

rich krueger life aint that long
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all songs written by rich krueger
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we humbly present the following songs for your listening pleasure

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1. A Stoopid Broken Heart *(for JJ)*

A day don't pass me by that a perfect stranger doesn't tell me
That I remind them of someone that they once loved or knew that's died
I smile back at them as if to say 'Well, thank you'
'Cause it's good having been seen for having tried.

Like you, I'm here to raise a glass to all my lonely foolish dreaming
The cup spills over sometimes when the troubles start to swell
No right minded no one wants to break down to a stranger
So that's why God made bars and girl bar singers and one-night cheap motels

But hey you look like you're just drunk enough that you might understand me
Let me pull on your coat awhile 'til the night pulls us apart
There ain't nobody sober gonna talk to me tonight
'Cause they've all heard this one already about me and the girl bar singer and
A stoopid broken heart

I know just why I came here but I know I won't admit it
At least not until I had a few more than a few
I'm staring at the stage wondering when she'll get started
A few more and every song she sings will be about me, too

She sings of loneliness like it's something she invented
She's kicking at my head from the inside
She shatters my illusions that I just might one day be happy
Then she leaves smiling before I can drink up all I can't hide

But friend if you're me friend you'd think you'd tell me
But I'm too drunk to listen and the night's torn me apart
There ain't nobody sober gonna talk to me tonight
'Cause they've all heard this one already about me and the girl bar singer
And a stoopid broken heart

-Nov 2010

2. The Gospel According to Carl

I'm wearing a big bow tie
The time was I could sell you anything
Even the pyramids along the Nile
Just crack open the odometer and roll back the miles
Flash a smile
Rattle those keys
Then watch the beater roll off the lot
Just like a set of old bones
And if you don't get fifty miles before the brakes just fail
Well even Jesus had no guarantees
Guess I was blessed with an honest face
I took religion at an early age
I played this cripple with an offering plate
As Daddy saved souls from a soap box stage
And when he passed he left me that gift
Christ, the man could sell you anything. I mean anything
But damn my soul to hell somehow I pissed it away
Behold a broken salesman's fall from grace

Can't you hear the bells?
There's a church at the end of the road
A congregation's redeeming
From up here on the steeple you can look down
at all the people praying

Praying 'Take me back before I lost my faith'
Take me back. Take me back when I could look
you in the eye
Shake your hand then lie straight to your face
Those were my glory days
No pricks of a conscience to get in the way
Who'd ever guess it'd be over
And there weren't no accidents to shake my
confidence
Since that news, I've hardly been sober

They had me clean out my desk
And I swore they'd be begging me to come back
When this new guy, he leaned back in my old
chair and said,
'Look pal, don't make us laugh'
I guess that he knew my wife
Who said the same thing the week before
Then slammed the door.
And they're so sure that I got nowhere to go
You can tell 'em, it's me and my maker tonight

Can't you hear the bells ringing?
There's a church at the end of the road
The congregations is singing
And from up here on the steeple,
you feel a little closer to our Jesus.

And I'm still wearing this big bow tie
Along with every piece of clothes I own
And it says here it looks like rain
On page four of the newspaper parasol
Next to the photo of the family
Who lost control of their vehicle on their way
home
Christ, the time was I could sell you anything
Jesus, lead me on home

I can hear the bells ringing.
There's church is at the end of the road
The congregations is screaming
As I let go of the steeple
Catch me Jesus. I'm falling.

-August 1992

3. '77 /17

"[You] creep me out...it was thirty years ago ...get over it" – Nancy H

'77 /17

It was fucking easy being green
And there, up proudly on the movie screen
A rock and roll transvestite queen
Midnight lips
My first kiss
Susan Saradon's lovely tits
John and Paul, Glen, Sid and Steve
And the brand new Elvis stops the TV
Harry Reems gets out of jail
William Jefferson Clinton still don't inhale
But she let me put my fingers there
Then Nancy slipped off her underwear

'77 /17

A couple hundred nights and
Christ, I really loved you Nancy

'77

It was like a blur
The Pistols flipped off the whole fucking world
Steamed up car windows radio nights
Policemen and their long flash lights
Bee Gees under winter stars
Not all the way, but really really far
I swore to her that my love was true
God knows I wanted to show her, too.
So I walked hours to her house through streets
of snow
Aw, Nancy wouldn't never tell me, no
But if she had I would have died
What a fucking perfect way to go

'77 /17

Many many many many nights and
Christ, I really loved you Nancy

It was '78 when eighteen hit
I was college-bound. I was dumb as shit
The music died at Winterland the fourteenth day
I prayed she wanted me to stay, but she
wouldn't say.
God, she really made me sad
But it looked to her like I got mad
So one day I just didn't talk to her
To this day, Nancy ain't said a word
Sid and his Nancy were a year away
But me, I really think I died that day
I want to go back and learn
How not to love someone in turn
Who'll let you kiss 'em at a show
Where every single punk that you know knows.

