



Broken Verses

**PARENTAL
ADVISORY**
EXPLICIT CONTENT

**I'm Glad You're Here.
A Few Words Before We Begin.**

Raised in the shadow of abandonment and abuse, my father lost to the streets and my mother to the bottle, I spent over three decades in two relationships steeped in deception and sociopathy. Leaving each was an act of survival, and though the past still lingers, these works are my way of reclaiming that history.

Every work in this collection is my own, except *Broken Verses of Betrayal & Redemption (An Ode to Tennessee Williams)*, which is composed entirely of his play titles and dialogue.

Raymond Helkio (they/them)

Raymond Helkio is a queer, neurodivergent artist living on the edge of insanity. They are a graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design, and their work has been shown at international film, theatre, and design festivals including Inside Out Film Festival, Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, Design Exchange, Videofag, Art Gallery of Ontario, Glad Day Bookshop, Artscape and Nuit Rose. They also host the long-running Poetry Open Mic at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre and are an associate member of the League Of Canadian Poets.

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Broken Verses

by Raymond Helkio

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*Contains subject matter that may be distressing to some. Music and soundscaping: Zubaida by Breuss Arrizabalaga Quintet, Jazzy Beat by Scydan, Cinema Rhythms by Samuel F. Johanns, Flat Lining (Instrumental) by Holizna RAPS, and Aqua by Eklorea Sound.

THE
READING
SALON

Your Love Is A Typo

I love you
He said.
And I
Had no reply.

Your love is a typo
An accolade misplaced as a footnote
An unspoken run-on sentence
An empty bottle of liquid paper

Your love is a typo
A super subscript
A questionable mark
Outside of the margin

Where your asterisks
Never end
And you can hide inside
A word salad

Of words without rhymes
Sentences lacking meaning
Iterations, facsimiles
And crumpled drafts

Your love is a typo.

That Night

That night
The stars
The moon
The happiness

I missed
While I was
With
You.

He was every man
That was also me,
And I loved me
A mansplainer

A project I thought I could fix,
But what I couldn't see
Was that he
Was me

And by placing
The blame
Not on the stars
In the sky

But the emptiness
Inside
The beginning
Met the end

That night
The stars
The moon
The happiness

I missed
While I was
With
You

That grin
Those empty eyes
The darkness
The fog

The steam on the windows
The speed
The long road ahead
The low beams

Your hand
Reaching behind
The seat
What is behind the seat?

What is it
That made me stay
A passenger
Your hand reaching

The accident up ahead
You're searching
My longing
The space

Between
The heaviness
Of every moment

Of every mile

There is an accident up ahead
Are you listening to me!
We are moving head on
Into a—

—young hitchhiker
That looked like you
Disappears
In the mirror

That night
The stars
The moon
The happiness

I missed
While I was
With
You

A drive
In the night
Turned into
Night

After night
After night
After night
After night

This
Is
Not
Love.

Broken Verses of Betrayal & Redemption (An Ode To Tennessee Williams)

That night
At the theater
An intermission
Came between us

And so you see
The natural or unnatural
Attraction of one lunatic
For another

That's
All
It
Was

I was the proverbial iguana
Noose around my neck
So he could fatten me up
For the slaughter

And for the days I woke up
Wishing I hadn't
The audience was gaslit
Darkness in the sound cage

So I became the streetcar
Destined for desire
But stalled
At an intersection

Between
Love
And
Abuse

I'm the cat on a hot tin roof
Refusing to jump
Scorching the pads of my feet
Skin stuck like glue to a rusted awning

I'm the thorn rose tattoo
Inked on my face
A regrettable decision

A reminder of you

I'm the glass menagerie
With a missing leg
That I allowed you to amputate
Along with my heart

Together
We
Were
A one act play

Opening with applause
But closing
To an empty
Theater

You brought something cloudy
I saw something clear
Then suddenly last summer
The two character play

Brought in a spring storm
And I took the stairs to the roof
And stood on a house
Not meant to stand

The marquee was wrong
Our program, a blank page
And there will be no encore
As I finally walk off stage.

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Act 1. The First Man I Ever Loved

One.

The first man I ever loved
I loved so deeply
That in his absence
I was nothing

The first man I ever loved
I loved so deeply
That without his gaze
My objects were impermanent

The first man I ever loved
I loved so deeply that I couldn't see
That his love
Was conditional

The first man I ever loved
Was my dad

And in that time
He came and went

Like most
Men
Who would
Enter my life

When I grew up
I wanted to be
Just like my dad
He was gay

And when the dream
Really did come true
I built a machine
That had me speaking

Like a queen
A wizard
Behind the
Velvet drapes

I pulled levers
Pushed people's buttons
And more heels
Oh my!

And I could sing songs
Meant for cloudy days
The kind that could
Make people cry for

Absolutely
No reason
At
All

And like the next man
That would enter my life
My dad
Would later die alone

In a bathhouse.

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Act 2. The Second Man I Ever Loved

Two.

