

POEMS & LYRICS



by Kyle D. Walker

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Kyle D. Walker

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FORWARD

For the greater part of my life I'd considered myself to be primarily a songwriter (with a novelist lurking in the shadows). I'd never really considered myself a poet. Poetry seemed frivolous to me compared to songs and prose. It's true that I'd write the occasional poem, but more often than not it was a song lyric gone astray. But I'd never really sat down and read poetry for poetry's sake.

Eventually I did start reading poetry. I thought it would improve my lyric-writing skills. Wonder of wonders, I found there were poets I liked. Wilfred Owen with his gritty depictions of trench warfare. Dylan Thomas with his brilliant tendency to leave all sense-making to the reader. I actually memorized Robert Browning's epic *Childe Roland to The Dark Tower Came* after finishing the Dark Tower series by Stephen King. Yeah, I kind of gravitate to the old stuff, and I'm not ashamed to admit that the songwriter in me likes poems that rhyme.

So can I be a poet now? I don't know. What the hell is a poet anyway? I just love words and the textures I can create by putting them together. I hope I've put something together here that you will enjoy.

Kyle D. Walker
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BOYS WENT SOUTH

It was there from the first like a harrowing tide
Waiting up for the moon in the sickening sky
The malevolent chatter of the chosen few
Make a good god wonder what the hell he's gonna do
'Til the war began to swell
And the boys began to yell
Slumber on angels... we've got the floor
Got a lingering suspicion we've been here before
There's a fight in the tower where the blood runs cold
On the steps where the patriots were stealing the gold

*Tell me who will heal the hero now?
With your fluids on the floor, you're bleeding out
The savior on the tree again
The passion on repeat again
Hand over hand to the top of the heap
Where you plant your flag three bodies deep
The lies from the sore behind your mouth
Trickle down to the ground where the boys went south*

Strung out on the barricades we found you
Two dozen bad ideas around you
You thought to be their guide
Did you know they were only serenading your pride?
Get down and kiss the ground and cry
You're the last sad lover of the freak inside
Take a bow, take a shot, take whatever you've got
Don't think we're going to think that you're something you're not

*Tell me who will heal the hero now?
With your fluids on the floor, you're bleeding out
The savior on the tree again
The passion on repeat again
Hand over hand to the top of the heap
Where you plant your flag three bodies deep
The lies from the sore behind your mouth
Trickle down to the ground where the boys went south*

HE DON'T HANG

The face that told a thousand lies
Before it ever fled to sea
Was younger than the sailor's eyes
That stole my love from me
But he don't hang around here
And my love won't be coming home to me
My father's finger in the sky
Pointing dark clouds out and smiling
He told me with his dying breath
You only die from trying
Think I'm going blind here
I think my eyes are blind
And I feel the darkness coming over me
And I feel the wash of the waves
Ho, Michael if you row your boat
Will you take me aboard for free?
What's God gonna do with a drunken soul
Who's walked into the sea?
But He don't hang around here
And I feel the darkness coming over me

RESCUE

He knows at least tonight it will not fall
The misbegotten dream
Is stronger than it seems
A leaning tower
He knows within the tower there's a room
A window with a sill
Where fingers tracing frosted lines
Have given him a message in reverse
In blocks and upper cases
Verses memorized by no one
But born in some dear childish mind
Come and find me
Steal me from the wind
Burn this stinking tower to the ground

I WAS GONE

Sinking sailboats
Sisters, hazards to my brain
I've come to take my way again
Still boats crossing
Over shores I once knew
I'll shake the morning dew again
All you mothers come to me
Have any of you stood there
Watching out across the sea?
Did any of you know that I was gone?
Frightened forests
Flinching, scared of what's beneath
Their canopy of lying teeth
Marbled mountains
Marching, reach into the sea
Like brothers now they come for me
And I can feel their stony fingers
How they shred the waves
Like wrinkled strips of foil
At the edges of my world I'll find my way
All you mothers come to me
How I've missed the way
I held the thought of you inside of me
Did any of you know that I was gone?
Did anybody know that I was gone?

