

CHRIS (ABOUT THE POEM “ALL YOUR FAULT”)

Very artistic write, enjoyed the read.

LINDSAY, ON THE POEM

“LOOKING FOR A WORTHY ADVERSARY”

This was by far the best poem I have ever read! I mean that seriously. I have never been able to read someone's work and truly feel as though I was there. This was so powerful...so moving....I really enjoyed it.

MARCIA ELLEN, ON THE POEM

“ONCE WANTED YOU AS MY FRIEND”

Oh the adventures of a slut!! Women after my own heart!! Wondrous narrative stuff!!

OEUVRE  
etc.



# etc

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## I'M NOT SICK BUT I'M NOT WELL

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
and I'm sure there's something I can do about this  
I've popped the aspirin  
    the Tylenol  
    the ibuprofen  
    the codeine  
    the Prozac  
    the sleeping pills  
and that thermometer is down my throat  
and I'm gagging

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
the doctors find nothing wrong with me  
and believe me, they've taken the x-rays  
they've striped me down  
and made me wear one of those awful paper robes  
and they've felt me up  
and checked me out  
and found what they were looking for  
but didn't find anything I was looking for

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
and I can't help but think  
that everything I'm doing to make things better  
might only be making things worse  
so I don't want to listen to what  
you have to say anymore  
and I want this IV out of my arm  
and I want this oxygen tube out from my nose  
and I want this suppository out of my ass  
and I want you to get that scalpel away from me  
because I want everything I've got

I'm not sick but I'm not well  
and they want me if they can keep me in line  
and they want me if they can cut me open  
    and take out my insides  
    and suck out the fat  
    and suck out the life  
    and make me generic  
    and make me dependent  
    make me unreal  
    make me not whole  
and I've walked that line with all you doctors  
and I want all my parts back  
and I want to be healthy

no, I'm not sick and maybe I'm not well  
but you're only making me worse  
I don't have the answers but neither do you  
so instead of tearing me apart  
    and dissecting me  
    and studying the bones  
let me just stay together for a while  
until I figure it all out

## CARPET

The apartment needs to be dusted. I can see some cat hair, and the carpet doesn't soak it all in, even though it does a better job than those damn hardwood floors that I'm so used to. Everyone seems to want hardwood floors in their home, but why? They are loud and look dirty quickly. And dust doesn't settle on them, so the air always has things floating in it. But carpet, carpet muffles the loud noises, it keeps your feet warm when you step out of bed on a cold winter morning, it makes things more pleasant. You have to vacuum it, true, but you don't need a mop. You have to be more careful that you don't spill things. But you shouldn't be spilling things in the first place, right? Well, anyway, I have to remember to dust this apartment. It should be perfect. You can't see the dust here, the carpet doesn't let all the dust get into the air.

## HOLDING MY HAND

when we're walking in stride together down  
the street and our feet pump out the same rhythm  
and our shoulders are almost touching and our  
hands brush up against each other for one brief  
moment and he reaches over and takes my hand

when he slides his fingers around mine  
and I feel him move along the palm of my hand  
well, no one knows what it feels like  
when his fingers curl and hold me tight  
well, it feels like... pop rocks

it feels like when that candy is sliding  
down my throat after I let it explode  
on my tongue and it's still tingling and no  
one knows I'm eating this and no one knows  
the feeling and this is my little secret

and I feel this feeling like never before  
and it makes me want to laugh and cry  
because I look around the room and no one  
else is eating those pop rocks and no one  
knows the feeling when he's holding my hand

## ONCE WANTED YOU AS MY FRIEND

I should laugh about this. I know  
that people will probably hear your stories  
and think I was a bad and evil girl.

I don't care. I didn't want to be  
a part of your life any more.

I wanted you as my friend  
after I was falling apart  
and I thought I had no one  
and I wanted my life back  
and because I believed you.

You told people I was your best friend  
and you are a liar, plainly put.

I didn't know you'd fuck  
your best friend's date. Hell,  
fuck the guy for a month until  
your neurotic ego can't take it.

I don't give a shit about a year and a half  
recovery from that evil spell of yours  
but I should never have forgiven you.

Maybe you need attention  
from every penis you can get it from,  
maybe you're more of an attention whore  
than I could ever be,  
than anyone I know could ever be,  
by my neurotic tendencies  
didn't keep me in my parent's house  
while I studied for another job  
because I didn't know what the Hell I wanted  
and maybe my tendencies didn't make me  
lose my friends  
or go through men like hand rags  
or give me sexually transmitted diseases

and didn't leave me fucking someone else while I was engaged  
"I've never orgasmed while having sex with him," you'd say  
well, I don't know what to tell you.

