

To Fade Away With You

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For all the other ones who've gone away.

People have often asked me to put out a volume of more strictly romantic poetry.

This is it.

Hope you like it,
Dennis Ciscel
May, 2002

1

A few years ago,
I suddenly realized that
I hadn't had a vacation for several years.
And, being a little compulsive and burned out,
I arranged to take five weeks off.

The first day of my vacation,
I drove to Houston,
and I spent three days in bed
with a pretty young friend.
Then I drove back to Austin
and spent a few days running errands.

It was the first vacation I had been on in years.
I had been on it for about a week,
and I was still pumped up on adrenalin like I was
having to go to work each day
even though I wasn't.

So I got up in the morning and
drove non-stop to southern Colorado.
I went to Mesa Verde,
and I walked around in the afternoon sun
with all the people from all over
taking pictures and trying to find signs
about what I was looking at.
And finally it started to rain,
and I got into my truck and drove back down
out of the mountains
into Durango or Cortez or someplace like that
and I rented a room for the night at some
cheap little motel
rated one star in the triple A guidebook,

I went to bed after watching ESPN
dirt track truck races late into the night.
But I awoke about four AM.

Awake and showered and dressed
I looked out into the night
and still couldn't sit still since I was
still pumped up on adrenalin like I was
having to go to work each day
even though I wasn't.
And finally I decided
that I had wanted to go see another
Indian ruin that
I had also seen in the triple A guidebook.
And it was far enough down the road
that by the time I got there,
it would be light,
and I could walk around and see it
and then drive on somewhere else for breakfast
in the next town
down the road in Utah.

But being still pumped up on adrenalin, like I was
having to go to work each day
even though I wasn't,
I drove too fast and got there
way before dawn.
And I drove up in the dark
and got out of my truck and walked up
and read the big sign at the entrance
by the lights from my truck.

It was a privately owned place
with a dirt parking lot
and no one on duty.
Just a guest book to sign
hanging on a post under a little shed.
And I walked around the ruins in the dark
in my cowboy boots,
alone and disoriented,
and finally I climbed up onto the top
of the highest wall still standing and
all of a sudden,

there was Sunrise at the Lowry Ruins.

The air was still.
All along the west, the mountains
stood darkened in the night.

The air felt still,
but anyone could see it moving
with the passing of the souls
who walked before.

Skin tight
upon my body, I stood above the
broken buildings on the
highest wall
looking west
and east
and north and south.

Spirits of the Indians
wandered the valley in all directions.
I leaned into the night and strained to hear
the footsteps of the shadows on the sand.

Circles of faint translucent warriors
gathered around cold smokeless fires
chanting small silent songs.

A hawk
spiraled softly into the stars above,
screaming.

The corn stalks
shivered quietly in the distance.

There was a far-off clack of a door
and a morning cough
from some other man or woman far away.

The arms of daylight

reached across the valley toward
my perch.

The spirits faded into the twilight.

Unseen angels
fluttered in my ears and eyes.

And it was time to choose
to stay within my flesh
or leap into the sound of wings
and fly with them
beyond the light.

"Not yet," I thought.
They were not my people.

I stayed within my skin,
for years of tears to
trickle down my cheeks.

2

I sent you a letter this morning.

In it I said that I
 thought of you,
 and that I
 hoped you were well,
 and that I
 hoped to be able to see you again.

It wasn't quite true. Not that it was false,
but that there was more to be said.

 I've thought of you
I've thought of your skin (smooth and taut)
and your smile, and the ripple of skin at the base of
your neck, and your eyes and your nose and the cup of
your back with my hand flat against it.

I've thought of the way that your eyes closed the
moment I strained to go in you, and thought how,
when so close, I still couldn't hear the brief sound from
your
lips.

 I've though of you.

 And I have hoped you were well.
 I have prayed you were well
 and strong and resilient and cared for.

And I have hoped to be able to see you again:
 to be able to hold you again,

and rest the back of your head in my hand as I
touch you
or talk with you
or watch you
 smile.

3

Until the next new
letter, keep this little piece
of my heart at hand.

4

When it rained, we took cover
underneath a bridge: You and me
underneath the pavement, with
a couple of birds in the beams up
above us. As the waters fell
outside and rushed by in the stream
below us there, I said I hadn't
been under a bridge in the rain
since I was a kid. A truck drove
by above us, and the rumble
made us tremble, and you kissed me
on my lips.

