

JOSHUA ABELOW
POEMS (2009 – 2024)

My Last Name Expanding

08.2009

[illegible]

A Giant
09.2009

When you turn your back
on everything familiar
a giant appears
and feeds you little mangos.

walk around the city
03.2010

walk
around
the
city
feeling
lonely

but
ever
since
he
met
her

it's
walk
around
the
city
feeling
lonelier

The Man with Black Arms
04.2010

A sad and foolish man
gathered all his shirts
and pants and stuffed them
in the sink and filled it up with
warm water and black dye.
Then he stirred everything
with a pretty wooden mallet.
He stirred and stirred for a
long, long time. He stirred
so much that his arms
fell off. They splashed into
the warm water along
with the clothing and the
black dye. There was nothing
the man could do, but stand
there and wonder why his
arms were no longer
attached to his body.
There didn't seem to be
an explanation. He went
into shock and fainted.
In his sleep the man was
happy again. He was filled
with love. The man still
had his arms. He ran
around waving them
in the sky like two kites.
Many days and nights passed.
Eventually, the man
woke up and walked over
to where the bad incident
had occurred. He peered
down into the sink.
Everything was
black, including
his arms.

lazy
04.2010

I
woke
up
so
late
that
the
day
got
up
and
went
to
work
without
me

sore winner
05.2010

nothing
is
the
matter
but
I'm
still
going
to
kill
you

fish chatter
05.2010

today
when I woke up
I decided
it was better
to go back to bed.
now
it's 2:33 in the afternoon.
later
when I
wake up
again
I'll walk
across the
bridge and
look down
at the river.
you can hear
the fish
chattering
about
this and that
as you pass
over them.

all she wrote
05.2010

a room
is
a walk
is
a meal
is
a poem
is
all
she
wrote

true love
06.2010

there is nothing
I'd
rather
do
than sit
in
a
room
and
dream
of
killing
you

goat
06.2010

I dropped
off
the news
at the laundromat
and forgot
to pick it
up

Now
I smoke
cigarettes
in peace
and
gaze up
at a
red
moon
pretending
to be
an
angry
goat

alone
06.2010

every
night
we
made
it

last
until
the
light
came
in

through
pulled
curtains

in
my
simple
room

oh
why
oh
why

did
you
go
back
to
New York

without
me?

ritual
06.2010

sit in the sun

walk in the rain

undress in my room

and

roll in the hay

we
roll
around
like

big wavy lines

bad day
06.2010

everyday
is
not
a poem
or
a painting
or
a drawing

some
days
are
just
days

and
some
days
are
worse
than
that

stay in bed
07.2010

stay in bed
and
sleep all day

yea
I think I will

no more light
no more dust balls

no more hairs
magically appearing
on the bathroom floor
day after day
after
day

like they own the place

dead waves
07.2010

we watched waves
commit suicide
all day
but
they didn't make us
the least bit
sad
angry
or
resentful

little room
08.2010

crowded streets
smelly smells
busy people with their fancy dogs
you need
a quiet place
to sit and think
a little room
to plot your revenge

Big Mouth
08.2010

Of
course
I can see
the mountain
and the
lake. They're as
big as
your
mouth.

Flipper
08.2010

Dakotah
flipped
the
bird
to
New York.

Then
she
went
to
Vermont
to
flip
burgers.

Now
she's
flipping
out.

Great Job
11.2010

Ten years ago
I went to Washington DC
to see an exhibit
by an artist named Gober
at a fancy museum.

I went in and said to myself, "It looks great."

Oddly enough, I was
recently offered a job
painting the vestibule
at Gober's place in
the East Village.

Five hours into it
Gober came out.

