

# TOUCHSTONES

35 Poems by Greg Bem

Written, compiled, and designed in April of 2016

*TOUCHSTONES* was published by Bloo Fyre, an imprint of the Wrought Proudly Press, in April of 2016.

*TOUCHSTONES* by [Greg Bem](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).



For more poetry by Greg Bem, including the digital version of this book, visit <http://gregbem.com>

Greg Bem is a librarian, poet, gamer, book reviewer, and performance artist living in Seattle.

This chapbook is for Scherezade “The Chic” Siobhan.

An additional thank you goes to Judson “The Namesake” Hamilton.

TOUCHSTONES

TOUCHSTONES

TOUCHSTONES

TOUCHSTONES

1

To be. To be stuck. So be it.  
Satisfaction of the single peanut butter cup.  
Like butter on fingertip, it stays, this image.  
Like light in the mouth, melted white chocolate.

2

Remembering old friends  
Phantasms of former glories.  
Wondering how much dust in my house  
Was created from their skin.

3

She clings to him demanding his life,  
Though what she really desires is his death.  
That is the reason for the bindings.  
That is the reason for choking his throat.

4

A confrontation necessary  
To necessitate his breathing.  
The forest breathes in all, whatever it receives.  
Trees, they can't run away like he does.



5

A condemnation: a parallax.

It's unsettling, like the up and down of the car window.

At the right angle, this world is jaw-dropping.

At the wrong angle, we stuff up and stumble.

6

Older age is complemented

By younger memories.

Becoming the box of flaws

Requires a gift of grace provided by time.

7

Dead camaraderie and latent chagrin.  
The benefit of the doubt: a pile of blankets at my feet.  
Staying awake from two to three in the morning,  
Hearing the ghostly pops and cracks of ventilation.

8

Boundary of light that seeps:  
Enough to raise a clover or a violet.  
Weeds too green to hate,  
too full of life in their uncanny spread.

9

A twitch and a war cry as all that's needed.  
I face digital monstrosities in place of memory.  
Burying the backyard and the running away  
With millions of pixels, muffled screams.

10

When I sleep I imagine wormholes.

Imagine a vortex of paladins  
carrying bundles of fresh sage.

Faces smudged in black coal, covered in holy light.

11

A forest fire turned a family into brambles.  
Skeletal they mark the way.  
Lacking leaves they had nothing to say.  
The wind commenced with the talking.

12

What's happened to these city places?  
Earth turned up now worms escaped.  
Some familiar faces no longer feel familiar.  
Part of death involves the undead.



13

Picking up the papers as if they are keys.

Burning documents, rusting locks,

Escaping the fire, taste of metal on molars,

The blood a lucky current, feeling the movements, moments.

14

The pathophysiology of the gamer:

Darkened rooms announce heightened sensations.

Thicker thumbprints on shiny plastics.

Greater quantity of emptied consumer goods.

15

I watched her body become fleeing tick on the dunes.  
So much sun yet so much moon: orange, blue, white.  
Each plotted path, each clomp along, her smaller.  
A figure in a void of dust, exertion resulting in sweat.

16

And then everything for a moment is blue,  
Walls made blue, roads made blue, tongue thick blue  
In front of the face, and the feeling is a crippled arousal,  
And that's when you remove the filter and go back.

17

Slumped in a booth we were equals.  
The surface was sticky with the mood,  
The wind outside probably a tad more stifling,  
Than an air still with scents hovering, floating, still.

18

I asked: what does it mean for me to be on top?

The response a sea of blankets, a rendered dream,

An escapade, and a desire to see more.

The response: a clamor, but then a sigh, and a smile.

19

I've got wheat-free pastry flakes on my wrist.

I've got very human smudges on the glasses in front of my eyes.

I am an animal making a mess out of everything neat and orderly.

Even my most fortified corners are filthy and unapproachable.

20

When the wrist isn't just red from lack of circulation it's purple,  
The demon got it when it said, Hello, you are in a fixed state.  
A motionless method, or methodless motion, I am meowing.  
The way things are set in stone, the way I hate every mood, glance.



21

I have exported, saved, and otherwise shat out roughly 30 videos.  
In the last two hours this has all happened, my mind comatose,  
My body jellied or flubber, but basically flabbergasted.  
The moon haunts me like this ceiling's dull lighting and HVAC buzz hum.

22

Little noodle ceiling and little beef sparrows on top.  
You fill a hole in my stomach.  
Cup of Noodles steaming to burn my mouth  
while I read Rilke in the sunset.

23

First there was a mention of Elmer City . . .

Uttering left and right: "Meth was Assumed" . . .

And there was the man who looked pretentious and French . . .

And there was the bright red face looking like it would murder me.

24

Mouth mouthing Jaar and gut feeling displaced,  
The concentration of sets of eyes on screens  
Dotting across the perimeter of the library.  
Believe me, it was a quiet Friday afternoon.

25

Like a pin trying to press through a beach ball.

Like the sun through three layers of windows.

A glass of coffee that never retains its heat.

A standard of working and living always shuffling.

26

If the thread dangles and I catch it with my mouth,  
Do they turn me feline in their opinion of me?  
My body frisky after the sworn oath of fealty.  
My paws bloody after playing with the fish corpses.

27

I may never die again so I don't worry about the chance.

It already found me or I it in the rags and in the bushes,

Little prickle of needle or thorn, it does not matter.

What does matter is the brilliance of these greens in the chill.

28

The impending lushness of an evening's drunken murmur  
Is matched by a memory of a matchstick in the garden.  
Last weekend the range of extremes like a dangling dance.  
I didn't carry fire, or clothing, or my blue tinted shades.



29

Stripped of all I've ever known, I become the necromancer.  
The dead, corpse or memory, of myself, and my blackest magic  
Is colored ebony and cruelly otherworldly despite diffused lighting.  
Exogenesis is the curl of the lip and the tightening of tendons.

30

Reminding the self to eat the slabs of meat as they meet butter,  
Which pops and crackles and glances the hinge of skin  
That slides in place as a portal reveals a scene that known fully.  
These are the moments of a bleak onset, chill of circumference.

31

Lightning or lightness soft as I imagine the sound most crackling.

An understanding of myself as my blood fills in the corners.

Our best moments are the dead ones with bellies full and laughters

A style of mirth exquisite and epitomizing: what we find capable.

32

I'm not entirely sure if it was colored like a skyscraper or a cemetery.  
The glee within the doom within the portraits within the walls.  
Everything facing the self in the regulation of the episodic.  
"Strangely the actualization" goes the line completed 1 hour later.

33

Staring at the freeze-dried shrimp questioning the existence of God,  
Tongue hanging like a roll of paper, library whispered as a curse,  
The erratic eradication of all things necessary by all things poetry,  
Which, like breathing, hardly seems worth it when arrived upon.

34

I suppose I did forge a nice path through childhood  
With thorough examinations of the best and worst forms of gaming habits.  
I spy tonight at the vague, sinister feeling of joy  
That the local Internet might be down, this poem impossible.

35

And the “anyway” in “I’m wondering about that lime taste,  
And how did they create it, anyway?” Being colored like a clouded sun,  
The pressure of contempt and laziness fueling but intoxicating,  
The language of pleasure as risky as the pleasure itself.

[back of book]