

## Fourteen Days of Rain

How it feels to step off the curb and hail a taxi  
My hand so naked in the rain coming down  
And you still sleeping deep and dark in your bed  
While the big hand rolls around  
How it feels to be crying in the backseat with the meter running  
Wondering what I got myself into now  
And racing neck and neck down Forty-Second  
In this black and white postcard of your town

Fourteen days of rain  
Fourteen days of rain  
Fourteen days of rain  
Fourteen days of rain

All I know about you, right hand, crooked lampshade  
Timex on the nightstand beside the Book of Hours  
Change of the Century on repeat until you feel it  
Moving through you with hydraulic power  
All I know is true, forty second stoplight  
While the meter readout quantifies this ride  
All I know baby, four bucks and change  
But a whole new world is implied

Fourteen days of rain  
Fourteen days of rain  
Fourteen days of rain  
Fourteen days of rain

How it feels starting over  
Reinventing hope and mystery, the rain in our faces  
And the whiskey in your kitchen, confessions and omissions  
Little lies to buy a moment of grace  
How it feels to be crying on the corner in a thunderstorm  
With yesterday's dress soaked to my skin  
And stepping off the curb, across the river of Forty-Third  
Past the flashing lights of vice and sin

Fourteen days of rain  
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## 1917

When he sailed for America in 1917  
Jimmy Brennan's mother slipped her son a note  
Said she'd taken his father's treasure from underneath the mattress  
And sewed it in the hem of Jimmy's coat  
Jimmy walked the streets of New York City, free and unafraid  
With an eye for opportunity and deals to be made  
He cut his coat open to find his father's treasure  
Was just a deck of cards painted with naked ladies

There's a new name written down in glory  
And it's mine mine mine oh lord  
Lead me, Moses, across the red dirt road  
Across the red dirt road

When Stuart Miller lost his job in May of '31  
He took a train to Halifax, which cost him most his money  
He saw a dirty picture lying on the club car floor  
Which turned out to be a dollar bill folded funny  
Stuart walked out from the station, dollar burning in his hand  
He gave it to a fortune teller for the luck within her  
She read his cards and told him – you are foolish with your money  
But you'll never be lonely – then she asked him in to dinner

There's a new name written down in glory  
And it's mine mine mine oh lord  
Lead me, Moses, across the red dirt road  
Across the red dirt road

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## Three Brothers

Maybe there were three brothers  
Far away and long forgotten  
Maybe there was a quest for love  
Fortunes told, an age old riddle  
Oldest brother drove his truck  
Through fields of gold and fields of cotton  
Youngest cursed his brothers' luck  
You were the brother in the middle

Faraway  
Faraway  
Faraway

Three brothers on the make  
Love to break and love to barter  
Oldest took champagne and cake  
Lost the wager, caught the garter  
Youngest searched his whole life through  
A diamond shoe, a white tuxedo  
One too big and one too little  
You were the brother in the middle

And I almost remember the night I left you  
Down, down, the stairway down  
The room so black when I awoke  
In silence, silent out your kitchen door  
Rolled my car around the block  
Then popped the clutch and morning broke

Faraway  
Faraway  
Faraway

There were three brothers  
Each more lonely than the others  
Oldest learned to see the world  
On black and white tv screens  
Youngest drove into the river  
White wall tires, black Camaro  
Gone to dreams of gold and green  
You were the brother in between

Faraway  
Faraway  
Faraway

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## **Avalon**

When Mary's brother Artie was discharged from the army  
He wore a dog's tooth on a chain and sat for hours, his hand covering his chin  
His eyes were too wise and scary, but I remember coming in with Mary  
Screen door slammed and Artie jumped out of his skin

Cartoons on the tv set, carpets smell like cigarettes  
Ballpoint pen, pretend tattoos... Artie never told us what we shouldn't do  
And he had a rock that saved his life, he let me use his pocket knife  
I carved a heart, a skull, a sword, and tied them to a ribbon and a pin

