

Poetry Series

Ryan Cole
- poems -

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Ryan Cole(August 27,1961)

Ryan Cole was born in West Los Angeles, California, and raised in the canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains. His father is an artist, who taught him to see the world through an artist's eyes, to see the beauty in the mundane, and his mother gave him the gift of words.

1/4/12

Kiss me in the pale light of the half moon

on this cool winter's night

As I would kiss you in the bright sun

of September past

But it is not about the moon or sun or the light

It is your lips on mine, my hands on your back

and the certainty of the touch,

when everything else is unknown, unseen, unsure

except the closeness of our lips together

in the pale light of the half moon

on this cool winter's night

Ryan Cole

2/7/12

You are not the tears I shed

and I am not the words you speak

as we are not these things that make us

Separate/together

What is the sum of us

words and tears

The whole seen in fragments

Like the items thrown haphazard into an overnight bag

for a weekend tryst,

forgotten, put aside

Only to be discovered later in the back of my closet

the scattered remains of what was/is

words and tears,

You and I

whole/apart

pieced together, the archeology of love

the shards of memory

Lost and found

And I am not the tears you shed,

as you are not the words I write

Yet we are perhaps these things that make us

Together/separate

Ryan Cole

5/9/11

Dried flower petals

Turned to red dust in the folds of a pocket of a thriftstore jacket

amidst matchbooks and bar napkins

with scratched notes and numbers,

unfinished lines

Discarded petals, forgotten rose

Clinging to my fingertips, falling unnoticed

to the cold ground

dried petals, blood red dust

Ryan Cole

6/25/10

For you, I would give my life, he said
Yes, she agreed, but...
would you give something you valued?

Ryan Cole

7/19/10

I was wondering if maybe
I could have my heart back for a while
I know I gave it to you
but I kind of need it,
you know, to move blood to my limbs
and maybe my brain,
no, not my brain
It'd still be yours and all
I'd just be borrowing it
and to be fair,
it's broken anyway
and you're not using it
I'd just need it for a while
until maybe someone else
gives me theirs

Ryan Cole

8/2/11

A fading light
As shadows grow across once bright day
The flicker of a guttered candle
incandescence once bright, now dimmed to passing

Yet still, always, there is love
Long after all else is gone
Glowing still, shining on, a beacon to memory
Held precious, to guide us all home

Ryan Cole

A Comfort

She thinks of me, she says, as she lies in his arms
Closing her eyes as his lips are on her neck
but her thoughts are of me
There is a comfort in that, I suppose
in the uncertain knowledge of her words
For she is my water and I am in this parched hot place
She comes in flooding fury, Spring tide heights
Salt sting tears to my eyes, receding too quickly
Wet sand clinging to bare feet,
forgotten moments, whispered prayers
And she thinks of me, she says
waking in the night to another man's touch
A comfort, I suppose

(7/28/11)

Ryan Cole

A Love Song To Beautiful Girls...

A Love song to beautiful girls with sad eyes,
sweet smiles, and father issues
who leave broken hearts scattered on barroom floors
amongst the peanut shells and sawdust
moving with aplomb through the throngs of want to bes
and would've beens
with borrowed cigarettes and no shortage of lights
playful grins and drunken laughter
and gentle scent of perfume
You're the light at the end of the world
and why we stay 'til last call
only to stumble home
to hangovers and regretful mornings
with only memories of the sad eyes and sweet smiles
of beautiful girls...
... with father issues

Ryan Cole

A Lullaby

I will write a lullaby
for all the lost and fallen
who linger on barstools
until the shout of last call
I will sing a ballad
for the lonely and brave
who face the dawn
with tired eyes and chagrined smiles
I will play a dirge
for the sad and scattered
who seek redemption in another's eyes
if only for a moment or a day
And I will compose a sonnet
for all of us who continue
and cling to love
if only as promise unfulfilled

Ryan Cole

A Place Like Home

I have found comfort in this place
Not love perhaps, though it has flittered now and then
At the corners of my vision
Dancing seductively with beguiling grace
And I have rested in this place
While the wounds of a lifetime have healed
To old scars, tough and numb
So that they no longer cause pain
But are reminders of what has been lost
And I have changed in this place
Grown and shrunk, waxed and waned
Like the lines of tide at its two extremities
Marked by the detritus left behind
And I have lived in this place
But it has never been my home
Walls and sinks, bed and tables are not home
Shelter and convenience are not the parts
From which home is made
No, home is the things I keep in this tattered tramps suitcase
That is my heart
Held together by packing string, duct tape, and wishful thinking
With scuffs and scratches in the torn vinyl
Water stained, whether from rain or tears I cannot say
But it holds the precious things
The vagabond's tune sung in the night to keep the demons at bay
The lovely melody pieced out on a slightly out of tune piano
And the light of your eyes, when I look into them
Head down and slightly turned to the left
Illuminated by my butane fire as I light your cigarette
And the smile we share
These are what I think of as a place like home

