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Tales of the Ridiculous

Absurd & Nonsensical

Old So-and-Sos

Yea, smell that rose!
It's on the nose.
Not one of those
Who would suppose
That poems, prose,
And speeches' throes
Must not disclose
Where their heart goes,
I always chose
To stick to those
That *told* my nose
What was a rose.

Psychedelic Pstarfish

Seems sillier than psyllium to sing of starry seas,
Yet so the ocean's silken shore's sufficient proof of these
That sparkling in such shady deep, something is sure to gleam
In stunning stellar specks and sparks in that submerged stream,
So sing we sweet and shining songs of starfish as we wish
Upon the evening star to see a firmament of fish

Folkloric

Handyman

Solutions

As it happens, in the house
I would have oiled the squeaking door hinge
But my also-creaky spouse
Had doused the hinge with Oil of Orange
And I must admit, although
The squeak has still remained pernicious,
I don't mind it even so,
Because, at least, it smells delicious.

Orange (*Mission: Preposterous*)

Can there be anything that's more ingenious than to rhyme with orange?
Or have you heard aught more absurd than rhyming an unmated word?
Just this: that even realists
can turn into idealists
when once they think they have attached
a mate to words that seemed unmatched.
So if you'd make your rhymes more orangey,
just sip a wee dram of Glenmorangie;
you might learn words to score in Scrabble on,
or, at the least, be led to Babylon,
but certainly, however foreign,
just know that all rhymes lead to Orange.

**Place & Time
(in Perspective)**

It pays to remember,
while deep in December,
that what I most fear
in the north hemisphere
is not what I might get
as a promise, a threat,
or an ever-so-slight
bit of tremor, of fright—
if I happen to be
at the warm Tasman Sea.

Being and Nuttiness

Origami boats and hats
And frogs and swans
And paper cats
And chicken frills
And snowflake cuts:
These little pieces
Drive me nuts—
It's not the cut-
And-paste, you see,
That makes me
Shake the acorn tree;
It's just that
They should
Have the guts,
Barefaced, to call it

Therapy.
I wish such
Noodles
Pleased like poodles,
But I'm too
Tired from
Doodling oodles.

Sharp Objects Falling out of the Sky

On certain Wednesday mornings
Sharp objects from the sky
Come shearing down the sides of clouds
Like spaceships zipping by
And boulders, ashtrays, cutlery
And great meteorites
Come slashing from the heavens
—But clear up by Wednesday nights

Thing that Does Things

There is a wonderful machine that's spiffy, neat, and super-keen
Because its functions are so grand and great, but on the other hand,
It's hard to fix when it's abuzz, malfunctioning, or conked, because
It is so arcane, intricate and complicated, that we get
Bamboozled trying to describe what's wrong, and end in diatribe,
For truthfully, we've not a clue just what this fine machine can do,
Or what its actual functions are, for it's so complex and bizarre
That we, in our benighted state, prefer to simply think it great
And know that if we could have guessed what it is, we'd sure be impressed.

Joyriding

I'm thinking of driving
Up on the sidewalks
On the way to
Work today
And up
The sides of buildings,
In the
Tops of trees;
I'll probably drive
Across the bay—
It calls for
Some extravagance
On peculiar
Days like these.

Rides Upward & Back

Bicycling up into a tree, I paused to see what I could see
between the branches, richly leaved, and saw, if I was not deceived,
a broad, expansive view indeed, and haply so, while I was treed—
but (Woe!) relaxed my braking foot and clocked my forehead on the root—
so, shorter 'twas than was my wont, this little arbor-biking jaunt.

Psychedelia

Precipitously, in pastels, Four neon pharaohs twirled, rang bells,
And sang high madrigals so fast They made the future seem the past—
And just as quickly as begun, It ended, POOF!, as though the sun
Had disappeared at noon; you scoff,
But anaesthesia does wear off!

Personal Distinctions

Though it may seem too silly, a
Girl plagued with hydrophilia
Might find attraction only wins,
For love, a boy with gills and fins—
But then, if hydrophobia
Sends her out to the Gobi, a
Boy's more apt to find her chummy
If he's as dried up as a mummy.

Noises On

Bye bike bicycle
Far farce farcical
Pop plop Popsicle
Drip drop dropsical
Miracle spherical
Fanatical dramatical
Hysterical historical
Oracle Coracle Rhetorical
Trickle mickle pickle tickle fickle nickel prickle
Hackle spackle cackle grackle tackle
Chuck chuckle chuckling Buck buckle buckling Suck suckle suckling
Duck...Duckle? Duckling...
Oh, F...I mean, Yuck.

Animal Behavior

Cow Art

I wonder if you flinch at all

At cows upon the bedroom wall
That have great horns and twitching tails—
The massive cow that seldom fails
To win a ribbon at the fair—
Perhaps it's odd to see them there
But I admire those cows, you see,
And like them watching over me
To fend off any sleepless nights
And fill my dreams with cow delights

In a Sentimental Moored

Oh, pretty little heifer cow, I think you're cute but know not how
Appreciation paid in full to such sweet charm could seem but dull
Poor compensation for my plain bland bulliness; am I a drain
Upon your dewy calf-eyed ways; am I so silly in my craze
For you, adorable and fine, that I'm a fool to wish you mine?
Nay, let us frolic and cavort and caper 'round for joy and sport,
Let us delight in being calves and neither shrink from fun by halves
Nor ever find we're short of hay in pasture, or get sent away,
Or be penned up, for these things, too, would make a poor calf cry Moo Hoo!
No tragedy besmirch our wooing and leave us sadly this way mooring;
Let us, instead, just take a vow to stay together, bull and cow.

