LOVE, ROBOTS, AND OTHER MYTHICAL TALES

A Project

Presented to the faculty of the Department of English

California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

English

(Creative Writing)

by

Johnny Sittisin

SPRING
2012
LOVE, ROBOTS, AND OTHER MYTHICAL TALES

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Johnny Sittisin

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Department of English
Abstract

of

LOVE, ROBOTS, AND OTHER MYTHICAL TALES

by

Johnny Sittisin

A collection of fairy tales, myths, legends, and wonder for adults.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Prof. Joshua McKinney

_______________________
Date

iv
DEDICATION

To Love: Whatever it is – Here.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people: Joshua McKinney, Doug Rice, Peter Grandbois, my family, my friends, Woody Allen, Snoop Dogg, and myself for harboring a savage curiosity.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLIDE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A CHECKLIST FOR DRAMA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A FICTIONAL HISTORY OF MY FATHER</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITER’S BLOCK</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANCHOR</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AXIOMS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLOSSOM</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREATHLESS STORY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURIED</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARNIVAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDHOOD</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHOICES</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY SLICKER</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAIRE DE LUNE ON PBS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMESTICITY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPILOGUE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRYTALE DRAMA</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAKE EMPIRE</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.I. JOE’S VISIT TO THE DOCTOR’S OFFICE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HONESTY</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I AM MYTH</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNAL CALCULATIONS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONG DISTANCE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATINEE</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATURITY</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARCISSUS ON OPRAH</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIGHTMARE</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARTOON SCIENCE</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROMETHEUS</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECEIVER</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOLUTION</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ROMANTIC EQUATION</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHIFT</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DREAMING AFTER AN I.Q. TEST</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPONTANEITY</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRINGS</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYNOPSIS</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYNTAX</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BOY AND THE MOON</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITING UNDER THE INFLUENCE</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHORT CIRCUIT</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collide

- For Ari

You walk with her through the garden, lonely hands separate. Though you feel the gentle brushes of skin kiss one another as you sway down the stony path of roses, lilies, carnations, lilacs, tulips, and orchids, you both make an unspoken, conscious effort not to hold hands. You look up to see the gray sky has pulled itself over everything. And just beyond the haze, you know that the meteor is coming. You’ve heard the reports on the radio, seen the frantic specials on CNN, read posts about it online, there is no mistaking it – Earth will be destroyed. And yet, there you are, walking beside her through the garden, more afraid of your words than the end of the world.
A Checklist for Drama

1. Meet
2. Fall in love
3. (Insert)
4. Fall out of love
5. (Insert)
6. S/he left
7. (Insert)
8. S/he wept

How cliché
A Fictional History of My Father

My father was a supportive man, always there for the baseball games cheering me on from the top bleacher, chanting my team name. My father was a sartorialist, dressed in the finest clothes, tie perfectly askew as he left for work, teaching history to a classroom full of bright-eyed college freshman. My father was a kind man, touching the small of my first mother’s back as they swayed to The Penguin’s Earth Angel melody they hummed in unison. My father was a passionate man with tact, never raising his voice when angered, always calmly advising me on my homework, and constantly praising my intelligence. My father was a responsible man, always paying the bills on time, never wasting a dime on the inessentials, abstinent from alcohol. My father was a good father, tucking me in at night and telling me stories about how he knew, without a doubt, that I would grow up to be better than him. My father was an honest man who never told a lie.
Writer’s Block

A writer is sitting on a unicycle at his desk, hunched over his notepad. His face is drooping and painted like a clown, complete with a bulbous red nose. He sighs and puts his hands to his face, honking his nose. The tuxedo-wearing monkey on his shoulder taps his shoulder.

“What’s wrong?” asks the monkey.

“I’ve got a problem,” the writer replies.

The personal pizza-sized storm cloud hovering above the man and monkey lets out a sneeze, spraying the pair with a gush of gooey rain.

“Sorry, I’ve got the sniffles,” the storm cloud says.

The storm cloud pulls out a handkerchief and wipes its translucent nose. The monkey pulls a banana out of his pocket and begins to peel.

“So what’s the problem?” the monkey asks as he takes a bite of banana.

“I want to write,” the writer says.

“I want to go on a date with the sun. She’s hot,” the storm cloud adds. A cartoon heart appears above the cloud and floats like a balloon. The writer begins to think about a girl he knew long ago. A butterfly pops out of his bellybutton and flies onto the monkey’s shoulder.

“Now I’ve got a butterfly on my shoulder,” the monkey laments.

The storm cloud squeaks out a fart of lighting, trying to be discreet.

“Well, why aren’t you writing then?”
“I’ve got nothing to write about.”
Anchor

Oars chopped into the ocean’s skin as Ahab gazed across the waves. The white whale cannoned from the sea, harpooning the gray sky, eclipsing the sun. The spear vaulted from his hand and pierced foggy flesh. The whale lanced back into the depths as rope banded Ahab’s leg, dragging him into a blue union. While liquid dreams filled his lungs, he realized it was love.
Valence murmurs on the tip of newborn’s nose.

