



# Torus

by retrodrag

## **preface**

Loss and memory are powerful things. It is one thing, I think, to lose something (or someone) but another thing still to remember after that. Even worse, to forget. I feel it has always been my duty, somehow, to keep the memories of everything I've ever done with everyone I've ever known alive somehow – but what good can that possibly do in my brain? One day too, I will join the Earth again and become a greater part of the universe – but what of my mind then? Will my being continue in some abstract way? Will I exist, not as I, but as memory in others? It isn't my life I'm concerned with but the lives of those whose memory I carry – how can I justify those who don't exist? Maybe remembrance isn't just a single thing, maybe it is like a winding path through time something some of us could share with each other. The path will always be there, as the past, so maybe the best thing is to carve our initials into some tree with a longer path than ours.

-retrodrag

**This collection is dedicated to my friend Nick. You deserved so much more life, and so much more in it. Rest in peace, my friend.**

## Torus

in the ever-expanding garden on  
Earth heaves, there is a field

pushed together, parent environs  
prior to halcyon soil

sparse crumbling dirt in tender hands  
a sapling coos towards fresher air

amidst the grass and trees  
young leaves flutter, excel, exceed

long cast shadows shrink,  
saplings reach higher and grow

between aging trees, wizened trunks of height  
cradle meadows clamour, a stark new grove is born

nettled crowns of viny hubris, the sapling royals  
the grove wears a ring like truth on slender branches

in the ever-expanding garden on  
Earth heaves, there is a field

some trees fall, fail - others burn  
some house their rot - others fraught

their kingdom of the ring, always reaching  
hollowing the roots' hearts, always reaching

roots touch, worm, wriggle, wrap, and rot  
and all the memories, in the dirt, remain

in the ever-expanding garden on  
Earth heaves, there is a field

a steadfast guard, in life's undergrowth  
some roots hold a piece, pierced, prepared

in the ever-expanding garden on  
Earth heaves, there is a field

as if a seed, kept sprout  
ethereal, wisp thoughts

a worn ring knows  
when wrought again

## **strained eyes, obsession, sitting in the room**

upon the stool i sit  
hunchback and broken

sit back in the table room  
found a serving, on a loom

satin drapes over wood  
six courses we withstood

timid, the melody  
of tangent clocks in disharmony -

upon the stool i sit  
weary and ravished

wide glittering glance  
sat guests, they prance

silverware with golden glow  
warm touch and metal flows

stark waiters waif afoot  
entropic shadows, so cordial -

here i sit on a stool, Virgil  
stooped over, as a crook

cutlery sheathed, no lights to look  
candles doused, sulphur infernal

screaming, strained, wet hands  
grasping at the stool's edge

my feet press on a resting bar  
my eyes lock on the estate's hedge

as though the sun has risen, a midnight lark  
through velvet curtains, the bush is burnt

resting now, on the stool  
his mouth, a cup of drool

upon the stool i sit  
unclear how i'm counterfeit

## alumni

in the golden prairies, grasslands of my youth  
frolicking in the shadows of rocky mountains  
i'd sit up on the twin hills of town  
i still remember that landscaped sky

sitting under bridges, claiming sin  
an open mind, even poison seeps in

being a kid wasn't easy back then  
just four short years of being young -  
then, it was just my Dad and me  
i still think about our missort cat

it was when there was a picket fence  
smiling faces, siblings and sense

we moved, i grew up -  
friends weren't easy back then  
we were the same age, i guess  
but i was just so much older then

they were only kids, they can't understand  
I hope that they never understand

i never really fit in, that's okay  
i used to hate the way i'd be  
bullied and teased, made fun of, ostracized  
that's okay, i'm just a space between eyes

as though that child became a pilot  
to occupy my mind and direct it

this image, i've cloned it  
i've kept one walk, one morning, one winter  
every house was dark, but one bay window lit  
it cast a light on fresh powdered snow

there was a trip that day with friends  
it never began, and thus never ends

this idyllic scene, the perfect moment  
everyone was living then,  
now they're dying, and i grew up -  
my friends are now just stone and thought

with granite skin, flowered crowns  
some alone, some with crowds

## alumni (cont.)

Zarathustra and his mountain, i am akin  
alone with my thoughts and wind  
sitting alone with dead old gods  
candles for the ghosts

we start the fire to remember them  
i keep it lit. i'm shackled. cumbersome

i see myself, just a man in this world  
seeing that painting drip, unfurl  
imprint the canvas onto my sight  
and keep the memory of it alive

this living mountain, shadows and vigil lights  
i count the few, like that morning's steps in snow  
these words a memory, like my dead cat and sky  
graduate, now aligned with this school's crucible

## To Nick

Hey man, I never thought that this would happen  
it wasn't supposed to go this way -

I wasn't there when you were shot in the back  
I wasn't there to help you, or your cat  
I wasn't there, I'll never forget.  
I wish I knew.

