

I SING
THEREFORE
I AM



VOLUME
TWO

I Sing, Therefore I Am

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Contents

Sarah Frideswide

- 5 Pyjamas
- 6 Under the tap
- 7 Dressing
- 8 Shaving
- 9 Rebellion

Gillian Gregory

- 10 Box Hill

Linda Logan

- 11 To Do List #1
- 11 To Do List #2
- 12 Mother's Roommate At Rehab Facility
- 13 Obligate Parasite
- 14 Why Are You Still Here?
- 15 Swarming the Queen

Sarah Middleton

- 16 Impasse in the Art Room
- 17 Hearing Aid
- 18 Birthday Treat, New Theatre

Rowland Molony

- 19 The Walking Frame
- 20 My NOT To Do List

Pat Williams

- 21 5-Minute Poem
- 22 Leaving or Not Leaving
- 23 The Spoon

THE **POEMS**



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Pyjamas

An amorphous mass, wet,
stinking sharp and strong.
They are heavy, sodden.
Red spaceships on them
defy their inglorious fate.
My hands take hold
I gave up keeping clean
a long time ago.
I am washed perpetually in his pee.
We are closer than siblings
should ever have to be.

Under the tap

they are formless and rinsed out
like our lives
they weigh down the washing line.
Liquid leaves fabric
one slow, fat, drip at a time
but they are never the same.
Bleached, they go back on him at night
only to be drenched again.
Our lives are an endless cycle of pee.
He gives, I receive,
a perfect partnership of recycling
that will one day wear us out
till we are just threads, hanging on a line.

Dressing

I had to dress him before school,
my brother
whose penis I should never have seen
but which I saw daily
in all its moods.

The size of it was bloody terrifying
sometimes
and awkward to get round
while dressing.

Shaving

We stood in the bathroom,
he and I,
perfumed peaks speckled my wrists and the wall.
His hands jabbed, grabbed at me
flaming welts rose on his skin
where he had moved too fast.
The walls held us in,
black mould mocked us
in our bathroom world
all elbows and knees
and creatures that crawl in the walls.

Outside the birds sang of freedom
beyond thick frosted glass
and ivied shadows.

He smelled of sweat and shaving foam,
so did I.
He made outrage manifest
by jumping, yelling, slapping my hand.
He left marks of his own;
but my anger was dead in a box,
lost to me.
In the end he stole the razor;
dropped it down the toilet
with a triumphant yell.

And the birds sang outside
where we could not see.

Rebellion

Balls of fire
hurl themselves across air and space
to decorate a bland beige car park.
Leaves of summer's warmth
have scattered themselves
profaning walls and paths
with nature's sanctity.
She will not be denied
though human structure tries to push her out
contain, conform, define her;
even the chains of winter
will fasten her only a little while.
She will break out again in spring;
blossom will coat the car bonnets.

Gillian Gregory

Box Hill

When I was small in my shoes

I carried tiny scraps of paper

lists in pencil fainting
where I trod –

‘Listen to everyone
listen, listen, listen –’

Patience was a little girl

who never washed

my mother says.

No time, no time, no time

(White Rabbits telling time
in a tunnel –)

I cut the faded bits
into tiny scraps of paper

I buried them in corners
well-acquainted

with the night –

*

in my forties I began
to find slim volumes

in the cleft

of ancient trees.

To Do List #1

Grab pill trays from cabinet
Dump out bag of vials
Arrange alphabetically
Consult list of meds
Drop eleven pills in morning slots
Six pills in noon slots
Five pills in evening slots
Conclude “Proper treatment and
Management” of too much, too many
Too high, too old.

To Do List #2

Pick up Mom’s meds
Confirm date of birth
State street address
Punch in phone number for rewards points
Discuss new medication with pharm tech
Acknowledge risk of death
Consider odds.

Linda Logan

Mother's Roommate at Rehab Facility

Get my shoes, I'm going home.

You're not ready to go home yet. You need to get stronger.

I've got to take care of the baby.

There is no baby, Mom. I'm the baby.

You're not the baby. There's the baby. Right over there. Get me out of bed so I can get it.

That's your sweater on the chair. There's no baby in here.

I'm leaving at one o'clock.

You're not going anywhere. Not today, mom.

