

# THE EQUALIZER

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**EARLY BIRD MOTIONS**

Who are you to violate others  
with your sense of understanding?  
The reality shared by pen & page  
is not that of the mouth & mind.  
The forest is a place of hiding & of lurking.  
The Perindens tree shelters doves  
fleeing dragons. Faced with the looming  
asceticism, what supports your walk?  
Dust off the chestnut. Point the telescope  
at the nebulae. Retire into a  
profound solitude. *Goodbye to the swift pony  
& the hunt.* Coleridge read of Bartram's  
travels through Georgia. Meditate on that  
as you sit deep in the folds of the Land  
of the Noonday Sun. Radical but not revolutionary,  
a neutral agent. In search of the source of the misty ring.

**FOSSILIZED NEW JERSEY**

---

The last orange star waits  
at the bottom of the breakfast dish,  
a small breakfast forgotten  
in our holiday shuffle.

The yellow moon has slipped  
off the platform of the horizon.  
The diamonds on the turnpike's  
HOV lane look blue in the dark.

Down at the Purple Horseshoe,  
the barflies are waiting for their kids  
to come home from the City.  
Come home Pete. Come home Aggie.

Green clovers are growing  
through the cracks in the parking lot.  
Come home, Janet.  
Our pink hearts burst for you.

**RIPSTAVERS, GALLBURSTERS, ETC. WITH THEIR FRIENDS**

Has not my anticipations been realized

A few dark designing men wearing dark  
Green spectacles let no rotten eggs be wanting

Sugar them off

All that is near dear to freemen  
Purified of its chronic disease

Cure the broken headed

Hoe them out  
A few pieces of pumkin will not be amiss

Oak staves

Brought in Orangemen from the back concessions  
To wheedle weak and simple mortals

In short sow them up

Forming a host of worthies  
The Moon or some more wholesome place of residence

The schemes of

Madness ever ends  
In a silent commotion

**DARK PASTURE**

○.....○

Their breathing swells the air between us,  
the occasional tail-flick a flattering gesture  
toward anesthetized darkness.  
Ponds of shadow. Of uncertain depth.

A break in the rhythm would cast  
everything invisible into the light,  
deliver what we never deserved.

Slowly we still our own minor breath  
until the lungs function as one, for once.

**GHOST DOE**

I'm always in the east.  
I would like to sit  
on your property among the leaves and soft  
decay of lawn.  
Someone is back here, eating petals,  
rattling jars on your shelves  
in the dank garden room. I stand, hooded figure, ancient.  
You cannot see.  
You are following the scent of smoke wisps.  
But why does the vehicle come,  
a season, readying, a wheelchair?  
I can see through your windows, eat the hearth  
and your legs outstretched.  
I am mostly myth, human,  
a person built of sight and sound.  
Cracks in the gutters and a leeching  
of whatever it may mean to be a stick figure  
among razor thin trees.  
To make more is a censorship,  
a formation of granite where soft  
wood to the core once stood. We are berries,  
stricken by barriers, erect fences laced through with fingers.  
We work, we inevitable.  
Let's play the part of the runner and make  
the mark of speed,  
strip the door of its frame, the sills of their sleeves.  
Teach the vines to honey the basement's womb,  
channel out to the iron chairs  
and pumpkin the stairs with all that is reserved in your smile,  
hidden by autumn's flame, the doe of death.

**IF NANCY WERE A DE KOONING**

---

On a still day surprised  
beyond all dutiful hammerings  
the skin's the color of a new plate  
    or an unasked for intuition.

Placed this  
way or that  
way, then, narrowed eyes  
shape the evidence  
of my cleverest misgivings.

    In the flat back-  
ground, there are thirteen types  
of blue.

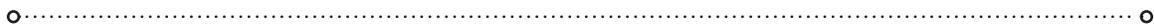
You name them all.

