

Magic Saved Me

George blows smoke rings towards the ceiling
Jonathan rages against the world
Marianne can't hide her feelings
I'm the missing girl

Magic saved me
when you wouldn't
when time didn't
when science couldn't
When God was too slow
And art was too vague
Magic saved me
Magic saved me

George stares into the middle distance
Jonathan has a word for everything
Marianne offers no resistance
I'm a bird with a broken wing

Magic saved me
when you wouldn't
when time didn't
when science couldn't
When God was too slow
And art was too vague
Magic saved me
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Money too cheap
Sleep too fleeting
Cheating too trivial
Oblivion too violent
Silence too tender
Surrender too blind
Kindness too fragile to carry me through
It was magic to my rescue

George strikes a match with his thumbnail
Jonathan leans into the flame
Marianne likes stories that dovetail
I have no name

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Rockabye

He was a beautiful baby but he quickly grew scary
like the changeling in a fairy tale
we thought he would grow out of it but instead
he grew out of his crib and then he grew out of his bed

So we made him down a pallet on the floor
but when he could no longer squeeze through the open door
he slept out on the lawn until the neighbors complained
that his feet were blocking the street

Rockabye rockabye

He moved to the prairie when he outgrew our town
We could see him in the distance with his head in the clouds
The windows rattled and cracked from his footfalls
At night he rested his head on the foothills

Nobody knew what he might do
we ran in fear as he stepped above our homes
on his way to the ocean. When he waded to the other side
The coast washed away in the floods worldwide

Rockabye rockabye

Our beautiful baby, he grew and he grew
We held our breath as he reached up to pluck the moon
Then, it was a small step up to the next galaxy
And he was lost to me

Rockabye baby before you were born
I sang you the song about the ancient oak tree and the acorn
I sang about the peppercorn tree and the peppercorn
I planted a seed, and it grew... into you

Rockabye rockabye

Sleeplessness

I have a long history of sleeplessness
A savant's gift for watching the ceiling
I know how dawn drifts across in each season
And the curl of the wall paper peeling

What if I'd danced with him to Johnny Mercer
There in the diner, tripping the waitress
Closing the spaces between us in the noise and the crowd
If I'd danced with him then
Would I be asleep in his arms now?

He was mostly a mystery. I couldn't look away
From him across the booth in that roadhouse café
Then that tune came on and he was up on his feet
But the song was drowned out by my heartbeat

What if I'd danced with him to Johnny Mercer
There in the diner, tripping the waitress
Closing the spaces between us in the noise and the crowd
If I'd danced with him then
Would he be here holding me now?

Out on the street, the stars were rising out of LAX
Only Mars was unmoved. Anything could happen
All that unexplored voltage zapping
Everything or nothing or not yet

The letter I sent in the shape of a poem
Meant as apology, self-deprecation
But was instead accidentally profound
And earned his respect, but never another invitation

To dance with him to Johnny Mercer
There in the diner, tripping the waitress
Closing the spaces between us in the noise and the crowd
If I'd danced with him then
What if I'd danced with him then
Would I be asleep in his arms now?

Little Theater

In our Little Theater adaptation
The tragic ending was rewritten
The warring factions resolved their confrontations
The set was New York, not old Great Britain

You'll have to work hard - said the choir director
Who had written the scrip, but he gave me the part
I went to school in the dark, stayed late for rehearsal
Came home in the dark to my mother drinking

You don't fix the world by going to the moon
Said my mother, and she left the room
But the director said, "We've all heard enough sad tunes
Let's play something you can dance to"

La la la la la la....

I learned my part by heart. For once I knew what words to say
Were they true? I don't know, but they served the plot
All my life I've waited in the wings of someone else's play
I never got to say what I really thought

Be true to yourself and you will be rewarded, said the king
Who was mayor in our adaptation
Then I sang a song about the beauty in everything
And everyone danced. And the curtain fell

For a moment I could see the view from the moon
Then there was rustling and someone trying not to cough
Then everybody clapped their hands and we all took a bow
Then I went home *in the* dark, to my mother drinking

La la la la la la...

