

Hope's in Vain

MARTIAN PRINCE BOOKS

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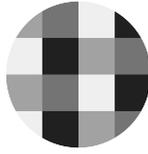
128 Poems Under Construction

by

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MARTIAN PRINCE BOOKS





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“Oh, don’t mind about me. I’ll stay here and work, and you all go along and have a good time. And if you could manage to choke yourselves to death while you’re doing it, I’d take that as a favor.”

— *Dorothy Parker*

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PREFACE

Most probably, none of the following poems are any good. While I adore literature, read literary theory at university, and am a playwright, my knowledge of how to write poetry is slim and I never really got into it as much as compared to short stories or theatre.

Nonetheless, I tried my hand at poetry from time to time, because I am a firm believer in *Why not*; and because one has to try everything to discover what works for them and what does not. While I have come to the conclusion that poetry simply does not work for me as well as theatre, I am still publishing every poem I have written in this here collection lying before you.

There is a very good reason why I am publishing them all. Think of any poet you admire, or just simply have read. Have you actually read everything they have ever written? You might have read everything they have *published*, but that is simply not the same. A lot of bad (or just, mediocre) poetry is lost because it has never been published. You never get to read what a poet wrote just before they wrote that one epic poem studied and analysed in every single poetry class across the world.

Furthermore, what a waste of time and energy if I had just left these poems unpublished. For what purpose would I have written them if I had just kept them in a digital safe somewhere, hidden from the outside world? Now, they are out there to be ridiculed, scrutinised, or, very improbably, celebrated.

While these 128 poems do not necessarily represent things that have happened in my life, they do reflect the themes, memes, and hash tags that would have been applied to my life if it had been academically studied on Tumblr. I have never been a prostitute ("Cassandra the Heiress," page 133), have never actually slid my wrists deep enough (multiple poems, including "I Envy the Slain," page 123), been an aging

ex-monarch ("The Heartsore of Memories of Yore," page 103), or experienced whatever "The Infinite Gust" (page 129) is about; but the general themes, motifs, and the emotions discussed have been (and still are) mine. From depression to heartbreak; struggles with gender identity; politics to religion; there is no denying that these poems have been influenced by my own influences and feelings.

As time progresses (all the poems have been published in chronological order), it is clear that I tried a lot of experiments along the way. And while I still have not figured out what works for me, I do feel that the newer poems reflect my own style better than the more basic first poems do. Which isn't all that odd of course when you realise the first poem was written in 2008 while number 128 was written in 2012. Four years (including three years of reading literary theory at university) passed between them, and it shows.

What do I hope you—the reader, the critic—get out of this collection? I actually hope you don't get anything other than reader's satisfaction from browsing through and reading these poems. Once published, these poems are no longer truly mine; the meaning I put into them will no longer matter that much. The reader's interpretation will take over. That's what I hope will happen. That other people can deduce some meaning out of these poems, and perhaps feel some bond with them. What I want or hope isn't important.

Or, like I say in my award-winning acclaimed epic poem, "Lovers at Play" (page 87), "[...] ding!"

Poems

1. I Do, You Do Not

I love you,

— Even though you do not love me.

I would catch a bullet for you,

— Even though you would not.

I will change who I am for you,

— Even though you will not.

I adore the way you are,

— Even though you do not.

I will always love you,

Even though you will never love me.

2. Zestig jaar voorbij ¹

Zestig jaar voorbij
Twintig jaar voor mij.
Een dag van wauw,
Met 'n lach van dauw.
Een verjaardag is er nij.

Met familie en vrienden,
 allebei.
En vele feestelijkheden,
 zotternij.

Vier deze dag als nooit tevoren,
Laat iedereen zien,
Laat iedereen horen.

Een groots spektakel,
Met vuur en veel
 gekakel.
Van nul tot
 vierentwintig,
Een-en-al trots en veel,
 uitzinnig.

Of het nu schijnt,
De dag blijft hetzelfde.
Of het nu verduistert,
Tot aan het eind.

¹ I wrote this a birthday present for my mother (who turned sixty), though I never actually give it to her. I left it in Dutch because, firstly, I am not a translator, and secondly, I just don't feel like translating it, all right. Get off my back.

Het is uw verjaardag vandaag,
De zestigste alweer.
De goden worden uitgedaag',
 want,
Nog vele jaren te komen.
Zo iedere keer weer.

3. The Bay of Today

Someday I will go away,
On that day, it will be my way,
To achieve what I want,
On that one day,
I will go and head out,
Out to the bay.²

If you see me on my way,
On that most special day,
Do not talk, do not speak,
Of what is about to go on,
To go on, on that day.

