

Max

Max has a small telescope
Max has a paper and pen
Max, the unpublished poet
Is longing for something

It's a summer night, Max takes his telescope outside
And lies on his back for hours looking at the sky
"Max," I say, "You looking at the stars?" He says "No, at the space between.
I'm looking for that star that no one else has ever seen
And when I find it I can claim it, it will be my own
And then I get to name it and the name will be a poem
About the heavens and the earth, all things temporal and eternal
It will be published in all the papers and the scientific journals"

Max has a small telescope
Max is in love with me
He's a dreamer and I know it
But there's worse things a man could be

"Max, I'm tired" I say "I'm going to bed," he says "Okay
I'll be there in a little while just as soon as it's day"
I drift off to sleep with the stars in my head
At dawn I hear a voice, "Don't move" is what it said
And Max the great explorer of all things heavenly
Is standing in the door with his telescope focused on me
While galaxies collide and novas fade to black
Max recites the poem that names the freckles on my back

Max has a small telescope

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John Llewellyn

I remembered John Llewellyn, I was driving down the coast
These were the roads we used to cruise the year he swept me off my feet
'Course I was just a kid, he was a little older
He worked at Half Moon Hardware, he had hair down to his shoulders
Bouncing off the borders of a small town in the summer heat

I'd tell whatever lies I had to tell and sneak away with him
Fly along the coast in his Chevette, hanging tough
We'd stop by Meadow's Chevron where the rest room had dispensers
We would find a place to park, we were immune to consequences
He taught me everything I thought there was to know about love

Ooh, danger
Ooh, danger

That sweet and salty summer I thought would last forever
But those were crazy times and John Llewellyn got the call
Got shipped out overseas, ooh that last long night
He was not afraid to love, he was not afraid to fight
And I swore I'd wait forever if he came back at all

Well, John wrote me lots of letters but they kind of struck me wrong
Talking about his buddies and their trips out to the warehouses
Full of innuendo, he got into talking dirty
And I felt so betrayed, I was confused and kind of hurt and he
Was like a stranger, just couldn't write him anymore

Ooh, danger
Ooh, danger

Well the months went by, I guess I kind of forgot
I fell in love a time or two, I really learned a lot
John Llewellyn came home, he called me right away
Thought that he could pick up on the games we used to play
Well by then I had grown up enough to be offended
I told him what I thought of him and that's how it ended

Well, I might have let it go, never thought of him again
But a couple of weeks later I read in the news
John Llewellyn took the curve and he was going too fast
They found him in a gully in a sea of broken glass
He'd survived a tour of duty but not the road to Santa Cruz

Ooh, danger
Ooh

So I remembered John Llewellyn, I was driving down the coast
Stopped in at Half Moon Bay to buy some gas and stuff
In the rest room I saw that dispenser on the wall
And it all came back, John Llewellyn's last call
And I cried all the way from Half Moon Bay to Lookout Bluff
Just to think that's all he ever got to know about love

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Fight the Devil

She wore her hair in a long blonde braid
So you thought she's be easy to understand
You couldn't have been more wrong but you didn't know it
Till you saw her hair loose and fanned
Across your pillow, and then it was too late

You were woven in her web of masquerading
In a way you would be unraveling forever
Like her soft wild stands of hair unbraiding

If you loved me, you would bring me roses
You would lie for me, steal for me
Fight the devil
You would call me angel, forget your own name
You would lie awake all night, lie awake all night

Those hot endless August nights
When you knew for certain she was gone
You sat in your attic room; you were sleepless and burning
With a pain as fierce and raw
As a razor, as a tearing at your skin
You were crazy with the pain, crazy with the heat
A sort of fever dream floating on
The sounds drifting up from the street

If you loved me, you would bring me roses
You would lie for me, steal for me
Fight the devil
You would call me angel, forget your own name
You would lie awake all night, lie awake all night

How trusting you were, how unafraid
Of falling, or surrender, of the devil, of the dark
When you called her name it was singing in your veins
But it seems when she called you sweetheart
It was just a title you vied for and won
And then lost in the next round to a worthy foe
Who met your standard and raised it
And you were powerless then but to let it go

