

The background of the page is an abstract composition of soft, painterly washes in shades of deep blue, indigo, and purple. The colors blend and overlap, creating a textured, ethereal atmosphere. The lighting appears to come from the right, casting a brighter glow on the right side of the page.

**Think Twice |  
Litany Dylan**

**by Sadi Ranson**

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## Think Twice | Litany Dylan

## Introduction

I've listened to Dylan for years but I'm not sure that I have always heard him or that even now, with every listen, I really truly hear what he has to say. But when I *do* hear Dylan, I *really* hear him and he gets me when I am vulnerable, happy, sorrowful, ecstatic, tired – the gamut of emotions. And with Dylan, and this seems unique to my relationship with his music, he manages to touch my mind in ways that most other music does not. I say “most” for of course some does – but generally, it's Dylan.

One winter morning at about three o'clock I was awakened by the gentle thud of snow outside my window. I rose and put on my iPod and listened to something Dylan - probably to Wedding Song or something off of Planet Waves – which has remained a staple in my Dylan diet for many years – and I began to write back; a sort of echo back to his words. That is the work contained here, in this brief volume. These words are not letters to Bob Dylan – please understand. The work here is addressed to whomever the lyrics and music that that particular song happens to evoke for me – and the responses are my own particular and peculiar “series of dreams”.

In the December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1965 during the KQED San Francisco press conference Dylan was introduced as, “a poet” who would “answer questions from everything to atomic science to riddles and rhymes...” When asked how he viewed himself as performer Dylan said, “I tend to think of myself more as a song and dance man,” and dismissed the “folk-rock” label that was so often affixed to him, saying of himself and his work, “I like to think of it more in terms of vision music...”.

Dylan said that he, like William S. Burroughs who kept an album of photographs to illustrate his literature, he likewise had “photographs of “Gates of Eden” and “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue.” Songs that have startling visuals in lyric, which I have seen illustrated through the incredible paintings of others: I once saw a fabulous and richly layered depiction of “Desolation Row” with a complete cast of characters and I have a whole book of an illustrated “A Hard Rain’s A Gonna Fall.”

In an interview with *Playboy* in March, 1978, Ron Rosenbaum asked Dylan if he recalled having any visionary experiences while growing up. Dylan responded that yes, in fact, he had, “Amazing projections” he said, “those visions have been strong enough to keep me going through today...they were a feeling of wonder.” Dylan has been conveying those visions to us, and me, I’ve been like a kindred cousin or neighbor across the way flashing mirrored code across the wide city avenue.

Like Yeats (who, I should note, in an interview in August 1965 with Nora Ephron and Susan Edmonton, Dylan said he had never read), Dylan’s work hits on all of the senses; a rare gift for any writer, to use language such that it has scent, color, taste, and pulse. To give life to the printed word such that our all of our senses are fully engaged this is what every poet, every writer aspires to and very few ultimately achieve. But Dylan succeeds in fully engaging our every sense. His music is vision music to be sure and multi-hued. In the ’78 *Playboy* interview, Dylan said of the sound he heard, the sound in his head was, “The ethereal twilight, you know. It’s the sound of the street with sunrays, the sun shining down at a particular time, on a particular building...The sound of bells and distant railroad trains...”

Watch the footage from Rolling Thunder Revue, just the songs alone (or take Renaldo and Clara and watch the song performances and not the rest of the film), and it is the *bluest* show that I’ve ever seen in my life. It is a white-faced Dylan giving his All in a Cobalt blue light. It is pure electric Dylan belting out Isis in an electric-cerulean blue of Chagall’s *Le Marriee*.

Dylan brings us all shades of light. There is “Noah’s great rainbow”. We can even be tangled up in blue. And of course there is “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”, a song vivid with its bleak and still early morning air of vagabonds and steppingstones. I cannot think of “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue” without thinking of the book *On Being Blue* by William Gass, which makes me think of love - for if love is any color, surely it is blue. Blue is also the color of victory and of war. Lightning blue, death’s “supremest blue”, writes poet Gregory Corso. Blue is the color of sacrifice. Blue is the color of a maiden’s garter. Blue is the color of the wrap around the Venusian woman on the World card in the Tarot deck. Blue is sacred, blue is bled and blessed. Blue is declarative. If nothing else, blue is absolute and final.

