

Poetry Series

**Ryan Cole**  
**- poems -**

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## Ryan Cole(August 27,1961)

Ryan Cole was born in West Los Angeles, California, and raised in the canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains. His father is an artist, who taught him to see the world through an artist's eyes, to see the beauty in the mundane, and his mother gave him the gift of words.

**1/4/12**

Kiss me in the pale light of the half moon

on this cool winter's night

As I would kiss you in the bright sun

of September past

But it is not about the moon or sun or the light

It is your lips on mine, my hands on your back

and the certainty of the touch,

when everything else is unknown, unseen, unsure

except the closeness of our lips together

in the pale light of the half moon

on this cool winter's night

Ryan Cole

2/7/12

You are not the tears I shed

and I am not the words you speak

as we are not these things that make us

Separate/together

What is the sum of us

words and tears

The whole seen in fragments

Like the items thrown haphazard into an overnight bag

for a weekend tryst,

forgotten, put aside

Only to be discovered later in the back of my closet

the scattered remains of what was/is

words and tears,

You and I

whole/apart

pieced together, the archeology of love

the shards of memory

Lost and found

And I am not the tears you shed,

as you are not the words I write

Yet we are perhaps these things that make us

Together/separate

Ryan Cole

# 5/9/11

Dried flower petals

Turned to red dust in the folds of a pocket of a thriftstore jacket

amidst matchbooks and bar napkins

with scratched notes and numbers,

unfinished lines

Discarded petals, forgotten rose

Clinging to my fingertips, falling unnoticed

to the cold ground

dried petals, blood red dust

Ryan Cole

**6/25/10**

For you, I would give my life, he said  
Yes, she agreed, but...  
would you give something you valued?

Ryan Cole

**7/19/10**

I was wondering if maybe  
I could have my heart back for a while  
I know I gave it to you  
but I kind of need it,  
you know, to move blood to my limbs  
and maybe my brain,  
no, not my brain  
It'd still be yours and all  
I'd just be borrowing it  
and to be fair,  
it's broken anyway  
and you're not using it  
I'd just need it for a while  
until maybe someone else  
gives me theirs

Ryan Cole



**8/2/11**

A fading light  
As shadows grow across once bright day  
The flicker of a guttered candle  
incandescence once bright, now dimmed to passing

Yet still, always, there is love  
Long after all else is gone  
Glowing still, shining on, a beacon to memory  
Held precious, to guide us all home

Ryan Cole

# A Comfort

She thinks of me, she says, as she lies in his arms  
Closing her eyes as his lips are on her neck  
but her thoughts are of me  
There is a comfort in that, I suppose  
in the uncertain knowledge of her words  
For she is my water and I am in this parched hot place  
She comes in flooding fury, Spring tide heights  
Salt sting tears to my eyes, receding too quickly  
Wet sand clinging to bare feet,  
forgotten moments, whispered prayers  
And she thinks of me, she says  
waking in the night to another man's touch  
A comfort, I suppose

(7/28/11)

Ryan Cole

# A Love Song To Beautiful Girls...

A Love song to beautiful girls with sad eyes,  
sweet smiles, and father issues  
who leave broken hearts scattered on barroom floors  
amongst the peanut shells and sawdust  
moving with aplomb through the throngs of want to bes  
and would've beens  
with borrowed cigarettes and no shortage of lights  
playful grins and drunken laughter  
and gentle scent of perfume  
You're the light at the end of the world  
and why we stay 'til last call  
only to stumble home  
to hangovers and regretful mornings  
with only memories of the sad eyes and sweet smiles  
of beautiful girls...  
... with father issues

Ryan Cole

# A Lullaby

I will write a lullaby  
for all the lost and fallen  
who linger on barstools  
until the shout of last call  
I will sing a ballad  
for the lonely and brave  
who face the dawn  
with tired eyes and chagrined smiles  
I will play a dirge  
for the sad and scattered  
who seek redemption in another's eyes  
if only for a moment or a day  
And I will compose a sonnet  
for all of us who continue  
and cling to love  
if only as promise unfulfilled

Ryan Cole

# A Place Like Home

I have found comfort in this place  
Not love perhaps, though it has flittered now and then  
At the corners of my vision  
Dancing seductively with beguiling grace  
And I have rested in this place  
While the wounds of a lifetime have healed  
To old scars, tough and numb  
So that they no longer cause pain  
But are reminders of what has been lost  
And I have changed in this place  
Grown and shrunk, waxed and waned  
Like the lines of tide at its two extremities  
Marked by the detritus left behind  
And I have lived in this place  
But it has never been my home  
Walls and sinks, bed and tables are not home  
Shelter and convenience are not the parts  
From which home is made  
No, home is the things I keep in this tattered tramps suitcase  
That is my heart  
Held together by packing string, duct tape, and wishful thinking  
With scuffs and scratches in the torn vinyl  
Water stained, whether from rain or tears I cannot say  
But it holds the precious things  
The vagabond's tune sung in the night to keep the demons at bay  
The lovely melody pieced out on a slightly out of tune piano  
And the light of your eyes, when I look into them  
Head down and slightly turned to the left  
Illuminated by my butane fire as I light your cigarette  
And the smile we share  
These are what I think of as a place like home

