Don't get me wrong, the sex is great

The candy store closed in 1983, or
Was it 1981? Hard to
Remember now.

The long curved shop window,
With its enticing dark purple tint
(People had come thousands of miles
To admire that window and its contents)
Shattered, spraying wicked glinting
Shards across the square.

It seems we were lucky
To have been sitting on
The bench in front of the shop,
Sharing a single perfect peppermint buttercream,
When some flaw (still poorly understood) in the glass
Sent a wave of stress
Streaming up the material behind us
Until the neat purple curve at the top
Bulged more and more, and having no more to bulge,
Showered
Bright spears of glass out above us,
Flattened us on the sidewalk below, where we
Contemplated candy wrappers and our mortality.

The two of us lay on hard gritty cement
Beneath the ruined window,
Anxiously observing the panoply of
Newsreel devastation in the square before us,
And wondering how peppermint could taste like blood.

Just as we nerved ourselves to
Brush aside the long bright shards and
Stand to face what next,
Cops arrived,
Crouched behind innocent parked cars,
Bull-horned instructions

NOT TO MOVE. As if we were running amok!
In fact we'd just been pleased to
Find that, with double-timed pulses and
Mouths so dry our tongues glued to our palates -
What happened to the candy? -
Our pants were still, wow, both clean and dry.
Commands

NOT TO TOUCH THE GLASS,
Its edges so sharp, so inclined to
  Slice unrealized into soft skin.

Jesus Christ! We can't just
Cower here forever (we think we
  Remember thinking). So we
Rose up in an agony of caution,
Each holding the other,
Pulling him up until we stood in
One another's arms.

"I'm scared shitless",
  I admitted, as he
(With his greater height)
  Sheltered my head
Against his chest.
He, not being given to
  Words of distress,
Wept openly and shivered
  In mortal fear and bravery.

We picked our way
  Across the street,
Out from the square,
  Up to our rooms,
Embraced one another and
  Whispered how
Lucky we were.

And lying down, curled around
  One another in
Sleeping lovers' first position,
Suffered survivors'
Guilty dreams.
The candy store is long gone now;  
   A vegetarian deli stands there instead, the  
   Disastrous window converted to  
       A wall of simple redwood shingles.
But we don't eat at The Celery Stick, or  
   Even walk around the place;  
The papers say  
   NO TRACE OF DEATH GLASS:  
       SQUARE IS SAFE
But you can't really believe  
   What the papers say.  
Today the headlines struck an  
Ominous note:  
   DEATH GLASS CHEMICAL  
       A SILENT KILLER

More flamboyant dailies proclaim:  
   PEOPLE WHO DIED  
IN SQUARE WERE  
   LUCKY ONES

It seems  
That special purple tint, the tone  
That made a simple licorice stick in that window  
   So achingly attractive that  
   My lover and I once blew off our afternoon appointments  
   Just to commune together with one such stick  
   (Not to mention those peppermint buttercreams),
This color (they say) comes from  
   Cryosulfate compounds - or some such, the  
Terms vary in ways we can't follow -  
   Which, once entered into your body, spread  
Silently, over hours or days or months or decades,  
   Who knows how long,  
   Until they reach some critical point only  
   The compounds themselves appreciate and then they  
Shrivel your guts until  
   You die, and pray hotly to die, with  
Your insides knotted into a  
   Tight fist of tissue.
And they say: KILLER COMPOUND
CAN SPREAD BY
SHARING FOOD
Still no one understands the
Underlying mechanism.

Do we believe this? Could it
Be true? Oh fucking Christ, please
No, no,
No.

It is true. People
From the square now appear
On television, carefully chosen
In that brief public transitional period
When they have just realized
<IT IS HAPPENING
INSIDE OF ME; I AM
ONE DEAD SUCKER>
But before they become
Tastelessly
In need of Sister
Morphine.

What to do? Advice proceeds
From every quarter. Loony
Advice, advice to seize the
Day, advice to move at least
Ten miles from any of the
"Cryosulfate victims", as these
Unfortunates - us unfortunates? -
Are now referred to. Advice
To stop eating altogether;
To stop eating from the same utensils with others;
To stop eating at the same table with others;
To stop eating in the same room with others,
Or...maybe just with others
Who were in the square, or
Were close to it that day, or
Are acquaintances of someone who was either of these,
Someone who is, oh sweet Jesus I call on you again,
(Fucking or not) a
PEC (person "potentially exposed to
cryosulfates").
So the two of us are PECs. We call ourselves "Peckers" and wave our Cocks at one another in greeting, Like obtuse Teenagers in a Locker room But we are, both of us, Scared shitless.

