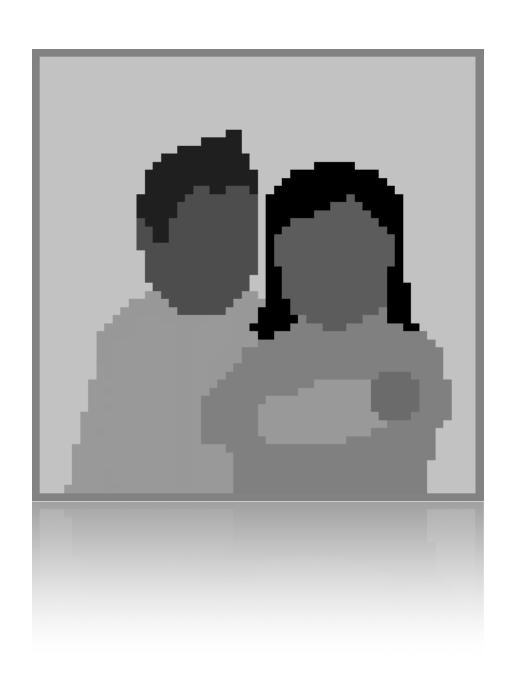
WHO THE MAN IS

(2010-2015)



AUGUST 5, 1944

Dear Al,
The smile of the dog
we had a discussion about piss and shit and sex
and it smelled bad,
but I'm determined
to eat better

Dear Al,
A terrific hot day,
glad to be alive
and in a temperate part of the world
aren't we?

Dear Al,

The boys are good at the paper route I would have your brother's initials engraved if only I could remember them.

Damn this war, I guess,

Daddy is coming to pay the bills

BALANCE DANCE

With one wet snap of the fingers, I slip the last dish into the rack.

A one-eighty spin
And I fold down in
to a chair. Then
on cue at noon
a book hits my lap.
I smile midair,
balancing in
that rare moment
of no movement.

BLINK

My love, we circle each other become trapped in war, see no way out, and sacrifice ourselves to the mystery of the unknown future.

My love, we build castles of windows and then hate our walls. We dream we were never ourselves. Then we are thankful for dinner.

My love, we know who we are, but we allow others to teach us about ourselves anyway; Perhaps if there is something we do not know, life does not need to be so complicated.

My love, we chase paper because it is easier to represent the world than to look it in the eye.

When I was a boy, when I was a boy, when you were a girl, when you were a girl.

I cannot promise you what I will always remember. I cannot be infinite.

I can be myself.

CAJUN TWO-STEP

Presiding over all this is a mistress of ceremonies known as Tante Sue,

а

tiny dynamo of a woman who boasts seven great grand children. She sings, cavorts, sips hot schapps from a half-pint holstered on her hip.

She has an accordion printed on her T-shirt. And as she spins around, she grasps two strategically located points of material and says, "I play my accordion on my T-shirt, I have a great time. I don't miss a note."

DEAREST SAMSON

As a dominatrix, it is my job
to feel powerful. But with your wrists bursting
through all the new rope in Gaza
and nylon not being invented
for another two thousand years or so
I have to do something drastic
to keep you in bed.
So I ask you, respectfully:
Would you give up the power of God
to be my bitch?

Believe you me,
flaming foxes make me boil and drip.
But no woman wants a ticket to the gun show
for her entire life.
I want to teach you.
Real heroes know when to be held
captive. Come swim
in my poison.

--Delilah

Curator's note: You have no idea of the persuasive power of leather and nipples, even in prehistory.

DREAM MASSEUSE

My muse is a beautiful woman
Who sleeps in the nude.
She goes out every night-Swallows the frosty, alcoholic moonlight
Downs every frothy glass, until
It's time to wander home, and be blown softly
From sadness
Into sleep.

After a time, she wakes Crushes cold clouds beneath her feet And walks slowly From the bed to her window, To see if it is snowing in heaven. Still lazy with sleep. She takes a milky toga That is really a satin bedsheet And pulls it up above her pearly knees. She tosses it over her shoulder, and reaches back To wrap the waves of white Tightly around all the skin Of her stomach and breasts. Shivering, she takes some icy water Into her mouth And rolls it down her throat.