Ryan Cole

A Sunday Afternoon

Drinking champagne from between your lips
After mornings in the sun
The summer my mother died

Later, we would lay in my single bed,
you asleep
My shoulder your pillow

And I, awake
Listen to bits of the songs
Playing on the car radios from outside my bedroom window

It's where I learned to be patient
On Sunday afternoons

Ryan Cole

All The Different Places

I think of all the different places we shared

So far from where I am now

A foreign land, a distant shore

The far side of this world

I think of all the different places we shared

You and I and our youth

Squandered and scattered and left behind

like hair in the drain after the shower

I think of all the different places we shared

and all the times we should have held to

but couldn't, because to do so we would have to know

And in knowing, we would have changed it

and then it would be lost

as it is lost

as they are all lost

The different places we shared

Ryan Cole

An Absence Of Rivers

In my life I have always felt an absence of rivers
For it is rivers that we follow
To the sea
Yet I have felt them
Not in their wide expanse
or savage grace
Not in their endless grace
their calm depth
but still I have felt them
if only in their absence

Ryan Cole

An October Morning (2/1/12)

Ashes spreading through water
swirls of grey upon grey of different shades
In the cool October morning
the living deck beneath, moving with the swell
like the ashes, moving too,
spreading with current and tide
finding its way
Looking to the shore, I see these hills
Lines across the land,
breaking the horizon
etched across my heart
Known so well,
Like I know my name
I know these hills
Like I know the sound of my father's voice
calling my name
Ryan Cole

Angel And Devil

Devil on my shoulder
shrugs and shakes his head
while the angel is busy
trying to
hail a cab

Ryan Cole

Another Time (For K)

She had the saddest eyes when she smiled, far too sad for someone so young. Still, she smiled sweetly before looking down at the drink in her hand, as if amused by some inanity I'd just uttered, just trying to hold her there for another second. Then she reached up and brushed her hand through my hair, and I was gone, lost, doomed, by the touch of her hand and the sweet smile and the saddest eyes

Ryan Cole

Another Tuesday Morning

Another Tuesday morning

up before the sun

lights from the development

across the canyon

glitter like a constellation

changing a scar into something of beauty

by the absence of the day

And my eyes search the indigo sky

for a last glimpse of Venus

my constant companion

an old wound

made lovely by the absence of the day

Ryan Cole

Apostate

Looking away from Eden's Gates
with a long road before me
and an empty place growing
where once there was... what?
Belief? Hope? A promise?
Once a fool
Now, a sage?
Hardly
Only an apostate
feeling the vacuum
that was once faith

Ryan Cole

Bouncing At The Pint

Drinking lukewarm tea with a name like a porn star
to fight off the chill
and reading the works of a much better poet
about the days and wild horses
I wonder if he'd have liked this bar
I'm sure he would've liked the girls
and the whiskeys
and the beer
but probably not the bouncer
at least not this night

Ryan Cole

Canyon Road/Dawn

In the cool of the morning
Just before first light
Walking down a canyon road
and thinking about a girl
lost to the world
It seems like I've spent half my life
walking down canyon roads
in the cool of the morning
Just before first light
Thinking about a girl
lost to the world

Ryan Cole

Celestial Navigation

She moves across the heavens
passing Venus and Mars with her fingers crossed
Unbound by any laws known to Newton or Einstein
Eclipsing sun and moon
A pole star
the brightest object in the night
guiding the lost and lonely
to a place like home

Ryan Cole

Contemplating Emily Dickenson On An Unseasonably Cold And Wet Tuesday Afternoon In May (5/17/11)