“Welcome to the family,” all the organs vibrate in unison, shooting chuckles across baby’s body.

“Don’t say anything,” Old Man e’ buzzed beneath Valence. “Skin flakes off easily, so you won’t be here anymore than a few weeks or so.” Valence turns its axiom just in time to see e’ adjusting its spectacles, the glare shining like tears. “Never trust you’ll be anywhere long.” Valence silences to a hum and thinks about the beginning of the universe.

Sometimes his anxiety over spontaneous combustion resurfaces by way of shaky elliptical patters — banging out of nothingness into somethingness. Tethering the weight of existence is a heavy thing to deal with. But, Valence went with it and got along well enough: neutrons were a little dry in their wit, whispering puns, while protons were downright bourgeoisie, refusing to share their guffaws with anyone except other protons, and definitely not Valence. The only category of particles Valence got along with were quarks who enjoyed flirting with black holes, nebulas, and those mysterious dark matter types. Or rather, quarks seemed ambivalent to valence’s presence. Unless you were attractive, quarks didn’t speak to you. And combining average looks and being habitually late to bonding parties, Valence didn’t get much interpersonal time.

No calls for assistance bubbles from Valence when drifting south into the snow, the single flake of skin melting into the winter blanket. Baby bounces from sight, hands
nestled in the hands of her mother. Valence thinks about how they look like a single organism, sighs, then ponders the end of the universe.

When the end of existence comes, Valence will be vanguarding Sun’s supernova, heralding the cosmic reset button. Baby will only be 8 years old, and Valence will feel bad surfing the waves of energy collapsing Earth into the flat canvas of blackness it always was. “See,” Old Man e` mumbles behind Valence, “we’re all just a collage of stars ready to combust at the slightest sneeze.”
Black

A tiny black hole emerged in the center of a sandbox. As the nature of black holes command, the black hole began sucking in sand, dirt, bark, wood, grass, trees, and children in a whirlpool of night, growing bigger with each passing second. Next slipped in the parents, then benches, cars, swings, buildings, oceans, the sky, light, everything until the entire world eventually collapsed into itself only to blossom again with the parents as grandparents, and children as adults with their own children, all left wondering where the time had gone.
Blossom

Surrounded by children on the patio of The Garden tea house on the corner of E and 10th sat Neil Alman, a man with a bonsai-sized apple tree growing from the top of his head.

“…and when I tried to blow dry my hair for the prom, the tree caught fire,” said Neil, fluttering his hands like a symphony conductor. “I never made it to prom, but I did dance in my bathroom.” The children lit up with laughter, waving jazz hands above their heads as mock flames.

“Did you make apple sauce?”

“No.”

“What do your apples taste like?”

“Depends on how ripe the memory inside it.”

They came every Saturday. Sometimes Neil shared allegorical stories, like how when kids teased him as a sproutling, sneering “Silly Sapling,” “Dogwood,” or “Rotty to the Core,” he would pretend to ignore them, whispering how his roots were planted deeply. “Even at a young age, I was as stout as the thickest oak, and wiser than the oldest redwood. You couldn’t shake my branches.” The children smiled. He never mentioned the bullies throwing apple cores at him as he walked home.

Sometimes Neil wove fantastical tales.
“Mr. Moon and Ms. Ocean were in love, but couldn’t be together because of their jobs. Mr. Moon was a nightlight, and Ms. Ocean was a nutritionist who kept Rev. Earth hydrated.”

“Why can’t they be together?”

“Distance. Space and stars.”

“But stars are what you wish upon.”

“They sent love letters though. They share a gravitational pull, which is like a telephone line, or email.”

“Can we read the letters?”

“No, but you can hear them. The pull of gravity shapes tides, the wind carries the message of the tides, so you can hear their words in the breeze.”

The children tilted their heads just as a gust blew, shaking the reddest, ripest apple off a branch deep inside Neil’s tree.

“I don’t hear anything,” sighed some children.

A boy picked up the nickel-sized apple and took a tiny bite. Colors blossomed, shapes formed and joined again and again. The child tugged on Neil’s shirt, eyes lit, body weighted.

“Mr. Moon and Ms. Ocean shouldn’t try to be together if that’s what love is like.”

“The love in that apple is a myth, kid.”

The child cast the remains of the apple down and stomped.
Breathless Story

A man with wings decided to overcome his fear of heights by jumping off the Empire State building. While falling, the man saw a reel of his life flash before his eyes, glowing translucently as if being conjured by an invisible projector. Seeing all the obstacles and trials he had overcome to be at the present moment where he was, his fear of heights dwindled away and descended into nothingness. Nearing the ground, he lifted his wings, landed as graceful as a drop of rain and dropped dead. Officials later concluded that he had died of a heart attack caused by asphyxiation.
Buried

I buried my father’s bones in our front yard in the fall of a year I don’t remember. Shuffled the dirt over his skull next to withered oranges, plump with fatigue. Autumn winds provided most of the care, a sleek drizzle of gray and thunder. On the days it didn’t rain, I’d pour a bottle. Or two. Or three. When winter arrived, a hand of bones sprouted, cradling a bouquet of pungent yellow carnations. Get rid of it I told the gardener. I hate weeds.
Carnival

Norman wanted nothing more than to ride the ferris wheel, but that was difficult seeing he was a minotaur.