Dylan’s music has color and depth and shape. He has spoken of that “wild mercury sound” in his music (and that of others – a sound he tries to catch) which really, you have to hear to know – and he’s described it as how the city looks at a certain time of day, or the angle of the sun on a particular building. When I heard that - when I heard Dylan say that - I was sure I knew then what he was aiming with vision music. That he, perhaps like me, sees music in the same terms – as sound having a particular color, as a song being sleek as mercury and slightly edgy and slick – all electricity on rails, tinsel silver-wired. All of that simply validated my own vivid associations and images to and his wild mercury sound - his Blonde on Blonde, his New Orleans, his Freewheelin’, his Rundown Studios all correlate to my Brooklyn Bridge, my pelting rainy day marriage, my storm in Spain, my calm Carmel California cliff with my brother and the sound of our quiet conversation, my Xanadu, my pop culture all Citizen Kane and Clash, my grandfather as a new immigrant, already savvy to the ways of the city, and the memory of our feet slapping the boards of the bridge between Manhattan and Brooklyn. And then there is my wounded pride, my insouciance, my back-talk, my love, my fury, my sensuality sexuality – all of it I find in my response to Dylan’s music.

Dylan never needed to write *Chronicles*, though I'm glad he did because he clears up – in the way that only Dylan can – some narrative of his life. Still, if you ask me, I still prefer his lyrics and albums all strung together and it is in those that I find a richly layered narrative that intrigues me a whole lot more. Perhaps it's easier for some of us to give of ourselves in lyric or in poetry more than we could never say outright in memoir form – no matter how honest we are or want to be because that's simply not the form our communication takes.

Wisely, Dylan never says whether his music is directly autobiographical or not or whether it was fictional or a slick and smart combination of the two. I would guess it is somewhere in the middle like my own work – at times entirely fictitious and at other times, entirely autobiographical but it's not up to me (or him) to let you know which is which. It's frankly more interesting to *not* know.

I'm not a critic - not really. Interpreting Dylan has never been my role or my interest. I always said to others that I never could say what Dylan was getting at, and anyway, I wondered often, what's the difference? That was his business and his alone. What interested me far more, and this I did write about – was how all of us responded to his music. What was it that any given Dylan song made me think of, dream on; what made my skin bristle or raised the ire – what got me moving and what made me smile; what turned me on. I never cared to analyze why I respond to Dylan the way I do – and you won't find any such analysis in this book: only responses and pauses – maybe like prayer, a sung litany.

To that end, if you want, listen to the song then read the poem; or listen and read together – a sort of multimedia experience– this way you have a sort of spoken litany, which is how the book was intended – one poet speaking to the other, sometimes directly, sometimes in notation, but always there is a communication, whether subtle or frank - Andre Breton's *Communicating Vessels*. As Dylan says at the end of “Don't Think Twice It's Alright” in the

live Philharmonic bootleg and the beginning of “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll”, “it’s like conversation really.”

- Sadi Ranson, January, 2014

## Note

Each poem in this slim volume relates to a specific song written by Bob Dylan. Because this book really is a sort of litany, my hope is that you'll read this work for what it is on its own and perhaps, you will also be moved to listen to the Dylan song or maybe you already know it. In this way, the work communicates.

## Correspondences

*Ellipsis – Most Of The Time*  
*Iron Melt - The Executioner's Face – Well-Hidden*  
*It Is I – Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands*  
*Ragazza – Three Angels*  
*Dear Mr. Stone – Like A Rolling Stone*  
*By Way Of Correction – Tomorrow Is A Long Time*  
*Warning – It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*  
*A Celtic Storm – Wedding Song*  
*Bride Price – Wedding Song, 2*  
*Like Me Like You Like Us – A Sweetheart Like You*  
*A Prayer of St. Chrysostom – Sign On The Window*  
*The Wind Is Jealous – Blowin' In The Wind*  
*Your Kettledrum – Shooting Star*  
*Note: Re. – To Ramona*  
*Heartbreak Sans Issue - Simple Twist Of Fate*  
*Your Miss, Mister – I Want You*  
*The Sky Our Scrim Witness – Up To Me*  
*Light – Visions Of Johanna*

