

Poetry Series

kendall thomas
- poems -

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Many divert themselves with philosophies and religions to soften the stark reality of existence, but, I think, a walk through any large cemetery will impress upon the intellect the futility of life, despite the stone longings for immortality. In the end, we are only the sum of our memories, and memory is always about something that no longer exist.

A Butterfly

A butterfly was trapped
on the inside of my window.
It flittered about
not finding anyway out.
It couldn't comprehend glass.
I wanted to help it find freedom,
but I knew I would only
hasten its death
by crushing its delicate wings.
For us there may be no help
or perhaps there is something delicate
that would be crushed.
No window imprisons us,
but what restricts
perhaps is what we believe
what we cannot comprehend
that would set us free.

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A Cloud

I dreamed I was a cloud last night.
Saw toy soldiers off to war,
children kicking sand castles.

I soared above the four-cornered world
and saw multitudes of starving poor,
and wondered why god
did nothing to ease their pain.

But perhaps this thing, that some call god,
is but a flame that bursts
upon the scene, to flicker
and then to die -
recurring endlessly, it seems,
no more omnipotent than you or I.

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A Funeral

How you summed up love
in hugs and smiles
and morning glories in your eyes,
sweet child.

Now how silent you lie on God's dark anvil,
pale as a drop of white candle wax,
a pearl goodbye.

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A Kitten

A
kitten
sleeps
in
the
middle
of
the
road.

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A Lament

Soft the music of the lute played by a tongue less wonder.
A lament heard from afar strummed on spider webs for our
brief descent. The ageless trees seem posed to catch the
returning footfalls of some vanished love. Yet, like
fleeting melodies that drift upon the wind, that which once
is gone never comes again. Janus like, you strive in vain
to hold the reigns of time. Plaything of the gods. Poor
puppet, puppet. You clench your fist around the wind, but
the wind moves on. Stare into some ancient mirror. How
many have? How many gone? Once, full breathing life, they
cast their shadows on the ground, laughing with their
friends as this wheel turned round. Where are they now?

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A Roomful Of Laughter

there's a roomful of laughter
and a roomful of tears
and the women wear pearls
dripping from their ears

the men drive sleek daggers
through the heart of the night
and yesterday's memories
are locked up tight

there are children singing
full of despair
in a room filled with laughter
no one cares

the women are pretty
they slither like snakes
through a roomful of glass
they have no time to waste

the men smoke cigars
and talk of the war
money and profit
and the bright women who whore

small birds shake rain drops
from the limb of a tree
and boys and girls
sell themselves for a fee

in a roomful of laughter
nothing is free

yesterday's dreams
are trapped in a drum
that a clown beats
with the backs of his thumbs-
a terrible beat that
wakes up the sun

in a roomful of laughter
razors cut lines through the snow
silver lives are revealed
in mirrors rimmed with gold

beauty is truth
but truth is a lie
and no one cares
who lives or who dies

somewhere there is purpose
somewhere there is design
but madness is the reason
and hope a waste of time

delusion comes unbidden
and fills the cup of woe
with foolish fabled myths
we come and with sweetest
oblivion go

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A Scene

on the front lawn
soft spring come and gone
and summer sun
reveals its burning face

beyond farmers mow the blown waves
of green grain
beneath skeins of opal clouds
where cattle graze

and up and down the cherry tree
children play while
sunk in layers of fat
mother lies on a blanket
pudgy promise between her thighs

a baby drools at her feet
and bawls at the wind
and the wind throws back
its answer
and is gone

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A Spider And A Man

A spider strung his net
above my kitchen sink
that struck my head
whenever I took a drink.

I gently tapped the net
to tell him this would not do.
When I came back
the net had withdrew.

Strange that a man and a spider
can get along but men cannot.

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A Spider's Web

The soldier burrowed upon his back.
Above the spider waited in the rack.

Over enemies concealed among the trees,
clouds threaded among the leaves
leaving shimmering raindrops of diamonded memories.
Cautious now the soldier peered ahead.
One wrong move and then you're dead.
Something trembled, then stopped in dread;
harpy fingers played upon the silent threads.

Indifferent eyes watched from a branch that swayed.
If he had wings he too could fly away.

If only he could lie here in eternal bliss
he would gladly take the loss of honor's empty kiss,
but he must rise and journey on
though all about comrades lie cold and still and long.

The spider now has wrapped its meal
and trips back to a border fairly well concealed.

He thought had he not been born there would be no pain,
then a bullet cut the cord that bound his brain.

What once was loved and loving - son, friend or lover,
became only a lump again of cast off clay.

He fell somewhere over there
beneath the trees
beneath a spider's web bejeweled with raindrops
dripping from the leaves.

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A Stone

Once upon a time
A stone was flung across a universe
By a mindless hand

Past rainbow-colored stars
Through a cold and infinite span

Caught on the other side
Flung back the stone
Another mindless hand

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After Reading The Fathomless Ashbery, I Wrote

Diablo's hot Studebaker
roared down the road.
Birds rankled in the
Peachtree.

Roared.
Niagara Falls.
Marilyn Monroe flees
the wetness between
her thighs.

Diablo left no tracks
on his way to the stars.
There was no whiskey
left for dreams.

Weeds bloomed
beneath the mailbox.
Flies buzzed around the oak
where Diablo died
in a cloud of smoke.

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All Things Beautiful

all things beautiful
must someday die
said the wind
with a sigh

but i never heard
the fallen leaves reply
why all things beautiful
must someday die

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An American Prayer

I'm gonna kill, rape and plunder
cause I do what I'm told to do.
My government would never lie,
so I do what I'm told to do.

There are little, brown people
who want to hurt me and you;
so I kill, rape and plunder
and do what I'm told to do.

Well, I kill, rape and plunder
so the rich get what they're due.
I shut my ears to the screams
of the children that I've slew.

