



**a nation of assholes w/ guns**

**john sweet poems**

**scar** **publications**

# like distant music, like quiet sunlight

blood rising up from where the  
cross is planted, just like dali promised

streets laid out in meaningless patterns  
until they give birth to cities

the body of a homeless man found  
out by the railroad tracks,  
body of a second grade teacher  
found tied to her bed

not too far to the  
empty fields from here

not too far to the forest

a few miles down 26 south, over the river,  
over the interstate,  
and there you are and, after you've  
gotten dressed, after she's called her  
husband to say she'll be home in a  
few hours, she tells you she  
wants to drive

says she wants to get lost

doesn't mean it, of course,  
but still

it's an idea that never quite goes away

## our lady of sorrows, dreaming

ancient down some sightless avenue w/  
broken hands

w/ faith in the government  
and in god  
and the trees all recoiling from  
the flames that surrounded him

the powerlines all snapped

electricity mixed w/ blood and  
the woman who screamed sounded  
like my sister

the city lay in ruins

words written in ash and tar on the  
walls of abandoned factories  
and the carefully considered words of priests

their addiction to violence

no greater than anyone else's  
i guess  
but it still felt good knowing how  
painfully they'd die

## **the blood of yr father**

don't make yourself a victim don't  
dig yourself a grave

don't pray unless  
you understand the alternatives

god is like television

the human mind needs  
no reasons for its actions

just scream and fuck and  
squeeze the trigger

close your eyes and  
pull the earth up over your head

## take your time

said *this is the story*  
and then he died  
and you think this shit is funny  
and you're probably right

you're brought up to believe in  
justice  
and then the killer takes  
his own life

leaves behind a pile of corpses  
and a dozen movies-of-the-week and  
if you have children  
you no longer know where  
they are

if you love this woman  
next to you in the bed  
it's only by accident

it can be undone

you should know this by now

## Looking for the Big Dipper

And the lions, yes, and the poets,  
all of them with the chance to  
apologize, to make a difference.  
The air dark and cold and the  
phone never quite ringing. Your  
lover at home with her husband  
and daughter. Dust on the  
bookshelves. Words like corrosives.  
No answers, just this endless  
goddamn noise. Just this need  
for affection. Father dead, sister  
vanished, car payment overdue.  
Walk outside. Sit in the yard.  
Sound of passing cars, and of  
yelling teenagers. Barking dogs.  
Close your eyes and stare at  
the sky. Your future and your  
past, both right there.

## poem for myself in a dark blue room

what you seek is in the palace of  
the last idiot king,  
and there is no *forward* there,  
no *backward*, and so you only move  
in circles

you only tread water until you're  
too tired to stay afloat

it's one thing to die,  
but another to  
forget what it means to be alive

## **sometime**

had the dogs on leashes  
& had the women

drove 400,000 miles w/ no  
heater and no headlights

spent two weeks working w/ the guy,  
but this was before he killed  
someone in a bar fight

this was when i could still  
remember what 20 felt like

knew this girl who was 16  
but, when the cops called,  
i hadn't seen her in weeks

when her stepfather called, i  
tried to tell him about cobain's suicide

i tried to tell him there wasn't  
enough time

could only make these small  
frightened noises that  
no one else was able to hear



## **civil war**

was born with wings  
was loved  
but never blessed

never promised god or heaven  
and when she bled  
you could only laugh

when she laughed  
you could only leave

a million miles to the ocean  
and all of the bodies you  
found there

## without water

And she is beautiful in her moment of dying, and the word is salvation, but the dogs aren't buying it. Their world is flat, their mouths are empty, and the ambulances have nowhere to go. Are always arriving too late to save the burning child. Six years old and laughing in an empty house, end of October, and the man on the sidewalk starts to run when the cop approaches him. The girl is fourteen, but says she wasn't raped. Says she loves him, and at three in the afternoon I am sitting at a cluttered table, am missing you, and you are two hours away, are at your husband's side, and what none of us talk about anymore is the war. What we refuse to give up is our belief in happy endings. Our addictions to the ghosts of gods. Our failure