'77 /17

Jesus Fucking H Christ,
I really loved you Nancy

Mary Mother of God,
I really loved you Nancy
-December 2008

4. A Short One On Life

—for KR, Tom Skinner, Skyline Radio, and Tulsa

She walked in.
She looked around.
She picked me out and she spun me 'round,
And said, 'Kiss me now boy,
 but don't ever take your eyes off me.'
To this day, I ain't sure if this story's even true.
Tell me, does this kind of shit ever happen to you?
'Cause it ain't never happened to me before
In my whole Goddamn life.

And maybe, well maybe, she's just real drunk.
I couldn't tell you.
Me, I'd rather take what comes
 then try to tell a river which way to run.
'Cause there is only one fact that
 I've hewn hard from my long life,
And that's that life, well it ain't that long.

If she had a nickel,
Or so I was told,
For every one-night wonder with a heart of gold
And a name for his cock that no thinking person
 would ever even name a dog,
Then she might have had time for nicer finer
things.
She might've even stayed home past age 13,
When with her father's long coat and his
cigarettes,
She hopped a freight train for Tennessee

And maybe, just maybe, she's just crazy.
And sometimes, she's just hurt.
But who needs a stranger's tears.
A stranger's more use for vodka and beer.
And you're never gonna make me believe
 it's a sin to want a warmer place to sleep,
Even if just like life, he ain't that long.

Well there's folks got names for women like her,
And she knows the places those kind of folks
can go.
The small minded kind who like to pass
judgement
Well, they can all just kiss her ass,
And kiss the ass of the woman who should have
been president.
There ought to be a law against stupid.

We stayed a couple
For a couple go 'rounds,
As if two losts could ever make a found.
We were off and on and in and out for two years
 that I will never see again.
Well, I could complain out loud how my life
unwound,
But that's just the way that some lives are
bound,
And though you know you can't step into
 the same river twice,
Don't mean you're ever gonna quit tryin'.

And maybe, well maybe, life's meant to be
crazy,
 and sad and strange,
Messed up, poorly planned,
 and the only one you're ever gonna have.
But sometimes, well sometimes, I get a little
lucky,
 and something comes along,
Like a short song on life, how life ain't that long.

A short one on life, how life ain't that long
-June 2015

5. Then Jessica Smiled

for JM, R. Graves and B. Tyler

*Love without hope,
As when the young bird-catcher
Swept off his tall hat to the Squire's own daughter,
So let the imprisoned larks escape and fly
Singing about her head, as she rode by.
--Robert Graves (1895-1985)*

How's your weekend going?
They're always going.
Do you think you could ever make one last?
Kiddo, from my end, I fear a fool's heart
 always breaks way too fast.
How is it that a girl like you? How is it that a
smile
Could make me so proud to be humbled,
 broke up, and beguiled?
Kiddo, I am just another stupid fan,
Another old weak married foolish man.
But you, you are wild life,
A pistol, sex, white light,
A dancing pyre built of a thousand burnished
diamonds.
Dare I take your hand?
Crash with open arms wide,
'Til everything stops still and you flash another
smile?

I pray that this song finds you,
And wherever it finds you, that it finds you well.
But kiddo, did I forget to mention my wife?
She said she liked you. I can always tell.
Me, I hold to this kind of bent Punk-Christian
view.
Always try to ask myself,
"Now just what would our Sid Vicious do?"
When I find an answer to put my heart at rest,
I draw a broken bottle across my chest.
Though if God could just forget,
 or forgive, just this one time.
If Sidney is still dying for all these stupid sins of
mine.
Then grace might co-mingle with ecstasy
 while my mounting stupor whiles away
Everything that once seemed somehow
important
Before Jessica smiled

Kiddo, I just an old man.
Even less of an old man than some knotted old
tree.
But kiddo, can you try to help me remember
 just how it felt to seem so free?
Young mens' inspiration just spills down from
above
While we old just prattle on
 about Graves and hopeless loves
And you, you're young and rare enough it's true
To be the squire's only daughter, too.
But if all the larks that sleep within my hat,
Dream of their escape to fly and sing about you,
All the drunken drumming,
The singing madly in that room.
And underneath the din, a rock rolls from a
tomb.
But do I long for you, or what could have been
 had I been wanton heedless and wild?

Or is it that just that for so long, I have so longed
And then Jessica smiled.

It's a heartache...

