

Rachel West's  
30 Poems  
April 2021



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1 April 2021

I'd prefer to say nothing of any great moment.  
I've been perfectly happy inside,  
in dreams of vast office buildings at night,  
in improvised dialogue,  
in the little euphorias,

a story in verse about rotting flowers,  
how badly I want to transcend—

but what use can I be without courage?

Only this moment is safe.  
There's so much ahead  
and I want to say I have faith  
that something both great and good  
will find me through these words.

2 April 2021

This is what I want for myself.  
I am the big stone blocking the river  
and nothing will come  
til I make way.

My back is to it all: all that I want for myself.

I look at the emptiness of what I have  
guarded here, speaking in negatives  
until it's clean.

And what if I prepared to fill  
this channel with all the world's shame  
and then decided  
at the last minute it wasn't mine?

3 April 2021

I am a child,  
to my grandfather and to myself.  
If I opened my chest  
would the thing emerge?  
Crawling or flying?  
Alive and in numbers?  
I was not a woman but a predestined coil  
interred and left to grow  
according to the magnetism of the world,  
the air quality,  
a happenstance of fires  
that didn't reach me.

4 April 2021

It's easter today  
This is perfectly normal work

We walk in the graveyard  
I'm feeling the weight of practices  
I have some friends here  
In the graveyard

I feel cold and resentful of all that's lost  
The impersonal sunshine like a hologram or false skin  
Merely a map

Everything must be named  
I am glad  
Of these long thumbs

He called me over to watch the grackles  
And I felt again a call from some  
Distant peak

A bell tolling, you know  
It could say come, receive  
The balm  
The juice

5 April 2021

Despues del conferencia,  
Misifuf y Zapiron  
(Buscando, quizás, otro capón)  
Encuentran ¡Una ambulancia!

¿Hay algún emergencia?  
¡No, señor!  
Ya comemos hoy en dia.

*This poem is based on a poem my grandpa and I were discussing. Misifuf and Zapiron are cats.*

6 April 2021

The rain sounded violent.  
I got up earlier than usual.

What I'm grieving  
Isn't what I'm supposed to be grieving.

Everyone, everyone  
Just needs to be left alone.

I wanted to write about  
A porn star I follow on Instagram

But I was afraid you'd think I was joking.  
He had some things to say about love.



7 April 2021

got caught up in  
what I owe to  
the living

and my little ideas  
went like marbles  
all over the food court

life is short

8 April 2021

what did it feel like,  
the warm jump of beginning?  
skin on skin, and rain.

9 April 2021

You who smoke yourself sour  
with reproach,  
we are family.  
We share this blood.

I cannot spare the world  
and live in it,

but there is more.  
Don't stay behind.  
Throw the mess away.  
Throw the bomb, joyfully, and run,  
because you deserve to live.

10 April 2021

I had a dream where he  
was in a rock shop in India

where he'd been pursued  
by assassins, after learning the truth.

Why did you want me to see this?  
he said, touching a strand

of prayer beads made from  
strawberry quartz, specifically.

11 April 2021

If I had an ocean  
I would not send my voice  
to cross it.

I would stand on its shore  
and watch it for years.

I would wrap myself  
in a succession of sweaters  
someone else made for me.

12 April 2021

we're not in hell yet.  
there's utility in love  
and in numbers we can count to.

the good stuff is this moment, any moment.

it's right there on the shelf.  
it's not locked up or anything.

you know how good it tastes  
because you were born in it  
and you also made it.

don't wait, don't ask, don't clock out first,  
just take it.

13 April 2021

Oh, it's a bit rich,  
isn't it, to say to anyone  
No, this is not hell?

What do I know of god's love?  
Whose instrument am I?

Looking out the window, saying  
Yes, this feels like home,

like hope; I see  
no problem with the boiling sky.