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A Prayer of St. Chrysostom – Sign on the window says no company allowed” “A bunch of kids who call me ma or pa/build me a cabin in Utah/that must be what it’s all about” references “Build me a cabin in Utah/Marry me a wife, catch rainbow trout/Have a bunch of kids who call me “Pa”/ That must be what it’s all about/That must be what it’s all about. “Sign On The Window” copyright © 1970 by Big Sky Music; renewed 1998 by Big Sky Music

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*Ellipsis*

Most of the time, you're never here  
And I'd change it all of the time –  
But okay, I can survive I can endure -  
But who am I she or her to you or him.

This most of the time  
This rest of the time  
This flexible bendable construct  
It is not this way really – is it can it be

My idea of length - of brevity –  
It is a lifetime away from you and yours.  
Your most of the time is *none of the time*  
How it frightens, such disparity.  
The cheat on the self you never quite get away with;  
*Most of the time most of the time*, you whisper to soothe.

Yes most of the time I...  
And most of the time you...

Your sinking base guitar –  
A cigarette smoke contrail -  
A blue vapor trail, your eternal ellipsis.

*Iron Melt*

I was ugly, uglified – worse then worser.  
A curse, cursed-curser; a witch-bitch cuntress  
A once upon a time enchantress.

It's a coy line you feed yourself;  
It makes the pain of the bleed the seduction of the squeeze that  
little bit easier.

Dylan said, *Make your conclusions more drastic, Queen Jane*

Maybe then explain,  
Drastic, I think, still unknowing, but as Lewis Carroll said,  
“*When in doubt, take an extreme case...*”

So we are fine - my hurt and I  
Curling together nightly,  
the iron-melt simmering on the back of my tongue  
A bitter rind I just cannot spit  
A tree that won't grow  
Dear, why not say it?  
Keep your geronimoes in private –  
the executioner's face stays well-hidden.

*It Is I*

I ate mercury as a child, and the cigarettes I smoked, oh!  
There I am praying, an Anglican vesper chant  
Pockets torn, the Plasticine I bought you.  
Silk are we to the other  
Your eyes see what in mine, prophet?

You of the warehouse eyes – You and your Arabian drums  
The sheets are all charged static, ionosphere  
The air so metallic, like iron – like your wild mercury  
The sound I so love:  
    again/again/again  
    and one more time, please

Silhouettes of me, my ballet communication: echo & location.

“Would you walk the length of my back,” you asked.  
Yes, gentle as your geisha.... Yes I would,” I said.  
We at the gate, the leaning post, West Corridor, Grand Central  
That is me in a ruby red dress, waist cinched  
We - another color, another era  
And that is you, beside me, a shotgun at your feet and a box full  
of bullets, mister.

That is me in the cowboy hat, chin-tied and proud – a little silly.  
That is me in the cap, a little proud, a little haughty you say.  
Should I leave, you want to know  
Or  
Should I wait?

*Should I stay or should I go know now*  
    all Clash and Clash and Clash

Sure, why don't you wait...

The sea at my feet, your winter shell, kosher Christmas unkosher  
Such are shattered vessels  
Bright are the sparks, still -  
Something is not right: you are not here.

*Nag Hammadi* you  
Light electric blue you  
You are to me divination, ordination  
With you, my face like glass  
Glowing and glistening incandescent  
Saint like, with a soul like a ghost  
But whose is not, I ask.

No man will come here, you say.  
So wait and wait and wait, that is you speaking saying...  
So full of awe and yet you question question question  
So beautiful and lilted, but where is your action, your next  
move?  
Are you or are you not a prophet; should I trust – that is,  
speaking strictly prophet to prophet.  
You speak of you and you and you  
I can tell you of what I see  
But not of you; no never; such is not me.  
Yet the love in your voice – oh!  
And the ache and the drag of it –the longing and the wanting.

How long have you wanted? How long have you longed?  
And how much longer can such beauty stand ...  
Just like that... an ellipsis without resolution, interruption,  
beginning, or end...

