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***The Man He Killed***

*Thomas Hardy*

*1840-1928*

"Had he and I but met

By some old ancient inn,

We should have sat us down to wet

Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,

And staring face to face,

I shot at him as he at me,

And killed him in his place.

"I shot him dead because —

Because he was my foe,

Just so: my foe of course he was;

That's clear enough; although

"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,

Off-hand like — just as I —

Was out of work — had sold his traps —

No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!

You shoot a fellow down

You'd treat if met where any bar is,

Or help to half-a-crown."

***A Study of Reading Habits***

*Philip Larkin*

*1922-1985*

When getting my nose in a book

Cured most things short of school,

It was worth ruining my eyes

To know I could still keep cool,

And deal out the old right hook

To dirty dogs twice my size.

Later, with inch-thick specs,

Evil was just my lark:

Me and my cloak and fangs

Had ripping times in the dark.

The women I clubbed with sex!

I broke them up like meringues.

Don't read much now: the dude

Who lets the girl down before

The hero arrives, the chap

Who's yellow and keeps the store

Seem far too familiar. Get stewed:

Books are a load of crap.

***Is my team plowing***

*A.E. Housman*

*1859-1936*

“Is my team ploughing,

That I was used to drive

And hear the harness jingle

When I was man alive?”

Ay, the horses trample,

The harness jingles now;

No change though you lie under

The land you used to plough.

“Is football playing

Along the river shore,

With lads to chase the leather,

Now I stand up no more?”

Ay the ball is flying,

The lads play heart and soul;

The goal stands up, the keeper

Stands up to keep the goal.

“Is my girl happy,

That I thought hard to leave,

And has she tired of weeping

As she lies down at eve?”

Ay, she lies down lightly,

She lies not down to weep:

Your girl is well contented.

Be still, my lad, and sleep.

“Is my friend hearty,

Now I am thin and pine,

And has he found to sleep in

A better bed than mine?”

Yes, lad, I lie easy,

I lie as lads would choose;

I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart,

Never ask me whose.

***Break of Day***

*John Donne*

*1572-1631*

‘Tis true, ‘tis day, what though it be?

O wilt thou therefore rise from me?

Why should we rise because ‘tis light?

Did we lie down because ‘twas night?

Love, which in spite of darkness brought us hither,

Should in despite of light keep us together.

Light hath no tongue, but is all eye;

If it could speak as well as spy,

This were the worst that it could say,

That being well I fain would stay,

And that I loved my heart and honour so,

That I would not from him, that had them, go.

Must business thee from hence remove?

Oh, that’s the worst disease of love,

The poor, the foul, the false, love can

Admit, but not the busied man.

He which hath business, and makes love, doth do

Such wrong, as when a married man doth woo.

***There’s been a Death, in the Opposite House***

*Emily Dickinson*

*1830-1886*

There’s been a Death, in the Opposite House,

As lately as Today —

I know it, by the numb look

Such Houses have — alway —

The Neighbors rustle in and out —

The Doctor — drives away —

A Window opens like a Pod —

Abrupt — mechanically —

Somebody flings a Mattress out —

The Children hurry by —

They wonder if it died — on that —

I used to — when a Boy —

The Minister — goes stiffly in —

As if the House were His —

And He owned all the Mourners — now —

And little Boys — besides —

And then the Milliner — and the Man

Of the Appalling Trade —

To take the measure of the House —

There’ll be that Dark Parade —

Of Tassels — and of Coaches — soon —

It’s easy as a Sign —

The Intuition of the News —

In just a Country Town —

***Mirror***

*Sylvia Plath*

*1932-1963*

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.

What ever you see I swallow immediately

Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.

I am not cruel, only truthful---

The eye of a little god, four-cornered.

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.

It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long

I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.

Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,

Searching my reaches for what she really is.

Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.

She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

I am important to her. She comes and goes.

Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.

In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman

Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

***Discovery of the New World***

*Carter Revard*

*b. 1931*

The creatures that we met this morning

marveled at our green skins

and scarlet eyes.

