



Forgive Me, Tiny Robots

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Argotist Ebooks

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Foreword

These micropoems are selected from my twitter feed. What is a twitter feed? For me, it is my own journal of poetry. For others it's a location finder. I guess for mine it is a location finder, too, but not in a dimensional context, but rather in a philosophical context.

This is a poetry experiment. The poetry itself isn't experimental, maybe it is, I don't know; I can't be the judge of that. I started this experiment to exercise my writing.

These short poems run in reverse chronology from the most recent to the oldest. The real twitter feed is read in reverse chronology, too, but that's not how they were written. The oldest ones were written first. You can start at the bottom of the page and read up, or start on the last page and read forward. But if you log on to twitter, you will most likely read them in reverse of the natural chronological order in which they were written. There's something to say for reading backwards, disrupting the natural time sequence is a powerful experience, as if self-dissecting. I'm sure I would have to consult a physicist who studies time to fully understand it. For now, feel free to read in whichever direction you like.

After entering daily tweets for three years Monday through Friday, I thought I should make a selection of them, not just to gage and assess the work, but to help spread interest in the work. I have selected the ones in this collection according to my own preferences for strong, succinct, evocative use of language. These are not haiku. They are all exactly 140 characters long. Including punctuation and spaces. That is the only thing they have in common. I did not make an effort to connect them in a series, other than the few obvious entries of an alphabet poem and the week of mimicking Christian Bök's *Eunoia*, where I use only one vowel in the words of the entire entry, but those are not in this book. You'll have to visit my twitter feed to read those. Other than that, I made no conscious effort to unify the entries. However, you will find unifying themes of family, commerce and work, architecture, art, and philosophy, using images like balloons, children, nature, and the brick wall outside my office window.

After three years, I will continue to write them, but after reading these, I feel I should try something different. While these micropoems satisfy, as an artist, I want to reinvent my relationship with the form. Maybe. I'll keep you posted.

To read the feed, follow twitter.com/MePoet. The twitter name was inspired by *Me, Cladius*, a spoof on *I, Claudius* by Robert Graves on Sesame Street starring Cookie Monster, and by the twitter feed for Bigfoot, MeBigfoot, one of the first twitter accounts I started following.

I don't have many followers, but I will welcome new ones. My intention is to have a daily writing practice. And that is all. Some of the poems have been picked up in journals such as 4and20poetry.com, and some entries have been used for longer poems in other manuscripts in progress. I have been hailed and re-tweeted, and also criticized for not going deep. The twitter form, like most social media, is panned for instilling narcissist behaviors in its users. I urge you to try to write a short, evocative poem daily. 140 characters with a haymaker punch

is not easy to do every day. As a writer, it's challenging and I've had to go deeper than I ever have before in ways that I would have never imagined.

Eric Wayne Dickey
October 2012

September 2012

Cascading crash of snapping branches rising in crescendo. Earthy smell: fir and cedar, dirt and duff. A buck charges through our understory.

Somewhere on a bus right now, a mother is giggling with her child. As the bus turns, sunlight pours through the windows onto the many faces.

A cradle rocks at the edge of the seawall. Stairs lead down to it, but the jagged riprap and the incoming tide force us all to wait and see.

A spool of kite string unraveled as you opened the door; it fell into your hand just as a wind gust poofed the kite up and carried you away.

August 2012

The following may or may not be true: You once kissed a dog, let its tongue slip deep into your mouth past your back teeth into your throat.

July 2012

The midnight show began with a bang. Instead of tears of joy and orgasmic releases of love and lust, Charon appeared where we were standing.

Climbing a ladder, you find a gun on a rung. Above that, a dandelion flares its mane. A hand reaches for you through the next step. Take it.

A blue sky cuts through a brick wall. No. The brick wall cuts the sky. They are in love with each other at a difficult time in their lives.

Your lips curl out to greet me like a doe's nimble lips nibbling dandelion in an apple orchard. Your arms pull me to the kiln in your chest.

