

# **More Love Poems Innit**

A sequence of poems by  
Rik Roots

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**Dedicated to Nigel**

(because 25 years is just the start of it)

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### [Catch](#)

Shall I make the wave stop mid-tumble, salt  
curl on a cusp of froth? Or snare the breeze  
in hawthorn buds, freeze street garbage into art,  
halt the heron leaping from her nest? Can I catch  
your eyes lost in that smile you share with cats?

I want to secure this, and this, in a chest  
and store them safe from harm; a charm to keep  
the scavenger who leaches chalk from bone  
at bay – but I fail. These instances lie: the wave

must crash, the hawthorn bloom; litter must burn  
as the heron's neck stretches and her wings  
slap rings into water. And bones must bleach –  
but not yet, my love, not yet! Not while  
the fractions between us keep our eyes wide.

## [The One](#)

*"There are many different ways to be a man,"*  
she said, *"and ten thousand tricks to falling*  
*in love."* Oh my sweet, I need to count them all,  
here, now, and let them cleave this time  
to countless, endless moments. What caught me first –  
a laugh to etch a web of cracks in diamond?  
A glance to snatch my eye wide? A tightened  
sinew caught across your neck? A gust  
of pit sweat, that snort, your tap of fingers  
on my drum-tight chest, a lip mid-bite –  
I topple into love with everything  
you do, demon infection who strikes and lingers,  
who plays my blood like a deep-note cello: smite  
me yesterday, tomorrow! You make me sing!

## [Just Do It](#)

It's like that moment when  
someone, burning the map,  
shouts: let's follow that starling!  
Like when Mum tosses baby  
into the air and bellows: catch!  
It's as if Charlie, finding gold

in his chocolate, eats the ticket;  
or you turn to me with eyes

cool and warm and half-lashed  
and say: let's move in together –  
and we leap elsewhere, each day  
another jump, mapless, flying  
free of care or promise of candy,  
daring the world to deliver.

### Midnap

Be warned, I keep this dreamhouse  
sparse – kitchen, bedroom, lounge:  
no space for broom or store. We pit  
spoor in a yard with face-mixed friends.

To each room, an altar – to hope,  
to growth, to you. Aside a bed a steam  
of steeped assam, a clip of bleach-frayed  
punk spike; across a sofa's curves a match  
of lobe-woven lungs, that shared air  
a safe dock for fond, blood warm words.

A galley pan upon the flame; a sweat  
of nettles in broth, their weal inks drawn  
and spiced like us by fresh starts: hug to me  
tight, my love, while I wake.

### The It of It

A river in flood, fast and deep and yet still – the base  
boulders are too low to ripple this quiet sprint of water,  
and there's no wind to tessellate its slate-cloud reflections.  
Our steps should be smothered by a pitch of roars, but not here:  
only the arch of my foot can tag the river's rumble, an ache  
at the instep when I unboot and desock and let mud meet skin.

I want you to know this. A camera can catch a mallard arsing and diving beneath a driven, rooty log but what of the husp caught in my throat as I watch? What technician's instrument can hope to trap that moment when the swirl of distant starlings merge with the first dance of evening midges around my head and my eyes splice and perspectives collapse and still

the river floods. No words. Instead, a setter at point, keen to snout deadly waters to fetch the spinning bird, now bearded in weeds, a braille of droplets running a soon-lost verse across its wings. No words – until a sketch of fingers tap to my palm, your hand gathering me back into me: *'Only an idiot walks barefoot here: look at the litter and shit and stuff!'*

## [JoJo](#)

When you glove my hand in yours I hold  
breath in my throat, count ruby stars  
as they drift within shuttered lids.

A pitch in my ear, a whine; carpet tufts trip  
at my toes; a huff of aged bacon; the sweat  
of your palms as you pull at my arm.

I spread fingers, take the mewling weight -  
soft and hot and bones in fur: so puny,  
this kitten, her claws clasped on my thumb.

Open our eyes: the birth of us is done.