## preparing the requiem

these things happen  
of course

you marry the wrong man  
                  the wrong woman  
you have children  
you get divorced

connections are broken

accusations made

something is thrown in anger  
or maybe a door  
is slammed too hard

a window shatters

little pieces of hope  
spill everywhere

## **the fucking waste**

in the year of finished basements, in  
the summer of bitter sunlight where all of  
our truths are spoken beneath the  
shadows of clouds, where ginsberg's  
death is a small relief, where bukowski's  
is an obvious blessing and with the  
knowledge of burrough's hollow tongue,  
with this woman nine months pregnant,  
disappeared, and her two year old son  
the only witness

will you accept any blame?

will you allow yourself to be spoonfed  
guilt by these priests w/ their  
poisoned god, their guilty tongues?

the truth is such an obvious thing  
once you step outside the  
room of mirrors

# static

stepping out into the light,  
disoriented,  
godless but warm,  
and when i ask you what the difference is  
between a thing that has no meaning  
and a thing that's meaningless,  
you shake your head  
and smile

when the man pulls his hand out from  
under the seat, he has a gun

shoots the cop in the face and,  
stepping out into the light,  
i turn to you and ask how many  
orphans it would take to fill an ocean

i turn to you and ask how  
many more miles until we're there

don't want an answer,  
just the soft weight of your voice

## the empire, returned to sand

nine months pregnant and found in  
the dirt, in the weeds, found murdered  
like you knew she would be, and  
the killer is her boyfriend, like you  
knew it would be, and we are never  
good enough at pretending, none of us,  
and the sunlight at six thirty in the  
morning is soft and unfocused but  
already filled with the threat  
of violence

already heavy with the promise  
of crucifixion, and i am kissing my  
sons goodbye at their mother's front door,  
am telling them that i'll see them  
tomorrow afternoon, and in the back of  
my mind there is always a list of people  
i hate, of people i would like to see  
dead, and by three in the afternoon the  
storm is almost here

by four, it's already gone

the heat returned like a lover who  
never gets tired of beating you

even years now waiting to be fired  
and always thirsty,  
always pulling away from the  
outstretched hands of others

waking up from a  
dream of impending disaster

a shower,  
a bowl of cereal, bottle of pepsi,  
then off to work

bills like the iron fist of god,  
always squeezing,  
always looking for one last drop of blood

**these new  
prayers,  
burning**

eternal,  
like the starving

like the insane  
and the tortured

do you see now?

we are not here to help each other

we are not here to cure the  
common cold  
or to reinvent the wheel

the men you've elected have  
learned how to turn  
the corpses of soldiers into money

your freedom of speech only  
extends so far

all bravery  
is punished in the end

## the truth

spent a lot of time  
making no one happy

tried doing it drunk, tried doing  
it with a headful of speed, then  
finally just let it happen naturally

sat on the edge of the bed  
while kathy cried

listened quietly to andrea on  
the other end of the phone

so many wasted hours filled  
with so many meaningless words  
until finally the house was  
silent

until finally the kids were  
asleep

both of them perfect in  
such obvious ways



## singing independence day

soldier w/ his feet cut off  
for the boots they wear

w/ his hands cut off for the sheer  
rush of power that destruction brings  
and you will watch him burn and  
you will listen to the dogs  
growl deep in their throats

we are all of us alone in the  
same windowless room

we are all of us blind and  
screaming at the deaf  
and there is no such thing  
as eternity

there is no such thing as peace

you can't fight a war against  
an enemy w/ no fear of dying  
and ever hope to win

the child of any corpse  
will tell you this

## The story, as it was told to me

Says *Lift those tiny islands.*

Says *Dream the gift concealed.*

Simple requests from the lips  
of Conquistadors, and so the room is  
small, is quiet, is filled with dust  
and sunlight.

The killer has taken his place.

Waits behind the door,  
and the woman is his wife.

The islands are his children.

No one leaves  
until all of us are dead.

## **if nothing is all**

Wanted to name the baby,  
but her tongue had been cut out.

Wanted to walk in the rain,  
and so I gave her the funeral crown  
to cover her head.

I gave her a basket of  
broken hands.

An ocean of blood.

Tried to make her smile,  
but no longer had the gift.

## **In the season of obvious wars**

And do you remember how it rained  
all day on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?

Stood there naked in the bathroom  
like I was 38 and divorced. Watched  
my reflection spit blood into the sink.

Had the house, but the roof leaked.  
Had the truck, which was paid for at  
least.

Was tied down to this fucking town  
by my job, which I hated. By my  
children, who I loved.

Cleared my throat against the cold  
blur of the afternoon, and spit  
again.

