

SAMPLE POEMS FROM

Horrible Dance

by

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Canada



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Pre-Transition House Party Disaster

bedroom

that's where the blood was happening.

one woman had a knife & one woman had a body.

in, *yank*, out.

in, *yank*, out.

inground pool

my guts invited the water in.

teens with solo cups watched me sink. one guy wore a suit.

i opened my mouth to smile

& my teeth floated out.

bathroom

i washed my face in cold water.

i scrubbed my hands raw.

i cornered my head into the sink & thought about growing old as
a man.

it was either lipstick, or blood, and i couldn't get it out of my shirt.

basement

these ndg houses all look the same.
she said her dad was at a hockey game so we could smoke in her
basement.
we found a freezer full of butter,
like, fuckin completely full of butter.
making out with straight girls was this rickety mix of desire &
guilt & fear & obligation & shame.
in each possible world, one of us was a predator.

back porch expanding

dustin dropped sarah's pipe & it broke.
i stole beers from some guy's two-four.
daniel minuk said something about how much vodka i poured.
sarah agreed with me: everyone's a little bit bi, right?
zach told everyone he'd shaved his balls.
ryan didn't wanna finish his forty so i chugged it.
i curled into the sinkholes of a teenage gender.
i dumped the mickey of jack daniels in apple juice.
i lay down in the middle of the road,
calling it a suicide attempt,
but these were suburban fucking house parties.
cedar drive didn't have the traffic to kill me.
i gave so many fake names to guys who played rugby.
i said i was called timothee chalamet (no relation).
we pulled pranks like hiding butter all over the house.
i drank most of seb's beer.
my rictus got wider.

if some dude left his solo cup unattended i'd steal it.
i saw the knife coming & forced a smile.
i told my ex i was trans while blackout drunk.
what happened was i noticed they were at the party & instantly
drank most of a bottle of whiskey like muscle memory.
i put "in the air tonight" on the speakers so i could watch bros
anticipate the drum bit,
alone in the malevolent knowledge that there's a full three minutes
before the drum bit actually hits.
i put on music my ex liked.
this went on for like four years.
i drank everything courtney brought.
i went to halloween parties as "a girl".
someone threw a painting through a window.
someone handed me a garbage bag to puke in. i missed.
someone kneed me in the stomach.
someone brought fucking baileys.
someone had been using the bathroom for half an hour.
someone thought i stole their jacket.
someone asked if i was alright.
someone said my shirt made me look like i was in odd future.
someone said "oh shit, from behind i actually thought you were a
girl."
i puked in the metro.
i'm pretty sure i never cried.
i sunk to the bottom.
i did really fucking good in school.
i lay still as she ran the knife into me again.
i was certain only that i deserved it.
i watched the sedans & the trees, looming & angular from down
on the asphalt.

Family/History

1.

You're not dead if I remember you hurting me.

I hope summer breaks your back.

You drape your voice around the house.

I sit in the swelter, reading, rocking.

You say, "Don't, it might bring the house down."

2.

The still-living river flooded my grandmother's basement.

We painted the floors and walls a blaring white.

Told myself kneeling, "Poetry is stupid and selfish.

I write when I want to look like I'm using my hands."

Forget the words, not the teeth, wet and deflating.

In this house we are our function.

Inheritance law as expressed by meat.

Kneeling to paint, to flatten.

A family's murderous disconnect.

Power is successive, like water, or paving over water.

I gouge myself from the world.
Detachment and profit as the only white memory.

The river, breathing, pooled on the carpet despite us.
We painted our house so it hurt the eyes.

On my knees I know what my parents are.
I can see where *the* body becomes *a* body.

3.

A house is a slim wall against the storm.
Oh summer so sickly.
I'm crawling back to the language again.

Oh amygdala.
It's oozing in, thru the floor & the ceiling.
Oh the poems are scabbing.

A bedroom is a slim wall against a family.
Your father won't clean up the mess.
You left your shame in the living room.