## [As Silk Strokes Amber](#)

If the cholera had achieved its aim to drain the last drops  
from Nikola's guts, or that boxcar blast had cooked  
Thomas's flesh to char, or Michael had not apprenticed  
as a bookbinder or – worse – had let the better bred  
beat him back to his trade, then I would have to handwrite

these lines by candle flame. No bulb to glow, nor switch  
to spark it alive; no wires or waves to scrunch space  
through time and tie lovers together. The ink in my quill  
a day's labour, the paper a week's hunger and yet I would pay  
again, again to scratch out these Hallmarked words

*you are my purpose,  
my pulse, my breath  
and my love*

because never can I imagine a life of mine where you are not  
the root of it. Here I am, the one who thrives in the midst  
of your infection, your flames; a man immune to the sneers  
of know-alls, gladly annealed to his fate to stay strangely  
entangled in your electro-magnetic, magnificent charm.

### [Spring Fling](#)

We first furred as brown trees blushed pink  
in frosts: him taller, I more muscled,  
we made a knit of tongues, a fret of limbs  
as we drank ourselves to convulsions.

We were done before the petals fell.  
As cherries swelled I listened again  
and over to the mix-tape he gave me:  
*'All that's left is a band of gold ...'*

I can't play his music today. As seasons  
blew the tech grew and consumed us all;  
soon that keen flash of his iceberg eyes  
will melt from my wits, like a wish.

### [This thing we share is not that thing](#)

We were too drunk, that first time, a mix  
of wines and beers and petrol-fume tequila

salting our clown attempts to joust meat –  
no, this thing we share is not that thing.

We found it later, this thing we share,  
in a different dive. It twisted slowly  
from our mouths – a fine-wrought choke,  
each phrase or joke a link to chain us close.

Don't get me wrong. Our thing is love  
as much as tree is wood or mud is dust.  
There was no grace in our attempts to find  
that thing together: *"my mate fancies you!"*

I still share this thing, though he is gone  
from me. See? Here it is! Our secret tongue  
of trigger words hoop in my ear each time  
I window-shop for never-trade: tasty cock!

### [Central Station, Islington](#)

His walk is a stammer of toe pokes and heel scuffs –  
an eye-stunned debutante at his first gay venue.

A showboat couple performs at the bar, their attempts  
to eat the other's face blocking paths to alcohol.

She stands almost demure, her forthright courts black  
on her feet; foundation fails to hide white stubbles.

The loud ones hang out at the back, pool cue weapons  
slapped over biceps far wider than their twig legs.

Two – no, three – quiet and attentive in their corners.  
They pull smoke from sticks in metronome drags.

The sightseers gaggle near the stage, boys in tight jeans  
corralled by their keep-the-fuck-away babes.

There's regulars here too: Pert Pete, Oxblood Andy –  
Reg the Righteous has made a clean-shirt effort.

As we enter our hands palm, hot in their fingery tangle;  
we know the flows of this space: we hunt as a team.



## Sirens

*"There is a deep-sea Jesus who once hammered  
his hands into coral for the glory of God."*

I nod at his words, wise to his tales.  
*"Does he eat rafts of sharks for breakfast?"*

His smile is a tight line, un-arched,  
a clench of flesh in the egg of his head.

*"He has wracks for his hair-locks – he would die  
for your sins!"* I kneel already: my elbows

denting his pastel thigh – so soft, this knit  
of oil-dark tufts that net my fingers.

*"How do you know this,"* I ask his eyes,  
five fathoms above; watch as they close.

Like a spring tide his palms spread  
their warm weight over my scalp –

knead and sculpt, push deep my wrasse lips  
to consume the treasures that anchor our needs.

## Burn

I've been lost in memories so long,  
sieving ashes for clinkers.

I wake sick for a dead place, its echo  
an ember, brittle yet sharp.

I slept, watched membranes hatch  
– plasmas too chill for the touch

and yet I tried to hold each one close  
for they were me, once,

before I shattered myself for the gift  
of cock love – oh, I have sinned

and still I sin as I yawn and shake the dead  
me from my flesh and turn

and lag you tight in my limbs, my lover,  
for I must burn!

## Prowler

*'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:  
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.  
-- Omar Khayyam*

I see you! I have no clue why you stand  
more focused in my gaze, one of many  
jackboot skins in their identikit threads –  
your smile, perhaps? That angle of eyes  
to nose to chin just one degree the better?  
No time for questions as a tension starts  
its slow build through my heels, my hip.