If you loved me, you would bring me roses
You would lie for me, steal for me
Fight the devil
You would call me angel, forget your own name
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If you loved me, you would bring me roses
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If you loved me, you would bring me roses

You would lie for me, steal for me
Fight the devil
You would call me angel, forget your own name
You would lie awake all night, lie awake all night,
Lie awake all night, lie awake all night

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Camera

You have a list of regrets as long as a river
And a string of lovers that just won't stop
And of course you have roses but they don't last forever
So you get out your camera when the petals start to drop
This one was wistful, he played the violin
He had perfect pitch, his vibrato made you weep
Of course he brought roses and a satin camisole
The cut was not unflattering but the cloth was cheap

Get your camera, the sun is going down
It's going to be a long night, going to be a long night
Take a picture, nothing's going to change
You're safe against the closing of the light

It was your own two feet took you down to the river
And you only meant to drown yourself, stop the change forever
But as you stood to jump your hand went up to close your nose
The gesture so disarmed you, you sat down to think it over
All the times you practiced as a kid
Going through the motions, how to stay alive
It's tugging at your bones, you're a puppet on a string
And even in despair, you are programmed to survive

Get your camera, the sun is going down
It's going to be a long night, going to be a long night
Take a picture, nothing's going to change
You're safe against the closing of the light

It was a newspaper headline you saw last week
It said "Lightning Strikes River; Picnicker Killed"
As though the coffin would be draped with a red checkered tablecloth
And the grave site marked with a barbecue grill
As though your life goes spinning through the changes
Toward that freeze frame, the blink of a shutter
And you're frozen in time, written in stone
"Picnicker," "Pedestrian," "Jilted Lover"

Get your camera, the sun is going down
It's going to be a long night, going to be a long night

Take a picture, nothing's going to change
You're safe against the closing of the light

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The Girl With the Flyaway Hair

What about that girl with the flyaway hair
The pigeon toe and the wingtip shoes
She was hard to pin down, wasn't she
Mystery without a clue
Just the kind of girl you liked
The kind of girl you could swear
Just appeared out of nowhere
And she had that flyaway hair
Pigeon toe and wingtip shoes
Hard to pin down, wasn't she
But you tried, didn't you

There was a rumor
'Course you believed
Her father had a killing in stocks
Little good that it did him poor guy
Found dead down on the docks
Victim of foul play, 'course they tried
To pin it on her as his only heir
But the couldn't find a law that fit her
And she slipped out with her flyaway hair
Pigeon toe and wingtip shoes
Hard to pin down, wasn't she
But you tried, didn't you

What about that stormy day you saw her
Downtown by the bus depot
Wind caught her umbrella, flipped it inside out
She just let it go
It floated up between the buildings
Everybody turned and stared
But she didn't seem to notice
And the rain fell on her flyaway hair
Pigeon toe and wingtip shoes
Hard to pin down, wasn't she
But you tried, didn't you

You followed her down a one-way street
The wind hugged her dress to her curves
In a way that let you know she knew
That you were watching her
She turned in a doorway and you followed
It was a fly-blown, fly-by-night cafe
She sat by the window, you sat across

And neither spoke. She turned away
And let you study her. She seemed
Smaller and prettier up close
With fine little lines around her eyes
And a scar across the bridge of her nose
There was something in the way she looked
Her paleness or her slenderness
That made you feel protective
You had this wave of tenderness
And you closed your eyes a moment
It was something like a prayer
And when you looked back at her
She'd disappeared with her flyaway hair
Pigeon toe and wingtip shoes
Hard to pin down, wasn't she
And she had that flyaway hair
Pigeon toe and wingtip shoes
Hard to pin down, wasn't she
And she had that flyaway hair
Pigeon toe and wingtip shoes
Hard to pin down, wasn't she
But you tried, didn't you

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Kiss Me in Rapid City

There are a lot of things a girl shouldn't do alone
It's not like I go searching them out
But I'm flying blind and there I am
What are you going to do?
I got on a plane with my backpack and my guitar
Spent the first night at the airport, then I bought an old car
And a wristwatch, the watch lost time and maybe I did too
But the car kept moving and so did I
Now it's all these years later, I can't look back
And say for sure where the hell I've been, oh
Kiss me in Rapid City