Thinking about the thing with feathers that Emily spoke of so long ago

as she sat, alone, in her curtained room

Did she know about all she missed

A lover's breath upon her neck as they become one

It's possible to know what you've never had

Don't I know about that thing with feathers, taking flight against all odds

Did she dare to dream of love, the touch of a hand upon her heart

alone in her curtained room, so long ago

Do I dare believe in that thing with feathers

alone in this rented room,

as I contemplate Emily Dickenson

on an unseasonably cold and wet Tuesday afternoon in May

Yes, I dare

Ryan Cole

Damaged

Light

Filtered through the trees

Unbalanced

Clustered shadows

Hanging with regret

Carelessly worded

My damaged one

My damage done

Night

Lingering scent

The trace of her finger

Like jasmine and the sea

Gentle touch

Promises whispered

My damaged one

My damage done

Sunset

Ever winding

A fading ribbon

The look in her eyes

Recrimination

Regret

My damage done

Damaged

Ryan Cole

Dawn

Dawn

In my youth only seen as the end of the night
As a challenge to be faced in the hours
between last call and someone's bed
A finishing line to the rush and the heat
to be confronted with red eyes, sallow skin,
and designer sunglasses
It was a goal to be crossed
without thought, a temple to my follies
For then, my battles were yet to be fought

Dawn

Now seen as a beginning
A lover's kiss upon the neck of the day
And if now, I have no worlds left to conquer
the heat and the rush diminished
Yet the desire remains, untouched
The want and the hurt
A different kind of longing
or perhaps the same
but expressed in a new way
How could I not love the dawn
as an ending or beginning

Ryan Cole

Denial

I don't want you any more
No, not very much
No more than I want breath in my lungs
I don't think of you any more
No, not very often
Except when I do
which is all the time
I don't care about you any more
No, not with all my heart
Not through my sleepless nights
Not through my pointless days
No, I don't want you any more
Not all that much
Not until the end of the world
Whatever everyone says

Ryan Cole

Diamonds

She keeps a diamond in her heart
It belongs there, she says
Because it's hard and cold
It fills the empty space
That no man can touch
She keeps a diamond in her heart
It belongs there, I say
Because it's a precious thing
A tear shed by Venus
In memory of a kiss
She keeps a diamond in her heart
It belongs there, I guess
Because it's bright and it shines
And fills the empty space
That I could never touch

Ryan Cole

Dreams Of Flying (10/7/11)

The trick, she says,
is to throw yourself to the ground
and miss

Despite her dancer's grace
she will trip on nothing but the air
and I dream of flying
yet am always ready
for the fall

Ryan Cole

For C

She makes her way to the dark woods
the windy moors
The blank places on the map
where dragons be
Not for her the birdsong or the dappled glen
The gentle stream
No, she is the torrent and the tussle
The wild places and barren lands
The world sees only her face
Bewitched and beguiled by the beauty
Desired and demanded
She is just a commodity to be taken and used
and then discarded
No better am I
this much I know
Though perhaps not just by the beauty caught
which first came to my eyes
Seduced instead by the sadness
as is my way,
for I too have dwelt in the dark woods
The windy moors
and the blank places on the map
where dragons be

Ryan Cole

For Corny

He was once so strong
He stood taller than the sky
His voice roared like profane thunder
Now, I tower over him
His arms and legs are so thin
And his voice speaks in low grumbles
though still profane
But he taught me how to see the world
He gave me art and soul and hope
He loved always and does still
And without him
Without him I would be lost
Or more lost than I am
And in my mind
He is still so strong
and he stands ...
... taller than the sky

Ryan Cole

For Jennifer F

Motionless

Yet with fire and movement

She holds the pose

relaxed, never stiff

filling the canvas with life

and creating art

out of stillness

Ryan Cole

For Katharina

A year later and I am still lost
How can it be that I was your low point
and you were my high
You ask why I hate him so much
and I say I don't, it's just ...
Just that he's not good enough for me you challenge
Oh darling, I respond
The list of men I don't think are good enough
for you
is longer than the list of my regrets
and at the top of that list
the pinnacle, the peak
is me
A year later, and still ...
...I am lost

Ryan Cole

For Katja

Russian women, she says,

Learn young how to move their hands

She is a dancer

Grace granted human form

and as she swings and sways and flies upon the stage

Each movement plants a flag

and lays claim to another piece of my heart

She is a Traveller

moving through this world

from a place by the mountains

she thinks of as home

Her long fingers and slender arms

dance in a way I've never seen before

Russian women, you see

Learn young how to move their hands

Ryan Cole

Forgetting

Forgetting

I wish I could
but the curse of my memory
is to remember every second
fully situated in time and space
and though sometimes I long to forget
I know I never will
and so with the memories
I will build a wall
behind which I might find shelter
from the onslaught
of everything
but the things I wish I could ...
forget

Ryan Cole

Gifts

I never gave her a sunrise
Our love was always in the twilight
Never the dawn
Yet I promised her all my sunsets
and so it is,
But I think I'll keep the sunrises
At least for now

