



JOEFILES 123

LIPSTICKED LINES OF LOVE

6

if you
ever
acquire the skill
to
draw a good
'6'
with your
right foot
while watching
what your
left foot
does while
this is happening,
you will
then
know your
true self in a
way you
never
imagined.

a broken string

as the
mysteriously
broken
guitar string
perpetually
bobs
up and
down
on the neck of
a guitar
i never had time
to learn,
i smile
at my nephew that likely
broke
the string and
never told
me
because he
had such
a good
jam session with
it
or merely
forgot
as the
tiny gales of
home wind
keep
the rhythm
of
that
string
strumming
just
as
it
should
there
in
the
yellow,
warm
silence.

a new blue angel

the first time
i had any
sort of notion
that my dad was going
to die
at the young age of
64
was one friday
afternoon after my
brother called in tears
to say that
the stars seemed to be aligned in
an odd sort of procession.

at this,
i was immediately out
the door
and in the car
racing towards my father's side
considering any last words
or missives
that should be parlayed out
just in case he was going to
slip out of the fold of this
world and into
the next,
unknown level.

and over the skies
of kansas city,
the blue angels were soaring
fast into the sky,
only to
let the engine slow to a purr
and lazily flop
slowly,
then blazing fast,
towards earth before they
would gun the engine and angle up
towards the sky in
the last moments.

for the last 10 years
or so,

the family has been racing
to our father's side thinking
this might just be that last
time as this
particular time
hammered the metaphor
of his life as an
air force vet.

always racing towards the sky,
my father did,
only to come plummeting in a
final gasp towards earth
until the hospital
or pill
or surgeon
or other medical intervention
saved him so that he
could avert a smash down
and raise up one more time
to laugh in the face
of this life that
was sitting on his chest.

and as we waited in
that waiting room as a family
hoping to hear the good news,
a trove of pregnant women
were entering and leaving that
part of the building that also had
a maternity care facility.

this was the lasting
memory of those all those
loud planes outside
and the revolving door of
that hospital welcoming a new life
as an old one clung
to the last drops of sweetness
as the world
fell into a screaming,
needed silence.

austin f.

on the one
year anniversary
of my father in laws
passing
it is uncommonly warm
out and the winds
are whipped about
like gales over
a sea he
grew up next to
and as i walked around
his back yard with
his wife's new dog
to get the piss out
i smiled at an
badly decayed lobster
pit i saved for him
from the trash
and realized
that my own father was also
gone
compounding the notion
that
all of us left behind
have to live
as hard as old austin
did to etch a story
our children will
remember
and to
make certain
that each check in
this life
is written,
cashed
and
burned
to
make it
all
permanent
in our
mysterious
motions.

BOTH

the
folks
that
always
say,
'cause
it
says
so
in
the
bible.'
are
just
as
errant
as
those
that
will
only
listen
to
the
entire
grateful
dead
library
which
makes
me
think
that
between
god,
jesus,
the grateful,
and the dead
we can
find
some
kind
of
logical

way
to
answer
life's
hardest
questions.

bumper jumpers

if that
wish
of time
comes
tumbling out
of
the
fictitious
cloud wall
all
ramble under,
i would
love
to
open a
series
of
art shows
with actual
replicas
of
the cars
and their bumpers
that
are jammed
with the
most eclectic
group
of
stickers
you
could
imagine.

from
whirled pea's
to anti-abortion folks
that love bush,
they would
be loud and
proud for all
to finally
have a
a

real
reason
to
scratch
that
itch
that
will
mushroom
on
each scalp
that
views
the
absurdity
of
the
messages we
pound
the innocent
motorist
that
is driving to
avoid
the
news
or
a
message
of
any
kind.

dreamy sleepers

with dreams
of california
or a solid coastal
town,
my wife and i
found a slice
of that creamy vision
in the back yard
of a home
she found
for us.

a white castle
on the corner of
163rd and Rebecca,
and a yard full
of peaches,
grapes,
raspberries,
apples,
pears
and
triumphant
kid toys.