Well, they're just godless heathens
who don't believe in good like me and you;
It's alright to kill'em
before they kill me and you.

They hate us for our freedoms-
not because we bomb them night and day
or starve them into submission-
it's our Christian duty that we slay.

And so I kill, rape and plunder
and do what I'm told to do
cause I'm a loyal American
and I do what God tells me to.

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Andy

Your grave is on a hillside
overlooking a residential area
in Pittsburg.

If you could sit here, as I,
with your back against cold stone,
you could watch the little people
come and go.

Wouldn't that be a hellish way
to spend eternity after the high life?

They put a rose in your hand,
shades over your eyes,
a platinum wig on your head
and a bottle of perfume beside you:
"Beautiful".

I wonder who will remember you or any of us
When the last ounce is gone?

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Angel Wings

The gentle
breeze
against your cheek:
angel wings
fanning some far away
hell.

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Apocalypse Of Memory

From the apocalypse of memory
You came to remind me
Of lines crossing battlefields
Of days when rain fell on muddy mounds
From terrible gray skies

I believe that
They doubt most who are about to die
Who hear the shells curse the dark
And strike their nails against the sky
Relieving hopelessness in a benefaction of fire

I saw a man die in such an instant
Who heard his gurgling cries
Could not believe in anything
Only the whistling of the senseless hurricane
That came and lifted us from hell
Our true domain

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Apocalyptica In Graffiti

Leroy paints mushroom clouds
On urine smelling walls
Melting fields of tarnished saints
Grown fat deceiving poor.

Munch's Scream to Guernica.
Leroy sniffs his can,
And sharks patrol a psychedelic land.

A hooker is mounted on her slab,
And jesus prays for more...
Endings in Disneyland.

Too late, my love, you turn these bitter pages,
The doomsday clock has struck.
Somewhere a universe turned us off
And ushered in the dark.

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At The Water's Edge

At the water's edge
a lovely shade of red
three leaves that bled
as autumn raised its head

And then came doubt
of all those conforming creeds
that men believed
and had instilled in me

That fairies flew above the trees
and elves drank of honeydew from off the leaves
in Fairyland Queen Mab they knew
lived within a rainbow too

Yet upon the water's edge
all that had been for me was dead
three leaves that bled
truth from mortal beauty led

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Ballad Of Bonnie And Clyde

Bonnie and Clyde
went out for a ride
with the Devil for a guide.

In a hot V-8 Ford
they took off with a roar
machine guns by their sides.

Bonnie was neat
and very petite
and Clyde was a handsome guy.

They robbed banks and stores,
and gas stations galore,
thumbing their noses at
a world they decried.

But the law was enraged
and made plans to engage
the infamous duo someday.

And on May twenty-third
they found a way
to put an end to Bonnie and Clyde.

It was as lovers they died
sitting side by side
in a bullet-riddled Ford.

And so then it came true as Bonnie well knew
that both of them surely would die,
for that's what she wrote,
expressing no hope, in the
Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde.

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Billy The Kid Rode Out

Billy the Kid rode out to pick May-bloomed flowers.
Riding a dapple-gray horse fleet as the wind,
he crossed the desert, one fresh-scented morning,
looking long for the sweetest flowers ever known
for the young girl he loved, pretty Paulita,
who lived at Sumner by the Pecos River.

In the house of Pete Maxwell by the river,
Billy brought her a bright bouquet of sweet flowers
for the fairest girl in Sumner, Paulita.
When he rode in on his swift steed like the wind,
she cried, 'They're the sweetest flowers ever known.'
And young Billy stayed through the night till morning.

But brother Pete came home early that morning
and saw Billy's dapple-gray by the river;
he cursed himself harshly for not having known,
and when he smelled the lush bouquet of sweet flowers,
whose scent came wafting through the hall on the wind,
he planned an end for Billy and Paulita.

Billy rode off waving bye to Paulita,
promising to return to her some morning,
and he spurred his swift gray and rode like the wind
from where Fort Sumner goes down to the river.
And Billy rode through a desert of bright flowers,
the names of so many to most were unknown.

But Billy the Kid he soon came to be known,
and his sweetheart was a girl named Paulita,
for whom he brought a sweet bouquet of bright flowers,
long years ago one fresh-scented May morning,
where Fort Sumner lies by the Pecos River,
where the May-bloomed flowers blow in an endless wind.

Over the campo santo blows this same wind.
The girl who was loved lies in her grave unknown,
where Fort Sumner lies by the Pecos River.
She was Billy's love, a girl named Paulita,

who was betrayed by Pete Maxwell that morning
when Billy brought her a bouquet of bright flowers.

Now the wind moans by the grave of Paulita,
who lies unknown after many a morning,
by the river where in May blooms the sweet flowers.

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Birds Scream In Attics

I walk down marble halls
that echo nothing genuine
Birds scream in attics
Women blacken their eyelids
with soot and dab their cheeks with blood
fixing men with sharp knives
Down empty corridors
blood-drenched eunuchs
find mirrored doors leading where
houses of glass, frosted temples
dedicated to doom
interiors streaked with black
stand abandoned in one of many forgotten infinities
Nothing ends, all remains
Each flyspeck a galaxy or a new dimension
Unfathomable glass serpents twine around silver trees
spinning gross tales of fruitless deeds
Empty bottles of physic
drunk in splendor
Wailing through the telescope
I hear birds in attics screaming
Touchstones, moonstones, tombstones
Dead soldiers rising marching backward from war
then Charlie Chaplin fast forward through time
No beginning, no middle, no end
Time concaved, convexed
The mirrored doors show us coming and going
Houses of glass with frosted panes
Mud puddles reflect dead men
with insect-breeding faces
Bullets flee from the barrel
of angry lilies like tack-headed hornets
nailing what to what end?
A blue cobalt sky
Baited traps of a pristine wood
The hyacinth dares not
one false step for its namesake
Lies and deceit leading on
The maelstrom swirls us back

We return to where we began
Birds screaming in attics
Nothing pure
Cymbals, chants, magical portends
Hopes built on illusion
Fear, the all-knowing driving force,
beckons us out of our caves
into new beginnings from old
It starts again
The spinning universe returns us
to the same old lies
The endless cycle
repeats, repeats, repeats
and birds scream in attics

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Blessed Now Are Those Who Were Then So Young

Memory brings back a land of long ago
Where silent phantoms walk I used to know.