All I can think is that you've made this bad  
out of straw and fabric scraps  
and I don't care if it rained yesterday  
and your precious bed smells like shit  
and you've got nothing clean to grab on to

well, you've made that bed  
and now you have to lie in it.  
so have a good night's sleep  
while you try to make sense  
of what you think is insane

God, the only insane thing  
is that your man still puts up with you  
or how much of your story haven't you told him?

So yes, I should be laughing  
because you're the one filled  
with so many questions. Please,  
for your own benefit,  
get them figured out.

I wanted to cut off ties from you sooner  
but I would have had to lose one of my  
closest friends in the process  
and we couldn't have that (of course not).

But I'm glad your warped mentality  
misconstrued what I said  
and that is exactly what you did  
nothing more, nothing less

but you at least got the idea  
because no, I don't want to be a part  
of your life any longer  
and I don't want to openly condone  
what you've done to your man  
and what you're doing to your man  
and I want to walk away from this unscathed

so I think I will.



## TIMING IS EVERYTHING

timing is everything, you know  
just when you say you've had enough  
just when you're ready to wave that white flag  
and step out of the ring and stop playing the game  
and stop feeling the pain because you're numb

that's when for a brief moment something  
wonderful happens and reminds you why you live  
and reminds you of what hope and joy and  
even love is

and suddenly breathing is no longer a chore  
and suddenly nothing is a chore and suddenly  
there is no pain and suddenly you remember  
what it's like to be alive and you start to like it

well, that's when they pull they rug out from  
under you, right at that moment, so that  
you can fall to the floor and then the biting  
sting of pain hurts that much more

timing is everything, you know, they do it  
that way on purpose because they can't let you  
go on feeling hope and not feeling pain  
this is their key, it's all in the timing

## SCARS 2000

*"Find What's Wrong"*

I

An Admiral, A General

A high-ranking military official  
when you get somewhere in the military  
when you grease the right wheels  
when you climb the corporate ladder  
when you get as high as you can

when you make your graceful exit  
when you've been adorned with pins  
and medals  
and badges of honor  
and you've got all your stripes on your sleeve

when you accomplish it all  
and when you retire

well, then what?

II

the effects of age are getting to me

my vision is shot to hell  
my contacts kill me and  
my glasses are so old  
they're only half the strength of my prescription  
so when i look at things  
i notice the blur more than  
i notice the detail

my senses of taste and smell are shot to hell  
i throw so much garlic on food for flavor  
that i offend my friends and family  
and i can't even smell  
when i smell  
i mean, cologne is lost to me

my one ear is closed most of the time  
and it feels like i've got water in my ear  
and it hurts for me  
to hear myself even breathe  
damnit, i can't even sing any more  
and do one of the things  
i actually like to do  
i try to hear beautiful sounds  
but people are usually talking over it instead  
and all i can hear  
is their incessant bickering and whining

and god damnit, i try to enjoy something  
every once in a while  
and something more irritating  
is usually in the way

you know, i'd rely on writing  
but for a while, i couldn't even do that  
and what do you have then?

i can feel it in my left ankle  
like i can't carry weight like i could any longer  
and my left knee keeps cracking and popping  
and my sister says,  
you know,  
you've got the 'kuypers' knees  
and i guess the kuypers have bad knees  
and i was always unaware of that

the knuckle in my right thumb  
has been swollen for over a decade  
and even the doctors can't find anything wrong

and whenever i write  
i grip the pen so tight  
that my fingers hurt  
and all i can feel  
is the ache in my joints

### III

and whenever i look down  
and see the scars on my body  
and i should be proud of some  
and some would say that i should be proud  
of surviving some traumas  
and having the scars to prove it  
but all i see are the scars  
and all i feel are the aches and pains

is this what scars do to you?  
or is it the memory  
of surviving the trials  
and getting the scars  
and is THIS what you have to show  
for everything you've done  
are these your pins and military stripes  
you get after you accomplished your goal?

because what do you do  
when you're retired  
do people care about your medals of honor  
or do you earn so many  
that they just weigh you down?

## GRAB THE OTHER'S NECK

I don't know where to start  
I don't know where all these feelings come from  
I don't know how to stop them

These feelings seem to come rushing up to me  
And I don't seem to have any control over them

And I hate myself for this  
And I'm not supposed to be having these urges  
And I hate myself for thinking that you may want me too

You know, I don't know much of anything about you  
    And I guess you don't know much about me  
But I like what I know  
Because in some respects you seem like me  
Yes, I like what I know  
    That you work too much  
    And have too much drive  
    And you have a wild side  
    And you do your best to keep your wild side in check