5

As evening settled
over the house and the hills
around the valley,
and the trees began to sleep
(with blankets of the night), I

settled over you
last night and filled your valley
and the hills around
it with the seed of seasons
past. Your flowers soon will come

as signs of love and
spring. Butterflies will soon come
too. On me. On you.
And everyone who ever
loved will be the morning dew.

6

There were brownies at Johnny
and Jennifer's housewarming.
After dinner and desert, we
smoked and talked and napped upon
the floor. After dreaming of
forests of black and white trees,
and wharves full of sailors who
came on the seas, while Richard
and Mimi Farina were
singing of letters to Jesus,
a vision of this man, who
(dressed like the trees: Black and white)
lay with his belly upon
the soft ground and humped Mother
Earth to her rhythms beneath
the black clouds in the sky, came
to my sleep shuttered eyes.

But that was years ago, and
I no longer smoke or eat
such brownies or take naps on
other people's floors. Imagine then
the way my eyes awoke when
I arose to find myself
upon your sailor's belly,
in your ground, and dancing to
your rhythms underneath the
great white clouds beneath the trees.

7

It was the fourth of July.

All day long across America
the citizens had celebrated with parades
and marching bands and families
having picnics in the park.
And in the evening, after dark,
the fireworks filled the air for all
to hear and see.

Having spent the afternoon alone
(the two of us in bed)

and then returned back home
just as the rockets and red flares began,
I sat upon my porch rail in the darkness
watching spirals of the light above
and barefoot children here below who
scampered in the sparkles of the light
while mothers called, "Be careful.
You stay back," yet smiled about
the proud, proud day at hand.

And I smiled back about the day as well,
my chest hair blowing in the wind
and tender, touching rockets under skin.

8

I looked into the mirror in the morning.
I needed to shave.
My eyes were tired and did not focus.
I was wearing neither a smile nor a frown.

I was quietly falling in love.

People saw me out and about and
asked how I was doing.
They did not listen to my answer.
They knew I was dating you
and joked behind my back
about how young you were
compared with me.
They didn't really want
to hear my story about
quietly falling in love.

At dinner
my hand stopped midway between
plate and mouth.
A fork full of buttered potatoes
floated in the air
painting the twilight
rainbow colors through
a tear welled up and soon to be
leaking out
down my cheek to hide
in my moustache or beard.

I was quietly falling in love.

9
An Irish Lullaby

Quietly (beside
your glowing flesh at night) my
loins reach out to you.

Smiling carefully,
I scatter all my seeds. You
do too. Spirits of

our friends and lovers
gather from the ether, smile
upon our sighing

hearts, and sparkle like
the sunshine in the dew. I
swear to you, it's true.

10

I love to feel the
cross you wear around your neck
cold upon my chest.

11
My Vows

I will promise to lay my navel down
against your navel, my chest against your
chest, cheek against your cheek; to pause between
my breaths for loving you, just loving you
with all my flesh and heart and being. My
being that someday will cease its breathing,
rise above our bodies and look back with
smiles as broad as sunrise and as hopeful
as the breeze across the afternoon when
we were simply lovers on a picnic
in a meadow and each one of us was
wanting to lie down with navel, chest, and
cheeks as one. I promise to lay with you
and pause between my breaths for loving you.

12 Night Songs

Swallows soar above us as we contemplate
each other's moonlit lips. Even though
the sun has set, there's still a bit of color
in the sky. The moon is up already
and already tinting everything beneath
it with its silver light. Just above
your shoulder is a star that shines at twice
the brightness of the other stars tonight.
I claim that star (by all that's holy in
the universe) for you and me as ours.
Ours. Our star will shine with twice the light of
all the other stars, even when the moon
is up and even when the sky still has
some color that's remaining after sunset.

And in the name of all that's holy in the universe,
I stake my claim with this small kiss on moonlit lips.

13

I awoke from my
dreaming (of your thighs, your smile,
your happy finger
tips) to find that you
were snuggling your muzzle
deep against my chest
and I was resting
my chin against the top of
your head as I held
you tight with both my
hands. Then, breathing lightly, you
stirred against me slightly:
Struggling just
a little closer than our
skins would let us be.

* * *

I kissed your navel like a
Papal ring: Awe struck reverence;
Obedience; Humility
at being blessed beneath your hand
and scepter with such jewels
as all had never seen in
light of day before.

14

Soon it will begin
again: Touching lips
and hands and skin. Soon
you will be holding
me: Again within.

Just as surely as
a host of angels
serenaded each
and every night that
Jesus lived his life
of such perfection,
God intended, when
he first invented
skin, that we should lie
together in each
others arms again.

