

Diamond Ring

My mother's diamond ring
witnessed everything
was there for the spark that made me
it was sharp on the hand that raised me

My mother's diamond
icy and silent
was there when glass was breaking
shook when her hand was shaking

Nights she came home late or not at all
I'd lie awake and wait for lights to rake my bedroom wall
Diamond ring
Diamond ring
witnessed everything
always was there, now mine to wear

My mother's diamond ring
Is hard and unyielding
if it was glass it would have cracked long ago
Long ago

What I was told and what I remember are not the same
I need a neutral witness, no stake in this game
Diamond ring
Diamond ring
witnessed everything
always was there, now mine to wear

My mother's diamond ring
witnessed everything
It was there for the spark that woke me
Sharp on the hand that shook me

Diamond ring
Diamond ring
witnessed everything
always was there, now mine to wear
Diamond ring
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witnessed everything
always was there, now mine to wear

Ghost Town Kite

When he died
I dressed in white like a bride
And walked through the ghost town along the riverside

Blood red rose
Passersby in mourning clothes
Lamp posts taped with signs and photos

make it all still true
still photograph of you
taking flight, a ghost town kite
I remember you

when sun broke
through the river mist and smoke
it drew shadows underneath an ancient oak

How could I know
I would see him in the crow
crying high in the branches of a willow

make it all still true
black crow black against deep blue
black crow cry and then you fly
and I remember you
make it all still true
black and white of me with you
taking flight, a ghost town kite
I remember you

When he died
I dressed in white like a bride
And walked through the ghost town

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West Memphis Arkansas

The river is the reason for this town. From here there's no sound, still I know it's there
out there to the east, in the dark, running deep
It's the trains and the interstate and the sirens in the distance
I listen to late at night, all the nights I don't sleep

He comes into town on the greyhound, under the radar, down at the playground,
watching for his boy, I know what I know and stay away

Hey Joey, let's go over to the river, going to make you a little boat of paper
float it on the water and let it drift away

This is where the road, the rail and the river cross
They cut across this town and keep going on to places you never saw
This is where the road, the rail and the river cross
But there are four ways out of West Memphis Arkansas

This little boy sleeps through all the noise, I wonder what he dreams as the sirens scream
and the train shouts back, clatters down the track, next block over
And in the morning he'll rise with the sun, my golden one, my gift, my mirror,
my hope, my danger, my masterpiece, my anchor

This is where the road, the rail and the river cross
They cut across this town and keep going on, someplace I wish I never saw
This is where the road, the rail and the river cross
But there are four ways out of West Memphis Arkansas
This is where the road, the rail and the river cross
But there are four ways out of West Memphis Arkansas

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Battle of Brooklyn

They took Park Slope and Prospect Park
We were outnumbered and underfunded
We fought but could not win
The battle of Brooklyn

Who ran with our battle plan to the other side?
Jamaica Pass would be left undefended
Ten thousand redcoats marched by night
Through Jamaica Pass toward Brooklyn Heights
We fought but could not win
The battle of Brooklyn

Wave after wave, shoulder to shoulder
They were practiced soldiers, well equipped
Our ragged army felled an oak
To block their path; they barely slowed
We fought but could not win
The battle of Brooklyn

We fought like wolves, we fought like hell
Our bodies broken as we fell
We fought 'til all was lost, and then we fled
At Brooklyn Heights we stood our ground
The bloody rain, the muddy trenches

And watched the other army's men
Prepare to take us on again

Then darkness fell and fog swept in
Our army undertook a stealth retreat
Across the East River, row ashore
We lost New York but won the war
We fought but could not win
The battle of Brooklyn

We couldn't win for losing
Until we won the Revolution
We fought but could not win
The battle of Brooklyn

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Danny Barnes

I went out last night to hear Danny Barnes play the banjo
What he knows about banjo can't be taught
And I thought about you and your beautiful hands
What was almost true when we were almost caught

All the way back to Calicoon
Crow black chicken and fly
Trick of the light made me see two moons
In the sky, and it was almost true

