

NUMBER POEMS  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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Published 2007

Printed by CafePress.com in the United States of America





## ONE

One is like the first fish from the sea:  
Near crazy with delight merely to be,  
Each stone or star an equal mystery.



## THREE

Three year olds have friends grownups call toys:  
Honey-colored bears with grumpy eyes,  
Raggedy Anns whose smiles smother cries,  
Elfin princesses and rag-tag boys,  
Each doing what friends do with tears and joys.



## FIVE

Five year olds are children of the shore:  
In a wash of letters, sounds, and words,  
Viewing them like small, web-footed birds,  
Entranced and frightened by their hungry roar.



## SEVEN

Seven is an age of right and wrong;  
Each choice is shaped to fit its proper slot;  
Vacancies have partners that belong  
Exactly in their customary spot;  
Nor would a truth dare be what it's not!



## NINE

Nine is an age when children like to lie:  
Instantly, the world is rearranged!  
Nothing is the same, and nothing's changed,  
Except an angel waves one last goodbye.



## ELEVEN

Eleven is a lovely, slender tree,  
Leaves fluttering like bright green butterflies.  
Each root is tuned to murmurs in the skies,  
Veering deep dark down deliciously.  
Even as the root winds towards its lair,  
New winds caress the sapling's long green hair.



## THIRTEEN

Thirteen is a very lucky age!  
Happiness comes tumbling out the door  
Instantly a-giggle with a friend,  
Returning with the bounce of empty bliss.  
There's no better ecstasy than this,  
Even when the strange teen changes end,  
Even when one finally knows the score.  
No time of life's more bubbly than this stage.



FOR YOU LIFE OUGHT  
TO BE A SILVER DANCER

For you life ought to be a silver dancer:  
In moonlight, starlight, dancing through your heart.  
For you the dream of beauty should be burning,  
Trembling with the passion of your yearning,  
Even as your days may come apart;  
Even as you rummage for an answer,  
Not knowing that it lies within your art.



## SEVENTEEN

Seventeen pounds heavy in the bass  
Exactly ten feet from the danger sign.  
Vandals had less chaos-lust than these  
Ecstatic children of our mores and malls.  
Now they tumble, burning, molten steel  
To their molds like white-hot waterfalls,  
Empty, plunging hearts too sheer to freeze  
Each time the lights go on, the worlds align,  
No wall of sound across one's ravaged face.



## NO MORE FAVORS, PLEASE

No more favors, please!  
I'm already choked with people,  
Nice people, sweetly moved,  
Expecting themselves in the mirror.  
Time to look at your watches,  
Ease yourselves into lounges,  
Enjoy the quiet of taking,  
No more intrusive than trees.



## TOUGH AND LOVELY

Tough and lovely, to see my child gain  
What personality she will assume,  
Each bit and gesture worked on year by year,  
No stopping till the character is clear.  
Tough and lovely, to see the child remain  
Yet underneath the mask that is her doom.

Only slowly does the child disappear,  
Not needing me to kiss away all pain,  
Entering alone the darkened room.



## TRUTH IS JUST THE OPPOSITE OF SENSE

Truth is just the opposite of sense:  
What we know will lift, eventually, like fog.  
Each paradox is like a shining face  
Nodding vacantly across a room.  
The only source of thought is innocence,  
Yet we must wear the colors of the wog.

The signature of arrogance is grace:  
How can we know, except that we presume?  
Reason robs the soul of nutrients:  
Each heart constructs its own bright carapace;  
Each mystery divides within its womb.



## TWENTY-FIVE

Twenty-five has come into her own,  
Wise enough to winnow what she dreams.  
Even in the landscape of her face  
No destination but has found its place,  
Though growing up is harder than it seems.  
Yearnings do not die through will alone.

For now there is a firmness in her tone  
Indicative of some internal grace  
Vividly attentive in its space,  
Elegant and certain what it means.



## TWENTY-SEVEN

Twenty-seven's not a time for scheming:  
Winds within will find the western shore.  
Each choice seems near immobilized with meaning,  
Nor does one dare indulge the drift of dreaming,  
Though winds and dreams alone tell what's in store.  
Years dwindle as one wrestles with a door.

Some morning you'll be young again, and sailing  
Easily along a quiet bay,  
Viewing hills you've walked among, and failing  
Even to recall one tortured day  
Nothing told your heart what it must say.



## TWENTY-NINE

Twenty-nine enjoys a certain peace,  
Well beyond the waterfalls of youth.  
Even though the current still moves on,  
Now it slowly slides beneath a calm,  
Tranquil surface mirroring the truth.  
Years bring change, but now change will decrease.

