



Avenue C

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scarsuonipilnd
2010 chapbook

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1.

She gets high on diesel dust
& mute reruns of Jack Benny.
This slinky white boot Barbarella
has got a rubber soul
that stretches into angel octave,
levitates in the nightly limbo
of bong & free trade
called Avenue C.

Claiming to be owned
by 3 bipolar Kings of Funk,
she breaks glass beer bottles
in the backseat of my old Cougar
& gives herself up
at least once a month.
She doesn't even wipe
the rivulets of blood
spelling my name
with a missing vowel.

Avenue C

I drive my car
on methamphetamine rage
fill everything up
on zeroes.

At the club tonight,
the D.J. looking like
some fucked-up owl on Special K,
I dance with everyone's girl
of a thousand bar butterflies.
She twists & gyrates
to the boom boom boom
& sonic Charlies,
shouting to the world
that her body is protein & crystalline salt,
addressing that constant hunger
of dead-eyed mystics,
shouting to the world
that she's not wearing underwear.

2.

After the artificial red smoke
& dancers with a thousand names
have cleared, he spots the old man
leaning against the piano
that the Siamese twins played out of key.
He's wearing a flannel shirt that is just so
out of place. He thinks: the crow
must be a veteran of a foreign war
where everyone lost their left hand
& some buttons.

How much? says the Crow-man.
An arm & your left leg, says Banshee-Bob.

In the hotel room,
Crow-man pumps Banshee-Bob
as if channeling his very soul
through the only bridge-&-tunnel there is.
& tonight, neither trick or customer has wings.

When finished, Banshee-Bob looks up
at Crow-man and spots a squiggly red line
across his throat. He hadn't noticed it
in the misty darkness of the club
that sold rum & quick-pop soul with ice.
It reminds Banshee-Bob of a snake.

But tonight, no need to call 911,
it's just a mongoose on home turf
just a self-inflicted wound,
the snake's eyes like tiny keyholes
into a room vacated by draft-dodgers
an old wallet photo of an Asian boy
how cold-blooded bodies can never be forgotten
except in Apt. 214d, last door on the right.

3.

My pit bull girlfriend protects me
from dreams that form scabs
under the skin. I draw a fibrous lining
around my sleep well, or live within
the chain-link perimeter of
hoping-never-to-wake-up.
But despite the subliminal waterfall
of wishes, I do.

In bed, we go down like good cough medicine.

By morning, I am cradled by the love of fur.
I recall the dream of her white teeth
that are mountains & the sun & the moon
that are various shades of her eyes.
There is no trace of a calibrated whistle.

& what I have at the end of my leash
is something that will never return
only the outline of someone
who once found me too needy
of claw & red meat.

Nine Reasons Not to Kill Yourself East of St. Marks

The Munificent Witch of Tompkins Square Park will still decree a twelve block neon Black-Out in which no one will wear condoms.

The blind jugglers in the park will never levitate in translucent Fruit-of-the-Looms bought at The Dollar Store on East Houston for a sliver of half-shiny luck.

They don't spread in Heaven the kind of gooey cheese at Benny's pizzeria, the kind that wraps around your tongue like a lover without teeth or aplomb.

You won't find the kind of girl who skin pops poisonous frog juice at The Gates of Sudoriferous Mates.

In the after after-life, they don't provide the kind of mirrors that reflect back seven stretched versions of you as a bending coke spoon.

You won't get to see Lypsinka at the Pyramid Club, dressed as a southern belle inhaling snuff, tossing layers of petticoats to the audience, performing his/her version of *I Want to be Loved by You*.

Diane Arbus will still sleep with hobos having scarred livers and saintly drawbridge eyes. They have spongy hands and answer to the name, "Jesus."

Really, what you will see at The Limbo Waiting Rock is a curious room of deadbeats, hookers, hot pretzel scammers, one-arm axmen, sugar-footed mule stalkers, moot tooters who chew on Juicy Fruit, optical sputniks from Hell, four-eyed potato looters, ginny ginny grab-baggers, porcupine right-to-stiff advocates, junk dealers with broken glass for tongues—the same crew who was there last week on earth before the block got self-nuked.

The last reason is waiting in your email.

Big City

She enters the city with the windup and silent tick of the best sex toy, a bounce and a slow burn, recent advances in plastics have made rabbit hearts obsolete. The man with the pug-ugly nose and fat lip tells her to sign on the dotted line and asks her to dance nude. He dims the lights and she's no choice. Her body turning to wisp and sunblind movement, she dances to an old Edith Piaf and her steps are out-of-sync but below the concrete floor the rabbits of despair swoon and blush. You're hired, he says in mud-stodgy tone. He proceeds to penetrate her from behind; there is no other way, until she forgets the Plains and the too seldom rain, an angel's piss, her father used to joke until his rubber band of a heart stretched and nearly killed the both of them. After she found out he had buried The Last Dead Indian, she no longer slept with him. In the city, the evenings take on a purplish hue just before sunset, not entirely toxic, claims the blind paperboy who delivers each day's news with a rasp and a pigeon's smeared blood across her door. The apartment is paid in full by the club, which is really an after hours hangout for the grifted and the philosophically maimed. She takes her hamburgers medium rare and the pickles remind her of the taste of last night's penis before she stuffed the stranger's apologies in a jar. He made a slow rattle on the way out. Over time, which is kept and set without fail by the rabbits underground, she falls in love with a club-footed mute whose hands play her like a cello. But he too disappears into the London Fog of his own inarticulateness. She cries for days, for no one, really. Then, one day, the blind paper boy knocks, offers her a fistful of damask-scented plastic flowers, cheaper than what

she can find on any street corner below neon
and electric unblinking eye. No, she says softly,
not wanting to wound him any further.

