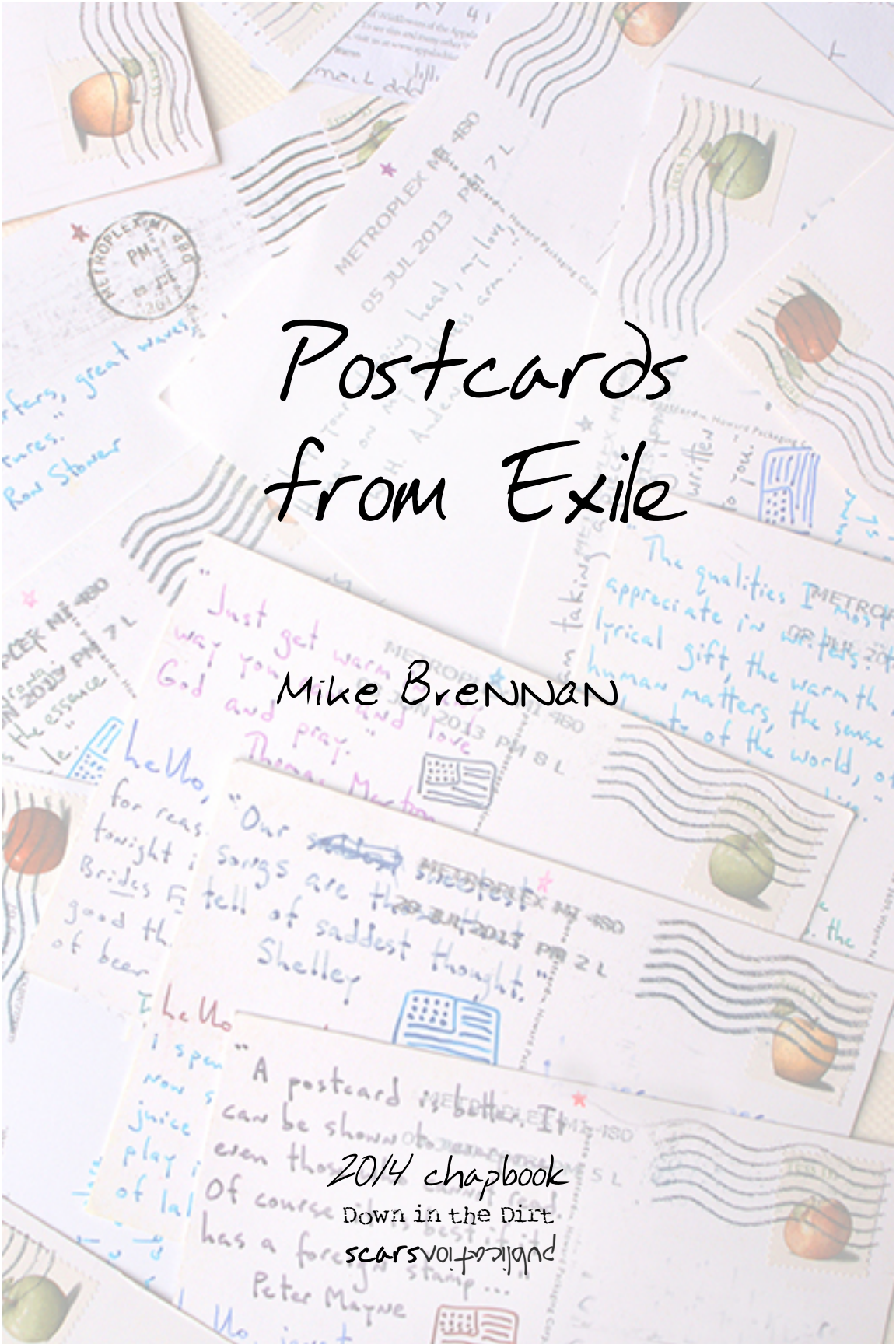


Postcards from Exile

Mike Brennan



Some of these poems previously appeared
with much gratitude in The Chiron Review,
CC&D, Down in the Dirt Magazine,
and The Eunoia Review.

A Meditation On Mayan Prophecies & The Sandy Hook Shooting Days Before Christmas While In a Veteran's Dry Out Clinic For The Second Time This Year

A Christmas of continuous crisis
Locked away & attempting to
Bandage all my appendages
With the powers of invisibility
I still miss you here in the ICU
Sweating Survival Statistics
In the wards & through the pores
Of a passed away VA
The patterns of my circulation are just
A washcloth of washed out water wishing
To become one with the atomic rain

But all that can be expected
Is a postmarked parcel of pharmaceutical pain
Addressed with scrawled answered prayers
To remain wrapped in a raincoat
To remain dry through the traumatizing trial
That is waking up to another grateful shot at today

So please just raise your hand
If you know where I'm calling from
& don't hesitate to share your checkered
History of abandoned attempts
At daily steps towards recovery
Because what went wrong last year
You'll pardon the pun & surely fix this
As long as our collective strength is
Enough to survive the apocalypse
& just know that you really don't
& your best thinking only bought you
This metal chair & a complimentary cup of coffee
That you're stirring while shaking
Because the neurotic neurons

Are still partially receiving
Fragments of what the friendly forces
Keeps firing at the enemy
& it's never quite quiet in the DMZ

Your mouth muscles are
Always slacked at half-mast
Trying to talk & spit up
Bites of bayonets
Names, ranks, & serial numbers
Involuntary movements to identify yourself
& state your business
& maybe just determine exactly
How many passwords can be committed
To the artificial asylum of memory

So you take three steps forward
When the front door opens
Palms paralyzed at the sides
Trying not to betray
Their white knuckled strain

But inside it's only about the souvenirs
Yesterday's campaign is today's exhibit
The smile behind the chemical straightjacket
The many ornaments that adorn
Such a utilitarian uniform
A keepsake case of embalmed ears
Birds & Bars Stripes & Chevrons
Tattooed odes to the orders of the fallen
Granite catacombs of all that was
Chosen to be forgotten
As our bones become bricks
In our confused cohort's shell-shocked walls

You are just a bearer of flailing emotions
Constantly trying to keep remembering
You are not your mind &
You can never be completely in control
Of both the logical & the sensible