Now the restless surges, raw, uncouth,  
In passing through the heart will do less harm;  
Nor will the ravages of wonder cease,  
Even as they take a different form.



## THE THIRTIES: WHEN DREAMS CRASH AGAINST THE SHORE

The thirties: when dreams crash against the shore,  
Hungering to change the littoral.  
In time, the lulling rhythms of these surges  
Realign the objects of one's urges,  
Threatening a fade to pastoral.  
Years break like dreams that sing of something more.

Often one forgets the miracle,  
Not recalling how delight emerges  
Easily, the sweet, sweet days of yore.



## THIRTY-THREE

Thirty-three: the age Christ died on the cross.  
Has one need for birthdays more than this?  
In such short span one may our souls revise,  
Remake our worlds and liberate our eyes,  
Terrify us with the threat of bliss—  
Yet years roll on with neither gain nor loss.

The secret of happiness is always love,  
However long one lives. Birthdays wheel  
Round and round this truth like raucous cries,  
Eased into a vast silence, unreal,  
Eased into a calm winds cannot move.



## THIRTY-FIVE

Thirty-five's a whisper in the sunlight  
Half-submerged in butterflies and bees.  
Intimations run like rutted scars,  
Remembrances of wounds beneath delight  
Thick with summer bloom like rainbow seas.  
Yet night brings on a wild rage of stars.

For what is this ejaculate of light?  
In pain and wonder, agony and ease,  
Viewing silent, distant ecstasies,  
Estranged from emptiness by silken bars.



## THIRTY-SEVEN

Thirty-seven's way far out to sea.  
Home is now within. The child's the dream.  
In darkness you're a lantern in a chain  
Reaching cross the waves in love and pain,  
Though less alone by day than you might seem.  
Years pass. The wind is yours. You're strong and free.

So does your late youth linger gracefully,  
Even as your eyes subdue their gleam,  
Vibrant still, though darker. And the plain,  
Easy truths dissolve in mystery.  
Nor will you want to visit them again.



THERE ARE NO WORDS TO SAY  
HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU

There are no words to say how much I love you:  
Half my love might fit into a song.  
In times of prayer I look for you to hold,  
Reaching for you more as I grow old,  
Taking, as I gave when I was strong.  
Years have turned the tides of Being towards you.

Now my hopes are reconfigured for you:  
In me there's no bright dream for which I long,  
Nor measure of my pride as I behold  
Each day the grace your childhood foretold.



It's OK, being forty:  
Still a child,  
Always children,  
Lying equally in the arms of life and death,  
Knowing beauty and terror,  
Peace and agitation,  
Mother and daughter,  
Father and son,  
Giver and needer—

Hold me to your heart,  
Be still.



## FORTY-TWO

Forty-two surrenders to desire,  
Opening the door to greet the wind.  
Revelation ever comes unbidden,  
The gift of sight to those who travel blind,  
Yielding all a pilgrim might require.

To love is to go through an open fire,  
Witness to what life one has been given  
Only after fear is left behind.



## FORTY-FOUR

Forty-four goes voyaging at home,  
On a journey deep into her heart.  
Rest assured she does not go alone,  
Though none who travels with her can take part.  
Years flow swiftly through the gates of stone.

For her there are old continents to chart,  
Old shoals new revealed, old harbors known,  
Unvisited but by the dames of art,  
Restored now in a mirror, one by one.



## FORTY-SIX

Forty-six has much to celebrate,  
Open as she is to wind and song,  
Riding what rough beasts might come along,  
Traveling through the wilderness of fate  
Yet knowing that the soul is ever young.

So may she weather well the storms of state  
In love that lies beyond all joy and longing,  
Xerox of the unknown infinite.



## FORTY-EIGHT

Forty-eight finds little to regret,  
Opening her arms to what is hers.  
Revelations are a daily joy,  
Though there is much that weighs upon the heart,  
Yearning for what now will never be.

Everyone would change some things, and yet  
In truth the gift of life is what occurs.  
Given that some would sweet days destroy,  
Her love's a gift from which she would not part,  
The denouement no actor could foresee.



## FIFTY

Fifty's full of life and well-tuned vigor,  
In full career across a fertile field.  
Fears of night from time to time may trigger  
Thoughts that an exquisite sadness yield.  
Yet life is still as rich and sweet as ever.



## FIFTY-TWO

Fifty-two is like a full-blown flower  
Iridescent with the sheen of days.  
Fine petals droop just slightly towards the floor,  
Thin velvet strokes of beauty, wanting more,  
Yearning in the sunlight of our gaze.

There is no loss of happiness, for our  
Wishes haunt the windings of our ways,  
Opening each turn another door.