-April '07

6. Can't See Me in This Light

for RL

All needs be
Seen by me
Is lit by the light
Burning steady in your eyes

Ruby glowing coals
Bank the timbers of your soul
A strange strong light
Burning steady in your eyes

Shine on me
Let your light shine down on me
It don't matter you can't see me in this light
But let your light shine down
Let your light shine down

If there's a point
To have a heart
It's so I'll know
Just what it means to lose it

And man it's gone
I'll never find it in a night that's gone this blind
From the white pure gleaming
Burning steady in your eyes

Shine on me
Let your light shine down on me
It don't matter you can't see me in this light
But let your light shine down
Let your light shine down
All love is
Is a door ajar
That you're drawn through
After light that's falling from a star

Build me a cage
Out of your arms
And I will be your perfect effigy
Burning steady in your eyes

Shine on me
Let your light shine down on me
It don't matter you can't see me in this light
It don't matter you can't see me in this light
But let your light shine down

-December 2008

7. Ain't It So Nice Outside Today?

"There but for fortune may go you or go I" - Phil Ochs

Ain't it so nice outside today?
Ain't it so nice outside today?
There's so much I want to do.
'Cause ain't it so nice outside today?
Ain't it so nice outside today?
He says his back's been broke a couple times.
She says her neck don't bend quite right.
He lost his left eye in a bar fight.
She says her shoulder's froze up tight.
She can't mount a flight of stairs.
She can't even climb out of a chair.
He said, 'They said my head got busted with a 2
X 4.
Since that day Doc, it's like I got no soul no
more'

And it hurts so bad,
And it hurt for so damn long now.
Pain don't ever go away.
But I wanna live
I wanna live another day.
I just wanna live another day.
'Cause there's just so much I wanna do
And it's so nice outside today
 There but for fortune

Sister been deaf since she was born.
Brother been blind since he was two
From something he caught from momma when
he got born.
Whatever the hell it was, carried momma off too.
Your good hand keeps dropping things.
Your foot feels like it's made of wood.
You can't walk. You can't talk. You can't stand.
You can't sit.
And there's blood everytime you take a shit.

And it hurts so bad,
And you ain't worked for so damn long now.
Boss won't dare your coming back.
And if you don't work, then you don't get paid
So you can't live to work another day.
And there's so much you still can do.
Ain't it so nice outside today?
 There but for fortune go you and go I

The nurse, she said good luck
She give you these pills. but you don't know
what they do.
But these pills they just don't see you through.
It's like helplessness...
 it's just another word for nothing left to lose.
Helplessness
Just another word for nothing left to lose
 There but for fortune

She said 'Doc, the meth ran out.'
She said 'Doc, I crashed real hard
February. The cops found me down
Outside of an E/R that'd been shut down.
Guess I slept too long
Slept too hard on my right arm.
They said weren't nothin' they could do.
Doc said he had to cut it off before I come to.'

And it hurt so bad
And it hurt for too damn long now.
I can't even feed myself.
But didn't Jesus...
Didn't Jesus even ask God himself?
Didn't Jesus even ask God himself?
Why can't I live another day?
And it's so nice outside today?

helpless hopeless aimless homeless
pointless toothless limbless useless
faceless worthless lifeless
But it's don't cry don't cry don't cry
Oh baby don't cry don't cry
'Cause there's so much you still can do
Ain't it so nice outside today?

-November 2009

8. The Wednesday Boys

*Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child must work for a living,
But the child that's born on the Sabbath day,
Is fair and wise and good and gay.
-A Fortune Telling Song*

*I was born a bastard in Kings County Hospital
in Brooklyn. NYC in January 1960
It was a Wednesday.
It rained the next few days.*

Cut it loose. Cut it loose. Cut it loose.
For Christ's sake, dig it out and cut it loose,
The rueful treasure in your chest, the buried
child that's of no use.
The bitter gilded stupid sorrow you staunchly
unsunder
From that hollow part that once held your heart.

Tune it out. Tune it out.
Turn it off. No one is even listening.
And even to a kind, kind friend, it only sounds
like pissing.
You've been betrayed again and again
by a restive, unforgiving brain,
And by those songs that always seem to make it
fucking rain.

I'm ain't going down this time.
You can't bring me down again. This time it's
mine.
I have no more room for shadows. I've no more
time
For this kind of noise.
Say good-bye to one of your Wednesday boys.

Look again look again
Look again into that mirror.
Cross yourself down and count to ten.
The stranger in that unkind glass ain't never
been no real good friend.
Though you both could stand a real good talking
to.
Ah, but would he listen this time?

