

John Brandi / Steve Sanfield

POSTAGE DUE 

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the continuing poetic correspondence
of John Brandi & Steve Sanfield / 2007-2011



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Backlog / Tooth of Time Books

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bright clear
everything finished
but the year itself

no clouds
but the sky fills
with snowflakes

year's end
looking in both directions
for an answer

turns the menorah
upside down, finds
a bar code

deep in the haze
a gnarled pine
crowned with sun

canyon fog binds
the old and the new
together

here long enough
not to care about
home improvements

flickers, swallows
letting them nest
in the gables

not the places
but who
takes you there

cups emptied
a smile of recognition
in two strangers' eyes

solitude—
every knot on the floor
begins to move

fancies himself a hermit
until the bikes
go roaring by

the winter
he waited for
arrived too soon

fresh snow—
the slow lift of a crow
from a spot of blood

wind shattered pines:
resin filling
the night air

wild musk
in the darkest
places

so happy for their visit
he opens the gate
for the swirling leaves

another pal becomes a recluse
almost no one left
to not visit

winter gone
what's left
a few poems / more debts

the neighbor's
broken wind chimes
ah, just the leaves

every day catches one
every day
lets one go

long after dark
still out there
plowing

spring suddenly upon us
all its joys
all its tasks

between the rails
of the blown-over fence
violets bobbing

spring evening—
he sits in one chair
blue jay takes the other

a dusting of snow
covers last night's tracks
—who's next?

waiting for the rain
that never came
—spring passing

sudden shower—
pallbearers joking
behind fogged windshields

diminished hearing
makes social gatherings
much more pleasant

the price . . .
drawn in mid air
by the deaf tailor

unburned brush pile
beginning
to bud

dry riverbed
slowly filling
with cloud shadows

three mistakes / two stumbles
and not even
out the door yet

jury summons
he wears exactly
what they told him not to

in the hot springs
seeing all of her
without looking

each vase of wild flowers
gives a hint
of where she walked today

sitting with a dying friend
the seasons change
again

no more confusion
the man who resembled me
laid to rest

trips over
the very stone
he's been searching for

black belt party —
higher the rank
the more they limp

wine stained
well before finishing it
—his friend's new book

coffee rings
where he's supposed to sign
—final draft of the will

sometimes death whispers
why even bother
there's not enough time

mountain top bright
but the trail up
deep in shadow

at each memorial service
more and more
balding heads

graveside ceremony
the reverend losing ground
with each sentence

one small owl
hooting all night
—every night

wish it were an owl
instead of the neighbor's
baying hound

the roshi's cabin
in every room
a clock

—Idyllwild, California

another room
another roshi
map covered walls

—Mt. Baldy Zen Center

blood pressure
way up
—a new nurse

a new nurse—
her finger
too short

all day alone in the woods
not a poem in sight
—better this way

elbows out
another poet losing the way
scrambling for the top

changing the stream's song
simply by moving
a stone or two

through piled stone
the autumn wind
whistles a tune

still at it
50 years later
—no closer

the book
he thought finished
now in its tenth year

the letter he dreaded
arrived with
postage due

postage due
the swami's request
for donations

wins the door prize
loses the ticket
—that kind of day

keynote address
turns two pages at once
—who notices?

in the hands
of the medicine man
plastic arrows

it cures everything
says the healer
offering a Coke

years of pine needles
on the path
soften his own fall

moonless night—
without shadows
the way much easier

flake by flake
one by one
we become snowbound

storm from the west
your snow
now my snow

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