

Poems to Quote to your Lover

Consisting of a set of love poems committed by
Rik Roots

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For the many men I have loved,
but mainly for Nigel
who's special.

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[**Summersex**](#)

We step barefoot across the still-wet humps
of Dymchurch beach, its moonlit streams an etch

of curves connecting each abandoned stretch
of sea back home. I catch your hand, my thumb
a chat-up telegraph of taps and strokes –
two strangers newly met at the party fires,
shared beers and jokes beneath the stars; desires
like this are best kept secret from our folks.

And after – after grit and groan and sweat
and lick amid the leathery strands of kelp –
I find a mermaid's purse among the threads
of nets and cans, the dog inside unwhelped.
You gift me one last kiss, a whisper: *'tide's
about to turn – I'll see you round sometime.'*

Cliff

As the hovercraft puffed its skirts
against the concrete apron, so I flew –
Dover harbour a spray of images
behind my brother as he swung me
over the salt-crust lawns, the edge
of the unguarded cliff, a handgrasp away
from learning the dangers of trust.

Now the last hovercraft has been scrapped
for spares, I can discover new seductions:
the dangers of windy walks through stiff grasses
to watch the sea bolster Dover below; the feel
of rain spattering my neck, my back
as I dance with you, tonight's friend,
on the edge of the cliff – eyes forward
not down – each step an experiment
in my trust of flinty contact.

First Love

You're drowning me: water
blisters over the river's dirt bed –
a borewall of branches, snakes, garbage
dumped in the forgotten course. This flood
of you pistons me through storm drains.

'Change must come,' grumbles
the corpse of a dog flushed
from its grave of dust and tyres.

Now the surge sings, percussion streams
harmonised with outlet gargles. Nerves
get pinched, pressed in my skin – the hands
of a giant who luges alongside me, holding me
safe in his great grasp; he pushes my form
through sewers, curving me into the sea.

You scare me; cleanse my veins
in chemicals and drown my lungs.
'Breed,' squirm the maggots in dogmeat –
*'Breed like the gods have smashed
the skins of the world!'*

Transaction

My friends ask me: how much does that special smile
of yours cost? I'll warn you now it's pricey:

not a trinket stacked on shelves in giftshops
trading junk. You cannot wipe my palms

with coins and watch it swipe its muscly tricks
across my face, nor will enticements bag you

that act – for a drink I'll swap a grin, and for food
I'll pack a leer into our dialogue. But

my smile, my honest sweat-on-face with blushing grace
stretch of lips and crowfeet tracks towards my ears,

deserves a deal only you can strike, my love, when
you look at me with lids half-drawn across your eyes.

Eating Out

When he laughs his tongue
splits his lips, spider lines
compressed like the accordion
serenading the the diners;
the veins across his bow-nose
beacon his joy of fine malts.

Her joy is sedate, her oatmeal
hands clasped to the linen
where she hides her smile,
her beige eyes tuned to his face;
I watch her water-stretched heel
stroke along the curve of his calf.

I carve designs on the tablecloth
with the steel of my knife, quiet
amid the clatter. As I wait
for your late arrival I refuel
on cheap house white and the sight
of the waiter's tight groin.

Nothing Much

Look how quiet the room is: a cat
whiskers behind sunlit curtains
for spiders; noses cold rice
from a plate in search of meat.

Shadows shoal the tank, each a life
behind the green scum growing
on the glass. Tide rings in the mug
mark the slow sips of a cold coffee.

You activate me remotely, the song
of the phone triggering animation,
audio smiles and shrugs as we chat
for a while about nothing much at all.

Accessory

Such a stupid hat.
Not you, the way it falls
across your eyes, the brim
sieving dust mites;
a swatch of orange
without feathers
– felt, maybe,
or shoddy.

So many rags and snags
rolled tight to fit
in this cupboard.

Dress up for me.
Let fall your hat, your shirt –
wear me, tonight, my supple
leather laced tight
to you.