THE UNCLEAN HOURS OF MORNING

Let it come, be brilliant
I have something to say
The brown sludge out of the faucet
Before the clear water, hooray
It's the unclean hours of morning
Sumatra, sugar, cream
And my thoughts are halfway hobos
Dive-rolling off the fog-shrouded train
I'm thinking on my cats
And how I might have dreamed
Of mountain lions and mysteries
And red-washed slaughter streams
It's the unclean hours of morning
And nothing's settled in
I've got gargantuan Van Goghs
I've got sweet memory of sin
Maybe I'll stay home today
The dragons in my room
Are crimson-scaled echoes
Doom-shadowed fevers of my fears
And I'm not scared
I've got cats and highway strangers
From the wonderlands and fairs
I'm not scared
I've got saltpeter and Blue Angels
Flying smoke across the air
I'm not scared
I think I'll get up now

A BOY CAN DREAM

The train was coming up around the bend
You'd lost your way and were now tied to the tracks
Above you a man in black stood laughing
I said, This is a job for Superman
But he's not here, so I'll just do the best I can
I'll save the day
Or something
I've dreamed that dream about a hundred times
Sometimes it's tracks
Sometimes it's darker crimes
But don't worry
I always get there in time to kick ass
Or something
Now you know as well as me
That every boy, he wants to be
A cowboy superhero with a sword and a spaceship
And eyes that see through walls and stuff
(Wouldn't THAT be cool)
And I wouldn't want harmed a single hair
On your pretty head, and I wouldn't dare
To think that you couldn't take care
Of the man in black
Or those train tracks
Or find your way back
Without the help of a star-struck kid
But before you get all riled up and scream
Just let me say, a boy can dream
And in those dreams are hard-won kisses
And stars that bend their light for wishes
And hands that reach down to pull you from
Say... the sea
No, I'm not cut out for games of love
And yeah, there's stuff in me
I'm not proud of
But wait and see
Because a boy can sure as hell dream

SPACES

I'm humbled by the beauty and the elegance
Of what speaks between my efforts
To be what I think myself to be
It's nested in the intervals
This true melody
It's framed between the brush strokes
This divine hue
It's revealed inside the spaces between words
This breath of nature
I only see it in hindsight
But others see it
Whenever I pause to breathe
And for that one blessed moment
Stop trying so damn hard
To be what I think myself to be

WILD MAGIC

Wild magic...

Stealthy, noble, passionate will
A strength compels me to my knees
A weakness lifts me by degrees
Until I'm strong, and stranger still

This magic...

I travel solitary ways

And magic

Sometimes a misty distant hint
Will steal a painful longing breath
(I think will taunt me to my death)
And then sometimes my calm is rent

By magic...

With energy so fierce and true
White surges ripple through my frame
With urgings I can hardly name
I go beyond what I can do

With magic...

Not wrought by spell or chanting song
The only amulet is me
Its binding law is that it's free
To crush me or to make me strong
This white, wild magic

THE GHOST CLOWN

The ghost clown wanders alone
About the dark and empty grounds
Where happy fairs have come and gone
Something merry lingers on
Abandoned by the weary crowds

His searching eyes cast down, he drifts
Above the shaggy tufts of grass
The white paint on his forehead shifts
In worry he might somehow miss
His treasures in some careless pass

Ta dum da da dum da da dee
Now dance, you shadows, laugh at me
The magic of the moon's parade
The only ring left to me

One last saggy-trows'd shuffle...
Then bring out the cats

SHADOW-MATE

He took a wave within his grasp
The other fist reached high
Into the whorled mane of western wind
And fleeing, thus fixed
Between the sea and sky, suspended
Teeth open to taste the spray, battered
Shirt snapping as his streamer of some New World
The boy severed night from night
And stars from frothing sea
And laughed as both rejoined behind his trailing feet.
At one point from this vantage
Where - unknown to the boy - a penned degree of fate
Made junction with a traced degree of hope
On some sacred mariner's chart
He spied two vessels whose angled courses
Bore promise of encounter.

And what was the question on his shivering lips
When moonlight revealed the intimate
Burgundian letters spelled in paint
Across the prominent timber of one?
The trifling lunar mood that night
Prevented his reading the other.