## FIFTY-FOUR

Fifty-four finds few to sing her glory.  
In what one is must be one's sole reward.  
Fair fortune is no substitute for being  
The passionate apostle of a word.  
Yet endings do not vary with the story.

For her, it is enough to bear the beauty  
Of singing one small note of some vast chord,  
Unknowable but in the act of seeing  
Resplendent the hard road she has endured.



## FIFTY-SIX

Fifty-six feels frequently at home,  
Internally at ease with who she is.  
For her the journey's flattened to a sea  
That has no moorings marked as hers or his.  
Years yield peace, though yearnings yet may roam.

So do the turning days become a poem  
In which the questions vanish from the quiz,  
X'd out by an unchained serenity.



## FIFTY-EIGHT

Fifty-eight still finds delight in learning.  
Implicit in her passion is her love  
For being and devotion to its treasures,  
The things that in one's life most lasting prove  
Yet never cease to fill the heart with yearning.

Ever in her eyes the lamp is burning,  
Innocence regained at one remove,  
Granted those who pioneer their pleasures,  
Habitué of lands they know not of,  
Travelers to morning, turning, turning . . .



## SIXTY

Sixty is an age a bit too ripe.  
If our hearts deny it, still we know.  
X-rays may not give us cause to gripe,  
Though old-age aches have just begun to show.  
Yet we have many, many dreams to go.



## SIXTY-TWO

Sixty-two is not an age for mourning.  
In time one takes a long and varied tour.  
Xylophones may tinkle without warning,  
Then turn to screams one hardly can endure.  
Yet of change itself one can be sure.

There is within us all, forever dawning,  
Whether chaste or wisely immature,  
Of hunger wrought, a joy unbound and pure.



## SING A SONG OF SWEET BUT SILENT BEAUTY

Sing a song of sweet but silent beauty  
In which a pensive soul might be sustained.  
Xerophytes prefer to be arraigned,  
Tough and spare, before the bar of duty.  
Yet there are those whose wills are more restrained.

For such, there are no goals to be attained.  
Open to the wind, nor wise nor witty,  
Unmoved by wealth yet wounded well by pity,  
Rich in harmony, they live unchained.



## SIXTY-SIX

Sixty-six sits quietly at home,  
Immersed in the sweet turpitude of time.  
Xylophones play softly in the wind,  
The chattering of children in their chime,  
Yet distant, as though faintly on the phone.

So does nostalgia come into its own,  
Innocent as passion in its prime,  
X-ing out what laws it would rescind.



## SIXTY-EIGHT

Sixty-eight sings silently of light,  
Inner song reflecting inner grace.  
Xylophones send messages by wind:  
Tapestries no hand can hope to trace;  
Yearnings no beatitude can blight.

Even in the fortress of the mind,  
Intimations of the coming night  
Give way to what no fortune can rescind:  
Here, and only here, is paradise,  
The moment that gives beauty time and place.



## SEVENTY

Seventy's a lush, high mountain meadow  
Eerie in the silence of its sky:  
Vividly awash in alpine flowers,  
Easy in the soft and vagrant hours,  
Not quite at home but loathe to question why.  
The moon shines through the veil, pocked and sallow,  
Yet still the sun casts down its golden eye.



## SEVENTY-TWO

Seventy-two is in the thick of things.  
Each day he meshes like a gear with power.  
Vested in the future, he discerns  
Entrances everywhere he turns,  
Nor does he mourn the passing of the hour.  
To be is to be rich in all life brings,  
Yet he finds greatest joy in what he earns.

There is but little he does not devour.  
Working as he does, his hunger churns.  
Over him the darkness spreads its wings.



## SING ME AN OLD-AGE LULLABY

Sing me an old-age lullaby that soothes  
Each age-old plaint of a bewildered heart.  
Vision me a melody that lingers  
Easy in the hallways east of dreams,  
Naked once again to passion singers  
Touch with the precision of their art,  
Yearning neither joy nor pain removes.

From Brighton Head the dark ship moves  
Offshore to wait its part.  
Unbind the moon, O pale-eyed singers!  
Regard what the hour redeems.



## SEVENTY-SIX

Seventy-six is steadfastly old fashioned,  
Ever certain of his old-world ways.  
Vested in the truth of what he knows,  
Each parable in place, he comes and goes,  
Not seeing what his landscape overlays,  
The stream that underneath the ice still flows.  
Yet only what he ordered meets his gaze.

So is his understanding strictly rationed,  
In keeping with the passion of his pose,  
X-ing out whatever time betrays.



## SEVENTY-EIGHT

Seventy-eight swims violently upstream,  
Emerging, like a fish, where she was born,  
Very near to death as well as dawn,  
Equally at the borderline of dream,  
Now stripped bare of the identity  
That years put on, once more no more to be,  
Yet in the shallows, where shadows dart and gleam.