And I still want to  
Be able to straddle you  
Take off your glasses  
Mess up your hair  
So you get strands falling around your eye  
touching your cheek  
And touching you  
To remind you of me  
And grab the hair at the back of your head  
And cock your head back  
Just so I can see your mouth starting to open  
Because God, I want to see that  
And it would make me know I'm right  
And it makes me know that you want me too  
And I'd let your hair go  
And you would stare at me

And give me a look I just can't explain  
And can't argue with  
And have to submit to

And when I want this  
I would wonder  
Who would grab the other's neck  
For the kiss

I still don't know who would make that move  
Or who could make that move  
So I'm begging you to start this cycle  
I'm pleading you  
I don't want to be the only one with these fantasies

Tell these stories to me  
Tell me you've thought these things too  
Tell me you know that we're both stuck  
Because you know there's nothing we can do

And I know this too

But I'd like to hear you say it  
To validate my fantasies, in a way,  
Because I'd love to hear you talk that way to me

I'm a sucker for that, you know

But tell me I'm not alone in this  
So I'm begging you  
I'm pleading you  
Tell me I'm not insane for thinking about you  
Tell me you have these fantasies too

## WEREN'T EVEN MARRIED

you jumped from an airplane once  
and you promised that you'd force me to go with you  
the next time  
you were always jumping out of airplanes,  
weren't you

the ring i'm wearing  
is on my right hand, not my left  
and it's on my middle finger, not my ring finger  
and it seems appropriate  
you didn't even buy me that ring  
and we weren't even married

i bought the ring at a street fair  
on belmont avenue in chicago  
on the day of our first date  
where we watched pulp fiction at your apartment  
and i asked you to sit closer  
to me  
and you kissed me

the ring isn't a complete circle  
there are two stones that don't quite meet  
and there's a void in the middle  
and that was appropriate  
cause you didn't even buy it for me  
and we weren't even married

i've missed you, you know  
i can't even pass the apartment building you lived in any more

i remember when you told me  
that someone was shot in that building once  
and that maybe it was haunted

but they were shot for money  
they were robbed  
and this time you just slipped away in your sleep  
so this time i was robbed

when one of the stones fell out of my ring  
i was sad  
but i think you were more sad  
you wanted to replace the shiny purple stone  
but i said no

and now i still wear the ring  
and a stone is still missing  
and isn't it appropriate  
and we weren't even married

i've missed you, you know  
and with your absence the bad memories vanish  
where you were someone else once  
where you were someone once  
where you were alive once  
i forget that there was so much about you i hated  
because you're not here to remind me

so with this ring, i remember  
because now nothing is complete anymore  
and everything is missing now  
and isn't it appropriate  
that there's no next time for us  
and we weren't even married

you jumped from an airplane once  
and you promised that you'd force me to go with you  
the next time



## BURNING BUILDING

This is what you don't allow me to say.  
These words I utter are a plea for help  
and you tell me you want to be the hand  
that pulls me from the burning building  
and every time I try to be rescued  
you turn your back and walk away

so I will rescue myself this time again  
and I will wonder if I should stop trying  
and allow myself to perish in the flames  
now all I have to do is sit and wait  
for another disaster to consume me  
and sitting in silence is exactly what I'll do

Why do you tell me one thing and do another?  
Why do you run away when I need you most?  
I'm stepping over the wooden beams now,  
and the flames are all around me. Here, look  
at the blood dripping from my arms. Here,  
smell my flesh burning. This is what you do.

I do not walk away unscathed. I never do.  
But now that I wait for my next burning building  
I know I will never allow myself to enter it.  
Why can't it be easier to perish? I try and try,  
and every time at the last minute, my figure  
steps over the the charred remains and saves me.

If only there were no more burning buildings.  
If only I didn't have to save myself all the time.  
If only I could feel free, just this once.  
If only I could feel safe with you, just this once.  
If only your words weren't empty promises.  
If only your words were not the burning building.

## DEATH TAKES MANY FORMS.

It is winter now.  
The trees have lost their leaves;  
the city is covered in a thin layer of soot and snow.  
The grass is dead.  
In the sunless sky black birds circle overhead  
searching for prey.  
An eerie cold settles over everything.  
Nothing is growing anymore.

Death takes many forms.  
For you, death first came when you were five years old  
and your mother had to give you three shots of insulin a day  
until you could take a needle to yourself.  
Did it hurt to push that needle into your arm, the first time?  
Or did it hurt you more to know you had no choice?

Death takes many forms.  
Death can be someone telling you without trying  
that they are losing their sight.  
Behind coke-bottle glasses you would see me and say,  
“That’s a nice black suit you’re wearing.”  
And I would tell you, “It’s green.”  
And you wouldn’t believe me.  
You wouldn’t hear the howling wind of the changing seasons.

Death takes many forms.  
I know what follows the autumn wind.  
It is winter now.  
Do you remember when it happened?  
The changes are subtle, the temperature drops,  
first only slightly. It’s almost imperceptible.  
Only when the first snow falls do you realize  
where the seasons have gone.

