

An Invitation to the Top of the Ziggurat

We'll build the base however many cubits it takes
to support a platform wide enough and long
enough for a table that seats twelve. We'll learn to form
the bricks from earth, straw, and books
storied and baked in the sun. We'll set them in staircases,
climb from horror to history to unrequited love,
getting ever closer to the blue dome of sky.
We'll dress the table with your china, crystal, bells
of Ireland, yellow tea roses, delicate willow branches,
place-cards made of linen and hand lettered.
We'll set out rich risotto, creamy bisque, tender cuts of meat
in handmade bowls that hearken hieroglyphs
of poppy blossoms when viewed from the sky, steam rising
from silk vermilion merging with wisps of clouds and offering.
We'll wear ridiculously high heels the color of heather
on the moor and dance like hurricanes, hang
from elaborate chandeliers knitted from lightning and hung
from heaven. We'll be so close, so close.
We'll pass our treasures, fingertips brushing as
we wash, dry, and stack with felt dividers like the caress
of dandelion under a chin. We'll begin again,
craft ceremonial robes from sacrifice,
indulge our selves in thin rims of gold.

Fifty Ways to Write a Poem

1. Stand on your head. Increased blood flow stimulates creativity. Subsequent black floating dots, possibility of passing out lend themselves to spontaneity.
2. Listen to any album by The Cure. Make sure it's on slightly warped vinyl.
3. Consider how close you are to turning fifty.
4. Drink half of the bottle. Any bottle. Contemplate whether it is now half-empty or half-full.
5. Stand on your head after drinking half the bottle.
6. Sing the "Fifty-nifty" song. Write a poem about the state you forget the song after.
7. My poem is about Indiana.
8. Indiana is where my dad was born and raised.
9. Make up a villanelle about Robert Smith's hair.
10. Listen to 50 Cent's hit "In da Club."
11. Write a "contents" outline for your Wikipedia page.
12. 50 Cent's content page goes from "Early Career" to "Shooting."
13. Test your knowledge of the lyrics to "Boys Don't Cry."
14. Egg whites were good for liberty spikes.
15. Think about whether or not you could accurately describe a can of Aqua Net.
16. Describe the smell of Aqua Net, especially as it is applied to hair rolled on a hot curling iron.
17. Drink the other half of the bottle.
18. There's more than a fifty/fifty chance that if you are writing poetry, whatever was in that bottle wasn't water. Or that's what people would have you believe.
19. Discuss the stereotype of a poet.
20. Discuss the stereotype of a female poet.
21. Try to turn water into wine.
22. Consider blasphemy.
23. Listen to any album by Depeche Mode. Make sure it's on slightly warped vinyl.
24. Listen to that one song with the train whistle on it.
25. Google how to get your hair to stand up in liberty spikes.
26. Write about what it would be like to be the guy dressed up in the Statue of Liberty costume outside the tax office in April.
27. Write about how he always looks happy and about his dancing.
28. Wonder if he is also the guy in the blow-up cell phone.
29. The mascots for my schools were the Gaucho, the Tiger, the Torero, the Pirate, and the Valkyrie.
30. "Legal Issues" is section eight of 50 Cent's "Contents."
31. Jot down an outline of a narrative poem that uses a cowboy, a tiger, a bullfighter, a pirate, and a valkyrie.
32. Try to put Elmer Fudd's "Kill the Wabbit" out of your mind.
33. Be very, very quiet.
34. Meditate on how close you are to turning fifty while standing on your head and listening to "Question of Lust."
35. Make a list of the ways you've left your lovers.

36. Make a list of the ways you thought about offing your lovers.
37. They say women prefer poison to violence.
38. I own a book called *The Book of Poisons*.
39. Arsenic is listed as a “classic” poison with a toxicity level of 5, five being the most toxic.
40. Compose a poem inspired by the women in *Arsenic and Old Lace*.
41. Measure all of the storage furniture in your house. Determine whether or not you could shove a body in there.
42. Determine whether or not you could shove yourself in there.
43. Try to put the extra fifty pounds you’ve gained since your mascot was a Gaucho out of your mind.
44. Scroll through your tv channels at six in the morning. Knock off a poem about how many of the channels are featuring weight loss programs, work out programs, weight loss drugs, one-minute workouts, the Brazil Butt Lift, or the Lifestyle Lift.
45. Write a poem about knocking off your lover using nothing but warped vinyl, an empty bottle, and a half-empty canister of Aqua Net.
46. Contemplate how much of your life was stolen trying to memorize state capitals.
47. Indianapolis is the capital of Indiana.
48. Consider whether or not you should spend the same amount of time on the Brazil Butt Lift as you did attempting to memorize state capitals.
49. Determine whether or not a Brazil Butt fits the stereotype of the female poet.
50. Pretend that you are investigating a poisoning at your own house. There is an empty bottle. There is a stack of 80’s vinyl. There are upside down footprints five feet up the wall facing the television. Write a poem.

Geography

If time is a dimension like space

Los Angeles exists Dublin exists

then you and I spark you and I laugh
in North Carolina over a few beers,
a vinyl checkerboard covered table,
at a dive bar in South Carolina.

You unpin my hair unpin

unpin

A king sized hotel bed in Charleston,
white cotton sheets across my bare back,
the space next to me untouched.

Cairo Santa Fe

I run my fingers over white. Feel
a hollow from your hip,
indentation on the pillow
another bedroom where you face me (Miami)
shuddered breath between baited lips (Meridian).

Hanging Mary

Executioner elephants, trainer nods and feet deemed
decent stools, umbrella holders set to the right of a door,
settle on extremities. Radius, ulna, crushed. Nods
and feet exert patient pressure, pulverize the thighs,
hobble ankles. Nods and feet deliver life
right out of the body, the criminal chest,
wet walnut head beneath a velvet sledgehammer.

Mary's trainer, one cruel prod too many; one
by one she gathered his limbs to her, flung
them like so much rotted hay. People flocked
to see her public punishment. Picnic lunches
and children playing as chains were wrapped
around her grey neck, as the crane winched
her captive body impossibly up.

Wish List

When I asked her what she wanted,
she said, I want a bathtub table. Oh
that would be lovely. I've wanted one
for so long. But it's just one of those things
that you don't buy for yourself. It's not
a necessity. So I Googled bathtub
table to find out what the hell
I was supposed to be looking for,
and there was a bathtub lined with sand,
decorative rocks, and aquatic plants.
Koi were gaping beneath a piece
of glass set with service for four.
I thought, oh that's cool. I could find
an old tub, pick out some fish like
underwater butterflies, like aquatic
flowers undulating petals in tangerine
and pearl. Set out wine and glasses like
real fancy with candles. And then
there was a bathtub lined with women
dressed only in the strategic placement
of their arms, their mouths open
in perfect O's of surprised lipstick,
their hair coifed in careful rolls.
And I thought, oh that's, that's,
where is that? And then I thought,
that's not what she was talking about.
And then there was a bathtub with a couple
of guys with top hats on and shot glasses.
And I thought, no. And then there were
several bathtubs with tasteful teak
trays that fit neatly across. Built-in
book easels, soap baskets, wine glass
holders. And I thought. So much
for the bathtub-aquarium-table.