

The Black Mirror

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If we look upon that which we refuse, might we then become beautiful?

Contents

Introduction	1
The Black Mirror	4
The Break of Night	10
Nothing Left for Isaac	14
Aphorisms, Epigrams and Thoughts-- Group I	19
Justice Lies Within	39
A Hangman's Spell	49
Happiness Loves Company	52
Once Upon a Hope	60
large thoughts in seventeen	64
Strength of Heart	70
Aphorisms, Epigrams and Thoughts-- Group II	74
Jacob's Last Rite	111
The Last Moment	115
The Father, The Daughter, and The Holy Ghost	118
Aphorisms, Epigrams and Thoughts-- Group III	125

Introduction

What do we have here? What strange bountiful harvest comes stretching up and over, its roots bound fast in this new day? This book is the crop which springs from the unblinking view, the relentless stare which now must dream and be relieved of itself, before knowing itself all too well again. *The Black Mirror* is the reflection of those depths, the image once removed and inviting; what may be born to Day might first know its own shadow, and ease the digestion before the main course. How lovely to discover the meal has already been happily, unknowingly consumed, and now nourishes from within!

This New Day, my last book, has laid plain some of what is here graciously transfigured into parable, silliness and play. But do not be fooled, look carefully and you will find should you sift well, the basis, the active germ of a new thought, a new psychology, buried quietly, unassuming and nearly silent, nestled in a bed of aphorisms. The next book will make a spear point of such things, and plunge the dirty stick plainly in and down to skewer, a liberation in laying bare and non-believing, removing and reconstructing the lattice and freeing what was imprisoned, a clinging vine no longer--may we ascend, our true course--skyward and unbound where we were tangled around ourselves in circles? So I will plunge the stick into my heart and into yours! This cruel delight of knowing awaits in the next, but first some warm air and sun, a breath of healthy looking and forgetting so we may be strong enough to know it aloud. Or have I hidden a nakedness here--assumed you will look away and not see, not hear the words, for it has already been done, clearly, plainly whispered here first! Yes, first the dream teases us and invites us to "guess," as if freedom were a

thing tender enough to guess! Too late! To know costs more, always much more! But first the whisper, the overtones we will see without seeing, know of the unknown and pretend we guess, pretend it's safe, suppose and luxuriate in the question. I will let it invite us in, let it warm us to knowing, to wanting to know. Maybe then we will wish for it, hear what we want to hear and be glad to know it, to know why.

Ahhh... What is my highest hope, the hope of my ugly happiness, shining and teasing me playfully, so strange, dangerous and tempting? I can tell you, but I should not. I should not tell you, but I must! This is its call, the can not which must, an instrument which can be heard only against the prevailing winds, so listen well and see if we can hear downward and around the wind which wisely urges us to abandon all such wells, and seek no such soundless sound. So I will tell you of it as a fool before all wise winds and an idiot before myself, it is the instrument whose tones are unheard, whose strings vibrate but not aloud, the springs in the lock of our song, to release the why of our grotesque and our hidden delight! All swords and shames rattle to divert me, the sirens sing and blare to swerve me, and swear to sear me, but my laughter knows best, this game of delights tempts best, to know! Who will place their fingers upon the hidden springs, the lock which we pick denies that there is a lock, denies that we can pick nothing and move the tumblers of design, where there is no design! How my nothing does shout at me, so the louder nothing protests the more certain I am that I hear something! So do we lie beneath, behind, before, over and around ourselves, and believe it is true! Laugh with me oh fellow burglars and thieves, let us steal into the impossible and behold, let us embarrass the nonexistent to show it lies before us, and better still let us reach our hand within and play what has hitherto only

The Black Mirror

played us. To what sad unknowing have we been so tragically, so farcically instrumental? I see me! What was so fearsome and fearful, a bluster of shame and sham serves one who knows his wishes are but thoughts he needs, and why he needs such thoughts, well... Only *you* may see that! What monster does not sing sweetly for a piper such as this? What ugly thing can not become you? Is there a demon which can not bestow its kiss and its treasure, to one so able to embrace the sight? What is ugly without shame? What angel might rise from its filthy tomb to serve one who knows how, and where to place his fingers upon those hidden springs, one who need no longer whisper behind his own back to unlock our secret? Who else may find such joy to speak its name aloud!

The Black Mirror

Joseph was hollow but for his tears. He never wept, and so not since he was a child had he known such terrible fullness. He could no longer deny himself, and knew not what he was, or whose tears he cried. Like a wounded dog, he limped in a pitiful circle and could come no nearer the cause. He sat upon a bench in the wood, and placed his heavy head into his hands, and his tears fell into the earth. The earth drank them into itself, and knew his pain, for the earth knows itself, and so knows the world.

As Joseph wept he cried aloud but to himself, "Why has my wife left me, my child abandoned me and my friends scorned me? Why am I alone, what have I done and why, why am I alone?" His self-pity covered him as a rotten blanket which falls away in clumps. And so he knew his sorrow, his tears so long absent filled him with their empty song, their question which fell to earth. There is nothing so empty as a question, the answer to which we can not stand to know.

The earth sent forth a messenger, a knower of things without compassion, so full and grateful was the earth to give answer to such empty tears. Joseph heard a strange rustle in the leaves and sought his pity no longer, but pressed his eyes and wiped his tears to behold a fearsome ugly sight which seemed too fascinating to resist, and so held his fear behind a strange still glass, as if an inborn respect had been awakened within him to hold his judgment suspended in the air along with his horror. As the leaves shuffled he saw a form rise up from beneath them, covered in dirt with roots hanging along its back. The shape of a huge insect, a hard-backed multi-scaled beetle grew from

the earth, here before his eyes, until it assumed the monstrous proportion of some 150 pounds or more, as far as Joseph could tell. Frozen in the awe of disbelief the summoner stood before the summoned, and was judged and known. The beetle's eyes were perched upon stalks which drooped downward with a sort of respectful reverence, they seemed unable to gaze directly upon him but were drooping, always forward, the strange inexpressive eyes pointed at the earth under his feet, as if the bug were expressing its reverence before a king. The plates which covered its back clicked and shimmered in the light, so black. They fascinated Joseph, but he found he soon felt sick and nauseous, and had to look away from their ugly form if he beheld it at too great a length, or looked too closely. The bug for its part had no discernible affect other than its strange reverence which would not meet his gaze. It crawled over to the tear soaked earth and consumed it with its protruding mouthparts. Joseph seemed to understand the thing was there to help him, and so he waited in like respect for the insect to seat itself, such as a beetle can, upon the bench. He asked the beetle, "Why has my wife left me, my child abandoned me and my friends scorned me? Why am I alone?" The bug heard Joseph's words and tasted his tears and it seemed as if the two had somehow combined in its insect gullet, and the bug seemed to be upset, even annoyed or perhaps just dyspeptic. He could hear a strange scraping sound emerging from its innards, coming from deep beneath one of its abdominal plates and then a froth began to appear from its mouthparts. First a bubble then two, but soon a froth of white foam amidst a furious clicking as the now obscured mouthparts worked feverishly beneath the growing ball of foam, to some mysterious end. It was all the beetle could do to keep its eye stalks

erect and allow its eyes to remain safely above the turgid secretions. When the clicking and scraping sounds stopped the beetle seemed to vibrate head to toes until it suddenly shook with such violence as to fling the foam off and into the air, showering the area with the weird air whipped cocoon, including Joseph who hardly bothered to recoil, so fascinated was he at the result. The insect had produced a single scale like those which comprised its back. It scuttled over to Joseph and offered it to him reverently, eyestalks lowered, the black scale gently presented from its mouth. The bug returned to rest upon the bench and ceased to move, as if a June bug in September, which is now no longer a bug, but just a shell.

The black scale was awash in the colors of the daylight, it seemed to absorb them and suggest a subtle deep hue in its darkness. "Depth never forgets," he thought to himself as the darkness gazed back at him, and pulled his thoughts from him. The black mirror showed him what he kept buried in black, now like a subterranean insect beheld in the sun, he knew what he had seen. The image was his, and then, the beetle's! The bug! The eater and speaker of filth too foul to behold, and even much less, oh please God never to know, and then surely but surely, never to be! To be it all! To know it forever! The filthy loathsome thing! But the mouthparts were his, the thorax his, the tendrils and eyes of abomination, but his alone! He had driven his wife out for she had come to know the weak, fearful, dry, sad, selfish, cringing thing he had become; so wounded, mean and hollow in his reproaches he drove her off with words that were surely meant for himself. She all but saw how he was, all but knew him rightly and so he drove her off before she knew him complete, before she dared say his secret aloud before him. His son and friends abandoned him

and scorned him to see him as he was, a cringing black soul too small and empty to love, so then transformed into the inverse, the sharp spine for those who are deserving and in need of his tenderness most! He wants them gone, and so they are gone. So the mirror tells him and so he knows. Now his reflection is again his own, and the insect has dissolved in his new knowing tears, which fell clear and black, absorbed into the mirror as it rested on his knees. The mirror accepted these pure tears not born of self-pity and self-righteous humility, but honest tears clear and black, funeral tears of knowledge, disgust, hope and change. He knew himself and was filled with laughter to know what he was, laughter being the shining note, the signature utterance which weaves our sad cloth into the highest of hope's songs.

Now Joseph was as the earth: he knew himself and so he knew the world. This was the cruel gift the earth's happiness had given him. The earth is not compassionate, and so may be trusted. As he walked around the streets and homes among men, he beheld the truth. Each was a carnival of shame, layered thick with strange lies or beautiful truths which concealed empty places. A cacophony of horror greeted his awakened eyes! First the grocer is the grocer, then a bug with its snout on a flexible stalk, probing the loins of each customer engaged in conversation, breathing its stolen air into a sack with an unblinking eye attached, its pupil dilating and constricting in pleasure, responding in the rapture of hidden intimacy and the mysteries of forbidden places with each unseen breath. The stock girl becomes a caterpillar so friendly and broad of head, her tube feet pulse with happiness, and she glows in kind acceptance. Something is concealed beneath her lovely fur and he knows it is nothing. She is an invitation who will not exist, a fraud who refuses herself, life and despair alike, until she is filled

with another. She is an empty place, a hollow wrapped in a promise. But no! He feels her turning in her doubt, her sad interior consumed in choking doubt, and he is filled with her true hopeless soul until Joseph can not breathe to know it! She is the stock girl again and he must leave at once! To know yourself is to know the world, and so know hell! For the world is that which will not know itself and so will remain hopeless, and ugliest of all. The world banishes what hope needs to celebrate and destroy with her laughter. As with all who can destroy and resurrect, hope's laughter is black before it is bright.

So Joseph ran back to the forest and his bench where he sought the companionship of the bug, or "his beetle friend," as he thought of him now so warmly by the hearth of his new vision, in his mind's eye. The beetle was warmed there by this hearth, its fire led him to feel truly grateful to the beetle for having helped him. Although it sat as if dead, he spoke tenderly to it, "I have to thank you. Truly you have shown me my ugliness and I am changed. I am better than I was, surely more in your image, I am honest and new. I feel like you in this way of knowing and want you to understand I am glad in the knowledge you were kind enough to give me. I find you the most beautiful of all my friends, and perhaps the only one I trust, although you are no doubt dead, and mute even in life." The beetle came alive, but now its eyes no longer drooped in reverence at the end of its stalks, but instead looked squarely at him. Joseph noticed this with some alarm and spoke, "Why do you suddenly find you may look upon me? Do you no longer respect me after what I have said?" The beetle replied to him with a calm voice and caring tone, "We who are subterranean see only what lies beneath the surface, and find the sight of your posturing, lying race too loathsome, too hideous and

The Black Mirror

unbearable even to envision. I can look at you because *you* have looked, so only now, can I stand the sight."

The Break of Night

Leslie was alive, a blossom held aloft in life's season. The strange wounded tumult of joy and awkward exaltation which is youth buoyed and savaged her, and she opened her tender unknowing before it, and like a sail welcomed all dangerous winds and seasons to find their breath then within her, and claim their heights as her own. All the world is weather, and gladly fills such a sail.

Likewise all those who sail want nothing more than rope to rig their mast and hold such a sail, so they may invite the wind to test it. Jack was a sailor to be sure, and beheld Leslie with the hunger, hope and daring of youth's highest wisdom. Only one who has yet to find the cross winds of his true seasons is wise enough not to doubt such a truth, and in the sure wisdom of youth they were wed.

The wisdom of youth beholds the future never knowing it is not the present, and so believes itself true. All sorrow and happiness, dull, awesome and terrible, were to fill those precious years with life's full froth, for bitter makes sweet, and life is such a brew as this. In storm and season the mast was sure and the sail was swollen with those winds which blow twice. And so Leslie knew her body, and its season filled her heart with crimson sweetness, and so her body knew her husband filled her and she him, and did forget herself, and choose to know this season's full breath, will and measure, in place of her own. She was full to be pleased and to please him, and was that not happiness? She served him before all things, and so placed her burden down and was virtuous. "After all, who need carry water for two, when to serve one is wet enough? Am I not full to know he is happy,

and is this not sacrifice and virtue?" So she whispered the words of her secret soul to herself no more, and found it easier not to hear them. Is it not easier to be silent when the season fills our heart? How can a blossom not deny itself for the wind? What but passion could speak loudly enough to quiet the dead?

Again the wind blew and the sail was swollen before time with its second breath, which her body graciously returned. Her child bore her heart aloft, and she blossomed to his season, and plummeted to his depths, and they were as life loves life, in double draughts of bitter and sweet, and so time's thirst was slaked and its season spent.

So full with time's hungry winds, her days were consumed, and she was alive and floated upon the stream of its passing, born high above her lost words, the season's happiness was within her and cast no shadow. How could she see her hollow shadowless happiness from such height? "Is it not best to sacrifice our words to the season of our children, and find our place happy amongst their streaming clouds and windswept days? Is this not sacrifice, most beautiful?" So did kindness call her disappointment virtue, and name her unwilling emptiness beauty. After all we are kindest to ourselves when we murder ourselves, and most forgiving when our lazy steps find virtue shuffling over our thousand graves. Who but virtue could quiet the dead? Under whose feet does our happiness sleep? Under whose leaden feet is our happiness pressed mute?

So time came as a virtuous thief, to steal the cost of Leslie's virtue. Leslie found her body tire, and an empty place came, where another season once bloomed. Her children left and she cried out to her husband, "I am empty and gray. My children no longer need me, and my sacrifice is unreturned." He said unto her, "You may love me, and

I you, and so we might fill each other with time's last drops of life." So they found the shadows of evening fine company in play amongst this Autumn, and Leslie sacrificed to her silence and bore her husband's weather within her as her own, and was happy in her Autumn shadow.

Leslie's husband, at last, could no longer cheat time, but left of her, and knew no more days, and sacrifice claimed the wheat of Leslie's life, and so Autumn melted into icy winter, with the empty field of frost and stubble her sacrifice had born. Leslie cried out, "My husband, my love!" but he was gone. "My children, my reason!" but they were gone. Only the night remained to hold her, only the night remained to hear her, a windless vacant sphere, a silent vacuum which has forgotten the promise of sacrifice, where the pulse of passion has been long silent, where no echo of dawn remains.

Leslie thought of her life with its hundred seasons--red lust, loves glowing shadow, purple anguish bruised and tormented, shy yellow days and golden baskets of wheat, and how these filled all the light of her days with color. Now only palest night remained within her, empty and unhueed, for what is blackest is also what is most absent, empty and pale, in its darkness.

The night held Leslie without touching her, and its silent voice cradled her to listen, for the night loves us by receiving, its absence is its whisper, and so Leslie heard, and knew that a new season had held her in the tenderness of perfect silence. She understood the black pale beauty of night, the shades of its ink which whisper the sacred prayer of our days into an empty ear, a waiting hollow like night itself. Our night soul is a hidden cave filled with still air and the echo of our days. Once the echo fades we are blessed to know what remains. This is the

night's silent wisdom. So does the night bestow us to ourselves, as a silver whisper, cradled in ink.

So Leslie unfolded her winter heart, and laid it open before the night, to hear the night whisper into the quiet of her soul. Only the palest diamond leaves light unspoiled. So may our winter heart know the night: as a crystal chalice filled with what the hot sun has spilled into the night, made tender and perfect once poured through the white ice moon, and washed pure. Leslie thought this to herself and knew the night and its rejoicing, listening silence, and found her courage could be heard in the still night air. She decided to cheat the virtuous ghost named Time, and steal the moment of her night happiness back, and so give it Time's breath with these lines of verse:

"The Break of Night"

The break of night, day's under season
Slowly yields its gold to ink.

The folded page, now free from crimson
Finds in blackness freedom's light.

Ever often passions straining, faded as a laurel worn
Now but ink reclaims the heart, in darkness stilled, and still reborn.

What air is drunk in silent folds, the tender ear in rapture slakes
Of heaven's thirst and then in season, feels the perfect still of night.

No longer pulled, no longer heated
Spring of fire be gone, and so

I hear no pulse, but know this evening
Only now, my promise hold.

Nothing Left for Isaac

Isaac was loved. His tender hand had nurtured his family and they had sprung up from the bed of his sacrifice as perfect blossoms to unfold before the sun. His wife who loved him, and his friends, and all were his friends, knew him as their "slow Isaac," for he always gave pause before speech, and hence was kind. How else might one who knows not what to say, find the word which fits best in the ear, as the truth which brings strength to the hearer, is that word which lies sweetest therein? All loved Isaac, for one who is kind bestows treasure, as they betray themselves. All love such a man who lays at one's feet and brings one new height to tread upon his back.

But some twenty years past, Isaac was not slow or kind. He wrote tales with a quick wit and pointed pen which carved a terrible truth. His tales were as a blood wine which stained the teeth of all who drank it, so they were as the teeth of a beast which understood what is strong and what is beautiful, are but the same. The heroine of his tales was such a beast. Her name was Althea, and her Norse laughter was clad in black armor, and carried a sword of legend, hammered from folds of black steel.

As Isaac knew the days pass under the brown sturdy bridge of his kindness, he saw his children leave and prosper, and the days passed into their autumn, and he, slow Isaac was beloved by all, and long had known the winter which laid before his season, but grew as age, so slow, to remain a hidden frost within his still heart. What need had he of its murmurings, for its cavity was filled with the knowing of his deeds, and this was a beauty beyond himself.

Isaac was to be alone for nearly a month, twenty-four days his fond wife would be away visiting home, her mother and in-laws, then her friends. Isaac felt unaffected by her absence, peddling his routine around the day as if she were there. Evening brought night, and night its sleep, where the dead may rest and the living awake.