sometimes,
i lose
grip on the
notion
that we
live
in the rural
belly of missouri
surrounded
by horse farms
and cow troves.

instead,
we slip
into
that envelope
of
fantasy
and plunge

our teeth into
a
juicy
apple just
plucked
from out
mighty
apple
tree.

each successive

time i
lose a hard
drive
it
is
usually
larger,
and more
robust
with stuff
i would never want to
part with.

but each time,
i
become
more comfortable
with how
fleeting
each moment
i capture
in whatever way
i capture it.

and the real hard drive
is my
wet,
meat brain
taking all of it in
with each
delight,
or pain
that is parted
out in the moment
of chance.

there's never going
to
be
a remedy
for
the
vast amounts
of
digital

ones and zeros
that
rule our technological world.

so,
instead of wondering what
i may have lost in a
wandering conversation
i recorded with my
dad or the
tiny sounds i shared with
my son at an obama rally ..

instead,
i remember how well
my old man and i spoke together
and how
my son
clutched my torso
as i walked away from
the voice of
president obama
fighting
to
change
this
world.

forgetting the layers

while driving through
the hustle
of a city i
used to languidly
spend my days
fueled by dreaming,
i now feel like
a monarch that
has at last
shed all the layers
of true youth
and the
unknown avenues
i would have been curious
to know about.

as my curiosity
stretches over the road
like an oil spill in a cold alaskan water body, i smile at my son sending gibberish into the
sky and my wife that waits at home for me to triumphantly bring home her favorite
hummus here on a new valentine's day for us all.

and as love swells in the air
and the color red has
the town painted in
gentle undertows,
i don't miss
the leisure i used to
take advantage of
because i don't know
what that
shade of me felt like
nor
do i want to
meddle around
in the past anymore.

the only thing that
has become my cloak of
comfort anymore
is the present.

not the past,
and ignorant of the wide future ahead.

it is finally in this moment
of my living that
right now is all i know i have.

i lose memory of
the past
and find the future a large
orb of space ash just out of reach.

so,
for now i'll dig now
as the hummus grows cold,
my boy falls silent and
my lovely valentine is
landing her first wet foot
out of the tub
with the remnants of a
lip stick message she scrawled
the evening before to me
gently
melting
down in a
torrent of
hazy,
present
mist.

god radio

each morning
the god radio blares
wide open
with its neon green light
and the voices begin.

my wife loves it.

she stays in bed to
listen to the soothing,
simplicity of
these religious fanatics
talk about how sure they
are about their beliefs.

from money,
to politics,
to sex,
to food,
to you,
to me,
to my wife,
to my kids,
they go on in
strode confidence about how
they feel they have
the world figured out
in their
rather sub-intellectual rants.

many
'yes"
'ahh's'
'mm-hmm's'
come pouring
out of folks
listening to the
main guy talking his
walk.

and when the snooze
button is slapped
and the theological
rhetoric comes to

a crashing halt,
my wife usually
whispers,
'what did they talk about
this morning?'

my response is
usually,
'i simply can't remember'
because everything sounds
the same,
yet each time
it has it's own distinct tone.

could be my
abiding epitaph on
how
i feel
this country
carries
on in their
moral majority
ways ..

this,
as my wife shakes it off
and smiles a bit
knowing that it
would be nice to be so
simple and confident about
how you feel
this world
should
carry
on in
the
grand
god
scheme of things.

HELL-coptin'

the swarming,
vicious skies
over the once
quiet
south
kansas city
airwaves
now
ignite
with
the
sounds
of
metal
blades
whipping
about
like
angry
metal hornets
looking
to
sting
the
beast
that knocked their
nest out
of
the
summer tree
as
the
crooks
attempt to
see
if
they
can
escape
and
win
just
one
more

fucking time.

