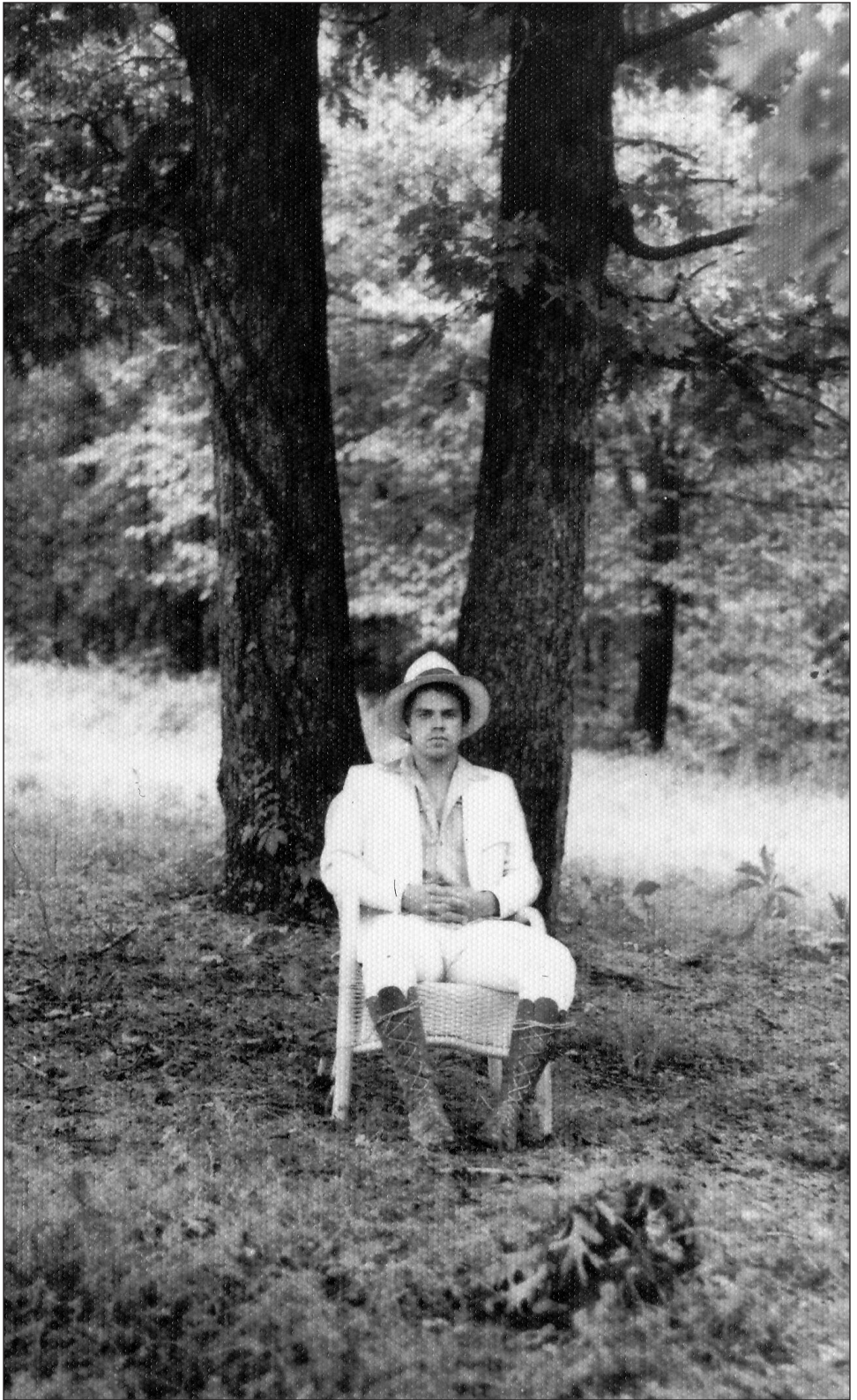
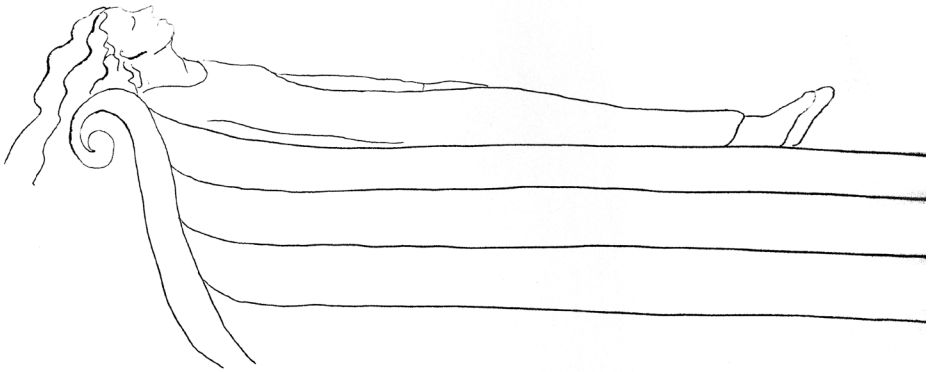