Hooves and All

They may confuse you at first glance,
These Highland cows in chino pants—
But you'll adjust—this vision hurts
Far less than seeing them in skirts.

Moo-Hoo

From Farmer Burgess I acquired
A fear unnaturally inspired,
Of eggplant-colored legs and ears
And grape-juice tinted moping tears;
I've long since feared becoming plum,
A hue to make a heifer glum,
And so have kept a watchful eye
Lest it occur; suddenly, I—
I saw a purple cow, I think,
Hoped not to be one; in a wink,
I was the most extraordinary
Bovine in the Violet Dairy!
But weep no wine-inflected drops
When you hear cloven clip'ty-clops

As I approach, for I inspired
A soda jerk ere I retired,
And am remembered better now
Than when I was a Normal cow.

Imagine Wool

When I washed my sweater, I
Was taken by surprise
By how diminished it appeared
In length and breadth and size.
I was a little saddened that
My favorite cashmere top
Had shrunk too small to wear it
To tomorrow's Bunny Hop.
I threw it in the dryer just
To see if it revived
And was surprised when from
The lint trap sprang a goat, alive!

Methinks the Lady Doth Bleat Too Much

*[News Item, Ghana: 'Really Ugly Family'
Fails to Disguise Rustler]*

Pregnant goats in tee shirts
Loaded in a car
Are not the happy family
That you may think they are;
Expect some protest e-mail
When you begin to see
That no one likes a female
Who's wearing a goat-tee.

How Cocooning Relieves Stress among the Hardworking

Behold the moth: he waxeth wroth, and sure has cause if any hath:
A life so short and labor-filled that many lesser moths hath killed;
Yet all's not tragic, dire, dark things, for, briefly as he hath his wings,
He waxeth too his Silver Wraith; it shineth like a ghost, i'faith.
As caterpillars of his ilk produce the finest bolts of silk,
Yea, marvel at such industry, and bitter butterflies ne'er see,
For, selling such rich bolts of cloth, they've little cause for waxing wroth.

Tarantella for Arachnophobes

I'm told a lizard ought to find
small creatures of arachnid-kind
as tasty and desirable

a treat to make the tummy full
as anyone could wish to munch—
but I hate them, that horrid bunch!
Spiders, to me, are crawly, creepy
creatures; make me frightened, weepy,
send me under my bed, my couch,
in a zipping zing or a crunching crouch;
they make me itch in my lizard pants,
in my reptile rooms, until I prance
around the house in a manic dance!
I try to shake my whole belief
that they're attacking; no relief
is found when I am faced with grief
from eight-legg'd monsters or their kin,
and then such dancing must begin!
I'm forced to writhe and wriggle madly,
spin and struggle wildly (sadly),
and last, because the fear remains,
tomp out a tarantella, badly!
O, would that I could simply snap
my jaws on that small hairy chap
the spider, show no fear of death;
instead, I lose my very breath
and shrivel, like the brink of doom
has entered in my living room!
What was my fateful youthful sinning
set my head and heart to spinning
like a dervish when one shows,
to tearing my poor lizard clothes,
sneezing out of my reptile nose
and stretching like a garden hose
to flee arachnids; why do those
bring fear into my scaly soul?
I only know my utter goal
when spiders enter into view
is: dance until they set on you.

Salt of the Earth

Three little thrips with jointed hips
Hopped in a pile of potato chips—
One of them wondered if it was his fault
A bit of a chip had been stripped of its salt—
He slipped in his hopping and, hippity-hey,
That thrip threw his whole life of hopping away—

His sorrow was such that a genuine tear
Fell out of his arthropod eye every year
On the date he had given up happily hopping—
No wonder the other thrips studied his stopping
And formed the opinion that sorrow could drown
A poor hip-hopping thrip if the ol' chips were down.

Frenemies

When cat and dog and sheep and goat, yea, fox and hen and hog and stoat
Befriend each other, work and play like boon companions, night and day,
It's time to question if the world as we have known it is unfurled,
Unraveled, undefined, undone—if we should pack our bags and run—
For such behavior's a disgrace and flies in Mother Nature's face.
So, be alert! The fox and hen, sheep and the goats, like gods and men,
Belong apart; the stoat and hog must not be friends, nor cat and dog.

Tom Slingshot

A cat sat in a catapult and
Cast his eye around
His cozy little kingdom there;
It rested on the ground,
Where he espied his lady-love
In kittenish flirtation
With stranger-Tom; the king cried out
His rage and ruination
And (here I am embarrassed to
Admit) the king let fly
And shot himself, I mean,
Was catapulted, to the sky;
The tragedy: he overshot
His goal and was shot down—
The upshot is, he learned:
Don't ever throw your weight around;
And furthermore, his lady-cat
Huffed off; the king learned that he
Ought not offend with jealousy:
It made Miss Kitty catty.

Little Beasties' Escapade

Raccoon, Armadillo and Possum set sail
In a galvanized bucket, the teeth of a gale,
On the reservoir lake in the midst of the night,
Under cloud-obscured stars and without the moon's light,
For they were on a mission requiring the dark,

At imperative speed, wildly searching the spark
Of a glimmer ashore on the lake's farther side,
Where they'd scramble the banks and find somewhere to hide—
And what was their mission, to act like scared squirrels?
Escaping, of course, from the amorous girls
Of the possum, raccoon and the 'dillo persuasions.
Run and hide's all one *can* do on just such occasions.