They are free now of longings, hope, despair,
Those lovers gone that formed a joyful pair.
Blessed now those who were then so young, so fair,

Blessed for being forever unaware.
Though not I who remain to think and stare

At the rain trickling down my winter pane.
Slow drops, as we, return from whence they came,
Wear down the stone that bears our faded name.

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Bukowski's Black Cat

I woke up this morning
to a glimpse of delicate blue sky
through gray cover.

Wonderful!

A black bird darted through it.

I want to feel each day
the wonder of life,
but I fear something more
than Bukowski's black cat
creeps toward me.

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Censors

Why do they censor you?
What do they fear?

Could it be that censors hate freedom
and only want their views understood?

What should they see and hear
be kept from you?

Are you children?

If what they censor doesn't hurt them,
why should it hurt you?

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Censorship

I am against censorship
or the suppression of ideas or
people through force or coercion.
Let us see what is done
and hear what is said, good or bad.
Are we children who
must be sheltered from the truth and reality?
Under the cloak of 'benevolent' censorship
many horrendous crimes
are committed and lies perpetrated

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'Cuse Me

my guitar is silent
my fingers no longer work
those days have slipped away
all the hours that I played
'cuse me while I kiss the sky
love, Jimi

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Doorstep

I'm leaving my dreams on your doorstep.
You wanted them, and now you have them.

You didn't want me to have them;
You wanted to take them away from me;
So here - now you can have them.
I don't need them anymore.
You lose.
I'll go after something real from now on.

I leave you with handfuls of nothing:
Dreams and a son who no longer loves you.

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For Those Always Willing To Die

And so, here you are again
in another senseless war,
fodder for a beggar's fee.
Or did you actually think
it was for liberty?
Think again.
No matter what the hell you believe,
the rich are chuckling over tea.

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Garden Of Stone

In
the
garden
of
stone
lovers
stroll
hand
in
hand
where
sleepers
once
dreamed
long
ago.

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Give The Age What It Demands

Give them all the guns and bullets
they demand and all the terrible things
that are made by man.

Tell them to go out and kill at will
anything that moves or even still,
reality is so much better than any game.

The rich who deal the cards
will be the last to die.
Wide-eyed with wonder,
perched on mounds of bloody gold, they'll cry,
"You mean it's over?
But we were not the ones supposed to die."

A demented prophet writes upon a crumbling wall,
'The age demands shit and in the end
the age gets what it demands.'

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Gnomes Of The Megaliths

They have always been with us:
These who want to rule the world.

They create dynasties
through death and destruction.

They build mausoleums of precious stone
to hold the atoms of their once rapacious schemes,
enticing the ready worshippers
to their holy shrines.

I think
if you follow any well-worn path,
lined with flowers, you'll get there.

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Hills Of Beauty

O' hills of beauty
we have roamed
where are the people
we have known?

O' hills of beauty
we have roamed
where are the flowers
that have blown?

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I Once Believed

I once believed in destiny and things like that,
but death is the end of all endeavors
and always has the last laugh.
There will be no trumpets
calling us forth on some last day,
only the cold wrap of space around our loins.
They say matter can neither be created nor destroyed.
We will drift among the stars forever.

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In Memory Of Gone

You were a gypsy dancing on moonbeams,
smiling like a lantern
swung by a drunken sailor,
a ship storm-tossed and swaying,
a displaced stone from a creek bed.

I didn't hear what the minister said;
didn't seek reasons; there aren't any.
I lowered my hand to let the sky back in
and pieces flow from my head.
Better to remember you
in a warm café sipping a latte,
than gone.

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Learning To Ride A Bicycle Without God

You thought you couldn't ride your bicycle
Without him.

You were always looking behind
To make sure he was holding on.

One day you looked back,
And he wasn't there.

He was smiling,
Waving goodbye.

You were on your own
And doing fine.

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Longing

We cling to the tribe
longing for safety and comfort,
but these are illusions.

We are always alone and
death will find us anyway.

Like sad children we play the game,
shuffling through our brief lives as dreamers,
and if any memory, only that of
dry leaves scraping across a desolate plain.

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Loose Screws

When god created the universe
he held it together with screws.

Over time some of the screws
came loose

and that's why everything's
so screwed up.

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Magic

being born
is magic

dying
is magic, too

we are like
the bunny rabbit
that a magician
makes disappear
with the wave
of a hand

that
is
magic

over us
a phantom
waves its hand
and we disappear

that
is
magic

but there
is no
applause

only silence

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Memory Is Myth

This is where the weeds grow.
The middles slope in
where no path comes.

How tedious
this multitude of stone.

Pay no mind.
They were only cutouts
spinning their days
endlessly into nothing.