When the Battle Ends

Look out of the window: see how
the sparrowhawk plucks feathers, how
the pigeon flaps grit over the path?

I bought a brace of feathers once,
tied them to my arms and flapped –
elbows held acute above the shoulders.

Look at you, crying. Why cry over
the carcass of a bird you've never loved?
You need new eyes to see beyond
the unzipped barbs along the quill.

An Office Acquaintance Offers Advice

He said: *'love is
a sport of both skill
and chance, strategic
planning must become your
core competence.'*

I said: *'why render these chemicals
into a game?'*

He said: *'you have to
compete, my friend.'*

I said: nothing. I watched his tongue
moisten his underlip, a quick slither
of spittle between words to gloss
his looks. He smelt of sharp spices.
I watched him cock his head, his eyes
remained symmetrical, blue – electrodes
pushed through my forehead. I watched
his throat form thoughts; a rhythmic
rise and close, rise and close.
Curled hairs caressed his larynx.

He said, oh,
something or other.
I wasn't listening.

Trade

You grab my hand and net aside
the camouflage and walk into the murk:
there's ghosts in here – they moan
in whispers, grunts; the shunts
and smacks of fruitless, faceless
love; anonymous entanglements
of slugging tongues. I slip
my hands around your waist,
then down into your jeans to cup
your muscled arse, pull our groins
together. Can you see the devil
set within my eyes? I can suck
the wisdom teeth from jaws,
the snot from lungs; I
can gnaw through sweat-built chests
to lick the hearts of warriors,
my fifteen minute friend who asked
to dance astride some tumid tail.

First Night

It was your eyes that sobered me: ice
at the end of the world; the ghost of a fox
staring down his hare across the tundra;

a chilled air vaulting through the sweat
of men as they drank, posed, assessed. That glance
of shivered blue left me feral. I was in the bar

and then I was in the bar with you. When
you passed me lager, I spied iceflake glints
on your dew claw. We danced, I think

we danced; or possibly you stalked my tracks
through the snows of our private ecology –
new ground frozen from the polar seas.

The Cartographers

You promise me treasure, offer
your body as the map that leads
to riches. I search for symbols
in the folds of your skin; intercept
clues on tasks to perform morsed
by white eyeflags, semaphored by curls
and angles at the edge of your mouth.

Your hands challenge translations –
they fly to sift through the world.
I have to vector them, pin each digit
with a symbol: here be dragon lairs,
unicorn trails, wells of gold coin.

My finger sketches your face's edges,
the cream henge of pegs cradled within lips.
'The map is not the thing,' your tongue
hints. But I know this – I dismiss
the adipose spoils midriffing you,
mere landscaping that can't disguise
the designs etched in your marrow.

I could finish exploring this map,
but instead I let you fold me tight
inside your elbows, watch you build
a map of me in the pits of your eyes.

Exhibits

She was skipping over the rope, her body
a basket and her face an embrace of garbage.
We laughed like the monkey laughed, his snout
two model lorries axle to axle, though his laugh
was silent while ours staccatoed across
the boxed up exhibition space, disturbing
frowncast students and mumbly aficionados.
'Why can't these idiots see how funny he was?'
you wondered. But then Picasso sold his bits
and pieces so idiots could mount them
in ice bright halls while he mounted whores
in Paris. I'd have mounted you there and then
but the gallery staff had our number and our hour
in the company of genius was almost done.

Morsels

When I fed you I set you three courses:
oysters from Whitstable, a carnival
of slime singed with lemon, edged
from ashtray shells and gulped;
a testicle of truffle, shaved
into a soft scramble of eggs and cream
and served on toast – crumbs knocked
from your chin by my thumb, each morsel
followed by a froth of champagne;
figs stuffed with mole, the bitter
chocolate squeezed from the fruit
as you bit the sweet flesh.

When we fed guests you set me:
rings of calamari around a candle
guttering its wax into my navel;
frets of watercress stems woven
through the down between the hooks
of my hips, dripping from the rinse;
a pharaoh's necklace – layers of mango
intersliced with pear flesh, molded
to the folds of muscle and fat
and bone lacing my heart within

its cavity, safe from the scavengers
snuffling through our home.

