

Poetry Series

Mick Tomlinson

- poems -

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7 Block Salad

Instead of croutons I brought
home beef bouillon cubes.
What the hell am I supposed to do
with chunks of dried broth?
For Christ's sake why do I
do this to myself?
Wait, I have a fish aquarium
with fish that eat other fish!
That's it.
I just saved myself at least
two months worth of fish food,
and those little
tin-can jobs are expensive!
So now the fish are set
but I got nothing. I mean
yeah, I got the romaine and
onion and cheese, but what's
all that without my
bread croutons?
So I hit up the quickie-mart
only four blocks down,
\$3.45 it cost me to shave
three blocks off my walk.
Fucking worth it, go ahead
ask me.
So now I'm back and my fish
tank is murky brown
like shit water in a clogged
commode. Hot damn I bet they
are loving that!
This is great, the fish are all fed
and I'm all set here
with my salad and my croutons
and my...
AWW YOU GOTTA BE JOKING, NO FUCKING
DRESSING? ! ? !
are you kidding me?

Mick Tomlinson

A Cave In Santa Fe

for 25 years
I searched,
found nothing.
friends tried to help
and I'd smile
the way a mother might smile
at a vase
with fake flowers
or at a child
pretending to learn
mathematics.
I swam seas, climbed trees
& mountains,
got so close I poked
a stick at God's ribs,
found nothing.
I was told to look
under pillows,
beneath seat cushions,
'leave nothing unturned'
but all I found were teeth,
loose change,
a forensics nightmare.
I gave up looking
for the obvious,
found myself passed out
(one year later)
in a cave in Santa Fe
filled with
spiders, bats
& rattlesnakes...
and the answer
to almost everything.

Mick Tomlinson

Across the Median

across the median
where cop cars idle
in ambush
I saw an angel
get crushed by the
slow roll
of approaching steel.
I also saw a race
take place
between god and man,
both in a rush
to resuscitate
two broken wings,
both failed
miserably.

across the median
traffic jammed
for 30 miles as
heart-shaped helicopters
dipped and rose
within the sky like
useless yo-yo's.
save me!
save me!
but the ace of spades
had been played
that day
and no one got saved
across the median
where even angels
get struck down
from heaven.

Mick Tomlinson

All Fun & Games

I push buttons
frantically
because I don't know the code
for invincibility
or rejuvenation
and I'm scared I will fall
through the floor
to a subterranean level
and impale myself in a pit
of shiny spears,
so I
tap, tap, tap, tap
to maintain momentum
and jump
from this platform to the next
and jump
my way to freedom
to discover a bonus level
hidden in the clouds!
and in the midst
of all the excitement
my reckless fingers
get carried away
and I plummet to that place
I fear most,
to that place that sends
my Xbox
hurling through the
air like a
300 dollar frisbee.

Mick Tomlinson

All That Was Left

before the road,
the rain and failing sunset;
before the trenches
and bayonets of distant wars,
before all this, yes
she sat in my lap
with map and compass
pushing sixty in a pleated
skirt.
the interstate was ours,
we earned it-
we reached heaven's gate
a day ahead of schedule
and how the angels adored us!
their trumpets bellowed
and took us home
because our car
would not start and our hair grew
wild as ivy,
threatening their very
existence..
we had to go we had to go
but it wasn't long
before the road, the rain
and failing sunset found us;
before the trenches and bayonets
of distant wars devoured us
and all that was left
was beautiful,
so inexplicably
beautiful.

Mick Tomlinson

Alone with Warm Beer, Stale Chips, Question Marks

it's not that I have horrible taste
in women, exactly
or that my fear of an honest
relationship is a lit match
in my shirt pocket,
it's simply this:
I don't understand you
or her
or me
or the way things work
or are
or should be,
and I get confused so quickly
that my mind jumps in
ready to stop the bullets
from your loaded mouth,
and then of course
the trees collapse all around me
and the lumberjacks
all go home
to sit on front porches
carving wooden idols
out of looted branches
for their kids to have
while daddy plays in the forest
with chainsaws.
you see,
this is how it happens
each and every time.
I feel someone new moving in,
getting closer,
another woman with her nose
pressed up to my ear
ready to whisper
all of her secrets,
ready to exchange her scent
for my own,
ready to relax in my corner
between the bookshelf
and the fireplace
with her head in my lap,
her heart in my hand
like a fragile piece of life
I shouldn't be holding,
trusting me
more than I trust myself.
you see,
I am a monumental mess inside
and I told you this
from the very beginning
but you decided
to wear your x-ray specs

hoping to see right through
all the shit,
hoping to find the good food
hidden at the back of
the fridge.
well that's fine as wine
it's your waste of time,
but don't get sore
and try to even the score
with a cute little slice
of poetry.

Mick Tomlinson

Ambuscade

tiny fingers grip
the wooden handle of
an old ragged-out recliner
exhausted from years of
200 pound ass abuse.
in a dank corner it sits,
hungry, mouth open
like an upholstered
furniture fly trap
waiting for a meal;
the dark hollow calls out
to Mr. Cat
'here kitty, kitty'
closer.. closer..
(victory only a whisker away)
closer.. that's it..
WHOOSH!
a war takes place
between claws and fabric
and a child squeals
in delight
as he deserts the battle front
and runs upstairs to
inform mommy that Hitler
just invaded Poland
on tv.

Mick Tomlinson

Atomism

I carry several planets
(replacement earths)
in a leather satchel
draped over my shoulder
like a universe of misplaced
creations.

I carry my arm in a sling
to draw attention
to myself,
exposed fingers dangle
without purpose,
cracking and attracting
the ears and eyes
of circling falcons, hungry
for the worm.