Why do I invoke you, Jesus? Innocent or carnal, you are not Anything I believe in, but still I call on you. Not for help; you are Hopeless, dead hopeless. Can you give me Advice, then? What do We do?

By the way, My lover wants to Know, too.

Step by step, we Abandon our rites, The practices that Have bound us together.

No longer do we Share a banana In a race from each end Till we kiss in the middle.

No longer does he Feed me ices From a spoon that I use To feed him some too.

We try an experiment, Plates and bowls in two parts, Divided in the middle, Just in case.
Just in case, what, Jesus? Tell
Me, what are saving each other from?
More important, can we do it?
Are we hopelessly screwed (my apologies, Jesus,
To fucking and all of its relatives; no
Slight intended) by that
One potentially astounding
Peppermint buttercream
That he had his teeth in and
I had my teeth in and we could
Smell one another's breath and
(For that matter) sweat and that we were
Just about to get this great
Soul-filling hit from as we kissed
And, incidentally, swallowed the
Candy (I guess; where else could it have gone?)
When the goddam weird
Window blew up?

We really do
Want to know.

The experiment
Runs a bad course;
Each of us
Is gripped by
The fear that he
Just might be killing the other.
We retreat at first
To eating at opposite
Ends of the table,
Separate utensils (though
It's against our way of life),
Then to eating at
Opposite ends of the
Fucking room, I ask you,
What is this world
Coming to, when loving
Couples can't
Eat together?
Yes, we do salacious food-
Talking in bed, but it just
Isn't the same.

The trouble with you, Jesus,
Is that you and your associates don't
Have a lot to say to
People like us.

And now they say
PECs CAN GET CAT-SCANS
TO DETECT CRYOSULFATES

Hey! No cats on our
Pecs, thank you! Those claws hurt like,
Oh shit (We're giving up on you,
Christ; at least we understand shit, and just maybe
It will listen), we can't talk about any of this
Stuff any more: Whoever's listening,
Hear our word-play and enjoy how
Cute it is to have peckers like us talk about peppermint
Buttercreams. I don't think we can ever again
Eat together the way we
Used to.

You see, Jesus, (and the rest of you), we're not like
Most of the others.
We set one place at table, one glass, one fork.
Each feeds the other, each gives
The other what he
Wants and needs.
Two mouths share an apple,
A peppermint, a companionable slice of
Bread.

How can they, how can you, dubious Christ,
Take this away from me, but especially
From him?

Our dreams now are fantasies of
Recollection; we share memories of the candies,
Dirty secrets, we
Trade racy images of the store,
While fearing the very thoughts might wrench my lover's gut,
Or mine,
Into a hard final walnut of pain.
We remember with delight:
The broad fruit-flavored sugar strips, in
Cranberry, tangerine, kiwi, nectarine,
Lingonberry, mango - (there was a specialized
Candy-maker for each of these, and occasionally other,
Flavors), which we would suck on
Langorously for hours while their tastes
Somehow grew more and more
Intense...until they were suddenly gone,
And we were desolated but satisfied;
And the peppermint buttercreams,
Which exploded on some timetable of their own
Into a sharp hot coldness that flirted with
Pain but filled our mouths, our heads, our
Entire bodies, right down to the holes in our
Inner beings that had long needed patching.

Christ, we really did like doing
Those peppermint lovelies. I never even thought of
Eating one alone by myself.

Is this fucking impasse we're in fair, Jesus? Do you
Care about fairness?
Most of our friends are joined
The other way -
Your standard genital unions.
They just don't understand.

Sometimes we walk with them in the evening
And they say, "What's the
Big deal? So you can't eat
Together, you can still
Eat alone." I'd like to see them
Fucking alone.

(Behind our backs I think they say
We fuck like rabbits -
That's true enough I guess -
And they disapprove.

Don't get me wrong, the sex
Is great.
But an apple just isn't the same
If your lover's lips are not also
On it.
(Not to mention peppermint buttercreams.)

We can't complain, though.
We have our health and
We have each
Other.