There was a time my father would have blamed me
For every gray hair on his head
Well, maybe that's fair, I know for sure I'm to blame for every one of mine
He doesn't think about me much anymore
I'm the grown up daughter who moved away
He won't want to hear what I don't call to say when I never find the time
Well maybe I've run from everyone who tried to care
Hey, it's better that way, I'll call sometime
With my new address (write it in pencil), oh
Kiss me quick in Rapid City

Sometimes it seems what you least expect is what matters most
That's what I thought when we met
'Cause you told the truth, and gave me respect
That makes a world of difference
And all our lives, though I never would have guessed,
The space between us expanded and compressed
Until we touched and I learned what it meant
To really close the distance
So I'll write you this letter on a phone booth wall
Because I know you wouldn't be home if I called
Let it go, don't look back, oh
And kiss me in Rapid City
Oh, Rapid City
Oh, Rapid City

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Man With a Broken Wing

I had to look twice to be sure it was you
Crossing the street against the light
Your big coat flapping like a crow with a broken wing
Absently waving at cars that speed by
You came out of my past and caught me off guard
Caught off guard I duck in a doorway
And let you go by then I trail you
While I make up my mind should I call to you
Or let the chance go? When I saw you last
I'd be breathless trying to match your stride
Now your uncertain step tears at my heart
But I fight a desire to be by your side

Ten years ago we would meet in cafes
Drink wine in the afternoon, a heady romance
"You're a man who draws women," I'd say to you
I spoke in that brave and overly frank manner
That very young women use when they first learn
They hold a man's eye but before they realize
They're just being humored, I said
"Women are drawn to your need, to your weakness.
You're loud and you're handsome but you run
On that current of women you draw through your life."
You'd nod as though listening, your hand on my knee
And a vacant inscrutable look in your eye

I spoke for myself of course for you drew me
Against my reason; you were what I was not
And I clove to you for your mystery
And for the resistance that tightened our knot
But I lost you. You left town without a word
It was just that simple and that impossible

I'd walk the streets, I'd be looking for you
And on every corner, I'd see your ghost
And now here you are, and up ahead
The light turns red, I'll go up and greet you
When you stop at the corner...but of course you don't wait
You step off the curb, you're crossing the street

Well, there was a time I'd have plunged with you
Into that river of cars, but today
I stop at the curb. "No," I say,
"The current's too strong for me, and anyway
I've moved beyond that time, I've accepted mortality
And you, you still walk before cars
As though clinging to that illusion even though
Your recklessness has lost its charm"
You look so weak, you're all alone
I'm not unmoved, but I let you go
And the last I see, the wind takes your coat,
Sets it flapping like a hobbling crow

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Words

She has a good heart, good ideas
She has the sweetest touch
You just wish you could turn back time
And keep her from loving you so much
You curse yourself when you lead her on
But you don't want her to cry
How are you going to find the words to tell her good-bye?

You think you might just hide away
But she's there at the door
You take her in your arms just like you've done
So many times before
She makes you laugh and you know you want her
You know you want her to go
How are you going to find the words to tell her so?

Wish that you were still the guy
Who could break a heart and not think twice
Wish that you could walk away
And never apologize

But there she is with her heart on her sleeve
Sweetness to the bone
You think she's fragile like a little bird
You hate to think of her all alone
But you know she's deserving of more

Than what she'll ever get from you
How are you going to find the words to tell her it's through?

She's such a damned good listener
Why can't she just overhear the words
Between the words you say
And quietly disappear?

But there she is with her heart on her sleeve
Sweetness to the bone
You think she's fragile like a little bird
You hate to think of her all alone
Curse yourself when you lead her on
But you don't want her to cry
How are you going to find the words to tell her good-bye?
How are you going to find the words to tell her good-bye?