Because when I will be,
 at the bay,
Do not expect me to go,
 out of my way,
Just because you feel,
 it is not my day,³
But your day, as you think is the way,
For I have to achieve,
 going away,
Not now, not soon, but on that day,
The day of days I will be on my way,
Heading out to,
 to the bay.

² Hint: bay clearly stands for something else.

³ I'm already done with this rhyming scheme, and we're not even near the end of the poem.

I said do not talk, do not speak,
For you might spoil,
 the only way,
I have,
 to go away,
 on that day,
 to the bay,
Heading out, on my way, till today,
It was unheard of on any day,
That I might be saying this,
While standing on any day,
 someday,
At the bay.

4. Class

Going to class,
Usually, such a hassle.
There is no bass,
In the joy of music,
Which fills the room,
When class starts.

Once, this one time,
Class hadn't begun yet.
A loud bass waved-through,
Past and in, class.
Nobody knew what it was,
Or even where it came from.
The windows were foggy with dew,
And time passed-by quickly.

Perhaps nobody noticed the bass,
That inhabited the class,
For no one seemed to mind.
The joy of music stayed behind,
When our class came to an end.
Nobody knew, no one cared,
But all had felt it though.

What we had experienced was friendship,
There in that class.
And from that day on,
Our lives were led by that one,
Thoughtful, joyful, and merry bass.

5. Tête-à-tête

Good day, like a slow but scary wink,
As he said what he said while stalking.
And in it there was a sort of weird link
To what he had done before, while killing.

I may say your name, may I not?
And as if the day had begun without worries,
He brushed this grey hair he had bought,⁴
Like the slow-burning of approaching armies.

The camera pans and suddenly in the distance,
A smart and broadly-mannered cop approached.
Good day, to the cop; To the man, of course you may if you want.
And it took a while for her to restore from the daunt.

From nowhere they both started a conversation,
Filled with joy, witty anecdotes, and sexy animation.
A tension so cold that neither could really laugh,
Surrounded by idiots, fools, and a family of riffraff.

After some time they were unwashed and unkempt.
Have you seen my play, the silly man then asked.
The officer of the law, startled by the sudden attempt,
Replied, No, I have not yet, completely unmasked,
And got an answer in thoroughgoing contempt,
Do look around, if you want. (It's not like you weren't asked.)

⁴ He's wearing a toupée?

When I have the time, I will go and see.
She said, not having any time for the ballet,
And carried on, going completely out of her way:
Can I now carry on with my splendid day?

The cop walked on, smartly and steadily,
Not looking around, not saying a single word.
The wind blew on, oh so very, annoyingly,
Lifting the man's hair—it looked just like a buzzard.

Good night, from far they then exchanged.
A kiss blown into the air, so quickly growing estranged.
Away went the evil pair, ready for departure,
To become a whole new set, one lacking their own future.⁵

⁵ This is an incredibly awkward and forced conversation between three people. I tried editing it somewhat to make sense out of it; but it turned out to be a failed attempt.

6. I Do, You Do Not: Adapted ⁶

I love you,
— Even though you do not love me.
 Would you ever,
 I would probably run away.

I would catch a bullet for you,
— Even though you would not.
 Would you ever,
 I would probably die, even so.

I will change who I am for you,
— Even though you will not.
 Would you ever,
 I would probably stop loving you.

I adore the way you are,
— Even though you do not.
 Would you ever,
 I would probably say “farewell.”

I will always love you,
Even though you will never love me.
 Would you ever,
 — *No, you would never.*

⁶ An adaptation of the first poem, “I Do, You Do Not” (page 17).

7. Biding

Stay with me,
Just this night.
Don't leave me,
So soon, all night.

Call it crazy,
But I won't leave.
It is crazy,
If you do not leave.⁷

Go, now, immediately,
But how, so suddenly?
Go west, north, or south,
I don't want you here;
You are definitely, out.

⁷ I'm not sure what happened between wanting this person to stay and wanting him or her to leave, but it escalated very quickly.

8. Gorky Park

On a foggy day,
The watery delight

Of the evening bay,
Reflects the kissing,
Hugging, and loving,
Of the people sitting

On the bay in clear sight.

On a snowy day,
The heavenly white

Of Gorky Park

Covers the blood

Of lovers gone by,
Walking from here,
Here to the bay,
On that Valhalla day;
Most walking alone,
Heads down, with a sigh,
Love has left them,
It being so very accident-prone.

The magic Ferris wheel

Of Gorky Park