

2 FOR DOWNBEAT

for the last time
bugs swarm
down the mountain
you can't stop them

coarse moss
gathers pebbles

you might find a
throw pillow
in the fireproof room.
you ____
my blue look alike,
downbeat.
//

Alphabet handcuffs,
snug as a belt
or locking carabiner.

Digging in the stupid gutter.

ACCESSORY

You don't smile when you see me
Pass you walking on the street.
I've vanished from your frame of reference.
My disappearance is complete.
I'm missing from those candid snapshots
Of all the parties you attend.
No desperate begging on your voicemail box
And there will never be again.

And I'm telling you, I'll never be so hard up
As to need you by my side once more.
And now I know that all I ever was to you
Was another accessory to the clothes you wore.

Now folks don't even recognize me.
They don't notice me without you.
I can walk on by so discreetly.
That's about all that I can do.
Sometimes I see you in my nightmares
And it's just like you weren't gone.

But when I wake up, you're not even there
And you ain't never gonna come.

ALL-TUCH

He catches me roll my eyes in his rear-view mirror. He was chewing the skin off his lip with his teeth. His teeth are as yellow as the beer I drink in the back-seat. Now he tastes blood. Yellow like the beer is what I picture. Now his lips bleed. Blood drops cling to the plaque on his teeth. He rolls his window down and hears a hollow, soaring sound - hawks coated in bubble-wrap or owls with wine jugs.

Now his lips bleed red - blood-red like a nosebleed, like bloody snot. He has lived this moment before, in closets. He thinks, *We used to laugh together*. The dots on my face are freckles. He is so clean. He has so little to offer, believe it or not. Follow like an echo.

Follow like a coda. He thinks, *They still laugh with me, but their faces in mirrors look wrong*. I kick the back of his seat in time to "All Summer Long." He sure knows how to pick them - wide as the ocean. He brought one to the holiday party one year. As soon as she came along, sour-faced, down-trodden men broke-out into song. The fish on the plates were swimming.

He is so hopeless. He would trade his car for a cast of my face, in a pinch. There is no end to his foolishness. He is so hung-up. Hung-up like a trophy, hung-up like a plaque on the wall with his pictures. Even lit, he looks somber.

He has lived this moment before, in basements. I know when he brushed my waist at the show, I flinched. Snitches get stitches and fools get duped. Cradle like a baby. Wound-up like a pretzel - twisted. He picked me clean as a whistle. He says, "Don't lie to me - I won't tell on you."

He is such a needy puppy. He tails a filthy person with his wagging puppy tail. Did he drink the golden snail? Did he feed you stuff? He is wearing a muscle tee, I forgot to mention. This is my fond farewell - Wassail, Sincerely, With love.

ANTHEM

It was crowded at the bar
So we drove to a liquor store in your car.
You cranked a tune and asked me if I was a fan -
As if I pop a boner for garage rock bands.

We were baking in the sun
and when the show was over we were blackout drunk.
You brought some back and thought you'd play it cool.
The bartender he tells you that's against the rules.

You stole some bottles from that bar
And then you popped a soccer ball, hit it with your car.
We followed you right to the outskirts,
Where you took off your pants and you took off your shirt.

You've settled down, you're on the right track.
Scratching at your sweaty buttcrack.
Right before you go to sleep,
You slide a frozen hotdog into your best friend's briefs.

ARE YOU HAVING FUN?!

Bite your tongue, don't bite the hand that feeds you.
No one wants to hear the things you say.
You know that alibi of yours is see-through.
When they find you, you better get on your knees and pray.

It's so hard to know what you want when you want nothing.
You say that you're gonna sow your wild oats.
And when you pronounce your judgment,
you better hope the ones you love, love you the most.

Flaunt your disregard for where you came from.
When you rock it so hard, do you think you might rock it right off?
Not the sharpest tool but I am handsome.
Can't you take a hint and stop?

Keep it to yourself, you have no audience.
I'm with you or against you or I'm dumb.
You think I'm the one who's lost his common sense.
Do you remember much? Are you having fun?

BECAUSE OF YOU

Think back on when we were so hell-bent and youthful -
no, not yet dignified or noble.
We were red in the face, like Scott Hooper.
We would cat-call and ogle.
We were snug in drunk stupor.
Now we only close our eyes when we yodel.

I don't think that it will rain,
don't feel it in my bone.
But you saw it on your phone.

Do you know I'm insane?
Don't roll away the stone.
You're yawning when you moan.

The air is gray.
I'm so lazy.
Eye-roll and groan.

What can I say?
You know the rest.

I'm stuck this way.
I'm complacent.
I'm on my own,
on holiday -
so decadent.

BEGGING DOG

You said what I had was the thing you just couldn't resist.
You said we were getting in trouble every time that we kissed.
But when you're not in trouble, trouble is something you miss.
Yes, I'm sure you've had too many troubles to list.

Table scraps from your heart that you throw on the floor.
It feels like I'm collecting on alms for the poor.
Table scraps from your heart that you throw on the ground.
You're leading me on and you're spinning me around.

You nailed me up like a stuffed buffalo head on your wall.
You said I was cuter than cute, like a porcelain doll.
But you cannot stop at one, when you want them all.
You're flying so high that you better prepare for a fall.

You can just place the blame on me
Or you can just blame the alcohol.

BEING THE OTHER MAN

I hear you have eyes in the back of your head.
I hope you don't start seeing red.
No need to take one last look over your shoulder.

That European Spring Break tour
Has left you hazy and obscured.
I'll bite off a chunk of her inner thigh.
You won't miss it - say, "Goodbye, goodbye!"

But don't despair, do not distress.
Come home to the great Midwest.
I bet she'll let you pull up her short dress.
Don't make a mess, don't make a mess.

Indianapolis, Indiana.
Wipe off your shit-stained bandana.
One-way streets and two-way doors.

Last night you pulled that accent bit.
I cut you down with just one hit.
Do you think it makes you sound exotic?
Don't forget you bit my lip, you bit my lip.

I'll bite off the choicest chunk of her flesh,
Make sure that it won't be missed,
Trade it for one final kiss,
Take it with me to Los Angeles.

Crack out your axe and crank up your amp.
Show off your new tramp stamp.
You think you're just like Jesse James.
You think you're just like Townes Van Zandt.

BIG BELLY BLUES

Sky is red, I'm stuck in bed.
Show me your big belly - Mama, gonna rest my head.

This house is propped on stilts you see.
It was built in the City of Industry.

Gas stove oven - gonna cook my meat.
Tan your buns in the summer heat.

Blow your brains out, pump that Super Soaker squirt gun.
I remember when you were young.

Mistook your brother for yourself.
At least you can still shine your stacks of wealth.

I'm so lonesome I can't breathe.
Your loving arms are all I need.

BIG LOVE

My love is big, she stretch her dress.
She climbs me - Mt. Everest.
Or is I the one who climb?
We are living in the end-times.

Oh my love is bittersweet.
To love my love is sweat and labor.
This mark she marked me with her teeth -
I gave it too, I gave it to my neighbor.

Tongue your sweetheart on his lips.

Honey, take a whiff on this.
My thoughts are stained in toxic sludge.
Loving you is my labor of love.

I move like I don't have bones,
Moving like we used to do.
You licking on your ice cream cone -
I have often thought of you.

Knocked so hard I knocked your door.
It's too early - sure not nearly quarter to four.
Why do I feel so strange?
Ride around, little dogies, ride around my brain.

Love, were you moved by the sound in my throat?
It was nothing. I nibbled the crumbling biscuit.
It was a trifle, it was no rose.
You can't feel the thing you're twisting.

What I wish you weren't wicked.
It doesn't mean a thing like this to listen.

BLOOD AND GUTS

You always said I should stick to my gut,
but what about you? were a stick in the mud,
better watch what you stick or you're stuck.

You always said I should play it by ear
but all I could hear was the wet on your breath.
You were not cleft in two, you were freed.
You said we weren't more than the sum of your parts.

Do you like what you see when you look in the mirror?

BLOOD WISP

How rude to crush that fragile bird's nest!
How dumb!
Stupid sucks hard candy.

Sugar water tears up a heart.
That's too rich now for this bird's nest.
This sweet omen, now underwater.

Ugly water whispers wrap the tree.

Come inside, knock cold marble.

Knocking hollow? Knocking solid.
Miserable liars hide somewhere.

What yo-yos, white-knuckled,
bouncing down fresh-buffed floors?
Something muddy.
Something rubber, with stinging blisters.
Sneakers squeak down, rubbing again.

Whatever snarls like a dog
should snap the guard dog muzzle on.

BLUES ARE HOLLOW

Cube of ice in my cup. Winter coat. Riverboat, quote unquote. Sun comes up and it matches my shoes.
Bright yellow. Say, "Hello Iowa! No new news!" This shallow talk is nice. Buffalo on my rumped shirt.
Lashing out, fashionably.

This sunrise interrupted my total grief. Photographs don't. Photoshop. What's the actual use of sorrow?
Does it show? Teal, aqua, turquoise. Blues are hollow. Fear blue eyes. Drown in oceans, gulping and gasping. Waves crash. Heartbreak sea.

BRIGHT TRASH

Did you say you were barren?
Did you think that was wishful thinking?
Was that why you were wide-eyed?
Did you light right up?
Oh what bright Wisconsin trash!

Are you scraping by barely,
Scraping the bottom of the barrel.
Was that the blouse you were wearing?
Did you bring enough to share?
Bring it out on a platter!

What were you starting to say when I coughed?
Did you lose the nerve, when I cut you off?

--

Did it feel glamorous?
What a clean cut that was!

CALIFORNIA BLUES

See the black smoke rolling from that old smokestack.
Careful not to trigger an asthmatic attack.
But when you're visiting a friend in the Hills,
You're gonna chomp on your cigar.

And I can recommend a picturesque spot
To smooch your sweetheart in your sleek sports car.
But when you loosen up to liquor and you're stone blind drunk,
You break the bar and your eyes roll back.

When it's summer in St. Louis City, sweet child of mine,
You've got to sun out in your undies under sweaty, sticky skies.
But when you're going to the Golden State,
You're gonna sleep under the stars.
I've got a buddy with an unmatched hate.
See him fuming on 55 in his car.
I'm content with burning bridges on the river
When the rainy season starts.

Deep in the heart of Texas, folks in low-cut shirts,
They're going on and on, on how they're third coast birthed.
But when you're picking up beach town chicks,
That won't get you far.
You can bro out with your buddies on the weekends,
Roll your joints on the dashboard of your step mom's car.
That's all you are and that's all you're worth.
That's all you are and that's all you're worth.

Mississippi river runs wide and far.
Take the Poplar Street Bridge to an eastside bar
Where whoever you will bunch in the face
Is going to slash your tires.
And you can finish off a whole case
Riding shotgun in your best friend's car.

CAUTIONARY TALE

When I'm famous, with a pretty girl on each side,
I'll dive into my guitar-shaped swimming pool and I will feel goddamn alive.
And when I die and the maggots gnaw my skin,
If you dug up my gassy corpse, you would see a toothy grin.
And when it ends and the lord delivers me,
I will not fear the judgment day, I'll greet eternity.
Bury me beneath the weeping willow tree.
Dedicate a chapter in your self-help book to me.
Oh my baby, when you lay me down,
Make sure that my body never leaves its burial ground.

CHOCOLATE BUNNY

I am not this way by chance.
You tied my legs and cuffed my hands.
You dissolved like plumes of smoke.

