

Todd Robinson.

You Can Be in a Relationship

or you can be right, our therapist says.
It's May, days before the deluge.
Unplanted plants line the walk
to our blue door. Contrails carve
the sky while my morose neighbor
points a leaf-blower hither and yon.
I vow to walk to the rose garden
every day, give up on day three.

We've got our own flowers
and sidewalks. They look good
in my sad poems. To be a ghost,
write a poem; to be a poet,
wear a shroud. Learn by doing,
the slogan goes. I do TikTok
all the time, where I learn
what I already know about life.

Where trick ping pong shots
are all the rage; where dancers
and dash cams fill our hours.
I keep saying no more ice cream,
no more bread, do your pushups,
stop looking at your phone so much,
be nicer, read a goddamned book.

Last year I made sixty thousand
dollars, more than any Pharaoh
ever made; I stack my bricks
of days into a monument
to my own forgetting.
Tomorrow I will sing karaoke
for the first time – my friends
will laugh at my atrocious voice.

I will say remember this, this is good,
use this when you are lonely.

(semicolon)

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If the Satellites Are to Be Trusted

Most days she hides behind the bedroom door, head trampled
by castanets; that's a pretty way to put it, which is no more
or less amoral than chewing my way through a daily loaf,
drinking pints of milk courtesy of all those miserable cows.
Yet still I am thorny, even with Joy Division dancing me
through our house full of pill bottles and EOB's.

If you don't know what an EOB is, enjoy your youth, Narcissus.

If you don't know Narcissus, I'm talking to myself.

Yesterday after the flood I unpacked three boxes of pictures
from our former life – there's no way the guy wearing
my hair was the guy with a real estate agent's smile
and veins full of cannabinoids.

I met my love in a classroom governed by a burnout named Hap, I shit you not.

It's weird how thousands of years of mating rituals end with two kids
drinking Guinness and tequila after Guinness and tequila
before kissing on a scratchy couch; I may or may not have said
"I suppose I should kiss you now" before supposing to kiss her then.

Two moldy photos canoodling by the milk factory, that's our origin story.

Now she lives on string cheese and organic pork, disability checks
keeping the world at bay.

Now I live on tennis and AA, the farm where I long ago learned melanoma
a brown feedlot scar.

I can escape all this, if the satellites are to be trusted.

So many sweet dreams ending in surrender; it's important to remember.

Goodbye, Stella, Ed, Ken, Violet.
Goodbye, Marilyn and Bill.
Goodbye, Mac.



These are only a few people I loved who disappeared.

Tom,

Ernie,

Don and Delores are some more.