Let us drop to our knees and
consecrate this ground with a
blessing that the Lord above has
made inside of us to give to
one another and to have
leak out and drip upon this
sacred spot of ground.

15

Until I am your
flesh too, day or night, empty
yourself into me.

16
To Fade Away With You

What if God were to give me a choice,
six more months with you
or immortality with parades
of charming beauties beside me
down through the halls of time
until the final call to judgment?

Or what if being with you
meant poverty,
and I could go away with another
and live a life of leisure
in a palace above the sea
on a hilltop of antelope
and orange trees?

Or what if I had to choose
between you and fame.
Fame that would carry me forward
in peoples' hearts
who, never having met me,
loved the work I did.

It would be you, of
course. I'd have no other choice
but to stay with you.

You and poverty.
You and anonymity,
and mortality.

Sweet mortality.
Through the course of time, we get
to bloom and then fade.

And I am in full
bloom, heavy with all of the

blossoms of our love.

What kinder fate, or
hope more fair is there, than to
fade away with you?

17
Brightly Wrapped
Beneath the Tree

Jeffrey whispered in the dark,
"I love to hear you reaching
for the condoms and the lube.
The crinkling of paper
sounds like Christmas, and I
always wonder what my gift will be."

18

All of the linens
tossed about and halfway on
the floor. The two cats

purring at the door.
You and I together in
our skin. (One of us

without and one within.)
We kissed. You turned your eyes
away. And I could

hear the dolphins crying
tears enough to float the
sailboats sailing far

away upon the
sea: No one left behind on
earth (but you) (and me).

It was in the winter. Outside it was cold and white with snow. I was shaving, and the two of us were speaking of some things. My hair was tussled, and my face had a beard of foam and stubble. I looked over at you, as you were saying something, and you were leaning against the door jamb in long white underwear bottoms and gray socks.

I had stopped listening, and your head drooped slightly to the side waiting for me to come back. Some people believe that photographs will steal the soul. There is no photo, but part of me is still there: Where both of us were waiting for the rest of our lives to come.

Every now and then I feel the hand of
death reach out to touch me on the shoulder
(just to let me know He's there). A chill flows
down my neck and back into my soul. And
as it happens, I inquire if I am
at peace with the Lord. I hear a simple,
"Yes." And I inquire, again, if I am
at peace with the world. Comes the answer, "Not
until I kiss you on your lips and tips
and glands and hands and kiss you on your nose
and on your rose." A quiet, gentle voice
from somewhere outside me calls, low, "Your rose."

Within my rose, I hear you calling, "Yes."
And all around the silence echoes, "Yes."

21
Another Irish Lullaby

In the night, as we lay talking, what I wanted was to lay and talk with you. And when we touched, the only thing I wanted was to lay and talk and then to touch. And when we kissed, the only thing I wanted was to lay and talk and touch and then to kiss. And when I got inside of you, the only thing I wanted was for both of us to lay and talk and touch and kiss and

then to drift away with me inside of you and you around me sighing how you loved to lay and talk and touch and kiss and hold me deep inside you. In the morning twilight, when the first sprinkle of sunlight trickled on the roof and woke the birds and started them to singing, I awoke and kissed you in your sleep. And you awoke, and you and I were silently embracing.

It is late. You are already asleep
and breathing on the pillowcase. I should
hurry up and join you. I glance over
from my writing and can see your muscles
sighing with each breath, quietly at rest.
I will stop these words and lay with you the
night. In a few hours the last quarter
of the moon will rise, and the silence of
the night will smile in silver. You and I
will both be muscles sighing in our sleep.
Both of us will dream about the tides
along the seashore. You will dream of angels
and the light they have to bear. I will dream
of moonlight on your face and in your hair.

23

Asleep beneath the
cover, I did not see the
way night crept away.

But beside me in
the morning lay your breathing
and the skin in which

you stayed.

24

Simple diversions
that fill up the evening while
we wait for bedtime
to come: Dinner, music, talk,
watching you quietly breathe;

ordinary things.
We pass the evening in our
routine, waiting for
the time, when dressed in tattoos
and sweat, you exhale on me.

* * *

After you have died, I will
sing my song and dance beside your
grave. My lyrics will recall
kissing you upon the neck in
summer, holding you against
me in the spring. But they won't
tell the spell of you.

They will tell the tale of nights
laid out with you and endless days
of skin. Someday I will go
back to your grave again, bend my
knees onto the earth to kiss
goodbye the years of skin and
fondly join you there.

Wait for me please. I will come
to you as I have done before:
My eyes both clear and clouded,
and my heart singing that I love
to be with you. I will lay
with you as much in love then
as when we could breathe.

