



## SCENES

Kids rule the sidewalks.

A hopscotch board and broken chalk  
are scattered over walkway squares.

Names of boys and girls in love  
are written inside of pastel hearts,  
scribbled on dry cement.

Drawn with no regard  
for the practical weights  
which tend to impede people  
from experiencing some of life's best scenes.

You're looking fine in those blue jeans  
purchased with your money  
left over from paying rent.

I'm wearing my old corduroys  
and a faded denim jacket.

My rent is late.

You know,  
I love that you own *Graceland*  
and bought it for the album as a whole.  
Not just *You Can Call Me Al*  
or *Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes*.

I am sure  
you would not be opposed  
to falling asleep tonight  
outside on Upper Broadway.

You've always preferred  
living as a cartoon on Saturdays.

Let's have ourselves a night  
just like in the movies.  
You can play the heroine  
and I will play the junkie.

Cue the plot line,  
cast and crew  
and pray the writers  
don't go on strike.

It's a tiny little bookstore  
with a bar buried behind  
stacks of ancient literature.

It's a place  
not many people know of.  
At night the stereo spins  
on regular rotation  
Michael Jackson,  
Aerosmith, Queen  
and Journey.

In between  
belting out familiar verses  
happy customers  
order "one more" drink  
from the bar.

When they've had their fill  
they kindly ask the bartender  
for a token in order to access  
the bathrooms.

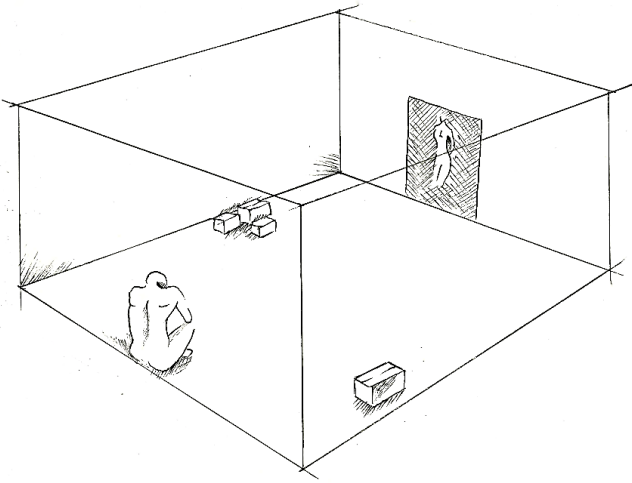
Let's have ourselves a night  
just like in the movies.  
You can play the heroine  
and I will play the junkie.

Cue the plot line,  
cast and crew  
and pray the writers  
don't go on strike.

Although we both agree  
they are underpaid for their trade  
protests regarding pay raises can wait.

I hope the paint  
hasn't dried on their picket signs.  
I hope they've saved  
some of their best lines for tonight  
on crumpled paper  
hidden in pockets  
ready to now  
see the light.





## **BUNKER**

We're all trying to find a safe place.  
A bunker that feels like home.  
I'm happy sharing my space.  
I am sure I have enough for you.

We're all just wasting time in the same place.  
Might as well save on bills.  
I'm happy sharing my space.  
I am sure I have enough for you.

I will try not to purchase unnecessary belongings.  
I will keep my odd possessions tucked in boxes  
so the hardwood floors and dresser drawers  
are yours to do with however you like.

We're all trying to create a safe place.  
A bunker that feels like home.  
I'm happy sharing my space.  
I am sure I have enough for you.

We're all just wasting time in the same place.  
There are empty rooms under this roof.  
I'm happy sharing my space.  
I am sure I have enough for you.







## PATHS

I've got to find something celebrated far and wide  
which pays no attention to the ties that bind.  
I've got thoughts of revolution  
on my mind, my dear.

I pray they don't slow.

Still, every single morning  
is like a newborn's tear.  
The only way in which it's quiet  
is if you plug your ears.  
You're free to try and admire  
the beauty alone  
but can you tell fear from beauty  
when they're living as one?

She says,  
"How we gonna raise a child in a world like this?  
It's not the world we knew, the one we grew up in."

Maybe new hope is all we need,  
another generation to solve our mistakes.

