

WHY I WRITE

I was thinking about it, and
you know how you always say I never tell you anything?
Like, I don't know, about my problems or something.

Well, I was thinking about it, and I thought,
you know, that's probably why I write stuff.

KNEE ALL BUSTED (A POEM IN PROSE)

So I'm walking to the emergency room and my knee is all busted. I'd sort of crashed my bicycle about an hour or two earlier. I'm right around the corner from the ER, right? And this guy on the street asks me if I have a pen. What do I tell him? Twenty feet from the emergency room, I'm not gonna say no when I know I've got a pen. So I give him one. He's writing down directions that his cell phone is giving him. And I wait. He's on the phone with his mom or his kid sister or his dopey second wife and I wait. But he goes on. And here I am, busted knee and all, twenty feet from the goddamned emergency room, and I'm not about to leave him with my pen. That's like my favorite pen, my best one. It's lucky. And it's a damned good one too.

My lucky pen, I got a rule, see? Don't ever write in my idea notebook with any pen but that one. It's my muse. And it's probably a lot more reliable than most of those other muses.

POEM FOR E

Maybe it's that moment in my life too, man. Maybe I'm totally you know. Totally in the top of a tree. And without me noticing they've clipped the branches I used to climb up. Totally stuck up here and not really sure if I should be pissed about it.

So out of it. So outside the something that I can't even name it in the first place. So outside the never ever. But whatever it is, I was in it just the other day. I can't tell where I've wandered off to. In the back corner in a diner in a red sparkling booth in a dream.

I didn't think this is how it would turn out.
Dancing drunk and high in the basement
Of a kid I've known since our balls dropped.
Wishing I was with this girl instead.
Wishing she wished she was with me.
Knowing you are wishing similar things.
Similar somewhere else.

WHEN LEAVES DON'T FALL FROM TREES

I have this fantasy. A girl breaks my heart. Thirty years later she comes knocking on my doorstep telling me that I was the only one she ever loved. Her one true love. She tells me she made this huge mistake in leaving me for dead and she wants to give us another try. But alas, I tell her, I am happily married.

That's kind of lame of me, isn't it?
Who says I'll ever be the one true love of somebody's life?

I think it has something to do with fake whisper down the lane
and Holden Caulfield's ducks
and figuring out when leaves fall in Fall
and elevators to floor two
and how I do this thing where
if I drop an ice cube on the ground,
I just leave it there and hope it disappears.

And then there was this one girl I met.
She told me her friend was dying (cancer, I think)
and she accidentally killed this fly and then she thought,
 now he's going to die for sure.
I think that girl was the love of my life.

BECAUSE HEART IS JUST HEAT WITH AN R

I'm late for some bull shit something so I rush out of the house. I'm a block off my place when I trip on a crack or a tree root or a mountain of little not paying attentions. And I look down. And I see that my sneakers are covered in puke. I stand there for a bit and think about walking on. Then I look down again and see one of my pant legs is covered in puke.

Then I turn around and think that Heart is just Heat with an R.
And maybe I was supposed to be late to this something.
And you know how long goodbyes are so awkward?
Like if you say goodbye to someone,
and then go onto opposite tracks of the subway,
and just awkwardly make small waves and smirks
at the other person
from across the tracks.
And then when the other person's train comes
I think how
it's good to be in love.
Even if I'm just fooling myself.
Even if I just like to use
love as a scapegoat.

TO BALANCE MYSELF AND STRETCH A HAMI

At age seven
a tennis coach once told me
told a whole group of us tennis prodigals:
Let's face it.
You'll never be Andre Agassi.

His point was lost on me
as was the context.
Mostly I just thought
as I held an invisible pole
to balance myself and stretch a hami:
Who the hell is he to tell me
I'll never be Andre Agassi?

Yes I cursed at age seven.
You're damn right I cursed.
And yes words sometimes held tight for me
and sometimes not.
And yes I knew the good stuff ain't easy
like I know now the good stuff ain't easy.
But just because I knew then what I know now
doesn't mean I know what the good stuff being easy
even means.

