

Rachel West's
30 Poems
April 2018



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Sunday 04/01/18

In A Rush, I Make Formal Observations.

I gathered my socks,
my hair.

I soaked the plants
which crackled in my hands.

My shadow went ahead,
calmly-sweetly calling me.

It's snowing again.
Two people in parkas walk by
holding hands.

People are made
of stacked-up stones.
It's easy to understand them.

Monday 04/02/18
Snowy Magnolias

There is a rushing hum
outside the window
that expresses everything.

I have a desire to be silent
and that desire is filled with chiming bells.

Why have you grown sad?
Does everything in this world
remind you of yourself?

I breathe in sharply and it feels
like an embrace.

Tuesday 04/03/18

Dreamwork

Maybe I can make a deal

under hypnosis

to divine in active submission

my heart's objects.

In the midst of infinite experience,

I will learn how to not be myself.

Wednesday 04/04/18

Awake

I sneeze in the early morning.
I will never be more awake than this.
Part of me is beginning to know what you mean.

Part of me always thought, "Oh well.
We are happy.
Let all we build be imaginary:
our bodies, our castles..."

But then I fear so much every inch of silence
between your flesh and mine.

Let us light holy fires.
Let us live for that.

Thursday 04/05/18

Love ended survival.

Love entered survival.

Love undid the glory of mere survival.

Love made me too big to burrow.

Love added.

Friday 04/06/18

Transience

Sending little signals to myself,
I wait in the past,
escape into eternal recurrence.

It is like a train station, the point
where our fates overlap
and time itself goes heavy like a coin.

Saturday 04/07/18

Epic of Lightness Part One?

I rose up in a balloon threaded
from the contemplation of love.

It was not a white light.

It was a sliding light. Love was
invisible on his sleeping body.

The memory of his skin was
a station on a spectrum.

Sunday 04/08/18

Epic of Lightness Part Two

The cold lifted my thoughts
as I walked the other day.
Thin and still, the air had me
floating nowhere like the ghosts of snow.

I bought a new notebook
and had coffee with my lover.

Can't let too many things
stick to me. Not paper, not permissions.
I need to be able to melt,
to rejoin the cycle.

Monday 04/09/18

I Dreamt The President Was My Teacher

I dreamt the president was my teacher.

Aside from the obvious chaos
it seemed the world itself was full
of poetry written in Spanish,
full of travelers and fighters
and holy sites laid waste.

As ever, I was just gazing out the window
watching birds and airplanes fly,
waiting for the bell.

Tuesday 04/10/18

Epic of Lightness Part Three

Because poetry is where I talk about my life.

There is no other place for it.

Yes it's too close always too immediate for a story but I will find it.

My body is finding the light.

My body is

turning on notifications.

My body is dank.

I don't relate to cute things these days.

I am actively in a love/hate battle with Springtime.

I hide my plans, my content.

Knowing what is visible, I hide it all

one layer deeper.

Usually that's enough.

Wednesday 04/11/18
All Together

Patiently, the tea
changes for me.
I attempt to complete a phrase.

Turning away from things
is the wrong approach.

I saw a name that was similar
to another name; I couldn't create anything
but comparisons.

Alone now, I create
aloneness.

Thursday 04/12/18

Sitting next to the void,
drinking mint juleps.
That's my idea of friendship.
Do you see it too? Yes.
And what a lovely evening.

Friday 04/13/18

Epic of Lightness Part Four

The sun is the big boss in the sky.

I feel late for everything now.

Yet something happens; when I go outside
my lungs fill with a light
that blows the dust and bitterness out.

I open the windows.

I see friends that somehow I still have.

My counting and stitching and prayers
all cease, quietly; I listen
to the starlings.

Saturday 04/14/18
Maybe This Time

What do I want to commemorate?

I ask myself that question and spend the rest of the day flapping wildly and screaming and trying to discover if I am as small as I think I am.

This history everyone talks about isn't really that long.

We talk as if things ended. Everyone ever born woke up from eternity in the middle of the story.

Sunday 04/15/18

Spring

As robins shelter and search
the magnolia, as large trucks roll
over freshly filled potholes,
I'm here, doing domestic things,
thinking about marriage,
listening
as Beyoncé speaks to black women,
as Nebraska puts off Spring another day.
Children and dogs smash about the stairwells.
The sky silvers and empties and stays the same.
I'm here.
I'll do my best.
Yellow daffodils under snow.

Monday 04/16/18

Internalized Misogyny

Love was redundant.

Love was culled like a starving regiment.

Love withered unfed and unnamed.

Love is sought in the dust.

I seek it in myself

where it drips out

through perforations

bound in cobweb.

Tuesday 04/17/18
Epic of Lightness Part Five
(for Mom's birthday)

Shall we have more coffee
and stand together on top of a tower
over the world?
How do people come to be themselves?

I've observed you for a lifetime.
I'm conscious matter. I talk about myself.

My coworkers are much younger
than me, which is nice. We talk
about our parents and about our sun
and moon signs.

A lot of my old friends
are raising children now.
I'm an old fool but I would
crack my head like Zeus
to have more strong women in my life.

It's Tuesday here; we are always celebrating.
Because there aren't enough flowers
in all the world
to send you this day.

Because maybe you decided at some point
to always believe me.
I have a lucky coin in my pocket
and I'm never lost.

Wednesday 04/18/18

Joy

So we entered a time
where the joy of survival
was as quiet
as the joy of crickets,
barn owls.

I was raised in the individualized dream city.
We were surrounded
by feed corn and pretended it was all for us.

Thursday 04/19/18

Themes from today's notebook

What slows down time? Thoughts or feelings?

Monarchies or military rule?

The people were much like us.