The chill hits, and she realizes
With silent, wide-eyed terror
That she is already late. The glass
Is dropped.
She rushes down, through the sky
And lands, placing quiet toes
Onto the sill.
With a silent leap, she lands
On the night-table
And reaches down, at last
To cradle my head in wind filled hands.
She touches foreheads with me

And whispers her apologies--Frowning, sulking, and weeping Into my dreams.

DWELLING

As we live,
we collect.
And our shelves, you know the ones,
the ones which we make a museum
of our selves,
those shelves
are stuffed with us.

Here is a series of figurines of fat elves. a plate that is really more of an art piece, a small, ornate box we don't keep anything in. No, we just like the way it looks. Oh, and look at this here is a small painting we liked. yes, there is something about the way that man is picking his nose in the background that made us reach into our hearts and pull out enough to buy it. LOOK! Here are a series of tickets to shows we saw and enjoy recalling here is a local news clipping, framed, in which we are mentioned in passina here is the picture of an uncle in a nightmare of a sweater waving from a famous place he visited. Looks like it might have been Minneapolis? No, it couldn't be, there are no pyramids there. Anyway, here is a photo album, a clock that was a gift, a rifle from the war which now seems silly, an unfashionable pair of glasses, an urn, a book that is of no interest but has an alluring cover, more newspaper clipplings, and more photographs, yes, always more photographs.

Only now that we are looking at it, there is someone in the photograph whose voice we can't remember.
Which is a shame, because they spoke

like a box of music.
but never mind, here is an advertisement for a dance
from thirty years ago
that we never went to
because we never left the house together.
The date went so well we just sat on the couch
thinking happily that we might never get tired of kissing.
Though just now, we can't remember the color
of that person's hair, or skin, or eyes
or the nice things they said to us when we were getting sleepy.
They could really have been anyone, now.

We are the silk that sticks so much together...but gravity is always getting stronger and so much friction between the memories of objects and places and feelings and people they all begin to feel alike. They melt into each other, until we only know what we already know. Memories become generic, unsharp. If we are lucky, as we grow, and we always grow all these things are destroyed in a beautiful storm. we forget to take our medication and smash them. the window is broken by someone's God in a wind or a burglar with a brick, or we trip and our elbow catches the edge of a long object, like a golf club, knocking every thing to the floor. We get to start again.

When we remember someone we look at their shelves. we wonder who the people in their photographs are,

and why they collected so many little statues of fat elves, they're really even kind of creepy.

And then, maybe,

suddenly, we think we realize we're next.

After all, this does happen

in a kind of sequential order.

But I warn you that this is

almost certainly not the point.

We may be gone already. We may come back.

We may look at the moon one night and become stuck in between, neither alive nor bored to death. Think too much about death and you end

wondering what's happening

to all the food in the refrigerator.

Is it time to buy more already?

If the humous is gone, why are there so many crackers?

Didn't we pay this electric bill last week?

Should I shave?

The answers are yes and no, yes and no, hello and goodbye, a thousand whats and no why.

I met a foreigner. She said that in order to meditate, we need only remember enough to make us happy. Don't dwell, she said, just get in, get happy and get out.

That means no fat elves, no books with alluring covers, no favorite paintings.

So I think of the three things my grandfather gave me last: a haircut and a ride to the airport, and the little something extra he always gave us.

So, when I ask to be, I am alone on the curb at the airport.
Though I keep waving, I see the silver sedan

pull away. I feel a new breeze at the back of my neck, and the smile of a warm twenty-dollar bill in my pocket.
Then, I am here.

A titanic steel boa lays dead a hundred miles long, hollowed out and breathing the wind, a spinal thing stitched into the desert. Wind blows as if the whole sky was just the dried up path of something that used to flow.

The pumping station stands tall and thin. It latches down the shiny line, a bundle of tight tubes solid and dry against everything. On the flat iron door, old padlocks and sunlight duke it out.

Once in a year
a man comes, key in hand.
He checks under dust
and listens for the sound
of flow inside.
When he knows, he can return
to his soggy garden hose
his kitchen sink
and his other
moist occupations.

LEVELING

I visited locations in their correct orders drove cylinders, twisted handles, arranged symbols.

Sometimes this involved visiting the same location twice with a new item, to pick up something I was unable to get before.

In obscure locations
I depressed secret mechanisms
or else gave up, a life-lock
half-picked.

MONSTER HUNT

There be dinosaurs, slimy and strong hiding at the bottom your heart as though you were Scotland. Locks lock lochs of emotion in your chambers.

