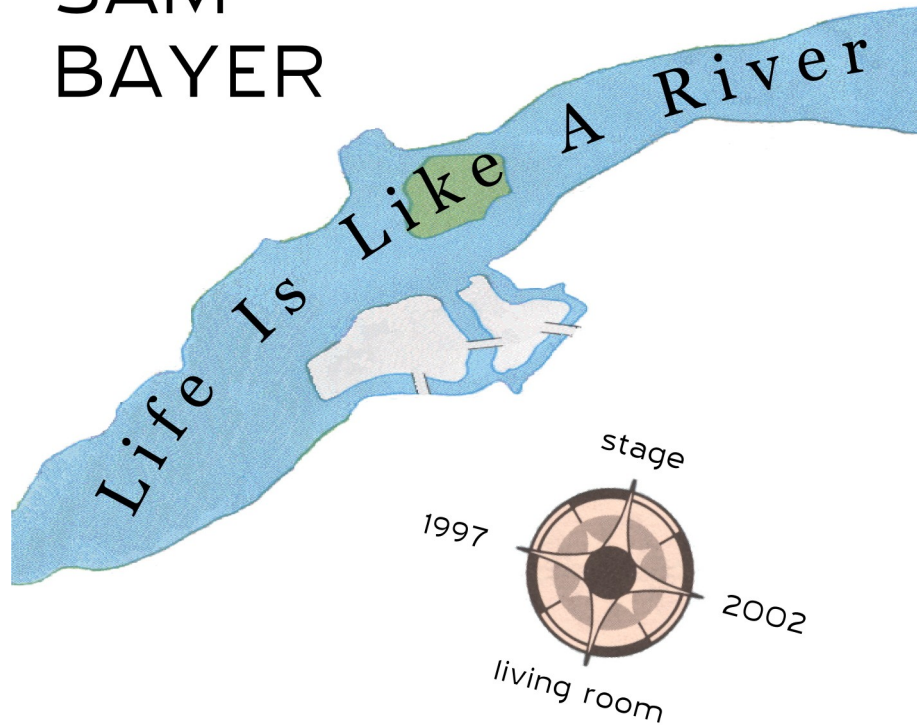


SAM BAYER



DISC 1

Love Letters
A Couple of Photon Torpedoes
Atlantis
Algiers Cafe
Amanda Means
Different People
American Elm
Life is Like a River
God Damn My Heart
Doesn't Anybody Want a Piece of Me
Bird on a Balcony
To Your Health
Edith and Elmer

DISC 2

Just a Couple Steps Ahead of Me
It Must Have Been That Botte of Wine
Meeting Judi
Vices
Putting Sophy to Bed
Playing with the Big Boys Now
The Visiting Uncle
The Vulture
Chalkboard
The Beatles Are Dying
The Arrogance of Heartbreak
Saving the Second-Hand Virtue
What Kevin Remembers Next
The Way She Looked Like You
Oyster Girl

DISC 3

The Mistakes You've Made
The Longest Day of the Year
I Can't Write Love Songs
The Millennium Song
Moving
Me and Walter Mitty
The Elephant in the Room

Hallucination
I Can See Everything From Here
Not Quite Spring
A Man Like Me
It Seemed like a Good Idea at the Time
Cassandra
The Election Song
When the Empire Falls

Love Letters

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Crayon sunsets and paper moons
Paint Septembers and postmark Junes
A pair of parted lovers with time to kill
But such a precious target won't stand still
It's the next best thing to the next best thing to being
there

If you don't wear blinders the small reminders are
everywhere

From the crackerjack rings and the paper chains
The playground swings and the coffee stains
The promises that hang heavy in the air

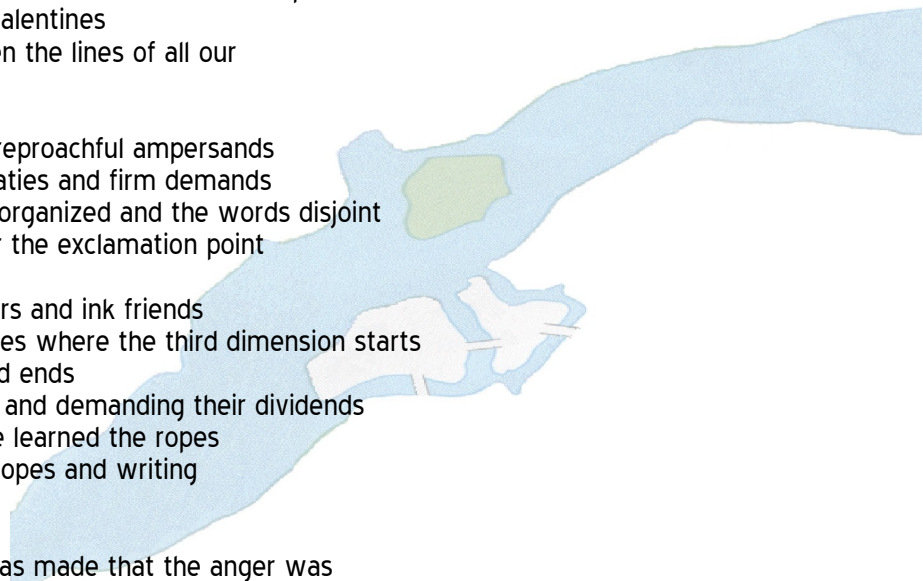
Made by ink women and ink men
Each one a model paper citizen
Each one the picture of restraint and discipline
They dream of Valentines
And hide between the lines of all our
Love letters

Sullen commas, reproachful ampersands
Distraught entreaties and firm demands
The thoughts disorganized and the words disjoint
But you can hear the exclamation point

Made by ink lovers and ink friends
Storming the gates where the third dimension starts
and the second ends
Rattling the bars and demanding their dividends
They feel they've learned the ropes
Addressing envelopes and writing
Love letters

The argument was made that the anger was
secondary
You and I were swayed but the two of them appeared
so
Stationery

And there's ink you and ink me
Reflections in the mirror of reality
Phantoms haunting photos in the gallery
They roam the empty aisles
Confronting distant smiles and reading
Love letters



A Couple of Photon Torpedoes

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In a cattle car at rush hour, we were standing nose to nose

I said, "Excuse me, neighbor, but you seem to be stepping on my toes"

He didn't say "I'm sorry", he didn't tip his hat
He just turned to me and bared his teeth and growled,
"You got a problem with that?"

I cringed inside and swallowed my pride and tried to limp away

I was running out of cheeks to turn and it bugged me the whole damn day

Well I know it isn't Christian, and I know it isn't kind
But a couple of photon torpedoes would have probably changed his mind

Violence ain't no solution unless you're on the giving end

And how many pacifists feel the bully's boot as their dividend

I'm running out of forgiveness and grace
Just gimme a couple of those photon torpedoes
And I'll make the world a better place

They cut you off in traffic, and they cut ahead in line
They park in front of hydrants and refuse to pay the fine

I'm picking up their litter, I'm sitting where they've spat
And I'm getting my toes crushed on the subway and hearing,

"You got a problem with that?"

It's not like they murder or rape or pillage or steal or torture pets they find

They're just looking out for number one, but number two ain't far behind

So let 'em grin, let 'em gloat, let 'em celebrate, let 'em revel in our loss

Just gimme a couple of those photon torpedoes and then we'll see who's boss

Selfishness ain't no solution unless you're holding the stick at the long end

And how many altruists get the finger as their dividend
Just one more slap in the face

And I swear I'm gonna take a couple of those photon torpedoes

And make the world a better place

Major Tom, Rocket Man, other people sing

They're all trying to get away from the same damn thing

Orbiting alone in the solitude of space

Free from all the ingrates in the human race

But there they are, parking geosynchronously next to you

Knocking on your porthole to borrow a spacesuit or two

Eating all your rations, breathing all your air

Leaving for higher orbit a couple minutes before the cops get there

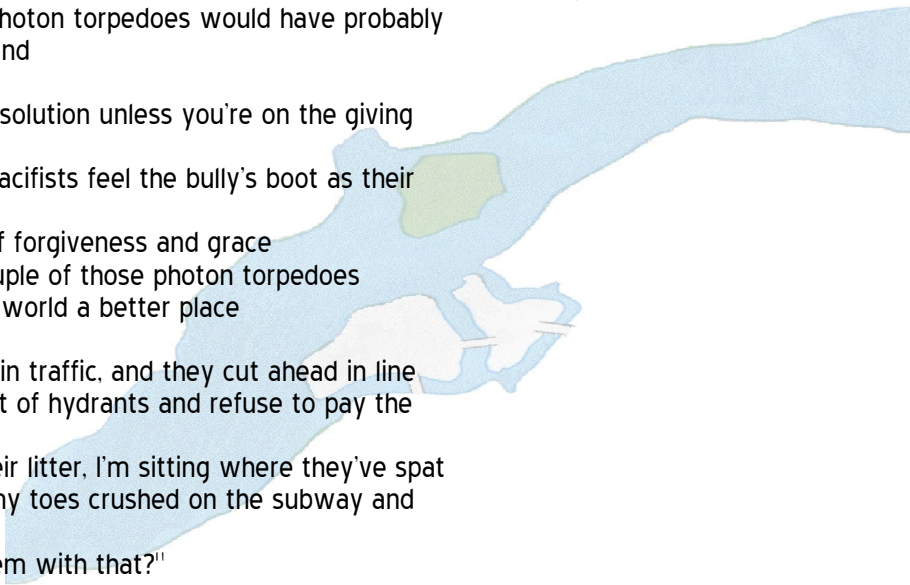
Loyalty isn't an asset unless you're on the taking end
And why should I shake your hand if you're as likely to be a foe as a friend

The view is clearer from space

Just gimme a couple of those photon torpedoes

And I'll make the world

A better place



Atlantis

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Try as I may I just can't seem to find a way for us to
stay together
Sometimes it seems that the land itself is conspiring
against us
Hills fall bare, and roses shrivel
Heat and cold rage unchecked when we kiss
Our love is struggling against a headstrong wind and
I've had
enough of this

But there's a land whose distance is measured in years
instead of miles
A city I've heard sank eons ago beneath the waves
I can't say that I've ever been to Atlantis
Or set out to find it under the sea
But it couldn't be any more hostile to you and me

Can't breathe the water
Can't drink the air
Can't keep the life from oozing slowly out of this
doomed affair
Don't dare continue
Can't bear to quit
We can live in Atlantis
I'm sure of it

There must be peace in that city, amid the seaworn
stones
and the coral streets
I can't believe they'd turn away such deserving
refugees
The army stands, staffed and ready
To defend the city from the lands ashore
No one could doubt their evil intentions anymore

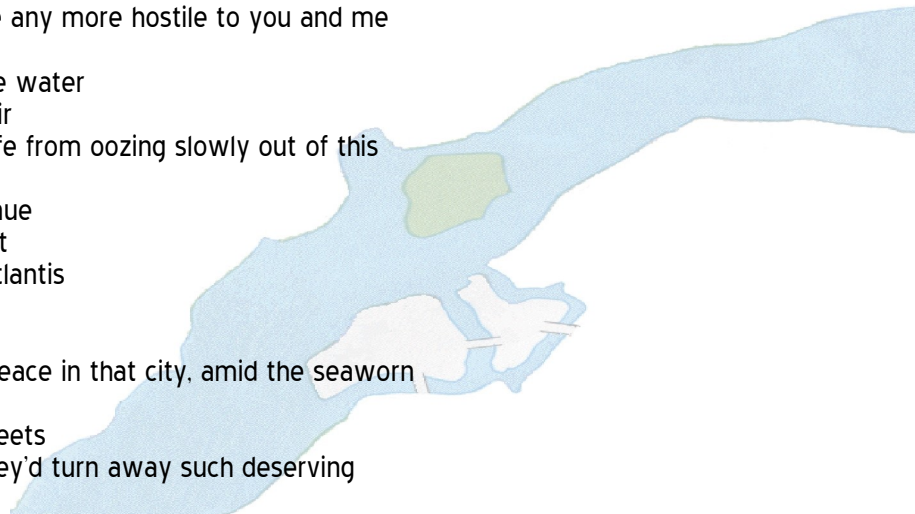
Can't breathe the water
Can't drink the air
Can't keep the life from oozing slowly out of this
doomed affair
Don't dare continue
Can't bear to quit
We can live in Atlantis
I'm sure of it

There are seven seas, and not a hint to choose
between them
And the wind is a foolish and ignorant guide
How will we know when we get there?
Perhaps Poseidon will wave
What if we wrinkle and shrivel like prunes
What if the sea salt gouges our wounds
What if the nymphs and the mermaids

Escort us to a watery grave

Will we emerge from the other end of this tunnel of
love
Are we wading into lakes too deep for hearts to
survive
Why do you ask me questions
When you know I have only my faith to guide me
How can you breathe this air when it won't let you
stand beside me

Come on in, the water's fine, I say
Let's take that dive, we're sinking anyway
Got another gamble to take
Got another wager to make
Dammit, it's only a planet, it can't be that hard to
outwit
We can live in Atlantis (3x)
I'm sure of it



Algiers Cafe

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Mitch and I sit in the Algiers Cafe
Wondering how life got so crazy
He's expanding on a theory of exhaustion and entropy
As I nurse my pot of Earl Grey
Fretting the hours away

Mitch and I borrow a moment of time
From the bank with the bitchy old teller
She snipes and sneers from behind her safety glass
And no matter how much time we spend today
She's only an instant away

Sometimes I confuse yesterday with tomorrow
Sometimes I miss the future and anticipate the past
And when I turn myself around
Who's to say I'm facing the right direction
This time
But it's the only time I have

Mitch and I nibble our carrot cakes
As the evening grows long and the streetlamps bright
We have our orders to trudge toward the next minor
crisis
And whether or not we obey
It's only a moment away

Mitch and I seize on the Algiers Cafe
As our likeliest line of defense
We'll hide beneath the tables when the clock comes
looking
Informing the patrons they just can't stay
It's only a moment away

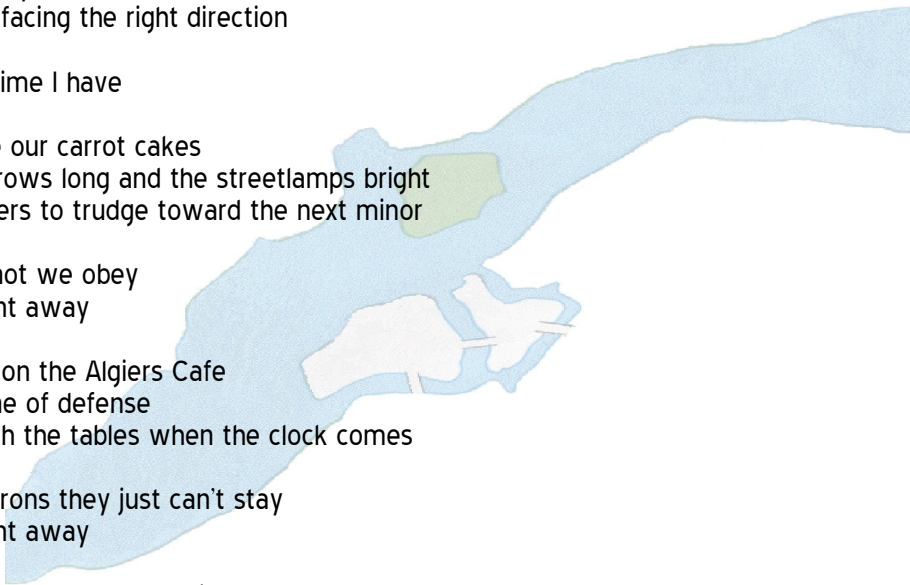
Sometimes I confuse yesterday with tomorrow
Sometimes I miss the future and anticipate the past
And when I turn myself around
Who's to say I'm facing the right direction
This time
But it's the only time I have

