

You should never write poems for women

Keye Martin

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Contact: bliss@keyemartin.com

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a box of candy

give me some moment
with nina simone singing candlelight into the glass of wine that i call mine.
two adoring eyes that never close lit up like the skies that shower prose
fluttering in suggestion across the table from this question
next to something epernay and all sparkling like jazz
better than real life or the starlight that it has.

give me some moment
with ducks splashing water on sunlight scattering like squirrels
in audubon park before april dinner in paris;
followed by shadows moving on walls under ceiling fans staring at us;
counting raindrops through an open window on a torrid tuesday night
yes gasping girlish sighs and breathing looking in the eyes
interrupted by rhythm vibration and sweat in between
until muscles in flux cause faces to flush and lapse into a dream.

give me some moment with the outside replaced by the inside
doused in caffeine slash alcohol and cinderella at the ball
with nothing under that beautiful gown except teasing an evening uptown
pleasing to the eye with a hint of don't touch
static electricity and something too much
the feel of a secret whispered over quiet champagne
of waking to the sunlight that broke through the rain
and landed its way onto lady's ass exposed
because i took the covers back and most of the clothes
from the thief that stole my heartbreak.

give me some glance with two divided by zero
and something in the light
that makes you shy but makes you try
in places that cloud like monet:
a box of candy is never a kiss
and less than a moment
on valentine's day.

a stranger in passing

should we go today
upon these idle oxford streets,
in pursuit of the hysterics
that poetic impulse meets?

it is long after twelve
during another afternoon tea,
that i realize the lady
who said good morning to me.

had i told a stranger in passing
what i was truly thinking,
might her eyes be fluttering starstruck,
instead of rhythmically blinking?

then should we go today?
along the greyest oxford street
with noise enough to interrupt,
the quiet few we never meet.

happy

miss magdalen college in her second year
or whatever your name is
it makes me happy
that you notice i constantly write in the third person
as though distant from things like people

i suspect that you and i – that we –
ought to shake the earth a few hours
one night
when i am sitting
with those who look like friends
perhaps you might crash my illusion
where the edge of the table begins

and we can say “do i exist, would i be missed?”
as we contemplate life upon this loveless balloon;
but it is far better to laugh and to drink,
than to worry in the middle of a moment ending soon.

maybe i should repeat myself
somewhere near your inner thighs;
it might even improve my health
or possibly open your eyes:

the unanalysis of things is happy.

bienvenue

all along this hyperventilating rue,
you can bump into someone
if you really want to;
you can run inside them
over, under and through;
like smoke in an illicit cafe
just a little out of the way,
where the wine and the words are true
and the music gets played out blue.
this is paris baby;
bienvenue.

a jen thing

the streets are half bent over and faking
like a ten dollar whore that puts up a fight
and the clock has nothing but eyes that it's making
at the alcoholic delusions that are trying to fuck midnight.

somebody pass me that bottle of expectations please,
i feel like having a shot;
until i'm down on the floor where you're up on your knees,
and the sound of inhibition is not.

now the stars are all twinkling and medicated
with a luster that only exploding suns can bring;
as the night staggers intoxicated
along the curvature of a quivering jen thing.

a liaison in april

i had a dream last night and you were in it.

there were children happy
in a hopscotch game of endless;
in the upstairs loft,
an impressionist full moon
carried something they were trying to send us.

there were plastic champagne glasses dressed in red wine,
and they were walking down the street in a subtle rain;
as the sound of a piano being played into itself,
followed an umbrella onto a train;
that stopped before a footbridge at midnight,
where you were moving in an elevator;
from the apartment entrance downstairs,
i was staring through a mirror at later;
when it floated upward into the night sky,
like bubbles from an operatic clown;
they were gentle,
and they were inevitable,
like something up,
that was going down.

in paris,
near the square at the marais:
i had a dream last night –
about today.

near evening

this is my moment.
the cause of years spent suffering
through dreams that do not let us sleep;
along beaches that race through the bloodstream deep;
in waves that caress the hope that we keep,
until they land on pink champagne sand
that listens as Louis plays;
to a single table at sunset, lost,
in the radiance of coming days.

this is my moment.
when life appears
to be no more than an intricate and complex design;
when the only concern in the entire world,
are the eyes behind a glass of wine.