I carry a book on atomic
philosophy inside my
jacket pocket,
to remind myself that
who I am, wherever I go,
and everything I see
is all that ever was
and ever will be.

I carry your trust
in a locket around
my stiff neck
hoping that one day
soon you will be there,
standing in the gravity
of our being, agreeing
with everything
I write.

Mick Tomlinson

Back On the Farm

I don't even know
where to begin,
or how to tell you
about the
dog-collared days
of my youth
where I was lead
out back
behind the shed
beaten and bled
onto pitchforked bales
of hay.
I studied the foreign
exchange of gold
into crimson as
I questioned the
meaning of life
squared, corded,
racked and stacked-
future feed for
creatures
more heroic than
myself.
I hid from my
monster
amongst the hens
and their eggs
and roosted my troubles
just the same,
a chicken scratch
existence with
rhode island reds,
my only friends.
I played rambo
in the woods with
a gun constructed from
a broomstick and
a leather strap,
but the knife
I carried on my hip
was real
and ready to deal
the final blow
that would send
my monster
flailing about
the yard, headless
like so many of
my feathery friends
before him.

Mick Tomlinson

Basement Steps

these basement steps,
a concrete compost
covered with rotting leaves.
there could be snakes sleeping
somewhere underneath, but
I don't care.
I'm ignoring life again,
not paying bills,
hanging up when they call
demanding money.
I watch the smoke trail off
as I wet this cigarette,
its soggy filter infuriates me,
but it's my fault.
I could become muscular.
I could lift weights and
care about my looks
like so many other people,
but instead I eat cheetos
and hug my pillow tight
at night, sobbing.
I have family and a normal
life, people who care
about me and voice their
opinions, but I pretend
I am dead to them,
a ghost, a faded memory.
I've jumped from bridges
and overturned cars,
I've spun guns on hardwood
tables, my life reflected
off spinning chrome.
yet I stand here still,
these basement steps
and this life I question
not my own,
walks away from me
and disappears behind the
treeline.

Mick Tomlinson

Been There All Along

a grim discovery on my front bumper,
two shredded butterflies
and the feathery remains
of a bird, possibly a sparrow.

back inside my apartment
I can't shake the vision from my head
as I try and remember
when I last washed my car.

on my shelf, a bird watchers book
never before opened
informs me I was wrong..
a black-collared swift, not a sparrow.

this new knowledge does little
to ease my conscience,
but reminds me that tomorrow
is laundry day.

Mick Tomlinson

Before the Sun

it's always like this
first thing in the morning-
before the sun,
before the last star
disappears,
before the chill in the air
becomes t-shirt warm
and tiny songbirds shuffle
within their nests
preparing for opening chorus.
it's always like this
first thing in the morning-
silent,
peaceful,
surgically calm.
spiders tapdance
between the trees
fervently spinning silk
into beautiful death traps
ready to capture the sun
when it rises,
ready to intercept all
early morning flights.
it's always like this
first thing in the morning-
my favorite time of day,
coffee in one hand
cigarette in the other
and 24 hours ahead of me
full of all promise,
absent of lies.

Mick Tomlinson

Behind the Telephone Line

my phone is ringing again,
ringing.. ringing..
ringing..
but I ignore the
nightmare of conversation
waiting on the
other end.

it could be my boss
wishing to send me far away,
maybe to a remote
third-world country
where rare flowers bloom
at 3 o'clock in the morning
and the buzz
of hungry locusts
can be heard across
the desert flats.

or maybe it's an ex-lover
checking in,
checking for a pulse,
checking old emotions
to verify the reason
for her leaving.

or maybe it's the family
still worried,
still concerned
about the child who
refuses to exist,
refuses to submit,
refuses to answer
the ringing of a phone.

or maybe it's just me
calling to see
if I've placed myself
(along with everyone else)
on that list of
unaccepted calls.

Mick Tomlinson

Behind the Telephone Line (part two)

it's torture when she calls
because I know the next hour
of my life will be spent
holding the phone between
my ear and shoulder
while trying to eat, drink, smoke, type, and turn a page
with one hand
and massage away the neck
cramps and spasms
with the other.

I wonder why she persists
when she knows
the deliberate silence from
my end will be followed by
the tossing of the phone
like a flat rock skipping water
across the floor into a wall.. kerplunk!
and there it is..

my rattled emotions,
my darkest inner thoughts
exposed in fragmented pieces
all across the living room.
well, she knew it'd come to this
eventually.
hell, she sunbathes in the rays
of my loathing
and never gets burned.

'you broke your #! @damn phone! '

'it was useless before it hit the wall.'

'it was insured, you'll have a new one by midweek.'

'wonderful.'

and sure enough on wednesday
there in the mail
radiating like a miniature god,
a brightly wrapped package
with my name
in calligraphic one inch letters,
a brand new source of infuriation
waiting to be released
from the box,
from the bubble wrap,
from my hand for a second time
without remorse.

Mick Tomlinson

Between the Broken Buildings

there are so many dark
alleyways here,
sleepy avenues &
sidestreets I've called
home, each reminding me of
women I've known or shadows
of a life not worth remembering.
it's easy to say goodbye
to the buzz of a well-lit city
with the turn of a corner, a
simple stroll down memory lane
with nicotine-stained
thumbs hooked casually
at the belt loops.
I find myself thinking,
as I pass by these paths
of my past, I find myself thinking:
'I gave all of this up?
left it all behind, and for what? '
I continue walking, of course
I don't stop. I don't go exploring
for answers, because I already
know the answers.
sometimes it's better to lie
to yourself
and just let things be.

Mick Tomlinson

Big Dipper

I love how the Big Dipper
aligns perfectly with the roof
of my house in August,
but by November
it has vertically tipped onto
its handle, closer towards
the utility shed.
And in the time it takes
for a constellation to flip over
I have accomplished
very little.