Ryan Cole

# A Sunday Afternoon

Drinking champagne from between your lips  
After mornings in the sun  
The summer my mother died

Later, we would lay in my single bed,  
you asleep  
My shoulder your pillow

And I, awake  
Listen to bits of the songs  
Playing on the car radios from outside my bedroom window

It's where I learned to be patient  
On Sunday afternoons

Ryan Cole

# All The Different Places

I think of all the different places we shared

So far from where I am now

A foreign land, a distant shore

The far side of this world

I think of all the different places we shared

You and I and our youth

Squandered and scattered and left behind

like hair in the drain after the shower

I think of all the different places we shared

and all the times we should have held to

but couldn't, because to do so we would have to know

And in knowing, we would have changed it

and then it would be lost

as it is lost

as they are all lost

The different places we shared

Ryan Cole

# An Absence Of Rivers

In my life I have always felt an absence of rivers  
For it is rivers that we follow  
To the sea  
Yet I have felt them  
Not in their wide expanse  
or savage grace  
Not in their endless grace  
their calm depth  
but still I have felt them  
if only in their absence

Ryan Cole



# An October Morning (2/1/12)

Ashes spreading through water  
swirls of grey upon grey of different shades  
In the cool October morning  
the living deck beneath, moving with the swell  
like the ashes, moving too,  
spreading with current and tide  
finding its way  
Looking to the shore, I see these hills  
Lines across the land,  
breaking the horizon  
etched across my heart  
Known so well,  
Like I know my name  
I know these hills  
Like I know the sound of my father's voice  
calling my name  
Ryan Cole

# Angel And Devil

Devil on my shoulder  
shrugs and shakes his head  
while the angel is busy  
trying to  
hail a cab

Ryan Cole

## Another Time (For K)

She had the saddest eyes when she smiled, far too sad for someone so young. Still, she smiled sweetly before looking down at the drink in her hand, as if amused by some inanity I'd just uttered, just trying to hold her there for another second. Then she reached up and brushed her hand through my hair, and I was gone, lost, doomed, by the touch of her hand and the sweet smile and the saddest eyes

Ryan Cole

# Another Tuesday Morning

Another Tuesday morning

up before the sun

lights from the development

across the canyon

glitter like a constellation

changing a scar into something of beauty

by the absence of the day

And my eyes search the indigo sky

for a last glimpse of Venus

my constant companion

an old wound

made lovely by the absence of the day

Ryan Cole

# Apostate

Looking away from Eden's Gates  
with a long road before me  
and an empty place growing  
where once there was... what?  
Belief? Hope? A promise?  
Once a fool  
Now, a sage?  
Hardly  
Only an apostate  
feeling the vacuum  
that was once faith

Ryan Cole

# Bouncing At The Pint

Drinking lukewarm tea with a name like a porn star  
to fight off the chill  
and reading the works of a much better poet  
about the days and wild horses  
I wonder if he'd have liked this bar  
I'm sure he would've liked the girls  
and the whiskeys  
and the beer  
but probably not the bouncer  
at least not this night

Ryan Cole

# Canyon Road/Dawn

In the cool of the morning  
Just before first light  
Walking down a canyon road  
and thinking about a girl  
lost to the world  
It seems like I've spent half my life  
walking down canyon roads  
in the cool of the morning  
Just before first light  
Thinking about a girl  
lost to the world

Ryan Cole

# Celestial Navigation

She moves across the heavens  
passing Venus and Mars with her fingers crossed  
Unbound by any laws known to Newton or Einstein  
Eclipsing sun and moon  
A pole star  
the brightest object in the night  
guiding the lost and lonely  
to a place like home

Ryan Cole



# Contemplating Emily Dickenson On An Unseasonably Cold And Wet Tuesday Afternoon In May (5/17/11)

Thinking about the thing with feathers that Emily spoke of so long ago

as she sat, alone, in her curtained room

Did she know about all she missed

A lover's breath upon her neck as they become one

It's possible to know what you've never had

Don't I know about that thing with feathers, taking flight against all odds

Did she dare to dream of love, the touch of a hand upon her heart

alone in her curtained room, so long ago

Do I dare believe in that thing with feathers

alone in this rented room,

as I contemplate Emily Dickenson

on an unseasonably cold and wet Tuesday afternoon in May

Yes, I dare

Ryan Cole

# Damaged

Light

Filtered through the trees

Unbalanced

Clustered shadows

Hanging with regret

Carelessly worded

My damaged one

My damage done

Night

Lingering scent

The trace of her finger

Like jasmine and the sea

Gentle touch

Promises whispered

My damaged one

My damage done

Sunset

Ever winding

A fading ribbon

The look in her eyes

Recrimination

Regret

My damage done

Damaged

Ryan Cole

# Dawn

Dawn

In my youth only seen as the end of the night  
As a challenge to be faced in the hours  
between last call and someone's bed  
A finishing line to the rush and the heat  
to be confronted with red eyes, sallow skin,  
and designer sunglasses  
It was a goal to be crossed  
without thought, a temple to my follies  
For then, my battles were yet to be fought

Dawn

Now seen as a beginning  
A lover's kiss upon the neck of the day  
And if now, I have no worlds left to conquer  
the heat and the rush diminished  
Yet the desire remains, untouched  
The want and the hurt  
A different kind of longing  
or perhaps the same  
but expressed in a new way  
How could I not love the dawn  
as an ending or beginning

Ryan Cole

# Denial

I don't want you any more  
No, not very much  
No more than I want breath in my lungs  
I don't think of you any more  
No, not very often  
Except when I do  
which is all the time  
I don't care about you any more  
No, not with all my heart  
Not through my sleepless nights  
Not through my pointless days  
No, I don't want you any more  
Not all that much  
Not until the end of the world  
Whatever everyone says

Ryan Cole

# Diamonds

She keeps a diamond in her heart  
It belongs there, she says  
Because it's hard and cold  
It fills the empty space  
That no man can touch  
She keeps a diamond in her heart  
It belongs there, I say  
Because it's a precious thing  
A tear shed by Venus  
In memory of a kiss  
She keeps a diamond in her heart  
It belongs there, I guess  
Because it's bright and it shines  
And fills the empty space  
That I could never touch

Ryan Cole

## Dreams Of Flying (10/7/11)

The trick, she says,  
is to throw yourself to the ground  
and miss

Despite her dancer's grace  
she will trip on nothing but the air  
and I dream of flying  
yet am always ready  
for the fall

Ryan Cole

## For C

She makes her way to the dark woods  
the windy moors  
The blank places on the map  
where dragons be  
Not for her the birdsong or the dappled glen  
The gentle stream  
No, she is the torrent and the tussle  
The wild places and barren lands  
The world sees only her face  
Bewitched and beguiled by the beauty  
Desired and demanded  
She is just a commodity to be taken and used  
and then discarded  
No better am I  
this much I know  
Though perhaps not just by the beauty caught  
which first came to my eyes  
Seduced instead by the sadness  
as is my way,  
for I too have dwelt in the dark woods  
The windy moors  
and the blank places on the map  
where dragons be

Ryan Cole

# For Corny

He was once so strong  
He stood taller than the sky  
His voice roared like profane thunder  
Now, I tower over him  
His arms and legs are so thin  
And his voice speaks in low grumbles  
though still profane  
But he taught me how to see the world  
He gave me art and soul and hope  
He loved always and does still  
And without him  
Without him I would be lost  
Or more lost than I am  
And in my mind  
He is still so strong  
and he stands ...  
... taller than the sky

Ryan Cole



# For Jennifer F

Motionless

Yet with fire and movement

She holds the pose

relaxed, never stiff

filling the canvas with life

and creating art

out of stillness

Ryan Cole

# For Katharina

A year later and I am still lost  
How can it be that I was your low point  
and you were my high  
You ask why I hate him so much  
and I say I don't, it's just ...  
Just that he's not good enough for me you challenge  
Oh darling, I respond  
The list of men I don't think are good enough  
for you  
is longer than the list of my regrets  
and at the top of that list  
the pinnacle, the peak  
is me  
A year later, and still ...  
...I am lost

Ryan Cole

# For Katja

Russian women, she says,

Learn young how to move their hands

She is a dancer

Grace granted human form

and as she swings and sways and flies upon the stage

Each movement plants a flag

and lays claim to another piece of my heart

She is a Traveller

moving through this world

from a place by the mountains

she thinks of as home

Her long fingers and slender arms

dance in a way I've never seen before

Russian women, you see

Learn young how to move their hands

Ryan Cole

# Forgetting

Forgetting

I wish I could  
but the curse of my memory  
is to remember every second  
fully situated in time and space  
and though sometimes I long to forget  
I know I never will  
and so with the memories  
I will build a wall  
behind which I might find shelter  
from the onslaught  
of everything  
but the things I wish I could ...  
forget

Ryan Cole

# Gifts

I never gave her a sunrise  
Our love was always in the twilight  
Never the dawn  
Yet I promised her all my sunsets  
and so it is,  
But I think I'll keep the sunrises  
At least for now

