



# FOLK SONGS

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He said, “hello, my name’s Michael, I’m from America. I was so sad; I never knew what to do next. I borrowed money for a car and a boat, then sold the boat and wrecked the car; now I’m here in this jungle to see a doctor I read about on the internet. Not sure if his cure is a hug or a spell, but I’ve got money for both.

I'm not a person who writes on walls. I'd like to be, and maybe this is about tattoos, because I don't have any. Maybe I think of myself as a house, better yet a fort. With that, I keep my walls clean, because like everything, my walls are for sale, and not all of the silent bids have arrived yet.

I bought a guitar to write folk songs without ever learning how to play. My first five songs didn't have what you'd call chords, but they made sense because all the songs were about people and how people go into the atmosphere outside their lives and try their hardest to never touch the rain.

Often I hear someone say of a phone that “it’s cheap.” Then they throw it around. Not really. They drop the thing. For one or two nights week, temporary rain pools fill potholes. People used to dig into the ground until water rose. When it did then chanted. A neighbor with an open window says “bullshit” and I want to be a good mayor here.

My name doesn't mean *peace*. It was just the first word I thought of. Really my name means *talent for finding the true meanings of names*. Chad's name means *empty zoo*. Stacey's name means *ready for witness protection*. Brian's name means *to stand in the doorway of a neighbor even after the neighbor has stopped speaking*. Devin's name means *yeah I'm too many fists*.

Sometimes Jackson wanted to know what's underneath. Once he shaved his head to see at his scalp. It wasn't attractive and people thought he was a skinhead so threw rocks at him. He tried to explain that he had a bare head, but was not a skinhead. The speed of his words couldn't break the speed of the rocks, so he walked around under a hat for many months.



I'm always dropping buckets of spaghetti on people, and I hope they think it's all cute. Yeah, I carry around buckets of spaghetti. I'm the neighborhood spaghetti man. Not the sauce man, that's someone else. When I drop noodles on people's heads, I apologize and try to make a cute face. They can't take this job away; it's a volunteer position.

Our weapons are not superior to plants. Which can kill us quickly or slowly with poison or fruit. It all depends on their attitude. But, I suspect we try to kill each other for that first taste of fruit, I mean the one that's within the other. With that, I mean by kissing. I notice the sun after it disappears. Everything turns to shadow and night lasts a thousand hundred times longer than the day.

My mom died and it doesn't matter why, mom's will go off and do that. Had to sell off her things, because the bank owned the house. Had a big yard sale, right in the middle of her living room. A man asked me to lower the price on her blender, I said, "sure, I'm bereaved, and a dollar sounds fine right now. I've got a week before I'm locked out and I never remember the smell of this home."

It's hard to love any city knowing it replaced a particular noise and space. Still, I keep a map of this one in mind with landmarks, and remember them like pictures without my face in them. Like pictures our grandparents used to take, because they heard stories of whole wars making their own noise and space that could reduce a town down, reduce it down to the soil.

To dream of an ox means you'll be well fed. Oxen have never appeared in my dreams, so maybe I'll always be hungry. Once, I dreamt you handed me a beer with an ox on the label. The word, not the animal. I tried to twist off the cap, but you said it wasn't that kind of beer. I spent the rest of the dream walking and thirsty. The unopened bottle in my pocket, bouncing against my thigh.

It was a story she told more than a few times. About how she had sex with a bank robber. The sex happened before he robbed a bank. After he robbed a bank and became a bank robber, the story went like so: they had sex in a lake. Before he robbed a bank, it was just sex, with no mention of a lake, and his name was Mark. As far as I know, he is still at large.

At the table Cory tells his two stories about Spain. In the bathroom there is hand soap but no towel. And I'm reminded why you should never have sex outside and in the snow, unless you want to experience the sensation of phantom knees and stories no one will believe. The party goes on and no one is on a hill but they all go on standing like they might be.

