

Collected Verse

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Madison Scott-Clary

*Arctic fox's den
adorned with flowers and snow
garden in winter*

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Current publication April 1, 2018.

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Poems from Missives

I wrote a silly short story a while back. It was meant to be a joke; a pseudo-victorian epistolary romance. It didn't really go anywhere, even though I submitted it to at least one publication. That's fine, though. I got a kick out of it, and the person who inspired it did too.

The end result was silly, but did include some poetry snippets. I didn't really think anything of them for a while, but one of them, the last here, kept coming back to me. on a whim, I completed all of the snippets into poems in their own right. They're presented in the order in which they appeared in *Missives* itself.

1.1 Though the flow'r may bloom ere long

February, 2017

Though the flow'r may bloom ere long
and night recede unto the dawn,
so yet may love's embrace grow fond
and still be spoilt upon the wan.
Brave are you and wield your smile:
A cudgel, tool, a keen-edged blade.
You are not wan, love is not spoilt;
thus I be slain and love not fade.
Have I any need for flow'rs?
For nights, for dawns, for words or breath?
With so keen and fond a blade,
There's naught to fear in life or death.
So slay, then slay! For now, I care not how,
I need for naught but that which love allow.

1.2 Delay, then, the morn

February, 2017

Though every climax approach a denouement
And every dawn a night,
Every moment worth sharing
May be worth stealing.

Were it with you,
Delay, then, the morn.

When every touch lingers as if forever
And yet seems to pass too soon,
Hearts reach out to hearts,
To seek, to aim, to keep.

Were it with you,
Delay, then, the morn.

Surely it's cruelty that need begets need begets need,
And yet need may bring pleasure.
Pleasure may hurt, ache, burn,
May steal hours of night.

Were it with you,
Delay, then, the morn.

1.3 Thy gift

February, 2017

I reach for the ewer of water,
I hope to quench the heat.
I beg for yet another serving,
I hope to fill my need.

The water — cool — cools not
Without thy merry presence.
The food fills, passes, is gone —
Yet leaves me empty, yearning.

Though the heart may quicken --
Though the tongue may lap --
I shall sup no greater meal
Than thy gift entrancing.

1.4 You find me at a disadvantage

February, 2017

On reading letters late received,
I felt within: the fox —
Yelping, yowling now, crying needfully —
Myself, a craving beast.

You find me at a disadvantage —
Panting and aswish —
Would that distance be traversed as easily
As hearts t'wards yearning hearts!

1.5 A rose, single, now blooming

February, 2017

A rose, single, now blooming
 may indeed bless the stem,
yet are not roses clipp'd and shown?
 Undoubted 'tis a blessing to them
who receive such a gift!
 Yet now unmade is the flow'r
which adorns thy mantle with its grace
 and withers, however slowly, by the hour,
 until 'tis faded to nothing and dust,
 though some scent remain forever amidst the must.

A rose, single, now blooming
 is perhaps best left on the stem,
its beauty to be admired amidst the growth.
 Surely 'tis better to long for that gem,
than witness beauty wilt and dry!
 Yet now one must long indeed, must burn,
Must yearn forever for that grace.
 To watch that growth, to explore stem's turn,
 day by day would destroy, weakening one by the hour,
 A rose, single, now blooming, forever holds all pow'r.

2

*Unimportant verse about important
people*

Love poems, of a sort.

Ones I never sent.

2.1 —

February, 2017

I see your past in cross-processed film,
in blown-out colors and over-saturation.

You told me all about it, told me grand stories:
you were going to go back in time and save the world.

I see your past in yellows and browns,
in umber and sienna and amber, in a younger sun.

You sat and told me how — and you were always sitting —
you thought past-you dreamt of a future less complicated than today.

I see your past through film-grain and vignette,
with a thick white border, space on the bottom to write.

You told me how you learned so many imperfect things,
in so many less than ideal ways, always at inopportune times.

I see your past in architectural drawings of unrealized buildings,
in paperback covers reaching towards heaven, in trillions of words.

You figured past you dreamt of, not perfection,
but a world unconstrained by so many failures.

I see your past with no me in it,
and wonder if past-you dreamt of us.

2.2 —

February, 2017

Resuscitating ancient coins in class, we learned,
takes a toothbrush and olive oil.
Slow, steady strokes across, around...
soft bristles dislodging soil
one speck at a time.
But no one that day was nearly as blessed,
seeing a coin shine through
at the end, full relief brightly expressed,
as I was to see you smile.

2.3 —

February, 2017

When you arrive,
the whole world gets slow.
Sluggish, amber-colored air
mellows lively conversations.
Everyone stops, marvels,
turns eagerly toward you;
and there are no complaints
about warming our faces in the sun.

