

The Roads Were Deserted

The roads were deserted because of the war
Not many men my age had their own car
So that made him interesting. And his deferment
Which he only hinted at. I was curious

I'd packed some sandwiches and lemonade
and apples I quartered then tied back together
Once we'd crossed the river it was all fields and pasture
Our talking slowed as he drove faster

The roads were deserted because of the war

I didn't know where we were going, but I didn't care
Thrilled to be far from town and the weight of the war
with a man I barely knew traveling unfamiliar roads
Reckless and fearless, and breaking the codes

Many breathless miles later, we'd passed Caribou
The car coughed and sputtered and rolled to the shoulder
He opened the hood but there was nothing to do
the car had run out of gas

The roads were deserted because of the war

He told me to wait there while he went for help
So I did. He walked north, disappeared around the curve.
Through the heat of the afternoon nobody came
Then the shadows grew long. The sun went down in flames

By the time I saw headlights it must have been midnight
My hands in surrender, I stood in the light
It was the deputy sheriff coming back from a call
I was ashamed to explain, as if I was to blame

The roads were deserted because of the war
The roads were deserted because of the war

In time the war ended, the soldiers came home
The one that I married taught me to drive.
One day I drove past Caribou searching for clues
But of course it looked different, the road was well traveled

The roads were deserted because of the war

Sputnik

On this day in history Sputnik was launched
Do you remember feeling left behind?
Then you grew up in the glorious days of the space race .
As your god was crowded out of heaven by humankind

One revolution
One revolution
One revolution around the earth

After a time the sky was full of satellites
It was the cold war playing out against the cosmic void
And you were still scanning heaven through a child's telescope
That couldn't tell a satellite from a star or an asteroid

One revolution
One revolution
One revolution around the earth

Blink and miss anything, a falling star, a dying star, a rising star at dawn
History will remember, the world will change forever, it's a burning ember, then it's gone

You feel like a child's sketch of a satellite on a sidewalk in chalk
And it's a rainy night. But you long to be much more
To be chiseled in stone and visible from space for eternity
Also on this day in history, work began on Mount Rushmore

One revolution
One revolution
One revolution around the earth

Living Legend

I played the opening set, and that's how we met
In fall of '97, he was a living legend
I had stars in my eyes. No one had hurt me yet
From the very first chord, no, even before
There was no denying the blues poet laureate
Everything I knew better than to do I was ready to forget

Everything is free
Everything is free
Everything is free
Goodbye my love, goodbye

It isn't what you think. It was kind of heartfelt
His songs were mirrors, I brought out his fears
So I left out of kindness, or so I told myself
but I never really left. I just sidestepped
Watching from a distance what he did with 12 bars and an octave
And how he always spun gold from a string of bad love

Everything is free
Everything is free
Everything is free

Goodbye my love, goodbye

Not everyone gets saved. His doctor really said as much
But I thought it was the priest. I wish it was the priest
Because his soul was never something anyone could touch
So the story ends. But not the legends
Thinking about him now makes me wish I could believe in heaven
Roll around the sky all day forever

Everything is free
Everything is free
Everything is free
Goodbye, now
Everything is free
Everything is free
Everything is free
Goodbye, goodbye, my love, goodbye

Misunderstood

When he rests his chin on his folded hands you might think he's a man lost in prayer
But I know him too well and I can tell
He's not lost in prayer

He's too tall for the furniture, too bony for his clothes, he curls like a question mark in the doorway
He's misunderstood but born to look good
Leaning in the doorway

We run out of words in a minute or less, so he takes my hand and I don't resist
it's easier to get it on than to admit it's wrong
And I don't resist me

Three pills and a whisky and he drops into sleep
Like a sandbag through a trapdoor
His defenselessness make me trust him less
But want him more

When he rests his chin on his folded hands you might think he's a man lost in prayer
But I know him too well and I can tell
He's not lost in prayer
Just lost...

