

# The Early Death of Men

Clint Margrave

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## *Contents*

### *Part One: Bodies*

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- In Our Twenties / 15  
Gentle Reminder / 16  
If Lovers Were Books / 18  
How Valentines Fail / 19  
The Bisous Ban / 20  
Clenched Fists / 22  
The First Time Books Saved My Life / 24  
You Are What You Eat / 25  
The Early Death of Men / 27  
Pessoa Died a Virgin / 28  
Preventative / 29  
Man Freed after 100 Hours Trapped in a Lavatory / 30  
Sakura Fairy / 31  
Sad Women / 33  
4th of July Bride / 34  
America's Mattress / 35  
Two, Too Many? / 36  
Exposed / 38  
Forsaken / 39  
Glitch / 40  
Ron Pippin: *Solar Deer*, 2009 / 42  
Literary Training / 43  
Luke / 44  
Corrective Lenses / 45  
Hearing Loss / 47  
Thirty-Three / 48  
Josep Maria Subirachs: *Saint Peter*, 1992 / 49  
Perishable / 50

## Part Two: Minds

---

- My Father's Brain / 53
- The Neck of God: Michelangelo's *Separation of Light from Darkness*, 1508-1512 / 54
- The Darkness of Libraries / 55
- Room / 56
- The Astronaut's Diary / 58
- What One Learns about Life from an ATM / 59
- Muse / 60
- Varnish / 62
- Radioactive / 63
- Is Anybody Out There? / 64
- The Role of Art / 66
- Darth Vader Holds Up a New York Bank / 67
- The Dimming Effect / 69
- Bar'd / 71
- Pessoa's Typewriter / 73
- A Poem Is Not a Teddy Bear / 74
- Danger: Avoid Death / 75
- The Worst That Can Happen Is You Die / 76
- Internal Revenue / 78
- The Second Day of the Year / 80
- Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead Is Purely Coincidental / 81
- God's Wife Edited Out of the Bible / 83
- The Famous Atheist / 85
- What If We Just Stopped Calling Death *Death*? / 86
- Marc Chagall: *The Juggler*, 1943 / 88
- Time Line / 89
- I Don't Believe in Ghosts / 90
- Looking in People's Houses / 91
- The Math Mortician / 93

## In Our Twenties

Cigarettes were wonderful.  
Drinking meant crazy.  
Girls felt glorious.  
Parents were distant  
and hadn't died or fallen ill yet.  
Friends seemed plentiful.  
Music couldn't be loud enough.  
Living with a lover  
was like playing house.  
Experience was urgent.  
Summers meant travel.  
Nights seemed infinite.  
Hangovers ended quickly.  
Work was provisional  
until our talents were discovered.  
Marriage was a life sentence.  
Divorce, parole.  
Success was more inevitable than failing.  
Suicide seemed romantic.  
The world was in love with us.  
We were in love with the world.  
We swooned inside its magnificent blue form.  
We walked with lightness.  
We even strutted.  
We thought we were invincible.  
We thought we were old.

## The Role of Art

Art is an introvert.

At parties, it sticks to walls  
nobody notices.

When it speaks,  
it struggles to be heard.

Like all who tell the truth,  
Art has few patrons,

is always offending somebody.

Art is solitary,  
rebellious,  
abstract.

It is *not* communal.

And when embraced too fully,  
has a tendency  
to crash things down.

Not wishing to be known,  
not wishing to be liked,  
not wishing the acclaim of  
its more popular cousin,  
Cliché,

Art is an outcast,

whose only role  
is to protect its value,  
by doing everything for its own sake,

and hoping that it matters.

## The Math Mortician

Instead of bodies, he sees numbers,  
readies them up on time's table,  
dresses them in brackets,

uses algorithms over aspirate  
to extract each variable,  
hypothesizes infinity is but an empty set,

and life an interval between two ends,  
whose value isn't absolute,  
when death's the only constant.