

precious delirium

Poems of Max Klein 1981-1983



precious
desirium

precious
delirium

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The Office of Max Carmichael
Silver City, New Mexico

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*Dedicated to the memory of the Terra Incognita loft, which was
destroyed by the Loma Prieta earthquake of October 17, 1989..
and to those brave souls who enlivened it with such thrilling
dreams and nightmares*

Introduction

In San Francisco during the early 1980's, the most vibrant subculture was a bohemian underground inspired by punk music. An entire generation of young adults felt themselves disenfranchised, facing a hopeless future of financial insecurity in a polluted landscape dominated by insidious consumerism, vapid media and brutal technology, in a society apparently trending toward fascism. But San Francisco was still an affordable city, and thousands participated in an explosion of DIY music, art, performance, video, film and literature that formed a short-lived but cohesive community.

At that time, Max Carmichael, a precocious young artist, musician, and writer, was just beginning to break out of the conservative mold of his early work to join this community of cultural adventurers. Originally known as Tim Ludington, Max had grown up mostly outdoors in the Midwestern farming community of Rush County, Indiana, learning about poetry (up to Robert Frost and e e cummings) in public school, and having some of his own poetry published in school papers and pamphlets. He had studied philosophy, art, science and engineering on scholarships at the University of Chicago and Stanford University, winning a literary award in Chicago for a Hemingwayesque short story. To signify his break with the past, he now adopted the pseudonym Max Klein — a play on

words which helped him claim to be the illegitimate son of his hero, French artist Yves Klein.

In early 1981, Max rented the top floor of an industrial building surrounded by bleak, filthy and decrepit tenements south of Market Street, near the center of downtown. He recruited a motley collection of conflicted but inspired roommates from the underground and, in precarious violation of zoning and fire codes, turned the industrial loft into an illegal residence, studio, and community arts center called Terra Incognita. His downstairs neighbors were enraged anarchist punks, and the surrounding tenements seethed with junkies, alcoholics, petty criminals, violent ex-cons, and the dangerously insane, who had been dumped on the streets after the new President, Ronald Reagan, cut funding for mental health. From the beginning, Max fought a running battle with roommates and neighbors — an ordeal highlighted by drug abuse, madness, theft, vandalism, arson, physical assault, and incarceration — while organizing an experimental music ensemble, producing a large body of art, music and performance, and working a day job which required him to regularly infiltrate the bowels of nuclear power plants.

Throughout this period he compulsively wrote the poetry which has been compiled in this volume, scribbling mostly in stolen moments at his day job, inspired by the underground subculture rather than by contemporary literature, which remained the remote and inaccessible domain of the privileged.

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3 Years

22•5•81

Maybe he knows something I don't know
something I don't know yet –
or something I will never know

a sobering thought

a sobering thought I was lost somewhere in rain above the Arctic circle one chamber began to fill with oxygen one with sulfur ignite and the heat enters somewhere along the meridian of your nasal septum / as you vent a pungent and moist aroma of death, love begins

as you want it, and there are 2 of you, always 2 of you, and you vent your spleens out 2 small holes, the fronts of you facing each other like Half Domes

Constricting & collapsing membranes of discourse in your half-space, the tracers go out as the sun goes down, lingering at the axis to collect its wayward tides

a band of Moroccan faggots sings outside your campfire – you can't see them / the night is dry but all your pores are open and sweating

you have fasted for three days,

and are now eating with her
the other
on a great brown piece of muslin

in the midafternoon geese flew over
it was too hot to move
a half-tent cut her slowly curving back with a knife of shadow

you painted it in dreams
& ovens baked human flesh somewhere else
the cells of our bodies, held together with a glue of misery
misery, mistakes, misery
& clever lines that were never spoken,
since language retreated within

ages on each beach,
ages on each planet, the
Capricorns, the Unicorns, the Universe,
a chemical volume of poetry

though you have walked the distance
from Alpha Centauri to be with her tonight, you will
fight back yawns, you will force blood
through your aching, half-numb, screaming, fading limbs,
those same limbs that seem to propel you in a genetic dance,
the muscles on the inside of your legs that still tighten when
she throws back her chemical volume of anthracite hair

$PV=nRT$

as mollusks and mandarin oranges
expand within your throat and belly
remember that nothing,

in the end,
is ever communicated,
except perhaps disease,
but that, too, could be learned –
sought instinctively like knowledge.

Finally, you run your finger vertically
and part the flames of her existence,
and walk through to the other side,
the dawn

6-6-81

The sounds that come out of your mouth surround me
They are my room
I am living in them
I breathe them
Lately I have been walking across them
– like a beam bridging two skyscrapers they bridge my happiness and my fears
– take something out of me and sell it
Anymore I feel it is the only way to tell if my life is worth living

7-6-81

Arrangements have been made
This was the seat he sat in
Arrangements have been made
This was the desk he wrote on
The car was waiting in this garage
Leonardo had written formulae over his bed
On a brocaded footstool a parrot sat picking his velvet shirts
 apart
The smell of oil paints had taken over the back kitchen
Now there was rust in the well
The moon came up behind something large and dark
It came up silently like a father
The dark thing was like a shoe
Say the name once
Say the name once
Say Bani-Sadr
Say Baden-Baden
Two figures of speech came down the road
One was wearing cannabis in a wreath
The other was wearing the insides of a color television

7-20-81 (A Calm Experience)

New clothes fighting social reform
New clothes
The feeling of tightening a new belt
I ran my finger along my shin
along the floor
looked up into her eyes which were always open like fish eyes
black
and glistening
oil
At night from above the whole estuary was alive with phosphorescence
I took off my clothes and shit on them
anything to keep from thinking
– thinking about love, about doors
Doors rolling up, slamming down
there was a picture on the inside of the hood, it must've been
taken about 1957
There were two of them in overalls, and they had a blue dog,
and a shovel,
and a pile of dirt.

8/10/81

I don't want to wait
See cry cry girl
I don't want to wait
See them in a line
Coffee on the stove
All around me pretty much
Coming and going
I don't want to wait
She long long falling down
I don't want to wait
Hair in my face and drown
Once I was lonely
Once I was all alone
Said I was patience
Sat on the telephone
Now I am all around talking in her walls
Make like I friend of someone special
Make like I sudden star
All around me the lucky strike
People that wear bones and mask
Questions now they fail to ask
Suddenly I cut in half
Healing like a photograph
Waiting for love to die

Is not my cup of tea

8/11/81

Lamb of God
Fruit of the loom
Bragging in secret
Tooting and shoving
Playing out fantasies
Wishing and loving
The bride is in mourning
The bride is in black
Tight chasms of neglect close around your throat
In balance you choose corpuscles of passion
that the dole stays open
The brown dust/men lie flowing across the white sidewalk
 from the Lifeline Mission
– Nothing more stable in the world –
makes you catch your throat
make mistakes with language
Who are the People? how do you picture them
Taking off for a week in the redwoods
inserting suppositories
learning to count apples & oranges
their dust makes you hiccup
their eyes make you shiver
you find yourself eating stuff they throw away
suddenly its the end of the page

8-27-81 (anti-existential edo)

Ok. The time is up. Those of you who were standing, sit down. Those of you who were sitting, stand up. If there is anyone here who raises a question, I will cuff his ears. Think very slowly on this. There is a storm outside. If any of us gets away, it will be out of native talent. I am turning the blackboard over. You are all naked in the dark. Imagine – hanging over you is the moon. It is huge and weighs more than all of us put together. The main feature, though, is that it is so old. The scars disfiguring it are the marks of a battle which occurred long before any of us was born. I feel that you are worried about this. It makes you question the authority of your experience here. What, you may ask, was going on in the room before I began talking? How long have we been here? And where, exactly, are we?

9-16-81

Knocks, licks, cracks
very cold water
blushing fiercely,
we could hear the crowns of our teeth squeaking together
I pull a small black fish out of my straw bag
I pull a note out of my mouth, like a ribbon of one color,
The sound flickers in wind close to the stream
gelatinous water beating
Nicks blows screams
slow caravans of ants draw maps around
your body you lie immobile with lighted
candles on your stomach, breast, and thighs
As helicopters drone overhead, searching

There is a stone falling on my head, it's
been falling on my head,

you hold my pants with red eyes

my bones stretch out to meet the sky

Calling a number no longer in service

9-23-81

Fashion breeds discredit
disrupt cautious advances with wildfire
At nineteen and seven-eighths Anaconda shows no sign of let-
ting her stockholders down
but Jane's fingernail scraped nameless veins on the side of my
penis and the clock went tick, tock, tick,

Talk, tic, talk, tic, talk

aspen makes a noise too . . . and so do
drops of water on a hot griddle
I will cross that bridge when I come to it, bury the hatchet and
run

keeping my veins in hard bondage,
twisting my elastic appendages until they snap,
beating time on the backs of my eyes

They said that man was something that man suffered
that late the wine-dark sea read slowly like a half-forgotten lan-
guage

