Thomas W. Case
- poems -

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Thomas W. Case (November 10 1966)
A Cursed Poet's Heart

The other day,
I was walking down
the street-I started
thinking about pork pie hats
and how I would love to have one.
I went to the Salvation Army store
and found a dark brown one.
I put it on, and walked out,
smooth as a puppy's belly-slick as
a butterfly's wings.
I loved that hat, I lost it a
couple of days later.
I lose everything I love:
My kids, my clothes, my jaded angel.
I've lost houses, wives, money and cars.
What is it about love and loss that
stalk me like a hound dog?

I've lost hope and heart, and
even my mind at times.
I've lost friends galore,
my parents and two brothers are
gone.I know if I love
something or someone I will
lose it.
And those losses leave scars on
my soul that never go away.
So the answer seems simple,
love less.
Yet, that is impossible with
this cursed poet's heart.

Thomas W. Case
When it's quiet, except for
the fan in the hall
and apathy crawls across the
floor like a spider
and the enemies are
thicker than friends
and the brain dries up
and the flame goes out
and writing a decent line is
like panning for gold...
Remember
it's a long row to hoe.

When nothing touches
you but the rain
and the wind, and the
pain from the sins of
your youth
and every fruit in
the garden is rotten
and you take a bite
just to keep from starving, and now
what you know can't be forgotten,
remember
it's a long
row to hoe.

When each pain is new
and every sorrow is fresh with
the opening of the eyes
and
if
you're blind to the darkness
of the world
or
you see it all too well...
remember
it's still a
long row to hoe.
A New Life

The honey on the
wet orchid glistens
in the sweet afternoon light.
I lick softly the
petals and the bud.
Your sigh is like
a symphony.
The emotions pound through
me like an ocean of love
like a river of madness.
The juice sticks to my soul
and I want nothing less then
to give you breath and life.

Thomas W. Case
A Tender Dream

Once there was this woman that I could talk about writing and poetry, talked about Emily and Bukowski, and many others. We were poets in our own right, shared tears and laughter, like a joint among us, we sang our daughter to sleep. She was beautiful and alive, the brutal dawn destroyed that glorious reality. She farted a lot, but I fell in love with her anyway, and her sons, even cooked. She was magnificent, although she got a little bossy in the kitchen. I can still smell the coriander and garlic and taste the salt on the back of her neck. I picked her wildflowers, and ate well from her garden—all slippery and smooth. She had these pastel soft blue eyes, like something out of a Degas painting. She could be as mean as Humpty Dumpty—all cracked and broken—yoke flowing. I couldn't fix her. And I certainly couldn't put myself back together. Then one autumn, I turned around, and she was gone. A wall went up, but I could see her through the holes in the wall. I knew that I would never touch her again; hold her, kiss her. It made me feel sad and alone. I keep her real close in my mind, some days that gets me. Other times, it's like she was never there at all—just a tender dream. I want to escape the memory of her; overdose on artichokes and avocados, drowned in a sea of Bloody Marys, or run away to far off lands, like Montana or Texas. I'm afraid I'd still see her there—in the Snake River or the wide open sky.

Thomas W. Case
About A Poem

Sometimes, a poem is a beast you create that shits and pisses all over the page. It doesn’t need neutered but it does need house broken.

Thomas W. Case
Aluminum Cowboys (For Tibbs)

I remember walking miles with
our blackies (big garbage bags)
They were full of cans, a nickel a piece.
We were poor aluminum cowboys.
Kind of like Don Quixote and Sancho.
Chivalry wasn't our thing, but we
didn't shy away from it either.
We certainly had our share of
adventures, and misadventures too.
We headed East into the
glorious tangerine and lavender sky of
our La Mancha/Iowa City.
We should be chasing windmills, and
vodka, and cigarette butts;
except late one Summer day,
providence ended it all.
We sat behind our castle
(which closely resembled a grocery store.)
Your face went pallid and you fell on me.
I did C.P.R until the ambulance arrived.
You didn't make it.
I hope there are
adventures in Heaven,
my aluminum cowboy.

Thomas W. Case
An Empty Nest

I've been going through
a long dry spell, an arid
wasteland of the mind.
Writer's block is hell.
It's an empty nest,
a dead baby bird in
the wet grass- ant eaten eyes.
It smells like plastic flowers on
a tombstone.
I'm lost and starving in
the whiteness.
Why can't I write?
Have I drank my mind
into mush?
The poems don't come like
they used to- the click is gone.
Sometimes, there were
four or five a night.
They swam from the
river of my soul.
They were my food, my light,
and my wings.
A good poem is like
smacking the ball out of
the park or, like coming together after
hours of foreplay.
Writers block is a
limp cock, a miscarriage, an empty gun.
It's like having a stomach ache,
and not being able to vomit.
Everywhere I go, I am
surrounded by convicts and a maze of walls.
My mind and spirit are not in prison though.
They fly over the razor wire like
the falcon I saw through the
bars on the window.
He pierced the clouds like a bullet.
I will make the next
poem a feast;
blood and feathers will
fall from my chin,
ambrosia will pulse through
my veins, and I will
sing and soar from
the depths of my cage.

Thomas W. Case
Another Lover

I guess I shouldn't be surprised.
In the beginning, the women are attracted to the light, the writing,
but after a while, they hate it.
They get jealous, as if I had another lover.
I suppose I do.
And when I'm in my stride
I don't give them the attention that they crave and desire.
When the words and lines are flowing
the women seem so needy, so greedy.
I guess it's not fair that I devote my heart to writing- but truth be told, they knew what they were getting themselves into.

Thomas W. Case
At Day's End

At day's end, your love is like a ditch full of weeds. 
A rotting pumpkin, a returned letter, 
a dead yellow cat in the grass.

At day's end, the bum drowns in the river
while trying to bathe. 
The soul is deep in atrophy, and the goldfish
floats to the top of the bowl.

At day's end, your accusations attack like cicada killers. 
Your eyes are soulless, and 
the clown is a killer.

At day's end suicide is a viable option, 
the light has been murdered. 
Jack the ripper got away, 
and the night goes mad with horrid dreams.

At day's end, the sailboat sinks, 
the horse breaks it's leg in the backstretch 
and neither your dog nor your hope will fetch anymore.

At days end there is a shadow behind the orchid. 
Your vagina has teeth, and the bull becomes a steer. 
At day's end, the planets fall in the ocean, 
the noon is an illusion, and romantic love
is gored in the streets of Chile. 
At day's end, my Alice won't leave Wonderland - the dormouse dies, and the dodo still can't fly.

At day's end Don Quixote burns at the stake. 
Robin hangs in his lonely closet. 
Peter goes out upside down, and old Ernie shotguns his way out.

Thomas W. Case
Ativan And Cheesecake

Often, when I'm on the streets, decaying in booze-degradation of the soul, I go under the bridge and watch the ducks. Sometimes I talk to them. They don't talk back. Some days, it's the only beauty I can see. I think and dream of a different world. A land without brutal lunacy. I can handle madness. It's the wicked, smiling hatred that I can do without. The Iowa River beckons me to come swim-float blissfully to heaven. But I know better. Katie and Perry drowned not far from where I sat. It's usually at this time that I'm fresh out of bread for the ducks and I have milked the vodka bottle for all it's worth, that a warm blanket of a thought comes to me- I need help- go to the hospital. I stumble my way there, sometimes by ambulance. I go through nightmarish withdrawals. At around the third day, I get a laptop from the patient library. I catch up with neglected family and friends, then I try to write. The first four days, my mind is like a smashed snail. But usually, the magic comes back.
The muse kisses me gently, and I put the shaking pen to the paper. I can order whatever food I want between 6am and 8pm. I discovered years ago that they have phenomenal cheesecake. So when I'm able to eat, it's the first thing I order. My withdrawals are deadly. Diastolic numbers like 103,109.113. So they give me Ativan. It helps tremendously- Ativan and cheesecake. Suck the muse's tits, then more Ativan and cheesecake. If I'm lucky, I'll turn out a poem or two-like this one right now.

Thomas W. Case
Back From The Dead

I will not be subdued.
Cages don't suit me.
I have to be free.
Fly
run
sing
dance in the
open fields, swim
in the river with
the fish and water snakes.
My soul can't be taken without my permission.
The access is denied.
My heart isn't yours to mock and rape.
I will stake my life on that.
I will rise like a phoenix from the ashes and sail on against the azure sky, free and untethered.
Resurrected
I'm back from the dead.

Thomas W. Case
Another sun sets on his bloody red
broken is the kind of scene
where a leaky faucet could be the straw that
breaks the roaches back, a snapped
shoe lace, a closed liquor store after
a mile walk, sick and shaking in
the pouring rain.
It's so hot, you could bake a potato in
the dresser drawer.
Hot like hell in the summer.
And after it's all said and done,
it's not the heat that finally gets him
or the rickety 's the beating in
his chest that began two hundred
years too late.

