

Illustrated Games of Patience  
**Ben Estes**

The Song Cave

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## Your Eager Neighbor

Open living and thinking  
extracted from humiliation and shame,  
the flower inside of the flower  
should now be pretty easy to see  
when the sea-tide shifts  
and flocks of dogs graze  
upon the salt marsh and treeless grasslands,  
grazing for an herbal pastoral  
they said couldn't be made.  
It couldn't.

In the low cornfield of used cobbles and pebbles  
the husky six footer eerily playing the didjeridu  
turned his attention to the horseless carriage  
so quiet and round it was hard  
to tell if it was coming or going  
up the steep crawl to the crest  
to find if sincerity could indeed flower  
in the hearts of this here tired ol' town.

I could not bear to see them as they had been,  
the films of you teaching the movements of modern humans.  
Enlarged to keep the dust from the hole,  
most won't even see the motion. They'll just feel  
the singing of advice from some saving-stamp scheme,  
baiting them with a few cabbage leaves, tiny dribbles

wetting the rocks around the art deco shell mosaic.  
A sadness our parents just didn't have time for.  
How much longer can I hand you this line?

What is real...does it hurt?  
Isn't it awfully late in the day  
to be seeing purple hairstreak  
pitting the sand?  
Must it always be the tongue  
glittering with quartz  
in a welter of flying spray?

Anyway, a string of top jobs followed,  
and I'll do my best to hold them,  
as they do still show signs of decoration  
for the nervous, excited, and I don't know,  
maybe also the lost.  
Four suns appeared in the African sky.  
Sprung independently,  
rolling off the assembly line,  
a jigsaw puzzle  
knitting peace  
as common as bluebells,  
then going back on into the earth at odd angles.  
Times sure have changed since  
we had to rear our babes in the dark  
after hauling them out to breed.

## Board

Viewed from the side at sunset, my poem placed on the turtle grass in September referred to the others by their tens and elevens.

We walk to lakes in order to see our serenity reflected in them, and virtue and glory if it has not been settled – but it has, and a little of the warble of the martin, there.

Disturbed three different broods of partridges in my walk this afternoon.

When the earth has absorbed most heat, melons ripen out steep paths beyond springs.



## Is Boo Boo Hiding in The Blank of Blank

What will spring bestow?  
A paper mask tied about my nose  
looking like the whiskers of a cat,  
or possibly more apt, a mouse.  
Around you I am milkair,  
or possibly more apt, tenderbluefog.  
An everything evening I'm still unaccustomed to,  
with the features of a blind parrot  
flying through it over my town.  
Knowing the place below is home,  
but only able to let the few words I recognize,  
a *Pretty Bird* or *Come Here*,  
lead me to my branch.  
Signaling the skill in this situation  
is my lack of being able to describe it  
within those two phrases.  
The not-knowing cheers up  
the knowing after all-  
a shy quiet mouse that I tell to:  
Pour water into saucepan.  
Uncover bird.  
Get bird water.  
Get cigarette.  
Put in mouth.  
All are marks made without looking.

As even the best of us tire of these heroics,  
we rest our eyes upon the dun colored fields  
pictured in the evening doodles of hunters.

Also doodled:

Bugs, leaves, feathers, cracks in the ice, and berries.

In the feathers of parrots, dividing the sun with a paper mask,  
a small dun field mouse.

In the juice of berries, a feather.

## African Violet Society

Hearing it go once, twice, three times a night...there was never a way our love could have seemed like a local disbelief, like antique ignorance. The two hands relaxing between us convinced us in their mistake, that we might have forgotten some nuance needed to preserve the spring flowers flooding the low fields along the bank, its depths as placid and nonchalant as the sea. We went out. We blew black smoke right on the old woman. We watched a bronze mask lit up by fire. We ate all the grasses in our field: violet then orange, pine, then the color of the desert sand blowing from across the low fields quicker than ever before. You could see how there couldn't be allowance, even then, for that loving hazel sky and rudeness of the lane.

No allowance to survive on, to pay my rent. These garden spiders demand I try to survive, earn a living, stay home most nights, and try to get my little talent together to write a poem for them every now and then.