She covers her breasts in a bathrobe and closes
the door. That night, on her way to The Strip, she finds
a dead pigeon outside her door. It's wearing
a tag with her apartment number. She brings it
inside, holds the carcass, petting it, refusing to let
it go. She wants to feed it. But that, she knows,
is another of life's great hoaxes and anyway,
she's out of bread.

Goya's Tenth Ave. Mistress

She spreads you thin across acrimonious days
splinters you against impressions of rain
loves you in turpentine prone positions.
A rat scuttles across the floor and again
you remind her that you are no subject for
the museum of national history.
With a palette knife and
a no. 12 sable,
she brings you to your knees.
Your other lovers are more or less
chiaroscuro blind.

Unsolved Mysteries in Scatology

If I showed her a photo
of myself ten years before
she wouldn't see the background
behind the background
nor comprehend how I craved pussy
but drowned in the echo of romance.
She would only see me & three buddies,
my long hair & heroic smile
& not the girl I had stopped writing.
We grew too many miles apart.
I narrowed my vision
to the meat and potatoes
the exact science of scatology.

I'm in this hotel room
facing the N.Y. Times building
fucking a Spanish drag queen
who has breast implants
that taste like black licorice,
soft as a California peach
by the time it reaches a starving boy.
Her anus is as snug as the keyhole
of my thoughts that lead out of the past.

And what you don't see in this picture
is that in another year
this same drag queen
was beaten to death
in the same hotel room
by a guy with angel tattoos
on his chest and arms
who mistook her for a woman
or wanted to believe she was.
You might say his vision was narrow.
& as far as echoes go—
I never knew her real name.

SS Girlfriend

Your SS Girlfriend with the sleek belly & gorgeous scars from ripping off Avenue A dealers has you on a leash of short-term amnesia. You can't recall the last time you got off from being trigger-happy inside her & you formed an post-Expressionist impression of a barbed soul. You could go crazy counting the nights that border on Nordic numbness, reindeers dying in a child's eyes, a hit & run on 7th ave. South. When she calls you don't say what the fuck, where you've been? Something inside you trembles like a victim, and you ask where & when. You curse the rain.

At the university cafe,
she shows you a new tattoo from the place on St. Mark's open until 3 a.m. She hits you up for some paper tongue because there's a new drug rumored to cure the virus called living by numbers. It's fatal but so is being born, she says with a smile that tangles up your peek-a-boo soul & leaves you misty for your father's polyester suits before he came down with a rare strand of sleeping standing UP. Tonight, after a frenzy of unsafe sex, in a hotel owned by an ex-captain of steely eyes, she sings you an old lullaby the very one her grandmother once sang when your girl's SS eyes were too baby doll blue for this world. And the two of you collapse into each other's jack box, the night taking no prisoners, only the half-shadows by the fireplace, only the soft flickering against the walls.

The Junkies of Gethsemane

The night air is thick with Tiger Bloom and heavy tropes.
Past the trimmed gardens, the clumps of Honeybells
or Blueangels, they crawl singlefile: The Frog Kings
and the Green Goo miesters, salt on their tongues,
the fingers like tubers, the breach of faith,
and now the impossible chasm between them and their
one time supplier of oyster suitcases and barnacle
clippers—Cyrthanthus. One of the betrayers, a man
wishing to be a woman who wishes to be a child, rises,
and says in low falsetto, “Master, where you’ve been?
You promised to teach us the miracle of The Sacred Hue.”

Slowly, Cyrthanthus turns, his beard full of bees,
dried petals from old lovers, and replies, “Why do you
deceive me? Have I not the elephant ears of an old woman
waiting for her son’s return from the sand wars? Did I
not feed you when your ponds went dry or your pastel
children went seeking sweet asylum in the oriental night?
Did I not command the oceans to give up their ruby queens
and imperial dwarfs for you? And this is how you repay me?
By giving my true name to the Dogs of Double Bounty?”
And with that each of the followers bow their heads and kneel,
while the flowers around them turn to Maneaters
and the only sounds for miles are the shuffling
of a woman’s feet, one who is carrying jugs
into town, and inside one, the cackle of an apple-green
calyx that was once a human heart.

On Being Mistaken
for a Gay Go-Go Dancer
at The Too Late to Die Night club,
Avenue C

3 hours before show time
& i'm dancing alone on a floor
harder than rock candy but
slipperier than the china boy
in g-string & hot patchouli oil
telling me "hey, man, you're doing
my job." he bites my arm, his teeth
a residue of old canine flirtations,
his erection hard as flint & an orphan's
frozen eyes under a trance of static
cling. kling, ping, my feet make
autonomous forays into this sweaty
cellar of someone's massacre of night
i'm feeling as brave & reckless as
a children's crusade of pickled hearts.

how can i tell china boy that my last
lover died during a heavy night sweat
when the comets exploded by his bed
leaving shards of memory trace
loose knots of life that i keep
undoing with all thumbs. i should tell
shady dancer to fuck himself with an apple peeler.
instead, i'll do the core bleeding for him.
"see ya later, honey," is all he says
as he rubs my rump in grand loose strokes.
i'm delighted he thinks i'm his pet rock
the one he forgot to name.

i will keep twisting & spilling & breaking
until i'm blind samson
bringing somebody's pillar upon my back.

later, in a bathroom,
some tenement uptown
& beyond windows of any faith,
a veteran of all foreign wars
a prisoner of anorexic widows,
breaks my arm in three places,
claiming i've overcharged him
for causing him to bleed
in embarrassing places.
his mama must have
fucked him hard.

on the streets, deserted, the swirl of life
from distant cars, there is nothing, nothing,
but cobblestone & endless tar path,
white lines & limestone walls,
i am the last man surviving this planet,
collapsing between metal lattice and brick frame,
i listen to the piss of my own voice
giving birth to
rock & stone
rock & stone
rock & stone.