25

We are alone
out in the trees.
The breeze has left
some silence in the leaves
and all the birds and
butterflies have flown away.

I know your touch
and your blush.

I hear your heartbeat
and your sigh.

I hear your whisper
on my thigh.

The noise is maddening.
I nearly die.

As I was driving home this evening the wind was blowing paper bags and leaves and plastic cups and all the other city trash across my path along the freeway, and my car was being buffeted in every direction at once. And it reminded me of a night I was driving home from Canyon Lake, all through two lane country roads in the dark, and, as I bounced along the pavement, it was leaves and deer and foxes being blown across my path by winds that blew us all around: Foxes, deer, and rabbits too, all hurrying to nice warm places to be safe against the cold.

And finally I got home, and we visited a bit and ate a bite of dinner and, in a little while, went off to bed. And there I saw the smile upon your face I loved to see, and I wrapped my legs around your waist and smiled back up at you and reached around your back and drew you down against my chest and rubbed my cheek against the side of your cheek and ear and, as you turned you face away, your hair. And the wind blustered outside in the night. And we could feel it shake the house sometimes. And you and I both scurried toward our nice warm home and covered up against the cold 'til morning.

In the night,
laying in the embers
of our last embrace,
asleep and dreaming
of each other's eyes
and smiles and skin against
our skin
(glowing in the dark invisibly:
No flame or smoke but
heat still left inside)
an angel flew too near to us
and stirred our souls
again with
only wanting to be
me with you
and you with me.

Awake.

Morning Glories freckle ashes piled out
in the backyard in a corner that I
used for burning trash last fall. Ashes laced
with green and blossoms. That's the way I feel
when I'm with you: Remnants of the ruins,
lost out in the back of life, that somehow
have been laced with green and freckled with the
purples of your touches, every morning,
waking to the sunrise singing silently
of love and lust and helpless, helpless
touching in the night, lighted, turning
into smiles a while and being nothing more
than leaves and vine and flowers, scrawled across
the little piles of ashes from my past.

As the petals faded on the roses
that you sent to me for Valentine's Day,
I plucked them off to let the younger ones
unfold (one by one at first, and then in
clumps of three, four, five or more, until all
of them had gone away and the stems were
standing with dark, dry leaves and only dried
out pollens on their core). I remember
reading, once (a long time ago) about
the magic that the ancients felt was held
in old, dry petals from a rose. I
remember that the old ladies of the time
would save them in plain earthen pots with wooden
lids until they needed the power
of their aroma to rekindle
whatever glimpse at truth, beauty, or love they
had originally been gathered to
restore. I don't believe such things. There is
no sorcery in old rose petals. But
they are so sweet to the fingertips (and
so faint for the nose to behold) that I
cannot throw them away. I think I'll place
them in an old earthen jar with a wooden
lid, just to keep as odd old memories,
until the day I happen upon them,
and open them, and all of your love comes
washing over me again that day, the
way it has so many times before.

I have no prayer for you
like the one for the barefoot boy with cheeks of tan,

but when I put down the Newsweek
on this late night
and went in to cover you up,
I wished for us both
that as we grow older
I might never forget
how I loved you tonight
in the glow of the nightlight light.

Like porpoises in a fish tank,
flowing
and rolling
and dancing like twins in the water,
with children watching carefully
and mothers turning away like nuns,
that is how it should be.

Not like dogs at the side of the road,
which can be so embarrassing.

Grey Blood
isn't bled by old men.
Nor Blue
by Aristocracy.
Nor Black
Nor Yellow
by African or Asians.

Why then is my blood flesh-toned
and unseen by all about
even though I am bathed in it
over you?

I was driving from Austin to Lufkin,
on my way to do some work out there, and
over blacktop pavement, grayed by time and
tons of cars and trucks across it, scarred with
patchwork squiggled, dribbled stripes of tar-patch
tar where road crews patched the cracks the hot and
cold had caused throughout the years; past gas pumps,
store fronts, neon lights, and dirty little
houses in the poorer parts of town, I
thought about the way that you politely
weave your fingers into mine when you are
sleeping, the way you breath lightly and sigh
in the night, the way you dream sweet dreams and
waken wanting me beside you in the light.

We were lying back
to back. I was on my left
side. My right arm was
laid along my right side, and
my fingers were intertwined

with yours above our
behinds. Our feet were also
intertwined at the
foot of the bed, with our old,
bulky, white, cotton socks on

them to keep our toes
and soles from getting cold. I
was the first to let
go: I still regret that so.