PEOPLE LOOK BETTER IN SUBWAY CAR WINDOWS

I like your style man
I just don't like you
You once said:

I don't know why I masturbate
It just makes me sad

That was honest man
But you
You're not honest
You channel surf through the television
You switch show to show looking for
commercials
I see you when
The television turns off
I see you when
I'm in the subway car
Looking past the window

I see this ghetto'd out little black girl with her mom and her aunt on the subway and the kid was complaining about something and the mom goes, Don't worry honey, nobody can't tell you nothin'. Can't tell you nothin'. You got money in your pocket? The girl nods. Then nobody can't tell you nothin'.

I got a dollar, the girl says, kinda sticking her chest in the air.

MY DREAMS

I don't remember my dreams.
Does that mean I'm a freak?

I met a kid on the street one day
and he asked me where
tenth avenue was. I told him
where tenth street was and
that I didn't even think
a tenth avenue existed.

Turns out I was wrong, there really is a tenth avenue.
Stupid me. Stupid stupid me.

How come I don't remember my dreams?
Is that a sign? Should I even care?

I did have a dream this one time where I got back together with
my old gal. Then lightning struck a tree and the tree fell on her
and I cried when I woke up.

THIS HEAT BOX

This heat box
Is like a box of heat.
A box of heat like
An overstuffed grill.
Overstuffed with the ass of a pig.
A pig's ass like
The sex you have in New York City
In the Summer with no air conditioning.
Romantic but only on the page.
Romantic but only in the way
She was romantic.
Before you really got to know her.
Before you really got to know her.

SUDDENLY

Suddenly
he lit a cigarette.
Suddenly he
lit a cigarette.
Suddenly he lit
a cigarette.
Suddenly he lit a
cigarette.

But in all that time she'd all but lost him.

Heneedsme, heneedsme, heneedsme, she says.

Oh, he responds.
So it's that
kind of poem.

SPECULATION NUMBER FOUR THREE FOUR

1000 little bugs walking on my brain
collecting data—eating my string
They have plans, you see
You will see you see
They are trying to persuade my fate
Fate being: a development of events
beyond my control; a sense of inevitability
Beyond my control being:
the plans they have; the cigarettes you smoke
Like that time I was run over by a skateboarder
I was on my bicycle—it was meant to be
Had the culprit been three-fourths of a second
beyond or behind me
it wouldn't have been a gumbleating
And as I flew over my handle bar
there was only passing doubt
that that moment could have revealed itself to be any different.

IT'S MORE REAL TO SHOW IT THAN TO WRITE IT

In a bar a man takes a dive onto the floor as he tries to get off his barstool and stand up. Everyone in the bar looks at him. They think, this is the true definition of a dive bar. They think, this man needs to get a hold of himself. Pull it together. Get the fuck out. Get a life. Get a job. Sober up and pull it together. Pull it out of a fucking hat if he has to, just pull it together.

He remembers how to get up and does so. He looks around and sees them looking at him, sees them looking at him. This would be fine if this was a movie, he says to them. This would be fine. This would be fine if this was a movie.

After he's exited, the people look each other not in the eye. Laughing but forcing it. Biting their lips. Tapping fingers on tabletops. Commenting on other things, anything. The music on the jukebox, the strength of their mix drinks, the weather tonight.

One younger guy at a tall table near the door says to the girl he's with, nervous —That guy's probably a writer. You know, because he's frustrated. He probably wants to show it. It's more real to show it than to write it.

The girl wishes she didn't have to drink at dumps like this because of her shitty fake ID.

POEM FOR CHARLES

I've been seeing a lot of people bust out and cry lately. Honestly, I've sort of been waiting, for a while now, for you to bust out and cry. Hell, I've sort of been waiting for myself to bust out and cry. Right out in public. And everyone would sit there and watch.

I once had a dream.

We stood at the bottom of a dried up ocean.

It was night but I could still see the scene clearly.

We were naked standing next to each other.

Me, a skinny, five foot seven inch, hairy but thinning on top Jewish kid.

You, a fat, five foot seven inch, hairy but thinning on top Jewish kid.

Don't expect any lies. Don't expect any honesty.

At least in the near to near far future.

TALKING SHIT ABOUT A PRETTY SUNSET

My brother was telling me
he was thinking about being a cop
because sometimes they get shot in the line of duty.
But I told him that was just stupid
because I'd much rather be a bad guy
if I was gonna go down.