You vanished in the air like bubbles of soap.
Broke your ties like mowing grass.
Sliced white knuckles on shards of glass.
Laughed a laugh so hard it stung.
Cum so hard your sweat streams run.

I was confident and crass.
What shame I had was in my past.
Now I'm humbled, cowed and shy.
I twiddle my thumbs and wait to day.
I have been this way so long -
It's just a husk that sings this song.
Parrot what you say and recite my lines.
Broken heart and an empty mind.

Broken heart and an empty mind.
Pink champagne and scarlet wine.
I feel like I'm doing fine.
Pink champagne and scarlet wine.
Pink champagne and scarlet wine.
Broken heart and an empty mind.

COBWEBS

You never leave this neighborhood if you can help it -
you would turn into a pumpkin or melt.
You are your collection - your filthy roomful.
You do clean up nice too, sweep with a push-broom.

Later, at the station, with a leather bag to lean on,
you whine that you are luckless.
When the whiskey gets you heated,
you will brag that you cum buckets.

But lust is just the devil's spittle -
see, he trickles down your chin.

I swore I'd never write another song with the word "whiskey" in it.
You're a lovely scumbag with a shit-eating grin.

Eager to please, like we lonely, hoping.
Swear it's worth it you shit with the bathroom door wide-open.
Stay up watching something on your phone,
Alone.

I never leave this neighborhood as well.
Done a desperate thing for every notch on my belt.
I'm a piece of garbage - I live a life of filth.

Dusty dog hair tumbleweeds, ancient mouse shit, cobwebs.

All night I spy my target through the glass.
Everyone's a victim, except for me.
Everyone's a victim.
This one likes to milk it.

Who is the you is the trick, I think.
But the you change each time is the thing.

Did you catch me red-handed?
I always lie when I'm caught in a trap and I'm caught.
I only think intrusive thoughts.

I caught a glimpse but I lost it.
Never in the mood - it's always, "I'm exhausted."
O love, I love a love is toxic.
See me sink my fangs in a toxin,
spreading malicious gossip or coughing.
I know you think I'm obnoxious.

CONFIDENCE BOOST

I fell asleep with my pants on again,
Then woke up with a grin on my face,
Laced up my shoes and took off,
Coughed up a fat wad of phlegm.

Them that are tough will go far.
Far is a long way to go.
I know I've a heart that's of dirt
But it hurts when I think of the pain that you had.

It's bad to get off on revenge that's not sweet.
I feel the heat of you, holding you close.
The coast is not clear when there's someone to hurt
But it works when it's him what you're trying to crush.

A rush of bloodlust is a turn for the worse.
She clutches her purse when we walk where we live.
I give her a confidence boost.
Loose is what she calls us when she tells.

CONNOISSEUR'S LAMENT

Can't you see I am the man that you need?
I've got cultivated taste and a collection of cocktail recipes.
Baby, let me keep you - you think you don't want to be kept.

And we could settle down - you just want to settle your debts.

You like desperate men.
I'm thinking of a message to send.
You like desperate men
And I'm not content with being friends.

Can't you see just what I can bring?
I've got a fancy fashion sense and I have solutions to things.

No I am no Thelonious Monk
But I don't have a mind that's like a ship that's sunk.
No I am no studmuffin or hunk,
But can't you see I am the man that you need?

COOL CHICKS

When I saw her on CNN, I didn't even recognize her face.
It's a wonder how quick your signature smirk can fade.
She was still good-looking, but she looked strange.
She must have got in trouble with the law - they were taking her away in chains.

She was born and raised way out in Topanga Canyon.
She used to lie butt naked on her back porch, listening to Krautrock on her headphones.
She took real long walks, way out in the woods out by her home.
As soon as she would make her presence known, she'd be gone.

I met her in 2001 on the west side.
She used to pepper conversations with lies.
She played it cute and dumb but she always came out looking wise.
She didn't get distracted easy - she kept her eyes on the prize.

A couple months later, caught her smoking outside a punk rock club,
Showing off a tattoo with a dress cut low and snug.
She was tagging along with a band, you'd show up at her shows and she'd be cutting a rug.
You can bet your bottom dollar, I knew that I was falling in love.

But she was running with a fast crowd.
She used to get real drunk on the beach and she would holler out loud.
She fought dirty - she would wrestle you down to the ground.
She didn't take nothing from no one. She stood five-foot-two and proud.

COUNTRY ROADS MIDNIGHT BUFFET

Almost heaven, purgatory -
this Old Virginia tornado.
Notes of humid sludge
with a mattress-stain mouthfeel.

Bite what the feeding hand feeds:
scalding frog legs stew,
served with a ladle.
Fill your flabby body.

Fill the circle completely.
Close the feedback loop.
You're a golden fuji apple, Fuji Apple Mama.
Mama, you complete me.

COVER IT UP

You trusted your lover,
Thought you were tied up.
Now you can't run for cover,
Can't cover it up.

She's sullen and stubborn,
Stupid and mean.
She buzz like a buzzard.
She sings like a queen bee.

She weeps when she's sunburned,
Sob when she cut,
So hard to relate to,
So soft to the touch.

Switchback up the mountaintop.
Cash is greener than the phlegm you cough.
Don't drive into roadside smoke.
Get the girl and now it's her turn to get your goat.
The marriage ended in divorce.
Jehovah's biceps are still way bigger than yours.

You trusted your lover,
Thought you were tied up.
Now you can't run for cover,
Can't cover it up.

And you have to suffer,
You pay the cost.
You're drunk in the summer
And she begs you to stop.

And she has to suffer,
She pays the cost.
You're drunk in the summer.

You're gonna drink that last drop.

You trusted your lover,
Thought you were tied up.
Now you can't run for cover,
Can't cover it up.

CRY IN THE RAIN

He said, "Come on the trip,"
and I agreed.
I was eating chips
and coming off of speed.
Sighing
through some half-assed art thing.

Loading equipment on the truck.
Pouring from a bottle in a mug.

And with the first drop you gulp -
sharper focus.
Cry in the rain.
Drop in the the ocean.
Dripping
salsa into a sink.

Curl up with a half pint on some gross sofa.
Spreading cashew butter on a cracker
in your grow hut.

Shine my little light
on warm Colorado mud.

You said, "Don't look when I dip
in this Utah lake.
I've had far too much
of your face today."

CRUISIN

Who can I smile at? Who will I pick?
Gonna give me what I want.
I want it now. I need a fix.
You just might be the one!
It's gonna take. You're gonna melt.
Don't front.

Gave it a name - the name didn't stick.

Gave it a number - the number was one.
As ever, a sucker - easily tricked.
Captive and hooked on whatever you sell.

Shaky on my bended knees. You had an elegant gait.
Was this your lucky night - a kneeling drunkard's plea?
I bet you could not wait to buckle up your seat belt and ride.
You're gonna ride. You're gonna rock.
You're gonna shake.

CURSES

Did you throw the towel in?
Murky eyes.
Weak chin.
Your cheeks -
 razor-burn purple
 with hanging jowls.

Please take my advice, old friend.
I see your skull beneath your skin.
The clock is ticking.

Flat soda
 in a plastic goblet.
You fill your cap
 with the tap.
Murky water.
Are you hungover?

Please take my advice, dear brother.
Don't hold a grudge,
 hold a hand.
You make me sick.

Remember, it was where
 we took turns
 rolling glasses
 down the slanted,
 softwood floor,
 and overturned chairs.

Please take my advice, my love.
Cover it up
 in dust
 and sand
 and sticks.

You say now you're just a shell.
Well, a shell of what?
Carry your house on your back
 like a crab.
When you slip-up,
 crack like an egg.

Please take my advice, you foe.
You don't know,
 but I know what
 you just
 can't stand.
You can't stand it.

DANCE SONG

I was dancing at the party. You were sulking, I was dancing.
I always come off looking foolish when I try to be romantic.
You asked about the wagon, was I off again or on it?
We agreed it's such a drag to spend our lives catatonic.
I said, "You spread yourself too thin - I see you as one in need."
You said, "Do you think I'm dim? You just want to sow your seed."
You said, "Do you think I'm dim? You just want to sow your seed."

Whenever I try to share myself, I come off looking sloppy.
I said, "Do you want me, dear. If you're not interested, I'll drop it."
Whenever I try to play it smooth, you swear you like it rough.
Whenever I play hard to get, you always call my bluff.
Whenever I play hard to get, you always call my bluff.

I guess you took me home with you - cross-legged on your floor.
I said, "If it doesn't happen after all, I swear I won't be sore."
Self-loathing isn't funny and depression isn't cute
But your smile swims the distance from your necklace to a noose.
You said I am insincere, I am an egotist and fishing.
And when I'm with you, you pretend that you are with the one you're missing.
When I'm with you you pretend that you are with the one you're missing.

DAWN CHORUS

Years ago, everyone knew your name.
Beware, your sagging mug may still ring bells.
Keep your head down.

Did you witness mystic hands?
Deep in the night.
You would keep your money in your shoes.

Neon lies, no loyal sun.
Birds are chirping early.
This is the final call.

You wish you were numb and rosy.
Oh no.
No, no, no.

Everyone is waving.
Put your glasses on.
Smoke clears.

Can't put your finger on the tip on your tongue.
Harbingers and hangers-on.
Smoke clears but the smell lingers.

DINNER PARTY

I'll buy the wine if you'll treat us on your food stamps card.
See your secret lover has her arm around her boyfriend's waist.
Play it cool and pray you don't get hard.
I'm so full that this food doesn't taste.

We are welcome guests in a neighbor's home.
Stop off in the master bedroom if you need a fix.
I must be the only one here who isn't stoned,
Because everyone is captivated with your magic tricks.

We all clasp hands and sing along
If we know how it goes.
I even take a quarter sheet advertising
Your next show.

You can't take it back but you can put up a front.
When you say goodbye, make sure you don't let out the cat.
I am the MVP of this easter egg hunt
And I've got a peacock feather stuck in the brim of my hat.

DON'T CALL ME BUDDY, BUDDY

When our boy clocks out, he hits the bar.
That is where he hits on barroom floozies.
With one six pack to-go, he heads on home, you know,
Right where he drinks them in his souvenir beer koozie.

And his baby-mama will drink them down too.
She will just drink them down right with him
And he just might be the fella of her dreams

But she is just the woman he is sticking.

Please don't call me buddy, buddy,
I'm not on your side.
I won't be your sidekick or mourn you when you die.
I don't want your friendship - I've got plenty of my own.
I am not like anybody, buddy, that you know.

The Taco Bell cashier-queens know his order.
They're familiar with his bloodshot smile, fingering his bills.
And they better keep it straight - he can't wait to get his taste.
When he's impatient, then the waiting is pure torture.

He can't even wait till he gets home.
See him driving crazy, stuffing tacos down his throat.
While he's chowing down, he spins that steering wheel around,
Swerving between lanes and onto the shoulder on the road.

The homosexuals whom he encounters on in public -
He thinks they cannot resist the urge to scratch his goateed skin.
He don't mind what turns them on, as long as they keep it in their homes.
Really, he's just scared of being tempted into sin.

When he likes a woman, he lets you know it.
"Looky here, buddy, at the thighs on that ass."
He's a perfect mate, he loves chicken-fried steak,
And you know that he can't wait to make a pass.

DON'T CALL ME HON, HON

I offered you my cheek right when you leaned in for a kiss,
But you knocked against my teeth - knocked against my teeth and cut my lip.
Than you held onto me tight. You opened up your mouth and you confessed,
Confessed that what you liked the most about me was just that I was liking you the best.