In the silver light from the full moon, the willows whispered to me of the flowing of your water and the blowing of your wind. Then, as if I were going pink and white with blossoms of embarrassment, I lay me down in grasses of the meadow and let your breezes blow right over me (and waters through). Writhing in the passion of your passage, I could not hear the song the willows sang of you. I could not see them dancing too. But afterward, while I was waiting for another wind to do as you, I heard the willows whisper that nobody else could ever, ever do.

I was married once. We even had a son. But then it fell apart. My Ex lives in L.A. My son died years ago. Now, standing by the river (It, in constant song. Me? Perhaps I hum along. But very quietly.) I silently remember how it felt when he was born. How wrong I was to think, when he had died, that everything would never be the same. For here I stand. (What is it, maybe twenty years since then?) And still the river plays it's song. And I still hum along. (Though neither of us, he and I, are children anymore. Now, I am old, and he has never grown.)

I love to hear the crickets singing to the night.
I love the breeze to brush the leaves and rustle to
the beat of crickets singing. I love to watch the lights
across the valley flicker in the heat of summer
evenings. But last night I sat inside and waited
for you. You never came. And so I awaken
this morning having missed so many things I loved.

36
Being All Alone

The long haired Tom cat was asleep on his back on the floor in front of the back door. I stooped and patted him upon his belly and then lightly scratched his chest through all his hair. He stirred and yawned and looked at me in passing. Then he shook his paws a bit, and leaned back up and gave my finger one small nip. I let him be. It was plain to see he didn't really want to have me bother him. And that was fine with me. I didn't really want his chest or his hair or his nibble on my finger. No, as much as I would have liked to have you here to touch beside me, you were gone away.

37

I cry myself to
sleep over you: Over your
departing eyes; your

cursed tenderness,
smile, consecrated bottom,
blessed belly; the

birthmark on your wrist
and how it felt beneath my
idle fingertips.

38

My belly cries, "Please,
lay against me long and silent
as our hands caress."

It aches
for ripples
of the tickles
from your hand.

It is the same old sun and sky. It has some clouds, and sometimes haze, but (always) it is still just morning without you. I am dying from the lack of your touch. It is the same old sun and sky. It has some clouds, and sometimes haze, but (always) it is still just morning without you. I am dying from the lack of your touch. No you. August has been long and hot and dry, and all the trees have wilted from the lack of rain. You've been away too long. It has been too long between your waters on my skin, or flowing warm within, and now my heart is dying from the lack of your white in the night.

Later,
as the sweat dried into
the air and cooled the night,
he said I was the best
blanket he had ever had
and sighed.
I squirmed a little bit on
top of him to better cover him
with warm and white
and tucked my lips against
his neck to keep away the cold.

We had not lied.

In the closet, I came upon the clown
suit that you wore the Halloween that we
first met. Still with no regret, I stood quite
still a while, and then I reached to touch it
through the years. Over all the years you were
Caruso, Yogi Bear, and Rin Tin Tin,
but first and last (and still) you were a face
with painted frown in baggy clothes, button
bows, and shoes at least two times the size of
mine, standing underneath balloons (alone)
and hoping some young man would take you home
and let your costume drop (and someday hang
in some dark closet, after all those years)
and paint your frown into a grin again.

My favorite memory was the time we wondered which one of us was taller and climbed out of bed, barefoot and naked, and stood against the wall, in turn, and marked each other's height, and, being second, turning round to find our marks the same, and then, both laughing, bent over and so loud we echoed off each other and the walls. Your smile

was bigger than mine. Your kisses sweeter. And all your touches echo in my muscles even now. No. No, I take that back. My favorite memory was when I asked were you awake and was this real or just a dream, and, in the dark, you kissed me.

I had entered an appointment in my
calendar in ink. Then it was canceled.

Using a bottle of white-out,
I was painting it away, and
the little wash of white felt
just the way it did that day
we cast your ashes all
upon the river:

Smooth and constant;
Without a thought of hurting anyone;
And yet were gone forever
all the lines upon your skin.

Was there anything
better (in all of space and
time) than the curve of
your behind? On cold, dark nights
it still smolders in my mind.

Reflections of our
moments permeate my mind,
light my eyes inside,
and fill my skin with touching
(in the dark) on lonely nights.

Relentlessly (and
patiently) our hearts reached out
to touch. The graceful
loneliness unfolding in our
kisses and our finger tips.

I'm looking at the
view, outside my window. Which
part of it is you?

I had stopped growing
older, frozen in time by
simply seeing you.

