



Joefiles 117

Extracting the Swollen Mustard Seeds

'a thought'

if you
can make
the world
think
then you may
have done
a small
stake
in saving a life
and each
face that
flits over
the
stack of sunday afternoon
obituaries
can truly become
the
victory
in your
fictitious
world
suddenly
made
wondrously
real.

'a wishy washy parable poem'

if one
of the three
wishes from some
errant kid actually
punctured the realm of
fiction into our reality
and we did instantly
get the antithesis of
george w. bush
i'm presuming that
most of the population
would wilt under
the intensely mounting
pressure of the last
seven miserable political years
into such glee and disbelief
that humans would
hop into smarts shock
and either die
or get plowed so hard
that it wouldn't even be worth
being shocked that hard
and the kid that gave us
his hard fought,
well intentioned wish
should just make it a
lifetime supply of ice
cream from himself and all of his
friends because that would
be much cooler,
less shocking
and so oddly non-damaging
for my fictitious brain
to absorb.

'advancing old man world'

further proof
that i'm
spiraling
into old man
land is the
constant
reliving and re-watching
all the old 1980's films
from my youth.

never ending
star wars marathons,
sixteen candles,
ferris bueller's day off,
flash gordon
and the john hughes list
drags forward.

there are approximately 350 spare
channels
spanning any and every possible
topic to assail my relaxing brain,
but i get stuck on
rendezvous nostalgia as i
recite the memorized lines
and wonder how i missed the
bigger plot of st. elmo's fire
in my adult age.

and it's another chalk swipe on the
board that is tossing me quickly
into the rapid aging
group as my mere 35 years on
this planet is proving enough
to also make
me
ponder the future of
my social security checks.

'boss for a day'

an indinan
man at
the
conoco
next to my
work
always
calls
me
'boss'
when i but
a
juice
or
corn nut
bag at
his shop.

each time,
i smile
stronger,
wider
and
say
'yes'
as
he
goes
on to take
my money.

as i leave
the
boss,
i know he's
the real
boss
and
his
verbal play
time will
always keep
me coming
back so

that
i
can
pretend in
brief moments
of blowing
money
that i am
the boss
in my
juicy world
full
of
fucking
corn nuts.

'cold piss poem'

it
was so
scorchingly
cold the other day
that my poetic
brain side jammed
an image that
has haunted me for
months.

i was thinking
about a scenario
that would pit
my bladder control
against mother nature
and i would be the loser.

as such,
i would pull down my
drawers and
let my junk fly loose
will all my pent up liquid.

and as my head tilted back,
and the yellow steam rose,
i would be arrested with
a piercing jab of pain.

when i look down,
i have peecicle forming
from my pal below
and i'm arrested with
what to do next
as a car approaches
wondering if i
might need a
jump
for my dead,
old car.

'driven'

the real
danger of
dry driving
is that
i can actually
see through
my clear windshield
into other
clear glass
to full faces.

and there
are some that
make me
wish i would
peer
deeper into
the yellow
center line
and just imagine
that all the
other cars
are being
piloted by
mad clowns
with surreal faces
that may ruin
by brain
if i catch
their direct
eye gaze.

that's why
i like to drive
at night.

that's the beauty
of night driving.

everyone in each
passing car
might just well
be a former president,
a rabid clown,

a murdered soul,
an angry priest,
an embattered subconscious moment,
and you don't have to see
them at all.

it's an evening of robot
drivers
as the world lightly
hums along in unison
agreeing
that we don't have
to see everything
that we directly
pass
on by.

empty

32 oz. cans
of malt liquor
squib,
and squabble
back and fro
as the storm brews.

cries from
a single apartment
building ratchet down
towards the dirtied
sidewalks
as the storm eye
intensifies.

a bullet crests the
upper ridge
and blows through
the invisible
stop signs
as the approaching
storm comes
closer to the ground.

another birth,
more beer,
the drug dealer sneezes,
as a new election
tries to capture that
one audience.

and if nothing happens,
the storm will
ruin all of our futures.

the malt liquor has
run out as
the umbrella unfurls
and we all
hope that
there's an ear
that my receive
our blueprint
prayer waiting to race
skyward.