Isaac's eyes opened in wide amazement, and to his horror he could not breathe or move. Soon his panic subsided, and the nature of his state befell him completely, for he was both wide-eyed and dead. First, there was an odor which he could not have known, for the dead are grateful of but one thing, not to be the sick! But his fate must be as a denizen of the unholy lair of the tortured dead, because the scent remained, burnt and rotten, feces and iron in his nose, the smell of shame! The sound was next. The music of noble ruin he had written himself, the sound of her armor like bells, knives and stones in a sack, which clatter and ring in time with the strike of her footfall. Only one sound remained to fill his dead empty ear, and then he heard it, the fierce wind of her laughter; and so the dead did tremble to know her, and fear they may yet be slain!

Her pure gaze fell upon him as steel upon a rotten thing. Her words fell from her smiling lips, they fell as hot lead stones into his distant soul which raised up with their terrible fire. A strange animal pressed from within his breast as she spoke her invocation, "I will raise thee dead thing, I will bring shame upon my lips and speak your name Isaac, as *you* have forgotten *mine*. I will bring shame to my lips to kiss your dead sick mouth, and raise up your soul into my own. I evoke thee to rise in agony, as a coward stung, and proclaim the shame to burn you and fill your withered lungs with hot stinking air, so you may know what you have brought upon yourself. Awake you feted thing

which did give as a dead one gives, so did you heap earth upon the living, and forbade them breath! Rise up and know thy shame, awake in pain and know my beauty! Find your torment, and so become! Awake and shed your mask, you rotten fruit, you hollow skin with its ugly mouth but a mute hole! Awake now the living heart which beats step upon step, to know its end!"

A cramp closed its fist within his gullet, and the corpse sat up with a sudden lurch as a putrid breath was squeezed from its stiff chest. His heart beat and his agony flowed through him like blood. His shame sickened him and so found him legs, and Althea's laughter put them to use, "Walk here," she bade him come to the kitchen counter, her armor sparkling as a black gem in firelight. "You have shown that you have no need of it, so we shall find its purpose again. You have something you do not deserve. You soil it to own it because you make it dead, the slave of a dulled soul, the undeserving pitiful soul of your kindness is a tepid thing made of a fiery life, a shining flame quenched in the dew of your mouldering soul, the dew of tears unknown and blood unspent. You lazy wretch, present me your hand, for I will pierce it from back to palm, as your cross is to be struck away, and then surely you will dance for me, for I will show you the steps, my unworthy dead friend!" Isaac placed his hand upon the counter and she struck a pen through it from back to palm, and then another and three more! Her gaze fixed upon his eyes and her will was his, so she tore him asunder and said to his soul, "You are unworthy of your left hand. You must give it to me. I command the filthy coward: Cut it off! Cut it off, coward!" She presented her sword, its hungry blade black as creased ink, and he took it from her in his right hand. She spoke to his soul which raised up in anguish to meet her,

"Sometimes the truth is a thin blade which fits between that which is separate, and cleaves the kindness which falsely holds it fast." Her words released the blow and the black blade parted the hand from he who was undeserving of it.

The hand leapt away from the arm, a bit of wrist was attached to it with a small protruding bony nub from which all manner of translucent and opaque secretions began to flow. The hand, which had retained possession of the pens thrust through it, began to crawl around the room under its own volition, spraying arcs of color, ink and image which merged and dispersed to become landscapes and murders, evil and knowledge, lust and the tranquility due all who surrender to chaos befall the room, which was now alive in its own right.

Isaac awoke with a start to hear his dog Daisy barking happily, inviting him to play. He had been sleepwalking and was standing before the kitchen counter with a cleaver in his right hand, and the dog in possession of his left, which was now missing two fingers, much to Daisy's delight. He fainted. When he came to, the hand was a snarled remain, and he had barely enough strength and blood left in his body to tourniquet and treat the wound. The hospital would be of no use now, but he did not care, and felt a giddy bubble of laughter rise from within his belly, as he saw the blood spattered walls from he and Daisy's exploits. Evidently the hand made Daisy a fine "work and chew toy" as her rubber bone, which advertised the same.

As slow Isaac cleaned up the mess, he noticed he was no longer slow. He knew what he felt and proceeded rapidly with all things. He began to write. First he composed a story about a priest who could not contain the sin in his secret heart, who could not resist but to kiss the mouth of one of the corpses left in his charge for interment. The priest

found that upon kissing the body, he changed places with it, noticing, sensing the alluring pallid face, and still lips stained as blue gray ash were now his own, and an angel of light was bestowing its kiss upon him. His writing continued at a pace to drive horses past every cliff, and to much laughter he found they might sprout wings for him. His remaining hand worked for a double share, too eager and glad in its labor to restrain. Upon returning home his wife could hardly believe the furious joy her Isaac possessed. His right arm was a blur in constant motion, the hand writing and gesturing in an energetic ecstasy, and he beamed at her despite having no left hand! She was amazed and aghast, so to voice both her curiosity and consternation she exclaimed, "Isaac your hand!" Isaac acknowledged her arrival and her alarm, and answered her while gesticulating and gesturing at a frenetic pace, "Oh do not worry, I have never been better. I had a dream and did some sleepwalking to discover something wonderful had happened. When I awoke my hand was gone and I am actually quite relieved, so please don't fear. You see I most correctly understood my condition, I had to admit it: There was nothing left but to write."

Aphorisms, Epigrams and Thoughts-- Group I

1. An aphorism is a single white gem, a perfect ivory tooth loosened from truth's crooked smile.
2. I have cupped the wind and burst my paper heart. I hope the sound pleases you.
3. Truth is the shadow which lies in contradiction.
4. The excuse of the damned is the one which makes Hell comfortable.
5. Only those in motion become light.
6. The still inherit their shadows.
7. The most beautiful lie is our ignorance of ourselves.
8. Often, "I didn't know" means, "I would not look."
9. It is an insult to beauty to be too well informed.

10. Any truth expressed in a pun appears either deep or funny. Truth lies here.
11. Humor elevates-- Wisdom despises pretense.
12. Let knowledge hide beneath humor.
13. The more I know, the more often I must be seen to trip.
14. A matter of conscience-- What is shameful is not discussed, so:
Let us discuss everything!
15. What do we hide? Light shadows itself.
16. "I know the world"-- It is difficult to see behind our eyes.
17. When we change, the world looks different. The world lies within us.
18. We are becoming, or we are not.
19. Honesty says: "You wound me. I would be insulted, but it's true."

20. We are the sum of all our small choices, we are the trend which results. We are all little things.

21. Some give themselves to another, only to protest after the years have made their self-betrayal clear. It is comforting to believe we have had stolen, what was easier to give away, than to earn ourselves.

22. The taste of true words are best washed away with a bad joke. We wonder, "What unwelcome shadow did I just forget?"

23. The more closely we approach the profound, the more necessary the ridiculous becomes.

24. Hope is only beautiful to the desperate. The rest mistake her for the devil.

25. Often a philosopher is one who gives voice to the ineffable, by boring you to death.

26. Only conceit is serious.

27. Is the profound humorous? Wisdom is a laughing God. The profound is a joke or an arrogance. Wisdom knows better than to take itself seriously. Only laughter doubts and believes in one breath. Only laughter is wise enough to look twice.

28. Overhead, the hawk is still and moving, circling but motionless. It is not he, but the universe which turns so slowly around the tip of his outstretched wing.
29. "I do not walk upon the earth, it is the earth which spins as I tread." So speaks the creator.
30. The easiest and the most costly duty to avoid, is our duty to ourselves. We extend ourselves enormous credit, but finally must pay attention and discover we have never lost interest.
31. Often life has a double meaning for a fool. One who never tries, fears to lose his finger to reach his hand into life's boiling sun. The sun laughs at a fool who cares for his fingers more than for using them, and says, "He who does not grasp, never knows what fingers are for."
32. It is frightening to believe in yourself. What if it doesn't work, am I proven wrong, unworthy? Better to be idiot enough to dare such a question, than fool enough to refuse and leave none.
33. The creator pours himself through himself, to discover the world.

34. He whom works most works least. Genius knows, when work is part of play, it disappears.

35. Often "selfless sacrifice" are the words we find to describe how badly we have disappointed ourselves.

36. You say, "Look at what I gave you!" I see a guilt box filled with the empty promise you made of life. It is easier to believe another took, what you were too weak to give yourself.

37. The martyr knows, weakness plays best as virtue.

38. It is happiness the martyr fears most. What else could take the joy out of complaining?

39. The unemployed can be counted on to work the hardest--they love the boss and the job! Happiness is a slave driver. Who else is so lucky as to have a boss who is his chauffeur?

40. The martyr who overcomes their misery is out of a job, proving once again that happiness belongs to the unemployed.

41. Every caring parent, artist and old maid with beautiful things knows that one is happiest who serves what they love.

42. Caring people give of themselves to help others. Self sabotage made beautiful? Only the selfish do not betray themselves. They shrink no burden, and court success and failure without shield; they ask it to land squarely upon their shoulders. The selfish have no "sacrifice" to shelter and excuse their failure.

43. Compromise is but defeat deified. Better a little of what *you* want, than a bushel of what *we* can stand. Those who are married and happy have remained uncompromised, they can coexist without defeat... They have learned to take turns.

44. Cooperation-- Happiness will follow if it can take what it will.

45. Happiness will lead or follow, only compromise makes two losers and proclaims, "Victory!"

46. Compromise lies to proclaim happiness. What makes equal defeats both and more... am I no longer unique? What have I compromised to believe you?

47. As an accidental tourist I can assure you: Hell is not a nice place to visit. The intelligent tourist lets someone else go, and reads the postcards.

48. Necessity and the firing squad know: The surest way to change, is with your back against the wall.

49. When everyone else seems to be growing still older, I am the only one who seems older but still growing.

50. When time cracks us open,

And what age has tempered, snaps as a brittle twig underfoot,

The sound of youth wells up amidst a white frost.

Once again the orchid blooms, but to winter's field.

51. Pain has brought a child's tears to old eyes, and found in their shedding, youth enough to want even again all new and sweet torments, even happiness.

52. The old are long resigned to compromise. The wise met compromise and long ago resigned.

53. We are as a point of morning ice, born of dew and night, brought alive to catch the sun. And once we have held its fire as our own, then but a melted tear upon the day.

54. Beauty Wounds Life

We are "touched"-- It is a blessed assault, a vital wound to know something beautiful. Life is ugly, and so life wounds beauty. Art restores her, so she may return the favor.

55. When brought to bear upon one of the most sensitive nature, it is a question whether the naked experience of beauty is one of pain or pleasure. That which is most exquisite is too bitter sweet, and so becomes ineffable.

56. The most hopeful thought: I am a false assumption.

57. Only the barren have children rather than become them.

58. People are lazy, that's why they invented contentment.

59. Happiness is different than contentment. Contentment is still, neat and photogenic. Happiness is always moving, often messy but never content to strike a pose.

60. If we look upon that which we refuse, might we then become beautiful?

61. You believe you insult me to decry what I was, and spit upon my shadow? We shall spit on it together, and praise me the more.

62. "I admit I was wrong." An unbeatable argument?

63. It is often because of one's height, one's reserves, and the generosity of strength which betrays itself in kind sacrifice, that we become mediocre. Who but the dragon himself could slay and still such a terrible and magnificent beast?

64. The most tragic sound is that made when a great man falls. It should provoke the most unforgiving laughter, and with the mask of this cruelty might we tempt him to rise again. Only the great have earned scorn.

65. He who can no longer rise to meet our malice, deserves our tears.

66. Over time some of us change for the better, some for the deader.

67. The living become beautiful in change. Who do we see? Who will we?

68. Only those who know themselves and laugh to reinvent, have beautiful depths. The serious and the hopeless remain ugly.

69. Dignity is joy made placid and knowing.
70. Now that I know myself I see you! So speaks evil.
71. Painless labor is an act of genius. Those who create turn nothing into something. Those who recreate enjoy doing nothing. Genius can't tell the difference.
72. Painful labor is an act of genius afterward. He who suffers most and finds laughter, knows it best.
73. We see one who makes the impossible look effortless and we proclaim, "Genius!" Whether native ability or the product of endless labor we know not. The highest genius knows both and breeds resentment, as if its height is an insult to the observer. "Surely you are a trick, or a freak!"
74. Restraint conceals the fact that we are undignified.
75. However soft spoken, truth often has the least dignified voice.
76. Restraint feigns dignity.
Dignity needs no restraint.

77. Kindness? The truth you withhold is a private delicacy-- A joke savored between you and yourself.

78. Truth demands the most of dignity. Where does one find grace tender or cruel enough to voice what is least dignified?

79. Only those who know their ugliness may own dignity as other than a mask.

80. Kindness is the name we give our unspoken cruelty.

81. Restraint looks away, dignity doesn't blink.

82. Restraint averts its gaze from the offensive. Dignity is not offended.

83. When winter leaves us

Fallen from all that we were,
Hope loves the dead best

Only in winter

When we can no longer hope,
Will hope then love us

84. The Master makes the slave.

When we serve luxury we become lazy.

When we serve duty we become tired.

When we serve ourselves we become happy.

Only the slave who loves and cherishes his master works himself to "life," the rest work themselves to death.

85. A rest is Time's incarceration.

86. Own your ugliness and be inoculated. Nothing hurts worse than a truth for which you are unprepared.

87. People mistake the card catalog for the library. One who has an "overview" of the situation may imagine he knows something well enough, just to know it exists. Depth hides in nuance. What does one who passes overhead lose in his shadow?

88. Be gracious, affirmed in the sun warmed tide of victory, and learn, flashed in the ice black current of defeat. It is the mark of high character not to assume the affect of humility. In honesty, victory and defeat may be cleansed of arrogance.

89. When humility is an affect, it is but a posture of pride. When humility is genuine, it is pitiful.

90. We can recognize when virtue has become poisonous, we name it "Duty."

91. Someone who is humble when they are right is a joke, a poison pill.

92. It is easy to be pleased without being overbearing. It is only pride and humility which offend.

93. Pride and humility offend. Insecure people make confidence profane.

94. A wise man knows he is stupid. "What I know fills my head, the universe is required to contain the rest."

95. Our Humble Truth

Arrogance and humility are two faces of pride. Humility is prideful in knowing it does not know. Perhaps the humble are above you for owning your secret?

96. Wisdom's laughing prayer: Let us be light!

97. The conservative know the best way to slow time is to stop enjoying yourself.

98. The aged find growth and change come gradually. Those who can least afford the time, pay the most for it. A child pays little for time. The one thing they can afford is change. It is the aged who must be the most supple, the wisest, the most childish.

99. Each night the wise pray the prayer of the dying: The last drop is the most precious, and so might be they all.

100. The martyr suffers and proves he is right. The masochist suffers and approves. Even the sick are happy if the cause they choose is their own.

101. Suicide gives futility a martyr's purpose. The temptress asks, "Dying for a cause of your own?"

102. "There is no good sense in changing my mind." The stubborn know that every dollar opinion is only worth a dime in change.

103. A Body at Rest

It's not inertia, I've just become comfortable here. Newton was in motion!

104. Each day holds an empty place into which you must whisper its secret.

105. He who has failed may brag how bravely he has lost his way. It is only he who has not tried who has lost.

106. To decide it is safer not to try is to have won failure.

107. The young try because they are too ignorant to fear failure.

The old try because they are too wise to care.

108. Getting to know you-- The initial stages of love are a short-term contract to find each other interesting.

109. Love is a disease for which children are the cure.

110. Excessive exuberance

Love-- The most hopeful time in a relationship is the beginning, when we know the least.

111. When we love someone who will not change, we make their faults our own.

112. a. Charity-- When someone helps you, you do not have to help yourself. They have taught you a lesson: Weakness pays.

b. Wealth-- Luxury is an expensive addiction and like any drug it has its pleasures. Having others serve you so you don't have to do for

yourself is an ease which makes one less able, and after you see the bill you will know: Weakness pays.

113. Luxury: "I am addicted to not needing myself."

114. Once and forever beaten: Life refuses many, but only the saddest refuse life.

115. Genius is an aged child. She playfully throws her stars into the heavens, and never cares at the weight of worlds.

116. The guilty help the best. If they are rebuffed they deserve it, and if they succeed they feel less guilty. The guilty help others out of the highest selfishness.

117. It is the most ridiculous thing to see someone who is serious.

118. Being useful is the willingness to be used without complaining.

119. A useful person does for another what they can do for themselves, while letting them complain about how badly you are doing it.

120. The butler should do it-- A useful person is a fool unless they are a thief. Every maid should be a thief. Pay your help well or they will help themselves.

121. Never be unkind to anyone who prepares your food. The stomach you pump will be your own.

122. The price of being liked: To be strong enough to swallow hard and take it, is to be cursed to repeat the same.

123. Those who are relentlessly happy are a desperate caricature, most relentless in their desperation to avoid their sadness.

124. Refusal is bliss-- Some are right by virtue of "ignorance." "If I never notice I am wrong, surely I am right!" What you won't know, can't be you.

125. To know shallow people is to say, "The more deeply I know myself, the less I like you."

126. Shallow people have discovered that the more deeply they know themselves, the less they can stand their own company.

127. The Honest and the Urgent

When we feel *too* well, *too* clearly, we will save ourselves with an excuse proclaiming the reverse: "I do not feel well, and must leave." Every urgent truth passes more easily with a lie attached.

128. We wish to be appreciated and to atone for our guilt. We often help others out of selfishness.

129. How often does, "I'll give you a hand" mean, "Look, I am better than you." We often help others out of selfishness.

130. When we see how selfish our motives are for helping other people, we are left with a question: Is selfishness good?

131. It may inflict the worst wound to understand the answer to the problem. "Now I see how stupid I have been!"

132. When Honor Descends

The will to respond is poisonous. "It is not your vulgarity which soils me, it is that I am too honorable not to respond in kind!"

133. A bad marriage may be an honorable thing. "I am too honorable not to keep my word, even when it has become a lie."

134. A bad marriage is a curse one puts on those they used to love, particularly themselves.

135. Dull Guile

Someone who is boring soon wears out all useless company, leaving only those desperate enough for him to use.

136. Dull Faith

Someone who is boring soon wears out all dangerous company-- those who will leave him. Only the people he can count on remain: Those willing to use him.

137. A restless prayer-- How restless one is who is lucky enough to forget he is weary!

138. Early joy

The greatest joy belongs to one too restless to wait for the sun. Only he will be awake and watching. Only he will make it rise.

