

wash along the river
uproot recent history

you seek higher ground.
walk along the tracks
avoid the floodland.

Now the river is poison
can't plant in its wake

dead fish float in scum outlining the bank...
mouths open
gills swollen.

wheeled out
set out on the cutting table
use a narrow knife to open me up
rub lemon on my body
ignoring the cuts...

my sister
dear, my loved one
come below and we will travel
to the Orient
hideaways we can only reach by boat

I need you
so I can hear myself only

the flood attracts insects
they kiss
the wasted remains

a lucky break

if you can't take it with you
I can ship it to you, remember
pack light

how far can I travel
to hear you...may I sit here a while

you heard what I said...but did you notice
the lightning.

When I met you I was happy.
genuinely happy.

In this, you will find fault
that you are known
 have been unknown
will act against reason to remain unknown.

Who would have guessed?

Turn around...I'm tired of looking at that bleached white shirt
the back
touch will not reconcile your anger

too much said for forgiveness...
my sense of smell dulled by the cold...
here
there will be no thaw
because there has never been a hard frost

if you didn't have a car,
I could give you a ride.

before a certain dawn.

it will take hours to straighten out these curves
in time
and still you are not hungry.

a hotel
where it is free to sleep
but you pay to wake up

without a call
still asleep

Along the River
they hide
death merchants
rats and skin-flints
tie you a cut-rate bargain

get ready
fast for three days
training for nasty work

the knife sings into the skin
warm metal licks drops of blood
surgeon's stained fingers

turn him over on the other side
so the sun can bake the back

Now, I'm being fed
don't have the use of my hands
still trying to gesture to you.

Quit trying to jerk me around. I'm not blind. I know what's
going on here.

Put on your clothes.

You think that I don't see. That I'm just going along for the
fun
Give me a chance to find out what it's like.

Wait until we get to the ocean.
met her tonight
from the mirror you distracted me
we were talking
a mosquito...probably nesting indoors.
so tropical in here.

Finish me off
I can't even brush a fly from my forehead.
You plan a winter safari.

I watch you dance to African rhythms
you follow your own logic...where logic applies.

have an apple
they weren't damaged in the flood

Little to say about all the destruction
so little to salvage

help me get going again.
The river draws you along.
loss of will
won't eat

I fetch you a fresh pack of cigarettes.

the script runs thin
 asked to improvise
 fried eggs
 not done too well
 the yolk streams into the white
 some ketchup...some toast

I get you a coke.
 Not too much longer.
 The taxi
 not my car
 and yours is broken.

too early for a nap
 too late to still sleep

a sliver of light dominates the room
 can't get up
 an aura of sick warmth presses in on me
 grasping at the base of my spine

dream's breath
 my heart in my throat.
 I cannot swallow.

each morning the pain grows worse
 my medicine tastes terrible.
 the next customer waits to use my bed.
 now blind
 I grope along the legs of these merchants...
 I hug the wall
 I inch forward.
 I enjoy it.

will you be along, soon.

F. WINTER WHEAT

talking with food in my mouth

broke his shovel

swore

the wrong body was buried in
that plot

price head

up

corner the market

too warm this winter

the wheat sprouted before

a heavy snow

too early

what to follow all this by

buried my head in the pillow

borrow ten grand from that boyfriend of yours

wait until next season

Kansas

bloody Kansas

still fighting your ancestors for a piece of history.

ate toasted rice in

Peking

onion-flavored chips

in San Fran

each kiss

a snack

wait for dinner

in between meal treats

spoil dinner.

the champagne

it's not pink..it's veined

with blood

separates as it holds together

How can you leave the table before dessert
 dinner took too long, we never got to the pudding

sell! sell! sell!
 if only you didn't talk so much...eat! eat!
 During dinner,
 I take three calls...business...the wheat
 the price of a sandwich
 we're out of buns
 burgers on white bread
 the ketchup running through

lend me your pen.

You'll forget to give it back

So follow me around.

I will.

If you have something to say, say it now. I have work to get
 done.
 I just can't say it right out. That's a little abrupt.
 I don't have that much time.

My hand stiffens in the cold...
 can barely manages a handshake
 you bring me through.

Your words ride the waves of wheat.
 I try to use my words to become flesh.
 Breathe into them for luck.

To bring your statue to life. But you art is
 not a word.