Although it is true
You always attempt to avoid the predictable
When language is not always literal
But the implications are of great importance
The sounds of the blues & soul are never quite broken
& since you are stuck
You might as well just sit back down & shut up
& expose yourself to the devil
Since she's always ready to reciprocate
The love you gave to such obviously selfish loss & hate
Is just a wrecked wristwatch
Is another date in the courtroom courtesy of the cops
Is an illegible message in a bottle & an uncomfortable place to flop
Is a crash landing when broken wings can't find a proper position to stop
A darkened vulnerability in a fatal midnight feature film
A harassing laugh at the dunce cap in the back of the class
A heart shaped holiday card sticky-taped to Grandma's refrigerator
A booming new market for bullet-proof backpacks
The theoretical yet truthful depths of my anxiety attacks
My carefully monitored regimen of generic anti-psychotics
The fear of tomorrow's texts of technological distress
The spreading disease of illiteracy, illegitimacy &
Pawn shop storage sheds full of priceless antiques & redneck TVs
Doomsday cults & finger-pointing Pig-Latin translations of Christianity
The murderous motive operandi mounted in our mosques & malls
Marred in the many morgues of modernity
All the undecided sides of the right to bear arms
Of all that belongs to freedom & liberty & the happiness loaded in an AR15
& the newest medication supporting the mental health community

& hopefully a day will come when the home front
Returns for the decorated hobos
Locked in their habitual nightmare of flashbacks
Agent Orange side-effects
Gulf War Syndrome & all the surprises
Starting to show straight through
The price tag of Enduring Freedom

Elegy for Jason Scott McClay 1973-2013

So many years
Overseas
To receive a homecoming
Of a blue collar and a benefit check
& an occupation you never wanted to occupy;
Or at least, not the night before last
When the Eagles were flying.
Still,
Then and there seems like a dissolution of right now
With our
Our complaints of the day &
Our bunks always disturbed
By the shit-bird
Squeezed between us
Like the ten year age gap that
Allowed me to call you Grandpa,
Although we were the same rank &
When you bitched about how I snored
Or my headphone hip hop was too loud
After an 18 hour haze of playing War
Knowing that we would do the same
Tomorrow, just like the days before;
Until we could at least put our boots
Back down,
On solid ground,
Maybe in Sydney, Thailand, or Singapore,
& for years afterwards
I always heard
That you were still trapped IN,
Receiving surgeries,
& waiting for that day to get back
To earning an average American paycheck
Which you did with your natural
Smile and an aching spine, until I saw the news that
You were gone, with a gunshot over nothing.

Not a dollar, nor a cent,
Not a pill from another Philly pharmacy robbery,
Just another death sentence,
My dear friend,
You'll never get to see,
& never deserved to get.

I Now Can Change Every You To I & I To You

I now can change every you to I & I to you
& what's eating me is stuck on the end of your fork
& I won't let the past drop onto my plate
Even if four of my five fingers
Point back at who is truly to blame
& while I dribble & chew
I won't ask for forgiveness for what
I can't correctly direct but I'll take
A photograph of the reasons why I
Should wear a bib while
Passing judgments & chewing
Myself out for not changing into
The magnificent costume you laid out on the bed
Where I couldn't get it up & often refused sex &
Ignorantly took all your impressionist prints
Off the walls I rented to support us
When all we had was
A sleeping bag, two cats & food stamps
& an extended adopted family because your
Biological clan was a whisper of
Untimely death & religious tongue twisters
& it was a Revelation when
I learned you laid Genesis
& I wonder if it was before or after
The electricity was turned off that I came to believe
I did everything I could to hang on to our dreams
But I just anesthetized myself straight up with tonic & torment
& even though you walked away
Right when I thought I could find a path back
To normality- It just wouldn't be-

& while you worked retail
& stole & sold clothes to travel across Europe
I was comatose in a snow bank
With a specter of a kiss & a wrecked watch slapped across my wrist
While you found another man to put a
A shinier ring on your finger
But I knew that you would always remember
How I solely provided appalling nights of gin & terror
& all the pathetic alibis for my misanthropic mind
& now all I can do is write down
My countless mistakes I ultimately know
My pencils can never erase.

STDs

The bells chiming
In my brain are haunting
Like Poe's but
A tad more euphoric
It seems a split-second ago
Before another BIC lighter flick
Things were quite different
& today I'm itching to become
Another number adding up to a statistic
Another walking failed New Year's resolution
Plotting my own cinematic version
Asides from simply reaching for
The alcohol soluble solution
While trying to find poetry
In this city's refuse & pollution
Since there is only a single blocked off exit
Out of this theater on fire
& I struggle to envision
The human condition as
More meaningful than modest suffering
My welfare as something
More than some social security
Maybe an atheistic monastery
Supported by a distant relative trust
Without an infinite debt of underlining disorders
Of both mine & mind

Everything bound between
A brittle bibliographies' yellow spine
Stripped & whipped
By the mistress of my memoirs
Of a credit history that will curse me
All the way into my oncoming lives
Until I find a way to condense
My stay in this house of corrections
& imagine my willpower wiping off the chalk
Scrawled across this tenured blackboard
Cleaning my slate & spinning the wheels
Hoping to catch a fortune like a cold
While trying to avoid
Other more debilitating
Socially Transmitted Diseases.

A Honeymoon's Hollywood Ending

His wife had never been to Los Angeles
She wanted to see the stars scattered along the sidewalks
& the looming sign so symbolic of the movies
& the golden gods and goddesses
Who stage our lives upon the silver-screen.

They spent some time soaking up sun-rays spread out
side by side along the beach
& walked down the boardwalks
hand in hand lips occasionally seeking lips
& walked back to their rental car
With his hands gently massaging her pregnant stomach & hips.

"I love you" she said.
"I love you more," he replied,
Searching his pants pockets for their rental car keys.

He looked up to see-
A brown gloved hand holding
A pistol to the back of her strawberry blonde head.

"Get the fuck inside. We are going for a ride.
& don't say a word or you'll both fucking die."

He was horrified but quickly complied
To the masked man's demand
As she softly cried
With all the faith that they were both too young to die

They drove in distilled silence
With the stranger in the back
Until they reached a deserted desert plot
Where the man told him to park & slowly step out

“Empty your pockets and give me your purse
I'm taking your car and you'll leave in a hearse”

A hole had been dug into the gravely sand
& as they were ordered to kneel
He fondled the ring he had just days earlier
Placed on her finger &
The last thing he heard was the man's pull the trigger.