Thomas W. Case
I was just thinking about your breathing, before you brush your teeth— I love it. It reminds me of simple, beautiful things like, streams flowing gently over slippery moss covered rocks, and puppies at about three weeks old, right before they open their eyes, the way they wiggle around with their ears pasted to their heads; blind to the world. Soft, plump bellies full of Mother’s milk, but I think most of all, it reminds of home, a home with love and laughter and books and plants; classical music and sunlight bending through half open windows. It warms hearts and hands, and hours and days that slip away far too soon. It reminds me of feathers and flight, and babies—clocks ticking, pages turning, and life—hard, fast, short, beautiful life.

Thomas W. Case
Chaos Is Sexy

Debauched nights, destruction waning.  
There is a twisted pull to the underbelly.  
Chaos is sexy, like silk stockings and  
Bonnie and Clyde.  
I can smell it a mile away,  
like a dog in heat.  
It draws me from the safety of my sweet calm life.  
There is an existence beyond the bridge, but it's boring and soulless.  
I want to murder the light and the routine; dredge the marrow from the bone.

Thomas W. Case
Chasing The Phantom

Drinking has been an exercise in lunacy and sorrow, like jumping off a cliff for tomorrow's dead dreams. The fruit of the vine should be sweet and sentimental, like mamas and moonlight. With a fistful of memories and a soul full of pain, I try it all again; I chase the phantom.

Thomas W. Case
Cooking Sherry

I used to crush
lightning bugs on
my face. I thought
I would glow in
the dark.
I don't, although,
my liver has given me
a nice jaundice cast.
Almost Miami tan.
The other night
she
punched me, then called
the cops- blood everywhere.
She went to jail for
five days.
She acted like it was
an eternity.
We fucked last night until
my cock was raw.
Today, she's a stranger;
self centered and
self absorbed.
I've been drinking Cooking Sherry
to keep from having siezures.
She could care less.
She brought home a
six pack and gave me one
beer.
Oh well,
I knew she was no Iris when
I met her.
I just didn't realize she
was Nightshade.

Thomas W. Case
Cor Meum, Cuput Meum (My Heart, My Head)

Pages turn,
chapters end,
books are finished.
With resolution, and head
held high, I'll
fly away to somewhere
better, where there's
less pain,
I try to love you,
but you just push me away.
The heart is a
silly dreamer.
It sees life as it
should be...could be,
and not as it
really is.
The head sees what
the heart doesn't.
Emotions can be as
treacherous as a
rabid dog or a
razor blade.
I wish I were a
redwood or a rosebush,
or even a dandelion just
swaying in the
breeze.

Thomas W. Case
Dawn Flys Away Like A Mockingbird

I flirted with
the sun as it
blushed
pink
through the trees,
their naked branches
spread wide
wet with dew.
Sticky sweet
dawn
winked with the
promise of a new day.
Swans mate for
life
and die in the Spring.
And she
lied a little less than
the moon, and
the fog, and the
wet cat drunk on
feline dreams.
Her eyes looked like
they hated her face;
like
they wanted to
leap out and
roll down the street,
find a mountain brook to
wash off all they had seen.
She saw too much...
felt too much,
as the fractured dawn
laughed
and flew away like
a mocking bird.

Thomas W. Case
Death Is Stalking Me

Death is stalking me.
It watches me play cards,
smoke cigarettes, and
drink beer.
It took my parents, two
brothers, and all my friends.
It got Chris last week.
20 bottles of whiskey in
seven days, I suppose that
would kill anyone.
They found him on the
railroad tracks.
Death is stalking me.
I won't cheat it.
I won't escape it,
but before it gets me
I'll bet I finish
this poem

Thomas W. Case
Done

It's heart breaking and
raining in my soul.
Love isn't enough.
It's a swamp in
her heart,
mold, mildew, decay.
She wants my balls in
a jar.
a gelded pony to pet.
I'll always be
a stallion.
The fields are
my home,
not her fenced
in facade.
I'm galloping for
good
into the wild.

Thomas W. Case
Dry Land

No commitment
no devotion.
I'm like a boat on the
ocean with you,
tossed and broken by
the waves of your emotions.
Your hurricane is dangerous,
I'm heading for dry land.

Thomas W. Case
Egg-Shells (Good-Bye)

Don't feel
don't think
don't talk
don't drink
don't smoke
don't move
don't live
don't die
don't try,
you'll fail.
Don't breathe
don't cough, don't sneeze.
Don't wake up early, or
arrive too late-don't love,
don't hate.
Don't express emotions that
seem insane.
I made my safe little
world, and I like it this time.
And you're frayed on
the edges, and too prone to fly.
So come closer my
bird, and get in the cage.
I'll clip your wings with my
apathy and rage.
Don't sing
don't shout
don't try and get out.
It's nice and warm in here
and smells like a slave,
and the grave will come
soon, so try and be brave.
And when you're gone and
rotting, and sunk in the
ground, I'll find a new
little bird that won't
make a sound.
Don't walk, don't run
don't swim towards the sun.
Embrace the darkness, you'll have lots of fun.
I have my gun, it's loaded and cocked;
make a wrong move, and you're bound to get rocked.
Don't be sick, don't get well.
Don't smell heaven, or skip towards hell.
Don't look at the moon, or touch the stars.
Don't play in the fields or go near the bars.
It's not safe there so just be afraid.
I like to play tricks you'll be my knave,
my jack of hearts my ace of spades;
and we'll pillage and plunder and live off the land;
and you'll lie here quietly in my rotten fucking hand.
Don't piss, don't shit don't vomit or spit.
Don't quit, don't try just sit there and sigh and be here and die and lie naked in my
mansion of filth my consuming wealth my towering health,
cuz I'm full of stealth and stature and beauty and grace,
and I'll smear it all over your fucking little face.

Thomas W. Case
Enamored By Your Dormouse

I love it while
it sleeps- smiling
wet with tea;
dreaming dormouse
dreams.
I tickle its
downy fur, and
it laughs and
moans softly.
I want to put it in
my pocket and
carry it everywhere;
take it out on
lonely autumn nights and
play with her until
she's exhausted,
relaxed and rested,
content and lost in
my hands and
heart.

Thomas W. Case
when I was a child
I had these strange febrile dreams.
In the blackness, globules
would form and float and
pulsate around the room and
inside my addled brain.
They were terrifying, with
their whispered screams.
The sounds they made started
out low and small, and then
grew louder with every breath.
It was a horrible sound,
like a demented school teacher
scolding a blind student.
And I thought, in my
young feeble mind that
angels were being tortured
and that if I drifted off
to sleep, they would wake me
with their unearthly moans and
floating globules that would
grow and attack my brain.
It was as if they wanted
help, but they scared me.
So I fought to get well; to
make them disappear.
I don't have those sweat-soaked
febrile dreams anymore;
But I still see the tortured angels-
under the bridge, down by the river.

Thomas W. Case
For A Friend In An Asylum In California

Give me lazy lithium
days, soft asylum, Cheshire madness.
This sadness only
lasts
awhile, with sun burnt
smiles and ocean mist
kisses...

Give me sweet Mai-Tai
nights, gentle lunacy.
The Mad Hatter Moon
laughs at me, and
the fog only lasts a
little while.

Just one more time,
please stay awhile.

Thomas W. Case
For O

A black splash
washes over my mind.
A dark flow that
bursts into bloom, like
Oleander or Night-Shade.
The four leaf clover in
my pocket broke into a
thousand green tears.
Lovers know how to kill.
And when she keeps me from
my daughter, she's the
executioner, and smiles.
But the sublime thing about
light and love is: I will
never give up.
If I fall 100 times,
I'll rise 101.
And I'll see you
soon, my little Iris.

Thomas W. Case
Frozen Love

Living on the Scandinavian streets have humbled Christmas cards with a 20 spot trust fund. All the money vanished like the last spider of vodka, like a dropped bottle of beer. She could go to a shelter by herself, but she chooses life on the streets in the brutal winter to be with her broken English Swedish boyfriend. Love is lunacy- sometimes frozen. Two dead friends last year on a mad moonlit night. human icicles on the Iowa City streets.

One time, while drunk, her and I stole the neighbor's had her little black dog with us. I dubbed him, Senator Ted Kennedy; probably because we were all drunks. (not the dog) I don't think... We wrestled the canoe into the Iowa river, and immediately proceeded to tip it over. The canoe sank like a bad bet by Hunter S. Thompson. We could've easily drowned, but we laughed our asses off, choking and splashing, except Teddy, he swam for Boston.

Thomas W. Case
On the edge of Summer, with everything green,
I dream less as I get older.
I can still smell the smoldering
fires of fierce youth, when the landscape
of my heart was wild;
a wilderness that wouldn't be tamed.
But, I'm afraid old age has slowed me down and
quenched my thirst for adventure.
Even my poems have lost their teeth.
Gone are my scabbed up knees and
swords made out of sticks.
No beautiful maidens to rescue;
just constipation to overcome,
as I listen to the clock tick.