The second man
I ever loved
Was my
First boyfriend

An Olympic God
A Greek tragedy
At the water's edge
Gazing down

At his own reflection
While he fucked me
And with belabored breath
I stared to

Waiting for him
To glance my way

Some kind of insurance
That things would finally

Be okay

And so my lover
I gave my courage
My brains
My heart

And the lot
He took it all
With a grin
And so after some

Careful thought
Contemplation
Consideration
Deliberation

Introspection
And lots of

Fucking
Meditation

I began to see that he was a
Future faking, shape shifting
Toxic motherfucker
Enough said

He was the death
Of my
Theoretical
Hero

He tried
And he died
Looking for somewhere
To hide his sexuality

And then one night
He got really high
Went to a bathhouse sauna
And died

He fell asleep
While his body
Cooked
From the inside.

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Act 3. The Last Man I'll Ever Love

Three.

The last man I'll ever love

He should have come
With a trigger warning
Charming on the outside
Decades before I saw his real side

You see it all fell apart
When I got up off the couch
With the intention
Of getting more coffee

I can always use more coffee

I approach the kitchen
My partner
The love of my life

My goofy nerd

And I see his computer screen
Flickering in the reflection
Of his glasses
The bifocals he perches

At the end
Of his nose
When he's
Concentrating

Like Benjamin Franklin
Or Stephen King
Like Santa Claus
Or Bruce MacArthur

You can call me
Nancy Drew
Miss Marple
Cagney or Lacey

The game was on
He's looking at me
As if I can't see that
He's obsessed

With concealing
Obsessed with hiding
What's on that screen
And this ain't the first time

I need to know
What's on that laptop
What is it that takes up
So much of his time?

And so what started
As me being a private dick
Looking for a dick pic
To make sense of the situation

I morphed
Into Alice

Down the
Rabbit Hole

Right-e-o, I'll be back
He says
Once I pick up a few things
From the grocery store

I half smile
He slams
The door
Behind him

Because that's
How he rolls
Slamming doors
Clomping feet

And so now
That he's gone
It gives me
About ten minutes

To go through
His laptop
Fifteen if he
Stops for wine

So I double-click

Then I remember
Command-V
Because pressing
These keys

Pastes the last thing
He copied
Command-C
Into the browser window

Hard return

Icons along
The top
Of his laptop
Flash

Ones that I have
Never
Seen
Before.

Tor
VPN
MegaServer
Onion

Double-click

Folders within folders
Like Russian
Nesting
Dolls

An online community
Building a massive
Digital catalog
Of black market videos

Toddlers
Raped
Of their
Innocence

Let's cut the pretense
Prepubescent children
Are being raped
Videotaped

And downloaded into my living room

They are far too young
To know
What was
Happening to them

Perhaps like me
They'll make sense
Of it
One day

Perhaps not

And then I remember the USBs
That I would find in odd places
Forgotten spaces
All around the house

There's no reason
To have these
Stashed
In suit pockets

When
You
Are
Retired

I grab a few
Plug them in
Just to find
More megabytes

Of little boys
And girls
In gruesome pain

Could someone

Please explain

How it's possible that
Someone I've lived with for over
Two decades
Could be trafficking child porn

Right under my nose

Who can
And are
Getting away
With it

The search bar
On a Mac
Is called Spotlight
It searches

The entire computer
And it's not long

Before it finds more worms
In this Apple

A zipped folder
And another
And another
With indecipherable names

But Spotlight
Flagged these folders for
Containing the word
Boy

And now
The question is
Do I
Double-click?

I don't think
I have the time
To trash the contents
Of an unzipped folder

I'd have to empty
The trash
And he never
Empties his trash

He'll know I was in here
But I can't hang
With this thought
Incomplete in my head

It's double
Or nothing
And I lose
Either way

So I double-click

In the
French
Folk tale
Bluebeard

A young bride is given keys

To her husband's castle
With one
Forbidden room

One day
Tired of the secrets
She opens the door
And there she finds

The murdered
Bodies of his
Previous
Wives.

As the pieces
Snap into place
The clock ticks
In double time

There's only
A few minutes
Before he
Gets back

My heart
Claws
At my
Ribs

There would be no
Command-S
For this relationship
I now have no choice

But to
Unhook
My entire
Life

From this dialectic
Diabolical
Master of deceit
And without warning

The door flies open!

Fuck

I am
Not prepared
For this situation

When I was in Beavers
I earned a badge
For preparedness.
Always be prepared

A pledge:

I promise to do my best
To be kind and helpful
And to love our world!

That was the Beaver pledge

I was not prepared
I was not prepared
I was not prepared
For the hyperbolic

Gaslighting that

Was to come
Hours of talking
In circles

His face pale
Eyes black
As shame
He says

I've always traded
These videos with
Other guys online
No one actually gets hurt

The videos are already there
So what's the problem?
It's more like a hobby
I've had my whole adult life.

As if by making
These statements
It's now somehow
Okay

So you see
He says everything is fine
But you snooping
Is over the line

You see he says
To me
There's no harm
To anyone

You are always
Too sensitive
Too reactionary
Too drunk

He says everything
To me except
I am sorry
As if sorry could ever do

The entire life I knew
Evaporating
Under my feet

Just like that!

