

Evan Exempt

—*Collected Poems*—

2011 - 2014



“If a novel is like a marriage, a poem is like a fling.”

—No one in particular

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

The works contained within this document are mine and mine alone. This document is intended to be distributed free of charge as a means of showcasing my poetic accomplishments (humble as they may be), and to entertain friends, family, and perhaps curious strangers.

At age 34, I am in what I consider to be the infancy of my writing career. I both contend and admit that I have yet to fully discover my voice as a writer. Bearing this in mind, the tone and subject matter of my poetry ranges from the dark to the inane, from the deeply personal to the broadly topical... I imagine that a random sample of perhaps three selections from this document could easily be deemed the work of three very different poets. Finding *my voice* remains, for the time, a quest in progress. But unlike our quests in the material world, internal quests rarely lead us to definite end-points; they are cyclical, self-perpetuating, ending only in our mortal demise. Perhaps my nature is that of a borrower or chameleon, and I will never harness a singular poetic voice that is my very own. I attribute this mentality to an ongoing refusal to settle—whether it be in matters of love, image, or even profession—a desire to explore the literary style-scape as though it were some giant, enchanted (or disenchanting) forest. And perhaps this is for the best. My heart is ever searching, ever changing... And so I write.

Please enjoy this sparse collection of my early work: an amateur exploration of the elusively minute yet infinitely vast art form we call poetry.

—Evan Exempt, September, 2014

Part 1
The Lighter Side

THE CAT RAN OFF

The word died because there was no one there to say it
The food spoiled because there was no one there to eat it
The rent came due, but there was no one there to pay it
The cat ran off because there was no one there to feed it

The phone beeped, but there was no one there to check it
The book opened, but there was no one there to read it
The pussy slept empty because there was no one there to fuck it
The sun came up, but there was no one there to see it

So, what went wrong?
Where was he?
He was right there, writing poetry

ROOMMATE

A keg in the kitchen
floating empty in water tepid
Your cigarette butts
spilled upon a pile of hard socks
pushed into the corner
The eco-system of a warm fridge
sitting silently
Bills unpaid
The lights come on and
your music still sucks
Plus now you're broke
So you sit and
defecate while eating
Mouth agape at evening TV
When you speak it is a belched
lungful of tar and
Your girlfriend's cheap body-spray
wafting through the rafters
with the tones of your creaking bed and
her Oscar-winning orgasms
Lube on every doorknob
Gloves I stopped bothering with
figuring it would be easier
to let your filth prevail
I set your cat free
His box was full

his dish empty
He told me he hates you
The first thing he did was
kill a bird
I watched and imagined it was you
flapping helplessly
then falling limp
I begged the cat to come back
To do you next
But he was gone
dragging his prey into the shadows
As I sighed upon the porch
where your rusted bicycle rots
too useless to steal
Locked ironically
to your dumb fucking swing
Even uglier when you sit on it
drinking my beer
while the sun sets
I pray that it collapses
while you're telling a joke
The lights go out and
your music still sucks

—Roommate

AN APOLOGY OWED

If you give me the time, I will say you a rhyme
that alludes to illusions in lieu of a mime

If you raise me a pound, I will buy you a round
that will make your fears wither and fall to the ground

If you hand me a shake, I will bake you a cake
too rich for a wedding, too light for a wake

If you squeeze me a hug, I will score you a drug
that can make a meek monk of a gun-toting thug

If you sneak me a kiss, I will touch you a bliss
that will cast you into an orgasmic abyss

If you lend me a buck, I will owe you an apology
because I work as a writer

IMPOSSIBELLE

You tell her you love her
She calls you a liar
She begs you to stay,
then she leaves

She gives you her heart
but then adds, to your ire,
that some other man holds the key

You buy her a diamond
“No, no! I said *demon!*
“Those stones are the blood of the poor.”

You bring her a demon
She gasps, “That’s no diamond!
“And put away that ouija board!”

She says she wants apples
You bring her home apples
She scowls, “I want green ones, not red.”

You go get green apples
She sighs, “Such an asshole.
“You should buy organic instead.”

