

Stumbling Through Oblivion: Collected Poems

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OUR VOICES ARE VIBRATIONS
POEMS: 2005 to 2014

"audience" (Summer 2006)
congregated, open-mouthed
unable to think of anything else
in the summer's furnace light
The colors collide, excited night
vibrations unite, reactions abound
losing yourself inside a new sound
a stirring inside, a passionate cheer
makes the world disappear

"poets, maybe" (Fall 2005)
The days only last so long
Time falls through your fingers
like water

Stop and see through
I think I see you

To begin with

*Bare bedroom walls
A Styrofoam angel
A massive old cloth banner
Little pink flowers beaded with rain
Many storms, many sunsets
Distant radio towers
Dormitory basements
Long hallways lit up
Lone sunflower in the weeds
Tree faces, concert stages
Souvenirs of old vacations
Sunglasses on picnic tables
Hilltops, shadows, songs
Classic cars, noisy bars
The leaves of Kensington
Pale afternoon in the living room
Zoo fountains
Teenage bonfires
Rainbows on the freeway
Your father's work space
John F. Kennedy's limousine
Hearts traced in snow on a rear windshield
Micro waved mac n' cheese
Ornate gargoyle window carvings
Duct tape on a bass drum
Coffee at an airport
A plastic skeleton
A carwash sign
Spiral blossom doodles
Forgotten treehouses
A bust of MLK slick with night rain
Jetstreams in the evening
ragweed dreamcatchers*

Halloween butlers
Famous marquees
antique stores

The days passed by, on we ran
When we're gone we'll understand

"bluepill blues" (Fall 2005)
earthbound angel, take this heart
look away right from the start
human perfection achieved
much too aware of it for me

life must be good with that sweet face
to show to anyone who comes your way
candy kisses, blown to lucky guys, misty-eyed
hair like spun gold pours onto bronze shoulders
body carved by the most careful chisels
shaped and chipped, little by little
God spent years on that body, I'll bet
How does it feel to be so perfect?

"sight of neon" (Fall 2005)
Beautiful city, electricity
An evening high on energy
Pleased to meet you
Pleased to meet you

Elevated, I cry, I try
To pry into the core
Of the brilliant light
But it's too bright

To fulfill the minds of modern man
Run to the fountains as fast as you can

Another new year to bring in the change
Holding out for a miracle, a Sunday charm
Suicidal pose, the answer God knows
Show you the goosebumps that rise on my arm

This is just the way I roll
So drink your edible chemical
The faces flashing through the square
The sight of neon everywhere

"the work" (Winter 2006)
I almost wrote a book
on how to talk with dead rock stars
But Jim Morrison told me to fuck off
And take my phony poser ass elsewhere
And I know Cobain hates my guts
Even though I said I was sorry
That I read his journals,
and it isn't fair
Don't get me started on the classics,
but whatever
here's the part where I don't care

I see lows and liars everywhere
And it takes one to know one
But as long as I can write it down
I think we'll get it done

"...slightly crazy to begin with" (Winter 2006)
I've walked the tops of sand dunes
I swam in Paul Bunyan's footprint
I've tangoed with trucks on highways
I've never seen man make war
But Charles Manson threatened me once
I haven't moved a mountain, but
I have seen the Atlantic in all her glory
I've listened to Moses tell his story
I've slept in the dirt, rose with the dead
I've acted, I've wondered, I've stayed, I've fled
I've had better days, and I've been well
And when all else fails I run like hell

Sanity is madness put to good use
Jamming about with Jesus juice
Feeling lucid, the night and moon
Won't wake up til half past noon

No more imaginations
No more aching souls
A land of justice with a God in control

"pulse" (Winter 2007)

I
Am
Still here
Fighting and
Trying to decode
This new breed of love, marvelous
I want to find out
the meaning
How to
save
us
all
be
cause
for so
long you stayed
swimming in anger
while I thrashed through the void in woe
but that was before
I heard them
Singing
To
Me
It
was
surreal
they were grand
these twisted angels
I had to stare, bear witness, hear
You'd better listen
You might heal
so sorry
you
won't
stay
up
don't live
unchanged
there is no reason
but you can't hear a wretch like me
I am conflicted
So human
Sit here
Want
To

be
real
break free
of this prison, this
corrupted mass of cells, perish
the whole wicked mess
please tell me
there is
more
out
there
so
i
trust that
there is light
and a destiny
that we will never understand
while we exist here
in fire
in dust
bound
to
death

"a time for animals" (Spring 2008)
At the first chords, they roar approval
Ignore the shoddy waste removal
Workers stand-- no eyes, no feet
Throwing water on the thirsty
Naked bodies thrash about
This is it? they think aloud

We're trying to be civil but
The price is nonsense
How many machines can
One crowd rage against
No consequence, aggressive seed
While the masses seethe, the humans breathe

Ears split at sundown
The fields are full of garbage now
They fight for food as the sun gets high
They sing along, their mouths go dry

The girls get sloshed and peel off their tops
The nude man onstage says Keep your hands off
Be kind to each other, bonfires are lit
The tower falls over, they feel discontent
Torsos shine under searchlights
A medieval painting, a damn good time

"bricktown breakdown" (Fall 2008)
Every man for himself
Individual shell
And every generation
We repeat ourselves
Caught under the dollar's spell
It's urban hell and all's not well

"downpour outburst" (Fall 2008)

Smooth sonic silk

Midnight blue music

Demon wing depression

The passing trucks are infuriating

Their motors grind through the wall

They clog my brain

The train whistles won't stop

they won't stop sobbing

Afraid all the time like a rodent

Somewhere, someone is obsessed

And they're terrified

Because they know inside

They'll never be satisfied

All we want is love

All we get is chaos

We're knocked between the two

"look how they shine" (Fall 2008)

The summit is ours
Under lamps and long lines
to sing about stars
In the stages, in the corners

Wear their hearts on their sleeves
Their quick fingers, exposed feelings
Someday when they're done healing
Put it all down and learn to grow old
But for now they're carefree, and they smoke
Under rockets and trees, and spend time chatting
You can't sum this up in words easily
The inside is noisy with lovelorn teens

It's for Christianity,
But you can't convert me
I'm here for the show
I already know
Where I'm going to go
Everything's emo
It's holy enough though

The suburban scene
Far from the city
But we can be moved
Just the same
And that's why I drive
Half an hour down here
to shuffle through strangers
and let my ears ring

"GOD BLESS...god damn" (Fall 2008)
I am refreshed by pale cream bellies
I am a mild mess
I am covered and warm
I am the same words
I am broken machines
No one knows
No, no one knows

My pockets are full of dreams and things
My belt is rock n' roll
My Bible is torn
My voice is clear rain
My account is bare
No one knows
No, no one knows

I do not smile at the darkness
I do not take you lightly
I do not forgive or follow
I do not stand up
I do not carry on
No one knows
No, no one knows

"you won't know it when you're dead" (Fall 2008)
it's a delusion
how cells can rise up
and conquer the universe
the beginning
and the end
and the middle

everything is insignificant
you're strapped and restricted
five senses can't be lifted

they were a blink
then they fell
back into the dust
it was one hell of a run
thanks to the big crunch

"the godzilla group" (Spring 2009, updated Summer 2023)
We meet at Izakaya Sanpei, a sushi joint in Canton
An old hang out for us
Down Joy Road from Franz's old apartment

I met them when we did a Godzilla fan film together
Two years and two trips to the convention in Chicago
The film never got finished
But we had a great time
And we're good friends now

Franz has a round, boyish face
He's fussy about his blow-dried hair
And his skin, which he puts cream on
every night, and he wears cologne
He exaggerates, some say he lies
He's really good with computer effects
He wears leather and has small earrings
He's podgy, but he's not fat
He used to be fat, but he lost all the weight
After his dad died a few years ago
Just before I met him
He used to have a girlfriend
He said she was blonde and perfect
Her name was Ashley
She used to cum so hard in bed
That she'd squirt a little, he told me
He said he'd be single the rest of his life
He said that a lot whenever we talked
About women
He directed the movie

*(Franz became a commercial director and freelance editor,
he never finished the Godzilla movie, he's been with a
woman named Natalie for seven years now and they're
engaged, we still text frequently but I haven't seen him
much in over two years)*

Bob is a big man, not muscular
But he towers over most people
He's pretty big, around 6'6
We make jokes about how
He's the strongest man alive
And can defeat anything
But he's really just a teddy bear
The nicest guy ever, actually
He wears small glasses and has a goatee
He doesn't like it when people say
He looks like a thinner Walter
From The Big Lebowski
He's got a good heart
And a bad vocabulary
He uses the word "effectively" wrong
He thinks it means "essentially"
We've told him this but he still does it
He's got a fiancé named Lisa
None of the rest of us care for her
She's short and chubby with short black hair
I've only seen her twice and
I've never heard her talk
She's really shy and has issues
Bob tells us, and he loves her
And they're getting married
He played my partner in the movie
And helped Franz edit it

(I haven't seen Bob in a couple years, he married Lisa and has two children with her, he works in the automotive industry or something, he played Walter for me in a Zoom read-thru of The Big Lebowski script a few years ago and he was really good)

Bob and Franz go to Tom Savini's
School for Special Effects in Monessen, PA
They'll be there for the next two years
But they come back every now and then
For visits
Today they're back because it's
The day after Easter
They've invited the old group out
For sushi at Izakaya, where we
Would get dinner when we were
Working on the movie
Franz left last September

Bob left in February
The rest of us don't hang out
Without them

Charles, or Chaz, is an art student
He wasn't very good at first
But now he's really good
He worked really hard
And he goes to CCS, which is
The best art school in the area
He's painted us all before
In cool situations
He has his own LARP world
Called Wytchmourne
He carries his sketchbook around with him
And he draws a picture of Bob
As a LARP character after we eat
He's got glasses and shaggy brown hair
And a shaggy beard
He's short and bookish
With a long black coat
He looks like a professor
he used to have a girlfriend named Elise
she was nice but crazy
with a nice body but not a nice face
and they broke up after three years or something
he was pretty torn for awhile
now she's dating Bob's old roommate
He lives with his brother, John
He used to be really weird in high school
With long, brown hair
And he smelled
Franz says he got him to clean himself up
He played another role in the movie

*(Chaz moved to Seattle in 2013 and I haven't spoken to him
since, I know he got married at one point, and I know he's
now a she and goes by Imogen)*

Zack is a musician but he's lazy
I used to go see him in bands
He's not bad, but he's lazy
He's got a pregnant girlfriend
She's due in September
They're giving the baby up
To a family in Commerce

He doesn't like to watch Juno
And can't find a place to stay
He lives with his parents a lot
But they kick him out every
Few months for various reasons
Now he's with his dad again
He used to live in an apartment
With some strange other guys
But he quit drinking and he could
Only stand his roommates if drunk
So he moved back home again
He's got a lot to learn, but he's funny
He's rotund, with a huge sloping gut
He looks like a high school science teacher
With shaggy brown hair and glasses
He didn't do anything for the movie
But he was a friend of Franz's
And he didn't ever have anything better to do
So he was always around

(Zack went through a bunch of shit, he lives in Minnesota now, his pregnant girlfriend had the kid and put it up for adoption, she transitioned into a man a few years ago, Zack thought he was a transgender woman too but didn't follow through with it, Franz still talks to him but I haven't spoken to him in over a decade)

Mikey is a big guy, not as big as Bob
But pretty big, and friendlier looking
He's Italian, and a Christian
He used to have a fiancé but they broke
It off last fall, he was pretty upset
When I last saw him he was clean cut
Now he has a mullet and a goatee
And he looks like Danny McBride
From Tropic Thunder, says Franz
He smiles a lot and is loud and friendly
He wears a white suit coat
And a yellow shirt that says
"Sinner Turned Saint"
and orange pants
he played another role in the movie

(Mikey married Marianne, I didn't see him much after this, haven't spoken to him in over a decade)

Brendan is small, and quick-looking
With a sharp little nose
And a sharp little tongue
He talks too much, and gestures a lot
And a lot of people don't like him
Because he's self-centered
But I don't have a problem with him
I think he's interesting and fun to listen to
He takes over the conversation
When he shows up
He gives us theories on the music industry
And movies, and other stuff
I assume he's had a girlfriend,
Probably more than one
But he doesn't have one now
He wasn't in the movies
But when I met him I thought
He was a producer or something

*(I didn't see much of Brendan after this, but I do know
that nowadays he has a TikTok with over a 100k followers
where he talks about Midwestern existentialism)*

I sing in a band,
but I don't call myself a musician
I'm supposed to jam with people tonight
But I don't really want to
I'm supposed to paint houses this summer
But I'm thinking about getting
My old job at Kensington back if I can
I wear a leather jacket and dark clothes
I have sideburns and a goatee
And thick Nike glasses
And long brown hair
I'm quiet, I don't say anything
Even though I used to a lot
The conversation's good enough today
I had one girlfriend last fall, and that's it
I played another role in the movie
I stayed here to finish school
I go online a lot
I try to write poetry
I try to write songs
I intern at a sports station
It's all right even though
I don't know anything about sports

I don't know what I'm doing
But I hope these guys are around
For awhile

(I didn't paint houses that summer, I got my old job at Kensington back and never got to use my degree in tv and radio production, I worked in hospice for three years and then controls for six, I'm now substitute teaching and plan on becoming a teacher in the fall, I'm also part time at Kensington which I went back to in 2017, I've written and recorded and released a ton of music but I don't have an audience, I'm writing this in the same leather jacket and I have a full beard now and my hair is short but still brown for now)

"smack of the death cult" (Winter 2009)

It was an accident, ending up here
We came for a reason that escapes us
But these monsters in leather
Are causing tears of panic

As we cower in the other room
They're getting evil
Prehistoric lunatic
under lamps like eyes of the sick

This gang and their leader
Psycho like a wolf
Don't know why he hates me
It's a Mafia hideout, I'm sure

See these headphones, they will make you deaf
This flashing light will blind you once
These needles with pierce you, tender
We'll set fire to your feet

I would hurt you, he says
With me pressed up against the wall
He's got the most violent look
And his hands chopping off my head

The others laughed and hooted
And danced around the garage
I waited for something to make sense
I couldn't help but smile

"dead man's idea" (Fall 2008)
I used to be running toward you
But now I am running away
I used to be a wolf in sheep's clothing
But now I am a lion among lambs
I used to be as wholesome as mother's bread
But now I am made of stone
I used to be of wasted grass and dead sky
But now I am an hourglass
I used to be as blank as new paper
But now I'm as full as an ocean
I used to be of regret
But now I am straight and stretched out
I used to be animal
But now I am still life
I used to be of wires
But now I am of worms
I used to be the above
But now I am the below

"connections" (Fall 08)
I catch crows on my tongue
I wait til it rains to wash my hair
I can tolerate balloons
I can make a hen tell the truth
I can't fake an egg
I eat spaghetti with an ax
I can carry small silver bells safely in a strawberry
basket
I would rather eat plastic grapes than bullets
I breathe miasma, but I wish I could breathe fire
A screwdriver makes his kids work on Saturday
If I shrank to the size of a pea, I would go back to sleep
If I had a tail, I'd handle it by threading it
Through a hole in my pants
Pretending it's not mine won't work for very long

"car crash cutie (that's just wrong)" (Spring 09)

Hey pretty baby

Hey foolish girl

I'm too curious to know

How you look without a face

What's left slumped and raw

Dried blood on the cement wall

Lol!!!!hai!!!!guise!!

How does I crashed the car

Woo hoo Daddy

I'm still alive

Come on down and gather bad karma

No longer surrounded by flowers

Your last hours, cocaine and a yell

but we're the ones going to hell

Faster than you died

Morbid masses hide

behind senseless screennames

And shout things outside

"the lonely places" (Spring 09)
One of us is going first
I'm always looking up at someone
Disgusted by the red lights
Disgusted by the morons
In a white rage

They have names for everything these days

Those who can afford it move
Into private communities
With spiked iron gates
And forget
until it's too late
While the zombies see who
Can distract themselves the best
From the robot races, societal traces
I'm going down to the lonely places

Depressive, psychopath, lethal combination
Maddening drizzle, I taste combustion

I've felt the sting, and the stone of the purge
And I can tell you all that it will hurt

"you think it's impressive (it's not)" (Spring 09)
I don't feel like writing or anything
I feel someone's been sleeping in my bed
And it's not just me
and bad poetry

We can sit with the lights out
Look out onto the courtyard
and watch the cops
bust another
drug dealer

I split my time between
Addiction and ambition
I'm afraid to undo the original
I'm afraid to give credit
I'm afraid to admit
The people want something new
And I'm not it

"at the end of everything" (Summer 09)
We've made it here
We've done it for nothing
We've given advice
We've worked our bones
We've rented and stole
We've shot up schools
We've fallen in love
We've planted trees
We've watched movies
We've gathered information
We've cluttered outer space
We've been terrorized
We've visited other lives
We've clapped and cried
We've had stupid ideas
We've been to the nowhere
We've spent too much money
We've used the right words
We've built and broken
We've torn and healed
We've let it glow
We've failed and fallen
We've seen some slime
We've laid down forever
We've gorged ourselves
We've spun our flesh
We've navigated rivers
We've stood under fountains
We've dusted down backwards roads
We've remembered the better
We've burned forests
We've frozen in graves
We've walked far away and then back home
We've guessed the weather
We've forgotten what we are
We've kissed under the stars
We've sang and sullied
We've remained silent
We've stayed legendary

"bad acquaintances" (Summer 09)
And once again
I've got too many friends
And too many plans
But this time
I'll handle it right

Some friends I love right away
And we hug as soon as I see them
Others are a little harder to get at
But you can't force this sort of thing

We chat amiably
Even though
clumsiness stiffens
both our voices
We don't quite fit
But we're trying anyway
The conversation is rigid
We can't relate

You'll buy me a razor
For my birthday
Drop it off Thursday
Thanks, man
I really should have said
You didn't have to
He's judging me
Right now probably

I shouldn't have said
My brother might have
The swine flu
Even though I'm sure
He doesn't
They'll tell someone
I'll look like a fool

I put the phone alarm on
And exhale for the first time
In a long time

"top of the city" (Summer 09)
The sky brimming with twilight
The blackbird freewheeling
The flag fluttering
The buildings humming
The eaves whispering
This is the best view you can have
As your life is ending,
With every tranquil second pending

You can read about rock and roll
And go faster than anyone else
You can fill your stomach
You can watch the janitor sweep
You can try, you can't explain
But maybe someday you will
You have been here before
And you'll be back again

"the lucky bum" (Summer 09)
You weave words for money
More than you deserve
your work talks of heartbreakers
Of harpies and whores
Of affairs gone wrong
Battles of alcohol and
Sad smoke-filled bedrooms
and sex addiction and
no love and nothing to lose

Your face is an
Amalgamation of
Pussed up eyes
And gin blossoms
Leather and lines
Cold narrow sly
A darting tongue
And shark teeth
a cracked and crooked face
a cruel and crusty face
old gargoyle

Why any girl would let you crawl on top of her
and growl,
"I'm going to shoot hot white juice into you."
is beyond me

And maybe that's the problem

"wisdom teeth" (Winter 09)
Tonic taste, x-ray flash
Rihanna and Sylvia Plath
Vicoden, Motrin, Tylenol
Head swells up, brain stays small
Ipod off, on painkillers
Sit down soon, it gets better

"sick of work" (Fall 09)

I see birds fighting
Bottled lightning
I stare into space
Clean at my own pace
Nacho Doritos and cherry pie
Other workers wave goodbye
I hear back-up beeps
Startled sheep
Dodging roadkill
I've had my fill
It's official

Worried about your own mortality
God knows I'll get what's coming to me
You've said it all, I've got a lot to learn
It's time for me to take my turn
I'm out of the bag, left eye's getting worse
No rumors to spread, and I'm sick of work

"an absence" (Fall 08)
he met her badly
hanging around
pretty lady, she was the girl for him
young girl, pupils watch
watch, until tomorrow
hopeless sunrise surprise
black suspicion, suddenly spotted
no broken bones
first love vexed
perfect liquor answered
speechless, stopped
she passed
her vacancies speak first
October, joyful
Lacking proposal
The sun and the ocean
Courting girls, costing business
Holding hands, sort of green
All right, hello, what's the use
Stand up, flowers, shades
Everything in the house
Got to go, tricky meantime
Drink, and the wheels rushed
God Almighty
Stay here with me, kiss me
No more babies
Skimpy sisters torrid fun
Who replied? Not every one
Gathering game, terrified though
Even the uncomfortable
Reach sinister stages
narrow streets and nails
drip piercing tears
Never did intend to be here
Marvelous teeth
Days? Lurid
Sure there were
Black and silver hot
Gamble in cities
Queens, Presidents
Advice connects us
Babble deeply in hell
Of course a hoax
In Hell a single day
Sun at night, a little better

Creature cutting, brooded over
The bright boy, less keenly
Specimens profitable and loose
A little push, now vamoose
Bleed gloom, face blistering

"weather or, weather not" (Summer 09)

Hazy August under charcoal skies
Watch some hoodlums cruising by
On their beat-up old bikes
As the grass dies

In the strange city with the circus lights
Bawdy festival of abnormal sights
Pretty confusion, happy madness
Consume and construct the glad glamorous
robust and ornate
You pass by the gate
See all the tents the color of hate
Walk up the steps to the noises above
What happened next? what you're thinking of
Talk to the man in the long midnight coat
In sunglasses and standing in line all remote
A sandwich with cheese, a late bonding meal
you sat and realized that everything's real

Past the shop window, and you don't know where
Can't remember the name, but you'd better beware
Can't bring you to tears, all days on the earth
The gunmetal grey, the walk that it's worth

Mother Goose stories, play with the hose
Push your glasses back up on your nose
Flutes and brass trumpets bring the night to a close
Doesn't have to have meaning, as long as it goes

Weather or weather not
It gets cold or it gets hot
I ramble on with what I've got
It's not that much, but it's a lot

"afternoon of october 29th, 2009" (Fall 09)
Went reading and eating at a subway
The washing machine has been gutted
And it's lying in pieces
At the end of the driveway
Dad couldn't fix it
They're getting a new one

This thin little maple
On the side of the driveway
sheds all its leaves on the same day
They lie in a ring like a dropped dress

Little brother wants to borrow old guitar
Middle brother has to go get contact lenses

November's days away
Gotta go scare teenagers
On a school night
Dress as Freddy Krueger
And hide in a corn maze
Drink cider and eat cinnamon

In October sun
In the car I sit
Wrote a poem
This is it

"jesus 2000" (Winter 2010)
Hanging with the hookers
Violet violence, casino blindness
With the cravens in the crazyhouse
The meek and downtrod
Their own volition, forgiven
Red- eyed and laid off
with the drunk and the damned
with those of empty hands
with the addicts of avarice
and the victims of venom
every bullet and blade
the starving, the searing
the swell-bellied and insane
slaves in the sweat shop, the office
the prisoners and the disease-rotten
the war-torn and hidden, lost in
the mountains of the Middle East
the desperate deserts
where fire rains daily
and oil swells between the
toes of ragged refugees
where alarms blare
and tempers flare
where love never lasts
where we let the guilt pass
and watch through the glass

"a piece of my mind" (Summer 10)
singing mannequins
I see between your spaces
Helpless and high

the epitaphs are already inscribed
But all these graves all still will sigh

Black veil mourn, sporadic
Burning candles on the mirror

Getting out of debt is like bailing water with a shovel

I want to kill something
I'll settle for insects
If it weren't for bad luck
You'd have no luck at all

"break room at the carpenter shop" (Spring 2010)
There are fly corpses on the tile
Next to bootprints
Meaningless paper, empty salt shaker
The waste basket needs emptying
Sawdust and seeds, the doors on a spring
And it has to be locked before you leave
Built sometime in the 1970's
400 dollars was a lot of money then
necessary caffeine, coffee grains
soda stains, pop bottle clicks
a drawing of an eye
a signature
blue collar blood runs thick
there is work to be done but
we long for the hour
until it's finally over
we talk amongst each other
and we head for the door
to the freedom of the afternoon
every day right after two

"God is" (Fall 2010)

God is fear of broken fingers
God is wandering the mall for the company
God is an ocean in the sky
God is insignificance
God is your grandparent's basement
God is living paycheck-to-paycheck
God is a storm you can't embrace
God is a pet cemetery no one knows about
God is falling in love with all the wrong people
God is dressing like a teenager into your 40s
God is your favorite record
God is a coffee pot at a gas station somewhere outside of
Chicago
God is wanting someone to be moved
God is a shattered wheel
God is riding a wave you can't control
God is capital N Now
God is watching a windshield get wiped clean
God is spontaneous piety
God is losing everything and keeping a straight face
God is sleeping alone for years and years and years
God is answering a phone call
God is wonderland revisited
God is pissing off strangers
God is realizing you're regular and writing it down

"meanwhile..." (Winter 2012)

Fear

+

human

=

evil

"how to start a fire" (Summer 2011)

It's like a slow fire, you know, simmering

Don't be afraid to stoke the flames a bit, though

Don't be afraid to show your edge

Gather steam and then just spark up into this brilliant
white sky of a chorus

just let it explode

Just think of gardens

Tell the voices in your head to go fuck themselves

"if getting into heaven was like passing an audition on
american idol" (Fall 2011)
they come and sing their songs in accents of light
they come and sing their songs to angels and gods
they come individually, one by one
actors in the abyss of stars and space
of energy aligned and candles gone out
they strut the stage and shine their lights and shine their
lives
up and out for an ecstatic audience of infinity
who clamor and cheer behind three or four seated judges
with various personalities, waiting, with the crossing
just to their left, mysterious and thrilling
all wise and sage and all-knowing and smugly adjusted
they smirk like impressed schoolmasters at the latest
hopeful
and you've got four yeses

their own colors, their own rays
some are shaky but pass anyway
they hit the notes that matter
and they're beautiful besides
you better stop in the name of love
under blue lights and astounded eyes
a scattered frenzy of absolute adoration
as the judges pass you, the gates open
the roar of the crowd swells, there's smiling,
there's the welcome home, the tears
they play your favorite song of all time
your family is waiting on the other side
desperately grasping to embrace you
they knew you'd make it through the light
and into eternity
where every moment
is forever

"ermehgud" (Summer 2010)

I want to be a naked corpse posted on 4chan
I want to be a 21st century Renaissance Man
I want to achieve the perfect friction
I want to be free of all contradiction
I want to be pollution in the upper atmosphere
I want to be the juice in a freshly rinsed pear
I want to be a sunbeam to scorch the summer sky
I want to be a tear of joy that's falling from your eye
I want to be a shooting star, I want to be away and far
I want to be a Roman God, I want to be a Greek façade

I want to be your friend, your broken, foolish lover
I want to be your downfall, your everything and other
I want to be a good idea that you can't quite recall
I want to be your blackest flag, your winking China doll
I want to be the clear and calm, a rocket shell of hot
napalm
I want to be an equation, an unsolved astro qualm

I want to be peculiar, but still know when to quit
I want to be the end of an extinguished cigarette
I want to be a question unspoken on the air
I want to be the quiet guy who no one knows is there

"squishing a gnat on a macbook screen" (Spring 2012)

I snuffed you out

With a fingertip

Into the broad light

Pressed into pixels

Crushed between

Skin and screen

Some Mild guilt

That was a life

A tiny life just ended

Motionless

"problems everyone wants" (Spring 2013)
If you have at least one or two people
Keeping you from the depths of despair
Then count yourself lucky

"this one time at the place" (Spring 2013)
so the window was behind me
and you had this look on your face
like you'd just been reminded
this one time at the place

like you'd just been reminded
of your forthcoming demise
it came to you at a warehouse
or a schoolyard of some kind

your neurons connected together
your brain turned itself on
in the clarity of that moment
through the window you looked beyond

"I'm lost again" you said softly
and I excluded my tongue
there'll come a day when we wake up
and see we're no longer young

never fear, i proclaimed with gusto
and raised my finger to point
as long as you enjoy at least something
in life you won't be disappoint

and with that babble you nodded
and vanished without a trace
i closed the window and walked off
this one time at the place

"LBJ & JFK" (Spring 06)

Lyndon Johnson may have had a huge dick
but Kennedy actually got to use his

"uninspired on the balcony" (Summer 2014)

Sip
Sour
Wine
At
Sunset

Reading
Someone
You
Always
Relate
To

Birds
Chirp
And
Trees
Chatter
And
The
Evening
Wind
Rattles
And
A
Dog
Barks

the
old
lawn
chair
cradles
my
bum
and
I look at the sky
And say
Thank you
Twice

"a sort of panic" (fall 2014)
you know those big glass globes
with plasma inside them and all
the purple and blue electric tendrils
drifting just along the surface of
the inside of the glass all
originating from a pulsating
sphere in the center of the orb?

imagine that glass is warm and
alive
and bare
and exposed
with every little hair getting a
lightning bolt as your fingers
brush over them, as they
dig in and feel the muscles
contract and convulse
with
the vocalizations
the involuntary jerking
the vulnerable flush of pink
the squealing
the speaking in tongues
the bleated begs
the lips moistened
the cup of the navel
the wrists bound
the ankles bound
the chest thrusting against
the flow of
the wildest power
the demons scream

she can never lie
she can't fake a true
reaction

if they're real
they don't perform

you can just touch and
watch her light up

"hell" (fall 2014)
Hell is your own life,
except the rooms are
emptier and the furniture's
been moved and pictures are
re arranged or gone
completely.

It's all very aching and empty.

You know why
everyone took off.
Why they
are gone
and you
are alone
You know this.

It was because
They found out about you.
They found out about whatever it was
you were
hiding from them. And they
shut you out
For good.
This
is how you always knew it would end.
They did not want you
and now they will not
forgive you.
This is it.
Best get used to it.

You are alone
And you accept it
And if you think about it too much
You laugh

You still go to work,
a long commute,
over an hour,
but can never
seem to connect with
the people you work

with.
They aren't bad people,
and seem worth knowing,
but for some reason there's just no
click
with you, there's some
awkwardness, some
thing that's wrong
with you
and it's getting in the way.

Your job somehow
manages to
simultaneously
bore and
terrify you.

You come home
and the rooms are bare and
a fan runs in the bedroom
you don't go in anymore

Music doesn't sound right,
It has too many corners
Disjointed and bland

Every light seems like
It came from a cave

Books never hold
Your attention
every time you sit
down to try and
read one.

No one calls
or texts
and you don't try them.

You eat food
from the freezer
and fridge
and box
and can.

You eat the cow
With ketchup
The pig
With mustard
The chicken
With honey
The fish
With lemon

And you don't sit
and eat,
you snack as you
walk about
and tongues of acid
lash the
inside of your
throat after
every meal
and your stomach
is a swamp.

Outside it's always dark
And dangerous-looking

Days are untrustworthy

Foggy or stifling grey

And you want nothing
To do with them

As you mill about
In your monkey box

Six floors up

And six feet under

"no more mr. rogers" (fall 2014)
It's the type of morning
where
If I were a child
If I were little
I would have watched
TV
and felt fear
For no reason
And I'd go back to bed
With cold clay feet
Even though I knew
there was nothing
Underneath
I'd try to reset
The day
to one that
Wasn't so bleak

"dusk falls over the neighborhood" (started summer 2010,
finished fall 2014)
fences in the snow
under the furnace of sunset
wracked with evening clouds
like smoke and iron
the naked black woods
and the crisp exhale
and the padded fur
and the footstep's crunch

lace curtains stirred
by a gentle breath
beyond the window frame
you longing for a female
body to press against
under your chilled sheets,
and the curtains waving
and swaying there like
phantoms in love
you think of girls wet
between their legs
and a mist in the eyes
of grown men

your brother knocks at midnight,
leans in the doorframe,
asks you if you want to
partake in a joint
you noticed how cold
the kitchen floor was
and for a couple seconds
it all makes perfect,
beautiful,
radiant
sense

"wasted pastry" (fall 2014)
I made a cherry Pop Tart
Actually I made two
Last night before bed
But I forgot about them
And they sat on the night
Stand all day and they
Got stale, like dry wood
so I threw them into
My little bedroom waste
basket and this homeless
guy came into my room
all of a sudden and picked
them out again, and he took a
bite and looked at me with
incredulity and said
what are you throwing these
away for? They're still good

"the dead kittens" (summer 2010)
That year I lived in the city
The year the old writer died
The year of the crazy old woman

I'd visit the stray kitten shelter
they kept it outside
on the corner of the park
the guy who ran it would ride around
on a bike, looking in alleys, behind dumpsters
down sewers, for abandoned kittens
and bring them there to be found

it was out in the open, there on the corner
the cats all lined up, mewling
in boxes and wire circles
one by one, people'd walk by
and look down at them
some would take them home

I would sit down on my way home
and talk to the guy who ran it
he'd smile and we'd talk
About plays or whatever
The cats in their small lines
Under the shade of the tree
As the foot traffic flowed
Next to us, the streets breathing
The cats curling up against
One another

This old woman in my apartment
Building, I'd talked to her before briefly
She was acquainted with the old writer somehow
I don't know if she lived there
I think they dated at one point, a long time ago
I'm pretty sure he dumped her and she took it hard
But I saw her there in the hallway all the time
She turned out to be crazy
She was not good looking
Although she probably had been once
Age had creased her face
Beyond beauty
Her hair was piled on her head
Long and gray and yellow
She never wore a bra and her tits sagged

Like a bad joke
She drooled a little
Her teeth were crooked and unclean
But her clothes were usually normal
So I figured she lived there, too
I'd see her in the hallway

The old writer
He lived a floor above me
He had an office that was up this flight of stairs
It was a nice office, cluttered but I'm sure
The old man never had trouble finding stuff
He was a bitter old man,
An ugly old man, but his poems were beautiful
And full of grief and despair
About the failure and futility of life
He made it beautiful
He wasn't famous, though
Just published in the local paper
And stuff like that

Someone started killing the kittens
At the stray kitten shelter
On the corner in the park
The guy would come to work
And they'd be suffocated in their rows
In their boxes
He couldn't move the shelter,
it was not an official business
That's why it was there in the first place
On the corner, he just set it up there
He just did it out of the goodness of his heart
He was really a janitor or something
It was just his hobby, saving kittens
He was pretty upset, and it happened
More than a few times
And so he found a video camera
And set it up across the street
He brought the tape into the news
I saw it on TV

There was the old woman in the night
In a blue raincoat, not bothering to hide
With a pink garbage bag, a big one
She'd put the kittens in the garbage bag
And suffocate them, then take them out

And put them back where they'd been
In the boxes, in the wire circles
silence hung in the night air
But nobody knew it was her except me
I think, because she never got caught
I'd still see her in the hallway

When the old writer died, I followed her
Up into his old office
She looked around, we both did
Then she walked out
Neither of us said anything
I had really bad heartburn, though
I do remember that clearly
I found her at the bottom of the stairs
Standing on the bottom step
Tears running down her face
She wasn't saying anything or making
Any noise, her face puckered with tears
"come here, old woman," I said
she turned and I slowly put my arms
around her, she put her head on my shoulder
I was worried she'd drool on me
I'd get her tears on my shirt
I decided I wouldn't say anything about it
Instead, I said, "he was one hell of a writer"
She moaned a bit, sniffing, the only noise
We stood there for a little while longer
Then she detached herself gently
And my shoulder was a bit damp
She walked back up to his study
With all the papers on the big oak desk
And the books and the pens
And his computer, still on,
Still open to Word
And the window, the blinds open
looking out onto the breathing streets
She sat in the chair behind the desk
"He was, wasn't he?" she said.
Her tears had stopped
"Yeah," I said.
"He saw things differently.
He just saw them differently
Than the rest of us and
he'd write it down."