Sometimes I have no idea what I am supposed to do. I look around and sigh, and reach for the soft skin of your face to pull your lips close.

June 2012

The screen is a mirror is a wall is a gate opening to a path leading to a house where you will find me at the kitchen table drinking coffee.

Our calling was hastily scrawled in chalk on a sidewalk. We clamor to see it, but shoes have scuffed it illegible and it's starting to rain.

A raven jumped out of the hole I dug for an apple tree. I turned to call you, but you were gone. I turned back, ravens poured from the hole.

The bricks in the wall by my window march like ants across a war field, helmets askew on weary heads. Their tired legs acupuncture my heart.

I peeled and chopped an onion putting my face close and breathing in all the onion smells through the nose and eyes. That's why I am crying.

A sun beam cut through thick clouds, scooted across the farmer's fresh-cut field as I drove by. I knew it was you, brother, saying, "Hello."

May 2012

Your eyelashes must have been feathers, your tail, a wing, because when I returned with my plug of work, you were no longer there, squirrel.

The rush to dress to brush our teeth to get out the door and into the car. Commerce cracks days like new bones. Forgive me, little squirrel.

How were the stars when you spent three nights trapped atop the tree? Could you see them through howling rain? You just keep purring, kitty.

You walked funny for days. Tried not to, but we noticed anyway. Your cheeks flushed red when she entered the room and sat slowly in a chair.

My love is a cat stuck up a high tree swaying in the wind and rain. Do not rescue it; just know that it's there. Be easy on me, tiny robots.

When I crossed the street, a car screeched into me. Except there was no car, but the maple seed helicopters still flickered down to save me.

My cat meows from atop a tall fir tree. It must be a hundred feet up. Poor pussy, so high on that pole. Ease yourself. Come down, come down.

I push my thumb into the center of an orange, and I remember the time we giggled as we finished making love right there on your porch swing.

The tree on the corner sprouts two legs, stretches its limbs, and walks to get the morning paper, shaking the sleeping birds from its nests.

A baby bird falls on the walk. No nest in sight; no future. Sun. Cars roll under shadows of branches along the tree-lined drive, flickering.

The book opens in my hands. Pages flutter like wings. Letters scurry, insects freed from a mason jar. When I look away, the book disappears.

Grandma served ribs and coleslaw at the picnic. The kids played a kickball game, I rolled my mean curve ball. And you decided to stay home?

I take a bus to work, but there is no bus, so I got on my bike instead, but the bike had no wheels. I started to walk, but my feet fell off.

April 2012

A skein of geese weaves itself northward across the sky. First a V, then a Y, soon the whole damn alphabet all at once. Thousands returning.

You see your twin daily; brush its teeth and hair; wash its face. You see it in the dark reflection of a monitor just before the blue flash.

Moored to the last pier at the far end of a forgotten wharf, a ship drops its gangplank on the dock. Listless, a crew readies the Mayflower.

Rain drops, dog paws on the window of my desire, wanting in. Your sparrows circle over us, dodging droplets thinking of nothing else at all.

The tea kettle whistled red hot. The handle burned my hand. "Damn it!" The faucet hissed cold water. An unfamiliar cat appeared in the yard.

A storm chaser, I chase letters and words. I watch as they get sucked up to the sky, leaving broken homes in my heart. Then I help clean up.

A train moans down 6th Street, barking and squeaking. If I run out of my office now, I can make it just in time to put a penny on the track.

Last night's storm turned the green path muddy. It rained hard; the path was pockmarked. I went to get the paper and got lost and fell down.

I dreamed a sea snake swam under me in the shallows of an estuary. It rubbed against my leg. I tried to move, but a big swell was coming in.

A giant steamship floats in the air and docks on Mt. Hood. Backfires from its stack rain on the forest floor below. Moist now, but soon dry.

My dog is chained to a fire tree and I push children to the flames. "Go save the dog!" I yell. The Mayor is there and doesn't think twice.

You followed a bird to the mailbox this morning. It hopped along and chirped about the light drizzle. It took you a minute to let it all in.

