



WHAT WE WANT

**POEMS BY
MIKE FINLEY**

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The Blind¹

We resented the lucky who were born to success
Who thought this was all there ever was

But we don't know if they're really lucky
Or if they're just simple and that's their loss

We hated the people who enjoyed causing hurt
And the clever for making us feel ashamed

Those who wouldn't tell us what they knew
Who stood and photographed our tears

But their cleverness was their punishment
Eventually the clever feel hollow too

And it is human to slow down and stare
At the splash of blood on the bottom stair

We resented our brothers for casting us down
Yet we know our brothers would die for us

We ran from our moms and we hid in the world
But they wanted us to be happy and live

Our dads did not think us worth staying with
But those fathers turn on rotisserie spikes

We cried because our children were no better than us
But they were drawn from our own confused blood

We turned on God because he turned on us
Or so we thought because we felt so alone

¹ This poem began as a 5th step document ... a list of resentments that lay at the root of addiction and unhappiness. But they seemed to have little lessons embedded in them, and I wandered from the 5th-step format to this.

We prayed the light would dwindle to a dot
But awoke to find ourselves home

The Gift

I am trying to form a syllogism
but I can't turn the corner on it.

It begins with enormous loss
that crashes you to the ground.

It takes months to dare to think
that the loss is some kind of gift

But what is that gift exactly –
authority on the topic of pain?

What good is it to be an expert
on knowledge no one wants?

What sort of gift is tears and who
will form a line to drink them?

Billboard

Mounted above a TV repair shop along Dale Street in Saint Paul
is a billboard with the immense face of a man on it,
thirty feet tall, as tall as a movie screen.

His tie is askew, his collar is wild, like a man who has been
running in his suit.

His coloring is all wrong, orange and blotchy red,
as if he spent hours in a tanning booth,
then guzzled down a fifth of cheap gin.

The man is perhaps 30, and he is holding a phone to his ear and
smiling,

but the receiver does not appear to be connected.

“I’m Steve Larson of Sunset Realty,” the sign says, “and I buy
homes for cash!”

He seems both innocent and crude, as if having the belief
that just seeing his huge face, faking a phone call,
grinning from high above the traffic,

will make us want to hand over our houses and give him the keys.

I imagine his pals clap him on the back for pulling off this stunt
but that even he knows, when he drives this way late at night,

When the traffic dies down, that he could not be nakeder
to the world,

promising cash in hand if people will only turn over
their lives to him,

than if that giant face were festooned on the moon,
agog at what is possible below.

The Stink ²

Does not understand
it is the problem

Brothers, sisters
where are you going?

² Things (2009)

Understanding Frankenstein³

The monster didn't want to hurt that little girl.
He was charmed by her, and beguiled
by the flower petals she tossed on the pond,
how they spun gently on the surface.
It struck him that she was a flower too,
in her apron and cotton dress,
a product of the sunshine and of love
and his hurling her to her death
was a kind of lovely compliment
from a budding artist.

³ The Rapture (2009)

Desalinization ⁴

As water became more scarce
we turned to our tears as a source

Suction cups hooked up to the eyes
Captured the precious liquid

Hand-held pumps converted them
to tapwater, ready to go

And the salt and the glycerine residue
were stored in underground casks

Nonstop grieving was encouraged
as an alternative to military service

Highway accidents skyrocketed
because it was so hard to see

But even that was not enough
to irrigate farm fields and

Planners looked for another source
And gathered by the ocean

And all agreed by the disagreeable taste
People have been weeping a long time

⁴ Desalinization (2010)

Death as Snack Cake⁵

the grave's a fine
and spongey place
a twinkie of an eye

and we who dreamed
so many things
are the filling surprise

⁵ The House of Murk (1972)

Other Women

How you must wonder
what the man is really like

The delight of him so human,
so stirring to the breast

He seems to have a sense
of their experience

To be near to such a one
so ripe with understanding

He is the one they didn't wait for
all those hurried years

He is the one who feels
the lining of their hearts

He is no great lover
but who cares about that

They hunger for instruction
And he has armloads written

They hope for the moment
when the iris flutters out

And the plumed figure struts
and the speckled flank may thrash

On the barbed hook
of an upraised eyebrow

This Gun Shoots Black Holes ⁶ ·

'If we can travel indefinitely outward
from a given point, we also travel infinitely
into that point, never reaching center.'