Reflections

A cracked mirror stared ahead
with a stoic reflection
of selfish intention
seven years of misfortune
& the layered failures
of the point where my
future laid waste to my past

It is everything to comfort
a shivering November
weak from weeks
of scarlet pneumonia
& such diseases devised
if only so that I
can duck a decoy's duties
& derive a most potent poison
from the very essence of my health

My mind drinks down a shipwreck
of fog, foam, & flame
& flees the futile scene
with the courageous cowardice
of an expert in indulgences

The sun's tears slide
down my deserted dome
until my nostrils inflame
& are scorched with sand
My eyes recede &
cower away from the sea
I somersaults & shifts
into the shape of me
a stranger in the strangest of lands
where the legless dance the lead
& the sightless savor
a single second to see
something beyond
a visionary clapping of hands
somewhere beyond the barriers
that barely withstand
all the forces breaking
at the bones of man.

3 Cheers For LA LA Land

1.

Hurray for La La Land
The grand defacement
Of an ageless face
The oppression of jigsaw &
Your jagged pieces salty tyranny
Of constantly fitting properly into the standard
Scheme of this palm tree eternity.

2.

Hurree for the sunlight-
The cameraman aims stage right for
The high-noon of gunfights
While tires squeal off when
Loves shot up
For
Liquid jewelry &
The savagery of sand
Cut
With pyrite.

3.

Hurrah for Saturday night
The stars of sunset bright-
Bearing fleshy lust
Of an obligated trust
To the actress
Hanging on the corner
High in the head as
The Hollywood sign
Or
A little girl in Illinois
Who dropped the strings
To her kite.

Check Mate Baby

The wretched
Calmness
Sought out
In another facility &
A variety of unusual
Untested substances
Blasts open the flood gates
Until both our lives are
Not quite unlike
Specimen slides
Yet any penance in my
Reoccurring & incurable illness
Has her always loving
My lies &
Her own levitating
Sermons
Concerning my
Morals & misconducts
Followed by another armistice
To bind us
Tonight with the usual
Sensual monopoly
Because with you
Intercourse always resembles
A car crash &
Hang-over's become advertisements
For rages and rhymes
Lyrics and broken records
Impassioned but incoherent
Anecdotes & personal narratives
Dedicated to
Whoever assigns
This world it's
Waning & weakening
Authorial names.

Her Ghost Still Sleeps Besides Me

Her ghost still sleeps beside me
Although our connection was canceled
By the brutal winds waving goodbye
Between us

The old aura flickers
Fleeting as a dying lamp
Beckoning
Our forgotten shadow figures
With your fragrant fatale list
A lingering mist
An incense of strange transits
As intoxicating as the Far East's opiates

Her phantom profile is as inviting
As a tavern necked
Upon the solemn docks of sudden departure
A quick inhalation of salt
Off this crumbling empire
& the stars all burst
At alarmed attention
To the crimson void invested
Upon this Atlantis of a landscape

Where we found reason
Reaching for something long lost
Within the paradoxical ruin
Of both virtue and sin
& all the horrors that
Tomorrow promises to bring.

On Achilles Heel

Tyranny appears to be
the turn-on driving
these leeches bleeding
vitalities off corpses
still left standing
posed in position
of gracious victim
for predators of a nature
not worth mentioning
because rarely does felony
actually reveal reasoning
& treason has simply
faded out of season

& when the deformed
demand hallowed reprisal
for justice from the
spiritually suicidal
the bankrupt brokers
pocket all the prayers
of change for the rainy daze
of the weak

Only to wake nearly extinct
like legions of lemmings
leaping over the edge
into a nothingness that spreads
from the heels of Achilles
to the bullet in the head.

Heroin

Bitter &
Dissolved
In the mixture

Of regard & wit

Pliant in Time & On

Encircled with gulls &
Sown with overlooked cash

Coming Tumbling

Into
The flawless fragrance of poppies.

Detox Dramas

All the key players act out my
methods of madness
across the drunken green screen
of my severely dazed delight
with the rupturing twilight
of my yawning youth's last days
tripped to bow before a
demon's phrase of praise

I knelt mourning sanctified beheadings
numb with victory for the dumb
piggish & philosophic
pondering alien degrees
& the grandest in machines
& opportunistic symphonies

I suckled sour grapes
on the run, on the beat, on the street
leaving the lot vacant
for lusty liaisons with
goddesses of ill-repute

Our tongues wagged
to tie a bind
to dispute, to pierce, to behold

The majestic glory of the gutter
where the young muster
to become
pure-bred monsters
faces burned & turned
all savage & old
tarred & feathered
& weathered by the cold.

Dollars & Dreams

I've surrendered although I've
been framed by both the light and dark painted
illuminations
that broke through my flesh
like the tip of Seattle's space needle

The sun setting resembles an alien peeking through the blinds
& the petals of roses have always reminded me
Of the lips surrounding your vagina

But that's an entirely different matter &
My own unedited doctrine miraculously issues
Deeper diatribes than I tell you
For
I am
As endangered
As an albino buffalo

But my causes are imprisoned by their inconsistent effects &
The specter of our broken engagement
Feeds my hands hospital food with fork toothed spoons

I have placed myself on trial
Again & Again
To see how our drugs & insults blended
Into this sorcery always amounting to zero

& the empty houses
Dressed for the Holidays
Still somehow seem to
Emit no light

& the television is the only thing that they will never turn off
& there is nothing left to do but swallow another pungent pill
& hope to sleep without dreams
Because life is always easier when you have
Neither a dollar or a dream.

Chemo

I saw the black cat cross my path- negative constellations whispering their mismatched misfortunes through a smoggy tarp concealing midnight like a mad woman's curses replicating the sky's bruised and ashen skin.

I hit and ran my heart-beat with careful attacks of poisoned promise, succumbing to all sickness with the sadistic intentions of a staged suicide & still begged, pleaded, for the hammer not to fall while the cold steel gleamed between my latest pair of stolen eyes.

All my scars are self-inflicted and this liver hiccups the bitterest dregs.

My mind is just a convict of sworn innocence, fogged up with the fanaticism of a fascist, the creaky skeleton was long ago eaten alive by some internal screams sounded by the ghosts that haunt the marrow of the morrow- where I continue to pace, a rocking chair of electro-shocks, back and forth, hither and thither, engraved in this cave carved somewhere deep in my cantankerous brain.