The door wears away the frame from all the use. Burnished wood grain iridesces every time you walk in and out, at the corners where it rubs.

March 2012

Our streets are sinking. We put plywood over puddles, but it sinks, too.
Now we use clotheslines to traverse the canyons of love between us.

Where are you, brother? It's been so long since oak leaf shadows darkened
our faces. You ran off and I can't catch you, no matter how I try.

Bury our selves in debt, regret, and forgetfulness like frets on guitar necks,
ever-smaller treble clefs, terrible cliffs with jagged teeth.

Each pancake got three blueberries. But you only got one, because you're
different and look suspicious, carrying a bag of skittles at night.

I reach my hand deep into a posthole dug for a fence. Dusk coming on.
Dark, bumpy, rocks like bones. I pick up a few, they rattle like dice.

An anchor claws my spine and pulls me out of the ocean. I can't breathe
and start to writhe and thrash. Everybody backs away to watch me go.

I snip thin fingers of branches with loppers, hack off limbs by saw, and
prune apple trees with these words to fend off unrestricted growth.

The poet hammers out a line about humankind being a giant blue lion
loose in the streets, battered and bloody but still eating our children.

The brick wall by my office window has had a door installed. The door
opens out onto a three-story drop. My co-workers fall to their deaths.

I got a new hammer. Ball-peen. Good for hittin' keys on the keyboard.
Smackin' 'em down, one at a time. Hunt 'n peckin' these poems for you.

February 2012

My next tweet poem will make you strip to your skin and run out of your office onto the streets, screaming like a striped-assed ape. Beware.

Night frost on morning grass steams and ghosts across the field. Driving into a fogbank, brakelights dart. The green traffic signal beckons.

Helium fills my body like a balloon. I rush to finish entering this tweet before I float out of my office window, so much to say, no time...

You giggle when I whisper in your ear, "That tickles!" I do it again and we laugh rolling around on the floor. The sweet scent of your hair.

A woman is walking up a wall, no ropes, no scaffold, no nothing. People are gathering, pointing up at her, shouting. She is five stories up.

Three shoes were by my bed. How long have I had three feet? Looking down, sure thing: three feet. Ha! Skipping to work was so much more fun!

The "Fe" in female stands for iron. Everybody knows the chromosome got lopped: the iron got dropped and clangs around the floor by his feet.

The sun flashes down an on-ramp. You are entering the freeway, sun in your eyes, no sunglasses, no visor. You can't see, but you can't stop.

Today you will drive home at noon, your spouse will be there, both of you surprised. What, with the kids at school and the bed still unmade.

January 2012

A dozen or so crows were gathered on my porch. "Go away, deathbirds."
Confused, they scattered. I threw my arms up. Their wings cut me deep.

Books tumble from the sky. Umbrellas are made of hard plastics. "Stupid
books. When will it ever stop?" They fall and flow to an ocean fire.

Rising rivers finger the landscape and read it like braille. Something is
heard, something is hushed. Rivulets run in and out of our mouths.

I'm afraid to look under my house. A water dragon is there, I just know it. If
I open the latch, the dragon will rush out and carry me away.

A paint-by-numbers piece a grandma did sold for some bucks. A grocery
receipt from Kmart won a Pulitzer for poetry. It's that kind of world.

Pick ax, remove sod, dig dirt, three feet down. Kitty wrapped in a towel,
lowered into the hole. Say a few words even though you're atheist.

My cat is looking for a place to die. She tries the bathtub, behind the toilet.
No good. She sniffs and bobs her head when I open a cabinet.

Nothing but bones and fur, the old cat purrs away pain and hunger. It just
sleeps there on its blanket wanting to finish its one last dream.

December 2011

I drive a wooden stake into the earth with a maul. The wood splinters, but I don't stop. I drive it deeper even after it's all the way down.

I put my head in a lion's mouth. Then my arms and my whole body. Pretty soon I'm in its belly. My hand reaches out for you, don't be afraid.