Aris Rutherford

Imagine a bullet that swallows its gun
that sucks up assassins
and targets at will:
the more it absorbs,
the smaller it
gets.

Trees shoot into the bullet, streets tear free
from their beds and jump into it,
thunderheads condense and pour
into the bullet, and the bullet
shrinks down to
the dot of
an eye.

Finally the whole planet is clawing its way
into this particle of dust and the flaps
of the universe come undone and fly
into the thing that is now
so small that everything's
died and gone
into it.

It moves in trillions now. Nonillions now.
Quindecillions. Vigintillions.

And life goes on
under our red roof
with no one the wiser.
I ask for the horseradish.
You pass it my way. And we
look at one another, traveling.

⁶ Home Trees (1978)

* Many poems have been written about black holes. I have been told this may be the most astrophysically uninformed one.

The Campaign⁷

We heard the click when we crossed the threshold.
I entered your body and set up camp.

The infantryman is the backbone of any army.
He knows when to retreat and when to hold the line.

A month, four months, a year.
We're getting used to the bill of fare,

to the figures of speech,
to the customs of your country.

Eventually the soldier hangs up his guns.
I know I do.

Joining with the enemy we build new walls
on the next frontier.

⁷ The Movie Under the Blindfold (1978)

Good! ^{8*}
.....

fish in the fishtank

bread in the bag

me waking up on the studio couch

the system is working

⁸ Borrowing from Minneapolis (To Pay St. Paul) (1980)

^{*} Everything is working the way it is supposed to, is the message here – no matter how unsatisfactory it feels.

The Man in the Air ^{9*}

The man in the air has been falling since Thursday.
He has an appointment on Sunday, at noon.

Time is important – he has always been punctual.
He checks his watch for the seventh time today.
In his mind he goes over the names of the clients
ahead of him,
the names of their families, the memory
of the perfect handshake.
My business is people, he says in the air.
I'm not just selling pieces of paper,
I am selling satisfaction,
I am selling myself.

He is almost sure how to do it this time.
A terrific idea will come to him soon;
until then, Pleasant day,
unlike Friday, falling all afternoon and during the best hours
of the early evening through light rain.

He holds out his hand in the rush of air.
Warmer now, almost perfect, he thinks.
Already I am having presentiments of success.

The man in the air is turning and twisting,
the cloth of his trousers is flapping around him.
He is falling head first,
he is sure he will get
where he's traveling soon, falling upward
like a stone.

⁹ The Movie Under the Blindfold (1978)

* I wrote four of these "Man in the ..." poems for Movie under the Blindfold – one for air, water, fire, and earth. They are all dream satires. Be grateful I did not include them all.

At the Ball Park ¹⁰

Ball Day at the ball park
and before the game
Lyman Bostock throws
out a couple dozen balls,
and all us fans
stand on our seats and
reach for them.

When Carew's turn comes
everyone cheers, even
the kids stop scouting
for ice cream in
a cup for a minute.

And when the vendor
does come by he stands
in everyone's view, so
we watch him instead,
pouring two bottles
of beer at a time, holding
his dollars in his teeth.

¹⁰ Home Trees (1978)

Home Opener ¹¹

Cold beer bare skin hot
Sun and this, self perched
On a porcelain rim,
Prying skin,
Laying open the white
Underneath.

This is what snakes do
Every year,
Spiraling outward into time;
Trees, too,
whittling backwards
The bracelets of their lives.

Compulsion, moist hunger and
Strange delight in
Lifting away these
sticky sheets,
Funny feeling called getting
Closer.