My Father Loves Poetry

My father loves poetry
That is something he doesn't yet realize
Because he's yet to read a poem he loves
Still, there's a riddle in what he's passionate of
That's poetry

There was a birdhouse like a dollhouse that my father built

from whitewashed cedar and finished with brass
Carolina wrens brought sticks and string and grasses
I watched my father watching them through his field glasses
And later I watched him watch TV like a hawk
He had harsh words for the experts, called the newscasters bastards
He scared the birds, he fed the birds, his pretty cat would stalk
Once I drew my dreams on the sidewalk in chalk
And was scolded convincingly
My father loves poetry
That is something he doesn't yet realize
Because he's yet to read a poem he loves
Still, I have to believe that he's capable of
Loving poetry

I dreamed it was dark and I couldn't find my way
then I woke and it was dark but the future was darker
so I opened my lockbox of memories to shine a light
oh the unblinking gaze of dolls, I never could sleep at night
so I would dance in the dark, feel my way across the floor
careful not to wake the sleeping giants in the room next door
if it's possible to sing without making a sound I would
Or breathe without stirring the air. I'd given up being good
And settled for invisibility
- My father loves poetry
That is something he doesn't yet realize
Because he's yet to read a poem he loves
He might not admit if he did
Still ever since I was a kid
I had to believe he was capable of
loving me
Because he loves poetry

Pseudonym

I published my book with a pseudonym
so not to betray my next of kin
afraid what they'd say about what I've exposed
I chose to assume a nom de plume

I can't change the subject, it's the subtext of everything
it's my only story, it's written in ink
And that's how I survived, I survived them all
Then I tore up the page because -- what will they think?

Now everybody knows
Everybody knows
In spite of my typos and raggedy prose
Everybody knows

I wrote what I wrote not to blame or unburden
Or for vindication, but to open the curtain
and let the light in. And what I wrote scared me

But I'll lay it bare behind my nom de guerre

The reason I need to write these stories
Is the same reason I can't write these stories
But, hey, they're my birthright, and they're a goldmine
and also a landmine, yes, but they're mine

Now everybody knows
Everybody knows
It's hidden in shadows and innuendos
But everybody knows

I published my book with a pseudonym
so not to betray my next of kin
"Shame," they might say, "You've sold out our shame"
So I dodged the blame under a pen name

But everybody knows
Everybody knows
I dressed a scarecrow in my own clothes
So everybody knows
Everybody knows
Follow the circles and arrows
Everybody knows

The Trouble With The Truth

When I learned my lover was a connoisseur of women
I wrote a song called "The Trouble With The Truth"
While he contemplated women that he found
In magazines, on screens, and hidden in his memories, the spoils of his lost youth

I don't feel like telling stories. - I just want to describe things
Like the color of his shirt left on the back of my chair
but how do you describe a shade without comparing it to something
Like the sky, forget me nots, but I don't want to compare

I walked into town, bought a box of paints
These are the colors I am thinking of
This one for criminals. This one for saints
that's all I want to say about love

Why did I let myself be part of his collection of parts?
I gave away my lost art for free
Folded myself into a box wrapped up in paper
And hoped he would forget - everything he knew about me

Fellow Traveler

Down by the riverbank he left a trail of evidence
I followed until the clues ran out and there he was
Smoke from his campfire tracking halfway to heaven
In a slant of sunlight. I was eleven
In a slant of sunlight. I was eleven

He saw me at once, and he nodded and smiled
Hello, fellow traveler, won't you rest here awhile
Tell me a story, sing a song to pass the day
His kindness so curious it took my breath away
His kindness so curious it took my breath

Later I would say that day was when I learned to talk
Because in my mother's house I was afraid to speak at all
I'd walk the trail when I could slip away, to bring him glue and scissors
I patched his hat and shoes, trimmed his hair and whiskers
I glued his tattered hat and shoes, I trimmed his whiskers

You know winter's going to come but it's not what you think about
Still I knew what I knew when I walked the trail and found the fire burned out
And I knew if you see everything sometimes you won't like what you find
And I knew that once I grew I'd leave my mother's house behind
And I knew that once I grew I could leave

