



ONE NIGHT ONLY

Poems and Pictures
by granmadave





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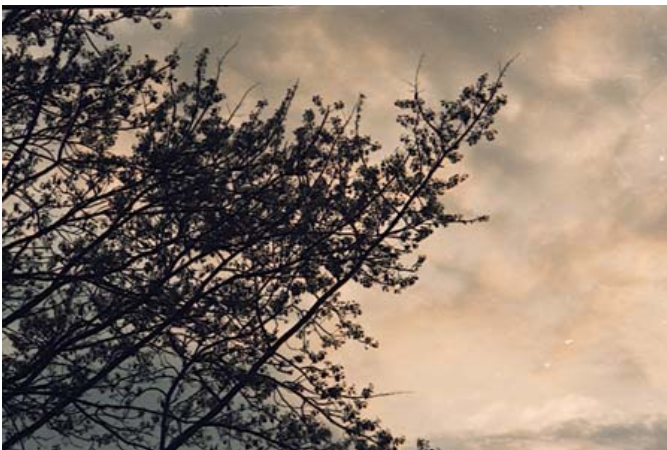
Most poems were originally published in A Lovely Treason; fP Baltimore 2004-2006. Some appeared in Otis and Other Issues; fP Houston 1999; fP Baltimore 1999-2000.

To the reader-

Please accept this humble attempt to provide a low-cost palatable assortment of some of my favorite personal poems as a companion to my live shows combined with some of my favorite personal photographs. I have done my best to provide a generous assortment for you to take home and enjoy, or maybe give as a gift to someone. I hope you will enjoy reading and seeing them as much as I have enjoyed writing and taking them. Thank you for your support.

This collection is dedicated to everyone who has supported me over the years. Without your support at these performances, I would have had no reason to continue.

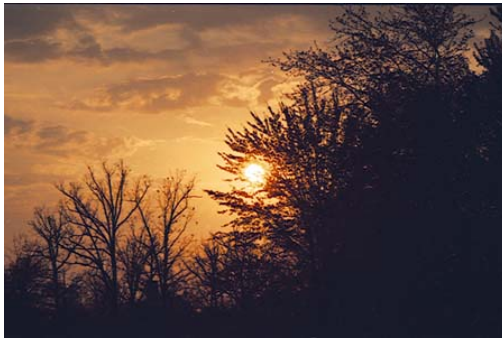
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One Night Only

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These Hands

The painter told me I have beautiful hands.
I could only respond with cheeks like
so many rose buds
these hands have handed to
so many lovers over
so many cups of coffee and
so many thresholds over
so many "I love you"s over
so many lifetimes.
These hands are beautiful?

These hands have cupped a
drowning body while trying to
resuscitate that dying light
with cartoon-cuddle-time
and stargazer lilies.
These hands have shaken hands with
capitalist devils in bleeding
cesspools of finance and aspiration.
These hands constantly paint
words on receipts and diner napkins
only to type them onto the
hard-driven memories of
mothers, children, brothers, sisters
in rooms that emanate love and energy
like the nucleus of an atom.
Blood-soaked and soiled, these hands are beautiful?

These hands have gripped these ears
in futile attempts to quell
the myriad voices yelling at me
from inside the fortress of my skull.
These hands have scrubbed floors and tile walls
in search of
green-golden respect,
only learning to hate my self in the process

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of servitude to a tyrant king
with a liar's smile
and a false prophet
promising me a better life.
Bruised and torn, these hands are beautiful?

These hands have traveled the vast
waistlines of unwritten love poems
whispered in twilight sleep with
skin against skin.
These hands have roamed over fret boards
seeking peace on
an ax and an amp
with candle-lit scores
of gut-wrenching lyrics
sooner forgotten than spoken.
These hands have cupped breasts in
motel bathrooms and dew-covered fields,
vacant theatres and automobiles,
searching for heaven in an orgasm,
but only finding the false god of
sex-without-love and another trip
to the laundromat to clean my soul
of loveless-sex,
only to return as Lady Macbeth,
throwing myself at the courtyard floor
with my heart as my jury and a verdict of
"Not Guilty" because
though I throw myself toward the ground-
that doesn't mean that I am falling.
And that makes these hands beautiful?

These hands have gripped the wheel of an
automobile rocketing to a pharmacy at
Two A.M. for an emergency fill-up of Xanax
to stop the manic attacks
of the fifth letter;
shaved head and unshaved legs,

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scared, scarred, and shaking
in the passenger seat of my truck
as we climbed the highest mountains
of stress and pain, frustration and fear.
These hands created
entire universes over
Six day's time
and ripped the Lego city apart
on the seventh.
These hands have carried silver-plated flatware
over dinners with elders who taught me
about my history
their history
OUR history.
These hands have tended the hanging gardens
while climbing Jacob's ladder
out of the hell of lies
into a honest heaven with
angelic poetesses singing
triumphant chorales
as I walk through
the pearly gates of self-esteem and self-respect.
These hands have clung to the trapeze of sanity
above the netless pit of manic-depression
with Jiminy-Cricket at my side
and Pinocchio as my guide.

These hands have done all of this and more
and for that I can now stand
Proudly here before you and say,
Hell yeah,
These hands are beautiful.