*Ragazza*

Draped in green, Dante's Beatrice times (x)three,  
*Ragazza!* someone shouts –  
They are a triad of insouciance  
Angels small and large  
All day they play on the penny-whistle  
I see them earthbound, fallen like red-throated doves  
A late summer omen...

They sit on cornerstones waiting,  
They have worked and walked so far  
They are wing-weary now.  
One whispers something to the other  
Who whispers something else to yet another.  
But I cannot hear them, not at all  
It is a hushed *Sbbbbbb* – a secret I am not to know.

The church bells ring  
*Semper fi* someone says, *Go rounds*  
And we silently count, *one and two and...*  
*Go rounds* ... A ringers' method –

You will know us by our sound  
As we know each other by rope sight.

*Dear Mr. Stone*

Dear Mr. Stone;

About school and what you say I did and did not do in it;  
“Ah, you were always juiced in it,” you blithely say.  
Oh, a few times but listen to *you*...  
Preaching to the wanna be –

Listen, once or more I had cancer  
So *deal*, you say, *Do you want to make a deal*...  
No: I do not make deals – to what end these.  
You ask me, *Which way, this or that*.  
Yet after all ...  
Tricks and kicks and diplomats – all the cats.

All of these words are hard for me these days  
*Love and Theft*  
Scene: *West 11<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>*

*How do you get to LA from here*, you ask,  
Well I did it  
And found some home there  
Rested and fell silent in the California rain all Buck Owens and  
divorce...  
So who is my Napoleon in rags, this caller you speak of –

Mr. Stone:  
I think I am alone on your Highway 61  
My telephones do not ring  
If they do, they mean nothing  
Not any more  
Home is another.

On the boardwalk in Venice I made a promise to this guy –  
From whom I bought a sycamore leaf covered in solid gold,  
I told him that I would rise like Ceres in the spring  
*Save the world*, he said  
I said I'd try and I meant it

Later, Diamond Joe had bought mango juice with a picture of  
Ceres etched on the box that I found in the fridge  
And Max the cat, where'd he come from – Central Casting?  
“It’s a good name for him...” I thought –  
“Max” So very Annie Hall.  
Max and me in a photo - my pink poncho, long hair pillow-  
splayed, smiling me –  
Beautiful and young then,  
No thought of nothing except Dylan and absence  
Dylan is whispering to me, “*Tomorrow is a ...*”

I say,  
*We'll meet later –*  
*In somebody's office.*

*Warning*

Look out, you warn me – the saints are coming through  
Why be afraid then. Why fear saints.  
He says, “*Baby, baby, baby...*” and I offer it back

*Baby Baby Baby*

*Oh when the saints come marching in...*

Can you hear the tune like I can  
It’s all coincidence and double bets on the dime.  
A beautiful woman blows on the die.  
Are we double once again? A Miller’s Tale –  
Kind of like Verlaine and Rimbaud?

There is my orphan on fire, gun-toting, furious -  
The rain, dear – hard, fast, and falling  
You want it to be so punishing.  
*You*, so full of questions  
Yes, it’s me, your darling young one, with your other, your blind  
son  
Perhaps he is blinded by the rain: this baptism  
“Such furious baptism....” you say and sigh....  
Can it ever be so angry, I say soothingly and remind you of the  
day on the Brooklyn Bridge.  
I’ll step into *that* Mikve again gladly  
Then he smiles.... He smiles....

Me I am the candle-lighter, arbiter, votive keeper  
A ghostly ghost in the vesper hour  
You asked me what I have seen, now you tell me *It is over: it is  
done*

Let me whisper to you now while your harmonica whistles silver  
trails of light...

*By Way Of Correction*

*Place*, I said, by way of correction.

*Tomorrow is a long place.*

A map of the human heart; all peaks and valleys

A glen you wander in to and out of - often wonder about

You dream about to forget to remember

Your reflection in the water – so pond pollen to my sky greys

I lie here and think of you

Rest gently on your nest of details

Yesterday and tomorrow

I do not speak

What good is this voice?