139. Life is heavy when we wait for it. Let us begin so we will be light, and life will have no weight for us!

140. Whoever finishes the race may enjoy it. Competition is only pleasurable in retrospect.

141. When we compete with ourselves we always lose. Who do we defeat? Soon we are unable to best ourselves and are defeated again...this time by our own shadow!

142. Competition promises the worthy affirmation in the defeat of others. To defeat one lower than one's self is a fine nectar, but what of the highest victory, victory over an equal? The true competitor wishes only to better himself.

143. You wish to improve? Competition degrades, ascension affirms!

144. A Ghost and some Tomatoes

Everyone is made sick to see the sight of the ghost of the path not taken, the success we could have had but did not choose. The gracious among us know enough to be affirmed in what we are, those less gracious know only that they want to throw tomatoes.

145. Genius loses its wits the moment it becomes serious.

146. When we see what is valuable, we find everything of value is within our reach.

147. Change is Becoming

Wisdom may come with age, but a question: Are you wise enough to become younger? Only the wise and the young are still becoming.

Justice Lies Within (or Beauty, Truth and the Philologist)

Her words came to him as a melody, sweet and honeyed, all truths melted into the swirling melody, the glowing perfume of summer and sun, golden and warm was the spring of her words, her beautiful truth. So James thought to himself as a philologist thinks, one who has read all old words, and loves words as a beautiful thing, a devotion which must be loved. This love of what is most worthy, what is timeless and graceful, is what drew him to Andrea, now his wife of six years, for she was worthy of his timeless standard, she won him with her dancer's grace, the poise that years of ballet had infused into her body, as if beauty was the original thought upon which she was founded. Her years of study and schooling in the classics let her into his heart by the front entrance. She outshone the pearl of all he loved, and so became his truth. A philologist is a rare thing these days and little in demand, but rare enough that a high price was fetched for James's antiquated services, and his hard work in all things academic old and forgotten was justly rewarded with a fine salary and a position of note. It was his just due, and James was a just man.

He loved his wife, his perfect china cup, bone white and pure as verse, and he accepted her friends as well. Jacques was beautiful in his own way, and pleased Andrea immensely. His bearing was a comfort, like a subtle understanding fire, he crackled and purred into James's ear, and warmed James from within. He always needed look but once into James's face, and knew just what to say, and so quickly earned his kind place as James's confidant. "Jacques, I am worried," he confided, "Andrea has not returned my affections for over a month's time and I am growing concerned." Jacques saw the alarm behind James's gentle

words, and reproached him with both hearty assurance and gesture, "James, she loves you as the sun wears the dawn, she talks only of you James, and really it is becoming too much. It makes me a bit sick, this poem of hers, sung sunny verse upon stanza, droning on and on, James only James. You are a monster to be afraid, and must never ask again! You soil yourself to question such devotion, she is a song with but one endless verse of James, James, James! It is revolting, really!" And with Jacques' round reassuring laughter and the sincerity of his words James was again sure and relaxed, he had melted, as always Jacques' truth had found a hidden tender sun lying within him, and he was charmed, soothed and calmed.

James was disappointed when the convention at which he was to speak, some two days travel distant from his home was canceled. He had been traveling too long, and was annoyed, but James swallowed his annoyance and was polite to the secretary whose responsibility it was to answer his questions, and deliver the disappointing news. After all, James was a just man. He always spoke his heart and was just to himself, and always heard the heart of another, and was just to others. His lot and his credo were a simple and happy thing.

So James comforted himself to himself with these thoughts as he neared his home. Underneath his placid understanding, a bitter resentment still lurked, his annoyance at having been left empty handed, with his pride unfulfilled before the gallery which would never gather to know his words, and his sweet wife who refused his lips upon her delicate china cup.

For these reasons James did something most peculiar for him, although normal enough for many. He stopped at a pub on the way to

his home, to drink and contemplate his lucky, unlucky lot. James rarely drank because he rarely craved drink, but now he found appetite and shook hands with the bartender with a vigor and happiness which hid his discomfort from the eyes of all but himself.

He had but three drinks, and for many that would have been a small thing, but for James it was rare and potent. He found courage for new thoughts, and was warm with a passion, a tender lust which crept within his empty despair and filled him with the nectar of sure desire, certain knowledge of what he needed, and so he crept into his own home, a burglar to steal what he already owned. Giddy with full sure delight, and a pounding heart he feared would betray his stealth, he opened the door to his bed chamber, a thief to steal his wife's heart from her sleeping breast, and know what he might know best to steal! Of course this game was only a game, and James would never offer himself over protest, because James was a just man. But now James was hot and alive within the game, and thought to himself, "Sometimes justice must steal its own happiness." And so he sought the forbidden intoxicating invigoration of a just thief's pleasure.

Opening so slowly, the door creaks, and James creeps over to his bed and sees a double shadow under the quilt, a double form beneath the covers, and so finds the twin which lies beneath the stretched skin of every just man. James knew his heart as a splitting hammer which mauls life, and fiends upon its own tenderness, to birth malevolence. All kindness doubled up within him, and hated itself, cutting into itself and mocking itself, mocking all love with knowledge. Every just thing in James rose up to destroy him. All he denied for justice became a cruelty unto himself, a deep laceration. One who is just denies much that is within him. All unfair things in

himself and the world lie held within his just heart, and so does he suffer to contain all injustice, and is thereby violating of himself. A just man is just to the world, and so unjust to himself. This is his self-cruelty, he denies his inner demon, he silences his injustice.

James's injustice to himself leapt away, as if a black stroke of lightening split his eyes open, and but a burnt coal remained. He reached into the nightstand and pulled out his revolver. He and Andrea had enjoyed target shooting that summer afternoon some five years ago when he extolled the virtues of hollow point ammunition and plugged a water filled milk jug twice, once with a round nosed lead bullet, and then after the jug sprang the resultant leak, a second shot with a hollow point, which spent the jug, now knocked into pieces, as the water plumed high in the air, a mist of tender dew suspended before the sun, his Andrea, a vision behind a prism of mist... Now the memory found the strength of annihilation, and he burned his happiness into rage. James was no longer a just man. He was now, just a man. James had gone insane.

He snapped the light on to reveal the two lovers, Andrea and Jacques, intertwined, blissfully, innocently asleep. He found a sadist's pleasure within his just a man's heart, and pressed the .357 into Jacques' temple, leaning his 175 pounds fully into the butt of the gun, so the barrel might crush the eye socket. Jacques awoke with a shout, pulling his head away in a reflex jerk, he looked at the man before him, a vicious ghost he had raised and gutted now leered at him, saw him holding her waist, holding the remains of James's mortal soul, now corrupted for her surrender, his wife awoke to see herself reflected in his eyes, a black mirror for a necrotic dream, a dead black

rose, a fallen rose which calls for the flame to cleanse us of its memory.

"James." No sooner had Jacques said his name than James began to speak brightly, teasingly in a strange unknown Scottish cadence, "Jacques me lad be sure 'tis me, 'tis I the cock whose hen you lay! Ha! I am the owner of the roost, be sure my claw into your eye did feast, and I will snap you oft and dead, but first little man, you poor little man, you shall tell me of what tale you can, so bring your last moments be they long or short, till you bore me and at last, are here no more!" Now James lost his cheerful Scottish accent, and his bearing shifted without warning as a loving broad smile of great charm and falseness stretched over him, a broad horizonless sunrise like a golden stench, reaching out from his vile, hateful, just soul, and James began again as if for the first time, "Dear Jacques, I must demand you tell me a tale to occupy my pleasure, so I may fully enjoy, and compass your death. If you tell me a short tale, I will kill you quickly. If you tell me a long one, I shoot later. But do be sure dear one, be sure that you make it to my liking, or I will delight myself, and shoot you dead!"

At this, Jacques knew that he betrayed his friend who had now, clearly, been driven entirely mad. In an effort to prolong his life, Jacques began to tell a story to please his executioner, one which would mirror his thoughts, and so delay his own fate. After all, reading the truth which fits best in the ear, a natural empathy from the sight of a face, to see the thought it held forth and voice it, was Jacques' greatest and most natural gift. Jacques spoke, "There was a man named Michael, and he was a good man. He was good to his wife and his friends. He gave them a thousand unrequited gifts, and caring

was chief among them. He never answered the messenger to account for his message, and the fault was his alone but too often to bear. His wife and friends were quick to use his just nature against him. She beset him with subtle nagging doubt, to teach him as to belittle himself, to mistrust himself, and his friends saw fit to gladly aid her, for this is but one of many ways a just man can be made soft easy prey, if his friends prefer profit to friendship." Jacques looked up and judged James to be pleased. He felt the black eyes press into him, just as the gun barrel did they sink into him, and bruise him to knowing, so did they also leave a mark. "So Michael's wife and friends turned against him and poured their scorn upon Michael, and in time his ear held their words for his own and his ear turned against him, and his eye saw the ugly things they saw for him, and he mistook them for himself and so his own eye did turn against him, and beheld his soul as an untrue thing. As a true man he was fooled, and thought he knew himself, a belittled and self forsaken disgrace and disappointment to be struck from the sight of all worthy things, and so he climbed the highest cliff, and bade the world farewell. He said goodbye to the fragrant grasses and the carpeted hills, goodbye to all he loved and treated with love, and jumped. As he fell towards the earth, the seconds embraced him, each as a year, and he languished in the memories of his life. He remembered a story which his father had often told him, but which he never understood.

Michael's father had oft told of an old stoic Indian named Red Blood. Red Blood's family had raised him to hide his feelings and his tears. "Speak not, for that which is better known, is better known in silence." In turn, as a father himself, the dignity of Red Blood's silence graced his family, who flourished to find his kind heart always

beat with them in deed and kindness, if but unspoken in word. His life was in those he loved because he had placed it there, and it had to be so, because he cared too much to speak it. He could but show it in deeds. So is truth made plainest to be seen, rather than spoken. He found himself often to struggle in his thoughts, unable to say what he was, and so he doubted himself. Deep down Red Blood wondered, "Do I truly feel that which I can not speak?" That thought was his secret doubt, Red Blood's secret trial by doubt.

The government sent a cringing hateful white man, a veteran from the civil war, empty and sour to himself he came to the Indians as a poison wind drunk and reeling with his hate. The man ordered the village burned, and the white people broke the bones of the women and raped them as rag dolls to be tossed in a ditch. Red Blood was gut-shot, and bled out on the dirt floor before the white colonel, a proud devil who wanted his morsel of shame. The colonel seemed to need something from Red Blood, he seemed only to enjoy himself in the suffering of another and asked, "Ain't ya got nothin' to say for yourself, for ya die, injun?" Red Blood thought through his life in his last few moments, where each second is as thick as a lazy year. He knew his family loved him and he gave of himself to them. He knew he, as all of us, must die, and found it easy to bear having met his challenge with strength and deeds, rather than hollow words. Red Blood knew himself in death and answered his secret doubt with his whole life, and knew his sure heart which never doubts. With some annoyance the colonel heard Red Blood speak his final utterance, an utterance of gratitude, as the last of his blood was swallowed into the hungry earth which never returns us to ourselves, and so makes us precious. Finally the colonel leaned over Red Blood to listen for the

last of his triumph, but instead of what he wanted, he heard only these few words, "Thank you for showing me."

As he plummeted to earth, for the first time Michael understood the meaning of this cruel parable, and also knew himself in death, and beheld his deeds of caring for those he loved, and his honesty before himself and saw the ugliness of his tormentors was not his to own, for he had looked into his heart as it stretched back over his days and found its shadow was bright, and just as Red Blood's deeds were his own deeds, each true to himself and those he loved, so he found the approach of the hungry earth as a hopeful thing, and laughed lovingly to know himself before himself. He too found himself a promise fulfilled, a hope made real, and so welcomed the hungry earth which never returns us to ourselves, and so makes us precious.

James's soul had written the tale, and now his eyes passed through Jacques again, and he asked the betrayer, "How does the hungry earth find you, my brother? How precious are you to have it know the taste of your salt soul, the last of your oily red tide will soon be drunk into its thirsty sands. Will they be the cleaner or the dirtier for knowing you?"

James's words fell into Jacques' soul as a bolt of the blackest lightening, the most terrible knowledge born through his friend's eyes, now spoken from his own lips, the knowledge of his deeds clawed back out through him, raking his soul, rending it with the black truthful claws of self-knowledge. So the bolt fell from James's madness into Jacques, the lightning which knows what twin lies beneath. Every black corner of Jacques' soul glowed, alive with a thousand ugly eyes. Every false truth spent to comfort, every slippery opinion which made the hearer warm and sleepy for the lie, so Jacques could move closer to

his prey. All the lies he had stolen from his wife and children, and now the terrible truth that the friend he deceives, knows him better than he does himself...until now. The true vision of his vain ugly soul claimed him, Jacques shook with a gasp of recognition and he trembled, but not of his fear to die, as he knew he soon would, but of disgust and nausea, loathing and the vile scent which knows itself, and is appalled. So Jacques shook, but with hope. Only the bullet, only the end could cleanse and cure. Jacques wished only for hope to claim him, and so James saw and knew what black magic, what forbidden sight and knowledge he had cast into his friend, a black magic mixed of both the highest vision and lowest order of man. A truth like Jacques' soul born to daylight, is a darkness made naked in sight, a shaming of the truth, a beholding of the unholy cloaked truth in the plain unblinking white of daylight, a black vision of the magician's hollow pandering soul, a magical rape. So had Truth found Jacques' hidden soul, and bestowed Hope.

James found that his throat was dry, his hand shook and his madness had vanished. He understood his broken friend, and his ugly wife. He put the pistol back on the nightstand and left the pair in each other's arms, Jacques weeping and begging, his eyes pinched shut, each like a dry fisted prune, below them his mouth opening, and the black hopeful words crawling, lurching, naked, exposed and shivering words, pushed out into the cold morning air, "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot damn you-- DO IT!"

James walked into the empty street. It was 5:30 am, the dawn was leaking its first rays, hued in rose, so shy, as if bashful, embarrassed at its own beauty, gradually emerging, so slowly that it might forget itself. So James thought as a philologist in whom hope

has taught the future new verse, and found ancient beauty lives in the greenest of hope's new leaves. What is ancient beauty and knowledge, but youth and thought which time has refused to plunder? So deeply was James captivated by the beauty of his new musings, and so engrossed in their new truth, that he hardly noticed the pistol shot, but his wife's scream was unique, it tugged at his ear and caught him to pull him from his thoughts. He turned toward the sound in amazement. He had never heard a more honest, less practiced or less beautiful utterance come from her lips. Had he only now, for the first time heard the note of her true soul? He felt sure that he would never again mistake hollow beautiful things like words for truth, and he knew he had found in this truth the most beautiful thought, and the most hopeful. Jacques and he both knew hope. James thought, "Hope is only beautiful if you can bear its truth." With this thought his weary watery eyes awakened and his heart opened itself to the dawn, which had never seemed so radiant, its cheeks flush with rouge and quiet, blushing warm and red, beneath one of hope's tears.

A Hangman's Spell

Day offers up her shining arch, offers up her azure shell
Its hours and minutes gladly swell
Their nectar into waiting lips
Beyond all doubt and future crypts,
Where night but day anesthetized
A somber dark behind dark eyes
Night looks into all those who dare
To find their joy in daylight air:
"Ineffable in mystery lay
The truth behind our laughing day
Woe to he who shame does find, his head upright and mouth aloud
Bold word to speak and mind to know
Why we sicken glow and grow,
Weary in our sideways glance
Never sure to hold the chance
Word unspoken in shadow dwells
To best conceal our unspent hells
The hours gone, the time run past
Our summers spent now, all but last
Too sad to pick the reigns again, and make our stand,
Best to pretend
Silent names and secrets sleep
Best beneath unknowing feet
Let their names in night and shame
Best to ever mute remain."

So speaks one who knows not the day
But lets it pass beneath his waves

As current known but never spelled
An undertow beneath him swells
A current of a hidden depth
Unseen so always to possess
What spirit made of truth denied
Shall guide and harness us our lives
And if night claims us to its dead
Smothers, stills and steals our breath
Well let us end this slumbering visit
And know aloud of what lies in it.

Night laughs then trembles giddy sick
At last to feel the fissure split!
What black encircled now daylight ripped
Torn away, all masks disgraced!
Disgorged in light specters confess
Each filthy deed in day undone
Each flattery in self and sun
All tired reasons shame the day
And keep us safe, to slay and rape
The lazy thief I did become
I now undo, unknown, undone!
So cast a spell of rhyme and light
Split open days, spilled into night
I see myself so wrong and fooled
Before myself my lies unspooled.
And now the night but young it seems
A blushing night unfolds my dreams
I cast aside excuse and doubt
Invite night to light, withhold but naught

Embrace the dirty hand of truth
Begin at once to cleanse uncouth
Lies now laughter, I the joke
My shame with needled words I poke
And prod my vacant weary mask, this tired hollow hull
And bring to night day's shining arch, her brightest azure shell.
Beauty claims that which was lost
Change is born at ugly cost
Hope is but a hangman's spell
I cast upon my wretched self
Today the night is young again
With this shadow's death,
I may begin.

Upon seeing that a friend had identified with the J. Alfred Prufrock of T. S. Eliot, I wrote this poem in quick response. Although the poem stands on its own, it can be understood to some greater depth in this context.

Happiness Loves Company

Abraham was not happy, and so had many friends. He had a job he was loathe to work, a family from which he withheld his love, and himself at the captain's chair of a ghost ship amongst clouds, and he was like many, and so had many friends. He and his friends were together often, and found much comfort in the sharing of their unjust misery. Often the intimacy of this sharing was so warm, such a forgiving and cherished friendship emerged, which listened only to embrace, so listened tastefully. "I too feel the weight, and am ennobled to know you, a hero who speaks quietly and but little, and so endures our hidden burden in dignity." We who have friends share the acquired taste for our misery.

Abraham was selfish and found he needed more than the warmth of such dear friendship. His misery would not be consoled or stilled, even in this tender cup, and so he looked over himself to God and prayed, "I am empty dear Lord, and can not quench myself in my pity, and find even those like me who I love, not enough to quiet my empty pain. I am close to blackest despair, and seek your wisdom and love; for I shall find another path to see you, and we will surely meet." God knew Abraham was close to blackest despair, and this gave God hope for Abraham, as one so low is most ready to climb. Only the desperate are willing to see hope lies opposite their shadow. Who else would leave one so like themselves?