The Colonel's Younger Lover

Among other things, all her lovers are stale, imitations of imitations. They hold umbrellas over Paris & have no sense of blue fifth jazz. When it rains, it doesn't necessarily pour a healthy broth. All wars are on hold. At the window, she is cabbage-patch sad and confides in toy dogs. Memory is a polka of exhausted I-told-you-so's. In the distance, there are insipid pinwheels that upon squinting turn out to be the neighbors. She turns. The maroon dress, one-piece and bought at a bargain, falls to the floor. Today, she gets naked for no one. The windows stay neutral like Switzerland. She's a demure alp of fog, a slip of misplaced vanity. At the knock on the door, everything will be alphabet clear, reassembled with the old stitches. The corners of the room recede in their erogenous red dust. Sure.

Forget Me Not

To forget her personal wars
she chooses him from a throng of urban pacifists
with a secret vendetta for collecting
rose scented mommy-clones. He drives her
to what-he-calls an “all night diner,”
but really much more than that.
The windows have cataracts
the color of old menus
and the coffee urns, dating from
before Proctor met Gamble, spout stagnant air.
In the back kitchen, by left-behind
dish racks, he ties her up
Artaud-style
and makes her recite the ten most given
reasons why a business fails.

He waits.

Mass Production

i say to the girl with botox cheeks
& burning marshmallow implants
that maybe after we punch our clocks,
ones that were made in hong kong
but shipped over to eastern standard,
maybe we can have a dance, spin a dime on it,
a dime a dance a chance to make the night last,
without impervious metal manic hulks
getting their rocks off by controlling us
in peephole gaze and telepathic neuron
tumble and spin, i just want to
i just wanna i just want to, you know?

but then it hits me so hard bursts through
my plastic kelvin heat-resistant heart
(my brain is under a 9-year apple warranty)
that the girl i am talking to [trying to] talk in twos
has cable controlled arms and time-clock clicking
brain manufactured by soft-hearted capitalists
who have no use for hands. Her blue pluter-perfect
eyes blink in eccentrically even timed intervals
that could make the old group of five break down
and cry for occidental lovers. No, she says,
I am only the sum total of my phantom parts
with meta-coded functions and love
or what could lead up to it
is not one of them.

my tin-girl annie collapses from lack of maintenance.

i watch the boys from section 6 take her apart
piece by piece, placing her parts in boxes
grouped by anatomical sections. They send her
on the conveyor belt, down a chute, to
be re-built and re-programmed for tomorrow's
new assignment. at home, in my dinky apartment
decorated with seven varieties of russian dolls,
i smoke a cigarette down to its primordial stub,
hoping that something short of love will kill me
without an intractable bleed. i blow perfect smoke
rings with the efficiency of a zombie-eyed factory girl
equipped with a Swiss timepiece of a quartz heart
that denies all past and imperfect tense.

Why I Prefer a Stick of Margarine to Elvis Presley's Ghost: A Short Memoir by an Employee of Heidi Fleiss

He watched me undress and compared my backside to expensive hills of albino flubber. Or a sign over a keyhole that reads: Keep Coming again. He asked me if I swallowed bluegrass. Did Homeric verse originate in a dry vagina? His twang stung. Slipped off my silk panties and faced him, those soul-slutted see-through eyes. I waited for him to disrobe. The leather peeled in delicate almost painful motions. Naked, he said he felt like a child again caught at doing what he did so many times. I said you look like The King. Or one of his impersonators hatched in a comedy cellar. I've been dead 35 years, he said, and all these 93 yr. old women claim to have slept with me. You know, those damn gossip columns. Do you know what that does to a ghost's ego? He cracked stale jokes, spoke of The Colonel as a dubious phallic sub, sang in a quivering voice Blue Suede Ghouls. On the bed, he was prone, pale-faced, and MrDieingly sad. I tried to palm his genitals then straddle him. My hands went through him like the lies of a thousand men through my ears. I felt frigid as a heirloom and I only managed to touch myself. Sex, I stated flatly, is always reflexive with a real phantom. He asked if I were in this business only for the money. Get out, I said.

Until the Lone Ranger Reveals He's a Drag Queen

Or the sky stops reflecting the work
of a slowhand god who forgot the C-chords.
When an Eskimo stops seeing safe igloos
of love in a feral girl's eyes
or the outcast lovers, dreaming
of street maps, swear off midnight confessions
of their most intimate and beloved ghettoes
or Sarah Palin declares Ad Hoc
that we all need an engine tune up,
and that only she holds the perfect wrench,
will I thank you for the dollar discount
of common sense you never gave to me
or the thousand love letters I tore up,
the ones that stated how you loved me
from the depths of your bad circulation
as if I would always be your cuddly toy.

A Girl Named e Cannot be Your Prisoner

I really liked having you in my bed, falling through loops,
even though in my drunken state, I must have called you
by a million non-refundable names. I've spent the greater part
of the afternoon, collecting empty soda bottles and pressing my lips
to the fluted openings and making strange whistles.
From the last skyscraper, I let the bottles fall a thousand, no, a million feet,
onto empty gravel. Then, I stuffed one bottle with a note,
a picture of two stick figures in the shape of e's, each facing the other,
their curved backs to the edges of white despair.
That is to say that I think you are so totally fucking cool
in your perfect $3/4$ obloid state.
That is how some define the essential solitude of love.
Trying to think of your name, I've forgotten mine.
Then I toss the bottle as far as I can.
Then I know I am made of nothing.