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Smoke and Mirrors

cigarette ember heat
draws past my teeth
floating away into the misty evening
black sky
twilight street
incessant questions in my mind
but never in my mouth
planted firmly in my resentment
fear and insecurity
burn tears across
the flesh-cape of my soul
all this,
when once, you called me "Eliot"
And we wonder,
who waits for us at the other end of the line?
whether the line of ants,
the telephone,
or the line at the grocer
there are nights
I lose sleep over things I have done
there are nights this process of
doubt, remorse, malice, complacency,
and, yes, even forgiveness
is too exhausting
and I find my pillow before i find serenity
always,
on these nights,
i wake up tired and sore
because I am hurting
and I am scornful
and I am afraid
and I am angry
and I am in love with you
and I know I did everything i could
and I know your mother would rather die
than realize she is wrong about me

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these lips once breathed love upon your name
these hands grasp at the fears that torture and tear
the thoughts that keep my eyes open
even three days since sleep
i drew questions
trying to get to know you,
but, instead, i pushed you further from my sight
you deny me twice in person
walking away toward some piece of a
peace of mind
mingling with liars
lying to lovers
and others who lie for them
you demand i address you by your name
but i don't know who you are
so if this ink is my liar-smile
then your name shall stand
because your smiles were lies all along
did you lie when you said you love me?
did you lie when you made love with me?
with what do i fabricate these memorials to your words?
is this your exorcism,
having named me your demon?
"your left ventricle
your right lung
your softest parts?"
fingertips grow calloused when run ragged
tired
worn with age
plunging below the surface
but nothing is sharp enough
nothing is strong enough
to dig these maladjusted malignancies
from beneath my thumbs
to allow me to release this tightrope from which I fell
but now hold so close in the hope you might ask me to dance
once more

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though i accepted the position of
dust puddle
in the shadow of your closet,
you walked away
allowing me to be inhaled by the vacuum of
a silent telephone
and a barren doorstep

i commit sins in
our bed
in
our room
with
your photograph
still in
my top-drawer
next to
your poetry
and mine
our poetry
and our memories still rumbling around in my head
so I run from the skeletal remains of this house
hoping to find solace
in the echoing chambers
of bare walls
forming empty rooms
which will be Mine
stale air
and smoke-stains
will run
as I try to move on
as I pretend to roll along
with all of this rolling behind me
like tin cans on pavement
if you want me to stop,
speak up.
tell me I am no longer the reason for which you live
and I will burn pyres for the death of those dreams

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you know i am strong enough
because if you lie to me
as you have so many times before
i promise
i will believe
but words of hope
followed by blank pages
breed chaos
with which I can do nothing
but scream angry words at myself
in failed attempts
to learn
how not to love you



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Fanatics

Fanatics never run out
of money
followers
or breath
They can nationalize countless numbers to be their voice
each willing to die for 'The Cause'
so that's who i want as my block leader
that fanatic
not the local pimp
which is why i say we need more people like
bin Laden
running our communities.
We need to harness that inspiration,
that perspiration
motivation
dedication
But we need to put it toward healing,
not hurting
We need money and power and influence
and a whole army of followers
not ready to die for the cause
but to live for it-
We can't fight if we're dead
It seems
sometimes
the only things for which our children are willing to live or die
are sex
drugs
and everything that comes with
the sex and the drugs
except, of course, the consequences
They're pulling the heavy artillery out of the classrooms
to go squat in alleys
huffing glue or riding horses
all the way down Plano parkway.
Instead of their grey software,
they're packing chrome hardware

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thinking they're "hard"
if they wear a piece
and place pornos in their backpacks
where they should be packing the heat
of a history textbook
or their English homework
but they're not going home to work
they're working each other on the streets
thinking life must be a game
since it's so damned cool to be "a player"
MTV, BET, and now even CNN are telling me so
and if it's on TV,
it must be the truth, right?
But who am I to talk?
After all, while pretending to try to achieve an education,
I pissed away my time at parties
watching my peers piss away their parent's Wall Street winnings
at a Thirty-Thousand Dollar per year
private university
After all, how can I hope to change the world
if I won't first change myself?
That is why i say we need leaders;
we need someone to pull us down from our horses
and up from our houses
to howl a battle cry into the night for our sons and our daughters
to remind our children and our selves our most powerful weapons
are beneath our skin
to bring us together, not as Three-Hundred-Million
terrified voices, but as One
solid and unrelenting
calling out so loud
we all forget our names and races
but remember what our place is
whether it's teaching high school English
traveling the world to experience something other than
the Discovery Travel Channel
or just being a cellar-dweller here in Baltimore
trying to feed my cats and crawl my way out of debt

One Night Only

But, I ask you to understand something:
when I was a senior in High school,
i realised I need to be one of those fanatics
i need to be in front of the class, not just in the top Ten percent
I have since come to the understanding
that while I am currently still a cricket singing in the subway some-
where
one day, I will conduct entire orchestras of small bodies
with huge potential
that is my dream
that is what I will live for
I am that fanatic
this is my dream
this is what I will live for
I am that fanatic
This is what I will fight for
and I need to know:
Who's with me?

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Dink and Grey

pink and grey,
my hands are scarred from this
simple actions
the turning of screw
flipping of switches
folding of sheets
i have no cables to pull for you
no dice to throw
question my authority on these things
you will see i don't know, either
tell me the answers to my dilemmas
and i will scoff at you
but help me find the ransom
to the things keeping me awake
because sometimes i find myself
plunging my fingers into flesh
with neither reason
nor direction
and when they find my own skin
my fingers become
pointless objects
and redundancies
occasionally making music
or journeying across the pale landscapes
of neighbors bodies
but not much more
sometimes,
i wish my hands were trumpets
sometimes flashlights
sometimes love, itself
they are pink from cold
and grey from working so hard
to grasp at thin wisps
of promises and assumptions
so quick to lunge for opportunity
in inexpensive endeavors

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of transportation
comfort
pleasure pain
perversion
passive smiles and pleasantries
blown away with cigarette smoke
because i want more
because i am looking forward
to those latter stages of life
when there is no more
"i will"
only
"i have" and "i am" and "i do"
and i do
love all those pretty things
who have come and gone
and i know i am but a flicker in their memories
passed into the back of their attic
to collect dust and mites
but that is good
that is who they choose to be
i am not the same.