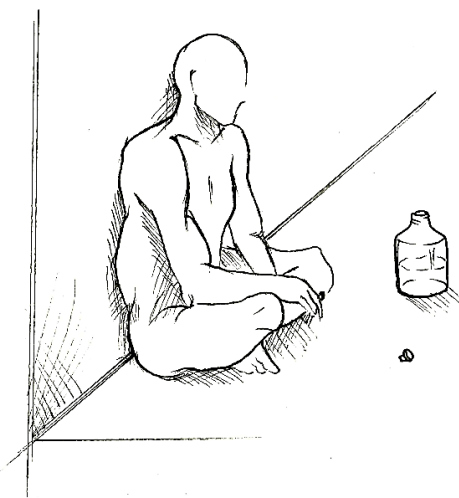
Maybe we'll change or stay the same,  
find ways to justify our prolonged existence.

I am not sure  
how we'll raise a child well in this world.

Today,  
I guess we've got to find a way to improve it.

She says,  
"You're right.  
I guess we've got to improve it."





## WARM GIN & BOBBY PINS

The warm gin and bobby pins  
you left here last night  
got me thinking  
when am I wrong?  
Oh and when am I right?

I take a sip,  
toss the top on the floor  
and leave the bottle open  
because I know I'll want more  
in a minute or two.

Maybe now will do  
to drink far away whatever it is  
that's got me drinking.

Like when the fires creep over the ridge,  
sometimes I think Hell is  
just a place we fool ourselves  
into believing,

"This is Heaven."

Metal curves  
in your U-shaped bobby pins,  
without a prick my fingertips  
straighten the bends  
but there are no answers,  
only cancers  
in my line of questioning.

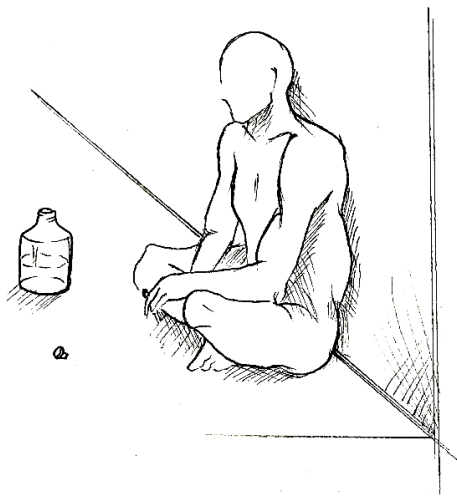
Like when the fires creep over the ridge  
sometimes I think Hell is  
just a place we fool ourselves  
into believing,

"This is Heaven."

We were running through waving fields  
distracted with no thought of an end  
then the flames and smoke  
suddenly engulfed the land.

Burnt again.

Sometimes I think Hell is  
just a place we fool ourselves  
into believing,  
“This is Heaven.”



## SOMEWHERE DOWN THE LINE

In a Winnebago  
crossing county lines  
The Beach Boys plea to her,  
“Don’t worry baby,  
everything will turn out alright.”  
She rolls her eyes.

The Boys’ advice doesn’t seem like  
much of a consolation prize.  
She’s seen these roads before  
with the very same eyes.  
Shot through a Lincoln tunnel,  
hallucinating angels in the rear-view,  
law enforcement dragged her from  
flattened cornfields  
back when she was fifteen  
and cocaine patched the Kansas skies.

Somewhere down the line  
she used to think everything  
would be alright.

The radio reminds her now.  
All the table-side stouts  
never were enough to drown feelings  
she didn’t want to get to feeling.

As far as she knows people come and go.  
You meet one Sunday.  
Saturday no-shows.

What makes Tuesday different?

The April windstorms,  
true to their forms,  
take more than they give in return.

Somewhere down the line  
she used to think everything  
would be alright.

The radio reminds her now.  
All the table-side stouts  
never were enough to drown feelings  
she didn't want to get to feeling.

Years later now  
she's bursting through the ceiling  
of this Winnebago.

Her mind's been sent freewheeling.

Retracing dealings  
made with The Devil, gone wrong.

Harmonies in the song lift her  
to places she's hesitated to go.

Somewhere down the line  
she used to think everything  
would be alright.

The radio reminds her now.

She turns The Boys loud.

