

The dilogarithm and other poems

$$\mathrm{Li}_2(\xi) \equiv - \int_0^\xi \frac{\ln(1 - \xi')}{\xi'} \, \mathrm{d}\xi' = \sum_{k=1}^\infty \frac{\xi^k}{k^2}$$

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Yogurt and bread

She was entering a grocery store
when a boy approached:

“Thia mou (my aunt) I am hungry,
my stomach is hurting,
would you please get me something to eat”

“Come with me into the store,
and you can pick up whatever you wish,”
instinctively she replied

The boy picked up some bread
and she offered to buy him
chocolate bars and hunks of cheese

“I only want yogurt to fill me up”
the boy replied

They walked outside
and she looked over her shoulder
to see what the boy was going to do

He sat under a tree
and wolfed down the yogurt and bread

Lowes aisle 14

They walked silently down Lowes aisle 14

You could sense they had spent
a lifetime together

The gray sky over the hospital
across the parking lot
reflected in their eyes

He was still wearing a plastic yellow bracelet
with his name and age written in red:
sixty-five

They picked up a few incandescent light bulbs,
enough to last them a lifetime

Regrets

He noticed a beautiful tattoo
around her wrist
as she handed him
a large McDonalds coffee

It means ‘‘regrets’’ she explained;
then she looked away and whispered
‘‘I have a lot of regrets’’

He had to move on
but their eyes met
as he was leaving

She smiled with a trace of sadness,
he nodded back with a trace of sorrow

Jackson Browne was singing
‘‘In the Shape of a Heart’’
in the background

‘‘I guess I never knew
what she was talking about
I guess I never knew
what she was living without’’

The road less traveled

He loved her the most
when he saw she would do
anything to ease his pain

He loved her the most
when he saw an innocence child
inside of her

He loved her the most
when he saw her clanging her pots
to scare away Bernard the black bear

She loved him the most
when she saw that he took
the road less traveled early on

Kitchen cabinets

The freelance
kitchen cabinet installer
was a war vet

He held his head with two hands
and closed his eyes
when the banging of the hammers
became unbearably loud

He was thankful for a hoagie and tea
offered for dinner,
he appreciated that he did not have to
fend for himself

He worked all evening,
slept on the hard plywood floor at midnight,
got up at dawn,
worked all morning,
and finished at noon

I asked an angel to see him
through his long way home

Rosa Milagro

Rosa Milagro wakes up
at four o'clock every morning
to work at the University Lodge

At times of sorrow or distress
she sings a beautiful lullaby

The song reverberates
like a ray of hope
across the narrow hallways

But is not heard by the
self-absorbed academics

Dreams

Her hopes and dreams started and ended
in the narrow streets of a small town

As she makes her morning coffee,
she watches
with a melancholic smile
the neighbors
walk their children
to the school bus

The father drives away first
in his work truck

The mother follows
in a little while
in a small white sedan

She occupies her day

Land of abandoned dreams

He drifted in rough waters
and ended up ashore
at the land of abandoned dreams

He walked through the woods
and recognized his own dreams
in the shape of a weeping tree
with broken branches,
surrounded by thick brush and thorny weeds

Other trees were severely damaged
and some had not survived the long droughts
and punishing winds

There were plenty of Joshua trees,
reaching for the sky

Unsmiling and muted,
he made his way to the nearest village

Highway Exit 33 revisited

I know what to expect
when I walk into McDonald's
at Highway Exit 33

A young woman with sad eyes
will be sitting
with her children on the left

A young man with sad eyes
will be sitting
with his children on the right

Two well-dressed businessmen
will be politely ordering meals

A pleasant woman from Ecuador
will make my coffee,
wearing a nice smile
and humming a beautiful lullaby

A construction contractor,
must be in his sixties,
will be hurrying to his next job
hiding two shaking hands
in his sleeves

Three retirees will be enjoying
each other's company,
discussing the weather
and current events

A lonesome young man will be battling away
images of a harsh foreign land
with a horrific replay between his eyes

I think of them and pray for them
as I return to the freeway

Redemption

He seemed too young to have retired
and too old to be lifting heavy lumber
as a part-timer

He helped him several times
and they became store friends,
discussing plumbing and hardware tools

He was neatly groomed,
dressed in clean yet worn out clothes

He caught him staring at the ceiling
with flickering eyes a few times

He finally realised:
the lumber was his cross to carry,
his way of seeking
redemption from a previous life

Intervention

Last night she dreamed that
he decided to intervene

First he visited the ill,
and they stood up and walked
with incredulous eyes

Then he visited the poor and the destitute,
and offered them yogurt, honey,
and bags full of clothes

Then he met with the meek and the righteous,
and they broke down in tears
for all the suffering they endured