9-27-81

I didn't buy those postcards
They were stone cold
He thought I gave him my cold
I was sending her this letter
She had gotten five postcards from him
There was a blizzard the day they arrived
Five million three hundred and eighty-five
Five million three hundred and eighty-five
Across the river stood a wooden cross in the wind snow had
 spotted the bushes of the plain
I took leave of my friends
A parting shot was fired
Christmas and sudden dawn

9-29-81

I wish I could take out my teeth and replace them with shards
of broken glass

You can stop the flow of my love with a twist of your tongue
Like closing a valve

Mysteries that tame me, drive me under ground, into dreams
that walk over my body like elephants

Here we are

Again

Sitting at a table

Sunlight is coming through the window

It hovers in the dusty air like the questions we can never ask,
never expect to answer

Don't look at me with love in your eyes

Stare at me as if I'm some sort of monster

10-10-81

come & see us
we are lying between 2 rocks on the beach
you may want to wait til the cold weather is over, if you are
 coming from the East
if you are coming from the West drive through Nevada on
 Route 50
I made a face I made a frozen kiss
I kissed her as I was freezing
my face stopped at the light and the motor of Time died, threw
 a rod I guess
she can't kiss, she's frozen against me forever now
the rocks press in
I want to talk to you about this
Come over and see us
our clothes scoop up the sand as we roll against each other, the
 sun freezes us
I told her that, we were pinned in a display case like butterflies
a big sun freezes us
her body was one feeling flowing into mine
one abrasive goose bump
I stuck my tongue in her mouth and scraped the back of her
 teeth
she stuck her tongue in my mouth & scraped the back of my
 skull

we heard somebody talking suddenly we were surrounded by
 people from all eras
counting as we fucked sideways questions in our eyes
 wide eyes
 blinking in the sun
 frozen, creases, black rocks
not counting, fucking not touching,
I came in her mind
she came in my past
came & went
ducks floating on the pond were plastic
chess pieces
NO – dogs – underwear,
 I can't wait
 To go insane

10-12-81

Slowly the turtle waves its legs in the air
The message is written on its back, fresh blood drips on the
 sand
The Revolution, revolution
is at hand
your days of waiting at last are over
free now to rebuild your life
repeat
the mistakes of your oppressors
what is there to learn?
live each day as if tomorrow you will lose that
which is dearest to you,
you thought you needed if merely to
live
you will find yourself
again
and again
picking yourself up off your knees
shaking your head
filing your teeth

10-12-81

If I had no clothes on & sat in a round meadow in the sun
If bees sang around me at arms length
You were somehow gone & with you the world
No plane streaks at high altitude, my thoughts the only con-
trails

Pas de deux

Pas d'un

Disassembling watches, the crystals like something that comes
out of your cunt,
the impossible gears like the mites that crawl across my foot

swarms of bees in ribbons waving above the grass

If I could pull my dick out of this bottle
If my hand would stop shaking,
and my heart stop jumping into the future,
this script would look like a piece of string dropped by a child
or uncoiled intestines
saying nothing
meaning o
meaning zero

meaning void

voiding art

meaning nothing less than all the rest of your burning life, my
love

(happens that way)

(he meant well)

(I remember when he won the spelling bee in sixth grade)

discovered a prehistoric civilization in southern Indiana

(he looks so natural lying there)

wake up, my darling

wake up

10-13-81

A cup of coffee cools in the window I'm
up to my old antics;
at the foot of Greene St. where
Rufus Putnam and Lafayette kicked around a can of Burgie
floats in scum.

The railroad bridge is being dismantled, they're afraid it'll col-
lapse, block the river traffic

up to my old antics again;

Saw Donny Ruhlman driving a cab
roasting marshmallows by a fire
through the trees the other side the river
his arm around a blonde girl

Then all our mothers went by rowing a long boat with crew
shirts a big red A

jabbering and flashing in a ray of sun

Christmas came and went

trees speared the colored lights were

berries that bled and blinked,

a high-pitched electronic wail, then a persistent beeping like a
phone left off the hook.

Spring washed over Front St. like antiseptic,

Wendelken's had a sale on escargot,

Portugal had elected a conservative.

Nobody goes to Portugal anymore...

Everyone was walking in a tight little group,
down toward the park, we'd
just finished a superb dinner in the Gun Room
at the Lafayette
Hotel

(I just discovered the styrofoam cup has skin trouble
like blood beading coldly on the
marble of a Madonna my coffee
seeps through the sides of the cup
wrecking certainty boding stigmata
wherever you look stigmata
watch for signs
you can no longer know
only a dull fear)

Margaret was at the organ she
made the mistake of playing "I
Hear a Symphony" that bouncing way
– we had to dance, there were
a Dozen of us,
all my old girlfriends came back

Those of you who speak Spanish refer to page 19

cold salads, Melba toast, breadsticks,
potatoes with gravy,
a lobster that tastes like meerschaum
I'm phoning the factory first thing in the morning

Go in that dark room
flickering whirring noise you can
watch my thoughts lose focus
wring from color to black 'n white

Naked and painted with cocktail sauce we
tossed guns to each other across the room
muskets so old they fell open and began to breathe,

Walking past the Legion Hall, the Post Office, you had your
arms around me and I didn't even notice,
even then and there I could not leave the future
I could not leave the potential,

I was lost in time
drums of mercy
mercy o lord

Christ have mercy

that abandoned
stolen from me
riven apart

waking on a doctor's table in Hell

10-17-81

and back on that subject, definitions
Don't forget you have a responsibility
to me, gifts that define
gifts that shave and leave what we call my beard rimming
your sink like what the tide does at every beach every day

I won't forget
Unrelenting unforgiving unflinching
I am your confessor and your critic
I am the judge of your heart and your lungs

The beating of wings last night
I did not hear
how did I know it happened
on the window over our bed
five chimes of the clock before my hand shut the switch

So I don't know how
So I turn my eyes in callow skin

Want to make somethin' of it?

10-17-81

I haven't tried to make anything pretty for a long time
– it could be nice. It would have
dots here, a sweeping line
like the beach, crosshatching that was
barely resolvable
I like grey
Water could be used, and bits of charcoal dropped
from above, a moderate height, six feet

Turning in your sleep –
My eyes settle on the pit your head left in the pillow
the colorless shadow in that depression in the pillowcase
– time and time again I forget myself
– again and again I lose my train of thought
I need a wider palette or a wider
field of action

Outside the wind moves in silence and
obscurity

Come slowly out of tension into my arms

10-19-81

I was in containment and I dug Shelley
I was in the aux building and I read Poe
I roamed the intake structure reciting cereal ingredients
Necessary conditions sufficient conditions
tried to write heaven tried to write Boston
You don your suit and helmet there is
water all around
the helmet is like a black dog
you are like a poisonous snake
winding through the tunnels like worms in the wood
after seven years second nature wins out
we are married in the charging pump room
our feet in a murky pool of water
death seems close and like another nameless valve,
wearing a tag that we cannot interpret

10-23-81

It is now two and twenty years since I sat me down and endeavored to write you, my dear Huntington. By and by we shall both be too old to travel, and I felt that some attempt should be made to heal that old rift between us ere time makes it complete.

As I crossed the pike this morning to snatch the paper out of the neighbor's hedge (where the newsboy invariably aims it) who should hail me from a passing lorry but the Queen Mother Herself, driving a load of garlics to Manchester. The radio set blared a garbled blend of Angeleno salsa and Hank Williams. Crystals of salt formed on the dry blades of grass. The sea was at last receding. Bodies without eyes shook themselves and shuffled forward. I had a premonition when I was six years old.

How many of us are from Cincinnatti? Everyone from Cincinnatti please stand up. You are each allowed one question.

Look up—no, you missed it. Wait, there it—oh, it's gone by again. Can you hear it? —that faint buzzing, like a fly now. It will surely come back. See how carefully I am following the lines on the paper.

You are walking in a huge aquarium, wearing an aqualung. You

have a horrible itch, and sweating aggravates it, but you are weighted down and the suit is too thick to scratch. Next there will be a hook.

Eighteen little girls leave the room, taking with them their giggling and their straight legs in white tights. The silence and darkness make you feel like a mushroom. Your eyelashes grow longer.

10-23-81

I came & rescued you
Before words couldn't help
– sleep caught us midway in restaurants
Shackled & bucking in your bed I felt your eyes fall out onto
my chest
I held your guts in my hand like a hopelessly tangled cats cradle
the child was running away across the playground.
A ringed planet sank behind the maple trees, the oak on the
corner had a ring, my neck was sore and raw from rub-
bing,
I couldn't stop wishing I was back there,
you were back there,
there was nothing happening there,
it was a place,
like lines on a page,
there were no numbers,
records of occupancy

10-31-81 (SHORT LIVES)

At the age of 37, Max entered political life for the first time.

I think I will give it a try, he said. I have failed at everything else, even my handwriting has deteriorated.

(He took to smoking cigars, wearing a raincoat in sunny weather, and some had claimed to have seen him at the race track.)

One day a beautiful woman got out of a cab in front of the hotel. I live a life of quiet desperation, she told him. Me too, he replied. Let's be pen pals.