## **past and present**

Someone in another room, dead or listening,  
and your father on the floor where they  
found him, back against the stove, cold cigarette  
in an ashtray on the counter.

You tell the story or you listen to it,  
and it has nothing to do with you.

you turn to the woman, a stranger's wife,  
and you run your hand up the soft curve of  
her stomach and then back down,  
and then the phone rings.

We pretend no one's home.

A doorknob rattles, then footsteps in the  
driveway, and I can't remember whether or  
not I locked the back door.

I creep upstairs to tell me son that  
it's okay, but his room is empty. Isn't  
where I remember it being.

Only boxes here, and sunlight cutting  
through dust, and a stack of books on an  
unused kitchen chair.

Only someone else's past.

# church

sign in front says  
JESUS  
LOVES  
YOU

but there's no one  
out here

fields filled with  
snow in  
every direction

cold blue sky and  
the shadows of  
hills

nothing  
to do but drive

## **Sleepless and Bleeding**

Not the power of memory,  
because it's the future that matters.  
Write this down if you have to.  
Stand in your back yard on the  
third day of the flood and feel  
the water wash over your feet. There  
is no bravery in despair. There is no  
forgiveness in the next 100 years. Warmth,  
yes, and simple pleasures, and also the  
ocean on fire. Also the deaths of  
everyone you love. Remember this  
like you would a prayer.

## credits

man says he wants to  
make a movie of my life and  
i laugh because the poems  
are what interest him and  
without them there's really  
not much left

the rest is sleeping  
is waiting  
is being afraid

nothing any different  
from anyone else



## another war

All day long, grey light through  
dead branches.  
Nothing to write about,  
because it's nothing you can escape.

The moment is what you want,  
but it's always in the past.

It's never arriving.

She smiles in her tentative,  
beautiful way,  
and looks at the clock.

You tell her you have to get going.

Everything is a lie,  
but it's better than silence.

It's better than starving.

You're always forgetting this.

# apology

You are your  
father's son, and  
this is all

You will hear it  
until  
the day he dies

## **A massacre: notes and observations**

Said it was frostbite, said it was simple fear. An axe through the baby's skull. Remembered the details. Handed them out like pieces of candy. The Indians weeping. Screaming. Gunfire & drunken laughter. Fires built to thaw out the ground. A shallow trench, and so quickly, so easily filled. *Not human*, she said, and was obvious she meant one side or the other. It was obvious she was telling the truth.

# industry

fuel pump went in the  
price chopper parking lot, and it  
was \$1000 gone just like  
that

it was the age of unpaid ransoms

seventeen degrees in the  
useless glare of early morning  
sunlight

cell phone dead  
and i had spent most of  
my adult life making enemies

i had stopped  
talking to my wife

was hiding from a girlfriend  
and from her sister,  
and the air stank of exhaust,  
and of suicide, and  
of gasoline