Forget-Me-Not

I wrote a book while you were sleeping
For hours then for years
Then forever. What else could I do
With everything you didn't care to hear

What did I want? That was the wrong question
You look in the mirror, you deserve better
You look at me and see your reflection
A mirror in a mirror forever

Forget-me-not

I danced on my toes
And my feet were sore
So there is that. Can I live on dreams?
Pirouette, pas de chat, encore

The answer was out of the question
You said: You, I kept you alive
And it's true; I'm living proof
But I will always be longing for a reason to survive

Forget-me-not

Your beauty was never in question
It's the one thing you never forgot
If your eyes are blue and you want to be remembered
Plant forget-me-nots

Who Hurt You

It was like having a dog that bites
But not all the time. Some of the time it's a snake charmer's charm
That pulls you in, draws you in, takes you in, breaks you in
Then she sinks her teeth in your arm

Her favorite shape is the triangle
How else to explain that smoky thing she does through lowered lashes
When she's around my lover? She doesn't even want him
But she's got to prove she is everybody's lover's secret passion

Who hurt you
So you think that's how you treat a friend?
And who hurt me
So I come back for more again and again?

She's a master at sleight of hand
And that's the thing. I lean in to learn the way she engineers the architecture of misleading
Keeping my enemy close
Suddenly I'm bleeding

Who hurt you
So you think that's how you treat a friend?
And who hurt me
So I come back for more again and again?
Who hurt you
So you think that's how you treat a friend?

It was like having a dog that bites
Everybody loves her.
Everybody loves her
Everybody loves her beauty and grit
Until they get bit

Who hurt you
So you think that's how you treat a friend?
And who hurt me
So I come back for more again and again?
Who hurt you
So you think that's how you treat a friend?

Everybody Wants

She moves through the fair and the crowds part
Then the crowds gather, it stirs your heart
You know she's too good for you, by a lot
By more than you can imagine, and so
You imagine that you have a shot
You'll always choose the path that's steeper
Everybody wants to take her home
Nobody wants to keep her

She's next to you, you're beside yourself
She's next to you, you're ahead of yourself
You're such a fool, the moment is ruined
She touches your arm as she's leaving
And it feels exactly like a knife wound
And makes you ache to cut deeper

Everybody wants to take her home
No one wants to keep her

Later you'll lie with her weightlessness
Her silence, her invisible dress
Twisting and turning and kicking at ghosts
And holding tight to what was meant
To drift off like a dream, almost
You've always been a restless sleeper
Everybody wants to take her home
No one wants to keep her

Tallahassee

Tallahassee might have been Alabama's lost child
Run away like he did when he was a kid
I want to say he knew better, but what do I know?
I want to say he meant well, I don't think he did

On a night it made no difference what I did or said,
Knocked down, unforgivable words
When I woke in the glare of a hospital bed
I thanked god those were not the last words I ever heard

Not a soul would blame me, except for him, and except for me
Alabama has no love for Tallahassee

Nobody wants to hear about another lost child
My getaway, backroad to the coast
There were osprey hovering in the fog, beach houses empty
A stray dog came when I called her, I called her Ghost

Why would anyone so smart and battle scarred
Run in fear of kind and sincere?
He could find me here, it wouldn't be hard
Asleep in his car at the foot of the pier

Not a soul would blame me, except for him, and except for me
Alabama has no love for Tallahassee

Runaway, runaway
Alabama has no love for Tallahassee
Alabama has no love

Nothing/Everything

"Nothing," he said, meaning "Everything"
That's when I knew I was going to leave
Everything was what I wanted
And nothing is hard to believe

All those late-night drives, snow in the headlights
Looking for vacancy. The rooms were suspect
I tossed and turned. I was very unhappy.
What did I expect?
But when nothing bad happened I thought, what the hell
And kept going. Where the hell did it go?
There was always a story I could tell myself
In the morning my car would be buried in snow

"Nothing," he said, meaning "Everything"
That's when I knew he wanted me to leave
Everything is what he wanted
And nothing is hard to believe

I was in too deep to turn around
And I had nothing to go back to
Nothing, he said, meaning everything

I was only passing through
We all had a shot, but he had a moment
I saw him on late night TV shows
To his credit he was exactly the same as he ever was
But with better clothes

"Nothing," he said, meaning "Everything"
Still it took me a long time to leave
Everything was all I wanted
And nothing is hard to believe

I Dreamed

I dreamed water rose, flooding the house.
Who knew guitars could float, but mine did,
Like a little boat, silent, adrift,
And I slept, both underwater in my bed
And hovering above with perfect hair.
(You have pretty hair, he said)
Then I woke to the bird's dawn chorus,
As morning light swept my time zone
And I stepped outside to write you this letter.
I hope you're feeling better.