Ryan Cole

# Grace

Stumble and fall  
for all my life  
I have lacked grace

Ryan Cole

# Happiness

Like water  
Dribbling through the cracks and holes  
leaving a puddle on my heart  
Like dry ice dropped in a glass of water  
filling my eyes with fog  
Happiness  
like all things transitory  
comes and goes on a whim  
but is always welcome  
for an interlude  
a matinee  
on a quiet Saturday afternoon

Ryan Cole

# Her Laugh

She laughs over the phone  
I used to live to make her laugh  
Maybe that was the only thing  
I was ever good at  
Except for making her cry  
But now she's laughing  
over the phone at something I said  
Something that jumped into my head  
and out of my mouth and across the distance  
to her Bluetooth as she navigates the 5  
And I think of all the times I made her laugh  
It was when things were best  
And I ask myself  
Is this love  
This thing we share  
Or is it what is left  
after love  
Is it a monument  
to foolish endeavors  
or just a mediocre tribute band  
to something great  
But I can still make her laugh  
I used to live to make her laugh

Ryan Cole



# Her Name

I try not to say her name  
As if it held some power  
To cast a spell  
I don't say it aloud  
Though it is in my thoughts all the time  
Bouncing around  
In the empty corners of my head  
Resounding like a bell on the door  
Of an old shop  
Burrowing deeply  
Into the soft place  
of my heart  
I try not to say her name  
For fear that when I do  
I will lose that last part  
Bouncing around  
In the empty corners of my head  
Burrowing deeply  
Into the soft places  
of my heart

Ryan Cole

# Her Tears

Her tears flowed like red wine into a paper cup  
Leaving stains not on the waxen paper  
but across my heart

Ryan Cole

# His Silent World, For Levi (Peanut)

His silent world

Who is to say it's any less

in its absence of noise

Does his mother's heart beat

any less

as she holds him while he sleeps

His head on her lap

Her love all around

Does he feel it any less

for the lack of sound

Ryan Cole

# Hope

Hope,  
like the condom in an awkward teenage boy's wallet  
is something I carry with me  
in case, someday  
I need it

Ryan Cole

# I Know Nothing About The Rain (With Apologies To T.S. Elliott,9/1/11)

Do you still love me, she asks  
fragile moment, simple words  
Fear and longing mingled like our breaths  
hanging precariously in the air

People talk about the weather  
To fill the savage spaces  
Empty Silence, empty words  
And we talk about the weather  
What can I say  
What do I know of the weather  
Falling gently, scattered drops  
What do I know of the rain

Do you still love me, she asks  
In the interval between  
What do I know of love  
Falling gently, scattered drops

And in the rooms the women light as a feather  
stand around talking about the weather  
And I don't really know what to say  
I know nothing about the rain

Ryan Cole

# I Say Your Name (For K)

I say your name

I say your name and all things fall away

To shatter like glass on the kitchen floor

Spreading pool of white

as random shards pierce bare feet

A splash of red

Spilled milk

Fresh blood

I say your name

I say your name in the quiet certitude of my love

Sure of this, if nothing else

I say your name and first person possessive

Your name

My love

Ryan Cole

# I See Her Happy (5/10/11)

I see her happy and I think  
of all the chances I never had  
to make her see herself through my eyes  
For she could only see herself through others  
A thing of beauty, an object of desire  
Someone I couldn't hold  
Though want was there  
a piece was missing  
Some fragment of my whole misplaced  
could never make her happy  
Though I longed to try  
I see her happy and I think  
Is she seeing herself now only through his eyes  
Clouded by love, but reflection still  
Or at last does she see herself as she is  
Intrinsic to herself  
A masterpiece waiting to happen  
A wildflower in bloom  
I see her happen and I think  
of all the chances I never had

Ryan Cole



# I Still Feel Your Ghost (2/18/12)

I still feel your ghost in all the places we used to haunt

clinging nostalgia dragging me back there

though I no longer belong

I am exiled, forbidden access

a traveller with no destination to call me forward

biding time, the interterminal wait

\*\*\*

I feel your ghost around me here

in the crisp cold cut of the morning

the ragged tearing of the wind, shrilly whistling

through the not quite closed window

and the empty space of my bed

There is snow on the mountains

\*\*\*

I feel your ghost in that too

Ryan Cole

# I Will Drink...

I will drink from the cup

and taste the sweet nectar

As I see that all knowledge is fleeting

This world, the next, tomorrow, today

All the hours and all the days

Might never be, never have been

or are yet to come,

But this morning, this moment, right now

as i sit here and drink from the cup,

and taste the sweet nectar

I'm okay with that

I'm okay

As I drink from the cup

the sweet nectar

A taste like joy,

though tinged perhaps

with other things,

but that's okay

As I drink from your cup

and taste the sweet nectar

Ryan Cole

# Irises

Irises

covering the foot of your bed

in the soft warmth of your down comforter

as we awake in the morning

Irises

Bought by me for you

but brought to us both

in the night

by the small yellow cat

who lay nestled

in irises

and the soft warmth of your comforter

as we awake in the morning

Ryan Cole

# Last Call

Is this love  
the heat and the rush  
or is it just the moment  
the kiss and the touch  
When I look in your eyes  
what is it that I see  
And what do you look for  
in mine  
Is this all a lie  
or something else  
Not love, but still real  
As real as anything can be  
in the heat and the rush  
and the drunken fondling  
of the last call

