

Masters Dissertation
English (Creative Writing)

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Project title
Shades of Grey & Pieces of Me

University
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
Durban
South Africa

Shades of Grey & Pieces
of Me *A paperback -Film?- written
by Gareth Llewellyn Lloyd Copyright © Gareth Llewellyn Lloyd; 2008*

The Vinyl Tragedy Design Company

A Vinyl Tragedy Design Company production
Building 4 A "City in my mind" Street
Road to Nowhere
Talking Heads; NW
420

This book is a work of life wrenched from the gut & forced up against the mind. Names, places, & incidents are either a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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DESIGNED BY GARETH LLEWELLYN LLOYD

Set in various

Unfortunately, Manufactured in the Republic of South Africa due to insufficient funds & already over-exploited working visa opportunities which has rather complicated the ease with which the author can now facilitate the steps involved in acting on his regular need to escape *this feeling of disconnect*

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This work has been classified by the author as the: **MASTERS DISSERTATION**
-edit-

As the complete body of work required for a: **Master of Arts in English**
(Creative Writing)

(A first edition print; *the live recordings*)

Under the Working title; **Shades of Grey
& Pieces of Me**

Student Name: Gareth Llewellyn Lloyd Student Number: 203504448

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal;
Durban; South Africa

Dedication;

▶ “Stephanie Says” by the Velvet Underground

#

Forward;

**“More than colors and forms, it is sounds & their arrangements that
fashion societies...**

With noise is born disorder & its opposite: the world...

With music is born power and its opposite: subversion...

In noise can be read the codes of life; the relations among men...

Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony;

When it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it invades man's

time, when it becomes sound; noise is the source of purpose and power; of

the dream;

Music”

-Jaques Attali (1989; 6)

The band;

‘All warfare is based on deception’

- Jimmy -

‘To lure an animal into a trap, you need *bait*’

- Jack -

‘The key to pulling off a con, is you to have an
effective hook’


- Eva -

‘The only really deceptive animal I can think of
right now,
is a teddy bear full of needles’

- Lizzy -

"BOOK 1"

'EVA'

 “Revolution” by Nicole Reynolds

*14 days before the May
'68 Riots broke out in
France, an article in a
French newspaper said;
France is bored...*

**Sometimes I feel
like France...**



play “Dirty Old Town” by The Pogues

‘The cobbled streets are polished rust’

‘You dress Bob Dylan’s lyrics in a corporate suit & tie & this is what the buildings sound like’

‘Janis Joplin’s voice in a sequined halter top’

‘Plastic franchise stores skin grafted on the crumbling faces of ancient grey stone walls’

‘Construction Botox’

‘Grey office block trees lining cobbled alleyways’

‘Interlinking stone boulevards shedding leaves of consumer dirt’

‘Dark shadows’

‘This is the kind of architecture you get when showing off your money means more than making it’

‘Buildings as fashion’

‘Fashion as art & Art as personality’

‘I feel an instant *connection* to the place’

‘Through my bus window the buildings look like employment ads printed on Rizla papers’

‘Serve Southern Comfort at an AA meeting’

‘Put a cancer promotion slogan on a cigarette pack’

‘I arrive in the city broke & homeless on a midnight bus & fall in love with a street artist called Eva’

‘Maybe this is how everything goes wrong’

'Maybe not'



pause

“Love Will Tear us Apart” by Joy Division

‘Peel back tab’

‘Refrigerate once opened’

‘I do it once a day’

‘I reach into the cupboard & pull a carton from the shelf’

‘I peel back the tab & after’

‘I refrigerate’

‘The thing I do in between is what keeps me awake’

‘One an hour is what is going to kill me’

‘This is the number of cigarettes I smoke when I am awake’

‘& I am not sure of the number when I am asleep; though I suspect this number is more’

‘Tonight is another night without Eva’

‘Her side of the bed is empty’

‘Her side of the bed is unmade & filled with the absence of her’

‘& when I look at it, it spills onto the floor, overflowing, & fills the room until I am drowning in what is left’

‘My eyes reach up to the where the walls collide’

‘& ceiling’

‘Is this the *one* place she hasn’t touched?’

‘& they gasp for air’

‘I have stopped counting the days the sheets have not moved from how she left them’

‘I sleep on my side of the floor’

‘& Why?’

‘Because what if I wake the memory of her by climbing in next to it?’

‘The doorbell rings & I am in a heap on the ground’

'& is *this* the *last* place she touched?'

'At night, I lie awake & listen to her tip-toe over creaking wood; trying not to wake me while she works out the details of whatever art project is next. & I have listened to her walk over these floorboards a million times; but tonight I am not thinking in terms of a million times. I am thinking *where* was the last time?'

'I press the side of my face against the door & listen to the sound of feet disappearing through the wood'

'I use'

'Wash'

'& re-use the coffee cup I found on the living room table'

'The one on the fireplace has not moved'

'& I can't bear to touch it'

'I just can't'

'Because'

'Wasn't *it*, the last thing to feel her lips?'

'&...'

'What is left; except the salvation of escape found in routine?'

'I go through the motions of myself'

'Cup-coffee-wash-cup-coffee-wash until I remember the one on the fireplace is mine'

'Until I remember that the cup I have been using was *hers*'

'& my stomach twists in on itself, & then'

'The voice inside me that is not her, says, *you've washed her away*'

'& then'

'Silence'

'& then'

'Everything is back to normal'

'Almost normal'

'Almost'

'Until'

'The smell of tea-tree oil passes me on the street & I skip a breath & then inhale twice as deep to get it inside me. Quick. Before she disappears'

'Tea-tree was the kind of shampoo she used. & what this does to me'

'Outside, she is rain on a tin roof'

'& water drips'

'Down'

'From a gunmetal gutter into an ashtray on the window ledge'

'The ashtray is fired clay in the shape of a hand'

'& I watch'

'Two birds drink from it, not knowing'

'& what should I do?'

'I stand at a window I am too afraid to open'

'I mean, what if the wind disturbs the way things are?'

'What if?'

'It is a question I ask often'

'Through the glass I inhale the memory of overcast mornings in bed'

'The smell of washed earth'

'Trees'

'& dirt'

'The sound of rain against the window is her voice calling me back to where days disappear in fragments *of just a little bit longer before it's time to get up, until*'

'It's time to go back to sleep again'

'& now?'

'Now just to make it the distance it takes to cross the living room floor'

'The apartment is forcing me into its unused corners; because where isn't she?'

'Scattered across the floor, between unfinished sketches, are the postcards she sent me the nights I didn't make it to bed'

'The postcards are how we used to argue'

'Her way of saying, the distance between us?!'

'Here's a trick I learned for getting your post delivered free'

'It is our first night together'

'& she's sending out invitations to her first art show'

'The address list in front of me is for all the big buyers'

'& she says'

'No'

'Write the address on the back of the envelope; you know, where the return address should go'

'Trust me'

'The post-office *always* sends *back* letters without postage stamps'

'They all had stamps; the postcards that came near the end'

'& I think about this now'

'& I wonder; was she saying, *this one*'

'***This one*** cost me'

'It's almost dusk & I am drawing a bath out of habit'

'Doing this is going through the motions of *she'll be home soon*'

'As if to convince myself'

'I light candles & drip wax on the floor so the candles will stick'

'I balance them on the rim of the tub'

'It's the old kind; the tub. White porcelain & clubbed feet in black. It stands on a raised platform of railway sleepers under a stained-glass skylight bearing the image of leafless chestnut tree'

'The branches and trunk of the tree are all done in thick black, the effect of which is that when the sun shines through the glass at whatever angle, the shadow of the tree is cast on what used to be porcelain'

'*Skeleton tree*, is what you're supposed to think, I assume, though I never asked her about the why of this'

'My *why of it* comes from a cover *The Pogues* do'

'Dirty Old Town'

'& the line'

'*I'm gonna chop you down, like an old dead tree & then dirty old town, dirty old town*'

'The tub is one of those must have things she had to have & had to have & then couldn't live without'

'Everything in the apartment is'

'For a while; I was one of those things'

'These thoughts seem trivial. The sentimentality of it all'

'But they are what I remember'

'The little things'

'Everything'

'Everything & all of it'

'Right up until'

'The last conversation I had is one I can't remember'

'& I rummage through the *day of* to convince myself that *she* was the last'

'& I am almost convinced'

'Was she?'

'Does it matter?'

'It doesn't matter'

'If I believe she was, I mean, & if

'If I can just hold on to this a little bit longer'

'If'

'The phone rings & I don't answer'

'I leave the apartment at night'

'Groceries are things I will need soon'

'Cornflakes are low'

'Tobacco'

'Rizla'

'Matches'

'Match'

'Light'

'Flame'

'& Breathe'

'Breathe In'

'Breathe out'

'& Breathe'

'I fill every moment with an action. I name actions'

'For example; *the thing I do to keep awake?*'

'I label every part of the process'

'Kettle water switch boil cup spoon coffee sugar fridge milk pour water milk stir'

'& I fill the gap that comes after with words for rolling a cigarette'

'All the things I once did automatically'

'Actions that didn't need words'

'I label *everything* to fill the spaces & I try to complete what I am doing before the words runs out'

'Before another thought can slip in'

'Before another...'

'The thoughts I fear,

are the ones I *can't* name'

'A rusted bucket collects water where rain leaks through a the hole in the living room ceiling'

'It is the thing in the apartment I did not fix & did not fix & still had not fixed until eventually'

'Now. What would it mean to fix it now?'

'I have postcards from *all over the world* with the same message'

'It says'

'Fix the leak'

'The days pass & I pass them'

'By'

'Watching the water level rise'

'& I have counted the number of drops it takes to overflow'

'& there is a moment just before the water crests over the rim'

'Just a moment'

'But it's not what you'd expect'

'I lie on the floor, my face parallel to the surface'

'Waiting for that *one-drop-too-many*'

'But it doesn't gush like it's supposed to'

'The water doesn't EXPLODE over the edge in a FLOOD that DESTROYS the floor'

'It trickles. Each drop pushes a small stream over the rim; replacing the water it displaced'

'& it carries on like this indefinitely'

'& I think now about how the impact was more when the water in the bucket was'

'When it was'

'Less'

'I have learned out of necessity to stare at something for hours & think nothing'

'To stare at nothing & think; *what?*'

'I have run out of words for sit, lie, & breathe'

'On the kitchen table is a tube of insect repellent & I reach for it as though...'

'My heart skips a beat'

'& I twist the cap & rub it on my skin. I chase the beat'

'It's not the season for insects'

'But what about the smell of her body on the night of our first kiss?'

'So I hold an arm up to my nose'

'& I sit,

I lie,

& I breathe'

'The smell of rain fills the room'

'& we are in bed. Our bodies pressed tight against each other. So close my skin can hear her breath & then'

'I am massaging her feet'

'& then'

'I am tickling'

'Her legs kick out & I tighten my grip on her ankles'

'Her body squirms & I shift my weight over her legs'

'I pin her down with one arm & tickle with my free hand until she breaks free'

'Her legs shift around my waist & press'

'& then she is pulling me towards her'

'Closer'

'& I close my eyes, or open them, & '

'I am standing paralyzed over the record player, staring down at Ian Curtis'

'& thinking'

'*Joy Division*'

'I separate the words & search for distraction in what it means'

'Joy

Division'

'& then I put the words back together'

'I close the space'

'& I find truth in what I want it to mean'

'Is *this* the *last* record she listened to?'

'Or was it my choice?'

'The things I did when I wasn't paying attention'

'The things *she* did'

'The *Things*'

'& do I need to complete this thought?'

'It circles back to the same feeling'

'Through it'

'& how do I escape?'

'I watch people through the window on their way to work'

'Post gathers at the door'

'The living room window cuts me off at the legs. & I am half a man to anyone
looking up at me from the street'

'I take walks through the city without leaving the apartment'

'At night, I am back in the apartment when I am on the street'

'The Park of Sighs'

'The cathedral on Green Street'

'& the pub on Jesus lane'

'I revisit all the places we used to go together'

'Until the impact of them becomes less'

'I save the visits to these places for *not so often*'

'That way I lose the memory of her in little pieces instead of'

'All'

'At'

'Once'

'Its dawn & I'm having a conversation with the girl sitting alone under a willow tree on the riverbank'

'My body stumbles into her, &'

'Why not?'

'She's picking petals from a flower; *it's a blue orchid*'

'& I fill in the words her lips mime'

'He *exists*; He *does not* exist; he exists; he doesn't exist; until the words I hear are my own'

'*She exists, she doesn't exist*'

'*I exist?*'

'One'

'at'

'a'

'time'

'She drops the petals in the water; which on the surface, is still'

'Still, & solid as a sheet of glass'

'The weight of the petals does not shatter the surface'

'The crack that appears is on her face'

'& I look away'

'& then back'

'Her hair is black & she is wearing a white summer dress'

'& I stare at her reflection in the water & then mine in the window'

'I stare until I am not sure which is my own & then'

'She dips her foot in the water, breaking what she does not want to see & her body says, it's cold'

'I take her *word* for it'

'Cold'

'& silent'

'We watch the ripples spread across the water; sinking petals in their wake'

'Those that don't sink are pushed further away & float down towards where rivers end up'

'& I wonder; will they complete the journey?'

'& if not all of them; then which? I ask'

'She smiles'

'& I press my hand against her face'

'It comes back wet'

'Tomorrow I will find an imprint of my hand on the glass where I pressed it against my breath on the window tonight'

'The girl & I are silent in each others company. Together, we finish a bottle of merlot'

'Me, up in the apartment, & her, sitting on the grass'

'& then'

'& then she leaves'

'She leaves'

'& I wonder'

'Would anyone notice? Would they, if I was the one who went missing?'

'Would I?'

'& I remember something Eva used to say'

'A quote by some philosopher'

'& it goes'

'The greatest loss of all, the loss of one's self, can occur very quietly in the world'

'As if nothing at all'

'& I think about Ian Curtis again'

'& I wonder. How is it you can pass the days, losing fragments of yourself with every heartbeat, no-one noticing a part of you is missing, not even you, until it's too late, until all of you is gone?'

Intermission

“Don’t Worry Baby” by The Beach Boys

(as would be interpreted by Charles Manson)

‘The first

image I see

my first *night in the* city’

‘A young girl sitting alone in a gutter at two am in the rain dressed in a thin baby-doll dress, white, & stained, &

building a dam, out of fragments of waste

selecting fragments of discarded city with shivering blue fingers
to catch

the sewage run-off flowing down

the gutter towards

the drain’

‘& I still wonder’

‘What happened to all the other *images* that came before her’

‘The ones *I* forced myself *to for-get*

‘So I could *make* her’

‘My *first* impression of the city’

?



“Like a Movie” by Nicole Reynolds (part 1)

‘It stopped the words dead in my mouth. It stole them. & then, when it was supposed to be over’

‘It came back & took the rest of me’

‘She ended it the night I was supposed to take the stage. Right before I was meant to go on. & in the skipped beat that filled the space between after it happened & when I woke up the next morning; what I remember comes back to me in flashes’

‘There are things I would *like* to remember & then there are things I would like to forget’

‘& these things, I find, are often the same thing’

‘Like taking the stage that night’

‘or not taking it’

‘I have a memory of doing both, & neither. Of one or the other. & I am not sure which, or what, or how’

‘Or even why’

‘I can’t be sure of anything that came after; because in the moment that followed, it was not my heart, but *the rest of me* that skipped a beat’

'In the corner of my living room is a guitar I haven't touched or looked at since the night of Eva'

'I am barely able to work the threads of myself through my hands'

'That guitar is a thing from my childhood. The thing my uncle turned to after he had nothing left'

'He was the one who raised me'

'My uncle

'& his wife'

'My aunt'

'& I think of him turning to that guitar the way you'd think of a drunk who tries to recover from the memory of himself; *the feeling*; by pouring bottle after bottle down the washbasin of his life; until it becomes a thing he does just to get drunk; & then because he just *can't* get drunk; until the only feeling left inside him is the memory of an empty bottle'

'Before my uncle left, that is what he did. He turned to that guitar the way you would a bottle'

'& then he poured song after song into himself'

'Over & over'

'Each day a little bit more'

'& more'

'Until in the end, that guitar was the only thing left of *him*'

'& this is something I try hard not to remember; or *forget*'

'When my uncle left, his body remained behind'

'& I am not my uncle's son. I know this because of what he said the night his body stayed behind –our tender moment – after a day up on the roof replacing a rusted sheet of corrugated zinc; the closest we'd ever come to getting near to each other. & I say *near* because that it what it was like. Near. The way you'd think of a couple who having sacrificed their bodies in the process of getting to

know each other, now spend their evenings *together* in separate rooms of the same house'

'It was after, & sitting up on the roof, when he handed me a beer & told me about his theory of god. Eternal life, he said, is what a one generation passes to the next. & then he told me his greatest regret is that our family's eternal life is something that is going to end with him'

'& my aunt'

'My aunt was another one. She believed she was an eccentric composer – *believed*, because she wasn't. At best, she was a failed housewife'

'& at worst, she was left of my uncle'

'She would walk around the house in a Russian Sable with nothing underneath'

'Just walking'

'Stumbling'

'A bottle of something in one hand & one of those long thin cigarettes in the other'

'A Satin Leaf or Virginia Slim'

'Talking to her plants as though they were people'

'Talking to her *art*'

'Doing her'

'*Art*'

'She would do this all day until finally'

'That moment when you're supposed to tumble in on yourself; in a heap on the ground'

'Sobbing'

'She was a beautiful woman; my aunt. Men would call on her to *help around the house*. This, whilst my uncle was *away*. & they'd greet him on the way in; spend time *admiring* his hand-carved wooden ducks on the way out'

'Some even had the nerve to *buy* one, or *offer*, as though they were doing him a favour. & he would just sit there. On the porch; all day, staring off into the distance; whittling those goddamn ducks'

'*Gifts for my aunt's helpers*'

'Something I have trouble with; the need to have something in my hands. It is a kind of nervous tick I think. & I am not sure if this is psychosomatic, like the hypochondriac who believes she is dying of everything until one day there is both a feeling & realisation that she is dying of *nothing* – & there is no cure for that; this feeling of nothing that spreads through you, taking everything, until there is nothing left to take'

'But, there is a peace in that final moment, I think, in the *realisation*'

'That idea of accepting or at least facing the truth about yourself; or a truth'

'Because isn't there always more than one?'

'For all their difference it seems to me they are the same. These truths'

'That they're merely diversions that loop back to the same loose end; *the* truth, that they're all a different version of the same lie, burying you beneath the surface of yourself, until all of you is surface'

'All surface, & no depth'

'& *deepest* at the surface'

'I keep a length of string in my pocket to keep my fingers busy. This is how I medicate'

'The tremor always starts in my left hand. At the base of my little finger, & then spreads, skipping over the rest of them, towards my thumb until the rest have caught up'

'This is when I reach for the string'

'I fold the ends over each other, tying it into knots. I plait, & I weave & I pull the knots as tight as I can'

'I stack them up against each other & then one by one, I unravel'

'& I am not sure if this is as much about medicating the tremor –*concealing it*– as it is the feeling of having something in my hands'

'Touch, *the symptom of a greater cause, perhaps?*'

'It is something that is both important to me & that I have learned to live without'

'& I can count the number of times I have felt someone's body pressed against mine in the tremors of one hand'

'The bodies of the ducks my uncle whittled held lead weights inside hollow chambers. These weights were free moving, to affect a rocking motion when the ducks were placed on water'

'He carved them out of blue-gum –a species of alien tree that all but invaded our property– because of a story he heard when he was in the army'

'It is called the duike-laartjie'

'& I am not sure of the correct spelling on this, but apparently it's a type of duck you find in the Netherlands; their carved effigies an icon in Dutch homes'

'Now, as I understand it, their job is to sit on the surface of the water, all day; & no matter how rough the ocean gets; they just roll with the waves'

'To see this you have to picture a tiny speckled bird floating on the surface'

'Never going under'

'Just bobbing out there like that saying about water off a duck's back'

'Or is it the one about how they appear calm on the surface, whilst underneath they're paddling with everything inside them to keep from sinking?'

'Whichever it is, my uncle would sit out on our front porch all day, whittling those stupid ducks from lumps of alien wood. Our whole family going under; the house crumbling around us, & none of us Dutch'

'Something I can do well. Skim stones. Skip them across the surface of a lake'

'Water has always been a good place for me. & trees'

'This is something I have in *difference* with Eva. One of the few things we *don't* have in common'

'I like the feeling of having something wrapped around me'

'Water. A forest.'

'*Clothes*'

'Even as I child I would submerge my entire body below the surface of the sheets'

'I am sure there is a psychologist out there who would have something to say about this'

'& no, I was *not* inappropriately touched as a child; though, as an adult, I think of all the kinds of touch this is perhaps the one I crave most'

'An unfamiliar hand on my skin; the wrong kind of person; a stranger, forcing themselves against me for whatever reason that doesn't matter'

'Because they are the same in the end; our reasons'

'& a stranger's touch'

'It is the lack of intimacy in this that makes it more intimate perhaps'

'More revealing, because of what it means – the lack of connection. A fleeting moment that has no threads; tying you to commitment, to a settling that forces you to give more of yourself – to *reveal*'

'I think the problem here is more the feeling that I have nothing *to* give. *Or*, perhaps the word for it is *left*. Nothing *left* to give'

'Not that I have ever given much of myself in the first place. I mean where would one start with something like this? & once you start unravelling a single thread?'

'They are all connected'

'These threads'

'& giving'

'I think'

'Takes less than not giving'

'Holding back'

'It is corrosive, because of what it is we give, our reasons, & what this means'

'The feeling that perhaps what I have is not something someone would want'

'& worse'

'Not wanting to find this out about myself'

'Remind me again about *the devil you know & the one you don't?*'

'Still, the idea is there & it eats away at you. It corrodes. & it takes'

'Always the question; *what if?* What if no one *wants* what you have to give?'

'What if?'

'My record for skipping stones on water is twelve & a tree'

'A tree because that is the thing I aimed for on the opposite bank of the dam that was on our property. It was a blue-gum. Always a blue-gum'

'That *invasive* tree'

'A problem with the city; there is no water except for the river, which is not wide enough to skim stones across, & too full of tourists on boats to skim lengthways'

'Though, I have at times been tempted to try both'

'A lot about getting this right is to do with the wrist. You have to snap it just right when you release. & the type of stone you use is important, also'

'Flat & round is the best I'd say'

'Years of practise has taught me this'

'If a stone has sharp corners it'll dig into the water. Maybe you'll get it part way across'

'Unless it's moving really fast'

'Or'

'If you're lucky'

'But nine times out of ten it'll dig in & sink'

'& it's funny to think about this'

'How momentum –speed– is always the thing that gets you there'

'A stone is not a thing that is meant to float; *but even a stone*, the say'

'If it moves fast enough between the places it touches base, can make it across the impossible without sinking'

'Perhaps there is something in this about why I feel the need to travel so much'

'The idea that if I linger, I'll dig in an edge; & if I dig in an edge, I'll sink'

'Unconsciously, the feeling that I am not *rounded*? That I am not a rock, as a song suggests, but a piece broken from the rock. Or an island? That I am a chip off the old stone of myself? All ragged edges & rough around the edges?'

'This is what makes it like the need to be wrapped up in forest & water'

'Immersed in clothes'

'& a stranger's touch'

'& the reason that the places I travel are mostly winter?'

'It is the intimacy of cold'

'You feel more of yourself & everything else. Your body being forced against itself to fight off the cold'

'Shivering'

'& the act of adding layers of something to your skin'

'The intervention of a memory here; it's the season after autumn; *fall*, & I'm sitting hunched over a cup of coffee in the store window of a boutique bookshop in a

small New Hampshire town. They have a couch resting on a raised platform of what used to be the window display of a clothing store but is now a place for *you* to sit & read –or if you prefer– to sit & stare out into the street; as I am doing, hunched over my coffee; warming my hands on the cup & my face on the steam; watching people run to escape the snow. Their bodies moving faster to escape; *the cold*

‘It is like travel because of the change it affects in you. Physical change; & the belief that this change is internal, too, *perhaps*. That you can control it; that you have, for what its worth, *some* control. Over it. & *yourself*. By adding layers’

‘This is why I’ve always felt comfortable in the city. The feeling of the crumbling grey buildings wrapped around me. The permanent shadow they cast on the street. The opposite of what light does. & it is something I am looking at now, from my living room window. The grey shadow of city cast on the cobblestones’

‘& I am trying not to think about Eva; but this is not as easy as I want it to be’

‘A thing I do; when I walk into a room, I always head for the switch. I dim the lights’

‘The dark, for me, is a familiar layer of something that conceals’

‘Eva is the opposite to me on this’

‘For her the city is a feeling of the walls closing in’

‘What she said on our first night together. She made me lie down on the street’

‘Look up the buildings, she told me. Pretend they’re rising up around you like walls of a coffin. That they’re closing in’

‘Because really, she said’

‘This isn’t pretending’

‘& do you ever feel like the sky is a giant lid, closing down on you? Closing in?’

‘& if you blink? & if *it* blinks?’

'I try to resist thinking about the parable of Jesus walking on water the times I remember the night we had sex on the lake'

'The sex was not a miracle, but it was a surprise'

'The lake was in the middle of a forest; a sort of hippie commune I spent some time in – a place where I touched base until that sinking feeling'

'The girl I was with was someone I hadn't met'

'She was an elfin girl with thin blonde dreadlocks & a name I don't remember'

'But she came to me'

'While I was lying in a canoe, staring up the night sky; listening to the sound of water lapping against the hull'

'Crickets & tree-frogs'

'Wind through the trees'

'She immersed out of the dark below & slipped herself over the edge'

'*To bum a cigarette*, she gave as her reason –& to do this she'd swum right across the lake'

'To *me*'

'&'

'Well'

'The thing going on here is that I know for a fact that there were cigarettes much easier to get to than mine all over that place'

'But that is what she did; she slipped herself over the edge of the boat & then slipped her body over mine'

'Our limbs scraping against each other on account of the size of the boat'

'She was wearing a white bikini that glowed against the night –I remember this–
& which held almost no breasts'

'It held the hint of breasts'

'& I have had a strange attraction to this build of woman ever since; the way she
felt against me'

'Inside me'

'A big personality. Vibrant. Forward. *Chatty*. Something I have seen in a lot of
smaller woman; a way of compensating for their size perhaps?'

'This is the opposite of small man syndrome, I think. A woman will become more
exciting to get attention –more interesting; more *unique* – or fold in on herself,
unlike the short version of a man who will become more of an ass'

'Something about the legacy of patriarchy I am grateful for; a woman
understands that there is more than one kind of beauty'

'That it can be found in both body & mind'

'That they are both connected & separate'

'& that beauty is a thing to be used instead of force; to affect change'

'A deceptive thing; beauty'

'Creative'

'& destructive'

'A man will hurl himself off a cliff to feel his body –the depth of his emotion'

'Fleeting'

'Or throw himself into another man's fists'

'A woman will enhance her hair to become someone else, or more of *herself*'

'She'll buy new clothes'

'& jewellery.

'& *make-up*'.