2.4 —

February, 2017

We fit together in the strangest ways
and seem to seek new seams to savor.
Such joins are hardly perfect,
thread tugging fabric unevenly
unless it's reinforced over and over again.
We seem to seek new seams to savor,
and, weak though they are,
revel in the imperfect unevenness of joining.

2.5 —

February, 2017

“Comrade” would I call you,
and “brave,” and “fierce” and “true”.
“Lovely” have I called you,
and hope but to live up to
the example which you set for me.

So, comrade, onward, ever onward.
I know I cannot hope to offer
much but word on cloying word,
dull rhymes I strain to proffer:
small flowers, small gifts, camaraderie.

2.6 —

February, 2017

Complementary, clashing anxieties.
Dull clamor of intersecting feelings.
Need, desire, craving, jealousy.
Worry, fear, care, prayerful fretting.
Love, lust, friendship, a need to share.
Emotions on emotions on emotions,
and, often, comfortable silence.

2.7 —

February, 2017

I chose your name.
To defend, it means. To help.
I admit, having chosen it,
that I chose it to defend you.
When I picked you up by the scruff,
Dragged you off to that place
I hoped we could call ours,
I expected that we'd
simply find a way to survive.
I never expected love,
and rejoice every day in that surprise.

I chose to collar you.
I admit it was an experiment,
I submit to most, but not my partners;
until then I'd never owned, claimed.
It felt vulgar, at first,
greedy, jealous, possessive.
Through you I learned the joy of possession,
the love and trust and exactness of terms.
Owner, partner, love,
and pup, partner, love.
My beautiful, my own.

I'll hand you off some day.
I'm a less than ideal owner
in so many terrible ways:
I owe you more than you owe me.
I'll gather your leash up,
I'll let you keep your tag,
I'll bow, I'll kiss you one last time,
and I'll bless you and your new keeper.
And I'll never stop loving you.
And I'll never stop loving you.
And I'll never stop loving you.

2.8 —

March, 2017

You, for whom a heart means all feeling —
You, for whom yeah is an expletive —
You, for whom even computers sing —
You, for whom every tangle invites disentangling —
You, for whom even I will rub feet —
You, for whom shop always follows flop —
You, for whom words form a squall-line —
You, for whom I guess I —
You, for whom —
You, for whom even —
You, for whom I reach —
You, for whom my shit day leads straight to lets talk —
You, for whom I curate my week's feelings —
You, for whom I wait by the month —
You, for whom I structure my year —
You, for whom understanding of me seems always in grasp —
You, for whom my struggles provide no obstacle —
You and I, from whom us.

2.9 —

May, 2017

Tightly wound springs
Of very carefully
Not touching.

 Secret words
 To be said
 With confidence.

Rules.

Prohibitions.

Limits.

 Discussions planned,
 Side-channels arranged,
 Whiskey purchased.

And now anxiety
Over what it means
And how to work it.

 Is it worth it for
 Long-standing questions
 To be answered?

To invite disaster
For sake of knowledge
And further dreams?

 Maybe the answer
 Is that tired refrain:
 Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.

And now we're
Awaiting weeks
Of careful touches.

2.10 —

August, 2017

I could never tell you
that you feel too much.
That you feel too hard,
or that your feelings
overwhelm and overtake you.

I could never tell you
how beautiful that is.
That I wish I could feel those things,
that I wish I could feel that way.

All I can tell you
is how beautiful you are
when you feel love.

2.11 —

August, 2017

Yit'gadal v'yit'kadash sh'mei raba
Would that I had the faith
To pray daily.
Eleven months to let you go,
And an amen to end the sorrow.

3

Mental Health

Poems on mental health.

Maybe I'll write a better intro at some point when I'm feeling better.

I dunno.

3.1 There is too much fire in me

June, 2016

There is too much fire in me to be described by the soldering iron's tip.

If I were to draw that across my flesh,
it would all spill out at once.
I'd melt, eaten whole by flames,
and flow into a pool of molten silver.
I would be borne up through the clouds,
and grow lighter by the second.
Sublimation would claim me then,
atoms would scatter, diffuse.
All that energy poured to the air around me,
an imperceptible increase in temperature.
Particle would excite particle
until I'm felt only as warmth on your face.

But even that would not be enough.

3.2 Cycle

February, 2017

Up cycle

Down cycle

Round and round

Push cycle

Pull cycle

Round and round and round

Here cycle

There cycle

Round and round

Bounce cycle

Slide cycle

Round and round and round

Free cycle

Wild cycle

Round and round

Unstoppable cycle

Uncontrollable cycle

Round and round and

Slam cycle

Crash cycle

And round and

Cut cycle

Burn cycle

And and round and

Crush cycle
Destroy cycle
And

Plan cycle
Note cycle
Rou-

Shower cycle
Wash cycle

.

