

part I

0

Twenty-two. Anthony returns from
theatre school to his love
and the city that he loves.

1

I believe in singing and
scribbling the words you have
at hand. I believe in
repeating lines in your head
that make things hum.
I believe in making the
city red. I believe in
rain and traffic.
I believe we whirl
and can never be counted.
I believe in
pushing and two friends
teaching each other
again and
again how to love.
I believe in
poems and
the dust we acquire.
I believe in labor. I
believe in
beds. I believe in
a night falling out
like a sheet.

2

I believe in
smoking cigarettes with
the windows open and
ashing them in
dirty cups.

I believe in making your way
however you can
onto rooftops
and standing at the edge

3

Let me eat you out
in the street.
Your
screams will carry
the traffic home and
bust
marriages
open so they will
rain flower
petals and pubic hair.

4

Not a life of abandon
but trapped
in my own skin
Another
waits inside me.

What I can't pay for
What I can't afford

I will burst.

Just hold me while I'm crying.
I need someone to hold me
while I'm crying.

5

Draw up the materials.
The bed frames
and ammunition.
Learn from everything.

Unwind everything.
There are many uses for a
blanket.
What are the blankets of the soul that need shredding?

6
On the limestone,
counting steps,
I think of leaving you.
Of being left.

The fossile sun.
The legs, red manked,
sweet
in a thick,
pushed afternoon.
There
is nowhere to fuck.
There
is no
where to be alone. You
will not hold me.

I
forgot. You
never forgot. I,
later,
oh, I
forgot.

The
bed, sheets, bodies
live
open. Stand
everywhere. I've

never
wanted so badly. I've never

been so wide.
Burning.

A hot thin need
rising.
This bed is bigger
than three cities,
this one, the
one I leave, the
one
we've
never been.

Between
both open
empty times, your face
was
pure delight.
Simple.
Radiant.
A prism hangs
from my hand
here

and
catches your face,
our undirectioned
light, wrapped
in high blush,
in bigger eyes,
softer
than sound or
a memory.

Your grass green skin.
Us, so kisses in the sun.
Me, so silent. Burning.
I don't stop talking til

I run. Til I
wail for you to
hold me.

I
could
not tell you that I needed you, needed to
be held.

7
No,
then driving home.
Don't speak.
It's
nice.

8
Magic and hot skin, cold
from sweat.
Rain. A long
wail. Cold.
Phones ringing.
Where do the years live?
Everybody is swept.
New thing for the
kitchen. The
dogs not dead
yet.
Somewhere.
Everyone thinks if you go there
you've gone but
nothing's there.

9
The
way I said Cumberland.
I need
weekends

with my tower.
I want
a house for us to
live in.
I open the
nights downward like
latched windows.
The mornings flicker and
are thin.
Bodies snap there.
In the mornings when trucks
are shiny.

10
So young. So alone. So,
barely able
to work, barely
dressed, miserable,
he hides
screams
like drug dollars
in a pillowcase.
He dies rich
and goes
on breathing.
No more words fall
out of his mouth
like eggs.
He goes on speaking.
Drunk, he is
never drunk. Lost, he is never
lost. Nothing
happens. He has
nothing. He worships
silently blind idols and
puts their
marks into his skin in bright public spaces when
his touch is turned off like a lamp.

11

There is no where
to sleep or put books or sing.
There
is nowhere
to fuck or to hang clothes or to kiss.
Can't smoke.
Can't afford beer.
Don't eat.
Just waiting for you.
Not working enough.
Scraping together
the hours to read poems and
basketball.

12

Come in, I
am dumber than a
dream. I
give my poems to
a woman and she
wonders aloud
what they mean.

13

The tobacco stains have faded off my fingers. I
can barely swallow. My mattress folds in two.
The furnace is enormous (music all night
long).
There is yellow light from the lamp.
You said my room smelled like smoke
but I never smoked down here.
You smiled here and slept,
or almost slept,
in my lap, couching your head in poems.
You told me
to tell you one and I,
hands deep in your hair,

said something like

‘in your brown leaves
my rough fingers touch your
smile and your hair,
pink ear and some colours
we breathe and run laughter
up the walls’

something like that

and you laughed at me
and I liked that better than my poem
because those words are my
cobble way of living through these days
that tumble out in shadows and
sturdy, beautiful moments:
rain, streetlight, sunlight, stars,
your touch.
I seem to use the word kiss for all those
things or be
pressing eternities
into your cheek.
Under your tongue.
Take them from your mouth
now,
alone in the sweater you wore
coming up.
Rough hands leaving marks of
need on that I-know-so-
well, unspoken back. Now,
again, a basketful of us or a smell. What I
do not have, is so close, it hurts to swallow.

14

How long will I regret not
moving in with you and Anne?
How long and hard and wasted

are our lives? If
only we could love
and do as we wanted
at the same time.

15

My parent's wood and glue.
I only cut my finger on your model lives.
Jesus Christ? I never saw you give up much.
These years, I've seen you get so much
stuff.
Now I'm just another student
returning home from far away to tell
his parents they lost track?
There is no model life.
I see the ghosts of other
generations, almost my parents too,
gathered at the burning of wood and glue.

16

In the morning, full of dried sweat and the
spit I could not swallow,
sickness hangs in a mouth.
Darkness swallows all the smells.
I get up for work.
Turn on the dryer.
Look for my phone.
Miss your calls and
waste time writing a poem.

17

Me, clumsy lover, tripping on wooing
you, knocking your head on the door to your
cabinet. Me, or the man with the stutter from
certified copy. I don't have any grace.
I'm bad with money.
I dream in foggy rain of the little lips between
us and a forest of accidents to keep us

laughing. I aspire to fooldom.

18

The sky
is so gray, like a taste.
The streetlights are on broadway at noon.
I got a parking ticket. No heritage, no shitty car
no hours of work will get
me thirty crummy dollars, bad rain or not.

19

I'm more
comfortable in costumes.

20

This morning I worked at Niagara and Mathers,
shovelling soil off the green around the yard
(the front yard, two piles in the backyard, behind
the garage, the side
of the house),
then,
this afternoon, I raked my moms boulevard on
Sargent and Victor for dead grass and sand
(caps, chip bags, broken bottles, etc...).
But now, my mom's
house looks
like Niagara and Mathers inside.
I'm just an employee here.
I belong more on the boulevard
than anywhere else.
And I
don't get this shit around cash.
I told Viola she makes in a month
what I'll make all summer. Her
face got red.
She felt bad.
I don't know.
I don't know.

21

I know that we are the stones in the street, the steps,
that we are the shadows in the street, the
pools of light, the snows. I know that the light
of a bus or some orange in the rain is
better than flowers. Do you know,
I have less than bus fare to give you?
Do you know the knots in my hands?
I think we are the cracks
between the slabs.
Road work is slow and every winter the
street's wrecked again.

22

Take a red cloth and tie up your
mouth. Wander broken-tongue.
For the many mouthed of the world
are bursting with colour
and need. Find a
rusty blade and drain your stomach. Fuck
I shoulda just fucking said
I just wanna get high man...
she was just like... and
the cops just ended up bringing her
to the drunk tank... that's
why I don't do Molly any
more... that's why I chewed
up the insides of my mouth.
Take the axhead of my words.
Blunt your ears.
They are not holy
but they
are at least sincere.
Learn to speak by
fighting
cops, getting fed, falling in
love, getting high.

23

How bright are you
that even in the pillows of morning
I ache with nearness? That
even the silent afternoons seem
a kiss? A whisper louder than the absolute?
The music
of knowing you. What words
can I leave? I've
written past understanding.
I have become reckless
with my
poems.
If you would let me
kiss your home.
If you would
let me smoke sometimes.
I feel policed.
But I never want to find you closed.
Can you take these
trashcan dreams?
This garbage desire? My smut
promise? You can only
wash me so clean. Will
you wet yourself against a hood caress?

24

I would like to learn to
care less
what people think and
bear myself
up against the brute well of the
sky.
I am the crack of the
globe. I am running through
neighbourhoods.
I am enormous.

25

The Idol is what cannot be questioned.
Survival, for the working class and
lower classes.

Comfort, for the middle class and
higher classes.

But how will we know
when we are in the desert,
abandoned by our
leader,
hungry and homeless,
and we turn to something,
how will we know
what is idol and what is idea?

Nothing is sacred
If it cannot be profaned
— it is Idol

Nothing is perfect
If it cannot be questioned
— it is Idol

Nothing is personal
If we get defensive, want to protect it,
if it is 'private property'
— it is Idol

Idolatry is sophistry.
Idolatry is slavery.

26

Some people know me.
Absolute.

Even when I'm alone.
How sheer can you be?
How silent?

Are we just falling from many
trees? We are living in many rooms.
We are all many people
forgetting.

27

Now, in the tub, hot water and flesh, alone, I know.
I am covered in dirt and will see things
like piano notes or ribbons
of script disappear, maybe better than
whole planets. There, as a breeze
is chasing soil out of nests,
of hair and into the street, as a band
of small shoes are laddered down,
hanging dense hopscotches or even
as we kiss (the one image I feel at the heel
of my hand and my chin, just off
my fingers, just off
my lips, always). Now, alone,
in hot water with poems, the tub and
my filth, my labor, my sweat, my
hours with people and my hours alone
pouring off of me. Now, I know.
Nothing can be shared. Beauty
disappears. Everything is broken. There
is a hole. An incompleteness. In
everybody's soul. We are all
alone.

28

I could quit drinking
or quit cigarettes, or take a vow
of silence. I could fast.
I could shave my hair or grow it long.
Every action is a gesture of
fashion.
I am almost at collapse
juggling every person's need.
I want to relax with
my poems, with my beer and my smokes,
to kiss my lover at night,
to kiss my lover in the day,
to act,

to laugh and weep and think,
dance, read, basketball,
but even these are hard to juggle
when you're poor and the woman
who you love doesn't
know who you are.

29

A promise is enough to live off of.
Get beer. Make dinner for my brother.
Drink and read all night.
Paradise.
We move in on Saturday.
A promise is enough to fight off of .
Run off of.
Die for.

30

I have no ideas. I'm
not scared of death. I'm
sad sometimes. I'm happy
sometimes. I try very
hard to love.

31

Tonight I cannot afford the colours.
The sky is gray and blue.
All the trees are dark. I cannot afford
the metaphor. I cannot carry the myths.
I was born poor.
I have holes in both my
shoes. I do not know how to speak
with my parents anymore. Their history like my
blood is rivering out.
I cannot afford to scream.
I cannot afford suicide.
I belong to other people.
I am too tired to live.

32

Even now, the sky is still purple.

There's no smoke for us,
my friend of rage and changing skin.

Do you feel alone? Is that all? You are not

I am made of pillars, Viola's warmth,
and raw poems.

I am made of stages and the west

end.

I will keep you warm.

I will keep you strong.

You are not alone.

You are not alone.

You are not alone.

alone.

hot skin

33

██████,

there's no way to reach you now. Your phone's
cancelled, couldn't pay the bill and you

called Viola by accident

on your last quarter

trying for ██████.

██████,

there's no way to reach you now. Your hate's
built up, cash-hard, a couple

dollars, you're pushing people, you're raging

inside. I know I could touch

a cool hand to your

soul. You only

need to love and a reason

to give up your anxiety.

██████,

you're going to prison, I want to

meet you at the court and find a way

to set you free.

I've been planning revolutions for a year

just so that you won't go to jail.

I love you.

Enough fantasy.

██████,
the west end belongs to us
but if you feel alone here
push somewhere you don't.
I will always be your friend.
I will come out to dumb areas
of the city
to chill.

██████,
you're so hard to reach,
I don't know why your worlds
falling apart, I don't know where
things have gone but I just can't
text you right now and nothing's worse.
I will not lose you.
I will not let you go.

██████,
I will force my way into your
soul and murder the hate.
I will get you free.
If they have to put me in prison
instead
I will do what it takes
to get you free.

██████,
I miss you.
Where are you?
Why are you always alone?

34
If the flowers open and close, I do not know.
Maybe love takes patience.
The gentle fingers.
Maybe flowers open or close.
We will press each other at our corners
and whisper
this:
Maybe love takes patience.

this:
Maybe flowers open and close.
This
is one gentle finger.
Here, the long words of a house
go.
There is dust and cracks
in the corners.
The people are too busy.
Her mouth is on his cock.
He has his tongue in her cunt.
The bed is never made.
There is dust. There are creaks in its corners.
Maybe they never clean.
They are too busy screaming
this:
Close your flower around me.
I pulled my fingers out of you
after you came.
They were red from your period.
I masturbated.
We kissed.
You touched my balls.
Both breasts were across my face.
I have heard:
This
is burning at your corners.
This is burning at your corners.
This is burning at your corners.

35

It was raining and I was driving back
from Viola.
On the radio, someone
said:
I don't know what democracy is.
I don't know what kind of democracy
the USA has.

I don't know what kind of democracy Canada has.
There green and the rain,
getting gas for my mother,
a hole in the floor of our
car, rain coming down
and cars going by.
Small traffic.
Little eyes. I thought: after the revolution,
it will be known
that all along
it was
just another military
dictatorship.
Cops are cops.
Being poor is being poor
and when no one's happy
in a country,
something's wrong.

36

We write hearts for each other (I write
them while we fight or in cars. In
Montreal when I would smoke cigarettes
I'd write our names again and again).

37

It is suggested by Che that revolution in the colonized
areas of the world
(Liberation)
will be the revolution that is successful.
Canada is still a colony.

38

The japanese umbrella. Under the furnace
and the japanese umbrella. I drank too much beer
too late before work in the morning.
I fold my sweaters and my shirts how
I saw them folded

at Isiah's, wide, so my clothes
look attractive and real. I put my books
up, six or seven. I haven't
touched my computer.
There are five people I
want to talk to. Here, dark, with shirts
hanging off the furniture, a few
hours before work, I have to choose.
Here the brown weather of joists and
floorboards, big rivers and the happy clutter of
Kelly's dye work. My future is folded wide
by my hands, warm and drunk with love. The atheist.

39

Downstairs, to the amber light on paint,
a bed, some books,
night and work. She
is moonlight wearing nothing or
my underwear,
my kisses.
Me, wearing nothing, and I run smooth
into the hours.
There is work in the morning.
Work here tonight.
Sleep in my arms.
Downstairs, she is not here, but the
amber light from
a lamp on the paint
and a bed and some books.
I have love and a night.
Work never stops.

40

The dog's orange. In bed, I think of wolves and
I think of how big, suddenly,
my body is. My hands
under my legs. In the dark. The dog's
orange. I, a new form, breathe heavy. I get happy.

I fart. Almost shit myself.
Nothing can take away this size.
This real human size.
Of a body curled up.
In fetal position
but still
so big!
I'm too drunk
but, no,
I don't care.
Nothing can take away
this size.
This joy.
I think of comedy. My heart beats very fast.
I think of a man getting excited and running into
a wall. I still need to shit. I don't
care. Nothing can take away
this size. The bulk of human body huffing here in the
bed like my brother's red dog upstairs. Nothing
can take away this joy.

41

The trees face down,
the west end's been gray for days.
Mother, father.
Sister, brother on the street,
there is no deep noise.
The sky is a blade.

Maryland's hungover.
Portage is in labor.
Sherbrook's getting breakfast.
Broadway's out early
on good behaviour.

42

Just be sure that your poems are ashes.
That they are already burned.

That you write them on burning pages.
On a page of flame.

When you are engaged
or when you write poems,
look very hard in your lovers face.
It is ashes.

Be sure that you put a ring of ashes on your lover's fingers.
On your lover's fingers of fire.
Be sure that you write your lover poems in the ashes.
Write your lover poems of fire.

You will wander hallways and alleys,
under crosses and broken shoes.
I have wandered through mornings and poems,
but I have always wandered through ash.

Be sure to write your love poems.
Poems on your lover's burning hand.
Be sure you give a ring of ash.
On your lover's page of flame.

Diamonds rain everyday.
I have caught them and brought them to my lover,
But I always bring them with burning hands
and poems written in the ash.

43

Witness her, under the flags, the low hill and streetlight.
Is she crying or sending a text? How many days will it be
before she is dancing in the street? Will she be dead first?
And buried in a cloak of dump refuse and scrap metal?
Flowers don't grow here. We don't sit under trees.
Just living a life, here, could be mistaken for lament.

44

I will dance with you to anything you put on.

In a kitchen of shadows or
like plants in the sun.
Nothing has cleaned. The sky is still dark,
or raining. I don't understand
a thing but I don't care,
I will dance with you to anything you put on.

45

Off work. In my brothers subcompact
driving back to the west. Villa Lobos.
Sweat and fiber glass. Past the school,
kids and the rich area to Furby and Cumberland.

46

The city wears scaffold like a summer dress.
She gets into construction all summer long
like she's having summer sex.

47

In a child's eye, every
eye that is not a
child's eye, is the eye
of the Law.

We learn to carry the
Law blindly. Every
eye of the law is a
blind eye.

How sharp are its senses?
How cruel is its temper?
We have only wooden swords
and sight.

48

Jesus is zero. A placeholder. People
should not say pray for me they
should say pray to me.

Last night,

on the couch, filming, there is nothing
between us and another human being.
We carry them like faces,

harder than coins, more present than money
and many, inside every fragile box
of shapes where a soul is in need.

Touch, through the shrouds, humanity.
Blessed is skin. Holy is material. The words
crumble off, are crushed in walls, or swelled.

Thought is not mystical. God is not real.
Action takes courage. Courage is friendship.
Tie yourself with absolute faith to equality.