We caress time, we praise time, we hoard time, we
mourn time
We count it like dimes under the sofa, we crush it like
pennies
on the track of an oncoming train
We wrap times up like good clothes or fine china,
bringing them out for special occasions, and packing
them up again
Time is the lint in our pockets, the slime in our fridge,
the objects in drawers we can no longer name
Time weighs more than our two thoughts together
Time lasts longer than the oldest dream, the dustiest

planet,
the darkest star
Time is what we will be
And have been
And are

Mitch and I sit in the Algiers Cafe
Wondering how life got so crazy
He's expanding on a theory of exhaustion and entropy
As I nurse my pot of Earl Grey
Fretting the hours away

Time is the lint in our pockets



Amanda Means

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Art is the language of life
It was a button on her lapel
Amanda Means was the name they were calling
She silently waved, and I found myself falling
Under her spell

The gallery gleamed in the sunset
The patrons were packed like sardines
The crowd was abuzz about what wasn't and was
Her vision's so pure that not a soul can be sure of
What Amanda means

The squares are the verbs, the circles are nouns
Or so say the critics in the magazines
I've stared at the reds and I've stared at the browns
And I'm ashamed to confess I can barely guess at
What Amanda means

Those paintings were Greek for more than a week
So I returned to the classics I learned in my teens
As I tried to stammer through my Latin grammar
I was shocked to discover I was supposed to love her
That's what "Amanda" means

So I opened my purse, sent her flowers and verse
Serenaded and danced and cooked tempting cuisines
We were the couple in fashion, the picture of passion
But the captions were missing when I watched myself
kissing
Amanda Means

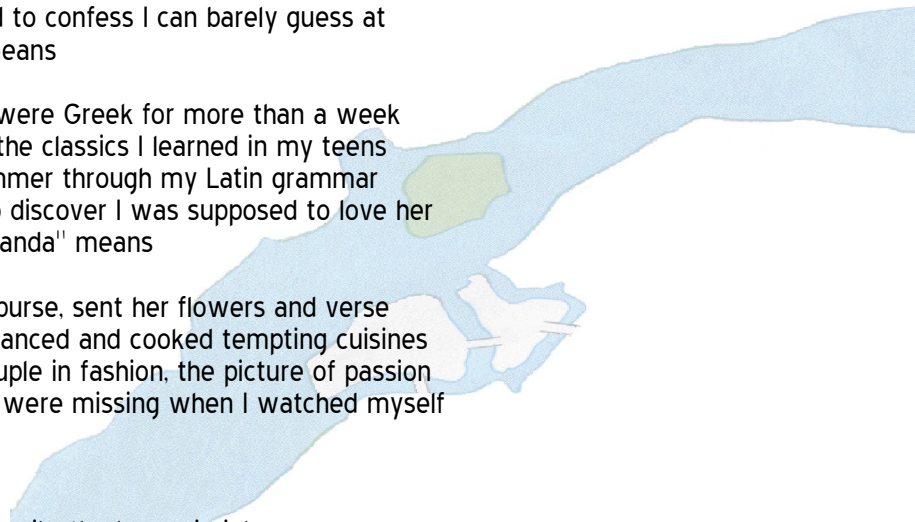
The friends are in oils, the lovers in inks
The strangers in purples and aquamarines
When I ask her to comment, she's as mum as the
Sphinx
Not even a lover can hope to discover
What Amanda means

She'd draw a circle and I'd draw a line
We had miscommunication in pantomime
There were hours of tension about my comprehension
When I asked to romance her she painted the answer

Was it green for no, or a square for yes
I couldn't figure it out, I was afraid to guess
So she threw up her hands and left a goodbye smudge
She was living her art, maybe others would budge
But not Amanda Means

Well, she embroidered my heart right here on my
sleeve
The craftsmanship is magnificent

I don't understand why she wanted to leave
But I don't want to go where Amanda went
And I don't really know
No, I can't be sure
What Amanda meant



Different People

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I get a knot in my stomach when you enter the room
Atop a mountain of expectations I can never climb
It's such thin and bitter air
How can you breathe up there
You've got doubts neatly packaged and tightly bound
They lurk like land mines under the most innocent of
words
Like "How are you feeling"
And "How was your day"

We've been over it and over it and over it again
We can't be lovers and we can't be friends
I beg and I plead, and you bicker and barter
But this is where it ends
If we were different people

If only I smoked or ate crackers in bed
Or picked my teeth with my silverware
You could make me your dastardly villain
And you could be the damsel in distress
But you think life is short and I find it long
And someone made you right and made me wrong
But I don't see any justice here
Just a woman with a noose in her hand

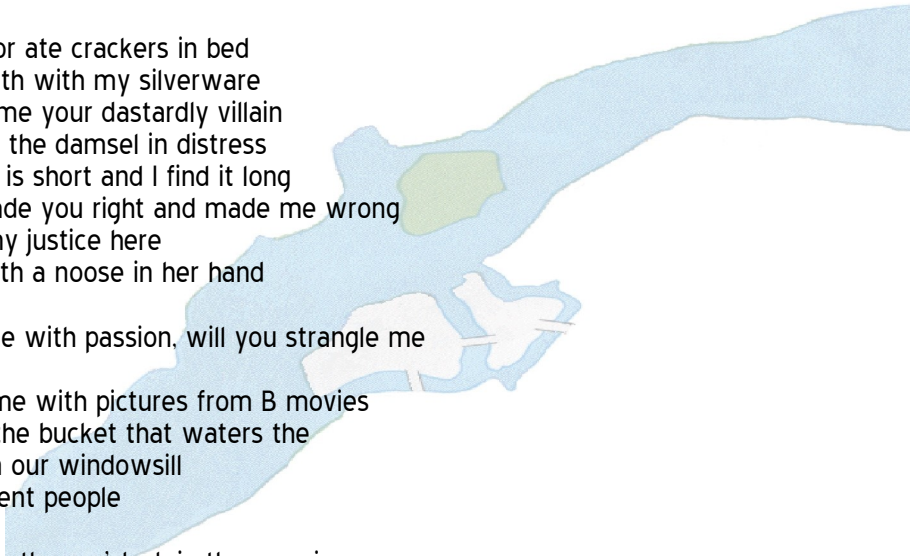
Will you choke me with passion, will you strangle me
with love
Will you silence me with pictures from B movies
Or drown me in the bucket that waters the
houseplants on our windowsill
if we were different people

Do you remember three o'clock in the morning
When you'd push me away and I'd surrender
But victory wasn't enough for you
You had to have me too
Do you remember late in the evening
When making love was the only way we could speak
And you swore all you felt from me was fright
It turns out that you were almost right

I've got pictures of you next to pictures of me
And the smiles are a moment deep
It's not a smile so much as a constant final wish
I wish we were happy, I wish we were whole
I wish you'd stop ignoring the magic in my soul
I wish I could snatch back the time that you stole
I wish we were over

Do you wish I was your puppet
Do you wish I was your slave
Will you spike your heel into my coattails

as I plot my getaway
Pointing and prodding in your chosen direction
In the hopes I'd find my way
If only I had been born as an eagle
If only you wanted sculpture and not clay
If onnot clay
If only we were different people



American Elm

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It was an American elm
Rare as the summer day is long
Peter the forester traced the leaves in wonder
An urban prize at our fingertips
A wreck of a house sat behind it
Abandoned since they carried the owner away
A collision of dirty red and peeling brown
But before they turned the house to rubble, the tree
 came down

They choked the roots, and they cut the branches
They felled the trunk and hauled it away
They promise another will soon shade our back door
But they don't make them anymore

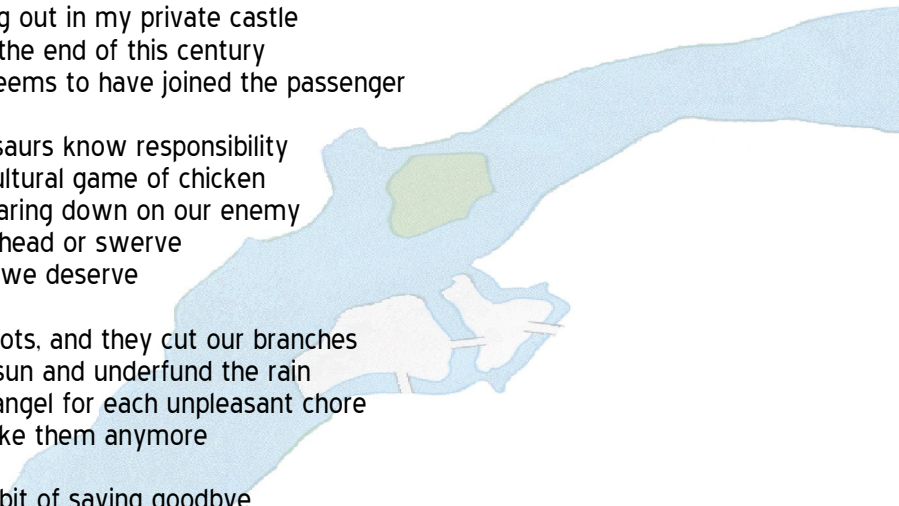
And now I'm hiding out in my private castle
Amid the ruins of the end of this century
Where patience seems to have joined the passenger
 pigeon
And only the dinosaurs know responsibility
It's a breathless cultural game of chicken
Each one of us bearing down on our enemy
Where we plow ahead or swerve
And we get what we deserve

They choke our roots, and they cut our branches
They privatize the sun and underfund the rain
They promise an angel for each unpleasant chore
But they don't make them anymore

I won't make a habit of saying goodbye
Hello makes the day so much brighter
But the past weighs the most in its absence
And the load never gets any lighter

You were my last chance, the final out of the inning
The branch hanging over the lip of the waterfall
I snagged myself on a corner of your heart
And I stuck there
But you said
I can't be your dam against heartbreak
I can't be the plug in your drain
You tell me I'm the only tree in a world that's died
But I'm parched from the salt in the tears you've cried

So you choked our roots, and you cut our branches
You felled our trunk and hauled it away
You tell me that someday I'll find what I'm looking for
But they don't make it anymore



Life is Like a River

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He picked up somebody else's guitar
"Hey man, can I play a little?"
And he wailed the blues like a man possessed
with the bite of a thousand heartbreaks
And he offered a song to the wedding boy
A cryptic twelve-bar dream
Life is like a river
Life is like a river

We drank a toast, the ten of us,
The seven of us, the six of us,
We dwindled in number as the beers grew tall
And swam around our heads like some vile primordial
soup
We cheered the guitar man playing
I could swear I caught him saying
Life is like a river
Life is like a river

We're looking for wisdom and all we find is a riddle
The current is trickier out here in the middle
We paddle a lot, and move just a little
Life is like a river
Life is like a river

The assembled ladies wrote his fortune on the
back of a cocktail napkin
"When she asks how she looks, say 'lovely'"
"Never kiss her without brushing your teeth"
And in gold, the words "Whatever you say, dear"
She'll laugh and he'll smile and say, "Hey dear,
Life is like a river
Life is like a river"

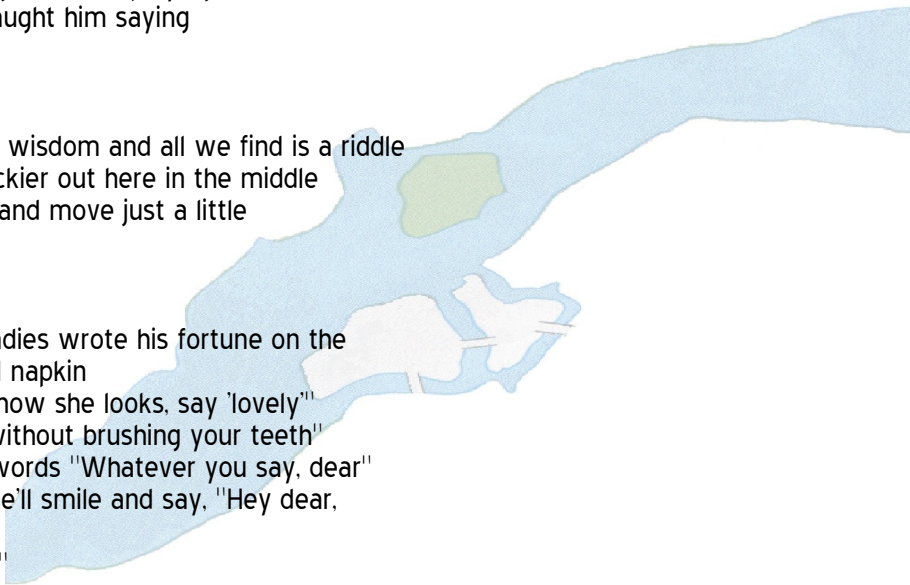
We're looking for answers and all we find is a riddle
The current is trickier out here in the middle
We study a lot, and learn just a little
Life is like a river
Life is like a river

And today, today is the equinox
And we are halfway between faith and despair
Halfway between truth and fiction
Halfway between here (wherever that is) and there
Will the world make more sense when two people in
love are married
Will the universe feel my lips when I kiss the bride
Life is like a river
Life is like a river

Each one of us has our mermaid
Each one of us has sought her

Some of us are still fishing
And some of us have caught her
And some of us lose toes when we put them in the
water
Life is like a river
Life is like a river

We're looking for wisdom and all we find is a riddle
The current is trickier out here in the middle
We paddle a lot, and move just a little
Life is like a river
Life is like a river (4x)



God Damn My Heart

If I make the mistake of falling in love with you (3x)

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God damn my heart
It's making a huge mistake
Wish this was a nightmare
But I'm pretty sure I'm still awake
Caught between passion and discipline
Can't hear the alarms when I'm in your arms
Can almost forget the mess I'm in

They say you lose your heart once in life
It better not be true
I'd better be able to fall in love again
If I make the mistake of falling in love with you

God damn this road
I can't figure out where you went
My auto swerves to follow your curves
I cover my eyes an instant before the accident
I clamber from the wreck
Thumb my nose at the other lovers
Slowing down to rubberneck

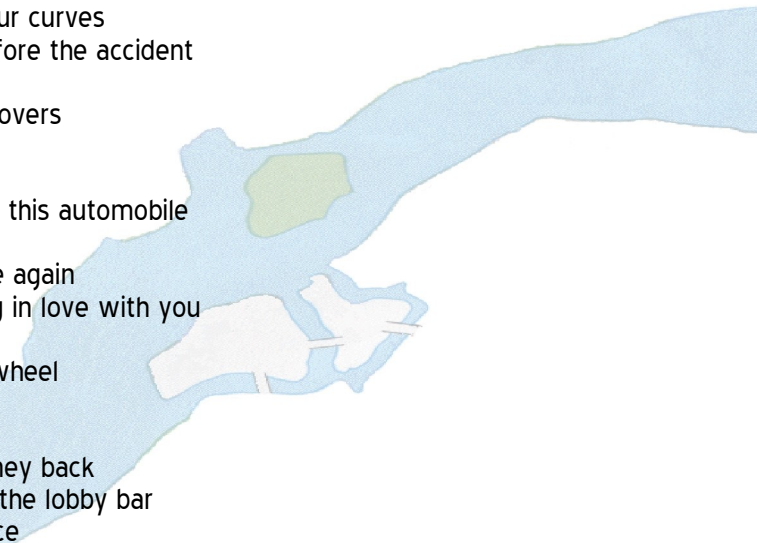
My heart has more dents than this automobile
It's beating black and blue
I'd better be able to fall in love again
If I make the mistake of falling in love with you