Mick Tomlinson

Breakfast of Champions

when morning drops in like
parachuting soldiers, stiff rifles
cocked, bombs exploding with
vitamin C,
it's the start of a brand new day.
chiseled stone fragments
litter the kitchen floor
so step carefully
on tippy toes the way a cat
walks in silence.
snipers behind the curtains,
snipers beneath the couch,
snipers up on the fridge
take aim and wait..
pop! pop! tarts leap
from the toaster to my plate
chaos in the ranks, CEASE FIRE!
damn those trigger happy jacks
and stacks of burnt bacon,
morale is at an all-time
low, we need more bombs.
we need to flatten cities
into pancakes,
feed the front lines,
keep pushing forward
well into the afternoon.
at 1700 hours we'll break
for dinner, regroup,
and ready ourselves
for another brand new day.

Mick Tomlinson

Damn It

deep down in the pit
of unsettling despair
that I call my room,
the basement I sleep in
is flooding.
water is spewing out
from the adjacent section
where only spiders,
roaches, and the beat-up
hot water heater goes.
it's unfinished back there..
concrete floors,
concrete walls,
dangling lightbulbs,
a 2x4 ceiling held fast
by cobwebs and copper
plumbing.
oh yes, it's heaven
holding hands with hell
but damn it
I am happy here
sitting at my desk
writing poetry
while the bowels of
this old house
leak muck up past
my ankles.

Mick Tomlinson

Dancing On the Memories

I pull the hood
of my hoodie
up over my head
as I step
all over these
pictures
of you,
these pictures
are all I have
left,
they are all
I need.
any other reminders
would be
to much for my
fragile disposition.
I pause for
a moment
and stare down
at your crinkled
face
and wonder
what possessed you
to delete
so many of my poems.
I would never
stoop that low,
but then again
you didn't have an
artistic bone
in your body,
so here I am crushing
your face
with my foot
and still loving you
for whatever
reasons.

Mick Tomlinson

Down By the River

quarter past three
the flood gates opened
and I was still swimming
downstream, waiting for you
to join me in the churning
waters, in that filthy foamy
river of deadluck.
you stayed tethered to shore
and watched me battle
for breath from the safety
of your tree branch,
it was an oak, am I right?
it doesn't matter now,
because you are safe and free
and probably better off
without me, although I must
admit it's rather dark
down here by the river
without you.

Mick Tomlinson

F*ck You For Asking

didn't go to bed last night
or the night before,
it's almost like I'm trying
to find an end
or an edge to the madness
as I sharpen
myself on that grind stone
to make a fine point,
but who's really listening?
who's gonna care
if I drive myself
(and a few dozen others)
over the edge
of a cliff
into the deep below.
the sting of willow trees
as we race towards
the bottom
is a lot like the thrill
of a pinball bouncing
towards a new high score
but really,
who's gonna care
when a heap of twisted metal
becomes a tomb for
the innocent
all because someone
(not pointing any fingers)
thought it'd be worth the chance
to bottle down
and make believe that buses
really can fly.

Mick Tomlinson

Facing the Corner Again

you asked me
to write a poem
tonight,
said it'd been awhile
since my last
and I thought to myself,
how wonderful
it'd be
if the sky dropped razors
instead of raindrops
or
what a nightmare
it'd be
if sharks bred with octopi
or
how beautiful
it'd be
if one day YOU sat down
with pen
and paper
and cleverly disguised
your thoughts
as poetry
and all I had to do
was point and click
to read what's on your
mind.

Mick Tomlinson

Fire Down Below

you have no problem
telling me what's on
your mind
when I'm sitting at my desk
upstairs
writing about the girl
downstairs
who is screaming up
at me
about yesterday's
burnt dinner
stuck to the face
of a frying pan
and last months collection
of bagged beer bottles
still blocking
the predetermined
fire escape route.
well, between your
cooking skills
and my drinking habit
I'd say we're
pretty much both
fucked.

Mick Tomlinson

Five & Dime

I remember asking,

'how much is that doggy
in the window? '

you know,
chasing a cheap chuckle,
but all I got was

'dog's not for sale, sir
part of the display'

no shit fella?
yeah, he'd lick the jollypop.
the place was a dive anyway,
not one clerk worth
a tit & a whistle.
so I turned to leave
and spotted a cockroach
the size of a tennis ball
guarding the door

'hey asshole, your store
has roaches..they part of the display to? '

being escorted from a
cheap five-and-dime
is a new low for me but that's ok,
this sad little town
is crammed full of sidewalk
shopping and I've got
all afternoon to explore.

Mick Tomlinson

Forward Retreat

don't count me out
just yet, old friend
this life
(hampered as it may be)
is still fresh
and full of punch.
just look at the way
my fists hang
by my side like two
dormant warriors,
disarming but ready
to do battle
at a moments notice.
yeah, that's right
I still got the iron
and the steel
and a whole army
of canteened mercs
stowed in wooden crates
at a shipyard in Algiers.
it's tremendous work
you know,
standing ten feet tall
when all the world around you
hovers just above the surface
on soft bellies,
afraid to submerge,
unable to elevate.

Mick Tomlinson

Front Porch

from my front
porch
i am invisible
as i watch
the naked neighbor
feed her dog,
fat-ass hung like
the moon
brightly shining.
i see it all
from my front
porch
from the safety
of my swing,
lovers engage
in unusual
positions while
the bastard
child from three
doors down
intrudes upon
their treasure
and exits via
the back
porch.