We stayed there in the office for a bit
Thinking about him
And down on the street
People walked by

"tori" (summer 2010)
Started to date Tori
She was a pretty girl
Dark, flyaway hair,

looked like she might've been
Mediterranean
Skin was olive, flawless
Eyes were hazel, tranquil
She had a decent figure
Our first kiss was next to the two-lane road
Around seven PM, out in the country
The wall ran along the road
It was a bunch of stone ruins
Some boulders, some bricks
It was originally 20 feet tall
But only parts of it are still
That big nowadays
most of it's
broken down
We sat on a bench
On the east side of the road
The wall was on the west side
There were fields around us, faded green
There were woods behind the wall
The stones and cement were crumbled
Scattered, broken, cracking, chipped
Tori sat on my lap
She was wearing a blue knit sweater
And a black corduroy jacket
And tight, dark blue jeans
We talked about love
And about the wall
And what it was
I looked at her
She looked at me
She shut her eyes
I kissed her
She kissed me
Cars went by
With the breeze

"I don't believe in anything
unless it's right in front of me,"
she said.

and then I
woke up

"everstream"

all is a cycle and all is math there is an equation for
everything and everything can be explained karma is a loop
death is a beginning and a beginning is a death and there
is no room for anything else there is no need for anything
else

"ipod on shuffle" (Summer 2009)

Iron and Wine, Over the Rhine
Aerosmith, Eisley, The Fray
Pixies and Live, Muse and Blindside
R.E.M. and David Gray

Hem and Guster, Harvey Danger
Fountains of Wayne, The Who
Dave Matthews Band, Beck and Pearl Jam
Tegan and Sara, U2

Alice in Chains, This Day & Age
Huey Lewis and the News
Portishead, Tool, Abandoned Pools
Radiohead, Sonic Youth

Weezer and Sting, Ride, Soul Coughing
My Morning Jacket, Nick Drake
ICP, Black Keys, Lush, Screaming Trees
And hit play for goodness's sake

"got the angles" (Fall 2009)
I never know how to start these things
I guess I'll just start talking
I was hungover on a Wednesday
After drinking on a Tuesday night
I went to check my e-mail
I went to check my dating site
And that's what I want to tell you about
Several girls I met
On the Internet

she's got the angles
she's got the angles
she's got pictures
that only show her face
it's like, i like a little meat
on my girls
it's not like we're not gonna find out
show up on the first date
then walk right back out
show us your curves
don't worry bout the nerves
she said I'll have the light tea

And I said girl
You ain't fooling nobody

I write, excuse me
You look interesting
Might you want
To have dinner with me
If you were a song
What song would you be
You ever seen those old
Berenstain Bears movies?
Several days go by
With nary a reply
The ladies want a hottie
And I'm just a guy

There's only so many times

You can get coffee with someone
I'm running out of conversation
I think it's time we called it a night
She said I think we've done enough

And so I said girl
You're talking too much

not pre-selected, so ineffective
the ladies turn out the ladies turn down
all but 10 percent of the handsomer men
spreading their genes with
whomever they please
while suckers like me
are down on our knees
she said I've got some bad news for thee

and I said girl
why didn't you get back to me

this one babyfaced blonde
from Port Huron
was pretty forward with me
gotta watch out
she spreads herself around
no doubt
but let's go out
you pick where
I don't really care
just tell me how to get there
She said what happens if we don't hit it off
I said I dunno
I never think that far ahead
Just go with it
Drove an hour and a half
Twenty dollars for gas
We went to the cinema
We didn't talk much
I dropped her off
She said good night

and I said girl
I didn't come all the way out here
Just to see Avatar with you

So this is what happens when you believe

What you read on the Internet
Six messages and you think you're all set
Where she fits in she doesn't know
She told me there's nothing like
Being compared to the status quo
She said I'm in over my big fat head

and I said girl
we're already dead

"ice storm" (Fall 2009)
That night
the temperature dropped
and the gentle powder
became a black rain.

By morning the ground
was bitter frosting.

The roads were paved
with glass.

The trees dripped crystals.

The skies weighed heavy with
static and ashes.

Trucks roared by,
spraying salt like diamonds.

A silver wind sang at
every windowpane

everything was
grey

"double cut faded" (Winter 2011)
The difference
between
who you are
and
who you think you are
is often
staggering

"blasphemy of the better" (Summer 2010)
If you ever wonder what's the difference
It's mostly comes down to fingerprints
You feel like you're entitled to at least some pride
As they advertise and exploit the sex drives
of lonely middle-aged guys

there's the beautiful people and then there's us
and they won't let us make too much of a fuss

"tampons and animal crackers" (Summer 2009)
You should clean yourself up
You were probably on something
You'll regret it in the morning

I refuse
To clean up after you
Hadn't thought of that
You're a class act

Beautiful in ash
Daily comatose rat
Not here cause
of skills that I lack

Why can't everyone be as laid back as me
Not just disgust, it's atrocity
My stomach turns, but not as I leave
I get more problems from my allergies
Quite the mixture, the wash and the sweet

Good thing the surroundings are pretty
I wipe off the blood with the truck running
Takes awhile, but I'm here for the money
Then again, it's still slightly scary

"ages" (Fall 2010)
fragile and unnoticed
seldom do they walk
ode to the precocious
not bothering to stop

when will it be it my turn
to leave this wretched place
the burden weighing heavier
each year upon your face

"skinnydipping blues ver 1"

You can hear them whisper

But you can't make out their speech

submerged in silk they twirl along

And they do so gracefully

Don't wanna be no captive, don't wanna be no clown

Don't wanna be no fucking fifth wheel

While they float with stars and diamonds and drown

While I dangle my heels

I guess that I should be getting off

but it's not that big a deal

see you around

"skinnydipping blues ver 2"
my boxers stink of shit and it's my own fault
I'm such a repulsive, fat clown, sitting here
Hairy and homely and unloved

Ariel takes off Analea's clothes for her
cause she's too shy, she just coos something
in her ear and slips her sweater down over
her front, exposing Analea's yellow suit and
Analea stands like a little kid getting undressed
and then she's naked standing there wearing
only moonlight on her breasts and belly and
it's really fucking hot but then they jump in
And Greg asks me about my job and I
Tell him I'm a janitor at Kensington
And he's like, "That's cool." But he was
Just being patronizing, the prick, cause
No one says being a janitor is "cool"
He jumped in and made out with Analea
While Kentaro made out with Ariel
And I sat on the dock, the scent of feces
In my nostrils, and after a minute
Put my clothes back on and went back
Inside

"gone lunar"
A dildo and a droid
An old wool sock
Crusty with cum
On two golden pillows

Four eggs scrambled
With chili hot sauce
Peach yogurt and a
Little silver spoon

The pleasure of the
Crushed shells in the
Trash before you
Tie it up

To find pleasure in
The fragile
Is to find pleasure
In destruction

"isis"

there is a screen
and on the screen
there is a desert
and above that
desert is pure
blue sky

there is a man
dressed in black
standing next
to several rows
of heads

the heads are arranged
neatly, about four to a
row, out on the desert
sand, and there's no
blood, the heads are
all long severed

their races vary
but most are white
there are two
women

the man steps forward
he removes the black
scarf over his face

he is young, dark-skinned
looks to be of middle-eastern
descent, but his accent is
100 percent French

He speaks English in a low
And deliberate and stony
Voice

"Hey."

"You."

"You there."

"American."

"Yes, you."

"There is no greater gift
you can give
than your own life."

The screen fuzzes
And cuts to a sobbing
Man with a knife to his
Throat, he is being held
Down, a shoe on his head
Arms on his arms
And the blade long
And silver and perfect
Slicing, slicing into his
Flesh and he inhales
One final time

"Pray with me"
says a voice as
the knife begins
to move and the
chant begins

God is great

OXYMORONIC
POEMS: 2014

"i'd never seen a bird take a leak before"
A sparrow landed
On the balcony rail
Of my apartment
On a Sunday
Quiet and
Pale

It was a flash
Quick and clean
Out of the corner
Of my eye
As I read
Bukowski

I saw it perch
And tweet
And little drips
Appeared
Beneath
Its feet

The sparrow pissed
Upon my rail
Then was gone again
With a flit
Of its feathered
Tail

"the icy terror of never going back"
eric and dylan crouched in the parking lot
cho chaining the doors shut
lanza watching his mother sleep
mateen with the neon in his eyes
paddock grabbing his hammer
huberty getting put on hold
breivik in the speedboat
bryant commenting on the WASPs
whitman climbing the tower
keyhoe waving as he drives by
grinning so you can see
all of his teeth

"sounds legit"
we're going to pay you
as little money
as possible

and

you're going to make us
as much money
as possible

"marathon man"

I enjoy watching plants grow
I enjoy watching people change
I enjoy candles burning out
And the sun going down
I enjoy potting clay
And looking at the spines
Of books
I enjoy the sound of a fan
When I sleep
And I enjoy the clouds
I enjoy water drying
electricity flowing
and dim lights
dimming
the blankets
folding
into
perfect
realms
of patience

"the only known photo of emily dickinson"
all daguerreotypes make people
look like ancient alien beings
in black and white and grey
or maybe corpse phantoms

but jesus

I was expecting the
short nosed prairie girl
bonnet and all and
there's this
smirking young thing

she looks like she knows
how smart she is

the young woman's mind
brilliantly bright
concentrated down into
verse after verse
breaking upon the shores
of eternity and ether

she was shy she wasn't famous
she wrote and never made it
she probably never even
thought about making it
at least not like we do
and I just now noticed
black flowers in her hand

"spiraling inward"
first we gathered around
fires
and then we gathered around
stoves
and then we gathered around
radios
and then we gathered around
televisions

the entire tribe
the entire family

and now we sit by ourselves
on laptops and phones
smart
phones

"epitaph"

I was complete
with autumn leaves
on the sidewalk
in the chilling breeze

"single black ribbon"
hit the browser on my droid
every morning like usual
8 am this Thursday
before my daily ritual
saw a single black ribbon
below the searchbar on google
curved and looped
casting the shyest shadow

and it occurred to me

our realities
and our reveries
are enemies
that rain bodies
onto screaming streets below

"patchwork parrot"
all my opinions
are just
other people's opinions
said by me

and I feel
like my life
is constantly
on the verge
of being about
to begin
and I will never
second guess
myself
ever
again

politics is the art
of deciding who gets
screwed over

"dichotomy"
civilization is a balancing act

life is just a bunch of people
scrambling for excuses to say
they're better than one another

seeing patterns that aren't there
touching stuff and breathing air
fucking and shitting everywhere

we are the slowest energy
evolved by an infinity
of possibilities

we are the halfway point
between the ends of the cosmos
and the strings in our atoms

crushed between eternities
born of pressure and time, of
explosions and expansions

all the same network
tuned to its own channel

the switch opens
then closes

"itchy eyes"
Blue fireball
in socket
Sockets of
failure
Sockets of
sand paper
Vulnerable
Blobs of gel
Slide and roll as
Red flesh swells
Low heat dwells
In the depths
Of the socket
The fiery, fiery
Socket

"sappin' my apathy"
like your head has been
seized by a pair of two hands
from another dimension and
they have clasped themselves,
the palms over your ears and
fingers gripping the sides of
your forehead.

they are now in charge,
and your bodily sensations
become more pronounced,
amplified.

the mild heart burn you
felt is now quite awful,
a dragon unfurling its
tail up your esophagus

the dishwasher swooshes
and whooshes behind you

the air conditioner blows on

your thoughts become characters
living things
that immediately run away
without saying a word

you dig your nose with a pinky

colors vivify into schoolhouse
clarity

shapes get more shapely

you can appreciate these things

you go to the kitchen
for a cooling tablet to
calm the dragon in your
heart, the tablets crushed
into a flavored powder
moistened then swallowed

you look between the two
broken blinds and there
are ducks on the lake
and the sun has turned
the lake to lava and urine
and the ducks are blackened
on its surface, floating
and expressionless
on every ripple of oil
blue and black
the sky burnt white blue
the trees breaking

there's wasp and hornet
killer next to the old TV
your dvds underneath it
the internet blinking
a nice amp, a cool painting
a grocery cart your parents
got you for your birthday
this year

shelves of books,
your grey hoodie
you're coming down now
that was quick

the hands grasp
and my asshole stinks
and my palms sweat
and my feet sweat
and I slurp saliva
and the hands grip
my head and I look up
at the dead Christmas
lights over the blinds
I crushed two of the bulbs
When I sat on them
A month ago or so

The hands clasp the
Sides of my head still
And I see candy boxes
Spilled nerds all over
Garbage and crayons

And some cacti and
A beer and a lotion

A broken mirror
And some cookies
Socks and make-up
The list goes on

And the hands gradually
And carefully grip my
Skull and I don't mind

"puzzled and puzzled"
we are technically falling
all the time
through nothing

you know that rushing feeling
when you close your eyes
and you lie back on a slant
and your feet are kicked out
from under you and your head
is thrown to great winds?

That's the void calling you
home

"douche"

Outside a low dark horizon
Is draping curtains of rain
Over ann arbor

But no one wants to hear
About the fucking sky

"i do believe in spooks"
I am a twenty-eight year old
Caucasian male of
middle class
Origin

I work as a Programmer
At a small automation shop
At twenty-two dollars an hour
Plus overtime
Forty plus hours a week
I live with my girlfriend
In an apartment overlooking a lake

I get along with my parents and siblings fine
I have a few good friends

I have a bachelor's degree
And an associate's degree

I work as a programmer at
An auto shop, did I mention that?

I will still pull the covers over my head
If I'm lying there after turning the light out
And my head is tilted in such a way that
I can hear disembodied voices in the air
And my girlfriend wonders why I need
A fan or two on constantly when I go to
Sleep
I can only get it out of my right ear
When my left is clogged and in the pillow
But I hear them and I whisper, "Shield,"
And pull the covers up over my eyes
Because if I can't see it
It doesn't exist

"growth"
there's
not much
a difference
between
a tumor
and a
business

"arm fell asleep while youtube surfing"
Somewhere amongst the doo wop
Covers of miley cyrus and sad singing
Clowns and the inadvertently hilarious
amy grant concerts I realize that my knee
is jutting into the tender unflexed muscle
of my right inner bicep

and then I realize the right side of my hand
has set to thrumming quite excitedly in
protest and as I relieve the nerve from its
pinch it gasps and floods my flesh with
fire and ice

"midterms 2014"

I saw a commercial for Gary Peters
The guy running for Carl Levin's
Vacant Senate seat

He sits behind a desk in a crisp
Button up with his feet up on the desk
His family tells us how frugal he is
The washing machine's older than
His kids, and he still wears this really
Old sweater because its comfortable

He sent a bunch of money back
To the Michigan treasury because
He's so good at saving it

He seems really jovial and it's a
Really well done commercial
His family looks friendly and he
Looks like a math teacher

I look on his Wikipedia page
And discover Dow Chemical
Is the second largest contributor
To his campaign, in their efforts
To expand hydraulic fracturing
In the state of Michigan

I work in automation, as a programmer
And there is supposed to be a FUCKTON
Of money in fracking, so if it gets brought
To this state I could get rich rich rich

But I've also heard that fracking tends to
Have horrific longterm effects on the environment
And I don't know if that would bother me

at some point later on to have been involved

So now I don't know what to think
Which is usually how my thought
Process ends when it comes to
Politics

Something tells me that's kind of the
Point

so
I decide to check out Peters' opponent
Terri Lyn Land, the Republican
She was the secretary of state in Michigan
From when I started driving til like three
Years ago, so I always associate her with
The DMV and long lines and strip malls
just beginning to show their age

It says on her page she's for equal pay for
Women and it lists her other positions
I notice she's worth 34 million

Gary Peters is worth slightly less, the
Highest number associated with his
Net worth was 3.9 million

So they're both 1 percenters which means
They have no idea what it's like to have only
Three grand in the bank and since you're
In debt for roughly forty grand you technically
Don't have anything

and I'm one of the people who are technically
Doing WELL

However, if I vote for peters and it leads to
Me getting a job with an extravagant hourly
Rate and lots of hours I could potentially
Be set up financially for the first time in my
Life

(It seems like I'm always just about to be set up
Financially for the first time in my life)

And come to think of it, the republican will

probably bring fracking anyway, so I can
pretty much count on some fracking work

But to what extent would it be at the expense
of the old forests that I grew up running through

most of them are already gone

and I would probably catch some flak from
my liberal friends and shit like that

I'd catch some flak for the frack

I'm probably going to vote for peters
or the libertarian candidate who I'll look up later

"metaphor"

When it comes to government I feel like a
long battered girlfriend whose boyfriend
has told her he'll treat her right for good
if she would just do what he says
one last time and since she can't imagine
what it would be like without him she
has no choice but to comply

"never catch midnight"
when falling asleep as a child
I would have a system, as I'd
Stare at the red segmented
Analog numbers on my clock
Radio, with its alarm set and
Watch time pass until I drifted
off

It was bad luck to see it change
You never wanted to catch it
Actually changing

Minutes were okay, but at both half and
Full revolutions
Half hours and hours, you didn't want
To catch them

And worst of all was midnight
You never wanted to see 11:59
Click to 12:00

because that's when the day
is shuttled off into the past,
gone
fluttering like a lost stamp

there was something about that
that was best left to private, best
left to its own devices

the only time it was okay
was on new years eve

"my dick itches something fierce"

God is punishing me

For masturbating

I ask for forgiveness

And hope this ends

"but then, one day"
the power went out first
no internet, phone, whatever
batteries didn't last, wifi was gone
it lasted for weeks, and no
one knew anything, no matter
where you went, even if people
had a generator, they couldn't
get signals from anyone or
anything

"this wasn't an accident" said
some people, "there wasn't any
catastrophe that could have shut
down EVERYTHING. We would
certainly have noticed it"

people stopped going to work
people only drove when they had to
people started coming up with
new ways to keep food preserved
people with gardens and farms
suddenly became very popular

people started getting to know
each other again, they had to,
sharing food and resources and
heat, it was late October, and
after about a month we were
beginning to reserve ourselves
to the fact that we were going to
spend the winter without power
of any kind

but then, one day

i was lying in my bed, reading
by candlelight, which I loved, and
it was still dark outside
when we heard the motors
from off in the distance

the rumbling

without power, everything
is padded, velvet silence

so we could hear them coming
when they were still miles away

motors, rumblings of a convoy
trucks and tanks, all black and
monstrous, the special ops soldiers
or police officers or whatever
they were looked like cyborgs
with black masks over their faces

they came into everyone's houses
people demanded to know what
the meaning was, but they just said
"Sir/ma'am, you need to come with us."
And no one really resisted cause
We were all hungry and cold and
Worn out after trying to get by
In the dark for the past month

People asked questions of the
Soldiers, "What happened to
All the power?"
"Did this happen everywhere?"
"where are you taking us?"

they all brought us out and loaded
us into long black buses
a huge crowd, the whole
neighborhood, it looked like
they were doing it in sections

they didn't separate anyone
that would have alarmed us
too much, we thought we were
finally going to be helped out
of our situation

then there was an incident
tensions already ran high
but then mr. smith from
on the corner started yelling
at one of the soldiers, I'll never
know about what, and I'll
never forget this, smith
is yelling in the soldier's darth
vader face in that spoiled white

suburban way and
the soldier just points the
long thin lethal barrel of his
rifle at smith's face and
opens fire

smith's face is blown to
pieces in a red mist, a gush of
black and red and pink and his
body collapses

there is screaming, pandemonium
smith's wife and son go into
a hysteria, his son leaps at the
soldier but the soldier clocks him
one on the side of the head and he
goes down cold and his mother
cradles his head and they sit there
on the curb, and ms. Hennessy and
her husband and a couple other people
including my mom go over and start
to comfort them
until the rest of the soldiers
level their weapons and demand
calm in those toneless, empty
cyborg voices of theirs

the soldier who shot smith
lowers his gun and walks over
to a huge black humvee looking
vehicle and he climbs onto the roof
and he stands up and another soldier
hands him a megaphone and he
takes his mask off

he's a young kid, probably no
more than twenty, white, handsome
with short brown hair,
and he regards us all with
a look of utter disgust

He yells into the megaphone,
"I don't know what's going
to happen to you people, but
I gotta say... I've always wanted to
do that. That's the problem with

you people, no one's ever pointed
a gun at you or taken anything from
you other than your lunch money
I'm breaking protocol by speaking
To you openly, and I'm breaking
The law by showing you my face,
But protocol doesn't matter anymore
The law doesn't matter anymore
Democracy doesn't matter anymore
The world has been conquered, and
The conquerors want the garbage
Cleaned out before they claim
What they have rightfully earned

He continued. "You people are the
Cancer of the world. Pampered apes
Sitting around stewing in
Their own filth, never bothering
To reach the full potential of
What the cosmos has gifted you
Eternal majesties and brilliance
Of discovery lie beyond the stars
And you sit on your macbooks
And drink your coke and look
At your stock portfolios and
Watch your kids do the same thing
Over and over, generation after
Generation, time and time again
We are going to take you on
These here buses down to Detroit
Metro, and we are going to load
You onto a plane, and from there
I don't know where you're going
But I do know one thing, and that
Is that you have brought this on
Yourselves. You have deemed yourselves
Unfit for freedom, and you must be
Dealt with. Now if anyone else
Has anything to say, they will
Suffer the same fate as mr. Sheldon Smith
There"

Everyone murmured because how
The fuck did he know smith's full name
We'd all asked questions, they had only
Responded with some variant of "come

With us" no names had been mentioned
They'd given no indication

The soldier on the humvee noted the
Murmur throughout the crowd and nodded
"Oh yeah, we know who all of you are
it only took a decade and a half to
placate and categorize and theorize,
confuse and complicate and gather the data
we can predict any event, we can best
any foe before he even knows he has
a problem with us at all
while you were watching Netflix and
wondering what it takes to become
truly successful, we were making you
dependent on us, and now look at you!
Three weeks in the dark, with no tech
Of any kind and you're mewling kittens
Begging for bottled water and pop tarts
Willingly surrendering your own ability
To make decisions to faceless mercenaries
There was a time, in my circles, when I
Argued in your favor. Give them a chance,
I said, to help themselves, but I see
You have proven my colleagues right and
Now I have no sympathy for you at all
You are cattle, you have let yourselves be
Turned into cattle, and from now on you
Will be treated as such.

"niggers"
if you say a word
enough times
it'll eventually
lose all meaning

"water cooler"

The morning after the election
My boss walks over to his daughter's
Desk right next to the one I'm
Sitting at and says "Well, the good
News is we won but the bad news
Is that half the country's still
Brain dead"

"grade a"

Whenever I get a
Good idea or something
I always spend more
Time thinking about
All the praise it will
Receive me than I do
Trying to make it a
Reality

I will fantasize about
This until the idea has
Long been forgotten

I have a psychological
Need for praise, if
Someone is not telling
Me I've done a good job
There is a good chance
I will not ever know I
Have done a good job

"shit happens when you're dressed
like pennywise the clown"
This ratty little guy at a Halloween
party once took me for a republican
You're from south lyon, you're
A republican aren't you, he said

He asks me if black people scare me
I say I'm scared of anyone who wants
To harm me, regardless of their color

He invites me upstairs for some coke
Which I've never done before
He shows it to me in a little baggie
He's got a ratty little goatee, and ratty
Little dark eyes

He's got two lines out on a plate
Two half lines, to be exact, one for me
And one for Chelsea and I take his
Rolled-up dollar bill and snort it
Without much ceremony at all

This is something you do like
Three times a year, he said,
Standing over me

My left nostril will feel stuffed for
The next few weeks

I'm already crunk on several joints
And homemade Halloween punch so
I don't really feel much, just some
Heightened awareness, some
Intensified brightness

Once the ratty guy goes downstairs
Kenny goes into full dad mode
And says, watch out for that one
He's no good, this is just party
Favors or whatever, but don't
Trust that motherfucker

Chelsea rolls her eyes and tells
Him it's not a big deal
Chelsea used to snort heroin

But she never got
Addicted to it

The ratty guy was gone
When we went back
Downstairs and Kurt
Put on Cool World and
We watched it, and I
Liked it and Chelsea
Hated it

and it
Turned out the coke was
Actually crystal meth

"cryo therapy"
After suffering a crippling
Divorce and being laid off
From the only job I could
Find that paid me enough
To live normally, I decided
My only option was cryo

I didn't want to have to deal
With another torrid summer

I said I only needed a couple
Months, just enough for me
To dream away this funk I'd
Found myself in

The girl behind the counter
Was really helpful, she laid
Out all the prices for me nice

Five thousand dollars to sign
In plus services charges plus
Maintenance fees which equals
Up to something like 8 grand
Which was good cause it was
All I had in my savings

After that it's 30 cents a day
While you're asleep

I paid for it all up front and
Said I wanted three months
The full moon will be out
The week I get woken up

The cryo droids tucked me
In and I remember the cryo
Chamber door closing and
I thought of my ex-wife and
Thought who's the ice queen
Now, bitch?

"MH17"

You were going home
Or something like that
And you'd just settled
Against the seat with
The drop beneath you
And then came the
Concussion, the climax
The cataclysm that tore
The world in pieces and

Suddenly you were flying
By your heels through
Morning clouds that
Withered your lungs
With frost and you
Flew down still attached
To the seat, legs broken
And you came to rest in
A field in a country
You'd never considered
Visiting, supine with your
Eyes to the sky thinking
Wow, I fell from up there?

"dishes"
I've turned the faucet on
To heat the water up and
The sink is full of dishes
it's a grotesque fountain

The cascade fills a pan
With leftover broth
And a bit of butter

And it spills
over a cup,
over a
glass

down to mingle with
the leavings and the bits
Among the silverware

Rushing past them on
A gross tide, hellbent
Over grits and grease
Over smeared stainless
steel as it plunges forth
and steam begins to rise

"babylon"
It's best to keep your idols far away

Never meet them personally

And it's difficult to remember all
Your ancestors at the same time

"rant"
People only give a shit about
Inequality
If they find their own situations
Hopeless

They're not thinking about what

The other guy has if they're too
Busy trying to get their own

It's only when they get bitter and
Notice how large the gap has gotten
And how little their greatest effort
Seems to count against that gap
That they stop trying to do anything
And have the time to notice who's
Causing the gap

And lately it's impossible not to get
Bitter when confronted with forces
That emperors would have envied

"and the waves crashed upon the shores"
I notice it first in the breaking news section
Of google news
No indictment
BBC has it first

I hit reload
The New York Times has it now

Reload again

Now USA Today

Again

it's been ten seconds

Now USA Today has an article titled
Justice Still Possible

And the Washington Post has an article
Talking about how the decision reflects
Jurors' tendency to give police officers
The benefit of the doubt

Experts debate
Politicians hold their hands aloft
Talking heads yak and yak

And to think a century ago this would have taken days

Another reload
And ABC News has it
The LA Times has an in-depth article
Slate has a live blog
The Huff Post and Fox
Still only say there's
Been a decision made

Then Fox 5 San Diego
Breaks it, below, upon
Another reload

One more reload
And U-T News has it
The Voice of America
Urges calm

The Wikipedia article
Is pinned to the bottom
Of the headlines in its
Own little grey box
Next to the blue "Realtime
Coverage" button

By the time the Kansas
City Star gets it less than
A minute later, it already
Feels like old news

"inspiration"

There is a light

that only comes on

when it wants to

and it's never

on for

long

and the more you want it

the less you get it

"all the moments in all the world"
A little circle of soot
In my palm suggests
That I am drifting off

This circle of blue
Against the dark
Suggests that I
Must be alive

You cannot rush to anything

Do not compare yourself
To anyone else, you will
Only feel envy and despair
Or contempt and
Disconnection

So instead of feeling all that

Just feel

"indication of damnation"
There's a monkey on my back
And sometimes it drives me
To gnash my teeth and roll
My eyes and spit and swing
About

There's a demon in my head
And I'm getting real tired of
Its shit

There's a clown under my bed
And it wants to grin and grab

There's a wolf in my closet
And its eyes glow like the moon

"neckbeard at the vending machine"
It's twelve fifteen in the am
In southeastern Michigan,
Usa

At the lakeshore apartment
Complex off ford lake in
Ypsilanti

In the back of the complex
At the end of the road
You'll see a large dark
Brick high rise, seven
Stories tall

Directly in its middle
On the ground floor
Beyond an asphalt
Loop for taxis and
Moving vans,
Are a pair of double doors
And glass windows
Showing a hallway
With some elevators
And some vending
Machines

There's a candy and
Chip machine and a
Machine for beverages
With pepsi products,
Water and monster

The elevator doors open

And a man walks out
He is greasy, big, tall
Looks sweaty, not
Smiling, hair dangling
His lips will be jowls
When he gets older
He has a patchy reddish
Beard

He stops in front of the
Vending machine and
Stands contrapposto
His hand on his thin
Neckbeard, stroking

He wears thick black
Glasses, and he regards
The snacks behind the
Glass with misshapen
blue eyes

he's getting a proud gut,
perhaps due to late-night
vending machine trips

he pulls out a soft
dollar from his wallet
and feeds it into the
machine's slot mouth

he presses c9 for
famous amos cookies

he knows he wants those
for sure

the other choices won't be
so easy

outside the world is dark
and bitter December cold
everything sleeps, there's
a far-off rushing noise of
some flying machine
splitting the air like a
knife, other than that
its deathly quiet
the light from the hall
as the man stands and
considers his purchase

he puts a five dollar
bill in the machine

he can't decide if he wants
peanut m&Ms or a nestle
crunch or a chocolate pie
or three vanilla zinger cakes
or all of the above

He finally relents, and hits
F4 for the vanilla cakes
They tumble to the bottom
Free from their coil

Coins clink into the
Change chamber he
Reaches in and fingers
Them out, they are gold
Coins, dirty gold dollars
And four quarters

Presidents on the gold
Lincoln and Washington
Sacajawea the Indian
princess is on the other

He spends her, better
To keep the presidents

After some more careful
Consideration and scratching
Of his reddish neckbeard
The man in question makes
His final purchase, going with
F5, the chocolate pie

He lifts the metal flap
To collect his armload
Of treasures, and he's
Headed back to the
Elevator, upstairs to
The room to feast, the
Same dumb, lost look
On his flushed and
sweaty face

"elite"

I hate your club

Can I please

Join it?

"fake christmas tree"
There are few things
More comforting than
A Christmas tree, even
A fake one
Whose lights have been
Left on when all the others
Have been turned out

That glow with the hum
Of civilization

Those little pinspots of
Golden yellow strewn
Like snow on the holy
Boughs, crowned with
White wings

Seasons turn in those
Needles even if they
Are only plastic tabs

From over here

Who can tell

"anarchy and irony"
a stick of Axe deodorant
with a scent labeled
Anarchy

a gold wheel of code
stuck on its middle
that will set off
an alarm in an instance
of attempted theft

"tickled"
A website has a shelf
Life

They get waves of
Different
People

The good wave
The best wave
The most entertaining
And uninhibitedly
clever wave

Comes about a couple
Years in

Soon after those
People
Lose
Interest
And move on
To another website
To fill with their
Shenanigans

After that
The giggly
Idiots
Take over
And
It's curtains

"what I love about the internet"

If you go to facebook you might
Assume that the average person is
Self-centered and pretty

If you go to reddit you might
Assume that the average person is
Smart and a little pretentious

If you go to 4chan you might
Assume that the average person is
a racist sexual deviant

If you go to tumblr you might
Assume that the average person is
A beautiful twenty-year old girl

If you go to twitter you might
Assume that the average person is
Actually pretty fucking funny

"we're on the wane, it's time to steer"
sometimes you find yourself saying things that you know you
won't be able to take back and yet you say them anyway. You
know the damage they're going to do, and you swing the
hammer, and you watch the faces break up

you know full well the remorse and guilt you'll carry
later.

But that's later

This has to be done

Sometimes these things just have to be done

And we can feel the weapon hovering
Ready to hollow us out like good corpses
And we know we must hold still and yell
go

Their full-on fights degenerate into evenings of quiet,
sad, far-away looks into nowhere, looking at anything but
each other, and smiling without their eyes when they do.

That sucks, dude

If there's peace, don't worry, it'll find a way
To turn itself into conflict

But it takes two to tango to be sure

And this smoky haze isn't helping, either

Surely we can do better than this

And maybe we will because we can still talk to each other

And have a good fuck now and then

And it's overall a good thing, a good, good thing

The best thing you could hope for, to be honest, and I want
it to last

It's worth fighting for, I'd say

"leather jacket"
the skin of a dead beast
hangs heavy on me
about this time every year
to combat winter's fouls
and any ill will I might
accidentally catch onto

"meh-eh-eh-eh-eh-eh!"

One day before the chorus came out for the big
Opening number

Rob started making goat noises and it sounded
Really authentic

Like there was a real goat backstage, and it was
Fucking hilarious

Rob kept making the noises until our cue came
And we all walked out onto the stage except for
Rob who tripped on the set and fell and hurt his
Shin and had to be dragged to his spot by one of
The other chorus members

I'd say that was one of the happiest moments in my
Life, laughing I went to my position, laughing at
Rob's goat noises

They sounded like a real goat, I swear

"the only living thing"
I been feeling the follows of old yesteryear
In ripples that pass through my ethersphere
Develop my image that will one day appear
Somewhere in time far away from here

I am a machine that is fragile to bear
I look down at my body and see underwear
Toenails and fingers and veins and some hair
I'm up in my head tower, they're all down there

The room is as wide as the walls are steep
The ceiling's as high as the floor is deep
Reaper reap and creeper creep, it's cheap
For sheep to beat the heap but they're all
Asleep

at that we'll leave

"mcconnell"
with the eyes of an owl
and his prominent jowl
he's out on the prowl
in a city most foul
mcconnell

"the empire business"

It takes two people
to make one person
it takes a nation
to make an elite
and it takes an elite
to make a revolution

"that damned black-eyed dog is at it again"
it begins in that inner reservoir of dread
that you always have, that emotional hole
that begins to widen

and then you notice your heart is thudding
and your palms are getting cold and damp
and your chest is full of echoes because
something
is quite
wrong

it spreads throughout like a pool of blood
it swoons you and rocks you, passes you around
terrible and
looming

then you feel the sinking, and the grey fuzz
starts to creep in the corners as you nod
and it slowly takes you over, surging forth
and it'll take you down to the depths with it
but only for a minute
you bob back to the surface
not knowing you were even gone
not knowing for how long
barely aware that your brain
just had its way with your
heart

"where you come from and where you go"
if there's one thing
you should never be
it's ungrateful

"the mob responds"
The system has failed us!
Let's burn down something corporate!
I wouldn't burn, I would boycott.
Hit them where it matters most--

if you're looking for
the source of your misery,
the source of the injustice
that drove you here today--
i tell you this--
you're not aiming high enough.