She mocks while you talk,
right in front of your friends
She insults and degrades and demeans

She’s a twit and a bitch as you cinch her corset,
but that girl has the tightest vagine

DRUNK AT THE DENTIST

Hello, Miss!
You're not the girl who cleaned my fangs the last time
She was younger, I recall
Is she still here? Just down the hall?
What's that? Sit back and open wide?
Oh, shit! I didn't zip my fly
Wow! A bib in powder blue
How did you know I often drool?
Yes, in fact, I grind my teeth
both while awake and while asleep
Pick a flavor?

Burp...Um, taco?

Rinse and spit? That's kind of gross
Nice funnel on that vacuum hose
I need to floss? I need to brush?
I need to piss, let's hurry up!
Oh, hi, Doctor... I forget
Wait! Don't tell me
Is it Schmidt?
Or Berklestein?
Or Shankarif?
Oh, your name tag—
Doctor Dick!
You're worried that my molar's soft?
Ow, that hurts!
Please fucking stop!

LADY ELECT & RUNNER UP

At thirty and change
I have cried for women in droves
exceeding the sum of my fingers and toes,
plus the years since my birth,
followed by seven zeros!

What “type” of woman do I fall for?
A too-witty muse or a too-pretty whore?

While I cannot find among the lady hairs that line my bed
a common thread of humor nor complexion,
their synchronized arrival times
do give me pause to mention—

When our eyes meet, it's bittersweet
Lady Elect arrives just as Runner Up takes her seat

I THOUGHT THAT I LOVED YOU

I thought that I loved you,
but that has all changed
I was in your pocket,
but now I'm estranged

It burns like betrayal,
yet aches like a loss
And I *swore* I'd look past
your most challenging flaws!

But alas...

One cold, rainy evening
the radio on
We were talking and laughing,
then something went wrong

My heart fell to pieces
when I heard you say
that you are a fan
of Michael Buble

BEST MAN

Dear Old Friend: It is with humble honor
that I blush to be even considered
to stand tall at the helm of your union
eternal—for forty percent

Oh, I've seen you at depths in this journey
with a girl ever slow to surrender
I'm relieved by the news of your bounty,
and pray love never leaves you lament

But, for all of your friends and your brothers
bearing witness to bonds ever after,
is not one better suited a wing man
than the loathable Mr. Exempt?

Your big day—a maid primps my lapel pin
As I kiss her, my heart fills with laughter
It's a mystery to me why your best man would be
this old, miserable, whore-fucking bachelor

LOVE REMAINS

Sound the bells and tie the knot
A noose for two—our lives to rot

Framed and hanged upon this wall
Your smirk worn thinner every fall

My dandy cane once drawn for show
Not such a prop as time would go

“Help me, darling, from my skates!”
A tandem coffin nigh awaits

We once were young and pretty things
Now gray we’ve grown but love remains

OUR DERBY DAYS

These days we'll save
to keep in mind
our younger hearts
our golden times

A dream we shared
A torch we lit
The scars we wear
won't soon forget

A wheel turned
A fever spread
Our oval track
Our crowded bed

We were women
We were men
There were loves
but we were friends

Part 2
Shorts

MY GREAT THUD

I wrote a verse so awful sad
my book leapt from its shelf
And at its thud the others laughed!
More books should kill themselves

EXISTENCE

So insignificant and incidental in the wake of history
So scattered and diluted in the crest of the present
So tiny and helpless in the great tide of the future
We are as one
yet each alone
Adrift
A drop
A name forever lost

HARMLESS AT LAST

How I long to be rid of this flesh and its cruel appetites
To turn back into light
Or perhaps into darkness
To fade into space
To be at last harmless

MAGGOTS

Men and women hurt
For what are sperm worth?
The sorcerers of birth
The maggots of the earth

STONER'S LAMENT

I have an idea
I just don't remember what it is
I meant to wrote it down
but it was lost before I found the pen
So here I sit
in hopes it will arrive again
I have an idea
I just don't remember what it is

AN HONEST LOVE POEM

Violets are blue
Roses are red
But you don't love me
so drop fucking dead

LUCKY LIFE

Fortunate am I
to want not for shelter
to want not for food
to take health for granted
to live a dream true
to lead a life lucky
and want only you