The shouts of captain and crew
Whether born of terror or of hope
Were shorn by distance and nature's fathomed rushing.
Over gentling swells the hulls drew abreast
And hails exchanged
But when that oaken thumping never came
All voices ceased,
Eyes widened and the coal-smudged beards
Slackened as ship passed into ship!
Timbers crossed and deck slid into deck without sound.
The absence of crashing, breaking, or splintering
Shattered the sailors' nerves

And eyes bent downward to scan the ghostly planks
Moving beneath trembling boots.

From his strange cradle the boy watched
As two vessels merged wraith-like
Failing to touch
And this was something to behold.
Then came the groans of aching sorrow
Recognition and tragic relief
In that one utterly clear moment
When each sailor's face found its shadow-mate
When each damp beam locked grain
With its undiscovered fellow
And every particle of soul was suddenly
And vastly and terribly un-alone.

The passing was mercifully swift.
Neither ship stopped
But both remained attached to phantom winds
That blew impossibly at odds.
Both moved on
Leaving only dark eddies of longing
In their gurgling wakes.
One captain's knees found themselves upon the wood.
His head sank upon his breast
"Aye, she..." he began, but could not finish.

The boy tugged at his breeze, pressed upon his wave
And slid into the company of dust-colored clouds.
He would spend many a pensive evening into the years
Spending thought on what he'd seen.

WONDERLAND

Winter climbs the high dive
Into the sky and performs
A beautiful swan.
She spreads across the surface of the water
Bringing stillness
Until the children tumble across
Pausing for snow angels and one voice
Calling out, "Marco?"
As though it were the only question.
The lifeguard lifts a whistle to his lips
But does not blow, and lets the whistle fall again
His eyes full of tears at the sight of angels.
Someone answers
"Polo."

TWO CREATORS

There's a lot of misunderstanding
Surrounding the moons we fly
In seven days we made good time
But yours is flying so close to mine

You had the stars that made me freeze
Ten thousand suns that shined
Worlds aging red like wine
And I was bound to love you
So I made the time

*Beautiful love of mine
Make way for change
Make way for time
The worlds we have made have no place for us
Let's start it over*

Your valleys are what made me breathe
Black forests, rivers intertwined
And I heaved up mountains just to please you
I quaked when your pleasure set fire to sky
And it doesn't take an aching heart
To see what we've done
Tragic and mystical and true
We are the heroes long since begun
To answer for the things that we do

*Beautiful love of mine
Make way for change
Make way for time
The worlds we have made have no place for us
Let's start it over*

I WANT TO BE LIKE SPRING

I want to be like spring
Its arrival invariably a relief
Following an ailing and irritable winter
And its death a modest one
A low circus bow, back-stepping
As summer bounds into the ring
Performing handsprings and cartwheels

TOYS

Who goes by *rapscallion* anymore?
It's not that we're trying to take
The world as a serious place
It's not that we're over-eager for that change
Go over, go on over
Let your toes enjoy the grass
Take your place among the children
Let the groove of nature pass right through you
Sometimes I think I've seen every sign
Every frescoed scene of intervention
Now I'm just waiting for the bus to come
Roll me over, roll me right on over
To the station at the end of the game
The stranger two seats over
If I throw a pencil
Wake him out of his dream
Or shout the name of some great 80s band
Or what if I just laugh and hand
The day over, hand it right on over
Will that man see one spot of color
Dribble-drabble on the gray threads
Of the motion-weary scene?
Anything is a toy in the hands of simple joy

THE THINGS WE LOVE

The things we love
We love for what they are
But I'm not convinced
We love them for themselves
In fact, I think we love the feel
Of our own affection just as well

But who am I to judge?
I do the same
There's something that comes back to me, I'm sure
Perhaps it's human nature
And our nature rarely offers something pure

HALFWAY TO HEAVEN

There's a bench you can find
Halfway to Heaven
Where you can rest on your way to the Lord
Saint Peter's not there (he's a ways further on)
But there's a man on the side waiting
With a piece of cardboard that says,
"WILL WORK FOR YOUR STORIES"
And if you ask him what stories he wants
He'll say, "I like the ones
Where there's whiskey and guns
And restaurant waitresses and prodigal sons."