The Magical Thinking of Birds

My brother, who always gauged the weather by the bulge and sag in his ceiling, said she began losing her hair and that I should come home. I imagined her hair now as something fine, short, almost like vellus. There was something at once absurd and irresistible about returning to the cycle of returning. At her bedside, I smiled and pronounced my name the way she did in the old country, only without the lilt, the soft flight of ending vowel. In the old country, she used to tell me at night, there were rare birds that could work magic, could save a sickly boy such as the one I broke out from. If you utter a secret name, one would come to your window. For that reason, as a child, I never crushed worms in wet soil. She opened her eyes a thread. If only pain originated in the epidermis, it would be so easy to get rid of. Like dandruff. I rubbed her cheek, the skin, dry, almost rubbery. Her eyes grew wide, moist, catching the low light,

holding onto it as if an imprisoned lover. “So you come home.” I smiled. Was she playing a game? Like the kind we played when I was a kid, hiding behind evergreens, pretending they were my mysterious and loyal stepfathers. When she discovered me, as she always did, she lifted me with her strong hands, her buttery smiles that promised me the world. But now. Perhaps she sensed my presence all along, even from the other side of the world. Her voice was wispy, a layer of downy. Yes, I said, in my strongest armadillo monotone. “Give me a kiss,” she said, “have I not earned it?” I obeyed, forever that stilted child, frozen in conundrums. She began to speak of her childhood, as if I was her priest who would grant absolution. The white pantomime of hills. The stranger’s laugh floating over a fjord. Her first sled that flew into the air and curved along the arc of the world. Slowly, she turned towards the bay window. The rain was streaking it. There was a shadow of some kind. A Rorschach blot of wings. I thought of birds that I read about, ones fleeing extinction: the Gurney’s Pitta, the Bachman Warbler, the Ivo ry Billed Woodpecker. No more names, I thought. It was really the afternoon that died.

Miranda Blue

Girls in blue heat should never vogue near fire hydrants, the colors never mix, but Miranda was always a slap and a spit to those Butthead dictums. On the dance floor we put Madonna to shame. Before a mirror that's longer than my idea of California, I see myself in new angles, unhinged, lines crossing or bifurcating. I'm a bluff on a dime. Unofficially, we are the club's featured dancers and are hotter than some backroom clergy in Jersey. I'm nursing my fourteenth rum and coke, light on the liquor but heavy on Sweet Street. While Miranda is still spinning past an ecstatic ocean of faces, tricked into some eternity of smoke and fog, I try to recruit whatever parts of my lungs can still aerate. Outside, we're under a blue yawn of sky, night tossing day. Pitching her stilettos towards the tailpipe of a taxi, Miranda becomes Mike and I become my proper double with false lips. She still has the best legs this side of a cruiser's paradise. Be careful, I tell her, this city is scurvy with the edges and open islets of glass. "Too bad, you won't fuck me," she says, doing a runway in front of me, the exaggerated lift of the hips. "You don't know what you're missing." I remind her that even though we grew up on the same downtown tree, we clung to proximal but different branches. We part ways at the subway, performing a rerun and a half of a French kiss that would make the French blush. The way they kiss in old war movies, ships into port and sailor caps in the wind, when someone returned with the most important parts intact. Back home, I collapse on the old futon, my mother out, making sales pitches door to door with women with engraved smiles and pureed voices. She covers most of Bergen County and is edging towards Passaic. I'm almost sober by the time I reach a dream, the part that must overlap with Miranda's. We're sitting at the living room table, munching on rye toast, no seeds, orange marmalade, or blueberry jam fresh as morning sex. Below us, a crusade of ants dance over our feet, scurries up our legs. And in this dream, where every creature is either storing energy or too stoked to consume more, I tell Miranda that I want to be in a twenty-four club with windows that never shut properly and exit signs that only glow in the phosphene of your acid morning brain.

Dirk Bogarde

Dirk Bogarde is your reflection in the kitchen sink.
Dirk Bogarde wears your father's trench coat.
Dirk Bogarde looks smashing.
Dirk Bogarde looks smashed.
Dirk Bogarde blushes on David Frost.
Dirk Bogarde gives the finger to Cannes.
Dirk Bogarde wants to.
Dirk Bogarde flinches in close-ups.
Dirk Bogarde entices women with suicidal eyes.
Dirk Bogarde makes small talk with Monica Vitti.
Dirk Bogarde loves good-bye darlings.
Dirk Bogarde uses razor blades for bookmarks.
Dirk Bogarde doesn't get off.
Dirk Bogarde is a face in the crowd.
Dirk Bogarde fakes brain injury after the accident.
Dirk Bogarde says "My injuries are internal."
Dirk Bogarde packs a Luger on the tram.
Dirk Bogarde believes Nazis hide in London.
Dirk Bogarde shoots Hitler on The Late Show.
Dirk Bogarde stalks a pawnbroker.
Dirk Bogarde sodomizes shadows.
Dirk Bogarde hides a Pollyanna.
Dirk Bogarde bleeds over tea and crumpets.
Dirk Bogarde has tiny scars on his left iris.
Dirk Bogarde reads your mail.
Dirk Bogarde licks before English gentlemen.
Dirk Bogarde discovers lipstick on their underwear.
Dirk Bogarde tortures a cripple named Josephine Losey.
Dirk Bogarde shakes down a Chinese junkie.
Dirk Bogarde slaps Belmondo's whore.
Dirk Bogarde taunts a sex-slave with wire-hanger lips.

