



**DEAR  
TWIN FALLS**

**RYAN COLLINS**

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## Acknowledgements

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<i>The American Drivel Review</i>	Berkeley
<i>The Benefactor</i>	New Lennox
<i>Black Clock</i>	Twin Falls
<i>Boxcar Poetry Review</i>	Davenport [appeared as Gold Coast]
<i>Caffeine Destiny</i>	New Lennox, Iowa City, Raleigh
<i>Clementine</i>	Rock Island [appeared as Iowa City], Ida Grove [appeared as LeMars]
<i>Greatcoat</i>	Scituate, Jones Anne Laughlin Steel (Pittsburgh)
<i>H_NGM_N</i>	New Haven
<i>Jellyfish</i>	New Haven, Stamford
<i>Keep Going</i>	Twin Falls
<i>LUNGFULL!</i>	Twin Falls, Carbondale
<i>Slurve</i>	Emerald City
<i>Spittoon</i>	Wisconsin Rapids [appeared as Wisconsin Falls]

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*Brian Krans, Woody Loverude, Jon Vermeire*

**DEAR TWIN FALLS**

*Dear Twin Falls—*

Burn down the house! but spare the meadow. Right? I say it depends on who's out to pasture. & that answer is best abbreviated to a lowest common denominator that will then pass easily thru the digestive system, well chewed. An answer that can be harvested another season & until then, bundles hay. We manage the kindling, build lattices of dry sticks, faced open to the wind to catch & push the fire out & up to the temperature at which fat burns clean off the bone. The meadow, its watchful house are temporaries & when that glow roars up over the hillside, trust me. Unless you want to dive down the well, leave your necessaries on the nightstand.

Close enough but not too far,

*Dear Jones Anne Laughlin Steel (Pittsburgh)—*

Unsure of your address or addressee, I write  
& no: I understand even less than I did when I first began  
to “continue.” I’ve collected, sure. But I have nowhere to  
keep. Now I’m off stacking steel & my tracks proceed out-  
wards—east to west—& never resolve. Topography’s not  
my trade: 3 rivers or one—all end in oceans. A wolf bays  
at the moon, whatever its phase, over any river. Are we as  
whole when (& where) we’re emptied? I’m not sure there’s  
anywhere else.

But I wanted to be sure to reach,

*Dear New Lennox—*

A baby boy & three years later—  
still we're riversided. Men on the corners, no-  
body out, the Mighty still to our immediate left.  
Another fort held down w/ an inch of good for-  
tune. Still we collect mothers & prayer cards,  
Berkeley gatekeeping the West. Still an initial  
difference between *sore* & *soar*—everything  
fitted into verbs. Laws still collapse our pillars  
& arch, but we're grounded for lightning strikes.  
We'll escape unscathed, leave behind no physical  
evidence. No usable prints.

Who is the fairest of them all,

*Dear Iowa City—*

I just used the phrase “radio appearance” & thought I would drop you a line. Not because either of us are on the radio, but sometimes we appear only when we are heard. What could be more precious than a given ear? I think it was Jimmy Carter that said listening was the bedrock for diplomacy, but probably not. Not to be political or anything. I doubt anyone will ever call me “generalissimo” w/out a tongue in their cheek. Probably their tongue, but who can be sure? Not me, unless it’s my mouth or second tongue, which I use for singing & French-kissing, which is its own kind of diplomacy, I guess. Not worth an argument either way. The broadcast will be a week from Thursday—hope you’re tuned in.

Sweep the leg Johnny,

*Dear Raleigh—*

Outside these States, it was complicated beyond the weather. Apologies for the haphazard bonfire started in your courtyard. Could've used some Vancouver that night—something could've been salvaged, but your shades were drawn. Still. We had a ball when we had. We finished off the Pope & didn't even realize. Made-up cocktails on April Fools, thinking back I can't get back in their context. No one asked directions to the theater—we just went. East from sentiment to sediment. & radio breakerheartbreaker wants to know if you're familiar w/ "the pride of Harper's Ferry," if you care for college basketball & if my ramshackle fire is forgiven. Hopefully, we're square.

There's no place like home,

*Dear Wisconsin Rapids—*

I hear it's easy to trip over the golden cobblestones of your serpentine roads, lined with poppies & mending fences built by red-headed strangers w/ calloused hands. Consult the tea leaves. Still the telegram fog hovers between hills, bridges appear from thin air & we drive off because how could we not? What I know & you do not could fill a thousand earthenware jars with papyrus scrolls, secrets hermetically sealed & buried beneath the holy prison, the one no one will ever escape. Maybe the people who look down to catch themselves are the tourists, the Philistines come to remove the words from your throat, to collapse your house of tarot cards. Light no candle for strangers, less they start a blaze.