'flat smoke'

an alternative
weekly here
in town
has
finally lost
any grasp on
how
to cover news.

their latest foray
into the realm
of hip forgetfulness
was a full cover story
spread on
the smokiest
bars in town.

of all the investigative
jaunts that could
really bend the brain
into a thinker,
some clunkhole found
that rating the
most smoke ravaged drinkeries
was read worthy.

if this klutz wanted
to cover something related
to the pursuit of
nicotine and what it leaves behind,
they should
visit a ward of
folks suffering from
cancers and other ailments
to see what would need to
be done to
halt the fleecing of our
flock due to cigarette addition.

instead,
we get another forgettable
retreat into the world
of soft news for the hip
brains to further

sink into
their own brand of nostalgia
that has
left my brain much
smokier than
it has
been
in
years
and
years
and
years.

good yawners

make you feel
the warmth of
a bed.

their lazy,
comical roar forward
is usually a clumsy
act that is about
as natural as a human could get.

but it's those that
elongate their faces just so,
the longevity of the
sign of tired,
and the intensity of
their watered eyes.

and it's at this moment
of veering in,
and not feeling too tired
that i get into their
brains and feel how good a
bed can feel at any moment
of a day when
sleep is just another
unattainable thing
your biology
lets out in a triumphant
guttural blast.

'horsy terms'

i would
like to
start affixing
gender roles
to injury
and
the first
one i'm going
to start uttering
and anointing
is a 'carly horse'
for the girl's out
there
that get
a
hard
driving
fucking
charlie horse.

'hot diggers'

it took
almost three
years for my
little boy
to really
burn himself on
something hot.

while i
was waiting to get
my hairs chopped
in the barber's chair,
he touched a
scalding hot
hair curler and
recoiled quickly
in absolute puzzlement.

quickly,
i recoiled from
the chair and told
the barber
i needed to take a
rain check.

he whimpered 'ma-ma'
the whole way home
as his red thumb
throbbbed
and he screamed
healthy cries of
defiance.

and now
he has a half heart,
half horse shoe
emblazoned on
his thumb
in all it's pre scar
glory as he
snores next to me
now in the bed.

congratulations

little boy,
you now know the
power of the burn
and how
hot
things can get when
you get curious
and ready to
scar
deep and
damned well.

i wonder all the time.

not simply
wondering,
but i wonder
about wonder.

and the wonderful
wonder that is
around us.

just the notion of
wonder,
and the slight
glimmers of
occasional topics
that flit into my
radar view.

but mainly,
i love the act of
tending to 'wonder'
as the world of
wonder suffers to
really be embraced.

for what could be
duller than not wondering
about anything or ever
wondering about wonder.

lest i waste anymore
of your wondering time,
i'm off to become a
hero of wonder
and to save
the plot of wonder
for my kids,
my wife
and anyone else
wondering what this
poem is really
supposed to mean.

'immortal snow swaths'

we are
one of the
few yards around
here that
have tiny
swaths of snow
that simply won't
melt away.

they hang on like
patches of
genetically
altered snow men
flattened
by kids feet,
but holding on to
spite the sun.

and it's only
when my
3 year old comes along
with his wiggling fingers
of eternal curiosity
and luke warm water
that these small cold
islands full of oasis visions
melt away like an
al gore prophesy.

then the joy of
anticipating a new,
white snow storm comes into
our drying brains to
douse us with the wonder
of winter
and
the
revitalization of
pure
human wonder.

in our 3-D world

i find myself
running into
mostly
2-D folks
and it's
those rare
4-D people
that i
can truly embrace
and figure out
if there is
some hidden
portal
to the 5-D realm
that we all my slip
off into
so that we don't have
to get quashed to nothing
by the
resoundingly loud
2-D world
smashing against
our brains.

'malings'

would
i sound
out of
line
if
my mail carrier
was a female
and
i began
referring
to all of
my parcels
as
'female'?

'missing miles'

i miss my
small miles boy
as i race around
towards another errant
moment
of producing something
new.

i wonder what
his brain is thinking
about or what word he's
being taught
or what sink he's playing in
or if he noticed the cat lounging
quietly on the couch,
or if he's asking for another
bag of popcorn to pop,
or if he got his vitamin,
or if he thinks about getting
his teeth brushed at odd times,
or if he's frantically shaking his head 'no'
as he pulls at his wrists in a 'i'm done'

frenzy,
or maybe he's thinking about
me coming through that basement door
back into his life to end
our collective wonder
with one smile
and a conjoined advancement
to speak wordlessly
about how our day went and why
we feel like our
moment of zen is
right
in our front pocket
finally.