14 April 2021

I love the texture  
of 3D-printed plastic

of flowers painted  
by artificial intelligence

something innocent at last  
something trying  
to be new

let me join them

how bored I am  
of endless rapture  
at the feet  
of a pale statue



15 April 2021

I can't do this performance  
I don't want to write about  
mundane things fuck them all

what am I supposed to wear  
to go swimming with you

I built an avatar  
to hold my collection  
of rare and imagined  
body parts

I looked through him and fell  
into the water

Love, love, love

I shouted out the window  
at love  
I shouted down a hole  
until all my air was gone

I indulged myself completely

16 April 2021

When Margaret died,  
Nellie and Walter  
took care of the baby (Marian).

Annette (5 years old) stayed with  
Edwin, who later remarried  
and had 4 more children  
with Helen.

Marian remained with  
Nellie and Walter  
(at their own request).

(Marian is my grandmother.)

17 April 2021

Instead of a poem,  
I dreamed a doomsayer's goof-off,  
poured out some ice wine  
for those lost in the nonnuclear  
megadeath.

But let's channel-hop now.

The year you were born,  
they catalogued two new kinds of  
headache, and two kinds of  
dulcimer!

In this glottochronology,  
"Rapture Of The Deep"  
was just the name of a racehorse.

He was so damn good,  
they used to say  
he could soft sell  
stiletto heels  
in a bubble chamber.

*This poem was made with (and about) words from the year of my mother's birth because it's her birthday today.*

18 April 2021

I believe you.  
Your spirit is slowly  
burning through these walls.

All the world,  
the sky each night,  
is on fire  
with my love for you.

My spirit is building  
these walls  
to protect you.

Something in nature  
will remember us.

19 April 2021

snow filling the cups  
of spring flowers  
as I sit here, not yet feverish,  
drinking my cup  
of spiced tea

20 April 2021

Day after the second shot  
And I'm just sitting  
Feeling the sun through the window  
Swell and fade  
Like water in a pool  
Magnifying and floating me.

I used to love swimming more than anything.  
So long now since I fearlessly demanded  
To be taken to a public pool,  
Fearlessly approached  
The water which could be so deliciously warm  
Or cold enough to crash through all  
The nerves of my body like laughter  
Or cheers through a joyous crowd.

To want that? To be that free?  
What would it mean now  
To be small again, ignorant of my body,  
To not care  
Who all those strangers are?

21 April 2021

Not feeling much  
of a mood. Would rather be  
in a gaming chair  
with a big bowl of lucky charms

I want my boots back  
and my short hair

If I have to be in the world  
I would like to be someone  
who can go anywhere

Here are three versions:  
Master criminal  
Man  
Hermit

The criminal is visually indistinguishable  
from a hero because deeds aren't fashion

The man is just trying to fit in somehow

The hermit is something else entirely,  
always waiting, always in the  
dark, so blessedly sealed and free of infection

My feet go into a prayer shape  
I thought I was so damn magical

22 April 2021

Here I go again looking  
for companionship in paintings  
of satanists,  
eyeballs, tiny deer,

a tourist of every culture  
who hasn't left the apartment  
in a year.

My gender, moon sign, birth order  
align: I never learned to share.  
I always liked boys

with long hair. But to be fair, I guess  
people have been killed for less.



23 April 2021

Remember tiny sparrows rising  
Up through the flowering tree  
I've been escaping

Slowly  
Like air through a pinhole

Beauty lets go easily  
And Nature is especially beautiful  
Steadfastness is a human error

We'll never belong anywhere  
Except within our own creation

A simulation  
Where time is reduced  
As one simmers a stock for soup  
To make something delicious and rarefied  
This is the trick

24 April 2021

i'm listening to her playlist again  
that j'amaï vu sensation—

you sure got me this time

the weather yesterday had me hoping  
for a wilder garden

the trees all bursting out  
like it's spring break

he waited patiently as i stopped  
to touch every single one

as i pointed and laughed  
at all the birds, every single one

25 April 2021

A squirrel was looking at us  
and making pointed comments  
as we talked about the future.