'-A *man*'

'& then adopt a personality to match'

'I have seen women shift the gaze of another, *or her own*, with words that hit harder than any fist'

'& there is a knowledge here; out of the reach of a man's grasp'

'Beauty; the idea of it –in all its incarnations– is a thing that fills the space between body & mind; an understanding that a change in one affects a change in the other; & that this is an *illusion* of change; & although not real –& what is real anyway? – it is truer than what is thought to be real, because it is *felt*'

'By *all of her*'

'A man is a static thing; living in the separate countries of body & mind. But for a woman, it seems these are the same, connected by the *idea* of beauty that lives in the space between. Its threads, constantly weaving & unravelling; joining & separating; filling & emptying; *that*

space'

'Fragile, changing, & perhaps, where the depth of emotion that is woman lies'

'The girl on the lake'

'I remember thinking at the time that it was strange that she was wearing a bikini'

'Because the rest of the time she hardly wore a thing. Nobody did'

'The place was the kind where the only rule was that you had to be yourself, & natural, & free'

'& everyone there was *just* as natural, & free, & themselves as everyone else'

'Like people who follow the latest fashion trend. All of them laid back, fire dancers, dreadlocked, beaded, rustic, musicians, organic, & naked'

'Still, it is a place that was almost home. They were good to me'

'& the place'

'The wrap around effect of water & wood & skin'

'But, this idea of being a minority within a minority; it is something I can't shake'

'The need to *feel* like you're a crowd within a crowd & then reduce, until you're a crowd of one'

'The music I listen to –& which is also the sound coming out of the my record player tonight– it is a sub-genre of a sub-genre of a sub-genre'

'*Anti-folk*, is the idea I have reduced myself to'

'& in this the belief that authenticity is something you equate with originality'

'Another nervous tick for me; the need to find authenticity'

'To feel it –& forgetting that the more *original* you feel the lonelier you get'

'& the things I do to get there. To feel lonely, & then the irony of the actions & words that come from the desperate need to *cure* it, until once again, *it* becomes the desperate need'

'The Stupid things I do; like when it rains, I stick my hand out to catch a drop on my palm. A single drop. & then flip my palm around to catch a drop on the back of my hand'

'*To feel the difference* I tell myself; although this is obvious. It is colder where the skin is thinner. & then the tumbling on of metaphor & cliché's'

'*The difference between lived & felt temperature*'

'It is something Eva said the night we met'

'& the reason I am attracted to her?'

'She told me about a girl she watched walk through a park in a summer dress'

'It was winter & there was a sheet of white on the cobbled pathways that criss-cross the park. A winter coat draped over the trees. But this girl showed no change in body the way Eva explained it to me'

'& she thought; *the difference between lived & felt temperature*'

'I have this on a postcard that she sent me; her thoughts about this idea;'

'& it is something I have read over & over –I have threaded it through my fingers–
& can recite the lines in a single breath'

'It goes'

"Intermission"

"Zombie" by The Cranberries

'From where I am sitting,

I can't see the *reason*'

'The image is of a little girl dressed in black'

'Mascara stains'

'Sitting alone, in a gutter at 2am'

'In the rain'

'& sewage run-off'

'Running down her face'

'& smudged'

'Black tears'

'& white'

'Rag'

'Dressed in fingerprints of

'City'

'Smear'd on her'

'Pale'

'White'

'Skin of

'Frayed cotton'

'Stained the colour of see-through'

'& touch, & touched'

'By city fingers'

'Probing the inside of her... ?'

'& rain & oil'

'& dirt & blood'

'&'

'The loss of...'

'Clinging'

'Fabric'

'Wet'

'& frayed & thin'

'Seeping into her skin'

'& embracing'

'Her'

'Body'

'

Fading'

'Behind the stain of flesh'

'Behind

the'

'Touch of stone'

'Cold'

'Probing'

'Eyes'

'Still forcing their fingers into her tears'

'& up'

'Up into her dress'

'& up'

'Up into the divide

of

'Rain'

'Holding her skin'

'Together & tight'

'Against'

'The transparent layer of'

'Baby-doll cotton'

'Clinging'

'To'

'The sensual curves of her unformed breasts'

'Like seram-wrap pulled tight over'

'Hips'

'& face'

'& legs'

'& breathing'

'Supple, spindled, & shuddering'

'From cold

or the *absence* of warmth?'

'& dark'

'Child'

'Nipples'

'Erect'

'& grasping at the loss of

gods loss of

humanity?'

'& plunging'

'Neckline'

'Slipping off shoulders'

'Inviting'

'& hem'

'An inch above blue knees'

'Blowing

up'

'Around her waist'

'Up'

'Around her *Waste*'

'Where the memory of torn underwear hangs'

'Dirty'

'& loose'

'& bruised'

'Shivering thighs'

'Stained the colour of cotton'

'& eyes'

'Blue'

'& cold'

'& dark'

'& wet'

'Vacant behind a watery lens of desperation &'

'Depth?'

'From flesh knowing too much about the loss of'

'The question is always the same as the answer. & the answer is always'

'Why?'

'From where I am sitting, I can't see the reason'

'The little girl is hunched over, head hung low, & sitting in the gutter'

'On the sidewalk, knees together & feet apart, inside a shadow of dirty yellow
light'

'& hanging'

'Above her from up'

'At the top of -a black pole- & the shape of an old lantern'

'The colour of *faded* *black?*'

'With square sides, five, sloping up in the shape of a pentagon'

'& a bulb'

'The filament type'

'Behind dirty glass windows in the walls of the sloping pentagon'

'*Panes*'

'Cracked & loose in their metal frames'

'A rusted core, rotting, inside a veneer of paint'

'& flaking on the inside'

'& insects'

'Spiralling up towards the cracks in the glass & rotten core, like water spiralling

down, towards a drainage hole in a zinc basin, or is it *tin?* or

stone? in search of'

'Light?'

'Heat?'

'Direction?'

'Self de-con-struction?'

'Shining'

'Down onto grey'

'Stone'

'& dirt'

'Casting a half-moon shadow of amber on where'

'She is sitting'

'For some reason?'

'Alone'

'Silent & shivering'

'Inside the shape of a fingernail'

'The rotting core?'

'Or claw of light?'

'Cutting through, menacingly, the dark, as if from a stranger's finger, *the boogy-man perhaps?*'

'Mysterious & calling'

'Her body'

'Towards'

'The dark'

'Or me?'

'The effect is that of a stage-light'

'Flickering occasionally to the rhythm of a loose connection, over an image that does not fit'

'It just does not fit'

'Or perhaps it does fit? If...'

'From where I am sitting, I still cannot see the reason'

'Why?'

'The image

in my mind

is an insect circling a lantern'

 “Song to Make You Cry” by Phoebe Kreutz

‘I use words that have been used before. Whole sentences. Philosophies’

‘& I think they are mine; I think’

‘*This is me*’

‘For example; I watch a girl walk through the snow in a summer dress & I say;
she is the difference between actual & felt temperature’

‘& I want to say more, but I leave it there, feeling I have said enough’

‘Feeling I have said too much’

‘& not enough’

‘& I listen for the reply that will say what I have not’

‘But the reply never comes’

‘Only the echo of the question, but faded, like your reflection in a store window at
night’

‘& I think’

‘Your body is staring back at you & it is empty & filled with things you can’t touch’

'Shoes'

'Ties'

'Jeans'

'Jackets'

'Wallets'

'Jewelry'

'Shirts'

'& hats'

'Mannequins'

'& I tell myself *your body is filled with things that are not you*'

'That you are not your body'

'& I search for a way to compare myself to it'

'My reflection'

'The one that gets to ask the question'

'Which body is truth?'

'These words; they are not my own. These ideas. They are things that come back to me in the overheard conversations of people I have never met'

'At a coffee shop this afternoon I eavesdropped on a couple watching a group of teenagers who couldn't keep their hands off each other'

'The man said, *features of rabbit*, instead of *creatures of habit*'

'& I just know I have said this before, or thought it; & what the woman said in reply'

'& neither of these things particularly clever or funny'

'This is something that bothers me sometimes'

'That my conversations are not the necessary kinds of enough'

'Witty'

'Clever'

'Ironic'

'Dry'

'& it's not like I'm slow, or *unaware* of what's happening around me. I mean, last week I watched one of those *before & after* ads on TV & I just knew there was something clever to say about this'

'But the problem is it didn't come to me until later; until after it'd had some time to stew in my mind'

'Like that saying the French have for a witty retort that comes a moment too late'

'Esprit d'Escalier'

'& then the awareness that everything I say is a kind of pre-meditated act'

'I think the problem is my body often arrives at conclusions before the rest of me'

'Like last week in the Laundromat when I made a comment about the label on the machines'

'& I thought I was being *funny* when I pointed it out to the manager & read'

'Remove clothes when light goes off'

'& her response?'

'She took off her jacket to reveal a replica of this label silk-screened on her T-shirt'

'& my clever thing to say about the before & after ad?'

'I said, *now if they could just find one of those pills for the culture we live in*'

'Do you see what I did here?'

'I deliberately left out the words *instant gratification* & then scanned the faces of my *audience* to see if anyone would make the connection'

'How lame is that? & me? How lame am *I*?'

'& this is how it goes; always the feeling that I arrive at a thing too late'

'After the fact'

'I stumble into my voice in the lines of a book

'In the spaces between the lines '

'& the blank stare staring back at me in a TV screen'

'Turned on or off. What is the difference?

'It is already inside me'

'& then realization that who I am is the relationship I have with figure in the glass'

'& that it is filled with things other people have put in me'

'Their words'

'Their actions'

'& finally'

'The *knowing*, that I am both myself & *it*

'Because without the other'

'What would either of us be?'

'This is the worst part'

'The knowing'

'That I am an unfinished lie; made up of disconnected fragments of *life* that are not; that *is* not'

'My'

'Own'

'& at the same time; *is*'

'Because; *they are,*'

'As the philosopher says;

I am'

'

- *Eva?*



“Boys Don’t Cry” by The Cure

‘She
 is sitting alone in the rain at 2am
Playing in the gutter alone
 & dressed in black mascara stains, too *old* for her body, running, &
 smudged, across her face, too *innocent* for her thighs, & a dirty baby-doll dress,
 clinging to her skin from the wet of & see-through?’

‘The answers are the same as the questions’

‘Does she have a mother? Or a *father*; *fathers*?
perhaps’
 ‘& does she have a *home*? at any rate A *house* she can call *roof*?’
 ‘Does her mother care? & for what its worth, what about her *perhaps*?’

‘& does her *home*? For that matter’
 ‘Or at least the wallpaper on the other side of her tears?’

‘The *answers* are the same as reason, *why*, she is here’

‘The water is collecting at her feet’
 ‘Bare’
 ‘& pressed to the stone bottom of the gutter’
 ‘Disappearing’
 ‘Inside the pool of sewage run-off, that ran & ran & ran over her feet until the
 running slowed’

'& pooled, where flesh formed a dam wall, that slowed & pooled & dammed,
sewage, until, it swallowed flesh, in the place behind where she is constructing a
new wall from fragments of city waste'

'To stop'

'Her feet from being swallowed by the gutter'

'Again'

'To stop'

'The cold lips & tongue & mouth of the sewage run-off from closing around her
body &'

'Swallowing'

'The fragments are:'

'Broken glass'

'Bottle tops'

'Plastic & *tin*'

'Leaves & stones & wrappers & twigs & lollypop sticks'

'Stacked on top of each other & interwoven to form a type of human beaver dam'

'To slow & stop the rain, running down the cobbled gutter'

'From swallowing, in the pool of toxic wet, her feet'

'Starting at her toes'

'& building, up, against the sides of her feet, until the water, pushing, against
flesh, arcing & curving, builds into a small wave of sewage that crashes, gently,
over one foot, & then the other'

'Until the waves stop'

'Until her feet have been consumed by the wall of *ocean?*'

'& then...'

'The little human beaver dam reverses the process'

'The image of the sewage spitting, out, her feet,

out, from the dark recess of its mouth'

'Its lips, opening around her bridges...'

'& starts building'

'Again'

'A new dam wall to stop the sewage & gutter from swallowing her feet'

'Again'

'Stalling the inevitable endlessly'

'& why,

she, doesn't just LIFT her feet, OUT, of the gutter, is...'

 play “aPoem On an Underground Wall” by
Simon & Garfunkel

‘A poem on a bus ticket found in a drain’

‘Drift into obscurity’

‘Through windows of’

‘Park bench hotels’

‘& meals at the end of nicotine stained eyes’

‘Searching for religion at the bottom of’

‘Frayed’

‘Empty’

‘Pockets’

‘& crumbs of stale tobacco’

‘Clanking against the memory of small change’

‘I folded my return ticket into something that resembled a paper bird; at the bus stop that night; the night I arrived in the city – the swan is the only origami thing I have learned how to make from the *paper-art* section of the *how-to* crafts book I brought on the trip with me’

‘The book gave three options’

‘Easy. Intermediate. Difficult’

‘Frog. Swan. Rose’

‘I chose the swan because of a story I’d read’

‘The book was on the origin of phrases, & this one told about the myth of how a mute swan -mute all its life- will sing a beautiful song just as it’s about to die’

‘& when I was done I dropped the bird in the stream of rain water running down the cobbled gutter’

'& I watched it float down the street'

'Pretending that it was my life'

'& then'

'When I couldn't see it anymore, I lifted my backpack onto my shoulder & headed in the opposite direction'

'There are things I want to be true & then there are the things I know'

'For example; I imagined this bird would travel through the city, exploring every street'

'I imagined its body getting dragged over stone, collecting dirt'

'& I imagined at some point we'd cross paths again; but what I know now'

'& knew then'

'Is that it was going to slip into the nearest storm water drain & disappear inside the underground canals'

'I want to have interesting thoughts about what this means; but my thoughts are not interesting. It means nothing & it means everything it could mean. It means both'

'& if I am honest about this, my only reason for doing it is because it is something nobody else was doing'

My bus ticket is the prescription I found in Lizzie's sock draw that night

“Intermission”



“ the mEtal mAchine; *love*; album” by Lou

Reed(part 2) -

‘*Every fear masks a desire* is what the man said I should do about this’

‘& I thought, *ok*’

‘& I said *fine*’

‘& I thought to myself *ok fine, I’ll do it*. But then it hit me & I said’

‘*No*’

‘Because, isn’t this the other way around?’

‘Isn’t it *every desire masks a fear*?’

'Friday night is open mic at *The Other Side Up* according to the man on the flyer'
'The flyer is a thing that is all over the city this morning –*a last ditch attempt, I assume, by the man to save his club from going under* – this man, he's the same one with all these catchphrases about realizing your fears through conquering your desires'

'& he has a point'

'You see'

'The place I'm in tonight is not the place I'm supposed to be'

'Outside, its 4 a.m. & I'm sitting in my living room window, watching the street'

'The sky is not black, the way it's *meant* to look. & it isn't blue, either'

'It is both & it is neither & it is dull'

'As though I'm staring at life through a camera lens coated in Vaseline'

'Nothing, this morning'

'Is as it's meant to be'

'There's a staircase leading up to my living room window'

'It's the first thing Eva had me change about the place after we moved in'

'& hanging, where curtains should, is a door that has been sized to fit the frame'

'The door is beech-wood –from dead tree we found in the forest that borders the bridge street cemetery– & it has a latch that only opens from the inside'

'A catch'

'Like those woman in Amsterdam, Eva says'

'Who sit, waiting for someone to buy them for an hour'

'For what they *need*'

'On the mornings I wake up to an empty bed, Eva is sitting in the window box'

'Behind a closed door'

'Smoking Golden Virginia roll-up cigarettes & reading something I don't get'

'I don't'

'Because of the latch; you can't open the door from inside the window. The latch is on the living room side. Eva insisted on this'

'*A detail*

'She said'

'To get back into the apartment, someone has to open the door for you'

'Or'

'You have to brave the thin ledge on the side of the building until you reach the fire-escape ladder that leads up to the roof'

'& then, you can slip yourself through the bathroom skylight'

'& down into the tub'

'Doing this, Eva says, forces you to think about the cost of living in a place like this. The cost of *settling*, she says'

'Each time you return to the apartment, you literally have to risk your life'

'& it is not the risk, she says. It is the feeling. The feeling that even though your body has settled into not moving, it is still alive'

'This is the reason I wanted it, she explains. Exactly the way it is. & without it, she says. I couldn't live in this place'

'Like the game my uncle played with us when we were kids'

'He would reach into his pocket for *change*, & then hurl the coins into the dam'

'The dam was a thing on our property & it was the size of a football pitch & the water'

'The water was a dark, murky brown'

'We would watch where the coins broke the surface & then dive in after'

'& we would hold our breath until our hearts were about to explode'

'Dragging our fingers & toes through the wet clay'

'Searching'

'For the *lost treasure* we couldn't see'

'Except'

'For where it fell in our memory'

'There is something going on here that I haven't felt in years'

'It is the feeling of body connected to the action of mind, or the other way around, or both, as they fight for survival below the surface'

'This connection is something that breaks the minute you break the surface, after, when your heart rate returns to normal'

'When your body stops convulsing; and your mind'

'This is what I am thinking about now, sitting in Eva's window'

'I am smoking, but I am not reading a book I don't understand & the door is not locked behind me'

'& sitting here, with the door open to the apartment, it is the feeling that the living room is stretching out its arms &

pushing me towards the ledge'

'& there is a temptation to slip my body over the edge

& drift'

'Down towards the city'

'To feel my heart *pulsing in my head as I dive* *deeper'*

'All the way down **& deeper'**

'Down'

'To the bottom of the street'

'& to drag my hands & eyes & feet'

'Over, & through *the cobbled stone'*

'As they search for *a pulse'*

'A beat'

'& feeling'

'As they reach'

'Stumbling & blind...'

'Grasping'

'Not for a *lost treasure'*

'But **for the feeling of'**

'Myself'

¹ Reading instructions: this is a 4-in-1 "poem" – wash rinse repeat (read the whole thing together/ or the left side/ or the right side/ or the centre in bold/ or all four/ whatever – the middle lines in bold form part of both left & right "poems")

“Would you believe me if I said that I am a bird & the sky is wide?”²

‘I am not a bird’

‘Or a fish’

‘Or a body’

‘I am what is left’

‘& all that is left is this moment & the next, sitting here in my living room window’

‘Breathing’

‘Breathless’

‘& watching’

‘Because doing this, is all there is left to do’

‘To watch’

‘On one side of the window, flyers tumble in the street like autumn leaves’

‘An hour ago I watched these same flyers drift down from rooftops’

‘Tipped over & poured out over the city, from the belly of a suitcase; *into* the city; by a group of hooded students the man hired to distribute them’

‘They looked like giant snowflakes. The way they fell against the backdrop of grey stone’

‘But they are not snowflakes. & it is not winter’

‘It is barely autumn. Or *fall*, as some like to call it’

‘I prefer the fall. It is what happens when things stop living’

‘They fall’

‘& they tumble’

‘& then’

‘They’re absorbed back into the earth or brushed away until all that remains is what is left’

² From “Hear Me” by Kelly Dyer

'Growing up I would rake rust coloured leaves into a heap & jump into them from the roof of the house. I did this every autumn, until one fall left me with a broken leg'

'The winter that followed is when I learned to play guitar. Not able to hunt tin cans with an air rifle, search for myself in the dam, or steal my uncle's dirt bike & race down the river that dried up during the winter months'

'I sat instead on the front porch of our family home teaching myself to play along to old blues & folk records, which, along with the guitar, were all that remained of my uncle after he left'

'I grew up on part of what had once been 2000 acres of pristine savannah between two rivers. The farm it had once been was cut up & sold off as a government solution to unemployment during the depression'

'What the government hadn't counted on was that most of the unemployed people they moved into these properties not only had zero farming experience, but had also been, by choice, unemployed before the depression – an occupation they were fiercely determined to carry *through* the depression & pass on to their children'

'The war that followed took what was left'

'& our property, was the one with the unmarked graves'

'They had been there as far back as anyone could remember, & then some'

'These graves were simply rocks arranged in ovals; the length of a body. & on one end, flat stones marked the sides that were head'

'One of those graves was not the size of an adult'

'Another thing that we did at the beginning of winter was to drag heavy sand bags across the golden brown grass. We would take machetes to the stalks & then burn a section of grass the length of our property. A circle. But I would protest to annoy. Sitting in the long grass like someone chained to a tree'

'The firebreak was a precaution against losing what we did not have; but it failed, more than once, to fulfil even this promise'

'& it is something to see. The sight of orange flames burning against the flat line of the horizon at sunset'

'Running back on nights when the air is dense with smoke & dust; this is what I salvage from my childhood home. Each time, & waking up in a room that is some place else, I realise that I should have taken more, but I never take more'

'& this is what remains'

'A memory'

'On the other side of my window'

'It is all that is left; & left to do'

'There is an advent calendar on the wall. It something I buy Eva each month because it is her only good memory from when she was a child. The calendar has little doors you open to reveal chocolates inside. I have not opened the door on the day Eva stopped living. The walls of our apartment have not absorbed Her. & the floorboards are still covered in a film of where she fell'

'I have not yet brought myself around to cleaning up after her –the pieces that remain– & why should I, I want to know? If they are *all* that remain'

'The side of my living room window that is not street is not the side I am facing tonight; or able to, I think.

'I do not need to look at it to know that is not a living room anymore, or perhaps, still is?'

'I am often caught between knowing what is'

'I get caught between a lot of things'

'Myself, for instance'

'These days'

'Here'

'Alone in the apartment with nothing to do except'

'& how long has it been?'

'I am not sure how long it has been'

'Like during the middle ages, when the official music of the people – *decided by the church*– was music that didn't have a beat'

'The correct term for the one long note that alters only in pitch & volume is *unmeasured time*; & its purpose is to imply *eternity* by literally negating time – *there are no holes in the sound*'

'I am sitting tonight with my elbows on my knees & my head in my hands. This is the pose of the thinker. Or a version of the thinker. But I am not the thinker. My fingers tremble sometimes. They shake. So I ball them into fists or clasp them behind my head. & I press my arms against my ears to shut off the street'

'But there is another sound that comes to me when I do this'

'& it is something I can't escape'

'A heartbeat'

'It is something that negates eternity –there are spaces between the beats, when just for a second, it could go either way'

'& it is not just a heartbeat; there are other things that remind you you're alive'

'The sound of crickets'

'& rain dripping on stone'

'Peoples voices, & the ocean'

'Wind, blowing crisp auburn leaves down the street'

'These are the sounds I am trying not to hear'

'Sitting in my living room window'

'Alone'

'It is as though I am two versions of myself'

'Or three'

'& the third stuck between the two'

'& isn't this something everyone feels; that *here* is always filled with the memory of somewhere else? That here is always someplace that is not there, & should be?'

'That feeling of always being caught between'

'*A rock & a hard place*, they say. Although for me it is like being a reflection of myself, not in a mirror, but in a pane of glass. Two versions of myself'

'One on either side'

'Staring at each other'

'Through me'

'& how do you know the difference is what I want to know? How do you know if where you are is where you are meant to be?'

'The guitar in the corner of my living room'

'The one I can't bring myself to touch'

'This guitar is a lot of things. It has travelled halfway around the world with me & then some. A weight around my neck. A yoke. Pushing. & pulling. & now, this guitar is Eva, or like Eva, & perhaps even then'

'She is what I thought of when I taught myself to play'

'Not her exactly, but the idea of her'

'The touch of paper; rolled between fingers & thumbs, against my tongue, licking
to close the loose ends' 'too close; the loose ends'

'The edges of a cigarette; circled & holding on' 'slipping, between'
'& the slow tumbling of yourself through someone else's hands'

'It's so quiet outside you can hear the tobacco burn; loud as a bonfire. Inside'
'& the death rattle of falling stars'

'A match; breaks the silence of all these shapeless voices'
'& the sound it makes'

'A frozen river, shallow, runs deep; deep into & through. A forest; & falling; below
its surface is enough to take your breath away, to claim your life; until all that
remains is what reaches up. Always up. Always reaching'

'My Fingers' 'Running over wood & steel'
'Wear down & build; callused skin on the wrong side of skin; sound; & the feeling
that inside me; I am getting thicker towards the centre. That the feeling of things
is; just is -becoming- less'

'My old guitar is Eva; staring at me from behind horizons drawn on concrete &
dirt' 'Drawn on the edges of my shoes & eyes grasping at the far off
lines of a window frame, a door, & the sharp point at the edge of a road'
'Leaving. Always leaving. I am always leaving'

'The new one I bought to replace it is something Eva took with her the night she
stopped living –she did it because she is the one person who knows all my
secrets. & now'

'Its shattered pieces are disappearing into the cracks in the cobbled street'

'There is a slogan written above my living room window. It is one of the slogans
that appeared on the streets after the May 68 riots in France. Eva wrote it here
the night we moved in. & I am not sure what it means'

'Or *wasn't* sure'

'But now I think it is coming to me'

'The slogan is in black eyeliner, running in a ragged line –like frayed thread– from an eye painted on the open face of the red-brick walls. The walls are coated in layers of stripped paint; peeled & flaking; flaked; & which are not the faded marks of previous owners, but something left by Eva, who painted the bricks these colours & then stripped the paint to give it that *used* feeling; *like what this place does to me* she said. Like that saying'

'The one about how the heart is *what* the home is'

'Or isn't. How it *looks*, she said'

'The colours she used are black, & green, & white; & what is left of them is what seeped into the cracks –the seams of the bricks; & tears, the rips in the seams– & couldn't be stripped off, or could, except for the effort'

'This is why I am starting to understand the slogan, I think. Perhaps. & Eva'

'It is in the cracks & holes where the dust gathers. The ashes. & of not just walls –of wood & stone– but, *your life*'

'The dirt & grime gathers in the imperfections. The scars. & the deep cuts'

'All those hard to reach places that are both hard to reach & not worth the effort'

'Because you can't just brush over them with a single scrape; you have to dig into these places, spend time with them, & doing this forces you to focus on the detail of each one, to dwell on the memory of it – to reclaim, or fail'

'*Fail* to reclaim it'

'& why bother exposing the *clean* surface underneath when you can just run a fresh coat over the top; like so many clothes & words that are not your own. Why? When you can hide the imperfections & what they hold, below the surface, with a layer of something new?'

'Perhaps this is nothing like the slogan after all'

'What it means, I mean'

'Perhaps I've got it wrong'

'That is what Eva would say if she were here'

'& she is here'

'In the art on the walls, in the furniture, & in that slogan; running from her eye
down the open face of the wall, & which says'

'I came in the cobblestones'

'So this is what I think'

'I think it means that she made *love* to the street. Or *did not* make love to it'

'The *opposite* of love'

'Violent

love'

'& I think it means the act; & that; this act; was an attempt to *impregnate* the old
streets with new life. Because that is what they are. The cobblestones. The
crumbling walls of the city. It is what they represent'

'The old'

'*Order*'

'Built by the hands of history'

& worn, down, smooth, under the feet of time'

'& what does city mean? The idea of city? & her streets?'

'Do you think the same thoughts as me? Can you tell me what this means?'

'The young reaching into the body of the old. Grasping for the feeling of body'

'& Forcing'

'New life into her, & then ripping it out; through the cracks in her crumbling flesh'

'But this isn't possible, is it? Because cities are not people. They aren't flesh & skin & bone'

'You can't *make love* to them. You can't make love to stone'

**The experts say this is often the case with trauma survivors like me
It gives *us* a new perspective, which is why we do things like what I am
doing right now**

'& why doesn't he just move?'

'Or get thicker curtains?'

'The slogan on Rizla packets calls it an art'

'& you get 50 goes to do it in'

'For less than the cost of a single cigarette you get 50 gum-stripped rolling papers & a slogan to tell you that using their product is an art form'

'Imagine if Mc Donald's did that?'

'The art of eating'

***'I would be the hero & the villain, she says, in my movie, & the whole plot
would unravel inside my head, hero & villain trying to pick sides on all the
little things, like paper or plastic?***

To-have-here or to-go?

National Geographic or Animal Planet?

All before any of the real action takes place'

'& do you remember how we used to sneak into the cathedral at sunset & then climb the steps, skipping every second one out of twelve because they were *evil?*'

'& whose idea was that?'

'& how you can see the whole city spread out in front of you from up there'

'& the way you used to stand on the edge, pretending you were going to jump or fall?'

'It was the 12 step program; & we were there because we had to be'

'Submersion promotes cerebral death'

*"Rows of houses, all bearing down on me"*³

'I can't see it, but the sound'

'Holes –'

'*Holes* in the sound'

'& they are becoming less. The things that move me more,'

'They are becoming *less*'

*"This machine will, will not communicate"*⁴

'& it is coming from them'

'The *sound*'

'& the *in-between* of sound'

'When it *stops*'

'The Noise'

'& the spaces between the noise'

'The places where the sound of *it*, the noise, when it becomes'

'Absent'

*"& Fade, fade out again"*⁵

³ Radiohead; Street Spirit

⁴ Radiohead; Street Spirit

'Like, I was wondering, how is it that one person's symbol of love can keep another person awake at night, tossing & turning, until eventually they snap & try to destroy everything the other person holds dear?'

