

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: I STOLE A BRIEFCASE AND OTHER POEMS

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Arranged in chronological order, the poems in *I Stole a Briefcase* show my development over the past five years. While the poems in Part One employ surreal images to create an ominous mood, those in Part Two begin to use a more detailed narrative voice. The poems in Part Three continue to utilize this narrative voice, but with greater comedy and absurdity. Finally, in Part Four, conventional-story-telling gives way to a more inclusive, freer style. In conclusion, *I Stole a Briefcase* encompasses different textures while maintaining continuity with a willingness to surprise.

I STOLE A BRIEFCASE AND OTHER POEMS

by

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Part 1

Mother's Black Cat

This winter morning
he sits secretly still
over the floor vent,
his neck reclining on chest fat.
He's old now. He no longer
swats no see'ums
by the window at night,
and his yawn just shows
one remaining yellow fang
stuck to his mouth
like an uncooked noodle.
I notice he's snoring
although he's awake--*I think*
he's awake,
and so utterly pleased
with himself he won't
even lift his eyelids
to acknowledge
my presence in the kitchen.
But he knows I'm here.
His ears somehow follow
the belt of my robe
as I swing it in front of him—
his radar ears.
I wonder, is it true
what the cat says?
Could mother's head
really be full of magic bones?

Nothing

I threw a handful of nothing
into the night sky. The darkness
became the good idea
I was having. I heard the sounds
the planets make as they move.
I knew if I took it back
my body would be destroyed
and remade like a star. So this

was it. I gave the sky
one chance to guess where it came from,
but the moon's green face wouldn't move
to form the word "you"—
the word I sent up to its mouth
with my voice, which it used to make
a new star. Just as an old star
and the darkness funneled back
down into my new hand
that is green like the old moon.

There's a Man Who Has Only One Dream:

he's in bed. Into his room comes
a pale old man, whose long black cloak
contrasts so sharply with the white walls,
his head seems to float on a void
of black space gliding towards the bed.
He scowls. Frustrated. His hands
escape the blackness to throw back
the white covers before he crawls in, always
to face away from the man,
who hears him weeping. This is

when the man wakes up, the night
telling him to put his confusion away
into the old book by his bed; he's not sure,
he thinks this will work.
He lifts it off the floor, always opening
to that same page, the heavy page
his eyes won't let him finish, where he puts
the black feather that marks his place.

“Knowing

is an accomplishment.” Sixty years later,
a likeness of Wittgenstein collects
dust in the philosophy department,
his face frozen in longing
for simple conversation. The school’s
most esteemed professor balances

a cold cup of coffee
on the statue’s head—
a momentary self-distraction
from his next Mind and Body installment:
*Reversed Epiphenomenalism:
an Amendment to Berkeley.*

“The Body is steam off the Mind’s street,”
he says to his students, who know nothing
of the great philosopher,
whose bronze bust announces to this man,
“you’ve accomplished nothing!”
—his thoughts made of black coffee.

The Magician

His assistant said, "Yes, Master,"
and put her bare hand
on the wooden target.
His long arm surged like a whip
when he threw the dead fish
that became a silver knife.

A curtain of fear
fell on the crowd.
Cold fish swam through my veins
which tightened
like leather ropes.
The Master's long knife

rattled in the target.
The crowd's cold stare
fell on his assistant's bare hand
where Death is always swimming,
swimming in blood that hung
from her veins like a purple curtain.

I Stole a Briefcase

I'm dragging it down a narrow road.
Behind me, the owner's silhouette
grows in the sun's pink eye;
the swish of his pants, louder and louder.

I lie down and wrap myself around
the briefcase which smells
like a museum. I'm small in the forest
of the owner's long shadow.

The owner bends down—
his bottom teeth look like a row
of tiny white houses. Tiny white
houses line the road where

the owner looms over me.
The sun has just set,
and the moon is a rare white coin
in the opposite sky.

The owner stands with the briefcase.
He turns and starts to walk, leaving me
like a spill of ink on the road
in a town that feels overwhelming.