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Of Bodies Torn To Pieces

i regretfully write to tell you
that i have betrayed you

they wired electrodes to my genitals

(i use polite words-my censors will not
let me use the crude ones-
they do not wish to offend)

but i would not talk

they screamed at me and called me a terrorist
'confess' they said; 'confess you filthy _____
pervert'

but i remained silent and prayed to my god-
their same god

they whipped me with knotted cords
they made me perform fellatio on them
(i cannot use real words)

but still i would not talk-
how could i?
for i was not a terrorist

they pulled my fingernails out

naked i lay in my own vomit and excrement
on a cold concrete floor

but still i did not talk-

'i am a man not an animal'-i said

they urinated on me

(i do not write real words because of censors)

i am assured now that i was not
tortured (i must not use unreal words)
it was only enhanced interrogation

they brought in my mother and daughter
before me and raped them

i begged them-pleaded
i confessed to everything

still they ripped their breasts off
with red hot rippers
i watched them die
as blood colored the walls

i betrayed you-my friend
i am not a man...
anymore

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Pagan Thoughts

I shouted my name through the valley,
but there was no answer.
My name died on my lips.
No stone would consecrate it.

The grass parted no more.
Birds flew where I had been.
Little children vanquished my footprints.
Invisible to the world of matter,
I went after the wind
but made no rustle among the leaves.

Listen, heart of ebony,
what is it that truly matters?
Our reach is infinite,
yet contains nothing:
A few flowers dying in a vase;
A book or two;
Stills of a vanished life stuffed in a shoebox;
A tea ring left upon a polished table,
reflecting the blinks of sunlight
through slatted shades.

A door opens somewhere:
footfalls on a hardwood floor;
a radio - distant murmurs;
a cool sheet drawn upon a head;
the buzz of a fly that drifts away;
whisperings of this or that;
a closing door,
then nothing more.

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Password

Your voice is rustling leaves now
the marble angel praying over you
has cold hands
that give no recompense

So many stones
spread among the trees
like buttons on some vast
computer keyboard

If only I knew the password
could press some magic key
restore what's been deleted
could bring you back to me

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Poem For A Suicide

It was raining on that day I saw you
standing on the Santa Monica Pier
looking dejected leaning on the rail.

You stared down at the empty beach and blue
water as if searching for yourself in a mirror.
It was raining on that day I saw you.

But there was nothing that anyone could do
to save you on that cold morning; no seer
could have foreseen you leaning on the rail.

Like me, I knew, life's struggle had got to
you; there was, I guess, no will left to peer
through the mist of pain that day I saw you

into some brighter future; it's I who
regret not stopping to comfort you, dear,
looking dejected leaning on the rail.

In the newspaper I read about you,
how they found you floating under the pier.
I'll never forget that day I saw you
looking dejected leaning on the rail.

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Pompeii

Sculpted in death, models on display,
this mute cast shows how it was to die.
The terror they knew is engraved on their faces,
their prayers canceled in a pyroclastic flow.
They would never know the artistry of their deaths
as those of us who now gaze upon their last remains.

I pause to muse upon the beauty of one restored
once dreaming, perhaps, into a silver mirror,
had she known it would never die.
And here a slave, who lies beneath his burden,
freed at last under molding ash. And the rich, too,
still clutching with empty hands round vanished gold,
had their end which is the end of all, good and bad.

I ignore the tourist crowd and wander down
narrow streets to be alone.
The hot sun shears a hole in the blue sky.
I stop at the arena, a monument for the many who died
to the execrations of the mocking crowds.
I sit where they sat and try to imagine
what it was like to watch men die,
and know, these were my brothers and sisters from long ago.

I gaze into an empty, silent room,
dust motes floating down, and wonder
who would have been here to greet me
and fill the hollowness that is now.

There are no sounds these days of cart wheels
rolling over rutted stone;
nor ancient voices crying out, nor footfalls
padding down these empty ways
where I wander like a ghost.

Indeed, I am a ghost that time allowed,
vanishing, into the past with each step;
but, sadly, time cannot move back, only forward,
always inching toward some unknown end

that draws me with a longing to know
what was and what is to be.

I climb stone steps back into modern Pompeii.
Its traffic grinding by, raucous voices here and there.
A loss lies within me that cannot trip away.

In the distance Vesuvius silently waits,
pressed against the immortal sky, as if to say,
long after you have gone, brief ghost,
who haunts these ancient ways, life
nature will give and take without design...
a book well read many times.

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Puzzle Pieces

Twisted branches
make puzzle pieces of a grey sky
that bleakly hides
a universe from me.

At night
So far away
the stars tell all,
that there is nothing more,
so beautifully.

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Requiem For A Porn Star

While you have been dead these many years,
I have heard pagan calls
desiring me to lift your pale body from the sea,

Now with garlanded throat of seaweed,
lie bones that once held flesh of a rare beauty
who, unmindful, cast away life's dream.

Naked in the arms of many lovers,
the camera caught your every move.
On scrolls of celluloid imprinted all your phantasmal years.
So that now, and forever,
you must raise your hips,
to meet that quickening thrust
of some Lothario's pagan lust
and form your mouth into that same eternal O,
eyes wide with some unseen wonder,
as you take all of it... and now but bones.

You had limos and stayed
in a house of glass upon a hill,
and for all the world gave, it seemed,
but a pretty face for it.
Closets full of shining clothes....
Now what's left of you must wear a mermaid's robe.

And yet the eternal illusion of beauty lives,
still draws a finger poised upon a photograph
to trace glossy lips of paper under glass.

You had life's dream...
And yet you slipped into the sea.
What were you seeking there?
Why leave your gilded throne?
The acclaim?
The worship of your many thanes?
What was it beckoned on that glittering sea?
Some siren song, that drew you lost in reverie?
One wonders... how easily you cast it all aside;

with one graceful step, lost forever in a swirl of brine.

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Rimbaud's Promise

he took the kiss
amid the green leaves
stained with gold
stained his lips with it
then with choking laughter
threw back the divine brew
fauns had brought

it was not good enough
it did not satisfy the promise
and so he threw it back
and ate crap
and spewed it forth
until he died

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Rocks In The Sky

I look into hollow eyes
and see wings beating
against a glass pane:
resident of a corralling skull
fed by leaf senses.