Baby one night somebody
Going to strike a match on a tombstone
And read your name.

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I. THE MIND READER AND OTHER POEMS



THE MOON

I think it is a ship
 putting out without me
A white horse
 that throws all riders
And a swimmer who is naked
 who believes she is asleep
It is a rooster
 molting dark feathers in the water
Or a beekeeper who dreams
 someone has found her out in the garden
A snake which sheds
 its skin in the riverbed at night
And a schoolgirl weeping
 under a black patch
I know it is only a stone
 everybody keeps a blind date with

THE MIND READER

the song keeps running off
it is like a wild pony
now where did it go to this time
my blood walks down the road like a drunk man
I look for it in the clouds the fresh pillow cases
I see the carriage
carrying the dead ballerinas into the wilderness
the passengers with wet slippers
and the ship bearing the harpsichord of dead lovers
is putting out like a smoldering pyre
I walk along the docks
I call for the son I won't put a bit in its mouth
when it's dark
the hunter goes off into the mountains
I hear his truck and I see the lights
but there aren't any mountains we both know that
I am the prey of night and she is always
stalking me she puts the doubloons over my eyes
I dream about robbers
and children rising up like vines around the eaves
all clasp hands we swim in the rivers
we cut our palms open with butcher knives
and grip one another
the blood brothers and sisters of each land
I dream of wide-eyed babies in jars of formaldehyde
I dream of submarines
and men suffocating in their own blood
I dream of the filthy moon
where the rifles are stacked like the harvest is over
the riverboat men boiling crawdads in the shanties
and I dream about mermaids' hair
there are women driving Cadillacs to Memphis at tremendous speeds
my dog died a long time ago
look at the teeth of the piano on the highway
there's no money under my pillow
only the unwinding rope in the fathoms of sleep where I give my only commands
to the water
I strut around with my hands over my mouth
two ribbons tickle the back of my neck
the rooster floated down the river on a ladder the men are standing in the boat
with the oars upright
I am the sentry of my dreams
I ride a black horse
I am blind and a swordsman of some rank
when you see the coffin ship you see me dead ahead
I am the acolyte of the forest