my kids were laughing in  
the back seat

my fingers were  
cracked, were bleeding

they turned the key one last  
time before i walked away

## **with love, so long**

you in a nation of  
assholes w/ guns  
and the driver says he's lost

two young girls waving  
good-bye  
out the rear window

people downstairs drunk  
and their tv up loud

nothing to watch but  
there's never really been  
any future in talking

# John Sweet a nation of assholes w/ guns

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scarspublications

## Magazines:

Children, Churches and Daddies (occ& magazine), Down in the Dirt magazine

## Books:

**Days Chest in the Arctic, the Window, Chase Cover Riders Staffing, (Woman), Armani Bazaar, Contents Under Pressure, the Average Day's Guide (in Translation), Changing Gears, the Key to Following, Domestic History, etc., Covers, Extra Verses, L'arte, the Other Side, The Best Lady's Unbroken, (epic) and 2005 Expanded Edition, Poetry, Sailing, Music, Intimacy, Comedy, Philosophy, Death Comes to Dinner, Morning Performance, Six Lines, Life of Cafe Alibi, Cream, Bunch Blues, The Delivery Project, The Other Side (2006 Edition), Stay, Stay Life, the Beauty and the Destructive, occ& v167.5 (Writing in Honor & Change, other editions), Mister & Dem (the Koyotes edition), 58& occ& v170.5 Distinguished Writings editor edition, Living in Chases, Silent Streams, Telling It All In, In All Cases Down, Hiding to the Surface, Indecent, Chapter 38 (v1, v2 & v3), **Finally, Literature for the Society and the (v1, v2 & part 1), a Wake-Up Call From Trunkies, (novel), Dark Matter: the Mind of Janet Koyotes, Evolution, (novel), Got Your Best On, Janet & Jan Together, po-em, Telling Poetry to the Streets, the Case-Deals (Ch-ch-un Unins, the Written Word, Prepare for for This, Unmarked, Living in a Big World, Puffed the Trigger, Ventures to the Unknown, Janet Koyotes Enriched, She's an Open Book, "40", Section and Other Stories, the Stories of Women, Prominent Poet (Koyotes edition), Hometown, the 2012 Databook, Prominent Young, Classic Moments, Fades, Stability Stability Stub Stub Stub, a Picture's Worth 1,000 words (color art book and ink art book), Life in Color, Post-Apocalyptic, Run Through Me, Under the Sea (graphic novel), Partial Reality, Revealed, 100 Hades, One on the House, Let me See you Stayed, Part of my Path, Rise Section Life & Death, Stay Working, Treatment, when you know you're the Pariah, Part of Poetry, a young Journey, Run Koyotes, Solider & Soldiers, Slits & Horses, Mister & Dem, Rises & Rises, Stories & Their, (art 10) Women & Crazy, Intense & Triumph, Oh, the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chase Theory, Writing to Honor & Change, Distinguished Writings, Breaking Stories, Unleashing the Mysteries, the Book of Scars, We the Poet, Life on the Edge, Revealing all your Dirty Little Secrets, Decepti Remains, Charred Remains, Hope & Creation, Reading the Curve, Layers of Creation, Dark Matter, Survival of the Fittest, Crawling Through the Dirt, Laying the Groundwork, Weathered, edo, ink in my blood, (bound) (4 editions), Enriched Poetry, occ& Enriched Prose, Enriched with Dirt, An Open Book, Literary Town Hall (2 editions), Prominent Poet (2 editions), 100 Words, 1,000 Words, the 2012 Literary Date Book, It Was All Prearranged, Cultural Touchstones, the Mission (issue edition and chapbooks edition), Purpose, Falling, Cheap Thrills, After the Apocalypse 2013 date book, After the Apocalypse (poetry edition), After the Apocalypse (prose edition), Enlightenment, Guilt by Association, don't forget to don't forget, read, here minimum, Post an Socratic, Drawing, Art is not Meant to be Touched, the Boston Park, a New Pen, Need to Know Keys (revised edition and extended edition), the "need to know" 2015 literary date book, an Silently Word, What Must be Done, AdHf, Salvation, the 2016 literary date book anthology, the Chosen Dew, Sleight in the Sanctuary, from Smoke, the Intersection, Infamous in our Prime, Anis Nin: an Understanding of her Art, the Electronic Windmill, Changing Woman, the Swan Road, the Significance of the Frontier, the Svetovetvora Upmsided, Harvest of Gems, the Little Monk, Death in Malaga, Memento Mori, in the Palace of Creation, R.I.P., Bob the Bumble Bee, Remnants and Shadows, I Saw This, the Dira, Thomas of Tea, Cracking Down Nineteenth, Blue Cellar Baller, nooem, in Your Heart the Apoptosis's Treadpods of God, the Adventures of the Key to Believing Bear, Anis Nin: an Understanding of her Art (second printing), **Deardard Dade / Charlie******