Now my hair turns gray again. Our kisses
whimper in the backyard helplessly. Our
touches echo listlessly against the
trees. But what about the sunsets we had
promised to each other? What about our
gazing eye to eye in silent harmony?
What about our glowing in the dark?

I miss the stories we were going to write
together when you came back home. And I
miss the music that our touches made and
that we played together too few times. And
I wonder, "Where have all our songs gone now?"
I had thought that we would be beside each
other, fading quietly, forever.

Caressed by only
angels and the ghosts of
butterflies, your heart pours

out on me. Our love
takes flight. Their eyes smile down on
us amidst the wings.

When I tore down the shed in the backyard,
I scared out a bunny who'd been living
underneath it. I'd never seen him near
the house before, but suddenly he was
stranded, without shelter, in the backyard.
A friend and I tossed him scraps of carrots
and lettuce, but we never saw him eat
them. He made a new home in the stand of
Spanish Daggers in the front yard. It was
more vulnerable, but it reminded
me of the Briar patch. "Please don't throw me in
that briar patch," I would sing to him as I
passed by. White ears high and listening, he
twitched his nose, keeping time to my music.

At dawn, for all of
eternity, I am a
little blue rabbit,
wiggling its nose while it
nibbles on the front lawn grass.

48
Beyond

Over on the other side there are ghosts
of oxen drawing ghosts of covered wagons
westward fully laden with the ghosts
of pioneers and their possessions. When
we look out of our windows and see yards
and shrubs and other houses up and down
the street, with concrete driveways, they see plains
and sky. They think about the Indians,
who may attack again at any moment.

But no ghosts of Indians will bother
them today or anytime to come. They
are hunting ghosts of buffalo some ways
away. And late at night, while all the ghosts
of wagons will have circled round their camp
fires, all the ghosts of Indians will dance
and chant of how the hunt has gone that day.

Here and there, transparent children all will
kneel in prayer before they go to sleep. And
everywhere the whispers of adults in
love will crackle like the fading embers
of a fire. Then the howls of wolves will fuel
the silence of the night for both sides now.

The living will have wondered if they've heard
the dead. The dead will hardly notice they
aren't living. The night will creep along in
lonely strides. And when we all awake (from
dreams of one another seeming so un-
real), the sunlight will confide that it was true.
The waters of the pond will ripple with
our skipping stones. The air will rustle with
the fall of autumn leaves. And underneath
our feet, the ground will just repeat, "Dig deep.
When you are planting all your seed, dig deep."

If you were here with me, I'd hold your head against my chest and play my heartbeats just for you. Then, dancing to the rhythm, I would give you all my touch. But since you are away from me, I'll sing my song alone like this. And every word will be instead of heartbeats. Every phrase will be instead of touching you: So, this one is instead of kissing you upon the cheek; And this one is instead of touching you upon the neck; And this one is instead of still more kisses from your navel to your chest and then on to your lips; And this one is instead of laying with you, both our hearts between us (just like flowers that are pressed between the pages of the bible) and caressing, every now and then, again;

And this one is instead of touching you throughout the night, even though we're both asleep and we don't even know that we are touching; This one is instead of kissing you awake; And this last one, instead of gesturing that you may go ahead, and as you pass, my stealing one last brush.

When last I lay with you it
was upon a pool table in
old New Orleans (long ago)
one afternoon when no one else
was there. Remembering the
fair warm breezes dancing with the
curtains at the window, and
the way you blew against my chest
and neck to dry my sweat, I
lay alone upon the sheets and
think about the slate and felt
and bumpers, yearning to be
with you too (so long ago).

It is late in the
Spring. Blossoms fade in the wind.
But your caresses
carry my heart in their hands
everywhere that they might go.

Then I went home.

I took a shower,
brushed my teeth,
and lay down in bed
tingling with having been with you.

In the morning,
I awoke unsure.
Was that a dream
or really real?

I sniffed for smells of you.
All washed away.

I licked my teeth
for tastes of you.
All washed away.

I searched my skin
for kisses.
All faded in the light.

Later that morning,
I sat in my meditation
less alone than usual,
and the gods smiled on me
more loudly than they had in years.

It had been no dream.
Though washed away
by soap and time and light,
you kissed me,
and I kissed you.

And the gods
were glad with both of us.

Driving home to the country and a good night's sleep,
slowing down at the crest of the last great hill
to look at the lights scattered across the night.

On the left's a pair of deer
just waiting in the light,
and I coast by slow and easy and say to them,
"Howdy Neighbors, how are you tonight?"
And they stare back being frozen in the headlights,
while I roll by relaxed and smiling, happy to have seen them.

