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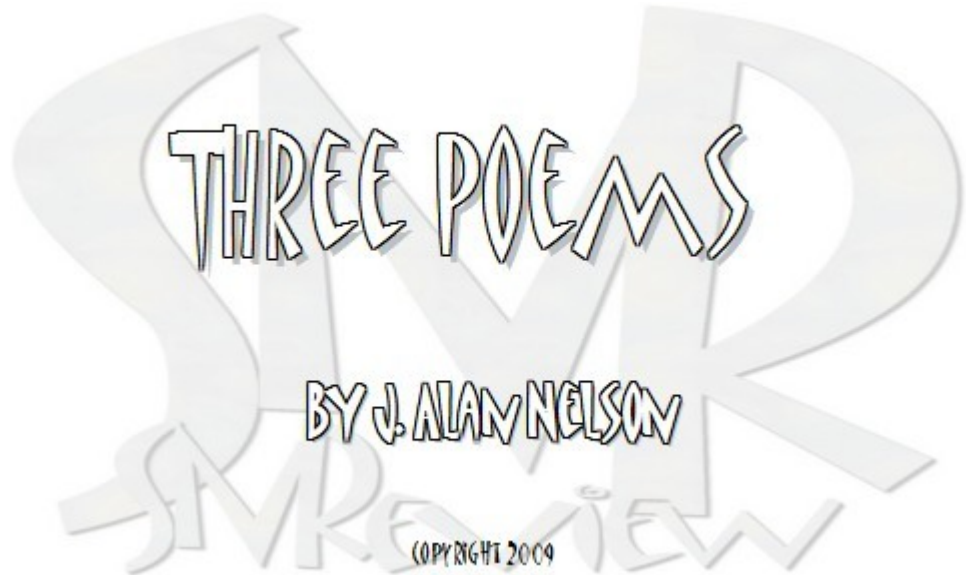
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Deceptive Milliner

I wear this felt hat with two holes so no one will fuck with me,
So people think I'm crazy. God, how I hate hyperbole.

If they talk to me, if they step past the fear, they find a comforting bedtime soporific, the kind they heard as children. The kind where a dog followed them home, and sits with them in a wooden shoe as they float off to safe slumber.

I qualify as a person of interest. Deep interest. I'll make a fool of myself if a woman says a kind word. I'm a descendant of the Court of Rumpenheim. I'm a good drunk, keep to myself and smile at all. A skilled ventriloquist, I make ghostly sounds when people walk by and look startled.

People throughout the world wonder what I do at this moment. That woman in the thong walking topless at Antigua wonders if I write about her. My old college roommate sits in his office and wonders if I'm playing golf. The two men who swung sledgehammers with me long ago lounge in the rest home and wonder if I sit by a pool, drink in hand.

They forget how quickly we become obsolete. The knowledge I scraped up in grad school became the toy of children. The only salt breeze I smell is the wind drying the sweat off my skin. Lawyers crawl and writhe in courtrooms while traffic snarls in the streets. Project development involves how to pay the bills for the next few weeks. I jam my hat on hard, sparse tufts of hair sticking through the holes, and walk like I own the planet. I'm all alone.

Can You Stop Reading Harry Potter for a Moment

Just focus, listen for a second.
The actors portray a cartoon nutshell of my life,
The audience applauds for ten minutes after the first scene.
Even the stage hands stop to watch. They clap backstage.
I had made a mess of my life, deep in debt,
and I sat in my tiny backyard choked with weed.

They say you'll brush off blows from your enemies easier
if you've stung a few victims yourself.
Yet that's a statement made by the cush and comfy,
far removed from the fields of battle.

I took up the guitar
solely for the reasons that musicians get away
with things that others don't.

I bought a self-help book at a library sale.
Manage stress by imagining yourself in a less stressful situation,
sayeth the self-help book.
Even more pressure. Imagine yourself under stress during peacetime,
then pulled into the maelstrom of war.

If you're a natural,
don't worry about being a chump.
There's only one champ per event,
chumps are better friends.
It's hard to be a champ, hard to succeed at something.
Take the easy path, act the cherub
who causes others to fall in love,
but unable to fall himself.

I set aside the book, and lay abed in the house.
The dogs howl as the jets soar low to a nearby airport.
Organ sounds growl and gurgle from my abdomen
as my system pulls energy
from whatever I consumed that day.
The thought flashes,
even dull is a wonder.
If you can stop thinking years, months, days, hours,
even a few minutes ahead,
life is focused and new, full
of ecstatic experiences of the average,
sharp as a movie.

Would Science Save the Day?

He uses cards, and hasn't seen cash in years.

So it turns out he's not a prince in disguise. That shocks him. The least little pressure and he spills the goods on everything. His mind does magic tricks. He worries about checking luggage before flights. He plans for the time when he might be a fugitive. He jams heavy metal to Leonard Bernstein. He has three vacuum cleaners, and an electronic air filter. He pretends to step on a tightrope in only a worn jockstrap.

He sits on a locked trunk. He lost the key long ago. His cat uses it for a scratching post. He repeats the obituary of Babe Ruth like a mantra. Maybe some soda company would like to use his house for product placement.

Still he writhes still in pain. The dramatic girl said she liked him just as a friend. What happened to divine passion? It began with smiles, milk shakes, wines and champagne cocktails. He felt like there was a God who created her just for him. A personal God in a special place. But it ends with nihilism, bleakness and biting a fist while listening to her prattle on the phone.

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