

Flying the Nest
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Acknowledgements

M. Harris (for calling me ugly and stupid).

Foreword

The original foreword of this book was written in May. I went on for a couple of pages about the importance of not letting passtimes turn into obsessions. I have not followed my own advice, as it is now two months later and I'm still not quite done with this thing.

Everytime I picked it up there was a comma in the wrong place, or a typo, or a poem that I no longer thought was very good. Some of the poems were started years ago and have gone through hundreds of revisions, some were written only weeks ago.

In January I moved out of my parent's house, and that's when this book started to come together. While it's a book about the transition from childhood to adulthood (although the lines between the two remain blurry) and what that transition has been like for me, I hope its meaning can extend beyond that and reflect what it's like for anybody when they take the leap from old to new, known to unknown, safety to danger.

I hope it will be as much of a pleasurable escape from reality to read as it has been for me to write.

Tim Case
July 18, 2005

Planted

A green and modest potted plant
on a warped and wooden floor.
The floor is bent in crooked slant
beginning from the door.

The plant is lush and often fed
while it basks in the sun's light.
Its roots set in a fertile bed
hold firm in blackest night.

When morning comes she roams the room,
and waters it each day.
Night falls fast and spreads its gloom,
the plant begs for her to stay.

Towards her life the plant's leaves sway
as she marches out the door.
Each parched and thirsty end of day,
always longer than before.

And there will come a day, too soon,
when she's left and gone for good.
The plant waits with the glowing moon.
It would follow if it could.

An Unexpected Guest

I had the house to myself,
my folks gone on vacation,
left me alone and in charge
of our home's preservation.

I'm not what you'd call
too obsessively neat,
so it didn't take long
before the place smelled like feet.

After three short weeks
in the empty abode,
the house started to reek
of dirt, must, and mold.

Cigarette ash
distributed liberally,
milk-cheese in glasses
when spilled, is quite slippery.

I had given up cleaning
the piles of trash,
despite the demeaning
gum on my ass.

I know now this was bad
though I didn't before,
until a visitor arrived
with six legs on the floor.

He didn't even knock,
and I thought, "How rude."
He just walked nonchalantly,
right into my room.

"You!" he addressed me,
"have you no shame?"
My heart skipped a beat,
as this bug called me names.

His slimy antenna
twitched with reproach.
I considered my dilemma—
this was a very big roach.

"Listen up, and listen good, bub,"
the cretin said boldly,
"I've had it with your mess,
it's too grimy and moldy."

I considered the words
of this big filthy insect,
and after a moment
addressed him with respect.

"Well I guess I'm in trouble
when a roach thinks *I'm* too messy,
and, come to think of it,
this place *is* depressing."

“That’s the attitude, sport!”
The bug turned as he left.
I grabbed a smelly old shoe,
and squished him to death.

Apology

The shining steps
of Hermes' shoes
sear sizzling prints
in twilight hue.

Soft summer sand
sees surf renew,
as windswept waves
wash them from view.

Last light leaves
a lingering glow.
Shoes step again,
strolling, slow.

Hairy

It's, "Such a mess," her hair.

Sitting on the stairs, a step below me,
bare shoulders in my lap,
she leans back
and floods my fingers
with an ocean of silky strands.

Tiny tricky little knots snag
my digits as they dive in,
and begin to pull.
Trying not to cause her pain,
I pry them patiently apart.

Hairless

More mind roots clipped
with each snip.
Slipping down a black slope,
my shawl cloaks me
from their fall.

I'm not as tall
when I stand up,
lightheaded, and
wobbling my way
to the register, I say,

"So, how would you like me to pay?"

Lend Me a' Ear

Work to be done!
Ropes rigged!
Sails hung!
Long devout days,
fade away with the sun.

Time drinking!
Time feasting!
Songs to be sung!
Only so long
before all that is done.

Ship's stuck.
In October,
so long summer shores.
Hazy horizons.
Sobered sailors snore.

Icy. Waters.
Frozen. Stuck.
Frigid funds.
All hands,
no luck.

Slow, and chilly.
Northern wind.
Need speedy remedy.
Sailors sleep in hallowed hull,
of destinations dream.

Rations run out,
water barrels
dry.
A curious corporal
looks up at the sky.

No port,
crows nested
for so many weeks.
Finally found
a worthy grey beach.

When dock's
decision,
at long last reached.
Surviving skinny
sailors feast.