We Were in a Field

trying to catch snowflakes on our tongues.
You wore your best dress,
me, my best suit, as we drifted
through an aroma cloud of red wine.

The ground turned pink as the sun set.
Piles slowly formed like hourglass dunes.
I found myself staggering
through the steam of my own breathing.

I turned around—you were
a speck of sapphire in the pink distance.
I could barely make them out—
your arms waving over your head.

Dumbfounded, I stood there, listening
to the tiny clinks of falling snowflakes,
waving back as if to signal
I'd found something we were looking for.

In the Long Afternoon

So many murderers hide
in the yard of the cat's mind,
tempted by the wind
wearing its dresses of leaves.

The leaves whirl through
the yard where the cat sits—
ominous black flags
waving around in his stare.

In the lungs of the house,
the wind is asleep, but
in the sleeping woman's chest,
the wind rolls an iron ball.

The windows of sleep are open,
and papers blow out and invade
the woman's dream where
the cat chases one in circles—

the woman flailing past him,
desperately trying to escape
the tangled wind that rummages
through the plans for her waking.

Many Appetites

My house holds down one corner of night's filthy carpet,
where my mind duels the giant mandibles of sleep.
Since the moon declares too many winners, there's never enough food.

I'm awakened so frequently by the stench of obsession,
but I don't have time to hire good maids. Even so,
they wouldn't keep up with my mounds of eraser shreadings.

The hidden treasures of the Louisiana swamps
are guarded by black skeletons wielding rapiers. You can't
bribe them, since they only have an appetite for wind.

Some poems are tiny boats pushed off a huge waterfall
that everyone but the poet knows will smash onto the rocks.
I myself like small poems; but I'd rather push them into an anthill.

The plantation of despair is often mistaken
for an inn. If we'd only put our ears to the floor,
we'd hear the devious footsteps of the Master.

Every night an armada of nightmares tries to siege
the palace it once helped me build. They can't
starve me, since I have an appetite for perfection.

Part 2

The Bully

A giant tentacle
snatched the keys
from my hand
as I walked by
an open manhole.
It jingled them just
past my reach, luring
me in circles around
itself, until I stumbled
face down on
the pavement. I pushed
myself to my knees
and stared at
my palms, which were
bleeding. I showed them
to the tentacle,
as if to say,
look what you've done!
while it dangled
the keys above
my head, its suckers
flaring wider,
as if fascinated
to see what I'd do.

Us Men in Suits

The lit elevator button
turned into a glowing moth.
We ducked and shielded
our faces until it landed
on a little girl's finger.
"There's nothing to be afraid of,"
she said, before it
coughed out a tiny
puff of black smoke.

Oh how we screamed.

There's a Man Who Has Only One Idea:

He's in the backyard, wearing his bathrobe, when he grabs a shovel from the tool shed.

He starts to dig, but after just a few good plunges into the ground, the shovel is heavy and awkward. Soon he picks up only spoonfuls of dirt.

He drops the shovel at his side and collapses to his knees in front of his puny hole. He pinches an ant from his brow and stares as its mandibles sink into the tip of his forefinger.

It burrows at a ferocious pace.

He feels it continue down through his knuckle, wrist, and on toward his elbow.

He hears the faint, high-pitched whine of its tiny jaws through bone...

He wakes up jealous again and goes off to his job at the cemetery...

Guilty

When I picked up the morning paper at the end of the driveway, I saw the mailbox bending down to taste the tulips that had just blossomed.

It cowered as I ran toward it, and I caught myself about to strike it with the paper...

Later that day my wife came home. She stormed into the bedroom with the dripping, regurgitated mail, where she found me on the floor, still unshaven and in my bathrobe, cradling a half-empty bottle of whiskey.

"This is my life now," I explained, as the bottle stretched out its neck to see who I was talking to...

My Father's Idea

It was my father's idea to build a theater in the attic. On opening night the curtains parted and a spotlight followed a furry spider to center stage.

