

Why I Was Late

poems by

Charlie Petch

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Brick Books
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Dear C3PO

To be accompanied by a ukulele & musical saw build on loop pedal, done to the tune of "You're Just Too Good To Be True" by Bob Crewe & Bob Gaudio.

I always thought you were gay
I imagined there was a
little glorious hole
somewhere in R2D2
and when you made love
he made those happy
 *"hrrr hrrr brwing tup
 whrrr hrr"*
sounds

maybe he would turn his head
all around to see you
try to read joy
in your manufactured face

I always thought you a top
that R2D2 whispered love songs
that didn't sound pre-programmed
or desperate
or othering

C3PO
was your golden exterior
made up of melted down wedding rings
tossed into vats at the training schools
the sheddings of those
ready to die ?

these galaxy warriors
who laughed at what made you feminine
which sounds like hesitation
which sounds like
we are afraid
to feel

how you must have keened
every time your lover
went to war
became a plug in another machine
(as unprotected as a jet wing)

your gold plated face
never told us
that behind the joke
was a man in love
with a soldier

I felt your tears my sweet
though your face
betrayed
nothing

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL9-yWFASpM

The Ballad of Owen Hart

Performed with a loop build on dulcimer and viola.

Wrestling died on live TV
my brother and I
saw the cameras sway
saw them fight not to look
at your fallen beauty

Son of Stu
brother of Jim, of Davey, of Brett
cousin of Rowdy Roddy Piper
your family trained generations
of gentleman and lady wrestlers

but that all changed
May 23rd, 1999
when Owen
you walked up 99 steps
got strapped into an untested harness
and were thrown to your death
in the ring

Owen
as you free fell 30 metres
what thoughts were with you
as the clip failed to catch
as the crowd cheered your names

"BLUE BLAZER"

who said he could fly
or

"OWEN HART"

who trusted he would

maybe
as you rushed towards death
you touched the small
razor blade in your pants
worried you'd land on it

maybe
you said God's name

maybe
you thought the mat
would bounce your body back

did you curse Vince McMahon
who turned your father's legacy
into the mechanism
of your death

Blue Blazer
that morning
you kissed
your bed - headed children goodbye

liplocked your wife
promised her
you weren't going to do the stunt

how did you get
from Martha's relieved embrace
to falling to your death
on

"LIIIVE PAY PER VIEW?"

was it because you knew
that pure wrestling
has no hero's reward?
that pride and tradition
won't put food on the table?
that the Olympics only come
every four years?
but the wrestling franchise
is on

"EVERY NIGHT OF THE WEEK"

and to win
you cannot be Owen Hart
who saves every dime for his family
who comes from Canadian royalty

you have to put on costumes
that make you feel foolish
you have to be the Blue Blazer

"YOU HAVE TO FLY"

when kids wrestle now
they use shattered fluorescent tubes
folding tables
metal chairs
and ladders
that lead nowhere

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFYqkLq3Nxs

I'm So Good At Drag

To be performed with the ukulele, foot tambourine, thunder tube, musical saw, viola, basically anything that can make noise. I add these to the loop as the poem builds. Also features my "cool dad" dance moves.

I'm so good at drag
I got the doctor to put "female"
on my birth certificate

I'm so good at drag
my parents called me
"Ca-ther-innne"

I'm so good at drag
I got the job and over performed
and still didn't get promoted
but I did get sexually harassed
and my ideas stolen

I'm so good at drag
my boy band
tried to pay me less
than the other guys

I'm so good at drag
I'm allowed to cry in public
be excused from manual labour
and can say things like
"I wish I could give birth"
and nobody laughs at me

(No I don't want to give birth, I was just trying to make a point)

I'm so good at drag
that some of my cis male partners
thought they we were having
straight sex the whole time

I'm so good at drag
that Ru Paul doesn't
want me on his
fucking show

I'm so good at drag
that some of you
don't understand
what this poem is about

www.youtube.com/watch?v=REqYqGixuKg

The Saddest Country Song You Ever Wrote

Performed with gentle finger picking on ukulele.

On the way to your memorial

I threw away the pieces of wall
you hit instead of me

the crowbar I kept under the bed
was in the trunk
and I was breathing louder
than you would have liked

we were a love poem once

on the way to your memorial
we stopped to get food
they didn't have the bbq chips you liked
is this how I would make you angry again

your memorial
was held at the dream home
you spoke of on our aimless country drives
I'm told these hermit hills
sapped your depression
the heart attack
that made you a cruel stranger
did not have weight here

you worked the land like it would save your soul
put my letters, cards and love poems in a folder
for your sisters to find
kept my picture in your music room
our wedding songs on playlists

told everyone you loved me
that I never deserved your anger
found their forgiveness for the years
spent furrowed furious

I only ever wanted you to be happy
and here, you were
you were

so now I suckle ice cream like an abandoned child
let our dog on the couch so I'm never alone
dream about falling asleep on the subway
instead of going to shows
without the force of your hatred and love
I am walking on Mars

Matty my honey
my first true love poem
this is the saddest country song
you ever wrote

[Start at 22mins, from a full set at Words Aloud]
www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj9SABkNmm4

How Did You Get To Be So Strong? Potential Answers

Public transportation.
I just stopped showering.

