between black & white

short poems by michael r guerin

Other books by Michael R. Guerin

Ghosts, Flames & Ashes world thru a window mind & machine

© 2018 by Michael R. Guerin

ALL RIGHTS ARE RESERVED. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author.

ISBN: 978-0-578-41524-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018913333

Six Cups Publishing, LLC. Newtown, CT www.sixcupspublishing.com

Table of Contents

i. red

mirage	9
it passes you by	10
still shivered	11
a self (in pending)	12
sweat & steel	13
a fan of summer	14
still falling	16
all a twitter	17
down route 113	18
a betrayal	20
open suitcase	21
once upon a when	22
ii. yellow	
dreaming in yellow	25
an august afternoon	26
on a melancholy angle	27
late afternoon	28

fireflies	29
lost little ball	30
a note from skógafoss	31
like purest gold	32
deep currents	33
goodbye, my indigo	34
iii. blue	
bittersweet and blue	37
for all the life	38
a letter	40
last night	41
the tolling bell	42
the colors that i seek	43
it comes like ice	44
as it echoes	45
no denial	46
a late october night	47
dying embers	48

"What is the art of living?
Where there is division in us
psychologically there must be
conflict, and therefore
disorder. As long as there is
disorder, trying to find order is
still disorder."

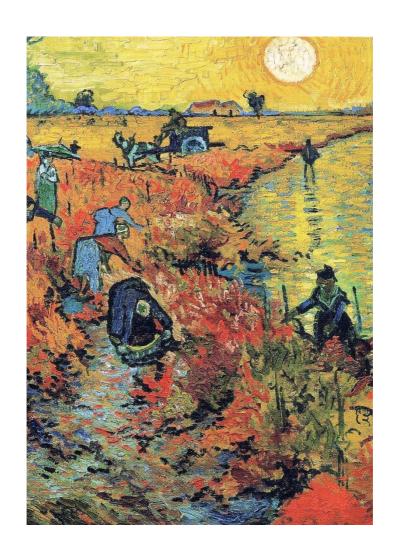
- J Krishnamurti

i.

red

"What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?"

~ Vincent



mirage

beneath a field of wine speckled with fire the air cool and dry, weightless i swim in a sea of delights intoxicated by life how your skin holds the setting sun's flame and raven hair trails to cascade like vines down the side of your face. in midnight my spirit burns skyward climbing heaven's stair through layers of rarefied air to meet you there.

it passes you by

beneath cast iron streetlamps
the red brick street glistens
from cool drizzle
and with each passing step
my warm bar stool slowly recedes
further into a yellowed past
i can no longer imagine
while somewhere up ahead
her black front door
stands barred
against all strangers
and neatly hung with a brass
number plate i was never
given to answer.

still shivered

there's never one reason for leaving (though mistaken heads nod in approval at fables offered up as truth) for crows will fly in any direction they choose (just ask van gogh) and the shivered tenor of a voice singing the blues so soulfully rendered in a singular moment and drifting through the pines as his song unwinds is executed for its own particular sake.

(for kurt cobain)

a self (in pending)

a self, in pending. bound by a web of whys from any given place all roads end in fate.

found between two poles of a self forever in transit, from what you've been and how you dream.

beyond absolution from those lesser gods of pleasure and pain, a self slowly burns in disguise.

sweat & steel

as one who has toiled in the fields borne of sweat and steel and labored beneath a yellowing sun under which all our colors run,

should you find yourself alone at last feet still planted in collective clay to yourself this singular question ask — to whom do you owe this day?

a fan of summer

at the risk of sounding clichéd life flowed differently back then on hot summer days windows would be flung open wide inviting any air to blow through rusted screens and carried on breezes the sounds of children playing outdoors, their screams of anger or delight mingling with bird calls and barking dogs along with the gentle rustle of green leaves dancing with each gust of wind, but that was before cable tv or central ac when rotary fans wobbled on table tops rhythmically spraying blasts of warm air from side to side into faces eager for any relief while dads smoked

and played pinochle
as decks got shuffled
and cards were dealt
with our moms retreating
into cozy living rooms
spinning family yarns
and taking turns
talking intermittently
amid bursts of wild laughter
like so many passes
from that old
rotary fan.

