

Learning to Say Farewell to a Friend
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1.

If only there were a voice in my eyes,
 what would it choose not to sing all day long?
 Could all the chatters that ache refuse to join?
 Could all the echoes stay hollow to the end?
When seven days of shallow silence finally pass by,
 would it then fail to follow the wet, dreary trails?
 Could all the blighted nights speed idly through?
 Could all the blinded stars tumble out a scream?
When twenty tons of light-heartedness wearily arrives,
 would it then take wing and spread out in daylight?
 Could all the brackets topple down at my knees?
 Could all the flooded floors hold firm in my hands?
When heart after heart come panting, pleading, feeling,
 would it then bring itself to utter nonchalance and ennui?
 Could all the wind pipes run flat out of steam?
 Could all the thermometers freeze in their tracks,
 lest they explode in a heap?

If only there were a voice in my eyes,
 I would see again under murky, luke-warm water;
 I could reach again beyond my claspy, clammy hands;
 I could sense again beyond the tips of my lanky sticks of hair.

If only there were a voice in my eyes,
 I would hear again the songs that came from another place;
 I could believe again in the grounds I have turned away;
 I could know again the mysteries of the pale blue skies.

If only there were a voice in my eyes,
 I would feel again the tender warmth of the morning's breath;
 I could touch again the coolness of the steel box that preserves my naïveté;
 I could jump off again in pain as the unbearable stabs at my fingertips
 remind me of what is not mine to take.

If only there were a voice in my eyes,
 I would sing a hollow song whose echoes would unlock the cages of my failings;
 I would sing a weighty, flighty song whose burdens would hold my soul fixed in its steps;
 I would sing a coy song of idle apathy, whose temper would free me to be where I long to be.

Or, come to think of it,
 perhaps my eyes would close in place,
 call to all their Guards and Servants,
 and wish to be free of the emptiness
 when it again opens.
And so it would seem.

5/13/08, bedtime, home

2.

Stand on me, I say,
 right here, on my toes,
 on my thighs,
 on my belly, which will melt away to make a void for your feet.
Stand on me, I say,
 for as long as I can bear the impossible need
 to collect the shedding pieces of aluminum that scale off your coats.

No, no, I meant nothing of the sort.

Stand by me, near me, away from me,
 but near where I can see how I can pick through my belongings,
In search of albuterol, and cromolyn, and loratadine, and menthol,
 my constant companions that keep my breath deep and resonant,
So as not to lose my tenuous hold on your presence,
 because of my stammering soul.
All this, so I may pull my sleeves up,
 wave my hands,
 and offer you the company of a seat,
Across from mine, besides mine, anywhere but mine,
 for I need my seat for holding my breath
 long enough, better to enjoy a sigh,
 that I hope would be short and shallow,
 but last the length of a lifetime.

5/14/2008, bedtime, home

3.

Dream: I am in a new light-speed spacecraft that takes me to the next solar system. The craft is so light and flimsy, it's as if I'm just floating through space, unsupported. I try to let go of my fear, and that makes it easier to wade through celestial debris I keep encountering. The journey takes five years, but passes by quickly enough, and I land my craft—now I see that it's shaped like a wind-surfing contraption—in what seems to be near downtown. I wander into the city, and it's just like any generic American city, bustling with people doing people-like things. I would have believed it if it turned out that I had returned to Earth. I check out a five-story department store, when the narrator warns me that the night is coming, and everything will change; beware of the females, especially. I run out, and reach an industrial area, passing by a gigantic hat shop. I come to a two-story building, square-ish. The top floor, reached by a steel staircase, is full of girls learning ballet. Frightened, I run downstairs, where boys and girls are partner dancing. It seems safe, but the narrator keeps insisting...

5/14-15/2008, home

4.

Tell me the tales of your triumphs;
 thought you'd be done with your trials.
 You had all your dreams, lined up by the streams;
 I'm sorry I'm longing to see them.
Tell me the fruits of your pitches;
 thought you'd have gathered your riches.
 You had your powers, toppling the towers;
 I'm sorry I couldn't be near them.

I wanted to follow your footsteps,
 listening carefully alongside,
 paces and paces, places and places,
 watching your glow from a distance.
Smiling with pride on my forehead,
 writing the stories on notepads,
 I'd tilt my head far, and sigh really low,
 bursting with cute admiration.