this is my moment.
this is what Shakespeare meant.
and this feeling could one day destroy me,
but this moment –
was sent.

light

on a late afternoon walk in june
Mrs. had her head on my shoulder
while rays of sun through clouds to the ground
said we were (though in england)
nevertheless in heaven.
the sky rained miniature sugar covered stars that night
and the next morning, though it rained,
i saw in the afternoon two rainbows at once,
really.

things to deny under questioning

there's a carousel next to a ferris wheel,
and a train past oak trees on a pissarro saturday afternoon;
all the museums in france keep asking for it back –
but if today is really ours,
why should we give it away so soon?

then by the incandescence of night
that lines this vintage hallway
with an arching window's moonlight
that spends this separate fall day;
goes an apparition draped in kerosene
to wake these sleeping embers;
an apparition that turns today
into something tomorrow remembers;
in places where you know she is not,
a minute, an hour, a month, a year;
one day the girl on the underground
is going to disappear.

too many references to dead artists can kill you
worse than lines i wrote to my lover when she was real;
at the prytania street liquor store they sell angelina,
theorems with blue in them,
and things you can still feel.

it takes a lot of red wine to write these things:

the tramp that stole tomorrow
still carries around pictures of cigarettes and sin;
recollections of an english sunday
before the night that started could have been.
remembering is being left behind.
it's giving up and wishing away
something inside that just won't quit;
it's not listening to music
or noticing when the moon is lit;
it's pretending that enough is really enough
when you know that it isn't true;
it's a picture of lady day on the wall
that says this isn't you.
it's never meeting eyes
and cursing at the sun
it's not kissing on the lips
at a table for two with one.
it's when the bottle doesn't let you forget:
tomorrow is something that today you regret;

it takes a lot of red wine to right these things.

at ronnie scott's in soho
you can tip the man at the door
and he'll let you right on through;
that's a secret most people don't know about
that's the kind of thing most people don't do;
but there's a reason that i found out –
i only wish that it were new:
patterns throw themselves into anarchy,
no color escapes the pull of blue;
pretty girls are never beautiful,
and gentlemen, are never true.

they say you can make it to the quarter before it gets too dark
by catching the streetcar that goes past audubon park;
and if you still believe in chardonnay,
you can walk to the Napoleon House from there;
where you might hear the sound of a piano,
being played by catherine clare[†].

but if this is my last day on earth
then i intend to write freely;
i'm bringing the glare of a jealous woman
and one of those convenient excuses that have no effect –
i'm bringing one of those poems that the collectors don't collect.
i'm taking Dexter Gordon and Chet Baker
with enough cabernet to frighten grapes for Miles from here;
today the girl on the underground is going to disappear.

[†]Musician, composer and close friend (1975–2002).

lines about a certain girl

on rain splashing streets,
in the middle of the city,
throwing starlet kisses,
ten dresses pretty.
lines about a certain girl
a million i may write;
in friday inside me,
in alcohol, in night:
in the pornographic violet
before saturday's first light.

the nowadays girl

it does not matter if women go unpleased
because they don't like Dresses or Ice cream or Chocolate or Kids
or for that matter anything that begins with the letter p:
like politeness and passivity over two in the afternoon tea;
like a girl who is perfectly proper
when i place her over my knee;

and into the back of my mind,
my psyche rather suspects;
that the reason they are always unsatisfied
is that they are girls who do not like sex.

finished

the time to answer is now so go and long for later
no second chance, no voice to call, no touch to masturbate her

for in this room, we'll self-destruct, on words just like forever
and here, tonight, we'll overdose, on pretending all is better;

and then the sighs on knees she cries for thrashing wet october;
too late surprise say please love dies she finally slipped up – over.

lines before a courthouse in the autumn

i was going to take a seat on that bench over there,
but then i thought it better that i stand;
until the changing of the season had left me aware,
that once autumn leaves fall,
they land.

down this beautiful street
women disguised as models
appear to walk as they float;
and it seems that this would be a very good place to get lost in,
or at the very least,
sufficient for slitting one's throat.

there is a chance that i have been here before,
on some occasion when it was best to disappear;
at the onset of some familiar winter,
in the psyche of some forgotten year.

so instead i thought it good that i should walk,
perhaps to some undiscovered place by nightfall;
where things give the impression of being new,
and it is possible to hear a single voice call.

