**Prognosis**

Ten years, they say, give or take a few.  
Well, what’s a few years between friends  
Or between me and the Big Guy – you know What’s His Name.

Fickle – if I were God I’d judge me.  
Who do you think you are, ignoring me for years then knocking at my door in your hour of need?

I’d find me wanting, needy, self-indulgent, wallowing in self-pity in the face of illness,  
Rather than Hey, embracing life, living for the moment, staying healthy, staying well,Eating right and exercising every day.

I know your brain’s being eaten away, but please just try and stay positive.  
Life is short, art is long.  
Here it is, my insignificant attempt at living forever,  
My long shot at immortality.

The arrow flies from the bow, but bent,  
Falling far short of the mark.

Hark, the dogs are barking  
I walk down poetry’s street,  
Wearing my glad rags, my corduroy gown,  
How enterprising.

Mostly, the townspeople just ignore me,  
Sometimes they throw crusts of bread, or rocks –  
A tough hide, that’s what you need in this game.

How to tackle life’s mysterious twists.  
How to respond when events go wrong –  
The parachute fails,  
The chooks won’t lay,  
The house catches fire and is razed to the ground.

How to respond in the here and now.  
Can you hear me now?

Everybody takes a one way ticket  
From the cradle to the grave.

Imagine living backwards,  
Rising from the grave like a zombie,  
Shaking off the worms,  
Fattening out of your elderly thinness,  
Hitting middle aged spread,  
Back, back to the birth of your twins,  
Back further to your first marriage,  
Then – a growth spurt in reverse –  
Sudden shrinkage,  
From the teenage years,  
Regressing through boyhood, with its bullying and its taunts –  
To infancy, your toddling years,  
The experimentation with colours and shapes,  
Then to your teething,  
All those hours spent gnawing on rusks  
Till the fangs break through.

Then inside your mother’s walls  
Into the womb, nestled in there like a bean,  
All sustenance delivered through the umbilical cord.

Circular – at the end, return to the start,  
The seven ages in reverse,  
Ten years they say, give or take a few –  
Do the pearly gates await – or eternal flames;  
Who do I think I am – Ozymandias?

If you take the time to read this,  
I still live.