

A DUNGEON OF DAYS

A collection of rhymes and poems

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The Author's Forward

This collection of poetry is my truth. It is a chronicle of a portion of my journey through life and how I understood it. This is my story. All of the events that are recounted in these poems actually happened. I have tried to honestly recall my thoughts at the time these events occurred and I believe that I have been honest and true to myself on that account.

At some point in the writing I decided to change the voice or perspective from 'I' to 'He'. I did this for several reasons. I was aware that I was trying to distance myself from my past by blaming it on somebody else - 'I' didn't do this or think that, it was 'He'. I also decided that this was mainly a chronicle for myself and I didn't want to have to read it at some time in the future and have to say to myself in my head that "I did this..", or "I did that...", and I didn't want anybody else reading this to have to do that either. I was always aware in my reading that I was internalizing the thoughts of the writer. When I would read statements with the word 'I', I always felt that statement or idea would ring through my thoughts as if I had said it myself and it would become a part of me. When I would read a novel, I would become the main character and if the writing was good, I would feel all of the emotions that the main character would express if the narrative was in the first person or 'I'. By referring to myself as 'He', I believed that I would never become that person again.

I decided to put this narrative into poetry because it seemed to be the fastest way to express the thoughts and feelings. I began writing the longer pieces in this manuscript in a novella style of strung together poems. I tried to write each poem which was part of the novella as a snapshot or piece that could stand on its own as well as being a strand in the story that I was telling. I was trying to create a form of the novel for people that didn't have the time to read a novel, and for writer's like myself that didn't have the time to write a novel.

When I was in the middle of writing the poems contained in this collection, my thought or goal or wish was that this could help somebody. The lesson, I felt, was that the maniac described in this writing could eventually straighten his life out and become a law-abiding, relationship sustaining, job holding, tax paying citizen. I thought that if I made it out of hell, then anybody else could do the same if they knew that they weren't alone or unique in their private and personal struggle. After toiling for years on this manuscript and being met with mostly the brick walls of rejection, I decided that the world didn't need this or want it and I stopped writing. In August of 2008 I felt the sudden urge to go back to this manuscript and do something with it. Several weeks after feeling the impetus to do something with my writing, I was diagnosed with brain cancer. After two brain surgeries, radiation and continuing

chemotherapy, I don't know how much time I have left. I want to use the time that I do have to get this story out there so that it will somehow be found where and when it is needed most.

The Author Would Like to Thank

I would like to thank my family and everybody that I've known during my life for putting up with me. Special thanks to Francine Hall, my parents - Mom and Harry, my sisters - Patti and Karyn, my nephews - Justin and Evan, the Ryscamp family - Jim, Jeff, Jodi, Aunt Pat and Uncle Roy and all of my other Aunts, Uncles and cousins. I would like to give thanks to the people that I've worked with and for and I would like to thank the people that I've traveled to work with on the public transportation system along with the people that have lived and worked in the places that I have lived. I would mostly like to thank the abiding spirit of Saint Therese of Lisieux for being a guiding light and inspiration.

*

GAUNT RETREATS - Songs for the bloody footed back pedal

*

He kept it all hidden down deep inside
What silence locked below was taken with him when he died

Tongues will turn to clay when mouths have gotten marbled
Talk is spread beyond a message that is garbled
Words are welled up in a strangle of emotion
My voice goes unheard in the draft of mild commotion
Slow days wait for sleep in nights of magic potion

I'll tie the hanging rope to a rafter high up in the stable
I'll have this out of my system just as soon as I am able

I want to speak out loud
Like I've never been told to shut up before
I want to tell my thoughts
Like a man with something to say
I want to take my sanity for granted
Like I never got carried away

(I want to get old
I'll probably just get in the way)

He lived in a world that he designed
Heaven and hell were on opposite corners of his mind

The searchers are looking pointless and off centered
The starting place is moving each time that it's entered
Thoughts are dragging to the pace of rapt attention
My brain is wired into a left behind dimension
The open road has been lapsed with intervention

I'll take off my muddy shoes and put them right down on the table
I'll get this out of my system just as soon as I am able

I want to be around
Like I've never been told to get lost before
I want to feel at home
Like a man who's welcome to stay
I want to take security for granted
Like I have always lived that way

(I try to get old
All I can do is get in the way)

Her beliefs were carefully destroyed
Left behind in afterthought she was filled into the void

Interest loses allegiance once it's drifting
 Backdrops fade onto a scene that's always shifting
 Hearts are drawn through low process of negation
 Souls are being dried in the hold of blunt stagnation
 The bare walls whisper in breaths of sighed frustration

I'll empty the bottle with the skull and crossbones on the label
 I'll clean this out of my system just as soon as I am able

I want to hear the truth
 Like I've never been lied to by life before
 I want to know what lasts
 Like a man that can see what's real
 I want to take my verity for granted
 Like I never could doubt what I feel

I never could doubt what I feel

* * * * *

There's too much time wasted on this circle walking trudge
 When my mind sets on something it refuses to budge

I go out each morning and do the headless chicken
 My heart is pounding and my insides start to sicken
 My calm is overwrought and pushed to panic stricken

I'm as useful as a country courthouse judge
 I'll while the hours finding harbors for a grudge

(I'm divided by my efforts
 I'm united by my fears)

Look out below
 I'm pulling out the stops
 I don't know how far the bottomless drops

My mind feels like a sieve
 I never had a goddamn to give
 I'm on a ship that silently sails
 I've been going so slow
 I've got a case of the snails

I'm reaching back for something
 But there's really nothing there
 I'm reaching back for something
 I'm only coming up with air

I'm seeing too many with the rabid maddog foam
 I watch myself in every long haired leaping gnome

I walk past the sob song hemorrhaged throated belter

My collar dampens with the drench of cold sweat swelter
 He's been stuck forever in the opened air shelter

I let him die on the streets I used to comb
 I'm too busy collecting cardboard for his home

(I'm misguided by my efforts
 I'm enlightened by my fears)

I'm coming through
 Start ripping out the stops
 I'll make the best with the worst of my flops

My mind drains like a sieve
 You only get one chance to live
 I have a front that finally fails
 If I had a hammer then I would never have nails

I'm reaching back for something
 I'm not sure what will be there
 I'm reaching back for something
 I'm only coming up for air

The night's simmering in the vent of nostril flair
 There's no place left to contain the raging ragtopped scare

The exodus stomps down hard on the lead foot pedal
 The road will be empty before the dust can settle
 The ringing in my ear now sounds like scraping metal

I went to work building circles for a square
 When logic undercooks it comes out blood red rare

(I'm forgotten by my efforts
 I'm reminded by my fears)

Full speed ahead
 I'm tearing out the stops
 I'll get there alone without any props

My mind leaks like a sieve
 I only have one life to live
 I have a drive that quietly quits
 I've got the key to the door but the lock never fits

I'm reaching out for something
 I'm just hoping it's still there
 I'm reaching out for something
 All I've been feeling is hot air

* * * * *

Habitual diversion has brought occasional relief
 Nothing waits beneath layers of survivalist motif
 A decrepitude is remnant of the stiffened strychnine
 Superstition mistakes an empty cipher for the bad sign

I'm too old to know that the last can be the first
 I'm young enough to think that I can still wear well through the worst

I'll approach the cold with iced persistence
 Along the squall of no assistance
 It's an isolated instance
 I'm going for the distance

Eruptible violence has been regretfully conceived
 The innocents and victimized are among those now bereaved
 Broken dreams are candidating for the likely rampage
 The truth is one time buried on the bottom of some back page

I'm weak enough to be slowed down by fits and starts
 I'm strong enough to make the whole into more than just its parts

I'll invent a cure for caged insistence
 Out on the road of most resistance
 This is ruminated instance
 I'm off into the distance

Freedom from all concerns allows the pursuit of thought by rote
 The solution is the poison and not its antidote
 Celebration idols die in the wings of sparkled gleam
 The rot that is devouring the core is noticed on the seam

I'm fool enough to think I'd never take the lumps
 I've sense to realize I'll be just one more of many chumps

I'll maintain a form of bored consistence
 Get through a life of dull existence
 It's a regulated instance
 I'll settle for the distance

* * * * *

The furies howl of gaunt retreat whipped into the bluster
 The shine is smeared with age that goes lacking in its luster

I'm subtled by the blandness of this stifling ambience
 I'm caught up in the pocket of coattailed experience

I'll chase for lost days through the plundered archives
 Next year freezes on the face of blundered still lives

What can grind the madness to a halt
 When can I pin my problems to a fault

If you've seen everything then what did that show
I'm watching Donna Reed on the late night video
But how could that matter to a Vincent van Gogh

This is business as usual
Life is not a question
Life is a refusal

The vision is surrounded and collected in the gloam
Half-baked disaster is driving hard down towards its home

I found the new mendicant in the old snake oiled charmer
I went back home to fast asleep like a tired farmer

I said a prayer for the Dalai Lama
I sent my last thought straight up to Bodhidharma

How can time be slurred down to a drawl
When can I knock a hole into this wall

If you've gone everywhere then where did you go
I've been drinking more coffee than Joe DiMaggio
But that wouldn't matter to a Vincent van Gogh

This is business as usual
Life is not an offer
Life is a refusal

(I'm sponged for the absorptive search of vicarious spills
I'm loaded with the promise of imaginary fills)

A life can stop while the years fly past like paper
The old ways line the clouds that will wash away for vapor

I'd be more open if I didn't act so reticent
I'd be decisive if I didn't feel so hesitant

I have a mind that corrupts and rectifies
I have a dream that resurrects and crucifies

Why must my part be so hard to fit
Why is it wrong to be a non-descript

If you've heard everything then how did you know
I'm hearing my childhood on the flashback radio
But that shouldn't matter to a Vincent van Gogh

This is business as usual
Life is not an answer
Life is a refusal

This is not so unusual
Life is not an answer

Life is a refusal

* * * * *

I left myself wide open naked turned inside to the out exposed
I shudder in revulsion at mention of the image I once posed

Judgment lurked when motives appeared transparent
Hatred consumed the heart of the withdrawn aberrant
Silent retreat is a reflexed condition
My past returns in the form of some blind rendition

I found asylum beyond the extreme
I sought out the harsh and willed it supreme

I fell down hard
This won't happen again
I'll be on guard
I won't be going over that way again

I'm canned up and jarred
Nothing remains of a trust after it's charred

I relied on everlasting light of heaven in god up above
My belief dissolved for doubt
When the good was pushed aside with a shove

The transient truth became permanent
Wisdom glowed in the bulbs made of burnt-out filament
There was no bleeding heart martyred miracle
There is no hope for the terminally cynical

Men will punish as divine will forgive
Better to forget and learn to let live

I was not spared
This won't happen again
I've been prepared
I won't be taken over that way again

I've healed and repaired
A faith that has been damaged is always impaired

I was raised on rot in hell temptation evil doing sinner guilt
There was no escaping from the depths of the inferno I had built

Innocence relaxed where demons exercised
Virtue took on the bad shape of all it ostracized
It's last legs for the common sense mosaic
The new way will be housed in something more archaic

I took refuge in the hollowed flagrant
Morals have been bottomed out and vacant

The page has turned
 I won't be falling over that way again
 If it happens again
 I'm not concerned
 If it happens again
 I'll see what I've learned
 Then I'll rake through the coals where I have burned

If this happens again
 I'm not concerned
 They can scatter the ashes after I've burned

There will be nothing but ashes after I've burned

* * * * *

I'm taking my gasoline straight to the heat of the fire
 I can smell the smoke of a flame that's starting to tire

I misplaced my invitation to the shoestring lunch
 I kept wavering in the blur of a light flash punch
 My insides echoed with a swallowed pride gulp
 My thoughts emptied into the garbage can pulp

I'm well on my pleasure reeking status speaking way
 I've faded for the nerve lacking time wracking gray
 I've almost forgotten my hop freighting dumb waiting day

Yeah, I'm getting it down
 I've got my head above water
 But I'm still afraid I might drown
 I'm running it down

You might say it's crap
 But I say it's brown

I'm getting it down

There's something wrong with the vine the grapes have grown out all
 sour
 The wine ends up tasting flat but it's still drunk with power

I can't raise my spirits with a spaghetti line winch
 I put everything I had on the leadpipe cinch
 I loaded plates during the secular fast
 I steadied my mood for the seasonal blast

I went off on a risk faking comfort making streak
 I quit being the quick stinking slow thinking freak
 I'm still on the ride up the lost battle no paddle creek

Yeah, I'm putting it down

I get the stench of the city
 But all I can see is a town
 I'm letting it down

You're laughing at me
 But I'm not a clown

I'm getting it down

There's a rush of the river down to the floor of the ocean
 A life slowly settles as it continues in motion

I quickly froze in the face of the cinder block stare
 I withered the bleaks alone on the dead clotted air
 I called out to the man with the crankcase eyes
 He said worthless words never mixed with the wise

I made my best lifeless living nothing giving try
 I told the double walking backward talking lie
 I'm collecting tears for the gut wrenching heart drenching cry

Yeah, I'm knocking it down
 A man puts a price on his head
 Just like he was handed a crown
 I'm setting it down

You paid for a smile
 Life sold you a frown
 I'm getting it down

Some days fit like a rag
 Others flow like a gown
 I'm wearing it down

I'm living it down

* * * * *

I lit the morning with empty hearted hope wrapped up in a big plan
 I heard the dawn would soon crack open with the coming of the new man

I scratched my name on the welded relic
 I made my bed in the tattered cloth
 I saved a piece of the lotted fabric
 I shook the dust from a startled moth

I held illusion with a pillared tenacity
 Radiance was veiled in secluded opacity

I wanted something that was simple and profound
 From the hidden and renowned
 Not of the silenced or the sound

I wanted something that grew by the ounce and moved by the pound
 I wanted something to light this darkness into clear
 More than all of that I just wanted - to get out of here

I used to believe all my tomorrows could be cashed in for today
 I stood off to safety's side thinking I would get thrown into the fray

I read the news from a bottled letter
 I rode the line of the fractured trestle
 I lost my shoes to the cornered debtor
 I dug the yard from the restless vessel

I lost perspective in a confused grandeurance
 Impatience developed into lingered endurance

I'm waiting for something that's sacred and profane
 Brought by effort without strain
 Between the pleasure and the pain

I'm waiting for something that can cut against and with the grain
 I'm waiting for something to draw strength out of my fear
 More than anything I'm just waiting - to get out of here

I lived for nights that could tell more stories than old Emmett Grogan
 The battle cry of youth has faded to a long forgotten slogan

I cleared my throat like the character actor
 I learned to pray for the human terror
 I turned my back on the restless factor
 I laughed out loud at the holy error

I shroud second sight inside sense starving obstructions
 Interest has drained out of self serving seductions

I'm dying for something that's quick when it is long
 Made from weakness that's grown strong
 Beyond the realm of right and wrong

I need something that can read like a book and sing like a song
 I'm dying for something that's gone far as it is near
 But most of all I'm just dying - to get out of here

I'm just dying to be gotten out of here

* * * * *

I'm an all too willing victim of happenchance
 Trapped beyond the dead end door of circumstance
 Fettered to an idea that I've been inconsiderately fated
 I've never been one to be easily situated
 Events unconnect while remaining deeply related

I'm pulled under the sway of a misguided force

I'm making my way out along an obstacled course

It's no accident that things don't come off as they are planned
I've come to accept this but I still don't understand

I've seen a cruelty that sells itself as kindness
Numbed by the faith made to comfort the mindless
Clouded by the belief that something manmade is otherworldly divined
Life has much to offer the least spiritually inclined
God is just a symptom of a more universal mind

A man loses his soul and the world is his to gain
He'll have the rest of his life to sleep off all the pain

There's a blessed hour after a lifetime that is damned
I tried to accept this but I still don't understand

(The only reward in life becomes buried somewhere in its end
I understand this now but it took so long to comprehend)

I know a man who's been betrayed into mistrust
Left to the mercy dealt him by the unjust
Shaped by tradition that condemns all it categorically tries
He's marked by a system that holds down the ones it denies
Hope provides an empty balm for the injury of lies

He's been left out for dirt by an organized wrong
As life is cheapened its will to survive grows more strong

I'm waiting to be there when he gets up to take his stand
He might not accept this but he can never understand

* * * * *

I worship the sun and the new day that it is making
My sleepest dream is much more wiser than waking

I'm breathing slow and knocking back the heat
I'm looking for mind mirages in the street
I'm part of the scenery
I never can fit in

I assume various shapes and sizes
Imagining the life behind the dog day disguises
This is the time of my own moronic season
When I move further from contemporary reason

A summer day makes me feel like I'm a boy again
I wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then
I still want the same things now that I wanted back then

I give thanks to the sun and the warm washed feeling it brings
My strength soars with the spirit of Icarus wings

My skin is baked and browning in the heat
The asphalt melts like chocolate in the street

I have stubbed my outer senses
I've turned myself within
I don't trust my outer senses
I'm living from within

I leave aside my abscessed mental freight
Succumbing to the bending force and pull of moral weight
This relieves the inner leperotic illness
Lulling a troubled heart with momentary stillness

A summer day reminds me of being nine or ten
I wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then
I don't have anything now that I didn't want then

(It's the summer time
I've got women
I've got women
I've got women
I've got women on my mind)

Earth is no heaven and the sun brings the fire of hell
I climb out of my rut then crawl back to a shell
I'm soaked in sweat from taking on the heat
Exhaust fumes hang like a burden in the street

I don't have far to look around
To see where I have been
I don't bother to look around
I know where I have been

I'm being slowly chewed up and swallowed
Sifting through the tired dust of those that I have followed
This dims the light of my psychotropic vision
I'm sadly reduced to an object of derision

A summer day sends me to before and way back when
I wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then
I wouldn't do anything now that I wouldn't do then

If I could do it all over I wouldn't do it again
(What can a poor boy do)

* * * * *

I feel the light ripping through
In and out the back of my eyes
It's like hail stone gravel hitting on a pie tin roof
I wipe a smirk on my face with a couple of tries
It's time to get on with this small time goof

I didn't know that I could be so tired
and still feel so good
I'll try to get some rest when
my body tells me I should

This life wants a lot
It can have whatever it takes
I spend the best hours of the day
In a room full of fakes
Because that's what it takes

I have to push my mind out to the far and the wide
I know nobody's coming out through the other side

(That's the way this life has been going
Totally wasted without ever showing)

My nerves are threadtorn and bare
Strung out along a fraying line
It's a sensation that leaves me ripped open and raw
Tight tension straightens out the normal curve of my spine
I grind my teeth right into my jaw

I never thought that I could look so lousy
and still feel so good
I have a mouth full of blood
to mark the ground where I've stood

Life asks for a lot
I can give whatever it takes
I reach out and grab hold of the prize
With a hand full of shakes
Because that's what it takes

I want to push my mind through to the far and the wide
I know nobody's made it back from the other side

(That's the way this life has been leading
Healing the wound that won't ever stop bleeding)

Sore muscles howl out alive
Burning below edges of skin
It's a pain that locks hold with an anvil iron grip
Each step is a stake driven further into my skin
I try my best not to buckle and rip

I get used to feeling bad for so long
it starts to feel good
My arms hang stiff at my side
like they are made of dead wood

This life needs a lot
It will get whatever it takes

I'll wind up alone in the end
 With a heart full of breaks
 Because that's what it takes

I'm going to push my mind to the far and the wide
 I know nobody knows what waits on the other side

(That's the way this life has been living
 Never wanting to know what it is giving)

* * * * *

I was getting all firecrackered up and fully fourth of julied
 We were out celebrating our nation's birth
 Will a future world care about the day that it died

Will they say
 We never lived up to our pursuit of happiness jargon
 We settled for a piece of life and believed it was a bargain
 But we're still number one even if no one's counting
 We push ourselves then wonder why the pressure's mounting

Do we think this will last forever
 When we say that everything has an end
 Did we think that this time it meant never

Many others before have done the rise and the fall
 Is this the sound that's heard when the new freedom makes its call
 Am I the only one listening to the sound of the freedom I hear call

Can you see the American flag
 (I think I see the forest but I'm looking at the tree)
 The flag was giving direction to the wind
 Dissension has been pissing in that wind

It's easy to protect what we have and to overlook what we lack
 We stopped moving while our world turned without us
 If we go to sleep will our dream decide to come back

Should we say
 We never openly declared the start of our civil war
 We refer to it as the disparity of our rich and poor
 Now the status quo still means having something to lose
 We have freedom of choice but there is nothing to choose

Do they want this to last forever
 They know that everything must have an end
 Did they hope that this time it meant never

It's hard to imagine a nation changing its face
 What if something better was able to stand in its place
 Am I the only one to think we can put a better government in place

I still see the American flag
 (I'm looking at the forest but I want to see the tree)
 The flag was just there to color a parade
 Disillusion rains down on that parade

I was thinking of America and the sound of Fourth of Julys
 We tell ourselves we're the greatest on the earth
 Will tomorrow's world allow this history of lies

Will they say
 We wanted to go down as the winning side that never lost
 We set aside a quiet day to justify the human cost
 Still we ask for change while we keep clinging to the same
 The new order means our old way with another name

Was this supposed to last forever
 Will this keep going without reaching an end
 Or is the end closer now than ever

We learn to adjust and end up worse off than before
 What if we all decided not to take it anymore
 Could I be the only one that thinks this country isn't working anymore

I can see the American flag
 (I'm looking at the forest and it looks just like a tree)
 The flag is all that will decorate a grave
 Disregard will be buried in that grave

* * * * *

We're the wildest animals with the sophisticated skins
 The civility ends where the abstract of money begins

Hunger can starve the will and inspire one to act
 Hunger can glut the spirit in fulfillment of what it once lacked
 Poverty never learned the law of abundance
 The rich get richer with an easy redundance

"There's three for me and one for you"
 That's generosity in our human zoo

They tell us to be happy and take what we've got
 I'm getting tired of all this have and have not
 I've seen too much of the enough that always wants more
 If we didn't have the rich would we still have the poor
 If I had a little would I have to have more

The soul is subjected when wealth rears its figurative head
 This is the new jungle where our desires wait to be fed

Thirst can dry out the sight and enable one to see
 Thirst can gorge the senses when what was held back is loosed to flow
 free

Downtrodders fall prey to the traps of affluence
The mass clamors for lives of moneyed affluence

"You can have yours just don't touch mine"
That's where good luck parts ways and draws its thin line

Out here it's grab what you can and get what you've got
When somebody has it then somebody does not
I've seen too much of the takers that always crave more
If we take away from the rich does that make them poor
If enough would be enough how much would be more

(Time is money/Money is time
Neither one is real
Outside of the mind)

The floor is moving in the room where my valuables lie
My worldly goods will turn into garbage as soon as I die

Need can strip thought down to a disciplined clarity
Need can clutter the mind when it reverses its austerity
Ordinary life drabs next to the opulent
The losers fight for scraps left by the corpulent

They get three and leave one for you
Would you call them fools if they took only two

No one cares what you are it's about what you've got
That's how it is in this land of have and have not
I've seen too much of the want that will always take more
If we give to the rich what do we take from the poor
If I took less would I have to want that much more

* * * * *

I've got to move while I've still got the do-it-now energy
I feel the overrun of the slowly sneaking lethargy

I'm talking in crayons while I'm thinking in paints
My unheard doubt rings like another man's complaints
Solace is found in the lives of impatient saints

I'm just a pencil lead back to the drawing board conclusion cartoonist
I'm going over like the fried ego hot air floating overhead balloonist

I thought I knew myself better than that
I have my head in place between my shoulders
I keep my mind tucked under my hat

I'm not twisted- I'm wound
I'm not dirty- I'm ground

I can't get much better than that

Imitation shortens the form of another's invention
 Imagination waters the seeds of unknown intention

I'm blended within the populace of the feared
 My social ambitions are reversed and low geared
 Strangeness becomes a habit that gives way to weird

I'm the left in the past that comes back tomorrow cultural elitist
 I'm the look at myself turned away empty handed hanging down head
 defeatist

I used to know myself better than that
 I lock the door on the way out behind me
 I hide the key right under the mat

I'm not wasted- I'm spent
 I'm not crooked- I'm bent

Who could want to be more than that

The half-baked truth finds its life in assembly line grammatics
 The unspoken lie can be seen in overlearned dramatics

I filed for ignorance hoping I would be spared
 My mornings remind me of how badly I've fared
 Remorse means nothing when it pretends that it cared

I'm the surface shining for the outward sake of appearance veneerist
 I'm the going nowhere fast loser do anything to get ahead careerist

I could have done myself better than that
 I make a promise to stop being a snake
 I find some way to act like a rat

I'm not screwed up- I'm tight
 I'm not bitter- I'm spite

I could have been better than that

I'm not stupid- I'm dumb
 I'm not frozen- I'm numb

Why should I be better than that

(How can it get better than that)

* * * * *

For all that has been withheld
 Something else has ripened into overflowing
 The control that I've been force fed
 Is waiting to become helpless and unknowing

Reasoning will not survive the coming lunatic binge
 Cold collection is torn apart and random chaos stands convicted
 There will be no peace within the maniacal fringe
 I just watch as better judgment is temporarily evicted

I frown at the crumbs of a crust of toast
 Those with least always seem to lose the most

I'll blame it all on the full moon
 I'll be frothing like a crazed goon
 There's a mad laugh broadcast
 And I'm in tune

I'll be riding on the high tide
 My mind will multiply and divide

Stagnation has reason to stir
 Petty detail will wake beside the sordid
 The calm has surrendered its guard
 It's the advent of the spirit snuffing morbid

False hope won't wear well during this faith destroying stretch
 Low curiosity will lose its bounds and explode what it restricts
 There will be no mercy for the ill deserving wretch
 The shelter of the greed abiding law will contort as it constricts

I'm watching the dream give away its ghost
 The disease is dead along with its host

I'm loading up on the bad moon
 I'll be shifting like a sand dune
 There's an evil wind howl
 And it's my ruin

I'll go sailing in the storm tide
 I'll dry off and be fully supplied

Life lessens and cheapens in worth
 Reasons to live are deformed and undernourished
 The good is drowning in the bad
 Negative aspects have quietly malflourished

Strength has been saved for a confidence rebuilding splurge
 Double vision is revoked and sound ideas have expired
 There will be no shortage of the life asserting urge
 I'm waiting to be sixty-five so that I can be retired

I see fear that masqueraded as boast
 It's another trip to the other coast

I'll take a chance on the new moon
 I'll be bending like a wet spoon

I thought I'd reached the end
But it's too soon

I'll be floating in the ebb tide
I'll be receding with the subside

* * * * *

I go out of my mind then try appearing intact
The only consideration is how to react
I piece apart with an increasing fragility
I get back together with an awkward agility

I went out of my way to get a shortcut
I found myself going belly-up with the rotgut
Something has gone wrong but no one would say what

Problems dissolve before a catastrophic scale
I suffocate inside my claustrophobic tale

This life is a mystery
I haven't got a clue
I studied the history
The answers have checked out and are long overdue

I need somebody around
It helps keep my mind straight
I need the anger
It won't let me forget that I hate
I don't have a clue as to why I must hate

(I heard tell that the more a man learns
The less that he knows
I'm making ancient mistakes
From which no new wisdom grows)

I'm in-between spiritual feasting and fasting
I was a fool to believe in life everlasting
There's nothing to show for a careless virility
I boiled my lusts down to wanton sterility

I swallowed my pride like it was a horse pill
I could have easily settled in for the cheap thrill
Blind acceptance would have been better yet still

Poison is leaking out of the restituted heart
I low-keyed the truth of my destituted part

My life is a mystery
That doesn't leave a clue
There's nothing in history
The reasons are obscured in a shelter from view

I need somebody around
 It gives my life meaning
 I need the push
 It won't let me forget that I'm leaning
 I need a clue to know which way I'm leaning

(I heard tell that the less a man says
 The more that he knows
 I'm making new mistakes
 From which no ancient wisdom grows)

I could not take value from my efforted labors
 I don't have a choice in who I live with as neighbor
 Helplessness builds with a blood pounding ferocity
 The spin is constant with slight change in velocity

I let guilt chase me around like a bad debt
 It takes years to break free of that negative mind set
 Doubt is the one thing that books like a sure bet

Faults are overthrown with an orchestrated heave
 I ensnare myself in a tapestrated weave

I can't solve the mystery
 I'm not given a clue
 I gave up on history
 I've looked there for answers that are long overdue

I need somebody around
 It makes my time seem real
 I need the sharp pain
 It won't let me forget that I feel
 I need a clue as to why I still feel

I don't have a clue
 I'm on an island in an ocean of souls

I don't have a clue

* * * * *

Alone in this life on a stoical plod
 I will answer to living man's god
 I lock down in a barren endeavor
 The results will be here now or be here whenever

I feel like eleven years of rainy Monday mornings
 I knew this was going to happen
 I've been given plenty of warnings

I put in for the long haul
 I'll use what I've got
 I won't get off until I use it all

I got stuck on the never ending haul
 Learning to let my time drip
 I signed on for the strange trip

The blood is drawn from the energy bane
 I push myself into falter and wane
 My inner peace is barred and seclusive
 I move along as the unresponsive reclusive

I feel like a drop of water in a truck full of sand
 I know that if I sit down to rest
 I won't ever be able to stand

I got on for the long haul
 I still lose what I have
 I won't be stopped until I lose it all

I'm way out there on the forever haul
 Snapping back like a cracked whip
 I've been up for the strange trip

All vibrates in washes of resounding drone
 I fly like a fish and swim like a stone
 I can't cut with the sit-com precision
 I put it to bad inner dialogue decision

I'm walking uphill carrying my whole life on my back
 I'm tying off the loose ragged ends
 I'm reeling in and taking out slack

I signed up for the long haul
 I don't want what I have
 I'll never get free if I want it all

I'm gone along the here to nowhere haul
 Bolting into a death clip
 I've been lost on the strange trip
 My life has turned into a long trip

* * * * *

I'm bought and I'm sold
 I do what I'm told

I walk through walls and bridges
 Like a number nine dream visitor
 Another mad karamazov waits
 For the grand inquisitor

I wanted the decay to be more sinister
 But I found out
 (It took me so long to find out, yeah, I found out)

It was just more of the empty intrigue
I still prop for the moral fatigue

I'm left here with
Fighting words and flying colors
Broken birds and burnt-out lovers
Money games and styles with names
It's supposed to matter
But I don't care
When I think of going
I'm half-way there

I'm wearing clothes
That somebody gave me
I get so still
That nothing can move me

I'm young and I'm old
I'm set in my mold

I'm looking for sweet thursday
In the winter of our discontent
I'd forget who's next and who came first
To know where the lifehouse went

It felt like the damage would start leaving a dent
But I found out
(It took me so long to find out, but I found out)
That it was only causing a ripple
I became my own secret cripple

I'm left here with
Sharpened swords and sprayed-on colors
Sun bleached boards and sudden lovers
Corner games and people's names
It won't ever matter
That's why they're there
I thought I was going
But I'm nowhere

I'm thinking thoughts
That corner and frame me
I get so lost
That no one can find me

I'm hot and I'm cold
I bluff and I fold

I'm listening to strange days
And I used to see other voices
I wouldn't trade one jack kerouac
For all of the james joyces

Honesty shines like a junkyard of rolls royces
 But I found out
 (It took me so long to find out, but I found out)
 All that's admitted is just denial
 I'm plummeting the downward spiral

I'm left here with
 Cutting knives and carpet colors
 Patterned lives and parted lovers
 Endless games and faceless names

Does it really matter
 If no one's there
 I've been where I'm going
 But that's no where

I'm doing things
 That strengthen and drain me
 I get so far
 That nothing can reach me

* * * * *

Benign humor is an easy wilt for malignant mood
 Vague misfortune returns to dabble in the squalor
 Dissatisfaction is festering a pathetic brood
 Frustration builds up to a barricaded holler

My closed mind is relieved by a thought consuming entropy
 Relationships mingle in a wrap of emotional dystrophy
 Condemned failure is summoned by a past of mistakes
 Lack of opportunity turns toward ill-timed breaks

I should be hitting my bottom
 Just about now
 I'll start climbing back up
 If I can still remember how

I've got my head in a cloud
 My feet trip over the earth
 I'll look for my place in the crowd
 I've got to reconsider my worth

(This won't be the first time
 That a man has tried
 To will himself to death)

Expression is bummed along the categorical rush
 Groundless hatred gives way to a guilt-driven pity
 Anger compresses underneath the systematic crush
 I'm forced to face myself and the mess is not pretty

My heartfelt concern twists itself into plaguing ridicule

Thoughts gather momentum but the resulting effects are miniscule
 Admission cools in the shade of lurking denial
 I'm the judge-ed juried witness at my own trial

I should be scraping the bottom
 Right about now
 I'll start moving back up
 I'm always able to some how

I'm putting salt in my cloud
 I'll make the fall back down to earth
 I'm getting too old to be proud
 I'll rinse my wallow off with a dearth

(Each time a man goes berserk
 I am thankful
 This time it wasn't me)

Unknown returns the same and promises something much more
 The day is a duller glare waiting to be dusted
 The night is tangled and trapped in ceremonial curse
 Effort suspends in a growth immovably crusted

I wade and ravel throughout a labyrinthic confusion
 I rearrange the meaningless into epilogic conclusion
 Lies are the results that point to questions as their cause
 Life is a violation of unnatural laws

I should be feeling the bottom
 Any time now
 I'll start working back up
 But I might not remember how

I've got to get off my cloud
 I've got to get down to earth
 Sometimes I try living too loud
 I want to bring my still-life to birth

* * * * *

I reap the searing wind
 Brace a sharded mental stance
 I spin my memoried mind
 In sullen boneyard dance
 I carve my futiled hope
 Onto a razor ribboned glance
 Anonymous coincidence
 Is never still for second chance

Perceptions register stronger
 While their sensations have been muted
 Healing takes longer and longer
 But the pain becomes disputed

I'm numb and I'm cold
 My propensity to feel has sadly diminished
 Compassion once flowed out freely
 But now it conceals itself- finished

I trudge the weighting thoughts
 Force a clogged-up choking vent
 I loose-let my distanced self
 In deeply buried pent
 I slog my waking dreams
 Through days of oblivions bent
 Resounding dialogue echoes
 Without revealing what it meant

Reality is in danger
 After the logic has been looted
 I'm acting stranger and stranger
 As my rights become refuted

I hear my words trail
 My ability to think is greatly diminished
 Conversation is a sentence
 That is left stranded out loud- finished

I plow the rotting stench
 Crop a concentration grab
 I warp my corroded plans
 In days of aching drab
 I sink my sunken eyes
 Into a face of plastered slab
 I harrow my stunted vision
 Then gape the wound with borrowed scab

Observations become brighter
 Where awareness is now diluted
 I'm winding tighter and tighter
 But the coil seems so ill-suited

I watch the light pale
 The truth in what I see has slowly diminished
 Self-realization won't start
 Until the outward search ends- finished

* * * * *

I consider my ruin
 Returning to scenes of innocence shattered
 I land wherever I'm strewn
 Then look around to see where I'm splattered

The world got lonely and cold
 When my heroes had folded up and gone

I went to my inner well
There is nothing there left to be drawn

My spirit bides neglected
For the purpose seeking existential
Obvious and detected
Wanderlust is stuck in residential

I try to go forward but end up back pedaling
Distanced from the help that I call meddling

How high can I go
How far can I fall
How low can I go
How low can I crawl

Should I cheat when I can
Will I lie if I have to
If I do this to myself
Why wouldn't I do it to you

A father's steely strength
Is cut with lead and watered down with plastic
There's no limit to the length
That chokes measures which are socially drastic

A once flexible nature
Has decided to be stiffened and starched
The carouse for adventure
Has been left gutted emptied and parched

The glass housed suburbia
Is screaming out to be renovated
The crumbling down city
Has no room to hold the devastated

When security and peace seem so unsettling
The moral fiber is ripe for meddling

How high can you go
How far will you fall
How low can I go
How low can you crawl

Do you steal when you can
Would you kill if you had to
Is there ever a victim
When it doesn't happen to you

(Hold on too tight
Life will take it away
Let it get out of sight
It still gets away

Stand up and fight
 You still lose it that way)

A man wipes off his smile
 Cleans a face of its emotional stubble
 Talking out loud for a while
 Betraying a mind of chaotic rubble

Out there knocking back the days
 Waiting around to see the avant age
 There's no sparing the short change
 To propagate the idiot sage

Determined and serious
 Turns into street corner eccentric
 Shaking dry delirious
 Is both riveted and electrical

The life long master of the art of disheveling
 Doesn't have time for unwelcome meddling

How high can we go
 How far can he fall
 How low can he go
 How low can we crawl

Does he live while he can
 Is this what we let him do
 Does he want something from me
 When he can't get nothing from you

* * * * *

I take the morning air
 To the bottom of ten gallon lungs
 I set free my loudest thoughts
 Into the out beyond the furthest flungs

I'm loading up and getting clear
 For a trip to and half way back from hell
 I live behind my eyes of fear
 While rotting age slowly wrecks and robs my shell

I need an amnesia that's easy and instant
 I consort a knowledge that is idiot resistant
 The streets I walk are so suicide inspiring
 Any time alone is solely gratifying

This is the bad penny that always comes back
 This is just another nail in the coffin
 This is the start of a hole in the sack

It's just a stone in a shoe

It's just another day in the life
 I got to do
 What I don't want to do

I can't handle the hold
 For the part of me that won't let go
 My awareness is a light
 Within the warmth of rigor-mortal glow

I see the soldiers of fashion
 They know I don't form unto their kind
 I conceal my severed passion
 From the brutal mutilation of the grind

I need a way that is near as it is distant
 I cloud a focus that is unrelenting and persistent
 My surroundings derive a purpose from life denying
 Survival is naturally death defying

This is the knife that always lands in the back
 This just drives another stake into the heart
 This is more dead meat that's hung out to wrack

It's just sand inside a shoe
 It's just another day in the life
 I have to do
 What I don't want to do

All talk is to myself
 Words shadow the thoughts they resemble
 The crumbled peace of my mind
 Is something that I've yet to assemble

I reread Emerson to learn
 I'm no closer to his self-reliance
 Outer calm masks inner upturn
 Chemical restraint is forced self-defiance

I need a relief that's continuous and constant
 I question the answer that's obvious and insistent
 Waiting around to die seems so unsatisfying
 Blind acceptance is giving up without trying

This is the straw that piles up and breaks backs
 This is just another log in the trail
 This is just another fall through the cracks

It's just lead inside a shoe
 It's just another day in the life of
 A man that gets to do
 All the things that he never wanted to do

* * * * *

In the lack of variation
 I'm guilty of repetitive scenes
 I know where each day will start and end
 I know every inch of in-betweens

My most unnatural inclination
 Falls to the direction that my desire leans
 The circling of my variation
 Only can differ in how it will spin
 I've got nothing coming out
 Because I'm putting nothing in

Is this my hallucination
 Is this audio-visual fact
 Is the light moting through the spaces
 Where my wall of reality has cracked

I fueled up for mystic education
 Only to reveal the enlightenment I lacked
 In the throes of my hallucination
 Thoughts melt into a distant background din
 I was getting nothing out
 When I tried putting something in

In idle imagination
 I do the prince and pauper switch
 I think I could solve all my problems
 If I could be independently rich

I see the probable self-destruction
 As an obvious and unavoidable hitch
 The results of my imagination
 Would fit loosely on the head of a pin
 I've got garbage coming out
 Because I'm putting garbage in

In front of my television
 I can sleep while my eyes are open
 Like a dream that's never remembered
 I lose the words as soon as they're spoken

I dwell a past of present revision
 Another dream that is fragmented and broken
 I can dissolve with my television
 Do the entertainment mickey finn
 I can't get anything out
 If I keep putting garbage in

In my outward fascination
 My absorption is valleyed and peaked
 I escape the prison of my thoughts
 And all of the confusion they have wreaked

I'm locked behind mental constipation
 Withdrawing control causes some parts to be leaked
 If I could suspend my fascination
 Would I unlock that which is held within
 I have something coming out
 But it's not what I'm putting in

If you can say that you've got nothing out
 You can say you got what you put in

* * * * *

Start writing the new history book
 The new president is here

Look out for the
 Rip tore
 Cold sore
 Sell war
 Rot corps
 Settle score
 Rap poor
 Asking for the four more
 Now that he's elected
 Bolt the lock on the back door

I'm down here
 Pounding on the pavement
 Thinking 'bout the government
 I'm part of the minority
 That has a problem with authority

Break out the disposable bottles
 The baby boomer is here

This means that it's
 No toke
 Blow smoke
 Canned joke
 Drink coke
 Multi-poke
 Chain choke
 Party till your voice croak
 Got himself elected
 But he can't fix what is broke

I'm out here
 Standing at the bus stop
 Waiting to see the flip-flop
 I'm part of the mentality
 That can't settle for practicality

Clear a place at the power table
The newest dealer is here

Good thing that he's
Corn fed
White bread
Mush head
Brain dead
Feather bed
Lock dread
Moving with the god sped
Had to be elected
We're so willing to be led

I'm still here
Sleeping in the door jamb
Sacrificing the new lamb
Part of the instability
That will confront your credibility

Make room at the wallowing trough
The hungriest pig is here

I hear that he's
Trip tried
Bulls eyed
Pork pied
Neck tied
Southern fried
Hog stied
Wonder if his wife lied
Now that he's elected
Ask him if he's satisfied

I'm up here
Camped on the window sill
Looking for some time to kill
I'm part of the hostility
That is doubting your sensibility

Crank up the media exposure
The first families are here

It's time for the
Back bite
Think lite
Cat fight
Be trite
Neon bright
Left right
Do it with the hand sleight
You can't get elected
Showing signs of the stage fright

Bob Dylan
 Still on the pavement
 Who cares about the government
 Is it still a priority
 To be suspicious of authority

* * * * *

Old man, your time is getting late
 Why would you want to live so long
 Has all your life been a way to make death wait
 Or am I looking at you wrong

Spare me the wasted time and troubled expense
 Tell me if the lesson was worth the years
 Did you find out if life made more than just non-sense
 Is the wisdom given to age a fable of pretense

I got to get out from behind
 The blind folded that are leading the blind
 When you were where I am
 Did things look this way
 Can I endure as long as you
 Living like I am today

Did you ever walk with the dark of night
 And believe that it would never end
 Did you ever lose your will to fight
 And embrace desperation as a friend
 Did you ever want a sudden silent end

Old man, your time is closing fast
 Did you ever think you would live so long
 Has your generation kept the best for last
 Or am I looking at you wrong

Take me to your gloried ghosted battle
 Tell me of those left behind by the years
 Did you ever hear the glimpse of death's hollow rattle
 Is it hard to watch your peers slaughtered by time like cattle

I want to leave all this behind
 I don't want to lead or follow the blind
 When you stood as I stand
 Did you pass this way
 Can I survive as long as you
 Being how I am today

Did you ever want to unlock your brain
 And release the parts of you that died
 Did you ever have a grievous pain
 And wonder why you never broke and cried

Did you ever want the peace of those that died

Old man, your day is drawing near
Do you know why you've lived so long
Is luck the only thing that has kept you here
Or am I looking at you wrong

Show me how to duck from life's firing flame
Tell me how to slide through the empty years
Did you know loneliness and call it by its name
Is "survival of the fittest" now just a softened claim

Did you have to follow behind
Were you caught in the line led by the blind
Would you know where I'm at
Have you been this way
If I should live as long as you
Will I be like you today

If I could live as long as you
Will I have to be like you today

I would like to live so long
Am I looking at this wrong

* * * * *

I sell my life and my soul
For the rewards secured by the drudgerous mental toil
I wait for originality
To spring life from my weed-bitten glass-tainted vacant-lot soil

I'm the free dealing gambler
Throwing away years for pleasure that pays off in hours
I'm the routine rooted Rambler
Roaming the plane with the herd that paper authority cowers

I'm never at a loss
For finding new ways of losing
I have different sounding voices
For each excuse I find myself using

I'm waiting for the day when I wake
Up to the voice that says
It's now time to go home
This has all been a dream
This has all been a mistake

(Nothing is worth repeating)

I have to face what I am
Whenever I corner myself in an eye-to-eye gaze
I'm subject for captivity

By those that hold me to some unremembered now forgotten phase

I'm the death row crackpot
Praying secretly for an eleventh hour pardon
I hit the lunatic jackpot
Waiting for a perfect world and the time to tend my own garden

I'm never at a loss
For finding new ways of losing
I have to examine my choices
As I undergo more ego bruising

I'm waiting for the day when I shake
Out of the voice that says
You were always alone
This is all a bad dream
From which you'll never awake

(Nothing worth remembering is forgotten)

I can never get away
I'm froze in the shadows etched on the wall of Plato's cave
I'm losing pieces of myself
In the unending attempt for fulfillment of all that I crave

I'm the classless dwindler
Rotting from the desire fed material cancer
I'm the self-scramming swindler
Cooking questions which I won't possibly be able to answer

I'm never at a loss
For finding new ways of losing
I have to live with the bad choices
In a life I don't remember choosing

I'm waiting for the day when I break
Into the voice that says
The fault was your own
This was always your dream
It's up to you to awake

* * * * *

Jesus saves the bones that the winter cold turns to chalk
I need a warmer place where I could walk
I'm not tired and I don't feel much like sleeping
I could stop and stand still awhile and talk
But I can't find a way to slow my thinking

Who carries those that would carry the world
Why do the weakest have to be so strong
Who's out running for the roses
When everybody wants to sing that whiskey song

Jesus saves the shoes that get left out in the rain too long

("When I was young it was more important...")

Jesus saves the bowels that rumble like a mountain
 I've got extra angels on my shoulder
 I found a piece of Roger's floydian foam wall
 I could fish spanish coins from a fountain
 But I can't find the street with the shopping mall

Who will turn the lambs loose with the lions
 Who is serving the serpent its own tail
 Who's the only one that's buying
 When the souls of bitter wrath are turned out for sale
 Jesus saves the feet that walk for yesterday's bread gone stale

Jesus saves the lungs that exhale with whistles and stink
 I always find faucet water to drink
 I could eat some sugar and the paper packet
 I can take a shower inside a sink
 But I can't find an open filling station

Who's going to pay for the barley gruel
 Who subscribes to the bloodless testament
 Who could not justify the cruel
 When humility assumes the belligerent
 Jesus saves the cigarettes the shirt pocket almost bent

("I was so much older then...")

Jesus saves the matchbook cover picture Kennedy
 I'm just episoding insanity
 I'm driving the wagon straight through treacherous bends
 I'm just experimenting poverty
 But I can't find out how the adventure ends

Who will sleep on that bed of burning coals
 Who knows when the sane stops and the mad begins
 Who reels from the punch of the joke
 When world beaten faces become cracked with grins
 Jesus saves the paper clips and souvenir safety pins

* * * * *

The bottles half-empty
 The glass only gets half-filled
 I drown in my years forgotten
 When I drink from the days I've killed

I could have another half-life to live
 If circumstance commands it
 If my body so demands it
 I don't know if I could stand it

In the paralysis of thought
I'm hounded by the noise
How does a man do what he enjoys

More or less
It doesn't matter
Things are worse
Things could be better

I'll continue to believe
 until I've been riddled with doubt
I whisper some things
 I know I should shout
I'll just keep on...
 until they carry me out

I can be six to one
Half-dozen to another
I can be staggered by regret
Then find some way to recover

I'll be the same tomorrow as today
Past action guarantees it
Friends and family foresee it
I don't know if I can be it

In the catharsis of my thoughts
I'm bounded by the noise
How does a man know what he enjoys

This or that
It doesn't matter
Things get worse
Then they get better

I try conjuring brain storms
 but end up ghost dancing with drought
I'm trying to know
 what I'm all about
I'll just keep on...
 until they carry me out

I can't take anymore
I've had all that I can take
When I lose interest in life
Then I have to learn how to fake

What would I do with more luck than I need
I'd find some way to taunt it
I'd probably try to flaunt it
I don't know if I would want it

In the analysis of thoughts
 I'm sounded by the noise
 What man ever does what he enjoys

Now or then
 It doesn't matter
 Things seem worse
 That once were better

I keep trying to find sense
 in the stupidity I spout
 I still want to know
 what life is about
 I'll just keep on...
 until they carry me out

* * * * *

She tells me
 That I don't know how it feels
 When a living only means
 Watching the death of your ideals
 From the compromise of dreams
 While inside your mind just screams
 Through fires washed with tears
 She's told me this for years
 The last thing that she wants
 Is to have to see another day

When the world won't turn your way
 It knocks the wind out of your pride
 It leaves a scar you'll have to hide
 Sometimes love gives more than it begs
 Sometimes there's only swill left in the dregs
 Sometimes the road looks long and wide
 Let's roll back and become one with the ride

You can live like there's no tomorrow
 If you're right you'll never know

She wants me
 To fill in an empty space
 Never certain if I care
 Mistakes the look worn on my face
 My mind's in some other place
 When I'm lost behind a stare
 I've been this way for years
 With her when I'm not there
 She listens while she knows
 I never have anything to say

When the world turns you away
 You learn to crash but not to glide

You only open when you're pried
 Sometimes love gets more than it needs
 Sometimes we kill the tree but not its seeds
 Sometimes the path is hard and dried
 Let's find a road that's easier to ride

We can always count on tomorrow
 If we're wrong we'll never know

She's so glad
 I've never been like the rest
 But being here only means
 This life settled on second best
 Not the vision of her dreams
 It's the silence after screams
 That echoes all her fears
 It worsens with the years
 The last thing that she needs
 Is to live like this another day

When the world would go her way
 She used to laugh more than she cried
 She used to show more than she'd hide
 Sometimes love gets more than it takes
 Sometimes we trade our oceans in for lakes
 Sometimes the way is long and wide
 Let's be the road and be the ride

You can't forget about tomorrow
 If you do I'll let you know

* * * * *

Moving on alone like the thief in the night
 You're up, freshed and out and gone before dawn
 To get to work by eight
 You leave the house when the street lights are on

You take a short and a long bus ride
 A nap in between on the train
 There's killing time standing outside
 This is travel in the stop and go lane

It totals over two and a half hours
 When you're connected up to good days
 That's the time it takes
 Just going one of the ways

Sixty five miles from home in a suburb
 You've got a job working at a store
 The bus drops you off right at the curb
 It's a thirty five foot walk to the door

For a lousy job that doesn't pay that good
You're supposed to feel lucky
Because nobody works in your hood

This is your life in the service sector
Activates my bullshit detector
Designed to attack the heart
Tear the self-respect apart
Why bother kickin' to social security
When your life expectancy is fifty three

The idea in school was not to learn
Then it's too damn late
When you find out you're unable to earn

Your education was produced by the state
They meant to let your future burn

Who designed a system like this
(I don't know)
Someone saw you coming twenty years ago

All day long on the losing end of orders
Served up by a low-level trivial punk
Thinking downward at you
Attitudin' like his shit never stunk

Avoid the boss whenever you can
His motive to you is unknown
If he's not able to act like a man
You just want to try to be left alone

In some mental landscapes you're not even real
Hassling with you is just a game
Your life and your death
It's all one part of the same

Then someone's always streotyping
On about how "ya'll just steal and rob"
Without the sense for realizing
That's easier than holding down this job

You just keep your mouth shut and try to stay good
You can pretend that you're lucky
But this won't get you out of the hood

Welcome to life in the service sector
Detonates my bullshit detector
Able to harden the heart
Give the self-abuse a start
Why worry about the social security
Your life is economic deformity

The real lesson of school was not to learn
It's too goddamned late
When now they say they'll give you what you earn

This is how they created the welfare state
They want to see the cities burn

Who designed a system like this
(I don't know)
Someone saw you coming twenty years ago

Who designed a system like this
All I know
Is that this system has to go

The first and middle of each month you get paid
Having money in your pocket feels strange
But that doesn't last long
It soon goes to the currency exchange

Money orders for parts of the rent
Payments on the bills that you get
In seven minutes the whole check is spent
And you haven't bought groceries yet

Nobody's gambling on your endurance
There's no incentive to save
There's no insurance
Retirement means the grave

This isn't even blue collar labor
And it doesn't necessitate a brain
Those that have done you this great favor
Tell you to get a life when you complain

It's a lousy death and the life is not good
You wonder who got lucky
You or the people stuck in the hood

This is your life in the service sector
Aggravates my bullshit detector
It's going to break your heart
Leave you finished at the start
Propagating complex inferiority
Enabling master slave mentality

The teachers at school weren't taught to learn
Just another fate
More and more are lost at every turn

This is how they make war on the welfare state
Then fake surprise when cities burn

Who designed a system like this
 (I don't know)
 Who had the power to architect a social prison
 (I don't know)
 Who had the power twenty years ago

Who wants to live like this
 (I don't know)
 This was set up twenty years ago

This is last call for the bus in Chicago

* * * * *

Blinded
 I don't know if it's my face
 I've been shut down for so long
 I open my eyes
 I still can't see what is wrong

Illusion is the power
 That keeps my ego afloat
 Exercise of the will
 Makes my personality bloat

I'm moving from breath to breath
 When I'm not living I'm fighting off death

I can see more with my eyes closed
 Things look better with my mind hosed

Silenced
 I don't know if it's my voice
 I've been shut up for so long
 I open my mouth
 Everything comes out wrong

The result of my reason
 Is a victimless crime
 I never needed a wall
 To see I've been marking my time

I'm holding on to each breath
 When I'm not moving I'm waiting for death

I could say more with my mouth closed
 Things make more sense with my mind hosed

(I don't know if I'm wasting my life
 Or if my life is wasting me
 I have to make a peace with my reality)

Hardened

I don't know if it's my fault
 I've been shut out for so long
 I open my heart
 I only pour out all that is wrong

I've spilled more of my anger
 Than I could possibly soak
 I try digging for truth
 But I end up shoveling smoke

I'm taking it breath by breath
 All that I'm doing is holding back death

I could feel more with my heart closed
 Things seem better with my mind hosed

* * * * *

I hear myself thinking
 Changing all the things I want to forget
 I thought I'd be a different man
 And breathe in the mountains of Tibet
 I only breathe whatever I can

Too much weight keeps me down on the ground
 I invited the bell to ring
 But the disturbance of thoughts covered the sound

I'm not breathing
 Like everybody else
 But in that shallow
 Empty feeling that has no name
 I am at once with all
 One and the same

Saving my life for tomorrow
 Trying to fill the space that is hollow

It takes an elephant's trunk full of memories
 To know the time spent lost
 Sleeping in the house of life consuming vagrancies

I catch myself dreaming
 Knowing there's some things I can't make happen
 I want to be a different man
 And see a million chinese women
 I only see whatever I can

Life only comes through television
 I built a statue in my mind
 But it can't commemorate the obsession

I'm not seeing

Like everybody else
 But in that astray
 Restless searching that has no name
 I am at one with all
 Always the same

Living my now through yesterday
 Trying to keep the hard let downs at bay

It takes the single purpose strength of a Hercules
 To find any meaning
 In a life built upon idiocies

I find myself learning
 Patience is all that I get when I wait
 I tried to be a different man
 And think there could be a gateless gate
 I think whatever I can

My mind could never be so open
 I look through the cracks in my life
 But I can't see where the spirit is broken

I'm not thinking
 Like everybody else
 But in that anxious
 Clogged confusion that has no name
 I am at none with all
 And still the same

Going through life while unconscious
 Trying to maintain some sense of purpose

It takes the clear headed logic of a Socrates
 To see the hobgoblins
 Lurking in the foolish consistencies

* * * * *

The totality of time melts down to a moment-
 Without an end-
 An eternity crisis has happened again...

I'm somewhere in the middle trying to get on top
 It's a hopelessly bottomless situation
 Every other thought is left out to drop

I just percolate and accumulate frustration
 Build up a panic and then suddenly stop
 Learning the hard way is a lifetime education
 Impatience won't help in making an end

I retreat into imaginative devices

In an attempt to deal with an eternity crisis

Events will work out of themselves but I just can't wait
Things always get worse with expectation and force
When this is known it is realized too late

I look outside for the problem then discover its source
All my obstacles are the ones I create
Trying to stay on a path while altering its course
The pattern plays on and on without end

Long lessons bought in exchange for life's prices
Nothing will happen during an eternity crisis

Lost and adrift in the adolescent wonderland
Things could never be worse than the way that they feel
The future is present and so close at hand

The idea that time is able to change and to heal
Is a concept still too dark to understand
Leaving all to be immediate and in the real
In a nightmare that never seems to end

Life is an experience that scissors and slices
During the first time trip through an eternity crisis

Depression settles itself weighing down at a ton
It's a plague encrypted upon the genetic strain
From mother to daughter and father to son

There's not a known cure available for a built-in pain
The cause may be found but it won't be undone
It tears its sufferers from the world of the sane
A life pursues an unnatural end

To take the easy way out glitters and entices
For the sad conclusion to an eternity crisis

Career devotion never rewards it only robs
The best hours in life left there to be stolen
Willingly wasted at monotonous jobs

Rust takes hold of the heart where youth once reigned itself golden
Spreading unchecked throughout the middle aged slob
Who count on time like it can be bottled and frozen
Fools save up for live to be lived at the end

Denying the wrath of debilitating vices
Unknowingly headed for an eternity crisis

Trapped in the downside of a crumbling social order
The least to fit on the Darwin economic scale
Sealed by fates cast in stone and sunk in mortar

Make an effort against the world and it's only a fail
 To leave a class that keeps moving its border
 Increasing the circumstances of poverty's tale
 People look but there's no light at the end

The promise of hereafter no longer suffices
 When surviving life is one long eternity crisis

Doing something I've done over and again before
 Gradually becomes too much for me to do
 Desperation resides and rots in my core

With battle and struggle I finally drag myself through
 Finding that I'm able tolerate more
 Relearning the sequence of things I already knew
 I'm never sure how I get to the end

The trick is in a bag of coping artifices
 The souvenirs from another eternity crisis

Haunted dreams deny their death and continue to thrive
 Their reality has long been withered and dried
 While still underlying each unconscious drive

When to let go is too painful to decide
 Hope provides incentive excuses for being alive
 It holds out after all possibilities have died
 Once a dream starts it never has an end

It waits behind the concessions and sacrifices
 Looking for a way to start an eternity crisis

* * * * *

Billy went home in a storm of controversy
 He made himself brand name famous
 But he was still given no mercy
 People looked at his life like it was a show
 He was always on and ready to go

When he came up he made all of their mistakes
 He was always told that he'd have to pay
 Now he was back to let them know
 They'd better take all that they were
 And clear it out of his way
 This was his life it wasn't a show

Billy runs on rocket fuel
 Packing his kicks in the side of a mule
 Burning both ends of the candle factory
 The smoke and the ash is the national story

Billy is a blaze in a torch of glory
Nobody cares about the price or the cost
All they want is a hit off his exhaust

Billy pounds forty eight hours into each day
His body is chasing his mind
Doing an inner Dorian Gray
False rumor often has it that he had died
Truth was that the rumor usually lied

Emotionally he's stuck at seventeen
He feels half-dead and it suits him just fine
The hard miles roll up fast inside
He was a man of sixty two
While he was still twenty nine
People waited to hear that he died

Billy's stoking rocket fuel
Keeping it clean with the help of a mule
He's a bonfire in the candle factory
The smoke and the ash is a continuing story

Billy's burning on a path of glory
He doesn't care about the price or the cost
Let them all trail behind in his exhaust

Billy went home in a shroud of controversy
He made himself a memory
But he was still given no mercy
People went to his life like it was a show
When he was on he was ready to go

Vultures will tear the meat right off the bones
He was in pieces before he was cold
There was no way to let them know
The lost years would never be missed
In his mind he got to get old
This was a life that lived like a show

Billy burned like rocket fuel
They'll bury him like they buried the mule
He left charcoal in the candle factory
The smoke and the ash don't tell the actual story

Billy went in a legend of glory
Nobody cares about the life that's lost
They all want one last buzz from his exhaust

Billy toasted a life of glory
The real story will never be known

Life is a joke when it's not your own

* * * * *

There's no face in the buried mirror
Far underneath the river of sound
On the slaveship of suffering desires
I'm on the course to forever bound

It's just another mild interest
That I can't do anything around
I'm just a fly by night
Navigating with the blind sight
Cruising with the auto-pilot
With no time to stop and think about it

Got to pull the plug on the robot
Cut all the cords to the past
I want to get off of the clock
The face is changing to fast

Raking my memories
For a string of frozen clichés
Sputtering in gibberish
About my better days
My life is right now
While I'm roboting away

In the pupil of the carnival eye
The circus turns on out of control
During the darkest night of the senses
I kindle the ladder in my soul

It's just another casual cause
That I can only think around
I'm wearing an eyefold
Putting my mind on permanent hold
Sleeping through the latest riot
Unable to do a thing about it

Put dead batteries in the robot
Stop the crash bomb into low
There must be spiders in the clock
Cobwebs are starting to show

Rifling my memories
For a thread of broken clichés
Babbling incoherence
About my wasted days
I could be here now
While I'm roboting away

(Automatic-habit entrenched...I built this routine with my eyes closed
Reactive...I am in remote control)

There's a message from somebody's heaven
 Provides more grist for the mental mill
 In a private hell I stopped loving life
 While I went on somewhat living still

It's just another slight diversion
 That I'll never turn around
 I give myself advice
 Think about it once but never twice
 Tell myself I have to try it
 Wait for a while then forget about it

Stop living the life of a robot
 Shake the machine off the bones
 I'm wound up tighter than a clock
 Time warping through twilight zones

Burning my memory
 For a rope of worn-out clichés
 Cultivating in rubbish
 About my empty days
 My life is right now
 While I'm roboting away

* * * * *

Cluttered with images and driven awake
 My mind stalks the reflections of the sleep starved night
 Someone has poured sand mandalas in the side of a lake
 I'm backtracking to mission boards and vagabond feasts
 With the dropout monks and self seeking priests
 Trying to connect to any sense it might make
 Listening for the silent mystical alarm
 Watching natural causes turn into terminal harm
 Wondering how many thoughts a difference would take

I'm waiting here for a change
 The kind that grows from without
 And tears up roots from within
 I'm waiting here for the movement to begin

I feel so chronically strange
 I used to pray for a god
 Now I just talk in my head
 Spilling my soul all over a life that I dread

I imagine psychic exchange
 Where I'll be thinking out loud
 Trying to fire a round
 Into the noise that never is heard in sound

I'm waiting here for a change

Life presents a gauntlet I pass through alone
 My mind fights with the animal that runs free inside
 Someone has told me of magic in quartz crystal stone
 I'm sidetracking to fun house trips and month long drags
 With the shaman heals and rusty medicine bags
 Trying to go wherever my mind has been blown
 Acting brain simple in most outward observance
 Looking blindly at all forms of physical appearance
 Wondering how much difference I can make on my own

I'm waiting here for a change
 The kind that pulls from without
 And pushes bounds from within
 I'm staying here to see the movement begin

I feel so hopelessly strange
 I tried to follow a god
 I was once easily led
 Spilling my soul while going out of my head

I envision psychic exchange
 When I'll be thinking out loud
 Trying to fire a round
 Into the noises that are not heard in sound

I'm staying here for a change

(If a difference was a day
 I wouldn't last a second)

Swimming in concrete and feeling so small
 My mind reels through the dim view of a dungeon of days
 Someone has said my defense is a jericho wall
 I'm train tracking death dreams and emotional voodooos
 With the deep lung breaths and self-improvement gurus
 I'm trying to run before I can mentally crawl
 Casting myself with the societal misfits
 Looking forward to the shift of the paradigm prophets
 Wondering who was left to do the thinking for us all

I'm waiting here for a change
 The kind that builds from without
 And tears down from within
 I'm only waiting for the move to begin

I feel so endlessly strange
 I tried to talk to a god
 It was like calling the dead
 Spilling my soul with every word that I said

If there was a psychic exchange
 I would be thinking out loud
 Firing thoughts all around

Trying to make noise without making a sound

I'm only here for a change

* * * * *

Your power drives
Your ambition wastes
You're the president of the United States

Never able to make a bodily move
Without stepping somewhere in the shadow
Of an over-cautious secret service agent
Anxiously ready and prepared to prove
That they would fill in the empty spaces

Between you and the threat
Of the lone assassin psycho
From a conspiratorial
Act alone tangent
You never know what some idiot might try to do

Does the oval office feel like a prison before the day is through
Where men would die to protect the power given to you

How is that power spent
Is it lavished in a squander
Of uneven temperament
Is it in the clutchhold of a miser
Whose judgment has become bent

Do you love all of the people, mr. president
So much as you would to yourself
What are you worth when your power is spent

Winner of the political hardball game
The ultimate old boy network hero
Guaranteed sentences or a footnote at worst
When tomorrow stumbles across your name
Inside of books on unopened pages

Between the tale and times
Of worldly leaders like Nero
King Louie the sixteenth
And Charles the first

You never know what some detractor might try to do
Would you sacrifice us now for a better historical review
When people will tell about the power given to you

How is that power spent
Is it lavished in a squander
Of uneven temperament

Is it in the clutchhold of a miser
Whose judgement has become bent

Can you face all of the evil, mr. president
Of the country onto yourself
Where will you be when your power is spent

Advised by experts before each decision
On how to target your benevolence
With personal agendas forced as policy
Drawn with rhetorical precision
Where truth lies somewhere within the extremes

Between image and man
Of self-serving indifference
Who barter human life
In dark secrecy

You never know what your backers might ask you to do
Have you been chosen by the many in the interest of the few
What other people control the power given to you

How is that power spent
Is it lavished in a squander
Of uneven temperament
Is it in the clutchhold of a miser
Whose judgment has become bent

Have you borne the burden of shame, mr. president
Of the country onto your shoulders
The social strand like your power is rent
What has your ambition meant

Where was your power spent

* * * * *

She thought she knew it all
But she never had anything to say
"I know...I said...I'm sure"
Every lie she tells herself
Is started out this way

She spoke like an expert on the sublime and absurd
She was half of a conversation that I overheard
Talking about how he goes, he said, she goes and she said
I thought I heard her say she knew what it's like to be dead

Speaking her mind was always a release and a lift
It's a cold wind that slowly builds to a put-down-drift

How could she know it all
All she knows is just a bundle of I's

Cast together by random chance
Made separate through circumstance

I want to know it all
All I am is just a bundle of I's

I'm throwing bricks at a stone wall
I'm getting up before each fall

He thought he had it all
But he had nothing left to give away
"I have...I want...I need"
Every lie he tells himself
Is started out this way

People that don't add to his gain make him annoyed
I represent a part of the world he tries to avoid
He tells me about the house the yard the phone in the car
And the cold brew and the warm stool waiting down at the bar

He favored the unequal distribution of wealth
Excess relates positive to material health

How could he have it all
All he has is just a bundle of I's
Missing the strains of the lost chord
Too much time alone leaves him bored

I want to have it all
All I am is just a bundle of I's

I rolled a stone up a steep hill
I have a part in the landfill

(I am...I will...I did...I went...I could...I should...
Take some time to spot the lies)

We thought we'd seen it all
But we couldn't see clear to find our way
"I look...I find...I hope..."
Every lie we tell ourselves is started out this way

We've learned to be strange and unlike to each other
I still call him a friend but he was once like a brother
Life is stark in our frame of chemical independence
We're trying hard to define an indefinite sentence

We'd shed our last freedom like an unused second skin
The days of mediocrity are settling in

How could we see it all
All we see is just a bundle of I's
Each unknown to any other

All lead to one and another

I want to see it all
All I am is just a bundle of I's

I'm a parade of intention
Moving in scattered direction

I keep a flower in a box
I'm just a door that time unlocks

* * * * *

When my reason is confounded with fractures
And my life only tears where it wears
It's time to go downtown and take pictures
With a camera of zombie-eyed stares

I'm soaking faces deep into my mind
My self obscured in the collective blind
I'm careful of the images I keep
I know they will return when I'm asleep

I need something I can dream on
I'm not getting any life
Black or white
Night or day
Asleep or awake
It's all shades
Of the same mundane gray

Give me something I can dream on
How real is real, anyway

I'm unconsciously contouring a role
Retreading endless karmic excrement
So much of life is beyond my control
I'd rather live in rapid eye movement

Being asleep claims one third of each day
The rest of the hours drain quickly away
I have no choice about the time I keep
That all changes when I fall into sleep

I have no time for the choices I keep
That will all fall when I change into sleep

I need something I can dream on
I'm not getting any life
Black or white
Night or day
Asleep or awake
It's all shades

Of the same mundane gray

Give me something I can dream on
How real is real, anyway

Stop the reliving of childhood traumas
Tune up the brain's electrical static
Left to recreate meaningless dramas
Nonsense plagues the mentally erratic

If it's inside or outside of my mind
It feels the same when I leave it behind
I'll take any kind of peace I can keep
Dreaming or thinking I'm always asleep

I've got something I can dream on
Now where do you get your life
Black or white
Night and day
Asleep and awake
Are you a shade
Of the everpresent gray

Now what do you dream on
How real is your real, anyway

* * * * *

How can I be all alone
When I can go out and melt into a crowd
How can I feel unhappy
When I'm numb and unable to cry out loud

In the lost world of my sleep
All that I dream will be true
Every battered wreck of a life
Was once filled with promise and new

What could cause me to worry
When I'm living in a secret of pasts
What is there that I can lose
When nothing I've found in this life ever lasts

I'm a harvester for gold
In fields where I've never planted
In the narrow shadows of the fools
The truth obscurely raved and ranted

I will merely exist
When living means only to survive
It's routine to resist
The miracle of being alive
Disillusion betrays

The ideals from which it's derived

I won't hatch an escape
 If I'm living a lie
 I won't hatch an escape
 Until I'm able to die

Why should I work for change
 When everything remains more of the same
 Why should I fight for control
 When I'm captive to fate's conspiratorial game

When I can no longer cope
 I break down into a stall
 A half-hearted attempt at something
 Amounts to less than nothing at all

* * * * *
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 * * * * *

I NEVER NEEDED A WALL (1991 - FLAPPING IN THE BREEZE)

There's something holding me back
 There's nothing keeping me down
 The common sense that I lack
 Is just the sense that I've found

If I could have what I want
 I wouldn't have what I need
 Forgotten thoughts are a haunt
 I blindly follow their lead

I am listening to what you just said
 There's nothing that I'm able to say
 I try to pull the thoughts out of my head
 Something much stronger now takes them away

I keep my head high up in the colors
 I wash the drag of the day off with sound
 I look beyond what reality covers
 I know a new world is there to be found

I'm working like a railroad
 I want to do it alone
 I'm carrying the whole load
 I'm bringing it all back home

I'm practicing hodgepodge religion
 The myth runs a mystic pagan course
 Turn deaf to all considered opinion
 I'm disregardant to that and its source

Abandon balance on the cutting ledge
 I retained the view seen from over the ledge
 What was left behind needs time to dry inside

I've seen both of the ends of the worst life can bring
 The part after it's done
 And the part before it begins

Forgotten thoughts are a haunt
 The ghost is more than I need
 It's not the past that I want
 Today is all that I need

* * * * *

I wasted years
 When I was younger
 Never caring or knowing

I now have fears
 I'm getting older
 Looking both back and ahead
 Assuming there was more
 Wondering what is left
 Missing it while it's here

There's a hole in my life where the time goes
 The memories mount where the past only grows
 I smooth over the ruts and ride out the grooves
 My beliefs may change but my faith never moves

Most of each day
 Is all and about
 Getting over and through it

Living this way
 Requires no effort
 Having no purpose or sense
 Wishing it was over
 Counting off what is left
 Missing it while it's there

There's a hole in my life where the time goes
 The future forgets what the past never knows
 I ride rough in the ruts and wear out the grooves
 My thoughts may wander but my mind never moves

Life day to day
 Moves on just like this
 Taking years and lives along

Each day by day

One day at a time
Takes from and gives to the whole

Always wanting more
When nothing is left
Wishing it was still here

* * * * *

Always fearing the plunge of inner darkness
Acceptance is hidden and harbored
Self cast in a part of loneliness
Uncertainty remains exposed and sheltered

If I could break through to myself
Change while still remaining the same
I would release the source of my fears
Would the anger I feel still remain

There is a higher aspect of sense
Apart from feel taste smell sound and sight
Free from the hints and shades drawn by doubt
There revelates the thread of infinite light
That connects from within to the without
To a truth that escapes wrong and right

Always wanting more than which is required
Enough is vast and unlimited
Fuel and flame in what is desired
Reason is to be sacrificed and consumed

If I could learn how to let go
Not having but giving away
I would release the need to want more
Would I suffer as I do today

There is a higher nature of sense
Apart from fell taste smell sound and sight
Free from the hues and tints lit by doubt
There revelates the spoke of eternal light
That turns from the within to the without
To a truth that transcends wrong and right

Each thought is filled
With limitless power
Sent and retrieved
From the conscious nether
An energy exploding
Into ideas and action
Driving the force of the will
And directing all intention
Fear and desire
Are just self invention

Fear and desire
Are just self invention

* * * * *

First thing in the morning
I give thanks for the day
I'm afraid if I don't
It will be taken away

This day I am changing
I can make a new start
I know that I won't
Without love in my heart

This day is a time gift
That is sent down to me
And the truth I affirm
Will be all that will be

But then something happens
It's the same thing each day
I forget all of this
And get lost on the way

I believe it within my will
To turn my life around completely
I believe that I have the power
To resist acting so mechanically

But I put on a mask and forget myself
And become what I don't want to be
When I can't remember myself
The mask I see in the mirror becomes me

Hard hearted coldness and contempt
Seem to occur so naturally

First thing in the morning
I give thanks for the day
Whatever toll it takes
I know that I can pay

I am safe from the past
I have strength in my mind
In all my relations
I'll be open and kind

If this day is my last
I'll know I've done my best
To live with compassion
In a world where I'm blessed