I am my own problem.

El Caminos are my favourite car.
Pro wrestling and pop tarts,
molestation.
I knew Snuffleupagus existed and
told no one on Sesame Street.

White Jesus looks like
every guy who's raped me.
I eat meat and love animals.

White supremacy helped me
afford therapy.
Doesn't survival,
really just mean
alive?

My ex-husband's death
made me a Widex,
which sounds like Windex.
I can find ways to laugh about this.
Thanks fuck I can laugh about this.

Didn't Bambi make a career out of grief?
I just have good comeback lines.

As a child I preferred band aids
to looking at my own skin.
I love the smell of gasoline.
My breasts don't belong to me,
so in a way,
some of it didn't happen.

I breathe easiest in emergencies.
My first best friend is psychotic.
Wolves only turn on the weakest.
I want to be seen as a man.
Isn't this how to be a man?

My brain is actually a maze of
safety deposit boxes.

I've been taught
the terrible art
of how to walk tall
on stolen land.

I am surrounded by people
who need to be stronger than me.

Because artists save me every day.
Because my art saves me.
Because the stage is never
the only open palm
that holds me up.

Transilience

Trans is waiting for your name to get called,
while the teams go ahead
and play the game on top of you.

Genderfluid is the shiny new car
that your parents think is a wreck
and will never let out of the driveway.

Non-Binary is rehearsing how to exit the bathroom stall
in a way that will get you past the four men surrounding it,
but not incite their violence.

Gender non-conforming is running up to cis people, asking
“Is this how you felt in your skin this whole time?”
while they stare at your high five until your arm withers.

Transmasculine is walking well behind women
so they don't get worried, while evading men
who follow you too closely.

Fluidity is taking out the pin
from the - *“how can I help you?”* grenade
and hearing the answer click on retail floors.

Coming out is revisiting the library in your brain,
and closing so many books that had remained open
waiting for answers.

Trans is whispering to your child self,

*“I’m so sorry I didn’t listen to you
let’s give you the life you deserve.”*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IomsO839dtw

How To Tell If A Poem Is Trans Or Not

(A helpful guide for slam poetry judges)

Look directly at the crotch
gently wave away all
thoughts about how
you never cared about crotches of poems
before this poet

consider the subject

is it about love, loss,
surgery, hesitation,
breath, death threats
surgery, surgery?

does it rhyme?

look at the crotch again

don't look up to see the poet looking
at you looking at their crotch
there's no need to involve them
in this ruptured universe

grasp for any gendered word
is tree bark about being a man?
are they saying anything about blood
or ribcages? ribcages are a trans thing now?

stare at its chest
they're saying
something something
 "inclusion" now
or was that
 "foregone conclusion"

wait, don't you have to score the poem?
how can you score it if you don't know

oh why did they write about a jack pine
it's all so unfamiliar just words like an apogee
with no point of gender reference

they look trans
why aren't they talking about that then?
talk about that then

times almost up
their crotch is telling you nothing
do you score them like a cis person?

maybe they're straight, dear lord
did you get it all wrong?
how low a score can you give them
if they might not be trans?

they warned you about slam
now here you are

crotchmerized

www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5kXsMDeRg

Wookie Love

To be accompanied by a "A Place To Sleep", a tango recorded with The Silver Hearts during my tenure.

Chewbacca
you are my favourite
of all of the wookies

since I saw you in the first movie
which is actually the fourth movie
you have ruined me for all of humanity

Chewie

there is never enough chest hair to satisfy me
never enough back hair to warm the cockles of my star warring
heart
the smell of sweat and hair is sadly not husky musky enough
to fully fill my
little tusk

but I try I try
*"just back from the gym?
bring that hairy ass in"*

the love cries of my partners have never equaled
the parallel universe of what comes out of your small-toothed
mouth
why are you not more saber toothed?
light, saber-toothed platitudes of love from you

would be like
sweet baths of sound
guttural bubblings
of glorious ghastrly sex

would you make me wear a mohair onesie
so that you could accept me as your own?
would you have me stop manscaping my landscape
so that there is somewhere soft for you to land?

Chewbacca, would you only chew my bacca
if the hair was long enough to be tangled with yours?

