

John Sweet

a lifetime of bitter confusion

nation of children dying from
their fathers' discontent

ocean of blood surrounds this
kingdom of corpses, and you waste yr
breath on sorrow and you dig yr
pit of despair

you move further away from the
sun to where the air is dark with the
songs sung by crucified prophets

you let every prisoner believe he
should've been born someone else

i let cindy walk through my door
naked and ghostwhite and radiant

told the joke and no one laughed and
the days here are all sunlight and pain

asphalt desert 10,000 miles in every direction
and the sweat in our eyes while we
waited for the body to surface

while we waited for the drunken
motherfucker down the hall to
finally drop dead

to lose his footing, maybe, crash
seven flights to his bed of spikes and it wasn't
until 20 years later that i finally figured out
you'd spent that summer homeless

it wasn't until after i'd lost you
that i became a father
and i kept the drugs hidden kept the
windows open but you never came back

you never got to hear the punchline

could never quite understand why
each nail had to be driven
all the way through

in jeweled palaces, in unspoken beauty

i will be the negative space
that embraces you

i will be the idea of
 love
from a great distance

the truth of lust and the
beauty of it, and i will be the song
that stays in your head for
the next hundred years

the words that brush
your lips like kisses

the silence that
defines us always

maia, refused

or pale grey afternoon
light trying to become something more

100,000,000 miles of dirty snow and
brown lawns, of dull white houses and
rusting trailers, because the present was never
meant to be any better than the recent past

because the dogs are starving

are chained to the axles of cars
propped on cinder blocks

the baby is dead in its soft blue room

is crying when stacy calls,
is sleeping beneath the distant drone of
passing planes and just because one
unhappy ending is true doesn't mean there
aren't other possibilities

found a religion on intolerance and
crucifixion then build a nation on the
corpses of innocent victims and
see what you get

let the days lose their shape

let your wife get addicted to
whatever the doctor prescribes

asleep on the couch and dreaming of
someone she didn't marry and what you
need to remember is that there is
no god worth killing for and
no flag worth dying for

what you need to do is
get in the car and drive

walk across the river until the
ice no longer supports your weight

it's been a long fucking time since
anyone's life or
death really mattered

and beyond

if this is you or i or
if these are strangers

sons or daughters or
one night stands from
other towns, from other lives

say *please love me* like an
echo in a room without echoes and
if this is how the story begins

a hallway lined with masks
in the suicide factory,
six a.m. and dark and if we are outside
fucking in the snow,
in the parking lot,
in the gravel frozen mud
that surrounds it

smell of gasoline and the
taste of blood and
if what we feel is a pain that is
not the pain of hope

if there are bodies falling
from the sky in flames

if this is war

a tyrant on fire, let his burning heart warm our bones

your life, amounting to less than
the sum of passing days

faith in a savior who
couldn't even save himself,
and is this a joke?

a religion based on torture

a nation dedicated to
the idea of witch hunts

if fear is what you value most
then i was born to be your enemy

why i decided to be someone else

car on fire in the breakdown lane
a few miles north of tully,
bones of indians buried beath the mini-mart parking lot

no songs in praise of junkies

no more pills in the ashtray

smile and tell tina she's okay but
her sister is hotter and
she tells you you're an asshole

says her mother's boyfriend told her the same thing
when she was 13 but he still fucked her anyway

has a scar just below her left breast
from where her last boyfriend sliced her and she
says she's pretty sure she still loves him

says she still wants to sleep with you but
maybe just on weekends

maybe just when she's tired of
being ground into dust