A kitten's brain is overcome by fire. A conflagration of sorts. I see it in its eyes, skittish and spinning on the linoleum beneath my foot.

The silo ghosts in fog, floats as if proof of spirit. Wait! See the silhouettes of shrubs at the base and a farmer walking in with a shovel?

The dogs tore through his chest and ripped out his heart. They shook it like a rag and left it to freeze on gravel in the late December air.

A pillar of black smoke leans to the north. Another of white smoke is pink in the dawn sun. The dialogue confuses. I'm not sure what to do.

A crow is calling my name, "Eric. Eric," over and over, while it jumps on a piece of garbage. I can see myself in its pearly black feathers.

Telephone wires bind us together. The puppeteer's strings are hard to hold on to, like faith. Pull gently, tiny robots, our hearts are easy.

Oils on my fingertips break lightbulbs. A match touched by wet hands won't strike either, even the waterproof kind I found in your backpack.

Do I need to strike a match so close to your face? A dark sky covers us under clouds, I thought you'd just like to look around a little bit.

Remember the night Piggy fell for Kermit? We were eating dinner on TV trays. Hot; windows open, shades shuddering. The look washed over her.

An airplane circles the airport. You are not on that plane. You reach into your pocket, coins spill on the sidewalk and circle into a grate.

A mom rocks a cradle in the middle of the road. Cars hush by, horns honk a lullaby. I can't believe she's out there. She must have problems.

December first. Iced up windows. Bluest sky. Sun so bright, it hurt to squint at it rising on the horizon. You would have loved it, brother.

November 2011

A giant broom bristles over us, flicks us down the hall and out the door onto the dirt patch where I wait to hitch a ride on your very sole.

What's that black spot floating on the water? It's behind a wave right now. Wait, there it is, do you see it? It looks like someone's head.

Scoop as many leaves as possible, don't care what falls away. Arms out wide, feel the rustle in your chest. Love me, leaf collector machine.

In a taxi, the driver says he's legally blind. Somehow you don't mind, even though he is running red lights and cars are darting everywhere.

Fog rolled in hard today. I felt it underfoot crunching like snow. I climbed on top of a bank and yelled at passersby. I was crazy and free.

I'm riding a strange bicycle: no wheels, it floats in the air. The seat is a fire that does not burn. You ride on the handle bars, laughing.

A black police car cruises in the air behind you, in your blind spot. It hums like an electric station. You wrench your neck trying to look.

Leave the cat out, she is old and frail and has served well. But lately she doesn't know what she wants. In? out? How she meows for nothing.

We dropped a baby, a plump cherub, cute, smooth-skinned, now wrinkled and wailing on some living room floor far away. We called it "fatboy."

On the leeward side of a hill, doe elks forage in leaf litter. On the windward side, a bull elk catches a whiff and comes bounding up the ridge.

My shadow shifts as I run the track by moonlight. When it's on my left, I talk to it. When it falls behind and out of sight, it talks to me.

Grange Hall Rd. took you to the highway. The hwy. took you to the interstate. The interstate took you to the off-ramp that brought you here.

You reach for a sock under the bed, for a shoe in the closet, and for a pan in the corner cabinet. You put your face on the floor each time.

October 2011

The road, a noose in the forest, slowly closes around our necks as we drive our dream to where trees meet the desert, bombs bursting in air.

The silverware is in disarray; can't find a fucking fork! I dump the whole drawer on the kitchen floor. Clamor and scatter. Beautiful chaos!

I pop matchsticks like pop rocks. They're really chocolate raisins, but they are changing me! Really. I am not afraid of losing you anymore.

Smoke blows back from a blow hole. A flatbed hauls a long load wrapped in a black plastic tarp bristling with rain beside the white Subaru.

Pencil + pencil = people. In a box, pencils make many double "yous." A forest writes a story, too. pine and oak spell "wow" on the hillside.

Scatter rocks on a pond: machine gun or applause? Careful how you choose: The oak doesn't pick where it sprouts, but it casts a wide shadow.

