

Chicago River Lyrics

Not Knowing (Intro)

Not knowing where I'm going,
seems I'd rather look back.

Chicago River

From the twenty-first floor
I look down upon the Chicago River.
My apartment is white, all glass, no drapes
framing steel and stone and terra cotta—and a January sky.

My crummy job is just a couple blocks away
along the river, seventh floor.

The CEO's a shark; he made me cut my hair.
He thinks I'm going to find new clients. Ha!

Hidden somewhere between towers
a tiny wedge of the lake fades into Indiana
from the green Chicago River.
Green, not just on Saint Paddy's Day.
There's a pool on the roof, Mac's in the lobby.
The doorman teases me.

I take commuter trains to visit mom and dad.
My mother wants me to move home.

My boss thinks he's my friend.
We drink a lot of beer
not only on Saint Paddy's Day.

From the twenty-first floor
we look down upon the Chicago River—
the green Chicago River.
It isn't a spring green—more of a slime green,
project consultant green—kind of a mean green.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

My nephews visited. We threw big chunks of ice

off of the State Street bridge and nuked that river.

My nieces visited.
They played house.

From the twenty-first floor
every night I look across the river.
I rearrange the letters in the giant neon signs:
PEPSI, PIPES; DELTA, DEALT.

Another bridge goes up
to let a tiny sailboat with a giant mast pass by.
He's going somewhere. He's going somewhere.

To Be Afraid

*In Sister Thomas Mary's classroom
I was never bored.
We good kids learned to diagram dependent clauses,
the rest to fear the Lord.*

Thunderstorms were just the best!
Mom would sit me down. Our stoop faced west.
We'd root for tree trunks cracked and great green gloom.
We'd ooh and ahh, count thousands, from flash to boom.

She never wanted me to be afraid
of anything.

When she'd leave to fix our dinner,
my friends and I, the Saints and Sinners,
would go get drunk on ozone,
dodge raindrops, get blown away.
I'd hope for meatloaf or macaroni.

She never wanted me to be afraid
of anything, not even thunder, not even lightning.

On good-boy days we'd save our town by being extra pious,
yelling "Jesus Mary Joseph, Save Us" after every thunder.
On bad-boy days we'd hug tree trunks
and dare Jesus to fry us.
If sister'd seen she'd have Monsignor tear our heads asunder.

Mom never wanted me to be afraid
of anyone, not even priests, not even nuns.

We'd pray for Wayne's house to be struck
and Wayne the Pain to burn;
ask Lucifer to flood room 7B;
beg God to send a twister to suck
Sister Thomas Mary up
out of her convent, off to Missouri.

Mom never wanted me to be afraid.
And when I was,
she took off work
and took on Sister Thomas Mary.
She took on Sister Thomas Mary!
Who learned
that day,
in seventh grade,
to be afraid.

Math Lab

My high school's new: all brick and steel
and glass weirdos walk into.
At the center: the academics building.
At its center: the math department.
At its center:

SIMILE:

Math Lab. Math Lab!

Like a radiation-shielded artificially enclosed lunar
Leave—they'll scour you with regolith and suck
freeze-dried.

cavern: you can fly.
your insides out; you'll be

Smells of mimeos, new books, white paint, no windows, no cliques, no jocks,
as far from locker rooms as I can get, just me and algebra and Russell's paradox.
No teens, sometimes a teacher seeking colored chalk who doesn't want to talk.

CHORUS:

If you have problems,
Math lab has solutions,
techniques like substitution.
Equations: solved.

Contradictions: resolved.
Theorems: proved (V equals four thirds πr cubed).
Zippers (like the one in the front of your pants)
ripped? (coulda been bad, as bad as the dance)
Binder-clipped. *Ouch!*

(repeat SIMILE)

No phones, no former friend, no freshman dance disaster,
just abstract shapes in perfect plastic or polished plaster,
where I can contemplate what it means to rotate
a single-sided polygon embedded in Euclidean or non-,
paraboloids, hyperboloids of one or two sheets, and future world-famous mathletes.