Death takes many forms.  
Death can be a sweat-soaked shirt, the shakes, dizziness  
when you needed food.  
You would look as pale as a ghost  
as I would hold your cold wet arm and steady you.  
Quick, some sugar will make everything better.  
Isn't everything better yet?

Death takes many forms.  
The signs of death can come  
when you lose your circulation.  
"My feet are numb, Janet," you'd say.  
"I can't feel my feet anymore."  
And I would rub your feet for you,  
and you would say it makes a difference,  
you feel better.

If only I could do this forever.

Death takes many forms.  
I said good bye to you to travel my own road  
but I didn't think it was the last good bye.  
How was I to know?

When I left, I knew you didn't want me to go.  
And now it's my turn.

Why are we always saying good bye to each other?

Are you trying to teach me a lesson?  
Because if you are, well,  
I've learned it. Trust me, I have.  
You can come back now.

Death takes many forms.  
And now, now it seems  
you've taken me down with you  
you've taken me into that casket with you  
and I'm running my hand along your jacket lapel  
and I can feel the coldness of winter all around me  
and I can hear them shoveling the dirt over my head  
and I want to get out  
and I want to take you with me.

Death takes many forms.  
Death can be that hole you left,  
you know, right over here, just a little to the left.  
I keep wondering when the pain will go away.  
When will everything be better.

You once showed me that winter could be beautiful.  
Instead of the dark and dirty snow lacing the city streets  
you showed me a quieting snowfall,  
over a lake at your parent's back yard  
glistening in an untouched whiteness.  
I told you I hated winters  
and you told me, "This you don't hate."

Well, I'm still learning.

It is winter now.  
And death takes many forms.  
The seasons change for you and I.  
It is snowing. And something is ending.  
It is snowing. Somewhere  
it is snowing.

*This poem was also published in the book *Changing Gears*.*

## I DREAMT ABOUT YOU LAST NIGHT

*"I dreamt about you last night  
and I fell out of bed twice  
you can pin and mount me  
like a butterfly"*

- Steven M.

I dreamt about you last night.  
I called you on the phone  
even though you passed away  
over four weeks ago now.  
I don't know why I called, I  
don't know what I was hoping for,  
but when you answered your phone  
I said, "Dave?"  
You said, "Yes."  
And I asked, "How are you?"  
You said, "Fine."  
And I asked, "You're not dead?"  
You said, "No."  
"But I just told someone  
you passed away a month ago."  
"Oh," you said, "Don't worry.  
I'll take care of it."  
And you sounded so -  
so relaxed. So peaceful.

They say that dreams are your  
chance to think over the things  
unresolved from your day. And  
I keep dreaming about you.  
Don't I think about you enough?

You're the one that left me.  
Why are you coming back,  
at night, when I let my defenses  
down, slipping in through my  
window and working your way  
into my dreams?

I dreamt about you last night.  
We were sitting together,  
about to go out for the evening.  
You were wearing a black  
t-shirt and black jeans.  
We were running late, and you  
were angry. "I wanted to wear  
this, but I wanted to put more  
black on - I wanted to wear my  
black vest and my black jacket."  
You know, I thought it was  
always funny, how much you cared  
about the clothes you wore.  
So I said, "But Dave, you look  
fantastic in your jeans and  
t-shirt." And you smiled at me  
and kissed me.

I wish I could have told you  
more in life how good you looked.  
I'm sorry, Dave. I'm so sorry.  
I wish in life I could have told  
you the things you wanted to hear.

I saw you today. You were in a  
black car and you were wearing  
dark sunglasses. He could have  
been you, if I closed my eyes  
and squinted just slightly. You pulled  
up in the lane next to me as I  
was driving to my sister's house.

You were about to turn right and  
I watched you look at the oncoming  
traffic, waiting for your chance to  
leave me again.

Let me think that it was you,  
driving, living. Let me think that  
you're just ignoring me. Then  
I can be angry with you.

I dreamt about you last night.  
I was on a cruise ship, and you  
were working as a waiter. You wore  
one of those silly short jackets  
for your uniform. It was a sea blue.  
And every time I thought I saw you  
you would turn away to do your  
job. All I ever caught were fleeting  
glimpses of you, walking away.

All I keep thinking is that  
my days are finally free of you  
but they're not. I keep thinking  
of you. And it isn't enough.  
I still can't escape you at night.