'She kept asking the woman, how long before the art cures the cancer?'

'& are some colours a better cure than others?'

'& what is the colour to cure AIDS?'

'My first thought is about what the hospital staff will think of me, arriving at the reception desk in nothing but my boxers, or god forbid the mortuary, because all my clothes are either wet in the wash, or wet on line'

'& haven't hospital staff seen everything?'

'I mean, who still uses those things...it has to be a bomb...it has to be...& I mean, just look at the way he's dressed'

'According to the brochure art therapy is also an effective treatment for the following:

phobias

obsessive compulsive disorders

addiction

& dementia'

'Fixing it' would be the logical conclusion'

'Except maybe when you use it to make a Molotov'

'In that chest freezer with that dead, naked girl on top of me'

'This is the first time I was turned on by a dead body'

'This is a question I asked Eva the night of the fire'

'Her answer was, easy. Ask yourself if where you are is where you *feel* you are?'

'I got stuck on this one. I have never been good with location. Or touch. The feeling of myself. I thought *physical* place or *mental* place?'

'But I said neither, or both. I am not sure which, but I think they are the same answer'

'My body sometimes has trouble understanding my mind'

'Or'

'Perhaps this is the other way around'

'The Other Side Up is a sort of artsy bohemian café two blocks down, where for a small entrance fee you can play your music to the same attentive audience of aspiring musicians that are here every night –unless of course you're a regular, or a musician intending to perform, in which case you get in free'

'& why the bank is about to foreclose, no-one knows'

'The interior design style of the club is either designer-retro or art-kitsch'

'The owner used his one big idea up on this place –& I mean he used *all of it* up in a way that makes you think about that saying of *when one word will do*'

'His big idea is everything must go upside down'

'The tables & chairs are all riveted to the ceiling. & so to the bar & a rickety stage where mannequins coated in layers of sculpted wax form a 3-piece band that never makes a sound'

'Even the toilets are glued to the roof'

'What you're supposed to use instead is a kind of *hanging* lamp fixture with a flush mechanism that *hangs* up from the floor – the name on the door calls them Mc loo-ens'

'But everyone either goes outside or at the public restroom across the street'

'& the worst thing about these lamp-fixture toilets is the idea wasn't even his'

'The idea, in fact, is something *he* came up with after totally missing the point of one of Eva's art projects'

'The whole concept here, he says, is it's supposed to make you question your perspective on the way things *should* be'

'Eva says the music alone does this'

'No need for the *art* to be hung the wrong way up'

'My problem here is that the *people* in this place'

'Most of them are the kind of person who has never heard of Patti Smith'

'They wear Bon-Jovi T-shirts '

'& think The Moldy Peaches sound isn't quite *polished* enough'

'Which is fine'

'I mean it's their life & all that other stuff about them doing it their way'

'But for me, coming here is like that *10-16* film by Gillian Wearing'

'10-16 is the film I am watching for the second time tonight'

'& to be honest it is not something I wanted to watch the first time. But there it was in the box with the label for what was my first choice'

'& needing distraction more than fulfilment, I settled for it'

'Twice'

'Twice because of a sudden irrational fear that I lack consistency'

'The man from the club said this is the problem with my performances & why I'm taking him seriously I don't know, but it stuck with me'

'This man, he wears designer clothes that have been deliberately aged to look like they were salvaged from another era & he wraps his conversations up in eastern themed one-liners like'

'Foreknowledge is, they say, the message come to flower'

'& seriously, does he get this stuff from Kung fu movies?'

'He told me my inconsistency is likely rooted in an unresolved childhood trauma'

'& I thought, you're right'

'For instance'

'Could someone please tell me what is the deal with that Winnie girl from *The Wonder Years*?'

'I mean, here she has this guy that worships her, but still, she keeps passing him over for the *other* guy'

'The one who treats her like crap'

'I mean, this is a serious unresolved issue for me'

'You see, I missed the last episode of the final season, so could someone please tell me, do they get together in the end?'

'I'll tell you what though, if the history of this show is anything to go by, the final episode is going to be just like the others'

'Winnie is going to lead him on'

'& then'

'The minute he's given up everything he's ever cared about to be with her, she's going to dump him *for* – you guessed it'

'At least *she's* consistent'

'So this is why I'm here'

'Watching this film for the second time tonight'

'Because, what better way than to resign yourself to settling for the same thing as you did before?'

'I resign myself to a lot of things'

'Or rather *into* – I resign myself *into* a lot of things'

'Jobs for instance'

'& relationships'

'This usually happens after the desire for fulfilment starts outweighing an attempt to settle, which happens perhaps, more than I would like'

'It is something I have become aware of that I need to change about myself – this learning to find fulfilment in settling – I have known people who can do this & they seem happy, or at least'

'Neutral'

'This for lack of a better word –*content* seems too strong & *indifference* not quite strong enough'

'I am struggling for a position that occupies the space between'

'10-16, as far as I can tell, is not really a film'

'It's more what you'd call an anti-documentary art film than an actual film film'

'But anyway'

'The main concept here, or rather *device*; the main *device* she uses is the idea of people confessing their secret desires, thoughts, & feelings on video- *like a sort of agony aunt vox-pop talk-show; an ironic Oprah* '

‘Only, she switches the confessions the various characters make by using a bit of clever editing trickery known as *lip-synching*’

‘So’

‘For instance’

‘We the audience get to eavesdrop on a naked adult dwarf in a bathtub confessing a 14 year old boy’s secret desire to murder his mother & her lesbian lover’

‘& I mean, haven’t we all had this moment at some point in our lives?’

‘Just tell me who has *not*, at least once, felt like a naked dwarf lip-synching to someone else’s childhood memory?’

‘And then there’s the young girl confessing that she has no real problems except for how to go about getting an abortion’

‘Again, a concern for all of us at this age’

‘Now, the thing going on here –*if I am getting this film correctly*– is the same as the question Eva sent me on a postcard before it happened’

‘The postcard is like all her others’

‘It has, as always, a hand-drawn picture of the two of us on the front’

‘Only this one has us wearing each others clothes & it’s captioned’

“What if body is deep & even deeper at the surface?”⁶

‘& what if disconnection from self grows when the importance of how you look becomes less?’

‘Because’

‘In your dreams; isn’t every part of you...’

‘*Perfect?*’

⁶ Anne carson

'That's what it says'

'I'm not sure if this 10-16 film is *art* like Eva's *Etcha-Sketch painting*, which is basically just an Etcha-Sketch inside a picture frame stuck on a wall'

'Or'

'If its art like her *Sell-u-light-Eye in a country Outhouse ala messieurs Duchamp et Mc Luhan*, which is an image of an eye constructed out of tiny fragments of celluloid from bygone eras'

'The eye is meant to resemble Anna Karina's from that Scene in Goddard's *Alphaville*'

'This is the one where the couple are in a shadowy bedroom talking about love'

'& he says, *when I said it I was in love with you*'

'& she replies. *Love? What is that?*'

'& then the scene cuts to an image of police car outside the window'

'& then back to them'

'He starts caressing her, & he says'

'*This*'

'& she says, *no*'

'*I know what that is. She says. It is sensuality*'

'*No. he says. Sensuality is a consequence. It cannot exist without love*'

'*So what is love then? She asks*'

'& then cut back to the police car which is a sort of overhead shot of all three of its four doors snapping open in perfect unison'

'This Other Side Up is the place I'm supposed to be tonight. This is what the flyer is telling me'

'& I'm already not there'

'It is like a heartbeat, the flyer, reminding me of my routines. That life is still beating outside my window'

'After the fire that took almost everything, this is the job I now have to cover the raise in rent'

'I cover Dylan songs at open-mic night to wrap up the stage'

'It is my job to tie the evening into an end'

'Sometimes I play Muddy Waters, Ry Cooder, Leadbelly, or Howlin Wolf'

'Whatever the crowd wants or doesn't want'

'Guthrie, Orbison, Cash'

'I draw the line at Elvis. Buddy Holly was the King of Rock & Roll'

'Whatever I want to play. The only rule is *no originals or obscure bands*. This of course is the only stuff I want to play. So I compromise. I do what I don't want to, to pay the rent'

'But tonight, if I go, it'll be my the first time in this place without Eva'

'Tonight, if I go, I think my body will stay behind & watch another movie'

'Or '

'The other way around'

'Do you see what's going on here?'

'I can't insulate myself against time'

'You think maybe you can do this. You think you can suspend the reality of what just happened, turn it into one long note, but then something like this flyer comes along & reminds you of your routines'

'& now I can't avoid the questions'

'Or rather, the answers to the questions'

'Because, what would I normally be doing?'

'& then, *why* am I *not* doing this?'

'No matter which way I look at it, the answer is the same'

'I'm afraid of remembering that she isn't here. Of what it will do to me'

'Or'

'Won't do to me'

'& I am scared, that my pulse will not change'

'Because what if the man is right?'

'What if it is not the other way around?'

'What if'

'Every fear, *actually* masks a desire?'

“Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin

‘Let’s start with the break-up & work our way back to not knowing each other’

‘She says’

‘Because I really don’t want to know you *better*, I want to know you *less*’

‘& isn’t this what we all want in the end?’

‘It started with a suitcase’

‘& it lasted as long as it takes to smoke an after-sex cigarette’

‘7 & ½ minutes, she said’

‘They did a test’

‘& this is when it happened’

‘The test was to determine how much time corporations lose to cigarette breaks’

‘But *escape* is what they should really call them, she said’

‘Because isn’t that what they *really* are?’

‘At two in the morning the city is a graveyard’

‘The buildings rise up around you like walls of a coffin & it’s so quiet you can hear the sound of your shadow dragging over stone’

‘It’s so quiet each sound becomes its own unique event’

‘This is how Eva came into my life’

‘Like a sound that shattered the silence & then just kept echoing’

‘The relationship happened on the top step of a cathedral at two in the morning’

‘& it happened on a boat & in the street’

‘& when it happened, it lasted the 7 & ½ minutes the test found it takes the average smoking employee to finish a cigarette’

'& don't you think this is the perfect length of time for a relationship? She said, leading me blindfolded down the street towards the next part of how we were spending the evening'

'I mean why go through all the crap of getting to know someone when you just know its going to end in the need for a cigarette?'

'Why not just fast-forward straight to the satisfaction?'

'For the date, she'd split the evening into four parts; each part an activity she'd always wanted to do but had never got round to doing; because, she explained, she'd finally got tired of all that talk about slipping in bed & waking up dead in a bathtub, *or traffic*, & realizing you hadn't done any of the things you'd planned to do before you died'

'*Emergency contraception* is how she explained the reason why'

'It is what she'd written on the postcard that came the morning after the night it happened'

'The post-card is a hand drawn picture of the two of us & in it I'm a flying bug circling a lamppost'

'Because of the story I told you, she'd written, & do you remember?'

'The story is the one about why flying bugs are attracted to light'

'& it's not what you think'

'The reason is *not* heat'

'We were rounding the corner into the street she said had all the art supplies she needed to for our relationship when she told me that after the test, she made a *what now* list on the back of a receipt which has listed on it following.'

'Thorazine - suppository'

'Tampax'

'm & m's'

'Small teddy bear- brown'

'& a hand mirror'

'The exact details of our date is item number 3 of 7 on the list'

'It was Salvation Army day, she explained. Once a month they pick up all the things that people don't want. The things they just *had to have* & *had to have* until they had to have something else; so they throw them out in the street & move on'

'She said'

'The cycle of life'

'& you can construct an entire life around the things people don't want if you just pay attention to the street'

'*Art* supplies, she said & then had me help her cart an entire living room from the sidewalk into the middle of the street'

'For the movie part of the date, she said'

The film she'd chosen for the movie part of the date wasn't a real film'

'Instead, she made us lie down in the street. Heads resting against a couch; to watch rain falling through the city lights'

'& then, because they were there, distracting us from the film, the film turned into flying bugs circling a lamppost'

'Like a *real* movie, she said'

'You know how it's going to end for them, I mean, can you *feel* the suspense every time one of them gets too close?'

'I want to shout, *no. don't do it. Escape*'

'But, just like if it were real... I mean if I did this; if I told them what I knew & they knew what I did, do you really think they would change the road they're on?'

'Like that Stairway to Heaven song? I said'

'She told me to shift closer, to lie down next to her, & stare at the absence of stars'

'& that is what we did. We pressed our bodies tight against the cold stone & lay there, silent under the weight of a shared cigarette, staring at what we knew was there but could not see'

'Because it is like this, she said'

'Heartbeats synchronise when they are pressed together for too long'

'Couples start looking the same when they have spent too much of their lives alone in each others company'

'Staring at themselves from inside each others eyes'

'& after enough time together, owners begin to resemble their pets'

'Because it is *not* the other way around, she said'

'The studies show that *we* are the ones that adapt *best*'

'& can you feel yourself turning into the city?'

'She said'

'Can you feel your skin turning into stone?'

'The term for it is mimicry, & it is what plants do to have sex'

'They pretend to be a female insect by re-producing the sex-pheromones she gives off to attract males'

'*Sexual deception* is the other name for it'

'& then, as the urgency of lust wears off in that final moment, *because, you only ever see things clearly when the excitement of sex has finally worn off*, it suddenly dawns on him that he's just humped a flower, tricked into it'

'The way your leg is sometimes tricked into humping a dog'

'& you just know that this is a story he will *not* share with his friends'

'Tell me a funny story, she says, so I can focus on somebody else's pain for a change'

'I'll trade you for sad story, I say, but not the kind with a punch-line'

'So she tells me about a man named Victor Lustig who sold the Eiffel Tower to scrap-metal dealers, twice, before they figured out he was a con-artist'

'& about the writer who bound one of his books in sandpaper so it would literally eat other books on the shelf'

'& about one of his friends who tried to blow up the Eiffel tower for the sole reason that its lights shone in his window & kept him awake at night'

'& then because she saw my eyes asking for more'

'She told me about John Cale'

'About how he used to play bass for the Velvet Underground, and that once, he did a show that involved bringing a pot-plant out on stage & then screaming at it for as long as it took'

'The plan, she tells me, was to scream until it died'

'& isn't this how it goes for all relationships in the end?'

& did you know,

She said

'That hunting moths under a streetlight is illegal in California'

'That this is an actual law'

'& that you can get fined up to \$500.00 if they catch you molesting a butterfly?'

'Did you know that?'

'& that In Alaska, it's illegal to throw a live moose out of an airplane'

'Even if he's wearing a parachute'

'& these laws are important, she said. Because they force you to ask *why?*'

'I told her there's a sign on a Thai temple that says it's forbidden to enter a woman; even a foreigner dressed as a man; & do you want to break that law?'

'& she said'

'Because of the slogan; & do you remember?'

'The one on the inside of Rizla packets?'

'It says, the *art* of rolling'

'That's a story for another time, I said, for when we're closer to it'

'& can we please not be so nostalgic for once? It is painful enough having to think about the future without *also* having to drag the past into it'


 “Eva?” by Me {theTinRoof *folk*-Sessions - *A diary*
of Bootleg & Whiskey}

‘These things are all going to die. That is what she said’

‘But only after I said it first; the mimicry; a reference to a thing our friend Lizzy does without realizing’

‘In conversation, she’ll unconsciously mimic the personality she is with. & sometimes this personality is her TV’

‘So you can imagine then what it was like trying to explain to everyone at the gallery that night; that *no*, Lizzy was not in fact a little safety-pinned punk bitch who somehow thought *she* had the depth of emotion & insight; & not to mention *the nerve* to think that *she* could offer a *critical comment* on the featured *artist’s* work *or* the psychological breakdown he credits as the inspiration for the work by acting out a scene from the Muppets in front of his most *personal piece to date*; assuming, naturally, as she does, the roles of both Kermit & Mrs. Piggy; because they’d run a Muppets marathon on TV earlier that day’

'& how were we to know?'

'How were we to know that Lizzy would do what she did?'

'When no-one batted an eyelid after she dropped her scissors on the pile of cartoon-animal cut-outs?'

'The ones she'd been *rescuing* from the pages of magazines & cereal boxes all evening for the baby book she was making'

'& then after, how she just flopped herself down in the corner of the room & said nothing all night; & the smudge of eyeliner on her face when we all know she is the kind of person who *never* cries until she *does*'

'& why is it no-one saw what was going on when she got up & made her way to the kitchen for another beer? How we didn't think this strange, all of us knowing she'd given up drinking?'

'& can you please tell me the reason none of us noticed when she rolled & then smoked that *one last cigarette* she swore she wouldn't have in the 9 months it would take?'

'Because I need to know, please, the reason we only remembered seeing all of this when we thought about it after it was too late for our thoughts to matter?'

'& how? Failing to notice any of these signs, how could you blame *us* for *not* noticing when she quietly made her way across the living room, to the window, with us all sitting there not paying attention'

'& then when she opened it & leaned out just that little bit too far; & when she sat there in the window box with her legs dangling over the edge, smoking that last cigarette; how she must've been thinking about the things she'd thought about all evening; the things we'd all missed'

'Those *unmistakable* signs'

'& after'

'With none of us realizing that all this was happening'

'*When she did what she did?*

'Because, how were we to know that her mother had just died, & then'

'*Worse?*

'The man on the TV said this; Worse. What could be worse than losing a parent?'

'Lizzy is the baby of our group'

'She's the bassist in our band and is also the most suggestible person you have ever met. She'll come across an advert & suddenly develop a craving for whatever product it is; not realizing she's just been told to have that craving by her TV'

'In the space of a single soap opera she'll get through a total of two ice-creams, one of the new low fat veggie-burgers, life insurance *for woman*, the new Ford Mondeo, & a boyfriend who takes off his shirt every time he enters a room'

'Once, after watching an episode of the Smurfs, I told her the series is actually based on reality'

'I said, did you know that in the early 70's a group of hippies tripping on magic mushrooms in a Norwegian forest –a *Norwegian wood*– stumbled onto a village of tiny blue people called the Smarfens who spoke a language called *Punken Smarfen*, & who, because of their isolation for so many years, & *the cold*, had followed an entirely different evolutionary path to the rest of civilization?'

'& she actually believed me'

'One of our favorite pass-times is to play tricks like this on Lizzy'

'Like the night in the pub on Jesus Lane when Eva dared a stranger to start up a conversation with her'

'The guy followed the script to the letter when he sat down in the bathroom stall next to hers & he said; *what a great night out*

'& then when she said nothing because that was the night she'd planned to be depressed & in a huff & in the bathroom alone for no reason; how he filled that silence with what Eva had told him to say'

'& how she jumped up on the toilet & stuck her head over the dividing wall to ask, what war? Shocked; the way we all knew she would be'

'& then when Eva pulled herself up on to the toilet in the stall on the other side of Lizzy's & stuck her head over & replied'

'Haven't you heard the news? *Disbelief*. They started up the Cold War again. & the communists have invaded *everywhere*. They did it *to* address the *economic downturn* caused by the West's *over-investment* in *communication* technology'

'& this for the *third* time now'

'That's why there's so many of them in the pub tonight, Eva said'

'Spies, the guy whispered'

'& Eva said. Yes. Just look at them. All those socialists. Spies. Doing their'

'& a chorus of'

'*Socializing*'

'This because Lizzy had made the mistake of interrupting an earlier conversation to ask if that's what *socialism* meant'

'The things that were going to die the night Lizzy's mother did & worse, were Bonsai trees'

'An entire miniature forest that filled up every inch of space in our living room for half a week'

'Eva got the idea after *finding* a set of *abandoned* pots & a how-to-bonsai book outside our local nursery'

'Her version of a *quick cash* scheme. She reasoned that if the nursery owner who had been in business for 25 years –successfully– had thought there was a market for them but had failed to capitalize on this due to his obvious lack of skill, commitment, and creativity; then it must be worth a go'

'So she made a shopping list'

'Trees'

'Stones'

'Dirt'

'Lizzy & Jack were tasked with the dirt & stone'

'Which they dug up in the Bridge Street cemetery'

'Leaving Eva & me with the job of finding the right kinds of tree, which is not as easy as you might think, because shopping with Eva is never *just shopping*'

'One of her main goals in life is to die without having ever really spent any money on anything'

'To get by entirely on her wits & creativity'

'Because who do you know that has ever done something like this?'

'Always this quest to be *original*'

'& *basic survival*, she says; isn't this the ultimate a test of creative skill?'

'So this is how –*because of Eva's creativity*– we ended up, at two in the morning, stealing over suburban fences to *shop* for trees in perfectly tended plots of garden surrounded by manicured lawns'

'Her solution to the obvious problem of how to produce the *authentic* looking bonsais –the aged look– was to find & cut *bonsai-like* branches from full size trees & then stick them in a pot for a quick discount re-sale at the open air market of a neighboring town'

'Before they died'

'A close call was a woman in a nightgown & slippers who shuffled onto her porch to ask us *what in god's name are you doing to my trees at this time of the morning?*

'Eva's reply nearly turned me into jelly'

'She said; we're an after-hours municipal pruning service mam. Our job is to remove any branches of nature that might dangerously or otherwise obscure your view of the neighborhood. & don't worry; we work strictly on a volunteer basis so our service is absolutely free'

'This is like the time at a street party in New Hampshire when my friends & I were given the problem of making a keg move from one house to another'

'The streets were overflowing with roaming squad cars determined to clamp down on underage drinking; & all of us underage except for my friend Neil'

'An Irishman, who, when the rest of us scattered into the undergrowth of the neighborhood gardens at the sound of sirens rounding the corner, chose instead to stand resolutely by our keg, alone, in the middle of the street until the cops pulled up alongside & asked'

'What are you doing son?'

'& Neil, holding the tap in his hand like a leash; looked over at the cops & said'

'I'm taking my dog for walk officer. The lovely evening it is; & hey boy? Hey?
He said, bending over to stroke his keg'

'& when he tossed a stick across the street & shouted, *fetch Budweiser*, fetch; it
was all I could do, burying my head in the snow, to keep from turning inside out'

'Right lazy fucker he is, Neil said while they were checking his passport'

'The woman in the nightgown & slippers'

'The worst part about this is she actually invited us in for coffee'

'& then told us how nice it is to see young people doing some good for a change'

'Giving back instead of just *taking*'

'& how did you come around to volunteering? She asked'

'Eva told her it's a condition of our parole'

'That we held up a chain of pet-stores to free the kittens. Imagine, she said. All
those new kittens being mass produced & sold like Big Macs when everybody
knows there are perfectly good *used* ones at the local animal shelter'

'& it proves my point, she said. Those mass produced kittens didn't know what to
do with themselves when we set them free. They kept running back to the store'

'Completely lost without their inbred, natural, instinct to flee'

'Oh, the woman said'

'Oh. I guess you two should get back to work now then? I don't want to get you
into any trouble'

'That was our last house'

'& in case you're wondering, the story about the kittens is not a lie'

'& it is'

'& it's not because it really did happen; but it is, because it was not Eva & me
who did this, but Jack & Lizzy'

'The problem with Lizzy is she's a real nature lover. But this is also the thing we love about her'

'Our little freak of nature'

'Or as Eva calls her, *a failed critical comment on a nature freak*'

'& the things she does, like once, instead of chaining herself to a tree the way you're supposed to, she instead walked into a book store wielding a basketful of candles; her idea was to place a lit candle in front as many books as possible; to *mourn* the trees'

'& do you want to know how this turned out?'

'The worst part was when Eva heard what she'd done & then accused her of trying to stealing her personality. *The little con artist. The little actress*'

'Before Eva, & her quest for *originality*; I thought all these situations she constructed & forced me into over the last six years are the kind of thing that only happens in movies'

'My mistake was telling her this'

'The look she gave me?'

'I mean how dare I compare her to the biggest fake of them all? How dare I compare her to a *movie*?'

'You'd swear I told her; *no, Eva. Those pants don't make you look fat*'

'The second mistake I made was to ask her; didn't Lizzy once have an idea to start *breeding banzai*?'

'*Banzai* because she got the spelling wrong'

'& the jokes this produced'

'She wanted to *breed banzai* as a way of bringing *nature* back into the city'

'& do you see what's going on here?'

'This naïve & innocent act'

'Because that is what it is; an *act*. *The little actress*'

'Like the night her mother died and worse'

'The night she told Jack that *they* should go to the Bridge Street cemetery instead of the much closer Lewis Brothers construction site to dig up the dirt & stone that *Eva* needed to *bury* the *banzai* trees that *she* wanted to *breed*'

'How Lizzy always talked about life in terms of nature'

'How she always called babies & little children things like *little flower* and *willow-tree* and *kitten*; because they were *pure* and *innocent* &'

'Nature''

'& how she made Jack take that shovel and that duffel bag along with them to the cemetery for all the things they were going to dig up'

'Or *bury*'

'& How that baby was an *accident* the way Lizzy was an accident when we got back to the apartment later that night; &after'

'When she walked over to that window & nobody noticed'

'How when it happened, that it was Jack who told us, but only after'

'When the rest of us ran out of all our *what if's* and *why's*; how he was the one who rushed to fill that space'

'& how he filled it with what she'd told him & *only* him'

'That night'

'On their way to the cemetery; while they were walking down the foot-path'

'Through the forest of Copper-Beech'

'& through the field of wild Cheiranthus'

'& over that arched stone bridge that leads to the cemetery where they sat, smoking a shared cigarette, on a mound of fresh dirt, saying nothing'

'Until she said something she was saying to only him & nobody else, & does he understand?'

'That it was *their* secret & that she didn't want the rest of us to know; because it was my birthday & she wasn't going to be the one to ruin it by telling everyone'

'Her mother had died that night, but that really, they'd buried her previous week'
'& then worse'

'How he told us that she'd told him that she didn't want to go to the funeral & then didn't go'

'& why this; this is the real reason they'd gone to the cemetery'

'That night'

'The night of worse'

'The night the *bonsai trees* were born & died; both at the same time; on the same night; in a single act of cutting that cut deeper than the metaphor of a branch that dies the minute you cut it from a tree'

'The way you can look into the mirror & wish a part of you wasn't there'

'& then the feeling that you want to slice it off'

'That maybe a new one will grow back the way a star-fish can grow an entire new body around a severed limb'

'That maybe *you* are a severed limb attached to the rest of you and how the rest of you is dead weight'

'So you do it'

'You close your eyes & lift the sidewalk up to your body to cut'

'& then the thought that maybe the part of you that you really want to get rid of is a part you can't see'

'Like maybe a broken heart that in the space of a single night, broke *twice*'

'Or the way none of us thought it strange when she said the kind of thing she never says when she asked us; *what if you gave birth and the person you gave birth to was yourself?*'

'& what if the *kitten* died?'

'Because when it sunk in'

'& when she heard what they did'

'What *she* did'

'That night'

'When she went through her mother's closet for the one thing that was meant to be hers one day'

'And it wasn't there'

'& then suddenly, when *worse* wasn't there'

'& worse'

'The realization; that the *accident* that was as much an accident as when she lifted the sidewalk up to her body to remove it from herself; when the realization hit that this accident was the only part of herself she *didn't* want to cut off; & then when it wasn't there anymore; the way nobody rushed to fill that space; not even herself'

'The only way I can think to explain it is like this'

'I once had a flat-mate who dated a girl who had a four year old daughter who wasn't his'

'She was twenty years old'

'Which means she was sixteen when her daughter was born'

'& where is the father you want to know?'

'Her father had abandoned her the year she was born because of what happened the night his three year affair with lymphatic cancer ended'

'There are some things my friends don't know about me'

'Things I have never shared with them'

'& there are things they have not told me'

'Secrets'

'That perhaps should remain untold'

'Like that night when Lizzy told Jack that she would do something for him if he did something for her & that this thing was the one thing he'd always wanted from her that she'd never been able to give to him until that night'

'That if he went and fetched her that duffel bag and that shovel and went with her to the Bridge Street cemetery to dig up dirt & stone & the all the things her mother didn't pass on to her in life or in death & if he'd help her bury the *kitten* in that duffel bag; in her mother's grave; how she'd finally say to him; *yes*'

'& do you know what he did?'