Salivating like Pavlov's dog & wandering under a silver moon,
I come to you as your legs spread like masts, &
as your eyes melt into moonlight and wine, &
as your tales of woe are saturated by the sheer forces of my own
I come all the way- in two - until I become a cancer
forever - feasting upon you.

I Stare Out At The Ruins

I stare out at the ruins of a past love & question attachment. Surveying skeletal trees vomit cattle so they can protect their secret obsessions. My naked skin is an evil empire. A prisoner of cupid. Arrowheads are motherfuckers in stolen skins. A roaring hernia of immaculate distance. The voice of another fatal dove takes aim. I swallow words & die a lion without a share. A feverish bog of bull-shit. A crystal clear apocalypse rising. A stunted growth inside a hurricane of kicking poppies.

Dinner Reservations

Are you aware you are now
Only a dull object to divert my anger?
A fluent vessel for all my miniature hatreds
Because obviously
There must be some love left
Maybe more, maybe less
To fill this vacuous pyre
Posing as a person
Who shuffles sore feet
To someday straighten up
To stretch both crooked legs
Like a formal dining table
To comfortably seat our guests
As they wait to be served
The hors d'oeuvres
Of all of my
Upturned & burnt
Obsession.

To Say

To say that I miss you now
is to call me sadistic
with the sirens dulled
I can think and breathe
a little bit more
than just Marlboros- your car foggy ambulances
& the sudden screams
of abortions returned to sender

The
wombs of
night
promised & filled
with a morning HALLELUJAH
the weak is over!!!
strength instantly regained with
instant coffee
&
how much did that all cost me?

So just buy me another, darling, baby love,
because Jazz never dies
but Rock sure ages

& I react by not acting

& our everything is
just
an empty café that soon will be closing

& this engine keeps staling

whenever I reach what might be a
vantage point
to running this endless
human race
towards no finish line in particular

except for some kind of inconvenient end.

The 13th Step

My higher power
is my shoes.
They're the only thing on Earth
I know for sure
has a soul.

In From The Outside

Fairly certain now,
That these times keep
Falling forward
Before Blackening Backwards
Into certain moments,
Indisputable fortunes, to be
Lost somewhere within these
Smoggy odes to air

So come substantially further
Into the water, following the waves
Under the upwards, into October
Of the never-ending blaze of gold
I've casually sold
To sow all I've stole
From other eclectic thieves
Who tried taking away
The ashes of Autumn
From you & me

& now that all our electric escapades
Have gone entirely wrong
Like blood red meat
Softened by tenderly sung songs
Both defaced & kissed
Faired as all's well
But greeted with a good bye
We evacuated this place
By losing both eyes
Selling both to be gone
Further southwards
With immaculate alibis
Of other times I've given
To the nothings upon
Which we have both been stripped
& clothed
To decide whether or not
We wish to write another scream or
Several newer reasons
To be cleansed
Or denied.

Atonement to Please Her Amore

Always fresh the flowers
Buried alive in the
Grecian urns of separation
Our collected coins now
Spent on the
Feeble fretfulness
Of an older-time's music
& the hatefully uncouth cries'
Necessarily naked wounds
I bear so guiltily to
Your pitiless examinations
& the mortifying unearthing
Of such nonsensical feelings
As these
Boulders of criticism
I must now ever shoulder
Along with your weighty dreams
& the novelties of such crystal clear shields
I summoned to protect
My wretched valentine heart
From the perfected femme-fatale beauty
That sometimes manages to stretch
Open your baby girl giggles
Imprisoned inside what you've prepared
As a playpen
For your younger & happier
Gospel of souls

These Walls

These walls will leave me tomorrow
but in their place
more will be built

Four corners worth of dreams
heart-aches, head-aches, hangovers
& every single hang-up
. . . gone . . .

But their legacy will continue
& burst through the ceiling that one tends to place
over all of
our values, faiths, and properties
despite all the prophecies
that we are at our best when
reduced to nothing

We ask. . .

What is nothing when it is gone?

Your heart-beat?
Your will?

If only to pen a glorious elegy
for the solitary slips of memory
that keep us level with those who are newly born

& of course, those who discover
that we really are
only just skipping stones
swallowed somewhere
along the shallow pond
surrendering to that age-old process
that we all. . . call. . . dying.

In? Or! Without?

In families
Soft murmurs
Are summoned to surface
With a hello
The casually disguised but formal luncheon
& yet another good luck and goodbye

In towns
Pain is suppressed
By a simply laid plan & the gossiping palms
Pointing their fingers
At another's halo
Or towards the telephone
Between Sunday mornings

In jails
Magic is forged
Into brick walls
With stealthy synthetic picks
Conversions tattooed
Quite deeply under the skin

In cities
Gatherings are discarded
For protective figures
Of semi-armored doubt

Every body is segregated-
Every body separates into another ghetto
Or a muted community caged behind a gate

In countries
True loves find themselves smiling
Within ruins, picnicking above dirt mixed with slaves' bone
Touring castles of torture & exile & abandoned hells on earth
But the picture is worth more than the history &
A honeymoon always makes for a grand story

In life
Eternity escapes her cardiac arrest
But brooding about the falling ax
She packs her bags & rolls right
Off into the teary climax
Of yet another one of the Universe's
Unproduced & Unpublished plays.

Coming of Age

This whole floor smells like shit
Not of babies
But excrement distinctly elderly
I'm barely pushing 30
& I hate thinking
Won't you just please
Die off already
2 heart attacks & 2 strokes
The hunchback
Twisted over
In line in front
Of me chokes
While begging for 10 more pills
& I have died a couple of times
From a whole lot less
Conducting intravenous experiments
& right now I despise
Wasting my transient time
& although I most certainly
Embrace humanity & everyday empathy
I know the hospital staff is getting paid
A dollar amount for this hour
I will never be refunded back
& even though I may be terribly self-indulgent
I really never thought I would live this long
Measuring a day at a time
In coffee grounds & coffin nails
& it's no wonder why
The samurais supported suicide
& I just wish our wrinkled warriors
Would also take pride
In the manner in which they die
So I'll just let the whole world know
If I become a disease wracked burden
& if I am all brittle back & wishbone broken
But for whatever reason possibly appear
Witty, worldly and wise-
I still won't want to live this life.