in the evening you can hear me crossing the bridge
I put a blessed rosary on my trout line
I say my hail marys to the gars
my friend is the trespassing dog
in the country where pistols are kept like photographs
I am the target I am the album
I run with convicts and gypsies
I dream I yell on the mountains
a pair of black boots
ride upside down in the stirrups
I was washing off the wound
I was throwing the knife
I was lying under the switchwillow tree
I was eating cherries
the pig was sucking my toe
I had a notion it might rain while the pirate cried
I can tell things like that
I can read minds
robbers and cottonmouths don't bother me
I make fun of the devil
I take the angels fishing
I sing in the woods
I sing to mother so I can sing
I sing to the creek
I dream so I can dream so I can pee in the Mississippi River
so I can bless the sailors
I dream about milk I dream about rifles
I dream about stamps like jungles I dream about the operas mother plays
I dream about keels
I dream about the midget who stole my boots off the bridge while I was
swimming at night
I dream-kiss my foot
I dream about old songs and my dreams sing back to me
I dream about a Negro sewing canvas
my dreams are like turtles they never let go
they are thunder and lightning
I keep a night watch over the territory of my bed
I whistle in my sleep to the mares
they cave in the levee sure enough the night is dark
they ride into the lobby like General Forrest he lied
my dreams are like ticks they suck that blood
I get sick in the early hours
sometimes they make me cry
sometimes I feel like a motherless child
I smile at my enemies the sad javelins no one will throw
I feel sorry for the devil he was an angel
my dreams make me kiss my tears underground
they make hind tracks full of blood
they play a guitar with a dead man's knife

they have teeth like a gar they make me say excommunicated tambourine
at the spur of the moment
they make me train with my Sensei to fight like Bujin
to be silent
and learn the torsion of the hand the tiger mouth and my throws
are like going over a waterfall in a dream
a bear paw for the throat a knife hand for the ribs
a tiger gnawing its foot
for the belly an iron horse against more than three
a spirit like the moon a mind like the water
the gentle way of empty hands
I am the samurai kneeling beside the still water
my battles are all over
I bow to them and they bow to me the honorable lost ritual the memory
I get up at dawn and meditate
I breathe
I swim the channels alone
I fight against the knife and sword
I fight against the ones older and larger than myself
sometimes I get knocked out
my favorite strangle is the Hadakajime the naked choke
my favorite throw is Ukigoshi the floating hip
I'm built for Haraigoshi the sweeping loin
I dream about Japanese warriors
I dream about the blind koto players
I dream about the great swordsmen doing battle
my sleep is a chauffeur
my bed is a hearse driven by its passenger a drunken gypsy
my room is a back road of white dust you have never passed over
in my dreams I go anywhere
the teams of mules have no eyes
I know the songs of the jive cat Charlie B. Lemon
I am a personal friend of his
my dreams sing in the choir like him
they pitch curve balls for WDIA like him
they drive the Cadillac like him
they use a ice pick with a high yellow
they use good-time dust like monkey women
my dreams make me crazy
they are like drowned schoolgirls who hold my hand in the moonlight
I fall in love right off the bat
do you see virgins riding bareback
I have eleven girlfriends
every night I dream I am a seafarer in a ship with one of them
I pretend I kiss the pillow
I am always by myself
sometimes I walk up to people and knock the daylights out of them
I stare at the ladies at the picture show
in the restaurants I look at them