'Or why none of us thought it strange how before they left she went to the freezer and came back with something wrapped in a towel?'

'How none of us asked what it was when she put it in the duffel bag?'

'So *carefully*

'Or wondered?'

'Or how no-one noticed, all week, not even once, when the corner of that pillow she'd made for her *kitten* slipped out the bottom of her shirt?'

'& how she quickly tucked it back in?'

'& how you can do something like run your hand through your hair every single day of your life but never hear the sound it makes until that *one night*'

'& then suddenly realize that this sound is something your ears have been hearing all this time without you realising it, not even once, until that night, until after'

'& then maybe you start to wonder, *why*'

'....When you went to the nursery the next day & the owner asked if your friend Eva picked up the bonsai pots Lizzy had bought from him earlier that week; the ones she said Eva would come around some time to pick up...'

'You suddenly heard the sound of Lizzy's heart beating inside you for the first time'

'Her mind'

'When you realised that she left those pots there for Eva to *find*; because she knew she would'

'& that she knew exactly what Eva would want to do with them'

'& how this would be the excuse she'd use'

'To take herself to the place she couldn't bring herself to go, all week, without an excuse that wasn't the reason she needed to go there'

'To tell Jack that for her to give him the thing he always wanted; herself; he had to dig up all the things her mother didn't give her in life or death & then bury the thing *she* couldn't give *him* in life or death; a future; herself'

'Because this is one of those secrets she never told anyone'

'Until the day she told *me*, when I was digging through the sock draw for what I thought I needed & instead found *the prescription* for what I didn't need to feel'

'The way she knew I would'

'& what that prescription said in words'

'& what it said in what words can't say'

'When words fail'

'The way mine did that night; & how my body rushed to fill that silence with tears when I realised what I did'

'How when Jack couldn't do what she asked him to do'

'How she did it herself instead'

'& how she knew this is how it would happen because she *knew* him; she *knew* all of us; the way I realised later that night; & only after, when it was too late for that realisation to matter; that none of us really *knew* her in the same way in which she gave us that gift of really knowing us; the one we took for granted until like so many words & dreams & loves & kittens; it was no longer there'

'& how when I couldn't think of any other way to think about this other than remember that father who abandoned his child, & wonder, if maybe my uncle got it right when he raised me so that I *wouldn't* inherit his legacy'

'& how I didn't want to'

'& how I did anyway without realising it'

'Because on that day that all those things were going to die & did'

'When I ran my hand through my hair & heard the sound for the first time'

'That is when I became my uncle; who sits on his porch all day; paying a little bit more attention to everything; saying a little less & less; because of what I am only now starting to understand what exactly it is that he sees & feels & hears each time he pays a little more attention to what it means to be able to answer that question'

'Worse? What could be worse than losing a *parent*?'

"Intermission"

▶ 'Cheated by the Opposite of Love' by

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs

'The Pogue's are playing a version of Dirty Old Town on the antique gramophone in the corner of the cabin & I think maybe this song is the soundtrack to my life'

'I think maybe I *am* the 'Dirty Old Town'

'There is no middle ground'

'Jack says this through clenched teeth clutching a smouldering cigarette'

'Swirling threads of grey smoke filling the air the way the hair of a living corpse flows under water'

'A roll-up cigarette pissing pubic hair strands of smoke from a burning red ember in front of Jack's face'

'A little cancer star swimming like a firefly in the dark corner of the room'

'The way it moves is the way an evil thought flows through your mind'

'The swirling strands of smoke you're looking at is underwater hair of the girl you just saved from life'

'She was begging you to do this in the end'

'Really, you did her a favour'

'This is what you'd call empathy'

'What you did was this...'

'You dragged her limp body through the forest to the edge of the lake'

'You dragged her body through the mud & the rain'

'She was wearing a thin white dress stained brown & red & wet'

'You could see the purple outlines of her nipples shining though the cheap material'

'You were slightly turned on by the sight'

'But this wasn't about sex'

'Bob Marley's Redemption Song was playing in your head in stereo'

'It was echoing in the hollow chamber of your mind'

'Echoing the way gun-smoke lingers in the barrel of a fired gun'

'Redemption song turned to 11 & consuming the sound your sin'

'This was the most peaceful moment of your life'

'& you'd never felt more alive'

'You don't remember any of this, but what you did was...'

'You stripped her naked & did a little ceremonial dance'

'A tribal jig'

'Like some prehistoric gypsy punk freak hopped up on peyote'

'You danced around her body the way primitive tribes do when they sacrifice their children to appease the gods'

'Think about the altar Abraham made for his son'

'Think about the Romans cheering when god sacrificed his son'

'In a hundred years, people are going to worship you for this'

'They're going to write books about you & call it religion'

'What you did was this'

'You rolled a cigarette & sat on a rock under an old dead tree'

'You smoked it & watched the misty morning fog roll over the water into the forest'

'It was dawn & the sun was rising in the west'

'Pink & orange & grey shining through black'

'It was the most beautiful sunrise you'd ever seen'

'The sound of birds & insects & cicadas'

'Imagine'

'You finished your cigarette & dragged her limp body into the lake'

'She giggled'

'The water was a sheet of cold glass'

'You could see my face staring back at you off the surface & the sight made you sick'

'The way you shattered my reflection was you pushed her face against the pane of water'

'The pressure of her touch sent a thousand perfect ripples away from her cold skin, rolling outwards & increasing in size until they disappeared inside the fog'

'You pushed her limp body into the lake & you dove into the cold liquid after her'

'A thousand wasps stung the surface of your skin'

'This is how cold it was...'

'Your heart rewound back to the night you lost your virginity'

'This is how fast it was beating'

'The hair on the back of your neck stood as erect as your attraction to her naked, limp body laid spread across the mud & dirt & time polished stone cold & smooth as her dead eyes'

'Your heart was bottled cement'

'Cold liquid freezing in its cracks'

'Ice expanding outwards against the walls of your bottled cement'

'Expanding'

'Waiting'

'Waiting to explode'

'This is what happened'

'She hung on the surface for a moment'

'Like she was paused image on a movie screen'

'A freeze frame image suspended in time'
'& then slowly'
'She started sinking'
'You spun in the water underneath her so your back was facing the bottom of the lake & what you did was this'
'You slowly let the air out of your lungs'
'You inhaled in the wrong direction so you could drop through the water underneath her'
'You did this so you could watch her body fall'
'So you could watch her sink'
'In your head, she was falling off a high rising building in slow motion'
'Drifting like an autumn leaf to the dirt'
'She was dropping like a stone feather through the cold morning air'
'You both were'
'Falling'
'Your arms stretched out to control your decent'
'You both drifted down through the cold liquid in perfect synchronised harmony'

'Her eyes were wide & pale blue'
'Thick rings of black eyeliner diluting in the liquid'
'Running down her face & through the water like tears of black blood'
'Her lips were purple & slightly parted'
'Her skin so white you thought she was made of snow'
'Still fresh on your lips, the salt & rust taste of her heart hung like the threads of black tears bleeding into the water from the open wounds of her eyes'

'Do this'
'Cut yourself & lick the wound'
'This is the taste of a human heart'
'Salt & rust'
'Submerge the bleeding wound in water'
'The way your blood flows looks like this girl's underwater hair'

'The way it looks is like the smoke from my cigarette'

'The way it looks is like Eva's black tears'

'We dropped to the bottom of the lake & I kissed her'

'I'd used up all my air to control my decent'

'On the bottom of the lake, we made love'

'How you make love to a corpse is the same as how you make love to a living person'

'There's no such thing as a living person'

'Our bodies convulsed from lack of oxygen'

'We struggled against the fight for orgasm & the need for air'

'Sexual gratification or life'

'We held it until we couldn't hold it anymore'

'We held it until we were at the point of death'

'& then, at the moment of release, we surfaced for air'

'This was the first time Eva & I made love'

 “In between Days” by the Cure - { the acoustic version } -

Or {“For Emily; Wherever I may find her” by Simon&Garfunkel}

‘Wha-da-ya want from me, Charliehorse?’

‘These are the words of Lambchop, celebrity sock puppet from the Shari Lewis show’

‘In this episode, first aired on the NBC TV network in 1961, Charliehorse is asking Lambchop the sock puppet sheep if she wants to *play* with him’

‘& Lambchop says, real sarcastic & suspicious, *wha-da-ya want from me, Charliehorse?’*

‘This is also the first thing Eva said to me’

‘That night’

‘Outside the Green Street Backpackers at three in the morning’

‘When we were the only two people out in the street, & I was doing what I sometimes like to do when no-one else is around to see me’

‘& then *she* was there, & the realisation that she was *there*; leaning out of that second story window; watching me as I stood there in the middle of the street; in the rain; just feeling that feeling of rain on your body’

‘It was the girl from the lake who first got me into the habit of doing this’

‘After the canoe, when she swam back to the forest & I stayed just that little bit longer to be alone, just for a second, which is another one of those things I like to do’

‘The way sometimes, after sex, Eva & I will share a cigarette & then I’ll go outside right after & have another one on my own’

'It is important to me, I think, that feeling of being connected to something & then that rush to break the connection the moment I feel it'

'For all those reasons of intimacy; sinking; giving; & losing. Always losing the things you love the most, & the thought that maybe if you can learn to love them a little bit less it won't hurt so fucking much each time'

'So you find excuses. She's not *funny* enough, *smart* enough; *pretty* enough'

'Even though she is all of these things & more'

'& *more* is the reason'

'*Why*'

'You wedge the distance'

'Like pouring water in the crack of a rock & leaving it out in the snow overnight'

'Because, *what if?*

'Any moment now something is going to happen & maybe this time you won't be able to pick yourself up off the floor'

'& the idea that maybe you can control it; that for what it's worth, maybe, if'

'If you just had *some* control'

'So you gather up all these little things that make you original; unique; loveable; *special*; & you give her all these things & more until that one day; when for no reason; you just, stop'

'You make one less joke than you used to & you don't quite *get* what she means *this time*'

'Tomorrow you become a little more impatient; a little less understanding'

'Until she starts feeling the distance grow & then fights that feeling of unravelling thread'

'Filling that space with her body & her mind; her fears & insecurities'

'That argument; the one over *that last cup of tea* you so thoughtfully stirred *two* spoons of sugar into, just the way she likes it, when you know she drinks her tea with three'

'& how; after all this time could you *not* know you this about me?'

'How could you not have noticed, not even once, in all that time we talked about it; how, the only thing I ever *really* wanted for my birthday was that Cure album I don't have but how you got me the Joy Division one instead?'

'& why is it everyone in my life either dies or disappears when I am the only one who ever really wanted to do this?'

'Why them & not me?'

'& why is it always after; that feeling of what I realise when she finally leaves'

'After the fact'

'The way disconnection in the end is not me from her; but her from me; that she is the one feeling the disconnection, not me'

'Because what if I thought this was the most love I could ever give her?'

'What if all I have to give her is a space for someone who is *not* me to fill; someone better, for her; & the feeling that maybe it isn't actually her'

'That it *is* in fact *me*'

'I wonder sometimes if she knows just how much I loved her & still do on the nights I stand out in the rain at three in the morning trying to hide what I'm not supposed to do'

'Because'

'*Boys, don't, cry*'

'& maybe if I could learn to live without people. If I could learn to be alone & not need somebody to feel that feeling of something inside me when she presses her words against my body; her skin'

'If I could just learn to do this, then maybe I wouldn't have to hurt people'

'The way they hurt me'

'My aunt turned to writing after the idea of being an eccentric composer didn't work out for her; or us'

'*Noir* children's books with themes including murder, betrayal, divorce, violence, & spousal madness –picture an elf necking a bottle of tequila & then hurling a television set across the room. Sometimes the TV was a cat'

'The thing that got her in the end was razorblades; *blades plural*, because it took more than one. A whole ship's container full of them; bought on a whim at one of those mystery auctions where the highest bidder walks away with *whatever is inside this container*'

'& do we hear our entire family savings going once, going twice, & *exchanged* for the kind of razor-blade that nobody has ever used, not even once, since the 60's; except for the purpose of suicide?'

'My aunt was what doctors today would call *bi-polar* –but they didn't have the terminology back then, or did, but psychiatry in those days was something reserved for *crazy people* – &, or, pride'

'*Pride*; I think. It's a symptom of *sanity*'

'Isn't it?'

'On good days she'd donate all my clothes to charity & then force me to wear my twin sister's *hand me down* dresses –*me*, a *boy*, & what is worse is I didn't even have a sister, or did, for the brief moment it took to declare her stillborn'

'After the accident I survived but my parents didn't'

'My aunt continued buying clothes for my sister right up until her 14th birthday '

'That is when she finally built up the courage to end it by *faking* her death'

'But this is only one version of what happened'

'In the other version; it is the day *–not able to take it anymore–* my stillborn sister finally ran away. Though, I am not sure which version is closer to the truth; the details on this are fuzzy'

'In my aunt's version, a building did it. She jumped. But she had my uncle tell me the news & he said it was a car-wreck. He said they'd discussed this at length & had agreed that tragic loss of a child was easier to justify to the neighbours than adoption –the abandoning of a child; imagine, what the neighbours would think? What would they *say?*'

'& besides, he said. Your aunt needs the tragedy for her art'

'We both do. So you understand?'

'I said; you're not talking about my *sister*, are you?'

'They changed their mind soon after, but this, I think, was the day that most of my sister left

'& there is a feeling; sometimes. That it was me. That I was the one born dead'

'That it was her, my sister, *who lived*'

'Aside from Eva & the Kitten & the Kat & my parents I've only had two other deaths in my life'

'My grandmother and a best friend'

'The best friend's father is the one who told me; the night I couldn't make it back for at least a month & when I did, how the last words my grandmother said to me were; *please*, promise me you'll drink lots of water'

'Have you ever wondered why I always carry that bottle around with me?'

'Or how I throw salt over my shoulder?'

'Another thing my grandmother taught me'

'Always right over left – to prevent an argument. & I have heard a lot of other versions for the reason of doing this but the one I have taken as my own is the one my grandmother gave me'

'& I am not, as you might think, a superstitious person, but I would not blame you for coming to this conclusion if you were look at me for the first time'

'The bracelet I wear on my wrist is woven hemp; the hemp from four different parts of the world. North; East; South; West. In the centre there is a stone pendant with an aboriginal carving on the face; which if I remember the story as the girl from the lake told it to me, is meant to symbolise safe travel'

'Another symbol for safe travel is a ring with a Viking ruin sign on it; Raido; which is meant to bring the wearer a journey in two parts. The first part easy & the second a challenge'

'The ring was bought for me as a parting gift from *myself* –on the instance of the girl I had known for the week when we wound up sharing a room in the Irish Embassy youth hostel in Boston; this despite there being a strict rule about boys & girls in separate rooms unless you're a couple, which they thought we were because we both arrived at the same time & alone'

'& there have been moments when my life has been hit by an unexpected challenge & my first instinct was to look down at that ring; & think, *has it started?*'

'A thing I try hard to remember & can't is what the card that came with the ring had said about the significance of wearing the symbol pointing in alternate directions'

'Forwards or backwards'

'Towards your body or towards the world'

'I have chosen to fill this space in my knowledge with the belief that one way means a safe journey & the other a challenge; that you have a choice instead of surrendering your fate to the *gods* –this is the most logical assumption, I think?

'But what if you are not travelling is what I want to know?

'What if you are stuck in one place?'

'Often, I have found this ring contradicts me; or itself; so I turn it both ways, back & forth, all day, to confuse it, or those Viking gods; or myself; perhaps'

'The feeling that I am moving when I am not'

'A prayer circle, also made of hemp, on a necklace of sea-shells collected from beaches all over the world. Aside from the ring & the bracelet & a lucky guitar pick, this is the only other symbol of safe travel I keep with me'

'All these lucky-charms are the kind of thing I have gathered over the years'

'Memories of people I have loved & known'

'& I wonder'

'Sometimes'

'If I would remember them if I didn't carry all these bits & pieces of them to remind me'

'& the feeling that sometimes I want to get rid of it all'

'Chuck it out the window of a moving train'

'As though you can rid yourself of the pain of loving someone by removing the thing that brings them back'

'& have you ever thought it strange, I wonder; how it is never things like thoughts & ideas that bring back the memory of a person or place? But smell, & sound, & taste'

'Or the weather'

'It has always been something that moves me'

'First my body & then my mind; to another place; without actually moving me at all'

'That smell in the air when the seasons change?'

'Another thought; about why; why is it your body always arrives at the memory of a place before the rest of you?'

'That was how I felt the night I met Eva; that my mind & body had finally arrived at the same place at the same time. None of that slow motion whiplash for a

change; the way part of you is always left to catch up & just as it does, the other part takes off again'

'A vivid memory of that night is that she was the one on top & I was the one on the bottom; & how this defined the rest of our time together'

'The idea of an independent woman is always something I've found attractive'
'& scary as hell'

'Both at the same time'

'The thought of having your masculine identity constructed in relation to what a woman expects of you & having her expect *more*'

'& isn't this how it happens anyway?'

'& shouldn't it be?'

'Perhaps it has nothing to do with me at all. Perhaps it's that she expects more of herself; to fight for *her* identity; & that this is something I find attractive because it forces me to live up to the image of me she creates'

'Like being a photograph of yourself, taken from far away; & how if you can just find that right person who'll pull you in'⁷

'Towards yourself'

'Moving towards Eva was instinctual that night'

'& when I did'

'& what she said'

'& how I knew in that moment that I'd found the one'

'When she said, as though she'd read my movement towards her as a thing as good as if I was asking'

'As though, in that moment, because there we both were, doing the same thing that nobody else was doing, we were committed to following it through'

'Which is what we did the minute she said'

⁷ Line (& part of previous one) inspired by & adapted from 'Dilate' by Ani DiFranco

'Let's start with the break up & work our way back towards not knowing each other'

'Because I really don't want to know you better, I want you less'

'& isn't this what we all want in the end?'

'When I asked her to if she ever planned to come down from the window & she said no, & then went on to explain the reason why'

'Because'

'It is like the thing they do in movies; she said. Where to suggest dominance they shoot the *dominant* figure from the bottom up'

'Forcing us & the other characters to look up at him, & as a natural consequence, up *to* him'

'Because *he* is always a *man*. *She said*'

'& I want to try a relationship that works the other way around for a change'

'So *you* come up to me'

'I told her to think of it rather as though she were coming *down* to my level'

'& in the end, this is what convinced her'

'Until that feeling we both get'

'But she didn't use a razorblade the way my aunt did'

'& there is room for irony in this; how my aunt always wanted to die & then when she was given 17964 chances to do this – I counted – she couldn't bring herself to do it. Even though we all insisted –a running joke in our house, when she alluded to *doing it* the way she did, all those times when she thought out loud to one of her plants; *that maybe I should just get it over with once & for all*; how one of us would always respond by telling her *the razorblades are in the shed*'

'& do you find it strange that the thing my aunt did to ruin our lives is what saved mine in the end?'

'I often wonder how my life would've turned out if I hadn't broken my leg that autumn when I jumped off the roof into that pile of leaves'

'& if hadn't been forced to find something different to do that winter because of my broken leg?'

'& what if I hadn't been bored & looking for that something to do in the shed that day; when I looked at all those hundreds of boxes of our family savings gone to waste & thought; what if I tried silver soldering two of these blades together?'

'What if I tried to bend them & join them?'

'& then when the end product turned out to be a tree; a sculpture; & then a woman's face; my aunt; & how people thought this was *art* & how selling this *art* is what got me the money I needed to get the out of the house'

'How do you think my life would've turned out?'

'& what do you think about the fact that I turned out, by accident, to be the very thing my aunt spent her life *trying* to be?'

'I wonder what Freud would say about that?'

'& then the realization that I am just like Eva'

'Who, when having a bad day will play up a secret from my past; one of her favorite pastimes; I think, to address the lack of conflict in our relationship by re-incarnating *my* childhood memories to deal with *her* present, past, & future issues'

'Like the night she filled the space'

'When for the rest of us it was the last thing we wanted to do'

'After the kitten'

'How she was the one who filled the kitten's room with all *her* childhood memories & then called it the *kiddie's* room'

'Eva's childhood memories are all on tape'

'Reels & reels of old movies & adverts & children's shows that she believes *colonised* her mind when she was a child; & which is now a process she believes she is reversing when she cuts them up & splices sections of sound into our songs; images & scenes from who knows where or why or when into the little *art-films* she makes & plays on the dirty stage wall of the Tin Roof Folk Club whenever we play there'

'The last one she was working on & never finished is the scene from that episode of the Shari Lewis show'

'The one that starts with the line that was also the first thing she said to me'
'& I have this scene committed to memory on account of the number of times she played it up there in the Kitten's room while I was trying to but couldn't sleep'

'After'

'After the kitten, I never went up there again. But the sound of her up there used to carry down to me because the Kitten's room is not so much a room as it is a kind of loft'

'A raised level'

'Like a wooden deck'

'Night after night every night of that last week in which Eva & I didn't once speak, not even once, the sound of that stupid show carried down to me'

'& now, I am starting to wonder, if maybe she was trying to say something'

'If maybe, because her body couldn't do it; she was using Lambchop to say what she wanted to say, every night of that week; over & over, when she would turn on that reel & Lambchop's voice carried down to where I was trying to sleep but couldn't'

'Asking, over & over'

'Wha-da-ya want from me, Charliehorse?'

'But I never replied the way Charliehorse does when he says, *you always want to play with me, & I always say no, but today I thought I'd say yes*'

'To which Lambchop responds'

'Yeah, yeah, yeah, & then, twisting her neck towards him & furrowing her eyebrows; that question, again'

'Wha-da-ya want from me, Charliehorse?'

'At this point Shari intervenes by asking Lambchop why she doesn't trust his intentions'

'& Lambchop asks her, do you remember the time Charliehorse wanted to play house with me?'

'Oh yeah? Shari Says. Were you the *mommy* or the *daddy*?'

'The *roof*, Lambchop says'


'The roof?'

'Yes. The roof, she says. Charliehorse said let's pretend it's raining & then he kept throwing water on me'

'So, wha-da-ya want from me, *Charliehorse?*

'I am thinking about this now & starting to wonder if Eva meant for me to see myself as Lambchop or Charliehorse in this scene, because in end, she was the one turned out to do all the wanting & the taking, & when it ended, the thing she'd taken the most of

Was'

{Intermission:}  **“Caribou” by the Pixies** (‘well sit right down my
evil son & let me tell you a story’)

‘Ask me how to gut an animal’

‘Anything you want to know about slaughtering the beast’

‘How to skin it, gut it, prepare the meat’

‘Which parts taste like what smell & why they taste that way’

‘The sweetest meat, you’ll find this near the kidneys’

‘70 % of the way something tastes’

‘Has to do with the way it smells’

‘The long rectangular stretches of tough, sinewy meat’

‘They come from either side of the spine’

‘Imagine the sound of a shattering backbone’

‘The taste of warm fresh blood better than mother’s milk’

‘Throw enough seasoning on a bucket of squirming maggots devouring
fermenting flesh & you’ll put it back the way you eat tiramisu in a 5 star French
restaurant’

‘Ask me about what parts of the animal are the best to eat’

‘Bursting fat maggots twisted into white knots digesting rotting green flesh the
smell of overripe peaches’

‘Ask any bum about how well you can survive by hunting in garbage cans’

‘Peaches & ice-cream’

‘White maggots with their yellow puss intestines pussing & oozing in your mouth
like yellow matted custard dripping from a dead dog’s eye,’

‘They’re an excellent source of nutrition’

‘The gag reflex’

‘This is about smell, not taste’

‘Ask me about my dinner parties’

‘The way my guests complement me on my cooking’

‘Most people, they don’t realize the things we don’t eat are usually better for us
than the things we do’

'Think about kids refusing to eat their vegetables'
'& you'll realise the problem with people is we've got irrational hang-ups about
the things that are good for us'

'Primitive tribes'
'They would eat their dead'
'This sort of thing'
'It disgusts civilized people'
'Disgusted civilized kids all grown up & still refusing to eat their vegetables'
'Refusing to eat what's good for them'

'Before the white man'
'Primitive tribes used to live for ever'
'The things *civilised* people never want to hear about is how they've actually
done tests that proves drinking blood heightens the senses'
'It improves eyesight & increases physical energy'
'Vitality'
'Think about vampires as a myth that emerged from civilized societies'

'& you'll realise the best way to bleed an animal is to hang it upside down & slice
its jugular'
'The way vampires do'
'Think about how all myths are based on reality'
'Civilized vampires with superhuman strength living for eternity'
'Vampires sucking blood from the jugular'

'This is a civilized reality'

'All this knowledge about eating the dead'
'It's all part of our collective lost knowledge'
'Lost & forgotten & *disgusting*'
'Until you start thinking about Abraham building an altar for his son'

'Nobody really thinks about what happens to freshly dead bodies after they're put in the dirt'

'Civilized people, we bury our reminders of our mortality as fast as we can'

'We stick our fear of death six feet under the earth'

'Fresh rich bodies buried with their gold watches & diamond rings'

'Their pearl necklaces & fermenting meat'

'What most people don't realize is that grave robbers are *not* an urban legend'

'Like civilized vampires living for eternity'

'Every myth is based on reality'

'Ask me about different types of meat'

'& I'll tell you'

'The liver is the best part of an animal'

'The most nutritious'

'But when you cut it free from the body'

'Make sure you avoid the bile'

'White spots on the liver means infection'

'Cancer'

'Maybe your animal was an alcoholic or drug addict'

'Eat around the spots'

'& make sure you eat it straight away'

'Cooked or raw'

'It doesn't matter'

'But usually'

'It's better for you when it's raw'

'Some of the kitchens I've worked in'

'The kitchens of restaurants you've probably eaten in a thousand times'

'The food you've probably eaten'

'Man, could I tell you some stories...'

 “The Ballad Of Throat Culture” by Phoebe Kreutz

‘An image of a one armed man trying to light a match in the rain is what got Eva into art school’

‘She took a photo of him’

‘& then she couldn’t stop watching him as he stood there in the rain, striking match after match, never stopping to ask for help or a light until eventually’

‘The box ran out’

‘& then, instead of giving up, what he did was the thing that changed her life’

‘He reached into his jacket pocket & pulled out another box & started trying to get it right all over again’

‘& why the guy didn’t just invest in a lighter is what we all want to know’

‘I mean, there is a level of self-awareness thing going on here, right?’

