



the adaptation between three and five

adaptation
FOUR

ELIOT PRESTON BERN

One hundred and fifty years.

Memories like gold
breathing all the undertones
reaping what we sow
losing everything we know
what exactly did we know

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Printed in the United States of America.

FIRST PRINTING

And there I was, naked - afraid of nothing.

I hadn't just removed my clothes,
I had removed that layer.

I showed myself to you.
And when I showed myself
to you,
I didn't get the reaction I wanted.

And there I was, naked; afraid.

IN THE SUN

Happy were all the thoughts,
Enlightened and elongated.

Our bodies;
Laid under the sun.

Crisp air and the cusp of discovery.
They don't make maps for you,

you were my Africa.

LIKE A CIGARETTE

I know that I shouldn't
I know that I can't

To taste it again
To become addicted

To yearn
To pine

Feeling it wrap around me
Taking what I want repeatedly

Relaxing in the comfort of satisfaction
I know that I shouldn't

You
are like a cigarette

It didn't take long before
she had been through every
good part of me -

all that i had to offer.

now she was left with mere parts.

discounted & discontinued.

JULY 5

in the days you fought for my salvation
given anything to listen now

ear pressed to naked ground

hand to skin
hair to pillow

i will take you
i will take it all

the next lifetime
all of the joy

and i will give

MAP - NO LEGEND.

i'm going to write you a sonnet
with none of the structure.
i'm going to spell out your hair
with no words of the color.

fill my cup like an alcoholic
one addiction feeds another.
i'm going to fill in your eyes
with no room for the other.

piece by piece i'll define new words
for a new world where borders blend.
hands, breasts, lips and knees
will never sound the same again.

never forgetting reading chapter four.
just not remembering the words anymore.

IN REGARD TO THE FRAME

It took some time to see the whole picture.
Maybe one more year and I'll see the frame.
What color wall to place behind it?

I'm already bored with that planning stage.

Carpet, counters, curtains, couches.
Saxony, stainless, sheer, settee.

Planning, no action.
Planning, no taste.
Planning changes, to changes unmade.

IN OUR DEATH

in our death we cannot smoke cigarettes.

for whatever reason,
in our death we cannot light the matches in our pocket
be it lack of oxygen to ignite the sulfur or simply
the lack of kinetic energy.

in our death we cannot smoke cigarettes.

but i pray to god, through some miracle, we can drink gin & tonic.

THE BALANCE OF FINISHING LATER

I'm kind of bad
at putting two and two together
But I'm getting better
at making something work.

I've been known to
tinker with disaster,
But I'm learning quickly
Just to flirt.

And just looking at you
And just looking at you

Movement pause -
Face in smile -
brain stuck
words won't compile

And if just looking at you
For a minute
Can shake my knees -
Nice, nice, nice:
You look.
Then I've said too much
about that minute already.

I'm selling my thoughts
too early.
You're treating them like wholesale goods.

Simple obsession,
For fairer complexion,
It was just good
to step outside again.

What do I know?

Voice on the phone to stifle regret
because she needed to talk to try and forget
Has forgetting worked out for anyone yet?

Have my eyes or my ways
or my lips let it slip
Past my touch
Past intent
The past passing of wit
Through my hands or my touch

Or my heart of a kid?

I am the boy who memory will not let you forget.

What's the value of an unselfish lover?
"How far have you walked for men who never
held your feet ... "

I'm kind of bad
At putting two and two together
Maybe division
Has always been my thing

NIGHTLESS

For so long
feeling like someone
needed to bet on me
Stick around and see

that bet through.

What is a man unfinished?
Trapped -

A house in storm
Without roof.

Timing.
Could not be a more cruel lover.

Does he take mistress -
One he cannot love?
Or do his own devices own him
Nightless, through day
Building habits,
But who cares if the time
Is spent like rabbits?

And what of love unspent.
Does it sour like the apple mash
Kept inside that tempered glass?
They love to drink,
but no one wants their lover drunk.

No one wants a sour heart
So in what hour does that battle start?
By what age has he paid the price?
Through toil and sweat and spoiled advice.

So what of a man who does not love himself?
You'll have to go ask someone else.

IT JUST RAINS

I can't say what brought the rain
experiencing death on the most peaceful of days.

Want to believe the rain has deeper,
tied-in with each of us, meaning.

Rain on our worst.
Radiate on our best.

It just rains.

The lamp casts the only light
to lift the words from that old book.

The sound on tin creates a familiar calling -
to the gravity of my eyelids.

We've danced that dance;
I've already surrendered - letting sleep go.

It just rains.

A devilish smile while the warmth
of Summer's rain bathes lovers.

How hair slightly curls as the proof that all inhibitions have fled
and we are wild.

Winter adds her own briskness;
I must hurry in - I must beat this added chill.

It just rains.

When it doesn't rain - we miss it.
When it does - we curse its tongue.
Humans can be quite fickle.

And that is truth enough.

IN LENGTH

Whispering to your neck ;
To kiss its length

To tell it everything

To feel humid air build

Soft, anticipating skin
Wrapped tightly around anticipating bone.

Anticipating heart

Eager feeling
Blood swelling
Veins pounding

My lips find your ear
Hand soon to follow

Want.