49

I made a sword off some wood I found on the street and I
told
Cecil to get one and I climbed on the fence a bit and
was in the street and then Cecil and me found a
ball and brought it to the court at the end of the street
and we were playing twenty one with it and I showed Cecil
how to shoot the ball and he stopped to tie his
shoe and there was this white guy playing on the
court and he said hey to me but I didn't say anything
Steve and his family went by in the lane and I said
hi to them and Shane came by with a bike he
found but the wheel didn't work, an ambulance
went by and there were sirens and Cecil asked
me something about someone and I said they're
at the funeral.

I had to write when I heard funeral. I stayed
long enough to get a name.

50

Do not, whatever cost, deny your fury and the chipped,
shattered path that love leaves. Do not, please,
deny your tears and the bathtubs they will fill, the
alligators swallowed. Use what tearing, tightened,
that you have. Tear open, beat out, stem by
stem, the night sky with your rage.
Make the city rain fire, the kitchen shreds
of dishes, your face with the alligator
skinned wailing. There will be new avalanches
on the beaches of your cheeks dry and
invisible. But, please, above all, do not,
whatever cost, deny your joy, deny pleasure,
ecstasy and the pure wailing madness of
living a life, dance out until every
colour wears skin, teach the city glow,
reach across continents to the dancing of
many people, snap borders with your
laughter, tear countries from the day, swallow
them for delight and make love to
the one you love and finally, do not, never,
deny silence.

51

I am a swan or something I have never touched.
I touched glass. If I broke it
would I be their autistic child? Nevermind.
I don't have a mind, sand or glass.
I am a swan or something like that.
I have a mind of unmade glass on
bits of sand. We were talking. I am
a swan. Nevermind I said. There was a long
silence. Am I their autistic child?
But this is not my home. I do
not recognize any of this. This
is not my home. I keep picking up
other people's memories. Am I a swan
or is that an autistic fantasy. I

was sifting through the shreds of
glass and deep spoonfuls of
uncastled sand. These are the ruins
of my home, unfeathered, unmade.
I am a swan. I pressed
a window til it almost broke
and yes there was sun. I am
a sun and no one's child.

52

In the house of metaphor, they are standing at the window
and calling things by many names without looking at them.
Resounding points are made and a chorus hms and has but
prison
is not prison there and their windows have bars they cannot
see.

In the house of chatter, they are in the basement
dreaming lives and stories from their lives and stories and
building griefs from false analysis, they are clatching word
to
word, words like 'put a life together', 'make as whole' as
they pull the house down around them.

But my language is dead. I do not know where the road
is. I have no home. There are friends. I cannot
tell if I am laughing or crying. It sounds
like singing.

53

So, listen, there under the boots, the dog is at his arm, the
hours in the attic, this is a chisel, this, almost alone,
is a tool like a chisel, the world is dead or is dying,
its skin is raining down, this is how it sounds, a
chisel or a tool like a chisel made the hard world
two, now, everything is split, the music goes on,
there are some books, the rubble is pouring down,
the world ends here, when an ear, which can be a

tool like a chisel, is pressed into it and someone
listens.

54

Sometimes
there is a
coldness
in my villages
of thought.

The
people all
seem
very far away
from
each other.

As though
there is a
wind on
snow
and

everyone is
wearing
all of their
rags.
The

men have
grown
their beards.
No one
shaves.

And the grass
that is on
many hills is

pulled and
torn,

naked,
and sways.
These are
the sounds.
Not

words but
maybe words
for food and
then just

the
sound
of wind.
It is
very loud.

The
men trace
their beards.
They look
at the grass

at the hills
and how
they trace
the shape
of wind.

The women
see the
houses, the
buildings, the
places

people work
and they
work. They
laugh and a
hat

or scarf
blows off
a womans
head and
another

picks
it up.
Catches
it and
hands

it to her
and she
continues
walking
home

from
work and
she is
at the
top

of the
hill
when
she sees the
house.

And sometimes
I

think I
see children
and

sometimes
heaps
of bodies
but
the villages

are torn
open
by sirens
and labor.
I sit

on my
brothers
couch
and
listen

to them
whisper
or chatter
or say
nothing

upstairs
and I listen
to the
street
for

cars and the
kids
I saw before
then

I go on reading.

55

Waste the dishes in the quiet.

Absolute darkness.

Your kiss is softer than a breath.

Cloud of kiss.

Your kiss is the colours of a room and
tracing fingers down me.

I have sores in my mouth.

There is hair and light everywhere.

The irking turning stuff,
organic stuff,
turns out of pots and urns.

I brush my teeth.

Almost,
a finger touching,
tracing,

me,

but you are not
here and

I go down into the basement and turn out
the lights. Your kiss
is like absolute darkness.

56

Bumble the morning gunk through bone and morning
breath.

Ogle yawn.

Tiger stomach.

Test your burn and go to work.

57

Light on the corner of a tub.

Soap, bathmat and some bottles of shampoo
on the floor.

58

We are in the worst years! These are the worst years! There are whole countries broken down, at collapse, descending slowly or fast into the sea, faces and faces are tumbling through the grates, teeth and bellies of managerial governments, bureaucratic institutes, cash gorged power, hungry corporations, military dictatorships.

Cliffs of people crumble in or crash off suddenly into the swarming foaming body, into the hungry frothing whale. We are in the worst years, these are the worst years, the ocean takes us all.

No crumb or scrap, no recognizable feature survives. There is the gurgling throng as the wind dies. A hard, loud cry wanes, is sustained and falls, these are the worst times.

59

The gullsong — the babbling of the gulls. Taste chalk. Something rots, the smell, something rotting in the sun. Over the hills something is burning north.

60

We didn't get the apartment. I'm stuck behind a train bringing cornerbeads and drywall back. The grass on the boulevard is shivering.

61

When you find a mirror, look carefully, to know

completely
what is there, then
smash it and walk away with
nothing.

62

There will be people who excite me
who I will meet and people who
I hate. There will be
people that give me erections
and people that do not.
People that make me cry.
I do not know anything and
I keep fumbling over everything.
What I am trying to do
is scrape away the part of
me that blindly thinks it
knows, understands.

63

Downtown is pop music and
all the people
look like technology.
Everything is dressed
in ladders of fashion.
Rude geometry
is dead.

64

No poses. I walked out on a tab for
two beers and I feel bad. It's sunny.
I was at the patio and I looked
for the waitress and I couldn't
afford the drink. I could've paid
it on my credit card
but now I feel like crying. I
don't mean all broke people are
thieves. I just don't want her to

see the table's empty.

65

Foust this shame from me. This dirt worm. Money
makes a slob of us all. My dust hurts. It's
lost in the sun. Make this skin come off me.
I haven't eaten yet. Everything I do is wrong.

66

Now I am alone, not even a camera, and all
the ages of concrete
come out to meet me. The big ships of metal,
the poor, working faces, the brown faces,
chipped, at the garbage can, from the brick
of apartments, all the faces come to meet me. No land
of this. There are no excuses from these hours.
The little cuts
I've made with lathe and shiplap,
with plaster.
The little pains I've grown like a thorn
garden, like a garden of
weeds. I was out for a century, plucking yellow
from the streetlights
and when I returned, all my people
had been crucified. There is no one
to read this poem to. The sky is changing.
The traffic continues. You can barely
hear it, the sound of feet, the sound of
children dying. There is a stroller
in the thorns.
Where are the mothers now? Where are the
workers now? Where are the artists now?
Father is this the patch of earth and
mistakes you planted for me? Mother
are your secrets riper than the
apple trees.
All the fruit has gone to rot.
The thresh winds came.

All the faces are ruined. Are buried in the mud.
All the faces make a soft path.
A wet path where two lines from stroller
wheels
are drawn.
This is sharper than regret. This
cannot be hunger.
This is the need of the home. That
mirrors broke and windows
broke and chains never put
behind apartments. Crackle
with me, you face, you ear, you blind
undominated eye that has picked
up these poems
like seeds. Crackle
with me under feet.

67

Where are the festivals now? Where
the speakers?
the carnivals?
the politics?
Is festival only in the basements
in our poor caves
gathered around
a movie screen,
praying,
a poem book?
A new bright wound will not come here.
Where the light bulbs ring
and the poor are collecting
less than alms,
the lines on their hands.
Where are the speeches? Have
they been turned to
stone?
Carried, wooden-casketed, carrying
bullets down to the hull

of the earth instead?
Where are the new worlds and the
carnivals? Where are the speeches
or the marches? Have they been
burned up by
the tired need to be free?
the tired need to eat?
Where are the lovers and the fuckers
screaming tongues over each others
bodies? I will
meet you at the statue,
carry a book of poems,
make movies for you.
I will
burn the crusaders,
keep your promises well fed,
keep your child out of jail.
I will
be the stone statue
un-wooden-casketed.
I will
be torn up from the bosom
of your mothers.
Exhumed. I will
be your speeches and your
marches,
be your
carnivals and song.
be your
festival and dancing. I will
teach you how
in weather learned yearning
to love fierce.

68

No contingency here, in the black fields, where the
prairie life of the rich doesn't grow
but is dropped down. Here, there are the rows

and the rows of white boxes.
Cruel faces, no stubble, no eyes, your
breath the spear marked air. The sun will not
rise for you. The sun never did.
I will be the tornado, if it
does not come, and tear through
your suburbs with howl and drum. Even
the black fields will be gone and
the poor will go on,
unshuffling their lives and
looking for home.

69

I was drinking beers and writing at a bar on Graham
waiting
for Viola and I walked out and left my things in the
restaurant and waited for her on the steps of the hydro
building
in the sun. I felt tipsy and thought one person was her
because
the earrings and I started walking towards the glass smiling
and
when the person came out she was a black woman and I
went back to waiting. Then Viola came and I was smiling
and
we chatted and I tried to kiss her a million times.
My god she's gorgeous! My god she's amazing! And we
flirted and talked about where we were gona live and I
kissed
her and I gave her her debit card because I had used
it to put down the deposit on our apartment but we were
denied because we weren't going to renew the lease then
she got on the bus about a thousand times. I can
never say goodbye. Then I went back into Rudy's and
I finished my drink. Then I left without paying and I felt
bad as soon as I was walking and I wrote about it and
bought a pack of cigarettes and talked to Lukas and Isiah
about hanging out and I went out behind the back alley

of my old apartment and I felt bad for smoking and I wrote and read for awhile but my phone died so I walked back to my brothers and plugged in my phone and saw all these people walking back.

One guy asked me for cigarettes and if I watched the daily star he was short and white and had a yellowing moustache from smoking so many cigarettes and I gave him three smokes then he asked me about the tv show and I told him I never saw it and he said he was waiting on payday that the show was about how Jesus was coming back and I asked him what then and he said new heaven new earth and I asked him if all this stuff would still be here he said Jesus was going to take the people away that in Isaiah twenty six it says the foundations of the earth will be riven and god will establish a new heaven and earth and there would be no animals but it would look just the same as right now and I asked him if there'd be people and he said there would be people and maybe puppy dogs and I went home and made a sandwich and talked to the guy we were planning on subletting from and texted Arthur once my phone was plugged in and the guy we're subletting from said he was a law student and what they were doing was illegal and he was going to talk to them tomorrow so that we could move in and I said thank you and hung up and walked over to Lukas.

I started a cigarette and was reading when I got there and Lukas came out and let me up and Darah was on the couch and me, Lukas and Darah smoked a roach and looked at his printwork. Then Darah went to bed she worked a full shift and biked forty minutes both ways and Lukas and I went out and went to the LC and ran into Delf and we bought some beers and Delf was with Diana and they bought wine and we left them and took a picture of Calvary Temple and walked by his artwork and found a tango band playing

in the Purple Room this club in an alley and the door was open and we stood there and listened and then walked

away and he had put three pieces of wood on a phone pole with nails that said TAKE ME AWAY and I said that I liked it and we walked down to the river and we looked at a bar but didn't have the money and ended up running into Delf and Diana on a bench by the river and I sat there awhile and tried to have conversation and looked at the trains going away on the railbridge, their lights on the bars.

Then we got up and we walked and we ran into Dan who had beer and a burger in his bag and we sat down and had beers and he ate his burger and said he'd fallen in love and Cali moved in and he stopped smoking weed and stopped dealing and was happy. He seemed happy and he talked about property taxes in Winnipeg then said he learned more dealing drugs than in business school and I went for a pee and I walked down through the trees to the river and I had to climb over a nest of fallen branches and I stood in the mud at the river and peed in the water and looked at the lights in the water and felt bad because I missed all of Viola's calls and and I felt bad because I had felt them buzzing but we'd smoked a joint and I felt bad talking to her high and I heard a song from some place on the street saying 'Just can't get home' or 'Can't have a home' or something and I looked at the trees and the streetlights or whatever that was making orange in water and I walked back through the mud and Dan's girl Cali had come and we talked for awhile then I went away. They were talking about shows and I went and climbed a tree and when I climbed it the guy walking past said he'd give me a hundred

dollars if I fell on my face and he said that he had it but I didn't but that's theatre and I should have.

I looked at the tree and the place I was sitting right beside me the crotch of the tree split so it looked like two thighs and right in the middle of the crotch of the tree was a slit that looked like a vagina and I kissed it then I rested my head between the legs and I stuck my tongue in the slit and then I climbed down and said I had to leave because I had work in the morning and we all walked together for awhile then I split off from them at Notre Dame and the street that Towne 8's on and Giant Tiger.

Then I started walking west. The first time I walked down Notre Dame with my Vie we talked about theatre and doing what we want with our lives and she told me to take a shot on NTS if that's what I wanted. She said it made sense and I fell in love when we were walking back then and I walked down Notre Dame and I saw the street and was so happy. There were people outside the Balmoral, the Subway there now and two lights on the sign from the strip club and I walked past this boarded up home that was blue and said something with an M and a CO. at the top of it and I was scared like a kid of its garden of leaves and dead trash and debris and I walked past Independent a jeweller that was a photo shop once but now it sold jewellery and watches and Fleet Auto Body which I'd never been in and Tawagin Pawn Shop that I'd never seen open and this Chinese food deli that must have just opened but was closed now and this pawn shop and the Portuguese Community Centre and this place that said Changing Lives

on its storefront and had an anagram like CAEA or something and had the mural of two dancers that I remembered and loved seeing. And I walked through the

Extra Foods lot that was cleared out since the store was closed where my brother and his fiancée used to buy their groceries. The place had to close because of too much stealing and shoplifting because people need food and if they close the store in your area because you need to eat, go to rich stores and shoplift there til they close too. And I walked past the basketball court that's also a parking lot at the end of my street and it had a piece of metal attached to the fence with chinese characters in red on it and I walked home and went outside and had a beer and just started writing and got a text from Arthur saying 'Man I wish you were here' and I wished the same about so many people and felt happy alone on the porch drinking beer and just writing.

70

I'm sorry I missed your calls. I ended up hanging out with Lukas and we met up with Dan and with Cali. I bought a pack of cigarettes tonight — I don't know why and I'm sorry I know I said that I would quit. I guess it's been harder being back than I expected. I get stressed about people and all the stuff I have to figure out. I only feel at home when I'm with you or when I'm with Isiah or my brother or when I'm reading or when I'm alone with the city. I guess I let myself

use the stress as the excuse. I'm
sorry. I hope you can forgive
me — you know I've been
working on this and I'm telling
you because I trust you and
I love you and I want you're
help in all this. I guess I'm
trying to invite you into my
struggles. I'm sorry. I love
you. I wish I'd heard your
voice tonight. It's funny. I
miss you. We're in the same
city and I miss you. I
hope you're sleeping so
good and I'm sending you
kisses. I can't wait
to talk in the morning.

71

This cabin of dreams. This cave
has grown tight with cloth and
concrete. I can't reach you
across the tether. I'm reaching.
Alone tonight. Reaching.

72

I am over her hair, naked, reading poems.
She is under my skin, sleeping. We are both alone.
I wring planets out of her torrents, out of her hair
with ringed hands. I pull the sun and my labour
through this statue of rivers. We are a pair
of bridges, drawing the beauty of things without creator,
drawing words, water, lives and our breathing carcasses
under each other, standing at the edge of imperfectness.

73

A woman is on
a bus. Her

hair and her
skin were
worked in. She
has come
unlatched
from the
long trembling
fabric
that is the sky.
She has
punctured
a hole
in the sky. The
crippled net swings
helpless
and she
steals
its size. She
adds its blue
to her face
and she unrolls
clouds alone
before her
two children
on the
street that
has lain
itself
through her
home and over
her table
for dinner.
Her eyes are
the only
untouched.
She has
pressed
them

into deep wounds
to staunch
bleeding, that is
where she
got her curtains.
But her eyes
were never
touched. They
have been under
the arms
of drunks and
walked a
staggered path
with them
back to their
homes and though
she made her
and her sons'
clothes from
the smells
she carried
home, her eyes
were never
touched. They
can be
blades and
they have washed
other eyes
clean
in their water
but
they are alone
in the world.
At night
she takes
them out and
puts one in
each of

her sons' sleeping
palms. That
is her sleeping.