On laughter!
On laughter!
On plastered mates!
Made many meals in
rich and poor taste.

Rejoice!
A conclusion!
A voyage's end.
Playing pirate a plus.
What's better pretend?

One Step at a Time

The grey stairway glows,
in the exiting light.
Bright red stencilled letters
shine through signs
painted white.

Destination located
on the very top floor.
Class had already started
when I walked
through the door.

Taking the stairway
isn't always a thrill,
but it beats the escalator,
at least you're not
standing still.

Calling: Attention

It weighs in my pocket
heavy as a hand grenade.

I'm careful with it in public,
so it doesn't go off accidentally.

One day, I'm sure, it will explode.
I don't know what I'll say.

Lukewarm

Coffee from a café cooling
cream congealing contents steaming
wobbly terrace table teetering,
don't let that cup spill.

Take time to drink and drain the dwindling
dying drops too timidly trickling.
A see-through semblance wrinkled
winking, in the chalice still.

A potent pot inside's been brewing
boiling bathing beans sit stewing
a beauty bravely blabs revealing,
her offer for refill.

Consider quick your careful yearning,
you don't mind your stomach churning?
Or a chance of your yap burning?
Do you have more time to kill?

Firefly

A firefly glows,
rebellious, red.
Wrongly restrained,
held by its head.

The fly falls tired
loses its heat,
hits the ground
near its captor's feet.

Its carcass stepped on,
its use complete.
The captor keeps walking
and exhales with relief.

Kick Some Ash

Unattended
bolt burns,
decays.

Stub holds its past
on edge
of tray.

With clumsy grab
soft soot
is sprayed.

Glow stays a moment
then fades
away.

Thirsty?

An ochre oasis,
in a depleted desert.

Encircled by sand
sharp as glass all around it.

Once the sky's dry enough
the oasis evaporates.

Soon the sky's soaking wet;
it begins to percipitate.

Bottle Drive

Queer green glass
shines in sun light,
might be ten cents
re: fun, tonight.

Empty fifty,
fill another.
Fourty ounces
are recovered.

Leftovers

It's really quite surprising
what'll fit down a sink,
provided of course
you can ignore the stink

of food and drink rotting
underneath pots and plates,
ooze de-evolving
to a gelatinous state.

If you wait long enough
it will all disappear,
but you have to be patient,
sometimes it takes years.

Years to get through
those tiny black holes,
through slimy sewers,
but, then where's it go?

I know for a fact
that it's not in my sink.
Maybe it's recycled
into water I drink?

Bath Time

Bowing below
a new hygienic low.
Legs bent, sitting
kneeling, by a porcelain pit.

Hot water heats
dishes,
dirty,
decrepit.

Dry by hand?
Store in drawers?
Clean up now?

Nah, forget it.

Don't Sweat It

Soaked and dripping
the liquid leaks out.
The soft cold slime
of a silent shout.

Ponder the palm's
perspiring pores.
Peacefully protracting,
a person explored.

Repugnant reaction,
rejection absorbed.
Palm placed in pocket,
protected once more.

Fuck the Universe

Take a shot.

Thrusting slow
and steady, seed
seeps inside
a deep black void.

Avoiding sleep
a pregnant mind,
conceives the future.
Here it comes.

Squirrel Fight

Two starving squirrels
bickering on a branch.
A sea naturally saws,
unless it breaks,
then it can't.

The large squirrel won,
and ran off with the spoils.
Toiled for his acorn,
the small squirrel, foiled.

I dissolved their dispute.
Swept up and bagged.
Threw it away,
with tree leaves
and old rags.

I left an apple on the porch,
a good sized Granny Smith.
Soon a cat brought me the corpse.
The apple'd barely been licked.

Feeding Time

Frantic feathers
flap in frenzies.
Screech and squawk
in bird brained
bread envy.

Concrete crumbs
spread by bag ladies,
pigeons pleased
first none
then plenty.

All birds street grey,
so tired, and hungry.

Flying the Nest

A young cuckoo
in a robin's nest, lies.
Having snuck slyly in
under hard shell's disguise.
The cuckoo's coy call
sung from his bed,
has convinced the robin
she must see that he's fed.

It doesn't take long
before the robin agrees;
she will do for the cuckoo
whatever he needs.
The cuckoo's content,
more so, he is pleased,
but he'll wake up one night
enticed by a breeze.