Up cycle
Down cycle
Round and round

3.3 Heligoland

February, 2017

Too many wine-dark seas need daily traversal,
And here the shipping forecast calls for rain.

The shipping forecast! What a load of bollocks.
You can listen from start to finish
And not hear a single word about how a day will feel.

Or maybe it's a pale, tired, steganography:
Moderate, becoming poor, violent storm 11.

Burning up, drowning, torn by wind, and all I can manage
is to tell you southwest gale 8 to storm 10.

I can point at the moon, exhausted, bored, decaying,
And hope you don't stare blankly at my finger.

Thanks to P.R.

3.4 Bruise Vision

June, 2017

I

Geese Level: A hundred geese overhead –
Unnerving A thousand –
Expect: A million –
anxiety

Heady scent of premonition.
Acrid tang of ill omens.
Portents.
Too much meaning
In too small a space.

II

Geese Level: Geese are a byproduct of laminar shear stress
Noise-Cancelling Of two layers of phantasmagorical
Headphones Newtonian fluids,
Expect: Which is why they're often seen on a plane.
auditory aberrations A thin, sort-of Truth
From a sort of thin layer
geese chromatography.

III

<i>Geese Level:</i>	As the dove bears the olive branch,
Eldrich	so to the goose bears the wand
<i>Expect:</i>	that withers all it touches.
red tint to vision; hot	A wand of nightshade,
flashes	Core of tainted silver.
	A wand of obscure origin,
	The goose surely stole it.
	Malice begets malice.

IV

<i>Geese Level:</i>	We know not the transgression,
Beyond	the origin -
Comprehension	We know not the punishment,
<i>Expect:</i>	only the terror.
confusion; nausea;	
sweating; racing	
pulse	

V

<i>Geese Level:</i>	Geas
Excruciating	Wing
<i>Expect:</i>	Dark
pounding heart;	Horizon
tunnel vision; racing	
thoughts; black outs;	
blood pouring from	
ears	

VI

<i>Geese Level:</i>	I'd rather owls.
Terrifying	Owls, as though geese were turned inside out,
<i>Expect:</i>	made less evil.
tinnitus; piloerection;	Still portentous,
shortness of breath;	Still momentous,
uneven gait	Just less terrifying.
	Owls are okay.
	I can think about owls.

VII

<i>Geese Level:</i>	Life within a comfortable grid.
Uncomfortable	Parallel lines
<i>Expect:</i>	Interrupting narrowing circles
subdermal itching;	Of birds in flight.
formication	Travel in straight lines.
	Turn at right angles.
	Trace the roof of your mouth
	With wet tongue.
	I'm not afraid of geese anymore
	Because I can step on them now.
	I'm big enough.

VIII

Geese Level: Ritual thinking
Birds Driven by geese —
Expect: By lines, by grids, by food —
birds By numbers and neat delineation.
And I'm left with questions:
Why are they so portentous?
Why the anxiety?
Or maybe:
Did I take my meds this morning?

Failing that,
Can I just have the comfort of prayer
Or the ecstasy of signs
Without the bleak paranoia
Over circling birds?

3.5 Beneath her coat was a whole identity

January, 2018

Beneath her coat was a whole identity:
A subtle form of ideas under soft fur,
A constantly shifting mass of meaning...
And somehow, she pulled it off.

She would go for days without shedding a thing,
And then, as if a bottle rolling off a counter,
She would shatter, sending shards of self flying,
And then we'd all see.

Then we'd all see the terror, the joy,
Then we'd all see the grief at nothing,
Then we'd all hear her say,
"I'm not built for a life with death in it."

And slowly, she'd pick herself back up
And find a brand new way to piece herself together
And build herself a brand new smile
And brush out her coat once more.

First-place winner of the Typewriter Emergencies Poetry contest.

4

Miscellany

Poems without a category.

4.1 The dogs assure me

March, 2015

The dogs assure me:
There are volumes of meaning —
Life and death —
And time;
Past, present, future —
In the scent of a rotting fish left after the flood,
Or a trace of scat,
Or the coyote, long passed,
But not everyone reads poetry.

I'm not so lucky, all told:
The rich scent of meaning —
Heady, intoxicating —
Rises only from words
And the way you rest your hands on the table.

Published in Civilized Beasts, 2016 Edition.