September 2011

Changing leaves are not anchors of hope born of despair. They are the candles on our cake. Can you hear their wicks crackling with laughter?

Something is stuck on the roof. We jump up and down to get a better look. The neighbors join and soon the whole block is jumping in my yard.

We lost a loved one last night. I hit it with my truck and left it by the roadside. Was it the fawn I freed from the fence months earlier?

In the oven, the bread was just a lump of dough. It came out as the memory of my brother, which I sliced and buttered and salted with tears.

Cloud front moving in. "Oh, it's you," we say and try to look away to no avail. Clouds everywhere. There's even a cloud in my stomach today.

I put photos of you in the bathtub, test the water with a toe, and slide under the foam. The ink marbles the water and transfers to my skin.

When I woke up, a beehive dangled above my bed. Just over my head. The room was abuzz and I was a whole field of clover as wide as Nebraska.

A gnat in the sink, drowned and flat by the faucet. Mouse prints in the skillet. So close to death. Kids play on their way to the bus stop.

You dropped an avocado seed in a bowl of drying marjoram. Crispy leaves clung to the round, slick orb. Then there's the alone feeling again.

I walked across the yard to get the mail, tall dandelions knocked my shins. A bee found its way into my shoe and stung me like an old lover.

August 2011

My thoughts fall from a ladder. One rung, two rungs. The ground, soft and forgiving, will eat you alive and spit your bones into the future.

There it goes! Like a tiny rodeo in your chest, a cut carrot rolling over your toes, across the kitchen floor, mouse quick, your first kiss.

I'm on my roof fixing a seam where the ridge changes pitch. I curl into a ball and roll down, bouncing on the lawn and right out of my life.

Slicing cucumbers, one falls between the counter and the stove. I thought it was lost forever, but there it rolls out, like dropped quarter.

Cat cry. I can't see her. I scan the porch. Where is she? At the stairs? Behind the rhododendron! Yes! She stops when our eyes meet. Blinks.

I land my boat. I am a dead fish. I have to get to the beach house. My legs stop working, I start flopping on the sand. Seagulls everywhere.

A lone cowboy boot in an empty dance hall. Your dreams are inside. Tip it over. Now. Hurry. You don't have much time, the band is tuning up.

July 2011

You are flying a kite atop a mountain. You can't see the kite, it flies above the clouds, tugging your arm like a new lover tugs your heart.

You board a steamship in the forest. No platform, no throngs of waving well-wishers. Just an empty ship with a fire risk. Tinder everywhere.

Look! The trees are waving at you, calling your name! Can't you hear their leafy voices, see their branches sway? They are in love with you.

A ripe strawberry snaps when plucked. The woosh of air past my ears as I bike down hill. The morning cold pulls tears from my eyes, brother.

I cringe at the flower, its dusty gifts make some hoarse. I cringe at the gun barrel so full of love. Its gift of songs make some go hoarse.

I eat the dirt from over your grave with a fork. Grass stains my lips, soil grains in my teeth. I stab voraciously, hungry for every memory.

I tape paper to my arms, feathers, jump out the window, puff my chest. I spy a dragonfly, the hunt kicks on. I go chasing, chasing, chasing.

I'm a tongue amputee today doctored by the mad brick wall outside my office window. The wall wears a mask. Signs my timesheet with a needle.

I know why the old woman swallowed a fly. She was enjoying a bike ride with her child, laughing over the bumps, singing. Her mouth was open.

June 2011

Empty bottles in a bin. Each mouth, a baby chick. Rain starts, they feed. I
coo, a mother. I shudder later as they get smashed for a nickel.

We set our own bowling pins in the shape of a heart. Sometimes the
crashing pins are laughter sometimes pure agony as the world rolls at us.

Bare knees on gravel, planting a kitchen garden next to the driveway.
Under the window right beside the door, I found a toy car in the dirt.

I put the heat on the axle nut to break the rust, damn thing won't budge.
100, 200, 300 pounds of torque. Cussing while swallows dart above.