Mick Tomlinson

Goose Bumps

on the straits of Mackinac Island
where the shore meets Huron,
where chisled rocks peek above
the surface
there are gaggles of geese,
hundreds of them
pissing and shitting
in the greenery
and beating their wings
against the cool rush of an early
Michigan breeze.
a peaceful morning
doesn't exist here,
HONK! HONK! HONK!
with the rising of the sun
all throughout the day
and well into the night.
the locals are powerless
against their numbers,
for every bird chased away
3 take its place
and the concert of horns
remains unbroken
as tourists shake their heads
and remind themselves
to vacation elsewhere
next year.

Mick Tomlinson

Grow Old With Me

my bones can't hold
this punishment,
these momentary years
are reducing me
to tears and i swear
i'll kill
the next fucker that
mentions it.. but so what?
so what if i am
getting up there,
who's in denial here?
not me.
nope,
not this left-over
snack, this half eaten
cracker.
but i still have
my eyes for the books
that support my
lonely conscious,
i still have
my lips that sip
old sorrows away,
and i still have
you,
ever faithful reader
wishing by now
you'd grabbed
Wordsworth or Yeats
from the shelf
instead.

Mick Tomlinson

Half Past Two

desperately searching through
old black & whites, cardboard shoebox
tilted on its side-
memories spread out
like a chinese fan.
empty beer bottles rising from the mess
of resurrected death
help fill the missing blanks.
the glorious roar of passing traffic
ended long ago
and now the walls are thick
with insect silence;
the scratching..
the deluge of foraging..
the chewing of wood.
outside, telephone wires whisper
invisible messages
through a neighborhood fast asleep
while carnivale clowns
and quarter-a-peek freaks
two towns down
play roulette with discarded syringes.
yes, this is the dirty side of night..
litter beneath a full moon,
a cocked revolver
in the hand of a child
during recess,
snapshots of spent rejection,
loose tiles,
a dirty kitchen floor.

Mick Tomlinson

Holiday Spirit

It's storming like hell outside
and I'm glad for it.
I feel like exposing myself
in the dining room window again,
Irene from across the street
is seated at her window
watching a winter snow
erase her driveway.
I have a candle burning
in the windowsill, a red & white
half-melted santa.
I want to take the candle
and pour hot wax all over
my balls and watch as the liquid
flames drip to the floor below

Drip..burn..drip..burn..

there's a sudden knock
at the door..

two cops,
an anonymous call,
report of a strange fire.

Irene, you bitch
wait til I break out
the menorah, then I'll really
put on a show.

Mick Tomlinson

Hook, Line and Sinker

pages of blank sheets of paper
piling up,
this collection of nothingness
asleep on my desk
reminds me that today
is no different than the
day before,
that tomorrow will likely
be just the same.
maybe this basement
has lost its charm,
maybe these walls
that housed me for a year
are tired and bored
and long to see the work
of a true genius,
a madman at the ink press
ripping cuticles from fingers
with angry teeth
and always shouting,
always believing in the way
things work,
like the penguins in the arctic
parading in soft circles
round a hole in the ice,
the rhythmic tapping
of their feet
luring fish to the surface
where everything is fine.
maybe i'm the fish
and these blank papers
are my lure, dangling..
enticing me to bite,
willing me to move about
and ready myself for a
second show..
well i dunno,
i just don't know.

Mick Tomlinson

House Arrest

when I climb those concrete steps
and open that cellar door
I always wonder
which celestial candle will greet me?
will it be the sun?
will it be the moon?
sometimes I feel
it's better to never
surface at all.
sometimes I feel
I've stayed hidden for so long
that life beyond that grey steel door
is just a hoax,
a complicated mirage,
someone's imagination,
an alarm clock
that never rings.
how many hours have passed this time?
how many days?
how many weeks?
I gauge my answer
by the blades of grass,
by the leaves of trees,
by the position of my shadow
when it's 1/4 past three.
so many times
I've surfaced like a groundhog
and went scampering back
into my hole
only to realize
I scampered too far, burrowed too deep
and I find myself
chewing through the roots
of yesterday.

Mick Tomlinson

I Could

I could very easily
upset the balance
of the living
by making friends with
the dead, rename them
after pets I've had
in the past.
I could very easily
leave this state
and move away,
maybe to Florida
where the sun is a
golden god and
the ocean a refuge.
I could very easily
jump from a bridge
and hope I float
face up
so I can watch
as the birds circle low
and target my bloated
corpse for landing.
I could very easily
run away, far away
and leave a trail
of colored candy behind me
for all the world
to follow and find me.
Yes, I could very easily
do all these things and
I could also write a poem
that ends on a good note
but that would
make me into a liar,
now wouldn't it?

Mick Tomlinson

I met a stranger

I met a stranger
in the mirror
of the men's bathroom
and he told me,
looked me straight in the eye
and said:
good god man,
a hot shower
a shave
and a piece of ass
would fix all that!

and you know something,
he was right.

Mick Tomlinson

I miss Drips

I've reduced myself to
taking shortcuts when I drive
and
frequenting corporate coffee shops
like Panera Bread Co.
and Starbucks,
where poets are carefully
sneered upon by
the green
and red
smocks of upper management.

oh I'm sorry, have I exceeded
the allotted time a
buck seventy-five will get me?
is my presence here
somehow disturbing?
pardon me sir,
do you have a light?
haha, a joke of course
I wouldn't think
of adding to the stink.

naturally I don't fit
their patron criteria,
I rolled up
in a Toyota and parked
between a Lexus
and a new H3
and the bumpersticker
on my car reads
I'LL BEHEAD THE NEXT FUCKER
THAT SUES ME, SO WHAT.