“Sorry, buddy,” said the bucktoothed carnie spitting over the railing edge, “You can’t ride this alone. You need a partner.”

As a child, Norman excelled in both the arts and sciences. His parents recognized their child prodigy when, at the tender age of seven, he mastered calculus and memorized the entire poetry collection of John Keats. In fact, he recited “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” at the annual Dungeon Keeps Union Dinner Extravaganza.

“Thank you,” Mr. and Mrs. Minotaur snorted in unison, their arms wrapped proudly around one another. “We’ve already set up a college fund for him.”

Working seventeen hour days guarding the dungeon of Donald Trump, Mr. and Mrs. Minotaur scrapped and saved, cutting out any and all expendable luxuries. Mr. Minotaur even sold his most prized possession: his Ford Taurus.


“There needs to be a minimum of two people,” said Bucky (that’s what Norman named the carny) pointing up to the flashing sign above his head, “That’s why it’s called the Couples A-Ferris Wheel.”

“I see,” said Norman tucking his ticker back into his pocket.
“I’ll go with you,” said a voice. Norman turned and set his eyes on a human girl: her hair was a flat brown, her skin plain and fair, her smile shaped by a cookie-cutter. The only interesting thing about her was a red balloon tethered to her right wrist. Despite this, Norman swore he heard the faint sound of a cello when their eyes met. He nodded as they both handed Bucky their tickets.

From the top of the Ferris wheel, the lights of the carousel swirled into the lights of the tent, melted into the lights of the theater. Even the red balloon the plain girl held seemed to be a little bit lighter. Norman and the girl turned to each other. Maybe it was the moonlight, maybe it was the corndogs, but it that moment, Norman saw that maybe, just maybe, the couple of the Grecian urn had a chance to hold hands.
Chapter 1

On the top shelf of the last row of fiction in the used bookstore is where Jorge found the black book of endless beginnings. He placed the book down onto the dusty table under the store’s dim lamp lighting and opened it up to the middle where the heading read “Chapter 1” as words began to fill in the crevices of the page. Jorge flipped to the end of the novel, or at least what he thought was the last page of the book, and was greeted once more with the “Chapter 1” heading, and blossoming words. No matter what page he opened it to, every single page began with the same heading, words sprouting from the depths of its fertile paper, ink spewing over the edges of the tome like vines over a fence. Jorge slammed the book shut and read the cover, “Chapter 1.” Forget the end, he thought. There are a thousand ways to begin.
Childhood

A young light switch was afraid of the dark.

“Don’t make me turn off the light,” the switch would say, flickering with nerves to the Sun.

“I have to go, Switch, there’s a whole other side of the planet that needs my shine too,” Sun would say in his deep, adult baritone.

“But the darkness is where things happen that you can’t see,” said Switch.

“There is nothing to be afraid of,” Professor Bulb, Switch’s Swedish teacher, would say.

Although Switch knew it was his duty to turn on or off the light, he couldn’t help but feel a sense of fatalism towards the whole drama.

“I could just be left on the entire time,” Switch posited to Professor Bulb.

“No, Switch,” Professor Bulb replied, spinning sweat off his wooden panels, “You would burn out.”

Switch raised his head, nose triumph and defiant, and said “That’s what I mean.” Professor Bulb, puzzled, rotated his panels slightly off kilter and asked, “What exactly are you afraid of in the darkness, Switch?”

Switch lowered his head, and in an oddly deeper voice replied, “Growing up.”
Choices

I remember the moment my heart chose to love. Or rather, when my heart claimed its own independence. It was at a McDonald’s. “I love cheeseburgers,” I said aloud, half-smile stretching across my face. “I don’t,” retorted my heart. “I’m tired of you claiming love unscrupulously. From now on, I choose,” said my heart jumping out of my mouth in a cracked gray three-piece suit, neatly trimmed beard, dapper side-part. I was in sweats. And like a country newly inducted into the U.N., my heart was ready to make up for lost time, engaging me in political debates, telling me not to wear a brown belt with my black shoes, and even who to date, “She just isn’t right for you, man. She’s an idiot. Who mistakes James Joyce as a T.V. chef?” It’s been about a year now, and my heart now lives in San Francisco as a consultant. I’m renting out my ribcage to a nice family of bluejays, they’re really chipper. Things are alright. Rumor around town is that my heart is married. I’m happy for him. If you hear from him, tell him I miss him.
City Slicker

A red kite loomed over the bright lights of nightfall Times Square. Gliding across the Trinitrons of Broadway musicals, film billboards, murals of pop singers, and temples of product advertisements, the kite kept silent in its simple dance. A pirouette here, a graceful leap there, the hazy bokeh effect of lights rendering its shape translucent. Look, the crowds point, fingers up, antennas to satellites. All the traffic lights go red. Cars park. People sprout from their cars, bud from subways, bloom from buildings all to look up at the kite. The city stops. Silence. A little girl from a small town from some faraway place, breathless with childwonder, rises up on her toes, trying to ride the wave of big city excitement.
Clair de Lune on PBS

A man covered in the blackest black whispers his hands across piano keys. The timbre pure. Chords melt fire. Set ice ablaze. And in my pajamas, eating a bowl of cereal, I realize before the last bass note releases, what kind of adult I will become.