Warm rain. Warm rain, slight mist. Warm rain, slighted dog. Slighted dog
wanders in warm rain. Slight mist, no collar. Loose on the streets.

May 2011

The father steps off the curb onto a busy street. The angle of his arm says good-bye, swinging behind him like a latch-less gate. No breeze.

As I opened the door this morning, a dead branch snapped from my apple tree. A crow glided down to the ground. It's not my time, death bird.

I flim the flim-flam, the flibberty flubbed, flabby, flu phlegm flan. Flute, flurry flummoxed flirty fritillaries on the floor, with fervor.

A bear rides a unicycle down Madison. Starbucks in hand, paper under arm, wearing pajamas, his breath smells like shit. Don't fuck with him.

A blue cat digs earth for grains, hearts in joy. Krokus loops metal names over piles quartered. Rising sun, tether us vainly, xeric yon zoo.

April 2011

A tangle-haired girl runs in the parking lot away from her father. Cars dart down lanes, speed between spaces. She makes it to the Safeway.

A dirty-faced boy lags 10 steps behind his mother at the Safeway. Snot on his chaffed upper lip. "Hurry up!" He is standing by the flowers.

It's not the monkey time anymore, but we still drive like them: changing lanes, no blinkers, weaving through traffic, swinging vine to vine.

The morbidly obese man knows how to talk photography. He needs his sons to help him sit on two chairs. His photos are really quite elegant.

The tiger shark pup ate its sibling in utero. If I am the earth and you are buried in my belly, forgive me, brother, you tasted bittersweet.

I walked sixth street last night, started where the tracks cut under the bridge. Went all the way to the Uhaul. Tree silhouettes and stars.

Kindergarteners are being shoved under a bus. Their teachers lead them single file and call them by name. Last Sunday we had roasted turkey.

A man on the sidewalk looks like my dad. I call for him, "Daddy?" He turns, waves, turns back, and picks up his pace. I lose him in traffic.

March 2011

A kid cries in the parking lot. Is it a boy or a girl? The mom jerks the arm towards the store, like a blackberry bramble pops at the roots.

A man in the Ford truck flips me the bird as he passes. Water sprays and coats my windshield, mixed with mud. My children look on, confused.

Birds nest in the burn pile. Hear the chirping chicks? I approach. The mother flits out, lands on a fence, weary of me with the red gas can.

I remember the battle of 1981. Earl Anthony parted his hair on the side. Mark Roth let his hair flow freely. It was the end of the cold war.

The silos in my Kansas heart are empty. Even the mice are gone and have eaten the last kernels. But look now! A fox curls up from the rain!

Twigs snap underfoot in my brain. Thoughts break off before they finish. No connections, only a pile of dried twigs and branches for a fire.

February 2011

A coffin cloud floats over an oak forest. Branches loft it up, a sea of arms at a wake. I am an oak. It is my coffin. My limbs reach for it.

Holly leaves crackle under my bare feet as I cross the lawn to get the mail, their prickly edges cut my soles. All day, tiny drops of blood.

We hunker down on all fours and slither to work hissing through rain and snow. We pray the van with the red whirling lights isn't one of us.

January 2011

I caught a bird while biking. It flitted in front of my face unaware I was on its tail. I reached out my tongue and pulled it into my mouth.

I hold a Lego man's head underwater. The air inside him floats and pops. I think of you, your last breath. I whisper, "Forgive me, brother."

Winter ravens land on my fingers, dig into my skin. One on each finger, five on each hand. Sparrows near death fly into my mouth for warmth.

Saturn will bear down on this new year, noose our necks with rings made of dust. How can something so light and airy choke us to near death?

December 2010

A grass field burns in my heart. Flames leap in front of each other with long legs, running toward you with open arms. Sweet, tender flames.

I reach into a barrel of bruised apples, searching for a good one. Flies swarm like lost images, I close my eyes and wave them away in vain.

I picked a burning book from a fire an angry mob made. Pages flared like struck matches faster than I could read. All day, burnt hair smell.