Trailing movements
Teasing moments

Tongue
Writing a letter
- licking the envelope

Tasting

Teasing

Migrating

North or south?
Choose.

IT'S ONLY FUN BECAUSE YOU ASSUME YOU WILL BE SAFE

And all at once the force hits my feet
A birth of cold
An awareness of oxygen

The thrill of descent
Recharging

The unstoppable downward force
The pit of danger that makes any plunge

Suspended
Immersed in life
Caught between the realm of light
And impenetrable dark

So I stand
Firmly planted on stone
As I lunge into nothingness

And become oblivious to everything.

MILK

Like soured milk
in the mouth
Before expiration, its
desire has no
doubt
Even intolerance cannot
keep most away
Sure to cheat,
sure to taste
once it's 'gone'
remove all doubt
Its value time
has squandered out

KEEP THE SILENCE

It is best to keep the silence between us
It will help me to forget
You don't need it - already silent
Already wrapped in some other gift

I'll hold my pen
Like I've held my lips
I'll hold my fingers
I'll hold my hips

My tongue may lash in violent protest
For lashings it has yet to give
Giving just to taste the taste
Give and give and give and give

It is best if we keep this silence
A misplaced moan might give you away

THE RIGHT WORD

I've been reading the right word.
Not genuine, to seize and hold
Setting upon, literally truthfully, literally or figuratively

Declaring these words

Artie, pretentiously artistic

Intense intentional and intellect

How do you, timid and tirade, sit next to each other?

The crutch long past needed is just that
and we all fall down.

LEGS AND LENGTH

I wrote your poem in my sleep
Wednesday night inside a dream
Legs and length attack memory
But the words assigned are cheap

Had I not found perfect harmony?
Between preposition, noun, and verb
Had I not found profound mastery?
To take weight off every chosen word

The words escape in waking misery
I can almost, still, see every line
I did not address your perfect pair
Or mention your still dampened hair

Just legs and length
Legs and length
I'm sure that those two words were there

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF HERE

The hospital chair is much preferred I'm sure
Than to be squared up in that bed
Needles in veins with fluid drips
Any memory escapes my head

The halls don't seem as eerie now
The air is not as stale
It's how I know I'm getting older
It is, I just can't tell

I'm sure you once sat by my side
Just as I do now
It's strange when you find yourself here
What you think about

43 WEEKS

blank
not blank
the idea kept it okay
writing it ruined everything

POSTAGE:DATED

You wanted a wall,
I mended the fence.
You needed a call,
I sent 42 cents.

YOU CAN'T WRITE HERE

Post whatever we are calling it
Post Sunday
Post the summer that never was

In a constant shift
In a learning to adapt
Adapting into slightly older

Slightly recording volumes
Slighted
Moving past the marker

Stringing words together
Stringing something feathered
A bird you could not own

What island do you call home
What name have you given
Named, revoked

Guessing we really all die alone
Sometimes guessing gets it wrong

DARK HORSE

Into the softest cotton
I could not have predicted you'd wash into this
Fulfilling a dream that never existed
And certainly not the one that did.

You were the dark horse
The lips, fire, begging to be kissed.

So what if I noticed,
I did not stop.

Once before only to regret it.
Your eyes tell me you're not like the other girls, but
Sure you knew them.
I'm sure you knew when -

To stop washing that sweater
because the softness would be ruined.

BATHE

Sometimes I fall in love with everything.
I turn my head and there is another thing to love.

The story of the human will, no doubt, be a complicated one.

Learning to love will be an essential volume.

How many lifetimes will I have to bathe
to wash you off of my skin

YOU WILL GROW UP

I tried to write you once,
I admit, I did not know what to say.

You cannot drink your loneliness.
You cannot eat your pain.
You cannot purchase a replacement for your disappointments.

Things will always mishap.

Things - you have no control over,
but you can get off of your ass.
You can do the right thing (
Whatever that is)

You are the sum of hard work and love - you will grow up.

To be a man,
It is far more important to remember to be a human.
Find compassion.
Find a place to bury: guilt, shame, and blame.

You will hurt; from both beautiful and pain.

But you - you have a light
and with that a responsibility to let that light lift darkness.

A responsibility to yourself.
Remain willing to find the others -
the ones like you -
because they are out there.

Because,
forgiving this cliché rhyme,
when you find another light
the path becomes twice as bright.

Life is no more simple than that
- specifics get rather complex.
so long as you feel fire in your chest
Know that, woven from the same fibers, I have felt it too.

And I will always be the man too proud of you.

THEY CLOSED

And all the stores
they closed

How I wished
I could be your line again

I will never be your lying again

How I had forgotten my pride
How I had forgotten that reflection

The December of lightning
long gone
Buried beneath the honesty
The honestly
Or the 'why can't you just be honest with me?'

Shovel square to sand
Do we fill these still with our own hands?

I should not have ever breathed that prayer
I should not have ever drawn you near

Now the shelves sit
Dust settled on goods
Dated, irrelevant, irregular - would(s)

The electric bill canceled;
Bolted locks.
Wrap all you want
Since 'they closed'
nobody hears you knock.

Soon.

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