We've all got stories to tell
It's what keeps us from going to Hell

SOMETHING ELSE

We all see with different eyes
Some look around and see the lies
I look around and I see pain
And some will want to wear the sword
Or save the whales or serve the Lord
But the only thing that matters is that you're true
True to who you are inside
And when you finally decide
To face the world, who will you be?
Something else that covers you?
I may not carry lettered signs
Or reinforce the picket lines
Maybe there's something else that winds through me
A star-spangled (or holy) ghost?
The demons that I've feared the most
Haven't taken a single thing away from me

HUNTING BOOTS

You chased her 'til she fell
A message carved in your open hands:
Turn off your soul
I love you, I am you

You changed her til she flew
The heavy words were hammered down
And all that she knew was
I love you, I am you

A closet in your room
Heavy boots for hunting gathered dust
But now they're new
And words appearing on your open hands:
Turn off your soul
I love you, I am you

THE BONE DICTATOR

All hail the bone dictator
With his hooded fanged minions
Rising from the east in disarray
“We won’t fail!” they shout
But their words are like tail-bones talking
And no one believes their forced messages
A tumbled head for every bloody syllable
All bow down to the man with the microphone
Watch his eyes
All bow down
You junkyard dogs
You sadistic servants of horrendous gods
Filling angry cells with rattling jaws
All bow down

THE DUST IS ONLY HOLY

The dust is only holy
When it settles softly
In the beads on my skin
I can hardly feel the pressing coolness
When she enters by the basement door
And gently whispers "When?"
I do this every time
An image within my mind
Calls to me from deep inside the stone
And she knows I'm down here to fight
The quarried fragments until the faces show
I can't let go
It's what I am

LIGHT THAT BENDS AROUND A STAR

Light that bends around a star
Comes to meet you where you are
Carries depth and dust and seed
And names that only God can read
If that light should find you here
In my arms, can you be clear
And let that light pass right on through?
Or will it have its way with you?

Love, oh lover, light is free
But even light knows gravity

Take your tumble to the sea
Clouded gales will cover thee
Wash you in the swell of waves
(Every soul the ocean saves)
'Til naked you return to me
Sparkling every bead of sea
Will I be seen as someone true
Refracted in the light of you?

Love, oh lover, wash me too
Take me to that sea with you

OH MOON

Oh Moon

Stay in your sky tonight
I'm lonely for your silver and thirsty for your light
But now you're somewhere sailing
In some black foreign sea
And all my stars are failing to comfort me

Oh Moon

Stay in your sky tonight
I trust your stony distance but need you in my sight
'Cause every time you wander
In some black harlot sea
I wonder why you choose to stay away from me
Isn't it hard

Shining like a star

When it's not really who you are?

Your secret's safe with me

Not a word I can sing

You've always had this thing

You frightened, fragile thing

Your secret's safe with me

Oh Moon

Stay in your sky tonight
You've one more turn in heaven
Then kiss the world goodnight
And don't you start to wonder how dark the world can be
Close your eyes
Your love is all the light we need
Shhh...

There's nothing to say

You've always been this way

Somebody's night with the soul of a day

But you're beautiful to me

AUGUSTEUM

How do you hold yourself at all?
Through every painting
Through every sad attempt at sainting
Through every mad despot dream you've remained
And your treasures long since lifted
By the trusted hands of thieves
Who altogether missed the point
Here I come to visit you
And rest within your welcome walls of ruin
Worlds go round, walls come down
Kingdoms die
And I'm only human
I will change abysmally

I trip along the tumbled stones of memory
Trying to remember what someone swore
Would always be remembered by the placement of these stones
But I don't see and I don't feel
I only see each moment pass beneath my feet
What are you now?
On that note, what will I be?
Another tremor in the crust?
Another wave in the sea?
I could rise or I could fall
Or maybe turn inside and call each moment into being
Will anything rise from the ruin of me?
A thousand years from now
Will someone will pass my dusty trace
And have cause to wonder?

