

Praying Backwards (All Apologies to Benjamin Button)

I plead compassion...
Pray to those around me,
that I go with them, instead of with God

I am the fear of fewer options
The third and last leg,
seconds and minutes.

Fear of the weakest link,
and weaker bladder.

I fear the slow,
as much as I fear the fast.

But *so* alive,
as much as a four letter word,
Amen.

Or worse,
ten cent words like, "retirement."

I plead bravery,
ready for the third career.
I am post pension,
In the age of people before profit.

I am the future
that their bad back should be lucky enough to reach.

I pray for enough.
More than social security, in fact,
fifteen years from now,
I am one in five Americans.

I plead the 55th
and beg your pardon.

The likely voter of now
The majority voter of tomorrow.

I am a voting block of octogenarians
pining to overthrow fossil fuels
with a revolution of cities that are walkable.

It is ironic,
How we get treated like yesterday,
when we are the fruits of biogerontology.
All while the pursuit of longevity,

makes me the inevitable destination
of biology.

When they ask our age,
God give us the strength to simply reply,
“ambitious.”

Maybe “overachiever,”
because we know aging is not a disease
it’s a daily ticker tape parade for the living.

It’s a cup of coffee, victory lap
from one’s birthdate and back, some would call ’em suicides.
When actuarially, we know with each and every day that passes by
the probability increases that we’ll *all* expire.

And I pray to the odds.
Call all those years behind me, capital,
Treat me like a contribution, rather than a liability.
Like a Rust, a Bennahum, a Rosenbaum
Like inheritance, rather than inhibition

When the income is fixed, bet life
instead of gambling on 65 like the insurance industry.

The misconception is,
That we’ll die alone and forgotten...
But aging is a communal...
a constant reminder of how YOU
will retire
at the most frequented intersection
in broad daylight.

They will paint us grey.
Karen Ann Quinlan us as patron saints...
Continually portray us as right die
when it’s our right to live that is at stake.

Give me years before my memory holds itself hostage
and my body imprisons my brain.
In the meantime, I’d appreciate not being handled
like some national treasure...
more like national security.

Since the things I’ve seen, and survived,
could help history not make itself over
and over again, as a mistake.

I plead,

no grannysitting.

I plead access,
to pride.

I pray we broaden the definition of “alive”
to include the quality of life
of those whose very appearance
reminds youth of the inconvenient truth of time.

It’s the one thing we cannot buy,
even those who can afford to hide us.

So my plea,
Just create the society that you would like to live in,
35 years from now.

Aging is not selective service,
it is conscription or discharge.

It is peace,
when war
is no longer feasible.

It is the waning of the word “sunset”
paired with our new ability to see at night.

It is a new appreciation for the sunrise,
the mourning person, with a smile.

My “*please*,”
is a prayer to the living,

A message from the edge of the earth,
sent back in time, to remind a younger me
that the world is round.

Not unafraid, nor desperate
to meet the maker that gifted me this many years.

Still praying for nirvana,
mañana.

And for the enduring ethical treatment of this aging body,
con alma.

These less traveled sidewalks before me
are, in fact, the new frontier that modern medicine
has given the next generation access to behold...

But for today, *I'm* holding on
with both wings, and this prayer
for the day after
the day after.

The every morning adventure
that each day, a more or less able me
shows up for.

The broken routine,
that can be called many things,
anything
but old.

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