I like that about you. Still

I don't want to be your trawler.
I'd hate to triangulate radar,
hire colleagues to comb your surface
or ask for the public's help
in bringing you to justice.

NOVEMBER 22, 1944 (WOMEN)

Presenting:
The Switch Board Operators Of AMERICA!
Regards,
Best,
Cheers,
Yours,
with information by letter
and Lots of Love, they're
keeping us together.

The words of the young are so filled with flippant electricity, you want to hear them but all you can hear is oh god, your mother, it's all about visiting and being sleepy, and don't don't

Why did my grandfather have so many female pen-pals in 1944?OCTOBER 18, 1944

Dear Al,
And how is your work
coming along?
What are the rumors up there and
do you still smoke
as much as you did at home?
You must try not to, it is
Definitely Bad
for you.OCTOBER 31, 1944

Merry Christmas, here are cigarettes don't smoke too many.

PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS

Nouns get gooey on the fire of the summer range. Yolky folks hug and scramble together that way. In the end, I found that a part of you was all I needed to get over easy.

In autumn the cold arrived, spatula in hand. Everyone hardened into happy little organelles all singing songs of blood and air, wandering apart in search.

It is as simple as my French.
We are speaking different parts:
You do not want to commit.
You want China, a book deal,
a name on a mountain,
whichever comes first.

Je comprende.
If you are looking,
I will be busy wearing warm clothes
in Appalachia,
drinking young water
and looking at moons.

PIRANHA

When we stopped weeding a drooling, toothy bulb slid from the soil in the small city apartment where we used to stay and say I love you.

An ever-widening radius drove us out.

I hid at the lips of the Pacific and you flew across it, which was wise. The East became dark; leaves began to block the sun. It threw planty glances, searching. Lonely tendrils wandered across our continent. Buds with teeth discovered me hiding in my city; I was digested.

Now, tangled in the first roots I can see the last memories we cared to cherish: a bed in new light a wall hanging from Mexico the sweet smell of us after a morning run.

RIGHT WRONGS

What to do with the hours you're not working is a question often answered hastily.

The answers are like glue. they stick to you and you choose them again, again, again. Hopefully you choose in the presence of natural advantages, and obvious obstacles. Things like incredible mountains, clean air a fully stocked laboratory a naked man or woman who would like to touch you, a television, a sewing machine, a book, an entire room of naked men and women, or just somewhere with a cash machine. Regardless, these are trades. self for self, you for new you, the world on fire until it becomes the world again.

ROAD TRIP

A hearse and a cream camaro in the parking lot of a sandwich shop

Old Trap, Virginia

A pickup truck explodes off 95 to Rhode Island, driver walks away with an empty gas can

Downwind of smoke, I'm just, I'm just I'm just waiting for the sheriff to show up.

SIGNATURE

A signature of a dead grandfather you never found, it was written on the inside of an envelope he stowed away for years.

Maybe he was practicing for a check, maybe he didn't write it at all...

maybe it's just a name somebody wrote on an envelope in a way that looked like his hand.

A signature like ivy which grew off the page, a resiliant, fast growing memory.

THE OLD COUNTRY

I hear all these stories about heterosexual grandparents about Catherine and Nikoli, about Vladimir and Bunny, forced to marry in Siberia by economics and

either

she's the owner of the snowed-in general store and he's the only one who knows how to use a shovel

or she's an overanxious surgeon and he's a drug dealer from three shtetls over

or she's a subsistence farmer and he a roving checker champion, who has always dreamed of settling down.

So many obscene combinations of history.

He's a stock broker with a golf tattoo and she's a freegan fisherwoman

He a pedophile who cares only for the sax and she's his deaf grandmother,

She's the tribal chieftess and he is the Norwegian Conquistador, blinding and glorious in his metallic sealskin

She could be a human frisbee and he a human pinball machine, based on an action movie.

0r

he is a prodigal ping-pong genius, whose hand was flash frozen to his favorite paddle, while playing outside in February, and she, amazingly, the same, except for a gigantic fro that blots out the warmth of the sun. Or she could be a hippie who's into anthropomorphism and he's just an an asshole soldier who can growl convincingly.

She may simply be a palm tree, he a mysterious fog and their child, their baby child, is an islander with a bamboo spear.

Regardless, they always end up in some tentative embrace under the icy hot sun in The Old Country, feet not quite puncturing the layer of ice resting on the earth, almost as though they were hovering in history.