Ryan Cole

Grace

Stumble and fall
for all my life
I have lacked grace

Ryan Cole

Happiness

Like water
Dribbling through the cracks and holes
leaving a puddle on my heart
Like dry ice dropped in a glass of water
filling my eyes with fog
Happiness
like all things transitory
comes and goes on a whim
but is always welcome
for an interlude
a matinee
on a quiet Saturday afternoon

Ryan Cole

Her Laugh

She laughs over the phone
I used to live to make her laugh
Maybe that was the only thing
I was ever good at
Except for making her cry
But now she's laughing
over the phone at something I said
Something that jumped into my head
and out of my mouth and across the distance
to her Bluetooth as she navigates the 5
And I think of all the times I made her laugh
It was when things were best
And I ask myself
Is this love
This thing we share
Or is it what is left
after love
Is it a monument
to foolish endeavors
or just a mediocre tribute band
to something great
But I can still make her laugh
I used to live to make her laugh

Ryan Cole

Her Name

I try not to say her name
As if it held some power
To cast a spell
I don't say it aloud
Though it is in my thoughts all the time
Bouncing around
In the empty corners of my head
Resounding like a bell on the door
Of an old shop
Burrowing deeply
Into the soft place
of my heart
I try not to say her name
For fear that when I do
I will lose that last part
Bouncing around
In the empty corners of my head
Burrowing deeply
Into the soft places
of my heart

Ryan Cole

Her Tears

Her tears flowed like red wine into a paper cup
Leaving stains not on the waxen paper
but across my heart

Ryan Cole

His Silent World, For Levi (Peanut)

His silent world

Who is to say it's any less

in its absence of noise

Does his mother's heart beat

any less

as she holds him while he sleeps

His head on her lap

Her love all around

Does he feel it any less

for the lack of sound

Ryan Cole

Hope

Hope,
like the condom in an awkward teenage boy's wallet
is something I carry with me
in case, someday
I need it

Ryan Cole

I Know Nothing About The Rain (With Apologies To T.S. Elliott,9/1/11)

Do you still love me, she asks
fragile moment, simple words
Fear and longing mingled like our breaths
hanging precariously in the air

People talk about the weather
To fill the savage spaces
Empty Silence, empty words
And we talk about the weather
What can I say
What do I know of the weather
Falling gently, scattered drops
What do I know of the rain

Do you still love me, she asks
In the interval between
What do I know of love
Falling gently, scattered drops

And in the rooms the women light as a feather
stand around talking about the weather
And I don't really know what to say
I know nothing about the rain

Ryan Cole

I Say Your Name (For K)

I say your name

I say your name and all things fall away

To shatter like glass on the kitchen floor

Spreading pool of white

as random shards pierce bare feet

A splash of red

Spilled milk

Fresh blood

I say your name

I say your name in the quiet certitude of my love

Sure of this, if nothing else

I say your name and first person possessive

Your name

My love

Ryan Cole

I See Her Happy (5/10/11)

I see her happy and I think
of all the chances I never had
to make her see herself through my eyes
For she could only see herself through others
A thing of beauty, an object of desire
Someone I couldn't hold
Though want was there
a piece was missing
Some fragment of my whole misplaced
could never make her happy
Though I longed to try
I see her happy and I think
Is she seeing herself now only through his eyes
Clouded by love, but reflection still
Or at last does she see herself as she is
Intrinsic to herself
A masterpiece waiting to happen
A wildflower in bloom
I see her happen and I think
of all the chances I never had

Ryan Cole

I Still Feel Your Ghost (2/18/12)

I still feel your ghost in all the places we used to haunt

clinging nostalgia dragging me back there

though I no longer belong

I am exiled, forbidden access

a traveller with no destination to call me forward

biding time, the interterminal wait

I feel your ghost around me here

in the crisp cold cut of the morning

the ragged tearing of the wind, shrilly whistling

through the not quite closed window

and the empty space of my bed

There is snow on the mountains

I feel your ghost in that too

Ryan Cole

I Will Drink...

I will drink from the cup

and taste the sweet nectar

As I see that all knowledge is fleeting

This world, the next, tomorrow, today

All the hours and all the days

Might never be, never have been

or are yet to come,

But this morning, this moment, right now

as i sit here and drink from the cup,

and taste the sweet nectar

I'm okay with that

I'm okay

As I drink from the cup

the sweet nectar

A taste like joy,

though tinged perhaps

with other things,

but that's okay

As I drink from your cup

and taste the sweet nectar

Ryan Cole

Irises

Irises

covering the foot of your bed

in the soft warmth of your down comforter

as we awake in the morning

Irises

Bought by me for you

but brought to us both

in the night

by the small yellow cat

who lay nestled

in irises

and the soft warmth of your comforter

as we awake in the morning

Ryan Cole

Last Call

Is this love
the heat and the rush
or is it just the moment
the kiss and the touch
When I look in your eyes
what is it that I see
And what do you look for
in mine
Is this all a lie
or something else
Not love, but still real
As real as anything can be
in the heat and the rush
and the drunken fondling
of the last call