still falling

still falling — like a withered maple leaf from the tree outside your window or the first few flakes of snow on a cold december evening or the weight of salty tears when i left you like a stranger and the time we stood like statues for hours in the rain.

it's taken
too long to realize
that there's nothing left to gain,
and now the better part of me
dares dream the sweetest
life with you, together
and still falling —
calling out
your name.

all a twitter

anger in any form is anger, naked and pure. righteous indignation is never righteous. indignation is nothing more than anger poorly dressed in finer clothes. when a wave of anger rises the masses smell blood demanding heads and vengeance which drowns out calmer voices beneath its roiling red tide. socially speaking we're not very sociable except when driven mad with rage as we wage another war communally justified.

(for jimmy kimmel)

down route 113

i still remember drives down route 113 laying on the back seat staring up through a side window with the sky broken every now and again as power lines passed by. we drove in silence to a nameless hospital where words like "cancer" and "chemo" didn't mean much to a young boy's mind and once there i sat quiet and still in an antiseptic hall where people dressed in white would pass by and remark on how smart i looked or how well i behaved while i waited for my mémère to emerge from some mysterious place. finally we'd return to her home to be greeted with the welcoming smell

of homemade chicken soup and sitting at the kitchen table i heard her say "he's too young to see me like this" and my mom replied "it will make him a good man, ma" but lost in a game of cards or steaming bowls of chicken soup i had no way of knowing that one cold december morning and not long enough from then in the barest blink of an eye that world would forever be erased.

a betrayal

in a millisecond you can feel it ring true that knowing without knowing in your gut or in your bones which communicates more than a million words ever could about the state of a soul in the barest glance of her clear blue eyes even before a single tear forms and eventually streaks earthwards under the weight of her world gliding down a porcelain cheek you were once given for kisses or the tremor in a voice about to break into tiny shards of shattered glass just before she asks you to leave and never come back and how your face flush with shame betrays you in ways your words never would.

open suitcase

too easy to leave one who's already lost but when love's the rage and nothing else matters and days run into endless days with betrayals exchanged despite any cost,

then how or when can a heart ever decide to cleave those final few ties which forever blind and with a pair of borrowed wings finally take to flight?

once upon a when

these feet once filled with rage prowled familiar streets and lanes in my dreams, in my drunken hours desperate for love's embrace or a simple touch given with meaning and deeply felt against another solitary night. was it madness that led to endless flights of golden fields armed only with brush and paint eager to transform the landscapes of my world, of my dreams while you slept on silently and with ease so exquisitely out of reach?

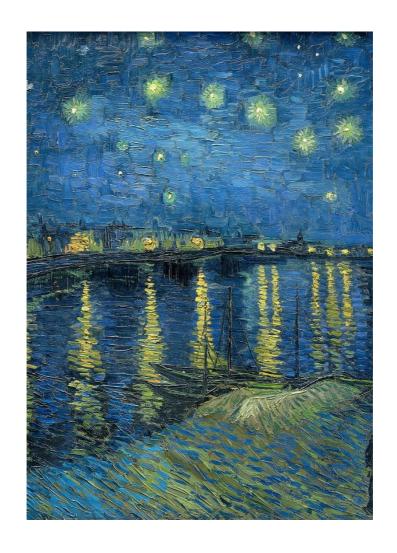
(for vincent)

ii.

yellow

"I don't know anything with certainty, but seeing the stars makes me dream."