But then something happens
 It's the same thing each day
 I lose sight of all this
 My mask gets in the way

I believe it within my will
 To turn my life around completely
 I believe that I have the power
 To resist acting so mechanically

But I put on a mask that becomes myself
 And the mask is who I will be
 When I try to remember myself
 The mask in the mirror reflects me

Inconsiderate selfishness and grasping
 Occur so naturally

(I've been wearing the mask for so long
 I couldn't take it off if I tried
 Stone can soak up a storm of tears
 And leave no traces where they have dried

Each day I want to right what is wrong
 But I couldn't do it if I tried
 I don't regret the wasted years
 I never said that I never lied)

With this intent in mind
 Into the day I go
 I'll soon forget all this
 And I won't even know

After it's all over
 I'll know I failed again
 I'm still the same person
 As when the day began

The battles and trials
 That I lived through today
 Will be the strength tomorrow
 To peel the mask away

* * * * *

I was stopped by a man on a corner
 Right out in the front of the place where I live
 He asked if I could lend him a quarter
 I lied and said I had nothing to give

I was wanting to stop and talk to him
 Instead I looked and walked the other way

There was no reason for him to listen
Or believe me if I were to say

Don't look at me
Like I've never been out of doors
Don't think I don't know
About sleeping on concrete floors

I've eaten lunch
Out of a sidewalk garbage can
I ran from myself
And ended back where I began

To get out of the cold
I'd gladly sit the night in jail
Sometimes at the mission I'd
Spend time at the salvation sale

When I went crazy
I couldn't live any other way
What once drove me mad
Is slowly killing me today

But I can't offer any help to him
Or alter the fact of his present state
It doesn't matter and he'll never know
I've played his part and can somewhat relate

I'm just out here flapping in the breeze
I got a lifelong case of the Beatle disease

I stayed out too long in the acid rain
Caught cold and I started to freeze
But everything's all right now
I'm drying out in the breeze
Hung up on a line about the heat whispered trees

Another day at the same corner
A man from the neighborhood where I live
Shot a glance I caught over my shoulder
He could kill with the looks that he'd give

There was no way that I could talk to him
We both go and live our separate way
There was no reason for him to listen
Or believe me if I were to say

Don't look at me
That way just because I'm white
Don't think I don't know
The choices you have are not right

I've been judged

Solely by the shoes I stand in
 That doesn't compare
 With judgment on the basis of skin

Like so many others
 I was brought up to hate and fear
 I never fed the lie
 That comes alive when you're out here

I fought in my heart
 What you confront every day
 But I'll never know
 How it is to live in that way

But I can't offer any help to him
 Or expect him to take this as his fate
 It doesn't matter and he'll never know
 I see his part and can somewhat relate

I'm just out here flapping in the breeze
 I dodged the spreading plague of the racist disease

I remember when I was just a boy
 I woke to inequalities
 When a raging and burning watts
 Sent embers into the night breeze
 The fire still burns somewhere in new found memories

* * * * *

Beneath the surface
 of the spiritual shallow
 Lay the heavy ruins
 of a sunken and shriveled soul
 The lonely all dwell
 in an emotional hollow
 Where silent prayers
 will affirm a lack of control
 The path with a heart
 is the only truth to follow

I can't tell for sure
 If I've lived there before
 If I have been
 I've only forgotten when

I know something was lost
 That's yet to be found
 Only to be lost all over again

If time is a lock
 then right now is the master key
 Within each moment

another past is to be born
 Clues are provided
 to an unending mystery
 Alive in the space
 from where the future was just torn
 Before after now
 become one in eternity

I can't say for sure
 If I've been here before
 If I have been
 I've only forgotten when

I know something is lost
 Then after it's found
 I'll have to lose it all over again
 I am living the time all over again

(All that I learn
 I always have known
 In every experience
 Another piece of myself is shown)

The conscious realm
 remains hidden layered and deep
 Beyond the dreaming
 that passes for being awake
 Lives are lost and spent
 in the trance of virtual sleep
 Where power of will
 is freedom that proves to be fake
 The thoughts that are sown
 reflect back the life they will reap

I can't know for sure
 But I've felt this before
 I've forgotten
 Only I've forgotten when

How can something be lost
 Before it is found
 Unless it is lost all over again
 I will wake from the dream all over again

In life I am lost
 This is the only thing to be found
 In becoming all over again

INDIAN SUMMER

I ran ripshodden amuck through the folds
 In the pockets lined with my lost summer
 I don't believe what waits in the mirror
 Dismal fuel saturates the dried trappings of youth

Fall flaps splintering wings
 Three saints in the wind
 Treadborn
 On a road of thieving slumbers

Reclused in overcoated armors
 I now need the four sided blanket walled security
 I can overlook the false demand for the harshest of truths
 Under my roof I am in the safety of sleep's ignorance
 Unaware of the nights that will never challenge the dawn
 Waiting to be dropped off into cold morning drubs
 Anointed in poison soaking sweats
 Unwilling feet
 Find the floor and wonder
 Why is it still here

Frozen harvests come down to claim
 The leaves on the trees of my gone summer
 Rotten in tropical confusions
 Yellowed in seeping malignancies
 Brittled in greenless disposition

Rewind the clock
 There's never enough time
 Reinvent the wheel
 There's nowhere to go
 Peel back the bones
 They were never really there
 **

MODUS VIVENDI

(Everybody's dying of something
 Some just find faster ways of doing it than others
 The obvious is still so unexpected)

I'm moving
 Down demon drives
 Through colloquial ruins
 I'll gather my thoughts in the providential air
 I'll shake this pallorous settlement to a foundationless heap
 I'll resuscitate this collapse of temperate stillness
 The elements have recombined in unknowing accords
 Massed in a majority of clumpen obedience
 Harnessed for desperating grips of inactivity
 I pull my flattened wheels from these hardened ruts

Risen from this ashen moment
 I am the jalopy flight of the just freed bird
 Elevated from the festered valley that torpors demise
 I remove this lifeless vision from my sight
 I leave the past to its intended burial state

I'm moving
 Out of this claustered derivement
 Away from the vortexed swirls of random directionlessness
 I'll dismantle my core to its unlayered place
 I tear these useless roots from their precious landings
 Footholds stocked in groundless insecurity
 I am apart from the limiting lamentation of clinical pronouncements
 Cold extremes of outward calculation
 I stir the stagnation of possibilities from their restive pools
 I activate this willing respite in its infection of dormancy
 Dispersing the unnatural courses that have inbred
 Disinterest
 Varying only in the degree of its similarity
 Laminant in straits of dimming convention
 I divorce myself from all harboring unions
 In response to this fluxous motivation

I rid myself of this strangled outgrowth of unquestioning obedience
 Unencumbered
 I remove the fetterments that once predicated my stay

I'm moving
 Distanced from the contaminant persuasions of easily won comforts
 I escape this incarceration of accepted wisdoms
 Fleeing the ironclad manacled trap of prejudgment
 I sever the tyrannical hold which is the underlying dominant
 Characteristic
 Of all exercises of authority
 I divert my attention away from all thought denying
 Entertainments

Harbingers of mind numbing emptying spans of misled attention
Patented imitations of tired originality
Consorting the basest levels of amusement
I turn my back towards these unfulfilling prophecies of culture
I abandon all unreliable hopes and their impending promises
Of disillusionment
I shirk the assumed responsibility inherent of popular reason
I step aside from the indignant weight of unethical obligation
I cast off this weighted yoke of enforced attitudes and reactions
I am loosed of the spirit clutching paralysis born of frustration

It's time to move
Forget about the scattered pieces
Leave them broken spilled behind
The melting tundra doesn't care
Self-importance will wait
For any man

LIFE LESSONS

Life will find out
If there's one thing that means the most to you
If there's one thing that is valued above all else
Life will find that one thing
And life will take it away
Slowly
Or maybe
All at once
Life will find you
Down to your lowest bottom
Life will take you down
Even further
Life will reveal your kneeling floor
Life will tear that floor right out from under you
Just when it seemed safe for standing
Life will take you up
Life will raise you far above your lowly stations
That's life's way of letting you know how far you can fall
Sometimes life will let you dangle
In ignorance
Before it lets you fall
Life isn't fair
Fair is a gray middle average
Fair is concepted on a human spectrum that life doesn't recognize
Life isn't blind
Life just doesn't have to look
It knows
You cling to life and all its attendant forms
The more you desire of life
The easily is life able to steal itself away from you
It steals away both
Slowly and suddenly
Without apparent reason
For in life there is no reason
Life will defy all of your logic and understanding
Life will repulse you with its presence
It will push its least desirable qualities into your face
The more you try to turn away from life
The easier it becomes for life to confront you
To overwhelm you
To exasperate and exhaust your patience
Life will force you to take it into your hand and consider it
To reconsider it
For whatever it is
It is never what you thought it would be
Life is always something more
Life is always something less
Life knows no sate for your misery
Life will collect your sadness and multiply it
Life will bring your unhappiness and compound it

Life will exploit your weakness
Life will fault your courage
Life will cripple your strength
Life will lead you down its trail in expectation
It will deliver you nowhere
Life knows no controls
Try to force or guide it
It waits
It's waiting to fly back at you and explode in your face
With a vengeful unleashing of fury
Life will let you dream
Life will admit your dream
Once admitted
That dream will be a ground for denial
Life will subvert your dream with harsh injections of reality
Life will give you things so that it always has something which can be
reclaimed
Life will claim things that you don't even have
Life will claim things that you didn't even know that you had
Life will disappoint you
When you think that you have endured
All of the disappointment that you possibly can
Life will disappoint you some more
Life will pile disappointment on top of your disappointment
The more that you can carry
The more you have to carry
Life is the stubborn obstinate pursuit of its vain self
Because life knows
Life knows that in death
There is nothing

SEE THE DOCTOR

In the padded straits of pewlike familiar benches
 Cramped into the dinge of afternoon waiting room walls
 The 3:45 the 4:00 the 4:15 and the 4:45 are sitting
 Blankly face to face
 With shoulder rubbing uneasiness leading into impatience
 They are separated
 From each other
 Sandwiches of wooden elbow rests
 Claustrophobic sprawl of twitches
 A melting community from a worn winter assortment of shoes and boots
 Pooling the carpeted area shared by their feet
 A dull glisten of shiny dirt, curbside slushes and sidewalk salts
 The 3:45 the 4:00 the 4:15 and the 4:45 are waiting
 In bland serenade of low-watt radio tones
 Heard from behind the sliding glassed opening of the reception area
 The cigarette washed coffee voice of the woman manning the appointment
 book
 Mixes into an indistinguishable soothe
 Tireless oceans of noise
 Rolling in differently to each set of listening ears
 Cascading a swirl of backdropped monotony
 Echoing in wordless disassociation
 The 4:15 arrived early 2 hours ago
 A case study of stone stiff institutional repose sitting bliss
 Talking out loud occasionally
 To no one in particular
 Eliciting no acknowledgement or confirmation
 Meandering a one way stream of dialogue
 Sudden thought stabs followed by disjointed utteration
 Responding to a voice leaking thoughts from another part of her mind
 The 3:45 sits one leg crossed over the top of the other
 Hunched in bend of foot jerking lean
 Dry mouthed parkinsonianism regulated and prescribed
 Side effects
 Eyes dulled and emptied into a premature haggard
 Betraying nothing
 Morassed in gradual debility and interest lacking silence
 The present has taken away its surprises
 All of her dreaming is done in somebody else's past
 The time moves somewhere else by itself
 Without her
 The 4:45 arrived with his mother
 The viet nam era veteran that never came back home
 Because he has never really left home
 It was so long ago
 Anything that could have happened back then could be real by now
 A belly bloat of television trance inactivity
 Oblivious to the middle aged concerns now strifling his generation
 His mother in thought wonders
 What will happen to him
 When she dies

The only sane reward for her brave pain and unselfish suffering
Would be in the dream comfort of knowing that he had gone first
Sparing him the inevitable harshness of a misunderstanding world
The 4:00 crowds the room
Breathing with efforted reproach
Assimilating the muffled boredom
He becomes invisible
An overwhelming physical presence that makes itself unknown
Thick tongued open mouth somnambulism
Eyelids half open
Pulling the room into their void
The 3:45 the 4:00 the 4:15 and the 4:45 are waiting
To see the doctor

I NEVER COULD

Dance
On the edge
Like some people
I was the man over the side
Splattered in a strewn of self-wreckage
I never could master that casual balancing act
Tiptoeing the precipice in a mock of imaginary danger
Acrobating in the safety of a well practiced stunt
My sloppy disregard was too real
I saw no stopping signs or guarding rails
I was an inevitable collision
With the bottom down below
An unfaithful plunge beyond the confines of youthful adventure
Into darkness
Beyond the thrill seeking folly that never has to
Try climbing back up

I never could
Play with fire
Like the nimble fingered swiftness of the magician
Deftly wrapped in the blue of the flames
Never consumed
Hands are merely warmed
Moving quickly through the air singed heat
Sacrificing the pain to illusion
Never bearing the scars of blistered skin
Engulfed to tightly heal over time
Always reassuring
The fire is real

SMALL WONDERS

When has gasoline ever extinguished a fire
When has hatred ever given birth to compassion
When has punishment ever guaranteed obedience
When has anger ever resulted in reason
When has betrayal ever grown into trust
When has vengeance not been followed by retaliation
When has guilt ever been a preservation of innocence
When has confusion been a sanctuary of sanity
When has stubbornness ever produced cooperation
When has stinginess not created a want
When has neglect not been a forerunner of need
When has oppression not been a precursor to violence
When has meanness pretended to be anything other than dispiriting
When has suspicion bred anything other than dishonesty
When has selfishness ever led to understanding
When has there been a peace that has not been preceded by war
When has desire not fed into a misery
When does a result not become one with its cause
When does a question become its own answer

HE STOOD ON THE EDGE

He stood on the edge of the subway platform
 Surrounded by the stench
 The piss painted platform reeking
 Six o'clock in the morning stillness
 Waiting for the light at the end of the tunnel
 He leaned over the platform edge
 Spitting absently in the direction of the rails
 Reverie staring at the shadowed greasiness and dirt
 Focusing on the edge of the track railing
 Where it looked like someone
 Standing in the same spot on the platform above
 Every monday through friday for the past 5 years
 Had been spitting down on the rails below
 While waiting for the light at the end of the tunnel

He enjoyed the anonymity of living in a city
 Being able to walk around
 In a place where nobody knew him
 In a place where he didn't know anybody
 He liked the idea of so many people
 Nobody had time to think about anybody else
 Nobody could measure his past
 Nobody could count his time for him
 After ten years on the same block
 Seeing the same people in his building and around his neighborhood
 He felt his anonymity being smalltowned
 Into a dreary constriction of constant familiarity
 He memorized the faces and the habits of the strangers around him
 He was sure that they in turn recognized him
 He was the man that never said anything to anyone
 The unfriendly guy that left you in embarrassed silence
 When he deflected any attempt at casual smalltalk
 He wanted to be left alone
 He didn't care what the neighbors thought
 His girlfriend used to tell him that
 Everybody in the building hated his guts
 Because he never smiled and always had a mean look on his face

He used to give blood at work
 Every couple of months
 When the truck from the blood bank came
 He always put his name on the sign-up sheet for donors
 He always loaded up on vitamins eggwhites and orange juice
 A few days before he was scheduled to donate
 Thinking that would make his blood strong
 For whoever would be infused with it

It took about 15 minutes to fill up the bag
 With his blood
 And his arm hurt like hell the whole time
 And afterwards when he thought about it
 He felt good that he could give something to somebody
 He wondered about the person that would eventually get his blood
 He always gave blood at work
 He even had a blood donor card in his wallet
 It was a red card with his name and A negative printed on it
 When his hair started getting long
 The bloodtruck nurses always made him roll up both sleeves
 All the way up to his armpits
 Before they would let him donate
 And after he missed 3 weeks of work
 To take time off for a nervous breakdown
 Nobody at work ever asked him to volunteer to donate blood again

He was the most routine-oriented schedule-stricken person
 That she had ever known
 He functioned invariably
 Repetitiously entrenching himself in habits
 He denied all spontaneity
 She confronted him on this account for years
 But it never varied
 He had to be in bed at the same time every night
 He woke up at the same time every morning
 He put his clothes out for the next day the night before
 He came home every friday night from work
 And made french toast with a half loaf of bread
 And a half carton of eggs
 He'd fill up plastic containers with cans of spinach
 Green beans pineapple olives and sauerkraut
 And he would eat this for dinner every night except friday
 Along with a garlic sandwich
 And a one of the red potatoes that he boiled on friday night
 While he was making french toast and filling plastic containers
 With canned goods
 On saturday morning he sat around drinking coffee at the kitchen table
 Reading magazines and papers
 Until he was ready for a massive bowel movement
 That no amount of aerosol deodorant spray could cover
 On saturday night he would put a movie in the vcr
 And fall asleep in front of the television while he tried to watch it
 He never wanted to talk
 He would probably lapse into permanent silence if she wasn't there
 It was the same thing every day for years
 She noticed something was up with him a couple of years ago
 He suddenly stopped acting like his usual self
 His routines began to vary and he was sleeping less
 She started thinking about what happened before she knew him
 When he told her about the time he flipped out and went nuts

He was awake for weeks and he totally destroyed his apartment
He poured a bottle of bleach on the carpet
He threw the rolldown shades and the lamp and the phone out the window
Into the alley along with most of his belongings
He had the refrigerator laying down on its side in the living room
He pounded 10 boxes of tacks into the walls and door jambs
He pasted rolls of postage stamps on the walls
He was finally taken away by the cops
After he kicked in the window on a door of some business
In the neighborhood
He came home a month later
And found a hairdryer running in a box of melted cassette tapes
And all of his food exploded in the refrigerator
Because he had turned the temperature all the way down
He did so much damage to the place
That when he moved out 2 years later
He lost his 550 dollar security deposit and owed money on top of that
She could just picture him doing something like this
Destroying their apartment and all of their things
So she called the police and had him taken away
He was so angry that he had to be strapped to a bed for seven hours
Before he could even be admitted into the hospital
And while he was in the hospital
He was so pissed off that they only let him come out of his room
Fifteen minutes out of every hour
For the first couple of weeks that he was there
He had to be strapped down on his bed a couple of times
He was so angry
His co-workers sent him flowers
With a card that said "Merry Christmas"
He stuffed the flowers down the toilet of the bathroom in his room
When he flushed the toilet the whole bathroom flooded
So he just pissed in the shower until it was fixed a week later
He overflowed the sink in his room and warped the wooden counters
He tore some wires out the heating unit in his room
That caused the thermostat to malfunction and remain
At the maximum setting
The hospital couldn't let anybody sleep in the room with him
Because he was awake and making noise all night for the first week
When they let him out of his room on new years eve
He walked up and down the length of the ward for 3 hours
Wearing walkman headphones and listening to tapes
He finally settled down and was allowed to go back
To his home and his job
He crawled back into his routines and his life went on
She still can't stand his rigid inflexibilities
And she doesn't know when he'll snap again
He still doesn't know which of the two extremes are the worst

It was a cool spring afternoon
Clear skies
Blue on blue
I was on my way home from work
I had a bus to catch
I walked hurriedly to the intersection
Vaguely registering the sound of the motorcycle engine
Wound out and opened up
Some guy out on the first clear warm day in April
Across the street a car snaked slowly across the intersection
The chrome trim and windshield shining in the bright sunshine
I saw the motorcycle slam wheel first into the back end of the car
The car slowly moving away from the sound
Of metal crumpled and dented on impact with the hard rubber tire
The motorcycle bounced up and the back end bucked before it tipped
The plastic tail lights and metal fixtures shattering and spreading
Across the intersection
The guy on the bike kept going
He flew through the air for 30 feet
Headfirst
His body still shaped like it was on the motorcycle
I heard two things when he landed on the ground
First there was a sound
Like somebody had dropped a 12 storey brick building
On top of a frozen cardboard box
A hollow crushing pop
The sound of this guy's forehead
As it hit
On the fresh afternoon pavement
And right behind that was the thud
The damp sound of his leather jacket
Slapping into the street at fifty miles per
The weight of his body hitting the ground
The sickening smack that can only be made by a falling carcass
I was right there
I ran into the street to where he was
I crouched down and looked at him
His eyes were already a marbled albumen
And the blood ran in a thin stream from his nose
A steady trickle that began to pool quickly away from his head
I told him he was going to be alright
Within minutes the intersection was backed up in all directions
With the cars full of people on their way home from work
A guy in a uniform came over
Looked at the crumpled body and said "Oh shit"
He looked like he was going to vomit right in the blood
That blood was running across the lane
Toward the edge of the curb
The lady driving the car was across the street
Standing outside of her car
Crying hysterically
She wanted to know if he would be alright
I decided I had better get going

Because I had a bus to catch
I read in a newspaper the next day that the guy was pronounced dead
At a nearby hospital
An hour after the accident had occurred
It took weeks of spring rains before the blood stain washed away

HE LIKED TO TRAVEL

He liked to travel
When he was younger
Once he took a trip
From his home up in Illinois
Down to Miami Beach Florida
He just decided to go
He had enough money left over
From the last paycheck he got
After he quit his railroad job
It was strongly advised to him
That it would be in his best interest
To retire from the railroad immediately
So he told the railroad to go fuck itself
And he left
He figured what the hell
He was arrested for drunk driving the week before
Two nights later after getting out of jail for drunk driving
He was hauled out of a Joliet Illinois bar
By the police
His car was stolen while he was in jail that night
He took his moms car out a couple of days after that
He was trying to find some dope
He was arrested again and her car was impounded
He even got himself arrested at the town library
He was opening up library books and laughing
At the names of the people that he recognized
Written on the library checkout cards inside of the books
It was all a big joke to him
But he was getting tired of it
He had been awake for weeks
He had taken a lot of acid in the previous year
The acid no longer seemed to have any effect on him
At least not an effect that he could notice
The acid and the ounce bag of pot he smoked every week
Had kept him relatively quiet for months
He started in on the drinking
Then his screws started to loosen
Drinking in the mornings didn't help things at the railroad either
He would have worked there for the rest of his life
If they had let him
He let his whole being spin completely out of his control
And everybody around him knew it and could see it
He still hadn't got around to realizing that yet
He still had money left from his last paycheck
Nobody he knew would sell him any more dope
Everybody told him that the town was dry
He decided he would go down to Florida
They had to have dope down in Florida
That's where the shit was coming in from
So he abandoned the late winter dreariness of that Illinois February
He got on a greyhound bus headed for Miami

He didn't have much money left after he bought the ticket
Whatever few dollars were left were gone before he was in Georgia
All of the places that the bus stopped at had pinball machines
And he could never get enough of that pinball action
He rolled into downtown Miami on the bus
He didn't know where he was at
He didn't know anybody
He didn't have any money
He didn't care
It was late afternoon and he just started walking
It felt good to walk after being on the bus for all of those hours
He could smell the salt and the ocean
He knew that there had to be dope down there somewhere
He knew he was on the right track
Somehow he made his way to Collins Avenue
Hotel Row
It blew his mind
Like he had been there before
Like this was where he was supposed to be
He spent the first night walking up and down
Past the hotels
He stopped in a bar to find out where the dope was in Florida
It wasn't long some biker guy had him by the throat
He didn't even blink
After the beatings he had taken back up in the Will County jail
Delivered to him after being handcuffed by Illinois state troopers
It was going to take more than a man's bare hands around his neck
To stop him
He left the bar and continued down the sidewalk
He walked late into the night
He went behind one of the hotels and waited for the sun to rise
He spent the next few days walking up and down Collins Avenue
There were so many cars with New York license plates
He wasn't sure if he was in Miami or if he was in New York
By that time it didn't matter
He had been without sleep and food for so long
None of what was happening even seemed real
He didn't know how to beg or panhandle
He didn't want money or food
All he wanted was to get some dope
He passed four days with aimless wandering and walking
He left his socks in the sand on the first night
He walked around in his shoes for days without any socks
The bottoms of his feet were blistered
He began to tire and get depressed
He was getting hungry
He was swiping packets of sugar off restaurant tables
He went inside restaurants to use the bathroom
Where he could clean himself up
He hadn't eaten since he left Illinois the week before
He hadn't slept for more than a month and a half
And he hadn't been without pot for a day in a couple of years
He sure was happy when some guy came up to him on the sidewalk

The guy wordlessly handed him a half-dollar sized chunk of ganja
Thick dry and resinous
He bummed cigarettes from strangers
He tore off the filters from the cigarettes
Removing some of the tobacco
He replaced the tobacco with the small potent chunks of the ganja
All the hunger and pains and tiredness left his mind
He could last forever if he could make his stash do the same
He smoked carefully so as not to waste a drop of smoke
His lungs held tightly to every hit
He overcame the urge to cough out the smoke until his eyes flashed
His visual field exploded
In bright lines of clear light after each hit
He held the smoke until he almost blacked himself out
Then he walked around the beaches in back of the hotels
In a stoned and silent peaceful serenity
He absorbed the whole afternoon
He was so thirsty after he smoked up the last of that gift stash
He went down to the oceans edge
He scooped up a handful of the salty water and drank it
He walked along the water's edge
By evening the pot was wearing off and his belly was full
Of ocean water
He reeled down the sidewalk on Collins Avenue in an almost drunkenness
He decided to spend the dead hours of the middle of the night
On the beach
In back of the Fontainebleau Hotel
He wandered in off from the beach to the hotel pool
There was a small building near the pool
He easily put his fists through the wooden lattices
Pulled shut and padlocked against the night
He kicked out the splintered fractures of wood and climbed inside
He found himself inside of a bar
He stayed in there for hours
He drank freely
He drained the beer tap into the carpeting
He smashed the bottles of tropical booze against the walls
He broke all of the glasses
He tore the barstools off
He broke all of the mirrors and pictures hanging on the walls
He destroyed anything that he was able to pick up and throw
He walked away from the mayhem when the sun started coming up
He looked across the water and wondered where Cuba was
He looked at the hat hanging on the wall
With a patch on it that said Cuban Missile Crisis
He wondered what Fidel Castro was doing that night
He went next door to the Atlantic Hotel and sat in the lobby
Nobody said a word to him
He was totally out of his mind
The escalating peak of insanity that had started weeks before
Back in Illinois
Was now in a state of full crescendo
He went back over to the Fontainebleau

He walked into the hotel and went down a hallway
He took the fire extinguisher off of the wall
He emptied the fire extinguisher foam onto the blue hallway carpeting
He turned a doorknob and walked into an unlocked hotel room
He found a porkpie hat on the dressing bureau and a salt shaker
He put the hat on his head
Pocketed the salt shaker and walked out of the room
Then he headed out toward a door that announced the Boom Boom Room
He was grabbed by a hotel security guard
People were gasping and buzzing with the discovery of the poolside bar
Torn open and apart in violent destruction
The hotel security asked him where his friends were
They wanted to know who had broken into the bar with him
He told them that he did it himself
He was taken from the Fontainebleau by the Dade County police
The porkpie hat and the salt shaker were taken away for him
Stuffed into his belongings envelope
He was beaten in a cell by a fat sadistic cop
He was used to this kind of shit from being arrested in Illinois
He still had knots on his scalp
From the night of his drunk driving arrest
He thought the Miami cops were a bunch of pussies
And he made sure that he let them know it
He was taken into a room and questioned
It wasn't a cop asking the questions
It was some kind of lady psychologist type
She asked him what he was doing at the hotel
He said he wanted to let the people come and live there for free
He was taken to a large block
Filled with rows of bunkbeds and prisoners
He ripped up the sheets from his bed and wrapped them around his feet
He was noisy and aggravated
The meanest and biggest guy in the block warned him repeatedly
He was told that he better shut-up settle down and relax
He spent the night awake cold and wrapped in his blankets
His name was called the next morning to get in line to go to court
Somebody in the line passed him a lit joint
He loaded up on the pot as he marched in the line going into court
He pled guilty to mischievous vandalism
He was able to walk out of the court house like nothing ever happened
He didn't know where in the hell he was
He was determined to get back to Hotel Row
He walked across the causeway and almost got hit by cars
He was able to get back to Collins Avenue
From where the police had taken him
He went right back to the Fontainebleau
He went into the manager's office and asked for a job
The manager told him to get a haircut
The police came and took him away
They dropped him off at a hospital
He spent several hours in a waiting room
With other people at the hospital
He was questioned by some doctors and allowed to leave

He had been in Florida for a week by then
He spent the night walking the downtown Miami area
He had no idea where he was at
He found his way back to Collins Avenue
But he was getting tired and hungry
He decided to make a collect call to his family
He asked them to western union him the money
For a bus ticket back to Illinois
He had enough money left after the ticket to play pinball
All the way back to Chicago
He had so much fun on the ride back
He scraped up some money and took another trip down to Florida
Two weeks after he got back
About a year later
The bug to go travelling
Hit him again
His mom had remarried and moved into a new house
He was living there with her and his new step family
He was collecting 200 hundred dollars unemployment every two weeks
He spent all of his money on drinking
He would drink anything
He was constantly and continually drunk
The problems started when he stopped sleeping again
The rest of the people in the house couldn't sleep either
He was usually making noise all night and keeping them awake
His mom and stepdad were getting tired of his disturbances
He would leave for a few days then come back
He was spending the nights downtown in Chicago
Forty miles away
He found out that the greyhound bus station was open all night
He would hang around inside the bus station all night
The bus station was big and there were always a lot of people there
It was the middle of winter so it was too cold to be outside all night
When he got too obnoxious the cops took him to jail
The jail always served baloney sandwiches before court in the morning
There were hundreds of guys picked up and brought in every night
In the morning the guards put them all in a big room
Numbers were written on the back of everybody's fist
When a number was called
The person with the number walked out said they were guilty and left
It was all a big joke to him
During the days he would find places indoors where he could keep warm
He would sneak into hotels and hang out in the lobby
He would roam around in the downtown library
He would hang around in the commuter train station
When he got hungry and depressed he found a way to get back home
One night his stepdad had enough and started choking him
The choking itself didn't hurt him but the idea of it did
He called the town police and told them
That somebody tried to kill him
The cops showed up and he realized that he was going to be the one
Going to jail
He filled a cigarette cellophane with some marijuana

He shoved the cellophane into his cheek below his tooth line
He kept yelling that his stepdad hit him in the jaw
There was nowhere in town to lock him up
The town cops took him to Joliet to the Will County jail
The guards took his clothes and gave him the issue jump suit
The guards remembered all of the trouble he caused in there
The year before
He had ripped up his jail clothes and flushed a roll of toilet paper
Down the holding cell toilet
They had to put him in solitary with no clothes
He spent two days like that
Before he was committed to a mental institution
The guards weren't going to put up with his bullshit this year
They let him know that as soon as he got there
All the way to the holding cage he yelled
About his stepdad smacking his jaw
He crammed the marijuana he smuggled in into the end
Of a Kool cigarette he bummed off of one of the other detainees
The guards were upset when they smelled the pot
It was a still early and there was a long night ahead
A burly drunk acting guy was brought in after midnight
He kept taunting the guy and telling him that he looked like a cop
He taunted the guy so much that the guy started punching him
In the face
He was so wired and tight that he didn't feel anything or bruise
The guy hit him in the face so hard
That the guy broke a bone in his hand
The next morning he pled guilty to disturbing the peace and was let go
His mom and her sister watched in court
His mom told him that he couldn't go back to the house
His aunt told him that he could come and stay at their house
He spent the evening drinking with his aunt and uncle and cousins
They all had to get up for work and school the next day
They went up to bed and left him awake downstairs in the living room
He decided he wanted to light a fire in the fire place
He crumpled a bunch of newspapers around the logs
Lit the paper with a match
He didn't know that the flue was closed
The smoke poured into the room
The fire alarm started buzzing
While the whole family came charging downstairs
He knew he wouldn't be able to stay there for very long
The next morning his cousin drove him to the post office
They waited until the post office opened
He got that week's unemployment check
Before it went into the carrier's bag
He had decided that he was going to California
He had been listening a lot to the Pink Floyd album The Wall
He had heard that Pink Floyd was going to perform The Wall
In Los Angeles
He was tired of being outside and cold all of the time
He thought that it would be warmer out in California
He had lived in California for seven years when he was a kid

He was glad to get out of Illinois
He was hoping that he would never see Illinois again
He went downtown to Chicago and bought a train ticket to California
He had about fifty dollars left from his unemployment after the ticket
He had a few hours before the train was scheduled to leave
He had time to drink a few quarts of beer and play pinball
At the bus station
He went back to the train station in plenty of time to make the train
He spent the rest of his money in the train station gift shop
He spent his last 25 dollars on a jar of purple caviar
He thought he should celebrate
When he got on the train all he had was the caviar and a ticket
He made fast friends on the train
He met a woman that had hash
He met a sailor from Boston that had some pot
He stayed continually stoned on their dope
He was getting hungry around Arizona
He was caught one night trying to steal a loaf of bread
The conductor that caught him took the bread from him and let him go
He walked out of the Spanish style train station in California
He didn't know where he was at
He didn't know anybody
He didn't have any money
And he didn't care
He started walking down the street
He walked past a place that was giving free haircuts
Somebody came out on the sidewalk and ushered him in
He had a beard that he hadn't shaved or trimmed in 8 months
He got his beard cut off and his hair trimmed
He walked some more
He was glad to be out of the winter Illinois Chicago cold
He managed to find a rescue mission at 555 S. Main St in LA that night
He sat through the service
Waiting to get a bowl of soup and a bread roll
He wasn't tired
He left after the meal
He didn't go upstairs to get a bed with the rest of the men
He wanted to walk around that night and see what was going on
He had more than a week to kill before the Pink Floyd concerts
He didn't have a ticket and he had no way to get one
He just wanted to go to where the show was at and see what happened
He made it back to the mission in the morning for breakfast
He had found the greyhound station a few blocks away from the mission
He didn't think the LA bus station was as good as the one in Chicago
He mostly just walked the downtown area to see where everything was
He found out the next day how to get to the Coliseum
Where Pink Floyd would be
It was an hour walk but he was used to walking so it was nothing
He wandered around the downtown area during the day
He would show up at the mission for meal times
He came to the mission late a couple of nights
He wasn't able to get a bed but he was able to stay in the basement
He shaved and cleaned himself up in the morning

Down in the mission basement
He met and talked to a lot of the bums
There were a few people there that were his age
The main concern during the day was getting cigarettes
Along with something to drink
He was able to get himself drunk everyday
He went to a mall with a fountain full of wish coins
He took off his shoes
Rolled up his pants and then scooped up all of the coins in the water
He stumbled into a movie set one afternoon
Some guy caught him stealing donuts off a table
The guy said he was working in the movie
The guy said they were making a movie called Angel on My Shoulder
The guy told him that he could work on the movie as an extra
The guy gave him a phone number and told him to call
He called the guy every morning for a week
The guy took him out to a lot in Culver City where he stood around
After about 2 hours somebody gave him 25 dollars
He took the money and spent half of it in the cafeteria
He spent the rest when he got back to skid row on pints of wine
He found his way to the Coliseum for the Pink Floyd shows
He never got inside
He just walked around the sidewalk outside each night
He waited for the people to come out after the show
He saw the people leaving the shows happy and laughing
He wondered if they were even at the show
He didn't think it was something to be laughing at
After the shows were over he kept hanging around at the mission
He wanted to get some dope
He asked a guy at the bus station for some dope one night
The guy gave him a handful of pencil shavings
He thought the people in California were idiots
He thought that the bums had it soft and easy
At the Jesus Saves Rescue Mission
He was glad that he hadn't been able to get himself arrested
He saw the LA cops taking away Mexicans Indians and blacks every day
He got thrown out of the mission a few times for being noisy at night
He always got thrown out of the mission when it was raining
He hung around for a couple of weeks after the Pink Floyd concerts
He knew that he had a couple of unemployment checks back in Illinois
He was starting to get tired and depressed
He made a collect call home and asked them to send his money
His family told him to rot in hell
He met a guy at the bus station who gave him a ticket to Sacramento
He took the bus up to Sacramento
It was cold near freezing up in Sacramento
He had lost his Illinois winter jacket the second day he was in LA
He stayed near the bus station in Sacramento
He rummaged through the early morning garbage outside of restaurants
He freaked a lady out when he started eating cookies
Off of the sidewalk
He didn't see any bums in Sacramento
He didn't know where the skid row was or if there was one at all

He couldn't hang out at the bus station because it was too small
He spent a few more days in Sacramento and called Illinois again
He asked his family to send him some of his unemployment money
He offered his family one of his unemployment checks
They told him that it was too late for that
They already signed his name on his checks and cashed them
His mom said she would only send him a bus ticket to get to Chicago
His mom said she wasn't going to send him any money
He hung around the bus station for hours before the ticket was there
He knew if he was there any longer he would wind up in jail
He was glad to be on the bus and moving again
He had a lot of fun during the ride back to Illinois
Another year and a few months went by
He started getting the itch to go somewhere again
He was living back at his mom and his stepdad's house
He was enrolled in a vocational rehabilitation program
He was picked up at his every morning by a mini-bus
He rode the bus with retarded adults to vocational rehab in Joliet
He spent six hours a day repairing broken pop bottle crates
He was paid 25 cents for every crate that he repaired
He made enough money
For a couple of cartons of cigarettes and sixes of beers
He would sit in his parent's house all night and drink
He learned how to keep himself quiet
He thought about his other failed travelling ventures
He decided that the problem was leaving with no way to get back
He had always heard about the breweries up in Milwaukee
He always heard stories of the brewery tours
Where people drank all they wanted
He told himself that he could go to Milwaukee on a Saturday morning
He thought that he'd be able to drink an amount of beer
In excess of the cost of the bus fare
He planned on buying a roundtrip bus ticket to prevent any screwups
He could stay outside on Saturday and drink for free on Sunday
He figured he'd be back in plenty of time
To get on the bus to rehab on Monday
He took it easy on the Friday night before he got paid
He usually spent most of his money when he got it on Friday
He loaded his pockets with a carton of cigarettes
He took along a bottle of various psych pills
That he had stashed away saved after he got home from the hospital
He took the first train downtown to Chicago on Saturday morning
He was out of the house before anybody was even awake
He had called the bus station ahead of time to find out the schedule
He didn't want to take the chance of spending his money in Chicago
He wanted to get his tickets and head right up to Milwaukee
He felt like he was sort of established
When he bought his round trip tickets
He wanted this to go off as he planned with no surprises or bullshit
He had some tremor reducers in his pill stash
He swallowed a few of the pills for the bus ride
He sat on the bus and thought about all his other travelling mishaps
He knew where he was going and he knew what he wanted to do

He was going to get drunk up in Milwaukee
He wasn't sure what breweries were there
He didn't even know where the breweries were at
He thought that Milwaukee wouldn't be that large
He thought that finding a brewery would be easy
He was even willing to drink Pabst or Bohemian Club
If that's all that was there
He even had money left over after the ticket
He hit Milwaukee around noon
He wasn't even out of the bus station
When he met up with one of the locals
He met a guy that gave him some methedrine
He agreed to get some wine with the guy in exchange for the speed
He went into the first bar they came to outside of the bus station
The people in the bar knew the guy and started to throw them out
The guy apparently had been thrown out of there before
He bought some quarts of beer and bottles of wine for them to drink
He walked around with the guy and drank the alcohol
They stopped at more bars
At each place the guy was treated the same
Everybody knew the guy and wanted the guy out
The guy pointed to him as a new found friend
The guy kept saying "kool and the gang"
He headed into skid row with the guy and forgot all about the brewery
He ran out of money when it started to get dark
The guy he met decided to stay on the row
He wanted to walk around and see what was going on
He had a good drunk going but the speed was wearing it off
He had some tranquilizers in his pocket so he took a couple of those
He met up with another guy and shared some of his pills with him
It was getting cold so the other guy decided
To crash on a heating vent
He didn't know where in the hell he was at
He had taken too many downers and was getting tired himself
He thought the Milwaukee row was a joke
He decided to see the rest of the town
He kept walking and getting more tired
He didn't know where the bus station was
He could care less about the breweries
He kept on walking up and down the empty streets
It was in the middle of the night and he couldn't keep his eyes open
He was walking around with his eyes closed
He tried to keep his hands out for obstacles
He walked right smack into a wall a couple of times
He walked into a wall a third time smashing his glasses into his face
He felt around on the ground for the lens and was able to find it
He would open his eyes every few minutes and check for obstacles
He got tired of banging into things
He decided to find a place to crash
He was arrested when the Milwaukee police saw him turning doorknobs
He was taken to the police station
He walked through the police station with his eyes still closed
He heard the police laughing at him

He screamed at them that he was on drugs and to leave him alone
He watched the cops digging through his wallet
He got his wallet back the next day and the bus ticket was gone
He raised hell with the police and the people at the court
He knew that the sons of bitches took his ticket
The cops just laughed in his face
He didn't know what in the hell he was going to do
He knew if he called home he'd be out on his ass for sure
He spent the next couple of days walking around downtown Milwaukee
He walked around most of the nights because it was still cold
He would sleep under concrete overpasses at the top of the embankment
He passed out while the cars rolled over the highway above his face
He had to keep moving at night though because it was cold
He was able to get out in the sun during the day to warm up
He hung around there for a week
He stayed away from the skid row section
He finally broke down and called his sister and asked her for 18 bucks
His sister told him that he was in trouble
For missing the rehab that week
His sister also told him not to show up at home
His stepdad was pissed
He asked her to just send the money
He wanted to get the hell out of there
All the way back to Chicago he thought about how good it was to travel

**

HE DECIDED THAT HE WANTED TO SEE HIS FATHER

He decided that he wanted to see his father
When he was 22 years old
He hadn't seen or talked to his father in a few years
He was having a lot of problems
He wanted to go right to the source
He had been living in a halfway house apartment for mental patients
He lived with a guy that laid on a bed in the living room all day
He stayed in the bedroom with a cheap stereo and hundreds of albums
He paid his rent with the public aid check he received every month
He was able to collect welfare
While he waited to be put on Social Security
He bought his food with food stamps and grocery store food vouchers
He bought cigarettes with the change leftover from one dollar food stamps
He spent the days in occupational therapy at a nearby hospital
He saw a therapist at the hospital once a month
He was supposed to be taking lithium for his manic-depression
He took the lithium three times a day for a while
He thought that the lithium made him depressed
He started taking the lithium
Only on the days he was scheduled for a bloodtest
He told his doctor that he was agitated and couldn't sleep
He told his doctor that maybe he needed to be on a major tranquilizer
He got the doctor to prescribe tranquilizers
He told the doctor that the tranquilizers made him stiff
He got the doctor to prescribe medication
To relieve tranquilizer side-effects
He got a months supply of medication at a time
He squirreled away the lithium and the tranquilizers
He took a month's worth of the side-effect pills in a week
He found out that by tripling the dosage of the side-effect pills
He was able to get stoned
He started taking the side-effect pills from the other patients
He was able to stay high everyday like this for months
He smoked pot whenever any was around or offered to him
He noticed that the opportunity to smoke pot increased over time
He had stopped drinking alcohol
He had spent some time in an alcohol program
While he was in the hospital
He thought that maybe the alcohol was causing all of his problems
He decided he was going to quit drinking and he did
He didn't follow up with AA or any of the other hospital programs
He was the only person out of the 15 in the program that quit drinking
He still liked to smoke pot and saw no reason to give that up
His life at the halfway house got routine and settled
His problems started when he started sleeping less and then not at all
He was talking on the phone with his mom one day
His mother told him that he was just like his father
He decided right then that he wanted to go see his father
His father lived in Prescott Arizona
His father hadn't worked in the 13 years since his parents divorced

His father lived from month to month
On a Social Security disability check
His father passed the years binging on alcohol and insanity
His father checked into VA hospitals from time to time
To sober himself up
He usually got a christmas card once a year from his father
He grew up being ashamed and embarrassed of his father
His father was an uncontrollable raging maniac
He wanted to find out if he was just like his father
He had been awake for a couple of weeks when he left the halfway house
He spilled all of his pills that he saved on his bedroom floor
He called his sister and said he needed money
For a bus ticket to Arizona
His sister told him that he was nuts and told him not to bother her
His sister lived 35 miles away from where he was at the halfway house
He climbed into a open freight train car
On the tracks behind the halfway house apartment where he lived
Heading in the direction of where his sister lived
He got off the train when it pulled into a switching yard
He got on the highway so that he could thumb the rest of the way
The first car that stopped for him was a police car
He was taken straight to jail
He had an outstanding arrest warrant
He had gotten a drunk driving ticket 3 years before
He had never paid the fine
He had been arrested for this more than 10 times in the past 3 years
He always promised to pay the money in a month
He never paid anything and a warrant would be reissued for his arrest
He always knew that the warrant was a guaranteed ride back to Joliet
He got picked up on the unpaid ticket warrant in Galesburg Illinois
Galesburg was a 4 hour drive from Joliet
He almost had to pay the gasoline bill
When the Joliet cops had to drive down there and then drive him back
This time he was taken back to Joliet to spend a quiet night in jail
He told the judge the next day that he would pay the fine in a month
He got out and spent the day walking
It was a 10 mile walk from Joliet to his sister's house
He showed up where his sister worked
He told his sister that he needed bus fare to Arizona
His sister told him that she wouldn't have the money for a week
His sister got a hold of their father on the phone
His sister told his father that he was coming down there
His father said that there was nowhere for him to stay
He didn't care
He said he was going down there anyway
His sister drove him back to the halfway house to pick up his albums
He told his sister that she could keep his records
In exchange for the bus fare money
He had just gotten into his month supply of side-effect medication
Before he left the halfway house
He was feeling pretty good and oblivious to the chaos he was causing
One of his sister's roommates was dealing
Out of a halfpound bag of pot

He helped himself freely to the pot
He was smoking his sister's roommate's for sale pot around the clock
He sat in a chair and listened to the stereo through headphones
His sister wanted him out of there as soon as possible
He got on the bus with the last of his pills and a bag
Filled with jelly sandwiches
He took the last of his side-effect pills on the first day of the ride
He hadn't been without the pills for the previous seven months
He was starting to feel a little sick before he got to Arizona
He wasn't used to having saliva in his mouth
He was used to the dry mouth caused by the pills
He had an old letter from his father with him when he got off the bus
He found the address and went there expecting to find his father
He was told that his father had moved from there months ago
He was given the name of a woman who knew his father
He found out where the woman lived and went to her house
He was told that his father was expecting him
The woman told him where his father lived and how to find him
He found his father living in a small room
With a bed and a gas stove and a sink
He told his father that he would sleep on the floor
It was the start of the month so his father still had some money left
He went out with his father that night and his father got drunk
He rode back to the room with his father on the back of his motorcycle
He stayed up all night and talked with his father
His father told him to go see a lady about getting some work
He went the next day to talk to the lady
The lady owned a restaurant and a couple of apartment buildings
He was told that he could work
For 5 dollars an hour and a restaurant meal
He went to work that morning and his father went out and got drunk
He had a few dollars in his pocket and was itching to get some dope
He was still feeling cravings in his body
He was withdrawing from the side-effect medication
He wasn't sleeping and neither was his father
He talked to his father every night when his father came home drunk
His father told him about the time when his father had died
His father said that it happened when he was home
On leave from the service during the Korean War
His father said he went out and got drunk with his dad
His father said he dropped his dad off that night at home
His father said that he left his dad sitting at the top of some stairs
His father said that it was hot and his dad wanted to get some air
His father said that his dad toppled down the stairs
His father said that his dad had broken his neck
While falling drunkenly down the stairs
His father said that his family blamed him for his dad's death
He waited for his father to go out one night
He pulled out the duffle bag where his father kept his things
He found his father's service documents
He found papers that said his father was trained as a tailgunner
He found papers that said his father had to be hospitalized
In a Roswell New Mexico hospital for military personnel

He figured that his father must have went crazy after his dad died
He asked his father about it that night when he got home
His father was angry that he had been digging through his papers
He had been there a week and a half and they were starting to argue
His father had drank up all of his money for the month
His father bought a radio
For 18 \$12 installments from a department store
His father took the radio to a pawnshop and got 20 bucks for it
He had been down there with his father for two weeks by then
He spent the days doing a few odd manual labor hours
For the restaurant lady
He wasn't sleeping
His father was drinking continually
His father wasn't sleeping either
He was still trying to find some dope to cool his burning nerves
He wasn't able to find anything
He was arguing and fighting more and more with his father
His father even pawned his belt buckle to get drinking money
He would go up to the bars once in a while when his father was there
He was kind of embarrassed at the drunken spectacle his father made
He remembered how much he liked to drink and how good he felt
He remembered that the happiest he had ever been was when he was drunk
He watched his father and wondered if he had been that foolish
He left a bar one friday night with his father after it closed
His father was going to ride the 3 blocks home on his motorcycle
He was always worried about his father riding his motorcycle drunk
He told his father that he wasn't going to let him drive the bike home
He was arguing out in the street in front of the bar with his father
He took the keys from his father and started walking home
He flagged down a Prescott cop
He told the cop that his father was drunk and needed a ride
His father had an extra set of keys with him
His father got out his spare keys and cranked up the bike for home
He watched the cop red light his father a block later
He walked up to where they had his father pulled over
His father was so drunk that he could hardly talk
He heard the cops ask his father to recite the alphabet
He watched his father say half of the alphabet and stop
He saw the frozen look of terror on his father's face
He watched his father get taken away for drunk driving
He got the motorcycle and pushed it the rest of the way home
He figured that his father would be out of jail the next day
He found out that this was his father's 5th drunk driving arrest
He was told that they weren't going to let him out of jail
For a long time
He talked to his father and assured him that the bike was home and ok
His father said he couldn't say the alphabet if he was sober
He told his father that he didn't know that he had extra keys on him
He told his father that he had put the cops on to him
To give him a ride and make sure that he got home
His father got mad and told him that he was a fucking idiot
His father stayed in jail and he stayed in the room
He was told by a cop that his father was going to kick his ass

He was still doing odd labor jobs and eating dinner at the restaurant
He spent most of his money on records
He listened to albums by the Clash and VanHalen at the library
Through a pair of headphones plugged into a clunky turntable
He wasn't sleeping and he was still craving for some dope
He started acting weird and talking to himself
He visited his father at the jail everyday the first week he was there
He quit going because his father got meaner and crazier each time
He decided he was going to get himself thrown in jail
He spent several nights trying to get arrested for something stupid
He decided he would have it out with his father right in jail
He was told by more people that his father was going to fix him good
He was getting weirder and crazier by the day
He was to the point where he wouldn't be able to work anymore
For the restaurant lady
He had been awake for the 4 weeks since he got down there
He was still fighting a real strong urge for some kind of dope
He was upset because he got his father thrown in jail
He was walking around the town and haranguing the cops
With a loud taunting voice in an attempt to get himself arrested
He was finally stopped by a cop on his way home
After working on a friday
He had acted weird while he worked that day
A lot of people had taken notice to his weirdness
They thought that he must have been drunk
He was assigned the job of helping two carpenters
He was to go outside of the house where they were working
With the measurements for boards
That a carpenter outside with a table saw would cut
He would forget the measurements as soon as he got them
Laughing and spewing nonsense when he went to tell the guy outside
How long the boards were supposed to be cut
He laughed and made up rhymes to remember the numbers
He sensed the anger and mounting impatience
In the voices and on the faces of the men he was working with
He let the work site at the end of the afternoon
He was still determined to get himself thrown in jail
He was walking home in his socks and carrying his shoes
He was given a ticket for walking against the crosswalk light
He was told to sign a ticket and appear in court
He signed his first name with his left hand
He signed his last name with his right hand
He was immediately handcuffed by the cop
Two more cops came up in a car
They demanded some identification
He told them that his ID was back in the room a block away
The cops drove him back to the room
He was led to the room in handcuffs
He was still carrying his shoes
He noticed the cops were wearing their helmets
He got the padlock off the door and the cops pushed him inside
He was punched kicked and choked by the cops
It was an explosion of violence

He was kicking and twisting away from them
He started yelling that they were killing him and the beating stopped
He had one of his toes broken in the altercation
He was charged with resisting arrest and battery on a police officer
He demanded to be thrown in a cell with his father
He was put in a holding cell by himself
He kept yelling out for his father
He told his father to come on and that he was ready for him
He made so much noise that they brought his father out to his cell
His father told him from the hallway through the bars of his cell
To shut up and settle down
He told his father that he was going to kill him
He was released the next day
He was hobbling around
He couldn't put any weight on his broken toe
He decided to show up at the restaurant for his nightly meal
He was acting weird and talking to himself
He stabbed a baked potato on his plate with a fork
Leaving the fork stuck standing in the potato
He was arrested and handcuffed in the restaurant
Two cops threw him around in the parking lot
He wasn't taken to the jail
He was taken to the hospital
He told the doctor that he needed a shot of Haldol and some lithium
He was strapped down on a bed and given a shot of tranquilizers
He felt like he was dying when he fell asleep
He woke up the next day and remained strapped down
He was finally unstrapped on the second day
He stayed in the hospital for a week
The hospital gave him the lithium and tranquilizers
That he asked to be given
His father got out of jail the day before he left the hospital
His father came and visited him at the hospital
His father told him that he made a lot of trouble
His father said that the cops had let him out of jail
So that they could follow him
His father said the cops thought that he would lead them
Straight to a cache of illegal narcotic drugs
His father said that the cops were convinced
That some kind of drug made him like that
His father said that he was busted at the restaurant
For the way he was eating
His father knew about the fork in the potato
His father told him that he'd see him when he was out of the hospital
He hobbled home from the hospital and met his father in a bar
He got the keys to the room and went back there
He waited in the room for his father
His father came back that night extremely angry
He was afraid that his father was going to kill him
He heard someone knocking on the door in the middle of the night
He let in the old bum that was at the door
The bum said that he just got in town and used to live in the building
The bum said he was going to see about getting a room the next day

He thought that with the bum there his father wouldn't kill him
He had it out with his father the next day after the bum left
His father told him to get out and don't come back
His father told him that he was a no good trouble maker and a dopehead
His father told him that if he didn't leave he would kill him
He thought that his father would kill him so he left

THE FIRST TIME HE EVER SMOKED POT

The first time he ever smoked pot
He was arrested and thrown in jail
He was eighteen at the time
He was a freshman in college at Western Illinois University
He had helped to instigate an outing for the people on his dorm floor
His whole floor of 90 guys kicked in 5 bucks each for a party
They were going to rent a bus and buy kegs of beer with the money
The buses would stop at the women's dorms on campus
The buses would fill up with women going to their party
They made reservations at a forest preserve to have their party
They all agreed that it would be a good
A good way to get drunk and maybe get laid
The whole thing had to be called off because it rained
The afternoon and morning of the Saturday that it was scheduled
They took the money they collected to a bar
They were able to drink whatever they wanted for 5 hours
They started in the afternoon so they were the only ones in the bar
It was evening when the money ran out
After the money was gone they had to start paying for drinks
He met a girl who was visiting her friend at the college
He didn't have much money so he was ready to get out of there
He had been drinking since late morning that day
Hhe had a good drunk going
He was trying to talk the girl into going back to his dorm with him
She said she would go with him if he would get high with her first
He told her that he didn't smoke pot
She found that kind of hard to believe
He had never even taken a hit off of a joint before
His friends back home all smoked pot
He drank with them through high school but he never got high with them
He thought that pot made them stupid
He watched most of them drop out or barely finish high school
His dorm friends were always trying to get him to smoke pot with them
He was drunk most of that first semester at school
He enjoyed drinking and socializing and had no interest in marijuana
He really wanted to leave the bar with that girl he met
He spent the last of his money
On a couple of glasses of vodka and orange juice
He kept at the girl to come back to the dorm with him
It was still early for a Saturday night
She was with a couple of friends
She said that she wouldn't go anywhere with him
Unless he would get high with her
He figured what the hell and said that he would smoke a joint with her
They went outside in front of the bar and started smoking a joint
He told her that he never got stoned before
He was completely drunk and ready for anything
He was taking the last hit off the roach
A cop came from nowhere out of the dark
The cop walked toward them quickly shining a flashlight in their faces
He calmly flicked the lit roach away from him

The cop announced that they were under arrest
He started to laugh at the cop and ask what he could be arrested for
The cop looked on the ground and found the lit roach
The cop picked up the roach held it up to them
He was drunk and started to laugh at the cop
He figured the cop must have watched them smoke the whole thing
He thought the cop was a sneaky bastard and started telling him that
The cop went through the girl's purse
She had a plastic bag full of white pills
They were taken to the Macomb Illinois police station
He was charged with possession of marijuana
She was charged with possession of a controlled substance
They were put in the cell together
She was really scared and starting to panic
She kept saying that her father was going to kill her
He was starting to feel the effects of the pot on top of the alcohol
His usual drunken hyperness was calmed by the pot
He kept trying to calm her down and tell her not to worry
He had been through this kind of shit before
He remembered the time when he was 16
He got busted on New Year's Eve in a car full of friends and beer
He laughed hysterically while they were processed
In the station that night
In full view of the parents of his friends
That were called out of their sleep into the Frankfort Illinois jail
On a New Year's Eve night
His parents were not able to get him out of jail
His parents were attending a Frank Sinatra concert
In Chicago that night
The cop was forced to drive him home
After all of his friends had left with their parents
He knew that this was just a joke also
They were told that bail was set at \$35 for each of them
He didn't have any money and she had about ten dollars on her
Her friends were still back at the bar
He called his dorm and told the guy that answered that he was in jail
He said that he needed somebody to bail him out for 35 bucks
His friends at the dorm were just as drunk as he was
They took up a collection and eight of them came to get him out of jail
They couldn't believe back at the dorm
That he got busted for pot because he never smoked it
He told them to bail the girl out
Once she was out she would get the money to get him out
They told him to leave her there and let her find her own way out
He waited while they left with the girl to get his bail money
He felt relaxed and peaceful and his drunk was leveling off
He waited about an hour before they came back with his bail money
It was still kind of early for a Saturday night
When he got back to the dorm
The girl he got busted with was there but he had lost interest
He just wanted to get totally drunk and stoned
People loaded bong after bong for him
He smoked everybody's pot and drank heavily

He was completely out of control and drunk at 1 o'clock in the morning
He was always like this on the weekends
Since the start of college 3 months before
The girl he met was long gone by then and he didn't even notice
He started getting aggravated and violent
He started throwing empty beer bottles down the hallway of the dorm
He was breaking bottles and making a lot of noise
He was living up to the name of Wildman
That he was tagged with and known by in the dorm
He eventually cut his finger on a broken bottle
His finger was bleeding all over everything
He couldn't feel anything
His friends at the dorm were getting scared and didn't know what to do
They took him to the college medical center to get his finger sewn up
He passed out while the stitches were being put in
He was kept all night at the medical center
He was allowed to leave in the morning
He noticed in the morning that his sight was normal
There was none of the uncorrected cloudiness or distorted blurriness
Even though he wasn't wearing his glasses or contact lenses
Gradually his shortsightedness returned
He went back to the dorm and went to find somebody that had some dope

HE DECIDED THAT HE WANTED TO BE A COMPUTER PROGRAMMER

He decided that he wanted to be a computer programmer
He didn't know what a computer programmer was
He didn't know what a computer programmer did
He just knew that he had to do something
He was visiting at his mom and stepdad's for christmas
He had spent the previous 8 months in Prescott Arizona
He lived with a guy and his wife and their baby daughter in a trailer
The guy had a landscaping business and he worked for him
The guy let him sleep on the floor in his trailer
The guy belonged to a church
He had to go to church with the guy as well as to work with him
He told the guy that he wanted to see his family for christmas
He talked his family into letting him come back there for a visit
His stepfather had kicked him out a couple of years before
He hadn't been back there since then
He left Arizona and told the guy that he would be back
He was going to visit his family for a couple of weeks
He was sort of hoping that he wouldn't have to go back to Arizona
He was sort of hoping that he move back in at his mom and stepdad's
He was hoping all of the trouble he caused at home was forgotten
He was told that he could stay if he could find a job
His family didn't want him sitting around the house and partying again
He hadn't taken a drink in a year and a half
He hadn't used any drugs for 8 months
He assured his family that he was ok and that they could trust him
He had lost his drivers license 4 years before
He hadn't been able to get his driver's license back
He still owed on the fine
He knew that there was an outstanding arrest warrant
He knew it would be hard to find a job without a car
He started taking the train to downtown Chicago to look for a job there
He applied at banks and stores for jobs that required no prior skills
He had only done manual labor and had a couple of semesters of college
He had no skills or qualifications to work indoors
He hadn't worked a real job for a three year period
He had to lie about what he was doing during that three years
He had to lie about where he was living during that time
He knew that he would never get a job
If he told people the truth about himself
He felt like he was being backed into a corner
If he was backed into a corner he was going to lie
Right to their faces and on their applications
He quickly realized that his chances of getting a job were slim
He saw an ad in the newspaper for a computer school
He made an appointment to go downtown for a seminar at the school
He was told that the school trained computer programmers and operators
He didn't know what either one of them did
He told his parents that he wanted to go to school
For computer programming
His parents said ok and said that they would help him

He applied for a grant to pay part of his tuition
His parents agreed to help him with the rest of the tuition money
He would receive a certificate after he completed a year of school
He thought that this would be good enough for him to get a job
He met the husband of one his mom's cousins at a family christmas party
The guy was the head of maintenance at a Montgomery Ward's store
The guy told him that he could work part time at the store as a janitor
The store job would pay for his cigarettes and train fare to school
He started computer school and his job at the store after christmas
He left for school at 6:30 each morning
He got back home from school at 3:00 in the afternoon
His mom worked downtown and took the train in the morning
He rode the train downtown each morning with his mother
He did his studying and homework on the hour train rides
To and from school
He came home in the afternoon had dinner and got ready for work
He worked the 5 to 9 shift at the store during the week
He worked all day on weekends
The store was a couple of towns away
His sister's boyfriend drove him each day and his stepdad picked him up
He grasped onto the computer concepts quickly
He was doing good at school and holding down his little job
He started getting bored with his job
He knew that a janitor was the lowest person on the ladder
In the little world of monkey wards
He hated the uniform he had to wear while he worked at the store
He hated taking orders from kids that were younger than him
He felt like a moron pushing a dumpster around the store
He parked his rolling dumpster at each checkout station
He wordlessly went behind the counters
Into the cashier's workspace to collect the trash
He felt like a grimy dirtbag moron
He came in every week night and did the same thing for 4 hours
He cleaned out and wiped down the bathrooms
He collected all the trash from the registers, stockrooms and offices
He vacuumed the dining area and swept out and mopped the kitchen area
He never said a word to anybody
He got so much work done each night that he left nothing for the crew
That worked the morning shift the next day with his cousin's husband
He kept thinking about the computer programming job he would soon have
He even had a 3 piece suit tailored
Pants cuffed and pressed on the hanger ready for the eventual day
When he would go on computer programming job interviews
He was picking up on the computer concepts
He was getting the best grades in his class
He didn't know that nobody coming out of his school
Had zero chance of landing a job in the real world
He didn't know that his 1 year programming certificate
Would be worthless on the job market
Competing with 4 year computer science degrees
He went to work and school during the week
He worked all day on weekends
He avoided his old friends and they forgot about him

He was getting along with his stepdad
He even sensed that his stepdad had more respect for him
He started to feel that all his problems from the past were behind him
He noticed marijuana roaches on the sidewalk near school each morning
On the sidewalk along the outside wall of the Board of Trade Building
Across the street from the computer school building
He figured that somebody must have been standing out there
Every night getting high
He started pocketing the roaches each morning
He would smoke the dope in the afternoon
After he finished his school work
He went to his janitor job stoned each night
He would do his job mechanically
He let his stoned mind wander while he worked
He didn't feel so bad about his job when he was stoned
He found roaches on the sidewalk in the same place every morning
He finished the first semester of school
With a perfect score on the final exam
He had 4 more months of school to complete for his certificate
He had a 2 week break between semesters
He bought a stash of dope to hold him over for the two week period
He told his parents that he would paint the outside of their house
He spent the two weeks of vacation getting stoned
While he painted the exterior of his parent's house
He started sleeping less
By the end of the 2 weeks he wasn't sleeping
He was half out of his mind when he went back to school
He was able to act normally for a couple of weeks
He was smoking more and more pot and lying in bed awake all night
People at school and at work started to notice he was acting different
He hadn't said anything to anybody for 6 months
He wasn't acting like his usual self
His personality was taking a turn
He was totally open and saying whatever he thought to everybody
People were starting to worry about him
His family had seen this all before and knew what was happening
A concerned classmate called his mother to find out what was going on
His mother said that he had problems
His mother said that he was supposed to be on medication
He was embarrassed that everybody at school knew about his problems
He went into the bathroom one day at school
Another student followed him into the school john
The student bear hugged him and pulled him out of the bathroom
His fellow students were convinced that he was going to jump
Out of the bathroom window down to the parking lot 10 floors below
He decided that he had had enough
He went to work that night and let the trash pile up
For the 4 hours that he was there
He remembered the restaurant job that he had when he was 15
Every sunday morning he was required to vacuum the dining room
He had to move all of the tables and chairs to vacuum the floor
He decided that it would be easier to just rip the electrical wires
Out from the inside of the Italian restaurant vacuum cleaner

He was ready to do the same thing to the monkey ward vacuum cleaner
That he used each night to vacuum the snack bar dining area carpet
His cousin's husband that got him the job was gone
His cousin's husband had went to work somewhere else
He figured that he didn't owe anybody anything there
He went home that night ready for anything
All the bullshit started with his family again
His stepfather went to the bar and got drunk
Lightning hit a tree next to the house and the tree landed on the roof
He picked up his check the next day at the store and told them he quit
He packed a suitcase and put on his job interview suit and left
He went downtown to Chicago and stowed his suitcase
In a twentyfive cent locker at the bus station
He wandered around downtown for a couple of days and nights
He spent all the money from his paycheck
He went to the beach by Lake Michigan and crashed out in the sand
His interview suit was getting dirty and lined with sand
He hung around at the beach during the day
He walked around downtown at night
He met a young woman at the beach and she took him home with her
He was up all night in her apartment
The young woman that picked him up had to throw him out in the morning
He spent the next 2 weeks hanging around her apartment and neighborhood
Sometimes he was able to stay for a whole day
Without her having to kick him out
She worked nights at a hotel
She didn't want to leave him alone in her apartment while she worked
He walked around the neighborhood where she lived until she got home
He told her that he wanted to get a job and move in with her
He even went and applied for a couple of jobs
She took him downtown to pick up his suitcase
He kept his suitcase in her house until she told him to get it out
His clothes ended up scattered and stashed
In the bushes around her neighborhood where he would hide at night
She was getting tired of him and didn't know how to get rid of him
He had been awake for weeks and was eating very little
He was getting tired run down and depressed
He went downtown to where his mother worked
He asked his mother for a couple of dollars for train fare
He wanted to take the train to a town that had a state mental hospital
He had been in the hospital a couple of years before
He had been dropped off there
Signed in to be committed by his mother and stepfather
He had gone to court and talked a judge into letting him out that time
He wanted a place where he could get some food and a place to crash
His mother gave him just enough money for a train ticket
His mother made sure that he got on the train
He got off the train and walked to the nuthouse
He knew that all he had to tell them was that he wanted to die
He had done this before to get into a hospital
He wasn't really lying because it was half true
He was admitted to the state psychiatric facility in Tinley Park
He was put on lithium and given a major tranquilizer

He waited a week before he called his family
His mother made arrangements
To have him transferred to a hospital in Joliet Ill
His mother kept him covered on her insurance for things like this
The hospital in Joliet was a regular hospital with a psychiatric ward
The Joliet hospital would be easier than the Tinley state institution
He was given lithium and minor tranquilizers in Joliet
He started to get depressed when he realized what had happened to him
He told his mother that he still wanted to finish his computer school
He told her that he could go back when the next semester started
His mother said that his stepfather didn't want him back at the house
He spent a quiet couple of months at the hospital in Joliet
His aunt brought some books for him so he spent the days reading
He was allowed to leave the hospital a week before the start of school
He came back to his mother and stepfather's house
He had nowhere to go
His stepfather went into a raging drunk the first night he was home
His stepfather stormed into his room in the middle of the night
He pretended he was sleeping face pressed into the pillow
He acted as if he was unaware of the light
That had been angrily flipped on when the door to his room slammed open
While his stepfather yelled and seethed at him
He went back to school to restart his last semester
He had no clothes because he lost them all during the summer
He was bloated-up on the downers and inactivity of hospital life
He was ashamed and embarrassed about returning to school
He kept taking his lithium and the mild tranquilizer he was prescribed
He thought about suicide constantly
He got into his school work and it came back easily to him
He came home after school and went to bed in the afternoon
He knew he was causing a lot of tension
Between his mother and his stepfather
His stepfather didn't want him there
His stepfather used every opportunity that he could find
To let him know that he wasn't wanted there
He didn't have a job
His parents had to pay for his tuition and train fare
He was starting to be a drain on them and they let him know it
He decided to stop taking the tranquilizers
He was too depressed
He didn't need to take himself down any further
His mother made him go to a mental health clinic
At the University of Illinois at Chicago
His mother wanted him to get help for his obvious depression
He went to the clinic twice a week after school
He finished the semester
He was given a certificate for 1 year of computer programming training
He received letters of recommendation from the school
He had gotten the best grades in his class
He got another suit for christmas that year
The school lined him up for a couple of job interviews
He was the first one in his class to go out on interviews
It was his reward

For getting the best grades and being the best student
He heard that his previous classmates had to take accounting jobs
Nobody was getting hired as a computer programmer from the school
He went on his first interview
For a job at a company nearly 60 miles away from his parent's house
He spent 3 hours on public transportation getting to the place
He tried to play down his lack of transportation
To his prospective employers
He lied about what he had been doing in the years since highschool
He felt like a jerk in his corduroy christmas suit
He got a letter of rejection from the company
The letter was dated postmarked and sent the same day of the interview
He went on another interview
Some guy called the school looking for someone to do some computer work
He went downtown to Chicago and talked to the guy
He wasn't sure what the job involved
The only thing the guy wanted to know was what he wanted to be paid
He told the guy that he would work for 12 thousand dollars a year
The guy wrote it down and said that he had more people to interview
He spent the next 2 weeks sitting around his parent's house
He didn't know what he was going to do
His school didn't have anymore interviews
He was told that he blew the first interview by not being aggressive
He was given papers by his school
The papers stated that he would be an excellent candidate
For employment at their company
He was told by his school to give this letter to potential employers
The people that ran his school told him that they didn't trust him
To put forward and present his best qualities
He didn't know how he would pay off
The student loan that helped pay for his computer programmer schooling
He didn't even think about paying back his parents
For their contribution
He was at home alone on Easter Sunday when he got a call
It was the guy that he had interviewed with for the job downtown
The guy said he could have the job if he wanted it
The job was going to pay 1000 a month
He told the guy he would take the job and start in a week

A TICKET OUT

He held on to his life
 Like it was last year's sweepstakes ticket
 He already knew that he had lost
 He was holding on to the vestiged hope that there had been some mistake
 Maybe the past would unroll and re-reveal itself
 Separating him from a lifetime tangled with sadness and regret
 Maybe he could have another chance
 Maybe he could replay that losing number
 Maybe he could find out that he had the winning number afterall

He kept that ticket in the middle of some drawer
 Buried and wrapped in piles of other reminders
 That documented and recorded meaninglessness
 Rent receipts paycheck stubs and checking account statements
 That was all he had to show for years of his life
 A losing ticket
 Lodged somewhere in his paperwork
 It would take some time but he knew where to find it
 In case he ever needed it
 It would be there
 Until then it was indistinguishable
 Quietly languishing in the stacks of his garbage

He was supposed to be a manic-depressive
 At least that's what his family and girlfriend told him
 But outside of a manic episode in the summer of 1985
 And another manic flurry at the end of 1991
 He spent all of the years in between and afterwards being depressed

Everyday he told himself that things were changing and getting better
 Everyday he ended up wishing he was dead and that he could be over with
 He knew that if he had any will power at all
 That he would have been dead a long time ago
 Either by accident or acceleration of natural causes
 He didn't know how somebody so miserable could be spared
 From the life robbing accidents and misfortunes
 That were always happening
 To other people all of the time
 He wondered how much those people valued their life and their existence
 He wondered if the untimely demises were unhappy like himself
 He wondered if those people willed their tragic endings
 Rushing the forces of fate into the shape of unfortunate circumstance
 Or he wondered if they were innocently bystanding
 The cruel hoax and paradox
 Where the ones that want it the most are denied it
 And the ones that don't want it at all are stuck with it

He thought about suicide a lot
 That would have been easy

Or would it
 He tried to tell himself that suicide was the coward's way out
 He tried to believe that
 Facing the continual daily onslaught took strength
 He tried to convince himself that it would get easier
 As he got stronger
 He knew that he was forever tainted with a deep and festering optimism
 That would make him hang on for as long as he possibly could
 Despite all of the internal imagined agonies he endured and created
 He came to realize that he would die soon enough
 Life is short and fast
 Nobody is going to be forced to live forever
 Death is inevitable and it will find everybody
 So in the meantime
 He was going to try
 To ride life out
 And wait

The unmasked beauty in the smiling face of a woman
 Looking at him
 That was the only thing
 That could make him wish
 That he could be something
 That he was not

He didn't like to talk on the phone
 He felt empty in a room
 Hearing his voice getting lost into the receiver
 He quit calling people
 After a while
 People quit calling him
 He knows that the phone works because he gets a bill for it every month
 He still likes to pick it up once in a while
 To hear the sound of the dial tone
 Just to make sure that it really is working

He never had anything to say to anybody
 He withdrew from the habit of smalltalk
 He left people stranded in embarrassing unnaturally awkward silence
 Unless something was specifically asked of him
 He couldn't think of a thing to say
 His mind was a total blank
 He knew this bothered people
 It bothered him for a while too
 But he learned to live with it and eventually take it for granted
 He convinced himself
 That nobody really listens to anybody but themselves
 He believed that everybody talks only to themselves
 He didn't feel like hearing himself talk to himself
 He didn't feel like holding his mind up