and I tell my mother isn't that lady beautiful
my mother was beautiful I've seen pictures
sometimes I'm a gentleman
I walk downtown with a tweed suit on
and tip my cap to the ladies like Errol Flynn
my father seldom speaks
when he does everyone hushes he's the boss
I go to sea in my dreams I go to hell in my dreams
they are sweet as sweet can be they are as strong as coffee
my dreams howl at the moon
my dreams are like sagas like Viking ships
I dream about bears in Snow Lake
I dream about beautiful wolves nobody sees but me
I dream about dogfights
I dream about traps
I dream about helping convicts make a break
I did it
I dream about the death of Rob Roy was eleven rivers of blood
I dream about peckerwoods turning folks in
they sell them down the river
I dream about scalawags and their suitcases of lies and friends
I dream about politicians with beeshit in their teeth
just look at them paying off their henchmen the trash
I dream about the good outlaws coming back one day
and running the cowards out of town
I dream black hands and white hands like where two creeks meet
I dream about prisoners strangling guards with log chains
I dream about men singing with axes I dream the red heads rolling
blessed are the cripples they have to haul everybody's load
blessed are the ugly they will be beautiful in heaven
blessed are the mothers crying in the death bed alone their sons won't come home
blessed are the no counts because they may have had a hard time
blessed are the people who make it bad on others maybe they'll know one day
blessed are the innocent they never had a chance
blessed are the fish I hook in the mouth blessed are the worms
blessed are the one-eyed minnows blessed is unbound hair
blessed is Stonewall Jackson my daddy's daddy saw him fall off his horse
blessed is Abe Lincoln he was a good man I believe
blessed is Baby Gauge we were going to school in the field
blessed is the spotlighted deer taking two loads of double-ought buckshot
blessed are the chunks of lung leaving a trail
blessed are the composers nobody will listen to
blessed are the drunks I like to talk to them and the clouds
blessed is the bald-headed preacher shooting somebody in the ass on account
of his wife blessed is the one that got shot
blessed are the wild horses let them be wild forever so I can dream
so I can swim in the lagoon of shotguns so I can ride the black steed myself
so I can duck out of the way of the limbs so I can say goodnight so I can sing

about the last ship I dream about the last crew
the sleeping virgins in the forecandle the dreaming rudders in the sea
the folded arms of the lovers the ambrosia keel the waking girl
the fish blood in the trunk of the Buick the flies on the hood in the fall
the door tied on with dynamite wire where the buck charged him
the love letters I put in the whiskey bottles I put in the slough
weeping gypsy dressed in black galloping through the woods
did you see him I did
a guitar bleeding to death did you hear it I did
the black arrows shot by the falling horsemen did you feel them I did
the rendezvous of the telescope and the bullcalf was kept
the rendezvous of the keelhailed innocent was kept
everything is kept in the silence of bloody lips
the shark was kept married in the sea the truth was kept in a shut mouth
the ship was kept in the harbor but the knife wasn't kept in the scabbard
it has always been kept in the hearts of the holy the damned
it doesn't matter if I shut my eyes or open them I can always see
the dancing boots of sundown
the grave medallions what about the autographed baseballs
the sleepwalker's dream horse
the beat-up colored man
the pistol-whipped gravy
the Swede bleeding out of his ear
the Episcopalian ghost ship
the knife in front of him
the prayer O.Z. said when he buried Jimmy's wolf ashes to ashes dust to dust
the shallow water where the sun comes up and I am half asleep
a man with his thumbs in his suspenders
a woman lighting a wood stove
a man putting grease on his hair and eating cornbread
the high-English brush back and the do-rag Ray Baby can't untie
a dog coughing a fish bone out of his throat
a man drinking buttermilk with dried-up goose blood on his fingers
a jar of it on the porch
a woman with light skin wiping crumbs off her lips
the hunters starting up their trucks
the picture of me looking through a brown half-pint bottle Tangle Eye
threw in a ditch
a fish hook somebody is going to step on
the field hands rolling out of the bed of the pickup slow as sorghum
the lost hoe file
the revolver in the paper sack
already it was nighttime
a peckerwood cutting his daughter's hair in the outhouse with a pocketknife
a bloodstained pair of pants
one stinking toe-holed shoe
somebody cracking their knuckles

