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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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