

## *Vacation*

Newspaper on hold – ✓  
Mail forwarded – ✓  
Yard to be mowed every ten days – ✓  
Greenhouse watered, birds fed M,W, F – ✓

Clothes packed, truck loaded, and yet  
The most important decision is still to be made:  
With whom shall I share my summer at the shore,  
And who stays, gathering dust and tempting the silverfish?

There's not time for everybody,  
Some must be left behind.  
And so to start. We start with  
Drury, who advises, and I consent.

And Catton, a most civil friend,  
And Tuchman (long left on the shelf),  
Lest the storms of August rage,  
And Karnow, to remind me of lost innocence.

Allende for the infinite beauty of her prose,  
Buck to see the earth in another light,  
And Tan to reimagine family,  
With all its webbing and resiliency.

Then there are the hidden pleasures  
Of Spillane and Turow and Carr,  
And the comforting discomfort of Hemingway,  
Steinbeck and Fitzgerald.

And of course, no summer could pass  
Without a weekend with Faulkner,  
Reminding me that I do not own books,  
These books own me.

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## *December Storm*

Warmed by solstice embers,  
I watch the snow fall silently on moon-lit earth.  
Unnoticed by the grass and leaves  
As it blankets them against frigid night,  
The snow covers crags and mudded trails,  
Swells barren branches, fills the uneven and soiled,  
Softens brambles by the pond,  
Amplifies the moonlight with ice-blue luminosity  
And brings serenity to the night.

So like the snow is my love as it falls gentle upon you,  
Unnoticed in the rush of your day,  
Offering a cloak of warmth should you feel the cold;  
It covers your imperfections, magnifies your presence,  
Turns your voice into a song and your nearness into a caress,  
And makes vivid the colors of my life.

And from the embers of my own long night,  
I nurture the love that gives meaning and light,  
And draws me to you like a night creature to the fire.

## *Sea Pappy*

The world is inside-out, and somehow I missed the joke.  
I'm an orange being squeezed from the inside,  
A balloon being inflated by a painted clown,  
Soon to be twisted into a Dachshund,  
A pirate's sword,  
A crown.

I force the air from my lungs, but uninvited  
It claws its way back, digging through  
The alveoli snoozing in the corner,  
Poking in the cupboard,  
The sock drawer,  
The bed.

Out and In, Out and In, Out and In.

A jellied pate with flowing braids, telling a tale,  
Seen but unheard, the unblinking eye  
Missing nothing in the dark,  
Watching the watcher,  
The doubter,  
Sleep.

Though sleep is an illusion, a technicality captured  
For analysis, as if disciples of Freud could  
Mine the language of the brain and  
Parse out the Id,  
The Superego  
The Ego.

Out and In, Out and In, Out and In.

So night stumbles forward, slicing the hours into  
Indigestible morsels that lie on the pillow,  
And lie about the truth, that time  
Will not be denied,  
Nor delayed in  
The end.

And yet, because we can, we do; the servos and diodes,  
The Botox and Viagra, glucosamine and Motrin  
Elixirs that define Woodstock in decline,  
Comfort us while we sleep everted  
In our inside-out  
World.

Out and In, Out and In, Out and In.

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## *Layers*

Leaving the office

I spin the lock, shedding for the evening the  
Title, the Business Card, the Mask.

Changing in the gym,

I leave the suit and tie in the locker,  
Dropping tension on the floor with the wet towels,

Three miles down the trail,

Worries of the day have fallen aside,  
Kicked off the bike by the pumping of my legs,

At six miles,

Hills strip away the ego, as younger cyclists climb  
With legs that my experience can't match,

Ten miles and nearing home,

The weight of the office is off my shoulders,  
Melted away by sweat.

The steaming shower completes the job,

Removing the lingering office armor,  
Sending worries into the watershed.

And then there is you,

With a smile that disarms,  
And a hug that opens another door.

We read the menu, share some wine,

And happen upon memories stacked neatly  
Like picture albums on a forgotten shelf.

Through dinner we select volumes,

And gently probe the pages;  
I watch your eyes as retelling becomes reliving.

Walking home, your arm on mine,  
The moon an umbrella,  
We are wrapped in a glow that keeps the world apart,  
Till alone together,  
We remove from each other the final artifice and conceit,  
And lie touching the hidden places of the body and the heart  
That are the essence of our beings.

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## *Sunday Drive*

“You’re insane,”  
She says.

“You’re going to get us killed,”  
She says.

“I know these people, you don’t.”  
That’s true.

To which I reply,  
“I’m just following doctor’s orders.”

To which I add,  
“He said to keep it elevated. I’m keeping it elevated.”

“Well, put something over it,”  
She says.

“A towel. A hat. Something.”  
She says.

To which I reply,  
“We don’t have a towel.”

To which I add,  
“We only have boxes.”

“They have guns,”  
She says.

“And not just in the gun racks.”  
She says.

To which I reply,  
“Really? What kind of guns?”

To which I add,  
“When we move out here, I’ll have to get one.”

And again,  
“Would an Uzi do?”

“You’re insane,”  
She repeats.

“And you’re going to get us killed,”  
She repeats.

We are driving down the road, city folk  
Going to our weekend place,  
Venturing into the country.

Wife driving, me resting my arm on the door sill,  
Bandaged hand in the air,  
Middle finger full of stitches, dressed for the dance,  
An unintended salutation to our new neighbors.

Considering this new information, I observe,  
“I like this place.”

To which I add,  
“I think I’ll be mayor someday.”

“If you live that long, you’ll have only two qualifications,”  
She says. “You’ll be old,  
And grey.”

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