Thomas W. Case
Tired and twisted
broken and listless
another day in prison pisses me off.
Last night was Christmas, and I
miss my kids so much, it feels
like I’ve been shanked.
I sell my desserts for coffee;
my one luxury in the joint.
The complexion of my day is
gray, and lonely as a
tea bag in the ocean.
Everything is gray:
The sky
the weights
the walls
the blood
the food
the fence
the mood, the soul, the yard, the heart,
and the beat of the false dawn.
It's all tombstone gray.
Hate thickens the air.
And the light on the
horizon is a lie- razor wire sharp.

Thomas W. Case
Her

The dark dance calls softly,
like night shade or oleander.
Just a little taste...
Just one more slow waltz.
I can smell her wet orchid while
I sleep.
She moves languidly through my dreams,
possessing me at dawn with lambent steps.
The love is violent, like a bullfight.
It's sweet and treacherous, ferocious.
Fatal for one of us,
and she's been gored.

Thomas W. Case
Her Mouth

I hold my
twisted angel
while she sleeps.
Her ass snug
against my groin.
I envision
her sanguine
grin while
she dreams of
domesticating me.
I can't believe
that I never noticed
how cute her mouth is.
It's amazing-I'm spellbound.
I want to nibble on
those lips.
The way she uses
her tongue to enunciate
certain words is sensual and
seductive.
I'm apathetic about
the book she is reading.
But while I watch
her mischievous mouth move,
I hear Shakespeare's sonnets.

Thomas W. Case
Heroin

I put the spike
in and push it a
little; withdraw, and there
it is, that beautiful
rose
bloom flash.
Push the plunger
and I'm back in
Eden.
Naked and no shame.
And in that moment
it's better than
sex and God and Heaven
and chocolate.
I'm lost in
a storybook blue
sky, and I don't want
to be found.
Nothing matters but
the sublime substance
pumping through my
veins that makes me
immortal.
Icarus flying into
the sun until my
wings melt and I
fall back to earth
and do it all again

Thomas W. Case
Hook Him Up To The Machine

Hook him up to the machine.  
Shock his brain into mediocrity.  
Death stalks him; he is aware.  
There is too much flash in his eyes.  
His brain needs a reboot; he needs to forget, like a goldfish, like a monkey in the zoo.  
Hook him up to the machine.  
He is too sentimental; salmon swim in his blood, he has a paisley heart, and a tie-dye soul. He can smell colors.  
Hook him up to the machine.  
He has Van Gogh eyes, and a Bukowski gut; He walks like he's lost in a maze, hunchback sadness, butcher-knife nerves.  
Hook him up to the machine.  
He believes in love, and has too much trust. His vivid green memory is a curse, we need to crash it, kill the eternal Spring.  
Hook him up to the machine.

Thomas W. Case
Hope Took A Vacation

I saw the dawn
rape lonely
orphans
with broken dreams;
while bats ate
butterflies,
cats killed sparrows
and hope flew
South for
the winter.

On my way
downtown
I've seen the
dead through
windows at the
dry cleaners eating
hamburgers with
starched faces.

The librarians, dry
and dusty, pray
for rain, as hippos weep,
hyenas sigh
and hope
flies South.

I've seen the strange
hand of
circumstance
wear the jester's
hat.
I've seen destiny
angry turn her
back, while potential
is wasted on
the railroad tracks.
Yeah, hope flew South
for the winter.
Thomas W. Case
I Love The Country Life

I love the country life,

in between the feral cats

and hawks.

Morning coffee March

I sip it with vanilla

cream and smile.

Last night I fell

asleep inside her.

Safe and sound and

domesticated in her

tight wet walls.

We came together in

determined silence;

family in the next

room.

I love the country life;

the ponds and streams and

sun soaked meadows;

the wild asparagus and
gooseberries.

In her arms my spirit rests.

My tired wings

find a nest better

than the barn swallows,

stronger than the eagles.

I'm a brook trout

swimming through

her veins.

I'll chase my

tail in her fallopian tubes and

make a home in her cervix.

I love the country life.

coon hounds and corn flowers,

coyotes yipping and

bobcats tiptoeing up on

shocked field mice.

Last night, after we died

a little in each other's arms,

I gently rubbed her

cheek and kissed her
eyelids, nose, and lips.

I breathed in deep the 

smell of lavender, sex, and 

home- the safest 

fragrance I know.

Thomas W. Case
I Want

I want to kiss
her mouth in the
Spring rain.
I want to
feel her tight
wet body
against mine,
while the water
pounds down around us.
I want to
carry her to
my underground
lair, and taste
her orchid with
my tongue until
she wilts in
sweat drenched
ecstasy.

Thomas W. Case
I Want To Swim To Heaven

I want to swim
to heaven, because this city has an infection. No injection will kill this disease, this treachery, this brutality...
So I'm going to swim to heaven, back float take my time. My rhyme will be the deep blue trip to heaven.

Thomas W. Case
I'll Be Home

Life is a series of tiring verbs
as I wade through the ashes of orchids.
I'm a vagabond with a ragged soul
coming for you on a lonesome hard road.
I float aimless, like an acorn in
a mountain stream.
The death of dreams smells like
autumn leaves, lonely as driftwood.
Home is not going to be
a white door at the end of a sidewalk.
It's bigger and broader, and can't fit
behind a fence and walls.
It will always be the
sum of my memories and longings.
Home is walking the streets, hand in hand,
with our son on my shoulders.
Home is lying in the grass with your
fingers in my beard, and hope
oozing from your blue eyes.
It's eating sushi and laughing at
our accidental touch of hands,
reaching together for the last California roll;
avocado safe at a sun dappled table.
I'm drifting lost on a Southern wind.
When I'm with you again, wherever that is,
I'll be home.

Thomas W. Case
I'll Still Miss Her

She pulls away when
I kiss
her.
And she treats me
like a stray dog.
I fell asleep, and
she retired to the
box springs alone.
I suck at good byes.
It's only a couple of days,
I know.
I still suck.
She's going to Missouri
to get some things from
her Moms'.
She's a fucking nut.
A break will
do us good,
but I'll still
miss her.

Thomas W. Case
In A Battle Without A Shield

It doesn't seem like Christmas.
Mom and Dad are gone,
the kids are grown; there's no snow on the ground, and
I'm in the psych ward again.
There is a dead dog loneliness about the place,
All the patients are asleep,
and it's too early to get my meds.
Coffee has replaced vodka in my diet, and
I feel like I'm in a battle without a shield.
Even the pen I wield isn't as sharp as it used to be.

Thomas W. Case
Into The Bright White World

She poured herself into her
jeans like a nice glass of Chardonnay.
I wanted to pound it, but we
had errands to run.
The sun was out, but it lied.
It was February, and cold;
real cold, like her
heart could be.
She wanted to set us free.
She found she couldn't
tame me.
Who the hell likes a
caged dog?
One thing's for sure,
The dog doesn't.
I pulled her close
and growled.
She bit my neck
and then
we were off
into the bright white
world.

Thomas W. Case
I met a man once who said, It's all nothing. Everything goes away in the end. It doesn't mean anything.
I asked him, What about love?
He said, It's an illusion; it disappears when you think you have means nothing; we are all going to die. I saw him walking one day, and asked him where he was going.
He said, It doesn't matter, all roads lead to death; it all ends the same- nothing matters.
I said, What about family, children, and God- what about life?
Family abandons you, children grow up and move away; God is deaf and dumb, if he's even there, and life ends in decay- everything goes away.
I said, What about art and literature, the power and the hope?
What's the point of beauty if the beauty ends? he said.
I said, What about the moment? You're alive right now, it's real and it's happening.
Look at the simple beauty of that robin- Its breast looks like a sunset. Do you smell the sweetness of the cherry blossoms?
Do you remember the slippery loveliness of a woman's vagina, the taste of a fine Chardonnay?
Look at the dappled fur on that dog; he's almost grinning, that has to matter; it has to mean something.
No, he said, That dog could get hit by a car in an hour, then he'd just be a pile of bones rotting in the street.
But look, I said. He's alive; his fur is warm and course; look at his tail wag, he knows things.
He shook his head. You don't get race is fixed; the horse breaks his leg in the home stretch. The champ goes down from a glancing blow, the dice are 's a setup.
Everything goes awry- it's not good for mice or men.
I smiled and threw a perfectly timed left jab to the bridge of his nose, the blood was the most brilliant shade of red I'd ever flowed from his nostrils and settled on the green grass below his of it stained his white shoes.
Hey what the hell did you do that for? he said.
"That fucking hurt."
I said, Pain is nothing- it will end- it's almost like it didn't happen; maybe it's a dream.
You're fucking crazy! It is real; you punched me and now my shirt and shoes are ruined, he said.
He walked away, and the sun broke trough the clouds, flowers bloomed, and a small black beetle crawled through a patch of blood onto a lilac bush. And somehow I knew that it all mattered.

Thomas W. Case
It's The Hunger That Drives You

I'm on a Bukowsiesque roll, 
pounding them out, 
seven or eight a night. 
I know it won't last. 
It's like a fast. 
It's the hunger that 
drives you. 
And when your starving, 
you eat- then rest, 
not today though; I've hit 
my stride. 
And the night is mine for 
the taking. 
And the words are mine for 
the raping. 
And my heart, I am staking 
on the fact 
that 
I will stay hungry.