And the cuckoo will shiver
despite warmth of the night.
Doomed with decision,
to stay or take flight.
His eyelids will open
and he'll look round the nest,
and he'll find himself facing
a difficult test.

In the heavy wet mist
of that moistened dark night,
droplets will drizzle
and dance in starlight.
Expelled into air
with the cuckoo's wing's might,
spread wide in believing
the wind must be right.

So into the gust
the cuckoo will go,
away from the robin
into night's fierce hard blow.
Questioning always
though he may never know;
whether he's better off
flying the nest,
or in the warm red comfort
of a robin's breast.

Please Check Your Baggage Before Boarding

They've all got bags,
slung boldly on a shoulder,
or burdening a back.

Pouches packed with
subtle secrets, or blatantly
borne like pink knapsacks.

Torn when loads become
too heavy, fabric worn
tears, rips, and cracks.

No spare bag bears my
sparse luggage. Fasteners
always break, and snap.

Cover Up

Mid sleep
without
warning
wake.

Bumpy
geese flock
frigid
fate.

Question.
Somehow,
slumber
severed.

Replaced
with stroke
of cold goose
feather.

Yawning
ponder,
then
investigate.

Events
unfolding
to this
chilly state.

Tumble
sideways
and
discover.

Partner
greedy,
under
cover.

Fruit Trees

Apples
on a few-ringed tree,
scattered
by a healthy breeze.

The frozen ground
is thick with weeds.
Thawing
under soggy leaves.

A picker
with a ladder sees
hard work doesn't
always please.

Over the Hill

She draws a red hood
over emerald eyes.
Enters the forest
in her scarlet disguise.

A basket's bread,
to her grandmother's bound.
Shades of tree's leaves,
branches shadow the ground.

Halfway on the path
a rustling resounds.
From fresh foliage
leaps a mongrel hound.

"Where are you going,
you lovely young girl?"
"To my Grannie's, so move,
you rascally cur."

"I'll get out of your way
if you tell me you're sure,
that you can't be convinced
to take a detour."

She brushed him aside
and went on her way.
He thought of a plan
to see her later that day.

He knew shortcuts and
took them, got to Grannie's first.
Before Hood arrived,
Grannie burned in the hearth.

He donned her nightcap
and her pillowy gown.
Used her old bones,
to pick clean his sharp frown.

Not long and a knock,
rap-a-tap on the door.
The cur though quite full,
always ready for more.

"Who is it?" He chimed
in his favorite falsetto.
"Me, Gran, I brought bread,
so put on the kettle."

Hood entered the bedroom,
where her Gran usually lay.
Felt afraid as she gazed,
something wrong, right away.

"Say Gran...you look different...
have you changed your hair?"
"Nope, guess again."
The cur drooled and stared.

“My Grannie, your arms,
they have gotten quite big.”

“All the better to hold you,
you lovely young thing.”

“And your eyes Gran, they too,
seem larger than before.”

“All the better to see you,
and seeing, adore!”

“Ok Gran...I’ll buy that,
but what about your teeth?”
The cur thought for a moment,
before standing to speak.

“To eat you! To ravage,
to take what is mine!”

“Oh, oh it is you...”
Hood began, sighing.

“Haha! Yes that’s right,
now how shall we cook you?
Grill, baked, or fried?
What do you think suits you?”

“Whatever you want,
whatever you wish,
I’ll just go get started
preparing the dish.”

“Good! Hurry up!”
The rascal said bluntly.
“But don’t be too long,
I’m getting quite hungry!”

In the cramped kitchen
of the cozy abode,
Hood got Grannie’s gun,
from its place by the stove.

Returning to bed
she aimed, and declared,
“What’s the matter Wolfy,
what’s wrong, are you scared?”

Vicious Cycle

Throttle choked,
rubber burned.
A certain spot
on the street is spurned.

Slowing slightly
too late to turn,
with careless crash
a rider learns.

Lack of leather
leaves skin scarred.
The cycle spins,
sparks scatter far.

Rider, rash,
removes remains.
Though charred,
the cycle, feels no pain.

The pavement dampens
under modest rain.
Cars pass by,
rider waves in vain.

Real Chairs

Rolling
in a blue white square.
Immobile inside
pitying stares.

Having
people's help is dandy,
more so when you're
feeling handy.

Base Sickly

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Boom boom boom boom.

Sometimes, I hate my neighbor.

Confidentials

Black and white breaks
in a great grey space
trade traps for rats
in a wretched race.

