

# A TOUCH OF JAZZ

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## **The Obvious**

the obvious  
is so easily overlooked

like the nuclear furnace  
eight light minutes away  
tossing neutrinos at earth

hot sliders over fir tree tops  
catch the corner of snow  
strike two

time and age become compression  
life shoved deep into  
the pit of eternity

black boiling mill at the  
center of heaven  
smoke galore

life slides on the glassy downhill  
falls through the jaws of gravity

rides an emission of particles  
eating the faces of clocks,

howls at the hole where  
the sun once burned

brightly

## **Paradise**

I wonder  
at this juncture  
if the cold  
is colder or  
if the bones  
are older

looking out upon  
a spread of white  
and still evergreen  
bound in arctic  
wrapper

it is impossible  
to believe  
that somewhere in  
latitudes south  
below the dotted  
center circle

there waves  
fronds in sea  
breezes and sunshine  
kisses warm  
brown skin

but with the  
wisdom of one  
who has trekked  
such paths  
I close my  
eyes and let  
memory prevail

and soon  
find myself  
once again  
plying Paradise

standing on  
the prow

eating warm  
sunshine

smiling

## **It dawned on me**

that we all sing  
songs of self  
for others  
no matter the key  
or tempo  
the shades or tones

whether by  
big lakes in  
long white dreams  
or down in  
provinces where  
the hickory nuts grow  
or even in  
the realm of  
deeper Dixie South

too far below  
the Mason D to even  
see a shadow  
skirt the ground

poems are now  
jungle drums on  
electric wires  
speed of light  
transmissions  
of thought  
or something posing  
as thought

poems are purveyors  
of what's shakin'  
inside and out  
up and down  
words that fit  
or don't

poems are as  
natural as  
cigarettes and coffee  
daylight in the window  
news or weather  
rattling in the

TV background

maybe even breath

I write no  
great poems  
this day  
just a mass  
of words  
flung through ether  
by marvels  
beyond my  
comprehension

characters that  
come to rest  
on retinas  
that never burned  
my image  
in reality

and it dawns  
on me that  
life may be  
much more grand

than we are  
ever willing

to admit

## Hereafter

Age plays  
a dirge  
deep in  
the hollow of  
my bones

soon  
I shall become  
light as a  
feather  
float  
through space  
toward the light  
called home

gather around  
the campfire  
with all those  
old muggers  
who have  
beaten me  
to the punch

Hank  
yodeling the blues  
while oak smoke  
cuts the creases  
in an angular  
face shadowed  
by the brim  
of a John B.  
Stetson

Elvis  
shaking a spiritual leg  
throwing that famous  
crooked grin  
and dreaming of  
a PB&B sandwich  
fried in  
butter

Carver  
blinking above

pudgy cheeks and  
sharpening his  
last pencil  
missing the final  
weed that killed  
him more than  
he ever dreamed  
possible

we are all  
gathered by  
the fire  
ready to  
recount the  
retreat of  
sanity from  
the last  
bastion

a congregation of  
three wise men  
and a fool

my dunce cap  
bending in  
the evening  
breeze

*I coulda been  
a contenda  
sez I*

my best Brando  
imitation

*but hell  
you boys need  
somebody to  
lug the  
wood*

*and say when  
supper won't be*

*served*

## **Crazy**

the psycho ward  
had gillette razors  
with a keyhole  
in the end of  
the handle

a dude in white  
locked in a  
fresh blade  
for each shave

before stainless steel  
mirrors under lights  
recessed and covered  
with steel mesh

meals were  
regular silverware  
sans  
the knives  
and they  
counted it all  
when  
dinner was done

every day they  
handed out packs  
of chesterfields and  
old golds

but only the  
main man  
had matches

one morning an inmate  
was released  
he pledged to be  
done with the place  
mainly a tank  
for chronic drunks

later during TV hour  
a hue and cry  
warrior struggle

they dragged him in  
wild and insane  
crazy drunk

he'd found freedom  
at the nearest bar  
gone back to nutland  
behind an overdose  
of alcohol

thrown in the floor  
dosed with  
paraldehyde  
off to the  
rubber room  
to vegetate

atop a green hill  
above blue ocean  
a loony bin on  
a pearl of land

tourists strolling  
kapiolani blvd never  
knew we were  
there

## Life

I sit around most days  
In an old bathrobe marred  
By countless cigarette burns  
Like a poor man's Hugh Hefner  
Except for the half dozen girlfriends  
And a case of Viagra in  
The basement.