Thomas W. Case
It's The Little Things

In prison
when you have no
money and you can't
buy commissary, and
the hours and the days drag by
like a tortoise searching
a garden, it's the little
things that make the time bearable.
Someone gives you a package of
noodles or a cup of coffee,
or a bar of soap.
Kindness in hell goes a long way.
It's the simple pleasures that
I took for granted that I
relish now:
Steaming hot water,
a bed with a real mattress.
and a library with thousands
of books to read.
I have writing paper,
ink pens, and reading glasses
to see with; it could be worse.

Thomas W. Case
I've Been A Slave

I've been a slave so many times
I've been a slave to booze and vaginas,
to poverty and the streets
I've been a slave to opiates
and poetry
brutality and love

I've been a slave to the flesh and my addictions,
good intentions galore.
I've been a slave to beauty and hatred,
passion and desire
the flame
and the
fiery dance with death
I've been a slave to the crowd and the pedestal
The morning glory women, and their spells
I've been a slave on the slow ride to hell.

So for the last time,
I'm done with slavery.
Go find a new cock to control.
This rooster is going back to the barnyard
chase the horses and the hens
I promise,
I will crow at the freedom-soaked dawn.

Thomas W. Case
Let Love Reign

When anger and hatred
flow through your veins,
let love reign.
On gentle Spring nights when
memories haunt you like
the lost dead,
let love reign.
When stress and confusion
overwhelm you and the
future seems as
uncertain as a roll
of the dice,
let love reign.
When you think God is
a grand prankster and
it feels like an
eternal winter in
your heart,
let love reign.
When the pictures remind
you of times long gone,
and the mirror is
a hard place to live,
let love reign.
If you get lost,
like I do in a
poem or a song,
let love reign.
In my dreams I will
see you, and kiss you,
and hold you forever,
and there will be no
good-byes
only good mornings,
if we let love reign.

Thomas W. Case
Let Us Be

When I look
at her with
an artist's soul
and a poet's heart
I'm in love all
over again.
She haunts my
dreams and owns
my thoughts
It's when we
expect more than
Love and art from each other
that things get
convoluted and harsh
I will never be
her Viking and
she will never be
my virgin
but when I let
her be the sensitive woman
I fell in love with
and she lets me be
the imperfect man that
won her guarded heart
the butterflies will laugh
and sing to the sky and stray dogs
will find homes

Thomas W. Case
Like A Butterfly Melting

The night is torn apart;
fractured and shattered by
the memory of you.
Stars shake and die,
and I'm filled with
diesel loneliness,
soul sick, like
a butterfly melting.
Everywhere I go,
I smell pumpkin pie, lilacs,
and sexual energy.
The day will come when
I'll not think of you;
not write a single line about
you- not feel you in the
attic of my mind,
but until then,
the crows peck at my
heart, Spring never comes;
ice forms on my brain.
and life inches along like
a filthy worm.

Thomas W. Case
Like A Cat Out In The Rain

Sometimes, I feel like
a cat out in the rain.
A big black and white tom just
trotted by.
Ears back, trying to avoid
the puddles.
Is he angry at the
world; maybe a little sad too?
Was he led away from
his domestication by
his drive and desires,
only to return to
a locked door and
no more love?
Or was he born on
the streets-never held?
Were the elements always all
he knew?
It's a dog-eat-dog world,
kill or be killed, and this
old boy is still alive.
I don't have the
answer to this feline's
follies,
but I do know this,
sometimes,
I feel like a
cat out in the rain.

Thomas W. Case
Lonely, Like An Orphan

November smells like an empty house,
like decaying dreams,
all pumpkin orange and burnt sienna.
I search for you through the ashes of roses.
My eyes are the color of despair.
I can still taste you;
that last kiss, clover sweet.
And without you, the days dawn gray and lonely, like an orphan.

Thomas W. Case
Lonely, Like The Leaves

The days crawl by like tortoises.  
My purpose is obscured by vodka nights, and  
raven-haired sadness.  
Naked branches of the maple trees dance in  
the autumn wind, and leaves rustle in the dead grass;  
all burnt orange and yellow ocher.  
They're like a little surreal sunrise.  
Hope is eternal.

Thomas W. Case
Lonesome Neon Night

Angels with broken wings, frostbitten dreams, morphine nights and gangrene schemes.

She had that broken glass sadness, the kind that gets worse with every slammed door and every lazy moon mad night. The light in her eyes was dim, like a candle in the fog, like a frog that dreams of flying, but wakes up to the same old pond; day after degrading day.

Man, every time I see her, I want to take her home and give her a bath; feed her strawberries and rub her feet. I want to free her from the rain slick suffering she's stuck in; wash away the stench of the lonely diesel strangers.

But I can't save her, hell I can't even save myself, so I bum her a Midnight Special, and light it for her, with a brief sulfuric blaze of glory, bereft of any lasting light.

Walk away, Jack-O-Lantern grin, into the lonesome neon night.

Thomas W. Case
Love Is The Victor

I sit back in
the place of
attack, but equipped for
battle this time.
The enemy wont win.
I laugh at him as
I greet the dawn with
a love-soaked heart.
It smells like
leather and my baby's
hair.
I'm fully aware of
the antagonist's snares, and
tricks, but we
won't be fooled.
We won't be trapped.
See, this story isn't a
tragedy, it's the
epitome
of romance and
victory.
I'm a stallion, and
my soul-mate is a
gorgeous queen.
And she rides me into
the evening as
we eat peaches and
pomegranates and
let the juice glisten on
our faces in
God's
glorious setting
sun.

Thomas W. Case
Love, Dad

When I think of my kids now,
I so much want to say things
that I know I won't,
like, please for your protection,
try not to feel too much.
If you can't help it,
you may find that
life comes at you like
a left hook...a broken doll,
a rotten tooth.
I'm sorry I failed you,
I would trade it all,
everything I own or ever
could possess, for your smiles,
and deep true laughter.
May you never know brutality
or ferocious things.
I'd rather you get
dog bit than hope and
feel heart sickness.
Find someone who holds
you tight and
doesn't let go.
The woods do in a pinch,
but they can't touch
you with flesh wrapped
bones that cherish your hearts.

My poor kids,
your crazy father loved you the
best he could.
Don't ever let anyone
kill your light;
always hold on;
there is beauty in the ride,
often too much.
You might feel like
a stranger or an alien,
it's supposed to be like that.
Often it feels like
a lump in your
throat that won't go down.

Wear sunglasses, they
help with the glare...the sharpness,
and remember,
some flowers are edible.

Thomas W. Case
Make The Static Go Away

Make the static go away,
the dead-dog depression;
the fleas tip-toeing across
my brain.
Hate locks the door to the heart,
and puts the soul in a cage.
The rage consumes, like a west coast fire.

Make the static go away,
the electric anxiety;
the butterflies swimming in my blood.
Love is a fantasy, a fairy tale for children.
Devotion imprisons the mind and subdues the heart.

Give me sweet apathy, beautiful sedation, let me float in bliss;
untethered by emotion.
Let me get lost, deep in the core of the orchid, and sail aimless,
in the vast chasm of the sea.
Give me radical lethargy.
May The Sun Die

In the country
on gentle silk
nights
I held you,
felt your satin
skin against mine.
smelled the lavender in
your hair.
And in the
morning, I wanted
the sun to melt and
die and fall from
the sky, like a
blazing orb of passion.

Thomas W. Case
Mom, Wake Up

When I was a kid,
my Mom would pretend
to be dead.
She'd lie in bed, and
when I arrived home from
school
I'd go to wake
her up.
'Mom...Mom...
get up,
I need a ride...
Mom...Wake Up...Wake Up! '
She'd smile, then
laugh and
open her eyes, and say,
'What if I were dead?
What would you do? '
I'd say,
'I don't know, you're not!
Quit acting crazy.
I need a ride to Cindy's house.'
She'd get up and
light a cigarette and put
on her quilted rose
colored coat.

We'd pile into the
boat,
the '74 Chevy Impala,
and we'd blast off
into the pink horizon.

One winter night in
'87
I stood above
her as she lay on
the hospital gurney.
She didn't wake up.
Thomas W. Case
Montana (If Only)

We used to talk about going
to Montana—escaping it all,
building a log cabin and
making a garden. We were
going to hunt and fish for
food—make rugs and
hats from the fur.

But look at us now.
You live in the
city, and drive a Volvo.
Goldfish in a glass bowl.
You even taught your
cat to walk on
a leash.
Can you see the
sky with all the smog?

I'm not any better;
living under the bridge;
the only hunting I do is
for cans, the rare and illusive
aluminum nickle, so that
I can buy booze.
Every penny I make goes
for
smokes, wine, or vodka.

I walk down to the
river's edge, and look up at
the expansive sky.
I close my eyes.
And when I open them baby,
we're in Montana.