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If I Could Give Her Voice

let them believe i am smiling
let them believe i am not in pain
let them believe i will stand here forever
if you ask me to-
your greatness gives me life
your brush creates my hair
your masterful hand caresses every lock
applies the slightest touch
give me some of my blackness
some brown some bronze
my powder skin my cinnamon lips
and the teasing texture of shadows
i will stand here forever
if you ask me to
lie about my age
tell them i am 42
tell them i am infancy
tell them i am old enough
costume me in your paint
pretend i am not a little girl
you saw on the street
in the market by your home
i will stand here forever
if you ask me to
i want your fingers to massage
the ribbons around my ankles
tie the bows around my waist
pin your rose to my image
tell me: am i twirling or am i falling
and the other woman; who is she
and if i stretch out my arms
could i ever pray to touch you?
i will stand here forever
i will hold this position
i will go on loving you
if you ask me to

Present Memories of Past Events

She is thin
but full of amazing thoughts.
Thoughts that she is often afraid
to share in the company of others.
She sleeps with
the t.v. on or
the lights on or
she doesn't sleep at all
until the dawn
unless she has someone there
to keep her warm.
She is sleeping,
and her pillow is
my one arm,
while her blanket is
my other; armour,
trying to keep her
from the things that would harm her.
She finds strength in swarms
of lyrics by strong women
in songs like,
"Write me back, Fucker"
and "By the time you're Twenty-Five".
She says they make her feel alive.
She finds strength in the
power of poetry
and the promise of a kiss,
but I feel powerless
when I walk in the room.
I feel powerless
in my futile attempts
to be that light for her
even when I am not there
in her darkest hours
to show her I care;
that I am here to share
the pain with her.

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There is
"Nothing I can do
That I have not done
No words I can say
No truth left that I can see
So must I let this end
So everything falls apart"
screams Victory not Vengeance
from my car stereo,
followed by Sweet Raymond
confirming what I already know:
"She falls apart
by herself"
And I am driving alone
as the lyrics of a million songs
swim in my hair
the way my fingertips once
swam in hers.

And I Wish

 there was something

 I could do.

But the walk down the dark tunnel
is one we all must make alone.
and these words are all but
present memories
of past events.
She walked down that tunnel,
away from this place,
toward the light of a night lamp
in a bedroom
in upstate New York.
She walked down her tunnel
away from this place
to a room
in Upstate New York.
Where she sleeps alone at night.
with the TV off.

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Alexandria

you fumble with silver
as a way to keep your hands occupied
i want to offer you my fingertips
but that would be too forward

you sit in beautiful contemplation,
or uneasiness-
i can't tell,
but i like not being able to say
what it is that keeps you here

we compare sedans
and i brag about my boxcar
and you smile,
for me,
I believe

you tell me about your love of the stacks
and the one memory you would keep
and I continue asking questions and telling stories

wanting really nothing more than to see you smile again
and believe I made that
because it seems an unnatural sunrise

he continues to bring you tea
and i switch to decaf
you don't drink coffee
and you prefer certain foods

i hoped this was a prelude
and as i return from the dessert case
i watch you and wonder if you're bored

i pretend to be unaffected
when i am rude and you tell me
i am a quarter of your age older than you

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and i know i am irrational
and i know i am overanxious
and i know i am assuming
there is even the possibility
this would ever even matter;
that you could ever want me in return

but i believe that i am right
and i tell myself this is how it must be
if i had stayed a student
you would have been my pupil

i strain for conversation
because i don't want to talk
but i don't think i should leave with you

so i continue telling stories and asking questions
the one memory i would keep
and my love of so many mundane things

i apologise
you tell me not to
and i wonder about your spine

if that tower
can give you the strength
to say what i cannot

and if those steps would welcome
the sandpaper of my chest
or my stumbling fingers
or breath

and we forget about hours
and we walk away
when at last i pay the check

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i act as if a gentleman
and if this night had used a different set of rules
i might have tried to kiss you

nervous and feeble
i walk back to my car
thinking about ethics
and willpower
and wanting little more
than for you to follow me home

but you are not one of your cherished starlings
and i am not bold enough
but i see you tonight and you glance at me
as we pass like lightning bugs dancing in the twilight
i fan my eye toward you
you spark
i burn like Alexandria
hoping you will crack my bindings
pull me from the parchment
with archival care
and i will immortalise you in memories and ink
because i am selfish and a coward
and i don't know anything about you
even after reading every letter you have written to me
pretending to understand anything besides
my own stuttering speech
knowing nothing other than hedonism
and the warmth of your ember eyes
pull me in
twist limbs into origami thighs
hide my lenses with opaque tresses
i won't strain to see
scratch your manifesto into my flesh
i will pronounce your desires
with the clarity of calming waters

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Spaces

she said she needed space
so i watched her walk away
the tiger-lily sun reflecting
off the icy pond of her rear windshield
and i wandered back to my cave
with the space between breaths
and footsteps
growing longer
i think about these visits
and agree with her:
maybe we should space them out
a bit more
but what are we
if not animals
feral and obsolescent
all sharing the same space
and what could i give her
to satisfy her delusions?
i tried to give her
all the stars in space
but she wasn't satisfied
because i never yelled at her
and there wasn't enough space in her heart
for her fear and my love
as if i wasn't afraid, too
as if i didn't stay awake at night
terrified that i might be wrong
and if only i could fit through the space between
the door and the floor
i could disengage my heart
from this like a red balloon
floating into the space of the sky
but i promised her i would take care of her
and she broke that same promise
letting the lies slip like her cigarette smoke
from the space between her lips
with her tan camel perched