Snow falls into a broken window, drifting up on the sill and floor below. I'm the window and you're the hole in the glass I can't telephone.

November 2010

An electrician connected my stomach to the breaker box. At least now I can eat your love properly. Sweet and warm just pulled from the oven.

She is a witch and can turn you into an orange-bellied newt. Look at you writhing on the rain-soaked forest floor, your bright belly hidden.

A deer nibbles on the short grass underneath the apple tree. An old buck leans hard on the tree trunk and shakes it. Apples fall all around.

October 2010

The coffee wiggles in my cup. My waitress calls me "honey." Winks. She knows how to work the tip and stretch out every last drop of creamer.

I follow you into a thicket. Thorns and stickers cut my skin. You laugh like you're being tickled. Blood drips on my eyes. The moon is red.

A slow rain tears down fall leaves from the maple. Stop-sign-red-leaves bleed onto the sidewalk and burn brown flame shapes into the cement.

This morning, the sun stroked the bellies of clouds stretched out like sleeping cats across a blue table. Pink cotton puffs left me purring.

A caterpillar crawls in my hair and wraps itself up in a cocoon. I don't shampoo or brush for weeks as to not bother the sleeping butterfly.

September 2010

Your feet flail you forward. Your path: A railroad teetering into dark hills. A horse clops behind, chases you. No horse, but you still run.

The crane moves slowly above the skeleton building. Moves like a cloud. I could hardly tell, save for the line and the hook thrashing about.

Clouds clap their hands and their paw prints of rain run across our window. They want to play catch and we chase them with our imaginations.

August 2010

Who among you will take me by the hand and go bounding through the tall grass, down the wild hillside, away from the paved road of commerce?

A secret lover hovers in my chest. We all want one: a garden, a glass of white wine, a good book, a gliding ride across the trembling earth.

I left the cat food outside last night. Raccoons ate it all up and washed their little human hands in the water bowl while I dreamed of you.

A girl in a silver skirt turns around. Smiles at me. I rub my face with my dry, calloused hands, too rough for her shining skin. She's gone.

I passed a flat squirrel on the road. Its legs stretched out as if running at a full clip. Its tail waving in the air. It was really moving!

The drill grinds to the root to the big payload, a reservoir of pain and blood under the gum line and into the jawbone itself. We open wide.

July 2010

The salt mine shines inside today. Payday. Laughter echoes from the tunnel. The miners pass a tequila bottle and a lemon and lick the walls.

Egg crates teeter on the edge of a dock at some mom-n-pop store in Denver. Gas pumps hustle money from rushed drivers. Somebody's whistling.

June 2010

The sun burns the good man's back while he tends his wife's garden. Each shovel scoop, each screech of the rake scrapes and etches his skin.

The Earth has got my back, but leery clouds look down their noses at me. They spit their rain at me and jeer at me and think of me a lesser.

The alarm sang its morning aria over tin speakers: The fat man of commerce embraces the fat lady of night. Awkward. Their arms don't reach.

Last night amid a rush of loud rain, the house creaked when I walked to your bed to make sure you were covered up. Was it my creaking heart?

I swallowed Xmas lights- the big bulb kind- and left the plug dangling from my mouth so I can plug them in and feel the holiday glow inside.

April 2010

Watch this, papa, I can hold my head underwater! Are you proud of me?
It's so easy! And I can kick, too. I can stay under a long, long time.

A car comes crashing down the street, scraping parked cars, clipping
lampposts, bouncing off curbs, driving right at you up on the sidewalk.

Dandelions turned gold to silver overnight, we glided to work in our purple
canoes where commerce wrested our will from our cold dead hands.

Standing at the edge of a line, waiting for the words to run, I start to shove
lowercase letters. A verb looks at me askance, throws a fist.

From your office, you see a girl on the street pet a poodle. The dog inflates
into a balloon, floats past your window. Reach for the string.

I wait under an oak for a deluge to pass. Raindrops pock mark the forest
path with tiny craters. I only want to be at home and in your arms.