**Waynes, 12 Times 12 Equids Grass, a Marble Niche Pauline Bardsch with a Marble Apple in her Marble Wood, Challenge of Night and Day and Chicago Poems, Lighten Up, Met For From Here, Waterwheel, You Have Finally Won, Avenue C, Sturban Rhythms, Down Synonyms, the Dark Side of Love, The pill is a man's best friend, Angelo's Symbiosis is Good Boy of David's Spline, Poems and Stories from the Blue Cellar Book of the Dead, Get People, Death of an Angel, Ghost, Schmeer & Carmichael's View, Ghost Dancers Leaping from a Tame, the 4-0 Window, Open Woods, Adina Jankis, Interstice, Gunther, Cats, Stream Good Island, When the World was Black and White, a Petal Under Pavement, The Holy See of CEE Book 15 "Thousand to Volcano, Lost in an Echo, I Was Charles Branson's Secret Hestop, Erasable Bond, Royal Don's Death Scene "Is of The, Understood, Alcoholic Shogun, Champagne - Hot Water, How a Bullet Behaves, the Thing in the Lounge of WagonWheel (I Come in Avarice), Postcards from Exile, the Five Steps of Medchit, Stay in Formation, Shadowing Other Footprints, the Girl Next Door and Other Poems, Major Arcana, Sine Poetia Nalla est Gloria, Short Takes, Seeing Strangers, Re-Viewing Anais, The Tribes Joshua Drove out of the Land, Butchery of the Innocent, Hammer-Chained, No Raft — No Ocean, Daring in the Abyss, Give What You Can, Come Fly with Me, Out of the Web, Don't Tread on Me, Entering the Ice Age, Entering the Ice Age, the Line to Power, Fear the Forsaken, Falling into Place, Unknowns, Forever Bound, Exploding on the Scene, Moving the Earth, Autumn Again, Up in Smoke, No Return, Wrapping It Up, Link in its Chain, Start out of a Cannon, Incalculable Ink, a new era, Moby, Friction, Sex Drift, and Then he Moved, Approaching Front, Beyond the Gates, the Curve of Arctic Air, Idea, a Mad Escape, Testament, the New Deal, the Captive and the Dred, When the Walls are Paper Thin, Down in the Dirt v0.8A, Closing the Doors, Skilled Ramblers, When the World Settles, Along the Surface, Into the White, etc., From Nothing, Down in It, Wake Up and Smell the Flowers, Looking Beyond, See the World Burn, America the Last, Candy Fire in the Treetops, Wisdom in Broken Brandy Symbiosis Mashed, Grounded, Perfectly Impaired, I Pull the Strings on a redly extinct, Home at Last, Spiraling, a Rare Story, Treating Water, Black Cat, a Bull Infused, Ten Many Miles, the Path to Least Resistance, Hello goodbye goodbye hello, Planet Aport**

## Compact Discs:

**Men's Favorite Voice** the demo tapes, *Koyotes the Ined (MP3 Inclusive), Winds and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Acting Something is Sweating, The Second Acting Live in Alaska, Patmos & Koyotes Live of Cafe Alibi, Painless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Koyotes Soaring Things Differently, 50/50 Tick Tock, Koyotes Change Questions, Order From Chaos The Entropy Project, Koyotes Six One One, Koyotes Stop, Koyotes Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Koyotes Death Comes in Threes, Koyotes Changing Gears, Koyotes Dreams, Koyotes How Do I Get There?, Koyotes Contests-Collaps-Collaps, the DMU Art Connection the DMU Art Connection, Koyotes Questions in a World Without Answers, Koyotes SIN, Koyotes WZBD Radio (2 CD set), **Men's Favorite Voice** and **The Second Acting** These Treasures, assorted artists String Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life At The Cafe (3 CD set), the DMU Art Connection Indian Mix, the DMU Art Connection: Music Depression or Something, **Classic Radio Classic Radio Week #1, Classic Radio Classic Radio Week #2, Classic Radio Classic Radio Week #3, Classic Radio Classic Radio Week #4, Classic Radio Classic Radio Week #5, Classic Radio the Classic Collection Collection #01-05 (5 CD set) etc.** (audio CD, 11 CD set), **Classic Moments (2 CD set), Classic in Motion (4 CD set), 50/50 Something to a Hell (EP), 2014 Ten for the Price of One (EP), Ink, Ink and Hypocrite, the American Parody, Koyotes the Busted Stop, Proud Rider the Money Parody, The Fashion (4 CD set), pulsation the Evolution of Performance Art (13 CD set), Koyotes Live (14 CD set), the DMU Art Connection the Things They Did Not Do You (2 CD set), Koyotes Soaring a Psychobill (3 CD set), Koyotes in Paris (2 CD set), Koyotes in Paris (2 CD set), Koyotes and the Mountains of South Africa Run Through the (2 CD set), Koyotes "90", Koyotes Section and Other Stories, Koyotes the Stories of Women (amazon.com release), Koyotes "Daddy YoCo" (4 CD set) Koyotes "Inner" (4 CD set), Koyotes "Letting it All Out", Koyotes "What We Need in Life" (CD single), Koyotes "Made any Differences" (CD single), Koyotes "Headache" "Across the Pond" (3 CD set).***