Ryan Cole

# Last Night/This Morning

I dreamt of you again last night  
Well, really, it was this morning  
and dreams don't amount to much  
Do they?  
But you always believed in dreams  
just like you once believed in me  
and I don't know what I believe  
not anymore  
Yet I dreamt of you again last night  
well, really it was this morning

Ryan Cole

# Lets Get Lost

Lets get lost  
Lets run away  
though there are no circuses left to join  
We'll create our own  
just you and I  
We'll walk the tight rope together  
and swing on the trapeze  
everyone will say how lovely you are  
as they laugh at me  
Yes, let's get lost  
Let's run away  
We'll leave this world behind  
to live in castles in Spain

Ryan Cole

## Light From Another Room,6/23/10

Seen through the crack in a door not fully closed  
Creating shadows where it is absent  
but no real illumination in its presence  
A sliver, a wedge  
There only to present a contrast  
to the darkness  
Nothing more

Ryan Cole



# Like Water

For I am like water  
Following the path of least resistance  
Through stagnant pools and rapids' rage  
Like water  
I will always find my way  
To the sea

Ryan Cole

# Lost Dreams Of The Fallen

LOST DREAMS OF THE FALLEN,6/10/10

We live on  
biding eternity  
lounging in outdoor cafes  
and all night coffee shops  
drinking wine as the morning passes  
or cheap cups'o'joe throughout the night  
We stay in rented rooms  
or cheap motels  
in the outlands  
where we belong  
at least in a way  
We watch  
a world we can never have  
and cannot love  
dreaming of heaven's fall  
and all that was lost

Ryan Cole

# Love (Or Something Like It)

Love, or something like it  
in your lips and tongue  
the warmth of your body  
the feel of your heartbeat  
against my own  
Here, tonight, now  
and the morning, which might never come  
If not love, still something like it  
Still to be cherished  
when the morning comes

Ryan Cole

# Muse

Words strung together  
to express a thought as yet unknown  
A simple melody  
a line of notes  
or chord change  
A minor to F maj 7th  
Simple line across canvas  
a dash of paint or a charcoal smudge  
to find a way  
to move the world  
make the girls weep  
bringing wonder and marvel  
and perhaps, just perhaps  
to live on for the ages

Ryan Cole

# My Father's Hands

I see my father's hands

Long fingered, elegant beauty

Shivering tremors replacing strength

Once they held the world

Once they held my hands

Safe in their elegant length

when I first faced this world

My small hands in his

shivering tremors, giving me strength

I see my father's hands

When I look at my own

Ryan Cole

# Numb

Numb

Is how she wants to be  
So that she won't have to feel  
and everything will fall away

Numb

It's how I have been  
but no more  
I'd rather live the pain  
than know it's there, unnoticed  
For pain is the warning  
against the burn  
Better felt  
Though it hurts so much  
than to be nothing  
but numb

Ryan Cole

## Ocean Park (4/10/11)

I no longer live in Ocean Park

Though I am never far from that place

Kept close in the quiet corners of my heart

Instead it seems I spend my days in passing

From a place I do not love to somewhere I don't want to be

And in my dreams there is you

So far away

Farther even than Ocean Park

With it's salt sting and morning fog

Known far too well

I dream of you, your eyes, your hand

The gentle hint of your smile

Replacing Ocean Park

In the quiet corners of my heart

Ryan Cole

# One Last Thing

'One last thing, ' he said  
'and then consider me dust  
'Be happy my love'

Ryan Cole



## Owned By Silence (2/25/12)

Tell me your secrets

Tell me your lies

Tell me stories of your day

Tell me anything and I will listen

and if I don't say anything in response

except the occasional mmm-hmm and uh-huhs

it isn't that I don't care or want to hear your words

It is only that I am, at times,

owned by silence

and it leaves me with nothing to say

Ryan Cole

## Passing (8/9/11)

From hand to hand  
Gentle touch moving silence  
Held in this leaky vessel before moving on  
To something, what not known  
But here once, part and whole

Passing now, yet remembered always  
The remnant of love is still love  
What remains to us  
from hand to hand  
passing gently

Ryan Cole

# Perfection

'I don't want perfection, ' I say  
'It doesn't exist, and if it did, it'd be boring'  
I say these words and she nods and smiles  
I say these things but I think she 'is' perfect  
In all the little ways  
The turn of her nose  
The shade of her eyes  
The shape of her mouth  
And the way she calls me on my bulls\*\*t  
She is perfect the way a Vermeer painting is perfect  
made of light...  
Light and shadows

Ryan Cole

# Possession (For K)

You are mine

You are mine and I am yours

And together we are... what?

