



Mark Harbinger

TRIUNE, ENDEMIC

NO, WE INSIST

My wife walked into the room, drooping
face a death mask. Muffled speech,
scared eyes numb to my probing
questions: "Are you ok? D'you fall, yes?"

...Will you?

But, you can't, can you? Can't stop grasping
for the words. You reach
out from what reminds us that we're dying.
But that fight: that's what separates us

From my Pop, twenty-two years ago this Thanksgiving,
I got the news: He'd been dead a week.
He had refused meds for months up—leading
to his demise, under suspicious circumstances;

Or from my Mom, his ex-, no longer living
the life of a free spirit. But rather one to preach
the Good Word from her easy chair in front of the 700 Club, fearing
the Christ of her own passions,

and too afraid of the world to leave her house to visit me for...

This Thanksgiving,
where even my own ex-

is present. Well here, not appreciative. We're all here for the kids, who're toasting
A good holiday. And for ourselves.

So much to carry: the dying, the living,
and the Dead. It feels as though they must be let go— not forgiven, but left to fall—
to teach what will happen if they just, simply insist on continuing
to live
in this fashion.

(2020)

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### DEATH RATTLE

Old man watching as the (hourglass)  
Shifting sands pass  
Below, falling to mark the passage of time; but,

He doesn't hear it,  
stops feeling it. Won't believe in it.  
Eventually, movement ends.

Does time stop when the sands refrain?

Or will a baby grab the timepiece  
in its perfect, little hand? Tiny fingers  
clutching and shaking, filling the air with the sounds of life.

(2021)

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REQUIEM FOR DESSERT, 2021

I've been seeing shadows.
Not every day. Pass.
Not in the corner of my eye, but just outside.
When I turn to focus—I've missed it. A warning.

It is too soon to mourn? Us, working about the yard. Making love.

The shape sweeps the cobwebs from the corner of the room when I'm not looking.
Pass, after pass.

Outside the bars, traffic, ambiance, the grinding lives restart. A final repast,
weighing my life against the time re-meaning.
You can only focus so much on what's in front of you.
And for dessert?

Pass. The dark shape, moving, refreshes my attention: shadows are where the light refuses to leave—
There it is again! Please. Don't take me yet:
I've still got this meal to finish.

(2021)