

W I L L

K E N N

Author of *Legs* and *Billy*

I R O N Y



"One of the richest,
most startling,
and most satisfying
American novels
in recent years"
— *Philadelphia Inquirer*

IRON W

Rich Curtis

Argotist Ebooks

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This is a series of thirty-five poems composed from found text. The found source material was a copy of the book *Ironweed*, by William Kennedy, that I ripped in half. I used the half that was attached to the spine of the book. As a result, I picked out certain phrases from the partial words and half sentences. I collected repeating images that occurred throughout the text. After this process was complete I began rearranging and distilling the parts into short cohesive poems. I used *Ironweed* as my source material because of the themes in the story and because I simply liked the book. There is also significance to the number thirty-five. This book is one of thirty-five projects I am completing within my thirty-fifth year. As Dante's protagonist in *The Divine Comedy* suggests, this is my symbolic half-life. I hope the poems cobbled from the half-pages of the book do justice their source.

IRON W

1.
up the winding road
rattling aware
of the dead
rounded by fields

like heavenly deposits
row upon row
of crosses twitch
in the grass

brittle to the touch
careful to preserve
face the familiar
silent past

just to wait easy
growing nameless
at the foot of more
durable memory

2.
that word
coward

past the place
where the old
come out fighting

frivolous is a
good word

the other side of
palpable smoke
here situates a man

3.
a country soul
distracted in town
missing connections
whango-bango
down the door
on the other side
break fence and roam

4.
snows of reduction
arrived

ranging the unbridgeable
chasms

steadfast virtues of
innocence

denial deflected all moisture
sublimity

exuding a high gloss
water

panoramic memory vivid as
eyesight

dropping from right hand
passing

5.
forge
through an act
of pressing
obligation

abandoning
silently in such
prolonged
final acts

both crouched
both stopped
in that
crouch

the breeze
has grown to
a noonday
pitch.

6.
remembered
remembered
the shape

loving life
the way it
could strike

feed
there and
wonder

following old
through old
window too old

toward the bed
the river alive
hopped in and out

journey to the
nameless
simple hopeless

fits of weeping
both questing
something

unutterable
eyes confirm
ever existence

old lock
over the other
seen the river

still run
right past
it blazing

supine
and yielding
the pose

full

all full of
scabs

7.
horses guard
between pillars of fire
helping to light
the weight of stone

on the final night
when grace is old and
the new dead walk

dust and sand
of redemption
bodies in allies
bodies in part of that
eternal landscape

8.
proffered hand
in spectacle
in a thing

touched the curved
fingers curved
tension on

came on and
lift leap pull
toward his own

face with
his own
gestures that

was a simple
show of
compassion

9.
be frost
freeze here
so fast
bring ice

any weeds
deep weeds
keep them
standing up
futility

10.

sounds made by
several amateur voices
raised all without
folding faces flushed
all woebegone

perfunctory mumbling
putrid perfume of
windblown purity or
private petulance

faces down forward
hair streamed
hands held it floating
in dust twisted
above the back
so full of holes
stained and tapped

11.

remember nothing
for when last seen
a bridge not far

this summer-hummer
this poem as well
remember the plaintive

nothing lasted on
that famous night
stood between speed

these reminiscences
and envy festering in
the heart that surpasses

so desperately needing
expression went unanswered
a most visible burning

12.

the compulsion to flight
desire searching swiftly

the urge to run
pleasurable running
the running from
or running in quest
of the spirit

another departure
all things ceased in
wondrous self

13.
buttoned up
nodded

having taken
life

would
understand

it smiled
and doffed
of brilliance

gleaming
the properties
of an angel

understanding
and

remaining
full

to loss
to failure
to the hostile
inconsistencies

14.
the light pole on the corner
ate what was left then
threw a fire into an oil drum

15.
throat-screamed
standing up

across time
held squinted eyes

leaving the
rest of your

life with you
when you

are struck
on the table

16.
now gone
gone entirely
turned

days pass
past the old
nights

so long the
vast hole
pours in cold

17.
that fusion
of beauty and
desolation

life very likely
is a posture
of elegance

the cocoon of
pretension is
transforming

admiration into
glares of envy
and hostility

18.

gray clouds blow
swiftly past shimmer
a sprawling sea of names

fingers like roots from
half-full arms are
closing in around it

the door is cantered on
one hinge protecting
from moonlight leaking

in a sudden blink
it returns for the night
to reinvest in a lost age

19.
into the
moving

be-grieving
bright

streets of
sunshine

rising for
work

opening
into a

day of
substance

and
optimism

20.

stillness bringing dreams
into the dust

rendered motionless
mountains rise up

and trumpets sound
floating without trepidation

into the exalted reaches
composed so long ago

21.
do not
speak ill

for the
fire I am

in my
tree of trees

what will be
and in what

strength
into life so

willfully
my poet says

I am
not dead

22.

hovering
at the edge of
escaping into
music

out into
the still-visible
stars drunk with
fire

resonating
out at the dawn
and roaming
free

listen to a
tree whose leaves
burst forth
symphonic

such things
cast crooked hands
to embrace a modest
understanding

23.
on the streets
the boys have urges

watch the night
watching naked

wanting a woman
wanting to watch

to climb down
and walk softly

listening to words
or sounds of metal

they are on top
and at the window

taking turns toward
vital and full and

confessing a fiery
yearning to

carry it through
having it finally

flaming bodies
finally together

for much more
unstoppable fire

24.

to move toward
 only hold tight
 moved
 toward

fingers dare moved toward
 tweeze and caress

permit fingers to
 fleshy whiteness
 culminating
 cleverly

humming
 again and again

trying mightily
 in exhaustion

25.
spoiled seed
grows to a
blossom of
no value

it produces
no seed
of its own

withers and
perishes
and falls
unknown

26.
once who
with once
that night

that once
when no
one since

the end of
the city
of the end

27.
morning air looked
and touched absolutely

the words tumbled and
the rapture swooned

into the world willfully
will to grace elusive

that grace moving
like wandering but not

unfolding instead
with no symbols lost

no pure instinct
its perfection in the
power to destroy itself
out of that deep center

all there was
was empty

28.

ever so much
is floating down
under the weight
of so much floating

ever so slowly
white bird glides
onto the grass
astream with singing

in its own perfection
which the wind
will curse in a
foreign language

29.
there are things
never thought and
there are things
never wanted

some involuntary
messengers try
connecting insight
into the patterns

uncommon contact
until the departure
a flight of a kind
fly again each spring

and it won't last long
and the grass comes green
and the music begins
and time is conscious
and longs to flee

30.
a target
movement

a lifetime
crumpled

the sound
the stone

the skull
old iron

too cold
this one

timed to
the frost

31.
the way
of time

goes on
without

the way
and out

still go
still real

that each
forever

another
would be

there never
still again

32.
odor of lost time
of imprisoned flowers
of reconstituted past

inside the trunk
melancholy histories
filed silently away

33.
new light
holding
the very
air in the
softest
wheeze
at last
cleared
smoke
winter's
harbor of
breath
to carry
with it

34.

walking down the night
adjusting to the darkness
in some damp place
with fallen plaster

looking for a little room
occupied with sleep
such a place still alive
live it out with a blessing

35.
too late now to continue
propping against it softly

the soul of the world is
a bird of uncertainty

a vision carved deeply
filling other souls

in grace and in air of fallible
memory never making it right