

Ars Poetica

Poetry Is Dead

1

When I was eleven I told my math teacher I wanted to write poetry when I grew up. She giggled as she said *Poetry is dead*. I was remorse because had I known Poetry died I would have gone to the funeral or at least sent a floral arrangement. I checked obituaries to see how Poetry was memorialized or if it had any surviving children but nothing was written. I thought maybe my math teacher, being a math teacher, mixed up her tenses and meant to say *Poetry is dying*. So I checked every side of every road on Earth in case Poetry was hit by a car and left to decay in its filth but I came up with nothing. Though, just to be sure I went to every hospital on our spinning globe and still Poetry was not incapacitated wearing an oxygen mask in any beds.

2

Even stranger, a few years later I saw a teenage boy on a train that had *save Poetry* scribbled onto the front of his notebook. I gasped because, once again, nobody told me Poetry was in trouble. So I checked all the Principal's offices on the planet and peeped into the front windows of every home in creation to see if I could catch a mother wagging her finger and scolding Poetry but I failed to uncover anything.

3

Years later, at nineteen, I sat in my bathtub and swallowed sleeping pill after sleeping pill when Poetry showed up and stuck it's finger down my throat. Together we laughed about the irony (you know— *dead, dying, save*) and I told Poetry I had been looking all over for it and Poetry said it's a lot like love in that it is best found when not searched for. I don't know if my middle school teacher is reading this but for what it's worth, Poetry doesn't look a day over thirty.

Your Poem

I'm attracted to your poem.
The way its curves go in and out like Sylvia's—
its succinct image of a young Hemingway.

I'm going to date your poem.
Pick it up when sun goes down—
open its doors.

I'm coming up for coffee with your poem.
Bumble around it awkwardly—
try to decipher its intentions.

I'm putting hands all over your poem.
Lightly rubbing its substance to arouse—
grating it unrelentingly as if it's never been looked at before.

I'm fucking your poem.
Digging my fingernails into its skull—
screwing it until something concrete and viscid discharges.

I'm in a relationship with your poem.
Sharing secrets with one another—
letting it stay the night.

I'm introducing your poem to my family.
Bringing it to Sunday dinner for the whole family to learn—
secretly hoping they hate its big words and sharp language.

I'm moving in with your poem.
Sharing one intimate space—
letting it see the worst of me.

I'm in love with your poem.
I can't see a future without it—
when I read it I feel most bold, smart, and beautiful.

I'm marrying your poem.
It said it couldn't live without me—
It will love and cherish me through the good and the bad.

I'm living for your poem.
It can support me with its words for the rest of my life—
show me experience through its images.

I'm pregnant with your poem.
Our separate parts have produced a delicate miracle—
we're going to give another our knowledge.

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Your poem is dodging its responsibilities.
It sits on the couch drinking beer, watching television—
stroking its ego while I run a household.

Your poem is behaving recklessly.
Spending money we don't have—
staying out all night with other poems.

I can't see your poem.
Liquids are drowning its ink—
its words are incomprehensible.

Your poem cheated on me.
Let another rub its hands all over it—
she put it inside her screaming she finally understood.

I cheated on your poem.
Met another whose brief expression swept me—
breathed relief as I realized other poems could still affect me.

I'm taking the kid and leaving your poem.
I need time to remember who I was before it—
show my child a poem won't destroy our lives.

I never knew your poem.
Those line breaks were broken in all the wrong places—
that clever metaphor was actually a shitty cliché.

I'm divorcing your poem.
Going to write my own story better than it ever could—
your poem was never that good in the first place.

This Is Not A Poem

You are not writing poems until someone says
you are writing poems. As tea isn't
hot until mother pours a cup
and you stick
a finger in it. This is a poem. Poem, this is.
Is this a poem? Don't let me finish. I'll gimmick
until a falcon lands on my arm and I convince I
taught it
that. The safe word of
this poem is *safe word*.
Or is it *note taking*? No, wait. It is—*All
rejected poems go to
heaven*. Yes, that's the safe word. Say it
with me—All rejected poems go to the refrain of a Huey Lewis and the News song. A
song about a boat falling in love with a car
but they can't be together. The boat will die
if it goes on land. How amazing to live
in a world where I can write this while watching the church
channel on a sixty inch. God himself spitting
in my ear, moving my fingers up and down.
I regard Bible as I regard books. I could read
but I'd rather television tell me.

This is weird because this poem is really about taxes.
It's about conspiracy theories and Bob Marley and dark caves.
It's about a guy riding a unicycle and answering *bad* when a cashier
asks how you're day is. You don't
always have to agree with the devil.
Maybe one day my voice will come back. Maybe
nobody will be listening.