## I'M A RECORD NOW

I feel like I'm a record now

you know how vinyl goes  
That there is a ridge, trailed in circles  
That groove that the needle can easily slip into

Well, I feel like I am that record now  
And the needle of life is in me  
And it is playing my story  
And I am stuck on this record player  
At this certain speed  
And I can't get the needle out of the groove  
And my life is being played out for me  
For everyone to hear  
And see  
And live



And they don't feel a God-damned thing  
But they claim to know how I feel  
But that needle is stuck there  
And the R P M has been set on the player  
And now my life is an open book  
And now my life is a playing record

And people can choose to read the book  
And people can choose to listen to the music

And sometimes that excites me  
Sometimes that fascinates me  
And sometimes that scares me

Because I wonder if people who listen know too little  
Or too much

## EXPECTING THE STONING

I

you know how  
you want a popsicle  
and you want it for the longest time  
and you don't even know what it's going to taste like when you get it  
and then you finally get it  
and it tastes oh so good  
and you have some if it  
and you want to save it so you can have it later  
and then you realize  
that in order to keep the popsicle from disappearing  
it has to stay in the freezer  
to avoid melting  
and becoming just a liquid pile of remains  
instead of what you wanted

that it had to stay in the freezer in order to survive  
and you couldn't stay there with it  
that it was meant to be cold forever  
or consumed

it was either one or the other  
they taught you that fact when you were little  
you can't have it both ways

you can try  
and it might be fun at first  
but everyone knows it will hurt later on

and it will



II

I think what I liked the most about us  
was the theory of romance

no, wait, it wasn't that

I liked the idea of being with you  
I would travel across the country to see you  
the thought of you and the times we had behind everyone's backs  
those times were like poems to me  
and it was still nice for me to fantasize

and what did it get me

III

maybe I didn't realize  
the novelty would wear off for you  
that you were like the average American  
and after twenty seconds of watching a television show  
you'd want to change the channel with the remote on the arm of your chair

I didn't know you were a popsicle that would melt  
when you were exposed to ANY sunlight or ANY heat at ANY time

I didn't know you were a snowman  
that I made in the backyard at my house in the winter when I was little  
a snowman that was fully equipped with  
a carrot nose, like pinocchio, no, wait, like you, with  
no hair, like you, with  
black rocks for eyes, like you

and yeah, that snowman melted with spring, like you  
and maybe I should have learned my lesson  
from that damned snowman

IV

I remember how little kids would want to build snowmen  
in the winter  
they didn't seem to mind the snowman eventually going away

I hated the cold, so I didn't play in the snow as much

maybe in playing those little games  
everyone else learned their lesson, maybe they learned something  
that I should have learned

V

I should expect the stonings that I am bound to receive  
for telling you that I know what you have done  
and that I want the rest of the world to know it too  
I will expect the stonings  
with time, I have been getting used to the punishments  
for telling the truth, even when people don't want to hear it

so, thank you for getting my hopes up and then blowing them away  
with one breath from your lips  
like anyone would do to a pile of sand

or table salt spilled on the counter

because I think I needed to learn that lesson  
and in a way, for now,  
I only have you to thank for it

## ISN'T IT AMAZING

Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. It's amazing to see people throw away their lives day after day like a bag of trash taken to the corner for someone else to carry away. You can forget about the trash when someone gets rid of it for you. Now all you have to do is bring it to the corner and then wait for them to do their work.

Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. Isn't it amazing. Isn't it amazing how willing we are to give up our chances at happiness. Isn't it amazing how afraid we are of life. Isn't it funny how we don't want to embarrass ourselves. Quick. Take out the trash. Hopefully no one will see you in your bathrobe as you make your way to the end of your driveway. All you have to do is turn around and leave it there. Someone else will clean up the mess. Someone else will pick up the pieces. This is what we do, in America. This is how we avoid hurt. This is how we stay ahead. Now look who has egg on their face.

Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. Once you've made that decision, once you know that you're going to be the one holding the aces, you can watch the rest of the world squirm. If only those fools knew better, you think. If only they knew what you know. It's emotion that gets them in trouble. Just don't cross that line. Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. It seems the obvious choice. Isn't it amazing.

## ALL YOUR FAULT

you know i could kick your ass  
for not calling  
for not showing you care  
for moving across the country  
for leaving me

you left me, you know,  
let me repeat that, you left me  
and that's how i'll remember it  
nothing more, nothing less  
and god damnit, i wanted a future with you  
i planned it all in my head

and hindsight's twenty twenty  
i know i was a fool  
but i still know it was your fault  
and i won't accept any other explanation

i've got to put my foot down on something, you know

and so i left you  
and i thought that would surprise you

but you have so much on your mind  
to worry 'bout 'lil ol' me, don't you

i wonder if you even knew i was there

there are many things i could have told you  
and never did  
and i want some kind of closure  
so i can put you behind me forever  
so i will no longer think  
that i was your only hope

