

# Poems to Quote to your Lover (before and after you fuck)



Rik Roots

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# Poems

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## Summersex

---

We step barefoot across the still-wet humps of Dymchurch beach, its moonlit streams an etch of curves connecting each abandoned stretch of sea back home. I catch your hand, my thumb a chat-up telegraph of taps and strokes - two strangers newly met at the party fires, shared beers and jokes beneath the stars; desires like this are best kept secret from our folks.

And after - after grit and groan and sweat and lick amid the leathery strands of kelp - I find a mermaid's purse among the threads of nets and cans, the dog inside unwhelped. You gift me one last kiss, a whisper: *"tide's about to turn - I'll see you round sometime."*

## Cliff

---

As the hovercraft puffed its skirts against the concrete apron, so I flew - Dover harbour a spray of images behind my brother as he swung me over the salt-crust lawns, the edge of the unguarded cliff, a handgrasp away from learning the dangers of trust.

Now the last hovercraft has been scrapped for spares, I can discover new seductions: the dangers of windy walks through stiff grasses to watch the sea bolster Dover below; the feel of rain spattering my neck, my back as I dance with you, tonight's friend, on the edge of the cliff - eyes forward not down - each step an experiment in my trust of flinty contact.

# First Love

---

You're drowning me: water  
blisters over the river's dirt bed -  
a borewall of branches, snakes, garbage  
dumped in the forgotten course. This flood  
of you pistons me through storm drains.

*"Change must come,"* grumbles  
the corpse of a dog flushed  
from its grave of dust and tyres.

Now the surge sings, percussion streams  
harmonised with outlet gargles. Nerves  
get pinched, pressed in my skin - the hands  
of a giant who luges alongside me, holding me  
safe in his great grasp; he pushes my form  
through sewers, curving me into the sea.

You scare me; cleanse my veins  
in chemicals and drown my lungs.  
*"Breed,"* squirm the maggots in dogmeat -  
*"Breed like the gods have smashed  
the skins of the world!"*

# Transaction

---

My friends ask me: how much does that special smile  
of yours cost? I'll warn you now it's pricey:

not a trinket stacked on shelves in giftshops  
trading junk. You cannot wipe my palms

with coins and watch it swipe its muscly tricks  
across my face, nor will enticements bag you

that act - for a drink I'll swap a grin, and for food  
I'll pack a leer into our dialogue. But

my smile, my honest sweat-on-face with blushing grace  
stretch of lips and crowfeet tracks towards my ears,

deserves a deal only you can strike, my love, when  
you look at me with lids half-drawn across your eyes.

# Eating Out

---

When he laughs his tongue  
splits his lips, spider lines  
compressed like the accordion  
serenading the the diners;  
the veins across his bow-nose  
beacon his joy of fine malts.

Her joy is sedate, her oatmeal  
hands clasped to the linen  
where she hides her smile,  
her beige eyes tuned to his face;  
I watch her water-stretched heel  
stroke along the curve of his calf.

I carve designs on the tablecloth  
with the steel of my knife, quiet  
amid the clatter. As I wait  
for your late arrival I refuel  
on cheap house white and the sight  
of the waiter's tight groin.

## Nothing Much

---

Look how quiet the room is: a cat  
whiskers behind sunlit curtains  
for spiders; noses cold rice  
from a plate in search of meat.

Shadows shoal the tank, each a life  
behind the green scum growing  
on the glass. Tide rings in the mug  
mark the slow sips of a cold coffee.

You activate me remotely, the song  
of the phone triggering animation,  
audio smiles and shrugs as we chat  
for a while about nothing much at all.

## Accessory

---

Such a stupid hat.  
Not you, the way it falls  
across your eyes, the brim  
sieving dust mites;  
a swatch of orange  
without feathers  
- felt, maybe,  
or shoddy.

So many rags and snags  
rolled tight to fit  
in this cupboard.

Dress up for me.  
Let fall your hat, your shirt -  
wear me, tonight, my supple  
leather laced tight  
to you

# When the Battle Ends

---

Look out of the window: see how  
the sparrowhawk plucks feathers, how  
the pigeon flaps grit over the path?

