

TOUCHSTONES

19 Poems by Greg Bem

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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.

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

[back of book]