



AMBER WAVES OF NAUSEA

Poems by David M. Schwartz

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Also by David M. Schwartz:

5/8 of Everything I've Written

"Ho, Ho", said the Platypus and Other Snappy Titles A

Pickle For Bernice

About the author:

David M. Schwartz was born and raised in the St. Louis, Missouri area. He attended Clayton public schools and earned his B.A. in Judaic Studies from the University of Missouri Kansas City. Subsequently, he earned his MSW from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. While he doesn't write poetry or songs as much as he'd like, he still anxiously awaits his muse.

For information on proper pronunciation of any Hebrew transliteration, or to become his patron, write to him at david@davidmschwartz.us .

This small volume is dedicated to my family and friends.

If you are insulted by the content herein, you are either thinking entirely too much or not enough.

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Amber Waves Of Nausea April 28, 2000

Prologue

I have learned to stop writing poetry
And settled into mediocrity, only surfacing to recite pithy thoughts Or
talk aimlessly with myself as if I were another.
But never knowing the future, I owe myself another moment of humor
Ah, sweet self-aggrandizement!
So I impart my manifest as every thirty-three year old should. Had
I made this a long work as I intended, no one would read it.
Still, there sat a title, begging, "Use Me, and be self-published again."

Society

Huh? Whatever happened to values of any kind?
Have I become a prude outside, still sniggering at jokes
Under my breath, alone in my car after leaving work?
Where have the stores, the home towns gone? Where are
the mom and pop stores and parades, That I will not
watch?
Americana of Sandburg and Ginsberg is gone with factories.
Issues to vote on are dead and long buried in bed sheets.
Reasons to go to war or on a good old-fashioned hunger strike are gone.
I know longer trust anyone in public or private office,
And would write in myself if I weren't afraid of being elected.

Culture

Music and art are vanity. All is drivel and Solomon may have been right
about vanity.
I cannot fathom songs or paintings, and Norman Rockwell seems too
complex today.
Even the music I laughed at is too complex now and classical is still an
excuse for a nap.
If I could turn back to days of reading Flannery O'Connor,
stepping into her towns
Or crossing America to write the great novel

I still wouldn't. Too much effort to revise and make every word precious. As if I could here!
Gone is poetry for me, as academics drink chianti and I want cheap beer.
Nor do I crave that degree with tweed and suede elbows any longer.
So do I rail against all I used to love, knowing that giving away my
albums and books does not profit me.

Politics

Trust no one and let no one elect you
And government for the people and against the people will crumble.
Or maybe not, but the advertisements will fade
Like my reason for writing.
Conscience having been my guide has led me
to vote no whenever possible
And against every incumbent regardless of how little money they took. I
beg you! Give me no chicken in my pot, unless it is made of tofu!

Epilogue

Now I've said it, now I'm done.
Having used my title, life is fun.
If I ever write another book.
Amber waves of nausea will overtake me.
If you don't believe me, then don't look.

But I Thought I Should January 13, 2001

Here I am practicing my lines,
Trying to make myself clear.
I fumble even to myself, finger holding down the receiver button,
Not ready for the call.

I'll give this a try, because I thought it might help. I
mean, you know, get things straight.
I debated calling and risk bothering yet another person,
But I thought I should anyway.

"We're not home right now.
Please leave a message."
I don't. I can't. I force myself to press "redial."
A quick fix comes when I say "it's me, just saying hello."

Many come and go, blurring in my tears
And the now gray erased spaces of my address book.
You're individuals, but like one person.
We can say that we knew one another when,
And someday laugh at fate separately.

So it goes for me like many others.
I'm this side of calling a hotline to talk,
yet just far enough from living and dying at the corner bar. I
hold it together.
I didn't have to write and send you these words.
But, I thought I should.

Desolate July 20, 2001

I. Jerusalem

At eighteen, I set off for the homeland I left three thousand years prior. It looked different than what I imagined.

Amidst the trees were green fields and brown.

The heat leapt up to meet me, smack me between the toes in my sandals, and my sun-burnt face.

No matter. I was home for nine months or so I thought.

The very word Jerusalem made me feel small.

The Arch was one thing to stand by, towering over but not collapsing.