11-11-81

I fear the shade, the silence
The normal sound of a car pulling away
and yellow paint on curbs, empty
garbage cans
rolled newspapers used for pillows

No one will help me form space and disorder into a future
– each wants his own
– each wants the future to be his own

Women will make their own compact and lush universe, they
will leave out all my images, they will leave me out,
It will be perfect

mine will be twisted

Theirs will be true

Mine will have worms in the wood

In theirs the rivers will flow sweet and dreamy,
like sherry down a crystalline throat

11-12-81

Dogs fucking ran me out of rain,
my skin sticking to blocks of ice,
the dry scraping of marshmallows across my teeth

There was nothing I could do at all.
I said I was sorry she looked away.
She looked away. Drops of water formed below the tip of her
nose.

ridiculous things like that –
there's coffee on the stove,
winter, worried, paces outside

sit down and have a drink
you look tired
sorry I was rushed the other day
how's your mother
is that the Times Book Review?
I'll open a window,
here's an ashtray

brushing your shoulder
your sweater sparks my arm
in fear; in envy

11-17-81

Heavy rumblings, brush fires, torpedo-faced men
emerging from the ground;

no plant life; the ground is painted in camouflage pat-
terns –

Things are getting more and more like each other – the
rain like the dry air, the wave goodbye like the slap, the broken
man like the picture of success, red sandstone cliffs like a burlap
wall covered with cartoons and clippings.

Things are getting more and more unlike each other
– her mind apart from mine, the wind while I am thinking of
Russia and the wind while I am thinking of China, the light as
if I were going to kill myself or the light as if I were going to go
to the grocery.

my hand closes on part of my leg. the stresses curl and
unfold. the meat old and tough. it is like the leg of a chair.

11-27-81

She's a death's-head, a dancing death's-head,
And she brings me peace, chills up and down my spine.
With her fingernails she tears my budding vine;
I will bleed to death, to join the restless dead.

11-27-81

On her hair the glow of light
On her wrist a watch of gold
Falling moonbeams trap the night
Vapor freezes in the cold
Two ways of losing
Two questions only
Do you love me
Do you know me

11-27-81

half-filled chronologies, like
glasses of wine around a table hastily abandoned
my parts beginning to gel
yours hanging out in thin slivers
now we're talking show business
money on the horses

goddammit open up
let me out for christ's sake
oh n-no n-no n-no

take
take
take
take my place

I'm going down
I'm going down
I'm losing power in all four engines
I'm going down

In Milan it was reported yesterday
snow will fall

12-1-81

Too often we have walked past this door
This is not the one
That is not the one
Oh, mother, demonstrate just one more time how you do it
pull the rabbit out of the hat

Silent crows fly homeward in the night
Small Japanese matrons box lunches
I am unjustly tired,
detained against my will at a station of the cross
I walk again outside to crush my cigarette
the bitter cold wind grabs my coat
I see the street
I see the wall of stone
I see the power lines hung with ice
I watch the sky change from grey to grey
seconds of just about everything

The newspaper boxes are empty all over Philadelphia
There is no evening edition
The cafes are closed
I'd better go back inside, coughing.

12-6-81

All the way up

I am spreading my hands slowly

my clothes tossing in the machine, the machine breathing my
clothes

All my clothes have come on them – there are empty condom
packets on the floor beside plastic forks

Tom when will I see you again? What do I need?

I am so cold, the soup is cold

Red lights hang above the streets, the streets are too long

Yeah, I date them now – so what? – Porcupines are just as skin-
ny as microphones

because my imagery is so obscure, from now on I am walking
down Mission in black baggies and white tee-shirt
swinging my blaster and smoothing my hair

Behind lace curtains a man paces in his fury – his undershirt is
yellow with sweat – he holds up both hands and counts
off his fingers, theatrically, shaking his head

you fell into a clay pipe, slicing your knee – I WAS THERE – I
CAN PROVE IT

so I thank you for being kind, being thoughtful, saying the
right things

I'm sort of bullet-headed, and talking to historical patriarchs in
my dreams – its not the sort of love you had in mind
– lets kill it

12-11-81

Black as night
White as snow
Red as a beet
All garbled up
She fell in a hole
It was black as night
All the time tryin' to get out
She lost sight of the truth
I was pure as the driven snow
I was goin' nowhere fast
But when I found her in that place
She was red as a beet
She had *nothin'* to do with it
It was all garbled up
All garbled up
All garbled up

I knocked her down
& dragged her out
She lost her sight,
Had sore eyes
There was two of us in the backseat
Drinkin' vodka and water
We saw that old woman cross the street

She was guilty as hell

12-11-81

I came to this conclusion
A *very* serious decision
I'm not the man I was before
Christmas
So many shrouds
I'm not *talkin'* about it
Christmas
Are you *cold*?
Did you go *too far*?

12-25-81

Mountains of crystal
that melted in the sun
going back had rained incessantly, raining
only in the back alleys,
leaving our celebrated avenues open to the paseo, girls with
sailors
Their scabbards clattering
I raised my glass it was in your eye
Eye that lay within
Bobcats in a trap
cheerless and motionless
2 kinds of motion
his hand around your ankle like a child
Duvalier 1957

1.4.82

Yesterday I bit into the lime
you gave me Majid

Your car and mine were going
neck and neck

Half the trouble in the world
was in the paper that day
Somehow in San Francisco it
was just another story

We got to the light and just like
James Dean I stopped
You did too
but the guy behind you kept going.

I am painting you like that,
with your head thrown
back to Morocco,
that fish bone of your neck
crawling out of its skin like

(the howl of) cicadas

1-4-82 (Equipment Data Request)

For each request that you made,
I made one too
I called and called in the big house
You were racially absent & took my pulse
You took several pictures they skid Robin Hood
Oh but the difference
And but in between us
Buyin' flowers on the wet streets
Look each way to catch the sweet meats
Ring softly at his door/he won't
hear you
he's not deaf
he's pretty
wearing shadows like orchids
and a plastic hood

shallow water warm under roots
warbling postures divine chevrons

taking flight as a matter of
taking off in fog
taking time to be alone with myself

can this be the war we were waiting on

1.4.82

Column question
What is the column question?
heard of it several times now,
column in question,
something in question

left for Antibes day before yesterday
all afternoon the clouds hung low over the train like an awning
just like

the veins inside the ear of
an old campesino
the fur inside his ear
the rising moon in autumn

adze color

1-7-82

Costumes of the saints

Green spikes in formika

Your turquoise bracelet your broken wrist and pale dry skin

I am swimming there as in a deep well, surrounded by phosphorescence

I took a knife and entered your cervix

I'm not coming out til all my demands are rejected

1-17-82 (S) Capistrano)

14 solid gold weekends
We were wanted from coast to coast
Pop singers fought over our story
& dead fish collected around the pier
Sunday morning, the fog & as your hand disappeared, you were
backing away already, the
headlights in the white dawn
could have been my x-ray
Somewhere a theater was opening
and a new chapter.

He's eating his shoes
I'm frying potato skins
2 Russians signaled
upstairs the laundry was almost dry
its colors blinding
blinding
Rose mission rose captive

2-24-82

Come to the rock
Where tomorrow's ideal is today's reality
Inward with ages of weight.
Waiting in stations of the long corridor,
each blue light above each recessed gallery.
Climate-controlled luxury, in fashions
timeless as the wind that skims the Styx,
we make love as effortlessly as a picture tube,
groping in each others ears with fingers
long thin and covered with sores

Talking quietly
too quietly
reading from old Cincinnati papers

my dick pops out and plunges into the lips of your frothing
cunt we
both seem like stuffed animals

hesitating
wrapping your legs around my head like
one of those long thin balloons,

I notice something written on them too:

2-24-82

9829 dove from a great height into an ocean slow and gently
 agitated by anemones
primitive figures becalmed on wooden rafts
rocked drunkenly in the wake of her dive

I got up
(my clothes were drenched with my tears)
dripping wet with tears
my whole heart was in my erection
& her lips around my neck
got ahead of the story

meekly, we crossed the street into a burnt-out tenement
I gave her a wooly worm, & then I came
my eyes twitched, my summer shook

flashbulbs in trees
walking catfish
all having trouble with the language,
felt inside her skirt, against the cheap cotton underpants
what was hidden there,

that she had got in Singapore

and Now 2000 dollars, what
meager robberies we had accomplished together,
walls that fell in Antigua in the last quake, red clay
dry on our black shoes from a ditch high above the
caves of San Cristobal

checkpoints along the road,
getting our asses reamed by hairy border police

the toothless mouth like a black rose
screams endlessly somewhere can't see
can't feel your blisters can't hold your
shrunk wrists pulling you down on top of
me in the crashing sunlight

Can I tell you about my dream?

I don't know. Try.

I thought it was the end. Everybody
thought it was the End.

Well. Was it?

No. I don't know. It was dark, and at the end everything was
still. A

gradual penetration,
that's all. The mother, the father, the
little girl, the little boy, all had
been shot by the 3-year-old,
who stood holding the police revolver.
In the picture white outlines on the floor

They thought it was the End?

in another the woods was filled with
large frightening animals, like rhinos
& elephants

Do you care about me?