I place my bet and I spin the wheel
Riding red and hitting black
Twenty-two on every deal
I guess I ain't winning my money back
You're the call girl lounging in the lobby bar
With the triple-digit asking price
The lady with the mink and the foreign car
The dealer with the legs and the cleavage and those
loaded dice

God damn these hands
For touching this mystery
Got women crying and characters dying
And organ music moaning in some minor key
A muffled scream, a hidden door
Your eyes aflame in a portrait frame
I could swear they weren't there before

You ask me where this tunnel leads
I haven't got a clue
I'd better be able to fall in love again
If I make the mistake of falling in love

They say you lose your heart once in life
It better not be true
I'd better be able to fall in love again



Doesn't Anybody Want a Piece of Me

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It's one o'clock in the morning, and the club is clearing out
A traffic jam is forming at the door
I've watched him far too often not to know what it's about
He's signed a dozen autographs, and he'll sign a dozen more
T-shirts on the counter, CDs on display
If I'm not in the audience I'm probably in the way
I may be just as handsome but my name don't have the same cachet

Doesn't anybody want a piece of me
The undiscovered voice of my generation
He'll cost you time and money, and I'm fast and cheap and free
Doesn't anybody want a piece of me

I'll do it out of envy, I'll do it out of spite
I'll gladly play each stinking college town
I'll gladly play East Buttfuck on a rainy Tuesday night
Opening for a juggler and a clown
Ship me off to Paris, ship me off to Rome
Ship me off to Pluto, well that's a bit too far from home
I'll meet him in Altoona and I'll buy us both a beer
And we'll take a sip and ask each other what we're doing here

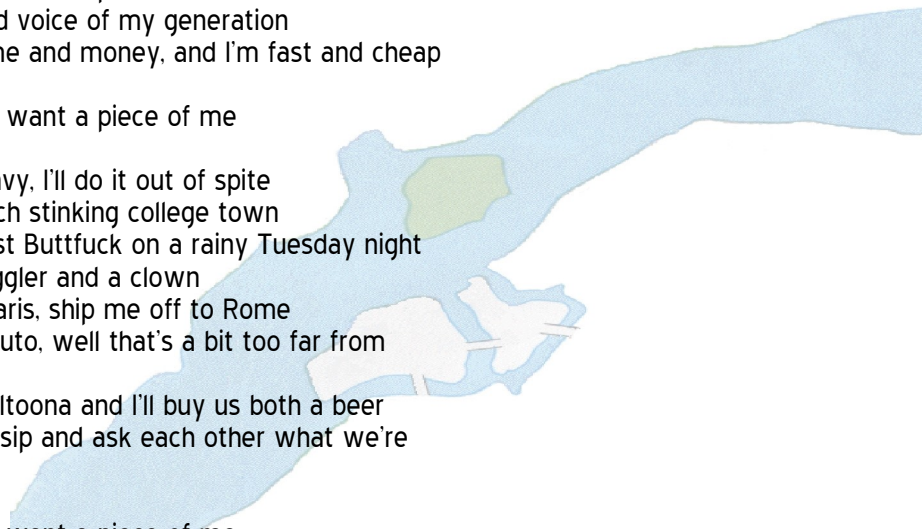
Doesn't anybody want a piece of me
The undiscovered voice of my generation
He'll cost you time and money, and I'm fast and cheap and free
Doesn't anybody want a piece of me

He's always in the papers, it's a sordid tale they tell
There's a dozen bastard children, and a couple wives as well
He succumbs to strange afflictions, he's a slave to his addictions
There's indictments and convictions, and he's going straight to hell
He bites the heads off chickens, and smashes his guitars
He's seen departing cheap hotels with wives of movie stars
I'll never know if any of it happened that way
But they say that's what they saw, and they say that's what they say

Hey you, come violate my privacy
I'm eager for the chance to shock the nation
They tell me that there's no such thing as bad publicity
I'll take a headline over just another chunk of scenery

Doesn't anybody want a piece of me
The undiscovered voice of my generation
He'll cost you time and money, and I'm fast and cheap and free
Doesn't anybody want a piece of me

I don't have all day
What's taking you so long?



Bird on a Balcony

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When first I saw you you were poised like a bird on
the edge of a balcony
Waiting for the wind to come by and fill your wings
The squirrels rustled through the autumn leaves
As you sighed and tucked your hands into your sleeves
The sun reached down a beam and asked you to
dance, and you said
"Maybe later, I'd like to give this boy a chance"

I took your hand and you reeled yourself in like a dog
leash
or a tape measure, or the one that got away
I lost my footing unaccustomed as I am to standing
above the ground
Heard thunder in the distance and the sun jumped
back
And those looming heavens opened up a crack
You asked me to lead us to shelter but I guess I just
lost track

The last part
Won't fit
I have to make my peace with it
Round peg
Square hole
My heart
Your soul

You landed on my shoulder and whispered in my ear
It must have been language but it wasn't a language I
could understand
Didn't want to say yes when a no would suffice
Didn't know what you'd told me once and what you'd
told me twice
Had no way of telling if I'd followed or ignored your
advice

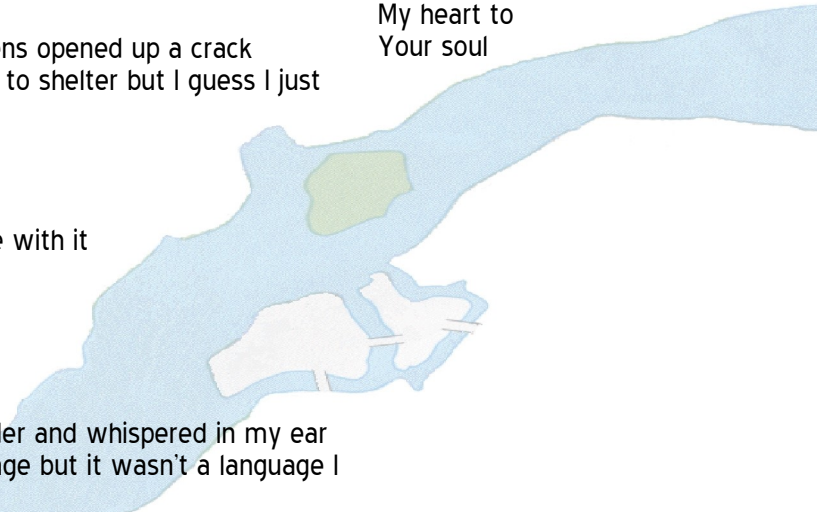
The last part
Won't fit
I have to make my peace with it
Round peg
Square hole
My heart
Your soul

The storm roared in from where the sun went to hide
The leaves dimpled in the swollen rain
And the trees bowed down as we waited inside
Just a boy and his bird and breath on a windowpane
We couldn't fly
Just hovered in the vault of the hall
It howled and it hailed, electricity failed

And the bird and her boy met the fury
The fury of fall

When last I saw you you were looking kind of
grounded
I know I'll see you fly again just not today
I didn't want to be the one to clip our wings but
though
Gravity's behind me I'm not light enough to slip away
from other things

The last part
Won't fit
I have to make my peace with it
Round peg
In a square hole
It was a good start
But that last part
Can't match
My heart to
Your soul



To Your Health

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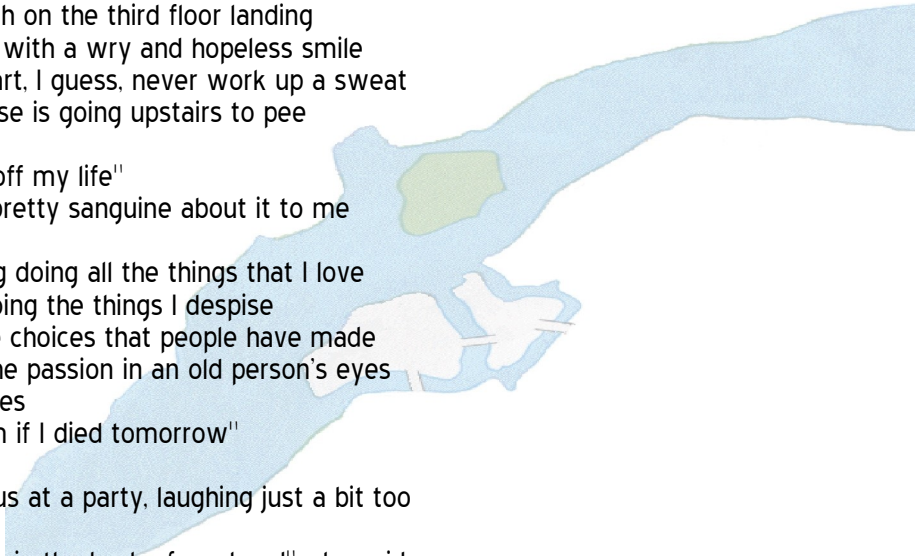
"Don't know from protein, never turn on my stove"
He casually mentioned as he bagged my groceries
"I'm living on pop tarts and breakfast cereal
Jujubes and corn chips and Hi-C
I'm killing myself
I'm taking years off my life"
And he seemed pretty sanguine about it to me

"You can die young doing all the things that you love
Or live forever doing the things you despise
And you can see the choices that people have made
In the pain and the passion in an old person's eyes
And I love my vices
And I'd miss them if I died tomorrow"

Gasping for breath on the third floor landing
He waved to me with a wry and hopeless smile
"I'm just an old fart, I guess, never work up a sweat
My idea of exercise is going upstairs to pee
I'm killing myself
I'm taking years off my life"
And he seemed pretty sanguine about it to me

"I could die young doing all the things that I love
Or live forever doing the things I despise
And I can see the choices that people have made
In the pain and the passion in an old person's eyes
And I love my vices
And I'd miss them if I died tomorrow"

She backed into us at a party, laughing just a bit too
often
"I wish I had eyes in the back of my head", she said
"Especially when I've had a little vodka and rum
And beer and tequila and whiskey
I'm killing myself
I'm taking years off my life
Yes I'm killing myself
I'm taking years off my life
Yes I'm killing myself
I'm taking years off my life"
But she seemed pretty sanguine about it to me
She seemed pretty sanguine about it to me
She seemed pretty sanguine



Edith and Elmer

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I was watching a commercial for Boost or Ensure or
one of those
products that keeps old people from wetting their
pants or dying of
exhaustion
And there were all these folks thirty, forty years older
than me
running round like they owned the place
And I looked at Edith in her sweatpants and curlers
And me in my T-shirt and ratty old robe
And all the time the clock on the wall was ticking,
ticking, ticking

And I said,
"Edith, get your coat
Put on your hat
Forget the chicken in the oven, there's no time for that
Death is at the door, he got my name somehow
I think we can outrun him if we leave right now
I'll step on the gas and you can steer
Edith, grab your coat and let's get out of here"

And she said,
"Elmer, have you lost your mind?
You never voluntarily leave the house
And I am honor-bound to remind you that your idea of
the great
outdoors is being more than fifteen feet from an
electrical outlet"
But I said, "Hallelujah, woman, I have seen the light
I have been humiliated by old people on television
And this decade and a half we have been vegetating
together is but a
prelude to a dynamic and invigorating life"

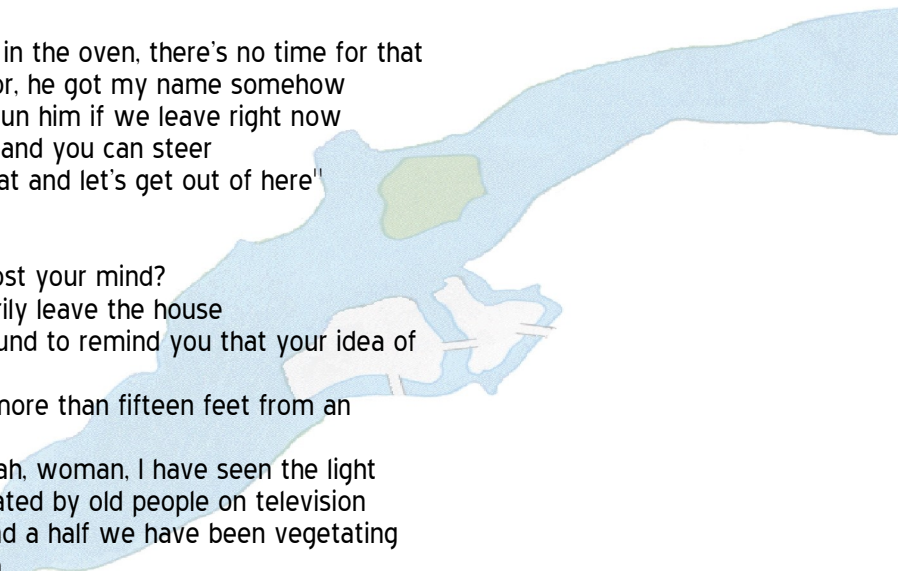
And I said,
"Edith, get your coat
Put on your hat
Forget the chicken in the oven, there's no time for that
Death is at the door, he got my name somehow
I think we can outrun him if we leave right now
I'll step on the gas and you can steer
Edith, grab your coat and let's get out of here"

And she said,
"What do you think I've been doing these last fifteen
years, sitting
around listening to you fart and watching you scratch
your belly?
Instead of sitting in the kitchen reading beauty
magazines I'll have
you know I went out and won myself the Nobel Prize

in Physics
And in 1987
I invited you to the awards banquet in Stockholm
And you said, 'Woman, you know I hate wearing a
tuxedo'

"And I said,
'Elmer, get your coat
Put on your hat
Forget the burgers on the grill, we've got no time for
that
Gotta get up on that plane and fly across the sea
Gotta do my little two-step with history
So put aside those Cheetos and flush your beer
Elmer, grab your coat and let's get out of here'

"And you said, 'Nothing doing, woman'
And went back to watching that goddamn TV"



Just a Couple Steps Ahead of Me

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A break in the trees
Seems to lead off to nowhere
It's a path I never would have followed
Without you leading the way
The dappled shadows pose a dozen questions
But you prefer to watch the light between
I try to believe in what you see
Just a couple of steps ahead of me

There's a sandy gold in the winter brush
That matches your hair and skin
I can't really tell where the forest ends
And you begin
I've got my compass, my rations, my first aid kit
My flares to signal an SOS
I see nothing but frozen misery
Just a couple of steps ahead of me

The woodland creatures would be mystified
By this boy who was stymied by a walk through the
trees
If you stick to the path you're bound to meet
The robins on Laurel Lane
And the squirrels on Acorn Street

Logs in the mud
Steppingstones across streams
A break in a flagstone wall
Steps up the face of a ravine
The obstacles fall like the autumn leaves
On this path I was afraid to follow
I try to believe in what you see
Just a couple of steps ahead of me

Da da da da
The robins on Laurel Lane
And the squirrels on Acorn Street

And I remember the path back to the parking lot
I remember my car
I remember betting you an ice cream code
We'd never get this far
The sun waved goodbye to our safari day
The forest bled steel and slate and grey
I waved my goodbyes and I turned to flee
But here in the dark
I can't even see
A couple of steps ahead
Of me



It Must Have Been That Bottle of Wine

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Gather round, and I'll tell you a tale
Of the sorry state of male and female
We've got questions to ponder, blame to assign
Thanks to a bottle of wine

She was a lovely lady, charming and tall
She could throw back her head and laugh at it all
It's a sound that scampers up and down my spine
And begs for a bottle of wine

And it introduces speculation
About the source of my intoxication
So let me haul down the facts from the shelf
And let you figure it out for yourself

Well, she mounted my stairs, and rang my bell
She was smiling wide and looking swell
We strutted out on the town on our way to dine
And we ordered a bottle of wine

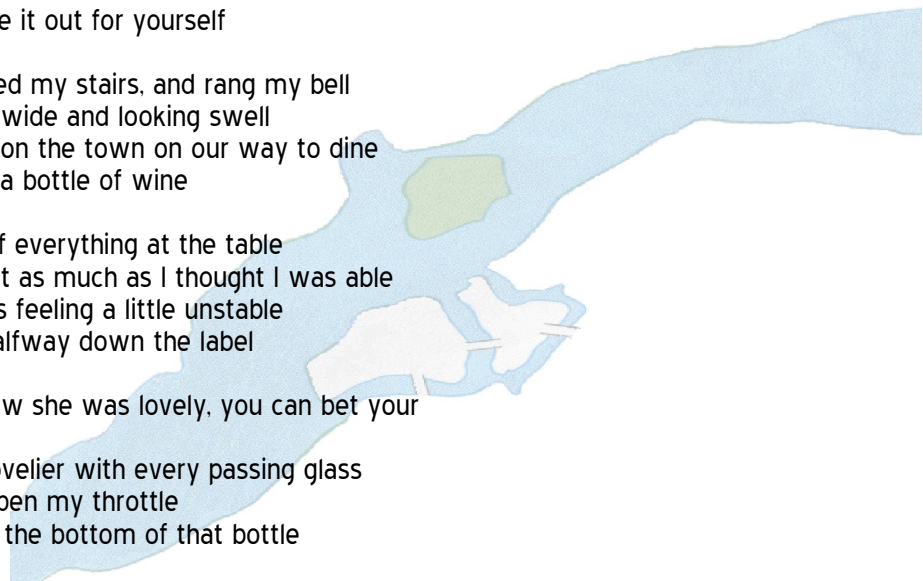
I ate a little bit of everything at the table
And I drank about as much as I thought I was able
And though I was feeling a little unstable
We were only halfway down the label

And though I know she was lovely, you can bet your
 ass
That she grew lovelier with every passing glass
I was ready to open my throttle
When we got to the bottom of that bottle

Well, I held her hand and kissed her goodnight
And the feeling hit me like a meteorite
Was she on her way to being my valentine
Or should I blame that bottle of wine?