~ Vincent



dreaming in yellow

when passion runs deep what bubbles to the surface?

behind each facade a face like any other in disguise.

to meet you i suppose from postcards left behind.

beneath each starry sky a soul can rattle its cage.

dried strokes on the page just a moment in time.

an august afternoon

in the distance a mower drones its low rumble. from my bedroom window all backyards seem the same.

a murder of crows land on my neighbor's lawn pecking at unseen bugs for their daily bread.

beneath this midday glare all thoughts run together bleached white by an unrelenting dread.

in the distance gray clouds gather on the horizon while i sit here quietly and pray for rain.

on a melancholy angle

early morning rays break the horizon with earnest anticipation of what might come to pass

while soft and subtle colors are bleached white when bathed in the harsh glare of midday light.

but late afternoon summer sunshine hangs reverently in warm air slanting sweetly through shivering silver-green leaves of towering poplar and beech on a melancholy angle.

(for emily dickinson)

late afternoon

sitting beneath a tangle of branches and grateful for their shade

a bird whose name i'll never know rested on a limb

and looking down for some response sang its song of life

or perhaps just a call for other birds to perch nearby just so

while cool autumn breezes kissed tall grass ready for a mowing.

fireflies

as a little boy i'd wait
for summer evening skies
to be filled with fireflies
and gazed in fascination
as their tails lit up the night
and running barefoot on cool grass
would try to catch them in tiny hands
and lucky enough to find one in my grasp
would peek between gently clenched
fingers to see its glow shine
on these innocent palms
yet to cause harm
in this fragile world
we reluctantly
call home.

lost little ball

that's just how it goes (i suppose)... say when right next door or way across town a life slips tragically away and when a heart gets torn or relationships are sundered and a thousand painful things in between, yet bound as we are by the same space-time we're still able to sleep (and peacefully) while the world wobbles on like a lost little ball spinning much too fast on its own.

a note from skógafoss

words fail us at nearly every turn. wrapped in a web of ideas about how things work and pushed to justify inherited beliefs which form the ground of our understanding is it any wonder that faced with unlacquered reality there's nothing left to say and what would you offer anyway to a waterfall that has no need of your schemes as pure water spills downward from the very mountain which formed it when no one was around and how it will still stand strong in this place majestic and sure stretching out into a timeless count of tomorrows long after our bones have turned to dust.

like purest gold

a field of green dotted white with clover and the air alive with buzzing bees as they flit from flower to flower following something only they can see gathering up their gold. or the hand you gently hold as your daughter takes her first few faltering steps forward to face her fate moving towards a destiny she can't imagine yet as one like the rest but with a heart of purest gold.

deep currents

bound within your walls and flash frozen like a fourth phase of water found under ice crusting over some siberian lake which hides darker currents still flowing fast and deep as they do when in sleep and the dreams you dare to keep that take you out of the present moment to land you on your feet in a world of make believe.

or those scenes burned within a heart which get replayed in your mind a thousand times a day when there's nothing left to say and there's nothing that you'd change and there's no one near to hear the secrets that you keep in currents running deep.

goodbye, my indigo

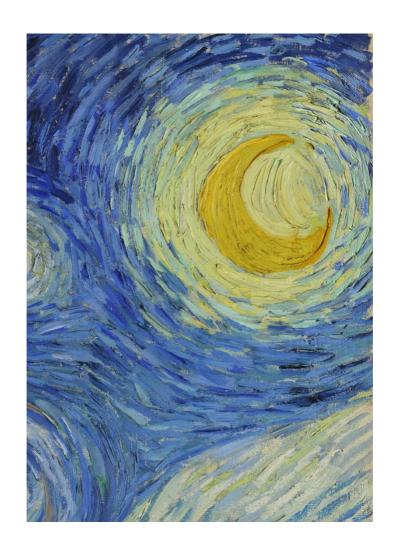
indigo fades into pale yellow moment by moment, degree by slightest degree — and beneath an empty firmament devoid of dreams perhaps you'll make your way through another hollow day wondering what it all might mean.

iii.

blue

"I often think that the night is more alive and more richly colored than the day."