Mick Tomlinson

In the Rearview Mirror

in case you were wondering
about the army
of unsharpened daggers
dangling from the interior
of my car,
or maybe the diffused
landmines I use
as seat cushions
for your unwelcomed ass..
well, just so you know
that was all for show
I was only out to scare you,
intimidate you,
remove you from my
acquaintance list so I could
drive through town
alone again,
with my thoughts
and my sanity
and my bookbag
occupying the space
where you used to be.
it's better this way,
maybe not for you
since you're
out there somewhere
sobbing like a little bitch
reciting lyrics
to songs I hate
while searching for a new
way to get places,
but for me
it's one step closer
to heaven
and we both know
what a treacherous hike
that's been for me.

Mick Tomlinson

Maybe God Sleeps In On Sundays

this mad bitch, hysterical
convulsing on my kitchen floor,
two hands with individual
brains, disturbed and producing
frantic waves
without rhythm,
without reason,
the energy released could
illuminate a light bulb.
it is sunday morning,
the birds know it,
my neighbors know it,
a church choir a block away
knows it, but she has
forgotten.
there on the stained linoleum
of center stage, the spotlight
shines on her madness,
the incandescent rage
is somewhat angelic.
I think god is watching,
waiting, whittling planets
out of wood and
tapping his feet to
the beat of good morning
sunday radio while
this intoxicated whore
desecrates the sabbath
right here in my
apartment.

Mick Tomlinson

Moon Over Monkey Lake

I can feel her
tugging at my heart
tugging at my sleeve
with words that
brace my eyes like toothpicks
so I see everything,
all that life has to offer,
everything I've been missing
by focusing
on bad dreams and bells
with broken clappers.
I love her for that
and in this poem I thank her,
remembering her forever
as the full moon goddess
of my forest,
illuminating the path of
darkness I always seem to
live in
drown in
breathe in
but never seem to escape.
I close my eyes
and I feel protected
by the things
that used to scare me..
trust
love
hope
friendship
I feel her lips at my ear
whispering, encouraging
and I have her to thank
for reminding me
and showing me
that good things can grow
from a spoiled seed.

Mick Tomlinson

Ocean Jumper

This boy is skipping islands
like flat rocks overseas
at high stride
he's unstoppable,
completely unstoppable
Where will he go?
When will he leave?
This boy is an ocean jumper
a species, rare indeed
a loner in the
by-and-by, master
of the sea
Watch him in the deep
Watch him in the deep
beyond the waves
are breaking
Watch him in the deep
This boy is skipping islands
a dozen at a time
oh, how I do wish
his ocean could be mine!

Mick Tomlinson

Open Road

I've been driving around
as if my life
isn't interesting enough,
as if my life
is currently under construction
due to a lack of
hairpin turns and silver
guard rails.

I've been driving around
ignorant of direction,
ignorant of the hazards
that crawl up from the roadside
and obstruct my
right of passage,
ignorant of the time
it takes for me to drive
coast to coast
and back again.

I've been driving around
searching for myself,
searching emergency pull-offs
for melted flares
or reflective triangles,
tell-tale signs that I
was already there.

I've been driving around
like this
for months now, as if my life
were no longer my own,
but instead a passing procession
of bread crumbs
carried on the backs
of a million ants
crossing the same old highways
I once drove on.

Mick Tomlinson

Our Naked Past

she danced for me
in stiletto
heels, black
leather racing up
her thighs.
the stage was
a portal for
shattered lives,
a place to go back
and remember
our naked past.
she danced for me,
communicating sorrow
via the curves
of her perfect body
as we shared secrets
and zeroxed the pain
of two tinder youths
violated and
repressed like the
wild techno beats
throttled throughout
the club.

afterwards,
we shared a cigarette
by the pool table
and drank Yoo-Hoos
through chocolate
Twizzler straws
while laughing
at first-time
customers,
stiff dicks,
and remembered that
life didn't always
used to be
like this.

Mick Tomlinson

Passing Through

you won't remember
even though I told you exactly where to go
the hell, you say
no..no..
to that quaint little corner
of the net that houses my soul
and crosses fat black homosexuals
off the list
of persons I'd like to meet.
it seems you've somehow forever
changed me,
like brown roots masked by
fire rose,
who would do that?
YOU.
(certainly
are
hospitable..)
behind the front desk,
behind the wheel of a car
that means everything,
behind a smile that reveals
tiny truths,
behind the door of the whore
in 312,
and quite possibly
behind a past threaded together
to create a perfect wound,
who really knows?

no, you won't remember
even though I told you I'd write this,
that poetry is my only drive in life,
my buick, equipped with all the
bells & whistles.
it's ok though, who needs a memory
when the world is full of
poets..
and possibilities..
and the willingness to write
at 3am when the rest of the world
is fast asleep,
dreaming up a better tomorrow.

Mick Tomlinson

Penless & Broke

well this is it
the end of a 15 day
relationship, run dry
the one you thought
would certainly outlast
the rest,
but here you are
right back in the middle
aisle of Staples
scoping the ceiling's
surveillance
and hoping this won't
be the poem that lands your
ass in jail.

Mick Tomlinson

Perhaps

Perhaps you found me
nose-nudged and forever
tethered to sleep,
this juxtapose of life,
intoxicating.

Misplaced conformities
dangle and sway from
plastic triangles in your
closet. In memories
I glide right beside
you, brushing lint
from the shoulders of
yesterday-
fabricated thoughts
and intricate ideals
bashed in like heads
of newborn baby
seals. Perhaps you
found me glistening
and listening
with ears remarkably
polished, loose flesh
worn like useless
training wheels.