Silences demons.

Shuts them in their coffins.

Praying time once again softens blows.



## BACK ROADS

It's a shame,  
we used to be good friends  
barreling down Birdfoot  
where Erfus bends  
smoking the green,  
picking through the  
seeds and stems.

Won't be like that again.

On those days  
we were stalling for plans.  
Horses in the barn.  
Icy bridges.

Lining up the "where"  
with an evasive "when."

Won't be like that again.

Because there's been years  
of attention grabbing heartache.  
Thievery in love's take  
of what she started.  
Schedule's full.

Friends get lost in the shuffle.

Families grow.  
There's no longer open car seats  
for rides through the woods  
alongside tattooed jailbirds  
packing the pipe with local musicians.

Oblivious  
has become obligation.

On back roads  
those days burnt different.

Won't be like that again.



## THEY'RE THE WIND

They're the wind.

We're the ones walking against it.

They try to break us,  
blow us backwards,  
bend us any which way,  
keep us in a state where  
we're always searching  
for ground to touch  
with our feet.

They're the wind.

We're the ones walking against it.

Genetically programmed liars  
have a way with words.  
They take what's mine and yours.  
Claim it was always theirs  
until we're left with nothing.

Ain't that something?

Still, we keep on walking.

One day we will be the wind.

They will be the ones  
trying to avoid our gusts.

One day we will be the wind.

## PAYDAY

If you were guaranteed  
a payday at the end of this line  
would that change the way your heyday  
caved to needles in the night?

Guess you're gonna have to face it  
you don't get second tries  
when you're six feet under  
on the other side.

Get a boy a car he'll race it  
no matter the style.  
Hills will wind  
and leave no space for  
even the slightest error.

Guess you're gonna have to face it  
we were not meant to fly  
in boxes without wings  
in the summer sky.

Can't bring back the ones  
who've left their shells here.

No spells to cast  
that'll make their souls appear.

Can try and salvage lost ships they steered.

We crash, leave in scraps or dock clear.

There are a million ways  
life could have played  
but this is the one  
we're awake for.

## THE ALPHABET

Lost so many people I won't forget.  
Got a name for each letter of the alphabet.  
Say hello when I rise from bed.  
Don't know if they're watching somewhere.

Not a god or man can reject  
it was horrendous means in which they left.  
Cancers churned.  
Planes crashed and burned.  
Heads were taken in violent car wrecks.

Lost so many people I won't forget.  
Few eased off into the sunset,  
faded old like they'd hoped they'd go.  
Life isn't long as we're sold.

Lost so many people I won't forget.  
Got a name for each letter of the alphabet.

Hold them close.  
This lets me know  
if there's no Heaven  
we can still live after death.

About this I won't fret.

Lost so many people I won't forget.  
Got a name for each letter of the alphabet.  
Say goodnight when I fall to bed.  
Don't know if they're watching somewhere.

## OPEN SECRET

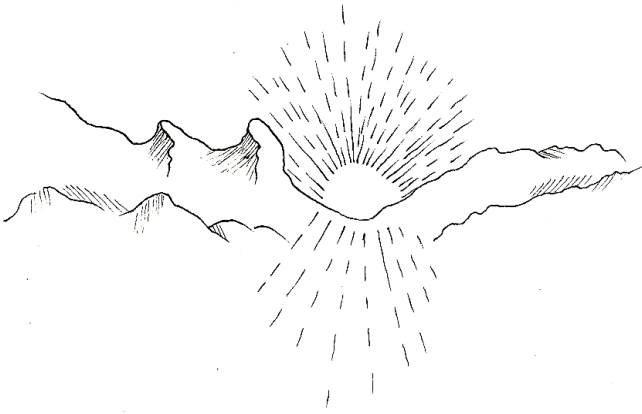
I'm retreating to a bag of stems she left.  
She's gone with her bags of make-up packed.  
Clearing channels of the funny programs.  
Sinking slowly like a feather floating free in the wind.  
I don't know if I should take a pin  
and stick it in the tail of this moment,  
call it the end.

There are things I cannot resist  
like dialogue in Turner Classics.  
I lay and listen to the voice inflections,  
search for hints of what I could have said  
to make her stay.