BAD BOY

She knows there's no love in his loving
All her friends say he's lost and diseased
But her panties get wet when she sees him
And her glasses fog up when he leaves

A BEDTIME PRAYER

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the lord my soul to (bleep)
If I day before I wake
Thank you very much

NAUGHTY RAINBOWS

I want you
with words that no one knows
In vulgar ways
demure in pretty prose
Oh, how I long to kiss
your smile's tiled bliss
while funnel clouds lay down
with naughty rainbows

BIRTHDAY BOY

There once was a sad little boy
who received for his birthday a toy
A miniature friend in the image of him
A doll twin that he'd promptly destroy

LITTLE KARMA

I proposed to take her out
I designed to take her home
I resigned to break her heart
Now I deserve to be alone

PLATONIC ASYMMETRY

It is for the best that we would never be
because now we can forever dream
fancying whatever could have been
...one of us, anyway, it seems

SLEEP WHORE

Sleep is a shameless attention whore
paying me no mind until everyone else has had a go
She comes a desperate lay at daybreak

YOUNG FELLAS

Always crushing
Always rushing
All or nothing
All disgusting

MADE FOR DISPLEASURE

Some minds were built upon straight lines and numbers
Some minds were born to be fathers and mothers
Some minds were colored for painting the heather
But I think that my mind was made for displeasure

MIND ATTACK

Sometimes my mind attacks me
It doesn't mean I hate you
It's not our cue to part
My head just had to fart

You're not a horrible friend
I'm not a terrible person
It's just—at times I can be
Sometimes my mind attacks me

IT ALL DISAPPEARS

My life with its joys and its dreams and its pride
It all disappears into black
Someday I'll go wander off in the snow
And I swear I won't ever come back

Part 3
The Darker Side

TOO SAD & TOO COLD

Who is that woman?
Dead catch in the night
Her tongue floats the truth
Her lips sink a lie

Who's her tall shadow,
cast black in the light?
Eyes dry heave at sorrow
Disease in his mind

Two rounds for two strangers
Too loud and too dark
His story's a swimmer
Her tale's a shark

They left here together,
But neither know why
For he's too sad to fuck
And she's too cold to cry

REAPER'S LAMENT

In some distant future
a garden awaits me
Or so says the legend
of fortunes bequeathed

Tomatoes and peppers,
fine herbs and rare flowers,
medicinal root-plants,
ambitions to conquer

Yet time brings her summer
to crawl and to slither
A rainless heat bubble
Leaves wither and crumble

A bounty in waiting
Slow hand of a killer
Parched feast for the famished
grasshoppers and 'pilar

A song for the harvest's
still-born bastard daughter
No bushel for market
A reaper's lament

Arriving December
I grip the gate frozen
Black fruits half devoured
but serve to remember

A CHRISTMAS WISH

Tonight marks my first Christmas drinking
in three years, since I gave it up
And now I suppose you're lamenting
or fearful I'll drown in my cup

But let me assure you of something
to ease your compassionate cares:
Nothing of life is forever
And someday it all disappears

Last Christmas I'd lost her for nothing
This Christmas I've lost her for good
They say Yule is time for the family
But marry the wicked I would

My Mother said, "Write us a list up—
"Your sister wants boots and a leash—
"Your father wants ratchets and trunnions—
"And I want to go to the beach"

Oh, Mother, I'm sorry I'm broken
My sadness has left me with nil
For I spent all my dollars on drinking
And for Christmas I want to be killed

HOPE

I hoped for shine, there came a rain
I hoped for joy, there came a pain
I hoped for truth, there came a lie
I hoped to sing, there came a sigh

I hoped to gain, there came a loss
I hoped for spring, there came a frost
I hoped to give, there came a take
You took my heart and gave a stake

I hoped we might amount to something
Hope would turn out to be nothing



HIT ME

If you love me, I will hurt you
If I hurt you, you will hit me
If you hit me, I will leave you
If I leave, you will come with me
If you come, I will forgive you
If I stay, you will forget me
If you hurt me, I will love you
If you love me, you will hit me

ABORTION MONEY

Basking in your bloom
Too free for one to keep
Too ruthlessly naive
to bid contempt

In me you'd find a friend
This decade-older weed
A jaded player heart
from love exempt

While younger bucks gave chase
I left you to your space
To please each one
As you deemed fit to please

And just as sure as time
You'd lay for me supine
Or I would bow to you
upon my knees

I neither spent inside
Nor was I your steady
Nor was I the latest
Nor the greatest...

