

Casual Emergencies

Five poems

Ian Ganassi

Flood Insurance

One way or the other
There's a storm brewing as sure as I'm sitting here,
The clouds folding into each other
Like mother-of-pearl opera glasses,

Unfurling white flags of victory
Or perhaps some of them are blood red.

Still one can hear the shit hitting the fan,
Taps being blown like the blues
Away off in the distance.

The key to the highway was a long way from home,
Like a constellation,
Wheeling about the stars,

The ruined cars and sugar shacks,
The letters never received,
The promises never meant to be kept,
The good intentions never sent.

"There is no past in beauty," perhaps,
But there's definitely very little beauty in the past

And the drain is so clogged no snake can excavate.
Much better to build an ark and wait for more rain,

Or else get used to being drenched to the bone
While the river carries away what used to be home.

Hard-Hitting Reportage

Like an automatic rifle the quickest cure was a taste
Of what could be handed out any day of the week.
The fuse was a simple shade of green, unseen,
Taking a simple in the back room,
Aromatic play of smoke upon the surface of the waters.

Sitting around with a big nest egg up his ass,
How small everything seemed,
A petty form of impatience, a late night talk show host
Trying to justify the ways of monomaniacs.
Just between friends it goes no further than this.

We'd like to inform you of your options
Regarding the conditions of our association.
Trying to avoid a void little was said
That could not have been said before,
Declinations of the stars

Here in tinsel town, is that what the stars
Are made of? At the top of the tree?
Clinging to the highest branches? I might have to draw
My cap gun or a portrait of the Pope
In a pontificating mood. *Taffy was a Welshman,*

Taffy was a thief and how clever was an acrobat
Aloft between the twin towers, those cavernous
Trembling elevators not unlike the narrow speedy escalators
In certain cultural institutions for the privileged,
Getting to the top in a hurry. But for another man

Just a feeling of being on the verge, about to lose
It because that's the way he was raised up to be.

Can't make a silk pig out of an elephant's earmuff
Or something witty along those lines.
How much humbility [*sic*] they believed themselves to have,

Each dwarf with a pickax as tall as himself,
Ready to break ground for the new centrality center.
Pale pimply unfortunate son of a preacher how far
Would you go to talk the talk and walk the plank,
Real men don't grow flowers, horses' asses.

Central Savings Time

A pack of feral cats with bloody mouths.

The terrifying ferocity of life
Beneath its thin veneer of beauty.

But no one really gets away with anything.

The markers bleeding through the page gave no instructions.

We cannot conceive a window without wanting to look out.
As long as we hear words we're sure there's a meaning.

Belief in an afterlife assumes one has lived,
Which is not always the case.

The branches of the cypress were swarming with daws.

The jaws of death yawned with boredom.

At the center of the pineapple there's a spiral staircase.

At the center of the pomegranate is a revolving door.

I mean in the sense of there being no better way to go.

Time goes in one direction while we try to go in the other.

In the fall we gained an hour, but it was the wrong hour.

No one's life is complete
When death presents his dance card.

Take it or leave it, break it or grieve it, it's yours.

Accidental Suicide

The sound, in the fall,
Of a late night train hooting by
In the distance, hooting off in a direction

That hasn't been detected yet.
The fog outside lingering with the pipe smoke.
Do the chance operations

Ever really give us a chance? Does this one?
Can your old English teacher figure them out?
Who can tell the dancer from the dance?

He stutters like a king.
To write or draw the thing
Without ever lifting one's hand from the paper

Is only a mistake if you get found out.
When they lifted his head the blood poured
From the corners of his mouth.

But it probably only happens like that in the movies.
Too delicate a question to ask the mourners,
While the senseless slaughter continues.

If the hero says he was just doing his job
He's right, but if we say the same thing about him
We break a taboo. The neighbors are as quiet as can be,

Which isn't always a good thing.
You have issues, I have tissues,
Do you need to sneeze?

Fuck the Ineffable

What was expected of us was contrary
To expectations. The Salvation Army
Rode in on a charger, a silver charger.
And in your eyes a picture of a picture

Of a flag flying like the boy within the boy
On the cereal box. The carp I caught and kept
In an aquarium until he died.
A salvo of muddled pronunciations,

A letter that was delivered but never received,
A point in the night sky
Around which the arms of the compass
Embraced a span of void.

How bright Orion's sword looked
Streaking across the firmament,
The arc like that of a rainbow in a terrarium.
You can see gravity bending time.

You can hear the vehicle before you see it.
The rain drained the energy out of the streetlights.
A strong draught of night blew in the window,
Dark enough to make you drunk,

The heady perfume of August darkness.
That which was discussed amongst those in the know
Was whether it was worth knowing.
People were much simpler than they appeared,

Except when they were more complicated.
To be set up to be let out, the mastiff
As impatient as the mongrel. The lines on and along
The highway repeat themselves nervously beneath the car.