¹¹ Borrowing from Minneapolis (To Pay St. Paul) (1980)

Instructions for Falling ¹²

We have to let go in order to fall
And the steady tumble that carries us down
Surrender all order, unclench every hand
Until we are sleeping, and begin again

¹² Horses Work Hard (2000)

Trompe l'Oeil ¹³

The painter's wife
Turned her back on him
And went to sleep. He
Went to his studio and
Set up his easel and
Painted a picture of
Snow falling on a small
Wisconsin town. On one
Of the whited-out
Streets was a house with
Green shutters and a
Streetlight shining on
An upstairs window. The
Man and woman inside had
Undressed, a pair of
Shoes lay under the bed.
Before climbing in, the
Man bent over and
Brushed the dust from
The soles of his feet.
I know, the stooped-over
Man was saying, I will
Rise up early and paint
A picture of snow
Falling outside our
Bedroom window.

¹³ Borrowing from Minneapolis (To Pay St. Paul), 1980

Accident ¹⁴

This coffee cup broken on the floor
will never be whole again.
Such a small thing,
still all this pain.
How can I make it right?

Before I met you I
was hollow, too,
and every little tap
resounded for hours.

Now see how easy I shrug off
disaster. You are
my coffee. I stir,
I cool you with my breath.

¹⁴ Home Trees (1978)

My Poor Fish¹⁵

Can't go to Coon Rapids.
I can go to Coon Rapids
whenever I want –
weekends or after work.

¹⁵ Borrowing from Minneapolis (To Pay St. Paul) (1980)

Boy Pee ¹⁶

I waited outside the Port a Potty
for the 7-year-old boy
to finish
and when I went in,
there was pee everywhere.

It was like London
in 1940.
He had to point himself
in 360 degrees.
All was devastated.

I know that boys have
a powerful stream
but they are so close to the seat,
surely they could do
better than they do.

Or maybe this is something
they do on purpose.
Powerless in the greater world
they let loose their stream
behind the pulled latch.

And I daub the area with
toilet paper and gingerly
lower myself onto the damp,
like a sad clown

making way for the next act.

¹⁶ The Rapture (2009)

Butts

get thrown from moving cars,
flicked from cricket fingers,
dumped out of ashtrays
ground under shoe tips

rains wash them into gulleys
then into the storm sewer
then headlong like the deer
departed out into the river.

beneath the Lake Street Bridge
is a sandbar of cigarette butts
millions jammed together like lumber
a beaver dam of paper and micronite

a cigarette is a valentine
you send yourself that says die
you worthless fuck
it is all that you deserve

it is target practice for the soul
each squeeze of the trigger
steadies the hand and
locates the crosshairs

a way to flip God the bird
and tell others not to hate you
because that would be redundant
you will save them all the trouble

the sandbar just below the bridge
grows like a stockpile
of spent shells, each one
etched with its owner's initials

Vicissitudes

they swell and empty with a
blomp like a sail in sun

always there as an alibi
whenever a mission is scrubbed

making more sense plural than
singular because they just do

What We Want

We want the basics, but the basics are not enough.
Meat and bread are good, but we want more than that.

We want to know there will be meat when we need meat,
and we want nourishment than that.

We want there to be beauty in our lives,
beautiful things to see,
the thrill we feel at something perfect,
the first moment you know you are in love,
and nothing is improvable.

Even more we want allowance for not being beautiful.
How great if being the way we are,
imperfect, naked, ourselves, were OK.

We want the warmth and the light of the sun
on our faces.

We want the feeling of surprise,
when suddenly things are not what we expect,
the glory of our affairs leaping from their track.

We want the glint of recognition when we see
and know the child in one another, and step gingerly out to play.

We want company and laughter and that drunken feeling of
feeling,
closing our eyes and just feeling.

We want instructive journeys into our own hearts,
where we learn who we are and why we are
and understand our own struggles.

We want another chance

to tell people what we really meant.

We want to join hands with those we have hurt
or insulted and say we're sorry.

We want to stop being afraid of the dark,
and afraid of the light.

We want to welcome the alien and celebrate the other.

We want to tell the secrets
that have been choking us for years, blurt them out
where they can't hurt us any more.

We want explanations, we want to be shown,
with arrows and diagrams, why things happened
the way they happened
and how it is better this way.

We want to be gods but we will settle for angels,
we would settle to be ourselves at our best.