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The Truth About Disguise

When you came in the shape of a stray dog
I recognized you right away
And I let you in, gave you a blanket to lie on by the stove
And I told you "stay"
And all night long your eyes never left me
As I made the fire and moved around the room
It was the same sweet attention
I remember from you
And in the morning when you winked into the perfect silhouette
Of a black crow in a blue sky
I longed to follow and learn from you
The truth about disguise
Oh, the truth...

When you came in the shape of an old Dodge van
You surprised me, I'd come by twice
And I drove you around the block, listened to your engine race,
Kicked the tires and argued down the price
And I bought you for every cent I had
And drove you down the road out of town
And it felt so familiar to be driving down the road with you
I had to laugh out loud
'Cause isn't that just how we always were?
I'd drive a hard bargain, then pay full price
And you always had the answer
You always knew the truth about disguise
Oh, the truth
The truth about disguise

There was a storm the night you tapped at my window
With your long bare branches till I woke in the dark
And said "that was just a dream," but I threw the window wide
And aspen leaves came blowing in like cut-out paper hearts
Oh, the truth
The truth about disguise
Oh, the truth
The truth about disguise

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April Twenty-Second, Somerville, Massachusetts

April twenty-second, Somerville, Massachusetts,
A man with a dog named Marblehead who just has to say
That I look like Ellen Stone, the girl he loved in high school
Course he was young and careless then but no one even asked him
They just sent the girl away

And the whole town talked behind her back
The whole town talked behind her back

April twenty-second, Somerville, Massachusetts,
A man with a dog named Marblehead won't let me by
He says somewhere there's a stranger with my hands and her mother's hair
I could pass her on the street and not even know it
And he looks me in the eye

And the whole town talked behind her back
The whole town talked behind her back

April twenty-second, Somerville, Massachusetts,
A man with a dog named Marblehead won't leave me alone
Well, I am not kin to you, I can't complete your story
I have my father's hands and my mother's accountability
And a story of my own

And the whole town talked behind her back
The whole town talked behind her back

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Real Money

On the day you grew bored with your butterfly collection
You mowed the lawn in a long slow spiral
Knocking down the wildflowers, the tall grass gone to seed
You felt so powerful
Like you were turning over a new leaf
Watching the grasshoppers jump before the blade

And cabbage moths flutter confused and lost
In the swath you made
You've been running in small circles so long
You know your way around and around

The boys are starting to make real money, yeah
That isn't something that you'll find for free

You go down to the cafe where the college girls collect after classes
Drinking white wine mixed with something on ice in tall glasses
They are not all wise or all of them pretty
And there is no one among them who could make you happy
But you're drawn to motion and to things in sets
You can't take our eyes off them clustered at the tables
And you wish that you could be the one to see them
Catalogued and labeled
The waitress in her uniform is rubbing you wrong
Pronounce your final consonants and close your diphthongs

The boys are starting to make real money, yeah
That isn't something that you'll find for free

On the day you grew so bored that you just couldn't stand it anymore
You went looking for something but came home empty handed
To your moth eaten lawn and one wildflower
You must have missed with your power mower
And flying through the air like an answer to your prayer
Like a ghost or an angel, it's a miracle, it's a butterfly
You roar out the door and knock her from the sky
So you've got one more pair of crumpled wings to display
But what you're longing for got away

The boys are starting to make real money, yeah
That isn't something that you'll find for free
The boys are starting to make real money, yeah
What does that get you if you can't get free?
The boys are starting to make real money, yeah
That isn't something that you'll find for free

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Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday I was walking
Through the streets of Livermore
I met a man who said he'd lived
In Rotterdam during the war
"Yeah," he said, "I heard the sirens
Went to the cellar
When the bombs started coming
Something gave and something fell

And I was trapped there underground
And no one around to hear me calling
Well, I've never been a man
Who had much use for prayer"
he said, "Imagine the unholy thoughts
I had down there."

Church bells were ringing
And the sun came through the clouds
In those long misty rays
I said, "So how did you get out?"
He said, "It was a miracle
But on the third day
The army of occupation
Rolled the stones away
But damned if my rescuers
Didn't take me prisoner
Of war, and use me for the dirty work
Of digging graves
And searching the ruined city
For more souls to save."

On Easter Sunday I was walking...

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