I push over the chair in your living-room

so
 you like him he tells you
 you've been waiting
 his words so full of flesh
 teeth marks
 punctuate

he works in the field
strong and touched by the sun.

He works well...digs deep
prepares the field.

This field will lie fallow
and this field will receive the seeds.

You borrow to pay for the seed
borrow on next year.

Sometimes, your words
 the only guarantee.
But your word is work. Talk with tired muscles...
sure and trustworthy,
avoid illness. Avoid worrying too much.
In the winter, gamble the spoils
wine-flavored kisses

lose yourself to the
charms of the city.

You start to dig into your reserves.

Out of practice
your muscles become soft.

You cannot wait
for the promise of spring

a dress that tears so easily
the cotton is worn

I am in a suit
I sit on the grass. It is very warm.

You led him on with sweet talk
he got mad at you...
couldn't keep track
kept ploughing over the same ground

sweet talk don't lead nowhere
can't build much of a life on sweets honey and cakes
But he's waiting for you...

Come onto the raft, honey.

In the field sharpening his tools. No doubt what he had
in mind.

And you felt what he meant.

When he spoke,
he tore words
from the wind.
All was written on flesh
or muscles.

laid into that Kansas earth ancestral
and frightening
left there
in time to plant

skeletal, you needed time to think
nothing would grow.

He thought about the farm:
this family was business

Daddy and the girls went
down to Florida in the mobile home.
Your two brothers ran off to Chicago.
Only you and a few hands to tend the farm.

The news grew worse.
Len ended up in Africa and
Bill got beat to death
outside a bar in Kankakee.

Tossed the body in the river,
the killer walked
away with a story.

What to make of this?
A trying season ahead...

A good storyteller
lets the words rob him
of his being
Each retelling awakens
a spirit in the listener.

In the wind he felt the
spirit of the wheat.
You cupped your hands to your ears.

G. STATE OF SIEGE

the letter
sent from Amherst, MO.

thanks for the poem

rafting down the Mississippi

damage
already done
I lay on the operating table
too long
sewing machine
would not
tie up loose ends

nasty bit of affairs.

in the whisper of the scalpel
the murmur of the anesthesia

hope to make the city by daybreak
getting pretty good at this
blow the lid off the whole damn thing

rolling mud balls
got big plans

by noon we hit the shore...
AT runs ahead
Don't go in there
 in the cave

There's nothing in there. You'll fall.
I've been there before.

But you find something that I missed.

AT
caught you running in the mud.
you were flying
sending up a trail
precipitating behind you.

I couldn't keep up, even running.

Lost together in the caves.
It all started as hide-and-seek.

Come down, come down.
I balanced at the entry way...
struggled when I lost contact with the light.
Your voice led me through.
I passed freely into the depths..no longer afraid.

moved as a cat,
you saw things in the dark.

passion,
a skeleton with visions.

a guiding lantern finds my clumsy
exploratory kiss

you sparkled in the flickering light.
In time, we would make our way
deeper into the cave.

the longer we stayed here,
the more we used the shadows to piece
together our playground

a play-
ground, you are impatient with the game
and thirst for more light.

Daddy tore you away from what you found.
We couldn't go on further...
ripping away from my side...
losing my pal.

I was buried in the caves.

You got hold of the architects's plans.
complained about my changes.

You couldn't look on me without sneering.
I bore your father's mark?

AT got left in the kiss, buried in the cavern.

The quake rumbling in the ground.
some sacred sign
the miracle serving as a gift to any charlatan
preacher:
-Stay away from the caves.
Down there
carnal desire.

You knew it wasn't like that.
More like shadow puppets.

The shadows mimic passion. Everybody loves a party. I asked you
for a dance, rather embarrassed.
Do you remember what happened in the cave? Yes, so?

Losing my talent for recounting that experience
the insults begin
claws scratching on glass

You bore me
and I can only threaten
with time..
what we will do
can't do now..my muddied plans.

Swim in the river with me.
Make it a fair fight.

But I've been up and down this river
too many times for you .
none of this will be fair.
They drew the boundaries..this was a free state.
In the present
I only obey...
only enslave with my version of the future.

Come out on the raft..into the center of the river,
where the currents are treacherous.

You and I
and the river betray
mad at us both.

I asked you over to tell you about the game in the caves. You had forgotten. Thought that I was making it all up.

My memory became ridiculous. It fueled my anger and hurled accusations at you.

I wanted to tell you about my new game.

To hold out
in order to return.