Weasels Ahoy

There once was a stoat in a velvet coat
Sailed off in a sterling silver boat—
Yet here's a clue: I don't know about you,
But I think some things are too good to be true,
And just as a logical soul should think,
That shiny boat was bound to sink—
At least in a Normal world it would,
Yet some things are simply too true to be good,
So I live in a world that I much prefer,
Where stoats wear velvet right over their fur
And captain ships of a platinum hue;
I think it beats logic by far, don't you?

Character Assassination

Regeneration

Small children are such pretty little things,
Their chattering and skipping on the green
Playground of summer like the beating wings
And songs of flocks of birds are heard and seen;
It's fortunate such playful charms are theirs,
That doll-like innocence and holding fast
To unspoiled beauty's natural to our heirs—
Or this bunch living now would be the last.

Z.Z.Z.Z. Tupp

Zebediah Zachariah
Zero Zanzibarus Tupp
Lay down sleepy
After dinner
And next morn
Failed to get up,
For his wife and
Her new boyfriend,
Strictly to

Increase his ease,
Poisoned his
Nightcap of whiskey
And they all caught
Lots of Z's.

Creatures Yet Unknown

The Warbling Flantical

Upon a promontory sat the Flantical, in coat and hat,
In curled toupee and beaded gloves (the sort his sort of person loves),
And sang a tune so bold and sweet, a choir gathered at his feet
And joined their voices, fine and strong, to this his pure and sacred song,
Admiring both his vocal fire and handsome mien in that attire,
And so anon, the Flantical and choir closed their canticle
And all dispersed, but all retained the melody that still remained
In head and heart; that is the story born upon that promontory,
And each Flantical now loves to sing it, wearing beaded gloves.

The Wriggling Jellybaggle

The Wriggling Jellybaggle and his relatives all laugh
at their own selves, each other, and at each faux pas and gaffe;
at funny things, ridiculous and silly things, and too,
at serious and sober stuff and fretful folk like you;
if you think you're too dignified to snicker, laugh, and giggle,
you obviously haven't seen a Jellybaggle wriggle;
and, furthermore, if you have failed to join the goofy gaggle
and goggle and guffaw a bit, your average Jellybaggle
would pity you, at best a fool, at worst, a stubborn stinker,
too stupid to enjoy yourself and thump your sullen thinker
with just the touch of tickling that takes the harm and hagggle
out of your life, when *you* could be a Wriggling Jellybaggle.

Deathly Delightful

Cuisinal Casualties

Rutabaga watermelon peanut butter chives
Gastroenteritis tremor scurvy scars and hives
History redacted retroactively to hide
Dr. Sparkle's accidental cooking homicide

Departure, It Seems

Take me quickly in your arms; I fear I may be dying!
Was s'posed to be in flight by now, but only Time is flying . . .
These long delays are hardly new, nor cancellations, lost

Bushels of baggage, nor the way the airlines jack the cost
Of tickets by these add-on fees that fleece us out of breath—
It's just that cumulatively, these may make us long for death.
Is this really the meaning of my life, or just my own emotional baggage?
So after all the schlepping 'round from gate to gate to gate,
the pat-downs and the x-rays—oh, I fear it is too late!
Defibrillate my fainting heart; revive my flattened will . . .
This airport life's hard to survive when I've such time to kill!

Fashionably Light

Shoes Lose

As much as she loves beauty and is fond of pretty things,
Wears gowns of gossamer and silk as fine as angels' wings,
And jewelry, accoutrements, great gloves and dandy hats,
There is one small adornment she will *not* indulge, and that's
The grow discomfort of spike heels or pointy little toes—
No matter how spectacular the shoes, she won't wear those—
So if you ask, she is inclined to put it on the books
That though she's fond of fashion, she'll choose comfort over looks.

Food Foolishness

Worst Recipe, Best Intentions

A corndog and two raisins
Stare up from the paper plate;
I'm pretty sure it wasn't Mom
Who chose to delegate
The cooking to my brother,
Who is only four years old,
But for a tiny volunteer,
His cookery is bold.
Perhaps he'll someday master
The nuances of chow
And be a chef of great renown,
But I'm real hungry *now*.
So even if it's wacky
And not the ideal feast,
I'll relish his odd combo
As sustaining, at the least,
And one might hope, a beacon
Of his incipient skill—
Why, here comes little brother now,
To add a sprig of dill.

Bite This!

What a wonderfully horrible mixed bag is
That magical concoction we call haggis...
Though eating it can surely pose no risk
Compared to that ingesting lutefisk...
Or maybe nibbling neither one of those
Beats noshing on steamed duckling embryos...
But then again there's something less than dreamy
For those who dare too much fugu sashimi...

Edible Extravanzas

You may not be impressed by my
Display of produce fresh
From Israel and Mexico
And parts of Bangladesh
But stick around for later when
We come back in to fix
The fruit for our consumption
And we catch it doing tricks!