Stood outside the office, smoking

Winter spit taps on my skull:
cold drops print '*you don't belong
out here*' on the paving slabs.

These shoes I borrowed pinch
my toes and your coat's too thin
to keep the wind at bay. Still,

this morning's kiss still warms
my lips. I puff smoke between the rain
and respond: '*you don't belong in me.*'

Take this Man

I married you on a couch in Clarksenwell,
its stuffing the curls of groin-hair
that Sebastian had buzz-cut from clients.
We held hands as he dabbed the needle
in vodka, pressed its exquisite point
through the seam of my glans. Not once
did you glance from my face to watch
my testicles dance to the pain. We swapped
our vows in white-hard hand grasps and later
we kissed, my trousers loose on my waist
and a dribble of lust on my newest ring.

Language

So when did we begin to evolve
a different tongue? That first night
of friction, perhaps, our growls
new sounds for acts and thoughts;
or weeks later, meeting in pubs,
shifting lexemes to build a space
between us and the crowds
who admired our mutual lusts?

Or did we develop our idiolect
browsing shops for sofas and linens,
partners in style crimes? I speak you
as well as you talk me, and sometimes
we'll even chat silently, conversations
conveyed by touch, look. Observe how
my shoulders type: *'I love you!'*

Puppy Love

When I heard that song on the radio
I became a silver jubilee younger. You
look good in my head, the shaving cuts
barely crevassing your sheen of cheek.

Lavender was your smell, as soft
on my nose as your clothes against
my hands when by chance I stroked you:
I still want to peel you of them.

We drifted – my lust got hidden in
text books, equations, exams. You
were too tidy in the end, I was scared
and the song was derivative, cheap.

Token

I buy a rose to mark
our anniversary:
stout, black thorns
erupting through the stalk
in whorls; the sawtooth leaves
nestling the tight bud –
sheets of peach and cream
rolled in green folders.

You smile, take my palms
and lag them round the stem,
pluck a petal and press it
inside my mouth with kisses:
'Love,' you whisper, *'is what
we do with symbols, yes?'*
I nod and grin, and bite
the lips that feed me.

Joy

You're fun! Not as funny as the time
we stood in the gay bar and watched
the fat drag act fire a replica cannon
which had, as his performance droned on,
slowly drooped until its dulled mouth
was level with the audience. *'That
will teach queens to douse in lacquer
on a Friday night,'* you said. I burned

your hair, once, when we made a game
with candles and ropes. In those days
we would play twice a day: we'd pounce
each other for instant satisfaction.

Nowadays, gratitude comes in tea bags
and interrogations. I could have given
you up a decade ago, but somehow we found
a slow burn that keeps us chuckling still.

Renewal

We severed the band together, took a saw
to its dulled sheen and rasped atoms

of metal into the air. Soap had failed
to ease its passage. Later we shopped

for a larger token. I would not sacrifice
a single digit of yours to an oval symbol

of our expanding love.

Respect

It's strange how our fingers
interweave when we cross roads,
shop for carrots, newspapers,
cartons of milk. Sometimes

I'll fold my palm around
your knuckles to keep them
warm while we wait for the bus,
or walk to town. Sometimes

you knuckle my hand away: decisions
are shared in this space, we both
must agree to risk the spits
of strangers, haters, sometimes.

About these poems

Welcome to this, my third collection of poems. In this collection, I am proud to present you with some love. These poems deal with loves and relationships in all their wonderful and woeful manifestations. Some of the poems are a little raunchier than others, but there's nothing (too) offensive or smutty in them!

About the author

Rik was born in the small village of Dymchurch on the Romney Marshes in Kent, England. Dymchurch has three Martello Towers and a station on the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway. This was Rik's world for the first 24 years of his life, except for those six terms away at college - the North East Surrey College of Technology, that is: Rik somehow managed to fail his final school exams and thus never made it to university.