Mick Tomlinson

Pilgrimage

maybe I'll migrate west,
hitch the whole way
on a dislocated thumb.
I'll find myself a mountain
majestic and fertile
and burrow in
like a bastard badger
not stopping til I hit rock-bottom
then, and only then
will I rest
and prune myself
and gather my thoughts
and uncork the memories that have been
sloshing around my backpack
for 1,800 miles.
the ground will be soft
like the women
and I'll make hundreds of useless babies,
plant them row upon row
in the forest
by the mountain near a stream.
I'll watch them grow
and dig their way to freedom;
watch them take off through the trees
and begin their easternly
migration,
and there I'll be.. alone again
with my dick in the dirt,
waiting for tomorrow.

Mick Tomlinson

Piss On It

I'm slowly getting over
you,
replacing you with
each drag off this camel,
every bike ride
I take without a helmet,
every slut I meet
and sleep with
and every poem I write
and throw away.
I'm slowly forgetting
about the promises
you made
and tossed away like
cheap ceramic craft
projects,
it's okay I wouldn't
have kept them either,
but then again
I wouldn't have made them
in the first place.
I'm slowly recovering
from the fact
that I allowed myself
to love that deeply,
to trust in someone
other than myself
after spending a lifetime
grooming otherwise
but hey
we learn from our mistakes
they say
and here is what I've learned:
thinking of you
and all the times we shared
together
is a lot like getting
my dick caught in
the zipper
after pissing on
old flames.

Mick Tomlinson

Poetry Is

what do you know about poetry?
what do you feel
when you read these words?
do you see a boy
just waking up from childhood
ascending the stairs of youth
two at a time,
or do you see a man
carved from the bark of a
thousand year old tree
yearning to be a sapling?
this poem is just a bridge
across a stream
in a field of knee-high oats
beneath a sun
that never sets;
these words are merely
training wheels
for your literary journey
put in place by the poet
himself, a father
pushing a child forward
into a new adventure.
so ride away
faithful reader..
every word turns the pedal,
every sentence becomes a path,
and every poem can be
that place you wish to see
if only you allow yourself
a little shove
in the right direction.

Mick Tomlinson

Pools of Pamukkale

wading the pools of pamukkale
soaking in the liquid riches
of a natural world wonder
and I wonder
how many have found it?
doubtful many have witnessed
pools of water stacked
one upon the other
forming a hillside of
pancaked lakes, I know this
because I've been there
wading the pools of pamukkale
without you.

Mick Tomlinson

Rain of 1,000 Kisses

it always seems
your kisses
fall from heaven
like raindrops
to form puddles
of shallow hope
everywhere I step,
forcing me to
hopscotch my way
around tiny
oceans of tears.
so I hide beneath
an umbrella
as I walk
to your house,
fearful of the rain
fearful of the kisses
and it always seems
like the storms
approach from
your neighborhood
and dump their
fury in my
backyard, right
when I least
expect it.

Mick Tomlinson

Rebirth

sleek & narrow
strips of aluminum
shine like God's
third eye
watching over me,
offering a
behind-the-scene peek
at truth, love,
& renewing bliss.
I stumble and fall,
the staggering
weight of it all..
humbled I crawl
on sanguine knees
rubbed raw.
this is the thick of it,
amidst the thorns & brambles
& vine entangled dreams
I see it,
that all encompassing glow,
that infallible
'I'm with you' feeling
teaching me to grow-
inside I'm a fly,
inside I run & hide,
inside is where I cry...
but I am still alive
and brightly eclipsing
like God's shoeshine

Mick Tomlinson

Sleight Of Hand

it's not okay. I was
just a little boy,
I couldn't help
the incessant sneezing
that forced me
to retreat indoors
where you were
silently waiting
like a brand new allergy.
outside the pollen
invaded me, indoors
it was you.
and there I stood
dripping wet from
swimming in your pool,
you handed me a towel
and watched me dry.
I stared at the floor,
eyes found refuge
in puddles left behind
by two youthful
feet. it's crazy
what happened next,
how quickly fear turned
to fun with simple
sleight of hand and
POOF! a coin magically
vanished..
only to reappear inside
the netting of my
swimming trunks.
how clever you were
disguising yourself as
god's magician,
conjured trust from
the dust of your
dirty closet and lured
me into the sick
fucking nightmare of
your life.

Mick Tomlinson

Slumber

I've learned that
it's better to leave
the front door unlocked
before you fall asleep
at night,
that way when
the drunk chick
from the bar
comes knocking at 3am
she won't smash out
your bedroom window
trying to oust you
from your slumber.

Mick Tomlinson

Small Favors

from across the street
police monitor
my 4 o'clock dragging of dead legs
to the fridge
where I take a leak
to relieve a hard days drinking.
tomorrow I wake up,
study the angle of the sun
on my kitchen floor
as I forage for lunch
and curse last nights
piss-poor judgment for a bathroom.
what a wreck in here.
I look around,
the smell of sacrifice fumes from
the oven.
I look outside,
the cops have left, given up
maybe to go home
to their not-so normal lives,
back to their
not-so happy wives
who wake up every day
(just like me)
wondering how in the hell
they will ever manage
their great escape.
'it never ends'
that's what I'd say to them
and
'caterpillars bleed green'
and
'god mocks our impotence'

just a few simple truths
from the poet,
the fiend, the misogynist
who keeps the boys in blue
just busy enough
to keep their wives
from pulling that trigger.

your welcome,
fuckers.

Mick Tomlinson

Smokin the '68

it surprised me the way you
kept your left foot steady
on the brake
while revving the engine
deftly with the other
until the world in the rearview
disappeared behind us
in a puff of white smoke
as if to say
'that's it, I've had enough'
but then the rubber
caught traction with blacktop
and the world returned
in jerks & squeals &
momentary flashes of dizzying
inertia and my mind was
spun three ways into
yesterday as my stomach
truned flips inside
my body, and shit
your crazy antics sent
my favorite hat
right out the window
and naturally
I didn't realize it
until just now, one day
and 3 poems later.

you owe me
a new favorite hat,
show-off.