Penance boys may owe,
a man will rise to pay,
minding he was
young but yesterday

A father's duty sweet
A daughter's bitter deed
A reaper's hand to
pluck this fallen seed

The reason that I cry:
I'm honored it was I
whom you would call when
months refused to bleed...

Just meet me at the clinic
I'll leave it in your lap
I may not be your man
But I'll always have your back

ALWAYS BE YOUR BOY

You picked him over me—all's fair and square in love and war
For months I shoveled desperately for dirt and nothing more

I stand six feet, conveniently, so I know when to quit
And if I can lay down comfortably, then love is sure to fit

So, here I stand, scepter in hand: an undertaker's spade
like that design which marked my cards—the foolish hand I played

And now I lay our love to rest—no pride left to destroy
You will never be my girl, but I will always be your boy

BLACK NOTHING

You can't chain her gate with a sentence
You can't wage debate with a choice
You can't break his legs with an expletive phrase
No, there really ain't much in a voice

You can scream her a suicide sonnet
You can fill her inbox with sharp letters
You can slit your own wrists and transmit her the pics
but it's certain: you're not going to get her

Oh, what can you say to make her mind stay
when her body gets up and walks away?

Nothing, I tell you
Black nothing

MISS FUCKING*

I miss fucking you
fucking miss you I
you miss fucking I
miss you fucking I
fucking I you miss
miss fucking I you
fucking you I miss
I you fucking miss
you fucking I miss
miss I you fucking
you miss I fucking
I miss you fucking
fucking you miss I
I fucking you miss
miss I fucking you
you I miss fucking
I you miss fucking
fucking I miss you
you I fucking miss
miss you I fucking
you fucking miss I
miss fucking you I
fucking miss I you
I fucking miss you

**Inspired by the work of Brion Gysin.*

THE GRAND APOLOGY: HER VERSION

To the boy I love best:
Please forgive me
For by now, there's no pride left to swallow
I never could take only one before bed
So, tonight, I'll just take the whole bottle

THE GRAND APOLOGY: HIS VERSION

The lump in my pants says I want you
The tear in my eye says I miss you
The rose in my hand says I'm sorry
The gun in my mouth says—*BANG!*

NOTHING OF ME
(a prayer)

Dear God:

Take my passion and freshness and game
Take my smile-white, crooked-tooth weapon
Take my gaze-giving eyes and my songs and my lies,
my impossible promise to reckon
Take my whim and my will and my want
Take my doubtless and dire obsession
Cast them all out with the grief and the doubt
and the drain of my horrid affection
Make me as one with the spirits afloat,
with the stream and the bank and the trees...

Oh, May the man wed
May the bride keep his bed
May the children grow tall
May their lives live it all!
May their dreams bloom untouched
May their souls rise above
May they leave behind goodness and greatness and love
Let their hearts lead them by justice and mercy
Oh, let them be loved for their deeds
Let them console each their mothers I've wronged
And let there be nothing of me
Amen

CARBON CHILD
(a *mother's* grim future)

We are the same in code
yet spun in separate flesh—
my younger carbon self

I only learned this year
what carbon paper was
The modern era's proof

A surface page of white
to trap each stroke of ink
and mark the page beneath

The era of your birth
now seen with wiser eyes
for what it would incite

I loved you as myself—
my daughter yet my twin—
in lost immortal dreams

A century cast aside
The husband I adored
Now why am I surprised
that he would love you more?

