

## **Cloudy Eyes**

“Are you hungry, John” sweetly asks little Rose  
sets him out a plate before the question takes hold  
The party’s buzzing with new toys and the grandchildren squeal  
Reaches for his spoon to prove he’s still as strong as he feels

As more faces pour in through that old oaken door  
He remembers clear the day he salvaged the tree from the storm  
Pulling the saw across that tight, golden grain  
The same old blood coursing through the same old veins

He walks through his memories like overgrown rose beds  
Taking the shears to the mishapen and dead  
Allows the strong to break their bud in the front of his mind  
Competing with the loud motion screens and bright, blinking lights

Don’t assume these cloudy eyes are just clouds of repose  
Still here at the wheel on these same damn roads  
Not sure which of these neon signs to regard  
Rather take the old narrow path home, by myself, by the dark

### **As the way**

As the way the lady fern  
unfurls her single emerald wing  
So curved and long

As the way the Swainson’s thrush  
Flies to the highest perch  
And cuts the day open with his song

That the way I want you to know my love

As the way the cherries  
Overflow the buckets  
Weighing down the pickup truck

As the way the harvest  
Just keeps coming  
Even when you’ve had enough

That’s the way I want you to know my love

As the way the autumn stacks  
the alder in the shed, roots in the cellar  
canning jars pantry high

The promise of comfort  
Beyond the killing frost  
Deep into the lengthened nights

That’s the way I want you to know my love

## **Born to**

I was born around a fire  
Born among many arms  
Passed my body all around  
And held me toward the stars  
I was born into a tight circle  
each face burned onto my heart

I was born into a smaller world  
under the open sky  
No roof, no walls  
In which to crawl and self identify  
I was born close to the ground  
My sights were not set wide

I was born among other beasts  
A chaser in the wild  
Born to feel the blood  
Push my legs miles upon mile  
Born to read the fresh tracks  
Use the sun as my dial

I was born into a story  
A shared tapestry  
Told by forty teachers  
Each one an old oak tree  
Taught me to turn a deaf ear  
From those that strove above the canopy

I was born into a song  
already spun into my throat  
Wove our voices into one  
And carried all our hopes  
Be it of health or of rainclouds  
Purpose hung in every note

I was born into religion  
Small and practical  
Narrated by the river  
And shapen from the stones  
We bore it as a lantern  
Against the shadowy unknown

We were born into a body  
Naked and unashamed  
Not yet bound by higher rules or useless games  
Our love was honest and simple like a child's gift  
We gave it as it came

## **Paper Town**

Don't go building a home

In a paper town  
That prairie wind will blow you up and out  
When the bakken gold dries up underground

Those rigs are burning bright for you now  
a field of lucky stars  
not like the county over with its burned out pumps, and poisoned wells  
and a strip full of empty bars

If there's money in the ground, but no future to be found  
Then let it lie

This place will make a tumbleweed  
Even out of the toughest man  
Walls thrown up quick with dirty hundred dollar bills  
Won't keep him warm in that howling winter wind

The cowmen have it hard enough,  
without your greed in the water  
their land may have long been broken, but at least they've build a solid roof  
on which they raise sons and daughters

If there's money in the ground  
But no future to be found there  
Then let it lie, let it lie

### **Before there was Blue**

Before they taught you what blue was  
How die you perceive  
Your own eyes in the mirror or the lights on the tree?  
The open sky reflecting off the surface of the wide, wide sea?  
Before there was blue

Before you learned about yellow  
How did you contrast  
Those butterbups tucked among the saltspring grass?  
Did they shimmer like goldflecks or fade into the earth's canvass?

Before yellow took shape in your mouth  
Someone pointed to sun and you repeated it aloud  
Built high walls around the word.  
Blue took shape in your mind  
Dug itself a home and nestled down tight  
Now language now filters the light

We explored those back acres, wooden swords in our hand  
Wide-eyed and trailside, up and down every tree in the land  
Had the sparrows and warblers yet to command our attention?  
Their names had yet to be mentioned  
By books or by teachers, no nothing could reach us  
Our minds were formless and free  
Filled the vacuum of language with hidden harmonies  
And other dappled things

Before you teach us your words  
Know that they just might  
Pry our left eye open at the expense of the right  
Omit certain waves from the prism's light

### **Swamprose and Honeysuckle Vine**

Between the newly-tilled wasteland and a single barbed line  
There in the mud, someone thought it fit to leave behind  
A patch of swamprose, tangled in honeysuckle vine  
Some things just aint worth fighting

A vestige of a great, wet thicket, wanton and wild  
Saved only by the limits of horsepower and size  
Of an engine dragging steel in nineteen twenty five  
Got no choice but to live alongside....