74

I will get dressed a thousand different ways! I will
wear the red sweater when we're shooting
and to make Viola
tell me
she will burn it some day
and laugh and do nothing in
and write poems and read books and
get drunk and drink coffee in. I
will wear that neon plaid shirt that I hate with
a sweater from my mom
to
tug out alone and in the mirror and to say to
Viola I hate wearing
these clothes.
I don't feel like myself and
for shooting and dinners with Vie's
family where I never feel at home and
so I
don't feel
bad about having the sweater. I will wear
crew necks for working and make the
white into gray from the dust and the labour
and for buying beers at the LC and driving Cal's truck. I
will
wear button ups
to relax and look handsome, drink beer, almost
posing, read books, almost
posing, and always leave one too
many buttons undone. I will
wear a blue shirt, buttoned up, and buy pomade and
razors and shaving cream and aqua velva I can't afford
to walk down the stairs after a shower
as Viola comes in through the

door in a casual grace, in a striped
blue-white dress, like she's
wearing the summer
and her see me and us go out to
the movies
and get ice cream and
flirt and
hold hands and kiss in all sorts of
places and
talk about the movie and
take pictures of each other
as we're walking
over the bridge to the park and we
stop and stand staring, so with her, looking
out over the river, just after
the suns gone,
the first of the
warm nights of summer, the clouds
gray, dark charcoal and the river
in currents, spits,
going under and me at the concrete in the
yellow of bridge light
with the people going by like their seasons
and holding poems and her and the slipping
like the river and running back
into my hands, like the
river, and slipping and
running and I will wait
til she takes the clothes off of me
in a rain of soft kisses and her
red summer tongue. I will
wear nothing
for her, for the stage, in my silence, and screaming,
again and again, as often as
possible.

75

The street cleaner with green gloves

feels the storm on his skin. He
sweeps my poems up with a red
broom. Nothing will divide him from the
thunder. No one will count his sweat.

76

I have the prairie storm in me. Desire
of a colour that has no name
and leaves nothing behind. I have more
of the thunder than sirens.
I was raised on wheat fields
and hood farms where the children scream,
sweep dust, wreck worlds and shoot guns.

77

The drunk is drifting, hot, through the thunderstorm and
under the stores. He
is, with his hungry eyes, waiting for the doorstep of light
that will whisper
Wring yourself out here. Have a coffee. I can patch the
holes in your knees. I can
make your shoes clean but I can do nothing with your soul.
It is filthy
and too big to hang up here. Make a tent with it and invite
the woman that
you love inside. Make her see the human of your body.
Make her wet
your dry tongue with her tongue. Uncover the night in her.
Rest in her
cleavage of stars.

78

Poetry is
the clouds and one hand
that will tear them down
and make a roof for the billions
out of nothing.

79

Report from the flight. From Notre Dame. From Furby
Street. West

End is a broken heart. I tried to love you here. My
heart is made of concrete. I wear.

I am made. A love out of cracks, out of
the footsteps of children. West End is under the long
ways. We walked maryland everyday. West

End is how much is bacon. West

End is have sex all night. Grow up and
went through the pyramids burnt on all sides.

A new side was split
open. West

End is work out. Make love. Fuck.

Art. Drugs. Play ball. And
come out for your cigarettes. So

West End is in Maples.

West End is in Paris.

And the heights. West

End is in prison. West

End is in polo and Montreal and Toronto.

Me.

Coming in

burned of truths for the
mothers with two kids. For

the women with

two jobs. For the

lives of the homeless.

This art is

forever. West End is

unending. We

break it open.

80

West End is
staying up with your
beer and your
poems or

fucking your love
good and hard,
long and deep. We
didn't grow up
at your malls just
had to get
jobs there
to survive. We
will destroy the
utterance in
favor of
orgasm. We
will destroy
the friend
in favor of comrade

81

In the (west) end I did
not ride the bus home
but stayed at my
brothers crib in the
basement.

82

Your west faced
eyes crippled
me. Angel,
your smile
is brighter than
paradise. Rabble,
you are so bright
it cannot be
called the
word light.

83

These last poems, I will write
in the arms of my lover.

These last poems, I will write
on the skin of the rain.

These last poems, I will write
without breath, without pen,
on the page of our flame.

These last poems, I will write
on the floor of the morning.

These last poems, I will write
jubilant, naked waste.

These last poems, I will write
without shame or restraint,
only my pure, apocalypse praise.

These last poems, I will write
in the hands of the worker.

These last poems, I will write
against her hour of pain.

These last poems, I will write
without rest, without end
to return her, her name.

These last poems, I will write
in the blackness and smiles.

These last poems, I will write
past the fabric of space.

These last poems, I will write
without worlds, without language
in the gibberish of face.

84

She taught me
No kiss is sure: Nothing
is guaranteed. We
must impose our
identities. Heat-Pacers.
Her: Blue
goodnight calls. Me:

soft handed midnight. Red
fingers. Red
fingers. Red
fingers. Lovers are
wrapped up. (first kisses)
Every second is a risk.

85

Hammer. Table. Laundry. Your
mouth of light. I'm
camera. Sargent knots in a tree. Your
leaves. Your kisses. Your sheets.

part II

0

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

1

In the recess of breath, this
recess of an hour, this lot wears
three leaves,
the metallic light of afternoon
and the shadows of a breeze. This
recess of a thought. These
three cars
three trees
three bins of
garbage trees and
cloverdale cardboard trays. Something,
less than
a breeze (the pepsi can rolls across the lot), less than
dust, less than
skin, less than the
bird talk,
rises.
A weekend rises from the street.
People —
purses, roaches, carkeys
— pass horizontally,
slide off the lot. Trees slide wind
off. Something rises. Less than
air.
A paper bag.
A twelve pack of beer.
A memory. The sounds — birds, cars, sirens,
buses — slide and
bounce off

this lot,
wearing less than
itself. A recess of its own
exact dimensions. Four cars. Two
trees. The garbage bins. Not birds. Not
breeze. Not the people passing back. Nothing
breathes.

2

Return to paradise. The brutal faces of
paradise. The child's tear-worn hands
in paradise. The summer dripping off
like alcohol damage
of every angel's skin. Return to paradise.
Five-jobs, empty-handed paradise. Bike
rust, foot oil paradise. Cry
grease. Build under. Build under
suns. Build under
tragedy.
Paradise.
Bark dust. Black dust of suns. Bark:
Dust. Sons with fingers
torn on the patches of
paradise. Caught (wind-like) flag
seams. Flag fray and
bird skin. The flies gather at the cat's
eyes in paradise.

3

The Guatemalan children and the Native children,
Pedro, Abraham, Cecil and others,
have a backyard fire.

Kelly and Nat are burning
credit card debt
in the backyard.

We're playing cards.

Taking off our clothes
to each others skin.

The dress off your shoulder.

Something, of smoke and desire from
the credit card debt, from the parking
lot fires,
from the cabins of love,
from backyard fires,
from unending smoke,
rises.

4

Was my father by this cabin of fire, burning
pink skin off of loss,
looking at his lover and losing at cards?

Were these two hands
forged from the fire
of burnt muslims,
burnt natives?

The blind, blank burst of black skin desire.

Was my breath of an
ancestry
of colonial desire?
Or are they caught up
in the backyard flames of
new children?

The west end
was heard from bathrooms.
Rubbed in my skin.

This pink-skinned loss
of rubbing off a history, inheritance, a

colonial desire.

I wore the black flame
of backyards, burnt thick with
pink skin. Burned pure with
delight. I wore the thick smoke of lateness.

I gave her me at your altar
in the eternal hood fires.

5

Sargent. The big face of loopy want. The west end: hats,
bikes, crude need, prison tats, rusty iron. The stroller
outside. The people. Old
men buying six packs. Molson dry. The garbage tvs.
Roots. The leaves. BFI. I am ellice.
I am west end. I am sargent. The
Zoohky tattoo is scrawled across
in desire.

6

Hey. Fire. A table with beer, home cooked food and
cigarettes.
A table of children.
Building a fire. A table of home cooked grief
and laughter. The childrens scraps
annihilating language.
Building a fire.

Children: whoever believes in... I believe... who
ever believes in... put your feet in the
fire... I tried to grab him and throw him.

Hey. A table. Where are you going?

To the fire,
your grief.
To the fire,

your laughter.
All the children,
to the fire.

All the children's remains.
Shovelfuls of ash. Charcoal...
is burnt wood... You were gone for a long
time. You scraps. Do you have
any newspaper? You
were gone for a long time. This is a
book... To the fire.
Your pain. To the
fire. Your gospel. Your birds. Your windows. What
could have been a parent
leaning out of windows. A table.

You will know
cigarettes.
You will know
beer. You
will know a mother's
words and
home cooked meals do not always
lean out
of windows. All of a sudden...
the smoke you wear will be a
decision. All of a sudden...
out of the air... A table.
Leave it.
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM

Change... Does your mother know you make
that face... Leaning out of windows... I'm
going... Does your mother know you're making
that fire... They're so slow at climbing. Hey.

No one's watching the fire.
The food's cold. The beers gone.
The smokes out in a trayful of water.

7

A family. Fast Spanish. Laughter. Ashes
and laughter. English and fast,
constant Spanish. Against the rough roses.
The pink houses. The summer.
The brown summer skin of
chaos. The rising cries. Rising cries.
Things smash.

A family made of smoke,
Spanish,
screaming,
rust iron,
children. Screaming. Make a family
out of danger.
Stop!

I will punch you. My butt almost went on fire. This
fire was weird because of you two. Make a
rough family (I deserve it only)
on smoke, constant
Spanish, children laughing,
thinking smashing, children screaming, spreading
fire.

It's done.
Let go Peter.
I'm just rolling it up.

Peter and Pedro are the
same name.

Against the pink stillness
of a burning neighbourhood. Make

a family in the blisters.
Make a family in the Spanish and the
very screaming,
things smashing
and fire. Things screaming and fire. Constant
smashing.

You just said my name
against the evening of summer.

Go inside to the Spanish.
Go inside to the screaming.
Go inside to the silence and rubble.
The pink rubble of a
flag made from garbage. Of
an evening. Make a fire of
the burnt rubble, pink-skinned houses.
Look at this.

Make a skin from the sunsets.
Make a skin from the breaking.
From the dawn. Hey.

Make a summer from the fast
Spanish,
burning bodies,
from the drum of children, from small
hands, from goodbyes, from the Spanish,
from the fire.

The skin is distinct from the air.
The smoke is distinct from the sky.
The Spanish continues. Make
a fire from the family.

8

I have no journey to make. Only between the
screen doors and the children. Between the little

words and the children, with a hand
across both mouths, with a hush between
the doors, policing children. Against the
sirens. Between the hand of a child
and a stolen flower. I have no eyes. I
have no mouth, no hush, no hands. I
am the petals of a stolen flower.

I am blown open by a child's hand.
Screen doors fall across the youth
face. A mother's hand. You stay here!
across the child's face. I have no
pilgrimage to make but into the heart of
a child's wound. Down into the belly
of their screams. Squat in the
corridors of their plucked thorns. Pluck thorns
from the latch til the whole
wailing thing is open and in bloom.

9

The middle class are all house.

10

Who was born to this? Waterless. Electricity
turned off. Who was born to this? Roadless.
Who was born to this? Unfloored, unhomed. Who
was born to this? Hungry. Hungry. Hungry.

Who, with the teeth marks and floor boards
of a tableless home, who, with the pat
need screams and the siren song, who, gored
out of a life, born addicted to crack, was born to this?

Nothing. Scream. Nothing to lose. Nothing.
Scream. Nothing to lose. Nothing. Scream.
Nothing to lose. Born with 88:88
tattooed across the backs. Who will die for more?

11

Beneath the airplanes. Berlin. Beneath the sky. Beneath
the light.

Screen doors and the ashes of a child's fire. Muslims.

Speak.

Bees at the window. We are butted out, over sirens, like the
last cigarettes of
the night.

We are spread, under airplanes, over sirens, like traffic and
ashes and porchlight, in
the street.

12

Under the trees, I am
less than the shadows.

I am hunting police.

I am fiercer than suns. I
am thicker than leaves.
I am damper than the

morning. I am more
patient than the moon
light. I am dressed

in poems about trees. I am
more absolute than night,
tonight, hunting police.

13

Dear Judge,

I sawed the rot wood off your home.

You explained squirrel traps with delight. BAM
BAM. BAM. Laughter.

Dear Judge,

Is it good that you are silent about the people?
The people are wailing.

Is it good that you have thousands
to pay on whims
for unnecessary scaffolding,
renovations?
They have nothing.

Dear Judge,
Have you been in prison?
Did you have a single mother?
How many of your parents worked
at residential schools?

Dear Judge,
They say you
are a nice man. My
people can't afford
your nice.

Goodbye.

Can't afford
to be nice. Goodbye.

If you are nice
here, you die. Goodbye.

14

Saw you the mother? Her
screens askew, her singlehood, her single
hood? Her two children? Her lights still
on? Her tiny house? Her children stole
the neighbour's flowers. And re-planted them
in their own home. Planted them!

Praise be to the tiny fingers!
To the thieving fingers!
To the fingers thick with grime!
To their crime!

Saw you her yellow flowers? Maria.
What jobs do you work?
How did you lose your teeth?
Why the names Pedro and Abraham?
Maria. How far is it to Guatemala?
Did you imagine living in a garage?
Is it better here?
In a garage with yellow flowers?

15

Light. Give me light before I die.
A pool of light. A circle of light.
On the back deck with books and beer.
Then bury me beneath stolen flowers.

16

This, with destruction at every corner of its being. Living
with destruction at every corner of its being. Lovers with
destruction at every corner of their being. I say
this, not as a gentleman caller,
I am no gentleman caller. The
lives with destruction, the loves that are wanting and
vicious, the cities that are blind, the worlds
that are riven. Complete destruction is imperative.
Complete
destruction is required. I say this,
at the edge of courage, at collapse, with a murder
of crows in my gut: Destruction must be absolute.

We are not whole. We are made of many corners.
We must be destroyed. Each one must be destroyed. I want
limitless. I want
love limitless. I want you. I want you
limitless. Let us match our corners up. Destroyed.
Let us match our nothings up. Let us match our bodies,
empty,
dripping with thoughts, dripping, long legs, with desire to
be

limitless, with destruction burning at every corner.

17

Your whispers are on my skin. My skin
is thick and hot with your shouting. Listen.
The rain is my kisses.
They are at your window, trying to get in.

18

Dog fur. A slick hand. Drop a match in rainwater. Porch
mosquitos. Deck chairs. The roar of storms. Wet
wood. Green glass. The noise and hush. Black
trees. A neighbourhood. Gone. Everything is gone.
To the white sky. The orange sky. The pink sky.
Purple like a bruise. A hole opens up.
There. Nothing is where a word was.

19

A journey into the black knots of trees. Into the mouths of
the
hungry. Into the acute angle of the sky. A journey between
ladders. A journey under awnings and porchlight and
kitchens
on and tumbling after midnight and the rubble. Into
the shams and shambles of people's lives. A journey
into a child's laughter. What is that hot ragged sheet?
What is that robe worn by lovers? What is that
rising? Rising into the acute angle of the sky?

20

There's no metaphor for a woman's back. Reaching for her
purse
naked. Peaches.
If someone drew the lips below the eyes that see
this woman's back reaching
(Her breasts fall. Her back is smooth. Her waist. Her hips.
Her spine. Things slide into shadows. Her
back blushes. Your sex is so good. Absolute power. No

metaphor for that
or her naked back.), they would be big and red as apples.
As
though she'd painted them there. Over
a person. Made a name for her desire.

21

Muslim laughter.

The sun is crippled. A hole is
punctured in the work. Islam joy:
as though
numerous fabrics, more colours,
are wrapped up in everything, wrapped around
everything.

Allah is the
sisters. Laughter's rebellion.

Soon,
we're laughing for no reason.
Someone tells a joke. A revolution.

The sun
is crippled. Pleasure
drips through work
in every colour. We force our own light.

Soon,
we're marching for no reason. Laughing,
working,
silent,
for no reason. Caught up
like a brand new garment in
sudden
Muslim laughter.

Sisterhood. A revolution.

The Academy is no place for me. The white faces
 drag bellies of wealth, drag
 bellies of lazy, mouths of greed.

Academy, where are your mothers,
 trotting to their graves? Make your
 grit and life off slaveships, make your
 happy homes from the shells of
 sales workers lives. How long did you look
 in the mouths of need, the bellies
 of crazy, the bellies of bed health and
 brown fingers? Why not rub your cheeks on
 iron? The bars are built around us. Why not
 rub your teeth on the fences and mountains?

Real people breathe. Academy,
 do not make me lazy,
 do not make me sick with your
 wealth, with your grumbling. Have you
 heard the big cries of the mountains
 we call inner-city? Neighbourhood?

The ghetto needs,
 dreams,
 seethes with poor, less than a hand.
 What good would they be in a
 theatre where all they're
 needed for
 is applause?

I have a kinship here.
 My brothers are in need.
 I'm going to live in the mouths of
 laughter, the bellies of children, the
 bellies of hungry.

The poor wailed. The poor

snapped. The poor splintered down. The
poor made an avalanche. I am running to those
peaks. I am running into battle. I am
putting myself under prisons. I am seismic.

I am the repeats,
doubled,
tripling over a nation of
locked doors, bureaucracy, law courts.

I don't have time to forget how to bleed.

I can feel the sea. The reserves battering
off of closed doors. The gates
will be snapped and torn. The iron of
your beds will be twisted
into tiny homes. I will make
myself into roofs and into mountains. Lay out
longer and flatter than a ghetto song on
repeat.

23

Thunder. Children's voices.

24

Between the black stone clouds and screams. Sunlight. The
hard
gravel tune. A bicycle through bushes. Catch
rain. A bucket of psalms and laughter. The smoking
bowl of lament rises over the west end. Work and
voices clawed up the afternoon.

This is the stroller wail of decision.
This is alcohol and blindness.

A screen door slams.
Generations die in the roominghouse. What is
the slumlord cloak? Trees disappear. Birds

in the fetid grounds of life
disappear.

Greetings are never ending. A world rattles
with their pain. The soft popping noises of beginning.