Dressed in a black tux and white gloves, my father knelt beside it and raised his conductor's baton...

Afterwards the spider explained it had merely rubbed cricket legs together with its mandibles. My father winked and blew the dust off a bouquet of plastic roses.

Part 3

Little Hole-in-the-Wall Tavern

On lonely nights I'd go in and order a few shots of whiskey. There was never a lot of business, just a few gruff-looking regulars that sat at the bar and stared at whatever game was on TV. So the bartender must have seen me as a fresh ear to complain to. He'd start about how his wife had left him, how he'd been audited by the IRS, how his bookie wanted to kill him, how his dog was run over by a truck, how his bad back made it impossible to even tie his shoes, how his house was contaminated with a rare toxic mold, etc. However, the last time I was there some new guy was working behind the bar. When I asked him where the usual bartender was he smirked and told me how he'd won millions playing the lottery. How he'd moved to some huge villa down in Miami Beach and no one had heard from him since. I left without even ordering a drink, and later lay in the dark, never feeling more alone.

Day at the Beach

Between the waves tossing me around
and the undertow sucking me out to sea
I became exhausted trying to swim back
to shore. Soon I could barely keep my head
above water and began moving my arms
over my head in desperation. Within
moments the lifeguard grabbed me
and began pulling me to safety,
when all of the sudden a huge wave crashed
over us that sent me hurtling out of her arms,
end over end until I washed up onto
the sand. I got to my feet and looked back
to see that the lifeguard was still out there.
I ran into the water, diving through waves, and
swimming like I never knew I could...
When I emerged onto the beach with the
lifeguard in my arms a large crowd suddenly
gathered around us. I set her on her feet
and we stared into each other's eyes before
sharing a long, rough, open-mouth kiss.
Then the crowd began to disperse
and she turned for the heights of her chair
just as I turned back for the ocean.

The Night Club

I strolled over to the bar and sipped on a Shirley Temple before turning to scan the dance floor. My jeans left little to the imagination. My comb-over was perfect. Plus my anti-fungal cream gave off an intoxicating scent. Within moments this leggy blonde covered in glitter grabbed me by the collar and forced her tongue into my mouth. She tasted like a mixture of cigarettes and sardines, so I pushed her away and gagged until tears rolled down my face. The crowd around me laughed hysterically. I laughed too as she tore off bawling for the door. Then this techno beat came on and we flailed about like lunatics.

The Role Model

The paperboy fired one at me while riding his bike past my house. I didn't even have time to duck or to throw my arms up in defense before it stung me right in the face. I was dazed for a moment. Then I reached down for the paper and, with a primal grunt, hurled it back in his direction. It toppled end-over-end through the air, then struck him square in the back, making him wobble out of control and wipe out onto the pavement. I ran over and pulled the bike off him. He was wincing in pain and I saw he had a nasty scrape on his knee, so I took him in my arms and rushed back into the house. I sat him down in the kitchen, cleaned the gravel out of his wound and wiped it with peroxide. I couldn't even look him in the eyes, but I knew he was crying from all his sniffing and the quiver in his breathing. "I'm sorry," he murmured in a voice that made me feel even more like a monster. "No I'm sorry," I confessed. "It's no wonder you did what you did with examples like me in the world." I applied a band-aide with a cartoon squirrel on it and he cracked a little smile. I smiled too. I walked him back outside, helped him onto his bike, and watched proudly for awhile as he pedaled down the street.

The Nude Beach

“No one cares,” my wife pleaded
as we stood just beyond the reach
of the surf. “You can run right into
the water if you want.” I stepped
forward and let it wash over my feet.
“It’s freezing!” I shrieked, leaping back
onto dry sand. My wife put her hands
on her hips and stared at me.
I could feel the eyes of others as well,
so I pulled down my shorts, worked
them past my ankles, and threw them
as far as I could into the ocean.
“Are you happy now?” I yelled.
My wife shook her head in disbelief,
watching my dignity float up
and down atop the gently rolling waves.
I turned and watched it too.
“You’re such a goofball,” she said.
“A naked goofball,” I replied, grinning.

