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SLUDGE

There's a point beyond which.

But once I got used to the feeling it made perfect sense.

The epileptic was ignorant of his disease;
He couldn't figure out
Why his tongue was bleeding
When he got up in the mornings.

Magical connectors, like,

“And, But”

And then again,
At least sometimes.

Nothing prevents the rain from pooling in the gutters
So cars driving through it can soak you in their wake.

I prefer the Mambo Taxi. Do you know it?

“I want my daughter to go to Choate,” she said.
(Her daughter was six months old.)

To be over-and-under privileged simultaneously.

A zero disguised as a one, a whole string of them, a veritable army.

But now here is everywhere. A pipeline full of zeroes and ones.

Toxic sludge comes out the other end.

The industrial glue requires a gas mask.

Do you notice how the time keeps changing shape?
She couldn't get used to it.

They wanted something more generous, something increasingly gregarious.

But this particular wasteland is full of it.

TRUE NORTH

The abstracted pedestrian was busy nursing his sciatica
At the crosswalks, the worse for wear. And his little dog too.

They considered him to be under the delusion
That it was all a dream.
But he went about his suffering anyway,

And business as usual.
Was he ill? With a perpetual complaint?
And in which doctor's province did it fall?

Which is to say someone beyond all other remedies,
For whom there is no remedy.

Our province is the plain;
Oh give me a home.

On the other hand,
"Said Tweedle Dum to Tweedle Dee..."
And he was right.

I am very fond of my rattle
And of the mysterious noises
Made by the plumbing.

But Halloween is not what it used to be.
Remember those wax teeth we used to get,
That had something like Kool-Aid in them?
Pretty disgusting actually,
But they seemed like fun at the time.

And at the clothes or boundary line, it was hard to get orientated.
She used to like standing with her arms out,
Pretending she was a compass needle.

It was cute,
But it never helped us find our way home.

DIRTY WINDSHIELD

Who beyond yon casement babbles, of things that cannot
Be repaired? And why bother? A parrot trained to sing
The blues. What are the blues anyway? We know what they're not.

Beat with perpetual storms of whirlwind and dire hail
I couldn't find my way to the parking meter, even though
I had lots of change. Keep it in the key of G Major.

And isn't it time to change into your black earrings
And new lipstick? The old women in black dresses throwing
Cow pies against the wall to dry for fuel. The astronaut's toilet,

Which they thought would burn up harmlessly in the atmosphere,
Finally landed on the superintendent's new car,
A little mess to be cleaned up. Something's fishy around here;

Something's rotten in Chilmark. I was never there, as fan or foe.
I surrounded myself with my own noise. The clerk
At the bodega said "you need that grease." (He was referring to beer.)

But happiness can come only of reality, As unreal as that seems.
I would say yes. "That droll, droll ...wait a minute." A can of spinach
Or pork and beans. Life dwindles down to a little pin prick

Of light and goes out, like an old black and white TV. A bunch
Of flowers for your sins, forget about absolution.
If you break a dandelion's stem, you get dandelion cream.

Which isn't good for anything. It reminds me to try to think
Of what to say to them. Trying too hard
To be a "regular guy" among the dancers.

STATIC SILENCE

In slow motion with darling asides
The hounds on his tail in full cry.

Full beyond capacity with the dead
But all that malarkey is just in your head.

The joints have grown cold, the dinner postponed,
The time is all out of joint, that is to say deboned.

But don't worry outside is where I got me some hygiene.
I don't want to go there again but thank you very kindly.

Interference for the lie we'll learn by experience,
Like a T-shirt or button that says Low Clearance.

Depending on your base assumptions, vile creature,
Your every backward glance betrays your ugly features.

The holidays are already behind us and I barely noticed.
I guess they weren't much of an object for focus.

Is there any trash to be salvaged here,
Or any salvage to trash?

The conspiracy has given me pause
With which to greet the dawn

But I forgot to set my alarm.
Or else I slept right through it with my head on my arm.

The late-night drunken sailor ascending the stairs overhead—
It's impossible to assign him to the quick or the dead.

BOTHERED IN BRIDGEPORT

A uniform is a sort of anchor.

With any luck I persuaded her not to sign up.

I can't remember the uniform Mr. Green Jeans wore.

The sea otter at the aquarium was going nowhere fast;
Too bad, he was a beautiful animal.

The striking phone workers are striking.

The surveyors look privileged with all that fancy equipment,
But they only get half an hour for lunch.

Ugliness can be truer than beauty.

The object of charity is never at ease.

Neither is the guy with the tie in the cubicle.

Bad news for the fleet of guns or feet.

None of them make life easier, but things could be worse.

The high-density porcelain insulators were irresistible as paperweights.

On the other side of town, regional theater.

The rest of the time we waited for it to end.

From inside the house
The radio was more annoying than the weather.

GLOOM OF NIGHT

The verdict preceded the crime,
In fact it was the reason for the crime,
At least “in the final analysis.”

But the analysis never ends.
Neither does the verdict.

“He had a blessed life,
It’s hard to know how this happened.”

Blessed with what?

There’s always something hairy
Lurking between the pages of the topiary.

But I had no notion for so long,
And then I had so much notion I got notion sickness.

Like cargo overtaken by water bugs,
It had to be quarantined.

Or the hissing cockroaches
Of Madagascar.

I saw some once, in captivity.
They were so bored with hissing for visitors
They had stopped doing it;
No matter how they were shaken,
They weren’t stirred.

And worrying the mailman is beyond me,
At least for now. I’m bored with his dog tags.

Will I miss Saturday delivery? Sort of.

“I’ll tell you, brother,” said the mailman,
But I couldn’t quite tell
What it was he wanted to tell me.

Something about “Civilization as we know it.”