

Celebrity

Anne Sexton died in 1974, the year I was born.

Thomas James died in 1974 and was born
in Joliet, Illinois, where I was born. He wrote
Letters to a Stranger before he killed himself.

I've written three books few people read
and wanted to kill myself. He was 27 like
Joplin Hendrix Morrison Cobain.

Karen Carpenter didn't die at 27, but at 32
in 1983. Google says people ask: *How much
did Karen Carpenter weigh when she died?* 108 pounds.

People also Google: *What is emetine cardiotoxicity,*
which is ipecac poisoning caused by ipecac syrup
which causes vomiting. She died in full cardiac arrest.

Randy Schmidt published in the *Guardian*:

Karen Carpenter, Starved of Love. Todd Haynes
made a movie: *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story.*
Barbie dolls played all the roles. He was sued
by Richard Carpenter for using their songs
without permission. Haynes portrayed Richard
as gay. He married his first cousin Mary
and was addicted to Quaaludes. I tried to write
a poem about her: "Karen Carpenter starving
on the stereo" was the only good line. I went
to the building in SoHo where Heath Ledger died.
Flowers on the sidewalk, body bag dragged out
under camera flash. I tried to explain to engineers
I worked for why his death was a big deal, but they were
homophobic and incapable of nonlinear thinking.

When Philip Seymour Hoffman OD'd, Cate Blanchett
walked through paparazzi to see his family. It's BLAN-
chett not BlanCHETT. Whitney Houston drowned
in a bathtub at the Beverly Hilton. Prince died
in an elevator at Paisley Park. Michael Jackson
was put to sleep like a dog. Thomas James
was influenced by Plath, and Plath was friends with Sexton.
They drank martinis at the Boston Ritz-Carlton.
I tried to steal toothpaste from that front desk once
because I didn't want to walk to the store. The Beverly
Hilton ran an ad with a hand on a bathtub, flowers,
steam: *To Die For*. Todd Haynes took a blade to Barbie's
face to make it look like Karen Carpenter lost weight.
Basquiat and Winehouse were 27, too. *If the elevator tries*

to bring you down. If pills plus alcohol plus fame, then
the answer must be River Phoenix. *Go crazy.*

Thermopylae

O'Hara and Plath both end a poem with this place. There was a battle there, because there's always a battle. When I watch the World Cup, I cheer for men with tattoos, who strip their shirts when they score. I cheer for countries that are good to their women and fags. I can say *fags* because I *am* a fag. A novelist who is straight has a character in her book named *Fag*: "Fag enters the room. Fag-got pours a glass of wine." My friend is pissed, said he should write a character named *Cunt*: "Cunt's writing a novel called *Fag*." The women in Saudi Arabia can drive now. The women in Saudi Arabia are *allowed* to drive now. I'll never forget the dead girl on the road by our house. Flat on her back, half out of her jeep. She looked like she was sleeping is what I wish I remembered, but there was blood in a puddle and her open, dead eyes looked scared. Men waited for an ambulance, not touching her. Mom told us not to look when we passed. Mom asked if we knew

her from school. I know a poet who hates a poet because he *tries to make death look beautiful*. I know a poet who hates a poet because he *is beautiful*. *I am so stupidly happy* are five words I'll never say. *I am so stupidly happy* are words I'll never mean. The kids made fun of her on the bus, her short, butch haircut, the same gray flannel every day. *He treats it like a movie*, he says. *Nobody dies perfectly when they're supposed to*. Dad asked if the dead girl was a *dyke*. O'Hara asks, *Are they spelled "dikes"?*

Get Thee to a Nunnery.

When the woman asks the woman behind the counter
if they have the current issue of *People*,
she says, “I think all we have is the ‘beautiful’ issue,”
and the woman says, “I want ‘regular’ *People*.”
And before I can help myself, I’m blurting: “the ‘beautiful’ *People*
is the ‘regular’ *People*. It still has articles; I saw it on *Wendy Williams*.”
I hate how helpful I am even when not asked,
how I need flight attendants to like me,
so I watch their safety presentations
though I know about oxygen masks and how to float after a crash,
or I’m extra nice to the waiter, assuring him everything’s fine
when everyone’s talking, so I’ll be his favorite.
The woman looks at me with a face that says “weirdo” or “faggot”
and in either case, she’s right. Her husband is waiting outside,

looking at his watch, not watching his wife

interact with the weirdo faggot in the magazine store at the airport.

His muscle-gut and ball-bat forearms make me swell in my belly

the way I swell when I listen to Fischerspooner's *Sir*.

I wish her husband was a faggot

and we could have weirdo-faggot sex

in the Terminal F bathroom where men aren't washing their hands.

I have a friend who won't leave the house for a hand job:

it's oral or anal or he stays home.

Okay, all of my friends stay home unless it's oral or anal:

If I'm giving up my parking space, I'm at least getting fingered.

My therapist says I have agoraphobic tendencies.

I ask him if it's strange that I'm a man who dates men and am afraid of men.

He says it's only strange if I think it's strange, and I say:

“Wow,” in my best fuck-you voice, “that’s a thinker.”

Then somehow we’re talking about Nicole Kidman in *Big Little Lies*
and the line between abuse and lust.

I say something like: “Is all lust abuse, and is sex by its very nature violent?”

He says the scenes where Nicole stands up, sits down
are the best he’s seen depicting therapy.

My shrink’s my longest intimate relationship.

I just nod when he compares my life to a line in *Hamlet*
because I haven’t read it in years:

he’s smarter than me, and I don’t want to remind him.

But I have seen *Girls*, so I know what he means about the guy and girl
who masturbate together on the couch without touching,
proving sex doesn’t have to mean fucking and can be what I need it to be
and pleasurable, making my previous statements wrong.

Fischerspooner's limited-edition vinyl has a big, thick cock—

we'd all leave the house for—on the cover.

P!nk is on the cover of *People*—beautiful and happy.

I love how Casey Spooner wears women's clothes.

I should mind my own business when I fly.