

Messages



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Bars

It's so hard to tell
who is keeping whom
It's as if each night
we trade around

Sometimes you have the keys
Sometimes I have them

The thing is
we never do anything with them
it would be easy
to unlock the door
but we never seem able
to search through the ring
find the secret
that locks us on two sides
of our lives

Bars seem more comfortable
than freedom



Messages

We try to keep in touch
the problem is too many keys
no, that's not quite it
Too many ways to say hello
It was simpler when
all you had were letters
Now you're never sure
what is going to be seen

The lines get crossed



The Palace

I promised you
that we'd go to the Palace
Bright lights in the big city
I called you my queen
and you laughed

We tried, didn't we
Hopped that train
but we were stopped
at the rail yards

We ran like the wind
screaming,
trying to keep our things
in our arms
You lost your bear
I lost the keys to our place



Wrong side of the tracks

You told me you were born
on the wrong side of the tracks
I didn't believe you
you spoke so well
you seemed to know things

But at night
you'd cry
while you were asleep
Sometimes you would hit me
while fighting something
or someone

It was hard
seeing a guy so big
so strong
as a little boy
from the wrong side of the tracks



You were coal

You said you were just coal
black
making everything around you
black

Bad for the lungs
You grew up in a coal town
and you've got spots they say
So the dust
got further
than under your fingernails

You said you were just coal
black
making everything around you
black

I tried to tell you
that coal made us warm
made steel
gave us the world we have
and you just looked at me
and nodded

I don't care
Sometimes
coal will shine



Tiger Eye

What goes on
behind those tiger eyes
I see so close
when I wake at night
sweating

What goes on
behind those eyes
I love so much

Are you watching me
while I sleep
what are you planning
you look so fierce
and gentle too

Like a tiger
watching her cub



Beer Talk

It doesn't get any more clear
We fight when we drink
we fuck when we drink
we hug
we snarl

The last time
you threw your keys
at my head
accusing me
of, what?
I can't remember

I threw a book at you
and said
get a clue
You laughed
grabbed me
tripped me
onto the bed



Spider Threads

You said
we were two lines
headed for each other
it was inevitable that we meet

You said that nothing
would ever separate us
once we met
after all
we were two lines
heading toward each other

What could go wrong



Lines never line up

Have you ever noticed
how lines never line up
you get one to where you want it
and all the others go out of whack

It really seems
sometimes
that the only things
that run parallel
are the curves

We were the curves
we fit each other
we fit into each other
and the rest of the world
went on pretending
that it was all parallel lines



The siding

Somewhere along the line
you switched
you ran off onto a siding
or something

I never noticed
I thought you were with me

but when I looked
you were far behind
at that siding

Who was there with you



Nootka

You said you had been to Alaska
you said you panned for gold
on the Chilkoot Trail

You said the sun never went down
it was shining
when you left the bar
at 4am

You said the ocean
had fish that jumped out
and into your frypan
that the birds
scuttled around your feet
so all you had to do
was pick them up

You said you bought a ring
in Haida Gwaii
and lost it
In Wyecombe
You watched them carve
a totem pole

You said the slats
of our bed
were Alaska Yellow Cedar

So I've been to Alaska too



No gray areas

Black and white
and all in angles
that's what you are
That's how you think

You can't see shades
you can't understand
that something circular
will cast a shadow
that looks straight

You can't see me
I'm more than black and white
I'm more than straight lines
You only see
what you first met
and what you want to see

But I'm round
I'm around
at least until the sun goes down



Shithole

I loved that place
it was just a shithole
behind a restaurant
but we lived there
for the happiest days
of my life

We would fuck all night
and sleep in the morning
before getting up
to make breakfast at noon

Then back to bed

Who cares
that we had no windows
We didn't need them



Beaver

Sometimes I swear
you were a Beaver
in a past life
You gnaw away
at something I said
just keep at it
for days on end

I don't know
half the time
what it was I said
or why
but you heard it all right
and you never let it go

Well
you know what happens
to a tree
that gets gnawed
and you know what happens
sometimes
to the Beaver

Don't you?



Bees Wing

You called me your bees wing
after that song
by that Thompson guy
you listen to so much

You said I was delicate
that I couldn't settle down

It was you, you bastard
that wouldn't settle down

And if I'm a bee
I'm one that you put
upside down
and backward
on a yellow flower
Just so you could look at it

Sometimes songs are true



A set of keys

Something happened
when you gave me
my own set of keys
something changed

It was like a switch
flicked in my head
I could now go home
alone
while you were somewhere else
without me

Was that it?
Was it that we didn't
go through that door together

I hate walking in
to an empty place
cold, with no laughter
no hand on my ass
no breath in my ear
saying
leave the dishes
let's fuck

Those dishes
when I go home alone
I do the dishes



You wanted a hobby

You wanted a hobby
You took up photography
but you never managed
to make your darkroom secure

You never made us secure
you were content
to let the light leak in
onto our developing picture

Mostly I didn't mind
those light streaked images
You said they were unique
the element of chance
introducing the essence
of surprise

Mostly I pretended to believe
your bullshit



I don't want to cut the string

It was like a Catalpa tree
in the spring
Creepy
all those pods
dangling there
refusing to drop

Like a cat
who has eaten string
and shits it out for days
it dangles
it drags around the house

Sometimes that's what we were



I was a fence

You never liked fences
you said
they were confining
they were constricting

So you ripped them apart
made a hole
No need to go around
when you can go through