This is the long walk through newness
to clear the ash.
This is the edges of your living, spinning,
drifting into silence.

25

Old man singing. Drunk. Child.
Beaten at home.
Beaten on the street.
Beaten by police. Child.
Put behind bars. Child. Had
his face beat in with a hammer. Child.
Caught bullets. Old
languages
die. All the doors
close.
Child. Is bleeding in the street.

26

I'm at your door.
I have food for us from
Seven-Eleven.
Nothing else matters.
The seeds and children falling.
You're not here.

27

Sirens on Cumberland.

This is the west end.
This is the primeval.
The ferocious.

This is the exhaust. This is
under every sky.

The children are silent. The evening of halos broken into a
shower of
sparks. Only a few stars remain. No headphones. No
silence. This
is under the refrigerators. The drug whistles. Yip yipping.

The sirens continue.

Believe in a Poetry of Violence. Sneaking through yards
and whispers,
the west end collects scabs and drug wounds. The children
leave to
collect debt. Or are shot. Or are put in prison. Believe in a
Poetry
of Violence.

Bow to no one.
Forgiveness is not a word.

The doors do
not latch or
do not exist
or have bars.
This is the west end.

Little neon cross baby. Crack scabs
and black teeth. We buy gold. Dis-
count everything. Our addresses are
in spraypaint or on paper tacked up. This
is the west end.

Every home deserves a song. Every hollow-faced
home deserves a song. The shutters are
down in some. The porchlights are on. The
tvs are on. The women are screaming. The

prostitutes are out. Every person
deserves a song. Every
person is hungry.
No one has a home.
This is the west end.

No politeness.
No time.

Kill. For your freedom. Shoot cops and lawyers.
Rob grocery stores. Take what food you need.
Knife the fuckers trying to destroy us.
Go out. Take to the streets. Take to the street.
Violence is the only answer now.
The sky is flashing. Fire works. Drivebys.
The drunk and hungry homeless fathers crouch
in alleys looking for a place to die.
The single mothers scream where their children
can't hear it. The marriages and buildings
collapse. No water, no food and no heat.
Go out. Take to the streets. Take to the streets.
Go out. Take to the streets. Take to the street.
Go out. Take to the streets. Take to the street.

28

Silence falls on the tiny house
like porchlights
or screen doors:

The latches do not
work. They wail closed. Sirens
stop and start all night.

Hear the branches cracking. The alleys
cracking.
Truck tires.
A couple voices.
Nothing

happens but death.
Hungry
die. No jobs
die. Sales
and shop clerks and
storeowners
die.

There's no working class here. Capital
made the unions
middle class
bureaucracy. The sales class. The
mothers
with two jobs. The
mall workers. The
fast food
workers. Over here
we die selling clothes. Over there
they die
making what we die from
selling: clothes.

29
Here
this is the air of my hands.
This the mouth
at your pussy.
I grew up in
the west end.
I'd die
for the people here.

30
I wear the Ellice Carnival everywhere.

If you,
Liberals, wish to cut
the fire from my skin,

the many colours,
the light of Infinity. If you
wish to cut the halo from
me: Hood Saint, I will
cut you open.

Make stars of me
to light revolts.

Make guns
from my skin
to kill police.

Make courage
out of nothing
and cut you from my life.

part III

0

Anthony of decision,
turned from every door.

1

Young man, why are you by the river?
By the twisted oak and the weeds?
I am burning my white skin off.

Dip your leaves in the solar flood
by the twisted trees and the river.

Write your name: Caress.
Write your name: Silence.

Your skin will never be a home.
Bring it into ecstasy.
Dip it in blood.
Write a current in your flesh
(I am burning my white skin off)
that will rend it.

To the mouths of ants
these flakes of cash.

I am burning my white skin off
by the muds of anguish
and writing new names in the
ecstatic ash.

2

What can be dredged up from the river?
Only the bodies of dead women.
What can be wrung from it? Only
the bodies of dead women.

Weed. Trash. Ants. By the twisted tree
I will stop the river
until every woman's corpse is pulled up
and given a new name.

3

You, barefeet,
I don't have any questions for you anymore.

Send your pink skin in a shroud
cold bathing
to the poor.
Wear ants and weeds.
Drink birdsong. Drink sunblood.

You have not come here
to pray.
You have come here
to die.

Unravel your barefeet.
Send them through the traffic laughing.

You have no more flesh.
You have no more hatred.
You are only armed with two fists,
in the river,
clawing out the nameless
from their cages of baptism.

4

Your hours,
your steps,
undress them.

The miles are gone.
The years are gone.

The day is good.
It is good to be naked.

5
Junkyard. Moosehead.
Pallmalls. Dandelions. Trash.

Erik: I hate my white skin.
Anthony: Wear your work instead.

6
Doctors do not drive trucks.

7
Us, swing in the hammock
like leaves and draw
phone lines, aching
for each other,
on each other.

“This is a laundry line,” you say,
and tear the clothes off of me.

We will be
like two shoes together
hanging from the lines
I wrote for you,
you wrote for me,
in a neighbourhood of flesh.

New territory.

8
Rain bottle music. I wear
blue in the morning, blue
in the afternoon.

Rain bottle music.

Tapping at the
windows.
A white cloud
covers everything.

The
boots and roofs roar. Rain bottle music. The
trees scream. Rain bottle music.

The kitchen windows are open, the
smell of rain comes in, the days flood in.

Rain bottle music
whimpers, brown-
skinned, like wet
wood in the garden.

Coffee and text messages under the
awnings. A mouthful of smoke
is pressed into the softest pages.

Rain bottle music.
In a jungle of doors. The shingles
run wet. Rain bottle music.

Colder than flowers. Black
birds and houses are beaten.
Cacophony.
The neighbours have no eavestroughs.
Things are screaming. Tortured birds
and sirens go up
like war. Rain bottle music.
Pounding. Here. Pounding.

Death is here.
Not in metaphor.
In the air.

Rain bottle music.
The poems are shredded
thin by the water. The storm
drowns everything. Rain
bottle music.

Extension cords. Lawn chairs. Barbecues.
Wood porches. Green window casings.
Wire mesh. Tin roofs. Chimneys. Scrap
two by fours. Car seats. Fence scraps.
Garbage cans. Back doors. Laundry
lines. Bird nests. Pink plywood. Gas
meters. Red doors. Tarp backs.
White fans. White plastic tables. White
boards with KILLERS written in blue.
Shovels. Firepits. Yardsheds. Buckets.
Phone books. Black dirt. Sawdust.
Bark. Mulch. Ash. Masks. Soilbags.
Windowframes. Weedheads. Caution
tape. Mattresses. Chalk words. Alley
ways. Gravel pits. Paper bags. Applecores.
Cola cans. Bicycles. Garbage bags. Grocery
bags. Yellow plastic. Black sweaters. Wet wool.

The back of my shaved head and
blue shoulders. Colder than flowers.
I am tapping on windows.
A man's arm hasn't moved. My
wet pages are rain bottle music.
We are mouthfuls of smoke
in this neighbourhood. I am
teaching you to dance.

9

There is a little pool in the chairs seat.
Ashes flail.

Long green drips

pass over his hooded face.

Rain.

Steam.

Smoke.

His lips are
burnt with
seeds.

The table cloth pendulums.
Askew on the plastic.
The
plastic is wet underneath.

10

The rain is constant.
It runs over everything.
The sink is clogged.
I think of my hands over
your dress.

The rain is clean and hard like a dress.
The house is full of work. My brother
and his fiancée are dancing and boxing and
vacuuming. I'm doing the dishes,
thinking of running my hands over your
dress like the rain.

I ran the garbage out. There's a hole
in my red shoe. The rain is hard
and fast and constant. It
makes a dress out of
everything.

I do the dishes
and vacuum
and think of how your dress is like

the rain.
our hands are like the rain. My face,
my work, our hours, your kiss is like the rain.

The rain makes its own country.
Silver and thick like a dress.
We are wrapped in each other.
The trees are greener now.
The rain makes its own country.

11

The flame runs up the match. Ashes stain
everything. The tablecloth is wet.

12

He said, "What bleeds for seven days
and doesn't die?" I didn't say anything.
"A cunt." he said.

"Their strength is incredible." I said.
"If you were bleeding from your balls
I bet you wouldn't go to work."

13

The small package of cigarettes was crushed
and they've all gone flat.
He leans out of his pink walls and
eats airplanes. His windows are all
arms and smoke. The gray
casings lean and, monsterfaced,
mourn the dense neighbourhood. He
coughs rain musk and ash. He bellows
new words and weeps
chimneymouthed.
His children pour over the street and
drive trays full of tears into it.

14

Children,
wash your cuffmarks in the thunder.
The schools here are bad.

15

Huron. Mountain. Jubilee.
Huron.
The rain. Mountain.
Jubilance.
Here on: Jubilance.
Five
cents less.
Bus fare. Short
five cents.
Mountain.
Jubilance.
Aberdeen. Burrows.
Jubilee. Mountain.
Aberdeen. Burrows. Jubilee. At
Manitoba.
Five cents
short. Mountain.
Jubilee.
Aberdeen.
Manitoba.
Jarvis
North. McPhillips Station. I'm so
naked its crazy.
White dots. Ecko unltd. Coffee.
Logan. Jubilee. Will.
Auto value. William.
Jubilance.
William
at Arlington. The Turbans of Streetlight.
Jubilance.
Wings for every task.
Buildings.

Tecumseh.
Jubilance.
I am.
Jubilance. William. Jubilance. William. Jubilance.
William
at Tecumseh East.
Jubilance.
Health Sciences Center. My mother's work.
William
at Sherbrook. Health
Sciences Center. My
hands. Isabel. Delivery.
Jubilance
My head's open. Seven Eleven
workers pop out of it
and
sit outside
nodding and talking
with homeless
men.
Homeless men
with signs,
cardboard,
wheelchairs.
The rain.
Huron. Mountain. Aberdeen.
Burrows. Manitoba.
Jarvis. McPhillips. Logan.
William. Arlington.
Tecumseh. Sherbrook. Isabel. Notre
Dame.
Cumberland.
This bus does not
pass Jubilee.
Traffic.
Jubilance. Green rain.
Streetlights.
Notre Dame.

Cumberland. Green
lights. Rain.
Jubilee.
Jubilance.
Sweaters.
Jubilee.
White dots.
Bus fare.
Bus lights.
Windows.
Jubilance.
Home. Here
on. I am.
Jubilance.
Home is
borrowed.
My mind is
red.
Jubilance.

16

The bus gone. Home.
The sky is vicious with light. Rain
stops.

17

Basement is
flooded.
Poor. Rain. Condoms
out. No soap.
Clothes wet.
Boots wet. Want
you. I wish we were reading or fucking
together. Naked.
Alone.

18

Could not make it to the mountain. Eighteen

dollars, forty-six cents. Belmonts in Winnipeg.

19

Fuck. How does a man end up with a cane?
Ashcroft. Versa Cold. Safeway. How does a
man die? How does a man learn? These
factory lights. These workers going home.
Dominion Bridge. The prostitutes come out.
The republic of dust burns. How does a
man make a decision? How does a man
touch his darkness? Factory
sounds. Factory smoke. Text messages
from a lover. How does a man end
up alone? Don't wake me. Don't take
me from the dusk. Don't bury me,
at the beginning of a night, in the
dust of your lies.

20

Belmonts lost on the mountain. The head
of a tree. The turban of stars.
Dying at the republic of dusk. A
brother out for cigarettes.

This is the blue blanket
an animal died in.
This is the blue blanket
where your mother rehearsed her divorce.

Did you see the sky?
I was outside my father's house.
I watched the sunset from the hill.
I wish I'd been there.
I wouldn't have said a thing.
I promise.

Valour. Westbound. Going home. There are no
directions left for us. It is too hard to live.

21

The poor have no history. The poor have
no history. The poor have no his-
tory. The poor have no history.
The poor have no history. The poor have
no history. The poor have no his-
tory. The poor have no history.
The poor have no history. The poor have
no history. The poor have no his-
tory. The poor have no history.
The poor have no history. The poor have
no history. The poor have no his-
tory. The poor have no history.
History has no poor. History has
the number of corpses left by the state.

22

We are all poorer than a moon.

Thirty five pairs of shoes.
No job. Phone cancelled.

I saw your mother cry for
you!

You will sell your shoes
or die.

We all make shadows.
Even this page has its
letters.

23

Litter me
ME
in your life. Follow my lead.
Lebron James.
Jesus Christ.

Born in a system of cruelty. I learned to
live in basements
and whisper.

Pull stars
down. Do laundry. These sweepings.
In a shop or in a funeral. The
sunlight
is gone. The hill quiets and seethes with
the people making
dinner under
factory light. Work security. Lose
everything. Pray
deaf and bleed. I put a
barrel of laughter
and gunpowder
on

like family soup. Our wicks snap
quiver
die. Strike. Strike. And
strike again.

Wet hands against the asphalt.
All the winders
wear smoke. Get naked. Are
never washed. My head
is an orange
light. My head is gas.
Hills taped in looped breaths.
Make yourself
less.

When someday
I am old and
look in the mirror less, look
less
at woman's legs.
Bleed, laugh, dance, cry, love, write,
act more.
It

will not be
that different
than
the decision I am making
everyday.

25

Born, the backyards are all gone
of childhood.

Sandlots,
dogshit.

Tuft of carpet,
of fur. Taught to shave.
Call it painting. Wore the
cream like
a beard. Two
fathers.

Learned the trades. Ripped
all my jeans. Learned
to cry and forgot and am
learning again.

Asked
my mother whats
for dinner. Never helped with
dishes. Walked
by crack houses,
cat houses, church
bells, school rooms
alone

everynight
from before

I was seven. Learned
to dance. Made
a poem for the sky. Made
a poem
for my mother. Watched
the city light blue. The
morning of

workers.
Learned misery.
Learned jubilation. Gave my
books away
to a school.
Watched a thin
shadow
die. Learned to love and
am still
learning. Learned
to fuck and am still
fucking. Learned
to give away everything and am
still giving. Got
red shoes. Got
five books. Got
a brother.
Lived in basements.
Learned to
drink. Learned to
smoke. Learned to play
with the children. Watched
things
die. Held Viola. Romance.
Gates. Bicycles. Ran
away
from the family. Call my
mother. Share
food with my father. Get
work when
I can. Think of
living forever. Heard the
trains. The music and
laughter. Screamed at
new years. Could not hold
a single thing. The light
trapped my fingers. Tore
the darkness

from my soul. Prayed
in need of
will.
Put this heart up for sale.
Shout. I need a reason
to live and keep living.
Pay cheque by
pay cheque. Just to
kiss you and rock
children.
Little boy
the city is moving. Your
parents will die.
You'll go hungry. Make
theatre for the
homeless.
This life's not worth living
if it's in capitalism.
Kill the banks.
Burn your money.
Teach the birds
to say communism.
Learn from the children.
Word hard then work harder.
The artist is owed nothing.
You will not get all you want
from life so you must demand
everything.
And more.
And more.

26

In the trial box. Crown:

The police saw an open bottle of
liquor outside the passenger door of a parked
car and performed a routine traffic stop.
The young man in the passenger seat said

the beer is mine. The backpack in the back
seat is mine. There's some weed in there. How much?
Five. I don't know. Ten. No. Eight grams I think.

(The Inventory:
Eleven and a half grams
of marijuana.)

The officers on duty found a scale
and grinder. The approximate value
of the marijuana seized judging by
current street prices is one hundred and
twenty dollars. The crown is satisfied
this is in alignment with personal
use and should be ruled as a possession
charge. It is my understanding the defense
is seeking an absolute discharge and
though we will leave the final ruling
to the judge, the crown is satisfied with this.

Nothing said
of his mother
of the YOUNG BLACK MALE
seeking jobs
of his unhappiness, of the police
badgering five kids
before making the traffic
stop and stealing their beer. (I got
a text after
that night:
what world are we living in where when cops
stop you it feels the same as getting jumped)

Nothing is said. Under bleacher light.

Basquiat Crown:
Could you roll down the windows a bit bro?
Cop: I'm not your brother.

Black cop saying things. Sapporo
can on the cruiser to drink later
with white cop saying less.
Flashlights. Cop:
So I'm not going to be seeing this
movie in theatres anytime soon then.

Showed our phones as our cameras.

Cop: Do you know the man in the car?
Us: We don't.

But we've been at your court cases
everyday since.

Cop: And you don't know the man in the car?
Us: No.

But we cried together and there's shots
of him and I
slowdancing on Sherburn
of hugging him
outside an apartment two
days later
of him holding me
to stay warm.

Cop: You have no relation to the men in
the vehicle.
Us: No. We don't know them sir.

But we did and I cried and
shot the arrest in reverse
and went off past tennis
courts to pray thirty minutes
the police would die a brutal
death.

Basquiat Crown (in the trial box):
I have nothing to add your honour.

Conditional discharge handed down
from white judge,
the black box started ticking (All rise)
the moment she walked in.

Made us wait in silence. Stare
at the red lines (dash dash
colon
dash dash)
of a little black box and
stand when the little beast
started counting and the
judge walked in.

Judge:
I think an absolute discharge would be
sending the wrong message to the public.
Marijuana is illegal and we
cannot have the public thinking they can
just break the law and get away with it.

He cried into my shoulder on the
elevater down.
His lawyer next to us watching
four floors counting down. Basquiat crown:
Don't you see? This never ends. It never
ends. That's what I'm saying: We're never free.

27
Mountain is
grass and landfill.

Fire is
garbage and laughter.

Work is
coming home drunk.

