

Farewell Series

The First Farewell: Know Thyself

The first farewell one bids, when facing the final sunset
Is not to a lover, family, friends, or pets
But to the dreams, hopes, and aspirations left unfulfilled
To things envisioned and unachieved, whether stark or wispy
To the aching of a heart earnestly deluded
By an imperiously imagined, endless timeline

The heartache of saying goodbye spreads to the wider chest
Through the torso, north and south
Flowing to the body's extremities with a sorrow
Unmatched by any other calamity
Beyond the body this grief emanates
For the body was truly never a container of being

Ears pounding with heartbeat
Or heightened to the sensitively a pin drop
In this space, soon to be vacated
All manner of sensory experience is elevated
Or otherwise strangely numbed
Who can predict what manifests in the whirlpool of vanishing?

Brushed aside, as if by hands of a god
Are the darkening cloud thoughts
That envelope a vanilla-hued sky
These are brushed away, though not in metaphor
For these vaporous messengers from beyond
Are slowly but surely stifling the minds-eyesight

More time... more time... if only... and in ironic response
Time moves backward, playing a slideshow of the past
Things forgotten, things remembered and cherished
Surprising things - never understood until now
And then comes the freeze-frame, look-in-the-mirror shocker
How to bid farewell to a self that one never knew?

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The Next Farewell: Know What's Nearest

The next farewell one bids, before the last sunrise
Is it to what's closest, when one is alone, lying in bed
A painting on the wall, frame hanging askew
All these years, glancing at that work of art
Never wondering: Who painted it?
When? Why? How did it come to be fastened on that paneled wall?

It's not that memory is lapsing, though it's certainly preoccupied
This data was never stored
Just like the curvy red ceramic cup on the nightstand
Half full of orange pekoe tea, poured hours ago
Dash of white, no sugar; a brew cold to the lips now
That cup seems unique, imported? From where?

Caught up in the flow of life - that is living after all!
And yet, to not pause to absorb more detail
Yes, the scent of the roses, we are not unaware
But that's just to do what were told
We fast-forward through our moments
Habitually aching for a future of more promise

There's a five-legged ant, now ascending the tea cup
He's the one to watch! One leg less, he's still a marvel
Where does he call home?
A nest in the wall? A hole in the garden?
How did he manage to clamber from wherever
To the high mesa of nightstand, and now up the curvy cup?

He's alone, no trail of fellows
Is he an outcast due to disability?
How tiny is he, compared to one's hand
Which could squish him easily
But what's the point of that?
That's no way to bid farewell to marvelous things, near and small

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The Last Farewell: Praise Be the Light

The last farewell one bids between departing and departed
Is to all manner of light, even that phantasmagoric hue in dreams
To go gently or not, is a force of habit, not will
Let's not pretend there's no kryptonite at the end, weakening our resolve
The darkness of death shall blot out all
Light and life are soulmates; what manner of living is there otherwise?

Though apologies to the blind; there's been no outreach to learn
To ask in earnest what quality of light they perceive
The courage it must take to navigate without sight
To relate to sighted friends and all sighted creatures of the world
What reservoir of wisdom from a parallel universe of senses
Do the blind draw on when death looms near?

For the sighted, in a single blink, light is gone
Try it: blink, hold it longer, then open
An afterimage persists, vague or clear, far or near
How diligently our brains strive to maintain the on-state
Keeping the lit-up scenes fresh, nearly tangible
A heroic persistence to a chronically disintegrating scene

Fear of the dark, of things real and imagined
Is the prime mover of light propagation
Maui, the candlemakers, Mr. Edison - heroes all, they are
For keeping the unlit and dim and scary at bay
Just as an idle hand is easily bewitched
So is a mind enfolded in blackness haunted by disquieting mysteries

The portent of fading light, the snuffing out of hope
That's the deepest of the cuts to be delivered
Pray that it be there until the last, however bright
Pray to not go gentle into that good night
Pray for an extension of the power to see
But pray as we might, Destiny cannot honor our pleas

Epilogue: For Those Left Behind

Cleaning up, tidying up, making arrangements after a passing
This is a business, an art, a sacred series of tasks
A process of solemn grieving
Or nothing of the sort when times are tough – war, famine, plague
It is after all, another human body to be disposed of
However ennobling the departed life force was

Death waves its wand before the bystanders and attendants
Not to entrance, but to awaken those left behind
It's a powerful gesture - pointing to the preciousness of light
Of movement, of beating heart, of breaths
Of thinking uniquely human thoughts
Of counting one's blessings

In contrast to Death's shadowy transference
Life's magnificence is a revelation
From the smallest appreciation, as for that five-legged ant
To a blast of God consciousness in one's psyche
Each step forward, each spoken promise of the heart, each lame gesture or stroke of mastery
Adds something to the vibrant swirl of existence, stretching out through dark matter to touch
in some fashion places and spaces and beings unknown

Nothing ever happened, and nothing ever will, though it feels so real
It's not a mean deception, the reality of no self - emptiness
It's a kindness, a grace that fools us to believe otherwise
Santa and fairies and spooky things we perpetuate in the name of innocence
Illusion is the cradle that rocks us in comfort
Until we have the strength, curiosity, and courage to take our baby steps

An unsmiling Buddha is a rare sight, for to smile is to align with the Godhead
It's the very best place to start, and to end, and to toast, with wine or tea
To say farewell is to welcome what is new, what is growth-driven, yet what never changes
And what tempts us forever to explore, to partake in and witness the process
Of dissolution and creation, if only for the sake of appearance, for the Celestial show
In the beginning and in the end we are only here to honor the opportunity of incarnation