

In the Fullest Heart of Night (Sleeping Sidewalks)

In the fullest heart of night,
sleeping sidewalks dream of light.

Plastic cup goes
tik-tik-tik,
alone by night-wind borne

past dark plate glass
with twisted mannequins,
blank human forms
with elbows posed
just so, to show
the very latest trends
to none.

For no-one's there
to touch the glass,
to ooh and ahh.
They're gone.
The sidewalk sleeps
alone.

Plastic cup goes
tik-tik-tik,
by night-wind
down the sleeping sidewalk borne.

There's nothing here
from yesteryear.
Memory remains
unborn.
Adorned
the night with tenebrous web, the
silken thread, the
connections left unsaid. Such is
the fullest heart of night. It weeps,
while city sleeps,
for light and darkness fierce,
unbound,
blank beast let loose to prey
on dreams of sleeping sidewalks. Sound

of plastic cup -
tik-tik-tik,

on night-wind borne
to somewhere else,
to points unknown and
streets unfound.

Mortal Mind

I turn away in darkened tomb,
my face to wrench from perished thought.
Nerves and brain sing, twisted taut
as I reflect on mortals' doom:

Saddened castle, pallored ruin
is aged mind of man, too soon
to dwell with poisoned stalk and root
and shattered branch and ragged bloom.

Fungus rot and stinking mold
await the mind of man so bold.
We till and plant, and work in gold,
and fancy sway eternal hold. But

among the stars are blank-eyed gods
who watch, and laugh at man's designs.
Speak, these gods, though without mouth,
their voices one, that of the void:

"O man! Weep tears of bitter blood!
Upon the grave of fresh-turned earth
'neath which lie, bestilled at birth,
Hope's remains, and corpse of Mirth!

"Think not thy lives be more than dust,
more than swamp-rot, more than rust!
To naught are all thy labors rushed.
By Time's cold hands wilt thou be crushed."

My red brow burned, my eyes rolled white!
Never, never could I light
the way, the path, the unknown turns
of phantom torchsouls' bitter fight

against the all-consuming fate
awaiting mortals unaware.

Blank-eyed gods, they lie in wait.
With neither love nor hate, they stare.

Yet mortal minds, we seek the light!
Though we reap but blackened blight,
and await us only pallid bone,
and wasted flesh, and silent stone.

Why make we such ill-starred search?
Because we know (knowledge be cursed!)
that before us only two paths lie:
Rise to hopeless quest, or die!

At the Depths of Constant Sorrow

“After Hiroshima was bombed, I saw a photograph of the side of a house with the shadows of the people who had lived there burned into the wall from the intensity of the bomb. The people were gone, but their shadows remained.”

-Ray Bradbury

At the depths of constant sorrow,
bangflash lights the dark and snaps
it stark with sharp-edged shades like
ghosts that missed the mark, preserved
in soot on blank white walls. Now hark-

forgotten city memories: Black rain
that danced, delicate on cobblestones and
concrete bones, the thermal wave
that lifted us to paradise
on wings of flame.

--Last night to that dead place I went
in dreams of liquid silver light:
Unburdened and unbound,
a cloud, a summer wind
I was.

I saw a high, high silver fish.
Weeping in the sky,
I was.

Then-
Dropped tiny tumbling speck,
fat falling stone, a chip of bone, a
harbinger of burning home,
deafening tone,
and rambling, rumbling jack of wreck.

A silent, bursting sun I saw,
a sun that woke the dead and dumped
them from their coffins whole and set
their skeletons to dance.

-- I woke askance
to glow and silent
blast of dawning light.
I saw

hanging, drowned in pools of blood,
a bloated sun. Exploding flood
of memories this silent morn:
They warn
of nothing anymore,
 but should.

Chasing Secrets Behind a Throne



My son watches the drawer-testing machine,
a machine the IKEA crowds ignore
in favor of shiny appliances,
but that owns *his* eyes.

Those eyes follow the number
on the machine as it glides
in and out, back and forth-
a pendulum, a lullabye.

As he watches I, in turn,
watch him.
I don't think he knows
he's my pendulum.

He's a stone, a question mark,
a painted warrior
whose naked
face has never been seen.

He's a bridge,
but the toll
needs some foreign
coin that's never been minted.

Five years old: he charges

away from me through waving
grass, folded in a puffy red
parka, arms

pumping into a universe
of green blades
that could swallow him
whole.

He's a little Michelin Man,
then he's a stick figure,
then he's a colored dot
chasing secrets behind a throne.

We watch the number
together.
It hasn't changed
yet, but maybe he knows

its secret. Maybe one day
he'll tell me all
his secrets.
I can hope.

The Old Man's Cane

Stout, this enslaved
piece of bamboo:

long and dry and hollow
but strong,

like a leg-bone,
stabbing and jabbing hard

at the ground.

An old man grips
its worn head

with a hand
as gnarled and tight

as the wood trapped
in the cage

of his fingers.

This wood was impressed
years ago into the service

of bearing its master's
body. The old man trusts

his third leg yet. But
this knotty piece

of Nature is twisted. It is bitter
with the memory of stolen growth.

It could betray the old man
someday. A dry snap, a Judas

kiss to send him
sprawling onto the pavement.

It would look
like an accident.