Mind the gaps,

*Dear Las Vegas—*

Too much in the middle & not enough up  
the sleeves. So little under our thumbs or affordable en-  
try fees. We wail about the deal & double down, always  
professionals sharking away the gold. Second-hand con-  
flict doesn't trouble their diamonds. But there's no heavier  
head than one in hands at the table. No crying over wagers!  
So goes the selling of autographs not worth half the asking  
price, the admission, the six degrees. An auction's not an  
auction that doesn't end in a handshake—a walk-off home  
run. Tomorrow I'll throw the chin music.

& the crowd goes wild,

*Dear Davenport—*

Sounds like low-flying lions thru the airspace between your bigcity shoulders. Hopefully they're more show than stalk. It's gonna come down to haymakers, otherwise. Like way back, when the heavyweight division had a little respectability. Before most lions stuck themselves in jesus-poses, pockets full of posies & a fist like a unified proletariat. That's community! or at least a clear day for fly-bys. Ready made for acrobatics. But wind's always stronger & sheer on the observation decks, close enough for jet turbines to snatch & shred unsuspecting tourists, tourists being an overly expectant bunch. I haven't seen those old lions since pitching camp in the city. No postcards from the grasslands. No ability to be taken for granted. Tourists or no, we're all to be taken. Even the roaring.

Beware the big game hunters,

*Dear Scituate—*

My father also seeks a suitcase for his remains, dis-embodied on a different flight—a finer grain of chalkdust coats his boots. I don't know the point I'm trying to bear across, but I'm dragging a trail behind me in the dirt. & though we haven't met, I thought I'd write because I too am a father. We must scare our sons & daughters, more for the sake of an idea, but can either be truly bulletproof? Their dreams are what's lived & sometimes their dreams speed to 88mph, breaking the time|space continuum. The rub w/ that is I'm not sure I want to play my hand that safe & not sure you want to either. Perhaps finger-pointing doesn't help, but instead is just a 55-gallon drum full of fire, over which we warm our hands. Still we're never warm enough.

Everything is getting terrible,

*Dear New Haven—*

You blow into the central standard & the air indeed bends.  
Your fingerprints set heavy on the pyramid windows we no longer peer  
through, heavy on the pages of the Collected Frost. A stolen gift is a gift  
just the same. Something no laboratory can clone, no matter how many  
rodents suffer the attempts. We live outside crude genetic duplication,  
the foolish want of so many for a body double—I'll do all my own stunts,  
thanks. When it's lights camera action! before you run inside the burning  
house, make sure you're fireproof.

Stop, drop & roll,

*Dear Twin Falls—*

Your performance under pressure so woven  
in & cut off like interstate traffic. Stop & go, the ebbing of  
confidence. & apology. When did you do some talkin' to  
the sun? frying someone? It's hard to be happy it's not me,  
babe. Happy as Dorothy Gale & no dream, no Roy Orbison  
remorse to follow my scams. A duplicate key, a winning en-  
dorsement hammers out an honest man's capital. Mea culpa—  
addresses forward to the floodplain bridge by bridge. Time to  
make that change, man in the mirror. Time to file claims.

Mr. Sunshine On Your Goddamn Shoulders,

*Dear New Lennox—*

God wonders back, indeed, but w/ the hands of a collector. He wants us trademarked, unopened. We're postage due & debtless. Dues paid & fuck your notes or dedications! Save 'em for the dead who are shaken, not stirred. All script & stagecraft aside, we need a happy hour sing along to proper ignore being locked out. Dissed. We unlock & fix our stars for future shortcomings too near. So it's dukes up! get loaded on screwdrivers & write a letter to the editors about why record-breaking breath holding don't raise the dead, but instead amuses them greatly. Don't snake the magic from hands who arrange flowers & lighthouse the harbors. We've got bigger fish to fry.

Show me that smile,

*Dear Emerald City —*

“What if we could colour the whole world yellow?” Oh, British Petroleum! Has no one told you of the merry old land of Oz? Everything there is yellow—the breezes sound yellow, wet fields of narcotic flowers smell metallic yellow, stringing out the Technicolor sky. Like mid-America: our country’s long equal sign, all tassels & telephone wires stretching westward. Even the rubiest of heels can’t click across it & backpedal home. Not even hot air balloons & wizardry survive the yellow.

I am the great & powerful,

*Dear Carbondale—*

Trust. Don't expect. Grown-ups take advantage when they smell innocents nearby, like strangers with candy. Thus arrived our current dilemma, our going under. You're going to fuck up—don't quit & don't trust Mapquest to give a direction. Use stars to map-make. If you never learn to navigate, you'll never get anywhere. Be at no mercy except the weather's. Don't bottom feed—*We are all the custodians of our innocence & let it die at our peril.* The peril of youth can't compare to old age arriving early. Don't wait. Shove back. Speak clearly into the mic. Hindsight's perfection is never worth the cost. Regret. Don't settle for satisfying audience expectation. Now it's in your hands. Cry after the game. & don't let anyone tell you different.