We want the feeling of winning just once
but completely, the victory that heals
the scars of a hundred beatings.

We want to be forgiven for the careless bullets
we pump into each other,
as if they were only words, words we saw coming
but didn't care enough to stop.

We want to die and be born and live,
and die and be born again.

We want to stop being bastards and bitches
and be the children we used to be, for whom it was enough
to be good.

We want to sit at the knees of those we treasure
and hear their stories into the night, applauding the best parts.

We want to see and taste
and hear and feel and touch.

We want the calm warmth of the sleeping body
banked against us.

We want to kiss and kiss and kiss.

We want to say thank you
a thousand thousand times.

More than anything we want to be known
by the stars, by name, by face.

Let them see us trembling
in momentary flesh, glad for the breath
that is in us.

When We Are Gone

When we are gone and the plates of the earth
have shrugged,
and the cupboards rattle and the rafters sift,
and the groaning household teeters on the brink
and the song of consciousness decays,
what calendar will cordon off its days?

When we are gone and the rub of reaching fills the world,
and root and branch and tongue and paw
all strain as one for what is just beyond,
sugar, sunshine, water, meat,
and the hummingbird suspended in the air,
what mind, what glance encapsulates it there?

When we are gone and the dust of our doing has flown
and there are no longer angels and no men,
And our home and our skin and our story of love
give way to hozannas of flies,
what spectators swarm the empty choir,
sockets twitching with surmise?

When we are gone and meaning loses meaning
though your molecules and my molecules
are plucked apart and strewn
across this raw unwitnessable scene
they are better for that blink of time,
forgotten in the giddy sprawl of green.

Roads

Macadam, asphalt, blacktop, tar.

Roads will take you anywhere,
speeding through the countryside, every bend a mystery,
every unevenness a jolt into something not known.

Roads on islands are conflicted
because they do not get you anywhere really,
they are circular and apologetic about that.

Mountain roads turn cars into eagles,
breasting the current then streaking down,
every eyelid opened wide.

Shore roads and causeways
lick the water while the water licks them.

Frontage roads like zoo animals prowling
their perimeters, pining to be free.

The dead end road is indeed a death,
irreversible and to be avoided
until the time you wish not to return.

Expressways and beltways that traffic courses through
like blood through muscle, cars by the thousand,
every destination of economic significance.

City boulevards throw each car in the spotlight
announcing a major breakthrough, you.

Alleyways where cats trip by on tiptoes,
and the modest lane that guides us to the garage,
the squeaky brake that tells you you are home.

Cosmetic Dentistry¹⁷

First the bad news.

The teeth you now run your tongue over
will all be leaving your head,
like that woman with the four-million-year-old skull
whose canines were scattered like dice
near the jaw in the red dirt of Africa's Afar Rift,
because bite the dust is what teeth do.

My neighbor is a cosmetic dentist,
you can tell from the way he keeps his lawn
he is a proficient, too.
He knows teeth are designed to last a lifetime
provided your lifetime is short and brutish,
but his job is to extend the warranty,
painlessly, with amazing glue and diamond drills,
through the lengthy and lovely lives
so many enjoy today.

Jung says that an archetypal dream
is that we are standing over a sink
and our teeth fall out of our mouths
and clatter down the drain and we try
to catch them but they are gone.
Turns out it's a dream about mortality.

The good news is, it doesn't bother your dog
that he's going to lose everything,
including his canines, which you don't brush
though you know you should,
though you love your dog a lot
but it's kind of a bother to brush your dog's teeth
and why shouldn't his ivories
last the full fifteen years,
when all he eats is toasted soybeans.

¹⁷ The Rapture (2009)

And the dog never dreams that dream
of standing in the bathroom mirror
watching his mortality clank against porcelain
because he's a dog and they are spared that,
unlike you and maybe unlike the Ardipithecus lady
if people were already starting to dream about teeth
four million years ago in Ethiopia.
Why are we the ones haunted
the way my poor neighbor the dentist is,
everything has to be just the right way,
on his knees in the grass on Saturday mornings in June,
exhaust seething from the chainsaw in his hands,
grinding away at the imperfect stump.