And then you're spinning me, you're spinning me, we're falling on our asses,
But your promises are empty like our bottles and our glasses.
There's a fire in your eyes - they're burning like a flame.
But when the night is done you don't remember my name.

Then you held onto my hand and you stuck them up your dress.
You wanted me at once, just like you wanted everybody else.
But baby, I don't mind - I'm in no place to pick and choose.
You're my only chance tonight. You're my only chance at being used.

DON'T CALL ME (SHOOK WALTZ)

You came on strong.

The move that you made, you made quick.
You were so strong.
The muscles in your shoulders were thick.

I was just looking for a woman who could make me feel better about myself.
When I touched your body with mine, you said it got you so wet.

You wanted to prove that you were just as tough as you looked.
Mover and shaker, you moved and you shook.

You said that I turned you on.
You thought that you and me would be a fit
But you were putting me on -
Changed your mind just like flipping a switch.

And you were just looking for someone who you could show-off to your friends.
I got used to playing like the things you were saying made sense.

You wanted to prove that you were just as tough as you looked.
Mover and shaker, you moved and you shook.

DRESS-UP SONG

He laid out with the blinds half-drawn and pined away for weeks.
Suntan tiger stripes look like whiskers on his cheeks.
Whiskers on his cheeks.
Dug his nails in sharp to skin and bones.
You can love with all of your heart and you will spend your life alone.
Spend your life alone.
Get up, tuck your shirt and don your coat.
They got you where it hurts, where it hurts the most.

He's looking right through his back door when he's coming up around the bend.
He's easy to please and he gets weak in the knees in the company of handsomer men.
He don't even want to be your friend.
He can spit out spit and he can cough up phlegm
But there ain't nothing that makes him better than everything he condemns.
Everything that he condemns.
Get up, tuck your shirt, don your coat.
If you let up chasing skirts, you're gonna slit your throat.
You're gonna slit your throat.

But we don't want that to happen.
He can love with an overwhelming passion.
He's got Merle Haggard tapes in his stationwagon.
He can stagger home blind drunk - he's a man of action.
He's a man of action.

EARTH, WIND & FIRE (VOLK MUSIC)

Way out west there's a deathly still,
But the wind comes quick like the winter will.
My heart is open like an open sore.
I'll break a plate and slam the door.
I am rotten to my core
But I play just like ringing a bell.

Way up north there's a deathly sound,
Like a rolling chair, spinning round.
I'm the least self-sufficient man that's been,
With thinning hair and greasy skin.
But I live to be your best friend
And I live at the edge of town.

And the country they call the Midwest
Is the land God truly loves the best.
Way out where the sirens whine,
Where teeth are stained with smoke and wine.
We're gonna have a grand old time.
We'll make amends and make a mess.

Way out here where the cold wind moans,
Leaves are falling right with falling snow.
My heart is open, like an open wound.
I'm waiting for you in our room.
There is nothing I can't wreck or ruin
And it's so, since I say it's so.

ENDLESS VACATION SUMMER WALTZ: SKINS & SQUARES

I'll have what you're having, I'll burn with your fire.
Slip on a raincoat, slip out of this skin.
I want to swim in your eyes when the whites shine so bright.
Don't wash yourself, I'll lick you clean with my tongue.

Straight to the marrow, right down to the wire.
You only pick fights when you know you will win.
I'll understand when I'm older, I'll know you were right.
I get it, babe, do you think that I am dumb?

When I tell you stories, does that make me a liar?
I'm so hard to fluster, I bear it and grin.
You say I'm too much to handle, but maybe you're just wound up too tight.
I can't help it, I've been this way since I was young.

I'll have what you're having, you say we're the same.

Slough off this old skin, slip into a new.
I want to swim in your eyes when the irises shine.
Don't wash yourself, I want to taste how you smell.

I'm muddy and fading I can't hide my shame.
Don't get angry, get even, I'm greener than blue.
Plum spoiled rotten disguised as a high lonesome whine.
Do you think I don't notice? Do you think I can't tell?

I give up so easy, I won't play your game.
Can we just be finished? I want to be through.
I'd sleep for the rest of the year just to fill up the time
and think back and laugh at from what heights I fell.

ENDLESS VACATION SUMMER WALTZ ("COLD COLD HEART" CRYBABY EPIC DIVA MIX)

Dream a little dream with your toes between your lips.
Miss your sweet man on the sea.
See all your suitors as impostors and foes.
Close up your mind when you open your legs.

The dregs of the drink that you leave in his room will taste sour.
Hour by hour, you're checking the time.
When he finds you distracted, his throat will close up and he'll choke,
But he's broken too, with a thirst he can't quench.

Each inch of him turns your intestines, nauseous and sick,
but the trick is to make him think it turns you on.
Is it so wrong to flatter the fools you choose to like?
In spite of your frankness, you're not what you seem.

Sing a little song with the lyrics confused.
Use what the tornado might spit through your door.
Sore losers and crybabies, captive and crushed.
You say, "lust just ain't the same as it used to be."

See what you leave in your wake, what havoc you wreak.
Peek while you're changing, have you seen him so thrilled?
Fill him with longing and swallow his pride.
Ride it out just until you find something new.

What you do isn't yours, it's been shared and passed down.
The sounds that you sound are just echoes.
I know you have goals and you claim to dream dreams,
but it seems you will bang any bell that will ring.

ENDLESS VACATION SUMMER WALTZ 3 - SOMEONE ELSE

You say you thought this happened too fast.
You say it made you scared.
Go hide that face of yours, go hide it under your covers.

Then you try to holler at me again.
Do you think that is fair?
I'm going back, I'm going back to my lover.

You say that I could never suffice,
Can't I just learn to share?
Don't fall to pieces on me, I thought that we were just having fun.

Just because I ask about you,
You think that I still care.
I'm going back, I'm going back where I came from.

I took the bait and the
Drool drip drop down from your chin.
I could never control myself.
Make this sweet sugar last,
Long as the future's grim.

So you say this time you think it will last.
Do you think that I'm dumb?
So I stick you like you're sticking one of those jewels on your crown.

Or you say you just miss us as friends
and you spell this shit with the same tongue.
Don't pick on me, i'll pick you up on my way down.

Or you say you like me better when I am nice
and you think I am trying to run.
Yeah, I'm gonna find somewhere where they don't all know my secrets.

Sing yourself someone else sunshining blues.
You can just whistle or hum.
I wanna hear what you sound like when you are speechless.

EVERY OFFERING

what is the price on your head?
like alarm clock numbers glow.
what does it take to convince?
you better run quick, like rumors
spread like a tabloid, like butter.
low fat butter.
smear greasy thumb prints.
someone with a great sense of humor.

wipe that weight off your shoulders.

waterfalls fall into the valley.
crumpled wrapper catches the sun.
bend your knees, inhale.
exhale as you fold your torso over your thighs.
don't think malicious thoughts, even if you want to.
run your hands down your shins, touch your toes.
what do you regret the most?
what are you thinking about?
I close one eye when I look at you.

FALL SONG

woke up wrapped up with you again
we still stunk like last night's sin
sit, smoke your morning cigarette
the smoke spun in my ceiling fan

it was the last warm day at a season's close
kissed the blackheads on your nose
sun come up and the feelings grow
the feelings we were feeling then

we tried to slip the day on track
coughed and choked your coffee back
mine was brown and yours was black
my peeling cheeks were glowing pink

you said white wine warded the throbbing off
we rubbed eachothers' bodies raw
were the whiskers on your belly soft
was I so wrong to think -

with every glass we poured
each time we touched across that floor
- that you were mine and I was yours
and we were on the rise

and laughing to recall it now
now when I catch you in your crowd
how once I thought that you were proud
now you won't meet me with your eyes

FAREWELL COUNTY ACCIDENT

That was where they tucked their chins.
Those were the people who dyed their bobs.

Those were the ones what lined their eyes.
Pry their eyelids open. Dry
as a Desert Owl melon.

Like a lazy Susan spinning top,
where you covered your faces with ice.
You were the ones with talent,
tiptoed out of a flickering film.
And your number's growing still.

This is where we buy
whatever they sell.
This is a weakness.
Whisper sweet sweetnesses.
Laugh our heads off.

You were the one - who else?
Carried sorrow, black as pitch.
You were wiping dewdrops off
your only Mongolian spot,
where the strawberry moon rises.

I reside in humid mist.
I was the one was buried in fog.
Yes, netted in my web of lies.
No, I never heeded your advice.
This is my fond farewell.

FAT TUESDAY

Found me slack-jawed at the bar, with that classic look of gloom.
We left in a silver car, underneath a yellow moon.
And I was blue, and the moon was blue,
and so were you.

"I've never seen a place like this before," each one of us says.
This house is like a deck of cards with a big four-poster bed,
Filled with people who look just like coyotes,
With eyes bloodshot red.
You said you lost your love. You said, "Baby, thanks a lot."
You check yourself in a mirror, say, "Tell me, do you think I'm hot?"
Then you eat a piece of food from a big metal pot.

I heard that you were on the second floor, measuring on a desk.
We consume without discretion, cross our fingers for the best,
Spill the liquor in the kitchen.
We make a mess.

You said that you were gonna be a star, you would be a hit.
I said, "I have been rejected too and I don't like it one bit."
This house is full of different kinds of furniture
On which we sit.

And we smile while the night is sliding by.
You list for the the reasons you would not prefer to die.
Your old drunk friend is wasted - he forgets to unzip his fly.

I think his daughter should've been a friend of mine, a true bosom friend.
I picture her with eyes like needles and hair with silver threads.
There is a stained-glass window in her room and it doesn't make sense.

But instead, he's sitting here with us, pulling on his mustache.
You won't give up on imploring him to give up his whole stash.
You contaminate our bag of tortilla chips with your cigarette ash.

There is a fire raging in the man's backyard.
The sun sets on the river and we cannot see the stars.
The sky is glowing blue and a chill runs through my heart.

FISHING FOR COMPLIMENTS

I walked up to Quiktrip, just to buy some wine and face the day and eat some snacks.
Felt like breaking down and crying - you know that I don't care enough to get my life on track.
Then I called you and you answered like you didn't even want to hear my voice at all.
I said I wouldn't bother you again, but who else am I gonna call?

You said I lit a fire deep inside you - you could barely take the heat.
But it seems that all you're looking for is a body that can keep you nice and warm when you're asleep.
The more I learn to care for one I love, the more she slip away.
You say our destiny is faded love. Oh yes, you think our love is bound to fade.

I can tell that you don't care about me anymore.
Remember, you were glowing while we danced across the floor.
I know that you roll your eyes, the minute I skip out.
You're lying with your eyes each time you smile with your mouth.

I woke up in the morning to you snoring there beside me in my bed.
Saw a grimace fall across your sleeping face, saw a furrow crease your forehead.
Watched your ribcage rise and fall, just keeping time. Traced the outline of your your bones.
It's true, I hate myself and I hate other people. But I hate to sleep alone!

FLÂNEUR

You won't catch me dead in Minnesota,

strumming a ukulele with a hat on.
Too busy slurping this Circle K mocha,
looking for action.
Saw the sun fall off the river.
Took a drop of polished silver.
Might as well be chopping chopped liver.
Is it that bad? Is it hopeless?