Ryan Cole

Last Night/This Morning

I dreamt of you again last night
Well, really, it was this morning
and dreams don't amount to much
Do they?
But you always believed in dreams
just like you once believed in me
and I don't know what I believe
not anymore
Yet I dreamt of you again last night
well, really it was this morning

Ryan Cole

Lets Get Lost

Lets get lost
Lets run away
though there are no circuses left to join
We'll create our own
just you and I
We'll walk the tight rope together
and swing on the trapeze
everyone will say how lovely you are
as they laugh at me
Yes, let's get lost
Let's run away
We'll leave this world behind
to live in castles in Spain

Ryan Cole

Light From Another Room,6/23/10

Seen through the crack in a door not fully closed
Creating shadows where it is absent
but no real illumination in its presence
A sliver, a wedge
There only to present a contrast
to the darkness
Nothing more

Ryan Cole

Like Water

For I am like water
Following the path of least resistance
Through stagnant pools and rapids' rage
Like water
I will always find my way
To the sea

Ryan Cole

Lost Dreams Of The Fallen

LOST DREAMS OF THE FALLEN,6/10/10

We live on
biding eternity
lounging in outdoor cafes
and all night coffee shops
drinking wine as the morning passes
or cheap cups'o'joe throughout the night
We stay in rented rooms
or cheap motels
in the outlands
where we belong
at least in a way
We watch
a world we can never have
and cannot love
dreaming of heaven's fall
and all that was lost

Ryan Cole

Love (Or Something Like It)

Love, or something like it
in your lips and tongue
the warmth of your body
the feel of your heartbeat
against my own
Here, tonight, now
and the morning, which might never come
If not love, still something like it
Still to be cherished
when the morning comes

Ryan Cole

Muse

Words strung together
to express a thought as yet unknown
A simple melody
a line of notes
or chord change
A minor to F maj 7th
Simple line across canvas
a dash of paint or a charcoal smudge
to find a way
to move the world
make the girls weep
bringing wonder and marvel
and perhaps, just perhaps
to live on for the ages

Ryan Cole

My Father's Hands

I see my father's hands

Long fingered, elegant beauty

Shivering tremors replacing strength

Once they held the world

Once they held my hands

Safe in their elegant length

when I first faced this world

My small hands in his

shivering tremors, giving me strength

I see my father's hands

When I look at my own

Ryan Cole

Numb

Numb

Is how she wants to be
So that she won't have to feel
and everything will fall away

Numb

It's how I have been
but no more
I'd rather live the pain
than know it's there, unnoticed
For pain is the warning
against the burn
Better felt
Though it hurts so much
than to be nothing
but numb

Ryan Cole

Ocean Park (4/10/11)

I no longer live in Ocean Park

Though I am never far from that place

Kept close in the quiet corners of my heart

Instead it seems I spend my days in passing

From a place I do not love to somewhere I don't want to be

And in my dreams there is you

So far away

Farther even than Ocean Park

With it's salt sting and morning fog

Known far too well

I dream of you, your eyes, your hand

The gentle hint of your smile

Replacing Ocean Park

In the quiet corners of my heart

Ryan Cole

One Last Thing

'One last thing, ' he said
'and then consider me dust
'Be happy my love'

Ryan Cole

Owned By Silence (2/25/12)

Tell me your secrets

Tell me your lies

Tell me stories of your day

Tell me anything and I will listen

and if I don't say anything in response

except the occasional mmm-hmm and uh-huhs

it isn't that I don't care or want to hear your words

It is only that I am, at times,

owned by silence

and it leaves me with nothing to say

Ryan Cole

Passing (8/9/11)

From hand to hand
Gentle touch moving silence
Held in this leaky vessel before moving on
To something, what not known
But here once, part and whole

Passing now, yet remembered always
The remnant of love is still love
What remains to us
from hand to hand
passing gently

Ryan Cole

Perfection

'I don't want perfection, ' I say
'It doesn't exist, and if it did, it'd be boring'
I say these words and she nods and smiles
I say these things but I think she 'is' perfect
In all the little ways
The turn of her nose
The shade of her eyes
The shape of her mouth
And the way she calls me on my bulls**t
She is perfect the way a Vermeer painting is perfect
made of light...
Light and shadows

Ryan Cole

Possession (For K)

You are mine

You are mine and I am yours

And together we are... what?

