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Beer Stein Poem, True Poem, Sick Poem, Erotic Poem, and Other Poems

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BEER STEIN POEM,
TRUE POEM, SICK POEM,
EROTIC POEM,
+
OTHER POEMS

MAGGIE BOWER

Beer Stein Poem,
True Poem, Sick Poem,
Erotic Poem,
+
Other Poems

Poems by Maggie Bower

First Reader: Adrian Blevins
Second Reader: Annie Kloppenberg

Spring 2015

Hey, you. Tell me what a treat is!

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True Poem

You are as comforting as
the hot burn of a sharp thing!
You are dirty sewage dew
on morning grass!
You are the long
pincers of the lobster.

Bible bible bible:

Internet.

Last train to New York City –

I'll take the bus, please!

Underpants of bright

yellow-white,

bright bleach stain,

body colors, body stain,

attractive, attractive,

seductive!

Ravings of a mad girl –

of a mud puddle:

how could you be anyone

besides myself?

I, Adult

How soft I am.
How small my lips.
None of this tastes like tapas.

But, in a burp,
I taste stale beer
on a Wednesday morning

leaning like a brick
against a balloon, like a
nail poised on balsam wood.

Sick Poem

I am sick from the layering of blazers
on my curving back. Sick from
the word *commute*, from the language
of restraint, the weight of manila.

In fact, it is almost impossible to lift
the lid of the scanner on this copier.

Here's what I'll do:

I'll make a medicine from cartoons
in the local paper, a medicine
of worn tar, and still-sharp tin cans
in a warm pond. It will be so bright—
like cold sun through thick pine needles,
like coarse rock-worn feet
healing from the silt-in-cut—
hot enough to cook salamanders from the earth
and sweat years from my skin.

Until then, here is my fever dream:

I am pond frogs, I am nourished milfoil—
I, the ruiner of the goodness of lakes!

Erotic Poem

Let me say it:

your eyes are like
garden gnome logic.

As in senseless,
like heavy cream
on a spoiled dog nose.

As in wet.

Wait— let me try again:

your eyes are six feet
of hard bed rock,
no, loose gravel,
no, milk in a paper cup.

Let's move on –

your lips are like
two French fries
rubbing, so kissibly soft,
like construction paper,
or dirty Silly Putty.

I know they ache for me.
I know because I imagined
that scenario.

When you spread your knees
to take up the whole subway,
see how the car fills with your
smug glow? See how my face
sweats hotly? See how I swoon?

Subway Poem

I love you, sir, eating Little Debby
on the subway at one o'clock
in the morning in your wool suit
like it is a meal, like you are in a rush.
I love you and I ache for you. Actually,
I mean to say: I ache for you,
and I love you. In other words,
take me away. And together,
let's resolve to de-train somewhere
into the new dip and swing.

The Dream

There it is there it is
in the back of my childhood car
and that religious girl
from high school is there too
and she's having a baby—
having it having it—
in the back of the red van
in the trunk with the seats
all down, on newspaper—
and the baby is dead—
of course it is dead. It is.
And we take it to
the end of the street,
take it to the stop sign.
Hold it up like an offering,
like a soft little pear, like
a flat monkey in a boat,
to passing cars,
to the acorns dropping like
anvils, to the sloping, dropping
street, and to what gentle God?
And she says to me—
over and over—
don't tell anyone.
Don't tell anyone. But
I am telling you. I am telling you.

Longing Poem

Look how beautiful I am
washing my hands.
Come, gather around me
as I wash. I am the best
at handwashing in the world,
and I noticed the beauty
of wet hands even before I saw,
after that rain, the moisture rolling
off the nested tern eggs. Come,
gather around me
in this gas station bathroom.
Here among the graffiti
and spilling garbage, the corners
of smashed cobwebs, smashed
beer cans, piles of hot soap
pooling in the sink.
I have conquered the light here.
I have beaten it into actual
bursting with the sound
of good soap, good noise,
the backs of my hands cracking open
with the sound of good soap.
I can see in the mirror
how you want me and my
clean hands. I can see
because I am imaginative
and because I like to believe
you are my very hands moving
in all this hot water.

Little Lyric Things

1

Oh my withness, you keep pace with my car
and collect a quarry of hail under the hood,
and I am left with a stalled Volvo. I sit,
wearing my collar of warm stones.