Mother is
crying by the front door.

Flower is
weeds, working too many hours, dandelions.

Children are
dropping out of school.

Life is
misery and jubilation.

Court is
white people telling natives and blacks
how to live.

Music is
some chimes, the only nice thing here, keeping us alive.

Time is
carried in by a judge, carried out by a
judge, the sun,
sentences.

28

But there are gardens in decisions. Weed beds
and little black windows in the attic. Every
colour is a colour I've never seen. The
children are teaching me new words without
letters. The birds die. The trees die. But
the stones are turned and become dust.
Life is made from nothing and nothing else.

29

Tree weeping. Wind weeping. Sun

weeping. Cloud, a dash, weeping.

See people in love leave a trail
of animal skins. Airplane tails. Where
are you going lovers?
What street do you name a kiss? Wrap
each others days of
heaven fingers
pulling a dress off her legs
and lips and take
words out to be
left hanging, on trees, hanging, the
lowest branch and a sheet or
wool blankets
by the thought
that draws down every brief eye
into its exact devastation. In a
flash the every touched body
is at the mercy
of suns
and no
rumbling breeze
will graze the long forgiveness that
burns
dry branches and animal meat. I am
low at the firepit
talking with Anthony.

“My lover is
built of clouds.” “No, she
is foolish like you and me.”
“My lover is like this pink house.
New people are always
leaning out of every
window.” “She is here.” And
he touches me. “Can you hear
the sirens?” “Is that her?”
“She is not the police. Can you

hear the traffic?" "Is it her?"
"She is not quite asleep
thinking colours and words
you've never imagined. She
is in her bedroom, with her
family. She is suffering." "Why?"
"Because you are distant
and built your body
from leaves. She is laughing."
"Because of me?" "Yes. When
you see her, all your
bodies clatter off you til
you're nuder than ideas.
Take her to the beach. Spend
an evening painting her. Fine.
But go under her dress and
beg to know the mystery
she has locked inside the word,
history, which she never
speaks. Go, live in her
chatter." "I am no more
than a breeze." "You are
less. You are smiling. Those
are the teeth she gave you."
"I've gone missing." "No. You are here."
And he leaves
to go touch her.

30

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

I thought
he said, "Do you have any money?" that's
why I asked him "What did you say?"

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

Did I

say "What?"
or "What did you say?"

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

Colour me red. I
stared at my skin after. Just
a week ago
I was walking with Viola,
"I love you" A couple passing,
laughing, the man said. I said,
"I love you too." "I love
the way you took our land away."

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

He was six
at the oldest. Maybe I sounded mean.
He turned around
and said "Hey whitey." to my face.

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

He was six
at the oldest. Wore a
red shirt.
Was he walking to
his brother's? I smiled at him
as I was passing.
It is not enough
to be nice.
My smiling meant nothing. Colour
me Malevich red.
Communism: Be my race.

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

He was six. I

almost cried. I laughed when I said “Hey.”

“Hey whitey.” “What?” “Hey whitey.” “Hey.”

I wished I’d
said, “White people have
done worse things to natives
than either of us know.”
This country’s
smallpox red. Blood, hunger,
railroad red. The residential
schools left bodies in alcohol,
crack, meth pools, having babies.
IP is written
in lament on every street
corner we both grew up in.
Written in rage.

“Hey whitey.” “What?” “Hey whitey.” “Hey.”

Teach me, child, to
cut the genocide off of me.
The horrors of John A. Macdonald
laughing, boasting how he was
starving wagonburners
working on his railroad.
How many times
did I hear the couch joke. “What’s
the difference?” “A couch can support a family.”
I told the couch joke and
my brother
said “You don’t understand,
will never
understand,
how much suffering comes with
poverty.” It is hard
to support a
family

when you're born addicted
to mouthwash
and have uncles taking
hammers to your face.

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

I thought the
word "Redskin."
Nothing can take away my shame.
After all this, I am the racist.

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

I should not have spoken.
I should have wailed.
Under the guilt there is still
evil.
Will always be evil
as long as one race profits off
another one's pain.

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

He had a red shirt on. He
had small eyes. Six
or less.
Should I have said,
"The last residential school
was shut down in 1992,
a year after I was born, and even
then there was
still abuse. Prostitutes
are found gagged, raped,
murdered, screwdrivers
in their vaginas. It is still
legal in Nova Scotia to

“scalp an Indian.”

Eat my heart young thing.

I am not worthy to be
alive.

The potlatches were made illegal.

Many reserves in
this province don't have
running water. Electricity.

The government hands out apologies
and small cheques
but will not give them roads. Will not stop
racism, will not
stop poverty,
because that would cost money
and you child, human being,
are worthless
to every white person
in this world than five
dollars or
a bottle of wine, a
nice evening with friends,
etcetera.”

While the Aboriginals in this
country are shit on, thrown
in jail, thrown
in the street, naked, raped,
mangled by addictions,
which is a disease
but doesn't get the
same coverage, same funding
as cancer
because rich people
get cancer more than they get
addiction and poor people
often die before
they can get cancer.

White people. We can tear
the sackcloth alone and go back

to our lives no longer. We
can lament our privilege
while eating steak dinners
no longer.
Give up everything.
And it starts with me.
I'm finding a way to get
naked and go out into
the street. Colour me
asphalt. Colour me Agnes.
Colour me Ellice and Beverly and Sargent.
Colour me Simcoe and Victor, McMicken, Mcgee.
Colour me Langside.
Colour me Young.
Colour me Furby, Alverstone, Lipton.
Colour me Sherburn.
Colour me Maryland.
Colour me Home.
Colour me Home.
Let's teach each other
to love, child. Teach me
to weep.
These are my hands. Honky hands. Cracker
hands. Pinkskin.
Teach them to bleed. Teach them to work til
they're raw past a colour.
I want to get rid of self-
hatred and race-hatred.
There must be a war.
But it doesn't have to be a race
war.
Canada's
just a
mass grave.

“Hey whitey.” “What?” “Hey whitey.” “Hey.”

Is it true that nothing will change?

That things will only get worse?
That we cannot stop capital?
I refuse to believe it.
I refuse to believe it
for my own and that child, my
brother, my dear comrade's sake.

"Hey whitey." "What?" "Hey whitey." "Hey."

31

Under the silver tree, surrender.
Under the laundry lines, by
the car bought for two thousand, by
the tiny house, surrender.

I am surrender to your buttocks.
I am surrender to perishing.
I am surrender to long
phone calls and a city of our thinking.

Go to where the stars surrender
their names. Go to where the
lover's fight. Got to where
the night surrenders a blessing.

The busy hooping calls of pain
COME RAINING DOWN

Force the surrender of your bones.
Bend your will on the
infinite. Make poverty
surrender a kingdom.

32

The drunks are howling.
This is the night of the wolves.
Stitch danger in a brief tattoo.

Bear a neighbourhood of grief,
baby's wails and skin shoes.
Print laughter in the stars.

The beers are open.
There are many cigarettes.
The whole street is clapping.

Even in the misery of the
sun,
it is there: good, hard childhood.

Hurry, the rumble.
These little days of silence
are swallowed in the hunger.

The whole street is fucking.

Maddening, the little
flowered curtains go wild.
Streetlights and labour come undone.

The heroes
(great beasts)
come roaring.

There is nothing but
the brutal path in
deeper.

Starskin, make terror
your only roof.
Only then will you live off of beauty.

33

There are many words,
but these:

I love you
and I want you in the darkness.

are the only ones I know
after I lost my childhood.

In the dimness with my
laundry or in the

silence of a silent tree
smoking cigarettes or

bathing
after midnight,

I love you
and I want you in the darkness.

I could say:
I want your face close.

I want to run my
hands over you.

Know your legs and
rough arms,

the smoothness from your
hips and buttocks, but this:

I love you
and I want you in the darkness

are the only words
I need.

34
Toss out what kills you. You will die.

Make your peace. Go forth. Love every
human being. Leave every door of your house open.

part IV

0

Anthony dies
and is resurrected.

1

This summer too
will only leave colours and feelings,
a couple hard objects

and Anthony the subject

(of these poems)
of the summer.

2

I cannot write poems tonight, the
ashes are too thick.
You are too distant.
I am too far from myself.

3

Anthony woke where there are no mountains. The
sky was shingle pink and stucco pink. His body
was a field of stars or a derelict house. There
was a quiet curtain over the window. He mumbled in
another language or perhaps in no language at all.
The sound of voices came and he drank them in a
paper cup The smell of cooking came and he sat and
read it and when we was finished he folded it up
and placed it in a pocket by his left nipple
but it was lost when he was undressing before the
touches of his lover's cheek, hip, buttocks, eyelid,
belly, foot, thigh, elbow, genitals, ankle, earlobe..
perhaps one of them stole it when he was asking
the crease above the lip its name. Perhaps he
burned it. There are hours of the night he does not

remember. Did he ever have that foolish page?
There are hours that he remembers completely
differently from the endless members of that
orgy, whom he has been interviewing ever since,
each in a separate language. Nonetheless, he
will never find again those first fleshy words and will
only mumble now, in another language or perhaps in no
language at all, then he will stop speaking altogether.
There will be a scream first, or perhaps only the space
where a scream should be, as the house is eroded
completely and the last moments of dead starlight
twinkle out. Then there will be silence and all that will
be left is the lack of language, which Anthony once spoke
in.

4

On knees, youth:
This is the dungeon.
These are my lies.
This is my trembling before the ashes.

I just had a long phone call.
Dragged Freud from my mouth.
Every friend is an analyst.

This is me at the bones of
Anthony.

I am in a heap at the ashtray.

These are my lies.
This is the dungeon.
This is the paged, purged lilac bush
where Rose took Anthony
with two fists.
This is the bridge, leaping
across
a pink fisted dusk.

These are my pockets.
This is my brother
over a match
with two cigarettes. This
is me at the foot of the mural.
This is my face. Unilluminated.
Rubbed by two hands
with Rose in the kitchen
a toothbrush,
two hands on both cheeks.
This is Rose:

“Are you honest? Anthony. Are you true?”
“I am. I am the cinder of malice.
I am another man’s song.” “Anthony,
are... could you be... more humble? Could you be
meeker?” “I could. I could leave with two hands.
These two hands at my cheek, these two hands at
my belly. A fistful of darkness. I
am leaving for Vancouver.” “And could you
be braver? Could you wear valour?” “I do.
I have nothing but scarves and the cloak I
wore splitting Belmonts in the hammock and
leftovers for dinner when the sky’s still
pinker than both hands at my gut. Oh Rose
wear my darkness, I am cruder than ash
fault, I can be read like my brother when
his head is on pavement and his toyboat’s
resting in a puddle between Sargent
and Cumberland’s remains. That child that died,
he could have been my brother. I am smaller
than his skull under tires, under schools,
I am taught less than blood, I am taught to
remember. I am taught that no family
survives the west end. I have learned to speak
gibberish, just looking for the word freedom.
I am surer than sirens. I am more
sure than stars. I am better to live in

than this derelict house.” “Call this marriage.”

She said,

“Then Call this Marriage in streetlights, in the
raw dawn, dry house. I will hold you for
ever. Under sirens and bridges. Hold
you for forever in the lilac scent.”

The words
put on were
perfume. The
sirens persisted.

This is my mural:
A man picking flowers.
Two men lighting smokes.
A woman in striped dress
at bridges. Belmonts, split-
ing leftovers, seeing movies on
Christmas. A wife saying
‘Enough is enough. I am leaving you.’
And the children of
divorce carrying baggage
and courage and always
alone.

Rose said:

“This is my childhood where I tried to walk
steps out of pavement, the angles acute.
Using apple juice for urine to keep
the gang out and giggling at mentors who
were boys two years older. There was a hole
in the bricks where the window’s bricked out. It
scared me.” “The brick missing?” “Yes, even then
that was scary. My mom took a picture
and the face of me smiling, avoiding
the pictures and just my face showing. Did

you see it?" "What were you wearing? Your hair was a bob? It is hard to imagine. Your childhood is like Shakespeare, I just can't understand it, even if I live to be eighty with both fists in my gut your childhood is a treasure I will keep like the books I can't read. Different language to me." "Tell me a story. What do you remember?" "My childhood was so lonely and that's all I can remember right now."

In the incense
of memory, there
are my hard objects,
taste my colours and
feelings. They are almost
all I have left,
except,
Anthony the subject
between your two fists,
in the bones,
in the ashes,
less than memory.
A body
made of a neighbourhood
blown astray.
I will wander from
your house and collect
the dust I can find,
a dusk blown away,
the sabers of youth
are unsheathed
like two palms from
a face.
Nothing re-collected.
Nothing, the same.

Ochre sky, O lovely, under
both knees
in the morning of belmonts
in the hammock
reading poems to his buddies, Anthony
quotes her body, her
loving, her
eyes.

They never think
when they're together,
Anthony and Rose, they
only speak
in a language of
praise and lament,
wearing silence and
going naked
into the streets, where she
rubs a bushel of lilacs
on his penis, her
first sight.
He nets, in blue and brown
colours, her pussy
and tells her
to scream, she whispers,

"This is my pussy, which man
has made unknown, til your hand
took my fear by your throat and
swallowed desire in demands."

Theodore unrolls
all his evenings: bed
bugs close to Logan, shot
guns in his chest,
the father of all midnights
passing smokes
to Austin and Myles, hotel

bedrooms, closet
doors.

██████ is in prison. He
petted my head. Became
friends in a daycare.
I can still
feel the tight
curls of his hair. Only
his hair and Viola's
I remember. I can still
feel his hair
like the Amistad word
and a finger turning nails.

██████
This is torture.
My first made friend is in jail.

Rose said:
"I am health. I am freedom. I put new
limbs in the corpse of an animal like
a suture on the amputated thought.
I'll teach you to bend like coniferous,
like when my hips, neck, knees bend when his two
fingers are in me, O Anthony, tight,
pain-tight, want-tight, joy-tight, need-tight, a lot
of your body is dancing, live for us,
I will attach new movements that run through
you like old districts seen for the first time.
I touch steel to your love better than shot
gun weight. I am better than Icarus.
I weld the star directly to your love.
Your body's idea. Idea's home.:

Anthony, dumb,
through a garden of
shit returned to the

feline hiss, home,
Rose's arms, ochre
arms, kinked hair,
the brown cheek
he pressed himself
into at his birth.

6

Anthony told a story once, wore
a mask in a wire cage and
said:

"I was born in a hospital. I was less
than equestrian, chubfoot and barecheeked, I
took a wife from my father and the caress

of unpackaged rooms, quiet fights and the sky.
I bought a storm with my birth and was taken
into a block of the families stretched out like

lime dead and days without history, shaken
from the coughing dog mouths of fathers buried
in the soil of september, in the haven

of new country. In the crib of the furies,
I cried without end and bit everyone's chin.
I was gathered in circles all born purely

from rejection and the shawl I was dressed in
was burnt or at least unremembered, as though
the ashpainted dances, the rum and the wind

were the only blanket I had left to grow
in, the booze of disciples, the upturned pool
of redoubled departures in the last throe

of morning, suns faces unnumbered and cruel,
broken on the table of human anguish,

of a city of bodies, all become tools,

no longer kissed or ecstatic, the tangles
of memories and psychosis, the refuse of
boredom and shame, in the cage of old language

twelve monkey-skinned howlings in the final crush
of survival, driving rage with the smashing
of glassware, into their children with the glove

of their distance, of their failure, and lashing
their children to this, to be artists, and lost
but persisting (too brutal!) their dreams, crashing

endless on bureaucratic mornings, all tossed
as waves, broken sun and their broken rest,
into their pits, wearing masks of the cross.”

Then Anthony rose from the cage and went out
into the audience, taking each of their
masks off and crushing them as he
went, tearing the darkness from their
faces, saying,

“I was blown from that place to the tower of
deserts, where the wailing of shadows could be
heard, and I knelt there and I wept out of love.

At the foot of the snow-covered mountain, I could not see
the difference of one shadow from another
and all the climbers seemed to be rooted trees.

And I followed the finger of my brother
to a faint glow, through the thickness, at its height
and we plunged or were plunged into the cover

of madness and soon we could not see the light
and thrust or were thrust forward or what seemed to

be forward into the denseness of that night.

The snow was so deep there that with every new step we were sunk almost to our waists and had to struggle to pull ourselves up and make it through

that first field or forest of souls, all so sad and so crazy and cold, watching with wonder as we came to the foot of the climbing. Mad

and tired already, our cold and hunger set in and we could see that the way was steep and made of sheer ice, with only weak lumber,

of souls seeking safety or going to sleep on that cruel face. We flung ourselves or were flung up on it. I climbed and looked at only each

step before me until I saw that I hung alone on a branch with a wall of ice that I, to reach the glow, now bright, must cross in one

jump. To fail would be to die, fall and die, back in the field below. Alone, I hurled myself to the other side of that enormous gap.

We pulled ourselves up into the light and yells (ours or from others?) went through us from above as we all held each other there and were held."

Rose emerges, maskless, she removes Anthony's mask.
Rose and Anthony dance.
The audience cries,

"This is too bright!" "Too bright!" "Oh they are too bright!" "Watch their skin!" "I cannot see it!" "It is too bright!" "It is blinding!" "Look! Do you see her eye?"

“It is there, now it is there!” “It is in new places all the time!” “I cannot bear it!” “These are places I have never seen!” “See! That hue!”

“It cannot be called a colour!” “How he breathes!” “He does not breathe at all!” “He does!” “He is breath!” “Watch their steps!” “I cannot!” “It is as though it cleaves

me from myself!” “Oh! Help! Help! There is nothing left!” “It is too bright! I cannot see! I cannot see anything!” “I will try to touch her dress!”