Avalon  
Avalon  
Avalon

Artie was a card sharp  
The night he joined the Euchre game, he threw down the winning hand  
And rocked back in his chair so wild I almost thought he was about to smile  
I know he didn't mean to knock the fishbowl off its stand

But the bowl came crashing down, goldfish thrashing on the ground and dying  
All the grownups laughed like it was supposed to be a joke  
Artie disappeared, I could hear footsteps on the landing, I was crying  
I let them all believe that it was because I cut my hand when the fishbowl broke

Avalon  
Avalon  
Avalon

What if we gave a party, Mary said, to cheer up Artie  
Isn't there supposed to be a big parade to welcome soldiers home?  
So we made a paper hat from the Daily Democrat  
Marched on down the center line, Artie marched in military time

People watching on the corner, cars pull over, honk their horns  
In the park a black dog barked, a soldier marching on parade!  
When we stopped at the light Artie just kept right on marching  
On and on and lost from sight behind a swarm of cars with flashing lights

Avalon  
Avalon  
Avalon

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## **The Contender**

What I learned to do for love  
Is to never look away  
Watch him in the ring  
Hands taped and dangerous inside his gloves

Duck a jab then take a left hook on the chin  
The crowd leans in

So the fight begins for real  
And maybe there are words for it –  
Overhand, upper cut, combination, cover up  
Connect, blood, sweat –  
Or maybe words are not invented yet  
No word for reflex, adrenaline, intimacy  
And no closet full of clothes at home  
Just muscle and skin, the fundament  
And the ritual of witnessing  
The fight. Fighting. Fist.  
This is how it feels  
This is what I want to say  
Lead right hook  
Straight left over the top  
Knock out punch  
Do you trust words?  
Do you question the flex of his spine?  
Some of his hate and love and anger  
Used to be mine

What I learned to do for love  
Is to never look away  
He lets his robe fall to the ground  
He lies down in my arms  
“Gently. Gently,” he says  
As I touch the mark on his breastbone  
The shape of an anatomical heart  
“The champion,” I say  
And it doesn’t sound foolish  
Even with his eye puffed shut and weeping  
And his mouth swollen to a stranger’s mouth  
Later, when he is sleeping  
I fit his fist against the pulse  
Above my ear  
And slowly count to ten  
“The champion,” I say again  
And I wonder where it can possibly go from here

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### **3rd Person**

She sees her life unfold, a story told in the third person  
She wakes from a cat nap, she says as she wakes

She dreams about drowning or driving to Jersey  
She knows half a man there who lives on a lake

She needs a drink she says, pouring a whiskey  
The whiskey goes straight to her head she said  
As the whiskey goes straight to her head

Her friend Tom the poet was an overnight success  
She could have had Tom, she says to the mirror  
Tom moved to Amsterdam to smoke off his depression  
She only likes Amsterdam three months a year

She needs a drink she says, pouring a whiskey  
The whiskey goes straight to her head, she said  
As the whiskey goes straight to her head

Harry died in Hollywood and Sara sings the boys to war  
All the little children have nothing to eat  
She looks good in baby blue, she says, thinking of the river  
Clear water running over little bare feet

She needs a drink she says, pouring a whiskey  
The whiskey goes straight to her head she said  
As the whiskey goes straight to her head

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## **I Rode the Train**

I rode the train past the churchyard of Santa Isabella  
Through the rain I heard the bells and saw the crowd with black umbrellas  
I pressed my hand against the glass but no one turned as the train flew past  
The churchyard of Santa Isabella  
Only passing through

I rode the train through the factory town where my days were stamped from steel  
Nights I'd comb my long hair down in a summer dress and slingback heels  
Restless in the dirty heat, lean out the window, call down to the street  
Of the factory town stamped from steel  
Only passing through

I rode the train past the field where I lay with my first lover  
Rolling waves so sweet and green and the sway of purple clover  
His raven hair against the sky, red tail hawk circling wide

Above the field and my first lover  
Only passing through

I passed the town where I forgot how to pray when I was young  
And I heard the sound of children singing songs in my first tongue  
I searched the street for that angel choir, flock of yellow birds flew from the wire  
In the town where I forgot to pray  
Only passing through