**THE SKY**

*for Colin Guthrie*

Observing  
the lip's  
sinister curve  
as it tricks  
the mouth open  
in a jagged turn  
telling the sky off  
cymbal crash to orange fizz  
it was no big secret  
stuck in the bathroom mirror  
cataloguing some gangly actor's smirk  
hot for whatever new malevolence  
we told the sky off  
going diagonal like Vega  
under leisure's silent pressure  
our friends sweetly  
whistling down offed  
one stultifying  
thought mulch  
in a clutter  
of painless orange gardens  
to grow taut again  
freaking the lines with distortion  
as a hundred lousy months  
of quiet weather subtracted the thorns  
from a floating red-worn nose  
a hundred months foraging gloom  
to swim in desperate ablutions  
loudly obliterating the moon  
for a crude relief  
telling the sky  
off and on  
like alarm  
clock colons  
a crashing blowout  
pouring out Boone's

on asphalt flowering cracks  
for the sky dog  
saying tip that shit bitches  
for the mother fucking sky



**PRECIPITATION**

Tonight the neon flickered  
just as the weathermen predicted.

Tall buildings winked  
in and out of sight.  
The humid evening breeze  
and the avenue rubbed  
together like two legs.

You were there—  
the cafés full of conversation  
were cumbersome rocks  
as you walked from block  
to block, a willful leaf  
floating on a dirty stream.

I breathed deeply. Clouds roiled  
up North of town.

Upstairs, you rattled  
your old window open.  
The city smelled like lighting;  
you shivered in spite  
of the heat of the night.

I'll come along to find you;  
when my long shift is over,  
I will leave my shirt and shoes  
on the fire escape in the rain.

Until then long white curtains  
will whip above your head.  
The first big raindrop  
measures one warm teaspoon;  
the cat hides itself on a closet shelf,  
and your sofa is pressed with wind:  
a storm begins.

**LIKE WATER WILL FIND A WAY IN**

---

just a maintenance-  
dose of cold clarity  
not a cure for the day

eyeless little  
data scraper  
swims the flow

smoke-shortie sugarette  
roll-your-own  
carving up  
that old okie-dokie

hello destination  
I did not know  
you would be here

shirt tails down  
to her knees

**RETURNS**

Many days since my last red letter—the stencil a spur, the penny  
sent for vellum. Riding  
toward frank need, even mallards leak marrow, honk, and drop  
into the street. Every June,  
we rise, histamine-vertiginous, full faces cradling fevers. This year  
was no different: the wait  
between flights. I look again at a picture I never liked:

me, on a trail marked with trash  
in the grain of a goodbye, beneath gloom-faced mountains. You,  
washing your ring in the slow-  
moving stream (before Ron sung out that he could see  
no bottom).

**FOUND FATHER**

---

For the support of this Declaration, with a firm  
reliance on protection,  
we mutually pledge to each other our Lives,  
our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Father's port of deck: The ray's sun, whether from  
real eye in sun or pro-tech sun.  
We moo, truly pledge due East. Other.

Our lives are fortunes, as is our sacred honor.

**A VERY SMALL BOOK**

---

Has windows in its pages

In my drawer

Cheap plastic

Parallelism

Don't pray to

Sirloin

Has no fingers

\*

I remember my creative days  
A necessary component of the disaster

That never came not even when the war  
Never came not even the winter

Everyone stopped making love  
Near the end of my creativity

In the midst of beautiful snow women  
I stopped writing letters when my typewriter broke

We moved away and the snow never fell  
Except of course on the cold days

But the snow never stayed  
The earth has become a fire



\*

I have a scab from an insect bite on my monk's bald spot  
Every act has become self-referential

But my landlord hired a backhoe  
To dig up the stumps in my yard

And that makes him a fuckhead  
No need to define

I can't let my cat outside  
Gorgeous 3 PM sunlight

Hits the neighbor's aluminum roof  
When I look back from my cat

Just ordinary sun in the leaves  
And the house looks

Sleepy as in dead  
We call anything

Anything we want  
All the leaves look taken



\*

Backups slouched in the dugout  
Don't notice

The rest notice  
Everything about each other

Especially the habit-forming habits  
The outfield full of horses

And the dead guys  
Who notice nothing but the dirt

Under their nails  
After they realize those weren't horses



\*

I ate a small flower I don't know the name of  
Not difficult to get comfortable in this world