Knock on Wood

So a tree becomes a stump
and the microbes burrow in
until it is all lacework
a filigree of matter.

The world that seems solid
is full of holes,
holes between pores
and holes between cells,
holes between the molecules,
atoms and particles.

There are oceans of space within and between.
You could say we live in space.

I'm not really here,
I'm just saying I am.

The Idea of a Boat

Whoever came up with the idea of a boat
was rowing against intuition.

The water, which seeks to envelope us
and fill our lungs with itself
and drag us down to its embrace
could be contradicted
with a thin membrane,
a leaf, a log, a raft, a door
and we bound out on the breast of death
like anybody's business.

Abused Mom

Woman at the crosswalk
daughter in her hand,
rushing to catch the school bus.

The purple eye is humiliating.
How can you hide it
when everyone knows its meaning.

I have walked into a dozen doors
and never made
a fistmark on my face.

Tall despite your wound
your hand cups your little girl's
as you venture into traffic.

Bath¹⁸

It has been years since you drew one
And now you descend into mercury again

The warmth in the extremities
As if heat rays shot out of you

The drip of the hot faucet
maintaining constant temperature

There are your feet and toes
Kept apart from you for so long

Lined up like penitents on the tile
And now you are reunited

They are the faces of what you know
And you embrace their wrinkled selves

Hello matched team whose
Intelligence is plodding

Did you remember to let out a squirt
It's wrong, but where is the harm

Then you lay back and immersed
The brain was haloed by rushing fish

One stream entering another
On their journey to the sea

¹⁸ Cartes Postales (2008)

Cromwell Crossing

In the bright of morning the whistle blasts a dozen times.
It is hard to stop a hundred plus cars
for a Ford Tempo straddling the tracks
and a drunk dozing at the wheel.

The particular machine bearing down on us
is loaded down with pellets from the range,
it's the latest edition, with sensors and IPs
and automatic pilots,
and that electric signal carries.

Perhaps there was an accident here
with a busload of kids,
twenty years before,
or perhaps rush hour,
even in a tiny town of 127 folks,
is a good time to be safe.
Either way they have to blow that damn
thing every morning now at 7 am,
no matter who's still sleeping.

The Wonder Was

She peered into the mirror
And wondered what the world saw
That she could not

It could size her up immediately
As unworthy of investment.
Efficient for them but perplexing for her.

Was it a look of stupidity,
Or was there a curse one could read
In the turbine of the eye,

A signal no grass would grow on this dirt,
In a moment they saw what she could not see
If she stood on tiptoe a hundred thousand years.

Be Patient!

A poem by Jalaladdin Rumi (1369-1420)

I've said before that every craftsman searches for what's not there
to deepen his craft.
A builder looks for the rotten hole where the roof caved in.
A water-carrier keeps an eye out for the empty pot.
A carpenter pauses at the house with no door.

We rush toward any hint of emptiness, which we then replenish.
All happiness starts with emptiness, don't think you must avoid it.
This empty cask, this chilling apprehension, this anxious
possibility –
contains everything you need!

Dear soul, if you were not friends with the vast nothing inside,
why would you always be casting your net into it,
and waiting so patiently?
This invisible ocean has given you such abundance,
but still you call "death" the thing that provides you all sustenance
and work!

God in his good humor allows magical switcheroos in our heads.
Thus we see the scorpion pit as an object of wonderful desire,
but the abundant oasis around it as swarming with peril.

The body's certitudes are like somebody on your payroll
who doesn't quite know all the ropes,
an unreliable employee you must bring along slowly.

That's OK, be patient, because patience is how
your capacity to love and feel peace takes root in you.

The patience of a rose by the thorn is what makes it fragrant.
Patience gives milk to the young camel, still nursing in its third
year.

The beauty of your mother's careful embroidery on your shirt
is the patience she poured into it.

Be with those who mix themselves in with God
the way honey stirs slowly into milk, and say, with me,
"Anything that comes and goes,
rises and sets,
up and down,
over and over,
cannot be what I love."

