

UNHAPPY BIRTHDAY

POEMS

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for D.S.

HAPPY ENDING

A light bulb blows out  
The phone doesn't ring  
I've got my suspicions  
And you had your fists

I'm feeling creepy  
I'm feeling blessed  
I want to kiss you  
Regardless the risk

Darkness stretches  
Across your cheek  
An incomplete sentence  
Or something obsolete

Let me begin again

A narrative  
In first person  
With the last chapter  
Missing in action

Where did our happy ending go?  
Where did our once upon a time lead?

To afterhours bars  
And new spots to cop  
Empty parks

And public bathrooms

Times Square

Astor Place

Or those exotic stops

The bodega

At Third & C

It's the same old scene

Cigarettes and scary dreams

Midnight sidewalks

And eyes of green

I hear you whisper

When I scream

I feel you breathing

Next to me

A suitcase of memory

Get this picture down

White underwear

An empty glass

A door without a keyhole

I'm half a word away

And I'm not sorry

A shift in weight

That took a thousand years

To properly name

Contra pasto

Seen in Rome

On a Vespa

Or in New York

On a skateboard

But no one's got

A good idea

To paint on a ceiling

Anymore

MARIO

I was twenty two  
when I first met you  
And not even  
twenty five  
when you died

But I was happy then  
for the first time  
however brief  
and even cool with it  
when you lied

You called me bro  
then left me alone

Now what's the point  
in all this loneliness  
This emptiness  
that goes on and on

All I get to be  
is half a man  
with my best friend  
forever gone

Relax  
and take a blast  
Nobody wants to hear  
my slob stories

And I know  
self-pity

is the last stop  
on the road  
to suicide

Once suffering  
has a hierarchy  
the spoon is burnt  
the stem is baked

I can't fake it  
anymore

So pour me  
a glass of sincerity  
I'm still searching  
for reasons to care

#### GREENSPACE

You sent me this message:

I am sitting in a big comfy chair...  
it's made of soft fabric upholstery  
and it seems to swallow  
my skinny body up  
when I sink back into it.  
I am tired...  
I worked hard  
pushing grocery carts  
around all day  
and now  
I just want some tea.

So I sit back  
close my eyes  
and start sipping  
when I feel a gentle arm  
run down my right leg  
and skim  
over my tight pants  
I open my eyes slowly  
to see your knee

I pretend to ignore you  
as you begin  
to unbutton my pants...

I hope that was dirty enough  
and not too much of a story.

#### INSOMNIA

I can't sleep  
When you're not here  
To keep me wide awake

## SNAP SHOT

I can't talk my way  
Out of this picture  
The light's all wrong  
Only shadows in negative space  
I can't quite make out  
The face  
But I know  
It's there

The opposite of everything is love

I love you  
It's all I can do

I can't fight my way  
Out of this plastic bag  
From fire to ash  
To blister  
I put your cigarette out  
Before the afterglow

On my arm

I never quit smoking  
Because I never started

I was just thinking  
About you  
It's never the right thing to do

You shoplifted my heart  
I borrowed your best excuse  
Some magic dust  
An incantation  
And poof  
You disappeared  
Into the pollution  
Of the moment

I never bought you flowers  
But I ripped one out  
Of the ground  
Outside your apartment  
And stuck it  
In a shot glass

It all gets a little fuzzy  
I think I fell asleep

The opposite of everything is love

8 by 10  
35 millimeter  
Or a digital print

## POISON

You sucked up to divinity  
And bought a pair of jeans

Fix the stereo  
Be patient  
And present

I stole this from a thief  
I hustled the hustler  
To the sound  
Of one hand  
Slapping your face

I left out the part  
About love

Now that pronouns  
Can represent  
Ambiguous groans

Glasses clink  
Hotel doors swing open

Frankly it's a mess  
Let's order in

Subway light  
And broken hands  
The game goes un-named  
You used me  
And I loved you

Belief in me  
It's all we ever had

SUBWAY

Escalator eyes  
Hands on rubber rails  
Chrome straps

Gargoyled faces  
Pinned against plexiglass  
Reflections  
And plastic seats

It's raining  
On the old rain  
But only damp underneath  
A transfer  
And you're lost

I've been writing  
This same thing  
For years  
Thinking it for longer  
Speaking up  
Frequently

I never get it down right  
The turnstile  
The skinny card  
The lost token  
Thoughts forever  
Thought broken