SHEETS

Washed sheets ripple
Blown by a June-bug breeze
Been slept on, fell on, cried on, loved on
Been washed, wrung, bunched, stretched out
Now hardly attached to anything
Not touching the ground
Clean but for their cycled stories crackling
In the June-bug breeze

HEART ATTACK

If you're an angel
Then angels are thieves
You lifted his heart with deft digits
Laughed, you cherub, as he clutched his chest
Wide-eyed and almost smiling at the sudden crime
And the fingers
They were, he thought, holy fingers

ON A STONE IN CANYON CREEK

Water, can you take me where you run?
I hear your curls, your falls, your light laughter
As you mock the channel's muscled arms with your sport
Can you take me where you run?

You tease this poor stone I sit on
Stupid thing, it believes that one day it'll follow your silver trail
Hold your silken hand and dance with you
In the faraway fields that breathe you in

But I see from where I perch
On the stupid stone's sweating flank
That you will never take the rocks with you
Unless they accept you'll only take their souls
In pieces tinier than the drops you fling to break them

I see your devil's deal
But if I'm honest, I'd let your drops carry me away
Bit by bit into those wide fields
Maybe all the way to the distant delta
Where I would never recognize myself again

FRIEND BESIDE THE SEA

It may be some better road will bend
And you will be my friend beside the sea
Every evening I'll share my moon with you
These are things that I want to believe

Or it could be our home lies further still
Beyond the hills that kneel before the kings
Who hold their courts in peaks of rugged majesty
These are things that I want to believe

*Dreams may feel like empty clouds
But sometimes they're real*

As a child I loved you in a dream
And though I've never seen you, I believe
Somewhere up ahead the road will bend
And there you'll be
Dancing on white sand beside the sea

*Dreams may feel like empty clouds
But sometimes they're real*

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I'M NOT FIT

Sometimes I feel like I'm not fit for this humanity
And it breaks my heart to stay
All the hopelessness and hatred in the headlines
Maybe I should go and lock myself away
Funny, though, because I don't know
What that sequestering would be about
Might be to keep the darkness in
As much as it's to keep the darkness out

PASSIVE

Well there are movers and shakers
And activist Quakers
Chosen ones lost in the flood
And you just can't convince 'em
You've nothing against 'em
If none of that runs in your blood
I'm concerned with the truth
And I have been since youth
There's more truth than one can see
So I think it's my duty
To see truth in beauty
And if you must
Then just leave that to me

GETTING TO IT

To get to the Light of the Ages
You have to shine like the Light of the World
You have to strike a match
Make an original pact
Like a photon, get yourself on course
To the Center
It's a wierd combination of virtues
To know yourself just to find you're wrong
But like the Sons of Liberty
Taking issue with the tea
Grab a crate and toss it into the harbor

You'll find no reason to believe you're stuck here
And every reason to find your way

TEN THOUSAND ANGELS ANYWHERE

Ten thousand angels anywhere
In one place might choke the air
But I've seen them, and I was unaware

If Heaven's grace is raining down
Then some things here will clearly drown
Will all the angels stand around and stare?

Count all the demons down below
We think they rise to tempt us so
I've seen them too, that's how I lost my fear
Sometimes it's ten prayers up and nine steps down
To the place where I can make sense of anything

GENTLY FOREVER

Gently forever
My perfect fear
Is the night will go on
Without you here
Failing the world
Would cease to turn
Gently forever
My heart will burn
Your fingers trace a chiseled stone
The name you whisper once was mine
And all the love for you I own
Would save you should I choose
To bide here waiting
For the hunger to subside

THE FOG IS RISING

The keys to the house
Are hanging beside the doorway
You're free to leave
But think before you go
The world outside is not the place
You knew before you came
And you are not the same
This you know
The fog is rising
Put your hand to the wall
You can feel it coming
Get up from the ground
Pull yourself together
Did you think I'd leave you
Out here on your own?
They come to us in shadow
We'll show them how to fear
We are the masters here
Soon they'll know
The fog is rising...