The Body, an Ailing Universe

The horizon appears malnourished
washed-up
muted & tangled
in shear jet-black promise

Segregating the daze that surrounds my day

until all possibility is revealed with the
eventual rise of the evening

Like a porcelain doll shattered in a second
my psyche becomes psychedelic
&
splashes my excesses like blood
all along a murder victim's wall

I am sorry I killed you with my travels and separations

Your forehead is always the perfect place where my lips land when I dream

So where are the stars?

The fireworks? The encore? The fantastic farewell?

O' yes,
They all drowned

In my liver's love of whiskey & wanton nights.
In the sea's hunger for sailors & landscapes still undiscovered yet.
In my eyes' silkscreen of immorality & forgetful sex.

I still remember. . .

I somehow
Can't
Stop remembering.

Angel's Bowling

How many infinite analogies become new religions?
All based on the fear and taste of any given community
The reasons are as distorted as talking tongues
& I'll eat from the apple tree
While venomous snakes bite confirmed fingers
As the provincials shout telepathically for obscured prophecies
& the fear of not waking upon sleeping
Since we all seem as terrified as everyone has always been
While we huddle fiercely against the rubble of America's dream
Falling towards our weakness for oil & gold
While wrapped in a tapestry
Of red, dead,
& all the light-bulbs burnt-out in protest
Against our own debts,
Our own wars,
Which we stopped winning
To underdog teams
& yet we wonder as we shudder
At the sounds of clapping thunder
Not too far off
In the distance
Still just pretending
It's only just
Angels bowling.

You Tell Me

You tell me you will become the history of art. You grab hold of a murky palate. I cut you down & sing. . . “it is inside the gate I swear to the snake and I ache like a rake.” You won’t record my tunes so I am sad and I tell you I won’t sleep with death any more than you will. We learn that eternity is only a million Buddha all screaming for their meals at the same time. But we keep mum. We get paid royalties by the hour if we do so, and we suck tear-gas instead of vitamins. Burn tall buildings for sport. Yet only until the acid rain washes our murky-eyed childhood away.

Control

I killed deer in my youth
that returned as my women

I drank storms that casually transformed
into fire & turpentine
which drained & distilled straight into my
mouth's mimed
muzzle of moonshine

& every year somehow sucks the life right out of me
just like sperm into the darkness invested upon a nameless whore

Three distinct worlds swarm upon my fingertips like wasps
returning as creational headaches
& inherited shakes of unpredicted earthquakes
shocked all along with my cut breaks
because I lay awake
knowing how much I detest these daydreams

The world's greed is strictly immaculate
while mine is as vulnerable & vigilant as a blind date

But a serendipitous smile reminds us all who is in control

Yet who really owns the night?
& who really maintains the untamed stallion's rains?

Grey clouds follow my footsteps like a shadow of sleet
along a water colored & defeated beach
that is my life separated into sudden episodes
& momentary stops
along the tracks to ponder, pause &
witness my spirit
being casually
wrecked upon the rails.

Alarm Clock 4:48

The paints of the poppy sculpt my health while
the blood of fine wines ruin my rhetoric
causing both hands to tremble as I type
the final lines insisting
I have maintained a satisfyingly chaotic life

A crusade for reality in a carnival of gleeful sin
and some different way in leaving the
right expression, intact, &
perfectly embalmed within

The shark tank of my morning mind
frenzied upon the discomfort
of my appetite of memory
churning itself around the remains
of my rage
repeating itself
ad nauseam.

The Long Walk Home

The homes along these half-lit streets
Frame the shade of my
Miserly mug &
The half-mile left of crackling snow to reach
The vodka I tote to toast this last
Romance totaled by the various tragedies
Of her youth & possibly whatever
Might have gone wrong with mine

But just remembering the ecstasy between
Our souls intertwined in the morning
Revealing the quicker slide
Of the slippery sidewalks &
The unceasing hustles & hopes
Of us against the world where
We could come but could never conquer

So we just escaped it all with a picnic with a blue nun
In the skin cancer ravaged regions beneath the sun
Where all poetries were just beached whales &
Verses mere decorations hiding the holes in our walls
Of all the wasted weeks &
All the battles & paintings
We've lost & stolen & won

But with one quick waft of a cannibal's cloak
My hide's become too tattered & weak
For even my own jagged jaws to eat
& this lake besides me asks
If I remember how to swim
It's incomparable to the canals of Venice
I dreamed we'd someday together see-
Far past the open barges of bitter age-
The theaters of immortal love affairs
Tear down the remains of our finalities' shade
Of a secure life settled along
The world's wide & wild rolling hillside
Of unraveled truths &
Wooded pocketknife marked paths
As still as the planets standing
Behind this noble savages'
Last hiccups & laughs.

Strings Attached

Tones of brass, strings, and dusted bones beckon the stranger melodious fruit of maddened passion. The fame of cannons scarcely fulfill this cryptic unidentifiable crowd of near-starved marionette's of magic, incense, and invisible damage. Pressures to pull out the eyes' and shoulders' relentless controller's scalded hands of tangled twine for the armless but eternally youthful portraits, providing no predictions for infractions sealed safely within its shortened breathe premises. An above ground zero sight sore for a new bohemia laying open its swollen head to be ceremoniously smashed open by the soundless riptides of mineral distilled gutter waterfalls. How all else is left standing crooked, as an explanation to the united front of worthless currencies & how nothing is more shocking then the cherished specialties of underground chemistry & while always knowing, everything has long been burned away into the flickering inferno of an American's delusional dystopian pre-dreamt death sequence.

Marilyn's Morning Facade

Is there a new enemy for the background's conscience? Memories step-tapping lightly through a quickly conjured existence, as only the lonely swell their veins openly & hang-glide through makeshift nooses, before maybe dreaming of deserts and car-wrecks, polished fingernails that I would gladly file, while tending to what is a little death behind the eyes, & the rouge fades as a fallen curtain, emerald eyelashes, wisps of lavender, and dreams of mercury and chloral hydrate perfect the dyeing of the hair and the spirit into a louder hue to match the pitiless virginal nurse's uniform & the rhythmic cinematic lights that bolt from my hands into the shallow streams of your yawning photograph of youth.

Blue 88's

The German shells are still
Rocking the steel plank
I clutch as I roll backwards.
Stomach scorched, the fire
Behind my half-mast eyes.
A Medic gives me blue pills,
The ones that could kill
The Fatigue, Kraut 88 clank,
A sweeping left flank
I can't dream away.

