

HAVING TAKEN VOWS



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One of my practices then is to own my imagination. If I can imagine it, in some other really possible life I could have done it.

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I'm Already Taken

The wind and earth fought
over me but I belong
to the pale moonlight,
to starry rivers,
to the morning shine of sun,
to your warm rose heart.

Resting Orders

It is obvious
this life is a trek from star
to star, from birthing
to dying, mostly
trackless but sometimes well paved
with awesome rest stops.
When you find places
you love please ask if you will
want to soon move on
as well as take ease.

Else please do not stop, she trilled.

Remember the tale
of the captain tied
to his mast so he could dare
the witchy voices
calling him by name.
You will never be stronger
than the last false call.
If you've mastered them
all so far you have not yet
heard that last false call.

God willing, you never will.

Migraine Weather

Lord knows, authentic
displays of prowess are hard
to seek, much less find
these sorry ass days.

You enlist my help as if
I am so trippy
despite the crusty
ooze I have to slog back through
to get to your door.

Phobia does rule.
I saw her just the other
day ensconced on pads
of stuffed green velvet
where she was waving hot signs
in the ruddy air.

An Education

I know it's not true
but I wish the face behind
my beard was someone
else's or that there was
a ripe education near
the backyard apple
where we tie the dog
sometimes.

We must watch for her
that she doesn't knot
herself immobile.
Her tiny moan is so lost
when she gets caught like
that, like I get caught.
Who's going to untie me,
I demand to know -
all the good that does.

Sometimes the rain hits
the bluff so hard I swear it
seems all will shatter.

I Am Sorry Now

When coyote comes
by please tell him I'm sorry
for all that I said.
It was in the heat
of August and this is now
September and I
just don't think the same.
It's not his fault, no,
not at all. I bit off more
than I could swallow.
No wonder he got
all huffy with me, went to
the top of the hill
and lifted a howl
before he loped off to you.

Cloudburst

I climbed out that day,
out of the grave - stood upright
next to its border,
beside the tombstone
weathered and withered, ground down
by the lightning storm
that enflamed my lines,
realigned my spines and shot
its charge down center
as I sieved through mud
to find the cell rapidly
breaking its last light.
I have no idea
why the storm god pokes at me
again and again.

The Trek

I search as I trudge
behind this tree and past that bush
steady paced movement
up and over rocks,
me on fire to burn my dream
of hurt and the grip
of my yellow teeth
to fine and powdery ash.

Is it true? Have I
found my noble task?

The fist of my mind opens.
Perhaps soon I'll give
as the others did.

Poet Among The Baritones

A part of the choir,
I write to find harmony
among the voices
not to try solo
but to blend as I was taught,
breathing in secret
and holding my note.
My note - no. It's not my note
but ours - holding that
whether you notice
or whether you don't.

Might be
it hurts to feel them,
devils and angels,
messengers from beyond death,
beyond mortal wounds,
beyond the sunset
and beyond the sun's last rise.

Me too, beyond day
and beyond the night,
I write to be found singing,
found once and for all,
all the time knowing
there is no end to the words,
no end to the love,

no end to the song.

A Dream Of Fall's Approach

This life does matter,
so momentous in this time
not mine to hold
in the come and go
of the moon, the sun, the love,
all dangerous slopes.

I would give gardens
to you, riots of color
and so many sounds,
so many winged shapes,
then the cool comes close behind
as it ever does.

The Bad Dream

You woke me twitching
in your sleep, letting out yelps,
small and steam shrouded
in the early chill
and I thought of the wolfhound
we've kept between us.

She dreamt like that too.

Perhaps if you'd stop sinking
like you do, creasing
your face with pages
of the afternoon's free verse
you would not whimper
so in the neap tide
of your grasping pre-dawn soul,
you herky jerky
and tangled white sheets
leaving me exposed all pale
and lumpy damp flesh.

The Last Morning

This morning I felt
you melt, dripping like warm wax
might, red blush warm wax.
The pale light mixed in
with your aroma, sleep sweet.

You've a warm waxy
glow and my dewy
eyes blinked back my sudden tears
at the thought of all
that comes next for us.

Your horses whickered nearby.
Then I smelled leather.