(CHORUS)

I Love to See

I love to see
everybody
stumbling 'bout
in the morning,
shouting down the hall,
talking about the ball
they had last night.
Water fight.
What a byte.

City Cat

City Cat she's so cool
City Cat ain't no fool
City Cat can be so cruel
How'd you like to be like that City Cat?

Kitty got jet-black fur
Kitty move like a blur
Kitty got such a sexy purr
How'd you like to be like that City Cat?

CHORUS:

City Cat prowls in Hades

City Cat growls at ladies
City Cat howls and suffocates babies

City Cat she's so cool
City Cat ain't no fool
City Cat can be so cruel
How'd you like to be like that City Cat?

Kitty got bright red claws
Kitty got velvet paws
Kitty ain't got no fatal flaws
How'd you like to be like that City Cat?

(CHORUS)
(INSTRUMENTAL)

City Cat got to roam
City Cat live alone
Kitty can't get no lovin' at home
I don't want to be like that City Cat (let me tell ya)
I don't want to be like that City Cat

City Cat chewing gum
lappin' up Coke and rum
City Cat, where you comin' from?
How'd you get to be like that, City Cat? (please tell me)
How'd you get to be like that, City Cat?

In and Out of Love

In and out of love
Serious, mysterious love
We're in and out of love.
This time I'm in but you're out of love.

Combing my house for every vestige of you
Eliminating every trace
Clearing your closet and your medicine shelf
Leaving them empty just in case
Knowing we're always falling

In and out of love
Glorious, precarious love
We're in and out of love.

This time I'm in but you're out of love.

Looking for every book that I would not buy
Taking our favorite photo down
Sorting the cereal and shampoo and wine
Saving it all for our next round
Knowing we're always falling

In and out of love

We're in; you're out.
You're in; I'm out; I'm in;
you're out.

We're in; you're out.
I'm in; you're out.
You're in; I'm out; I'm in;
you're out; we're in; we're

in and out of love.

Dangerous, delirious love

Our lives are synchronizing less frequently.
You love me intermittently.
I promise I will love you when you love me,
but only periodically.

Southern Indiana

Granny's sittin' rockin' and the
cornfields are a poppin' and I
catch you looking over my way.

Though your face is in the sunshine
pretty soon it'll be nighttime hey hey.

Now the sun has done its sinkin'
and the stars are up there blinkin'
and I'm wonderin' just what do I say?

It's sure a lovely evening for a stroll
for miles around there ain't another living soul.

CHORUS:

Here in southern Indiana
we got hills and forests, and a
lotta good hardworking people
sleeping underneath a steeple. (I do.)

We hate Indy we hate Gary
and a farmer's free to marry.
We eat sugar-cream pie.
We shoot hoops and we fry biscuits.

Now I'm takin' you out walkin'
and I don't feel like just talkin'
so I'm sending my lips over your way.
I can see your face a gettin' red
what color will it be your weddin' day?

By the window granny's sittin'
and her hands are busy knittin'
but her eyes are lookin' over our way.
I'm a laughin' you're a blushin'
and your finger is a hushin' me
I'll see you Sunday mornin' gee
it's gonna be a lovely weddin' day.

(CHORUS)

Granny's sittin' rockin' and the
cornfields are a poppin' and I
catch you looking over my way.
I can see your face a gettin' red
what color will it be your weddin'
I'm a laughin' you're a blushin'
and your finger is a hushin'
see you Sunday mornin' gee
it's gonna be a lovely weddin' day.