I'll tell you an open secret  
if you've got the nerve not to keep it closed.  
I still love her.

On the counter are pictures of the past.  
Can't bring myself to box them in the attic.  
She's wearing winter in a wood-framed photograph  
displaying signs of a simple happiness  
we used to know.

Think I'll send handwritten letters.  
Hope they reach her on the edges of the West Coast.  
I'll tell you an open secret  
if you've got the nerve not to keep it closed.  
I still love her.



## ON THE ROCKIES

The road before mine is bent.  
It reminds me I didn't break.  
The big yellow ball blasts a hole  
through the core of the mountains.

It's tough to decipher  
whether it's a natural trick of the eye  
or the sun is crafting a canyon.

Suzanne says something  
that strikes a chord in me.

She says,  
"Time and place are important parts of the equation.  
We tend to disregard their arrangement."

It's tough to decipher.  
Wondering if there will ever be a time and place  
that is right for our equation.

Now a Good Night Moon hangs  
admiring endearing mountains.

Suzanne says,  
"Plans, you can never really count on them.  
There are things none of us are meant to understand.  
Love and loss being two of them."

A little bit of clarity.  
She's right at least about one thing.  
Sunsets are beautiful on The Rockies.





## THE TRANSPARENCY OF THINGS

Falling victim to the transparency of things.  
Slipping below the thin film encasing all beings.  
Every little rock, wind-blown loose leaf,  
piece of trash littered or lamppost on this street.

A wide-eyed kid wades into the back seat  
of a four-door jam-packed yellow submarine  
momentarily exposing those inside to the elements.

A peddler of roses, a ragged rover,  
they scoot on over next to a scribe  
scribbling thoughts he can't resign  
to keep in his mind and solely think.

Thinking much too deeply.  
Struck by the possibility  
I once was or will be  
leading a life similar to these.

A gull culls far away from sea.  
Out-of-towners tour the city's steel beams.  
Guides offer perspective on change.

A man says,  
"Even long-standing buildings  
over the years tend to switch names."

But do they really become brand new entities?

A tree becomes a chair becomes loose-leaf  
all the while holding on to pieces  
somewhere underneath  
of what it was before the form we see.

## MINOR MIRACLES

"I've been out here  
making minor miracles happen,  
chasing Cheshire cats,"  
a girl says falling flatly  
in an open armchair.

"Some might say, well,  
I have gone a little bit mad  
teetering on the edge,  
scribbling on notepads  
every little 'what' or 'who'.

I've riddled myself  
to find the answer  
may be You.

Now what do I do  
with this information?

Put it in a capsule  
encased for future generations  
or see how much deeper  
this hole goes?

I've been out here  
making minor miracles happen,"  
this girl says matter-of-factly  
as rodents and rabbits  
race to switch seats.

Cherries squash  
beneath their frantic feet.

Pots and pans pile  
in an overflowing kitchen sink.

The girl screams,  
“Aren’t you listening to me?  
I could use some more damn tea.

I have been out here  
making minor miracles happen  
waiting for you to fill  
gaps in conversation.

If you’re so smart  
then why don’t you enlighten me?”

I tell her with riddles  
the answers aren’t always  
what you’d like them to be.

I tell her it may be  
in her best interest  
if she starts  
at the beginning.

## SLIGHT INFRACTIONS

Maybe I'm seeing things,  
crazy dreams of my life tipped over.  
It may be just a breakdown.  
Right now, a moment of disorder.

Should I spend another day  
with my eyes awake  
as a social courtesy?

When the days  
don't serve as a break  
from the nights (oh so long)  
wouldn't that make you want to leave?

Oh, I have made slight infractions.  
Now I cross the tracks and  
turn my head up stargazed.

Rites of passage  
and a Lacoste emblem  
hang over my heart.

I have been a fool.

Oh, I have made slight infractions.  
Now I cross the tracks and  
turn my head up stargazed.

Is that Mickey Mouse  
and Gorbachev  
at a tea party?

I have been a fool.

These psychedelic cures  
only heal so much.  
They tend to lend a hand  
then want to lend another.

All they do  
is trip out my point of view,  
make me want to ask  
or beg for another.

Never solves the problems.