"musing on the muse"

sometimes the muse only cracks the door
like a child on christmas morning
a thin creak and a thin crack of light
often when you're not looking for it at all
but you gotta shove your foot in there
and hold it open for as long as it takes
for her to tell you what you need to write
down

"scared every time I open my front door"
jennifer lawrence is signing
autographs outside the studio
at a filming of letterman

she's led by a gaggle of handlers
over to a frenzied group of fans
and photographers, flashing flashes
and flashing paper and pens with
all the subtlety of a startled flock
of geese

as she clicks over to them in the
classiest high heels, the fervor
increases and the crowd swells &
the people in the back push and
push and the people up front lose
their balance and the barriers
come down with all the people
looking like pigs at feeding time
but before they can get too close
she's whisked away in the other
direction by her security guard
who shields her against the human
tide and then she's left all
the grabbers and squawkers to
grab and squawk and boo for not
getting their glossy portraits
marked

the articles describe her as smiling
as she's jostled from one place to the next
but mostly she just looks like she's at work

"a nice cup of hot chocolate"
i usually somehow end up with swiss miss
all the time but any powdered brand works

i prefer the kind without the tiny marshmallows
they're not good for anything except getting
stuck between your teeth
not much better than little chunks of
wet sand

I like my cocoa clear of marshmallows
of any kind

get two mugs, fill one with water and
put it in the microwave for a minute
and a half

Put the powder in the other mug

When the microwave's done, pour
the water from one mug into the
mug with the powder and stir in

Sniff the steam with a deeply
peaceful look on your face and
sip away

"culture isn't your friend"
Everything you like
You probably shouldn't
Stop consuming
Start creating

Your idols don't care
If you love them
They don't even know
You exist
You should be ashamed
For having idols in the
First place
Stop consuming
Start creating

The things you have
Been made to want
More than anything
You should actually
Not want at all, and
You should be ashamed
For wanting them in the
First place
Stop consuming
Start creating

You're being lied to!
They all screamed at once

ABSOLUTELY APPARENT
POEMS: 2014-2015

"mummified infants"

Part 1:

Rosalia Lombardo

Last one in the catacombs

Sleeping in the chapel

Where tourists come and go

A victim of a violent flu

She'll be a hundred soon

Funny how she doesn't look

a day more than two

Her skin is showing age,

her bow has started to fade

And soon she'll dry

open her eyes

and

completely disintegrate

Little Rosalia, so peaceful and so cold

How many morbid pilgrims offered prayers for your soul

How many shuffled past the crypt and saw the swaddled babe

Left down here by grieving parents that January day

Sorry there, Salafia,

you couldn't stop decay

But you really did a bang-up job,

she's lasted for decades

Part 2:

Janet Barrie had some twins
Janet Barrie couldn't win
Janet Barrie had a trunk
Janet Barrie locked them up

She put a kiss upon their head
Slowly closed the lid and said
I leave you here with all my love
I leave you cause enough's enough

you can blame the dementia
I'm going back to Canada

Some years from now
they'll all find you
And speculation
will ensue

"pennyride"

you gamble in the fragrant air
dirt trampled in horsecart dare
you handle all the spokes with care
midway down the mainline fair

pictures of days long past
days we never thought would end
And all the riches time can hold
Tell of distant memories of old

opt out of a final race
cold bodies drink flat champagne
shame brought on a glimpse of grace
brought back, love, from whence we came

"nothing"
the more you have it
the less you want it

"florida keys"
The overhead tropical blaze
Has left my legs sore and glazed
And now I'm lying prone
Watching my toenails grow
And the television glow
And there's a blizzard
Back home

"buzz logic"

I am several million cells, divide and multiply
I am eternal energy trapped in a finite mind
I am one duality, a dominant species
This might sound crazy, but you're
going to be fine

I am stretched tissue, I am bone and meat
I have psychedelic trips every time I sleep
The floorboards creak and Satan speaks
We could all end up being some alien's
ultimate feast

Watch out for singularity
We're bound to match the alchemy
In twelve dimensions, all directions
In all directions, in all directions

"precious green"

if the environment is destroyed

because of climate change

how will we grow marijuana

if we're too worried about food?

"love during armageddon"

The day the world ended it came down in puffs of ashes
And the sky was black and it smelled like sulfur everywhere
And there were explosions on the horizon and the sky was
Cracked with white through the black and lightning came
down

And touched spindly fingers to the tallest places we knew
But we were not afraid we felt freedom as it was meant to
be

Felt and we ran outside and danced in the fall out and
tried to

Catch the little bits of ash on our tongues like snowflakes
Because we knew our obligations would all soon be gone
And for now we could all hold hands and dance in circles
Just like our ancestors did in the dawn of some long lost
Morning

"with time"

Sometimes people change
So much that they become
Different people

It is the measure of that
Which doesn't exist

"take a drag or two"
The velvet underground plays
As I pinch a few extra bunches in
and
Spark the glow, producing a most
Satisfying crackle followed by the
Stankiest of plumes

Lou reed one year in the ground

And there were people who thought
The world would end when elvis
Died

"rock is dead"

It soldiered on for a bit and
Even looked like it might endure

but we looked around recently
and noticed it had slipped off
without bothering to say later

true to form to the end, I guess

the needle crackles on the record
like a fireplace

"brainslave"

It set me up and
Stretched the skin
Of my forehead
And face

It made me think
Of glorious mornings
Of yesteryear

Driving a truck
To the bank
Parking lot
Running to the
Atm for cash
For donuts
On a bright
Wednesday

It made me think
Petty thoughts
About failure
And it compared
Me to people
With connections

It gave me a ripping
Good idea

It made me search
The room

It made me quit
My job

It put me back
To sleep

It recoiled when I
Got near something
I shouldn't have

It brought up the
Same subject hours
On end for no reason

It would do one thing
For decades and then
Just stop

It would not take any
Advice whatsoever

It would not pick up
Any good habits

It was never used
Quite to its fullest
potential

"nonseason"

Those days
Where there is
No color present

All the color
Has been sucked
Out of everything

The water is grey
The grass is yellowed
The sky is white
The trees are black

Cement and metal
Are the only things
That don't look
Out of place

It's the days when
January is a
week late and
December has
Already taken
Off
Out the door

Or when may
Forgets to leave
The lamps on
For june

Or when august leaves
Two weeks and
Then comes back
Halfway through
September
Like it forgot
Its coat

They either over
Stay their welcome
Or show up tardy

"the programmers"
Gathered around
Their screens

They observed
Their charges

Their prey

Their subjects

Studying human
Behavior in real
Time

They follow the
Lives of random
Folks, starting at
Birth

And they control
And influence
That person
Throughout

Seeing how
They react
To different
Situations
To stress
To suffering

But also to
Joy and to
Love and
Laughter

They watched
The links clicked
The interests
Sprouted
The fetishes
Revealed

Nothing was
Hidden from
The programmers

One by one
They learned
what their
subjects wanted
and how
they behaved

and once
they knew

they used it

pushing
the products
only they
wanted to
push

causing the
pain that
they and they
alone
selected

watching
their charges
despair and
divulge and
try to explain
why it seemed
like the universe
was against
them

they chuckled to
each other and
one stood up and
asked if anyone
needed coffee
cause he was
going to the

breakroom

these were not
gods, just other
people with
computers
and access to
the cloud
and a government
behind them
and billions
upon billions
of capital

they watch the
unsuccessful
through the screens

and comment
to themselves
on how best
to manipulate
them

they report
to their bosses
once a week

they party a
lot, make a lot
of money

they have a lot
of sex, spend
a lot of cash
all have nice
cars, hip city
apartments

they don't
think anything
of the treatment
of their charges

as far as they're concerned
they deserve it

they are like animals

barely aware

they deserve it

the universe is just
and this will go on
as long as it's going
to

this is how they
think to themselves
about what they
do, these
programmers

"religion"
I hold myself
From what I
Really want
Because if
You get too
Much of what
You really want
It Will destroy
You

"choir"

In creation, God took a breath
And split himself like a cell
And he's been dividing himself
up ever since

We all remember where
We're from
We just don't think about
It enough

We sing the world into
Existence, riding the
Shockwave called
Time

Singing is
Sex noise

Singing is the act
Of creation

Everything is
Vibration

Everything is
Singing

"even"
What a sleek word

Weasels sliding
Through holes
In the dirt

Fish in the river
gliding along

The garden
Bespoiled by
A single bite

Taken beyond
What it could
Have been

Now to tip
The scales
And restore
The balance

"acoustic brunch"

Every Sunday the brunch acoustic

The softer side of ann arbor's station

All the artists john's obsessed with

Broadcast nowhere else

Tune in and zone out

"dropped off"
Before I came into
the house just now,
I stopped on my front
lawn and tilted my
head back.

My neck crinkled.

So satisfying.

The sky was fucking magical.

Stars glimmered.
The universe pulsed.
Airplanes drew smoky
trails like fingers,
tracing their paths
in the deep dark
ocean of sky.

I saw
a satellite, a tiny
pin-drop of a light,
moving ever so slowly
and blinking, off and on,
gently.

The face of the moon
A silver dollar

The wind was nectar in
My nostrils, a good spring blend

The wind rose ever just so
Ruffling my hair like a grandparent

The stars were far away and the
Sun on the other side

"now this is how we do it"
It's rock and roll if the singer
Can't hit the note and screams it
Instead

it's rock and roll if the guitarist
plays riffs you can hum later on

it's rock and roll if the bassist
cracks the venue's foundation

Its rock and roll if the drummer
Looks like he's beating someone
To death

"a few"

You just have to believe in yourself more than them.

You just have to believe you're right more than they do.

"debt"

What's worse than having
no money?

Having no money,
and
owing someone money.

"acceleration"
When you're a child
Days seem continent-wide
But
As you grow up they begin
To accordion in
and get
Shorter,
you start to notice
Weeks passing then months
And then years

You begin to lose days
Whole weeks go unnoticed
Spent at some survival
Necessity
A new bill
Eats every
Paycheck

You mark the days
You try to hold them
As they fly off one after
The other

The key to the universe
Is multiplication by division
Hurtling toward glory
On the breath of the Almighty

"of mountains and men"
Fear is the root of all
Negativity

And I see the same places
In every new place I see
Throughout my life

I'm aware of the patterns
The cycles, the mechanism
Of the universe

I just can't calculate them
Yet

"the famous never really die"

A few months
After Robin
Williams killed
Himself, I was
Looking up
Sheryl Crow
Vids on the
Youtubes and
There was one
Particular live
Performance
Of every day
Is a winding road
It was all for
Some graduation
Or a charity
Benefit or
Something
And to my
Surprise after
The second
Chorus Robin
Himself walked
Out and began
Improvising
Amusing things
Over the chords

The vid was
From like 06
But I'd never
Seen it and
So it seemed
Like he'd come
Back one
last time to
Do improv
for me and
everyone

and he looks
happy which
is really nice
to see

"traffic jam"
don't be in
too much of
a hurry
or
you'll risk
making
everyone else
late

"oh ok"
I just realized
What my problem
Is

I put on a doors
Record and then
Go listen to
Big data and
Royal blood
On youtube

My singing
Voice is pinched
And whiny
And
My tone is
Terrible

And I'm not
Innovative

Like, in the
Slightest

I'm all stale form
Within confined
Horizons

"karma"
they say time
moves in cycles
that is, in resets
and restarts

every beginning
loops around an
end

that is to say,
you notice
something like
an event of
ignorant decadence
and greed like
Woodstock 99
Occurred in 99
And it was followed
By a catastrophe
Like 911 that happened
In 2001

2000 was the pole
we swung round
and caught our
behavior right
in the face

just different
people occupying
the same spaces

"headache"
My poor sponge brain
Is steeped in electric
Pricklings and pressure
Most unpleasant

Someone needs to hit
The release valve
And let some of
This steam out
And
Some relief in

I no longer feel
An obligation
This mental
Constipation

"this is us"
Listening to a
Physicist explain
The origins of
The universe

At one point
he explains
the universe
is only four
percent
matter and
70 percent
dark energy
and 26 percent
dark matter

eeef you luke
at dis pick-a-chure
uh-f dee unee-vurrse
eet ees stry-king

he says in a
gloriously
thick accent
which may
be middle
eastern or
Indian or
Eastern
European

Mos uhf de
Yoo-nee-vurse

he
Continues

But then

he's
Cut off

by what
Sounds like a

Person farting

It's a blowing noise

A cross
Between a

sneeze

A cough

and a fart

yes,

An audience member
Has expelled air from
Some orifice, and loudly
All messy and slobbery

What if the big bang
Was just a fart?

"tuesday evening"

We could
Charge the
Ipod and go
For a stroll

Good for the
Heart and good
For the soul

Loosen up the
Corridors of
Cognition's
Conditions

I never write to you
The way I used to

I both depend on and sneer at
my own ambitions

"alpha"
Continents shift
When he turns
His head

Lesser souls
Fall in behind
Like ants

his footsteps
thud with
purpose

his voice
is graveled
and booming

he says what
he thinks
and even
though every
one agrees
with what
comes out
he wouldn't
care if they
didn't, or at
least that's
how he comes
off

"sounds"

The heater kicks off
And the night kicks in

Nameless rustlings
A chorus of hums
Machinery running
The clock ticking

The aerogarden pump
Bubbling
A car in the parking lot
Pulling away

The tinny frequency
Of matter in your ear

The stars slowed down

"a little light"
In January of 2011
I was driving a
Hospice truck
For thirteen

An hour and
I was up in
The Shelby
Twp area and
Someone had
Spray painted
The word
"Freedom"
In red
in the upper
right corner
of the overpass
at Ryan rd and
59

it was up there
a few weeks
then someone
washed it off

"depth"

I get the sensation
Of being next to
Something immense
Something of a size
Beyond comprehension

"peaks and valleys"

When recounting
The past over a
Great period of
Time, I often
think to myself
you know, they
say us humans
are so good at
recognizing
patterns that
we often see
ones where
there aren't
any
but
I don't know
Because I
Think I'm
Seeing some
Thing here
Something like
A scan of a
Dying star
But I know
It has peaks
And valleys
Just like any
Other kind of
Frequency

"greatness"

I watch

These

Documentaries

On netflix

On great

Men in

History

Presidents

Like kennedy

And people

Who wanted

To be president

Like mitt romney

And george mcgovern

Lots of writers, too

Gore vidal, roger ebert

Hunter s. Thompson,

Bukowski

Etc.

The majority of them

Are dead or retiring

From public life

They're all in

Each other's pieces

Too, talking about

Each other and how

Great they were and

How much they

Respected each other

They're legacy pieces

It's just their families

Looking to cement the

Dignity of the brand

They're convincing

And interesting

Nonetheless

And while watching
Them I feel I've
Contributed nothing
To human society

Most of us will
Never have our
Childhood homes
Turned into
Museums

And I can't decide
If that's good or bad

"conditioning"
every time I
eat rice I
automatically
think about
Mitch Hedberg's
Rice joke
About how
They're great
If you want
To eat a
A thousand
Of anything

Every
Time

"simple things"
Thanking
God for
An evening
In your
Underwear
Eating
Two day old
Chinese food
Listening
To vinyl
And waiting
For the lake
To thaw

"pain"
Heartbreak is
A quick tear
Followed by
A slow fix

And death?
Hoo...
death is a
Whole other
Kettle of fish

Build a
Sarcophagus
Around it
Like
Chernobyl

Keep it
Right there
Where it
Can't get
At anything
Vital

Don't let
It seep
Out and
Start
Blackening
Things

Consume
You alive
and fuck up
everything

"the rorys"
i've only
known
two rorys
in my life.

one I met
in middle
school

the other
after
high school

one looks
at me
the other
down at
me

I delivered
To them
Both when
I worked
For hospice

Rory l. was
Losing his
Great
Grandmother
Or maybe
Grandmother

Rory b. was
Losing his
Uncle, and
The uncle
Gave him
The little

White house
He lived
In

They
Were
The only
Two people
I
Delivered
To
That I'd
Known prior

They're also
The only
Two rorys
I've ever
Known

Weird

"brick dick"
the Ypsilanti
water tower
erected in
1890 is also
the world's
most phallic
building

there is a cross
over the door
at the bottom
of the shaft

so the world's
most phallic
building also
has a cross
on it

147 feet of
limestone
and shingle

it stands
proudly
at the
highest
point in
Ypsilanti
Right out
In front
Of McKenny
Hall at
Eastern
Michigan

University

At Christmas
They put a
Gold star on
Top of it

I
Remember
Being able
To see it
From my
Dorm room
Window in
the Pittman
hall tower
seventh floor

the dick was
to the south then

it's in the north
from my apartment
now across ford
lake

I can see
It's round
Head over
The trees

I look for it
On the horizon
Every time I
Gaze off my
Sixth floor
Balcony

"burger"

The bottom bun is pleasurably thin and
Soft as a co-eds thigh on Sunday morning
toasted, not soggy; fluffy, not stale
The lettuce green and fresh in strips
You can make out the dew on the skin
Of the tomato slices and the onion slices
The pickle is there, and the meat, oh
The meat is oozing hot juice, from this
Vantage point the cheese appears liquid
Suspended in gooey decadence
between the two patties
Simmering in grease and goodness
There are onion rings in their crispy
Prime tangled just below the top bun
With some tangy orange secret sauce
To top it off before the top bun slams
Down and you can see the oil the
Sesame seeds settled in upon being
Sprinkled on the beautiful baked
Brown

"poor things"
Sometimes people
exiting the Ethereum
that is childhood
and Adolescence
go years before Noticing
that the training wheels
Are off

They're like mission control
When voyager 1 exited the
Sun's magnetism and began
Being pelted with God knows
What out past Pluto

Totally not expecting it, and
The implications can cause
Worry

No one celebrating their scant
Accomplishments

No one to trumpet their name
Or claims on earth

They just kind of spend
Their lifetimes shrinking
Without even knowing it
And they're so nice about
The whole thing too

They know deep down
They're the real

Inconveniences
They know deep down
To keep their
Heads down
To shoulder themselves
And never
Think too
Much

"apartment gardening"
I tried my hand at
Gardening last year
A challenge given I
Live on the sixth floor

I decided to start around
February, when I noticed
The poinsettias I'd gotten
For Christmas hadn't yet
Died

I got my girlfriend, who'd
Asked for kitchen accessories
a basic Aerogarden for her
birthday (along with other
presents) that
came with seed packets
for parsley, basil
and chives

I also got her flowers
For valentine's day
But they came in a
Styrofoam block
And were dead and
Gone within a few
Days

I was quite unhappy as I'd
Tried to water them and
Soak their odd sponge

Soil-replacement frequently

But I threw those out
And installed a glass
Globe that fits into
A hollow clay spike
And you fill the globe
With water and it
Soaks into the soil
As needed

Then my mom got
Me a small pail
Of planted roses
For my birthday
With some buds
And tiny little thorns

I had to cut the rose
Blossoms because
They started wilting
It was quite
A hot summer

But I was faithful
With my teapot of
Brita filter water
For all three of my
friends all through
Spring and summer

And then in fall
I had to throw out
The poinsettias
Because we had ants
And fruit flies and
I put it outside but
Then we had the
Nastiest autumn
Storm you've ever
Seen and we live on
The windward side
Of our highrise next
To a lake so we just
Get pounded with
Wind every time

There's a storm
Like that and I
Went out there
The next day and
My magnificent
Friend was lying
All its leaves limp
As can be, it was
Gone, it's leaves
Never got to turn
Red again, so I threw
It away

The roses stayed
Dry and dejected
Looking

They're still out there
Survivors

The aerogarden's
Children provided
Ample harvests for
My girlfriend and I
Throughout the months
After they first
Sprouted sometime
in May

we'd planted them in
april, putting together
the bowl and the light
and inserting the cone
seed packets into their
respective water holes

they required watering
and four milliliters of
a brownish liquid that
had to be shaken before
administration via
teaspoon every other
Monday

the three herbs grew
to full lush and bright

green, full and new
under the heat lamp
My girlfriend put the basil
On pasta and the parsley
On steak and potatoes

The chives were included
In some meals too but they
Never took off compared
To the basil and parsley
They were always thin
And crowded out by
Their more vivacious
Siblings

I had to deep six the
Parsley and the chives
A few weeks ago, the
Latest casualties

The parsley was a
Multistemmed stump
And the chives were
Down to one or two
flaccid green stalks
and a wisp here and
there

There was a little
Stem of basil with
Some healthy leaves
On it still tho so I
Left it and fed it
And it's now reaching
Up back towards
The light

It'll keep for now
Until my girlfriend comes
Up with another dish to
Garnish

Maybe my roses
Will come back
In the spring
But I'm not

Counting on it

It looks like a pot
Of desert clods

The soil looks like
Cremains and the
rose stems look
like something
on the cover
of a grapes of
wrath novel

for now, the
basil will bloom
and when it's
done I'll pull
it's circle out
of the aerogarden
and its roots
like cousin itt's
hair will follow
dripping and
into the trash
it'll go

In the meantime
I got my girlfriend
Three miniature
Saguaro plants for
Our anniversary

They sit in a glazed
Pot of rocks and sand
And they only require
Watering twice a
Year

On a related note, I have
Decided not to own pets

"loser"

I'm not important, nor do
I enjoy being important
but I do enjoy pretending
I'm important

I walk around the room
Pontificating my effortless
Brilliance to millions

I verbally vanquish
Opponents, a lance
Through the larynx
At every debate I
Step into

I motivate and mesmerize
With a podium under me

I stare smugly at all the
Suckers from the covers
Of magazines

I'm quoted in every website
I'm featured in every link
I'm at the top of google news
Every day, in fact, they've

Skipped right to it and just started
Making the main page a
Tribute to me on my birthday

I rake in sums of capital
That would arouse any royal

I banter with all the hosts
Maher, Myers, Colbert, Kimmel
Fallon, Corden and O'Brien
They grin at me like frat brothers

Politicians, celebrities and the rabble
All sing my praises and talk about
How much they all admire me

It's all a big club, and I'm in it now

The globe spins on my
Little finger

It gives me great joy
To think that, in a
Faraway reality, in
A distant dimension
These events are
Actually happening
As I pace about in
My small apartment
Thinking these here
Thoughts

"genius"

There are geniuses

Of every kind working

Behind counters

It used to be considered

A divine spirit had taken

Up residence in your head

There are geniuses

Of every kind working

In cubicles

So

YOU weren't the genius

you HAD a genius

There are geniuses

Of every kind who

Sit and feel unneeded

A man's worth is the light

In his heart, not his head

"awkward"

It is a face-clenching,
cringing, cowering
sense
of not fitting.

The whole square peg
being jammed into a
round hole thing

Very uncomfortable indeed

Squeeze your eyes shut
As hard as you can and
wish that hadn't happened
or
had happened better.

"regret"
You don't have to be
An irrational optimist

Just be open-minded

Be conscious of your
Mindset, if it's all grim
And gloom and
Learned helplessness
Then you're going
To cheat yourself
Out of a lot of
Good things
And for no
Good reason
Either

"helloooo out there"
Every time a published writer
Complains about anything that
Has to do with their audience
I want to drag them by the ear
To the nearest computer and
Show them my wattpad which
Only has views from me and
Ask them if they'd like to trade
Places

"I just want to do God's work"
My nose is runny and I raise a
Hand and quickly and quietly
Smear the snot away
On my skin and sleeve

"violence"

I want to knock him over and put my knees on his shoulders
And pound away at his face until his cheekbones start to
come

Apart under my knuckles and I'm going to keep going until
his

face is a bloody mush and I'll keep going and little bits
of bone

and brain and tissue fly up and stick to my face but I'm a
man on

a mission and I continue to punch downward with all my
weight

until I'm only punching carpet or dirt or whatever we
happen to be

fighting on then I'll get up with fire in my throat, and
walk

off, feeling much better about the whole thing

"author's portrait"

Introspective photography with
introspective lighting and other
introspective things that cannot
actually be introspective because
they don't have brains which means
they don't have cognition which means
there's nothing for them to introspect

the
artist sitting with an
introspective, melancholy look
looking all weary and worn out
because they spend all their time
thinking about the world
and being wise
and being prescient
and that's hard, man

I'm looking away because I'm too
Cool to care

I'm looking at you because I want
To intimidate you with
A glare

I want to catch your gaze
With my transfixing stare
As you peruse the aisles
For your latest adventure

"another little circle closes"
When I heard there was a
Lord of the rings movie coming
Out back in the 1999 I was quite
Excited as I had just read the
Hobbit in English class that winter
And was very much looking forward
To a movie adaptation

Since I had three years til the first
Movie came out, I would make up
How the movie would look in my
Head, and for inspiration I used to
Listen to the soundtracks of other
Films

The soundtrack I used the most to
Achieve this illusion
Was the soundtrack from Titanic
James Horner's iconic score
Haunting and vast and chilly
Perfectly conjures a northern ocean

Two years later I saw Enya had recorded
A song for the Lord of the Rings, I really
Liked it, it was called May It Be and I heard
It on the Lord of the Rings webpage, they
Had it playing in the background

Today I read on imdb that James Cameron
originally wanted Enya to do the music

For Titanic, and based the vocalization parts
Of the score on her voice

These connections mean nothing
But I enjoy noticing them

"don't be afraid, ya pussy"
Work is having a Christmas lunch today
Everyone's congregated on tables down
On the floor, eating pizza, a giant sub and
Desert of cookies and cupcakes

These gatherings really cause me distress

I hate having to choose tables to sit at
In places where I'm not close with anyone

It brings me back to lunch during school
Where I'd have to scan the lunchroom
For tables full of people I could consider
Allies, of which there were few

I was always fortunate enough to find at
Least some acquaintance lunch mates, and I
Sat with my bonafide best friends for
Lunch from 8th grade to halfway through
My junior year when I realized
They were idiots and I should stop
Hanging out with them

Eventually I just gave up on lunch altogether

Once I got a car my junior year of high school
And I just would get nachos or whatever and
Trode out to the parking lot, trying to look like
I was just retrieving something from my 95
Taurus, royal blue in color

I'd sit in my car for lunch, catching the tail end
Of Drew and Mike or just listening to my CDs

I was much happier this way, and I found I could
Get away with being a few minutes late to my
Fourth hour, too

Now, staring at this mass of strangers and
Workplace acquaintances and faces of the office,
The prospect of walking up and selecting
A table in the midst of all those eyes and heads
is really just something I don't feel like doing
right now, and besides, I've seen at least
Two other people go upstairs to their desks with
Full plates, including Tom Dawson, who's a super
visor, so I think I'll be all right if I just tromp up
The steps to my desk and go on reddit and
chow down there

"days of dixie"

The first black president
of the United States
is a Democrat

"more bitching and anxiety"

I am constantly in fear of unemployment
Constantly in fear of illness and financial
Ruin, that I am destined to loneliness and
Heartbreak, that society is on the verge
Of collapse, that my skin and gender make
Me a target for raw hatred and the world
will treat me like a second class citizen by
The time I'm forty

I don't hate my job and that's actually the best
A lot of people in my position can hope for

I don't love it, either, but I also don't hate it

That's the best the average person can hope for

I'm not happy, but I'm not unhappy, either

Leave well enough alone

None of this would've been a problem if I
Hadn't been told throughout my developing
Years that the only way I'd be happy is if
I loved my job

So naturally, when I'm just okay with the job
I'm going to have this vague sense that something

Is not lining up

I've had shittier jobs before

That's how I know this one isn't that bad

Expectation is the root of disappointment

"entrepreneur"

I hate the word entrepreneur, it makes
Me think of some college aged chode
Who just got a six figure advance
From his daddy's hedge fund and now
He's using it to come up with an app
That can detect the scent of people's
Farts so no one will ever be able to
Shirk responsibility again when it
Comes to cutting the cheese and
it will no doubt make millions and
Vault another twisted soul into the
Realms of power and influence and
The chode's smug face will appear
On cover after cover and link after
Link, talking about how he made it
By pure skill and ability and cunning
And we'll all have to watch and
The world will die a little faster

"follow your passion"

I never want to hear the words passion
And follow in the same sentence again

People who talk about passion
And the values of work are usually
People who don't have to actually
Work

Or they're assholes who've been
Forced to it their entire lives and
Now know that if it gets changed
They'll be screwed so they want
To perpetuate it so everyone else
Is as miserable as them

Work is so honorable
that everyone
Spends their lives
trying to get rich enough
to not have to work

work is not passion,
work is getting shit done
that needs to get done,

Not because
you have a burning
Desire
to get it done
but because
Civilization
needs it to be done

Work is doing something no one will
Notice unless it doesn't get done

Work is something no one will do
Unless they're paid for it

Work is what no one wants
To do but must be done anyway

Passion is defined by desire
Work is defined by necessity

"cynic"

Despair chases its own tail

Despair is resignation

Keeping an open mind is like
Trying to pry apart a bear trap

Ignore everyone

Get yours before
It all runs out

"dead sheep"
bill burr makes a joke
stating how no one
politician has
the balls
to come out and say
at least 85 percent of the
global population
has to go

and the audience cheers
wildly, unwittingly
for their own deaths

"truth"
the truth is

that which is

even if no one

wants it to be

"lazy"

I don't like work much

Oh, I imagine there's work
I'd enjoy doing, work that
I enjoy so much it turns me
Into a happy little machine
that doesn't even know it's
Working

But I haven't found it yet

Mostly I just like money

if there was a way I could
get lots of money, I'd
probably never do
anything else again

"game"

We got to the court and
The other team already
Had several million points
On the board

And they were wearing
Jet packs

And they seemed confused
When we were like,
eh
come to Think of it,
we'd rather Just pass
on the whole thing

"muddled"

I was on reddit's todayilearned

I read that

A study on wolves introduced
To Yellowstone park apparently
Had positive effects on the
Park's environment

It was from a Tedtalk

Then several lines down
There was another link
That said the Yellowstone
Wolf tedtalk story had been
Debunked many times over

...

"want"

It's difficult to appreciate
What you have
When the entire
cultural mechanism
Depends on the
Individual's never
Being satisfied

They would have you
Believe that
Counting your blessings
is not an American thing
to do

the American thing to do
is just buy another
blessing

"ass burgers"

I find direct eye contact
with people to be very
hard to maintain for more
than a few seconds

I'm constantly aware of what
signals I'm sending and reading
every little twitch from them to
see what they're sending and all
the while I've missed what they're
actually saying.

In attempting to discern the signal
Of the soul I miss the signal of the
Mouth

"silkie chicken"
There's a new breed
Of chicken with long
Silky feathers, it looks
Like a sheepdog chicken

They're called silkie
Chickens and I wanna
Say they're from Britain

I want to buy one of these
things so it can ride around
on my shoulder and help me
out when social situations get
sticky.

"That guy's not actually insulting you,"
the silkie chicken would whisper in my ear.
"He was making a joke. He likes you fine."

"No, no one saw you wipe your nose just now. It's all
right."

"It doesn't matter if you say hi to the receptionist or
not."

"Don't tell anyone else I can talk."

Plus if I get stressed out or start to
have a panic attack I could stroke its
feathers and calm myself down.

And it would replace my pillows
at home, so I'd save money on pillows.

Yes, I think I'd really like me a silkie

A silkie chicken

"occupations"

I've worked for my dad's freelance tv production company
As a PA and Audio tech off and on since I was fourteen
But I haven't done any work for him in three years

I bagged groceries at a Farmer Jack for a year and a half

I've worked at two different haunted houses, five
Halloweens total

I was a cashier at Toys R Us

I shoveled snow in an apartment complex for a few weekends

I delivered pizzas for an asshole drill sergeant

I worked in the kitchen at Chuck E. Cheese for a summer

I was a dishwasher at Outback for nine months

I was a janitor at Kensington Metropark for two summers
And then for a year and a half after college as well

I drove a hospice truck for three years

And now I'm in automation

And my degree is in TV and radio production
Technically

So go figure

I imagine in a few years
I will be in another job that
I cannot predict right now
Because I probably haven't
Pictured myself doing it

Stop expecting anything
You would expect

"Catholicism"
Christianity
with
Jewish guilt
left in

"RD-RRR"

When you get a flare
No matter the cause
You should RD-R-R-R

It's said like Hardy-har-har-har
So it's easy to remember

And it stands for

Recognize
Depressurize
Reanalyze
and
Realize
with
Real Eyes

It basically means take
A step back and see if
What you're freaking
Out about is really
Worth it

It's mostly just to break
The rage chain that gets
Forged when that
Addictive rush starts

Once you get your
Real eyes back, you
See if your red face
Is truly warranted
Or just unreasonable

God, I'm annoying

"beast on a leash"
Let's be honest here
Every man has a predator inside him
Just as a woman has to shed her eggs
With some blood once a month

Every time a woman
takes her top off
In a crowd
and says
she's not asking for it
she has a valid point

But it's still a slap in the face to the
Vast majority of decent fellows who
Hadn't planned to look at her tits and
Are now distracted and bothered

Dangled food in front of a starving dog

If you do you're a pig
If you don't you're a pussy

I was at Lollapalooza 2008
about a little more than halfway back
in the crowd during rage against the machine
and these two twentysomethings
Began stripping and gyrating in front of
everyone and they peeled their
Sweat-soaked tank tops off
And danced in their bras on the
Dirt and all of us were stealing
Glances but I only saw like two
Guys outright staring

They did everything but look
To see if we were looking

No eye contact, that was the key
Eye contact-- one of us might have
Gotten the wrong idea

But we could look for the time
Being

That was the point

To be watched and desired

And they wouldn't do that
If they didn't feel like the
Males around them weren't
At least somewhat trustworthy

Because they know
Most of us
Most males
are good at keeping
The beast on a leash

"all natural ball juice"

Hey

It's not our fault we've got
These pouches sticking to
Our legs, constantly
Feeding us an energy shot
of steroids that make a rush
To anger a paradoxically
pleasurable
Experience

I've never been in a fight
Before, not really, but I
Do enjoy a good flood
Of righteous rage sometimes

Vanquishing an old foe in a furious
Fantasy of revenge and triumph

And it's always right there, ready
To go, at the drop of a memory

Clears the head, clears the gut

Sends some vinegar coursing
Through your veins

I do it by myself, of course
Usually in the car

Anger is like masturbation
It's fun to indulge in it when
Alone but the more people who
Are around when you do it the
More awkward it becomes

ZEN' S ARCANE
POEMS: 2015

"break-up"
A split
Is hard
Because
You have
To be
Proactive
At it

You have
To keep
Pulling
Away

You have
To keep
Having the
WILL to
Pull away

Even
Though
Some parts
Of you
Are still
Attached

"over"

She walks out of the bedroom
And I don't look at her and
When she walks by I hold
My breath so I don't smell
Her perfume either

"alone"
As a man
You never look
As pathetic as
You do
When you walk
Into a hooters
Alone

"monday before halloween"

My girlfriend and brother are getting ready in the bathroom
My girlfriend's maleficent, my brother's going full out
drag

Lana del ray is purring out of chelsea's iphone 6 that her
parents

Bought her after she trashed the latest one. We've been
together

Two years and in that time her parents have gotten her at
least

Three brand new phones when she's trashed them in one way
Or another

My girlfriend's got on this horned headdress that
She bought and she did her make-up and she bought this
Dress for several hundred dollars at the renaissance fair
Last month

We watched Angelina Jolie's portrayal of the character
Yesterday for inspiration

I'm dressed as a werewolf, sitting cross-legged
On the bed and typing and I'm bracing myself

Lana's purring and they're not talking so I picture them
Methodically putting their make-up on with straight faces

I have to be up at 6:30 but fuck it, I'd been thinking
What kind of boyfriend lets his girlfriend trip on acid
alone
At the club a week before Halloween?