Something more than the sum of us

A spirit moving through the tall grass

A shadow cast on the longest day

growing and shrinking with the sun

moving across the sky

And I am yours

I am yours and you are mine

Filling the shallow husk of me

Touching the secret places

In the diminished light of the evening

Pale smooth and cool

You reach into me and caress me

Holding tight the lonely core

made whole by your lips

You are mine

You are mine and I am yours

A gentle finger moving along your inner thigh

A promise whispered into your ear
My breath on your neck
Saying your name in the final moment
Living forever as we again become one
I am yours
I am yours and you are mine
And we are together
Something more
The sweet promise of the little death
Lasting forever in the passing seconds
cradled between us
In the immeasurable spaces
You are mine
You are mine and I am yours
And together we are...
We are one
Ryan Cole

Rarity

I live for the random moments of happiness.
They are the promise that keeps me going.
I just wish they weren't so rare,
but each one is precious,
which perhaps, only comes with rarity.

Ryan Cole

Raven

Raven in the parking lot

Saunters about as he looks for food

Glances in my direction

and I swear, he nods

Two creatures

Both clad in black

Acknowledging each other's existence

And then he flies away

O to have such wings

O to fly away

Ryan Cole

Rememberance

I will remember you
through the mornings and the days
against the backdropp of my life
a greenscreen image
as I act the part
written for another
miscast and mistaken
Remembering everything
as is my way
what might have been
If only ...
those saddest of words
Leaving nothing but
my memory
to haunt and perhaps to heal
but never forget
all that is
You

Ryan Cole

Revenant

I see you
as a reflection in turbulent water
A shattered image across the rippled surface
I hear you
as a melody caught faintly across a canyon
A familiar tune, half remembered
I feel you
as a whispered breath across the back of my neck
a touch along the small of my back
I miss you
with the sad regret of all my failures
and the ache of a phantom limb

Ryan Cole

She

She is the shadows
in a film noir
The mist across the street lamp
on a London night
She is the mystery
that cannot be solved
The question unasked

She is the whirlwind
dancing across the Painted Desert
She is desire made flesh
slipping away with the tail of the night
She is the wayfarer's dream
as he falls beside the road

Ryan Cole

She Is A Danger

She is a danger
To herself and others
but most of all
to my heart

Ryan Cole

She Waits For You Across The River (8/20/11)

She waits for you across the river

In the soft untrammelled field

Beneath the warm sun

She waits to hold your head

as it rests upon her lap

To whisper the words remembered well

Sweet and smooth as promised grace

She waits for you across the river

Go to her now, call her name

She has made a place for you

beside her, with her, now is peace

Her hand reaches for yours, her lips call your name

Your battles are over, won or lost, it no longer matters

She awaits for you there, now is only love

Go to her, go to her and rest

Safe in the warmth of her love

Across the river

in the soft untrammelled field

Ryan Cole

Shelter

Shelter she offered
so briefly given
but how could it be
when she was the tempest
and I was the aftermath

Ryan Cole

Sleep

Maybe someday
I'll sleep again
through the night
without waking to look
longingly
at the morning star
Maybe someday
but no time soon
For now I'll be awake
and see the star
Venus as she moves
and think of you

Ryan Cole

Sleep With Me

'Sleep with me, ' she says
and I am at a loss
Her eyes are locked on mine as she says
'Let tomorrow take care of itself.'
And I am knocked to the floor
But it's not the future that haunts me

Ryan Cole

State Beach, Sunset

She laughs
and says surely you don't believe we can change the world
as I smile, to say I do
And I wonder,
a thousand years ago
did two lovers walk on such a beach
and say the things we do

Ryan Cole

Stupid Moon

Stupid moon

Doesn't care that you're not with me

It's going to go on being beautiful anyway

Just like you

Ryan Cole

Stupid Moon Redux

There's a light that shines
through my bedroom window
It keeps me awake all night
I have the radio on
I'm listening for our love song
but that's the only one that I don't hear
Every song that plays
is someone else's story
but that's just the way it always goes
You don't know what you want
You only know you want it badly
And I don't have it to give
Stupid moon
It's up there mocking gently
Reminding me of everything I've lost

Ryan Cole

Tangled,8/20/10

Tangled ...