Mick Tomlinson

The Bet

when apples
and oranges and
all the fruit
between
lie motionless
on your counter
unnoticed

when trees
and rivers and
all the land
between
become occupied
and auctioned
off like
cattle

I will find you

and remind you
that the bet is now over
and you owe me
50 bucks

Mick Tomlinson

The Cowboy Way

cowboy songs float
over an indian fire,
tribal warriors
in stetson hats.
medicine dissolves
on tongue like poison
trying to achieve
false visions.
they don't understand
the sacred rituals of
the fire,
or
the dance,
or
the moon
and it's foreign secrets,
they just smoke
their marlboros and
down their whiskey
and slur in a
drunken stupor while
trespassing on
ancestral ground,
this is the cowboy way.

Mick Tomlinson

The Heart and the Flame

love comes smashing in
out of control
hurling itself at my feet
but aiming for the heart
and I just sit back
grinning
and let it all happen
because I've seen this one
before, I already know
how it'll end
with you confused & crying
and making a mess
of everything, for example
like the art I had
hanging on my wall
that you felt
would be better displayed
in the middle of the street
or how about
my collection of MTG cards
that became confetti
when tossed from
the YMCA balcony overlooking
the indoor pool.
yes, the end is inevitable
& unpredictable,
but I think this time
I will beat you
to the punch and set
your precious little
car on fire
while you're at work
tonight.

Mick Tomlinson

The Kids Across the Street

look at this cardboard
whorehouse
built by the kids
across the street,
(other side of the tracks, of course)
its flimsy lid
serves dual purpose,
one, a swing-in door
two, a flap fan for cooling off
the money-making hookers
found deep inside.
these little shits
have buckets of imagination!
scraps of old dresses
covering cut-out windows,
a make-shift sign scribbled
in black ink
hanging from the veranda:
'2 Pokes 4 the Price of One'
they've even blackmailed
their sisters into
skimpy skirts and strategically
placed them about their
creation,
ensuring the attention
of curious passerbys
with wandering eyes.
hell, I don't know
whether to stroll over
for a closer look or
burn their abomination
to the ground.

Mick Tomlinson

The Long Drive Home After A Show

this guy has been
driving around for over an hour
with his turn signal stuck on
left, left, left
and his foot propped
out the window
shoelaces smacking the car door
like a drummer on speed.
I was at a concert like that once,
the stage bowed beneath
the energy and the fans
were bottles of shaken soda
crazy, ready to go
and that drummer,
oh man, that drummer!
he was an octopus with those sticks
mad at the world
mad at that drumset
mad with passion and those snares
and highhats and mids
were his enemies and he beat them
out of existence,
and he beat the sun
out of existence,
and thousands of frenzied
soda bottles erupted
all at the same time
showering cheers and encores
into the evening sky like
sharp thumbtacks.
and just like that it was over,
we drove home
in cars with forgotten blinkers
and windows rolled down
for exhausted feet
to breathe.

Mick Tomlinson

The Longest Day

funny, tomorrow is the longest day
of the calendar year
and people will celebrate it
with gusto
by starting fires and dancing naked
in the flames,
but I just don't see the purpose.
I mean okay, the longest
hot dog ever cooked
or the longest train ran on
a single pornstar in a day..
now that's something to behold!
but this summer solstice shit
leaves me jaded,
like a blister between two friends
or a cock that won't stop
crowing.
gimmie a beer and a smoke
and I'll give you
the longest poem ever wrote,
but sadly the crazies
will still have managed to
outdo me.

Mick Tomlinson

The Pits

so, all the care and hope
has escaped me,
left me haplessly folded
on the sidewalk
like a t-shirt in a store
picked up & put back down
by a dozen people
with better things to buy.
I want to go away
and iron out the wrinkles,
but north looks just like south
and east, no better than west.
I want to close my eyes
and reopen them
to a brand new world
inside the belly of a bubble
where the sun bounces back
from each horizon,
never settling.
I want something different,
something new,
something closely resembling
the inside of a peach
after being tunneled out
by an exploring inchworm,
the juices of life
not withstanding..
but really,
is that asking too much?

Mick Tomlinson

The Tracks, the Path, and the Sentry

it's all the same
inside this bowl of cereal,
inside my head,
outside of life playing dodgeball
with silver bullets
playing chicken on tracks of
rolling steel.
yellow canaries in clipped hedgerows
blasting their music,
beating their wings in unison
and the dogs, oh those dogs
can't make heads or tails
of it, so they pace
and pant with rubber tongues
sniffing the earth,
sniffing each other,
growling and salivating and sniffing
imaginary scent trails.
it's all the same
on the far side of the tracks
too, where muted campfires die
and smoke, choked out of
existence while the forest
stands proud in formation
laughing, condescending heroes
of yesterdays war.
boulders in makeshift burrows,
scarred, undisturbed
settling bets with nature
and waiting, waiting like time
trapped by a child in a
mason jar as the ivy
and the lichen and the moss
creep silently, up from below
and over, eclipsing the belly
of the great grey whale
forever.

Mick Tomlinson

The Way We Were

I'm standing here
on one leg
watching you
watch me
let this cigarette
burn out
between my fingers.
a warning
would've been nice
or even a slap
from your
ever so faithful hand
on my
ever so deserving cheek,
you still remember
that don't you?
mcdonalds..
the red ferrari..
the blonde
behind the wheel..
the reality check
that left red traces
of your fingers
upon my face..
and my big mac
in your lap
and your chocolate shake
in mine
(or was it strawberry)
god, that was the longest
drive back
to your house
but we still managed
to squeeze a quick
goodbye into the
backseat and laugh about
a lunch we would
never, ever
forget.