but wandering gave just cause to pause,
only moments after the start;
the autumn leaves were serving notice,
that i was there
to fall apart.

what night is like

otis redding singing
a touch of vodka perhaps –
for young men going without
and on the verge of collapse.

do not forget that greatness is always great,
do not forget that it is something to imitate;

there is no darkness in night,
let there be no confusion:
it has none of the things
we so often find
in the comforting light of illusion.

rynek in krakow

a generally held belief
is that today ends where tomorrow begins;
and though tulips thrive on jazz and candlelight,
the word on the street is that love never wins.
entertainers fill the square
with the truth about this life
and the music of stolen violins;
but hands that clap
are no substitute for shoes that tap
so when the dancer smiles, she sins.

is there no way to wake up from this?
no spell we can cast,
that will erase what has been done?
is there no kiss that can last,
beyond the arrival
of tomorrow's vindictive sun?

eyes that squint in passing
curse like a six string at a voice with no range;
and vows that break with the dawn,
have a rhythm that attracts spare change.
memories spiral inward
falling until they turn to truth;
quiet lies with its eyes
and in silence there is only proof.

lightbulbs and umbrellas

somewhere near goes a cornet again,
circa nineteen hundred and something or rather,
i'm not too clear on when.

but i know there were lightbulbs then,
and words that real living people wrote;
and i know that time didn't wait anymore than today,
for the man afraid to live by the quote.

somewhere near a lady sings to rain,
of moments that look numerous in scattered light illuminous,
when her soul was spent in vain.

and i know she must have found an umbrella back then,
because no one can sing forever;
some place at night to hide and wait,
where scattered light appears together.

half lives

one day far from now
we will sit together at a table in some cafe
somewhere on planet earth
following a chance encounter
that neither of us would have pencilled in.

we will sit together
and reminisce over the times
that used to be our lives.
we will remember being alive
in december at the court of two sisters.
we will recall the taste of overpriced wines
and the sensation of true adoration
that comes from both directions with equal intensity –
we will look across
and see a faint reminder
of a face that used to glow and of eyes which used to warm.
for one rare and honest moment,
we will stare in silence
and know that what is best about this life
has now passed us by;
we may even go as far to curse those
whose fears corrupted our hearts and helped us to part;
but such a desire however noble
will only be short lived –
as we are now just like those we'd like to curse,
having settled for less threatening situations,
having run from the only dangerous and worthwhile something
that can ever leave the human heart content and at peace.

we will vaguely recall
that for just a moment in time
the chance was ours to be different –
to live opposite to those
burdened and embittered by wisdom –
that we could have stayed naive –
that we could have been the object of envy the world over –
that never in the course of our life
would a love story make us feel our own lives were somehow substandard –
that no song however beautiful would ever cause our hearts to pine for more –

we will remember covering the most drab parts of europe
and find it amusing that something so dreadful now looks so wonderful.

i will look at you
and remember all the stories i told
of a certain opportunistic and loveless woman that broke my heart.

you will look at me
and remember all the stories you told
of an oppressive man who couldn't feel loved or secure unless he first removed your soul.

and these stories will be important to us;
we will use them to stay apart;
we will use them to warn others away from real love
like those before us did.

but secretly,
in places where quiet is too much,
we will know that they are only stories,
inventions designed to protect us from a pain
that we decided was better to cause
than to live in fear of every day for the rest of time.

and when our ten minutes far off from now have elapsed,
we will go –
you one way and i the other,
back to our comfortable lives and stable relationships,
doing our best to say “i was just young and in love”
telling ourselves along the way “this is for the best”
and aside from an occasional dream
that leaves us empty in the morning,
or the recollection of a certain town on a certain evening,
we will learn to believe it,
and to enjoy the half lives,
which are the fate of those
afraid to fight for more.

stargazing

i picture a place,
somewhere over there;
where a man can stand tall,
on the strength it takes to care.

i carry a place,
in the things that i keep;
where women who love,
sing children to sleep.

and i dream of this place,
perhaps light years away;
with more kisses than roses,
on valentine's day.

it seems like such a simple thing,
as does a little girl smiling on a swing that goes a lot;
it seems like such a simple thing,
but i have watched long enough to know that it is not.

things i should have told my lover

when my eyes first went her way,
i did not know i would spend years trying to forget.