Do you care about me? – you

hang around me a lot

you wake me up when you come in

& the grass is nothing but green, green,
soft as the lotion of your name,
traced with a single cat whisker on my leg

2-24-82

Saw her today, her pockets bulging
Couldn't pronounce her name, she walked past me, I stumbled
 over a bottle in the street
She was busy, leaves were starting to fall Suddenly I was aware
 of all the time I had lost,
thinking of her, trying to work it out in my mind, trying to live,
 losing time trying to live
The ghost was breathing hot on my shoulder
(I stuffed her address in a trash can &
Now I don't even remember what street it was!
Sometimes, when you ring my place, no one will answer
that doesn't mean I'm out

3/29/82

Buey crno jesni crno
In Berlin I hear there are 6 places to go
I am not in Berlin
I am in Oakland.
What was the question? Power?
if power is the question
doing on this train
doing six more hits/fry his ass

To cut the hair of a frog
first apply through the academy
–your name is on the marquee

several times last week I thought I saw Castro
Ten times in fact,
it made me start to wonder

I stopped talking in images and used only invisible threads that
stretched to the fixed stars.

By the time I opened my eyes you were gone.

31.3.82

How flexible are you?
In fifteen seconds, name all the teams
who won the world series last year.
I wasn't born yesterday you know
and now my heads too big to wear
that kind of hat

let me backtrack
I'm backing up on this track
There will be a momentary loss of memory
as we disconnect

Entering the corridor of fire,
leave all your expectations behind like
useless galoshes
all your images rush through the
conduit of her armature like a
forgotten Chesapeake

shit

now I'm in trouble
feel hot breath on the back of my neck
the stick's about to fall

4-3-82

I am probably just another crazy,
I have a hold of something fast in the dark
Like snow sun rages the strata of the bay
light falling
I am falling,
heavy heart, envy calling, noh time
Jet rising briefly in a picture between 2 walls; bird follows
stained yellow-white fresh from a broken egg
I am from an egg
gentle as a wasp crossing a great river in warm air of summer
 night,
feeling the air in front of me & behind
flying like a cross
burning like an immediate past,
full of verses worms and tongues,
all like tongues experimenting on the floor.

15.4.82

Drinking on the pier
Sitting on the pier drinking Falstaff
Throwing cans in the water
Like green leg warmers the seaweed hugs the piles
Sounds of the eighties behind us
Radios the size they used to be
Radios used to be big
& it was enough just to listen to the
lonesome hum beyond the stations,
a short wave,
a long black rail
a train six decades long vanishes
into the night
the last night

something hot & wet on the back of
your neck

Happy Birthday . . . Kathy

I should've known, with a name like that,
oysters in the shallows,
too many of the wrong kind of fish,
making the wrong kind of noise

20•4•82

I am turning womanish in my scheming
fareyed to capture people in a net around me
The sun draws a subtle oil out of my pores,
a blink awakens the salt of old wars
Red faced from lying too long on the outside of this fugitive
planet,
Martian down the road to a
fleabitten paradise,
I will better assess these afternoons
when ignoble,
astride hopeless pain & my body
only a bag of fallen teeth . . .

I call to forgive you
(the bakelite smells like my hidden knee)
all the ancient sins you taught me
and I aped in ignorance only feigned

one day when Pan went hunting
a doe fell in his path
and though he spied her dreaming
he slew her in his wrath

5•6•82

I should have cried
I was snow blind
crying in the heavens dried the pools of my soul
inside your black hair
in the heavy ropes of your hair
black as oil, crude as silk
I hid all night, crying,
wringing folds of silken skin
and drying pools of blood that we walk in
bare feet / crushed apples
dogs that held our attention,
animals of all kinds talking blindly in a courtroom
& hats that blew horizontally across the plain to the city

I was finally stolen
twin images finally broken in two
all for your love
which finally broke like the sea

6•6•82

the autumn leaves
drift past my window
the autumn leaves
of red and gold

beside your face
a mask of winter
nieges blanches
nieges noires

and where I lie now no stars are falling
no stars are falling
where I lie
your hands alone to press my rising chest
and all that might be missed, driving
some abandoned night

your hands alone
to take my words away
to take my voice
to take my life

I am now almost done I am now almost gone
I have taken all the chances I was given
and as I fall through this slot
the friction of my falling lights your mask from behind

the tracery of Christmas missiles, the sound

& now I plead with you
please, please never let me cover you with pie crust
never let me tell you how the sun goes
behind the earth
& silence you like a curtain traps a scrap of sun
wriggling in the dust behind the piano

before I tell you these things
kill me and eat me

my – love, no – but, my – yes, I – stop

I have not been talking to you,
(the sparrows crowd against the window)
now I will bring the candle closer,
a disc of ice will vaporize behind the glass
and now I will ask you

how tender is the night? how vague the schist
between the living tendrils of your hair?
my eyes are closed, my fingers spread like eagles
passed between the Mars and Saturn of despair
a slowly wrapping despair
entangling your body into mine like tongues
experimenting in an oriental puzzle
the more I talk the deeper in trouble I get
I am a man,
the one who has the trouser snake
the big jelly roll

all I can say now is,
gee, I'm glad,
let me sink my teeth into your shoulder
let me spread your breasts with the back of my hand, softly
like autumn leaves
and I love you most of all
as you stand holding your tower of hair
again mobilized
and with whole worlds of subterfuge
melting from your eyes until like simple black jewels
they stun, they sever
all my ties, all my roots
& I float painfully clear
bound and gagged across your sea of love

7•6•82

As long as it doesn't get in the way
I can think of you
All through the week
When we are apart
Once a week we meet
Once a week
Somehow enough
It keeps us going, this love that is mostly apart
We each walk our own lines,
Not to stumble, not to think too much of that night,
That rocket launch of sex that
That Cape Canaveral night that
Those lights and bells that
Say half a loaf is better than none

26.7.82 (Red Eyes)

O red eyes, guys in black, horses tails, driving wind
the flavor of quince, blue dreams, blue dream cheese, question
marks, odd quotations, bitch marks in yellow paint running
down the center of the road like an astronaut's needle. I am in
hock, all of me –

9/23/82

I saw 2 plugs of tobacco
I scratched my balls and wiped the sweat off the beer
blue & straight on the horizon a pregnant girl
down by the beach she stood and turned,
thin at first, then bloated, a bloated duck
I turned off the radio & shrill voices came
2 kids already, running up the beach
Hell, its a damn factory, I thought
I thought, next year I'll be rich,
or poor,
I may be alone as I am now,
or I may be fooled by good luck,
laughing and spending and forgetting pain,
– just because there's a seat for me in the machine,
form-fitted, stain-proof vinyl, with a horn up my butt
& I crank the machine & another
missile comes out, & the tits line up in the windows,
a suction sleeve drops down and jacks me off in 2 minutes 15
seconds,
doesn't mean I can't sow the odd seed myself;
& in your dreams, woman, the seeds
look just like missiles, one
with a Westinghouse mark,
one Douglas,

Martin-Marietta,
Bendix,
tame the wilderness, irrigate and sow,

someone has left the plug in the basin.
low clouds over the sea dress the wind in ice. my eyes are wet.
the bay is full of noodles or turds.

you walk toward me, the porch boards creaking, brown-legged
 & barefoot you come to me, the bread is in the oven,
last year's curtains fly out at the window,
as if ripped apart silently in time,
and the pump-handle screams.

8/12/83

back into the garage
feet sore, overweight
Talking to the judge, I noticed my calendar had lost a page
Will you play with me? Two steps

The sun rose slowly from the edge of the mesa. The whole world, I felt, was turning inexorably about an axis which, pulled taut by straining giants, hummed subaudibly like a horror film.

Then we ate lunch under a loquat tree, broad and yellow, in which several of them had just feasted. Their droppings stained the ground, and red and pink parasites writhed dumbly within. I can't remember if you were wearing a hat. The shade, cool at first, shrank into the spaces between your toes and finally the space between your thighs, where I hid til dusk.

Love

By the Authority of the Junk

By the authority of the junk that turns in my blood and stiffens
my neck, makes my toes numb and far and my tongue
roll like dust in space,

I pronounce your name

I move this line slowly, to the horizon and back

I come from the edge of a dream to witness

Like stacks of cold meat

Shams of true feeling waiting for buses on a street corner

Spiritual odysseys that cost money

Crimes without anger

Apologies without hurt

All these travesties and more I bottle up on my way to your
house,

try to sell them in front of the newsstand

where Native Americans are waiting for Custer, their collars
turned up in August

I grab a pencil and try carbon dating

The sun is on the far side of its orbit,

But when I ring your door,

and see your face there like the label of an elixir,

even the junk in me skips a beat

These Lips

These lips are walking across your public streets
Between houses washed in autumn rain
Taking baths together in this house or that
Running downstairs to pick up the mail that fell through the
slot
There were reds, velvets, the wallpaper
Our skin getting ready for winter
Outside the flags blew out high above the square
Crows at dusk
1917, Dylan, wooden nickels

Let's Not Have Children

If I put on a blazer like Arnold Palmer and
hung around while the sports press clicked shutters in the grav-
el parking lot and
heard the sound of spike heels piercing the pea gravel behind
my back
Suddenly the sun was off my back
Suddenly my back was cool
Your hand was on my shoulder
Your lips were on my blue jaw
And we could end up in black and white hanging like fish on
the newsrack
Lets not have children okay?