But if you're a cop, they remember you,
he said.
Yeah, for a decade, maybe.
But if you're bad enough,
they remember you forever.

YOUR GENERAL SADNESS

Let's talk about your general sadness for just a minute or two. It's the end of an era that lasted about five days when you thought you could see the world bending backwards and then forwards again. And when it bent forwards it ripped open and the world's guts fell all over the place.

But now and again
And again and again
It's that general sadness
That doesn't add up correctly.
It's important to take that general sadness
And really make it add up.
Make it Good on paper
Make it Good on all accounts
You've got nothing
Nothing without ink on paper.

TROUBLE WITH YOUR SEX LIFE

This is just a bus, not a train.

And if you want to start something, matches start fires.
Doves fly across a rooftop in the East Village.
I have a problem, but it's a good problem.

Update: It's Tuesday and it's not a good problem anymore.

Well, then what's
the point? You can't just
drag me out here.
Right into the pit. Right into the pit
of neverneveralways.
It's the everything of everything. And
it makes sense.

I've been seeing a lot of people
just bust out and cry
lately.

MY COMPUTER THINKS MORE THAN I DO.

How am I trying to change you?
Tell me so I can change.

Is this because
I make you glue your stamps
onto packages
crooked instead of straight?

Is this because I didn't follow your advice?
*Once you've fallen for a girl
the secret is not to fall fall for her.*
Because I thought you were just joking.

I know you don't like it
when I write on my hands.
But I just sort of have
problems remembering stuff.

And I know you think I'm stupid
Your computer thinks more than you do.
But you know, you'd be surprised
how much computers think.

Besides, don't you remember?
You hate anything
that mixes chocolate
and peanut butter together
and my favorite candy
is Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.
We make perfect trick-or-treat buddies.

So I guess
I just want to know
why I'm better off
without you and all.

SCRATCH & WIN

The man on the subway sits across from me and tears a scratch & win in half.
Then to pieces. Then the pieces to pieces.

He didn't win, I say to myself.
You didn't win, I say to him.
Don't laugh at something
that's not funny, he says to me.
He doesn't look up.

He tears the pieces of pieces to pieces.

Intensity needs to be released at one point or another.
(My mom died, is what I want her to say to me.)
(Yeah I heard, is what I want to say back.)

The man drops the scratch & win.
He puts his hands together as if to pray
but instead pressures his finger tips.
He looks up at me hisfaceisred.

Connect with me.
This moment is not enough.
Please connect with me.
You and I are
close. You and I are
close.

(We were constantly on the verge of breaking up, her and me.)

The world was made for comedians,
I respond at last.
He sits silently in the orange bucket seat.

LIFE IS ASPIRING POETRY

Life is aspiring poetry.

I can't dance, but I would if I could.

It's like that time you said I wasn't worth it.
And I was born.
It was more like an awkward jerk movement.
It was more like that time
This poplar tree was pointing at me
With its big bushy arm, laughing like a bully.
Like an eight year old bully.

It's like that time you said I wasn't worth it. And me walking.
Walking around with suitcases inside of suitcases.
Baggage inside of baggage repeating
Like a record on repeat:
We don't really give a fuck about you.

PAC MAN & TWO BOOTS

Let's play Pac Man,
me versus you in Two Boots.
No, not wearing two boots.
In Two Boots, the video rental store.

Yeah, I don't know exactly why
the video rental store has
a classic arcade game
rightdabinthemiddleofthestore
either.

But it sure does make picking out a movie
pretty hard.
There's not much space to walk.
Pac Man in the middle of
HerzogVanSantKubrick
and Bergman.
I'm sure he gets along fine with them, though.
I hear Orson Welles is pretty friendly.

And I mean, I know Pac Man is
pretty much the quintessential metaphor
for individualisticAmericandrivenconsumption

but come on—
a pillar of consumerism
there to root out bad apples with temptation—
Two Boots is no Garden of Eden.

So let's play Pac Man,
me versus you in Two Boots.
They won't mind—
And no, we won't forfeit
our solidleftleaningopinions
when we gobbledownpellets
and take over the world.

And no, we don't have to
rent a movie. That's the beauty.
We walk into Two Boots
with two quarters
(one for you, one for me)
battle to the death, and leave.