We are spawned by an infinite indifference,
obeying some immutable law
formed long ago in cold flaming chaos.
The course of our lives is
as swift and meaningless as rocks in the sky
going to and fro.
Bone beneath the stone
lies with the dust that once imagined us.

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Samuel Peffers

In the cave
the water dripped
upon the head
of Samuel Peffers:
fifty years of darkness,
fifty years dead.

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Shavings

We finished stuffing the animals.
The work went well.
They appear so lifelike
you must look close
to tell the difference.

Centuries from now
the children will come,
and they will see the animals,
how they once were
in their various habitats.

There are still some
animals left alive.
These we will stuff,
when they are gone,
so the world will not lose them.

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Spring Blessings

Rivers wind unnoticed
through the brown hills
and budding trees,
where dark, little birds
pierce the blue sky.

I drift in vague symmetry
lying somewhere on the grass,
among the wild onion sprouts,
and watch the
cherry blossoms fall
like tardy flakes of winter snow.

I want to hug the earth
and kiss the sky;
but one is too big,
the other too high.

The billowing clouds
drift stately by,
as imperious as spirit barks
of long-dead pharaohs
and their queens;
and I dream of Cleopatra
and beautiful Nefertiti
so long ago on the fertile Nile.

I should quit dreaming,
I suppose,
rise up and mow the lawn,
but it will just grow back.
And no one will say,
a thousand years from now,
'Here lies that great conqueror of the grass.'

No, I think the idle man is wise
who takes his time upon the grass
to revel in the blessings of the spring,
the things that cannot last.

kendall thomas

The Addicts

He tied his tie
in front of morning's mirror,
where the moving sun lit
the four corners of his being
above the window sill.

His wife rubbed off the cake
and brought forth a butterfly
that flittered about this purse or that.
What would someone think
to see her in that,
last year's summer dress?

There was in both
antsy anticipation.
For it was Sunday -
and there was church.

There will be gospel singing,
staunch shows of good will and fellowship,
followed by fervent prayers
spurred by some vacant need
to bring on glorious highs and thrills.

There will be the crafted sermon,
the munch of cracker flesh
followed by the drinking
of Christ's chilled sweetened blood,
and then, always in awkward silence,
the clearing of some one's throat
as the collection plate begins to float.

But O' the crash that comes
when Sunday's gone.
How to fix those two empty days
until Wednesday?
Then - even as going down the steps
out to the parking lot,
subtle, nerves on edge -

creeps in that gnawing feeling,
that need... to score... again.

kendall thomas

The Bullet Train

We cannot stop the bullet train.
It speeds along on tracks ordained.
Through fire of day
and fog of night
nothing can deter its might.

It coils around hills of green
snaking by lakes and rivers blue serene.
The cities are but winks;
the tracks iron fashioned links
between a past that always is
and a future that always was.

kendall thomas

The Bums

evenings the bums sat around
talking the poetry of life
dirty blue-fringed words
hands cracked cold before the fire
held cigarettes
fingered noses
slept in cardboard boxes
in doorways
asses to the wind

ragged Cortezes on humps of garbage
aimlessly ambling the roads to paradise
farting
grinning
through whiskey-rotted teeth

kendall thomas

The Coliseum

Four stories
filled with blood of
centuries' infamy.
The sword,
holy scepter of man.

How short this journey
'cross the sand
from the Gate of Life
to the one beyond
where Charon stands.

Surely you knew fear,
young gladiator;
yet marched
in pomp acting like a man.

No doubt you wished to be
with the abiding rabble
who clapped their soft clean hands.

How long this monument endures
is testament, I guess,
to what the ages demand.

How many more must lapse,
stone becoming sand?

kendall thomas

The Collection

a rock
from a river
that no longer runs

a butterfly
that no longer flies

a flower
that no longer blooms

a tear
that no longer falls

kendall thomas

The Colossus

Once invisible to the eye
now a colossus
that dies.

All things exist.
Yet this question contends:
why?

The years departing
leave us still blathering
with our sham and self-importance.

Yet no one knows
how it is possible that a colossus
has grown from a little seed
and dies.

We blind men,
feeling our way.
While behind us disappears.

kendall thomas

The Crow

I hear your repeated syllable
of loneliness and despair
come across this ploughed meadow
as I search for arrowheads.
Ancient bird,
watching from your pine perch,
remembering
the campfires
of those who brought us here
and their prayers
that went up like smoke in the wind
leaving only some stone intentions
to survive.

kendall thomas

The Crows, The Wind And

The crows will still call across the Cumberland
Long after I'm gone.
The wind will still wend its way through the tall grasses
And the trees.
The locusts will still dropp their sweet scent in the spring
along with the honeysuckle,
And that which is left of me will still be a part of the whole.

But what is that to one,
Who lives and breathes,
To become a lump of clay or a willow tree?

Yet would I want eternal youth?
Would insensible beauty be a joy forever
Or a chain around the neck?

How I have grown tired of this old world
With all its myriad facets.

How tired and wasted, then, a god must be
Who knows the morrow.

kendall thomas

The Dead Gull

I remember an image,
a walk along a beach,
early,
sun just rising out of the ocean,
a clear enough image,
straightforward,
nothing too complicated to understand,
the workings of a machine,
ants mining moist jewels from beneath
still eyelids.

kendall thomas

The Fjord

We entered through the narrow fjord,
emerald-sloped and glittering
with a silvery gleam
where once sailed Viking hordes,
and thought we saw golden swords
raised by phantom men
as if to demonstrate to us
that they were once the mighty lords
of all these ancient lands....
and then they vanished as if a dream.

kendall thomas

The Funny Farm

Green and yellow
apple orange
this is the way to the funny farm
where people work from break of dawn
and never think they've worked too long.
Hoein' and mowin',
huffin' and puffin',
they work all day for damn little or nothin'.
Green and yellow
apple orange
that's why it's called the funny farm.

kendall thomas

The Gladiator

Empty cup,
an empty sky,
blood across the golden thigh.
I think the world insane.
I will refrain.