Each singing moment finds an open seam,  
Invading with its music worlds forlorn,  
Granting with renewed simplicity  
Heaven's gift to those of shelter shorn,  
That would alone with beauty death redeem.



## EIGHTY

Eighty is once again in love!  
It is a bit ridiculous, but true.  
Glad as a teenager just to linger near him,  
Happy just to silently revere him,  
The full heart and empty head not new,  
Yet again the yearning we are made of.



## EIGHTY-TWO

Eighty-two is in the golden years,  
In tolerable good heath and well secured.  
Granted luck, advantages well used,  
Having saved, temptation oft refused,  
The pensioner is comfortably insured.  
Yet past the bright blue sky lie certain fears.

There is in each a child bereft, in tears,  
Whose pure, untutored terror has endured,  
Out of darkness come, alone, confused.



## EARLY ON, THERE'S A POINT TO REGRET

Early on, there's a point to regret:  
In creative pain, one can make changes.  
Grief is a wild, foolish, helpless rebellion,  
Heart against stone, desire smashing against  
The locked fact, the impenetrable event,  
Yielding nothing but the wash back into life.

For one who grieves, there's no point to regret:  
One lives through pain, it's not a time for changes,  
Undoing in one's heart what one must accept in life,  
Repositioning the precise stones one smashes and  
smashes against.



## EMPTINESS COSTS A BIT EXTRA

Emptiness costs a bit extra:  
In distant horizons there is peace.  
Given two windows on a whitewashed world,  
How could one not long for the sea?  
The soul wings it out to the horizon,  
Yet stays contented in a well-ordered room.

Sing to the gauze-covered shallows,  
Inlets and coves and the open sea!  
Xylophones tingle on porches unseen.



## EIGHTY-EIGHT

Eighty-eight spends much of life in bed,  
Interred beyond her time in drugs and pain.  
Grateful only for the gift of sleep,  
Having lost the will to laugh or weep,  
The shrunken doll repeats just one refrain,  
Yearning for the comforts of the dead.

Even so, the trail of pills has led  
Into a world she grapples with in vain,  
Grasping for a grace she cannot keep,  
Harsh and vivid hauntings of the brain  
That make of life a stew of joy and dread.



## NINETY

Ninety is a burst of mountain glories!  
In remote valleys wild memories bloom.  
No meadow is not carpeted with stories,  
Each sending forth its delicate perfume.  
The mind stays on the mountaintop, as night  
Yields only to the peak the last day's light.



## NINETY-TWO

Ninety-two sits quaintly in a garden,  
Intent on living through the awesome day.  
No sunshine is direct, but through the trees  
Enough is dappled in the gentle breeze  
To sing of glory in a muted way.  
Yet time itself can sometimes be a burden.

The hours sway like dancers, slow and wanton,  
While thoughts flit through the roses as they please,  
Open-armed and lithe yet loathe to stay.



## NINETY-FOUR

Ninety-four remains a little lonely,  
Incarcerated in her single room.  
Now quieted, now full of empty yearning,  
Each aged organ still with passion burning,  
To her betimes the body seems a tomb.  
Yet life itself is no less lithe and comely.

Friends and loves long past live in her only,  
Open as a garden in full bloom.  
Upon her, then, a world of wonder turning  
Rides undaunted into gathering gloom.



## NINETY-SIX

Ninety-six looks forward to one hundred,  
Intent on reaching that elusive goal.  
Not that life's particularly pleasing;  
Even so, the signal thought of squeezing  
Time to fit an arbitrary whole  
Yields a satisfaction to be savored.

So he lingers, withered, weak, and wheezing,  
Imagining The Moment, from time severed,  
X upon a sea that knows no shoal.



## NINETY-EIGHT

Ninety-eight still looks forward to eating  
Instant mashed potatoes, frozen peas,  
Noodles and butter with non-fat cottage cheese,  
Eggplant parmesan that keeps repeating,  
Tapioca pudding, tepid tea,  
Yearning less for food than company.

Each meal provides the matrices of meeting  
Into which he pours his energy,  
Grasping interstices he can seize,  
Hours of laughter, rage, anxiety,  
Till the next meal's quiet, offhand greeting.



## ONE HUNDRED

One hundred is a milestone indeed!  
Now one knows at least one has lived long.  
Even so, life finds much good to read,  
Having loved good reading all along.  
Underneath the years one still has wonder,  
Naked as it was when it was born,  
Delighted to be blessed a little longer,  
Reluctant to request much of the dawn.  
Each year of life's a gift of grace untold.  
Do, then, find pleasure rich in growing old.