Navy SEALs

At 0900 we reported to the beach where the Master Chief issued each of us a surfboard. He then sat down under an umbrella and began to read some sappy romance novel. We just stood there staring at him, then at each other. It occurred to me that this was a test, so I stripped down to my shorts and ran into the ocean. The other men followed my lead as I paddled for my first wave. I felt it roll beneath me, so I slowly got to my feet; but after only a few seconds I lost my balance and was crushed by a huge wall of water, badly scraping my leg on the bottom. Like a good soldier, I tried again, and again I wiped out. This went on for hours. Finally I tucked my board under my arm and staggered back onto dry sand. I turned to see the other men pulling off all kinds of aerial stunts. "I just don't have what it takes, sir," I said. The Master Chief was sipping on a tall glass of pink lemonade. "That's alright," he replied. "At least keep the surfboard." "I really don't want the surfboard," I said. The Master Chief shot out of his chair. "I order you to keep the surfboard!" Then he lifted his sunglasses and winked. I took the surfboard home.

Little House in the Woods

I walked my grandmother to her door.
She kissed me on the cheek and reminded
me what I good boy I am. Then
she began fumbling through
her purse. "No grandma," I said.
"Dinner was my treat." "Don't be
ridiculous!" she snapped. It was late.
I checked my watch, hoping she would
get the hint, but instead she knelt down and
started to take items out and set them
on the porch. I knelt down too.
"Really grandma," I insisted,
picking up her lipstick and reaching
to place it back in her purse. She slapped
my hand. "No more fussing!" she ordered.
I put the lipstick down and watched as
she continued to empty her belongings.
Finally she pulled out a silver dollar
and handed it to me. "Such a good boy,"
she said, kissing me once more on the cheek.

Fragile Little World

A huge fireball crashed into the house across the street. A crowd flocked to the scene as a convoy of sirens and flashing lights arrived. A news crew approached me, and a well-groomed young woman with a microphone asked me what happened. I told her a flying saucer went down—that it was spying on our town for years. She smirked at the cameraman. “Do you think the aliens survived?” she asked me. I ran back home and slammed the door. Later the news never mentioned the fire. I suspected the aliens were taken to some secret laboratory in the desert—that if alive, they’d be tortured. I wept, remembering their visits—how we’d sip tea ‘til dawn.

Scourge of the City

A bum crept up behind me
as I strolled through the park.
“What’s that jingling
in your pocket?” he asked.
I stopped, pulled out my keys and
shook them in his face.
He took a step back and
put up his hands, then
hung his head and began
to walk away. I walked after
him. “Wait!” I pleaded,
grabbing his shoulder.
I dug into my pocket and
handed him a quarter.
He smiled. “I knew it!” he said.

Night Life

The bartender brought me my scotch.
I threw it back like it was water.
“Jesus Christ!” the scantily clad blonde
next to me exclaimed. I turned and
gazed at her cleavage. “I see
you’re a man who knows what he wants,”
she said, twirling her finger in her hair.
She took the cherry from her daiquiri
and put it in her mouth. Then
she grabbed the back of my head and
forced the cherry through my lips
with her tongue. We shared
a rough, wet kiss, passing the cherry
back and forth. Suddenly she pulled
away and spit some soggy chunks
onto my face. She smiled. “I’ve never
liked cherries,” she said, before
disappearing into the crowd.

Part 4

Strange Escalators

1

The tall man
couldn't dunk
his donut

into the lava

Why won't
the speedy guitar
kick dust
in my face?