Cuz the next time I saw her, the fire had died
Like a birthday present with nothing inside
I should have known better than to use as a model
A night I watched through the bottom of a bottle

Well, that's the end of my tale, the end of my song
But if you think it's the end of me and her, well, you'd
 be wrong
Her laugh is still lovely, her smile's still divine
And if I had a moment of doubt, well, it must have
 been that
bottle of wine



Meeting Judi

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The bear emerges in the middle of the night
Snorting and stamping his feet
In pajamas that were never meant for human
observation
He's been flushed from his lair
Roused from a sound night's sleep
Stirred from a quiet winter's hibernation
He bares his teeth
Glares through his horn-rimmed glasses
Growls with disdain at the chaos that passes
For meeting Judi

The coyote spots his victim a living room away
Now he's polishing the buttons on his captain's coat
Now he's dressing up in feathers of bronze and indigo
Now he's hurtling down the hillside on his rocket sled
Now he's hovering for a moment in the air beyond the
cliff
Now he's a puff of smoke in the valley miles below
And his body aches
As he listens to her laughter
That sudden collision
Is all too common after
Meeting Judi

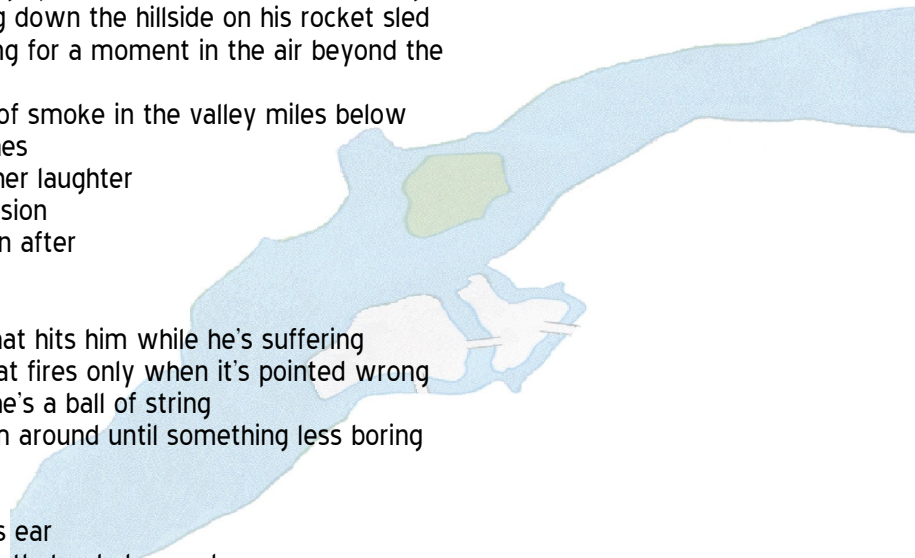
She's the anvil that hits him while he's suffering
She's the gun that fires only when it's pointed wrong
She's a cat and he's a ball of string
And she'll bat him around until something less boring
comes along

She purrs into his ear
Whispers secrets that only he can hear
Turns down the light to aid the atmosphere
And mask his larger flaws
She flicks her whiskers in his eye
Rubs her fur against the inside of his thigh
But it's not the armth of her breath that he'll
remember her by
But the length of her claws

She's a cat that jazz forgot about
He's a coyote without portfolio
The bear shuts his eyes, but no matter how he tries
The sight of them entwined is going to set his therapy
years behind
He just doesn't want to know

The bear growls a final time and lumbers away
The coyote plots for tomorrow the same plots as
yesterday
And the cat strokes her tail and turns back on the light

The bear lies down and his eyes drift shut
And the cat and the coyote go off to do God knows
what
And the menagerie shuts down for another night
The price of your admission
Is the least of your expenses
If you want to play
You'll have to pay the consequences
Of meeting Judi



Vices

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You could eat off my morals
I was as pure as the driven snow
You could steer by my ethics
You could read at night by my halo
But that was before I met you
Before I begged you to lead me astray
I didn't know how to get you
But righteousness wasn't the way

I was wandering around where I shouldn't
In a neighborhood I didn't know
I stopped you and asked for directions
And you told me where to go
You were a menace to my salvation
There was decadence in your eye
My knees took a moment's vacation
And I didn't even fight it, I didn't even try

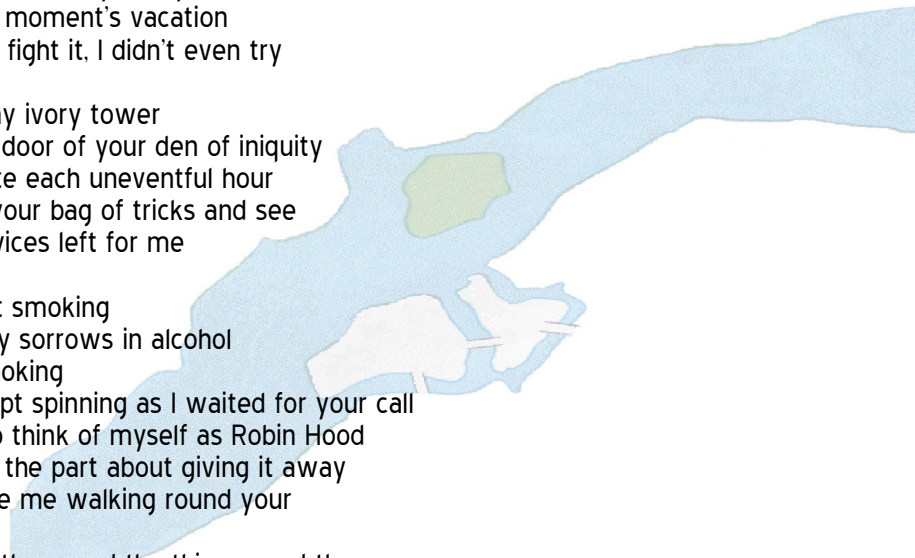
I'm all alone in my ivory tower
Pounding on the door of your den of iniquity
I've grown to hate each uneventful hour
So rummage in your bag of tricks and see
If you have any vices left for me

So I tried to start smoking
And drowning my sorrows in alcohol
I couldn't stop choking
And the room kept spinning as I waited for your call
You asked me to think of myself as Robin Hood
But forget about the part about giving it away
You couldn't have me walking round your
neighborhood
What would the thugs and the thieves and the
delinquents say?

I tried to be bad the way you wanted me to be
I tried to ooze venom and larceny
But I ain't going to hell unless you give me the key
And I'll never get to heaven
No, I'll never get to heaven
No, I'll never get to heaven
The way you got to me

So you sip your bourbon
And I slug my tea
You bite the end off a Cuban cigar
And I mask the stench with potpourri
We can't ask our parents to dinner
My folks would faint, your folks would faint
You can't pass me off as a sinner
And you'll never pass as a saint, never pass as a saint

I'm all alone in my ivory tower
Pounding on the door of your den of iniquity
I've grown to hate each uneventful hour
So rummage in your bag of tricks and see
If you have any vices left for me
Got to get me some (3x)



Putting Sophy to Bed

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I will trade one sweet for another hour of daylight

Sophy throws her licorice stick into the pot
And peers at her parents, jacks and queens in her
camp

The stakes are getting kind of high for a friendly game
of cards

And Sophy's starting to wilt under the low-hanging
lamp

It's the time of the evening for high-wire negotiations
For wheeling and dealing in talcum-powder-filled rooms
Poker faces melt into desperate solicitations
And the darkened spectre of the mattress looms

Sophy's going to be an international gambler
Sophy's going to be a diplomatic attache
She'll win with a bluff and a promise
Or perhaps with a tantrum instead
But Sophy ain't going to waver
And Sophy ain't going to bed

I wanna eat my milk and cookies in the evening breeze
I wanna run, I wanna jump, I wanna dance, I wanna
sing
I wanna laugh, I wanna play, I wanna stay up
Pleeeeeeeaaase

Sophy's in her kitchen stirring up a hypnotic brew
To mesmerize and paralyze her parents
She needs to stay up past her bedtime to achieve
worldwide domination
And she's grown tired of their constant interference
She's a four year old Lex Luthor, with her sinister plans
And designs on the household water supply
The cartoon bubbles above her head will tell you what
she's thinking,
and they say
"Superman doesn't have to go to bed, so why do I?"

Sophy's going to be an evil genius
Sophy's going to be a devilish mastermind
She'll win with the power of logic
Or perhaps with a tantrum instead
But Sophy ain't going to waver
And Sophy ain't going to bed

I wanna eat my milk and cookies in the evening breeze
I wanna run, I wanna jump, I wanna dance, I wanna
sing
I wanna laugh, I wanna play, I wanna stay up
Pleeeeeeeaaase

Sophy paces in her tent, miles from the front
The scouts are reporting in and the news isn't good
Mom and Dad have cut off access to the stairs in the
kitchen

And they're waiting in the hall, just like they said they
would

It's a desperate plan, she's a miniature Mata Hari
Sneaking across the border in her wide-brimmed hat
She asks the help of a friendly native in her very best
Spanish

And Mom scoops her up and scolds her and it isn't
supposed to end like that

Sophy's going to be a military commander
Sophy's going to be an undercover spy
She'll win with force and deception
Or perhaps with a tantrum instead
But Sophy ain't going to waver
And Sophy ain't going to bed

Sophy's going to be an evil genius
Sophy's going to be a devilish mastermind
Sophy's going to be a diplomatic attache
And Sophy's going to be a big girl who gets to stay up
late someday

An international gambler
A diplomatic attache
And Sophy ain't going to bed

Playing with the Big Boys Now

But we'll shake their hands and smile anyhow
Cuz we're playing with the big boys
Yes we're playing with the big boys
We're playing with the big boys now

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Got us a football team
A source of civic pride
I can hear the cheers echo off the walls
Got us the biggest signs that the laws allow
We're playing with the big boys now

Our city maps
Are obsolete
Every week we pave another highway
Our visitors still find us, but we're not sure how
We're playing with the big boys now

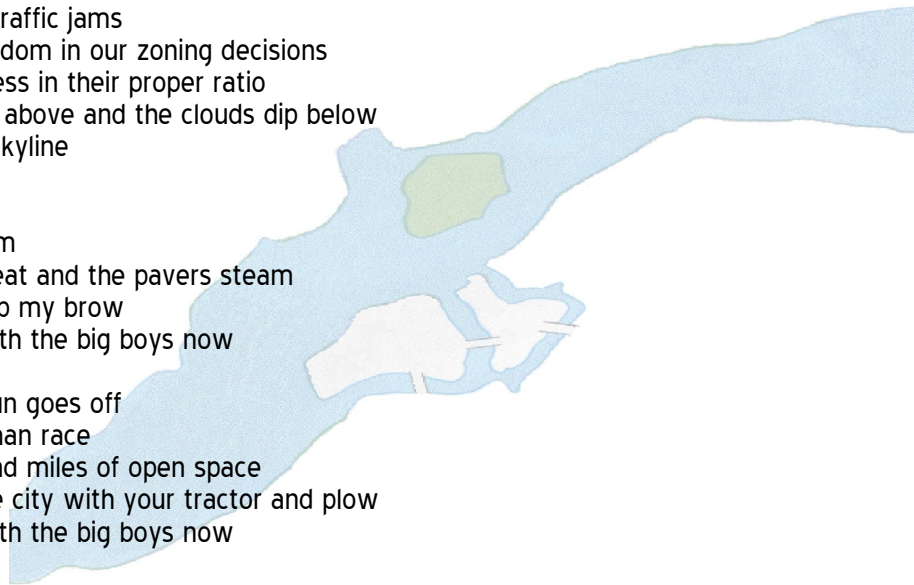
Lord
Deliver us from traffic jams
And grant us wisdom in our zoning decisions
Home and business in their proper ratio
As the sun soars above and the clouds dip below
The downtown skyline

The traffic roars
The towers gleam
The welders sweat and the pavers steam
In solidarity I mop my brow
We're playing with the big boys now

And when the gun goes off
We run that human race
Through miles and miles of open space
Don't drive in the city with your tractor and plow
We're playing with the big boys now

Lord
Deliver us from traffic jams
And grant us wisdom in our zoning decisions
Home and business in its proper ratio
As the jets soar above and the cars rush below
The downtown skyline

We say please and thank you and pardon me and how
do you do
We shake your hands and tip our hats and never
swear and never boast
You're welcome if you're staying or just passing
through
We're even civil to the assholes who fly in from the
coast
The talk too fast and deal too slick and half of what
they say is true
But it's the simple lack of manners that bothers us the
most



The Visiting Uncle

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I open the door for Elijah
He's only eight months old
He lumbers toward me like a beach ball
Rolling down a grassy
Hill
Somehow he's still standing
Where lesser infants have failed
All baby fat and half-formed consonants and grinning
Drool