“He’s playing to the ocean,” I tell plush Batman. “He’s playing to the rain, the rivers, the harbors.” I have no idea what I am saying. The taste of a memory yet to be born. Images of water. City streets wet with lonely lamps sputtering light. I glide my hands over invisible waves of black and ivory, fingers tickling riptides of sound, humming every note. I never realize how soggy the cereal is.
Domesticity

The man’s wife took the kids to school, washed the foreign lipstick off her husband’s shirt collar, made dinner, and went through the obligatory motions of sex, all despite being dead. She had been dead for several years now, but duty kept her body moving, pumping blood into her veins and contracting her muscles in the absence of a beating heart. She even spoke sometimes, too. For instance, last night during dinner, after being moved around like a marionette through the waltz of cooking, her son and daughter sat her down across the dinner table from their father and asked to be excused. They nodded their mother’s head and promptly left to plant themselves in their rooms where they knew they could not hear. “How was work today?” the man ventriloquized for his wife, spitting her steak into a napkin. Even more impressive though, was how the wife ventriloquized her husband’s silence.
Epilogue

The princess, now the queen, gazes out of her tower, cradling twins, incessantly crying, while the prince, now the king, is out on another crusade where he will bring back another maiden, a younger one, who will shiver with happiness at her dragon-mother slain and bloodied at the foot of her former sad stone spiral cage on the child-seat of an old wheezing horse secured loosely by the wilting arms of a fading champion who will lead her to another sad stone spiral cage where she will bear children and wonder if the fairytales she reads them were ever based on any truth.
Fairytale Drama

The setting: The foot of a one-room castle. Surprisingly bright and modern interior décor.

The characters: a typical knight – shimmering silver plated armor, Exxcalibur (clearly a knockoff), a crest of some noble animal, and handsome jawline.

Also: a dragon – green scales, fire-breathing, oddly miniature for an adult (elephant-sized), wearing a pair of bifocals.

The knight approaches the dragon, flimsy metal baton in hand. “I have come to slay you dragon,” he yells, his voice muffled by his closed helmet. The dragon bookmarks his copy of Canterbury Tales, and scratches his chin. “Do you have the proper documents?” asks the dragon in a librarian tone. The knight searches his satchels, chivalry caught in his throat. “I seem to have misplaced them,” he mumbles, head down, sheathing his sword. “Well, I guess our business is done here,” replies the dragon fingering back to his page. The knight turns and slumps home, “This isn’t how it’s supposed to go.”
On the other side of the room is a couple, hazy with drinks, cupids staggering around the curves of their lips. They are sitting on a couch beneath the kitschy glow of a 40 watt bulb, ready to burst at any moment. It is New Year’s Eve, and there’s 20 minutes left of this chapter. I’m still holding the first drink I poured. My glasses are foggy. A girl tip-toes to the bathroom, the sequins covering her shoes sparkle like diamonds. She looks as brittle as glass. I imagine walking up to her and saying something charming, her laughter expanding the walls of this silly soireé. I imagine making small talk about some pop culture postmodern dilemma that neither of us truly understand nor care about. I imagine taking her home, where exactly at the stroke of midnight, we will fall on each other, writing the story of the New Year in bold ink. But I don’t. And when the ball drops, the couple will kiss, the sequin girl will have left with someone else, and I will raise my glass and say, “Cheers,” thinking I have somehow figured out everything at once.
G.I. Joe’s Visit to the Doctor’s Office

Stark white walls are the first thing he notices when he sits down, blank decorations except for a framed certificate from Playskool University – an online college – hanging alone over an empty bookcase behind a desk. The room looks just like the brochure he had found on the bathroom floor of the AA meeting. A photo frame sits on the desk, two pictures placed side by side in it. One is of a faceless brown blob being held in white arms, and the other is of the same nameless brown blob (At least Joe thinks it’s the same) protruding its head out of a tourist picture board (It’s the painting of a solider – blonde shaven head, square jaw, military fatigues, and a bodybuilder frame) with wide eyes. The doctor enters – he is wearing an off-white coat, relaxed concave eyebrows, a black mustache, and his eyes give the expression of a plastic mannequin.

“Hello, Dr. Potato-Head. You look well.”

”Hello Mr. Joe, and thank you, I have been working out lately – the Mrs. loves the biceps.”  Joe’s biceps are two cannonball sized tumors. The doctor’s seem like silly string.