EVER ONLY EVER

As colder winds give chase
and press the gander yon'
I drain a bottle stiff
and breathe the dying leaves

This coward's will be done
A promise made to sever
The heart I swore to keep
Ever, only, ever

Be closed my fickle eyes
Be bound my straying hands
Be hushed my wicked mouth
and wicked plans

Look into your heart
May you try to understand
that I am but a child,
not a man

Attention that I seek
My will was ne'er to keep
But savor for a time
and cast aside

These lessons learned too late
Revealed by twists of fate
Please know I never meant
to hurt your pride

I saw you in a dream
of life and love idyllic
I could have died when
slumber slipped away

And ever since that morn'
my heart sits ripped agape,
longing for the bliss
we shared that day

But lo—what's done is done
My storm you had to weather
So words in gallows wait
A sentence now to hang

“Love” is but a crime
The heart I burned and tethered
may suffer for all time
Ever, only, ever

You know that I am sick
I know that I was wrong
And I know that you're hurt
And I know that you're gone

But I will right these wrongs
And there will be a ring
And there will be a song
And there will be a spring—

When I will take your hand
And we will walk together
into our future new
Never, only, never



Part 4
Two Sides

CROW FEATHERS

Sheryl

Crow

played

feathers

Soak up

blood in

the Sun

where he tried to

at the Red

Cross

fundraiser

LOVE FOR OTHERS

Love

leads

drives

some

others

to commit

fully

suicide

BLACK SOUL

Oh my

God

bless your

black soul

music

softly

speaks

to me

the

sister

shocked

WE ALL GOT TO EAT

He wakes

She goes

up

in

to

the

morning

attic

and cooks

bacon

meth

We all got to eat

Part 5
Lipstick on a Pig
—finale—

LIPSTICK ON A PIG

0.

Tugging buttons. Herding cats.
My circus tent is full of bats.

So please sit back. Enjoy the show.
For what this is, you soon shall know.

1.

Call it danger. Call it fun.
A pregnant girl dressed as a nun,

with Tramp le Monde in Cooper Black
tattooed across her lower back.

Photographed while being told
she would be Vice's centerfold.

Holler, "hipster!" Holler, "ho!"
But what this is, we both well know.

2.

"FIGHT THE POWER!" Chants the crowd.
The power fails — lights go out.

For blacked out "punks", too drunk to riot,
a revolution starts tonight.

The rich will masquerade the poor
mobs looting malls' Hot Topic stores

Tell 'em, friend, or call 'em faux.
But what this is, we both well know.

3.

A cheating boyfriend's olive branch
of wilted flowers' second chance.

— or maybe fifth? You're losing track.
His silver tongue invites you back.

Call him bastard. Call him slick.
You gave your heart. He gave a dick.

Your eyes won't let the image show.
But what this is, we both well know.

4.

“THE WAR IS WON! Your son is dead.
—we think. Identify this head!”

Like bullets, words whiz past her ears.
An army mother's private tears.

The price of victory's folded flags
for graduates in body bags.

My lips have kissed the young widow.
And what this is, we both well know.

5.

SONGS FOR SALE! MP3
Why pay? Download 'em here for free!

Our internet is home to art,
freely stolen, a la carte.

Lines of code and lines for bread.
A poet poor, yet widely read.

Call it raven. Call it crow.
But what this is, we both well know.

6.

Shut your nose and hold your eyes.
as puppy dogs are euthanized.

While tubes suspend the elderly.
It's our humane society.

Administer the mercy drug.
A patient family pulls the plug.

Life is pain and death is woe.
But what this is, we both well know.

7.

Strip it naked. Dress it up.
Give a euphemistic fuck!

Say you like it. Say you will.
Drink the Kool-Aid. Take the pill.

Sacrifice an honest lamb.
Your lying god could give a damn.

Hide your claws inside your paws
of kittens' cruel deception —

(Now prick the eye of innocence
for visual conception!)

8.

Call him Jekyll. Call him Hyde.
A plastic surgeon pimps the bride.

A blonde gorilla primps her wig
as staff puts lipstick on a pig.

Call it false or call it true,
but television's based on you.

And each new day's an episode
in seven-billion channels! —

(Eventually, we turn it off
and join the other mammals)

9.

Now let us bow our ads to pay
for pay-per-view that's view per prey.

A sport bar's patrons pick their food
and watch a lion eat a dude.

Tomorrow's hunger games proceed,
repeating history's maladies

with title fights and Super Bowls.
Oh, what this is, we both well know.

10.

Thank you kindly for your ear,
eye, and heart, my patron dear.

I hope that you've enjoyed the show
for what it is...

fin