Poetically, Rik has been writing since he was 14 or 15. He happily acknowledges that no work from that early period survives, thanks to a fortuitous kitchen fire which may or may not have been started deliberately. The kitchen was relatively unharmed, in case you were worrying.

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.

Rik's main publishing credentials are, strangely enough, in Magma Magazine. Nowadays he rarely submits poems to journals and has no plans to seek 'proper' venues for his chapbooks and manuscripts - Rik has a website, after all, which makes him very happy!

On a broader note, Rik is currently studying for that elusive degree with the Open University, and writing science fiction novels. Rik used to work for Her Majesty's Civil Service which is, he says, a perfect training ground for people wanting to write novels based on alternate realities and fantasy.

Rik currently lives in London, for his sins. His hobbies include causing trouble in various online venues and inventing languages. He also codes up websites - like this one.

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Other books by Rik Roots

The Gods in the Jungle

'Maeduul? What's wrong?'

He turned to look at the woman. She was staring at something just above them. Intrigued, he made to turn around to see what she saw.

'If you love life: don't move!' the woman hissed.



Suddenly, a flutter of fear tickled in his stomach. He could feel Delesse searching along his arm for his hand. When she found it, she grabbed it tightly.

'What is it?' he asked the woman, his whisper as loud as he dared.

'Turn your heads very slowly. Don't make any sudden movements! Don't shout or scream!'

He complied with the Servant's orders.

It was sat on its haunches no more than a couple of metres away from them, with only the boulder they had been leaning against between them. It took all his resolve to stop his muscles throwing his body down the hill.

Delesse breathed next to him: 'She's magnificent!'

He could see the outlines of muscles beneath the creature's fur; the long, sharp fore-claws resting on its hind limbs. It seemed ... interested in them.

'Dear God,' he whispered, 'it must be almost as tall as I am!'

'Maeduul, what are we going to do? Can you stand up and get the guards' attention?'

The woman didn't answer. He could see clearly now the alien-ness of the animal; the fur-clad scales that lay over its skin. From its mouth a thin, blue tongue emerged and waved through the air, as if tasting it.

'Maeduul!' he hissed. 'Do something!'

'I think,' said the woman, 'that it's up to you to do something. This little god has come visiting you for a reason.'

'What?'

'I think your contract is being blessed by the jungle itself. I think this might be a good time for you two to make a baby ...'

He couldn't move, but the woman's words seemed to mean something to Delesse. Slowly she leaned her head towards his and whispered in his ear.

'It's certainly a novel way to die ...'

Her hand let go of his, moved down to the leather enclosing his crotch. Not believing what was happening – not believing he could stiffen so rapidly while the demons of fear beat on his chest with hammers – he did as the Servant suggested: slowly; silently. Relentless until his release.

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*The jungle city of Bassakesh holds the keys to the future of the Vreski Empire. It is the sole source of the valuable Vedegga dye; it is also home to the mysterious Servants, who harvest the dye.*

*Delesse, the Bassakesh Governor's daughter, is marrying Loken, heir to one of the most powerful Clans in the Empire - whose leaders, Loken's own Father and uncle, are plotting to disrupt the dye harvest as part of their wider plans to win the aged Emperor's throne.*

*When those hasty plans go awry a terrible plague is unleashed across Bassakesh, bringing widespread death and chaos.*

*Aided by a collection of survivors and Servants, Delesse and Loken must travel through the jungles to face down and defeat the people who not only threaten the Empire's stability, but also ruined their wedding.*

*Set on a planet far from Earth, The Gods in the Jungle is an investigation of the drives and desires, fears and beliefs of the various peoples and classes in a crumbling society, through the eyes of those most immediately involved in events which threaten to bring an Empire to its knees.*

### **Snowdrop – A Story in Verse**

For most people, Christmas is a time of joy; for some it has become a time of lonely sorrow.

For Snowdrop, Christmas is about to become a timeless place of fear, horror – and unimaginable loss.

On the hill above the Marshes, someone watches;  
*some thing waits ...*

