

Poetry Series

**Danny Casteen**  
**- poems -**

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**Danny Casteen(11/11/1961)**

# Better Lies

If I were a writer, I would learn to tell better lies,  
Fictions of self-sacrifice, undying love, body and blood

Condensed and dripped in ink-blue dreams from this pen,  
Not the mean and muddy runnels of diffuse dissipated visions

But lucid prattling brooks, twin entendre streams,  
Surface tension splashing, slipping, spilling over commas like mossy boulders,

Swelling, gaining mass and cohesion, momentum and blind purpose,  
Merging into turgid rivers that surge through desert country,

Sprouting irrigation-ditch tendrils of ambiguity that stretch in straight-ruled lines  
Toward remote horizons, parallel and convergent there.

But still they flow south, down to the sea of my creation,  
Flood tidewater stanzas and paragraph deltas, deposit silted brackish erudition.

And I would gaze out from the white shore of my ocean of pretense,  
mold golems of duplicitous forms,

Play with them like laughing children  
In the low murmuring curl of my waves,

Track them through aesthetic skies as they soar and glide.  
Cogent torpid wings on crafted gusts,

Pursue cetacean thoughts,  
Arching backs into the deep azure welcoming.

And finally, weave these schemes like bright filaments,  
Long and intricate, fine-meshed, cast along the shore.

And so capture some true thing. Spill out that paradox  
Onto that literal sand, flashing silver in my heedful sun.

And when I could do this thing I would seek you out,  
Find you again in some new shining place,

And you would love me again  
With the selfish giving heart of a child.

Danny Casteen

# Die Gestalt

The Woman with whom  
Whom with which  
I have dwelt for seven years  
Packs her things into boxes this week  
As carpenter ants crawl through  
The detritus  
And up the back of my legs.  
Once crushed, they can't be counted by the nest  
And will be replaced.  
7 years of memories  
now stacked in cardboard  
Spaced, lofty  
Blocking the television.  
In three days the boxes will journey  
To some other place that wants the stack  
But not the contents.  
And the ants there will be too,  
Searching for water,  
Unaware of the meat.  
Life praises the vegan  
And abhors the consumption,  
Blind to the vacuum empty  
Of vigor.

Danny Casteen

# The Invisible Man

The Invisible Man Rides to Tomorrow Land

I slept last night on this slick pavement  
Before the bus stop.  
I didn't want to miss you.  
And though you can't see me  
I sometimes hear your thoughts.  
The pastor's Labrador sees me very well,  
Licked my face, assured me that I have this power.  
Dogs can tell you things.  
Of the tang and yarn of greetings and goodbyes.  
The musky and the bitter soles stamping  
Into fresh cement.  
You must only listen.  
They are nicer than people  
if you don't try to take their food.

You and I  
wind through the slums of Orlando,  
This Magic Kingdom.  
Your hand that moments ago cradled an egg Mcnothin'  
Now perches under your nose,  
Trembling hollow,  
Pale canary.  
And you hoped I'd sit someplace else.  
Didn't you.

But I'm on my way to Tomorrow Land.  
I gave it that name.  
There is sleep on those streets of promise  
Among spent balloons and powdered glass.  
Until Tomorrow.  
There's a woman lives over there who knows my middle name.  
And a little boy who wouldn't remember.  
I ain't seen the dog out in the yard for awhile now.  
A lot of yesterdays there,  
In Tomorrowland.

And you, you'll go home tonight.

You'll tell your husband to write a check.  
Send it to nurture the wretched  
Though when I sit beside you  
You can't bring yourself  
To utter hello.

Danny Casteen

# Waiting To Fall

Waiting to Fall

The edge of a great loneliness stretches gray and green to meet  
the black sky. I've smelled it on some level

For a lifetime.

The tang of salt and decay.

A bird watches me through one burnished eye,  
tilts its head.

There are others here,

Men like me, and a boy

fifteen or so,

Black hair smooth over the tops of reddened ears,

The wings of a bird that watches.

And then I see another,

Like the men in form, but removed in fiber and structure and sweep.

In architecture.

The woman gazes past me,

Through me

Down the length of the pier.

Birds ride the currents above her.

Black heads sing and laugh to one another,

Marking their place in this sky.

They lift me in a way I don't fully understand.

I want to glide with them.

Shout singing words with them.

I think I would give up this life to do it.

The woman looks to her left, past the men

trolling for their suppers before night falls, rusted bicycles fallen  
like the dead on the splintered boards.

And to her right, a bridge span humps up.

A cat's back holds back heaven.

The boy sees her now and their bodies incline,

Coupled in recognition.

And now they are close and their words

Join these others in the wind.

Prayers stirring wing feathers.

I'm frozen here,

A water dropp suspended,  
Assembled by surface tension into this clockwork array,  
Pregnant with yearning.

I am waiting to fall.

I look to the north, feel you watching, hear the words again,  
But I am more than a collection of memories.  
I am squarely in the path of time,  
History and potential rush in from opposite poles,  
Impending toward this now.  
I am the common spike in the merging track.  
I am golden.  
I am a witness,  
A molecule of this moment,  
A glimmer of the whole.  
And then it arrives,  
a prayer that moves into me  
But also out from me,  
unconscious and pensive.  
It passes through without passing and the change in me is subtle,  
I feel connected to this place, this now, this feeling of knowing and unknowing.  
And the old language speaks through me,  
Or maybe I just think it but the thought is patent,  
articulate  
and the woman nods because she knows the truth when she hears it,  
she is just afraid because fear is the driver,  
the prime mover of the men and the boy and the woman  
of all these prayers that drift  
Like ghosts through the gathering night.

And I realize that the pain I feel in my belly is  
Hunger, and – Caw – is the word for it too.  
I know now what pain is for,  
It moves us to some purpose.  
The ocean covers the sky.  
It spills over to cover the land.  
The water calls itself Rain.  
And I am falling,  
Heading north now,  
formless,  
Manifest,

irrelevant,  
Powerful.  
I am the harmonic in the wave,  
A spike in the oscillation,  
My eyes numerous as the stars,  
As grains of sand,  
Lines of sight to infinite directions.  
Glad for the axe.

And I realize there is no name for me.  
I am no one.

I am not afraid.

By Danny

Danny Casteen