Dirk Bogarde keeps a gypsy in a jar.
Dirk Bogarde drinks desperation on tap.
Dirk Bogarde hears snakes under Albert Hall.
Dirk Bogarde does not sign autographs.
Dirk Bogarde has a hand up your sister's panties.
Dirk Bogarde winks like a snake in the snatch.
Dirk Bogarde donates shoes to the slippery.
Dirk Bogarde slips counterfeit at the bank.
Dirk Bogarde enacts your father's death in the doorway.
Dirk Bogarde walks naked on glass.
Dirk Bogarde has a secret.
Dirk Bogarde was never Dirk Bogarde.
Dirk Bogarde's clones die sequentially in the rain.

A Forecast for More Snow

A canvas of overcast sky
the incessant snow
a gig due at CBGBs
and my bass player just quit.
In this room of drip drip drought
a half-finished pint of Jim Beam
your jeans lying pell-mell on the floor
my rug-burned wasted love.
I'm worried sick about you
scoring tricks with married men
in hybrid or stalled cars
a crescent-moon smile
upon your return,
"enough for next month's rent,"
you'll say, wrestling your arms from
a coat of tan leather, trim of white fur.
Tomorrow, you say, say, let's build a snowman
in Central Park, Christ, remember how?
But for now we'll content ourselves
to cuddle under a thick quilt
of dollar store wool
transferring the warmth of a hay meadow
to a collapsible steeple of flesh.

Inspiration

Night is black cat. Rain splattersplash.
Thoughts purr.
Dart from the rain. WindowModel'sMockSmirk.
Sidewalks bleed.
Neon lights flash. Solicit my Solace. This bar.
Chance it.
Inside, a DrowsyDiva next to me. Say, baby.
Say, say baby.
Switch and turn off. This dive a thinkdown
tune-up for thoughts.
Barmaid. Sir? "ShottaSchnawpps." DizzyDiva snorts/snickers
Pontificates.
"Honey, honey, my man called me a bitch.
Think I care?"
Customers crunching in. Rain slowstoppering. Tomorrow. the sun,
a sovereign. Bitch?
She fabricates fulsomefaux smile. Miss decked-outDiva yawns...
passes out.

The Death of John Lennon

1.

On a day of dizzying sunbeams,
My feet light as a thin Napa wine,
A day so quiet, one could hear
The skin peel off yellow grapes,
I stood at the edge of the pool,
Pulled in my elbows, ready to dive in.

There, at the bottom of the pool,
John Lennon's body, floating,
The cheeks bloated, the lips open,
Ripples murky, shimmering.
I thought of kites lining the sky
Watching them through clouds,
Drifting, free from strings
That anchored them to tiny hands
Tight as knots.
He was smiling. I could not be sure.

I turned to my new wife, Yoko,
Playing cello on the patio,
Said, "Do you know John Lennon
Is at the bottom of our pool?"
Her lips pinched as if this
A mere inconvenience,
Asked to pass a salt shaker
At the table, or yell at a
Child rummaging the attic.

"He's not dead, " she said,
"he's merely free from the burden
Of pretending to be a dead fish."
She resumed playing the cello.

For days, I walked, walked nowhere,
Lifted on the notes, the vibrato of that cello,
Walked through deserted streets and deserts,
Not afraid of stray bullets, rabid dogs,
The iron fists of irate strangers.

Under the sole company of the sun,
I began to disrobe,
Dropped this pretense of being something
For somebody else.
Or of having somewhere to go,
Anywhere to go
When the whole world is a globe,
A grid of intersecting endings, beginnings.
And then, my flesh,
The sun-baked skin,
This thick barrier of coat,
This shroud of costly desires,
I would soon step out of that too.

2.

The day after Lennon's death,
People huddled in Central Park,
Drew Lennon's face on balloons,
Released them, watched them float
Over the trees and baseball fields,
Over the high-rises and swank hotels,
While the crowd chanted the words
To Imagine. I could imagine.
For a moment, everyone became John,
The streetwalkers, the clerks,
The roller skaters, the carpenters.
When the song was over,
A hush fell over the park.

I had known Lennon all my life. In a sense.
Listened to him, my ear pressed against
A pocket transistor when I should have
Been multiplying by nines, adding fractions.
Or later, hummed along to his words

In the front seat of my dad's T-Bird,
My hand snaking along the nape
Of a girl whose face I can no longer see.

I left, nestled myself next to strangers
On a crowded subway, too immersed
In stock quotes and Iran's newest hostages.
My stop, the doors whooshed and screeched,
I climbed to the top of the stairwell,
Spotted a woman slouched,
Crying in a corner. Normally,
I'm not so disposed to approach strangers
who sell their small tragedies for hours,
As if their losses should be celebrity news,
And no one has anything better to do
Than to sink time in a staggered line before a kiosk.

What's the matter, I asked. Sometimes,
A stranger can help you more than you think.
Her lips pressed. She turned away to the light.
I reached for a carrot from my briefcase.
Here, I said, eat a carrot. They're good for you.
I always bring a carrot to work but never eat them.
But they contain essential vitamins.
You really don't want to live without carrots.
You'd go blind. Or worse, you'd stumble at night.
Think of a world without carrots. And rabbits.
My God, what would the rabbits do? Or horses?
No, she said, she doesn't care for carrots,
The way your teeth crunch into them, the scrunch,
You can never eat them in a room of strangers.
Her lips trembled, she nodded her head at the carrot.
Said she just lost her job. Now, the rent.
Now, the kids. Now, nothing. And, God, her husband.
Why, the only thing she could afford now is carrots.
I smoothed her shoulder with slow circular strokes.
There are other jobs, I said, the city is full of them.
It's not something that's really taken away forever.
But, I said, this, here, there, what I once had, others too,
I'll never get it back. Do you know, I said.
What, she said, you mean the carrot?

