

Requiem For Youth.

Sam Johnstone.

(Nom de plume)

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Forget-me-not Eyes.

Peg by peg I hang my washing to the old clothesline
Down the broken garden path, beneath the old plum tree.
Rusty wires sigh under the weight of worn out jeans,
The dappled sun through blossomed branches echoes liberty.

I see a petite fille in a pretty floral dress
Skipping, whistling, singing, laughing down the uncracked path.
That little flower girl has one most obvious purpose –
To skip and whistle, sing and hop and laugh.

The sun picks up forget-me-nots caught inside her eyes.
The wind dances through her happy messy hair.
Her little floral body twirling circles in the sky,
Her sing-song giggle floating on the air.

I blink again in sunlight but I know she isn't there –
At least not the petite fille she used to be.
I drop the clothes, fling off my shoes, unfasten my tamed hair,
Twirling, twirling silly circles on the breeze.

Under Lamp-Lit Glow.

There was a little family who owned a little house,
The heart of both a black piano under lamp-lit glow.
Mozart. Brahms. Debussy. Bach. Beethoven. Chopin. Strauss.
Pages rustle, metronome ticks slow.

The metronome, that evil, rigid, enforcer of time
No time for syncopation, improvise
Tocka-tocka-tocka-tock. No breath, no dream, no rhyme.
Vivace. Grave. Largo. Lento assai.

Our lives ticked by, and tempests swept to set fears into spin,
Lives and loves once stable now forgone.
Yet nothing hushed that old piano playing from within,
And music— always time for one last song.

We sold that house, and packed away our memories of our youth.
That house, my terracotta home sits firmly in my heart.
My climbing trees. Tomato vines. Tea parties on the roof.
And still, that old piano sounds childhoods past.

The Rose.

I never met miss Susan Rose
But knew her all my life –
She's caught in memories, pictures, thoughts,
Loved sister, daughter, wife.

She's there within my father's eye each time he sheds a tear.
She glistens in the chain he's worn around his neck for years.
She's present in each cow-licked lock, in each untamed curl –
Her name is cut in pieces, becoming every new-born girl.

Her artwork hangs on every wall in every family home,
Running childish hands on frame becomes the one way to atone
The guilt I live for never grieving Susan when she died,
Two years unborn, but now I weep the tears my Grandma cried.

When Susan died, my Grandma died, at least in some real part.
She wept and yelled, she blamed herself – that death near broke her heart.
I'm glad I never met her, I've decided about Sue –
Her reality might be too real, too cruel, confronting, true.
But in my mind she finds a place to sit and be adored,
and in my mind, perfection, young eternal, never flawed.

Et al.

You've been starring in my dreams, lord I miss you.

She sits by the letter-box every other day.
Sitting, thinking, waiting, hoping, wishing he would write.
A gas bill, a late birthday card, no word from him today,
Nothing but the jarring tender memory of that night.

The rain falls but it's nothing to the storm she feels inside.
The words come but they're nothing to the letters that she writes,
The letters that she writes each day she always sits aside –
Unable to cast out her hazy memories of that night.

She lies awake in reverie; her thoughts rest on his arm.
Bright, outside her window *la lune ne garde aucune rancune*.
She looks to the moon, that old devil moon, that death white ghostly calm,
Drifting west to east across a black sea, gone too soon.

She hears music when she cannot sleep, hushing silence with some noise.
Miss You plays, the Rolling Stones, a single tear alone
Slips down her cheek, that gig, that town, that night out with the boys,
I've been holding out so long. I've been sleeping all alone.

Lord I miss you.

She slides all of her letters in a drawer beneath dried pens.
He cannot receive post where he is now.
Curiously her scrawling words will almost make amends,
Reminding reminiscences somehow.

No.

A boy asked me to write a poem for him, I told him, "no -
Words won't come when asked, eluding force.
But in a quiet moment, under leafy oak they flow,
A flood of inky thought must run their course."

Their course an inky deluge stream on page and page and book,
Swirling dark on alabaster pure.
Babbling soft and gushing fast, a temperamental brook,
The wordy stream a ticking mind's one cure.

Après la deluge, after the flood, the words don't come at all.
Drought dries thought – past midnight time ticks slow.
I sip my tea by moonlight, wrapped in grandmother's old shawl.
I sigh. I smile. I know why I said no.