In a Home

I'm staying here
I want you to leave
For reasons that were clear
A moment ago
But not any longer
I'm just feeling stronger
I want you to go
I want you to go

It is October
Not yet the winter
Not in the center
Around the edges
Walking ledges
Or on the ground
In the leaves
I am alone
I am at home
It is the weather
Now or never
I'm on the phone
I'm in a home
In a home
In a home

Prime User

I used to say
2 or 3 years down the road
I will have a capability for you
But now I say
I want you in *real time*
I want to be the prime user
I want my channel clear

Terra Canibal

Whose ghost you brush
In cashmere sweater pink
With mocking smile
Face half turned hair black as ink
Smile half in fear
Run half in jest
You wonder where she hides the rest
6 figures in the morning
& coffee to wake you up
You must take my place
& in the morning kiss the wall
Terra canibal
Anima interminate
Rock-red your eyes

Wear Colors in Ghana

I feel like the silent h in Spanish
I'm talking to you while you eat grapes
Reading your lips and the look on your face
Your eyes are so far away
Your eyes are gone
You lost them playing craps outside the church
Wear colors in Ghana
The economy of Ghana is breaking up
The fabric of Ghana is breaking down
Look at him, he wears colors of parrots and persimmons
and the Threads of his shirt seem all tumbled together
This is nothing compared to the voice on the radio
which Comes to us across the square
This is nothing compared to the wind in the marketplace
and the rain-drenched flower in your hair

3 Moons

There were 3 moons that night

One was your belly – it had a scar where the astronauts had
landed

One was the white china tea tray with six mismatched cups
containing watercolors grey in the other moon's light

That third moon was yellow they were burning leaves all over
the planet yellow like time on the pages of your books
yellow like my face on the train back from Mazatlan
yellow like two cats standing on the opposite cliffs of
the Yellowstone canyon howling in their heads like a
volcanic photograph

A Modicum of Oatmeal

Since the government took our house we've been eating in the
open

There's a superhighway overhead but the car's still in the shop

This boy doesn't love you anymore

I'm too tired to do new things with your clit

Let's just shake hands and forget we ever sat in bed and watched

Hawaii Five-O

Pass the coffee

I could even forgive the instant coffee if I had a modicum of
oatmeal

A Fry Cook in Hell

nothing & life is barren/pressed like red leaves between
semidenotic pages, pages digitous and rapt
(the Dresden, the Vagabond, the Two Turtles, the Scholar and
the Wasp)
to continue to collect, too ravenous to accept
that to step inside the circle of fire, I am fighting
every day, with your blood on my lips, of half a loaf—
inch by inch you are drowning,
I have only a scoop of sand

I Toasted Her

I toasted her, by myself

It was nothing new

Blocks of ice falling off the icebergs north of Labrador are
more human

But that's nothing new either

its been happening for millions of years, they say

The Action Don't Come

the action don't come
fragments are all I can write
I don't look before crossing the street
why is that man staring at me
why is that chick staring at me
call Mr Rodney
he has my stuff
I can't watch it anymore
I move around too much
my suitcase looks like swiss cheese
I'm in the airport going through the metal detector
picking up other guys loose change out of the plastic bowl
That's the longest sentence I can write
I got no illusions
I'll never scrounge enough to come visit you
When I wake up I see your skin in the color of my coffee
Que triste to wake up before noon

You

My head anchored in a cube of obsidian night,
I felt the red sparks of her
Between panes of glass were black-coated schoolgirls, and their
 eyes were bleeding mercury into the stone streets
She was with the French girl and others I have seen
Go on
Go through life like a blade of grass, heliotropic, and get
 mowed down
En masse
I don't know what attracts me –
Moving slowly through a thick sea of mercury
Moving slowly through the pages of books
Parting bright metallic reeds she came to me
But still it was like she had never moved
All the time she was waiting in the sheets
Grey as fish scales
Her huge lips glowing like a red eye
Moving sideways across her sticky body I kissed her and I was
 lost.
It filled my throat like hot coffee.
I had become the meat of an abalone in the shell of her mouth
 while my dick hit her legs like a metronome.
All my power lines were down and I was walking in the midst
 of a ragged crowd steaming thick fogs of garlic

A winter night
Immense snowdrifts like naked museums

You You You You You
Your cries of terror lost
Somewhere in your throat
Your book of mysteries
Your hound's-tooth overcoat

All My Appliances

You took your tongue and rolled my legs and arms together
You pressed me against the inside of your mouth and I felt like
 a sausage
Outside was the night
Outside the night was manganese reflectors and the shapes of
 passing cars
My skin crawled under the 500 fingers of your pink sweater
I have the kind of job all I can do is write
Otherwise my wheels would trace your outline on parking lots
My gut would grow tumors like fetishes
All my appliances would sing your song

Raccoon-Hands

Under a flat rock in very cold water
there are shapes that never come into focus
black and yellow
the salamander on fire
a spot of mauve, red shade, flicks a grain of sand from the black
 crater of her eye.
Raccoon-hands, Turtle-tongue,
take my stretched body & play it like a harp

Groan Avocet Groan

Groan avocet groan
the green of cottonmouth kin not escape your lonely eyes
& in your breast a fire of fear burns
quavering like all the fashionable words before the sword of
Television

Reaching deep in your throat for the harp of Jonah
pluck me out a tune
and in its gentle ever-mediating clips and tweaks our song will
find a home.

I am 2 cups of salt
I am always ready
You are ignorant and beautiful
In court you smell like modeling clay

Fantasy island that was one afternoon
a part of the Kodiaks broke
the hearts of geologists all circling
in boats like the tiger, beating drums,
and melting in the heat of its pacing,
turning running . . . racing . . .

Be My Love

Be my love . . . light up my life
Stand at my side . . . through sickness and strife
Be my dream . . . take my name
Stand at my side . . . through madness and pain
Be my strength . . . live beyond me
Stand at my grave . . . forget me not

You . . . you are these eyes . . . eyes I have made . . . blue as the sky
You . . . you are these arms . . . filled with my blood . . . keeping
 me warm
You . . . you are these legs . . .

Be my equal . . . in my image
Who's to blame? . . . who did the damage?

Question Only Time

Question only time
the question of false objects
smiles of grape leaves
leaving unto me in sand
a question of power. Small
gestures in sand. A face
pale and marked like the
moon, swinging
like the moon.
If I was in the boat &
a great shark was carrying
you out to sea
you took with you the
libraries the covenant of
an arched foot the inside
of bent knee
Columbus fell to our satellite
there were fish in his cold
hands bleating

Boxcars Full of Love

Mysteries of your brown, brown eyes
the shape of your head, sideways
smile, perplexing fantasies of long
nights by a mesquite fire and the
snap of the little logs, ants
running in spiral rays to the circular
void, the geometry of blood, a
crust cracking and sinking below the
heat of childhood, richness, hot lumps
of gold dirty black in the
shadow of the fire, smoke on your
lips, smoke in my own eyes, tears
that come in colors like sails
blowing across my face, the
wind picks up & tumbling sage
crushes us, an avalanche of memory,
so that by morning there is nothing left but the purity
of our mutual regard, we are like two mirrors in the sun

Instructions

Take 2 Pictures

Now, before life falls, take 2 pictures

1. Flower, pink petals with blue figures yellow pollen
hovering in a cloud

small-winged, long-legged insects dancing
somewhere hidden to a seven pistol show blade
of
hope, gypsy candles remember Watts

2. Longer lines at gas stations, queers dancing there
with hard-ons, then thin fashion models with big noses,
garden hoses stuck up their cunts, flames out the car win-
dows like Northern lights, hazardous chemical spills in
blue mist of late-night TV.

Walking back and forth along a precipice at night, the town of
Hannibal below, and the river unseen but smelled; throwing
my shoes back into the bushes where horses stomp.

A wind came up; harsh words were spoken; the tribe voted to
sell the black Cordoba. In its place there would be a Jeep Wag-
goneer.

5-Year Plan

Draw up a 5-year plan: (five hash mark groups)

The 1st year will be spent in San Francisco recording panhandlers and arranging pop music. The 2nd year will be spent in Guam redesigning turbines for reconnaissance aircraft. At the end of the 2nd year personnel will submit a 150-page written report to the United Nations Special Committee. The 3rd year will be spent teaching English as a second language to members of the Tibetan upper class in exile in Nepal. Nepalese ladies will be available for your recreation. After the album comes out the entire organization will relocate to London (middle of the fourth year). Keep in mind that unannounced security drills may occur at any time. In the 5th year all pets previously vaccinated will receive booster shots. Disregard adverse headlines and do *not*, repeat *do not*, answer any mail.

Your director

Diary

The Bridge

Soft hair blows on the handlebars of her bicycle.

Her finger is taped and a little dried blood spots the gauze.