I want to be like  
a tree with dark leaves  
and white flowers.

It'll take a miracle  
for anything to go right  
so I guess I already believe.

I want to open my mouth  
to catch my own laughter  
like warm rain.

26 April 2021

not wishing to harm,  
I became absent

she's gone now and can't be  
spoken to

I must speak to you  
for the rest of our lives  
for her sake

you have your blood  
and I have mine  
and I have my words which  
bloomed in her garden

in her part of a more boundless world  
or however it is that love wanders  
like a weed

*Earlier this year a good friend passed away. She helped me a lot growing up. This was an attempt to write a little about that.*

27 April 2021

Nevermind the superleague,  
here's a poem.

Here, still inside,  
we open the window  
on the magnolias,  
the usual starlings,

and we watch football  
night after night.

Alisson Becker  
didn't save those goals  
against Real Madrid  
but he saved me.

28 April 2021

the temptation is terrible  
but it won't end the loneliness

so the table is open  
so what  
do you really want to sit there

do you really want to  
do it all again

29 April 2021

you guys  
I can't wait  
to go to therapy

and find out about  
the harm I'm doing

I have so many questions

how do I stop talking about myself

when is it appropriate  
to cry or look  
at stars or fly away to one of them

and what should I bring  
as a gift

I didn't even see  
the pink moon  
I was too busy  
with my guilt

30 April 2021

Here are some more jokes

When your ego is being observed  
by astrophysicists

Am I right?

When the speed of light  
meets modern monetary theory

When you model Satan's face  
after your own and they call it ableist

When you look back at how  
you treated all your friends and lovers and

Wonder why you never warned them

Here's a smoothie and your morning newspaper  
You're on your own now  
Try not to make it any worse, will ya?



## Notes on Digital Version 2021

More on Misifuf and Zapiron, the cats of conscience: the poem describes a couple of cats who encounter an ambulance on its way to the scene of an emergency. Since they're cats and they've just eaten i.e. their own needs are met, they're confident there is no emergency. Punctuation is wrong on this and a lot of other things in this document, I'm sure. As of now we're not sure of the source of the original poem which this poem is a riff on. Just something my grandpa remembered. In the original, they eat a rotisserie chicken that didn't belong to them, but feel their consciences are clear because they did not also eat the rotisserie, which was an impossible thing to do anyway. Cat logic.

Notes on the individual poems are in italics more or less as they appeared on my site. There's not much to add to them for the purposes of this release.

Fixed the spelling of Liverpool FC goalkeeper Alisson Becker's name in April 27 poem. Added some em dashes throughout, wherever I believed it was correct. I'm trying to be more consistent with the marks I choose, but I make mistakes, and also there are occasionally issues with character sets between applications that cause punctuation to get funky in the browser, something I didn't take the time to clear up when the poems were initially drafted.

The funny thing about capitalization choices day to day is that they depend both on my mood/energy level and, in some cases, the software I was writing in. I'm absolutely satisfied with those inconsistencies/artifacts.

Sometimes my tendency to use pronouns in place of names leaves me unsatisfied with the overall effect when taken together, when "she" means one person one day and a different person the next. I don't have a solution. Hope it's not too frustrating to read. By contrast, you'll find the poem for April 16 is ~90% proper names AND the details of their relationship to each other and to me personally.

Not using titles helps me remember that these aren't final versions, merely ideas which I or anyone else can build on in the future. I'm still using the creative commons license because I like to treat this as a sort of artistic research project "funded" by family/friend/community support, generational wealth, and the people who work in the supply chain that enables me to eat homemade smoothies every day. I don't advise artists in general to follow suit unless they know it's right for them. It's unclear how this affects publication rights if I were ever to pursue that, but that's not my primary concern.

That's it, really. Thanks for reading!

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20 May 2021