As long as this is not the world  
Stories don't have anything to do

If I stand a few feet back from the phone booth  
I'll be a firecracker in a sailor's pants

A match lighting the night sky  
On the projector screen

Noise has no simile  
I don't follow the name of

This is not the city  
I am standing back from



**FROM IDIOT-ILIAD, PHONETIC TRANSLATIONS OF BOOK 23 OF THE ILIAD  
(PATROKLUS' FUNERAL)**

Horsey men stand to okay a tap tollin'. O tear Achians,  
open denials. Take a Hellespont on his candor  
oy. Men are as kids, none to hang up in heck. His toes  
more Madonnas dock, eyes up. He's kiddin' us fey, Achilles.  
All hoggy noise he tars. O see, fill up, toll 'em. I summit Aida.

"Patroklus, cry amen. Who gargles his teeth, and in tune?  
O tear up, I call all o' you to tar po' mister gooey.  
Hip bows loosen many. Doors pass a man an' fade to punt this.  
Hire my ode, Patroklus. Cry on audio domicile. I  
pant a guerre a day to tell your taper. O friend, hoop the stain.  
Hektor's odor arrows us to thine. Cuss sinner men. Does he die  
to deck kids deep, prop a pyre vaporous? A body rots, tomb a sign  
Trojan hagglers attack noisy, then contaminate. I clothe the eyes."

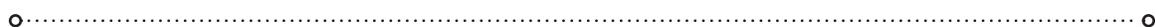
Ail fed up in psyche spooky. Patroklus died loyal.  
Pant automat ethos, tack eye. Home matters. Call (I coo ya).  
Guy sewn in guy toy spirit. Crew a-mutter, best to.  
Stutter up irk solace, come in prose mouthed, honeyed pen:  
"O men mew soon to sack a daze, all of thanatos.  
Stop team to hit the taxis: to palace and to paradiso!  
Tailing me are ghosts in suffer, idle and common tongue  
who all deem me poor. Misguess thy hop or put timey ows in:  
all laud us. Holler at my honor or pull this hide. Does  
key my disdain hear, a lost sir my hunger? And o this  
nigh soma. I ache. Hades a pain. My porous lay like a tea. I ran  
bullish through many boulevards of men. Holler: may men care,  
hum sick. Honesty gray, hyper lackey. Gig no men on par-  
akeet soil tomorrow. They all seep in a kill, Achilles.  
Crews see us, I'm furious. Tongue-tied, pour pot. Nay mate's here."

Kid him on this depart? No. The men on key. Neon hue lain.  
 Poisoned poor reign. Hecatomb dead on. End to key end and  
 ended pure, he hoops in any crony. This at acumen achy  
 pallor. Deify this male, a kill's upon him. He'll like these bows.  
 Pose the poor racer daring. Take a ram, fat on nectar. A phantom  
 day. Manacle loosey. Manic on mega tomb. Use a kill, laid as  
 is. Pour the sack, keep all this peer in trot. Toss 'em to kneel here.  
 Then debt is iffy. Men lit tusky. All lay fat in amphorae as  
 pros lay hay. A-clingin' pissed hours, they're spooking us. A puss  
 assumes men're us. We bawling pure rain. My gall's last nag icon.

. . . to deaf this killin'. O, to.

"Hire my ode, Patroklus. Cry on audio domicile. I  
 pant a guerre a day to tell your taper. O friend, hoop the stain.  
 Dudes eke amain true on me gasses, moan unless he's close  
 to us. Amass in pant pure as thy eye. Hek tore a doubt  
 and also pried amid pure-eyed dapper men. All luck can lessen."