The Wall was wider, older, and the cool stone held our secrets, tears and prayers.

I longed for it to take mine, as if I could bring a bullock or ram for offering.

There I was climbing a winding road in a bus, trusting I would not fall off the cliff.

I was held on by G-d, pulling me back to Jerusalem as if by tractor beam or by embrace.

How I marveled at the tanks left as if to tell me, personally "Child, never forget this land, this people."

How, I marveled at the sculpted shrubs saying, "Bruchim Haba-eem- Welcome!"

I had never seen sculpted Hebrew shrubs, as I climbed by bus toward my city.

How I dreamt of entering, as if on donkey, with gates opening before me. Instead, I walked several times in sneakers or sandals to sit by the Wall.

II. The Wall

What was I to do or feel? I looked around with my garland of sweat, My Wayfarers protecting my eyes from heat and blinding presence. I did not stare anywhere, nor did I behold the Holy of Holies. I scribbled several prayers several times when I was there. Many fell out of the cracks.

Perhaps others' pleas took precedence, or perhaps the birds ate them and ascended.

I tried to speak that first time there. What's to say?

"G-d, You know the words. You figure it out.

I'll just think and make do with that."

Perhaps I learned to shut my mouth for once, as if I could observe sages moving

Or figure out what I how I should act. It's hard not to cry or to make

myself cry at this remnant,
Harder still were the stones stacked for all time.

What's to say to the vines between the rocks, the weeds,
as if rungs to grab upward.
Could I even scale the Wall if given the chance?
Could G-d lift my words or screams upward, relieving me,
as if of my first fruits or wood?
What's to explain, even now, except maybe on fast days? I
have not been back, despite pleas for me to study.
It's harder to leave again.
Perhaps one day, or year. Perhaps I will send a prayer or a check.

How I miss not knowing what I missed in all the splendor of The Temples.
Even tears are easy to the eyes, easier than sacrifice and dedication.
Confession is easy for me,
though I probably have never said all that much.
How I have turned away, but I try to turn back, stumbling three steps
toward Jerusalem every morning that I pray.

II. St. Louis

How the city is desolate, the weeds growing as if they had been planted
at creation.
See how they crawl out of cracks like in the Wall.
See how they break up the ground.
There is no WPA to harvest them, no one to bundle them.
See how I face east on the train, as if I will ascend the holy mountain.
Instead, I descend further into St. Louis, though I worship no saints.

Look at the broken bridges, abandoned silo and gutted buildings.
What price progress for the home of traders and missionaries, This
gateway away from Jerusalem?
How the people leave the city,
forced in flocks for a better home in Babylon disguised as suburbia.

I have joined them westward, though there was always room
in the City of Gold.
There is no room for me here that can contain my pride or my spending.
St. Louis and Jerusalem are both far from my home.

I have been taking the train to work, trying to recall the hipness,
These feelings of youth and false knowing, all slipping eastward. I
ride on mechanical wagon, not donkey.
I have nothing to bring to these empty buildings, like my name-sake David
brought oxen.

III. Riding

I wait at the Wabash station, once part of the city's glory.
Now it is broken, stone cracking, cameras and ticket machines
Brought it back to artificial life.
No one dresses up like they might have before the War,

When train travel met something.
People rush for nothing missing trains like I do, to wait in silence amidst
noise.

They head into the city, as if into Jerusalem on market days,
But I see no wares to exchange.
The train rocks me half to sleep, I stand up so stay awake
Not missing my stop. There is nothing I miss on this train.

Look how the city is barren, waiting to be rebuilt. This is
no place for children, instead it eats its own. Look how
the people are glum, hot, just getting through But not
getting anywhere. I am among them.

I go and return each day, descending then arising to go home.
In Israel it is the opposite and my ears pop as I go up.
Here, I simply sweat lamenting all that could have been mine long ago.
What is there to say for either city? How can I explain my fasts Or
diminished joy, with hopes of rebuilding the third Temple?

I feared writing now, like I feared going to Israel.
What could I possibly offer but my words,
Not knowing if they are good enough. For whom?