“You cannot! It’s too bright! It will be too hot!” “I must! I must!” “Touch! Tell! Speak!” “What do you feel?” “Nothing! No! Too much! Oh! Help! Help! I am caught!”

“I’m coming!” “I am coming!” “I cannot see you! Are you there?” “Where have you gone?” “I am here!” “Is that you?” “I feel you everywhere!” “It’s me!”

“Oh, tonight’s brilliant!” “But it’s been a year!” “It is no year! It has been so much more time!” “It has been none at all!” “Can you see his ear?”

“Her tongue grows from it!” “Do you see how it shines?” “Oh! How it shines!” “It is growing everywhere!” “Here! In my mouth! In my eye! Oh! I am blind!”

“Your eyes have grown on me!” “That is my tongue there!” “Oh! These Hands! See! Look! His hands! These are his hands!” “Oh! They are touching me!” “Oh! Look! See the air!”

“It is her!” It is him!” “Oh, it is you and me!” “You are growing! There you grow! There you grow!” “Oh! I am so bright!” “You are so bright!” “I can

see! I can see! I am here and there!" "I'm known!"
"I am breath and skin!" "I am bright!" "I am new!"
"Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!"
"Oh!" "Oh!"

The audience bows to each other and dances.

7

"I often tasted rain."
"I walked up and down a city through the snow."
"I never learned another language."
"One day, I awoke and did not recognize my room.
I understood then
why I had been weeping in her arms
nightly
and I left."

I found these words on scrap paper,
bubble gum wrappers, cigarette
receipts, matchbooks, stray leaves, a
carton of ashes and bread bag clips,
walking back from the safeway with six
bags of groceries.

I heard this in a movie theatre:

"I do not have much to offer,
only this:
Go where the skin of your eyes is against the
air directly.
Go where you laugh and cry often.
Go where your nights are given
and are empty
and are clean
and can be stood in
completely.
Go where you can be alone
regularly.

Go to the people who do not make you
feel lonely.
Go and be poor.
Be generous.
Be humble but do not ever submit
to oppression
to bureaucracy
to ignorance. Do not ever surrender
your art
your honesty
your loving
for people
no matter what is their circumstance
no matter how deep their evil.
Do not be afraid to bleed.
Do not be afraid to lose.
Do not be afraid to fail.
Do not be afraid to die.
Let other people heal you.
Wear your need like a garment.
Own only five things
and give them away
easily.
You may spend your time
in a bedroom
at a table
in a library
on a dancefloor
in a laboratory
on a battlefield
in an ocean
on a mountain
in the street
in a kitchen
in a hospital
on a basketball court
in a car
on a balcony

in a bathroom
in a basement
in a backyard
in a playground
on a roof
in a mound of earth
in a womb.
Be drunk.
Be alone.
Be with people.
Earn the disgust of the sophists.
Earn the hatred of governments.
Earn the fear of the army.
Earn the silence of companies.
Never live by advertisements.
Never live by morals.
Never live by rulebooks.
Never live by laws.
Do not be afraid to hurt people
even the people that you love
but be ready to give up everything
for their freedom.”

I heard a city worker:

“Equality is absolute inequality.
Everyone is better than you.
Everyone is smarter than you.
Everyone works harder than you.
Everyone is more human than you.
It is the same with justice.
It is absolute injustice.
You do your work for nothing,
no returns and are given
what you need,
and more,
in return for nothing.
Likewise with beauty,

you must live close to the
heartbeat of destruction.
If you do not
face it,
you will never know beauty.
Attractiveness,
but not beauty.
Attractiveness will distract you.
Closet up the madness
and closet up the beauty
with the madness.
If you do not look
at the wretchedness,
the ugliness,
the suffering,
the poverty,
look at it in silence,
dumb, foolish and weeping,
it will be like you
are blind your whole life long.
And so it is with truth.
Only by doubt, only by
rending apart the very materials
of our world, of what is given
us as true
can we know the
absolute.”

In a bedroom, I heard
the most utter pain. A whimpering:

“It is hard to be in love with the wrong person... I don’t
belong here... I just
don’t want to hurt you... I wish I didn’t have to hurt you...
I feel like
I’m two people... I don’t know... I’ve never felt like this
before... I don’t know
who I am...”

I used to memorize poems about god and the rain.

I heard:

“You must betray the family.”

I heard:

“There are two things I will never do. I will never cheat on a woman and I will never stand a woman up.”

I heard:

“Do not speak til you have kissed the leper’s face, the loopy, boozed face, the bloody face, lurching towards you, I know where you live, I will kill you, give me everything you have face, the meth-destroyed face, the hunger pocked face, the big nosed face, the red cheeked face, the burn marked face. Do not speak until you have kissed the tattoo of the tear, the scab around the mouth, the pockets in the gums, the cavity where a nose was removed, the skin-cancer pattern. Writing a poem is like kissing a person who has never been kissed or a place that has forgotten the feeling of lips.”

I saw Anthony above a hollow tub,
painted red,
in the nameless act.
He held my mouth to the fire.
He said:

“SURRENDER SURRENDER SURRENDER!”

I have been a cripple
ever since.

8

He seems so big around her, as though his
arm has fallen across
her, sleeping, he, sleeping.
The light from the street
falls
through the blinds and falls away, on the
east wall, then on the north wall.
Both their muscles pant.
Music, from the street.
He, drunk, falls, his arm across
her, sleeping, asleep.

Their boxes, their clothes, their bodies
litter the room. Their
failed sex attempts,
their things. His things
fit small and awkward, a
dozen books, sweaters,
a week of underwear,
a week of socks,
shirts,
workpants,
boots, inside her things,
dressers,
sheets,
clocks.

His skin is darker than the
hardwood in some spots. Could it be
that he's disappearing?
He looks out the window on
the bed and cries.
Her face turns up through the pillows.
The hours tie themselves to her

breath. He thinks
every feature of hers,
now,
in sleep,
seems like a kiss. Placed,
perfect, falling
away and into the
next one. Of course, he thinks this because
he has kissed
each one
and fallen
away from her face, falling
back
into the next kiss. She sighs. He,
awake, leans over and kisses her brow.

Their eyes will glisten for no reason.
They find they can't understand each other
but still care deeply for each other.
They no longer have the right words
for each other
or the right lives for each other.
They chafe
and cry
and fall back into each other's
arms.
His hands
discover the end of her shirt,
the start of her hip,
as if for the first time. She
comes to him as he is cleaning and
places
both her lips
around his lips
as if to say,
"We will be alright.
This is the night.
I do not believe in clocks.

The things I say to you
are not my voice.
The things you
say to me, I know, are not
your voice.
Believe in this.
Believe in this with me.”

Her eyes don't have any
words.
He cups them
in his own.
They dance,
get drunk,
fall into bed,
their clothes
fallen off,
fuck, read, kiss, talk,
fall asleep,
his big arm about
her shoulders
(she said, “I have to turn away,
my head hurts like this.”
he said, “take your shirt off
and I will touch your back
then it won't feel like we're
so far apart.”).

Damn
the clocks.
Damn the books.
Nothing is sacred
but these few hours
when the lights are
coming through the blinds
and falling off the walls,
their breathing
out of rhythm,

his big arm about her
breast,
and all their secrets
out
hanging in the
room like the big emptiness
after moving in
and the clothes are folded up
and drawered
and the hardwood
(just barely darker than his skin)
can be seen completely
but the walls
(just barely lighter than her skin)
are still bare.

9

Over his knees, Erik
under blindlight
praying,
not alone in bed,
beside her body,
beside her form.

Remember this,

the traffic does not say it,
she does not say it,
the room is quiet,

Remember this.
Dare to remember too much.
When you were lying breathing,
When your life was huge
and hanging.
The crude stereo traffic.

Remember this.

These accidents
(are you almost sleeping?
lights are off)
are accidents.

You are staying in this room
because you are staying in this room.

She is sleeping.

The blinds are nosed down and
orange at the tops.
Your drink is ice.
Her back is
— will you say soft?
— will you persist in naming every touch?
— will you demand a lumpy and fine
set of words to gag her bright shoulder
with?

You choose how you live.

You must sleep.
You must pray.
If you must do more
be sure they were
directed while you
slept or prayed.

Journey from halfway house
to halfway house.
Journey from kingdom
to kingdom.
You must be a communist everywhere.

Perhaps a christian too.

You are not feeling your bones.

You do not listen to the day.
You do not pray at nights.
You do not read what you
want.
You own too much.
But you are forgiven.

Remember this.

Your name is not Anthony.
Your name is not Anthony.
You are Anthony or you are not Anthony.
You are buried either way.
You are loved either way.

10

“I love the island of my father, where he learned to hunt,
the
island of his father, where he learned to hunt, gum elk meat
at eighty, where his father was born, and his father was
born,
and his father was born. I love the island where I was born.
I
love the island where I fished, learned to hunt, and was
born. I
love the island of my father and his father and his father
and his
father. That is something that none of you will ever have.”

This is a room of intruders.
This is a room of white faces.

This is a blood without passion.
You do not sing unless you're paid to.
You do not dance unless there's profit.

You came here by accident and made a dream song wither.

I was stunned.
I folded my face into my hands.

There we were frozen. Eleven of us
in a room.
He flew. Nicholas (I am mis-telling this story
on purpose). He did not touch the
ground.
Nobody moved. He hooped
around us, laughing (something
we have forgotten how to
do for no reason).

He does not need celebrations.
He does not need to be praised.
His joy and his suffering
are infinite and naked
are tangled in dancing, in his call,
“I am bard! I am bard!”

Everything in his life has happened in patterns.
He was always trodden by white men.

There is nothing to quote
but the fearlessness
rising,
his infinite stature
as a man
as an island
bearing whole worlds
at the edge of destruction
up through the ruins of Canada and flying
from there.

I was flying over prairies. There is not much to
say. They are empty. That is the beauty.
My grandfather was settled with a large, immigrant

family. He has gray skin and veins now. He has muscle and bones and his prayers. His eyes are enormous and he winks often. When his family

was coming from Russia, the revolution had started. They were landowners. Kept serfs. Peasant slaves. Kept slaves. My grandfather tells a story,

“They were at home reading the bible. A man came into the room with a pistol. He said to my father, ‘Dance.’ My father said, ‘No. I will not dance.’ He said to my father, ‘Face the wall.’ My father said, ‘No. I will face you.’ The man fired six shots and each bullet failed to fire. The man said, ‘You must have the devil working for you.’”

The story is not true, I imagine, and it gives me no pride. When the mennonites came here they were given prairie land, they forced the Natives

north, they set up a residential school. They continued a tradition of good farming, land ownership, pacifism and insularity.

“I love the island where my father was born
and his father before him
and his father before him
and his father before him
and on and on.
That is something you will
NEVER
understand.”

For a hundred years they lived in Germany, but they could not be called German, only mating

with each other. They fled to Holland and mated

only with each other there. They were brought into
Russia and given the Russian people's
land. The Russian peasants were forced to work

under them. They only mated with each other.
Then they came here, to the prairies. So you
can understand when I say, I don't come from anywhere.

For me,
there is nowhere
to return to.
There is no one to call father.
No place to call home.
There are just people and places.

I am going
where no one will celebrate my praises.
I am going
where I will need deeply.
I am going
where my joy will be larger than my fashionable pain.
I am going
where my voice will be heard calling,

"The actor is the muse reflected! Make me bare!
The actor is the muse resurrected! Make me bare! Make me
bare!
Make me bare!"

I am going
to the place of broken patterns.

Make me a path
for the hungry,
for the hopeless and homeless,
teach me to be well-trodden.

Teach me to be a prairie
with paths in every direction,
to wear foundations
across all of my skin,
to be fruitful and quiet,
to feel every child's step.
Teach me to be humble,
a little paradise for others.

Tell me, please, Anthony, tell of the fool I am becoming,
show the
worlds which will be all uncovered, the worlds which
refuse to surrender.
After you came to my body and laid it to waste with your
army of
silence and you sacked my animal history, robbing my
genius,
taking the stillness and peacetime of being in love from me,
tell of
borders annihilated, days without guidance or mercy and all
the
people who I must still learn how to love and to listen to
who love
idols, who must eat the cash of the sun to survive and will
perish thus.

This here, with Nicholas dancing,
the farmhand and pistol,
your empty body, my empty
body, with Anthony singing.

I asked my grandfather
to tell the story
of how he met Mary, "I met her...
We went skating." His hands
were already moving, "We skated
so well together — had the right rhythm."
I thought of how Viola and I

could not figure out
how to dance with each other, “and
I asked her if she would skate
the rest of her life with me.”
I don’t remember
the line exactly right now,
it was something like that. “She said no.”
I asked Mary
why she said no. “It’s a long
story. Peter. Can I tell them?” He’s
deaf. She’s shouting. “Can I tell
them why I said no?” “Because of my
reputation.” “He was a flirt.” They
say it
at the same time.
But he took her to church
every Sunday
like he was taking her to the
movies
and he sang her dirges
driving home
and he always persisted.
She said, “Barcus is willing.”

Did she relent?
Did she settle?
They love each other so well.
Each of them follow.
They seem happy.
Was she betraying her morals?
We all must betray
our inheritance.

This summer is a feast.
This is how I came to betray my inheritance.

First I will tell you my name. I am Erik and foolish. I lost

all my small treasures when I was a child. I forgot how to
read, how to
dance, how to cry, how to laugh, I forgot how to live well
and love people,
but there was something worse I forgot. I forgot dying. I
forgot how
to die. See, when I was younger, I was always dying. The
pain was
enormous but it never mattered, it made me fearless, I loved
better,
I lied less, I was in awe of everything I encountered. I was
blessed.
Death. My own death was a blessing. That's why I'm
leaving, that's what I must learn.

These are the days of windows,
she is counting receipts,
there are pictures on the wall.
A day all happens at once.

This cabin, summerkind apartment, North
American, a room and window, se-
quence, drunk on brown and floral patterned cou-
ches, under ansel and the wall lamp with
an empty drink, the sound of counting groc-
ery bills comes from the other room where she
calls me to bed. I come. We fight. She sleeps.
I write. I am not in this bed. I am
not beside her. 'The lights too bright,' she says.
She says it in her sleep. I cannot hear
her though her breath is husky sweet and she
is near, asleep and tactile. No. I am
a jeffrey pine. I am a whitened rock.
The bills are on the window ledge and her
breath as she sleeps it rubs the room, it rubs
it like a wave and I am here beneath
this breath in prayer, beneath this wave. I on-
ly love her absolutely when in sol-

itude, in sex, or when I'm leaving. Now,
the compass hums, the lamp, the street, the blinds,
her breath, they hum, my heart, it hums, and doubt
and rage are equal parts of love, dissatisfaction,
boredom and despair, and I
am in her breath with no escape.

Here she has made me into waiting, made
me into wanting, and made an unanswerable
craving out of me. It sends
me to the booze faced jeffrey pines, the empty
pocket white stoned comrades to find my
own breath...

To find an ancestor.
Nicholas! Each
step
drums up
an ancestor.

"I will call back. Past the beginning. Where this island was
conceived.

This island too is my ancestor. We do not go alone. We
never go alone.

Justice is with us. Our ancestors are with us. I call, I am
bard, I am bard,
into the past. I beg them to come. I beg them to come. This
is the
trial. Judgment approaches. I reach back and draw them
into
me. They must come. I am the reason they have existed at
all."

Up from the low country
Up from the tetons
Up from the Ukraine and the bloodshed
Up from the slavers house
the train
the charred arms of wood

the empty cradle
Up from the nun's touch below the skirt
Up from the bible strap
Up from the rich land
the farmhouse
the gravelroad
Up from the graveyard
They come
They come
They come

You. Prophet. I will take your courage. I
will take the accident of your body,
and I will call what I have done that's stupid,
stupid. Slaver. I will take your whip,
your house, your land and I will dance and
face all of its walls while it is burning. I
will beg for food and bed and lash your guilt
clean to a golden sky, an empty mouth
and endless prayers. I will starve you and wear
your bones as a reminder. And finally,
Peter. You lover. Teach me to skate.

Here is a brighter thing.
A final realm.
A final thirty three. Bright still
in boredom. Brighter still
in chatter. Brighter still
in the daily canto breath.
Longing is not erased.
All the wrong ones are in love.
Your hands do not forget their need.
People tumble into each other
and you can tell them from the shadows.
All things are caught and free.

Humming, with rags torn and clattered in broad pavement,
nude forms unquestioned,

quivering, drip, water runs off their skin, shed and chased
off, and rise up
crying, "The West's at its end. Now see, Comrades, we hit
here a mark which no
one has yet hit." And the goblet is broken, the throat is
broke open, thick
streams run, the feasts upset, everyone eats freely.
Anthony's returned.
"I see your substance is wasted and women are raped and
all people are
wooded by survival or comfort. Now you shall live!"
Anthony declares.
They bring him clean clothes and light him a fire and all
dance together.

All people celebrate each other's praises.
All people need each other.
Joy and anguish come together.
There are patterns
but patterns pass and are transformed.
For example,
we rise up from chaos
but we are not subsumed.
We learn from each other
to cross the oceanic womb.
To fly from our birthplace.
To exit the prairie.
To carry with us an emptiness,
other-worldly,
as though our death had already happened
was always
happening
and we are too busy laughing and crying and
listening
to be afraid.