'my dad and his priest'

my dad
has been
meeting with
a priest
lately in the home.

whether it's
fear
or his secret march
towards some kind of
theology that could
heal his life,
it's beginning to happen.

and when he has
the priest over,
my brother and i call
and give him an ear of
playful shit or start
tossing a cuss fest over
his speakered phone and
he abruptly ends
the conversation.

it's usually right before
the priest gives his
blessing and likely
gets a small jolt of
how my father feels
when he clicks off
the phone with one of
his insane sons
so that the
real healing can begin
on his
aging
soul sagging
into the depths
of his enormous
bed chair
of worry.

'my famous boy in his features'

my miles
boy
always seems
to take
on some
famous
person's
feature
and i
can't let it go.

most recently,
i notice
that he has
some
fat,
bend barack obama
ears flopping off
of his head.

and each time he
babbles or points
or gestures or communicates,
i feel i'm getting closer
and closer to hearing the
truth behind his campaign.

and as the ears
become more
the lore than i ever imagined,
i go up daily and rub them
for good luck
hoping that one day
i can
hear exactly what
he is saying,
and hopefully
a President Obama
if we
are all
slightly
and damned luck
enough
to hear it.

'my final Austin poem'

my father in law
austin
told his wife yesterday
morning that
he wanted to
live just two
more days
to start collecting
his social security checks.

a life of defending
the truth,
a life long and well lived,
a life following his government
and devoutly voting,
earnestly paying taxes,
loving the flag through
prior service,
and all he wanted was
to make it into his
early 80's and get
his lifetime due.

i got the phone call
yesterday morning
that he didn't make it.

he was two days away
from a dream he had for
decades.

and now that he's
gone,
it was never really about
the money.

he knew that,
and though he spoke about it,
he lived the opposite.

few souls as unique as
him grace this planet of
greed we inhabit,
but he did it.

and he did it well.

rest in peace,
old man ..

.. you damn well earned it.

**no one
calls me back.**

rarely
are spontaneous
calls sprung by
friends.

no more visits.

they have
evaporated
in the span of
several years.

used to get
a call or two.

nothing.

i think that's
when you grow up
and
become a
family kinda guy.

or maybe i'm
just full of shit.

yea,
a family guy full
of shit very proficient
in speaking bullshit.

ahh,
i'm finally feeling
suburban
and i want
my phone to ring
back just once
with an answer
as i take a moment
to ponder
how good it is
to not be
so full of shit.

'oddballs'

you
cannot
return
anything to
the old
ODDBALL SALVAGE
warehouse.

even if it
was an unbreakable
slinky with an
extended warranty,
the ODDBALLers
say everything is contained
in their name.

even if you
bought an odd
set of chinese meditation balls,
they will smile,
point to their colorful name tag
and send you on your
way with
your broken balls.

pass the word
on that ODDBALL SALVAGE
practices what they
preach and
there
is nothing too
odd for
those
ballers
up yonder way.

'our earthly ingredient confusion'

i find
myself wondering
how the average american
is supposed to
understand much of
anything when
we don't
even know
what a
humanectant is
in our shampoos.

how can we
expect folks to
do things well
and effectively
when we aren't' sure
how to pronounce
most of the products
in the foods we eat
and the things we put
on our body.

and when the world
runs out of yellow no. 4
we will switch back to
red no. 2 knowing
that we still know nothing
more about these tiny
chemical attributes
other than it gets us
going in a direction
we can
accept ..

just like a line
of geese sluicing forward
into the cold clouds above,
to soon disappear
into the ignorance
of our
human genus.

'real poetic tears'

i saw
a famous
local KC poet
bob stewart
emit tears several
times at a
poetry reading
i went to on an
blisteringly cold
evening
in an old,
creaked out home.

and all i could
think was
how odd it might
be to go up with
a standard sheet of
white paper
to wipe the tears
of bob's face
and let them dry
onto the
paper blob.

then,
i could simply go up
in my own poetry reading
and hold up this sheet
with a revealing
infrared light
to illuminate
the powerful poetry
tears from
a man
who needs
nothing
but
sweaty water to
move a
crowd
like a
bobbing
mass of ocean water.

‘recycled thoughts’

i'd like to
find some kind
of wood hopper
that i can hypothetically
toss in my old thoughts
so that it can collect
into a big
bin of old thoughts
that could then
be mashed into
an old early 80's tin can
that could be
inserted into some
kick in the can
game around here with
the modern kids of the
neighborhood
so that they could
get a hint of
the future
in all their
recycled kid memories
that is being created
at the speed of now.

