

Sugar Tobey

Artist and Critic

On the wall outside my window
somebody painted a big bright happy red square
next day giant yellow letters in a confident hand wrote OK

it was the perfect thing to paint on the side of
an old gray neglected New York building OK
everything is going to be OK and I wanted to believe it

next day I see the artist in a paint covered hoodie
he looks up at me in the window he's got more paint
smiling he holds his paintbrush up in victory

I give him a big thumbs up
but later I see he has added more letters
the wall now reads O-K-O-M-A

what's okoma must be the artists name or something
I liked OK better so I shut the window
and pulled the curtain

Desperado

This is the loudest bar I've ever been in
you didn't think you'd make 50 did ya she yells back
then we toasted my birthday

she nods toward an old guy sitting alone behind us
he's wearing a big black cowboy hat
she whispers he might hear us

I don't want to become that guy I say
she gives me a look raising her finger to her lips
then she tells me

I was going to give you a blow job
for your birthday but then decided against it
you want to know why

no that's ok I tell her
somehow she doesn't know
it doesn't matter

on the way out I feel a hand grab my sleeve
the cowboy gives me a friendly nod
life starts at fifty he says

you know he could have just said
you'd better be careful
in these parts stranger

Talk Radio

It's gotten late again
way down the AM radio dial
her voice so gentle
so sexy

she's not speaking english
I don't understand her
she talks all night
deep into my night

I fall asleep
only to wake hours later
to static
the universe speaks

Midnight in Brooklyn

Mike the supers' wife died a few months
before I moved into the building
I miss her a lot he said they were very close

I saw the muddy shovel by the back steps
you doing some work around the building
Mike gave me a funny look through his cigar smoke

the dog just died he said she loved that dog
she wanted it buried with her
so I took care of it

Mike had broken into the cemetery
up the block sometime after midnight
dug a hole and buried the dog next to his wife

I admire you Mike I told him you got guts
he gave me that look through the smoke again
man you know you love somebody right

Power Couple

He was rushing toward greatness
she understood how others blocked her way

he knew the best way there
she could see people's foolishness

they irritated everyone
I wonder whatever happened to them

Next Stop

She got on the train
with only a loaf
of wonder bread

when she sat down
across from me
she started shoving
the bread into her mouth
chewing it just enough to
get the next slice in
but not swallowing it
saving it in her cheeks
which were growing so huge
you couldn't see her eyes

when there were only
one or two pieces left
she began to chuckle quietly

I got off at the next
stop even though it
wasn't mine

Gut Feeling

If you were to come back
when a lot of people do come back
maybe I wish they wouldn't

now temples graying
breasts sunken and worst of all
with eyes dulled

I would just as soon pass
you will find that my belly has grown
huge wise and intolerant