## PEOPLE'S LIVES WERE AT STAKE

I know everyone was talking about it and after the fact  
you'd hear the reports on the news about the damage done

and you'd think that we were in a war zone and that all of this  
was done for religious purposes and people's lives were at stake

and maybe they were and I just don't know it. I don't know. I  
know what it's like to have a cause but I never tried to

close people out to it, I tried to include them, to open them  
up to it, but I remember deciding once to walk to a woman's parade

called "take back the night", so that people knew that women  
should feel safe walking alone in the streets at night without

worrying about being mugged or raped or killed because they were  
female. Well anyway, I was walking to the parade to take

photographs because I'm a photographer, and a group of women  
were walking in a group to the parade, so I walked down the street

and started walking with them, and they were chanting and singing  
and I thought, wow, this is unity, people together for a cause.

and one of the women told me while we were walking that someone  
women there didn't like me walking with them because I was white

and they were African American. and I looked around and noticed  
that there wasn't a racial mix, and I said, well, we're all going to the same

place, and the woman replied, well, some people don't like you  
walking with us anyway. so I turned my head and let them walk

and I crossed the street and took another block and got there before them.  
and this is how we define how we should be separated, I suppose,

though I still don't understand it. and during that parade I heard  
about a trial case where a black man was convicted of a police brutality

crime, and the black community was outraged, saying that  
the white man was holding them down, and maybe in a way they are right

and I just don't understand it. a large group of people started their own  
rally that night which seemed to take center stage from women's rights,

i mean, they're just women, what are they going to do, bitch a little louder,  
or complain a little more, but then again, maybe it is just a matter

of deciding who has the loudest voice, or who has the most recent problem  
to complain about, I don't know. we went out that night, and I heard

the next day that in light of the trial 23 fires were started  
on school property, and most of them were of books in libraries

and I thought, this isn't nonresistant violence, this is out and out violent  
and what they're destroying are opportunities for learning and not ideas.

"yeah, but do these books hold what the white man wants you to learn?  
if this how he alters our perceptions?" i don't know, but this doesn't

solve anything and this isn't the answer... then I heard about one of my  
best friends, a white man, hit once by a black man in the street

while they were out that night, and the doctor said that they had to have  
a roll of quarters in their hand or brass knuckles because this was a clean break

of their jaw and for six weeks his jaw was wired shut and he had to throw pizza  
or meat loaf in the blender so he could eat something instead of ice cream

while he tried to recover. and I thought, is this all getting anything done?  
are we coming any closer to racial harmony? what are we learning from this?

## LOST IN THE BREEZE

Well, wouldn't you think of me anyway  
We've had enough of a track record together to earn it  
I have only seen you through my rose-colored glasses  
I know you thought of me  
On the most important day of my life

I know you thought of me  
you did things for me  
But a part of me asked for you there  
Because it would matter to you

But the minute your obligations were met  
Well, my name flew away like a feather on the breeze  
Caught up in the wind  
And then muffled noise  
That was my night  
And was my life  
Was forgotten

I am grateful for what you have done  
But all that I afraid I will carry with me  
Is that you did what you felt you had to do  
And then  
Like my name, a muffle sound lost in the breeze  
I left you  
And you went on your way

## JOY

I wasn't a popular grade-school kid,  
 things were thrown at me,  
 I was knocked down once,  
 so I knew kids could be cruel.  
 But once I walked to a swing set at recess  
 and Joy sat there alone.  
 She was teased  
 because she was overweight.  
 So I asked her why she was alone.  
 She turned her arm so I could see  
 the two-inch long bruise there.  
 She then got up and started to speak  
 and turned and lifted the back of her shirt.  
 She said some kids started hitting her  
 with the chains from the swing set;  
 then I saw her back.  
 I could see how the foot-long bruises  
 matched perfectly with the metal chains.

I didn't know what to say.  
 These chains are for swings  
 so children could play.  
 This swing, this tool for joy  
 became a tool for unjust punishment.

## FIGHTING I CAN DO

I know this is a normal thing  
 for me to be going through

I know that I have been raped  
 and beaten  
 I know they've tried to kill me  
 and lucky me, I survived

I think I can survive  
 everything they throw at me

But as time wears on  
 little pieces of this statue are chipped away  
 everybody wants something, right?  
 well, they've been taking from me  
 and taking  
 and taking  
 and taking  
 and my defenses are getting weaker  
 and I don't know how much more  
 fighting  
 I can do



## LEARNING MORE

It is amazing how I learn more, how I take it all in  
How I think I am just learning little random pieces of information  
And that is when I find out that all of the pieces relate  
That there is meaning to almost anything I see or do

I remember so much about you, and I know there is  
So much you have taught me  
How to understand the word of my elders

Mom has taught me to take it all in stride  
She has taught me how to manage it all and how to do that  
With grace