hood museum

i noticed
a well-tanned,
blond haired white
woman peering for a long
minute out of the side
of the large SUV's window
into the bowels
of kansas city's safe ghetto
trying to understand
why a ministry is
by a nail salon that's
by a check's cashed joint
across the street from a chicken
shack
as the exhaust from her car
mimic's the snake trails
of smoke coming from
several brother's
smoking their precious butts
as they wait for the
bus and the sun to descend
so the city can relish another
relatively
safe night in the bitter
cold
as the white folk
whittle on down the road
as though they are
a part of a procession viewing
a museum
they never want to live
in as they slip the car's heater
up a little higher
to feel their own
version of warmth.

january tornado alarms

as the snow
began sucking the
noise out of night,
a loud blare
of tornado sirens
rang over the
friday evening
capping the end
of the very first week
a black man
was the american president.

as i pressed my ear
to the window
to hear the automated
white man voice say
'THIS IS A TORNADO WARNING.
PLEASE TAKE IMMEDIATE COVER.'
my wife was dressed,
and leading 3 kids into the
basement.

i followed suit,
but stopped shy of the
steps leading into
the concrete cage
to look about
in my
disbelief.

as i peered out over
our higher than most view,
i saw nothing but large
hunks of soft, frozen rain
whispering in thick blankets
towards earth as
notions of nuclear
fall out and
rumors of cold war
enemies rang about my
head.

several neighbors
caught me out front

and said the cops were warning
folks
as i exhumed in confusion
that
meteorologically
there can be no way
a tornado could
exist in
a dust bowl of
cold
and the
complete absence of
warmth.

the neighbors
just nodded in silence
as the sirens went off
again and they went
back to their concrete cages
and frantic phone calls
to the cops.

come to find out shortly
after i went back inside,
there was an accidental
trip of the alarm
as we all
hurriedly went back
to whatever we
were doing on
that night
that
America
relished a
new,
bright
face
running
this
country
full of
false alarms
and
heroic,
white
snow

falling.

mall crazies

i always
notice
the
crazy
that
pine around
the malls.

the other day,
i had my boy in tow
so he could ride the
carousel
and saw a
small,
old woman
kind of crazed
sitting along
on a bench.

she peered our from
under her head scarf
as though
she was giving it one
more go to
see a bunch of
energized
kids tearing through
the world.

her gaze had
the blank credit card look
of being spent and
firmly in debt
as she caught wind of my
son
and parted a small
smile
that may have snarfed
several months of
darkness from her world.

and as we left
her gaze
and that old look returned

back into her eye,
she was the wishing well i
was going to throw my
invisible coin into
so that
she
might
just
find
that
spoke of
light
to
keep
her from
that
daze
of
daunting
darkness.

my damn arse

i rolled over
on my
side
and
she
took
a look
at my
ass.

after a few moments
she said,
'it's definitely not
a hemorrhoid.'

and as i took a
deep breath in,
she said that i have
a rip in my sphincter
with questioning eyes.

i wandered over this
statement
and quickly forgot that a
strange woman
has to look
so closely at
such a hidden object
about my existence.

and her eyes pouted
a bit in question
as i sat silent,
wondering how something
like that could have happened.

as we meandered into
my next question of health,
i wanted to blurt out,
'all i do is poop from there. that's it.'

but i didn't feel like defending
myself
because it wouldn't have mattered

and
i hold true to the
notion that one should not
have to defend they're innocence
to a relative stranger
if
there
is
nothing
to
defend.

MY FINAL BUSH POEM

the real
de-evolution
of
our
american
civilization
is
a
tear
from
one
of
bush's
real
tear's
if
that
damned
clown
cowboy
ever
even
cries.

occupational hazards

we have
become
the quintessential
cell phone
nation
that stops
ten feet before
the red light
swinging on the old
wooden pole
and
an act of silent mouths
talking about nothing
as we lose touch
with how to make
a simple,
old cashier
laugh
at both
life
and the
miracle of
making someone's moment
without
having any other attachments
than
just being alive
in that
one
shared,
random
space
in
unclogged
time.

past dins

the most interesting
thing about
hearing from folks
that used to be
in your past
is the one thing they take
from that
former existence.

one remembers throwing
away a valentine charm i
gave them
another remembers my old man's
signature pasta dish
another remembers ..

most others
have bits
they take away
that i will
never
even be able to
fathom.