I hunt by instinct: there's a lust in me  
that can hammer weeds through concrete,  
take a man by a thick of neck and shake  
him to a torrent of shivers, pelt slicked  
in sweats as a howl rips from his throat ...

I didn't choose this thing; all that I can ever be –  
for good or ill, for hate or hope – was sealed  
in my cells before my first astonished breath.

I know how this ends, see, the way I tease  
you from your mates when the bar shuts,  
the lines you feed me as I coax your fool belief  
that you are the alpha, I your toy for the time  
that remains before the sun erupts. We have

necessities to cull, my unknown friend,  
and my hunger burgeons beyond needs.

## [Well Met](#)

Four moons in the sky tonight: new waxed full  
waned – what gift is this? I thought you trouble  
when we met, big boots and attitude enough  
to tip the world to bruises.

This scratch etches across a serpent's head  
inked through skin to the bone within. We lie  
in a bed of hawthorns and nettles: you, me,  
poisons, provocations.

I like the way you flinch as I push a finger's tip  
in traces over your blistered thigh. Your eyes  
catch satellites in tear-pools; your fingers net  
a skull as we mix lips.

Who are you, bully machine? What brings you  
here to me, to my pop-up nest of hurts  
and hopes to let my limbs surround your flesh  
with sweat and urgent heat?

I strip dock sheets from their stalk, crush them  
for juice and balm my wheals – my hedgerow  
birthright gives me this know, even here  
in your city of dreams.

*"What's your name, mate?"* My name is silence.  
It takes a minute for me to dress and leave  
our bower, step goat-sure through derelictions.  
Clouds rile the heavens.

## [Prosopagnosia](#)

On good days all I see are mouths. Some pout,  
some chew. A yawning maw is an adventure  
with crampons and ropes. Smirks are welcome;  
smiles often false. Beards lag the lies within.

Other times are less fortunate: a morning  
spent in the company of walking noses can trip  
me to madness – how can the shapes of snouts  
be so infinite? Such colourful vents to the soul.

One time I walked among flocks of brows perched  
on foreheads. Once I skipped through henge-fields  
of chins. Sometimes I see only a swirl of palettes  
that slowly churn, topped by the occasional hat.

I have no control over what my stuttering mind  
will choose to specify. My horror is a surround  
of eyes – all stare and know and judge, dismiss ...  
except yours, my love. Only yours can I trust.

## [Nigel](#)

You snatched me back in ninety three,  
a crook-toothed smile spun through dim light  
to hook my eyes, a scatter of laughs and limbs  
lanky in jeans and tee – not my type  
at all and yet, and yet

here we are, somehow, boxed together  
so hard by that life we built I dare not guess  
where you end, I start – a melt of cheese  
over toast, cream and crunch, a shrine  
to sated lusts and still, and still –

## [Rain in Venice](#)

We find her hidden from invaders beyond a tight arched alley,  
beneath a bridge bricked between tenements. School kid shouts  
echo across the cobbled piazza whose puddles complete a mirror.

*"We could borrow her:  
you do the sculling  
and I'll do the song."*

I can smell linen in the air, and a boil of cabbage and fish.  
Our quarry, she lists: her cushions sheen with a first blush  
of emerald mold. Still it rains; the veil of drops grows heavy

when we kiss in this tourist-missed pocket, as open to stares  
as a Doge slumped in his woodworm throne. *"We can have cake,"*  
you hint, *"and prosecco. Happy birthday, my dirty old queer!"*

## [Garden Party](#)

I spot a crease in the lap  
of your shirt, there by the hip;  
a moment's stroke teases  
the cloth flatter – did you notice  
me touch you? Hands at your neck:  
I watch as they weave a knot  
along the nylon luster  
that garottes your throat –

"You look good," I say, no lie  
in my words. "You'll out-queen  
the Queen herself!" Your shrug  
is a novel of nerves and conquests,  
your smile a story half-told –  
a legend tensed to break bud.

