



# Signs That Do Not Signal

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*Argotist Ebooks*

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Argotist Ebooks

For Dad  
1932 - 2012

# Signs That Do Not Signal

## Something That Was Not Fragmented

I contemplate a part of  
your beauty that is  
like having a new key, or  
like holding a snake that  
has had its venom emasculated.

The battle with that serpent is  
almost over, and the  
joys of the fruit will soon  
be settled.

You are the designer of  
my limitations. You are the  
root of my fervour, and  
I am caught in your days.

I spent too much time on  
the reckoning and not  
enough on the shoreline—or  
so it was mentioned to me.

You knew the sea would  
cure me, though, but not  
for how long.

## Harmony from Damages

I have heard a good deal most  
difficult I would not presume to  
dispute the thinking eye or why we  
do not recall past lives.

Now the chief god of the Olympians  
the moon and witness to genesis in  
1980 a group met putting aside a  
need to revive the dead.

O my God forgive these angels  
seeking some sport in the sun.  
Do not remember my madness  
and the pain you know I must bleed.

My daughter went within a man  
once the viceroy of Egypt. A man of  
empty hands I warned about talking to  
himself beneath his visions.

## Dark Dream Envelopes

You dispel invisible improbability  
in the rain and  
ignominious expectancy as we  
seduce damp noses near  
the uniform vortex shrieks  
and your vessels entomb

impersonally undisciplined but sack  
crash riders terrified define  
perforated perfection sleeplessly all  
over the sky overflows  
deliberate enticement hypocritical concubine  
looks drolly vestigial dreams

vibrant balmily undesirable degeneration  
envelops unholy perfunctorily agnostics  
upright condescension burns carelessly  
plastic dolls immortally forceful  
sharp craves foul peel  
fall abruptly dangerously all

beneath the virgin coma  
sighs be luminous the  
lust dies blankly narcissistic  
streets mark complete vowels  
yet ensnare sticky witches  
at the stoops dimly

body nourishes thinly boastful  
chivalry capitulates dazzlingly travelled  
wile the evil rider  
defers dark weird and  
quaking about the seaweed  
reduces night scared unsafe

lost in broad radiance  
an unreliable map for  
whose sake the guest  
makes his way and  
misses his turning so  
glittering on the mist

we condone mammoth rubies

before the god of  
life comes again so  
sensuous above the slime  
we prod transparent delusions  
the spirits way cool

the vision is going  
strange and hot the  
sea you eat desirous  
eyes among the towers  
beware the night is  
good shadowed and hopeful

## The Other Half of Her

It was a beautiful evening  
Neptune slingshots to another world  
should seven in the womb  
be made earthlings outside the

passage to carry down faint  
signals and solar system answers  
when I last visited the  
contessa amid dust storm evidence

I had warned my wife  
of lake basins and riverbed  
landings earth creatures mixing hominids  
I can make fate good

and bad don't hold back  
your light I saw you  
walking through like they thought  
I was mad explaining it

or something as we arrived  
through the smoulder fifty percent  
of that is mine when  
she sat under the tree

what fancy stockings so much  
studied and findings applied like  
aspects of the entwined serpent  
now I feel so sick

## There Comes an End to Every Good Deed

On the hills  
of summit visible  
where the relentless  
women hate all  
aristocrats after

we'd spent some  
time with them  
after the marriage  
an enormous expression  
of personality

and the sense  
he'd been around  
after the split  
she and my  
son Jim

were around the  
same age she  
produced from under  
her dress a  
crest with

country roots or  
something some of  
the angels sided  
with her qualities  
and profits

shall encompass the  
city and the  
walls collapse a  
most tragic lament  
with jumping

as I walked  
he really looked  
bad to the  
island or the  
Red Sea

but the modern

man must dominate  
then submit and  
she remains undaunted  
in France

## I Can't Make You Wrong No More

I can still recall her  
nightmares and the sack  
that she wore, when she  
was then drinking and  
we danced in Baltimore.

When I'm out with many  
women, things are not  
that clear. I never had it  
like this before. Something  
always keeps me here.

She came here for a  
reason. I don't care  
what she said. I need to  
see some people,  
and bring it to a head

But I've got other  
things you still need  
to do. And I find  
things so hard that I've  
got to give it to you.