I want to twist and turn and grind you until we become
dreadlocked

(I'd take them out later though, because I'm white)

I want my skin to be patterned in scraped lines of the lineage you
left to be with me
for our kitchen to smell of victory sage and the rubbed salts of
galaxy seas

we could live our lives
as naked apes

(although I would still wear a sports bro, or binder
because it really feels weird not to have one on)

maybe we could both wear sports bros or binders
and dance to space music created for us
by the human John Williams

I didn't think our love
could outlast my crush on
Han Solo
but when I'm with my
han(d)s solo
it is your Wookiee cry
that blushes my neck
your feet (that must smell of freedom)
I want resting in my backs of my calves

it is you Wookiee man
 your ammo belt
 crashed to my floor
 your tendrils caught in my
 over-flossed teeth
that pull out my belief
that the language we seek
need never include the
oppressive learning of English

Wookiee I cry out
 “WAAHHARRRRHHH”
in hopes someday, you might cruise
your Millennium Falcon my way

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFkI52_AqB0

My First Lipping Hero

Performed with ukulele fingerpicking

We called you champ.

Mike Tyson

when you and I open up our mouths
they turn into bull's eyes
and we are silent in our defense
because words can be landmines

the first time I saw you
unabashed unapologetic on the
microphone

you became my first lipping hero

I imagined us in my playground
bullies fleeing our earthquake footsteps

I tried to duck and dance like a butterfly Ali
you were no one's punching bag
launched iron fists to the tune of 38 arrests
before you hit age thirteen.

the boxing world plucked you from reform school
maybe you felt saved
I know how education can seem like the enemy
and for a boy targeted for his

high-pitched lispy voice
you probably felt relieved that the teacher
would never call on you again.

your lisp never got better
your voice never dropped
you put up your dukes
gave up on language
and let your dreams narrow

before your mom died
she gave you to
your boxing coach
Cus D'Amato
who polished you up like a
custom auto
but never could install any breaks

there were no bells in the bedrooms you strode into
no towels to be thrown in front of your thundering ways

raised to be a wild animal
you look calmest wrestling with your bengal tiger
even your friends say you belong in a cage

but Mike
you're as used to betrayal as getting punched in the gut
I mean the man who could have protected you
left
when you were just two years old

there are no “s” sounds in “dad”
you could have said it everyday
without the worry of retribution

instead you shout it into barrel chests
it bounces back with the blank stares of men
who love you
for your fists
and the bags of money they bring

maybe what you needed
was a male embrace
not to be cut short by a bell

now in the wake of Holyfield’s spat out ear
your empire crumbles
your 4-year-old daughter dies
your other children look at you in fear
and your beloved tiger
paces behind some stranger’s bars

the television calls you a monster
speaks of your failures
your crimes
your legacy of violence

Mike
I like your new heavyweight fight
the one called Sobriety
as your daughter’s easy laughter
makes you champion

the father who's there
the father who came back

I've written so many endings
to your poem, Mike
some were too kind
others damned you
but you grew
in love and recovery

some humans are capable of so much
when we give them a chance
to get up off the mat

Buried Treasure

If you are currently eating, I'd recommend you stop until you're done this poem. Performed with a sexy dulcimer.

For a second I glance
at that spot
by your blushing earlobe
my treasure glinting

I force my attention
back
don't let on
don't stare

will my mouth
travel down your chest?
suck your nipples hot
blow them cold
linger at arced pelvis
and then tongue you like a
weathered stallion at a salt lick?

will I taste us
before I ask
with cum-tangy breath
for you to

“turn over”

you gaze at my fetish-glazed eyes
fear fluttering flaccid state

“why?”

you ask
my attempts at being casual,
laughable

*“you um... have
some bacne you can't get to
let me help you.”*

you turn over
and the poetry of your blemishes
open soft-cover sweetly

there it is

a story of trapped dirt, oil
and capped
worms buried in pores
a revolution
waiting to be freed
by my trim fingertips

when you're not around
I think about those three aged blackheads
by your ear
imagine long lingering dunking baths
heated lavender cloths
ambient music playing

trip hop tales of our
estheticia

oh, do not think I'm the only one
we find each other at garden parties
strawberry socials
and at the bottom of wine bottles

loosened by liquor
we speak freely
of acne vulgaris
closed comedos
open comedos
papules
and refilling sebules

we are at your spas
we're staring at the back of your sweaty neck right now
we go to school for twenty years to call ourselves
dermatologists
but we are lovers
freedom fighters

we can identify our lover's bodies
by the scars that we leave

"yes officer, it's them, I'm sure of it"

we'll say with tears brimming
knowing we can never press
those pores again.

let us heal you
don't make us live in shame
our passions spent downloading
"Biggest Zit Pop Ever"
"Cysts of Cyprus"
"Infected Boils of Istanbul"

and so dear reader
when you finally relent
and let me at your back
know that the nuggets that
I extract, and then present to you
with all the affection of a
murderous cat
is me showing you

the pus
real love
is made of

www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEkfQqnJVLI