

## **It's Dangerous, Charlie**

It's dangerous, Charlie  
Last night as I slept  
Thieves broke into my car  
Parked out on the street  
They went through all my things  
The radio, the photographs of you in the glove box  
And the toll road receipts  
This morning when I went out  
Everything had been  
Put back the way I left it  
It's dangerous, Charlie  
But there's no way to quantify the theft

It's dangerous, Charlie  
There was a man  
He was just a boy  
He stepped out of a doorway  
And he had a gun  
He held it to my head  
But his hands shook and his voice shook  
And then he ran away  
Before he ever took my money  
Well that might have cost me thirty dollars  
A pint of my own blood  
Is what that might have cost me  
It's dangerous, Charlie  
But there's no way to count what's lost

It's dangerous, Charlie  
I was driving through an unfamiliar city  
With a hand drawn map  
In the rain, in the dark  
And I lost my way  
I must have made a hundred thousand wrong turns  
And then I broke down crying with the hazards on  
Double parked  
A stranger pounded at the window  
He said "That's dangerous!"  
That's right  
It's dangerous, Charlie  
Goodnight

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## **Oh Tom, You Didn't Mean That**

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
Even babies don't like grown up men who talk in squeaky voices  
And come on apologetic

It's easier to act the fool  
Than to acknowledge etiquette

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
You're too contemptuous to be convincing as a sideman  
And you don't look good in red  
You need a spotlight and that puppet  
That has the wooden head

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
It was just a poem, just words for the sake of  
Nightingales and thimblefuls and manliest and smartest  
You have a way with words  
Trust the art, don't trust the artist

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
All your efforts at grand gesture are predictably predictable  
Banal and insincere  
I mean, is this the Taj Mahal, Johnny's tattoo  
Or Vincent's ear?

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
I know lots of guys who've put a baseball through the neighbor's window  
And then lied about who threw it  
And maybe you'll get away with it  
But that doesn't mean you didn't do it

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
How many times can you rewrite the story of your life  
Before you throw the pen away  
And give up the life you thought would make you write  
Like Hemingway

Oh Tom, you didn't mean that  
You're talking in your sleep and I'm fool enough to listen  
For something worth comprehending  
But it's dark, summer's over  
And the millennium is ending

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## **Anything Is Possible**

It was a time when anything was possible  
I took it on myself to talk you out of getting that tattoo  
St. Francis of Assisi and his halo of flying birds  
Although we were in San Francisco, I said, "Look at you  
Your perfect body. You don't even have a scar.  
How could you think that this tattoo  
Will make you better than you already are?  
And who are you to inflict this whimsy

On the man you're going to be in twenty years?"  
Ooh, yeah, anything is possible

Pull back the sheets in a motel room in Mississippi  
Or someplace with a thick dark history  
And a TV, a blower blowing cold air  
Four white walls, I said "We could be anywhere  
But last night I slept in a farmhouse in Arkansas  
Windows wide open, there were crickets and barking dogs  
At dawn there was a rooster and a barnyard full of sheep  
I could tell exactly where I was but I didn't get much sleep"  
Ooh, yeah, anything is possible

There was a night at the house where you were born  
Your parents' darkened bedroom. We tiptoed up the stairs  
Like thieves, like cats, like grown up children  
Whispered in your boyhood room among the wary glass eyed bears  
You said "I'm like a kid with too many toys  
Guess I'm still waiting for that one bright and shining choice  
So clear and compelling  
It makes every other possibility irrelevant"  
Ooh, yeah, anything is possible

We stood on a bridge across Tecumseh River  
Sun was going down and the moon was just a sliver  
Semi flying past in a dust and diesel whirlwind  
You said "When I look back at all of all my old girlfriends  
The ones I really gave my heart to are the ones I couldn't hold  
Just knowing they were going to slip away made me passionate and bold  
There are words I'll never say and questions you can't ask  
Just hold me like it was the first time  
Or like it was the last"  
Ooh, yeah, anything is possible

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## **Blue Dress**

I used to like your blue dress and I still do but I used to like it more  
When the belt wrapped twice around my waist and the hem dragged on the floor  
It was silky and real as I'd tiptoe in your party heels  
Looking down and thinking — so this is how it feels  
To wear your blue dress on a summer night, 1963  
That little girl is crying and she's hugging you around your knees  
Reach down and take her in your arms, say, "Hey you'll be alright  
You'll be okay," and you go out for the night  
In your blue dress that fits me now exactly like it fit you then  
There's still a ticket stub in the pocket, and your fountain pen  
And I'm not sure I ever meant to grow into this dress for real  
As much as I rehearsed it I still don't know how to feel  
In your blue dress on a summer night when I turn the page

And step into a photograph of you when you were my age  
For all the time gone by and everything I've grown into  
Sometimes being me feels like pretending to be you  
In your blue dress

I used to like your blue dress and I still do, but in a different way  
I like the inkstain on the skirt and how the hem is frayed  
I see it on a different scale and from a different angle now  
Than when I'd look up at you looking down  
In your blue dress on a summer night, going out for the evening  
Well, I still cry sometimes when I think about you leaving  
Me  
Your blue dress

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## **100 Miles From Music City**

I go back to the old place after many years away  
Imagine all the time I spent here just a hundred miles  
From Nashville and never made the trip  
Of course Nashville was a different place then,  
Yeah the Grand Old Opry was platitudinous and corny  
Country music was still hackneyed and banal, not young and hip  
And anyhow, we'd play our own music in the shade of the old oak tree  
When the afternoon became too hot to work but not too hot to play guitar  
And old John Walters would come down the road,  
Sing the old song a capella in his strange keening falsetto  
Drink too much of what he carried with him in that mayonnaise jar  
And tell us how they found his father in the bathtub on the day  
When he was through with wondering when his lungs were going to take him  
And then John would sing a song so pretty  
We'd all grow quiet for a long, long time  
While the sun sank towards the chicken barn  
A hundred miles from Music City

I go back and the old place is just forty miles from mammoth cave  
Just forty miles away and all the time I lived so close  
I never even had the urge to go  
I guess it's hard to see yourself give up and play the tourist  
When you're close to home and anyhow  
The hills behind the house were full of caves you wouldn't even know  
Were there until it snowed and only then by where the snow was melted  
Back from where the rock was open wide enough to slide in on your belly  
Until you found the place  
It dropped down to a room so big we all could turn our flashlights off  
And sit in darkness so complete  
That all your other senses were on fire and you had to taste  
The lips of someone next to you and breathe their Doctor Bronner's soap  
And wood smoke  
And the only sound was the ssssss of your down parkas touching

And you felt so giddy  
You drop your flashlight, listen while it rolls beyond a ledge then falls  
Forever until it hits the bottom  
Forty miles from mammoth cave  
And a hundred miles from Music City

I go back to the old place; no I never went to see the greyhounds racing  
Even though the track was only fifteen miles  
From where I woke up all those days and went to sleep as many nights  
Without the wish to see those greyhounds race around the track  
Like an unhappy metaphor for life, if I had ever lived that way  
And anyhow, I had a yellow dog and he was smart and irreproachable  
In all that time I never put him on a leash or made him wear a collar  
And he only ran off twice. First time he was gone two days and nights  
And I have never felt so lonely as when I was walking  
Through the hayfield and hollering  
And hollering and bleeding from the barbed wire fence,  
But there he was two mornings later  
Peppered full of buckshot  
And the second time he ran away, well, that was it, he  
Never did come back so I can't kneel beside his grave  
Fifteen miles from Coleman Racetrack  
Forty miles from Mammoth Cave  
And a hundred miles from Music City

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## **A Million Ways**

Winter in the midwest, bitter cold, bitter cold  
But a crowd gathers anyhow, in hats and scarves and boots and hoods  
And you're shouting into a microphone on the steps of Angell Hall  
Half your words are lost in the biting wind, but we cheer as one,  
Just like we'd understood  
And maybe it was the way the storm drew everybody close  
Maybe it was your delivery, or the rime ice in your beard  
But when you called for a meeting later on at your house  
I volunteered

I was good with a paintbrush and you set me to work making signs  
"Nice big letters" you said "make it easy to read  
Don't lose the message behind the design"  
And you sat on your threadbare sofa with the other guys  
Making notes and talking loud  
You looked so fragile in your worn out t-shirt  
I couldn't imagine you were the same guy I'd seen  
Shouting to the crowd  
Of course we fell together. Right away we were so close  
The line between us blurred  
We were like two halves of the same person  
We wore the same clothes, ate off the same plate

Spoke the same words  
And every morning waking twisted in your blanket  
Your breath would smell like ash  
You'd say "If this war is ever over  
I want to travel to Bangladesh"  
And there would be someone asleep on the sofa  
Someone in the kitchen making watered down orange juice  
Someone at the door, someone on the phone  
And a million ways to be of use

Who can say what happened?  
The war ended, meetings lost their focus  
Everyone drifted apart  
You took a job at a downtown bookstore  
And I told you there was a baby  
I swear to god it was true  
But I lost it, I lost my heart  
And I lost you  
So I was going back to classes  
Studying for my incompletes  
I don't even know how much time went by  
But I almost walked right past you  
When I saw you on the corner of East Liberty and Main Street  
You said you were fine  
You were going out with a business law professor  
I said, "so that's how we're going to change the world?  
Join forces with the oppressor?"  
You said, "Hey, you can live in that little world  
With your naïve politics, my god  
Like it matters who got arrested  
For the cause of fearlessness in the face of the riot squad  
As if all that soybean soup you ate at midnight  
Because it took that long to cook and it was cheap  
Ever fed a soul in Bangladesh  
Or helped some guy in a foxhole sleep  
I mean, pick a cause, any cause is going to work just as well  
If what you do it for is how it makes you feel  
About yourself"

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## **All the Girls**

All the girls who brought to you  
What you found no reason to refuse  
They bent back beneath your weight, oh  
Should you be so surprised  
That they loved you with such confounding complexity  
It made you tired, you were riddled with excuse

But it's not hard for a man to make himself unavailable  
In the name of worthy enterprise, oh

All the girls were splendid and pale  
They had elbows and knees, elbows and knees  
And such soft and lovely voices, oh  
And they were in love with you  
In love with you in love with you in love  
And you were quiet, vaguely uneasy  
But you trade their gracious passion for your affable indifference  
As if you thought that would ever be enough, oh

All the girls had tender intentions  
And pretty eyebrows drawn together  
They cried so easily, oh  
But they believed the words you said to them  
And they were understanding  
And that endeared them to you once they'd gone forever  
And your big heart beat with a flood of love and admiration  
Love and admiration and relief, oh

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## **Saint Fido**

You can leave your dog, Saint Fido, with the girl you love when it's convenient  
Travel to the city as a prophet and a tourist  
And everyone you'll meet is either famous or else planning on  
&nbsp;&nbsp; becoming famous overnight  
Unless it's morning first  
And you say, "Oh youth, you're just promise and illusion"  
You contemplate your own fading image in the mirror  
And settle on an attitude half wizard, half legend  
And half washed up relic of a halfhearted career, do do do

I saw you by the cold light of morning  
Saw your broken glass and the litter in your gutter  
Saw lipstick on your collar  
Saw you spilling dirty water in the alley  
And I didn't look away

So it's sometime after midnight at one all night bash or other  
And the boys have laid out every minor triumph they can chalk up  
That pretty dark eyed girl who wants to be a mermaid  
Is splashing in the bathtub in the kitchen of this Soho walkup  
And you say "Ah, New York, how can your ancient plumbing  
Take another generation?"  
You let a younger man walk his fingers up her back  
While you go off in search of the I.W. Harper  
And someone you can argue with about something abstract, do do do

I saw you by the cold light of morning  
Saw your broken glass and the litter in your gutter  
Saw lipstick on your collar  
Saw you spilling dirty water in the alley  
And I didn't look away

So it's your last night in the city and it's snowing, snowing, snowing  
And you're standing by a streetlight with that pretty dark eyed girl  
And the way the snow is catching in her hair reminds you of a hairnet  
That your grandma used to wear with tiny plastic pearls  
And you say, "Ah, at least I've got a story for the priest"  
You bend down to kiss her knowing she won't stop you, not tonight, no  
Not while the snow falls like pearls in Manhattan  
And you have a ticket in your pocket for a morning flight, do do do

I saw you by the cold light of morning  
Saw your broken glass and the litter in your gutter  
Saw lipstick on your collar  
Saw you spilling dirty water in the alley  
And I didn't look away

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## **Flood**

When it rains like this you know for sure that river's going to flood its banks again, because where else is the water going to go but wide, spilling across my little apron of land here where the river takes a jog, going wide and deep until it seems one more drop and my whole world's going to wash away, that's how close, that's when it stops, the sky clears, floodwater all runs downstream and overnight something miraculous happens, wake in the morning to a profound miracle, like the time I woke and looked out and it seemed like my whole riverbank was paved with shimmering silver, well, I grabbed my boots, ran down there in my nightgown and what do you think it was but millions of tiny little fish, beaching themselves, gasping out their last words, little "O"s of surprise, well, what could I do but go and gather up all my buckets and my wheelbarrow and go down there and pick them all up, the ones the crow hadn't already got to, and go through my garden with a basket of seed corn and a long stick, planting just like Squanto taught the Pilgrims to do the year they had that first Thanksgiving, you know, one seed, one fish, one hole? Of course it took me the best part of a week, and wasn't I glad when the last of those fish had a proper burial, but that corn grew to be the tallest anyone around here had ever seen, ten, fifteen feet tall, some of it, with ears like watermelon, and folks around here still talk about the year I grew that corn so tall, but I never told them how I did it, I never gave away my secret because it kind of felt like a pact, or maybe a test, and maybe I passed it, because the next time we had a flood, the morning after the water went down, I looked out and my riverbank was all shimmering silver again. Well, this time I got ready. I got dressed, gathered up all my buckets and my wheelbarrow, went down there and as I got closer I saw that, no, that wasn't any fish. That riverbank was covered with twenty-dollar bills. Can you imagine? And all I could think was-well, aren't I lucky that I have all these buckets and this wheelbarrow? And I filled them all up, two, three times over, some of them, which is a lot of twenty dollar bills, it took me the best part of a week just to wash the mud off them there in my kitchen sink, and rinse them, hang them out on the clothesline with clothespins to dry, run the iron over them because they got a little wrinkled, but when I was done, they looked as good as new, and I had a stack of twenty dollar bills enough to stuff a mattress with if I wanted to, and maybe I wanted to, maybe I didn't. I'm not saying that's what I did with them. Just that the next time it started raining like it wasn't ever going to stop, I got that kind of Christmas feeling, like you know something really wonderful is about to happen and you know you might

scare it off if you think about it too much but it's really wonderful and you can't stop thinking about it and you know you might scare it off if you think about it too much but it's really wonderful and you can't stop thinking about it and you know you might scare it off if you think about it too much but it's really wonderful, you know that feeling? Well, that was the year it rained and rained and rained. Days and days of rain and high water, my back porch steps walked out into a little eddy for days and days and days, and me feeling all Christmassy and wishing I just knew the end of the story and it would be over for days and days and days and days and days and days. Finally there was a day when my back porch steps walked out into dry land again and that night was the longest night of my life. That night was as long as most weeks would be if you went a week without sleeping, but I waited. I waited until I could see that the sun was up full and shining on that riverbank before I peeked open the blinds, looked out and what do you think it was sitting there on that riverbank looking just like in the showroom except for a little water running out the bottom of the doors, but that blue Pontiac. Same one you see sitting in the drive. Not a scratch on it. North Carolina plates, figure that out. Key in the ignition. Started right up. Of course it was the best part of a week before the mud firmed up to where I could budge her but after that I drove that car everywhere, probably would be driving her right now if it weren't for that flat tire, but no matter, radio works fine, I like to sit in the car and listen to the radio, get the weather report, but you know when it rains like this I don't need a weather report to know for sure that river's going to flood.

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## **Hard Work**

She was born a fairy princess you know  
Blessed at birth with charm and grace  
Oh, let her live a fairytale life  
Give her perfect bones and an angel's face  
Child of opportunity, pretty ballerina  
Someone moved aside the furniture so you could pirouette  
Nothing's going to stand in your way, you can move mountains  
It's just the mountains haven't moved quite yet  
Pretty dancer, born to magic and dreams  
Just waiting for a chance to shine  
There is no magic, there is just hard work

Check the mirror, life is not as it seemed  
At ten or twenty or twenty-five  
No magic road, no straight lines  
And the city is going to eat you alive  
What about your dreams? Opportunities?  
What about magic? Look in the mirror  
Say, "What's the fuss? I'm going to be young forever"  
Or, "How did I get here  
From there, and how am I going to get back?"  
You can dim the lights and hope for signs  
There is no hope, there is just hard work

Dreams shine like little lights in the dark  
Put them out and get some sleep  
What have you ever had that's better than being left alone?  
What else is yours to keep?

No one's going to pick you up and dust you off this time  
No one's going to open doors  
You're still doing pirouettes in the mirror  
For the man on the white horse  
Chase that fairytale like it was real  
Believe in dreams and silver platters  
Well, it's too late to have a fairytale life  
Getting by is what matters  
You're one in a million, maybe two million  
All waiting for a place in line  
There is no place, there is just hard work

There is no place like home, there is just hard work

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## **Cowboy**

I don't know much about that cowboy  
Strong back, smell of leather  
Scar runs the length of his left arm

Sun was up when I got home  
Crows laughing in the garden, I say shoo  
Anyone can drive a rusty red pickup truck  
Anyone can have a dog named Blue

I don't know much about that cowboy  
Crooked jaw, four day stubble  
Tattoo, "Mary," above his heart

Storm blew in while I was sleeping  
Hard rain flattened the nasturtiums, I say heck,  
Anyone can wear a belt buckle shaped like a conestoga  
Anyone can tie a rag around their neck

I don't know much about that cowboy  
Calloused thumb, gold incisor  
Dark blue road map on the back of his hand