For Friends July 27, 2001

Like clouds moving in, and the sun going out,
Like the winds blowing, so have been my days.
I've thought about this a long time, how I've felt betrayed.
I can't show, but only tell and count the many times I've prayed.

Like the rains on my window, and beating down the flowers,
Like the hail on the street, have been the troubles in my head. I
know that everyone's moving on, that they have to grow. While
I'm standing, hoping not to drown in my fears.

Many have come and gone, many more I will meet.
The faces circling before my fevered brow have never been as sweet.
Can anybody regret their time, knowing it may pass?
Even though the air's closing in, and this rain's pouring down.
How can I even say goodbye, measuring joy and pain?

As I write, I look for work, and hope to find friendly faces.
I hope to get a clue and pay debts of heart and cash.
As I think about you and my past poetry, all these words seem a waste.
Just like Ecclesiastes, everything's so vain
From tears running down my nose to the way I watch for rain.
We say our goodbyes nearly from the womb, we say them all too soon.
I've got no need to force my pen to excise all this gloom.

Maybe one day, you'll be on street.
You might see some bearded guy who looks like me.
You might wonder what became of me,
Likewise I the same for you.
We have no reason to fear growing up, or growing apart.
Just the same, I must confess how I feel so alone.

Gypsy Davy Revisited October 26, 2001

O-O-O-H!

When the zits are poppin'
And the figs are droppin'
And the flies are ooizin' from the gravy
You will know that I've returned Called
by the name of Gypsy Davy.

Well, it started many years ago, when I was but a lad. Ladies
took a shine to me, which drove their husbands mad.
They sought me out for house-work, they promised to pay me well
The husbands might come around
and see the likes of me shoveling dirt into a cart.
The wives would be upset as their husbands fired me,
But if they pleaded and bat their eyes, I'd get a half hour start from town.

On the roads I traveled and slowly made some friends,
We were only having fun, never meant to harm.
I don't know what people wanted from us,
though we were willing to work the farms.
My name became quite famous, and they nicknamed me Blackjack too.
All I sought was a place to sleep and maybe a bowl of stew.

Then it had to happen, my luck it had to change,
A lady spied me passing by, and tired of her life.
Well, she put off her dainty clothes, she put off her gloves.
She told me she had many loves, but she tired of being a rich wife. I
begged her to think things out, telling her not to leave her man. She
said she craved adventure, but would return for her baby Dan.

I told her she wouldn't like working here and there, She wouldn't like the weather.

How she wanted to escape drudgery, even if she gave up beds of feather. I
told her she should not divorce, nor leave her finery. She told me she
wanted to roam, and sing with Gypsy Davy.

After we were out of town, staying in the field.
Her husband came after us, her to take and me to kill.
I told him that I took his side and told her not to come.
She told him she went of her own free will, then he called me a bum.
He asked her to return with him to their cozy home.
She told him I don't need those things so on and on I'll roam.

She didn't bother kissing him, she didn't say too much.
He asked her why she wanted to go, and why she was thinking such. It
wasn't that he was mean, it wasn't that he was cheap. But rather his
life was so bland, so predictable unlike mine.

I told her how she was wrong, but she said I was much more deep.

Now we've been traveling for some time, she tired of me for another.
She found a very rich boy, whom she decided needed a mother. Me,
I've got no trust fund, and can't speak of any heirs.
And the mystery of my life, is why all these ladies care.
I am not really handsome, nor am I a generous giver.
But the ladies seem to like my guitar, as they sit under the stars and shiver.

I Saw A Woman Die Today Revised July 24, 1997

I was working at a hospital when staff started rushing around.

Orders came through intercoms and the crash cart was pushed to the door.
There was much confusion until the doctor called me to the room. "Be with
this woman and wait for her family.
She coded and will soon be gone."

I waited until they dressed her better and took away machines.
They cleared tubes and gear away, and packed up her things.

What will they say of us among strangers?

I found her still struggling.
She moved her lips and raised her chest slightly.
She seemed to sleep with fretted brow, waiting to say goodbye.

Her daughters were called and on their way, while
the nurse said "She's taking her last breath." I asked
if she could hear me, then I whispered "Go easy. Go
easy and peacefully on your way."