With all of its fractures and scars
To somebody else's light for examination

He saw a television program about autism
The program said that autistics can only interact
When there is stimulation from outside of themselves
He started to worry that maybe he was getting autistic
He started making an effort at initiating small talk and conversation
The more he tried
The more he realized
The only reason he never talked was because
He didn't have a goddamned thing to say

He decided when he was 31
That he was going to try to learn how to write
He thought that would be the only way he would ever communicate
He was damaged and turned hopelessly into himself
He thought the writing would help him break out of his mind

He always had music refrain riff choruses running through his head
He started writing those down on scraps of paper
The more he wrote the more he heard
He was singing songs in his dreams
And writing them down when he woke up

He did this steadily for several years
He accumulated pages of the songs he heard in his head
But he couldn't play an instrument so the music stayed inside of him
Then one day he stopped hearing the music
He was left with a stack of shitty rhymes
A moron crypt to seal his isolated confusion
Because nobody else could hear the music either

She liked him at first
Because he made her laugh
She met him at the University of Illinois Hospital psych ward
He was having his 7th manic episode in 8 years
She was recovering from a botched suicide attempt
He stopped making her laugh when he got out of the hospital
She moved in with him a couple of years later
She used to think that he would change
Nothing changed in the 8 years after that
He never made her laugh
And she still wanted to die

HOW THE MIND WORKS

He woke himself up early
 On Saturday mornings
 To implore his thoughts
 To grasp for his soul
 To consider his essence
 To bring definition and form to his meaning
 To try to oblivate the resigning suspicion he had
 That there was no poetry in a man
 Who worked 8 hours a day for somebody else
 Before coming home to fight with a woman

He always wanted to be able to help people
 He liked to think that he would do anything for anybody
 If they ever asked him
 Nobody ever asked him
 But if they did ever ask him
 He would do it
 Anytime anywhere
 Without a question
 For nothing in return

He finally came to realize
 At the age of 35
 He couldn't do anything for anybody
 He wasn't even able to help himself

For years he rode the bus
 On the way home from work
 That sat parked on the tollway
 Next to the landing runways at O'Hare Airport
 In the chrome and asphalt glare
 Of rush hour homebounds and long weekend travelers
 His stomach cramped in a bloated roil of contentious dispute
 He sat patiently on that bus
 Full of 5 o'clock shadows and 13-hour-day already smells
 Watching the planes dive bomb the runways
 Lizard skinned silver bellies almost scraping the roof of the traffic
 The air searing and scraped with engine machine noise
 Wing span lights wavering out of the eastern distance
 Revealing the stack line of planes
 Steadying themselves to land next
 A mile apart coming in right behind
 Outside of the bus seat window view
 When the bus was moving in a direction opposite of that of an airplane
 The approaching plane appeared to be motionless
 A painted still dropped back against the sky
 Suspended forever above the houses below it

For years he had terrible nightmares
Of horrific airplane crashes
His subconscious recreated all of the archetypical air travel disasters
That he had experienced from a lifetime of television watching
He saw nose down spirals that disappeared
Into an explosion above the trees
He saw landings in the street that tore open large buildings
He saw the plough into the face of the mountain side
He saw the overhead explosion that rained down cascades of debris
He saw the burning wing smashed cockpit descents into obliteration
He saw the dead weight vertical elevator drop plummets
After he saw the crash he would run to the site to find the survivors
But he could never get there

He would finally wake up soaking and shaking in sweat
Unable to fall back asleep

LABELS

He was committed to a mental institution
 When he was 19 years old
 At the time
 He thought that his life was over
 He still thought that was true 16 years later
 Only then it didn't seem to matter

He was an acute paranoid schizophrenic in March 1979
 After he spent 9 months intensely abusing LSD
 And after he stayed awake for most of the previous winter

He was schizophrenic and believed to be permanently brain damaged
 In the late spring and early summer of 1980
 After he had been totally drunk for 7 months
 And after he had spent several months awake and living out of doors

He was a manic-depressive in 1981
 After being awake and living mostly outside during the spring
 Of that year

He was psychotic in the early summer of 1982
 After he had been awake for more than 8 weeks
 And after he hadn't taken any drugs for almost a month

He was a bi-polar disorder in the late summer and early fall of 1983
 After staying awake for a month
 And after sporadically living outside for several weeks

He was suffering from a manic episode in the summer of 1985
 After staying awake for a couple of weeks

He was in an escalated and agitated state at the end of 1991
 After he was unable to sleep for a week

Sometimes he could only see the inherent decay in things

He looked at trees
 In a wind washed ocean of leaves
 Summer green
 All he could see were black January branches
 Mottled with ice and abandoned

He looked at the highwayed suburbs
 Bristling with small business and franchised enterprise
 Driven convenience
 All he could see was faded asphalt fractured by an overgrowth of weeds
 Boarded windows lined by crumbling brick corroded frames
 Broken glass mosaics shining desertion

He looked at people that he didn't know
 Filled with the moment's spur and galloping energy
 Unaware vitalous pre-occupation
 All he could see were forms laced with old age and infirmity
 Weathered by a time that was still years away

Sometimes he looked at people and felt that they never would get old

Sometimes he looked at things
 And all he could see was the lost promise in their hopelessness

He looked at automobile salvage yards
 Twisted rusty metals spewing engine parts and worn interiors
 Inconsequential decay
 All he could see was a brand new car being driven by its first owner
 Handled with the respected deference
 Given to babies and cartons of eggs

He looked at out of business and for sale signs
 Advertising economic battles given to eventual failure and capital loss
 Inevitable disaster
 All he could see was the lifetime realization of somebody's dreams
 Aspirated with the lure of getting rich quick
 While working for one's self

He looked at people that he didn't care for
 Seemingly constructed of unbendable hatreds and self-serving greeds
 Uncertain motivation
 All he could see was the fresh-worlded innocence of their childhood
 Spirited with playful discovery in a world of lesser concerns

Sometimes he looked at people and saw them swathed in their infancy

Sometimes the seasons couldn't change fast enough for him

JOB IN THE SUBURBS

He left for work
 In the pre-dawn darkness
 Of a city succumbed in tired sleep
 To travel to his job in the suburbs

He made it a point to get himself out on the street before 6:00 a.m.
 He didn't have to get up and leave so early
 It didn't matter what time he showed up
 As long as stayed and worked for 8 hours after he got there

He used public transportation to get to his job
 He traveled with all of the forgotten people
 That had to wake themselves up and leave
 For work at that time of the morning
 Because they had to

He rode the el train with the young run-down black men
 Traveling from the south sides of Chicago
 To wander mindlessly through soul denying maintenance shifts
 Within the gray loading corridors of the airport industrial area
 Or within the warehouses of the stores in suburban shopping malls
 Pocketing half smoked cigarettes and visions
 Laughing off old boy and all the shit that he says
 Living for friday night paydays of reefers and booze

He rode on the train with the northwest side hispanics
 Unable refusing and pretending not to understand ingles
 Quiet dark brown indian eyes watching and learning the ways of america
 Dressed in a cast-off collection of outdated oddfitting clothing
 Numb with cold on the first winter day without coats jackets or gloves
 Traveling huddled in confused scrambled groups
 To assorted pick-up points
 Loaded into overcrowded rust spotted vans
 With drearily streaked greasy windows
 Dropped off at the back entrances off hotels and landscape details
 To work as aproned maids and backbending manual shovel stooped laborers
 Human elements unnoticed and unsaid
 In the cracks and around the edges of the great technological machine

He rode on the train with the northside polish ukranian slavs
 Just finished for the night or just starting for the day
 Middleaged escapen refugees
 Of torn eastern european bloc-nation descents
 Swabbing the toilet rimmed plastic underdesk trash can of corporate USA
 Breathing cough fumes into the red-eye industrial strength antiseptics
 Leaving their smells and their cabbage sweat in the empty office air
 Taking nothing but that which is unused unneeded set aside and unwanted
 Asking for expecting and receiving all that is less

He rode on a bus with college educated black women
 Reporting to timeclocked routines

Of monotonous telephone conversation copy machine duties
 Checked thoughts and deeply held breaths
 Catching sleep on the ride
 With heads quietly pillowed with a jacket against the window
 Worrying about children left alone by themselves at home
 Thinking about men who come in drunk at all odd hours of the night
 Wondering about men who don't bother to come home at all
 Knowing that there had to be a break or an end somewhere

He left for work in the pre-morning early waking Chicago darkness
 When white authority was still
 At home slow and asleep
 Nowhere to be seen

He worked and competed with people
 That had graduated from college
 He was considerably less educated
 He had completed a few college classes after highschool
 And he had taken 12 months to complete an 8 month training program
 At a bullshit technical school for computer programming
 That ran advertisements on the late night early morning television
 While most of the people he worked with were getting their education
 And never missing a meal
 He was dividing his time between being locked up in nut houses
 And living outside in the street

He worked in an office
 With people that said words
 With little fear or understanding of the reprised consequence
 That the idea expressed by those words might bring
 If those words had been said in the presence of the people
 Those words were meant to describe denigrate and deride

He was an anomaly
 In a company of more than 300 people
 He was one of the few people that lived and came to work from the city
 He refused to relocate himself
 To somewhere in the suburbs closer to his job
 He didn't own a car and was seen arriving and setting out on foot
 He skipped lunch worked a straight 8 hour shift and then left
 He never divulged any personal information about himself or his past
 He only talked to people
 If the conversation was specifically work related
 He quit cutting his hair and it grew down to his waist
 He never went to the company sponsored social gatherings
 He never hung out after work or went to the bar with his co-workers
 He missed 3 weeks of work because he had a nervous breakdown
 He came back to work after he had a nervous breakdown
 He went on after his breakdown like nothing had happened
 He was voted the Employee of the Month

After he came back to work from his breakdown
 He came to the office early
 Hours before most of the other people got there
 He played music on a cheap tape player
 All day long when he sat at his desk
 He used the music to block the sound and noise around him
 Allowing him to focus single mindedly on his computer programming work
 He spent 4 or 5 hours a day traveling back and forth to work
 He walked through the office like a zombie
 He avoided making eye contact with anybody
 He was an eyesore and an embarrassment when clients came to the office
 He never sat around with his boss and laughed at his jokes
 But he made goddamn sure he busted his ass everyday and did his job
 Because he didn't want to give his boss any reason to fire him

He was good at his job
 He was a computer programmer
 He could sit for hours and concentrate
 On the most boring and mundane of intricate details
 That would have left most other people screaming
 In a torture of agonies
 He developed that ability
 During the hundreds of hours he wasted
 Fried out of his mind and tripping on acid
 Trying to fathom and determine the secret mysteries of life
 He could have never believed that somebody would pay him to think

He was good at his job
 He learned how to force himself to think logically
 He had to continually think about all the possible things
 That can go wrong in any programmable situation
 And plan for it in advance
 He had to be paranoid and logical at the same time
 Every computer programmer he knew was paranoid to some degree
 If they weren't paranoid they were no damn good and didn't last
 He used to get locked up and loaded with tranquilizers
 For being paranoid
 Now it was almost like he was getting paid for it

He was the kind of employee that employers hire
 Because they have an assuming notion that he will fit in
 Be an acceptable cog in their little machine
 Because he looks like he acts and thinks
 Just like them
 So they let him get his foot inside of their door
 Only to find out that
 He has no intention of fitting in
 Or becoming part of them
 And he has no intention of leaving
 He just keeps showing up

Doing his job
Collecting his paycheck

COMMON LAWS

They had been living together for more than 8 years
 In the same one bedroom apartment
 They had watched the white painted walls fade from off-white to beige
 She still kept telling him that they had nothing in common

It was a match struck up in the darkness of hell
 Nobody wanted either of them
 And they didn't think that they wanted each other

She told him that living with him
 Was like living alone
 He didn't know what in the hell she was talking about
 He woke up and left the house at the same time every morning
 He came home at the same time every night
 He ate his dinner in front of the television and then passed out
 He showed up there every single day for years

The fighting and arguing
 That can go on
 Between two people
 In a relationship
 Sustained over a period of time
 Bothered him a lot
 Until he realized that
 Anybody that could live
 With somebody without
 Fighting and arguing half of the time
 Had to be either a liar a fake or a cheat

HE HAD HIS FIRST NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

He had his first nervous breakdown
 When he was 18 years old
 During a long good friday easter sunday weekend
 While he was a freshman student at Western Illinois University
 Where he had embarked on a serious course of self reinvention
 From an introverted quiet weirdo semi-friendless
 Withdrawn into himself type
 At odds and indifferent to his peers
 To an outgoing maniacally friendly social exhibitionist
 Fueled and whimmmed on by a constant blur of drunkenness
 Stranded and cast adrift for the first time from adult authority
 He cut himself loose and set out to exorcise the previous 18 years
 Of loneliness rejection and isolation

He started drinking as soon as he arrived at school
 He lived in a dorm on a floor with 90 other guys
 He sensed that they were all sinking slowly
 In the same leaky boat together
 People that couldn't really cut it back home from where they came from
 They left their towns and went hours away to a school
 Buried hundreds of miles deep
 In the downstate cornbelt region of Illinois
 Drinking was the fastest avenue of social opportunity
 Away from whatever they had all left behind
 In the drab of uneventfulness
 That swallowed them for dead in their hometowns

He wasn't a friday saturday night guzzle beer
 Get sick and pass out drinker
 He had drank and been drunk enough times during high school to know
 That now that he was on his own
 He wanted to be drunk all of the time
 He found himself living on a floor
 With 90 other guys that had the same interest
 It wasn't hard to find or start a party every day

He had worked construction and saved money
 For 9 months before school started
 He rationed his money
 On cut-rate sale beer and fifths of Southern Comfort
 He went out to the college town bars several nights a week
 He hit the bars crowded with women on weekends
 He was learning how to meet and pick-up young women
 Talking to women was the best part about getting drunk
 For a guy that went all through highschool
 Without a date or a girlfriend

Classes and studies were secondary to social life
 He slept on his desk through classes that had mandatory attendance
 He skipped classes that he wasn't required to show up for
 He stayed up all night the day before tests to study

He was able to maintain a B average with the minimum of effort

He liked staying up all night
He noticed that the more he pulled allnighters
The easier it became for him to not sleep and function
He started staying up all night
Even if there wasn't a test to study for

He started smoking pot after he had been there for a few months
He had never smoked pot all the time that he was in highschool
He soon realized that he liked smoking pot more than he liked drinking
The marijuana made him quiet and more relaxed
He had been naturally spaced and stoned acting as a teenager
The pot made it easier to arrive at this fundamental state
Being high sliced the edge off
Of the drunken chaotic frenzies he worked himself into
He stayed up all night or got up early to get stoned by himself
He still found immense enjoyment in his routine of alcohol social time
He also looked forward to the stoned down time when he could be alone
To just think

He was running out of money when he came home for christmas break
He worked at his old job during the 2 week break
To bolster his partying funds
He brought his new personality and habits back home with him
His old friends and acquaintances back home saw
The immediate change in him
They didn't know who he was anymore
And they weren't sure who he thought he was trying to be
He spent his break hanging out
Drinking and smoking with his old friends
He went back to school feeling like he had real friends back at home
As well as all of the new friends that he had down at school
He felt like 18 years of being isolated and outside of life
Had suddenly disappeared dissolved and left from him forever

He spent the rest of the winter and the start of the following spring
The way he had since the school year started
He got drunk everyday
He went to the bars almost nightly
He stayed up all night several nights a week
He chased after different women every night of the week
He showed up for tests and was able to pass with high grades
He smoked pot continuously from the time he woke until he went to sleep
When he even bothered to go to sleep at all

He was almost out of money again at spring break
He had to cut back on his pot smoking
He noticed he was depressed and tired when he wasn't able to get stoned
He was losing interest in the effects that alcohol had on him
He started thinking that things weren't so bad back home
He thought he could go back to his old job
Support an once of marijuana a week habit

Give up the drinking
And be happy

He crashed for 24 hours straight a couple of days
Before the spring break starting easter weekend
He spent the next couple of days in a stoned haze
He used the last of his money to buy a dime bag of seedy pot
He was supposed to be going home that weekend
He was broke and he had made no plans for a ride home
He woke up on good friday morning
He found that half the dorm had already cleared out
He realized that he had no way to get back home
He had no money for a train
And most of the people he knew were already gone
He smoked up the last of his dope the night before
A slight dread and slowly creeping panic swept about him that morning
He hadn't talked to his family for weeks
He knew they were probably wondering what was going on
And they were expecting him home that weekend
The dorm was almost empty by the early afternoon
He began to feel like he was trapped there
He started feeling like something bad was going to happen to him
If he stayed there
By early afternoon his mild morning panic had erupted
Into a life at risk terror
He ran out of his room and pulled the dormitory hallway fire alarm
He bolted down the stairway and out of the building
He ran through the campus like he was on fire escaping for his life
He ran out of there convinced that something terrible would happen
If he stayed
He ran through the streets of the small downstate Illinois college town
He kept running until he came to a fielded wooded area
He ran through the field like he was being chased
He was in a muddy swampy spring wet growth of weeds and bushes
Still dormant dry and dead leave twigged from the winter before
He was in the middle of a field soaking wet and shaking uncontrollably
He vomited burning bile and stomach acid puke
He crawled through the mud on his elbows and knees
He emptied his watery yellow green bowels into the cool spring mud
He didn't know what was happening to him
He was experiencing a terror and panic like he had never known before
He was convinced
That he prevented something terrible from happening to him
He crouched down in the water and mud over his ankles
He became more delusional and paranoid as the late afternoon darkened
Into the biting cold of the Macomb Illinois March nightfall
He started to think that maybe the world had ended
He sat in the field wet and shaking and thinking that
He was the only person that was left alive on the earth
He thought of everybody he knew and thought that they were dead
He sat in the dark soaking wet and frightened
He was convinced that the world had came to an abrupt and sudden end
He knew he had to stay awake that night if he was going to survive

He crouched down in the mud
He was wearing a t-shirt in the near freezing late winter spring night
It was the longest and most painful night of his life
He was convinced that everybody he knew was dead
He knew that his life was never going to be the same after this
He didn't know what was ahead for him
He was caked and matted with mud
Raw from the cold air wind on bare skin
He began to realize with the break of the day that
Maybe the world hadn't ended that night
He started to realize that he had panicked and freaked out
He started thinking about spending the rest of his life in that field
He was too embarrassed to go back to from wherever he came
He started walking through the field
He knew that the world hadn't really ended
He pushed through dry weeds and bushes cutting his face and arms
He came out of the field
Into an area of backyards and houses on streets
He saw a woman come out of her house in the early morning cold
He asked her if he could have a glass of water
He drank the water she gave him and staggered away from her house
He walked past houses until he came upon a newly built home
He knew it was a new house
There were manufacturer's stickers on the windows
He walked around to the back of the house
He smashed the glass on the back door
He reached in through the glass and opened the back door of the house
The house was brand new a smelled of fresh paint and linoleum glue
He found the wall thermostat
He turned the heat up as high as it would go
He pulled the vent covers off the heat ducts
He washed his arms in the hot air
He went upstairs to the bathroom and filled the bathtub with hot water
He sat in the bathtub and kept refilling it when the water got cold
He didn't know what had happened to him
He realized that he had freaked out
He was ashamed and embarrassed
He knew that his family was probably wondering what had happened to him
He sat in the tub all that day and night wondering
What was he going to do
He decided to leave the house the next morning and call his family
He called his mother collect and babbled incoherently into the phone
His mother said she that she would make the drive down there
Pick him up and bring him back home
He told his mother it was cold and snowing
He didn't have a coat
His mother told him to go and wait
At the police station in town
He walked to the police station and the cops were expecting him
He told them that he wanted to crash out while he waited
The cops told him he could sleep in one of the holding cells
He was led to a cell and fell asleep on the cot
He didn't say much to his mother during the 4 hour ride back home

It was kind of understood that he wasn't going back
To finish the school year

Nobody asked him what happened to him for those two days he was missing
And he never told anybody what had happened to him
The rumors were spreading among his family and friends
It was something to effect that somebody had drugged him
He knew that was bullshit
He went along with it because he was too ashamed to admit
That he had fucked up himself
He went back to the routine of his old friends
He returned to his old Joliet construction job
He bought a used International Harvester 4-wheel drive truck
To drive around town and back and forth to work in
He assumed the responsibility of an ounce bag of marijuana a week habit
He thought that whatever had happened to him was over and behind him
He didn't know that his odyssey through insanity had just begun

A DUNGEON OF DAYS

The only thing that was certain in his life
 Was his depression
 He always knew his way
 Around the bottom
 There was no time wasted
 In false hope
 He was free of the unreasonableness
 Rotting the soft insides of unfounded expectation
 There was nowhere else to fall
 When he was at his bottom
 There were no surprises
 When he was depressed
 Only the inescapable
 Fact of his reality

He stood on the corner
 Each night after work
 In all kinds of weather
 Waiting for a bus to take him
 The last two miles
 Of his trip to home

He stood on the corner
 Waiting for the bus
 At Milwaukee and Division
 And thought about the Chicago
 That corner was 40 years before
 Of Nelson Algren
 Russian european immigrant factory workers
 And gin mills with sawdust on the floor
 He watched the cars pile up at the intersections
 Behind the red lights
 Flying away with eyes
 Darting to the sides and into rear view mirrors
 Stomping accelerator pedals
 Pushing through the frays along the edge of the evening rush hour
 Trying to catch the end of the workday reward
 He watched the black charcoal gray exhaust fumes
 Rise above the choking traffic
 Settling into the grit of the sidewalks
 He looked at the people
 That lived in and around that neighborhood
 He wondered if they ever felt helpless and trapped

He stood on the corner
 Waiting for the bus
 That passed through
 The Cabrini Green Housing Project
 Where the cement square rusty mesh open hallway buildings

Made it look like a prison facility
 The lockdown entrances announcing metal detectors and security guards
 The smoke damaged outer walls advertising kitchen fires
 The boarded windows promising that these people won't be here for long
 He wondered how long it would be before
 This would all be taken over
 Torn down by the high finance developers
 He stayed on the bus while the people that lived there got off
 He wondered what it was like for the people that lived there
 To sit in their white washed cinder block walled rooms
 Looking out into night from their window view
 Staring into the wealth and opulence of Gold Coast Chicago
 Charging the sky with its bright lights and sounds
 The sounds and noises of money being spent
 Less than four blocks away

He stood on the corner
 Waiting for the bus
 Thinking about his girlfriend at home
 He wondered what she was doing
 He knew that she hated it when he came home
 His face full of the hatred he had for the world and his life
 He wondered how long it would take him that night
 To act like an asshole and say something stupid
 To get her aggravated and upset

He stood on the corner
 Waiting for the bus
 Not caring
 Almost wishing
 That the bus wouldn't show up at all

He listened to the evening television news
 Every night from the kitchen
 While he made his dinner
 He thought about all of the stories
 Of violence murder and suicide
 Night after night and day after day
 He was always left wondering
 Why it didn't happen more often

His delusion was a monumental epic
 It was the only variety of interest
 In his life
 He clung to it in survival
 Until its existence was smothered and nullified
 By the dull certainty
 Of his dungeon of days existence

Whenever he heard about somebody going berserk

Letting loose the furies of hell with automatic weapon insanity
Purging a lifetime of caustic frustration
In an end of all reason boilover binge of suicidal violence
He was thankful
That it hadn't been him doing it

He listened to people around him
Talking about the same thing
All day long
He thought that everybody must have went to sleep
At the same time the night before
And been infected by the same dream

THREE WEEK TURKEY DINNERS

Every Thanksgiving was the same with him
He woke up and loaded a stuffed 15 pound turkey into the oven
While his girlfriend
In keeping up with dysfunctional family holiday tradition
Half overdosed with sleeping medications in the morning
After staying up the whole night before
He spent the day by himself
Ladling butter drippings onto the back of the turkey
Boiling necks gizzards hearts and livers
Opening cans of yams and cranberries and turkey gravy
When the turkey was done
He carefully cut and tore all the meat away from the turkey bones
Then sat down with a plate full of the food
He put all of the leftovers into the refrigerator
He spent the next 3 weeks trying to eat everything before it spoiled
It was his way of showing that he had a lot to be thankful for

WINTER HEART

He liked to walk along Lake Michigan
 In the cold dark bitter January heart
 Of a bleak unforgiving Chicago winter day
 When the water was a slabrous surface
 Table topped floe of ice chunks
 Choked swollen
 Spread out along a liquid foundation
 Idling back and forth
 Crashing steadily
 Aimlessly against
 The small glacial ice range
 Formed where the water lapped its frozen tongue
 On the edge of the man made shore

He liked to walk along the lake
 In the grip of winter gray
 When all of the people and dead fish
 From the summer
 Were gone

He looked forward to the winter
 When the sharp air
 Froze the inner lining of his nose
 Then cut deep down into his lungs
 Letting him know that he was breathing

He looked forward to winter walks
 Head down in shoulder hunches
 When the blasting north wind
 Laced with icy dampness
 Slammed and sliced into his skin
 Leaving him raw and painfully numb

He liked being out in the cold
 Slowly surrounded
 Settled and wrapped with a chill
 That found its way through layers of outer wear
 To bones that brittled into chalk

He liked standing on cold corners
 Concentrating on toes
 While the blood in his feet dried
 Feeling drained into a quick coagulation
 Filling his stiff shoes with hard frozen bricks

He told himself
 That this was the difference between
 Being alive and
 Being dead

He liked walking through snowfalls
 Alone
 On a plodding weighty foot march trudge
 Into the screaming white sound
 Of snow landing
 On top of snow
 Falling through the creaking howl wail
 Of tree branches grown heavy
 From trunks that cracked
 With sighs from the first winter
 When neanderthal man wrapped and shod
 In bark and animal skins
 Noiselessly trampled paths
 Through the snowy density of northern european forests
 Breathing heavily
 Blind with amazement and wonder

His favorite time of year was winter
 When the ordinary routine of daily existence
 Was overwhelmed by the struggle
 Of life
 In combat with the elements
 Battling for survival
 With the harshness of a nature
 That was always ready to destroy it

This was the apex of his existence
 The rest of the year blanded in comparison

He liked coming in from the cold
 Out of the hawk wind
 Into the dry heat
 Face flushed
 With sudden blood
 Pouring into rubbery extremities
 Life reaffirming itself
 Relaxing the incessant brace
 That has borne itself once again
 Through the trial of pain
 To the safety of comfort

He woke up in the middle of a January
 Night sneaking through the crack
 Left deliberately in the window
 To beckon the clipper wind whistle
 Not knowing
 If he had to wake up in four hours
 Or in five minutes
 Knowing only
 That he could go back to sleep
 Forever

THE ONE MAN MARCH SOUNDTRACK TRIP A-POLITIKO BLUES

He took the day off of work
 He spent the evening before
 Filling a 100 minute cassette tape
 With all the songs
 That he thought had once meant something

He was going to walk across town
 From his apartment to the Democratic National Convention
 With a head full of ghosts
 Other people's memories

He was going to walk right up to where
 It was happening
 Five thousand delegates and fifteen thousand members of the media
 The keepers of the gate
 All in one place
 Getting ready to hand over the keys
 To the kingdom
 Letting a man assume a place in history
 Without the hint of a struggle

He wanted to fly into the face
 Of their machine
 Piss into their wind
 Slingshot a thought into their vicinity
 Let them know somehow
 That nothing of worth is gotten easily

He headed out in the early afternoon
 Armed with his walkman and 100 minute tape
 In a purple cloth crown royal bag
 He settled into his headphones
 Off to find Simon and Garfunkel's America

He headed south down LaSalle
 Past the Moody Bible Institute enclave
 Listening to Cisco Houston eulogize
 Woody Guthrie's deportees in the plane wreck at Los Gatos
 He thought about the season in the city
 Divinity students he always passed on that sidewalk
 He wanted to know what they were bringing back
 To the middle america christian heartland

He cut over to Wells Street
 Moved south through the nightlife district
 The planet hollywoods yawning unconcerned
 In the bright afternoon sun
 He listened to a still fresh green Bob Dylan
 Naively warning that a hard rain was going to fall
 He walked toward the Loop
 Listening to Dylan's echoing indictment

How the times were going to change
 He still wanted to believe that the first would be last

He made his way across the Chicago River bridge
 Into the downtown area
 The syrupy strings of the change Sam Cooke wanted to see
 Slowing his step in reflection
 Of a long ago battle he had never known or seen

He stomped into the high building cool shade
 Dripping sweat through the late lunch office worker throng
 Blasting Creedence Clearwater Revival's Fortunate Son
 Every look in his direction feeling like a cannon

He turned right on Madison headed due west
 Listening to Marvin Gaye sing his Inner City Blues
 He looked at the faces of the new black entrenched middle class
 He wanted to know if they were able to say yet
 This ain't living

He bounded past the edge of the Loop banking area
 Through the outside of the building cigarette breakers
 Ringing with the Stones' Street Fighting Man
 He was 37 years old
 He still wanted to know what a poor boy could do

He cleared the downtown
 He was alone
 The sidewalk wide open deserted before him
 Confused in the new median strip flower box armada flotilla
 The new west side enforced wrought iron code scam
 Millions of dollars fake fixup for the convention
 Light pole banner masts heralding Chicago '96
 He listened to a 1965 kazoo tooting Country Joe and the Fish
 Take 1 honing their fixing to die rag
 He laughed inside at the ridiculousness
 He imagined the flower boxes
 Sun dried board rot rusty nail split
 Dirt clodded glass shard median heaps
 All things in time

He crossed the Kennedy Expressway almost wincing
 The next overpass draped in abortion protest bunting
 Listening to the nearly cornball Graham Nash pleas
 To come to Chicago
 He half feared somebody was going to trot that dog out
 In this convention summer
 Forever wrecking into insignificance
 Let a man live his own life

He counted off the blocks west on Madison
 To the United Center
 Finishing the first side of the tape

With 10 minutes worth of MC5 rant rave
Angry white boys
Mad Like Eldridge Cleaver
He thought about kids
Being poisoned on the streets of their youth
Dying of heartattacks in their 40's

He was a few blocks away from the convention center
Tin soldiers and Nixon coming
Four dead in O-hi-o
He wondered how fast Neil Young was going that week
He listened to David Crosby screaming in the background
Trying to keep up with the rolling tape

He pushed on through the taxi cab staging area
Cabs parked idle in a line along the curb
The drivers waiting in animated bullshit session groups

He was stopped at the concrete dividers
Abruptly placed in the street and on the sidewalk
Manned by Chicago cops
Two blocks away from the convention hall
He wasn't going any further without a pass card
He stopped short of the walkway entrance
Listening to Bob Marley tell about Them Belly Full
He came all this way
He wasn't going to turn and go back yet

He stood off to the side of the entranceway
Listening to the Clash describe the Clampdown
He was going to stand right where he was at
In an almost defiant exhilaration
What could they do to him
Where they going to arrest him for just standing there
Was there a law against what he was thinking

He notched up the volume for Chuck D
Counting down to Armageddon
Then the Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos
He was standing at the media entrance to the convention
He watched the C-Span entertainment crews
People with shoulder held cameras and rolling carts of video equipment
Filed in and out of the armed entrance

He watched the old man on the sidewalk
With a small blue sandwich board announcing
A black friend to the middle class
Unsuccessfully trying to hand out leaflets
A green and black fatigued guy too young to be a vet
Wearing POW/MIA patches
Trying to pass off pamphlets
To the uninterested

Across the street in the empty protester designated parking lot
 A flag carrying republican looking clown with a handmade sign
 Covered in writing about Bonnie and Clyde in the White House
 Drew the attention of the roving camera men
 He stood off to the side invisible
 Watching unnoticed
 Unobtrusive
 Wondering if he looked like Lee Harvey Oswald

He stood stock still in his worn lopsided re-heeled steel toe boots
 Wearing the black levis he had worn at least 2 times a week
 Every week for the past eleven years
 Faded worn ripped at the knees
 His black tee shirt hanging wet on his shoulders
 Listening to Jackson Browne exuberantly proclaim
 In a middle of life awakening
 That he was made for America

He watched Andy Rooney the ancient
 Curmudgeon padding past him on the sidewalk
 In a goofball assortment of mismatched colors
 With cameraman and watermelon sized duct taped boom mike in tow
 Looking right through him from behind dark wraparound sunglasses
 Seeking the carrion convention edge characters
 While his energy dissipated to Paul Simon's American Tune

He finished off the forgotten Men at Work warning
 It's a Mistake
 Looking into the faces of those entering the convention
 Forcing them to turnaway
 He wanted to remember them
 In their finest hour

He felt his leg cramping behind his knee
 He turned the walkman up full blast
 For the Who's Won't Get Fooled Again
 This was his grand finale
 He hoped somebody would hear it pouring out of his headphones
 It was all he wanted to say
 If he could say anything

He turned his back to the convention center
 Headed towards downtown
 Listening to Find the Cost of Freedom
 He wondered why in the hell he even went down there
 He stood out there like a goddamned fool
 He didn't care who they elected
 He never voted in his life and he didn't see that changing

He took his 100 minute tape out of the walkman
 Put in Miles Davis Kind of Blue
 Started the walk home
 Pretending it was 1962

Thinking
So What

PAPER WALLS AND DOORS

He moved into the top floor corner apartment
With a woman in 1987

They re-signed the lease every year
No matter how much the rent was raised
He came up with the money

The building management didn't know how
To get them out of there

He always paid the rent on time
Usually a day early
Sliding the sealed check envelope
Under the building office door
When he was sure that nobody was around

He never said a word to the neighbors
He knew that most of them
Were going to be there for a year
In for the big bad mean cold hearted city adventure
On their way to the rest of their life in the suburbs
Why bother

Some wouldn't last the year
Leasebreakers that fly in the middle of the night
Sneaking off with their shit without paying what they owe

He didn't talk to the few either
That were still there
Year after year

He didn't think that it made sense
To change the rules
So far along into the game

He measured his neighbors
By the trash they left in the recycling containers

The weekend mountain of imported beer bottles
Would usually be involved
In some quickly thrown together half hatched sublet scheme
Before the year was up

The drained dripped dry down to the last drop hard alcohol bottles
Were the ones that made the fast nonhesitant scam
Threats taped fresh on the door looking for money
After the security deposit was lost to back rent

The ones that threw disgruntled newspapers
 All over the garbage room floor
 In a disappointed sloppy mess left for someone else to clean
 Were always gone at the end of the year's lease

His recyclable trash was the regular clatter of scraped empty tin
 Cat food tuna and vegetables
 The same number of canned goods every week
 The sign of not much left after the rent

He knew that people like him made neighbors glad
 That they were getting the hell
 Out of the goddamned city

He kept the apartment door propped open in the evenings
 While he microwave warmed cold plates of leftover dinner
 Letting the cat dart in out of the hallway
 Sniffing around for traces of where people had been
 Listening on anxious small mammal crouched haunches
 For the thrown bolt barricaded sound
 Of a door about to be opened

He always used the back alley entrance to the building
 Never coming in through the front
 Letting himself in with his security key card
 Almost like he was trying to avoid the doorman
 Almost like it was too much for him
 To have to look at the doorman and say something
 Beyond an inaudibly mumbled thanks

Sometimes the woman he lived with could be heard
 From inside of their apartment
 Yelling and screaming at him
 Carrying on about what a stupid selfish bastard he was
 Telling him that she hated his guts
 He never made a sound
 He was barely even there

Every couple of years he had the maintenance guys
 Fix small fist sized holes
 In the bedroom and bathroom doors

He always said it happened
 While he was moving furniture

THE PROMISE OF ANOTHER DAY

Two people grew up in different parts of the country
More than a thousand miles and 25 years
Between their lives

They somehow came together
In the receded withdrawal
Of 12 Step resulting madness
All of the senseless damage
Finding a reason
In their finding each other

Nothing was back sacrificed to chance
Nothing was mistaken
Everything they had done in their lives
Each forgotten insignificance
Had been leading them up to their meeting

They decided that
The disparately running course of their lives
Was meant to go forward as one
The logical conclusion of all
That was the sleeping mystery of their unshared past

They married and soon after had a daughter
The lives of their parents and grandparents
And their grandparent's grandparents
Stretched apart in time and circumstance
Had impossibly come together
Interwoven between them

All that had gone before was
An inevitably ordained procession
For this ultimate purpose
An eventual destiny
Strung through a labyrinthic web of unrelated events
Spreading itself evenly across the centuries
A bond forged before the earth began

The whole thing fell apart
While it was still fresh in the magic of beginning
Unraveling out of nowhere on a september 1996 monday
Late afternoon rain wet Georgia highway tragedy
The delicately threaded seams irreversibly revealed
Asundering forever the unworn fabric of their newfound life

A truck bore into the driver's side door of the car
While the man was driving their daughter home from the babysitter

Death was in a moment on impact
Leaving a surviving one and a half year old daughter
That will have no memory of her father

And a wife in her early thirties
That would have to find a way
To fill the instantaneous void of a blind existence
That was never meant to make any sense

THE CARDINAL JOSEPH BERNADIN/A CATHOLIC ELEGY

He passed by the red brick mansion
 At the end of the State Street Parkway
 Across from Lincoln Park
 On regular walks
 Through his neighborhood

He always knew it was the residence
 For the head of the whole Chicago Catholic Archdiocese

Somewhere in the vastness of the Vatican
 He imagined there was a property deed for the place

He was raised a catholic as a child
 He was five years old
 When his mother taught him The Our Father
 Every night over the course of a week
 His mother taught him to memorize
 A couple lines of the prayer
 Writing the lines on a sheet of paper
 Taped to the wall next to a plastic crucifix
 In his small bedroom
 On Prospero Drive in Glendora California

The words ran together unknown in his imagination
 Hallowedbethyname
 Thykingdomcome
 Thywillbedone

His mind fixed and set images
 Of daily bread and trespasses
 Winding them inseparably together
 He wanted to know what a sin was

His mother made him say the lines each night
 To make sure that he had remembered them
 He saw how happy she became
 When he was able to say the whole thing
 Straight through

He remembered how young his mother was then
 He looked back on it later
 As the last time that he ever did
 Anything that made her happy

His mother took him to church with her
 Sun hot slow 1964 california sundays
 While his father stayed at home
 With his two younger sisters

His mother gave him a quarter one sunday
 To drop into the collection pole basket
 He palmed the shiny coin
 Large and silver in his hand
 Before the start of the service

When the usher came around to collect
 His mother told him to put it in
 He held on tight to the coin
 He refused to let it go

The usher came around with the pole again
 Slid the basket down the aisle
 Stopping the basket in front of him
 Back to collect the unpaid debt

He looked at the man
 With the coin tight
 In his clenched childhood fist
 He refused to turn over the quarter

His mother took the quarter back from him
 After they left the church
 It seemed like he went to church
 Less often after that

He always saw squirrels
 Running claw feet along the bark
 Of the wide short tree
 In the front of the cardinal's house

He wondered why the squirrels stayed in the yard
 When there was a whole park
 Filled with trees
 Right across the street

His family drifted away from the church
 During the middle later 60's
 Always moving around
 Never in the same place for very long

Sundays were spent on long drives
 Out into the dry waste of the squatter shack desert
 To look at plots of undeveloped real estate
 To dream of a different life
 Up into the nearby mountains
 Stopping on the side of road
 For cliffs edge views of the canyons below

He was an unwilling passenger
 On a shiftless nomadic unsatisfied restless quest

Always in search of something better

He went to a catechism class
 For a while after school
 He was the little white bright shining star
 Among the mexican second grade children

He was taken to a religious seminar
 Where there were kids older than him
 Somewhere an hour away

He embarrassed the people that had taken him there
 By trying to answer all of the questions
 The seminarian put forth to the group
 In a childlike simplicity wonder
 His answer to every question was Jesus
 No further elaboration
 Just Jesus

He knew that he had done something wrong
 He wasn't sure what that it was
 He stopped going to the classes
 Soon after that

His mother's parents came out from Illinois to visit
 Their daughter's family in California
 While his grandparents were there
 He thought that he had seen
 In a moment of half dream wakefulness
 A woman in a flowing white gown
 Move across the darkness of his bedroom

His grandfather told him
 In the earnest superstition
 Cultivated over a lifetime
 Of believing in the saints
 And sunday morning hangover sermon penance
 It was a sign
 He was going to be a priest some day

He thought that priests were in possession
 Of a sacred secret knowledge
 Indoctrinated in the art of direct communication
 With Jesus Christ
 He considered the responsibility
 Associated with a power of that nature

He wanted his grandfather's sign to be real
 He wanted to be a priest
 Someday in the church
 Where they kept the Flying Nun

He went by the cardinal's house
During the low dark days of mid-decembers
Every year a nativity was set up on the lawn

A small scale open wood barn
Filled with straw and plastic figures
Re-imagining each year
The birth of the Christ

He studied the map of California
Dotted up its length with symbols
Each one representing a church
On the mission trail

The missions were spread roughly
26 miles apart
In pre-goldrush 1800's california
The length of a day's journey on foot

He wondered how long it would take him
To walk the entire trail
Stopping off at each mission
Just like one of the original spanish padres
Heat cloaked in black garments
Varnished wood silver chain crucifix bead pocket filled
Leading a pack of dry blanket dusty burros

He had visited several of the old mission churches
The cool dark earthen air of the adobe structures
Red wall flickering lit warm with offering candles
Spun him off lost into reverie

He found no end to the fascination
Everywhere he saw the physical signs
Of people that had been there
Hundreds of years before

He could feel their prayers and beliefs
This to him represented
All that was sacred and holy

Each time he walked by the State Street house
He wondered if the cardinal was at home

He looked quickly from the sidewalk
Into each of the windows

Sometimes seeing a lit lamp

Not knowing if anybody was there

In 1970 his mother decided
 During the spiritual crisis
 That may have been confronting her
 In the wake of divorce
 That all of her children were to make
 Their first Holy Communion

He went to classes with his two younger sisters
 All of the other kids were three years younger than him
 He went through with it because he had to
 He thought the whole thing was a joke

He worried about his first confession
 He didn't know how he was going to recount
 All of the things he had done
 That were bad

He thought that if he confessed everything
 The priest was going to throw the whole rosary at him

He finally settled on a silently rehearsed
 Brief nervous quickly muttered summation
 He had lied he had stolen and he had sworn
 He said his hail marys thinking he had been let off easy
 It was the last time that he went to confession

He had walked by the cardinal's house
 For a couple of years
 Before he noticed
 The rain gutters leading from the roof
 Were a light green color
 The color of rusting copper
 He wondered why nobody bothered to fix them

He was put into a catholic school
 For the seventh grade
 Queen of Apostles in Riverdale Illinois

His mother decided to put her three kids
 Into the same school where her sister's children went
 Her kids were going to be a part of the church
 Even though she was unable to as a divorced woman

He had already made friends in the public school
 He was sick of changing schools
 He had been to 6 different schools since first grade
 He had no choice in the matter

He was grabbed from behind by the hair
 Pulled into an office by a nun
 His first day at the catholic school
 He didn't know what the hell was going on

The nun was smaller than him
 Into her sixties built like a thin boy
 She was the principal of the school
 She told him he was to get a haircut
 He told her ok then left

He thought she was nuts
 It was the start of a year long war

He was a month in between jobs
 During the last spring month of 1989
 He mostly sat in his apartment
 Dealing himself thousands of hands of solitaire
 Waiting for the phone to ring

He went down the street in the late mornings
 To meet the woman he lived with for lunch

They sat on the steps of the Holy Name Cathedral
 Next door from the place she was working

While he waited on the church steps for his girlfriend
 Afraid and unsure of the future
 Not knowing what was to happen to them
 He kept thinking about the cardinal and his house
 He knew it was the church where the cardinal presided

He thought about that month
 After he had been back to work for a while
 He realized that it was probably going to be
 The most peaceful month he would have
 For the rest of his life

He was in trouble the first week of catholic school
 He had written a filthy note to a girl in his class
 That was built like an 18 year old woman
 He signed the name of the biggest dork in the class on it

When he was in the office with the old nun
 He didn't even deny that he did it
 He agreed to get his haircut
 In return his mother wouldn't have to know about the note

He got his hair cut that night

The next day his mother was called in
 The nun read the letter to his mother
 The old witch kept dwelling on the letter
 He almost thought she was enjoying it

He took the hell he caught at home
 Right back to the school the next day
 He got himself thrown out of class
 He thought the goddamned old bitch had double crossed him
 He was pissed off
 He had gotten his hair cut off for nothing

He spent the rest of his year at the catholic school
 In a constant state of disciplinary punishment

He disrupted the school church services
 Laughing and farting in the pews

When he was quiet in church
 He was taking apart the monthly missalettes
 Rearranging turning the pages upside down backward
 Then replacing the staples that held the books together

He took off his shoes during religion class
 Carefully wiping the dust from the bottoms of them
 On the black cloak of the priest walking the classroom aisle
 Leaving upside down crosses on his back

He had to pick up the convent and rectory trash
 There were always large grocery bag bottles
 Full of empty wine bottles
 More than could have been used in service
 He thought that the priests were a bunch of drunken winos

He went back to public school after the year
 He decided that he wanted no further dealings
 With the catholic church

He passed by the cardinal's house
 Thinking about the cardinal
 Unaware of the malignancy
 Slowing growing inside
 Fed on ascetic celibate breaths

He went to the church across from his house
 During highschool a couple of times
 When he was drunk
 With a friend who was a member of the parish

He thought it was a good laugh

He laughed so much in the back row
 The last time he went
 The usher smacked him with the collection basket
 Up against the side of his head

He got involved in his early 20's
 With a four square gospel church
 In the mountain town of Prescott Arizona

The fanatics there
 Lapsed and former catholics
 Referred to the catholic church as The Whore

He wondered what kind of church he was in
 There wasn't a crucifix
 Anywhere inside of the place

There was a small camera
 Mounted on the outside
 Wall of the cardinal's house
 Pointing down at the driveway
 And brick overhang front door porch

A view that could be had easily
 From any of house's large windows

He wondered what purpose the camera served
 The house was wide open exposed
 There were no gates or fences
 Anybody could have walked right up to the door

He didn't see the camera as security
 It was there keeping a record
 Documenting the mostly mundane

His religious reading led him
 To St. John of the Cross
 In his early thirties

He tried to understand the result of his past
 A past filled with insanity
 Mental ward hospitalizations
 Drug and alcohol abuses
 As the first of St. John's dark nights

The dark night of the senses
 That was rendering much of what he knew as life
 To meaninglessness

He wanted to know when it would end

When anything that good happened
 Wasn't to be followed by something
 That was worse than all that was worse before
 The up and downed guaranteed uncertainty existence
 Of an unmedicated manic-depressive

He contemplated St. John's second dark night
 The dark night of the soul
 When free of all of life's trapping
 One would be left alone
 With nothing

He wondered when he would be finally concealed
 Secure in his darkness

He heard about the cardinal's battle with cancer
 On the nightly news reports
 Along with the rest of the city

He remembered the small black plastic sign
 White lettering sticking out of the lawn
 In the front of the cardinal's house
 It said PRIVATE PROPERTY

He thought a lot about something he had read
 By Saint Augustine
 How could something be found
 Unless it was lost originally
 How could something have been lost
 Unless it already had been found
 How could something be found
 When it was always in one's possession

Nothing was ever lost
 Nor was it ever found
 It was always there

Saint Augustine found a god
 That had always been there
 Waiting

He prayed for the cardinal's recovery
 More or less
 As did a number of other people

He walked by the State Street house
 In the summer of the cardinal's remission
 Wondering how much longer
 The cardinal would be there

He passed by the cardinal's house
After it was announced
That the cancer had returned to the cardinal

The driveway was filled with cars
He knew that the cardinal was at home

He walked past Cardinal Joseph Bernadin's house
In the late October fall of crumbling leaves

He thought about the rituals of the catholic mass
The Eucharistic Feast
Through Him With Him In Him
The Mystery of Faith

He thought about a man
Looking out of the window
From the house at the end of State Street
Facing the southern edge of Lincoln Park
Looking at the trees
Frozen black empty stark against the end of december snow
Knowing it was the last winter
He would probably see

MENTAL CASE

He was institutionalized for the first time
When he was 19 years old
He was sentenced to spend no less than 90 days
At the state of Illinois psychiatric facility in Manteno
By a judge in the Will County courthouse
After he spent the weekend in the county jail
For missing a drunk driving court date several weeks before

He had went from his mother's home to downtown Chicago on a train
To watch a movie on a cold March saturday afternoon
He had been out of touch with reality for more than three months
That period had been filled with escapading insanity and energy
He wasn't sleeping and he was occasionally eating
He had been arrested for drunk driving
He had his new car stolen
He had lost his job
He had been arrested more than a dozen times
For the kinds of things where the cops let him go after a night in jail
He had taken two bus rides to Miami and walked around down there
With no money
He had pissed off and lost all of his friends
His family was sick of his bullshit and wanted no part of him
His mother saw that he was crazy and worried he'd end up dead
He was unsuccessfully trying to withdraw
From a year long drug and alcohol binge
He had been regularly abusing LSD mescaline and bootleg amphetamines
He had been smoking columbian marijuana hash opium and thai sticks
He had increased his drinking to the point
Where he started in the morning

Going to a movie seemed like a safe thing to do that Saturday
He left with enough money for the movie ticket and the train fare
He had enough money to get there and back
He went to see the movie version of Hair
He had been listening to the Broadway soundtrack album
Since he was a kid
He thought that the hippies had been a bunch of fakes and wimps
He wrote the words Sid Vicious with an ink pen
On the back of a tight fitting army jacket
He left the jacket in the theatre after the movie was over
He walked out into the cold still freezing early spring evening
In a t-shirt
He had been unable to feel the cold that winter
He often went without a coat
He went back to the train station and headed for home
He handed a pocketful of coins to the conductor on the train
For his fare
He was told by the conductor that he didn't have enough money
To buy a ticket back to the stop in the town where he lived
He was a dime short

He remembered the dime he had thoughtlessly and happily tossed
Into the dark noisy theater air
When a commercial was shown on the screen featuring a local radio dj
Making a joke about giving somebody a shiny new dime
He was told that he could buy a ticket to the stop before his town
There was seven miles of railroad track between the two train stations
A on the train woman offered to pay the extra dime he needed
For the ticket
The conductor told her no and refused to take it
He was put off the train at the stop before the one where he lived
He grabbed on to the side railings of the train when it took off
He jumped off the train when it suddenly stopped
After going a few hundred feet
He thought about walking the tracks back to his town
He decided to break into the locked station instead
A cop arrived after he tore off a window screen
The cop said that the train had called for him a half hour earlier
He was handcuffed after the cop ran his name over the radio
He had a warrant out for his arrest for missing a court date
He was taken to the Will County jail in Joliet 15 miles away
He was placed in a large lockup cell with some other men
He was yelling and screaming at the jail guards and corridor cops
He was climbing the cell bars and spitting on the floors and walls
Outside of the cell
He kept yelling that if he had to be in a cage
He was going to act like an animal
He stuffed a roll of toilet paper down into the toilet bowl pipe
He flushed the toilet
He watched the water flood over the sides of the bowl
He told the other people in the cell that if they had to shit
They were just going to have to hold on to it for a while
He took off the jail issue shirt he was given to wear
He ripped the shirt into shreds
He tied the sharded strips of his shirt around his waist like a belt
He was allowed to carry on like this for a couple of hours
He had been in this jail before
The cops knew he was a trouble maker
He was taken out of the holding cell and thrown into an isolation cell
He was put into the isolation cell naked
He spent the night and the next morning in the cell
Singing rock songs at the top of his lungs
He liked the way his voice sounded in the small concrete room
It was cold in the cell
There was nowhere to sit except on the toilet
He smeared his breakfast all over the cell walls
He tried to cover the small plexiglas window of the cell with food
The guards came in and smacked him around
When they saw what he was doing
It was sunday afternoon
He had to wait until the next day for court
He tried lying on his back on the cell floor
His tail bone hurt
It dug into the floor and it made him uncomfortable

He saw the deep scratch marks in the paint on the iron cell door
 He started thinking that people were put in here forever
 Never to be let out until they died
 The sunday afternoon dragged on into sunday night
 He was not given any lunch or dinner
 After what he did with his breakfast
 He was cold and uncomfortable naked on the cement floor
 He started banging his head against the floor
 Trying to find relief in the explosion of lights and colors
 That he saw each time his head pounded into the floor
 The monday morning jail guards kept looking in the small window at him
 Naked and sitting on the floor
 Like a captured animal
 He finally went up to the window and let loose
 In the loudest strongest and most powerful voice of his life
 He shouted that if he wasn't given a blanket to cover himself
 That he was going to kill everybody that worked in the jail
 That got the attention of the guards
 Six guards and a woman police officer stormed into the cell
 He stood before them naked
 He was ready for another round of sadistic beatings
 He stood there with the guards for several minutes not saying anything
 The guards had guns and clubs and handcuffs and shoes with heels
 He was told that he would be given a blanket
 If he agreed not to tear it up
 He sat with the blanket over his head until it was time to go to court
 He was given another set of jail clothes
 To wear when he was taken into court
 With the other prisoners
 He was handcuffed to a jail guard when he was brought into court
 He had been through this routine many times before
 In the course of just a few months
 He was convinced that he would be walking out of there free in an hour
 When his name was called he stood before the judge
 He was told that the court was committing him to a mental institution
 He was taken out of the court and into an area in the jail
 Where inmates talked to visitors
 On a phone with thick glass between them
 His mother was there waiting for him and she was crying
 He yelled and cussed into the phone and across the glass at her
 For having him put away
 He told her he never wanted to see her again
 He was taken back to the holding cell where he had spent the weekend
 He was put back into the cell naked with only a blanket
 While he waited to be taken to the mental institution
 He was hoping that he would get there in time for dinner
 Because he was getting hungry

He had heard about Manteno when he was a kid
 About ten years before
 His father was sitting in a drunken hung over stupor
 With a cigarette dangling from his mouth

Squinting his eyes as the smoke trailed up into them
 His father had recently been discharged from the VA hospital
 His father's mother was yelling at his father
 His father's mother kept asking his father
 If he wanted to go to Manteno

He kept thinking about this
 While he sat in the jail cell
 Waiting to be taken to Manteno

He was driven in a police truck
 From the Will County jail in Joliet
 To the state psychiatric institution in Manteno
 It still hadn't dawned on him where he was going

He thought a lot of things
 During the hour drive from Joliet down to Manteno
 He felt like he was being broken out of jail
 On some wild escape adventure in the night
 He thought that he had been the victim
 Of some sort of sinister renegade government
 That had taken over in place of the real government
 And that he was being rescued by the real government
 That had went underground and into hiding
 He thought that he had made some kind of breakthrough
 A psychic mental telepathic cosmic revelation
 Brought on by the large quantities of LSD and sleep deprivation
 And that he was being brought to place to be studied and tested
 He thought this was like the movie
 One flew over the cuckoo's nest
 And he was being sent to free and liberate
 The nuts that had been locked and withered away
 In Manteno for years
 He thought that this was some kind of initiation
 Into a mental-physical guerilla army
 That was one day going to do battle
 With the evil government
 That had silently taken the place of the real government
 He thought that he was involved in something important
 And he couldn't wait to find out what it was
 It still hadn't dawned on him
 That he was being sent to Manteno
 Because he was dangerously fucking crazy

When he arrived at Manteno
 The first thing they did was
 Take his clothes away
 He traded his t-shirt and levis in
 For an oversized pair of green checkered polyester pants
 And a brown acrylic shirt
 He wasn't given any underwear to wear under the pants

He told the guy that gave him the stuff that
 The pants were falling down and made his balls itch
 The guy told him to stop acting
 Like a punk popster

He arrived on the ward
 At evening medication time
 He saw all of the patients
 Lined up sheeplike
 To take their medication from the nurse
 The pills were swallowed down with kool-aid
 Poured from a stainless steel pitcher
 He started thinking about Guyana and Jim Jones
 He wondered if
 That was how the kool-aid was dispensed in Jonestown

He noticed the people on the ward
 A lot of them looked like foreigners
 Dark bearded arabic jewish
 Speaking in different languages
 To themselves
 He thought that maybe they were
 Smuggled-in newly arrived under the table immigrants
 That freaked out when they got to America
 That had to be locked up until they cooled out
 Until they got used to things in a strange country
 He started thinking that the whole place was a front
 For escaped russian dissidents
 That were waiting to be assimilated into American life
 He thought that these undernourished scraggily men
 Were recent gulag escapees
 Great intellectuals in the world wide struggle
 To take back life from those that had stolen and denied it
 And made it wrong
 He couldn't understand their soliloquies
 But their gestures hand waving restless pacing and quiet tones
 Made it sound like they were saying something important

He met some of the other people on the ward
 They all acted like they were glad to see him
 Or any new person
 The way people act
 When they haven't been around other people for a long time
 Then get all excited when somebody is suddenly there
 They talked to him like they had known him
 For a real long time
 He thought that it seemed like they had been expecting him

He was told that he would have to go to sleep

By the ward staff
 He was given a bed in the hallway
 All of the beds in the men's sleeping rooms were filled
 He told the staff not to worry or bother with getting him a bed
 He told the staff that he never slept
 He told the staff that he would be real quiet
 And not make any noise
 While the rest of the patients were sleeping
 Two uniformed security guards were summoned to the ward
 To hold his arms behind his back
 While the 250 pound night nurse stuck a needle
 Full of Phenobarbital
 Into the back of his ass

He was woken up at 6 o'clock in the morning
 When the morning staff turned on all of the lights
 To roust the patients from their beds
 All of the patients were supposed to get up and make their beds
 Then go into the day area of the ward
 The rooms with the beds where the people slept
 Where locked up during the day
 All of the patients went up to the front desk
 To get one of their cigarettes from behind then the desk
 Then they waited for one of the staff
 To screw the wall lighter into its socket
 Then they all stood in a line
 To light their cigarettes from the wall socket
 The patients were allowed to have 1 cigarette before breakfast
 Some of the patients didn't have any cigarettes behind the desk
 They picked up the cigarette butts off of the floor
 And relit them for what they were worth from the wall lighter
 Or they took the lit butt from somebody that was at the end
 Of the cigarette
 And took it the rest of the way down to the filter
 He had never smoked a cigarette before
 He didn't even know how to smoke a cigarette
 He was used to smoking pot from a bong
 Then holding the smoke down into his lungs
 Until his eyes flashed with light
 Before he would let it go
 He never saw the sense in wasting his time with tobacco smoke

He waited around for the two hours
 With the rest of the patients
 For the two hours
 Between the time when the patients were woken up
 Until they were able to have breakfast
 Most of the patients were quiet
 He was still dull from the shot
 That the nurse gave him the night before
 He was starting to get hungry

He thought that if they were going to lock him up like this
Then they would have to feed him

He walked in the line from the day room
To the cafeteria where the meals were served
He saw people lining up in front of the locked door
That separated the day room from the cafeteria
Long before it was opened up
They just stood in front of the door and waited
To eat
He made his way to the end of the food line
He walked past the food with a tray of plates
The staff filled the plates with the food
He noticed that the people that stood in front
Of the door to the cafeteria
Were already through with their food and leaving
When he sat down with his tray of breakfast
After he finished eating his breakfast
He was told to empty the food scraps from his tray
Into a plastic garbage can
Then he was told to empty the paper garbage from his tray
Into a metal trash can
He was convinced that the food
Being dumped into the plastic can
Was going to be served again at lunch time

He was told by several patients
That they were in the mafia
He had enough sense to know
That if they were really in the mafia
That they weren't supposed to be talking about it
He started to think that
The people that didn't claim to be in the mafia
Must be the ones that are really in the mafia

He was scheduled to see the doctor
His first morning there
He thought that he would go in and
Blow the doctors shit away with fast talk
And that he would get himself out of there
Because he would so overwhelm the doctor
With slick double talk and bullshit
That they would have to release him
Because he wasn't really crazy
And it would be obvious
The shot he was given the night before
Thickened his tongue and made it hard to talk
When he was being questioned by the doctor
He became frustrated because his mind seemed lucid to him
But his mouth and tongue were not coordinating

He had to make himself angry to get his point across
 To the doctor
 That he was not really crazy
 This was a mistake
 And he didn't have to be there
 The doctor told him that he was going to be given
 100 milligrams of Thorazine
 3 times a day

He was assigned a social worker
 After he talked to the doctor
 The social worker kept telling him
 To get his act together
 He kept thinking that meant
 He was supposed to get a band together
 And sing rock and roll songs

He had heard about Thorazine
 A few years earlier
 In a punk rock song
 That was on a Ramones record
 He thought it was kind of a joke
 That he was to be given Thorazine
 He thought that after all of the street drugs
 That he had abused himself with
 That there was nothing left
 That could cause him any harm

He had cut up the cover
 Of a Ramones record
 Then dumped the pieces of cardboard
 With song titles on them
 Now I Wanna Be a Good Boy
 Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment
 Glad To See You Go
 I Remember You
 Swallow Your Pride
 Commando
 On the judges bench
 Before walking out of the courtroom
 When he showed up for his drunk driving traffic ticket court date
 He thought that taking Thorazine was
 His personal punishment for this

He was given his first 100 milligram
 Orange brown M&M sized pill before lunch
 He bit into it and ground it into his teeth
 He still thought it was a joke

He found a rock 'n' roll magazine in the dayroom
 He tore the magazine open to a page with an article by a guy
 That was locked up in a mental hospital
 The guy in the article said he thought it was a joke
 But he found out the people at the hospital
 Were playing for keeps

He was served a moist lump of brown into gray multi-textured food
 At lunch time
 He asked the other patients at his table what it was
 He was told that it was bread pudding
 He was convinced that it was made up
 Of all of the left over food
 Thrown into the plastic garbage can
 During breakfast
 He decided it must be ok to eat
 Because everybody else was eating theirs

He found out that all of the patients
 Were on a behavior reward system
 Set up by the hospital staff
 The levels were
 Step One
 Step Two
 And Step Three
 The reward for each of the steps was
 A daily allotment of cigarettes
 He was told that he would be issued
 Three cigarettes a day
 Because he was on the lowest level
 Step One

He was given three cigarettes a day
 They were non-filter
 Packed as tight as lead in a pencil
 Manufactured supposedly by convicts
 Somewhere within the state of Illinois penal system
 He wondered what it was like to be in prison
 Making cigarettes for other inmates
 To smoke
 He thought maybe there was a secret con plan to put something
 In the tobacco
 So that people could smoke themselves stoned
 While they were doing their time
 He knew that anybody that wasn't a patient
 Or an inmate
 Would never have any business smoking these cigarettes
 Nobody would ever find out
 He went into the bathroom
 To see what was in the cigarettes

That made the other patients
 Beg borrow cajole each other the ashtrays and floor for them
 He smoked his three cigarettes like they were joints
 He held the smoke down until his eyes flashed
 All it did for him was give him a headache

He spent the first couple of days
 In the hospital
 Walking up and down the hallway
 From the bathroom to the dayroom
 He was convinced that there was a way to get stoned
 He tried smoking dried out chewing tobacco
 That somebody had given him
 He rolled up a rastaman joint cigar sized cigarettes
 On Bull Durham papers
 Made up of pipe tobacco he got
 From a guy that smoked a pipe
 He painted stripes of toothpaste
 On his state issue cigarettes
 Then smoked those like joints
 Nothing could give him that stoned feeling that he wanted
 He still didn't know how to smoke a cigarette
 He hotboxed them and held the smoke down in his lungs
 All it did for him was cause a mild headache and dizzy feeling
 Like he had been pounding his head against a brick wall

He paced up and down the ward hallway
 There was a drinking fountain at one end of the hall
 He would hear the drinking faucet refrigeration motor
 Kick in sometimes when he passed it while he was walking
 He was convinced that he was able to start the motor
 Inside of the drinking fountain
 With the thought power directed at the fountain
 From his mind
 He started to think that all of the machines
 That had been built by humans
 Were dead
 Only coming to life when human thought power desired it
 He believed that electricity only happened
 When there was a conscious force of will involved
 The electricity would only be real
 As long as somebody believed that it was
 He thought that if the whole world fell asleep
 At the same time
 Leaving nobody awake
 Then all of the electricity that powered the machines would stop
 Ceasing to exist
 He became convinced that if he didn't direct his thoughts
 At the drinking fountain
 That the refrigeration motor would never wake itself alive
 The drinking water would then turn rancid stale and dead

He then thought that the water fountain served water
 Because that is what the drinker expected to come out of it
 He thought that he could get the water fountain
 To serve him vodka if he went up to the fountain
 And said vodka
 Before taking a drink from it
 He spent the whole afternoon
 Walking up and down and drinking from the water fountain
 Each time he came to it
 Saying the word vodka
 Before taking each drink
 He started to feel altered
 Like he was getting drunk
 After doing this for a few hours
 He started talking loud and walking up and down the hall faster
 Until the staff had the nurse give him a shot
 Of Phenobarbital
 Along with his evening dosage of Thorazine
 To calm him down

He was kept on the ward
 The first week he was in the hospital
 Patients that were
 On Step One
 Were not given grounds privileges
 Or allowed to leave the ward

The ward was locked from the inside
 When patients were taken en masse
 On a group outing
 To somewhere else on the grounds
 They were lined up in front of the door
 The door was only unlocked
 When the staff and security
 Cleared the doorway of any patients
 That weren't allowed out on the grounds
 They were afraid that one of the patients would try to escape

He looked out of the narrow pane of glass
 On the door
 After all of the patients that had grounds privileges had left the ward
 He wondered how far he would get
 In the cold
 If he bolted past the guard and out onto the hospital grounds
 Without a coat
 He wondered if he could walk the 40 miles
 Back to his mother's house

He spent most of his time in the bathroom
 The staff never came into the bathroom

He would hang around and smoke
 Other patients would come in for a while
 Hang around and talk

There was a wooden bench by the shower stall
 Somebody was always curled up on it
 In a fetal position
 Pretending or trying to sleep

There were parallel sets of mirrors
 On the walls above the sinks
 And on the walls facing and to the sides of the sinks
 This caused an illusion
 Of an infinity of images
 From the mirrors reflecting back and forth
 Into and beyond each other
 Looking into the mirror
 He could catch the view of himself
 Being shot into the mirror behind him
 Bouncing off of the mirrors to the side of him
 Then casting itself back to the mirror in front of him
 The illusion went on and on
 Until he was able to see
 Hundreds of layered pictures of himself
 Looking into the mirror
 Spread all over the bathroom walls
 He thought that the arrangement of mirrors was some kind of a ploy
 To drive a person crazy
 If they weren't crazy already

He never went into the television room
 Where patients sat in chairs placed in front
 Of a color television set
 He didn't have the patience or attention span
 Or interest
 Required to sit in front of a television set

He had become convinced
 Months before
 When he was taking acid
 That the television was a two-way transmission
 That the people on the television news discussion programs
 And the people in commercials
 Were able to see and hear
 The people that were watching the programs
 He also thought that some movies
 Along with some situational setting series programs
 Were real life documentaries
 Taken down by hidden cameras
 And that the people that were in them had figured out
 That they were being secretly taped
 They were then given movie and television careers

To keep them quiet about what had been going on
 He thought that the people that were on the normal television channels
 Had access to a secret underground television network
 Featuring people that were spied on and recorded by the government
 He was convinced that there was something inside of the television
 That enabled it transmit like a two-way receiver
 He didn't trust the television
 He didn't know what was real
 On television
 Or what was the result of a script and acting

He sat down in front of the television
 On a sunday morning
 When most of the other patients had been taken to church
 In between the used car commercials
 An old low sci-fi program called One Step Beyond came on
 When the title to the show was flashed on the screen
 One word at a time
 It came out reading
 Beyond Step One
 He was the only one in the television room
 He was one of the few people left on the ward
 He was still on the lowest no privilege ward level
 Step One
 He was convinced that the show was being broadcast
 From somewhere else on the hospital grounds
 To remind him that he was on Step One

He had made a few friends on the ward
 That he talked to regularly
 It seemed like all of the other people
 On the ward
 Were there for a day
 Then they were gone the next day
 He couldn't keep track of the new people
 He never saw them arrive
 He never saw them leave
 He wondered what in the hell was going on
 That these people would be there for a day or so
 Then they would be gone and never seen again
 He wondered if they were escaping
 Or being let out in the middle of the night
 Or if they were stow away passengers
 On some kind of underground people railroad
 Checking in and hiding out
 Then going of their own free will and accord
 He thought that maybe fugitives from the government
 Like an on the lam Abbie Hoffman
 Would hide out lay low and cool out in places like this
 Under the nose and out of the eyes of the government
 Then leave in the secrecy of night

He began to think of some of the staff and patients
 As legitimate mental patients and health care workers
 That had no idea about was going on
 To keep up the mental hospital front
 While the rest of the staff and the patients
 Were part of some kind of underground network
 That was being operated in opposition
 To the evil forces
 Of a dark government
 That had secretly taken over the country
 He even thought that the government was suspicious
 About what might be going on
 So they infiltrated the hospital with their own
 Patients and staff
 Whenever a fellow patient started asking him questions
 About what he used to do or where he hung around
 He thought the patient was probably
 One of the government infiltrators
 He thought that every encounter with a patient
 Was a test
 From one of the sides or the other
 To find out how much he knew

He started feeling the effects of the Thorazine
 After he had been taking it
 For ten days
 He was getting noticeably more tired
 He had a hard time staying awake during the day
 He spent several days trying out different places
 On the ward
 Where he could comfortably lie down
 He found the chairs in the day room were the best places to lay
 Even if he couldn't sleep
 His body ached and was having a hard time moving
 There were only a few chairs in the day room
 The other patients would sleep in the chairs
 He noticed that the chairs were taken by the first people
 That had finished their food and left the cafeteria the fastest
 Once the chairs were taken
 Nobody in them would move until it was time for the next meal
 He started lining up by the cafeteria door
 Before breakfast lunch and dinner time
 He would get his food
 Eat real fast
 Then get back to the dayroom
 So that he could get a chair
 Before they were all taken
 He would lie in the chair sideways
 With his head on one of the arm rests
 While his legs and feet hung over
 The other arm rest
 He would remain inert like this for hours

Not sleeping
 Immobilized and numb

He withdrew into himself
 His manic energy and hyperactive paranoia
 Dulled and chemically stifled
 The stiffness spread through his body
 Until he found himself unable to talk
 His jaw felt like it was wired and clamped shut
 He found it becoming more difficult to move
 The staff laughed at him when he tried to talk
 The words fell from his mouth garbled and unintelligible
 His belly bloated and distended
 He hadn't had a bowel movement in two weeks
 He was eating three full meals a day
 Then lulling through days of relative inactivity
 The oversized pants he had been given
 When he first came onto the ward
 Were now becoming tight
 His abdomen swelled with constipated heavy meals
 His 3 times a day 100 milligram Thorazine treatment
 Was regularly being supplemented
 By shots of Phenobarbital
 Whenever he did something that angered the staff

He felt all of the months of manic energy
 Drain from him
 Leaving him an empty and worn battered shell
 He was convinced that the people in the hospital
 Were trying to destroy him
 Cutting him off from the psychic power source trip
 That he had accidentally tapped into

He lost interest in his delusions
 As he became physically and mentally engulfed in depression
 The feeling of selfpower and control
 That he had been experiencing was gone
 He realized that he had been to an unknown place in his mind
 A chemically induced transformation
 That he would never be able to create again
 He started thinking that
 The rest of his life
 Would be a walking death
 Spent thinking about not wanting to live

He was given a shot of muscle relaxers
 To counter-effect the stiffness
 Caused by the Thorazine
 He was given the shot before bedtime and told

To lay down go to sleep and let it take effect
 He fell asleep and woke up an hour later
 He was stoned out of his mind
 He felt like he was floating on a cloud
 He got up and started walking around the ward
 He didn't want to waste a high like that by sleeping
 He was told repeatedly by the staff to go back to his bed
 The nurse that gave him
 The shot of muscle relaxers
 Started screaming and yelling at him
 That she wasn't going to support his habit
 She said it was the last shot
 Of muscle relaxers
 That he was going to get
 For acting like that
 He didn't know what the nurse was yelling about
 The nurse kept screaming that he had been faking
 His inability to talk or move
 For two weeks
 He was given a shot of Phenobarbital
 And sent back to his bed

He felt the depression set in
 As the mania subsided and receded
 He became quiet
 He spent most of his days laying in one of chairs
 That were in the dayroom
 He wasn't able to sleep
 He would lie in the chair
 With his eyes closed like he was sleeping
 He would just think about everything that had happened to him
 In his whole life
 He was convinced that his life had ended
 He could only look back
 Over all that had once been
 With a longing to go back there again
 In the safety and security of the past
 He could not imagine or see a future
 For himself
 Suicide went in his mind
 From being a consideration and an alternative
 To the only possible course of future action
 When he wasn't thinking of his past
 He was thinking about how to kill himself

He was allowed to leave the ward
 During the third week of his hospitalization
 He found that the grounds of the hospital
 Were self-contained self-sustaining
 Townlike
 He went to a barber shop

For a hot towel straight razor shave
 He went to a gymnasium
 To bounce a basketball and shoot free throws
 He went to an activities building
 With a drum kit set up in a small sound proof room
 He pounded and rolled the drums
 For a half hour
 Until his arms shook spasmodically
 He quit playing after he broke the drumsticks
 He went to the gymnasium to see a movie
 With Sylvester Stallone called F.I.S.T.
 He only watched the actor's hands during the movie
 He was in no condition to follow the plot or the dialogue
 Of a two and a half hour movie
 He went to a store with a guy
 To buy real cigarettes
 For another patient that was unable to leave the ward
 He saw dozens of buildings that housed other patients
 He went to a dance in the gymnasium
 Where he saw patients from the other wards
 That had been living in the hospital
 For over 10 years
 He saw women going into the bushes with men
 To have sex
 In exchange for cigarettes and junk food
 They called it push push in the bush
 He thought that there was a reason
 For all of the things that he did and saw
 When he went off of the ward
 He just wasn't sure
 What the reason was