It tastes like there's soap in my club soda.
I guess I'm washing out my filthy mouth.
I would swallow any potion
to banish your doubts.
Saw the sun drop in the sea.
Rubbed my gums with instant coffee
Oh am I in misery?
I'm just perfecting my new coping mechanisms.

And I don't want to cry tonight.
I don't want to see a crying face in the clouds.
It wasn't feeling real before.

I am underneath the streetlights,
underneath the sky with my feet on the ground.
I am turning a corner

FROGGY

Hey stranger, can I beg a ride?
Red Rover, roll over to the winning side.
This is Froggy courting.

Froggy settled for an undisclosed sum.
I saw him hop in through an open transom window
and pound his gavel on the vanity.

Stranger, release me. Stranger, let me go.
Red Rover, release my endorphins.
Order! Order in the court!

FROZEN

I only keep my own secrets.
I come from Susanna with down on my knees.
I lied on the application.

I come from a generation with different values.
I breed fancy pigeons with down on their feet.

I revere fine breeding.

I come from California with a banjo tattoo on my kneecap.
I carved my hit list on a swivel seat at Foster's Freeze
with a razor-sharp five-hundred dollar bill.

Someone rifles through my glove compartment every night.
Once I found your letter in the gutter, drawing flies.
Jasmine rice and safety glass.

Who put the bomb in the bomb-detection dog?
Who pulled that rug out from under you?
Who put the bomb in the shoe-bomb decoy?
Who put the plume in your picture?

There's a false face under your mask.
There's another false face under your false face.
There's another weapon under your weapon.
There's another victim under your wingspan.

Who was that person shaking?
And was that shaking dancing?
Who smeared prints on your chrome doorknob?
Who put a hit on the patsy?

There's a skeleton in the graveyard.
There's a skeleton hiding somewhere.
There's a shadow in the video.
There's blood under the blood.

There's blood under the blood.
There's blood under the blood.
There's blood under the blood.
There's blood under the blood.

GET GOT

You were looking at her across it.
You were looking through the holes in her shirt -
You were checking her out at that show.
And you're jealous of the man who will take her home,
Back to his squat.

And you think she's hot.
Oh, but she get got.

She brag time that she spent South,

Say now she only fuck around with
Real ghetto music and Bounce.
And she summers in Chicago.
Fellas, she show boys there
How to use her mouth.

And you think she's hot.
Oh, but she get got.

And I suppose it wasn't ever real.
You thought you caught her eye but you just copped a feel.
And you can't wrap your head around just what you did.
You're not some romantic lothario - you're just a sick kid.

But you get got.

GO AWAY

Give that megaphone a rest and go away.
There's nothing left for you to squawk or say.
Loving you was hardly worth it in the end.
I will never consider you a friend.

Go away, go away, go away.

Sink your fangs into me if you must.
You've already torn asunder what you termed our sacred trust.
This love of ours was blooming yesterday.
Now I can't wait for you to pack your bags and go away.

Go away, go away, go away.

GUILT RHYTHM

She was exceptional - she was an exception to the rule.
I was licking on her pillow, licking up a puddle of her drool.
And she played the holy fool, while I was genuinely stupid.
She was cool - sunglasses cool.

I didn't bag that little culprit. No, I just eyed her cheerful loping.
She was sultry. She was molten.
I was hoping.

Did we twist that guilty rhythm - that "If You're Ready, Then I'm Willing"?
Now she is wilted. So am I just the vulture, picking?
Now the vultures circle and I am hanging at half-mast.
I was never granted mercy. I was only strangled purple.

HARD LUCKY

Wrap long arms around the tree.
Merry Christmas, Eucalyptus.

Hard Luck Lucky sucks hard candy.
That's too rich now for brave Blood Heart.

Down at the pool hall, that bird's nest,
liars cower.

In Coward Harbor, heavy rainfall
falls in step.

All of the sudden, rubber downfall.
Liquid said it, said it best.
That was rubbing in it, rubbing
alcohol.

Touch cold marble, knocking solid.
Squeaky sneaker steps.
Echo diminishes whisper,
knocking hollow, echoes garbled.

Waft in peppery, oh with -
Oh what ardor! Oh
loner, wallow, bouncing ball.
Oh clasp knuckles, gnarled.
Elegant shake delicately.

HER FRONT TOUCHED YOUR BACK

you spit up last night
and you said it looked black.
did you give up your fight?
has your jawbone grown slack?
she followed you right.
her front touched your back.
did you ever look twice?
did you ever get smacked?

you made love last night
and her pupils looked black.
then you switched off the light
and you rolled onto your back.
and you felt so right,
with your lines down pat.
if you were so bright,

you would've seen through that act

she cut across your face, slapped your cheek, marked you up for her.
what she would leave behind - smelled, took her scent, and it took your breath away.
laying down her weight, pressed your legs with her fingertips.
you stripped her down, kissed down the down on her dry, chapped lips.
was it "she met your gaze" or "she just shielded her eyes from you"?
say it straight, she say, "stay calm, don't you get carried away."

you split up last night
and your future looked black.
you said that it was alright -
you never planned to get trapped.
you should've seen the light.
you could've cleaned up your act.
there's no turning back,
no, there's no turning back.

HORSE TO RIDE

Please don't make me blue, please don't bum me out.
I've been drunk since 2:00 and I've been running my mouth.
I've got no excuse to act this way.
I've got no excuse today.

Please don't make me break, please don't make me bend.
Don't you know you've always been more Christlike than me, friend.
But that don't mean I don't got my own prophecy to send.
I got my own flock to tend.

Please don't break my heart, please don't make me cry.
Why was I so convinced that our two fates was entwined?
Now I know for reals, just what you had in mind.
You was on the lookout for a horse to ride.

HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW?

We were mining for gold by the National Park
And we took in the late show downtown.
You said you wanted space and that I was intense.
I wanted to kiss you in the Arkansas dark
But you thought we were being too loud.
You thought we were loud when we moved in our tent.
All of the things that I had became ours.
You were so proud that you told all of your friends.

How do you like me now, now that I'm not in your way.
You can't see me when you see clear as day.

You know I can't see far.
How do you like what you like anymore?
Break out in hives, squeeze the pus from your sores.
Breakdown in your car.

Told me you loved me with all of your heart
But you doubted I could care for you much,
When I do not care about anything else.
You thought what we lacked was the integral part.
You felt as if I had given up.
You said that I needed to learn to take care of myself.
You doubted yourself every time that we touched.
What was enough to make up for the rest?

HUMPTY DUMPTY ON HIS WEDDING DAY

The crowd was transfixed, you remembered your lines.
You slurred to the DJ to queue up your song.
You took off your blazer and put it back on.
If this was the worst it would get, you were fine.

This was your wedding, so you were the star.
You were chewing a carrot you dipped in ranch dressing.
You were so needy, you needed attention.
Put you back together when you come apart.

You were stoned at your wedding with twigs in your hair.
Yeah, you grew out your bangs for your squeeze on the side.
Then me and my lover found somewhere to hide.
But you got suspicious, you followed us there.

With a look like there's blood on your teeth from the wine,
Did you spit-take, did you gasp?
- When you discovered us there in the grass,
Unzipped and untucked and entwined.

If this is your altar to romance of steel,
Does it insult you so when we roll in the hay?
Well, I don't care what you say
And I don't care how you feel.

All of your cousins and of your friends
Can't put your pieces together again.
I'm gonna give you one piece of advice:
If this is your wedding, then go find your wife.

I AM ALWAYS WALKING

I am always walking on Gravois.
Swing my arms like hammers nailing.
Could we two flee to sunny climes?
Who am I kidding.

Not aging well.
Sliding downward slope.
Your crying in a saucer of milk.
Tears are dripping down your ski slope nose.

Can that shook face, you're not squeamish.
It wasn't easy becoming like this - so easy.
You said you would stop short of begging, but just short.
And you thought the raindrops would drop-off like glistening sweat.

You look like a chicken
With that white lace dress,
And your golden cheek fat,
When you're blushing.

So wrap your legs around me
Like a belt around the sun.
Do you melt when it rains on you?
Do you flinch when you're touched.

Oh yes, I caught you roll your eyes in my rearview reflection.
I know that I'm not the one.
I know that I'm not the one.
I know that I'm not the one.
I am just the employee of the month.

I DON'T HAVE A PICKUP TRUCK

I don't have a pickup truck
But I have a station wagon.
I've got big, swollen glands in my neck.
I'm leaving in the morning.
I'll be out of here real quick.
I'm gonna go way down and see that woman.

I was sucking blood,
Right under wet and sticky skies.
I was sucking down cold, cold drinks.
But when I cross that old red river,
I ain't gonna feel a thing.
I will look into my darling's eyes.

You know that all kinds of glory

Roll big circles in my head,
When I see that Oklahoma border sign.
I feel big and bright and starry-eyed.
In no time you will find
I'll be lying in my lover's bed.

"I KNOW YOU GOT MY MAN" (MURDER BALLAD)

I wanted to hold him and to tell him that I love him
But the words my lips formed made him cross.
He pierced me, like always, with that glossy, glass wax stare
And melted my heart and my confidence.

I painted his portrait and signed my name backwards,
Indulged in cheap metaphor - just like now, can't you see.
His arms made me stiffen, my quick limbs grew thicker.
I'm stranded in paradise - what will I do?

I'm tired and lonesome. My best years are fading.
His image is burned like a brand in my brain.
I'm full-grown, but shrinking. I feed his wax statue
But my voodoo affects him no longer.

If I can't have my way with him,
I'll do away with myself.
A self chosen victim, I harbor no grudges.
In fact, I delight in his happiness.

I bend over backwards and break with my homeland,
Roll like a pro and his bros think I'm hip to boot.
My deep thought capacity cannot compete with his childishness.
Is the thrill of my lack of shame lost to you, boy?

IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE

say you don't care about your health
was that your easy way out
lied you could laugh in the face of death
but you could only lick her ass

it's hard to be humble when you hate yourself
when you won't let up off your cloud
yes when you puff out every breath
do you wish it was your last

are you trying me on
see what fits
are you so proud of me

am I your pet

IZAAC ISAACSON, JAKE JACOBSON, JACK JOHNSON

You were always rolling lazy eyes at me.
I was always blind - I was blind and couldn't see.
You were always telling me that what I did was wrong.
If you could only sing, you would only sing along.
You said that I would understand if I could see the light,
But I am only looking when I'm looking for a fight.

You would shrug your shoulders at me, yes you would.
When you saw that things had changed you thought they hadn't changed for good.
You were always vigilant - you did what you should.
You said that things were bad whenever they weren't made of wood.
And I was just a philistine, I spun your wheels for kicks.
To you I was more vulgar than a hooker turning tricks.

You once had a girl and she was one I dug.
I was picturing you buried in a hole I dug.
I heard that you were thumbing her like pennies in your pocket.
You had to have your run - if you can't try it, you can't knock it.
You always said that you would be the next man she would know.
It was as if your god commanded, "angel, purse your lips and blow."

Now she is also rolling lazy eyes at me.
She is secretly hoping I would just let her be.
She said you were the strong and silent type - you never made a sound.
And I am just the loudest of the fellas she's turned down.
I would give my happy home if I could take your place.
You're always there to rub it in and overstate your case.

JJ

Too much trouble to remember, it's getting hard to keep it straight
Just who I have affection for and who I hate.
Keep your feelings to your own self.
Don't play crooked, keep it safe.
This binge is frosted sweeter than your sweetest chocolate cake.