Some days the pride I feel  
for you stabs in my lungs  
so hard it slaughters words  
like caged piglets – do you notice  
my joy when we share space,  
you and me, the world beyond?  
I spot a crumb on your lip,  
thumb it away as you tell me  
your plot to rule this day.

## Safe

You walked in my footsteps, once in time,  
on Dymchurch beach; I had mudlark eyes,  
could spot the squirt of a razorshell  
at ten yards. Safe I steered us then,  
gust-bent in our treads over shift-sands  
and flotsams as the lugs spouted brine  
warnings: quick the tide shifts.

No risk, no gain – do you not understand  
that without you I can risk nothing?  
Sometimes I hate you for making me live:  
welt-heel, mud instep, gash-toe.

## Hero

Each evening, when we tell our day over dinner,  
you reveal a new bruise – here the weal of a grip  
so tight it bracelets your wrist entire; there  
a kicked shin, a train-wreck scratch on the arm.  
A rose of ovals tacked mid-chest tally a fight  
taken to knuckles amid a gale of cuss words.

I love that you smile as you spin your epics  
of tiny victories – that bone-and-joints man  
who drew strength from your flesh to stand  
and walk to his food; the tiny woman adrift  
in hostile memories who found your eye  
and joined you in song. As we settle and eat

I watch you in glances and know: the well  
of care sprung from your core is too deep!  
You have no choice but to see each new face  
as a friend waiting to hatch, to smithy tears  
to jewels and worry smiles from scowls – even  
mine – and I adore you for it beyond wounds.

## [Headbreak](#)

I've never had my heart broken. Never felt my chest pressed between iron when someone whispers go away; get lost. Or that malicious fib: maybe some time apart will make us stronger – no. Those are the words that put boots in my brain, set blood in my face; how can such small words sideline my thoughts into an endless loop of *why, why, why?*

I've lied, too. That lad whose laugh went from intriguing to embarrassing in a week; the (many) men whose beauty grew alongside the level of phenols chugging my blood – I think I remembered to thank them; us uglies need to be kind.

You can break my head. Sometimes you do it daily: selective listening; a thoughtless word – just as I can tighten your springs and set you up for argument. We own each other's remote control and, when bored, the fun of channel-surfing through emotions and reactions is too tempting to refuse. Such is the life we have both embraced, eyes open.

## [The Last Breath is the First Breath](#)

It's been a heavy year, my love, like weights around a diver's chill waist dragging our faces through brine

and yet here we are, separated as fireworks fizz and bust between us your voice in my ear at midnight –

*Happy New Year: Happy Happy Love You*

– and then you're gone, dead line  
as the frail patients on your night-watch list  
seek comfort from deep memories

and I on my knees at prayer  
to a shattered night sky: give us strength  
to draw joy from each other

and calm when I hear your key unlock  
our shared door as I wake and welcome you  
like bubbles in dance under waves.

### **About the author**

Rik lives and works in London. To earn money, he codes websites and stuff. In his spare time he codes, and writes: mainly science fiction and poetry.

Rik's major claim to 'proper' poetic fame is being part of the group that established Magma Magazine - he even edited Magma 6, for his sins. The magazine's subsequent success has nothing to do with Rik; he left the Management Board a few weeks before Magma 7 was published.

### **Find Rik on ...**

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## **Other books by Rik Roots**

Rik gives away all of his books (in eBook formats) for free, mainly via Smashwords, Apple iBooks and Google Play. Hardback copies of each book can be found on Lulu (at cost price). Rik does not sell his works through Amazon or the Kindle Store.

Why the free giveaway? Rik writes for fun. He hopes the people who read his works also find some pleasure in the experience. What's life without a few gifts, huh?

### **Stories**

***The Gods in the Jungle***

***The Story Portraits (short stories)***

***Spin Trap: the Lonely City***

***Spin Trap: Worlds Within Worlds*** to be published before end of 2020

### **Memoir**

***Rik's Army Career (in its full and awful glory)*** - to be published in 2019

### **Poetry**

***22 Facets of my Father***

***Play Time***

***From Each Skull, A Story***

***Poems to Quote to your Lover***

***To Posterity***

***Snowdrop (a story in verse)***

***PaleoRik***

***And Still I Breathe***

***More Love Poems Innit***