Hearing Abraham's black prayer, a prayer of hope, God was touched. God drew Abraham's soul close to His breast. He is a vain and lonely God, a great, needy and cruel God, and hence a

compassionate God. He found Abraham as a single grain of sand from a thousand beaches in every time, and He drew him near so He might know him. A man's soul is as vast, black and bright as the universe, and so is a very small thing to God. God found Abraham and heard him, so He bestowed his wish, and gave Abraham happiness.

Abraham awoke with a fearful start, quivering with fear to know it was true: he had known God! He saw the reflection he drew from his mirror and was horrified. He called himself all filthy names, and all manner of black curses and hideous oaths fell from his own lips, to his own ears, and he knew: He was a lie! He spat upon the mirror and wept bitter tears for himself, and so seeing this, broke the mirror with his fist. Blood ran down the length of his arm and he cursed God. "You filthy wretched liar, I am not happy!" The room shook with cruel laughter and the mirror began to vibrate, and its broken shards ran about like mad insects, furious and somehow cruel and malevolent, until they too gave voice to their contempt for Abraham, and began to laugh at him as well! One stung him and then another took a piece of flesh and spat it into his horrified face and began to laugh! Now all the shards seemed to be of one terrible mind and fell upon him, laughing and chewing out plugs of his skin and showering him with his own flesh, insects gleefully scorning him in a filthy shower of his own flesh and life's blood. Bloody and oozing from thousands of wounds, the wounds began to see him, each now shown with a sparkling eye, a droplet atop a splinter of glass which rose forth as a crystal needle from each, and each alike topped with its clear shining bead, a thousand single, laughing, seeing, knowing splintered eyes. Overcome, mad and crying out in the bitter anguish of the defeated, his strength was spent and so finally, Abraham collapsed.

When he awoke he discovered the mirror was whole again and he was both in it, and looking at it, tears falling from his eyes, his wounds were gone and his laughter resounded along with God's, a cruel wonderful laughter which makes the birds jealous enough to sing, and so be exalted in beauty. Now Abraham was free and joyous in all things and thoughts. His step was easy as his tears, and he held no high aspiration or gloomy duty before himself. He could not stand the profusion of his joy, and wanted others to understand and share it with him. He became still more joyous at the thought, and it seemed he might burst from only knowing within himself. He heard a sad voice, the voice of God come to him and say, "Abraham be careful, for all gifts are not for all men." "But surely God is mistaken to caution me such, or He would not have made my happiness so great, or my joy so restless," thought Abraham. So Abraham went to share his happiness.

Abraham set forth to see his family and bring word of the new happiness God had given him. Abraham's family was surprised to see him home before the week's end, as it was his habit to come home only on those two days when it could not be avoided. His sons saw him enter the foyer unexpectedly, and were visibly shaken. White faces cast downward glances and few words hurried the two away to warn their mother. Soon the family was together in the living room to see the cause of the trouble, but a strange man sat loosely in their father's chair, owned their father's hands and arms, but gestured in ways alien as the damp eyes which drew one fondly in. A new trick? Abraham began, "I have spoken with God and have learned the secret of happiness, which I want to share with you." Looks of disbelief were turned inward, a stifled gasp of relief was suspended in the air along

with a question mark, and the family dared to look up. He who has hated no longer holds the torch, and so they looked upon him and were less afraid. Abraham thought, "Good, they may yet hear," and spoke, "Yes you have heard the words rightly spoken, I am different am I not? I am happy! I know I may seem strange and over-joyous but please hear my words, for they are the words of God. We need never repeat the pattern of our misery, but may instead see ourselves for what we are, and laugh at our attachment to all things past and sick, to disown the broken sad and loathsome self amidst laughter. May we create ourselves again, and in change might we find happiness, and in change be made again! All is ours to see, discard and renew." The boys looked, and his wife squinted. Their looks were unfamiliar upon those faces, but all too familiar on his own. A new and terrible gleam came to his wife's eye and his sons smelled what was surely a scent never before known, a scent other than the stink of hate and the sting of abandonment to all hopeless stranded frozen places which went with it. What was this look of happiness but weakness! Now they came at him alive and hungry as he had never known them before, their words tore into his flesh and their hate and fear filled them with new life! He had never known them so alive and radiant, and he saw they refused his words, but no matter. Perhaps he and God had done this small thing. Perhaps his family was now liberated too? They had never seemed happier than in consuming him, and so he snuck back late that night and stole behind the curtain to hear. And so he wept. They were not happy, but now knew only what he had allowed them, and turned the "gift" upon each other, as hate set the two boys, each against the other, and the mother, now encouraged to wickedness, sought to exhaust the

two lions for her blood pleasure. They refused his words, as they were taught to refuse him, and he wept the lonely tears of happiness.

So Abraham went forth to share his happiness. His oldest friend of forty years, the lamp of whose sorrow had kindled friendship's warmest glow and tenderest salvation, Frederick was the kind fount of both laughter and tears, his true friend. Frederick opened the door but knew not the man who God had touched with happiness. Abraham spoke, "Frederick, God has given me a gift of the greatest value. I am happy, and wish to share this wisdom and pain with you, so we might partake together in life's greatest joy!" Frederick was at once afraid his friend had gone mad, but knew enough to know there was much he did not understand, and so held his tongue and bade Abraham continue. "Please tell me this secret and I will join you in your happiness from God." Abraham replied, "The secret is terrible in its hope, and you may suffer to hear it, but soon the dawn will fill your heart with a sweetness that will make the angels jealous enough to fly up and show themselves above you, and so be exalted in beauty. Please hear my words for they are the words of God: We need never repeat the pattern of our misery, but may instead see ourselves for what we are, and laugh at our attachment to all things past and sick, to disown the broken sad and loathsome self amidst laughter. May we create ourselves again, and in change might we find happiness, and in change be made again! All is ours to see, discard and renew." Frederick heard his words and they sunk into him as the hot stones of boiling truth, and the words of God. He began to tremble and shook slowly, as a bridge in a wind twists did he suffer the truth of happiness. A vibration came over him, much as it had Abraham, and like a scarlet blossom his face was first flushed then swollen with blood, until his

eyes protruded, and the vessels in their whites burst. As Abraham left Frederick's home, he heard the agony and madness beset his friend to its full measure, and laughed God's evil laugh. God heard Abraham's laughter, and was afraid.

The next day Abraham returned to visit his friend, and found him rocking back and fourth on the ground muttering, unaware of Abraham's presence. Abraham shouted, "Frederick awake! The day is a laughing prayer, and we are the sacred whisper which is its coming! Awake!" Frederick sprang to his feet pointing a shaking crooked finger at Abraham, "You call me an error, a mistake, a fake and a liar! You who say the past is not to be honored, say I am a forty year error, a falsehood, a misery without cause and betray both me and God, who would never permit me born to such a lie!" Abraham said, "Friend, it is true! You and I are a mistake until we betray our misery. A mistake causes its misery, and wears the years away in wretched obedience to duty as if virtue had other than wings to tempt us! We owe no duty to our mistakes, they are not virtues! You are ridiculous and erroneous and hilarious as God and I see you now and forever, you are now as you have always been: Free!" Frederick attacked his friend of forty years and fell at his feet, his anger spent upon himself, his face frozen in the half grimace of stroke, forever numb and mutilated. And so Abraham wept the bitter tears of his happiness, and its sorrow.

That night the sorrow of Abraham's lonely happiness was too great, and again he called out to God in blackest despair. Again God heard his hopeful prayer from far away fly up on the wings of despair. A broken soul hopes highest and leans least on its shadow. Only truest despair no longer finds comfort in its misery, and wants to leave a shadow so familiar. So God heard Abraham's soul call out as a single

grain of sand on one of a thousand beaches throughout all time, and God drew Abraham's soul to His breast so He might know him. A man's soul is as an endless black fire aglow with the tender light which surrounds all of eternity, and so is a tiny thing to God. God listened as Abraham spoke, "God you have shown me my ridiculous self and all of hope and change which laughs, and is itself again. I am myself happiness, but can give no happiness to my family or friend. I am alone in joy which brings ruin to all those who will not accept it. I am weeping in my lonely over-full happiness, a tragedy born of laughter whose words bring despair, and despair alone to all who do not hear them well." God replied, "Yes Abraham as you have seen it is a terrible cruelty to inflict happiness on one who is not strong enough to withstand it." In earnest consternation Abraham inquired, "So why in your godly wisdom did you inflict this treasured happiness on me?" God considered his answer carefully. Anyone who knows Him knows God is extremely clever, and that there is more than a bit of the devil in Him. Knowing Abraham as he knew himself God said, "If you wish I will restore you and your world to its previous state of blissful misery and friendship, and you shall awake with no knowledge of these events, save the one truth that you, Abraham, have created Me. All will be as before. Or, if you wish, I will allow you to stay here with me in happiness, but I must confess, I gave you happiness so I would have someone to share it with. Abraham, can you forgive me?" God knew, that Abraham knew, that happiness is always changing and has few companions, but likes to travel in pairs. The happiest men have created themselves, and often must create their friends as well, and so long to be alone together with God. Likewise Abraham knew the way to a lonely, vain, needy, laughing God's heart is to understand Him

with laughter, so he answered God's plea for forgiveness with the highest understanding and respect saying, "Of course I will forgive you because as you know, in my heart I am all but too happy to know you better."

Once Upon a Hope: a thought experiment in pun and in sense, to clear the air...

Is wisdom a bad joke set upon me? How much more wisdom is there in a pun, with a string of words through its hundred eyes, how much wider, open and broad its horizons, than the narrow heart of man! I will open up the hollow of my soul and cast a line, down through its hundred empty places to the bottom, sunk right and unblinking, sunk through but few of its hundred laughing, knowing eyes.

A pun knows more than the one who makes it, so often goes unnoticed. To reflect possibility through language we shift sense, and find new meaning in change. Sometimes it is the change, the returning cents which are of the greatest value. A new thought is a fresh coinage, so let us laugh and know: Change makes new sense.

What sense shall we change, what shall we lose in change--for the currency "we know" shifts in value if we lose something. Let us:

Lose self-- To grow beyond we must become what we are not. Suicide? Betrayal? Day is shadow which walks away from itself, to find itself again light. Can we fire an arrow of hope, a splinter of day to burn through the heart of our mortal shadow?

Lose self-- May we become the dead: the self denied? Unearth the losing self, the self submerged rises up to make who dead in its place--the who we know? Is who we don't know us? Can we know too much? Can we be happy for it? Can the dead become us?

Lose self-- If we stop looking, will the mirror blink? Are we still there if we do not look, or perhaps only just born in forgetting? Does the self-observer make the self-aware at the expense of self? Are we dead to be born? Do we become a mask, only an impression of the real, a fake, when we observe? Do I lose myself to know of me?

Lose self-- The self of loss with its gray stammer and shame, the dead hear us not and we can not speak of those lost to our unquenched bitter desert, those we can not repay of the dead, the lost we can not reach in life, and the dead we never brought forth into day from within our life: Our disappointed dead. If we let them through our blessed chambers will they wash us open, our hot stone tears plunging into ice seas? Are we ever more alive, free and open than after we have been plundered by sadness, and again set her sweetness aloft? Are we complete to return our sadness to ourselves?

Lose self-- If we stopped looking and stopped stopping would we start being? With the self-observer lost, and then one less more, is there more or less if the self is selfless too? More being and less self makes more self being! Who remains when no who remains--us? Dionysus knows us! How? He slays us! In abandonment to the river do we become it? Then what is it--us? Of festivals and souls uncorking: so may we become song to lose ourselves. When only music does replace us, only going will replenish us! The abandonment of the "I" relieves us of ourselves to find our "under-selves,"--in the sea is it us we don't see when there is no one left to look, or are we still only fishes?

Lose self-- The guilty one who is both apple and worm. The "lose self": the self which blackens self, this self who we fear to lose, whose fear is our losing, may we lose this habit and find ourselves reborn,

unafraid before time and chance; where guilt has poison breath we invite just winds, and open our heart to find who in guilt's stead: The laughing one who dares, he who makes the wind innocent, the chance taker?

Lose self-- Can we lose the mask as self: He who masks himself before himself, is but impression, appearance before himself, wants his sight but shallow, fooled in himself. Will not mask of man, but man be born, slapping away his mask but found, afraid to fear but sick to see, shame's rage, stained light, so cruelly free? Once banished tear stains red cheek unhid, and dew of sorrow's happiness, so shy and then reproaching, in tender turns we know, pour past and presents through future free, renewed is light unmasked, which did through heavy shadows grow. To curse the lie to curse the mask, of steady hand and darkness gone, to be the hand and free the darkness, then to find it ever flown?

Lose self-- One score past and one self now, one in future lands will dwell, but how can we be free to know, of two distant oils one solid grows? Bring forth the first, and first the fourth, so south and north meet evermore. If past will sound in future's bell, might its ring the truth foretell? Will past be known or find its toll, and present cheapen with future sold? If all pasts into knowledge stand, will they become our future's hand, a strength of sadness now spent and known, a strength and laughter, tears now show? If change be holy and God is known, will future be present, and God be shown?

Can God be our present to ourselves? I see no God, only our present and so, might we meet Him again in the future? We have already met Him, you buffoon, and He is not here, He is present!

Only someone who believes in a separation in the presence of past and future could ask such riddles, say such things, and be godless before God. So I ask: Can we lose this riddle self!? This believer in ghosts and oily unknowns? Until we look are we all haunted by the ghost of present's past? Might the past change to become known, and be harbinger of its own death? Are we born to spend it? If we free its demons and have them before us, and with us, might we harvest their energy, our energy, to know ourselves in one piece, one strength where we hid in pieces, made to haunt ourselves as specters, as if feeble ghosts we called past, and believed dead? Does new life find its rivers first run thick with the dead? What do we lose to know--self--pain--a limit? A past and future God asked me, "Can we bestow upon ourselves, our present heaven?"

What if every answer were yes!? So now you see Hope herself is gallows humor! She laughs most at our attachment to ourselves, which is hopefully impossible. She enjoys nothing so much as a good funeral, because it is birthdays she finds most hopeful. Her laughter is the death rattle of our convictions, and so does she defeat us, to most graciously bestow upon us her godly treasure, and our present.

large thoughts in seventeen

1. Pain of tender sight,
Beauty is a perfect tear
Too heavy to lift

2. Pain nourishes life,
Many tears water the earth
Where beauty finds root

3. What truth lies hidden
In daylight seen plainly born,
To wound is to heal

4. Rejoicing finds us,
Sorrow comes to rend the earth
Before we can know

5. Resist and suffer
Release and fill your belly,
We are full in pain

6. Golden sweet but lost,

Nectar tasted no longer

And so double sweet

7. The last moment known

The judge which we are to be,

Then Time will forget

8. Night finds us knowing,

The black prism unblinking

Unafraid to see

9. Every hue unfolds

All sweetness and bitter things,

Bruise the poet's soul

10. Never more today

Never more sick yesterday,

The Raven is hope

11. What is born again

Alive as a child is born,

Pain in ecstasy

The Black Mirror

12. Free the moving heart

Shatter the strength which binds us,

Free the moving heart

13. I pour myself through,

The pain which finds all motion

Is beauty concealed

14. I cherish the dew,

The morning tears which dawn brings

As it mourns the night

15. Only once the past

Has its pound of tears and flesh,

Will beauty love us

16. I have never seen,

Morning spun into pure glass

Fill my empty heart

17. My paper heart burst,

A shadow of happiness

Has whispered my name

18. Now empty again,

I open my silent heart

To spill in the day

19. Once the dead are born

And their tale from in us told,

May we taste the day

20. After the past lives

We become still before time,

Before each moment

21. Once we have suffered

Happiness will suffer us,

To suffer no more

22. He who withholds pain,

Is always suffering that

Which he does withhold

23. The universe knows

You are nothing to know of,

I lie to exist

The Black Mirror

24. The universe knows

You are nothing to know of,

So I love nothing

25. The universe knows

You are nothing to know of,

I know the unknown

26. If you understand,

I am not alone to know

That I am alone

27. If I am a farce

And nothing I do matters,

I am free to choose

28. What do I become

Who will I decide I am,

Before this new day

29. Who will I meet here

Will happiness be alone,

Can I stand the weight

30. Those who are but new,
May find only a shadow
To share what they are

31. The luckiest man
Has found another to share,
What can not be said

Strength of Heart

John was strong. Everyone could tell it. His hard gray eyes and the chill mirth in his voice, a core of cold wire inside his words, made it known. John was a fierce wind, hot or cold as the season needed, but a gust in the chest which pushed back all doubt. A sure wind pushes all aside, every shadow where truth hides, every nook where doubt festers are boiled white, scalded into nothing before such a wind. What can withstand a wind more ferocious than doubt and truth?

So John stamped his will upon all things. He willed himself most of all, and his laughter was a wire lash upon his back, and then twice again upon his face, until his spirit was bloody and withdrew into his strength, which had harnessed the current of agony itself, a strength as a blaze in dry pines which rises up to consume itself and burn the sky. All but the sun fear such a man who does not fear himself, but consumes himself in the crackling fire which rises to make the sun recoil, and then laugh. The sun knows that a fire which consumes itself is a glorious and perfect thing which even the sun respects as it disrespects, fears as it laughs to know such sacrifice. John's strength pleased the sun as a monk pleases the sun when he sets himself ablaze in immolation before the watching world. Who could not love and fear such a sacrifice?

The world knelt down before John. He commanded his weakness be gone, and struck out into the soft flesh of the world, where doubt became his ally, worming the earth in the rotten breast of all he knew. He shone into each doubting crack, each empty maybe in

their hearts, and they destroyed themselves for him. All withered before the storm, and knew their own doubt. So do we follow one who is fit to lead, a doubtless soul most sure. We who live in our own shadow are thusly tricked to believe there is no doubt in the heart of the sun! Every desert knows, what comes of knowing the sun, what is left, what lies between the sands, but heat?

Now John had success and riches but a heart of burnt clay from which to drink. He asked his heart, "I have won all the world, melted the clouds into my rain, found the hearts of men as a puddle, a film of breath before the sun and own the weather and the night, where men and women show their round eyes to me, dip their heads and fear me; but I am not happy. Do I have no heart, or do I have no fear and can not fathom my heart?" His heart said unto him, "You have lied to me. You have consumed yourself in flame to conceal your fear... You fear much John!" John heard his heart and raged against it, "You weak filthy lying heart, no wonder I burnt you to a black stone, you rotten thing, who but you might bring me weakness and show me what soft thing I am a flame to consume, a torrent to drown and a blade to scrape you into the desert sand, and bleed you gone!" With this his heart laughed at him with a cold lashing wire inside its mocking laugh, and John heard his heart, "You have done all that and much worse John! You who believe a flame beats in his breast and know a desert happiness which is dry and crackling as sand and heat in your mouth, you chew these words and know: you have wasted my tears for weakness, and now behold-- The desert claims us both!" The laughter was more than John could stand, and he began to go mad.