And gaining speed from the hill, not rushing,
just coasting faster and faster,
I bounce at the bump at the bottom of the hill
and lean with the curve to the right
giving gas to keep moving,
and, off to the right in the fringe of my lights,
comes a deer running towards me:
Jumping brush and barbed wire
and running straight for me.

I slam on the brakes.

Above the quiet of the night, the scream of locked brakes
peaks and holds and holds.
The deer runs.

I try to steer while sliding.
Everything is on Emergency Reactions.

I am going to miss it.

I am going to hit it.

I wonder if I'll be able to mount the head.

The tire screams continue,
and, out front, the tiny tan scrub deer pumps:
Magic muscles taut and pulling like a jockey's on its back
Whipping its flanks and breathing, "Run you mother! Run!"
It is trying to win its racehorse life.

And even later when I'll look back upon the skid marks,
I still won't be able to figure out where the finish line
was,
but one of us crosses it first, and just as the tires stop
screaming
(Wham)
I catch her left rear hip with my front bumper.

Ankles and elbows up in the air
she flies and she flips and she lands running.
Running to the trees. To the trees. To the trees.

And I am left sitting alone in my pickup,
engine stalled by the quickness of the stop,
my lights all aglitter like a Christmas Tree,
slightly sideways in the middle of the road,
surrounded simply by the silent night.

And I don't know whether the deer survived,
or what I'm supposed to do now,
except drive on home through the night
smiling at the lights,
nodding to the neighbors,
and hoping we all get by.

Late in the evening,
after conversation and
our tenderness, we

drift away beside
each other into sleep: And
so I share my heart,

my soul, my search for
meaning in life, and the
tiniest little kiss.

(The smoke billowed above and about me and then off, up through the trees, and away. Thick, black, acrid and wet with tears, it would occasionally get into my chest, and then it would heave as if it were filled with some old love song. The firemen came and put it out and told me I shouldn't have done it: But it was too late. The policemen came and told me I shouldn't have done it. But it was too late. The neighbors mostly stood around and pointed and talked among themselves. But Old Widow Nelson told me that she wished that she had thought to do it too, back then. But now, it was too late.)

I just wanted you to know that, after you left me, I dragged our bed out into the back yard and burned it.

55

God smiles down on us.
And the music of the spheres
has all our faces.

Creatures of the night arise and prod us
in the darkness to admit ourselves into
our nightmares and our dreams. Making us
to be the noises in the dark who shook
our childhood stillness in the early years,
please, instead of poking at our fears and
making us to call out to our parents
begging, "Bring some light into our
night," now, instead, cause us to recoil to
each other in the darkness, 'til amidst
the moaning and the groaning and the squeaks
of bed frames we become the things that through
the ages have gone bump throughout the night.
For ages have gone bump throughout the night.

57
Leonardo's Dream

Driving home from an out of town job with his coworkers, Leonardo fell asleep in the back seat dreaming of shoulders and the curves of young muscles around upper arms as they tie into backs and arch down to full asses and hard thighs and the calves and the ankles and white marble skin.

Coworkers chatted amiably.
Trees and countryside passed by swiftly outside of the window.

Although his body did not stir outside, inside Leonardo was forming the perfect man with his hands and his chisels and blow after blow of his hammer and tool.

In the villages,
they passed children playing stick ball and tag.

In the fields,
they passed men who had tanned leather skin and smelled of days of perspiration even though they'd bathed the night before.

All of them filled his senses
as he passed by in his dreams.

Even with his eyes closed
and in dreamland, each and every one of them touched back into his corneas and leaked into his brain as visions of the once and future boys and men that he would carve again when he got home.

There would be laments to losing Jesus.

There would be brief praises to the patrons
who had paid the bills.

There would be more sweat spent on these boys
than the real ones in the fields and streets,
and it would smell so sweet.

And when he was finished,
there would be a sigh
like no one had ever sighed before, and
he would lay among the rigid bodies
and extol the virtues of virginity
and chastity and semen crawling down
his leg to find the ground and sneak off in
the night to find the muscles he had dreamed
of in the light while driving home with
coworkers that day.

It is night, and I am back alone at home. You are back, alone, at your home too.

When I was driving you home, the fog was thick and close, and I was going slowly and paying close attention to the road and fog, and you had your eyes closed and your head against my shoulder. And we held hands.

After I had dropped you off, the rain began, and the fog was washed away in just a moment. And the night sparkled before me in my headlights and the street lights and the lights from stores and businesses along the way back home.