I hand her my sandwich which she bites with her endless
mouth.

The bridge is a rainbow. We have lost the road and now she
loses the river for me. I take off my shirt.

Mosquitos make me hurry. The bicycles fall in a coil of thorns
and spring quietly to sleep. I give her my money and
then I am off, the green water surprising me like snakes.

Can't Ignore It Anymore (8-26-80)

I guess you could say I'm a fairly optimistic guy. I never took much stock in all those prophesies of doom. I never really noticed them until they stopped. And now I can't ignore it anymore. There is something wrong. When I got up this morning I couldn't find my watch. Then I remembered I don't have one. When I got to the shop there was a note on my bench telling me to take the rest of the day off. That wouldn't happen unless there was something wrong.

Why

Why does it feel so much like rain?

Why do I pick my nose in the office?

Why do I lie about my feelings?

There are no windows and there are no doors

The sound of the ventilating fans pours down out of the ceiling

Four walls enclose me like a pearl in an oyster

There is no water there is no pressure

Why does it feel so much like rain?

When I open my eyes I see that a grey pallor has descended

The Teeth of the Memo Pad

These are the teeth of the memo pad
I wrote poetry before I knew what fucking felt like
I had dreams that got me off
The sheets felt good
Now I just want to go to sleep
And my dreams all take me back to that crowded elevator
and the small brown mole on the back of her neck as I stood
 behind her feeling
(Gravity waves)
How I wanted to rip her to the stars

Things never change.

Wish List

- 1) I wanted a powerful bladder so I could piss as loud as a horse
- 2) I wanted young girls with red cheeks to tell me I wore them out making love
- 3) I wanted every night to be able to look out over the world and know that somewhere there was a light burning for me.

All My Old Girlfriends

Pools of warm blood
My stomach twanging like a big eardrum once
At her touch it
All comes back at once
Feeling calves liver in my hands on the butcher block
Held by the park night warm air pouring life out of me out of
 life like a pitcher of chocolate
Enormous fingers all around my neck, the small of my back,
 between my legs
Froth and yeast and Shalimar

All my old girlfriends came back last night
Showed me their pictures
Tried to impress me
You have to start somewhere

Something Visual

Something visual happened to me the other day
Psychological drama
Trying to deal with tension
This is the age of awareness
Art will never be the same
Still I get misled
The eyes take over
The way the surface moves moves me
Like a big fish under water that girl's tits swam under her green
sweater
She could be an object
She could be an exhibit
Should I call the zoo?

Trumpet of Joshua

The inevitable rooms of friendship

Enter at the front and be disappointed locked forever in a grip
like handcuffs

or slip through the back door, hear the slap of the screen swallow the kitchen heat intimacy in ten seconds of rubbing the eyes

Get your hand out of my pocket

I was lost one night in the attic

I was alone with your memories

Another time pressed to the toilet my ass felt like the trumpet
of Joshua

Who Are They?

Writing is pointless
My mind is frozen
My hand moves as though in a cast
I have read so many books I am like a travelogue that never
ends
“Pull yourself together” says the sign
My word powers decrease
Since they did this thing to me I’ve had a compulsion to write
down what I feel
A remnant of what I was like before
But just as I start to get lucid my head begins to freeze over
again

“We have to wait, there’s a train ahead.”
“Twelfth Street Station next. Transfer here for Richmond and
Fremont.”
“Next station Nineteenth Street Oakland.”
“Bush Tetras are old hat.”
“I know. I just need someplace to get in out of the rain.”
“Brother, there’s better ways to skin a cat.”
“It’s so sad when they take down the marquee at night, before
the show’s over.”

Who are they?

Death Opens My Eyes

Death opens my eyes
I see cleft chins like buttocks under bleeding mouths
The mouths of brutalized virgins
Whose stomachs have been crushed with steel pistons
I wait for my own fate to fall
Death gives me a pill to stay awake
To keep us both awake
Harry Reasoner is telling us about Nicaragua
A small thing like genetics crystallizes the universe
Light in fluid ribbons cascades down the starry curtain
To where me and Johnny sit in our '58 Olds.
Kissing popsicles and each other's shoulders
Up close my knuckles are zebra-striped with car grease
I read again from *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*
Somewhere there are two Catholics making love in silk
Across the wine-red desert black boys fish in fluorescent reeds
Cottonwoods drink the Rio Grande

Down on Melrose gates are shutting and the afterburn of a big
jet ignites the ocean and my woman's cunt draws me
irresistably across the floor, ignoring the mail that falls
prematurely through the slot

I'm wearing undershirts for Christ's sake smoking Marlboros I

drive a 36 foot cabin cruiser down Santa Monica Boulevard like the Ancient Mariner coming back in spades

Good night darling if I remember anything I'll remember you

I Shook My Cock

I shook my cock and
the last drop came out just as I was zipping up;
on the way out I passed Charlie.
Charlie said, Well what about it?
Are you here to stay?

I looked him in the sunken eye and swore, Is any of us here to
stay?
No, its a fact, we're all just passing through, he finished.

Passing through October, passing a great water, through a yellow
and foul winter.

Last Sunday afternoon walking up Harrison Street was all I had
to do in life. If I'd been a poet I'd have written

the sun bronzed the flat
cheeks of my buildings
all empty with sunken eyes and
Greek columns
a pigeon, large dog turds and laundry
rollup doors, rolled down
(the story of the little hare
who, in his trap, the sun would snare)

a few bums smoking in a swamp
somehow festering platoons of cattails just a few colonial doors
away from mine

Sundays Olen just sits in his car, a silver BMW, jazz on the tape
deck, thinking:

I'm not prepared to answer that.

Peace

you know, I wish it could all be a lot simpler –
a long black rail, a short crosstie
cattails in the Calumet River –
I lost the rest.
junk has taught me 2 things:
time and love.
I long to put myself in the command
of something black and silent,
something that whispers “peace”
and allows me to b

Stories

Opening an Office

Two men are in a room
The walls are painted grey
So is the ceiling
The carpet is grey and not soft
There is a noise like a radio between stations.
The men take off their clothes and embrace
Outside the rush hour has started
A crowd wells up out of the subway.
One man is lying on his stomach and the other man is spitting
on his buttole
They are both thinking about deep water and lightning bugs
Twice they fuck each other
Two women come into the room
The men are asleep.
The women kiss each other and finger their clits until they both
come, tongues curled together
Today they are opening an office
Just as everyone else is getting home
These four people are going to work.

Plucked eyebrows

1. She was to die.
2. A man running down the Tacoma Narrows Bridge
3. Four soda straws
4. The film is in black and white, a grainy print that looks old but is new. The scenes have no feeling. They are like TV.
5. Suddenly the road is full of lap dogs, swarming like rats. Her breath catches and under each breast a fist seems to close.
6. The station started getting letters protesting the soup commercials, a few a day at first, then so many that they had to take it off the air.

High Class Night in Bed

1) Hearing Columbus Day fireworks. Vietnam, tunnels, “the horror”. Argues: no, 4th of July with other guy was better. Something, two exploding eyes, Rubens light against smoke rouge and ink sky.

2) The fire alarm going off, screaming in a dark stairwell. Argues: is it broken or real? Shut up, go back to sleep. Sniffing for smoke. Unable to rest.

3) At dawn a man walking down the street, throwing up.

An 80's Acid Wedding

An 80's acid wedding – big bikers in black like the fingers of death ranged round the blinding frozen amphitheater delicate arch soaring over caught in midflight by the sun's immortal flash “eat broken glass & die faggot” bound to the river's course and dazed slowly in the green heat we let the raft offer us to the distant, almost imaginary ocean, where tattooed men in colored scarves (heads spiky with memories & whore's phone numbers) load peeling icons on a listing schooner. Back a million years & a wall grows up around the canyon, water flows muddy and cold, the sound of trumpets echoes into the camera's ear. Gin ripped my tongue apart. I have used secondary laser cheese burritos to etch your profile on my retinae. Other than that I was the same as before.

Do you know how many men have died trying to cross this restaurant? The question was perhaps inelegantly put.

10PM 6/24

A string of green lights

A string of blue lights

A spotlight, white, swinging across the mask

I am not afraid of lights – I am not afraid of the night

The night is close, and full of dreams. Far off behind the dark field and above the strings of lights is a sign – a word – “WHY”.

If it is red it is a cry of pain. If blue it is the first question ever asked. Not to suffer enough could be a problem. Now the sign is red.

Just Like an Omen

Chains of letters.

Flaws of captive iron.

Chains of biscuits,

Sorrowful and steaming.

(Biscuits wracked with sobs)

Ndisco Nttacking nutmeg throngs

(It was in fact that night as I turned my dick in my hand that I
thought I heard my son playing Rave On with accor-
dion and bells)

It's still light outside. As someone goes out, the slamming door shakes my window pane and my face reflected in it. It's still light outside. But the light comes down. Slowly down. The walls go up the light comes down. Rizzo and Castagnoli, it is a sign, & in green with yellow rim and red letters, a flourish of script, it is a sign. I am their constructor, they are my waffle iron. Now I am about to eat. It is still light outside. On every wall in the Project there is a sign. In green and in yellow and in red. By doing this I make the narrative longer without making it seem longer. It is the season for this sort of thing. You squint. Is that a powder or something in your eye? What about the riot gear? Pick up the paper, someone has rioted every day. Next they will leave Xerox for Ricoh. It is just like an omen.