Like being in a metal box with his laughing heart, reverberating, pounding in a metal drum his heart drove him mad with its laughing

echo. He began to strike himself in the face, and as he struck harder and harder, his madness knew itself, to see what he had become, and he began to laugh as his heart laughed to behold himself. He looked upon himself with his heart's evil knowing, the knowing of his weakness and his hiding! He understood that it was he who had been savaged by his strength, boiled dry, so afraid of his tears and pain, made weak and pitiful, striking himself to awaken the desert and feel its anguish, so long choked dry in burnt tears.

And today the tears came again, but John opened up his dry desert heart before them, and soaked his burnt heart in the tears he wept for his foolishness, as if a burnt earth can grow toward the sun! How has strength without tears found the earth but conquered and stripped, baked and prostrate, barren and burnt before a will which leaves the truth bare, parched, half dead for what it will not know, the tears and rain which it needs to rise up toward the sun. That which is defeated never rises to happiness, and so the desert belongs to a cowardly and jealous sun.

Now weeping for his burnt heart, his heart loved him, and found John's despair touched it, and his heart spoke these tender words to him, "John, you are strong enough now to know me, and so I will show you what magic there is in the world of the heart which is full in tears and happiness."

John picked up the guitar he had not touched for fifteen years and began to play. He wept as he played, and his heart found his thousand lost spirits, each shamed and hidden, bruised and banished behind a burnt tear.

John's head felt as if it were a huge black witch's cauldron. His heart must be a witch or the Devil himself because it seemed that his mind and soul were a black iron vessel into which his heart began to hurl souls. Like a slow rain of hot stones, each plunging into the cauldron in turn, his heart slinging souls from above him, hurling them downward into his hungry, wanting, waiting, empty, black iron, desert cauldron of a mirthless soul, until he was alive with their power, their fear and knowing, their splendor and shame, rapture, horror, life and sadness filled his black iron breast, and he began to glow as a hearth glows once over-fired, now red and soft. Then his heart itself leapt in the cauldron, as if he could stand yet another! Now the belly of Time laughed to know him, and the Devil drew his hands toward God through Music, and the world sung whole and complete pouring through him, every God and heaven sung its sweet lament, echoing into the Devil's ear who leapt up to answer, so do both embrace and all Gods become one under the fire of song. Now John opened his over-full heart and heard his tear soaked joy sing its love song for the sun; the cauldron of his soul spilling its golden broth, tears and sun stirred together in an open heart which can not resist its happiness, its song of desert sorrow made wet and knowing, rising toward the sun, nourished in a broth of golden tears.

Aphorisms, Epigrams and Thoughts-- Group II

148. Of God and creation-- A man's soul is smaller than that which he creates.

149. Beware: One who is low casts no shadow, and may simply be stealthy.

150. The obsequious hide their shadows by stooping down at your feet. Only pride believes the truth condescends to crouch.

151. Music-- Hear the sound of my thousand broken souls in their burlap sack: Bells upon bells striking pain against ecstasy! To hear the ring, is to be wed.

152. Music-- The one thing in which God and the Devil agree.

153. Music-- What lies hidden here? Truth too. What demon sleeps inside beauty?

154. Music-- Beauty struck awake without knowing.

155. Music-- Can we fathom what is "hear," what strange agony finds perfect key? A killer sings sweetest harmony... Who can it not tame, or hide?

156. The poet's soul: He who with his left hand reaches down to caress beauty's cheek, may reach down with his right, and find that hate fits his grasp just as easily.

157. All emotion is present to the poet, all things press against his inner skin like a calf with horns and hooves stretching him to fullness, he must feel, see and know the animal completely, birth it and consume it entirely, horns, hooves and meat alike. He who is naked before beauty, is naked before all of himself. He who knows beauty is also he who hate knows best.

158. The creator smiles gladly before his hundred hundred souls, and never judges. This is the cost of self-knowledge, we pay by suspending judgment. Only then will all of our selves knock at the door, or even better, demand entrance. So let us happily admit it: The one who knows beauty most intimately, knows hate with equal freedom, and in equal measure.

159. The poet's soul-- The more beautiful I am, the more I know hate.

160. What demon lies alongside the poet's soul? Is it but his right hand? Ask music. All souls welcome.

161. From sickness to sunrise, creativity makes virtue of all things, even our "defects." So broad is the soul of man! May we now, finally be grateful?

162. Only a creator has use for all of "themselves," even his errors. Who else could be glad of it?

163. Creation and the past--when what was a burden becomes useful, we appreciate ourselves.

164. My errors have redeemed me! Wisdom is creative.

165. Who is glad for the madhouse within? Only he who has found a part for each may be grateful. Only the creator makes his own parts.

166. War and creation redeem all aspects of the human possibility.

167. What is needed is redeemed.

168. It is in the addition of morality that war and creation are both defeated.

169. Even if we are making a point about morality, all parts of the self can be used to accomplish the end. Is there a moral here? Sometimes evil does the most good.

170. a. It is God who needs the devil most. God only knows who we would blame without him.

b. Those without religion are willing to blame themselves.

c. One willing to answer to his failure, also owns his victory and his happiness as his own, in life's true, pure, highest spirit.

171. The best psychologist is just a lunatic who took notes.

172. Charm may own with grace

Steal without having to steal,

A smile is a thief

Tact can steal out loud,

What may I omit to take

All that you hold dear?

If I steal your hate

Will you then admit this thing?

Diplomacy steals

The Black Mirror

A beautiful lie
Has stolen my right to feel.
Diplomacy's tact

What season is left
When we believe what is said,
Then uncover it?

Better to know all
Ugly painful sweet complete,
Never pretending

Let us know each day
Every season and misstep,
Plainly born in blood

Beauty knows that blood
Is the river we refuse,
When we refuse her

Beauty knows that blood
Is the pain which we have known,
And the breath of hope

173. To know what you are, is to see what must be changed. To know what you are is to know what will become you.

174. "I laughed so hard to meet me, I will never be me again!" So speaks one who knows themselves. Someone who knows themselves, knows better.

175. Innocence or guilt? Our happiness is the best judge of our virtue.

176. Death assures those who un-dam themselves.

177. When knowledge and humor conspire, the unhearable finds voice-- Only a joke could entice us to speak the ineffable. Humor is a pair of gloves.

178. What is clad in farce today, will be naked in tomorrow's tears. So do we come to know our unspoken happiness.

179. We laugh hardest at that, about which we can not yet weep.

180. The charming are the most worthy of fear.

181. What we want to believe seduces us to name it truth.

The Black Mirror

182. What is most beautiful may be what is most deceptive.

183. When we first see what is beautiful in someone, we are often disappointed to discover the rest.

184. 99 out of 100-- Love soon fades when we discover the true identity of its object.

185. Love is a beautiful suit we hang on the other. Do we love our suit, or the mannequin beneath? When the fit is poor, do we have sense enough to blame the tailor?

186. Love-- To know you is to be disappointed. I will love you instead.

187. The desert knows-- What rage has scorched, tears reclaim.

188. When the sun reigns the earth, the earth thirsts for rain. The desert knows: Hope is a forbidden cloud.

189. Diplomacy is evil--its aims only lie in winning.

190. Guilt is a criminal act.

191. After we have brought the past into the present, we may be present to the future.

192. "I had no choice, I could no longer afford my error." When hope is broke, all it can afford is change.

193. Diplomacy winks to itself and knows: The battle best won, is that which the enemy is unaware of having lost.

194. Kindness belongs to the Devil. Were words more guilty or true ever spoken?

195. What is bitter today, becomes guilty tomorrow-- Kindness is bitter revenge.

196. Burnt Winter

A desert tide of hot sand washes over and through the parched heart of one who has deserted his tears.

197. In the poet's soul, everything is a violence, most of all beauty.

198. Only the most raw and tender skin feels a passing shadow as a wind, and beauty as a wound which bruises happiness.

199. He who has slain his errors finds joy stands on a corpse.

200. Just as we who create them, God and the Devil alike are formed in our image, and are entirely imaginary.

201. "I stand naked before you and weep." So does the poet repay beauty for her wounds.

202. A Lost Soul: I used to know you, and am sad to see it is you, which you have forgotten.

203. We will always carry that which we do not acknowledge. What we will not own, owns us.

204. All of beauty is balanced upon a tear, as yet unborn.

205. We feel insulted to meet an old friend who has grown. Disappointment is added to insult if he has grown smaller.

206. Only one who has grown beyond himself can breathe the alien air of another's heights.

207. "I am delighted to meet you." So speaks one who knows themselves to find another who knows something different. Only the brave are curious enough to ask, "What?"

208. The neurotic worries about what he can not control, and so betrays his reasons.

209. We worry about something and believe we might control something which controls us.

210. "Don't worry about it, you are helpless to change it!" The truth is worrisome until it defeats us.

211. "My old friend, I weep to know what you were, and what you have not become."

212. "My old friend, it matters little that you disappointed me, and much that you did not disappoint yourself."

213. An old friend is one who used to know happiness by the same name.

214. Only those who weep know the highest happiness. Happiness is moist with the dew of tears-- An autumn morning offers itself to the sun.

215. He who finds his tears, no longer halts at the door to his happiness.

216. When we resist our pain, our joy hides along side it.

217. He who is strong enough not to weep, weeps forever.

218. Only lost tears and forgotten sorrow might burst the tomb where happiness is concealed.

219. Joy sleeps beneath her blanket of misery and sadness. Little wonder it is She who we fear most.

220. A Snake's Tail

Only he who has shed his tears may become his happiness.

221. Stubborn people negate themselves to change. Genius is new colors.

222. "I see you do not want to hear this, so I will speak louder." So speaks friendship.

223. When one allows what is foolish to pass without comment, respect has decayed into restraint. No sadder admission stains friendship than kindness.

224. Our friendship remains, but my laughter has drown in kindness. One day may you be strong enough to know me again, so we may laugh at you together. Kindness is a pity.

225. What is born of fire, but ash?

226. Proof of Happiness

He who weeps is he who heals.

He who heals is he who changes.

He who changes is he who hopes.

He who hopes is he who is happy.

227. Dignity is confidence without caricature.

228. When it is an affect, confidence decays into an unpalatable fruit, self-grandiose and rotten. When it is genuine, confidence matures into dignity.

229. The two Semitic races, the Jews and the Arabs appear identical in many things, particularly in their hatred of each other. There is no hatred worse than that amongst brothers.

230. a. If we are alike I must be shown the better! So argue brothers.

b. If we are alike, we can not agree! So argue brothers.

c. God cursed mankind when He made us all brothers.

231. He who was your friend becomes the finest enemy, the enemy who knows you. Has there ever been better reason to change?

232. Music, beauty, art and excellence are superfluous. Such things are only necessary if one requires hope.

233. Excellence makes no "cents." Someone who works hard enough to be so good may or may not be rich, but either way they haven't time to spend the money.

234. It is evil to tell someone what they need to hear. Truth is an evil mistress.

235. Paranoia is a mixture of fear and flattery.

236. Truth is the first sin. To see one's self clearly pains one to grow beyond the sight. How could God not be offended at one who seeks to better His own image? Is there a greater sin? Pride thinks the past is a god.

237. One who refuses knowledge may see a worm in the apple. If he looks closely he will notice his resemblance to the worm, and that his envy of it rises with his gorge.

238. Tact is a liar who pretends she has no enemies.

239. Once reduced to a bodily function, our sexuality may be satisfied without entanglement. The de-spiritualization of sexuality is its debasement and its acknowledgment. Love is ugly when she is naked.

240. Tact and truth are often enemies but occasionally, only tact's cunning tongue is kind enough to slip truth's shadow, in a dark place.

241. Tact approaches the truth silently and is palatable for what it omits. The truth is, sometimes only a lie will do.

242. If we appear to get along it is a lie, but hope knows no lie is impossible if we practice. A practiced liar lies best. Hope lies here, or is it truth who slumbers?

243. Sometimes we are mistaken in believing one who is talented, is one who is wise. Both create pathos, but wisdom alone sees itself and is stirred to laughter, crying aloud, "Pathetic!"

244. It seems as if the Sun is a jealous God.

Only those with broken eyes may know her beauty,

Only those with broken wings, may approach sight of her heaven.

245. A thoughtful man knows the only dangerous opinion is the one which happens to be true.

246. An eagle's prayer: May I see, so I never return.

247. Every winner takes the unpleasant wrinkles out of truth's skin. However well he conceals it, a lion strong and lucky enough to leave his tooth in Time's tender hide, is sure to have had one of her claws puncture his own. Only Time knows the whole lion's hide.

248. Tell me what I want to hear and I will call you true.

Tell me what I already believe and I will call you wise.

Tell me what I refuse and I will call you an ass.

Tell me what I am: A joke I hear but refuse to believe, and I will call you a true wise ass.

249. Laughter Rises

If I took myself seriously I would be responsible to repeat me. I never believe in myself more than I believe in someone better.

250. Beware: A thinker who seeks the philosopher's stone unprepared may be unlucky, if fortunate enough to find it. Knowledge is a cruel mirror which can only be withstood in laughter.

251. Fixation-- A fool travels in a circle and expects hope around the corner.

252. What is innocent is wise. Knowledge devours wisdom. Laughter makes knowledge wise.

253. Follow me! The wise have followers and the foolish have more. Even the pope has a shadow. We all follow ourselves, but only the dumbest get in line to do it.

254. Learn, do not worship!

He has a hero like he wants to be.

She has a hero like she wants to be.

We all follow ourselves, but only the young kneel at another's alter to do it.

255. The young have heroes. They imagine themselves and believe they see God.

256. a. "I have learned how to teach myself much." A good student is busiest after the lesson.

b. A diligent student learns every bad habit best if he is ignorant.
The first thing we must learn is what to learn.

257. Tact: Only a lie makes the truth palatable.

258. To grow we must fire an arrow through the heart of our shadow. If we wait too long this is a painful and frightening moment, where we must remember who owns who. It is easy to forget a shadow has no weight when it appears so late in the day, so much larger than ourselves.

259. Only the discourteous answer honest questions with the truth.

260. Only the discourteous can be trusted.

261. No one makes worse company than an honest man.

262. Silence is the form of lying we call "restraint." Cowardice is undignified.

263. A Sterling Reputation

"It is not your reputation which is tarnished, it is your reputation which has tarnished the truth." Often the truth shines the brightest when we are rubbed the wrong way.

264. A silver tongue most easily tarnishes the truth.

265. To know yourself is to answer a question: "What's next?"

266. To know yourself and be content, is to know yourself to death.

267. Contentment is the death of hope.

268. Only he who owns his past may change his future.

269. The wise are hopeful. They know themselves, and see what they won't be.

270. The wise know but one thing: The next question.

271. Self-knowledge is expressed in growth.

272. Wisdom loves its errors.

The wise are kindest to themselves when they fall.

Wisdom rises above itself and so loves its errors most.

273. Only the wise see how foolish they are, and are delighted.

274. Those who are always right live in circles.

275. "I do not hate you, I simply respect myself too much to care about you."

276. Someone who behaves foolishly may need help, but they want company. Two fools become virtuous.

277. Love knows beauty is the most powerful enemy. To whom would you rather surrender?

278. Love knows a lie can change the world.

279. A new lie may cleanse the old. Those who have stitched their heart to false promise know: It is hate which best lifts love's bloody stain.

280. The best liars believe themselves and appear the most sincere. The most dangerous never believe themselves and are the most charming.

281. The devil is the one who does the least and leaves you to defeat yourself. What?! The devil created conscience?

282. An empathetic person knows what they do as they do it. They have no use for guilt and conscience which show up as judges after the fact. Such judges are intoxicated with their own words, and have more liquor on their breath than truth.

283. A Judge's Hearing

Conscience does much vital good to keep us honest, fair and true to a higher spirit of our word. It is also a lever the unscrupulous and the guilty can use to advantage themselves, and bring us to immorality against ourselves. Let us be sure the knife is in proper hands! Conscience champions our morality or our immorality with equal ease. To know whose voice judges *hear*, is to know the difference.

284. Our kindness needs selfishness to be trusted. Kindness may be turned against you if its will serves another. Let us be selfish or sure we are only kind to the kind.

285. Of nations and men: Opportunity makes all but the best and most foolish of us into thieves and children. "I don't trust you" means, "You can be selfish here but I can not." There must be equality amongst thieves and children.

286. When we create our own problems we see that the end is in-sight.

287. Without humor life goes on too long.

288. I am not sufficiently well read to have stolen the idea. My ignorance is original.

289. A wise man is an ass who knows he's an ass. Pretenders don't laugh.

290. On the dangers of backward fascination: Do not move toward yourself, move yourself toward you!

291. A good book wounds twice and elevates once. Even after you join in, nothing hurts as much as laughter from above.

292. There was a time when I knew myself, but now I am hopeful.

293. To know what you are is to begin to hope for better.
294. I love myself enough to refuse contentment. Only more will do!
295. When something touches us, we remember ourselves.
296. We cherish the tears shed at a tale tenderly set forth, and may set loose our tears in beauty. If we heard *our* tale as fully, beauty might crush us beneath a single black tear. Pain knows, beauty can kill.
297. Mourn your loss or beauty will stalk you. Beauty hunts the "strong."
298. To create yourself is to no longer be jealous of your possibility.
299. Only those who have done well can honestly wish well for another. Those at height do not fear the casting of shadows.
300. Those truly heartened by your success are often selfish eagles. How lonely one is whose words fall from above!
301. When we improve we move above ourselves and must bear the weight of our own boot prints on our shoulders.

302. The truth is often avoided for a lie which sounds more truthful.

303. An opinion becomes a fact when two people believe it.

304. Good propaganda is better than truth because it is believable.

305. "Spin" seems to make the world go around, but it is the universe which is turning.

306. Innocence and laughter are the only judge of an honest man's deeds.

307. I see how unhappy your virtue makes you, it is a sin.

308. "I hate my life, so I will repeat it until I discover I like it." We become used to our mistakes more easily than we change them.