Unfinished business.

Almost like insects,
rode them belly-up
they brought pleasure to themselves.
Reach in and pull it out,
like some organ
carved your name
AT

You would not speak about the cave.
You refused to grow
getting smaller day by day.

I had a terrible time
thinking about nothing.

Ocean shells
now fossils in the cave.

gave your history lesson. Marks on your knees,
mud smudged on your face.
Still
so damn pretty.

Slipped down there,
your sixth sense
didn't see you through.

I didn't talk about the accident.
To me it was no accident. Did it all on purpose.

We were going to stay down in the cave for a long time.
We brought food down there ...smoked catfish

and money rolls. Hide down there quite a spell.

Got pulled out
yanked by the hair.

I cannot see your face.
My hands trace it from memory.
Words roll along the fingers.

a salmon lightly peppered
in butter
lemon
not tampered with...

H. ABOVE THE TELEPHONE

Their money clips bursting
they've already bought time.

Your back, it turned to me.
I approach to tap your shoulder,
but some gangster intercepts my path
and gives you a hug.

The zebra cracks its tail.
You achieve enlightenment.

With all the money in my pocket,
I paid for that picture of me.

Trout fried in butter
and new potatoes.

Now that I've heard your story,
you can untie me.

What can I do about it?
Tell another story,
Love what happens, but you never know the characters...too few
details.

you were in the classroom
I waited for you to come out.
Driving to the store, saw a burgundy car
a Honda, like yours.
followed it for a block
different license plates.

drank milk with chocolate
spilt
during a sonata
on the piano

your nails against my teeth.

hang up and call the police

are you in danger
right now

they're going to kill me.
I know what to say
not what to say to you.
bits of words, your phone number.
the gods have me freed.
 out of Leavenworth, Kansas, out of Missouri,
out of time
 out of this world.

this place
not zoned for building.

a bare bones budget
nothing to waste
nothing to save
no-one

fetch me a rum and coke

in the time it took you
to

I never...

share
with the architect.

get him out of here.
I'll clean up.

say it now
what I couldn't say
on the phone
without looking at myself in the mirror

contemplated hit and run
not easily frightened
 but felt fear

can't get over you

boring
into the base of my skull

to get over it

a little more mechanical

watching you
spent all your energy being yourself
taking it all apart

arrive in the nick of time
with a present.

Your pet lion roams the halls
unfed

at first
said pretty much of anything
words...spoke for their sake
then my sake
to hear them again

tape recorded myself
my conversations
left out your reply

after saying what I had to say
what I had been saying

only then can I say
what had to be said.

sees so well at my request

camera finger
adjusting
the scene
to follow your mind.

I'm going to pick you up for the party
at eight.

But
I never told you about the party
assumed you would come
you enjoy parties
over the telephone

you tack one of your photos

to the wall
a reminder

turn on the tele-vision
funny people seen three times
at least

find yourself repeating them
order breakfast
 pizza from the
night before.

I like it
and I log on
as sort of an imposition

speak quickly
before you think to
hang up

that would be letting you off too early
too fast...your words....remember.
you beautiful and I had nothing good
left to say.

fortune teller
hurts your hand

each day
I look for messages
you hide in your room

when I'm in my room with the door
closed
don't bother me.

I imagined it open slightly
a crack
letting escape a sliver of light

my fingers
in your mouth
you can't talk
I want to touch your tongue

come in late for the picture
don't recognize the actors.
I missed the actors.
I missed the title.

This is getting
me
too easy.

sometimes I talk to you
noise
so I won't have to think about us

us
when we make up new words.

the hotel employees call a strike
already last week
poetry
not good for news
each revision forgets
the up to date.

you go under
to await the drill
your tooth still sore
the embrace of the drill
so fast
that you can't keep track
of its affection.
More pain
will not
slow things down.

Become like its machine,
to taste the whir.
sweet and deadly
he draws blood

drink water
the power fails
the strike
a botched job. you can't wait;
you can't leave with
your teeth like that.

I. PORTRAIT AT 18

18 Rue Jules Champlain

I could give you myself
entierement

and from the remaining bits
of material
piece together
another self

caught in the mirror
unsure of the direction it reflects

as serious about the portrait
as I could be about you.

your stare
fixes me in a trance
my fear chokes me

I love watching your hands
their gestures
slide in the air
sculpting
a wilder idea.

you give me
too much of a chance to know.

pancake mix in the cupboard
but no water
or gas to cook
out of maple

a kiss nails your hand to the wall

I continue to repeat the same question
hoping the repetition will get
the hoped-for answer.