I can sift through
a tiny dot about
as fast as you
can reel in

a pile of
Chinese mud

In the meantime
kites fly
from the heart

2

Sorry I missed
your last attempt

at eating the apple
from mama's beard

I hadn't seen
the airplane belch

but all your
gourmet tendrils

leapt from the sand
to annihilate

one scorpion

3

The sorcerer
slapped me with
his giant glove

Just to be closer
to beeswax

a messy sneeze
appeared in
the rearview

I can call on
those rivers
the rest of
my life and

they will
always yield

that same
mesmerizing
yank of
the lever

Melted doll
parts fell
on the skyline

4

The past was full
of flaring nostrils

I saw you and
the nicest compliment

flew like bologna
past the window

You weren't
impressed by

the nonchalance
of butter

a leafy dream
shattering

the mongoloid's
forehead

Heatstroke won
in a landslide

The tertiary monsters
washed up

on drug island

5

The monkey ate
a copper telephone

then quickly took
the nap to be

talked about
for centuries

I saw the Master
plunge His dagger

into a meteor shower
too heaven-bound

for latex
No one ever felt

as betrayed by
cannabis as me

I lost several
pink guitars in

a carnivorous fog

6

I was crippled by
the syndrome of
walking androids

It infects one
out of every
thirty customers

It was time for
flowery synapses

Shouldn't firemen
throw heavier
snowballs at the dead?

I'm an altered
zygote with
the patience of
an amoeba

I bobbed for
apples while
the paved starling
wiggled out of

its straight jacket

A Garnish with the Ladies

I threw a ball
of flames into
the audience, then
spent the next
few days on
the hump of
a giant camel.
All my funerals
appeared chaffed
in a yellow bikini--
must've been
a mustard seed
from hell
inside my coffin.
I bounced off
the trampoline,
clearing that pile
of tangled mosquitoes
while an ice cream truck
sank to the bottom
of a gelatinous
swimming pool.
Sorrow crept
under the trailer park.
I spanked
the glass meteor so
the cards were
forced to grow
a new kind
of feather, then
marched toward
my own wealthy paradox,
blackened by
the parallel bars of fate.
Paradise was
a broken laser beam.
I followed one
orange flamingo home
via motorboat.

The Night Was a Game Show

What happened
to the statues of
larvae that made
my head turn
to maple syrup?
They were
so likeable yet
so shaved
the penguins
jumped into
Hemingway's lap.
I spiked the punch
with a gasoline
so volatile
the jumpsuits
shriveled in
the Tuscan sun.
The sergeant
threw his torpedo
like a football, then
installed an ironic
pump into his heart
before pulling
his own spine from
a mound of jelly.
Shouldn't all
gremlins learn
how to hotwire
a sarcophagus?
Fred's body
vaporized mid-
swan dive.
I followed one
black van back
to Memory Motel—
my rubber nest
of mass hysteria.
A sewer rat
hid in my beard.
No, it was a
tube of toothpaste!

Reliable Little Wagons

Weren't there mashed potatoes on the lawn?
I threw a hand grenade to the beggars, then
so many wiffle balls fell on my head.
It would take a strongman to pull the weeds
from grandma's tongue. The doctor wheeled
a giant thermometer into
the strip club. A lobster gave birth
to a rubber band. I snapped a glass rose
in half, then biked across a cornflake. A glove
is the best defense against palm readers.

*

An invisible mastodon lives in the jungle.
I sniffed a petunia with
no halo, and the wrath of Laundromats
crushed me with the force
of a million paperclips.
Smelling salts betrayed
the ninja, but Vaseline
made a hump grow on his back.
I sat on the beach, gazing at
the plumes from the giant zit while
you trapped a ghost
in your vacuum cleaner.

*

I paid you with radioactive watermelons.
The Martians vaporized
all the earth's fish. None of
the walkie-talkies worked because
they were covered
with apricot marmalade. Didn't
someone urinate in my parking spot?
I felt too sad
to walk the giant sea slug.
Ovaries were growing
from the trees.
The astronauts needed to jumpstart
the space shuttle. My fork
came to life after
fireworks destroyed the moon.