‘Apparently he was not all together himself, as Eva explains it’

‘He was singing a song whilst trying to do this; the first line of which goes’

‘Happiness happiness is different things to everyone’

‘But how because of the way he was singing it, or because of the cigarette clenched between his teeth, it sounded more like he was singing; *a penis, a penis*’

‘It was in the retelling of this story one night that Lizzy was reminded of an article she read about *a real life penis thief* from West Africa, who had moved to Sudan to steal men’s virility’

‘How he did this, apparently, was by shaking a man’s hand; sucking his libido right through his palm, & then demanding a large sum of money in exchange for its safe return’

‘How cool is that? Lizzy said’

'The rest of the article –which Lizzy hadn't got around to sharing because she'd been too distracted by the idea of a *real life penis thief instead of just a pretend one like Eva*– goes on to explain that the mass hysteria caused by this rumour had somehow managed to divert attention away from the news of a long awaited breakthrough in the peace negotiations between Sudan & its neighbouring Kenya'

'The reason for this story is it's the best I could come up with after reading today's *word of the day* on Lizzy's *word-a-day* toilet paper'

'She makes it herself; a joke that started that day Eva was in the bathroom & was suddenly struck by inspiration'

'Lyrics; that she'd been trying to get out all week but just wouldn't come, because *she'd* been too distracted to sit just down & focus'

'Until she did; & that is when it came in a rush of words that wouldn't stop'

'& with nothing to record them with except a mascara pen & roll of toilet paper'

'That is what she did'

'& when she rushed into the living room, too excited about the *best lyrics* she'd *ever written* to realize how it sounded to the rest of us when she explained how she just couldn't get that song out & how she was pushing & pushing & how when she finally just relaxed, it came'

'I thought Jack was going to pop an artery & because Eva is not the kind of person who can take a joke, Lizzy decided to rub it in by making her an entire month's supply of word-a-day toilet paper for her birthday'

'Today's word of the day is *diversion*; which is why I'm trying to remember all the big diversion themed moments in my life'

'So far it is only the two'

'Eva was meant to meet Lizzy at the Velvet-Room Art Cinema the night she got distracted by the one armed man'

'They were going to watch an old Goddard film; & Lizzy had some *big news* she had to tell Eva *right away*'

'The film was *a bout de soufflé*; which in the opposite of French means *breathless*'

'The story is one of a star crossed love affair between a young Jean-Paul Belmondo as *Michel Poiccard*, the tough guy criminal who is killed after getting betrayed to the police by his girlfriend, Patricia Franchini, an American girl scraping together a meagre living in Paris by selling newspapers on the street'

'This is Lizzy's favourite film'

'& because Eva never actually got around to watching it with her *like she promised*'

'She instead decided I should be the one to watch movies with her from now on'

'To annoy Eva I suspect'

'Because this is the only film we have ever watched'

'& then only when Eva has been around to watch us watching it, *together*'

'& for all these times I've seen this film you'd think I know how it ends, but I don't; because Lizzy keeps interrupting the action whenever we reach that scene in the middle, the love scene, to tell me *why* this is such a ground breaking film'

'*How Goddard's liberal use of the jump cut in a rather crude example of discontinuous editing opened the doors to the use of editing as a means of the exploring alternative narrative structures in film making*'

'& had she ever seen Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*? I wondered'

'My favourite film of all time is Andre Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*, for reasons I keep to myself'

'But there is this scene when the barn is burning, & you see all the men running towards it to save what is already lost'

'You can't help but think; what is the point?'

'This, I am sure, is the realisation the mother came to'

'In that moment'

'When instead of running towards the burning barn like everyone else'

'She chose to sit on the edge of the well & watch the flames consume their lives as though the tragedy were a work of art'

'I would like to be able to look at my life in the same way, but instead, find myself being distracted by all the little things'

'Thoughts mostly; like the question of Freud's analysis of art'

'Film particularly'

'How maybe the man who is supposed to be the father of modern psychology only ever had that *one big idea*; & then just kept repeating it in different versions of the same thing?'

'& what if *we all* only had one big idea?'

'& what if that big idea was how we ended up living our lives? Or ending it?'

'My friends are good with these kinds of thing. *Big Ideas*'

'Like when Eva came up with game where we all had to think of at least one original thing to do each week & then get the rest of us to do it'

'& how after the fight she had with Lizzy one night about who should sing what song at our next gig, Lizzy went to the Hat-box costume shop at the Canal street theatre the next day & rented bear suits for all of us'

'Because, *her* original idea for that week, she explained, was for us to live as Gummie bears for the next seven days'

'She told us that after the fight with Eva she'd watched an episode & it occurred to her that we'd all been acting very *uncaringly* towards each other; very un-Gummie & that maybe doing this would help us reconnect'

'& because the one rule of Eva's game is that everyone has to participate in everyone else's *original thing to do*, she couldn't back out when Lizzy outlined the rest of her plan, which was that we all had to pretend the city was Gummie Glen for the week; acting out a new episode each day'

'The art district, she told us, would be where Gummies live'

'& the part with all the money & jobs would be where Dukey & his trolls live'

'& that Eva was to play Dukey & his trolls whilst the rest of us played the Gummies'

'& because we were the *courageous & caring & dashing & daring* Gummie Bears whose *fucking songs filled the air*, our job would be to stop Eva's evil plan to *take over the fucking art district*

'& then when she went out & arranged for a flash mob to join in the game, how this turned out to be the best week of our lives for everyone except Eva'

'The only big idea I've ever had idea is to find new & interesting ways to be alone'

'& time, I've found, is the best place to go for this; the little fragments of early morning that people don't want; when they're asleep in bed; & I'm walking through the city, alone; gathering the image of my shadow circling around me as I pass a streetlamp'

'Standing in the middle of the street to see how many shadows of myself the city lights cast around me'

'Thinking about the women in my life in terms of shadow & light'

'Do I think of them as my shadows?'

'Or the light?'

'& which do I find more attractive?'

'& the way I sometimes stretch out my arms to see if my shadows will touch hands'

'Or when I lie down in the middle of the abandoned street; alone; staring up, under the weight of a cigarette & all my memories of when I was someone who hadn't stopped moving until the night I arrived in the city & met Eva'

'& how the moment I stopped moving'

'I lost my identity'

'Before Eva & the city; Lizzy & Jack; the words I would've used to define myself are *someone who escapes*'

'Now, I think, the feeling of myself, is as someone who wants to escape but cant'

'Because, let me ask you this; what kind of person would I be if I abandoned a *kitten*?'

'& then after, when the *kitten* died?'

'The Kat?'

'& what if it wasn't even my kitten to start with or the Kat wasn't something that really loved *me* the way it loved the idea of me but inside someone else; but stayed with me because I was what was there; the one who put my body & mind in that space because no one else did; because what if when I looked at them both & saw myself, I thought; what if someone had been there to look out for me?'

'& there was '

'Once'

'Someone who looked out for me'

'When Lizzy made us live as Gummie Bears for the week'

'It was after I'd told her this was my favourite show growing up'

'& how even with all the shit, things were simpler being a kid'

'Because there is still that hope when you're young, that maybe, you can escape into something better'

'That you will'

'One day'

'& then, when you don't'

'Over & over again'

'There reaches a point where you lean that guitar up against the wall, next to the girl, & you just walk away'

'Sometimes I wonder if I ended up with the right person'

'Because the last time Lizzy & I watched *Breathless* together; she did something that turned me inside out'

'When we reached that love scene, she left the room & came back with a pair of her socks & then quietly slipped them on my feet, *just because* she noticed I was getting cold'

“Intermission”



“Road to Nowhere” by The Talking Heads

‘I have a sail-maker’s needle permanently sewn into my backpack’

‘This is the 5 inch one with the flat edges & sharp tip

‘The flat edges are so the needle cuts *in between* the weave instead of through it’

‘The needle is a sort of heavy duty tool they use to pull twine through the canvas they use to make sails’

‘Mine belonged to my great-grandfather who picked it up when he travelled as an 11 year old stowaway on a ship from Ireland to wherever it was going’

‘For years, this was the only thing he owned’

‘Another thing sewn on the pack is a tattered fabric poster of Sid Vicious smoking a joint’

‘& the image has a slogan on the top right that says, *drugs kill*’

‘Now, you can take this slogan both ways; & I have often thought about which one of these two is the one I *mean to say more*; but the only answer I have ever been able to come up with is the one that sounds like maybe I’ve run it through my head once too often; in attempt to impress; like when it was Lizzy who asked the question & I looked at her & thought about how cool it was going to sound when I said; *the one I’m pushing is the one being advertised*’

‘& then the realisation of just how *cool* I can *actually* be when that part of me that is supposed to control the outpouring of these things isn’t working’

'There are some things I think that should stay in my head'

'Like this morning, when I looked down at my feet & thought out loud what I wish I'd whispered even though I was the only person in the room'

'Would you like to know what I thought was a deep thought?'

'I have sock puppets on my feet'

'Saying this out loud the second time, it still doesn't sound anywhere near as profound as it does in my head

'This is often a problem for me'

'Nothing out loud sounds as profound as it does in my head'

'The sock puppets on my feet are moose'

'Complete with floppy ears, beady eyes, & antlers'

'& they are from a book'

'Or rather; a *magazine*'

'This is one of those how-to arts & crafts magazines with a different theme for every edition. The one where the moose on my feet come from is lying on my living room coffee table'

'Where she left it'

'The picture on the cover, where the airbrushed cover girl is supposed to go, is instead a picture of two sock-puppets sitting on a park bench'

'A pink one & a blue one'

'Now; I think the pink one is meant to be the girl puppet & the blue one a boy, but I don't want to make any assumptions about this because of how those feminists can get about gender-stereotyping'

'But anyway, this picture is what is supposed to entice you to pick up the magazine & leaf your way through the history of sock puppets –including;'

'A brief history of the sock monkey'

'Famous puppets in history

'Current puppet uses'

'& everything else you did or did not know about sock puppets all the way up to the point-by-point instructions on how to make moose'

'The magazine was a thing Eva got for her last art project; to tie in with the Lambchop theme'

'But really, it was a way of getting through to me, I think, because there is a story here'

'The one I told Lizzy who responded by pulling a pair of socks on my feet that night; & which I think is something she must've told Eva, because why else would she have done what she did?'

'I think it is the city that does it to them'

'This need to outdo or unravel each other's lives'

'Competition'

'& always using that stupid *original idea* game of Eva's'

'Like the night she moved the living room out into the street'

'& then Lizzie, in response, stuck picture frames on a whole street full of store windows & signed them all; *Eva*'

'Why is it they always go for things that the other one loves most?'

'Like when Lizzie turned the city into Gummie glen when she knows that the Gummie Bears were Eva's favourite show when she was growing up'

'One thing I'm grateful for is that they've stayed away from Jack's interests'

'God help us'

'Wilderness survival'

'Tracking'

'Serial killers'

'Eva thinks she's the con artist in our group, but Jack was the one who taught her'

'He learned it when he lived on the streets; after he dropped out of school'

'When the doctor gave him the news'

'All his dreams gone in a single day'

'He wanted to travel the world after school'

'Go backpacking'

'& it was him who convinced his friends to go with'

'& then when he couldn't; how they went anyway'

'& it was a close call'

'The night he told us the story about that unemployed actor who invented a career for himself as a professional stalker'

'He'd stalk people's stalkers for a fee'

'& then Lizzie said; I had a stalker once. It was horrible. They're all you think about. It's like fucking identity theft'

'& Jack said, I stole someone's identity once'

'& went on to explain; when I was on the street. I was starving & the guy looked like me & his wallet & passport were just lying there on the table outside the coffee shop'

'This is when Eva came up with her original idea'

'We should start our own art school, she said'

'Teach people things like wilderness survival, tracking, con artistry alongside film-making, music, & acting'

'Projects like tracking random strangers; becoming them'

'Putting up little obstacles in their lives & then see how it changes them'

'A human art project'

'People as your medium'

'I said, isn't that the function of everything with a price tag?'

'Music; *TV?*'

'I said *TV*, because I knew that would kill the idea'

'The needle sewn into my backpack came before Sid. & it came before the safety pins. & it came before the buttons, & the razorblades. The strands of woven twine that dangle from zips holding key-rings attached to army surplus can openers, & guitar picks, & keys, & all the *everything else* that is also sewn into the fabric'

'These items, taken alone, are all *the kind of thing that is useful* when you live inside a backpack; survival tools; but this is not how they appear. Together, they conspire to suggest *decorative* instead of *functional*. Together, they imply *identity*'

'I think Lizzy & Eva have the same problem as my backpack'



play

“Venus in Furs” by The Velvet Underground

‘The girl strapped to the chair has just shit her pants’

‘This’

‘& Jack hasn’t even started his little game of Russian roulette yet’

‘If this wasn’t so funny’

‘I’d almost laugh’

‘Lizzie & Eva are taking *artistic* snapshots of shit pants’

‘Framing her from every angle’

‘Snap snap snap’

‘Camera shutters snapping like the sound of a shattering backbone’

‘They’re adjusting the lighting to create scenes with the *perfect* level of *noir*’

‘Every snap turning her suffering & humiliation into a work of *art*’

‘The whole thing is starting to feel like some *avant garde* fashion show from hell’

‘Like some red carpet event’

‘Like some staged movie scene’

‘& all I can think about doing is stepping outside for some fresh air & maybe another smoke’

‘All I can think about is how bad I want to feel the cold air on my skin’

‘But I have to operate the 16mm tonight’

‘I have to film shit pants shitting her pants’

‘Capture the expression on her boyfriend’s face the minute he rips his super-glued hand off his dick to go & help her. & do you think he will?’

‘It’s a hard choice; losing your dick *or* your girlfriend’

‘Jack says’

‘What Jack’s busy doing is he’s setting up the roulette part of the show’

‘& how this happens is the same as it *always* happens’

'Jack starts disassembling an AK-47'

'Slowly'

'Like Jack *always* does'

'& he *always* does this in front of whoever his chosen shit pants of the week is'

'& this shit pants is *always* some random dupe who maybe looked at him the wrong way at some point in the week'

'In my head,'

'I'm in another place'

'I'm listening to *The Cure* play on an endless loop on the wrong side of my ears'

'I'm listening to *Without You*'

'& I'm thinking about the loss of innocence'

'I'm remembering when I used to feel sad & lonely'

'I'm remembering when I still used to *feel*'

'This'

'Was back before I hoped away all my faith'

'& how I did this was I believed in the purity of love'

'Every morning it's the same thing'

'You wake up & you feel like you've surrendered your front lobe to your TV screen'

'You have the emotional response of a frog in slow boiling water'

'Life desensitising you to *feeling* the same way TV desensitises you suffering'

An interesting story about frogs

Polecats actually

'Jack'

'He *always* talks the shit pants through the whole fucking assembly/ disassembly procedure while he's doing it'

'Slowly'

'Like his mind is some military issued rifle manual for retards'

'*Rifles for dummies*'

'To build suspense'

'He says'

'Step one'

'Removing the bolt cover'

'This is a bolt cover'

'Jack says'

'Holding the rifle up to the her face'

'Holding it so close she can smell the *machine blood & oil*'

'Same as the smell of a dead bunker monkey'

'& how you remove the bolt cover'

'Is first'

'You press the serrated end of the *driving spring guide* into the bolt cover'

'Like this'

'Now'

'Hold the driving spring guide *in*'

'& then'

'Rear end first'

'Remove the bolt cover by lifting it *off*'

'Slowly'

'Jack removes the bolt cover & then he slams it down on the bar counter'

'Faking his thousand yard stare'

'What the shit pants of the week starts thinking at this point is exactly what Jack wants him to think'

'Psychotic ex-military weapons expert'

'What shit pants is thinking is'

'I'm about to be butchered by some freak who left his mind in a third world trench'

'& really'

'This isn't all that far from the truth'

'Shiny shiny'

'Shiny bolt of metal'

'Jack'

'Singing'

'Like *always*'

'*His version Venus in Furs* while he slowly disassembles the AK'

'Jack'

'Dancing around the room like some tribal freak hopped up on peyote'

'Rifle in one hand'

'Bottle of wine in the other'

'Shirtless'

'Hair matted & down to his shoulders'

'Ripped jeans'

'& a roll-up cigarette dangling from his mouth'

'The way he looks is like his identity is a giant decal sticker he peeled off some scene from a Vietnam movie'

'Apocalypse now'

'Peeled straight off the TV screen'

'Eva & Lizzie'

'They're also dancing around the room'

'& today'

'Because it's Monday'

'They're dressed in 70's thrift store'

'Dancing'

'But these bitches can't dance'

'The way they're moving, you'd swear they were hippies on an acid trip up their own arseholes'

'& dressed the way the are'

'They look like what happens to 70's thrift store clothes after you filter them through the mind of a homeless person on a crack binge'

'Gypsy punk freaks'

'Smiling & giggling like horny little schoolgirls at the Mad Hatter's tea party'

'Giddy'

'Step two'

'Jack says'

'*Removing the driving spring guide*'

'He tosses the bottle against the wall'

'& it smashes against the face of one of the graffiti faces on the wall'

'Red wine spilling down its lips like blood'

'*This is a driving spring guide*'

'Blah blah blah'

'The thing about Jack's brand of Russian roulette'

'Is it's *always* played with a Kalashnikov'

'This is non-negotiable'

'He says'

'I prefer the AK-47'

'Because this is the preferred weapon of third world child-revolutionaries'

'A child can learn to use this weapon in under thirty minutes'

'Go to Sierra Leone, Somalia, Russia, or The DRC'

'Pretend you're one of those over-privileged daytripping backpackers on a gap year from suburbia'

'Poverty tourism'

'Try Liberia, Angola, Guinea, & Iran for a fun time'

'Or maybe you'd prefer the social climate in India, Colombia, Burma, or Nepal'

'Plenty kiddies blowing each other to hell over there'

'Take a trip to Rwanda, Uganda, Cote D'Ivoire, or Chad for stories about rape & torture'

'Enough memories to max out the memory card of that top of the line digital camera you bought with money you earned from the job you never had'

'All across the world'

'Eleven year old AK-47 experts'

'Trained killers'

'Remorseless'

'So many children'

'Jack says'

'Can't be wrong'

'& I say'

'You realise Jack'

'That an AK-47 is an automatic rifle'

'I hold up an invisible notepad like I'm reading this from a script; trying to get the message through to him. The invisible notepad is a thing I learned from him'

'A way of saying; *how about we change the topic?*'

'& I light a cigarette & I try to look bored'

'This isn't exactly one of those *hard to do things*'

'Because really'

'I *am* bored'

'The same familiar routines'

'Coffee, cornflakes, & dead bodies on the sidewalks; in the bathtub'

'Looking at my notepad'

'Looking bored'

'I say'

'You realize'

'Jack'

'That an AK never jams'

'Handcuffs, barbed-wire dildos, & razorblades'

'I say'

'You realize'

'Jack'

'What you're doing here is not Russian roulette'

'This'

'Jack'

'This is murder'

'Blah Blah Blah'

'& each time we do this'

'With each new shit pants'

'I say the same thing in the same way'

'Over & over'

'Like some trained monkey'

'Like some shit pants'

'Me playing my part in Jack's little play for my Vaseline coated banana prize'

'My barbed-wire dildo treat'

'& I say'

'Jack'

'All I have to do is clap my hands & go *oh-oh* like a retard watching animal porn & that's exactly what I'll be'

'There is nothing more frightening'

'Jack says'

'Than a raped & starving eleven year old AIDS orphan with a Kalashnikov & the firm belief that you are the reason for his shitty life'

'How you disengage the driving spring guide from its seat in the rear'

'Is you have to push forward'

'On the end of the guide'

'Like this'

'Where we are tonight is we're in the basement of Jack's little shop of horrors'

'Jack's little torture shack'

'Now'

'Pull the entire *driving spring assembly* out from the *bolt carrier*'

'*This*'

'Jack says'

'This is a bolt carrier'

'Blah blah blah'

“Song to Make You Cry” by Phoebe Kreutz

‘Dramatize your ideas, is the advice the book gives’

‘This is the book where they use the example of a rat in a store window to explain principle 11 of 12 for getting your point across’

‘The book, of course, is the famous one’

‘But I’m struggling to get past this rat thing’

‘The way he explains it; two live rats intended for use as props in a window display were given to all dealers as a promotional tool for the product that wasn’t moving’

‘The product, of course, was a particular brand of rat poison’

‘& after this dramatic presentation, he says. The sales figures shot through the roof’

‘So there you have it’

‘Dramatize your ideas’

‘Ok. Fine’

‘But still. I’m struggling with this final solution sounding bit’

‘The mass extermination of so many rats, I mean?’

‘Thing is’

‘Right’

‘This isn’t so much my problem. The dramatizing part. I can handle this’

‘But the part I’m having trouble with here is the ideas side of it’

‘You see, it’s not like you can do this with people’

‘& god knows, haven’t we all *wanted to* at some point?’

'For example'

'My apartment is across the street from a river, where during the summer months tourists & foreign students spend their Sunday afternoons sipping cocktails on hired row boats'

'Sundays are not the only days you can do this though; in fact, boats are available for hire any day of the week & all year round'

'Mind you'

'The advertising brochure they hand out at tourist information would have you believe otherwise'

'They suggest Sundays are best'

'& if the rat ain't broken, right?'

'Now this is my problem. Or rather, *another* problem'

'You see'

'Today is more than just *one of those days*'

'Today is what comes after technique 12 of 12 for getting people to see your point, which is of course'

"If nothing else works, try this"

'Except, what do you do if *this* doesn't work either?'

'Where's the next bit of helpful advice?'

'The next *this*'

'I mean it's not like I'm not trying here'

'In fact, I've tried every fucking suggestion from 1 through 12 on this issue'

'But this girl'

'The new neighbour'

'She just isn't getting it'

'You see'

'This advertising brochure is a thing they *only* give out at the tourist information centre'

'& the tourist information centre is all the way across town'

'& I mean as far away as anyone in this town can get away from right here & still be considered eligible for the city's population-stats census'

'So how then, could you explain to me, did this brochure end up in my apartment, under the coffee cup on the fireplace that I haven't moved since the night of Eva?'

'Well, let me tell you how'

'Last night I ran out of coffee & because I haven't had a good night's sleep in I don't know how long, I actually slept *through* for a change'

'Now maybe for the kind of person who chews on valerian root this isn't a problem'

'Maybe for this kind of person, amytal sodium or secanal is the light at the end of a dark tunnel'

'For me, not so much'

'For me, sleep is the same as what Gargamel means to the Smurfs'

'It's like Skeletor to He-man'

'Dukey to the Gummie Bears'

'& while we're on the subject of 80's children entertainment, there's a band I'm listening to right now called *Cheese on Bread* who aside from singing about a *Sexy Anarchist Boy* whose life the singer says she'll *organise if he promises to fuck hers up*, also make a very valid point about cornfields'

'You see'

'The way they explain it, is that yes, ok'

'Cornfields are great to look at'

'They're aesthetically pleasing'

'& I'm talking here about the soothing effect of watching the gold & green stalks sway in the wind under a blue sky on a Sunday afternoon'

'But'

'What we're forgetting about is that *corn* is a thing they use to make *corn-syrup*'
'& that this is of course one of the main ingredients used in the manufacture of sugary beverages they market to first world kids; like your various brands of cola for instance'

'Now'

'& this is the very valid point they're making'

'What about all the starving third world kids, who, for the price of one sugary beverage a day, you too could adopt?'

'Or at least feed'

'& if you order right away, we'll throw in a second one absolutely free'

'& let's not forget that less than one percent of the total annual expenditure on arms, globally, would be enough to eradicate hunger'

'& this is what brings me to *my* next point, which is not the same as theirs'

'But still'

'This corn thing has got me thinking'

'You see'

'This new neighbour'

'This morning she's in my apartment when I wake up'

'& she's telling me her *water broke*'

'This new neighbour, she's telling me she's really really sorry, but she really has to get to her job, & she really really really needs to have a shower'

'So she hopes I don't mind, she says, that she let herself in & is now taking a bath in the tub that no-one has been in since Eva'

'Because, her water'

'She says'

'Broke'

'I mean, talk about dramatizing your ideas'

'& what do you say, right?'

'Now, the nice thing about where I live is that it's not the kind of neighbourhood to raise your kids in'

'The architectural style for this part of the city has a general design theme'

'& this theme is'

'Crumbling grey sandstone'

'Rotting wood'

'Wrought iron supports in various shades of rust'

'& mildewed red brick walls wallpapered in a sort of lime-scale, soot, & assorted grime pattern'

'In fact, the only advertising you'll find in a four block radius is for rock & roll bands that couldn't care less about making money'

'Not that it's a slum or anything'

'It's just that the location hasn't exactly made it economically viable enough to be earmarked for re-development'

'& this suits me fine'

'It's the reason we moved here in the first place'

'You see'

'This is the only part of town left where you can still close your eyes & actually *listen* to night turn into day'

'Everywhere else is non-stop sound-sound-sound'

'For example'

'During the 80s there was another very popular corn based product that was marketed primarily to children'

'Back then, it was considered *the biggest snack pennies can buy*'

'Although, at this point, I'll be honest, I was struggling to get out of a Penguin chocolate bar phase, which I think is partly to blame on that catchy jingle they used to advertise the product'

'This is the one where they sing the line *p-p-p pick up a penguin* to the tune of what sounds almost like the beginning of that *Timewarp* song from the Rocky Horror Picture show'

'Now'

'For the past few weeks I've been working on Eva's last song'

'The idea here is to cut sections from the *Monster Munch* advert & then splice them into various parts of the song'

'This is not *sampling* like hip-hop people do'

'We're strictly a stripped down analogue anti rock & roll couple'

'Drums, guitar, double bass, & lots of spaces between the sounds'

'& this is harder than you might think'

'First'

'You need to transfer the audio to a reel-to-reel recorder or an 8-track'

'It doesn't matter, but I prefer reel-to-reel'

'Now, the reel-to-reel should ideally have what is called a *tape counter* so you know exactly where you are at a particular point in the sound clip'

'Once you've found where you want to cut; *your sample* that is; you now need to mark it with a pen or whatever, but a pen is generally better'

'The next step is to then transfer your tape to a splicing kit, which basically clamps the celluloid in straight line so you can cut it'

'You should always make your cut at a 45 degree angle'

'Once you've got this done you then need to splice it to your next bit of audio using what is called *splicing tape*'

'Basically, this is just like sticky-tape, but it lasts longer'

'& the thing our band does is we sample a whole bunch of these clips from all over the place & then cut them up & splice them together in *new & original ways* which we then use as a sort of backing track we play on an antique gramophone during our live performances'

'For example'

'The song I've been working on uses snippets of dialogue from a 1959 New Wave film by Alain Resnais called *Hiroshima Mon Amour*'

'The conversation I'm using here is the one where she's telling her current lover about a dream in which her previous lover dies'

'The new lover is of course playing the role of both past & present lover in this dialogue & he asks her'

'Do you scream?'

'To which she replies, not at first... I call your name softly'

'But I'm dead, he says'

'I call your name anyway, she says. Even *if* you're dead'

'& then'

'One day, she says'

'I scream'

'Loud. Loud Like a deaf person'

'Which brings me to the point about this new neighbour'

'She walks dogs for a living. Or used to. If you can even call this a job'

'But anyway'

'Ever since she moved in, there's been a stupid little poodle outside my window every morning'

'& this thing barks incessantly'

'I mean, it's like it's determined to fill up all the spaces between the sounds in my life'

'But this morning I caught this dog making a number 2'

'& I don't know what they feed this dog, but it was struggling'

'& thing is, it saw me watching it struggle'

'& for the briefest of moments I felt vindicated by the fact that I had something on this dog'

'I'd witnessed it experience a vulnerable moment & both of us knew it'

'But then it dawned on me'

'If dogs are anything like people, which they are, because why else would we call them man's best friend? Then I just know that it's going to try & regain the power it lost to me in its *vulnerable moment* by –you guessed it'

'Barking its authority even louder'

'& this is my problem with everything in general'

'Like this advertising brochure'

'You see'

'On the list of recommended things to see & do, it lists as its first activity'

'Go to tourist information & pick up this brochure'

'Now, I'm not sure if this is genuine stupidity, like the warning label on the bag of nails that says; *not fit for human consumption*, or, if it's a clever ploy to make you think you're on the right track'

'A way of cosying up to you'

'Like the thing with the rat, for example'

'Because'

'Principle 7 of 12 in the book on *influencing people* states quite clearly in black

& white that the key to marketing success is to *let the other person think that your idea is actually his or hers*

'So there you have it'

'& now this thing with the new neighbour'

'You see'

'Our apartments are connected, so when her *water broke*, mine broke too'

'& because of the way apartments sometimes work, she managed to water my electricity to death, which is now the reason the plumbers, electricians, & landlord are all telling me I have to leave the apartment'

'& what is the goddamn deal with the Smurfs anyway?'