Thomas W. Case
More Than I Bargained For

I've lost everything I
owned more times than
I can count.
All I had left was
the clothes on my back.
In some ways, there was
a sense of relief.
What else could I lose?
That answer came hard
and fast like the night.
I could lose my health,
my sanity,
my friends,
my sense of peace
and love,
I could lose my
creativity and
the muse
She could end up at
the Deadwood, bellied-up
to the bar, tickling
some young English major.
I could lose a lot more
than I thought

Well, here I sit
in a three bedroom
house that fell out
of the sky,
a few pieces of clothes,
some food,
coffee and cigarettes.
I have a blue and
orange cast on my
left leg.
I have the cast
because I fell and
broke my ankle
on a debauched
lonely winter
night.
I had surgery
ten days ago.
Now I have
more than I
bargained for- a plate and
screws galore,
and a nice healthy
opiate addiction

Thomas W. Case
Your ashes don't speak to me Dad
They float silent in the ocean.
I need you.
I have questions about
Don Quixote and Steinbeck.
You implanted in me a
love for literature,
and then left me before
the story was supposed to end.
What is the theme?
This plot sucks!
I inherited your anger.
I think of you when
I punch the wall and
scream at my wife- spiderweb windshields.
I cry through Man of La Mancha,
and laugh at the memory of the
stage you built us in the basement.
Who does that?
Props and scripts were our toys.
I acted and lied my way through my
first two marriages- always on.
You were the great director;
all your trophies are on the mantle.
You thought the pizza place turned
the volume down on the T.V when
your speaking parts came on.
I think you passed me your insanity.
I've been to the nuthouse many times.
I'm a poet Dad-two books published.
I still remember you reading
Kipling and Cummings to me.
In third grade, I read from
Of Mice and Men to my class.
The teacher scolded me for
saying "Jesus Christ" and "Son of a Bitch." 
What a peasant!
She missed the bigger picture,
life doesn't go as planned.
Thomas W. Case
My Alice

In her deadly blue eyes, I fall down the rabbit hole.
Down down down I go. I hit the earth like a mock turtle on its back, with a smack; like a shot to the vein. She travels through my bloodstream with the force of a mad tea-party. Her hair is dormouse soft. I touch it, and feed her tarts, as she rides me like a guillotine; sharp and final, with a purpose, like a porpoise with a fish hook in its mouth. I hold on tight and never let go.

Thomas W. Case
My Hat

I found this old hat at the Salvation Army. I like it, it fits well; kind of Sinatraesque. I've received lots of compliments. But it doesn't stop the cats from screeching in the night. It can't quench my thirst. It will never bring my Mom or Dad back. It's just a hat. It can't fix my relationship- it won't break the horse or heal Lautrec's legs. It won't give Vincent his cobalt blue dreams or give back Poe's Annabelle Lee. But it's my hat and I like it.

Thomas W. Case
My Heart Beats For Her

She comes raging back
into my life,
like a West Coast wildfire;
no force can keep us
apart.
Too much love built
up over the years, to
be touched by anyone, or
anything-angels and
demons might try,
but their most concerted
efforts are like
little foam balls bouncing
off a mountain.
No circumstance is
worthy to jade our
bond or taint our connection.
Trials make us stronger.
Man, we have fought and fucked
with a ferocious appetite,
like wild rabid
dogs, our bodies attack
each other in a sweat
drenched bliss that is
primal and prehistoric.
Last night we had a
tidal wave, a tornado of
lovemaking that left
our genitals,
spent and throbbing and
ablaze with
a flame of desire and hunger.
I hold her in my arms, and she listens
to my heart beat fast for
our miraculous new
lives together.

Thomas W. Case
My Heat And My Feather

You were a woman of soft gray
skirts and glasses, little boy in tow at that
place we met where the clocks stopped for awhile.
As the years pounded by, you became
my pasture of Heaven; my honey-suckle friend.
Your waterfall love washed over me.
It cleansed me like a violet stream,
dappled by the sun through the leaves on
the Cottonwood trees.

Once, I dreamed that we flew together on
the back of a bluebird and laughed until
our jaws ached and we ate honeydew until the
juice ran down our face and dripped onto
the birds wings.

But, we always wake from dreams,
and birds fly away and build nests...
Yet, I know the light that shines through
you...that exudes from your soul
will always be my heat and my feather.

Thomas W. Case
My Shoes

I like
my shoes; they are
the only pair
I have.
I've walked miles in
them.
They have
got me around for years.
My shoes are
falling apart.
They should have
quit on me a long
time ago.
Strangely enough,
people compliment
me on them.
They don't see
that the soles are
worn thin, or that they
smell like cat piss and
rotting flesh.
They don't see the
blood stains on
the canvas and the
piece of broken glass stuck
in the heel.
Nope,
they just say,
'Nice kicks;
they look good on you.'
I can't afford
another pair right now,
and even if I could,
I wouldn't spend
the money on them.
No, I like my
shoes, even with
all their imperfections.
They have seen
a thousand sunsets and
carried me away
from many heartbreaks.
My shoes have
run
walked
and sauntered through
snow
rain
and all kinds of shit.
My shoes have
saved me and
betrayed me.
And they have
tasted every type
of booze known
to man.
When I'm dead and
gone
I hope someone
burns
my shoes and throws
the ashes in
that long lonesome
river, under the bridge,
where men
live and fight
and dream.

Thomas W. Case
I hear music in
my head when I
look into her
eyes.
It's like a
soundtrack to love.
A cross between
Van Morrison and
a Gregorian chant.
When I touch her wet
cotton candy lips,
I hear the
oceans and lions roar.
The waves crash to
shore in my heart,
and I listen to the
mermaid's song.
And in the end,
her footsteps,
and her heart beat,
and her
apple blossom voice
are forever my
soundtrack to love.

Thomas W. Case
Night Terror

In my night
terror,
I hear the pounding
of
your wings, ripping and
tearing
at my feeble heart.
It's beating,
but
barely,
bomb-blasted by your
attack.
your love is like
a stroke;
like a bloated toad.
I'm road weary,
teary-eyed like a
sunflower.
And you scream in
the darkness like
a lamb.

I long to cum in
you.
I'm like dentures
chewed on by a stray dog;
teeth missing,
jagged like a
jack-o-lantern.

Damage control is
your best bet.
I let you way too
far in.
No turning back now.
I'm like a dumb
cow led to slaughter.

I'm miles away.
You're on a
different
island.

Thomas W. Case
Not Such A Silent Night

It won't be a silent
night this Christmas in
the Psych Ward.
There are some real
wack jobs in here.
One guy grabbed his crotch,
and said, 'I have hold of all my faculties.'
The nurse asked him what
drugs he was on,
He said, 'It's not the drugs that are
the problem, it's the women.'
Maybe he's not as crazy as I thought.
I shouldn't talk; I'm getting
ECTs (Electro Convulsive Therapy)
One of the side effects is
memory loss. I hope they make me
forget the last woman in my life.
Life is so odd.
I'm locked in the nuthouse,
getting shock treatments.
She's home in her apartment,
cooking and cleaning,
crazy and mean as a shit-house rat.

Thomas W. Case
One For Hunter

This one goes out to
the rambling, gambling mad man
from Aspen- the late great
Hunter S. Thompson.
My drinking has landed me
in prison for a short stint.
to occupy my time.
I read and write.
It keeps my mind sharp
and the nursing homes at bay.
Also, a pen or a book in my
hand has the added benefit
of a signal to the other
inmates that I'm in my own
world, and I don't care to converse.
H.S.T's guerrilla approach to
writing, and his sharp gonzo wit
keep me laughing and thinking
on this carnival ride from hell.
And if I can laugh in prison,
I'm halfway home.
My mind will go where my
body can't.
Like Hunter, I'm a betting man too,
and I always bet the long shots.
So I'm putting a bundle on
me to pull out of this shit hole,
and do something with my life.
Ho ho ho, God Bless you Doctor.
And as my old man used to say,
"They can Kill us, but they
can't eat us."

Thomas W. Case
Our Life

Our life lives inside
her.
My walnut haired angel;
my freckled dreamer.
She's swollen and sensual;
beautiful, beyond Spring.
Far above the ocean's light.
I want to take her to
a meadow and make
love to her with the
breeze and sparrows watching.
I want to taste the
sticky sweet dew on her
thighs, and wake up next
to her for the rest
of my life.

Thomas W. Case
Preoccupied

I make love to you;
exploring your body like
a garden.
I walk in the
lovely shade of your eyes;
that safe sky that I
long to fly in.
I dream of swimming in
the blue, and diving
hard into your wet pink soul.
I want to sink to the
bottom of your orchid, and
lick the nectar from
your swollen petals, like a
hummingbird- all beating heart and
pounding wings.
As I let the juice
run down my gray bearded face.
I taste your sweetness in
the new morning sun,
I feel immortal,
and I wink at death.

Thomas W. Case
Redemption

I am going to dig through dumpsters today; alone or with a fellow aluminum treasure is God for can is worth a nickle, and if we get enough of these shiny miracles, we can get a pint of vodka, our oasis in the desert.