He had visitors come out and see him
 While he was in the hospital
 His mother and the guy she was seeing
 Came out to the hospital
 To visit him for a few minutes
 And see how he was doing
 Two of his younger cousins came out once
 To bring him cans of pop and candy bars
 And to see how he was doing

The visiting area was in the hallway
 That separated the dayroom from the cafeteria
 There were chairs set up in the hallway
 For the patients and their visitors
 When the visitors wanted to leave
 The visitors had to wait in the hallway
 Until the staff unlocked the door and
 Let them back onto the ward
 Then the visitors had to wait
 Until the staff unlocked the front door and

Let them leave the ward

He noticed that most of the patients
Never had any visitors at all

His mother brought him a pair of his pants
From home
For him to wear
After he had been in the hospital
For a couple of weeks
He noticed that the legs of the pants
Fit real tight
And he was unable to zip them up and button them
He noticed his stomach was all swelled out and bloated

He was told by his mother
That his stolen car had been found
On a police car impound lot
There was a couple thousand dollars of exterior damage
Done to the car
His stereo system and cassettes were gone
His mother said that the glove box wasn't
Tampered with
His mother said she unlocked the glove box
There was one hundred twenty dollars and
An envelope full of pot
In the glove box
His mother said she was afraid she was going
To be arrested
When she smuggled the pot out of the police garage
In a rolled up newspaper
His mother said she flushed the dope down the toilet
When she got home
She didn't say what she did with the one hundred and twenty dollars

When his car was stolen
He had hoped that it would never turn up at all
He wanted the insurance to pay it off
He knew that he wouldn't be able to drive it legally anymore
His driver's license had been suspended for three months
For flunking the breathalyzer test
When he was arrested for drunk driving
Then his driver's license was sure to be revoked
When he went back to his drunk driving ticket hearing
That had been rescheduled to take place in the summer
He had bought the car 6 months earlier
He still owed about three years worth of payments on it
He wondered why the goddamned thing had to turn up now
He was convinced that the police had stolen it from him
In the first place
He was out getting drunk at a bar in Joliet after work

A few nights after he had been arrested for drunk driving
 He bought an ounce of dope earlier that day
 He would drink a couple Heinekens in the bar
 Then go out to his car to listen to music and smoke the pot
 He remembered doing this several times
 That night
 Then he remembered nothing
 He thought that he must have blacked out somewhere
 He woke up and found himself
 In the back of a police car
 The police drove up to his car in the parking lot and asked him
 If that was his car
 He told the cop that it was his car
 Then he was taken to jail for the night
 The cops told him that he had been arrested
 At an old people's home
 Down the street from the bar where he had been drinking
 The cops said that he was trying to get inside
 Of the old people's home
 He didn't know what happened
 During the missing 4 hours
 From the time he remembered being in the bar
 To the time he found himself
 In the back of the squad car
 He went back to the parking lot the next day
 After he got out of jail
 With his mother
 To pick up his car from where he had left it
 The night before
 The car was gone
 He reported it stolen
 He was glad to be out from under the responsibility
 Of having to make payments on the car
 For the next three years

His mother told him that the car was going to be fixed
 He had damaged some of the car himself
 Before it had turned up stolen
 He was told that this damage was to be blamed on the thieves
 It was to be fixed also
 He started worrying about how he would make the payments
 On a car that he wouldn't even be able to drive
 He didn't know how he was going to be able to work
 While he was immobilized and lobotomized on Thorazine
 He could only envision impossibilities
 He became more depressed
 He saw suicide as the only way out of this whole mess

He decided that he had to escape from the hospital
 If he was going to survive
 He thought that if he could get off of the hospital grounds
 He could call home and have his mother pick him up

He was convinced that the doctor was trying to kill him
 With medication and inactivity
 He left the ward on a ground's pass
 On a saturday afternoon
 He saw a large track of plowed up corn rows
 Next to the hospital administration building
 On the other side of the field was a road
 He thought that if he could get to the road
 He would be home free
 He started running across the field
 His feet sunk deep in the wet spring mud
 He was quickly out of breath
 His legs tired and felt like they were dripping with lead
 He was determined to escape from the hospital
 He found himself in the middle of the field
 He felt like he had been running for hours
 He knew that he had to push himself
 To the other side of the field
 He saw a house on the road
 At the edge of the field
 He decided to go to the house and ask to use the phone
 He would tell the people at the house that it was
 A life and death situation
 The hospital was trying to kill him and
 He had to get away from there
 He pushed himself onwards
 Forever
 Through the muddy troughs and rows of dried dead corn stalks
 He saw a man and his daughter come out of the house
 They watched him struggle to run towards them
 He saw a station wagon with state of Illinois insignias on the door
 Pull into the driveway of the house
 The man and his daughter and the station wagon driver
 Watched him struggle to free himself from the grips of the muddy field
 He knew the car was waiting to take him back
 To the hospital
 He wanted to get through the field
 He wanted to prove to himself that he had some willpower
 Left somewhere inside of him
 He staggered out of the field
 Onto the gravel driveway where the station wagon was parked
 He was out of breath panting triumphant
 The man and his daughter watched as he was handcuffed
 And driven back to the hospital grounds
 The guy driving him back to the ward didn't say anything to him
 He expected to be punished when he was brought back to the ward
 He was surprised when nothing happened to him
 He spent the rest of the afternoon
 Tracking the mud on his shoes and his clothes
 All over the ward

He was told that he was going to be allowed to leave

The hospital
 By the social worker assigned to his case
 He had to have his mother come in for a meeting
 Before he would be allowed to leave
 His mother came in for the meeting
 It was agreed that he could come home
 If he agreed to continue taking his Thorazine
 Three times a day
 He promised that he would take his Thorazine
 He promised not to cause any more trouble or problems
 His mother came out to bring him home the night
 He was scheduled to be released
 He had been in the hospital for 30 days
 He thought he was supposed to stay for 90 days
 He was glad to be getting out of there
 He was told when it was time for him to leave
 That he wouldn't be able to go
 Because the doctor hadn't signed the form
 That allowed him to be released
 He stood up at the front desk
 With a paper sack full of his belongings
 While his mother yelled at the staff workers
 He was convinced that he wasn't going to be able to leave
 After an hour of uncertainty
 He was allowed to leave the hospital
 He was given a jar of 100
 One hundred milligram Thorazine pills
 A month's supply of medication
 He promised his mother that he would take his medication

He spent the first few days at home
 Alone
 While his mother went to work
 He spent the first couple of days
 Nervously pacing from one end of the house
 To the other
 He had put on 35 pounds
 While he was in the hospital
 He thought he could burn some of that off
 By walking up and down in the house
 When nobody was there
 He took his Thorazine
 Like he was supposed to
 He went to bed early each night
 Like he did while he was in the hospital
 His thoughts centered around suicide
 He could see no way of possibly going on with life
 He had lost his friends
 He had lost his job
 He had lost his car
 He had lost his drivers license
 He had lost his self respect

He had lost his mind

He celebrated his first friday night at home
After being released from the hospital
He took 500 milligrams of Thorazine
Then drank a six pack of beer
He passed out immediately
He woke up 14 hours later
His head and his body ached
He was half paralyzed and
Barely able to move
He decided that
That was the last time
That he was ever going to
Take Thorazine again

BRAIN DAMAGE

He promised himself
 After his first mental patient hospitalization
 That it would be
 The last time
 That he would ever be locked up
 Like that again

He didn't know
 When he made that promise
 To himself
 That he would be
 In a mental hospital again
 A little less than a year
 Later

He returned to his mother's home
 After being released
 From the state of Illinois
 Mental health facility in Manteno

He was to live in his mother's home
 Under the terms of an agreement
 That he would continue
 To take 100 milligrams of Thorazine
 Three times daily
 As prescribed by his doctor

The doctor and the people at the hospital
 Told him and his mother
 That he could never stop taking
 His medication
 Or else he would go crazy
 Again they said

He stopped taking the Thorazine
 A few days after he got home
 He told his mother that it made him feel
 Tired and sluggish
 He didn't tell his mother
 That it made him want to kill himself

It was agreed that he could skip his medication
 As long as he was able to sleep
 At night

He had no problem sleeping
 He had the house to himself all day
 While his mother went to work

He would wake up late
 In the morning
 He would go directly from his bed
 To the couch downstairs in the living room

He would lie on the couch
 All afternoon
 Watching television with one eye
 Falling asleep
 Drifting in and out of consciousness
 Semi-catatonic in a bereft of hope lethargy
 Swallowed up in a lingering confusion of despairs
 Wanting to die
 Absorbed in considerations of the effort that it would require
 To accomplish that escape

He would sit in a chair and watch television
 When his mother got home from work
 He went back upstairs
 To bed around 8 o'clock
 Just like he did when he was in the hospital

He found relief in thinking about suicide
 Before he plunged back into sleep
 He thought that dying was the only way
 Out of the living daytime nightmare darkness of hell
 That he had crawled into

It felt good to him
 To know that he had an out

He spent the first month out of the hospital
 Laying around the house
 Thinking about suicide
 And sleeping

His mother started nagging at him
 He was acting like a zombie
 He never talked
 He never went out
 He didn't see anybody
 And he didn't do anything

He didn't know what the problem was
 He was sleeping at night
 He was quiet
 He wasn't causing any trouble
 He didn't know what anybody expected
 Out of him
 Beyond that

He was still bloated
 After a month of being
 Out of the hospital

He had hung 35 extra pounds on
 His five and a half foot 120 pound frame
 While he was in the hospital
 He had never weighed that much before
 He felt like he was in a different body
 His movements were oafish and clumsy
 His muscle tone had sallowed into a watery fat
 His clothes were too small
 Too tight

He knew the weight was making him feel
 Even worse about himself
 He thought that the weight was the reason
 For his depressional suicide thoughts
 His whole physiology had been slowed
 Buttered into a living shallow breathing grist
 Dulled and retarded

He spent his days on the couch
 Thinking about his father
 Thinking about how he had seen
 His father lay on the very same couch
 For 4 years
 After his mother let his father
 Move back into the house
 Even though they had divorced
 Several years earlier

His father spent most of his time on the couch
 There was a flattened sag in the cushions
 From where his father had been
 For all of those years

His father got a check
 Every month from the VA
 A couple of days were spent getting drunk
 Then the rest of the month was waiting
 On the couch
 For the next check

For his father
 This was better than living
 In a small room at the YMCA

He never wanted to be like his father
 He was always ashamed and embarrassed
 Of his father

He never knew what to say when
People asked him what his father did

His father was a raging maniac
He wondered how his father was able
To contain the violence of his rages
Screaming and swearing
Abandoning self-control and reason
Teetering vertically on the staggered brink
Of the constant threat of an explosion

He always thought that he would
Turn out better than his old man
That he would never
Go crazy like his father did

He started to think that his insanity was inevitable
He was relieved in a way
That he had cracked up early
When nothing was on the line
Instead of going nuts like his father did
In the middle of a life
With three kids
A lousy job on the night shift
A mortgage
And a wife who couldn't stand him

He was afraid to go out of the house
For the first month that he was home
He kept thinking that
Everybody in the small town
That he lived in knew
That he had gone out of his fucking mind
A lot of people had seen him losing his mind
Gradually
Steadily increasing in acceleration and degree
During the months of insanity
That led up to his hospitalization
He knew that gossip ran in tight fast circles
Around the bored slow knots of a small town
He kept worrying that if anybody saw him
They would be thinking to themselves
There was that guy that went crazy

He wondered how somebody could have the courage
To be the village screwball idiot nut
Without worrying about what
Other people thought and said

He decided that he had to get away
He wanted to run from where he was at

As fast as he was able
 Never look back
 Forget about all that had gone before
 Pick up from whatever remaining pieces
 Those which hadn't been permanently scattered
 Four directions and all other ways
 Into the wind
 And get on somehow
 With his life

He wrote a letter to his grandmother in Texas
 His grandmother and her husband ran a fence company
 He had gone down to Texas and worked
 For them before
 During the summer before his last half year of highschool
 Then for 6 months after he finished highschool

He wanted to go down there and work
 In the hot unforgiving humidity of the north Texas summer sun
 The way he did before
 He had taken drugs and gone crazy

His grandmother said that he could
 Come back down there to live with them
 And work for them

He was glad for the escape
 In his mind
 It was almost as good as committing suicide

He rode the bus from downtown Chicago
 To Texas
 He worried that the family stories
 About his drug abuse and subsequent crack-up
 Had found their way down to Texas
 To his grandmother and her husband
 He wondered what they had heard about him

He wasn't the highschool kid
 That had been down there 2 years earlier
 He didn't know who he was
 And he didn't know
 Who they were expecting

He remembered the Texas routine
 There was nothing to do
 But work
 After the work
 He would be too tired to want to do anything else

He was looking forward to this
 He wanted to lose himself
 In the exhaustion of labor
 And the collapses of well deserved sleep
 After the work was over

He wanted to go somewhere
 Where he could pretend
 That the things
 That had happened to him
 Had never happened

He was 10 years old
 When his grandfather died

His grandfather drove a truck for a living
 His grandfather squirreled and stashed away his money
 For years
 His grandfather spent his whole life working
 For his retirement and the good life
 That would start when he was 57
 His grandfather used to say
 57 and out

His grandfather was a few months away
 From his planned retirement
 On a cool October friday night

His grandfather drank 2 bottles of vodka that night
 His grandmother wound up in the hospital
 With knife wounds on her chest and arms
 His grandfather turned blue on the hardwood floor
 Dead from an overdose on alcohol

After his grandfather died
 His grandmother spent several years
 In the drunken chaotic throes of remorseful grieving
 The sleepless middle of the night pitiless insanity
 Waking up screaming from continual nightmares

His grandmother had barely put a dent
 Into the money that his grandfather had left behind him
 When she got remarried
 To a man that was 10 years younger than her

His grandmother's daughters hated
 Her new husband
 They all thought that he was a gigolo
 After their father's money

His grandmother and her husband squandered
 Most of his grandfather's money
 In a couple of years
 They decided to take what was left
 Sell everything and go
 Down to Texas
 To operate a fence installation company
 With his grandmother's husband's brother

His grandmother's daughters were upset
 That all of the money was pissed away
 They didn't get any of it

He always liked his grandmother's husband
 His grandmother's husband was an alcoholic
 Just like his grandfather

His grandmother's husband had been in prison
 For 10 years
 Sitting out a stretch for armed robbery
 For his grandmother's husband
 Stealing lying and cheating were practicalities
 Facts of life and sometimes necessary
 For survival

His grandmother's husband was in his 50's
 When he first went down to work for them
 In the summer before his last year of highschool
 His grandmother's husband could work
 Harder and longer
 Than young men in their early 20's
 Digging fence post holes with an iron pinch bar through white rock
 Mixing and pushing wheel barrows full of concrete
 Carrying 50 foot rolls of chain link fence on his shoulder
 His grandmother's husband taught him how to work

He found out how out of shape he was
 The first day at work
 After going back down to his grandmother's in Texas

He had a hard time moving
 He had an overwhelming propensity to just stand
 Still and not move
 To withdraw into himself and his thoughts
 His body was a sunburned sore muscled blister
 After the first couple of days
 He was catatonic and non-responsive
 Only grunting out labored yeahs and semi-audible nos
 When drawn into mumbling conversation

He was swelling with a panic dread fear

Thinking that everybody working at the fence company
 Knew that he was insane
 He spent the first week frozen
 Petrified in flushing anxiety
 He tightened up into an internal balled fist of tension
 His whole being locked in a self-protective clenching defense
 He couldn't even crap for the first week

He went out after work
 At the end of his first week
 With some of the guys that he worked with

He spent his first friday night in somebody's trailer
 Pounding down beers and listening to music
 Not saying much more than a couple of words
 He got up from his chair after 3 hours of drinking
 To throw up in the bathroom toilet
 The vomit erupted from his belly
 Before he could get to the bathroom
 Exploding through the fingers of the hand that covered his mouth
 Spraying all over the walls of the trailer

He soon settled into a routine
 After he got through his first week in Texas
 He spent the week days working
 He went home after work to eat dinner and then pass out
 On friday night he went after work
 With his grandmother's husband
 To a nearby county that sold alcohol
 They loaded the truck with 4 or 5 cases of the cheapest beer
 That was on sale

He started drinking the beer on friday night
 With his grandmother and her husband
 He paid for half of the beer and was entitled to half of it
 He wasn't able to keep up with his grandmother and her husband
 They were professional drinkers
 They had been doing this regularly for nearly 40 years
 His grandmother and her husband drank late into friday nights
 After he fell asleep in a dead drop drunk
 Then they all started up again on saturday morning
 After they woke up
 Then kept at it through saturday night
 The beer was usually gone by sunday morning
 Sometimes they all loaded into the truck
 For the 30 mile ride to the dry county's border
 To get a couple of more cases for sunday afternoon
 And after work on monday

He went out on weekends sometimes
 With the guys that he worked with

To drink beer and smoke pot

He had been afraid to start smoking pot again
But he found he had no willpower
To refuse
The first time somebody offered him a lit joint

He didn't enjoy getting stoned
He withdrew further into himself
Then became nervous and paranoid
As he noticed the alteration the marijuana had on his thinking
He kept thinking that everybody could tell
That he was stoned
The way he used to think that
Everybody could tell
That he was tripping
When he first starting taking acid
He almost felt like he was tripping
When he smoked pot
With the guys that he worked with
He spent most of the time that he was stoned
Wishing that the effects of the dope would wear off
As soon as possible

He was getting drunk
One saturday with his grandmother and her husband
His grandmother and her husband started arguing
Out of frustration
His grandmother's husband told him
That he was crazy
Because his grandmother was probably crazy

It was the first time that
Somebody had called him a nut
Directly to his face

His grandmother had to take a job
As a seamstress in a mexican sweatshop
Because the fence company was losing money

His grandmother was in her early 60's
She had never worked outside of her own home
In her whole life
Now she was getting up in the morning
Going to work for the minimum wage
They dropped her off on the way to the fence company
In the morning
Then picked her up in the afternoon
On the way home

He started thinking that his grandmother

Had to go to work
 To pay the salary
 That he was collecting
 For standing around like a stiff idiot
 In peoples back yards
 While fences were being put up

He sent most his paycheck money back home
 To his mother
 For payments on his car
 That was sitting in the driveway
 At his mother's house

His car had been stolen
 Then turned up with all kinds of damage
 The car was repaired by the insurance company
 While he was working down in Texas

He spent the end of the spring
 And most of the summer
 Working down in Texas
 For his grandmother and her husband

He was due back in Joliet Illinois
 In the middle of August
 For a court hearing
 On his pending drunk driving arrest
 From the previous winter

He told his grandmother and her husband
 That he would be back
 After he went to court
 For his drunk driving ticket

He rode the bus from Texas back up to Illinois
 He went to his drunk driving court hearing
 With a notary public woman attorney that his mother had hired
 He had already had his driver's license suspended
 For supposedly failing the breathalyzer test
 He took on the night he was arrested
 He wondered how in the hell
 He could have failed the breathalyzer test
 He pushed his breath as hard as he could into the tube
 He thought that the cop was pinching the tube
 He knew that he couldn't have still been legally drunk
 When he took the breathalyzer test
 His arrest processing had taken several hours
 Of swearing and yelling at the cops
 Then having the shit beat out of him every couple of minutes
 While his hands were cuffed behind his back

He lost his license anyway
 For mitigating circumstances
 The arresting officer said he was acting like he was drunk
 Even if they couldn't prove
 That he was legally drunk
 His drivers license was revoked for a year and
 He was fined 500 dollars
 Plus he owed 250 dollars
 To the notary public woman attorney
 That went to court with him

He told his mother
 After his drunk driving court hearing
 That he didn't want to go back down to Texas

His mother told him that he could stay
 If he found a job

He wrote a letter telling
 His grandmother and her husband
 That he wasn't coming back down to Texas
 He never heard anything back from them

He didn't know what he was going to do
 He owed 500 hundred dollars for his drunk driving ticket
 He had a car payment due in a couple of weeks
 He wasn't supposed to be driving
 He was living in a semi-suburban almost rural area
 Of wide opened spaces
 Corn stalk bean field row distances
 Long flat straight to the horizon roads
 Traversing desolately stretched abandon
 Destinating sparsely populated areas
 Getting around without a car was nearly impossible

He got in his car
 The day after his driver's license was revoked
 For a drive out to Joliet
 To pay a visit to an old employer
 A general construction shod artist
 Half-assed crooked home improvement contractor
 That was in a money losing business
 With a perpetually wasted on marijuana son

He had worked for this outfit
 Before and after he went to college
 It was low-skilled rusty broken down tool manual labor
 In a constant atmosphere of charged hilarity and impossible chaos
 Fucked-up home repair debacles
 Perennial lawsuit lawyer liens and courtroom emotion dramatics

Better Business Association squabble beefs
 Unsatisfied ripped-off customers
 Refusals to pay
 Stop payment checks
 Refund demands
 Battles with government agencies that withheld money
 For work that was done late incorrectly not up to code standards
 The place had gone bankrupt 5 times in a 20 year period
 The old man kept a yard full of rusty metal
 Junk piles of garbage salvaged from various construction projects
 To be used as payment to the creditors
 That were inevitably going to confiscate all of the rubble
 The next time that the place went under

Everybody that worked there was a character
 With extensively checkered histories of drug and alcohol abuse
 The whole time riding in the trucks
 To and from the job sites each day
 Was spent smoking pot
 Lunch was usually an hour drinking beers at the nearest bar
 The business was an always open revolving door
 For maniacs lunatics and psychotics
 That came and went as they saw fit
 Working whenever they had a whim or a need to do so

Once he had his foot in the door
 He got some of his friends in
 His friends robbed and stole at every opportunity
 Gas money was used for cigarettes
 The company trucks were taken out at night
 For riding around town getting drunk and high
 The time cards were padded with bullshit overtime hours
 That were never worked

He went out on a job with a guy one morning
 They followed a beer truck
 For 45 minutes on a rural south of Joliet highway
 Into the start of the downstate Illinois sticks boondock area country
 To buy a six-pack of beer
 At the tavern that the beer truck was delivering to

He felt bad sometimes about the old ladies and suckers
 That were getting ripped off conned and cheated
 Their homes being butchered and maimed by idiots
 That had no idea of what they were doing

He went into somebody's basement with a jack hammer
 He spent two days blasting out parts of the basement floor
 There was a massive model train landscape with tracks and tunnels and
 bridges
 Spread all throughout the basement
 Locomotives and boxcars handpainted
 Lifelike little trees and shrubs and countryside towns and houses

A hobby filled with loving care and obvious devotion
 Representing somebody's investment of money and time
 He never thought to cover any of it while he was jack hammering
 The whole thing was dusted
 In a thick white coat of concrete grains and chalk

He was on a crew to put in two basketball goal posts
 For a south suburban Chicago Illinois township park district
 They rented a backhoe that day
 To dig the holes for the goal posts
 It was a long ride out to the job site
 Three joints and twelve pack of beer
 They came back a few days later to hold up the posts
 While a cement truck poured a yard and a half of concrete
 Into each of the misaligned holes
 The second hole was half filled with concrete
 When a guy that worked for the town came out yelling at them
 The basketball posts were not straight across from each other
 He trawled the cement around the pole
 While one of his co-workers tried to explain to the township guy
 That they could still play half-court basketball

He worked part time for his old boss
 After he left to start his career at the railroad
 He would come in on Saturdays and Sundays
 Stoned drunk and tripping from the night before
 To do odd meaningless jobs for extra beer money
 He had been going in on weekends
 When he was cracking up the winter before
 No matter how crazy and wild he was
 He always put on a straight sober facade when he saw his old boss

He was a nervous wreck
 That day after he went to court
 Driving on the highway
 Without a drivers license
 Paranoid about cops spotting his car
 Worrying about getting pulled over stopped hassled and thrown in jail
 Wondering if his old boss knew that he had flipped out and went nuts

He knew that he must have hit the rock bottoms
 His old boss wanted no part of him
 After all of the derelicts and bullshit artists
 That his old boss had put up with and allowed
 To come and go through that business
 He was told to leave
 There was no work for him there

His only hope was to renew bonds of friendship
 Ties broke damaged destroyed
 Severed under the strains caused by his psychosis
 When he was cracking up the winter before

His final descent into insanity was swift
 After the people that he was drinking and taking drugs with
 Abandoned him to his increasingly obvious problems
 Nobody wanted the responsibility of aiding and abetting
 A lunatic on an unstoppable path of self-destructive demise
 His world caved-in collapsed down upon him
 After he was cut adrift from the loose cords
 That precariously connected him
 To the society that existed around him

He hadn't talked to any of his old friends in months
 He was angry about being ostracized
 He was embarrassed about losing his shit and falling apart
 He was painfully aware of why
 Nobody wanted to have anything to do with him
 He knew that he needed help getting his life back together
 He was thinking that one of his old friends could help him
 To maybe get some work somewhere

He had been on the outer fringe of a social group
 All through and after highschool
 That came to include over a dozen people
 Living in several towns
 They got together at night and on weekends
 To drink and smoke pot
 They went from spending nights drinking under highway overpasses
 To spending their after work hours in Joliet saloons

He drifted in and out of this group
 Going several times down to Texas to work
 Going away for an insanity aborted year of college
 They were always there when he got back
 Doing the same things and going to the same places
 He would fall quickly back into his place
 Never sure that he really fit in
 Assuming that he was accepted
 Not certain that he belonged

He had been out of their world for 8 months
 Since his breakdown his hospitalization and his summer in Texas
 He hadn't heard from anybody that he knew
 He waited a few days before calling anybody
 Half hoping that somebody would try to get a hold of him
 He finally called one of his friends
 He knew the routine
 His friend would be going out that night
 To meet up with the rest of his friends in a Joliet bar
 After small talk and silent pauses on the other end of the phone
 His old friend agreed to stop by and pick him up

He felt pathetic when he walked into the bar
 Bloated from a 40 pound overweight overfed swell

Stuffed tightly into a pair of jeans
 Ready to burst
 Screaming agony at the seams
 He saw the sad looks in the eyes of his old friends
 His throat jaw lung and chest guts fist clenched
 He was too nervous and tight to talk
 He wanted to turn hide and run away
 He tried to innocuously sit at the bar
 He stared straight ahead at the mirror
 Against the wall behind the bar
 He thought that he looked just like his father
 He settled his gaze on the beer can in front of him
 He talked to one of his friends that he had worked construction with
 His friend was working for a guy putting up fences
 He asked his friend if he could maybe work for the guy
 His friend told him to wait and see

He found out from one of his friends that worked at the railroad
 While he was working there
 That the railroad had laid everybody off
 After he had quit

He had worked at the railroad for about 6 months
 He was stoned the day he went in and filled out the application
 He was stoned the day he went in for his physical
 He was stoned every morning when he showed up for work
 He was stoned and half drunk every afternoon
 After he got back from lunch
 Near the end he was drinking in his car
 On the way to work in the morning
 He got so belligerent it was suggested that he resign
 He quit so that he wouldn't be fired
 He thought afterwards that the morning drinking had did him in

He knew the railroad was the best paying blue collar job in Joliet
 He knew that it was hard to get in there and that he was goddamn lucky
 He worked with middle aged men in their forties
 That had started working at the railroad when they were his age
 Living in homes with families all over Joliet
 He wanted to do the same thing
 He saw the whole rest of his life before him
 Standing in the dusty steeltoed tired shoes of the railroad lifers
 He liked the image of the life and future that he saw
 It devastated him to realize that it had all evaporated
 He agonized that summer working in Texas for low wages
 He mourned the death of the life he dreamed he was to live

He worked on a line in the E.J. & E. railroad car repair shop
 The railroad hauled steel to an Indiana mill
 The open top gondola cars were sent to Joliet
 For repairs and maintenance

His job was to shore up rivets and replace the handles
 On the sides of the cars
 He used a high pressured hydraulic gun
 To squeeze the collars onto the rivets
 The old days of hot bucket glowing red iron rivets were gone
 He enjoyed the work
 He took pride in his mastery of the skills required to do the work
 It was a mindless repetitive routine
 His thoughts to meander a drifting wandering plane
 He liked when his body functioned robotically
 Sailing smooth and unattended on the internal auto-pilot
 His mind was allowed to pursue a world of its own

He knew the railroad was a dangerous place
 With the overhead cranes lifting steel and box cars around the shop
 With the movement of the cars up and down the tracks on the lines
 He took the hazards for granted
 Until the rivet gun he used exploded
 Into the chest of one of his co-workers
 Driving an oil and sand mixture with 2000 pounds of pressurized force
 Through 4 layers of thick winter outer wear
 Into the skin all over the guy's chest
 He had missed work that day
 He heard about it when he came in the next day
 He kept thinking about all of the times
 He had worked with that gun head high
 Right in front of his face while he plugged the rivet holes
 He was upset
 He started getting drunk before he came to work in the morning
 He starting refusing to use the equipment
 If he saw oil leaking out the bottom or through the seams
 He was taken off the line and put on a clean-up crew for fuck-ups
 He started missing work because he was getting arrested at night
 After his car was stolen he didn't care
 He had no way to get to work
 His sister drove him to work for a couple of weeks
 Before the railroad had enough of his bullshit and told him
 He had to quit
 When he came to his senses a few months later
 On a chair in the dayroom of a mental institution
 He realized how badly he had screwed up
 He realized what he had lost
 This ate away at him

After his friend told him about the layoff and lack of work
 He wondered if it mattered
 He would have been out of a job anyway

He saw his friends several times
 Over the course of the next week
 He knew that he was on a trial basis
 Tentative status on still shaky ground

His friends were watching him closely
 Looking for any remnant traces of the behavior
 That they had witnessed during his breakdown
 He kept quiet and drank beers with them
 Nobody smoked dope around him
 They were afraid that it might set him off
 Into some bizarre psychotic acid delayed flashback reaction
 He knew what was expected and he just went along

He felt better with the approach of the fall season
 The cool dark september Joliet nights were a relief
 After the relentless intensity of the numbing Texas sunshine and heat
 He started feeling like his old self again
 He made separate and formal amends with each of his friends
 Having done something individually to piss each of them off
 He apologized to them
 They in turn told him that they were sorry
 That they had to turn their backs on him
 He started to feel like he was fitting back into his place

He picked up some quick cash putting up a fence with one of his friends
 For the guy that owned the bar they were drinking in
 They took a drunken blind ride
 Out to their old boss's construction company
 In the middle of a quiet Thursday night
 To steal all of the materials they needed for the fence job
 They spent a couple of days putting up the fence
 Around some property next door to the bar
 It was a couple of hundred dollars each
 And all of the beer that they could drink while they were working
 After that his friend got him the job installing fences

His new boss was a creep
 A drunken alcoholic broke down middle aged fence man
 That lusted and drooled for anything that moved within eyesight
 Out of ear shot
 Male female or animal
 It didn't matter

He thought that his boss liked having his friend around
 For a drinking companion
 He thought that his friend got him the job
 Because his friend didn't like being alone with the guy
 He knew that the guy didn't want him there
 He had an immediate dislike for the guy and had a hard time hiding it
 He knew the job wasn't going to last long

He would drive his car to work
 Every morning worrying
 That he was going to be caught

By the cops
Driving with a revoked license

He knew that his blue Camaro stuck out
In the memory of the local law enforcement agencies
He had been run in by
The state police the county police the town police
He wasn't afraid of the bastards
When he was crazy
Now he was in constant fear
When he saw a squad car
While he was sneaking back and forth
In his car
On the way to work

Several times he was followed by the cops to his mother's house
He started using an unincorporated gravel road
That ran through the back of town
He quit using that road
After he was followed down it by an Illinois State trooper

He was a known troublemaker
Come back to the smallscale scene of not yet forgotten petty crimes
He got the feeling that the cops were just watching
Waiting for him to try to pull some more of his shit

He bought his car after he started working at the railroad
It was a dark turquoise indigo blue Camaro
A 1978 model with barely
Over a thousand miles on it
Already for sale as used
In October of 1978
It still looked like it was just from the factory new

He bought the car
Because the color looked good to him
When he was stoned

Everything on the car was blue
The entire interior
A dozen different variation shaded tint hues
Of the color light blue

He also bought the car
For the cassette tape deck
With speakers mounted in
The doors
And behind the back seats

He had spent the previous summer
Driving around in a beatup rattling

International Harvester 4-wheel drive truck
 A cornbinder
 A chugging heap of rusty metal
 Guaranteed to have a flat tire any day of the week
 On the way home from work
 Mystery carburetor vapor locks
 Stalling itself on the open highway
 Out in the middle of miles away from anywhere
 Like it was out of gas

He drove the truck through creeks and fields
 The settings on the front wheel hubs permanently froze
 Weld rusted stuck locked
 In the 4-wheel drive position
 The truck was in need of serious work
 He had no mechanical inclination interest or aptitudes
 He just kept pushing the truck down unremembered roads
 On its inevitable journey to the junkyard

He learned how to safely operate a motorized vehicle
 While being chemically damaged and impaired
 In that truck

He took acid every saturday and sunday morning that summer
 Then spent the afternoons driving alone
 Around and around
 On the quiet miles of forest preserve roads
 In a Joliet park

He would drive through the woods
 Like it was a movie on a screen
 Endlessly rolled out before him
 The leaves and branches of the trees overhead
 Behind and on all sides of him
 Except in the spaces where the light fell through
 A canopied cathedral experience
 In the shade of forest green
 Wind rustled still
 The sounds of the birds
 Muted together in a single mosaic of noise
 Chirps
 Whistle trill call songs
 Becoming one multi-layered distinct sound
 Immobile plaster in the driver's seat
 He kept his truck moving through the woods
 Not even aware that he was behind the wheel

Driving became an automatic response
 When he was tripping on acid

He had the drinking drugging tripping and driving down

When he bought his car

After lumbering laboriously
 In a boxy cumbersome lurching pickup truck
 All over the area that summer
 He cut loose on the road
 When he got in that Camaro
 He was a maniac
 Quickly addicted to the feeling
 Of automotive powered speed
 That feels effortless
 Without friction or impending restraint

When he was stoned
 He started thinking that he was at one
 At tune and part of that machine
 He felt like the car was responding
 To his thoughts concerning acceleration and direction
 Even before he put them into action
 He started thinking about cars and people
 The brain inside the skull
 The hard outer protective shell covering
 The vegetable-like controlling cell nucleus
 Inside a metal cranium

He thought that in the future
 People would spend their whole life in an automobile type structure
 Their vehicle no more unlike to them
 Than a shell to a turtle

He kept the tape player running full blast
 The volume turned all the way up
 While he was driving
 Listening over and over again to Rush
 Pink Floyd
 UFO
 Ted Nugent
 Led Zeppelin and the cold turkey horror screams of John Lennon

He could think of nothing better than
 Being stoned listening to music
 While driving his car

He had once heard a lecture by Timothy Leary
 About a future of space colonies
 He wanted to be the driver of a one of those space colonies
 He was convinced that given enough dope and loud rock music
 He could sit in a chair and operate a machine
 For the rest of his life
 Plowing across time on a lifelong journey through the void
 In charge

In control
At one with the machine
While the passengers lived
In the hold behind enjoying their lives

There was a lot of snow that winter of 1978-79
Most people were getting their cars snowed-in buried
He never had that problem
He never parked anywhere for more than a few hours
He kept his car moving
Driving around alone in the middle of nights
That looked like the moon
Everything white except the reflective yellow in the highway signs
And the blue on the hood of his Camaro

He drove at high speeds
With no regard to the winter weather
Or hazardous driving conditions
He had no patience for the careful driving
Of others
He thought they were fools
With no understanding or communication
For the machines they were operating

When he saw cars going out of control
He took it as a sign of unconscious maliciousness
On the blind part of the driver
That had been unknowingly acted upon
By the cars that these people were unknowingly driving

He thought that most people had no idea
What they were dealing with
When they were given control of a machine
He thought that these people were dangerous
He thought that he could sense them in traffic
He kept an eye on them
Staying out of their way
Waiting for them to cross the line
He thought that he was able to tell
When the car and the mind inside of it were not one
It was a split double threat to him
Of machine and driver gone amuck
Anything was able to happen

He had to do a lot of quick high speed hairpin maneuvering
To avoid collisioned mayhem with other people and their cars

He liked driving in the middle of the night
When everybody was at home sleeping that winter

One barroom drunk after work friday night
After helping to push a buddy's truck out of the snow
He got in his car to drive home

Two hits of purple micro-dot
That he had taken earlier that evening
Exploded with intense colored lights and geometrical patterns
All over the field of his vision
At three o'clock in the morning
While he was driving

He continually found himself moving down the same road
Knowing that he had never turned off
Not aware of how he had gotten turned back around
Always traveling in the same direction
Passing repeatedly by the flashing lights of a squad car
Sitting each time in the same place
On the side of the road
In front of his old highschool
He approached the scene perpetually
Every time long look staring into the faces of the cops
Like they were ghosts
Frozen inanimate cardboard robots
Pasted onto an image
Macheted red and blue
By the swirling blink of siren lights
He was the only person driving on the road that night
Driving 15 miles per hour
On a foot of still falling snow
He must have driven past them cops
A half dozen times
A 10 minute ride home
Eventually turned into two hours and a quarter tank of gas
Lost unaccountable time

He became convinced
In the mid-december middle of the night early morning dawn darkness
That with the help of his car
He was able to trip and materialize himself
Into an alternate version of our world
Where everything appeared the same as it was in the previous life
He thought that he had died somewhere
Out on that road the night before
And to that world and to the people in it
He was dead
Being mourned that moment as dead
He thought that people died and woke up
On another world
All the time
Without even being aware of it
He thought that he had evolved his being
Advancing himself to a higher plane of existence
He was convinced that he had died the night before

Replacing himself in a subsequent version of earthly human reality

He got in his car the next morning
 To make sure that spirit of his machine
 Had made the trip
 Into the new world with him

His almost brand new car
 Didn't look so brand new
 After a few months of winter driving
 He had scrapes chips and small dents
 In various places on the body of the car
 He had burned holes on the interior console
 With patchouli incense cones
 Beer had been spilt all over the seats by careless passengers
 The carpeting was matted with pot seeds
 He started to look at his car
 As a rolling ashtray and garbage can

He was glad when the car was lost for stolen
 He thought that it was gone forever
 When it turned up months later on a police impound lot
 All of the damage that he had done
 In the few months he drove the car
 Was included with the damage done by the thieves

When he got the car back
 The insurance company had fixed everything
 It was like all of the abuse he had heaped upon the car
 Had never happened
 The car had been restored to its original condition

Driving was never the same for him
 His confidence and sense of machine mastery were destroyed
 Stolen and revoked
 Along with his car and his license
 He drove like a dog that had been whipped on and beaten
 Too many times
 He slunk down the road
 A whimpering tail hiding sneak
 Back and forth to work
 He was too scared to drive any other time
 He didn't even turn on the radio
 While he was driving
 He wanted to be quiet
 He didn't want to attract any attention to himself
 Driving became an exercise in paranoid fear and silence

He spent the fall months
 Of September and October

Installing fences with his friend
 They worked in dreary locations
 Fencing off and enclosing
 Industrialized waste areas
 Uninhabitable desolates
 Wrapped in thick heavy gauge chain link
 Barbed wire and razor ribbon

His boss liked to drink
 Lunches were always spent in a tavern
 Afternoon work disintegrated into semi-drunkenness
 They moved from one job site to another
 Jobs always seemed half finished
 Nothing ever seemed completed

He collected his paychecks and kept his mouth shut
 He knew this wouldn't be lasting long for him
 He spent his paychecks on car payments and six packs
 He stayed home on week nights
 He didn't think he could handle getting up for work
 Half loaded after being out until 1:00 a.m.
 With 5 hours sleep

He just wanted to stay low
 Be moderate
 Not get out of control and
 Fuck everything up again

He put up his last fence
 At the Joliet State Penitentiary
 It was an 18 foot fence around a basketball court
 In the prison exercise yard

He rode up to the prison
 In a fence truck full of empty beer cans
 Ashtray full of roaches and half smoked joints

The guard at the gate took one look into the truck
 Tools and equipment scattered
 All over the cab and in the back of the truck
 The guard said there was no way they were
 Getting into the prison

They drove back down the road
 Threw out all of the empty beer cans
 Straightened out all of the tools
 Then drove back to the prison
 The guard let them into the prison

The fence was being put up

Next to the prison commissary
 The prisoners stood in line waiting for commissary privileges
 Some of the prisoners drifted over
 To where the fence was being put up
 They wanted to know if he was getting time
 For putting up the fence
 The prisoners assumed that he was a con
 The guard up in the tower
 Overlooking the yard
 Must have assumed he was a prisoner also
 He kept his rifle on his shoulder
 Pointing down on him and his friend
 While they worked
 They were the only ones
 In the yard

He spent several days working at the prison
 In the afternoons he saw the prisoners
 In the exercise yard
 Next to the basketball court where he was working

The black guys pumped bars
 Loaded with immense rolls of iron weights
 With arms that were bigger than both of his legs

Skinny long stringy haired
 Burnout hippy white guys
 Pitched horseshoes at iron stakes
 Sticking out of the ground
 Their bell bottom blue jeans
 Dragging through the dirt and dust

The rest of the whites
 And the browns
 Were involved in a game of softball
 Loud with cheering and hustling
 He thought that the basketball games must have been the same
 Short explosion bursts
 Of locked up energy and emotion
 That needed an eighteen foot .6 gauge chain link fence
 To surround and contain it
 To keep it from spilling out all over
 The prison exercise yard

He sensed a sinister evil at the prison
 Something lingering from the 1930 or 40's
 A legacy of apparituous terror
 On the part of inmates guards and prison officials alike
 Part of past that conspired
 The old black and white prison movies
 He watched late at night on television as a kid

He thought about Jack Palance and Burt Lancaster
 Busting out of jail
 In the dark cool Joliet run away to freedom midnight
 Of some imagined half awake long ago

He thought about the real life monsters
 Like Richard Speck
 Housed somewhere inside of those prison walls
 While he was working out in the yard
 He wondered where they kept Speck
 He wondered if Speck had a window
 Or a view of the yard area

He wasn't afraid of the inmates he saw
 Out on the prison grounds
 He was afraid of the malignant spirit
 That seemed to live all over the prison
 Leaving everything inside quiet empty and dead

He wondered how old the prison was
 It looked like it was built
 Back in the 1920's
 Designed from some blue print
 Left over from the middle ages
 Of inquisition wracked tortuous revenge
 Iron chains
 Hangman scaffolding
 Guillotine electric chairs

The prison was made out of distinct yellow bricks
 Rough cut bulging rectangular oblong misshapen masses
 Custom chiseled from the same quarry
 Made to order
 In sizes varying
 As large as an automobile
 And as small as a fist
 Piled into a fort like wall
 That looked 40 feet high
 Blocks long on every side
 Capped with rusty barbed wire
 And castle like shotgun guard towers

The building was meant
 To exude and represent punishment
 Deterrence in the form of fear
 To whatever was concealed beyond those walls

He noticed that the same bricks were used
 To build the high school
 Across town from the prison
 In Joliet

Vehicles entering the prison
 Had to park in a doubledoorred bay
 Over a walkway with steps that went
 Under the vehicle
 To allow the guards to check for prisoners
 That might be hiding on the underside
 Of the vehicle

Nobody ever checked under the fence truck
 For a prisoner
 He wondered if the walkway was always there
 Or if it was installed
 After some guy rode out of the prison gates
 On the underneath of some truck

He saw a movie truck in the prison
 One of the days he was putting up the fence there
 A guard said it was for a John Belushi movie

He kept looking at the studio truck while he worked
 He thought about the summer he had spent
 Down in Texas
 After he had gotten out of the hospital
 He thought about the couple of months
 He had been working around Joliet with his friend
 Everything started seeming empty useless and boring
 He was wallowing in insignificance
 Perpetuating meaninglessness
 Wondering when change would set itself free into new motion

He was officially laid off of work
 A couple of weeks after the fence was installed
 In the Joliet Prison
 Work had quickly slowed down from every other day
 To half days to an hour a day
 He went down and filed for unemployment
 He was told he would be paid
 200 hundred dollars every two weeks
 That was enough for his car payments
 With enough left over for drinking

He found out that his friend and his boss
 Were going to be working all that winter
 Inside the prison
 Putting a fence around the multi-storied tiered railings
 Because an inmate had thrown a guard over the rail

The work at the fence company didn't really stop
 It had just dried up for him

He quickly established his unemployment check collecting routine
 He woke up late morning early afternoon
 Sat around the house alone watching television
 Went out to the bars at night with his friends
 To get drunk
 And chase women

He had no responsibility
 He was 20 years old
 Living at home with his mother
 He had no hope or thought about the future

He made payments on a car
 That was sitting in the driveway
 Parked

He put down the names of bars that he drank in
 On his unemployment forms
 As the places that he applied for work

He just wanted to get and stay drunk
 To make up for lost time
 To heal and smooth over
 All the rift rough spots
 That had come before
 Between him
 His family and his friends

He wanted to erase the ever present feeling
 In his mind
 That tortured gnawing paralyzing fear
 That told him
 Everybody from now on
 Foremost and first off
 Would think of him as being crazy
 He was now and forever to be regarded as a nut
 He would never be considered normal
 In the eyes and minds of anybody that knew him
 Again

He wanted to make everybody around him
 Forget his past
 And let him escape from it

He was still depressed
 More than 7 months after being released from the hospital
 Work had kept him busy
 Too tired and too worn out
 To consider suicide

Now that he was left idle again

The suicidal escape thoughts returned

He started to think that the weight
 That he had piled on
 In the hospital
 Was the reason for his continual
 Unabated depression

He was convinced that
 The forty extra pounds
 He had been carrying around
 Was causing some kind of physio-mental disturbance
 Larding his mood and outlook
 His energy and thoughts clogging up
 Dense with the saturation of fatty deposit despondency
 He decided that the weight had to go

Every afternoon he put on 2 pairs of pants
 5 layers of t-shirts sweat shirts and a jacket
 Then climbed into his old railroad winter coveralls

He would put a stack of old rock and roll albums
 On the family stereo turntable
 Then he would run in place while the music played
 He would run until the music stopped
 Soaking through all of the layers of clothing
 After he stopped running
 He spent another hour sitting in a steaming bath tub
 Filled up to the top with hot water

He was at home all alone during the day
 Nobody knew that he was doing this
 He ate one small meal each day
 Then drank beer all night with his friends
 He was able to sweat off 35 pounds in a month

He started to feel better gradually
 As the weight soaked and dried salt into his exercise clothes
 He started to feel like his old self
 His mental frame reflected in his changing physical appearance
 He had more energy
 Drinking became enjoyable again
 Instead of burying himself in a stuporous withdrawn silence
 He was talking to people again and laughing
 Almost able to forget
 For a while
 All of the misfortune he had brought
 Down upon himself

He went into the winter
 Thinking this was the best he had ever felt

In a life flavored with depression and unhappiness

He became friends with a woman
 He would meet at the bar
 During his nightly drunken escapades

She was 5 or 6 months pregnant
 Impending motherhood in its showing glory
 The father-to-be wanted no part of the outcome

He met her through his friend's sister
 He worried that she might find out that he had gone nuts
 He worried that she already knew he had gone nuts
 He wasn't sure what she expected from him
 He was obviously a drunken fuckup
 No job living at home collecting unemployment

He half wondered
 During increasingly less frequent sober thoughts
 If he could take care of himself a woman and a child
 He realized that only a person
 With more problems than his own
 Was ever going to have anything to do with him

He liked being with her
 She kept him calm and he was able to relax
 When he got drunk enough
 He let her take him for rides in his car
 So that he could listen to car stereo

His mother got remarried at the end of that year
 To a guy that lived across town
 With his two sons
 In bachelor pad mechanic grease all over everything squalor

He moved into a new home
 With his mother his stepfather and his two stepbrothers
 He drank a fifth of vodka on the moving day
 Got so drunk that he was dropping everything he carried

He was happy
 He thought that he was getting the brothers that he never had
 He thought that he was getting the father that he never really had

The new house had a family room
 With a bar and barstools
 He bought all kinds of bottles of booze
 Bar glasses a blender and a Mr. Boston drink book
 He filled the closet shelves with his hundreds of rock record albums
 He spent the first few nights up all night in the family room
 Drinking and listening to music

His whole family was celebrating
 It was Christmastime
 His mother had just remarried
 The two families had moved into a new house
 His younger sisters were staying at the house for the holidays

He was so loaded that he had bruises
 From falling over and banging into things
 He got so drunk that he couldn't stand up
 He thought that this was the way things were always going to be

He spent an unemployment check on a new year's eve party
 He bought a halfbarrel of beer
 All of his friends and his stepbrother's friends came over
 The house was full of people
 He played albums all night
 Then threw the records on the floor when they were done playing
 There was spilt beer and quarter full plastic cups of beer
 All over the house
 He wanted every night to be like that

Everybody in the house went back to work
 At the start of the year
 He was wound up from the end of the year christmas celebrating
 Nobody bothered to tell him that the party was over

He stayed up all night listening to music and drinking
 While his family was trying to sleep for work the next morning
 He drank up all of the christmas gift bottles of whisky and scotch
 He drank up his parents vodka and then tried refilling the bottles
 With water
 He had people over every night of the week
 Every morning the family room of the house was strewn
 With beer cans ashtray garbage and people
 That got too drunk passed out unable to leave
 He emptied all of the swill
 From the opened beer cans that he found
 Into a large mug
 Then guzzled it down to start the day

When everybody left for work
 He started scheming around for a way to get drunk
 He was usually broke
 He got a \$200 unemployment check every two weeks
 He would spend it all in a couple of days
 Then he would scrounge around broke
 Pilfering loose change from the couch seat cushions
 Until he got the next one

He wasn't sleeping very much

He would pass out for an hour or two then be awake
 He wasn't eating very much
 He would drink a glass of beer with salt and a raw egg for a meal
 He was having too much fun to notice
 That his family was getting tired of his bullshit
 Real quick

He was still seeing his pregnant girlfriend
 When he met another woman in his town

He met her at the gas station
 She asked him to help push her car up to the pump
 Because it was out of gas
 He had just came from the grocery store
 Where he cashed in two bags of soda pop bottles for money
 It was one of the rare times that he went driving in his car

It was the middle of January winter outside
 He was running around sweating without a coat on
 He had just put some gas in his car and was in a hurry
 To get some beer with his pop bottle money
 He pushed her car told her where he lived and invited her over
 Without even looking at her or noticing her
 He had forgotten all about her when she showed at his parent's house
 A few nights later
 He was getting drunk with his friends
 And his pregnant girlfriend's older brothers
 His pregnant girlfriend was sitting on his lap
 When the woman that he met at the gas station walked in
 That was the last time that he saw his pregnant girlfriend
 When his pregnant girlfriend left
 With her brothers that night
 They told him that he had better never bother her again
 The woman that he met at the gas station spent the night with him
 In the family room of his parent's house
 After everybody else had left

His new girlfriend was a hustler
 A con rip-off artist woman
 That could get away with anything
 Because of the way she looked

She was the kind of woman that drove away
 From the gas station without paying
 He couldn't believe anything that she said
 She said she was married to a big mean harley biker gang guy
 She said that she had two kids
 He didn't know if any of this was true
 She worked as a waitress in a restaurant
 Where she was in trouble for stealing credit card numbers from receipts
 She came around whenever she felt like it

He didn't know how to contact her
 He didn't know where she lived
 He thought that he had something special
 She was a scammer and he had nothing
 He thought that this must have meant that she liked him
 For himself and not what for what she could take from him

She usually stayed all night when she came over
 His mother was getting tired of finding her there in the morning
 His mother started yelling and ranting when she came over
 One night his mother told them both to get out of the house
 He drove her in her car
 With 4 inches of snow and ice on the windshield
 His head out the window to see the road
 Drunk laughing yelling and screaming out into the middle of the night
 To the empty condominium where he used to live with his mother
 They spent the rest of the night there
 On the floor

He was hardly sleeping that January
 He was drunk all the time
 Things around him were falling
 Apart fast
 He denied what others
 Hinted at in his presence
 He was cracking up
 Again mental hospital bound

His renewed friendships of the previous autumn
 Quickly frayed
 Unraveling after a weekend trip
 To a frozen winter cottage resort town in Wisconsin
 Three days of around the clock drinking
 Ended in a Wisconsin ski lodge
 Broke out of money drunk drinking other people's drinks
 Wearing a coat without a shirt underneath
 Bare chest bellied to the snow and the wind
 Registering nothing

His friends started avoiding him
 He started hanging around with a guy from town
 That had went around the bend
 A few years earlier
 On psychedelic drugs
 Never making the return trip to sense sanity or reality
 Convinced that the voices in his head
 Were being broadcast from somewhere
 Within the town
 By somebody with a microphone
 Hooked into a secret transmitting device

His friend talked
 Utter disjointed nonsense gibberish
 Having him around the house was too much
 For his mother and his new step family
 Nobody could sleep with his crazy friend and his girl friend
 Drinking all night in the house

His family wanted him out of their new home
 He wanted nothing more than to get way from there
 His dream of having a father and brothers
 Quickly wilted in the light of the obvious
 His step brothers wanted no part of him
 They thought he was a stupid wasted crazy idiot
 His step father waited for the word from his mother
 That it was time to do something
 About him until then
 His step father tried to be patient
 Putting up with the bullshit
 Of the no good son of his wife's ex-husband

He started riding the train to downtown Chicago
 40 miles away
 To get out the house
 Away from his family

He hung out in the buildings
 Where the rock radio stations were
 Applying for jobs
 Talking to anybody that would listen to him

He spent nights in the downtown Greyhound bus station
 An all night haven for homeless
 Reprieve from the January Chicago cold streets
 Sheltered refuge for maniacal derelicts
 With nowhere to go
 Like himself

He found out about the bus station the year before
 While taking trips down to Miami
 There were bathrooms
 Heat
 Pin ball machine cigarette butts spread out on the floor
 People from all over the country
 Moved in and out of there
 A good place to spend a sleepless night
 Warm with a neverending
 Choice of things to do

He went to the downtown public library
 During the day looking

For pictures in books
 Of anybody famous
 That he might recognize

He afternoon sat in hotel lobbies
 Like he had some business there
 Keeping quiet and to himself

He would take the train back to his parent's house
 After a few days
 Tired hungry and worn out
 Clean up change his clothes grab some food
 Before he was rousted out
 Into the cold night again

Things temporarily settled down
 When he would get his unemployment check
 He bought beer had parties
 Got drunk with everybody
 The money was gone after a few days
 Taking along with it
 The fragile patience of his family

When he returned after disappearing for a few days
 It was strongly suggested by his step father
 That he quit coming back
 Because nobody wanted him there

His step father finally exploded
 One night after everybody came home from work

He had been drinking and smoking pot all day
 His girlfriend had been over
 There were empty beer cans and trash all over the house
 He had been sitting in a bathtub full of water
 With swim shorts on
 Singing out loud
 With shaving cream smeared all over the bathroom sink mirror
 His mother and his step father burst into the bathroom
 His mother screaming at his step father to kill him

His step father started choking him
 Letting loose all the pent up rage and fury
 That the ex-small town cop rifle range marksman Ford mechanic
 With the ass shot up and filled with lead in Korea
 Could muster for the lousy dopehead bastard
 That was living under his roof

He stood toe to toe with his step father
 Looking him in the eye
 Throat muscles hard in a resistant knot
 Until his step father unwound his grip and backed off

He told his step father that it would take a lot
More than that to put his lights out

He called the police
Telling them that his step father tried killing him
The cops came out to the house
His step father and his mother
Had him handcuffed and removed from their home

Leaving the night workers at the Will County Jail in Joliet
To put up with his all night non-stop bullshit

He spur-of-the-moment decided
To go to California
Spending an unemployment check
On a one way Amtrak ticket
And a railroad station tourist shop jar of purple caviar

He left Chicago on a Friday night
Bound for the mythic California
Of his 1964-1970 childhood
To get away from the family members
Friends relatives neighbors
All of the other people
That would never understand him
Put up with him or accept him

He left the cold bitter snowy dark winter Chicago gray
For the warmth of the past
His childhood summer Los Angeles suburban hot tar heat
Golden brown Riverside hills
The flowing ride in the car
With the windows open
Radio in the wind
Through the downtown industrial districts
Street mirage shiny hot white asphalt bleached pavement
Remembering cool nighttime traffic breezes
Hollywood incandescence
The wave foam noise and smell of salt
In the ocean

He was convinced that the state of Illinois
Was the cause of all his misery
His adolescent depression
His loneliness
His isolation and escape into drug abuse
Alcoholism and insanity

He told himself that he was leaving
Behind everything
For good
He was never coming back

He had been listening to The Wall
Album by Pink Floyd
That winter
He heard there was going to be
A week's worth of concerts
By Pink Floyd in Los Angeles
A monstrous show that was too large
To drag around the country

He had listened to Pink Floyd
A lot the previous year
Stoned on acid and pot

Sometimes listening to a Floyd album
On drugs
All the way through
From beginning to end
Became a practice exercise in paranoia damage control
The strange music and sounds
Inducing mild panic in the twitching drug bewildered mind
Leading the thoughts down a winding
Path of weird spiraling noise
That coil wrapped back into and out of itself
Going on forever
Ending up and coming out of nowhere
Frightening intensity that usually made him forget
He was only listening to a record

He once spent an excruciating almost intolerably unbearable evening
Sitting in the basement
Of a friend of his cousins
Smoking thai stick on top of blotter acid
Listening to all 4 sides of Pink Floyd's Ummagumma album
Straight through
Overriding the strong necessant urge to run from the house
Freaking and screaming out into the night
He knew after that he could handle any of the pseudo-bullshit
Challenges that life could present to the drug warped mind
Driving working
Cops parents aunts uncles bosses
Gas station attendants
Middle aged grocery store counter clerks
Would never again pose as problems

He didn't have a concert ticket for the Pink Floyd shows
He knew he wouldn't have any money
To buy a ticket when he got out to Los Angeles
He just wanted to go there
Just to see what would happen
If he did

He was drunk when he boarded the train
 He spent the afternoon drinking beer in the station
 With the last few dollars
 Left over from his unemployment check
 His mother found him in the line
 Waiting to get on the train
 He told her that he never wanted to see her
 Or anybody else that he knew again
 He promised that he was leaving for good
 This time

He was out of money
 By the time he got on the train
 He didn't have any suitcase or luggage
 All he had was his ticket
 And a jar of purple caviar
 He had no concerns about where he was going to stay
 Or how he was going to eat
 He hadn't slept an hour in almost two weeks
 None of this bothered him
 It didn't even enter into his thoughts

It didn't take him long to find somebody with dope on the train
 He made quick friends with a woman that had some hash
 She had been on the train already
 Before it got to Chicago
 She was weird looking
 Too weird almost for even him
 She was dirty greasy unkempt
 Obviously traveling for days
 She talked with a lockjawed incoherence
 Reminding him of the nuthouse drugs he had taken
 The previous year
 That left him unable to talk
 His tongue a granite slab
 In a rusted quiet frozen steel trap

He smoked her hash in the bathroom
 Venting the smoke out of the bathroom window
 He let her have some of the purple caviar he bought in the station
 She bought beers for him

One of the conductors took him aside
 Told him to be careful because
 She looked like she might have some kind of disease
 The conductor didn't say what kind of a disease

He wondered where she was from
 He couldn't tell if she was even an american
 Her speech was guttural
 An unintelligible almost indecipherable noise

She wore army pants and combat boots
 She had on a tanktop
 Revealing a healthy untrimmed crop of armpit hair
 Leading to him wonder if she was european
 Or a bohemian lower east side punk rock woman
 From the New York he had read about in rock music magazines
 She almost looked like a female Joey Ramone
 He wondered if she was escaped from a mental hospital
 She had a bottle of anti-seizure medication
 Her hair was a greasy dirty ethnic dark black
 Her eyes looked oriental behind the thick heavy
 Black framed glasses she wore
 He thought that she might be
 An italian-chinese communist militant marxist manifesto woman

He could tell that the other passengers
 The normal people traveling with their families
 Were afraid of her
 Making his weirdness seem less bizarre
 In comparison

He started thinking that she was really
 Some famous person that he knew
 But was unable to recognize
 Traveling undercover
 An incognitoed shamle disguise
 Or a strung out wreck
 Fleeing from success
 An example of excessed decadence
 Gone undercover
 Withdrawn into an undiscovered hiding
 At one point she started telling him
 That she was Jerry Rubin
 Laughing at him
 Sensing his paranoid imagination
 Reading secrecy
 Conspiracy
 Into her being there

It was too weird for him
 In the back of his mind
 He knew that reality had once again crumbled for him
 When he got onto that train
 There was no use trying to sift through
 Or make sense of the ashes

He found another passenger with dope
 A sailor from Boston
 On the way back to a base in San Diego
 After an end of basic training leave
 East coast italian slick
 Several generation american watered down sharp

Looking like a young street lieutenant recruit
 Black uniform impeccable shine on his hair and his shoes

He caught a whiff of pot
 After the guy came out of the bathroom
 He cornered the guy
 More or less demanding
 That he share his stash
 Insinuating that there is no decorum
 In matters that are outside of the law
 Helping himself
 Making himself welcome
 Where he was not wanted
 He had gotten into the habit
 Of demanding that strangers share their dope with him
 Most of the time this worked

The sailor had a portable cassette player
 With a briefcase
 Full of cassette tapes
 A 12 tape for a penny selection of new music
 With some of the stuff that he had listened to
 When he was in highschool

He was impressed with the sailor
 The sailor was a young guy
 Managing a pot habit indiscreetly
 Looking like a professional
 Traveling with an expensive portable music setup
 In a briefcase
 Going back to the secured stability of a career in the navy

He felt like he was a complete fuck-up
 He thought that the sailor guy had everything
 That he had ever wanted
 He took a quick look at his life
 He wondered where in the hell
 He had gone wrong

He was too wound up to sleep on the train
 He prowled around the train at night
 Walking along the aisles of the cars
 Where people flop curled pretzled themselves
 In a twist of all sort of positions
 Hanging body parts over the edge of the seat
 Snoring open mouthed uncomfortable
 Unaware that he was sneaking amongst them
 Looking for any food or cans of pop
 That he might be able to steal

He quietly turned the knobs on every door
 Going into the compartment areas

Of the train
Where he had no business or reason to be

He snuck into the empty sleeping berth cars
Sitting around until he got bored
The constant urge for stimulation
Driving him to move on to whatever was next

He was caught by one of the conductors
Stealing a loaf of bread
In the middle of the night
From the kitchen car
He told the conductor he was hungry
He thought that he would get to keep the bread
Because the conductor was black
He thought that the conductor must have known
What it was like to be hungry
The conductor put the bread back
Telling him to stay the hell out of there

He started thinking about what he would do
When he got out to Los Angeles
He didn't think too much about it
His mental state wasn't conducive
To any rational type of contemplative consideration
All he could focus on was the moment
He was reduced to reaction
To whatever was in the immediate vicinity
His field of attention quickly disintegrated
He needed continual interaction
Moving to keep himself awake

He told himself that he could be
A movie actor
That somewhere there was a movie guy
In Los Angeles just waiting
For somebody like him
He was convinced that he could do anything
Once he got there

All he had to do was keep himself awake
Until he got out there

On the second morning of the train ride
The train stopped in Arizona
The bright cool green blue
Early February spring
In the west
Was a world away from the snow piled Chicago winter

He thought about his father

Living out there
 Somewhere in Arizona
 In and out of men's hotels
 VA alky ward drunk driving jail cells

He hadn't seen or heard from his father
 In a couple of years
 This is the closest he would get to him
 He wondered if his father could sense
 That he was there
 In the same state

He arrived in Los Angeles
 On a sunday afternoon
 All of the people that he met
 On the train
 Quickly evaporated in the station
 Going the separate ways
 That their lives would take them
 He was left alone
 For the first time
 Since he had begun the trip

He walked out of the spanish style LA train station
 Leaving all of the other passengers
 Their baggage
 And the people that had come to meet them
 Behind him

He didn't know where he was at
 He didn't care
 He vaguely realized that he was alone
 Cut adrift from the safety nets
 That he had worn out in an overextension of abuses

He was 2000 miles away
 From his mother and stepfathers home
 Where he could show up every few days for a shower
 And a change of clothes

He was beyond the grace
 Of his younger sister's patient generosity
 That could keep him supplied in cigarette six pack money
 Whenever he was totally broke

He was out of touch
 With his friends and his drinking age cousins
 That would pick him up and cart his ass to bars and parties
 Too far away for him to walk

He was without the help
 Of his step brothers that left

Loose change lying around the house and never said anything
When they knew damn well that he was pocketing it

He had broken free of everything
He was finally out
On his own

He unknowingly found the LA skid row district
Walking without purpose
Destinationless
Outside of the train station
Instinctively following the strewn haphazard trail
Marked by empties
Bottles with Nighttrain Thunderbird Olde English 800 tiger labels
Tipped over drop dry broken
Smashed into shiny pieces on the pavement

He was pulled off the sidewalk
Coaxed into a student barbershop place
He felt like it was part of the starting new process
Leaving an 8 month beard and six inches of hair
Along with all thoughts of Illinois
For the barber sweep's broom

The people at the barbershop told him
There was a mission
Over on Main Street
He got directions to the place
Then immediately forgot them

He knew he would get there
Sooner or later

He spent his first night in LA
Wandering the downtown area
Excited
Wide awake
Hyper on the strange adventure of the unknown

He thought it was a bum's paradise
Where people could stay outside
Year round
Without fear of freezing or dying
In the cold

He saw people parking shopping carts
Full of odd scraped wire cloth junk
In doorways along the sidewalk
Bedding down on cardboard
For the night
In their own private room

He walked up and down
 The streets tirelessly
 Becoming familiar with the area
 Waiting for the rest of the life
 That the morning guaranteed

The first sun brought the bums out
 The early birds
 Oldtimers drinking whiskey
 At six in the morning
 A natural occurrence
 Like they had been born to do that
 Like they had done that every day of their life

He bummed cigarettes with gulps of their booze
 He kept thinking that the old guys were
 Movie extras
 Just off the set got paid
 Waiting for the next western to be shot
 When they would move around slow backgrounds
 Dressed like 1887 colorado on the trail cowboys

The old guys started dropping
 Movie names
 Lee Marvin
 Marlon Brando
 He wondered if it was crazy drunken dreaming bullshit

He started to think that the whole town was
 A big movie lot
 A hollywood backdrop fantasy set city downtown
 Made to look real
 For the fools that didn't know what was going on
 For the fools that wanted to believe it was all real

He even wondered if the old men
 Were acting in a movie right then
 The whole conversation taken down on film
 By a camera hidden somewhere nearby
 A movie shot in real time
 With all the drudge of real life to be taken out later

He started thinking that any encounter
 Could be a screen test
 He thought that all the bums knew what was going on
 Each one hoping to impress someone
 Get a break
 With a part in a movie

He set down his christmas brown leather jacket

On the window sill
Of a dirty brick building along the sidewalk

He walked down the street several minutes
Then came back to where he left the jacket
Half wondering if it would still be there

The jacket along with the wallet
He left in the inside lining pocket
Had disappeared as soon as he walked away from it

His state of Illinois identification card
And a social security card
With an 11 year old's signature on it
Was gone with the wallet

He didn't think he would need any of that
The jacket
The ID cards
Or the wallet

His first concern was to find the sports coliseum
Where the Pink Floyd concerts were going to be
It took a couple of hours
Asking directions from strangers
Walking the wrong way
Up and down streets he was unfamiliar with
To find his way to the coliseum
Then back downtown to the skid row district

He wanted to make sure that he knew
How to get to the coliseum
No matter how drunk stoned tired
Or out of his mind he was

He walked back to the coliseum
Again just for practice
To make sure that he really knew the way

He wandered the row until he found
The rescue mission
With the JESUS SAVES sign
On South Main Street

It was the middle of february monday los angeles afternoon
Old bums were already lined up
Outside the door
Waiting to get in

He was told the routine
He had to sit in chapel service

To get dinner

He hadn't eaten anything
Since he left Illinois
The friday before

He thought the chapel was a joke
The room was filled with smelling drunken dirty
Farting filthy old men indians mexicans

The men were made to sit in chairs
Waiting for the service to start
Every few minutes somebody would fall
Out of their chair
Onto the floor
Then somebody else would yell
Man down
Like the guy was a battlefield casualty

The front doors were locked
When the service started

He sat in a mindless thoughtless rumination
With several hundred other men
Most of them old
While a non-denominational sermon was preached
The men sat patiently
While jesus glory of the lord hymns were sung
Waiting to be let at the food

It reminded him of lining up
For meals when he was locked up
On the state of Illinois mental ward
The year before

Several of the bums couldn't sit
Through the sermon
It became an arduous ordeal
A torture to keep from yelling out screaming obscenities
Before the service was over
Getting thrown back out into the street
With no supper
After waiting around outside for hours

He thought the people running
The mission were petty tyrants
Bending men in uncomfortable procedure
Standing waiting sitting silence waiting
Lining them up
Before allowing them to eat

He got up from the folding chairs
With the rest of the men

Following them to the dining area
Next to the church service room

Dinner was a bowl of watery barley gruel
Day and a half old restaurant donated bread rolls
Of varying texture and consistency
And a tin cup of black coffee

He complained out loud about the food
He still wasn't as appreciative
Or as hungry
As the other men

He was told that he could sleep at the mission
If he got there by 8 o'clock at night
After that the front doors were locked

He thought that was fine for old farts
He wanted to move around
Trying to find ways of getting drunk and high

He spent the night walking
Around the district
In a cold damp steady drizzly rain

He built a bonfire in a rusty 55 gallon drum
The way he thought that a bum would
Then stood around it with some mexicans
Waiting on the morning

He spent the first few days
Tramping tirelessly the workday LA downtown sidewalks
He bummed cigarettes from any stranger
That he happened to see smoking
He was able to get enough slugs and swallows of booze
Throughout the course of the day
To keep in a state of mild drunkenness
He showed up at the mission for meals

He used the shower facilities
In the mission basement
He was able to shave crap
And get a clean shirt down there

He left his underwear in a garbage can
Because it was starting to stink
He thought it was important
Not to look or smell like a bum

It rained almost every night

The first week he was there

He would walk around until the streets died down
Getting himself tired wet with damp cold chills

He showed up at the mission in the middle of the night
The people at the mission would let him in
To spend the night in the basement on gray wooden benches
With other men who missed the 8 o'clock bedcheck

He never lasted the whole night in the basement
He was usually thrown out bodily
For being a noisy disruptive awake all night nuisance
He would find a dry corner to huddle
In an alley behind a garbage can
In a doorway on a deserted street
Or in the hallway of a building with an unlocked door
He would come back to the mission in the morning for breakfast

He thought this was too easy
Food shelter a place to clean up
He thought that he could live like that forever

He spent his first friday night in LA
Puking in the gutter outside of the mission
Hot burning gut torrents of barley
Empty stomach acid bile

The bums lined up on the rainy sidewalk
Laughed at him
Like he was a 16 year old kid
Two quarts full of beer of beer and piss

He wasn't drunk but he wished that he was
After he was through vomiting
Some guy fresh from the nuthouse
With a bottle of outpatient schizophrenic downers
Gave him a handful of pills
He swallowed them down
With warm brown bag bottle beer
Then went off to walk alone through the night

He quickly settled into a downtown LA skidrow existence routine

He bummed cigarettes from strangers
He showed up at the mission for the twice a day mealtimes

He walked all over the downtown area
Making sure he was able to find his way back to the mission

He practiced walking to the sports coliseum

Where the Pink Floyd concerts were going to be

He made fast volatile friendships
With other people on the row
Loose connive scheme hustle partnership scrounges
With alcohol as the main objective

He supplemented his mission meals
With packets of sugar stolen
From the tables of restaurants
Quickly shoving the paper packets into his mouth
On his way out of the door
After being refused the use of the washroom facilities
While the restaurant proprietor authorities
Chased after him
Threatening to call the police

He filled his pockets
With books of matches
Paperclips and safety pins
Found on the sidewalk
Not yet rusty

He saw himself as a tooled down
Younger
More efficient
Version of the classic
Downtown paper shopping bag man

He kept himself awake
By incessant moving and talking
Never staying still long enough
To let the weeks of sleepless tired exhaustion
Sneak up on him

He saw the cops
Beating drunken long haired indian mexicans
On the head
With their skull and shoulder scarred club sticks
Telling them that they had been warned before
Not to come back to the area

He saw young black guys
Being handcuffed and taken away
Regularly by the police

One guy told him that he got out of jail
By digging shit from out of his ass
Then eating it
Right in front of the cops

He found out it wasn't like Chicago

Where you spent the night in a cell
 Got a baloney sandwich in the morning
 Had a number written on your hand
 Went up before the judge when your number was called
 Then got let loose on the rest of the morning
 With hundreds of other men

He found out that in LA it was a minimum
 30 days for the stupidest infraction nonsense bullshit excuse

He wondered why the cops never bothered him
 He wondered why a lot of the cops looked
 Like the guy that played third base for the Dodgers

He went to a downtown LA indoor shopping center
 The place had a water fountain inside
 Spotted with people's wishing prayer coins

He took off his shoes and rolled up his pants
 Waded into the shin deep water
 Scooped up hundreds of coins from the bottom
 There were pennies quarters nickels dimes
 Coins the size of half dollars
 With spanish writing on them