'Please explain to me this thing about them using the word Smurf interchangeably as both a noun & verb'

'& on top of this'

'Now I can't sample this Monster Munch advert which is how Eva said she wanted the new song to open & which I am only now realizing is also a story about a dream & not only that, it also has the same plot as the dream in the Resnais film'

'You see'

'This advert, unlike *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, is about a sort of Muppet monster'

'The red one, who if I remember right is meant to be roast beef'

'Now the advert starts with your standard establishing shot, which is of this monster making monster sounds'

'They use a close up shot of the monster's face which is a technique filmmakers use to imply *intimacy*'

'Basically, this is a clever manipulation trick they use to make the audience feel a connection to the character'

'Unlike the long shot which shows the monster at a distance, implying a weaker connection'

'Think for example of the distance you keep from strangers in the street'

'Ok'

'So now that the initial relationship between viewer & monster has been established, they can move on to the next phase & so on & so on'

'The key thing going on here is that your relationship to the various monsters on the screen is in a state of constant flux, similar to how an abusive partner would use erratic behaviour to keep you on edge'

'This is all about creating tension & resolving tension & it's all very carefully controlled'

'Like an emotional roller-coaster'

'Until finally, at the end of the trip, you're provided with the neat resolution which, if you've managed to follow the action & are now identifying with the particular monster they want you to identify with, you will see as the resolution to *your* personal conflict, which they too will have provided for you'

'Much like the way the Gummie Bears drink *Gummieberry juice* to solve all their problems'

'Or, the magic potion Asterix drinks to enable him to defeat the Romans'

'& the soundtrack, if done correctly, is meant to support the entire thing'

'For example'

'Right after the establishing shot in the Monster Munch advert'

'The voice-over of the narrator comes in to explain to us that'

"This monster is having his favourite dream"

"The one where *Monster Munch* grows on trees"

"Giant trees of course"

"One for pickled onion flavour"

"One for saucy"

“& one for roast beef”

“Which is all very fine for him”

“Not so for his somewhat smaller friends”

“However, while he’s enjoying his dream”

“Guess who’s enjoying his Monster Munch?”

‘Ok’

‘So maybe you get where this is going then’

‘You see’

‘All of this started with a comment I made to Eva about the Smurfs’

‘& this really upset her’

‘& I mean it upset her so much that the next day she came home with every single episode on tape which I had to then watch, & *just let me dare not to*, to find the one line that proves once & for all that Smurfette is *not* the village bicycle, *or*, a lesbian for that matter’

‘But let me tell you something about this Smurfette’

‘It’s not just that she has different Smurf-bits to all the other Smurfs’

‘She isn’t even a proper Smurf, because *she* was in fact made by the evil wizard Gargamel’

‘Just like this Smurfing new neighbour who’

- a) *broke my water*, which:
- b) took out my electricity, both of which, incidentally I would have fixed myself if she hadn’t gone &:
- c) called the plumber & the electricity company, who discovered that:
- d) the name on the lease is not mine, but Eva’s, & then set about to:
- e) further investigate this issue with the landlord, who, because he’s been looking for an excuse to get rid of us:

- f) set about getting the water & electricity shut off permanently, because:
- g) this new neighbour, despite causing all of this (not to mention the fact that when she broke into my apartment through the window & the breeze blew all of Eva's sketches all over the place) couldn't, not even for a few minutes:
- h) pretend that she was Eva, the little actress; so that
- i) could just carry on with my own little private life in my own little private world without the constant interference of everybody else's smurfing point

'So do you want to know what I did?'

“Intermission”



play

“Psycho Killer” by The Talking Heads

or

(anything by Adolf Wolfli)

‘Welcome to Jack’s little shop of horrors’

‘How you find this place’

‘If maybe you want to get rid of yourself in a hurry’

‘Is you don’t’

‘How you find this place’

‘Is you wake up strapped to the chair with no memory of how you ended up here’

‘& the chair you’ll find yourself sitting in’

‘It’s one of those old state-owned chairs they used to teach death-row inmates about god’s love’

‘*Electric chairs* they call them’

‘This chair is the centre piece of our lovely little sanctuary from the harsh realities of life’

‘& how it looks, is it’s made out of rotting wood’

‘The railway sleeper kind of wood’

‘& it has one of those little copper salad strainer bowls with the holes in them hanging above where your head goes if you’re sitting on the chair the way you’re meant to be sitting on it’

1

'How we got hold of this chair is Lizzie bought it from an antique store because it was cheaper than the other antique chairs they had on display'

'For a while this was strictly Lizzie's chair'

'No-one else could sit on it'

'& then Jack wired it with electricity'

2

'If you find yourself in this chair'

'You'll notice your arms & legs have been tied to the wood with a ropy looking material that isn't quite rope'

'These are animal tendons'

'& the way you make animal tendons supple enough to tie them into knots is you have to wet them'

'Soak them in water'

'If you don't do this they go dry & brittle & are impossible to tie'

'The knots you'll find tied around your arms & legs'

'These are what survival experts & serial killers refer to as the *clove hitch*'

'Pull as hard as you want'

'You won't come free'

'How you tie a *clove hitch* is simple'

'First,'

'You have two ends'

'*End A* & *End B*'

'Wrap *End A* around the victim's neck'

'Bring it back over itself & around her neck again'

'Now bring *End A* back up & under itself'

'& pointing in the opposite direction of *End B*'

'Now close the loops around the victim's neck'

'Pull them together,'

'& then pull the knot tight,'

'Real tight'

'You know you got it right if her eyes start turning red'

'These are simple childhood lessons not being taught anymore'

'How to gut an animal'

'Tie knots'

'Start a fire'

'Track your prey'

'& build a perch spear trap'

'Which plants & animals are good for poisoning'

'All these basic survival skills'

'Completely forgotten'

'They've all become *ancient knowledge*'

'Replaced by skills like hacking websites'

'Shopping'

'Feeling special'

'& overdosing on anti-depressants'

'This is the perfection of irony'

'*Modern living*'

'When there isn't a shit pants in the electric chair getting a dose of Jack's shock therapy'

'You'll find Eva carving little *artistic* pictures & words into the wood'

'Sitting there with a hammer & sickle'

'Carving carving carving'

'Making *art*'

'Eva'

'Picking all *artsy* looking rusty nails out of a glass jar'

'& *artistically* hammering them into the wood'

'Turning the chair into one of those Indian nail beds'

'Creating one big *artistic* tetanus experiment'

'& always with a smile on her face'

'Dancing & singing a cutesy melody song like the Velvet Underground's
Stephanie Says'

'Or something by The Vaselines'

'Molly's lips'

'One of the things I hate about Eva'

'Is whenever she's busy with something sick & depraved'

'She always goes all twee-pop'

'Like a little oblivious six year old lost in a dream world of fairies, marshmallows &
dirty syringes'

'The whole effect is *seriously* unsettling'

'Above the chair'

'Hanging from one of the rafters holding up the warped & saggy ceiling'

'There's a big light that flickers & shines down in a big spaceship beam of yellow'

'Down onto the chair'

'Like a stage-light'

'The whole flickering effect of the light always makes you think of the word
electric'

'Take away the flickering & you don't even know there's a light'

'Jack says'

'The medium is the message'

'Teach kids how to fight, track, & kill, & you'll have less school massacres on
your hands'

'Teach them how to rely on themselves for their survival & they won't get
depressed because nobody *likes* them'

'They won't spend their spare time scouring internet chat rooms for sexual predators who *really* get them'

'Really'

'If you think about it'

'Western kids are so spoilt'

'What I'm not going to tell you until much later'

'Is the animal tendons you've been tied up with come from the last animal that woke up in this chair'

'Maybe if western kids got raped & tortured more often'

'Maybe if you starve them, & take away any prospect they have of a future'

'Butcher their families in front of them'

'Like what happens with the AK kids'

'Kalashes'

'They call them'

'Maybe then'

'Their violent outbursts won't look so much like pathetic tantrummy cries for attention'

'From the outside of Jack's Torture shack'

'If you're standing in the cesspool of hookers, junkies, & bums,'

'& if you're staring straight at the sign that says:'

'Green Street boarding house; open from midnight to dawn'

'The building we're in looks like an abandoned cathedral'

'It looks like this because this is what it is'

'& if you look real close'

'Written in small print'

'Under a rusted sign that says *Trading Hours*'

'*Open from midnight to dawn*'

'Is another rusted sign that says'

'Or, if you need to get rid of a body in a hurry'

'& in even smaller print'

'It says'

'& if you can read this'

You have just become a body that needs to be disposed of in a hurry'

'Now'

'Smile & look up'

'What you do is what everybody that reads this does'

'You smile & look up like a well trained employee'

'Like a retarded shit pants watching animal porn'

'Suspended disbelief'

'& what you see is you're staring straight into a closed circuit television camera'

'& under the camera is another sign that says'

'Thank you for volunteering to be a torture victim slash corpse in our next art experiment'

'We will contact your next of kin shortly'

'& that's when you know you're fucked'

'But still'

'You think maybe this is a joke'

'Until it isn't'

'The thing that used to make me throw up'

'When I was still capable of caring'

'Is there was a time when these signs used to be a joke'

'& then Jack got all bored & artistic at the same time'

'Blah blah blah'

'Where Jack's little torture shack is located is in the part of town the people who come here to die affectionately call *the toxic waste section of the cities sweatshop district*

'& Jack's little shop of horrors'

'It's the hub of this thriving little community of freaks'

'But now that the paedophiles have moved in'

'The neighbourhood has really gone to shit'

'& it's not that we've got anything against kids'

'It's just the paedophiles unique brand of parenting has left these kids sticking their business in places they shouldn't be sticking their business'

'A real culture of *monkey see monkey do*

'Really'

'The place is becoming just like *mainstream* society'

'Jacks secret plan is to herd all these kids together, his original idea, & issue them Kalashnikovs'

'Give them pictures of random people he photographs in the street'

'Suburban looking types'

'& say to them'

'These people are responsible for your shitty life'

'A whole new western franchise of Kalash kids wreaking havoc in suburbia'

'He says'

'He's surprised that the *developed* countries haven't opened up child soldier franchises on their own soil yet'

'He says'

'The developed world is so under-represented by Kalash kids'

'& it's ironic'

'Jack says'

'Because all the weapons supplied to the nations with the Kalash franchises'
'These weapons are all provided by the developed nations'
'& really'
'This is like discrimination against our own children'
'If kids in underdeveloped nations are allowed to massacre people'
'Why shouldn't ours?'
'I'm surprised the *concerned parents league* haven't formed pressure groups to address this issue'

'Blah blah blah'

'Jack on his little tirade'
'Shit pants shitting herself'
'Her boyfriend trying to rip his super-glued hand off his dick so he can untie the clove hitch strapping her to the chair'
'Eva's *artistic* nails ripping her arse to shreds as she squirms & squeals'

'You start a Kalash franchise in every suburb'
'Jack says'
'Like a new brand of boy scouts'
'Neo-boy scouts'
'& suddenly less people in suburbia get bored'
'You totally solve the *depression* issue'

'Imagine'
'Jack says
'Neo-boy scouts running around suburbia trying to earn a *torture badge*'
'A murder badge'
'Massacre an entire street & you win boy scout of the year'
'You could import a herd of Kalashes from other countries to train up our local boys'
'& you could have an inter-child soldier butchering Olympics every four years'

'Shit pants; her whole body is gyrating the way a virgin schoolgirl gyrates in her uncle's bed'

'So much *special* candy shoved down her throat she's on the doorstep of a diabetic coma'

'Suburban Kalash boy scouts would be an excellent new *art* project'

'Jack says'

'The only problem is'

'Next week's original idea'

'*Perhaps*, I say, Jack'

'Its better to just let sleeping kids lie'

'But I know this won't stop him'

'Jack has gone through the whole disassembly routine & has started reassembling the AK'

'Jack says'

'Reassembly'

'Step one'

'Engage the front opening of the gas cylinder tube with the gas cylinder'

'This'

'Jack says'

'Is the gas cylinder'

'Step two'

'Slot the rear of the tube into the rear sight base'

'Now'

'Rotate the gas cylinder tube lock down into its *lock* position'

'Like this'

'Step three'

'Replace the bolt'

'How you do this is you take the piston'

'This is the piston'

'& you slide it carefully into the hole under the rear sight until the carrier fits neatly into the grooves cut at the rear of the receiver'

'Blah blah blah'

'Sometimes'

'If you're wasted enough'

'Jack's weapon assembly instructions sound just like sex tips'

'How the inside of Jack's torture shack looks is'

'Dimly lit'

'Dark flaky reds'

'Blacks'

'& greens'

'The look of smoky'

'Decaying'

'& rotten wood'

'The graffiti *art* on the walls looks like it comes straight from the ghost brush of Van Gogh's psychotic brother'

'Jack finishes reassembling the AK & starts loading the magazine'

'Like *a/ways*'

'He starts listing AK statistics like some door to door carnage salesman'

'He says'

'The AK is three two point four inches long & weighs nine point five pounds'

'Gas operated'

'Magazine fed'

'Three zero seven point six two by three nine millimetre rounds per magazine'

'This is its capacity'

'Its rate of automatic fire is 100 rpm'

'& it has a maximum effective range of 400 metres'

'This rifle'

'Jack says'

'Never, ever jams'

'Blah blah blah'

'Jack clicks the magazine into the receiver & aims the rifle at shit pant's head'

'God I miss feeling that *hollow* feeling you get when you're sitting in the window of some no-horse town coffee shop in the dead of winter'

'That hollow rusting feeling expanding in the empty vacuum between your mind & skin, he says'

'That feeling of memories & dreams'

'As you watch the snow fall in slow motion'

'& Steam rising off the streets'

'Alone'

'Cold'

'Feeling complete in your loneliness'

'Feeling warmth in your cold'

2

'Without the feeling of cold you can't long for the feeling of warmth'

'This is about hope & faith & love'

'Warm climate people lack depth'

'You're out on the street & it's so cold your blood is ice'

'Your breath is steam'

'You find your body pushing you down the street'

'Towards salvation'

'Automatic'

'Desperate'

'Your hypothermic limbs carrying you towards the promise of warmth'

'& then you're sitting in the chair of a coffee shop window'

'Hands wrapped around the cup'

'Hunched over'

'Warming your face on the steam'

'& still'

'You feel the cold'


'But it's just enough cold to be the memory of the cold'

'Just enough to remind you that you still have to dream about the need for
warmth'

'This is the same as how love works'

'The way it feels'

'Don't get this wrong; he says to the girl. It's not you, it's me in that chair'

 play “Dilate” by Ani DiFranco

“Oh my god, that guitar solo at the end right? It just sort of, I don’t know... it reconnects your body to your mind somehow? I mean it’s nothing special right? Musically I mean... But it just kinda... it does it to me; like... like here I am, you know? like this is me?...yeah, & its as though you’re hearing the music with this part of you that...I don’t know...it’s just like... like there’s this hollow space between your mind & skin & the music just fills it up?... Yeah, totally, I totally get that & just for that brief moment it is as if you’re somehow... CONNECTED to yourself again...yeah, yeah...& then... & then it’s over...& what now... I mean... Bob Marley right? Redemption Song? ... You know, when he hits that line? ... Coz you just know...& then...& then it’s just sort of ... I mean it just totally fucks me up right? & here I am? Coz it’s like... these songs of freedom ARE all I ever had. They ARE my redemption songs...& this is the truth of my whole fucking existence right here, right now &... yeah, yeah, for sure ... & what gets me is this; here I am a complete wreck & all around me people are just getting on with it right?... Like, how is it that song didn’t just strip the paint off your walls?... Totally. I totally get that...I mean, here you are, living breathing people all around you & there’s no connection...its like the deepest human connection you have is to a dead Jamaican who died the year you were born...& is this the rest of your life?”

'I dial her number & it's engaged until'
'Disconnect'
'& I listen to the static until the doorbell rings'

'Remove & reveal'
'This is what the instruction on the packet is telling me to do'
'& why?'
'The *instruction* I mean'
'Why should I do this?'
'To find what I already know is there?'

'The new neighbour is telling me the same thing'
'You should get out of the apartment, she says'

'All the things every self help book, agony aunt column, & Dr. *I can't save myself from myself* talk show over the last *who knows how long* has riffed into the vocabulary of everyone who is alive & *you still don't know this after how many years on this earth?* That, you do not say to someone, who is going through what YOU HAVE NOT experienced FIRST HAND, the words'

'I'
'Under'
'Stand'

'The new neighbour is not saying this directly, but isn't all advice just a round-about version of the same thing?'

'Remove & reveal, she says'
'& I am back in the apartment'
'& where is the Scotch?'

'Stacked in front of me, on my desk, are four packs of cigarettes & what is left of an ounce of rolling tobacco I keep in a silver tin; though the silver tin is not actually silver but *tin* made to look like stainless steel, which, because of the way it has been made, is meant to give the *illusion* of silver'

'In my jacket pocket, I am sure, is another pack of cigarettes & a spare lighter'

'Or '

'A book of matches lifted from a hotel bar'

'I have tobacco stashed all over where I live, & a number of places I don't'

'Because'

'After the first time you are forced to live without something you can't live without'

'After...'

'There are pieces of Eva stashed all over the apartment'

'The walls are floor to ceiling art'

'& the paintings are all *her*'

'I look at them now & they push my eyes to the floor'

'& there she is'

'Staring at me from inside the photographs & postcards & sketches, which are all works of art that did not make it onto the wall'

'The air above them is a paper-weight that could shift at any second'

'& I freeze'

'My body freezes'

'& I am suddenly afraid of cracks below doors'

'& Are the windows closed?'

'&'

'&'

'&'

'Is this normal?'

'When I walk across the living room, my feet collide against the wood'

'My feet are heavy'

'They tremble'

'& I hold my breath'

'Dust rises up from where it lay & the grains spin violently inside rays of light that shine at slanted angles through the window'

'They are a Richter scale that measures the impact of my movement'

'& I am afraid to move at night'

'A corner lifts on a sketch'

'& I am on my toes, stepping between half-finished *art* as though through a mine-field'

'Living like this, every minute is a new day I can't face waking up to'

'& the days turn into months'

'I watch a hobo do a one man show in front of the Canal street theatre'

'He feigns genuine surprise when a man walks through the revolving door'

'& an instant later, out walks an attractive woman'

'He runs around shouting, did you see that? Did you?'

'& gathers a crowd'

'I lift Eva's camera & zoom in for the shot'

'& click'

'&'

'Another person walks through the door & the homeless man cups his hands against the glass & then steps back, mouth open'

'He waits'

'The crowd waits'

'I wait'

'& then out comes someone else'

'A middle-aged woman in a sort of gypsy dress & beads turns into a 20
something business exec with a leather brief-case'

'A father & his little girl come out of the building as a woman in a tight fitted skirt
& breasts falling out of a white blouse'

'Which one is *she*?'

'The father'

'The little girl?'

'We wait for a clue'

'The crowd watches until they grow bored'

'They watch until the joke gets old'

'& those that leave & can, drop *what they can spare* in the hobo's money tin'

'People leave other people join'

'The crowd gathers more people; because isn't this what crowds do?'

'He directs the *spectacle* like a ringmaster at a *carnival*

'Building the tension into fits of laughter & then'

'All over again'

'& again'

'Until an hour & a half of this later when he has collected enough in his tin for
what he has planned'

'& how is it someone with enough creativity to pull off what he pulled off ended up
where he is?'

'Later that night I see him passed out on the sidewalk; an empty cider bottle in his hand'

'Two cops wake him with a *we're going to have to take you in speech*
'& *I will resist the obvious joke in this*'

'He staggers to his feet, confused'

'& then'

'Before anyone can stop him'

'He's heading for the revolving door'

'When he comes out, he looks genuinely stunned that he has not turned into someone else; so much wanting to believe in the myth he created'

'I watch him tumble in on himself; laughing in sobs at the irony of it all'

'& in this moment, he has found his greatest truth'

'Because here he is'

'There we are'

'& where is life?'

'We are lucky to stumble into it in the brief moments our mind slips just enough to shatter the illusion of ourselves, & remind us'

'This is who I am?'

'I mean, in the end, aren't we all the final victims of our own con?'

'Perhaps I am seeing more in this than there is; wanting so much a truth that is'

'Hope'

'Maybe this is what is going on here'

'His thoughts got out of the way just long enough for him to taste it again'

'Hope'

'Just for a moment '

"& let me tell you about heartache & the loss of god"

'Eva records a message on the answering machine'

'& according to her, it's the funniest joke she's ever made'

'The message starts'

"In the beginning, when god created the universe..."

'& then the entire history of western civilisation recorded on a specially modified *for this very purpose* reel-to-reel recorder, which whoever is calling has to get through before you can leave your message for *Eva* to get back to you'

'We have not had a single message on our answering machine'

'Because honestly, Eva says, *who* has the *time* or *patience these days* to go through the entire *word of god* before you get to say your say, get your response & get on with it?'

'What message is really so important you are willing to *wait* for *god* to tell you all about the *right* way to live before you can *actually* get on with *your life*?'

'We are in the supermarket when Eva suddenly laughs at nothing anyone said or did & where is the funny sign?'

'& *what* are we laughing at?'

'She says she's thinking about at which point who gives up trying to get what message through to her'

'& isn't this the funniest thing ever?'

'She asks'

'*No, I say, not really*'

'& she's harassing me all the way down the frozen veg & through the assorted meats & on to fresh veg about the entire thing being just too sophisticated for me to appreciate'

'& would you prefer a punch-line kind of joke?'

'One that doesn't force you to think?'

'Did you hear? She says'

'Popeye went to kill Moses'

'& do you know *why* Popeye went to kill Moses?'

'She asks'

'Because Moses went to *mount Olive*'

'On the walk back from the supermarket Eva asks if we *can we take a shortcut through the cemetery?*

'When I don't reply, she fills the silence by rolling her lip ring into her mouth'

'It's on the bottom left; the lip ring. & I have learned this much about her'

'When she rolls it into her mouth like this; she's telling me she's just made another joke I didn't get'

'She does this often; as if clinging to the hope that *one day*, I'll make the connection'

'The one on Bridge Street? I ask'

'It has the best flowers, she says; skipping ahead of me & then stopping to peer in a garbage can'

'Sticking out of the slit where you dump your trash is a part of a guitar & a man's arm'

'Hi Sam, she says, & what's on the menu today?'

'Sam is one of Eva's adopted hobos'

'*Conceptual hobos* is the name she has for them. Conceptual, because of how they ply their craft, which according to Eva is different from regular hobos not

because they're any different, but because her hobos live in a university town, which, because of the demographic *slash* psychographic profile of their target market, forces them to up their game. Like they have to adapt or something'

'Location, location, location, she says'

'& she tends to them the way you'd imagine some people take in stray dogs'

'Food, money, clothes, hugs'

'& once a week'

'Or'

'At random, she gives them *spot check* inspections for *any new rashes or scars?*'

'& don't get me started on the times I've come home to be scared right off the toilet by a hobo soaking in a bubble bath'

'The thing about Sam is whenever we stumble into him she rolls up a sleeve & checks his wrists'

'You look at this & you want to say, wouldn't it be more obvious than *that* if he'd killed himself?'

'& I would, except for the why of it'

'I'm talking here about the advice they give when *you try to end it & fail*; about how what most people don't realize is that when you make the cut'

'You also cut the tendons'

'& doing this leaves you with *partial- to-no-use* of your hands'

'Sam, Eva says, is the opposite of people who want to die'

'Because he's actually *going* for the tendons'

'& the reason, she says, is at least this way he has an excuse for why he didn't make it as a musician'

'Most of Eva's hobos are some kind of artist; I mean, when is it you last dropped money in a hobo-tin for them to fill out your tax-return?'

'So about the whole adoption thing; it started as a themed photo-series on the *unseen city life* –she called the collection *below the surface*– & once she'd got all the art she needed, she couldn't just walk away, right?

'I mean'

'Things that on the surface seem complicated are often simpler than they first seem'

'For instance, the *Hannah test*'

'Hannah is a friend who starts every first date by asking the *big question*'

'The answer, she says, is how she determines how far she'll go with whoever her potential future ex of the night is'

'& the question?'

'Would you, she asks, stay with me if I went crazy? & I mean institutionalised kind of standing on a table all day drooling into a Kermit the frog coffee cup kind of crazy?'

'My answer is *depends*'

'& she says, you only get 2 types of answer to this question'

'& *which one* tells you everything you need to know about the rest of your *countdown* with this person'

'If it were me, I say, I'd expect the person to leave'.

'I'd want them to get on with their life, but only because, secretly, that's what I'd want to do'

'Hannah says she'd stay, but only because that's what she'd *openly expect* me to do in a very subtle, but overtly manipulative kind of way'

'Neither of these answers is the right or wrong kind of answer, she says. Your response is more a sort of one question compatibility test'

'You don't answer the same here, forget the rest of whatever together'

'Nip it in the bud, she says, or one day, you'll wake up & realize *when was the last time you actually watched the TV show you wanted?*'

'& then the tumbling of everything after until you suddenly realize you've compromised you're entire life away'

'Because, she says'

'Do you really think that if two people have entirely different concepts of love, they're going to agree on all the little things that remain once the pheromones have finally worn off?'

'& if you'd just bothered to ask that question *before*, she says'

'You'd have known'

'Another thing you should know about Sam, Eva says about him, is every day he talks in a different accent'

'& before the obvious question, I've thought about it & what I think is this'

'Maybe it's about the future. Maybe he's trying to change it by creating alternative pasts'

'Everyday, he starts out with a whole new history & still'

'No matter how much'

'He always ends up inside a garbage can, busking for small change'

'& this is everything you need to know about everything, she says'

'It's art'

'Because, when you strip the surface of your life down until nothing left'

'There you are'

'Confronted with the only thing you ever need to know'

'Which is this'

'Who you are, is what you fail to create'

'Because show me, she says, the one person who does not want to go back to being the childhood version of who they are meant to be?'

'The woman on the TV is talking about the same thing'

'She's one of the pre-recorded guests on the live talk show about people that survived'

'I'm watching this show from memory of course, because of the thing that happened to our TV, & as far as I can remember, the woman explained it like this'

'It was at that exact moment, she said, when I let go of the railing'

'That I finally realized all my problems are actually the kind you can fix'

'& thank god she survived'

'There is a scrolling message that runs across the screen at this point'

'It explains to us, the audience, that this woman, the one who discovered all her problems were actually fixable, had, just prior to the broadcast of the show, not survived her second attempt'

'But they don't give the details of the second attempt, which *is* of course what everybody watching *really* wants to know, right?'

'Instead, there is the dramatic pause & all the correct facial expressions'

'& the cumulative effect of the suspended silence constructed to perfectly synchronise the collective skipped beat of both home & live audience'

'& then'

'The attempt by the *expert* psychologist to explain the reason'

'Which, he says, is that *although* this woman realized she *could* fix all her problems –*and this apparently, is a common scenario*– she was unable to fix them, not because she was unable to, but because the habit of not being able to

fix them was so ingrained in her psyche that she simply reverted back to the routine she knew best'

'& this is why, he says, anyone in a similar situation should please call the hotline where you can get the professional guidance of a trained expert'

'& then the number'

'& how is it, I want to know, that abused children grow up to marry abusive husbands?'

'& how can people who are unhappy with the situation they are in *do nothing*'

'& then say'

'I'm doing my best'

'I mean'

'Just Look at me. I'm talking to a bag of goddamn olives'

'& why?'

'Well let me tell you why'

'Because labels on packaging is what passes for company now that Eva is...'

'& yes; I know Kübler Ross would have something to say about this'

'Avoidance'

'Denial'

'Etc.'

'But let me tell you something'

'I have noticed something about these consumer items'

'They all give the same advice'

'For example'

'The milk tells me to: Peel back the tab'

'The cigarettes tell me to: Remove & reveal'

'& the olives are telling me to: Tear here'

'It's like they're all conspiring to get me to *open up*'
'& I would, perhaps, if it wasn't for the phrasing'
'I have never been good with instructions'

'Perhaps this then is the reason for all the coffee'

'The coffee isn't telling me what to do

'It simply says, *enjoy*'

'It tells me I can *customize to my taste*'

'Unlike the other products'

'The coffee is giving *me* a choice, or is at least smart enough to manipulate me into thinking I have one, unlike the bottle of *sparkling* water, which I am sure is either condescending or retarded for feeling the need to instruct me that *it, it* is carbonated & that because *it* is carbonated I should avoid shaking it before opening; so you see then, why, for now I am going to stick with the coffee'

'But the milk'

'The goddamn milk is doing my head in'

'It's the long life kind that can last up to a year & which Eva calls *oot-milk* because of the name for the thing that makes it last'

'The UHT process, as the box explains, is when the milk is exposed to Ultra High Temperature for a brief period'

'This, apparently, kills all the harmful bacteria that makes normal milk go rotten'

'& thinking about this is what is forcing me back into my past'

'It's making me *peel back the tab*'

'It's forcing me *remove & reveal*'

'The stupid fucking milk is triggering all the goddamn sleeping dogs & spilled milk & I just know if I *tear here* I'm going to fucking cry & nothing is going to stop this'

'Until'

'Until that fucking feeling that your life has been tipped over & poured out'

'Because it has'

'& what now?'