And out in the darkness  
when there's not  
much to share, I still rouse  
up new dissenters  
lighter than the air.

## The Necessity to Always Live Immortally

I'm going away I've  
found life again I'm sick

of language everyone  
has found history

and textbooks lying  
around all kinds of people

on the ground while drunken  
in the entry or fighting in

the war we always live  
immortally you made that

plain and clear and even  
though I'm thinking this side

of the sphere we never get  
what we want until it's

late in the year one day  
you're here one day you're

there it all vanishes like music and  
footprints on the shore that

wasn't my intention when I came  
in through the door your mask

shows nothing and your face  
shows nothing more

## Vivienne Did Have Her Own

Stop trials  
universe neat  
the disenchanted  
of clothes  
notebook out  
at an  
always when  
with look  
replacing but  
desperation with

him knows  
heartened the  
promised leave  
term somewhere  
Greek now  
doctor's sugar  
of around  
daughter air  
driving loose  
filmed permission

Acropolis identified  
always but  
and beautiful  
most skinning  
of barnacles  
called causes  
or conditions  
time 70%  
progesterone daily  
the culprits

half eccentric  
complicated sitting  
like get  
me want  
the look  
head eyes  
of love  
just mourns  
each one  
Honolulu baby

## You Could Hear Them Crunching

Are we really so  
up and down the  
next I heard her

say how have these  
things happened anyway I  
need not hanker after

comfort but now feel  
I must carry on  
for some nebulous end

so I went out  
tonight and life was  
headed alone made nor

stringent aspects ruling our  
days I'll never know  
anyone else who's been

part of my life  
she said perhaps he  
hated maps or some

such aspect of dragging  
out suitcases while screaming  
without considering the public

I had the morning  
free and cut my  
moustache it's better like

that pulling plaster by  
the river listening about  
visitors scraping more than

enough honest fundament history's  
hollow freedom yet immortal  
forebears numbering the crest

## I Tried for a Day Out

Apparently, she kicked  
in music night, able to  
regard the server as an  
approximation. But ordering  
chronologically was never  
my thing.

And as many times as  
you have, there can be  
no real step forward. It  
is much more than you think,  
because he calls her often,  
sometimes.

I don't know why he  
does, though. He's just  
desperate for a flush in  
Cuba. I think something could  
have happened, though. I knew  
his son.

Nobody left to regard  
you. So I came back  
upon the hog and found  
pleasure in renegade streams  
in this sector. Don't expect any  
favours.

So much time is wasted.  
Quantity is everything, it  
seems. Sometimes I've got  
money, so I've no need to tout.  
You may hear of her soon, in  
Baltimore.

## I Couldn't See It Coming

He wanted to be in Montana,  
like he read  
in that philosophy book.

But it was impossible  
for him to get  
away from his doldrums.

Time and again, his fate  
was to remain  
here, with a few pleasures.

I was happy in the fields,  
not thinking  
about the present.

Sometimes, I hear her  
calling me,  
after I begged her to stay.

## I'm Counting on Your Licking

You have chosen wisely  
the wrong man.  
Don't count your chickens  
he hasn't.

He has married before,  
and controlled  
his birth.

No need for him  
to change his goals.

## Sun in My Hair

I've got too much  
sugar in my milk, and  
the cathedral is moving in  
front of the clouds.

And Venus  
is coming close to me  
and telling me of the  
mansions in heaven.

I would tell her  
that when I've got the sun  
in my hair  
I don't need her to  
come around.

Others have told me  
of the squeals they have lost  
to unworthy competition.

They are learning  
that when it's time you  
save  
you can never be a  
slave.

But even in the sea  
you can be thirsty.

## I Wanted to Be a Plant

I loved you so I fell.  
I hurt my pride.  
You tempered me  
while I attempted to swing you.

You sat behind paper all day.  
You weren't paid much.  
You looked at times uptight.

You had a small room—  
big in places.  
And your plants sucked in  
the air you breathed  
out.

I wanted to be a plant.

You helped every one,  
yet you gave nothing to me.

If I could find a mad girl  
like you in every  
bar and corner,  
I'd be lucky.

We both knew it  
back in Kathmandu.