The beauty in your eyes

Incomparable, a rising sun, the stellar dawn

A prayer at morningtide, Psalm 137

By Grand Central Station we fall into each other.

*Whistle*

You so wanted to scare frighten-tighten.  
You'd execute me as surely as I you  
(maybe baby)

Listen to that whistle blown'  
Must be the Mother of our Lord.

Do you hear fear?  
My how you ought  
How bad we have been.  
So now listen to me.  
I'll set you straight and then she will -  
Mercy is right.  
Before I am through, you'll be on your knees begging for it.

*A Celtic Storm*

My ideas of love, so childish  
That because I love you  
So ought you love me

You're thinking, *But I don't even know you*  
*You don't even know me.*

Like a Wedding Song: a Celtic storm, a Celtic strum  
A painter's deception, a story you once told in a gallery hushed.  
The closeness of two who should not but do.

Your dark roads that I fall into  
Your country canvas black and green and threatening  
- autumn leaves avenue blowing.  
Your tempest on Ninety-something and Riverside.

Later it will be ice-cream in the parlor –  
A little saccharine, a little sorrowful  
Our private partings and reunions  
Our Memphis blues, New York City in the grey misty afternoon.

Later, you'll tell me to be careful of that book.

*Bride Price*

Resin-scent and snapdragon  
A girl smoking cigarettes - a car's exhaust  
The wet pavement - the scent of her hair  
My eyes darting - here there everywhere  
See this apple - red now green  
Now falling fast past my grandfather's bowler hat.

#

The bride walked, late Spring  
A blind man at the coffee counter  
My grandfather says, *I don't believe you,*  
Counting dollar bills before he gives them to him anyway  
*How can you tell,* he says  
*How can you know how much if you are such*  
The blind unblind no matter, still desperate

#

We walked the half-mark that day  
The wooden slats click-clack - all that  
The day's breeze the clouds - the balmy New York air  
Fingering the plaque that speaks to the found of the found

#

Another decade ages away  
A dream of you - a rain-pelting day  
All wind thrust and rush - the bridge  
We follow each other toe-to-toe and tip-to-tip  
Your kiss still honeyed on my lip  
And at the half-point we are married  
...almost or as if, a wist,

*"...the world's wedding..."*

A sky break day  
The spitting mist - my glowing aurora

And I will be your borealis  
Your little and your big  
With you I will bow to the Plaedics and Orion  
Kneel in the vesper hour

#

The hush in the church, perhaps some talk  
Once someone said to someone, *Be quiet, would you please!*  
And I was grateful.  
We meet to pray repose console  
That is you - your head resting near my soul  
You are shaking now – your trembling grief.

#

All of life's kindness and unkindness  
Randomness and chance  
"You'll get no answer..." I whisper to your cockle-shell ear  
Your damp cheek - your cool hands - your-my salt wet face  
There is no disguise here  
I tell you, "*Hush now hush now*"  
That is me, comforting my comforter

#

Journeys - rails this way, now that  
Someone is laughing laughing laughing  
Once he was shouting  
Now the shouts have died down  
And we are left with the icky bits of  
Our private disasters, our private confusions, our public disgrace  
It is me, it is I  
*Once blonded now blacked*, your darling young one

#

*So much rain today*, mother says  
*What shall we do - What do you?* I give no answer.  
I put on my dark boots and stamp in inky puddles  
My hair flying out behind me - "*I am here! I am this one!*"

#

A sirocco Spain the great and gulping waves  
Me at eight and saved from the sucking sea,  
My mother and I fast running beneath the hotel windows  
The wind blown silver - glass explosion –  
a dagger to her back as she arcs to protect her child.

*Like Me Like You Like Us*

I was not born at the bottom of the wishing well - not like you.  
But somewhere there is a photograph of my mother, blonded  
and standing next to one  
All Dolce Vita  
You are talking Fidel Castro  
Barbara Walters  
Cuba  
And you have the nerve to say to me

*You you you so unpatiotic –*

*Listen sweetheart!*

What are you doing in a place like this...?  
A sweetheart like you – like me – like you

And as for Tony Perkins  
My dad said re him (when I professed my undying love at age  
fifteen)  
“Are you fuckin’ kidding me, Sa?”