When your eyes frost over white and your belly starts to swell,
If I don't finish up tonight, I guess I never will.
Unless you decide that you really miss your health,
You won't remember that true love feels like you laughed so hard you pissed yourself.

Keep it on the highway.
Keep it in your pants.
I can't see it with my eyes

But I can feel it in my hands.

The open road is open like an open soda can -
It's sticky, flat and smoking, like a greased-up frying pan.
Swallow lies until you're choking and you'll start to understand
That that woman is the ocean you cannot hope to dam.

When the only thing you are missing is the thing you need the most,
It's just like the dead of winter on the South Pacific Coast.
When your mind is playing tricks on you, you swear you've seen a ghost,
No matter who you're kissing, you still go to sleep alone.

J/K

You're losing weight and you're turning bright shades of red.
I don't even give a shit about the thinking that you're thinking in your head.
Take it back real soon, back to your old stomping grounds.
We will enact your revenge - we're gonna tear this old building down.
You're on a roll and you won't quit till you stop winning.
You've got that glint in your eye that you get when you're talking to women.

I'm watching you eyeing a girl you're hoping to bang.
Frankly I'm unimpressed with you and everyone who's your kin.
You wanted her bad, she completed you in every way.
Sure, you treated her rough - too busy picking out y'all's first-born's names.
You only keep the friends that you really love the most
And all of the others just float on by like pillars of smoke.

You're smarter than me. I appreciate the effort you make
To dumb yourself down so I can understand what you're saying.
This is bigger than you and me - you live life in a cosmic frame.
And that's a handy excuse to avoid ever taking the blame.
Things are bad. Brother, they're just gonna get worse.
And I don't have enough nipples to match all the grudges you nurse.

JUST ASK ME A QUESTION

If you can't take what I'm giving, you're not taken, you're just missing out.
Keep calm, it's my call - it's my call when we heighten the tension.
And don't riddle me this or that. I know who I am and I know just what you're about.
I cough and I spit and I piss and I shit like an engine.

Do I need to explain that you need not get high on the drugs that you're running?
I'm a train, so you better get off of the tracks when I'm coming.

No, I had not seen a mug like yours in a while,
But yes, it's true I lied clear through my teeth and I smiled.

Not only am I so unashamed, I am proud.
I'll tell you whatever, just ask me a question.
I've got no time to listen - I'll just talk over you loud.
And I don't give a shit about whatever is the mess that you are sweating.

I've got a sweet bachelor pad and a cool new persona and that's something.
I saw you hail a taxi cab, give you ride to your potluck brunch.

Loving you was only fun for just a little while.
When I jumped the gun you cried just like a newborn child.

LAY SO LOW

Renegade, run with the sharps.

Cover the piles of wood with a tarp.
Weigh down the tarp on the wood with a stone.
Weigh down the tarp with a stone from the yard.
I love you more than words can measure.

It must be winter, it's already dark.
No wonder I shiver without you to hold.
My neck feels stiff when I sleep with a pillow.
My heart feels broken when I sleep alone.

I saw your breath and it looked like a whisper.
You said you were hurried, you said on the phone.
My breath smells like the trash in my car.
Your heart is as black as the mud in the river.

You won't need that look where you're going.
Walk through your life like a coat from the cold.
Your manner is slipping, your cover is blown.
Suck in the fumes from the fire.

The smoke rises up to the stars.
We can't see stars in the sky.
This isn't quite like you pictured.
It doesn't live up to what you were told.

You like to act like you're hard.
But you're putty, you're softer than gold.
You secretly weep like a willow -
Paper-thin skin and brittle bird bones.

Each moment we share is a treasure.
If we nurture this love, it will grow.
Or just pick at the scab till it scars?

You think it is a thing that is withered.

We shoulda known, shoulda known from the start.
All of our keepsakes are starting to mold.
Outside it looks like it's starting to snow.
But we're dry and dusty, right here by the fire.

When I'm running late, I cut through the park.
Wherever I'm going, I'm running on time.
I know I'll quit when I'm ready.
I'll give you a call when I'm on my way home.

Don't make amends to them I wrong.
I know I'll never.
Crawl on my palms like a lizard
When I am feeling low.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star.
You're holed up with your curtains drawn.
Why are you always so tired?
Do you really think I am jealous?

LIFE OF LEISURE

When she said, "You make me nervous when you're pacing.
Are you ever comfortable? You can't put your feet up in your coffin."
It hurt my feelings. This life of leisure tests my patience.
I said, "Don't you know I trace your outline in the carpet when I'm walking?"

You can't put down roots into a moving target.
Was I functional? I thought only cowards heeded caution.
So now am I a useless thing? Oh I am always so uneasy.
And *absence makes the heart grow fonder* is the hardest pill to swallow.

Then she said, "It serves you right for playing chicken.
If we eat the stars out of the sky, will they still shine like diamonds? Will they twinkle in our shit?"
Then when I said she was fickle, like: "You could hardly spot me in a lineup,"
She countered, "You're too sensitive - passion that's impersonal is timeless."

She said, "Take this sitting down," so see me sitting pretty.
"Your waffling exhausts me. Can't you take a stand with confidence?"
She was leaking like a faucet - drip, drip, drip, drip, drip.
I said, "Love, my love is unambiguous - throbbing like the pressure in my sinuses."

LITTLE & SMALL

You were eating sticks of butter with your dress above your knees.
You were spitting streams of soda from your lips.

You were shivering and shuddering. Your face was smeared with grease -
Sliding down your chin in tiny drips.

And in spite of all of that nonsense, I was waiting on your whims.
You were the woman I was loving at that time.
I feasted on your kindness, you could smell it on your skin.
Your sweat was sweeter than the sweetest fortified wine.

You said, "If you got your youth, that's all that you need.
You can stretch the truth just like a rubber ball, you see."
I said, "Sweet thing, yes I see.
Baby, you have exactly what I need"

And you said, "I give what I have to who I please.
I give what I have to who I please.
I give what I have to who I please.
I give what I have to who I please."

But you got caught off guard.
I know you tried so hard
To keep it under lock and key behind bars.
You never thought I'd find a way into your heart.

LOOSE CANNON (BLUES FOR THOMAS)

I'll take you home
And take you home with me,
Unless you're sleeping
On my back porch.

I wasn't born
Just yesterday,
But I know
That I am young.

You're only as weak as the moon.
You're only as strong as your tongue.

Some have said
That I am a loose cannon.
You say that you're worried,
You get that off of your chest.

I've got a love
That's bigger than your breasts,
But don't worry -
I won't try again.

You're only as strong as your bones.
You're only as weak as your sin.

I am in love
With a ghostly wraith.
My love
is bigger than you.

I don't care
If this is a safe space.
I've got nothing,
Nothing to lose.

I know that you don't run on time,
So I can't tell that you're not coming back.

LORENA

AM dial preacher preaches, "Pain is a microphone." You listen while you're pissing.
You piss into your Big Gulp cup - steering on the bumpy gravel bumps, driving on the frontage road.

When That Painful Lonely cranks the volume dial loud, thunder rolling and explosions cannot drown it out.
Do you fear the buzzing flies of Highway 35 - rubbernecking cops?
Lorena is a village of specialty shops.

Yes, that open blacktop cracks you open, cracks you like a lobster claw. Exit right and dry your eyes.
Love's attendants squint and yawn. Watch the constellations fading. Dawn will cut you wide on this side of
Arkansas.

You roam from town to town to hide your shame. You were cut clear down, like the knockout game.

Did you burn that bridge yourself or were you ostracized? Do I spy the sign of Cain? It's all over your face!
Now you drown in deeper depths. There is no dramatic gesture left - that you could make to sway the course of
your fate or stem the tide.

It's a pain that you can't numb. It's roaring loud. You sing your little lungs but it cannot mask the sound.
You spun your web of lies and it tears you up inside. That pounding in your chest just knocks.
And it will keep on until it stops.

LOVESTRUCK & SMITTEN

did you weep in anguish, did it hurt?
if you were ever even anxious,
you never let it show.
you were touched, you touched a nerve.
I doubled-back and blushed,
but I didn't roll my eyes or thumb my nose.

you called and I came running.
you called and I came running.

you swelled with rushing blood.
your eyes were glazed.
swing low,
sweet talk.
sling mud.

who's chasing who,
or jogging in the park?
what are you running from?
where are you running?

don't pretend I'm your lover -
just your fluffer, your butler.
you smile describing
the torments you suffered.

you say things were so bad back with him then
and you wish that meant you don't miss them.
when I waffle, you roll your eyes.
you say, "can't you say shit with conviction?"

you say my sweetnesses pale to his - sinful and richer.
you condescend like his scornfuls cut quicker.
who was the vanquished and who was the victor?

you say, "babe, you're losing your grip, your grip, your grip,
you're slipping, you're slipping, you're slipping..."
you think you're so stunning - I must be lovestruck and smitten.
you say, "get off of your soap box. listen up, listen up,
listen up, listen up, listen up, listen up,
listen..."

I toothpick your eye-teeth
and itch at your pimples,
but you wish you were still
daddy's little girl with big dimples.

filthy but gleaming -
your babydoll timelessness,
like the alley-cat's spit-licked pelt.
you suck up on my make-up-your-mindfulness.
I warble and waver like Narvel Felts.

no, you can't be blamed, you can't bear the hassle.
you wreck what you touch, you asshole.

give up the ghost, you're not the queen of your castle.

MOSAIC BUG

Squirrels run
where we walk,
where midnight rabbits
jump.
Bugs swarm
over the bog.

Each time you roll
your tongue
off the roof of your mouth,
I'm stunned,
like a hawk
on the ground.

We both know
the grand old boar
is a high-flying hog.

When the sidewalk on
Columbia Ave.
is a ribbon
of ice.
I slide
back in my shoes.

I would slide all night,
even one million miles
to you.

We both know
Botanical St.
is an ocean of toads.

MR. PURE

comb my hair and I press my shirt.
my heart is a sandbag ballast - you cannot make me hurt.
you cannot make me hurt.
you can hide but you can't run.
peeling skin confetti, lipstick stains and bleeding gums.

they all shout, "we seen you passing by this way before,"
or snicker sideways, "seen you passed out, drooling on the floor."
"caught you scratch your face like a lotto card, break out into sores."

"we tried you on for size, but we don't like you any more."

so step into my office in this dimlit, sticky dive.
no, I won't stick within my limits, as long as I remain alive.
just as long as I am alive.
tell me, are you fever-shaking? is your belly touched with hives?
your porcelain will rattle - you will know when I arrive.
you will know when I arrive.

see me pick my nose and scratch my butt.
don't waste none of your words on talent - I've been blessed with a magic touch.
I've been blessed with a magic touch.
tell you how it goes and what is what.
sweat the milk of pure human kindness, you know my snap judgments cut.
and I will leave you in the dust.

NIGHTMARE BUG

This is the nightmare again.
I could be anyone wearing a baseball cap.
With shaking hands
in my pockets.

My lips were open.
I recognized an omen,
a bitter aftertaste.
So I bent it out of shape!

I threw a tantrum.
Tornado sirens and thunder.
I ate an apple from the gutter.
Now my lips are numb.

I saw the number on a tear-off flyer.
Blinking eyelids.
My head is empty.
This is a warning.

Blow-up, burning roof.
Chances are, don't understand...

NIGHT TRAIN EXPRESS

Take that Night Train Express and I'll raise your bet a fifth.
It's not just that I'm leaving but I know I won't be missed.
I waited for so long for your kiss.
Now I'm leaving on that Night Train Express.