“And please, just call me doctor.”

“What seems to be the problem?”

“Well…I want muscle reduction.”

“Oh?” The doctor takes off his eyebrows and eyes, puts them into his coat pocket, and replaces them with eyebrows of lifted convex surprise and eyes as wide as Joe’s first name, “Government Issue.”
“Yes, I always feel so tense, my muscles are constantly flexed, and I can’t walk straight.” The muscle mass of Joe’s body forces him to always walk bow-legged and with a hunch, like a sumo ready for battle, his veins persistently popping out.

“And why exactly do you want to do that Mr. Joe?”

“I’ve always wanted to be a dancer, but this body type isn’t built for it.” The doctor takes off his look of surprise and assembles a face of amusement (one eyebrow raised in absurdity).

“What type of dance?” he snickered, his mustache on the point of detaching itself.

“Ballet.”
Honesty

“It’s not you, it’s me,” she said as the dirt fluttered from her shovel into his big dark hole.
I am Myth

I stood in front of a mirror and saw nothing but words. Words floating between the infinite space in front of the mirror and my body. I whispered some words, I thought, of wisdom. Words like: truth, love, justice, Mother Mary… As I spoke they came out in all sorts of curious fonts, sizes, colors, and shapes, dissipating as soon as I registered what I had said, and what they had meant. Soon, I too, begin to dissipate, breaking apart limb by limb, organ by organ, cell by cell, in a flourish of words, then letters, then symbols I didn’t understand. I uttered my name. A wisp of smoke and light.
Internal Calculations

Times I’ve slept past my alarm: 86; times I’ve sang in the shower: 665; times I’ve driven past the street I was supposed to turn on: 4,086; times I’ve said nothing at a party: 1001; times I’ve been in love: 4; times I’ve proposed: 3; times I’ve had my heart broken: 4; times I’ve counted stars: 89; times I’ve felt I understood the universe: 42; times I’ve tried to learn Spanish: 46; times I’ve travelled with company: 8; times I’ve tried Indian food: 2; times I’ve had diarrhea: 2; times I’ve gone to the casino: 19; times I’ve won at the casino: -4; times I’ve cried as an adult: 4; times I’ve not followed through on a promise: 736; times I’ve driven on a yellow: 903; times I’ve let my parents down: 122; times I’ve let myself down: 635; times I’ve screamed to my pillow: 54; times I’ve seen Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind: 22; times I’ve travelled alone: 400; times I’ve wanted to take something back: 533; times I’ve gone to a Broadway show: 2; times I’ve deserved a promotion: 48; times I’ve streaked: 1; times I’ve wanted to say something, but didn’t and should have: 4; times I’ve not known what to say: 4…
Long Distance

A baby boy born running and aflame ran out of his mother’s womb into the playhouse of his childhood; he ran past his first steps, past his first words, ran past the stuffed animals and warm blankets of nighttime lullabies; he ran past 2nd place of the 2nd grade spelling bee, past the best friends made at summer camp, past his first school play, past sex education right into the awkward math of middle school; even there, he ran past school dances, ran past love notes taped to his locker, past the bullies who punched at him while crossing their paths, past the pretty girl dropping her books with silver eyes, and he kept passing her throughout high school, past the science fairs, past homecomings, past prom, past his first kiss, past college, past sex, past his office job, past getting married, past his children, past the 40 years at his office job, past his parents death, past the calm winds of retirement, past his death – to stop at the finish line of his grave leaving no trail, and a wisp of a name soon forgotten.
Matinee

You walk into a theater screening the film of your life, alone. The popcorn is stale, but you buy the large anyway because it comes with a Coke. You sit down in the middle seat of the middle row in the middle of the theater, anticipation popping up from your feet, spreading through the rest of your body. A couple near the top left corner of the theater is shrouded in darkness, their silhouettes moving in and out of the focus. You turn your head forward, meet the face of the blank blackness and blink. The screen blinks. The intro credits begin: Letters dances across the screen in Helvetica font, or is it Comic Sans? You’re not sure, but they are singing “Let’s all go to the lobby.” The films begins and you see yourself seating in middle seat of the middle row in the middle of a theater – all from behind. You raise your hand, the film you raises its hand. You wave, the film you waves. You stand, it stands. You both laugh in unison. You feel a tap on your shoulder. You turn…
Maturity

A boy was flying around the skies of his backyard, swooshing through clouds when his father stomped out the backdoor and yelled, “Icarus, get down here, now!” his lance-like fingers stabbing the sky. “But, Dad!” Icarus said, his head and shoulders drooped, lowering to the ground like in an invisible elevator. “The weather is nice today; it’s spring.” Icarus’ father folded his arms, stiff, over the lapels of his too-tight three piece gray suit, and shook his head, “I don’t care, you’re ten years-old now, you need to stop these childish games of flying and grow up.” Icarus’ feet hovered just above the ground. “Icarus!” his father yelled, “Ground yourself now! “Okay Dad,” Icarus said, “I’ll go do my homework,” dragging his feet across solid Earth toward the house. “And no reading until you’re finished,” added his father following his son inside, arms folded, smiling at the thought of his boy maturing each and every day.
Narcissus on Oprah