I will not act
nor take a stand
but cast down my sword
in the blood-drenched sand,
bow no more to indifferent gods
of thousand-headed man.

kendall thomas

The Lark

The lark sings
in the willow tree
where the river runs.

Sweetly in tune
(for him nature provides)
so much more than I
this little thing.

Where does he perch in the evening
so silent then,
hiding from those who would
cut short his song?

Is it then
a song he sings
or, for me, a futile cry?

So silent becomes the willow tree
when, like a phantom,
the lark is gone.

kendall thomas

The Lilies

The lilies
wait on the wall
for the all-telling
sigh where doves huddle
neath cornices

Only capable
of tears
nodding
my cigarette turns on me

One final time
a fermented scene and
rapprochement
come together
but spilled wine
can no longer reclaim
its bottle

kendall thomas

The Magic Show

I looked into
the magician's bag of tricks,
but that was my mistake.
Thereafter, I could not
enjoy the show.

kendall thomas

The Mole

a little mole
lay dead
on the lawn today
his pink claws
sticking out
like tiny hands
from the sleeves
of his fur coat
he lay where the dog
had grown tired of him
un petit solitaire
inches from home

kendall thomas

The Mountain Climber

What shall I do now?
Follow the sun from its rising
into the valley far below
or shall I climb higher
to better see
how far darkness goes
and how high these rocks have come
from vanished seas?
I come to taste the salt
from ancient floors
and read your shells of silence.
Up here I see so far,
yet never far enough to tell
from which star hung Heaven

kendall thomas

The Mourning Doves

The mourning doves have taken flight
above the village, plains and heights.
And now all the stars are gone
having disappeared with the dawn.

The old men sit in the square.
Some whittle sticks, some nod, and others stare.

'Used to be a dirt road, ' one would say.
'Yep, I remember well; it was only clay.'
'Remember that teacher gal, what's her name? '
'I remember her, ' another claims.
'So pretty. Used to see her walkin' by.'
'She's gone now, ' another sighs.
'That was long ago. Before the road was paved.'
'Killed herself over that slim feller.'
'That's what they say. So pretty she was and gay.'
'Yep, I remember him. Never a nicer feller in the world.
But somethin' went wrong that day.'
'Maybe he killed her - that's what some say.'
'Right after, he disappeared; went far away.'

'She sure were purty. I saw her walkin'
down the road that day. It was dirt then,
only clay. Years before they paved.
She waved at me.
Yeah, at me. Oh, that made my day.'

'Whadahyuh suppose could've happened? '
'Who knows; it's only guessin'; who can say? '
'Ah me, such a long time ago. Long before the road was
paved.'

kendall thomas

The Painted Porcelain Whore

as false as gold
a fool holds in his hand
love for hire from
tired illusion's stand

thoughts behind
a painted face
have no place
on the boulevard of dreams

a scarlet skirt above
black-silked thighs
whispers lies
paradise for a sum
or denied

one does not readily perceive
nor want to -
as a child
thumbing through
comic books
wants nothing more

give him then the painted porcelain whore
who while false to promise
gives nothing less
than what the saints adore

kendall thomas

The Painting

she spent her life kneading dough
but her heart billowed like a sail as
her eyes followed the gilt-framed eagle
over the windy crest
her stew was praised by all
her blueberry muffins
'mouthwatering'
when she died
they put on her stone
enclosed between two mourning doves
'good wife and mother'
but could they have known the longings
that once simmered in that now still heart
they would have been as amazed as
an explorer finding footprints
on the sands of Mars

kendall thomas

The Passing

The wild honeysuckle has taken you
where the rose wraps its cool arms about
the fallen lattice.

Old, gray walls.
Pitched roof.
Myriad voices
once haunted you.

The green, velvet-covered pond is silent,
reflecting your demise.
Weeds taunt you
and vines explore
where spiders hang their silver webs.

And this end,
this quiet death, beneath withered trees,
is the inevitable rejoining of hands that formed you,
whose pride you were.

I alone deplore
this passing,
this brief flashing affirmation
of mutual decay,
here, in the countryside,
you and I.

kendall thomas

The Patriot Game

I am the grass that covers all
And sucks summer through their teeth~

I come to his grave beneath its bright pennon,
but I do not wonder why he went. I know.
It is because he was young and didn't believe that old men lie.
That's why young men die.

I stand by his grave and want to hold his hand once more,
as I did when he was a child, to stare into his eyes and to see his
smile.
But that can never be, for the game is done.

I do not wonder why he went. I know.
Because he heard the siren call and believed it was Liberty that called.
And being young and naive, he wanted to fight for Victory and Glory-
but only the mountebanks have won.

I cannot speak to him; for he no longer hears; so I whisper to the grass
which covers all young men and sucks summer through their teeth:
It is not your fault for having gone.
It is ours who kept silent and let you go for fear of drawing attention
to ourselves.
It is to parents who would not say "No more; not this one, you evil
bastards! "

But all are cowards when 'Liberty' raises her flaming sword,
and the wealthy, like jaded whores, get richer off the blood that young
men pour.
And we pretend on Memorial Day that some great deed was done.
But I stand above this grave and know that nothing's won.

One smile again from my dead son would cancel out all the bombs
that madmen have ever flung. But the game is done.

Ah,
how little I must have valued those trusting arms around my neck when
he was young.

No more kisses for your daddy now.
No more my warm, soft son.

kendall thomas

The Pond

Turds bloom
like lilies
in the pond
where flies gather
like pilgrims
on the shore
of some new world.