'Seeking in vain for a way out?'

'A final realization of the inevitable?'

'& what if that final realisation is the memory you're trying to suppress'

'What if on your 21st birthday you decided to get health insurance because it's *the adult thing to do*'

'So you went for the medical & they told you that they couldn't insure you, because you have a congenital heart defect, & which'

'Without'

'You now can't get the surgery you need'

'So maybe you had a gig that night; right after the medical; & you were late

'So you took a shortcut through the Bridge Street cemetery'

'Down the foot-path'

'Through the forest of Copper-Beech'

'& through the field of wild Cheiranthus'

'& over that arched stone bridge that leads out of the cemetery where you sat that night, on a mound of fresh dirt, sharing that cigarette with Jack, saying nothing'

'& what if, after you woke up in that bathtub someone left out in that Beech-forest by the cemetery, you couldn't quite remember what had happened too you, until you did'

'All those bruises & the blood & your ripped dress'

'& what if you went to your gig that night anyway, straight from that place & no-one in your stupid little punk band said a thing, or noticed, because they just thought you were being *punk*'

'& maybe you hauled that bathtub out of the forest one day; you got a cart; & you dragged it through the city'

'To your apartment'

'& you bathed in it every goddamn day'

'Dreaming up little fantasies of what you'd like to do to those hobos that grabbed you that night'

'Thinking about what they'd done to you'

'Until'

'You forgave them; but, couldn't forgive

yourself'

& it is all there is left to do

Because of the slogan, I tell her, & do you remember?

The one on the inside of Rizla packets?

It says the *art* of rolling

'Jimmy'

'Gypsy funeral'

There was a time when people's bodies were nomadic. Now our bodies remain in one place, whilst our minds wander aimlessly, searching for the lost

connection to our bodies...

An Interview / Critical Reflection

with/ by
Gareth Llewellyn Lloyd

Introduction

Gareth Llewellyn Lloyd is an illusive character. Tracking him down is always tough work; more so when you're in the same room as him. Famed for his dislike of critical reflections, I knew when getting this assignment that getting one out of him was going to be a challenge. And it was.

Despite his constant insistence that a critical analysis of 'Shades' would be pedantic due to the self-reflexive nature of the work, I eventually managed to persuade him to construct his critical reflection in the form of an interview

The interview took place in his bedroom at two in the morning

Interview:

Note: Interviewer in bold

Hi. Gareth?

Hey. Yeah. (Coughs and the rustle of papers in the background – I think I might've woken him up)

Hi Gareth, yeah, it's Gareth here. I'm phoning about the interview we discussed?

Oh, yeah, shit. Sorry dude, I totally forgot about all that. Fell asleep at my desk again. How you doing?

(The click of a Zippo, I think. He lights a cigarette)

I'm good. I'm good thanks. How about you?

All things considering. Do you mind if I make a cup of coffee while I talk to you?

Yeah. No. Go ahead. And I'm sorry I'm calling you so early in the morning, what with it being like 2am where you are?

Yeah. No worries. I'll be fine after I get through my morning routine
(pause)

Cigarettes and coffee

Why not make it an Irish?

(Laughs)

Yeah. I totally would if I wasn't out of the good stuff

I'll send you a bottle as a thanks for doing this interview

I thought the condition was a crate? (Both laugh)

Still, I know you have a lot on your plate what with the deadline you're up against; I'm sure you'd rather be writing?

Well; you know what they say. And yes. But you have to keep the audience happy (Laughs)

'Ok. So I'll try not to take up too much of your time and get straight to the point then'

Man after my own heart

Ok. Question one

Why did you decide to construct this critical reflection as an interview?

Good question

And I'm not going to harp on too much about this body mind thing, except to say that maybe at this point in the interview you should start thinking about this in terms of philosophy

Nature; consciousness; and all that other fun stuff. But more in terms of *Eastern philosophy. Also disassociation identity disorder following a traumatic event*

Can you elaborate?

I'd planned to

Ok

So, to elaborate; and again, I'm going to skip over all the big ideas –looking at yourself / life / everything in terms the natural world; as growing from the internal out the way a plant does rather than the western idea of asking 'where do I come from?' And then the question of *what is internal and external?* And *what is the relationship dynamic here?* etc. – and instead try whittling it all down by using the example of Tai Chi

Tai Chi?

Yes. Tai Chi. You still with me?

Yes

Ok. In Tai Chi they have this principle called Body Mind

And basically what this boils down to is the idea of a disjuncture that has been created between body and mind as a result of all the distraction of modern living; and then a process of meditation and movement

–meditation through movement / movement through meditation –

to repair the disconnect. The idea is to get the two to work together in harmony again

Body understanding and speaking the language of mind and vice versa
Both at the same time (and insert here all the appropriate questions of what is body and what is mind and what is internal and what is external and so forth)

And if you start to think of this in terms of the so called *postmodern condition* then maybe it'll start to make more sense. Or less

Yeah, yeah, I think I get where you're heading with this

That opening paragraph in the Jimmy section

"There was a time when people's bodies were nomadic; now our bodies remain in one place whilst our minds wander aimlessly, searching for the lost connection to our bodies"

Yeah, that's it. Or close as

Its one of my favourites

Thank you. Mine too (laughs) – but I haven't really answered your question, have I?

No. not really

But I'm happy for the diversion

It's a bad (sic) habit. All this diverting. It's become a totally unconscious thing for me. It started as a very deliberate approach to getting certain ideas across

And those Ideas?

Briefly

A moth circling a flame

Pseudo-cyclical time

The segmentation and fragmentation of the market and thus the human mind

etc.

Identity

Diversion, distraction, and manipulation as a foundation principle in con-artistry, music, literature, art, advertising, wilderness evasion, camouflage, tracking, sexual deception in the plant and animal kingdom, the game of sex played by humans, (and interestingly also a principle in) Sun Tzu's Art of War

And if you were paying attention you'd have spotted the theme running through these things

That predator / prey relationship

All of this is about power and control

Dominance and submission

The change in power

It's about who is on top and who is on the bottom and how does who is on top and who is on the bottom and how this changes influence everything else

How does everything else influence this change?

Which is the best way to go about changing the power dynamic?

It's about asking the question; what is *top*?

And it's about exploring 'communication' as the 'weapon' used to do all this

The idea was to use *form* just as much as content to affect certain changes in the reader

To get certain ideas across as effectively as possible

Sometimes effectively achieved

Sometimes deliberately ineffective (feign weakness – Sun Tzu)

And mostly just failed and flawed

All this for the novel, but now I catch myself doing it in everyday life; most of the time without realizing

And to answer your question

No, divert away

No, it's a good question

And since we've already glossed over some of the big words –the philosophy, the theory– I'd like to try and discuss it on a more personal level. Besides, the people *in the know* will get what I'm going on about when I use dirty words like *postmodern*

–*the academic crowd* –

they've read all the theory. All the Hegel and Kant and Fichte and Schelling all the way through Nietzsche to Jameson, Lacan, Derrida, Barthe, and Fiske; and they have their positions on this and I have mine

And yes. We can get into a debate on this level. I'll construct my argument and justify my position and they'll construct a counter-argument in response and justify their position, and so on and so on. We'll agree. We'll disagree.

But the real danger here is that if we do this we're going to alienate the rest of everybody else. I mean this sort of thing can go on indefinitely, right? So I'd prefer instead to try and do something I didn't do in the novel

Which, is to translate all this stuff into the language of the street

Move it to the level of body

That way it's more inclusive, but still maintains that element of critical reflection

Body and mind

Which is exactly the kind of thing you were *trying* to do in the novel?

Yes. That was the initial goal.

I was hoping to divert and distract you along the same lines in this interview

But I see you're too sharp for me

(laughs)

We'll I've read the novel, and what do they say about *fool me twice*?

(Laughs)

Ok. Back to the question at hand

Shoot away

So we're talking genesis here

Genesis

Yes

I think what you need to understand is that this work is basically parts of my life tipped over and poured out on paper. My blood and guts and thoughts and heart

Body and mind

And maybe not something to admit to in an interview, but that is what it is

I did the Tom Spanbauer thing here

Dangerous writing?

Yes. And to explain this a little better, *Dangerous Writing* is a concept that Tom Spanbauer uses to teach creative writing

The basic idea is that you mine the unresolved issues in your life for material

The writing then becomes a process through which you deal with those issues and ultimately (hopefully) heal yourself

Chuck Palahniuk talks a lot about this, and I know you're a fan, so is that where you got it from?

Yes. Unfortunately I don't have the luxury of attending those workshops, but I picked up on the idea and went with it in my own way

So this novel is *autobiographical* then?

All creative writing is in a sense 'autobiographical' but you deal with real issues in a fictional way

The loss of a soul mate? Yes

But the way it is represented is not necessarily the way it is

Read *'The Harvest'* by Amy Hempel and you'll understand what I'm talking about. How she tells a story of a near fatal car accident – A perfect example of realism or neo-realism or so called minimalism as they like to call it; and then halfway through suddenly there's that line

"I leave a lot out when I tell the truth. The same when I write a story. I'm going to start now to tell you what I left out of 'The Harvest,' and maybe begin to wonder why I left it out"

And then she goes on to deconstruct the first half of the story

That's what it's about. You take from life and you twist it into something else

You have talked a lot about the influence of 'minimalist fiction' like Hempel's on your work. Is that the category you'd slot your writing into?

I can see this question leading to questions of form and genre and all that other stuff; so, lets get all of this out the way in a single breath:

Meta-fiction; deconstruction; modernism; postmodern; prose; poetry; script; monologue; fiction; literary fiction; transgressive fiction, minimalism etc.

These are terms academia uses to make sense of a book. Labels the publishing houses use to slot it into a market. These terms are not important to me, or rather, *less* important than the idea of using art as a way of dealing with life

It's about using words and sentences as way of trying to save my life
And if other people find something of value in them, great'

But still, these terms and labels deserve some form of mention don't you think? Is one more relevant than other perhaps?

Ok. Perhaps here's a better way of explaining this

My writing philosophy (and which I am a bit embarrassed to admit is a quote from Jean Claude van Damme movie) is this

"Using any technique that works, never commit to a single style, but keep an open mind"

In my teens I applied this principle to the guitar. You'll see a lot of guitarists either playing metal or blues or folk or whatever. I always did a bit of it all. So it was natural for me then to apply this same principle to writing. The idea of investigating everything and retaining what you need

So you can see then that these terms and labels are not irrelevant, but they are not the thing that is *most* important. I didn't set out to write a postmodern piece or a minimalist piece or a so called transgressive piece. I set out to add tools to my 'writing toolbox'

The problem with creativity in an academic context is just that; I did not do all this study and research and writing to be a theorist who can write a clever work of

meta-fiction with all the appropriate references to Homer and Hegel. I did it to improve my writing. To 'flex muscles' I haven't really used before
That was the goal

The constant quest to improve my skill
To become the best I can be at this point in time
And I have by no means achieved everything I wanted to, but I learned a great deal by taking on this particular challenge
(Perhaps more about what doesn't work and what not to do)

And again, this is about using whatever technique is available to me
It's about learning through endless study and practice whatever it is I can *learn* as a way of helping me improve my ability to use art as a mechanism through which I can find some sort of truth about life
Taking in as much as possible; letting it coalesce, combine, and separate; and then pouring it out in the form of *art*...

....To save my body by filtering its responses to life through words; to find those words; and to save my mind by filtering the words it forms in response to life through my body...

So the answer is yes, and no
Yes, these terms matter. I studied them all. In depth. But no, I don't care for the labels. I'll leave that to the people who want to analyse my work

So you wouldn't say that the minimalist fiction of Raymond Carver is more influential on your writing than for example a work with meta-fictional elements like Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 69* or Copeland's *J-pod*?

Can I answer your question with a question?

Shoot

What music are you listening to more than any other music at the moment?

Nicole Reynolds

Would you say that she is currently more influential in your life than your mother? Or your first girlfriend? Or how about a random one night stand? Or your favourite band when you were a teen? Anti-folk or grunge? More influential than your university education? Or just a *part* of your university education? Which part? Or *parts*? Or how about the three years you spent overseas? One of those three years? Or just a particular day? Which day? And was it because of the weather or something else?

Do your thoughts follow a particular rhythmic pattern?

Can you turn them into a song?

And if you could; do you know what kind of song this would it be?

And do you ever find it strange that it's never concepts and words and ideas but sounds and smells and weather that bring back the memory of a place?

And why is it you always remember a place with your body *before* your mind?

And have you ever asked; do my emotions have a melody?

And are these melodies different for different emotions?

And have you ever thought about how would you represent this in words?

Have you tried?

And do you ask yourself this question in the bath; what is body? What is mind?

And are the answers you get in the morning different to the answers you get at night?

And what do you think Marshall McLuhan would think about this? Or a tree?

What about that time you got the job renovating that apartment in that really bad part of town and those gang bangers came after you because you flipped them

off after they started harassing you about who knows what? Do you remember how you felt when you were hiding behind the bushes in someone's garden whilst they drove up and down the street looking for you? And was it a gun dangling out of the window or a cell phone? The puckering of your arsehole? The sweat dripping down your face? Do you remember looking down at the tremors in your hand? And how you swore you could hear the sound of those tremors and were afraid the sound would give you away?

That idea of sound betraying you?

Do you remember how as a man; this was the most humiliating experience of your life? How it forced you to question the concept of masculinity? And how you thought this kind of thing only happens in movies?

And what if the histories of Soviet montage cinema and Hollywood were reversed?

What if they were swapped?

What if an entire generation were raised on films like Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* and Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* instead of what is Hollywood?

What if it were just *your* child?

And what if Guy Debord got it right in *Howlings in Favour of Sade* when he said; what if suicide is the perfection of ambiguity?

What if we all had the same idea at the same time and that idea was to commit ambiguity?⁸

What if ambiguity was a cliché or a metaphor or a symbol or shoes?

What if it was a kitten?

Or a baby?

⁸ What if you suddenly realized you got into the habit of asking 'what if' after reading a poem in Anne Carson's 'Autobiography of Red' but only realized this after you had used up all your 'what ifs'? And what if this made you feel unoriginal so you added a 'what' to the 'if' because she only said 'if' and then you removed the 'if' and then the 'what'? What if you tried to replace them both with something else? And then the rest of *your* sentence? And then when you realized the way you had it in the beginning was best? And now you're being forced to choose between being original and what is best? And suddenly, after all of this you realized you didn't pick up the habit from 'the seated figure with a red angle;' but from a relative mourning the death of a loved one who kept asking, *what if?* And then the realization that 'what if' belongs to us all? And that 'what if' or 'if' or 'what' or 'any of the words or ideas these words or ideas are attached to' are not original. That none of us are. That we are **all** filled with the same words and actions and thoughts and fears and desires? And then the fear that there is nothing you can call your own? And did you go searching? Anyway?

Or sex?

What if we all committed sex?

And then when you got sick from something you got at the 7/11 that night and how the toilet in that apartment didn't work because the previous owner had flushed a shower curtain ring down it? How you fell for a girl in a relationship but did nothing about it? How you lived off Nachos, Red Bull, Coors Light, and Malboro medium cigarettes you bought in packs of five; how you did this for three weeks; all that time sleeping on the floor, paint fumes filling your head?

And is Kierkegaard really as misunderstood as people think he is?

And has that song 'Wolves Won't Eat Us' by Nicole Reynolds been more influential in your life than the people you met in Boston or in Cambridge or Fort Lauderdale or Melbourne? Or just *some* of the people you met there? And which ones? And in what way? Is part of the song more influential than the rest? And do you remember when you looked at her picture and didn't realise she was a woman until after you read her name? Did you ask yourself; why is it she became even more of a woman after you heard her sing?

And have you ever thought; at what point does something *stop* being *avant garde*?

And begin?

And how far did you take this thought?

And what if punk never happened?

And *did* it happen?

And what if getting a job, dressing in designer labels, and buying a car, a house, and loved ones is as punk as you can get?

What would have to change about society to make *this* avant garde?

And do you think Nicole Reynolds is currently more influential in your life than the experience you had when you were on a train to Inverness and it broke down leaving you stranded in a toilet compartment with a heroin addict? Do you remember that suitcase he had with him; the one that looked like it was out of a Bronte sister's novel? What about when you had that fever in New Hampshire and thought you were going to die, alone, in a foreign country? How about when you went to work the next day –in the snow and all day out in the snow– because it happened on New Years Eve and you didn't want your boss to think you weren't at work because you partied too hard?

And if Hitler didn't have arms?

Or all those years you spent sleeping on floors? Is she more influential than those floors? Which floors?

When you read Fiske's *Jeaning of America* did you think about that pair of Levi Corduroys you bought for \$1.00 at the Salvation Army in Plymouth; the one near the Chinese restaurant where you always used to order the cheapest thing on the menu and then sit all day and drink the free *bottomless* tea you get with every meal? And how those corduroys were the only pair of wearable trousers you owned for a year? Do you remember how they started unravelling around your feet and then ripped all the way up the seams? How you tried to sew them back together but gave up and bought a pack of safety pins instead? How for you this was a functional solution but how for someone else it was a *good punk- fashion sense*? And why you didn't buy another pair of trousers until you did? And why were *they* corduroys? And *woman's* corduroys at that?

What if you had to bounce Kurt Cobain off Nietzsche's Zarathustra?

Trade their names?

How about the fact that you are sleeping on a couch on your parent's front porch right now? And how all your friends are living your dreams even though they

never really wanted them? How on paper you're supposed to be smarter than your friends but that they're all making more money than you? How dreaming is the thing that saved your life? And when it stopped with that phone call that curled you into a ball and turned you numb for over a year? And have you recovered yet?

Do you ever wonder what Adolf Wolfli was thinking when he:

- a) Constructed that insane body of work in his padded cell?
(And)
- b) Diddled those kids?

Why haven't you *touched* your guitar in over a year?

And is experimental form or shocking content *more* transgressive?

What does it mean to be transgressive?

Do you ever worry about how we have become desensitized to everything?

How nothing shocks us?

Until it does?

And how about the times you were homeless and broke? Or when you arrived in Fort Lauderdale at 4am with two dollars to your name and no plane ticket home? Or when at 18 you roamed the streets of New York City all night because you couldn't find any accommodation? How you slept in the park during the day? How whenever you hear that song about the buildings in Chelsea by the Counting Crows you remember that time? Do you think this is hypocrisy? How you proclaim *art over commerce* and still justify listening to major label artists? Or do words like hypocrisy only apply when the hypocrite isn't you?

And if you were to personality profile this song would it be schizoid or narcissistic?

Do you sometimes think about what Simon Frith said about how we respond automatically (unconsciously) to music; and then ask yourself, what exactly is it about this song that moves me? And then, which part of me is moving; and where is that part; and to which part of the song? And what if it stops moving?

Do you remember, vividly, all the times you spent in Laundromats?

And do you ever ask; what is the difference between the tone of the body language in these two songs? Is one of them looking up and to the right? Does it have its hand over its mouth?

And if you shine a light on them would their pupils dilate?

If you shone words on them instead?

And have you ever tried applying the answers you got here to fiction?

To the *act* writing?

And is writing an act of mind or body or both and what is the perfect balance?

And has the Counting Crows body of work had more of an impact on your life than Nicole Reynold's body of work, or has the influence only extended as far as your interviewing technique? Or just a particular album? Albums? Or is it just *that* song? And if you had to compare all her songs to all their songs?

Musically or lyrically? Which do you respond to first? Most? Which is the *best*?

And how has your study of music and culture and art influenced the way you think about this? Attali more than Adorno? Adorno more than Frith? You've studied all of Frith, so how would you compare what he has to say about the art school scene in Britain in *Art into Pop* to what Attali says about the lent carnival in *The Political Economy of Noise*? How about Nietzsche on music? Hebdige and Fiske?

What about Jameson, Lacan, Derrida, and Barthe?

Or how about that time in Cambridge when you had no money and nowhere to go in the middle of winter? That night you spent in a telephone booth to get out of

the rain; what song was playing in your head then? And would you say that song is more significant in your life than the one you are listening to right now? Or has the effect of this song faded? Has it been replaced by something else? And why?

And what about that so called postmodern condition?
That feeling of disconnect?
Have you ever longed to know why this is feeling one of longing?
And do you think that if you stayed in one place it would be less?
The place; feeling; *you*?

And if you had to *go* out in nature?
Alone?
Would you bring the city with you?
Which parts?

And what if you were the city?
Would you still feel disconnected from it?
Or would you feel disconnected from nature?

And how would you look?
And what clothes would you wear?
And would this mean you're experiencing a *longing* for yourself?
And what if you were to go back?
And what if city people came to visit?
And what if you weren't *all there*?

What if their disconnection causes you to feel a disconnection from them?
And which type of disconnect would be more *you* if you sometimes wore a dress when it was hot that day and no-one was around until someone was; and when you looked, you saw that person was *you*?

What if you were to compare yourself to yourself and found it lacking?

And what if you had to analyse this stupid idea?

The idea of different melodies and rhythms in different songs; and that question of *which animal*... which would you choose as the one that most defines you?

And what if your mother were to die this very moment and a song you feel indifferent about starts pouring out of your radio just after you hear the news? What if instead of your mother she was your soul mate? What if it was her that died? Will it be more significant to you than the Nicole Reynold's song you have been listening to all week?

What if the first thing you saw after was your toothbrush?

Thumb tacks?

A bar of soap?

What if it was your penis?

Would you stop using soap or change brands to avoid bringing back that memory?

Do you remember the time you tried to reduce every single 'chapter' in *The Society of the Spectacle* to an advertising slogan –or *elevate them*; and how you were the only one who thought this was funny?

Is this where your constant drive to sum things up with that perfect one-liner comes from? Or is it from all the time you spent not being able to write songs?

You've studied Sade, Blake, Lautreamont, Baudelaire, Rimbaud. You've also studied every bit of DADA you could get your hands on. Not to mention Surrealism, Pop Art, and almost every document produced by the Situationist International

And you've also studied the Beat Poets and New Journalism right? And modernism?

So

Faulkner or Becket? Hemingway or Huxley? Joyce? What about Chuck Palahniuk and Irvine Welsh?

Has Chuck Palahniuk's often shocking content influenced your understanding of transgressive fiction more than Amy Hempel's experimental form?

Or is her form *idiosyncratic* rather than transgressive? Or is that she just writes the way a woman thinks? Does this make 'woman' as a whole transgressive or just the way she thinks? And what if she says what she thinks?

Do you remember how 'Iris' by the Goo-Goo Dolls was playing the night of your first kiss and how the memory of that exact moment is what got you interested in the band and how they are the reason you started experimenting with alternate tunings which is now a trademark of your playing style? Do you ever think about how if you didn't learn to play guitar or weren't a slightly *avant garde* guitarist your taste in women might've been entirely different?

And why has everything in your life always started and ended with a girl and a song?

And don't you find it strange that your favourite writer and your favourite musician are both women and you're a man?

And if you had to analyze this attraction?

Would it be identification or sex?

What if you sound too much like Amy Hempel?

What if you sound too little like her?

Didn't she say in an interview once that she doesn't sound quite like herself in real life? Or was that a *book*?

Do you remember the first date with your current girlfriend?

How you sat outside a pub watching flying ants circle a streetlamp in the rain?

And have you ever thought about how strange it is that all the major events in your life have happened in autumn?

And this obsession with seeing a leaf fall from a tree; that moment it snaps loose from the branch; when did it start? *Why* did it start?

And why is it you still can't you find a way to describe the sound of a crisp autumn leaf tumbling over stone?

Why?

What about that age old idea of 'knowing who I am by knowing what I am not?'

Have you ever thought of this in terms of gender?

What is woman?

What is man?

And don't you think it's ironic that a sell-out major label band got you interested in punk? And that if it wasn't for your interest in 'alternative' music, you wouldn't have developed a similar interest in 'alternative' writing? What about the fact that your guitar style has somehow been reproduced in your writing style?

And is your guitar style feminine or masculine?

And what conclusion do you think you would come to if you were to apply Theo van Leuwen's discussion of overlapping dialogue as typical of female conversational structures to that Nicole Reynold's song you're listening to right now? And when you think of Guy Debord's discussion of Pseudo-cyclical time and the big evil commerce machines influence on our lives and you tie that to Van Leuwen's analysis of female dialogue following circular patterns rather than the linear patterns commonly used by men?

Why is it you are only *now* noticing the sound of your hand running through your hair; when your ears have been hearing this for most of your life? Is there a disconnection between your thoughts and your ears? Which side is the wrong side of your ear? What sort of character would think something like this? Could that character work in a Tolstoy novel?

And didn't Ani Difrancio mention in an interview that her circular song-writing style is just a natural consequence of her feminine identity; that women operate in cycles?

Why is change the thing you crave the most? Why do you identify with old buildings more than new ones; and crave *new* experiences –things– at the same time? And do you ever get annoyed with the way buildings keep encroaching on nature? Commerce? Art? Nature as art? Art as commerce? City as commerce? City as nature?

Do you ever ask yourself who the fuck am I?

Where do I belong?

And what are the answers to these questions?

And what if you find these answers boring?

More than the questions?

And if you had to represent this balance on a pie chart and present it to your friends; to god; to the president; yourself?

Do you remember how on your days off you always found a way to go and be on your own? How you'd walk through the snow or sit by a river or on the beach or in the woods or in that doorway opposite Great St Mary's church on a Sunday evening when the church bells were ringing; but how you never went inside even though you always wanted to and thought you should; *or that you might?*

All those one night stands you regret not having and the girl you should've asked out but never did? What about that day you called in sick to work to be with a girl who was leaving for good that night?

How a flood had closed most of the railway lines but *you* insisted on going anyway and how it took three times as long to get there and how the train was so packed you had to sit on the floor and how nothing else mattered except that
you
were

with
her?

And do you ever find it weird that we construct and define ourselves in relation to the opposite sex and our own sex at the same time?

And with all the women you have had in your life have you ever thought that you might be more woman than man?

And which one is deeper inside you?

Do you ever wonder why it is the only two times someone has reached out an arm to save you from people, that both those times the people who saved you were gay?

That the most intimate gesture ever shown you was when someone pulled a pair of socks over your feet because they noticed you were cold?

And do you sometimes play word games with yourself; replacing words like fear with words like knowledge or deferral? And then change the rest of the idea to match?

And why is it that Ani Difranco has forced such a significant change in your understanding of feminine identity and what it means to be an artist but the fact that she is bisexual has not changed you in any way?

Do you sometimes wonder if maybe you should look at what Hitler did as *art* in the same way you'd think of DADA as *art*? Or the weapons industry as *art*? Or just the less than one percent of the annual expenditure on weapons trade that would solve world hunger? Or the Germans that knew about what was happening to the Jews but did nothing? Is doing nothing an option? And if you had to compare and contrast or critically analyse your current actions in response to third world starvation relative to what happened in Nazi Germany, would you be closer to:

a) a Jew

- b) a non-Jewish German living in Nazi Germany that knows what's going on and does something, anything
- c) a non-Jewish German living in Nazi Germany that knows what's going on and does nothing
- d) a Nazi

And when you think about your car your house your clothes your body your haircut; isn't this all just a way of appealing to the opposite sex?

Where do you get your information for what *she* wants from?

And don't you find it strange that most of your life is a thing constructed in response to your idea of what *she* wants?

Do you ever think of yourself as *art*? What kind of art?

And what was it that Frith said about androgyny in music?

And the powerful female in rock?

Have you ever listened to The Raincoats?

What about the rain? Or a coat? Or to yourself listening? I mean *really* listened?