Mother was a mystery so I lived like a detective
Looking for clues, for the motive, the weapon
And I thank the traveler on the riverbank for giving me perspective
He showed me everything I never knew I wanted is true
Yes, everything I never knew I wanted is true
Everything I never knew I wanted is true

East 10th Street

The artists coming up in New York in 1950
had each other and not much else
European Modernists commanded the museums
The galleries were long-established, and of little help
The Village was outdated, and imitating Paris
but the artists coming up were avant-garde
On E. 10th street in Manhattan they found as their blank canvas
an undiscovered neighborhood on which to make their mark

The artists coming up in New York in 1950
at the forefront of a shifting scene found East 10th Street

Angelo Ippolito painted lyrical abstractions
More gifted if less famous than some of his counterparts.
He saw an empty storefront facing on E 10th Street
and thought that it would make a first rate space for showing art
When it opened as the Tanager it drew mostly creators
who were at once participants and spectators

but in time collectors swarmed in, and found themselves communing
with the likes of Lois Dodd, Jasper Johns and both de Koonings

The artists coming up in New York in 1950
at the forefront of a shifting scene found East 10th Street

And so the artists gathered at the Cedar Tavern
debating aesthetics over beers
drew the city's art epicenter downtown
where it remained for the next 50 years

The artists coming up in New York in 1950
at the forefront of a shifting scene found East 10th street.
The artists coming up in New York in 1950
found each other on East 10th street.

Sculptures Of Women

My neighbor makes sculptures of women
From tree trunks with a chainsaw. The noise is disquieting.
A figure emerges from the sawdust riot
My neighbor's a lonely man, from what I can tell

His sculptures are crowding the fence line
Their breasts are like bowling balls, breasts are like basketballs,
Their breasts are like metaphors, legs are like tree trunks
He calls them ladies but they're not ladies

My neighbor watches me while I garden
His gaze is disquieting. I beg your pardon
The rose is in bloom and the hedgerow grows slowly
I feel scarred and raw as if carved with a chainsaw

Annie Proulx

Annie Proulx knows exactly how to tear you in two
She'll throw the book at you and you'll let her,
Because you're caught up in the plot and lies of her criminal mind
all those words words words words words
And you'll never see it coming in the tangle and web
That breathless, endless, on and on
Feels like someone else's story
until she backs it in a corner
and there's nowhere left for it to go,
and then you'll know it was your story all along

I remember your hands. and the moment I met you
thinking - if you loved me I would let you
And, ooh how you knew exactly what to do
It was breathless and endless, tangle and web
So I never saw it coming, your lies, your masterpiece

I threw a book at you, I threw someone else's story
Didn't I, it was a weighty tome
And you were never mine alone
It **never** ever had a place to go,
yeah, you know that was our story all along

Annie Proulx knows exactly how to tear your heart in two
She'll throw the book at you and you'll let her,
Because you're caught up in the plot and lies of her criminal mind
all those words words words words words
I never saw it coming, your brilliant masterpiece
I threw a book at you, I threw someone else's story
at the notch between your collarbones
It was never mine alone
so it **never** ever had a place to go,
yeah, that was our story all along
that was our story all along
that was our story all along

California

Who knows where everyone went? Probably to California
The locksmiths heard they needed more locks,
the horologists followed the crowds punching clocks
and the doctors,
I can't even guess about doctors
I moved to California once myself, for all the right reasons
I found work, I found love, I didn't miss the change of the seasons
And nothing about it troubled me. There was nothing ever troubled me
I'm still haunted by all the things that never troubled me

In California California California

Back here, it's so quiet, silence is a thing you could break
with a hammer or a whimper
and the tide goes out until the ocean's a lake
and the songbirds
Can't call them songbirds
When the tide goes out in California they build houses on the sand
Then when it floods back in, washes them away, next day they build them all again
And call it creating jobs, they answer to their machines
And pelicans dive the waves like they have since the Pleistocene

In California California California

Who knows where everyone went? Not a soul here to say
So if I'm a stranger with a secret
And there's no one to be a stranger to
No one to keep a secret from

What does that make me?
California California California