I wasn’t.

Funny kid me. Freckled, summer tan,  
High on life happy  
Earthquake unawares  
Riding the trolley with you

Dylan’s easy Queen Jane Approximately  
“When you’re sick of all this repetition...” and etc  
Christ we passed that point a long time ago ... about two years  
but never mind.

“Won’t you come see me...” (he says, you say)  
On his-your Genuine Never Ending Tour  
Not unlike my own  
Or my family’s  
Who these days I do not hear from

They must be with you  
– somewhere -  
Your roadies, Band-aids, producers, managers, whatever...

And you, my other, – my sometime lover manager married  
unmarried  
All Wedding Song saying, *Frankie Lee and Judas Priest*

Well, *I Don't Believe You*

(If only you wouldn't clap so hard I might be able to take it)

#

Me and my brother cliff edge, Carmel  
Legs dangling, 6 a.m.  
Seals barking with surfers a thousand crashing feet below  
Us smoking cigarettes into the mist  
Rich says, "*Man looks into the abyss...*"  
And we laugh take a drag and laugh into the cool California  
morning the Pacific down below...

It's all mist and mist and mist –  
Brother you are missed.

Years ago this that then.

Us at the heart of the estate.  
The long and dusty road, all Xanadu and Citizen Kane  
The tiled indoor pool so Moroccan and me saying, "*I could live  
here...*"  
You: "*Sa, It's a little remote...*" Your sideways glance.

#

Now, Dylan is all about *When your father to your sister he explains...*

At this point even *I* would be interested to hear...

Sung and said with such attitude  
Like me, like you, like us

So who is at the bottom of the well now?

Awful stories on the wire

And nothing has been changed – except the words.

*A Prayer of St. Chrysostom*

The sign says *Lonely*.

Sign on the window says *No company allowed*.

Perhaps it says, *No trespass* – like one of grandfather's signs –  
But this land is not condemned.

It is not mine, it is not yours.

You'll know when you are wanted: you will be sent for.

Oh the letterpress invitations.

The Park Avenue evening – all rubies and sparkling earrings  
And what came before in linen white sheets, and in the  
background-playground song, Manhattan throng.

That's how it was with you, how it went then.

Love and publishing, publishing and love.

Our very inky business.

These days we all think and wish upon a star:

"A bunch of kids will call me ma or pa"

I'll build me a cabin in *Utah*

That must be what it's all about...

"Ooooo --- Mmmmmmm"

But first where is my husband

(...and which) the one before or before or...

I am thrice married – wife of no-one

Twice on the altar – always before G-d

And one time, the world's wedding

But as you so often tell me, *Three's a crowd* ...

So then, a Prayer of St. Chrysostom

-----*I me bear witness to this.*

*The Wind Is Jealous*

Me with my child's-eye heart.  
The just and right vessel for there then.  
The who so what and want  
I am merely a facilitator  
An easy go-between  
Whipping quick here and there – the wind on the rush:  
your promise.  
I am the wind and rain's easy co-conspiritor  
Connecting gently or brutally – but with force  
The wind is jealous of the earth and sky – their mad  
love, amour fou -

*Let us keep them apart, their love a corkscrew to my heart, he  
whispers in my ear*

I am just like the oven-bird on the roof next door  
Chimney top perched black feather breasted mouth  
open to the great, great sky  
Singing morning worship – evening vespers  
Saying,

*Mother, father, it is I – Your darling young one –  
Please!*

They have argued incessantly.

This morning the sky turned cream  
Like something to fall into - a pillow and at night it  
turned  
by turns peach now apricot now amber rose  
Rushing fast over the triangles of our roofs and  
shingles of our tainted imperfect loving homes  
Of our disease our crops our dysfunction  
The clouds now wind split and pink against the  
cleanest see-through sky as if washed to see us clearly  
at once  
To see me  
To see all of us now

As if to say  
*We are here – This is it.*  
*It is done.*

*Your Kettledrum*

There ought to be a language for this  
Words we dish out daily: some measure of the immeasurable.

Impossible of course.

Hence all of your kettledrums, your vortexes, your wind on the  
rush.