Mick Tomlinson

Therapy Helps

here it is,
3: 05am
and I'm bouncing echoes off
these empty walls
time and time again.
I've lost all gravity,
ceiling tiles jarred loose
from the lashing of
my tongue
and while you weren't looking
I smashed out three windows,
one for every
time you said therapy
would help.

it has helped,
and I feel so much
better now.

Mick Tomlinson

There Goes the Rose and Bastard

I purchased three
long-stem roses
from a girl
behind a cart;
I would've bought
the whole damn lot
if she hadn't been
so condescending.
it was as if she knew
those roses were
for no one, had no special
place to go.
maybe she saw it
in my eyes,
maybe she felt
the death of her flowers
in a lonely apartment
somehow made her
bigger than me,
I dunno,
maybe.

Mick Tomlinson

Thin Walls

just as my neighbors voice
finds me, a conversation meant
for another ear,
i tell myself
'the walls here are just too thin'
and its true,
they're made of paper
and plastic and vintage condom
wrappers from the early
70's.
so many lives have been
wasted here,
right in this same chair
in this very same room.
i should have tossed
this second-hand furniture
the day i moved in,
but like many tenants
before me, convenience
overruled despair
and i allowed myself
to recline in the left-over
comforts of others
while i drank up
what money i saved..
this is the definition
of life simplified.

Mick Tomlinson

This Side of the Fence

dozens of storage containers
line the perimeter
of this graveled inner city parking lot,
side-by-side
lined up in perfect rows
like obedient children awaiting dessert.
this is a place
where thoughts get stored away,
locked tight and forgotten;
where pigeons roost
on metal lips and dream of
larger wings and bicoastal flights;
where the poor & homeless
find shelter behind the surplus
of the wealthy.
I can feel the magic happening here
as I sit and ponder
which of these crates, if any,
houses the corpses of
a forsaken family of immigrants..

well, it sometimes ends like this
for some people
in the dust of a desolate lot
in Chicago,
this side of the fence.

Mick Tomlinson

To Be A Poet

to be recognized as a poet
one must drink heavily
and never sleep and
have many failed relationships
with women who still
knock on your door at 3
o'clock in the morning
asking you to recite that
poem you wrote for her
so long ago.

Mick Tomlinson

Trunk Space

you broke into my secret
trunk, that beige beast
I keep locked away
from the outside world,
somehow you managed
to slither in
and settle to the bottom
and amalgamate with
the shadows.
when did all this happen?
has this been a plan
of yours for some time?
I remember just yesterday
I was in there snooping around,
searching for a memory
from two years back
and I never even saw you.
man, you're good.
I'd sure like to know
you're secret, after-all
you've had more than enough
time to learn about mine.
maybe tomorrow
I'll tidy up the basement,
shake out the rugs
and dust off the shelves
of my being,
then you and I can go
for a drink
and wallow in the lining
of my past, and you
can tell me everything
you've learned from
your uninvited intrusion
because seriously,
I'd really love to know.

Mick Tomlinson

Waking Up to Whiskey

she is really something, that girl
and I warned myself right from the start
not to get involved,
not to get intimate
but look how beautiful she is
passed out in my crotch
again, her hot heavy breaths
create a persistent erection
in my lap while I fumble
between ass and cushion for the
remote. she stirs, her hair
tickles my exposed skin
and I tremble.
I'm thinking about waking her up.
I'm thinking about pouring
my left-over whiskey
all over that beautiful face
and waking her right up.
she needs to know what she's
doing to me, and this drink
is pretty much spent.
now, where the hell
is that remote..

Mick Tomlinson

What Little Bugs Do

look over there,
she told me

between kisses
that felt like convulsions

look right over there,
baby

so I looked,
but all I saw were ants
and ashtrays and chocolate..
oh my god, the chocolate!
how the hell did I
overlook such a mess?

see baby, I wasn't lying ya
was I?

her lips could suck bricks
from mortar
where did she learn to kiss
like that?

I didn't care
because I had found
the ants

and the ants had found
the chocolate

and I wouldn't have to do a damn thing
tomorrow 'cept let those
magnificent little fuckers
clean it all up.

Mick Tomlinson

Where Heroes Are Born

I hang here in silence
like a sign with burned out bulbs
attracting no one
on a pole in the drive
of a dive long ago deceased
THUMP, THUMP
it's steadily getting colder
the sun doesn't exist here
worms don't crawl in rainstorms
dogs don't bark or breed,
even time took off
for a piece
maybe to run with the sun
on the far side of the world
THUMP, THUMP, THUMP
it's a playful peaceful dead
and I feel like crying,
these new shoes
are half a size too skinny
and my toes are rows
of swollen berries.
THUMP, THUMP
somewhere in the arctic
a penguin kisses a polarbear
and mammoth glaciers
thaw and flood the igloos
as eskimos fuck & run for cover
while I sit here
in a town that doesn't exist
watching a boy bounce
his basketball
up the street
THUMP, THUMP, THUMP

Mick Tomlinson

Where We Are

everytime I ignore you
I slap my better judgment
and fingernails leave
trails
of self pity across
my leathered torso.
and everytime you
come back
to me, you reduce
yourself just a little bit
more and those eyes,
those soft spoken
changes that take
place on the
apartment floor
remind me of when we first
started dating,
and how i knew it
would eventually
come to this.

Mick Tomlinson

Your Words

your words
like soft whispers
tickle my cheek

I see the street
you once lived on
vacant since the day
you left,
and you left in a hurry!

the car..the backseat..
both are still there
minus the fogged-up
windows.
you left few
memories behind,
partial thoughts drift
lazily through
empty streets

your words
echo in my head
(echo in my head)

remember the times?

Mick Tomlinson