No mansion in Hombly Hills,  
Just a simple little wood frame abode  
That I have called home on and off  
Since 1960, in those spans between  
Wives and jobs, blue runs to here and there  
Always seeking success and good luck that  
Managed mostly to  
Elude me.

No Rolls to carry me to the local equivalent  
Of the Viper Room, which might be Goob's Tavern  
A gun and knife club of distinction  
Just an old tattered rider sitting under the holly tree  
Battery dead since sometime last fall  
Gathering dust and bird droppings  
Like its owner.

Each day I spend hours sitting here in one spot  
In a little room of perhaps 12' x 15' dimensions  
Breathing second-hand smoke that would set the  
American Lung Association into a slaving fit  
Failing eyesight battling the fog to see this  
Electrode that gleams in my face until  
It's pasty tan from radiation.

I've been in this configuration for over two years  
Going abroad on Fridays only unless there is  
Some pressing need, some essential forgotten  
During the last run to the store, the post office,  
The coffee shop.

Five years ago the idea of living like this would  
Have been unthinkable, beyond my comprehension  
For I was out and about, working, gathering news  
Bothering people, making a few friends and  
A lot of enemies.

Now I understand that I have gotten past  
The point that matters, the place where life balances  
On the beam, on the teeter-totter of existence  
What days are left will come and I will take them or  
I will leave them and be not the better or worst for it  
No matter which way the cookie crumbles.

It's not that I don't care in some deep place but  
That I'm not concerned because, at some point  
Nothing is worth concern, worth worry, worth the  
Sweat off your balls.

One can't play the game and then blame others  
For bad wagers, silly bets better left held in hand  
Because the game goes on no matter how soon or  
How late you slide the chair back and walk away  
From the table.

But what the hell, it's all been sweet this  
Long ride down, even the rough parts where  
The path went convex against the future and the  
Past rushed up in dusty array to cover any  
Good deed by accident done.

Be they few and far between.

## **I want to die on a cold day**

the smoke of my bones  
sullyng a leaden sky  
my soul clinging fast

to the wheels  
of heaven

groaning over stars  
seen from the  
backside  
light reversed

black holes  
whirring like saucers  
in a b-movie

riding the tunnel  
of light through  
a prism bent in  
shades of gray

diffused melodic  
dispersal of  
protons

shotgun approach  
to universal nothing

boom scatter  
boom scatter scatter

a silent rock band  
of negative matter  
windmill on strings  
of rays

solar wind tooting  
the horn of  
nothing

it's like jazz in  
the void

yeah jazz in the void

all that noise  
and nothing  
much

## Roads

I return time and again  
to the familiar theme  
of roads.

Roads long and bent  
roads straight as the  
proverbial arrow, leading nowhere.

We lean into winds on roads  
whose culmination always stands  
beyond the scope of our eyes,  
black lines bleeding stains of  
twisted memory down wells  
of bent brain tissue.

There is no morning on these roads,  
no evening yet to come. There is only  
the surge of invisible traffic singing  
in the lanes of the soul, the taste of

exhaust gasses yet to be dreamed,  
the unknown sound of motors unmade,  
the slow slide of clock hands  
unmade,

sweeping faces too grim to ponder.

## **The Arms of Winter**

I am certain only  
of the arms of winter;  
melodious clouds waltzing  
above scraggly limbs that  
bend back toward summer.

Life has become a rote standard  
closely woven of taut fabric,  
a mass spread of cold butter on  
white bread days, indifferent.

All things age before my eyes,  
and in the morning mirror.

Memory bleeds sorrow across my face,  
the countenance of one disappointed by time,  
twisted in mental kinks by the way things are.

But soon shall come spring or sanctuary,  
the long unwinding of stiff limbs-  
or perhaps the stiffening of limbs long loose

There is no sunshine in the afterlife,  
but then there is no night.

There is only forever and nothingness;  
all we seek to avoid and finally,  
all we ever want or need.

## **The Trick to Surviving**

the trick to  
surviving  
is not to  
steel the body  
to beat  
the street tough  
you can't  
whip

but  
to harden  
the heart  
to turn away  
the thrusts  
of pain  
thrown by  
soft hands  
that once  
touched lightly

with love