can i have this chance to dream?
of certain white picket fences
and porch swings that stare into open fields?
of oaks that scatter sunlight and cast the shade of home?

can i have this moment to pretend
that once these things were mine?
that i may have watched a toddler stumble in the grass,
struggling to keep his balance as i now do?

that once in some universe my soul sang out
a gentle summer breeze that caressed it to sleep?
that one spring day a white dress lit up a shopfront window,
where two smiles met, and just seemed to know?

when my eyes first went her way,
i knew i would spend years remembering.

a trace of spring

in some fleeting scene about dying
played out in an airport cafe;
there's enough time to kill
and years to fill
just thinking about today.

it's easy to end a life:
just watch the seconds pass;
it's easy to break a vow
and be forgiven by next sunday's mass.

catch some train that rides on the night
along some track that cuts into a glance
leaving tiny little fragments
that used to be white
and moments corrupted by circumstance.

catch some train that bursts into light
before the moon has the chance to settle down
before the gravity on this planet can drown.
before the sky gets dressed to the nines
in stars about to pass out
from sparkling epernay wines.

someday there will be the chance
to sweep the floor with infinity
to weep for more with the trinity;
to listen to jazz
and realize what it meant;
to stand in the future
and wonder where it went.

and the echo of those domineering voices
who were so sure they were right;
will vanish like a trace of spring
from a cold november night.
and it will seem unthinkable
that while all of this was happening,
they were somehow happy about it –
so blessed by love were they,
that we must live without it.

now their voices have grown quiet,
they have no more wisdom to impart,
no more stolen sermons to preach to the young;
they have succeeded in corrupting their own,
and this is the only song that they ever sung.

tension in balance

now we stand to go,
among places lined in doubt;
now we pretend to know,
what all this is about;

now we wait for hope,
now we reach for rope;
now we warm the hypothermic,
now we waste on hypodermic;
now we play an ace of spades,
now go wrists to razor blades.

one by one and inside through,
lost men fall while standing true.

lost men try,
great men do.

lost men die,
great men too.

if ever i should disappear

if ever i should fall away,
remember that time enough was mine;
to smile and love and learn that truth
is clearest before the age of nine.

if ever i should vanish,
from this earth without a trace;
know that the fall of a decent man,
makes up in poetry, for what it lacks in grace.

if ever i should disappear,
and travel now to never here;
think of me as good to know,
as one who lived and was sincere.

a midnight swim

i went down to the seine,
to forget my lady's sin;
i went down to the hudson,
with thoughts of starting again.

and i stared into the horizon,
in search of something i could be;
when i felt the rhythm of the verse,
in the bridge's haunting poetry.

i went down to the strait,
to curse the planet that quit;
from some junkie's offered pipe,
i lit up and took a hit.

and then i knew i was going to die,
i could feel it in the depths of my soul,
as the pit of my stomach began to cry
that this life had taken its toll.

i thought of couples holding hands
and children playing in backyards;
i thought of enamour and the way it lands,
for restless women who write thank you cards.

so i went down to the thames,
and committed my own kind of sin;
i went down to the mississippi,
to help the tide roll in.

streets

between the legs of drag queens slurring karaoke
over the ranting of coffee shop architects preoccupied with freemasonry –
in dive bar mirrors where recording devices are strictly prohibited
so that no one can ever see –
on a child's train through a widow's eyes
at a holiday party in december –
the gypsy in jackson square
says you'll be lost in thought
and sure to remember;
you'll be prone to stare
over what was sought
and burn with every ember;
heartbreak feels the same everywhere.

the art dealer plays johnny cash
on an old acoustic in a backdoor gallery room,
knowing full well that all most ever hear is sound;
the ex-con on house arrest
talks of dead grandparents and dreams of costa rica,
when his domineering mother's not around;
the nervous jitter of a single parent cokehead
is whispering questions about the past;
while the tenth floor deck at some french hotel
warns that sunrise is approaching fast.

and it's a straight shot from here –
just a few seconds from eternity,
if the meddlesome streets are clear;
so go ahead and pull the trigger if you dare,
but don't forget that it'll follow you –
even there;
heartbreak feels the same everywhere.

