

Five Pieces Today

Okay Mick

Several days ago
Exactly when, I don't know,
Mouthed voice mails while drinking beers
Each at most a minute long, "Cheers
Mick," said I and more I did say,
"Belated Thanksgiving,
Early Merry Christmas,
Earlier still Happy New Year and...
Hoped his family was 'okay'."

Said I, especial for him, hoped he was "okay".
Such a funny word 'okay' is to say.
So many meanings said in such a simple way:
Breathing, laughing, heart-pounding, walking-- today.

He'd been three-phased electric- shocked
Until his neurons slowed, he rocked.
Alive he was, last time seen
Off his meds, he could be mean
Towards himself he'd want to kill
Not me, nor you nor Uncle Bill.

Just Mick.

Mainly hoped he was 'okay'.
Better said, 'alive.' But in a good way.
Not depressed, repressed, stressed nor possessed,
But reading a poem, reflecting on greater good at simple rest.

Didn't worry I, waiting for him to call.
Paid bills, bought groceries, watched TV, window-shopped at the mall.
Existence continues like an almost empty alcohol bottle-
A few sips remain, then away tossed, as backs of hands mottle.

Told him I loved him—hoped I said the right words.
Not like our younger days—we could call each other rotten turds.
Back then, didn't really know what 'mental' meant; we were drunken blokes.
Now? Careful not to set him off. No teasing, definitely no sarcastic jokes.

Finally he called me back.
Was after midnight. I was in the sack.
Weren't any airy words either of us said.
'Okay' he muttered. Hung up. Rolled over in my bed.

Married Conversation

I was shearing the corn stalks growing from my ear
Which return days after they're harvested and
Observing my wife had none in hers
While she was brushing her ten teeth-
But I held off saying a word
Because I've learned there's a time and place
To communicate with one's spouse.

So later, over plain as day oatmeal,
I shared with her my hairy observation of
A difference between men and women
In general, not specific
And she said, bitter and non-sugared
Like our coffee
'Cause can't have sweets
So we can live longer and have the opportunity to talk to each other more.

"You just realized this.
After sixty years," she repeated, "After sixty years."
Like I hadn't heard her the first time,
Like my hearing was poor (it's not)
Like we've known each other for forty years (we have)
Then she added, "We don't have beards either.
Have you thought of that?"

*Of course I did, I thought, knowing when to be silent-
I wouldn't have married you if you had chin hair.
How about that?*

I changed the subject—
"Is today a Costco Day?"

Morning Blessings

ahmmmm, argh, ahmmmm, argh, niff, niff, ahchhoo,
“god bless you.” “got a cold?” “no it’s the dust.”
“you got a cold. take something.”
ahchoo, ahchoo, ahchoo,
“for god sakes take something.”
“it’s the frigging dust-- sleeping, waking, eating, breathing, pissing dust.”
“dust thou art and dust thou shalt ...never mind, take something.”

floss, brush, gargle, swish, spit, repeat
argh, ahmmmm, argh, miff, miff, ahhhhhhhhh
one stroke, two stroke, three stroke, four
face bump, cut self, red blood, more.
Owwwwwwchhhhh, dadgumit
“tissue, tissue where are you?”
cooooaggggggulattttttttteeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

fahgetaboutit
warm spray and suds wash rouge down the drain,
and powder too
ahchoooooo, achchoooo
“god bless you”
“not a cold, stop saying god bless you, damn it”
“dust thou art and dust thou shalt...never mind, take something”

owwwwwww chhhhhhhhh
“shit, piss, and corruption”
“whatsamatta now?”
“stubbed damn toe.”
“god punished you for not taking his blessing.”

“you want eggs for breakfast?”
“I want a new toe.”
Ahchoooooooooooooo
“god bless you.”
“i give up. thanks. chin’s stopped bleeding.”
“here’s some tea, lemon, and honey.”
“dust, dust. We must dust one day.”
“sip slowly.”

Piece Work

Mom drew flowers on metal trays before she birthed me,
Then in order Steve, Jo-Jo, Fred, Margaret, and last Carl at age forty.

Swapped oils for diapers; red roses and yellow daffodils for crazy us,
And when we all left her house, she again took up the brush.

Like her, we had kids and they had children too.
Seventeen to date, more on the way. Mom knew what to do.

She sketched arrangements, bouquets and corsages out of love;
Her gifts now light each home, while she paints for all, high above.

Keekees

Our former guest has nine lives
I think it true.
She retired to Florida
Like septuagenarians do.

She'd weakly meow
Each time she got sick and sad.
Then mew twice as loud
Whenever hungry or mad.

For many years, we cared for Keekees--
'Cause our daughter went to college.
Only yelled at her once or twice...
She'd jumped on the table and ate our porridge.

Most times she'd lie under a tree
Watching robins in flight,
Dreaming of youthful days
She'd snare 'em when they'd light.

Keekees had a temper for sure
But mellowed as she aged.
Yet no matter her extended years
She hated to be caged.

We didn't mind her all that much,
Easy she was to care.
Until she'd get in a fight
And return without her hair.

Our child married in April and
With her husband lives in Miami.
On their apartment's landing,
Keekees' one eye scouts tsunamis.

We'll visit them in winter months--
From North Carolina, a thirteen hour drive.
An old roommate will be waiting--
Half-blind, half-furred, but forever alive.

End