Crow black chicken
Crow black chicken
Crow black chicken
then you fly away back home

I remember you from across the room the first time that I saw you
Talking with your hands
And the last time I saw you was the other side of something
I can't ask a soul to understand

But when Danny Barnes plays the long neck banjo
Crow black chicken and fly
His hands on the strings saying things that I believed
Nobody knew, but they're still almost true

Crow black chicken
Crow black chicken
Crow black chicken
then you fly away back home

black chicken
Crow black chicken
Crow black chicken
then you fly away back home

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A Loves B

A loves B, he really does
He loves her tenderly because
she is beautiful, mysterious
and timeless as she ever was
and he knows it's his luck to hold her
walk this world shoulder to shoulder
but the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
is the secret no one has told her

A loves B, but he sleeps around
he runs free when he works out of town
it's a wonder B has not found
what he does when he's not around
I don't understand how he could risk
The story of love for a footnote asterisk
but the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
who is he letting down?

B loves A, she trusts him completely
and why wouldn't she? He treats her sweetly
and his secret life is kept from her neatly
repeatedly, repeatedly
what would happen if she knew
and how has she missed all the clues?
but the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
who is hurt by truths kept discretely?

I love B and I love A
and I love them both for the way
They love each other, and I pray
they stay together always
I ache for what I know and I ache
for what I'm scared to say
but the question that keeps me up at night

the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
the question that keeps me up at night
Which of them do I betray?

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The Weapon of Choice

The weapon of choice made a hole in my heart
A hole so deep nothing else mattered
My point of view, my memories
and all that was ever mine scattered

I didn't guess the weapon of choice
Even in all of my best fears
Of fever or falling or flood or fire
A siren's cry in my ear

Late in the evening, a mockingbird's call
knock at the door, step in the hall
late in the morning, no sound at all
the world too small

I never expected to know a weapon
As unforgiving or as true
As one that left a hole in my heart
Only passing through

Late in the evening, the ringing phone
my mother's voice and a dial tone
late in the morning, no sound at all
the world too small

The weapon of choice drove a hole in my heart
A hole so deep nothing else mattered
My point of view, my memories
and all that was ever mine scattered free
Remember me

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Unravel

What if you could unwind all the story lines that led
To exactly one moment in time, he said
Then he pulled his shirt off above his head
Stood like a diver over my bed
For exactly one moment in time
And I want to stop there
Big hands on twelve
Still trusting the stories we tell ourselves
Still trusting stories we tell ourselves

It was early in spring he sat on a chair
Out in my garden and I cut off his hair
Sparrows were building a nest in the eaves
Wildflowers unfurling their perfect green leaves
It's only hair, he said, and I said, it will grow back
And I want to stop there
Long hair strewn
Our comforting lies still possibly true
Our comforting lies still possibly true

Nothing is lost; everything is lost
After the frost I pull down the vines
Turning the leaves to the dark underground
Burying seeds for another year's round
Finding the sparrow's nest storm winds blew down...
It's wound with his hair
And I want to stop there
Long hair entwined
With sticks and moss and vines
And I want to unwind
All the story lines that led
To exactly this moment in time...

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Raised By Wolves

My mother found fault with my father
My grandparents slept in twin beds
And I would slip under the table at supper
At home in a forest of legs

My cousins were raised up by strangers
My brother could jimmy the lock
And I would sit under the lilacs
Dismembering dolls that I made out of hollyhocks

My grandpa was famous for nothing
My step brother knew the DuPonts

And I dug a hole in the meadow to hide
What I found behind Romeo's Restaurant

But I knew all along
you were out there and i remember
listening for your distant song
What do you remember?

My aunt left her title in Reno
my uncle was always alone
And I would sneak out after sundown
Disguised in a crown that I built out of bones

My sister kept track of transgressions
My step sister bullied the cops
and I was alone when the telephone rang
and there was no way to make it stop

But I knew all along
you were out there and I remember
listening for your distant song
What do you remember?

My mother found fault with my father
My grandparents slept in twin beds
And I would hide under my quilt with a flashlight
Write poetry over their heads

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