Hard dogs drag
and can't lose their leashes.
Stones ground daily,
reduced to just pieces.

Offers entice
and close in like vices.
Buy low? Sell high?
Depends what the price is.

Road Rules

A wet black box
on a concrete street,
fills forty-five
or three degrees.

She clicks and clanks
in constant change,
in soaking sheets
of thick grey rain.

The danger centers
on its yellow phase.
The warning fades
to a blood red stage.

Traffic stilled
a second, stays.
Perpendicular
the flow makes way.

With a clammy clank
the flow regains
its order with
a light green haze.

Met Trop

Brown tracks
black tunnels.
Grey walls
shake and rumble.

Bough's petals
commuting.
Underground
not conversing.

Pupils pointed
peer inside.
Don't look up,
enjoy the ride.

Can't Be in It

Wild files,
crammed, cramped.
Deceitful drawers,
closed dark and damp.

A temp to sort
and clean the sheets.
Tidying time
is quite a feat.

Unsolicited

Door to door to door to door.
Each knock a no, no, no. No more!
This chore's become a bore that boars
a sore into a poor sole's core.
The sore is gouged with grit and gore.
Selling myself makes me a...

Axe

A chicken stricken,
with the same sick
predilection
as all chickens.

Once the chicken's
thickened, sick
predilection
is quickened.

A farmer is pickin'
the head off the floor.

Ad Rich Culture

It's supposed to be a private joke,
about the chicken and the egg yolk.

Farmers: kind, but simpler folk,
sometimes wished they hadn't spoke.

At market stalls, their goods compared,
prices set, they hope are fair.

What exactly is their share?

What's it matter? Does your omelet care?

Skippping Stones

A polished stone thrown
in a large sea sinks.
The sea's salty depths
recede with a plink.

Ripples rebel,
in an outward sphere.
The waters calm,
the surface clears.

Down to the bottom
the stone slowly swims.
Eroding in darkness.
No light, bright nor dim.

The waves batter the stone
and it's reduced to just sand,
a strong current moves in
and it's washed up on land.

With the right recipe
of earth, water, and wind,
some grains get together,
are a small stone again.

One day maybe someone
will come strolling along,
pick that stone up
and put it in their palm.

Palmed in a hand and
tossed up and tossed down,
someone will choose
if it's dropped, saved, or thrown.

Bounce

A bouncing plastic ball
in an empty marble hall.
The same height reached
with every bounce,
same distance every fall.

Within the hallway huge and vast,
a bouncing and constant contrast.
Bouncing out,
against the wall
another bounce, the last.

With Ew

Purple circles
sagging bags.
Wearing weathered
royal rags.

Whether rags
remain employed,
haggard heaps
of tide and joy.

I, Machine

Current circuit
lectrified.
Pouring over
diskette drives.

Shocking surges
buy nare I.
Inside a case
there lie hard drives.

A Point

Insecurities,
are like needles in a haystack
that you're using as a mattress.

Epilogue

June 5th, 2016

Montreal, QC

Dear Friends,

It has been over a decade now since I finished Flying the Nest after a couple of months work over the Spring and Summer of 2005. I had high (more accurately-delusional) hopes about cruising into a career as a successful Poet in my mid twenties.

I enthusiastically made lists, and plans, and maps of bookstores I would convince to hock my wares for me-only until the inevitable discovery of my heartbreaking genius of course, at which point I would spend the rest of my days travelling the world, absorbing and recounting its delights in a whirl of whimsy and wonder for a few decades, maybe teach a bit, and then retire to a nice Laurentian farmstead.

Grand designs, certainly. The reality has been, well...different, to say the absolute least. My foolhardy ambitions aside, and hopefully without being overly jaded, cynical, or pessimistic, the world still feels like a pretty fucked-up place right now.

One thing I have learned all too well in the past ten years is that change-significant, real, lasting, and ultimately good change, rarely happens without at least some level of discomfort, pain, and sacrifice.

I probably spend more money on cigarettes every week than I've ever made from writing poetry, but doing so is pretty much never an activity that I end up regretting. Sadly, a lot of those bookstores I fastidiously targeted back then don't exist anymore.

Just some among so many of the cultural victims of the rampant and destructive forces we continue to subject upon ourselves and our environments. I am not hopeless, and in many ways I am less scared and more optimistic about humanity's prospects than ever.

But we could still all do with a lot more love.