I sift through trash bags full of cat shit and broken dreams. I find: losing lottery tickets, broken costume jewelry, unwanted books, and a porno magazine. I examine the jewelry closely, hoping for a diamond or real pearls; some silver or gold, something I can pawn or sell and turn into liquor- no such luck. The whole thing smells like death, and piss, and a city dump in July. Sometimes I think it would be easier to just quit drinking, but to do it abruptly could kill me, the withdraw seizures can be deadly. As the sun begins to set on Iowa City, the sky looks like a butterfly melting. I haul my black garbage bag, full of cans, over my shoulder down the railroad tracks, and across highway 6. I stop to vomit behind a building, then wipe my
face and continue on to
the store- to be redeemed.

Thomas W. Case
Reptilian Heart

She has that
reptilian heart, snake eyes-
cat screeching, rabid anger.
Whenever she's close to
me, I need sedation;
another world-one with
beauty and love.
Hers is a land of
brutality and hatred.
It makes my
soul vomit.
When I'm lucky enough to
escape, she finds me, and
lures me back with her
charms and spells.
Then, it's back to the
cage, waiting to be
consumed.
She quit doing drugs.
Her dope now is
control.
It's the dragon that
she rides to hell.

Thomas W. Case
Return To The Womb

When my mind and
body digress,
I return to
the safety of
my watery womb.
The bathtub filled
with bubbles becomes
my sanctuary;
my hiding place from
this weary world.
Placenta engulfs me and
comforts my
twisted soul.
I roll through this
life and yearn
for my long awaited
return to the
watery womb.
My lighthouse
my rocking chair
my wet cave, far away
from society

Thomas W. Case
Rotten

The breakup was
the best thing that
ever happened to me.
I lost everything except
my dignity.
I escaped with my soul.
She tried to buy it with
Sushi and Thai food,
but it's not for sale.
I would rather
freeze, and be free,
than die warm in her cage.
No amount of love can
fix that abysmal madness;
that car crash confusion.
Daisies withered when she
walked by.
Her heart was rotten, like
an STD, like a
fish-hook to the eye.

Thomas W. Case
Sailing For Insanity

I lost my best friend today.
She didn't die; well not physically.
She went away mentally, and emotionally.
It's a forever vacation-
I can see it in her dead eyes-
hear it in her rabid voice.
It makes my soul sick, but she's
not taking me down with her.
I stand on the placid shore and
wave good-bye, as she sails for insanity.

Thomas W. Case
Score Keeper

You will meet people in life that love to keep score. "I've done this for you, so you should do that for me." They keep a mental ledger. They're pathetic. Nothing is ever done out of the goodness of their heart. Their mind clicks with records and accounts. They are slaves to the almighty penny. Nothing you do will ever count anyway. You're always in the red.

Thomas W. Case
Searching For Nod

That first morning swig washes away the stain on the inside; the parade of hearses and the lovers lost to the carnival of life. A few more swallows and memory becomes nebulous. Cumulus clouds form in the brain, and the thoughts float by, all fluffy, like cotton candy, and fun-house safe. In this twisted mirror I see the tired eyes of a clown who's not funny anymore; just a ragged costume and a jagged soul that is hungry for sleep and dreams, a moments reprieve.

Thomas W. Case
She Throws It All Away

Every time she kicks me out,
she throws my stuff away:
my clothes
my books
my poetry.
I'm broke like a toad.
I can't afford it.
No bother- she just throws it all away.
No apologies.
I come back, and ask, 'Where's all my stuff?'
Away,
far away.

Thomas W. Case
Sometimes She Consumates The Deal

There she is: naked and fickle on the floor, sucking marrow out of soup bones; her breasts busy with living things.

The muse plays hide and seek like a spoiled little child, as I sit with sterile white paper. I think I see her from the corner of my eye, but when I look, she is gone, like the last Dodo bird. I yell, "Are you dead?" NOTHING.

And then she appears dimly through the glass and gives me a hard one, fierce, right behind the eyes, in that still small place where sullen shadows dance to Wagner, while...
sparrows burn and
smell of
Spider Mums, and
funerals.

Then, she's gone like
the Cheshire cat.
(the grin remains.)
I get another
drink, hoping to
swallow and consume
her- to become one.
It doesn't work.
I get
frustrated, pace the
worn out
carpet, like a
caged tiger

Writer's block is
hell.
It's worse than
celibacy and
bologna.
Far worse than
constipation, or not
being able to cum.
It's like missing
the vein, or
dying of thirst in the desert.
It's like being
dead, but alive.

And
finally at
last
it's over (she consummates the deal)
and the words and
lines flow like
rain in Seattle in
the Springtime.
I can
see the vulva in
the rose.
Taste
the sweet potato sky,
plant flowers in concrete, and
beat Mr. Death in
a game of go fish.
And
strangely,
it all smells like
home,
eternity,
and two-week old
puppies dreaming of
Mother's milk.

Thomas W. Case
Sonnet For Mary

I love her enough to write her sonnets;  
to use an unfamiliar form to woo her.  
Rhyme schemes are like a bee in my bonnet.  
If she were cold, I'd be a coat of fur,  
wrapping her body in love and heat.  
Warming her soul in fuzzy animal bliss.  
I long to rub her gorgeous shy feet,  
and taste her inner thighs with a soft kiss.  
When she's away, I can hear my heart break.  
I can taste her salty tears in the wind.  
I'm a vampire, this distance is my stake.  
Taking her for granted was my deadly sin.  
The first tender blossoms ache into bloom;  
and I will feed her hungry orchid soon.

Thomas W. Case
Sorceriffic Ass

Vicious eyes,
erocious mile, and an
ass that begged to be
rubbed all night, like
Buddha promising good luck.
But what that
ass brought was
life under a bridge,
jail, soup lines, and
homeless shelters.

The heart pounds the
head, then the feet pound
the streets,
walking mile after mile,
aimless roaming
doe eyed thinking:

What went wrong?
Where the hell did
I go wrong?

Then it dawns on
me like the dew
soaked morning.

It was the ass.
Always that
sorceriffic ass.

Thomas W. Case
Stabbed By The Autumn Leaves

Jack-o-lantern love,
stabbed by the autumn leaves;
bleeding all burnt orange and sienna.
And it smells like
cloves and vanilla,
and loneliness. Kaleidoscope confusion,
that dog bite pain
in my soul.
I don my navy blue corduroy,
as I bundle up for
the great void.

Thomas W. Case
Starving

I'm not hungry.
How many times have
I said that?
This time, it's the
recent woman.
She wants to savor
the buzz.
Food would interfere.
I know it all too
well.
The hell of not
eating to maintain
the high.
Food absorbs.
I used to go
six to ten days
without a bite.
The light goes out.
The brain begins to
eat itself.
She's starving.

Thomas W. Case
Stay Green

Smell the newborn puppies placenta from heaven, like candy canes and burning leaves. Stay green as long as you can. Drink up the sunrise like a chocolate shake; because tomorrow comes with a sigh.

Thomas W. Case
The Ball Woman

I once knew a woman that
could roll herself into a perfect ball.
She rolled all over town.
It didn't seem that unusual; sad,
but not strange.
Lots of people are all balled up.
I caught glimpses of her face.
It was often expressionless.
She had a flat affect.
Sometimes, she'd come out of her ball,
and smile.
She was gorgeous, educated, and had a
great sense of humor.
But when I'd get too close,
she'd get back into her ball and
roll away.

Thomas W. Case
The Bullfrog Dreams Of Flying

He wants to shake the moss off his back
and leave the tad-poles behind.
They remind him of his misspent youth
and wasted Spring.
The blackbird sings of blue skies,
far off lands,
and the bullfrog dreams of flying.

Thomas W. Case
The Cages

In a dream,
I see the raven
fly into the night;
his dark song beckoning
from his beak.
Shiny black wings promise
flight,
but to where?

I watch as the
pair of doves bellow
their songs of love
and with a rush of
angels wings
fly heavenward.

I hear the
bluebirds and
sparrows little hum of
hope fade softly into
the afternoon sun,
and I wonder,
what does it all mean?

Then I see them, and
many other kinds of
birds, with beautiful bright
colors,
Parakeets and parrots,
eagles and herons...even
a dodo and they are
all rotting in cages.
Some of the cages are
open,
others are closed,
but all the birds are
lying on their sides,
sad dead eyes,
staring blankly,
finished and flightless.
and I get it.

Thomas W. Case
The Death Of Spring

In the heat of Summer,
I met her, toted her
little boy on my
shoulders all over town.
Love was fresh and hot.
Passion was wild.
She needed an apartment and was
worried.
We laid in the grass, and ate berries.

Fall with its autumnal beauty was
amazing. All burnt orange and
harvest moons, raw sienna and yellow ochre.
We had our windowsill madness.
Her little boy grew, and I read to him nightly.
He loved those stories, and I loved cuddling with
my new found family.

Winter came with its frigid frost,
and we went our different directions.
I missed her, and thought of her always,
worried what she was up to...if she was happy?
We saw each other a couple of times, but things
fell icy and cold.