Like a storm, but like the rain, only gentle, like dripping water.
Oh the names I could tell.
A house is a slim wall dripping blood.

Oh in Montreal they're cool.
A door is a penetrable thing.
We burned the old city down.

Oh old man is big oh new man loves old man.
Oh old man is bad oh new man hates old man.
Oh old man is gone oh new man is big.

Oh let the blood guide you.
Oh I'm losing you again.
Oh here it comes, up through my insides – but gently, in droplets.

4.

When my grandmother dies, I'll cough up coal.
I'll hate myself for having blocked her number.
She said this would happen. "I'm getting old,
it's not as though I'll be around forever."

I'll lie down all day, eating guilt and rot.
Hide at the funeral like a mob boss,
back to the wall, expecting a gunshot.
Christ, what a heavy, jagged thing I lost.

When she dies, I'll walk into the river.
Stand in the current a while, the freezing
flailing waves against me. I will give her
my body, bloodless, beaten, and heaving.

It'd be nice to shake for a reason that's not
My body remembering things I forgot.

On Shame

can you forgive me
for how you hurt me so bad

Night at the Sexual Assault Center Art Show

Out of place immediately.

Scan artwork for clues. *The female body the female body the female body.* Get punch.

Notice plastic cup shards emerging through your fingers like **slag** *mites: break, of course they do, that break.*

Sink through the space like mud. *apnel.*

Card saying it wasn't your fault. **Room full** of faces lurching like a trash compactor.

Packing paper on the wall says write whose fault it really was. *A signup sheet.*

Stare at it like a drier full of sneakers: shaking, mostly empty, clattering.

Female body the female space into which the male

Surprise a girl as she leaves the bathroom and sees **you waiting** *eyes she knows what you are.*

Wash your face. Remember after.

You scrubbed skin off your filth.

See reflected offscreen someone talking about the phallus.

Horror in how you spill dip.

Believe you will puke *remember this.*

Sit in ways that hurt your legs. *this.*

Wish your body could shrink.

Intruder *place immediately.*

Scan artwork. **The female** body the female body the female body. *Get punch.*

Notice plastic cup shards emerging through your fingers like **Hands** *that break, of course they do, that break.*

Car *teeming* blocking view like shrapnel.

Card saying it wasn't your fault. **Liar** *Thief* of faces lurching like a trash compactor.

Packing paper on the wall says write whose fault it really was. A signup sheet.

Stare at it like a drier full of sneakers: shaking, mostly empty, clattering.

Female body the female space into which the male

Sinks *disguised in overlarge sweater* invading. **sees** **Terror** *in her* eyes she knows what you are.

Wash your face. Remember after.

You scrubbed skin off your filth.

See reflected offscreen someone talking about the phallus.

Horror in how you spill dip.

Your shoulders will remember this.

Your shoulders will remember this.

Wish your body could shrink.

A Pearl

when we fucked
the old old fears fell on my fingers

left to the bathroom & i was ruined
by small white moths on the kitchen floor

we'd left the window open
i saw them all at once

i knew you had that phobia
so i killed them
their wings made little krak sounds as i crushed them
each one made that little krak sound

it felt so gentle
we broke up that weekend

i want to hide that gentleness
a pearl for me, alone
but i want to write it

poetry's a vampire that way
one of the wounds i'll have to gape
is breaking small white moths under soft white tissue

Sonnet Under Ice

I had a poem in his magazine.
They paid me 50 dollars. That's my price.
She told us what she did. It had a sheen,
a beauty like a body under ice.

They let him teach again, the fucking cowards.
My poem wasn't even any good.
I guess we all forgot who he devoured
cuz it was easy. He asked me who I'd

fuck. So punctured people punctured people.
We learned about how conflict's not abuse.
*We have to work with her. It's just carceral
logic to protect the girls she raped.*

What the fuck is rape supposed to rhyme with.
Art is bootlicking. Run fast. Trust no bitch.

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