What will they say of us among strangers?

I touched her arm and stepped back.
The doctor checked her eyes.
I could not help but wonder what went through her mind.
What could she tell us if she could?

I saw a woman die today, and it was like TV. but more peaceful.
The family and staff agreed to let her go.

What will they say of us among strangers?

My Chanukah Song December 8, 1997

Kislev time is here again, on the 25th we'll remember when, brave Maccabees took up the fight,
They defeated Antiochus' might.

We remember how Judah stood tall, and
his brethren were prepared to fall.
Rather than be like their enemy,
They fought for the right to worship freely.

After fighting off the Assyrian Greeks,
they rededicated the Temple and relit the lamps.
Their oil lasted a whole week and they celebrated throughout their camps.

Though this tune may seem long and trite,
we'll still light candles each of eight nights.
We spin dreidels because a great miracle happened there.
May we always remember and always care.

So there's my Chanukah song in a few minutes flat. If
you have any questions you can try to find me. and
you can tell me this song was the bomb. I may not
answer cause I'll be eating fried foods, clogging my
arteries as a festive dude.

Nobody November 29, 1994

Nobody can crush my heroes. Nobody can wreck my dreams.

Nobody can knock my idols down. Nobody can make me scream.

I've loved some people for many years;
I've known some from just one day.
but I lost them living my own life, cookie-cutting them into my mind. I
didn't completely use them, they could've turned away.
I took them into my own head walking on my own.
How come I see nobody around?

Maybe it was the wind and maybe it was the scene.
We were drinking coffee on the street when you looked at me.
You stared right past my hair line to the place I often hide.
What did you see there that I haven't felt?
Nobody can crush my heroes. Nobody can wreck my dreams.
Nobody can knock my idols down. Nobody can make me scream.

I've often felt I was a rock with others chipping me down. I'd
be lonely sometimes than risk losing all I know, what I
created out of relations.
My dreams are like stone towers, and I'll never let you go.
There's days I feel invincible, but mostly I just cry.

Nobody can crush my heroes. Nobody can wreck my dreams.
Nobody can knock my idols down. Nobody can make me scream.

Places January 11, 2001

There are places I've been where the sun shines and still I feel so cold.
All alone, I've wandered, thinking I sought something
though I never knew what it could be.

You first came to town for school.
You were young, yet wiser than me.
Thanks for bringing your smile and ideas for accidental poetry.

We all worked for a while, sharing coffee and some dreams.
But now the job is gone, and it's time to move on
To places of which I've only dreamed.
It's not the same, having to find a place to toil,
and I'm changing all my money-making schemes.
They aren't the same when you and your mate aren't around.

People move around, maybe move together.
Me I'm used to my island, and this suburban space. I
don't have the wanderlust but I seem to be gliding
somewhere further back in my head.

Thank you for calling me for coffee,
for coming around at the right time.
I wish there were something more to say,
not that I must apologize for not writing more,
or contradict my feelings.

There are places I've been,
Some dark and some bright.
I don't know where I'm going
But I'm glad for this dream.

Poem For Gram Parsons July 14, 1997 (Inspired
in equal part by Townes Van Zandt)

Do you feel you've got nowhere to go or
maybe there's nowhere worth going? Do
you lack the ticket for plane or track
or are you scared maybe you won't come back?

I know...I've been there before
after being lost in Waco and pulling into Effingham at dawn.
The coffee ate my belly and I called collect to say
I should have already been gone.

There's no adventure on the innerbelt.
It never leads me across water or field.
So much chains me here and no place can help me not to feel.
I've traded my dreams and wasted years
and even if I kept crying, would you dry my tears?

I don't know... I'm watching a screen.
Am I hoping for a lover or just someone to reach me?
I'm tired and lazy to go out looking,
so the web grows gauzy before my swelling eyes.

Are you trading your dreams for the rent?
Did you bury them by the photos or in the closet
behind the tent you always meant to use?
The guitar is growing dusty and my voice has gotten husky
so excuse me now, I think I'd better play if I still can.

Do you feel you've got nowhere to go or
maybe there's nowhere worth going? Do
you lack the ticket for plane or track
or are you scared maybe you won't come back?