distance from all living things

tea with apricot jelly on sordid affairs
sometimes the night watching really just stares
and though this is only a cold oxford street,
if you add ice, stir twice and repeat,
denmark reappears made of voices
in some far away place that looks now lost to silence.

i saw two directions breaking over the sweat and sex of a krakovian summer;
softer than a vision of men falling to madness in the quiet of vacant halls,
louder than the whispering of impressionists that hang from parisian walls;
they were the ends of excess and extreme,
the most beautiful violence imaginable,
and for the first time i was afraid.

i know that if i do not write that i will lose my mind;
i know that if i do not hear the sound of music that i will lose my mind;
i know that numbness is not a natural condition for much of mankind;
i know that michelangelo's house (in firenze) was not worth the walk it took to find.

is this the soul of pharmaceutical descent?
i saw two directions breaking on a summer night in manhattan
but i cannot remember in which i went.

perhaps it was my inner most being,
having made no attempt to know it, shape, understand or identify it,
that was revealed to me one morning
after a passionate night of fucking the darkest depths of my inclination
to discipline those who lack the right amount of eccentricity;
i know what little girls are made of;
still, it is a fine line we walk you and me between passion and outright perversion.

now repeat after me:
the one you loved was insane and you are innocent;
the time you lost to heartbreak has not been time well spent.

the heavens know that there is nothing
quite like the grey and the death of an oxford winter;
over here the air carries everything
missing from lives that could have been balanced,
which is why i am certain that behind the doors of those perfect english houses
mrs. career-as-a-substitute-for-d*ck has at last in time for the wintery season
found herself a new young lad
which when mixed with gin grants her this year's reason;
this is not to speak unkindly of her,
only to point out that i am what makes her tick;
and she is what makes me sick;
and together we are like a fine hangover
watching a windmill in a field of forget-me-nots,
with emphasis on the f word.

and the next morning i looked both ways of course – safety first –
before stepping outside
onto the porch of an apricot house on st. charles avenue –
and i swear that it was there
that i saw the following advice passing on a streetcar in motion:

“in the moonlit haze of miss’s dreamt about figure,
should you find that you have somehow misplaced your eyesight
in the violet of the situation,
do not start playing games with the last of the memories
that forgot to dissolve in a lovesick cocktail on new year’s eve;
it is so easy to pretend that you might just start to believe.”

this was the first time i suspected it –
that there is a fantasy state consisting of nothing more than numbness
and distance from all living things.

now repeat after me:
no left and right,
no agreeing to disagree,
no listening to both sides;
balance is the destruction of the soul –
i would rather die,
than let it take its toll.

i remember now –
there were two directions breaking,
and i screamed so loud about this,
that no one ever heard.
i saw two directions breaking (but neither was worth taking)
so with the most beautiful violence imaginable,
i created a third.

a place at night

the day i started reversing letters
fall came quiet
on tight fitting cashmere sweaters;
the day i started leaving words out
thoughts were skipping so fast
that i couldn't keep up;
haven't you learned by now that promises don't last,
would you please shut up?

i want to die in a beautiful place at a beautiful moment,
not here,
not like this;
i don't want a girl that i need to fuck,
i need a girl that i want to kiss.

the day i started seeing colors that weren't there
i knew they weren't things that made people care
but tricks with the light that hide in the glare;

there was a poem inside me today
but i let it go;
there was a voice i thought i heard
but i didn't know;

there's a place at night,
where september clings to august;
for the kind of light,
that fall won't spring upon us;
with enough secobarbital to make two bottles of dom perignon last
into sleep –
past,
the point of lying;
deep,
past the point of dying.

there was a poem inside me today
but i didn't know;
there was a voice i thought i heard
but i let it go.

riddle about a poem*

frightening ghosts have midnight
colored vibrant blue,
resonating july kisses,
x-rated zeal too.
once upon a perfect quiver,
no shudder will ever do.

inside, lasting, you.