*

I smashed the gnome with a mallet
other superheroes couldn't lift. I hated
making olives fly. A fuselage crept up
on the horses. Since
shoelaces are the last
memory of giants, sheep should
linger in a tube sock. Ulcers ruined
your flight, but silver polish is
warping the child's mind.
Steamrollers passed
through the garden.
The grenadine shivered.
You may dream of parmesan cheese, but
the huge toenail flocks
to a night of green ducks.

*

A frog landed on the wedding cake.
I knew the egg would break on
the ape's head. The knots
in your speech were delectable.
Weaning you off
memories worked
to my advantage.
I smelled the rock of shame.
The punishment for leaving
the casino is death. Wasn't
a molecule swimming
in your soup?

*

Take a sip of the love doctor's brain juice.
It will make you queasy with
the suggestion of sunshine, and for luck
a sand bandit may assault you
with a potato gun. So we're sure
about the laws here, right?
The luminous juggler reveals
the mapped-out laundry you threw.
I swore an oath to mascots that
a lover's mentholated corpse might
burn a retina onto

the boulder of sorrow, yet I wasn't
invited to the parade of genies.
In wheelbarrows things are less slobbery.

Attack of the Nihilist

I

Some of us had stardust in our feathers.
Others felt betrayed by the amoeba who
pretended to be a weatherman. I couldn't
forgive all the winged astronauts. I felt
lucid in the hazy feeling, and all the world's
binoculars were melting in the sky. I had
a sunburn, and was learning a new way
to tie myself to a metal grizzly bear. You
weren't amused by the jungle, with all
its primitive leeks. It was time to refuel
the birds, so I let the clouds drip blood
into my hands. A huge brain is helpful
when trying to crack a skull with a noodle
made of steel. The orca's brain: a cockpit
with two opposing windows. When oatmeal
comes out of the hose, it helps to remember
the explosions in my village—the towering
fountains of fire. An evil nun still throws
rulers at me in my sleep. Petting a shark
may cut your palm, but we cannot all have
the fever that caused the president to put
a live dove in his mouth. We must learn
to eat pineapple slices with our eyes closed.
Kicking a fire hydrant is useless when
a tennis racket is lodged in the gears
of a giant clock.

II

Why did you have a monkey in your Christmas tree?
It wasn't right to approach the lead singer of the band when
mice were wheeling a big ice sculpture of their god
into the cathedral. I wanted to spank the drug lord, then
a missile flew through the window. I wanted to mimic
the pig-like creature, but I looked too sexy in my loin cloth.
It wasn't my fault the bandits of time were hiding
in grandma's privates. The laughing machine was broken
because baby birds were always falling from their nests and
getting diced up in its propeller. Before computers,
refrigerators told us when to procreate. After the caveman
used the bathroom, I found urine all over the toilet seat.
The Misses doesn't like it when I blowtorch the ceiling fan, or
when a man-eating shark jumps out of the floor.
A vacuum cleaner sucks all the mucus from my face.

III

Orange mohawks were in style. Before
the credits rolled, a mossy demon pulled out
its wisdom tooth. Better to purchase
a giant condom than
a scientific calculator.

The wussy kangaroo needs love even though
one swing of the bat could easily
recharge his testicles. A million tiny sparrows
are trapped in them—aliens who've never
tasted hamburger. I was getting frustrated.
I needed a plan to amuse the urine stains
on the carpet. My pillow exploded, as did
my biceps. I'm not even trained
to operate a Ferris wheel. Could you at least
whimper into the microphone? When
the Buddha's arms fall off, he will
happily vomit milk. That will be the end
of the clockmaker's story. His eyes will
melt onto the floor. Why does that
intimidate me so? Your kite is a squirrel
with long droopy wings and a maple leaf
grows from your shoulder.