the fish scales on the plank looking like silver dollars
the hide on the barn
the firecrackers Melvin threw on the white preacher's church I got the whipping
the deathwatch over the cook and her grandpa was chief of the Creeks
that means she was a griffe
Emma is a sambo
the beanflip Baby Gauge shot the midget with
it will chuck a rock clean across the river
the blessing at sea of the blind warriors the Bushido
the corridors of Creole songs and crawdads one dollar a bucket
the hoodooqueen from New Orleans selling tobies and Mexican good-luck water
the frog gig he did himself
the castrated horses breaking wind
the thrown-out supper grease running down the bank
the young woman washing her tits in a red-rimmed dish
the flashlight I dropped off the bridge it burned all night
the time Jimmy let me watch him screw a girl
he showed me how to jack off
the gantry where they lynched a man they said he was a rapist
the knife thrower's wife was Italian she was naked
the bleeding roses the wagon wheel the burial vault in Verona
they won't believe me when I get back to Memphis I carved in the outhouse
the white suit with the ticket stubs of the last picture show I saw in the pocket
the magician threw his knife in a tree for a thousand years it rusts and the tree
grows around it I listen to it I don't have to think about it
the buried knife is the trumpet of the voyage of the wolf heart
the night bears its wound the tree bears its wound
the virgins bear their wounds the knife bears its wounds the ship bears a wound
and school starts tomorrow
there is pigshit under the house with the chickens and the geese
and the name of my school is Sherwood not the forest
they hung Robin Hood a long time ago
they burnt his bow up and the arrows turned into driftwood
they stuffed their pillows with the feathers
their bellies with poor folks' meat they turned the dogs
loose on my dreams
I can't be at peace anymore
Maid Marian she's a whore
and all the merry men shook hands and dropped dead
the sheriff's boys got them
so long Friar Tuck you pig pray for me
cut a fart when you lay the Host in the hangman's mouth
so long Baby Gauge
we'll never go to school together
keep a lookout on the levee
don't let Baby Ray drown keep the high sign for you know who
the school that shit hole

the sepulcher of report cards I got straight A's
I hate it
let all the children raise up in their dreams
let them all slit their wrists
let them swear their oaths in their sleep
and it will be known throughout the lands
we are the dream children
in the classrooms assault your teachers
they're so full of shit they don't
know it
everybody going around like blow flies
kissing each other's ass the leeches
phooey
I say goodbye to the rivers
goodbye
to the fields
goodbye to the earth where I can dig good bait
so long fish I'll get you next year
I see the teacher now with her shovel
in repose I'll wait in my grave
when boys are licking calumny's boots I depart
I say goodbye to those tongues
have mercy on them sweet Jesus if only they could dream
farewell sister with your black-eyed peas
so long Dark with French harp
I remember you in the dead of night
I can only say goodbye
take it easy friends don't let anybody mess with my hound
I want to strip down
I'll read the book I stole out of the library *The Virgin and The Gypsy*
so far doesn't make much sense it would in a boat though
I want to lay my head in my mammy's lap so long
I want these flies out of my sweetmilk
I want these teachers to let me go in peace
I am leaving take care of the deaf and dumb man
I want to sing
I dream about Greece about scimitars about arbalests about Mozart about Gulliver
the sword in the rock the lady in the lake the burning rope Gunga Din
the falcon and the hood
the Green Knight and the Black Knight
I swore an oath to the archangel to joust with evil all my life
the son in the moon the night the cup of blood
I dream
I make up ships I look up dresses I read plays I talk to myself
I am waiting to draw a ship that will carry me away
back to Sukey jump camp doing the old breakdown
make a B line to Elaine
a black ship with fine timber some of that good ash from over around Friars Point
a ship without a rotten plank

a ship where everyone will have his turn at the wheel
a ship where the incantation of oars is never heard
a ship where the only prayer is the wind and it says
what did I bring you not the savanna of fangs not the leagues of loneliness
I bear blessings boss I got it all the dancing captain says
I guide you through the sleeping rivers I keep the snakes out of your tent
I carry you through the songs of the graveyard
through the passages of lost swords
bless my soul
blessed ship bearing the wounds of the world
the ship of dreams sighted by blind riders
ship that puts out light and darkness
ship betrothed to the wilderness
a ship bearing the tortured corpses of the horses my friends you will be
healed by the constellations I make up so I can follow them so I can dream
black stallions wounded riders sleeping girls
black as the moon black as a paw black as Baby Gauge
I'll have such a crew in the gospel ship
me and my dreams
like Saint Francis and the wolf