You grow sick of the philosopher.

they still believe your charm

you take your time putting on your make-up
each stroke prepares an episode of the night-to-come
dazzled by a flashing light
you focus your stare
become glued to some conversation
mistaken for interest

but in
your interest.

quarantined for a cholera epidemic

you're going to have to stay
with these folks for a few months

time for the roller coaster
to measure your fear

you hold tight
when I increase my grip
you grasp tighter

but your touch
never can tell what it holds
and when you see

only anger

I move on
past your hands
past your charms
past your regard

this journey
only a beginning

afraid of where we're going

you try to off the roller coaster
before the big dip

I'm trying to teach you
how to free fall

I try to move with you

in dance
you turn to the mirror
to blacken my invitation

you bounce along your smile
relentless
in your mission

but I'm planning nothing
with you

I test the chalk against the board.
my hand running along your stomach
testing the line of the drawing

the closer you get
the damage only brings us closer
as we learn to time our falls.

I keep writing
to pretend contact.

But I know that you've stopped listening
stopped after I told you how to use the time machine.

You still only move in one direction.
Slight adjustments into the past
appear to be the future.

My voice cracks at the higher notes
I hope you can fill in for the words missed.

Falls in love with the
portrait of a dead girl
why
a good portrait?
nothing to do with her words no, one letter

a suicide note
not suicide,
homicide
give the detective something to do

I love you like all God's creatures
but I don't like you

the creature haunts these pages.

Denial
did anything get away
tore out the sun

had a book
I wanted you to read

denial

told me you did
I would always return

unfinished business
that's why you left in mid-sentence.

Now the account is paid.

It's like this ashtray.
To me it's more than an ashtray
your ashtray.

We'd spend all night talking about this more.
that ashtray you crafted holds your cigarette.
See it's an ashtray
no more
real than any other art.

each kiss
a different flavor
a different person

hold still
this ashtray.

more TV
these goddam gangsters
popped that little queen

they got the wrong girl
But he denies the portrait.
hides out down by the lake
with hamburger sandwiches

and coke

got to get used to it
I like a softer taste
mint kiss

you a little spicy
cinna
mon

read your diary
 your letters
 that portrait
polaroid

I feel I almost know you

and NOW the TWIST
like a set-up
 you knew how good you were
 could charm him in

He thought you something special
 without guile

so what is all this
 the portrait
 the words
who are you

the real me ...sitting with a drink
enjoying myself
avoiding men like you
men who fall in love with their fantasies.
You saw my talent, gave me enough rope
and let art take its course.

J. SCAPEGOAT

The leader
breaks from the pack of flesheaters
goat's head dripping
 blood

naked from the waist up
contrived a phallic torch

his magnificence

curious, you feign proximity
he whispers
until you are
too close to
 pull away
 his spell
with twisted horns
approximate messages in the dust
burning branches
drag the ground
irrigate a riper seed.

a drop of blood
solidifies
in your hand
 a bus token
led into the leader's hut
you debate whether your
 future
 hides a hoped for

he quakes
 silhouetted
 in the fire

the chicken pops out
 full-grown
dusted in molasses
 and blood

Finger your dinner
 grease slides down
 the palms
your hunger only encourages

you in the recital

Finger a transit pass
trying to make your car

before it is too late
and the car
has been towed away.

Lady,
where do you want
to go
-Let the meter run
drive around
when you get there
I'll know.

traffic backup

the downstairs below downstairs

on the fourth floor
But you have to use the
elevators in the other
building

lecture hall: medical exam
on paper
or will the body
answer the questions

Back through another room
damp, your feet sinking
in the planks supporting them
mil...
spontaneous
another car ride
what are you doing after this?

recess, wait for the postman

excessively jealous
What is the norm of jealousy
if pushed
he was pushed to the curve
by an impulse

powerless to control
He will be from punishment.
 crime,
punishment enough
brought in some fancy lawyer