Or else ... be like a caravan fire,
left to flare itself out
alone
beside the darkening road!

not translated, but mulled over and paraphrased by Mike Finley

I, Gilgamesh ¹⁹

I was an ordinary king
I lived and ruled and learned what I could
and of all the world I loved
the monster Enkidu
who fought me and was defeated and
became my servant friend
and died and broke my heart again
In my grief I beheld fire squirting
from the wounded loins of Humbaba
I wooed Ishtar to determine the secret of death
and I stood on a promontory and witnessed Father Anu
create the bull of heaven and later
divide the bleeding beef and eat of it
and thrust as an insult an offering
into Ishtar's swollen mouth
and the rain of stones that continued for weeks
and fell upon Uruk, domed capital of the world,
and Uruk mourned the dead and dying
and many tablets of wet clay
were cleft that day with lamentations
of the priests of all the people
I asked Utnapishtim to put me at peace
and he prattled on about the cleansing flood
and the miracle plant that made men live
beyond this life and into the next
but the plant was swallowed by a giant snake
and destroyed men's hopes forever
and now I Gilgamesh am retired
to my house of myrtle wood
to dream of long departed friends
and breathe the smoke
of their memory

¹⁹ House of Murk (1973)

Frankenstein in the Cemetery *

Here is where
 I ought to be.
And here.
 And here.
And here.
 And here.
And here.

* This is the only poem of mine that Daniele ever told me she liked. Figures. It describes a scene in *Bride of Frankenstein*, where the monster waxes homesick for the graves of the bodies he is made of.

Dead Bee on a Book by Philip Roth ²⁰

Imagine a man of raving demeanor,
Driven to nonsense by torture and desire,
Life as prolog of sneezing excess
And epilog of trembling apology,
Pages and chapters of unspeakable crimes,
Lambsblood let upon every letter,
And still the knee can not bend,
Antiheroic to the end.

Picture a creature true to his race
In the preservation of all that is sweet
In the neck of the illiterate flower,
Whose enemies are frost and a liege
Too busy to be a friend,
Heroic to the very end.

They lie prone, dog-eared together
In the rear window of my Fury,
Striped husk and desiccated book.
The book I left too long in sun,
The bee because he was
Kidnapped in my car and held ransom
From his queen, a hundred epic yards from home.

²⁰ The New Yorker (1996)

The Rapture²¹

Walking with Rachel,
We detect a fragrance
So sweet and so intense

Like honey, lilac and swirled violets
We look at one another
With a look of deepest longing

Until we step into a clearing
And see the turquoise
plastic Port O Potty.

²¹ The Rapture (2009)

Toggle

Everything we know suggests decline.
Pebbles tumble down mountains.
The whale lies gasping on the sand.
My undying love for you fades.

It is a wind-down world, and we place
a chair under every doorknob
to slow down the entropy, to hinder
the dying programmed into each cell.

But what if there were a toggle switch
located on the side of the box,
which flicking winds us up instead of down?
Play with it yourself and see.

Down, we slip into death and depression.
Flick up, the sun lights up the tomb.
Instead of draining we recharge,
Instead of dying we stand erect.

Diving backwards from pool to board,
Hearts quickening, love bounding,
The need to race to conclusions dwindling
because we were not in the hurry we thought.

Is There NASCAR in Heaven?

There surely must be
because of the glory
But obviously not the advertisements
They will not be selling Winston and
Kool 100s there
The afterlife is noncommercial
though the cigarettes are free

And instead of cars
which depend on resistance
we will have something looser,
I am thinking of songcars
You just sing and off you go
There's no burning rubber in heaven
no needle teetering on the red

And the guy at the loudspeaker
Is also the guy with the checkered flag
He's also the clown
with the multicolored wig
And up in the stands throwing down
Crackerjack that's him,
and slapping the mustard stain
on his thigh,
him too

And we will not race in a loop anymore
and not against one another
But with one another like colts at play
and everywhere and in every way
Its going to be terrific, you'll see

And instead of celebrity drivers
like Richard and A.J.
we will all be sitting at the wheel.
like movie stars in our astronaut suits
and the bugs on our teeth don't even die
they brush themselves off
and fly away

