

# after the ball was over and other tunes like that

## poems

by William Bauer

### Uncle Sim Recalls

#### Why I

remember trolley cars on this street  
four abreast  
the bells clanging to beat all hell  
racing for downtown like they were thoroughbreds  
Out to the fairgrounds

George Squali's monkey  
Over at the ice-cream parlors on a chain  
with an operation on his lip  
So he could learn to whistle  
After the ball was over  
And other tunes like that

#### Remember

When there wasn't a single  
Jew store from one end of  
Union Street to the other

The time Bill Skinner at the barber shop  
In Drake's Hotel tried to shave  
A circus freak with rubber skin  
And had to give up because  
His razor wouldn't take hold.

#### Your father

might remember you ask him  
About George Squali's monkey  
And why it was him and friends  
Used to like the Drake's Hotel so much  
You just ask him and see what he says

#### Well

Before he was born I used to help out  
At the lively stables all day long  
For just the privilege and all the cold water  
I could drink and glad of it

#### Why I

remember so far back  
I can recall when even a white man  
Knew his place.

### Buddy B. Snow

It is a dark hard  
Dark bad grievous thing  
To be  
Buddy B. Snow  
Sitting down to his breakfast  
In the middle of York County  
Gumming his pancakes,  
Without the heart  
For the riot of daybreak  
Or for hoisting the creamer  
With the rooster-tail handle  
To lighten his coffee.

It is not for you or for me  
To tell him otherwise

But for me to tell you  
To go slow  
If you want to say anything  
To Buddy B. Snow.

### Autumnal

When Autumn comes to Birchleyville, it comes with a vengeance.  
Birchleyville has Autumn like no other place I've ever heard of.

Each leaf is turned one night to pallid yellow  
And falls in the general torrent on the morrow.

The old men to a man forget each others' names,  
And even the art of cursing in the old style is lost.

The sun pours hot and pitiless through the naked trees,  
As eccentricity loses whatever charm it may once have had and  
Crullers in the glass bowl at Smokey's Diner sour on the public tongue.

Hound dogs bay at outlandish vehicles on the turnpike,  
The best home is so listlessly regarded it will not be honoured another year,

Women in curls weep at the sight of turkeys in the market,  
And irrelevant children walk soundlessly to school.

### CUTE IT WAS

Cute  
it was  
How you used to look at me  
Bright and hard  
With both eyes at once  
and such on your Sweet

Capeval  
fill it was like  
a third bright eye

A red one this time  
Right in the middle  
How you used to

sniff  
Your way through a whole  
Box of Kleenex at a sad  
movie

Two - if you happened to have  
A cold at the same time  
How it was you loved

the zoo  
But hated all the animals  
Added a little water  
To the hot chocolate

sludge  
At the bottom of your  
Cup at the Plaza Restaurant  
Instead of ordering  
Another one

And how you almost never  
Took your

coat off  
In the house

Do you know I could still  
love you  
For such things as these  
Though you are now past 40  
And are Howard Boomer's

wife

### Gifford's Cathedral

Gifford noodled in his moonhouse  
They tell me  
Planking and planking it out onto the night,  
All whichways night after night, rafter-happy

Spinning cobwebs of beams into a drunken tangle  
Of loft upon loft until lost.  
Floor onto floor from his hammerhead habit  
To do when the seeing was bad and the wish was warm

Warmest when the moon was fullest  
And come down the best he could in the morning  
Red-eyed and mad from loss of sleep, hand over hand  
And cursing his own wild dead-end stairway.

### The Identity Seeker

I have traveled to the corkscrew falls  
In the Northern part of the country  
And found there in a wet season  
The face of myself in the waters  
Blown apart by the mist and riding on the air  
Thoroughly dissevered

Nor found it afterwards  
As I sat by the picnic table  
Painted green by the government  
Looking down at the round  
Expressionless uncut  
Surface of the pie  
We brought from home.