A hot wind comes up the alley. I am gone and the
houseless have taken up my temple. There

in the mattress, a whisper is left or a book, it

says, 'we are all of us transients', and your face is
printed and fading. It lingers just long
enough for you to leave it. The summer is not

gone, though you have counted it out in debt. It is here
and it is humid and it is made of
faces and movies and books about justice. Your

skin is tied to somebody's skin. You are calling
the same rooms the same thing. There is work to
be done. There will be long silences. Everyone will

be betrayed. Those with courage will forgive and when
it is gone you will leave childhood behind
forever. Nothing but a faint trace to remember.

A colour. A smell.
A couple hard objects.

The man called Anthony
like everyone there simply
dies of thirst.

And only the thirst is left.
The only thing to follow.
The only thing to go on.
A thirst in your praises.
A thirst in your needing.
Amid your joyous accents you will detect
the thirst

to go where no islands remain, to go
into the gloom, into the dark, broad seas.
My comrades, my comrades of toil and joy,
my comrades, my comrades of thought, I have
a pack of cigarettes, an envelope

of cash, I might save up to buy my mother's car, and we are young. We wear our deaths like flags. We are all mad with love. We all want to have children and are just hoping for the food and shelter so that we can raise them. We are communists, lovers, artists and doctors. City lights are rising on the water. Hear the people moaning under the slow moon? Hear them moan in the deep? Friends, they are calling for us, thirsting for a newer world. Oh! Hear them say, "A bard! A bard!" Their throats are dry, they cannot see, their dusk is gone, the baths of all the western stars won't quench their thirst. I'll tame the gulfs or be washed down before I see them die. Though all is taken and nothing abides, though we don't have the strength that's needed to build a paradise here, I am that I am. We are infinite. Though we're born poor by chance, our love is pure, unbreakable and endless. See it pour out for the people. For the rabble. For the crew. For every living human being.

part V

0

“Dip your hand in me —
The smell will never be rubbed off”
They move in together

1

A sheet of hair hangs over both windows from her
raven tips he hangs across the door of her mouth and
listens to his partner shuffling inside hugging
herself From her raven tips he hangs across both
windows licking the door listening to the
stranger thoughts of his lover wearing raven petals
rose fur He touches her address hanging
from her windows whispering her name
asking for directions

2

A city block She smiles Her eyes reflect the
night She looks up past her lover and makes a
constellation Her lips blister heaven on his lips
“Recite the origins of things” He drowns in her
delta Nothing is left but a prophecy and numbers
spilling from their skins

3

He the Mercyhead a wreath of children’s
voices about his neck is learning to undress her in
the kitchen Hang by nail an hour of
delight across the trembling archway walls

4

They cry in every room over the dishes in
each other’s arms He wraps the curtain string
around his neck and holds it there against his weight
when she is not in the room He holds her as she
shakes In the bed On the couch At

the table By the tub Did she hear the words
 he could not say when he turned from her They roll
 off his eyes She piles the plates and screams
 "I want to be useful." Kissing her mascara
 black from his nose to her cheekbones "My
 tears are tickling me" "Don't touch me" "You
 look like an animal" He looks out the window at the
 trees on the boulevard Afterwards they come
 at the same time They do laundry at Sargent and
 Spence but he is not there he is lying underneath the
 window staring at the trees

5

Slippery wet her skin leaps against his skin
 Anthony skating his palms across her belly
 leaving figures faint and disappearing as
 though her body was a planet
 Rose bears etchings coffee skin milky skin
 cola skin She is the mother of a thousand histories
 blind Anthony learns them in the tub with
 both hands above her stomach and then they let
 them disappear as he carries her to the bed "Let me
 feel your tongue" Slippery wet

6

She wore him for awhile the way a window wears
 the sun glinting off into the street into a city
 worker's eye over a children's hour Inside
 her apartment he taught her walls to cry to
 peel colours to dance or be bare or be
 seen Like laughing they have no colour for a time
 then they are gold then they are gone

7

He draws a square of sky there on her bare shoulder
 She does not know it's there except often he
 watches it or kisses it He can feel wings

growing on his back Perhaps he will disappear into
it someday

8

He tries to explain it but it's like the colour of the
sky or a child's game He is more naked now
all the time She has got a new pair of clothes
He finds it hard to reach the woman that he loves She
is a little less willing to make mistakes He sees a
dummy in his place cutting peppers The dummy
says what she wants to hear She is no less honest
just more afraid They are no longer adolescents
He says "If you can bear my plastic coming off
if you can wear my human hands my adult tears
I promise this A real life Real as the colour
of the sky a child's game or revolution
everyday"

9

There are more couples than he can count burning
through the apartment walls one leans over
kisses a neck one is cooking sweating
one is holding hands at dinner one is drunk
one fucks white bodies sliding over each
other screaming shaking one
straightens hair one holds her mirror in the living
room one fights and screams and begs to leave
but loses the words and stays instead one is held in
the morning turning and turning through the
minutes in the pillow one is coming home
and one is going out with kisses Who let them in
with their sunset skin their book of poems
their box of wine Where is the ice cream that they
promised Why are they counting quarters
underneath a pile of shoes Why aren't they adults
He still has his baby fat or at least the memory of it
and all these faces He marvels at her She
laughs and cries and chatters and is silent

and red faced yells insisting that she is
not yelling But she is always her He cannot
control who he is

10

His fingerprints are an apartment building Outside
a woman is being wrestled down by police There
are garbage cans and green umbrellas on the balconies
Across the street a little child teaches Erik that
nothing has a name Rose does not know This
is the mark Anthony has left over her body When
she loses him she will scour cities for this place
but find nothing Oh What is the mark of
her fingerprint Anthony has spent years searching
for it

11

It's as though he has a tumor His mouth keeps
coming apart He would like to howl As
though his face was broken in two He walks in
circles He does not shave or bathe He locks
the door at work and weeps Everything is wrong
He loves her but he must leave her

12

To know she suffers He feels every hot tear
He is with her in the empty rooms Crying over
every meal Her hours at work These are his
ghosts She is not an angel She is not an idea
She does not have a name She is flinging moments
off into the void She may laugh or cry
or speak and her smile or her gasp
may be paradise But she is thinking everyday
and her dreams are bigger than even she knows

13

He would like to get drunk with her Read poems to
her Go out into the streets and wander until dawn

with her He says "When did everything
 begin making you uncomfortable" When did
 everything begin making you afraid" They need to
 fuck again Laugh again He asks her
 "Where is your adventure" He says to her "I
 refuse to lose you" She says "I need you to speak
 to me In sentences Unguarded sentences"
 He says "I am just beginning to learn to open my
 mouth"

14

He drinks wine and coke She makes him chocolate
 cake He dances in the hall She shaves her
 legs

15

Smoking one shoulder under an awning he
 shuffles rain over a red sweater She is one block
 away The apartments teeter in Strips of sky
 come off and roll down his cheeks Everyday he wonders
 whether he'll go home whether he'll go to her arms
 her pajamas and her perfume Two months
 creep by He looks at his hands and waits for tobacco
 stains to disappear He looks at the walls and
 watches cars go by He counts the things he owns
 and wonders how long it would take to pack them up
 then he goes home and is folded into her arms her
 perfume takes him by surprise She touches the
 marks on his cheeks where the sky was She kisses
 him She tells him the things she will work on
 like they're little boxes or she's lighting candles
 One night their distance was telescopic under a
 lamp She looked at him and all their shapes
 became clear then suddenly they
 were laughing and it disappeared He is learning to
 keep one shoulder warm while the other one gets
 wet shed awnings are small his cigarette
 grows bitter with the rain He thinks of her face

a gesture something she'd say and presses it
into his face where the sky is coming down

16

She wakes up sobbing one of those eternal nights
where one of them is always awake kissing holding
touching the other They are happy It is the
first time they are close in weeks

17

She curls her hair by the stereo and goes to work in warm
clothes a blue sweater a striped dress
tights she waits for him at lunch She does not
ask "What is a partner for" She lives with
him Dances against his body in the kitchen laughs
with him brings her mistakes to him as they happen
She makes a gentle aesthetic from old calendars She
watches television shows on her weekends She is
impatient with little things but is content to make a
womanhood slowly from patches and joy She
touches a cool hand and tears to her scars and his strips of
lightning Her words and clothes of girlhood peel off
and fall slowly tenderly She has
chosen laughter instead of history Diligence and
weeping come to her naturally Her iron strength is a
mystery She has taken him under her skin to
where a tremendous courage lives that no one else
has seen

18

Tucked in a drawer beside folded sweaters
"You who I ate every sun with You of the red dawn
and hunger You dressed me in white shirts and ashes
You ran my hands under wheelchairs You put dirt
roads in our silence I am walking into the night that
I built us I am living in a column of ruins I
am hanging our eyelids from the poles of the street I

am the tatters of the moon I am warm and have
 brought you a basket of laughter We train our ears to
 lament We train our mouths to hang open We
 are the laundry of the revolution We alone
 are less than human We must take joy in the sweat
 of our hands The dreams have gone missing
 The days do not matter The hours without kisses are
 still sweet The waiting is over The people
 have found us in their shoes and their pockets You
 with the beginning of wrinkles are fiercely determined
 I am shouting and my bones begin to show
 We are children just learning to walk The way is
 filled with dancing and with laughter and
 with doubt Light comes in flashes”

19

He makes dinner She comes home to his warm
 mouth She takes her dress off over him They
 get drunk off boxed wine He puts his hand in her
 before she fucks him

20

She puts her brown hair on the pillow He runs his
 hand through it From a little book of poems
 he gives their night a name

part VI

0

We were walls facing walls.

1

Disaster. We arrived in paradise to discover
ashes and wet clothing.

It seems the rain has been falling here
for a very long time.

We built a shed from the
bones of an animal. We peer out. Rarely
together.

We never talk about
what we see.

Does she take the wailing heap
of refuse for green hills? We
have stopped examining each other's eyes.

We even hide them
from each other at times.

The only
comfort

is after she's lit the fire and it's gone out,
after we've cooked our scraps
and eaten them, after I've taken the dishes
to the rain for
washing,

we hold each other and listen to the
wind. Then she sleeps
and I continue listening.

2

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Suddenly, strawberries appear all over her body.
 Blood bubbles in pools in the streets.
 The rail will not stop for days.
 Spaghetti and margarine at a mother's table.
 The baby chokes on missile dust.
 Storm rises from a lover's body.
 She has joined the puddles.
 A haze covers the west end.
 There are no mountains. There is no mist.

Two wander over a bridge of dragonflies.
 Dust clings to the rubble like a child's hand.
 Every face wears the gaza shroud. Apartheid shroud.
 The west end shrieks.
 He claws the reservation shroud from her
 and tongues a promise there.
 She draws a face across his belly.
 Gauze whirls in shreds.
 The corpses gawk at dumpsters.
 Hospitals explode.
 There are no heavens. There is no home.

Anthony's ring tumbles off and two kiss inside it
 like a pool of streetlight.
 A mother wanders through with her child.
 The crocodile breath laps up her feather dress.
 Her path of veils.
 The poet sears a knife blade to his other cheek.
 Wails rise like lit candles.
 There is a heap of waxen fingerprints.
 A man in a white cape counts the dead.
 He is deaf to the children's laughter.
 He is blind to the mother's tears.
 He cackles out the word 'Devastation'

Huddled under ashes in sacks of flesh,
 an army rises holding severed limbs and baby teeth.

Electricity clatters off around them.
They whisper the unnameable.
They dance and shout.
They kiss the mother's eyes.
They build homes beneath the earth
and tunnels for the sunlight.
They march against the pale masks.
They burn the slogans of the state.
Advertisements go black completely.
Their gorgeous limbs spill into boiling water.
There are no angels. There is no Christ.

Bombs continue to rain.
The state suffocates the people in their sleep.
Workers die with fistfuls of nothing.
Songs echo in their necks where the throat was torn out.
Prayer sweeps over the land like a child looking for its
father.
Like a lover looking for their lover,
holding his whisper like a scrap of lightning or an address,
reciting thunder:
'We have no more hands to hold hands and sing.
We must kiss our stumps to each other's stumps.
Tear the heartbeat from my breast and teach the world to
dance upon its ruins.
We will chisel our poems into the oppressor's skull.
We only bow to tie our comrade's boots or wash our lover's
feet.'

4

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7

You wash hands above the sink. Some of you
 is the colour of dandelions. Some of you

is the colour of matchheads. Over
the yellow sink you shave your face
and think of the brick sky for a moment
and the dust buildings that wore it.
You bring out a box of wine and a
book of poems. You lie beside your
lover in all sorts of shapes and lose
track of the words you say,
waking her. You make beds and stoves
out of each other's bodies. She doesn't
hear you when you say you love her and
shifts beneath you. Something falls
off of you and is lost in the room.
You do not know what it is. You
rise after kissing her earlobe and leave
her sleeping on it. The lamp you turn
on in the next room, milky skin pouring
off you, is a very quiet whisper that
touches you everywhere, it is her, breathing
in the next room, wrapped around the bed
you left there with the fingertips, red
as matchpoints, that touched your eyelids
while you screamed.

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14

will we carry this on? will we be another
 generation of mother & child
 who do not know each other
 of father & child
 who do not know each
 other? I hid every rite

of passage from you.
why? we never fight.
we choose our words too carefully.
how long since you cried?
how long since you laughed?
how long since you screamed?

i want to ask you
what do you dream?
does desire die in everyone?
are you hiding from it
or did it simply expire?
what's under all this religion?
who are you?
what makes you happy?
what keeps you up?
where does your hollowness sit?
when you die what will be left of you?
what will be left of me?
how should i live?
who am i?
how can i be happy?
what must i do
with this hollowness
that swallows me
from the chest
burning into my throat and my crotch
my feet
and behind my eyes?
how should i live?

but i do not.

we trade in silences and interviews.
you bring me things as though i were
still a child.
i close my mouth
to you like an adolescent.

mother.
father.
when will i be adult?

when will i
laugh and cry and scream
in front of you
the way people
laugh and cry and scream
in front of each other?
when will we ask each other questions
or sit in silence
like human beings?
will you open all your darkness to me only
when you're old
and your paper skin is gray?
are we all afraid of adulthood and loneliness?
do you feel like only half a person too?
are you at jesus' feet because you're scared of being?

i cannot count for you
the paths i've taken
out since then.
i cannot bring these secrets out for you,
the only things i have to give.
i must lay a trail for myself someday.
maybe we'll meet again when we have
both made our peace with brokenness
and both have things to say.

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18

A book of sunlight maws open and
rushes over a thousand beds
and a thousand more and
a thousand more. Night
scrubbed fingers claw out
its pages. The body is dispersed.
From lying in the green folds of itself
it gathers voices.
It makes a river of them
and bends its
broken head beneath the current.
There, the empty pocketedness roars deeply.
It presses its head
further to where the drunken mouths gasp for
kisses and rifles off the words of its
flesh. A thousand tender touches
and a thousand more.
And a thousand more.

part VII

0

This is Paradise. There is nowhere else. This is Paradise.

1

Anthony takes the cigarettes from his bag and puts them in the front left pocket of his blue denim. He is wearing a white shirt with spray foam and holes in it. He has no shoes and his keys are in his back right pocket. He does not take his wallet but he does take his phone, he moves it from his left pocket to his right pocket to make room for the cigarettes. He takes a small notebook that Christian gave him weeks before at breakfast (he unwound the coils and removed the pink flowered cardboard covers and closed the coils tightly around the yellow lined pages in an empty board room on the main floor of a museum where a father and a child drank out of pop cans from vending machines). He walks down from the apartment to the river. It is brown thick and wide. There is a long low oak hanging at the bottom of the low hill that falls into the risen river. He sits there on the sloping grass and takes out his cigarettes. He searches his pockets for his light but has left it in the apartment at the corner of spence and balmoral. He sits and feels the sun very bright on his skin then stands and walks back to the apartment and opens the front door with the silver key and opens his apartment door with the gold key and goes inside to get his red lighter from the front pocket of his black dakine bag sitting on the cheap metal futon in the front room (there is a brown and orange afghan covering the unattractive fabric — both the afghan and the futon were in the apartment when he moved in). He walks back down, locking his front door with the gold key. It is a tricky lock and he has to pull it out slightly before turning it or the key will not move. He goes by the man and woman on the side of the street in lawnchairs selling alligator skin purses and fake leather purses and horror novels and disco cds. He sits down in the thick sunny grass and takes his

shirt off and lies in the sun and breathes and looks at the trees and watches the leaves move in the wind and watches the river which does not stop moving and listens to the sound of where he is. He sits up and puts his shirt back on and takes out a belmont cigarette and puts it in his mouth and uses the red lighter to light it and takes the notebook and writes 'A book of sunlight maws open and rushes over a thousand beds and a thousand more and a thousand more. Night scrubbed fingers claw out its pages. The body is dispersed. From lying in the green folds of itself it gathers voices. It makes a river of them and bends its broken head beneath the current. There the emptypocketedness roars deeply. It presses its head further to where the drunken mouths gasp for kisses and rifles off the words of its flesh. A thousand tender touches and a thousand more. And a thousand more.'

At the bottom of the hill a woman walks in the mud and the branches right at the edge of the river and the weeds. She is drunk and she stumbles on a log and stands, there is wind and she stands in it. A man comes behind her and puts his arm around and puts his body very close to hers and they are laughing.

"Didn't expect that did you. The wrap around."

She smiles and she kisses him and he kisses her and she kisses him and he puts his hands on her hips. She is wearing a gray tank that is too tight and blue shorts and her hair is parted in the middle and comes midway down her back. He has a hat on and the peak faces down towards the back of his neck and a black shirt with a band name on it and gray denims. They are both wearing shoes that will not let them down. His are red and hers are torn.

"Where's Peter? Where did Peter go? Peter!"

