

## All The King's Horses

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Just yesterday I sat in the white flower café,  
the one in Central Park.  
As the waiter left I said how just that morning  
my professor spoke so professorially.

My friend brushed gray hairs from a lined cheek,  
and asked me to pass the salt.  
Are you listening? I said, just as the professor  
would have asked the question,

She yawned and sprinkled without tasting,  
then took a bite and ate.  
Seeing me there waiting, she finally wondered,  
“Does it really matter?”

What kind of question is that? I thought,  
I even rolled my eyes,  
then held my knife like the professor's crop,  
and said, “Of course it does!”

She sighed and let her eyes wander across the table,  
then through white linen towards my waist,  
she raised them like a downy blanket and asked  
if I'd had sex lately.

“Is that all you want?” I said.  
She smiled and offered me a shrimp.  
It had no Deepak meaning,  
just basil and salt and God it was delicious.

Not all, she said, frowning now beneath her.  
“Maybe just a better chair.”  
You're hopeless, I replied. She sighed,  
I don't need loathing in a place like this.

She reached across and touched my hand  
to synchronize our subjects.  
Now my psyche fell a great fall.  
What might this woman repair?

Her eyes looked better than anything I'd tasted,

so we left and tried those pools.  
And Holy Christ they were much better.  
So much better than before.

When we stopped I tried restarting,  
to regain what I'd been taught,  
leave this pleasure, these new pieces,  
to put myself together again.

She sighed an older sigh again,  
she knew it all by heart,  
including all those rusty stanzas  
about assembly being required.

She raised herself on the rumpled sheet and offered  
a short sermon on the mount.  
about the difference between blackboards  
and older women seducing younger men

Don't let winter ruin spring,  
or let summer die in fall.  
"So back to the professor—" I began.  
"No back to sex," she interrupted.

When she was done I had new pieces  
Hers a sun, his a candle,  
but how now, and now what?  
To put me back together again.

She stayed with me for several years,  
I learned what can't be taught,  
sunning in her quiet storms,  
drowning what I'd thought.

Then liking my new tarnish,  
outside the ivy halls,  
one day she left me, with a kiss,  
up there upon my wall.

### The Legend of Bagger Jeannie

It was a remarkable sight,  
I wonder if they really saw it.

the reasons for the apparition—or was it real?  
are understandable, mind you,  
if you know this broken her.  
how she loves those nervous blurs of couture  
the little yellow finches.  
that dance in small latitudes,  
within the tiny garden nick,  
something she drew  
from the still working gray  
in our little south forty.  
clearing tiny throats,  
they sing to her—and me,  
as I watch through shadows.  
around peppered seed they eat,  
then drink, then bathe;  
brightly colored feathers  
strobed among flowers and a tree,  
bringing smiles to her troubled eyes.  
she spies some larger others,  
intruders, knaves,  
gathers a frown,  
and slowly opens the low gate,  
dressed with concern  
and a pretty blue robe.  
she steps gingerly along broken flagstones.  
but armed, she has that loaded flyswatter.  
and lacks only a pith helmet.  
she moves as fast as broken can  
creeping between fuchsia and vine,  
scolding soft warnings,  
in tones as firm as five feet can muster,  
yet polite, with the legacy of her line.  
she makes her warning way  
towards larger Clantons  
that bully faeries from Elysium.  
there she goes, savior, knight, protector,  
unleashing a 16 rpm attack,  
so slow she gives more notice  
than crippled broken wings would need,  
the bare bit of wave  
says away avaricious, away.  
the desperados must wonder:  
what the hell is she doing?  
they don't pale a bit.  
still she comes, tenacious, harmless,  
to check whatever Darwin

would trespass in our garden.  
this brave and hurting lovely,  
making sure smallest mouths can feed.  
the villain's eye her glacial creep,  
with—what's that she's holding?  
what's her design?  
bother surely couldn't be in her mind.  
wait, that's it.  
it's some new plant,  
adding color and quicker crawl  
but surely no danger.  
still it comes,  
slower than old dogs  
whose tails need batteries.  
this new vine  
that stretches near.  
but she knows what she's about.  
she launches a slow wave  
through heavy air,  
that one will feel an ache for days,  
but it's enough.  
the intruders are bothered  
their moment is past.  
they wave up and away.  
maybe frowning, maybe laughing  
as they go.  
the little field sits quiet,  
protected, saved.  
mission accomplished,  
for those few seconds.  
she's yet troubled,  
the little win is a grain  
of the battle she can't win.  
driven by her loving Patton dna  
she retreats slowly to the house  
creeping toward rest from all the effort.  
and in her wake  
the smaller feathers dash back in  
for grateful sips,  
or a brief bath  
rescued, relieved, and safe,  
while the enemy wait on lines or towers  
wondering what that pale, slow flower was.

## Hummingbirds and Horses

The little bird finally quit its hovering  
to nervous safety of the upper rim.  
so rare to see wings folded,  
sitting on an edge of fountain.  
“They remind me of horses when they do that,”  
she said, framed with pink fuchsia.  
the hummingbird began to bathe,  
droplets flew in scatters.  
“almost always at their feet.  
on their mark and set to go.”  
back at the fountain  
cleaning is well under way.  
“So rare to see them calm,  
when we’re so close.”  
quiet took her away.  
now smile was gone,  
years off,  
while she sat there.  
where did she go?  
some mean sadness crossed her brow.  
what’s behind those dark eyes now?  
she lingered at the old something,  
her lines set gravely,  
then she was back.  
unmelted, smiling  
at fuchsias, and fountain,  
and little wings.  
they started up again,  
a washed blur lifted the tiny bird.  
it paused over the bowl,  
searching east and west,  
then turned and darted off,  
having brought memories,  
and had its bath.

## Not Enough

Not enough to be young,  
And brash,  
Or shy.  
To smile,  
Be excited,  
Or reckless and confident.

Nope.  
Not enough to embarrass oneself  
To learn lessons  
To better.  
I'm sorry, nope.  
Not enough to have friends,  
To be interested,  
To be lovers,  
To hear the word yes.  
To be married?  
Nope.  
Not enough to take deep breaths  
Have meaningful talks,  
On long walks,  
To lose it and argue,  
To be upset.  
Nope.  
Not enough to be sorry,  
To replenish,  
To strengthen.  
No, my dear.  
Not enough to be parent,  
Or teacher and student,  
To succor, to nurse, to worry.  
No. No. No.  
Not enough to be tired,  
And proud,  
And empty,  
And confused.  
Nope.  
Not enough to fear doctors,  
Feel dread,  
To be brave.  
No, please, no.  
Not enough to be there  
In sickness or poorer  
It's not.  
Nope.  
Not enough to lie there beside her,  
With all that's behind,  
To think of what's ahead  
To be there.  
Not enough to be broken,  
Exhausted.  
To drown alone.  
God, no.

## Memories

What was that song about?  
The words were hammered silver.  
Of boots that crunched in nighttime rain,  
And clothes worn til' they tore  
The bleary dawns and endless yawns  
From days you never slept.  
You always shrugged at grateful pats,  
You always changed the subject.

The cliffs from which we viewed our foes  
Were nothing you raised flags to.  
Yet on your wrinkled lap  
You've just another husk.  
What virgin minds rejected,  
Now you've mostly just accepted.  
Memories, the woman sang.  
But was she smiling?