After years of struggling with his ego and vanity, Narcissus walked onto set amidst the cheers and whistles of Oprah and her audience. His golden hair landed perfectly on his broad Greek shoulders as he glided down to his seat all the while being showered with compliments by Oprah on his memoir *The Real Me: The Man Behind the Beauty*. They exchanged obligatory greetings, hugged, and immediately began talking about how great the other looked. Next came classic television drama: a story of a rough childhood, the dive into depression as a young adult, the spiral into addiction with his own image, the painful recovery, the triumphant rise to stardom, and so on. After every four sentences, Narcissus and Oprah would make a take to the camera, and smile, though Narcissus occasionally winked for extra flourish. During the commercial break, Narcissus drank three glass of water. I see all this unfold from behind the camera, and can’t help but think about how thirsty I would be, too, drinking from a pool of my own reflection.
Nightmare

A dream woke up covered in sweat. “What is it?” its spouse asked, flicking on a star. “I just had this crazy nightmare,” it said to its spouse, floating off the cloud bed in a whirl of silver mist. “Tell me about it,” the spouse whispered, laying its translucent head back onto the cloud-bed’s folded puffs. “I dreamt that I was stuck inside the head of these creatures whose bodies touched the ground!” The spouse yawned, “Oh my! That’s terrible,” gray with sleep. “And what the worst part was, I stayed dormant inside this thing for years,” said the dream pacing back and forth, a minor speck shadowing the moon. “Well, just got back to sleep, honey,” I’m sure you’ll forget about it in the morning,” mumbled the spouse, half-asleep. The dream got back into bed, flicked off the star, and thought about forgetting until the darkness of sleep covered its eyes.
Cartoon Science

Take the square root of love and add a Miles Davis trumpet tune, spilling blue all over a rubix cube. These are the contents that inflate a heart balloon. And it’s ready to pop at any moment. When it pops, you’ll realize that not everything works like it does in cartoons. Because when you run off a cliff, you won’t be able to tread on air. You’ll drop like a one ton anvil. Or maybe you won’t.
Prometheus

Forget what you’ve heard. Forget your knowledge. Forget the myth. Truth is, Prometheus was human. Flesh. And blood. And bone. And desperate. His wife was dying, stricken with frost, cold and weary of Dionysus’ harsh absences. The rains had come, but without thunder, without light, without heat. Watching his wife shiver like a ghost, like a forgotten story, he wrapped her in yellow fleece of wool, and set off for Mt. Olympus. Scaling the mountain, he struck through rock, slid through mud, stomped through sleet, rammed through rain, until finally, he reached the shimmering city above. The Gods were having a party, Bacchus spilling blood wine everywhere, Hera staring down her husband wooing a plump goose, Aphrodite chatting with herself in the mirror. The stake of fire was there on the dinner table next to the glass sculpture of Atlas. He moved swiftly, faster than any messenger, faster than any god, fast as only a heart that carries death could, snatched the burning stake into his hands and cradled it down the mountain, forever igniting the world. Yes, Prometheus stole fire and brought it back. But, he also left something on Mt. Olympus. As the Gods watched him return to his wife and light a fire, they noticed how gently his hands folded over hers, natural as breath, curious as myth.

Remember this story – a human story of love.
I had a conversation with my telephone the other day. Or rather, I listened to my telephone lecture me about life; it was a rotary dial, so it was used to having long intimate conversations. “I lived in generation without the concrete idea of multitasking,” the phone mumbled in a feeble, bland tone. I took notes during our dialogue, jotting down key points in listening, doodling sketches of good conversation dynamics, graphing a flow chart of phone ending etiquette, when my telephone stopped speaking and began ringing. “It’s your mother,” my phone said, “answer me.” “No,” I replied, I hate talking to her. It’s like no one is there at the other end of the line.”
Resolution

Laying with water up to his chest, Harold took a bite of the burnt Pop-Tart and threw the still plugged-in toaster to the side of the bathtub. The bitter crust taste crept up his tongue until the smell of smoke filled his nostrils. That’s when he took another drag off his cigarette, puffing out wisps of smoke in small gusts. He watched the gray haze float to the ceiling, fogging the red haze of his bathroom window. Electric currents still ran through him, he had almost done it, placed the final period. He rose from the water, put on his robe, and walked out his front door, trickles beading down his skin with baptismal speed. Outside, crimson clouds filled the sky as the four horsemen dragged fire across the horizon. Next door, his neighbors, a family of four – a man, woman, and two boys – were kneeling down in silent prayer, tears sprinkling their scorched black lawn. A crevice opened up on the street in front of his driveway, shooting a ball of brimstone in front of him. Harold flicked away his cigarette stub, reached into his robe pocket, grabbed another cigarette, and lit it with the embers of the burning ball. *Tomorrow, I’ll quit smoking* he thought taking a deep drag.
The Romantic Equation