Ollie ollie oxen free,

*Dear Rock Island—*

No rolls today, but at least we went to the buzzer unofficiated. No rumors unpacked or disabled. I'm wearing out my purple threads in hopes of an appearance by the holy virgin, a kiss run-off from her aqueduct. Could it be the overpasses are crumbling? A new terrorist speech, an assassination's abstract—unread memos from an ultimate villain. The Church undone by tornadoes in the meantime & yes! these are the shadiest visitations. Lazy incandescence of an easy money & short search warrants. We go on flexing into the frontiers that take minds off, packing a summer's worth of water.

Full metal jacket,

*Dear Berkeley—*

Buck up! That sad-sacking won't pull you out of the tank. Studies show that most of us are shooting blanks, so why shouldn't we sign on for that free trial subscription as we're being checked out at Best Buy? This way, we're more connected, getting back in the game, if you will, whatever confidence you can put into con. Where are we putting ourselves unprotected? Least there's nothing in my shoes: I'm bonafied. & though the hell you might say, I say it louder. Whether you're a sleuth or saboteur, I will have your silence. Unless they get to it first—if you're not afraid now, you will be. You will be.

We've only just begun,

*Dear Ida Grove—*

You're like pinball & bagpipes: listeners admire your capacity to wail in harmony. You anchor their fears, sent them to bed w/out supper too many nights. Too reliant on your handeye. Too much of damn near everything. Oh, your over-confident thumbs! as if you've invented something, gaming or no. Who doesn't feel pressure to cheat? Up down, up down, left right, left right, A B A B, select, start—an infinity of lives. Not a day spent outside the arcade, where even the lames eventually master the fatalities.

Hands up on defense,

*Dear Wisconsin Rapids—*

I'm sure there are harder things to shake off than an earthquake. No one is more subject to the elements than we puny humans. We are buried, dig ourselves out & spit out the dust. Who knows what's really in our lungs? We're no surgeons, you & I, but we know when we smell blood & know what comes next. What comes next? There's one sure way to find out, but we might have to chew our legs off, might have to set ourselves on fire to find out.

Stick the landing,

*Dear Stamford—*

So we meet again but outside the northeast corridor. By your grandmother's watch, the institutions here have been slow to take hold. This pillar of Midwestern virtue not yet sunk to the bedrock & what a delightful lilt we must seem to have. We all lost the names of the boats which brought us here & those not brought here by boat have gone into hiding, but here we meet! west of Appalachia & east of the Mighty. No transfers responsible for such happy happenstance—each conversation is one with a converse & no end in sight. That makes about as much sense as how we meet, how anything begins. But like those magic eye pictures, I can make you out through the static.

Seeing is believing,

*Dear New Haven—*

Your permanent record out in force, canvassing the Midwestern night. You track the constellations. I wait for you to manifest, take human form, or become Shiva the Destroyer. See to our deliverance. Your slate expression waits for the chalking away toward definition. You banish yourself, hiding within temples, hoping to outlast the monsoon season. But the floods have your number. Consult the I Ching, draw from the tarot—the fates will not break rank. Our scent finds the sharks. Take the rope when it falls. Someone on the other end will pull you out. I'll stay back to make sure nothing & no one follows.

Champagne wishes,

*Dear Twin Falls—*

What do we make besides gestures?  
A recipe for bullshit circulates the philanthropic  
cookbooks & hey! I just remembered I've some  
furious book-cooking to do before I'll be paroled.  
My crimes are older than a greystone chapel, where  
the condemned repent & sometimes marry. Can't  
remember what personal effects await my pending  
release. Sneer, blink, cough. Here, one learns the  
brute consequence of shoveled words. Better to hush.  
Better not to sink warmly into an antique pie-tin. In  
this prison, we speak only with our hands. The old  
forms don't fit. In this prison there are only sons, no  
fathers. So don't get caught.

Burn all your notebooks,

## LINEAR NOTES

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### [Locations/Dedications]

Ian Harris, Ed Roberson, Woody Loverude, John-Franklin Dandridge, Alicia Rebecca Myers, Brian Krans, Nick Flynn, Jon Vermeire, Tony Hayward, Chloe Garvis, Benjamin Fong, Kate Farence, Lauren Pretnar

### [Samples]

David Byrne, Frank O'Hara, L. Frank Baum, Robert Mark Kamen, Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale, Flannery O'Connor, Burt Bacarach, Michael Jackson, John Denver, Ian Flemming, John Bettis & Steve Dorff, Stephen Malkmus, Robert Everett-Green, George Lucas, Karen Carpenter, Konami, Ed Boon & John Tobias, Robin Leach, Glen Sherley

### [Gratitude]

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