How many days have I been here?
All the while still being there?
Arriving back and forth
To and from the Front, every few hours,
With the first night being a full day
And the second, a shrieking half.

2nd L.T. barks that we need to get all our gear secured,
"We are heading right back to Hell in the morning."
Private Richardson tries to disagree, while wiping
A string of drool from parted, parched lips.
"You're not blind. You're not dead.
You still have all your limbs.
You're going back to Bedlam soldier."
Richardson whelps like an undisciplined pup but doesn't say anything of sense.
I stare out at the unscathed countryside through snow white windows.
Asides from their accents the nurses remind me of Ashford, Connecticut.
Their whiteness of all the Christmases I missed.
There's one who I dreamed I asked to the homecoming dance.
2 seconds before I was forced right back into the war.

I know everything I've been issued is still stuck in my locker
But I can't bring myself up to my feet to either check nor clean.
I flip through a deck of cards until the medic makes another pass.
"Can I please have another Blue 88?"
He shakes his head arrogantly and hands me the pill.
I thank him with a nod and swallow it straight down.
Later I jerk awake with all my cards
Scattered across the floor. . .
I breathe shallow and soundless since
At the very least, I know- there are still 4 more hours until morning.

Exhibit A

Examine your own rage
& I will taste the marrow of mine
& will perceive the fallacies of your blame
Clearly curdled through chancy embraces
As the words you love to censor
Find voice through my midnight whispers
& discover anesthesia
In your hilarious situations
As an escape tunnel from the Shang-hi of your indifference
& as a route straight West- to
My one healer- My one great gasping sea

Where I have figured the numerical lack of nerve in my speech
With vicious drums still guiding my tongue far past the soul & mind
Causing enigmatic anti-truths to burn me in effigy
Leaving ashes of sorrow to replicate innocence
& realized apologizes left deserved to all.

My sick & armored vanities
I wish to forever down play & beg for
Their disposal, like a body, dismembered
In the dead of night.

In the sweaty depths of
An ocean
A forest
A leisurely dream
Turned to waking nightmare

Incased in-between such a harsher dream

To suddenly awake
As a mere capsule of
One simplified being

Miserable Drunken Swan Song

As I rise, shaking spastically, to greet the morning sun
I hallucinate sacred poetic passages
Writhing unnoticed & unaffected, picking up the morning paper
Within an inner carnival cackling with
Groans & moans as I remember her
Gone sour
& much too early,
Like milk,
Once again

& into this critical ode of woe and nonsensical O's
I sparked our flame too often to tend to the fireplace
& with your lightning, kisses, and philosophized air breaths
I viewed through your translucence- my youth balding
& flipping through family albums filled with epilepsy

Across empty rooms & dusty floors
& through a mostly minor alcoholic insolence
Anonymous witnesses scorn my persona of personally thirsty spite

& it was to whom I surrendered all
& slept sickly
Laughing at today's own tragic games
& the casual warfare of another day
Ruined by the migraines of another
Lost battle with the rain.

Requiem for a Drunk Sailor Drowned

Promise me that when I die
no warships will be sailing the skies
no gun salutes will shovel gravel over
the grave
no flags shall be folded nor draped across the door
that contains
the shell, the fossil, the memory of a face
no ribbons can loosely symbolize
the reckless mystery of vanished life
just roll the body under a rock
& brandish the bottles that
time keeps stocked
for he who has been lowered might
require a drop
to water the grounds
covering life's
ultimate plot.

Juju Jazz

All the overlooked omens
the juju jazz
the snakes dicey eyes
snuff the wick that sculpts this spine
& short circuits sense
with spontaneous human combustion
until I've become another burning Buddhist
maltov cocktails flooding my throat
drowning cats and alphabets
as adolescents daydream of napalm
for another agent orange afternoon
for another atomic wedding
hands cuffed in nuclear matrimony
where from sea to shining sea
birds of war scramble to deafen me
with white squalls signaling
that soon liberty with land
face-down & floundering
quick to perish in a pollution of sand.

Karma Is a Killer

Karma is a killer
the derringer is concealed
in her ruby stocking

The leg dangles to strangle
forewarning the sensuous constriction
that comes with a premeditated death

Break her body of bread and be
deprived of wine
if only to whine & plead
just to break free, break even, break off
all future dates with time

But this lottery leaves us luckless
& any success sucks
between dirty needle rows of teeth

My glasses continually
empties & shatters

fate forwards its own disasters

love leads hatred
along on a leash

Karma is a killer-
A hung jury set free.

Nevermore

The cruelty of April has struck once again
Rocking crumbling Gibraltar to dust
Conning even the cunning with the guise of an easy friend
& rising sonically through the scorched earth's crust
The melody of a first fired shot
Blasts past a stereo speaker's ears
While secret admirers in Salvation Army uniforms
Carved your initials into their forearms in public memoriam
& sang along to the songs concerning, the burning,
Conditions of your stomach, & how you were no longer having fun,
& how you swore you didn't have a gun
A million bleached minds followed yours slumped to the floor
Oh well, whatever, nevermore

Teenage angst breeds pin-pricked posters
Of a perfectly timed alien nation that's
Forever young & timelessly 27
Screaming anger at a rapist of an audience
Who pretends to understand but knew not what it means
When you bared your soul between rolled up sleeves &
Drained your art through the stigmatic wounds lining your inner elbows
As a million bleached minds followed yours slumped to the floor
Oh well, whatever, nevermore.

With all the telecast analysis of antiquated addiction
& all the kicks which you never could
Your photogenic magnet tar-pit couldn't trap
The black ball hollowing away at
Your poisoned apple's core
So you stashed it all away
In a cigar box of imitation wood
& revolted against your skeletal arms with another chord &
A condemned man's stare &
Sold the world for much more
Than any man's shoulders could bare
& a million bleached minds followed yours slumped to the floor
Oh well, whatever, nevermore.

Friendly .9

Shrapnel lodged in the dome-
thoughts trying to surface like submarines
& the body launching another airstrike
off sleepless eyelids
because maybe the Doc didn't prescribe the right meds?