Something more than the sum of us

A spirit moving through the tall grass

A shadow cast on the longest day

growing and shrinking with the sun

moving across the sky

And I am yours

I am yours and you are mine

Filling the shallow husk of me

Touching the secret places

In the diminished light of the evening

Pale smooth and cool

You reach into me and caress me

Holding tight the lonely core

made whole by your lips

You are mine

You are mine and I am yours

A gentle finger moving along your inner thigh

A promise whispered into your ear  
My breath on your neck  
Saying your name in the final moment  
Living forever as we again become one  
I am yours  
I am yours and you are mine  
And we are together  
Something more  
The sweet promise of the little death  
Lasting forever in the passing seconds  
cradled between us  
In the immeasurable spaces  
You are mine  
You are mine and I am yours  
And together we are...  
We are one  
Ryan Cole

# Rarity

I live for the random moments of happiness.  
They are the promise that keeps me going.  
I just wish they weren't so rare,  
but each one is precious,  
which perhaps, only comes with rarity.

Ryan Cole

# Raven

Raven in the parking lot

Saunters about as he looks for food

Glances in my direction

and I swear, he nods

Two creatures

Both clad in black

Acknowledging each other's existence

And then he flies away

O to have such wings

O to fly away

Ryan Cole

# Rememberance

I will remember you  
through the mornings and the days  
against the backdropp of my life  
a greenscreen image  
as I act the part  
written for another  
miscast and mistaken  
Remembering everything  
as is my way  
what might have been  
If only ...  
those saddest of words  
Leaving nothing but  
my memory  
to haunt and perhaps to heal  
but never forget  
all that is  
You

Ryan Cole



# Revenant

I see you  
as a reflection in turbulent water  
A shattered image across the rippled surface  
I hear you  
as a melody caught faintly across a canyon  
A familiar tune, half remembered  
I feel you  
as a whispered breath across the back of my neck  
a touch along the small of my back  
I miss you  
with the sad regret of all my failures  
and the ache of a phantom limb

Ryan Cole

# She

She is the shadows  
in a film noir  
The mist across the street lamp  
on a London night  
She is the mystery  
that cannot be solved  
The question unasked

She is the whirlwind  
dancing across the Painted Desert  
She is desire made flesh  
slipping away with the tail of the night  
She is the wayfarer's dream  
as he falls beside the road

Ryan Cole

# She Is A Danger

She is a danger  
To herself and others  
but most of all  
to my heart

Ryan Cole

# She Waits For You Across The River (8/20/11)

She waits for you across the river

In the soft untrammelled field

Beneath the warm sun

She waits to hold your head

as it rests upon her lap

To whisper the words remembered well

Sweet and smooth as promised grace

She waits for you across the river

Go to her now, call her name

She has made a place for you

beside her, with her, now is peace

Her hand reaches for yours, her lips call your name

Your battles are over, won or lost, it no longer matters

She awaits for you there, now is only love

Go to her, go to her and rest

Safe in the warmth of her love

Across the river

in the soft untrammelled field

Ryan Cole

# Shelter

Shelter she offered  
so briefly given  
but how could it be  
when she was the tempest  
and I was the aftermath

Ryan Cole

# Sleep

Maybe someday  
I'll sleep again  
through the night  
without waking to look  
longingly  
at the morning star  
Maybe someday  
but no time soon  
For now I'll be awake  
and see the star  
Venus as she moves  
and think of you

Ryan Cole

# Sleep With Me

'Sleep with me, ' she says  
and I am at a loss  
Her eyes are locked on mine as she says  
'Let tomorrow take care of itself.'  
And I am knocked to the floor  
But it's not the future that haunts me

Ryan Cole

# State Beach, Sunset

She laughs  
and says surely you don't believe we can change the world  
as I smile, to say I do  
And I wonder,  
a thousand years ago  
did two lovers walk on such a beach  
and say the things we do

Ryan Cole



# Stupid Moon

Stupid moon  
Doesn't care that you're not with me  
It's going to go on being beautiful anyway  
Just like you

Ryan Cole

# Stupid Moon Redux

There's a light that shines  
through my bedroom window  
It keeps me awake all night  
I have the radio on  
I'm listening for our love song  
but that's the only one that I don't hear  
Every song that plays  
is someone else's story  
but that's just the way it always goes  
You don't know what you want  
You only know you want it badly  
And I don't have it to give  
Stupid moon  
It's up there mocking gently  
Reminding me of everything I've lost

Ryan Cole

# Tangled,8/20/10

Tangled ...