Catch that Night Train right on time and I will up your bid a pint.
You said you didn't love me and I thought I didn't mind.
I guess I'll stop wasting my time.
I'm leaving on that Night Train Express.

So take that Night Train Express.
We're gonna wear our Sunday best.
Take that Night Train Express.
We're gonna make a mess.
Take that Night Train Express.
We're gonna tear this town to shreds.
Take that Night Train Express till you're gone.

Take that Night Train to a bar and I will drink you up a shot.
Everything that I have cherished, I have lost.
Now the only thing I've got
Is this ticket to that Night Train Express.

Take that Night Train to your party and I will drink it like a pro.
I am taking it to extremes and I just thought that you should know.
I can take it like a man and I can take my sob story and go,
Go on get right down to that Night Train Express.

So take that Night Train Express.
We're gonna tear this town to shreds.
Take that Night Train Express.
We're gonna make a mess.
Take that Night Train Express.
Baby, this ain't no idle threat.
Take that Night Train Express till you're home.

Take that Night Train Express when it gets too much to handle.
I'm gonna head on home and sit in bed and suckle on this handle.
I've got nothing left to lose and I've got nothing left to gamble,
So I'm leaving on that Night Train Express.

NOTHING

with a wild-eyed look, you looked rough.
I got it so often those days - "did you have a rough night?"
when it felt like that fire in your eyes was the light of my life
and your embrace was my punch in the gut.

I put that thing right in my mouth, I was tough.
when will you learn - "she's a gem who keeps quiet?"
I thought you were my partner in crime.
I thought I was tying one off - I was all tied up.

mind your own business, don't meddle.
I am the worst; I'm above nothing.
step out and step on your pedals.
where are you going? where are you going?
all you could taste was what tasted like metal.
for a minute you had it, but then you had nothing.

when the sun split your lip, you kissed rough.
then you came like a thief in the night.
what is the biggest regret of your life?
when you made up your mind, did you go with your gut?

ODE TO TOAD

You can squeeze the sweetest drink
from a sour, citrus fruit.
You can be the scarecrow king,
with your broom-corn wig and your popcorn suit.
You wonder why I always blush?
I'm not embarrassed, it's a niacin rush.
Rosy rare steak, burgundy cabbage.
I'm crushing
crushed velvet.

Is there any pleasure sweet
as sweet red velvet cake?
No you cannot sink your teeth
in that sweet euphoric haze.
You wonder why I'm always lost?
So serene, so macabre.
Cut your losses, stifle sobs.
May those who say "Aha! Aha!"
turn back, turn back ashamed.

I know my steel-cut oatmeal
tastes just like confetti,
and I even stain my stainless steel appliances.
I know it's useless to apologize.
I made my bed of nails,
stung my tummy
sucking honey from the hive.

PHILANDERER, AT LAST ;-)

Gossip spreads - small town talk.
She says that I'm just like her.
Gentlemen scope her on the bus
And line up for her chopping block.

She'll get you off, you'll have your fun.
When she open her mouth, she rave and rant.
When she craves attention from some man,
She'll moan and cry, drool and pant.

I've got a woman - big and fat.
Hairspray stick her hair down flat.
Sure, we share a cosmic bond
But I'm gonna share with everyone!

I've got a woman - sweet and kind.
I'm so proud to say she's mine.
Our connection is pure and deep
But she thinks she's too cool to keep.

I may lie, but I'm true as sin.
You can ask any of my friends.
I get lit, I light on fire.
You can smell the smoke for miles.

I want it all, all of the time -
Sure is rough, sure is rough.
See me sober, stricken pale.
I curl in bed and cry and cry.

Once you said you loved me true,
When I was the one that was with you.
But when you finished first and fled,
I guess you just changed your mind.

PHONE CALL

I had a dream about a party.
And you were at that party.
Then we went to another party.
And the party it was bangin.

Yeah, we were at a house party.
There were so many people there.
They were all on the first floor.
They were all in the basement.
They were all in the backyard,
and then the policeman come.

You know, I still go to the parties,
but they just don't compare
to the parties where we used to go,

we used to go when you were here.
ain't the same since you went away.
ain't the same since you're gone.

PILL BUG

suffer lonely leaving
doggy's sleeping fatso
lying wildly abandoned

PLEASE

who was the man it was gave you the look that I saw in the glass?
was he the one too you said to you couldn't be kept?
was it the time that you shaved all the hair from your lips to your ass?
I was the one it was spit in your mouth while you slept.

who was the idiot boy you were trying to flee?
was he the one it was fixed you so you couldn't cross?
was it when you dozed off with your nose in between of my knees?
you couldn't tell it was me this time telling you off.

who was the best at the thing that we did in the grass?
was it one who did too with her underneath chandelier lights?
was it the time you said you were so trashed?
you couldn't put up a fight.

how was he the one it was fogged you up so what it was now you just could not see?
what did you make of the thing that you had in that shade?
I was the one that was duped. it was me.
who was the stupidest? who was as sharp as a blade?

PLEASURE SCHEMA

Sweeten my honey with sugar.
Cool-off my coffee with creamer.
If we make it through December,
Will you make it up to me?
You make me sick.
You look like an absolute living dream.

Sweeter than strawberry butter.
Swallow your snot when you sneeze.
You look like a toddler,
Wiping your face on your sleeve.
You've taken a turn for the worse.

Seems like you're braver than Jason.

Maybe I'm chicken.
No memories left to erase.
I won't miss them.

Can't hide your fat with that stubble.
Fog-up your mirror with steam.
Can't understand when you mumble.
I never know what you mean.
How low can you go?

RAINBOW QUEST

You were blinded by the light that you were shining in your own eyes.
I was trying to pick up girls and you thought those girls looked filthy.
I was trying to pick fights with kids who were half my size.
You said, "Boy, you like to keep your pleasures guilty."

You were looking white and talking black and turning red.
I wasn't thinking right, talking shit and keeping track.
I was keeping track of all the stupid shit you said.
You were talking about me behind my back.

And I am not afraid when you're talking smack.
I've got my own plan of attack.
I know your secret - I'm not afraid to tell.
You say you don't give a shit, you don't care - that's fine.
I know what it looked like and I know how it smelled.
I'm just waiting for the perfect place and time.

We would hop the fence, hop the fence where you lived,
Transcend this plane in a cosmic bridge,
Smoke out on your porch - we were teenage kids.
I know what I am, do you know what you is?

I was cutting corners - I was trying to look sharp.
I thought it would be hot if we couldn't really do things right.
You were singing, "Black Gal, What Makes Your Head So Hard?"
You were seeing spots and you were sliding slides.

And I am not afraid - you're just talking trash.
I've got my own plan of attack.
I know your secret - I'm not afraid to tell.
You say you don't give a shit, you don't care - that's fine.
Your soul will live forever. Your body is a shell.
I am always waiting for the perfect place and time.

REAL WORM BABY

You let me feel the most secret part of your babe.
You should have known I would steal your sweetheart away.
She'll patronize me, brag about her latest lover's skills,
Then deeply stare into my eyes and drug me with her pills.

Smear it all over your face, flaunt it.
Wrap my arms around your waist and ring your torso like a bell.
I know that you would love me just as long as you wanted
And then leave me for somebody else.

Old-fashioned body, but her loose morals are ahead of their time.
So coldhearted, but I help her when she gets in a bind.
Old-fashioned body, but her loose morals are ahead of their time.
So coldhearted, but I help her when she staggers in blind.

I want the real worm, baby, none of your fake shit.
Don't tease me or dick me around, throw me into your snake pit.
I'll be waiting by your side in the morning when you awaken.

RUMORS

Howdy, bedfellow with that look of gloom.
I've seen your woman making eyes at the man in the moon.
She's drawn her blinds in her room.
Whatchoo gonna do?

Hombre, this newsflash is no news to me.
Should I jump off that Old Chain of Rocks Bridge or drown in the deep, blue sea?
I've been listening to her dreams - she dreamed she was free.
Whatchoo gonna do?

She's been telling all her friends that you're worthless.
She's been flapping her donkey-lips at the hair salon in curlers.
She's telling mean old lies and it's making me nervous.
Whatchoo gonna do?

What if those rumors were true?

Get on a bus, get outta town.
She's got a pitchfork mob assembled and they're making their rounds.
Slip out through the back, don't make a sound.
Whatchoo gonna do?

SAM

Sam was talking about your clothes
He said you were wearing the same clothes
The last time he saw you

We saw him at the last show
You were wearing the same clothes

Sammy's police radar reader.
Nothing so cool as a teenager weaving

SHOW OFF

Show-off, you can lace your own laces but can you zip your own zipper?
You've been known to make it known that you're known as quite a funny guy.
Your kooky remarks are going a long, long way toward establishing a zany persona
And it's true that gullible chicks eat up those yarns that you spin like -

Crack a joke, like a knuckle.
Go on, endear yourself, handsome boy.
I'm splitting my sides.
Go on, land one of your signature punchlines.
You can chuckle yourself right back to New York City.

You can see his big, white teeth when his smile is stretching his eyes shut.
He sports bright print cardigans and corduroy slacks or khaki slacks.
He reads the Sunday paper when he's drinking his coffee on Sunday.
He gets stiff on homey domesticity
And he's chaste, discreet, and sleazy
Like an aging, sex offender registry ex-convict.

Conman connoisseur - he's a foodie and an addict and a real cool guy.
A certified expert on you.
Go on, land one of your signature punchlines.
You can put that in your pipe and you can smoke it.

I don't want to hear your words of wisdom.
I just want to pinch your cheeks - I just want to pinch them.
I don't want to hear your words of wisdom.

SIGNS (LOVE CAN BUILD A BRIDGE)

when I said, "what is the shape of the shadow you cast from your soul?
the sound of you eating, you craping your fork on your bowl?
how can I dig myself out of this hole?
shivering and cold,"

you said, "what are you talking about? what gives?"
then I said, "I want your mouth with my lips."
do you think that works? like, "love can build a bridge"?
drink in the shower, sing like a fish.

when I said, "why is it always like this?"

you said, "doesn't it ever get old?"

"which of your names is the name that you name for your friends?
what makes your skin crawl like the touch of my breath?
still you insist this will work out for the best,
when you know that I'm fed-up and spent."

when you said that you're sick, I said, "I'm sick as you, you'll find.
I don't want your number, I don't want to know what your sign is.
I don't need an answer - you don't need to make up your mind.
I just want a reason to lay my life on the line."

watching you biding your time.
do you think that I can't take a hint?

SLEEP SONG

Slumber while the earth shakes the ground around my house.
Thunderstorms and earthquakes are not enough to rouse me.
Doze face down on downtown streets and I hear no sound.
But you keep me up at night.

I saw logs in cramped back seats, rest stops in Ohio.
And I fall asleep beneath two feet of snow.
No matter how the rain falls or harsh winds blow,
Only you keep me up at night.

You keep me up, I can't sleep,
When your spectral body floats down on me.
There is nothing I can do -
I get up when I think of you.

SLUG GUZZLE

You don't embarrass me - I'm shameless. I don't want to like you.
You are so gross, it hurts. You know I'm not a sailor like you.

The hills are alive with the sound of wrappers and Chex Mix lint -
snacks in your purse. I swear, the buffet wore a face that looked like you.

Gossip is the currency here, and blushing girls.
You said, "There's a special dungeon for flirts like you."

I sleep on my belly so I can't see the street -
sticky with sweat in a threadbare shirt, just like you.