2

Oh I want to teach the men of the world
about tiny moustaches! They can be beautiful,
I say! Whiskers make the ponds freeze,
make the berries ice.

3

Oh – to watch the gardens
curl their tendrils into sickles,
turn the dew to sharp tinsel,
and black ice to frost-pupil.

4

And when my trowel slipped,
as I knew it would,
it found only frozen earth:
chipped steel across a square lawn.

Brother Poem

A blue jay
flew into my brother's room
through the window –
a holler of wings and air.
He came from the woods
up the street.

He'd been feeding on our crabapple,
he loved suburban cultivation,
looking for suburban comfort,
loved my brother's square room,
the box of boy teeth,
the stagnant pee-stained laundry.

There weren't many like him—
so hot-hot with blue wingtips:
he needed inside observation,
inside with the booger-artist,
stair-wrangler.

I remember because I was
old enough to notice
that the outside was beating itself
senseless in corners and edges
and on fixtures and doors, across
the ceiling, dresser, painting of sky.

When I ask my brother about it now
he says he can't remember
if the bird lived or died,
but he remembers the feathers—
exploding in an odiferous blue headdress
on the pilling, grey carpet.

Of Use

I want to wake up in the morning
and be made loose change.
And of course, I will be nickels.

Oh, let me be worthy currency
so that I am spent on garden
hose and sturdy fence. On tacks
to hold frames. On windshield
wipers, on crepe paper
in wedding invitations.

I worry that I will end up
giving fingertips the smell
of copper door knobs, fear that
I will be abandoned in vending
machines. I panic that I will be the
sound of a cup shaking in the subway.

Reader, I am saying: let me
be a coin-press souvenir. Let me
be a full and heavy pocket
so that I collect. So I am spent.

Father Poem

I caught a fish today
standing on the bank
of second avenue.
I had been casting
toward the median
but it was in the shallows,
in the leggy reeds,
next to the bee-drunk trash
cans, that I caught it.
And now the question is,
what should I do
with my gratitude?
Should I lay it long
and low, a newborn
stretching in a boat,
a boat pulling up
on granite countertops?
Or should I stretch my arms,
like an arctic poppy
to the dipping sun,
again, to track
your good voice—
catching it
in my cupped palms?
Perhaps this time,
I am wondering, and
again I am wondering,
if my square fingers
might spill over
with the little hooks
you gave me, curving
off the blue flatwing flies.

Important Poem

After Charles Simic

Ella took every inch of her hair
and donated it to charity. She sent it
in the mail. In a manila envelope.
How odd, to put body bits
in the pouch of a government worker
hanging right there next to the thigh.
David took charge of his life. He used
self-help books that he bought
in a real bookstore. And, in the end,
it was the walk downtown
that was the real fix. Someone wrote an article
about Suz in the paper. She is 25
and has climbed a lot of mountains. Also,
the paper said, she is studying for the MCAT
and will probably get
a very good score.
Greg just discovered the best way
to make pasta. He uses high-protein
finely-milled flour, for silkier noodles.
His dinner parties have turned blue eyes purple,
have caused sparks to shoot out of noses.
And I, I just fell down in the shower
and all of it had a feeling of transcendence.

Beer Stein Poem

This thing must have poured
from the window of a brothel.
It is the Greek pillars of a temple,
restless whores lounging on steps.

As you raise it to your lips
again, I am saying. And again
the brazen ladies are following:
weathered, thin, sightless, bitten.

Mother Poem

Still I find you
delicate, like a cut
of leather tied tightly
around a bone knife.

And, tell me, what
is the metaphor
for wanting to crawl

up your back and
curl around your neck?
I would perch there,

an adder so spitting mad,
all tongue and muscle
and skin! And you

might pluck me off,
breathing: "there is no
need, there is no need."

On Dementia

Speaking of gasoline,
after a while we all knew
his passwords. They were always
some version of “EXONMOBILE123”
or “eXonMOBile232,” a nod
to his wife’s-father’s-business, a code
to crack the online bank
where the EXONMOBILE money
lives, as in where the money has its parties
and eats its corn chips. Or as in where
the money lies on massage tables and sips
daintily on scotch. It was the source
of the khaki pants, fees to stone
clubhouses, the big-art-canvases,
the leather-chair-money. Perhaps,
it was his love song.
And we, of course, give thanks
for the language of forgetting,
for the way the air lightens,
like pipe smoke clearing in study,
every time we type this ode.

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