Nobody said anything to him
 He went to a food stand next to the fountain
 Ordered some food then sat down to eat it
 He was halfway through his meal when he was asked to leave
 He left by security guard escort
 With his half eaten meal in hand
 Pockets loaded with random change

He thought rich people were fools
 He thought that they didn't know that
 Everything they had could be just as easily taken away
 Just like the coins they wished on and tossed
 Into their downtown indoor shopping mall fountain
 Everything they had was there for the taking
 There would be nothing they could do about it

He felt sorry for them
 Softened and luxuriated by easy living
 They were defenseless

He knew that if the hordes
 Ever came trampling in upon them
 In the brute pent-up fevers of physical force
 To take away and destroy all that they had
 That the matter wouldn't end
 With just a handful of penny coins
 Wished into the bottom of a fountain

He was always being bothered by men
Asking him to have sex

It used to upset him
Until he learned not to take it personally
Until he realized
He was just a statistic
In somebody's experience of tried determined calculation
That specifically guaranteed
When a given number of people
Were asked if they wanted to have sex
Somewhere a yes was going to turn up

Most men left him alone after
He told them no

The more persistent
Willing to invest time men
Never asked up front for sex
They tried plying him
With staggering amounts of liquor drug combinations
Only to realize hours later
That he was a semi-dangerous
Out of control maniac
Who wasn't about to succumb or pass out

He was followed one night
By a big muscular mexican guy
Insisting he have sex with him

The guy leeches onto him
On a dark middle of the night LA downtown skidrow street
He was drunk tired
Robot walking
Zombie stomping
Half blind
Up and down the sidewalks
He must have looked like easy pickings

The guy half trotted to keep up with him
Demanding to have sex

He collected enough sense to recognize
The threat of the situation
He was alone out there
In the middle of the night
With this guy that wouldn't leave him alone

He went a few more blocks
With the guy still on the hound

A few feet behind him

He seized upon a wobbly stop sign
 Standing loose in the crumbled asphalt entrance of an empty parking lot
 He wrenched the sign post out of the ground
 Then spear chuck heaved it javelin style
 In the general direction of the guy's head

After the seven foot sign post stopped its skidding crash
 He ran it down
 Picked it up
 Then battle axe brandished it
 Stop sign machete wielding
 He took some wild ball bat swings for the guy
 Just missing him
 He told the guy he would poleax him
 Sledge hammer drive the edge of the stop sign
 Through the top of his head
 Into his chest
 Bust his skull right down in half

He got the guy running
 Chased him off into the dark
 Letting him know that he wasn't fucking around
 He carried the sign around the rest of night
 Not sure if the guy would be back

He wondered how many weaker more vulnerable
 Kids out on the street for the first time
 Caved-in buckled to the pressure
 Of the sexual predators

He wondered if that's how it felt for a woman
 To be badgered and pressured for sex
 By a man much stronger
 Larger than herself

He happened upon the LA greyhound bus depot
 After he had been out there for a week

It was only a few blocks away from the mission
 Near a police station

The LA bus station wasn't like the one in Chicago
 It was a low grade dive
 Late night haunt of cheap sleaze scum vice artists
 It was small
 Stop and go dull
 Not like the allnight hangout action in Chicago

He spent the better part of one rainy night there
 Mainly riding the escalator

Continuously going up and down
 For an hour and a half straight at one point
 In a full view taunt of the bus station security guards
 Claiming in a loud voice that he wasn't loitering

Whenever he was making deliberate trouble like this
 He always vocalized in a loud voice
 What he thought the people observing him were thinking

He thought this stopped their wheels from spinning
 Dead right in their tracks
 Derailing them into helpless inaction
 He let people know out loud
 Right in the front
 What kind of bullshit they would be in for
 If they were going to try to do something about him

He would tell them what they thought
 They were going to do
 Then he would tell them
 Why they weren't going to do it

He did this not by talking to them
 But by talking outloud
 As if to himself
 Loud enough for them to hear him

He did this to cops security guards
 Anybody harboring an idea of exercising authority
 In response to him

This verbal offensive usually worked
 He was an obvious lunatic
 Better off left alone

He noticed he was different
 From the other young guys on the row

The men at the mission were generally divided
 Between young guys like himself
 In their late teens early twenties
 And old guys past middle age bordering elderly
 There wasn't too much in between

This is where men came from
 Or this is where they wound up
 This was the start and the end of the line

The time in between was spent
 Somewhere out in the workworld
 Living in homes with families
 Building up something

That could be squandered
 Pissed away in a slow degenerative course of ruin
 Inevitably bound for the gutter

He was one of the young guys
 That somehow managed
 Never to get started

He noticed the young bums avoided the old bums
 The young guys had no understanding of age
 The old guys had no patience with the young guys either

He spent parts of his day
 Hanging around with the old men
 He considered it an honor
 To be included in the old black men's
 Wine drinking gatherings

He almost felt like he was old

He wondered what it had been like
 For those black men
 Living in 1940's 50's and 60's america
 In a society indifferent to them
 Blind and unconcerned with them
 Bent on keeping them back
 Holding them down

He tried calculating the odds and bullshit
 They surmounted to survive
 The unending aggravation
 The high blood pressuring
 The heart attacking frustrate
 Of shitty living conditions
 Bad nutrition
 Limited opportunity
 Low paying jobs
 Raggedy clothes
 Poverty oppression
 The certainty of early death
 It only made them stronger

The old black men
 Were the toughest ones out there
 The hardness of life heard in their voices
 Deep down rough
 Time hewn scarred
 From throats ripped raw sandpaper scraped
 By years of cigarettes reefer and gutrot brown paper bag bottle booze
 Men who could never lose hope
 Because they had never been given hope

To begin with

He thought the old black men were special
 He treated them with respect
 Some of them told him
 That if they ever got settled
 Into a place of their own
 He was welcome to stay with them
 To sit around and drink beer
 And watch television
 In eight dollar a night rooms

He walked into a mexican section
 Somewhere near the heart of the downtown
 Shops with their wares
 Spread out in display
 Pouring out all over the sidewalk
 Like a cement paved curb lined version
 Of the Tia Juana outdoor tent flap roof bazaars in the dirt
 He had seen over the border from San Diego
 When he was a kid

Spanish music blared
 From the colored cloth curtained windows
 Of the stucco and bricked buildings
 Opening out onto the sidewalk

He could smell the chorizo frying
 Mixed in with the mid morning summer in february sounds
 Of children in cloth diapers

He picked out broken words from phrases
 Words he remembered from three years
 Of high school spanish class

He was aroused with strong sexual desire and longing
 That seemed to be attacking him from somewhere
 Hidden behind the walls in the rooms
 Of the buildings

The sense of sexual presence overwhelmed him
 He thought that sexual thoughts
 Like any other thoughts
 Were transmittable
 Wafting through the atmosphere
 Waiting to be received and acted upon
 He felt like he was being bombarded
 In mexican downtown sidewalk LA
 He didn't know where it was coming from

He looked on the street
 All he saw were middle aged spanish mexican gypsy women

He wondered where all of their daughters were
 He wondered who was putting the sexual hoodoo on him
 That poured the blood into his groin
 While he walked
 Brick hard
 Standing Hampton
 Grimacing deliberately
 Making eye contact with everybody
 To make sure they weren't looking
 At the stove pipe bulge
 Poking down the leg of his trousers
 He was convinced that somebody was fucking with him
 He had never lost control of himself like that before

The spell ended
 After he got the hell out of there
 He wanted to find a job
 Get himself off of the street
 Straightened out
 So that he could go back there
 And find himself a mexican woman
 From among all of the middle aged mexican gypsy women's daughters
 That he could live with
 That would make him a lunch for work everyday
 Burritos filled with scrambled eggs and potatoes
 Just like the lunches
 The mexican on the construction crew back in Joliet
 Used to bring to work

He knew that women were a lost cause
 His insanity joblessness homelessness and sleeplessness
 Resigned him to a future
 Of monkish isolation

He met a young woman
 On a sidewalk downtown bus stop bench
 She was waiting on a bus
 He was interested in the animal cracker cookies
 He saw scattered around under the bus stop bench

He sat at the opposite end of the bench
 Deciding to wait until the woman was gone
 Before crawling under the bench for the cookies

The woman started talking to him
 The way a semi-open minded not been too far around
 Cautious lonely person would talk
 To a person they just met
 Out of a charitable well meant extension of courtesy

He knew it was hopeless
 He wanted to string out some meaningless small talk

See how far it would lead
 Without him having to reveal
 That he was a bum
 He had no money
 He had no job
 He ate at the mission
 He stayed outside

He decided it wasn't worth it
 He was stringing himself along with false hope
 More than he was haggling her curiosity
 He went straight for the prize
 He crawled under the bus stop bench
 Picked up a handful of the animal cracker cookie pieces
 Stuffed them into his mouth
 Kept right on talking to her
 Pretending not to notice
 The look of recoiled horror in her face
 In response to what he had just done
 Like it was the most disgustingly terrifying thing
 She had ever seen

He chewed the cookies for a long time
 Pulverizing them into a sticky doughy mash
 The woman was obviously becoming afraid of him
 Before she escaped to the safety of the opening bus door
 He opened his mouth wide
 To let her get a good long last look at him
 With the masticated cookie glop
 Caked into his teeth
 Painting his tongue

He went off in search of some water
 An unattended spigot on the side of a building
 A restroom sink
 A drinking fountain
 To wash down the whole mess

He knew that he had better get used
 To being alone
 For a real long time

He bungled into a movie set
 Spread out all over a workday morning sidewalk
 Right in the heart of downtown LA
 Wooden canvas director's chairs
 Names printed across the back
 One advertising a TV mini-movie series star
 Peter Strauss

He aimed himself for the table
 Covered with half rifled donut boxes and cartons of milk
 He was able to shove two donuts into his mouth

Before a guy asked him what he was doing
 He guzzled a pint container of chocolate milk
 Belched in the guys face
 Told him he was doing nothing

The guy told him he was working for the movie
 A remake of an old 40's film
 Angel On My Shoulder

He told the guy he needed a job
 The guy told him that maybe he could work as an extra
 The guy gave him a phone number
 Told him to try calling
 In a couple of days

He called the movie guy
 Every day for a week
 First thing in the morning
 Out of the mission onto the street
 After the stale breakfast roll tin cup of coffee
 He started scrounging
 Hustling up coins
 For the telephone

He kept himself shower cleaned mission razor shaven
 He knew that he wouldn't get anywhere
 Unkempt smelly dirt crust mangy in raggedy filthy pissed-up clothes

The movie guy kept telling him to call back
 He called the guy back
 He made sure that he bugged the guy
 Every day

Scraping the change together in the morning
 Not losing the piece of paper with the number written on it
 For the telephone call
 Kept him occupied
 Helping the time to pass quicker
 Between meals

He kept calling the movie guy
 Until the guy told him
 There was an opening for an extra

The guy told him to wait
 On a corner the next morning
 Where the guy would pick him up
 Then take him out to the movie lot

He wound himself up into a quiet excitement
 He made damned sure the afternoon before

That he knew how to get to the corner
Where he was supposed to wait for the guy

He wondered if the guy was really going to show up
He wondered why the guy was willing
To go out of the way for him
He wondered if it was all
A patiently long drawn out variation
Of some pathetically tired buttfuck scheme

He decided if it was an empty double talk bluff
Ulterior motivated bullshit disguise
He was going to be right there
To call it for whatever it was

He waited on the corner for the guy from the movie
He got there an hour early
Making sure that there was no skidrow drunken
Missed appointment hour late lost stupidity screwups

He anchored himself on the corner
He bummed cigarettes from passing strangers
That were smoking

He insulted people on their way to work
Keeping up the clown routine
Until it was almost time for the guy to be there

He twisted himself up
Belligerent talking out loud
Lunatic rant babble muttering
To no one in particular
While he was waiting on the corner
For the movie guy

He knew that he had to switch gears fast
He had to depress himself
Get real quiet real quick
He still retained the vague amount of sense
Necessary for understanding the obvious
Most people would have an instinctive fear
Of a sleep deprived out loud psychotic maniac

He started thinking it was all a bunch of crap
When the guy was getting to be a half hour late
He started thinking that maybe the guy had sent
Somebody down there before hand
To see if he was ok

He started thinking that the guy wasn't going to show
Because of the obnoxious shit he was doing
While he was waiting down on the corner

He waited on the corner
Until the movie guy showed up
Almost an hour late

His bullshit detector went into activation
When the movie guy said that
They had to stop off at his apartment
Before they went out to the movie lot

The movie guy was an indian
In his late 30's

The movie guy gave him a shirt to wear
A blue polyester turtleneck
Told him that he looked better with that on

The movie guy told him that he worked for a company
That hired extras for the movies
The movie guy told him that he wanted to make a movie
Someday about an indian that goes back
To the american midwest reservation plains
To rediscover his lost broken heritage
Until then
He was just marking time

He asked the movie guy if he had any drugs
The movie guy asked him if he was a cop

The movie guy drove him out to a lot
In Culver City
He was told to wait around
With some other people
That were going to be extras

He waited in the living room
Of a fake house that had no roof
He was told that he was to wait with the others
For the assistant director

He started to realize that it was all a joke
He wondered how hard it was to be an actor
To drop emotions on a dime
Laugh cry
Until somebody yells cut

He thought of all the stories
He had heard of actors party drinking drug taking
He thought about all the times he had went
To work in the morning after pounding alcohol hard
Late into the after midnight hours

Hung over skull busted
Stomach raw watery gut bowel turmoil

He remembered how useless he was on some of those mornings
He wondered if that was how actors showed up
For work in the morning
Spent tired wiped out
Still wasted from the night before

He wondered how hard it must be
To be an actor
How hard was a job
That could be done
While hungover burnt half drunk and stoned

He stood around with the other people
Waiting for the movie AD
Waiting to be extras

He waited with an elderly couple
Retired probably picking up a few extra bucks
Cashing in a long overdue years lost in the mail check
For a dream that never came out right
The celluloid immortality that escaped with their youth

He stood watching them
Overeager in their nervous childlike anxiousness
He was waiting for them to bust out
Into some cornball comic-serio soft shoe song and dance routine
Anything to catch the attention of a movie big shot
That might happen to be fragmenting their way

He waited with a real little kid
Seven or eight years old
Bored probably intelligent for his age
Ants in his pants
Unable to stand still for long hyper quiet
He wondered why the kid wasn't in school

He looked at the other couple of people
Waiting around to be movie extras
He could tell that they had done
This kind of shit before
None of them wanted any part of him

He started to feel like some kind of a freak
Empty stomach hungry starving
Straight off of skid row
Wearing no socks or underwear
And some other guy's stupid blue polyester turtleneck shirt

He started mumble talking to himself

He wanted to see some camera action
 He didn't want to stand there like a sheep
 In a backdrop room full of idiots
 Waiting around for some asshole with a clip board

He wanted to tell somebody there
 To fuck the acting
 Let the film roll live
 He was crazy enough to believe that
 He could do anything

He remembered watching movies
 The year before when he was losing his mind
 Perpetually fried unable to get out of
 An acid trip that went on for months

He started thinking that
 The movies were real
 Based from some initial premise
 That was allowed to mushroom explode itself
 Into a feature length film

He had thought that scripts acting direction repeated takes
 Until it was gotten right
 Was a dull load of bullshit
 For highschool drama club memorize recite morons

He was convinced that the best movie actors
 Were given the licensed reign to just cut loose
 Right in front of the rolling camera
 Without a script or rehearsal
 Live time action sequences
 Later edited into a movie
 He wanted to be in a movie like that
 A real movie

He had no sense of the craft
 That went into movie making
 The stand around wait to do nothing patient idleness required

He was too chaotically unfocused
 To believe that movie making involved any amount of concentrated work

His name was put on a list
 He was told that he was hired as an extra
 He didn't know what he was an extra for
 Or what he was supposed to do

He was told that he earned 50 dollars
 For standing around that morning with the other extras
 Waiting for the assistant director

He was told that he could only get half of the money
 Because he wasn't a member
 Of the screen actors guild

He spent most of the money
 In the cafeteria on the movie lot
 He found his way back downtown to skid row
 He spent the rest of the money
 On pints of wine and quarts of beer
 He was broke and drunk
 When he got back to the mission
 For dinnertime

He went to the indoor sports arena
 Every night of the Pink Floyd shows
 He didn't have a ticket
 Or have a way to get inside
 He didn't bother to try getting inside
 To see and hear the show
 He just wanted to be there

He roamed around the concert area parking lots
 He walked the sidewalks outside the building
 With the crowd of concertgoers

On some of the nights
 He was run out of the area by the cops
 For being verbally antagonistic

He demanded alcohol and drugs from people
 He accused people of being undercover narcotics officers

He yelled Pink Floyd lyrics
 From the song Sheep on the Animals album
 At the people arriving making their way into the arena
 "Harmlessly passing your time in the grassland away"
 "Meek and obedient you follow the leader"
 "Have you heard the news the dogs are dead"
 "You better stay home and do as you're told"
 "Get out of the road if you want to grow old"

People laughed at him
 The way they would in mild amusement
 For any raving dispensable froth babblous idiot dement

He yelled Pink Floyd lyrics
 From the song Pigs on the Animals album
 At the uniformed security and cops covering the area
 "Big man pig man ha ha charade you are"
 "Pig stain on your fat chin"
 "You house proud town mouse ha ha charade you are"
 "You're trying to keep our feelings off the street"

"You got to stem the evil tide"

This was too much for the Los Angeles police to bear
 They screamed in his face
 Ordered him out of the area
 Baton arms cocked with ready violence
 Just stopping short of beating the living life and shit out of him
 Warning him to clear out of there quick

On the nights when he wasn't chased off
 Into the darkness
 For the walk back to skid row
 He paced drunken circles on the sidewalk
 Around the building
 Vaguely aware but not paying attention
 To the muffled reverberations of the music
 Heard outside of the arena

He rummaged through the sidewalk trash
 Left outside by the concertgoers
 He helped himself to discarded unopened cans of piss warm beer
 Unfinished bottles of wine
 Crumpled cigarettes cigars

He found letters and notes
 That seemed to be addressed to the band
 Among the strewn debris left outside the show

He read the dropped letters
 Wondering why they were left out there
 Wondering if somebody had placed them there
 Purposely
 For some paper sidewalk trash sifting fool
 To pick up
 Read and wonder
 About their bizarrely vague contents

He watched the people pour out of the hall
 After the shows were over
 The crowd was young comfortable affluent privileged white
 He was reminded of the rich parent kids he saw during high school
 He resented the obvious implications
 Of easy money
 Lazy opportunity
 Available dope
 Reliable automobiles
 Concert ticket connections

One of the nights during the week of the shows
 He stayed in the area of the arena

Long after all of the people had left

He saw a guy come from out of the arena
 The guy had rock 'n' roll written all over
 Long black hair mane mustache boot leather jacket levi denim blue
 A woman on each arm
 With a large wine gallon jug shaped paper sack in hand
 An english hippie let loose
 On the 2 o'clock in the morning after the show american night

He watched them from across the street
 For the brief moment
 Before they disappeared into the shadowed treelined darkness

He thought about the rock and roll dream
 That he had been trying to buy into since he was a kid
 He thought about drinking drug taking women chasing
 He thought about his con-artist hustle girl friend
 Back in Illinois

He had been trying to be that guy for years

He remembered the first time he heard Pink Floyd
 In the 1973 summer after 8th grade
 His only friend's brother came home
 From the Viet Nam war navy Philipppines
 With a small pile of japanese import Pink Floyd albums
 And a slight wartime case
 Of lingering depressive unexplainably meandering psychosis

When his friend's brother went to therapy
 At the VA in the afternoon
 He sat in his friend's brother's room
 In a ceremoniously silent religiosity
 Listening to Pink Floyd records with his friend
 On a bilge smuggled contraband asian stereo

The Pink Floyd music represented
 A paranoia and fear
 A slow plunging glimpse into the mysterious abyss of madness
 That he was unable then at the time to understand

He found pieces of styrofoam
 Parts of the metaphorical wall
 Made up of school teachers mothers and women
 That Pink Floyd was building to tear down each night
 On the sidewalk after the shows

He carried the found pieces of the wall
 Back to the mission on skid row
 With the stoic determination of a bum pushing around a shopping cart

Loaded with useless unsalvageable worthless junk

He was convinced that the styrofoam pieces
 With the brick block shaped outlines formed into them
 Were important
 Physical evidence that someone had busted through
 Torn into
 The Wall

He carried the scraps of wall prop
 Along with some of the notes found on the ground
 Back to the mission
 Determined not to lose any of it
 To the sidetracks
 Of inevitable obstacles
 That were sure to be encountered along the way

He was let into the mission chapel area
 With his plastic bag of styrofoam paper souvenir garbage
 To sit out the rest of the night
 In a noisy room full of drunken farting snoring men
 Who had showed up at the mission
 During the night after the bedcheck time

He passed out in one the room's rows of folding chairs
 Waking up a half hour later to the realization
 His pieces of the wall were gone
 Along with a half smoked found on the ground package of marlboros
 That somebody picked from his shirt pocket

He wondered why somebody would bother to steal
 Such an obviously useless collection of trash

He had been outside most of every night
 For over 3 weeks
 In a continuous riot of sustained never letting up motion

He walk stomp roam prowled
 Around the downtown area all night
 Stopping at the mission to sit in a chair
 Or go down to the basement
 Until he had to be forcibly kicked out
 For causing repeated disturbances

He couldn't sit still
 He couldn't keep his mouth shut
 He kept himself moving
 He would nod out for a few minutes
 Then shake himself loose from the clutching claw grip
 Of beckonous sleep

He was doing anything he could

To keep himself awake

It was easy to stay awake during the day
 With the incessant glaring chrome bright sunlight
 Automobile exhaust driven activitied noise
 Incessant feed waste products
 Of the hungering grind
 Workers jostling about positions on foot
 Showing up every morning for work
 Cup of coffee empty stomach rushing shirt tail tucked tie jitters
 Clogging the office worker district sidewalks
 In a sun soaked shoe polish brown lunchtime
 That seemed to last all afternoon
 Until the harried commuter in an almost panic flight
 Cleared the downtown for the outlying vicinity
 At the end of the day before it got too dark

He was convinced that all of the awake people
 Had a slight electrical mental psychic energy
 Discharged into the city's atmosphere
 The collected thought remnant field
 Rising up from one million brains
 That he was able to tune into
 Pick up on
 To jump juice start his worn down dead batteries
 To keep his own brain awake

He sensed the dissipation of this energy
 When everybody was asleep
 There was nothing left
 To keep him going

The nights kept getting longer
 The lonely late all alone in the silence down time
 When most everything folded into itself
 For the rest it badly needed
 He was left to fend for himself
 With frayed to the burnt melted wire wits
 Calling on muscle action to bone will power
 Fighting the combined cumulative effects
 Of alcohol hunger insanity fatigue
 Doing whatever he could to stay awake

He put the sleep off for as long as he could
 He knew once he started sleeping
 It would be the start of the imminent crash

He gradually fell into the rescue mission upstairs bedtime routine
 With a hundred other tired old men nowhere else to go bums

He slept in his clothes
 In turned once a week white sheets
 Under raggedy wool blend cotton threadbare torn blankets

He slept with his shoes on
 The laces tied tight in triple knot maze complexity confusion
 To make sure they were still there
 When he woke up

Everybody had to be in the wrack early
 The lights were shut off while the noise
 Drunk guys hollering out loud to nobody in particular
 Car engines winding wide open dry sputtering loud low on oil
 Bald tires squealing over dry pavement around corners
 Still coursed life through the streets outside

A guy with a flashlight dozed
 Half bored magazine comic book page staring monotony
 Making low voiced get back to bed small talk
 With the guys that kept getting up to piss

The lights were turned back up in the morning
 To roust everybody out
 For another tortuous sit through a sermon with hymns
 Before being allowed to eat
 Day old restaurant cast out leftover stale handouts
 That could be had from one of a dozen trash dumpsters

Sleeping upstairs at the mission reminded him
 Of being in the mental hospital

When he spent the night sleeping at the mission
 It was a straight eight hour plunge
 Into an unknown void of empty black nowhere

He closed his eyes to the street lit dusk darkened room
 Then opened them up to the sudden blast of morning fluorescence
 There was nothing in between
 It had all lasted a second
 An instant lost somewhere between moments

He didn't have a drop left to dream
 Every neural path was exhausted dry
 There was nothing left
 Halfcooked or part of the way baked anywhere
 In his brain
 He had nothing left to unload

He remembered when he had been up for months
 The year before
 When he felt like he was permanently tripping on acid

He was convinced that his mind
 Had no way of telling if it was awake
 Or if it was dreaming

He thought that he had busted through the fine line
 Barrier between consciousness and unconsciousness
 Reality wasn't even considered
 Part of the equation

He was afraid that if he went to sleep
 He would lose the edge he seemed to have
 Over everything

He thought that sleep would rob him
 Of the power
 To think on the run
 To talk anybody down
 To not feel physical pain
 To possess relentless stamina
 To forget about hunger
 To have no fear
 To do anything
 That to him seemed possible

He started to believe
 That he would never have to sleep again
 For the rest of his life

He thought about Jim Morrison of the Doors
 While walking the late afternoon
 Low industrial brick building gray cracked sidewalk weed stretches

He found a bar called the Hard Rock Cafe like the one
 On the Morrison Hotel Doors album back cover
 The outside of the bar was painted blue
 It wasn't red like the album cover

He imagined the mythical bearded bellied Morrison
 Kindling the slow March afternoon tavern darkness
 With brown bottles of beer
 Marlboro cigarettes
 Shot of whisky ring circle damp coaster ashtray on the bar
 Drunken ramble irish bard lyrical poet
 Staring at the wall facing the bar
 Seeing nothing
 Thinking

He met a girl at the bus station
 Army jacket green hiking boot duffle bagged off the bus

On her way to Venice Beach

He told her that blood stained the roots
 Of the palm trees in Venice
 He wanted to go with her
 To live on the beach at Venice
 Like an acid frying 1965 Jim Morrison
 Walking around singing out loud
 Making up songs in his head

He was afraid of leaving the downtown area
 The haven of mission food
 Last chance open all night late resort sanctuary

He remembered how he ended up
 Drinking ocean water
 The year before on Miami Beach Collins Avenue
 After a week without food

He didn't think he could survive
 On the beach

He listened to the still night sound
 Of constantly moving through LA traffic
 Thinking about the Doors LA Woman album

LA Woman had always made him think
 About the late 60's Los Angeles suburb days
 Of his nine and ten year old childhood
 With a two sided Light My Fire 45

When his parents' marriage was crumbling
 When he was constantly riding in the car
 With one his parents
 All over the Los Angeles area
 Trying to find out what the other one was up to

On and off the freeways
 Endless car rides through
 Whittier
 West Covina
 Hollywood
 El Monte
 Arcadia
 Duarte
 Cucamonga
 Shitty stop light towns
 Mysterious spanish names

The unwilling spectator participant
 In a parent played child selfish adult dangerous game
 Of lying infidelitous deceit

Called on to side and defend
 By two people
 Who had no business being together
 In the long drawn throes of inevitable separation

The engine rev roaring into overdrive sound
 Of the guitar
 In the beginning of LA Woman
 With the broken glass shard piano fragments
 Always made him think of the nights
 Listening to the sound of the road under the wheels
 Driven around in endless circles by one of his parents
 Divorce bound insanity
 Torn apart family tragedy
 In the golden sunset
 Of late 1960's southern california

He crouched in a 3 o'clock in the morning skid row alley
 Still long enough to remember
 Wanting to go back
 Then trying to find
 What that quiet boy staring out the passenger seat window
 Had left in the darkness
 Of those long ago warm Los Angeles nights

He walked around broke thinking
 About the 200 hundred dollar unemployment check
 With his name on it
 Back in Illinois

He saw mail for people
 Tacked up on a cork board
 On the supply office room wall
 In the basement shower stall area
 Of the mission

Out of date yellowing written on with ink envelope letters
 Fading backs of warped corner turned decayed postcards
 For shiftless on the move addressless men
 Waiting on the wall to be claimed

He thought about an old song
 He had heard on a Jim Croce record
 About a guy that had his mail sent
 To a post office box
 At a rescue mission

He started thinking that his parents
 Could mail his unemployment checks to the mission
 He could put himself together
 With some food a room then a job
 If he had that money

He decided to forget about the money
 It was worth losing the two hundred dollars
 Every two weeks
 Halfstarved sleepless living almost outdoors
 If he never had to see or hear
 From anybody that he knew back in Illinois

He walked around for a week
 Thinking about the unemployment check
 Waiting for him back in Illinois

He could think of a lot of ways
 To spend that couple hundred bucks

He finally caved in
 He picked up the phone
 Called his family collect
 Asked them to forward his checks
 To the mission

His mother told him to go to hell
 Told him to go hook up with his father
 Somewhere in Arizona

He had been out in LA for over a month
 He started wondering why he was there
 The Pink Floyd concerts were long over
 He knew there was no reason for being there

The semi-regular sleep at the mission
 Was weighing him down
 He was tired during the day
 Depressed hungry
 Alcohol twisted him into angry belligerence

He picked through restaurant garbage dumpsters
 For scraps of leftover thrown out half spoiled partially edible food

He started thinking about a place he had heard about
 Called Camarillo
 The nut house where Charlie Parker was locked up
 Somewhere back in the 1940's
 The place that Frank Zappa sang about
 With the woman that had underarm growth
 Like steel wool pads
 He thought about the woman
 He met on the train with bushy armpits and psych pills
 He wondered if she was at Camarillo

He thought it would be nice to crash

For a few months
 In a California nut house

He wondered how he could get himself locked up
 In a mental hospital in LA
 It wasn't like Chicago
 Where the bums were routinely picked up
 Then dumped off at a nuthouse or jail for the night
 There were too many bums in LA

He saw a maggoty lice infested beard bedraggled guy
 Spouting scriptures out loud
 On an after work downtown pedestrian pour sidewalk
 Reading disconnected sentences
 From a small pocket sized thumb smudged New Testament
 Then repeating them

The guy rant rail frothed delirious circles
 He stayed to watch to see what would happen
 He noticed in the middle fury of the tirade
 The guy shot him a wink
 Then kept up the idiotic repetitions

He thought that the guy was worn out from the street
 Tired hungry dirty rundown
 Doing something not too violently threatening
 To get locked up
 Anything to get pulled off of the street
 The guy almost looked happy
 When the police stepped into the ruckus
 Then disappointed for failing
 To get himself carted away

He started wondering what he would have to do
 To not get thrown in jail
 But locked into a nut house

He was getting tired of the skid row routine
 The snaky erupt at any second paranoid unreliability
 Of the people that frequented the mission neighborhood

The younger guys were jacked on frustrated violent energy
 Nobody had the common sense desire
 To back down shut up get the fuck out of the way
 Arguments exploded out of nowhere
 Over nothing
 The weakest and the oldest usually
 Ending up bloody mat head cut up scab bruise crusted

Reality drifted an in and out of focus haze
 It was mostly non-existent

People would believe anything everything or nothing
 His own insanity was fed
 By people telling him that the FBI
 Was following him
 Checking him out
 Seeing what he was up to

Everything was billowing pipe smoke
 Dream talk about imaginary yesterdays
 Bullshit about soon to be forgotten tomorrows

He was followed around for a couple of days
 By blue denim super fly afro guy
 Claiming to be a pimp

The guy loosely tagged on to him
 While he wandered the downtown during the day
 The guy was always 20 or 30 feet away
 Wherever he ended up
 Behind sun glassed stone face
 Watching him

The guy told him he was recruiting him
 For work in his stable
 He told the guy he wasn't interested
 In his chicken ranch ventures
 The guy just kept following him around

He had the loudest mouth
 Of anybody in the mission
 His maniac fearless outloud over the top
 Spontaneous gregariousness
 Annoyed people

He was too psychotic wild
 To be deterred by threats
 Or thwarted by ordinary violence
 Nobody was able to shut him up

Finally a guy heard enough exploded
 Grabbed him from behind
 Pressed the shiny blade of a switchblade knife
 Into the skin wrapped around his adams apple
 Then flung him around into the walls
 Of the mission basement
 With the knife against his throat

He had been out there for 5 weeks
 He decided it was time
 To get the hell out of there

He headed for the Greyhound bus depot
 The first step on the way out of town
 He latched onto a young guy
 Dressed up in a suit
 Out of place killing between connections time
 In the depot lobby

He tried running a scam on the kid
 Offering protection services
 Against the vultures
 That would pick an innocent like him clean
 Leaving him with just his underwear

He wheedled the kid with his bullshit exploits
 The kid supposedly got around the country a lot
 He told the kid how he demolished the poolside bar
 At the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach
 The year before
 The kid claimed to have heard about it

He told the kid that somebody was trying to kill him
 He had to get the hell off of LA skid row
 The kid gave him an unused bus ticket
 For upstate California Sacramento

He was on the next bus
 Heading for Sacramento

He was in a half panic excited bat out of hell glad to be going flight
 He didn't know what he was going to do
 In Sacramento

He got into Sacramento near sundown
 It was still like winter up there
 There was snow flying piled up frozen on the ground
 He was wearing a thin sweatshirt

The greyhound Sacramento depot was room sized
 With a counter some lockers a few chairs
 There was no way he could get anonymously lost hanging out there
 Until he figured out what to do next

Sacramento was clean new suburban
 There was no evidence of bums
 Or a skid row mission district
 He knew there was no way he could survive
 With no money or a coat

He spent the night wandering around shivering
 Unused to the sudden shock blast of still lingering winter cold

After being in the early spring southern california warmth

He picked through restaurant closing time trash
 As soon as the dish washers brought it to the curb
 One of the restaurant workers gave him a leftover sandwich
 After seeing him eating end of bread tomato onion rind lettuce scrape

He stood around on a corner for hours
 Not knowing where to go what to do
 He met all kinds of characters
 In the middle of the Sacramento night
 Claiming all kinds of fantastical probably made up bullshit lies

One guy the supposed younger brother
 Of a lead singer
 From a San Francisco well known famous rock band
 Jefferson Airplane spinoff tangent Starship
 On his way back from Reno
 With rock star party shot heroin punched the bartender in the face
 stories

On the make queers
 Drove up in cars
 Bothered him
 Offered him rides

He wasn't about to go anywhere
 He didn't know where in the hell he was at
 He knew the bus station was a few blocks away
 That was the only way he was getting out of there

He hung around the Sacramento bus station
 The next day
 Looking for something to turn up
 He knew it was hopeless

He kept thinking about his 400 hundred dollars
 In uncashed unemployment checks
 Sitting back in Illinois
 Not doing a goddamned thing

He broke down with the onset
 Of another out in the cold Sacramento early March night
 He called his mother collect
 Demanding his 400 dollars

His mother told him that
 They signed his name on his check
 Already cashed it
 Nobody wanted him to come back there

His mother finally agreed to send him a ticket

For the bus ride back to Illinois
 He promised to hand over his next unemployment check
 Directly to his parents

He wasn't going to be sent any money
 He was lucky he was getting a bus ticket

He had one more cold night to kill in Sacramento
 While he waited for his bus ticket
 That was supposed to be sent
 The next afternoon

He decided to stand out on the corner again
 To pass the night

A guy in a car stopped
 To talk with him
 He told the guy he was waiting
 To pick up a ticket in the afternoon
 So he could get the hell out of there

The guy told him that he could stay at his house
 Until he had to get the ticket
 He knew it was another buttfuck scheme
 He decided to go with the guy
 To get himself out of the cold

He kept the guy wide awake on edge all night
 He paced up down the floors of the guy's house
 He went into the bathroom to cleanup shampoo in the sink shave
 He came out after shaving with the razor blade in hand
 He wanted to let the guy know
 He was in no mood for bullshit or games
 He was ready to cut his way out
 Of anything

The guy offered him a hit off a bottle of amyl nitrate
 He took huge snorts of the bottle
 He thought it was like sniffing glue
 He thought it was a bullshit high
 He put the bottle in his pocket
 Told the guy he was keeping it

The guy finally got him out of there
 In the morning
 Drove him back to the bus station
 Where he had to wait another four hours
 For a ticket out of Sacramento

He let the people in the Sacramento bus station know
 That he was waiting for a ticket to be wired

Later that day
 He wasn't about to go anywhere until then
 Nobody had better think about trying to run him off
 Out onto the streets into the cold

He was loud verbally abusive obnoxious
 Pacing up and down the small bus depot
 He pushed just short of the point
 Where the cops would have to called in to take him away

The people working in the depot were waiting
 To see if somebody was actually going to send a ticket
 To this come from out of nowhere insane babbling nonsense moron

He worked himself into fever pitch maniac intensity
 Talking out loud walking up and down
 When the guy behind the desk announced his ticket

He quieted down
 While he waited for the bus
 He didn't want to get himself thrown in jail
 When he was almost out of there

He got on the bus back to Chicago
 With just his ticket
 He didn't have any money
 He knew it was going to be a long ride

He bummed cigarettes beers pills
 Anything he could get
 Off of the other passengers

The last half of the trip
 He was left with just the bottle of amyl nitrate
 He inhaled it constantly
 To forget about the hunger cramping his stomach

He waited in downtown Chicago
 For his mother to get off of work
 He rode the commuter train back to town with his mother

He was pissed off
 From riding a bus for two days
 With no money for food

He figured that somebody back there
 Owed him something

He got back home on a friday night
 He picked up right where he had been before he left
 Like he had never been gone

He had his hustler con artist girlfriend over
 He had his friends come over
 So he could hit them up
 For beer and cigarettes

He had the house in an uproar
 The very first night he was back
 Nobody that lived there wanted him around
 They let him know that right away

He didn't know what in the hell he was going to do

He had been relatively sober straight clear thinking drug free
 While he had been out in LA
 He was half way gotten back together

He unraveled as soon as he got back home
 He catapulted himself right over the edge
 With the sudden influx of easy constant access
 Readily available beer booze and reefer

He knew he was playing out the last act
 In his just starting to revolve door to the nuthouse psycho drama
 Everybody around him knew it too

He vowed with vehemence
 He wasn't going back this time
 They weren't going to take him in alive
 Nobody was going to lock him up and put him back
 On Thorazine again

He would scrape up a few dollars
 Enough for train fare to downtown Chicago
 Hang out at the bus station and the public library
 For a day and a half two days
 Then get his mother to pay his ride home
 When she was on her way back to town from work

He was tired hungry
 Outside half of the time cold
 He stopped sleeping again
 He was drinking all hours of the day
 He felt like he could keep this up forever

He headed out for downtown
 On a cold march saturday afternoon
 He put on his steel tongue flap shoes
 From when he worked on the railroad
 He knew it was going to be a rough night

He knew he was getting out somehow
Once and for all
For good

He kept thinking about New York
Saturday night live and John Belushi

He spent the afternoon playing pinball
At the bus station
With crushed coke cans
Under the pinball machine legs
Leveling it up
So the pinball wouldn't drain so easily

He went out when it was dark
To get something to eat
He wound up in a record store
Flipping through the Frank Sinatra section
Looking for the record Come Fly With Me
He kept thinking he was getting out of town that night
It was going to be Autumn in New York for him
Somehow

He spent his last couple of dollars
On a Frank Sinatra album called Come Dance With Me
One eye open
One eye closed
Crook finger
Everything on the record cover was blue

The indigo under neon florescent flush
Felt warm in his eyes
It reminded him of tripping on acid
Sitting in his car
Every imaginable shade of blue
In the middle of a rainbow

He spent the early evening
Hanging around the bus station
Broke carrying around a Frank Sinatra record
Wrapped in cellophane
He felt like something big was going to happen

He met a guy outside of the bus station
Around midnight
Asked him if wanted to get high
Pulled out a big plastic baggie of golden bud marijuana
Loaded pipes of it for him

He smoked a dozen bowls of the guy's pot

The guy kept loading
Saying here want some more
Not smoking any of it

He heard the guy talking
Like to himself
Or to somebody that could hear him

He figured the guy
For a queer
Or an undercover cop

He went back to the bus station
Drifted into a euphoric oblivion
He hadn't been stoned like that
In a long time

He went outside to move around
It was in the 20's
Hard driving late winter snow off Lake Michigan squall
He didn't even need a coat
He left it in the bus station

He walked around in bare arm shirt sleeves
Painless numb in a wonderland
He started thinking that he had transported himself
Trip warp dreamed himself
Right into the red appled heart of New York City

He didn't know where he was at
He didn't recognize anything
He knew he was on a rare high
He was going to ride it
For all that it was worth

He walked for a couple of hours
In the cold
With his Frank Sinatra record
Arms cut slash oozing blood
Ripped ragged in the windy Chicago cold

He headed back to the bus station
Three thirty in the morning
Running down low

He told a cop he was getting tired
The cop asked him if he wanted to go to jail
He told the cop let's go

The cops kept in the car for a long time

By himself
 With the heater blaring
 Cop dispatch radio squawking codes voices addresses

He still had his Frank Sinatra record
 He started to think that it was an important record
 Like it was Sinatra's own personal possession
 He had to give it back
 Before he was going anywhere

He shoved the album under the cop car seat
 He was driven to jail a few minutes later

He spent the rest of the night alone
 In a cell on a steel bunk
 Staring a grid onto the 11th and State Street cell ceiling

In the still dark sunday morning
 He was driven to the Cook County Jail
 For holiday court

He rode in a paddy wagon
 Chained to another guy
 Police truck bench full
 Of drunk stoned tired torn-up
 Late saturday night early sunday morning men

He took off his steel tongue railroad shoes
 Left them in the paddy wagon
 Walked in the cuff line
 Through the overnight gray dawn snow
 In his socks
 Thinking to hell with the railroad

He was about the only white guy
 Brought in that night
 He was given a whole cell to himself
 While he waited to go to court

He climbed on the bars
 Yelled and hollered
 Pissed on the floor

He asked the guys in the holding cell next to his
 For a cigarette
 They told him to reach around for one
 He stuck his arm in the next cell
 Eight hands grabbed hold of his arm
 Pulled on it
 Scratched it
 Punched it

Burned it with cigarettes

He yelled they got my arm
 Rattling the concrete walls
 They gave him his arm back

He went to holiday court in the morning
 Pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct
 Then was freed to go

He didn't know where he was going to go
 It was cold out
 There was snow on the ground
 He was a couple of miles away from downtown
 He had no money
 He didn't have a coat
 He didn't have any shoes
 He decided he wasn't going anywhere

He wandered out of the court area
 Wound up in some judge's chambers
 Babbling incoherent about thinking he was in New York
 Making no sense
 To the men left in charge of the city
 When the real guys in charge were at home asleep

He was told that it was New York in there
 But it was still going to be Chicago out there
 A cop was called
 To get his crazy ass out of there

The cop drove him to the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute
 They wouldn't take him there

Then the cop drove him to a place for alky's
 They wouldn't take him there
 He wasn't drunk

The cop was getting aggravated
 In no mood for this bullshit mickey mouse run around detail

The cop drove him back to the Psychiatric Institute
 Told the people that this guy was going to be on
 Real People that week
 That got him
 In the door

He spent the first day in the hospital
 Walking up and down the corridors
 Talking at people

Bumming cigarettes

The weekend crew was on
Nobody cared what he did
As long as it was quiet

He stayed up late with another guy
Watching a Jim Brown prison movie on television
Thinking the movie was real
Wondering when they were going to try to force him
To go to sleep

He stared out the 8 9 or 10th floor window
Of the unit in the building he was in
Down at the dark Chicago street light lit glow below
Everything was tinted green hazy

He started thinking that the whole city was submerged
Underwater from some cataclysmic flood

He thought he was being kept in the hospital
Because he was an important person
Like some vital national resource
That couldn't be left to just die out on the late winter streets
With no coat or pair of shoes

He still didn't realize that
For all intents and purposes
He had gone dangerously out of his mind
Again

He got himself into trouble immediately
With the monday morning no nonsense hospital ward staff

He found himself strapped down on a gurney
Shot full of Haldol

He was told that he was to restrained
Until he could be shipped downstate
To the mental health facility
At Manteno where he had been
For a month the year before

He had been hoping that he could stay
Locked up in a hospital in Chicago
So he could make connections
With Chicago gang members
Meet ethnically conceived women

He didn't want to have to be locked up
With the slow no action know nothing morons
From out of the city south Illinois

His jaw locked tight from the Haldol
Mouth wide open wedge teeth baring silent scream grimace

He was given a shot of muscle relaxers
For the two hour back of the caged station wagon ride
Down to Manteno

The muscle relaxers made him high as a kite
He felt good again

He was told by the people at the hospital
That his blood
Had a real high level of PCP in it
Smiling when they said it
Like it was some kind of a joke
That he was laced into elephant trunk stoned insanity

He figured that he had been the guinea pig
For some basement chemists twisted batch of super weed
He knew that if he had been dusted
That it happened a hundred times before
All the other times that he had smoked himself that high

He wanted to sign up
For a lifetime supply of that shit

He let his family know that he was back
In Manteno again
He needed clothes shoes cigarette can of pop money
He didn't know how else to get it

His mother made arrangements
To have him sent to a private hospital
On her work insurance
So that he could get the help that he needed

He didn't care where he was going
As long as they had a radio
So he could listen to some music
While he whiled away
In mental incarceration

He had a few days to wait
To get into a private hospital

He was right back at home in Manteno
He knew the ropes
He knew how to avoid trouble

He was able to get himself out on the grounds
After he had been there for a day

He went to the hospital grounds straight razor shave barber shop
Had his hair cut down to an inch
Stuck it straight up with soapy water
Like the pictures of the english punk rockers he had seen

He recognized people from his month the year before
At Manteno
Guys that had been bloated zombified vegetables a year ago
Were spider thin
Still tiger wild animal dangerous off the streets
Back to get overfed
Depressed into major tranquilizer submission

It reminded him of himself
He had left the hospital overweight sluggish
Lost it all in the course of slowly going crazy
Back to do it all over again

He began to see the cycle
He knew there was a pattern at work there

He was taken to a private hospital
With a psychiatric ward
In nearby Kankakee Illinois

He thought it was all a joke
The place looked like a country club
After being locked up in the state institutional facilities

He was excited
He was looking forward to living there

He was kept in an isolation ward
Apart from the patients on the main ward
When he got there
Because he was too wild threatening possibly dangerous needed to be
observed

His bullshit girlfriend found out where he was at
She was out to visit him on his first night
She was repulsed by his appearance
He was bone chip thin yellow skinned
With stuck straight up short hair
The bearded long haired hippie looking guy was gone

She didn't have time to waste on a jerk like that
She lowered the boom on the cretin
Put the whole stake on the table

It was the end of the game
She wanted to know if she could have his car
He laughed in her face
Told her no

His hustler con artist girlfriend got up
Walked out
He knew he would never see her again

His mother came to visit him
She was told that her son
Was probably suffering from brain damage
From all of the abuse he had subjected himself too

He laughed when he heard this
He didn't care if was true
He was digging in
He let go of his desire
For outside of the hospital functioning freedom

He knew he was going to be there
For a long time

COMMITTED

His second psychiatric confinement
 Was spent
 At Riverside Hospital
 In Kankakee Illinois

Downstate Illinois
 Rural oasis
 State park sprawl
 Riding on a river
 Cornbelt cornball metropolis
 Backward facing Davenport Iowa
 Slowly leaning toward St. Louis Missouri

It was a place where he would be safe
 Locked up watched over
 Taken care of
 Away from the drugs and the streets

He came to Kankakee
 In the back of an ambulance
 Driven from the Illinois State psychiatric hospital
 At lesser downstate Illinois Manteno
 A half hour ride away
 In a forgotten isolated existence of its own

He rolled through the automatic opening hospital double doors
 In a wheel chair
 Hospital ambulance medical card procedure
 He couldn't walk into the place on his own

He was wearing a worn thread exposed 1920's style trenchcoat
 Dark dirt olive green wide lapelled
 Inside pockets cut open bleeding endless bottoms of lining
 Found in the Manteno gymnasium wardrobe closet
 Along with a dusty brown fedora
 Possession became compulsory ownership

The hat and the coat made him feel
 Like some kind of magical mystery clown tramp

He tried to imagine the years of life
 That coat had been dragged through
 End of the trailing at the state nut house
 Pulled off the back of some
 Cantankerous swearing foul mouthed gibberish bitter
 Stinking tired old aqualung
 The coat reeked skidrow european other-worldliness into his senses

The hatted trenchcoat outfit

Made him look like an out of time warped
 Idiot screwball nutcase
 When he wheelchair rolled into the hospital processing area

He lifted himself out of the wheelchair
 Slow motion grade school dramatic fakeout
 Claiming he was able to walk
 In miracle cure praise god healing ridiculous amazement
 He keep on truckin' walked past the startled hospital workers
 Front leg extended straight bottom of the foot up
 Boogie back leg bent tilting torso 45 degree angled
 Hat high raked grandiose exaggeration flourish

He wanted to make sure
 That everyone at the hospital knew
 There wasn't a goddamned thing wrong with him
 It was all a big joke

He crack potted his way
 Through the hospital admission interview
 He had a smart ass remark for every question

He thought that he could beat the nut rap
 He would clear up the mistake real quick
 There wasn't anything wrong with him
 They couldn't hold him there

He planned on being released within the hour
 He was going to walk the 100 miles
 Back to Chicago
 In his trenchcoat with his fedora

To hell with his family
 He wasn't going to ask those bastards for anything

He was asked if he heard voices

He told the admissions interview lady
 That he heard her voice
 Every time she opened her mouth
 And the garbage poured forth from it

He asked her if she heard voices

He told the woman about all of the bullshit
 He had gone through that winter
 The drinking
 Not sleeping
 Staying outside
 Running around skid row

Nights in jail

He told her about all of the drugs he had taken
 The year before
 The continual acid trip mind fry melt breakdown
 When he squandered a job on the railroad
 Lost his driver's license for drunk driving

The woman told him that none if it was true
 Asked him if he really believed any of it

Her incredulity agitated him
 Paranoid was quickly written down
 On the admissions interview sheet
 After schizoid delusional psychotic

He felt like he was being framed
 Set up made to look like he was crazy
 When he really wasn't

He was put on an observation ward
 A temporary holding facility
 Separate from the main psychiatric area
 For suicidal hospital pajama shuffling depressed overdosers
 Questionable vegetables
 That needed to prove that they could be trusted
 Amongst the general hospital population
 On the regular ward

It was a small secured area
 A couple of rooms for patients
 A room with a couch facing a television
 A glass partitioned nurse's station
 Surrounding a small slightly larger than a room
 Encircled common area

It was a small cage
 Seventeen healthy sidewalk stepping strides
 From wall to wall
 An enclosure too confined
 For somebody that had spent much
 Of the preceding months wandering
 Around large citied areas

He was supposed to be kept on the observation ward
 For a day or so
 Until a room was ready for him
 On the main ward

He got screwier
 More bizarre

Twisting further into abnormality with each passing hour

He paced the floor half way up into the walls
 He sang out loud
 He chain smoked

The PCP buzz he rode in on
 From the week before
 When he was dumped off at a Chicago psych hospital
 By a Chicago cop
 Was wearing thin

He started chillum smoking his cigarettes
 Through a clenched fist pressed to his mouth
 Hot boxing through a pack in a couple of hours
 Desperately attempting to alter his consciousness
 By choke thin muting the supply of oxygen
 Trying to make its way to his brain

He babbled nonsense phrases
 That he had picked up acquired along the way
 From all of the crazies
 He had ever come across

Cashing in all the moron catch phrase demento invectives
 He had been able to hear
 Locked up and roaming the streets

The ward nurses scrambled to get it all down
 With ink pens into spiral notebooks

He laughed to himself
 When he thought of somebody
 Trying to read the reports

He thought that it was a way to honor
 All of the forgotten misunderstood to be idiot men
 That had unknowing parts in his training
 For an inevitable future life of curbside village idiocy

His day or so on the observation ward
 Stretched into a couple of days
 Then into a week

He drove the staff crazy

The observation ward nurses were accustomed
 To passively depressed patients
 Comatose stuporous lumps
 First time in a psychiatric setting scared

He was institutional experienced
 Working a revolving nuthouse door case
 Insanity mixed with alcoholic drug abuse
 Off the street animal potentially violent dangerous
 He was outside of the range of the staff's training
 He was inappropriate
 He didn't belong there

He demanded to be sent back
 To the state psychiatric hospital at Manteno
 Where he could be locked up like a man

His coverage on his mother's work insurance policy
 Guaranteed that he wasn't going anywhere

He was quickly put on Thorazine
 The dosage was set at 300 milligrams
 Three times a day

Triple the amount
 That had stagnated him into catatonic inoperable depression
 During a month at Manteno
 The year before

He had never heard
 Of such a whoppingly out of line with reality dosage
 He told the staff
 That they were more deep down dark crazy and sinister dangerous
 Than they could ever imagine him to be

He was determined to fight
 The effects of the medication
 He paced he ranted he sang
 He kept chillum smoking his cigarettes
 He wasn't going to let them destroy him

He ground the gigantic M&M sized Thorazine orange pills
 Into powder with his teeth
 He wanted them to know
 He wasn't cheeking his pills

He kept taunting the hospital staff
 To name their poison
 Whatever it was
 He would beat it

He pressed into his closed eyelids
 With the backs of his thumbs
 Lighting his darkened field of vision
 With concentrically warped

Geometrically precise lined colored patterns
 Transfiguring multi-hued shapeshift intensifications
 Out of the blackness bright explosive rays
 Of white red yellow sunsprays
 Narrowing into tunneled dark specks

This was the trip
 Eternity's door step
 This is what the almost dead
 Come back to life
 Had to be seeing

The final release
 Of cerebrally imprinted images
 The rods and cones firing random sporadic dying confusion
 As the lack of oxygen in the brain
 Dries the flow of blood into the eyes

He stood in the middle of the observation ward
 Pressing into his eyes
 Broadcasting outloud to the staff
 The textures of the colored shapes he was seeing

He wanted to make sure
 That they knew
 What kind of fucking weirdo they were dealing with

The Thorazine days passed slow
 On the observation ward

His thought processes were disjointed splinters
 Fly apart in the face of the next moment's provocation
 Concentration was a fractured dismantled impossibility

He kept the television on the ward
 Turned up loud
 Tuned into a low outlet local watt cable station
 Featuring a hand full of rock music videos
 Over and over
 An unvarying small stock redundant repetition rotation
 Pounding itself indelible on the shadowed walls of his brain
 Like a late 1960's early 1970's AM radio station

The music kept him grounded
 Centered
 No matter how far into his head he went with his thoughts
 The sound of a familiar song
 Pulled him back gently
 Into the dull ache mundanity of the moment
 On a blanket of memories associated with the music

There was a video clip of the Who
 Playing a live version of a Who's Next song
 Without Keith Moon
 Pete Townshend
 The big nosed patron saint
 Of depressed male adolescent loners
 Windmill stalking fury trousers
 Breaking down into a mad dervish drunk spastic dance
 Doing the Baba O'Riley jig
 To a canned fiddle

He knew the whole Who catalog by heart
 Hundreds of teenaged hours spent
 Headphone secluded in his bedroom
 With drug store bargain bin corner clipped copies
 Of Sell Out and Magic Bus
 The Who Sings My Generation and Happy Jack

He wore out his 1972 Christmas gift Tommy
 He turned his record club 12 for a penny copy of Quadrophenia
 Into a term paper for sophomore English class
 With footnotes from a 1964 Newsweek
 About mod rocker riots on English resort beaches

He remembered the time he sat
 In a car with the son of the boss
 At his old Joliet construction job
 Smoking a joint
 Rendered into speechless stupid silent reflectiveness
 When Bellboy came on the radio
 Because he knew that's just what he was

He remembered seeing The Who
 On the By Numbers tour
 From a view obstructed upper balcony seat
 At the Chicago Stadium
 Which hid Keith Moon behind a tower of speakers
 Suspended on cables from the stadium ceiling

He had read and reread the Pete Townshend interview
 Printed in a copy of a Rolling Stone magazine anthology
 Paperback leftover from the late sixties
 A rambling autobiographically loose conceptually dissonant
 Think outloud verbal sprawl
 Like it was a revered oracle delivered by a pious sage

He remembered the time he sat
 In a car with the son of the boss
 At his old Joliet construction job
 Smoking a lunchbreak joint
 Rendered into speechless stupid silent reflectiveness
 When Bellboy came on the radio

Because he knew that's just what he was at that moment

He remembered acid stoned staring
 At the Who Are You album cover
 Into the tired sadness on the faces of band
 Recalling months later the Not To Be Taken Away chair
 With a haunted slow set in realization chill
 After he had heard that Keith Moon died

He felt disheartened watching his old hero
 Pounding the stage like some kind of broken down clown

There were two videos by Iggy Pop
 The hellbent warped fury years of the Stooges
 Lined into the sides of Jim Osterberg's face
 Already an old days throwback
 Fighting a possible case of the has-beens
 Iggy complained about being bored
 About being only five foot one

He kept wondering if Iggy made the videos
 Knowing they would be the only relief
 For somebody locked up on a hospital mental ward

He wondered if Jim knew what it was like
 To be locked up on a hospital mental ward

There was a video by the band Nazareth
 Drunken scotsman power glory
 Sandpaper lunged screecher banshee wail shred Dan McCafferty
 One of the staples of his highschool
 Riding around with his beer drinking buddies
 With the 8-track blasting nights
 Nobody messed with a son of a bitch back then

The hair of the dog was cleaned up now
 Slicked back video perm styling
 In a song that talked about
 Jaguars magazine covers pop stars and halloween
 With a hook big enough to pull a shark out of the ocean

Another of his favorite videos
 Was by an english german looking
 Dug up from the grave pale red lipstick drawn
 Synthesizer jockey Gary Numan

Robot strange vocals about being In Cars
 The music had a trancelike bleat
 That fast forwarded him into an automatic slow motion
 Stop everything in its tracks hypnotic

Computerized effeminate new wave music
 Everything he had grown to know
 Meat and potatoes guitar drum bass rock music
 Was outmoded outdated out of style
 Driven out of business

He knew he was looking at a new world
 He drew the line with this non-guitar crap
 In Cars was as far as he could go
 The new music was horseshit bland generic interchangeable
 No balls or adrenaline
 The time was going to have to go on by itself
 Leaving him behind

He was hooked up to an electroencephalograph machine
 The hospital wanted to measure
 The extent of the brain damage he had incurred

He deliberately attempted to skew the results
 Fuck the test up into an undeniable abnormality
 He played the Dancing Days Led Zeppelin guitar solo
 As loud as he could inside his head
 Windshield wipering his eyelids to the string strikes
 His head strobe flash popping lit like a pinball table

He heard the needle pen scratching back and forth
 Zig zag confusion all over the graph paper
 He laughed inside to himself
 Knowing that was the sound of his brain damage

He believed that if he thought something
 In a real loud voice
 Inside of his head
 Other people could hear it

People would even say what
 When he did this
 Not saying a word
 They thought that they had heard him
 Say something

He did this with music
 Played it loud inside his head
 When he was around people he didn't know
 Aware that most people couldn't tolerate
 Hearing it turned up out loud for real
 He wondered if his thoughts would have the same stifling effect

He knew that loud music
 Left many people overwhelmed aggravated emotionally responsive

Unable to concentrate or focus a reasonable thought

He regarded the music he listened to
 Along with the drugs that he had taken
 As part of a lifelong training regimen
 In being able to think through any noise or chaos
 To maintain his thought processes
 No matter what the load of outer sensory bombardment

He knew that volume was a weapon
 Outloud or in his thoughts

He imagined a war fought in the future
 With loud rock music
 Leading the assault on large urban areas

Maniacs demons and wizards
 Like Ted Nugent Jeff Beck Jimmy Page and Eddie Van Halen
 Would rotate in shifts
 Hired guns hooked up to massive sound systems
 Covering cities in relentless guitar noise barrages
 Three chord solo treble explosions

There would be no escape from the noise
 Only the prepared would be able to survive
 With their nerves and sanity intact

He was on the observation ward for a week
 Before he was allowed to spend
 An hour a day on the regular psychiatric ward
 With the normal patients

He spent his hour in the radio room
 A small plexiglas enclosed sound proof closet
 With a stereo system powerful enough to shake a house

He cranked the Chicago FM radio stations
 Loading himself up with noise
 Before being taken back to the observation ward

The staff noticed that
 The music calmed him down
 Kept him quietly relaxed for several hours after

He had the best hallucination of his life
 Listening to a Pink Floyd song
 Comfortably Numb
 In the hospital radio room

Towards the end of the song

The stereo speaker he was looking at
 Began to melt
 Dissolving into molecules
 Which disappeared
 Until he was able to see the block wall behind the speaker

He was blacking out while he was still awake
 Slipping into some sort of below consciousness realm
 Into an area right beneath the surface

Out of the music came the voice of Roger Waters
 Calling him out by name
 Telling him he was fool
 The trip he was on would not lead him anywhere

He remembered the time
 At a Moody Blues concert
 Strychnine stiff in numb leg cramp pain
 Loaded up on King Tut blotter acid
 A metallic sounding voice overcame him
 Telling him that we are the gods
 There was nothing outside of our thoughts

He stood his ground
 Refused to buckle
 Went for the ride
 For all that it was worth
 Listening to the rant spoken over the music
 Knowing that it was coming from somewhere
 Inside of his head

He knew he couldn't cook something up like that by himself
 He knew it was the Thorazine
 It was kicking his ass

He was moved on to the regular psychiatric ward
 After two lost time weeks
 Spent in confinement on the observation ward

The 900 milligram a day dosage of Thorazine
 Had no noticeably outward phasing effect
 The hyperactively volatile weird bizarre commotion continued
 His abnormality remained an unhindered pursuit

He was told repeatedly
 All he had to do was behave
 Stop talking nonsense from out of his head
 Stop singing with the far away gone off somewhere else look in his eyes
 Stop chain chillum smoking cigarettes through his fist
 Stop pacing all over the available floor area
 Stop the frenetic constant in action
 Slow motion deliberate spasmodically precise

Stark hand gesture arm movement muscle contractions

He reveled in the strange absurdity
 He was having fun
 He wasn't hurting anybody
 As far as he could tell
 He was in a nut house
 He was determined
 To act like a goddamned nut

He was taken off of the Thorazine
 Given a milder major tranquilizer
 Called Loxitain

Nobody on the regular psychiatric ward
 Was given Thorazine
 It had too many debilitatory institutional connotations

He was in a private progressive treatment center
 A place for non-confrontational mental patient lightweights
 The hardcore hopelessly demented psychos weren't even considered

People with access to insurance policy coverage care
 Weren't mummified into zombies
 By oblivion inducing soul obliterating drugs
 Like Thorazine Haldol or Mellaril
 They were regulated easily with milder gentler sedatives

He was assigned to a staff doctor
 A tall balding not yet quite middle aged man
 With a czech sounding name
 A fifteen letter confusion of end of the alphabet consonants
 That he could barely pronounce
 And never attempt to spell

Six and half feet of mad coattail long sleeve flapping
 Hungarian stork gangle
 Flit flop flying about the ward
 Out of breath from patient to patient
 Appearing at the end of the afternoon
 To make the daily rounds
 Overworked frenzy agitation
 Never enough time talking fast
 In foreign accent clips
 A rush hurry up get it done quick schedule
 That left no time for listening

While the doctor talked to him
 He babble blabbed bullshit non-word syllables
 A nonsense noise mime
 A who in the hell cares mock

Right in the doctor's face

The doctor drove home the four minute introductory spiel
 Mile a minute breaktongue pauseless rattling
 Looking straight ahead
 Seeing nothing
 Unaware of what he was doing

He was assigned to a room
 With a schizophrenic hospital shuttle nut
 A smiling incapable of associating kid
 Waiting to be sent to another hospital
 Hopelessly lost in-transit
 Passing through Kankakee on the way to his next psychiatric home

He figured that the ward staff decided
 To stick him with the worst possible roommate
 That they were able to find

He noticed that his nerves were shot
 Every time he caught a sudden quick movement
 In the partially obscured off to the side angle of his vision
 His body tremored momentarily
 His muscles watered into a jellied uselessness
 Nearly buckling him into a clump on the floor

He clenched his body into a standing fist
 He fought to remain upright
 He knew the shakes were a side product
 Of the intense Thorazine bombing he had undergone

He made it worse for himself
 By telling one of the other patients that
 He was fall apart shuddering
 From corner of the eye motion

The guy he told this to was a few years older than him
 A big round party like hell greek mexican
 Who wasted no time in telling another patient

He was then shock blasted into uncontrollable shaking pieces
 As the two of them took turns at frequently recurring intervals
 Running up in whooshing rush from behind him
 Pounding flatfooted feet on the carpet
 Charging along his side in accelerated noisy blurs
 Schoolboy sneak snickering lowdown petty pimp pranksters

He knew it was good hassle
 A good joke
 Even if he was on the ass end of it
 He got control of his shakes real quick

He would wake up in his new room
 The first couple of nights he was there
 Not knowing where he was at
 Burning hot with urine
 Unable to find the bathroom door
 He half asleep tranquilizer drug dreamed pissed
 Into the metal garbage receptacle

His nights were a restless jumble of somnatic vision
 His thoughts struggling to hold on to waking reality
 Unable to let go or trust
 In the gone consciousness of sleep

He knew there was no way he was going to rest
 When the guy in the other bed in the room
 Spent the night playing with himself
 Gibbering unintelligibles into the darkness

He woke up to the sound of his own yelling
 He took a soggy fistful punch on the flat of his forehead
 While he was sleeping
 From the creep that was in the room with him

A punch that made a loud fish on a rock slapping sound
 A punch from a skinny muscle atrophied psycho sick weakling
 That made more noise than a dent

He went out of the room
 He told the Kankakee good old boy night watch guard nurse
 He wasn't going to spend another minute in a room
 With an untrustable schizzy son of a bitch

The night guy told him that he had permission
 To go in there and beat the living shit out of the kid
 He told the night guy he wasn't going back in the room
 For anything

The night guy laughed at him
 Told him that he wasn't a man
 Because he wouldn't kick the kid's ass

He never hit anybody in his life
 Not as kid growing up with two younger sisters
 Not as the smallest kid in his age group

He had gotten knocked around hit over the head on the streets
 But he never hit back
 He didn't feel anything when he was crazed on drugs and sleeplessness
 A guy got a broken hand punching him in the face in jail

His skin was so tight it didn't even bruise

He knew he had a rage burning inside of him
 Just like his old man
 A barely bottleable volcanic inferno energy
 Seething just below the surface
 Ready to spill out of control life ending violence

He was afraid that if he ever cut loose
 Started driving a knuckle wrist forearm shoulder sternum connected club
 He was going to put it right through somebody's skull
 Crumple pop explode it like a damp cardboard box
 Go through somebody's rib cage like it was an empty mason jar on a shelf

He didn't ever want to hit anybody
 Unless he really had to kill them

He spent the rest of the night
 After his wake up punch in the forehead
 Walking up and down the psychiatric ward corridors
 Walking the way he would at night
 Outside alone on the street
 When everybody was asleep
 When there was nowhere for him to go

He thought the hospital was playing cheap with his life
 Loading him up with Thorazine
 Sticking him in a room with a soft psychopath
 He felt safer on the streets
 He felt safer in the state psychiatric hospital

He wondered why his family locked him up in a place like this
 He felt like the assholes were trying to kill him off
 Knowingly or unknowingly

His family and the people at the hospital
 Were dangerous not to be trusted
 They didn't even know what they were doing to him
 His life had spun out of his control
 His life was in the control of fascists

He wondered if that was how it was to live oppressed
 In a communist totalitarian dictatorship regime
 Where there is no good
 Where justice never prevails
 Where lives are extinguished
 Snuffed out like a burnt down to the bottom of the holder candles
 Leaving nothing but the faint trail from the last wisp of smoke

He walked up and down for the rest of the night
 While everybody slept

The ward night guard left him alone
 He filled the middle of the night hallway
 With his collection of thoughts
 He got himself back together
 It was the first peace he had felt in weeks

He launched an offensive on the day staff the next morning
 A non-stop verbal just below a shout hammering
 He demanded to be moved into another room

He knew a middle of the night punch in the head
 Was bad for hospital business
 Might upset the other patients

The staff would have to shut him up quick
 Otherwise people would start to wonder
 What kind of fucking loony bin were they running there

He still had some rights somewhere
 He was a goddamned paying customer
 His mother's work insurance was footing for this bullshit

He was assigned to an empty room
 By himself

He always thought that people went for weakness
 Like hungry sharks drawn to the bloody water jugular

He could never be quiet
 Be himself
 He always thought
 His inner reflectiveness was mistaken as passivity
 A welcome-mat open door invitation to be stepped on
 By people that he didn't know

He learned that he had to keep people in check
 Keep them from thinking they could walk over him
 By getting in the first last and every other word
 Using a strong voice as a force
 Unimpedimented speech
 Rising above conversational tone levels

He learned that he had to freeze people with eye contact
 Hold them in an unblinking cut to the back of the brain glare
 Look right through and into them
 Startle them with the subtly communicated warning
 That they were dealing with somebody who didn't think like them
 Let them know that they were up against a maniac
 That had mastered their fluctuating weapons of intimidation

Being a quiet depressed kid had gotten him nowhere

He was the food chain barrel bottom plankton
 In a social survival system based on interpersonal domination
 He had been the victim too many times
 He learned the game on the shit end of the stick

He knew that the only way to be left alone
 In the peaceful place of his own thoughts
 Was to bulldoze trample over everybody and everything around him

The hospital psychiatric ward reminded him
 Of a well kept hotel
 Country club clean carpeted plush atmospherics
 Day room lobby new wood furniture decor
 Fast action bank golf course green chalk tip queue pool table
 Stuffed leather couch upholstery console television viewing room
 Sound proofed stereo speaker stacked component music listening room
 Large visiting room area with floor to ceiling plexiglas shine view
 Looking out on the wind washed forest tree shore of the Kankakee River

There was none of the broken down government fund dilapidation
 That he found at the state psychiatric hospital in Manteno
 Ashtray heap smudged filter tip mound pigsty squalor
 Cigarette burn nicotine linoleum stain tile filth
 Slobbering greasy sweat damp scummy vinyl
 Communal men's room stall peep outhouse pervert stench depravity
 Rancid piss puke chemical disinfectant mop mold

He felt like he had hit into some kind of jackpot luck
 He didn't think that being locked up
 Could get much better than that

He checked out the other patients on the ward
 Most of them seemed normal to him
 Functioning out in society adjusted well adults
 On leave from trying to help and understand families
 Time-offed with pay from generously forgiving employers
 Everyday paragons of outward appearing stability
 Taking a mental holiday escape tranquilizer vacation
 From their everyday out in the world responsibilities

As far as he was able to tell
 There wasn't a goddamned thing wrong
 With most of them
 He wondered who had told them they were crazy

He couldn't understand why
 Somebody would willingly submit themselves
 Without outside pressure coercion of force
 To a mental ward hospitalization
 Put under locked door around the clock supervision

Freedom gladly handed over to 8 hour shift workers
 Medication administered
 To be regulation monitored like a child

A mental hospital was a soft jail to him
 Cushioned with chemical bars
 The people around him didn't seem to notice that
 They were prisoners

He was suspiciously confused
 He thought that something else was really going on
 He thought it was some kind of ulterior motive setup trap

He didn't trust patients that asked him questions
 With an over obvious full bearing mental faculty capacity
 His paranoia twisted down winding side paths of imagination

Anybody that wasn't an out in the open
 Act up disturbed borderline rave rant vent
 Idiot nonsense strewn maniac psycho
 Had to be up to something

He had heard about totally normal people
 Indiscreetly checking into nut houses
 People on undercover narc government spy agenda missions
 Sneaky snake in the grass sons of bitches
 Up to no good
 For who knows what

He mentally divided the other patients
 Into two groups
 The nuts and the fakes

He could goof on the other nuts
 Tangent talk in moron crypt
 Sift through strange disassociations
 For secret hidden screwball encoded messages

He was too much of a nut for the fakes
 His first week on the ward
 The fakes avoided him
 Talked of and about him in his presence
 Like he wasn't able to hear them
 Like he wasn't even there

He thought most of the fakes were weak
 Soft bruise easy
 Wait to be coddled
 Fucked up on the inside
 In a way that wasn't as noticeable
 On the outside

They were probably worse off than the nuts

A woman checked in after he did
 Young somewhere in her 20's
 With the black Charley's Angel Jaclyn Smith hair
 He kept thinking he had seen her
 Somewhere before

The year before
 When he was all fucked up on an acid binge
 The night he black out lost four hours
 While he was at a Joliet nightclub

The January night he woke up in the back seat of a cop car
 Without a coat
 Carrying his shoes

The night he was told by the cops
 That he was trying to get into a senior citizens home
 Down the street from the night club

The night his car was stolen from the mall parking lot
 Outside of the night club
 After he pointed it out to the cops
 Before being driven off to jail

The day he split work early
 To drive some guy he didn't know
 All over Joliet to buy an ounce of green pot
 In a US Department of Labor envelope

The night he stepped out of the night club
 After several bottles of Heinekens
 To make an intermission run out to his car
 To smoke some of the pot that he bought earlier in the afternoon
 While he listened to the live Aerosmith and UFO cassettes
 He had bought that night

The night that he couldn't remember anything about
 After he went out to his car
 To get stoned for the 10th time in the day
 Just like he had for every day of the preceding nine months

The night that left him with vague deliratory images
 Half dreamed half remembered
 Scenes that he watched apart
 Separate from himself
 While being directly involved

The night of sleeping wide awake nightmares
 Where he had to be pulled off of the nightclub waitress
 After mauling her

Animus pursuit of carnal desire
 Grope grabbing blind instinctively for her crotch and breasts

The night of half real unconscious confusion
 When he deliberately pissed all over the floor
 During a live hot wire vultured restroom confrontation
 In the enraged violent presence of the wiry italian night club owner