There was no other I'd trust like you, my man, B-42.

You were a confidant, and I know you'd scoff,  
you were like a fucking knight, bro.

"Well maybe physics is wrong," you told me,  
as you tried to generate infinite electricity  
but talk of your infinite generosity?  
You were crass, but golden-hearted, opening your home  
as often as you did, and watching you bloom  
like some vine of flowers, wildrose and trillium

Your aspirations, lofty and memorialized,  
like the Lancaster yet again rising.

I've seen the way you'd toss small boulders around  
or that time you ripped a young tree from the ground  
and we, as youth, torn as well - I was a mandrake  
and you were a thorn of kindness  
(drop the poetics, it was cannabis!)

One true justice of this world was when your inner soul  
everyone else beheld, finally, everyone's enrolled.

You bought a home in cash, we were chemists too!  
I don't remember, weren't you a C.E.O.?  
You made that stock deal in Africa,  
resold all that product from China.  
You were amazing, my friend, and you didn't even know.  
You dropped out, but you're brilliant, it shows.

You took a bullet for a stranger, nothing more can be said.

I always thought that in our ancient years  
we'd yell at kids, and tell our stories  
to anyone who would listen, maybe tell our kids  
about the teenage microcosm, how we spent our days.

You've become a memory, I'd like to join you  
not just yet, but to share a smoke if you'd let me -  
I really hope that whatever it is, you are home  
(why did your story end, why couldn't I have known?)

## Cast

a translucent resin, a gemstone worn  
on a pedestal, an idol, gravestone form  
inside, plucked from wild gardens  
a thistle, cast thorns and purple

it sat on a shelf, a home now gone  
with sibling trinkets, in a shop  
lost artist, with guiding brush  
it became a gift in my trust

a home now, on a shelf, in sight  
as paint line splotches, like kites  
artist's delight, art through time  
in light, resin memento shines



## **sightlines like fishing lines**

in the golden Western plains, in fields  
of choreographed wheat and other seeds  
scattered oases in a sun-dried sea  
along the bend of the Rockies

a town on the highest hill, as a teen i sat  
"being seventeen, never forget that!"  
gazing at a horizon like jagged razor form  
"i don't want to die where i was born"

every chance to run, take flight, or ride  
follow my eyes, my heart or mind  
thought i saw a city once, deep inside  
it was just a hitchhiker, with a sign

## regrets

no regrets, something i've always said  
a pointless exercise, the past is stone  
why dwell on something without form?

no regrets, but always some emotion  
beautiful moments are always known  
why are they so strong?

no regrets, but sometimes a lover's face  
reminds me how the heart holds off time  
how it feels carved onto my eyes

no regrets, just keep forging on  
blindly the path bends with folly  
out-swim the wake for the shore

no regrets, but sometimes a memory  
captures the mind, like theatre -  
all the audience, they're all me

no regrets, but i wish i could forget

## Holes

I close my eyes and I write,  
a young boy in pyjamas, surrounded by toys  
echo of love, long forgotten

He sits there, trying his best  
just a boy in old clothes  
donated vests.

No friends, just a sister and some cats.  
He's a child, a kid, with just a thought,  
"What will I be? What will I do? Who will teach me what to do?"

I sense connection, I yearn understanding  
why do these words exist?  
Forgo closure, why does the past linger?  
There's something to set free  
captive in a cage of wire and mud  
grounded and trapped below

Why tell the world?  
Nothing but two flowers  
a journey through the woods  
a chapel built on hope

or  
a hole in the ground  
where the truth still lives

Why a chapel in the woods?

## holster poltergeist

i saw the starting guns, rigid in formation  
steady cascade of spent ammunition  
as if a jellyfish tethered to human souls  
chose a direction, and pulled

i saw the starting guns, seldom misfire  
severed my thread, sewed a holster  
as though one could win the west  
armed without a gun

i saw the starting guns, the line does end  
rope-burned hands, a steady walk  
no casing for me yet spent  
where can my soul have intent?

i saw the starting guns, and i rose  
saw myself in the range, in a daze  
i may reach the target, i may fall  
tetherless, free, and uncalled

like gunpowder smoke, flaming blooms  
untethered potential, it plumes  
soon another thread's end on a loom  
stitched closed. though i'm frayed  
my path is what I laid.

## 0

the aching, aging clockhand clings to rust  
restless seconds stick like newborn ash  
lightbeams silhouette in scattered dust  
between moments, in Sundered glance: a cache

velvet pinhole stars of the night  
a dying wick's light in a void  
a catalyst, a cure to a blight  
something that shines, and is not destroyed

Ouroboros, it can not be stilled  
it isn't fleeting, like a dream  
Ozymandias, it can not be killed  
Sisyphus, it endures, like silent screams

as though a passing albatross coos a melodious song  
for a moment, it seems jarring, and still it belongs