Before he left, he eradicated
the evil strand of ambition and greed

She woke up at dawn
with tears in her eyes

She was comforted by a little creature
curled up near her feet

On Christmas eve

His foreign accent was charming
and his broad smile was a treat

He joked around with anyone and everyone
that would come near his shopping cart

He wife beside him,
looking somewhat embarrassed
but proud of him

For some older lonely shoppers,
he was the best present ever
on this Christmas Eve

The Advocate

She sat next to him
around a long table
like a sacrificial lamb

Clasping papers that proved
her worthiness with tables
and charts

Her voice was strong,
it crackled and showed weakness
only at the very end

The pencil he was holding
broke into several pieces,
he realized at the end

A few scratches and drops of blood
in the palm,
nothing that won't heal

They walked outside
in silence
and sat on a park bench

Keep your spirits high,
everything will be alright
he said
with a false sense of authority

Some days are better than others,
she said

He walked back to his office
in a soaking rain
with a folded umbrella
under his arm

He was copied on the email
on a Friday afternoon
a few weeks later
in November

Empty skirts and suits

Shelter

As the sun sets over the freeway,
we all become brothers and sisters,
huddling in apartment buildings,
suburban mansions,
and groundhog holes,
seeking shelter in our souls

Accomplished

There is still time to make things right,
he thought

I will not care so much
I will go along
I will get ahead
I will flatter them
I will please them
I will join them
I will eat with them
I will drink with them

He looked away
in the tenderness of the settling sun

A few clouds looked back at him
with affection and love

“Father please forgive me,”
he whispered with teary eyes,
“it is not me
it is the Devil inside me”

It has been accomplished

The dilogarithm

I am stymied
by the elusive integral
of the spanning trees

I am thinking with affection and shame:

Grigori would have looked at me
with disdain
and flushed their million bucks
down the drain

At the steps of the Mission

‘‘It will get better,
you’ll get through this’’

They were sitting
at the steps of the Mission
on a bitter cold day

On his way out,
a car drove by and honked

Investment property

He mows their little patch of grass
every Tuesday afternoon

Surrounded by a dentist's office,
a mechanic shop,
and a Big Box store

A young woman holding a baby
watches him with pride
from the porch

This is not an investment property,
this is their home

Spring

Shoveling snow
to clear the sidewalk
in front of the row house

Bundled up in layers
of sweaters and shirts
and an old military jacket

With a scruffy face,
eyes on the shovel,
and deliberate moves

The mailman drove by:
spring will be here soon

He looked up
and his face lit up:
yeah, spring will be here soon

Implements

He fell asleep
listening to Coast to Coast
with the brochure
under his pillow

Thinking of all the implements
he could order in good time

The loader first,
the brush cutter second,
the tiller third,
the backhoe at the end,
in due time

All shiny,
unscratched,
painted bright red

She teased him
and kissed him goodnight

He got up before dawn
and was at the dealer's
before opening time

For a moment,
he thought
he was standing before
his first bicycle shop

Typerware cover

A typerware cover was lying
on the ground
in an empty parking spot

It must have fallen out
as the contractor was closing
his work truck's door

He will be looking for it
in the evening after dinner
when he starts
preparing for the day ahead

Exhausted and consumed
by an honest day's work

She will suggest
to put aluminum foil on top

They will discuss the kids
and she will kiss him goodnight

The television will be flashing
relentless pundit opinions
and obliterating reality shows

Between right and wrong

I saw a picture of them applauding
with their eyes glued to the candidate

A nice latino man dressed in a suit
wearing a red tie

A no-nonsense middle-aged man
with a stern expression on his face

A kind middle-aged woman,
no doubt she is nice to everyone
she meets

A beautiful young woman,
looking lost,
she must have been in her early twenties

Others looked like professors,
others looked like rednecks

All searching for a trace of hope lost
but not abandoned

The devil and an angel were standing
on either side of the candidate

Between right and wrong

Soles of my shoes

The sole detached from one of my shoes,
and I glued it back

The other sole also detached,
and I will glue it back

Why waste a perfectly good pair of shoes
just because two soles detached?

Haiku for a big bear or any other aggressor

Please don't maul us
Eat our garbage
We know you love us

Refund

He asked if he could be refunded
the difference

for some lumber he bought
that is now on sale

The young woman looked up and said:
of course,
every little bit of money helps,
you know,
you can fill your gas tank

It is awfully kind of you,
he muttered with shame

She smiled with dignity and pride

Fifteen dollars and forty-six cents

A garden snake

A garden snake
found shelter
in a pile of stones

I will get rid of it,
he muttered scared

He is harmless,
let him be
his name is Simon

In a few days,
Simon become his best friend

Tribute to my mom

Budgets of trillions
net worths of billions
and astronomical financial gains

Could you please
spare a couple of euros
to reimburse her
for buying a tsoureki
for this retiree
who has not eaten in three days
and is too proud to ask?

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