Spring came, I hid Easter eggs.
Rebirth and resurrection.
We talked of matrimony and babies-made love like
rabbits, picked flowers and celebrated life.
The boy grew into a little man,
The nest is empty now.
She's moved away, I probably won't
see her again, but I'll always love her.
WAIT...this poem shouldn't end here.
It sucks, because we should have been
so much more.
We were best friends, more than soul mates.
We were lovers building our lives together,
and tonight she's gone.
Thomas W. Case
The Journey Is Done

The feet are the
soul of the shoes.
And without the
feet, the shoes are
an empty body,
vacant vessels that
sit in the corner,
quiet as a tombstone,
forgotten, and curled at
the toes, flowers and
grass smashed into
the tread.
The tan leather is
baked brown from the
sun, tired and cracked from
the long lonely
miles of wandering.
Finally, the journey
is done.

Thomas W. Case
The Line

I keep searching for the line, a line that straightens my posture, unsnarls my eyebrows, and gives the bathroom mirror a better reflection.

I keep searching for a line that stops the midgets from crying, that heals the lame dog's leg, and slows the ticking clock.

I keep searching for the line, one that gets me laid by the librarian; that takes the eagle from the city; gives the whores hope and the hobos a home.

I keep searching for the line...

Thomas W. Case
The Picture

Chain smoking sadness; slapped by time.
Winter doesn't freeze the pain.
There was one thing that mom
wanted more than
anything else in the world:
It was to have a
picture of her seven
kids all together- in one place,
at one time.
There was an age difference of
23 years between the
youngest and the oldest,
and 1000 miles separating us.

In December of 1987
two weeks before Christmas,
I held a picture of the
seven of us all together.
I put it in the
right front pocket of
her navy blue blazer,
and after the funeral,
we buried her with it.

Thomas W. Case
The Pierced Dreamer

I met her at
the Corner Pocket.
Her nose was
pierced, so was
her tongue and
her heart.
She spoke of
a utopian
city:
a town of tree houses.
She was in her
third year of
architectural school at
Iowa State.
Some dreams are
best left
unsaid.

Thomas W. Case
The Purple

For the first time in my life, I saw colors— not like normal people see colors; my recent woman sees colors all the time. This morning, there was purple splashed all over my room. One time, in her sleep, she said the word 'purple.' I asked her what it meant, she said, 'Knowledge of the future.' I know she will try and screw this sickness out of me; God Bless her. What do I know about the future? I know it looks bleak, and the doves are crying.

Thomas W. Case
I found this thing when I was a little boy. It's a beast of some sort; it has fur, sharp teeth, and a long 's pulse sounds like a ticking 's beautiful and hideous all at thing makes me feel immortal, like I'm a part of something big and imes it eats everything in sight. And other times, I think it might be starving. It smells like shit, death, and booze. But sometimes it smells like lilacs and autumn and different women from my life. I haven't been able to tame it, but I feel like it's my friend. It runs away from time to time. I stay awake staring at the black sky, worrying that it will never come back. I walk the streets looking for the thing on dark nights and foggy days. Sometimes, I find it hiding in a patch of tall grass- all wet and dirty. But usually it comes home on its own, when it's tired of the vagabond life. It does tricks that make people laugh and cry and think. When strangers and friends see the thing, their reactions vary: Some people hate it; they want to kill it, they never say that, but I can see it in their eyes. They say, Who needs a thing like that? But other people appreciate the thing; they love it and the way it makes them feel. They say, I want a thing like that. Sometimes I think the thing is almost holy, the way it walks into a room and looks at everyone with its searching eyes. I'm sure it knows magic. I have a hard aching love for the has the
most disturbing eyes; They change color depending on its mood. When I look into the thing's eyes, I see people and places in a different shape and waltz around the room. I can taste sorrow and loneliness; I can hear the wind blow ripples across a small pond surrounded by cattails. I've had the thing so long, I don't know where I begin and it ends.

We don't always get along, but it's usually because it won't behave the way I want it to. It puts up with my selfishness, and kisses me on the lips. It has no perception of time.

I'm getting old. I'm no longer the boy I was when I found the thing. I like it best when we walk together and try to make sense of this carnival ride of a life that sleeps with me every night. Sometimes, I hardly know it's there. But I like it best when it snores and dreams, and I feel its hot, sweet breath on my face.

Thomas W. Case
The Womb's Lullaby

I first heard the lullaby in the womb. 
It has a pulse, and a rhythm. 
It was embedded in my tissue and cells. 
And when I was shot out, bloody and naked, 
the cord was cut. 
The journey began.

At four years old, I remember closing my eyes, and lying down to go to sleep, it felt like I was being rocked. 
I wonder if the subconscious mind is remembering the rhythm of the womb. 
My Mom- pregnant with me, walking upstairs- walking downstairs, elevators escalators movement pulse, the eternal lullaby of the womb. 
When I closed my eyes, it felt like I was being rocked. 
It felt like I was in a swing, back and forth, easy like a fragrant Spring night.
I feel and hear the pulse- the rhythm, 
the heart in everything! 
In footsteps- in the wind, 
in the ancient river 
in the mermaids song, 
I feel it in 
the beating of the hummingbird's wings- I see it in 
Van Gogh's jagged sky, 
in the flight pattern of 
the wasp. 

There is a rhythm in 
death and birth and love. 
Oh my God...the rapture of 
the rhythm of love and 
joy- so sublime... 
The primal beat of a 
heartbreak- PAIN, 
like painting with 
blood. 
So real 
too lucid. 
Icarus, lets fly into the 
sun, drunk on 
cheap vodka or wine. 
We'll escape- liquid smooth, 
until our wings melt, 
and we fall back down, 
CRASH- 
to the pulse, the rhythm, 
the beat. 

Bum Bum 

Bum Bum 

Bum Bum 

Sometimes, I wish I were
a rock.

Thomas W. Case
There Is A Crime

There is a crime that
goes beyond
denunciation.

There is a sorrow, a fucking
hollowness
that weeping
can't even begin to
symbolize.

There is a failure in
life
that topples and
belittles all
success.

When trying to focus on
life
is like looking through
a kaleidoscope,
when sounds liquefy and
odors take shape and
waltz
to sullen night music,
life must end.

Life must end, because
a profit can no longer be
ripped from your
hands, your knowledge,
your punctuality, or your
dedication to
the machine.

Ever since I can remember,
I sensed the
randomness of it
all.
I fought against it,
I had faith, I believed.

Thomas W. Case
This Moment

If I could take this moment and
own it,
hold it like
a piece of
paper,
I'd fold it
and
stow it away like
a pocket knife.
If you could be
my wife,
I'd be the
happiest guy in
the world.
you'd be my
girl,
and I'd be your man.
I would hold
your hand and kiss you.
And you'd never
miss me
again.

Thomas W. Case
This Poem's For You

What's there to say when your two best friends die a day apart?

Greg died crossing the street, smacked by a minivan.
Tibbs, from some strange brain quirk.
I did C.P.R to no avail.

They're both gone.
They sailed away.
Gone like the last spider of vodka.
Gone like the songs we sang together.

Sometimes
I still look for you two.
I turn corners and I half expect to see one of you.
So fucking alive one minute, so dead the next.

Both of them fathers,
friends, and men of valor.
Iowa City is a shittier place without you.

If there's a Brightside, it's a brutal winter and you don't have to suffer through it.

I hope death is treating you warm and well.
Your hell was
here.
Struggling for that
drink;
to be okay- to get that click,
to carry on, one more
grueling day.

It's over now.
You're gone.
Gone like the last Dodo bird;
gone like your impish smiles.
Gone like the miles we
trod with bags full of
aluminum nickels.

Words can't express the
mess
I am without the two
of you.
I know I'll see you again,
out there beyond the
purple horizon.
Until then,
This poem's for you.

Thomas W. Case
Time And Dirt

He had that
groaning soul
loneliness, like a
puffy white cloud,
floating aimless and
aching toward the
black abyss- that gray sky
sadness,
like he was
five years old, and just
watched his dog get
hit by a car.
You could smell
the pain- taste it
like potato chips on a
sore throat.
It smelled like a
basement or cobwebs.
I told him,
'Nothing will fix that
shit- just time and dirt.'
He didn't blink,
and his soft walnut eyes
flashed
crossword confusion.

Thomas W. Case
Together Forever

She was dressed
business sexy the
night we
read poetic love
letters to each other on
public access television.
It was like
that mad moon night was
made just for us.
Magic show in between our
readings.
Is it all just a dream,
dreamt by a dormouse
asleep in a vodka bottle?
Don't wake that furry little
screwball.
This can't end.
Wedding plans,
torts and tarts, and
a tiara for my queen.
My heart is stained by
her love.
My soul reeks of
our champagne celebration.
Life,
together forever,
unmolested by
the concrete and the crows,
and the godless
heathens, bent on
their toboggan ride to
hell.

