

Grandfather remembered
When they took away the cocaine and heroin.
A pharmacist used to sell it at the drug store, with a smile and handshake
he would give you a small glass bottle of cocaine stopped by a cork.
It was an upper if you were tired, a pick-me-up
Recommended by ole' Freud himself
For the coal miners or the average Joe at the Ford factory.
Then the man took it away, and it was
Instantly gone, a memory of the past.

Dad remembered
When they took away alcohol and tobacco.
At my birth he purchased a Cuban cigar to celebrate.
He used to drink in the den as Mom gave me a bath.
They sold cigarettes in vending machines and beer at bars.
But the man was unsatisfied with that
Level of debauchery.
The bar fights and smoky casinos —
It was too much, apparently.

I remembered
When on the street all you could get was
Fat, nothing but fat.
There was a fat stand at the end of my block that I could get at
Any time of night.
We bought it in buckets and bathed in it and it was the
Only thing my wife cooked with —
We had lard tasting parties.

Some fat had different flavors and smells.
American butter was plain, very tasteless.
Irish butter was rich.
Crisco needed to be mixed with other things.
Bacon fat was delicious and could be eaten on toast.
Coconut oil had a delicious fragrance.

My kids remembered
When there was grease and tallow around the house and they did
Flinch when they saw it.
But public opinion turned, and a
Smear campaign started, and soon
It was banned like everything else.

What will come next?
Something has to fill the void, which will
Eventually be outlawed too.

"Fat stand"
By Gary H. Button

I am
Young yet.

Still young enough
To be lean,
To have sex,
To eat meat.

My hands are fresh,
eardrums unbroken,
Eye clear,
Mind pure,
And heart warm.

I dance
when music is played,
Adventure
Through the streets
Late at night.

Old age is coming,
I hear it in the air,
Smell it in the ground.

My balls are dropping
Much further than I
Want them to,
And they will continue
To drop.

I will be fat,
My metabolism will slow,
And my arms will grow weak.

I will be blind,
Deaf,
And senile soon.
Quicker than I know it,
Before I am ready.

But I will not lose control.
Gun in my hand,
Noose around my neck.
This life is mine to live,
And death mine to take.

One day I will be old,
But today I am
Young yet.

“Young yet”
By Gary H. Button

When I was young,
I held the world in my hand.
But somewhere along the line I lost it.

In my 30s,
And worried about bills, and
Fear, and
Love.

That was my mistake.

In my 40s,
I worried about kids, and
college funds, and
Mortgages, and
furniture.

I stand at 50, and
Curse my parents for
Keeping the lie.
They knew.

They left me with a lifeless job,
In a painful life, with
Kids I despise, and
A divorce.

The same monotony.
Rushing from one queue into the fire.
Hatred, boredom, and stupidity everywhere.
Snot and piss.

Turning 50 was the worst.
No wonder people buy red corvettes, or
Shoot up the Post Office.
The helplessness is crippling,
A two-ton crushing weight,
Silently chained to my neck.
Something I never noticed
Until now.

My kids are gone,
One is working and the other in school.
I want to tell them what I know:
To run far away,
Drink wine in a foreign country,
Sleep in a dilapidated room,
And listen to live music.

Love your brothers and sisters,
Even with their wretched souls.
They are your tortured kin.

Don't be too comfortable,
If you ever are, run

As fast as your legs will take you.
That is the trap:
To lull you into stagnation.

Do all you can before 50,
Because once you get here there is no going back to 25.
It is upwards and onwards.

I bid you farewell,
I have a trip to take.

“50”
By Gary H. Button

The King of Fire sees all with his clairvoyant eye,
He sits on his throne and looks down everything below him.
His fiery steed rears on its hind legs,
Its muscles flex and heat steams from its flanks.

The Queen of Fire fled with the Prince of Darkness.
Abandoning her post and her husband.

For a while the King enjoyed himself,
Among the whores, wine, and jubilee
But the whores grew old, the wine impotent, and jubilee dull,
His mind returned to his wife.

He put on his armor of fire,
And drew his elder sword,
And said a prayer to the oaken flame.

He rode through the village and rallied his knights,
Tall strong men,
Battle tested and ever loyal,
The knights rouse the peasants,
Who were wary and ever frightened.

All together —
The King, the Knights, and the peasants of Fire,
Walked to the Valley of Darkness
To reclaim their Queen.
They approached the large black stone gate, and a
Messenger was sent.
The King demanded his wife.

A shadow returned,
And told the King that his wife was full of Darkness,
And could not be reclaimed.
The King's eye filled with fire and
He made plans to
Storm the castle and
Rend black stone from stone.

The plan was executed on the full moon,
Its yellow hue illuminated the earth.
The men clashed against the gates of Darkness.
Swords clashed,
Metal and might
Dealt blood and death to both sides.

The King was injured gravely,
And started to die in the Valley of Darkness.
A white flag was raised —
Neither the Knights
Nor the peasants
Of Fire
Wanted to die in the valley of darkness
Trying to reclaim their Queen.

With his dying breath
The King ask to see his wife
For the last time.
She was brought out by the Prince of Darkness
And she held the King as he slowly died.

Why did you flee? the King asked
You would not hesitate to be rid of me
But your absence left a hole I could not fill.

The Queen felt him die.
She accompanied him back to the land of Fire
And helped bury him in the ashen earth.
It was the least she could do.

“Queen of fire”
By Gary H. Button

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