I am unstable -
But at least I speak clear! I don't mumble and slur like you.

SONG BEAN

With several swallows
of amaretto
from a filmy pantry bottle,
I rolled up my cuffs
and opened a window
and I jumped.

Swiping pharmacy BluBlockers.
Medieval Madness,
dripping down a waffle cone.

Lightning lights the farmland.
Steal across Kansas.
Ice rain on a traffic cone.

Clamshell plastic containers leaking sauce.
Always craving a juicy scandal.
Keep me out.

Who thought this up?
This frozen grape.
Bathtub lullaby.
Only steam rises this late.

Tied-up up with electrical tape.
Can you clarify?
I know it's hard to relate.

What are you dusting for fingerprints?
The holiday of your choosing.
Just capture your piece of desire again.

A capella pitchy slush.
A capsule of bitterness.
How many tabs?
How many Kirkwood triangles?
Either you don't or you have it,
said rabbit.
It's like it didn't even matter.
Bring me the head of
Bring it out on a platter.
Wax beans,
Butter beans,
Cannellini ,
Purple hull peas,

Field peas and snaps.

SOUR GRAPES/SETTING SUN

won't take it to heart, won't look at you sore
you're talking so fast
I can't catch you, you just slip out
don't shrug me off
like a cold

be careful what you wish for.
I can sing you to sleep
with my thumb in your mouth
with one cross word
the mood is spoiled

laugh it off, babe, grind your teeth,
laugh it off, babe, grind your teeth.
this tornado is a jacuzzi
and you were my last cry for help.

remember how you said you felt when you looked at my lips?
did you melt in my mouth
or did you melt in the palm of my hand?
you can take it all back
but the damage is done

you were raring to go, I saw you chomp at your bit
will you come clean?
can you draw a line in the sand
are you my shining star
or my setting sun

SPECTRUMS

Don't stick your fingers in the cage. Don't feed the animals.
Don't set your drapes on fire with a smoldering ear-candle.
Don't smoke-out your dog. Never relax. Never Relax.
I'm just an old romantic.

You're just an old romantic in search of a mucous membrane.
You always poke the bear. You always feed the flames.
Don't feed the fish.

Feed the fish at your own risk. Please don't feed them too much.
Please keep this quartz point for me. Turn my bad luck.
Don't turn out the light. Don't steal all the covers.
The moon is wearing brass knuckles.

SPINNING LIKE A WHEEL

You just think I'm crazy when I'm talking to myself.
I show up unannounced, drink all the liquor on your shelf.
I think that I'm doing fine but you think I need help.
You say I should go find someone, find somebody else.

You think that you're more real than me - oh, but I am real.
I have all these feelings - no, you don't know how I feel.
You claim to have feelings too but somehow you can deal.
My mind is always spinning - oh, it's spinning like a wheel.

You might not remember but we dated for awhile.
You wouldn't shrink away from me, you'd flash your shining smile.
Now you shower me with ridicule, vitriol and bile.
To win you back I'll stop at nothing - I'll follow you for miles.

You think that I'm crazy when I'm talking to myself.
I show up unannounced, drink all the whiskey on your shelf.
I think that I'm doing just fine but you think I need help.
I don't want to go find someone, find somebody else.

STAGE NAMES

You were beat and bloodied by your own blood kin.
He go to church on Sunday to confess his sins.
You said you could not blame a man who did just what he could
You wanted to be just like that - you thought it would be good.
Some day, you would.
That's what you told your friends.

You were tarred and feathered at your hero's house.
He said, "Don't come round here, boy, with your filthy mouth."
But you were ruthless in the pursuit of fame.
You spent your time deciding on the cleverest stage name.
And you were free of shame.
And you were free of doubt.

And you were a target for your moshpit peers.
You know they only bullied you to disguise their fears.
And you fantasized that you'd be cut down in your prime.
You didn't want a legacy - you thought it would be fine.
But now you're taking your time.
At least that's what I hear.

And we would cruise on up and down those docks.
You could not respect a girl who wasn't sucking you off.

You thought that your honesty made you exempt from scorn.
You'd always gotten off scot-free, since the second you were born.
You should've been warned,
One day you'd be caught.

STILL SEXY!

Smoking cigarettes is still sexy.
Fiberglass chafes on my tongue like pubic stubble, ingrown hairs.
There's an imprint of your yellow teeth on my butt cheek cellulite.
Baby, with them fancy, high-fashion sunglasses, you look like a movie star.
They're real people just like you and me, I hear,
But too sophisticated for cheap sentiments, like those in "There's a Tear in My Beer."
Sweatpant booty-shorts - I know what kind of girl you really are.
"It hurt but it hurt so good." Honey, ha ha ha.
You were just another research case study.
I was in love with your girlfriend when everyone still thought that she was crazy.
Now we know that her personality quirks are just another medical side effect.
We still play bridge on weekends.
I remember when she got wet with the prick of short grass upon her soft skin.
I don't know how to use it but at least I can clean it.
I'll talk rude to you baby and maybe even I will mean it.
It's true that I'm not foreign, working class or twenty five years' your senior.
Your friends will snub me and affect an apathetic pose.
Remember when I listened to your thirty-minute ecstasy-inspired monologue?
Crash your truck and I still respect your wrist tattoo.

Chicken-legged fucker with his pants so tight,
Walk away quick and forgot what he look like.

STREETWISE GIRL

I wore you down,
Swam in your swimming pool.
Now I drown in muddy water,
Drink that river brine.
My drinking chum
Has run off with a painted swine.
He's gonna raft across Kern River,
Eat that river sand,
Get that high-toned hooker
Let him be her loving man.

I've canceled my subscriptions.
I'm crawling into town.
The dancing was contagious -
We moved our furniture around.

You see that streetwise girl
With her streetwise gown.
I hear she skinned her knees
In brawls at Upstairs Lounge.

STREET WIFE (SUMMER SONG)

She was living in a Central Valley town.
She was selling flowers at the flower store.
And she wore a hangdog sucker frown.
I was always shaking on her unshakeable moral core.

When I met her she was choking back her laughs
And she captured me like you capture something in a photograph.
She pretended not to notice me checking out her ass.
I knew I could not survive the aftermath.

And she was a genuine psychopath
And a voyeuristic creep.
I caught her digging through my dumpster.
She'd climb up to my windowsill and watch me sleep.

I decided that she was my favorite.
I took her under both of my big wings.
We climbed ladders up to rooftops.
Tap out a rhythm on her knees and I would sing.

C'mon, come on right to that woman that you dig.
This summer is bound to end - it gets colder mighty quick.
You had your fun. There is no trick to this.
Your indecision is killing me. Make your move and make it stick.

She's a loveable junkie. I'm just a crosseyed, sweaty square.
I've got pit-stains, fear and money. She has golden, curly hair.

She's a dangerous nymphet. I've got a full tank in my car.
We lurk around neighborhood playground swing sets and in alleys behind bars.

She's the swinemaid to my swineherd. She's the peahen to my peacock.
If this is the Rock Island Line, I've got all livestock.

SWAN SONG

Tell it to me straight -
Don't it make you blush when you're compared to heaven's gates?
You say if I could hold my horses, I would witness you make waves.
Oh, but I can't wait.

And what is this?
You make it seem like there's nothing you won't fix.
Don't try to show me your collection of bricks.
How will you document this?

What would we do without you?
We're just hoping that the rumors are true.
I'm not even certain what it is you do.
I don't have a clue.

Is that why you're so smug?
You've been put in charge of an exclusive, secret club.
This ward is your oyster - there is no one you won't snub.
It's just like you fell in love.

SWIM OR RAKE

Said it was slower than Christmas
Missus missing her mister
Do you mess up your mind when you mix up your mixture?
Nothing so far from the truth
Nothing so far from the truth

Nothing but a nomad
At least do you ramble with gusto?
Do you stare in a pool when you're flexing your muscles?
Do you love to see the towns pass by?
Do you love to see the towns pass by?

And what when there's nothing to cling to?
When you're stricken with chills and you shudder?
When you're stricken with chills and you shudder?
There's nothing to fear for the wino in the gutter
As long as his bottle stays full

But what when you're running on empty?
And you think the grass is greener
And you think the grass is greener
Do you mean what you say when you're blowing off steam?
Nothing so far from the truth

THAT PICTURE

She was so mad. She took that picture from the bathroom.
She took that picture and she put it in the trash.
The picture was a portrait of the man that she was mad at.
And on top of that, it was a gift from our friend who moved away.

She was so mad.
She was so mad.

She was stark-raving, cradled her cocktail in her palm.
She was stuck on that man - so fat - the moon of his beergut and glasses.
She said he had a seafoam shelf, set next to his bed in his bedroom.
And on top of that shelf, she balanced a handle of daisies.

He was so mad.
He was so mad.

And why did she still stick with it?
It never seemed to serve her well.
He would fool around on her.
He was no fine specimen.

THE FINAL STRAW

Just another mouth to feed
with a leg to hump.
I left my innocence
at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump.

How did I get home last night?
What tore my party shirt?
Was it what fleeced me down
by Signature Iron Works?

What wet my fitted sheet?
Pockets spotted ballpoint blue.
Just what was the final straw?
I disappointed you.

It doesn't matter anymore.

THE FLY

I was the last to know
when you spun your web
that I was caught in
aw you were tickled pink

so I served my stint
hung snug to what you said
but it was for show
yes you were a fickle thing

of course I had to go

what was it you that fled
but that was back then
and was I listening

stricken dumb or fallen
always blushing red
what we were taking slow
turned out slipping in

THE IDIOT LIST

I was staring at your butt and I was drooling like a dope.
You were ashing in a Pepsi can of butts that you just smoked.
You were laughing like a jackal. I was giving up all hope
That I could be your anything but the butt of all your jokes.

You said you liked to chew the fat and spend your time alone,
So how come all the fellas tried to chew you like a bone?
Bit off more than you could chew, I heard you bit a curb of stone
And you're chewing just like chewing's what your life's depending on.

You're no fool, no nut to crack.
When you play it dumb, I can tell it is an act.
An eye for an eye - what's fair is fair.
But I am much too dumb to care.

You severed our connection, turned me loose and cut me off.
You said we were a waste of time, severed ties and cut your losses.
You thought I liked to play the victim - martyr on the cross.
I don't learn my lesson is the only lesson I've been taught.

You sucked my breath away each time you looked into my eyes.
It sucked - the way you spent your nights with the other guys.
It didn't take too long. I was not taken my surprise.
Now I suck bottle after bottle down and hang my head and cry

THE OPTIMIST

You know I have no tact when I'm consumed with lust.
Yeah, you were talking smack with your hair tucked back
And I just laughed till my gut bust.
You slipped town, shot straight, took a night flight.
I slimmed down, stayed up late and lost fights.
I heard that you were knowing so much.
I've just been losing my touch.

Tell me, can you keep my secret safe?
I'll pick you up on my way down.

I'm just waiting for something to take shape.
We can pull up roots and paint the town.

Just as soon as we piled into that clown car,
I realized that my come-ons wouldn't get me far.
I'm a family man with a picket fence.
I can bed you down and be your friend.

We didn't see that traffic light or that cop car.
So we sped off into the dark of night, but we didn't get that far.
Spun round, stood up, coughed phlegm, fell back,
And the ground was soft sand shell stacks.
We were seasick with that ocean mist.
Roll over, give you a Hollywood kiss.