It's hard to keep the singer from the song, and I listen to help me carry on.

Every time I go driving just to soothe my soul.
If I had you with me, one day home we'd surely roll. If
I had you with me, one day home we'd surely roll.

Poppy Seed Galaxy July 19, 1996

This song's not about opiates, but I've been bored of late.
My brother homeward bagels bought
and I chose two I ought to eat for dinner.

I munched and looked at the table
and noticed the seeds were shed.
They inspired me to write this song if I were able.

There was a poppy seed galaxy and I saw shapes.
I'm not talking Leo, Virgo or even apes. I saw
guitar chords, I give my word!

I stared at them as I ate, wondering why I nary get a date.
They weren't in the sky but lying there. If they were stars
would they look down at me and care?

If they had mouths what would they say?
Would they suck up cream cheese? If I
think of them am I okay?
Someone give me a real job please!

There was a poppy seed galaxy and I saw shapes.
I'm not talking Leo, Virgo or even apes.
I saw guitar chords, I give my word!
If they were stars would they look down at me and care?

Returning February 18, 1998

You don't know me though you're family.
You can't see the changes taking place in me.
You only seem to want to fight and put me down,
but even you will strengthen me and you'll be surprised
how things will turn around.

I don't hope for much at home anymore. Hope
comes from deep inside from up above.
Though you won't change as I have done, don't
worry cause I still feel love for you.

I am no freak no saint no charlatan but I've been freed.
It feels good to write these words, cause they seemed lost to me. I
am no more alone or solitary than in another room praying, and
you think I am leaving and I can't scream loud enough that I have
not quit anything so who am I betraying?

I just lay it on the line, risking friends through honesty. I
might as well, nothing else can go wrong.
You can only insult me for so long but I have turned safe inside.
Holy books have helped me and my tears have dried,
and I am back where I should be.

I have looked inward and out
and I am finding new parts of me.
If you just open yourself, maybe you won't be hard of heart
and we won't run the other way, we won't pout in rejection. I
turn my heart to you as I find more of me,
but can you do the same? Won't you try?

Ritual (Dogma Part II) March 28, 1995

Did you see me at that open mike?
I spoke like a Bar-Mitzvah boy.
I was called up to deliver my song or poetry sermon,
maybe proselytize about lost unhad love.

Then I left the crowd unsure whether to clap
and forget this chosen honor spot if I can.

I'm like that kid before the crowd,
on some stage urping up my soul.
Maybe it just looks better in front of others.
Me, I don't know.

Performance is like another prayer to my ego god,
and I practice, edit, and never get it right.

Waiting to perform is like sitting in synagogue.
Quiet is measured against the sound of my mind
racing to get through the service as if I had somewhere to be.
Let-down can be counted on the next time too.

I pray my secular gig hoping for salvation
in the right set of arms.

Secret Farewell December 12, 1996 I

remember the last time I saw you.

I can't shake your face from my eyes. May

I be forgiven for how I treated you and

kept from more kind hearted lies.

When you kept calling, I heard messages left behind. I

remembered my own desperation long before. On a

spectrum, I'm slightly more refined,

so your calls made me wish, I never crossed your door.

Honey you were always nice, but you missed the bus. I

may be a maggot but you're hauling lice and you were

never worth the fuss.

When I look at the mirror, I remember where we've been. I

become both angry and sad.

We're alike in our foibles and intolerance is my sin,

but if I kept you around we'd both have felt bad.

I wish I had the smarts to cut off your matted hair

and I wished I chained you to an exercise bike.

Now I don't have the courage to call with feelings laid bare

cause there's not much in either of us I like.

How can I get you to wish we never met?

You increased my dating frustration.

Don't you know I'm forever in your debt

because my best songs come from self-detestation?

Honey you were always nice, but you missed the bus. I

may be a maggot but you're hauling lice and you were

never worth the fuss.

Shocked July 2, 2000

Surprising, isn't it?

Neither of us thought I still had it in me to write, much less feel.

But there I was nearly in tears, holding back at work. I hold back

almost all the time, except in short frenzied spurts Of uncontrolled

crying, screaming, writhing then I feel better.