It wasn't always like this; I wasn't always defined by what I chose to like.
There was a time I only chose to survive.
The first time it snowed I killed a buffalo and climbed inside
While the body was still warm. I hadn't yet discovered fire.
I ate the muscle off the bones, but kept the pelt around me. It was a revelation.
After that I wore clothes all the time.
Gradually, it became a form of self-expression:
I am the sort of person who wears fur but not feathers

There was a book I meant to write. I thought I knew how the story would go
But then my life turned away and I lost my obsession.
Now I only think of endings. The endings come easily
But I don't know where to begin.

A Long Way to Go

He was obsessed with history
Conquest and revolution
He weighed defeat and victory
For clues and drew conclusions
I said – it might be clearer
Just looking in the mirror
Does he hope to make history?
No, just the future

There's a long way to go,

Late nights in someone's smoky kitchen
I wore his black beret
Lost sleep was our drug of choice
We drank coffee and stayed up for days
Hell-bent and not myself
But for once, I was someone
It's not hard to throw words around
When no one's got a real gun

There's a long way to go,

Feverish, invincible
Soldiering on
When I finally got a good night's sleep
I woke, and the magic was gone

In the history of our defeat
I'd say we were both driven
To bring something into being
That had never yet existed
He had a vision for the future
Rewrite the story as a fighter
But in the end I lost the cause
Rewrote the story as a writer

There's a long way to go,
There's a long way to go
There's a long way to go

Make No Mistake

Life is a self-perpetuating myth, he said, like love, like joy
Like the price of baseball cards
He was a self-perpetuating boy
and when he shaved his curly red hair I took it hard

Nobody died from a haircut he said, yeah, and I'm nobody
His beautiful hair was growing in kind of salt and cayenne peppered
Speaking of beautiful, he said you know who had a beautiful face?
Sam Shepard.

Make no mistake, he said, so I made no mistakes
Make no mistake I made no mistakes

Inexact science, enemy lines, imperfect rhymes, grape vines, he said
Everything worth thinking makes me think about Jack
Can't tell you the reason that I still keep a copy of the keys to his flat
He said, all I know about Jack is he won't come back

Make no mistake, he said, so I made no mistakes
Make no mistake I made no mistakes

You think I can't tell the difference, he said, between an eyeball and a peeled grape?
You think I can't tell the difference, he said, between curly and curled?
You think there's something so broke, he said, I can't fix it with a Q-tip and duct tape?
When I'm gone, he said, are you going to say – he was just too beautiful for this world?

My short term plans are the Sunday funnies, he said
Or do you want me to give you chapter and verse?
And if you were asking about my long term plans, he said
My long term plans are existential. Aren't yours?

Make no mistake, he said, so I made no mistakes
Make no mistake I made no mistakes
Make no mistake I made no mistakes
Make no mistake I made no mistakes
Make no mistake

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Punk

Portrait of the artist as a young punk
How sweet did it feel, that moment of rage?
You know you're right and righteous, but stop, that's enough
You have our attention, all the world's a stage

The moon gets full, and then it gets empty
Time goes by, after a while you'll look behind
And maybe feel something like love for that sharp little lefty
Meteoric and brave, no use for humble and kind

What is the worst thing you've ever done?
When the next wave passes judgement that's all they'll have heard

Whoever cares least is holding the gun
You don't get the last word because there is no last word

Portrait of the artist as a young punk
How sweet did it feel, that moment of rage?
You know you're right and righteous, but stop, that's enough
You've got our attention, all the world's your stage

Born with a silver pocket flask and a paper cup
It's got to spill, it's bottled up

Which is the story, and which is the truth?
Where do you stop? Where does the big machine start?
Legend gives you one more year of radioactive youth
Blame the artist if you must, but trust the art, trust the art

Portrait of the artist as a young punk
How sweet did it feel, that moment of rage?
You know you're right and righteous, but stop, that's enough
You've got our attention, all the world's your stage