Tell me, can you really keep me safe?
Just look what kind of love we found.
It's not something you can just replace.
It's what happens when the sun goes down.

THE WINNER!

Meet me in the middle.
Nothing thrills like burning bridges.
Every relationship is a competition.
You may already be a winner!

Meet me at Center Cross.
My patron saint is Pinocchio with his nose chopped off.
My spirit animal is a salted slug.
My love is bigger than your gas leak.

Meet me in Metro East.
Every compromise is a massive defeat.
Every apology is a tactical loss.
Every motel room has bedbugs.

Meet me at Globe Drug.
Call a taxi.
Meet me at the library.
Meet me in the basement.

Nothing satisfies my cravings.
There is no saving grace.
There is no silver lining.
There is no saving face.

THROW ACROSS

I was trying to keep you awake.
I was trying to keep my eyes open.
I was trying to forgive someone.
I saw you watching a blue snake.
I saw you crab-walk with grass-stained knees.
I saw chills wind a banner, saw boughs break,
so that may be, that may be, that may be
buried in mudslides, shaken like parapets shake.
I saw from the rooftop, hoisted with a pulley rope,
tore open palm blisters stung.

I made a mistake I can't fix.
I made a list of the things I could change.
I made you into a thing that you hate.
I was so dry there was nothing to spit.
I was dry-heaving so nothing came out.
I was wiping cobweb sweat drips.
I coughed and I coughed and I coughed
from powder gusts heave off bricks.
I saw vermin hole down the gas range,
scuttle up ceramic plates.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

I'm going out late. I'm going to town,
But I'll wake you up when I'm back.
You can sleep on the couch when you get home from town.
When you hold me tight you're just hurting my back.

Have you seen this one before? Yeah, we watched it last night.
I've wronged you before. It was wrong, it wasn't right.
How can I convince you that I've seen the light?
If you will forgive me, I'll love you tonight.

Who did you hold underneath city lights?
You've done it before and you can't take it back.
I was only out walking - I needed some air.
I carry the weight of the world on my back.

I've said it before and I'll say it again.
I love you too much - I will not be your friend.
What would the point be in playing pretend?
I guess that we just was a means to an end.

TOOTHLESS COWARD, BORN LIAR

You were taking slugs of gin and stuffing that bottle back in your purse.

You were looking at me with your eyes - giving me a skeptical look.
Wipe off your spit on my shoulder. I'm wearing a sleeveless shirt.
You know that I am open to the power of suggestion. You knew just what it took.

We live in a two-room house on a one-way street.
I'm trying just to keep things easy. You think things should be right.
You can uncap bottles with your belt buckle. I can unzip zippers with my teeth.
We don't even go outside some days and we don't even turn on the lights.

I'm not known for being friendly.
This ain't no storybook romance.
I can't read the messages you send me
But I can be your man.

TURPENTINE

T for thunder, hold your baby near.
Fear, thick like summer.
C for city, look over your shoulder.
T for Texas Ave., All New Fixtures!
W for window guard.

If you don't like the way it touch you,
you can't wait to make it stop,
you can find most any taker
who will take it off.

Cannot blame the bad news better.
Any gesture puts you off.

Soggy pleading tests your patience.
Which part of the face I made
you feel the mean no harm?

Here comes a sadness-flatted someone.
Slumped on his stoop, he squints.
Coupon-stupid, dodging busses.
Popsicle shirt-stain dribble.

When some poor mover beckons hither,
gestures with his jewel-set ring,
he will peg you as his brother.
He will love the song you sing.

Fear fraternal love unbidden.
Shrug-off any warm embrace.
He will string you on his necklace.

He thinks you are the same as him.

Yes, here he comes with horse-tail bullwhip,
pit with looks could leave a mark,
scarfing fists of Red Hot Riplets.

He dodges on his bike
strewn garbage.

Does it make my ass look fat?
Crack like a baseball bat.
Does it make me look like a cop?
I'm just recouping my losses.
Don't take me into your confidence.
I'm waiting on direct deposit.
Do you wear your anger like an outfit?
This is my creative outlet.
Chomp at the bit.

Do you like ice?
Do you like ice cold drinks?
Do you like bars?
Do you like bars of soap?
Wash out your mouth.
O for outlier.

UGLY UGLY UGLY UGLY UGLY

When I first came to this town, we stayed up all night - drinking soda,
Watching fitness infomercials in our motel room.
I didn't know it yet but I had claimed myself a homestead.
It was the last time that I saw you when I thought I'd see you soon.

The second time, years had passed - passing through and passing over.
I got so drunk I could not see, you had to lead me home.
Found a footlong earthworm snaking strangely on the sidewalk.
I felt just like he was - acting lonely when I wasn't.

I have walked your streets and I have scraped them with my forehead.
I have been invited and I have been denied.
I have spit on beggars and I have flattered tyrants.
I've made myself an ugly thing to pity or despise.

Every time I try to leave, the magnet sucks me back again.
You said that it was a horseshoe magnet, swimming by the shore.
Once I had it made but I'm afraid I squandered all, so shameless.
Now I can't quite settle, when I'm always wanting more.

I have stumbled senseless - I've fallen on my face.
I have shed each saving grace and I have severed ties.
I might drown in sorrows but I don't pull my punches.
There is nothing to discover. Don't ever be surprised.

WE BOTH KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS

You, with your greasy hair, drink with me tonight.
You can lose your keys and we can kill the lights.
We can lose those lights.
And you, with your red cheeks, sweat on me tonight.
You slip out of your shoes and I'll rip off your tights.
I'll rip off your tights.

And I don't expect to be your man.
Oh, I know that's not your thing.
You don't want a golden wedding band.
You don't need a diamond ring.

And you, with your crooked teeth, look me in the eyes.
There's nothing we can do that will ever make this right.
But we can keep quiet.

And I know that we've done this before
And both know what that means.
But It's not like someone's keeping score
Or watching just what's going on behind the scenes.

WEAK-WILLED, SICK & STIFF

You were limber once, but now you're weak-willed, sick and stiff.
There's nothing good that you have left.
We don't know what's come over you
But you can bet your ass what you're dreaming ain't gonna come true.

You used to think that you could live on love alone
But that means nothing when you have none.
Those lucky stars have all passed you by,
So you piss in the sink and you sit on your bed and cry.

You can say you're getting the spins and you're sick as sin.
You can reassure us you were never even fixing to win.
You can just shed your friends like a rattlesnake shedding his skin.
It's all your fault, it's not in your head and it's not pretend.

You had ambition once but now all you've got is dead air.
You say it's because life's not fair.
And your apartment has become a tomb.

You're just passing the time wondering who's gonna mourn for you.

You're ready to quit, you've just had it up to here.
So you're pulling on your dick, you're drinking cans of Stag beer.

WHY WON'T YOU DANCE WITH ME?

I was acting like a fool on the dance floor.
Then I was slumped on a stool - I was feeling sore.
Then you said, "C'mon, man,
Why won't you dance with me?
I see there are lines in your face.
Buddy, that's no way to be."

I was drunk at the show. There was spit in my hair.
I was feeling low. I was putting on airs.
You were wanted by the law.
You were on the lam.
You were blunt - what you said cut raw.
You had me in the palm of your hand.

WINTER SONG

I slipped on ice and I cut my face.
You shared what you had and we said our grace.
Though you know we froze together,
We were destined to part.
Don't know why there is no sun up in the sky.
Too overcast to count your lucky stars.

No change of pace or change of luck.
She is always on the lookout for new ways to feel stuck.
We can't stay in one place for too long.
When we go out, she dolls herself up fine.
She knows all of the words to all the radio songs
And you can listen when she's rolling sweetly blind.

Can I get it now? Why must we wait.
She said you did not mind at all and that that's what made you great.
Cloudy thoughts and stormy weather.
You can't change a jaded heart.
I know you always said she was the apple of your eye
But she's not deep enough to drown your sorrows.

Don't change your tune or change the station.
Whenever she goes inside anywhere, I am always outside waiting.
And her bangs are looking windswept.
And her lipstick is caked-ok.

Sure, she can kick my ass but can she clean up her own mess.
I won't think she's hips until she shakes them.

I kissed your lover on the face.
You spared my life, you said, "Just get out of this place."
Though you know we froze together,
We were destined to part.
Don't know why there is no sun up in the sky.
It's too overcast to count your lucky stars.

WRECK ON THE HIGHWAY

Wreck on the highway - you could smell the stench of death.
The windows, they were clouded with the heat of a dying breath.
Oh, we bawled and wrung our hands and wept our red eyes ragged.
They did not call the ambulance, they just sent bodybags.

Wreck on the highway - and you flipped your truck three times,
Envisioning secret messages in spiraling white lines.
When we heard the tires squeal, we could not tear our eyes away.
When you swerved, we drove on by - you couldn't hear us pray.

Your spirit shifted soundlessly, you shattered with a snap.
Wreck on the highway - you charred your white bones black.

Wreck on the highway - picture you engulfed in flames
And a tombstone at your funeral emblazoned with your name.
The smoke was rising higher and the flames were burning hotter
But no one witnessed the demise of your mama's loving daughter.

Your spirit shifted soundlessly, you shattered with a snap.
Wreck on the highway - you charred your white bones black.

YR BABE

You thought you had her with your charms.
I caught you knocking your knuckles up and down her arms.
She was your foil and a partner by your side,
A subject for your ethnographic study and a budding, baby bride.

What will you do, now that God has turned his back on your struggle?
When she kicked you, she got bound, so her bite stops with the threat of your muzzle.
You thought you had her pat down, but her conflicts we too much for you to juggle,
So you're giving her hell.
Forget "hung like a horse," you hung her like a trophy.
You thought she wasn't just like anybody else.

You had to put her on display

In the Saint Louis Science Center in Forest Park with her organs labeled and her legs splayed.
And fellas, to this very day,
You can catch them on the boulevard, performing in the Macy's Day Parade.

YR OWN BAD SELF

is it "put this behind us" or "put us beyond this" or we hit a snag or a slump?
oh really now - how am I doing in honest? well, you drag me down in the dumps...

you tilt my wound till it stings like betrayal. I am always all-ears to yr giggle and snicker.
yr not playing for keeps, yr playing it safe. so wring yrself out - don't just sit there and shiver.

and when the feeling hits sometimes, you get so sad you just melt.
but you don't have the time for this - yr too busy loving yr own bad self.

is it hurting yr tummy? turning you nauseous? would it fill up a bag? did it come out in clumps?
you turn on your word, renege on your promise. no no no no I'm not mad - I just feel like a chump.

and is it victim or villain - the shaming yr craving? just picture you fretting in yr bathrobe and slippers!
I'm sickened and shrinking - the moon when it's waning - and slivered like fingernail clippings.

ZONES

I caught you humming "Black Snake Moan."
You thought you swing your hips in time to rattling bones.
Your friends will all abandon you, you'll take your stand alone.
Make believe your heart of wax is a heart of stone.

You say, "whatever happened to that pure, unadulterated feeling?"
You thought you could run this town so long.
Something you will learn will send you reeling.
And you'll be walking with your tail between your legs, you'll be walking home.

You've got your traveling shoes laced up but you don't roam.
You've got a steaming compost heap in the backyard of your home.
You've got several good pals and you can call them on your phone.
And you can sit around your bonfire and you can suck on foam.

And I'm gonna keep my mouth shut.
I'm just gonna trust my gut.
I bet that your good luck will turn soon.
And you'll slink into your cave and you'll lick your wounds.