(like the cord to my earbuds

shoved too quickly into my breast pocket

at the beginning of my shift

wrapped around the sunglasses

that fling themselves to the ground

as I retrieve my iPod at the end of my work day

plummeting to the asphalt of the parking lot

to shattering lense and bent frame

and angry curses at the unfairness of fate

and a journey home squinting in the bright sun)

... are the strings around my heart

Ryan Cole

Ten Weeks And Two Days

Ten weeks and two days without a drink
And I can't say I miss it yet
I don't feel the absence of anything
More it is a presence I perceive
How much has changed in that time
How many worlds have risen and fallen
Empires of my folly
Grief and joy and grief again
And the question I'm afraid to ask
Where will I be,
Ten weeks and two days from now...
Without a drink, perhaps

Ryan Cole

The Beauty Of The World

I hate the beauty of the world
The moon, the stars, and all the spaces between
Hell is not a place, it's an absence
And all the beauty just reminds me
of what isn't here
Here or there, ten thousand miles away
The beauty of the world is all just a shadow
dancing on the cave's walls
illuminated by fire
obscured by smoke
but always, always
there is you
And everything else
is just shadows on a wall

Ryan Cole

The Bouncer's Lament

I can laugh
It comes easy to me
And I smile readily enough
They say I have a nice smile
the barflies and regulars
the drunk girls and the lonelyhearts
And if I look down
or glance off to the horizon
to some far off place
As they talk their drunken talk
Don't think that I can't smile
It's just that I feel the longing
as we all do
that whiskey doesn't kill
I feel it in the cold night air
Yet still I can laugh
You know,
It comes easily to me

Ryan Cole

The Dry Wash

The expanse
Broader than anything I've ever known
Except for maybe the distance between us
Not like the canyons I have loved
But rock strewn and arid
A gulf separating the hills
Waiting for the rains
And what then?
A torrent raging
But now, just a dry place
Broader than anything I have ever known
Except for the distance between us

Ryan Cole

The Girl About To Fall

See the girl about to fall

Dancing on the wire of her desperation

Falling, to shatter in a thousand jagged shards

that cut my feet and pierce my heart

And all the best intentions, all the pretty words

cannot put back together

the girl about to fall

Ryan Cole

The Moon 2 Days Past Full

The moon,
Two days past full
Pale in the light of morning
Framed between two date palms
Above an empty parking lots
Another day
Fading and falling
In the growing light
A chaste lovers' dance
the sun newborn
The dying moon
Two days past full
Passing glances as they part
Another day

Ryan Cole

The Parts You Saved

The parts you saved
were not the things you valued most
It was just the stuff that was close at hand
And the things you lost
Were the treasures
that cannot be replaced

Ryan Cole

The Poet

See the poet, hard at work

grumbling and scribbling and drinking his tea

In his pajamas for two days straight

his hairs a mess, he needs a shave

most people call it loafing

but the poet is hard at work

Ryan Cole

The Transit Of Venus

I remember waking up in the morning, the hours before dawn, looking out your bedroom window, to see the morning star, Venus, as she moved across the sky. You would sleep beside me, unaware of me, or the star. I would watch, captivated, as she slowly made her way as the light would come, to the point where I wouldn't have been able to see her at all, if I hadn't known she was there. Even then, I knew that though I loved you and you loved me, we were no longer in love, that what remained was only a shadow, a comfortable, safe place where we could linger for a while. The difference between loving and being in love was never so clear as I watched Venus slowly vanish in the coming of the dawn, so clear to me, since I had watched her from the darkness, but invisible to everyone else, in the diffuse light of morning. We had loved and been in love once. Now, we held on to feelings we no longer felt as a shelter from the storm, frail and tempest tossed. You slept, as I faced a new day, watching Venus, the morning star, vanish into the growing light of the sun, but knowing, even then, that she was there, unseen, a remnant or memory, of what had been, what could have been, what would never be again.

Ryan Cole

These Desert Hills

I walk through these desert hills

beside a highway

In the heat of the day

Here now, but not inside

Inside, I am in a cool place

an old place,

Sitting in an outdoor cafe

in the shivering cool of a drizzling day

on a cobblestoned street

with you

Drinking cheap Spanish wine

huddled in our tattered elegance

warm only in our closeness

and our secondhand coats

You, ageless beauty, still young

me, fading fast to some lesser thing

We would talk of art, words, and music

drinking cheap Spanish wine

on a cobblestoned street

in the drizzling cold

But no,

I am here, in these desert hills

and I have no idea where you are

in some outdoor cafe?

on a cobblestoned street

drinking cheap Spanish wine

with the man you love?