Spinning Heads

I went out on the street with my head mounted on a swivel joint between my shoulders. It was spinning madly, and as my eyes adjusted to the motion I saw that all the other people walking about their business had spinning heads as well. There was a great humming sound in the air.

Precious Delirium

As the hours creep outward into regions which I create deliberately as a slow hand draws venetian blinds shut across the window of my mind as small animals trace merry-go-round patterns of light behind a screen on which a man and a woman are fucking in formal Chinese silence as squad cars rip the curtains of night / their limbs as white as bones as brittle as chalk which turn into stars when they break, piercing our eyes as we lie on the beach in a blanket of unclean foam...

The strands of her hair were caught in my food. Sheathed in clear plastic she walked through the polished metal door of my starship. I could not look up from the controls.

Calibration did not diminish the explosion of her eyes. And moving like the burning sea lamps of a video retina the torrid flowers of her huge nipples came closer, closer

Her fears were like octopi living in her cunt; my dick would prod them and excite them and I could feel them grip it and twist it ruthlessly back and forth. I loved this and at the same time knew I was doomed.

Starved for Music

A brown partition split the room to shoulder level. On one side people were making maps and on the other they were reading modern French poetry. The people making maps were always borrowing erasers from the other side, where they were rarely used.

It was there that I met Lucy. She had curly blond hair and used to walk around dressed in white on the black peat paths of the courtyard. Nothing but Boston ferns grew there. She could walk with her eyes closed, and her eyelids seemed to breathe as if blue animals moved underneath. I read in one of my books that she was dreaming, and every one of her dreams made a billboard pop up along a road somewhere. That made her like a technicality between me and the sex police.

When I went to France I took her rings and sold them for a lot of money. She repaid me by closing my curtains and opening my mouth. Starved for music, Magellan's men beat on the shells of great sea turtles.

Your Vision

You see clouds that float like ideas on a slate sky and buffalo moving between them on tracks as in a game. They are branded: Sea Biscuit, Tranquillity, Boss Man. You keep driving. You turn the radio dial with one hand. Maybe there will be some news. The air is cold and crisp. The car slides on the road, following the contour of the land as if it were an old memory. The radio sputters. Now and then you see a writhing, mysterious script written in sand on the road ahead. As you pass over it, it explodes and vanishes.

Was she angry with me? I'll never know. All I have left is a small mathematical expression, a formula perhaps, that she used to get away.

A pack of dogs crosses the road ahead. One of them carries a scrap of yellow cloth in his mouth. Your breath catches. Then the radio comes to life and the pounding of the music is like the pounding of blood in your head. You have to pull off onto the shoulder.

You stop behind an abandoned Studebaker. It begins to rain. As the windshield wipers beat from side to side, and the rain comes down and swells up over the car like a ghostly hand, you see her body walking toward you across the desert.

When Hell Freezes Over

When hell freezes over ice skates'll sell like hotcakes. I got a million of em. Take my wife. Please. How do you tell the Jew at the football game? He's the one yelling "Get the quarter back!" Two Polacks went duck hunting. At the end of the day one turns to the other and says "So how come we didn't get any ducks?" "Maybe we didn't throw the dog high enough." Hah hah hah

The first wave of the attack was pure torture. Drops of molten plastic were sprayed at the fully clothed victims, charring their flesh and gluing spots of clothing to their bodies. Then they were drenched with salt water and bombarded with razor blades, some of which stuck and some of which didn't. The women were knocked down and their feet were hacked off with dull axes and the men had their ears ripped apart with vise-grips.

Don't close your eyes. It just gets worse. You shout terrible obscenities at inanimate objects. You laugh uncontrollably whenever you feel pain. You seem to be losing blood but there is no wound.

Chicago Transit

Day in day out day in day out please do not put head or arms
out of window

Aragon Ballroom

a small old man dressed in black with a black beret on
his head waiting for a small black dog crossing
a garden on the diagonal

The landscape overwhelmed by architecture

Bryn Mawr & Granville

Belmont & Fullerton

deluxe one bedroom and studio apartments available
petals on a wet black bough
dogs on a wet curb
walking relentlessly to look for dogs
crossing chiseled streets
galoshes and black balloons

Rock of ages cleft for me
cleft of hope and sympathy
buying time and selling flesh
in the end

The lake breaks just like the ocean

The smell of her skin suddenly bends the hair of my nose like a
gentle wind across the prairie

she's been dead 6 years
& the dull clap of a wooden heel on wet paving-stone

Ahead of me an enormous lady treads on her slippers
the flesh piled around her huge legs is nuclear, ruined, almost
epic. Her black hair, thick & dry, bristles under a light
green scarf. She stops every few steps and glances
around her as if looking for a lost dog.

I would rise up on my elbow, and she would be lying there in a
pool of silence.
and when I blink, she will be leaving me on a bus,
waving.

Already getting colder toward Christmas. The short
trees with their yellow leaves & red berries will hiss and crack,
sheathed in ice, leaves gone, the berries like crimson stigmata

chiseled out halfway to China, his mask was almost ready

a woman sat across from me and read Harold Robbins / Time-
sharing or Profitsharing, its all the same, cheap talk, cheap life,
cheap smelly cunt
if you don't get your cunt off my nose I'll kill you

As she turned away I started bragging about my war injury.
I lost a phone number that was very dear to me. *You*
can't replace it, no matter how many times you carry
me in from the car, drunk on Christian Brothers or
Seagram's.

Fat 'n sassy, porked & happy – my dick feels like its in the bank.
Sidewalks made of heavy ancient grey stone slabs in an irregular
patchwork, collecting rain, seeping rain, wearing away like

the basins of Utah and becoming a maze for our walking, ant-hill of dreams, city of fears, fearing to get our feet wet. Our feet sweat. Between our toes colonies of bacteria and fungus fart massive clouds of distracting gas, deceptive gas – a girl of 27 runs a towel between her toes, graciously, probably exits out the back, she will eat, she's putting on a little around the rump already – plugs, toothaches, dogs belching in pain of indigestion from anxiety, waiting on our return.

Fuck you buddy. That's *my* dog.

Bikes, bro's, brews & broads

Mimes & nukes, dikes with cukes

Kripke, Frege, Russell, Mach, Hertz,
Von Neumann

Montagu, Richard: *Formal Philosophy* two porcupines sitting on a fence, one had no dime, the other had no sense

I am lying

I am trying to confuse you
Logic is only as good as the sex it gets you

-M. Klein

Going down in the valley & coming up to breathe. I've been down in the valley and I'm coming up for air. My nose feels pinched, felt pinches; I had cotton in my throat. Time glowed like sapphire jewels behind a plate of black glass at bedside. A single ray of sun took the scenic route across the dusty air to my old Baldessari piece on the east wall. I shook the cov-

ers off & stood up. The bed was entirely covered with fur. My cat came in and you could see the fleas diving at her.

Now I felt hungry, so I called the maid & went to the bathroom. She was there before me. She was taking a shit so I had to pee in the tub. A lot of plaster had fallen down in the night. Apparently the quakes were getting worse. I shook off the last drop & washed my hands. She tied off my arm with the belt from a bathrobe and took the bottle, a large one, and a clean glass fit with a new needle, and wrapped her leg around me, her bare pussy against my hip as she slipped the point home, though how she could find a vein at this juncture was beyond me. I thanked her & told her she could have the house to herself today & my bed tonite, I would be back tomorrow noon. She was shy, I knew she'd have Catrice over, the video artist, they'd stick lights & cameras up their cunts etc. How was I going to last till the meeting? I didn't know.

Back in my dressing-room she was helping me with my clothes when it came on, my spine turning into a pillar of blessed light – I had to sit down, and it took all her strength to get my grey tights on, and the tight black boots as well. There you are, Sire, she said, tickled my balls and pulled me up by the dick. The tights were made of raw silk, with Magpie feathers woven into the irregular mesh. My black boots were very small, pointed, with spike heels, well-worn. At the crotch of the stockings there was a hole out of which my member hung, also well-worn, with its wrinkled little reservoirs of come. I don't mean to dwell on it, except that if I didn't, nobody else would. And now that I've started, I'll tell you about my shirt, which was chain-mail, very chic, people had stuffed bubble gum all over it, which made it sticky but helped me keep warm; my jacket, which I had found in a taxi last March in Paris, had one sleeve shorter than the other and tended to shrink in cold weather, was covered with the matted roots of orchids and had

fragments of robin's-egg shells peeking out of it like – well, like Easter.

The foreman dropped his lunch. “I’m all plugged up with emotion,” he cried. You could hear white-hot slugs hitting the water somewhere in the dark. It was eerie. Soon steam filled the air, naked bodies of running men with masks, long crystals of gypsum . . . High above, the Nest swung slowly back and forth, within it two ruby-glowing eyes. Breakfast, lunch, or dinner, it didn’t matter.

