

LIGHT 1: THE PASSING SEASONS

PERFECT SUMMER DREAM*

A summer day...
The river slumbers,
Lulled by the sunny drone and hum of life.
A Mole, a Water Rat
Idle in a boat.
Mole, the sunlight baking on his fur,
Gazes deep into the lushness
Of the river bank.
Ratty pauses on his oars to watch
A cool green circle swirl away...
A dragonfly stops time.
Eternal moment.
Perfect summer dream.

—ALLEN JOHNSON, JR.

*From *A Breeze in the Willows*, a celebration of the wit and wisdom
of *The Wind in the Willows* published by Ten Speed Press (Berkeley, CA).

SPRING FLING

Every year these bodies

slinking and high-stepping
in grandeur, flesh

again palpable
like cherry-blossoms

to smell and taste, steal
with fingers into our fantasies—

We all become adulterers
all dreamers

of our own bodies,
how, adventurous Argonauts,

they burst open and sun
ravishes us every

sepal, calyx, stamen
alive on these ancient stems,

eyes eager like the gods:
crooked and divine.

—DAVID RADAVICH

2: NOTHING BUT NONSENSE

TENSE TIMES

The perfect and imperfect clinked
their glasses
to the likely future, as is
often done.

The plu- and future perfect on-
-ly winked.

Unter Zeiten

Das Perfekt und das Imperfekt
tranken Sekt.
Sie stießen aufs Futurum an
(was man wohl gelten lassen kann).

Plusquamper und Exaktfutur
blinzten nur.

(From the German of Christian Morgenstern)
—MARK HERMAN & RONNIE APTER

DIM AND DIMMER

There once were two Ricks—one, the dimmer Rick,
Conceived this idea for a limerick:
Discuss Truth and Beauty
And doing one's Duty.
Hey, why don't you let that one simmer, Rick?

—EDMUND CONTI

NONSENSE COUPLETS

9

On a trip to Madagascar
I encountered an old Lascar
Who said that dyspeptic flatus
Troubled him without hiatus.
I advised the man to try a
Purgative of raw papaya.
His response was that religion
Forced him to eat roasted pigeon,
And the source of his complaining
Lay in slapdash toilet training.

11

Want to bet at Narragansett?
Actually, I wouldn't chance it,
For I've heard the racing course is
Just for doped and wired horses,
And that even show and place is
Settled well before the race is,
And that every single jockey
Has a little key and lock he
Opens in the horse's saddle
To make him slow down, or skedaddle.

Is a sin benign and fleeting,
And allows a modest wager
To turn minor dough to major,
But I wouldn't bet a dollar
At a turf so steeped in squalor.

12

It takes a bit of sheer bravado
To serve the simple avocado.
First you peel its leather jacket,
Then you take a knife and hack it
Down the middle till it's split
To remove the spheroid pit,
While throughout this heavy toil
Your hands get coated with green oil.
Next, you find you must make use
Of fresh lime or lemon juice
To prevent the flesh from browning
(A thing that leaves most diners frowning.)
You may use the cleaned fruit solely
To make a dish of guacamole
But I always keep one section
To relish as a pure confection.

—JOSEPH S. SALEMI

3: OUR CREATURE COUSINS

THE SNAKE AND ITS CRITIC*

The snake having caught
an excellent mouse
will not hunt again for a month
though the farmer whose wheat
the mouse has eaten
says why not catch more
though the mouse
dissolving in the long corridor
says no no already
you have caught
one mouse too many.
The snake however refuses
all such importunities
and gulps and curls and sleeps
as it pleases
doing neither great good
nor great evil but constantly
as little harm as possible.

—BONNIE JACOBSON

*First published in *The Random House Treasury of Light Verse* (1995), Louis Phillips, Editor.

HOWLING DOWN THE HILL

Tonight the dog is howling down the hill
Again, howling to wake the dead, to wake
Our lawyer neighbor, who calls to tell us so:
Your dog's been howling half the night all week—
As if we didn't know.

What does she howl at so? The moon's not full.
All night she lay in stupor by the fire,
Then whimpered to go out, as dogs must do;
Nothing to spook her we could see or hear,
And so we let her go.

And now she won't come back, although we call
And call. Something is there, my wife says, deer,
Or beavers building in the swamp below
The hill. But I say, no, nothing is there;
She howls to tell us so.

Over and over that elemental howl
Rises against the darkness overhead.
The lawyer wakes and calls to tell us. Oh,
She howls as if she means to wake the dead,
As if we didn't *know*.

—CHARLES W. PRATT

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