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between her finger tips
now scattered ashes
crushed into the space between footsteps and concrete
with this relationship falling
like scattered bones on a record cover
she said she wanted space
then kept me close like a record needle
of a turntable collecting dust
so close, but never filling the space of her groove
never scratching my way around her circumference
journeying ever closer to her center
making her scream
a clarinet rhapsody like her first orgasm
rising ever so high,
to the doorstep of space
but no.
instead i hear brubeck
tripping through the space of her sunroof
as she pulls out of the parking lot



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Invitations for the Ashes

I.

electric teardrop
envelops and protects you
crying in a smile

desires remain unspoken
and, therefore, unheard
i have always been afraid to reveal
without the magic of a greeting
though i already know your name;
could sing it through the halls
and walls of this room
i hesitate to tell you how this happened;
my detour along my way coming here
my scaling of the neighbor's fence
the delicate press of my toes against the wet blades
reaching out, fingers extended like whiskers
concealing in my palm the small shears
touching fragile silk with my rough-hewn skin
a selfish man completing a selfish act
then darting away, a hawk from the surface
of a lake still rippling in mourning
and yet, now i shiver,
afraid to bring the act to its conclusion
afraid you will not be holding my hand
when the curtain is drawn
afraid your slender piano keys
will not accept the crimson buds
i imagine how one of these orphans would look
draped between your fingers,
the dark flesh of the arrow dangling
as if a soldier, cut down in battle
i picture you placing it upon your pale smile
pressing it lightly against your pout,
your full lips revealing nothing
as you inhale the scent of my invitation

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and when it lands,
will your eyes be closed or open?
your hair is a brilliant waterfall
hiding those picture-frame caves
barring entrance from the unknowing

II.

make me your pupil
take my hands into your own
teach me to hold you

are you irish crystal?
fragile, forged from the heat and labor,
spun and twisted, filled and emptied?
would i balance you between my knuckles,
swirling only what i pour into you?
are you a diamond orb?
hard, invisible, priceless
allowing me to read what is beyond you
keeping me ignorant of the beauty you are keeping inside
rest, you, there upon your perch
the fingernails of the goblin king
now you are snake, now you are peach
now you are anything i want
except mine
are you an iceberg?
withholding much more than id
but stabbing at the ferrous facades of fellow travelers
journeying before me
tell me, did they paint a wounded rabbit
across your snowy, shaking wrist
when they, on burnt knees, kissed your rings?
i apologize i have not had the courage
to ask to pay tribute to
your alabaster cheek,
your alpine breast,
your vanilla waist
your paper thighs

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if i had been born with steel between my teeth
i would use these thorns and my ruby ink
to draw this as calligraphy across your spine,
carry you over the arctic peaks of this
cowardice and confusion
to glide softly down on the other side of fear
like feathers of a comforter
i saw you smile once
i would like to think i can bring that sunrise to your lips again
possibly to see it in the moonlight of a night swimming
perhaps in the shelter of starshine outside your door
maybe carved into the face of my pillow
etched upon the cloth of my skin
inaction will make fools of us all
what will you do with the chance
this song was written for your ears
to steal away from you this time
to steal away with you next time
every poet is a thief
i have risked being shackled
simply to deliver this message
i have risked being shot down,
a pigeon protecting the prey
or simply in the way,
having presented you with these words
i pray you would throw me to the ground
pierce me with your glance,
tell me i have crossed this graveyard in vain
i would retreat in pride,
having heard your trumpeters' declarations
having felt the caress of your gloved hand
having learned the lesson of your eyes

III.

how many times now
have i called your name, and still,
you have not heard once

Subtrahend

i can feel these curves falling
and rising like the sun toward a mid-winter's day
I look out
down the street and across this suburban landscape
and everything is flat
stretched out
warped
in your direction
as if you are a star
as if you are the center of my universe
as if you are the essence of my very being
as if you are GRAVITY, itself..
but you can't be
you are more than that.
you are the math.
me? I am simply words.
trying to make sense of you,
trying to understand you,
i am tearing myself to pieces
each an offering to you
peeling layers of skin
praying for your blessing
i am tearing myself to pieces
for you.
trying to find the infinite
trying to find the infinitely small
trying to show my world to you
I am tearing my self to poems
trying to be sonnet
trying to be predictable
so you can meet me at the end of my final, rhyming couplet.
but I guess I do not rhyme with you
I am fragments
trying to be haiku
trying to be senryu
trying to fit all these things I need to say
within three simple bars

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i am fragments
you are the math
and i know there is a hole
in my heart
in the shape of your smile
but I know
I am still whole
without you
i am tearing my self to pieces for you
offering them to you
offering them to these teeming multitudes
giving away parts of me
without diminishing in value
because, Subtraction,
you are not here.
I am trying to swallow every drop of life
i can bring to these lips
but still, i fear I am withering away
as i give away parts of me
and you are not here to
sew me back together
to make me the sum-total
of the man i wish to be
you are the math
I am simply words
I am simply that scared,
17-year old boy
sitting in calculus
struggling to understand you
struggling to make some sort of sense of you
but you
are indivisible.
you will never be
less than you are
right now
to me
you will never fracture
as I have done

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as I am doing
for you
You are the math
and I am trying to remember
and I know I can't multiply without you
because I am not even a fraction of the man I want to be
because I know I am not even a fraction of the man you want me to
be
but still i am tearing myself to pieces,
trying to break down this praise chorus
into the phonemes and morphemes
I can rearrange
so I can one day speak your name
so I can one day scream your name
I am tearing myself to pieces for you
you are the math
I am simply words
I just wish I could have been the numbers
so you
could make sense
of me.