Perhaps so

And I am in these desert hills

Ryan Cole

This Ordinary Madness (12/15/10)

We talk about these things

This ordinary madness

The gum in our hair,

sticking and pulling and making a mess,

impossible to remove

This ordinary madness

The complications of the days

and the nights

and the times between,

stolen and hoarded and hidden

This ordinary madness

Writ small on folded pieces of paper

shoved into a too full wallet

to be quickly forgotten

until found, much later

a memory of a chance

Now nostalgic in its aging grace

This ordinary madness

These things we talk about

Of interest to no one

but you and I

Precious perhaps

In it's mundane way

This thing we talk about

through our nights and days and the times between

This love, this desire, this need,

This ordinary madness

Ryan Cole

Too Long In This Place

I have been too long in this place
An exile to myself
living in the half-life of the memory of your smile
comfortable in this splendid squalor
but cast loose and cut off
drifting, rudderless,
I could never touch your savage grace
or tame your dancer's soul
Yours was not a heart given to forgiveness
or bound by temperant soul
but I am here
still in its shadow I linger
Too long in this place
in the lost light of the memory of your smile

Ryan Cole

Uncomplicated Joy

Crash and bang
and children shout in pleasure
the uncomplicated joy
of illegal fireworks
It's always fun
until someone blows his hand off
And I feel a thousand miles
from anyplace I love
as another little bomb goes off
to the delight of the crowd
but I'd rather hear
the rumbling roar of the ocean
and taste the salt on my tongue
than the gun powder smoke
For it's lost to me
the uncomplicated joy
of illegal fireworks

Ryan Cole

Untitled

Saying all the right words
but only causing her pain
The right words but the wrong lips
My lips, not his lips
What a tragedy
two broken hearts instead of one
Yet I am compelled to throw myself
against the rocks of her ambivalence
until she casts me aside
Still I fling myself headlong
down that flight of stairs
that will pass for love
'Til something better comes along

Ryan Cole

Untitled 8/5/10

I would make you my religion
and worship at the temple of your body
Taking communion from your lips, your breast, your thighs
I would die in you
and in dying live again
To die a thousand deaths
each more ecstatic than the last
All other women will be a heresy
A blasphemy to what you are
False idols, profane, lesser deities,
and I a disciple to your beauty
an apostle to your soul
Though I should burn forever
Burning would be paradise
to be with you

Ryan Cole

Untitled,7/30/10

A father and son
kicking a soccer ball
in the alley below
while mariachi music
fills my ears
And I think
that's pretty good for now

Ryan Cole

Vanishing,6/24/10

She is always
Vanishing
Leaving nothing
but a ghostly image
burnt across the retinas
of my imagination
She disappears
until she again returns
If only as a thought, a wish
a longing, a promise
For again,
she has vanished,
has gone,
and again,
I am without

Ryan Cole

Walking Down Fourth Street

Walking down Fourth Street from your apartment
heading towards Pico and the long trip back
My head full of thoughts i shouldn't have
My heart full of wants I can't let go

I wanted you so that night
For days and months
But I couldn't take as a prize that which is only a gift
And I wouldn't want to be someone you regretted

Another mistake in your journey down
So I took you home that night
but didn't stay
We will never be lovers
Not even friends

As I walked down Fourth Street from your place
Towards Pico and the long trip home
You were so lost then
Lost then, as I am now

Ryan Cole

Welcome Home

Wet sand clings to the spaces between my toes
and to the wet cuffs of my jeans
as the low waves, soaking
wash away the evidence of my passing
As the breakers crash against the stones of first jetty
I taste the salt against my lips
The spray stings my eyes
As the look to the line of the hills
Engraved across all that makes me who I am
The horizon I know so well
have always known
Will know on the day of my death
The waves, the hills, the stones
They whisper in my ear
'Welcome home'

Ryan Cole

Wildflower

Uncultivated
with no plan or reason
Burning across my dun colored world
like a sudden flash of flame
Bringing yellows and blues and reds
Shining for a second
then gone
Returning to grey
yet I am changed forever
I see the color through the mist
An ember
A spark
Wildflower

Ryan Cole

Without

When I think of something funny, who will I rush to tell?
When I wake up at 3 a.m., who will I feel next to me?
When the sadness comes, as it always does, who will hold me?
When I marvel at all the beauty in this world, with whom will I share it?
When I buy flowers, who will they be for?
If you love someone else now, who will I do these things for?

Ryan Cole

Without Malice,6/26/10

There is no malice in her
All the little wounds she brings
are accidental or providential,
but always inadvertent
symptoms of her misery
And yet I die from a thousand little cuts
but somehow continue to breathe
To walk, to work, to sleep
or not to sleep,
perchance to dream
Living on, if dead
wondering
Is this Hell...
or just the rest of my life

Ryan Cole