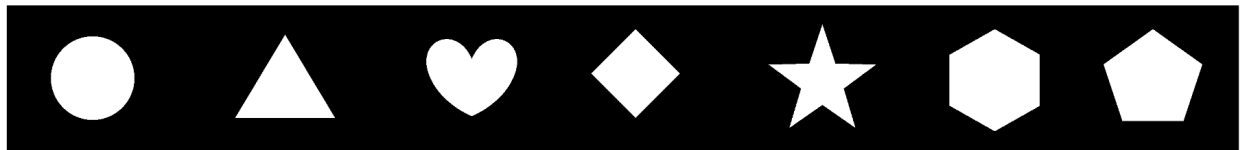


15 more poems



(BY MICHAEL MANDER)

I.

my mind like an epiphany hotspot
my mind like a stoned pony making
its major league debut
the margins I've known my whole life
shrink in seconds as I ditch
my ever-dying batteries
into the still and concrete-coloured Pacific
everything I thought I knew
I've somehow proved stupid
my earliest and darkest fears
like a bunch of younger siblings somehow become
disconcertingly larger each time I come home to visit
a little bit more to the left
and you'd be in the fire too
hey there buddy
if I were you
I would count myself lucky
I was even alive

II.

history is like a stoner
hurling snowballs at an avalanche
there's no boundary to human consciousness
so deep in every direction does it extend
a teenager codes a perfect sunset
a blind chihuahua barks at the moon
every single piece of plastic ever produced
still exists somewhere
I shout these thoughts out loud
then march straight ahead
there's a canyon between us
all I see is light

III.

another anarchist prince
pissing out the window of his limousine
it's almost as if the HOLLYWOOD sign
had somehow italicized itself overnight
not every single cage is a prison
this one probably is though
shorn of all interiority
unknowingly conducting the equivalent
of military exercises
in my sleep
I find myself constantly
in search of more reliable ways
to escape this persistent guilt
of being alive
sober but still stumbling mindless
through the garden of God's turbulence
not understanding a single thing
I think that if you held my hand right now
it might melt through your skin
it might not

IV.

deposited on a cardboard planet
I wasn't going anywhere
until somebody semi-important
told me what in the hell
the internet was doing to my family
another victim
of my own dumb luck and success
even in a universe
with flower petals for currency
I have to beg

V.

the room you're in
seems changed
shortly thereafter
commences another
phenomenological
investigation
into the only thing
you seem able to muster
more than fifteen minutes
of your techno-bludgeoned
life towards
incrementally
a path emerges
like the spine of a stegosaurus
being delicately dusted
out of some dirt
by a team
of elderly paleontologists
who have dreamed of discovering
a skeleton like this
since they were literally toddlers
there's a hum in the air

like an unspoken secret

everything is obsessed with everything

everything is made of real gold

everything is God

VI.

a vague unformulated thing
you want to repeatedly destroy
maybe forever maybe not
vampire-seeming movements you make
to cross a stoner-populated room
to experience truth for a fleeting instant
to think life is worthwhile without needing
some manufactured stimulus injecting pseudo-
romantic impulses into an already
overly-toasted psychosphere
the road ahead looks like an ampersand
the sky looks like a cat
we're all just death-leaning
flesh-mired shapes
graduate students
beached
plastic
Cheetos
piles of grey
compacted
dust

VII.

for the millionth time

I stub my toe

on the thin line

dividing this world

from the next

another tired lap in the mud

the sky looks basically the same

faint echoes of Beethoven pierce through

the pavement-coloured cloud cover

then barrel triumphantly through deep space

VIII.

you wake up in the night
you read some stuff about Titian
his truest decisions always leaning cosmic
letter after tear-stained letter
addressed directly to the sun
am I as broke as Titian was
or as drunk as Titian was
it's July
I have no more money
fascinating how little I seem to care
about what is basically essential
for surviving official society
eyeing the mud-caked carpet vacantly
from the room's most shadow-
obsessed corner
dissolving
intermittently
into data
and ash
as the mind entire
fragments kaleidoscopically across
this bizarre new age

IX.

a bed of the world's
rarest daisies
wilting because of
their collective failure
to embrace the light
while it still burned in the sky
like a rich man
with his money
when you have this much time on your hands
you'd give your very life to hold onto it

X.

I thought I had won the game
but actually I had only agreed
to referee the game
for the next seven or eight years
there was no time for any anesthetic
I simply strode into whatever room
wondering as the shadow-phrases slid over me
if the surrounding forms were faces or wounds
the single word I spoke was “tarantula”
because the less you knew about the revolution
the less you were expected to give up in order
to precipitate it
all nuance of human conversation deleted
incrementally from the collective temperament
as you resume the race for whatever Swann was after
knowing now that even darkness isn't totally still
knowing now that even you aren't totally immune
to shame's hammer

XI.

I longed to be as quiet as the fog was
my seemingly-eternal stint
at the so-called academy
only made me more and more ashamed
of my apparent desire to remain there
as soon as the way out was easy enough
to steer my team of donkeys through
I departed for newer lands
occupied by even meaner forces
soul-tightening thoughts
hovered above me
like flung hammers
a trickle of water
sounded loudly across the plains
when I jogged over
all I saw was the web enlarging itself
amid piles of sriracha-
encrusted cutlery
built up like a monument
to some low-level god
the grass wagged back and forth
with a certain portentous bearing

as though the grass were trying
to warn me of some coming thing
as though the abyss could actually
be spoken about for once
as though anything around here
was ours to speak about at all

XII.

it's simpler to think about the present
like it's a game you're playing
you put on an orange reflective vest
and maneuver vampire-like
past rows of stoners
into a pew in which your name
has been carved with a sharpened vape pen
into the pew before it
you pretend to browse eBay
for an hour or two on your phone
soon the gesture turns into something else
something sort of real
you exit the arena
aware of every squandered opportunity
including the instant the world
became the way you wished it was
and the instant the world switched back again
you feel cold and confused
you find a stack of papers in a dusty corner of a room
you find a photograph in a small silver frame
and you sort of recognize the people in the photograph

XIII.

the Earth capsizing on itself
preserved only in its disappearance
whatever you thought you were back then
is probably what you were back then
the truth is that you'll never escape this simulacrum
without leaving a piece of yourself behind
the idea alone gives you a certain rush
you walk out of the office building and the sky
looks even drunker than you are

XIV.

the realer
truer landscape
of the spirit-territory
an unhealthy
preoccupation
with matter
via different phase states
maintaining a kind of
throwaway humility
like a muted scream
a thought wafts in
suddenly I feel closer to home
than I can ever remember being
without wave after wave
of some cognitive onslaught
walloping me into another
transcendental grief-experience
the sun
runs backwards where I'm from
colours don't have words
a chorus emerges
fully formed

inaugurating absolutely nothing
but pronouncing all names incorrectly
disintegrating
again and again
but grinning at you madly the whole while

XV.

conjuring information out of psychological dust
the owners of the future exist in a dark cloud
an amethyst in which a drop of oil
floats imprisoned like a single tear
this recurring digital melancholy
dates back to your pre-Emersonian life
you've sold all of your books
you have nothing to show for it
all night long Death roams your mind-castle in the form
of a big dog inspecting every room for psychic contents
to sublimate into three-dimensional objects
thereby improving the public's understanding
of what it means to be alive in the present
and what it requires of us to remain here
the internet
is like a big rat
the world's atoms are slowly separating
I walk across oceans of vodka in my dreams
the sun is only one centimetre wide