The black-capped and golden-crowned and ruby-winged and chestnut-sided neighbors  
Common sense demand you dodge the  
Bullrush and cattail and dogwood  
growing in those boggy craters

Before tools outgrew their own good  
The tug of a two horse team still tired when it should  
Didn't need no laws to limit what a man thought he could  
and couldn't do

The heirlooms and the legacies that I now find most grand  
Were accidents or shortcomings of an older make of man  
Little flecks of gold they never found, still scattered across the land  
To find them just follow the calls of the

black-capped and golden-crowned and ruby-winged and chestnut-sided songbirds  
Singing in the morning light with the  
bullrush and cattail and dogwood  
swamprose and honeysucklevine

### **Able Man**

The reaches of his mind  
End sharp at old west fenceline  
Fading on out where the willows crowd the creek

He'll tell you where frost might sit well into May  
Where the loam starts acting more like clay  
When the blackbirds nest on the edge of the winter wheat

He's seen the highway long grown tired and old  
Nowadaysworking more like a one way road  
The banks sucking dry every home around  
The combines dropped like dinosaurs  
When the dollar to the bushel hit the floor  
Only one plow left that knows this valley ground

He is a man, he's an able man  
Pulled from the the womb with his own two hands  
And on the day that lifting a spade is more than he can stand  
He'll carry it down and dig one last hole  
At the edge of the wetland

Started telling himself lies  
The day he lifted the veil to kiss the bride  
Some honest work should serve this woman well  
But she was born of books and finer things  
This farm did nothing but clip those wings  
60 open acres tight as prison cell

She'd resent her life, that chunk of land  
His simple mind and dirty hands  
Her city glowing faint over the hills  
He'd be at those rows from the break of day  
Burn late lantern light in the tractor bay  
Her cries too faint to penetrate his will

He is a man, he's a stubborn man  
Pulled from the the womb with his own two hands  
And on the day that lifting a spade is more than he can stand  
He'll carry it down and dig one last hole  
At the edge of the wetland

The summer eve his boy was born  
He was out there racing a thunderstorm  
Wouldn't let that rye go wasting in the field  
Well the grain got safely to the barn  
As the nurse laid the boy in his mother's arms  
The city would claim this man's greatest yield

He is a man, he's a lonely man  
Pulled from the the womb with his own two hands  
And on the day that lifting a spade is more than he can stand  
He'll carry it down and dig one last hole  
At the edge of the wetland

### **Feedback**

Lunch break, a walk around this concrete lake  
10 minutes, all I got to let my mind escape  
The make-believe, and get some blood back into my feet

Nothing can fit in, there's 80 words per minute  
Already crammed into my head's hard limit  
Not letting go  
please help me....

Clear a little space, find a little place to slow down  
Wanna hear the wheels and gears crumble off on the 1-5 outbound  
Turning over the same data, it's always on the radar  
Everytime I lay in the weeds and close my eyes

Like morris code, on a figure 8 road

It's got a hook and meter and it won't let go  
Is that a bird singing, or just another phantom ringing

I want my thoughts back, mentally hijacked  
Escape to the wilderness but still hear the feedback  
Whoever's in there, I'm calling you out to...

Help me clear space, find a little place to slow down  
All the wheels and gears crumble off on the 1-5 outbound  
My brain is my phone, it's my ego and the home of wild beast  
That I've long ceased to tame  
Help me close it's eyes.

### **Riversong**

I'm going away, find a river to float down  
I can only hope that my baby will hang 'round  
I'll be gone til the spring washes into the summer  
Just because I'm leaving doesn't mean I don't love her

I'm taking off, find a mounting to climb on  
The windy peaks might exist outside of this folk song  
In the wake of these boots love can get a bit dusty  
But my stronger bones support a stronger heart beat