The home

I had

Come to adore

Command-X

Holding the image

Of my partner

My love

While simultaneously

Holding

This new

Opposite

Truth

A dialectic so polar

I disassociate

From the argument

Altogether

I start running this

New information
Against all the
Dark moments

Of our history together
A history that turns out
To be just
A theory

Both truths
Make sense
And also
They don't

My once
Charming man
A cherished friend
Now a dead end

I will tell you this

When he came back
That day

Command-Q
Began a night

He could
Never have
Anticipated
Command-ESC.

All That I Didn't See

Thinking of the world
I once knew
Thinking of him, me
And all that I didn't see

I wish I didn't know it all
But not knowing would definitely
Be a bigger curse
And a bigger fall

Being young
Dumb
And full of
Cum

I mistook my need to be validated
For love
And that made
Things worse

Because where he
Ended
And I began
Was a mystery to me

So my focus
Was on his lack
Of integrity
And I focused all of me

I have aged into his arms
This deception
His immaculate silence
The unbelievable silence

Of this now rotten relationship
This was his Pandora's box
But my look back at Medusa
Something I can never unsee

Now, who is he to me?
All these years

Eclipsed
By an epic collection

Of lost lullabies
And cradles
Balanced
On secrets

Like a mobile
Dangling over
A child's crib
This relationship

Spinning
Just
Beyond
My grasp

My future self
Thanks me
For rising above
The quicksand

Rising above the mess
That was his life
But became mine
I lost everything I knew

And saw the man before me
Show me another side
That shadow space in between
Is just too much for me

The blackness
Of his eyes
When he knows
His mask has fallen

The gig is up

This is all
Too much
For me
To touch

Or look at
Or give space to
Except in that
What's always been there

Lurking in the shadows
Now sits in the light
It's not like an affair
Where a partner

Could turn a blind eye
This changes
Everything
And how could it not?

Little by little
It all started to rot
And the real damage you see
Was to me a collapsing

Of everything
I knew

To be
True

And so where do I go now?
Completely alone in the situation
While everything
Happens at once

Thinking of the world
I once knew
Thinking of him, me
And all that I didn't see

But the truth is
I was at a point
Where being here
Was now a dark vacuum

And against all odds
I clawed my way
Back to today
And so here we are

In this moment
I get
To have
My story

Because recovering
From this took
Everything I had
I pulled my way

From disbelief
Through grief
And I can't hide
How this has changed me

And so the moment
I stopped keeping
My experience
A secret

Is this moment
This moment

This very moment
Is when I finally

Get to walk free.

Let's (Not) Talk

Your call has been forwarded to an automated voice messaging system. At the tone, please record your message. When you finish recording, you may hang up or press one for more options.

Come on let's talk they said
Ordinary citizens, ordinary friends
Now therapists
Training provided by Bell Canada

Let it out
We're here
We care
And for a few days

I breathed a little bit easier
Love in their voice
Compassion
A lifeline in my storm

But novelty fades

Understanding wanes
And soon enough
My burden returns

I'm searching for understanding
They wanted to see results
I needed a friend
But they were looking for an end

An end to my suffering
So we could go back
To when everything was fine
And a must happen in double time

An avalanche of advice
I never asked for
Have you tried yoga?
Meditation?

Did you go for a walk today?
You should journal
You should journal more

Sleeping enough?

Eating enough?

Groups?

Group therapy?

What about pizza?

Have you had

A slice

Of pizza

Today?

I cannot go back

To the way it was

In our pictures

And so they say

You've got to listen

You must cooperate

But as you see

You are not... committed

Not
Enough
Never
Enough

Every word
A new kink
In the link
Of these chains

Afraid of my pain
They social distance
Bell let's talk
Please fuck off

Telling me
I need professional help
Is just another slight
In my pharmaceutical plight

And a way
To put distance

Between them
And me

Holding space for a friend
Is not the same thing
As giving
Unsolicited advice

The latter only serves
To undermine
What I am
Doing

And just because
Before you I stand
A wreck
Doesn't mean

I'm not perfectly
Where I need to be
So thank you
But no thank you

Speak up
Bell says
As friends
Turn to judges

Colleagues
Into critics
And I just die
A little more each day

So if you have
Mental health challenges
May I suggest
Let's not talk

Keep your wounds hidden
Your struggle silent
For the world isn't ready
It isn't kind

It isn't enough
To hold the weight

Of your
Truth

Which means
After the rush
Of the first few days
I will now be in the glow

Of your fleeting interest
So I will carry the blame
Bear the shame
Of not being enough

Never enough.

Addendum

And so how does this unfold?
Where's my pot of gold
At the end
Of this road?

I'd never get my rainbow
Without a whole lot of rain
And in my darkness
He came

And so
My prince charming
You see
Turned out

To be me
A new beginning
For my dearest
Friend.

THANK YOU

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unique code printed below.**



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