There's a huge thud from the bathroom

"oops!" my gf says

ultraviiiiioooooolet purrs lana del ray one final time
and then off to the races starts

They love being fabulous together

A year ago we got the cops called on our house-
Warming party because they started fighting on
The porch and our neighbor heard them and
Called because she thought they were killing
each other

They start singing along and I make a note to buy
Some cans of monster on my way to work tomorrow

"it hurts"
Tearing yourselves
Away from each
Other

At least her rage
Makes it easier
To avoid her

She says I laugh
When she cries

We made the
Right decision
We yell

The walls are
Partially bare

The bookshelf
Mostly empty

Such a shame

"horrible relief"
a band is like
a marriage and
a marriage is like
a band

a relationship in
which you live
together is
a trial run

glenn frey said
the breakup of
the eagles was
a horrible relief

and that's
the sensation
pretty much

your thoughts
seesaw

your
yin consoling
your yang

over and over

until it
runs out of
thread

and time
pulls it
to pieces

"basement"
everything is
empty but
I've been
Down here
Before

I've put on
A tv just to
Hear the
Voices

I've smoked
Myself to
Stupor

I've scarfed
Take home
Cheesecake

Everything is
Darkness but
I've been
Down here
Before

It's not that
I don't fear the
Black hole

I just accept
It's always
Nearby

"we tried"
we enjoyed
the easy parts

maybe said
I love you a
Little too soon
But they say you
Can never say i
Love you enough
So Idk

We strained against
The forces gently
Nudging us apart
Until they decided
To suddenly take off
Like eagles
in either direction
one chilly march
Afternoon

I couldn't handle
Capitulating again

I couldn't allow myself
To be pushed around
Any longer

It was a million
Little things

We took a break for
A week and she said
She wasn't as sad as
She thought she'd be

I wasn't, either

We ended it that
Wednesday but
Still had to live
Together in the
Confusion of

Getting a lease
Modified with
Very little to
Spare in case
Of further mishap

We were lucky
We got away
Clean, or as
Clean as
Possible
At least
For now

I remember the last
Time I saw her she
Was walking to her
Car

I was putting some
Things in my brother's
Van with my parents
Who'd come to help
Me move out

She'd tried to avoid
Them but they saw
Her as she came out
To leave for work

She was embarrassed
But smiled and said
"I gotta go" as she walked
To her car

It's amazing how
Fast it all changes

And how much you
Carry in your heart

It had to happen

We had those
Moments, the
Ones that are

Hard to think
About now

But I'm thankful

and
it's good to be
thankful

"roots"

your roots have
been growing together
for a couple years now,
entwined, and it looked like
it might even be forever
but then one day
they were ripped apart
and they cried out
as their sinews were
suddenly ragged and
hanging

the sound was like
fruit being pried
apart with hard
fingers

it was no band aid

and sometimes
that's just how it
goes

"a graceful exit"
the scream of the shower
the phone gone dark
the pillow on the couch
the comforter spitting feathers
from an unseen tear

tender words find no purchase
winter birds find no perches

two hearts ripped open
red everywhere

cold april marches on

"joyless"
Spend yourself
In a plastic baggie
Greased with lotion
Under a wool sock

The heaves and
Breaths of
Cold room air

the stink of shit
and the sweet
scent of lotion

a chest rises
and falls as
a screen glows

like slushy sledding
or stale pizza
not as good as it
could have been
but
still decent

let this be the last
time though I know it
won't be

sketch the feeling
and nod off

"i do not matter"
the things I do have
no effect on the
world at large

nothing whatever

and at first this
is a depressing
thought
but then I think
and it's actually
quite liberating

I have no obligations
Really, other than to
Make a living and
Pay off my debt

but true freedom
is money and the
less money you
have the less
freedom you
have

It's time for me
To be left alone

It's the most
Comforting
Thought I've
Had all day

"selfie"

I will

Never

Understand

Why

Someone

Would ever

Take a picture

Of themselves

By themselves

"you know no one likes you"
you know no one likes you
if you play a show and after
wards no one talks to you

you know no one likes you
when you scratch your arm
and notice its bleeding ten
minutes later

you know no one likes you
when you send out messages
on a dating site and get zero
replies back

you know no one likes you
because of your skin and
because of your gender

you know no one likes you
because you're a failure
and America hates failures

you know no one likes you
cause you don't either

"neverwas"

it

hangs on my shoulders
like a heavy bear rug
and presses my chest
and sinks my eyelids
but everyone else is
already feeling like
this and they don't
want to hear it so
I keep it to myself
And wait for it
To pass on

"open window"
I'm fairly certain I'm
not
Clinically depressed
But
If I was
I don't think I'd want
Treatment because
Then the industry,
The system will
Swallow me and
Use me for its own
Devices, even more
So than now

One more string to
Attach to the puppet

I want to participate
As little as fucking
Possible

I've never taken meds

I don't trust doctors,
They're just selling you
Stuff like everyone else
Nowadays

I don't trust mechanics
Or bankers or pretty
Much anyone with
Authority or riches
Or power of any kind

Power warps the mind
No matter the skull

Turn my face to the
Grey light of day

"stuck"

I'm in a trough

I'm in a rut

I'm in a ditch

I'm in a trench

I'm in a ravine

I'm in a rip

I'm in a tear

I'm in a crack

I'm in a line
that's
going nowhere

"not a good day"

i was born in columbus and
moved to michigan when i
was two

i was an okay student, didn't
really fit in but was pretty
fucking average in almost
every way, and it's better
to be average than below
average so i guess i should
be thankful for that

i went to college at Eastern
Michigan University, which is
where they send people that
don't get into U of M

EMU's a degree mill, no one takes
anything seriously there, at least
in my experience

you know a college sucks if they
have to advertise their wares on
billboards

if i had known anything back then
i prob wouldn't have gone at all

i graduated during the Recession
and immediately learned the world
cares not a wick for anyone without
money and you should just get over it
cause that's how it's always been
and that's how it'll always be

i'd known that before but i didn't
REALLY know it

the only way to be truly happy
is to be independent, to not
need any human contact to survive

and the only way to not need

human contact is to have \$\$\$
and lots of it

i've cleaned toilets at a park,
and that was my best job ever

i delivered hospice equipment
and that was my worst job ever

i somehow got into automation
controls a year and a half
ago but i'm still not particularly
good at it and i've always
sucked at science and math
anyway, always did, but that's
where all the money is now so
that's what you have to do if
you want to survive like your
parents did

if i get fired or quit i won't
be heartbroken, in fact, i'd
feel more relieved than
anything

just on to the next thing

i've never had more than
five grand to my name at
any given time

i've never known what it's
like to not be in debt

i should really just stop
feeling sorry for myself
but i never do for some
reason

"goddamn"
I'm trying to
Think of poetic ways
To describe you right
Now but nothing i
Can come up with
Seems to do you
Justice

"last kiss"
As they touched
his lips pressed
In
For one last go
And
Her lips wilted
Like rose petals
Against his
As they fell away
Forever

"single again"

My friend Mike and I
pull into the parking
space

there's a blue mini SUV
possibly an Escape
parked next to us
on our left, headlights
facing out, it's mid-afternoon
on a Saturday

In the backseat, smoking
cigs and being edgy, are
three or four girls who
look to be about twenty

young and sexy ruffians

dyed hair, hoods pulled
up, nose piercings all
around, slim waists and
quick little fingers on
their iphones

i open the driver door
and step into the sunshine

the girls text less than a foot
away through the
rear passenger side
window

they have all their
windows open

One girl with a black
Stoner shag of hair
side eyes me with
what looks like

Half disinterest and
Half caution

their heads do not lift

And now I have to get out
Of my car

This must be done quickly

I open the door, make a
Point to not look at them
As I swing my head
Around, and
I walk around past the back of
my car to meet Mike as he
steps out of my passenger
seat

as far as I can tell
I have successfully avoided
Them without anything that
Could remotely suggest
Interest, I am on with my
Day, but then, on top of it
All,
Immediately,
a little redhead
pokes her freckled face out of
the open car window

"HI!" she chirps at Mike
and
At Mike only

mike's still standing
Next to my car with the
Door open

"Hi," says Mike

Their game is obvious
The cruel little things

The girls are flirting
With him and dissing

The creepy older guy
With the terrible outfit

I try to look like I don't
Care but I'm pretty sure
I betray a dismayed
Look and the redhead
catches it out the corner
of her eye

"How are you doing?"
she wants to know of
my handsomer, younger
friend

They are not looking
At me, much too
Obviously for it to not
Be a point, I am only here
To be insulted if
Acknowledged at all

Even a hint of this
Sweet smiley
Friendliness that
She's giving up to
Someone five feet
Away sent in my
Direction and I
Might get the wrong
Idea

"A big beta like that
Is always desperate
He'd cling on to us
Like a sick puppy"

"Must be avoided at
All costs"

"But not to the point
Where we can't let
Him know his place"

"Good," Mike tells them
"I'm not working (right now),

so..."

Mike is a good guy, it's
Why he's so sad all the
Time

I turn my back and pull
Out my bowl and Mike
And I walk into the forest

By the time we're around
The first bend I've already
Forgotten about them
Which is what's really
great about getting
Older

"head explodes"
You tune
Reality
With your
Decisions

And

Whatever
Decision you
Make
Will be
The wrong
One

"dry spell"

Desert wastelands as far as the eye can see

Every time I sit down to pound something out
I always end up pounding something else out

Sentences are
Fragile and
Take forever
To construct

And most of what comes out gets tossed almost
Immediately, ideas are stillborn, inspiration like
A wet match

Wait it out, give it another try when the next spike
Comes

"layoff"

another cycle comes to an end

it'd be nice if you could predict
their length accurately and plan
accordingly

but as we've been since the agri
culture boom, we are beholden
to those among us who accumulate
the greatest wealth in whatever
goods we have deemed valuable

on the plus side I've saved up a
bit of my own, enough to get by
until something else comes along
so
it's like a surprise vacation if you
want to be positive about it

the market's good for now and
I'm barely functional and able
To survive still

Sleeping in your brother's
Childhood bed and waiting for
That bigger paycheck to fatten
The numbers in your bank account

Hoping someday you'll begin to
Put away sums that provide security
Instead of the perpetual precipice

Time to soldier on

"in the palm of the creator"
Prayers are like balloons
Let go with dangling strings
Drifting off to who knows where
To meet with who knows exactly

Ask forgiveness whenever you
Feel like it

Say thank you, or think it when
You recognize you're having a
Good time or feel at peace with
The world

Express gratitude for the heights

Don't discuss the depths

Just ask for it all to go well

Ask for it to be painless

Put your head down

And go in swinging

"dry bleed"
She straddled my chest
Holding the knife, she's
Completed everything
Else so far

I lie on my back on the
Bed, crying like a bitch
Because
Death terrifies me

She sticks one end of
The blade into the left
Side of my throat just
Under my jaw bone, i
Sob harder

"HOLY SHIT" she says
in astonishment as the
knife slides under my
chin, I can feel it carving
through my skin like
an Easter Ham, it feels like
it's cutting doll flesh

there is no torrent of blood
nor a sudden loss of breath

just the knife completing
its arc under my chin

I continue to weep as the
Incision is completed

But for some reason I'm
Still living, so I get up and
Look at myself in the mirror
And
There I am, and I inspect my
Chin as if shaving, and there
Is the incision, two flaps of
Skin, a little blood around
Them like a dried nosebleed

I can hear her in the other room

I wake up while looking at myself

And I find she's texted me for
The first time in two months

"lover"

I

Think

Of you

To

Keep

From

Tumbling

Down into

My own

Head

"neutered"
white people do
not have any
rebellious icons
anymore

no role models
that are unabashedly
saying fuck the
system, even tho
the system is more
ripe for fucking
than it's ever been
before

all white pop stars
and role models are
just other
dutiful employees

they're not subverting
anyone

they're corporate lickspittles
scared of power
just like the rest of us

kids these days
don't know how
to say fuck you
in a meaningful
way

they just participate
cause there's no other
options anymore

"white guy rant"
a man hates all women
he's a bitter misogynist
a woman hates all men
and there's implied righteousness

a white person hates a
minority they're a
disgusting racist, but
a minority hates whites
and there's implied
righteousness

Rich screws the poor he's a brutal capitalist
Poor screws the rich he's a mooching socialist

Warriors of social justice
Versus
The rich and the religious

it's all become just
another business

"rage is rejection"

All those people
On the news who
Snapped and gone
And did something

Their existence had
Been spat on one too
Many times

Their existence had
Been denied one too
Many times

In our culture if
You don't have
Money you don't
Matter

And money is existence

If you don't have something
Anyone wants you don't
Matter

And being with
Other people
And connecting
With them is
The only way
To feel better
About not
Mattering

So when the
People around you
Reject you repeatedly
And you have nothing
Else to lose except
Yourself,

"all right now"
sometimes I think
the world would be
a much better place
If everyone just left
each other the hell
Alone

"kids running on the ceiling when you're trying to sleep"
to fully immerse yourself in this world
on this planet, on this plain, in this existence
you must earn it

discomfort, absorption of hardship,
development of patience and the
ability to take on weight without
complaint

in boot camp soldiers are supposed
to have the stress beaten and screamed
out of them

they don't do stress at the end of boot
camp

but I knew a soldier once and he said
that's all smoke and mirrors

every human has a breaking point
and the further you move the goalposts
down the line the brighter your body
the more solid your soul

"lone wolf"
lone wolves are just
alphas that haven't
found their packs
yet

some never
will

"that far-away feeling"
my best friend
from adolescence
and my ex-girlfriend
from my longest lasting
relationship
visited me
in a dream
last night

"system ain't legit no more"
Articles and reviews have always existed
For promotional purposes only but jesus
Christ they don't even bother trying to
Hide or mask it nowadays in objectivity
they're literally just
Positivity pamphlets lauding whatever
They can find that's good about the movie
Or show or product or whatever

It's like everyone gets a trophy day for
Corporate brands

"clinton and stewart"
Watching bill Clinton
And jon stewart
Do clinton's final
Interview on the
Daily show with
Jon as the host

I feel like a child
Watching the
Grown-ups talk

That's the vibe
They give off

Clinton talks on but
He seems almost bored
He looks really thin
His voice is really reedy
And raspy and tired
He looks really old
He might be in the
White house again
Two years from now

Hope Hillary
Doesn't fuck
Up my thirties

Stewart's got
Five weeks left
At this point and
Seems on point
Although he
Also seems fed
Up with the
Whole thing

Clinton has to
Remind him
Every now and
Then with a
Curt glance
How they were
And what they
Were when this

Began

The crowd baaas
on cue applause
whenever the two pause

the episode ends
and that's the last
time I'll see of that
particular bit of
television

"eureka"

I suddenly understand
How it feels to balance
Your emotions voluntarily

There is narcissistic me, which exists on the high end
primarily
And then there's the perverted me, which exists at the
lowest low

Each mood is pointing in a direction, just like steering a
car

Certain moods produce certain outcomes

If you want to go down, you do this and think this way
If you want to go up, you do this and think this way

Et cetera

"stress"
anesthetic
innocence
is just
aesthetic
innocence

"one word title"
There's society as I
Experience it in my
Daily conscious life
And then there's
Society as I perceive it
as a whole
through the near- constant
Input of media

Both are intimidating, but
Only one seems truly
Heinous

I'll let you guess which one

"final say"
love is love
and
hate is hate

and

that's the only
distinction
us humans
need make

"happy fuckin sweetest day"
I worked at a
Haunted house
October of 09

The woman who ran it
had a daughter
Who was a year
or Two older
than
Me

She was a farm girl
Really stocky
With flushed
Cheeks and
A foul mouth

She wore sweaters
A lot, grey ones

I remember one
Day we were all
Lined up in our
Costumes
Getting ready
To go out to
The fields and
She walked
Up

She had make-up
On, her hair was
Washed and put
Up in a ponytail

She was wearing
A form-fitting
t-shirt instead of
a sweater, and her

body was pleasantly
curvy

She looked surprisingly
Attractive

Someone asked her
What was the occasion
For the change in
Appearance

She said she'd just
Felt like it

Someone mentioned
It was sweetest day

Oh, well,
Happy fuckin sweetest
Day, she said
And walked away

"brain, heart and penis"

brain: okay, what are we gonna do today?

We've got a couple bills to pay...
Other than that we should spend
Quality time with the fam but
We're not going to be able to
Toke up at all because we don't
Have our own room since the
Littlest bro is coming home
Today... looks like we're just
Going on reddit and 4chan and
Thinking about writing the
Novel but never actually
Writing it... what you guys got?

Heart: I've got nothing on the
Agenda other than thinking
About the novel, feels good man

Penis: Me neither. To be honest
I'm rather bored

Brain: We know, penis, that's
Frankly the only reason we're
Able to have this meeting...

Penis: Well excuse me for
Trying to extend the blood
Line like it has been from
The beginning of time up
Until now

Brain: Anyway, okay, so we're
Headed back to KC on Sunday
For work...

Heart: Ugh... I hate that place

Brain: Our hotel's booked, and
We fucked it up so we're in one
Room for the first week and then
In another room for the next
Sunday night and then we're
Going to have to book ANOTHER
Room for the remainder of the time
We're there

Heart: We're never using Priceline
Again, that's for damn sure...

Penis: Are we going to the strip
Club this time when we go back
To Kansas City?

Brain: Only if we can afford it.
It's not likely until the middle of
July, but we can see Ant-Man, too
Around then

Heart: Oooh, that'll be fun.
That's nice, that'll give us
Something to look forward
To

Penis: Yes, it will.

Heart: Hopefully work doesn't
Suck too bad, hopefully no one
Yells at us or anything

Brain: We've had a good
Week off, wouldn't you say,
chums?

Heart: I would, yes

Penis: We had sex like
Five times with *****,
So, definitely, yes
that's a success, hell,
Any time I get used
AT ALL is a success
That's why I want to

Go to the strip club
In Kansas City so I
Don't have another
Month of just jack-off

Brain: we'll see

Penis: I'm fine for
Right now, though
Just for the record
I don't even need
A jack off right
Now, not even if
You put the cutest
Little cutie right in
Front of me, I prob
Wouldn't even chub
Up, that's how
Satisfied I am
With myself

Brain: yes, Penis,
We hear you

Heart: I really want
To write that novel
I want to, like, start
It and not stop
Until it's finished

Brain: Like I said,
We'll keep trying
And eventually it'll
Happen

Heart: I don't give
A shit about anything
Else that happens I
Just want that goddamn
Novel finished as
Soon as possible

Penis: I want it finished
Because there's the
Smallest chance it could
Lead to more for me to

Do as well... all SORTS
Of vaginas to explore

Brain: we'll see, you
Guys, we'll see...
One thing at a time

Heart: It just
Occurred to me
We'll probably
All die alone

Penis: Eh, as
Long as we get
Laid as much as
Possible before
Then it's all the
Same to me

Brain: Let's not
Get hysterical
Here, fellas,
Looks like
Things are
Just fine...
Is the poem over
Yet?
It is?
That's all we got?
Okay then
We'll see you
Next week?

Heart/Penis: Yup!

"blocked"
I only
Want to
Write
When
I'm unable
To

At work
Driving
Showering

Anywhere
I'm not at
A keyboard
I will
Immediately
Be inspired
And energetic
About my
Ideas

It's really too
Bad and I'm
Hoping it
Changes
Sooner rather
Than later

Waaaahhhh

"shy third eye"
there's this sense

that if you sink

low enough into

your consciousness

if your light dims too

far

you'll be consumed

and

you'll never come

back up

it's the revealing
of the sensation that
none of us are actually
here

is that realization
death?

That's what I get
For sharing space
With another plant
Spirit while on a
Less than desirable
Frequency

I'm just gonna hang
Below the surface
And peek out until
It's safe to come up
Again

"on a weekday morning in april 2001"
Freshman year

English class,

Sitting on the couch

Against the far wall

In Mr. O'Dowd's room

Claimed my spot once again

Classmates make their
Appearances
one by one
Through the door

Desks fill up

Best friend comes in

Sits in desk next to couch

To my right

This is before iphones so
I'm just sitting there waiting

I may have had a book

My backpack resting
Next to my feet

Best friend puts his backpack down,
Folds hands across desktop, looks
Over at me and asks,

"So do you think Timothy
McVeigh's execution should
Be public... or pubic?"

"the biker and his girlfriend"

Was going for a drive
Exploring Kansas city
Came back down from
The spider-web-looking
Bridge on the east side
Over the river and
Through the factory
District when I saw
A couple on a motor
Cycle, woman with
A blonde ponytail
Stocky handsome
Soldiery looking
Guy gripping the
Handlebars of his
Chrome stallion
Both looked like
They were in their
40's, just beginning
to gracefully slip
into middle age and
as I watched she
put her chin on his
shoulder and their
solace was palpable
and quite beautiful
and the sun was
setting
and they made a
right turn at a light
and drove off
together up the
road and out
of sight

"close"
Falling asleep
Alone becomes
More and more
Difficult the
Older you get

The absence
Of another warm
Soul to share your
Space with

That's why I
Never take a
Snuggle for
Granted

I mean, sex is
Good, we can
Talk about sex
All night

But is there
Anything that
Really feels
Any more
Complete than
When your
Morning flesh
Seems to melt
into each other
and she turns
to face you
and curl her
arms up
like a mantis
and nose up
against your
collarbone
and you put
your arm
around her
and close
your eyes
again

"encouragement"
Started plc training
w/ rick, a brainy old
codger who'd once
sold chuck yeager
a kite

his father worked
on the atom bomb

he was typically
a tough teacher
and he got pissed
at the company
and retired early
before the class
was supposed to
end so I didn't get
much out of the
class except how
to make a traffic
light blink
sort of

but one day at lunch
we
had all gathered
our sandwiches
and fruit and chips
and were about
to start eating
when rick held up
a hand and said

I want you to think
About all the stuff
You know now that
You didn't know last
Monday, and I want
You to feel good
About it.

He lowered his hand

Waited a moment

Then said

Okay, good, now
Let's eat lunch

"damage control"
when I get home
from work I see
jesse eisenberg
compared comic
con to a genocide
today

I know what he meant

From that perspective

That many people screaming
At you would be pretty terrifying

It's eerie to listen to
All the screams of comic con
Fans
And note how similar
They would be
To the screams of
Some wretched arena
of dying refugees mowed
down by gunfire or gas

He said it was incomparable
To any other cellular level memory
But it's like have you never
Been to a rock concert?

But he talked about how it's
A mob and Jason Segal chimed in
Saying whether it's positive or
Negative it's still a mob and I
Agree

They were doing publicity
For a David foster Wallace
Movie when jesse said the
Genocide comment

Then, later, when I'm about
To go to bed I see

He's clarified his
Comments, says was using
Hyperbole and 'it was an
Honor to be there'

"new horizons"
It's Wednesday evening
And I'm looking at the
First picture ever taken
Of Charon, Pluto's moon

Someone on reddit today
Mentioned that 100 years
Ago we have just learned
How to fly, fifty years ago
We went to the moon and
Now we just flew past Pluto

And by 'we' they mean human
Civilization

So that's pretty cool

Keep expanding, folks
It's what the universe
Is best at

"paycheck to paycheck"
It's like when
The ground
Dissolves beneath
A cartoon character
Or an action hero and
They make a mad dash
For solid ground and
They begin to run
From boulder to
Crumbling boulder
Finding footing on
Dirt clods and rocks
As the cliff falls
As the earth disintegrates
into some
Abyss
And
Every two weeks
The ground gets
Thin again

"snowden"

He did the right thing, but
I'll never completely trust
anyone
who literally wraps themselves
in the flag
on the cover
of a magazine.

Maybe there isn't a
Giant security apparatus
Collecting all our info
But they want us to think
There is because people
Only behave themselves
When they think
They're being
Watched

He isn't petting a phoenix
In China
But he's definitely petting
Something

"first draft"

I call it the--and this is insensitive--
but I call it the Bulimic Stage,
where you just force yourself
to vomit up something onto the
page.

It's almost never pretty,
always unpleasant,
but it needs to be done.
You just force yourself to
puke up anything and
everything you can come up with,
in a somewhat linear fashion,
from beginning to end.

Don't worry about quality,
worry about quantity.

Just get it out.

You can fix it later.

The Diarrhea Stage would
Also be an appropriate name
But that's when it comes
Out regardless of whether
Or not you're trying

"genital parallel"

The way women feel about their periods,
men feel about their insatiable sex drives.

It's annoying and gets in the way and
if we could get rid of it we probably would.

Also the way men feel about freeing their balls
Every evening
Is the same sense of relief women feel when
They free their boobs
Every evening

"observant"

Dinosaur descendants dining on plant eggs

A thin red line in a hollow battery

A floor stripped of its layers

A tree carved in careful pieces

A sun that reveals all the dust

His entire face sloping downwards

Pressing onwards for no reason at all

"50 dollar per diem"
it's Saturday and I have
it off

I'm staying a townplace
Suites that the controls
Company booked for me

I've been going to outback
For all my meals, I used to
Work at one as a dishwasher
Ten years ago

Last night I got prime rib
And mac and cheese

Today I got the bloomin
Onion burger and a peach
Cocktail called the wallaby
Darned

I'm considering seeing
Ryan Dunn's grave today
Or tomorrow, it's only
About half an hour away

I'm working at a Ford
plant, I've only had two
days there so I can't make
a solid judgment on it yet

my boss is south African
which is cool

I'm ready for the parabola

"machines of loving grace"
It seems to me a damn
Shame
That God would turn away
Those that have ended
Their own lives

It seems that those souls
Would be the ones that
Need the most attention

To be at the depths of such
Despair as to turn off your
Own light

If the Lord truly can do all
Things, then the suicidal
Are saved

"perfection of nothing wrong"
I've found myself
In the unfortunate Position
of only Being able
to Be happy
when I get exactly
what I want
all the time

"free passage"
a man strolled down
a street in a tophat
and coat

it was a busy street
with lots of other
pedestrians

men and women
and children of all
races and appearances

the man in the top hat
would stop and tip his
hat at them, pull out
the handle of a pistol
he held in his breast
pocket, smile warmly
and ask, "Free passage?"

Most people ignored him
Or waved him away with
Annoyance, like they would
Any street salesman or
Beggar

But one man he stopped
Who was walking by
Himself, immediately
Showed interest

"Oh, yes, certainly."

"Have you lived a
good life?"

"I honestly cannot
say one way or the
other. I can say,
however, I'm no longer
interested in pursuing
it."

"Why's that?"

"I spend most of my time alone, I have no family of my own, my parents are gone and my siblings don't call, all my friends have disappeared one way or another."

"How old are you?"

"43."

"Are you healthy?"

"I couldn't say, I haven't been to a doctor in years."

"Are you better at anything than anyone else? Anything at all?"

"I do not think so. I have no passion for anything, my talents are all mediocre at best, and my career is unsatisfying."

"Have you considered trying another?"

"I haven't the energy. I've tried that many Times over now, and No, it seems I'm simply Not exceptional at much Of anything. And it's not For lack of trying, either. I have given my best to Many endeavors throughout, It's just that my best never Seems to be good enough."

The man in the tophat

Rubbed his chin and
Considered

The man in front of him
Pleaded, "Please, sir, I
Could certainly use some
Free passage. Either we
Come back or we don't
But either way I could use
A reset."

The man in the tophat
Drew his revolver and
Pointed it at the other
Man's forehead

"Very well then," he said
"Go with grace, and may
your next attempt be of
better result."

"Thank you so much!"
said the man. He had
tears in his eyes. He looked
exhausted and relieved.

The gun went off and
None of the other pedestrians
Seemed to notice

The man crumpled to the
Sidewalk, blood seeping
From the hole between
His empty eyes.

The man's eyes were now
Empty as a new basement
But his lips still held a small
Smile of relief

The man in the tophat resumed
His walk, producing the handle
Of his revolver to potential passengers
just enough to
Let the metal glint in the streetlights

"cause you can't change the way I am"
Don't get lost in the
Tunnel of time
Of memories

Don't let your
Consciousness
Shrink back from
Your eyes

Don't shrivel down into
Nothing

Don't recycle down into
The depths

Don't shrink the binary
Fractal projection

Don't bruise the simulations

Don't feel the air for a screen

Just let the light glow ever brighter

"meals"

Stephen king is fast food
A good cheeseburger and
Crispy fries with a soda
Pretty damn good and easy
To get but it tasted a lot
Better and seemed less
manufactured when you
Were a kid
(but it's still
Pretty good)

Cormac mccarthy is
Steakhouse prime rib
With mixed veggies and
wine, really filling and
No guilt afterward

Bradbury is like a mouthful
Of fresh fruit-- apple, pear,
Pineapple or strawberry

Vonnegut is like cheese
And crackers

Palahniuk is frozen
Pizza when he's at his
Best, and that's a
Compliment

Raymond Carver is a
Plateful of chocolate
Chip cookies, the ones
Your mother made

David Foster Wallace
An assortment of garden
Vegetables, ultra healthy

Lester Bangs is spaghetti
And meatballs
From a can

Hunter S. Thompson is a
Gas station hot dog and
Chips

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is
A slice of wedding cake, rich
And fluffy

Hemingway is a well-prepared
Piece of fish spritzed with a
Squirt of lemon, all muscle no
Fat

Roald Dahl is a handful of candy,
Maybe M&M's or Skittles, and you
Can never have just one handful

John Steinbeck is chicken breast and a
Side of rice, wholesome and healthy

And Bukowski is,
Of course,
A slab of ham
on rye bread
With golden mustard
And dill relish

"the first time I downloaded tinder"
I downloaded tinder today
Because I'm incredibly horny
And in need of some of that
Sweet sweet sweet
pussy

Fetlife is producing no
Results, myfreecams
Has lost its appeal and I
Haven't the funds to make
A strip club run

Going to the bar and
"picking up a chick" is
something I've just never
done or been able to do

you might as well ask me
to wrestle an alligator or
lasso a torpedo

So I download
the little flame
even though
I'm leery of it

I've heard it
Only lets you upload
Facebook pics, of which
I have none, because
I'm not photogenic
In the slightest

But I think to myself,
Surely it must allow
You to choose photos
Of yourself
From places other
Than Facebook

I get my profile set up
My discovery settings
Set up, agree to let
Tinder look through
Everything on my
Facebook page including
My friends list and email
Which I'm not comfortable
With but it appears it
Won't allow you to move
Past this stage unless you've
Agreed to every last thing

I do not have any pics of
Myself up except for ones
With my ex-girlfriend
Which I quickly delete

My current profile pic is
A picture of the universe
If we could see dark matter
This vast brain-looking network
So it's really cool and cool-
Looking and I don't have
To actually be in it but I
Can still tell people "lol, it's
technically a picture of me
cause it's a picture of everyone"

there's that and a black and white
Photo of me dressed as an
Alien for a short film I was in
Two years ago this November
But I'm wearing an alien mask

I try to navigate the app, but
Its fidelity to know everything
About me via Facebook only is
Very very distracting and forces
My profile to the most bland and
Most esoteric depths

My Facebook profile page is not
Where I keep everything about
Me, I do not keep everything
About me anywhere on the

Internet, why? Because no
One wants to see or hear it

That's not self-pity
That's just a fact

I know because I've
Already tried

Aside from the complete lack
Of photo representation,
All my likes are so obscure it
Looks like I'm actively TRYING
to be a hipster

We've got:
The demo for sounds major,
Lightning love, my brother's
Film page, Bernie sanders,
Francesa marie smith aka
The voice of Helga from
Hey Arnold, mara Wilson
Writes stuff, Thursday
Night open mic, my old
Bands, some other local
Bands, tom hanks, Godzilla,
And sonic lunch

I miss when Facebook let
You just fill out your profile
Instead of having ads every
Few stories in the news feed
Disguised as posts from
People you know
And making you subscribe
To pages whose sole purpose
Is to advertise to you

I don't think that all this info
Will yield me many results
But
I will swipe some people first
I think, then make a decision

I go to the swipe page and wait

The little circles emit their
Signals from the universe profile
Pic in the center of the swipe
Page, the signal expands and
Fades out multiple times
Again and again and again

The plus and the minus and
The little heart sit in the center
Grey and unresponsive

Time passes

Nothing happens

The signal just continues to emit
The circle just continues to fade away
Sadly,
like someone waving goodbye

It's official

I have literally no matches

Well, that settles it then

I delete the account and I'm not even
That upset about it, it would've been
Much worse if I'd had hundreds of
Swipes and no matches which is likely
The outcome whenever I cave and put
Up pictures of myself on Facebook or
Get an Instagram and try this bullshit
Again

It's a sign, I think to myself after
Putting my phone aside

So this is what it feels like to be
Naturally selected

I'm an evolutionary dead end

I'm simply not meant to get laid at anything
Resembling a regular pace, ever

The pressure is off, I can just enjoy being
A involuntarily celibate but peacefully
Resigned monk like character

I'm getting
Older every day, and I spend most of
My time alone already and I'm completely
Fine with it, or at least that's what I tell
Myself whenever the subject comes up

I'm average, blindingly average, as I like
To say for some reason, so average
You don't even notice it, and I like it that
Way, honestly, because no one expects
Much from you, you can just observe and
Enjoy things and be by yourself where no
One bothers you and harshes your mellow

The one relationship I was in that came
Close to marriage was not something
I would ever seek to repeat, sadly, but
I'm glad I got to experience it so I know
It's not for me

I've also come to the conclusion that
I do not want children, ever, but
I will take the pussy when it happens along
If ever
And I'll gradually lose interest in it more and
More the older I get, or so I fervently hope

If not I imagine I'll get the fuck over it

The fact of the matter is I've never had any
better sex than jerking myself off into a lubed
plastic baggie sheathed in a thick sock
While mouth-breathing and clicking one-handed
to something on my computer screen,
the laptop battery hot on my chest
The blankets getting clammier by the minute

So to the back of the mind it goes once again

And I'm off to pornhub

"worship"

We've now created
Generations of
Groveling children
Waiting to please
The next invisible hand
Of God, only now the
Man in the sky is a
Colorful logo

Corporations are
Empires, nation
States without
Borders

All slaves to their tastes
And brands, people can
Take personal insult
If you happen to speak ill
Of a product they adore

Try getting into an argument
With someone about their
Favorite sports team

That's our religion now
And it has been for some
Time

And the worst part is
It's lame to point that out
Now

"luciana"

I get dinner at a
Pub called Hooley's
It's got a short stage,
It's irish-themed, staff
Are all cute girls and
Women dressed in
Short black skirts
And tight shirts

I'd decided I was
Getting a summer
Shandy and a tuna
Melt without tomatoes
Before my waitress
Introduced herself

My waitress tonight
Is named Luciana
I think, I'm not sure
Of the pronunciation
Because when she
says it to me I'm
Too busy marveling
At how gorgeous
She is

She has some accent
Might've been Latin
Might've been Italian
But she looks like a
Thinner, girl-next-door
Version of Sofia Vergara