I was a fence
you ripped a hole in me
and you went through



Warning signs

There was nobody
to tell me
just how dangerous
that crossing was

How was I to know
that those lights
that bell
the gate
meant I should have
stayed away

You were so pretty



Close-up

I love cedar
the leaves so soft
and green

Then one day I looked close
and saw worms
horrible black eyed worms
coming out of those leaves

I loved looking at you
but one day
I got too close
and your ears
were full of wax
your eyes red
bloodshot

and your toenails

I loved you
but I looked too close



I am a brick wall

I am a brick wall
and you are a fancy new car
reflected in my windows

Look how you shine
let's ride
into the country
we can put the top down
and the wind will blow my hair
over the seat
toward all those losers
behind us

I am a brick wall
and you are reflected
in my windows

Go on
When you pass by again
tell me what the wind felt like
in your hair



The Laundry

Each day you trudged
down that lane
to the laundry
where you earned our living

When you came home again
I had a nice smile
and a meal ready
Maybe we can go out
to the bar
and meet some friends

Maybe
you said
Ate like it was coal
to a furnace
and dropped
onto the couch

I smiled
tucked a pillow
beside you
and went back
to the kitchen



When you hit the curve

It's funny
how, at first glance
things seem straight

We don't see the curve
in the distance
as long as things are moving
in a straight line

Later
when we hit the curve
we notice
as the dishes slide
off the table



What do they say to us

A still, cold day
with a sky
almost cloudless
the sun humming along the wires
and bending through the glass

The telegraph pole
doesn't look like a cross
It was always the cross
that looked like a telegraph pole

You can hear the messages
long trapped
in the wires
never to be delivered



Put me together

Look at these dead guys
pioneers or something
their gravestones shattered
and pieced together

That's what I feel like
when I'm with you
shattered
but you piece me together
with bits of cement

When I'm gone
as long as these guys
have been gone
will anyone come along
and say
There was someone
in pieces
picked up and put together
by someone else



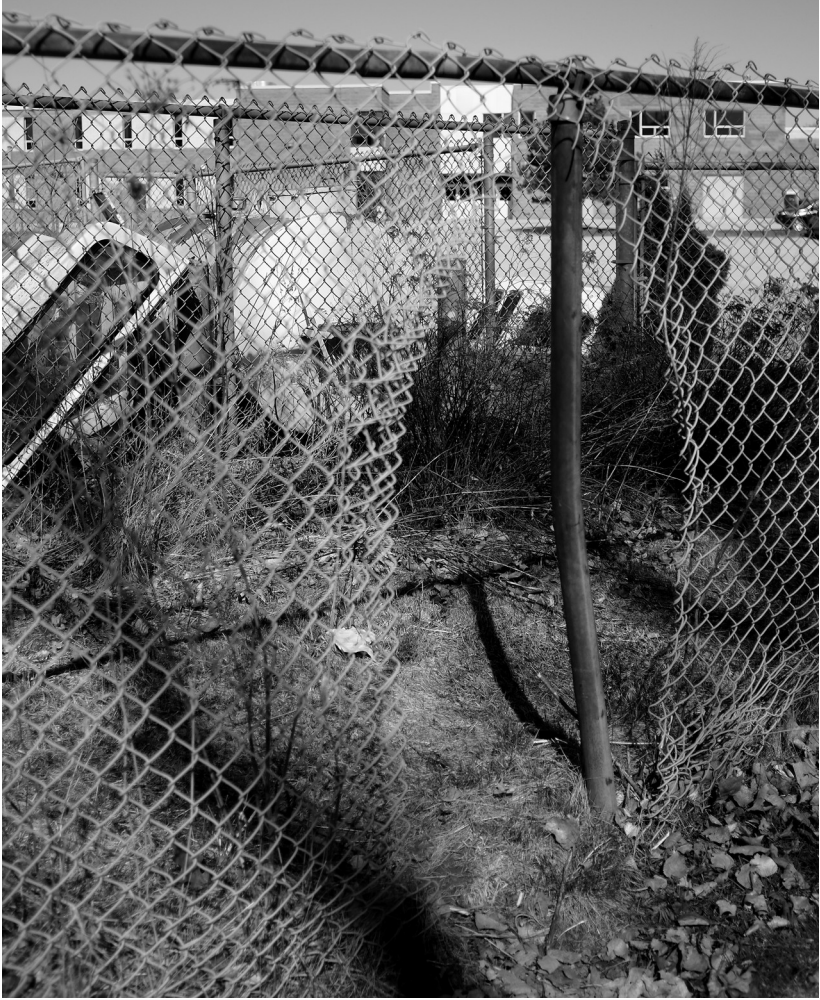
Not very Romantic

There is this photograph
by some old dude I should know
Of a wall in Spain
covered in little windows
and bullet holes

The best we can do
is a little window
that isn't a window
and a discarded sign
with a couple of nail holes

Not exactly sun baked adobe
in a town square
Our window
is behind a garage
on a used car lot

but at least we can both look
and say
Not very romantic



During Math

Remember that fence
by the schoolyard
We used to squeeze through
and head for the woods
on the other side

You would lean up
against a tree
and I would curl
into your lap
like a kitten

Once, I opened your zipper



Pages melting into each other

Used up and discarded
by a fence
the winter snow
and spring rain
has finished the job

We were like paperbacks
that read each other

I can recite you
You can recite me
No need for pages now