I swear I'll never look sad when carrying a jug of cat litter down the sidewalk, whenever that unfortunate day comes. Today I saw two people on different sidewalks carrying jugs of cat litter and they looked pretty sad. And perhaps they weren't sad, instead perhaps they had bad posture. So maybe tonight I will sit with some wine and order a new chair to correct myself.



100 people didn't feel like a lot, because Jon could stand in at least 100 different places throughout his apartment, including the bathtub. He measured his body space with a grid pattern in his mind. When he pictured 100 people, they were not his same size. He figured he was at least two and a half people, who were not too tall and with an average person belly.

You've got to find the lady of the land and see her before she sees you. I look for her here inside of the city. Between houses, backyards, and privacy fences, I find groups of trees. It's unclear who owns the trees and I wonder how long I could live within them. And I think anyone living out in the trees between yards is definitely a person no one would fuck with.

This folk song was once a wish for the animals, but they won't understand and they've got colors in their coats to lose, so this song won't be about animals, and it won't be about how no one warned me how after my first visit to the zoo the animals would never appear as bright again, so this song is now over.

This hotel doesn't remember me or the previous night, but I said something beautiful about pockets, and here we are trying to remember what I said about pockets, and how it was beautiful, and maybe you'll hang around a few years, until I remember or say some other beautiful thing, maybe about buttons and buttonholes, or I'll think of a new beautiful word to replace 'buttonholes.'

I was lost in an enormous and obvious sunset, when I heard the original instruments. It was night and everything was breathless except for the bugs. I stumbled into a house teens had taken over to practice at becoming vampires. I know the signs, and know what a teen vampire looks like. I've read all the books they like. Books that give them ideas about music and sadness and becoming infinite.

Jason learned from a how-to video that he was shampooing the wrong way. Now he's on youtube every night, doubting the correctness of his daily activities. With the help of househusband in Denver he'll learn about all the things he does wrong. Tonight he'll learn how to fold laundry, then this weekend when his one true love is at a bar down the street, he'll learn how to vacuum the carpet.

A big black cloud followed everywhere she walked and people didn't know what to say. She didn't have a favorite movie or band or team and this made it hard for people to relate, because if you're a rock that's not covered in sweetener, good luck if you're trying to find a mouth that will go out of its way to welcome you inside.

Danny went to see that new movie with Keanu Reeves. Ordered a soda and popcorn combo, sat up front and felt lonely even through the action and violence. He kept checking his watch, wanting the movie to end and to be somewhere else, some place bright and loud and covered with people. When the next day came he went to work, told anyone who'd listen about how he'd go see the movie again.



People are on ships and they aren't adventuring and I'm here looking for lessons in the everyday. Most of life isn't surviving a crash or calamity. Most of life is surviving in line waiting your turn to buy cigarettes. This place would be perfect for witness protection. It's the crossroads of America. Everyone passing through looking similar to some body else.

A wave stretches up through my arm and opens up before I can catch it. Now a stranger removes bandages from his face and feels excited. He thinks I want to be his friend. Sometimes I forget how clouds belong to everyone and that at one point the universe was the size of a yogurt. The universe was the size of a Honda.

After I recovered from my injuries the monastery gave me a new name. A monk said “here is a handsome head” and that became my name. They gave me simple clothes and tasks. Often I want to raise my salary. Often I want to wear two robes at once and feed the monastery turtle.

Sara was too aware as a child. She said early and often, “death is slower and takes longer to arrive than most people expect. That’s okay, I’ve got my whole life to wait it out. Maybe I’ll pass my time with relationships and ideas about my carbon footprint and the rest of the bullshit I’ll forget after my end, so go ahead and light me a cigarette.”

Sometimes to know a person you should know what they were almost named by their parents. You should also know what they wished to be named. My parents almost named me Mark. I wish my parents had named me Snow Lake.

We tried to escape the effects of the Earth and spent the rest of the summer collecting novels about Big Sur. Some afternoons when we make love, we call it 'making love.' It doesn't sound embarrassing. We're the only ones who have to listen to us. Some afternoons I return home and find the apartment empty, sit in a chair outside alone and still make love.