Forget Cleveland

Forget Cleveland
Forget August
Forget him
Forget what's-his-name

Forget sunsets
on Lake Erie
Forget sailing the Cuyahoga
Forget that night

Remember the guy who is always polite
Maybe not Mister Excitement
Who spends his day battling subroutines
And sleeps in a condo he never cleans
And doesn't make speeches but says what he means

Forget Cleveland
Forget August
Forget suits
Forget businessmen

Forget banquets
keynote speakers
Forget fame
Forget conferences
Forget what's-his-name

Remember the guy who is always there
I mean always here for you forget Cleveland
Remember the guy who is boring but nice
when you think about vows and veils and rice
remember the guy with the brilliant advice:
Forget Cleveland

Analyze alibis
Count the lies
or try nice guys

Forget Cleveland
Forget big cities
and vice-chairmen
of subcommittees

Remember
Nebraska
The Big Skies
Us nice guys

Forget Cleveland
Forget August
and that night

and that orchestra

your hotel
your first flight
the great view
Forget what's-his-name
He's forgotten you

Remember the guy who won't leave you alone
The boring guy bothering you on the phone
Who'd never do what he did
Who's always nice
Who thinks a wife and kids and home
would be paradise

Forget Cleveland
Forget Cleveland
Remember
Nebraska
Forget Cleveland

Whoever Lives Here Now

I try to avoid this neighborhood.
It's evil; it's haunted; it's not good.
But thanks to the County of DuPage
where detours with detours are all the rage
I sit here looking at holes in the ground,
stuck on your street in this rush-hour race,
watching the road crew just standing around
taking up space next to your old place.

Whoever lives here now
keeps a bike on the balcony
just like you.

Whoever lives here now
has a rusty old barbecue
just like you.

Whoever calls this work zone home
owns a telephone.
Whoever lives here probably

will not disappear.

Whoever lives here now
seems to love plants too.
Whoever lives here now
has a brand-new view:

The field where I crashed your stunt kite
is now a giant Priced-Rite.
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou.
Twenty-four hour convenience for
whomever lives here now.

Whoever lives here now
keeps their vertical blinds closed
just like you.

Whoever lives here now
doesn't wash windows
just like you.

Whoever calls this work zone home
owns a telephone.
Whoever lives here probably
will not disappear.

Whoever lives here now
isn't you.
Whoever lives here now
is probably that beer-gut standing around
taking up space next to your old place.

I'd Rather Live in Chicago

I wanna look like a lumberjack
in my red plaid flannel shirt,
but I don't wanna chop down trees;
those blisters and callouses hurt.

I wanna look like a lumberjack
in my stocking cap and jeans,

but I don't wanna live in no
lumber camp barracks; those men are mean.

I might like to live in the North country
and be free and philosophize,
but I'd rather live in Chicago
where it's civilized.

I wanna look like a Tahitian man
with my deep, dark, golden tan,
but I don't want eat no bananas and guavas
and paint like Gauguin.

I wanna look like a Tahitian child
stark naked to the core,
but I don't wanna step on sea urchins
and Portuguese Men-of-War.

I might like to live on a South Sea isle
and watch the sun god rise,
but I'd rather live in Chicago
where it's civilized.

I wanna look like a college student
and plan a panty raid,
but I don't wanna bring back the 60s,
all-nighters, term papers, and grades.

I didn't mind living in a dorm with
seven hundred guys,
and fourteen million dollars-worth
of stereo hi-fi's
with Dolby-A and -B and
decibels unequalized,
but I'd rather live in Chicago
where it's civilized.

I wanna look like a businessman
in my three-piece suit and tie,
but I don't want no martini-wheeling-and-dealing;
I'd rather die.

I might like to live in suburbia
suffering sub-prime rate deflation.
But I'd rather live in high style and sophistication
in the skyscraper city

that's still second best in the nation:
no flannel, no fauna, no finals, no stock fluctuation.
Yeah, I'd rather live in the utmost,
on lovely Lake Michigan's left coast.
Yeah, I'd rather live in Chicago,
that outpost of civilization.