Sometimes I am surprised as I look around my room

And I realize that I really have no desire to shove needle or knife

Into my bicep or butt my forehead into a wall.

After all, endorphins feed endorphin rushes and we get ours where we can.

I have these dark feelings that the meds have not taken away Like

watching myself from afar encircled in a blue ball because I was

struck by lightning in the middle of a river,

Or being pinned against a wall, while people watch the birds peck.

I'm shocked as the next person that I am not capable Of
shutting off my brain, despite prayers and chanting
Or wondering if I would end-up any more scrambled from ECT.
This isn't my best confession, but thanks for listening.

So You Think You're A FolkSinger May 17, 1996

You picked up guitar at 14 and made yourself scraggly)2x
You haven't changed much but to get a C harp.
I tell you that you're in some kind of warp.

Where have you been and where are you headed?)2x
You don't have the guts for New York or Frisco.
Isn't Top 40 the kind of music you claim to have dreaded?

You don't have much to protest, you're so bourgeoisie)2x
You'll make less than others but don't have it hard.
Your causes died inside you and your beard's looking greasy.

Tell me, o tell me do you think yourself a hero ?)2x
Then why'd you stop playing open mikes, and switch
to non-alky beer-o?

You have finger style tapes, but have no Woody Guthrie.)2x
You've never been to Hibbing, much less the Grand Ole Opry.

You don't know love but want to ring some gal's finger)2x
You could be out looking but you're writing this song.
Enlighten us please, so you think you're a folk-singer?

Someone To Sing My Song June 14, 1996

I've been getting lonely from searching so long.)2x
I've been writing and playing guitar,
but need someone to sing my song.

I want to meet a soul who can share my tune.)2x
Must I die looking for her? I hope to meet a partner
soon.

I've got the words, but need a pretty voice.)2x
How I'd like to get close to its owner but I'm
about as likely to win a Rolls-Royce.

I've hoped and prayed to find my partner true.)2x
I could sing in my flat voice all night long but could use some joy.
How about you?

I could use some cash, but need my dream to come real)2x
Nobody gets stronger being crushed and I wonder who
knows how I feel.

I could use some help so life won't go so wrong.)2x
Maybe I need a want-ad or maybe a clue. But I need
someone to sing my song.

I've been getting lonely from searching so long.)2x
I've been writing and playing guitar, but need
someone to sing my song.

Sweet Bitterness August 13, 1997

I swear I've been leeches so many times
from the inside out I can't seem to dry and heal.
What goes in must surely get out like my words. I
need to get them out of me.

Oh sweet bitterness, inspiring my every turn.
I'd like to let loose this pain, but what would be left to feel?
Oh sweet bitterness, helping me to open my heart here. I
know I'm alive by what I feel.

Sometimes I lose all track of what I want to share.
Usually there's no audience anyway.
I can invite them into my private screening room,
but there's only room in my head for me.

If I asked you what word I remind you of
would lamenting be a choice?
Can you tell I'm a little boy lost
or will you bother to find out what 's going on?

Oh sweet bitterness, inspiring my every turn.
I'd like to let loose this pain, but what would be left to feel?
Oh sweet bitterness, helping me to open my heart here. I
know I'm alive by what I feel.

I've worn this ragged feeling for as long as I can
trying to shake it off and start again.
They all turn away, so I hang my head on my chest.
I sit on the ground not speaking not even wondering why.
How can I stay in this barren place? How can I handle this decay?
Will any one hear or read my voice in what I've written?

I tell no lies but then I tell no stories.
True my words weave pictures no more.
No more do I wish to prophesy as if any would care to turn away.
You said I am fragile, but I've learned to bounce without breaking
and yet I'm too brittle to keep on this way.

If I had somewhere to go then I'd return.
No answers and moorings so I'm moving on.
You don't see where I've been each day,
traveling in circles, and no one rides along.
My course is not righted or wrong.
Even with yesterdays to live in, nowhere I want to run.

Oh sweet bitterness, inspiring my every turn.
I'd like to let loose this pain, but what would be left to feel?
Oh sweet bitterness, helping me to open my heart here. I
know I'm alive by what I feel.