I know that you were the foundation to everything she maintained  
You were stern for a reason, and this was how  
You kept everything in line without having to raise your voice to me

Because I just knew

You were making all the details possible by working so hard  
Mom knew this, and gave you your space for it, and all the children  
Thank you, and I thank you, because mom and you are what made us  
us

Life would never be the same without your influence  
Without you making it all possible

My brother told me we were all creative in this family  
I did not see how, not for all of us, I did not fit the pieces together  
And he laid out the details this way for me  
Mom painted, Ed was an architect, Bob built from scratch with construction,

Lorelei was an art teacher, Sandy got her art out through crafts,  
And I was a graphic artist and a photographer and a writer  
Before he told me that you took my grandfather's business  
Kept it alive, kept it thriving, I then remembered one more thing

Once I was looking in the little kitchen and found a box  
Of old black and white photographs, I didn't know where they came from  
I asked you, you used to be a photographer, that you  
Developed these pictures, that you took pictures  
When you were in high school,

this was the way you could be creative  
It gave me my own snapshot of you, it helped me realize  
These are the things we do to keep ourselves alive

and It gave me one memory of you

this was something I learned about you through chance, first hand  
This was how I learned more about you, and me  
And I thank you for that

There have been so many changes that I have gone through in my life  
So many things I could not explain  
Learning about you, getting these tiny glimpses  
It is as if I have taken these snapshots of your life

Now I can slowly piece this all together to make the picture complete  
I know that life is not easy and that it all takes work  
Your life has been difficult at times, your life has been rich as well  
Your life has also made me rich, rich from you, from being a part of your life

When people compliment me, tell me that I am smart or talented  
I know where the pieces came from that have made me whole  
That have given this to me  
And I thank you for that

## MY DEAD DAUGHTER

I keep getting this image in my head  
of a little girl, and she has long straight dark hair  
and she is quiet and she comes to me and asks me questions  
and I am working, but I turn around to answer her  
and she sounds really intelligent  
and I treat her that way and I answer her like an adult  
and then I wonder if I'm not spending enough time with her  
so while I'm answering I turn off my computer  
and I turn around to her and I continue to look at her

I make a point to make eye contact when I communicate with her  
and I get up so we can walk to the library  
as I finish answering her question  
and we get to the library and I ask her  
is there is anything else she wants to know

because I want to be the one to tell her the truth  
and she says no  
she says she doesn't need anything  
and underlyingly she makes me feel as if she doesn't need me  
and I think,

I gave birth to that girl, she has to need something from me

and maybe she's a smart girl  
and maybe she's learned to do things on her own  
maybe she does all the things I have had to do in my life  
maybe she understands more than I ever did

but these are my memories

these are the memories of something that has never happened  
and will it ever?

I always imagined a girl

maybe that's the maternal side of me,

being a mom and knowing women

but I never knew who the father was

and I never got her name, whenever I would have these memories

maybe she never had one

## TRUE HAPPINESS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

*"I ain't never found peace upon the breast of a girl  
I ain't never found peace with the religions of the world  
I ain't never found peace at the bottom of a glass*

*Sometimes it seems the more I ask for the less I receive  
Sometimes it seems the more I ask for the less I receive  
The only true freedom is freedom from the heart's desires  
And the only true happiness this way lies"*

- Matt Johnson

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
I'm the new savior    the savior of science  
    the savior of strength  
    the savior of survival  
    survival of the fittest  
    survival of the best  
and I'm here to tell you we're starting anew  
so fasten your seat belts  
    hang on to your hats  
place your seat trays in their upright and locked position  
for it's a bumpy ride, and I'll tell you why

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
the millennium of reason and logic and strength  
and I don't want to hear about your self-destruction  
I don't want to hear your whining, psychosis,  
your depression, suicide, alcohol and drugs  
and just what made you think that playing with needles  
and escape would make things better somehow  
    God, I've always hated needles anyway  
    what is it with you people

well, you need a leader and I'm stepping up to the plate  
you keep asking for a big brother and I'm here to set you straight  
you want someone to wipe your noses for you  
well, pick up the damn tissue and do it yourself  
because when you give up your rights, you take away mine  
and we're not having any of that

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
and you say to me you need crystal meth  
so you can stay awake through work  
and you say to me that you don't need to drink,  
that you just like the taste  
and you say to me that with all your escapism  
you still don't feel any better  
and you say to me that sometimes suicide  
is the only answer