Epic EPICureanism

Take one fresh raw jellyfish
And fill it with a mousse
Of minty-scented liver past
And seedless grapes and goose
All minced with walnut oil and chives
And candy bars and peas,
Then boil it, broil it, fry and bake.
Then, toss that garbage, please!
Or, have the special of the house:
Boiled left-side whisker of a mouse
Served on just-sprouted nettle stalk
And garnished with two bits of chalk,
Sauced with the ink of a giant squid—
One tiny drop—press down the lid
Of the waffle iron on it; cook
Until it sizzles, but don't look
Until the tiniest wisp of smoke
Tells you it's done. Discerning folk
Will come for miles, order this dish,
Watch it implode,
Then feast on fish.

**Haiku on the
Least Supper**

Thomas Tallis ate
Spam in Aluminium
In forty small bites

Higher Plane or Another Planet?

Midwinter Panic Attack

This is a winter morning, this is,
So hide your children, protect your Mrs.;
Be sure to keep your animals warm
Beyond the reach of the blizzard storm
—but Oh!, but Oops!—what gaffes are these:
We live in the
Antipodes.

*In the collection Chantefables et chantefleurs (Sing-fables and Sing-flowers),
20th-century French poet Robert Desnos included:*

“La Fourmi” (“The Ant”):

*Une fourmi de dix-huit mètres
Avec un chapeau sur la tête,
Ça n’existe pas, ça n’existe pas.
Une fourmi traînant un char
Plein de pingouins et de canards,
Ça n’existe pas, ça n’existe pas.
Une fourmi parlant français,
Parlant latin et javanais,
Ça n’existe pas, ça n’existe pas.
Eh! Pourquoi pas?*

*An ant 59 feet long
With a hat on its head:
That doesn’t exist, that doesn’t exist.
An ant pulling a float
Full of penguins and ducks:
That doesn’t exist, that doesn’t exist.
An ant that speaks French,
That speaks Latin and Javanese:
That doesn’t exist, that doesn’t exist.
Hey! Why not?*

My Response:

Don’t Tell the Ant!

(After the Poem ‘La Fourmi’ by Robert Desnos)

A giant ant in a jaunty hat:
Fancy that! You could knock me flat...

There's no such thing! It cannot be!
Don't tell *me* that it's what you see!
An ant hauling loads of penguins and ducks,
Penguins and ducks on parading trucks:
There's no such thing! It cannot be!
Don't tell *me* that it's what you see!
A polyglot ant, spouting, if you please,
Both Latin and French—even Javanese:
There's no such thing! It cannot be!
Don't tell *me* that it's what you see!
The truth, of course, if you have to know,
Is that *nothing's* real, that it is not so,
That there's no such thing; that it cannot be!
But no one can prove
It's not what *you* see!

Zoanthrope

Wilhelm believes
He is a giraffe.
Everyone in
The neighborhood
Believes
Wilhelm is a nut case.
The stark evidence
Of the boring actual world
Makes no visible penetration
Into Wilhelm's faith.
The neighbors
Are sure he's crazy
And it never occurs
To them
That he constantly knocks
His head
On the twelve-foot ceiling,
Which in itself is usually
Not considered
Surprising
For a giraffe.

Paranormality

At lunch they'd
Paranormal pear (a
Normal slice or two)
And eat the kind of

Lunch a paranormal folk
Would do.

I'd paranormal pair of such
With any folk in range—
So, why the heebie-jeebies?
Why?

Do you see something
Strange?

I Be Crazy

You, Too, would Complain

Pardon my polysyllabic rants,
But if you lived my life, by chance,
No doubt you might find that it gives
You equal urge for expletives,
Especially the tragedy
Of being idiotic Me.

Beetling Brow

Inside my skull's a fizzing insectarium
of mystic, magic, merry little things
so wildly pretty that my brain can't carry 'em
without the power of all their tiny wings,
Abuzz with sparkling brilliance and their fleeting,
so speedy that they've utterly forgot
regard for gravity or need for beating,
become instead bright vestiges of thought.
Now, you may think I'm just a bugged-out entity
with not a thought for anything of sense,
but every person has his own bugs, hasn't he,
and with their glittering gleam, the joy's immense;
I never really cared that much for images
or what all others thought my problem was,
but just embraced my inner insects' scimmages,
and love the shiny ways they make *me* buzz.

Convulsions, Convolutions

I'm thinking baroque
Thoughts today,
Internecine and wild—
As weirdly Machiavellian as
The daydreams of a child—

As Byzantine as psychotropic
Drugs could make them be—
But you need not be worried for
My safety: that's just me.

Abnormal Graphology

It crosses my mind as I'm crossing my T's
That my words are a filed-day for analyses;
How I write, what I write, where I write, when and why:
Every dot data done, to the scientist spy.
Paranoia or self-conscious block intervenes;
It's because I don't know, but suspect, what life means.
O insecure writer! I do give a damn.
I'm afraid I'll reveal how abnormal I am.
So scribble in secret, but dot all those i's,
Lest you land in the clutches of literate spies.

To be Honest

It's true that I have fallen down
more often than a chef's soufflés
(or poor Pierre crashed into town
in air-ballooning's early days,
before he noticed heat would crown
the heights but *cold* air caused malaise . . .)
Meanwhile, I stumble, flop and crash,
careening like a loosened wheel,
my dignity thrown out like trash—
but had I grace and nerves of steel,
I'd likely still keep this my fashion—
nothing better proves I'm real.

Going Buggy

I wouldn't say it bugs me
All that much to be indoors,
For after all, my place is not
Much awfuller than yours,
Both having small enclosures and
These windows that won't open,
And both beset with folks who have
Rude ways of interlopin'
Whenever you might think you've got
A chance to set things right
By putting forward fine ideas
Or going home at night,

But if it comes right down to choose,
I guess I'll stick right here—
My rubber room; your office—
'Least I'll get reprieved next year.