And when I got home I fed the cats and made sure all of the windows were closed and took a shower and lay down in bed and thought of you.

There will be no rainbow once this storm has passed.

Because you gave all of them to me.

Good night, my sweet. Good night.

In bed, with the lights all out and all of our clothing off, after the sweat and the semen both had flowed and dried, and we had taken to talking softly about how nice it was to be with each other and touch and know each other was still there, and (in each others arms) we were both about to slowly go ahead and fall asleep, you commented that maybe we should turn around so our heads would be back at the head of the bed with the pillows. Funny, I hadn't even noticed: All it took was about an hour in bed with you and everything had turned completely around.

Absentmindedly,
I touched my desk while working;
I had been thinking
of you, and it was hard and
smooth and there within my reach:

* * *

Two birds outside were
playing. They jumped and flew and
sang from bush to branch
to wire. Even as they played,
a cat stalked them from below.

I thought how like they
we are. Until some pain might
catch us and dash our
dreams, we sing to each other
and dance together on air.

It is difficult to write poetry about my boyfriend anymore. There is no yearning that is not met. There is no wonder that is not held in awe. There is no mystery that is not explored. And there is no skin between us that is not touched somehow. We talk, laugh, eat dinner, visit with friends and go our separate ways. We sleep back to back or in each others arms or, sometimes, one or another on the couch for some reason. But it is difficult to work up the energy for poetry about him. I am grateful to have him in my life, and there is not much more to say. I love him beyond words.

Even now, when the
leaves are lying brown upon
the ground and cracking
underfoot, it reminds me
of you. And when the children

play on skates, along
the sidewalks (with the sounds of
wheels against the cracks
repeating rhythmically
in time to squeals of pleasure,

set to toothy grins
and tосseled hair and freckled
faces in the sun)
it reminds me of you too.
And in the evening, when I

chance to see the moon
against the darkened sky, and
there seem to be no
stars because the city lights
are much to bright, it is still

just you.

Beneath a willow canopy, surrounded by the leaves that fluttered in the breeze, we sat crossed legged and talked of childish things.

Later on, we paddled the canoe about the summer lake and smiled at children diving from the docks into the playful land of water.

You didn't have to take off your clothes. It was good to be with you, and any glimpse of skin was so exciting.

Standing next to you in the bedroom was more than my heart could take, and it battled against my rib cage trying to get out, to be with you.

But, thank god, you did take off your clothes with me and we could touch and make our play at trying to be only one together.

Whose arm was whose? Whose leg was whose? Whose heart and breath was keeping whom alive and there together?

They were all the leaves upon the willows, canopied about us, fluttered by the breeze, and shivering with touches from each other, circling the two of us, crossed legged upon the ground, as we spoke of childish things.

I think he had dark hair. I think he wore no glasses. I think he might have had on a blue tee shirt, blue shorts and white tennies. He was wearing simple white jockey briefs underneath his shorts. Stepping up to pee at the urinal, he dropped his shorts to his ankles and clinched his cheeks together inside of the white cotton briefs to squeeze the water out of his body. He arched his back slightly and craned his neck a bit to the right, laughing to a friend that it had been a good game. I tossed my dirty paper towels into the trash can and turned and walked away, not looking back at him.

Summer slipped over
us before we knew what Spring
would bring. We (laying

under sheets of petals,
scented, soft and fading),
we, still touch as then

(when Spring slipped into
Summer, as we lay in soft,
scented, fading skin).

We still lay as then
(before we knew how Summer,
wet and grasping, would,

still wishing, wanting,
needing more, wrap us in our
only hoping love).

* * *

Summer slipped over
us before we knew what Spring
would bring. We still touch
as then. We still lay as then.

I caressed his vision with a blend of
truth and ancient legends from the country.
Then, inhaling twice, I spied his sigh and
came in waves of crying. I was the proud,
indulgent parent of the babies in
the playground of his belly. I smiled at
their behinds, naked like our own, draining
out of every fold and grabbing every
hair. Colorful, inebriated, boys,
we lay knowing it would never be better
than this, knowing we would have to come
down some day, hating the coming withdrawals.
I closed my eyes to breathe before it ends.
His eyes flew on in opiated winds.

In the late evening, your back
against my back. In the night,
your hand against my stomach
and your arm around my side.

In the morning, your gentle
touch against my butt, pushing
together in the silence,
as we stretch our aging muscles
awake. And too, the quick
kisses licking at our lips.

* * *

I have never had the
opportunity to
watch us making love. But
I am sure that we are
graceful and elegant
and tender and beautiful.