A man figured out the equation for love. It was simple: a dash of calculus here, a touch of physics there, and just a kiss of biology and he had it, the equation that could make anyone fall in love with him. He began small, using the equation on girls who already harbored a crush on him. Soon, he lived a life of vertigo, for he was falling into bed with a new partner more often than he stood, losing touch with the conceits of gravity and motion. Things spiraled up afterwards, he tried using his equation on secret crushes, and just the same, they would enter the dance of sweat and sheets. This continued for days, weeks, months, years. One day, he realized something was off about the equation, a variable he had missed – he hated himself. No matter how much he tried to use the equation on himself, he could not look himself in the mirror. The letters of his name appeared jagged, disproportioned. Despite the number of times he had fallen into bed wrapped in the arms of another, he couldn’t shake the Holy Ghost. The man knew he had gotten the equation for love wrong. What is the use of a solution without the complexities of a problem? He had found the equation to take love.
Shift

With a slow, steady increase of pressure to the gas, Russell drove down the empty highway, eyes closed. In the darkness of his eyes, he saw the lights of the city’s translucent glow, the haze of red tail lights flicker in front, the off-white stream of headlights passing to his left, beyond the divider. He wondered where everyone was going, the reasons behind their rush, the goodbye kisses skipped due to late appointments, the mounds of paperwork shuffled and kids left untucked into their beds, empty of stories to dream of. Amidst this traffic of thought, Russell, with a conscious gravity, pushed his foot down. Hard.
Signs

After another dreamless night, Jack awoke missing his smile. In fact, Jack’s whole mouth was completely gone. Nothing but a blank patch of skin below his nostrils, hot air of heartbeats skimming across his chin. He gazed at his silent face, shrugged and went about his daily routine: combing his hair, donning his blue corduroy suit, eating his lonely bowl of cereal, updating himself on current events, watching kids fly kites outside his window, and ignoring the waves of his neighbors as he drove to work. *Body language says just as much as words do*, he thought, his steps stuttering into his accounting firm.

Kimberly, the peach-haired receptionist, fluttered a hello. Jack heard a whisper through the curves of her hand. A pang of love? Eyes down, he blushed and buried his hands in his pockets. There it was, in his pockets all along — his smile, brimming. Jack couldn’t bear to take it out. He didn’t have the words anyway.
Dreaming after an I.Q. Test

Slouching in a chair, corner of a coffee shop near a little table, I think to myself, 124 – my I.Q., (the online test told me so), above average, but not quite genius, 16 points away actually. Always dreamed of becoming a genius, but I guess I have to settle with near-genius instead – how mediocre of me. I sip my apple tea, appreciating its abundance of flavor – how knowledgeable the tongue is! To translate so many different types of flavors so naturally and easily, if only our brains acted in the same manner…Then I realize that I have never seen this place before. How exactly did I get here? Who paid for my drink? Why apple tea? I take another calculated sip – my pinky finger raised. Hmmm, There must be a logical explanation for this anomalous event to have transpired. Certainly there must be. Then they floated in through the door, the numbers 1,2, and 4. They floated in bobbling up and down like balloons. 4 came in first, wearing an argyle sweater vest, blowing bubbles with a pipe; 1 followed, a lab coat with a stethoscope; 2 entered with a top hat and a monocle. They floated over and stationed near my table. 4 passes me a piece of paper; 2 hands me a pencil; 1 starts a timer. I write. Letters drip from the tip of the pencil and grow legs on the page. They walk up my arm and dance on my shoulders shouting “Learning, Learning, Learning, Learning, Learning…” 1 puts the stethoscope on my head – to check my brain pulse; 4 slaps me and points to the paper; 2 sips my apple tea. The timer begins to beep. The numbers form a line side-by-side: 1,4,2. 2 begins to bend itself. It forms a 0. Now they are 1,4,0. They start to dance, or at least float rhythmically up and down from side to side. Vangelis begins to play. I sip my apple
tea, float up, and begin to dance in slow motion. I click my heels. The next morning, I retake the I.Q. test, 133. I have an apple for breakfast.
Spontaneity

I woke up one morning a minute before my alarm clock alarm went off and knew that I was going to spontaneously combust. My family is known for dying in odd fashions: crushed by gumball machine, waltzing off a cliff, electrocution by calculator, the list goes on. I have an intuition about these things. But, bills needed to be paid, so I went through my regular routine: shower, brush teeth, put on socks, slacks, collared-shirt, tie, glasses, comb hair, and toast. When I arrived at work, my arms were both aflame. “Johnson,” my boss yelled. “Yes, Mr. Nowhere?” I replied, hiding my arms behind my back, hands clasped tight. “Your report better be on my desk at 1pm today or you’re fired!” he said cradling his gut like a baby. “And don’t you dare set off any fire alarms to get out of this.” I nod. By lunch my entire body was lit, sans my head. No one wanted to sit near me. “I hear Johnson is going to be fired,” the other workers whispered in one collective hush. I ate my melted tuna sandwich alone. A typical day.
Strings