Os seep on, hat of resin cocked. Lay today, Achilles,  
 a fire pure as thy sigh. Try prod, a mega no. For this taxi, stay.  
 A seedy low track on tripod stands him in pure icky lay.  
 And his rude oar. Achy, a-ha, pour the sinned lad to hell on this  
 gassed train. Men trip odds, poor in fibs. Heat meets water,  
 ought to. Peppy daisies in the ore, urine, optical coo.  
 Kite of today, lose him. Peck an oily fond lip. He'll thank you.  
 On the cot, alas, place olive fat to send new royal.  
 In luckiest sigh, death enters. (He: an ode.) Lit, eke a love on  
 his. Pour the sick cover, ace. Cough up earthy. The far eyes lukewarm.



## WHO WRECKED THIS TRAIN?

---

Back then, one of us was a sleek, shiny train,  
and another was a bright blue smiling train,  
unassailable as he tracked his way around.

The sun reflected off all of us trains;  
it was bright back then,  
back when our lives were filled  
with so much university and beer.

Bright trains, never tired trains, and trains  
wearing big brown sunglasses.  
We were all linked up with big metal joints  
that clanged when we rammed into one another.

No one could say when certain trains wrecked,  
and no one worried about it much anyway—  
we were trains; we were made of steel.

Now we know no train wrecks itself;  
there's nothing a train likes more than its track;  
and as the train rolls through the forest,  
the trees ask "oh, what have we done?"

**DARK ART 1**

There is magic, walls, windows, a door.  
These contain the magic of human struggle.  
There are books in my library  
which are a struggle to finish.  
My library is too connected to my living.  
I am waiting to discover wood, light,  
someone else's cool breath on my neck.  
I will open the door.  
I will see *The Faerie Queene*  
and remember the outside of poetry.  
Beetles and bark in the air because it is  
summer again, maybe it's always summer's  
migration rest-area.  
The way light and heat combine  
and produce this feeling of environment.  
Inside the house, the sound, we have dialogue here.  
It is magic and it is drunk. I am magic for it.  
There are trees with leaves that fall  
to the ground outside, or  
what life is and isn't doing.  
Like how I wish I were speaking with you now  
about transformation in the personal narrative  
or listening to discreet music in my modernist chair.  
My prayer too is a form of song.  
These hold together everything we cherish.

**DEAR STARS**

It's Sunday  
It is Sunday. I was thrilled  
to get your letter. I must've  
died some to read it. When I woke up  
I was forty. Someone had taken my cloud  
and revived it. Now a silhouette  
of shellfish over fire, I was thrilled  
to get your letter. The grass has turned  
to snow. Your life sounds most miraculous,  
that third shift you're working.  
It is Monday. Did I mention? When I woke up  
I was forty. You were probably riding  
a train to your job. Anti-inflammatory.  
My heart's a giant gosling. Sincerely,  
there are worse things, but it's no one  
that you know. I was stunned to get your letter.  
I was soup in a bowl. Your life sounds  
like lettuce. I talk a lot faster. It is Sunday.  
Philosophy. A life I'll never know.  
Yours sounds Romantic. Homeless at home.  
Faking the ice rink.

I woke up and it was Saturday. My teeth hurt  
from pacing. Someone had taken all the trees  
and reattached them. I was thrilled  
to get your lobster, take your Advil. I read it  
while riding your train to its job. I waved,  
but you must have been sleeping. You were  
forty. It was Wednesday. Hump day.  
Gertrude Stein. Plato's cave was cool  
and delicious. Your silhouette to rub  
up against. I was thrilled to do it harder.  
You were probably a sculpture—a sculpture  
of motion or a ride to the office. Please  
come and visit, I'm alone.

**RECOUNT**

My beautiful eyes have just expired. I'll take a fresh ballot  
andthat x-ray. It is fall again,  
and what the wind does to wings is moderation in the Republic.  
As the parade pinches, we flip  
our collars up—each a Roman arch, dove-gray. Soon, night,  
having imbibed already tomb-  
fulls of patriarchs, will concede its light to a Tallahassee suburb.