Here you are
with a dry cloth
a lie
read by a dead moth

kill the messenger
 the news
 so ugly

Would you call her
appearance
deliberately
enticing

ripped it up with his hands
swollen and scratched

He tries to sit
a dinner
in a suit
now fallen into the ice
water
at first

 numbing cold
after a few strokes
moving freely

you surrounded
by roses
modest in the sun's shadow
your gown, a burning orange
writing in your book
an occasional
outline

expand outward
and in words
my hand is your mind
you write to my heart

with age my lips become thicker
my words
more frightening

say what you will
But you're becoming craftier

floor stripped
to dust
where I can walk

my sources
for gossip
not too good

for smiles
 Acted the part of the scarecrow
 arms in the air

 frighten baby birds
 chirping away at each other

a feeder by the window
a little water

you chicken shit
came back to my car
full of tickets
and you kissed me

can't sleep
in spring
 stay away
too much water down
in them caves
and in the summer
swarms
of mosquitos
down near
Saint Louie
man killed by those
nasty bites

Brain fever

in fidelio
and fraudulent
the wife became the scapegoat

crochet
in her room
the knock at the door
solemn

prying in the kid's stuff
some evidence
that I am around

a spark
switch from electric to gas stove
excellent with machines
whip up sanity
from butter
had to save face
the phone
don't let it get disconnected

I'm alone in the kitchen
resisting too many cooks
hand-style
is rotten
blender reformatory
the mixture
thickening, divinity
or fondue

mummy's to blame

for this tired mess
spoke long enough
her words became prophetic
at breakfast

tossed on peanuts
-handful
rather fancy

food seemed too
hard to digest

loss of appetite
Too many plastic wrappers
left on my floor
I'm not going to pick them up. They stay there
with
 raisins
 and chips

trade wax paper
for aluminum

Everyone's heard that story
What difference does it make?

That bit you can't understand.

You don't need to understand.
Doing fine on your own.
You owe it to yourself
to take the time.

telephone log
hello,

(dial any alias
unsure of what follows:
no plan
lacking wile

now not speaking
But our words have guided us here
words for
walls we
touch
knock against
pushed towards you

back up.

hear the story

can't plan for what
happens in those caves
messages pasted above the telephone

suggestions
we lose our connection

sweet tooth
waiting for you, honey
When you first
 were learning
cast spells on everything
around
Those first spells you can't undo
We were talking about
 privacy
about you
with the puppies

Trade the chaos
for news about you.

if you were doing so well
yourself

why did you get tired
so easily

I can
 you can
teach you
the ultimate trick
 (for the dog)

OK...

roasted dogs

relish, not mustard
food satisfies
bloodlust

baby duck
flops around
escape clause

a clue

crawl down in
the cave
room for one
or another just

wedged against
whispers in the cathedral
prayers become seductions

I can't hear a thing
over those machines

how did you know
OK, I'm good with things like that.

the day before yesterday
taken in
some prophetic way

I think
I'm going to be sick
on the phone
a lot tonight

daddy's gone a hunting
for a dear
one.

I cup my hand
your fingers dig into the
cavity
to tear apart the crab's
body
tortured
my limbs detached

Richmond, VA
I was nine
heard about the room
above the garage
scary
skeletons
real dead men
up the stairs
presents for the courageous

By the time I get my chance
all boarded up

the passage
stairs came down
in front of me

to salvation
denial

you don't know that for
a fact

dizzy
twist around and fall

you and
D.J.
watch me naked
in the gym

This isn't a dance
didn't even see you there.

They do it to themselves.
I can't really care about that.

how they do it
circumstances can't remember

you only said you liked
me 'cause
you wanted
and now you really
don't like me

it's not like that
What we've got more
than even words

in the spring going to build
a birdhouse

I'm sure there's food
but

Here's where I count to ten
leave
before I realize
I'm playing chess with you

give in
I drink Möet
 out of the bottle
Are we still buddies?

you
drive me
crazy

Sorry, about that, Dad.

They didn't know...
What do you mean we didn't know.

Sorry
about last night

about what you said
or that you said it?

I don't remember.

I made it up
needed you to help

Picture what
 I see
you can't see
can't touch
Draw together, I hold your hand
not legalized
feeling
 unlike any other.

nice
we were all sitting
in a giant cafeteria
mess

but our table was the only one occupied
exam here
food on the table.

seemed much darker

seeing you
only
breaks my heart again

to hear self
heed the warning

lie perfectly
still on white sheets

a skeleton
without visions

you moved with my
visions
He would leave you here
waiting to call.

mercury spilled

about the room
in the prophesy
his magnificence would
shrivel

dust the floor
with lamb's blood
and the air
with black magic
what does not destroy me
makes me stronger.

hold the escape duck
not as pet
a sacrifice

Jenny hid her baby in the basement
Mummy shouldn't know
got ready

for his painting
AT caught crawling around
down there
mustn't remember the secret

the duck turned on you
spoke the prophesy

Bez got his pen
wrote it down
his poetry

Phil, Jenny's boy
tricked you down there
tried to do rude things
with time
showed your future
to his friend
a watchmaker

Jenny raised her head
and laughed at you.