The night that he somehow had the lingering memory trace
 Of astonished in shock middle aged night club patrons
 Gaping at him
 While he drunken clumsily knocked half full bottles of beer
 Off of the tables and onto the floor

The night of cloudy uncertainty
 Where he had the faded impression of several men
 Elbow lock choking him from behind
 Pummel pounding his torso with fists

The night of hazy after drunk recollection
 Of being flanked by non-jurisdiction police
 In black uniforms

The night that he never knew for sure what had happened
 When he was taken to the Joliet police lockup
 For his third arrest in less than a week
 He saw a lady cop in the hallway
 Outside of the bars of his cell
 Where everything looked like it was underwater to him

He thought that he had seen the same woman cop
 The week before when he was hauled in by an Illinois state trooper
 After being arrested for drunken driving

The woman cop was a light sifting through the cracks
 Of the dark down sinister world of police power authority brutality
 That he had unintentionally found himself up against
 An shadowy unknown to him in an obscured realm
 That knew more about him than he about it
 The only thing that kept him from believing
 That the cops were bent crooked enough
 To kill him because he had pissed them off

The woman that checked into the hospital
 Looked just like the lady cop he had seen
 In the middle of the night police lock down insanity
 Of the year before

He bummed menthol cigarettes off of her
 He tried not to let his paranoia run away without him
 When she open-endedly told him that she worked
 In the Joliet court house

He wondered if she knew
 What had happened to him that night

People had started to look the same to him
 A set number of physical characteristics
 Combined into a set number of appearances
 He started seeing the facial patterns repeat themselves

He would stand on commuter pedestrian gorged sidewalks
 Soaking in the faces
 Melting distinctions into common features
 Blurring individuality

When he went to other parts of the country
 He recognized the similar faces
 An alike set of people in simultaneously different places

Fashion fed style sped the illusory process
 The same hair shapes and clothing color cuts

Television traceable unoriginality
 Uniqueness was obliterated
 An overlooked casualty that escaped unnoticed

He wondered if it was his loneliness
 That made a stranger look like someone
 That he had known before
 That he had never met
 But had seen somewhere else

He wondered if it was his own sleight of perception
 His insanity skewered observation
 That could find the face of a relative
 A cousin or a distant aunt or uncle
 In somebody he had just met

He wondered if the similarities
 Went deeper than appearance
 If people looking the same
 Were also thinking the same
 If there was a set number of mental responses
 Associated with each set of facial structures

He was a fool for coincidence
 Wanting to believe in random circumstance
 That tied together in a pre-ordinated scheme
 Unrelated events united in a purposeful confluence

He was able to reason the transpirence of chaos
 Into a recognizable order

Everything that happened to him
 The fleets of impression
 The unknowns of chance
 Were parts of a grandiosely conceived design
 The jigsawed experiences
 Of his own personal puzzle

It was his job to piece together the shambles
 To quantify the disasters
 To synchronize the unrelated
 To find the meaning
 Cloaked in the insignificant

He made people unknowing agents
 In the search for his personal fortune
 Reducing them to road side stops
 On his life living journey

Everybody he encountered was put there
 Specifically for him
 There to impart some fraction of knowledge
 Into the mystery of himself

Those that had no obvious part
 He created one for

Imagining them to be something they weren't
 Attributing thoughts to them
 That were not their own
 Shohorn square peg round slotting them
 To fit his paranoia fueled fantasy imagination thoughts

He was young enough to still believe
 That he was the fofaled center fixture
 Of his own individual constellation
 Every reflection revolved from within
 Then back onto him

He slowly got to know the other patients
 His first couple of weeks on the ward
 He was too woundup hyper incapable of sitting still

He spent the day walking all over the patient common areas
 Rolling the floor like a dice loose tumble comedian
 Making idiotic comment aside swipes
 At the other patients
 Like they were props in his own personal amusement
 Fun house walk around ride

He couldn't stop moving long enough
 To dissemble his thoughts into a conversation

He went straight off into an all day float
 As soon as he got out of bed
 Bouncing between patients the staff and the radio room

He made sure that he addressed everybody on the ward
 By their names
 He wanted to let them know
 He had more than a vague idea
 Of what was going on around him

He wanted to let everybody know that he wasn't
 As far gone lost as they thought

He liked talking to the nurses
 They were all young well dressed good looking
 College educated bright

After all of the ugly shit he had seen
 They look sounded as if they could have been
 On television

He knew that out in the real world
 He could never get close to women like this
 Women like the nurses would have nothing
 To do with him

He knew that when the nurses spent time with him
 They were just whiling down the work minutes
 Putting up with him
 Because it was their job
 Because they were getting paid for it

His favorite patient was an older guy
 Enormous giant of a man
 Softened in mid-40's baby fat
 The type of guy that came off at first
 As being relatively normal
 Before dwindling into bizarre pronouncements
 That gradually revealed a lifetime of mental institutional care

He never knew when the guy would make sense
 Or go off deep into the yonder
 Broken down into catch phrase mantras
 Hurlled out into the air at nobody in particular
 The watery gruel
 The lithium slime

He cracked up when he heard the guy
 Sputtering nonsense
 Greasing the absurdity with his laughter
 Trying to delve the knowledge in the stupidity

Trying to understand the meaning
 In the meaningless
 Wondering if the guy was just repeating garbage
 That he had heard from somewhere else

A couple of times a week
 The guy went in for a session of electroshock treatment
 The guy was real quiet after his therapy
 Placating for hours in a languish of lifelessness

Halfway through a cigarette
 The lumbered stupor would suddenly shake itself loose
 A threatened menace of violence would erupt
 From somewhere out of nowhere
 Zombified frankenstein arms stretched out for an available neck
 Rubbery paws grasped the air in search of a choke hold
 Before being led away to a sedation shot by a nurse

He wanted to believe that
 The whole thing was some kind of an act
 The survival scheme of a pathetically helpless bastard
 Looking to be taken care of provided for
 Comfortably cushioned by hospital living

He didn't understand how
 A mind could be totally uncontrollable
 Shutting itself off and on at will

Most of the men on the ward were older than him
 They all talked about the same things
 About drug binge lost mind partying
 Blind drunk alcohol shit faced drinking
 How as soon as they had a chance
 They were going to go out and get
 All fucked up again

Nobody mentioned a problem with drugs or alcohol
 It was all of the other insignificant bullshit
 That drove them to the hospital

Most of the men on the ward lived in the area
 The hospital was right in their backyard
 They all knew each other
 They all knew the same people

He wondered what it was like for them
 To be locked in a nut house
 Right in their own hometown
 Where everybody that knew them
 Knew that they were there

He was a good hours worth
 Of flat out 60 miles per hour open highway driving
 Away from everybody that knew him
 In a place where nobody knew him
 It still wasn't far enough away

Most of the men took their hospitalizations
 As a temporary setback of minor inconvenience
 They acted like it was nothing
 Trivial adjustment
 To sit around all day shooting the shit
 Enjoying the effects of their tranquilizers

None of the other men displayed the wound
 The burning guilty rage of humiliation
 The crushing destruction of personal pride
 The shaming embarrassment of being put away
 On a mental ward

It almost made him feel that he could be normal
 Like his existence hadn't concluded into a dead living end
 As if he could go forward
 Back to the life and the people he had known
 Like nothing had ever happened

He became friends with a guy a few years older than him
 A self-claimed Kankakee area biker gang guy
 On the somewhere fringe of the Outlaw motorcycle mafia
 Rife with club house insider stories
 Initiation recruitment hell glory

A mellowed out wild man
 Heavy boot denim Marlboro carton blue plaid flannel shirt
 The guy held court during visiting hours
 With a young long hair brown hippie live-in hog mama girlfriend
 Telling rock roll dope running stoner violence tales
 Regaling the local underground biker legends

He remembered the bikers that hung out at a bar
 Down the street from the railroad he worked at in Joliet
 A frozen beer can second hand stool whiskey spill place
 Owned by a hard drinking red faced ex-sailor
 Who liked to play chess while getting good and drunk
 Who let guys work on their bikes right on the floor
 Inside the bar when it was cold outside

He wondered if the guy was telling the truth
 He wondered if the guy was really a Corvair driving sissy
 Pedestrian biker gang riding hopeful dreamer
 Who picked these stories up
 Somewhere along the way

A guy who read too many Easyrider magazines

He wondered if the guy was a narc
 The guy seemed too smart to be a biker
 Too much of a clean cut edge
 None of the oil stained Freak Brothers acid burned grit
 He had encountered in real bikers

He wondered if the guy really was affiliated
 Put away to cool out
 A guy who talked too goddamned much
 A giddy casualty
 Of renegade glamour
 Sent to spill on a mental hospital ward
 Where truth could be washed away
 Lost in the dubious quicksand foundations
 Of nuthouse patient reality

He had heard so much bullshit
 From so many different people
 He had a hard time believing anybody

Separated from the adult mental patient ward
 There was a ward where adolescents were kept
 Kids a few years younger than him
 Locked up unwillfully by their parents
 In a futilely desperate last hopeless struggle attempt
 To regain control over them
 To rewield the outgrown broken shaft of authority

Kids that stayed out all night
 Kids that stumbled into the house smelling of beer drunk
 Kids that smoked pot in their upstairs bedrooms
 Kids that beat the shit out their younger brothers and sisters
 Kids that didn't want to go to school
 Kids that had been kicked out of school

Teenage girls new in the bodies of women
 Running around with grown men

Teenaged boys with minds not yet their own
 Ripe for any outside of the home impression

He tried to avoid the adolescents
 When they were let loose on the adult ward
 Each day for several hours

He thought that adult problem lockups
 Were no place for open to suggestion kids

It made him sick to watch
 Kids become easy pick victim prey

For adult patient perverts and male staff members
 He wanted no part
 In the sex drug corruption of youth

He looked on the adolescent patients
 As first time petty juvenile minor offenders
 Being put in with hardcore chronically mental criminal
 Nothing good was going to result

His favorite time of the hospital day was in the evening
 When the ward was open to visitors

He liked the coursing electric current
 That pulsed through the ward
 Stirring the dead afternoon before dinner stagnation leftovers
 The sudden infusion of outside brains
 Unadulterated by hospital tranquilization inactivity

The visitors were more considerations
 For his rampant running wild imagination
 He talked to anybody that would listen to him

He drew attention to himself
 By center stage clown act deliberates
 Like smoking hand rolled cigarettes
 Filled with Lipton's tea leaves
 That supposedly smelled like burning marijuana

He wanted to freak people out
 Pull weird shit when he knew they were watching him
 Warp their minds
 Like Bill Murray doing a Hunter Thompson
 In Where the Buffalo Roam

His own visits were once a week cigarette deliveries
 From his mother
 That quickly broke down into profanity trading arguments

He looked forward to the hospital meals
 Served on oversized trays
 Weighted down with thick plates
 Kept warm with shining stainless steel covers

The food fascinated him
 Especially the vegetables
 The color green against the white ceramic
 Of the serving dishes
 Glowing soft under the translucent watery film
 Of still melting butter

He had never eaten green vegetables before

He avoided them as a kid
 He was always too full up at dinner time
 With drugstore candy bars and coca cola

The spinach the Brussels sprouts the green beans
 It was all new for him

He kept thinking about the food at the state mental hospital
 Gray starchy lumped pasty mush
 That sat constipating inside of him
 Swelling his stomach with shit

He remembered the food he had been served at the mission
 Stale day old donation bread rolls
 Brown water floating barley speckled soup

He thought about the food
 He had starve picked out of garbage cans

He never bothered filling out the meal menu
 The way the rest of the patients did
 Talking out loud about the food they hated
 He ate whatever was on the tray
 Like it was somebody else's food

He adjusted to the effects of his new medication
 The Thorazine induced hallucinations
 Slowly dried out of him

The new medication made him pass out at night
 He woke up stiff in a film of hazy grog
 As soon as he was aware of the morning sun
 He roused himself out of bed
 Forced himself awake with movement and cigarettes

He slept in his clothes
 So that he could get his ass out of the room faster

He guzzled plastic hospital pitchers full of cold water
 He figured that he could keep the medication
 From taking a foothold in his system
 With constant irrigation

He was going to flood out drown the poison
 Then piss it all out

He was given a small dosage of muscle relaxers
 To combine the tranquilizer side-effects
 The same shit he had been shot up with a couple times before
 When he was medication froze up with lockjaw

The muscle relaxers widened his pupils
 Letting the light pour into his eyes
 Colors avalanched into fantastically bright warm blurs
 Soft edged out of focus slightly

His up close vision became watery
 The plaster in the cracks of a tile ashtray
 Soon turned into a swirling river
 Of small dancing oval particles
 If stared at for a long enough time
 While not blinking

The muscle relaxers made him feel good
 He felt so good that he had to keep himself in check
 Tone himself down
 In case somebody realized the shit was making him high

He kept complaining about the stiffness
 Tranquilizer muscle cramp dull lethargy
 He exaggerated the side-effect symptoms
 Until he was able to get his dosage of muscle relaxers doubled
 From one to two milligrams

The muscle relaxers made him want to sing
 He couldn't believe how good his voice felt
 When he sailed it out of his chest
 Into the high walled ward hallway
 Letting it float up into the ceiling
 He listened to the reverberation buzz
 Of his voice echoing back upon itself

He liked to sing at night
 Blend his voice into the dark lit by neon
 When his mouth was medication dried of saliva
 His breathing slow deep open relaxed
 He could feel the sound vibrate his ribs
 He didn't know where the voice was coming from

He could hear the medication causing change in timbre
 It was the way he had always wanted to sing
 When he was kid in the late 1960's
 Listening the whiskey brown booze smooth baritone
 Of Dean Martin crooning The Green Green Grass of Home

He wanted to spend the rest of his life
 Stoned dry on muscle relaxers
 Standing flat footed
 Singing out loud

He knew the words to hundreds of songs

He knew most of the words
To thousands of other songs

He had spent at least 3 hours a day
Everyday between 1964 and 1970
Listening to the radio
He knew every song
That was played on southern California Top 40 AM radio
During the mid to late 60's

He spent the 1970's accumulating
Hundreds of albums
Each one worn out
With constant continual repeated playing

When he was alone
When he thought that nobody was listening
He sang along out loud with the singer
The voice of a child
Trying to imitate grown men

When he started cracking up
All of the songs that he had pounded indelible into himself
Poured out of his head
He didn't need the record or the radio
All of the words and melodies were there
In an explosion of recall

He started to think that he had put
All of that music there for a reason
For a time when he wouldn't have access
To a record player or a radio
The songs were going to be there
In his head
For the rest of his life
Whenever he needed them

He was allowed to leave the hospital
For 8 hours
After he had been there for a full month
A saturday afternoon pass
To be spent in the supervision of his family

His mother and stepfather came out
Picked him up
Drove him back to their house
Set him up with a six pack of canned beer
Then left him there while they went out
For the rest of day

He sat in the family room

Alone with himself
 Smoking cigarettes
 Drinking beer that warmed fast
 In the saturday afternoon small town neighborhood silence

He listened to the awakening April spring sounds from outside
 An occasional far off down the block dog bark
 The low motor whoosh
 Of the infrequently passing car
 With the muted puncture sound squawks of the hard rubber tires
 Rolling across the loose white rocks
 Random along the rounded over rough edge of the cold asphalt
 It was too early for the lawn mowers

He dug an old Supertramp record from out of the closet
 Set the record player arm needle
 On the last side 1 song Asylum
 He played the song a couple of times
 Then sat listening to it in his head
 Please don't arrange to have me sent to no asylum
 I'm just as sane as anyone
 It's just a game I play for fun
 For fun

His home visit went off well
 He finished his beers
 Along with several more he found in the refrigerator
 Before it was time to go back
 To the hospital

He kept quiet on the return ride
 He knew that he was too drunk to talk
 His jaw tight in a tongue numbed stupid incoherency
 The alcohol magnifying with the hospital tranquilizers
 He watched his vision trying to double itself
 Into a split signal dichotomous separation
 His head trying to vortex launch him
 Off into a dizzying spin

His mother and stepfather relaxed into a quiet peace
 During the drive back to the hospital
 In the cool saturday night Illinois highway beacons dark
 Almost unaware forgetful of his being there
 He sat in the back seat sweating
 Behind a pair of cash register counter rack sunglasses

His parents walked him up
 To the locked glass ward double doors
 Rang the bell for the nurse
 Then turned around left for home
 Happy knowing that somebody else was going
 To look after their problems that night

He started spending time with a woman on the ward
A 32 year old married mother of three children
She was 12 years older than him

She was one of the normal patients
Right in the middle of the loud mouth gossip group
Always surrounded
He could never talk to her alone
He had to climb through
A half dozen other people that thought
He was a crazy fucked up in the head idiot

He started sitting patiently
Quiet at a table full of people
Dropping in and out of the small talk
Over cigarettes
She watched him
Waiting for the crowd to fragment into a moment
When he could be there with just her

He didn't know why she was in the hospital
There was nothing wrong with her
As far as he could tell

She told him that the last thing she remembered
Before coming to the hospital
Her uncle was trying to choke her

He didn't push her beyond that for details
He knew the story didn't make sense
He didn't know if it was a genuine confusion
Or a half covered attempt at a lie
Camouflage dressing for a still sore open wound
Trying to hide the pain of a truth
About an emotional breakdown crippling brought on
By some kind of not from within mental abuse

She acted like a woman that was deeply afraid
In a shattered circumstance of misplaced trust
The victim of a sense altering betrayal

He knew there was man involved somewhere
Maybe it was her husband
She told him that
Her husband treated her like a stick of furniture

He decided to go slow
Give her lots of room
He wouldn't try to corner her

He always made sure that somebody else was with her
 Before he tried talking to her
 He knew that she felt protected
 With her women friends nearby

He marked his words
 He didn't want to screw anything up
 He didn't want to scare her away
 He didn't want her to think that he was hopelessly insane

He acted like a man with time
 Bought with the inside certainty knowledge
 Neither of them were going anywhere

He had the hospital bedroom to himself
 For a couple of weeks before
 A new roommate was put in with him

The guy was a Kankakee local
 Long haired stoner burnout older fading into late 20's
 Sent to sleep a month in the hospital
 After a minor vehicular grievance involving alcohol

The guy went to a mechanic job each morning
 Then returned to the hospital
 In the middle evening after work
 To crash on hospital downers

The guy came in each night
 Half drunken high
 Full of after work stops
 A dinner tray of cold food waiting

Sometimes bringing back nearly smoked joints
 The two of them took turns
 One on lookout
 The other standing on the toilet in the bathroom
 Smoking the leftover roaches
 Exhaling the pot smoke into the top of the wall ventilation duct

The guy had nothing left to say
 Talking in occasional quiet low keyed grunts
 During empty voice nod punctuated meaningless conversations

The guy kept clear of everybody on the ward
 Spent most of the weekends out on pass
 Getting back to the hospital
 Just in time to pass out
 Just like it was a hotel

His stepfather came out to pick him up

For his next saturday afternoon visit
Driving his Camaro

He had stopped making car payments
When his unemployment ran out
Right before he landed in the hospital

He had already made a year and a half of payments on it
There was still a year and half of payments left to be made
He would have settled for a repossession
He wanted to put the car totally out of his thoughts
Forget about it in his own way

His stepfather must have made the payment that month
His stepfather was letting him know
The car wasn't his anymore

He sat press jammed against the passenger side door
In an awkward wind vent tire hum filter of noise
He choked back the humiliation stoked ashes of burnt defeat
He was right where his stepfather wanted him

It was the third time he had lost the car
First it was stolen
Then it sat in the driveway parked after his license was revoked
Now his stepfather was behind the wheel
This time he knew it was gone for good

The bastards kept taking it away from him
It was the only thing he had
The only thing of his they could get their hands on
The only way he could be punished
In their minds

First it was the cops
Then it was the courts
Now the most closest to home son of a bitch
His stepfather was taking his car

He had nothing but shitty luck with cars
His first car was a creaking 1950's Volkswagen bug
Older than he was
A hundred dollar special
With a floor rust rot view of the street below
Courtesy of his mother's younger brother
His godfather

He drove it on the back of town dirt roads
A couple of times before it froze up
He sold it to some guys down the street
With the mysterious egg yolk shells still dried hard

Around the gas tank
 For half of what he paid for it

He figured they were the guys that clogged it up
 They pushed it down to where they lived
 Then went right to work cleaning the fuel line
 They had it running the day they bought it off of him

His next car was a middle 60's mustang
 Split between him and his year younger sister
 A summertime fume filled noxious rattling bomb
 Loud as a tank driving through a mine field
 The oil burned faster than the gasoline

He had the back seat piled with speakers
 12 inch bass woofers
 Salvaged from the 1965 family Packard Bell television stereo console
 Along with a couple pairs of coaxials
 Loose strewn wired into a cheap Radio Shack eight track player

His sister finished the car off
 While he was away at college
 Ran it drip dry of oil
 It was ready for the tow chain pull to the scrap pile
 When he came home seven months later

The day the car was scheduled to be hauled away
 He took out the back seat
 Then methodically destroyed every part of the interior and body
 That he was able to pry loose with a screw driver
 While his mother stood in the condominium communal garage driveway area
 Shrieking at him that he was insane

He smashed the sparkplugs with a hammer
 He wasn't going to leave anything of value
 For the goddamned junkman

His next car was a late model El Camino
 A favor from his mother's wrecking yard owning boyfriend
 An accelerator sticking deathtrap
 That sent him whipping into corners at 40 miles per
 A bald tire hazard that hydroplaned slid across wet pavement
 Like a slapshot hockey puck on ice
 Bumper smash rearend barreling into whatever was in front of it

The car's interior had a disturbing odor
 Like it had been used for a month of july
 Dead body storage facility
 In a dark wooded decomposed algae infested swampy quagmire
 Rotting knee deep in the smoldering muck
 Somewhere south of Mississippi

When he drove the car stoned on pot
 The unpredictable gas pedal and vomituous cadaver smell
 Made him think that somebody was trying to kill him off

His sister drove the car to her job
 Where she worked on a plastic injection mold machine
 Until the tips of two of her fingers were severed
 In the start of a workday accident

He drove around in an International Harvester 4 wheel drive pickup
 truck
 In the summer before he got his Camaro
 A summer spent in vaporlock breakdown at any time uncertainty
 Flat tire retread spare randomness with a rusted lug guarantee
 A clunkering box of piss dirty lemon yellow sheet metal

He drove around with the hubs locked in 4 drive
 Until the front wheel finally fell off in the driveway

He had 4 payments left on the truck
 When he gave it to his younger cousin
 For nothing
 In a drunken acid inspired gregarious act of grandiose generosity
 During the christmas of 1978

His cousin turned around and sold it
 For a couple hundred dollars

He learned how to drive in his mother's car
 With his father ranting in the passenger seat while they rolled
 Vacant through empty sunday afternoon shopping center parking lots
 Telling him and anybody else that would listen
 That he had no ability

He flunked the driver's education road test
 In the summer of his sixteenth birthday
 Told by the shop metal teacher driving instructor
 Who hated skinny long haired sullen rock and roll punks
 That he had no business being on the road

He drove around blackout drunk high stoned
 Wasted on acid
 In a truck and a car full of open alcohol
 With a moonflower bong on the dashboard
 Everyday for a solid 10 months
 Before he was arrested on a monday night
 Turning the wrong way into a one way street
 In the middle
 Of an exceptionally cold blizzardous january nightmare winter
 That rendered most vehicles inoperable and most roads impassable

His license to drive was suspended for 3 months
 Before it was revoked for a year
 He would have to come up with character reference vouching letters
 If he wanted to reapply for his drivers license
 Then he had to carry high cost personal liability insurance for 5 years

He still owed money on the fine
 From when his license was revoked the summer before
 There was no way outside of hell to pay it
 He knew that driving was hopeless
 He let go of the idea of ever driving again
 He was wiping his ass clean of the whole fucking mess

He started spending more of his time
 With the married woman he met on the ward

She was one out of about three other women
 That he was casually chasing
 Checking into during his spare time
 Dropping out of the screwball moron routine
 When he was able to talk to them alone

He half wondered how far he would be able to get
 With a woman that was 12 years older than him
 Trapped somewhere with a husband she said
 She didn't care about
 Struggling through the dry years of a lapsing marriage
 That involved children

He knew that any time spent on her
 Was probably going to be wasted

He started chasing women when he was 18
 The available combination of alcohol and older women in bars
 Worked like magic for him
 Dissolving the highschool nightmare years
 Spent in withdrawn teenage isolation reject loneliness
 Without ever knowing what it was like
 To have a girlfriend

He went after anything that didn't appear tied down
 Making up for the wasted lost time
 With a whiskey sped false courage bravery abandon
 In a Dr. Jekyll type personality warping transformation

A restless always unsatisfied pursuit
 The great white wife hunt
 Was mostly a losing proposition

He had stumbled slowly into the gray vague dawn realization

That women picked him up
 When he was able to sit still
 Long enough to keep his mouth shut
 He didn't have to do anything

He learned how to drink in bars
 At a place called Joe's
 Named after the owner

A dark thickbrowed stocky emigrate gypsy
 A supposed member of the non-existent
 East side of Joliet syndicate
 An alleged man of rumored repute

A shark inside of a fishbowl
 Who ran the joint with a tape handled dent creased wooden baseball bat
 Strongarm managing over a revolving crew of muscle brained lackeys

The guy was mentoring one of his friends
 In a life of tax free success

He got into Joe's as part of a gang of 17 year olds
 That had been drinking quarts of piss warm Pabst Blue Ribbon
 By the case
 Underneath an expressway overpass
 In a nearby town

Nobody gave a shit about a bunch of underaged kids
 Hanging out shooting stick
 Getting noisily drunk
 Ordering up shots from every bottle behind the bar
 Trying to find the one that tasted the worst
 As long as they had money in their pockets

Joe's was a neighborhood bar
 In the economically strapped Joliet Ridgewood area
 The down the street tavern
 Where guys stopped off after a day's work
 In dirty sweat stained blue collar job clothes
 Grease still smeared on their hands and across their faces

It was a place where hair slicked malnourished older booze hounds
 Hand shake steady sunken skin ashen gray polyester seedy
 With nothing at home except the sharp glare of a bare 40 watt lightbulb
 Sat quietly at the end of the bar
 Watching television sitcoms on the corner set
 During near dead weeknights
 When the headlights of passing cars
 Moved along the walls

Joe's filled up on Saturday nights
 Mostly with men looking to cut loose
 Sandblast guzzling a weeks worth of useless memories
 With an impatient eight hour delirious frenzy binge of alcohol
 Until they were able to fuck or fight anything that got in their way

Cue balls bounced off of the wood paneled walls
 Stools were knocked over
 Disputes erupted into take it outside spillovers
 That never made it out of the back door

The jukebox pumped out strong at full volume
 An endless roaring three song for a quarter barrage
 Country music by Waylon and Willie and the boys
 Hank Williams Junior and Johnny Paycheck
 Merle Haggard
 David Allan Coe singing the perfect Steve Goodman song
 The white working man's version of the black man's blues
 Made by the pot smoking redneck hippie cowboys
 The middle 70's golden age of outlaw country music
 Before Eddie Rabbit and all of that urban cowboy horseshit

"A good hearted woman in love with a good timin' man"
 He wanted a piece of that action

He spent a year in Joe's
 Before he started hitting the area nightclubs
 Where people his own age were hanging out
 All the places and the people in them were a joke to him
 Weak lightweight easy to knock over phonies
 That didn't know diddley

He disrespected every establishment he went into
 Smoking pot out in the open
 Breaking bottles against the walls
 Smashing glasses on the floor
 Stinking up the places with the foulest cheapest cigars he could find

He knew that it didn't matter where he got kicked out of
 He could always get into Joe's

Two guys arrived on the ward with guitars
 He thought that maybe he could
 Get some kind of musical singing thing going

He thought that maybe the real reason
 For his going crazy
 Getting locked in the hospital
 Was to get him into the band
 That he always thought he should have been in

He thought that the hospital lockup was the only way out
 To get him away from the people and life
 That had convinced him
 He was just another nobody
 Going nowhere

The first guy had an expensive 12 string acoustic guitar
 Along with an endless spiel of probably
 Made up on the spot stories

The guy was supposedly in the hospital
 Under the strongly recommended advice of a family lawyer
 Part of a lay low alibi work out
 Dealing with a brag about being a suspect
 In a sexual molestation murder
 Of a man found floating face down in an area creek

He figured the guy for a non-functioning
 Always lived at home adult
 Who was too demanding for a rapidly aging set of parents

He knew that people walking around
 In clothes from twenty years ago
 Probably didn't have a family lawyer

The 12 string guy talked about being in bands
 About collecting royalty checks from an album
 Released the year before
 Claimed Steve Miller was a family blacksheeped cousin
 That drank animal blood then ate their meat raw

The guy made an offhand claim
 About knowing how to play every song by the Beatles
 He told the guy right now
 He knew the words to every song by the Beatles
 He told the guy to play any Beatles song
 He would sing it with or without him

After a couple hours of pointless fucking around
 He figured out
 That the guy knew
 The beginning parts of a lot of Beatles songs
 But the guy was unwilling or unable
 To get through to the end of a first verse
 Stopping starting over
 Slam braking the chorus kick in
 Gear switching to something else
 Before anything ever got going

The guy didn't want to play

Anything that he could sing to
 He said the hell with it
 Didn't bother with it after that

He followed the other guy with a guitar
 Around for a day
 Trying to find out what songs the guy knew
 Trying to get the guy
 To play something by Neil Young

The guy had a beat to shit six string box
 The guy was tall with thick black framed glasses
 Lanky almost like a big footed clod
 Loping in easy strides all over the ward
 Strumming on the guitar
 Singing off the top of the head bullshit words
 Capable of exploding in a sudden flying rage of anger
 When any of the staff members attempted to get in the way
 Or threatened to piss on the one man parade
 The guitar became a weapon of menacing possibilities

The guy talked a mumbled stream of nonsense
 Deliberate gibberish smirking eyes
 Laughing from behind the glasses
 He knew it was only a matter of time
 Before the guy el-kabong smashed the guitar
 In a dangling string wired fray of splintering wood chip pieces

He guessed that the guy was like him
 Probably acid damaged
 Didn't give a fuck about anything
 Putting up a screwball front
 For anybody stupid enough to buy into it

He spent half of his day
 In the ward stereo room
 A small sunk into the wall afterthought
 Soundproofed glass cinder blocked enclosure
 With enough comfortable room for three people

He wandered in and out of the room
 Sitting for a half hour
 Or standing impatient for a couple of minutes

He fished the radio dial around
 The couple of fading FM station signals from Chicago
 Trying to find a song that he liked
 Mostly it was the same stuff over and over
 Bob Seger and Eric Clapton
 FM top 40

He got all excited when a song came on that he liked
 A song with speed melt guitar note skull boned bass kick drum pounding
 Or a song that he knew the words to

He turned the sound up until the ward walls rattled
 Let the sound soak into his body
 Then left the room as if refreshed

He kept a small portable radio
 In the large ward visiting room
 Tuned into WLS on the AM band

The room was usually empty
 He went in there by himself
 Walked up and down
 Attention narrowed to the small radio sound

He looked out at the Kankakee River trees
 Turning his back on everything that was hospital
 Before the windows in dull reflection

The nonstop fast talk radio din jingle on WLS
 Always reminded him of living at his grandmother's in Texas
 The summer before his last half year of senior high school

He would lie awake on his back
 Adjusting his eyes to the particled darkness
 Listening to the powerful WLS signal
 Cutting it's way down the length of the continent
 Scraping through the cackling electric night air from Chicago
 Coming out of the cheap clock alarm radio next to his bed

He thought about his friends back home
 He wondered if they were riding around
 Car parked laughing in green dashboard glow
 Somewhere in the still heat of never ending summer
 Hearing the same radio broadcast

He sat in the ward visiting room alone
 Listening to WLS in the middle afternoon
 Remembering the rides in the work trucks
 With his friends
 WLS playing unheard on the shitty truck ride radios

He thought of his old friends
 Driving to a Joliet area job site
 Windows down to the fresh April air
 On their way back to the yard
 Maybe they were hearing the same radio
 At the same time

He always felt like he was on the fringe
The soon forgotten outer edge
In the circle of his friends

He was too much of a loner
To be a fulltime part of a group
He liked to be alone too much

He had spent his high school years
Constantly withdrawing
Into his own inaccessibly private secret world
Locked away in the pages books and the sleeves of records

He left for months at a time
Several trips spent working in Texas
Along with a partially completed year of freshman college

He came around when he felt like it
Then later when they would let him

He was never there for the forging
Of the strong unbreakable bonds
Associated with the non-retractable guarantee of lifelong friendship

He drifted in and out of the people he hung with
He always felt that he was tolerable to a point
Nobody went out of their way to include him
His presence was inconsequential
He had to make all of the calls
He had to initiate all of the interaction

He was an easy person to abandon
At the first sign of any trouble
Nobody had wanted anything to do with him
The year before when he went crazy

He agonized for eight months alone
Until he was able to find a place
Back into their lives
The confidence shaken gladly grateful recipient
Of a reluctantly offered wary eyed second chance

Now he was on the outs again
He fucked it all up to hell
Ostracized
On the shit list of twenty different people

He let the sense of loss
For what might have been

Eat away at him
 A self pitying feast of continual inner turmoil
 Leaving a gaping hole of wounded broken regret

He still wanted to believe
 That he could lose friends
 That he never really had

He was allowed to leave the hospital
 Every saturday morning
 For a day pass in the accompaniment of his family

He spent his saturday home visits
 Getting shit faced plastered falling over drunk
 Barely able to walk by the time
 He was driven back at the hospital

Getting out to cut loose once a week
 Made the time pass more quickly
 The hospital stay seemed more bearable

He was settling into a routine
 That he wanted to see continue
 Indefinitely

He spent a couple of hours every day
 Talking to the older married woman
 He had been getting to know

He kept the talk small
 Trying to be cool
 Trying to maintain the respect
 That he felt he should display towards a woman
 That was another man's wife

She was like all of the other things
 That he had ever secretly wanted or hoped for
 Beyond his grasp
 Hopelessly out of reach

He was taken out on a hospital outing
 A weekly evening trip in a hospital van
 To a Kankakee bowling alley

He had to promise not to do anything
 Bizarre or non-socially conforming
 Like smoking his cigarettes through a clenched fist

Being forced to agree not be weird
 Was a thrown down gauntlet of challenge for him

He was determined to act
 Like a totally out of mind warped weirdo lunatic
 When he was let loose in the bowling alley

He went to the bowling alley
 With a dozen other patients
 In the supervision of a couple of female staff members

Young unmarried in their middle 20's
 Educated women that were too good to be true

Women that nobody had gotten around yet to telling
 That they had no business or need
 To be working in a hospital
 Babysitting adult lunatics

He was hit with a sudden flood of embarrassment
 When he got into the bowling alley
 He knew that when he asked the guy for his bowling shoes
 The guy would know that he was an idiot
 On a recreational outing from the nearby loony bin

He stayed off to the side
 Like he wasn't one of mental cases
 While everybody was getting ready to bowl

He knew that only a force of circumstance
 Could assemble a group like this
 There were older people and adolescents
 Young people markedly different in appearance
 A black woman in her early thirties
 People this different
 Would never have gotten together naturally
 Outside in the world of real life

For a brief moment in his glimpsing awareness
 The patient staff hierarchy boundaries
 Were no longer in effect
 The antagonism and ridicule he felt
 Gave way to something else
 When he suddenly saw each of them as a person

He noticed some young guys in the bowling alley
 Laughing and looking at the nuts from the hospital
 He wanted to kick their watery smiles down their throats
 Bowling ball smash their vacant faces
 Into a pomegranated brain speckled bloody pulp

The married woman slowly became the focus
 Of all of his waking attention

He kept thinking there was something more there
He started thinking that she knew

He was slowly centering his life around her
Trying to keep a lid on the simmering stew pot of emotions
He was cauldroning for her

He would never openly acknowledge that
Which was obviously visible
Just below the surface
Of all that he expressed to her

It took the older more experienced one of the two
To put an end to the game
They had both been knowingly playing

She wanted to know first off
If he was really crazy
She told him that she had talked to his doctor
Now she wanted to know from him

He wouldn't say if he was crazy or not
He asked her if she thought he was crazy

Then she wanted to know what his plans were
With the girlfriend that had visited him
When he first came to the hospital
He told her that he didn't have a girlfriend

It was settled then
She was going to be his girlfriend
While they were in the hospital
Then she would see him after they got out
But he had to keep his mouth shut

He agreed without pinning himself with a yes
He asked her about her husband
She told him not to worry
Her husband didn't matter

He wondered what kind of setup he was getting into
How could her husband not matter
What about her three kids
How was he going to take care of them
He was nut bound
He didn't see himself working again
What kind of life could he make for a woman

He couldn't picture her life
Without a husband or children
A nice comfortable home

Two cars in the garage
In some quiet hicktown

Where was he going to be in all of that
Stuck off hidden somewhere
Stashed in a side sneak

The confusion unsettled
The sudden realization
Of all the impossibly hoped for expectation

He wasn't sure what this woman wanted
He started to think
That maybe she really was crazy

One of the guys on the ward was always talking
About going out to get all fucked up drunk
The guy cooked up a scheme to have a party
With a couple of the women on the ward

The guy was one of the from town locals
One of the Kankakee down south regulars
Open emotional bandage wound fresh
Just out of a spent marriage
In the hospital for some kind of nervous depression

The guy had a loaded row of teeth that flashed
Out from a shit eating sell you anything grin
Along with lid sliced winking slitted eyes
That pretended to take in nothing

He always thought of white yellow pearly ears of corn
Carnival rope confidence man hucksterism
Whenever the guy put that smile on him

The married woman that he had been getting to know
Told him that she was going to the guy's little party
She told him that he was going with them
She rigged it up with the doctor
He was going to be let out on pass for the night

The guy from town said it was alright
If he wanted to tag along
But privately warned him to stay out of the way
The guy figured on banging the little blonde

He wanted to tell the guy to forget about it
Instead he acted like a scrawny loser twerp
Played it off like an innocent unknowing idiot ignoramus
He kept his mouth shut

The guy loud talked up the party for a week
 He was told that he was going
 It sounded like a lot of bullshit to him
 He was going to sit back
 Take the ride
 See how far it really went

He couldn't see the hospital
 Let the four of them
 Walk out of there together unattended
 On a weekday night
 To get loaded and do who knows what
 It was too fucking crazy to be real

He left the hospital on a Tuesday night
 With three other patients
 He was with the married woman he had become friends with
 Along with the woman from the Joliet court house
 They rode in the car with the corn row tooth guy
 The party was going to be at the guy's mother's house

They all had passes written out for 5 hours
 He was given his pass when it was time to leave
 With an illegible ink smudged scrawl
 Where the doctor's name was supposed to be
 He half wondered if one of the women had forged it

He had been chasing both of the women
 In his own roundabout indirect plenty of time way
 He hadn't really agreed to anything with the married woman
 He knew it was pick and choose
 He was hoping to get out of there
 Without giving either of them anything definite

He started to get paranoid
 When they got to the guy's house
 He realized that he didn't know
 Jackshit about any of them

For all he could imagine
 They could have been a bunch of undercover cops
 Narcs leading him into an elaborate setup

Maybe the guy was a criminally bent psycho
 He sized the guy with an eye sharp on the throat
 The guy had a half foot and fifty pounds on him

They could of been hospital spies
 Incognito shrinks trying to find out
 If he was really a spree drinking maniac

Then he thought that maybe the women
 Were going to bust him out of the hospital
 Take him away somewhere to live with them

He was softened with regular sleep and hospital drugs
 He knew that he wasn't ready
 To walk into a snakepit situation

He started to calm down
 When he saw the guy's mother
 The guy told her to stay on the other side of the house
 It was the too real to be faked detail he needed
 To shut down the nervous run of imagination

The guy brought out a plastic bag
 Full of fat green double papered joints
 The guy said it was from a nephew
 He figured it was grown in a nearby field

The guy fired up the joints
 One right on the end of another
 Seeds pop crackle exploding
 Smoldering rice paper ash wafted the smoke filled room air

The women weren't interested in the pot
 He knew the guy was trying to put him in the dirt
 Get him out of the way

The guy got stupid real quick from the dope
 A laughing giggling moron
 An unembarrassed diminishment on open display
 The smiling teeth and eyes were dissolved from their controls

He traded his corn tooth image of the guy
 For that of a braying jackass donkey burro hee-haw
 He hated to have to take shit from turkey's like that

The four of them sat around drinking cans of beer
 Mixing vodka with orange juice and flat coca cola
 He ended up in a room with the married woman
 On top of a bed a piled with their coats

He was a sloppy drunken stoned quiet fool
 Babbling nonsense with his arm around the woman
 Trying to keep from passing out
 Dreadly aware in the buried reasoning part of brain
 He was sealing and fating his future

The four of them gathered themselves together
 When somebody had the social drinker's sense to realize

That they were supposed to be back at the hospital

He kept thinking about the woman from Joliet
 He felt like he had made an irrevocable mistake
 He wished she hadn't been there to see it

His sole hospital preoccupation
 Became his married woman girlfriend

He was right next to her
 As soon as she came out of her room
 In the morning awakened
 Fresh from fussing around in the mirror
 With a blue eye shade shadow layer of cosmetics

He was right by her side
 Never farther than a voice away
 Stayed next to her the whole time
 Until the night staff told them
 It was time to knock off for the day

They did everything together
 Except sleep in the same room

He never had somebody
 That he could totally pour himself into
 Somebody that could put up with him
 For hours at a time
 Without getting tired of him

He had never in his whole life
 Gotten this close
 Wide opening himself up to another person

He always kept a permanent wedge chasm stakelike
 Driven between his innermost thoughts
 And those that were around him

The woman thrived on the exhaustless attention
 He was just what she needed

They were both in a cut-loose devoid of responsibility
 Dream floating through a hospital ward inactivity limbo
 They had nothing whatsoever to do
 Just sit around talk smoke cigarettes together
 Wait for the meals to be served

He was able to accomplish
 What her husband hadn't been able

The husband that was too busy working a job
Combating the daily bullshit of the outside world

The thankless breadwinning provider
Out there breaking ass
On a consistent reliable everyday basis
To keep a foot on the mountain of bills
Carrying the load of a two car home
With three kids and an unhappy wife

The husband that treated her
Like a stick of furniture
Didn't have a chance

The woman kept telling him
She was going to be seeing him
After the hospital was a long gone
Almost forgotten part
Of both of their pasts

He told her that they weren't going to let him out
Until he was a bloated stiff armed silent zombie
Tranquilized into a suicide inspiring depression
That was the only way
His family could tolerate him

The woman told him that
He didn't have to go that way
She was going to help him get through

She showed him a large pharmacy prescription bottle
Stashed in the makeup case pocketbook jumble of her purse
Filled with amphetamine diet pills
The two dollar a hit black cadillacs
Black bombers
Black molly speeders
That he had seen before on the street

She told him that she got it from her sister-in-law
She would give him two of the pills each day
She told him that he had to keep his mouth shut
He wanted to know if she could get more

He had never felt better in his life
He had found a medication combination routine
That was finally going to work

He slept straight through each night
Knocked black into a dreamless cold death
On the Loxitain tranquilizers

He cleared out the morning cobwebs
With coffee and muscle relaxers

He popped a couple of speeders after breakfast
Then sailed right through the day
The automatic pilot flying
On cruise control

He was able to get laugh out loud drunk
On saturday passes with his family

He was able to get a buzz on
From occasional joints and roaches
Smuggled in and passed off to him
By other patients and their visitors

The hospital staff didn't know what was wrong
Whatever they were doing wasn't working

The doctor told his family
Things weren't looking good
There was no change or abatement in his behavior

He had a new guy moved into his room
His other roommate left unceremoniously
Woke up had breakfast then split one day
Having completed a court enforced 30 day stay

The new guy was from a nearby town
A couple of years older than him
A born thief and a natural liar
A lazy slouching whining bastard
The kind of guy that borrowed things
With no intention of ever returning them
The kind of guy that inventoried other people's belongings
Mentally cataloging all that was there for the taking

He had nothing in the room
Beyond the trenchcoat and hat he showed up with
And a couple of days change of clothing
He still managed to lose a shirt and a pair of sox
To the lousy worthless son of a bitch

He became friends on the ward
With a puerto rican mexican cuban guy
The guy kept promising to get him some pot

The guy came off like some kind of low leveled gangster
Without ever coming out and saying
That's what he was

The guy would talk normal until a staff member came around
 Then the guy would start bird arm wing flapping
 While bounce balancing shifting weight
 On one solidly floor planted foot
 Slow motion stop moving
 Back leg swung back suspension
 Air hang drop kick ready paused
 Saying the word bubblelicious
 Laughing in their faces

The guy thought americans were stupid little babies
 Television commercials revealed them
 For what they were

The hospital people were in a leery fear of the guy
 The guy cheeked then spit out the hospital pills
 The guy never said why he was there

He turned the crank on an ice bucket
 For a homemade ice cream machine

Several minutes of crouched handle turning
 Sent his arm muscles into uncontrolled
 Shaking trembling spasmodics
 Out of breath dog-lung panting
 He wondered how out of shape he had become

A charge was added to his climbing hospital bill
 57 dollars and 43 cents in an itemized column
 Under the notation of Ice Cream

He sat in the hospital unaware
 An arrest warrant was procedurally filed
 With his name on it
 Somewhere in the offices of the Joliet Court House

The date had gone and past
 For the promise he had made
 To a judge the summer before
 When he had his driver's license revoked

He was supposed to have paid the \$450
 He owed in fine money
 Or reschedule a hearing with the judge
 For an extension

He hadn't bothered to do either
 To hell with them
 He wasn't giving the bastards a penny
 They put him out to pasture
 Then they demanded money from him

They had already taken enough from him

They had his number punched
 All they had to do was sit back and wait
 The first screwup he made that involved a cop
 He was going straight to jail
 There was no way he could avoid it

For a fuckup loser like him
 It was only a matter of time

He set up his day
 With the married woman
 In the always empty visiting room

He rearranged the thoughtless clutter
 Of furniture in the room
 To his own comfortable liking

They sat in a cleared out area
 In the middle of the room
 Away from the rest of the chairs
 Facing out unobstructed
 Towards the Kankakee River window
 Cigarette pack ashtray
 And a quart plastic hospital issue pitcher of ice water
 Always within a bent arm's reach

He sat next to her talking
 Almost like they were riding in a car
 A sitting still feeling of continual motion

The days began to fly
 He wanted them to last forever

He half listened to a portable plug-in AM radio
 At a level just below a conversational tone
 While he sat in the visiting room with the woman

Always in the background everpresent
 The endless repetition of the same songs

He was soundtracking the experience
 Indelibly etching his memories with music
 Memories that could be retrieved years later
 When the music he associated with them was heard

Every part of his life was remembered with music
 His earliest recollections were of songs
 The music would eventually lead him back

To where he was
 To how he felt
 To who he was with
 When he was listening to the songs

He had been doing this since he was 4 years old
 When he became suddenly aware of his consciousness
 The first neural lines of memory being mapped
 Each time he heard the sound
 Of the siren voiced falsettos
 Frankie Valli
 Jan and Dean and the Beach Boys

The outside world was sounding a call
 To wake up to what was around him

Music ran like a river through his life
 First it was from the radio
 Later it would be an album
 Played every day repeatedly
 For weeks at a time
 Until it was heard unconsciously

The music and all of its surrounding time
 Becoming inseparable

He could hear Len Barry's 1-2-3
 In his mind
 Taking him back
 To the thoughts and feelings
 Of his 5 year old 1965 southern california world

Like the reminiscent haunt
 Locked in an old forgotten picture

Or the past that is released
 In the trace scent of a once familiar fragrance

It was so easy
 Like taking candy from a baby

He sat in the room with the married woman
 Knowing in the back of his thoughts that years later
 Whenever he heard Chrissie Hynde sing

“ Gonna use my arms
 Gonna use my legs
 Gonna use my style
 Gonna use my fingers”

He was going to be right back there
 Sitting in a chair next to her

On a Kankakee private hospital psychiatric ward
 In the spring of 1980

He was interviewed regularly by social workers
 That came from outside of the hospital

He couldn't stay in the hospital forever
 He was told that arrangements had to be made
 For a permanent placement
 There were funding paperwork issues
 Stacks of bureaucratic triplicate procedures
 To be taken care of

He turned all of the interviews into a joke
 He looked forward to talking to women case workers
 Women that seemed to have an interest in him

He enjoyed the attention he was given
 The opportunity to talk about himself
 The opportunity to show what a wise ass he was

He kept himself purposefully oblivious
 To whatever plans these people were making for him
 He was ignorantly unrecognizant to the fact
 That these people were in complete control
 Of his life and his future

He went with his mother and stepfather
 To family celebration get together gatherings
 During his saturday home visits

His mother's family always meant
 Socializing oiled with alcohol
 A guaranteed free easy fun drunk

It was better than spending the saturdays monotonous
 On pass sitting in the house alone
 Not knowing in the silence
 How loaded he was

It was better than sitting around sipping cans of beer
 With his stepfather in cigarette smoker's
 Quiet reflective contemplative solitude
 Knowing that the man in the room watching him
 Hated his fucking guts and didn't want him there

He showed no shame before his relatives
 He walked around with his orange hospital pass
 Poking out from a front shirt pocket
 Proudly displaying it like it was an award

To anybody that bothered to ask how he was doing

They all knew how he was doing
 He was a goddamned certified lunatic crazy nut
 That had to be locked up

He had been whipped too hard
 Shaming himself
 Into a crushing personally defeated humiliation
 When he had been hospitalized the year before

He hid from everybody he knew
 For long last forever months down in Texas
 Stayed suicide low
 Despairing
 In guilty depression after he came back
 Until an end of the year drunken celebratory binge
 Gave him the nerve to go comfortably
 Before his relatives again

The depression of his Kankakee hospitalization
 Hadn't settled into him yet
 He was letting the family see the high side
 Right out in the open with his insanity lockup mess
 As it was happening

He wanted to cut off the pack
 Of hush voiced behind the back rumors
 He wanted to be there face to face
 He wanted to feed the facts himself
 Into the sharp grinding teeth
 Of the unforgiving family gossip mill

His relatives put up with him
 Out of respect for his mother
 His mother was their cousin
 Their niece
 Their aunt
 Their sister
 She was one of them
 He was nothing to them
 He was the no good bastard son of his father

His insanity pushed all of the ugly
 Well hidden developed hatreds
 Crashing out over the surface

It was the truth of his family standing
 That he might not have ever discerned
 Had he not given it the excuse it needed
 To reveal itself

He always knew that his father was hated
By everybody that was in his mother's family

Her parents hated his father
Her brother-in-laws hated his father
The aunt uncle cousin relations hated his father

A hatred that was barely containable
A hatred he had to hear about
When it was late
When he was supposed to be asleep
Not listening
When the adults sat up talking and drinking
Into the night
He was taught to hate his father

He was his father all over again
As he began to look more and more
Like his father
He should have found it natural to assume that
The hatred his family had for his father
Was now a hatred for him

He looked forward to saturday out of the hospital visits
When he was able to third wheel tag along
To a family party

He knew that he made people uncomfortable
His older relative were hardly able to disguise
The openly hostile disgusted contempt
They felt towards him

His younger cousins lost all respect for him
Regarding him with condescending pity
He felt more sorry for them
Than they could ever feel for him

He was still caught in the draft of the upswing
He couldn't let any of it bother him
Everybody thought that he was too far gone
To notice what was going on

A tuba playing Italian immigrant married
A young immigrant woman from the French side of Alsace-Lorraine

His great grandparents settled
In the Taylor Street Little Italy neighborhood of Chicago

They had ten children

Four boys and six girls
His grandmother was the second oldest girl

One of the boys died in early adulthood
Traffic stop sitting on a motorcycle
Run down while waiting on the light
By a speeding carload of hopped out 1935 junkies
On their way to hook up with a fix

The rest of the children married into other families
The daughters married italians a german an irishman and a pole
His grandmother's brother had nine children
His grandmother and three of her sisters
Had 19 more children between them
These were his mother's cousins

His great grandfather was the well loved patriarchal head
Of a blood line empire
That stretched across dozens of lives

He was special to his great grandfather
He was the among the first of the great grandchildren

He remembered his great grandfather
Taking him into the store he owned
On a sunday when it was closed
To give him a candy bar from a box on a shelf

He remembered the last time he saw his great grandfather
He was four years old
In the days before his parents were to set out
With all they could carry in their car
Headed for the prospects of a new life in California

He hid from his great grandfather
Refusing to come out of the car
Covering his head with his arms
Not wanting to say goodbye

His great grandmother died in 1965
His great grandfather died shortly after that
Alone in a broken hearted unwilling to go on despondency
His great grandfather stopped living

It was up to the daughters then
To hold the family together

He first met all of his mother's family
In 1970 when he was 10
When his mother returned to Illinois

The family was by that time a matriarchy
 Held together herded over
 By his grandmother's younger sister

There were so many people all at once
 He couldn't keep the names straight
 He saw replicated sets of people
 Each one in some way resembling the other

He was in a sensory overloaded shock situation
 For the seven years he grew up in California
 He had lived in relative isolation

His whole world changed when he first met his relatives
 All he had known growing up in California
 Evaporated into an inconsequential insignificance
 It had all been a mistake
 That was better left forgotten
 Like it never even happened

He suddenly found himself lost
 Let out loose to drift in strange waters
 Cast away from the well known stable mooring
 Of mother father two sister survival struggle

The lone wolf pack family had been reabsorbed
 Its singular identity denied
 Shoveled under the piled on bottom
 Of a large extending family

He felt pride in being part of their family
 In their life's he had a sense
 Of his past and his future
 He finally felt like he belonged somewhere

The women members of the family
 Far outnumbered the male members
 The men tended to drift away from the family circle
 Seldom calling never coming around

The male in-laws were acceptable
 Only as husbands that turned over their paychecks
 Keeping their mouths shut
 Allowing the wife's to do as they pleased
 Putting the wife's family first above all else

Any male in-law that fell out of favor
 Was a marked son of a bitch
 To be hounded out and eventually driven away

His mother's sister's two sons
A couple of years younger than him
Were built-in best friends

He always liked to secretly think of them
Like they were his own brothers
Blood bound through the thickened thin
There for each other
For the rest of their lives

They both already had a real brother
They knew the difference
He was just an older cousin to them
Somebody that came with their mother's family
He was somebody they would have to temporarily put up with

He liked going to family parties when he was a kid
He learned by watching his relatives
A good time was drinking and socializing

He looked ahead to being older
He wanted to take his place in the family party scene

When he was finally allowed to drink with his family
He had to be carted out cut off
He was too excessive
Walking around with a drink in each hand
Getting so drunk
He had to hunch up his shoulders
To keep from falling over

He wanted every day to be a party
He didn't want to settle for fun on special occasions
The rest of the time in between
Passed mechanically
In a dull thoughtless sober depression

He had planned on spending
The rest of his life with those people
Now his relatives wanted nothing to do with him

The party was already over
Before it ever got started

He had been in the hospital for over two months
It was no longer a question
Of when he was getting out
A decision had to be made
About where he would be going next

He didn't want to get out
 He didn't want to go anywhere else either
 He wanted to stay there
 For the rest of his life
 In a wayward drift
 Slipping away
 On hospital time

He was having too much fun
 He knew that things would never be that good
 In whatever life followed after the hospital

He had nothing going out in the world
 All he had were people
 That couldn't accept him for who he was

People that he had unregretfully
 Provoked into openly showing
 The hatred they had for him

He was beyond consideration
 For simple decorum
 The formalities of tolerance
 Were forever dispensed
 As far as he was concerned

Too much ugliness had spilled from the bottle
 Things would never be the same

For him outside of the hospital
 There were only people
 That hated him
 That made him hate himself
 That made him want to die

He was getting used to the idea
 That he would never work again

He started to joke that he had retired
 At the age of 19
 Permanently wing clip grounded
 Taken out of action by the authorities
 That weren't going to let him work or drive

The bastards could take care of him now
 His time was going to be free
 To listen to music and sing
 To sit around stoned drawing pictures

His putting up with a boss taking orders eating shit days were over

They could pack the whole thing right up their ass

Alarm clock time clock deadline appointment ultimatums
The whole thing was bullshit

He knew the work world
Was a hollow empty structure
An end up back at the start meaningless maze
A going nowhere circuitous life wasting soul smearing route

Set up
For and by
Unthinking drones

A way to occupy fulfill the empty
People that wouldn't know what to do
With their time
If it suddenly became their own

He was going to slide through their cracks
He wasn't going to do their work

His father stopped working
At the age of 38
After losing everything to a divorce
His father probably figured why bother

He watched his father trough tread wallowing
In the free ride subsistence level poverty
Supported by first and the third day of the month stipends
Veterans check social security supplemental income

His father's life became an aimless round about trudge
Of YMCA room skidrow hotel transience
Wintertime cold weather VA hospital resort style vacations
Paycheck day drunken binge spend splurges

His father became a willing captive
To the taxpayer supported government handout program
That left a man broke 24 days out of every month

They tried making his father go back to work
His father would start going off every day
To some ditch digging box stacking toilet swabbing job

The same thing happened every time
His father would be alright for a couple of weeks
Then his father would explode
From out of the all of a sudden
Full of suspicion distrust backstab accusations

Wild eyed clench teeth sweat fly fuming
Flat out refusing to go back to the cocksuckers

He never knew if was real
Or if it was an act

Whichever it was
It was a way to keep the disability doctors happy
It was a reaffirming backup of the basic diagnosis
His father was a paranoid schizophrenic
An incurable bordering over the psychotic
Unable to function in a work setting

He didn't know for sure
If his father wasn't able to work
Or if his father just didn't want to work

He saw people in the hospital
Older adults
That never worked a day in their lives

Wards of the state from day one
Didn't have to lift a finger
They let other people take care of them
Showed up at meal time
Lived comfortably
Swallowed their pills
Kept their mouths shut

He knew there was a free ride
Just waiting there to be taken

He thought the whole mental health thing was a scam
From the doctors to the nurses down to the patients
An insurance racket where people got paid
For doing nothing

A safe haven sanctuary for people unwilling to deal
With the harsh existence of the outside world

Psychiatry was an imprecise nonexistent
Fraudulent pseudoscience
Formed around a vaguery
Of ambiguous generalized terms

A ravel of arbitrarily loose
Double-sided word concepts
That could be coerce bent warp weld hoodwink nod framed
Into meaning anything

People getting paid to evaluate explain
 The behavior of others
 An unquestioned reality consensus opinion

A career scale confidence game
 Built out of a phallic symbol mythology
 By a coke hyper duplicitous viennese quack
 Who thought that everybody wanted to fuck their own mother

The doctors didn't do shit
 Rich men that bought their diplomas
 From second rate foreign country universities
 They signed their names on the bottom of forms
 Shoved in their faces by the nurses
 Asked the patients how they were doing
 Then split before they even answered
 His doctor ran around like Latka Gravas on crank

The nurses were glorified baby sitters
 Filling out the forms
 That kept the money pouring in
 Keeping an eye on hospital property
 Making sure that the patients didn't destroy everything
 Keeping the place from going to hell in a hand basket

Most of patients were weak whine babies
 Who would have been better off
 Getting back out to face life
 Instead of trying to shelter themselves from it

The patients that really needed the help
 Were so far gone
 They were beyond helping

He was sent one morning by the hospital
 To a day care out patient treatment center
 A place where a bunch of tranquilized bloated zombies
 Sat around a table in a house
 Doing occupational therapy art and craft ceramic work

He was told to check the place out
 If he liked it he could go there each day
 Then return to the hospital at night to sleep
 That would be his life

He agreed to see what the place was about
 Knowing that he wanted no part of it
 Knowing they were all out of their fucking minds
 The people that sent him there
 And the people that spent their days there

He noticed the cumulative effects of the house immediately
 A room filled with heavily downer dosed people
 He was put under the stifling sedated oppression

He felt like he had been given a knockout punch to the head
 Sock sand sapped from the blindside
 His body ache weighted in a down drag
 With a thick pounding heaviness
 Something was draining the energy out of him

He was in a room full of low running brainwaves
 An energy depleted lifeless vacuum
 Like somebody had ripped the cord from its socket
 He felt the thought torpor malaise saturate him
 It would be impossible to combat the force

He started wondering if there was something in the air vents
 Aerosol depressant spray chemicals
 Surreptitiously pumped out
 Into the atmosphere

He knew the outpatient house was a mental death
 He stayed there for the morning
 He was forced at the end of the ordeal
 To sit in darkness for the last half hour
 While a gruelingly dull film was projected onto a small screen

It was too much all at once for him
 He hadn't sat still or focused a thought for six months
 Now he was expected to sit quietly
 With a table of reticent vegetables
 In a crowd stuffed overflowed room
 Pretending to be comprehending a film

He listened to the moving mechanics
 Of the projection machine pulling the film from the reel
 Each click of the motor notching him closer
 To the moment that he could get the hell out of there
 Go back to the hospital and tell them
 He wasn't interested in being a part
 Of their outpatient daycare program

When he went home on Saturdays
 It gave his married woman girlfriend a chance
 To have some quiet peace
 Time to herself
 While he was gone

She spent the day sleeping
 Late relaxing getting caught up

Working on her finger nails
 Peroxidizing her hair
 Doing the kinds of things
 That a 32 year old woman thought she had to do
 To be attractive to a 20 year old

His married woman girlfriend spent one weekend at home
 Left early saturday morning
 Stayed gone until sunday night

She came back with her husband
 In tow with the guy that treated her
 Like a stick of furniture

He watched the two of them together
 He kept thinking about what it had been like
 The king and queen of the prom
 The Joe Stud quarterback football american hero
 And the pumped up little blonde cheerleader

Straight off the slick glossy gray black white pages
 Of a small midwestern town
 1966 highschool yearbook
 A whole life together ahead of them

He wondered what happened to them along the way
 Three kids and 14 years later
 It was inevitably bound to go wrong

He was issued a standing pass by his doctor
 He was allowed to leave the hospital
 For two hours each day

Most of the time he stayed in the hospital
 Sitting around with his married woman girlfriend

He took her out with him a couple of times
 She had no interest in his boundless wandering

He would start walking with no destination
 Getting himself lost on the streets around the hospital
 Walking without paying to attention to where he was going
 He would landmark building navigate himself back
 Not knowing where he had been

The two of them usually stayed on the hospital grounds
 Sitting in back of the hospital
 On the grass
 Or on the railroad trestle stones
 That crossed over the Kankakee River

He wanted to be there with her forever
 He would get caught up in the time
 Not noticing its passing
 Afterwards sensing the loss
 For what was then gone

The hospital worked with his mother
 To find a place where they could send him

He was made to talk to various people
 He signed his name at the end
 Of stacks of printed forms
 Right next to the X
 Right where they told him to sign

He had no interest in the procedurals
 He jam cram scrambled his thoughts
 Full of nonsense
 Whenever he dealt with the paperwork handlers

He wanted to let them know
 They weren't going to break him
 He wasn't going to be changed
 He wasn't going to live
 In their version of what the world should be

They were going to do
 What they were going to do

He wanted to let them know
 He didn't care what they did to him

He was set up with an interview
 With an indian guy
 That ran some kind of hospital home

His mother was hopeful he could go there
 His mother got him going
 On the idea

He was told it was place
 Filled with people just like him
 His own age
 With problems like his

It would be a place
 Where he could listen to music
 Draw pictures
 Maybe meet women that were his own age

He worked himself up
For the interview with the indian guy

When he heard the guy was an indian
He imagined the guy
To be some kind of hindi brahman
Steeped in the thousands of years
Spirituality wisdom traditions of the Rig Veda
Hare Krishna Bhagavad Gita

He wanted to make a good impression
He thought the man would give him a home
Where he could thrive
As himself

The indian guy was in his late 40's
Graying at the temples
Dressed like an american business man doctor

He was flying on three black bombers
When he met the guy
He had a huge wide grin
Spread out all over his face

He bowed out of respect
To the man
And the religious significance
He held for all that was India

He had the indian guy interview him
In the hospital radio room

He couldn't keep his hands
Off of the stereo receiver
Switching the channels
Stopping suddenly to quickly roll
The volume knob all of the way up
Then immediately back down
When he knew there was a moment
In a song
Where the sound of a single note
Was going to be left
Hanging in the air

He punctuate blasted the stereo
For less than a second
Amplifying the space
In between the echoes
At the end of Whole Lotta Love

Right before the guitar crunch kicked in
 He wanted to show the indian some style

He couldn't maintain his excitement
 While he spoke with the indian
 Wound up hyper sped with overexuberation

He kept a grin on his face
 Throughout the half hour talk
 Answering each of the indian's questions
 In turn
 With a question

He bowed when the indian left
 He felt like he had made a good impression
 He felt like he had won the guy over

If the guy was running a home for weirdoes
 The guy would have been able to see
 That he was going to fit right in

He was disappointed to find out
 He wasn't accepted by the indian

The indian wanted no part of him
 He wasn't getting into the indian's home

His mother told him that
 He completely turned the guy off
 The indian left the hospital
 Thinking he was a complete fucking idiot

The hospital people were pissed
 Because they went to a lot of trouble
 To set the whole thing up

He wondered what the problem was
 He thought he was supposed to be
 A complete fucking idiot

It was a warm Kankakee May that year
 Everything was full leafy grown green

The sun cut a hot knife
 Into the leftovers of the cold winter spring air
 Letting the dampness escape from the ground

The crisp around the edges
 Waited for the wilt

Of summer time's sluggish despondency

He thought about 10 years
 Of illinois summers

He remembered that he was always depressed
 Fighting his way through a struggling let down

A low
 That he instinctively associated
 With melting heat humidity
 Sunstruck endless afternoon deadening brightness

The high he had been on
 The elevated mood increasing energy swing
 Since the end of autumn
 Early winter
 Thanksgiving to St Patrick's Day holiday binge stretch
 Was running itself out

Nature would now take its course
 The longer hours of daylight
 Sent the message signal
 It was time to come down

His married woman girlfriend was given
 Her release date from the hospital

He knew about it for a couple of weeks
 He let the time slip by
 Unaccounted for
 Not really thinking about it
 Only the immediate was real

He was living in the moment
 As long it was still guaranteed
 He wasn't going to worry
 About anything beyond that

His married woman girlfriend acted like
 Her leaving the hospital
 Was to be a temporary separation

She told him that as soon as she was out
 She was going to come back
 To the hospital
 Take him out on an all day pass
 Just the two of them
 No hospital in the way between them

He let her make the plans
 He wasn't going to waste his time
 Thinking about the future

He wasn't going to waste his time
 Thinking about something
 He was no longer able to believe

His married woman girlfriend left the hospital
 He fell into the gaping hole
 Her absence left in his daily routine

He found that he was unable
 To occupy amuse himself
 Long ago exhausting
 The hospital's possible potentials for diversions

He was bored aggravated listless
 Argumentative irritable
 Dried of amphetamines
 He felt the hospital downers
 Getting a hold on him

He was taking on weight
 He sensed that he was sinking fast

He spent the days alone
 Walking around Kankakee
 On pass from the hospital

Walking without direction
 Purposeless activity
 Anything to make the time move
 Seem like it was going faster

He hung out sometimes
 With the puerto rican spanish mexican guy
 From the hospital

The guy rigged up some kind of scheme
 Living with a woman from town
 As a combination handy man gardener chauffeur

He sat around mornings with the guy
 In the woman's garage
 Drinking quarts of beer

He quit going there after the guy snapped
 Hurlled a half full bottle of beer against the wall

Right in the middle of a sentence
 Squared off in a boxing stance
 Knuckle up fist fight bobbing
 Snake eyed slant
 Talking about c'mon motherfucker

He was too relaxed off guard surprised
 To do anything but try to calm the guy down

When the guy got back halfway to normal
 He slowly backpedaled his way out of the garage
 Got his ass back to the hospital
 Feeling weak helpless
 And useless

He was put on the Public Aid welfare roll
 His hospital bill was piling up
 Everyday was hundreds of dollars
 Billed to his mother's work insurance
 Three months worth of itemized charges
 Five yards of continuous paper
 With no end in sight

He was given a green card
 Which would be used
 To pay for his medical expenses

The hospital was working fast
 To get him out of there

The Public Aid medical card wasn't going to bring in
 The kind of money
 That could be had
 From a patient covered with an insurance policy

His married woman girlfriend came back to the hospital
 Just like she said she would
 To take him out for the day

He met her down in the hospital parking lot
 He was going to reap into the harvest
 Two months worth of sown desires
 Spent sitting patiently by her side everyday

He had kept his hands off her
 He had kept his mouth shut to the other patients
 Now he was going to get his reward

He was going to spend the day
 In a fourteen dollar Kankakee motel room
 With another man's wife

The hospital caseworkers were closing
In on a deal
To have him sent
To a nursing home
In Chicago Heights Illinois

It was one of the few long term care facilities
That took in people
Covered by Medicaid

He tried imagining a nursing home
He kept thinking of one story ground level wings
With dormitory type rooms

He wanted to know if he could bring his albums
Along with his stereo
A pair of headphones
And a case of books

He thought about the night his car was stolen
He woke up in the back seat of a police squad
The cops told him that they had arrested him
Trying to get into a nursing home

He had tried often to discern the meaning of that
A premonition hidden amongst the unknown
The secret buried in a subconscious act

For one who already felt old
Tired of life
Receding
Ready to withdraw
From an outside society
That he did not want to be a part of

The middle of the night black out
Nursing home break-in abort drama
Would now reveal itself
As an inescapable reality

He had several weeks to wait
Before he would be sent to the nursing home

He thought little about the nursing home
Half way looking forward to it
Vaguely projecting occasional scenes
Across an idle moment of imagination
Trying to envision what it would be like

He was too far set
 In three months of hospital ways
 To think of anything else

His sister came out to visit him
 Along with a friend of hers
 And a friend of his

His sister was taking over his car payments
 She wanted to know what he did
 With the knob for the passenger side window

His sister's friend was there for the laugh
 His friend was there for the six pack of beer
 His sister had picked up for the ride

While they were visiting
 Moving around with him
 In a chaotic interspersing ramble
 From one room to another
 The hippie fried girlfriend
 Of a Kankakee biker that had been on the ward
 Came to the ward visiting door
 To palm a joint off to him

He felt like a king shot wheel in front of his friend
 He wanted his friend to let everybody that knew him
 Know that he was not
 A froth babbling indecipherable dement
 Rubber room strapped down psychotic maniac
 Monotone bound by heavy tranquilizers

He wanted his friends to know
 That he was having a better time in the hospital
 Than they were having out on the street

He was taken aside
 By one of the women
 That worked in the hospital

She wanted to know what was wrong with him
 She told him that he had been locked up
 For over three months
 And he was going to be put away
 For good

She told him to wake up
 To knock off the nonsense

He refused to buckle
 He kept believing

The whole thing was a big fucking joke

He was in the full crush
 Of warm weather depression
 When he was moved to the nursing home

He walked into the place momentumless
 Unsure of himself
 Uninterested in the unknown

The nursing home was in an old hospital building
 A worn out run down dump
 That reminded him of a school

He was given a bed in a second floor room
 Next to a beatup night stand
 And a coffin sized standup wooden closet
 Separated from the other bed in the room
 By a dirty ripped white cloth hanging
 In the middle of the room

A screenless window opened to the outside
 The room swarmed with flies and heat

He was told he could have the nightstand drawer
 Locked and unlocked by a staff member
 To protect against thieves

He said that he didn't plan on having
 Anything worth stealing

The nursing home had a large cafeteria
 In the basement of the building
 A stand in line slop tray serve
 Mismatched table broken chair confusion
 Where the patients had their meals

There was a 1950's phonograph player
 With the speakers built into the sides
 In the cafeteria

The patients fought over the right
 To put scratched disco 45's
 On the cafeteria turntable
 Dancing while the same record
 Played over and over

A nurse came around to the rooms
 To give the patients their medications

He had his dosage of muscle relaxers decreased
While his dosage of tranquilizers was increased

Sometimes the nurse with the medicine cart
Forgot to show up in the morning
That meant that he missed getting
The muscle relaxers

The nursing home was surrounded
By a tall twelve foot high chain link fence

There was a small asphalted area
Between the fence and the building
The patients spent the day milling
Outside in that small area

There was a pulled up section in the fence
Patients crawled out under the fence
To sneak out to the shopping mall district
Arriving back later with the police
Following shoplifting vandalism sprees

He stayed to himself
He sat alone quiet during the meals
Then went back to his room

He had no interest in the other patients
There were a few that were his age
Most of them were older

State institution cast offs
Begging for cigarette butts
Drooling filthy unkempt

Ripped up raggedy out of style clothing
Sweaty starch eating pallor
Medication bloat
Suffering the double edged casualties
Of poverty and mental instability

He spent most of the day
Laying in bed
With all his clothes on

The sheets and blankets pulled over him
Sweating in the hot room
Trying to focus his eyes
On the black blurry dot buzzing
Of flies that continually landed on his face

He moved in and out of consciousness
 Not aware of how long he had been gone
 Listening for the sound in the corridor
 That meant another meal was being served

He talked to his married woman girlfriend
 On the nursing home pay telephone

He told her he didn't know
 When he would be able to leave on a pass

He left her the pay phone number
 She said that she would
 Try calling him

He thought about being in the hospital
 For the rest of his life
 It didn't seem real to him

He couldn't believe
 That they really committed him

He started thinking about ways
 To kill himself

He was allowed to go home
 For the 4th of July weekend

He spent the weekend in the family room
 Laying on the couch
 Drifting in and out of Chicago Cubs baseball games
 And cable tv movies

He took his medication as prescribed
 Each night
 Crawling up to bed before nine o'clock