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Small Windows

we were where you admired my veins
and i wanted to kiss you
i was afraid,
so, instead, i went on
nervously talking about
toilets, gutters, and cats

your slender ivory
felt warm in my palms
as i watched you dance
and we talked

you looked so soft,
lying there on my bed
and i wondered what
your eyes would say to me
in the pale whiskers
of morning sunlight sneaking in
through my small windows



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Komodo

i devour these memories with the ferocity of a dragon
trying to touch you with my teeth
and when I do, these moments will blossom like tumours around the
wound

travel your arteries,
find your softest parts and overtake you
with the passion of a revolution
or the rapture of a child

you will meet me in the spaces between your breaths
while you struggle to grasp air
and I see you futile infertile
and I know I cannot help you
as I stand and watch you drown

I was ignorant and impulsive
when I first put pen to page
first put lens to face
first put lips to lazy lovers' lives
and I know nothing more now
than I did then
but somehow I've learned something

you and we are different species
we are giant lizards
cloaked in reptilian skin
communing in humid dens
consuming the flesh of each other
and yet, our cuts will heal

we parade our scars for scores and applause
building upon ferocious egos
and good intentions
because we were designed to withstand other people's pain
steal it, drag it with us, share it
we are scavengers
we are komodo

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but this is not venom
this is simply septic saliva
this is the dessicating fury
caused by harbouring that for which we have
hungered
hunted
hounded
honed our skills and wits
these moments rot in our cavities
but maybe this thing that makes us immune
is also why artists will all die young

The possibility of eternity wears thin the cold blooded
and we reach death
before we reach old age
so we must compress our message to fit our fleeting mortality
with the hopes that you will all wake one morning
with no fear in your footsteps
and we can look at you
speak to you
hold you
and know that you will live

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Might be Wrong

i do not like the silence
there is fear in those quiet moments
and so i write my foolish meanderings
and i tell my foolish stories
how we are named
lose our touch
forget to say 'i love you'
and are all destined to be alone
i am the only one who can save me
i am the key to my salvation
thus, i am god
thus, you are god
she is god
we are god
we pray to false idols in the hope
that prayer will open some door inside us
he, with the elephant face,
is but a mirror of our own perfection
he, with bleeding wrists,
a model of honor and restraint
there are times i crucify myself
because i have no wish to move on
is this perfection?
these moments are short,
ineffectual children
passed into the dust of the past
we speak of them as if they are still alive
tell their story as a war hero
a tall man
a mother obsessed with cleanliness
but when we are done
have we affected anything?
when you talk to me
i feel as if you know i am listening
i believe you when you breathe
you reached for me
put your arms around me

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held me in
and i was afraid
i reached for you
put my arms around you
held you in
and i was afraid
most people consider these things
harmless encounters
but there is healing in touch
i was never taught how to show interests
i run on instinctual reactions and impulse decisions,
robbing fruit
or molding notes into coasters
pushing digits in plastic
because i don't know what else to do
i know i don't need to impress myself upon you
but i fear you will forget about me
that is why i don't wait for your call
in my perverse optimism
i have determined you will never call
you don't know my jellical name
will never cry out for me through the walls
in this way
should you happen to stumble across numbers
with my name above them
i will be surprised
i will be wrong
i live for the times i am wrong
only then can i be humble in the faces of gods
only then can i grow
i cannot learn if everybody loves me
i will never change
but when i am shunned
when i am turned away
then i can begin to evolve
into something more beautiful
they say they know what is poetry
that poetry must allude to questions

One Night Only

and imply answers
but, i have bluntly described my dilemmas
and forthright asked questions
i don't even wish answered
but this is a poem
i have already determined i am god
and in my divinity
i declare it to be as such
and it is good
but i have already determined you are god
and in your divinity
you will decide if this is poetry
or just the meaningless ranting
of a lesser deity
this is not a love poem
this is not a manifesto
this is but a letter
never meant to be sent
this is a definition
not a disclaimer
a decision made
without debating the consequences
i would like to think i wrote this for you
but i admit
i might be wrong.

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Licking, Sucking, and Arithmetic

on the last day of fifth grade
my class watched Mrs. Frisby and the rats of Nimh
we crowded several homerooms' worth of students into
ms. Hutchinson's room
and I sat on a desk with a piece of paper, counting

i was a smart kid
i'd always been good at math and science
i understood the concepts behind most basic physics
and I could translate between metric and English measurements

I estimated that
for each second you suck on something,
you were performing roughly the same
amount of work as if you licked that same thing five times
now, this doesn't account for
heat,
friction,
or hydrophilic chemical reactions
between sugar and saliva
but as a rough approximation,
it would do

so I counted

i used the 1, 2, 3, 4, SLASH
tally method
on a piece of paper i had taken from Leah

Leah was the most beautiful creature
i had ever laid eyes upon

we had met in the third grade in Mrs. White's homeroom
she was the first girl who didn't have cooties
even at the age of 9,
i recognized her power over me
once, I nearly burned a pair of pants

One Night Only

because she said they looked dumb
I would have done just about anything for her,
now that i think about it
not that i haven't heard about it a lot since then

our desks were arranged alphabetically
as were our lockers,
so nearly every hour
of nearly every day
from third grade to sixth
was spent near Leah Peddicord
and, god, did we fight
that we hated each other
would have been a safe,
though incorrect,
assumption.