The Tree

Too late you told me
to stop thinking about you.
I'm caught. This late light
is full of perfume
from your flowers within it.
If I climb the tree
of knowledge and pick
the fruit, should I drop it down
to you, would you eat?
I ate already.
Now I see why I risked it.
I see why I love.

You At The Stove

Bacon in the pan,
the starting point of this one,
this journey to you.
The frying sounds shake
the world and smell shapes the day
beyond the cane chair
and maple table
where I shall feast on pancakes
and fresh picked berries
and the solemn taste,
the offerings of rashers
laid straight on my plate.

Burning The Dross

We wove complicated
spells of entangled dreaming
because it was right
for us to lift off
and float in mid-air in knots
of our own making,
limbs pinned back and cuffed
like some fetishist might do,
striving for the heights
of hot sensation
burning off all the drab ways
of the same old thing.

The Duet

I watch from the door.
You don't see me, you staring
out the wide window,
turned in Egyptian
profile and gauze gowned for sleep,
still glowing from steam.

I gave you your wrap
of terry, then tracked your scent
to our room nearby.

Oh, you were not there
though I thought you'd be waiting.

So I have come here
and find you sitting
above the keys, with your toes
working melody
in the harmonic
duet of our hope and truth.

At least so I hope.

Clamming

Slogging through mudflats
at the edge of the brown bay
looking for clams, for
the secrets they keep,
all clammed up as some might say,
as if I would find
instructions on how
to love you better and find
a clear flowing tide.

Sleepless Night

I have pulled myself
off the floor, off my bruised knees.
The warnings they give
tell me there's no good
can come of winter this year
and the cold pane view
confirms your absence
old enough to give no sign
in the falling snow.

I feel in my teeth
the biting of the north wind,
an exposed nerve, sharp
and cracking me wide
open like the bad thin skin
wrapping my ankle,
just above the knob.
This foretells my fall.

I risk
infection despite
all I try to do.
All is virginal out there,
but in here, bad air.

Please

An angel touched me.
I did not know it then like
I know it today.
Today I am sure
an angel touched me down deep
in the great ocean
of my dream of you.
I know it now oh my love.
The angel's true heart
is too deep to reach
though I discipline my breath
and pop my ears as
you taught me so well.
I only want you, you know.
I know you know it.

Love Song 144

I will bend and sigh
as I curl inward on signs
of my hope for us.
You carry my weight
easily, spirits rising
as I conjure time
in my cap. I love
caps and love to hold eons
as close as I might
other brass trinkets.
Oh, I won't neglect the shape
of your nest, putting
my back into it
as I twine around your heart
tying knots of love.

Love Song 513

I've carved my song out
of the white long hollow swan
bone flute you gave me
to play in the deep
grace of our moon glow filled nights.

I sit near your trust.
Moon lets me see how
the whole shine of your presence
flows down the long years -
yes, dear, the long years.
Then I get all tangled up
in them as I must,
like the warm blankets
we wrap loose around the world
get all that way too.

It's A New Year

I walk the late streets,
the shiny streets, water slicked
with much less traffic
than at noon for sure.
The time is perfect for me
to think of the way
you would look at me
in those other moonlit nights,
so far away now,
navigated lanes
of time peeled back leaving raw
shapes of bone and hair.
It must be love, dear.
I don't understand this love
nor stone truth be known
do I understand
any other or life either
though I must live it.

The Turning Point

I stood bent over,
weighed down with my thoughts of you
at the misty edge,
at the precipice,
leaning against the guard rail,
with the wind billows
opening my coat
while I decided what next
in the scheme of things,
what I should do now.

Indelible

We have not even
lost one hope, one sigh or snort,
one wink of an eye.

No, we have not lost
anything so important
as all that and more.

When you wash away
all sign of us this does not
matter for you are
pressed into my eyes
and I am spread all over
the house, in crannies,
in nooks, on steel hooks,
and other places you won't
ever find, ever.

Holding My Place

I hold certain things
in my grasp, in my orbit
as they circle you,
as I circle you.

The gravel of my long path,
all this way I've come
to be here with you,
these stones click beneath my feet
as I shift, restless
waiting for notice.

The Church of What's Happening Now

And as years pass by
the enormity fades too.
Sixteen years, divorce
and today's sermon
places current vortices
at heaven's pure gate,
not the old cold pains.

