

Selected Poems from Jack Kerouac

**On Tears**

Tears is the break of my brow,  
The moony tempestuous  
    Sitting down  
In dark railyards  
When to see my mother's face  
Recalling from the waking vision  
I wept to understand  
The trap mortality  
And personal blood of earth  
Which saw me in—  
    Father father  
    Why hast thou forsaken me?  
Mortality & unpleasure  
Roam this city—  
Unhappiness my middle name  
    I want to be saved,—  
    Sunk—can't be  
    Won't be  
    Never was made—  
    So retch!

**Tree**

But a tree has  
    a long suffering shape  
Is spread in half  
    by 2 limbed fate  
Rises from gray rain  
    pavements  
To traffic in the bleak  
    brown air  
Of cities radar television  
    nameless dumb &  
    numb mis connicumb  
    Throwing twigs the  
        color of ink  
To white souled  
    heaven, with  
A reality of its own uses

**Tenorman**

Sweet sad young tenor  
Horn slumped around neck  
Bearded full of junk  
Slouches waiting  
For Apocalypse,  
Listens to the new  
Negro raw trumpet kid  
Tell him the wooden news;  
And the beat of the bass  
The bass—drives in  
Drummer drops a bomb  
Piano tinkle tackles  
Sweet tenor lifting  
All American sorrows  
Raises mouthpiece to mouth  
And blows to finger  
    The iron sounds

Selected Poems from Jim Carroll

**Prologue**

Starting with little in mind  
the best you might do is begin it  
over and over again. Transforming

the real earth to a texture and strength  
beyond control. I am thinking of a wave.

We sit, huddled in winter coats, transfixed  
to the logic of stars collapsing. The fresh  
gravity pulling at stones we grip.

Locked tightly to the seams of night,  
the moon rears like a fenced stallion  
and, its rage subdued, turns back.

Then the hour is loose as the music,  
a vapor passing through. It defies  
each change, As the wind outdistances  
each word spoken, and replies with  
a promise already broken.

**Our Desires**

There is a wind that seeks the crevice  
under my heart  
the way insects file at night  
beneath a doorway

Its edges are rough, it slits  
the cords. It trips my steady breathing.  
When it comes there is no one  
I can trust.

It seems, at times, I have designed  
too well this vision of you.  
I cannot survive your eyes  
when they are scarred with a need  
for some lesser form of love.

I admit to this conceit.  
And though you will not accept it  
You love it nonetheless

It is just like you. Our desires  
will always be kept sharp  
by a kind of perversity. A need  
to be each forever alone....

Its color is violet, like lips  
that have been smashed by nights  
or robbed of blood by lack of breath.  
The wind I was speaking of does this.

I can feel it now.

**Poem**

Some trust the wolf  
they have raised since birth  
not to turn on them.

Some trust their lives  
In the hands whose fingers  
Are five silent lives.

Some will be reminded  
of nothing, or perish  
by that mermory.

**Poem**

The people down  
The hallway who  
Stab each other  
Each Friday night...

Is that a ritual

Or just something terribly unresolved?