I rode the train while the sun sank below the earth  
In that deep twilight I fell to sleep and I dreamed the memory of my birth  
The arching of my back and the heartbeat of the wheels against the track  
As the sun sank below the earth  
Only passing through

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## Enough

Sometimes it's a story about a long lost friend  
Gets your running backwards through places you've been  
Until it's five in the morning, never got to bed  
But the sun's up bright, kind of clears your head  
Sometimes the waitress has a smile like Beth  
It's been so long a time it kind of takes your breath  
But she talks to truckers like one of the boys  
And you can't ride home on a stranger's voice

Then you find yourself in Iowa, little blacktop road  
You know somewhere someone waits for someone you don't know  
But you don't have to hurry, the day is passing slow  
And that's enough

Sometimes you remember that sharp dressed man  
He let the whiskey pour the whiskey and he shook your hand  
And he talked about the alligator shoes they wear uptown  
Might have talked too much – you just write it down  
Across the Mississippi you decide to go  
Through that town with the name of a town you used to know  
You can still sing the melody but you forgot the words  
Because they made you cry and your memory blurred

And somewhere someone's saying "hell with it all"  
Somewhere someone's turned your photo face to the wall

But you know there's someone somewhere who might answer if you call  
And that's enough

There are deer walking these fields at night  
See them by the road in your highbeam light  
And you slow down baby, ghost by cool  
You're not afraid of dying, just of being a fool  
East of Granite City at the Troy motel  
Hear the highway hum as you hold yourself  
Flying headlong toward the future just as if it might exist  
Close your eyes, fall asleep unknissed

And somewhere someone plays that song you used to know  
Somewhere someone finds a photo of you from long ago  
And in the morning in the mirror you'll see your own face one day older  
And that's enough

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## **Sugar**

He came from Canada and before that  
From a place he wouldn't talk of much  
I was lucky, he said, but the look in his eye  
Said nothing of luck  
He ordered good whiskey, paid with a fifty  
Folded his jacket on the back of his chair  
His shirt was fine white cotton  
Cut to fit him fine  
Oh sugar you'll never be mine

Time passed so fast the sun fell out of the sky  
With a violent flash of red light  
And the moon rose high overhead  
Leaving streaks of white  
His hands were not rough but he handled me roughly  
His touch was not sweet but he touched something sweet in me  
His hands still carried the cane, chains  
Three hundred years of hard times  
Oh sugar, you'll never be mine

There was a seashell on the windowsill  
I remember that  
And a black and white photograph of a woman  
With a scar like a cross on her cheek under glass  
And a newspaper clipping, barefoot boy  
With a stolen gun and a rich man's son

Yeah, I got away with it, he said  
Or I didn't but I got away and that's half of my crime  
Oh sugar, you'll never be mine  
Sugar you'll never be mine

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## **Field of Flowers**

Men fight war with fire and steel  
And with the force of their bodies, that was the weapon turned on me  
And like the fields of Flanders where the poppies grew  
I lay down the battle, but life chose life

And war fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore

Occupation soldiers carry rifles through my town  
They follow orders and they long for home  
My body an occupied city, this unborn child a soldier  
He's a weapon and a stranger, but a child is just a child

And war fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore  
War fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore

This tiny soldier knows nothing of war  
He smiles, dreaming of a field of flowers  
Blood red and reaching on long thirsty stems  
For the sun that shines on the world without borders

And war fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore  
War fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore  
War fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore  
War fights war  
I don't have a home in this world anymore

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## Away From the Lights

Maybe you were riding through small towns on the backroads of East Texas under a full moon, in a derelict Cutlass Supreme, wind high and badgering the car and the woman behind the wheel was not a mysterious woman but she had a mystery about her that meant something to you on a cellular level, in a participatory way, and just then on the radio, Carlos Santana tearing Samba Pa Ti out of thin air, and you turn to her to say:

Let's pull over somewhere away from the lights

But the moment already has a momentum of its own that you don't understand so instead you just watch her driving, cotton dress pale in the x-ray dashboard light and even when the song ends and Zenyatta Mondatta comes on, even when she exits the highway and power steers the roads all the way to your door, leaves you with a wave and a smile, even when you put your key in the lock and the microwave coffee smell of a place you've lived too long alone washes over you, and even later still when you're lying between your favorite rancid sheets while a slant of moonlight fans across a poster of a painting by Andrew Wyeth thumbtacked to your wall you are still turning to her to say:

Let's pull over away from the lights

As yet unaware that the urgency of those words belongs to a chance that won't ever come again, just:

Let's pull over away from the lights

Over and over until it becomes an idiomatic phrase in an archaic language without context or meaning still somehow comforting like a refrain:

Let's pull over somewhere away from the lights

Hi ho the derry oh

Ooh-ee ride me high

Let's pull over somewhere away from the lights

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## Almost Forgive

All the years since we last spoke  
I've been writing the stories that you might have told  
Once you drifted away saying life is a joke  
A curse on the joker who lives to grow old

Lie lie lie

I could almost forgive you for taking that ride  
When we ran out of gas saying you'd go for help  
But I wanted so bad to think you had not lied  
I waited all night, made a fool of myself

Lie lie lie

That night in Fort Smith you were drunk on your ass  
Smashed the last pitcher and broke up the game  
Then when Mike cut his fist on the carnival glass  
It was his blood they found when the cops finally came

Lie lie lie

Well I still have your shirt with the holes in the sleeve  
Where you held cigarettes to burn scars on your arm  
That night that the landlady told you to leave  
When she broke in to shut off the smoke alarm  
And if only I'd known it was hell for a ride  
When you loaded your stuff in the trunk of my car  
But when Mike called your bluff and you called him outside  
I felt sick to my gut you might take it too far

Lie lie lie

All the years since we last spoke  
And all the stories that you'll never know  
Because you took out the world in a cloud of blue smoke  
Like a man who has nowhere to go

And I could almost forgive you for taking that ride

Lie lie lie lie

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## **Faithful**

High wind and listening for a knock at the door  
Cold night air comes rushing in the arms of the one I'm waiting for  
High wind and listening for the sound of my name out loud  
Yellow candles flicker down, flicker down, flicker out

But I have been faithful to you  
I have been faithful to you

Crowded room, Chicago blues, touch on my arm  
Smoke and leather press against me, leaning back into the bar  
Crowded room, Chicago blues, trouble and wine  
Fall together through the haze, hand on the small of my spine  
Faithful  
I have been faithful to you

Last train, driving rain, no need to ask  
Sharp dark suit and ruby, passing back and forth a pocket flask  
Last train, driving rain, as if we both knew  
Words we spoke were dark and dreamy, dangerous and partly true  
But I have been faithful to you  
I have been faithful to you

Black cat in the brambles where there once was a town  
Slow dance in the broken glass that's tumbled down, crashing down  
Black cat in the brambles, holding muscle and bone  
Jack weed and sorrel in the cracks between mortar and stone  
Faithful  
I have been faithful to you  
I have been faithful  
I have been faithful to you

Ebb tide, September night, water like glass  
Step into the ripples where the phosphorescent minnows flash  
Ebb tide, September night, following in  
Moonlight walking across the water, across water and skin  
Faithful  
I have been faithful to you  
I have been faithful  
I have been faithful to you  
I have been faithful  
I have been faithful  
I have been faithful to you

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## Free

I was yours for the time it took to climb the stairs, let myself in your door  
Dogs were howling out in the yard as I walked through your empty rooms, I was yours

When I left my fingerprints on your sugarbowl, on your piano's long smooth legs  
I was yours for the time it took to cry myself to sleep on your bed

I was yours when I heard your key in the lock and I fell down the stairs, broke my rib  
Yours when I tore my clothes on your rosebush and crashed through the laurel hedge, bloodied my lip  
Yours when I grazed my throat on the razor wire and bruised my hip, scraped my knee scaling the wall  
I was yours for the time it took to untie and free the howling dogs

For the time it took to climb the stair let myself in your door  
I was yours

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