309. It is a beautiful lie which is gatekeeper to the ugliness of the world.

We beautify the world to bear understanding it. "They don't really mean it," is a kind lie which preserves the offense. It is a beautiful lie which is gatekeeper to the ugliness of the world.

310. Remember: A beautiful lie is the best defender of all ugly deeds.

311. We lie best when we believe ourselves.

312. The older I get, the younger I must become.

313. The angriest people have twice the energy of ordinary people. They owe it to themselves to become the most graceful and creative of all men.

314. When anger knows itself it weeps.

315. The Angriest God

Have angry people cracked the atom? It seems as if pain and pleasure alike are liberated into pure energy! All emotions can become hate! Or have we only been blinded by the explosion, the subtlety of our misery too dim to see under the flash? Every sorrow runs in fear before the wrath of God! It is the angriest God who will not weep.

316. An angry man who is not creative is a promise unkept, a promise which remains profane.

317. When anger weeps it becomes wisdom.

318. Only wisdom is joyous enough to laugh at the dread weight of our black despair and command, "Become Light!"

319. Death

Before Wisdom laughs she weeps. Sometimes only the strong are fools.

320. Unhappy Pride and Joy

Someone who is unhappy and remains committed to their position is proud to have found their joy lies in refusing joy. Nothing is as joyous to the unhappy as proving their unhappiness right.

321. Man is impotent.

Man created karma to punish the dead.

Man created hell to torture the dead.

Man created sin to torture the living.

Man created justice to punish himself.

When man expects justice he is unjust to life and will always be disappointed in her. Life always comes to us naked and imperfect, just as she is.

322. It is not your actions which are pitiful, it is that I was foolish enough to have thought better of you.

323. With so much pain in the world, the one who suffers most is the one who refuses their tears. Their happiness will wring them dry to exhaustion. Joy never refuses sorrow.

324. "I love you only for the most selfish reasons." So speaks the most reliable of angels.

325. Profit turns the greedy into the reliable.

326. Threat and profit are the most fertile ground for manners to grow.

327. Those who are tempted or threatened may become polite, one to come nearer and the other to flee.

328. Be cautious around diplomacy. Manners deceive us all. The polite lie: Perhaps we can all get along? The naive serve themselves... To Wolves!

329. "That's not funny!" To tell a joke is to risk becoming one.

330. The Angel's Angle

Those who help others without receiving any reward are either saints or of the most suspect character. Someone who gives without receiving is a con man who cons himself! The ultimate mask! Soon

they will be indispensable! Never trust an angel clever enough not to know themselves. You may both be airborne to discover their angle has cost you both your wings.

331. The first rule of diplomacy: "He who can not be stealthy, must be polite."

332. A secure person sees what he does not understand and is curious. An insecure person sees what he does not understand and questions if it exists.

333. Hope demands we change and think differently than we used to.

When Hope sends flowers they are accompanied by a card which reads, "My condolences and congratulations."

334. Our pride is the mourner who weeps the loudest at the funeral for our errors.

335. Oh what strange fountain of pleasure is pain once un-hid? How bright, how burnt orange and red is the sun? How deep is our bliss—how much anguish fills and fires the glowing coal of our happiness?

336. A Change in Time

"I can't remember the last time I felt this good." Joy comes in small moments. What if we could change the camera, would the picture persist? Can we release the shutter? Can we see a new time, different than the last time, a time where time would last?

337. Every drunk knows the secret to happiness is to forget just how sad you are.

Every lover knows the secret to happiness is to forget just who you are.

Every thinker knows the secret to happiness is to remember: just change what you are.

338. Just because the answer is right, does not mean it is the right answer.

339. "It's easy"... Sometimes a lie is the quickest way to the truth.

340. Remember: When we mean, "You must begin at once," we must say, "It's easy."

341. To tell someone the truth may be doing them a favor, although you may never hold their favor again.

342. Do you care enough to wear another's mask? If I lie to you, you will remain ugly, but if I am truthful, I become ugly. Caring is willing to be misunderstood.

343. Someone who understands their misery may be ready to leave it, or they may be enraptured, affirmed to know it better.

344. I do not begrudge you your happiness. I will admit it. Perhaps it is your misery.

345. I have finally come to terms with how unhappy I am. After all that, why would I change?

346. A comfortable sickness is preferable to an unknown health.

347. Most people are only affirmed in the voice of another who is similarly afflicted.

348. We are affirmed in another with the same faults. Sympathy makes weakness content.

349. Company which soothes is company which stagnates.

350. After you solve your own riddle it may be tempting to help another do the same. Be warned: To answer a riddle which does not want to be solved, is to discover you are hated.

351. Innocent Blood

It is okay if you are perceptive in conversation regarding the behavior of others. Insight is different. When the real answer becomes clear one must be quiet or be stained in innocent blood. We are all innocent before we hear our secret. Sometimes innocence is a lie of omission. There are occasions where insight may be best kept within.

352. When someone asks for an answer it is likely they don't want it. They only wish to appear strong enough to have asked.

353. Common courtesy-- If you ask I will answer you. If you ask twice I will answer you honestly.

354. We are never helpless or hopeless before our self or our instincts. We are not a final result, condemned to what we see, we are at the beginning of the game. The challenge: can we use *this* to create something better? Hope is always a challenge.

355. Hope is a full-time job. When we see hope in the hands of another, we are hopeless. When we see hope in our own hands, we are busy.

356. It is a terrible injury to give someone hope who has become comfortable being hopeless.

357. To ask twice is to risk hearing the answer.

358. It is the most ridiculous thing to see someone who is serious.

359. When you stop taking yourself seriously you become as smart as someone else.

360. The reason someone else may be able to see more of you than you can, is because they don't believe you. "The most comforting thing about me, is that I find my arguments so convincing."

361. A Tough Room

I am my best audience and my most severe critic. I can only stand me because I have hated me first. Excellence is conditional.

362. Someone who sees the problem and accepts it appears content, but is actually just too lazy to hope.

363. The older we get, the easier it is to believe our mistakes are virtues.

364. Angry People

a. It is among nations as it is in life. A war may be over but the hatred lasts forever. What has been born in humiliation will not rest! Every war has a gift: another war. Once the wound breathes within us only one question remains. War with who?

b. An angry person owes himself a debt. He wastes his precious treasure on others and might better be angry with himself. This is more honest, and if he chooses not to hate himself, but to better himself instead, he will discover that the most perfect, selfish and generous act of rage is a lifelong commitment to his own ascension.

365. If honesty is sometimes a weakness in character, bad taste enough to say so, may I have strength enough to be as weak as possible!

366. What we want to hear is seldom the truth. Everyone likes a liar. A liar is always considerate enough to see the truth your way.

367. One who breaks down has the luxury of defeat in his favor. He may reconsider. The one strong enough to continue can afford his blindness.

368. Lucky are those weak enough that they must get it right.

369. We must surrender the beautiful lie that "we are right," if we are to discover the more beautiful truth: We still can be.

370. Hope and Blood

Change is frightening because we must sacrifice the old to realize the new. Redemption is only found in blood.

371. An honest boast-- "See me I am man!... A confusion in all things, save my pride!"

372. An ideal can make liars of us all. How many lies are there between here and heaven?

373. The Vengeful Hero

Inside every coward is a fearful self-hater. There is no more fearsome warrior than the coward who has discovered he may defend himself another way: He may hate *you* instead!

374. One is never given a miracle. A miracle is something one takes. One must first create it, then endure it. Happiness is a challenge. Who among you is glad of it?

375. One may help another out of loneliness. "If I elevate you might I finally be amongst the company of equals?"

376. Our misery may be our greatest pride.

377. The truth: Our discussion may be over, but I will never be over our discussion.

378. Someone who is self-hating may either appear cruel or humble.

379. Self definition? Hope knows never to repeat. It seems as if we are helpless before self, but it is self which must be helped before it is us.

380. We are free to say no. One man's freedom may be suicide.

381. Decline-- It is not that I judge you, it is that something smells unhealthy here.

382. The only instinct which matters is the nose for ascension.

383. On helping others-- My answer may not be yours. Some are happiest when they are unwell.

It may be it is best to leave unwell enough alone.

384. Change

True happiness is a restless thing. There are few who are strong enough to stand it.

385. Happiness abhors tranquility.

386. A challenge: People who hate are lucky enough to have double the energy they need to be the hardest working, most productive and joyous of all people.

387. The most convincing argument is the one which makes a revelation of what we already believe.

388. Virtue is often a "mistake" we lack the courage to make.

389. Consistency makes a vice of growth. Nothing is more virtuous than misery. Happiness dares new "sins."

390. Virtue is the name the fearful give to cowardice.

Virtue is the name the brave give to recklessness.

Virtue is the name the serious give to unhappiness.

Virtue is the name the joyous give to living.

Real virtue begins when we give it a name other than our own.

391. One who fears themselves calls duty a virtue.

One who knows themselves calls work a pleasure.

392. Prudence is fear made virtuous.

393. Consideration and forgiveness are but pity concealed.

394. Laughter stings when we can no longer take ourselves seriously.

395. Fear and change: We are all in the presence of the possible. It is only fear which keeps us comfortable.

396. Hope lies in the unfamiliar, but hope *lies* in the comfortable.

397. In politics and public life, tantrum is more effective than truth. The truth dirties one's hands with nuance. Nothing feels cleaner than a good rant.

398. Malice and truth-- Most people don't mean you any harm, they simply aren't mean enough to do you any good.

399. All healthy things evolve, change and grow, or maintain, degenerate and decay. Do you trust yourself enough to change yourself, discard, destroy and begin again? What will you think of you? Only the brave dare true health and happiness, only the brave would want such wisdom.

400. When we grow and adopt a deeper understanding there is always the undercurrent of betrayal. We no longer believe what we used to defend, and have betrayed ourselves! How could this be? How could you do this to you? Remember: When it comes to yourself, never feel bad about betraying someone less intelligent than you are.

Jacob's Last Rite

Jacob was right. Those who knew him found out soon enough, they may be wise enough to agree, or they found out: Jacob was right. He could be affable and sincere, a friend who knew what you knew, an assuring hand to hold you steady and a fine friend so long as you remembered, who was right. Those who forgot, those who argue and have their own silly wind, their own dull dribbling truth found out what comes to those who forget who is right.

Jacob had friends in school and understood the game first. He saw what the grown-ups saw and did what they did, not what they said. He saw his daddy do it best. Now you agree and laugh, now we are friends, and then you make the move, tell 'em who to blame real sudden, like a stick, his daddy could use words to hurt like a stick, so he gets 'em real close and settled to change to the stick and, "What the hell are you tryin' to pull on me! You tellin' me I'm a liar?! Now see here you best make good after that crack, make good fast and proper or..." and then all the other hard words like they did somethin' wrong, until they cracked and crumbled like dirt, and paid up. His daddy never had want of cash or friends, so Jacob understood how to be right.

Now the years put a fist full of money in Jacob's hand, and a wife in his bed as is likely to follow. One hand clasps and one strikes to teach best. That's how he raised his boys. Jacob's boys did for themselves and learned early. Most of all they learned who was right and damn well remembered every bit of it. Who pays for 'em, who raises 'em, who deserves to be right? So Jacob's boys were beneath him, the sun below him in the sky, and why not? Who owned the sun?

As he knew to help, he helped his sons, and so never helped them. As he knew to love, he loved them, and so shamed them, and said to his heart, "I have made my boys strong and tough, proud, too proud to take no favor from me!" So he told his heart he helped his sons to have them hate him, and made them strong to rage in them. So each son carries a splinter of his rage and hate, a dirty flame, a filthy cut which leaves you cringing, turning around inside of you like a splinter of dirty glass.

At night Jacob slept easy, a tumbler of whiskey, Scotch or Irish and he slept like a baby. Today he was feeling fine, it's football day for his boy and Jacob raised his 280 pound body up onto the bleachers with a curse and a puff of cigar breath. The bleacher creaked under his weight, and his son having seen his dad, sagged a bit himself to know the old man was watching. Oh God, his dad had a mouth, and he sagged a little more to hear the familiar bellow, "Put my boy in now, coach! Now, or we gonna talk!" Jacob knew how to work a coach like a Coke machine, and his boy was up! That coach might need a kick or another quarter shoved in his cement head, and Jacob lit up red in the face and opened up for real, "Coach-- My Boy-- NOW!" Suddenly Jacob felt a pain in his head, a burning hot needle of a pain behind his eye, and man he was sick! Jacob fell off the bleachers, and all heard the slap of 280 pounds of meat hit the cement.

Jacob awoke in the hospital and saw his boy there, and his wife. He looked at his son and he thought, "Look at that no good wiggling little nothing of a boy. Scared stiff of me even here layin' sick." He went to tell him, "Snap up and look at me!" but the words wouldn't come. Jacob could feel it, he knew he was dying.

The doctor came in and gave him a shot and off he went. He liked that doctor plenty. He smiled at his stupid kid, and his worn out wife, and knew he was dying but didn't care much. What did it matter? Now Jacob felt a long strange quiet come over him, settle into him like a stiff starch on a shirt, he froze up inside and felt it was happening, he was dying. The moment stretched to contain every corner of his being, like a cloud curling up around him time grew and slowed, spilling itself almost back into the glass, and so slowly, he remembered who he was, and where he was, and the moment was beyond time, curling around him forever, but not, and the pain came to his chest and he was gone.

Jacob was shocked, kind of sick and relieved all at once, but mostly surprised to wake up again, see his son and wife again, and then he understood: when the body stops, really stops, we are not conscious, we stop, not black or white but zero. Heaven and hell are but a myth for kids, only the last moment, the longest moment, welcomes us before we die. The door at the end of life leads nowhere, it is the silence in the doorway which is our reward.

Jacob felt it again, the stiff arms of pain squeezed his chest, and stiffened his body one last time and again the moment stretched before him and curled around his life as an endless cloud spilling back into time before oblivion, the last moment where time is a cat taking one last lick of the mouse, now so docile and sweet, before consuming it. As Jacob felt time stretch out and languish before him, and within him, he sighed to his heart that he was right, and lived well. Time heard his thoughts and welcomed him into its last timeless moment, the longest moment. Slowly Jacob began to see a strange shadow open up in the floor of the mist and his father rose from it. A terrible stink of hate

and leather, shit and heat, shamed and fouled his soul. He could not breathe. He could not weep. Now his friends who he had suffered and made suffer were suspended before him as hollow sacks of skin he had gutted, they could not breathe. They too, could not weep. Now his boys who he had made "proud," but had not made proud. They were broken and sick as he had wanted them, too weak to rise above him, "No son should rise above me!" he thought, and now knew he was right. Hell may be but a moment, but it is a moment where you know it is you alone who has extinguished the sun. So Jacob knew himself in the longest last moment and passed from life, and so passed from hell.

His boy sighed in deep relief to know his dad was dead. "He sure looks peaceful Mom, I guess even the Devil wouldn't have him." She answered, "If He did put up with him, I'll bet it wasn't for long."

The Last Moment

All who know the seasons fall
The days of amber grain and flax
The autumn sun, the winter day
Crisply snaps the winter branch.

The Spring of youth, so turning searching,
Worming stretching to a time
Found spring and strength, summer's season
Fall before our watered eyes.

Now the candle, now the taper
Burning bronze and gold before
Some who leave, gone before us
Leaves so tender time has shorn.

What is after southern knowing
Northern shores and poles of ice?
This world conceals but a shadow telling
Us of never seen delights
And pleasures hidden in heavens lifted,
High above the riddle here?
Is there Hell, or Heaven better,
What lies behind the final door?

I asked an angel sick and knowing
Asked him twice and he replied
"Repose is but another knowing"
And so I've learned that he has lied.
As sickness claims the mind and spirit
Stopping now the balanced world,
Halting all unfurled and swirled

Never known and never knowing
Ceaseless ceasing stopped and sure.
All not black but gone and nothing
Greets us from no foreign shore
Or bank or ferry or Eden lying
Never but a fairies' farce,
For children and the ever glowing
Whom in lies, does joy impart.

What is sure, and I have seen it
No spirit or no world is next
But our final moment stretches, ever never glowing, knowing not
again; so slowing all the more.
As melt glass pulled, time re-fulled
A moment stretches, watches, knowing
Nothing but eternal looking, back and over, ever forward
See the whole of every vision, lie and truth shown plain before us.
The moment stretches past comprehension
Visions lost in timeless curls,
The sea's caress soon unseen
Forever now...soon always gone.
So our last and longest moments
But twice do lick and cup, our only ending world.
And find us still and ever seeing
Life before the moment lasts, we know all pasts
We find ourselves, judge height and hell,
Before the moment, never more torment
Never more ferment, joy and mirth, deserve and love, reward and
kiss,
Time's last and longest true embrace, to hate, to love, to have then
leave.

Time surrenders us as ashes
Burnt and blown, before again
The riddle gone, the melody sung
So slow and sweet, our hells and heavens, sung complete
So slow... so sweet until it's gone,
So sweet... until it's done.

The Father, The Daughter, and The Holy Ghost

The funeral: And so their words filled Rachel's ears as dirt and clots of soil, for what is a parent's knowledge but the soil in which wisdom may strike root. Their words smothered her as clumps of earth but she was want not to know it, and so loved them. Down into the shaft of their life together and now but she remains, and with but few salt tears to connect flesh to memory. So they were wed as we are wed at funerals, the shaft is aisle and we are beautifully betrothed to the ghost of our pain, a holy ghost summoned by another caring hand.

Back from the dead she drove, and wept but little, her heart dared the profane and beat with a shameful laughing hope for all that still lived beneath their earthen words, but soon a guilty shovel restored her shame, and her mourning heart was recovered. Still, that evening the day was light and restless within her, and so she struck at her heart with the familiar reproachful tongue long enough her own, that she saw not that it was borrowed of the dead. "You are a disgusting thing. A laughable thing. A selfish stupid little girl, to imagine you have any business trying, or even dreaming such a frivolous thought, so useless to dream it, or laugh as if you might succeed where you have no business. Mind your limits, and honor those who gave of themselves to show them to you." Shame spoke and covered her happiness, so she accepted them, and so accepted herself and pushed quietly off to where sleep lives, as a lover lost between night and memory.

Each day we wake, open our daylight eyes and cast out our heart as a net into the day, so we see all which we can not know. And

in turn, each night we close our eyes and wind in the net so we may then pour it out into the sea, which swallows all things into its depths to know all things, but behold none.