MY BODY GUARD  
For Matt Dillon

A moody kid  
In a gray  
Sleeveless  
T-shirt

Tight blue  
Jeans  
And red  
High-tops

Hair slicked back  
Perfect

I might just try  
To knock that chip

Off your shoulder

Or anything  
To make you smile

#### RANDOM NOTES

It's hard work  
looking for a fix  
When you're  
not really broken  
I tried to get  
away from you  
But there's always  
another "you"  
It's not the tracks  
It's where  
they lead us to  
Back seat  
of a Chevrolet  
Parked outside  
A synagogue  
in New Jersey  
Sixteen clumsy  
and not so shy  
That I couldn't ask  
What's her name  
For a blow job  
She acquiesced  
I guess  
And at least  
The windows  
Got pretty  
Steamed up

## THE LIAR

If pretty girls make graves  
Then pretty boys like you  
Must get lucky  
Before the afterglow  
When there's so much to hide  
But so little to show

The night I first met you  
You lied to me about everything  
And your friends helped out too  
I called you an angel and tried  
To kiss your cheek  
You woke up  
And threw up on my sneaker

Ten years later  
And you're still lying to me

## PEACE OUT

There's something about a chorus  
When the verses are a blur  
In devotion and extension to a dance  
In a ceremonial rain  
We'll try again to become friends  
Or at least  
Co-exist  
Peacefully

One of your many personalities  
Is slightly dyslexic  
On coke or dope or Jack Daniels  
You'll hurl your skinny body down  
From a fire escape

Only a year and a month later  
I see it all again  
Another friend gone  
He climbed out the bathroom window  
Muttered a scared line  
For a song I'll never write

SPRING STREET NATURAL

Memory groans  
Back to when I grew  
Not in weight or flesh  
But in depth  
Of soul  
With the teacher  
Taking turns  
As student  
And lover  
Now lost

LANCE

Today is the future  
Of the past  
We try and make last  
Faster than laughter  
That disappears

I'm left with the nearness

And the nothingness  
Which I fear

In my soul  
Old and young  
At the same time  
I need another line

RIGHT

I've been here before  
With my face on the floor  
And I'm always coming back for more

I've been bad for too long  
Now it's time to get gone  
And face the place where I fear to belong

You're right  
You're always alright  
And you've always got something to say

Your face makes me dream  
Of the places I've seen  
But it all starts to seem too obscene

The things we could do  
If I could make you my boo  
But will you still love me tomorrow too

I need to embrace you  
To seek truth within you  
I need to confess to the mess that I guess

I always was with or without you  
I need to undress you  
To press through to see the best in you  
But how can I impress you  
And still bless you

When you're always right  
And you've always got something to say

TRUE

There's so much lying  
Involved in telling  
The truth

I was hungry  
But not starving  
When I first met you

Any reason will do

In my soul  
There's no soul  
But in my heart there must be love

I'm digging my own grave  
As war rages on

We all need some soul  
To lower the highs  
And raise the lows

ONE OF THE GREAT DADDIES  
For Gregory Corso  
Holding up a mirror  
The old man grimaced  
Take a look into this  
And you will see the face of God

I was young  
And so I played along  
Never mastering the game  
All but for a chance to pen a song  
Now he is long gone  
One of the great daddies  
Of his generation  
But his Spirit runs through me

Endlessly  
Like the Sea

STREETS

The stellar gray  
urban decay  
This is all to say  
That I'm alive  
today  
The haze  
that fades  
The radio  
waves  
I'm in the back  
of this cab  
Heading back  
to play  
In the snapshots  
culled from heavenly  
Patches of sunlight  
pot smoke  
last night's  
red light  
lapsed memory  
mementos  
a hip hop beat  
a pause  
in the steam  
the Puerto Rican  
girl's breath  
is wafting  
gently  
against  
the terra cotta  
bodega  
wall  
gently  
this is all to say  
that I'm alive  
today  
still searching  
for that sympathetic  
fix  
a face  
half-formed  
in the twilight  
And still  
searching  
for that perfect

picture  
Swayed  
in a sexy  
sadness  
Or was that  
madness  
I'm glad  
at last  
For a hint  
of soulful eyes  
Distracted  
and sublime  
I stay high  
all the time  
I smoked  
the good shit  
A hit  
and a slant rhyme  
On the dl  
most times  
Refined  
behind  
a line  
I am  
what I am  
after hours  
Divine  
Plunge  
into your mug  
With my thug  
Drugs  
And money

EMPTY PAGE

In hiatus from myself  
It took a lot of denial  
To get threw the biggest  
Breakdown of my life

I'm still feeling  
The after lull  
And directionless  
In a safe place

I tried to avoid  
The topic of my situation  
With an endless  
Shiny patience

But it's an enviable space  
To break free from the past  
And start anew  
As I stare at that blank page

Glowing white  
And I'm not ready yet  
To make the first  
Crude mark