Deadly hips, a flat belly,
long legs, straight dark
hair, she looks about

twenty six or seven

She laughs when she
Can't find her pens
In her apron

She calls me babe when
She checks up on me after
My food's been delivered

It means nothing but
I still notice it

I ask her about
Open mic nights, on account
Of the vacant stage area over
By the entrance to the place, she
Says she hasn't experienced
That yet, literally, she says it
Just like that, "I haven't
Experienced that yet" but
She brings me a list of
The events for the week
And there's no open mic
Night but I say thank
You so much and leave
Her a 20 on a 14 dollar
Bill because
Beautiful women that
Take the time to smile
At me deserve a
Good tip

wherever she's from
I hope this country
Doesn't eat it out
of her

"conditions"

The experiment worked,
The mechanisms of control

The conspiracy is in the
Conditions, not the events
Themselves

IF you create a society
Where wealth and status
Equal self-worth AND
IF you consider treatment
Of mental illness to be a
Luxury AND IF your
Gun laws make it easy
For the undiagnosed
Maniac to acquire a
Weapon you will
Probably have
Several public
Shootings a month

Especially if you make
Sure to tell everyone about it

The constant media coverage is
Never for the dead perpetrator

It's for the next guy thinking
About it

"movement"
Sometimes I feel
As though I'm
Viewing my
Actual life
From the
Prison of some
Lowly and
Unspoken of
Place

At times it seems
All of creation
Is a tidal wave
Against me

My actual self
Out there, living
Dreams and
Scoring goals

To be happy
For what one
Has isn't enough

You have to
Continuously
Satisfy the abyss
Or it will suck
You back in
Again

Stop expecting
The world to
Finally turn
And see you

Just do what
You enjoy as
Best you can

Find a job
You don't hate

Notice happiness
When it occurs

Shrug off any
Gremlins or
Ogres or
Friendships
Gone sour

Your ex-lovers
Will fade from view

The days will treat
You to beautiful
Sky after beautiful
Sky, sunset and rise

And in the end
Your own witness
Will be enough

CRINGE AND A HALF
POEMS: 2015-2016

"lost autumn"
Freedom is a highway
During the day
When you can see
And be truly grateful
For every moment
Of inner peace

"fuck, I'm horny"
women are at their most adorable
when they are
startled
or laughing hysterically
or clearing their throats
or pissed because they feel ignored
or adjusting their ponytails
or rolling their eyes
or moved to tears by something random
or dancing

"ain't that a bitch"
when I was dating my ex girlfriend
we were on the outskirts of Toledo
in this little dive bar and a friend of hers
from school was working there and
there was a psychic in the corner
named Sylvia giving psychic readings

my ex girlfriend was all about that shit
so she insisted we try it out

I went first

I don't remember much, I remember
Trying to get the spirits in Sylvia's head
To tell her something about me that
I knew but she didn't

Sylvia said
Something about parlor tricks and
How they don't do that

She said that my true soul mate was
Two dimensions over, and that she
Was a nurse

This is the closest you'll ever get to
A soul mate, Sylvia told me, of my
Current relationship

Two years later me and my girlfriend
Broke up, and that fall I was assigned
To a factory in bowling green Ohio
Just south of Toledo

My route to work down the windy
Dixie highway passed right by a house
That had a sign out front—
Sylvia:
Psychic readings, it said

"to go to sleep"
Just think of cats curled
On blankets

Birds snuggled in feathers
Safe above the ground

Coins in pockets, toddlers
On baskets of warm laundry

Layers of animals skins in
A ramshackle tent out on
The prairie

A pile of raked leaves, dirty jeans
And hoodies with strings drawn
Tight

Guide your mind away from
Your failures and darkness

Nudge it towards comfort
And do not be afraid

"pop star and night shift"
I made the mistake
Of falling asleep
An hour and a half
Before my 10 o'clock
Night shift on a Sunday
Night and now after
Waking up at 9:30 I'm
Going to be
head-draggingly
tired until 6:30 AM

I'm driving the twenty
Minutes to work down
pitch Black dixie highway
Listening to Hits1
On Sirius XM which
Is running its random
Demo feature that pops
Up every few months
Or so, I would never
Pay for satellite radio
When I have apple
Music but I listen to
Sirius when it's free

Halsey's New Americana
Comes on and the DJ
Yells at us that she hit
A major career milestone
Recently by selling out
Madison Square Garden
Without any supporting
Acts

I heard this song for
The first time last
Halloween

She sings about legal
Marijuana and about
Being raised on Biggie
And Nirvana

I really didn't like it
But it's been getting
Harder and harder
To avoid, now that
The girl has sold out
The Garden it sounds
Like she'll be the next
Big thing, it sounds
Like we're stuck with
Her

The song makes me feel old

I'm 29

I looked up this Halsey
After she played Colbert's
New Late Show back in
October

She's another gorgeous
Biracial twenty year old
Who put songs on the
Internet and divine
Providence sought her
Out for fame and fortune

My youngest brother is
23 in three weeks

I feel like I've been riding
In the trough between two
Massive waves of culture
My entire life

I feel like I'm destined to
Always be an observer

Survival of the richest,
Halsey sings like it's
Something to be proud of

I will work 8 hours on
Lines that make the
Bottom frames for
Jeep grand Cherokees,
The door hinges for
Ford focuses, the
Doors for jeep
Wranglers, and a
Few other things
I haven't bothered to
Learn

I make 24 dollars an
Hour

This is the best job I
Can find though I've
Never stopped looking
Since I graduated from
College 6 years ago

I turn 30 in six months
And I'm still trying to
Get my life to start

I am a straight white
Man and I feel like
My time was over
Before I even got here
And yet I'll be paying
For everything like it
Was done in my name

Listening to this girl,
This child, who's already
locked into a world
Of success and decadence
that is worshiped
And revered more and more
By everyone around me,
I feel very small indeed

"ex-girlfriend is in a new relationship"
The thing about the guy
Who dates your ex
Right after you do
Is that you can be
Guaranteed
He'll only know the
Worst possible you

All your weakest
Moments and
Most embarrassing
Quirks will all be
Discussed and
Scoffed at, most
Likely in a smug
post-coital
Glow

it's also the official
Cut-off point, no chance
Now of reconciliation

Even if you weren't
Thinking of doing it
And wouldn't have
Done it anyway even
If the possibility arose,
It's still got that distinct
Bodily twinge of soul-
Sickness, even months
Or years of a gap between
When you and her severed
Ties, and even when it was
You who initiated the
Break-off

It's a wound that has to
Be inflicted

"whiplash"

I'm watching whiplash,
A perfect film, the kind
Of film I would like to
Make if I could make
Films

I look up the director
On wikipedia

He's a little over a
Year older than me

I'm sitting in my
underwear eating
bdubs watching
his perfect film
which won oscars
last year when
he was the age
I am now

I'm chowing down
On some mild and
Honey barbeque
Boneless wings,
Trying to not
Get ranch on the
Comforter

This is why they
Say never compare
Yourself to anyone

"I can't sleep today"
I was able to
For like two hours
This morning, the
Fatigue just taking
Me under soon
After I got home

I woke up and
Could not get
Back to sleep

I have Bonnie Raitt's
Rendition of Angel
From Montgomery
Stuck in my head
And it's too sad to
Let me get to sleep

So I went shopping
And got groceries
At Meijer so I
Should be set on
That for the next
Couple weeks or
So

I read Fortune
Smiles by Adam
Johnson, really
Depressing read
I wish I hadn't
Picked it up
Under these
Circumstances
But too late now

Then I watched
Minions to cheer
Myself up

I picked it up
At the family video
Last night before
My shift, with my

Other five movies
For the week, one
Movie a day

I eat some chicken
I cooked on Friday
While I watch Minions

I take a Vitamin D

I watch Animaniacs

I putz around on the
Web some more,
Reddit, 4chan, mfc
Youtube

I watch the part in
Into the Wild where
Kristen Stewart
And Emile Hirsch sing
Angel From Montgomery
On youtube

Kristen Stewart has a
Really nice voice,
Very smoky, who knew?

Eventually I try to
Lay down listening
To Pope Francis's first
Homily from back
In 2013 but I still
Feel uncomfortable
So I get up and go
Buy Phil Klay's
Redeployment from
Books-A-Million
Which I've been
Meaning to do for
Awhile

I think about hanging
Out with my parents
Yesterday afternoon
Before I came back

To Ohio, they had a
Great fire going in
The fireplace and we
Watched that morning
Show on PBS with the
Little sun illustration
In the corner and Face
The Nation and Meet the
Press

Simon, the family cat
Came over and enjoyed
The fire with me

The Christmas tree and
The Christmas decorations
were all up, stockings and
All and after the shows
They put on Pandora and
We sat and listened to the
Gillian Welch station and
Angel from Montgomery
Came on, the John Prine
And Emmylou Harris
Version and it was
Really nice, I was really
Thankful how peaceful
My mind was right then

But now it's 3:30 and I'm
Not going to get any more
Than five hours of sleep
Plus the two or so I got
This morning

I was so disappointed
When I woke up with
My head still buzzing
From the fatigue and
I looked at my phone
And saw it was only
9:30

I imagine I'll pass out
Eventually around
4 or 5 and get a couple

hours before I have to
get up and go in at
9:30 or so

That's the end
of that thought

"roadkill"
next time someone
tells you how precious
life is

just tell them to count
the number of dead
creatures splattered
along the road on
their way home

"get on my level"
naked trees
look like
negative space
models of our
brains

the universe
balances itself
out in ways you
can't imagine

and there is
symmetry that
you pick up on
every day

this is all the
same fucking
organism

"ihop"

"get over four years ago.
get over ten years ago
while you're at it,"
says my brother to
Ashley as we sit
In our booth

Our food lays out
Before us, pancakes
Waffles, chicken,
French toast, eggs,
Bacon and sausage

The waitresses
Gather over by
The computer
Putting in their
Checks and chattering
Like a flock of sparrows

There's a rowdy group
Of teenagers behind us,
Mostly male, talking
Bro shit and rocking
The booth seat back
And forth against my
Shoulders

They're encouraging one
Of their little buddies to
Go and talk to one of the
Waitresses, little curly
Blonde thing, cute and
Nice-looking, not cynical
Yet

I saw her looking over here

Earlier

But then I hear them talking
About her

One of the dudes gets up, baseball
Cap and hoodie, and walks right
Over, big goofy smile on his adolescent
Face, and they begin the ritual

Ben's sitting next to me and he's heard
Their quacking and he watches the
Ordeal too

"She won't give it to him," he says
"No self-respecting server gives out
Their number to a customer."

The waitress looks up at the bro
With doe eyes, with dove eyes,
With a soft little smile, she digs him

He grins that big goofy I-can't-believe
I'm-doing-this-grin and chats her up

It's like a fucking afternoon movie
On teen nick

If I
were ever to walk up to a woman
And start talking to her like that
Out of nowhere
she'd get really
Uncomfortable, no eye contact
No doe eyes, no dove eyes, just
Downcast eyes, eyes of fear and
Embarrassment

Someone with authority would
Come over and ask me to leave
Then everyone would make fun
Of me when I was gone for daring
To even think of making such
An advance

But this waitress peers right up

At our young buck and then
She steps over to the computer and
Takes a roll of receipt paper and tears
Off a piece and writes her number on it

"Bang," I say, pointing, "Look, she
Gave it to him."

I wish I would've bet Ben some
Money for it

The guy walks off, his prize in
hand, and the blonde waitress's
Girl friends all gather round her
To talk about what just happened

One of them walks by our table

"Did she give him her number,"
Ben asks her

"Yeah," the waitress says, and laughs

"Was it her real number?" I mumble
under my breath

"What?" says Ben

"Nothing," I say

"Alex, do you like women when
They're young and beautiful?"
Ashley asks me

I don't answer

"on second thought"
I just typed out a comment
On reddit for the new
Suicide squad trailer about
How I want it to be good, I
Really do, but this new
Trailer hasn't sold me and
the screenplay seems
Weak and the trailers are
Just patching over that
With the action and stuff
But then I deleted it when
I remembered no one cares
What I think

"pretty girl"
she moves in front of him
light and energy condensed
into hips and belly and
breasts

he vibrates two flaps of
flesh in his gullet, the
vibrations they make
float through the atoms
indicating his pleasure

these organic masses
split by eons, rejoined
by forces unseen, hot
and heavy and hallowed

his appendage
her hollow
hallelujah
little death

"likes"

For me
On Facebook,
about twelve Likes
is considered a
Resounding success for
A status or post

And
For me
On Instagram, three likes
Is a resounding success

Look around
Sooner than we think

"nobody"
If you're not
Rich or famous
You live in the
Center of a
Universe that
Doesn't know
Or care that
You exist

"winter walk"
you smell that?

That's the smell
Of sterilization

Mother Earth cleansing
Herself of all that doesn't
Belong

Everything from the past
Year, gone

A new start, for everyone
Who lives through it

"crossover"

thor plus black widow equals wonder woman

captain america meets hulk equals superman

iron man meets hawkeye equals batman

"cringe and a half"

She was the most beautiful thing ever, that girl. Her eyes were deep and brown. Her hair was a bright and rich blonde, and it changed daily; from straight and feathery and soft as sin one day to lush, chipper curls the next. Her skin was a crisp tan. Her teeth were white and straight, and when she smiled deep dimples bloomed in her cheeks. I noticed the way her pink sweater came to a halt just an inch above her white belt, hinting at a luscious slice of belly.

She was, in every ridiculous sense of the word, perfect. And by complete and utterly cruel circumstance, I got to dance with her.

I reached out one shaking hand and placed it on her hip, feeling her shift under her jeans, under her panties. She took my left hand lightly in delicate fingers with small pink, carefully clipped nails. It was warm and smooth. She draped her left arm over my shoulder; not encircling my neck with her elbow the way a couple would, but just letting it hang there like she was leaning on a tree branch.

Her skin smelled of cinnamon and sugar, her hair like April gardens.

She wouldn't look me in the eye, and I wouldn't look her in the eye. Her face was blank, a look of slight anxiety, or irritation. She wanted to get it over with.

She turned her head away to the side, eyes always on our instructor across the room. When we turned to dance, we would either stare down at our feet or look over our shoulders. That was fine with me. If my eyes met hers I was apt to melt into a defeated puddle of lovelorn goo.

I was shaking. I'd never been this taken before. Not even in grade school, where I crushed on a number of cute girls but never dated and never got any phone numbers. Never got up the gall to approach and ask anyone to dinner. Never

made out in the back of Dad's car. Never put on some quiet music and cuddled in a dim room in front of a rented movie. We did a slow waltz, surrounded by other couples, chattering to each other about how they didn't know what they were doing. Girls would glance coyly up into the faces of their partners, only to snap their heads away when their gazes were met, little smiles on their lips.

She refused to look at me, her eyes on the floor, on her feet, down past the faded jeans that hugged her long, slim legs. We said nothing, only shuffled slowly on the tile surrounded by other dancers.

I wrote shitty poetry about her. I listened to the Goo Goo Dolls and Over the Rhine and thought about her. I visited her Facebook profile daily, cursing myself for a stalker but unable to click back or break my stare.

When she walked into the room the first day of class every guy turned his head, not even bothering to hide it. She didn't flinch. She was used to it. All the girls seemed to shrivel bitterly in their seats. "Who the hell does she think she is?" they said with their eyes.

When she gave presentations in class she was wooden and prone to stuttering, not nearly graceful or articulate at all. She made terrible aside jokes that the guys laughed at no matter what. The girls snickered to each other.

We did our awkward shuffle, and I tried not to breathe in her face.

The song ended and she let go of me and I let go of her and that was it.

"funkin' it up"

I remember Fred telling me of Funk Night. It was an almost-secret party held in remote locations around Detroit on the last Friday of every month. It was known only through word of mouth.

People drank themselves silly and danced to 70's music in an enticing labyrinth of dark rooms and strobes while a DJ blasted out old dance staples. Everyone shuffled and grinded and threw their arms and twisted their hips and tossed their heads, a seething mass of limbs and lechery. The girls were wasted and easy, according to Franz. He'd been there for the first time in January of 2008.

"You've gotta come with us this month, man."

He told me he'd been dancing with this girl for a bit, drunk off his rocker, her the same, pushing their hips together, both of them moving to the skull-thumping beat and synth.

He turned her around and looked at her.

"I think you should kiss me," he said.

She looked up at him, her eyes curious pools.

"Why?"

"Cause I'm the ghost of Heath Ledger."

She smiled and thrust her neck out. Tongues coiled.

"We made out for like, half an hour, man."

This all sounded beyond wonderful to me, as I hadn't had any semblance of action in nearly two years, and nothing at all before that.

I agreed to the next Funk Night for sure.

One Friday evening not long after, an opportunity arose. I went with Fred and Bill Cody and Matt Frayer and Matt's fiancé Evelyn.

Overall, it was fun. I drank what seemed like a gallon of some grape flavored alcohol beverage which may have been some form of wine cooler or may have been something else but it didn't matter cause whatever it was, it worked marvelously. I took several huge swigs from the big glass jug and dove into the fray.

There was one girl-- short, chubby, flabby-looking, with long, stiff brown hair but a cute enough face. She emerged from the flashing, spinning darkness. She had on a pink top and jeans.

I was holding the wine jug over my head in one hand and showing off some signature, jerky dance moves.

My friend Bill Cody-- the giant, the gentle, the lantern-jawed-- was dancing nearby, making swimming motions with his massive arms. Fred was next to the wall, watching for potential partners. Matt Frayer, the Italian Christian (who turned out to be quite a competent dancer) and his one-and-only Evelyn were off somewhere else.

The girl danced right up to me, turned around, and thrust her ass into my crotch. I hardened immediately. She was at least a head shorter than me. She pushed in further, no point in being discreet. I wasn't embarrassed; I was fucking thrilled that something was actually happening. I didn't care why she'd come over. I didn't care what she looked like. They don't call it getting lucky for nothing. I reached around, put my hand on her soft belly and pulled her up close.

"You gonna sing the chorus with me, baby?" I yelled over the din, my face down next to hers.

"Uh-huh!" she chirped back, drunk as hell.

"PLAY THAT FUNKAY MUZE-IK, WHITE BOOOOO-YAH! PLAY THAT FUNKAY MUZE-IK WHY-EEE-EYE-EYE-AYTE!" the whole room erupted in unison. We screeched along, me savoring the feel of her cheek against mine.

I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"Turn her around," Fred said into my ear.

I put my hands on her shoulders and did just that.

She stopped dancing and reached for the wine jug.

I knew it.

"Ohhhh!" I said, grinning. "*That's* why you came over here!" She grasped for the jug. I pulled it out of her reach. I had at least a foot on her with my arm extended high in the air.

"What do we say?"

"Please!"

"What?"

"PLEASE!"

"Huh?"

"PLEASE!"

"Please what?"

"PLEASE CAN I HAVE SOME?"

I hesitated a bit, still grinning down at her, before lowering the jug. She grabbed it, took a giant gulp and we started dancing again. A few bars later she turned around again.

"I'm gonna go get a smoke. You wanna come?"

"Naw, I don't smoke. But come find me after you're done if you wanna dance some more."

She leaned up and I leaned down. Our lips crushed together. It was the sloppiest kiss ever. I didn't mind.

She disappeared into the crowd. I saw her again about fifteen minutes later, dancing with another skinny guy with a rodent face and patchy beard who had a beer in his hand. He was feeling her up. Somewhere in my wasted head there was a blip of sadness and jealousy.

I danced alone for a while, just enjoying the haze and the tunes. Soon I realized my friends were gone. I pushed my way across the room, bumping shoulder after shoulder, making for the door to the smoking area.

Along the way, I jostled a girl grinding on a muscle-bound fellow in a tank-top with an expressionless face that hinted at easily-sparked aggression.

She shouted at me, "Dance-off! You and me, right here!" She gestured frantically at me and herself and the floor between us.

"No, fuck that!" I yelled and pushed past her.

The doors led to a big, fenced in backyard area. People smoked and milled about. A huge gnarled black tree loomed in one corner. It was freezing, but I was drenched in sweat and it felt glorious. The cold wrapped around me and I steamed.

The party was being held in what appeared to be an old stone house on the outskirts of Detroit.

Maybe part of a school. Maybe an old church. Who knew? I hadn't bothered to look when we'd arrived. I'd wanted to get inside, to get started.

I saw Bill and Fred over by the old tree. They saw me. I walked over.

"Grade-A pimp," Bill roared.

We slapped hands and talked drunk about why he doesn't call himself Billy Cody, even though it would sound a lot cooler.

I danced alone for the rest of the night, trying to get the attention of other ladies but not succeeding.

I danced up on this one pretty girl with a neat little nose, large dark eyes and corkscrew black hair. She ignored me.

I asked for a drink from the can of Monster she held. She complied.

A black guy next to me asked, "Is that your girl?"

"No. I'm just mingling,"

"A'ight, I just don't wanna be mingling with nobody's girl," he said.

Another fellow in a grey cap and smoking jacket with square shoulders doing a strange, manic little shuffle ended up next to me. He had a giddy smile on his face and his eyes were wide and sparkling.

"How you doing, man?" I asked.

"I've got the night fever," he said, grinning ear-to-ear, his feet shuffling softly to and fro.

"That's what it's all about, brother!" I yelled gleefully. We slapped hands. I danced away.

I was tremendously hungover the next day and my back hurt from spending the night on Fred's soft leather couches I never threw up. I remember Matt drove Fred's car back while Fred and I slumped in the back seat, barely coherent. Bill had sobered up long ago and left of his own accord, in his own vehicle.

I drove my parent's Town & Country home in what seemed like blinding sunlight, through a bleached world, listening to Train's first album because there was nothing else in the car and the radio wasn't any better.

"pipe chase"

He stuck the key in and opened the door.

The inside of the pipe chase seemed to blink in the sudden light, a nocturnal creature startled from slumber, offended, darkness snuffed out by a flood of sunshine.

There was the usual aroma of the hidden, the locked-up, the necessarily out-of-sight.

Drippings, droppings, dust and dirt.

Plumbing crossed overhead, wooden broom handles clanged on iron and copper and plastic.

Stale mops floating like hag's hair in buckets of brown suds.

Corrosive chemicals confined to corners collected cobwebs.

A dead lightbulb in its socket on the ceiling, grey and useless.

Flakes of rust, peelings of paint, damp puddles of sewage and pipe-sweat.

Unneeded rolls of trash bags piled against cool cinderblocks.

He stepped inside, began.

"local blues"

I went to a concert a few weeks ago with Nelson. The band was a hard blues quartet called Chef Chris and the Rumpshakers. Chef Chris runs a barbeque joint in Hamburg that Nelson and I frequent. The barbeque is awesome. The band's pretty good.

The show turned out to be part of WEMU's Blues and Brews series, and Michael Jewett was emceeing. The gig took place at the restaurant near the Holiday Inn off 23 at Ann Arbor Road. The name of the restaurant escapes me, but its mascot is a happy cartoon pilot. I ate a burger. It was okay.

Mr Kentes, my incredibly fit gym teacher from junior year who I hadn't even thought about since walking out of our last class in June of 02, was dancing with his strikingly beautiful wife/girlfriend on the dancefloor for most of the show.

Kentes would never make us do anything in gym class. I can remember spending most of my time in the bleachers reading and eating those Little Debbie Strawberry Shortcake Rolls and drinking bottles of Coke. The rest of the class would play Horse or Lightning. Sometimes I joined them. Everyone slacked. Kentes would show up to take attendance and then disappear.

Our final exam that year consisted of a mostly blank sheet of paper with one question typed at the top-- "What did you learn?" I don't know what I responded with. Probably nothing. Kentes got fired that semester.

I recognized him instantly at the show. He looks kind of like a darker-haired Bill Maher with a male ballerina's body.

Once Michael Jewett shouted Chef Chris's intro and the Rumpshakers launched into another 10-minute-long blues jam with the Chef himself wailing away on his harmonica and shouting into the mic, a crowd of 40 and 50somethings gathered on the floor to boogie along.

Kentes and his wife were actually really good dancers, doing actual steps and twirling each other, elegant dips and spins and other shit I can't describe as someone who

knows nothing about dancing. They were effortless, graceful, their faces tight with concentration. I started to pay more attention to them than the band.

Everyone else just kind of shuffled and spun around. Grey-haired guys whispered into chick's ears with lascivious, beer-slick grins. One enthusiastic, drunken broad was wearing an extremely low cut silk shirt that was threatening to spill her sagging, tanned, 50-something breasts out for everyone to see. She threw her arms about and cackled with her two friends. There was lots of whooping, lots of raucous laughter and sloshed merrymaking. It was a time for these aging, mostly overweight people to forget about their paunch and their thinning hair and their aching knees and act like they were in their twenties again.

Nelson and I stayed for the first set and most of the second. Then we left, and that's the end of that memory.

"we are all little universes"
depression is wanting to be
awakened from this life dream

anxiety is the fear that someone
will wake you

"identity politics"
I was taking a
Greyhound bus
Across the country
To visit my brother
In LA

We'd stopped in
Some sunscorched
Hamlet in the middle
Of Kansas at a seedy
Gas station

I went in to buy some
Candy and a water

There was a black dude
On the bus sitting in front
Of me, he'd shared a chicken
Wing with me earlier, nice
Enough guy

I was in line when he started
Yelling at the clerks about
Accusing him of stealing
Because he was black

There were two clerks,
One was a Native American
And the other was a skinny
White trash guy

The black guy thought
The white trash guy had
Told the Indian guy to
Watch him because the
White guy thought
He might try to swipe
Something

I didn't hear what started
It, all of a sudden the black

Guy started getting mad and
Emptying his pockets

It's cause I'm black, isn't it?
He yelled, furious, everyone was
Watching him now, the white
Clerk embarrassed and
Trying to deflate the situation

What the hell, man, that's
Like if I said something about
You being Indian, man, the black
Guy said to the native American
Clerk

I'm a bigger minority than
You are, said the Indian calmly

The black guy freaked out at this

And while the minorities
argued about
Who's less privileged

I, the white guy, quietly placed
My Cookies N' Cream Hershey bar
And my smart water in my
Hoodie pockets and slipped out
The front door

And no one said anything

Except I didn't actually do that

I thought about doing it

And how it would make
A perfect story

Instead I just awkwardly waited in line
And went up and paid for my stuff when it
Was my turn, went back out to the bus and
Kept going to L.A.

"others must fail"
I need to stop checking reddit

Another twenty something
Author just became a millionaire
And critical darling

I'm waiting on another cell
To fail, for another robot to
Go down past the expertise
Of the robot techs, to where
They have to come over to
My hole and ask me to look
Into the guts of the PLC to
Determine what switch didn't
Come on or go off

It's a living, and I'm climbing
This fucking ladder though
Sometimes I just want to
Jump right the fuck off, in
Moments like this, when I
Read about someone else
Breaking free

The girl is 25, just sold her debut
Fucking novel for 2 million dollars

I just texted my on/off fuck buddy
Who's living in Arizona, she responds
With tart, distracted, unfeeling answers
She doesn't ask how I'm doing, I
Haven't seen her since December,
Whatever, we had our fun

The New York Times and every other
Fucking elitist publication showers
Praise on the novel, which is no
Doubt brilliant unlike anything I've
Ever written

Earlier today I met with a friend of
Mine, who's been a server for ten years
And still lives with his mother, he's
My age, 30

We discuss our lives

"You're doing
A lot better than me, man," he says

And he's right

I look at the young author's pure
Blue eyes as she stares serenely from
Her author's portrait, so many reasons
To hate the world

Welcome to the fold, where you'll
Never have to experience reality
again

You'll be wrapped in a privilege
So total you won't see it

and you're
Female so anytime anyone questions
Your motives or your character
You can just make some swift
Redirection and accuse them of
Bias against your gender

I read an article about how
Poor white people are killing
Themselves with drugs and
Alcohol and firearms, and a
Study done on lab rats that
Found rats are most
Susceptive to drug addiction
When they're isolated, and
The study concluded that a person's
Weakness for addiction
All depends on whether
You see the world as
Your playground or your
Cage

Being a nobody is one thing,
The added sting of having to
Watch others succeed is the
Real kick in the dick

Having everyone jealous of you
Is the greatest possible problem
A person can have

"from a distance"
It used to be God watching
Everything you do
and judging

Now,
thanks to the Internet,
it's everyone else

"gold dollars"
I love going to the change
Machine and getting my
Paper tens changed into
Gold dollars

I spend the Sacajaweas
First

Then I go in order of
A president's historical
Ranking

Warren G Harding and
Millard Fillmore and
James Buchanan and
Martin Van Buren go
First

Then James K Polk
And Andrew Jackson
And Thomas Jefferson

Lincoln and Washington
Are always spent last

"edge"

I feel like

All of us are
Always one
Good day
Away
From being
The next
Superstar

And one
Bad day
Away
From being
The next
National
Tragedy

"mouth parts"
On the way
To work
I listen to the
Anchors of NPR
Flap their gums
And the slick
Saliva sounds
Made by their
Tongues and
Teeth as their
Lips move in
Front of the
Mic

They talk
About pro
Video gamer
Celebrities,
People who
Get rich
Playing
Video games
On Youtube

You have
To make
your own
view your
reality
you can't
get sucked
into the
collective
consciousness
of media and
spectacle

that's living
death

I spent
Too much
Money on
Virtual whores
This morning

Again, I need
To delete this
Profile but
We're all
Addicted to
Sugar and at
Least one
Other thing
As we divert
From the
Crush of
Eternity

you have
to keep
your ideas
down to
a number
easy enough
for your mind
to hold all at
once

in this
vice grip
of a now

"when God got to australia"

I'm out of ideas, He mumbled
To Himself

I think I'll just start
Combining other animals

Beaver and a duck?
Platypus

Deer and a rabbit?
Kangaroo

Squirrel and a bear?
Koala

Giant gopher?
Wombat

Let's have a dog
With tiger stripes

and know what would
Be cool?

An anteater with
Porcupine quills

And let's have it
Lay eggs just for
The fuck of it

"on a march afternoon long ago"
I remember one
Time we were in
My front yard or
Maybe it was the
Playground

I remember we
Were in spring coats
And the grass had
That flat, yellow-
Green early spring
Color to it and
Ryan took my hand
And I held my palm
Open and face up
And he took a finger
And he traced the
Insides of my fingers
Down to the center
Of my palm one by
One, making the spokes
Of a wheel like in the
Red Wings logo, and
Then after he'd done
All five of them he
bunched
His fingers up in
The center of my
Palm like he
Was picking up a
Napkin and pulled
Up and away

I remember a strange,
Cold sensation at
The center of my
Palm where he'd
Just brushed his
Fingers

"Do you feel that?"

He asked.

"Yeah," I said.

"That's your soul,"
he said.

"functioning cog"

as one of
the
ordinary

in a world
built
for the
extraordinary

"shut the fuck up donnie"

Today's demons

Are

Tomorrow's angels

"when I got to work"

there were several gentlemen
gathered around the factory door
socializing.

four black guys,
one white guy
leaning on the railing,
and another white guy
sitting in the passenger seat
of an old Jimmy
parked off to the side.

i didn't catch
the beginning
of the conversation
they were having
because
I was listening
to slipknot
on my earbuds,

but as I approached
I heard one of the black guys
yell at the white guy
in the Jimmy

"Hey, stop all that racist shit!"

"You listen here,
you fucking Uncle Tom,"
yelled the white guy,
gesturing in faux-anger
with his cigarette.

"My name Uncle BILL,"
responded the black guy.

"linger"

I was in the parking lot
Of outback steakhouse
At Grand River and Wixom
where I worked as a
Dishwasher

I was killing time in the
Car,

waiting til the last
Second

til I had to go in

And wade in steam and
Burn my fingertips on
Hot china and empty
Heavy wet sacks of
Garbage and slop
Into the dumpster
Out back and get
Trenchfoot from
the water in my
shoes

I was listening to
A mix on a CD player
I had plugged into
The cassette adapter

The Cranberries came
On, the intro to Linger

Dolores O'Riorden
Singing a beautiful
Cascading vocal riff
While guitar notes

Are sprinkled like bits
Of silver over a silken
String section

I notice the billowing clouds
Over the roof of the outback

I think about flying up to the
Clouds as I listen to the
Cranberries sing their wistful
Intro

I'm struck by a deep and
Unexpected moment of
Inner peace and reflection

For a split second
My young mind seems
Connected to all the
Energy in the universe

I feel a tremendous
Gratitude for the
Beauty of existence

For the song and for
The sight of those
Cottony mountains
Floating over my
Place of employment

Its times like this that you
Realize God has just peeked
In on you like a parent
Checking in on a child after
Bedtime

Then the solace breaks and
I'm back to myself again,
I open the car door and inhale
Early autumn air

"the bird's nest"

There was a lilac tree outside
the house I lived in
With my family between the
Ages of 5 and 8

I found out there was bird's
Nest in it one summer

I wanted the bird's nest

Thought it would be cool
If I could put it on a shelf
Or something

It looked empty to me

That's the part I must stress

I thought the damn thing
Was empty

I got my friend Ryan from
Across the street and told
Him of my idea

Ryan didn't think it was
A good idea but I assured
Him the nest was empty

I'd watched it and hadn't
Seen any mother bird
Come and go

It was clearly abandoned

We got a broom or a rake
Or something with a long
Handle and poked it out

All of a sudden I was aware of
Ryan yelling at me and pointing
At the ground

YOU BIG LIAR, he yelled in horror

There, fluttering on the ground
Were two or three baby birds
Helpless and naked and exposed

The nest was still stuck between
The branches, half-cocked

I'd nearly had it, was so focused
On getting it down I hadn't noticed
The birds falling out

I don't think I can convey the
Guilt I felt at that moment
But the closest I can come is
I'd wished my being would turn
Into a black hole

I don't think I said anything

My dad wasn't home, my mom
was

I can say I immediately only cared
For myself, I was only worried
About how this would make me
Look, what this would do for my
Image in the neighborhood

I felt bad for the birds but I
Thought of myself first and
What the consequences
Would be

My mother was understandably
Livid, shocked that I would do
Something so thoughtless

She sent me to my room

I deserve it, I said, through
Tears

I sat on the lower bunk of
The bed I shared with my
Brother and thought
Of how angry my dad would
Be when he got home and
Heard what I'd done

I cried a lot and thought about
The birds on the ground

I'd honestly meant no harm

That was what sucked the
Most about knowing what
A monster I was—I'd done
It completely and totally
Unaware of the hurt I
Was causing until it was
Too late

Apparently my mom and
Our neighbors fixed the nest
As best they could and put
The babies back in

In those days it was thought
That mother birds wouldn't
Come back to their babies if
The babies smelled like human
Hands

So I'd just murdered two or
Three baby birds as far as I
Knew, all because I wanted
What I thought was an
Empty bird's nest

Later on
Mom had me go get something
Out of the backyard and I nearly

Stepped on one of them

It must've hopped away from the
Tree, out into the open yard
So it didn't get put back in

I didn't touch it but told
My mother about it

I'll never forget the way
She looked at me

To this day, they don't let
That go, the bird's nest
incident, that is a defining
Aspect of my character,
Just as I knew it would
Be in those first moments
After seeing the baby birds
Fluttering on the grass

Moments of such blind
Selfishness, the kind that
Isn't visible until after you've
Done the damage, have
Occurred throughout my
Life

I have no excuses

"flip the sign"

When I was at
Fifth grade camp
We'd eat our meals
In the mess hall, an
Enormous log building
In the center of the
Campgrounds

At the end of the meal
One person would get
Up and go flip the sign
That hung over the
Doors

I can't remember what
The sign said but it had
Something to do with
Everyone being allowed
To exit formally

A person would get picked
By a table or a certain amount
Of people, and as far as I could
Tell they were chosen on some
Merit or social standing they'd
Achieved

And they would walk up to the
Front as everyone chanted

*"'Name' is looking good!
'Name' is lookin' fine
Come on 'Name' and
Flip the sign!"*

Then they'd chant
*"Flip the sign!
Flip the sign!"*
Repeatedly
As the chosen person
Climbed a ladder
That was set beneath
The sign and flipped it
From the 'you're not
Allowed to leave yet'
Side to the 'you're now
Allowed to leave' side

One day I was chatting
With this group of strangers
At a table and I seemed to
Be making a great impression
On them, I don't know why,
I was just good at acting like
A good kid and telling people
What they wanted to hear

One guy got up and went to
Talk to the counselor and for
Some reason I thought he was
Going to make arrangements
For me to flip the sign

I don't know how I got that idea,
I think one of the other people
At the table said something to me
that hinted at it

As far as I knew,
Flipping the sign was meant for
Only the most upstanding and
Admirable and popular of campers

It was a bill I knew I didn't fit

I'd done nothing to deserve it

I didn't feel worthy of it, and the
Thought of walking up in front of
Everyone while they chanted
My name filled me with terror

I walked over and explained as
Calmly as I could to the counselor
And the kid recommending me
that I didn't want to flip the sign
And I thought it would be better
If someone else got the honor

The counselor, a young woman
Who at the time looked like an
Adult but was probably only
Of college-age at most,
Looked at me incredulously and
Sympathetically said okay

The kid who'd gone up to recommend
Me leaned in and said something

It started with "You gotta..." and
Due to the din of the crowd I didn't
Catch the rest but it sounded like
He was giving me some curt advice
About not being a pussy when others
Bestow a ceremonial honor on you

I'll never know, though

I went back to my seat and finished
My meal and someone else flipped
The sign and dinner was over

I often wonder if I'd flipped the sign,
If I'd just faced my fear or whatever,
If I'd just been confident, then maybe
I could've gone on to greater things
In my life

In addition,
As I write this I realize it's completely
Plausible that I'd completely misread
The situation and the guy was talking

About the counselor about something
Completely unrelated, in which case
I'd just made an ass of myself, which,
Hey, it was over twenty years ago now,
So who cares

WHEN YOU INHALE ANGELS
POEMS: 2016-2017

"everyone's favorite pseudointellectual"
don't call me a bother
don't call me bitter
Ok, call me bitter
but something's wrong with this picture
so don't call me wrong
Is this all because
My nails are too long
give too much and it's gone
In Detroit, in the clutch
We're piercing eardrums
While you're killing the love
Cause you've never come
take my rule of thumb
don't ever play dumb
You're cute and you're easy
Tank top and blue jeans, we
Adjust frequencies, know I'll disagree
You always were too good for me
I see
What the problem is
I've overblown, my mind's a mess
Take off your clothes
under blankets
I can't stand it
One look's all it took
I know you fucked him
But I can't get in
Guess that's what I get
For being a gentleman
I see you bending over him
soft strumpet, take a sip
hope you enjoy your original sin
That's it, you're his
Lights out, I quit

"the light, the heat"
is there anything
more comforting
than the butterglow
of a desk lamp?