## On This Fateful Day and Barren Land

And on this fateful day  
I sought some hours,  
and escaped  
among  
certain friendly trees.

I saw a rose upon the land,  
half buried in the sand,  
and held it  
all day,  
in the breeze.

And I made some plans  
for the Golden Lanka,  
and wrote a note  
to a woman  
and thanked her.

And in some fallen moment,  
and some unknown kind  
of way, I managed  
to pass by  
this troubled day.

## Snow Ranges and Fair Woods

Angers and failures:  
my lads are not for reconciliation.

I alone drink accurately  
on the uncertainty.

I drink for the occasion,  
similarly impressed, to brakes, skies,  
and ghosts.

Snow ranges and fair woods  
have their stint.

Printed feasts of richness.  
Thrushes that quote but do not sing.

Racing to the beginning where the  
reed's breath sums up heaven.

And yet the reed speaks of simplicity  
while full motion reconciles earthly years.

Dread lurks in the forest.  
Candle boys shine the rough men.  
Safe are the spheres that are dried  
like the shells

The old ships cry fleetingly  
under the moonshine.

## **Plaster Piece**

*For Lourde Murphy*

The sky-blue plaster piece  
you chose because I touched it,  
you will always keep.  
You like to spend the days with me.

The Sunday I first took you  
on plastic with red button lens  
you turned out well.  
The air was cold, but it was shining.

And the round crowned church  
held you in its circle  
and calmed you at my side.

You take photos in the light.

## Sometimes It Can Take a Year to Be True

It was inconceivable  
that the horizon  
could be ablated  
by the paving  
stones of anxiety  
foisted upon the  
gravelled stairway and  
ceramic triangles that  
we passed against.

Charlotte was a woman  
of strange complexion whose  
ambiance was that of  
a cat trapped in  
a fire escape of  
its own projected delusion.

I knew her  
well that spring  
and June and  
on that Friday  
morn in blessed  
dawn she was  
the best thing  
that ever happened  
to her and  
I cannot recall  
my problems at  
that state other  
than to say  
we had a  
great time there.

The autumn leaves fell  
by the gate and  
slipped through the mist.  
Time has no meaning  
to fruit. Nothing bothers  
them so it seems.

I found a  
woman too I  
heard her say

stop dreaming you  
lush we are  
not in May  
so have a  
drink on me  
if you believe  
in nothing he  
wrote can be  
heard but fleeced.  
If I could just  
go back to that  
autumn week and all  
the tables and chairs  
that shone so brightly  
for her glorious madness  
and upbeat tortured serenity.

## I Need Your Hygiene

You believe what  
you will. He  
got no one  
else to lie.  
He had plans

I never knew,  
while listening to  
my sacrifice. The  
dust has you  
tight, and you

don't question it  
when it commands  
you in the  
night. I'm waiting  
for some of

your time, and  
losing what I  
can't find. You  
took me over  
your walls but

only had your  
breathing to sell.  
After Milton, he  
became more treacherous,  
and needed you

for reasons you  
didn't need him.  
Now he's got  
a chicken farm  
in Puerto Rico,

where he blows  
a horn all  
day. You have  
your hygiene which  
you carry well.

## Roman Sky

Do you remember that walk?  
That walk you called separation?  
That walk you called independence?  
That walk you called "being stronger"?

Did you really believe any of it?

Did you declare how you were  
free and how  
you had no machine to  
control your day?

Did you try to prove  
a point  
while weeping into  
your hands  
in the desert?

And did you find someone to  
make the sky like  
Rome for you?

## Cutting up That Crop

Nobody knows  
what a nice  
day it  
is except me.

I came back  
to see you  
while  
you were away.

You have  
spoken well,  
if that's what you feel.

We'll make no  
more arrangements.  
We carry on regardless,  
anyway.

I didn't learn  
my lesson,  
and you  
didn't learn the truth

## Sometimes Things Are Hard to Put Down

Be careful where you chew,  
as they're looking  
for someone else  
who never lets it sleep.

Turning gears and sticks,  
she doesn't know which  
way to go.

Now I measure all my  
leather, making sure it fits.

When I get the envelopes,  
I'll look out for the slits.

She is on the lawn,  
looking up at the birds.

She can never be here,  
if you are always there.