He impressed his family
 During his 4th of July visit
 From the nursing home

He was quiet
 Whipped
 Defeated
 Docile
 Well behaved
 He was right where they wanted him to be

His mother talked it over
With his step father

They decided that he could stay
He wouldn't have to go back
To the nursing home

He didn't care either way
All he wanted to do
Was die

REHAB

He was let back in
 To his family's home
 After being committed
 Confined for several weeks in a nursing care facility

His family stood tentatively firm
 Foundering unsteady on solid grounds
 Straddling sure over a shaky confidence

The nursing home experience
 Along with the previous four months
 Spent locked on a Kankakee hospital psychiatric ward
 Would have been enough
 To straighten his sorry ass out

He had moped his way back home
 A 4th of July weekend pass

He compuncted a grievous penitence
 A tranquilized nuthouse downer sedated oath
 The dirty white flag waving held up tatters
 Back to the wall sluggish crushed
 Caved in surrendered defeat
 Winking a promise

He would never
 Get out of line
 Again

Everybody around him said it was a matter
 That time was eventually going
 To have to tell

They knew otherwise

In the back of their minds
 The buried unspoken thought was
 The poisonous seed
 Already transforming itself
 Becoming a subtly conveyed expression of doubt
 Insidiously prophesying the inevitable reality

The rot had already taken its hold
 There was no way that he could win
 The odds were stacked in favor of the house
 The outcome was guaranteed

His family already knew
 In their heart of hearts

They would live in regret of the day
 When they let that miserable bastard
 Back into their home

He had been home for a couple of days
 The nursing home started calling on the phone
 They wanted to know when he would be back

He told the nursing home people
 He wasn't going back
 They could throw away the shit
 That he left in the room there
 Give his bed to somebody else
 He wasn't going back

The nursing home people were persistent
 He was money in the bank
 They tried to convince him
 That he needed their help
 He was going to get sick
 If he didn't take his medication
 As prescribed

He didn't want their help
 He hung up the phone

He knew that he would die
 If he had to keep on taking
 His medication
 As prescribed

He sat down for a talk
 With his stepfather agreeing
 To behave himself
 In the future

No parties no friends no noise
 No staying up all night
 No bullshit was to be tolerated
 This time around

He heard the breakdown hollowness of his voice
 Lost in the vague empty meaningless talk
 About how he was going to find a job
 Straighten himself out
 Get himself going
 Knowing with all the insight he had into himself
 It was a totally unreasonable demand

He had gotten too far off the clock
 A four month mania sped nervous breakdown

Followed by four months in a hospital
 Had left him
 Free form floating
 Improvising irresponsibility

He was too far gone along
 To find his way back

He was in a place his stepfather
 Ex-cop Ford automobile mechanic
 Would never be able to comprehend

He was beyond the structured
 Work-a-day world tedium
 That his stepfather had
 In mind for him

He was left to face the days alone
 His mother his stepfather
 His sister his stepbrother
 All headed out in the early morning
 Still cool drowsy summer light
 On their way to jobs

He had a dim awareness of their leaving
 Each morning slipping quietly
 In and around the edges of his sleep
 Toilets flushed footsteps on the stairs
 Doors closed cars turned over in the driveway

When the place got quiet again
 He went under for another round
 Of forgotten dreams alternating with lost blackness
 Gently letting loose
 Of the guilt that he felt

He spent the first couple of weeks at home
 Flat on his back
 On a couch in the family living room

The television mostly set
 On the afternoon Chicago Cubs baseball games

The middle innings blurred
 Escaping unnoticed
 Lost somewhere
 In the inability to remain awake

He light focus tuned his attention
 Into the televised games

Hazily listening to the ballpark background noises

The walkway pop of a paper cup being stomped on
 Kids yelling
 The sharp snapping slap of the vendor
 Cases being closed
 The organ driven automatic hand clapping
 Foul ball percussion

The monotonous ebbing flow of the announcer's voice
 Blocked out of his mind
 With continual thoughts about suicide

He remembered the summer of 1972
 When he spent all of his saved newspaper route money
 Going to see the Cubs baseball games

An after morning rush hour commuter train ride
 To the heart of downtown Chicago
 With a paper sack full of peanut butter jelly sandwiches

The 35 block number bus ride up Clark Street
 Staring out the window thought reverie fascination daydream
 Looking at all of the doorways
 The bus passed along the way

To Wrigley Field at ten in the morning
 Three and half hours before game time
 When the bleachers opened
 A twelve year old's adventure in the city

He watched the players take batting practice
 Warming up
 Standing around clumped in the outfield
 Avoiding fly balls
 Shooting the shit

His favorite Joe Pepitone
 Hipster wig hat raccoon eyed hood lidded
 Five o'clock shadow in the morning laughing
 Talking into the back of his first baseman's glove
 To the college aged women in the stands
 Hiding from the coaches

He found out later that old Joe
 Was just getting himself in
 From a night's boozing dope stoned carouse

He kept score to all of the games
 Meticulously

Like it mattered
 Getting his pencil and scorecard ready
 When the creaking voice of Pat Piper
 Forty-eight years in the same pair of shoes
 Came crackling out over the PA
 With the day's lineup

He watched the Mets the Phillies the Pirates
 The Reds the Dodgers and the Giants
 Come in and routinely kick the Cub's ass

The same people sat in the bleachers everyday
 Stayed until the last out
 Nobody cared if the Cubs won or lost
 They just wanted to watch a ball game

He had the Chicago Sun Times and Chicago Tribune
 Morning newspaper routes
 On his block and the next block over
 In 1971 and 1972

He went out every morning
 Before six o'clock
 While it was still dark
 Before anybody in the neighborhood
 Was awake

Loaded the bundles of newspapers
 Into an apple green Radio Flyer wagon
 With his father's wire cutters on top of the bundles
 Making stops at each of the three flat buildings

He had the whole neighborhood to himself
 He liked being out there alone

He could have done his paper route
 With his eye closed

He knew the smell inside each one of the buildings
 The cabbage steam cooked perpetually into the walls
 The moldy wood warped rotting downstairs door dankness
 The dusty foot worn thread torn stairway carpeting mildew
 The dark brown turpentine banister sticky varnish

He learned how to go up three flights
 Then back out
 Without drawing a breath

Letting loose of his lungs
 In a triumphant exhale
 Gulping at the morning air

When he was back safe outside
 Away from the noxious nauseating fumes

He knew the people that lived there
 Day after day
 Never noticed the smell

He did his route with a transistor AM radio
 The fifth prize from a newspaper agency raffle

He remembered the winter
 The radio played the same songs
 Every morning
 John Lennon's Imagine
 American Pie and the Theme from Shaft

It was so cold outside
 The batteries froze up
 And the music died
 Stranding him in dark winter silence

He put the papers right on the doorsteps
 Never had a complaint

He never saw the people he delivered to
 He read the names on the ring of subscriber cards
 Dvorak Shinkus Golding Robinson
 He tried to imagine what they looked like
 Which ones were young which ones were old

People left him envelopes with tips
 Waiting on the doorstep
 Addressed to the paperboy
 At Christmas time he cleaned up

He wondered if any of them knew
 That he was one of the little bastards
 That used to run in and out of their buildings
 Up and down their hallways yelling
 Pounding on their doors

He remembered his best friend
 Back when he had his newspaper routes

A thin wiry kid like himself
 A kid maligned and deformed at birth
 One leg shorter than the other
 Missing a nut a kidney and a thumb
 Saddled further with an impossible handle
 Four last names strung together with hyphens

The legal souvenirs from a mother that had been through seven marriages

They were the two most hyper kids in the 6th grade class
Constantly running and laughing
Usually away from the adults they had provokingly agitated

His friend used to pull a detachable thumb gag
That had kids pissing in their pants

The two of them ran around the neighborhood
Together after school
For a couple of years

He was living in another town
When his mother showed him a newspaper obituary listing
For a fourteen year old kid
With the same string of stuck together last names

The man at the funeral parlor said it was an accident
A shotgun went off while it was being cleaned

His mental hospitalizations hung over him
Like a conviction
A sentence to a death he had to live out
While he was still alive
A precarious existence
Where the first thing he would always be
In the minds of others was crazy

He saw himself reflected
From the eyes of those he knew
Distrust always came out
Looking the same
Whether it was based on fear or grounded in pity

He couldn't go on
Hating himself
For the way others felt

He wanted to make a swan dive fetal crawl
Into the path of an oncoming train
End the whole mess once and for all

All he could see in the future
Was more of the past

His first weeks back at home
Passed quietly
Trying to keep from getting underfoot

He made sure that he kept himself

Down low
 Deliberately unobtrusive
 To the rest of the people
 In the house

He was afraid to let anybody know
 That he was there

He let the days roll by
 Wasted and unnoticed

He managed to get himself cleaned up
 Then propped into a chair at a table
 Next to the lit television set with a clean ash tray
 Pack of cigarettes matches set out before him
 By the late middle afternoon
 In time for the rest of the house
 Getting back from work

He made sure that nobody knew
 About the 5 to 6 hours he spent each day
 Flat out on the couch
 Half awake half asleep immobile
 Totally lost in afternoon dream drenched thoughts
 About death by suicide

He caught himself falling deep
 Withdrawn further into the empty recesses of himself

He felt vacant alone the most
 When the other people in the house were there

His voice become swallowed in dull laconic monotone
 When required to respond
 With the in-breath desultory yes no
 To one of the infrequently asked questions
 He found himself having to answer

It was all that was expected of him

As long as he was quiet
 Not infringing on the transient bliss
 Of the other people living in the house
 He was doing just fine as far
 As they were concerned

The weight he had managed to keep off of himself
 While he was in the hospital
 Suddenly found it was easy to stay

Food was in unlimited access supply on demand
 All he had to do
 Was make the walk to the refrigerator
 Pull open the door

A couple weeks of no control appetite all day eating
 Along with sedentary prostrate inactivity
 Made the two pairs of pants that he wore
 Stuffed tight ready to pour flesh from the seams

He overfed himself like a pig
 Taking solaced pleasure in the food
 All the while knowing that
 The increase in weight
 Meant a deeper drop into depression

He waited until he was home for a couple of weeks
 Before trying to get a hold of
 The married woman he had met in the hospital

He called her up not knowing what to say
 Wanting to see her
 Maybe she could make the hour drive
 Sometime from the town where she lived
 Out to his family's house

She told him that they were in luck
 Her husband was off on a 6 month construction job
 Somewhere in Ohio
 Her husband would only be home on weekends
 Two times during the month

She told him that she would come over
 To see him every week
 On wednesdays
 She had everything planned out for him

He spent an uneventful wednesday afternoon
 In a motel room a few miles from his family's home
 With the married woman he knew from the hospital

He started thinking afterwards that maybe
 He could get his shit together
 Move in with the woman and her three kids
 Take over pick up where her husband had left off

He wanted to feel good about something
 He didn't want to believe
 That they were a totally hopeless impossible
 Once a week for a few hours sneak away thing

He didn't want to believe that
 The only reason
 She made the hour drive that day
 Was just for the motel room sex

His married woman girlfriend came out the next wednesday
 Instead of the horn honk in the driveway rush to the hotel
 He had her drive out to the Pilcher Park forest preserve park
 In a nearby town

He had spent the summer weekends a couple of years before
 Smoking pot stoned on acid alone
 Driving the twisting winding cracked asphalt trail
 That wrapped its way scenic through the park

He felt like he had left a part of himself there
 Somewhere in the trees that hung their branches
 Leave drape over alongside the narrow road
 In the birdsong shade splattered with patched sunlight
 He was there
 It was a part of him
 He wanted to show it to her
 He thought that she would be able to feel it
 To know that he was there

She was a busy woman
 On a schedule
 He was wasting her time
 With his pointless bullshit

The woman was finally able
 To get him out of there
 With the promise of a twelve pack of beer
 To wash down the speeders she would give him
 As soon as they got to a hotel room

He was learning to live without money
 Totally broke no source of income or way
 To pay back
 Anybody he might have borrowed from

Once a week his younger sister brought home
 A carton of Marlboros for him
 He accepted the cigarettes wordlessly
 Sheepish in his gratefulness

The only other thing he needed
 After food and smokes was beer
 He waited until somebody came home
 With a six pack
 Then waited for them to offer him one

He was totally dependent
 A parasiting grasping leech
 A freeloading sponge
 He didn't care anymore
 How his basic needs were met

He knew that he couldn't hang out with his friends
 Even if they weren't still pissed off at him
 There was no way to while away the nights
 Sitting in bars
 Without any money

He started hanging around with his younger cousins
 They took him out at night
 Kept him primed with beers
 Cautiously offered a hit of reefer once in a while
 Wary of what he might be capable of
 They kept a suspecting eye watchful over him

He was part of their family
 His acceptance was a grudging obligatory

His cousins were all under the legal drinking age
 He was able to walk into a liquor store with their money
 And buy them alcohol

His cousin was three years younger than him
 His cousin ran around in a custom interior used blue chevrolet van
 With a full crew retinue of teenage girls
 That included a girlfriend a younger sister and all of their friends
 After his cousin's girlfriend and sister
 The rest of the girls were up for grabs
 Each with a secret place somewhere on his cousin's back burners

His cousin's best friend was a big polish kid
 First generation first american son of immigrants
 The family had a small farm
 A large barn stabled with board horses
 They had a profitable commercial mushroom enterprise going
 The horseshit from the barn was wheelbarrow shoveled
 Right into the long rows of mushroom beds
 Sold in plastic wrapped packages to all of the area restaurants
 They were totally self sufficient

His cousin got everybody loaded into the van each night
 Made a beer run then headed over to the barn
 It was a place for kids to get drunk make noise play loud music
 Whoop holler yell raise a disturbance
 Off of the streets away from the cops
 His cousin knew how to stay out of trouble

He spent the evenings getting slowly shit faced drunk
 Sitting silent by himself in a corner of the barn
 Paralyzed frozen quaked with fear
 Thinking that everybody there thought
 That he was crazy

He let the summer slide out away from him
 Nothing to distinguish one day from the next
 Except the wednesdays spent in motel air conditioning

He slept late into the mornings
 Sweated the afternoons into the couch upholstery
 Cleaned up ate dinner waited for his cousin to show up
 Drank himself drunk staggered silently in around eleven
 Immediately passing out

He took comfort in the routine
 He depended on it
 Nobody expected anything further from him

His thoughts of suicide were continual
 Unabating persistent
 Ever present at the fore

Instant death seemed like the only escape
 The only relief from the shaming embarrassment he felt
 For losing his fucking mind

He had been hospitalized twice
 There was no coincidental mistake involved
 It was a matter of fact
 He was hopelessly bordering
 In and around the edges of sanity
 Overlapping for a time in some dimly bright
 In between shadowy gray area

Half crazy
 Or crazy half of the time
 It still added up to crazy
 In the mind's of those that knew him

He was never called crazy to his face by anybody
 Nobody ever spoke of his hospitalizations
 When they were with him
 They didn't have to

Whoever he was with it was there
 In their eyes in their voice
 The fear misunderstanding distrust pity

Reserved for a madman

Whenever he was around people that he knew
The thought hung suspended in the air
Unintended branch rotted fruit
Inadvertently left for his picking

Nothing around him would let him forget
That he was crazy

He believed that thoughts
Took on a form of their own
Separate from the thinker

Thrown out flung together in a unitive field
Gathering force with like minded thoughts
Strength intensity variant dependent
An energy was produced
Made manifest
Taking form in the seemingly random occurrences
That took place over the course of a lifetime

Prayers magic rituals affirmations negativity
All different fountains
Tapped into the same wellspring

He was convinced that if ten people consciously willed
For a person to have a bad day
That person would have an incredibly difficult time
To avoid having a shitty day

He shared the same birth date
With his year younger stepbrother

His 21st birthday was spent with a house
Full of his stepbrothers friend's
A loud weeknight party that overflowed out into the driveway

He had spent the afternoon by himself drinking
He was already in the bag before anybody else got started
He got more uncomfortable as the place filled up
Too many people too many bad memories
All he wanted to do was get the hell out of there

He knocked off a bottle of cheap champagne with his cousins
Then head spin sideways shuffled the stairs up to his room
Crashed out cold in his shoes
Before it was dark outside

He was contacted by the Joliet mental health out patient center

The place kept a sloppy disinterested bureaucratic tab
 On all the nuts that were running
 Around loose in the area

His sister drove him out to his appointment
 He talked to a social worker
 Refused all offers of treatment
 Wasn't interested in therapy medication doctors
 Whatever else they were providing

He left the outpatient center
 With a month's supply of tranquilizers and muscle relaxers
 Said he didn't want the shit
 But took it anyway

He stowed away the pills
 It was a good stash to have around
 Something he might want to abuse later

He wanted nothing to do
 With the mental health industry
 He thought it was a self-serving
 Self-perpetuating racket

If people weren't kept at least part way sick
 Tether attached to the idea of illness
 The mental health professionals would be out on their asses
 Out of business with nothing left to do

Clinics appointments prescriptions
 It was all hospital on the outside
 Trappings to constantly remind
 He was crazy
 Fucked up dependent reliant on shrinks and meds
 He would never get better

The best thing was to stay away from anything
 That had nuthouse association connotations
 Bury the whole experience in the past
 Move on to some normal kind of life
 So that his insanity could be forgotten
 By all of the people around him

He took a ride out to Joliet Junior College with his younger cousins
 Signed himself up for a couple of classes

His aunt came up with the idea
 Sold it to him his parents and to her kids
 Everybody involved went along with it
 Without saying anything either way about it

It was agreed that during the upcoming fall semester
 His cousins would drive 5 miles out of their way
 On tuesday and thursday mornings
 To cart his ass out to school with them

He didn't care what kind of classes he took
 He had to take classes the same time as his cousins
 He had to make sure that he left wednesdays open
 For the weekly visit from his married woman girlfriend

He settled for an early american literature class
 From Cotton Mather to Ralph Waldo Emerson
 He always liked the hobgoblined simple mind quote
 About a foolish consistency

The other was a history course
 1500-1800 south/north american continental history
 Part of the class was about the new world spanish conquests
 He thought it sounded interesting
 He always liked the song about Cortez
 He had heard on a Neil Young album

He knew the college classes were bullshit
 A time stalling dodge
 A four and a half month low gear idle
 Anything to valve off the pressure
 About going out getting a job

There was no way in hell he was going to get a job
 No car stuck in a 3,000 people town
 Everybody with something to say about anything in the area
 Knew him by sight
 As a fucked up trouble making nut
 Any of the handful of businesses within walking distance
 Would be ringing the phone at the police station
 If they saw him approaching their property
 He knew a recent paraplegic that had more of a chance

Better to hide out at the junior college
 With a bunch of green out of high school kids

His stepfather knew the college classes were an angle
 A time wasting going nowhere back and forth trip

His stepfather wanted to know
 What 6 credit hours two day a week
 Inapplicable to the real world useless book knowledge
 Had to do with that lazy bastard getting off of his ass
 For some real work

His parents paid the 50 dollar a class tuition
 Gave him a check for the books

His stepfather got drunk
 Statue stone silent on a stool behind the family room bar
 Watching him flip through the classroom texts
 Through a haphazardly dented row of empty Old Style cans

Two ashtrays full of beer tab rings
 A chain of Kools
 One on the heels of another
 Smoked down to the filter
 Drinking the beers right out of the paper bag
 Not even bothering with the ice box
 Fist palm crumpling the empty cigarette pack paper cellophane
 Throwing down the crinkled wads in disgust

Jaw tight teeth grind clench determination
 His stepfather didn't like being had
 His stepfather was digging in for a war

He had went to college before
 Eight months after he had graduated high school early
 His mother drove him to downstate Western Illinois University
 For the 1977 fall term

He had a full tuition scholarship
 With money in the bank
 Saved from building fences at his grandmothers
 Down in Texas during the winter and spring

He worked construction in Joliet over the summer
 He thought it was a waste
 To leave behind a good 5 dollar an hour paying job

He declared a major in Law Enforcement Administration
 He had an idea funneled into his head
 He wanted to work with fucked up juvenile offenders
 Help them straighten out their lives while they were astray
 Before they became hardened bent permanently out of shape
 Be some kind of good Serpico Spencer Tracy priest cop
 To make up for all of the small town pricks with badges
 That were continually hassle hounding the local teenaged punks

Maybe he could continue on to law school
 Be a lawyer
 Stick up for the rights of the unjustly accused
 Fight the cops from their own dirty bag of tricks

Mostly he wanted to work labor in Joliet

Find a woman and settle into
 One of the 30 year old homes on the east side of town
 Come home at night after work
 Turn on the stereo

He wasn't sure what he was going to college for

He hadn't drank for almost a year
 When he went down to college

By the end of his first week at school
 He was drinking Southern Comfort whiskey
 Like it was cough syrup
 Staying up all night

He went on a every single day drunken splash
 Ran his bank account dry going to the bars
 Making above average passing grades
 By night before the test memorization cramming

His LEA major classes made him sick
 The instructors were greasy slick dandruff flecked ex state cops
 Baton wielding knuckle pounding fascista brutalists
 Training dumb fuck recruits for careers in sadism
 In the all out to be fought against society's perps

He sat in the classes wondering what he was doing there
 He knew he didn't belong
 He didn't fit in with the rest of the LEA majors
 He knew the whole thing was a mistake

Skinny long hair side burned Cheech and Chong drooping mustache
 He was the kind of guy whose head they would have to crack someday

He had never smoked pot before he went to college
 He withstood the dorm room pressure availability for months
 Just like he had with his friends back home

He was by nature spaced out withdrawn
 The alcohol brought him out of that

The last thing he wanted was something
 That would pull him further inward

It took the promise of a night with a girl
 He was trying to pick up in a bar
 For him to try marijuana

He was in handcuffs hauled off to the college town jail

By a lurking in the dark watching cop
 Before they even finished the joint

He started getting stoned around the clock
 With the stay up all night drinking
 He lasted until easter

Cracking up on the afternoon of good friday
 He spent a 40 degree night in a tee shirt
 Soaking wet crouched in a muddy nearby field
 Thinking that the world had come to a holocaustic end
 He was the last person left alive
 Or maybe he was the one that died

He spent the next day in a bathtub full of hot water
 In an empty house he broke into
 Imagining it was a burnt out basement
 Wondering what in the hell he was going to do
 If the world really hadn't ended

Easter sunday his mother drove down picked him up
 At the Macomb jail
 Where he went to crash in a cell while waiting for her

His friend drove him back down a few weeks later
 To pick up the 500 albums he had left down there

After that
 Nobody ever said anything about college to him again

He came back from college a different person
 All of the nights spent awake stoned alone
 Along with a couple of weeks in a zen buddhism class
 Unhinged the doors of his perception

Nothing was the same for him
 He thought that he had cut through
 To the core essence of reality

Everything that had been passed off to him
 As life
 Was a sleeping illusion

He was imbued with a self-cooked homebrew quasi-mystic philosophy
 He said out loud whatever came into his head
 No matter how uncomfortably inappropriate it was

He abandoned all reason to intuitiveness
 Once walking home 12 miles in the middle of night
 Turning down rides from the cops that stopped him on the way

Because he was impulsed to do so

He went around in a sleeveless mexican vest
 With a round mirror glued on the back of it
 He quit using soap when he showered
 Sometimes he wore his pants inside out
 He smoked Lipton's tea when he couldn't get dope

He tried to tell people what they were thinking
 He pissed off everybody around him
 He was out of context

Nobody was able to make him understand that
 He was out of his fucking mind

It took him a few months to settle down
 After he came home from his college experience

It was a strange spring
 Mostly spent listening to the Doors
 The Moody Blues and Spirit
 Hanging around in the forest preserve parks
 Meeting young women
 Trying to keep himself high
 He wanted to know what the river knew

He finally went back to his old construction job
 Got himself a used 4-wheel drive international truck
 Bought a lid of columbian every friday payday
 Started taking acid on the weekends

Everybody around him was reassuringly relieved
 He had gotten himself back to normal

He thought about the times he had gone crazy
 There was always a brief period
 Before everything went straight to hell
 When he felt himself kicking into another dimension
 Transported into a strange plane of existence
 His knowing and seeing became markedly different

He kept thinking that he had inadvertently unlocked something
 An unknown forgotten human psychic potential
 That was hidden beneath the glare of the modern world

An energy of the mind
 Crushed dormant by the clutterous noise of 20th century civilization
 That was somehow brought forth
 With the right combination
 Of fasting with lack of sleep

He knew reasoning was an immediate casualty
After he had been awake for a few days
He responded with instinctual emotional reactions
The mind reduced to its basest functioning level

There was something about fasting
Maybe after the conscious drive of hunger was overcome
The mind not busy with directing
The acquisition decomposition absorption of food
Was able to work in other ways

It was all an exact science
One that had to have been mastered
By the seekers and seers of visions
The monks and shaman scattered
Throughout the ages

He knew that he was on to something
But for now he had to sit still
Wait
Ride out the depression he was dropped into

He wanted to go back
Find a way to immerse himself in the fire
Without getting burned

He didn't know why he had gone crazy again
He wasn't taking acid like he had before
When he got himself locked up the first time

During the last snap
It was almost like he was tripping again
He was just as wild wound up crazy as he had been
When he took acid constantly for 6 months
Then stayed awake for weeks at a stretch

Until he wasn't sure if he was awake or dreaming
If he was dead or alive

He wondered if he had experienced a flashback
He had heard once
From a big-toe basement chemist
That once ingested
Acid never left the body
It stayed stored unknown
Somewhere in the brain

He remembered that he got the screwiest
Once his weight dropped below 120 pounds
Maybe by then he was burning the fat in his brain

Burning off the lodged trace LSD residuals
Combusting himself into acid flashback psychosis

He would have to watch his weight
Next time around

He was 140 and counting
He figured he was a good 20 pounds away
From being crazy

Looking back he could almost pinpoint
The ascending point of each bout of madness
When the weirdly eccentric
Embraced the psychotically insane

It was after the first 3 or 4 days
Of not sleeping
When he still had to fight to keep himself awake

Suddenly the urge for sleep would leave
He became charged with a seemingly endless electric flow
Of steadily increasing energy

His brain circuitry was hot wired
Like he had traded up from a windmill
To a nuclear powered substation
The candle of life was an aerosol spray blow torch

Each of the three times this had happened
He remembered thinking that
He would never have to go to sleep again
He was awake for the rest of his life

Each time he convinced himself he didn't have to sleep
Madness was waiting to be discovered
No matter which corner he turned

Everything would be fine for a week or two
He functioned normally without any problems
He kept quiet
Kept himself busy thinking through the middle of night
While the people around him slept

The trouble always started
When other people realized that he wasn't sleeping

The insanity seemed like the result
Of the people around him
Constantly putting obstacle blocks in his way
Booby trap land mine detonating every step that he took
Because they were determined not to let him

Live out his life the way that he wanted

He started his junior college classes
 After the end of august labor day weekend
 Riding the half hour out to Joliet
 On passenger seat tuesday thursday mornings
 With his two younger cousins

It was a bright humid september
 He was still swamp fevered sweaty sick
 His depression entrenched in the itching malarial heat
 Tied to the sunshined oppressing glare
 The days drove like a stake through his resolve

The start of the school year
 Cool breeze brisk autumnal electricity air
 The looking forward to crispness
 Anticipation about the new girls
 The sounds of new music
 The sense of expectation guaranteed fulfillment
 All of that was now dead

He was in hell
 There was no back to school waiting for him

He got through mornings at school
 Without saying a word to anyone

He speed wrote down everything the teacher said
 Into used found around the house spiral notebooks
 Leftovers from his youngest sister's highschool years

He took a seat in the back of the classroom
 Never looked up once
 Or around for anything

Thinking
 That if he didn't look at anybody
 Then they wouldn't be able to look at him
 He would be invisible

He almost physically tremored at the school
 Petrified with the tensing wash of frozen shock terror
 That ran nerve rippling waves over his stifled body
 He paralyzed into an unnatural wooden cast

There was nobody at the school that knew him
 He was still convinced that somewhere
 Somebody in the school knew all about him
 Knew about his flipping out at Western Illinois University

Knew about his multiple arrests around Joliet
 Knew about his two stints in the nuthouse
 Knew about all of the acid he had taken

He saw the rest of his life wrapped in a fear
 Ball and chain tied to the events of his past
 Hiding from those that knew what he had done
 Worrying about those who would find out
 What he had done

When he was through with his classes
 He went out to the parking lot
 Sat in the passenger side seat of his cousin's van
 Waiting for his cousins to finish their school day
 Lost drifting in and out
 Of a dashboard inspired reverie

He had tried idling out the time in the student union
 The wait was an anxious stomach destroying eternity
 Paranoid fear imagining
 Amid the carefree conversation of unnoticing 18 year olds
 That all anybody needed was one look at him
 To know that he was obviously insane

He felt more comfortable in the parking lot
 Safe away from any other people
 He found quiet relaxed relief
 Thinking about death and suicide

He kept up his wednesday motel room appointments
 With his married woman girlfriend

The whole thing was becoming boring
 Dull predictable
 The soul depleting unvarying staid exercise
 Of two people using each other's body
 Chasing placid escape in the carnal

The only thing that he cared about
 Were the alcohol pills and smoke
 Available with the occasion

Each week he saw his married woman girlfriend
 He sensed the intransible gulf between them widening

Each week that he saw her
 He felt himself farther away

The bridge of a 12 years age difference between them
 Taking on a flagrant appearance

With her escalating use of makeup and hairdye
 False eyelashes fake fingernails multi-colored eyeshadow
 Little girl fake dressup imposter costumes
 The garish ridiculousness sickened him

He wanted to tell her
 To get rid of all that shit
 It was time to go back home
 To be a mother to her children
 And a wife to her husband

But he still wasn't ready
 To let go of the only thing that he had

He had a built in auto-destruct mechanism
 For as long as he could remember
 Which had a way of deliver rescuing him
 From any seemingly impossible to reconcile situation
 That he needed an immediate way out of

No matter how hard he tried to keep going
 Another part of him was working secretly
 Circumvent undermining
 Looking for a way to sabotage
 Fuck up everything in a totaling completeness
 So that whatever he was doing
 Was brought to an abrupt screeching skid end

All it took was the first thought
 The acknowledgement that he was sick of the shit
 Then another part of him took over

He learned at these moments
 To let his common sense reasoning step aside
 Get out of the way
 Stand back watch with bemused marvel

Let one part of himself
 Destroy another part of himself

He started hanging around with a girl
 A year older than he was
 On his nights out at the barn with his cousin

She was one of three sisters
 That were running around with his cousins

It was a wordless attraction
 Built on a mutual indifference

They found themselves

Thrown together by circumstance
 Night after night
 Stoned drunken into a useless stupidity
 Left alone in a hayloft
 Conversation was unnecessary

They both needed somebody
 That they could grab hold of in the dark

He started showing up
 For his wednesday get-togethers
 With the married woman from the hospital
 With barn straw in his pants
 From the night before

The girl he was hanging around with
 Had an older sister

A tough little broad
 With two kids
 Fresh hatched from a marriage
 With a guy that was supposed to have been
 A dope fiend pusher wife beating maniac

The older sister had went around
 On an angel dust binge
 Wound up OD'd in a paramedic run
 Then got carted off to a psych ward

She made jokes about taking Thorazine
 Like there was nothing wrong with it

He was hoping that maybe
 He could hook up somehow
 With the older sister

He never talked about what had happened to him
 He never heard the behind the back gossip about it
 He never knew for sure
 What people had been told about him

The girl he was hanging out with
 Told him about her older sister
 About how she had flushed her whole life
 Down the toilet
 Bad decisions bad men bad drugs
 Two daughters in a perpetual tow
 A road of ruinous squalor
 Laid out before her

He listened to the story

Didn't think that it was so bad

After all of the shit he had been through
He wondered what she thought about him

He headed out on a saturday morning
In a car that his cousin had borrowed
Up to Alpine Valley Wisconsin
For an REO Speedwagon concert

They had a cooler with ice packed around beer
A bottle of vodka in a paper sack
A nickel bag sized tin foil wrapped stash of pot
Along with a half-assed set of directions

They hauled the couple of hours through Illinois
Swilling beer from the can
Smoking bowls through a resin clogged pipe
Windows cranked open to the rushing wind
Pacing themselves

They missed the turnoff for Alpine Valley
Kept pushing steadily north
Cruised through the Madison exits
Going hours out of the way
Until they started seeing signs for Green Bay

He knew they had overshot the mark
Didn't say anything
Neither of them seemed to care
The open road rolling out under the car
The motion with speed was a welcome release

They decided to turn back around near Green Bay
Figured if they kept pushing on
They could still make the show

A speeding ticket detour cost them a couple of hours
His cousin's boss wired the money to get them going again
They fought the saturday evening Wisconsin highway traffic
Pulling into the concert parking lot
To see that everybody was just leaving

His cousin got nailed for speeding again
Just short of the Illinois border
He slept in the damp car outside of the police station
While his cousin banshee howl wolf barked all night
In the small town Wisconsin jail cell

He woke up in the morning to his aunt and uncle
Pounding on the car windows
They took the unopened bottle of vodka

Put the rest of the beers in the trunk of their car

He didn't bother listening
 To his uncle's sunday morning parking lot ranting
 He already knew
 The whole thing was going to be his fault

His cousin was three years younger than him
 His cousin and his cousin's year older brother
 Had been one of the few constants in his life
 Since his family had moved back to Illinois when he was 10

His two cousin's were his best friends
 He used to think that they were
 Almost like younger brothers

After his first crack-up he noticed
 His cousin's started treating him differently
 They looked down on him like he was
 A condescent black sheep uncle
 That was almost embarrassing to have around

He liked hanging around with his younger cousin
 His cousin would do all of the talking
 When they were alone together

He listened to his cousin talk
 He felt comfortable knowing
 That he wasn't expected to provide a response

It seemed like his cousin's talk was thinking
 An out loud incongruous ramble of words
 An in progress redefinition of ideas
 A selfclarification
 That nobody was ever supposed to hear

Sometimes while his cousin was talking to him
 He caught the look in his cousin's eye
 A quick frozen bolt of bewildered fear

He knew that his cousin wasn't ever sure
 If he was really there

He knew that he made other people uneasy
 When he let their words trail off into dead silence

He would hear their words
 But he had nothing to offer in return
 No reassurance for them
 That he was in agreement or understanding

He had no way of letting them know
 That he had even heard what they said

He remembered the first time he met his cousin
 His cousin's family pulled a fold-up camping trailer
 Across the country from Illinois
 Out to his family's home
 For a 1968 california vacation

He went with his sisters to a camp grounds
 For a weekend with his cousin's family

His cousin spent the whole time with a fishing pole
 Sitting huddled on the bank
 Of the narrow creek
 That swirled muddy water through the camping grounds
 Steadfast determined through dirt streaked tears
 His cousin refused to accept
 There wasn't a fish anywhere near the place

His cousin looked like a little old man to him
 Hunched in a green illinois flannel shirt
 Waiting for the big one
 That was never going to be there

He always thought of his cousin after that
 As a wrecklessly hopeless dreamer

He went with his cousin to buy a horse
 Somebody unloaded a three year old on his cousin
 A nervous skittish temperamental moody animal
 That had never taken a bit
 He was supposed to help his cousin break the horse

He stood like a dried lump of turd
 Fingers fumbling in the bottom of his jacket pocket
 When the vet came out to do the gelding

White sausage horse parts in a ziplock plastic bag
 The cold wasteful destructiveness sickened him

He spent the afternoons with his cousin
 Out of kicking distance
 While his cousin brush combed the horse
 Ran the rope tied horse in hours of circles
 Slowly leading the horse's head into a halter

His cousin was working out of a book
 Full of horse dreams and horse plans

The horse got meaner and crazier

He figured that the horseshit strawbale hay
 In the barn they were hanging around
 Had finally gone to his cousin's head

He did his best functioning
 Within the walls of a routine

Reliable days
 With a guaranteed set in stonedness
 He always knew where he was at
 There was nothing left to expect

The deeper into the routine he went
 The more mindlessly mechanical the days became

This allowed him to do one thing
 Manual rote robot automatic cruise controlled sailing
 Filling the wide open space between his thoughts
 With something other than what he was doing

An almost dual-like existence in
 And out of the world

A memorized sleep walking life
 A vacant overlapping layered structure
 Built over a span of forgotten months
 Around ritualized outwardly appearing purposeful actions
 Senselessly devoid of any inner meaning
 The routine provided escape

This was the best way that he found
 To kill time

He molded his week
 Around the two college classes
 That used up tuesday and thursday mornings

He skipped the drunken hang out
 The nights before class
 Spent the evening skimming the textbooks
 Going to bed early

He spent school day afternoons
 Horse breaking with his cousin

He set aside each wednesday
 For the visit from his married woman girlfriend

The rest of the week he was free

To go out get drunk stoned with his cousins
 Crash deep into morning early afternoon
 Awaken slowly to the alcohol marijuana blearies
 Sit alone in the house
 Recopying the notes he wrote in class

He found umbrage in the schedule
 The busyness gave him less time
 To think about killing himself

He watched the daylight recede
 Dusk drawn shadowed five o'clock dinnertime
 The gradually perceived cooldown
 The dried leaf winds of october

The slow death dramatic autumn spectacle
 Nature transforming itself into a winter

He felt a stirring energy for life
 Growing in the memory of dark november nights
 It always held out a hope
 Of something that was promised for him

If the seasons could change
 Then maybe his life could change too

Every wednesday for four months
 Had been spent with his married woman girlfriend

She left her three kids to fend for themselves
 Drove the hour out to his house
 Bought a motel room for the afternoon
 Loaded him up with diet pills alcohol and sex

She drove through the rush hour back home
 After they had gotten their fill
 Of each other

Some weeks she showed up
 For an extra day

Sneaking around out in the open
 Too obviously clockwork predictable
 A careless flaunt in the face
 Of the required clandestine

He kept wondering where the end was
 For all of the fun he was having
 He knew that this was no way
 For a married mother with children
 To be carrying on

His married woman girlfriend's husband
Had been gone away all summer
Out of town construction job working
In another state

Her husband didn't take long
After getting back home to family life
To realize that something wasn't right

The guy's wife came home sloppy disheveled
On two consecutive late wednesday afternoons
Half bombed laughing mascara smeared
Negligee stuffed inside of purse
Disappearing for the whole day
Unaccounted to unknown whereabouts

She arrived at his house the next wednesday
With a rusty metal magnetic key case
A spare pair stashed in the car underside
For locked out of the car disasters

She told him that her husband took the keys
Without remembering the emergency set
She said she was going to fix that bastard

He momentarily startle flashed with the vision
Of an irate out of control fixed bastard husband
Busting down an afternoon motel room rendezvous door
Brandish ladening spiked baseball bats
Sharp machete hatchet blade knives
Bullet full double barreled guns

For all he knew
The guy might have followed her
Maybe was seconds away
From a blind fury rampaging stormtroop
Into the living room of his parent's house

He told her to turn around
Get in the car
She had to go
Don't look back
Haul ass back home
The wednesday afternoon game was over

He started to miss the married woman
He was forced to take a face slap sobering stare
At the botch stalled relationships
He had going with the people in his life

His interaction with those around him was quagmired
In an unnaturally choked meaninglessness

He never talked with length or depth
To anybody that he knew

Emotionally silent frozen abort truncate
He heard the few words that he spoke
Pin drop quietly to the bottom
Of a well of empty insignificance

Shut off closed down mistrusting
He was unable to look anybody in the eye

He was noticeably nervous
Almost in a petrified knotted cast
In fear of other people

He was the only one that knew
How far he had receded
Into his loneliness

He waited a blank month
Dull walking numb
Through the days lost irretrievably
Before calling up the married woman

A beggarly salvage for scroungeables
In the consensual aftermath
Maybe there could be one more
One more
One more last time

This time she was the one
That had to say
It was all over

He came to a loose formal agreement
A grudgingly mumbled verbal acquiesce
With the girl he had been hanging around with
When he went out nights with his cousin

Instead of drunkenly messing around with her
Whenever he haphazardly ran into her
He was going to be her boyfriend
With all of the responsibility
To commitment that was implied

He would be calling her on the telephone
Making arrangements to meet her
Going out to her family's home

Getting the once-over from her mother

His new girlfriend's mother
 Didn't want him anywhere
 Around her daughter
 She told him over the telephone to quit
 Calling for her daughter
 Click cutoff dropping
 The receiver down into his ear

The old lady knew
 He was a never amount to anything bum
 A whipped down beat back mongrel maggot dog
 Shamelessly lacking self-esteem
 A freeloader plundering cadge
 Without a job a car or a future
 Looking to pillage on her daughter

Her daughter didn't work or have a car
 Scraped loose change together for cigarettes
 Spent all of her time figuring out ways of getting high
 Came home drunk every night of the week
 And she slept late

They were both a couple of losers
 He wondered why her mother had a problem with him

He went out on double dates
 With his new girlfriend

The two of them tagged along
 With her older sister
 And whatever stiff
 The sister had lined up for that week

His new girlfriend's sister was a hustler
 Out on a single purpose determined scam
 For a good time
 He became an unwitting accomplice through association

It meant a free ride for him and his new girlfriend
 Driven around by some trying to be a nice guy chump
 Stereo cranked saturday night car backseat oblivion

The two of them ripped loose from their senses
 Partaking in the generously offered dope
 Alcohol free flow available abundant

Most of the doubledate saturday nights were lost wasted
 Neither of them knew where in the hell they were at
 Or where they were going

He went out on a cold early winter weekday night
 With his cousin to watch
 The John Belushi Blues Brothers movie

The movie had taken on a synchronotous importance for him
 The random coincidental purpose found
 In the unrelated happenstantial crossings
 Occurring along the impersonalized paths of chance

He walked into the movie theatre
 Remembering a saturday afternoon
 A year and a half earlier
 Spent sitting in the dark
 For the last 15 minutes
 Of a two day Continental Trailways bus ride from Texas

The bus gridlock parked
 In the commandeered underground tunnels
 Of downtown Chicago Lower Wacker Drive
 Unable to proceed to the bus station
 All traffic temporarily on police barricade hold
 For the filming of a John Belushi movie the driver said

He thought of himself sitting on the bus
 Waiting for the traffic to loosen itself
 Aware of the momental extension of his anxiety
 Returning home for the drunken driving court date
 That guaranteed the certain revocation of his drivers license
 He had spent four months hiding in Texas
 Unable to face anybody that he knew
 Following his first psychotic disruption mental ward hospitalization

He knew then that the end of the bus ride
 Meant the end of the darkest days of his life
 Whatever was ahead would have to wait a few more minutes
 In the carnival frivolous atmosphere of hollywood movie making

He sat in the dark of the theatre thinking
 About a yellow hazed glare day 11 months before
 Rolling up to the gates of the Joliet Illinois Stateville Penitentiary
 In a fence building work pickup truck with his friend
 The movie studio production semitrailer trucks
 Parked outside the buildings inside the prison
 The excited gatekeeper guard said that
 They were making a John Belushi movie

He sat in the theatre reminiscently aware of how
 He had kept glancing at the movie trucks
 That day in the prison while he worked
 Overwhelming in a sudden personal realization loss
 Of dot sized insignificance

He had went from a deep bottom
 After coming back from Texas that summer
 To a flat lining settled unsatisfying low
 He was desperate for something to shake loose in his life
 He was still clutch clinging to that desperation
 Nearly a year later

He watched the movie unfold upon the theatre screen
 Vaguely aware of its content
 He wrapped the previous year and a half of his life
 Around the back of his mind into a circle
 With the movie marking
 The significant points of reflection along the way

He saw the night as a culmination
 The third point in the triangle
 Of a journey
 Along a deadend circuitous route
 Out and around and back again
 On a road that had taken him nowhere

He walked out of the theatre with his jacket open
 Embracing the chill night air
 His breath a long pulled train of billowing frost
 Black winter sky myriad speckled in points of star bright
 The trip was over
 He knew it was time for his life to change

He went in to take his college class finals
 He knew there would be nothing on the test
 That he hadn't written recopied read reread
 Memorize indelible stencil pounded into his brain

He knew how to prepare for a test
 By cram detail loading his head with information

He was able to recite the material in his thoughts
 Like an emptily chanted mantra reflex refrain
 That would effortlessly pour like water
 From his pen onto the pages of the exam booklets
 Then immediately evaporate all vestiges of itself
 Leaving no evidentiary sign of the place
 Where it was once stored in his head

He got his college class grades in the mail
 He got an A in both of his classes

He wondered what it was worth
 What amount of difficulty there was
 Carrying a two day a week

Two class half load
 Without a job or a real social life
 With nothing better to occupy his mind

He hid the grade letter
 With guilty embarrassment

He didn't have to worry
 About not telling anybody how he had done
 Because nobody thought it was worth asking

He sat in a Frankfort Illinois bar
 A slow dead dusty newspaper cluttered creaking floorboard dive
 Half watching monday night football waiting
 While his cousin rummy hustle shot dollar bill games of pool

He thought that he heard the football game announcer Howard Cosell say
 In between the sound of cue ball breaks and empty tavern talking
 That John Lennon had been shot

He got the keys from his cousin
 Went outside to his cousin's van
 Not wanting to believe what he thought he had heard

He turned on the radio to Imagine
 Punched quickly through the radio preset buttons
 John Lennon came spilling out from every station

Stunned sitting
 In the dashboard glow of green radio light
 He knew John Lennon must have been dead

He stayed awake the night John Lennon died
 Lying on a couch in the dark with headphones
 Listening to Rubber Soul
 And the Walls and Bridges album
 Thinking about the Beatles
 John Lennon
 Instant karma
 A thousand trips
 And the number nine dream

Confused in the feeling of unexplainable loss
 For someone he hadn't known
 The world suddenly became an emptier lonelier place

He bought the John Lennon Walls and Bridges album
 When it came out in 1974
 A Beatle freaked since childhood 15 year old
 Paying a dutiful homage of respect

To a hero

He played the album once after he got it
 Filed it away with disinterest
 Then forgot about it
 For the next four years

When he came home in the spring of 1978
 After melting himself down at college
 He found an old postcard
 That was stuck inside
 The John Lennon Elephant's Memory
 Some Time in New York album

The postcard was part of the 1972 campaign
 To keep John Lennon
 From being kicked out of the country

He filled out the card
 Mailed it in knowing
 It was six years late
 On its way
 To a dead post office box in New York

He just wanted to let somebody know
 That he still cared

He came home in the dark middle
 Of a january 1979 friday night
 Paycheck spent stoned drunk tripping
 On purple microdot acid
 He had been driving his cars for hours
 Through the frozen waste of a moon shot snowstorm

Unable to sleep
 He instinctively dug out
 A once played John Lennon record
 Walls and Bridges
 He listened to the album
 Through stereo headphones
 In the gray winter night becoming dawn bedroom still
 Over and over

His fried mind soothing in the melting warmth
 Of the liquid hawaiian indian guitar of Jesse Ed Davis
 Hearing John Lennon's name
 Called out
 Along with that of George
 In the heat whispered trees

The japanese kimono rustle muffled voices

In the song #9 Dream
 Convinced him that the record was made
 For him to hear on that night

"Shoveling smoke with a pitchfork
 in the wind"

A haunted message
 Sent from through
 And across time

Warped
 With eight straight months of intense drug abuse
 He felt like he had finally broken through
 Kicked in knocked down the doors
 To a totally new realm of possibility
 Beyond any imaginable barrier
 A ghosted world of spirit
 Existing in thought forever
 He knew nothing would ever be the same for him

He didn't get any sleep that night
 He was able to keep himself awake
 For the rest of that winter

The number nine dream
 Was for all time

"Au bouwakawa
 pouse pouse"

He was free of responsibility
 For the christmas holiday season

The month of december faded
 In an abandonment of celebratory drunkenness

He came into the new year
 With a sense of renewal
 A sudden feeling of redemptive energy
 Released from depression

The burned down bridges of relationships
 With his family and friends
 Restored in the forgetfulness
 Slowly brought on over time

He was moving forward
 There was no more time to waste
 Trapped in the prisons
 Built from his past

He got a letter in the mail
From the Will County Mental Health Center

He was being accepted
Into a vocational rehabilitation program

He thought the whole thing
Was a time wasting joke
A way to be back in the nuthouse
For a part of each day

It was a walk right back
Into the world of quack shrink doctors
Well intentioned therapists and psychiatric pills

He thought the whole thing
Was a step back into the past
A shameful humiliating degradation
For a uselessly hopeless fuckup

His parents told him that he was going
They thought it would be good for him

He got up in the mornings
With his stepfather
Like he was going to work

He drank the morning coffee
Smoked cigarettes with his stepfather
Almost able to pretend
That he was heading out to work

After a few minutes of sitting around
In the mumbled silence of small talk
A bus pulled up in front of the house
He got on and rode out to Joliet
For his vocational rehabilitation training

His illusions of work quickly evaporated

A bus from the mental health center
7:15 each weekday morning
Stopped off at his parent's home

The bus was a half bus
Double width doors
With hydraulic lift devices
Couple rows of vinyl soft upholstery seats
Most of the floor space inside left open
For wheelchairs

Every detail of the bus designed
For transport of the handicapped

He got himself onto the bus quickly
Eyes aimed at the ground in embarrassment
Not looking up or around
Hoping that it was still too early
For any of the neighbors to see

The bus stopped at various houses
Through a series of several small towns
On the way to the vocational rehabilitation facility

At each of stops
Retarded adults were picked up

People vegetating
In a twisted genetic combination
Of Down's Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy
Slow children
Locked inside the bodies of middle aged adults

His initial reaction of sadden shocked horror
Gradually subsided with each morning

He spent most of the ride
Looking into the deep of their eyes
Wanting to believe
That there was something in their beyond
That was fully aware of what was going on

Something that was arbitrarily trapped
Behind an awkward physical expression
Mangled in a cruel joke clumsiness
Unable to get out

His work rehabilitation took place
In a makeshift pseudo-workshop warehouse area
Set up in the back
Of a Joliet mental health building

He spent six hours in the workshop each day
Repairing damaged wooden soda pop bottle case crates

He had his own steel top tabled work area
A hutch over the table
With nails boards metal strips
All of the components
Involved in a pop bottle case

He worked with a hammer and a nail puller

Wore a yellow safety helmet with goggles

He got a check from the mental health department
At the end of the week
25 cents for each case he repaired

His stepfather called it ding dong school

He went to rehabilitation
With twenty other men

The rehabilitates divided up about even
Young black and white guys
With drug alcohol problem pasts
Older near middle aged retarded adult men
That had lived longer then they were supposed to

He kept his mouth shut
Nobody was offering any information
As to why they were there

He made out most of the young guys at rehab to be
Fuckup burnout nut case drug casualties like himself

All the break time lunch half hour talk
Centered around cigarette smoke blown in the breeze plans
About getting wasted drunk shit faced high on pot stoned

Some of the guys even hung out together
He wanted no part of it
Trouble was the only thing that would follow
When lifelong losers got themselves together

He thought he was better off
Getting wasted drunk shit faced high on pot stoned
With the normal people
Relatives and friends
That he already knew

He settled into his pop crate repair work
It was a mundane mindless repetitive task
Mastered within minutes
Something that kept him busy
While allowing his thoughts to wander

The monotonous boredom was not a challenge
He found that he could conjure
Cut from the cloth of his memory
Whole rock and roll albums
Song for song exactly

Just the way he remembered hearing them
 Years before on the cheap record player
 In his teenaged bedroom

He made himself inattentive
 To the unrhythmic unrelenting chaos
 Of twenty mental cases and retards
 Pounding hammers on nails on wood
 On the steel table tops

He piled the finished crates around him
 Forgetting about the rest of the people in the workshop
 All surrounding activity disappear drowning

Each day at the workshop was a built wall
 Made up of soda pop crates
 Daydream thoughtlessness and humiliation

He was able to make from 60 to 80 dollars a week
 Repairing the pop bottle crates

All the young guys cranked out the crates
 Half assed sloppy bent nail crooked
 Just enough to pass the inspection
 50 or 60 a day
 Everybody knew what they were there for
 Cartons of cigarettes
 Six packs and dime bags of pot

The retarded men took their time
 Totally rebuilding each crate
 With a painful to watch meticulousness
 One minded attentive precise focused direction

The retarded guys made less than 10 dollars a week
 It didn't matter to them
 They didn't need the money

His life changed with the money from rehab
 The dead dormant doors of social opportunity
 Were once again open to him

He was able to sit in the bars
 A couple nights out of the week
 With his old friends

He was able to kick in for beers
 When he went out with his cousins

He didn't have to drop hint wait around
 For his sister to buy him cigarettes

He was able to buy some beer
Have his girlfriend come over

He was able to sit around and drink
Hang out in the garage
With his step brother's friends

He didn't tell anybody what he did during the day
If pressed for anything beyond vague inspecifics
He alluded to a factory job in Joliet
Then quickly diverted the conversation
Off into some other direction

He slowly tested his limits
How late how long
How much could he drink
Before getting up in the morning for rehab

He nursed himself through
The first few hangovers
Moving tentatively
Stomach stretched raw
Torn out of shape
Shitting water
Head throbbing dizzy
Eyeballs ready to fall from their sockets
With every hammer pound
He was forced to listen to

He waited for his old work habits to come back
He knew that after a while
The hangovers would stop

All he had to do
Was keep pushing himself
Through those first few lousy days

He rode the mental health bus home
In the two o'clock afternoon
An arduous bladder stretching stop and go
Through the streets of the west side of Joliet
Through the heart of the Joliet black middle class

Rows of one story garage attached houses painted
In a mind totaling phosphorescent array
Purples pinks powder blues
Canary yellow and oranges
Peter Max colors
That he knew were best appreciated
Under the pupil wide influence

Of hallucinatory drugs

He demented into a paranoia
 Maybe the whole neighborhood
 Had been drugged by the government
 The incoming water supply
 Tamper lace treated with psychedelics
 In a feebled bungle attempt
 To render the residents
 Mentally incapable

A dark impenetrable conspiracy
 That collapsed in a failure
 Exploding a rainbow
 Back into the faces of the perpetrators
 The only evident result of the drugs
 Was the freaked out color paint of the houses

He developed the idea
 As the bus rolled to its stops
 Hard long look searching the eyes
 Of the wheel chair strapped vegetables
 Believing that they psychically aware of the plot
 Maybe they were victims of something similar

He fast forwarded
 Into a gone wrong awry
 Aldous Huxley brave new world future
 Of prenatal chemical altering embryonics
 Damaged human catastrophe byproducts
 In the blindfolded madness of scientific ambition

The ride finally ended when he got home
 He laughed inside to himself with relief
 The whole idea was a preposterous nonsense

He took the fantasy as a good sign
 His imagination was returning

He would see blue lights in his eyes
 A quick momentary dot sized flash
 Something he guessed leftover from the drugs

It always happened
 When he was deep into a thought
 When an idea would suddenly reveal itself
 The light would blink on

It took him a year to realize that
 Nobody else could see it
 It was something emanate from inside of his brain

It always happened when he was thinking
 Whenever his line of thought
 Resulted an inner mental pronouncement
 The simultaneous spontaneous reaction
 Of thought intuition and realization
 Combusting to fire off a glowing blue charge

He knew that the blue light
 And the thought that caused it
 Meant that he was on to something

He gradually realized that
 The blue light signified the truth

He got on the mental health bus
 For a gray dark early afternoon winter day ride home

Somebody getting on the bus said
 That the president Reagan had been shot
 Somebody else said that they got all of them
 All of them had been shot
 Nobody knew for sure
 What the hell was going on

He could almost hear the word
 Good
 That immediately resounded in his mind
 And in the minds of the black guys on the bus
 Nobody had to verbalize it
 It was an unspoken understood consensus

It was payback time for the powers
 A sign of a long overdue slowly redemptive justice
 For all of the done wrong down trodden innocent victims

The ride home through empty streets was silent
 Each man in a seat by himself
 Out the window alone with their thoughts
 Even the retards in their way seemed to sense
 The imminent prospect of change

He bought himself a transistor radio
 A cheap pocket sized AM old fashioned 9 volt
 He scotch tape custom encased a picture of Debbie Harry
 Cut from a magazine
 Onto the face of the radio

He listened to the radio in the morning
 While sitting at the rehab breakroom table
 During the half hour 3 cigarette wait
 He sat through before he was allowed

To start working on his pop bottle crates

He listened to the once mighty top 40 giant
WLS 89 on the AM dial
It was the dying days of AM radio
FM radio took all of the good songs
AM radio was left to send out the trash

The same doggerel shit over and over
He got himself used to it
Betty Davis Eyes
And a song by the neighborhood heroes Styx
With cool dripping synthesizer intro
That sounded OK turned up loud for a couple of seconds

He even got used to the put-on innuendo
Between the morning DJ and news woman

Low watt 9 volt electricity
A picture of Debbie Harry
Anything to get himself going
Anything to make him temporarily
Forget the fact
He was repairing pop bottle crates
With retarded people

He bought himself a record
By a punk rock band called
The Dead Kennedys

Loud fast densely worded music
A sacrilege joke assault on society
It was everything he had ever hoped for
A second chance coming
For the failed 1960's bastard coupling
Of rock music with change effecting political rhetoric

When Ya Get Drafted
Let's Lynch the Landlord
Chemical Warfare
Police Truck
Holiday in Cambodia

He memorized the words to the songs
Until he was able to spit them out
Right along with the singer Jello Biafra

He spent hours in fascinated confusion
Trying to decipher the collaged poster
That was included with the album

The whole thing was a sign to him

Something was happening somewhere
 Something that he wanted to be a part of
 Somewhere there were people out there
 Just like him

He grew up like most of his generation
 Believing in the tragic sainted saviourhood
 Of the martyred shot down President John F Kennedy

He even remembered the funeral
 On his grandparent's black and white
 The Lucy Show was on afterwards

The night Robert Kennedy was shot
 He went back to an eight year old's sleep
 Thinking about a heroic man with a bullet in the brain
 Fighting for life
 He wanted a miracle to happen

He was disappointed to find out in the morning
 There was no miracle
 Robert Kennedy was dead

He reveled in the Kennedy family myth mystique
 Joe Jack Bobby and Teddy
 PT-109 Camelot and touch football at Hyannis Port
 He built a shrine in his imagination

This was before the Kennedys
 Became the irish bootlegger's sons
 That couldn't keep it in their pants

He knew the killing of President Kennedy
 Was a boon to crackpot delusional lunatics
 He even took the trip himself once

Deep within the Dade County Miami Beach jail lockup
 Under the influence of the ocean water he had been drinking
 Handcuffed beaten by a fat cubano guard
 He was put in a room
 With a thinly built deeply tanned man
 In an olive green short sleeved army type uniform
 Looked just like President Kennedy
 Hadn't aged a day in 15 years

He was convinced the guy was clairvoyant
 Psychically reading his mind
 The guy stood off to his side
 Seeming to react with silent gestures of agreement
 To the onslaught psychosis rush of thought
 That went tunneling through his head

The guy was President Kennedy
 In lay low secret hiding
 Actively engaged
 In a telepathic war
 Against the corrupt government
 That had taken control of America

The whole thing in Dallas was a propped fake
 A Walt Disney built smiling waving robot
 Set up in an open limousine
 Designed for ketchup bag target practice
 Kennedy saw the whole thing coming

Afterward he tried to tell his family
 That he had seen the President Kennedy in Miami

No wonder they had his crazy ass locked up

He wanted to put together a guidebook
 A step by step walk through how-to instruction manual
 Of all the insanity deluded paranoidias
 He had sweated through

A list of things to contemplate
 Suggestions that could lead the mind
 Into a controlled throe of psychosis

A funhouse sitting in a chair walk ride
 Through a lunatic's unending madness

There had to be a way to recreate
 That momentary lapse of reasoning
 That escaped sanity loss of mind terror
 When the impossible became real

He would include all of his bad trips

The last survivor after the nuclear holocaust
 The chemical wire in the brain that received government transmissions
 The died last night trapped in a mundane bardo
 The hidden camera built into the television set
 The family members replaced by CIA replicants
 The temporary death state of sleep
 The space ship the rock stars were going to buy with all of their money
 The movies that were edited from real life footage
 The man who was kicked off the planet for thinking too loud
 The faked death of President Kennedy
 The loss of sleep reality that feels like a dream
 The mafia recruit initiation rite hassles
 The old men dressed up like old ladies
 The disheveled bum that was really a famous person

The renegade sidewalk punk being scouted by the hollywood movie director

The FBI infiltrators in the downtown skidrow mission
 The mental ward fugitive on the lam underground railroad system
 The mental ward smuggled dissident holding area operation

All of his bullshit inventions
 Maybe there was a way to put them into a pill
 That came with an instruction booklet

After the pill wore off
 Everything would return to its normal

He passed gradually through the back of the winter
 He knew that things were getting better
 He felt an anticipation welling
 Something good
 Something big was going to happen

The psycho maniacal spree episodes
 That scarred his previous four winters
 Were finally going to dissolve
 Into the slowly forgotten unfortunate events
 Of a past that was finally relinquishing
 Its stranglehold lockjaw grip on the present

He wasn't going to flip out
 Again

He got himself back into drinking shape
 He was drunk every night of the week

He spent each night with different people
 Moved himself around

He wanted to stay spread out
 Only let people see a small part

That way nobody would know
 What he was up to
 He didn't want to be around anybody
 Long enough to make them sick of him

Nothing was going to go wrong this time
 He wasn't going to give anybody
 An opportunity excuse reason
 To get in his way
 Cut off his fun
 Fuck everything up for him

He celebrated the first greening of the spring
 He shaved off the beard
 That had grown wild thick black untrimmed
 For the previous seven months

He bought a nickel bag sized dime bag of pot
 From one of the guys at rehab
 Got stoned after he got home

Spent the rest of the afternoon
 Before his stepfather got home
 Walking around the backyard
 In a stupefied state of utter amazement

Staring awestruck at the individual leaves
 On the trees
 The networking lines leading to stem
 Becoming capillaried arterous veins
 Connected to the heart of the tree

The delicate threads spread into the green
 Exact precise patterned
 Each leaf the same
 The trees were alive
 They were breathing again
 He could feel it

He told himself afterwards
 That he needed to get stoned like that more often

He went for his first ride on his cousin's horse
 After months of standing off to the side askance
 Just beyond the range of striking hoof prints
 He had disinterestedly watched his cousin
 Work the horse into the halter
 Then the bit
 Now finally the saddle

He mounted the gelding in a corral
 A couple of hundred feet away from the barn
 Where the horse was being stabled

Instead of walking stiffly through the corral
 The way the horse had when his cousin rode him
 The stupid animal threw up his front legs
 Tried lurching him from the saddle
 Then gallop bolted back to the barn

His head popped with an explosion of white lights
 As the horse ran him underneath
 The low ceilinged rafterboards in the barn entranceway
 He heard the sound of his skull

Slamming successively into the overhanging two by sixes

The horse stopped long enough for him to get off
 Threw a back leg in the direction of his chest
 Stomp snorted through the barn ran
 Back out to the corral where the ride had started
 Standing there all saddled up ready to go
 Like nothing had ever happened

He told his cousin never again
 The goddamned animal was fucking crazy

He was secretly convinced that the horse
 Had been waiting months
 To take him for that ride

He was called into a meeting by the people at rehab
 The guy driving the bus in the morning
 Turned him in for being drunk
 Claimed he got on the bus every morning
 Smelling like a brewery
 They were going to have to suspend him

He told them no way in hell
 So what
 Yeah he drank a couple of beers after dinner

The only thing that asshole bus driver was smelling
 Was the alcohol working its way through his pores

Every man he had ever worked with
 Went to work in the morning sweating
 Stinking of beer from the night before
 It didn't mean that they were drunk

Where the hell had they been
 Hadn't they ever been around working men before
 Bunch of stupid know nothing lightweights

He was a grown man
 He was just sweating it out

He kept on the rehab people
 Talking fast persistent adamant
 He wasn't going to admit to anything
 He wouldn't let up
 Until they agreed to drop the whole thing

They weren't going to pin any shit on his ass
 He didn't care what he smelled like

His stepfather decided to crack down on him
 His stepfather came home pissed up on a friday night
 Full of after work end of the week
 All night sitting at the bar beers

His stepfather found the letter from school
 That said he got A's in his two junior college classes

His stepfather said the grades were proof
 There wasn't a damned thing wrong with him
 His whole illness
 Or whatever the hell he was claiming to be wrong
 Was a fake
 The rehab program was a waste of time bullshit
 That phony punk was going to have to get a job
 Assume some responsibility
 Start paying room and board or else
 Or else
 He was going to have to go
 Clear his ass out here

He thought that if he kept quiet
 Kept himself low
 Stayed out of his stepfather's way
 The whole thing would go away forgotten

He spent a week at the rehab center
 In the front office area
 Undergoing vocational testing
 To determine what kind of work
 He would eventually be suited for

He went through a daily battery of mock work tasks
 Alphabetically sorting stacks of dog eared index cards
 Separating the contents of coffee cans full of assorted nut and bolts
 Assembling gadgets that didn't do anything
 Adding up columns of numbers
 Reading paragraphs then answering questions about them

Sub-moronic cretin level idiot dunce tasks
 Designed as a challenge for the retarded people in rehab
 He thought the whole thing was a demeaning affront

To make the tests interesting
 He stayed up all night drinking until six in the morning
 Took a shower caught the bus
 Went in reeking and belching beer
 Ready to prove to anybody there that he wasn't drunk

He flew through the tests with ease
 Scoring high beyond the diminished standard
 By the end of the week

The people that ran the rehab
 Were looking at him differently
 Like maybe he wasn't the fried wasted insane stupid incapable fool
 That they had led themselves to believe he was

He was told at the end of the evaluation
 That he could probably do whatever he wanted to

His cousin wanted to start a band
 His cousin had a seldom played
 Half forgotten guitar
 That had been sitting around
 For a couple of years

His cousin recruited a couple of other guys
 Bedroom practice amplifier ledzep jammed high school rock rollers
 To round out on guitars and drums

He lit himself up with a hope
 A not yet dead dream
 Kindling from childhood
 Still lingered the remotes of possibility

Maybe he could be the singer

He spent a saturday afternoon
 In the garage at his cousin's parent's house
 Watching the first last only rehearsal of his cousin's band

He was woundup excited that day
 Got himself started early in the morning
 He was bombed out of his mind blackout drunk
 Before the band even started

He was waiting for somebody to tell him
 That he had to be the singer
 He assumed that was the reason
 For his being there

He knew how to sing along to a record
 He knew how to sing alone by himself
 He wasn't sure how to sing with a band

He spastic careen dervish carom ricochet bounced
 All over the floor of the garage
 A one man flying air band
 While the band worked through fragments
 Of FM radio teenage staple classics

Nobody was asking him to sing
 He went from laughable joke to pestersome menace

Everybody started to worry
That he was going to damage destroy
Bump into knock over
Break their equipment

The band idea disintegrated quickly
Into an apathetic overall of disgust
Everybody packed up their shit then left

The band idea was never mentioned again
He thought it was his fault

His family was tiring quickly of his bullshit
He was constantly drunk
Staying up late not sleeping
Speeding himself up with punk rock
Losing weight
Getting stoned acting weird drawing pictures
Hanging out with people
They didn't know or like

He was scrunching his neck into his shoulders
Because he was too fucked up to stand
Without tipping over

Everybody around him knew
Where all of this was leading
He would have to be put away again
It was another repeat of the past

His mother started hinting around at him
It was just about time
For him to go back
To the hospital

He returned hints of his own
Vague idle out in the air threats
He wasn't going while he was alive
He would choose to die first
They weren't locking his ass up again

Nobody listened to him
He had said the same shit
The year before
The last time he went crazy

His parents decided that they had seen enough
They got themselves up and dressed
On a saturday morning
Before he could clear himself out of the house

His mother sat in a driveway idling car
 His stepfather muscled in on him
 Told him it was time to go
 Talked to him
 Like he was a mind fried incompetent idiot
 Totally oblivious to the reality around him

He thought they were a joke
 A couple of middle aged alcoholic phonies
 They had another thing coming to them
 If they thought
 They were putting him away

His stepfather was getting impatient
 Leaning in on him
 The creep kept saying
 It was time for him to go

He gathered up his 14 pack stash of Marlboros
 Shoved a lighter down his sock into his shoe
 Grabbed his transistor 9 volt AM radio
 He had everything he needed

He was ready to go for their ride
 He was ready for anything

His parents drove him to the state of Illinois nuthouse
 In nearby Tinley Park

He told his parents they were dreaming
 There was no way he was getting locked up
 They were the ones that needed to be put away

His parents elbow escort walked him
 Into a plexi-glassed cage metal hospital holding area
 Signed a clipboarded paper
 For a white uniformed attendant
 Then left

The lowlifes didn't even stick around
 To make sure that he was admitted
 His parents had things to do that day

His parents drove away from the hospital grounds
 Confident that crazy bastard
 Was out of their lives
 For good

He spent three hours in the hospital admitting room
 Waiting to be seen by somebody

He thought that once he got to talk to somebody
He would be allowed to leave

He would verbally blow their shit away
Impress upon them the fact
There was no reason in hell
For them to lock him up

He chain smoke paced the floor
Of the small mental hospital waiting room
Rearranged the chairs
So that he could move around better

He sang along with the songs on his AM radio
He started talking out loud
To the people that ran the hospital
He figured that they were watching him
Listening to him

He made grandiose exaggerated slow motion deliberate movements
Asked out loud if that was enough
To have a man put away

He went off into a spoken tirade soliloquy
Said he was thinking right out loud
For everybody to hear
He had nothing to hide
He was letting them hear his thoughts
Let them judge his thinking for themselves
There was nothing crazy about his thought process

He wanted to know how sane was a man
That was able to outwardly control and hide
A mind filled with disturbing thoughts

He wanted to know who among them
Had the guts to put their sanity on the line
All of their thoughts
Out loud and in the open
What kind of crazy diabolical devious shit was lurking
In their silences

Three hours was more than enough time
To prove to anybody
That might have been watching his performance
That there was
Definitely something wrong with him

He refused to voluntarily admit himself
Into the hospital

He demanded a 5 day release form
 The hospital holds him for 5 days
 Then he goes to court

Let a judge decide
 If he was crazy

He wasn't a stupid spaced out stuttering rookie
 He knew the in and outs
 Of the nuthouse game

They could watch him for 5 days
 Then they could watch him beat their rap
 He was just starting to roll
 Nobody was cutting him off

He was the only that was deciding
 When it was time for him to be put away

He scrambled to throw himself together
 He was escorted by a roving hospital brown uniform
 Handcuff catalog cop baton weapon guard
 Up to a sixth floor ward

He was a talk out loud lunatic
 Wired tighter than a swiss stop watch spring
 Displaying signs of karate kick violence mayhem possibilities

He had talked himself right into the nuthouse
 He had a week to undo the damage
 Done by a three hour observation room furniture walk monologue

He was going to prove
 That he didn't have
 To be locked up

His mind was working fast
 He walked onto the ward
 Carrying a bag full of cigarettes and a radio

He didn't wait for his things to be confiscated
 He told the staff worker to take his stuff
 Lock it all up behind the counter
 So that nothing would be stolen

He knew how the bastards worked
 If they think the patient wants something
 They take it away
 If the patient asks them to do something
 They find an excuse to refuse

The staff workers went right off at him
 As scheduled
 They weren't responsible
 For his belongings
 Sissy assed stupid white boy
 He would have to take care of his own shit

His supplies were essential
 He needed total control of them
 They couldn't be locked up doled out
 At the discretionaried whim of some sick fuck
 With the bored nonthinking intent
 Of making his life miserable

His next battle was over the medications
 There was no way
 He was going up in front of a judge
 Arguing for his sanity
 Five days full of nuthouse hospital tranquilizer downers

He was given a plastic shot cap
 Full of red syrupy liquid Phenobarbital
 The saturday afternoon nurse
 Expected him to drink it

He calmly refused the poison
 Swallowing the surge of gut rushing instinct
 To tell them through fist knotted teeth
 To shove it right up their fucking ass

He stood himself still
 Pulled the air slow long
 Through his nostrils deep into his lungs
 Deliberate
 Stone face slit eyed
 While the staff rifle threatened the drawers
 In search of leather restraints

He made a deal with the staff workers
 At the first sign of trouble
 They could strap him down
 Shoot him up

A syringe full of phenobarb was drawn up readied
 Waiting for him

The Tinley Park Illinois Mental Health Facility
 Was the forgotten publicly
 Subsidized dumping ground
 For the far south of Chicago suburban nuts

The too poor unfortunate unqualified
 Small town squirrel case standouts
 Indigents
 Without the backing of a major medical insurance policy
 To get them into the comfort of a private hospital

A state run institution
 Set out on the end of town alone
 In the middle of miles of weed patched earth
 A no man's land barren oasis
 Away from all of the populous areas

An undistinguished mass
 Of square six storied box-like brick brown buildings
 Spread out sprawled across wide open acres
 Roped off enclosed by a rusty six foot high chainlink fence
 At the southernmost bottom border of the Cook County line
 Dropped down on the facing edge of Will County cornfield country

A place that was never mentioned
 In fear of what might be there

Half of the people in the Tinley nuthouse
 Were dropped off by the police
 Wild rowdies that were too incorrigible out of it
 For the areas jailers to handle

Suspected murderers
 Kleptomaniacs
 Arsonists
 Angel dust damaged disorderly conducts
 Goof balls that phoned in threats on the president
 A stew pot boilover of semi-dangerous loonies
 Doing easy jail time
 Staffed over by lazy low paid state workers
 With a prison guard mentality collective

The rest of the people on the Tinley Park wards
 Were the repeat business
 The unknown hidden kept away from the neighbors
 Older brothers and sisters
 Aunts and uncles
 Harmless schizophrenics
 Harbor closeted at home by their families
 Packed off on occasion to the nut house
 When they got too loud obnoxious belligerent