and in these
memories,
we surface
as to who we are
and what
kind of influence
we
have been able to wield.

and in these memories,
there are many
that is never remembered
at all.

so,
if you are remembered,
know that
it's
merely
a

small
step
to
maybe
realizing
who
you
really
are
when
that
large,
moth
bitten
curtain
comes
memorably
down
towards
your
head.

powerliners

the
real power
around
us
all
is the amount of
power lines
and boxes
that litter
every roadway
in our periphery.

and as this
power jostles through our
homes
and
around our spinal column,
i count each of these lines
as they dip,
and swoop
in imaginary
faces of
smiling
idolatry.

each one feeds into
a huge,
gray robot mouth
that leads to another bundle
that is giving me
the clarity to type into
this electronic board
as the TV hums in silence
and the radio tip toes in
it's small
steps of electric squeamishness.

and all the other
necessities in this
house of ours
that feed
the big robot mouths
and looping lines
of power we

forget
to ponder
as the forgotten
birds of tomorrow
all huddle
in the cold sunshine on that
one patch of warm wire
that will
make everything
seem just
fine for
the
time
being.

pressurized blood

every time
i take
my blood pressure
at the local pharmacy
with my energized
miles boy reaching for the
red button
and dreaming of the green
button
i feel the cup squeeze my upper
arm like my 4th grade teacher used
to when she would lead me out
into the stench of the
childhood library.

and while the tiny heart
of mine beats in my
upper arm,
my son
squirms
as though
he has an itch on his has
that might end him if
he doesn't get
rid of it
while
he lurches in
vain to press a button or two.

this entire time,
i'm trying to defrag the stress,
breath in joy
and wait for a normal
reading to come out,
all the while i'm waiting
for miles to hit
the red button and have this
cup permanently attached to my
body.

and visions of walking out of
this joint with a huge heart monitoring
system siphoned to my arm
as my boy squeals in excitement

because he can play full time
on my new medical arm toy.

instead,
i get another pre-hypertension
read
that baffles me a bit
as my son tears off my lap,
over to a bag of candy,
then a ball display
and shortly thereafter
saying 'hi' to some stranger over
and over and over again
as i settle into
my newly discovered racing heart
and
addled pressure
on
my
body's blood.

prominent suckles
of political residue
waft about the
american air today
as obama still smiles
and legislation
passes through
that can make us all
feel more in touch
with our government
that touches us
all too often
and as the
white male nay-sayers
light up the talking head
outlets,
we in the post-bush
glow just smile a bit
because we are
done with ignorant emotives
flitting around
this sweet air of ours
that somehow,
some glorious way
feels
damned real
again
like a
honeysuckle
brushing over
the edge of a child's nose
for the
very
first
time.

public johnnie

the
guy
with the electrical
engineers
logo
painted pristinely
on the side
of his newly
washed white
van
ambled
out of his
vehicle
in
the empty
gravel parking lot
walking with
squibbly concentration
towards the
park bathroom
and nothing
but
pure
plumbing agnation
in mind
as i
remember
why
those kinds
of public
restrooms
always stink a bit
and never rid
themselves
of those
ghosts
that get laid
down by
innocent
folks
looking
to
rid

their excess
in
secret,
hidden locations.

redefining alone

i stopped
today
to absorb
the
notion
of being alone
as my
son
in the back seat
said the
same four or
so words in
rapid succession.

it starts with
'boo',
then 'lellow',
then 'mo'
and 'no'.

he's 4 and
cannot verbally
speak to
us except for
a stanza or two
of
splotchy language.

and i realized
that over
all those days
i have spoken to him
as though he was going
to speak back
and
fully
taking in the fact
that he's said nothing
more than tiny spurts,
many non-verbals
and a host of
sign language to stay alive.

and i had to

move into another direction
believing that
he might just speak
to me some
fine day

and the talks
we will have then.

in the meantime,
i dig the love
and the fact
that we really
do speak
to each other 70 percent
or more without saying anything at
all.

so i'll
end
this
piece of
words
with
the only
thing i see
as
ever present
and profound in
my life
these day's ..

