

Changing of the Season

by [John Tustin](#) (March 2025)



Beehive and Bees (illustration from le Grand Herbier, 1480)

Changing of the Season

It's saddening
when the bee is
locked out of the
hive at the end
of the season.
Even a bee does
not prefer to die.

then there's us,
living decades
beyond use and
clinging on to
the sides of life,
cantankerous, vile,
less deserving of

another breath
than a bee that
the changing of
the season has
banished from
the only home
she's ever known.

God is unjust in
allowing these
many victories
to man, who lives
on and on, creating
terror and plastic;
a world consumed.

A City Under the City

There is a city under the city
and that is the city where we live.
The subway further underground,
all of the business and minutiae of living
done here in a dirty, mostly darkness.

The daylight trickles down like a dusty breeze
and gets into our eyes.
You and I, the walking ghosts
among cadavers and earthworms
who feed and till the earth around us.

We are ragged bone machines; mole men.
Living in our contemptuous blackness,
our perpetual dusk, in sadness and silence
while you go on about your above ground
city business, giving us the shaken-loose earth

of your rumbling feet upon our heads.

Equalization

He was a great big man
and he was as strong and forthright as an oak.
He stood against the sky
and his shadow cast upon you and me below
as we looked up, wondering
what happened to the sun.

He belonged on a horse
or behind the wheel of a racecar.

He would stand with his hands on his hips
and look out upon the earth
with his mind made up that he owned it.

When he tilted back his head
the laughter that filled his mouth would travel for miles.
He ate by the trough full, he drank by the gallon.
His arms were thick branches
and the oceans splashed inside his eyes.

Today his body stiffened
as if struck by lightning
and he fell off the sidewalk into a culvert,
dead before he rolled to a stop,
his body lying there a little bent,
looking like a larger-than-life sized doll.

The great big man lying like a discarded doll.

Now, just like you and me someday,
his body will decompose
and be eaten by many tiny things
and then his skeleton will shine
beside the dullness of the dirt.

Exile Mountain

The best exile is the self-exile
and soon, I believe enough time will have passed
that I will arrive there.

Long living on Exile Mountain
in the Cave of the Mostly Forgotten
but never getting joyous about it,
only accustomed.

I grew the long beard,
let it get dusty and white
while reading Hanshin by starlight.

Watching the rooftops,
drinking in moon drops.
Growing bent and stilted, never going below.
I still dream often that I am lost on city streets.

The best exile is self-exile.
The best reflection is self-reflection.
I look into the water now
and only see my own face.

Soon I will have everything:
the food to survive, a place to hide
that is almost warm;
a mountain on which to climb and see over the top;

watching the birds fly from nests,
the dogs that chase their own tails;
seeing my own reflection clearly in still water.

Understanding my own reflection.
Never dreaming of being lost.
A placidity when the weather rages
and the seasons change without notice.

The echo is me.
The trees breathe in my carbon dioxide.
I am the mountain.
The mountain is me.

New Construction

I drive home
and everywhere I look
it's either falling-in buildings
or new construction
and often a building that is standing still,
suspended there with the cars
going in and out of a driveway or lot,
caught in the middle of its life.

I see a dead deer on the roadside,
just before I turn into my development
and there is a vulture on him,
spreading big beautiful black wings
in a victory pose
up against the setting of the sun
before she starts to digging in,
feasting to regurgitate
for her three or four hungry chicks

and I get to my place,
park my car,
sit in the heat of end-of-day,
thinking about all of it
and finding there is not a thing
about any of it
I can enjoy.

[Table of Contents](#)

John Tustin's poetry has appeared in many disparate literary journals since 2009. His first poetry collection from Cajun Mutt Press is now available on [Amazon](#). You can find links to his poetry [here](#).

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)