I bought a brace of feathers once,  
tied them to my arms and flapped -  
elbows held acute above the shoulders.

Look at you, crying. Why cry over  
the carcass of a bird you've never loved?  
You need new eyes to see beyond  
the unzipped barbs along the quill.

# An Office Acquaintance Offers Advice

---

He said: *"love is  
a sport of both skill  
and chance, strategic  
planning must become your  
core competence."*

I said: *"why render these chemicals  
into a game?"*

He said: *"you have to  
compete, my friend."*

I said: nothing. I watched his tongue  
moisten his underlip, a quick slither  
of spittle between words to gloss  
his looks. He smelt of sharp spices.  
I watched him cock his head, his eyes  
remained symmetrical, blue - electrodes  
pushed through my forehead. I watched  
his throat form thoughts - a rhythmic  
rise and close, rise and close.  
Curled hairs caressed his larynx.

He said, oh,  
something or other.  
I wasn't listening.

## Trade

---

You grab my hand and net aside  
the camouflage and walk into the murk:  
there's ghosts in here - they moan  
in whispers, grunts; the shunts  
and smacks of fruitless, faceless  
love; anonymous entanglements  
of slugging tongues. I slip  
my hands around your waist,  
then down into your jeans to cup  
your muscled arse, pull our groins  
together. Can you see the devil  
set within my eyes? I can suck  
the wisdom teeth from jaws,  
the snot from lungs; I  
can gnaw through sweat-built chests  
to lick the hearts of warriors,  
my fifteen minute friend who asked  
to dance astride some tumid tail.

## First Night

---

It was your eyes that sobered me: ice  
at the end of the world; the ghost of a fox  
staring down his hare across the tundra;

a chilled air vaulting through the sweat  
of men as they drank, posed, assessed. That glance  
of shivered blue left me feral. I was in the bar

and then I was in the bar with you. When  
you passed me lager, I spied iceflake glints  
on your dew claw. We danced, I think

we danced; or possibly you stalked my tracks  
through the snows of our private ecology -  
new ground frozen from the polar seas.

# The Cartographers

---

You promise me treasure, offer  
your body as the map that leads  
to riches. I search for symbols  
in the folds of your skin; intercept  
clues on tasks to perform morsed  
by white eyeflags, semaphored by curls  
and angles at the edge of your mouth.

Your hands challenge translations -  
they fly to sift through the world.  
I have to vector them, pin each digit  
with a symbol: here be dragon lairs,  
unicorn trails, wells of gold coin.

My finger sketches your face's edges,  
the cream henge of pegs cradled within lips.  
*"The map is not the thing,"* your tongue  
hints. But I know this - I dismiss  
the adipose spoils midriffing you,  
mere landscaping that can't disguise  
the designs etched in your marrow.

I could finish exploring this map,  
but instead I let you fold me tight  
inside your elbows, watch you build  
a map of me in the pits of your eyes.

# Exhibits

---

She was skipping over the rope, her body  
a basket and her face an embrace of garbage.  
We laughed like the monkey laughed, his snout  
two model lorries axle to axle, though his laugh  
was silent while ours staccatoed across  
the boxed up exhibition space, disturbing  
frowncast students and mumbly aficionados.

*"Why can't these idiots see how funny he was?"*  
you wondered. But then Picasso sold his bits  
and pieces so idiots could mount them  
in ice bright halls while he mounted whores  
in Paris. I'd have mounted you there and then  
but the gallery staff had our number and our hour  
in the company of genius was almost done.

# Morsels

---

When I fed you I set you three courses:  
oysters from Whitstable, a carnival  
of slime singed with lemon, edged  
from ashtray shells and gulped;  
a testicle of truffle, shaved  
into a soft scramble of eggs and cream  
and served on toast - crumbs knocked  
from your chin by my thumb, each morsel  
followed by a froth of champagne;  
figs stuffed with mole, the bitter  
chocolate squeezed from the fruit  
as you bit the sweet flesh.