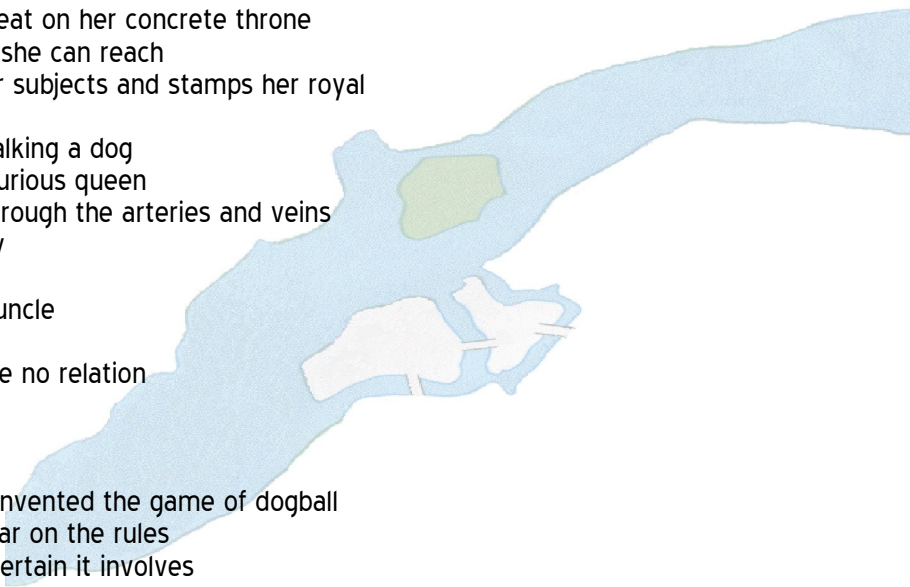
I am the visiting uncle
The family friend
These children are no relation
Just a partial preoccupation

Anne takes her seat on her concrete throne
It's the only stair she can reach
She beams at her subjects and stamps her royal
Tennis shoes
It's a little like walking a dog
Waiting for the curious queen
As she stomps through the arteries and veins
Of New York City

I am the visiting uncle
The family friend
These children are no relation
Just a partial
Preoccupation

And Jonah's just invented the game of dogball
He's a little unclear on the rules
But he's almost certain it involves
A dog
And a ball
And hurtling through the air like an artillery shell
But he lands without exploding
On padded sofas or carpeted floors
Or a mother's bruised but willing breast

And Anne demands my Chinese noodle worms
And Elijah looks puzzled as I kiss him goodnight
And Jonah gives me a cold
To remember him
By



The Vulture

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We creep through the streets of the city
We meet in twos and threes
Almost everything we say and do the vulture sees
He presses pen to paper, he touches pick to strings
He waits among the shadows to collect the words he
sings

He's looking for timeless wisdom
He's looking for the universal truth
He feeds on the genius of the elders
He feeds on the folly of youth
He thrives on salacious rumor
Appropriates a dash of humor
You better watch what you do, watch what you say
You might end up in a song someday

He's the waiter at your table
The clerk in every store
The sullen secretary just beyond your office door
We hone our blank expressions
And circumscribe our prose
But everything we think and feel the vulture knows

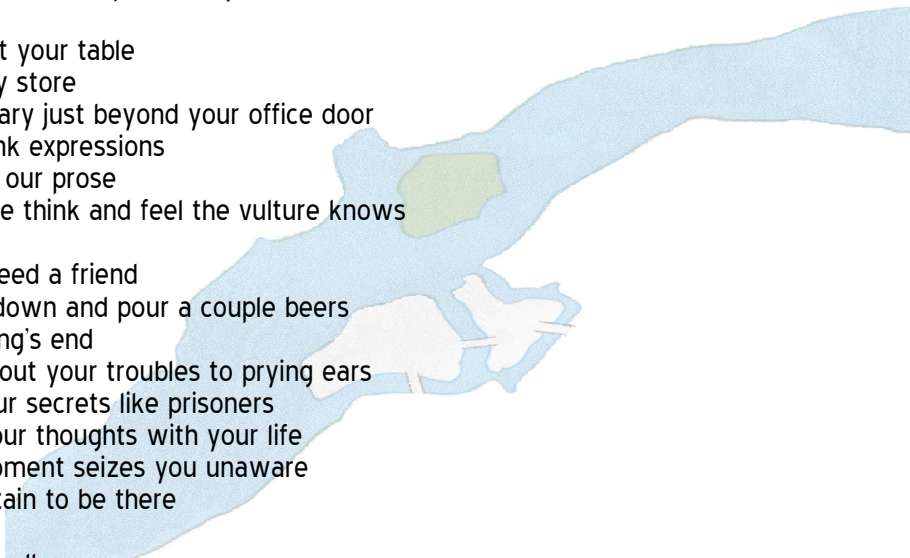
Someday you'll need a friend
And he'll sit you down and pour a couple beers
And by the evening's end
He'll be crooning out your troubles to prying ears
You can keep your secrets like prisoners
You can guard your thoughts with your life
But when the moment seizes you unaware
The vulture's certain to be there

Someday you'll finally snap
And you beg the listening skies for privacy
But here inside his trap
He'll hear your prayers in major ninths and poetry
You can keep your secrets like prisoners
You can guard your thoughts with your life
But when the moment seizes you unaware
The vulture's certain to be there

You can speak a private language
A secret set of signs
You can bury all your meaning in a nest of nonsense
lines
But the vulture will untangle
The vulture will unfold
The vulture will ensure that no one's tale remains
untold

He's looking for timeless wisdom
He's looking for the universal truth

He feeds on the genius of the elders
He feeds on the folly of youth
He thrives on salacious rumor
Appropriates a dash of humor
You better watch what you do, watch what you say
You might end up in a song someday



Chalkboard

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I can't remember how it started
The silences seemed a little less than kind
Cooler and longer than the day before
It crept in like frost beneath the shingles
We didn't see the damage, I didn't take the time
And every day the temperature dropped a little more

And I'm waiting for a reaction
In the sidewalk slate of your face
Where every broken moment bears its weathered
stain
And the chalk pastels of a happier time
Rendered by an unknown artist
Blur to dust in the traffic
And wash away in the rain

And though time is the best prescription
It's a luxury we can't afford
We're fingernails on each other's chalkboard

I've taken cover behind the sofa in the living room
I can serpentine to the armchair in the den
The shelling stops at dinnertime, to give the troops a
bite to eat
I've got reinforcements coming, but I don't know what
I'll do then

And though I've tried to base our truces
On the roll of the dice or the flip of a coin
There's only one set of rules upon which we both
agree
Choose your weapons, take your places
Draw your pistols, count your paces
Turn to fire, glimpse the faces
Wait and see

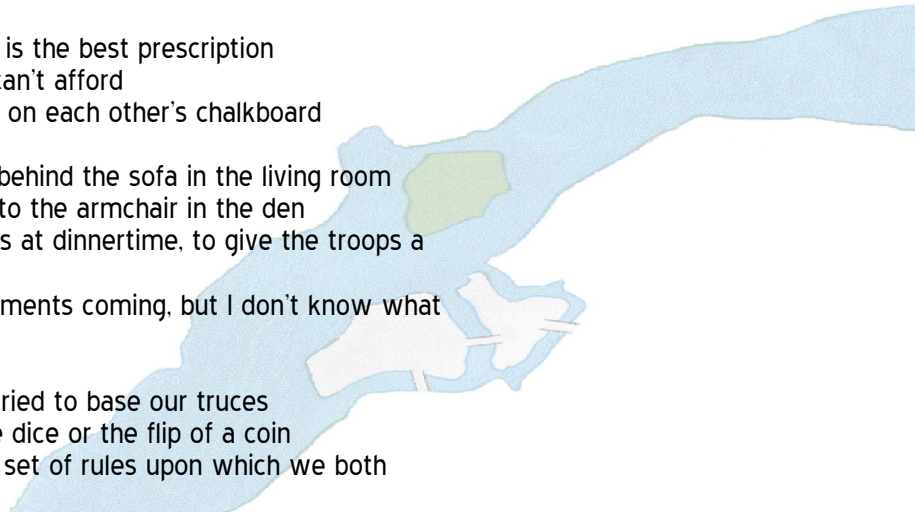
And though valor calls for discretion
It's a path too often unexplored
We're fingernails on each other's chalkboard

It's a quietly dying neighborhood
With soap for storefronts and weeds for yards
And traffic signals winking at the vacant streets
Apathy killed this struggling town
As certain as if it was dynamite
Will the last person out of our heart please turn off the
light

So I rub you with sandpaper
And we prick each other with needles
And you hunt me down in the basement next to the
laundry

I'll try to keep the bleeding low
But it's a trap they outlawed years ago
I might have to chew my leg off, but I'll get free

You might say the process is draining
But there's no more blood to be drawn
It's not that my patience is waning
It's that it's gone, gone, gone
We might locate the love that's remaining
If only someone would offer a reward
We're fingernails on each other's chalkboard



The Beatles Are Dying

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"Let me hear Penny Lane once more"
Sir Paul whispered on his deathbed
"I still remember the moment the amplifiers switched
on
and the tubes all glowed"
His nursemaid nodded silently and repositioned the
stylus
And the room sang that trumpet's ancient song
He closed his eyes and began to dream
About that barefoot walk across Abbey Road

Oh, the Beatles are dying (2x)

Ringo retired from his little red caboose
To bounce his grandchildren on his knee
Making up new and outlandish verses to "Yellow
Submarine"
And as the years passed he'd forget his own name
Or the faces of his children or where he lived
But he still snapped to attention when a cymbal
crashed
Or a snare serrated across the village green

Oh, the Beatles are dying (2x)

And John's assassin played Father Time
And Linda Eastman earned her angel's wings
You can try to seek refuge in rhythm and rhyme
But we all know what tomorrow brings
And George's sweet Lord will be there to greet them
And pretty soon all I'll have is this photograph
To remember them by
Seems like yesterday there was a buzz in a basement
in Hamburg
And today I hear "Yesterday" in an ad for an auto parts
store
We always said we wanted a revolution
But this ain't the revolution I was hoping
For

The Beatles are dying
Oh, the Beatles are dying

"Let me hear Penny Lane once more"



The Arrogance of Heartbreak

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Look at me. I'm an apple core on the trash heap of
romance

Look at me. I'm a carcass on the highway of love
Where's my consolation prizes
Where's my army of outraged friends
Where's my raft of sympathy
Everybody
Look at me

Do my laundry, pay my rent
Keep my pets from starving
Weep with me for her lost embrace
Wring your hands as I stare off sadly
Into space

I know you want to help me
But it's a huge mistake
I just can't seem to shake
The arrogance of heartbreak

Help me deface her photographs
And shred her correspondence
Curse the strangers who won't pass blame
And punish your friends who share her name

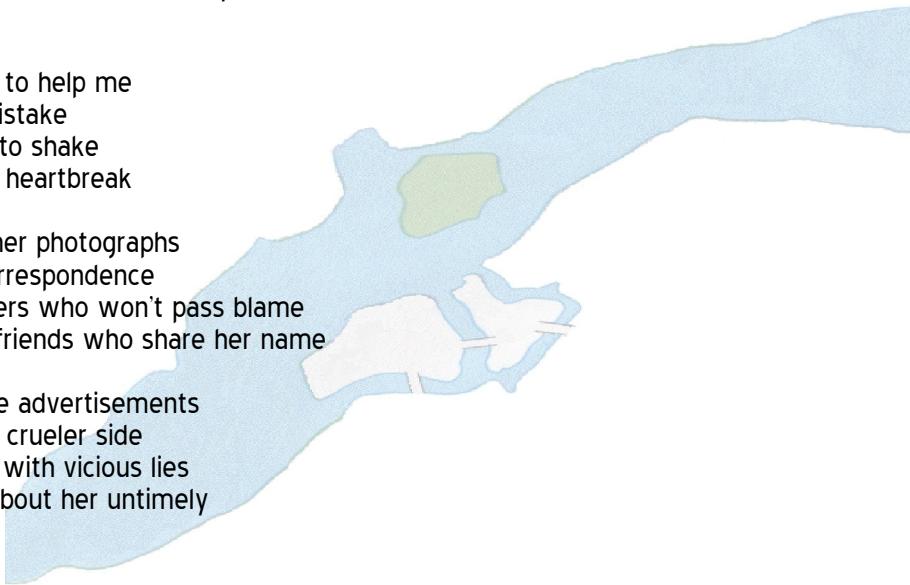
Take out full-page advertisements
Documenting her crueller side
Smear her virtue with vicious lies
And file reports about her untimely
Demise

I know you want to help me
But it's a huge mistake
I just can't seem to shake
The arrogance of heartbreak

Ply me with Kleenex and alcohol
Strippers and Penthouse magazines
Tell me that dreaming of retribution
Ain't no crime
Tell me stories where she gets burned
Tell me lies about the lessons I've learned
And make all those soothing condemning sounds
For the nineteenth time

Meet my eyes from across the room
Lend an ear for sympathy
Hold my hand over brewhouse foam
Stroke my temples
Take me home

I know you want to help me
But it's a huge mistake
I just can't seem to shake
The arrogance of heartbreak (3x)
The nerve



Saving the Second-Hand Virtue

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You'll never guess what I found in the dustbin
A little courage the someone had lost faith in
Notes in the margins, page corners folded down
A few faded traces of a highlight pen
And there's a prayer inside the cover
It's a little hard to see
That says, "I just need someone to love me"

So dust it off, clean it up
Bet it'll be better than new
Saving the second-hand virtue
Don't like the price that your courage makes you pay?
Buy a cheap one on the Web
Throw the other one away

You'll never guess what I found in the pawn shop
A touch of grace that they were using as a doorstep
A little dent in the waist, where you take your bows
Mold around the spots that hold doors for strangers
It had a label on the bottom
Kind of hard to see
That said, "I just want someone to love me"

So wash it off, hose it down
Bet it'll be better than new
Saving the second-hand virtue
If you'd like to run but your honor makes you stay
Sell the old one to a friend
Rent a new one by the day

You'll never guess what I found in the thrift store
A little common sense that someone had no use for
Scratches on the casing from a rollerblade fall
A little rust around the parts that know when to cross
the street
And a message scribbled underneath
The voided warranty
That said, "I just need someone to love me"

So shine it up, turn it on
Bet it'll be better than new
Saving the second-hand virtue
If the things you think are far too dumb to say
Give your caution to the poor
And do it anyway
Sell the old one to a friend
Rent a new one by the day
Buy a cheap one on the Web
Throw the other one away



What Kevin Remembers Next

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It's a grim day dawning in the 'hood for Whitey'thieves
Young toughs on the corner, cigarette packs in their
shirtsleeves
Grizzled lieutenants spitting tobacco in the shade
And muttering about the mess these careless
youngsters made

Hooker by night, waitress by day
Serves a coffee to a wise guy who plugged a bookie to
pad his resume
They've all read the papers, and they're scared and
perplexed
About what Kevin will remember next

Nerves fray in the kitchen, tempers flare in the yard
Fingers drum on bakery counters, shoulders hunch on
the boulevard
Lips are sealed and fingers are crossed in the context
Of what Kevin will remember next

Kevin's associates are kind of upset
About those people and places he was supposed to
forget
There's frustration, and rage, and occasional regret
And no one thinks he's finished yet

Eight by ten cell, a little sunshine at three
Wonder Bread for breakfast, General Hospital for
company
The thought of Whitey in a fake mustache
Swimming in women and liquor and cash
Jogs his memory

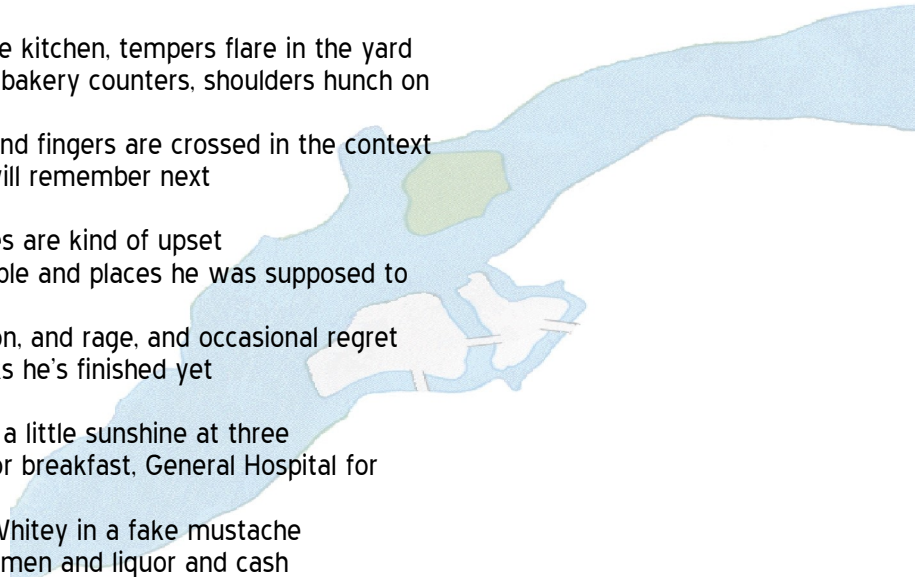
There was this bimbo down on Broadway who wanted
a piece of the action
She dropped too many names for Whitey's satisfaction
When a woman like that makes such a rash demand
You've got to kill her or deal her a hand