I want to tell you it must reside in prayer then –  
caught in cupped hands, whispered  
a silent movement in the light. This and the candles to the side...  
So many lit - all green beacons wordless and flickering. Silently  
saying all.

We clutch our symbols dearly, daily  
Redefine and find, circle back around to the start.  
Perhaps I'll dispense with the pyramid, the circle, the flame and  
genuflection, the star, the cross, the cloth -  
A sure and right resurrection.

Impossible, of course.

No matter the language, it is all there -  
as it was and ever shall be.

The apple you gave I never did eat it.  
A tick tock inside of me said: Pause and consider. From where  
did this come?

I felt like Snow White only un-duped and alive - a living sprite.  
So I fed it to the birds, all souls lifting.  
But me, had I bitten, I'd be flat-backed and spell-bound - lost  
forever in a witch's fugue.  
Nothing you intended, but I was aware.

The pear, years ago, so different - a gift there;  
A promise and a wish and a kiss.  
Say no more. Say your prayers.  
What is this good grief? The opposite of for goodness' sake  
An expression of love, right and true  
A thing navigated between me and you.

I've said goodbye to fairy tales - mostly.  
I've seen the wicked queen, her cast down spell  
This time I saw her coming and re-scripted the ending.  
I'll not scrub her palace steps nor hide in any forest.

And Sleeping Beauty: I could sleep all my life and wait wait wait  
in some or other state  
But I realize that only I can cut through the thick thicket.  
I wake to the sound of church bells  
To the prayers of all good people.

Let the frames slide into focus then...  
One spirit lifting, the other weeping.

Have you ever seen the two side-by-side - Goodness and Grief?  
You'll find me there between the two: a bright burst of amber,  
lifting lifting.

*Note: Re.*

I am not her – your Ramona. I am your could have been where  
you not so...

Your words that make, yes, elliptical sense

But really – ought not.

If I do what I think I should do (as you advise)

I'll pray and pay at the doctor's request

*How do you feel – Is it like...*

*No* and *no*, I want to shout, I want to scream.

So I will run to the mountaintop

Me and a tree-stump; an ax and some wood

That is me – swinging – first my ax, now my scythe

Cutting a path through the thicket just for you.

I could care less now about the city's dying flowers

They bloomed an angry burst – aflame.

Me at the twilight, the Spring's crocus bud

A promise whispered and unkept.

The doubt and questions you presuppose

You should know me better by now.

I am tired of your not knowing.

The world heard me sing.

*Heartbreak Sans Issue*

The scene – some park, the river, the twilight summer dark, your  
kiss

But I felt your mouth on mine before then –

In the cathedral, Grand Central

Later, the viaduct slipping silvery by

We made love there

To the hushed sound of the river

Sam's saxophone echoing somewhere – the future twist

The blind man in my past begging money

My grandfather and I – two new New York immigrants

Treading lightly over our Brooklyn Bridge to the mid-point

I loved you

I love you

I love you not

Do you know anymore?

Do I?

I would marry you again again again - if and when you ever  
sort it out

You –

you wait but do not seek.

This is your sin: the constant waiting – only this.

I have sought you out for years and often

Repeat repeat - heartbreak sans issue

You my sin my love my blackest dove  
Caught in church spire rising with the choir music, my bit lip  
blood drip

*allelujah*

Someone ring the sanctus bell.

I wear your bracelet of charms  
(I slip a coin into the cup)  
Do you wish that you'd gone straight?  
Or do you tell yourself that you did?  
It doesn't matter now, you know...  
No need for reproach of me or you.

All shut window shades and wet harmonica rails  
My thoughts of you as I tread the pier, fading into the mist  
My mind straight and seeking  
The ticking of the clocks too loud (you say)  
I've picked you out over and over and over again – but you never  
see me.

Wait, just wait and see, you say.  
It is so indefinite this future of yours, of ours.  
Perhaps it is not me or us after all. No, not at all.

So enough with questions of faith;  
If it is as you say, if it is Fate, all impossible and too hard  
Let the sacrifice be complete.

*Your Miss, Mister*

You and your Queen of Spades, all good to you and I your  
debutante chambermaid  
All good and bad for you and we two  
We know what we want but does it matter  
Our unrequited love – a forever hanging ellipsis.

