible dripped dirty oil into a pan of kitty litter
and the turkey buzzards tussled over a groundhog bloodied in the road
I remember
he was getting too tippy to play tennis
ever again

Five months later in the great man's dying-room
the days wore on like dust
eternity yawned its catnapped smile
at 3:00 a.m. in the air-conditioned hum
languidly licked its patient whiskers as the old man tossed and mumbled
in the muffled shadow of monitor readouts
72mL of 122 delivered 41% remaining
and a green LED teardrop of Ativan swelled and burst with a hiss and flush
down the toilet of his ruined veins
and the soft flush and swell of warmth carried him away
to those nether regions where he still fought to part the tangled web of enveloping
confusion
still wrestled to dispel the fog of imprecision gripping the brilliant scalpel of his 88-years
mind

There from his starched-white-sheeted hospital deathbed
as he dozed in oxygen deprivation
between the drab olive walls
as he dreamed his morphine dreams
beneath the acoustic ceiling tiles
The Chairman orchestrated his Board Meetings
as nurses paced the tiled hallways
teleconferenced his business empire
as someone made another pot of coffee
set in order the affairs of Fiserv and GMAC and who cares what else
from his folding gurney in his backless blue gown
purple-footed and catheterized
he managed the world's affairs
rescued the nation's banking systems yet again
as his family folded and crumbled at his bedside

During those endlessly dragging tragic dying-days
the Albuquerque sun baked the parking lot tarmac
fried the Lotaburger and
in the courtyard outside the great man's death-room
pendant drooping white yucca-flowers clenched like fists
popped

swelled open
dropped their petals and
plopped like turds in the courtyard while
we discovered how diaphanous is that flimsy soap-bubble film between
overwhelming grief and
giggling

His children crashed and burned under the strain
some elegantly and gracefully
some gently morosely
some chose absence
some porcine belligerence
we all ate pretzels and beef jerky and told ourselves we were right
tolerated the intrusions of the others
sometimes barely
God forgive us
we could not help ourselves from being ourselves
we all peeked out from our grief and confusion
assured each other it was not about us
while in the courtyard the selfish finches trilled and sang and flitted

That final morning we ate our guilty breakfast of apples and Swiss chocolate with
almonds
and then at some patiently looming moment finally so full in its ripeness
we all said yes
it is *my* fault his blood curdles and careens drunkenly through the shattered veins
if I had been a better child or friend he might have chosen life
it is indeed *my* fatal error that finds him here broken and wheezing
with time the curse
with the tortured endless moments lasting forever
and forevermore
and his death-rattles shook the room
and then the deadly pregnant stillness of apnea
we all held our breaths
until I feared we would all expire together
and then finally the silence reigned
and the birds started and flapped off with flashing white underbellies,
spilling piñon husks into the dust