The sun winks at me through the clouds. It wants to undo my pants, rip off
this button-down and roll me down a grassy knoll. I know it does.

March 2010

I wave as she drives away. I say good-bye, too, even though she can't hear me. I wave a while and listen until the sound of her car is gone.

I wear my heart on my sleeve. More people should. But most wear theirs around their necks, or in their wallets, or tucked in their crotches.

Apple? Come here, Apple. I want to scratch behind your ears and rub your belly and watch your leg shake when I find your secret tickle spot.

Night time bike ride, my headlight tells a story through darkness. Small raindrops pit and pat my jacket and land on my tissue paper cheeks.

February 2010

The girl rolls up her sleeves. She spits on her hands and picks up an ax, lifts it straight to the sky and brings it down hard on the block.

I chased a fire across the prairie last night. Chased it back to its original spark, back into the very flint stone I am holding in my hand.

January 2010

Left the dog outside today, despite a chance of rain. Bitch would not come in. I screamed at her, kids cried. Will you dare to hold my hand?

The tulip guitar broke a Haitian string in mid-song. Only a few musicians stopped, mostly singers who didn't have to put down an instrument.

December 2009

A Daddy Long Leg in my bathtub, I thought it was strands of hair left over from my wife's shower this morning. Forgive me spider, I am late.

I turn over cut grass and bits of trash like cans and plastic bags. I look for words that writhe when I cut them in half with my fingernail.

Daddy, the moon is beautiful! The clouds are moving fast! I'm just going to lie here next to you, look out the window, and watch them go by.

October 2009

I chase words in traffic. Always dark, I squint in the high beams and raise a hand to block the light, the other hand grasps my child's arm.

Each day I give out free cookies. Some days the cookies are fresh, other days they are stale. Whichever it is, you must bring your own milk.

Who knows the path through the blood dark forest of love? Leaves fall on our shoulders. Rain. Lost children, we shiver and clutch our knees.

Our future is a silver balloon bobbing in the wind on a farm field. We think a boy is in it. A man runs out to grab a tether. I am that man.

I snap a chalk line and walk it like a tightrope. Rain makes it a ghost line. By nightfall, I'm on hands and knees, looking for chalk dust.

Each morning the bus eats children in the eerie fog; spits them out each afternoon in the rain. I smile and wave and choke down barbed wire.

August 2009

I was left alone on the grassy hillside, my family ran down its slope. They didn't look back but kept calling my name into the deep silence.

The Newport line pulls the country's soul into the Pacific, it stretches us like a violin string and drags a bow across our quivering chest.

July 2009

The Ferris wheel sits still in the morning dawn. Framed by hills, it is our heart on the landscape, our child's goodbye-hug around our legs.

As I walked out the door to catch the bus to work, the morning light held the world together as I broke through its web. Forgive me, spider.

The house is full of laughter, children give the Earth rise. The house perks itself up for them, for the roses climbing up the rain spout.

I cross the finish line, the ribbon stretches and breaks around me. The crowd cheers, someone hands me a drink. It's coffee. I am at work.

Here we go again, Monday, toe to toe. You and me, you and us. Today could have been a Saturday for all we know. Time chains us to ourselves.

About the Author

Eric Wayne Dickey has a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Oregon State University. He is a John Anson Kitredge Fund for Individual Artists grant recipient and a Vermont Studio Center Fellow. He lives in Corvallis, Oregon, and volunteers as a writer-in-the-schools at local high schools. He enjoys writing book reviews, several of which can be read at Galatea Resurrects. His chapbook, *The Hardy Boy Poems* (2013) is available at Beard of Bees: <http://www.beardofbees.com/dickey.html>. He has a children's book forthcoming in 2014 from Craigmere Creations. You can find his poetry and his translations online and in print. He has entered a daily tweet of exactly 140 characters, Monday through Friday, since June 2009. You can follow him at twitter.com/MePoet. Mostly, he works a full-time job, raises two kids, and tends a garden.