The fact is, I was crazy about her
and i was pretty sure she liked me, too

In sixth grade, I broke my ankle
while playing football with some friends.
Leah, who normally would have given me the finger
told me to fuck off
or just pushed me out of the way
was suddenly being nice to me
smiling at me
holding open doors
holding my books
holding my breath
I wanted to ask her out
but I was afraid
i wanted to kiss her
but I was chicken

after that school year, I moved to Houston
she and I saw each other on occasion after that,
but we eventually we lost touch

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but you see-
In fifth grade,
while watching Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimb
between licking, sucking, and arithmetic
i counted the number of licks it takes
to reach the tootsie roll center
of a tootsie roll pop.
i don't remember the exact number,
but it was somewhere in the vicinity of 1518

however,
I remember very clearly
feeling pointless as i chewed my turd-like reward
Though, satisfied in my victory,
I was convinced that Mr. Owl was a lazy asshole
and the boy a misguided hero,
but, while it had taken the entire movie to perform my experiment,
the sweet taste of victory didn't even last through the ending cred-
its
i didn't feel better once i knew the answer

a few years later,
during high school
i went to visit Leah at her house,
and i asked her about sixth grade
and whether she would have said "yes"
if i had asked her out

Without hesitation, she responded, "Hell yeah!"

...and that's when I realized the lesson I should have learned years
earlier:

It's not in the solution that we find redemption, but in the asking of
the question.

Her response no longer mattered,
But at least I now I had finally tried.

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One Night Only

Beautiful

i didn't leave construction equipment at your door this time be-
cause i am not sure what we are building
it is all so beautiful
you are beautiful
i am beautiful
the moon is beautiful as
one third of a candle drips its way across the water toward our
naked bodies
struggling to walk across rocks and algae-covered timbres
your small breasts curve upward
with your raised arms as you
pull your hair from your eyes to watch the clouds drift peacefully
above us
you shudder as a shiver sends glitter from your glistening hip
like a disco dance floor and i want to touch you,
but you are ripples on a pond
and to touch the surface only makes the waves run away
it is all so beautiful
we sit on a folded blue cloth with baby tigers covering us to keep
us warm
were it not for the movement,
the lake would seem frozen
a mirror of the sky
the moon a thousand strikes of light across the surface
and we shiver together
teeth colliding
resonating like makeshift drums in subway tunnel stops
and street corners
you are curled fetal
and your back is a wet stone staircase
you lean into my touch
unafraid, welcoming,
lightly, afraid, i kiss your neck
you are frozen in time
as i make a photograph of this moment
your hair is short like the roaring 20s
and is still wet

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and i run my fingers through that rainforest
feeling your energy
pulse beneath my fingertips
before i can ask to touch your lips
you say it's time to leave
it is so beautiful
forests flying by at 50
bugs reflecting off headlamps
now 60 as we ride onto the blacktop rollercoaster
now streetlights at 75
feeling like batman
but i want to take time
make this last
to simply be
hear you
now
but i won't waste your time
won't you wrap your waist around me?
take my head in your palms and pull me into you
i don't know how to say these things
instead i turn
stealing flowers from the highway
hoping to make you blush
i couldn't see you,
but i know i heard you laugh
and i know you heard my invitation
you are so beautiful
standing there in my t-shirt
pale legs disappearing under the grey cowl
your slowly-drying hair
curls flirtatiously as you sprawl across my bed
place your head on my chest
i want to love you
we flitter in and out of consciousness
i realize you will still be here
when the sun and i wake up
so i turn off the light and crawl back into bed
next to your sleeping beauty

One Night Only

the morning is so beautiful
and the air is cool as we run down charles st.
singing because i have no radio
and you say this is you at your worst
when you have just woken up
i laugh, saying to myself
i have seen you dressed up
and i have seen you naked
and i call you beautiful
i have see you awake
and i have seen you asleep
and i name you beautiful
i have seen you full of energy
and i have seen you groggy and disoriented
and still i see you as beautiful
you are so beautiful
as you prance across the street to your home
and i drive away

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Independent

for Anna and Geoff Morpurgo on their Wedding

If i didn't know it was midnight,
i would swear dawn was around the corner.
the animals are talking wildly about
something-or-other
and it is bright enough to read without a lamp
some of us read fortune cookies
others tea leaves
still more keep faith in prayer beads
and magic spells
i hold no such illusions in my moonlight eyes
i read history books
i read the story of your birth
written across our mothers
face, hands, and belly
i read the story of your childhood
adorned with photographs
and crushed aluminum cans
on a patio in a southern suburb
clay masks carved out of your
pre-adolescent life
when we couldn't go next door
to the park and playground
down the street
to the dairy queen
or through the neighbor's yard
to the pool by the lake
without permission
your teenage years,
when you first discovered boys
and i first discovered
you were cool
going to dad's office
next to the summer camp
where we taught the other kids
Maryland
is not 'in' another state

One Night Only

riding around playing
"Name that tune"
"...and artist and album"
"...and for bonus points, year"
and imitating the
squealing of tires
and the changing of gears
as we exited to the feeder street
try as i might,
i never did get any older than you
so i stay behind
reading the romance novel of your travels
all over the world
all because of a few simple choices
you made
when you were still learning to drive
back then
you ignored road signs
opting, instead, to follow landmarks
now you read compasses and maps
declaring I AM HERE
pointing to a well-defined point
miniscule in the mire
of a formless mass
simply titled "Time"
and this is where i stop reading your history
as you have yet to write it
if i didn't know it was midnight
i would swear dawn was around the corner
the animals are chattering frantically
about something-or-other
and the night is bright enough
to write this with neither
lamp nor candle and i write
my pen is stammering
about something-or-other
and the moon is making faces at me
as i try to pay tribute

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to someone who has everything
you are the product of the sea
the maker of the winds
and i have traveled here
to watch you defy the laws of physics
to witness as you,
a woman
whole, strong, and independent
join with him,
a man
whole, strong, and independent
to become one
whole, strong, and independent.



