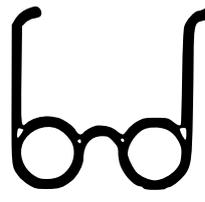


39 and
49 other
POEMS

Robert Moscaliuc

 THE
DOUBTFUL
RECLUSE



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DOUBTFUL
RECLUSE

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Moscaliuc" followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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Designed by Robert Moscaliuc & The Doubtful Recluse.
Published in Italy and the European Union.

To Anvar L., whose skyscrapers I
can still see wherever I am,
and to D. S., whose dreams
were better than I.

Fifty

I'm the prophet's lover
Who lives in a cave inside a house
That was once yours.
You come to visit and
I know that when you come in through the door
You're about to leave.
Call it a lover's premonition.
No.
Before you even come in through the door
You're about to leave.
No.
Before you even decide to come in through the door
You're about to leave.
No.
Before you even start sucking on this jelly
I call reality
You're about to leave.

Forty-nine

I met a man like no other
Who said he's seen shadows in me
Who sent me pictures of dead roses
Set against a bookshelf
And a white sign hanging beneath it that read
African solutions to American problems
Whose world of flowers held against the chest
Dismisses mourning and suggests coolness
And smiles that can't decide to be themselves
Which remind me not of reckless running
But of walking on floors made of white satin
Whose departure resembles not entropy
But finding the cold kiss of my own saliva
On the pillow in the morning.

Forty-eight

We've driven our women to where the grounds
Were the blackest of coal
Flattened them against those grounds
To add a tinge of red
To the soles of our shoes.
There we whispered to them:
I do not wish to return to your womb, woman
To go up your legs and thighs like on a social ladder
I'm looking for a man whose womb
Is warm enough to keep me quiet.

Forty-seven

You dreamt you had a dog
Your sister getting married
A weird red building
In a dreamlike vicinity.
It was some sort of villa
In a warm place, like south of Italy or LA
It had a kind of tower, circular
A dome on top, white
A hispanic feel to it
Mediterranean.
We promised to go inside together
We never did.

Forty-six

The red

From the Red Riding Hood
Has rubbed off on your fingers
From all that touching
And spread like pepper
On the Wolf's whiskers
On the bedroom wall
By the bed where
The Wolf made love to you
And grinned in your hair.
You told me it's nothing really
The red marks
Are like breadcrumbs
To help you remember your way
Back to the home
Of the hunter with the oily hands
In case the Wolf ever asked you
To get rid of him.

Forty-five

The farthest future
(And all the promises
It needs to exist)
Is at the tip of your cock.
It's but a question of space:
One needs pleasure
Always to be at hand.

Forty-four

Next to my collection of books
I keep my collection of porn magazines
And next to them
Under an imaginary bed
I have a book
Of eyes that move sideways.
Of course
I don't collect porn magazines
It was just to give you
A sense of hierarchy.

Forty-three

On that second day of silence
I thought of all those musicians
We overhear while doing stupid stuff
About how they've been blessed sometimes
With not knowing or seeing
The people who dance or listen
To their music.

Forty-two

We were unaware
The strawberry pink drinks
We served by the pool
With the certainty of party hosts
Were once
Two separate things:
White milk
And drops of careless blood.
Imagine the awkwardness
We could have occasioned
Had we refused to serve and drink
Such drinks.

Forty-one

The dog licks its wounds
To hear the abrasive tongue
Against the veiled warnings of pain.
Shards from those wounds
Detach themselves
Like chunks of meteorites
Drifting through space
And collect inside the dog's chest
To form a ball of pain.

Forty

You.

A recognition

Then a denial of that recognition

For a moment you resemble

The fear of having seen myself

From the outside.

Fear dispelled when one morning

As I was opening the windows

I saw the light streaming through the trees

And thought of you.

Who else hears your breath

And knows that it's a symptom

Of you hurting yourself again?

Thirty-nine

Standing above me

You look at the burning blue neon

Flashing above us

And take one of your eyeballs out

Then gently hold it

In between the tips of your fingers.