I think it awakens
A sense of security
And relaxation
Because the light
Brings to mind
The fires of our
Cave days

It's the same
Dusky yellow

That same sunset
Shade, like a furnace
On low or candles
On a windowsill

The same tones
Of home

"limp dick"
I don't watch
Porn
Because I'm
Tired
Of seeing
People
Other
Than me
Get laid

"something about me"
Once as a child

Probably in
Middle school

Maybe a few
Years older

we'd stopped
At this gas station
Or made some pit
Stop and my siblings
Were all making a
Ruckus as we opened
The sliding minivan
Door and all tumbled
Out

There was an old woman
Standing nearby looking at
Us and I said to her,
"Yeah, I gotta live with
Them."

I was only trying to
Make a joke, trying to
Make light of my sibling's
Embarrassing racket

Truthfully, I was paraphrasing
A line Don Knotts says in this
Murder mystery he was in with
Tim Conway where he says to a
Japanese cook, "Yeah, I gotta
Work with him..."

This woman must've not seen
That movie because

"I think it's more they
Have to live with you,"
She replied coolly.

"the first day with obama"

I did an interview today with Barack Obama at a rally in Flint.

Just before he was due to show up, I stood next to the two-shot camera, right in the center of the room. He and the interviewer were to sit about five feet in front of me.

Dan (the audio guy) put a mic on him in the make-up room, so I put the headphones on and heard him before I saw him.

"...yeah, imagine him doing number seven! Wouldn't that be something?" I heard the Senator say.

Dan appeared from behind me and grabbed the headphones back.

I stood by the camera again.

He strolled through the door a minute later and shook the hand of the correspondent, who was named Jake Tapper.

He sat down in his chair, and then scanned the room, making direct eye contact with each of the crew members.

"So, how's everyone doing?"

He and the correspondent made small talk about how his forehead and nose often get too shiny during interviews.

"Sometimes they get distraught over it," he said with a grin. "But it's like my ears-- it is what it is."

He did the interview, slipping up and having to start over on his first answer.

After it was over he stood up and walked around the room thanking the rest of the crew.

He shook my hand second, after Jake Tapper's, walking right up to me.

Again, direct eye contact. He extended his hand.

I caught the ends of his fingers. His grip was light.

"Hey. Good to see you," he said, a face just like on TV.

"Take care," I responded.

He shook the rest of the crew's hands and was off again through the door, his entourage trailing behind him.

One smooth motherfucker. Knew everyone was watching him and didn't seem to mind it one bit. It was like he'd been waiting for this kind of attention to happen to him all his life.

The whole ordeal was about seven minutes long. (6/17/08)

"the second day with obama"

Obama seemed to be in a bad mood when he walked into the small courtyard at Wayne County Community College. The day before he'd seemed energetic and playful. Today his smiles were forced and he looked worn out and distracted and pissy.

The event was scheduled for 11. It didn't actually start until 12. The press, crammed into a small corner of the courtyard, waited and muttered.

It was cloudy and looked like it might rain. When Obama finally appeared the sun came out. When he walked back into the building an hour later, the clouds came back. It was weird. I swear that's what happened. I'm aware it doesn't actually mean anything, but that's what happened.

He had a meeting with about fifteen college students at the school. Most of them were studying to be dental hygienists. They all had sad stories about how they had sick parents and had to struggle to pay tuition. Most of them told of a kit required for a class that cost four grand.

"What exactly is in this kit," Obama asked, perplexed, after it had been brought up for the fifth time. "I'd like to see this kit. That is an expensive kit."

The students asked Obama about his plan for education and the four grand a year credit he'd be willing to dole out in exchange for 100 hours of public service. He patiently answered questions and seemed very professor-like.

"I don't want you to think that when I'm president everybody's just gonna all of a sudden be on Easy Street," he said at one point. "But I can make it a little easier for you to do certain things like pay for college and get health care."

At another point a woman asked him what advice he'd give to

college students struggling through school. She said her daughter was having a hard time keeping her grades up.

Obama looked at her for a moment.

"Are... are you asking me to address your daughter directly?
Or--"

"Oh, would you?" the woman asked, her eyes lighting up.

"Uh--"

"Would you?"

The woman started digging in her purse for a cell phone.
Obama smiled tightly.

"Oh, you've got the phone right there, huh?"

"Would you?" the woman asked for the third time.

Obama's smile softened a bit.

"Maybe I'll leave her a message."

"Oh... all right."

"But to answer your question, I'd tell her to stick with it," he said. "The repercussions of not finishing are a lot worse than sticking with it and sacrificing. And I'd be willing to bet that your daughter goes to the mall. And the movies. And hangs out with her girlfriends."

"Too much," the woman said, nodding eagerly.

"Well, she's got time to do that, she should be able to find time to do schoolwork and keep her grades up," he said.

After Obama talked with the college students, one of the girls walked up and presented him with a clear plastic bag full of toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, floss and other dental care supplies.

"Wow, look at this," Obama said. He held up an electric toothbrush. "This is high-tech right here. And we've got

toothpaste... is there floss? Wow, yes there is. This is like a lifetime supply."

He called over his second-hand man Jesse Love and handed the bag to him.

"Thank you very much. This is an outstanding gift."

They hastily took group pictures.

After, one of the girls asked Obama if he would take a picture with her alone.

"I can't take individual pictures," he said sharply.
"That's why we took the group picture."

He bade everyone farewell and walked off, a throng of security and advisors milling around him, worker bees swarming their queen.

We had some time to kill before being let go, so my dad, Gordy and I decided to drive up the road and get some food and wait for Andy the Producer to tell us we could go home.

We ran into Fletcher, the other photographer, who was from Washington and working on the same crew. He told us he needed a birthday card for a party he was going to later that day.

"Oh, well, why don't you just come with us?" my dad offered.

So Fletcher and the rest of us piled into the Sprinter and took off down the road in search of a pharmacy or card store.

First we saw a semi-truck with Wal Mart on the side.

"There's a Wal Mart," said Fletcher, pointing.

Then we noticed the truck was parked next to a huge abandoned store.

"Oh," said Fletcher.

Next we came across a Sam's Club.

"Do you think Sam's will have cards?" Fletcher asked.

"I think we'd be better off just finding a CVS or a Hallmark or something," my dad said.

We drove on. No CVS's, no Hallmarks, no drug stores or grocery stores.

But then, up the road, we saw a sign in a mini-mall parking lot advertising its businesses. One of the sections said "Pharmacy"

We drove closer and closer and soon the building came into view. A large red sign hung over the entrance window to one of the empty suites. It said, "Pharmacy-- Coming Soon!"

"Fuck," said Fletcher.

We did find a pharmacy, and then we got some Rio Wraps.
(6/18/2008)

"my brother's sign"

I was walking up to the library today to do some work in the computer lab when I noticed a crowd of people gathered outside the front doors.

I noticed a girl waving a Bible around and shouting Scripture and judgment.

I noticed my friend Kyle, who explained to me that radical Christians were demonstrating. They were telling everyone they were going to hell for being gay, smoking, etc.

"I've been out here for like, 2 hours. They had another guy out here before her." he said.

Just then, a guy clad entirely in a bright lime green suit ran out of the library doors and started dancing with the Christians. Everybody cheered.

I went inside the library and did my work.

About an hour and a half later I came back out. There were more people gathered around and now there was a guy holding a Bible and yelling instead of a girl.

There were a few cops gathered around. One guy walked up to them and asked if what the Christians were doing was legal. The cop nodded.

I noticed someone holding a poster board sign that said, "Vote Yes on Proposal 1" on one side and "Hell is gonna be a PARTY!" on the other.

I looked down to see who was holding the sign.

It was my younger brother Ben.

He wandered around the small crowd, waving the sign. The Christians ignored him. People smirked. A few clapped.

After a bit, he noticed me watching and came over.

"Hey," he said. "How's it going? When am I going to meet your woman?"

"I dunno," I said. "Soon. What are you doing?"

"They're saying anyone who smokes pot is going to hell."

"What's Proposal 1?" I asked.

"Legalization of marijuana for medical purposes," Ben said. "When I came out everybody started applauding."

"Did they say anything?" I asked, looking at the shouting man with the Bible.

"No."

"Hm. Well, I gotta go. See you."

"All right. Peace."

I walked off. He went back to walking around with his sign.
(10/13/08)

"guitar center"

Today I went to guitar center with the intention of asking them about voice distortion pedals.

I walked all the way to the acoustic room like I always do and in to the nylon-strings room where I sat down and plucked away versions of "Birds and Boats" by Gregory and the Hawk and "Midnight Passenger" by me.

I had been in there about fifteen minutes when suddenly a man burst through the door and said, "Excuse me for intruding."

He had a thick European accent and looked to be in his 50's, with gray hair and a baseball cap. He wore a green hoodie.

"Not a problem." I said, and continued playing.

"I am looking for something specific," he said, looking at the guitars on the wall.

"Am I holding it?" I asked.

"No, no, it is..." he trailed off, studying guitars.

I resumed playing. The guy examined the guitars on the wall a bit more and then looked at me.

"You are a good player," he said.

"Thanks, man," I said.

"Yes, you actually play it," he said. "Anybody can strum

it. Do you play in a band?"

"Yeah, I play in a band." I said. "I only know one pattern, though, for fingerpicking. I just learned it recently."

He took a guitar down from the wall.

"Here look at this one for me. Is this good?"

He took the guitar I had out of my hands and placed a new one in them.

I plucked at it.

"Uh, it's more in tune than the last one," I said. "I like that."

"Do you know any Johnny Cash?"

"I used to. Let me think..."

I tried to remember some Johnny Cash. I couldn't.

The man started to sing "Ring of Fire" extremely off-key. I tried to accompany him.

I decided I liked this guy.

"Have you seen Johnny Cash out there?" he asked me.

"There's a guy out there who looks just like Johnny Cash and he can play very well."

"No, I haven't," I said.

"He looks just like Johnny Cash," he took the guitar from me and placed it back on the wall.

We walked out to the main acoustic room. Sitting on a pile of boxes was an acoustic guitar all by itself. The man inspected it.

He looked at the price tag.

"69 dollars? This cannot be!" he exclaimed. "Is this a good guitar?"

"I'm not sure. For the price it looks okay, I guess."

He looked inside the sound hole and read.

"Designed in USA, Made in China. See, I hear China and I just want to throw up..."

He took the guitar from the stand.

"Here, I will take it to the experts."

He started to walk out of the room.

"Hey, dude," I called after him.

He turned around.

"If you don't mind me asking, where are you from?"

"Born in Paris, and raised in Germany, and now I've been here ten years," he said, smiling proudly.

"Oh, sweet. I was just wondering."

"Yes, people are always curious."

"Well, you have a good one," I said.

He smiled and walked away.

I thought that was the last of him, but a few minutes later he came back beckoning to me excitedly.

"Come see him, come see Johnny Cash!"

He lead me up to the front where there was indeed a fellow who looked just like Johnny Cash in his 40's, with long black curly hair, talking to the girl at the sign-out door. He was an employee. His nametag read "Alvie"

The European guy walked over to him and said to me, "See, Johnny Cash!"

Johnny Cash/Alvie stuck out his hand. I shook it.

"Thank you very much," he said in a Johnny Cash voice, grinning.

The European guy handed him the 69 dollar guitar and told him to play, so he sat down.

"What you been up to, man?" he asked the European guy.

"Guitars," the European guy replied.

Johnny began to jam out a blues scale, then strummed and sang a few bars of Folsom Prison Blues. He grinned some more, but my European friend frowned.

"Something is wrong with that guitar."

"Well, it is 69 dollars, man" Johnny said. "I could retune it, maybe..."

"No, no, no there is nothing that can be done. The guitar is junk. I think that is the first time I have heard you play badly," the guy said. He smiled broadly again and turned to me. "He is much better than this, I promise you."

Johnny smirked down at the 69 dollar guitar.

My European friend took it from him.

"Here I will put it back."

He started back. I decided it was time to leave.

"Have a good one, man" I called after him. He turned and waved. Johnny shook my hand again.

Mike Doughty's "I Hear the Bells" played on the stereo as I left, totally forgetting about voice distortion pedals.
(January 09)

"music as a weapon 06"
The concert was decent,

I'd say Stone Sour was the best,

I had a crush on Lacey from Flyleaf

but once disturbed got on
I'd lost interest

I was hanging
Out in the vestibule
out beyond the doors
To the actual arena,

I don't know what I was Doing,
this is the days before smartphones,
So, I must've just been hanging out
Talking to myself
but all of a sudden

these cops Bust through the door
with a skinhead kid in their grasp,
grappling with him

There's a skinny white trash girl sobbing
Behind them,
following,
crying
"stop stop stop!"

Apparently
the skinhead had been going around
During disturbed's set
and punching people
he didn't like the look of

Security tackled him and brought him outside

They pinned him to the ground, the lead cop
Insanely calm, saying the guy's name over
And over and telling him to calm down

The guy refuses to submit, and his pants
Have fallen down to his ankles because he
Was sagging them and his little pink tootsie
Roll of a cock is dangling out the front slit
Of his boxers

He's thrashing about and cursing the officers
Holding him down, there's one on his chest
And another four at each of his limbs, and
He's throwing his weight and trying to
Get up and yelling drunken insults at
Everyone and his girlfriend is crying
And yelling at him to stop with snot
Covering her lower lip and her mascara
Ruined

Eventually the cop on his chest, the calm
One, puts a choke hold on him and he
Passes out and they pick up his limp
Form and carry him through the exit
Doors where I can see red white and blue
Lights flashing

His girlfriend follows, still crying

"bus navigator"
When I was
In grade school

Maybe 3rd or
4th, I got selected
By a substitute
Bus driver to
Show her
The stops

I didn't know
The stops, as
I was pretty
New to the
Route myself

But she insisted
Even though I
Made it clear
I wasn't familiar
With the route

Wouldn't take no
For an answer

And I was not good
At being assertive

So I sat in the
Front seat and
Resolved to give
It my best efforts

After about
Two or three
Missed stops
She looked at
Me in that long
Mirror with a
Look of irritation

Josh, a big high
Schooler who lived
Down the street
Plopped down
Next to me and said
"you don't know
What you're doing,
Do you?"

I for some reason
Wanted to save
My pride and so
I stammered an
Excuse or two
And he nodded
And said, not
asking, "you
Don't know what
You're doing."

Josh took over the
Navigating and I
Sat next to him
And the rest
Of the ride went
Smoothly

"unpopular"
At the end of
Sixth grade
We were all
Gathered in
The cafeteria,
The whole class,
All three hundred
Or so of us, and
We watched a
Photo montage
Of moments
Captured during
The school year

Kids doing activities
And mugging for
The camera

The class would
Cheer loudly whenever
Certain popular students
Were shown, and the
Same group of students
Was featured more
Prominently than others

I was only in it
Once, and I was
Surprised to see
Myself at all

In my picture
I was holding
A pizza made
Of frosting,
Cookie dough,
And various candy
Pieces including
Thin licorice,
Candy corn,
M&Ms and other
Things, all made
Up to look like an
Animal cell

I remember a
Giant round
Gummy life
Saver served
As the nucleus

The cell had
Been a hit in
My science class,
Everyone wanting
A tasty piece of it

But now here I was,
My giant image
Blasted up on a
Screen in the
Cafeteria in front
Of everyone, against
My wishes and without
My permission, while
Kenny loggins' footloose
Played at full volume

It was only onscreen
For a few seconds, but
That was long enough
For me to notice

The utter silence

"hymn"

I was changing out a
Mattress pump at a
Facility in Howell
When the old woman
In the bed started
Talking to herself

I'd thought she was
Asleep, but then she
Started convulsing and
Shaking her claw-like
Hands and her puckered,
Chapped 'o' of a mouth
Started working and she
Said something like, "I'm
Sorry, honey, I love ya,
I love ya," her voice was
Pure agony, she was
Suffering inside her head

I hurried to get the pump
Switched out, detaching
The hose

The people in the other
Beds were sound asleep

The monitors beeped and
The breathing machines
Hummed

The woman started to sing
In a quavering, toneless
Voice

"And he walks with me
And he talks with me
And he tells me I'm his

Own and the joy we share
As we tarry there none
Other has ever known"

I switch the pump out
And am off

"potential"
They say
The older you get
The more you need
The people you knew
When you were young

I think that's because
You need people who
Remember you from
Before you became another
Boring, interchangeable
fuck-up

"garrison keillor"

One Saturday at the end of 2009
Sitting in the bright winter sun
in front of the carpenter shop
where we parked the trucks,
Sitting in 440, a GMC pick-up
with a water tank in the back
for spraying out the pit toilets

Garrison introduced Wilco
And they came on and sang "One by One"

and I sat there in the December sun
With the tufts of dead grass trembling
Under the shop window with the AC
A biting breeze, the shadows long,
And listened to Jeff Tweedy sing
About hopes vanishing
in the twilight

"bunches of balloons"

All sorts of different clouds, the sky a
watercolor of orange and blue and purple

I drove through the Meijer parking lot
I didn't actually go in I just drove around

When I was waiting at the red light I saw
Three bunches of balloons sailing into the
Sky, someone had let them go, they floated

I watched them go and so did everyone else
Around me in their cars as we waited for the
Light to change

Home at last, sang the guy from the lumineers

"the people at the peak"

A community
at the bottom
of a mountain
keeps getting avalanches.

They travel up the mountain
to find the reason
for the avalanches,
and find a community
above them
a third of the way
up the mountain.

They blame them for the avalanches,
but the community says that they've
been getting avalanches, too.

So the two communities
travel up the mountain further
and they find another community
half-way up the mountain.

But this community
has been devastated
by avalanches as well,

so all three communities
go up the mountain

They find a fourth community,
living almost at the top of the mountain,
but this group has been getting avalanches as well,
although they haven't been as devastating
as they've been farther down the mountain

All of the communities travel to the peak of the mountain
to find a few people sitting at the very top, enjoying the
view.

They ask them to please stop causing the avalanches.

The people at the peak respond, "What's an avalanche?"

"born racist"

One time in first grade
We were learning about
The civil rights movement
And Mrs. Fovenesi was
Having this class discussion
About it and telling us about
All the bad shit that went
Down

"Boy, good thing we're
Not black," I blurted out,
Knowing that if I'd
Been around back then
I'd have dodged all
That nasty Jim Crow shit

The black kids in my
Class looked at me
Like wtf

"It's a good thing it
Happened a long time ago,"
Mrs. Fovenesi said sternly

This was in 1992

What a productive lesson
That was

DEAD BRANCH
POEMS: 2016-2017

"my horn"

I drove
a 16-foot box truck
an Izuzu
with a suicide cab

i was in Dearborn
and i passed these two young things
walking
in their short shorts
and tank tops
and
one of them
gave me a naughty little smile
and she made a gesture
with her left hand,
raising a fist in the air
and making pulling gestures

i beeped the horn
enthusiastically,
and the nasal Japanese horn
sounded like
a nerd
asking for extra homework

"autographs"

The line stretches up the staircase that
Wraps up to the balcony sections, and
I get in line on the second floor and it
Trickles down

I take pictures on my way down the
Stairs, people are getting their tickets
And wristbands signed

Sweetness is playing on 89x's intern
Booth across the way

I shake zach, the drummer's hand
First, he has to switch the sharpie
To his other hand and i hand my ticket
Over for signing

Then I shake jim's hand and say hi
"you guys got me through my first
year of college," I tell them, and it's
almost true

they all say thanks, the moment
is happening so fast

my existence doesn't give them
the pleasure theirs gives me or
anyone else in line

They all scribble on my ticket

I shake tom the guitarist's hand
And then rick the bassist, and
I remember seeing his picture
In an entertainment weekly
Article for the review of futures
And he looks me in the eye and
I look him in the eye and say
Thank you and have a good one
One last time and then it's over
and I'm off and it's like it never
happened but for the folded
paper in my hand with sharpie
on it

"sunshine"

I went to this Subway for
Lunch near the five corners

There was always this
Girl behind the counter,
Thick-hipped with wavy
Hair done up in this
Cinnamony color
probably mid-20s

She was the assistant
Manager and always
Cheerful, always chipper

She said "Alright" in
The most adorable way,
"all-RIGHT!" whenever
someone answered her
questions as to what
kind of sandwich they
wanted and what they
wanted on it and if they
wanted their sandwich
toasted, she answered
Like she was actually
Happy to be there

I read her nametag

Marianne

Every blue-collar sad sack,
The other regulars in line with me,
We were all there for her, we
Could've gotten Subway anywhere,
But we picked that spot to see her
Smile at us and bullshit with us and
Remind us of what's good in life in
The middle of a day working a job we
Hated for wages that were never high
Enough, the line stretching nearly
Out the door, all of us side-eying each other
Like, "Don't you dare fuck this up"

It was subzero December and my feet
were always cold, a cold that gnawed
Right through your jeans, and your
Fingers always felt like carrots in a
Vegetable crisper

Her friendliness and smile warmed
The place right up, unadulterated
Friendliness, usually when women
Are this friendly they're either attracted
To you or they want something and I
Don't think it was either one with her, at
Least it didn't seem like it

Of course she turned out to have a
Boyfriend that she lived with, he
Owned a jeep that he used to drive
Her to work through the snow, and
His mom was sick with cancer

When I'd been coming in for a
Couple weeks she started to recognize
Me, knew that I got a turkey on white,
Asked how I've been doing and I asked her
How she's been doing as she built my
Sandwich

I'd head for the door with my sandwich bag in
One hand and my Coke in the other, like a
Sailboat with a fresh breeze behind it, ready
For the second half of the day

That is one you put a ring on, I'd think

"humanity"

I have a bigger house
And that makes me better than you

I have a bigger apartment
And that makes me better than you

I have a mental illness
And that makes me better than you

I have an idea
And that makes me better than you

I get laid constantly
And that makes me better than you

I choose to be a virgin
And that makes me better than you

I am in the military
And that makes me better than you

I am Ivy League
And that makes me better than you

I have white skin
And that makes me better than you

I have dark skin
And that makes me better than you

I have nothing to say
And that makes me better than you

I am listened to
And that makes me better than you

I am rich
And that makes me better than you

I am poor
And that makes me better than you

I am alive
And that makes me better than you

I am dead
And that makes me better than you

"smoke like a woman"

I was in Windsor
this one time
One of many times
With my buddies

We went to Windsor, to
Canada, across the border,
Under the river, because
The drinking age was 19

We were in a bar, pre-gaming
Having the first of what would
Be many drinks indeed

This blonde girl came over
And asked us if we smoked

I didn't smoke, but I immediately said
Yes

She was about our age

She was a cutie- short, feathery
Blonde hair, neat little nose, dark eyes
Tight tight tight little body, wearing
A pink zip up made of some fabric
I can't name because I'm fashion-dumb
Had no-nonsense professional intern
Vibes, the type of girl who would marry
Up and never have to talk to anyone
She didn't want to talk to ever again

We got outside and she passed
Out cigarettes

A couple of my buddies came
In fact, I think they all came

Some of them were actual smokers

I puffed but didn't inhale
Trying not to cough as
They shot the shit for awhile
And smoked their cigarettes

"Do you actually smoke?" she asked me

"I do not," I said. "Why?"

"Cause you smoke like a woman,"
she said, smirking

Here's what I wish would've happened:

"How does a woman smoke?"

"Like you."

I took another mouthful of smoke

"You got me," I say. "I just said yes
Because I thought you were really cute
And I wanted to talk to you."

And she's impressed with my boldness
and we spend the evening together
I learn her name and her story
And I end up fucking her in a hotel
Room and we keep in touch for a
Few years and fade out of each
Other's lives into sweet memories

What actually happened:

Nothing, I don't remember what
I said but it wasn't clever or bold
I just felt insecure and called out
And she parted ways with us
Not long after that, my buddies
Continuing to chat her up until
The cigarettes were gone

I did spend the rest of the night
Saying, "Hey, watch me smoke
Like a woman" every time I'd
Bum a cigarette

"y2K"

New Year's Eve 1999 I was in
The family room watching the ball drop
With the family and the Christmas tree
Was still up and I remember squeezing
My eyes shut like I was about to get a
Shot at the doctor's office as the ball
Reached the bottom of its pole

Nothing happened
except the
New Millennium

"joke's on you"

I was at a gay wedding

It was held in a barn on this
Friend of my girlfriend's dad's
Property

There were two young lesbians
Getting hitched, and so almost
All the attendees were of the
Gay community, all young
And hip and with it

I was the oldest young person
There, clearly the only straight
White guy

My girlfriend at the time was
Bartending, she was a vision,
Truly, all done up in white lace
And her red hair looked like
Ribbon candy, all curled and
Shiny, I wanted to eat her like
A wedding cake right there, she
Looked great, seriously

She stood behind the bar
And got everyone drinks and
I sat in front of the bar, the only
Person sitting there, cause I
Didn't know anyone else

This young lesbian couple
Came up, not the ones getting
Married, and one of them had a
Short, spiky male haircut and
A bowtie and the other one
Looked like a library assistant

They were young, probably
18, and they started talking
to my girlfriend about me, I
didn't catch most of it but
I did hear the last thing they
Said which was, "Oh, God, it's

Like, I'm single forever..."

"Actually, this is my boyfriend,"
said my girlfriend, smiling
radiantly like the sun outside

The two turned to me and
I turned to them.

"Joke's on you," I said.

"Heh heh, yeah, joke's
on me," muttered the sexist
little dyke, turning with her
"boyfriend" to go back to
their table, champagne in
hand

"end of the road"
regardless of what
a man may control
he's eternally fused
to the universe soul

"death of a regular"

I was hanging out
With friends and we
Went to Aubrey's in
Ypsi and upon entering
We saw the bar and there
Was a chair flipped up
On the bar like it was
Closing time and there
Was a flower in a vase
And a full glass of beer
And a picture of a lonely-
Looking older woman
All sitting there on the
Bar and no one was
Looking at any of it
But I could tell they
Were all feeling the
Lack of presence
Of this woman, you
Could feel the air
That was occupying
The space where
She would normally
be and their
Little tribute took
Back some of it
In her honor

"new living room"
three floors up in
the new apartment,
just paid my first
new rent, there's
kids down by the
pond, playing in
a circle and the
clouds are moving in
from the west and
just as my head turns
I hear a siren go off
And a police car
Races down Pontiac
Trail and I'm listening
To Kings of Leon on
Vinyl and my half
Eaten dinner of
Pork chops and
Rice cakes with
Hummus is next
To a half-drunk
Homemade beer
Brewed in my parents'
Garage, all on the
Coffee table and the Samsung
Logo flashes on the
TV screen and the world
Is here and so am I

"survivor guilt"
Justin's over by one
Of the Martinrea cells
And he tells me about
How he illegally down
Loaded some software
And got caught and he
Was nearly fired but his
Skills make him too
Valuable and so they
Kept him but he says
He feels like a beaten
Dog

"survivor guilt?" I ask him

he laughs too hard like he
always does, he's a veteran
spent time in Afghanistan,
one time he told me he's
held human brains in his
hands

i didn't mean to make the
joke like that, I realize what
I've said, but he just says,
"are you sure you don't still
smoke weed?" and I say,
"no, almost two years."

"millennials talking"
the clipped,
know-it-all
speech patterns.

the quick cuts
where the person
jumps all over
the screen
as they talk
to you
in a cheap
attempt
at keeping
your attention.

the constant vocal fry.

the overwhelming sense
of self-consciousness.

a desperate and deep
need to be accepted
and praised.

the thirst

acting like they don't care
about any of those things.

the thousands of views
that occur anyway.

the ego.

the sense that this person
thinks only of themselves
all the time
and expects
the rest of the universe
to do the same.