I lost my keys, I couldn't find my shoes  
Flies buzzing in the kitchen, I say, sure  
Anyone can take a room by the week at the Pine Knot Motel  
Anyone can move as if their bones were sore

I don't know much about that cowboy  
Sidelong squint, one raised eyebrow  
Tiny slow twitch at the side of his mouth

There's his truck at the Cloverleaf Cafe  
I circle around the block, then I just drive past  
Anyone can rock their chair back on two legs and look right through you  
Anyone can grow up and have no past

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## Circle

I don't mind sleeping in the straw  
Or washing in the pony's trough  
And I don't miss the life I left  
I've no regrets for running off  
There's endless work behind the scenes  
It's dirty and it's hard  
I spend far more time in ripped up jeans  
Than in my sequined leotard

But nights when everything goes right  
I stand in a circle of heat and light  
And I have the power to change the dreams  
Of everyone in this shabby tent  
Make them believe, if not in magic,  
In money well spent

I'm not the best in the business  
But I earn my applause  
There are risks you know, these tigers have teeth  
But no claws  
And right away I was so good with them  
I never thought of going back  
I could smell the anger in their sweat  
I could coax them to attack

And nights when everything goes right  
They leap through a circle of heat and light  
With the power to change the dreams  
Of everyone in this shabby tent  
Make them believe, if not in magic,  
In money well spent

We were driven out of Beaumont  
When the Lazy "J" complained  
And we tore her down, packed her up  
In a stubborn Texas rain  
And standing by the trailers  
While the dogs and roosters load  
I think about a dark-eyed poet  
I met along the road

But nights when everything goes right  
I stand in a circle of heat and light  
And I have the power to change the dreams  
Of everyone in this shabby tent  
Make them believe  
In magic

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## **Flight**

I caught a flight to New York City  
Pilot was a New York cabbie  
It was white knuckles all around  
Passengers all broke into spontaneous applause  
Once we were safely on the ground  
"You have to trust the radar," you told me once  
We were flying through the clouds into New Orleans  
I said, "I could move east, we could be together"  
You said, "That isn't what I mean"

There were always stories  
You were above suspicion  
You'd kiss me on the corner just like you'd lost your mind  
But there's never enough money, enough motion, enough passion  
Enough patience, enough vision, enough comfort, enough time  
"I'll try to catch you" you said to me  
Calling from a phonebooth with a pocketful of dimes  
So I flew across the country just like I could fly  
Then dropped like a rock at the New York City skyline

I thought I'd lived too long to love like this again  
Thought my skin and bones had turned to leather and stone  
But you gave me back my grace, you knew what it was worth  
When you mirrored my attention just as if it was your own  
And I flew above the city, I said, "I can't get lost this time  
My veins are a streetmap, all roads lead to my heart"  
Then I crawl out of the subway, blinking in the bright lights  
At the noise and commotion and I don't know where to start

If it was different there would be roses  
You'd have a story and a name to love me by  
And I would have a history of knowing who could love me  
I'd still believe my honesty would crowd out every lie  
And our children would have fine bones, fine feathered wings  
And when they flew too quickly, I'd cry out, "Wait  
I love you," or whatever you say  
When you're trying to hold on and it might be too late

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## **Sweet Good Nature**

I love your fast car  
And the way you drive slow  
In the center lane with the windows rolled down  
Traffic going around you like a river around a stone  
And you're smiling  
This day is yours forever  
I press my hand against your forehead  
Like a benediction, like checking for fever, I say

Never grow old  
Never grow angry  
Never lose your sweet good nature

You put on some weight  
Then you took it off  
Cut your hair short then grew it out long  
That's how I know that time went by  
And you left me  
Then you took me back  
I believe in my heart I might not ever know why

Never grow old  
Never grow angry  
Never lose your sweet good nature

It's a miracle  
When the sun comes up again  
And you're sitting in the kitchen with the morning paper  
A cup of good coffee and a bowl of sweet cherries  
And I love you  
Just to feel you here beside me  
Is a mystery and it's powerful and holy  
And perfectly ordinary

Never grow old  
Never grow angry  
Never lose your sweet good nature

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## **Anything Is Possible (Reprise)**

It was a phone booth in the middle of the midwest  
It was raining like the devil. I was depressed  
I watched a pickup truck slowly float by with its hazards blinking  
Windshield wipers slapping, I said "I keep thinking

If I can hold it all together just one day maybe two  
It'll all make sense and I'll believe it's really true  
I wish I could take comfort in steady slow improving  
But I'm scared most of the time. I don't feel safe  
Unless I'm moving"  
Ooh, yeah, anything is possible

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