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Passages of Time & Age

I May be Getting the Hang of It

Tumbling on fifty-one years
Of joy and quiet wonder, fears,
Of curiosity and laughs,
Of writing songs and epitaphs,
I think I'm finding here at last
Direction from each annum past
To lead me forward to explore
At least another fifty more

Finding Contentment in the Middle of Things

Around about twelve-thirty (at midday or midst of night)
I tend to find my peace of mind is shaken by the fright
That I am growing ancient fast (and probably not sage)
And it's profoundly sad, I've found, to be past middle age
Without achieving greatness (even being semi-grand)
But having checked, in retrospect, it seems okay to be bland
Compared to early bloomers, (who so often flame out young)
So I grow old, somewhat more boldly aging—not unstrung.

Can't You See

I'm Working Here?

In youth, I was so supple, so
elongate, swanlike, graceful, lean—
I was an aspen sapling, bending
in the brook-dale in my green
And lovely youth, flexible splendor,
full of marvels, strong and new—
Now at last I find this sprawling
is as much as I can do.
Did I use it up, or was it all
illusion—youth and skill and strength?
I would puzzle that all out, but
it's too tiring to, at length.

Time Flies, and with It, Our Niftiness

When I was but a wee small thing and charming as can be,
I'm certain few quite realized the wonder that was me,

But now that I'm much older, crummier and much less cute,
Evaluations of me, sadly, tend to be far more astute;
It's sad we can't be kept preserved when at our youthful best,
But such is life, and so we'll mount the trash-heap with the rest.

Traveling at Speed

When I was just a little tad
And full of zest and vim
I never thought the day would come
When eyesight could grow dim
And hair fall out, and memories
Impossible to keep,
Or that my middle would go soft
Or I would fall asleep
Just trying to sit through the news,
But couldn't sleep at night,
Get creaky and arthritic
And develop underbite,
But, over and above these things,
No way would I have guessed
The day would pounce so suddenly,
So early. I'm depressed!

So Soon Begins the End

Upon my word! This is a fix
I never thought to find me in—
at least not find for five or six
more decades, when my hair'd grown thin
and belly fat, and joints grown weak
and brain grown mushier than it had
been yet, but I age as we speak—
so rapidly—why, this is *Bad!*
I never dreamed that I would age
before a hundred years or so,
and then, at most, to turn more sage;
oh, this is a grubby way to go!

The World in a Nutshell

All of the world's in perpetual motion,
A loop of swift action, a constant commotion
That moves us in nervous centrifugal rings
To do and to act on a million odd things,
And so caffeinated we cannot hold still,
Or the moment of fixity surely might kill
Our fast-racing heartbeat, as used as it is

To zipping and zapping around in a whiz—
And all of us hope we will one day find quiet
And respite from all of our everyday riot,
But I am suspicious that it won't occur
Until the last second of living, no Sir!

Nearly Endless Cycles

We pedal around at a furious rate
Just as though we'd outrun finitude, death and fate
But the truth of the matter, however we flee,
Is we'll all still die off—that guy there, you, and me.

Very Delicatessen

A liver-spotted gentleman
Is preferable to younger, when
The latter thinks himself too suave
To say a simple 'Mazeltov'
Or serve you brisket with a pickle;
Such young bucks are cheap and fickle.
I prefer the well-worn style
That does a mitzvah with a smile

Patina

I know I'm rough around the edges, what with age and wear and rust,
But I like the character antiquity imparts; it must
Seem strange to you who have such beauty, youth and grace, you smooth of skin,
Bright of eyes and freshly laundered whippersnappers—my sole sin,
If sin I have, is being ancient and well-lived and storied; still,
I think your sympathies will shift as you get older. And you will.
If you don't, rough luck, poor suckers, and I pity you the trust
You had in your youth and beauty, come the day you too will rust.
Better to have aged and crumbled, to have faltered, dim and grey,
Than to croak and to have tumbled. 'Old' beats 'finished', I would say.