They lack antennae

and can’t be made to grasp

your proclamation that they are

our lawful food and prey and slaves,

nor can they seem to learn

their body-space is needed to materialize

our oxygen absorbers –

which they conceive are breathing

and thinking creatures whom they implore

at first as angels or (later) as devils

when they are being snuffed out

by an absorber swelling

into their space.

Their history bled from one this morning

while we were tasting his brain

in holographic rainbows

which we assembled into quite an interesting

set of legends –

that’s all it came to, though

the colors were quite lovely before we

poured them into our time;

the blue shift bleached away

meaningless circumstance and they would not fit

any of our truth-matrices –

there was, however,

a curious visual echo in their history

of our own coming to their earth;

a certain General Sherman

had said concerning a group of them

exactly what we were saying to you

about these creatures:

it is our destiny to asterize this planet,

and they will not be asterized,

so they must be wiped out.

We need their space and oxygen

which they do not know how to use,

yet they will not give up their gas unforced,

and we feel sure,

whatever our “agreements” made this morning,

we’ll have to kill them all:

the more we cook this orbit,

the fewer next time around.

We’ve finished burning all their crops

and killed their cattle.

They’ll have to come into our pens

and then we’ll get to study

the way our heart attacks and cancers spread among them,

since they seem not immune to these.

If we didn’t have this mission it might be sad

to see such helpless creatures die,

but never fear,

the riches of this place are ours

and worth whatever pain others may have to feel.

We’ll soon have it cleared

as in fact it is already, at the poles.

Then we will be safe, and rich, and happy here forever.

***Eros Turannos***

*Edwin Arlington Robinson*

*1869-1935*

She fears him, and will always ask

What fated her to choose him;

She meets in his engaging mask

All reasons to refuse him;

But what she meets and what she fears

Are less than are the downward years,

Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs

Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity

That once had power to sound him,

And Love, that will not let him be

The Judas that she found him,

Her pride assuages her almost,

As if it were alone the cost.—

He sees that he will not be lost,

And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees

Envelops and allures him;

Tradition, touching all he sees

Beguiles and reassures him;

And all her doubts of what he says

Are dimmed with what she knows of days—

Till even prejudice delays

And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates

The reign of her confusion;

The pounding wave reverberates

The dirge of her illusion;

And home, where passion lived and died,

Becomes a place where she can hide,

While all the town and harbor side

Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,

The story as it should be,—

As if the story of a house

Were told, or ever could be;

We’ll have no kindly veil between

Her visions and those we have seen,—

As if we guessed what hers have been,

Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they

That with a god have striven,

Not hearing much of what we say,

Take what the god has given;

Though like waves breaking it may be,

Or like a changed familiar tree,

Or like a stairway to the sea

Where down the blind are driven.

***Against Love***

*Katherine Philips*

*1631-1664*

Hence Cupid! with your cheating toys,

Your real griefs, and painted joys,

Your pleasure which itself destroys.

Lovers like men in fevers burn and rave,

And only what will injure them do crave.

Men's weakness makes love so severe,

They give him power by their fear,

And make the shackles which they wear.

Who to another does his heart submit,

Makes his own idol, and then worships it.

Him whose heart is all his own,

Peace and liberty does crown,

He apprehends no killing frown.

He feels no raptures which are joys diseased,

And is not much transported, but still pleased

***Hidden Meaning***

*Dabney Stuart*

*b. 1937*

Both Hansel and Jack hated their mothers:

Jack sold the old cow

so she threw his seeds away;

Hansel let his feel his fingers a lot

and then stuffed her in the oven.

Their fathers were troublesome, too:

one was a wimp willing to sacrifice

his children; the other was so big

he had to be cut down, stalk first.

We know nothing about Rumplestiltskin's

parents, but he played by himself in the woods

and when he couldn't get a baby by proxy

stuck his wooden leg through the floor.

The two boys finally got rich, like Cinderella,

but beyond that the ends are obscure.

Maybe they entered life, and found it to be

its own magic fable, as consequential

as any Snow White Blood Red,

and on the surface, true.