The blue sky
studies itself
from above
like a whore
at her vanity.

kendall thomas

The Prodigy

Where is that dream time of youth and wonder
when all the waking avenues of life seemed open before me
and bejeweled skies beckoned in that august dawn?

What fabulous kingdoms my lucid mind devised.
What riches beyond wealth compiled.
What beautiful women wondrous beyond desire.
And mine, all mine, for a touch of gold
that came so easily in that dawn.

Ah, Lucifer, how you did then despair,
yet laugh now at my ragged ware
that age has brought so low.

A dreamer dead in a garden fair,
I held council with the worm, the leaf, the stone.
The silent stone always won
without a word, but eloquent.

I threw a host of stars into the air,
and back they came as pale, brown leaves
murmuring with a broken throat
a thistled truth
that time had run
and I, my clever I, was done.

I held a thought in my hand
and squeezed it tightly,
yet it ran,
and when I was done,
night-rushing truth had won
and recognition gave and took,
and I was gone.

kendall thomas

The Rain Is Falling

The rain is falling through the leaves.
I open my window to hear the drops.
They say to me that love comes
with a broken heart;
that it comes with a heavy price
and is full of deceit.
But the rain is pure
as it falls through the leaves.
She comes again.
I see her standing in the rain.
She holds her bleeding heart out
in her hands to me with a selfless look
I have seen before.
Less and less she has come through the years,
but still she comes
thinking I will be deceived.
I who have lived so long.
But this time I will take her heart,
bleeding, from the palms of her hands,
and I will bury it in the ground,
in a plain, wooden box - not of gold or silver,
for if someone should dig it up,
I would not want him rejoicing,
thinking that there was something inside
of even greater worth,
instead of worms.

kendall thomas

The Red Rose

There was a rose,
a red, red rose,
on the side of a rocky hill
that overlooked a verdant valley
near a clear and gentle rill.

In the fleeing hours
that spiral and spiral
I have tried to find beauty once more,
but one cannot retrieve
the blush nature decrees
must someday fade away
as from a red, red rose.

kendall thomas

The Rose

does the rose
smell its own perfume
and know how sweet it is
and does it know death
in a crystal hour
turning hour

kendall thomas

The Sea

This is how the sea moves:

Hips undulant

Like a naked woman who is dreaming,

Who is eager for love

And despairing.

The sea is like this:

Like a woman who has no illusions,

Who feels stirrings of lust within her.

The sea moves as a woman who is proud,

With shoulders squared back,

Who approaches calmly or angrily.

This is how the sea moves:

Against my thigh lapping

And without shame,

Or regrets or demands,

Moving without restraint,

Natural and free.

kendall thomas

The Stream

The stream glimmers
with the gold of the sun,
the blue of the sky,
the wing of the blackbird
flying by.

The wind through the
willows speaks to me
from the banks of the stream
that flows to the sea.

Through the willows it returns
as between the banks returns
the stream.

A thousand years,
a thousand more,
the stream will glimmer
with the gold of the sun,
the blue of the sky,
the wing of the blackbird
flying by.

kendall thomas

The Tears Of Narcissus

Too soft blooming flowers,
Settling tea leaves.
We are not attuned to the nuances of nature.
We would need elephant ears to pick up
Laments strummed on spider webs.
But like Narcissus we think our tears
Should draw attention
Forgetting that galaxies collide in silence.

kendall thomas

The Turd

There's a turd on my front lawn.
How can that be?
I don't have a dog.
They're not allowed.

How can I get it up?
I don't have a scooper.
And I certainly don't intend to use my hand.

What will people think?
'He has a turd on his front lawn, ' they'll say.
A big gray-green turd,
right there where everyone can see.
It's very humiliating,
but what can I do?
I'm not responsible.

Perhaps there's a turd-removal agency in the yellow pages.
But I don't think so.
How does one get rid of a turd on one's front lawn?
No one else has a turd on their front lawn, that I can see,
Will I have to mow around it?
Everyone will be watching me.

I can't mow through it.
It might go into someone else's lawn.
Then they will be mad at me.
'He tried to fling his turd into our front lawn, ' they'll
say.
But if I don't do something soon my neighbors will call the
police.
And they'll arrest me for having a turd on my front lawn.
A big gray-green turd.
They'll say I put it there deliberately.
The newspapers will come and take pictures.
Then everyone will point me out and say,
'There's the man with the turd on his front lawn.'

I don't dare put it in the trash though.

If the trashmen found out they would boycott me.
But I have to do something,
or people will be lining up to look at my turd.
How could this be happening?
I have always tried so hard.
But now there's a turd on my front lawn.
And it will be the end of me.

kendall thomas

The Universe Has No Ears

It's like coming home to a tomb
when a dog has died.

There are signs everywhere:

a chew here,

a scratch there.

These are the jottings
of an animal that can't write.

The universe has no ears

kendall thomas

The Wind

You were there at the beginning.
You saw the seed expand.
You saw the rivers of blood,
the rise of man.

You carried Nero's song
from the Tower of Maecenas,
The Sack of Ilium,
feeding the flames of Rome.

You gave shape to the wing
that allowed Daedalus to soar
and watched mankind create
a new kind of war.

Good and evil hand in hand
always contending for the heart of man.
Eons upon eons you've wandered the land
giving no answer to the fate of man.

kendall thomas

Three Things

Three things there are
that never can but forward go:
rivers, years and thee.

kendall thomas

To The Egotist

I don't believe I know your name,
but surely you are quite insane.
Here you are on a spinning ball
fast whirling through an empty hall
trying to seek some scrap of fame.
But, oh, what applause you garner
will not even travel farther...
than from your earlobe to your brain.

kendall thomas

True Believers

You never cease to believe, do you?
You believe what your leaders tell you, don't you?
Leaders tell you what they will do.
Hitler told you what they will do.
They will tell you what you want to hear,
then ignore you when they are elected.
When time comes to run again,
they once more tell you what you want to hear,
then ignore you when they are re-elected.