So Much Happens in a Few

So much happens in a few
Stray days, cells changed and borne along
Eternally, while growing strong
And old, and yet, too, growing new,
Dividing in their bubbling streams
The wind and sun of yesterday
And all that with it passed away,
From what are tomorrow's dreams.
So, too, notes dashed off in haste
And then recalled with cool regret
Or penciled into kind words, yet

Not guaranteed to mend the waste,
Join in the fragile and the small,
Still, pale, inconsequential space
Where in the cycles of our race
So much can happen to us all.

Things that don't Pass with Time

Memory is transparent
And fleeting
Things once held dear
Or thought immutable are flown
Rust eats up the sunken ship
That seemed so potent as a man-o'-war
Trees fall and new young seedlings
Swiftly supplant them and yet
The scar where you once
Filled my everyday remains
As a gash that will never
Be closed

Decrepit Like Everybody Else

I ought to get my rear in gear; encroaching entropy
Challenges my mere existence, yes, the being-ness of me—
Why, I'll be disappearing soon, with chaos on the rise—
Order is losing ground to it, and much to my surprise,
Growth falls to dissolution at a speed I comprehend
Is likely to outlast me, too, as I fade to my end—
And now I am unraveling, unwinding, getting old
And obsolete, for that's the end of every tale that's told.
Goodbye to all you younger things: relish your hour of youth—
You'll all join me, and soon enough, and that's the simple truth.

High Speed Chase

The world, my friends, is a fleeting thing, and life, swift passing by
Like silent film outside the train, blurred trees against the sky
And birds, small flecks, shot from the grass to pepper clouds with black,
Yet nothing would I change a whit to veer from on this track;
If hurtling time should slow its pace in this great journey's run,
There'd be no more such tales to tell, no news under the sun,
No destinations to explore, adventures to be had,
And not one bit of joy that's *new*, and wouldn't that be sad!
So I'll hang on and buckle up, and hope what's speeding past
Won't leave me in a cloud of dust. I'll get there, too, at last.

Should Have Been

'Return to me,' I said to the past,

As though to make the moment last,
'Come back, hold still,' I cried in vain—
It never answered my refrain,
But ran, instead, more speedy still,
Until old age, as such things will,
Caught up with me, for as I stood
Bemoaning fate, decrepitude
Needed no effort, speed of pace,
To sneak up on me in the race.
Now I lie dying, faint and wan,
And sigh, 'Where has the time all gone?'

Perpetuating Childhood

In all probability I'd be prone
to be an insufferable old crone,
a hag, a harridan, full of mold,
if I had to mature—grow up—get old—
because, in truth, the prospect's grim
when responsible heart meets creaky limb,
and milky eye and baggy middle
drag *joie-de-vivre* down a little—
I'd rather, by far, annoy my peers
by being unfitted to my years,
guffawing, as boisterous as a sinner,
and eating six Popsicles for dinner;
skipping like a stone across the Square
and having wild grass seeds in my hair,
wearing skirts too short; taking much too long
to figure out what I'm doing wrong,
yet enjoying the doing things just the same,
since it's all a bit like a great big game
anyway—this journey we call a life—
so why should we let it sour, be rife
with tedious, tiresome old-age gunk?
I'd rather go back to school and flunk
for excessive dreaming and foolish pranks.
Grow up? Grow old? Mature?
No, Thanks!

A Map of the Interior

What lives inside my busy brain is far from France, the hills of Spain,
the Rio Grande, or the coast of Ireland, and yet almost
each single time I step inside, I see my thoughts roam far and wide,
as though the moment they begin, they light a universe within,
a place nobody else can sense, and yet it's palpable, immense
and potent as no state on earth; this is my place of greatest worth.

If in your mind you travel, too, I hope the countries that are You
are equally enchanting, wide, and vivid, and that there inside
you find as you grow older, more great places that you can explore—
and if in old age we forget all else, we'll have one journey yet
to places fond not left behind, the inner reaches of the mind.

