

Clean Pants

Freshly washed jeans hug my legs
and girdle my waist.
The button hole and stud

behave like feuding neighbors
and need a tug across my belly's street
before they're forced to shake hands.

And each pocket is similarly unaccommodating.
My handkerchief has a reservation in the left rear,
but the door is tightly closed

and I need to force it in to get it seated.
On mornings like this
I check the mirror or step on the scale

to see if I'm getting fat.
But I'm just myself garbed in American casual,
the un-pleated bridge between rich and poor.

And as the hours pass the weave relaxes,
as if attending fabric yoga
where space is breathed into each pocket
and comfort is restored.

Tuesdays at The Seagate's Atlantic Grille

*Ponce de Leon sought a fountain.
He should have looked for a band.*

In aquariums walling the dining room
sharks slide back and forth,
and jellyfish contract and release
in puffs of translucent motion.

Stone floors and glass shelves shine under soft light,
and the crowd and din grow toward eight.
Table talk is shouted over appetizers
and orders are placed before menus are folded.

But the real meal walks the floor
with a deep tan, smile and gold necklace,
slinks through the arch in high heels
or sits on the next stool.

Some believe in out-growing,
shed clothes that no longer fit,
and leave some sports behind.

Others still hunt and hunt.
Like nomads they trudge from oasis to oasis,
climb rung after rung, squint over bifocals,
and stretch for one more apple.
For them, tonight, *Joey and The Gigolos* will play,
and play tonight they will.

The room is soaked with sock-hop longing
spiced by seasons of holding and stroking,
lying down and snuggling close.
And while some seek sleep in the hotel above,
many by the bar hope to stay up all night.

The dance floor holds more leg than a meat cooler,
more cleavage than the Canyon Lands,
and dresses tighter than Cling Wrap
and more inviting than an open house.

The band plays in the key of yesterday.
The drummer's pulse is now.

The market's open till ten-thirty,
and next week waits for those still hungry.

Photography 201

Smartphones in every hand,
on every bridge and stair,
in each park and chapel,
at every meal and market.

Here's a beautiful picture.

Now, add me.

Here's a miraculous fresco.

Now, add me.

I took a trip and saw the canyon.

Look. I'm there.

No more waste or mess,
carving initials into a tree or desk,
spray painting a bare wall.

Look at that tower,
the canal and statue.

*See, I was wearing blue,
and the wind whipped my hair.*

I know, this one is truly amazing.
Took them three centuries to complete.

*And don't you think
that's a good picture of me?*

Yes, I do too.

Blinds Down

The highway concerto plays all night.
Sixteen wheelers groan and moan
below the alto hum of tread on concrete
and the rising arias of sporadic speeders
who've found an open lane to fly across stage
instead of slowly stepping toward an exit.

An occasional siren wails and dies in the wings,
and a rare car tire thuds
dropping from a curb to the gutter.

And while the rest of us seek sleep,
the clang of a trash bin's lid
as a truck drops its load is a reminder
that others are at work cleaning our mess
so the sunrise will feel fresh and pure.

Sending a Kiss from Third

Every infield is different.
The ground may be as smooth as tarmac
or loose as a hiking trail –
groomed like the Masters
or shaggy and snarled like the Turner's tree lawn.

But the only way to play
is with hope for a true bounce
and prayer to snatch a liar.

The game is slow
with lots of room to itch and scratch, spit and stare,
but the window for strolling and shifting shuts
when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

Then it's time for low, ready balance –
each foot dug in, hugging the earth,
and arms long and loose before bent knees,
like willow branches almost touching the ground.

But as low as you get, your head must be up,
as if you've crept close in a tiger crouch
with your muscles loaded and ready to pounce.

And in those brief seconds the world must disappear,
for the only story's near the plate
where you read the back and arms' unwinding torque
as the bat flows in a wide circle
and greets the ball with a crack or ping,
that darts like a bullet aimed at your head
or skitters like a stone skipping water,
seeking a pebble or divot that might shift its course.

This is what you've trained for.
This is why you've oiled your glove,
pounded a predictable pocket,
even why you've taken dance lessons.

In this instant, the only time is **now**.
Now you must welcome its flight, delight in its arrival,
and reach wide or close, low or high,
to draw it into your mitt
and embrace it with your fingers.
Hug and grasp it as you slide toward first,
skating left while loading right,

loading your arm like a jitterbug back step
before pulling your partner into another twirl,
gripping the ball like a knob
before flinging a door wide open.
Then whip your arm, free and relaxed,
free and flowing across your body,
as you turn around your spine
and look at the first baseman's mitt,
like a lover's face arced up and begging for a kiss,
as you let the ball go.