(like the cord to my earbuds

shoved too quickly into my breast pocket

at the beginning of my shift

wrapped around the sunglasses

that fling themselves to the ground

as I retrieve my iPod at the end of my work day

plummeting to the asphalt of the parking lot

to shattering lense and bent frame

and angry curses at the unfairness of fate

and a journey home squinting in the bright sun)

... are the strings around my heart

Ryan Cole

# Ten Weeks And Two Days

Ten weeks and two days without a drink  
And I can't say I miss it yet  
I don't feel the absence of anything  
More it is a presence I perceive  
How much has changed in that time  
How many worlds have risen and fallen  
Empires of my folly  
Grief and joy and grief again  
And the question I'm afraid to ask  
Where will I be,  
Ten weeks and two days from now...  
Without a drink, perhaps

Ryan Cole

# The Beauty Of The World

I hate the beauty of the world  
The moon, the stars, and all the spaces between  
Hell is not a place, it's an absence  
And all the beauty just reminds me  
of what isn't here  
Here or there, ten thousand miles away  
The beauty of the world is all just a shadow  
dancing on the cave's walls  
illuminated by fire  
obscured by smoke  
but always, always  
there is you  
And everything else  
is just shadows on a wall

Ryan Cole

# The Bouncer's Lament

I can laugh  
It comes easy to me  
And I smile readily enough  
They say I have a nice smile  
the barflies and regulars  
the drunk girls and the lonelyhearts  
And if I look down  
or glance off to the horizon  
to some far off place  
As they talk their drunken talk  
Don't think that I can't smile  
It's just that I feel the longing  
as we all do  
that whiskey doesn't kill  
I feel it in the cold night air  
Yet still I can laugh  
You know,  
It comes easily to me

Ryan Cole

# The Dry Wash

The expanse  
Broader than anything I've ever known  
Except for maybe the distance between us  
Not like the canyons I have loved  
But rock strewn and arid  
A gulf separating the hills  
Waiting for the rains  
And what then?  
A torrent raging  
But now, just a dry place  
Broader than anything I have ever known  
Except for the distance between us

Ryan Cole

# The Girl About To Fall

See the girl about to fall

Dancing on the wire of her desperation

Falling, to shatter in a thousand jagged shards

that cut my feet and pierce my heart

And all the best intentions, all the pretty words

cannot put back together

the girl about to fall

Ryan Cole



# The Moon 2 Days Past Full

The moon,  
Two days past full  
Pale in the light of morning  
Framed between two date palms  
Above an empty parking lots  
Another day  
Fading and falling  
In the growing light  
A chaste lovers' dance  
the sun newborn  
The dying moon  
Two days past full  
Passing glances as they part  
Another day

Ryan Cole

# The Parts You Saved

The parts you saved  
were not the things you valued most  
It was just the stuff that was close at hand  
And the things you lost  
Were the treasures  
that cannot be replaced

Ryan Cole

# The Poet

See the poet, hard at work

grumbling and scribbling and drinking his tea

In his pajamas for two days straight

his hairs a mess, he needs a shave

most people call it loafing

but the poet is hard at work

Ryan Cole

# The Transit Of Venus

I remember waking up in the morning, the hours before dawn, looking out your bedroom window, to see the morning star, Venus, as she moved across the sky. You would sleep beside me, unaware of me, or the star. I would watch, captivated, as she slowly made her way as the light would come, to the point where I wouldn't have been able to see her at all, if I hadn't known she was there. Even then, I knew that though I loved you and you loved me, we were no longer in love, that what remained was only a shadow, a comfortable, safe place where we could linger for a while. The difference between loving and being in love was never so clear as I watched Venus slowly vanish in the coming of the dawn, so clear to me, since I had watched her from the darkness, but invisible to everyone else, in the diffuse light of morning. We had loved and been in love once. Now, we held on to feelings we no longer felt as a shelter from the storm, frail and tempest tossed. You slept, as I faced a new day, watching Venus, the morning star, vanish into the growing light of the sun, but knowing, even then, that she was there, unseen, a remnant or memory, of what had been, what could have been, what would never be again.

Ryan Cole

# These Desert Hills

I walk through these desert hills

beside a highway

In the heat of the day

Here now, but not inside

Inside, I am in a cool place

an old place,

Sitting in an outdoor cafe

in the shivering cool of a drizzling day

on a cobblestoned street

with you

Drinking cheap Spanish wine

huddled in our tattered elegance

warm only in our closeness

and our secondhand coats

You, ageless beauty, still young

me, fading fast to some lesser thing

We would talk of art, words, and music

drinking cheap Spanish wine

on a cobblestoned street

in the drizzling cold

But no,

I am here, in these desert hills

and I have no idea where you are

in some outdoor cafe?

on a cobblestoned street

drinking cheap Spanish wine

with the man you love?