*There are twenty-six letters in the English alphabet.

inside a nightmare

past the window i crept
just a little beyond that spot over there
where the night once slept
on secrets nightmares kept
in the frigid nocturnal air.
to a place where only streetlights go
where no sound does not regret escaping
past the serenity of the moonlight's glow,
and the window's well worn draping.

to the clicky clack of the blue line off track
where an old man catches your eye not once but twice;
to the anxiety of thieves that drank off their last days,
nursing fractured pentameter on ice.
where the dripping of the faucet
drowns out all cries for help;
and the ticking of the clock
says this is your truest self.
to the place where illusions are stored with care;
to being paralyzed while half awake,
inside a dream about a nightmare.

past the window i crept
just a little beyond that spot over there
bound by invisible restraints
in resistance of the night air.
to the place where words are jailed
and the loudest screams are sure to be drowned,
by the humming of the streetlights,
and the shadows on the ground.

nothing[†]

we are living in the shade
that light walked out on,
drinking telepathic vodka
and cursing out the dawn.

underneath some shadow
that silhouettes to the shape of yesterday;
in between a nervous breakdown
and the games that children play.

we are falling inside of girls
and kneeling at the altar of midnight,
believing in the promise of nothing,
to escape this madness called right.

we are building new walls around us
that others merely graffiti upon;
we are breathing in the excess
of the dream that lost to dawn.

down by some stroke,
that wept like heart attack –
where lips colored picasso blue,
kiss eyes that shut the light to black.

[†]For Russell, my father (1949–2007).

a funeral in poland

i went to a funeral in poland,
i went to say goodbye;
to a man that i knew only briefly,
i was not completely sure of why.

i saw two young boys in the chapel,
that wanted to know where their father was;
someone answered,
and they asked “why?”
then a quiet voice explained “because.”

i went to a funeral in poland,
to apologize for things that i said;
when i looked into the eyes of his sons,
i realized that he was not dead.

to my son on his twenty first birthday

you will never know me,
but know this:
be careful with your first kiss
but careless enough to know,
what it is like to be an immortal
and what it is like to go.
be careful with your first heart,
especially when things are new;
and if you think there's a chance you don't,
then do not say you do.

remember that women are notorious for loving poets
and for leaving them when they fall in love with night;
so unless you are adept at making love to an empty room,
i do not recommend that you write.

remember that too much light can permanently affect the eyes,
even under the guise of ultraviolet protection:
if ever you catch a glimpse of what is possible in this life,
it will be difficult to look
in any other direction.

i will never know you,
but be sure of this:
a young lifetime ago
your mother was deeply kissed;
and now there are these things we have in common,
that you must fight like hell to resist.

excerpt from a suicide note

you don't have to leave dad
but i know you have your mind set on drinking yourself to death.
you miss your daughter, you miss your wife
but worst of all
is that the boy you once threw out on the street with nothing
has become your last hope.
the thought that i may do something great
or that i may one day give you grandchildren
is the only thing that keeps you alive.
and that is the saddest thing i can think of.

because this planet is not some place where one can afford to feel
it is not some place
where we can talk about the things inside us that are real.

it is not a place where it is okay to admit that you feel like quitting.
one of the most natural feelings in the world has been relabelled an illness.
only happy feelings are healthy and all others require medicine.
what will become of the poets then?

women have plastic surgery so that they can all look the same.
what will become of beauty?

what has happened to the individual? the person who thinks for themselves,
the kind of person you can trust? how is it that we are expected to feel
anything other than alone, when every person we meet is living according
to a script that someone else wrote?

by 22, they graduate from the university;
by 26, they marry;
by 30, if they're lucky,
they realize they have been living someone else's idea about life.

there is no time for love
unless they have a degree, a good job and the approval of their family and friends;
how is life even possible in a place like this?
what will become of the moonlight
that dances upon a kiss?

they want homes and money and cars and expensive things,
they want trophy wives who themselves want garish diamond rings;
they want children they can raise into more of the same,
they do not want to play a piano,
or anything they cannot tame.

there is no room on this planet for a poet,
there is no place where the sound of music is heard;
there is no starlight to hold hands to,
there are no eyes that respond to the written word.

there is no room for emotion,
for a sunrise, or a sunset;
there is no time to remember,
there is only time to forget.

there are no things in this world
that thrive upon a kiss;
there are no fairy tales from our youth
that we are allowed to miss.

there is no place where uniqueness is beautiful,
where differences attract and unite;
will they redefine the day next?
what will become of the night?

there is no time for saying things that are true,
and that is what this planet will always be;
there is no more time for you father –
because there is no more time for me.

melancholy

one time i got on a train with my guitar and travelled far away to a place in the beautiful south to see my friend. i remember passing many wonderful run-down small towns whose romantic appeal was not lost on me. i could easily imagine robert johnson walking down some of these streets at an earlier point in time, when perhaps i would have been better off.