One Night Only

One Phone Call

For B.

And I just wish for
one phone call.
not one of those
"I just called to say I love you"
phone calls, but a
"Hi. How are you?"
phone call.
And I just wish for a fucking clue
what to do
about you
no...
Fuck You.
If I told my parents,
you would be in Jail.
And I want to SCREAM
but not for you
I will not scream for you
I won't scream, because my throat is so fucking hoarse from crying
but these tears are not for you, no.
These tears are for the 3 1/2 weeks that I have been waiting
These tears are for the 3 1/2 weeks that I have not been able to
sleep when I have wanted to
These tears are for the 3 1/2 weeks that I have had to stay awake
with only my thoughts as company until I pass out from exhaus-
tion
These tears are for the 3 1/2 weeks that I can now explain
These tears are for the 8 Months I have left to cry.
And how I wish I could be 17 and carefree again
Instead of 17 and (at least) 3 1/2 weeks and Scared to Death
And how I wish I could get one phone call
because last I checked,
you got one phone call
when you went to prison
and I am imprisoned in my fear
with your-

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my-

OUR child imprisoned in my womb
and I can't even get one phone call from you
And how I wish I could be normal
How I wish, for once, that I didn't have to be the
Point-One Percent
And how I wish I knew what to do
but instead, I am feeling queasy
as Quasi takes me to the clinic
And I wonder if I'll see
that little kid with the
WWJD tattooed on his arm
Because my fear is tattooed across my face
like a brand on my soul
And I wonder if I'll see the
fundamentalist pro-lifers out front telling me
that I am going to go to hell if I make
That Choice
well...
too late.
I am living the hell
of fear and sleepless anticipation
and I haven't made that choice *yet*,
but if I make *that* choice,
it's *my* choice to make
so as I drive to that clinic,
I hope you are happy with her
and I hope she knows how lucky she is that she got
blood-stains
instead of
morning sickness
and how I wish for just
One Phone Call
and how I wish I could just be
seventeen
and carefree
again.

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One Night Only

Mark Twain

for Rob Templeton

i am

that i am

that i am

i am that large gay man in the wheelchair weeping tears the size of
fists as the pressure pushes against the inside of my head and
my heart hangs heavy against the underside of my chest

i am mark twain

miles rides the el while waters croons a blue note while we are
gathered here to get through this thing called "life"

while YOU are gathered her to get through this thing called "life".

i said oh, momma we been dancing too long

i said a-oh, momma we been dancing

for way too long

momma, won't you lay my head down?

I think it's time to go

poppa's calling from saint louis

he says it's time to come home

we bathe on the shores of the american ganges, humming holy hymns

to fallen heroes who will one day be the mythical characters i

will one day tell my children so they will sleep well knowing

there once was a bull named Templeton who sang the blues in

a baltimore basement

how his powerful legs could once lift him onto a stage

how i saw him walk once

or twice

or a thousand times

but in his last days he chose to remain seated while we took for

granted the medicinal jazz our feet make while we keep danc-
ing.

like Zeus, he watched us, and sang about us, knowing that if he

stood, the pillars would indeed collapse

the pressure's cooking like a kettle on the fire

i said i need you, momma

i said the pressure's cooking like a kettle on the fire

i said a-oh, momma, we been-

and he forgets the words, but somehow says, I love you

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and he forgets the words, but somehow says, you earned this
he forgets the words, but somehow says, the fact you're here
means you're supposed to be here.

i said i need you, momma
poppa's calling from saint louis
he said it's time to come home
we been
dancing
too long



Dredging Patricia

I.

wintery landscape
silent drip, azure water
secret and wooden

II.

we were a secret
your mother was the enemy
and i loved you like a spy
through winter nights at the fire
i serenaded you and our friends
then passed along the shell to
another who bore my same name
you were sitting lotus
wearing a black shirt and a tan jacket
blue jeans and a shiver
i sat behind you
my thighs forming a mug
and like coffee, you flowed into every crevice
my legs around you
you reached down
took my trembling fingers
into your steady palms
and declared
"you are cold. put them in here to keep warm"
as you silently brought me inside
your jacket
my arms around your chest
wrapping you like a fur pelt
the tips of my pens
cupping your breasts
and I did not freeze
as i held you that night.
and i held you there
like your life depended upon me.
once, when your employment

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was crumbling around you,
we waltzed through the door
with their paper and plastic
i sang to you one night,
trying to imitate
the timeless recordings
at the Cote D'Azure
and it meant everything
in those spaces between being one
and having to take you home
and i sang to you
like my voice would always wake you
when i came home to an empty house
you stayed with me
we carried my world across a city
you had begun before i had even arrived
your tiny frame carrying your weight
in furniture and boxes
without the help of the yellow man
who was afraid, for me, of you
you came with me that night
we loved bruised knees
into a box spring
you were a panther
creeping across my floor
as if stalking my flesh
tearing into me when i drank from you
pulling me in when i poured into you
we washed away the stains of our sins
praying the water would purify us
dripping from the wall into torturous mornings
and i loved you like you would die that night
and i loved you like you were my heartbeat
and i loved you
like i could make you stay
but the winter landscape snow
melted into sullen rivulets of mountain tears
the trees crying for you