Jittery Janus

A slight, but real, absurdity is troubling my mind:
If something is in back of me, it's fronting my behind—
Or is it backing up my front? It's weakening my pride
That heads or tails I can't make out, so coin flips must decide
Whether what's aft is yet before, ahead or what's astern,
Or I'm too turned around and backward-brained to ever learn
If what's before my very eyes affronts my front or back;
Please, someone, sort it, or I think I'll have a heart attack,
For hid behind this placid front, behind the back of me,
Yet also forward of my back, where, sadly, I can't see,
This sad conundrum irritates and pesters me, alack,
For I've no way to know what's going on behind my back.

Love among the Loopy

Infernally Yours

Thou mak'st me hot, O swain of mine, afire with passion, sure,
and art my furnace, blazing beau, so flaming your allure;
What is it getteth in my groove that thou hast, O my heart?
How heat I up, so quickly broiled, as roasting from the start?
Mayhap, thou sneaky Devil, thou hast dropped affection's bomb
When I misjudged it *literal* and went to Match.com!

Opposites Distract

Lavinia, dressed in leopard print,
And Leopold in stripes,
Were destined to collide and clash,
Descend to snips and snipes—
She drinks her coffee black; he sips
Sweet tea with heaps of cream,
And every conversation
Escalates to near a scream—
Yet every fray defuses and
Dissolves in hugs and tears,
For they've adored each other
Through four-dozen blissful years.

Preserving Their Love

Although he loved her well (my mother knew), Dad always said
He'd take her to the taxidermist's shop when she was dead,
For if they sometimes disagreed and chafed from year to year,
He loved her so, he'd never stand not having Mother near—
And Mom, for her part, told Dad when it came to *his* dire case,
She'd have him mummified and hung above the fireplace,
For she, though they might spar a bit, as married couples do,
Loved him in kind and wished to keep him always near her, too.
The postscript to this fairytale, if such things must be said,
Is that I treasure both my parents, both Mummy and Dead.

Medical Messes & Malodorous Monsters

Be Not Ill at Ease

Around my sprockets and my spleen lurk what no doctor's ever seen,
a plethora of arcane ills impossible to treat with pills
or pessaries, with tinctures, teas, or magic potions for disease—
not curable by overhaul of engine, tune-up, electrol-
ysis, electric shock—it's thought by some I will infect them; not
true, though, for what seems to be feared is not contagious—
I'm just *weird*.

Mycological Mysteries & Mishaps

A mushroom-hunter in the woods
has grasped the essence of the goods:
Ingesting whilst she picks and roams,
she damages her chromosomes;
Yet, happy, hopping, fails to know
she killed those brain cells long ago,
And thus can skip through vale and copse
quite blithely, nibbling mushroom-tops—
For nothing is so esoteric
as munching on a Fly Agaric,
But she knows not she shouldn't eat a
bit of tasty *Amanita*—
Thus goes the world, and with it, sense,
when fungus fans face recompense.

A Real Hottie

O radiant beauty, dost thou know
What microwaves thine innards so—
Pray, can it be that bane of men
And women both: yea, estrogen?

**Parting with Parts
is Such Sweet Sorrow**

Can anything be worse, or sadder,
Than to give up one's gallbladder?
Well, perhaps *one* worser quirk:
Still having one that doesn't work...
And one worse yet: the wails and groans
Induced by one that's filled with stones.
So I'll amend Assertion One:
Having a gallbladder's no fun.
But then again, I must concede
That surgery is bad indeed.
It all comes down, if I should guess
To what will save my happiness
More fruitfully: intact gallbladder?
None? Can't say: it doesn't matter,
Since the choice will not be mine—
'Til then, I s'pose I'll be just fine—
I hope. Of course, I still don't know
Whether I even *have* one, though.

All Other Martyrdom is Naught before Mine

This harsh, persistent pain I have, O Doctor, tell me, please,
Can it be cured by some cheap salve, Or have I some disease
Beyond the scope of modern meds And pessaries and pills,
Like something Biblical in scope, One of those icky ills
You read about in magazines, See movies-of-the-week
About so frightful that you Realize that you're a freak
To have such creepy plague, To be afflicted so, withal,
That even specialists will cringe And dash off down the hall
To hide behind their file Cabinets until you leave
Because they're overwhelmed by the Bizarreness they perceive
Upon your person when they see Disturbingly displayed
Such malicious malady It makes them sore afraid.
What say, Sir Doctor? You detect My source of agony?
Who suffers worse than martyrs who Have papercuts, like me!

Unendurable

Ulf was our unctuous uncle
who was uglier than a carbuncle
so we tried to disguise
him from unwary eyes;
but he also stank worse than a skunk'll.

Breathe on Me, Breathalyzer

What is that sulfurous smell?
Is it the mouth of Hell?
Or is it only Morning Breath?
With you, I cannot tell.
Through mystic haze and mystery,
Through funky dark and gloom,
Throughout the house and yard and park
And to the edge of doom,
It penetrates both brain and soul
And harries unto death—
Begone! foul demon, Hell-bound hound,
And take your stinking breath.

Take Thou Thy Hindmost Hence-ward

If thou must wind down, go downwind, please;
I'll remain up here while thou tak'st thy ease,
for I've found if a lady's downwind of thee, she's
immediately an endangered species.