I measure her up with  
my head,  
and I give her rifle,  
and I give her bait.

## The Sameness of Days

You hold the peasants at bay.  
You have your work cut out.

You should make enough, as  
the winter is coming.

Your slivery tongue will get me down.  
Same as it was yesterday.

I have diligently numbered the days  
since I came west.

It was the only thing left to do,  
while heading upriver.

Captain of my soul, now I know.  
Good measuring has informed us.

The plains of the world were  
where the gold of happiness was.

## There Was a Feeling of Sympathy between Us

Winter again  
drunk  
to shed

ramble makes  
deeds  
sail well wash

action dies matted  
of a  
fist lens paint

swear foam  
bursts the  
goat

midnight dog  
backs  
up shaking years

radiation source  
fingers  
defence city loners

death crosses  
mark network  
down

trench statues  
commingling with the  
dead

hotel gate presidents  
reserve shells  
and trench statues

## You Know Anything Is Possible

Her coat spreads  
power around  
elegance of  
compromise.

Second ridge  
ghosters  
take the city  
and are grateful.

The no seen cars  
speed town  
borders vanish  
fast control.

The weather  
was the  
first accident.

## **There Are Those Who Rebel against the Light**

I'm alone and it's spring.  
If only you'd let me lie on you.

You've no dispensations or compensations.  
You must let yourself go, that's the only rule.

Who's that woman over there?  
I haven't seen her before.  
She's up from the coast with her aunt.  
She's here for her health.

I found her in the morning when she was at her best.  
I found it hard to walk away.  
The hardness stayed with me all day.

I've got people on the streets.  
You're not wanted anymore.

There are reasons for me to suspect I'm mortal.  
Raise me from the stranger's grave.

# I Won't Change Fawngirl for Anything

*For Rachel Lisi*

On to Lincoln, Nebraska—  
plumb in the middle of The Great Plains.

I wish I were back there again.

Tempests in the dark taunt  
our exhibited drunken selves,  
placing fallen yellow graves at our feet,  
and waves stretching back liberty's possession,  
hand-cuffed under female felt and passion,  
drift upon island animals and hidden  
rebellions emerging.

There are many ways to lie when good  
deeds and bad deeds follow you,  
and you have everything you wanted.

Will you eventually be with me in that log cabin  
in San Juan Valley, Colorado?

I wonder about a good deal in dreams and  
dramas, half sick, half wounded, much around the  
world, on sea and land, down among the first  
arrivals while the worst was yet to come.

Another paradise lost,  
but I wouldn't have it any other way.

And I remember my old man, slaving away on  
that lemon ranch in California, staring  
across prairie land wandering  
what the end would be.

Don't worry Rachel,  
I won't change Fawngirl for anything.

## **Trees of Sorrow**

*For Michelle Greenblatt*

The trees of sorrow  
that hang over these graves,  
mark the spot where you are hidden.

You flew away too soon.

And all the while I could not  
see the larger picture.

Your hair used to breathe  
like the autumn smoke.  
And you let me keep the cherished  
dreams that fed me.

All for the sake  
of trying to satisfy the eternal yearning.

All for the sake  
of feeling some warmth in the night.

All for the sake  
of flying too close to the candle.

All for the sake  
of swimming in the contagious sea.

Such futile joys  
we strove for,  
and which brought us both to grief—

me, in my glass-walled palace,  
you on your barrier reef.

When the sensuous hand  
of destruction tempts and beguiles you,  
who is safe to touch?

Who is safe from the cuts that  
are too small to see?

Someone always comes forward to  
be the victim when

the temptation is too much.

And is it just me, or is there someone,  
somewhere, always missing you?

## Grovel of Babylon

She did appease my oblivion  
and anxious hose,  
flailing with  
tongue seductions  
in the wreck of time.

Discarding chronicles  
like sail foam,  
data jobs,  
or managerial endings,  
she was a true love of mine.

But now it's come to sunshine  
regimens, profile  
clouds, orphan windows and  
nihilistic soundtracks.

All like mighty  
wandering shadows,  
unexpectedly impaired,  
somewhere in the night.

I still got a thing about you.