When we fed guests you set me:  
rings of calamari around a candle  
guttering its wax into my navel;  
frets of watercress stems woven  
through the down between the hooks  
of my hips, dripping from the rinse;  
a pharaoh's necklace - layers of mango  
intersliced with pear flesh, molded  
to the folds of muscle and fat  
and bone lacing my heart within  
its cavity, safe from the scavengers  
snuffling through our home.

## Stood outside the office, smoking

---

Winter spit taps on my skull:  
cold drops print "*you don't belong  
out here*" on the paving slabs.

These shoes I borrowed pinch  
my toes and your coat's too thin  
to keep the wind at bay. Still,

this morning's kiss still warms  
my lips. I puff smoke between the rain  
and respond: "*you don't belong in me.*"

## Take this Man

---

I married you on a couch in Clarkenwell,  
its stuffing the curls of groin-hair  
that Sebastian had buzz-cut from clients.  
We held hands as he dabbed the needle  
in vodka, pressed its exquisite point  
through the seam of my glans. Not once  
did you glance from my face to watch  
my testicles dance to the pain. We swapped  
our vows in white-hard hand grasps and later  
we kissed, my trousers loose on my waist  
and a dribble of lust on my newest ring.

## Language

---

So when did we begin to evolve  
a different tongue? That first night  
of friction, perhaps, our growls  
new sounds for acts and thoughts;  
or weeks later, meeting in pubs,  
shifting lexemes to build a space  
between us and the crowds  
who admired our mutual lusts?

Or did we develop our idiolect  
browsing shops for sofas and linens,  
partners in style crimes? I speak you  
as well as you talk me, and sometimes  
we'll even chat silently, conversations  
conveyed by touch, look. Observe how  
my shoulders type: *'I love you!'*

## Puppy Love

---

When I heard that song on the radio  
I became a silver jubilee younger. You  
look good in my head, the shaving cuts  
barely crevassing your sheen of cheek.

Lavender was your smell, as soft  
on my nose as your clothes against  
my hands when by chance I stroked you:  
I still want to peel you of them.

We drifted - my lust got hidden in  
text books, equations, exams. You  
were too tidy in the end, I was scared  
and the song was derivative, cheap.

# Token

---

I buy a rose to mark  
our anniversary:  
stout, black thorns  
erupting through the stalk  
in whorls; the sawtooth leaves  
nestling the tight bud -  
sheets of peach and cream  
rolled in green folders.

You smile, take my palms  
and lag them round the stem,  
pluck a petal and press it  
inside my mouth with kisses:  
*"Love,"* you whisper, *"is what  
we do with symbols, yes?"*  
I nod and grin, and bite  
the lips that feed me.

# Joy

---

You're fun! Not as funny as the time  
we stood in the gay bar and watched  
the fat drag act fire a replica cannon  
which had, as his performance droned on,  
slowly drooped until its dulled mouth  
was level with the audience. "*That  
will teach queens to douse in lacquer  
on a Friday night,*" you said. I burned

your hair, once, when we made a game  
with candles and ropes. In those days  
we would play twice a day: we'd pounce  
each other for instant satisfaction.  
Nowadays, gratitude comes in tea bags  
and interrogations. I could have given  
you up a decade ago, but somehow we found  
a slow burn that keeps us chuckling still.

# Renewal

---

We severed the band together, took a saw  
to its dulled sheen and rasped atoms

of metal into the air. Soap had failed  
to ease its passage. Later we shopped

for a larger token. I would not sacrifice  
a single digit of yours to an oval symbol

of our expanding love.

# Respect

---

It's strange how our fingers  
interweave when we cross roads,  
shop for carrots, newspapers,  
cartons of milk. Sometimes

I'll fold my palm around  
your knuckles to keep them  
warm while we wait for the bus,  
or walk to town. Sometimes

you knuckle my hand away: decisions  
are shared in this space, we both  
must agree to risk the spits  
of strangers, haters, sometimes.