Ask yourself, would you?
Cut it out. Cut it out. Cut it out.
Come no nearer, not even for that one last look.
Step out of the shadows. Lift the chin up off the
hook.
And leave behind all those songs
that always make it the rain,
And those holes where you earth
your poisoned honeyed pain

I'm ain't going down this time.
No, you can't bring me down again. This time
it's mine.
I have no more room for shadows. I've no more
time
For this kind of noise.
Say good-bye to one of your Wednesday boys.

-May 2007

9. What Is It That You Want?

for Diane Izzo and Marco Zas

What is it that you want?
This time?
Can you put it into words?
Would you know it if it bit you?
Could you wrap your fingers around
Those dreams that are put there to kill you?
Tomorrow's lying face down in the road
Congratulations!
You're our one millionth new Tom Joad.
And if you don't believe what's been said
This is a wake-up call
But are you already dead?
Listen to me brothers and sisters.
What is it? What is it that you want?

What is it that you want?
Yes, you.
Face facts you better fucking think this through.
But you don't know what you want, do you?
Here is a mirror. Tell the truth.
You laugh. You smile. But it's all a lie.
You're blowing smoke but without the fire.
You say you can live without desire?
But can you name anyone else who would even want to?
Can I get a witness brothers and sisters?
What is it? What is it?
What is it that you want?

Is it a brand new car?
Or a brand new wife?
A good night's sleep?
Or a decent life?
To die in your own bed with your loved ones near?
Your soul to keep?
Or do you want just one more year?

Do you want to sing?
To hear to see to walk to talk to live to breathe?
To know deep down in your soul
That you were once worth something to someone?
That you ain't yet died inside?
That your ship ain't sailed its last time?
And when it all finally slips away
You want the world to say that it was one hell of a stay?
Testify for me brothers and sisters
What is it? What is it? What is it that you want?

-July 2011

10. What We Are

A song of hope

Now that your world has gone turned inside out
And everything you hold true is plagued with doubt,
If there's still a place where life's wrestled free from fear,
And there's a God who loves us,
It ain't here.

Look, you and I both know that mistakes were made
As the philosopher said even Emperors will,
But it was telling the Emperor what kings just don't want to hear
That got the philosopher killed.
When speaking lies is safer than speaking true,
Listen friend. There's something you can do

Take your broken wooden heart
Carve yourself a gypsy violin.
Make it laugh just like a mother's crying.
Listen while it whispers that the world isn't dying
And tomorrow's really not that far.
Remember,
Tomorrow's what we are.

Get in my car. I'll drive us down to Ancient Rome,
54 AD. Emperor Nero's at home.
At night in his garden, Christian torches* aglow,
He entertained the masses with fiddle and bow.

And like the late Spade Cooley, he kicked his wife to death.
He killed his brother and his mother, too. It's true.
And before Rome knew what hit her, fires would grow.
Tell me, does this sound like anyone you already know?

Somewhere hope can't hurt you, it only makes you strong.
Somewhere no one claims a thing's right that's just plain wrong.
Somewhere men know why we must walk awhile in another man's shoes,
And that a lie is a lie, and not "fake news".
The stones on your chest ain't really new.
These fallen seas around can rise for me and for you.

Take your broken wooden heart
Carve yourself a gypsy violin.
Make it laugh just like a mother's crying.
Listen while it whispers "The world isn't dying"
And "Tomorrow's really not that far".
Remember,
Tomorrow's what we are.

February 2017

**What's a 'Christian Torch', I hear you ask? First, take a Christian. Tie'em to the top of a long pole. Then douse him with pitch, and set him on fire. An unusual light.*

11. It's That Time Again (A Christmas Song)

It doesn't seem very long ago.
Outside of the church, I watched parked cars disappear under Christmas snow.
It was about eleven, and the service was about to start.
I could have stood there all night,
But I was only seven, so I went in and played my part.

I guess it's the cold that I like the most.
But Christ, if he were here, he'd probably spend his birthday on the gulf coast
Drive along the water, and watch the sea-oats sway;
Then have a few beers, stroll onto the gulf,
Probably fish all day.

And it's that time again,
'Tis the season for shopping, and cartoons, and a little good will to men.

But after giving dad that perfect Christmas tie,
After all the parties, after all the clothing drives,
Once the New Year's resolutions get tossed like empty bottles of champagne,
Then it's back to routine, and thank God everything's back the same.

We seem strangely blessed once all the lights are put away.
Charity may begin at home, but always seems to end on Christmas day.

Two shepherds tend their flocks by night.
It's late. They're cold. They're more than a little tight,
One says to the other, "Man, is that some kind of star?"
"No man, it's probably just a passing car."

And it's that time again.
Sometimes among the voices of angels you can hear the voices of men.

Felix Navidad...

-December 1986