

Classic Poetry Series

Louis Jenkins
- poems -

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Louis Jenkins()

Louis Jenkins (born October 28, 1942) is an American prose poet from Enid, Oklahoma. He has lived in Duluth, Minnesota, for over 30 years with his wife Ann. His poems have been published in a number of literary magazines and anthologies. Jenkins has been a guest on A Prairie Home Companion numerous times and has also been featured on The Writer's Almanac. The author's book, *Nice Fish*, was winner of the Minnesota Book Award in 1995. His book *Just Above Water* won the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award in 1997. In 1996, Jenkins was a featured poet at the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival. Actor Mark Rylance recited works by Jenkins in lieu of formal acceptance speeches after winning a Tony Award and a Drama Desk Award for the play *Boeing-Boeing* (in 2008) and after winning his Tony Award for the play *Jerusalem* (in 2011).

Football

I take the snap from the center, fake to the right, fade back...
I've got protection. I've got a receiver open downfield...
What the hell is this? This isn't a football, it's a shoe, a man's
brown leather oxford. A cousin to a football maybe, the same
skin, but not the same, a thing made for the earth, not the air.
I realize that this is a world where anything is possible and I
understand, also, that one often has to make do with what one
has. I have eaten pancakes, for instance, with that clear corn
syrup on them because there was no maple syrup and they
weren't very good. Well, anyway, this is different. (My man
downfield is waving his arms.) One has certain responsibilities,
one has to make choices. This isn't right and I'm not going
to throw it.

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Regret

There's no use in regret. You can't change anything. Your mother died unhappy with the way you turned out. You and your father were not on speaking terms when he died, and you left your wife for no good reason. Well, it's past. You may as well regret missing out on the conquest of Mexico. That would have been just your kind of thing back when you were eighteen: a bunch of murderous Spaniards, out to destroy a culture and get rich. On the other hand, the Aztecs were no great shakes either. It's hard to know whom to root for in this situation. The Aztecs thought they had to sacrifice lots of people to keep the sun coming up every day. And it worked. The sun rose every day. But it was backbreaking labor, all that sacrificing. The priests had to call in the royal family to help, and their neighbors, the gardener, the cooks.... You can see how this is going to end. You are going to have your bloody, beating heart ripped out, but you are going to have to stand in line, in the hot sun, for hours, waiting your turn.

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