Stubbornness²²

is a kind of beauty
in some, when there is fire
in the face that would burn up
the world which is the price
it pays for having you
in it and it is unreasonable
and it is doomed still you
cannot look away from
the power of that longing,
kicking and willful like
a young colt in spring

²² Horses Work Hard (2000)

WeThink

we invented wondering
but that may not be true

What if wondering is all they do
those things moving around us

wide-eyed, swimming,
buzzing, eating

that unbegun sentence
hangs in the air

and being happens
without ado

Eclogue

Half a Monopoly board
blown into a thistle bush
in the Colorado chaparral –
the game ended here.

Why?

Why do friends love us
while we hate our guts?

How can they overlook
the disturbances we fix on?

The patterns and indulgences
the sickening repetitions

Or is it that we spend
all our time in here, with that

And we are so exhausted
and the relationship is tense

Maybe we need to back off a bit
take a break from ourselves

Until we are superficial but loving
the way good friends are

And we see us as they do,
from somewhat of a distance

these forgivable things

When Fat People Get Skinny

When they diet and hit a good patch
And for a while a lot of meat slides off
It is like a cowl has been peeled away

And you see them in their glory now
Like resurrected souls
This is they way they were supposed to be

But also the look of sorrow they wear
For all the things they have suffered
And anger at the times they were betrayed

One more piece of pie, Louise
You want to always be jolly, don't you?
Come on, you know you want it

Nevertheless they are beautiful
And even if they are wasting from some disease
There is this shining look of pride that says

None of you ever really knew me
And a glint of joy that in their undoing
In their diminution and melting away

They are allowed to pass through a green land
And say I was like you, and you, and you
Like Christ on Easter Day

Game*

some say the world
will end in stone,

others paper,
and still some blade

because fear makes hash
of every laugh

and laughter drives love
to distraction

but love's cover
can smother fear

rock scissors paper
fear laughter love

* There's a reference to Frost in here. Too many references, probably.

The Kindly Cannon ^{23*}

and everyone he met
he blessed with gladness

eight pounds round
was his heart of iron

and matchsticks
were his friends

²³ Horses Work Hard (2000)

* I'm told the 'and' construction, used here and in practically every poem in this volume, is a quintessentially Irish transition. I found some comfort in that.

Cafe Bulletin Board

Valentines Day Puppies, \$300 for female, \$200 for males

Laz-E Boy Chair, royal blue leather, 1 week old, \$350

Their here – the 2004 Polaris snowmobiles!

Hi, I'm Eric, and I plow snow – call for free estimate

Truck for sale, low miles

God's Simple Plan for Salvation, take one

Guitar lessons by Steve

Explosive home based business – \$99 in = \$1000 out –

we team build and every one gets paid

2 single Craftmatic beds with built-in massage and heated

mattress cover, one never used

Dog houses for sale, single insulated \$95, double insulated

\$135

Will haul for peace and justice

Courtesy²⁴

²⁴ Horses Work Hard (2000) Billboard

.....

man gone way hand everyone
Like must face see another things live business red let
Day dying seems hundred better eye glory skin
unlike goes sun times Man tears Ball beautiful house saw
feet end go brush water Roads tell small kiss
fear sleeping selling bullet tell small Want
death home air making dog think
look enough best making dog Mike
peace something enough knows window
call beauty moment meaning dozen
loss going die thousand feeling instead take
traffic cars feel world teeth always around
stop Frankenstein falling love friends lives make molecules
Finley dust really every kind
people year years dream holes kind
also though empty time know one patience
perfect even now face know one stream
blood still just laughter know one stood
never just laughter know one born
laughter know one long
know one hurt
know one God
know one fire
know one everything
know one thought gift
know one turned Boy
know one many used

When the arrow sticks
Don't make a fuss
Just reach behind
And feel for the shaft

If it is plausible
break it off
But it won't be, so
Don't make a scene

Kraken Press



1841 Dayton Avenue
Saint Paul MN 55104
651-644-4540

mfinley@mfinley.com

Visit us at mfinley.com/kraken