No. No, not the carrot. You don't get it do you, I said,
What's all around us, colors fading, the echo of
Subways through tunnels, the plaster across people's faces,
Not even a sheen across tiles, nothing reflects back;
Nothing. it's everywhere. Don't you see it?
What is? she said, what? If not about carrots. Tell me.
Please. . . Please. Please. Please. Please. Please.

Do you know John Lennon is dead?

3.

Tonight, I walk the streets, me, a private world
Among city blocks of such, as if our heads
Were the kind of boxes children sometimes
Cover their faces with, to block out the light, or
To sustain their new identities in a game of space aliens.
Tonight, the bars, their jukeboxes, play every song
Ever recorded by Lennon, his son, Julian,
The duos with Yoko.
I remember how the crowd used to toss tomatoes
Or how they posed nude to protest war, war of any kind.
And I wonder how it is that someone, so far,
Far as dust or stars,
Now, long ago, always,
Never to revisit this planet
of untimely coincidences and new fads,
Has guided me for so long
On this journey to now,
Which is another name for never.

4.

If I could take two steps back for each day of the week,
I'd wind up swinging the door out of Tower Records,
Holding a plastic bag of new cassettes,
And then, stepping into the street,
the gun raising in slow motion, incremental steps,
I'd throw my body into the bullet's path,
An imploding burn, something final, more treacherous
Then dying in a back draft,
My body crumbling to the curb,

And John, stunned, yelling for an ambulance,
Yoko pressing her hand against the hole
Widening in the pit of my stomach.
This blood gushing, my silent, liquid lifeline,
Turning to blue, turning to sky.
But too late, too late,
And I would never live to enjoy my celebrity,
this single act of heroism,
But at least, I'd figure, I've helped John
To make a hundred years
And at least ten more albums.
Or twenty.

5.

The last time I interviewed John,
He sat lotus-styled in a black love seat,
Yoko, somewhere in the palatial house,
Ordering the servants to fix something Hungarian.
John lifted a glass of Burgundy wine to his lips,
The aroma wafting towards me, African Violets in a heat.
He told me his theory of evolution while
My pencil scrawled to the end of the pad.
“It's not like all the rubbish, y'know, they taught
you in school. I mean, that God created ev'ry bloke
And bee to continue the process. No, not like that.
It started with rocks, then flowers, lilies, huckleberries,
Onto birds, finches, Marions, then us. Get me drift?
And someday, we give way to another being, stronger,
Stronger than us, but not perfect, not perfect yet,
But then, someday, yeah, perfect, and this being
Far more beautiful and intelligent than we could
Imagine, and then, all time 'ill stop. Just like that.
He dropped his glass of wine on the hard floor.
I watched it smash and splatter.
He rose, shook my hand, said, “Sorry, Gov.,
Gotta run now, we're 'avin' guests, ya know,
The interview's over.” He breezed out of the room.

I studied the broken glass, the red streams of dark wine,
The pieces reflecting rainbow prisms of light.
Perhaps, Yoko would snap a picture of it for an art show.
I wondered: could this be how the world began?
How it would begin again?

6.

Slowly, they took John down from the cross.
Yoko Ono showed us the veil imprinted with John's blood
And sweat. Elvis showed up with the Colonel,
he lay a heavy Fender at the foot of the cross,
Said, "My brother, may we meet again in rock n' roll heaven.
The Liverpool Apostles: Paul, George, and Ringo,
Crossed themselves, vowed never to sign another record contract.
They cursed the Pharisees, the producers, the media,
The imitators, The A.M. stations, the censors, Cousin Brucie.
Yoko picked up a stone, inspected each and every
One of our faces. "Who sold him out?" she said.
"Who! It was all of us. Each and every one of us."
An old woman, perhaps from Syria, perhaps once,
a hip Hittentite, hobbled over with a cane,
said her bed would be forever made of bricks.
Imagine sleeping on nails, or hot cinders, she said.
I carried John in my arms, his body, slumped, growing lighter,
The blood draining out. Over there, said Yoko, heading the procession.
She pointed. "We will not bury him. Lay him there."
I lowered John on a hilltop overlooking the Sea of Galilee.
We bowed our heads and sang the words to Dear Prudence.
A young woman walked up to us, said she would never again
Sleep with another man for money, food, this false tranquility of flesh.
The crowd dispersed, a few argued over who should get his platinum records.
"My husband," said Yoko, "his voice of wind and broken pearls,
May you rest in peace. The world will never understand sacrifice.
Here. Lay him here. Where his flesh and bones will turn to yeast,
the bark of trees, the wings of a blackbird, a filament of sky.
In this way, John will become everything.
And everything is everything.
There will be no more wars of separation.
Everything is everything."
Then, we treaded slowly into the void of dusk.

7.

Today I sit on the back patio
immersed in a swatch of blood-orange sunset.
not even the buzz of my thoughts
could wake up the gladiolas, the insects.
Yesterday, my wife announced
that she was leaving,
without explanation or stretching the facts.
She left me with a jade of silence
& a whole cabinet of spice.
I should be thankful she didn't take
the old Beatles collection,
or the one with John and Yoko,
peaceful lovers under a tree,
the way we ourselves once designed
that summer of love.
We managed to survive a karma
of rainy days, a fondue of hopes
nettling the skin. We always wondered
just what happiness was.
& now with that buzz of thoughts
shifting to foreground, the drone of days
stretching out before me,
this empty goblet filled
with my distorted reflections,
I suppose Lennon and I
are alone together
again.