If I could, would I walk my shoes  
through a different town tomorrow?

Wouldn't sell my soul  
but if you hold the key  
I might be taking offers.

Oh, I have made slight infractions.  
Now I cross the tracks and  
turn my head up stargazed.

Broken records.

East Coast standards  
blare on my headphones.

Wandering somewhere...

hell if I know.

## PRETTY PASTEL HOUSES

It's nice to hear hurricanes  
haven't leveled all the pretty pastel houses.

Seaboards hold waves at bay  
from crashing on the shorelines.

I'm sure the summer heat and accents  
take a short while to grow accustomed to.

Still, Charleston remains just a dream of mine.

I imagine proper ladies carry umbrellas  
even when the sky is clear.

They nod their heads at potential suitors  
passing on the promenade.

It is true corsets don't force cleavage  
as high as they once did.

Still, Charleston remains just a dream of mine.

I picture sailors settling  
in regular seats at the ends of bars  
topping each other's stories about  
the sizes of whales they've caught,  
removing caps no matter if an old  
or young lady walks through the door,  
making sure to stand and offer up their seats.

It's nice to hear hurricanes  
haven't leveled all the pretty pastel houses.

I can hear by your voice you're considering staying.

Trading in the suburbs  
for sand-beneath-your-feet living.

Still, Charleston remains just a dream of mine.

## ACROSS THE STREET

All the people sleep five houses in a row.  
Connected walls turn the slightest noise loud.

Left my light lit on the second level.

“Is it everything you dreamed  
living across the street?”

A slight change of scenery.  
It’s modest at best.

There’s more room for clutter to cover up the rugs.  
Ants file single file over from my old abode.

“Is it everything you dreamed  
living across the street?”

Not sure who I thought I would fool.  
They track changes of address.  
The postman’s job is to catch wind  
of new living arrangements.

Didn’t really think he’d take my bribes,  
agree to leave my past behind me.

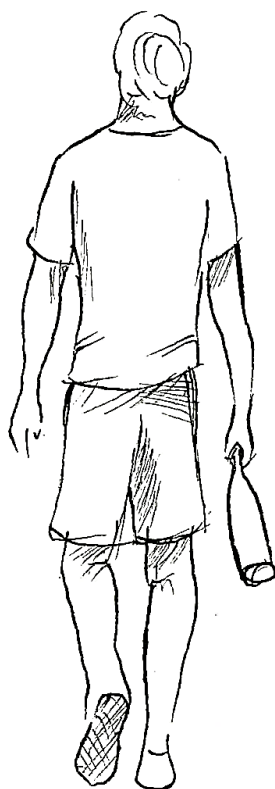
“Is it everything you dreamed  
living across the street?”

All the people sleep five houses in a row.  
Connected walls turn the slightest noise loud.

Empty out my pockets on top of dresser drawers.

“Is it everything you dreamed  
living across the street?”





## LEAVING ST. PAUL

I'm leaving St. Paul  
with alcohol fresh on my lips.  
I'm going where all the hippie girls live  
and cable cars still exist.

The wanderer's curse  
has become a welcomed plight, you see.  
This search may inevitably break me.

I'm leaving St. Paul  
with alcohol fresh on my lips.  
Maybe I will find myself an Asian girl  
with fine Creole skin and Hispanic cheekbones.

But that's not even the entire point.  
This search may inevitably break me.  
Or in fact rejuvenate me.  
Either way I will be on to something.  
Something I wasn't on to before.

I'm leaving St. Paul  
with alcohol fresh on my lips.  
I'm going where all the hippie girls live  
and cable cars still exist.

It's not just about a woman.  
Been feeling like a caged human.  
This search may inevitably break me.

## ON TO THE NEXT TOWN

Tried to get a job at the carnival  
but they said, "No."

Applied to operate The Whirly Whirl  
but they said, "No."

So I tried to get a job at The Wishing Well  
but they said, "No."

Applied to grant wishes with alcohol  
but they said, "No."

Well it seems like there are no jobs to be found.

I guess it's on to the next town.

Tried to get a job at The Village Inn  
but they said, "No."

Applied to cook steaks at any degree  
but they said, "No."

So I tried to get a job at the local market  
but they said, "No."