Intermission's Emissions

A thousand pardons, gentlemen
And gentle ladies all!
I'd not the least expected
To be followed down the hall

By those extreme emissions of
The distant porcelain stall.

I fear what has emerged from this
Experience, unchecked,
Is that one may be shadowed by
The clouds one might eject,

And one may not retract
What one regrets in retrospect.

In short, my deep apologies
For what has here amassed
And doubtless left you gentlefolk
Both breathless and aghast;

My error proves that one cannot
Outrun one's evil past.

Missed Manners

Out Cold

Do not the hockey puck invite
Your flaxen brow to cleave
By wearing not your shining helm;
And do not tear your sleeve
Upon the blade of someone's skate;
And don't assay to test
Opponents' blows, save if you wear
A Kevlar hockey vest;
Avoid, if you are able to,
A stick thrust at your sternum,
For whacks like this are undesired
Even by those who earn 'em;
Above all things, I recommend
You not enrage the goalie:
Though wounds are bound to happen here,
Some risks are just unholy.

Pardon My Snoring

My lead-lined eyelids will insist it's time to go to sleep,
So don't be too insulted if I leave to count some sheep;
I find you fascinating and quite scintillating too,
So please don't take it wrong if I should conk right out on you.
Your dazzling personality and brilliance are so bright
It pains me to, but go I must, and bid a fond Good-Night!
Pay no attention to the way I'm backing out the door,
And know your super-excellence could never be a bore.
I sigh, I yawn! But, for all that, it can't be you that tires:
I'm sure it seldom happens that your audience expires!

When Lack of Talent Meets

Lack of Tolerance

When Hazel gets her grizzled hands
Upon the poor harmonium,
Her bashing pains me in the glands
And burns my peritoneum
To the degree that if she plays
Much longer and won't stop right quick,
I'm fairly certain that this haze
Of agony will make me sick.
Don't judge me harshly—you've not heard

Organ so badly played, or you
Would not consider it absurd,
But fear these awful tortures, too.

Call Me Crazy

Oliver doesn't like olives
And Mary thinks marrying's odd
And Colton's allergic to horses
Divina believes in no god
And don't get me started on Philpott
And Sunshine and Robin and Mame
'Cause whatever their parents were thinking
They didn't think What's in a Name

The Note He Left Behind

Once upon a song-sheet
I met a balladeer
Who sang out loud
To a restless crowd
And was answered with a jeer;

The singer lost his patience
And heaved his rounded heft
To leave the stage,
And in his rage,
He mooned them as he left.

A Little Antsy Now

If I could do just as I wished and not a nickel more,
I'd not sit still just listening to any tiresome bore,
But I'm in well-bred company (I'm told), so I must stay,
Attempting to pretend it's deep engrossment I convey—
Meanwhile, my nostril starts to itch and twitch, and I suppose
No one will take much notice if I subtly pick my nose.

Nutty Narratives

It was Different in the Movies

The plucky jewel thief alights,
on glittering but silent nights,
'pon Riviera balconies,
gymnastic in his catlike ease,
delighting in his old-school skills
as much as his collection's thrills,

keeping that gentlemanly style
and cool about him all the while,
but I think he may not be charmed
to learn the safes are now alarmed
and he'll be met, upon alighting,
by men quite differently exciting,
who'll nab and toss him in the clink
with lesser guys—that's what I think—
where he'll discover his new roomie
collects stuff that'll make him gloomy:
I mean, has up his jumpsuit sleeves
(*ahem!*) a Thing for jewel thieves.

Leave the Help at Home

Off she went to see the market, basket full of goods and greens,
And the fond companions with her came to see the market's scenes,
Prancing, dancing, baying, barking, nipping at her head and heels;
By the time they neared the city, all beset by crowds and wheels,
She her petticoats beribboned had all stained and soiled and torn;
Hat askew and heels unbuckled, basket broken, cob and corn
Strewn, her lettuces and flowers flung amain, and so she sat
In the rutted road's dry scours, in the dust, and that was that—
No point now to going onward to the market if she would,
Dog and pony show now ended (at the least, that part was good)—
Then the animals felt sorry for the chaos and the mess,
Made a show to make her cheery, give her back her happiness.
Nothing mended for the market, recompense for not a sou,
But she smiled at how they capered, no more anger and to-do,
And they picked up, swift and swishing, tails and coattails all a-sway,
Backward home, though she was wishing it had gone another way;
To the market back, tomorrow, she would go to sell her wares,
But avoid her current sorrow,
Locking up those pranks of theirs!

Hey, Who's the Real Bad Guy Here?

One day I was evading the police pursuing me,
And by a mere coincidence, I bumped into a tree
That happened, oddly, by surprise, to tip onto a house
And through its roof, which crumpled down, startling a rabid mouse
That shot across the neighbors' lawn and bit their Shih Tzu dog,
Upon which, he upended, deathlike, in aphasic fog;
The neighbor lady found him lying stiff-legged on the lawn
And started in with CPR to save him, thereupon
Shocking the Shih Tzu back to action, sending him a-pounce,

As though he squirted from her arms, to give the mouse a trounce
That sent the rodent racing back to its familiar haunts,
And by the tree, it spotted me, quite startled for the nonce—
The both of us, indeed, taken aback for just that blink,
Until a second later it occurred to me to think
There were some coppers on my tail, and if I didn't scam
They'd find me gaping at a mouse, and clever as I am,
I reached instead and grabbed the little critter by the tail
And strapped him in my seatbelt, so if any went to jail
It would be one that, anyhow, had terrorized a pet,
Whereas I'm just a burglar, and I ain't bit no one yet.