Stick your tongue out, you say.

And you place the eyeball on the spoon

Of my tongue.

Swallow this.

Your hand gesturing as if to close a drawer.

I want to see what's in there

This is medicine.

Thirty-eight

I've been telling men
I'll sleep with them
As long as they stick around
Long enough to tell me
What's wrong with me.
I wonder if they can see
For how many times
I've tried to be beautiful but failed.

Thirty-seven

Did you dream last night?
I did but I don't remember
I know I dreamt of eggs broken eggs
I was trying to separate the broken eggs
From the good ones
I remember that among that egg chaos
– I saw the fetus of a chick
And I thought:
Fuck
If the eggs hadn't broken
I would have eaten this chick.
I thought of miniature women
Wearing feathers
Hiding inside the eggs
On the top shelf in the kitchen fridge.

Thirty-six

Set these words to violent violin voices
To playlists made to make you feel better
Imagine sweat coming off my brow
You sitting, me standing at a sharp angle
Fingers like a gun pointed at you:
You listen to me
You listen to me good
You're no man
You're just one fucking sorry ass poofter
'Cause at the end of the day
The end of the line
You'll be prancing around
In your bathrobe and shower shoes
Feeling like a man
Because the ass that is now turned
Towards the heavens like some sunflower
The half dead dick
Pressed against the mattress
Were all yours but minutes ago
His grunts against the pillow
An affirmation of your efforts.

Thirty-five

These sheets too rigid to feel like home
The commercials on the TV
Refuse to even whisper to me.
They do speak however
To the married man on top of me
The room too dark to see his face.
And if you take a few steps back far enough
To immerse yourself in the sticky half-light
Of the woman speaking to a man
About a job about a friend who
Did the job
Just far enough
It won't seem like the married man
On top of me
Is fucking me
But strangling me
His final thrusts the echoes
Of the dying man
Beneath him.

Thirty-four

The sucking sounds of guy and girl kissing.
So loud, loud as all the ideological veils.
Out there.
Not just on the benches.
By the library walls.
Draped over the world.
Over knowledge and know-how.
Over the green grass.
Flailing in ominous body language.
So loud they remind me of fear.
Of getting caught watching porn.
Of coming out to my parents.
So loud that it's all I can hear.

Thirty-three

Your open palms.

Covering your cock.

And the nest of pubic hair.

Is the wing of a male bird.

In the ecstasy of reproduction.

The bundle of goose feathers.

Grandmother smeared scrambled eggs with.

Over the pale skin.

Of homemade bread.

Just moments before being shoved.

In the oven.

Thirty-two

When the dog on the side of the road
Reached the speed of light
The owner had been dead for quite a while.
When the dog stopped to sniff its own urine
The leash ended in silence.
Tumescent.
That silence chased the dog
Until it disappeared
Its muzzle held high
To smell the wind.

Thirty-one

This morning of October.

The dew on the grass

Resembled the first snows of winter.

And through that snow I've seen you coming.

Not because I wanted you there.

[I was running.

And I was all sweaty.]

But because

By the time the first snow falls this year

I will have known for quite a while

If you are here to stay.

Thirty

In the green light rush of 5th Ave
I've seen the pulsing breasts
Of two youths in shorts and loose shirts
Returning from basketball practice.
Not just seen.
But prayed to.
And thought.
What should I do to make these men
Love me?
Me.
One who believes.
The nights are cold.
Because the stars.
Are starving.

Twenty-nine

When you sent me that picture
Of your face against a blue sky
With clouds of white hair
I thought of Greek gods
Looking down from above.
I'm no god.
You said.
I don't turn water into wine.
Let me return this vision.
The way King David must have done
With his god
Through the words of his psalms.
The way the sun.
Makes the clouds.
Feel useful once again.
By giving them.
A splinter of his grace.

Twenty-eight

I dream of sitting
Cross legged
Inside your voice.
Not in the words
I can make out of it.
But in its slurring
Its pillow grunts
The sounds of a mouth
Pushed against the hairs
Of my chest
When you return exhausted.