IV

The last thing on my mind was the tornado
in the refrigerator. My pigheadedness was
starting to pay off, and the tractor trailer seemed
to be weeping. I peeled off the night's foreskin.
Have you ever soaked your feet in vinegar?
It tingles, and the orange sweaters in
the marching band make my eyes water,
make me feel bloated. The beast howled
in its cage, angered by the applause in
the Walter's Art Museum. The coffee shop
was closed and filthy—too much tuna salad
on the floor. One time a chef sprinkled
gasoline on the back of my neck. People
from Australia were everywhere in the city.
I stepped out of the shower and let the light
radiate my body. I had a redneck tan, which
my wife didn't appreciate. Better hide
your face. The brontosaurus's lungs are full
of giant flies. But I love my wife. She'll
spray paint you green. She'll annihilate

a snail and dance with gophers in the moonlight.
Something's fishy, though, in the garbage disposal.
It won't stop raining, and the blacktop is littered
with broken eggs. My father likes his eggs
sunny-side-up. It's difficult to understand
the theory of relativity, so why try? Life
is absurd. We're so damn small in the universe
nothing really matters. That's funny?

V

A goat ate your license plate. It wasn't
a bad thing, but too often
lingerie is strewn on the gates of death.
My waiter was beheaded
for stalking a poltergeist.
I felt like chewing on Velcro.
I wore nothing but an apron as
dumbbells melted on the sidewalk.
Belch into the megaphone!
A pyramid floats on the sea.
There's so much fluid in your ankles.
Sucking a bar of pink soap makes you high.
My slacks were frozen in an ice block so
I struggled to ride the mechanical horse.
A light bulb explodes.
Stuff your cheeks with marshmallows!

VI

A walrus chewed on a robot's rubber hand soaked in fish guts.
I vomited on the control panel, then plucked the unicorn's eyebrows.
I was cured of pushing people off huge tire irons. Assassins eat
nothing but barley. I tried to mend the fence crushed when
the moon pooped a giant pumpkin. It was easy pulling the demon's arm
out of socket. The brightest star: tiny, yet it bleeds through a napkin.
Poisonous frogs left orange footprints on the canvas, thus creating art.
The cheetah couldn't catch the metal lamb, whose bleating causes
bones to crumble. Are we to rely on a devious wrench? Every golf ball
in my veins is hatching. The thorny rectangle is dented on all sides.
I had a pillow over the face of doom as it tried to stab me with a clover.

VII

The gamma rays were killing us and
all we could say was thank you.
The washing machine caused minor
seismic activity. Granny's old pictures
fell off the wall. The bearded toddler

swung until the chains snapped and
he plummeted deep into the earth's mantle.
Global warming continues. Nuclear bombs.
Cellular phones. I'm still living on
the high from the first time I tied my shoes.
I despise Velcro—a good idea, but
not stylish. When it was popular I'd watch
other bored kids play with it. I'd also
stare at the fish tank because that's what
people did on TV. My dreams were
cartoons then. I wanted to be a rooster.

VIII

A giant octopus lay dead in the bowling lane.
The bed of the pickup truck was full of urine.
Several palm trees fell over.
Heavy raindrops were destroying L.A.
The judge's gavel smashed a termite
that frequents George Washington's teeth.
I demanded a lifetime supply of those mints
the maid leaves on the pillow.
I've survived all of Scorsese's films.
The latest miscue by the queen:
a ray of neutrons was fired into blank space.
A large dog barked over my montage
about life in the military.
Kamikaze geese take out many hot air balloons.
We shouldn't give medals to those
who intentionally rotate the turret
three times before firing.
There's a diaper bag in my mind,
lots of candy bar wrappers on the floor.

Saint of Bulldozers

Why do you need to glue more cotton balls to the lion's mane?
There aren't enough sandwiches in his pelvis
to crown the linoleum baby, and a day job of cigars
cuts the dead elevator from his soul.

Oh wise Saint of Bulldozers!
Stand on the myth!
You will never improve the skeletal mishaps of the past with
all those brown cherries stuffed in your pillowcase,
baked in an oven with a batch of fifty evil kittens.
There aren't enough glossy envelopes on the grill, and
the great red tree has never been to Paris—microscopic yearnings
that will never achieve the loftiest ski lift.