Closed/Open

Windows and doors
Are metaphors—
But also real
Gateways.
So: are Yours?
How open to change?
How closed in fear?
Do you throw them wide
When a friend
Comes near?
You can bar the way
And lock out
All storms—
But have you
Barred Chance in all
Its forms?
Are your windows sealed
To stop the rain
So tightly that
No light can gain
Entry anymore?
Is your door of steel
Holding off
New joys
For fear you'd *feel*?
Throw open the sash!
Swing wide the door!
Adventure is what
This life is for.

My Mind Wanders & So Shall I

I want to wander
To traipse and travel
Or else I wonder
If I'll unravel
Make expeditions
I may
I must
Or my brain could bust

From Wanderlust
Let me sally swiftly
Flying forth
No matter whether
South
Or North
For I might implode
In irksome itches
The way my
Passport
Ticks and twitches
Can't pause to ponder
What's yon
Or yonder
My heart
Yells START!
And I want
To wander—

Antique Finishes

The lovely grain of quartersawn oak
With age's silk patina glows
And hints of many-storied lives
And past events nobody knows;
The ghosts and gossips of days gone
Are whispered in the cupboards' glassed
Door fronts; the table's curving legs
Bespeak its long, mysterious past;
In the looking-glass, the passage
Of the hours and years is blurred
By antiquity's sweet singing
All the stories ever heard,
By the voices of the missing,
Of the dead departed wealth
That once filled these halls with magic,
Now reached only late, by stealth.
If antiquity should call me,
Siren-like, to take a look,
Once more in my soul I'll draw it
From the pages of a book . . .

Visiting My Antiquities

Smooth stone underfoot
Curving into a polished shallow bowl
Made of a million passing steps
As pilgrims and those who pause

Only for curiosity's sake
Remember, each in his singular way,
The uncounted ghosts who came
Over the stone before

The King is Sleeping

Don't go in—the king is sleeping;
Don't barge in, disturb his rest—
All the bodyguards were keeping
Such good care at his behest
Up until a couple decades
Turned to several centuries
And the stalwart guardians made
A heap of dust fine as the breeze
And the palace came to crumble
And the country to decay
And the sands of time to tumble
To eternity, away—
Let the king sleep on in silence;
There's no reason to awake
Anymore, to stir and rile and
See destruction come and take
From him all his kingdom's treasures,
All he held and fought to own,
All his onetime loves and pleasures
Turned to silicates and stone—
Don't go in—the king is sleeping;
History cries 'let him sleep!'
While the passing age is creeping,
Peace is all he gets to keep

If Memory Serves

If memory serves
It serves us right
To swerve first left
And then to right
To right the ship
And shift our weight
See changes flip
Both small and great
As fools it's true
But happy ones
And lighted through
By moons and suns
As endless time
Follows its curves

To roll away
If memory serves

By Babylon Creek

Babylon Creek
used to make the
children laugh as it ran
tickling fingers up
their summer-heated shins
and the older folk
chuckle shamefacedly
at its puns and the way
its hilarious licking made
them squirm like
dog-loved kids themselves

Jeunesse et Tristesse

We two, when we were very small,
Walked hand in hand down avenues
Studded with poplars and long views
Of granite pavement, pale and tall
Sun-sprinkled shops, apartments set
Above them on whose balconies
Perched men like birds among the trees,
Eyeing our youth with vague regret—
How could we know, young as we were,
The brevity of these our strolls,
How every hour more swiftly tolls
Than the preceding? To be sure,
The marvel of our living lies
In sensing little of the thought
That what short summertime we've got
Measures in spans like butterflies',
And realizing late in age
On balconies, as children pass,
Our tenure's brief as leaves, as grass,
As words washed from the novel's page
By tears dropped silently, this truth
Too hard to tell to little ones
Passing in hand-held joy, the sun's
Brief rays alighting on their youth.