It Takes All Kinds

I am the back end of a pantomime horse,
and I say this without much embarrassed remorse,
because I could never have claimed too much class
to have let people see I'm a true horse's ass.
No reason to laugh, though, or mock me in jest,
since I'm in such fine company with all the rest
of the others (this, straight from the true horse's mouth),
for we know every north end requires its south.
No cause for weeping, dear friends of my heart,
for prancing behind is its own kind of art,
and no matter how foolish the fine equine farce,
better far than play dead to just play the arse.

Expedition Down the Tube

A fellow, exceedingly thin,
Got his auto prepared for a spin;
When he checked the exhaust,
He was sucked in and lost,
Since when nobody knows
Where he's been.

Breathtaking Architecture

Sylvie in her lovely home
Designed a sort of bio-dome
Intended to keep out all ills
Without necessity of pills
Or chemicals or artifice
But found her comfort came to this:
The one small misstep taken there:
That her design won't let in air.

On Not being Quite Specific Enough

An Athabaskan lady and a young Mauritian man
Met on the bus while shuttling to the airport in Japan
And planned a summer get-together in the town of Dent,
But didn't think of all details—yet still, one day they went
To meet each other in that little place—the town so small
They didn't guess there would be need for detailed plans at all—
Sadly, the lady was in Minnesota, with no clue
Her friend was off in Cumbria, the Dent of English hue,
Completely unaware as well that continents away
His lady-friend awaited him, unknowing, that same day—
And so they never met again, each sad the other failed
To know how much they'd hoped to meet, and what it had entailed
To reach their distant rendezvous and keep their destined date,
And neither learned there were two towns named Dent until too late.

Beastly Discovery

Mild-mannered Monsieur Ste.-Hilaire
Went out one night to take the air
And came home newly sharp and snarky
(Full of mischief and malarkey);
I think that maybe in the park, he
Might have met a succulent
Voracious, wild and truculent,
That bit his elbows, left and right,
Infecting him that very night
(As you'd imagine, quite a sight)
With psychedelic thoughts to itch
Him to a highly fevered pitch
Wherein he met another world
And in its vortex, seeing swirled
(The way such rarities are hurled)
Strange creatures in bizarre parade,
He loosed the window, threw the shade
Upon it open just to share
With us the beastly thoughts in there
(Effects of which you're now aware).

Lady Samson

Her hair's grown long now; does this signify
She's stronger yet somehow, or then, have I
Mistaken this adornment so hirsute
For something that a person more acute

Would recognize as only pretty hair?
I'll ponder it (and hope not seem to stare)
Until a sign arises that this length,
If only by its beauty, gives her strength,
For anyway, I oughtn't give a fig
E'en on discovering that it's a wig.

Bumpkin's Comfort

I am not wholly ignorant
Of what a fool I am
But if you'd keep me happy
Just give me a slice of ham
A piece of cheese a bit of bread
Some butter, if you will
And I'll continue happy fool
Slumped up here by the still

Bells Rung a Little Prematurely

Bats of old Belvedere flew out and in
Of the belfry Hieronymus tended
'Til they drove him quite crazy, so is it a sin
That he swung ere the service was ended?

Saturday Night Study Group

(Or, The Craven)

After Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven'

Lo, the lazy morning passes,
Finds the weary lads and lasses
Still abed, or on their asses,
Half awake and half a-snore,
'Mid detritus of the pizza,
Hot wings, chips and other treats a
Sober student seldom eats, a-
Strewn in heaps upon the floor—
 Partied late; what was it for?
Shattering the blissful quiet
Suddenly, a loud impiety
Is screamed and starts a riot
Right among the corpse-like corps:
All a-scramble, grabbing trousers,
Shirts and shoes, these late carousers
Start remembering the wowsers
Of the night they'd passed before,
 Though recall was rather poor—

Finally, wakening more fully,
One of them, if somewhat dully,
Crawled across, his brain still woolly,
To fling wide the knocked-on door
And reveal the dawning horror
Come to waken every snorer,
Standing, looking faintly, more or
Less, like someone seen before—

 Somehow shook him to the core—
Ay! It's Mother stands there staring,
Arms akimbo, nostrils flaring,
Challenging his story, daring
Him again: *Explain this war!*
What's this wreckage, who these bodies
Strewn among the butts and toddies,
Some dressed only in their naughties,
Covered all in festive gore?

 He stood gawping, nothing more.
In the cursèd silence stretching,
From a distance came a retching
Sound and instantly, all fetching
Up as though a manicore
Chased them out of their reclining,
They responded to this shining
Call and left the poor repining
Lad, with Mother, at the door,

 Beast and trembling matador.
Dust now settling, son and mother
Gazed intently on each other,
Understood this bit of bother
Must be rectified, the score
Evened out: this was the chore.
Mother, calm now and quite cool,
Explains to him that, while in school,
Her son shall still observe the rule
Of sober thought. The lad's encore:

Will I party? Nevermore!

 (And means well, just as before.)

The Unexpected is the Unavoidable

Barton and Begonia were
Adrift in their skiff at sea,
When, very much to their surprise,

They ran into a tree—
And Zip! Their little
Emerald boat
Began, straight off, to sink;
They thought while going down:
Perhaps we should have had less drink.