Thomas W. Case
Too Much

I lie in a bed in
the hospital that we
lied in together a couple of years ago.
I held her; she was tired after work.
I can't go anywhere that
memories don't haunt me-chase me like
a rabid dog.
But this is too much.
I can see her,
smell her,
taste her.
And my heart breaks when
I open my eyes, and
face the loveless sun like
a knife.

Thomas W. Case
Unbelievable

She steals candles from
the craft store.
I stole a ceramic rooster,
and said,
"Here's your cock."
We rock the stores like
they're our bitch.
It's an itch that
has to be scratched.
We get drunk and
it's game on.
It's a high like
having sex in public;
like that first shot of
booze when you're
shaking and sick.
Someday, it will all
come crashing down.
But until then,
it's the flash of
lightning and the crown.

Thomas W. Case
Under The Benton Street Bridge

My derelict soul
rolls West, to under
the Benton Street Bridge.
The bridge is strange and
lonely and changed, with
Steve and Scott dead.
Both of them died on
the railroad tracks.
The ducks are still there
under the Benton Street Bridge.
A feral calico cat stalks
them with death and
hunger in her eyes.
The river's up;
fish jump where me
and Carl used to sit and
sing old Motown songs.
I'm in the nut ward for
the umpteenth time.
Booze induced madness.
Pensive about my life,
bereft of hope,
I wonder:
am I just a lost duck?
Maybe, I'll ask that
slender cat.

Thomas W. Case
Until The Rain Stops

Our love is
bigger than paper.
It's made of flesh and
bone and blood.
Words can't tear it apart.
Distance won't taint it.
My spirit groans
without you.
My soul feels empty
and alone.
I feel like a ghost wandering,
lost, like a blowing leaf.
Grief has become me.
I hunger for you.
Feed me.
I think of you there,
lonely and afraid.
I want to take
you in my arms and
hold you until the
rain stops, and
the orchid blooms.

Thomas W. Case
Valentine's Day 2019

I remember Valentines Day
16 years ago.
I was staying at
the Salvation Army in
Des Moines. I was
going through a divorce
and trying not to drink.
I was competing in poetry slams
at Java Joe's downtown.
That little stage kept me sane.
Some of the guys at the Sally
asked me to write love poems
for their girlfriends- to get them laid.
I told them in order for the poetry
to not sound contrived, I might
need to spend a night or two
with their women.
They didn't think that was funny.
I wasn't kidding.
I ended up writing a decent
poem about the irony of the whole situation.

Well, it's February 2019,
and I'm in prison for drinking.
No romantic Valentine's Day this
year; but still plenty of irony.
Even in the joint, guys ask me
to write love poems for their women.
The other day, I did write
a poem for a guy's wife who is
dying of cancer.
I hope some day soon,
he gives it to her.

Thomas W. Case
Vincent

There goes Vincent with
his jagged sky, and
ragged beard.
His cobalt blue hands are
stained with the
glue that should
hold us all together,
but it doesn't.
His sunflowers are
lost on humanity.
When we can't hold
on to what we
pretend to love,
we kill it.
Usually in small
treacherous ways,
like apathy or
arrogance.

Thomas W. Case
Watch Out

It's always the bat-shit, rabid dog
crazy ones that will put up a really
good front when you first meet them.
You're always amazed at how normal they appear.
They are intelligent, hold down jobs, drive Volvos;
maybe they even have children that they
seem to take care  pay bills,
celebrate holidays and have houseplants.
They might even have a
dog or a cat, or a sickly looking bird in a cage.
But, just underneath the false façade of
lucid smiles, lurks a whack-job from hell,
that make Sybil and Lizzie Bourdon look
like Mother Theresa.

If you find yourself with one of these
women, don't confront them, it only
makes matters worse and could prove deadly.
Just smile and nod and slowly back out
the door-don't stop until you see the
Pacific in and wash yourself off.
You're safer with the sharks and the rip-tide.

Thomas W. Case
She left me like
Brutus left Caesar,
like a shark attack.
My back was bent and
bleeding, and I was well
versed in delirium.

She had the electricity
shut off the day after
she abandoned me, and I drank
my way into a new oblivion.
There were kittens in
the wall- shadows, tall and hot,
and I was well versed
in delirium.

I stole Four Locos' from
the convenience store, but
not enough to keep
the goblins at bay.
They chased me through
my nightmare- molested
me at dawn.
The elixir exorcised the monsters,
but I often misplaced it, in
the dryer or
fireplace.
Meat began to rot in
the freezer, and I was
well versed in delirium.

My moon flowered brain thought
the cat-tree was
a person- I paced the floor and
talked to it- asked questions,
sought solace.
Degradation of the
mind reached critical mass,
and I landed in the
psych ward again.
The bats brought seizures, and cheesecake, and yogurt berry parfaits that were to die for.
I was well versed in delirium.

Thomas W. Case
Westward

I can taste the
lavender sky
smell the pink,
squeeze the orange out,
and drink it like a
screwdriver.
My angel with
jaded wings,
my heart sings when
I hold her.
I can touch the
burnt umber of her
hair.
And I'm in
Wonderland, because she's
my Alice, and I want
to bring her
safely home.

Thomas W. Case
What's That?

I see the ship sink
just off the coast;
darkness at the end
of the tunnel.

Is that thunder
rolling in from
the East,
a tornado, an earthquake,
or a flood?

Is that sound I
hear the pounding of
hooves outside my window?

No
it's just the noise my
eyes make when they open.

Thomas W. Case
When The Laughter Dies

When the sadness strikes like
a match to my soul,
and living is drudgery,
and my pulse slows to 49
because the thought of
life beyond the pink
horizon calms me tremendously,
I think of our laughter together;
our churning, choking laughter,
and I smile through my
pain for a second or two,
then I gaze through the
venetian blinds at the gray
sky and the sycamore trees and
the daffodils in the distance,
and none of them are
they know that
laughter always dies.
The heart tries to hold on,
but loses every time.

Thomas W. Case
Whose Seed Is This?

I nurture the creator in you;
the little god that throbs to be master of
words and colors, lines and notes.
I watch you give birth to it.
I see how it squeezes out of
your brain and crawls across
the floor- all bloody and wet.
It's alive and glorious and grotesque.
You're immortal- a giver of life.
I hold it to my face, and breathe in
the smell of rain, pine trees, and desire.
I kiss its fur, and taste the
fires of hell, cardamom, and oysters, raw and sweet.
I feed it a bowl of saffron threads, soaked in milk,
stare into its wild black eyes; I can hear
it hum a tune in B flat minor, and I wonder,
whose seed is this?

Thomas W. Case
Windowsill Madness

She tastes like
a sunset and
smells like peaches...
succulent,
soft.

Moonlight breaks fast on our
windowsill madness, while
passion kisses us in
the white-hot heat.
Her vagina is a
stranger, strangling me.

Medusa turns men to stone,
and I'm rock hard,
three floors up.

When I explode,
I'm
like a butterfly
floating into the sun.

Thomas W. Case
Worry

She worries about everything, real and imagined. 'What if this? What if that?' I watched my Mom worry herself right into the grave one disastrous December night. She doesn't care. She wants me to worry right along with her. And when I don't, she gets pissed off. My Dad used to say, 'They can kill us, but they can't eat us.' I share this with her. Nothing! Just worry, worry, worry.

Thomas W. Case
Writing Is Orgasmic

I've said it before,
I'll say it again.
Writing is orgasmic.
It's like coming.
When I haven't
written anything for
awhile, it's like going
without pussy.
I need it, I have to have it.
And then when I'm writing a
poem, it's like sex.

Depending on the
piece, sometimes it's hard and
rough- doggy style in
sweat drenched bliss;
toes curling at the
point of climax.

With other poems,
it's softer, easier.
It's her on top;
deep long kisses,
caressing each other's cheeks,
looking into her eyes,
her long hair dancing on
my face to a slow waltz,
or something by Bach or Beethoven,
candles lit- incense burning.

But more often than not,
it's me on top
pounding it in;
scratch marks on my back,
guttural moans, then
finally,
orgasm!
Sit back, smoke the
lonely cigarette,
and wait for the
next fucking session.

Thomas W. Case
Zits And Chocolate

You used to search my back, arms, and even my ass for zits.
When you found one, you went to work at popping it.
It hurt like hell, but I never said anything, because it seemed to bring you such pleasure.
Sometimes, I don't even think there was a would just squeeze a freckle or birthmark.

And chocolate, for God's sake, you loved it.
Whenever I could afford it, I'd buy you chocolate when I couldn't, I'd steal them.
You hated me stealing, but you loved chocolate.

In those golden Summer evenings,
I remember carrying your son on my shoulders into the pink and lavender sunsets.
We had story time on the Shelter couch, your head resting on my shoulder.

But time, as it always does, rages on.
You have your son, your apartment, your job.
I have my river, my writing. and my ducks.
I feed them bread, not chocolate.
And although they wake me up at dawn by walking on my back, they don't mess with the zits.

I've trained them to eat bread out of my little tongues feel like sandpaper.
I'll never look at zits and chocolate the same.