And it's twelve years since she blew
her insides to paste
and crawled her way free
while I shivered and shattered
and they held me close
until I could go
from there to a new posture.

There is nothing left
of the old except
me. That's it. It holds water.
Me and the new cat.
Me and the basement
that I now call home, women
upstairs, my dinner.
I watch my body
come apart on some schedule
kept by mystery.

Cloudburst

Here at the border
of heaven and earth the plight
of angels forces
us into insight.
We've changed the issue, trouncing
all hope of fire, thanks
to crisis, the word
that we must depend on love
to weather. I hold
you, your black feathers,
then you touch my useless stubs.
There is no paved road.

A Kindness At The Small Heart Of Things

I am not confused,
no longer, for you removed
all the outer lights,
leaving me only
the inner display of truth
so I can steer by
that instead of things
we all say in public to show
each other what's what.

Last Outing, Autumn, 1889

We're on the river,
you prone and at risk should we
topple in some rogue
wave or other thing
happening - but none in sight
for sure at this time -
you lie in the bow,
hair wrapped up and fur around
you with your blanket
all down amidships,
the coughing quiet for now,
while I punt against
the relentless rasp
of your lately ripped breathy
flow of bloody air.

Poem was inspired by John Singer Sargent, "Autumn On The River - 1889"

Singing In The Rain

When I fell in love
with you the whole planet changed.
I mean, from orbit
to first molecule
the whole world shifted through some
seven dimension
torus and came out
the other side all brand new.
I was full amazed
the people near me
did not see this obvious
renewal but then
I remembered how
it has all happened before
not only to me
but to him and you
and to Gene Kelly singing
in Hollywood's rain.

Going Over The Border

That day's journey took
three hours to get to the falls
from downstate, my start
a short enough time
in the scheme of passing things.

That change from hot sun
to the cool, tangled
mist near the base, the roaring
of it in my heart
reminded me of you,
of your last embrace, and what
it meant to leave you.

It's All So Surreal

I've laid down the map
of things to come over you,
a blanket of sorts
to cover the snake
as it wraps you up.

Sweetie,
I don't understand
why you keep the snake.
Yes you've explained it before
but that snake crowds me.
She takes the corner
where holding our cat I like
to crouch and watch you
as you wash yourself.

I Will Miss You When You Go

Oh special this day,
the day you chose to show me
how to live, you hung
in branches, setting
like the April sun sets here
within the dogwood
tree, like it always
does in every springtime
I've known in this place.

Now I've thought to show
you some token of esteem,
and how love breaks out.

Finding My Way

So what I'm trying
to do is find the way to you
whether it's summer
nights camped outdoors
or winter's chill dim indoor
days and nights that go
forever, ever
on and on, slaying
my thoughts of winding bear trails
and your honey trees.

The Edges I Have Found

The wind seeks a path
through the tangles of your hair,
through the weave of you.

I seek the way back
from the edges I have found
though this stand gives me
vistas I cannot
explain without resorting
to the old stories.

You are mystery
beyond my ken, and your scent
peels me from my bones.

Dancing

The distance between
maintains breathing room as if
I needed to breathe,
as if your contact
did not save me as it has
before, me drowning
in your waters, gills
working just fine as I twine
my old soul with yours.

Of late we find space
enough to dance our gavotte,
weaving our new forms.

Looking For Love

I crave the lovely
pain you set like a bounding
mine beneath the road,
how it springs waist high
and blows my limbs off my heart
which bounces on down
the remnant road bed
cratered and crazed with some shards
of glassy sight left
to me as my heart
stutters trying to speak out
while gushing my joy.

What Else Can I Do

True love showed me how
I'm doing these days, coming
up behind me to
split her beak or head
on the glass wall between us.
She fluttered and called
as if I could hear
through the crystalline backlit
screams of hard living
or around corners
sinuous and so skittish.
I deny it all
of course. I will not
admit I am twisted up,
not on your tintage.

Precarious Times

Your dangerous shape
tastes like pepper drink stinging
my tongue and changes
my heart, pushing me
farther than I'd go alone,
on my own power,
exposing my red red
blood to the heat of your lair.
You have woven bonds
of your scent, of your
eyes that flash a siren's light
and hold me swollen.

With My Wand

If I could, I would
turn you into your freedom,
soaring like ospreys.