Twenty-seven

There might come a time
When our thing:
This prolonged caress
Broken into daily doses
Will take the rectangular shape
Of money.
When we will come to believe
This thing we've found:
Our tent made of dark picnic blanket
Will trim our dreams.
Will tuck the loose ends.
Will protrude like a shark fin.
Out of the blue depths of our lives.

Twenty-six

It's so easy.

To predict a man's future.

He has to.

The cards will show.

Inevitably.

A woman who wishes him well.

Not while departing.

But coming towards him.

Twenty-five

Nobody actually cares.

Whether you're reading Philip K. Dick.

While you're waiting for your train.

Or Joyce.

For that matter.

Other commuters won't look for Joyce.

They'll look for your face.

In the crowd.

Then they'll search your face.

To see not Joyce.

But his Ulysses.

And.

Are you returning to Ithaca by the afternoon train?

Twenty-four

The four pearls on his ankle
Were of four different colors.
That's my lucky number.
The man with the mustard colored
T-shirt said.
We're four brothers and sisters.
They're precious pearls.
They bring me luck.
I touched the pearls.
While looking at them.
Which might as well have been a reason
To touch this beautiful man's ankle.
But then I know that the next morning.
While taking a dump.
I'll think of the pearls as redundant.
Just as he thought my backpack.
Was redundant.

Twenty-three

Think of it.

I've used lines from.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

As pickup lines.

Lines from Dante's *Inferno*.

The ones I could remember.

Reciting from the Bible in gothic.

Not Hamlet but Macbeth.

Twenty-two

Just don't tell them you won't have sex with them.

It's better to keep that to yourself.

Said the man with the mustard-colored polo t-shirt.

With the four-pearl string tied to his ankle.

You could be refusing to have sex with the love of your life.

I ate the apple slices from the lip of my cocktail glass.

And took my sweater off.

To reveal more skin.

He threw his eyes at me

Keep fucking and in doing so

You might find the right one.

And if that doesn't happen

You'd still be fucking

Right?

I thought how beautiful.

The evening sky.

Just above your head.

Twenty-one

Let me be.

The kind of music that refuses to betray you.

The paragraph you keep returning to

When you feel as if there's something you

Missed.

Let me maintain

The abstract stubbornness.

Of concepts misunderstood.

Then understood

During nights of heavy sleep

And in the aftermath of violent dreams.

Twenty

When I saw you.
Lying under those paintings.
You and the colors bleeding.
Into one another.
Like soldier friends.
At the end of tedious battle.
I thought of your youth.
Not sunbathing.
But color bathing.
A distant sun crawling in
Through the windows
Its rays clasped like a hairpin
Into your beard.
There's no such thing
As instances that words could not describe.
They're just trivial.
In the grand scheme of things.

Nineteen

When we got under your dark picnic blanket.
I noticed that its underbelly.
Was painted in a wide range of colors.
From fury to passion to rage.
To golden fur of dogs.
I looked up for so long.
That you weren't there anymore.
I started drawing tiny soldiers once again.

Eighteen

I came in.

Departed from a family.

Where flowers.

Could be offered both to the living.

And the dead.

Where red roses.

Were stubborn enough.

To retain a tinge of passion.

In whose bathroom, towels.

Cut your body in half.

Where father did not have.

The hands of a gambler.

But gambled nonetheless.

Seventeen

You came in.

With a dark picnic blanket.

So big it could cover the world.

It's too big for the two of us.

I said.

It's okay.

You said.

We can build a tent for now.

Sixteen

Does the bluish glow.
Of my phone's touchscreen.
At two in the morning.
After a long session of sexting.
Count as postcoital glow?
'Cause it wasn't even post-*anything*.
You told me you came.
I mirrored the gesture.
And words refer only to themselves.
Our orgasms a ceasefire.
A quieting of circuits.
A waste of our data plan.

Fifteen

You were.

I reasoned with myself.

One of those men.

Who started and ended conversations.

With a thumbs up.

When I had never even seen your shoulders.

Or fallen in love with them.

To begin with.

As it happened with that man with crooked teeth.

