

SAMPLE POEMS FROM

Hsin

by

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verified with the corrected, finished book.

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from “Untitled”

Our childhood rules were simple.

Husha husha,
topple or be blown.

She could smell if you'd touched her pillow.

I could lie.

We could be anyone in the restaurant.

Bestest tale wins.

Don't want to hear some sob story about

a teenage girl knocked up.

Asian eyes and blonde, blonde locks. In her fits

she would dust.

Take every figure from the shelves. In a careful rage

rub them perfect.

Our childhood games were simple. I'd pierce

my black sky with colour.

She'd yank the bright pegs out.

Let the white holes sing.

Found, Children's Aid Society Records

You were born too
soon. Long and lean,
sallow skin. She left
Hong Kong to study.
He left just after
your birth. Syrian,
medium build. You were
fussy, didn't like to be bathed,
undressed. She showed
little interest in you.
Said they were friends.
She was raped.
You loved to talk.
When you were made
ward of the crown,
she stayed poised.

Pachamama

Who are you?

I am loose flake bark, twigs, cobwebs, bud scales,
tangled bits of story, fur.

What do you obey?

Raw tobacco, my chicha, and wine, wine
staining corners red, how it catches, how it
burns all to the ground and we've forgotten what
we came to do. Fuchsia streams of cotton,
candied virgins, a dried llama fetus. It ain't
pretty, I can't promise that, but there is room
here for sitting and overlapping gods.

How will you prepare for your death?

Twilight as scaffold collapses into flame. Faces in
shadow and lit. Each bidding vies for a part. Burnt
walnuts, fallen feathers tied with tinsel. And a tender
rage humming at my ankles.

Happy

You tell me that I am not happy
or not someone you think of as

happy and I sense that it comes from
love or something wanting to be

near it. I strike back when what
I wish to say is that young

Saglana from the taiga forest
walked miles at minus thirty-four

to get help for her grandma.
It was early dawn, sun and

moon still in mingle. She was
four and alone along frozen banks.

No fear of wolves. Nothing
but a tight fist of matches

trekking tundra and carrying fire.
That I'm here and words

turn me back into song
throat song

some lit thing nearer is all
if you'd ask.

Minister

in memory, Liu Xiaobo

Avoid the words
Tiananmen Tyranny
Tibet Taiwan
torture particularly
Falun Gong avoid
truth compassion
tiger dragon
but especially
people pig code for
democracy avoid
military gambling
brainwashing sex
how to make
bombs make
counterfeit harvest
kidneys quakes avoid
poor rights floods
one party freedom
of expression avoid
any potential
embarrassments
Xiaobo wrote
from prison
none who have
interrogated me
are my enemies
none are my enemies

for hatred is
corrosive of a
person's conscience
corrosive
Liu Xiaobo
born 1955
offline 2008
banned

Letters

after the Marquise de Sévigné

There was a French duchess who spun long, taut letters like scarves. They spilled into hallways, tool sheds, linen drawers, pantry shelves. Every velvet nook of Versailles. Beribboned raw silk, broad-rimmed hats, ostrich plumes, toes handsomely turned out, young tender peas, sixty kinds of pears, a hall of mirrors, sunken octagonal tubs. Years after the Revolution they used her words to rebuild every corner. Nothing is lost, I am assured, just different. I swear that I asked him to live with me because he was the last to send letters. Art and song. Longhand dotted with drawings. He licked each stamp, lived with the weight of “envelope.” Digital is vertical. We have only the limbs. What would I tweet? *There was a time when trench soldiers carried Pound in their pockets. When blank pages bore witness and words flew. Few knew he was Fascist. Lovers sent their mouths in the mail.*

★★

If only he touched as he painted, with the same poised fire.

Art

after Jean-Michel Basquiat

Beautiful, sad Basquiat of
patches and Italian wool,
you climbed the canvases,
replicas, studded staircases
and grateful mouths, poked
and poked at the ceiling
until crowned. People
full of paper stopped and
stared.

Fool, you knew how to bare,
how words crossed out and
knocked with colour
pop. You let the icons spit.
An organ for your kinetic, sir?
Bits of body, skull & syntax.
Not even wide New York
could hold you, bear
the *origins of cotton*,
your footprints
dating the paintings.

Pure world famous &

teeth teeth teeth

How to get away with it,

Prophet?

How to fail others
to lift?

Stars

There were only two left:
the word and the hand.
The hand could not hold the word
The word could not read the hand.
A star chattered to them one night.
If you are right, then one of us is not needed.
What if both of us are true?
Then we don't need to be two.
What if we aren't really two?
Then one of us is dead.
What if both of us are dead?
Then there is no need for stars.

Su Hui

First known palindromist (4CE)

Earliest female
figure survives

tradition

can be read
in any direction

play

rules tell us
how to read

weave

an assertion
reversible

speech
body

to lure
her husband

back

object
as armature

armillary

celestial rings 7
poems 2,848

create

choosing
snaking
down
the grid

aimlessly
turning

a kind of
appear and
disappear

hsin
at the centre
left out

Meridian 2: *Hsin*

characters collide
in Mandarin
stack

moon and night
snare

wings

azaleas freshly picked

a peafowl
a tickling
a cold unsheathed sword

empty
said the master

to rival desires

on the way

a poppy screams