They seem to love their mamas, they can't be such
bad chaps
Just another day at the office, running numbers and
busting kneecaps
It's a dirty job, and just a privileged few can do it
It sure beats Burger King, it's a shame that Kevin blew
it

The iron fist turns rusty, the secrets wilt in the light of
day
Counterfeit twenties in the till, shallow graves beside

the highway
From the crustiest veteran to the youngest turk
They're all looking for a new line of work

And Kevin pumps the freeweights in the federal pen
He's serving two to five instead of eight to ten
It ain't good behavior's gonna save his skin
It's that Whitey can't get in



The Way She Looked Like You

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I put my parcels on the counter
Got a wedding on my mind
There's a clerk behind the clutter, and she gives me a
 wave
But it's a hand reaching out of a grave
It's eerie but it's true
How much she looks like you

A sudden crash of ocean
Washes back the time
I'm drowning as the dream descends
I race back to the surface and I get the bends
It's eerie but it's true
How much she looks like you

I remember your face as you told your tales
Your lips would linger on a turn of a phrase
But whenever I dwell upon these sweet details
I feel a tap on the shoulder of happier days

I was foolish and lonely
And you were bitter and lonely
And we stood next to each other for a while
and our friends made a fuss
There was just enough love to be dangerous
As we tried to make do
With how you looked to me, and I looked to you

I could try to forget about the ways it grew clearer
That I couldn't be the person you begged me to be
Or I could admire my scars in the mirror
Cuz pain has this funny integrity

The transaction's almost over
She's got her hand out for the bill
And I can't help but find it strange
How I'm already so different and here she is
expecting change
It was a shot out of the blue
The way she looked like you



Oyster Girl

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You look up and smile
And I ask myself what the hell is wrong with me
You take my hand for your anchor
When all I want to do is break free
But I don't have the courage to tell you
So I'm hoping you'll figure it out eventually
I'm counting on the rust of cowardice
Instead of the knife of bravery

You are my oyster girl
I am your blinded and stranded pearl
You'd sell your shell to keep me, this I know
But if I'm enough of an irritation
Maybe you'll let me go
Maybe you'll let me go

So I smile a little more weakly
And I consent with a little less spark
I turn away a little more quickly
At night in the dark
I protest a little more firmly
I frown and I whine and I worry out loud
It's the cheapest of tricks
But I'm not proud, I'm not proud, I'm not proud

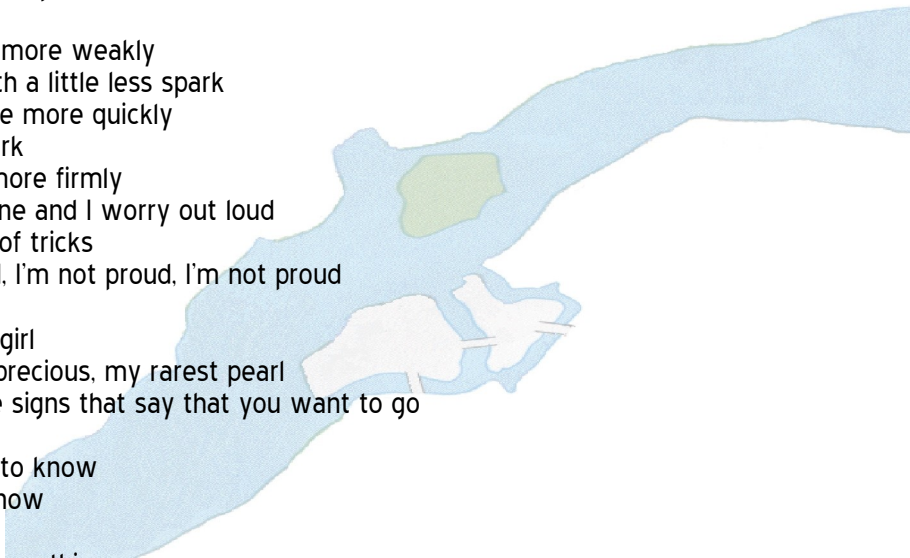
I am your oyster girl
And you are my precious, my rarest pearl
When I see these signs that say that you want to go
I wish I was blind
Cuz I don't want to know
I don't want to know

Your patience wears thin
With my stance of neglect
I wish I could tell you that it's weakness
And not disrespect
And all the joys that we shared
I don't want to discuss
The taste of our laughter will turn bitter after
The wreckage I've planned for us

If I laugh by mistake
If I warm to your touch
If I have to remind myself I can't afford to care
very much
Don't take it as an invitation
It's not a promise to stay
Cowards sometimes do things wrong
That way

You are my oyster girl
I am your shameful, your blameful pearl

You'd sell your shell to keep me, this I know
But if I cut you down
If I make you pick the crumbs off the floor
When your well of goodwill is empty
When you decide not to take anymore
Maybe you'll let me go (4x)



The Mistakes You've Made

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We were the match from hell, of that you can be sure
Romantic indigestion, mal d'amour
Compounding the damage with each moment we
 stayed
It was one of the mistakes we made

But now you're pointing fingers; man, that's rude
I won't be held responsible for the things you've
 screwed
Up
You want me for your scapegoat, but I'm afraid
I'm just one of the mistakes you've made

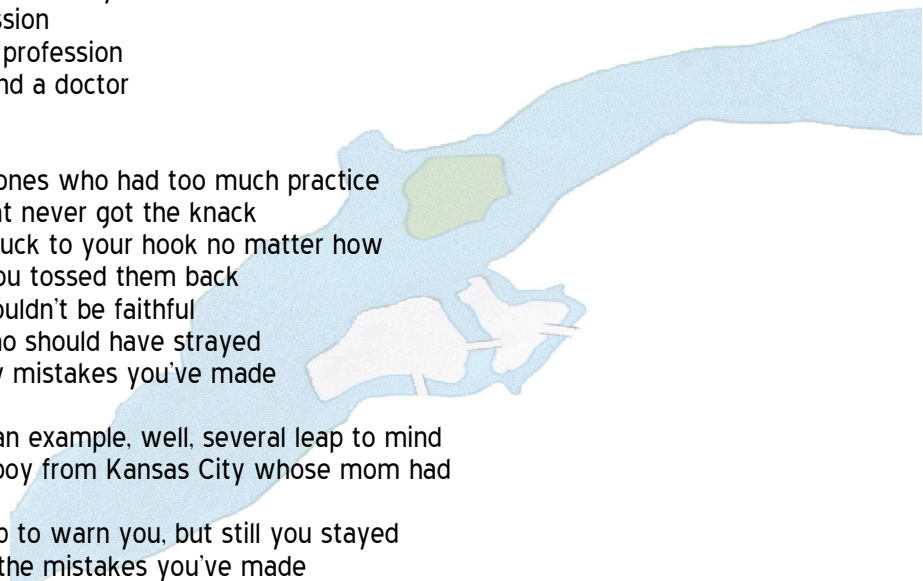
You could fill your pen with professional men
Or members of the faculty
But auto repossession
Don't count as a profession
And when you find a doctor
It's Mengele

There were the ones who had too much practice
And the ones that never got the knack
The ones who stuck to your hook no matter how
 many times you tossed them back
The ones who couldn't be faithful
And the ones who should have strayed
Among the many mistakes you've made

You ask me for an example, well, several leap to mind
There was that boy from Kansas City whose mom had
 just resigned
She called you up to warn you, but still you stayed
With another of the mistakes you've made

You swear that you're maturing
In the men you find alluring
But no one thinks it's going to last
Your friends have reached consensus
That your only safe defenses
Are a blindfold, and handcuffs, and a body cast

So when the sun is high, and love is in the breeze
And you inhale romance like smog or allergies
I may be no physician, but I can pinpoint your condition
Whenever you begin to sneeze
You're dogged by bad decisions
But dogs can be spayed
So they won't make the mistakes
No, they won't have what it takes
To make all the mistakes you've made



The Longest Day of the Year

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On the longest day of the year
On the porch behind your apartment
We made faces into your camera
In front of a platinum sky
On the longest day of the year
We pricked our pinkies and touched the tips
We drew two stick figures on the sidewalk and
guarded them from passersby
And the sun don't move, the clocks don't chime
Seems like we've got nothing but time

So stand clear
And let the sundial shadows pass
Free the sand from your hourglass
It can't make any difference here
On the longest day of the year

On the longest day of the year
We dipped our toes in the water
We ate clams from a paper bucket
We drew hearts in the sand
On the longest day of the year
I picked up a snail from the sidewalk
And I knelt and placed in on the third
finger of your left hand
And the sun don't move, the clocks don't chime
Seems like we've got nothing but time

So stand clear
And let the sundial shadows pass
Free the sand from your hourglass
It can't make any difference here
On the longest day of the year

Some day
When the future ain't so far away
And the past is just a masterpiece
Hanging on our wall
Then we
Will snare this firefly memory
It's just one of many moments
I'm gonna try to catch them all

On the longest day of the year
I put my gun down
I put my sword down
I stood there weaponless
On the longest day of the year
You whispered your answer to your finger snail
And you looked at me kind of slyly

And told me to guess

And the sun don't move, the clocks don't chime
Seems like we've got nothing but time

So stand clear
And let the sundial shadows pass
Free the sand from your hourglass
It can't make any difference here
So let go
And share the secret the vacationing roosters know
That time stopped passing a long long time ago
And who are we to interfere
On the longest day of the year (2x)



I Can't Write Love Songs

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Sunday morning
We wake up with the heat
We buckle up our bathrobes and shiver through the
paper
And I pick up my guitar
And shake it to find out what's inside
It's a spider's strand of inspiration
I make aimless tuneless noises
And I search for a melody
Your bare feet glow in the sunlight
And you ask "Are you thinking of me"

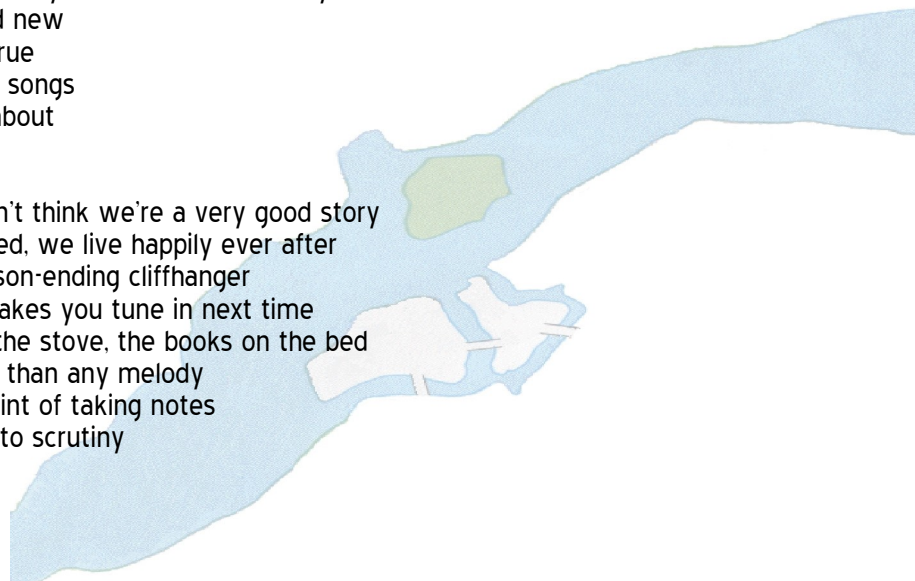
I can't write love songs
I don't know how it's done
Can't bear to bare my heart in front of everyone
They don't sound new
They don't ring true
I can't write love songs
So I can't write about
You

The truth is, I don't think we're a very good story
We meet, we wed, we live happily ever after
Where's the season-ending cliffhanger
The hook that makes you tune in next time
But the pots on the stove, the books on the bed
Tell a better tale than any melody
So what's the point of taking notes
Or subjecting us to scrutiny

(chorus)

And last night
I held you as you fell asleep
And I thought of words to sing
But they didn't tell a story
And they didn't form a rhyme
No, not this time

(chorus)



The Millennium Song

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Chicken in the oven, cider on the stove
Champagne on the back porch cooling
The kitchen stinks of lemon, cinnamon, clove
Dog lies near the trash can drooling

Cold breath on the window as the doorbell rings
And cake and wine and cheese and bread and hearts
stand in the doorway
We've made the march of time, but no one promised
 life was fair
I've seen my whiskers peeking gray
But Dick Clark's looking younger every day

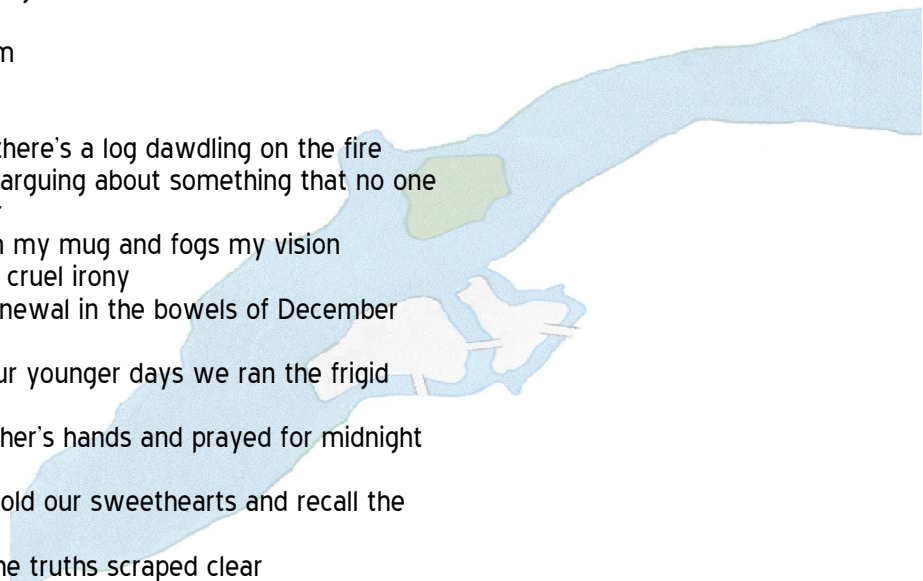
So hurry up
We don't have long
Learn the words
To our millennium
Song

Ten o'clock and there's a log dawdling on the fire
And we've been arguing about something that no one
 can remember
Steam rises from my mug and fogs my vision
but I still see the cruel irony
Of celebrating renewal in the bowels of December

'Cause back in our younger days we ran the frigid
 streets
And held each other's hands and prayed for midnight
 kisses
But tonight we hold our sweethearts and recall the
 frantic revelry
And chuckle at the truths scraped clear
And besides
It's warmer in here

So raise your glass
And sing along
Learn the words
To our millennium
Song

Eleven forty five and three of us are almost dozing
But the year is hanging by a thread
And another one is straight ahead
So forget about the lost election, point your corks in a
 safe direction
Tense your toes at the starter's gun
Ten nine eight seven six five four three two
Thousand one