So Rachel found herself before the sea, and the gentle foam shed the breath of its bubbles around her feet, and knew her. The sands opened having been kissed by the knowing sea, the dune folding back over itself, until a sweet air and golden light invited her to step within. The walls received her and arched up to form a marble chamber thick with the scent of pine and cedar. Her very soul was born into the air and light therein, and returned to her as tears. An alabaster light, white and pure as milk drew her toward the chamber's end where a pedestal of stone curved under as the back of the sea reaches upward, but in mirror. So Rachel beheld her father, cupped thusly in the palm of time's loving hand.

Her tears drew their curtain of gauze before her eyes and loved him, for he was beautiful. Her memory welled up within her, as warmth rises up above cold things, and she knelt down and kissed his forehead with a daughter's warmth, and knew he was beautiful. His lips no longer seemed blue and ashen, but now as her own, and his eyes opened but were not his eyes, but were as her own, and weeping.

Her lips spoke to her from him and said, "Go to the sea and be safe, for you are loved and safe within my shadow." For he had placed within his shadow his wisdom, a father's wisdom: Keep close to the earth that which casts an ugly shadow. So he had suffered to learn, and then to teach. Fear is the shadow of suffering, and the child might bear the mark of the wound and so never know it. His shadow rose up from his body and carried her back to the sea, where the waves had receded to reveal a wondrous marble statue, its stone as pure as light, and

whiter than the palest ivory. In its delicate hand was a slender vase with a narrow neck, as might receive a single perfect flower. There was a golden script encircling its neck, ornamental and graceful as the vase itself. The statue and the vase were familiar, and she knew that her daylight eyes would find them. Suddenly, the statue turned in the sand to reveal that its left arm was missing, and a deep pain, as from the marrow itself, came to her left arm. A stifling grip exerted itself upon her throat and breath. Now Rachel's chest tightened and a horror fell into her as a hot stone from the heavens. Even as she was dreaming and could not see, she felt her pained arm, and as the moon finds its light of the sun, she knew that there is day in the night, and night in the day, and was afraid.

When Rachel awoke she opened her eyes and cast out her dreams with the net of her heart, so thought little of them. The statue with its slender vase came to her thoughts, and she went to look through those treasures her father had bequeathed to her. A hardwood jewel box inlaid with mother of pearl, lay hidden beneath the profusion of many old musty cardboard cartons. The inlay was of such magnificent quality as to be a perfect portrait in opal and pearl, every detail of the statue was perfectly presented, including the vase with its cryptic writing. Within the box was a brass necklace, a band adorned as light on light with gold leaf on brass to form the script lettering. Its beauty and ornament all but obscured the cryptic letters, which Rachel discovered spelled, "*slihoavmee.*" Although she did not understand its meaning, the necklace was a masterpiece of caring and craftsmanship become artistry of the highest order, not to mention a loving gift from her father. So she clasped it about her neck, and felt it snap fast in a perfect fit.

All those who knew her noticed how beautiful the necklace was, and the glow of her days was marred only by the ever worsening pain in her arm. A strange sympathetic vibration with her dream? A nuisance to be sure. "I can not stand the ache, and it feels as if the bone itself atrophies. See how thin, tender and useless it is, I have come to hate it!" Her doctor seemed thinly amused himself to hear her complaint and remarked a bit too glibly, "Maybe it is not a good thing to hate your arm. Maybe it is your arm, which hates you! Ha ha ha. Well we will see who has been disappointed to know who soon enough. The x-ray will be back shortly." So the bad news came after such levity as this, and a cancer of the bone which all could see dampened the mood to blackness. A surgery was scheduled.

She cursed her withered dead arm, and with each black word the arm hurt more, as if it had ears, and malice in its marrow. The days passed and she cursed the arm and hated it even as its torment answered her words with pain's terrible vengeance. So the day came and the mask was placed upon her face and the potion injected so sleep might cover pain which remains unseen, and the arm was gone. However, when she awoke, Rachel found that the pain was not.

And where the arm had been the air hurt her, and she thought, "How can what is no longer here hurt? What is pain but an imagining?" And she was comforted by these thoughts, and felt not her arm. So does one think and speak who is in the daylight, and can see but does not know. Rachel lived her life and told no one of it, and so thought she heard not herself. An empty place, a silent place broke the happiness within her, and she saw nothing of it, so busy was she remembering how happiness looked, that she forgot she knew nothing of it. A smiling one, bright for the eyes of others, and to know her

reflection in place of herself, the appearance and mask were happiness, were they not? So did her daylight eyes tell her, so far was the net of her heart from her days. Those who wear masks fool others by coincidence, and themselves by design.

Rachel knew the mirror held a strange thing before her soul, but she knew not what. Her father's eyes looked upon her but she saw her own, his lips spoke within her but she heard no voice, and so passed the mask of her days. In the daylight she could not see her empty heart, and its brittle barren net, for her eyes were not hers to know, the eyes of a father hidden beneath shades of daylight. The holy ghost is invisible before the sun.

So she could look upon herself but knew herself not, and pushed quietly off into the sweet ink of night, where sleep's arms are as a lovers outstretched. The sea swallowed the empty corners of her heart into its tumbling depths, and so knew her, and wept unseen within itself, salt in salt. Again the sands were opened before her, and again she saw them fold over themselves, but now she was pulled in their undertow into the mouth of the dune which closed hungrily behind her, sealing her in a long narrow corridor. The acrid scent of venom and the snap of hard scales catching scales, as a beard rubbed against the grain, a clicking vibrated the air and she beheld a row of giant scorpions, each as a man in length, preening themselves in the firelight of a dozen oily wrought iron torches fastened to the walls like ugly flaming spines. A golden light invited her, spilling from the chamber at the corridor's end and she knew, it was the golden light and scent of cedar and pine from the chamber of her father's enshrinement which beckoned her. Her goal was clear.

The scorpion spoke within Rachel's heart, and loved her. Its rattling sting told of scorn as a mother whose tongue scorches and scorns. For one tender who is scorned, soon learns not to hold forth target, and so is safest from scorn. Laughter filled her breast to banish shame, and she leapt over each insect in turn, over one and over the next, until the scorpions were crackling, snapping and showering each other with venom, much to Rachel's amusement, and her laughter increased further still to enter the sacred golden chamber, which was as before but for the echo of her happiness off the still marble walls.

Now standing before her father's corpse, she saw her eyes, the eyes she so sorely left in him, pleading, abandoned and weeping, sparkle but sadly in death's unseeing head, and she knew that in like she had left her lips and their words unheard, but to grace its gray ashen face. At once she understood and cursed the dead, and so loved them, "I spit on you oh honored dead thing, I laugh to know myself and drown your shadow in light, my higher laughing light which mocks you and so loves you best to curse you to eternal contempt and devotion!"

The sea knew she had heard, and so washed into the foul chamber and buoyed her upon its waters and tenderly set her upon its shore, for she was wise. The necklace fell from her neck, as its clasp was born in two, its inscription separated even to even, odd to odd, the letters rearranging to reveal its components: love and shame. She found the vase now pure white in her slender fingers, and knew her happiness was the perfect flower it would contain, and she wept in gratitude to the sea, and wanted to repay it with a vision of its beauty. She spoke to the sea and recounted to it the lesson it had taught her. "Only those who surpass the dead may honor them, for to continue an

The Black Mirror

ascending course, we must rise above that which gave us limit. So we may honor best to dishonor, and continue best not to follow. One who follows does not lead, and so may not be trusted with the future. We the living must earn our rightful place above the dead. We honor them best to tread upon them."

Now the sea, which knows itself, found mirror in Rachel's words, and so beheld itself plainly. She gazed upon its waves, once bashful, now dark, tender and serene, hued of a hidden ink as if a black violet shroud passed deep beneath their majesty, where what knows itself and beholds, is born to sea.

Aphorisms, Epigrams and Thoughts-- Group III

401. Man sees his reflection upon the waters, and believes he sees the future. Doesn't he realize he is looking downward?

402. All who have met them know: standards are but limits denied.

403. The two things which prevent my eternal happiness are my mortality and my humanity.

404. The blossom from winter's branch,

White against snow.

Is life just a shadow of peace,

... of nothing?

405. Religion and the "afterlife"-- Beware any "truth" so closely guarded that it remains unknown, hidden until it is too late. You may hold the envelope in "faith," but you may not open it until such time as the letter can no longer be read. Could it be any more obvious?! They have *no idea!*

406. Those who honor the dead to deify them in "tradition," curse themselves and the dead in one word. We surpass that which we

honor, or place the living in hell with the dead and so enshrine their limits as our own, in this black prayer we call praise.

407. When we praise the honored dead beyond their deeds, we lie in their place.

408. To remember them plainly we curse the honored dead, and profane ourselves in a guilty truth, the scent of a beautiful lie disinterred.

409. The one who I need most, hurts most deeply to have abandoned me. We praise the dead as we resent them for having left us naked before ourselves.

410. Restraint is the suffocation of truth. The dead do not become perfect, only hidden, unremembered. So do the dead become beautiful in memory.

411. Of the worst and the best of our relatives: We have to admit that in the end, they love us.

412. Father and Sun

In his youth a Father loves his son so long as He is still above him. "Nothing shall be brighter than me, even the sun!" So proclaims the young Father to his hidden heart. In old age what threatened now

affirms and continues, the son is self and so the Father wonders in selfish disappointment, "Why is there not more sun?"

413. To be honest one must be strong enough to bear as little of the weight of another's expectations as possible.

414. The psychologist is grateful to his illness. How else would he have overcome? How else would he have known?

415. I can use everything! Creation and knowledge are shameless.

416. It is not that I was mistaken, I simply did not understand the value of my errors.

417. I used to think differently but have forgiven myself. You see I am someone different now. Wisdom is a divorce.

418. Absence honors the voice of the dead. "It is the silence which holds my words aloft."

419. After we have wept might we find our bitter cup filled with the tears of joy, of having known?

420. When we mourn we celebrate in retrospect. Only happiness could find such sorrow.

421. We speak to the dead and say: "Only after you died did you hurt me enough to know..."

422. They are wise and drunk in New Orleans. Every funeral is a celebration. Only the drunk are wise enough to celebrate a memory, rather than weep for themselves. Wisdom is less selfish with an anesthetic.

423. The fact that there are only seven deadly sins is testament to the unimaginative nature of religious and moral thought.

424. When we argue to make our point, we should remember: When two fight, one may or may not win, but both will be bloody, and neither convinced.

425. Our masks are ugly because they invite one to guess at the truth. A bad guess is unflattering and a good one worse.

426. We wear masks to stand falsely before ourselves, and impress others who do the same.

427. Farce impresses farce, but it looks good doing it.

428. We may believe we conceal from others or manipulate, but the masks we wear serve an even uglier purpose: To defend us from the sight of ourselves.

429. Humane History: Tradition unites humanity. We are all traditional enemies.

430. The Jews and the Arabs, the Semitic races are enemies, and the rest of the world is anti-Semitic. We have too much in common to be friends.

431. The foolish make virtue of rewriting the past. They name it "Tradition."

432. A "Tradition" is a beautiful lie with ugly consequences.

433. Never pity "the sick"-- Fear them! For they may become "the healthy!"

The psychologist knows illness is a road, a puzzle solved to strength and knowledge. The creator knows illness is an engine to height and health. First one develops one's self by way of adversity and discovers the alchemy by which we must ascend or be drowned, so much is learned about economy of soul, where to spend one's energies to best effect, what value is had of heating our lead with our straw, and then of what dread cost is the resultant gold? Then, knowing that,

what would happen if we became healthy, *and* knowing? What is not possible? Are you sure? How much height, how much excess in strength and broadness of soul might be afforded one who has learned to rise, to thrive and create in sickness, were he to harness the bounty and full volume of an unbounded health? Has a more beautiful, dangerous or noble question ever been asked?

434. Intellectual integrity as religion: Let us create a compassionless God and call it: "The Truth"-- Finally, a lie in which I can believe!

435. Intellectual integrity looks carefully and only believes its best guess after it's checked twice. We can never know the world directly, but our suppositions can be repeatably demonstrated so... I can not be sure I know, but I am sure I believe I know. "The Truth"-- Finally, a lie in which I can believe!

436. The subterranean genius: Throughout history a few souls of a rare subterranean order have seen too far into themselves, and so *through* the rest of us without having the good sense to be ashamed. Seeing our embarrassment they even spoke *more clearly!* Could anything be more beautiful?

437. Opinions make scents-- Opinions are like the breath of a leper. They are true in so much as they have the same odor as the one who possesses them.

438. When someone is too quick to consider someone else's view, they may be loathe to understand their own.

439. On mortality: Hope is honest and lazy. "I mean nothing. I would kill myself but what would it change? Why bother?"

440. A wound is a furrow in our soul, a steep cut, a forbidding gash. Depth comes when we look into the crevasse. Knowledge sees. Only wisdom understands that we may invert the wound. Wisdom makes height of our depth.

441. When we live well we become ourselves.

442. Only the unemployed are free to work.

443. "It is freedom with boundaries, forgetting without losing, overflowing which never spills, ease of the impossible." To the uninitiated, excellence appears as paradox.

444. Wholeness appears as multiplicity to the undeveloped.

445. When we do not believe in ourselves, weakness postures as virtue and proclaims itself, "reasonable."

446. Let us not forget: Consciousness comes first, personality next then philosophy. Philosophy is an emergent aspect of personality. Philosophy is a rationalization.

447. Beauty is an ugly child.

448. The importance of knowing yourself is in the resultant ability to recognize your mistakes.

449. We give the highest compliment in this sweet vengeful fruit we have graciously prepared--a question to your answer. In the auspices of acceptance or criticism, in its depth, we offer praise: we have considered it, fathomed it, consumed it. We have heard you.

450. a. Today poetry is sentenced to feign silence. An invisible sin.

b. Now that poetry is a sin, perhaps it will again become enticing?

c. Today's reader is as likely to skip poetry as to read it. Beauty may no longer enter through the front door.

d. Once poetry infuses prose we wonder, "Where is it, where did it go?" The answer: Everywhere!

e. As is typical of "Sin," in her banishment, she has conquered us.

451. Today, no one will do anything without consulting an "expert." Such experts are best at one thing, convincing other people they need experts. They know that first you must believe that *you* are no good, so you will stop trying, like an advertiser for deodorant who wants you to skip the shower so you will admit you stink! Never trust an expert, become expert instead.

452. The horse's head? You can lead a horse to knowledge, but you can't change which end the brains are in.

453. The dead do not laugh but we need not pity them, for they know it not.

454. It is the indefensible which lies best defended.

455. We mourn our dead shadow and so change night to morning.

456. Excellence can be a symptom, a leaf in Autumn--a beautiful decadence. Excellence comes once we have gone on too long.

457. Genius knows when work is part of play, it can go on forever.

458. The best writers are haunted by their own ghost. A good writer is entirely self-possessed.

459. Poetry without purpose is a crime against the reader's good intentions, a lie before their investment, a jilting, a false invitation. If you use poetry never insult the bride with false proposal! If you use poetry you had better mean it.

460. Poetry is to be avoided at all costs and under all circumstances, particularly if you are using it.

461. "You will get used to it," means: It will never go away.

462. Today poetry is sentenced to sentences.

463. Honest men have long admitted they know they do not know. Even more, may we admit what we want to know? I know what is *on* my mind, but may loathe to see what is *in* it.

464. A "collector's item" is something of dubious worth, which can be hoarded. The seller understands, it is the collector who is actually the item of value.

465. A treasure is something so valuable that once you possess it, it owns you.

466. The rich who can not squander their riches are poorer for being possessed by them.

467. "Let's be friends." Do you still think compromise is not defeat?

468. Standards

1. One who doubts themselves is want to form an opinion, so their opinion may be trusted most. One who doubts is surest of their opinions.

2. One who is want to praise, praises best.

3. One who has standards doubts themselves, and so may be trusted.

4. Whenever we surpass our honest doubt, we may trust ourselves.

Only the diligent may relax without lying.

5. Once we have met our own standard we find work is part of play, and wonder: was it always so?

6. Who do we cheat to know, who do we cheat to be sure, who do our standards betray... Happiness?

7. Must we be unhappy to be happy with ourselves? It is she who is fairest, but we all pay as a bride to Excellence before the alter of Happiness. Only once we have achieved Excellence, may we be Happy with it. We may be wed, but first...the dowry.

8. Now the challenge: Surrender unto confidence. Happiness believes!

9. In the end Happiness believes because she has standards.

469. In doubt we find reason to believe in ourselves--now we must remember how.

470. A joke reveals contradiction as intention.

471. Those who know too much have become holy, but are no longer sacred. Welling up from every broken corner which no longer holds, all precious things, bitter, sweet and vile, all that eternity makes bashful, find light and song, born out from this vessel which can not contain, and though but broken, will not break.

472. Darwin knew mutation was God.

The watchmaker of life's design, perhaps a God holds the screwdriver? But did you know His name is Chaos?

473. The dead are blessed into memory, safe from our love and the sorrow of our tears, which fall into our guilty cup. Now full once the hour is past, it is we who are consoled to care, comforted in suffering which too late loves aloud, and so believes.

474. Do the living mourn the dead, or forgive the living? Now that you are lost I know I loved you, and may forgive myself for my silence. Will the dead forgive us to hear our cries? Will we?

475. Praise can solidify, seduce the hearer to interest in what should be discarded. Praise is unbecoming.

476. He who imagines they exist without consciousness, is an imaginary error--but that does not make him right.

477. The Grateful Dead

We for whom it is too late. We for whom all bells are alive in their sweet tolling, proclaim: Ever deeper, never better.

478. A bad marriage shuffles around the ancient dust of a sad tomb, while still playing house.

479. Anxious is he who must forget that which they already know.

480. It is sad when love long fled abandons its charge to an imitation. We honor and obey that which we can no longer love and cherish.

481. I remember what I loved about you--so speaks the mask of love named honor. I remember the sound of my happiness, and will pretend. So speaks the mask of our empty joy, and the face of tragedy.

482. a. Heavy with snow, a bower bends to earth and sheds its crown.
So is the past born to earth, before we may taste the day.

b. Heavy with snow, a bower bends to earth and sheds its crown.
Before we find daylight, we must bend before the weight upon our
days.

483. Error is strength. I know what I was, and what I will not be.

484. One who refuses the past is in league with the Devil, but remains
convinced He does not exist.

485. Contradiction may imply falsehood, or the profound, should both
be true.

486. A paradox is formed when the Truth is embarrassed to see itself.
When contradiction is proved true She blushes as if caught asleep on
the job.