16 Traumas

Your new girlfriend
with the buttermilk smile
one lazy eye
was once somebody's overpriced vampire
with flawless teeth
succulent skin.
These days
so many obituaries
are in between the lives.

Her words
are bats at the window
or finely sharpened
a set of paring knives
that make you peel
in nonsense syllables.
By morning,
the obtuse angles
of blending shadows
are legible.

But because
you are nothing
but the memory of 16 traumas
under rabbit-soft sheets,
your father tearing
your paper moons
or your mother's eyes
as distant as candles
in someone else's window
that old neighborhood
of scar-thin silence—
you follow.

Bunny Slippers

I ditched my blind date
a girl named “Cinderella Spice”
from TurnaroundVirgins.com
for a trip to the bar
where this black dude
with green contact lenses
and combat jacket
was selling blue-ray porno flicks
at a discount.

At home, watching the chick
through the V-shaped space
between my cold feet. She refers
to one breast as “Moonwalk”
and the other as “Billy Jean”
and then looking directly at me
says how lonely she is
since her man left her
for some “ugly bitch”
who lives in bunny slippers.

The Green-Eyed Shwemyethna

Eyes that flash a beautiful anger,
two green moons,
an anger endless as dog day shadows.
I watch this moon-girl, bare bellied, waist wispy,
gyrate on the dance floor, as if she's possessed
by fever or the ghost of a scarred ancestor.
The DJ, too stoned to get off his ass,
can't stop playing *West End Girls*.

Moon-girl spins around & around
drunk on her outrageous momentum
as if she could make the world rotate
on its own fables.

Spin.

Spin along the edge of your own spoon.

She weaves her crazy limbs under the dash of lights
until they blur into four or eight arms
& her strange dance taunts me,
robs me of all false name pretense,
the body no longer a shock absorber
to sudden love.

Back at my apartment,
a grotto of night,
I embrace her quiver,
mimic her trilogy of sighs,
grip her arms white as heroin,
a shade of Alice, a shade of sugar.
Her love is hard & fast,
sand & death & moon-dust kisses
but she soon evaporates from the room,
past the wall of white sleep,
perhaps too, from the agenda
of stonewall rules & shallow breathers.

Tomorrow, the city will wake with the bustle,
the roar of downtown buses, the grumble

of impatient commuters & scam artists.
It will rain green, the weathermen predicted it,
everywhere it will rain green droplets,
& people will think green rain,
shake off green rain at bus stops,
this green rain, its tragic love affair with the earth.
& somewhere a water-sister cries over her brother-lover
addicted to solids & city street maps.
I know that story.

& the world will know green
but it will not remember
the green-eyed Shwemyethna
who died in my sugar-deprived sleep.

Dig That Girl!

Leave your dog and your dog-eared lovers at the door.
I smile at the bouncer, pay my ticket, and wink at a slasher chick.
She gets pumped on heavy metal gods and Kwaito.
Here, anything goes at Z-Katz, a throb and a thump
of strobe mirages. And Ricci's doing all flavors
of moon-walk, torso-twisting or hip-wriggling.
She spins past the motorcycle queens crammed
in SRO like mayonnaise jars on an overpriced shelf.
And those Soho art tarts, so high on their manicures
and mouth-washed speech, just drool, but pretend
they're so fucking indifferent. In this joint,
I'm a cross-town fly.

I wonder. How do I signal that I want her, body and soul,
or even just body, without turning myself into a stand-up
comedy routine? Okay. Just wait. Waiting to dance in
Ricci's shadow, anoint myself with her sweat. If I could shrink
to the size of that fly, I'd sit on her ass [in those skin-tight jeans]
that are two Siamese-joined heads, twitching. I'm twitching.

Can you drown in the fellatio of joy and despair?

The night sky and stars are tangled in pyramid schemes.

I know. I know. It's the liquor that's doin' the thinking.
But I think happiness dies as fast as a chemical reaction.
It adheres to quarks and particles, the shelf-life of eternity.
When the bartender yells out last call, I'll get the balls to ask
Ricci to crash at my loft off Ave. A. Maybe stretch out a love
that would otherwise last a whole five minutes.
In the sun-stricken morning, after a dream of her vanishing
through crepuscular cracks in walls, we'll sleep like two Ecstasy overdoses.
I think of people, like mummies, rising from their sleep and returning
to their cubicles in the Land of the Dead. I think of men, who can fold
and pack me in their briefcases, their eyes,
the heads of hard sunken nails. My Egyptian Mau at the window,
her belly humming that she hasn't been fed.

Last Night I Dreamt of Virginia Woolf Walking across the Thames

Your first and only lesbian lover is a chemistry student named Esther. You meet at a frat party where the cheese is free and the girls sputter their theories of love while pressing chilled wine glasses against their cheeks. At least one girl, named Penny, rumored to spread a mysterious social disease, gets up to puke. They find her body, years later, half-naked, in the backseat of the professor's station wagon. He teaches myths of the Mid-East. But tonight, you find yourself lying next to Esther over your mother's hand-knit blanket, laced with pictures of . . . little horses? Palominos? Your head buzzing from the wine, you freely admit you never did it with a woman before. "Isn't it strange," says Esther, "how my name almost rhymes with *aether*. You know, Aristotle's fifth element." Her voice is somehow desert-dry, falling in shafts, as if excavating old truths. Even when she comes up for air. From now on, whenever you make love to a boy, you feel heavy, about to gush white lies, cultivating the energy required to hold them. When Esther calls, you cry for no reason or for a whole chain-link of non-sequiters. The room spins whenever you are alone in the fundamental element called night.