“What’s the bite, Fred?” one of the wipers turned from his tub. Inside the grinding-worms writhed and bubbled angrily.

The foreman scratched his crotch. He began to cry. “Nothing,” he muttered. A plastic dog fell out of his jacket. “Glow in the dark,” whispered the wiper’s assistant.

Well, sit down. Light a cigarette. Or maybe a joint. There’s time to visit the restroom. A bell will ring, once, like this: _____, when the show comes back. In the meantime the copy reads like an ad for lingerie. Whose lingerie? That of a very fat, very ambitious lady, talking to your doctor behind the wall. Behind the wallpaper, like pigeons in the eaves or rats in the lath. I took the liberty of checking you into room 909, and for tonight, at least, you’ll have to abide, listen, hooked up to the wall machine, as the walls go up; the lights, in turn, come down.

Around her vast, glowing thigh a single strand of pearls lanced together by the finest 22 pound test monofilament fishing line. Gestural, or painterly use of color, the web of silk, actual silkworms imprisoned in the stockings by spiders in the warehouse, cascading down over her stately knees and calves. Rainbow colors. Then holes for what on a lesser being would be ankles. She raises a glass to her lips, takes a drink. Swallows

half a tumbler of vodka. Old people shiver and pull their cardigans close.

Eternity

Nothing Is Older

I discovered that the weather of life made rings in my soul
I had gone to the chimney of the world and measured trees that
 grew out of cracks older than these words.
I tried to fuck them in wounds I could not find.
Red ants ran up and down my bleeding dick, glistening like
 numbers in the night
I lost my way in storms of mute passion
and woke beside small spiders weaving webs in the grass
Those did not say
Nothing is older than these words.

Writing Songs

A voice comes out of the future
Strikes the word on stone
Afterward there is the smell of excited air
The rumble of fate receding
Animals in the barnyard start to howl and cough
I only remember it
I never see it
It's right there in front of my face.
Many years later I discover life in a habit of sound.

Zarephath-Horeb

In Zarephath-Horeb
People arming for the struggle
In New York and Miami
The heathen are restless
They are burning their homes
God-given lodgings
Like mad dogs they bite
The hand that feeds them
Zarephath-Horeb
Gets ready for the struggle
Making babies in the woods
Get ready for survival

Sadat Dreams

On a Saturday night Sadat dreams of corny things
Ice cream parlors in Waukegan
Big-nose Jewish girls who come all the way to Hyde Park to see
 Saul Bellow play tennis
Neon horses bucking in the sky over nickel slots in Wendover
The hostages
Whoever gets up first in summer camp, running in may-apples
 down a hill to the steaming river
Where the river meets the fog meets the dew, water alive in the
 very interstices of matter
Diatoms in the mud reach up like fingers between his bare toes
 with sensual sucking sounds like the skirt of the sum-
 mer Nile.

Who Will Remember

Who will remember
Memories getting in the way
get in the way
the shit, the excrement of our experiences, the
good we do is nothing, but
because of our inner strength –
what? don't crowd me now
My pores, my pores,
I can feel each pore as it breathes
as it breathes
as it breathes in the air clogged with perfume
women and flowers painted on the still air
who will remember that I have
been in this room
eaten this chicken of one ten years ago
that can make me nearly keel over in distress,
gut pain,
who will remember anything
but the pain that cleanses
when you try
and you try
to remember
& you see
the future

as well
as the past

Devil Rock

Devil Rock is bigger than me
How come Devil Rock is so damn big
Went to the kitchen to look at the clock
Couldn't even get past Devil Rock
Devil Rock is where we had our first kiss
It was so good we forgot to go home
We had lots of experiences at Devil Rock
Lots of experiences at that place
When the sun comes up behind your dome
Even if I'm lying in bed at home
I imagine the faces of big people carved there
Nixon and Kennedy and Jimmy Connors
Farrah and Madeleine Murray O'Hair.

She Used Up Her Life

She used up her life
Waiting for the revolution
She was a good follower
A product of civilization
A weapon lying fallow
Like a seed on the parched fields of chance
A dream of struggle
Quickened her senses like an odor of gunpowder
People shimmered in the sun like objects of the desert
Only words had clarity and permanence
Like a kind of shitting they allowed her to expel poisons manu-
factured by the Enemy Within
Somewhere like a crucifix there festered the model for her soul
Performing voodoo like a map on the living body of a city
Everything was always like something else,
And like itself

The Stones

Oh the stones not yet cut
Budded on earth & blossomed in heaven

Your Guts Are Full of Sand

No way to pinpoint
No need to think
No pinpointing
No stuck pigs
Around here after a rain the daffodils
Yes the daffodils
Yellow, rimed
The chalk cliffs
Wrists of pain
The small bones giving you away
you are afraid the x-rays will show your weakness
or that you're dead already,
nothing moves in your veins,
your guts are full of sand

Withdrawals

We get to know our withdrawals

– we wait for them like expectant brides

We cherish our withdrawals & surround them with solitude,
clarity

Babbling Vietnamese

Babbling Vietnamese is not my idea of performance
Grave-robbing, performance criteria,
Black market value,
Gone are the standards by which I could judge myself,
the erosion of my days on the
landscape of public life
Gone are the friends that I knew on
 vinyl seats with pollen-filled
 hot wind past pink ears,
 & green-husked ears of corn at
 the same level rushing by

Rush County, a sad betrayal,
so many fat slow people
I loved behind – if
I could go back,
like a corn-dog penis,
a bauhaus dick ejecting up through the loam,
& everybody got knocked up with the
new locomotion, then
shit,
the human race could go on

The Animal Bites Them Off

Somehow the way I see a blue plane
A grating sound a shaft some place
Two charcoal bars across the sky shadow
Cast an eye before crosshatching up
My arm is tense
My arm twitches
Lifting my glasses I sweat into space
I see mirrors with Duvalier's face
Pitted with footprints like the human race
riding a bicycle on a country road
seven miles from town he stops to listen
twice he closes his eyes and hears a train
there is a row of cyprus and a bottle cap
he feels like he was kissed by a mongoose
this way
through the gate
Coin return – you curl your fingers inside the hole and the ani-
mal bites them off, the animal bites them off, the

Photocopying

Photocopying long and late
The light flashing like the top of an ambulance
Photocopying as if her life depended on it

Roemers Glen

the far peak's hovering.
 the faroff peaks.
crag of ducks' & dragons' teeth
shivering through the dust,
 filtering Jeff's mind's residue.
a heat wave shook the car –
 cornering above red sand,
and next to the radio with beer in hand
 I read the mailbox:
Roemers Glen (we took our walks;
 telling me she'd left him there –
it was her father's place, and
 he alone to miss her slacks & hair)
where her father died in high water,
 mud-rich Colorado writhing fierce
beneath the bakelite cliffs

Swallow

Because of *your questions* several people resigned;
They took their *books* and the documents of the *case*.

I was strolling down the *Rue Montparnasse* when a *flower* vendor approached me and gave me *this*:
a small box of *matches* with a *butterfly* inside,
dead many *years*,
with *all* the velvet and *much* of the color gone from its wings,
it smelled *very* far away, I remembered closets behind stairways
dark on still days of Ohio summer
I saw my *mother* wearing coral beads and a black hat, hurrying
to church.

Seven *Arabs* in robes boarded a jet bound for China;
I *checked* my watch and to my surprise it was gone.

You are running to answer the door
The long hall is dark:
By the basement stair is a low table,
on it lies a charred body
stinking and sunken-checked,
eyes popping like billiard balls
Its outstretched arm *scratches* you as you run by.

There are bodies sprawled in other places along the way, they
were dumped there to remind you of this:
Just below the soil in Pennsylvania a seam of coal is burning,
calling softly and tenderly,
the mosses sickly green and warm beckon
And children lie down *naked* as if *drunk* on pear wine
. . . all goose bumps, lips pulled back from yellow teeth on the
quivering earth

Swallow

Swallow

Swallow

now

Swallow

Evolution

They laid down on the sand and became boards
They sat in trees and drew rain
For thousands of years they did nothing but evolve

The women had hooks that projected from their shoulders and
 kept getting stuck on clouds
The men ate big seeds and farted 'til they nearly died.

Slowly in their stomachs grew worms that made them laugh
That made them go without pleasure
They stood around in a big circle and sang songs from the ra-
 dio, clapping hands.

They suddenly looked very old,
then very young,
then like sexual organs

When they could not sleep
But only count the stars,
starting again and again,
from one to ten

I cried, I turned off the set and got into bed with her, in pieces
 like a junk yard

Your Star

Paste the voice of doom against the smoky embers; catch your dream falling whitely through the frigid night; walk blindly into the cavern of justice; for as the dawn breaks across the kingdom of God your star shall burn last, an angel, and that is all anyone can ask.

Goodbye

Take good care of yourself.

Eat well.

Get *plenty* of *rest*.

Watch your *health*.

Call me if you *need* anything.

You know it *kills* me not to *see* you.

Well, goodbye.

I love you!

Goodbye!

*For more information, please visit
www.maxcarmichael.com*



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