

In My Father's House There are Many Rooms

“If ignorance is bliss
Then I'm a blizzard”
he said one night at dinner
we were stunned into silence
then paralyzed with laughter
he laughed too
I'm not sure he knew why it was so funny
a moment of clarity
in an otherwise clouded mind

I found him once on the third floor
of what they call an assisted living facility
sitting on a bench far from his own room
“I'm looking for my father” he explained
“I am too” was all I could think to say

he's forgotten that he likes to be outdoors
to feel the sun on the back of his neck
perhaps forgotten that there is an outdoors
so I take him out to the garden when I visit
words fail us both
I rub his shoulders
he seems to remember liking that
it's not the zoo or the merry go round
but I'm doing the best I can

“you were a good father” I say
he looks up at me and smiles
“I was?” he asks hopefully
I don't know if the old bastard is playing me or not
I lie again and say “yes”

something drove him out of doors that damp spring night
he was taking off his clothes when he fell
the alarm went off but the attendant was afraid of the dark
he was left out there until the morning shift did their head count

before death comes
I recite the lord's prayer and tell him
“you're going to see Jesus, maybe your mom and dad”
he doesn't remember to smile
I don't tell him he'll see my mother
I don't want to scare the hell out of him

Summer Pathways

a shiny green apple
knocked to the ground
by a giddy squirrel
so anxious to pluck one
he sends three others
crashing down to earth

one hard little fruit
rolls down the bank
to settle by the moss
a quiet place to rot
the soft white dog
carries off his tart prize
white flag waving behind him

much later
it will appear in our bed
a love offering
riddled with tiny bites

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Voyage

promotion in a three piece suit
long days, prestige, more loot
corner office, city view, secretary
might be seen as kind of scary

but for the old commander it is not
to sail a desk is now his lot
as a paper pusher he has no peer
known for proper policy both far and near

I have no reason to despair
a life of ease beyond compare
it's changing on us once again
and now at least I have my pen

so long as we have life in us
there will be mystery and promise

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Approaching the Center

first here must be silence
the long slow descent into quiet
off in the distance, a rumbled whisper
the lilt of my long dead old ma

the mystery of the origins
shrouded in haze
long obliterated by time
secrets kept without knowing why

called to mountains, the paps of Danu,
where ancient peoples left behind
nipple cairns to make the point
aimed at the setting sun

my own mother before me
drawn here in the midlife shift
to find the place of her people
named for the brown cow

now here at the bend in the Boyne
the Goddess Boand's bountiful flow
illuminates my vision
and stirs new life in me

no longer young, yet not yet old
I still have milk to give
And urges more primeval to satisfy
In this holy place I am renewed.

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