That Song To A Possum June 28, 1996

I was driving home late, wondering if I'd be up at six. I
came around the bend, and you nearly met your end.

Hey Possum! Are you a he or she? How can I talk respectfully? I
don't want to see you curled staring down my lights. I don't want
to find you on my tires. What a sight !

Why don't you go home, back to your bed?
Your family's asleep like mine I'll bet.
We're both out running, no reason at all.
But people have their cars and could run you down dead.

I've heard people hunt and eat your kind.
You'll get know trouble from me just move on please. I
worry about you, like I do my mind.

I'm gonna keep driving so good luck. I
hope you have a safe life.
Don't stay there or you'll be splattered
and scraped off metal with a knife.

I'm gonna keep driving so good luck.
I hope we both find a sweet wife.
I hope our dreams won't be shattered,
and we'll build our own homes without strife.

Hey Possum! Are you a he or she? How can I talk respectfully? I
don't want to see you curled staring down my lights. I don't want
to find you on my tires. What a sight !

The Ear Wax Anthem November 11, 1994

Ear wax seeping down your nose.

It gets darker on your clothes.

You can't stop it so why not try to use it in many ways?

Ear wax, ear wax, sticky, lumpy ear wax.

Mold it, flake it, fold it or rake it.

You can use it for sculpture or furniture polish,

stick notes to it or other things if you wish.

If you are sly, like a fox, put it in your neighbor's mail box.

Some people really hate it, but I say cult-iv-ate all that golden brown stuff.

It's so smooth and rarely rough.

When life gets stressful, relax and think about your ear wax.

Ear wax seeping down your nose. It

gets darker on your clothes.

You can't stop it so why not try to use it in many ways?

Ear wax, ear wax, sticky, lumpy ear wax.

Mold it, flake it, fold it or rake it.

You can use it for sculpture or furniture polish,

stick notes to it or other things if you wish.

If you are sly, like a fox, put it in your neighbor's mail box.

Some people really hate it, but I say cult-iv-ate all that golden brown stuff.

It's so smooth and rarely rough.

When life gets stressful, relax and think about your ear wax.

Don't you love your ear wax?

The Jumper August 14, 2001

I. The Jumper

Today's the day it's going to happen. I will finally get my rest
and to hell with all their promises.

To hell with the firm, and with Robert.

He couldn't even let me finish out next week
when I'd have the house paid.

No, he said I should think about moving on. That's rich.

He's not moving, because he's staying and Toni down in Clerical
said he just got a raise.

To hell with Constance and the kids.

They never even cared for a minute as I sweated for them. I
gave them their bikes, braces, got Bill his first Mazda. Even
Constance's mother told her she should let up.

She told me that I would probably be late to my own funeral,
stuck at the office. But she always wanted more, so I worked more.

I'm giving them nothing, not even a goodbye.

They haven't had many words for me,
much less kind ones for seven months.

Why should I even leave a note, much less a video?

To hell with them, and to hell with the Metro, which made me late
to this pit of a town and of a life and of a job.

They will all see, and the best part-

I don't need their stinking monthly pass.

I can't wait for that train. Maybe I can even de-rail it.

Somebody will finally take notice, when they can't get home to their wife
after working all night, or they lose that all important deal.

If I can jump at the right angle, I will be pushed straight ahead.

Then I will go up and under on my back.

That's okay, because I always hated this suit,
but I wore it because of Constance.

The family won't know what hit them
because I got rid of all my credit cards, my license, my insurance.

I've watched those films of car crashes and I think my body may be pretty
much intact despite the severe injuries and blood loss.

But I will finally have sweet sleep.

II. The Conductor

Why me? I've been on the job three months.

Couldn't I just have a robbery like in the old days? I
didn't do it. I'll- I'll summon witnesses.

How was I supposed to see him coming?

Everybody knows that I can't stop on a dime. I
was slowing anyway.

Couldn't he have just od'd or stepped in front of a car?

No, he had to do it on my shift. I've got my quota, my time-table.

For every pack of school kids, or people from a home, it slows me down.