Applied to bag groceries in checkout lines  
but they said, "No."

Well it seems like there are no jobs to be found.

I guess it's on to the next town.

Tough on a man  
without a change of pants  
or secondary plans  
to advance his social prospects.

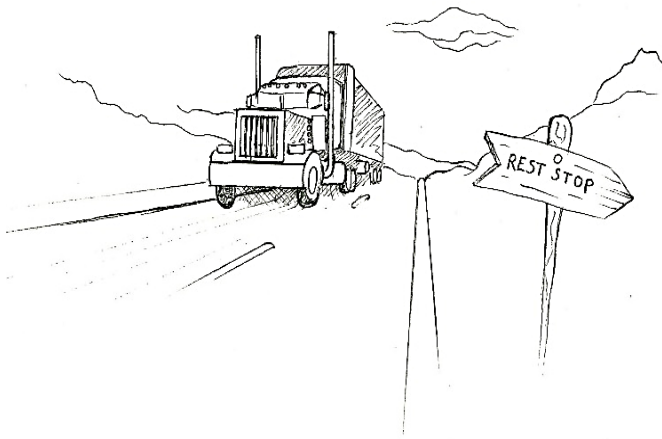
Are you telling me  
every place in town is fully staffed?

Aren't there any openings?

No?

No jobs around?

I guess it's on to the next town.



## WAKING UP IN SALINA

Waking up in Salina  
I'm wondering if I mean a single word I say.

A small town past Topeka.  
The girl at the counter waves  
as I step outside the motel.

No set destination.  
Counting change to fill my gas tank  
so I can get to wherever it is I'm going.

Waking up in Salina  
I'm wondering if I mean a single word I say.

How do I measure up  
to the tumblers who went before me?  
Are my lines in line with my life story?  
Moments of glory.  
Self-sabotage mostly.

Waking up in Salina  
I'm wondering if I mean a  
single word I say.

Waking up in Salina  
I'm wondering if I mean a single word I say.

Grown a weary demeanor.  
All these eighteen-wheelers weave,  
slow and rev around my four.

Then a Kansas sky opens and pours down  
unleashing the fury of Midwestern thunderstorms.  
I'm back and forth with each sheet of rain.  
The ominous thunder shakes me.

Am I a shot of lightning or just a frightened little boy  
running as fast as he can far away from home?

Waking up in Salina  
I'm wondering if I mean a single word I say.



*ABOUT THIS COLLECTION*  
**SONG LYRICS & POETRY**

Even as a little kid,  
Tom Rush had a fascination with words.  
Except his interactions didn't occur  
through traditional poets or outlets.

For him, it was the singers and bands  
heard on Oldies radio stations and  
cassette tapes played in his room.

Having to know every word being sung,  
he'd sit and scribble down what he was hearing,  
reading the confirmed lyrics over and over  
to make sure he'd gotten them just right.

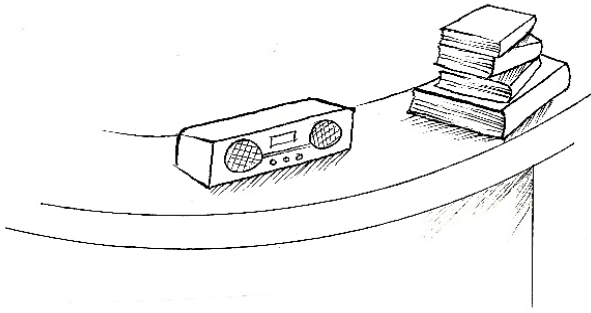
One day while listening, he wondered,  
how can new songs still be written?  
Hasn't everything already been written about?

That curiosity grew into an obsession  
with writing lyrics of his own.

This collection is a result of that obsession.

Not everything found  
in this collection is necessarily a song lyric.  
Some are and have become realized through  
collaborations with various musicians.  
As for the rest, they're poetry of sorts.

Each is an experience had,  
moment observed or story of raw realism relayed,  
serving as reminders of the shared bonds between us  
over love, loss, lunacy and leaving.



For collaborative inquiries or listening to music  
by Tom Rush associated with this collection,  
visit [tomrushpresents.com](http://tomrushpresents.com)