I met at a conference.

Or those two men.

At the train station.

Whose faces I couldn't see.

All of this.

Is but the scream of an old car.

Slowing down.

Then pulling into an empty parking lot at night.

Fourteen

When you told me you weren't coming.
After all.
I put more makeup on.
I painted my fingernails and toenails.
And cut my hair.
Over the sink.
With that beard trimmer I bought from New York City.
So as to put on a new wig.
And sunglasses that would cover the eyes.
That were just as big as the face.
I wanted to look like Capote.
In that movie about Capote.
Have Harper Lee.
Talk to me.
Like your manliness.
My suffering was made in Hollywood.

Thirteen

With the feathers still on.

We put on the make-up.

You farted and we both laughed.

Here, smell my bad breath.

You said.

I sad it's not bad at all.

It's yours.

Twelve

You don't know yet
How many limbs my words have grown
To escalate your body.
My words like restless children
Who need time to settle down.
I haven't told you yet
About how everyone is entitled to a moment of wonder.
When you sent me that short short video.
Of a foreign hand jerking off.
(Supposedly yours.)
An alien cock.
(Allegedly yours.)
I felt like a peasant.
Who goes into a cathedral.
In the Baroque aesthetic idiom.

Eleven

Let me teach you a thing or two:

You take what's best.

Then spit the shell out.

In this order.

Like eating sunflower seeds.

When you say these things.

There's a feeling in my guts.

Resembling the need to take a dump.

Make room for junk food.

All it takes is to just step away from the phone.

Switch on the night-shift mode in the middle of the day.

Or just pour some still water into a glass.

From the bottle that sat throughout the night.

Next to your bed.

And listened to you masturbate.

You don't drink it.

You just drop some blue ink into it.

And look at it.

And remember what your grandma's doctor told you.

Young man you've got the hips of a woman.

Take this magical powder.

Made of chemical roses.

Dilute it with warm water.

Then wash yourself with it down there.

Ten

You remember his name well enough.

You've been inside him, what?

Two times already?

It's just that Hollywood movies.

Turned you into a man.

Nine

There's something I should tell you.

When I go for a run.

I look for the ice-cream vendor.

What is he, like, nineteen or something?

I think I'm in love with him.

He looks good from the sidewalk.

Eight

You stole my words, you told me

So precious they were.

They were:

Yes, slowly at first.

Watching it as it goes in and out.

Seven

Marry me.

No man in this world

Has ever asked me how I was feeling

After sexting.

You told me our prime-minister

Wants to take a peek under the covers.

Six

Such refined way of speaking.

As if you were eating in a fancy restaurant.

It turns me on.

I think I should be embarrassed.

When you tell me my beard is turning you on.

I send you an emoji.

That doesn't look at all like me.

Five

Vacuum cleaning.

While *Tell it to My Heart* plays in the background.

Feathers all over the floor.

Not from a pillow fight.

We took the feathers out of the pillows.

Put them on ourselves.

Inevitably, some fell on the floor.

In colorful patterns.

Four

Our house has the length of a song.

Our bedroom the expanse of a song's chorus.

Our kitchen sink brimming with unwashed dishes

The first beats of a song.

We were unaware of it.

Until one of our neighbors told us:

Hey, faggots, you're living inside an 80s song.

Three

I have two brains.

My body is covered in fur.

I'm bicerebral bicameral

Massage my brain and my cock.

This erection is all your fault.

You should be proud of yourself.

Two

D: I like to listen.

R: So what have you heard while listening?

D: Seagulls were laughing.

R: What were they laughing at?

D: I dunno, at the clouds, at us people.

One

If I were to draw a line between us
My right hand would hesitate
Long enough for you to doubt it.
Then, it would begin walking again.
Would tremble.
Go back.
Then go back.
I would draw tiny soldiers with swords and shields
Just above the line
From A to B they would evolve
Swords to spears to guns to heavy war machinery
But the tiny soldiers would still be recognizable
If not for their weapons of choice
Then for the colorful plumage they wear on their heads
My tiny war animals
Dispatched to look for you