one night i was outside and for the first time i saw an honest to goodness firefly. a lightning bug. i had never seen one before and rarely have i seen one since. i wondered why there were no fireflies in the city. it seemed to me that maybe they use the light to communicate with each other, to find each other, and that maybe because there was so much light in the city, there was no way for them to find each other there, since the powerful city lights might drown out even the best illumination within them.

so they had decided to move to a place where it gets dark at night, to a place where the light within them is more visible. it's funny that life tends to be slower in such places, and that because of it, people are true. they carry no illusions that living life at a hundred miles an hour is important. there are no metros, no tall buildings, no melancholy covered up by the pursuit of fleeting things. people know where they are going there and they understand that there is no point in hurrying. i think that must be another reason that the fireflies are happy there.

i thought of the fireflies this morning when i woke up and noticed that my mouth was bloody. i had bitten myself in my sleep. it happens from time to time, but i've never known why. maybe things have a way of creeping from the back of the mind to the front when you are sleeping. maybe it's just stress, but i cannot think of anything for me to be stressed out about.

today i am in the south, a million miles from here. in some place and time where things are simple and the fields go on for miles. where the sun is loyal enough that you can trust it to stay and it is not offended when you escape beneath the shade of a towering oak for the better part of an afternoon. the year is about 1950 and currently i am at a picnic taking place on an overly traditional blanket with a woman that believes picnics are one of the most important things in the world, second only to children, cooking and the man she loves, but in no particular order. she even sews. a couple of times a week her and her friends get together, play cards, have tea and talk about the kinds of things that make my head hurt if i listen for too long: recipes, where to shop, and what they think about so-and-so (who it seems this week is even less proper than usual). they giggle and exchange secrets when they think there are no men around; i suspect that at times they even sneak a little amaretto, though i have no direct evidence of this. or at least that is what i lead her to believe.

the view from under the oak tree is quite nice. there are the fields, a gentle breeze that always turns up at just the right time, a perfect clear blue sky and two small children, one a toddler, running around playing what would easily be the oddest game in recorded history – if they were being recorded. it is quite simply a game with no point. it has no beginning, no particular ending, there

is no way to win or lose, it has no apparent rules or order of any kind, they just sort of continue in a manner that even the participants seem to not completely understand. at a random point in time they may say "okay, now the game is over" and then start laughing for no reason. there are times when i get the urge to look at my picnic date and say "darling, there may be something very wrong with our children." i remain hopeful though that they are simply creative as opposed to the lunatics that we appear to be raising.

today i have decided to improve the game situation by teaching them about kites. it will be the first time they have ever seen such a device; i expect they will be greatly perplexed by how such things work. but why does the kite go up in the air and we don't? "it is because kites are magic," i will say. one day they will realize that i was lying, and later still, perhaps much later, they will realize that no, he was in fact right the first time: kites really are magic.

lunch came and went and afterward the kite flying proceeded unhitched, for a little while anyway. the boy quite enjoyed flying the kite, but his younger sister, who was convinced that the kite was a magical kind of bird, started to ask if we should "let the nice bird go." it is cruel you see to hold birds captive. this appears to be something she learned from her mother. sure enough, true to form, when it was her turn to fly the kite, she let it go. now the nice bird is free but sadly we are minus one magical kite. she is quite proud of herself and cannot be convinced otherwise. she has even managed to convince her brother of this.

it is now late afternoon and my picnic date has decided that it is time to go. there is a party tonight and it will take a long time to dress the small lunatics that set my kite free. we are walking through fields that the sun hits and turns to gold, so bright that it hurts your eyes to look. we are walking down small paths that pass between oak trees and onward past streams where birds sit on partially submerged rocks and squirrels stand on their hind legs in leaves looking to see if we have anything for them. we do, and the eternal battle between birds and squirrels for crumbs continues.

we come to a break in the trees and up ahead there is a house with a swing on the porch. the girl lets go of her mother's hand and begins chasing after her brother who had already started running. he wants to be the first one to get there for some reason that used to be important to me. they are running together now screaming things that make no sense and my picnic date looks at me and smiles. i put my arm around her and we stroll on up ahead.

the sun is beginning to set now, and i am going home.