'smoky hell'

back in the
glory of my
smoking years,
i simply couldn't
handle one
vessel of
true smoking
enjoyment.

it was the
smoking lounges
in select airports
around the country.

one i remember
like a taxi yellow matchbook
was the corroded
plastic bubble
in st. louis'
airport.

i usually had to
hold back the
real urge to vomit
and peered through
watering eyes
to see what other
insane bags
of folk
were trying to
squeeze
the sand out of
their hour glass
like myself.

and once i got
through the
visitation
and reading each
wrinkled face,
i was in worse
shape than
ever
as i lunged towards

the door to
return to regular
non-smoke air.

the gulps and
coughs of new
air was like
i was back in kindergarten
racing towards the
wood chip play ground
to get myself
all bloodied
by my own
dammed
free will.

teams of religious fanatics

descend on our
tiny two laned
road with their
red tote bags
emblazoned
with some
errant line
of scripture.

they all have
their wide eyed,
brim browed faces
glowering into the sun
to cross the chicken road
to find the god
they have
been told about.

as the long line
of motored cars
blitz by and
hold the gates of heaven
away from
these red baggers,
there is a tiny
break in the action
for the real zealots
to cross and
get into service
on time.

and as they wind
blows heavier
and heavier,
the tossed scalps
of serious folks
blare across the street
and forget their
kin as they blast towards
the opened arms of god.

this,
as all the others simmering
in the 'hell'
of their patience,

they seethe with repressed jealousy
as the pearly gates look
a bit more glassy
and unrealistic
in this simple
doting day of
infinite theological possibilities.

the value of winter sunshine

is
the substance
of coal around
a diamond.

it's deceiving,
yet all together
comforting
as you dig to
get something more
than a rumor
about what is in
the middle of it
all.

and as the
pounds of
winter rays
hit my skin
and rapture
the room around
me,
i'm glad
all that
hard coal
is being broken
down into
comfortable
heat to
keep the direction
of this
poem
straight
and simple.

'the very best of trash'

i believe
people throw away
their best things
so when i hear
about how nasty
dumpster diving
can be
i really think
those people don't
know what is truly
prized in
this life.

form old wood,
to belt buckles,
to working shelves
or any other manner of
being,
i'm ready to live
the trash of someone's
life and turn it into
a painting in a window
frame.

from there,
we can talk about
how full our landfills are
and how selfishly useless
americans are in
keeping the act of
willful recycling and
environmental consciousness
as a righteous act.

so,
the next time i lower myself
into the heap of one's
trash piles,
know that i'm rooting
through the best they
have to give to this
reality and as you
snicker under
your pretentiously

void breath,
know that there would
never be anything of value
in your toss,
including your
precious trash
known as
wordy thoughts.

‘willful revenge’

i'd love to
rent a big 18-wheeler
with rubber bumpers all
the way around the
vehicle and
smash all the idiot cars
around me that deserve a little
hedging.

or jam on my breaks
to get some
wanton country boy
off my ass because he
has nothing better
to do than
to fuck with
folks he'll never meet
and they'll never get
to dislike.

and these trucks shoves
wouldn't do damage
other than downgrading
silly egos of drivers blindly
careening through the
proverbial night on
a card of expired karma
and a tank full of warmed
over sugar gas.

‘wrestling the creative inverted pyramid paradigm’

when i
get hazed by
the act of writing
and consider moseying off
to do something else,
i find that the second word
i decide to write
gladly lends to the third,
fourth and before i know it
i'm onto the hundredth and
wonder how i
could have turned my back
on the craft today
as the wonderfully crammed world
of potential ambles,
waits on its perch for our
human energies to dissect
it's fullness into tiny
bite sized squares
ready for
able consumption and
further
dispersion of
as many words as we can possible
get off
in
out attempt to
rid
each and every
secret we
all carefully hide.

'writing worlds'

i used to
huddle over
the cold air
typer pounding
soliloquies
as the smoke
curled away from
my body.

now,
as the years
have escaped
like smoke
from ash,
i am in a clean,
warm aired
room with my
son next to
as my familiar
fingers tap
into eternity.

i have traded
to city window
wafting with
remnants of rampant
life and exhaust
for the chance
to exist in full force
daily with the greatest
creation i have
ever concocted.

and i have finally
found how futile
poetry can be
as this
current
ramble down towards
more white space
serves as
another
footnote
in my son's

advancing life.