Exit 27

I used to drive this interstate
and dream about a decent bed.
I'd do my best to stay awake
and chuckle at a sign that said:

No food
No lodging
No Attractions
Exit 27
1 mile

No food
No lodging
No Attractions
Exit 27

I stopped to help someone in need,
but couldn't fix your frozen line.
Offered a ride and you agreed.
We turned off at that sorry sign:

No food
No lodging
No Attractions
Exit 27
1 mile

No food
No lodging
No Attractions
Exit 27

We got into a sweet routine.
Each Friday I'd get off at three.
I didn't think; I should have seen
you needed more than feeding me

fried chicken apple pie
clean sheets a soft warm body
mutual attraction
exit twenty-seven
heaven

fried biscuits sausages
a pile of sheets and pillows
animal attraction
exit twenty-seven
heaven

I always hoped, I even prayed,
we'd fix it, give it one more shot.
I never thought I'd see the day
when exit twenty-seven's got

No food
No lodging
No Attractions
Exit 27
1 mile

No food
No lodging
No Attractions
Exit 27

Diesel

I'm Here You're There

CHORUS:

It's not that I don't miss you,
it's not that I don't care,
it's not that I don't love you,

it's only that
I'm here;

you're there.

It's not that I think sometimes
we're not the perfect pair;
it's not that I'm not coupled,
it's only that
I'm here;
you're there.

I'm here with the rush-hour
jerks on the Eisenhower.
You're there eating croissant
and climbing the Eiffel Tower.
 You're all high style
 and glitz; my life's
 the pits.

(CHORUS)

You're there, trying hard to
forget about Februaries.
I'm here in a blizzard
enjoying obituaries.
 I lose all my files
 while you cruise the Greek Isles
 on a yacht.

(CHORUS)

(INSTRUMENTAL)

I'm here on the couch in the den
playing some new CD.
You're here on the couch in the den
reading world history.

 The czars, guitars,
 the Doors, world wars
 the Blitz.

(CHORUS)

Stay Outta My Space

CHORUS:

Stay outta my space.
if you're a member of the human race,
stay outta my space.
Unless you're someone I might care to embrace
stay outta my space.
Unless we're running to first or second base
stay outta my space.

I don't wanna see the pores on your face.
I don't wanna watch 'em open and close.
Though there are just a few,
I don't wanna count the hairs in your nose.
Eww!

I'm at the gym, approaching seven treadmills.
One and seven are occupied by people thinking,
"Stay outta my space."
While I'm choosing, a big guy passes me.
If he takes three, I'll take five;
the four of us'll be two treadmills apart.
If he takes five, I'll take three;
the four of us'll be two treadmills apart.
But he is a greedy.
He takes four.
The greedy bastard!
So everybody who's already there is three treadmills apart, but what about me?

What can I do?
No matter which I take,
I'm next to someone.
My workout's ruined.

I take three.
The greedy guy gives me a dirty look: Stay outta my space!
I hope he hates the hairs in my nose.
I hope that my deodorant fails.
I hope that his doesn't.

(CHORUS)

I don't wanna one-on-one interface.
I don't want to smell these people's colognes.
And lest you misconstrue,
I don't wanna smell type-two pheromones.
Eww!
Three girls, in neon sports bras (chatting, chatting, chatting),

About their kids,
About their jobs,
The books they're reading,
Next year's elections—
They approach the treadmills.
One takes two; the others five and six and keep on chatting.
Not about boys.
(They keep on chatting.)
Not about clothes.
(Chatting, chatting, chatting)

I try to ignore them;
(They keep on chatting.)
And focus on FOXNews:
(Chatting, chatting, chatting)
Trump good.
(They keep on chatting.)
Hillary bad.

Paradise

CHORUS:
The water's cold.
The palm tree's dead.
That isn't dirt, it's mold.
That millipede has reached my bed.
The sun has never shone.
The fish last night was mostly bone.
There's no convenient place to charge my phone.
Their promises of paradise were somewhat overblown.
Their promises of paradise were somewhat overblown.

We always loved this beach.
Everybody got along—more or less.
From physicists to farmers,
politicians to the press,
from football fans to operaphiles,
from stars to their chauffeurs,
even chiropractors, even used car sales managers.