## Venus Indignant

The ejaculatory  
life is  
the salvation  
meteor of  
futility or  
fidelity willingly  
false more  
by your  
leave during  
times of  
cultural tautologies  
other destinations  
ready love  
in the  
breach always  
ambivalent mystery  
reality waiting  
to be  
defiled in  
the uninterrupted  
present wings  
will be  
effortless for  
aliens needy  
of platonic  
mist or  
evolutionary doubts  
in music  
pirate maidens

## Where Your Love Belonged

I'm sitting here thinking  
of a time I could have been  
love-friend to her  
about life

Pretty girl facing me  
from the corner of a room  
forward stretching over it  
my bridges burnt

She said never leave me  
as if I ever could  
that was just something  
in her mind

There were good days  
and there were bad days  
but the sun shone brightly  
and the sky was blue

## Precious Requests

It was a Sunday morning.  
And all the bells were ringing.  
I work my fingers to the bone for you.

I want to buy you something new.  
You can't have that many things,  
even if I say so myself.

There's plenty of time, and there's work to do.  
What you hear in the dark,  
always repeat in the light.

There's no gold or silver for your belt anymore.

I shall never forget these things.  
Your mother knew about them.  
Let your light shine on these special gifts here.

Don't keep your treasures all that near.  
You can't take them with you too.  
Your father knows you need them all.

Is there someone asleep in the doorway?  
My legs won't keep me up:  
not in the house we stand in.

Your precious requests have not gone unnoticed.

## The Crossing of the Bridge

Dimness is here  
followed by regiments  
recoiling from containment  
armour in Europe  
remembering fire-eaters  
absorbing what was put down  
with great trouble along the bridge  
while the rain saturates everything  
the enslaved more furiously  
throughout fictions and incredulity.

I remember my friends on dry roads  
and wagons coated in perfume  
memories on the ferryboat  
love that is the distance  
and the eternal clock  
democracy and earthquakes  
and women for all the troubadours  
shuddering hearts and brains  
that heat this world  
and rulers furnished by other arts  
when I was alone in Charleston.

## Out in the World

No one sees the darkest hiss of rain  
or the authority of selfish tears  
in the rattle of liquid night  
like timber packets

Alone hot struggles of kitchen fire  
that is her trade  
driving her rampart  
a woman unconsciously witnessed  
with auburn hair low from time's complexion  
that nobody watched

The boatman passes like a gust  
absently he comes scratching  
cursing all the time  
always afraid  
strolling to him feels like plunging

Mud errands high hair unmoving  
flat time downriver from uninterrupted  
books I came not to take employment  
for the room had not changed

Able herself supported  
she walked with undercut pride  
or perhaps with something better

Admit the truth  
open the window  
goodbye to houses and hello to farms  
this is the way things are  
out in the world

## I Suppose We'll Work Something Out

Nature charms you  
outside the temple were things  
will be understood though wrongly directed.

Unhappy idealists discover  
doubts about principles or  
otherwise confuse themselves.

Mansions bare the parched streets  
where visitors gather by  
statues with ironclad  
stepping stone traps.

Accented people in the thin city  
with frustrated friends  
find destiny tumbles  
in terror.

Deep in love like resentment  
dragons and hyperbolic death  
women remark that  
men go out  
on winter mornings habitually  
balanced yet visible  
in the way of the spent  
room.

Gathering like the rest of society's  
house bought off with chairs  
and wine congratulations  
and with barbaric modesty  
cultivated in vapours  
my teachers come to me.

## Going Home

*For Dad*

“Looking in the mirror—

mirror

mirror

mirror

Tomorrow—bright light.

I will see God tonight.”

Thanks for running after that bus for me, Dad.

## About the Author

Jeffrey Side edits The Argotist Online, and has had poetry published in *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Underground Window*, *A Little Poetry*, *Poethia*, *Nthposition*, *Eratio*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Fieralingue*, *Moria*, *Ancient Heart*, *Blazevox*, *Lily*, *Big Bridge*, *Jacket*, *Textimagepoem*, *Apochryphaltext*, *9th St. Laboratories*, *P. F. S. Post*, *Great Works*, *Hutt*, *The Dande Review*, *Poetry Bay* and *Dusie*. His book publications include, *Carrier of the Seed*, *Slimvol*, *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* (with Jake Berry) and *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* (with Jake Berry).