(silence).

rush of air

when i talk to
my wife about
my family and what
memories flit to the
top of that froth,
i always hold
the fart dear to my
memory path.

sure,
there were christmas times,
good meals,
my father's bottles of J&B,
the local swimming pool
and the plethora of pets
we had over the youth of
my life.

but,
it has always been that
hearty laughter and
solid reverence of
the fart
that has kept our legacy
alive and brimming.

and to this day,
as trite as i know
they can be,
i still let them fly without abandon
and celebrate the laughter
that ensues.

we still have family discussions
about our favorite fart or shit
moments and
it brings us all to
that common family
ground.

and as the stench of
this reality finally
leaves the room
like a good

fart into the void,
remember
that family sanity has
no shame
and the only way you
will ever know anyone is by
that same communication token
no matter
what
hole it
flies out of.

slim pickin's

i
caught
some
modern
day
cowboy
in
a
cadillac
the
other
day
just
picking
his
nose
with
furious
abandon
as
though
some
kid
like
me
might
never
catch
wind
of
it
and
pen
down
a
poem
wondering
what
was
going
through
his
mind
as

he
finally
nailed
that
itch
as
the
ghosts
of
indians
rushed
over
his
car
i
a
small,
mythical
torrent.

sonny downtown

when i
take my
small
son
through
downtown
and talk
about
the buildings
and
avenues
and
where
i used to
walk
and
live
and
exist,
he just
looks
around
in
silence
validating
everything
i
know
as
being
a
father,
mentor
to
this
tiny
bundle
of
suburban
flesh
that
will
hopefully
feel

the
same
as
i
have
one
fine
day.

stuck together

it
was one
of
those
cold, snowy
mornings
full of karmic notions
as we
all drifted
towards
our
day
jobs
and
whimsical
notions
stuck
together
in this
collective
soup
of
now
wondering
if
the
heat will
stay
on forever
and if
there
is
going to
be any joy
in
brooklyn
if
the
dodgers
never
return.

the hardwood guys

have their army of
AM trucks
idling,
dreaming,
smoking,
eating,
thinking
as i look out
over
the
suburbs
and
again
become comforted
by
the notion
that a
group of fellows
that
drive
around in trucks
that
make the women
throttle and the men
smile
as the grand
entourage
of
the
hardwood boys
ready to emrege into
heated cars
and
another
day
of
lying down
the floors
we all
may walk
on
some
day.

'the keep'

i
find
a
handful
of
days
hard to
keep
up
with
others
when
i have
a
hard
time
keeping
up
with
my
own
fucking
self.

the song will never stop

as

it

lances forward

in a torrent

of

keys,

low bass,

odd synths,

echoes of drums,

tiny muffled voices

and

the

reason

to validate

forever

for

each of us

in order for us to make

sense of

why the past

is always

so

far

away

in

its complex

networks

of simplicity

that

will

never,

ever

end no matter

how much

we

may

will

it

to.

tuesday

every day i
i drive
by the TUESDAY SCHOOL
on tuesday's
there
is
never
a
car to
be found
in the
parking lot
which leads
me to believe
each day is a
relaxer
from the school
or
that
the truth
in
the
proverbial
label
never
stands.

what the men get?

if
father's day
was during
the regular
school
year,
what would
all the
kids
make
for
their
old
men?

pipes?

wooden toilets?

plastic hammers?

rubber underwear?

a photo album
to store our lives?

or another
supposed assumption
for the fact
that
us
father's
will
never get
that
little
reward
we smile
about
when
our wives get
their mother's day
gift

all
covered with
pure,
powerful
kid
love.

willie winker

in the
beer
gut uniform
makes the
girls
uncomfortable,
yet
makes the
guys howl with
laughter
as he
self
depreciates
this life
down
to it's lowest
common
moment
of sheer
comic
genius ..
enough
for
us to finally
realize in our
collective
haze of
comfort
that there
is something
more
valuable
in
truly being
oneself
rather
than
acting
the fucking
same,
tired
old
ride.