It wasn't perfect, but we were making progress.
And now new management has promised paradise.
For free.
We bought it—and now we pay the price.

They're piling up our sand dollars;
we got what we deserved.
For example, lately I've observed:
(CHORUS)

Float Little Snowflake

CHORUS:
Float little snowflake
Float by my window so I can see
I know the last place you want to be
is on the ground
Float while you can little snowflake
You've got to do what you've gotta do
Life can be fun if you want it to
so stick around

Maybe you'll land in a treetop
and look so pretty
painters will paint you
and poets gush

Maybe you'll land on a sidewalk
and scare old ladies
amaze new babies
with your cold touch

(CHORUS)

Maybe you'll land in my backyard
live in a snowball
If you're good packing
you'll fly again

Please cream my dumb little brother
not another window
Help ambush buses
and mailmen

(CHORUS)

Maybe you'll land in a mud puddle
melt right away
All little snowflakes

must melt someday

Joan Bone

CHORUS:

Joan Bone on the phone
If it ain't busy, she ain't home
Joan Bone, monotone
She's permanently tuned to the dial tone

Her sister Judy lives in Phoenix, Arizona
with a dozen lovely children to discuss
"The second from the youngest had the flu last week
and Thursday number seven missed her bus"

The wires overloaded periodically
Ma Bell of Illinois was going into debt
until the FCC OK'd a special satellite
in a stationary orbit over Joliet

(CHORUS)

Her sister Jeannie lives beneath a water tower
In case of flood, tornado, hurricane, or war
if her telephone should ever lose its power
she'll climb up there and they'll communicate by semaphore

(CHORUS)

Assisted Living

Every picture's crooked.
Her favorite kitty photo's lost.
Her last lei is turning brown
in my mother-in-law's assisted-living facility.

Cable's on the fritz.
Her oxygen tank's beeping
while we're playing ukuleles
in my mother-in-law's assisted-living facility.

Ninety-nine, one hundred:
will she make it to Thanksgiving?

Where will Christmas be this year?
In my mother-in-law's assisted-living facility?

She thinks she baked us cookies.
She's planning her next cruise.
When we're alone she tells me
dying one inch at a time is for the birds.

Not Knowing

Not knowing where I'm going,
seems I'd rather look back.

Every year we slept out
running around the tent in the dark
without any clothes on.
Three times around.

Every night we stayed out for hours
taking a leak on Mildred's flowers.
Mary's too.
"Hey you!
What are you kids doing out this late?"
Can't you see we're running straight for home!

Didn't seem so great then,
but I always had at least one friend.
Sometimes two.
Once three.

Don't know what my life holds for me,
but I do know what it used to be.

Not knowing where I'm going,
seems I'd rather—

Once we all went skinny-dipping at night in Mike's pool.
What a fright when Gigi came out too
to tell us it was getting dark.
Mike said we knew.
We'd be in soon.
Please go away!
Please go away, Gigi.
Please go away.

Don't know what Who's Who will have to say
but I do remember yesterday and it

didn't seem so great at the time
but every year we made a trip to Riverview.
Sometimes two.
Once three.

Not knowing where I'm going,
seems I'd rather look at the past, not the future.
Taking a look at the past,
forgetting all about the future,
and trying to get those trunks back on
before Gigi sees everything.
Please go away!
Please go away, Gigi.
Please go away.

I Gotta Have My Key

The only thing I care about's
the key to my back door.
Before I go out,
that's the only thing I spend time looking for.
Though I can leave
umbrellas, wallets, gloves, and combs at home;
without that key I'd never, ever, roam.

CHORUS:

I gotta have my key
'cause I'm a crybaby.
I gotta know I can come home
whenever I start to go crazy.

I don't think I could venture out
into the cold, cruel world
without that piece of golden metal in my palm,
with fingers curled.
And if I lost it I would offer everything I own.
I don't think I could face the world alone.

(CHORUS)