

Rain is the Hourglass of Memory



poems

Jack Evans

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Sample Poems

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Time as a Metaphor for the Distance Between Moments

If you could balance time
On the tip of your finger
It would be like glass,
Catching the light of yesterday,
Turning it into tomorrow.

If you could hold time in the palm of your hand
It would puddle like water.
Sleek silver hours would leap up out of the waves,
Splash down in another hemisphere.

If you could hold time tightly
Between thumb and finger
It would shine for you like a coin,
Like a sun,
Like a hundred things you give
More value to than now.

Flip it high in the air.
If it comes down heads,
Proceed to your next breath.
If it comes down tails,
Give yourself a goodnight kiss
And sing yourself to sleep.

Starkweather

for Jeff Falk

Him, looking like James Dean
Tooling round in that '49 Ford,
Sawed off four –ten in his lap,
Her, resting her cheek on his chest.
Shot that one guy six times.
In the head!
Shot his dog, too.
Jesus, they was mean.
Shot her mom, and her stepdad,
And her half-sister Betty Jean.
They was just plain crazy.
He wanted to be a bank robber you know.
Clyde Barrow, and her?
Bonnie Parker I guess.
Ten dead altogether.
Shit! Nebraska was in the news
For the first time since
William Jennings Bryan.
It was back in '58—
Or was it '59?
Don't matter.
Took off out of Lincoln,
In January I think.
Anyways, it was cold.
Killed ten people—
Did I tell you that?
Wind blowing across the flatland
The whole time.
Wind in their faces
All the way to the Badlands.
Trees talking to him,
Him talking to death.
It all seems so innocent now.

Crossing the Agua Fria

In the north, the sky fills with dust,
Dead air becomes restless,
Moving closer to my skin
And the sand between river rock and
Creosote brush is the spray of a sterile sea.
I think about rain
And late summer afternoons
When the air was wet with anticipation
And we sat watching the water
Stroke the trembling pier,
As a small boat arched itself against a storm
That whispered of its coming.
We cracked open lobster,
The sweet, damp flesh glistening
Between our fingers
And the scent of salt ripe in this season of storms.
The brass bed enfolded us in its down
And we dreamed the dream of innocence and fidelity,
Not understanding the loss of one,
Or the absence of the other.
Later, you would stand in the kitchen,
Barefoot, making supper,
While I sat on the edge of the bed,
Watching out the window,
Wondering what it would be like
Where it's dry.

Pebbles in The Holy Stream

Like a Christ figure nailed to a park bench,
Smoking day-old cigarettes
And turning wine to flesh,
He watched us play
On the summer grass.
Once, when the sun had drained us
Of our games, we spoke to him,
Only to ask his name.
He cursed,
Waved his arms in the air,
Threw a handful of the plague
To strike us dead on the asphalt path.
We ran back laughing
To play on the grass.

One winter, years from then
At the corner where the wind
Was created for God's revenge,
I saw him raging as he crossed the street
And I knew the time had passed
To know his name.

All the Nights Of His Dying

All the nights of his dying
They lingered by his door
In whispered tones conspiring
All the nights of his dying
And the not yet corpse is lying
In the courting suit he wore
All the nights of his dying

They lingered by his door

Night Colder Than an Open Grave

Night colder than an open grave
And blacker than its tenant's sight.
More silent than a cadaver's dream,
Calls to commence nocturnal rite.

She lies upon that ice blast hill,
A tossed terrain, a glazed flood,
With mouth apart in Thespis moan
And eyes adull in dried up blood.

He kneels framed in that frigid moon,
With hands carved darkly into stone.
She takes her measure, as she lies
Of passion brittle as a bone.

Museum without Statues

Blessed are the dreamers
For they shall be resurrected
Every day
And the street people
Will move indoors
Out of the cold
Drink coffee with the night watchman
Who tells stories from his youth
About late nights on the Grand Concourse
When all the holy words
Were left in shadows
And the girls wore red spiked heels

In the long deadly night of neon
The rain-slick streets spilled out
The nameless children of our failed abortions
And Christ drunks wandered in their 40 block deserts

The watchman never slept in those days
He only dreamed
Dreamed and whistled tunes
He'd learned from his father on Sunday mornings
With the bathroom mirror all steamed over
And the lingering scent of sex
Still a fragrance
He had no name for

Black Sheep on Acid

Days descend
Into Christianity commercials
2 a.m.
And still no illusions.
He walks mercifully
From this scene
Of neon and heartbreak
Crank the volume
Up to black and white.
Forcing his fear
To laugh itself plastic
He remembers
There are just two things
You need
In order
To escape:

The heart of a juggler.
The hands of somebody else.

Family Secrets

I

You sit and whisper with father,
Lips going on and off
In the flicker of Christmas tree lights.
Mother hums holiday in the kitchen,
I sit on the parlor floor
Almost preoccupied with a new toy.

II

The lake settles into
The shadow of a hill.
We walk arm in arm
Along the shore,
Laugh and whisper the light
Into a bloody splash on the water.
Once, in a dream, I kissed you
As a lover.
Heat seeps through our nonchalance.

III

Dancing makes me wordy.
I want to blurt secrets,
Tell tales.
The music stops.
I try to hold back the flood and debris of history,
But I can't.
Father, mother, you

Come back in a frenzy of guilt,
Love, long Sunday afternoon walks.
The time when I was six
And you left me in Macy's,
The dream
Pony rides at Van Cortland,
How much I hated him sometimes,
Mother singing as she baked,
Windless nights in the upstairs room,
All Soul's Eve,
A chocolate Santa,
The lost baby,
The Easter we went to Asbury Park,
And finally,
I run
Out
Of breath.

About the Author

Jack Evans was born on the banks of the Hudson during the twilight years of the reign of Roosevelt II. He moved to a little house overlooking the dusty Agua Fria when Lesley King ruled the land. He loves music of all types, and film from many places. He believes in baseball and books. He writes poetry, he reads poetry, he thinks poetry, and he shares poetry. His work has appeared in numerous publications, and he has performed in venues all over Arizona and from coast to coast since the 1970s. He has also directed a number of spoken word series over the past 30 years, and is currently co-director of the Caffeine Corridor series in downtown Phoenix. He lives in that city with his wife Judy, his dog, his cat, four parakeets, and a laptop.