Ode to Happiness Tuesday April 28, 2020

While many under lockdown orders seem to have taken to the restrictions ‘lying down,’ not so my older daughter, Kitty, living in the blistering hot suburbs of Phoenix who carped’ the heck out of some diems making face masks from remnants of cloth looking for a purpose.

I must say they are far more comfortable than the neckerchiefs and surgical masks I was using, so now I am both comfortable and fashionable…well with the latter maybe I’m not, but the masks are.

A friend, another artist of note, Louisa Wallace Jacobs of Westlake Village, responded to Sunday’s Fern Hill with a story very similar to mine:

*Thank you for the one and only Dylan Thomas, the subject of my English (Poetry) final essay. When my instructor heard that I had chosen Dylan for my final thesis he reminded me that the Welshman was a notorious drunk, an incorrigible town hooligan, unreliable and irresponsible, I just looked at him and smiled. He responded with “I see I have just thrown stones in the church window.”*

*I received an A Plus and read, as required, several selected paragraphs out loud to the class. Since I have recordings of his speaking voice, which is highly imitable, unusual in lilting cadence and entertaining to the listener even without the rhymes, I held back from actually doing my shtick in front of the uninitiated who were trying to stay focused anyway having never heard of this poet in the first place. Those were the days …… 1957.*

Along the Same Lines

When I was in High School, I as others were given the opportunity (with a gun to the head) to do things like recite poetry, perform a scene from a play…something guaranteed to turn our knees to jelly. One that I did recite (luckily with the book open though I didn’t have to use it) was Kubla Khan written by a rather accomplished doper named Coleridge, a circumstance that bothered a couple of the teachers who would have preferred Mary Had a Little Lamb.

Coleridge said the poem came to him in an opiate induced dream, but that in the midst of his reverie “…a person from Porlock” banged on his door, consigning much of it to an early and from the world’s standpoint, unfortunate grave.

If you want to do yourself a special favor, read the poem aloud, letting its cathedral-like beauty enshrine both you and it for a few measured moments of your time.

**Kubla Khan**

By Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground

With walls and towers were girdled round;

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;

And here were forests ancient as the hills,

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted

Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,

As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,

A mighty fountain momently was forced:

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,

Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:

And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever

It flung up momently the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,

Then reached the caverns measureless to man,

And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;

And ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far

Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure

Floated midway on the waves;

Where was heard the mingled measure

From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer

In a vision once I saw:

It was an Abyssinian maid

And on her dulcimer she played,

Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me

Her symphony and song,

To such a deep delight ’twould win me,

That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,

That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

And all who heard should see them there,

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,

And close your eyes with holy dread

For he on honey-dew hath fed,

And drunk the milk of Paradise

**Paraprosdokians**

(Now there’s a word worth remembering when you’ve got nothing better to do but contemplate the mysteries projected by slow moving clouds.)

Paraprosdokians are figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected, and frequently humorous. It is rumored that Winston Churchill loved them, which goes part way in explaining how the Goat of Gallipoli resurfaced 23 years later as Britain’s wartime leader.

1. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.

2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you, but it is still on my list.

3. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.

5. We never really grow up; we only learn how to act in public.

6. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

7. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

8. They begin the evening news with 'Good Evening,' then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

9. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.

10. Buses stop in bus stations. Trains stop in train stations. On my desk is a work station.

11. I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.

12. In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put 'DOCTOR.'

13. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.

14. Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.

15. Behind every successful man is his woman. Behind the fall of a successful man is usually another woman.

16. A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.

17. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

18. Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.

19. There's a fine line between cuddling and holding someone down so they can't get away.

20. I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.

21. You're never too old to learn something stupid.

22. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.

23. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.

24. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

25. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

26. Where there's a will, there are relatives.

And one more:

27. I'm supposed to respect my elders, but it’s getting harder and harder for me to find one now.

A practical solution produced by Larry Green to one of humankind’s oldest question.

I ordered a chicken and an egg from Amazon. I'll let you know…

You have to wonder why no one thought of this before.

Larry has more to offer today:

1. Is there a word that uses all the vowels including y? Unquestionably.
2. You can't \*run\* through a campsite. You can only \*ran\* because it's past tents.
3. Simple riddle: A word in this sentence is misspelled.
4. I've always taken pride in knowing how to use a semicolon; damn.

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More on yesterday’s video of Italy’s Tricolori flight demonstration team:

Wouldn’t you like to visit Rome and say “Hi” to the Pope right now?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uI5taI6swJ0&feature=emb_err_watch_on_yt> Tricolori

Or practice your Italian?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy4qOMclHfQ\>

You may have heard that the Blue Angels and the Thunderbirds are ganging up to thank those who are making a difference during the pandemic. Here’s a preview from Pensacola, home of the Blues.

<https://vimeo.com/410461506>

As the Earth Moves

Tanya Atwater of University of California’s Geology Department produced this fascinating short video of California and Baja California Plate Tectonic History, from 20 million years ago to the present demonstrating the evolution of the San Andreas Fault system and emphasizing the rotation of the Transverse Ranges block within the plate boundary region.

My guess is that you’ll want to play it several times to see the relationships over time. Notice particularly the rotation of the Transverse Ranges block that swung Santa Barbara clockwise through 90 degrees.

<California 20> 4.22 Mb

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And For your music enjoyment, this seems to offer compelling truth to the notion that conductors are born, not made.

<every choir needs a good conductor>