Tinley wasn't a place for first timers
 It was a place for the hardcore perpetually hopeless insane

He spent his first evening on the ward
 Walking up and down
 Chain smoking
 Listening to his AM radio
 Registering his surroundings

He was on a total lockdown ward
 The bedrooms were closed off limits
 Steel cage wire enclosures covered the dirty paint peel window sills
 The women were kept on a separate adjoining ward
 Behind a thick black triple locked steel door

The walls were nicotine stained muddy brown yellow
 The floor gray industrial chipped linoleum
 Cigarette burned butt smudged dusty with ashes
 The bathrooms were a gray tiled urine splattered mosaic
 Toilets backed up clogged overflowing with paper and shit

The dayroom had a thick wooden name carved rectangular table
 A mismatch of wooden chairs thrown all over askew
 And a plexiglas case enclosed television set
 Mounted in the corner of the wall up near the ceiling

Most of the men were loud irritable angry
 On each other's nerves at each other's throats

The staff stayed mostly behind the counter
 Surrounding their small closed off cornered area
 Yelling continually at the patients
 Shut up settle down knock it off be quiet go sit down

He knew exactly where he was at
 He knew there wouldn't be any problems
 He fit right in

He became of one mind
 Singly determined in his purpose
 He wasn't going to screw this up
 He was getting himself out
 When he went up before the judge
 At the end of the week

He looked at all of his past
 Nuthouse mental hospital experiences
 Overnight weekend sitting in jail lockups
 Skidrow mission wino bum eating out of garbage cans

All of it was a preparation
 For the week that lay ahead of him

Everything that ever went wrong in the past
 Every fucked up misstep calculation

Was now a utilizable weapon at his disposal

This was going to be the most important week of his life
 He was back for the final battle
 Their bag of tricks was now empty
 There was nothing left to throw at him

He would do their time for a week
 After that a judge would end it
 The nut game would be over

Weekends in the nuthouse were always the same
 An unbroken spell of two day monotony
 A blurry run together of disinterested hours

The patients were allowed to linger in bed later
 Spared the regular morning lights-on roust
 They shuffled into the dayroom
 One by one
 Freed from the herd stampede wakeup drive of the week days
 That usually resulted in argument agitation

Meal times were schedule free unpredictable
 An early food delivery a pleasant surprise
 Catching the patients off guard in unawares
 Nobody noticed when the food came up late

There were no doctors on the weekend ward
 No social workers breezing in and out
 There were no activities or groups
 Marking each hour of the day

The week day adhered regimen disrepair dissolved
 In the hands of the slovenly hospital weekend staff
 A drowsy lack of lifelessness settled over the patients

The monday morning hospital shift came to work knowing
 They had to whip the whole mess back into shape

He went into a time killing mode
 He had five days ahead of him
 He had to lay low keep out of trouble

He came out on Monday morning
 Full cigarette pack in each front shirt pocket
 Lighter stashed secure in shoe
 Armed with his transistor AM radio

He had everything that he needed
 He was totally self-sufficient
 He was independent

Nobody could get in the way fuck with him

He spent the day sitting in a chair
 Back against the wall
 Smoking cigarettes
 Guzzling cold water
 Listening to the radio

The days took on a rolling down the road feel
 He felt like he was moving
 The days slipping by fast
 Talking with the other patients
 An endless bullstream swap session
 Stories about rock music and drugs

A black guy from jail kept telling him
 Free your mind and your ass will follow
 Or was it free your ass and your mind will follow

Either way
 He knew he was getting out

He wondered what chance a person would have
 Dropped off at a nuthouse
 By people claiming
 They were a danger
 To themselves and others

Anybody willing to declare
 That somebody else was crazy
 Could have a person locked away
 No questions asked

The natural inclination to anger
 Protesting that none of the charges were true
 Would be psychosis bordering violence

Trying to explain that it was a setup frame
 Would be the delusional ranting of a schizoid paranoiac

A calmly rational placidity
 In the face of utter ridiculousness
 Would be the dissociation of a suicidal

How many sane people
 Would crack in a situation
 Where everything that they did
 Was judged in the light of insanity

He knew the hospital in and outs

The ward felt like a second home to him

He knew how to avoid the loudmouth patients
 Explodable trigger tempered hotheads
 Troublemakers looking to drag somebody into a fight

He knew how to keep clear of the idiots
 Crazies inherently disabled further
 By slow thought natural mental stupidity

He knew how to spot the liars
 Guys that were talking all of the time
 About all of the shit that they had going on the outside

He knew how to recognize the staff
 The lazy time clock punchers
 Unconcerned with the ward goings-on
 More interested in reading the newspaper
 Not wanting to be bothered

The frustrated bitter pent up on the ward
 Mental health professional dead end career workers
 Venting reproachable wraths of seething anger
 Provoking the patients into losing confrontations
 Wielding their vengeful authority like a weapon
 Coiled ready to strike out lash at any time
 With no apparent cause or reason

The empowered system embittered militants
 Singling out the white patients
 In a blind get even leveling
 For all of the shit ever taken by a black man
 At the hand's of a white run society

He knew the terminology
 He knew the schedule
 He knew the routine
 He knew how to get himself out of there

He was assigned a bed in a room
 Where eleven other men slept

The bedroom doors were unlocked around nine
 The patients had to be in their beds by ten

The room filled up at night
 With the smells of dirty feet
 Ball raunch unwashed body odor drift
 Most of the men slept in their clothes

One of the men had a paint peeling snore
 A loud throat choked phlegm gargling rattle

That he would awaken to hear
 Startled during the night
 Not sure of where in the hell he was at

He slept eight hours
 Each night in the hospital
 Ten to six
 Almost straight through
 No dreams

He woke up in the morning feeling good
 Clear mind rested
 Another eight hours passed
 Each hour bringing him closer to his court date

He was sailing right through the week
 He knew there was no way
 That they were going to keep him locked up

He didn't hear anything from his family
 While he was in the hospital

He didn't bother making any telephone calls home
 He wanted to prove to his family
 That he didn't need them
 He didn't want anything from them

He didn't know if they knew that
 He was going to court
 To get himself released from the hospital

Thinking they had put him away for good
 They had already left him gone for forgotten
 Now their lives could get back to normal

He thought that once the judge cut him loose
 He was going back home
 Into the opened welcoming arms of his family
 Back to his friends and his job at the rehab center
 Like nothing had ever happened

He spent the day before his court date
 Badgering the staff for laundry privileges
 Walking around in a knot tied hospital gown
 While his one set of clothes
 Went through the wash rinse dry cycles

He wasn't going into court
 Looking and smelling like a skid row bum

He got a straight razor toting staff guy
To give him a hot towel barbershop style shave

Everything was going to be perfect
He was going to be spotless

He had kept out of trouble all week
Proved that he was all right
Without having to take the nuthouse tranquilizer drugs
The staff had nothing on him

There wasn't a goddamned thing anybody could do
He was getting himself out of there

He woke himself up early
On his court day friday morning

Fever pitched with excitement
He waited for the morning staff
To tell him it was time to get out of bed

He came out demanding to have the shower room opened
Quietly explaining with patience to the staff guy
That it was real important for him
To get himself cleaned up

This was the biggest day of his life
He wasn't going to start it out
Looking like he just woke up
After sleeping in his clothes

He was driven in a mental health department station wagon
Dog catcher caged in the back seat
Facing backwards
For the hour ride into Chicago
To his mental case court appearance

He passed the ride in anticipatory projections
Trying to imagine what the court would be
Envisioned with yards of dark brown tables
Straight high backed chairs
Judges bench and witness testimony stands
Everything thick solid from hundred year old oaks
The judge senatorial stately
Black robed grey templed

Maybe secret witnesses would testify
On his behalf
Detailing the fucking over he had been put through

Maybe the bastards were going to payoff

Award him with a new home
 Set him up with a new life
 Personally apologize
 For all of the humiliating indignation he had suffered

Kicked out of everywhere
 Hauled off to jail
 Locked up in nut houses
 Made to live like a goddamned animal

All of the crooked rigged fixed underhand bullshit was over
 The judge at the nuthouse court was going to know
 That what was done to him was an injustice
 It wasn't right

The mental health court
 Was located near downtown Chicago
 In a government bureaucracy building

The court waiting room area
 Looked like the unemployment office
 Dirty disheveled poor broken down people
 Every screwball from every nuthouse in the area
 That had refused admittance to the hospital that week
 Each one waiting to see the judge

All of the patients were with staff members
 From the hospital they came from

It was easy to distinguish the staff from the patients
 The patients were dressed sloppy
 Shirts hanging out untucked all over the place
 Shoes untied tongue flapping without laces
 Soil stained cigarette burnhole pants
 Stubble unshaved beard outgrowth mangy
 Hair matted sticking straight up at right angles
 Juxtaposed with grease

He knew that none of them had a chance
 Some where walking around talking out loud
 Trying to bum cigarettes off of strangers
 Just like they were back locked up on the ward
 Every one of them was looking at a minimum of 60 days
 They were going to be sleeping in the same bed that night
 That they woke up in that morning

Of the dozens of people
 Waiting to see the judge that day
 He knew that he was the only one
 That had any hope in hell
 Of getting cut loose

He waited to see the mental health court judge
 He sat in the middle of a row
 Of waiting room chairs

Next to him was a young woman girl
 Staff worker from some area hospital
 Dressup disguised
 In a matching shirt dress pants blue
 Business career professional department store suit
 Escort babysitting a babbling lunatic on a friday
 To the mental health court

The staff woman leaned real close to him
 Started whispering into his ear
 In a low barely audible back of the throat voice
 Kept on repeating
 That she was so tired

He was the only one that could hear her
 The rest of the room was thrown up in chaotic noise
 He started thinking fast
 Maybe there was a way
 He could walk out of there with her
 Go live somewhere with her
 Just the two of them
 Take her out
 Away from all of the insanity
 That was slowly driving her crazy

He knew it would never work
 He realized that compared to the other people in the room
 She probably thought that he was another staff worker
 From an area nuthouse
 Escort babysitting a babbling lunatic on a friday
 To the mental health court

He let the girl talk in his ear
 It relaxed him

The line between the patients
 And the workers had dissolved
 The caretakers had taken on the disease
 Of those they were trying to care for

He knew for sure
 He was getting sprung from the nuthouse
 That day

He went into the mental health court room
 He was walked down the middle of crowded room

Psychiatrist therapists sitting in classroom rows
 Student intern bored observers

He stood in front of a foldup cafeteria beat table
 Piled with stacks of patient folders
 Loose paper legal document dogeared scatter
 Sandwich stuffed pouring all over everything

The judge was a middle aged wild haired guy
 Dressed in a plaid sport coat
 Pot belly gut grimy white shirt slob
 Sitting behind the table
 Eyes bloodshot tired baggy lid puffy red
 Looking out over the tops of the bifocal glasses

He wondered what kind of bullshit
 Kangaroo fucking joke court
 Was trying his sanity

He quickly gathered the court
 Was an already concluded procedure

The patients were marched in
 Sentenced to a minimum of 30 days
 Then taken straight back to the nuthouse

He interrupted the judge's paper shuffle ruffling formalities
 Started talking saying he wanted to be heard
 Went off into a quickly spoken tirade
 About how he was in vocational rehabilitation
 Trying to get his life back together
 About how locking him up now
 Would be throwing out all of the ground
 He had been gaining
 In his attempt to be a normal functioning person

He kept on talking
 Hammering home his point

He wouldn't shut up
 Until he could see the guy
 That was supposed to be the judge was
 Buying into the spiel

He listened to himself
 Bargaining his case in mental health court

He was ready to promise anything
 Anything to avoid being locked up
 He knew the rehab program was a fucking joke
 Going on about it in a room full of people

Like repairing pop crates was the most important thing
In the world to him

In the back of his mind
While he was agreeing to return
To the vocational rehabilitation program
He knew that as soon as he got the chance
He was going to tell that people at rehab
To drop dead go to hell

It was finally decided
He was going to be a good boy
He wouldn't cause any more trouble
He was being released from the nuthouse

He had won the last battle
The war was over

He rode back to Tinley Park
In the mental health station wagon

He went away
From his victory in mental health court
Feeling empty
Unsatisfied
The inevitable reality
Didn't amount to the buildup

He thought that he was going to skate
Out of the building free on his own
Walk around Chicago for a while

Instead it was back to the nuthouse
To wait for somebody in his family
To drive out pick him up

He called his parent's house
Talked to his younger sister
Told her to come out and drive him home
She said yeah sure
Then hung up

He waited around for an hour
Called his sister a second time
She told him yeah yeah
Hung up again

He made the same call a third time
It was getting near dinner time
It was almost friday night
He wanted to get the hell out of there
What was the holdup with the ride

His sister went off on him
 Screaming
 Yelling
 He couldn't come back there
 Nobody wanted him there

He listened to his sister
 Sitting in the car that once had been his
 On the ride back to his parent's house
 Everybody was sick of his shit
 Why was he coming back there
 He belonged in the hospital
 He was a fucking crazy asshole
 Nobody wanted him there

His being released from the hospital
 Was an unexpected shock
 For his family

He came home to his parents
 Flying around the house
 Like bats driven out of the darkest corner of hell

He was unable to make out all of the words
 Behind closed door arguing shriek swearing
 Lot of goddamned bastards
 Stinking lousy nogood punk son of a bitches

He sat quietly alone sipping on beers
 Listening to his stepfather
 In another part of the house
 Banging and knocking shit into the walls
 He knew it was his stepfather's way
 Of trying to throw a scare into him

He had wrecked his parent's friday night
 He had wrecked their weekend
 He had wrecked the rest of the spring
 He was wrecking their lives

He found out that he had been suspended from rehab

Each morning that he was in the hospital
 The mental health department bus
 Stopped in front of his parent's house
 Honked the horn
 Waited
 He never showed

Nobody in his family bothered

To tell the rehab people
That they had locked him up

He was on the phone yelling
Demanding to be reinstated
He couldn't get on the bus
Because he was in the goddamned hospital

He couldn't call to cancel the bus
Because he didn't know the phone number
He didn't even have a dime on him for a call
His parents roused him with no warning

He was right there all week
Right under their nose
Within their system
In custody of the Illinois Mental Health Department

He told them to check their records
Get their story straightened out
He wasn't AWOL from anything

Nobody was cutting off his access
To a lousy seventy two dollar a week paycheck

The mental health people finally agreed to let him
Go back to rehab

His circle of acquaintances quickly shrank
He knew the word must of been out
That he had been carted off to the nuthouse

People started avoiding him
Quit coming around to drink beer hang out
Nobody would smoke pot around him

His nuthouse court victory meant nothing
All that mattered was that
He had been locked up in the hospital

He started to drink heavily
Looking for the good times
The laugh outloud fun relief
The alcohol had fueled before

The drunks took on a darkened ugly moroseness
Frustrating smashed bottle escapades
That would eventually aggravate
Into a late night breakdown of anger
Requiring physical restraint

Nothing was working
Everybody was all over his case
People were abandoning him

In his eyes
People were letting him down

He started taking the pills
That he had stashed the summer before

Muscle relaxers topped off with downers
Mixing the shit with beers

He told the people at rehab
He needed the downers to calm down
Then went back and told them
He was having side effects

He was given muscle relaxers
For the side effects

He wanted to blot himself out
Smash himself over the head
With a chemical hammer
So he wouldn't feel a thing

He ran through the muscle relaxers
A month supply gone in a couple of days
Triple quadrupling the dosage
Taking them every couple hours
Until he felt stoned

He used the downers sparingly
They made him pass out
Wrecking the muscle relaxer high he had going

After three refills in three weeks
The guy at the pharmacy told him
That was enough

He couldn't get enough of the muscle relaxers
It was better than anything
He had ever gotten illegally on the street

The stuff made him spaced out
Dry mouth quiet stoned
Like he was tripping on acid
Without the boxed-in no end in sight fear
Lost mind paranoia

His body felt good
 Like he was nestled in a cloud
 He moved around like he was made out of paper

Colors intensified
 Bright blurry
 Opiated warm
 Fuzzed around the edges

He wanted to be put on muscle relaxers
 For the rest of his life

He had always heard about the breweries in Milwaukee
 Stories about beer production plant tours
 Walking through a vatted factory with a sloshing bucket
 Drinking beer for free

He decided to go up to Milwaukee
 Hit one of the breweries
 Schlitz Pabst
 There had to be breweries all over town
 He didn't care which one it was

He wanted to get good and drunk
 Right inside a brewery
 Get so loaded
 They would have to roll his ass out of there

He didn't care if the beer they were handing out
 Was piss warm 89 cents a quart Old Bohemian
 Made from tap water
 Spigotted through a muddy green garden hose
 He just wanted to get drunk

He could ride on a bus to Milwaukee
 Leave on a saturday morning
 Get there before noon

He estimated Milwaukee to be an hour walk
 From one end of town to the other
 He would start walking
 Until he spotted a brewery

All he had to look for was a water tower
 With a beer brand logo

He might even be able to hit a couple of breweries
 Before it was time to catch the bus back

He'd have money in his pocket
 After drinking for free all day

He could hit the Milwaukee bars afterward
 Stay out there all night
 Get the bus back to Chicago in the morning
 Be back home before sunday afternoon

Make a nice weekend trip out of it
 He had the whole thing figured out

He headed up to Milwaukee on a saturday morning
 Woke up while the rest of the house was asleep
 Got the first train out of town to downtown Chicago

He left the house with his shirt and jacket pockets
 Stuffed with cigarette packs
 He had a prescription pill bottle
 With 15 downers and 25 muscle relaxers

He had nearly 40 dollars in his wallet
 After he bought a round trip bus ticket
 For Milwaukee

Cigarettes pills
 39 dollars with change
 And a round trip bus ticket

He was organized
 He had a plan
 He didn't tell anybody where he was going
 Nobody was going to be able to fuck it up for him

The whole thing was bullet proof
 This wasn't going to be
 Another of those one way ticket excursions
 Like in the past
 Where somebody from back home
 Had to bail his ass out of jam

There was no foreseeable way
 Anything could go wrong

He rode on the bus up to Milwaukee
 It was two three hour ride
 Out of downtown Chicago

He had already put a dent
 Into his supply of muscle relaxers

He sat placid in the bus seat
 Thinking about when he got back home
 About how he was going to regal his friends
 With stories about his Milwaukee brewery adventure

He looked at the day as a scouting trip
 Once he figured out what was going on
 He could ringlead his friends
 On a drink for free Milwaukee brewery system tour

He looked out the bus window
 Taking in the half gray late April Wisconsin scenery
 Feeling good about himself
 Satisfied
 Something was finally going to happen right

He got into Milwaukee around noon
 As soon as he got off the bus
 A black guy in the station spotted him
 Walked along side of him
 Trying to sell him drugs

He told the guy he was there to get drunk
 The guy quit on the sales pitch
 Gave him some crystal methedrine
 Told him he could have it for free

He told the guy it was time
 To go get drunk

He headed out into downtown Milwaukee
 With the guy he met in the bus station

The bus had let him off
 In the skid row wino section of Milwaukee
 Seedy dive bars open for morning business
 Package bag liquor stores
 Empty bottles scattered broken along the sidewalk

He told the guy to lead the way
 He bought rotgut wine and cans of beer
 The two of them walked down the sidewalk drinking

When the beer and wine was gone
 He bought some more

He spent the afternoon
 Walking around the Milwaukee skid row with the guy
 Drinking paperbag quarts bottles cans of beer
 Richards Wild Irish and Mogen David maddog wine

Wherever the guy took him to buy alcohol
 The place would go up into arms
 When they saw the guy walking through the door
 Barkeeps customers proprietors

Everybody yelling for the guy to get out
 He figured the guy had been kicked out
 Of every bar in the area

The guy kept laughing
 Whenever somebody started giving the guy shit
 The guy would point to the bag with the wine
 Then say "Kool and the Gang"

He figured Kool and the Gang must of meant big times
 In a backward ass rinky dink town like Milwaukee

He lost the guy somewhere in the late afternoon
 He had spent all of his money
 He didn't know where in the hell he was at
 He had totally given up forgotten about
 Trying to find a brewery

He decided to explore the Milwaukee skid row
 Maybe there was a mission
 Where he could get some food

He met up with a guy younger than him
 A dirty faced burly kid
 With snot running out of his nose

The guy offered to show him around
 Took him out to a dry weed damp dirt clodded field
 In the back of a factory
 Where there was hot air coming out of the ground
 Through a vented grating

A board was set along the heat exhaust vent
 A half dozen kids were lying on the board
 Teenage pre-teen runaway grubby raggedy little kids
 Scrunched up together trying to keep warm

The guy he was with told him that
 He could crash there with them
 He told the guy it was too early for sleep
 The dusk hadn't even turned over the dark yet

He split the last of his downers with the guy
 The guy swallowed them without asking what they were
 He told the guy to take some of the muscle relaxers
 To ward off the cramps
 The guy got scared
 He told the guy the pills were nut house tranquilizers
 The guy punched him in the face

He left them out in the field
 He didn't have time to waste with idiots

It was just getting to be saturday night
He had a bus ticket in his wallet
To get back to Chicago

He tried finding the Milwaukee bus station
It was night
It was dark
The streets were lifeless
It was dead for a saturday
He didn't recognize anything

He finished off the last of his muscle relaxers
He was down to his last pack of cigarettes
It was time to get the hell out of there

He walked all over the downtown Milwaukee sidewalks
Fucked up drunk wasted lost
Speeding on methedrine
Trying to find the bus station

The evening turned into the middle of the night
It looked like sunday
He kept on walking
Like a robot

He was starting to pass out while he walked
His eyes would close
Then his consciousness would drop a notch
Transporting him into the random chaos
Of a dream state

He would awaken to a light flashing crash
A sudden face smashed startling jolt
When he inadvertently walked into the sides of buildings
Light posts
Newspaper stand kiosks

He walked right into anything
Blocking the path of the sidewalk
With his eyes closed

He readjusted himself
After each obstacle
Found a clear path to aim for
Closed his eyes
Then started walking again

He kept walking with his eyes closed
Slamming into things
Until he broke out a lens from his glasses

He started to look for a place to crash
 Out of the cold damp frost night
 A cop saw him turning doorknobs on a deserted building
 Trying to find a door that would open

He was arrested by the Milwaukee cops
 Taken to the police station
 Charged with prowling
 And attempted burglary

He went through the arrest proceedings
 Moving through the Milwaukee jail processing area
 With his eyes closed

He screamed at the cops
 He told the cops that he was all fucked up
 Out of his mind on drugs
 Downers speed muscle relaxers alcohol
 All he was trying to do was get to the bus station
 So he could get the hell out of there

The cops thought the whole thing was a joke
 He saw a lady cop laughing at him

He was thrown into a brightly lit
 Steel door slot cinder blocked wall
 Plexiglas observation window cell

He flattened his back onto the thin pad iron cot
 Took off his smashed glasses
 The black dotted white ceiling tiles
 Looked like they were underwater
 Swimming with spots
 Of hallucinatory blue colors

He was glad to be somewhere dry
 Off of the street
 Where he wouldn't bump into anything

He sat out the sunday
 In the Milwaukee jail
 He had a court date on monday morning

Half fucked up wasted
 Spillover from the day before
 The time went by quick

It wasn't like downtown Chicago
 Where hundreds of disorderlies
 Were dropped off at the county jail

At 26th and California
Paddy wagons from every precinct in the city
All the saturday night derelicts in one place
For sunday morning holiday court

Everybody had a number written on their hand
Everybody was given the same instructions
When the number was called go up
Plead guilty
Then leave

He figured Milwaukee was running
The same kind of vagrancy rap
Sit the night in jail
Go to court
Plead guilty
Then leave

He half wondered if they were crazy enough
To actually charge him
With attempted burglary and prowling

He went to the Milwaukee court on monday morning
He was fined 125 dollars
For turning doorknobs on buildings in the middle of the night

He agreed to pay the fine in 30 days
He would have agreed to anything they said
He just wanted to get the hell out of there
He would never come back to fucked up town like Milwaukee again
He wasn't going to pay them anything

He waited after court to get his wallet back
The cops took his wallet when they hauled him in
He had a bus ticket back to Chicago
Inside of his wallet

He waited around at a counter for his belongings
He was aggravated out of cigarettes impatient
He had been detained in Milwaukee long enough

He dug his wallet out of the yellow envelope
He rifled the pocketed folds of his wallet
Tore open the envelope
His bus ticket was gone

He wanted his bus ticket back
He stood yelling at the cops in the jail
Stubbled dirty awake for two days tired
Wearing glasses that were missing a lens

He felt suddenly powerless
 He was half blind
 He couldn't lock hold of somebody's eyes
 Freeze grip them in a glare
 Let them know that he meant business

The cops threatened to re-arrest him
 Told him to get the hell out of there
 He said he wanted his goddamned ticket back

He remembered showing the bus ticket to the cops
 The night they brought him into jail
 He told them he was trying to find the bus station

He couldn't have lost the ticket
 The cops took the ticket

Maybe the lady cop he saw laughing at him
 Was trying to make sure
 That he stayed in Milwaukee

He took the ticket mishap to be a sign
 He wasn't meant to leave
 He was supposed to stay in Milwaukee

Nobody knew he had gone up there
 He would just vanish
 Never go back
 Just disappear
 Like he was dead

He thought about everybody back home
 Girlfriend
 Cousins
 Friends
 Parents
 Step brothers
 Sisters
 Nobody gave a fuck about him
 He was a crazy pain in the ass
 He had nothing to go back for

He flash forwarded ahead
 Twenty years into time
 Heard himself telling a story
 About how he came to Milwaukee
 Lost the bus ticket home
 Been there ever since

He wanted to get off right in Milwaukee
 He purposefully steered himself clear

Of the downtown skid row area

He found a government welfare office
Went in to find out about getting housing
Maybe some food to hold him over
Until he could get something going

He was told that he would have to wait
30 days before he could have an appointment

He knew that 30 days
Living outside
Without money food or shelter
Was the same as 100 years

He would never be able to make it

He walked around downtown Milwaukee
Everything was new
Clean like it all had just been built fresh

The people were scrubbed clean
Well dressed in warm layers
Light skinned light haired
Probably northern european descended

Milwaukee was swathed in an innocence
Naive to the rotting urban decayal
Devouring the maggoty core
Of major cities like Chicago

Milwaukee was waiting unaware
Isolated in an oblivion
Ready to be picked clean torn apart
Ripening for a scourging harvest
Of institutionalized poverty
Homelessness
Rampant widespread drug addictions
Alcoholism
Joblessness

The homey wholesome heartland holdouts
Were waiting to be discovered
By the rest of america

He spent the monday afternoon
Tramping the Milwaukee downtown office building sidewalks
Halfheartedly bumming cigarettes
From people he saw smoking

He watched the end of the workday downtown desertion

Files of workers scrambling
The pedestrian commuter maze for home

He wandered into the residential areas
Looked through the front of the house windows
Seen from the passing sidewalk
Lit with the open curtained warmth of table lamps
Televisions flickering the prime time
The neighborhood air marked with the smoky aroma
Sent from wood burning fireplaces

He walked past the houses until they were dark
Saw the occasional switch flipped muted glow
Through side of the house glass block windows
Signaling middle of the night half asleep
Trips to the bathroom toilet

He was shivering in the thin jacket
He had worn for a sunny spring saturday afternoon
It was a late April 40 degree Wisconsin night
A slow quiet rain started to fall

He headed for a highway underpass
Made his way up the slanted cement embankment
Found a flat two foot wide edge of muddy concrete
At the top of the embankment
With the bottom of the roadway
Running over it from above

He wedged himself into the flattened space
The underneath of the road inches from his head
He listened to the wet tire hiss sizzle of the cars
Driving across the roadway above him
The steel belted radial 50 mile an hour berrap noises
Of cars and trucks pushing through the night
Sometimes he even caught the sound of the radio

The roadway vibrate rattled
With the traffic overhead
An unending steady stream
Small vent holes cut into the edge of the overpass roadway
Spray dropped dirty highway rain water down onto his face

He gradually fell asleep
Wondering if a life like this
Was going to be worth living

He had one lens in his glasses
His vision was blurry out of focus

He couldn't read the words on the street signs
He couldn't tell where he was going

Wasn't sure of where he had already been
 Everything was looking the same
 He wasn't able to distinguish

He knew there was no way to bum around
 Wearing a pair of eye glasses
 There were too many ways to get hit
 Knocked up side the head smashed in the face
 Glasses were going to get broken

He had worn contact lenses
 All of the other times he had been outside
 Put them in left them on
 For weeks at a time
 His eyes became hard boil egg golf balls
 Stuck wide open socket sunken

Being one eyed blind was a serious disadvantage
 A visual cripple
 He knew he would never make it

He started wearing glasses when he was 10
 Thick black plastic frames
 They were always broken
 Held together with tape glue and wire

He figured that he wrecked his eyes
 From all of the reading he had done
 When he was a little kid

He had read hundreds of books about baseball
 Brought them home from libraries in stacks
 Biographies of all the baseball greats
 Mays Mantle DiMaggio Ruth Gehrig Berra and Koufax
 Biographies about the oldtimers
 Christy Matthewson and Honus Wagner
 Biographies about the great teams
 The murderer's row Yankees
 The Brooklyn Dodgers and the gashouse gang Cardinals
 And biographies of the not so great
 Bobby Richardson and Red Schoendeinst

His own baseball playing ended
 During highschool team tryouts
 His soldered together wire frames broke in half
 Leaving him helplessly uncoordinated
 In his near sighted half blindedness

His glasses were always breaking
 At inopportune times

His glasses were broken
The first day of highschool

He walked through the blurred hallways
Of a building he had never been in before
Lost in a nightmare inspiring underwater soft focus recurrence
Not knowing how to find his classes or his locker
Unable to read the numbers on the doors

Without his glasses
He was walking around
Blindfolded

He knew after the second night
Walking the empty dull dead streets of Milwaukee
He was going to have to go back home

He spent the days in a downtown park
Near a harbor on the lake
Stretched out flat in the grass
Out of the wind
Warm in the sun

He tried to fall asleep
There were too many people around

He loaded himself up with drinking fountain water
Pissed it out in gas station bathrooms

When the downtown was emptying
In the late cold shadow afternoon
He bummed cigarettes off of office workers
Then started walking

Kept on walking all through the night
It was the only way to keep warm

He walked the middle of the night Milwaukee thinking
He didn't know what he was going to do
His life was all fucked up

He was an in then out of the hospital nut case
He was unable to work
He was unable to drive
He was unable to sustain a normal relationship
He was unable to take care of himself

The future was a brick wall
Right in front of his face
There was no way to get around it
There was no way to get through

He was going to have to call his family
Have somebody from back home
Bail his sorry ass out of Milwaukee

He decided to wait a few days
He wasn't ready to go crawling back yet

He met a truck driver from another state
An older guy was killing time
Outside of a diesel engine repair place
Waiting to get his broke down rig back on the road

He walked around for a few hours
Talking with the truck driver
He tried to act like nothing was wrong

He was wearing glasses
With one lens missing
He was 5 days unshaven
Empty stomach shrunken starving
Wearing dirty clothes
Men's room wash up greasy

The truck driver guy bought him a can a pop
And some vending machine candy bars
Set him up with a half smoked pack
Of menthol cigarettes

The guy's truck wasn't ready yet
The guy was going to be back at the garage
The next day to get the truck

He decided to stick around Milwaukee
For a couple of more days

The truck driver guy told him a story
About going into a Milwaukee bar
On an afterwork tuesday night

A middle aged guy came into the bar
Sat at the bar drinking
Screaming at shouting volume
Fist pound gaveling the bar
About a no good wife
Yelling at no one in particular
Thinking out loud

The truck driver said nobody in the bar
Was paying attention
To the guy's out loud rant

Went about their bar room business
Acted like it was nothing
The trucker said it was the damndest thing

He started thinking about all of the crazy people
Walking around
Talking outloud to themselves

He got himself going
Thinking about what would happen
If everybody started talking out loud
Letting everybody else hear
Yelling the thoughts
That were eating away at them
From the inside

He knew if that ever happened
They wouldn't be able
To lock anybody up
For being crazy

He met up with the trucker again
He was hanging around the truck repair garage
When the guy went in the next day
To pick up the truck

The trucker bought him
A hamburger and fries lunch
Gave him some cigarettes

He watched the truck driver
Getting ready to roll
On the road that led back home
To a family somewhere in Ohio

He wanted to climb up in the truck
Ride in the passenger seat
Through the highway beacons night
Listening to the sound of the tires
Whistling down the road
Smoking cigarettes with the country western radio
Get out in another city
Somewhere he could start over
Make a new life for himself

He didn't bother asking the truck driver for a ride
He figured the guy had done enough for him already
He didn't want to have to put the guy on the spot

He didn't want to force the guy
To tell him to go get lost

He had been in Milwaukee for a week
 When he finally gave in
 Made a collect call
 To back home

His younger sister yelled into the phone
 While he tried to tell her
 How to go to Joliet
 And wire him a bus ticket

His sister wanted no part of it
 He agreed to pay her back 50 dollars
 For the 18 dollar bus ticket

His sister told him that he was in deep shit
 With everybody
 The rehab people were calling up looking for him
 His stepfather didn't want him back at the house
 Nobody wanted anything to do with him

He rode the Continental Trailways
 Back down to Illinois knowing
 That being stuck up in Milwaukee
 Out in the cold at night shivering
 Damp dirty clothed scraggly
 With no money food or a place to stay
 Walking around with broken glasses
 Was a lot better than
 Going back home

He came back from his week in Milwaukee
 Nobody got around to asking where he was at
 Nobody cared

He got himself reinstated at the rehab program
 With doubletalk sincerity and bullshit promises
 Caught the mental health bus each morning
 Went back to his little job
 Repairing wooden soda pop bottle crates

The people at rehab made him go to see a shrink
 He got more scripts for downers with muscle relaxers
 Screwed himself up
 Pouring alcohol on top of the pills

None of his old friends would return his calls
 He started hanging around at the parks
 Walking in unwelcome
 On teenage highschool kid parties
 Hijack muscle helping himself
 Claiming seniority elder entitlement

To their reefer and beers

He fought continually with his parents
About not sleeping
Drinking too much
Acting like a fucking weirdo

He came home one afternoon after rehab
Got stoned
Set the stereo speakers out in the driveway
Put on Inna-Gadda-Da-Vida
As loud as it would crank
Did a mexican rain dance in his socks
In full display defiance of the onlooking neighbors

He knew like everybody else
That it was a short matter of time
Before he would be back locked up
Inside of the nut house

He made friends with a guy at rehab
A kid like himself
From Lockport Illinois

Neither of them talked about their pasts
They were both filled with the same fuck up's
Shame guilted rage
About being locked up in hospitals
Labeled as nuts

The guy had done all of the same shit that he had
Alcohol and drug abuse
Revoked drivers license
Minor run-ins with the cops
Pegged for a smalltown troublemaker

A kid from a poor working mother hillbilly family
With a couple of older brothers
Put down in prison

A guy that was still trying to do right
While everything he did
Was turning out wrong

His parents wanted him out
Of the homelife they were trying to build
Two years into their marriage
He was causing too much of a strain

He was talking to the people at rehab
About getting help from the Joliet Mental Health Center

Finding a place to live

He was told he could take college classes
On the Mental Health Department
As part of his vocational rehabilitation

He signed up for a poetry class
At the junior college in Joliet

The people at rehab told him
A poetry class
Didn't fit into their definition
Of vocational rehabilitation

He made plans with his friend from rehab
He was going to go down to Galesburg Illinois
With the guy on the Memorial Day Weekend

The guy had family living in Galesburg
The guy's mother would drive them down

They were going to spend the three day holiday weekend
On a rolling drunken spree
They would leave right from rehab on friday afternoon
Cash their paychecks
Then hit the road

They would be in Galesburg
Just in time for friday night
Paycheck flush stomping
Ready to hit the bars

They would spend the weekend getting loaded
Eating fried chicken dinners
Cook hamburgers out in the backyard on the grill

He looked forward to the trip for weeks
He would have a ride down there
He would have a place to stay
He would have somebody to hang out with
He would have a ride back

He congratulated himself
The whole plan was perfect
There was nothing there for him to fuck up
Nothing could go wrong

The night before his Memorial Day weekend in Galesburg
He went out to a Joliet bar with his cousin
His cousin was with his girlfriend's older sister

He met up with a guy in the bar
 That he knew vaguely from highschool
 The guy was married to an old girlfriend of his

He had been hanging around with the guy's wife
 When she was carrying the guy's kid
 The guy told him that he had caused all kinds of problems
 Almost wrecked their family before it got started

The guy kept talking about selling shitloads of acid
 He felt something inside of his consciousness slip loose
 The outer layers of his awareness began to dissolve
 He felt himself being thrown into a trip

He thought the guy had dropped acid into his beer can
 Maybe all the talk about acid was setting him off

He felt stranger as the night wore on
 He felt good

Whatever was happening
 He wasn't going to complain about it

He always had a secret thing for his girlfriend's older sister
 He had watched her with other guys for months
 Now she was running around with his cousin

He decided that night in the bar
 To take a crack at her
 Put his hidden feelings on the line
 Ask her how about it

While his cousin was shooting pool
 He told her that the only reason he had
 For going out with her sister
 Was that it gave him a chance
 To be around her

His girlfriend's sister looked at him with disgust
 A look with horror on her face
 She saw him for the lowdown louse that he was
 A double crossing dirty snake sneak rat

He was the kind of scumbag
 That would go behind his girlfriend's back
 With the girlfriend of his cousin

He rode home from the bar with his cousin
 And his cousin's girlfriend
 He had a couple of hours before rehab in the morning
 Then the weekend trip down to Galesburg

Drunk loud obnoxious
Not sure if he was on acid
The guy that ran the bar told his cousin
To get him the hell out of there

He had been asking his cousin the whole night
To fire up some dope
His cousin kept putting him off
The way his friends would put him off
When they decided that he was too unpredictable
To be trusted with getting stoned

This always pissed him off
He didn't expect this from his cousin
His aggravation increased on the ride home

He was tired of people
Holding him back
Cutting him off
Keeping him down

He was yelling in the van at his cousin
He went off into a delusional's rant
About how he was going to be an important man
He was going to be famous
He was going to be on television
He wasn't going to be treated like shit forever

His cousin screamed at him to shut the fuck up
His cousin's girlfriend looked at him with wild uncontrolled fear
Like he was a roaming nighttime countryside serial killer

He grabbed hold of the steering wheel
His cousin said that was it
His cousin stopped the van in the middle of the road
A few blocks from his parent's house

All of his cousin's frustrated under the lid anger
Months and years spent simmering
About having been forced to put with
A crazy assed idiot insane bastard
Had all at once boiled over
Came spilling out of the van
Tumbling into the street

His cousin was swinging wildly thrown punches at him
Half connect roundhouse flailing
Cowboy boot kick stabbing

He went into the arm flying melee
Bearhug football sack tackled his cousin
Pinned his cousin down in the street

Sat on top of his cousin's chest
 Like when they were kids
 Shook his cousin by the ripped lapel collar
 Told his cousin to calm down

His head popped with flash of bright light
 He turned around to see his cousin's girlfriend
 Winding up with a motorcycle helmet
 Getting ready to hit him over the head again

He backed off his cousin's girlfriend
 His cousin kicked in the van headlights
 With a tearful sob choked vent of crying anger

The midnight shift town cop drove up on them
 He picked up his cousin's glasses out of the street
 There were half full beer cans
 Broken sparkling shards of headlight parts
 Sprinkled all over the road
 His cousin's girlfriend standing there
 Holding a motorcycle helmet
 Threatening to smash him on top of the head again

He started telling the cop
 A made up on the spot story
 About how a carload of teenage punks from another town
 Had driven up alongside of them
 Pelted them with beer cans
 Shot roadside spinout tire peel gravel
 Knocked out the headlights of the van
 Then sped off down the road

The cop knew it was bullshit
 The cop knew nothing could be proved
 Either way

The cop knew who he was
 The cop told his cousin
 To get him home

He spent the rest of night awake in his bed
 Talking outloud to himself

He left for Galesburg
 On a friday afternoon
 With his friend from rehab

His friend's mother was driving them down there
 In an old rusty limegreen lumbering Cadillac bomb

They cashed their rehab paychecks checks at a tavern
 Right off of the top

Each bought a carton of Marlboro cigarettes
 Along with 6 sweaty bottles of beer for the ride

They smoked the only dope that they had
 In the tavern parking lot
 While his friend's mother waited in the car

Then the three of them headed southwest
 To downstate Illinois

He was still halfway crocked awake out of it
 From the night before
 With three days of nonstop drinking
 Waiting ahead

He rode to Galesburg in the back seat
 The hot wide open window rush
 Tunnel of roaring highway air
 Drowned out the sounds of the Cadillac radio
 Made talking below the level of a shout
 Inaudible

The two and a half hour ride made him tired
 Drifted him off into a complacent repose

He could feel the knot
 On the top of his head throbbing
 From the night before
 Where his cousin's girlfriend clobbered him
 With a motorcycle helmet

He sat plastered
 In the middle of the back seat
 Not wanting to move
 A bladder full of warm beer piss
 The only thing keeping him awake

This was the first time he had hung out
 With his friend from rehab

They both thought that all of the other people
 Working in the rehab pop crate repair factory
 Were loud mouth bullshit story telling liars

They both laughed at the stories they heard told
 Agreed that all of the big time party talker braggarts
 Were no account lightweight crybaby punks
 Two beer pass out wimps that wouldn't know
 Hemp from oregano

The weekend in Galesburg was a chance to prove

To themselves
 And to each other
 That when they said they liked to get hell raising drunk
 They really meant it

They got into Galesburg in the still light
 Late friday just sprung from work holiday weekend eve afternoon

They stowed their shit at his friend's grandmother's house
 Then headed out on foot into town

They stopped at a neighborhood bar
 He asked the bartender for a salt shaker
 Foamed the flat glass of tap beer with the salt

They drank a couple of beers
 Then headed down the street
 Drank a couple of more beers in another tavern

The rest of the night was spent going
 From bar to bar
 His friend knew where every joint in town was at

His friend was all wound up laughing
 Yelling Boy Howdy
 Like in the beer ads he used to see in Creem magazine

He drank himself into a blind blackout haze
 They started getting kicked out of the places they went into

In one place he lifted the front legs of the pinball table
 In another place he deliberately shot the pool balls off of the table
 In another place they came in with their own beer
 In another place he got into an argument with a bouncer
 In another place he tried shaking people down for dope

By three in the morning they had made their way
 Clear to the other end of Galesburg
 To the college crowd cover charge nightclubs
 Near the highway on and off ramps

They cut back across town through the Galesburg fields
 Clomping over waist high weeds and mud
 Singing the words to Doors songs

The saturday morning sun was just starting
 When they got back to his friend's grandmother's
 They fried up pans of eggs and bacon
 Sopped up the whole mess with a half loaf of toasted bread

His friend went to crash out
 He took a shower

Then headed out to see Galesburg

He found an early saturday morning Galesburg bar
 A neighborhood tavern place
 Noisy half full before nine o'clock
 With farmer old timer boy shit kicker locals
 Wearing oshkosh bib denim overalls and tractor caps

He stood at the bar drinking beers
 Trying to mind his own business
 He started getting paranoid
 He listened closely to the conversation in the bar
 Everybody in the place was looking at him
 Talking about him like he wasn't there

Bunch of stupid backward ass ignorant fuckheads
 Probably never seen a stranger before

He listened to the talk rising all around him
 Heard something said about kicking some ass

He flipped his cigarette lighter into the air
 Cracked his knuckles
 Caught the lighter
 Lit a cigarette
 Pounded his fist down onto the bar
 Straight off guzzled a full glass of beer
 Slammed the glass on the bar
 Let loose with beer gut belch
 Pounded the bar
 Cracked his knuckles
 Threw back his cocked elbow
 Ripped his wallet out from the back of his pants
 Slammed his wallet down on the bar
 Pounded his wallet with his fist
 Tore out a dollar from his wallet
 Slapped the dollar down on the bar
 Then asked the bartender for another beer

In the 10 seconds it took to run through
 The choreograph planned in advance routine
 He heard the bar erupting with old boy yells and shouts
 Big mouths whooping let's go that's it

Afterwards he stood calm
 Like nothing had happened
 Went back to his cigarette
 The whole place busted out laughing

If he had to stand there being watched
 Then he was going to put on a show

His cousin's grandparents lived in Galesburg
He remembered taking a sunday car trip
Down to Galesburg
With his cousin's family
When he was a kid

He remembered his cousin's grandmother
Playing songs on the piano
With shaky hands

He looked up the address in the phone book
Got directions from a guy in a gas station
Walked over to their house

He had seen them when he was a kid
Now he was going to be visiting as a man
He thought maybe he could wheedle his way in
Be honored like a from far away traveled guest
Get some booze food or cigarettes

He knocked on the door
Waited ten minutes for his cousin's grandfather to answer
A tall man stooped with infirmities
Chest and waist all run together at the belt line

His cousin's grandfather stood outside against
The closed front door
While he explained who he was

He had all of the names right
The old man finally acknowledged him
He was the nephew of the old man's daughter-in-law

His cousin's grandfather peered at him
Through age broken gray squinting eyes
Told him to leave
There was nothing for him there

He was wild eyed fast talking drunk on saturday morning
There was no way that old man was going to let him
Get into the house

He spent the saturday afternoon in Galesburg
Trying to retrace the bar hopping route
He had taken with his friend the night before

The money from his rehab paycheck was gone
He was walking all over everywhere
Looking for whatever would turn up

He saw a sign for a band playing at a college that night

He made his way back to the place he was staying

He was barely able to remember
How to get back to the house
Not sure if it was the right place
Once he was there

He arrived back at the house
Where he was staying with his rehab friend
After having been gone the whole day

He was toting a soggy beer case box
Found in a nighttime alley behind a Galesburg bar
Full of lottery tickets from the state of Michigan

He thought the cardboard box of dead tickets
Mixed in with airline flight receipt stubs
And ketchup mustard wiped fast food wrappers
Was some kind of detroit syndicate gambino connected shit
He had to ditch the incriminating evidence
Save the boss and the rest of the crew
Before the cops got ahold of it

He sat on the floor in enthralled fascination
Pawing through the worthless paper garbage contents of the box
Making noises talking to himself
While his friend watched him

His friend was worried
His friend didn't know what to do
It was obvious that there was something
Definitely wrong with him
Bringing him down there had been a bad mistake

He told his friend about the band at the college
His friend didn't want to go

His friend wanted to stay in the house
Knock off a case of beer
In front of the television set
Relax
Kick back
Take it easy

He was just getting going on a roll
He was made to move
There was no deadass sitting around for him

He borrowed a couple bucks off his friend
Then went off out into the night alone

He went to the Galesburg college to hear the band
 He was one of a dozen people
 In the open floored area
 When the band kicked in Led Zeppelin's Rock and Roll

The band was professional tight
 Playing note perfect covers
 Three older longhaired guys with mustaches
 On drums guitar and bass

He thought they were rock stars
 From different bands
 Getting together for a lay low secret practice gig
 Under an assumed name

He thought the whole thing was some kind of set up
 It had to be something more than just
 A small town bar band playing over practiced copies
 In an empty Galesburg college lunchroom cafeteria

He stood off to the side of the stage area
 Air drum box pounding out the beat with his fists
 In the corner of the drummer's eye

A guy that claimed to be the manager of the band
 Told him there was going to be a party after the show

He swarmed with a deludes megalomaniacal grandiosement
 He was convinced that it was his band for the taking
 He could sing everything they were playing
 Do a better job than the skinny guy with the Journey pipes

He stared at the empty microphone stand
 It was waiting there for him
 All he had to do was walk on the stage

He went outside during the band's between set break
 All of the Galesburg college kids were hanging out

In the overinflated air of self excitement
 He tried grabbing a joint that was being passed around
 A guy spear arm lunged at him
 With a snapped open switch button knife

He went into a homemade Bruce Lee
 Slow deliberate foot karate shuffle stance
 The guy with the knife thought
 He was too crazy looking
 To take a chance finding out if he was bluffing

A security guard cop from the school
 With a badged uniform and a flashlight
 Told him to clear out of there
 Chased him completely off of the school property
 Wouldn't let him back in

He hung out by the side of the road
 Leading away from the school
 When the cars drove out at the end of the show
 He tried flagging people down
 Asked where the party was going to be at

The people in the cars laughed at him
 Through halfway rolled windows
 Then drove away

He wandered into a Galesburg campground
 Spent the rest of the dark hours of the night
 In the cement block walled campground shower facility

He left the campground when the sun came up
 Walked along the bank of a thin rocky creek
 Keeping quiet out of sight listening
 To the stirring campout families

He found some fishing line with a hook
 Gordian knot twisted wrapped broken left
 Strangled around the bushes

He unwound the fish line maze
 Pulled a fish out of the water with the hook
 Bashed its head on a rock
 Ripped it open then tried eating it raw
 Chewing the fish guts into a fatty pulp
 That he finally had to spit out

He walked through the sunday morning church traffic
 Back towards the house where his friend was at

He tried bumming a cigarette off a kid working a gas station
 The kid was scared on the phone to the cops
 A Galesburg cop barreled in told him not to move
 The cop ran his name through the Illinois state computer
 There was a year and half old warrant out for his arrest
 For the drunk driving ticket he never bothered to pay

He was gun drawn handcuffed side of the face pressed flat
 On the hood of the squad car
 Then taken to jail

He was dumped off at the Knox County Jail in Galesburg

Where he was to be held
Until he was escorted back to Joliet

He was thrown into a cell area
With six other jumpsuited guys
Playing cards around a picnic bench table

He came into the cell area running his mouth
The other guys wouldn't let him in the card game
He wasn't impressed with any of them
Told them they were chicken ass backward dumb fucks

The biggest guy kept threatening
To kick the hell out of him

He thought the guy was a robot
He could bust open the guys head and come up
With a hand full of socket fuse wiring

A baseball game was playing
On the television set in the cell

A see saw back and forth Memorial Day weekend
Homerun flying high scoring extra inning slugfest
Between the Chicago Cubs and the Pittsburgh Pirates

A guy from the Cubs tied the game
With a three run homer
Right after he said
That the next pitch was going out

The baseball game didn't seem like it was real
It was an inanimate malleable lump of putty
Subject to the dictate of his will

He started to imagine guys in jails
All over the country
Sitting around watching sporting events
With the single minded going nowhere intensity purpose
Of a person focusing in on one thing

He was convinced that the guys in the cells
Free of outside everyday distractions
Were able to will into the action
Direct bend influence call the shots
Run the shows

The teams that won were the results
Of the strongest brute collective mind force

Nothing could withstand the thought power
Of a man locked up in a prison

He was put into his own cell to sleep
 The guard unlocked the door
 After he was placed inside
 Then yelled at the other prisoners to get him

The six of them came storming into the cell on him
 Running in their bare feet
 Kicking and punching

He flattened himself out on the floor
 Nothing solid was landing or connecting
 They all ran out as fast as they ran in

He spent the next hour
 Yelling through the cell door
 At the other inmates and the guard that let them in

Six on one
 They were a bunch of yellow bellied pussies
 Ran in on him like goddamned rats
 Punched like little girls
 Couple of them couldn't even make a fist
 He called the guard a big fatassed stovebellied sap

He warned them all to never leave Galesburg
 None of them would last a day
 Somebody was going to rip a bloody hole in their asses
 With a rusty crowbarred tire iron

He crashed out in the jail cell
 With a matted brown wool blanket pulled over his head

He woke up at lunch the next day
 To a tray with a round ball shaped lump of canned corn beef hash

He always had thought that canned corned beef hash
 Looked and smelled just like dog food
 Probably made from the same ingredients

He smeared the potato dice textured corned beef hash
 All over the walls of the cell
 Took the rest of the food on the tray
 Wiped it all over the walls
 Then crawled back under the blanket for more sleep

He heard the tray attendant yelling and swearing in his cell
 He was told to clean the mess up

He told the guy to fuck off
 He was waiting for his ride back to Joliet

He sat through Memorial Day
Then most of the day after
In the Galesburg jail

The jailers quit giving him a food tray
Told him that was his punishment
For smearing food all over the walls

He was freezing cold in the cell
He asked for extra blankets
He shook shivered slept on the cot
Under a pile of woolen blankets

He looked out of the cell once
To see his friend's mother out in the hallway
Looking in on him
Being told by the cops
That he was going back to Joliet the hard way

Seeing his friend's mother looking in at him
Made him realize
What a helplessly crazy bastard he was

He was transported up to Joliet
Handcuffed in the back seat of a squad car

He listened to the two sheriff's deputies
That came down to pick him up
Bitching all the way back to Joliet

They told him he was going to pay
For them having to spend six hours
Driving back and forth to Galesburg

He was going to pay their salary time
He was going to pay for the gasoline
He was going to pay for vehicle wear and tear
They were even going to bill him
For the mess that had to be cleaned
In the Galesburg jail after he left

He came into the Will County jail in Joliet
Yelling that he wasn't paying anything

He told them if anybody was going to pay
It was going to be them
For hounding him down and hassling him

They already wrecked his life
They took his drivers license

They sent him to the nuthouse
 Now they had him back
 For more

The Joliet lockup was ready for him
 Two tears earlier he had flooded a toilet
 And torn up his jail clothes
 The year before he had smuggled dope into the jail
 Then smoked it right in front of them in the cell

He was body cavity strip searched
 The guards were checking inside his mouth
 Behind his ears
 In his armpits
 Under the hair on the back of his neck
 On the bottom of his feet

He started mumbling about wanting to kill
 An Illinois state trooper named Bolerjack
 That had started the whole mess two a half years earlier
 By bringing him in for drunk driving

The cops started talking about filing
 A death threat against him
 Made off like they were processing the paperwork for it

He told them they were full of shit
 He'd say they were goddamned liars
 Made the whole thing up
 He would scream forever with denial
 They weren't going to pin a rap on him

He remembered a night when he was all fucked up
 The cops ran off a couple rolls of film
 After the official mug shots
 Egging him on with hoot howl laughter
 Letting him make all kinds of faces
 While giving the finger to the camera

He never knew if the Will County jail cops were serious
 Or if they were just messing with him

He was taken in to see a judge
 In the Will County courthouse

He told the judge that since the court
 Sent him to the nuthouse
 Then revoked his driver's license
 He was having a hard time finding work

He was in and out of the hospital

Locked up for months at a time
 He was enrolled in a vocational rehabilitation program
 Where he was on final warning probably kicked out
 Because he had been sitting in jail

He was probably kicked out of his parent's house
 He had nowhere to live
 Didn't know where he was going to go
 Had 12 cents in his pocket
 Didn't know where the next meal was

The judge listened to his story
 Told him he had 30 days to make a payment
 On the \$425 he still owed
 Then the judge wanted to see him back in court
 At the end of the 30 days

He knew what would happen in 30 days
 He would be nowhere near Joliet or the courthouse
 Another warrant would go out for his arrest

He looked at the unpaid fine as an ace in the hole
 It was a guaranteed free ride in the future
 Back to Joliet

He walked out of the Joliet Will County courthouse
 Started heading towards the outside edge of town
 To the junior college for the second session
 Of the night poetry class
 He had signed up for

The walk to the junior college took all afternoon
 He got there early waited around
 Panhandled cigarettes
 Off of the clean scrubbed home fed college kids

He went in to see the teacher
 Told the teacher and one of the women students
 He had missed the first class
 Because he was sitting in jail

He recounted the whole Memorial Day weekend mishap
 The teacher and the woman student exchanged
 Eye roll doubtful suspicious laughing unbelieving looks
 The teacher said that it sounded like a fish story

The teacher wanted to know
 When he was going to pay the class fees

He told the teacher that he had to get the money
 From the mental health department of Joliet

The night poetry class
 Filled up around him
 Older adults
 After work after dinner
 Making time for a passing phase hobby interest

The teacher asked somebody to read a poem
 He got up without being asked
 Recited the words to the Doors song
 People Are Strange

The teacher told him that wasn't a poem
 He didn't know
 What the teacher was talking about

He spent the rest of the class battling
 A runny nose that poured snot
 Into the sleeves of his shirt

The teacher started talking to the class
 In an evenly monotonous calm hypnotically lilting voice
 About having a runny nose head cold
 Exploring the moist balled up greenyellow textures
 Of mucus soaked kleenex

He bent himself with twisting paranoia
 The whole class was a setup
 Everybody in the room was an ex-mental patient
 The teacher was probably
 An insanity fried psychotic fringe lunatic

He was convinced
 The teacher was trying to fuck with his mind

He left the junior college
 In a knocked over paranoiacs
 Fire fed warped imaginative confusion
 Spent the night walking
 Towards downtown Joliet

He sat for hours crouched in the dark
 Across the street from an all night Denny's
 Looking through the bright lit diner windows
 Watching the life move in and out
 Thinking about Edward Hopper's Nighthawks
 People drinking coffee at a counter
 Imagining the ceramic clank of the white coffee cups
 Being set carelessly down on their saucers

He walked by a record store with an advertisement
 For the new Van Halen Fair Warning album

Spent a halfhour in the predawn sunup gray
 Straining fast food paper bags
 Empty cigarette packages
 And other found garbage
 Through a muddy parking lot puddle
 Torpedo hurling the strewn watery glop
 At the Van Halen dutchboy cartoon sign

He laughed outloud at the mess he made of the sign
 He thought that David Lee Roth would have been proud

He was in the half dead downtown Joliet
 For the slow economy half scurry
 Of the recessed Joliet work morning rush hour

He watched the middle of the morning
 Errand busy purse clutching old ladies
 Move spiderlike through the crosswalks

He went into one of the Joliet downtown government buildings
 He saw inlaid in the doorway opening dirty white floor tile
 A design in darker tile
 Shaped into a backward facing swastika

He thought that the sign in the tile was a hidden message
 A sleep deprived insanity drunk hallucination

He was the only one that could see it
 Joliet was a secret international hotbed harbor
 The backward time dying days holdout
 For the fascist corrupt Hitlerian anti-semite malaise

He found his way
 To the Joliet mental health services offices

He went in there to ask them for some help
 He was dirty tired snot soiled out all night cold and hungry
 The people in the office were ignoring him
 His jaw melt stiffen slacked
 Into a confused mumbling stammer
 He thought they were laughing at him

He forward marched up a flight of stairs to a bathroom
 Closed the door behind him
 Took a deep long breath in the closet sized room
 Listened to the snickering half stifled
 Giggles of the office workers

He started yelling as loud as he could
 His voice a rusty basso profundo boom of echoing noise
 He told them to get up off of their asses

He wanted a fucking place to live and something to eat

He ran through all of his problems
Listed all of the bullshit he had been through
He felt the thin walls of the bathroom
Vibrate with his vocalizing

He finally asked them what they were hearing
He told them that they were hearing voices
If they even mentioned that he had been up in the bathroom
Shouting threats through the floor at them
He would swear that they were lying
They were out of their goddamned minds fucking crazy
They taught him the game
Now he was back to shove it down their throats

He walked calmly out of the bathroom into stilled silence
Nobody in the office looked up at him
He told them he was in the vocational rehabilitation program
He was there to collect on their promise
Of food and housing

Arrangements were quickly made for him
To spend the night in a nearby hotel room
He was given a twentyfive dollar cash grocery voucher
He was told to come back there the next day

He figured what the next day would be about
Gun belt cops and mental health bouncers
Waiting there with restraint straps
Hypodermic downer sedate syringe shots
Ready to cart him off
To the nearest loony bin

The mental health department put him up in a room
For the night
In a downtown Joliet dirt bag derelict's hotel
An old bird incapacitated wino hangout
A social security check collection seedy dive resort

He bought some fast food hamburger joint fish sandwiches
With part of his twentyfive dollar food voucher money
He picked up six tall cans of cut rate liquor store sale beer
Stashed the paperbag warm beer up in the room

He went out with the rest of the money
Canvassing the downtown mexican neighborhoods
Trying to find some pot

He went right up to the people
Sitting outside the threeflat side street buildings
On the front porch stairs

Told them that he wanted to buy dope

The vatos all acted fisheyed suspicious scared
He knew that they thought he was some kind of cop

Two guys told him to follow them
He was led into an alleyway entrance
He grabbed for an empty bottle
Smashed it on the ground and came up swiping arcs
With the jagged jutting wild glass broken neck
When he realized he was being walked
Into a two-bit punk knock over the head robbery

He went back to the hotel room
To drink his beers
Figure out what he was going to do next

He paced the floors of the hotel room
Half drunk talking outloud to himself
He was convinced that the room was bugged for sound
Maybe even hidden cameras

He went into a one way dialogue diatribe
Directed toward specific members of the mental health department
Told them all by name to fuck off
Steady level breath ranting
They weren't getting ahold of him again

He looked out the window of the room
He saw hotel denizen flop residents
Sitting crosslegged on the concreted stoops
Drinking out of paperbags
In the abandoned rundown desertion of downtown Joliet
Street lamp lit dim shadowed middle of the night

He recognized one of the guys from rehab
An old AA alky that came in for outpatient therapy
He thought that the guy was a spy
Sent there to keep an eye on him
Until they were able to lock him up properly

He went down to the street
In front of the hotel
Right out in the open to be seen by all
To be seen by all

He spent the rest of the night
Foot stomp squashing quarter sized black beetle bugs
That were crawling like cockroaches
All over the sidewalk

He left the hotel neighborhood when it got light
 Got on the commuter train that went from Joliet
 To downtown Chicago

He made stops at all of his old downtown Chicago
 Cold weather warmup hangouts
 The Greyhound bus station
 The public library
 The WLS radio station Stone Container building
 The empty restaurant on the second floor of the Marriott Hotel

It was warm outside
 There was no reason to be cooped up inside

He found his way into the all night Rush Street area
 Hung around with the outdoors squatters and YMCA room residents
 Trying to scam off the nightclub partiers

He ran around nonstop for three days
 Talked five dollars out of a guy at the train station
 Rode a saturday afternoon train back to Joliet
 Walked into a field near the Joliet train yards
 Hid out from the rain
 In an abandoned concrete oval of underground water piping

He sat for a couple hours
 In the dry of the crumbling concrete tunnel
 Thinking that maybe he could spend
 The next six months living
 Like an escaped loner from society
 Hermit in the field

He felt himself getting tired
 Lapsing into a wornout drowsiness sleep lack depression
 The sitting around thinking was bringing him down
 The rain had stopped
 A bright hot dull sunshine summer sticky glare
 Settled like an oozing poison over the field

He had to get out of there
 He had to keep moving

He hitchhiked walked the 15 miles from Joliet
 Back to his parent's house
 His stepfather was all over him
 As soon as he walked in the house

His stepfather told him to get out
 All he wanted to do was change his clothes
 Get something warmer to wear
 For the still cool early May damp outside nights

His stepfather threatened him with violence
 Stood over him in knuckle down fist clench
 Hot breath down the back of his neck
 He left the house

He was deep down secretly in fear of his stepfather

His stepfather
 With the armada sized weapon ammunition arsenal
 Up in the crawl space attic over the family room
 Grenades
 Smoke bombs
 Smoke bomb launchers
 14 hunting rifles
 A pistol and handgun collection
 Cases of shotgun shells
 Korean war bayonet machete blade souvenirs

His stepfather
 With the yellowed newspaper scrapbook clippings
 For the first prize award
 In the 1964 Orland Park Illinois
 Police target shoot out competition

His stepfather to him
 Was a more dangerous nut than he ever could be

His stepfather was a respected
 Community pillar member of society

All he wanted to do was sing and draw pictures
 He couldn't understand
 He was the one that had to be locked up

He spent the next week
 In the park near his parent's house
 Staying drunk and stoned
 On the reefer and beers
 Of the people that went to hang in the park

He made foray raids into his parent's house
 When his parents weren't there
 Changing his clothes
 Washing his hair in the sink
 Guzzling glasses filled with raw eggs

While his sister and stepbrother yelled at him
 To get the fuck out

He slept on the floor

Of the wooden outhouse shack at the park
 Tying the shithouse door shut at night from the inside
 With the leather strap of his belt

The people in the park quickly got tired of him
 Started avoiding the park
 Just to avoid him

The town cops started coming around
 Hassling trying to run him off

He decided it was time to get the hell out of there
 Once and finally for all
 For good
 He carved square blocked letters with his belt prong
 Into the top of a park picnic table
 ACID WILL FRY YOUR FUCKING MIND AND MAKE YOU PSYCHOTIC

He signed his name under the message
 He knew that he was going away
 For a long time

If he was going to be remembered for anything
 He wanted it to be this

He went one more time
 Back to his parent's house

He stole enough money from his sister's purse
 And his stepbrother's bedroom dresser
 For train fare to downtown Chicago

He was running desperate
 Pushing through the sleepless awake
 Tired hungry nerve collapsed exhaustion
 Mainlining the adrenal gland
 118 pounds of rubberband wound tight flesh
 Pulled over bone
 Shot through with mental electricity

Something big was about to happen
 He could feel it
 It was waiting for him
 He was ready for it

He saw a cardboard advertisement sign
 Taped to a downtown Chicago lightpole
 Looking for people to be extras
 In a punk rock movie

He rattled newspaper and payphone coin return slots

Until he found phone call money

The woman from the punk rock movie phone number
 Took down his name
 Gave him the address of a nightclub
 Told him to show up the next day at noon

He had 24 hours to travel
 The couple miles from Chicago downtown
 Up to the movie shoot nightclub
 He could take his time relax
 Gather his wits
 Focus his strength

This was his big chance
 Opportunity out
 He wasn't going to fuck up this time

He spent the night before the punk rock movie
 Walking around the Chicago Gold Coast Rush Street area
 Keeping quiet staying to himself

He looked up at the lights in the windows
 Of the highrise apartment towers
 Incomprehensible with awe
 Vertical stacks of lives
 Worlds stretching up into the black darkness
 He tried to imagine
 What it would be like to live
 In one of those buildings

He washed up bar of soap shampooed his hair
 In the washroom sink of an all night outdoor cafe

Went over to the concreted beachfront along Lake Michigan
 To watch the sun rise a bright warm redorange ball
 Over the far Michigan side of the lake

He met up with an older black guy that was living outside
 Told the guy about the punk rock movie

The two of them spent the morning
 Working their way slowly through Lincoln Park
 The guy panhandled money off of good looking women along the way
 He stood out of earshot on the side
 Watching the guy work a well practiced hustle

The guy gave him some dollar bills
 When they got up to the movie shoot nightclub
 He wanted the guy to go in with him

The guy didn't want to be
 In a punk rock movie

He went into the movie shoot nightclub
 Checked in with a woman sitting behind a table

He didn't think that he was in a nightclub
 He thought he was supposed to be on a movie set

He went into the women's bathroom
 Not noticing the sign on the door
 Not paying attention to the startled women
 Putting on makeup around the mirror

He started complaining when he was told
 That he would have to pay for his alcohol

He was out of money
 After two bottles of dark imported german beer

He walked around the bar wondering outloud
 What kind of bullshit fake movie shoot it was

He waited around with the other movie extras
 Nobody looked like a punk rocker to him

They were mostly out of highschool new wave
 Skinny tie acting class dressup geeks

There was a girl
 In raccoon thick dark eyeliner
 Wearing a blue denim mini skirt
 Over ripped run black nylon fishnet stockings
 Laying on her side on top of a pool table
 Her friend was lifting up her leg
 Both of them freeze frame posing
 With fake struck dumb looks
 While a guy was taking pictures

He laughed outloud to himself
 He knew that those girls were punk rock

He was crowded with the rest of the movie extras
 Into the nightclub area of the bar
 Seated at tables around a stage
 While a punk rock band pounded out the same song
 Over and over
 A song was about Maynard G. Krebs

Each time the arm crossed singer sang the tagline chorus

It sounded to him like
 The guy was singing something about
 Making cheap friends

The extras were told to pogo bop up and down
 He didn't have time for punk cornball nonsense
 He wanted to stand out from the background
 Get himself noticed
 Get discovered

He careened around the tables moving slant sideways
 Grabbing drinks and bottles off of the tables
 Gulping down other peoples booze
 Then smashing the glass on the floor

He lost all of his patience
 When a scene was shot
 With what he figured to be the movies main characters
 At a table near the brass rail cordoned off stage
 A big dork with a drama school fag ivy league college accent
 Whining bitchy dialogue to the actress playing his girlfriend

It wasn't a punk rock movie
 It was a movie with a scene in a punk rock club

A guy gave him a Quaalude told him to calm down
 He ground the white pill into powder with his teeth

He saw the bleach blonde pompadoured band bass player
 Head shot posing in the bathroom mirror
 He laughed calling the bass player a big poof
 The bass player said something to a bouncer
 He was walked out of the club onto the sidewalk
 Told that he wasn't allowed back inside

He told them that they were all full of shit
 Bunch of fucking fake punk rock pretender wimps
 He mumbled outloud to himself about what a bullshit movie
 The Quaalude he had taken was starting to kick in
 He started looking around for a place to crash

He woke up on a wooden bench
 In a small park near the movie shoot night club
 In a neighborhood he didn't recognize

A middle aged guy was there when he woke up
 Started bothering him
 Following him around
 Calling him John

He told the guy to get away from him
 Warned the guy that he was a violently deranged psycho maniac

That was just about ready to explode

He headed over to Lake Michigan
Carved out a bed in the beach sand

Before he could get settled in
He was thrown in the back of paddy wagon
By the cops doing night patrol on the beach

He rode in the back of the paddy wagon
While the cops drove up and down the lakefront
Shining a spotlight on the sand
Looking for trespassers

Three white loudmouthed drunk Bridgeport college kids
Were loaded into the van by the cops
He told them that if they didn't shut the fuck up
He was going to stomp the living piss out of them

He spent the last couple hours of the night
In a cell by himself at the county jail
Stretched out on a wooden bench

Fortified by a baloney on white mayonaissed sandwich
It felt good to have a real roof over his head

He pleaded guilty in the morning
To a bullshit disorderly conduct charge
Left the Cook County Courthouse
Then fast talk persistent persuaded a CTA fare collector
Into letting him get on the el without paying

He spent the day walking aimlessly around the downtown
Late June sunny monday summer morning

It was too crowded
Too hot
The streets and sidewalks were clogged
With goofy smile people and horn honking car exhaust
The off gray shadowy damp hue in the concrete was gone
Everything was bleached with a blinding brightness
In the eye pounding relentless light of the sun

There was nowhere to hide
Nowhere to be alone

Something had to happen fast
He knew that he was running out of time

He went up North Michigan Avenue to the Watertower
Hung around the small square sidewalk plaza

Acting the fool
 Talking outloud
 Asking people for cigarettes

He found a magazine in a trashcan
 A thin issue poetry magazine called Nit & Wit
 With a picture of John Lennon on the cover

He carefully tucked the folded magazine inside of his shirt
 He thought that the magazine was a sign
 A secret hidden message
 Instructing him to hold out
 Not give up
 Something big was still going to happen

He headed back to the downtown when it got dark
 Spent the night across the street
 From the Greyhound bus station
 In the Civic Center Plaza

He crawled into the back opening of the Picasso sculpture
 Out of sight from the bum rousting plaza night guard
 He tried carving his initials
 With a flattened aluminum can
 Into the rusty brown iron inside of Picasso's woman

He lay in the cobwebbed back of the sculpture
 Behind the sloped inclining breast
 Remembering that he had read somewhere
 That the day the statue was dedicated in 1969
 It was the same date as his birthday

He thought about picture postcards he had seen
 From 1960's Chicago Illinois
 Where the sky is an unearthly even blue
 The hustle bustle combination of old buildings and new skyscrapers
 The time frozen shot of moving cars captured in traffic
 When his aunts and uncles were young
 When his grandfather was still alive

A summer day in 1969
 Picture perfect

He hung around the Civic Center the next day
 Rooted around the garbage cans at lunchtime
 For the halfeaten leftover food scraps
 Thrown away by the business attire office workers

He watched the afternoon commuter rush hour scramble
 He knew that somewhere in there his mother
 Was one of the tens of thousands

Getting on the trains
 That would take them back home

He started walking west out of downtown
 Straight down Taylor Street
 To the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute

To the nuthouse where the Chicago cops had dumped him
 The year before

He knew there was a meal and bed
 Just waiting for him there

He made the walk down Taylor Street
 Right through the heart of the Little Italy

Along the way the doorsteps leading into the homes
 Right flush up against the sidewalk
 He could hear the pot and pan racket of dinner being made
 The ringing of telephones

The young dagos with their girlfriends
 Laughing at him
 Challenging him
 Mocking him
 Sensing something familiar about him
 As he moved steadily thru their turf

He felt like he had been there before
 In another time

He remembered hearing that his great grandparents
 Had lived in a house on Taylor Street
 He remembered being in his great grandfather's store
 Maybe it was the same place on Taylor Street

He talked to an admitting doctor
 At the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute

He came across to the doctor
 Like a guy that needed
 A place to stay and something to eat

The doctor told him that he wasn't crazy
 The doctor told him that he was just a bum
 They weren't running a flophouse
 They couldn't let him into the hospital

The doctor said that times were tough
 The hospital was going broke

He was given a bus token and a dime
Then told to leave

He spent another day walking around downtown Chicago
He chewed down the graygreen pink grizzled remains
Of a tinfoil wrapped hunk of moldering corned beef
He found in the bottom of a sidewalk garbage can

When the night started to set itself in
He made the walk down Taylor Street
That he had made the night before
Back to the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute

He was determined
They weren't turning him away
He had nowhere else to go
They were going to let him in this time

He wasn't going to fuck this up again
He knew what he had to do
No tough guy bullshit
All he had to do was tell them the truth

He walked in the door
Told the lobby guard that
He was ready to die

He sat down in a chair
Then waited until he was taken
Up to the 8th floor ward

It had been a long year
He was tired
It was time to go back home