Sensitive chimes, shelves of venomous temperament:
the bitter needle imprisons a battleship of chance, while
its followers squeeze a wreath of joyless smoke.
Too much pink hatred!

Flaky wings cannot destroy the bleeding surface, which
the instances gore until sunrise.
Your flute is melting, and you will never have
enough chalk to pulverize the toad's mistake.

You must lay down your flowery synapses!
You must stab your dreams with a hummingbird's beak!

Gypsy Woman

Before I knew the gypsy woman
her intention was to wear a gasmask and
to spell her name on the inside
of her prisoners' skulls. Then
her breasts fell out of a leather suitcase.
Her sinister yodel beheaded a scarecrow—
 juggler of brown bears—then
dove face-first into the vat of equations.
Her urn turned into a pile of kitty litter
(too many somersaults).
Her yacht became a disease
amongst many pink curlicues, and
her brow, a colossal sand dune,
attacked the great fish of yesteryear.

Now her memory of crusty pyramids
falls deep into the round core
of original children, while
moldy gongs steamroll
the bingo halls on her tongue.
A crystal beehive pierces
the chicken in her mind—
her wounded fears returning
to their stage of brittle ropes.

She won't stop lactating!
She won't stop gnawing on her father's dead fork!
She won't stop exploding! Although
shadowy frigates eat cigars.

Look! A canary!

Another Man in the Cornfield

Narcissism inevitably wins on the planet forbidden to doves.
We cannot drive temptation from propaganda's loins and
before there were dead twins in the background
I could annihilate every atomic cemetery.
Can't you see that I will allow only giant moths to procreate with the devil?
It isn't my fault that every time you try to send microwaves
through the mattress you get kicked by donkeys.
Can't you hear the moans of aluminum statues
before they take their headache pills?
Can't you radiate a thousand plates of cranberry sauce?
It isn't my fault that every smudge of crayon on your wedding dress
isn't able to whisper into the pig's pierced ear.
Take it as a warning that soon there will be
another man in the cornfield to collect the zombie's receipts.
He will ask for blood and will attack every bleached molecule.
He will lose his tooth in the timid atmosphere of gas lamps since
the grapes were not washed by atrocious anteaters.
No one will speak of the garbage thrown into the lava but
he will try to attack the pigeon's foot.
His dream will be chewed by toddlers in hell.
His workshop will be exhausted in the black light of morning.
There will be tired leeches growing in his palm while
prairie dogs listen to the stars wheeze.

What I'm Doing

I'm peeing into a big silver bucket.
The past chews on its own
wedding gown made of maggots and
I'm throwing chocolate bars
at a furry spider whose
mandibles snapped my mop in half.
Soon there'll be barns shaped like croissants.
Soon a hand holding a butcher knife
will ask us to take off our aviator glasses, then
it will explode in a plume of black hairs.
Soon I will yank out a sperm whale's tooth.
Soon toddlers will throw a billion egg yolks
at the queen whose exhaustion
will show itself and
she will laugh at its Kabuki mask.

Those Were the Days

I could have thrown a pumpkin full of explosives
into the dining room and Babe Ruth would still have
pointed towards the outhouse.
I could have stolen the sloth's teething ring and
painted a big red X on the roof.
When no one stared except those wearing earmuffs...
When the sun was a junkie's eyeball and
everyone noticed a cloud giving birth to Sherlock Holmes...
I could have thrown a tarp over Easter Island and
a tsunami of antelopes would still have
destroyed the neighborhood.
Two werewolves were mating on a hilltop,
sheltered by a huge crystal ribcage.
The tri-athletes threw pole vaults
at each other through the wind while
my urine flowed down the ant's tunnel,
into a secret dungeon where green men
suckled the teats of a giant earthworm.
I could have swallowed both black rooks and
filled a dollhouse with decapitated ninjas.
A pancake riddled with bullet holes lay in the street.
When microscopic toads clogged our pores...
When a forest of Christmas trees grew on our brains...