That hurt.

But you knew where Jenny got her power
from

Phil took you down
showed everything about her.

I thought it all quaint

a bit of comedy
before the main attraction

Got the times wrong
taped the wrong station
got pissed the rest of the
night

Not must
but by now
you must realize what this
coming together

and breaking apart means

what this object you're
so afraid to see
This time
I'm not stupid enough
to say it.

A kiss
is not a future
it is a will

I really like you
and
I guess

too much.

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K. CANDY ANALYSIS

fourth grade field trip to candy factory

peanut clusters

we heat the ovens

to 450

how do the ovens hold the heat? how hot is hot?

the heat of

gas

kiss all around the lips

Hershey's candy cleared from the desk

from an over-eager diner

guilt in his contented smile

I can hold

it

I can taste

it

sweet and crunchy

licorice

or chocolate

cherry or

flesh

I promise to buy her

a world of

toy soldiers

and talking penguins

lose the will

to find a butter cream

cluster
 immune in saliva
 butter adorning your lips
 sugar coating the kiss
 57
 I can't take it.
 first thing in the house the fridge
 ate the shrimp
 candied
 the butter tarts
 the caramel surprises the Chinese custard And
 now time for a serious meal.
 feed me! feed me! feed me!
 stuff my mouth with
 breadcrumbs
 coke oozing over
 my chin
 apples jutting into my nose
 here's a new flavor
 I'm trying to
 develop a taste the spice
 too bitter
 covers the honey of the scallops
 approximate the flavor of blue cheese
 a laboratory onion
 couldn't move for a week had food wheeled to my bed lived on
 mints and lemon drops.
 Taste this; it's excellent what is it?
 a wonderful butter cream
 you detect the
 hint of
 nutmeg
 the passing of vanilla
 bubbling sugar
 58
 chemistries
 a cinnamon dusting encased in chocolate
 suspended egg white orange gratings suggest
 I suggest you put out these fires
 you clean the kitchen.
 chocolates melt in the bed your squirming
 only rubs
 in the mess
 taken a day to fire the ovens
 Now

that we've eaten the dessert:
the entree!
mushroom buttons blanched almonds worstershire
and
paprika
sour cream
curdling
peel off the crust
my tongue
cannot reach your resting
passion
potato wafers, floods of
milk
streams of fish blood
patterns wind in the
yolk
left the trout's eye for
serving
your face still embraced by confection
59
a white chocolate a doughnut sugar
I need you to be sure candy face time
ginger castles
peppermint
I love to suck the mint
from your lips
You don't have any avocados.
I'll make do
I like my apples at room temperature.
I whip up some candy and Alice
can you taste the care
in ingredients.
You play with your food
I fumble with
a wooden spoon spit the apple seeds
near the garden
wrestle with flies for meaning
and this whole mess
is in your mouth
you want to swallow the good part
but your teeth have caught a corner
sickeningly
crunchy
can't use your fingers manipulate with your tongue
shift

push forward chew
 suck up
 not to sneeze at
 60
 this moment
 pepper injection
 all this effort wasted
 out with the whole mess
 You try to talk about a flavor.
 forget this dinner no cleaning bills.

61

L. THE LILIES RETALIATE

FANCY

in a grocery list
 electrics
 not ethics
 how you jump when charged up
 the better the pump the better the jump
 Don't bite me the predator
 finds her hunger satisfied
 Now, the lilies retaliate.
 Bee sting an overextended tongue
 licking or talking too much
 The world is my cafeteria tray.
 on the menu are you?
 water with the meal
 lily stands up
 in the vase
 at the end of the
 dining table
 your hands fold
 around it
 trying to strip the flower from
 its
 stem.