487. I would be a fool to care what you thought, rather, I doubt if you
have any.

488. He whose swollen heart is bruised to know the face of beauty, is
himself a poem, one of wisdom's tears.

489. Time withers and tramples all beautiful worlds, and so loves them.

490. The impossible defies itself to exist. So does time know beauty. Memory alone, can but contain its shadow.

491. We know the day and then must remember what was most alive, that which can never come again. Memory holds what we can not.

492. Time crushes the beautiful so we might wonder if it were ever there, and hunger for its shadow.

493. I grasp at the day and miss it, to consign its broken image to memory. I surrender to the day and become beautiful in forgetting the fact.

494. Once spent, the past returns a moment to us. This is its present.

495. Confidence becomes us when it forgets itself.

496. When the mind is still...we create the world. Is it the world which lives?

Our quiet hears and creates all things. In a silent room, light and dust become alive for us, a symphony rises from the sand, as if the day

stirred out from a sealed tomb, we fill the air with the scent of rain and feel our storm's silent promise. Only in silence can we know the heart of light, the splinter of hope within our sadness.

497. People who are wrong make the best followers. Perhaps now their luck will improve?

498. Stupid people run the world. The rest of us run away to build our own.

499. Occasionally the neurotic fears themselves, and so may be trusted most. The nervous surgeon checks twice.

500. The creative mind finds new assumptions. The neurotic mind doesn't believe its own.

501. A creative person and a neurotic do not believe easily. Both doubt what is known, but the creative person doubts to *ascend*, he enjoys the process and does not resist it, he is happy for a new look, a new possibility. Angst travels in circles.

502. Both the stupid and the quiet have their virtues, never more so than when they are together.

503. Honesty is the opposite of charm, and so works a similar magic-- It disarms the listener to present something familiar, but unacknowledged.

504. We are disarmed to see a mask we can not resist, or one who is naked and unmasked. Charm shames us to pretend, as honesty shames us to empathy.

505. People who lie are most disappointed to receive a truth in return. Who could believe such a thing?

506. Sometimes a liar is safe because their stories are interesting but untrue. The truth is either dull or dangerous.

507. The straw man becomes his mask and is beautiful. Only the beautiful may be naked before themselves.

508. The sea is pliant and the rock is hard, but the rock will see.

509. Only by traveling every valley, might we have breath enough to sustain the heights.

510. Sometimes only the rude and the silent can afford the truth. Only the rude may be trusted.

511. What may most profit another to hear is often the truth we regret most once it is spoken. True friendship wounds itself.

512. The Complainer

Hope looks upon you and speaks: Perhaps one day you will no longer be happy to ceaselessly prepare your sweet misery, and no longer exhaust yourself to lie upon your comfortable bed of sighs.

513. One should appreciate one's critics. A certain level of importance is required before one rates the privilege of being misunderstood.

514. Our body may be in the present but our mind knows, the present lies after the past.

515. a. It is most difficult to love those we know best, particularly ourselves. That which does not grow is consumed in the act of appreciation, and soon becomes uninteresting.

b. When someone can be counted on to do everything but change, we find we are grateful for that which we can no longer appreciate.

516. When writing appears cryptic or obscure it offers the promise of what is hidden. Unfortunately, the undisclosed fact is often that the writer has nothing to say, or at least doesn't know what it is.

517. Honesty's hands are red with the blood of those lies which love us most.

518. The poet who mistakes the personal for the profound is a puzzle with a disappointing answer. That which is profound may be frightening, joyous or new, but it is never opaque.

519. The profound is the result when we learn what was thought to be unknowable, or when we know the familiar differently. The profound which is concealed in mist is still unfound, a farce which becomes itself only when clearly understood.

520. A rumor is a falsehood which catches its own tail, and believes itself real.

521. Poetry hints of mystery, and invites us to unwind, we know not what. Good poetry is unafraid and makes the hidden living and clear, too close and alive *not* to know. Good poetry is not mysterious, rather, it can not be denied and hence is often unrecognized as being poetry. Today no higher compliment is possible.

522. To make the subtle available and plain, to unfold the mystery in quiet air so we may hear it whisper: If we steep poetry in purpose we may extract from her, this gentle promise. May she remain hidden, and her beauty free from the judgment born of her name.

523. Today, when poetry becomes the lurid face of rant it is heard most easily, because it is the least beautiful. Poetry has stained beauty.

524. The luckiest poet is a crystal goblet, a chalice which cracks under the weight of his feeling, but does not shatter. Those beneath it may taste its nectar and behold its beauty, knowing it will soon be drained of all but dust and light.

525. A true compliment becomes suspect the moment it is returned.

526. He who waits for an earthquake is shaken by Time. He who makes an earthquake shakes Time. Look at Her tremble! How funny! Creators are evil people. The evil have the most fun.

527. Family resemblance... Anger has the ugliest children.

528. Relics: Poor people know religion-- When something is holy it can not be replaced.

529. Slave and Master

Those who live in luxury are most indebted to work. We who live easily may choose our master. The brave choose themselves.

530. Only the restless need never fear to pause. To them rest is an act of discipline-- As to the rest...

531. Those who live for pleasure hide from their misery. Joy lies in eluding one's self.

It is the headache which argues loudest for another round.

To hear your misery is to reveal the hiding place of life's pleasure. How you have bludgeoned her!

532. The Sea fills itself from its deepest hidden places, stretching its skin, and offering its swollen breast to the Moon, who so over-full with golden tears of longing, weeps, and pours her light onto the needful waters. Desire remains potent when it covets, but can not have. The first kiss foretells the death of romance.

533. We should be grateful to our critics. "I am flattered you have taken the time to slander me."

534. "If you have taught me well today, I will teach myself tomorrow, and that will teach you!" Every teacher wants a proud student.

535. When someone wants you to lend them money, they want to exchange your friendship for something more valuable. Any sensible man knows the greater the kindness, the less the incentive to repay it in kind.

536. Practicality has no place in art or excellence.

537. Forfeit Victory

Why bother? The one thing more anxious than the chance we won't succeed, is the certainty that we have failed.

538. A strong man boasts: "I have risked and lost." A weak man boasts: "I had sense not to try."

539. Our parents give us much, and often cost us more.

540. A wise man's followers travel in his wake. After mourning at his wake, they might awake to a morning of their own.

541. People preserve themselves through a highly developed reflex toward stupidity.

542. When we commit an error we quickly seek to justify it with a second. "I presume the innocence of all my mistakes by repeating them."

543. Error is born in innocence and nurtured in ignorance.

544. Pride is a monster most covetous of its errors.

545. One errs the most being right.

546. A firm opinion is the foundation of error.

547. Conviction is the basis of opinion, knowledge is the basis of fact.
The fact is opinions have no basis other than our certainty in them.

548. Why bother? I never argue when you say what I know is false.
A look is enough to disagree. I only argue when I fear you are right.

549. The ugliest fault is being too weak to have any.

550. Rich men's sons and vultures know, "It is through carrion that we carry on."

551. Distance and drowning-- Listening can make another's misery intelligible, accessible and seductive. It is only safe to listen if we do not hear.

552. When life has been unjust to us, we are satisfied to inflict the same mistake on another and call it a "lesson." The small shrink you to their size and call it wisdom.

553. Will you respect me in the "mourning?" The young have to respect the old if they want their money. The old only discover if they are respected after the young have been paid.

554. A vulture circles prey.

A halo above an angel?

555. If I believed me I would be as stupid as you. This is the compliment every con man gives himself. He knows better, and finds you laughable. Even his jokes are a self-pity.

556. Propaganda and advertising know repetition is a form of truth. What is laughable today is tomorrow's profit. Every profit knows there is truth in advertising.

557. It is possible to find an example of every diverse outcome amongst the multiplicity of human expression in modern times. Is there a profit who would not be proven right, just to be published?

558. The only thing more vulgar than morality is immorality. Is there a-moral here?

559. When meaning and style conjoin, clarity is born.

560. When someone's advice benefits us we appreciate and understand them: "I know what you mean." Has praise ever spoken more clearly?

561. The surest way to prove to our parents what a bad job they did, is to be unhappy.

562. To have critics is to be imagined important enough to insult.

563. Redemption comes of error. The wisdom of a misspent youth: It is good that evil knows.

564. Confession of a creative writer: Misspelling is a creative act. I create when I misspell, and misspell when I create. I am too ignorant to be unoriginal.

565. Original Thief

I write before I read what others have said. It is only later I learn who I have stolen from.

566. I am the kindest to you when I misunderstand you.

567. Beauty and pain are intertwined as lovers. At its most exquisite life is painfully beautiful. Likewise loss shows us in pain, how beautiful our memory has become.

568. Only the nauseating arrogance of the good could make "evil" attractive.

569. Hearing is doing-- I refute your advice: I did not follow it, and am no better off.

570. The good are too sure of themselves. Always brooding, tired and sure that their duty is ours. The evil are strong and gleeful enough to prevail, so let the good be evil! Evil does not judge but tastes to see what is good instead. Only evil knows it is good. Only good thinks knowledge is evil.

571. Too late-- By the time the meek inherit the earth, only the meek will want it.

572. The performer-- Sometimes we help people just to hear the sound of applause. We call this "gratitude."

573. A question of height-- Sometimes "I want to help you" means: "I want to prove I can help you."

574. One who finds himself unentertaining is annoyed by personality when he encounters it in others.

575. Someone who is self-secure finds the company of those whose strengths he lacks to be as a sparkling champagne. Someone who is insecure finds the company of those whose strengths he lacks to leave him flat as a stale drink.

576. Anyone can learn all the facts, but few know what to do with them. Only wisdom understands knowledge.

577. One who hides in their misery is safe. "Perhaps if I keep it this bad, it won't get any worse." The most miserable thing is a surprise.

578. Many of the virtuous scorn "sin" because they fear they see happiness.

579. The only one who lives in sin is he who is unhappy with his pleasure.

580. Joy affirms our choices.

581. Gloom denies our virtues.

582. To endure your burden is to fear what you would make of your life without it.

583. A Compass-- Anything is possible, innocence and laughter belong to what is desirable.

584. The Curious Virtue of Sin

- a. Only those who have tried can distinguish sin from propaganda.
- b. Only a name like "sin" could make something so repellent seem worthy of curiosity.
- c. To tell me what not to do is to dare me to enjoy it.
- d. The greatest sin a young man can perpetrate against his future is not to indulge his curiosity. To be wrong is to know, only ignorance is curious.
- e. A young man's mistakes are inoculations for his future.
- f. Woe comes to any man, young or old who mistakes his mistakes for himself. Only pride struts in error, fear in virtuous robes. The greatest hope youth offers is that it ends.
- g. Youth is the death of innocence by experiment. In the resultant knowledge may we learn to choose our happiness wisely, and find innocence reclaimed, now part of age, where time and knowledge have built youth a lasting home.

585. The sure and the unsure flourish equally when opinion is "for" or "against." One believes they know and the other wants to be told. The wise know that they do not know something. To wonder what, is to set foot in dangerous places, places without opinions. It is in the

dangerous places that we find anything terrible, strange or beautiful enough to be truly new.

586. Every generation thinks everything is "going to hell." Enough! At last we have arrived! Now, perhaps things can get better.

587. The most hopeful thing about nuclear apocalypse is that it would put an end to politics.

588. Sometimes when someone gives you a compliment it is a lesson. The tutor wants payment. Listen and you will know the exact flattery to return. A true compliment never needs a reply.

589. A thoroughly misspent youth is best.

The most dangerous sin is the one you don't know or understand. "What have I missed?" is a terrible question once it's too late. Better to make every mistake once so you know better. The only sin which is still attractive is the one about which you have to guess.

590. Sometimes, "I want your opinion" means, "I am flattered you will talk to me." Other times one may seek your opinion only as a pretense to offer an opinion of their own, or, "I talk to you to flatter myself."

591. Like father like son-- I taught him everything I know: "If my limits are good enough for me, shouldn't they be your strengths too?"

592. Morality has spoiled everything. Now that so much is forbidden, so many strange things have become attractive! Morality has spoiled the innocence of play. Now guilt has become part of fun. Nothing creates the immoral with greater certainty than morality.

593. Growth is ageless. I don't care how tall I am. I care only to be taller than I was yesterday.

594. Beauty Death and Growth

Some things are most beautiful when they die. The crimson leaves of fall offer themselves up as a willing sacrifice to life, at last deserving of its full color before surrendering to an inevitable wind. What could be more quiet, still and hopeful, than a barren branch crowned in snow, a fresh promise? Only spring can answer such a question.

595. Poetry should make language beautiful, language should not degenerate into poetry.

596. Clear Style

Style by itself is empty but gives the impression of substance. Substance is real but often leaves no impression. Substance impresses when it is clarified with style.

597. The bravest man is he who is most afraid, but remains.

598. Someone who is always sad may have had happiness toxified for them. Joy has become fearful, a sure way to sickness, shame and rejection. They have survived by reversing their tides. The current of their happiness is now available to them only when they are sad.

599. When we say, "I love you" sometimes we mean, "I am enamored of you" and sometimes, "I feel too guilty to say otherwise."

600. Fate has bequeathed something for us all, it is only the fatalist who insults his life by waiting for the worst. A sentence reveals its meaning before the period.

601. Smile! It is customary never to stand before a camera without cover of a courteous lie.

602. An honest admission: I do not feel that *you* are in error, I am wounded because you will not accept *mine*.

603. He who dares too much: How fearless one becomes when they hate themselves! Sometimes the brave wish only to be revealed as the stupid.

604. The cost of shame is high. Generosity shames best.

605. Nothing wounds someone who hates themselves more than being appreciated.

606. A compliment insults when the one receiving it knows better.

607. Once a case is closed, it often becomes a soap box.

608. The best way to respond to a compliment is to lie, and say that you don't believe it.

609. Nothing is as insufferable as a closed mind and an open bottle.

610. A happy drunk drinks to forget his troubles.

A sad drunk drinks to remember his troubles.

A mean drunk drinks to become his troubles.

611. Objective perfection

If I claimed my opinions to be subjective I would be lying. I am simply wrong sometimes. Perhaps that is your fault?!

612. Objective perfection

I am too confident to find anything subjective about my opinion.
I am sure if sometimes mistaken. Even my errors are perfect!

613. To speak clearly is to risk being proven wrong.

614. To speak clearly is to risk being understood.

615. The philosopher who looks twice is never in contradiction. Each truth is a single spiral fissure, a thin crack of light in a black circumference. Many such strands of silver web are needed if we are to light the sky.

616. Beware of all things claiming to be a "lifestyle." Style only impersonates life.

617. Some things judge us. Laughter and innocence come to all those who live well.

618. The only thing more flattering than being used is being needed: the highest most reliable parasitism.

619. Love breathes, need suffocates.

620. I am not ashamed of what I am, I am ashamed of what you think I am.

621. How often do we accept the unacceptable to be accepted?

622. The relationship with the best chance of longevity begins with low expectations. The hardest thing to overcome is an ideal.

623. Like a wax statue in the sun, our ideals become misshapen when they come into contact with reality.

624. We pay someone a dangerous compliment when we listen to them. Listening is an act of malice, as it soon expects too much of the speaker. To listen to someone is to dare them to be interesting.

625. The storyteller likes to be listened to because he is not heard. He takes the compliments due his story.

626. The easiest way to make an ass of someone is to listen to them.

627. Its own reward

There are no rewards in life outside of doing well enough to know that you deserve them.

There are no rewards in life outside of being well enough to know that you may enjoy them.

There are no rewards in life outside of well-being enough to know that you are them.

628. A bad relationship turns one into a stupid dog--too stupid to leave once its been kicked.

629. Laughter re-christens error. We are never funnier than when we are wrong, and never wiser than when we get the joke.

630. Rather than justify a past mistake by repeating it in the future, let us cleanse the future by not mistaking it for the past.

631. On addiction and stability: A "vice" may be appealing because it holds one together.

632. Shame and Sun

A good relationship is a sunny invitation filled with laughter and challenge. Happiness loves daylight. A bad relationship is hidden, an admission one makes by night--something one "gives into."

633. As life unfolds it answers many questions. It seems unimportant that they are seldom the ones we have asked.

634. The vain philosopher is just lonely. He hides in the posture of vanity and hopes his reflection will keep him company.

635. On notoriety and causality-- The fleeting glory of appreciation, praise and critical acceptance is of equal or lesser value than the lasting fame which comes of shame, critical humiliation and scandal. Whether the odor is good or bad, fame remains long after the stink which caused it has vanished.

636. The priest sees everything as an expression of divine will, and the cynic sees everything as an expression of what is base in man. One espouses false hope and the other hopes to make false. Although their suppositions are different, the priest and the cynic worship the same god: Purpose.

637. When Opposites Dance:

To understand your feelings is to become an oxymoron--
a synchronous contradiction.

638. How much more to Man would there be if he were strong enough to hold more of the weight of his hope? Man is limited by the

shallow hope he is able to realize. May he grow strong enough to hope for more.

639. To see your place in the universe is to see that you are nothing. To believe in yourself is to know that nothing is important.

640. The General Problem: Insight doesn't care for generalizations. It is in seeing the specific at a distance that the general is understood. Each specific needs its own generalization.

641. It is a shame that we need to be redeemed. Let us be unashamed instead.

642. He who sees his error may stop indulging in it, and see never to repeat it. Error has redeemed us twice and no one else was required!

643. Once we see why we are the way we are we can stop judging ourselves, and begin to appreciate ourselves instead. Love your errors as you change them. Who else would have shown you?

644. A shadow was the first compass.

A little spit may be required to hold our shadow down as we walk away from it, but then we should soon turn around and admit we love it, know that it was just misunderstood and let it come along and be welcome, after all, it is our guide.

645. The under-shadow is over us but...what is under shadow today, may become the world.

- a. The world lies in shadow.
- b. Joy has light feet. Happiness knows, he who does not live in shadow is light.
- c. It is my shadow which is earthbound.
- d. Our shadow lies upon the earth.
- e. If we love our shadow will it become light?
- f. He who has no shadow is light.
- g. Our shadow is close to the earth, our hope is close to the unknown.
- h. The wise understand: What I do not use becomes me.
- i. When we stop judging ourselves we can enjoy everything, even the things we do not become. Now that I love every possibility, what shadow does not become light?
- j. Out of the shadows-- When we stop hating what of ourselves we have not become, we are free to become the world. A free spirit beautifies the universe to know himself.
- k. What of me I do not use I pour into the world, and so love most of all.

646. The true measure of a man is in his ability to realize the most distant of his hopes are near enough. To try, is to bring the impossible closer, then maybe we will be near enough to begin.