You wonder why the price of everything goes up
while your pay goes down.
You wonder why your jobs are shipped overseas.
You wonder why all wars are wars of necessity.
You wonder why you are asked to shoulder the blame
when your government squanders your taxes.

Who, you sometimes ask, is the enemy who
is coming to take your freedom?
And why does he hate you?

Why do the rich get tax cuts while your children
die from malnutrition?
Why does your government put you in chains
for telling the truth while leaders lie and go free?
Why is murder wrong for you while genocide is condoned?
Why is it allowable for government thugs to grope your privates
but illegal for anyone else?

When will you cease to tolerate?
When will you have enough?
When will you cease to believe?
When they herd you into cattle cars...
again?

kendall thomas

Twilight

A white rustic church with spire
sits in the twilight by the side of the road
as if a toy in some child's playset
where I used to go

There were memories even then of doubt
as I listened to the pious voices of the devout
the shuffling of tired feet on artificial ground
the miracles of a man in a faraway land

No angels but birds fly through this corralling dusk
the voice of the crickets have become the choir
of a cleric moon offering its Eucharist
through the branches of puzzling trees

But sermons go on too long
and little children are given to sleep
when words are only words
and mother's lap the soul of eternity

kendall thomas

Unanswered Prayers

There must be a place in Heaven
where God keeps files of unanswered prayers.
But, like a clever politician,
he keeps the answered ones on his desk,
freshly dusted,
for when the cameras come.

kendall thomas

War Is A Holy Thing

War is a holy thing.
It comes from God.
He leads the unblemished lambs
to the altar of Christ's blood
and buries silver daggers in their hearts.

Everywhere dead men meet on street corners
and sing hosannas to this God
and his holy war.
Angels rejoice in Heaven.
For it is war that comes from God
and it is a holy thing.

The time for tithing has come.
The children of God must give silver and souls,
for war is a holy thing,
The scythe moves through the land;
the wheat has been placed in shocks;
the time for harvest has come.

Vanquish the infidels,
the heathen hordes of unbelievers.
Return them to the clay;
for the wrath of God is upon them.,
and men of peace you may despise,
for war is a holy thing.

Listen to the singers of songs
and do not be swayed by the peacemakers,
for they are not of the children of God.
Cover your ears and look away.
Shake their dust from your feet.
They are full of lies and seduction,
leading you from the path of righteousness.

Sing hosannas loud into the night,
giving strength to the faltering.
Show them the way with lighted torches
as stars guide men in heaven.

And be not afraid.
For God is love,
and war is a holy thing.

kendall thomas

War Is Kind

Poor kids,
why do you hang
to the branches
of these barren, campus trees?
Why won't you let go?

Do your mothers
remember the color of your eyes?

Think of all the leaves;
it is telling how they lie.

But I cannot cry.

Did I know the sorrow
whispering your names?

I hear something, vaguely,
about a war, and sigh,
and the autumn leaves lie.

I cannot cry.

O, Mother Grief,
do not be deceived,
war is kind.

Really, I feel for you poor kids,
God knows;
but you can't expect the best to die for something low.

Does it hurt to die?
Hell, no!
And I know; somewhere I've read it's so.
Besides you're dying for your country,
and how glorious that must be!

We will remember you;
do not doubt that;

and, by golly, we will cry
to think how young you were
and that you had to die.
And if the giving was your soul,
then you gave it with our pride.
And that should have given comfort
on the day you had to die.

O, Mother Grief,
kiss your sons goodbye,
but do not cry.

War is kind

kendall thomas

We

How can there ever be an end to war?

First we kill all the politicians.

But who would lead the country?

The people.

But the people don't know how to run the country.

We will teach them.

But the people are too diverse in their beliefs:

Social, political, religious.

We will unite them.

But, then, who is we?

kendall thomas

We're So Good

Ever wonder why people, in 3rd world countries,
leave their homes and move into deserts to live?

The US, and/or other have nations,
hire mercenaries to drive natives off their land,
to steal it for foreign investors,
then kill or drive these pathetic bastards
into deserts where it lets them starve to death.

Oh, but occasionally,
during photo ops,
we'll be shown on our TVs
sacks of flour being parceled out
to them from the back of a truck.

Then Americans will lean back in their plush recliners
and say, 'We're so good! '

What is never shown are the warehouses
bursting at the seams with food
for the dictators and war lords
nor the billions of taxpayer dollars
that go into their Swiss bank accounts

kendall thomas

When I Was Young

When I was young
my grandfather
handed me
his 22
to shoot the owl
perched in the tree

I shot the owl
who held wide fathomless eyes
on me
then fluttering
fell through the leaves

Fifty years later
the tree is still there

And
the owl is still fluttering
down through the air

kendall thomas

Whisperings

I am the wind whispering of eternity.

I am silence.

I am the junkie on the street corner.

I am the moralist who condemns.

I am the one who stops to help the stranger.

I am the one who looks away.

I am the sick pervert slaving over the dead.

I am the lamb who nails you to the cross.

I am that wild joy that sends you running through the meadow.

I am the rotting corpse that astonishes you on the battlefield.

I am the slaughterhouse of ideals, the apostle of despair.

I am all.

I am all you wish for.

I am all you fear.

I am the worm, the leaf and the stone.

I am every character in every play, in every book.

I am proud, despicable, profound.

I am wise.

I am the prancing fool, the voice of nonsense, the sage of reason.

I am transcendent. I trail worlds behind me.

I am oblivion.

I am the gate to Heaven.

I am truth and

I am hell.

kendall thomas

Yesterday's Memories

yesterday's memories
are little ghosts and clowns
who move inside our heads
rattling chains
or throwing pies
making us dread or laugh at
tomorrow

kendall thomas