International Intrigue

Jean-Jacques is from the south of France,
Where they grow large man-eating plants
And cars are driven in reverse
By drivers in orange underpants
Who smoke big tarragon cigars
While tooling in their backward cars.

Meanwhile, out in the Netherlands
Lives Kees van Winkel, who pretends
He is a dentist, pulling teeth
From random passersby, and sends
Short telegrams off to Jean-Jacques
To try to give his friend a shock.

Across the border, deep in Spain,
Dwells Castellita, whose large brain,
Like other Spaniards', sends out rays
That fry hens' eggs and entertain
The children with projected shows
About an ex-dictator's nose.

Her dear friend Hulda von der Norder
Lives across the German border,
Doing headstands in a pond and
Holding an old tape recorder
While preparing to extend
Her free foot, waving to her friend.

Piratic Fanatic

Old Pirates Never Die

Regardless of his occupation,
Calling, nature, what you will,
There's no transition for the pirate
Who "retires" from loot-and-kill;
Such ingrained behavior, action,

Predilection and delight
Won't be stopped or set aside
As long as he remains upright,
And be honest: few among
The pirate nation really croak,
But to nice folks' indignation,
Are too ornery sorts of folk
To allow that sort of respite
For those who are put-upon—
Mean guys live, I think, to keep us
From enjoying that they've gone.

All Hands on Deck

(and If You Ain't Got Both of Yourn, Git Along Up There Anyhow!)

Methinks the parley perilous with pirates gaudy, garrulous,
spectacularly scare-ulous, with too much time to spare;
That's when the day gets dicier, the swordplay sharply spicier,
and nastily not-nicier linguistics fill the air,
For pirates, though a jolly sort, think keelhauling the keenest sport,
'n' walkin' the plank, starboard or port, a fine means to such ends;
So watch your tongue (and your nose 'n' ears) when a peg-legged, cutlassed cur appears
and he with his Hook-fist henchmen nears, for they are risk-fraught friends
Who'll trim the hedges about your garden without so much as a beg-yer-pardon,
then trim *you* to size without regardin' your nat'ral breadth or height;
So parley with care, and watch your purses, as well as the strength of your pirate curses,
or fall beyond reach of the leech's nurses ere day drops into night.
All this aside, and despite the urge a pirate may feel as a dramaturge,
he might invite you to join the surge toward a pleasanter thing to do:
Join with his crew, ye smirkin' smarty, drink and be merry and join the party,
and dance and laugh like a loon most hearty, and talk like a pirate too!

Aye, Aieeeee!

When he was young he was swayed by the sea,
and he strayed by the sea and stayed by the sea—
his spirit was formed and was made by the sea—
he was in it up to his neck!
He knew he would have to succumb to the sea,
to come to the sea and bring some to the sea—
(of his very best valor—and rum—to the sea)—
he looked forward to it like heck!
And when he was older he reigned on the sea;
he was trained on the sea and remained on the sea—
until his affections grew strained on the sea—
that's when the real Poop hit the Deck!

Undercurrents

Under Wonders

The measure of a man when he's
undressed down to his BVDs
is neither like to leave impressed
anyone more than when he's dressed—
nor less, in truth, than womankind
in underwear *their* measure find,
and neither males' nor females' worth
has any price at all on earth
determined by the clothes they wear—
or, Emperor-like, when nothing's there—
no looks reveal, nor can they hide,
our value, for it lives inside—
and gender draws an "I don't care"
in terms of styles that people wear
or of their color, shape, or size,
for naught of value in that wise
is clearly shown. Small are these parts,
compared to what lives in our hearts.

...and for Pete's Sake, Wear Clean Underwear

Do not go out until you've donned your hat and gloves and purse,
coiffed up your hair and done your nails, 'cause there is nothing worse
for guaranteeing that you'll meet, the minute you go out,
the entire cadre of the folk you worry most about
impressing with your savoir-faire, professional decorum,
with taste & charm & grace & cool and, since you can't ignore 'em,
can't duck or cover with a veil or hide behind a screen,
the people you would best avoid will see that you've been seen:
the catty broad from book club, the doyennes of Fashion Week,
your boss's wife, your long-lost love; and even as we speak,
they're each of them gussying up to go out on the town,
so do the same and don't delay, and skip the dressing-down.

Ghost in the (Washing) Machine

While rushing through the underbrush in rustling underwear,
Ermina realized she'd run from Things that Were Not There—
She paused to contemplate with rue what might appear insane—
By when her sense returned in full, They'd captured her again.
The moral of this story, if there is one to be had,

Is: when you feel Things closing in, at least you can be glad,
No matter if They're real or not, or if you're caught anon,
At least to be returned to sense with underpants still on.

Unsportsmanlike

I May Not Ski Well, But Boy, Do I Ski

I skied a lot of miles this week
And though it may behoove, it
Does not demand that I display
My purple parts to prove it.

Après-Ski

I'm as sore as sore can be
And happy to be aching
Because I earned this agony
Without my ankles breaking.

So Nearly Perfect

The batter struck a daring pose,
Looked down his long an pointed nose,
Raised up his bat and swung so hard
The ball should simply clear the yard
And leap the fence with perfect ease,
As sharp and glorious as you please,
Except this microscopic thing:
He faced the backstop for that swing.

The Height and Depth of Insults

Karabiners, caravans,
and Sherpas by the score
I may have scaled
the highest peaks,
but
won't do anymore
Because I fell
right off of one
and now
my
backside's
sore.