You're not my boss. Get my sweater. And don't forget the baby.

Linda Logan

Obligate Parasite

Clot-splotched lungs, feral heartbeat
Sticky platelets, garroted arteries—
As much a host as if beset
By helminths, leeches and
Liver flukes, rooting and
Sucking its life away.

Linda Logan

Why Are You Still Here?

How much Eliquis would it take to kill her?
Tell her she forgot her morning dose
Her evening dose, yesterday's doses
Last month's.

Swarming the Queen

We bathe her, dress her
Get her in and out of bed, of cars
Drive her to appointments
Keep her safe
Keep her company
Keep her jar filled with caramels.

She falls
She forgets
She falls again
She forgets she falls.

This is what I told my siblings:
I can't do this
I'm stepping back
It's mom or me.

This is what I told my mom:
I'm sorry you're old
I'm sorry everyone you know is dead.

This is what I didn't say:
I'm sorry you don't remember that summer
Don't remember that man
That child.
I don't forgive you.

Sarah Middleton

Impasse in the Art Room

We can barely all squeeze in but the aperture of raindrops on washing line affords a breathing space.

The three of us stand like gathered brushes by stacks of canvasses, wallpaper peeling, musty shelves.

The soft voice of Nonna purrs hope and cherishing.

The pauses of Mum put mince pies and fruitcake more firmly on her palate [palette]

The old leathery shoes creak

“There’s still life in this place”.

Hearing Aid

I was meant to be helpful.
Sludgy grey brown, camouflaged
With ageing skin, inanimate yet
Harbouring a high pitch menace.

I can only do as programmed.
Stamp on me if you wish.

Remember I offer a chance for
Chatter and inclusion.

But *keep* me in a slipper
If that suits you better.

Sarah Middleton

Birthday Treat, New Theatre

“Don’t rush me. I’m 85!”

“But we’ll be late. Why didn’t you let me drop you at the door?”

She couldn’t say but needed to stay attached,
The once familiar foyer was now a stranger, a fearful sight.

We got there in the end.
Shuffling feet, arm gripped, eyes wide with wonder.

Her seat in the stalls enveloped her bundled body
As her soul danced out to the stage.

The Walking Frame

Wheeled, it nonetheless clanks and jangles
its aluminium bones throughout the house,
manoeuvring itself in bathroom, stairwell, bedroom –
across mats and rugs, the obstacled sitting room.

How readily it gives its arms, elbows, legs
to journeys, destinations; how it transfers balance
to the teeter, the lurch, the wayward turn;
so gripped and manhandled, it keeps us vertical,
a step at a time.

The frame stands sentinel each night at the bed head,
like an actor in the dark, balancing in the wings
on the balls of her feet, standing in for volition.

5-Minute Poem

A full and active life ...
is available for all
Concurrently being a wife -
time available is small

Things I always thought I would do -
discuss feminism with some men
try kayaking or own a canoe,
live in a tent, keep a hen

At my funeral they will say I did care
But not enough for myself I fear
Life zoomed past like a hare
'full and active' not able to steer

Leaving or Not Leaving

Blackouts ease stimulation levels
for the body in a hospital bed
while two brains yearn for the beach.

Crying is a luxury neither can afford
we look for solace by provoking purring – or in a short piano piece.

An apple takes too much energy
Pureed pears more appropriate.

We can do this today, in fluffy pyjamas
with soft fur gently breathing under her hand.

Then ...

an assault from washing powder drives us outside
frantically clearing air in lungs and room
until it is safe again.

The Spoon

Adopted from Woolworths in Wantage
and named 'this is a find':
I'm warmer and lighter, above all I'm quieter -
still treasured many years on.

Conduit for nutrition and delectation
liquidised food, stewed plums or soaked prunes -
with ice cream -
I've tasted them all!

The angle is critical for a lying-down mouth
we master it perfectly, twist and deposit.
But another takes charge, why I can't fathom -
no finesse, wrong angle, clash teeth, spill and dump.

Time passes
Now sitting up in bed is the norm.
Textures more varied; crisp, crunchy or chewy
Tastes: spicy, bitter, nutty or toasty
I'm living my best life - I hope she is too -
with more spoons to spend, there are life choices available;
a long way from those months of 'eat soup, or pee?'

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