Now this. I didn't even know the poor guy.
I'm not going to seek out his family or anything.
Maybe our office will release a press statement.
Just leave my name out of it.
I'm no murderer like those bus drivers or over the road people,
with the elderly people who dart in front of them.

It took me two months to find this job, and I enjoyed that check.
Susie could finally go back to the doctor with my family benefits.
Now this. I will probably be suspended.
Maybe I can stay in my seat as long as possible.
Maybe I won't have to move the train forward a little for all to see
whatever is left of that jumper.

I feel sorry for these people on my shift. They didn't know,
and this baby strapped on her mother is cute,
but if she screams one more time-
I almost want to join that guy down there with the migraine I'm getting.
But that's his deal, not mine.

III. The Business Man

"Look, Tom. I know. I'm trying to get in as quick as I can. I
have two more stops and I am in this tunnel.
No, I don't see anything. I don't know why they stopped.

No, I shouldn't have driven.
You know that I hate taking the car down here
and they aren't going to transfer me to the other office.
So, what should I say? I'm sorry that I didn't make it in with the bagels? I
know the shop is right there, but I can't even get there yet.

See here, Tom. I know we need this contract.
It's a good twenty minutes walk and maybe this jam will clear up
and I can be there in fifteen.
They have the bagel order ready. What, you can't pick it up?

Hold on. They're giving people the choice of getting off or waiting.
What? Something about a jumper and calling the coroner.
I do see people looking concerned, staring under the train.
Maybe it's something under me. A lady is pointing, screaming.
Tom, something is screwed up, now they want everybody off the train."

III. The Nurse

What I wouldn't do for a cigarette. Why did I quit anyway?
I worked all night, and at least I missed the poor sap coming into Trauma. I
don't want to talk to the cops, but I did see him jump.

Yes, Officer. No, I couldn't stop him or grab his arm.
I know I'm not on trial, and I do feel bad.
These things happen, I guess. I was watching the lady over there hold
her kid back from the edge and I am glad they gave up waiting.

For a kid to watch all this. That I wouldn't wish on anybody.

Look, I am just a graveyard shift nurse.

No, I'm in cardiology, not psych.

Sure, I am down here almost everyday waiting for this train.

You don't really get to talk to people, if you know what I'm saying.

It's not like the local diner.

Can I go now? I mean, I got off work an hour ago.

Are we done here? I don't see why you should need to call.

It's a random thing. It's not like you can't file your report.

I've seen a lot of blood.

It's dark down here near the tracks, but he just looks bruised.

Then there's his head. No, I am not going to see if he is breathing or not.

Just let him be.

Unspoken June 26, 2000

Dear, it's better I don't use your name
It'd be better I don't stick around.
But I don't have the money or the will to save face.
Even if you spat in my face, I could not break away.

Wait. You won't find me outside your trash
Or behind the next car over.
You won't find me sending letters or chocolates
So don't worry about changing where you go.

I didn't think I had these words in me
Or that the tears could still flow.
Maybe you were just standing by
When I popped like a volcano
And this chaos came pouring out.
You are the lucky winner of the torrent of these words.
Run before the lava covers your pretty head.

Dear, I can't face you anymore.
I looked for your substitute in the paper,
On my computer, on the street.
There was none to take me in,
Or hold me close to her breast.

How you can't see me cry,
But then I won't let you
Because my thoughts are wrong
And forbidden. And you are with another who deserves you.
And I can't get close just the same.
I have a pillow. It doesn't talk or complain when I sob.

Wait. You won't find me chasing you.
I only can watch and hope you deign to speak. I am
a man. I can't help fearing this fascination, Knowing
that your kind words, or being held Would make my
bones ache for your fix, your lips.

Of every book I've read or prayer I've said,
Nothing could prepare me for this.
Why have I been left alone, to fail a test I never wanted?
I can't bring myself to treat you differently,
Or block you out. How I wish I had another.

There will be none to take me in,
Or hold me close to her breast I fear.
My head is popping with these hot words
Like that volcano. Run while you can.

Warning August 14, 2001

I know people. These people know things.
These people know things about you,
though you don't know what they know.
You don't know them either.

I'm telling you that the people I know
not only know things,
but they know other people.
Those people could do things that
Well, just know that I know people.