62

You succeed where others have failed. I cannot succeed, can't
 recover.
 Get these flowers to shut up.
 their voices fill the garden
 buzz in their new resting place
 until they hang drooping from the vase petals strewn on the
 coffee
 table.
 any life preferable to this life

learn to enjoy more and more pain
 held you in esteem inflict pain
 and become convinced
 they can beat you senseless
 for fun
 what is a negative fuck
 fuck -off
 never forget a body OK
 this yours is you
 stripped and left to dry
 you complained that
 I lacked moisture
 waited for an occasion
 put a lemon on that expression put the limo in that spot
 You tear off your life-supporting system. Why do I need this to
 get along.
 on this little Rock make the best of it
 watch a white Rose
 flower
 as time slows
 and the movement speeds up
 63
 the new flavor of fear tasted in your sweat your mucous
 your blood
 more like sand
 perfect for tomatoes
 chip potatoes, wiped out by frost
 thick tomato slices for you hamburger or ground for ketchup.
 no space for flowers
 so the lilies retaliate.
 get me through this one and I'll buy you a treat.
 had a cut under the eye
 fighting
 what did he have left
 another round
 do your bidding one more time.
 fall asleep driving car jumps the median the highway deserted
 took a rest in the mountains
 had a detective follow you to together on the roof
 push you a little further
 swiftly retaliate
 --How dare you?
 I needed a risk
 a rest after the accident
 trauma

cushion the shock with trust
 begin a conversation in the garden. Almost spring. The lilies
 swell in the wind.

I watch you eat.

You are angry

perform with your potatoes and a fork
 eat the broccoli

64

eat the peas

eat the asparagus

trust me with ice wash behind the ear

chicken breast in a wine sauce

you can't get alone

from this treasure of toast.

I collected hospital flowers

from deceased patients brought them to you as if they were new.

Before we perform the operation

one question

--Do you have insurance?

Get on with it.

Quiet please

If I don't ask questions how can I find out what's going on.

Before I die on the table ...one thing...

the secret to life

sex

whether you get it or you don't

We all have sex, but do we all have medical insurance.

Before you drop him in the ground one last massage

below the belt.

His pants hid your hand.

One last punch you know where.

flirting in the gift shop. a cute doctor

I'm going away

(plant lilies)

then I'll be back.

65

Then I'll go away.

And then you'll be back...I know...it keeps on... over and over
 the return.

No, it only repeats twice. Precisely, twice.

then the lilies

retaliate.

66

M. VIADUCTS AND PERFUME The fold of the napkins. can't leave now
 why are you running out on me.

You were never in
 my life
 Is that a question I'm supposed to answer. The answer's only
 going to hurt you.
 Does it hurt you when you do that? I was asked for an answer.
 Make up one, anyone, make up a new life. her face
 went through the windshield
 embraced the viaduct
 the body stayed in the car
 lose your head
 the old mind-body problem.
 I like it dry...the perfume in the powder in the handkerchief
 on the shoulder
 paper towel it
 sop up the blood
 before you use the broom
 liquid never looks nice on a broom
 But there's glass. It'll cut through the towel.
 That was an expensive bottle
 that you dropped
 my room retained the scent for a month cover up all other misdeed
 that happened in the room.
 You never saw me
 take something from your room.
 But if discovered missing who else could you blame.

67

a prank
 tangles in my hand leaves a blue ring like a burn
 or a lipstick smear
 My hand passes through your body. Who is the phantom?
 your hug brings me back.
 I know you want the jewel.
 after you get it
 after other boys
 I order a caramel sundae
 make notes on a napkin
 watch the words run into each other
 I can't eat this garbage too much frosting
 I pop the cherry in the water glass.
 battery-acid quiet piles of
 old batteries
 hollow for a million
 car-chase
 impatient for what comes next
 stay in my Room

writing
won't make it down for supper
I can guess your next move but not your next word.
the crossword puzzle is
the test you'll take tomorrow will determine
what you do
for the rest of your life
But you can't prepare
you've already failed to look over the clues

68

Just fill in any letters...it's geometric meet me for a snack
you order a strawberry shake we're fresh out of strawberries,
will frozen do?

I am obsessed with pecans Butter pecan
ice cream
shake.

TV upstairs
so I can keep working there and not miss my show.
I'm not ruling you out
But I've got so many other offers here.
And yours was late.

No, it's getting rather late.
Paid my taxes with a carload of penny rolls
Easy following your words
in a sentence
a few sentences

But then
it all takes off again
and I'm chasing your name again
When I let go
you let me go.
when I'm not there I am
not there.

Razors against the teeth. Reline your smile.

69