Do you remember when you refused to buy a bed *on principle* and then spent the next eight months sleeping on two settees in the living room; waking up each morning with your head on one, your feet on the other, and your arse on the floor?

And what was that principle again?

Or was it a lie you constructed to avoid the truth that you were surviving off small change you stole from the tip jar at work? And that time when you lived off bread for two weeks and then when you got some money how you bought fish and beer and the label on the fish said *boil* so you boiled and you ended up with little chunks of raw fish you had to fish out with a plastic spoon? How you spent three hours scratching through the lining of your guitar case for the makings of a joint?

And do you ever wonder what it would be like to date Patti Smith?

Or Ani DiFranco?

What would the difference be?

Do you remember standing outside the Irish Embassy Youth Hostel in Boston at 3 am? And the time the *power went out* and you thought you'd lost your ability to hear music, because you could (clearly and distinctly) hear everything else; including both the washing machine and the kettle. How for an instant you thought god was punishing you by taking away the thing you love the most?

Do you ever find the idea of dating a strong, independent woman both appealing and scary as hell?

Both at the same time?

More one than the other?

And why?

Is it a fear that your masculine identity will be formed in relation to what a woman expects of you?

Isn't it anyway? And shouldn't it be?

What about the time you were *convinced* you saw a ghost because you *weren't* stoned and then felt cheated because you weren't stoned. And when you taught your friends how to make a blow-gun like those primitive tribes use to hunt & kill and they turned it into a flame thrower like the Nazis used to hunt & kill?

Does Sartre agree with all of himself or just on certain points? _____ perhaps?

And when was the last time you talked to the friend who used to roll you a cigarette and make you a cup of tea every morning? Why has a girl never done this for you? Why did that friend quit smoking? Why have all your friends quit and you haven't? Why are they all married and you are not? Why do they all have jobs and babies and houses and cars and you don't have any of these things? Do you remember when you were all equal; how you used to feel both more or less equal at the same time? Do remember the other friend who gave you a £100.00 when you had nothing and then wouldn't accept it when you tried to pay him back? How you bought him a birthday present with that money and

wondered if you should have spent more? How you did, and then after, how you wound up in a worse financial position than the time before, but this time you didn't ask?

And if you had kept count of how many times you have listened to all the music in your life; do you think that the song that comes out on top would be the most representative of your identity? Do you wonder *what if Adorno had thought this thought?*

And when you think about why you don't keep in touch with your friends is it because:

- A) It suddenly hit home; that time when they *invited* you to move in with them and then took all the money you had in the world as a rent down-payment even though they didn't actually *need* the money
- B) That they did this at the beginning of the month instead of at the end of the month
- C) That they did this even though they knew that you were only getting paid at the end of the month
- D) Total strangers have let you sleep on their floors for free
- E) You can't discuss art with them
- F) You do not feel worthy of them
- G) These are the same friends who gave you gifts of cigarettes and tea and money
- H) None of the above
- I) Some of the above
- J) All of the above

And do you remember that night your first serious girlfriend broke up with you? Do you remember the feeling you had when you heard the truth about everything she lied to you about for so long?

And the morning you lost your virginity; how when you thought about it after how you realised you'd actually lost it the night before; when you told her you're not sure if you're ready, how she said she understood and then went and sat outside, quietly, alone, all night, not leaving, not staying, until eventually you used your body to fill that silence?

And have you wondered why nothing has felt as intense since?

Do you ever think *sex is like advertising*?

And in your study of the natural sciences, did you ever come across subjects like camouflage, mimicry, and sexual deception?

And did you try tying the way people operate to the way an orchard will replicate the smell and hind quarters of a female wasp to attract a male wasp so that she can procreate?

Who is the orchard deceiving? The male? The female? Herself?

It's amazing when you think about how a starfish can grow a whole new body from a severed limb, right?

Do ever wonder which you'd be if you were a successful musician; a starfish or its severed limb?

And are animals better than people? Or just some? Which ones?

What about advertising? Or sex? Or music? Or politics? Or religion? Or tracking?
Did you try and tie the way an orchard has sex to any of these?

Nature?

Consciousness?

Music?

Brushing your teeth?

And do you still wonder how she could get away with lying to you for so long without you realizing?

How she could love another man and you at the same time?

And when was the last time you asked yourself why you could forgive both of them but not yourself?

And when you walk the backstreets at three in the morning, do you still notice the way your shadow circles around you when you pass a streetlight?

What if you gave birth and the person you gave birth to was yourself?

And what about when the baby died?

Do you think of the women you have loved as your shadows or the light?

Which, I wonder, do you find more attractive?

Why can't you put yourself in her place; feel what she did; understand what she must have gone through? Why did you feel rage after? Why do you still?'

And when there is more than one streetlamp do you still stretch out your arms to see if your hands touch?'

And what if Nicole Reynolds used predominantly masculine structures in her song writing? Would she still be a woman? Would she be a natural woman? Would she be less or more of a man?

And when was the last time you counted your shadows?

And how many have you seen at once?'

And when you counted, did you think; *the medium is the message*, even once?

Or did that only come later?

What if you compared yourself to yourself and found part of you lacking?

Or all of you?

What if Derrida had done this....?'

And do you still divide the sounds you hear into figure, ground, and field?'

Do you separate thoughts into close, medium, and far'
And do you feel things in close up, full body, and long shot?

Or have you replaced these words with words like faith and hope and love?'
Are they close? Are they ground? Or are they a long shot?'

Do you remember the girl who murdered you but left a part of you behind to
watch yourself die? Which part was that?
And the one that died?

What if your bathroom mirror was Kierkegaard?
And what if you had body dimorphic disorder?
What if you wanted to cut a part of yourself off; *you had to?*
And what if that part is the one you can't see?
What if your hands were scalpels and touch was love?

What if everybody else's hands were scalpels?
Their eyes?
Their words?

And when you listen to the sounds of insects and ocean at night, do you
sometimes separate them into rhythm and melody?

And when you had that argument with your girlfriend last night, did you maybe
stop to wonder, just once, which is better; the way Chuck Palahniuk lists in
explicit detail all the things his characters know about how to make bombs and
clean stains, or to 'submerge' these things below the surface through the use of
ambiguity, symbol, or metaphor? What if you did this with an entire plot?

Do you ever think of sound in terms of touch?
Do you think about words in terms of sound?

What if you had to write an arpeggiated sentence? How would you do something
like that? Or a chapter in the key of A minor?'

If you were to divide an entire book into rhythm and melody. Which part would be rhythm and which part melody?

And all that time you studied con-artistry, were you thinking about love?
What about when you studied cannibalism? Or wilderness survival? Or tracking?

And then suddenly; when that phone call came; and the girl you love; how it curled you up in a ball on the floor?

And do you remember that quote by Nietzsche; the one that goes;

“lets suppose philosophy is a woman, what then?”

And let's suppose fiction was a woman
And let's suppose woman was music
And let's suppose music was advertising
And let's suppose advertising was con-artistry
And let's suppose con-artistry was a man
And let's suppose a man was fiction

Then; let's suppose fiction was an insect or a toothbrush or making tea or thinking or remembering or loving or crying or fucking or building or drinking or whiskey or cigarettes or a river or a city or swimming or floating..... floating naked in a lake in the Hostel in the Forest in Georgia at midnight under the full moon with a girl you hadn't met and all the ones you were going to meet and have met and haven't met and every other girl including the one that.....or an idea or an action or inaction or fear or apathy or clothes or a boat or the concept of escape or dancing in the rain or two thirds of the bible or a tree or the absence of trees or little bits of philosophy and little bits of fiction and little bits of poetry and little bits of music and little bits of song and little bits of truth or rhythm or a feeling of falling or a feeling of being full of lots of things and not knowing what those lots of things are... sometimes... or the feeling of being lost; or; the idea of

being lost; or; a feeling or tears; or;
back of tears

the holding

And let's suppose all of these things was a *life*

What then?

And then finally, then; let's suppose a man were a three chord pop-song and a woman were a symphony

And let's suppose these roles were reversed

Which would you listen to?

And which would be on top in bed?

And which would be the most natural?

And which would be the least deceptive?

And which would be the most relevant or representative of the current political, social, and economic context?

And which would be the superior form communication?

And then finally, then; let's suppose you tried to translate all these questions and more into a work of fiction;

What then?

Does that answer your question?

Yes. But can I ask you another?

Shoot

Interview continued

Question:

One of the things I find interesting about what you just said without actually saying it, and which is a technique you used in the novel, is the idea of leaving stuff out but it still being there. How for example Kierkegaard or con artistry can be a dominant theme or subject in the book, a presence, without you actually mentioning that thing in any direct way...

Yes. We're talking about *exposition through omission* here, but maybe not so much omission as much as the idea of submerging certain things whilst exposing others. Perhaps it's better to think of this in terms of the Hemingway ice-berg principle

...the virtue of its movement is that nine tenths of it is underwater?

Exactly

If you look at the first chapter you'll see that I never actually mention the word *death* once. But you assume that's what's going on right?

Yes

I also never mention the gender of the narrator. I never use the word *he* or *him* or a male name at any point; but I suggest it

Think of that line;

'The window cuts me off at the legs. And I am half a man to anyone looking up at me from the street'

When you start bouncing this off the rest of the novel –when *he's* looking at the girl through the window; con artistry and identity theft; Lizzie being an actress; this gender confusion issue that started when the character was made to wear dresses as a child, and the question about whether this character is a boy being made to wear a dress or a tomboy struggling to define herself relative to the concept of a dress and all that is attached to that; the idea of a traumatic experience forcing you to create a fantasy; just creating a fantasy (a dream man or woman;) defining yourself in relation to the opposite sex; constructing yourself in relation to the opposite sex; seeing your dream of becoming a famous pop star as the opposite sex; the idea of sexual deception in the animal kingdom; etc. – the maybe you'll start to realise what's going on

Yeah, yeah. I totally get that. Can we talk influences?

By way of example; and referring to the previous example; I'm going to mention a line

'A man dissected by a pane of Glass'

That's a line from a poem by Breton; and it only occurred to me after I wrote that line about being cut off at the legs that its construction was informed by the Breton line

It could quite easily have come from the all too common phrase 'cut off at the legs'

But for me it didn't. Maybe it did. Maybe it was Breton and the phrase; but it immediately brought Breton to mind after I wrote it

I came across that line when I was studying DADA and Surrealism as part of the research for the novel and I remember it struck a chord with me at the time, and then I forgot about it. A year later I'm writing this piece and out comes that 'cut off at the legs' line and suddenly I remember the other one. They're quite different, but I know for a fact that this line influenced mine. That Hemingway idea again; about how if you know enough about something...in this case I didn't plan on making a reference, and the reference is quite vague, and it happened by complete accident, but it shows how the things that make up your life and rattle around inside you; the books you read, your experiences; the stuff you listen to, the stuff you study etc., all manifests in your work. In the end I didn't plan on using Surrealism or DADA in any direct way in the novel even though I devoted a lot of time to studying them; but as you can see, a little bit snuck in anyway without me even realizing

Like con artistry?

No. that was deliberate

It started with the idea of using con artistry as a plot driver. The specific knowledge a character has that makes that character a character. Think of Tyler Durden's bomb-making knowledge in *Fight Club* or Tender Branson's advice on how to remove stains in *Survivor*

In *Shades*, Eva was meant to be an artist and a con artist. Jack was meant to be a wilderness expert and film maker. Jimmy was meant to be a musician, but he's

also a backpacker and he's interested in things like The Art of War. Lizzie is into animals and psychology (mainly as a response to certain phobias and OCD's she has)

Now; all these characters are all these things in the novel, but it's a question of how this is revealed to the reader. You can go the Chuck Palahniuk route and put recipes in a characters mouth. If you look at the Jack excerpts I've included in this submission you'll see this is what I've done. He shows you how to tie knots disassemble an AK 47, skin and gut an animal etc. But I worked Eva differently

Yes. You didn't mention a hustle once?

Do you want one now? How about a change raising scheme? I bet you I can tie a cigarette into a knot without tearing it

Sticky books?

How about I sell you a rental car?

I studied all this stuff for the better part of a year. But; think about what con-
artistry is? It works because you don't know you're being hustled. So why tell the
reader the character is a con artist? How do you submerge that information so
that when they suddenly realise a whole lot of everything at the end of the Lizzie
book and go back to page whatever they see it there right in front of them. They
missed it. They were conned. Diversion and distraction

Key principles in hustling

Isn't that the same sort the logic used in constructing a plot?

Exactly

If you look at most short cons, they follow the exact same formula as a
conventionally plotted novel. There's that initial situation. The draw. It pulls you
in. Leads you down a couple side streets; drawing you further in. Convincing you.
Moving you to that point. And then; there's big moment or twist

But you didn't go this route?

Yes and no. In the Jimmy and Jack sections you'll see more of this, but in the Eva and Lizzie sections I attempted using the logic of a long-con

Which is of course the more sophisticated approach?

Yes. It relies on diversion and distraction. Ebbing and flowing. Pushing and pulling. Toying with the reader. Turning them in circles and maintaining their interest at the same time. A dog chasing its own tail. Circles. Fucking someone over without them realising it. It's a more complex form of communication and also characteristically female

I'm not sure I achieved this goal in the novel but I've definitely moved a great deal closer to *being able* to achieve it

I remember you saying that this is the most complex plot you have ever written; but when I got to the end of Book One I thought, *am I missing something?* You have since revealed the secrets of books two, three, and four to me and I totally see it now, but since you've only submitted book one, can you elaborate a bit more for the people who don't currently have access to the other books?

Yes

You need to remember that each book is meant to deconstruct or unravel or shed light on the previous one. And that I spent more time actually researching and thinking about plot than actual writing

I heard it took you seven weeks?

That's about it. I have written easily over a thousand pages over the last year and a bit. More. I'm not going to count it. But the stuff you see here; the majority of it was written over the last seven weeks

I know you said you work well under pressure but wasn't that cutting it a bit close?

Yes. Very yes. There is so much I want to change. I am not proud of this work. I don't believe it showcases me at all. But it took a lot of time and research and study and pain and writing to get to that point where the all the elements of the novel started working together the way I wanted them to

Started

Because I'm still quite far off from the point where it works on paper the way it works in my head

In fact, when I rework the novel I'm pretty sure I'm going to throw out everything except the first chapter & the *idea*

The plot

But done in a completely different way

I devoted a great deal of energy to developing this plot, so, when I started writing I already had everything completely worked out in my head. It was just a matter of drawing on everything I had done in preparation for the writing. I was thinking of all the plot twists in the Lizzie book the whole time I was writing the Eva book. The execution might not be all that great at this point, but all those set-ups are there. All submerged below the surface. You don't see it coming until suddenly you open up the Lizzie book and the first line is the last line of another book and it is written on a postcard. And then you start to think about how Lizzie might *be* Eva. But then you think about how Lizzie is someone who unconsciously mimics people because she's an actress (revealed more and more throughout)

And she's this innocent, naïve, dumb blonde who throughout the other books gets revealed to be smarter and smarter until she's the smartest of them all You think about the themes of con artistry and identity theft (as art projects – how Eva is an artist and her medium is people) revealed in the Jimmy book and you start to wonder if Eva has stolen Lizzie's identity or the other way around

You think about the increasing conflict between the girls in the Jimmy book and Jack book and how they are fighting over ownership of him and it seems like they are set to destroy each other. Do they?

What if that omission in the Eva book was the moment one of them was destroyed? When in the Eva chapter there was the *suggestion* that Lizzie jumped out of the window but it was not stated. Was it Lizzie that jumped, or Eva? Did she jump? In the Jack book; did Lizzie and Eva eventually swap identities so that Eva could use Lizzie's medical insurance to get her heart operation, or was that just a little role-playing thing? Were they acting out a scene on *movie night* – set up by the strong presence of film in the book; how in the Jimmy book they pull flash theatre stunts in supermarkets and act out scenes in front of CCTV cameras? How they weave scenes from movies into their lives. How their lives become more movie than reality

And what if one manipulated the other one over the edge? What if they are the same person? The true self and the false self? The real self and the dream self. And because of the gender confusion issue, what if Jimmy is Lizzie's ideal male self? Or the other way around? What if Jimmy is her ideal male *partner*? A dream she constructed. What if she found herself lacking and constructed Eva to be a match for Jimmy? What if she did that in real life and realized she didn't want Jimmy anymore? What if Eva turns on Jimmy; but by doing so is fact turning on herself?

What if all of this is about self destruction? Or rebirth of self? What if all these characters are different evolutionary stages of a single person's life? A journey they started at birth, but which was accelerated by a double tragedy? Maybe that tragedy forced them into isolation where they started living in a dream world. Maybe this whole novel is someone's dream world? Maybe I wouldn't be so mean as to spoil the plot for you in that way, but do you see how sophisticated this is getting? And how it took me forever to get the 'mathematics' of this right?

And when you hit that last line of the Lizzie book and you realize it circles back to the beginning of the Eva book. And you think about everything I have already said. When you realize that all of this plot was submerged or hidden in plain sight through the use of metaphor, symbol, ambiguity, omission, and selective release, how you end up with a completely different reading of the book. And how I had to keep all of this in mind. The whole book. All of the twists. All of the mathematics when I wrote the Eva book. How form is meant to re-enforce and play against all of this at various points. Do you see how sophisticated it is?

I know how sophisticated it is. But what I want to know is how did you get the idea for this?

You mean apart from my life? (laughs)

Yes

Well; plot was a real issue for me for a while. I wanted to write a novel that goes nowhere. That circles in on itself. Initially it was meant to be a comment on society

Pseudo-cyclical time

A moth circling a flame

Active vs. passive

Etc.

Another part of it was the challenge of pulling this off. For me this novel was about improving my writing skill. So to teach myself I set myself a number of tasks. Can you break all the rules and still keep it interesting? Remove the plot. Take away the action. That rule of not letting the character spend too much time on their own? How about trying to write a chapter where the character is doing *nothing but* sitting alone in a room. No action. No landscape. No evolution. No interaction with other people. Keep all of it to an absolute minimum. See if you

can do all that and keep it interesting. And if you can, maybe you *can call yourself* a writer. Now try extend this to two chapters. Three. And so on

All this to improve your writing?

That was the goal when I set out. And what better way to improve your skill than by trying to do the impossible?

So you believe this was effective?

Working this way forces you to explore multiple other avenues to compensate for or replace what you have taken away. It's a constant process and its tough as shit. You fail and you fail and you fail. You get close but not close enough. You cry and you want to die and you hate everything you do, but it forces you to become a better writer. And isn't the goal of art?

End result is I'll never do a lot of what I did in this novel in any other novel ever again, but it was a fun experiment that stretched & flexed my mind

What are some of the techniques you learned and used to compensate?

Ambiguity. Metaphor. Symbol. These to start. A lot of this comes from studying poetry

Song

Advertising

Omission

That killer line.

If you can reduce everything to a paragraph

Reduce it to a line

If you can make every line great. If you can write line by line instead of paragraph by paragraph. If you build each line on top of the one before it

As a response to the one before it

If you can do this in various ways

Rhyme. Rhythm. Idea. An earlier hint. Word choice. Syllables and consonant sounds. The word green used in two different ways in these two completely

different sentences as a word that links them. Two separate words that suggest a similar idea. What if that idea is a subordinate idea in both those sentences? What if they hold bigger, separate ideas, but that shared subordinate idea hinted at in two separate words in separate sentences is what links the separate big ideas in those sentences?

You read a novel you don't really see a lot of this stuff, but if you start dissecting that novel with a scalpel it becomes clear just how 'written' a lot of that stuff is.

The good ones

I once spent three weeks trying to find a way of linking two lines. Most of this is strategy I picked up from Hempel passed down to her from Lish. A lot of it from song writing. A lot of it from advertising.

That idea of the cumulative effect of those lines

If instead of distracting people with lots of useless information about the weather and landscape, what if you can stop their breath with a single line? Slow them down mentally? Speed them up emotionally?

Cause their mind to smile? Cause their body to smile?

Break their hearts in a single line?

And if you get it wrong it stands out so much more, so it really challenges you to work harder to get it right. A few crap lines between a lot of good ones somehow comes off as worse than a few good ones between a lot of crap ones

And I'm still so far off from the level of someone like Hempel on getting this right, but I'm getting there

That's the point

Growth

So this alternate approach is not because you are perhaps unable to write a conventionally plotted novel then?

A conventional plot is something I mastered on day one. Project one

Put a gun in a man's hand. Trace this back and follow it forward

Why does he have a gun in his hand?

What's he going to do with that gun?

Maybe he walked in on his wife cheating on him?

Is he going to kill her?

The other man?

Himself?

The kids?

Everyone?

Maybe the gun is something from his past?

His father's gun?

What's the history there?

How does it link to the present?

The future?

Maybe he bought it at a pawn shop?

Maybe by a cruel twist of fate it turns out to be the gun his father killed himself with or killed someone else with or maybe it was the other man's gun?

What if the other man took it to the pawn shop that very day?

What if it was a gift given to his father?

Who gave his father that gun?

What's the history there?

Sins of the father?

Does he plan this?

Is it pre-meditated?

How does he plan it?

What is going to do with the bodies?

What scenarios does he run through in his mind?

How does he get caught?

Is it years later? A twist?

Is the twist related to the gun and the history of that gun?

Something minor that happened in one of these scenes?

The court case?

The police chase?

How about you put a man in a Cessna and crash it in the wilderness?

How does he survive?

What challenges does he face?

The journey back to civilisation?

What change does he undergo?

Are you convinced I can write a conventionally plotted novel yet?

Yes

And I do have conventional plotting in this novel. The Jimmy and Jack sections I haven't included in this submission are quite conventional in places, and they are becoming more so every day. I'm changing them in my head as we speak

Not Lizzie and Eva?

No. for all the reasons I outlined in my list of questions and more, so I'm not going to elaborate except on maybe a few points

Like

Think about con artistry and music and advertising and art and sexual deception in the animal kingdom and sexual interaction in the human-animal kingdom and how women are generally cyclical rather than linear in thought etc.

All those things I mentioned earlier.

Now realise that a lot of this has to do with emotion

Think about how to win an argument

You get someone emotional. Force their emotions to cloud their reasoning. Or you use their mind against them. You lead them down various routes. You force them to certain conclusions. You play those conclusions against each other. Tie them up in knots. But they don't see it coming until it comes. And wonder, isn't this a sort *plot*?

Yes

Exactly. I'm attempting to use alternate structures to manipulate – dirty word
Look for example at what I'm doing in the first part of the novel

Chapter one is pure heartbreak. That was my goal

I gave it to both my girlfriend and mother to read, both of whom have lost people recently and after reading it, they reported cold shivers. Both said it's exactly what it's like. And it should be. I wrote it from personal experience. I was dealing with my loss in that piece. Or a part of it. I also listened to other people who had lost loved ones talk about their experience after I had written it (to compare) and it was feeling for feeling. That was my goal

Then there's a sudden shift to the head. Contemplative

Then humour

It's about forcing shifts in emotional and mental response

Line to line. Paragraph to paragraph. Chapter to chapter. Book to book

It's just not your conventional kind of shifting

For example

If you look at the Eva book you'll see we're dealing with present then past then future. So there's a logic here. The shift from present tragedy through your past issues and memories to get to your future (a place of healing...but is it?)

Also, if you look even closer you'll see the logic follows more or less the cycle of grief

I had it written out on the wall opposite me when I was writing

Another structure

Another cycle

Why does everything always have to be Hollywood and pulp novels? The same tired formula. And it *is* the same formula

Which is sad because there are so many different ways to explore a story

Like music?

You've been paying attention. Yes, music

And it's dangerous to get me started on this subject, because I might not shut up

Again, I mentioned a lot of this in the question piece, but I'll elaborate a little more

Think about music without words

A sad song in a minor key

Think about rhythm and melody

Think about music layered in three different fields

Close. Mid. Far.

Think about those fields shifting.

One moving to the front

One to the back

All three in your face at the same time

Think about a conventional plot in terms of a three chord pop song

Three shifts

Repeated a few times, and then another shift towards the bridge, and then another towards the chorus, and then the shifts in the chorus, and then back down

Now think about the shifts in a symphony

Think about shifts in finger-style folk

In Blues

In Celtic music

Romani Gypsy music

Zulu guitar

Sitar

Are you seeing the possibilities here for fiction?

Now look at my first chapter. Let's divide that up into rhythm and melody

Think of rhythm in terms of line length. Fast or slow. Short sharp lines. Long winding slow ones

Pace

That space I put in there after 'the thoughts I fear'

The first time I read that after I wrote it, I skipped a breath

And a few times after

This is your body reading. Your eyes are forced to drop down the page to find the next words

They've been lulled into a familiar pattern of movement and suddenly that pattern has been broken. Your body responds in a different way to the text because of that pattern break and you rush to fill that space with words

And if you are not a dead fish; you should *feel* at least a bit of this change on a bodily level

Because your body is going through a change

If I have written well enough to pull an emotional response out of you; if you are feeling something whilst you are reading; when you get to that space it is going to do something to you

Look at the words I used

The things I fear...

I end on that word fear. It's a powerful word if used correctly. Like death and fuck

Look at how Irvine Welsh uses the word 'cunt' in every line and after a while it starts to lose its effect. Now fill a page with pretty words like love and butterfly and joy and peace and kittens and sunshine and then put that word in there

Joy

Love

Peace

Butterflies

Sunshine

Cunt

Now; since we've shifted to content, try thinking of content in terms of the emotional response you have to melody

Happy

Sad

Pensive

Angry

Curious

Afraid

Now think about the main feeling you got from the first chapter

Was it a feeling of sadness?

Would this be a chapter written in a minor key?

Do you see how rhythm and melody can work together, against each other etc.?

Is this starting to make sense?

Think about the idea of an arpeggiated paragraph

The relationship between lines I discussed earlier

Each line as a note

Building up to that root note

Think about the relationship between the D note (line two of one paragraph) and the G note in the next paragraph and B in the next paragraph. What is the difference between those notes? How far apart are they in terms of words?

How would you simulate that difference through word choice or sentence structure or whatever?

Remember the discussion earlier about the word green or two words that connote a similar thing or sound similar?

If you analyze a lot of the really good novels you will see that they are full of structure. Perhaps constructed unconsciously, but there. Everything is a structure... master as many structures as you can...use them deliberately...art

So what sort of music or song would you say your various chapters and books are?

Well; when you think of a conventionally plotted novel as a three chord pop song
Or a rock song

Jack would probably be punk moving towards The Pogues and Gogol Bordello
At later stages moving towards The Pixies

Jimmy is blues and Leonard Cohen and Grunge

Eva is folk

Moving towards finger-style and Ani DiFranco, but spending a lot of time in the Anti folk scene. This was at least the intention (the attempt)

Lizzie is symphonic

She's the most complex which is why I am working on her little by little

My skill level at its best is probably finger-style so I'm working my way up to her

Working my way up to constructing symphony

And there is still so much I want to go back and change about everything I have done. Replace bum notes. In the Nicole Reynolds (part one) chapter, I want to insert more landscape and action. The character needs to be doing more I want those things to be every day things but with a twist. More shifts. Better shifts. A bigger variety of shifts. Too much use of the same chords. Riffs I am not particularly happy with the content or the way that content is structured I regard most of the novel as a *failed attempt*; but there are sections that work

I desperately want to do something about the sections that don't work, but writing this way is a slow, labour intensive process and if I start fiddling now I'll throw a lot of the established rhythms off. It's not easy coming up with that perfect line.

Taking apart a chord

What if you're removing the chord because the D note doesn't work; but the B and G of the chord are linked to notes in the previous and following lines / paragraph?

What if that balance falls apart?

And once you start unravelling a single thread

So I need a bit of time to do this and unfortunately I'm working under a deadline which is why we need to wrap this up so I can get back to the writing

One last question

The answers are in the questions piece

-Gareth

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The Gummie Bears

The Monster Munch Monsters

The ppp pick up a penguin Penguin
And The Smurfs for their special Guest appearances in this Detoured film

And finally, You Tube

And 80's nostalgia for being there for me in those times I needed reminding

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