Moving

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Pack up the books, sort them by size
Pick out the stinkers and give them away
Roll up the rugs, tie them with rope
Shake out the dust and vacuum them later

Gather the change from inside the couch
It'll pay for the tolls on the interstate
Shut the windows and lock the door
Don't know whether to mourn or celebrate

Cancel the paper, forward the mail
Wave to your neighbors one last time
Ready or not, now we are free
Kym and Taylor and me

Clean out the closets and throw out the crap
Empty that ominous kitchen drawer
There's gizmos and gadgets and doohickey thingies
How can you need them if you don't know what
they're
For

Donate, downsize, simplify
Is it wisdom or betrayal
You don't want to wake up tomorrow
Without the props to tell your tale

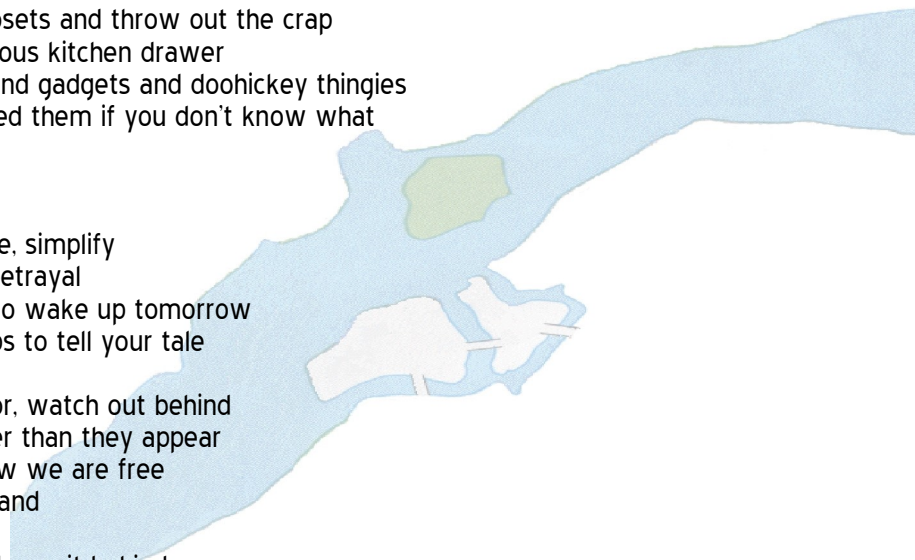
Look in the mirror, watch out behind
Objects are closer than they appear
Like it or not, now we are free
Kym and Taylor and

Keep it, trash it, leave it behind
Everything goes into one of the piles
The more we pack the more we find
We're traveling lifetimes more than miles

The lonely snap of bubblewrap
A partially empty bottle of beer
A key on the floor of an empty room
This is the evidence we were here

Open the throttle, step on the gas
Kick up the sand in your hourglass
Ready or not, now we are free
Kym and Taylor and me

Ready or not



Me and Walter Mitty

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Me and Walter Mitty
Traded notes on the veranda
From the jungles of Uganda
To the alleyways of Rome
And we reached a quick agreement
That in spite of trouble brewing
Though good deeds still needed doing
It felt good to be back home

The world weighed on our shoulders
As we sipped our tea and honey
Not adventure, fame or money
Could distract us from our goal
While others spin their story
Of revenge and gain and glory
We will dream the dreams of courage
That can make this poor world whole

Chase the pirates on the ocean
As the hurricane roars past
Give the password to your contact
Taste your blood and breathe your last
Free the patriotic prisoners
From the despot's catacomb
Lead the refugees to safety
Save the world and hurry home

Me and Walter Mitty
Watched the sun set on the river
Heard the chirping crickets shiver
And the rattling of roulette
But we couldn't help reflecting
On the world and all its dangers
And the untold desperate strangers
That we hadn't rescued yet

Me and Walter Mitty
Tucked our pistols in our pockets
Rode the Orient Express
And snatched the maidens from the tracks
But it's a million miles to Moscow
As the last cabana closes
And we stroll back, sniffing roses
And trying to relax

(chorus)

Me and Walter Mitty
Downed our final dry martinis
Raced our custom Lamborghinis
To our leader's hidden lair
We were briefed and dressed for duty

In our comfy plaid pajamas
We curled up with dime-store dramas
In our favorite easy chair

Me and Walter Mitty
Read our secret coded orders
We'll be off to war-torn borders
And adventures yet unknown
We'll be dreaming dreams of justice
Slaying dragons, saving planets
In this world with too few heroes
You just have to be your own



The Elephant in the Room

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He kind of blocks the door, when I get up to let you in
He says he's merely clumsy, but I'm suspecting
discipline
He grazes in my parlor, beneath a wrinkled cloud of
doom
He's the sturdiest of baggage, he's the elephant in the
room

I offer you a beverage, and you gratefully make your
choice
But above his heavy breathing I can barely hear your
voice
We talk about the weather loud and firm
But he cannot take a hint, my patient packyderm

He doesn't seem to mind that he doesn't have a name
I can't bear to meet his eyes, but he stays here all the
same
We hunt for other topics as he lumbers in the gloom
I won't say anything if you won't about the elephant in
the room

He says he'd work for peanuts, but that's more than I
would pay
But I'd buy him all of Africa if he'd only go away
He's a constant through each psychosocial fad
He's the parrot on my shoulder, the dog I never had

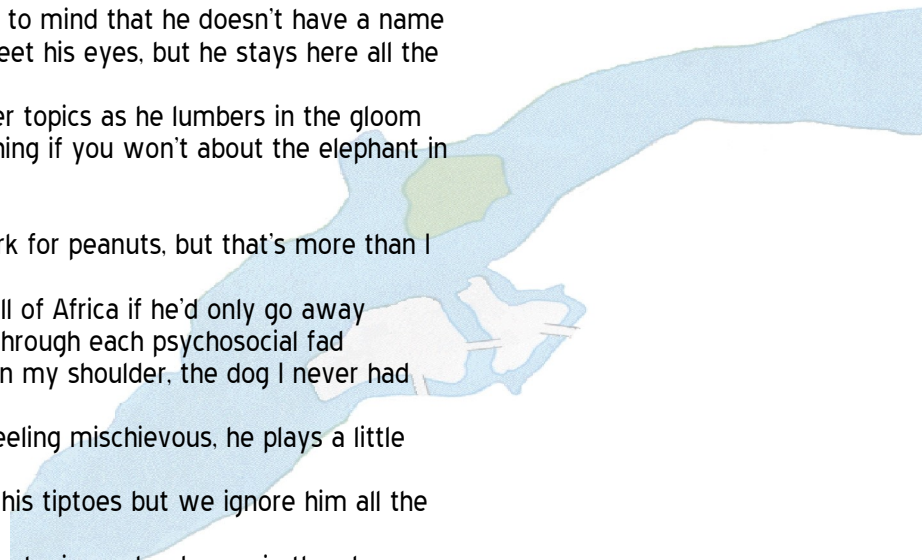
And when he's feeling mischievous, he plays a little
game
He stands up on his tiptoes but we ignore him all the
same
We hunt for other topics as he dances in the gloom
I won't say anything if you won't about the elephant in
the room

He's been stared at and avoided
He's been whispered at and shunned
But it's never changed his sunny disposition
He's endured the coldest shoulder
As he's watched us growing older
But he only seems more focused on his mission

And then one fateful day you brought an uninvited
guest
She was large and grey and wrinkled and she had
something on her chest
She was looking for another ear to bend
And there amid the shadows, she made a brand new
friend

They bellow and they chortle as they egg each other

on
They're so vaguely badly mannered and so vaguely put
upon
We could endure those painful quarrels about who's
ignoring whom
Or we could scoff at all this fussing
Why, it's barely worth discussion
Ve know absolutely nussing
About the elephants in the room



Hallucination

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Ah, last week, I remember it well
We found a stray cat beneath your neighbor's porch
And as it looked up at me with those big green saucers

You promised that we could keep it
Now it's five AM and you're awake again
and the cat is treading on brand new bedding
And you're telling me it's all my fault
as you lasso the cat with your sheet
And I hope it's the exhaustion talkin'
When you call me names I can't repeat

I ain't lyin', I'm just remembering differently
It's subject to interpretation
It may be plain reality
Or a convenient hallucination

Ah, last year, I remember it well
You wore that red, red dress on the day we met
And as the sun beat down on those empty stands
We toasted our team to victory
Now it's five AM and you're awake again
and you swear it was hazy and the crowds were crazy
And you stained your favorite T-shirt
as we traded a couple belts
And the Sox were losing another one
And I've got you confused with someone else

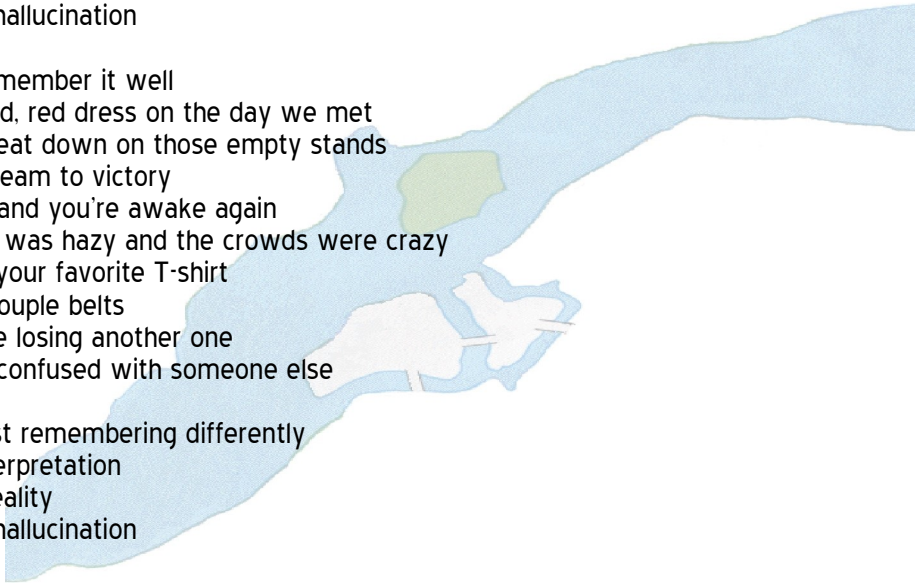
I ain't lyin', I'm just remembering differently
It's subject to interpretation
It may be plain reality
Or a convenient hallucination

No permanent record, no tape recorder
No memo filed in triplicate
No judge, no jury, no court reporter
No journalist live at the scene
No wise and relevant Asian proverb
No Solomonic wisdom, no superhero lurking
I'd like to go back for another look
But there ain't no instant replay,
and the time machine ain't working

And last time, I remember it well
The streets were warm and the subway sang
And you held up a match in your fingertips
And asked me if I'd like to light it
Now it's five AM and we're awake again
and we're finished sweating and I've started fretting
That we'll never, never match
and this is all a big mistake
And you're reminding me of promises

I swore I'd never make

I ain't lyin', I'm just remembering differently
It's subject to interpretation
It may be plain reality
Or a convenient hallucination



I Can See Everything From Here

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I've been climbing up this mountain
Climbing day and night
Got chasms on my left and I got glaciers on my right
I creep up through those crevices on hand and knee
And I stop to catch my breath, and this is what I see

I see the twisted path you followed
To slip into my heart
The tricks you played to stay there
From the very, very start
The frozen words you whispered to keep me near
Oh darling, I can see everything from here

The way you plot my future
And the way you sculpt my past
The way you forge these chains that
bind my heart so tight and fast
The way you make your promises and disappear
Oh darling, I can see everything from here

You're the shadow in the corridor to trip me as I pass
I fall flat on my face, and I fall flat on my ass
And you reach down to help me with that goddamn
upper hand
From high atop this mountain
I finally understand

The way you plot my future
And the way you sculpt my past
The way you forge these chains that
bind my heart so tight and fast
But the secrets that you kept from me, well,
Now they're crystal clear
Oh darling, I can see everything from here

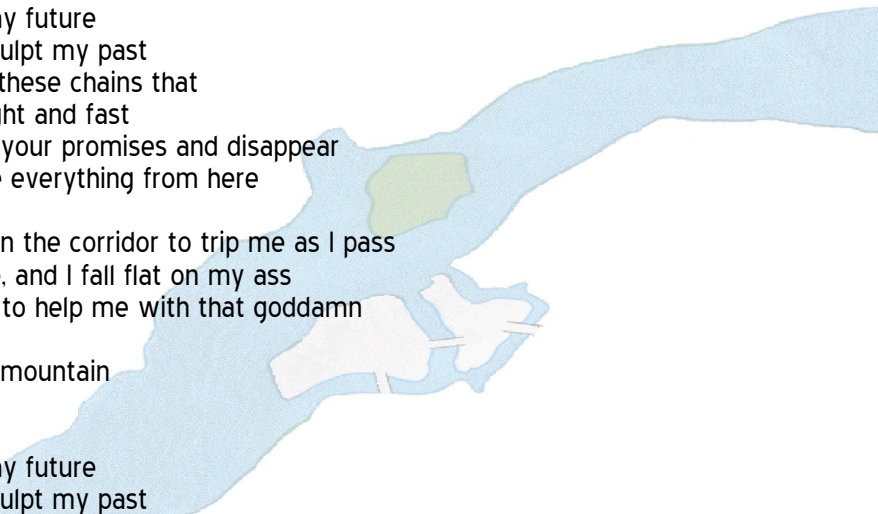
But is that us in our dotage
Locked in our embrace
The familiar look of panic etched across my wrinkled
face
No mutiny concerns you, no scraps of pride remain
I lean on you as firmly as I lean upon my cane

And what fool would stay in prison
With a copy of the key
And why can't I do to you what you're gonna do to me
If I'm the marionette and you're the puppeteer
What the hell's the point of seeing everything from
here

It's a muddy, muddy march

Through the foggy mists of time
And I just can't bear the thought that I'll learn
nothing from this climb
But there you are in front, with me bringing up the rear
Ankle deep in shit
So mad I could spit
Nothing's changed a bit

I can see everything
From here



Not Quite Spring

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I stumbled over the leaves we'd forgotten
The soggy mess of an unkempt fall
I tossed them skyward, waiting for a warmer breeze
to take them
But it couldn't take them all
Damp with ice and slush they fell
Spattered the mailbox and the telephone pole
It's a doubtful balm to soothe the sting
Of this not quite winter, not quite spring

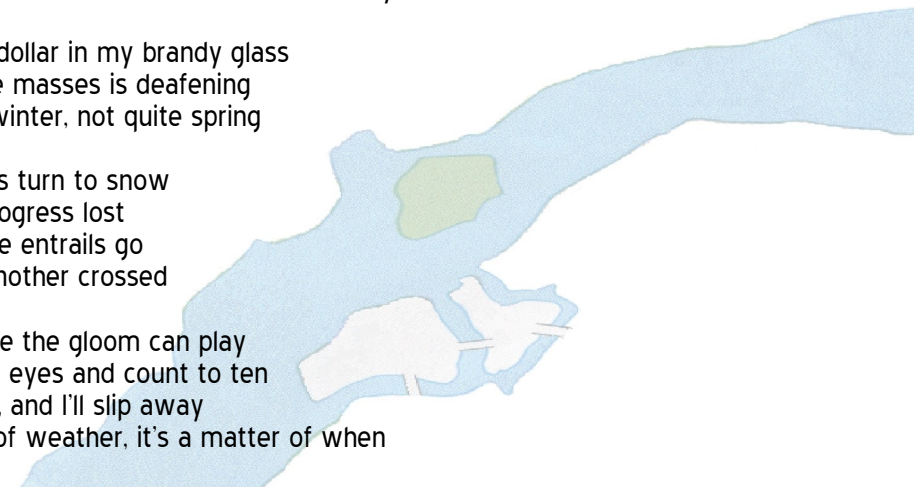
At dusk I asked the sun to reconsider
At dawn I asked the moon to yield some ground
I pried the day apart with the force of my persuasion
And it seemed to make a difference
But no one stopped to thank me, no one shook my
hand
No one tucked a dollar in my brandy glass
The silence of the masses is deafening
In this not quite winter, not quite spring