"welcome to la"

On the way we saw a ton of homeless people
Sleeping in dusty blankets
along the side of the highway
and along ventura boulevard
Just like in the song

In the subway we saw a homeless woman and
Her young child, the woman's nose was bleeding
All over the place and the child was screaming
And everyone walked past them

My brother went up to a phone in the wall and
Called security, we didn't wait to see if they came

We walked up the stairs to Hollywood boulevard
And there was the Hollywood sign, just like in
The movies

We walked into the theater and bought our tickets
For captain America: civil war

And there was a premiere going on, some low
Level movie but all the stars and the cameras
Were present in their dresses, against some
Corporate backdrop they bared their gums and
Teeth as white and artificial as hospital plastic and
Hooked arms with each other, I wondered where
These pictures would be posted and who would
Bother seeing them, I didn't recognize a single
One of the "celebrities"

They smiled as though they were all somebody

I thought about the homeless woman in the subway
And the spots of blood she left on the tile floor, it
Was like spaghetti sauce, and the way her kid cried

I watched the d-level actors and actresses mug for
The camera flashes as if this was the Oscars
Convinced they were the center of creation

My brother said,

"follow me down"

When you find an artist that arouses you

You burrow to see what was borrowed

You find out where they came from

Bukowski becomes

Fante, Hemingway,

Celine, Miller, Li Bai

And Dostoyevsky

and a bunch of other guys who

Turn out to be white supremacists

When I read their Wikipedia pages

Stephen King becomes Richard

Matheson and Ray Bradbury and

A bunch of other badasses

I could go on but my inspiration

Just dried up

"machinery"
All is noise

Every frequency, from the low
To the shrill

The lights are white and harsh
The light itself seems tired

The floor is always cement and
Always stained with oil and dirt

Everything seems worn down
Patched over, made up, done

The air conditioner, a whistle

There is banging, slamming,
Clanging, thumping, buzzing,
Humming, beeping, metal on
Metal, metal on flesh, metal
On plastic, over and over and
All night long and all day long

The radios crackle, meaningless
Buttons pushed unknowingly

Indicator lights blink mindlessly

The parts roll off conveyors,
Are stacked pallet by pallet,
Taken away by forklifts as
Dirty as everything else,
Belching clouds of fuel stink
Out their backsides, over to
Bay doors where big trucks
Come and take them away
Forever

"what I am"
I'd like to say
My ancestors grew food in
Hard soil and hunted with
Their hands and carved
Their own meat and gave
Birth to their own children
In huts of grass and mud

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
My ancestors came over on
Boats, shitting through holes in
wood planks and praying quietly
And puking out the portholes,
Getting jobs working with wood
Keeping the economy running
Raising up the powerful like the
Rest of us

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
They endured winters, they took
What they could and they loved
Each other and they didn't bitch
Or blame anyone no matter who
They were

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
They dominated and conquered
More lands than any other people
In the history of the species

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
They fought innocents and Nazis and animals
Alike, they killed them all and took what
They wanted and didn't feel bad about it
Because that's just what nature is

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
You can be proud of descendants
Despite their atrocities and their
Failings as humans

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
In fact, there's no other way to do it

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
Every people's history is written in blood

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
Every individual a shameless sinner

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
Every person makes excuses as to
Why they deserve the power and the
prestige and why everyone else deserves
To fight over what's left

But I don't know for sure

I'd like to say
When someone denies you your pride,
When they insist that it's very existence
Is an affront to them or to anyone else,
That's when it's most important
to hang onto

But I don't know for sure

"respect"

This is why some cops will
Never be police officers and
Why some politicians will
Never be statesmen and
Why some teachers will
Never be mentors and
it's why some bosses
will always wonder
why their jobs
Are so damn hard

"hobo repellant"
Went to the Fleetwood diner
With Chris Nelson the other
Day, we sat outside and it
Was late, like 1 in the morning
And the streets were empty
And the traffic lights were all
Blinking yellow, and this
Homeless dude in a blue
Shirt comes shambling down
The walk and babbles
Something at Chris, Chris
Doesn't even turn around
And I wave my menu at him
Saying "hey dude, we're
Eating, thanks" and he babbles
At me, going, "Hey, just sayin
Hi man just sayin hi..." and walks
Off and the waitresses brings
Our menus and we order our
Drinks and asks if she can
Get us anything else for the
Time being and Chris asks
If she has any

"wimp"

leland's this lovely
little lakeside town on
lake michigan with
old fishing shops and
tourist traps
and the like

and i'd been going there
since i was a kid and i
was in the t-shirt shop
and i heard this pretty
acoustic song on the
loudspeakers

the refrain went

everything comes back to you

some pop stuff written by a guy
better looking than me
and richer than me and more
popular than I'll ever be

but it was
striking how pretty the song was
and how pretty his voice was

couple of months later i got
it in my head one morning
after i got back from work

i made eggs and cereal and
listened to it, it's by this irish
kid named niall horan, and
apparently he's in one
direction which was
surprising at first, I thought
he was going to be some
howie day type singer-
songwriter

again, the refrain goes

everything comes back to you

quiet, acoustic song, real
pretty, real simple picked
strings, like watching rain
drops run down a window

like watching a rainbow
in parking lot puddles

and other gay
shit like that

i started thinking about it,
how old i was now and
how i didn't know any
young people anymore,
all my rights and wrongs,
how nothing is permanent
and how it's not the bad
times but the good times
that make it hard to take

two minutes later and
i have to google the
scientific
reason as to why
certain songs
make you
cry

everything comes back to you

thanks a lot niall you little
mick bastard

"holocaust"
People can tell if
You're a cunt or
Unworthy of love
Or attention right
Off, they can just
Smell it on you

You see their
Eyes turn red
And grey,

Oh

It's one of you

They might give
You a chance at
First but the look
Always creeps in

There are far more
Truly expendable
People in the world
Than anyone would
Like to admit and at
A certain point you
Look in the mirror
And see yourself
And think man
That guy better
Get his shit
Together or
Nature is
Gonna
Select
His
Ass

"the cleanest open wound in history"
There's something to use
In every fuse
There's something to lose
In every ruse

Face me
Face me and say

Catching weed wisps
On a morning advice wire
I'll do it on a Friday
When I'm not too tired

Shed your winter skin
I'll sink my hooks in
One more nail
in the coffin

"bachelor"

when i get home the first thing i do
is take off my boots and throw my
hoodie over the back of one of my
chairs

then i go to my bedroom, turn on
the light and strip down to my
boxers

then i go to the fridge and chug
chocolate milk

i might make my lunch for that
night at work

i come back to the bedroom and
if i'm horny enough i'll jerk it but
if not i check reddit and 4chan
then my email

attention is a precious thing

i spend my days alone and
it's the best option, i cherish
the friends i still have from
when i was younger, but i
haven't made any new ones
since my mid-twenties

i have all my favorite bands
and they're all getting older
too

things change all the time
but some things are always
the same

I lie in bed and try to go to sleep

It's easier if I can imagine a girl
in bed with me

"passenger side"

i was getting subway
and i walked out
and next to my car
there was this old woman
getting out of the
passenger seat and
i stood there on the curb
waiting for her with all
my food and i could tell
she and her daughter
thought i was irritated
and i was but i didn't
want them to know that
but the daughter was like,
"i should've just parked
another space down,"
and there was some
edge to her voice but
i said, "no it's all right
i'm not in a hurry," trying
to be nice but in hindsight
it didn't come off that way
it never comes off that way
but anyway, the old woman
is shuffling her eighty-year
old self out of the passenger
side of the car and she's got
a cane and she says she's
terribly slow and i want these
two women to know that
even though my immediate
animal reaction was irritation
i have to get to practice and
i want to eat my sandwich
because i haven't eaten all
day but i tell them, "i'm not
judging you, i'm not one of
those people," i say, i just
want people to get along
with each other, dammit,

this old woman can take
her time getting out of the
car while her joints ache
and i'll stand there and
wait just fine i can wait
for my sandwich and ride
to practice but they finally
close the passenger door
and i step into my car and
i start eating my sandwich
and doritos and a few seconds
later they're back and getting
into the car again so apparently
it was all for nothing

"rabbit hole"

As we all claw our way up
The ladder of narcissism
Looking to make ourselves
The center of the universe
All I can think about is how
It doesn't have to be like this

You understand that every
Thing is an advertisement

A network designed to
Sustain itself at whatever
Cost, every word, every
Opinion is there to further
Some economic transaction
And no one takes you
Seriously when you point it
Out because they already
Know and they want in

Lie, cheat and steal, all in the
Name of getting the best pick
Of mates and everything else

Trying to get to the best
Possible state, where your
Very presence is a sellable
Commodity, where you can
Complain of the difficulty of
Being wanted by too many
People at once

Dreaming the same dreams
You dreamt when you were
Younger, re-dreaming them

You can't help but resent
The people your age who've
Found themselves atop the

Ladder, safe and secure

There is something inherently
Perverted about success

You simultaneously hate
And envy them, wanting
To join the club while at
The same time knowing
That the club's existence
is what's causing all this
misery to begin with

nothing that happens is
organic anymore, it's all
genetically enhanced,
grown from the same
artificial crop of plastic
stars and business folk
serving themselves
and demanding to be
served by everyone else

And yet you know that
This would all go away
In a blink if the universe
Decided to bestow on you
Any fraction of the triumph

Uneven stanzas and blocks
Of text, you don't think any

This bitchy stream of
Consciousness is better

Don't go down too far or you
Might not get back out again

"second novel"

Is your first draft where you just
Shit the novel out and get the
Structure and the story down

Then there's the meat stage
Where you pack on the muscle
And the sinew and the tendon

Finally there's the skin stage
Where you coat the whole
Thing in skin and make it
Presentable

Most of it consists of staring
Down the same sentences
and hoping they'll yield some
substance, paving them over
and over until they have
enough on them to sustain
the story you're trying to tell

Day by day by day by day by day
You pack words on like wet sand
And let the thing crystallize and
Hopefully it turns into something
You can work with

"I'm tryin'"

I enjoy listening to the latest
Pop hits every now and then

I'm listening to bad liar by
Selena gomez right now

My favorite among the
Current crop of libidinous
Young ladies vocalizing
Their mating calls in
Computerized form
Across the streams
In the year of our lord
2017

The song uses the bass
Line from talking heads'
Psycho killer, and it's a
Sweaty little number

The chorus bounces
Like a lap dance

Selena's singing with
These breathy little
Mewlings, rhythmic

She sounds like she's
Getting fucked, they
Don't even bother
Trying to hide it

"zero day"
good god
the worst days
are when you try
and still can't
muster any content

your fingers type
all the words with
the letters in the
wrong places and you
keep having to go
delete them and type
them again and your
rhythm gets thrown
the fuck off

you can't immerse
yourself in the scene
of the world at all

those days are few
and far fucking between

"wall in an empty house"
And maybe
in another life
a little picture
of a sailboat
hung there
through the year.

"wardrobe"
I have this fun
make-believe
Game I play
with my button
Up shirts

I've named them and given them
Special powers for when I'm at
Work

The Obama shirt- known for
Enhancing negotiation abilities
I was wearing it when I shook
The man's hand all the way back
In 08

The Aqua shirt- known for keeping
Cool under pressure

The soldier shirt- known for increasing
Ability to put one's head down and force
Through the hardships of the day, soldier
On

The office shirt- for when you don't give
A fuck, throw this on and give yourself
Increased slacking off abilities, no one will
Care, makes you immune to the banalities of
Day to day work life for when you're feeling
That old day in-day out ennui

The family shirt- will make my co-workers
Get along with me better, and I'll get along
Better with them, I was wearing it in
A recent family portrait

I have a lot of other shirts but haven't made up
Names or powers for them yet

"trout heart"

On the Harvey or the Sydney
I can never remember which
Creek is which, in northern
Wisconsin, and we were
Gutting the trout we'd caught
That day, sitting on the creek
Bed on a log and some rocks

We'd stick knives in the fish's
Buttholes and slit up their bodies
Rip out everything inside and
Throw it on the rocks, rinse
Out the fish and the meat
Leftover, and move on to
The next one

After one such gutting and
Throwing of the guts onto
The nearest rock, I noticed
Some movement in the guts

There was a small, red sack
having spasms, it looked
Like something was inside
It trying to get out, I thought
It was an egg sack with some
Baby trout hatching for a sec
Before I remembered that's not
How it works with fish

But I quickly realized that
The little red sack, the size
Of a pebble, sitting there and
Jerking around with these
Liquid, spastic twinges,
was in fact
The fish's heart,
beating its
Last few beats

"feels good man"

Went and saw Oliver Stone's
Snowden last night, decent
Flick but nothing more to say
About it

I was one of three people in the
Theater, and I was the first one
Out

There was a girl, a theater employee
Standing in her white button up
Shirt and black vest against the
Wall outside the theater door,
She was very cute, probably 19
Brunette, curly hair, probably
Could get a decent Tiktok
Following

I planned to dump my trash
And blow past her, but she
Spoke, unexpectedly

"have a nice night," she said to me,
Smiling

I looked at her and smiled back,
I saw a friendly little thing,
Not cynical yet

"you, too."

I dumped my trash and walked to my
Car, stealing one more look at her
Over my shoulder before I turned
The corner and she went out of sight

"preemie"

was scrolling down
my facebook feed
today when I
came across this
link an old co-worker
of mine had liked, the
face of a prematurely
born baby with an
ear to ear smile on, she
looked so happy with
her newborn eyes
and red skin and
the tube coming
out of her right
nostril, same
expression
as someone
getting a
surprise
birthday
party or
something
and I had
to sit there
and think on
it all for a
moment
cause you
know

"oh really wow"

I use

"Oh really"

And

"Wow"

as interjections
in conversation

constantly

Someone tells me part of a story

Oh, really.

They tell me another detail of the story

Wow.

More details

Oh really.

More

Oh, wow.

I catch myself doing it.

I'm trying to improve.

"blocked"

I have about seven people
blocked
On Facebook,

Some
old crushes
and their
Irritating
hipster
friends,

and a psycho
Former best friend
of mine who I've
Blocked three different times
Because they tried
Three different profiles

Imagine being able to do this in real
Life, blocking a person out of your
Existence for as long as you please
Making yourself invisible to them
Literally

That's how I deal with people

"panthers fan"

I had an old South Lyon Panthers
t-shirt in sixth grade that I would
wear

I didn't give a shit about football,
And I don't know why I would
Wear it, it was just another t-shirt
I don't remember where I got it

I liked sports logos
But this didn't have
a logo on it
Just the words

One day I was walking in the
Hallway and Chris Ryne, one of
The popular kids, the Justin Bieber
Of my class, came up and asked
Me about it

"Do you play?" he asked

"No,"
I said,
not thinking
my response
through

"Why do you have the shirt on then?"

How could I put this?

I wasn't on the team
And didn't particularly care
About showing support

But I didn't want to offend him

I spoke

"I just, you know...
Like them."

Chris walked away without another
Word and I don't think I wore the

Shirt again after that

"my life: the movie"
I was discussing life with a friend
Of mine.

"If your life was a movie would you
watch it?" he asked me

"Yeah, I guess," I said.

He grinned at me.

"I wouldn't."

"UFO"

when I was in third grade
the spring after I'd moved
to south lyon, before I knew
how big the world was and
I only knew the way to
School and back home, I
Was sitting on the swings
By myself and I looked up
Into the sky and it was
A nice day, big puffy clouds
Of white with pure blue
Beyond and I saw what looked
Like a grain of rice, way way way
Up there, high above the clouds,
Too small to be a plane, too high
To be a plane, zipping along way
Up there, and I stared at it and
Wondered what I was looking at
In the broad daylight, my feet dangling
In the smooth grey pebbles
Under the swings instead of that
Rubber asphalt stuff they use now
And I stared at this little grain of
Rice with no wings and I wondered
If they were looking down at me

THOUGHT VOMIT
POEMS: 2017-2018

"madeleine"

She just turned nine
Months old yesterday
And they put a picture
Of her up on Facebook
Smiling a crooked little
Smile and wearing two
Bibs, one that says 9
Months and the other
That says I'm a gerber
Baby

She looks quite happy
To be here

Yesterday was the
Worst mass shooting
In the country's history
And tom petty is either
Dead or close to dying

Jimmy Kimmel is doing
Another monologue in
A quavering voice, and
All his late-night counter
Parts are doing their
Somber observances
And everything is going
About the usual track
As far as these events
Go

Tom Petty, another

Kind, laid-back, decent
Symbol of America's
Heyday, is gone,
Leaving one more
Hole unfilled by today's
Vapid crop of self-
Obsessed perfection
Confections

I don't have kids of my
Own and I don't think
I'll ever want them, but
I look at that smile on
Madeleine's face and
Hope that she never has
Reason to lose it

"unobtainable"

and maybe in another life

I'm cut like an mma fighter
my arms and chest and
legs and back all
shining with rock-hard
muscle, skillfully carved
over time like the sea
at the shore

I'm singing shirtless on some
stage lit like a sacrificial altar
silver Elvis mic in my fist

my beard is down to my chest
my hair is down to my ass
I look like a caveman Viking
wild and deadly and full of
danger and darkness

the venue is full and I'm
bellowing my soul into
all the faces while my
brothers play their
weapons all around
me and the sounds
we make are like
God Himself come
to earth

I let my ripped
jean shorts slip
just a little to hint
at the arrow of
muscle at the
bottom of my
torso, pointing
to you know where
and tongues dart
across lips,
moistening,
the split fruit
of these females
pulsating

i stand on the stage
like a conqueror
the entire place
and everyone in
it belong to me

i look down in
the front row and
there she is, she's
dressed specifically
to get my attention

she's looked forward
to this for months,
counting the days
until she gets to
share my presence

she will never look
this good again in
her life, she oozes
sex appeal like the
sweat on my neck
beneath her tight
spaghetti-string
crop top her belly
button is pierced
and her breasts
swell outward,
overripe and firm,
her cleavage a

canyon in which
lesser men have
lost themselves,
her eyes are
sparkling like
black magic
her body moves,
like black clouds
spitting lightning
captive to the beats I
conjure, she is young
and desperate to be
shown the way

I walk to the front
of the stage, daring
the mass in front of
me, challenging as
the maelstrom rages

I hold my hands up
the place responds
like troops before
battle

I look down and
see her looking up

she's reaching
out to me and
she's the only
thing worth
looking at in
the entire front
row

we lock eyes just
long enough

I want you, and
you want me

I strut off to
continue the
performance

she lets me go
I let her go but
the moment
happened

she got what
she came for

without dreams
we are damned

"justin roiland fucks a cosplayer"

I think rick and morty
Is a terrible show, I've
Tried to give it a chance
Several times but I just
Can't get past the fact
That it seems really
Lazily written and yet
It's the number one
Show among people
Aged 18 to 34

its fans
Seem like the most
Repulsive self-obsessed
Preening motherfuckers
My generation has to offer
And the show is barely
Funny and innovative and
I cannot see why anyone
Would like it

It is the epitome of luck

Its co-creator, Justin roiland
Who, like me, is a schlubby
White guy with brown hair
A red beard and glasses
In his thirties, only difference
Is justin's in his late thirties

And I'm in my early thirties
And the other difference is
He's got one of the most
Successful tv shows out
There right now and
I work a midnight shift
Five nights a week and
Clean toilets two mornings
A week and sleep during
The day

He posted on his twitter
Back in September
This picture of a really
Cute cosplayer dressed
As a character from the
Show called unity, green
Skin dressed in this office
skirt like a naughty secretary
Or something, glasses,
Cleavage, all of that

She's got a cute girl next door
Face, body is just curvy enough
To hint at her bedroom abilities
She looks about 24, maybe a
Little younger, the green paint
On her face and arms brings
Out the yellow in her straight teeth

Her smile is a bit forced
As though she's not entirely
Comfortable with this picture
Being taken

The pic is taken in what
Looks to be a service elevator
One that celebrities might
Use to move freely between
Their rooms and a convention
Floor free of harassment
So it's not unlikely that it
Was taken as Justin was
Escorting her back to his
Hotel room for some post
Show fun

Then he posts it on twitter
For anyone to pick up on

The caption over the picture
Reads "The Toronto fans
Have been incredible! Love
All you guys!"

Remember victory means
Nothing without vanquished
Bystanders powerless and
Seething at your impeccable
Fortune

Oh God does it work

My body is so sick
With envy, I seriously
Can't right now

Some of the comments
Below the tweet
Say what I'm feeling

Did you fuck her
I'm jealous you little fuck
Etc

I am stuck where I am
All I can do is write
About it, shout into
The void and feel
My center go numb
And my skin crawl

Be thankful for what
You have is bullshit
Right now

Seriously can't wait
Until I can think about
Something else

"lightning"

It's an awful lot like if you
Stood on top of a building
With a piece of sheet metal
And just waited for a storm

Even if one comes along
There's no guarantee it'll
Hit you, you can create
The conditions but
ultimately
It's up to the universe to
Complete the circuit

"existing"

i was seeing bush
and chevelle and i
got lawn tickets but
the pavilion wasn't
full so they let me sit
down in the pavilion

i took a seat next to
this couple and the
girl was obviously
perturbed by my
presence

i don't do anything
except stand there
and exist and watch
the show

i'd move but this
is where the ushers
sent me

i ignore her and
she doesn't say
anything until the
end of the show
when they go to
leave

they gather their
crap and turn to
go and the girl
says, with
unmasked
contempt,

"oh, i'm sorry,
I forgot you
were there."

"that's all right,"
I say. "So did I."

"jackass"

What if when

kanye west was a kid

in the suburbs of chicago

or wherever he grew up,

an angel appeared to him

and said

lo,

there shall be the first african american

president of the united states,

and he shall call you a jackass

and everyone will agree with him

"surfacing"

For some reason, Filburt ate
All but two of the goldfish,
And they grew in size
Until they were nearly
As big as Filburt

I named them Dotty
And John for the strange
Black spots they had
All over their bodies—
John had a stripe across
His upper lip that looked
Like a mustache, so I
Named him john after
John astin, the guy who
Played Gomez Addams
On the old tv show

Gomez would've been
A better name but
Whatever

Dotty died first, and I'm
Pretty sure I woke up
And found her one
Morning and flushed
Her

But John lived for
Awhile longer, and
I remember the night
He died

He was limp in the tank
Floating around with his
Body crooked into a C
Shape, and every now
And then he would
Thrash and thrash

Raging against the
Dying of the light

It was as if he was
Falling asleep and
Struggling to stay
Awake

I heard him struggling
To keep the life flowing
Through him all night
but it was time
and I found him
The next morning

Later on in life, I was
Working for hospice and
I met this woman north
Of Utica named Joyce
Robinson, and she lived
In a trailer park and the
First time I delivered to
Her I ended up staying
A good half hour chatting
With her on her front porch

Nice old lady, very plain-
Spoken, talked about her
Son a lot

I kept bringing her stuff
Over the course of the
Next month, and I remember
One time towards the end

She was lying in bed and
She kept waking up, snapping
Awake like she was waking
From a startling dream, her
Mouth would fly open and
She'd gasp and her arms
Would fly up like she was
Trying to grasp at something

Like she was trying to swim

I picked up her stuff a few days later

"motorists"

When I was five or six
I went to this traffic
School, it was from
The time in your life
When the world isn't
Connected, you're
Just toted from
Place to place by
Your parents and
You never question
Where one place is
In relation to another

It was at a school,
In a parking lot
And in a gym

We were all sorted
Into colored teams
Green, blue, etc.

They'd teach us
About traffic safety
Look both ways
Et cetera

I remember the fun
Part came when
They'd send us
Outside and divide
Us into groups
And have us role
Play on this little
Fake track that
They had made
With little wooden
Houses and shops
And there were
Little streets and
Stop signs, all
Designed to
Simulate a real
Street and public
Square where
People interact

With traffic

There would be
Motorists, pedestrians
Safety people and
Others

For some reason
Us greens always
Got to be motorists

The class went on
For a couple of days
And we'd always
Be motorists

We got to drive
Around on those
Little pedal kiddie
Go-kart things
They used to make

I thought it was so
Dope, pedaling
Down the street
Next to the fake
Houses and shops
Staying in the
Traffic lines and
Watching the
Blue team who
Were always
Pedestrians
Have to wait
Their turn at
Stop signs while
I pedaled past
As they walked
Around the track
While shooting
Envious glances
At us kids in
The go-karts

"rational male"

i get up and i'm
feeling odd

i do my exercises
keep with the
routine, go to the
gym and do 25
minutes on the
elliptical, the
place is empty
and it's 2 in the
morning on a
sunday, all the
machines in their
rows, one dude
behind the counter
trying to not fall
asleep

i take a shower
and decide to
drive to ann
arbor to go to
the fleetwood
diner and get
a tuna melt

the american
flags are flying
in the arctic
wind on main
street, flapping
away as i wait
at the turn lane

i listen to patty
griffin and the
clouds look like
they're lit from
within

i stop for gas

off north
territorial road
and while
i'm standing
there the first
snow of the
season comes
blowing in like
a sandstorm

the ground's
still too warm
for it to stick
and i drive
down 23
the new
asphalt
looks like
black licorice

i get to ann
arbor and
the city is
deserted,
stop lights
flashing
yellow and red

i park and pay
with my card
before realizing
the meters aren't
enforced on sunday

i get into the fleetwood
and there's two women
sitting next to the door
both of them attractive
enough to 1) be out
of place at 4 in the morning
in a city and 2) talking loudly
about their friend's issues
without caring who can
hear

i sit down and order my

tuna melt, a guy is sweeping
the floor, the girls talk
incredibly loudly

"That's a fucking no," one
of them brays over and
over "That's a fucking NO."

one is louder
the other is quieter, they're
both brunettes and speak
with exaggerated valley
accents and accentuated
vocal fry, they're both
well-dressed and speak
with freedom and loose
tongues that suggest
accustomed affluence
Or maybe just one
Too many glasses of wine

i try to read my copy of
rollo tomassi but the girls
are talking so loud, it's
just me, them and the
skeleton crew here

their friends are all having
guy problems, they drink
a lot and got kicked out
of an uber recently for
fighting and "wildin' out"

i stare daggers at them
across the small diner
but they're completely
wrapped up in their
universes, no one has
ever told them no or
made them feel truly
unwanted and i hate
them for it

i truly hate them, i
think i might hate
them enough to

kill them but my
own life isn't worth
throwing away for
something like that

i think about stephen
paddock pouring round
after round out his 32nd
hotel room windows in
vegas last month

i think about devin kelley
yelling everybody dies
motherfuckers
a few weeks ago
as he strolls into the
first baptist church of
sutherland springs, tx,
shooting the pastor in
the back before walking
down the aisles and
shooting through
parents shielding
their children, firing
multiple times through
the parents to get
at the kids, whose cries
infuriate him

i think of patty griffin on
a darkened stage singing
about roses and rollo
checking his blog to
find he's got millions of
views

my food comes and it
tastes great, my diet
coke gets refilled
diligently by the
waitress, a tired-looking
woman in her forties
she looks either
hispanic or mediterranean
and has an aged sexiness
to her

the girls' loud voices
echo off the metal walls
covered in stickers

they finish their food and
still don't leave

my bill comes

i finish my food just as the
louder one gets up and
walks over to the counter

i'd like to pay for us but
not everybody, she says
like it's a joke

she chats with the
waitress, i walk over
and stand in line, wait
to be acknowledged but
the waitress is talking
to the loud girl and so
i hold my bill out and she
ignores me just long enough
for it to be awkward but i
don't give in and she takes
it and the two girls finally
leave and i pay and i see
them walking down the street
their butts wagging, all by
themselves in the cold,
out of my life forever

i drive home through the
november freeze, stopping
at meijer for fruits and
veggies and heavy
whipping cream
on the way

"heights"

"You sure?" she'd ask
Every single one of us

"Yeah," they'd respond

"Positive?"

"Yeah."

Then she'd let them go
And they'd scurry up the
Ladder

My turn came

"Sure?"

"Yeah," I said.

I was.

"Postitive?"

"Yeah."

Two minutes later
And I'm frozen
Twenty feet above the
Asphalt sidewalks
Waiting for a park
Employee to come
Retrieve me, they
Finally sent this
Shaggy-haired
Blonde kid, probably
Twenty, and he coaxes
Me across the divide
And takes me by
The hand and helps
Me down and off
And is gracious
Enough to hide
His irritation

"drop the nukes"

My name is

r.H. sin

my name is

rupi kaur

here is my poem

now fucking

pay me

"an old man and a young man"
In the room there was a
Resident sitting in a wheelchair
Looking out the first floor window
Onto the parking lot where the fallen
Leaves scraped across the pavement
and I don't remember anything else
about that day except the leaves and
this guy looking out the window like
a writer posing for a jacket portrait
and I don't remember saying anything
to him— I needed a nurse's signature,
not his—but I do remember he turned
to me and said, "Thank you, young man"
and the words "young man" were loaded
with such sorrow and weight that they're
the only thing about this memory that
isn't hazy and disjointed and they're the
only reason I bothered to write this poem
at all

"acclaim"

i went and saw
greta gerwig's
lady bird today
and it made me
think a lot of
things

one part i did
like was a really
brief scene in
which lady bird's
drama teacher
played by the
guy who was in
lincoln and fences
is talking to
the mom played
by laurie metcalf
who i know
primarily as the
mom from toy
story and he's
clearly in the
hospital for
depression and
she asks him who
he has to turn
to in moments
like this and he
asks what she
means and she
asks if he has
anyone to lean
on and he sighs
and says
no one

i got stood up
today by three
potential sugar
babies that i've
been courting

dave matthews
sings about
orgasms as i
drive home

your inner self
isn't enough in those
moments

"silverdome"

I remember hearing about it
On commercials with the guys
With the big voices announcing
Big events

I went to a monster truck rally
There when I was like 5 or 6
I don't remember much except
Bigfoot and Grave Digger
Rolling over the junk cars
And they were so loud
It was fucking terrifying

I was more fascinated with
The junk cars than I was the
Monster trucks for some reason

Years later, while driving
I'd pass it on 75, it would rear
Up out of the north like a
Citadel, its white dome
Shining in the sun, majestic

From the tops of some hills
Off to the north you could see it
Along with the distant Troy skyline
The Chrysler headquarters building,
The Pontiac skyline and, on clear
Days, the Detroit skyline, far away

One day in 2013 I noticed the roof
Was gone and figured they'd taken
It down, it had been out of use for
Years at that point, no one used it
Anymore, so it just stood there,
Alone

The roof had collapsed, and it
Lay in pieces on the royal blue

Seating like scraps of toilet paper

It used to be one of the greats,
Elvis, Zeppelin, The Pope,
Metallica, U2, and others all
There, but those legends are
Gone or aged and the legends
Of today play back in the city

That's to say nothing of the
Thousands of sporting
Memories that were forged
Within its walls

So many millions of good
Times and voices raised
And hands raised and souls
Uplifted, that space is just
Another trash heap now

Even the Palace, its sister
arena to the north, closed
This year and will be facing
The wrecking ball in the near
Future

The silverdome stood there
In the sun for years, waiting
Like a person in a nursing
Home for the final curtain

Then, they finally came
And rigged charges of
Dynamite all around
The perimeter last
Weekend and pressed
The detonator with a
Crowd watching
But it didn't fall,
It stood standing
For another couple
Of days, going out
On its own terms

It seemed to be
Saying, not just yet

Today they blew it
Up again, and it finally
Gave up and collapsed
Falling down, exhausted
And waiting to be carted
Away piece by piece, and
The land it sits on will be
Repurposed for some
Other capitalist venture
And it'll exist only in the
Memories of citizens like
Me

"the waves will come"

and when they do
you need to put your
shoulder into them like
a hockey player going in
for a devastating body blow
and hit that fucker with as much
force as you possibly can, you let
it know you exist as much as it does
and know that in that moment everyone
in the universe is with you, all the people you
love and even the characters you love, they're all
there with you, bearing it, bearing down, withstanding

"sir L"

i got a package in the
mail for christmas, sent
to my parent's house from
my old neighbors in troy

I lived there from the ages
Of 4 to 8, and those three
And a half years seemed
Way longer than they were

i've mentioned my friend
ryan before, he died almost
2 years ago from a prescription
med overdose, another opioid
statistic

He lived across the street
From me and was the first
Best friend I can remember
Having

the package contains a cd
from him and i open up the
cd and it's all the songs he
worked on- he rapped as
a hobby

i put the cd away and
listen to it while out
with my brother a few
days later

it takes a lot of reflection
to get through the listen

there are songs with titles like
the other night
and
coulda been so different

they all have new meanings
now as all art does after its
creator has shuffled off into
the next life

other rappers collaborated
with him, they added verses
And beats, finished the CD
For him after he died

his rap name was sir L, a play
on his last name

later that afternoon i pick up
the package the cd came in
and find a card inside

it's a mirrored silver with
snowflakes and a snowman
sandy with sparkly glitter

on the inside is a note
from ryan's dad telling
me that my mom thought
i'd be interested in the cd
he got the songs burned
off an app, the note ends
with love you and wish
you all the best

"good day out"

my brother ben
is in town
for the holidays

it's the week after
christmas, the day
before new year's eve
and the sun is out

it's arctic cold
and I pick him up
after going to
barnes and noble

I spend a gift card
from my other brother
on
a douglas adams collection
and
american gods
by
neil gaiman

i discover the forward
in the douglas adams
connection is by neil
gaiman

i didn't know that
until after I'd bought
both the books

I'm getting sushi when
my brother calls me— I
told him to call me when
he gets up, and I say I'll
come over and get him

I pick him up after
chatting with my parents
apparently the cat pissed
under the Christmas tree
and they had to throw out
the skirt under the Christmas
tree, so he's not allowed out
of his room unsupervised

I stop for gas on the way
out of town— we decide
we're going to go to the
botanical gardens owned by
the university of Michigan

I've never been there before

I put the pump in my gas tank
hole and leave it unattended
going inside to see if they have
any IBC cream soda— i had one
at the barnes and noble earlier
and those things are fucking tasty

i scour the place but they don't
have any, it's the shell station
on 8 mile and pontiac trail, many
memories here, including from back
when it was a mobil station

i get back outside and discover
the pump is overflowing gasoline
there's already a fragrant puddle
collecting on the snow and slush
at the foot of the pump

i splash in and quickly disengage
the pump— at least my tank is full

i get in the car and tell my brother
About the overflow and the spill
he freaks out, i go back inside and
get window washer fluid which i need
anyway and tell the cashier about the
spill, minimizing the amount of gasoline
they don't seem to mind anyway

i get back to the car, fill up the washer
fluid reservoir— the freezing wind makes
this a challenge as it blows the blue
liquid everywhere but i empty the jug
and toss it and get in and holy fuck
do my shoes stink like gasoline

it's like a twenty minute drive down
to the botanical gardens and my
brother and i are arguing about what
to do about the gasoline smell, the
windows are cracked and the heat is
blasting but the smell still wafts up from
my feet, i'm worried it's soaking into the
soggy floor mats

i'm worried about being high on the fumes
and when we finally get to the botanical
gardens i do feel a little funny as we walk
in and don't pay for parking

the place is nice— there's a big greenhouse
with three biomes— tropical, temperate and
desert, one right after the other

in the tropical biome there's a tree from africa
called a sausage tree, has all these giant
seed pods that look like fat dry sausages
hanging off it, the signs says it wards off
evil spirits so i hang around it for a bit hoping
it'll take care of my anxiety about being slightly
high off the gas fumes

there are fountains and you can hear splashing
water and there's a bunch of families with their
screeching toddlers running along the paths between
all the exotic plants. the temperate biome seems like
something out of bioshock, the desert is a lot of
strange-looking cacti and is cooler temperature-wise
than you'd expect a desert to be

ben gets on the phone with his friend ashley— Ashley
and i used to date like 8 years ago, and she's gained
a lot of weight recently, but she's nice enough if

something of a space cadet, and after talking he puts me on the phone with her and she asks if we can pick her up and of course i can't say no so i say yes

we walk around there for a bit and then leave again- i buy a wolf head puppet- one of those plastic pole puppets with the trigger tied to a string that runs up the center of the pole into the puppet head, i think maybe i can use it for my web series

i have my brother put my shoes in the trunk and drive the car in my socks until we get to ashley where she brings plastic bags for my feet

we drive to my apartment and the sun's still out and it's really clear and really nice and ashley's telling us about her life and she starts crying because her brother has a tumor in his stomach and he's getting it taken out soon and he might die from the operation then two minutes later she's fine again and talking about her new job

we get to my apartment and i put my gasoline shoes on the snowy porch in the garbage bags and change my jeans cause the cuffs stink like gasoline too and put my boots on and we go get thai food at this place a couple of miles away, it's good stuff, good pad thai and we talk smart some more and we decide to go see the shape of water at the michigan theater

afterwards we drive down to ann arbor and ben picks the music off my phone and it's getting dark now and we get to the theater and pick a spot in the middle and it slowly fills up as the dude plays the organ, plays the nutcracker and songs from Chicago, the theater is beautiful all red and gold and stuff and we get crammed in with all of the ann arbor-ites and we move up to the balcony and watch the movie there

it's better the second time- I saw it last week the first time- and my brother cries at the end

we stop at the church in town on the way back to drop off ashley and my brother, and we spend some time in the chapel, i like how quiet it is

in there and I like how it smells, there's a bunch of wooden and bronze statues of jesus and mary and joseph and we all sit in the pews and pray our prayers and look at the stained glass windows, the place is really comforting, you can really feel the presence of holiness there, I thank God for a good year

then we drop off Ashley, and i drop off my brother and go home

"when we reach that bright horizon"

i will settle like sunset on each
one of the fallen leaves

i will enter the paracosms forged
by the books i read, all those
comforting vistas

i will visit my favorite movie
theaters and play with my favorite
toys

i will sit in the break rooms of
all the jobs i had, all the tasks
performed and behind me

i will hurtle down the sidewalks
in front of the houses i grew up in

I will sail through the empty hallways
of my old schools

i will lay my head one last time
in each of my bedrooms

i will find the holy spirit in
the musical artists that spoke

i will reconcile with my sins
and dance with my sorrows

i will say all the things i
meant to say but didn't

i will lay on the hilltops
where i slowly became air

i will forage through the
furthest recesses of my mind

i will collapse into the
present and be one with all

"not quite well"
I come home and
The cold is the kind
That stills the cells
In your skin, dries
Everything into
Cracked leather

My throat feels like
A sponge left by
The sink

My bed is like a
Stone and my sheets
Are like that Pearl Jam
Song

The vents breathe
Heat into the walls

I take a Vitamin D,
Two fish oils, a
Motrin, two Tums
And call it a day

"that song with the bee girl"

It was literally last minute

I saw this one was relatively
Close so I went for it

I was 25 and had Saturday
To myself so fuck it

I took 94 west to 69 south

It was cloudy the whole way

I remember Indiana being
Morose, flat, the skylines
Of refineries and factories
Sticking out of the horizon
Like dystopian cities

The highway cut through it all

I got Arby's and kept moving

The day got darker and it
Was getting cold and rainy

I made it to Dayton, the
Little town where Hoon
Is buried and found the
Cemetery, which wasn't
That large, either, only
An acre or two of land
Arranged in a rectangle
With all the graves set
Along two-track roads
That ran the perimeter
And through the middle

Hoon was towards the
North of the cemetery
And there was no one
Else around, the town

seemed deserted

I didn't take long to
Find it, just trundled
My civic up the two-track
And then all of a sudden
There it was on my right
Just like on the internet

I got out and gave him
A red guitar pick, setting
It on the large stone slab
That covers his remains
With the lyrics to one of
His songs, titled Change

The grave has flowers
And other guitar picks

When I was a kid and
First heard No Rain I
Thought it was a woman
Singing it

I stood there a while
Longer, trying to let
The gravity of the
Situation sink in

FREEDOM TO JUDGE
POEMS: 2018

"norma jean"

they had this old school
dvd player in there, it
looked almost like a small
vinyl record player, but I
put it in and watched it
and it's a decent enough
movie and Bette Davis is a
really fucking classy dame
and George Sanders is alpha
as fuck but then suddenly
there's this golden goddess
on the screen, some basic
scene in a stairwell, I
can't even remember when
it happened in the movie,
or what was being discussed,
but the woman George has
on his arm as they all sit
in the stairwell smoking
during a party is the most
strikingly beautiful young
woman I've ever seen and I
look up the cast on wikipedia
the next chance I get and of
course it's Marilyn Monroe

"snack food treasure"

i was rooting through my cupholders
around midnight, separating my dimes
and nickels from the hordes of pennies
and digging my last quarter out of the
spaces between the seat track and the
floor and I was feeling particularly
alive

it was January and Detroit was between
two brutal cold fronts of arctic making
and the temperature was 46 degrees and
because the previous week had average
0 degrees it felt like a cool spring
bath, everything soaked and melting,
the ground itself seeming to melt into
a soggy cereal, the asphalt juicy with
streetlight

I hadn't packed a lunch and I was out of
cash so I was scrounging through change
in hopes of enough to get myself a snack
to get me through to 6 am

I collected a dollar-five in total, tossed
a nickel back into the cupholder with
the pennies and went in and bought myself
a double decker little debbie oatmeal cream
pie

i filled up a water bottle from the water
cooler, walked back to my desk and unwrapped
my snack food treasure and held it in my
fingers and inhaled its chemically sweet
aroma

the scent reminded me of sitting in
grade school cafeterias and bus seats
and notebook pages with smeared lead
and heavy backpacks and long hallways
trampled by wet boots and hours spent
looking at clocks and the occasional
wholesome memory of actually learning
something

"success"
the
only way
to become special
is to convince
someone
who's already special
that you too
are also special

"poem for a fangirl scream"

When he starts to sing
The first verse and all
The girls in the crowd
Realize he's covering
The romantic classic

There's a flurry of coos
And woo's as all the
Happy females express
Their pleasure at his
Song choice

Then,
As Mayer is singing
The word "Jesus"
There is a young
Lady who absolutely
Lets loose and just
Screams a second-long
Scream, pure, naked
Honest-to-God loss
Of control over her
Emotional facilities
Over this pretty Greek
Statue of a rock star
And his cotton wool
Voice amplified

It's a Beatlemania
Scream, an eruption
That brings to mind
wide wet lips and
wide wet eyes

It's the sonic
Embodiment of
"My ovaries just
Exploded."