~ Vincent



bittersweet and blue

without a single word your clear brown eyes reach out across this distance and cut me to the bone and lay my falsehoods bare in ways bittersweet and blue which leaves my spirit empty and hungry to hold some truth.

i doubt if you remember such a slivered slice of time or space and i wonder what you're doing and how your life has been in the silent traces of an hour filled with recollections bold and blue as my sun sinks into rust.

for all the life

we see what we want to see at a traffic light or by the beach or cruising eighty miles an hour down a dusty highway in the middle of nowhere with nowhere to go.

and it comes as no surprise that each comparison pulls us further and further from any hope of truth and each judgement about the world just another nail in our future coffin.

you ask what i'm thinking
while the tv drones on about some war
or toxic waste between commercials
for beer and tooth paste
but not in a million years
do i dare share

thoughts which perpetually pass through this mind of mine.

stray from the track trodden down by centuries of blind faith and be labeled mercilessly.

but for a sensitive soul your sensible world seems more and more senseless each passing hour each passing day and for all the life left in me i can't call your sanity sane.

a letter

your words have finally reached me from out of the cold and out from the past and it's more than i could have hoped for and more than i ever knew and as the years melt away between us i'm able to see at last how nothing that's true ever passes for a heart that's willing to ask.

last night

her last words hang heavy in the air as your car door slams shut and through its open window you watch as she walks steadily up a gravel path to her front porch lit by two yellow bulbs buzzing with a cloud of moths and mosquitoes. she fishes a key from her purse and without a pause or glance back in your direction unlocks the door and slips inside her darkened home, behind drawn curtains the muted glow of a lamp greets the night and from memory you imagine those slow barefooted steps toward a back bedroom as her dress slides off silken shoulders and comes to rest on the wooden floor.

the tolling bell

wrapped in grief's embrace never sweetly felt what lingers deep inside to rattle a chest cold as ice while reason wanders past? and lost in darkness blacker than night without a path to guide how can a soul truly rent apart ever find its weary way back?

(for fanny brawne)

(triptych of grief, i)

the colors that i seek

shall any aspire to measure the beat of a broken heart or dare weigh such depth of feeling between two rendered souls? and yet as so often happens

far removed by time or space the masses shoot dull arrows from a worldview hung with rags as if dead words might matter to echo love's hidden truth revealed thru spirit's passing along its hallowed path.

(triptych of grief, ii)

it comes like ice

behind your tears which flow and those stuck frozen as ice unshed upon a cheek unbled upon a soul duly rent

is a feeling felt with reason unable to gain release of a thought held fast as fact of what won't come to pass

and an ending of a dream you'd rather not let go, or surrender — like the fatal blossom's kiss you cannot unremember.

(triptych of grief, iii)

as it echoes

i'm not naive
enough to believe
that a well said word
if properly heard
makes a damn bit of difference
in the end. but as a deeply felt
note can split the night
the only choice left
is to cast your voice
across the endless waters
and let it echo into void
for its own particular sake
even if no one ever bothers
to stop or listen.

no denial

maybe it's strange how life worked out this way like how i can't deny your face burned into my brain with razor sharp precision or how most starry nights lying atop my tiled roof wrapped tight in anonymity i watch each exhale trail upwards as warm vapor only to get lost in cool air as the next fall breeze blows past my best laid plans and how most days now it's a fight to keep these eyes focused on the task at hand without seeing your face burned into this brain white hot like a brand across the pages of my memory.

a late october night

beneath yellow streetlamps damp oak leaves glisten stuck on pavement like confetti.

summer parties long over we walk in elemental silence where everything worth saying hangs by a thread.

each step pulls us further from your empty home shuttered to meet the impending cold.

up ahead a pickup truck speeds down the narrow lane with high beams blinding both our faces.

my exhaled breath lost without a trace.

dying embers

a cold drizzle sheets bare branches hung like copper wire and devoid of crows.

three straight days of rain have transformed my lawn into an impenetrable bog.

with a wrought iron poker i rake gray ashes hoping to catch the last few logs.

embers glow. and from a warm cup of coffee i take a long, slow sip. "Freedom and love go together. Love is not a reaction. If I love you because you love me, that is mere trade, a thing to be bought in the market; it is not love. To love is not to ask anything in return, not even to feel that you are giving something - and it is only such love that can know freedom."

— J. Krishnamurti