It's so much harder now
trying to become a crew-cut civilian
living a half-life of VA-can't stares
awake all night doodling nautical nonsense
popping Klonopin & occasionally nodding
until another memory emerges

There is nothing left to compromise
but to suddenly rise &
raise my friendly .9
(a finger feels for her familiar clitoris)

Except then unexpectedly, there's
a sudden touch of that trusty PTSD-
a threat of Tuesday &
a war on terror that has consequently
become a conflict
waging across the collective salts
of all the world's seas

But it is all only just another ship
dropping down searchlights &
highlighting the drowning doppelganger
that spits surreal images &
unpublished sonnets
over what the sharks
have kindly decided
they would spare of me.

The 13th Step #2.

Its 12 steps towards recovery
& just 1 more till you're swinging on
The gallows pole.

My Rack

With a full moon fried into my cranium's miasma, dark spirits stampeded all that lies between flesh and plasma, lapping lethargy from a bottle of the grimmest nostalgia, whose perfume's vapors incited the syphilis tinged sweats of an infernal fever whose stabbing currents crashed chaotically towards my constantly hollowing core.

Bringing along a bellowing of new hatreds for my cancer armored heart of displaced amour, as if wolves had torn straight through death's dead-bolt doors, by distilling simple sin-filled screaming like wounded soldiers buried under their comrades corpses, all just rustic tin relics of a coward's monetary war.

So reaching the highest hallways to join history's heroic portraits, veiling such sensitive life for narcotic legend that tells lies that no tongue would have dared speak before.

The Venus De Milo claps her hands at the closing of this box of sordid conditions, scarring childhood's arms ancient beyond recognition, like two trains taken off track with hell's humor for mismatched connections, and the tragedy of touring all these ruins from the unforgiving & forged fathoms burrowed beneath the floor.

Where paupers pray to the plumpest of poppies and sermonize in hoarse-throated harmony, all the hope for a home away from the hands that keeps the days dancing for fool's gold gleaming with ghastly glues that bind tighter than all the vices combined, which stealthily slips the hang-man's noose over the hexed realization of a prophetic doom, all too insane with devices to even imagine never-less ignore.

But hounded by sickening hunger, the narcissist turns grey at the gates of forever, his canes snapping and his hats flattening, until the thoughtless head is severed to see, that the worst torture will always be, that the absolutely most agonizing of pains will evermore be possible to be enjoyed & not just politely predicted & evenhandedly endured.

4 Tiny Haiku Poems

1.
Scotch-taped hair
the airplane lands on your nose

2.
Cerebral decapitation
the clouds grew sharp

3.
Sedative fingernails
I file away
all year

4.
On the bus
my mind slowly
caves in

Dear God

If you have a design you need to go back to drafting school

I have seen you bump off infants within their first year
Afflict teenagers with elderly diseases
Litter life with a litany of suicides, mangled Marines & accidental OD's
All without any logic nor reasoning

Your Angels are all that are caught up in Man's Venus Flytrap in your absence

I am haunted by the faceless entities bombed overseas
At least in their explosive demise I hold some belief
Although their existence is as foreign to me as yours
I can at least recreate their ghosts in the dead of night

Unlike you,
You counterfeit boogie man

Come out of your closet &
Show me your eyes
Those baby blues that are supposedly windows to the soul

To me you are just a punch-drunk Santa Claus
With a savage chip on a shrouded ancient shoulder

A first-degree killer
Willing to send your own son
To be slaughtered
Or maybe you really are Allah
Busy pawning off virgins to suicide bombers

It's impossible to count all the lives you toss away like yesterday's newspaper

Limbs ripped
Brains damaged
Untimely Nothingness Forever Expanded

I believe man's words can be as holy as any written under your name
You really are the Original Gangster
& who am I to stand in your way?

So many tend to bend towards you
But I refuse- I refuse.

I am the Thief

I am the thief being crucified by Jesus' side. Dangling like a fat petal off a wooden stem. I can see my house from this height. My family and friends circle an anorexic lamppost. My god-parents toss epileptic fits on a freshly trimmed lawn. I have all the instruments of death within my reach, but I like the idea of draining my life away, while becoming a heavenly body. & now I flow. . .I flow like a rock n' roll lyric. I flow like the fuck. I flow like bright colors on a canvas, sadly aging in the island's sick sun. I am more dynamic than any bird in those coffee stained books you buy. The stain is always a beautiful ring. Like Dante's circles of Hell, but I don't really care about birds. I prefer their wings, or the cat that lurks in the darkness behind.

Millennial Mania

The first years
burned like arsons' fire in our guts
the nerves pure shotgun fodder
folding over & over into a terrible origami
each night dissolving into an absolute vodka anxiety
as the boredom flips through the fingers like a faded quarter
could a nameless medicine quell the fear outside the window pain?

The television flickers over Hitler as I
decode what other decades subconsciously decided
over my last thousand packet of cigarettes
over all the roads less traveled than paved
the future lying on a fault-line
shivering through a stagnant earthy spine
is anything truly yours or mine or
fornicating & floating along on borrowed time?

Ah! Apocalypse-Just A Sequel-Neither a Bang, Whimper, or Squeal
blackened skies of a belligerent belly-ache escalating the
burning sunlight from the inside out
& murdering my summer dreams with spirited spite
hope disappearing into the distance as a death masked kite
shall I just forge an epitaph for eternity sufficing our oedipal sight?

& as I long to firebomb my TV and dose talking-heads with LSD
the horrors remain an entity of an enemy
flanking the flower-bed trampled within me
twin towering giants conjoined into repeating
all the wrong numbers while
punching my psychic phone
until I expire like a milk carton
finally alone?

So let someone else soliloquy my skull
with ADHD, OCD, & PTSD
bullets over Broadway
ricochet into the headache of neo-revolutionary history
the masses all screaming, Me, Me, Me,
as their fifteen minutes quickly laugh off into sullen tragedy
I pensively ponder
if there is a part in this play already penned for me?

I am no tragic or noble king nor would ever want to be
I am just the ghost wrapped around the closed curtain
similarities spoken aside- all equally uncertain
I stick out my thumb and ask
“Which road leads to ruin?”

I'll just smile out the passenger side
& let the rest pass right through me
besides agony is all that you really allow it to be
so I guess a will towards nothingness
is all the certainty that is left to be cleansed & free
as we all are just starving actors
staggering across a stage
that's design has become too strange
for any audience to accept nevertheless believe.