I have no idea
What that girl
Looks like or
Who she is but
this is for her

"almost home"

Girl on a Train by
10000 maniacs
Was playing, I
Was driving a
95 taurus, my
First car, and
My legs were
Soaked from
The knees
Down

The dish tank
Was a steam
Hell, a rotting
Garbage pit
Where bits
Of stray food
Got caught in
Between the
Creases on
The bottoms
Of my shoes

I'd stand there
For hours in
The evening,
A napkin tied
Around my
Head, sorting

Shoving rack
After rack
Through the
Damp dragon's
Mouth of the
Dishwasher

The dishes
Came out so
Hot you'd think
They'd burn
Your fingerprints
Off

I drove myself home
My jeans and shoes
Stinking so bad I
Would have to
Leave them in
The garage

But the way
The night air
Would hit my
Soaked pant legs
As I stepped
Out the front doors
And got into my car
And drove away

How do you know
What life is really
About

"super-organism"

Acceptance

The human connection

The human desire

To connect, to be, to feel

Wanted and received

Acceptance

Criminals, all rejected

Perry smith writing in his diary

Accepting some dreamed award

Criminals snapping, thinking

This is the last time I'm made

To feel like I'm not here

Acceptance

Every teenager falling asleep

Thinking of performing some

Feat in front of their fellow

Students, achieving, dreaming

Acceptance

Unconditional, a place inside us

All, getting an email from your

Idol or mentor, praise, hugs,

Acceptance

Minor talent that reaches out

Anyway, desperate for dreams,

Desperate for rights, desperate

Acceptance

"channeling"

he was a mediocre writer.

he was an insanely good story teller.

insanely.

just a fucking natural.

reading his stories is like
looking at a beautiful painting
through a dirty window.

"weak-ass poem 2"

I didn't want to write
anything tonight,
just not in the mood

And I had to scroll up to the
Secondraft document on the
Folder window and I've got
Nothing to say and there's a
U missing from the keyboard
And I keep missing keys and
I'm stalling out, restarting
Sentences

And I guess this'll have to
Do for now, I'm tired, waiting
For the clock to hit the time
When I can go get a diet
Coke from the vending
Machine and have it jerk
Me awake with false
Energy, maybe I'll get
Some donuts too even
Though I need to eat
Better, a sugar rush is
A myth, the scientists
Proved it, but anyway

"comfort"
the wil cwac cwac
theme music playing
on the old solid state tv,
the size of a dorm room fridge

the dirt and black
Around the silver drain

my hair wet from the
drench and the washcloth

my toes tucked
nestled in my footie pajamas

the white light
blazing from the hallway

falling asleep
knowing I'd wake up warm

"norma jean, pt 2"

She's buried in a mausoleum next
To Hugh Hefner

Dean Martin's a couple sections down
Robert Stack's ashes are in the room
Next door

Along with what's left of

Don Knotts, Natalie Wood, Farrah Fawcett,
Bob Crane, Frank Zappa, Roy Orbison,
Bettie Page, Ray Bradbury, Walter Matthau,
Jack Lemmon, Rodney Dangerfield, Eva Gabor,
Doris Roberts, James Coburn, Peter Falk,
and many others

It's a small cemetery
that exists in the shadows
of several LA
office buildings

To the south is a residential neighborhood

Imagine living so close
To all those famous bones

I know exactly where Marilyn is
the stone is rose-tinted
And there are lipstick smudges
all over it from where people kissed

hugh hefner, who died the previous fall,
has some purple flowers on his tomb

there are none for Marilyn right now

I think about giving her a guitar pick

That I've carried in my wallet for years
but decide to save it for Chris Cornell

Marilyn was the first woman I ever saw naked,
A pic from that red velvet set she did
Where she's got her arm up over her head
I'd never seen a naked boob before
and I thought her nipples
looked really raw and infected,
they looked like they hurt,
but I was also entranced,
at least in the way an
8 year old can be
by something like that

The pic was hanging over the bar
in my great aunt and uncle's basement
I always went downstairs to look at it
when we visited

I think about
all the posters
and plates
the neon signs
the merchandise
her laughing face
has graced
in the fifty five years
since she was put in this place

I try to really capture the gravity of the moment,
Relish it, here I am in front of Marilyn Monroe's
Bones, paying my respects or at least trying to

Then it's time to move on,

there's a service going on
over in the chapel
on the south side
of the cemetery

and I don't want to be here too long

As I'm walking away
From Marilyn's tomb
I step in a puddle

and my shitty, worn-out shoe
doesn't protect my sock

I like to think that puddle was Marilyn, giving a
Rubbernecking male tourist a little inconvenience

"Take that, you dweeb."

"fortuna's wheel"

Night shift is ending
They're pushing me
Onto day shift and
All I can do is ask
For a raise and the
Four tens I want so
I can still go to my
Kensington job and
Clean toilets in nature
For two days a week
Because I prefer
Cleaning toilets to
My "career" in
Automotive controls
Which I'm obligated
To say I'm thankful
For the same way
Medieval peasants
Were obligated to
Say they were
Thankful for the
King's walls

"something poetic"
Trump just tweeted
In all caps at Iran and
It may start something
Or it may not but
The first comment
Underneath it is
"Dude, eat a Snickers"

"i remember august"

summer shimmers over the grass
that stretches off to the west
towards a road with cars rushing
their exhalations off to other lives

every treetop is extraordinary

i think about songs i love and
being a child, all wide eyes
and arms spread out trying to
take in everything all at once

"she & me"

You led me on, you insufferable tease
No, I'm not crying, I just have to sneeze...

I'm sick of seeing you drunk
On your damned facebook
Looks like you're having a really good time
What with all those drugs you took

I was the Hummer, you were the motion
I was the iceberg, you were the ocean
I was the hinge, you were the rust
I was the attic, you were the dust
I was the tree, you were the storm
I was the freak show, you were the norm
I was the mattress, you were the sheets
I was the city, you were the streets
I was the darkness, you were the sun
In love, in denial, cause you weren't the one

Don't touch me, she said
The words stuck in my head
So I left her instead

"together we breathe"

One for
curiosity

Two for
pleasure

Three for
necessity

Four
you and me,

infinity

"of earth & space"
A pilgrim, a pilot, a passenger
How is this all held together?

draw back the heavens
The celestial curtains
See the workings beneath
Make yourself uncertain

Darkness, gears, signs, stars
Wonders, clouds, rock, wheels,
light, lines, metal, motion, and air
the cosmic engines
the god machines

I want to know the source of grace
Touch the sun's solemn face
The village below in tranquil green
The mountains tower in between
Lives of beauty, fever of mind
Take it apart to see what's behind

Are we merely children of chance?
Apes with egos, swiftly advanced?
Or guided by a holy hand
That numbers couldn't understand

The earth was never flat
There's more to it than that
We're ants inside an Internet
Roll it back, the clocks are set

SMALL FISH
POEMS: 2019

"mac miller is dead"

I'd take 26 years

Of the highest,

Most decadent living

this life

Has to offer

Over roughly 8 decades

Of mediocre obscurity

And peasant grind

And so would you

Probably

"summer of autumn"

autumn and i were having
a good dinner
at vinsetta garage,
and the burger was
holding together very
nicely

and then out of nowhere
autumn asked

do you like where we are

and everything came apart

and i knew it was time to
call it off, i don't even
remember what i said
in response, I stammered,
something she said,
she wanted more
communication,
she was tired
of being the one

to text me

i told her i wanted to cut it
off when we got back to the
apartment and she said if that's
what you want but she didn't
want to break it off so i said
let's sleep on it

the next day i sent a lengthy
text saying i really think
we should end this and she
sent back another even
lengthier text saying she
didn't want to and i said
let's give it another week
and see how we feel and i
haven't had the guts to text
her back since

right before she asked
the question that derailed
the whole thing, she was
talking about how her
parents were going to
name her either summer
or autumn, and it's ironic

because she loves the
summer season and
hates the fall season

"this was going somewhere and then it didn't"

john b mclemore,

robert johnson

and i

all sitting

talking about how

the years of one's youth

take on a luminous quality

the farther into the distance

they recede

nowadays, Charles Bukowski

would be writing on medium

and getting 58 claps for bluebird

"invisible cannibals"

I was at this tiny facility

In downtown Northville

Right on main street

Above the shops

In one of those

Old brick buildings

The hallways were

Really narrow, the

Place felt like an

Apartment, and i

Was setting up a

Bed and this woman

With big moon eyes

And white hair came

In with this frightened

Look on her face and

Asked me very seriously,

"Do you know if they're

Coming to kill and eat me?"

I didn't say anything, just

Kept doing my job, even

Though I'd looked right

At her and heard her fine

"Do you know if they're
Coming to kill and eat me?"

The woman asked,
with the
Same tone of concern
as if
She was asking me
if she'd
Left the oven on
or if I'd
Seen her lost dog

I should've just said
"No,
They're not,"

but for some
Reason I yelled,
"Nurse!"
And the nurse came in
And escorted the old woman
Away so I could
Finish my job

"I see you"

A square of morning sky

The color of peaches

Glimpsed from across

A factory floor behind

Stacks of metal pallets

And walls, like the day

Itself is winking at you

A girl with a voice

Like morning dew frozen

on a blade of grass

sings a song

that reminds you of college

and you're thinking

about how no one

questions good fortune

and no one notices

"win"

I received a rejection
Today, it's been nothing
But rejections, I'm applying
For my master's, I have
Heard nothing but no

My dad said last summer
Keep going, no matter how
Much you hear no

I don't know what made
Him say that then

It was right before he
Was diagnosed with
Brain cancer

To understand I'm not
Going anywhere

These words will
Endure, burn bright
white in years to come

I may be buried in
Obscurity, in a civilization

Of noise, but making my

Own is the only way

The only way

The only way

"the poet"

i'm not nelly sachs or
any other refugee

i'm not audre lorde or
any other multiple
minority, oppressed

i'm not bukowski
with his drinks and his
women and his demons

i'm not mary oliver
with her morning coffee
and backyard views

i'm not james dickey
or sylvia plath or
leonard cohen
or any other
silver-tongued elder

i'm not longfellow or
whitman or blake or
any other
stone legend

i'm definitely not
homer or aeschylus or
any other
ancient echo

i'm not rupi kaur or
r.h. sin or any other
instagram sensation
with their obvious
two liners

"bart and his parents"

When I was about 5

I had a bedroom to myself,

Forest green carpet and a closet

Right across from the bed

For decoration, my parents

Cut out portraits of

Bart, Homer and Marge

just their smiling heads--

it was from a magazine

I think--

Homer and Marge were

cheated left/right profiles,

homer facing right

and marge facing left

Bart was a head on portrait

They taped Homer and Marge

To either side of the closet

And Bart up on top in the

Narrow strip of wall between

The closet door frame and

The ceiling

And I'd see them every night

As I fell asleep

it was odd
because my parents
Would never let me watch
The Simpsons
but had no problem
decorating my room
with the main characters

one night
I was having trouble falling asleep,
Childhood jitters or generalized anxiety
Or whatever, the actual monsters
that lurk in the dark,
the ghosts of our evolution,
leftover cave and jungle shit
from when a pup like me
could've been snatched
Out of the nest
by a predator

and I kept waking up my mom
to have her come in
and comfort me
and finally
In an attempt
to get some

Sleep for herself,
she repeated

I had nothing
to worry about
As I had
Bart and his parents
Watching over me
so I should
Just not worry
and try to go
To sleep

For some reason, this worked

And I found great comfort in
the bug-eyes and yellow skin
of the iconic cartoon characters'
triangulated gazes as they
made sure no harm came to
my slumbering little self

"radiate"

i am on fire for the process
i have a stamp on my hand
a drunk woman talked to me in line
last night
and then later
i saw her getting yelled at

no one returns my emails
it takes awhile to think of something

i'm poor enough to be looked down on
but rich enough to go to concerts and
post shit on instagram and get 2 likes

the computer is being slow today
i brought yogurt and berries for lunch
i have fat in my liver and gallstones
but as far as i know it's nothing serious
i just need to improve my diet a little

the only difference
between a loser
and a hipster
is the hipster has figured out
how to monetize his talent

"gaelic for peace"
We did this exercise
the first day of class
where we had to go
up in front of the class
And pick someone
And sit face to face
With them and hold
Hands and look into
Each other's eyes
Without looking away
And recite our monologue
As fast as we could without
Thinking, the teacher
Told the first girl to
"Be selfish" when
Picking who she was
Going to partner with
And when I got picked
I chose Erin because
I'd noticed her earlier

My dad had been diagnosed
With brain cancer
The previous weekend,
He'd had the tumor
Removed and so
I was thinking about
Mortality and regret
I needed no more than
"Be selfish"

I picked Erin, and she
Came up and I stared
Into her eyes and sent
Her telepathic messages
Like, "You're gorgeous"
And "Let me take you
Out" and other cringe
Shit like that

At one point the teacher
Kept telling me not to
Break my gaze, to not
Look away from her
Face involuntarily to
Remember my lines

"It's not like she's
Hard to look at,"
He said,
and I shook my head
a little, and I'm
Remembering Erin

Noticing and giving
The tiniest smile

Some people have all their dreams
Come true and sing duets
with their childhood idols,
the rest of us get by
on scraps of dreams,
like holding
Erin's hands
and looking into her eyes
in front of a roomful of people
And reciting that monologue
From The Producers
about how Hitler
Was better than Churchill

"spoken text"

I went to the Fleetwood

I love the rain

pattern pattern on the roof

the tin roof

everything was beautiful

and so was I

the guy walked down the street

cross the street

with his girlfriend

his girlfriend was wearing

a black and white striped skirt

and another guy walked by

with his girlfriend

she had a flower dress

it was raining and they looked cold

"martin prince sings summer wind"

remember that episode of

the simpsons

back when it

was a rip-rollicking

cultural

tour de force,

its white hot prime

in the middle of the 90s

that episode where the simpsons

get a pool and bart breaks his leg

and does the whole vertigo parody

with flanders

the ending to that episode is

as emotionally arresting as

homer staring at the stars

after saying goodbye

to his mother,

maybe more so

martin prince, the fat little

probably-gay nerd in bart's class

with his hair perfectly parted, gets

a pool of his own and temporarily

becomes popular as a result, paralleling

lisa's own plot arc earlier in the episode

too many kids jump into the pool, though
and it comically breaks apart and everyone
leaves, stranding martin in the summer
sunset, naked after being pantsed by bully
nelson muntz

martin accepts his fate and stands there in
the wet wreckage of his pool, butt naked and
feeling the "gentle caress of the summer breeze"
on all four of his cheeks

a lamenting jazz swing wafts in on the soundtrack
and martin sings the opening lines to sinatra's
classic "summer wind"

and as he does so the
camera retreats up and up and up into the northeast
giving us a lovely scenic panorama of martin's
neighborhood with an orange rind of a sun dipping
below the horizon, leaving the chubby little nerd
alone in his backyard to contemplate his loneliness

the scene is so out of nowhere, the rest of the
episode has no other moments like this, and for
some fucking reason it gets me right in the feelies

more than any other moment in this godsend of a
cartoon sitcom

that episode is nearly a quarter century old and
it still gives me pause, even just as a thought

russi taylor or pamela hayden, i can't remember
who did martin's voice, or maybe it's nancy cartwright,
they did a great job singing those lines, they're
just competent enough to stick the emotional landing
without being unrealistic and taking you out of the
scene

i don't know if the moment was supposed to be funny
or wistful or both but it only strikes me as incurably
sad—because maybe, for me, i see years of my own life
disappearing over the horizon in that wide shot

"a preview"

i wrote with fingers clacking
like restless crickets and mice
then died off without
speaking
for, like, months at a time

don't breathe me in
unless you're judging
because that's the only
way
anyone is interesting

open your flow, your mind
is gold, don't choose the
path
you're avoiding

I'm only a person, an
ordinary broseph who
happens
to have an internet connection

roughly four years of lonely
afternoons and evenings
and
a trove of mined memories

i spill on the screen, in red
and green, with no particular
pattern
in mind, but expression

"wyn"

i had a poet on my podcast
a few weeks ago,
his name is wyn cooper

he wrote a poem called "fun"
that sheryl crow's manager
randomly noticed
when she was
hard-up for lyrics
and
she turned it into a
grammy-winning smash
called all i wanna do

you've probably heard it
especially if you lived
through the nineties

wyn came on my show
and talked about that
poem and all that and i
told him on the air that
i'm a poet, too, or that
i've written poetry, it
was a good interview and
he was a great guest to

talk to, but i mentioned
this and he's a freelance
editor, an expensive one,
and he said he'd look at
some of my stuff (off the
air) on the house so i sent
him a poem from my first
collection

a lot of my poems, especially
these days are just diary
entries in word tower form

they're easier to write
this way but whatever

i call them poetry

we agreed to keep in touch
and in fact he sent me
an article on bukowski
not a week after the interview
which was awesome and
i sent him three poems
one from my first collection
one from my fifth and one
that i'd just written a few

months prior

the email came back a day
later and said, "thanks for
these, Alex. 'Poet' is my
favorite-- love that last
stanza! Cheers, Wyn"

And that was that

ESOTERICA
POEMS : 2019-2023

"holding an infant for the first time in my adult life"

my buddy's daughter is like 5 months old
a little bald smiler
blue eyes, blonde fuzz

her mom hands her to me
after we take a shot of this
knob creek whiskey that i
brought them as a housewarmer

"pass the baby," she says.

i hold the infant under the armpits
while she kicks and squirms
for a minute
or so,
convinced the second i adjust
she'll go toppling to the floor

"she's not gonna break," says
my friend's wife. "unless you
drop her on her head."

she's right,
and when i finally get her
into the standard infant hold
pose with the hand under
the plump diaper butt,
she gums my shoulder with
drool and cranes her neck
to observe the new world
around her

my biological clock
taps
the inside of my skull,
saying
"you know, i'm still a thing."

"be on my podcast, big brother sean"
I saw you on the first NOW commercial

I thought your name was Harvey

I've emailed you twice and I think

I saw you tweet about it once

I'd love to pick your brain

The conversation would be

So enlightening, I'm sure of it

i'm not some imbecile
who just wants to talk about
i'm not sick but i'm not well

i even loved elvis, i don't love you

"new president"

it got dark outside
and we watched the
reports come in

when he won california
we knew it was for real

i checked my facebook
feed, people screaming
yes we can

my roommate,
a childhood friend,
voted for the other guy

"this is bullshit,"
he finally muttered
and went to bed

i fell asleep that night
to the sounds of people
in town celebrating, and
one guy kept screaming
at the top of his lungs

somewhere in the parking lot
all by himself, over and over

OBAMA

OBAMAAA

"a million followers"

Your liberation game is over

brilliance set up a system
in which you are at the top
and if anything changes
for anybody below you
lose is what little they have
and they will have to remember you

Judas downed arsenic bitch

I just want to shake your hand
your hand shakes
mean
I got no weapons
no weapons here
and I respect that
counting to bullshit
you guys do

"oh piss"

Speech class, freshman year

Sixth hour, last class of the day

I gave a speech about ghosts once

That was a real hit

We all gathered by the door as

We did, Waiting for the bell

And a few of us slipped out

A few minutes early

I don't know why

I think it was something

The seniors did, it was the

Only class I had as a freshmen

Where I was the only freshmen

And it felt like I was surrounded

By adults

For the most part they were all

Nice to me, like hanging out with

A bunch of babysitters

One kid, Jon Hernandez, and I

slipped out one day before

The bell and we started running

Down B wing toward the locker halls
if Mrs. Manus didn't catch us
before we disappeared there'd
Be nothing she could do, at least
That was how I understood it,

But we ran and our backpacks
Were bouncing on our backs
And we had nearly made it
To the shelter of the lockers
In b-wing, I can still see them
The lockers were darkened
For some reason, light blue
the halls were taupe and
grey-carpeted, we were on
The second floor and
Running with our backpacks
Bouncing comically on our
Backs and Jon—this really
Handsome 15 year old kid,
Looked almost like a young
Professional soccer player,
Hispanic, dark hair, model-esque
Dark eyes, kind of like Ezra miller
But with darker skin
and more masculine—
Just spews, "Ohhhh, pppppppissss!!"

In anticipation of hearing
Manus's voice call down
The hall for us to get back
And wait for the bell but
I didn't look back and
We kept going and we
Made it but as far as I know
She never even came to the
Door

"ok boomer"

Teenagers are kids who

Think they're adults

they're almost as bad

as adults who think they're kids

"moment of youth"

We were at Taco Bell at 1 AM

We were writing on the paper
Placemats they give you in the
Plastic trays

These placemats had cartoons
Of a little nondescript guy
doing various things,
Just this random cartoon white guy
With short hair, an everyman,
purple with dark purple hair
and on each panel he was
Doing something taco-related

I don't even remember what
The original captions were,
Because Franz and Bob crossed
Them out with a pen they had
And wrote in their own as we
Chowed our tacos

"I meant to pull out" Franz writes
On one where the guy has his hands
Up in a gesture of futility,

a pained expression on his face

"Just the tip" he writes on another
Where the guy is making a measurement
Gesture with his finger and thumb

"If they're sleeping they can't say no!!!"
Bob writes on one where the guy is
Peering around a corner mischievously

Shit was fucking hilarious

"impact"

saw a guy get creamed last night

was on my way back from a night
in ann arbor, i'd gone to open stage
at the ark (didn't play, just watched)
then went over to the jolly pumpkin
for a po' boy and ended up chatting
with some of the folks at the bar

i took a walk around the city,
making sure the three wines i'd
had were good and subdued in
my bloodstream before heading
back

i don't know the intersection
but i was sitting at a red light

i turned to my right and saw
a car careening through the
westbound lane which had
the green, there was a dude
running across the lane
as he did it, he didn't even
stop, the guy running, and
it looked like maybe the guy
would make it, like my forced
perspective made it seem
like they weren't going to
connect but then

the guy flips through the air

he's younger, white, homeless
long dirty hair and beard, all
greasy and grimy from life
in true freedom

he lies in the road facedown

no one does anything

the guy who hit him stops
almost instantly

flashers are put on

what should be done

the guy's not moving
it's almost midnight
should i get out?
i just had three wines
if the cops ask
i decide to get out
i see others getting out
the guy in the car behind
me gets out and runs over
the dude is lying in the
street
the guy takes charge,
starts asking him questions
what's your name
what day is it
the guy mumbles
his shirt is rode up
exposing his stomach
the guy talking to him
rolls him over and there's
quite a bit of blood on
the street
"holy shit!" i exclaim
i can't help it
the guy is mumbling
i'm an er doctor, says
the guy talking to him
sirens blare, the guy
who was in the car
behind the car that
hit the guy is on the
phone with 911 dispatch
another girl stands with
us
the guy who hit him is

moon-eyed, an italian or
hispanic dude with bright
black eyes and short dark
hair, he walks around with
his hands on his head as
though he's stretching
after a long work-out, he's
stunned this happened to
him and i want to give
the fella a hug

the cops come, the er
doctor does his job
keeping the guy's
head straight and
talking to him

the stricken transient
is loaded onto a stretcher
after an ambulance
wails to a stop

he's awake and talking
but not coherently

all the emergency
personnel have the
same subdued
same shit different day
expressions on their
faces, they're at work

the stunned guy
who plowed into the homeless guy
sits on the opposite street corner
hands still laced over his head

the cop takes down
information, fortunately
not from me

i stay out of the way
and try to not let the
flashing lights get to me

the cop tells us we can
go

the er doctor is over
by a trash can wiping
his hands with a wet
nappie, i ask him if
he's all right as he
throws it in the can

and gets back into
his car

yeah, he says
with the beleaguered
tone of a guy who
knows i wouldn't
understand anyway
if he tried to explain
how he isn't all right

i hope that guy does
all right, he says

yeah, i say. good luck

i get in the car and turn
around and leave, the
cops have blocked off
the street down both
ways

"prone"

falling asleep in the early evening

sucks

I'm super tired

nodding off

just as i should be

and then i'm awake

and it's pitch dark

and i'm thinking of something

out of my control

like dying

and the impermanence of existence

the mysteries of consciousness

the mass of the mind

lost in myself

i have to get up to shake it all off

and my night is lost

everything seems so much bigger

more daunting

when you're lying all huddled in

on yourself

"pennies"

I started Medium's Partnership Program

I get paid for views on my poems

I wrote a poem called Poets, Maybe

It's titled after a line in Our Town

And the content consists of descriptions

of a bunch of random things

the random things of life

they were all just a list of pictures

i'd taken on my old cell phone cam

i wrote the poem in 2006

and i published it last weekend

and i just looked up

the partnership earnings

and it's earned me 1 cent

so far

"productivity"

I should be writing right now

i should be doing laundry

i haven't done laundry

in a long time, i'm down

to wearing my pajama shirts

and the same boxers

for days on end

i should go to the gym

i went three times

this week already

i did my regular

exercises but i

should go run

but i'm reading

about river phoenix

and how he died

on the sidewalk

outside the viper room

i'm looking up

the viper room

on google maps

next time i'm in la

i need to check it out

i drove right by it
last time i was there
there's a picture
of me driving with
the whiskey a-go-go
in the background
and that's literally
across the street
from the viper room
the band on the
marquee in the picture
is fronted
by a guy i recorded
with, what
are the odds of that

i check tumblr again
i check seeking arrangement again
i check Facebook
i open youtube, don't search

i've heard the story
of river phoenix dying
a million times
the night he died i was
in second grade, i was

godzilla that year, it
was halloween, best
halloween of my life
at that point

if it happened
nowadays
we would've
found out
that night
and there
probably
would be footage
of him dying
on the sidewalk
but it was 1993
so we
didn't find out
until the next
morning
at least

i didn't know
who he was
until i got older

he'd be 49 now

i should be writing
instead of reading

"wholesome crush"

i have a crush on a girl named
she has brown hair and dimples
very girl next door
she's 27, just got a job
with u of m

i don't know anything
about her, not really

i'm old enough to know
when i'm crushing
on the idea of someone
more than who
they really are

i want to text her
haven't talked to her since
spring

there is no spark there

i think i mentioned her in
another poem

i asked her out in the worst
way possible

directly

it was last february

i'm seeing someone,
she said

no spark

last time she texted
was about game of thrones
during the last season
asking me some question
because she knew i read
the books

i answered after calculating
the right amount of time
i should let pass
to show her i care
but not too much

why do you ask, i wanted to know

oh, i'm sitting here with austin
watching and we were wondering

haven't had any interaction since

the idea of someone

she's my wholesome crush

not a jerk-off crush, of which

i have many, like all guys

i don't think about fucking her

i think about making a life

with her

it's just as unhealthy

"facebook post"

social media is

a behavior modification

devil's tool

but

it's nice

to post a picture

i find funny

and bam

there's my first college roommate

there's this guy i did open mics with years ago

there's my cousin

there's an engineer from the podcast studio

there's a good friend i've known since kindergarten

there's my eighth grade science teacher

there's a woman i met in an acting class last year

there's another good friend i've known since middle school

i haven't talked to some of these people

in years

but i

imagine all of them in the same room

together

in some weird random reunion

"suddenly I see"

i woke up just now

2:47 AM

thinking of a song

i haven't thought of

in awhile

reminds me of college

reminds me of this

date i went on with

a girl named emily

we went and saw

the science of sleep

at the state theater

together

she asked me out

the song is by kt tunstall

it's her second big single

called suddenly i see

her other songs were

gorgeous 2000s pop

acoustic ditties

layered and sweet

and touching

and catchy

i can't list the

song's lyrics here

but a quick google

will help you

relate

it's inspired by

the cover

of patti smith's

horses

i can see emily dobbs

every time i hear that

first verse

i only went on

that one date

with her

and then i'd see her

in poetry class

she got a steady boyfriend

soon after

and i believe she married him

made a family with him

i don't know why my mind

decided to conjure

this song

or this girl

after all this time

maybe random nothingness

"2020"

stayed up all night

watching youtube

down the rabbit hole

cmt crossroads specials

john mayer and keith urban

dixie chicks and james taylor

sheryl crow and willie nelson

and it hit me

these days are gone

the days

these people

represented

the comfort and familiarity

they represent in my mind

is fading into the past

and kids nowadays

will have their own

sonic nostalgia

and then it was time

for me to go

to sleep

"leaving new york"
i've only been to
new york city
once

when i was 18

march 2005

ground zero
still an open wound

a raw cement hole

i don't think i've
ever felt a city
that alive
before
or since

everything in it
seems to vibrate
with the energy
of all energies

on the way
out of town
on a bus
to the airport

i was
craning my neck
back
trying to watch
the skyline
as long as i could
seeing the actual atoms
with my own eyes
instead of a picture

with the twin towers gone

the empire state building
was the tallest tower
in the skyline at the time

and i thought about
how the other skyscrapers
must've looked to it
after that one tuesday
like orphaned children
to a grandparent

"bruh"

I have not had sex in two years

The last time was a week before

my dad's death

I use this as the excuse if people ask

but they never do

"chore"

I get up after the snowstorm

and shovel the driveway

and snow blow it

badly

and i wonder if the neighbors

are judging me

and i wonder

if i'm a narcissist

for wondering that

"more connected than ever"
i went through
my old facebook
profile pics
and the art
i used to post
instead of pictures
of myself
back in the golden era
of social media,
2007 to 2012ish
and I found myself
missing those days

the actual camaraderie
we had for a moment
in those years
people online,
with each other,
people I knew
personally

now I watch two ads on youtube
before the video plays
and I have a thought
and I consider posting it
but never do

"fuck up"

I fucked up not going into academia in college in the late 2000s

I fucked up not having what I don't have

I fucked up telling my favorite teacher he was my favorite teacher

I fucked up not going into the family business

I fucked up being me

I fucked up not loving anyone but me

I fucked up not loving myself

I fucked up listening to Taylor Swift at all

I fucked up learning guitar at 15 and not earlier

I fucked up sending that email

I fucked up giving that advice

I fucked up getting myself tired

I fucked up staying up too late

I fucked up catching Covid

I fucked up typing this

"small victories"
a cup of peppermint tea

a little shoe-shaped cake
from Costco

An empty wine glass
returned to the kitchen

A text sent, an email
answered

A shirt folded and
put away

A song selected
and filed away

A single poem
written and read

"cruising"
lately
i've been doing this thing
where i open a video
and listen to the voice
of the person talking

david foster wallace
speed levitch
gore vidal
some rando

i listen
but don't watch

i play a game
on my phone
my fingers sliding
and tapping

colored squares
smashing
cartoon birds
crashing
the voice
speaking
my mind
flowing

i hear the voice
I play the game
my mind is satisfied
my mind is occupied

meaningless
simple
tasks

monkey shit

not trying
entertained
existing
and not feeling any way
about it at all

"last tweet"

People

with

day jobs

Make the

best

art

"the modern american"

It's about naming your dog after a kind of alcohol

It's about wanting a gun but never actually getting one

It's about having a stoplight turn red when you're in a hurry, and green when you want to check your phone

It's hearing the lane departure alarm beep over and over while you pick another song

It's about taking three hours to transcribe a podcaster's rant on wikiquote when you should be doing homework for the classes you're taking to get your second degree

It's about obsessively checking the same three websites over and over and over until one AM, then hating your alarm at five thirty

It's about fatty liver and gallstones

It's about being desperate for the adoration of strangers while ignoring family

It's about lingering guilt with a nebulous, unnamable source

It's about feeling a terrible white-hot rage over some minor inconvenience or perceived slight, then telling yourself you're a horrible person for feeling said rage after you've calmed down

It's about sucking melted Reese's peanut butter cups out of their wrappers because you left them in your car all afternoon and you want them now

it's about telling no one any of this

It's about adding lol to something you did not actually laugh at

It's about wanting and not knowing why

It's about needing something crucial, but being unable to articulate what it is

it's about seeing ads in your dreams

it's about feeling a deep, lasting, familial bond with Homer Simpson but not talking to your sister for months

it's about Disney remakes

it's about exercising but never losing weight

it's about summers getting noticeably hotter

it's about hating a particular celebrity because they're everything you want to be but aren't

it's about fantasizing about stopping a mass shooting, or committing one

it's about preferring porn to actual sex

it's about seeing everyone you don't know as a competitor who is not to be trusted

it's about moving back in with your parents for the third time

it's about being prescribed antidepressants you can't just stop using or they'll kill you

it's about acute post-nut clarity

it's about being viscerally repulsed by the accidental sight of yourself in the phone camera

it's about wanting desperately to be showered with positive attention, knowing you'll never get it, and being slightly comforted by knowing that even if you did, you'd still feel vaguely unfulfilled