Another man emerges from the very thick bush right at the edge of the water, he is fighting out of the green thicket and he comes and sways next to them. He is wearing a shirt and pants because he must be wearing something. He has a very big branch that he is using as a staff to keep himself steady in the shallows of the gray brown water. They come up to where the bottom of the hill is clear and try to pass back into the thicket and continue walking along the river but soon they are returning to where it is clear.

“Fucking mosquitos”

“Fuck that man”

“No fucking way I’m walking down through there. I’m not fucking doing that. No fucking way man.”

They come out of the thicket and walk up the hill and see Anthony sitting watching them and smoking a cigarette and smiling and sitting there watching them happily.

“Can I have a cigarette?”

“Of course”

Anthony gives the woman a cigarette and she sits next to him and the man sits next to her.

“Can I have a cigarette too?”

“Of course.”

Anthony takes out another cigarette and gives it to the man named Peter. The other man is drinking from a blue cup and he finishes drinking from the blue cup.

“Do you want a cigarette too?”

“No I’m good man.”

“Can we have one for later though?”

“Yeah of course.”

He gives Peter the cigarette and Peter puts the cigarette into the pocket of his bag.

“Peter pass me your bag.”

The other man stands up and goes to the bag there and takes out a bottle of stone cold and fills his blue cup and he drinks from it and he is going to offer it to the woman but then he does not.

“No. You don’t need any more.”

“Cuz I’m already fucking drunk.”

She laughs.

“My name is Jamie.” The woman says.

“I’m Erik.” Anthony says.

“You’re cute. I like your smile. You’re cute.”

She draws out the word you’re as though she is saying two words you and re.

“And this is Drum.”

She cuddles up to him and he giggles and buries his face in her neck and kisses her and they laugh and kiss and are very much in love.

“And this is Moses.”

Drum says and he points at Peter who is smoking his cigarette and his staff is laying in the grass. And they all talk and laugh very much and they smoke more of Anthony’s cigarettes and Anthony refuses to call Peter Peter but will only refer to him as Moses.

“I’m sorry if we’re bugging you. We don’t mean to be bugging you. I know some people don’t like to be bugged but we don’t mean to be bugging you.” Moses says.
“You’re not bugging me. I like talking to you.”
“Ain’t nobody got a problem with us. If you got a problem with us then you’re the one with the fucking problem you know what I mean?” Drum says.

Drum has many names for Jamie and will not stop kissing her. Jamie will not stop saying do you know what I mean and she says it as though she is saying two words junowati and mean. And Jamie laughs very often. And Drum laughs very often. And Peter can be very silent.

Peter says “I saw heaven once.”

Anthony “What’s it like?”

“It’s like this.”

“This is as close as it comes?”

“This is it. Heaven is on earth. You know. It’s right here. This is heaven.”

“Can you tell me about when you saw heaven?”

“I was. I was walking through this fog. There was nothing. And you couldn’t see nothing and I was walking there and then I saw this great. Light. And it was pulling me forward and I could see it and I could hear it and this was before I was out of the fog.”

“Can I have a drag bro.”

Jamie comes and they share the rest of the cigarette Peter has been smoking and Anthony does not hear the rest of the story about heaven. Jamie shows Anthony her shoes and they have holes in them and Drum shows Anthony his shoes and they are covered in mud.

“Fuck man I didn’t know it was up on the side.”

Jamie says “I was bleeding really bad from here. Cuz I was in the river and I cut myself on something.”

Anthony “Was this just now?”

“No this was before and I was freaked out cuz I was bleeding bad from here and I was on acid and I don’t get my time that often and then I got cut here and I was bleeding and I got my time at the same time and I was freaking out and then my cousin got a hole like this here and I was like fuck man is everybody bleeding but I don’t really like to talk about it because it was a bad time do you know what I mean?”

“Yeah. I wouldn’t want to talk about it either.”

“You want some?”

“Thanks.”

Anthony drinks stone cold from the bottle and Drum digs out a blue plastic cup and hands it to Anthony.

“Oh that’s okay.”

“Fuck off, thats okay.”

They both laugh and Anthony says “Thanks” and fills his cup and Drum holds out his cup and Anthony fills his cup.

Peter and Jamie are to drunk to drink anymore but Drum and Anthony are not.

Anthony drinks from his cup and Drum says “Finish it” so Anthony pours out the rest of his bottle in the blue plastic cup and they sit and laugh and Drum plays music on his phone and they smoke cigarettes.

Jamie sees the small makeshift notebook.

“You writing love letters?”

“Yes.”

“Oh we’ve all done that.” Drum says.

“You’re cute” Jamie says. “I’m going to call you Pretty.”

“I like that. That’s a good name.”

“Yeah that’s a good name.” Drum says, “Almost as good as Pretty Lady.” and Jamie laughs and kisses Drum on the

mouth and on the jaw and on the neck and they laugh and he calls her his bubbly and his lovely and many other names and they make jokes of pushing each other “Get away from me” and then leap back into each other and they laugh and Anthony is blissful and Peter is quiet and easy.

“I’m her little black baby.” Drum says “And she’s my brown lady. Her and Peter. The brown babies. You should see them man they’re exactly the same. Just exactly the same these two. The brown babies.”

“Well at least I wasn’t born a black baby.” Peter says and Drum laughs very hard and says “Oh I see. I see how its. Now we’re getting racist now this is Peter getting racist.” And Peter is laughing very hard and Jamie is laughing very hard and Drum and Peter wrestle and tickle each other and pull away and Drum kisses Jamie and Drum’s plastic cup tips over and he loses the beer and he resets it and says “Damn” but he does not care.

“What time is it?” Anthony says.

“I don’t know man. Fuck it. Three fifteen maybe.”

“Oh I gota go make dinner.”

“Oh are we coming over for dinner. I like carrots. There’s got to be carrots.” Drum says. “There’s got to be carrots.”

“I’m sorry man, I gota make dinner for my lady.”

“Oh I understand then man.”

“You have a good night.”

“Drum.”

“Drum. And Jamie.”

“And Peter.”

“Moses.”

“Moses.”

“Gbye Pretty.”

“Goodbye. Have a good night. Have a good day. Goodbye.”

And Anthony gets up and puts the cigarettes and the lighter in his front right pocket and walks back up the green grass hill and past the gravel path that cuts diagonally across

from the river side to the east sidewalk. He comes onto the sidewalk. There is a small concrete patch at the top of the hill with three stone benches and a young woman and a young man are sitting on one lighting a hookah and Anthony smiles at them but they are looking at each other and Anthony walks on the west sidewalk and he can feel little rocks on the palms of his feet and he goes up the steps to his apartment and he puts the key in the door and pulls it open and takes the key out of the door and he goes to the hall door and he unlocks the door and he opens the door and he goes inside and he takes an hour to type out all his poems from the little dishevelled notebook but he does not send them to anyone then he cuts up two garlic sausages and half a red onion and five cloves of garlic and fries them in olive oil and then adds tomatoes and crushes them and adds a bouillon cube and salt and pepper and oregano and rosemary and cayenne and he adds a thick slice of yellow butter and lets it melt in the sauce and he puts another pot of water on the stove and boils it and puts a packet of spaghetti in the hot water and stirs it in and drains it when the noodles are soft and prepares two plates and sits waiting for his lover to arrive. The meals are hot on the table and Anthony is jubilant in the metal chair.

2

I was already drunk when me and John left the apartment to get two king cans at the sherb and we were walking down balmoral and talking about things and I wanted to smoke a cigarette but I didn't then because I figured I'd enjoy it more if I had a molson dry at the same time so we were walking down and we were talking about moving away and John was moving to toronto and he was telling me about how he was moving to toronto and how Lisa was missing him at night when he wanted to go hang out with people and spend time with them and she didn't understand why he didn't want to spend time with her because they only had a couple weeks left but he was saying how if she was going to be needy and whiney then the time spent together isn't

all that great anyway and I was talking about how sometimes you just wana hang out with the boys when we got to the sherb and started parsing out cash and picking what we wanted to drink.

We had enough money for two molson dry king cans so we bought those two and we were headed out when the woman behind us in line who had bought a six pack of lucky whites asked us if we'd walk her to broadway and young because she was scared of the area and I said of course and she said oh thank you oh thank you boys and so we left out the back of the sherb where the glass was so dirty its gray into the backlot where there's an orange light over the big gray parking lot where there was only two or three cars parked and theres the little curbs that tell you where you should park and theres the little apartment buildings on the edges of it where people I know and other people live.

We walked down langside up to sarah and turned right onto sarah where there's an alley that takes you up to young and there were three or four chinese lanterns hanging from the tree in the backyard of someone's apartment and the woman was telling us how grateful she was and said that she would buy me a pack of smokes as long as we would share a beer with her in the park on young street and we said yes and she told us how shes a good woman and how she has a job and she showed me her molly maid shirt that she was still wearing and passing the side of an apartment building through the alley onto young I asked John if he remembered smoking a joint in an enclave in the building with William when I was getting over strep so William had rolled me my own joint and I hadn't smoked in weeks getting over the strep and I had gotten very high and John said that he did and we came out onto the end of south young and turned past the wading pool where Brian had worked and Brian and John and I had smoked a joint after playing basketball in the middle of the night with one of the neighbourhood kids and she said that she was meeting her

sister at her apartment and said that her sister was in the apartment just across the street and I asked if it was the blue and white one and she said yes and I told her that I had looked at that apartment a lot against every sky when I lived on young and after when I lived on colony and looked at the building from the bench smoking cigarettes and we stopped at that same bench and she sat down and I set down her beers because I was carrying her six pack in a big cardboard box and I crouched in the grass and John stood at the edge of the bench.

I lit a cigarette and she lit a cigarette and she asked us if we wanted a beer and John said he was okay but I said yes so I took the beer and I opened it and she had opened hers and we drank lucky whites and I passed the beer to John and he drank a bit and he passed it back to me and she kept saying how grateful she was and she said that she could look at me and she could tell I was trouble but she said she could tell John was a good boy and she kept saying how handsome I was how handsome I was when I smiled and John said that she was right about me being trouble and I said I know I'm a bad influence and John said yeah he is and we smiled at each other knowing it was true and thinking of all the times I'd kept him up until five or six before work and before weddings getting drunk and she said see I knew I could tell but you shouldn't be a bad influence you shouldn't be one and I said I know I try not to be but I can't help it and she knew.

She said that she worked a job but she had come down to the sherb to hang out with her sister and she said that she had spent two hundred dollars and I asked if it was on vlts and she said it was on vlts and her sister had left her because her sister was falling asleep at the bar and asked if she wanted to come home but she didn't want to go home yet because there was a guy there buying her drinks and so she told her sister to go home and she would come by later with beers and so her sister had left and she kept saying

how she hoped that her sister would be awake but she knew her sister would let her in because she had beers and she had work in the morning so even if her sister wasn't awake she would just catch a cab to her place on henderson so she could sleep before work and she pulled out another cigarette so I pulled out another cigarette and she was trying to smoke hers but it was broken and I told her it was broken but she said it was fine but then she was trying to smoke it and it wasn't working and I told her it was broken but the break was close to the filter so she could snap it off and make a cowboy but she didn't understand so I told her I'd trade her the cigarette I was smoking for that one and she said okay and she gave me the broken cigarette and I snapped it off at the filter and I smoked it the way I had smoked the cigarette on Isiah's auntie's porch after I had lit it from the wrong end and she smoked the belmont and she insisted we took another beer but I was very drunk and I could tell John was too and we still had the two kingcans of molson dry so we told her we were okay and she said okay and we smoked our cigarettes and she kept apologizing for how slow she was drinking hers and I told her it was okay and it was probably a good idea.

She told us that she had been lucky because her brothers and sisters had to go to residential schools for years but she had only had to go for one year and they had come and taken her from her family and it was supposed to be a trial run and her mother was supposed to be able to pull her out at any time after a month or after two months or three months or anytime but her mother couldn't pull her out and she kept telling her mother to get her out of there but her mother couldn't and so she had to stay and she didn't understand and the school was in churchill and her mother lived just down the block but it was forbidden to visit her family so she did not see them but at christmas because she and a couple other kids knew that if they worked hard the school would give them two or three hours of free time to go to the arcades or the movies in the town though they

were not allowed to visit their families during these free hours they worked hard and got the free time and she and her brothers and sisters snuck to their mother's place down the street and they had christmas in two hours and then they went back to the school and when the school teachers asked them where they had all been they said they were at the arcade because they knew they would be beaten if the teachers found out they had gone back to their mother's home but she said that even if they had found out it would have been worth it and she said for one shitty year she got paid ten thousand so she couldn't complain but it made me angry though I didn't say anything.

She said I hope I get to see you boys again but I don't think I will because you know why I think you're ghosts you're too nice I think you two are angels you must be angels you're too nice you know I saw a ghost once and she told the story and she said I'm sorry I'm not going to see you again and she said I'm sorry I'm drinking too slow and I said don't worry ghosts have all the time in the world and she liked that then when she was close to finishing the beer John took the cardboard box and we started walking down the sidewalk with the hockey rink on the right and the big soccer field on the left towards the basketball court and she finished her beer on the sidewalk and she dropped it and we walked past the basketball court and the have humility mural and the white block apartment building with yellow light windows that was on our right and we came out to broadway.

She went to the payphones but they were card only phones so you couldn't use them if you just had change and she was getting frustrated but John let her use his phone and her sister didn't pick up so I hailed a cab going down broadway because I figured she had to get home some way and the cab driver swung onto young street north young and pulled over and I told him that she wanted a cab to henderson but when I went back to the payphones where she was standing

with John she said she didn't trust him that she thought he would cheat her and charge too much for the trip and that she'd only do it for fifteen so I went to the cab driver and I asked him if he would take her to henderson for fifteen and he said yes and I went back to her and I told her but when she pulled out her purse she only had seven dollars and some change left and she started swearing and a man was walking down toward us to ask us something but she screamed fuck and he turned away and kept walking and she said that she'd wait outside the apartment building until someone was coming in or out and she'd knock on her sister's door and she said it was alright if we left so I told the cab driver that it was okay and he drove off and she said by the way my names Alice and she told us about her daughter who was doing well and engaged to a chef who worked on portage and they were travelling to hawaii and I asked her if she was going to go and she said she didn't want to because she was happy in winnipeg and she had a job but she said her daughter's good and that they take care of each other and she said her name was Alice and I told her my name was Erik and John said his name was John and she said you boys are angels are angels are angels and she said I'm sorry I keep calling you boys I'm just so old and I told her that I took it as a compliment and she said okay its okay if you leave I'll be okay now and so I said okay and John told her to be safe and she said she would and so we walked back down the sidewalk to the same park bench that we had drunk the lucky whites with Alice at.

We opened one molson dry at a time and drank them together passing them back and forth and John told me that he had the chance of having a hereditary disease which would mean that he would die soon so his family was springing for life insurance before it was proved whether he did or not because if it was proved that he did have it then he wouldn't be eligible for life insurance at all anymore and he told me that he probably had glaucoma which meant he was going blind in a couple years and because of his life

insurance he wasn't allowed to smoke cigarettes or marijuana otherwise he'd be listed as a smoker and his life insurance would be nullified so if he got hit by a bus and there was nicotine or THC in his system his family wouldn't get anything and I told him that I'd tried to kill myself and he told me that his sister had almost been molested by her uncle and that was when he realized he was capable of killing someone but his uncle had been in Florida and he had no way down to Florida and he told me if I ever was taking sharp glass to my wrist again I could call him and we walked down young and he asked for a cigarette and we smoked together and went back into the courtyard of my first apartment building and stood in silence smoking and later I let him into my apartment to pick up his headphones and his skateboard and I gave him a hug and I told him I was sorry I couldn't go out to Toronto and he said it was okay and he left and my head was spinning from all the drink and the smoke and I drank three glasses of water and washed my face and lay down in bed and held Viola and could not sleep and felt sick and lay on my back praying that I'd vomit in my sleep and drown in it.

3

They sat on a stone curb. Flowers blossomed behind them. The summer was hot and the hot breeze came down through the city. Yellow lights twinkled and flashed everywhere, ribbons of yellow lights on the small market kiosks ramshackle in the alley. The smell of hot food and curry came with the breeze and they breathed it. The grass of the square was hot and crumpled and green under the feet of people dancing. Footsteps and voices walked up and down the alley of cobbled stones and food trucks rimmed and ringed with yellow lights and the posters fluttered in their glue from the windows and walls. He reached for her hand and it was there pink warm and enormous, loving him. Their fingers in each other's fingers, a small bag of books. They looked at the pink sky falling around them and smelt the hot breezes of warm summer food and heard in the

ringing cupped city all the sounds of laughter. Her and his skin felt each other in the sundead night of the summer the city alive with its need an empty ringing tomb cluttered with too many people all desperate for loving and they clung to their hands and looked in their eyes and felt clean empty and happy in the warm summer air.

A man from the laundromat his white coat frayed in the nightness came down from the alley of bookstores and clothing with nothing but gray beard and a twinkling of silence. He stopped at their feet and there was the force of warm silence much better than a greeting. He asked them a question and spoke about magic and just as he was living he said “I hope both you live for” and he left then he turned in a halo of streetlights and said “ever.”

As he was walking he turned and with his gray cracking voice he made the whole city shiver saying finally in the streetlights and the warm summer air wearing the sounds of the people and crumpled grass of the dancing and the summer heat of hot curry “Do not hope the same for me. I already have.” And he twinkled out like a warmness and yellow of nothing and they sat in a ringing that was bigger than a city holding each hand in the sidewalk where the last words were said.

*Winnipeg,
May - August, 2014.*

