

5 Poems by  
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from his book

*To Lose & to Pretend*

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## God as a Thing, or Whatever It Is

Ever since I stopped believing in God  
I've been pretending I was in a movie.  
Early in the morning doesn't feel like it in July,  
with the empty beer cans storying the porch  
& spent bottlerockets dry-humping the gutters.

Jobs are retarded. The hipster merch-girl at the midnight show  
in black jeans & white heels argued that *corsetiere* refers  
to the corset-wearer, not the maker. Maybe it's the only thing  
where the wearing is harder. Well, that & Poetry—  
which means you're a Poet too if you got this far.

You may already be feeling your organs start to shift.  
Even though I can prove God has no gender  
I'll still fantasize about teachers for the rest of my life.  
You run out of underwear fast when you help people move.  
You find out what Poetry isn't: You run through

the high-school diary, the college lecture, the grad-school puzzle—  
then for a few years it feels like rain every Sunday.  
There's no article of men's clothing that makes women horny by itself.  
Poetry makes women horny but God doesn't. Suck it, God.  
When you move somewhere, you go to bars alone.

## Velveteen Intestine

The flirtatiously smug empath with the bob near the papasan took her time in late Summer comparing my soul to the age when she'd wrap, to the light of one unshaded lamp, herself in garbage sacks, pretending they were leather.

Parties are like involuntary debates over belief in talent.  
It's time I started dealing with the fact I won't be famous.  
When you see me, apologize. I'll apologize back.  
Faith is the easiest thing in the world

not to have, so cut it out already. Get to the point where the language eclipses the grating like rising dough; where the Poem is a grey cat that acts like it wants to be petted but doesn't. Gangster-flip an oversized coin skewed *guilt & shame*.

Skim it down your culture like a dimmed Hall of Fishes.  
Wait for it to once-around & back up your spine.  
Girls imagine wearing things & boys imagine touching them,  
only most things aren't being touched most of the time.

When Edna Millay was 24 she cut herself with a stage knife somehow over the heart in Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, then later became like a story someone tells about how there used to be a rosebush in some certain place.

## Admirable Fooling

There are more Good Nerds in the world than Evil Nerds,  
& that's why Evil will one morning lie buried  
like broken toy guns beneath snow & sawdust.  
I can get away with the word *heartbreaking*  
because I used to cut myself making paper wizard hats  
with a whoop-jug, before passing through the hedgerows  
to seek out the other gifted children.

The first was Rufus, deadliest on the seaboard with a crayon  
but only if you cooperated. He had a real record player.  
The last was also Rufus. He retired undefeated  
to a mysterious island. Every Sunday  
he sends a few jokes I never get. If the world were my dream  
people would worship waterslides & chill with rhinos.

You wanna die? Simple. Put on a Star  
Wars movie & do a shot every time something comes  
across as a double entendre. I want to know  
how old you have to be to start calling people "son,"  
because the world isn't anyone's dream.  
Whenever it's a month, I'm amazed it's that month  
& it's, like, always a month.

Oh World, are you onto something or on something?  
Oh World, if you've got questions, we've got dancers!  
World, the thing about a whoop-jug is,  
we're bound to brim it with what we love.  
Oh & World...when I save you, there'll be this one part  
where I jump a bridge in a speedboat. It's gonna be so cool.

## Weneht

There's nothing new to say about being alone  
until you find a new way of being alone,  
in which case, you're not. A cliché is a cross  
between a medal & a bug in your mouth.  
I've a stitch from booking after fake boy pain.

I knew this guy who was obsessed with Elvis  
because Elvis bit off one of his legs in 1976.  
He told me, "Some things best take the shapes of jokes  
but aren't lies." I told him if a girl has a tattoo  
it means she takes it in the butt. He said, Dammit.

*Poems are the jokes you don't laugh at until Heaven*  
would be a good line if there were such a place,  
like how there was this one field with a big tower  
with a flashing red light, where girls in sweaters liked  
to sing & run fast. Sometimes there was a moon.

The Poetess with the watercolor mouth to whom  
I sometimes write e-mails full of facts about animals  
has a poem called "There Is No Such Thing As Skill."  
I forced 100 random people to write poems  
with that title, & some were way better than others.

Many of the poems were elegies about turning 30.  
I called it new & silly. They said, "In all fairness,  
it never meant failure before." I said Dammit.  
I pretended to leave the room. People who pretend  
to leave the room sometimes yell "I'm done."

## I Just Need a Few Things

Badgers are filling me with lies  
is a statement both factual & entertaining enough.  
Sometimes I can tell the worth of a poem  
going in, by my handwriting, & other times  
it's all the solid white sky in a big parking lot,  
your hands smelling in December of last December,  
still trying to explain things way past lunch.

These septets I'm on this year have me as nervous  
as a genius isn't when around a lot of stone.  
Look—a slight young woman left her gloves  
by the weeded tunnel where the villagers come to blame  
me, or slight young women, or me for slight young women.  
They call one-by-one, down it, after wars they'd love to name.  
I understand you'd like to write a Poem

where it's a boy & girl sitting there the whole time  
flirting by comparing whose glasses are stronger,  
but the sign by the tunnel clearly forbids that,  
right between "campfires" & "skateboarding." Why badgers?  
Because as nouns they're fuzzy & surreptitious,  
but then turn into verbs & won't leave you alone.  
The lost gloves are steadily dampening. You can drink now,

then care so little you make an obvious joke,  
which shows you all over again why you love anything.  
Here I am, on the way in. We've never eaten  
here before, but it smells fantastic, & turns out  
we don't know the young woman gloveless in the headlights,  
dancing "fake sexy" but cold & careful enough  
that everyone exhales like an old-school drawing of the wind.