I placed K-Y Jelly
in her forgotten country
she said it's been so long
the last time anyone traveled there
was when Marco Polo looked for spices.
She had a double chin
and a little girl's laugh
that me think of jumping jacks
and how I used to get
ripped off by rich kids.
We had sex on the shag carpet
until 4:30 a.m. and she talked
about an old lover,
sandy-haired and beefcake trim
perfect as an olive.
He left her to become a sponge diver
off the Greek Islands.
After him, she said, she fell overboard
and gouged on octopus and oyster
until she developed an allergy
to strangers at the ocean floor.

Pancakes

Later, we went to I-Hop
and I ordered whole wheat pancakes
with bacon and eggs sunny side.
I meticulously slid some butter
through each layer in the stack.
“Just coffee?” I asked.
She said even though she was hungry
she was sticking to a diet.
I felt a stream of syrup running down my shirt.
She stared at me, head in hand,
eyes as if underwater
or detachable clouds.
“Do you think,” she asked,
“that if I ate you whole,
would it be enough
to go underground
to make a baby and a brother
three months of bone and flour,
one good week of morning sickness.”

The Amazing Headless Chicken-Wire Girl

When sex was as easy
as the surplus of national poultry
you'd come over every Tuesday
visit me in my post-Sartre gloom
turn my soft-water room flat
into a coop of jokes
about being at the bottom
of the pecking order
& feathers that would always
make me sneeze
or curse Zola.
You'd even incubate a thought
in my head whenever i told you
that girls like you
waiting by rail tracks
for a cheap decapitation
are dime a dozen.
Nowadays, whenever i think about you
i find an egg on my tongue
& my days are runny
filled with guilt
but an abundance of rich egg yolk.
If i could find you,
i'd thank you,
the insemination
of your memory,
clean and bloodless,
has really cut down
on my grocery bills
& i don't even need
to get tested
for Salmonella.

The New Siberia Is the Old Siberia

If Hitler came down
with Swine Flu,
or Margaret Truman
discovered spiders
beyond the 38th parallel
of her sheets
I wouldn't take a Glock
aim for the hamstrings
of history professors
denying their personal gulags
the rotting teeth of their wives
from too many chocolate truffles
and the mistresses
bedding any stranger
claiming to be a Trotskyite
from the old block,
never missing a chance
to cause a revolution
on crutches
making a scene
in Finnish train stations
under closely watched clocks.

Last Call

In the street, the drunks mock Last Call,
then return to their lives of constant hangover
and mid-morning skeletons. I turn to my new
lover, a girl with perfect teeth and razors
in her eyes. She says she knows an after-hours
spot where we can grow numb and never sober.
Baby, I say I only got a bad heart and loose change,
just enough for one song about broken wings
and stretched-too-thin lies. It'll do she says.
She's a cheap date but a costly lay.
In the bed of night where there's a constant
turnover of housekeepers, she'll say she wants more
but I've already disappeared into the
Hoboken of middle-age stamina,
irregular bus schedules.
On my tomb it will read:
They only accept exact change.

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Books: *Hope Chest in the Attic, the Window, Close Cover Before Striking, (Woman.), Autumn Reason, Contents Under Pressure, the Average Guy's Guide (to Feminism), Changing Gears, the Key to Believing, Domestic Blisters, Etc., Oeuvre, Exaro Versus, L'arte, The Other Side, The Boss Lady's Editorials, The Boss Lady's Editorials (2005 Expanded Edition), Duality, Seeing Things Differently, Change/Rearrange, Death Comes in Threes, Moving Performances, Six Eleven, Life at Cafe Aloha, Creams, Rough Mixes, The Entropy Project, The Other Side (2006 Edition), Stop., Sing Your Life, The Beauty and the Destruction*, cc&d v167.5 (Writing to Honour & Cherish, editor edition), *Blister & Burn (the Kuypers edition), S&M*, cc&d v170.5 Distinguished Writings editor edition, *Living in Chaos, Silent Screams, Taking It All In, It All Comes Down, Rising to the Surface, Galapagos, Chapter 38 (v1, v2 & v3), Finally, Literature for the Snotty and Elite (v1, v2 & part 1), a Wake-Up Call From Tradition, (recovery), Dark Matter: the Mind of Janet Kuypers, Evolution, (tweet), Get Your Buzz On, Janet & Jean Together, po'em, Taking Poetry to the Streets, the Cana-Dixie Chi-town Union, the Written Word, Sulphur & Sawdust, Slate & Marrow, Blister & Burn, Rinse & Repeat, Survive & Thrive, (not so) Warm & Fuzzy, Torture & Triumph, Oh., the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Writing To Honour & Cherish, Distinguished Writings, Breaking Silences, Unlocking the Mysteries, the Book of Scars, We The Poets, Life on the Edge, Revealing all your Dirty Little Secrets, Decrepit Remains, Charred Remnants, Hope & Creation, Bending the Curve, Layers of Creation, Dark Matter, Survival of the Fittest, Crawling Through the Dirt, Laying the Groundwork, Weathered, echo, Ink in my Blood, (bound) (ccd poetry, cc&d prose, Down in the Dirt poetry and Down in the Dirt prose editions, available as both ISSN and ISBN versions),*

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