There is where you'd like to be  
And where you are instead  
    Wanting me missing me - me your miss, mister  
    How soppy romantic

Someone with time on their side – who?  
And yet another has died – and me, I am not surprised  
All this waiting, our missed marks

I kept cold vigil in the twilight park  
Staring starry-eyed at the stone-etched pilgrims exchanging soft  
sheaves of corn,  
My wheat hair hanging down, my blue blanket coat turned to the  
chill  
Six shivering hours of that – a Bronx tale, a New York thing  
I sought you  
I want you I love you I want you  
I thought that I might die  
A hoar-frost fear

You are unafraid

Me, I am afraid (most of the time)  
A child-ballad crane dance  
The night's cool harmonica (*my holy nose, your kisses like snow*)  
My skin flush rose on the subway  
*"I love your cheek against your collar, so very soft, this contrast..."*  
Pink-cheeked to auburn vintage fur apropos of desire  
Then you kissed me as the train bumped and we sat toe-to-toe.  
All so very Leipzig – all grown up in New York

And I wanted you and I loved you  
And you loved me and you wanted me

That was the beginning – that day then.

*The Sky Our Scrim Witness*

It was years ago now and who are you and where were you  
anyway?

Nothing to do with it so steer clear as I would of yours.

Me in grandfather's old blue hatchback –

arm window draped beneath the balmy grey sky

Thinking of Him and him – my grandfather and you

He was so ill then: worse then worser

And I, blue then bluer

Parked at the post-office posting one of so many letters home,

My watercolor envelopes.

I don't remember if I had cancer then or not; it didn't matter.

I made soap to ease the mind; I made the best of it.

I made love

I made books

I built a life

That was up to me

And you, your harmonica leading – did you know?

A pied piper in the mackerel morning.

And so when he died, grandfather,

I came following you and your pro-nun-cia-tion in the jingle  
jangle morning

The heart's ease my reprieve from night's of fiery terror, all  
soul's lifting

And me a witness – not a thing I could do about it.

My dreams so awfully prophetic, all over the news,  
Life death unstoppable moving before my draped lids  
I sought you out in Canada  
In our frost-bitten Winterlude;  
I pond-skated quick tight circles (your swan)  
The sky our scrim witness  
To my quick bladed alphabet on ice.  
Sugar and spice and all things...

Being equal.

I saw the deer cross the lake  
I jumped a mogul trail  
I broke my leg  
I screamed a bright red trail down the steepest part of the  
mountain.

And as your soul rose like smoke  
I sped home through a blizzard  
As if I could save you –  
As if it were up to me.

*Light*

Backwards talking knight, his honey-trap lunch box saddle hung  
Upside-down buckled-below, so kind he –  
He taught me all the right moves: how to get from here to there  
A simple L-direct and I'm gone.

The bluff, your key chain –  
I'd toss it off you know  
And it is forever lost to the abyss.

Me, your once ghost of electricity  
My howling cheekbones, my lemon-lime eyes, my ecstatic face  
All scream and shout and shake it up  
This my farewell kiss –  
Oh the small-talk, the gossip, the buzz  
I'm sick to death of it ...

At dawn my lover did not come to me –  
Did not tell me of his dreams.  
So much for Eden – This must not be the place.  
I have been searching for him  
My once upon a time he, who said  
*I love you I love you I love you*

And you, another, who I saw through my magnifier lens  
Whose scent I caught, so heady (did you know)  
I pray for you (and you me?), official mind-blowers we

I owe you nothing, nor you me  
Our mutual conscience co-exploding  
The deep-sea fish about us in blue waters  
Shimmering and glimmering –  
As I dive the calm shallows, *Oia*

I am she. I am her. I'm the one you've been seeking.  
Come: this side of the mirror –  
Find me delicate and pointing,  
Quiet in the throb of the rain.

### Author's note

St John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407), Archbishop of Constantinople, is honored as one of the four great Greek doctors of the Church. A Prayer of St. Chrysostom is an Anglican prayer. It reads as follows:

#### *A Prayer of St. Chrysostom*

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.