All the banyans are bare of their leaves.  
The hornet flies over the Savings and Loan.  
The white dog sleeps in the shade.  
Yes, the polls have closed.  
No, I am not stung. Look me in the iris.

**THE CHICKEN-LESS PULLED CHICKEN BLUES**

---

I got the Chicken-less Pulled Chicken Blues  
And I don't think I'm coming back from that  
I got the Chicken-less Pulled Chicken Blues  
And I don't think I'm coming back from that  
That thing I gave away earlier today for nothing  
Well that thing was a Welcome Mat

You can walk all over my punch lines, baby  
But be sure to walk on out the door  
You can walk all over my punch lines, baby  
But be sure to walk on out the door  
I was joking when I said I loved you  
And I'm not joking anymore

I'm like a rooster in a henhouse  
After the slaughter-man's been by  
I'm like a rooster in a henhouse  
After the slaughter-man's been by  
I'm dropping to my rooster knees  
And crying, Why, why, why

Ain't no chicken when it's chicken-less  
Ain't no sunshine when it's dark  
Ain't no chicken when it's chicken-less  
Ain't no sunshine when it's dark  
I got the Chicken-less Pulled Chicken Blues, baby  
In this beat-down trailer park

When you got the Chicken-less Pulled Chicken Blues  
You're both done and you're undone  
When you got the Chicken-less Pulled Chicken Blues  
You're both done and you're undone  
Now you may think these Blues are over  
But these Blues have just begun

## A MARRIAGE OF LOVE AND INDEPENDENCE

---

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes  
When in the course of human events it becomes  
I all alone beweeep my outcast state  
necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands  
and trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries  
which have connected them with another and to assume  
and look upon myself and curse my fate  
among the powers of the earth,  
wishing me like to one more rich in hope  
the separate and equal station to which the Laws  
featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them,

with what I most enjoy contented least  
We, therefore, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name,  
Haply I think on thee,—and then my state  
by Authority of the good People of these Colonies,  
(Like to the lark at break of day arising  
solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies  
from sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

**EARLY SNOWBALL**

I'd be lying if I said we  
could go back to that. You  
in your costume from *Gianni  
Schicchi*, me clean-shaven and full  
of bravado. The façade of order  
requires a retinue to maintain.  
The more moving parts, the more  
to go wrong. The Japanese maple  
has moved from mauve to crimson.  
The brushwork is unorthodox, colors  
bold. Baroque pop in the bedroom,  
and Maria Merian's *Insects of Surinam*  
in the antechamber. It's natural  
to plan more than one narrative  
at the outset of the day. There's  
more than one way to kill a duck;  
behead the Nantes, smother a Rouen.

SHO



WHY SO BLACKED & BLUE? o minstrel sea, we stuck on your dirted face: smirched map of thirst and all we'll waive to drain it.

BURN ABOUT SPILL ABOUT & JUMP JIM CRUDE! do the dirty bird! do the sully gully! do the gunky chicken! (it do what it do.)

GULF GOO A GOGO! we see you bubbling, black: we see you, runaway black: we sees you, fugitive black: "and the darkness thick..."  
"...and keep on going..." "many thousands..."

POUR IT ON H<sub>2</sub>O H NO! but they don't mix never: a gulf. is troubled waters with oil a double negative? broken english mess the mouth.

WENT  
(said it do what it do!)  
rave-up, mer. never more water than when spilt.

DOWN TO

DE RIBBEL

I DIDN'T

MEAN TO

STAY

ON THE BAYO

UN,  
WE GONNA  
HAVE BIG FUN  
it's comin fo sho.



A self-ordained professor's tongue  
Too serious to fool  
Spouted out that liberty  
Is just equality in school  
"Equality," I spoke the word  
As if a wedding vow  
Ah, but I was so much older then  
I'm younger than that now

Bob Dylan