Refusal to Understand

My prodigal brother
do not let the meat-grinder of life shred your unusual ways
let your mind fly far away from the climax of another terrible day
madness is just all the others refusal to understand

The aching you feel inside is
the whole world's wounds that will never be band-aided or healed
my prodigal brother

Life is strange when everyone seems stranger but
they are more penniless than what lines their pockets &
madness is just all the others refusal to understand

The population that forces-feeds you into a fattiness of false rebellion
should never compound the weight of your own confidential inferno
My prodigal brother

You say you want a way out of the lot & to burn alone on your own terms
though the situation should never be selfish
although it is obviously meticulously planned &
madness is just all the others refusal to understand

& once the charade of this colorless parade fades away
you will accept the futility of your purposeful distancing & disdain
just remember forever,
my prodigal brother,
madness is just all the others refusal to understand.

The Ugliest Of Hands

Cut, cracked, calloused, & burned
My hands creak like an attic &
My knuckles pop like beer bottle tops
Scratched, torn, & casually adorned
With carelessly dropped cigarette butts-
My hands get uglier every day

Constantly trembling with an ailing naivety,
General anxiety, soothing shots of whiskey,
Or for an abrupt act of aggression-
As the trigger finger always tingles the worst, while
Clenching a Camel Filter, punching through a wall,
While clutching a bottle or pen
Or cauterizing another wound with salt & iodine

These palms will one day lay lifeless by the sides
While I'm passed out in paradise
Dressed in a most unnatural best
From head to toe, with embalming fluids
Flowing freely inside

I see their sordid histories through
A shattered last shot glass
& I have to always hold them back
From wringing love's lithe neck &
Smashing them straight through
A stained glass window

Each finger seems to represent
Another bitter insolent disappointment-
My hands get uglier every day

Last Call

I used to be the last one standing
& now I've fallen flat on my face
I once was ruthless in all my pursuits
But now I wear the sleeves of consequence
Like fading prison tattoos
Scarring India ink seeping
From my insides out
As remnants of the articulate flames
I snuffed & flushed into these
Overindulgent rhythmic phrases
That I can't expect to escape with
Any mental mediation
Since I was seized &
Thrown into a compartment
Of solitary confinement
With walls which each & every day
Signify telepathically
That I must pass through the
Shackles of Satan's social workers
Who prepare everlasting contracts
For opening vocations
Since Dionysus laid me off &
Apollo smashed my lyre
Across stoned Sisyphus's rocks
Who cheerfully chuckles
As I guzzle the grapes of wrath
Pending that I'll eventually
Pass out & collapse
Onto the motion-sick
Linoleum of my past.

There Is Always an End to Everything

There is always an end to everything
& just like anything
that has ever claimed life-
I really was clearly & merely
destined to die.

Senseless, somber & shaking
intoxicated by the intensity
of being alone yet lost in a
peculiar companion's painkilling care

Ever so
tired of the tourists of the Earth,
surrounding this moth-balled room,
while I'm left behind
wondering
will this become my tomb?

I lay listening
as all their briefcases & purses
jingle & jangle &
drown out
the symphonic insignificance
of my entire exhausted life

All the dead flower dreams,
& that inevitable final gasp
for air
that's hardly more than
a whimper
yet is always
a hell of a lot
worse off
than the common cough.

& With That I Pass

My voice is abandoned like a vacant lot
Or a boarded house
Imitating a victorious army barracks
Or an emancipated slave ship
Sailing solitarily
After a triumphant mutiny along
Ancient waters
Tides determining the journey
With supplies squandered long ago
& weary lives passing under
The rudders
On this course set
By exploding stars
& irrelevant maps
& as one & all
Jumped overboard
I quietly agreed
Because I knew if I
Accidentally discovered me
I would be left treading water
In a squall & a flash
As every companion
Has been both
A cannibal & a magician
Performing disappearing acts
Before I even could pull the
Rabbit out of my hat

& this salutation
Is not worth the price of ink
But is an ancestral stamp
An X marking the spot
A swan song sung
For the long gone dead
With a music which I paid no mind
Since everything is epitomized
By the idyllic you I burgled once I had broken through
Your confidential quarters simply to
Ask for your company
To the Saint Vitas Dance
& you said...
& with that I pass.

Postcards from Exile

Mike Brennan

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CDs: *Men's Favorite Hiss the danna tapes, Koyppers the final [MFV] inclusive, Wends and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Acing Something is Swearing, The Second Acing Live in Alaska, Patter & Koyppers Live at Cafe Aloha, Painless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Koyppers Seeing Things Differently, 50/50 Tick Tack, Koyppers Change Rearrange, Order From Chaos the Entropy Project, Koyppers Six One One, Koyppers Stop, Koyppers Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Koyppers Death Comes in Threes, Koyppers Changing Gears, Koyppers Dreams, Koyppers How Do I Get There?, Koyppers Contact -Control -Control, the DMJ Art Connection the DMJ Art Connection, Koyppers Questions in a World Without Answers, Koyppers SIN, Koyppers WRZD Radio (2 CD set), Men's Favorite Hiss and the Second Acing These Truths, assorted artist String Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life At The Cafe (3 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection Indian Flux, the DMJ Art Connection Manic Depressive or Something, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #1, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #2, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #3, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #4, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #5, Chaotic Radio the Chaotic Collection Collection #01-05 (5 CD set) ex (audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Elements (2 CD set), Chaos in Motion (6 CD set), 50/50 Screaming in a Hall (EP), PR&I Two for the Price of One (EP), *W&I, W&I, Jake and Hystack: An American Paradox, Koyppers/No Basted Tins/Paul Baker/the Jamaica Powerless Trio Fusion* (4 CD set), *podcasts the Evolution of Performance Art* (13 CD set), *Koyppers Live* (4 CD set), *the DMJ Art Connection the Things They Did to You* (2 CD set), *Koyppers Seeing a Psychiatrist* (3 CD set), *Koyppers St. Paul* (3 CD set), *Koyppers the 2009 Poetry Game Show* (3 CD set), *Koyppers and the Fillmore of South Africa Burn Through Me* (2 CD set), *Koyppers "40", Koyppers Section and Other Stories, Koyppers the Stories of Women* (amazon.com release), *Koyppers "Dobro VeCec"* (4 CD set), *Koyppers "hmmmm"* (4 CD set), *Koyppers "Letting it All Out", Koyppers "What We Need in Life"* (CD single), *Koyppers "Made Any Difference"* (CD single), *Koyppers "Standard" Across the Front"* (3 CD set).*