Perhaps so

And I am in these desert hills

Ryan Cole

# This Ordinary Madness (12/15/10)

We talk about these things

This ordinary madness

The gum in our hair,

sticking and pulling and making a mess,

impossible to remove

This ordinary madness

The complications of the days

and the nights

and the times between,

stolen and hoarded and hidden

This ordinary madness

Writ small on folded pieces of paper

shoved into a too full wallet

to be quickly forgotten

until found, much later

a memory of a chance

Now nostalgic in its aging grace

This ordinary madness

These things we talk about

Of interest to no one

but you and I

Precious perhaps

In it's mundane way

This thing we talk about

through our nights and days and the times between

This love, this desire, this need,

This ordinary madness

Ryan Cole



# Too Long In This Place

I have been too long in this place  
An exile to myself  
living in the half-life of the memory of your smile  
comfortable in this splendid squalor  
but cast loose and cut off  
drifting, rudderless,  
I could never touch your savage grace  
or tame your dancer's soul  
Yours was not a heart given to forgiveness  
or bound by temperant soul  
but I am here  
still in its shadow I linger  
Too long in this place  
in the lost light of the memory of your smile

Ryan Cole

# Uncomplicated Joy

Crash and bang  
and children shout in pleasure  
the uncomplicated joy  
of illegal fireworks  
It's always fun  
until someone blows his hand off  
And I feel a thousand miles  
from anyplace I love  
as another little bomb goes off  
to the delight of the crowd  
but I'd rather hear  
the rumbling roar of the ocean  
and taste the salt on my tongue  
than the gun powder smoke  
For it's lost to me  
the uncomplicated joy  
of illegal fireworks

Ryan Cole

# Untitled

Saying all the right words  
but only causing her pain  
The right words but the wrong lips  
My lips, not his lips  
What a tragedy  
two broken hearts instead of one  
Yet I am compelled to throw myself  
against the rocks of her ambivalence  
until she casts me aside  
Still I fling myself headlong  
down that flight of stairs  
that will pass for love  
'Til something better comes along

Ryan Cole

## Untitled 8/5/10

I would make you my religion  
and worship at the temple of your body  
Taking communion from your lips, your breast, your thighs  
I would die in you  
and in dying live again  
To die a thousand deaths  
each more ecstatic than the last  
All other women will be a heresy  
A blasphemy to what you are  
False idols, profane, lesser deities,  
and I a disciple to your beauty  
an apostle to your soul  
Though I should burn forever  
Burning would be paradise  
to be with you

Ryan Cole

## Untitled,7/30/10

A father and son  
kicking a soccer ball  
in the alley below  
while mariachi music  
fills my ears  
And I think  
that's pretty good for now

Ryan Cole

## Vanishing,6/24/10

She is always  
Vanishing  
Leaving nothing  
but a ghostly image  
burnt across the retinas  
of my imagination  
She disappears  
until she again returns  
If only as a thought, a wish  
a longing, a promise  
For again,  
she has vanished,  
has gone,  
and again,  
I am without

Ryan Cole

# Walking Down Fourth Street

Walking down Fourth Street from your apartment  
heading towards Pico and the long trip back  
My head full of thoughts i shouldn't have  
My heart full of wants I can't let go

I wanted you so that night  
For days and months  
But I couldn't take as a prize that which is only a gift  
And I wouldn't want to be someone you regretted

Another mistake in your journey down  
So I took you home that night  
but didn't stay  
We will never be lovers  
Not even friends

As I walked down Fourth Street from your place  
Towards Pico and the long trip home  
You were so lost then  
Lost then, as I am now

Ryan Cole

# Welcome Home

Wet sand clings to the spaces between my toes  
and to the wet cuffs of my jeans  
as the low waves, soaking  
wash away the evidence of my passing  
As the breakers crash against the stones of first jetty  
I taste the salt against my lips  
The spray stings my eyes  
As the look to the line of the hills  
Engraved across all that makes me who I am  
The horizon I know so well  
have always known  
Will know on the day of my death  
The waves, the hills, the stones  
They whisper in my ear  
'Welcome home'

Ryan Cole



# Wildflower

Uncultivated  
with no plan or reason  
Burning across my dun colored world  
like a sudden flash of flame  
Bringing yellows and blues and reds  
Shining for a second  
then gone  
Returning to grey  
yet I am changed forever  
I see the color through the mist  
An ember  
A spark  
Wildflower

Ryan Cole

# Without

When I think of something funny, who will I rush to tell?  
When I wake up at 3 a.m., who will I feel next to me?  
When the sadness comes, as it always does, who will hold me?  
When I marvel at all the beauty in this world, with whom will I share it?  
When I buy flowers, who will they be for?  
If you love someone else now, who will I do these things for?

Ryan Cole

## Without Malice,6/26/10

There is no malice in her  
All the little wounds she brings  
are accidental or providential,  
but always inadvertent  
symptoms of her misery  
And yet I die from a thousand little cuts  
but somehow continue to breathe  
To walk, to work, to sleep  
or not to sleep,  
perchance to dream  
Living on, if dead  
wondering  
Is this Hell...  
or just the rest of my life

Ryan Cole