4.2 Being transgender

October, 2015

You get to explain gender to all of your friends —
And all of your family —
And maybe once more to be sure —
And random strangers —
And maybe, like, doctors and nurses who should probably know better;

You get to explain to your partner that nothing has changed —
And that you were always this way —
And that really, honestly, nothing has changed —
And that this has no effect on your love for them —
And I promise;

You will get to come out again —
And explain that it wasn't that being gay wasn't enough —
And explain that it has nothing to do with who you like —
And explain that that shouldn't matter —
And - oh right, this means you might be straight after all;

You get to go through that awkward period of growing your hair out —
And learning how to ask for a more feminine haircut —
And trying a curling iron for the first time —
And figuring out how to eat noodles without also eating your hair —
And the worries that you're just trying to be rebellious;

You get to worry whether you're maybe just trying to be rebellious —
And whether or not you might just be faking it —
And whether you're really Trans Enough or not —
And whether you're maybe just appropriating femininity —
And whether or not passing really matters to you anyway;

You get to dress up in your best clothes —

And your best makeup —

And worry that your shoes are too masculine —

And have your hair game on point —

And convince the doc that you deserve those patches and pills;

You get to go through puberty again —

And it will be weirder this time around —

And your skin will grow soft —

And you'll get more sensitive to temperature changes —

And – YEOWCH! That's a new sensation;

You will cry a lot —

And bite your tongue often —

And lower your gaze —

And learn to take up less space —

And talk softer;

And your dogs will still love you.

4.3 When I fall, I will remain whole

November, 2016

I keep hoping that, one day,
I'll spring palladial from the bole of a tree.
Fully formed, asexual,
Conceived without desire or intent.

My body will be virgin and clean,
My mind fresh, my soul at ease.
The tree, behind me, will stand crooked,
Bole seeping until time and air dry sap.

I will be a flat expanse of green, made up of new cells.
Everything will work together, a machine running smoothly.

I keep hoping to, one day,
Function with unity, unflagging.
Organized and purposeful,
Intent only on fulfillment.

My vision will be clear and unclouded,
My will affirming, strong, and sure.
And when I fall, I will remain whole,
Confident that I lived well and unapologetic.

4.4 Meaning & Self

February, 2017

There's some duality between sources of meaning,
 Between the types of stories we use to back identity.
It's not quite good & bad or light & dark,
 Though I'm not yet sure just how to define it.

Dad used to punish the dogs
 by locking them in the basement.
If he was really mad,
 he'd toss them down there by the scruff.

Mom moved me & her dogs to a new house —
 moved us three days early during the divorce.
Her dog punched my ex stepdad in the crotch the night before,
 the nut-shot to end all nut-shots, & our time there.

Few things make me feel as deeply about life as parenthood,
 even if it's just me caring for my dogs.
Some reminders of that are intense enough to be raw, painful,
 salt in the wounds of mortality, maybe, or the ache of maternal love.

The meaning behind the story of me & my dogs
 comes with a story of its own, or maybe several.
It's bound up in stories to come,
 & these stories nest infinitely deep.

Remembering that & shaping that,
 It's a part of making the meaning in my life.
This isn't better against worse,
 it's not mom against dad.

It's not a dichotomy at all, really,
now that I think about it.

It's something subtler, comfortably complex, a topic of its own.

I guess it's just meaning & self.

4.5 Every time I fall

August, 2017

Every time I fall,
 The ground tells me I'm in love.
"Cause love is
 All low," it says.
"And loves is
 Places."

And I always argue,
 That love is all people.
That love is dogs,
 And cats.
And love is
 Emotions.

But every time I fall,
 The ground tells me I'm in love.
That gravity is
 Some awkward embrace,
And love is
 Permanence.

And I always argue,
 That love is temporary.
That that's
 The beauty,
And permanence
 Misses the point.

And every time I fall,
 The ground tells me I'm in love.
And every single time,
 I keep coming back.

4.6 Somehow, she's me

April, 2018

Her hair is tied with a ribbon
 Saying "This is not for you."
She wears a pendant of stamped brass
 Saying "Non sum qualis eram."
"I have been a hero since birth,"
 She tells herself,
 As though that will somehow
 Explain her scars.

She pierced her own ears,
 But did a shit job of it.
Her tattoos tease around
 the edges of her identity.
Her bones are ley-lines,
 She tells herself,
 Strung with symbols
 Heady with meaning.

She has a certain "fuck you" inflected
 "Je ne sais quoi" about her.
Her clothes bespeak
 carefully constructed laziness.
"I've got my own style,"
 She tells herself,
 While doing all she can
 To not be seen.

She studied order through science
and found it chaotic.

She studied chaos through music
and found it inviable.

"I'll work with words."

She tells herself
She'll write a book,
Or publish stories.

She wanted to be a bus driver
when she grew up.

Then a linguist, then a biologist,
Then a composer, a conductor.

She never wanted to be
What she became;
The irony of which
Is not lost on her.