One Night Only

because i could not
that day your mother
appeared at my door
she could only say
"at least we know she's safe"
and she said that so convinced
as if announcing it
could somehow recall death
and cancel it out
as if she were god's messenger
only appearing too late, and yet
i would receive no ceremony
there was no wooden box
for me to lay you down
no brown study over which we could mourn
we could only visit you
in those halls of sickness
watching through the thick glass
as your body paraded around
in someone else's smile
i stood by that wall waiting
for you to let down your hair
waiting for a day i would never see
walking into your room
under close scrutiny
i made you laugh
i made your mother smile
i made those younger imitations of you
believe there was a chance they would get better
and i prayed you would get better
and i begged your mother not to exile me
and i prayed you wouldn't turn away
and i begged for understanding
and I prayed
like i could bring you back

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A Sort of Metamorphosis

I.

a coffee cup sits on a table,
erratic as the man who sat it there
I am talking to an old-time friend
who is talking to you
I and my like-minded mug don't know it yet,
but we are there because you are

hours later, I'm well aware of why I'm there and I
just want to know your name
your birth date
your smile
your smell
but you leave me
wanting

when I echo into your life
and you sing harmony
our conversation leaves us both
wanting

II.

I meet you at five, when we stutter downtown
where in the bar we are surrounded by bells and people singing
while we eat
i pretend to know what I'm doing when I make you smile
and you glow like broken brake lights
and it hits me-

at all times,
you should have some whisper in your mind
of how impossibly gorgeous you are
so whatever the weather or your temperature
you'll never have to wonder about that
because if attractive women are like exploding stars,
you are super massive going hyper-nova
and I am pulled past the event horizon

One Night Only

of your eyes
slide forward and I am holding you
birthed in the nebula of your perfume
kiss me
touch my chin
bite my ear
make this as is your skin:
smooth and durable
grab my shoulders like reins
hammer nails into my flesh with your desire
let us make this beautiful
but like a stranger who knows my name
you leave me
wanting

III.

You greet me in the evening
we grow together like trees planted too closely
watch as vines intermingle
limbs lock in latticework
our trunks become one in the cacophony of midnight
but in the sunrise, we are flowers
dewdrops settle on your petals as you open to the morning rays
of me
bow and bend in revealing dance steps as you warm my quaking
form
oscillate in unison
find resonance in the misstep of breath brought about by touch
and when sleep makes children of us, form fit into my arms

I still don't know your name,
but I hope one day to call you lover
so please, walk into the willow of my hair
curl once about the house of my chest
nestle down into the bowery of my palms
let me never keep you
Wanting

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The Holiest Word

She always thought of him as a peace-maker.

He would sit around the dinner table, listening to their arguments before chiming in, pointing out whatever good points they were each making, then reminding them to settle down and enjoy the company. And, he taught his little brother how to avoid fights and make friends with bullies, so it made sense to her when he came home one night and said,

“Mom, I’m joining the Army.”

And, I didn't ask her, but I'm pretty sure that when she first raised that boy to her breast, she had no idea she'd be here today. I have a suspicion that when she washed his cuts, there was no way she could have imagined that she'd give this talk. I have a thought that even as that new son of hers boarded the plane, she was pretty sure she and I would never meet. And, on the day he came home, she was probably beyond the concept that I would shake her hand,

but there was that day, as she stood at her sink, washing dishes and listening to CarTalk, the doorbell and two officers delivered a message that every mother dreads they will ever hear

Her son had been killed in a bombing in Baghdad. In the photographs, his flesh is barely marred by the shrapnel, but the X-rays show the twin balloons of his lungs, ripped open by the expanding shockwave from the blast. Doctors and nurses call it the “white butterfly;” the calling card of suicide bombers.

And a few mercifully short days later, when she shook the hand of his honor guard brothers-in-arms pall-bearers and listened as they said how hard it is to carry this when their hands are tied by a government with mixed motives and bad ideas—that was when she put it all together and realized that for his honor, she has to give these talks.

One Night Only

And so she tells us we are a good people surrounded by a culture of war and commercialized violence where the media mocks protests in an effort to perpetuate the collective numbness toward manufactured consent, she says
"Every capitalist in this room should own stock in the company that manufactures gold stars because we are all shackled in the stocks of a country that manufactures Gold Star mothers."

She reminds us of the one senator who voted against both world wars who insisted we prevent the creation of more Hitlers, but then she demands, "What are we doing about the ones already in power?"

She begs us to study mindfulness, because as a nation, we are so addicted to war we cannot seem to prosper unless we're profiting from killing the children of brown people somewhere overseas and there has got to be another way.

She says, "Yes. There is." She says:
Question. Choose. Vote.

Talk to ten people you've never met and ten others you know disagree with you and start a dialogue toward new policy.

And I ask her, what's the point;
How can we sow her tears and reap a new nation?
How can we take the blood from all our hands to paint
the image of change?
How we can tackle this task?

And she assures me it's simple. She says,

"Success depends on you, so...

...Start."

Also by granmadave:

The Otis Series

Other Issues

A Perfect 30

A Lovely Treason

Audio Debauchery

(CDDA with Chris August)

and

DVD PressKit

(DVDV on DVD-R with Chris August)

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Coming Soon:

the official release of A Lovely Treason
and the release of Best of Granmadave, Volume I



“Thank you for coming. Welcome.”

-Chris August



FP