Freezing raindrops turn to snow
A bitter tale of progress lost
Back and forth the entrails go
One god sated, another crossed

I've a simple game the gloom can play
Where I close my eyes and count to ten
He'll run and hide, and I'll slip away
It's not a matter of weather, it's a matter of when

This battle of wills will only lead to trouble
Mother Nature whispered as the drizzle swirled
Your victories today are just losses saved for later
I've got all the time in the world
But still I curse the darkness, still I raise my sword
Still I light my fires to melt the snow
You've got to stand for something
In this not quite winter, not quite spring

It's not a matter of weather
It's a matter of when



A Man Like Me

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If there were colors more primary than primary colors
Those would be the colors he'd be
Brighter than the stars, wiser than Socrates
Heavier than gravity
More honest than truth
He's the original the original's a copy of
He's the next plunge in the swimming hole, the next
kiss in the rain
Frozen anticipation
The picture of perfect love

I fell into your looking glass
When I reached out to take your hand
I tried to speak with my voice, my thoughts, my
desires
But all in a language you didn't seem to understand
You're tuned in to some distant station
He's holding flowers on your doorstep on channel
number three
It's a barrage of better moments, the punchline to all
the jokes
The trailer for a movie you never got to see

You say you find your prospects grim
You say you view the field so skeptically
There's never been a man like him
But there's never been a man like me

Now we're sitting in your living room, your tomb to
your lost lover
Here's the masking tape he left here you just can't
bear to use
Here's a lock of his hair, the sweater you refuse to
wash
The note he left one morning when he went out to
find the news

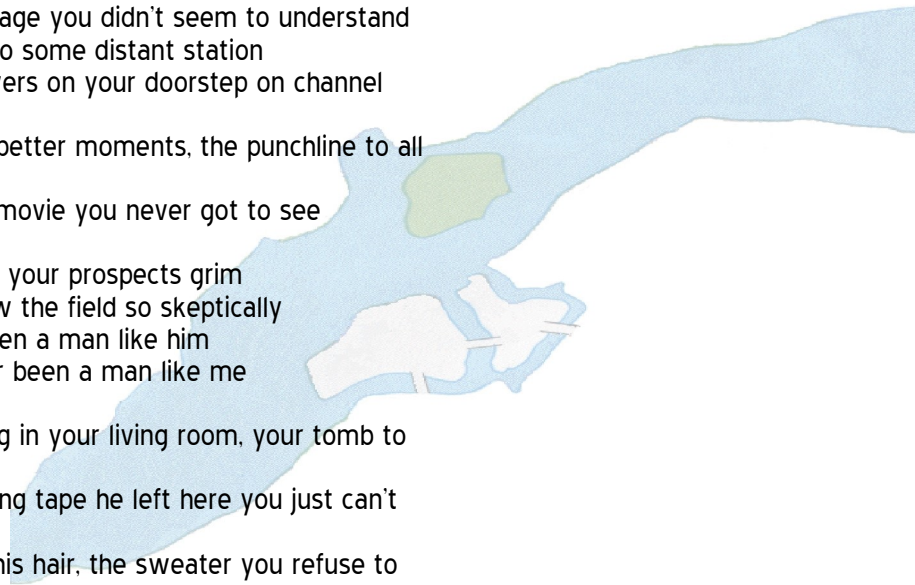
It's a motley collection on which to found a new
religion
A single blind disciple is all it can hope to gain
It brooks no caution, makes no promises
And it calls salvation what I call pain

Did he beg for your forgiveness on the day he broke
your heart
Was he suffused with sad nobility on the day he said
goodbye
It's an all too common tale, and he's got company on
the scale
Somewhere between a deity and just another guy

This man you've hung your heart on, I know that you

still see him
Posed in the middle distance with his chin against the
sun
It's been a lovely visit but I've grown tired of this
museum
Why don't you try to count to two before you decide
that he's the one

You say you find your prospects grim
You say you view the field so skeptically
There's never been a man like him
But there's never been a man like me



It Seemed like a Good Idea at the Time

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He invited me onto his yacht
And offered me champagne and truffles from a
platinum bowl
"Would you believe I started with nothing but the
clothes on my back
And a no-interest loan from the governor's son?
Y'see, there's this little company down in Texas
And I'm not sure what they do but they seem to do it
very well
I made my investment and watched it accrue
I tripled my money, and you can too"

You take three parts hubris and no parts shame
Mix a gallon of repellent and you'll get bitten all the
same
You've been oh so entertaining and I haven't spent a
dime
Yeah it was dumb
But it seemed like a good idea at the time

She was a persistent little brat
And there were days I could swear that she'd never
take no for an answer
So there was the time in the hallway and the time
under my desk
And the time I left a stain
Now the world regards me as a congenital liar
who can't keep his pants zipped
And I lost my job, and the dog died
And I'm staring at the tatters of my legacy
And my wife has made her choice between Strom
Thurmond and me

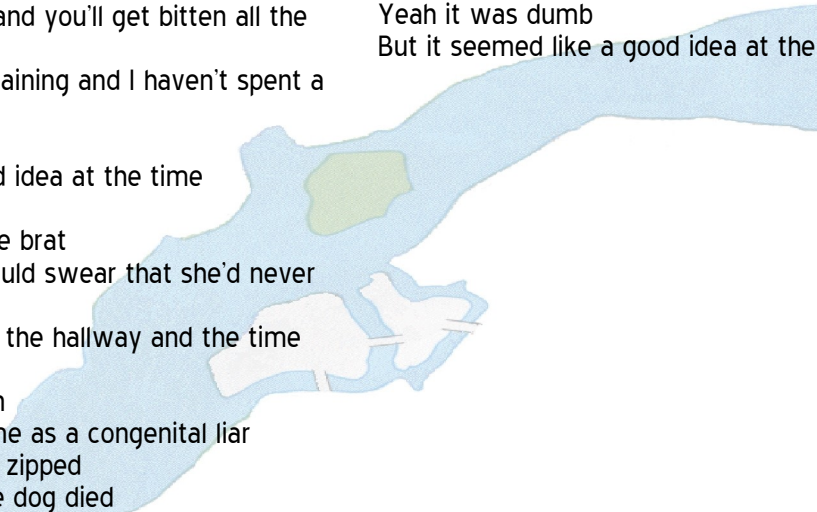
I took three parts hubris and no parts shame
Mixed a gallon of repellent and got bitten all the same
I've been oh so entertaining and you haven't spent a
dime
Yeah it was dumb
But it seemed like a good idea at the time

And those pesky small corrections
That leap in from strange directions
They're just pebbles in the path
They'll never crease your placid brow
But from the poles to the equator
You're gonna look real stupid later
And if you want my frank opinion
You don't look too clever now

So if you've ever left a courthouse with a bag over

your head
Or referred all reporters to your attorney
If you've ever stopped reading the paper because
every time
you read the paper thinking things couldn't get any
worse
They get worse
And if your ears are ringing with the sound of mocking
laughter
And your face is flushed, and your nerves are shot
You might pray for something curable, like the plague
or halitosis
But that ain't gonna be your doctor's diagnosis

You went heavy on the hubris and skimmed on the
shame
Mixed a gallon of repellent and got bitten all the same
You've been oh so entertaining and I haven't spent a
dime
Yeah it was dumb
But it seemed like a good idea at the time



Cassandra

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Cassandra makes a face and births a new prediction
Her breath grows heavy, and her knees go weak, and
her eyes descend
It's not about politics, and it's not about religion
and it's not about a neighbor, and it's not about a
friend
The one thing that concerns her is the way we end

And she rations her prophecy
Don't wanna take a stab at the lottery
Don't wanna write tomorrow's headlines
Don't wanna guess what's in my hand

Cassandra
What makes you see the things you saw
In the middle of the night, after all my second guessing
Over each real and imagined flaw
Oh Cassandra
You say you suspected all along
That doubt this deep trumps love this strong
But what makes you think there's anything wrong
With us

I've seen Cassandra pacing when she thinks that I'm
asleep
I've seen her lose her place, in a public space
when the demons creep
They tap her on the shoulder, and they poke her in the
ribs
and they tread upon her toes, and they kick her in the
shins
And her breath grows heavy, and her knees go weak,
and the trance begins

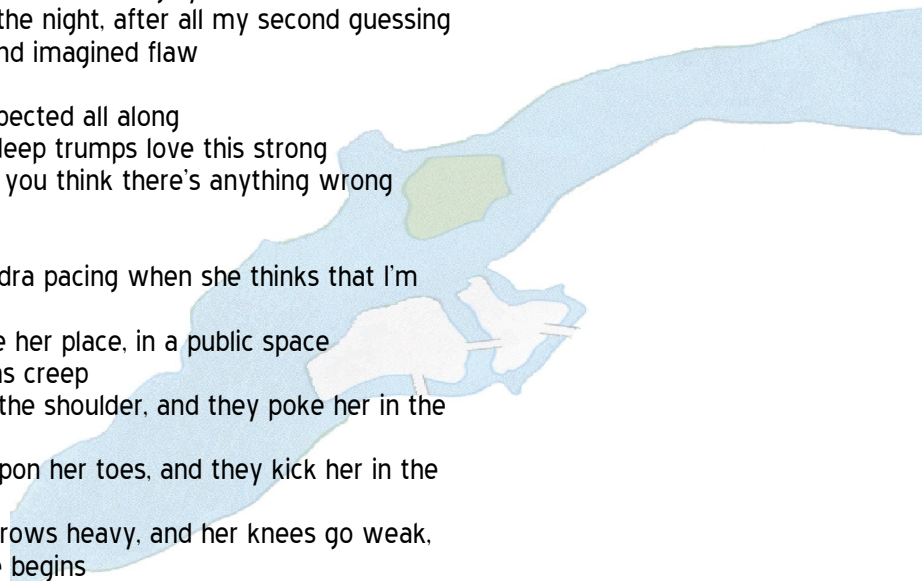
And Cassandra draws a crowd
She's got her acolytes of doom
They form the static in our kitchen
And pierce the silence of our room

Cassandra
What makes you see the things you saw
In the middle of the night, after all my second guessing
Over each real and imagined flaw
Oh Cassandra
You say you suspected all along
That doubt this deep trumps love this strong
But what makes you think there's anything wrong
With us

Your friends are at a loss
They say, look at the damage that you do
And you say, I know you think we're perfect, and I

know you think I'm crazy
But the future's true, it's true, it's true

Cassandra
What makes you see the things you saw
In the middle of the night, after all my second guessing
Over each real and imagined flaw
Oh Cassandra
You say you suspected all along
That doubt this deep trumps love this strong
But what makes you think there's anything wrong
But what makes you think there's anything wrong
But what makes you think there's anything wrong
With us



The Election Song

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Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Competing to serve you publicly
One's enough to make you curse
And the other one is worse

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Run campaign ads on your TV
I want your vote, I'll tell you why
I'm not the other guy

They don't much care if the question's hard
They answer them all with the same regard
"Lock 'em up, blow 'em away,
Not in my backyard"
Tweedledum and Tweedledee
The booby prize of democracy
When they zig and zag and haw and hem
There ain't much difference between them

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Differ in their philosophy
One hates the poor, and one hates the rich
But I can't remember which

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Squabble about the economy
They each have a plan to save your ass
As long as it's middle class

They're fond of business and tough on crime
They're giddy watching the Dow climb
They'll slap the wrists of nepotists
Some of the time
Tweedledum and Tweedledee
The booby prize of democracy
There's an instinct lodged in my brain stem
That there ain't much difference between them

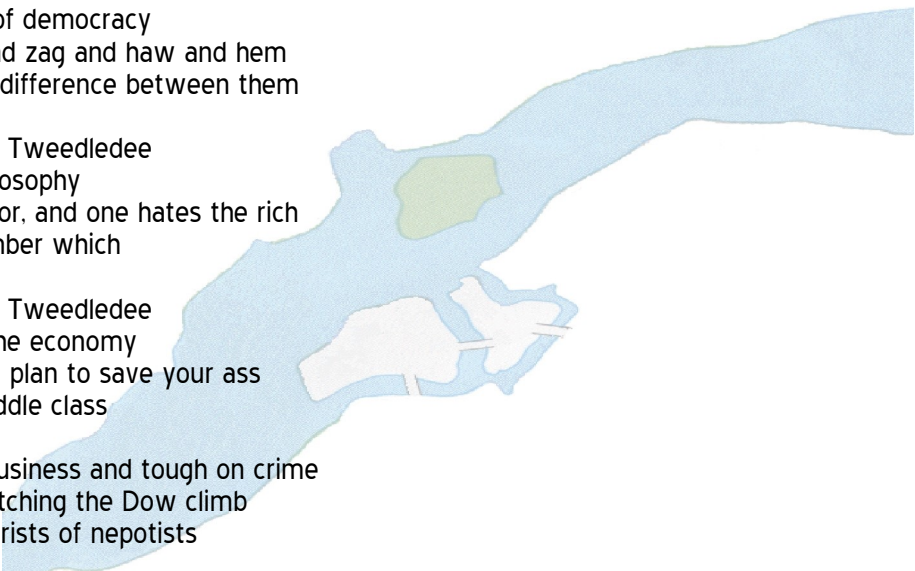
Tweedledum and Tweedledee
A model of opportunity
Man or woman, white or black
You can be a party hack

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Believe in the rule of majority
Like back when Bush defeated Gore
By a vote of five to four

Their skulls are thick and their nerves are thin
Their principles made of gelatin
It must be a flaw in election law
That one of them has to win

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
The booby prize of democracy
There's an instinct lodged in my brain stem
That there ain't much difference between them

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
This time it's O'Brien and Romney



When the Empire Falls

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They say a lobster boiled slowly
Never knows he's dying
It lacks that certain sense of urgency
Living the high life
Strutting safe inside its shell
King of the shallows
Taking whatever the sea has to give
Just a bit too stupid to live

When the empire falls it will be whittled by degrees
Pecked by sparrows and stung by bees
Most of us lounging behind these walls
Will go right on sleeping when the empire falls

It was a lovely suit of armor
With heralds at the breastplate
And a scabbard at its side
But then you wore it to too many parties
And you left it in the rain
Forgot what it was made for
Taking whatever the steel had to give
Just a bit too stupid to live

When the empire falls it will be cut off at the knees
Softened by the sun and scattered on the breeze
When that knock on the door comes and destiny calls
We'll be honor-bound to answer when the empire falls

Nero fiddled while Rome was aflame
And now even the Visigoths have their own video
game
Glued to our sofas like a planet to a sun
We've got five hundred channels
And the revolution's on every goddamned one

Well, this boxer's lost a step or two
But he still packs a hefty uppercut
And he'll hit you and hurt you where it counts
And he's got a nasty temper
But his memory is shot
And his attention is starting to wander
Taking whatever the ring had to give
Just a bit too stupid to live

When the empire falls it will be whittled by degrees
Pecked by sparrows and stung by bees
Most of us lounging behind these walls
Will go right on sleeping

When the empire falls it will be cut off at the knees
Softened by the sun and scattered on the breeze
When that knock on the door comes and destiny calls

We'll go right on sleeping when the empire
Falls

They say a lobster boiled slowly
Never knows he's dying