I want to eat.

I tried collecting job leads

as a solution for longevity.

I can do better. I can slow it down more.

I can turn it into light, or maybe just a flavor.

Friday 04/20/18

Timers

The real way to make time stop
is to do nothing, I thought;
to watch it pass, bare, to cut
it down smaller and smaller.

At some point it stopped working.
I was in love with time, always had been.
My attention became a black hole
and everything shrank to an instant.

Saturday 04/21/18
Spring Game

Delightfully, I'm downtown
on the day of the spring game,
just like in the old days.

It took some surrender
to go out and join in with this thing
that supposedly includes me.

I spent the morning forgetting
how good it really is to have a home.
My mood lightened once I was in the fresh air.

There was also the sound of the stadium
booming to the south like the very trumpet of angels.
There's a new place on the corner

that doesn't even explain to the likes of me
whether they serve food or coffee or wine or what.
This neighborhood is being cleaned up

for the next wave of rich people
who are scared of scruffy people, scared of crime.
Their projects never fail.

Do they ever find themselves alone,
watching people they used to know
slowly go crazy or drift to other cities?

I'm scared, too. I'm lingering.
I'm using my coins instead of my twenties
to buy coffee, just to get out from under that sky.

Sunday 04/22/18

Bracelet

This poem is not a suit of mail
nor a lavalier; which is to say
it is not long,
nor will it protect you.

It should have a focal point.
It may indicate something
already present: a rough stone,
or the wearer's wrist.

Monday 04/23/18

You've All Given Me A Lot To Think About.

It's a morning that reminds me of a late morning.
I'm doing some stretches on the living room floor

before work. It feels good
to bow in to the sun,
to re-encounter my legs.
They're reporting to me.
Hanging in there, waiting for something.

Zinc, coffee, sunshine, my medicines are zonking me out,
reeling me in. Where am I on this
intensely personal rotation?
Which way are my feet pointing? I'm ready to be guided.

Out the window there is a child
twirling in pink. Then comes another, also in pink.

What if I didn't assume anything?
What if I described them
just as they appear: a series
of geometric declensions, emitting signs?

Tuesday 04/24/18
Evening Walk

Turning, we came
to a bike path
that pointed all
the way to the horizon.
No streets, no cars,
only houses and grass,
and a bat
circling Venus.

Wednesday 04/25/18

Prompt: Warning Label

Warning: contains plastic
and toxins. DO NOT EAT.
Please. Don't eat me.

Warning: Will ghost you.
Like you've never been
ghosted before.

Warning. Beware.
Will steal your ideas
and forget doing so.

Warning: Judas Iscariot.
Warning: Poet.
Warning: Problematic.

Warning: I am,
by trade,
a disappointment.

Warning: Will subtext
you in poems
for years, maybe forever.

Will sign on to things
and disappear or
disengage, slowly.

Will sign on to things
with no endpoint
and pretend it's ok.

Warning: sends
memes. Doesn't
read.

Warning.

Toxic. So toxic.

Wow. So plastic.

Beware. Do not eat.

Do not engage. Wait
for cleanup
crew to arrive.

Do not handle
without proper
protective gear.

Thursday 04/26/18

Mornings

Early mornings enter the ear first.
There is a percussion between
inside and out, as morning pulls
up its silvery banners over the eternal
parade route. I must join.
Thoughtless, I sit alone and prepare.

I get to work; for a short time it is quiet.
A sequence, a perfectible sequence begins.
I don't get tired of this, seeking
perfect muscular control over the process
of weighing out coffee beans from a jar.
I try to stop the needle
at a precise point, as if I will win a prize.
The wood floors creak as I walk with exaggerated haste.
Could it be that someday I will come here
as a customer again? I doubt it.
When I'm gone, I'm gone.

Friday 04/27/18

songs mad the storm flew over (automatic writing exercise)

over the mad and the mad the *bla* the *slo* the *la*

there is a something kettle over by the door. love the mad the mad only flap the tower.

blame this flaw smash, look it round. there was some flap the lever with a erik

and I mustn't pause-*culause* over the love kind, the low, let it be the

longslumming other the lolita the film the cancer. aw hound I sense

the stop I can't remember so ever monet lavender blow the ten melon.

Saturday 04/28/18
Before The Picnic

Twitter is boring today,
which is a good sign.
A blue curtain
keeps the kitchen dark.
The sun coming in
through the window is infused
with magnolia blossom.

Low-angle sun is best;
the light is room temp
and mellows like tea.
By ten it'll be getting rancid,
so I'm starting early.

I already dusted the piano.
I got the vacuum out; it's waiting
in the hall. I've been preparing for this day
all month. Last chance to clean
before I'm married. Last day
to buy fruit
for the picnic.

Sunday 04/29/18
Progression

Quiet islands
that walk
all the way
across the sea.

Procession.
Progression.

I don't want
to return.

Monday 04/30/18

Bloom

This is the important time, when the magnolias
are in bloom. Every moment seems eternal;
what is now must have always been.

Winter is forgotten,
and one does not yet have the sense of hot
light lingering all day in the green
wide leaves of the magnolia.

They are innocent now, the shapes
barely formed, just thoughts the tree is having.
Happy thoughts.

The tree will enjoy the relentless summer sun; the tree will be
shouting, singing boldly and we will be humble in its shadow,
thankful for its boldness, its eagerness to rise up and shelter us.

The flowers are here now,
just the banner of what is to come. I spend the mornings
admiring them but it's not something I can know.

Notes

As in previous years, the poems are presented in order and without any changes from their originally posted forms, **with the following exceptions:** I corrected the spelling of Beyoncé's name in "Spring" and standardized the capitalization and numbering for the Epic of Lightness series.