I am willing now,
willing to gift you with lift
like the running cat,
or the hart mid-leap.

I would craze the glass, shatter
the bonds that hold you,
by grace release you
from the gravity of all
the old illusions.

The Flagstone Path

I pull up the stones
looking for signs you left me.
I miss you that much.
I find no treasure
and this matches the gray day,
the pile up of clouds,
and the systole hitch
I live with these halting times.

I set down the stones
using all due care
trying for the undisturbed
appearance of things
and I think I do
well enough, thank you. Indeed.
I pray you find peace.

An Inner Light

Liquids heavier
than water have their own ways
at the sea's bottom.
This is no blunder,
not by nature nor by man.

A wolf's submission
is not a true cringe
no matter what it looks like.

I do not digress,
even at this time,
even when I offer mums
and dig my thumbs in
all along your back
hoping I remove your stress,
you laid out beneath
my hands, me in deep,
deep in your dreamy rose core.
I'm ablaze, I shine.

There Are Cymbals In The Clouds

Once a howl like this
broke loose under the new moon
and rose past sunrise
or where it would be.
Once the wail of the old wolf
meant everything.

We fell out of love
just like the howling of dogs
afraid of the gray
wolf holding the trunk
framed in the dark shine of pride
and me in the heart
of the horn sounding
taps and you calling silence
into the cushions
calming me, humming
so quietly I believe
you've already gone.

The Endless Search

I arrived today
looking for the live free verse
or the right sonnet
within the pages
we hold so dear that we place
them in brown volumes
we keep in order
on shelves constructed of steel.

This got weird for me.
My passion ran thin.
I wrote some stuff down instead.
Here are some phrases,
a form I dare hold
true in the grand scheme of things
along with doting
on you.

Now will you
show me the time of day, love,
roll me in clover?

At The Tree

The egg has broken
wide, spilled and spreads at the tree
of my undoing
where you perch, my love,
where you sit my royal love
like some songbird might
as I slink away
with my churlish shape so formed
from long heavy use,
pretentious poser
of dancing motes of starlight
entranced and enjoined.
The window behind
you has opened but neither
of us fits inside.
God stands near the ledge
and whispers His words too low
for you or for me.
Is there nothing else
that I can do with you now?
Nothing left to do?

Gratitude

The world sometimes feels
just like this sunlit boulder,
warm like your body
warms through some yoga
pose in the early morning
though this is later,
past noon, and not on
the porch but in that meadow
we found together
last fall. Thank you, dear.

Passion

Just how bad I want
to kiss you right now
could turn into a movie
starring Paul Newman
or Robert Redford,
someone like that or I reach
out my hand and stroke
your hair, gliding down
its sweep of silk, its auburn
a swirl of dream smoke,
a complete surprise,
world creation, utter truth.

What Coyote Gives

Coyote gives you
what you want, gives you the moon
as she snuffs the edge
of the world right there
in your yard. She gives you eyes
for the shape of things
and a way to find
my scent as I pass nearby.

She gives you a tail
and sure footed grasp
of the wild life just outside
the door to your heart.

Ch'i

I nest within you
Never outside you, never
Beyond your sweet glow.

I feel the rising rhythm
Of your song all around me.

This is like fish in
Warm blue alpine lakes, birds in
Green summer breezes.

Holding Still

I hold still for you,
So still that flowers speed by,
Marigolds racing.

I hold so still that my cat
Forgets me and goes her way.

Even more still, I
Forget me and leave my mind
To find your true heart.

Having Taken Vows

As if you could save
me and in this save the world,
you sling your color
forth into gray space
expecting response as if
I would say right things,
surgical strikes at
the holiest heart of truths,
as if your drawn lines
would square the circle
I lie in squirming under
God's wide ranging eyes
and all things would shift, and I
love you for this dream.

Christopher Hileman was born in Berkeley, California, in 1945.

He moved to Oregon in 1973. He has retired to live on the volcanic bluff overlooking Willamette Falls in Oregon City, Oregon. He ascends the stairs from his basement digs to improvise on his Yamaha keyboard or the house Playel grand when the calico cat releases him from below. The part-Irish Wolfhound here likes him.

Christopher keeps a poetry blog called View From The Northern Wall, <http://northernwall.blogspot.com/>.