

Mad Dog Howls at the Moon

The moon draws a black veil
across its face.
Stars wink, knowingly.

Traffic stops to let a dead
baby cross the street.

You can feel the disappointment
in the crowd of onlookers
when the unknown soldier
appears at his tomb and
presents his dog tags.
No one salutes.

Equally sad is the certain
knowledge that if time
were to stand still,
very still,
no one would notice.

Life is a blur, some say.
What does that make death?

I apologize.
I don't mean to scare you.
It's just that the spider
crawling on your sleeve is
not a spider.
It's a memory.

Stop or continue?

The Longboat Delivers Food to Shorty

He serenades his mother
as she lies sleeping on a
bed of castanets.
The wine is dark.
A subtle blend of improper gestures
and sly innuendos.
He sips as she sleeps.
He wonders when winter will
give up and melt into spring.
He wonders why anyone would
want to build a boat in the desert.
He lies awake at night
listening to the faint clatter of castanets.
The fog rolls in and obscures the
view of Great Rock.
Fireflies float in the empty room,
casting a faint glow on the hardwood floor.
In the morning, the crowd of
camel herders that were standing
by the rock wall are gone.
Camel tracks lead off into the desert.

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The Great Emptiness

1

I came to a great emptiness and felt
too tired to go any farther so I sat
down and wept. My tears filled
the emptiness, which became an attractive
lake beside which children played,
lovers rowed boats and into which
fishermen cast their lines.

2

I came to a great emptiness
and it was a dark house
save for one window in which
a candle burned. But the
window was open a crack and
when the wind came up
the candle was extinguished
and nothing was left but
a thin trail of smoke.

3

I came to a great emptiness
that seemed to have no beginning
or end and no dimensions—
no length or depth or width.
I was afraid that if I wandered
into it I'd lose my bearings,
so I just stood at its edge and
stared. To be honest,
it made me sleepy.

4

I came to a great emptiness
but before I could decide what
to do someone filled it to the
brim with smiling faces.

(continued)

(continued)

5

I came to a great emptiness
and stood still and gazed
out across an immense space
and all I could see for miles and
miles were floating cows being
herded by floating cowboys
on floating horses.

6

I came to a great emptiness
and decided to walk out into
the middle of it and just
sit and stare. After a while
pigeons came and gathered
around me, so I fed them bread
crumbs from a paper bag.

7

I came to a great emptiness and
found that it was not great but
something less than that—
a big emptiness, a considerable
emptiness, a significant emptiness.
It had been overrated.
People had talked about it, built
it up, made it seem more than it was.
There was nothing great about it.

8

I came to a great emptiness
and looked across it. And on the
other side I could see children
playing and I wished to cross
this emptiness but did not
want to be eaten by monsters
or squashed by giant lizards.

(continued)

(continued)

9

I came to a great emptiness
and found Bob Hope there,
eating a ham sandwich.
When I asked him questions
about how to be funny he
shrugged his shoulders
and handed me a pad of
paper and a pencil.

10

I came to a great emptiness
and in the center, the exact center,
was the Leaning Tower of Pisa,
but it wasn't leaning.
It was standing perfectly straight.
I spoke to a guard who was walking
the grounds who said that ever
since they straightened it no one
came to visit anymore and he
was very bored and lonely. Then
he tried to engage me in a lengthy
conversation about weights and
measures, but I told him I had to go.

11

I came to a great emptiness and it
was a theater in which the funniest
man on earth was performing and
the people in the audience were
laughing their heads off.

12

I came to a great emptiness and
yelled "hello" into it and waited
for the echo, but it never came.
So I yelled "I'm lonely."
After a few seconds a voice
came back across the emptiness,
"You are not alone."

(continued)

(continued)

13

I came to a great emptiness and
I could see the bottom quite clearly,
and on it were pennies,
each representing an unfulfilled wish.

14

I came to a great emptiness,
but I was not afraid or even
apprehensive. Just curious.
“How did you become so empty?”
I asked. “By breathing in
and breathing out,” it answered.

16

I came to a great emptiness
and felt sorry for myself and
for all the time I had wasted
feeling sorry for myself.

17

I came to a great emptiness
and I wept for joy because
it was without noise and
movement and devoid of
meaning or purpose and
there were no people
and no one was trying to
sell me anything.

18

I came to a great emptiness and I
followed it but then it split off
and went this way and that way and
I thought, *great*. So I sat down
and waited for some inspiration
to tell me which path to follow.
That was forty-five years ago
and I'm still sitting, but I'm about
to move because, unlike Robert Frost,
I've come to the conclusion
that they are both the same and
which ever path I take I'll end up in the

same place, which, as a matter of fact,
is right where I'm sitting.

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