I know you'd rather I didn't,
 and seemingly I cannot help it.
 What's precious to me is who you have been,
 and who you're gonna be later.
Perhaps it's not fair how I see it,
 for me to be all very tender,
 however often you've showed me your bones,
 or how many losses you've counted.
Perhaps it's not good that I struggle
 to show you what of you I gather,
 regardless of all of your futile attempts
 to ask me to take what you ponder.

I know that it makes your heart darken
 when I fail to grasp what is spoken,
 especially when the doubts are so clear
 that no one can miss what all's missing.
What's painfully true stays unnoticed,
 for what I can say is so feeble;
 nothing too true; nothing too false;
 a little and humbling annoyance.
I see what I see unquestioned,
 I do what I do unfettered,
 and that is to say, I do regret,
 there's nothing to do but adore you.

5/15/2008, waiting for a mutual friend at a restaurant in your town

5.

Dream: I have to put together an alarm clock. I design a 6V to 12V switching converter, and a voltage divider for the telephone line. Turns out I need a 48V voltage quadrupler, and the part I'm using (1397?) has an Absolute Maximum Rating of 48V on its output pin. So I start looking through catalogs to find a replacement, hopefully one that can use the same inductor. I cannot remember the name of the manufacturer. I thought maybe Datek could supply a module, but they'd charge \$20 for the sample. I finally find a Motorola catalog, and I cannot find voltage converters because I'm looking backward. I reach the beginning, and there are pages and pages of prototyping boards, all with too much part-specific layout, including one for vacuum tubes, and with ridiculous customizing options. I can't stop reading about them anyway.

I start to wonder if I should be doing this, given that I have given up electronics and thrown away all the data books.

5/15-16/2008, motel room, after the dinner with the mutual friend.

6.

I didn't ask 'cause I didn't know.

I don't think I know why it should be
that even the billows have bedrocks to lean on
and yet there it is that
uncertainty depends on something to count on.

I could bear it 'cause I had stopped pushing.

You may be sure of how that might be
that once you let all the weight fall on down,
and so they leave you standing
where once you had dreaded to tread.

I cannot forget 'cause I had stopped thinking.

Someone once explained to me in vain,
that running's the best way to lose all the heat,
and the harder you pound on the ground,
the less time the aches would calm.

I stay assured 'cause I'm so full of doubts.

They say it's not proper to wonder,
so five-year's time would seem like a moment,
and my narrator tells me again
that I don't know much of the plot.

I grow afraid 'cause I see it fading.

The ending always reminds me,

5/16/2008, 5 am, motel room.

7.

It seems I'm always waiting,
and it seems I never know what for.
The soup has cooled; the bread is dry;
the butter is warm; the ice has melted.
Here comes the third glass of water;
the candle is flickering hard,
and all the while,
I have more forks than I'd ever need.

It seems I'm always looking,
and I know I look for nothing.
The river has passed; the clouds have dried;
the birds have flown; the grass is wet.
And all the more the people keep coming;
the wind is weak and panting,
and all the while,
I wonder why people are burning in the sun.

It seems my hands are hurting,
and I know I'm writing too much.
The pen's exhausted; the paper is low;
the notebook is heavy, and so is my arm.
Still the words wouldn't stop and let go;
less certain become my needs,
and all the while,
I have rosemary rotting on my teeth.

5/16/2008, 8 pm, sunny hot day, at a river-side restaurant where I don't expect to run into you

8.

On ordinary days, I love the maples.

On ordinary days, I count those seeds on every branch
and bless the blossoms, so tenderly beckoning;
at first, quietly, alone, shy, bashful red,
then slowly merging into glorious fireworks
of passion, of dominance,
of unchecked, inundating reproduction;
I even would bless the powdery nothings
and dizzily spinning wings of angels,
that pile up shamelessly on my walks,
on my drives,
on my nostrils.

On ordinary days, I watch the leaves idly flying
as if they are slow, ever slow gushes of youthfulness,
of pride, of power, of irresistible pull into decades of stability,
of that inscrutable strength that only they convey,
of that seemingly endless cycles of death and life,
death and combination,
death and resumption,
death and flight on to the heavens.

On ordinary days, I feel the breeze that carries them all,
I feel the light that carries them all,
I feel the scent that carries them all,
and I'm surprised to find
that I'm having an ordinary day.

5/16/2008, 9 pm, dusk, after dinner, by the river