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
I'm here to usher in a whole new generation  
so stop asking for things and start working for things  
because X is for ecstasy as long as it's fast  
and X is for extra but there's always a cost  
and ecstasy doesn't come without extra work  
no matter how many corners you cut  
and you know, X is for X-Ray and I see right through that

they say that Eve ate from the tree from knowledge  
but you know, she shouldn't have stopped just then  
cause the loggers are raping the trees of knowledge  
the loggers are raping the forests of talent  
the forests of ability the forests of reason  
of skill of logic perserverance and life  
we're letting them rape the forests of excellence  
and you know it's now time to take it all back  
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
and I'm here to tell you how it's going to be done

you're looking for peace in all the wrong places  
you're asking your leaders to save you from yourself  
but your leaders are losers and they're worse off than you

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
where it's time to take charge and it's time fess up  
only you can deliver you from your own sins  
but first you must know what sin really is

it's time to make choices and it's time to lay claim  
to everything we've been blindly giving away  
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
take charge of yourself, and I'll take charge of me  
I'm my leader, not yours, so wipe your own damn noses

take it in to your hands, people, mold your own tools  
this is the new millennium, and this is your chance  
because no one should be showing us how to fail  
people mastered that feat a millennia ago  
so set your own rules and do something fast  
cause it's time to take charge and it's time to be alive

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium  
And I'm waiting for you to usher in yours  
Because true happiness this way lies, my friend  
and I won't wait long if you lag behind  
cause I'm setting my rules so step out of my way

I'm here to tell you there's a new sensation  
and I'm here to tell you there's a new salvation  
and that true happiness this way lies

*This poem was also published in the book Changing Gears.*

## LOOKING FOR A WORTHY ADVERSARY

I've been looking for a worthy adversary  
someone I can lock horns with  
because although my life makes more sense when I'm alone  
it's not nearly as interesting

I've been looking for a worthy adversary  
someone I can battle to the death with  
because it can't be about love, you see  
love can't exist on the terms I demand  
it's never that pure

I've been looking for a worthy adversary  
and so I slither up to you like a snake  
as you sit there at the corner  
of the bar drinking your gin and tonics  
and I tempt you with a golden apple

but all I was offering you  
was fruit from the tree of knowledge

I didn't know how willing you were  
to take from that tree  
I'm not used to that, you know

Did you know you'd need to come back for more?  
Did you know what you were getting into?

well, I didn't know you'd have  
a thing or two to each me too

and did I know I'd need to come back for more?  
Did I know what I was getting into?

because as I've been looking for a worthy adversary  
all this time I've been playing a part  
an actress on a stage, spouting the lines on cue  
and that role was getting tiresome  
but those stage lights still came on night after night  
and I still had to play my part

until on my night off I saw your performance  
at the theatre down the street  
and you know, your protagonist  
was doing what I was doing  
right down to faking it with people who don't matter  
right down to going home and still feeling empty

and you know, I liked to see  
that boiling emotion underneath  
that no one else could see  
because only I had the knowledge to know  
what that emotion really means

and you know, I'm beginning to wonder  
if we can get together  
and write our own play

it would be a masterful performance, you know  
and as that curtain would close we'd hold each other's hands  
and walk off the stage  
and the audience would know that there is a happy ending

and now when I walk out on to the set  
and there you stand, in front, stage left  
I wait for my cue to make my move  
none of the rest of the scene matters to me, you know

maybe they'd like our little play, maybe they wouldn't  
who really cares

because even though I came to you  
and tempted you  
you now tempt me and tease me and torment me  
and tell me everything I was too afraid to believe  
and show me the knowledge that always escaped me

and when you talk you reach your hand into my brain  
and pull out my thoughts and shove them into your mouth  
and spit them back at me



and instead of filling me with terror  
it fills me with joy

I've been looking for a worthy adversary  
and maybe you are much more than that

I've heard the words you say to me before  
I've said them to myself many times  
but why do they sound so much better  
coming from you?

I had been looking for a worth adversary  
someone I could lock horns with  
but now I'm no longer locking horns

now it seems I don't have to fight the battle alone  
now it seems that there's no battle to fight  
we know what all the lines from our play really mean  
and now we're performing for no one  
now we're just ourselves  
and now there's just understanding  
I don't even have to speak

and now every day is Valentine's Day  
and now it's like candy and flowers and springtime  
and hearts and cupids and sunshine  
and you know it's scary  
these cliches are actually beginning to make sense

I guess that's what the tree of knowledge does to you

so this is what has been going on in my mind  
and now I've just spilled my guts  
and now I'm just a puddle on the floor

but now my performance of a lifetime is made  
I stand here like a statue  
and wait for my applause

and as I wait for the reviews  
on the performance I was made for  
I know what they're all going to say  
and none of that matters anymore

because I know what you are going to say  
because it's everything that I want to say

because now it's time  
for you to take my thoughts again  
and shove them into your mouth again  
and spit them back at me again

and now I wait for you to come on stage again  
for our next wonderful performance  
where we have our happy ending  
where you tell me what I already know