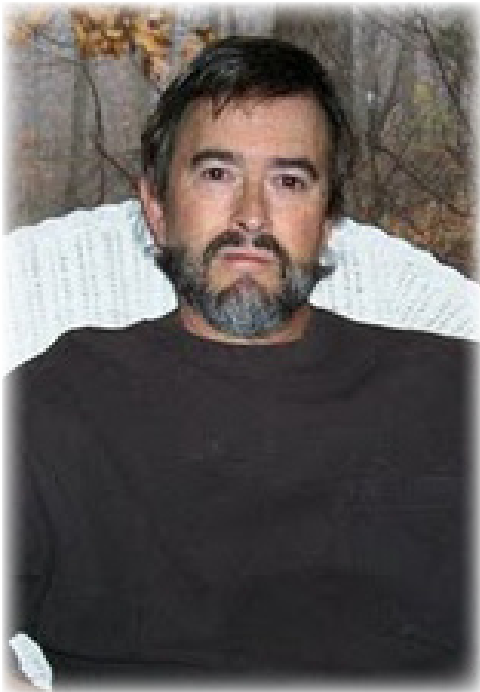


Two Poems



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Doodad

My mother asked for the doo-whicky
on her dresser, and by the sound, itself,
you knew it wasn't a screwdriver,

but something just as useful—a needle
and thread, or hair barrette. A screwdriver
would be more in the category of a what-

cha-ma-call-it or a thing-a-ma-bob.
This concept would never work in surgery,
but in an antique mall you might find

a whole table of whatnots. And none
of these imply deficit language like
the word bauble, just a categoryless

category, somehow understandable
in human terms. Of course, you always
risk not getting what you ask for,

but it's curious as hell to see what's
returned. If I ask for a doodad,
and someone brings a shrimp

stuffed avocado with white wine,
I'd know they weren't listening,
but I'd thank them just the same.

The Light

*Beware of prosperity, friend,
and seek affection. – Charles Wright*

Driving to the library to write a poem,
the poem writes itself. Get the yellow
legal pad she says, and the blue ink pen.
I prefer blue—the sky is blue, October blue—
the ocean is blue, though you haven't
taken me in a year. The water in the mall
fountain is fake blue which is only fitting.
I turn onto the beltway around the city,
the yellow pad on the steering wheel.
In the library café, I get a cup of coffee
and sit by the window. The poem
stares into the park on Church Street
where the homeless warm in the sun.
one man lights two cigarettes in his mouth
and hands one to a friend who thanks
him with a palm on his shoulder.
Even the homeless love each other,
the poem says. A boy with a terrible
scar on his face pulls a piece of paper
from his pocket, unfolds the creases
with care and begins to read. He knows
the words by heart, the poem says,
but reads the letter moving his lips
so he can see the hands that wrote them,
so a constellation is lit of her fingers,
her eyes, her mouth. The poem watches
a cabbage butterfly dance the air
above a rose bush. A legless old woman
in a motorized chair stops at the cross-walk
on Church and 5th. The poem reaches
over and takes my hand, each of us
is waiting for a light to change, she says.