A string goes through many different lives. It is its nature to bind together strands of reality, weave the fabric of the cosmos into something cohesive. Or maybe not. Some strings enjoy vibrating at the edge of the universe (if there is any), keeping like company, painting stars into being through twirling dances, unfurling milky ways and galaxies in simple pirouettes. Other strings retire early, catching light in the center of supernovas, riding waves of celestial energy from one end of the universe to the other. And others still, embrace, tight, to form tiny ropes. These strings know what they want. Have seen into the heart of existence—full of lilacs poppies, lilies… These strings are divinely content being pulled side to side inside the mouth of a plaid sweater-wearing dog. Especially if the dog is very cute.
Synopsis

It’s fall and they are waiting outside the movie theater watching leaves play. It’s a Woody Allen film, and they both arrived forty minutes early on their first date. The man has either had a stroke of genius or just a plain and simple stroke because reviews have championed nothing but the movie’s existential brilliance making it a heavy first date. That is, a make or break situation. The woman is dressed in a floral dress, gray cardigan, black leggings, and bright colored flats – in short, a hipster librarian type. The man is wearing an argyle sweater, midnight blue cotton blazer, skinny tie, and solid light blue collared button down tucked into deep brown corduroy pants — in short, a hipster English professor. She has a book in her purse with a book light, just in case the film is boring, or too pretentious. She knows he chose a Woody Allen film to accentuate his culturedness, and though she finds it charming, she also finds it rather cliché. She thinks of pop literature love stories like Pride and Prejudice. The man knows that she carries books in her purse to highlight her sophistication, and though he finds it endearing, he also finds it a bit too academic. He thinks of pop culture loves stories like When Harry Met Sally. It’s ten minutes until the movie begins, they clap hands, walk into the darkness of the theater, and smile. Both knowing that they have the other figured out exactly.
. a period grew tired of being at the end of things so moved itself to the front of the sentence while the first clause gave it a curious look snickering, “Why do you want to move there? it’s so much work,” to which the period responded, “I don’t just want to be associated with the end anymore, but with the beginning, now if I could just capitalize myself” ——
The Boy and The Moon

Many years ago, a boy fell in love with the moon. Every night after reading *1001 Arabian Nights*, the boy would sneak out of his second story window, climb to the highest point of his roof and gaze at the moon. Sometimes, on nights he was lucky, it seemed as though the moon would gaze back, its luminous glow engulfing the boy like words to a page. One night, the boy brought the moon a bouquet of roses, acacia mostly, with one single red rose blooming from the center.

“Thank you,” said the moon lifting the bouquet into its gravity.

“I love you,” said the boy. The moon faded from fullness to three-quarters, dimming the world.

“That is sweet, but you are just a boy. You are young,” said the moon fading into a crescent smile.

Seeing the moon fade, the boy, wordless, with silver crashing his eyes, leapt toward the moon and burst into a supernova of light. This is why when the moon is full and the night is quiet, you can hear the North Star whisper stories.
They say that poetry is born through inspiration, a touch of the divine mind, a breath of the holy spirit. A poet gets in touch with it through drugs. “Spiritus Mundi is a roll of Mary Jane,” they used to say. That was stupid. People are smarter now though. Drugs aren’t cool anymore. They’re uncool. It’s a societal rule to all intellectuals – like me. I don’t do drugs. I’m too good for that. I just eat six Big Mac’s at McDonalds for my inspiration. The sodium chloride clogging my arteries can give me the same high. Wings of euphoria through a beef patty. I don’t do drugs. If only others could be enlightened as I have been. Eating a large batch of crisp crunchy freshly fried french fries could produce a Shakespearian sonnet just as worthy of an anthology as having an ugly girlfriend. I don’t do drugs. Who needs to fall in love or feel the knife of unrequited love to write when you’ve got a dollar menu and an appetite imagination. I don’t do drugs. Plus if you really listen to the hamburger it’ll tell you the secrets of the universe I’m not kidding I don’t do drugs. I don’t need them. But I will super-size my number one. I’m a great poet. Capital P for Poetry. Poet. Me. I don’t do drugs. I’m hungry.
Short Circuit

A robot fell in love with a human woman one day. It happened so fast that a 2 appeared in the robot’s binary coding OS, causing him to stall. “Something does not compute,” it beeped and booped as the human woman went through his interior, caressing his circuitry, rearranging his wires, running a diagnostics program. “You’re going to be alright,” her blue jay voice said soaring through airwaves. Whenever she was near, the robot felt a curious program run through its copper veins. Its cooling system would fail and overheat, ram usage would increase ten-fold, its dual-core CPU would overclock to the point of rupture, and yet, despite these system checks indicating near malfunction, the robot felt lighter than an abacus. “It must be a virus,” the robot said. “Maybe;” the human woman replied closing its panels, voice lowered. She stood. The robot’s lcd eye display met the glistening eyes of the human woman’s. Something is wrong with her eyes the robot observed silently. She must have the same virus.