He said, "Did you paint these walls?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "It looks great."

so long lady cardboard
12.2010

to
day
he
cut
her
up
with
sharp
scissors
to
place
in
a
brown
box
to
ship
out
to
morrow

weird room
12.2010

there's
nothing
half
normal
or
even
one
quarter
normal
in
your
weird
room

Selfish Rusty
02.2011

It was the day before
Valentine's Day.
Rusty called me up.
She said, "I wrote you a poem."
I said, "Great, read it to me."
She said,
"Not now."
Valentine's Day
came and went
and still
there was no poem.
I called Rusty up
and said, "What happened?"
She said,
"I decided to keep it for myself."

mirror
06.2011

riding
my
bike

in
your
black
dress

on
our
silver
night

it
was
you

on
our
silver
night

in
your
black
dress

riding
my
bike

afternoon sun
12.2011

jump
out
the
window

follow
her
as
she
turns
her
back
on
you
and
disappears

just
like
she
did
yesterday

and
the
day
before

very sick
12.2011

in a patch of light
by the window
he lay down
and looked at
the potted
plant and
that's all
he looked
at

dirty socks
12.2012

an
envelope
arrived
which
contained
a
letter

with
words

that
smelled
like
dirty socks

nobody
needs
these
dirty socks
the
man
thought
as
he
read
the
letter

these
words
are
stinking
up
the
place

he
said
under
his

breath

he
was
the
type
of
man
who
understood
the
difference
between
clean
socks
and
dirty
socks

he
tossed
the
letter
in
the
garbage
can

then
he
made
himself
something
to
eat

doomed relationship
12.2012

it's
just
the
noise
of
a
train
in
the
night
going
someplace
we
are
not

21st Century solitude
06.2012

21st Century
solitude
is not like
the
solitude
of yesteryear –

21st Century
solitude is bigger
has a much clearer picture quality
and is also
significantly
more
durable

spring chicken
07.2012

You'll
always
be
my
spring
chicken,
even
in
the
fall.

blonde cat
01.2013

in
the
morning
before
work

she
looks
at
her
reflection
in
the
mirror

she
looks
like
a
blonde
cat

she's out
02.2013

I am in her bed and
it is so very, very quiet –

I hear nothing but
the sound
of one car going by
in the distance
over and
over.

computer poem
04.2013

it's
so great
sitting here
at
my
desk-

it's
like
swimming

it's
like
napping
in
the
afternoon
sun

it's
like
throwing
a
stick
at
your
head

hot poem
07.2013

It was very hot so
we went to the
water to
cool
off.

Afterward,
we lay down in the
sun like two fish
washed up
on shore
to die.

running man
11.2013

run
toward the sun

into its
squiggly rays
you
go

run
into the black
iridescent
sun

stay in there
as time
goes
by

Thursday poem
12.2013

I sit alone
at the kitchen
table.

I sip
black coffee
from my favorite
red mug.

I am
reminded
of
girls
I've known
as I look
out the window
at the cold
day.

The day is
as cold as
all their
hands.

Cape Cod
07.2014

The sky
sagged down
like a big
wet rag
as I walked
past tiny cottages
thinking
of my dead
grandmother.

38

09.2014

38

years

neatly

pressed

into the shape

of a man

sitting on a chair

alone

in a darkened

room

wrong girl
02.2015

turn on
the television

sit
on the couch

stare
at the screen

it's better
than her
kiss

clear path
05.2015

the screen is illuminated

it is the middle of the night and
the screen is illuminated

it's lit up
like an incandescent moon
showing a clear path

I can see the image –
a neon silhouette
with squiggles
inside
of it

it's getting dimmer
as she walks
away

normal thoughts
11.2015

There must be an interesting program
on the television, but he is
too tired to go upstairs
and turn it
on.

So, in a dark room,
he sits and thinks
normal thoughts.

São Paulo
12.2015

insects
eating me
alive

loving
the taste of
beer and cigarettes

as I disappear

yellow dress
12.2015

yellow

dress

*

yes

*

I like her

*

yellow

dress

*

yes

*

yes

*

yes

*

yellow

dress

cute maniac
12.2015

He got up and
looked at
her.

She looked like
a maniac.

She looked exactly
like a cute
maniac.

beach poem
01.2016

saltwater sounds
and shapes
dance
like moonlight
on happy
fish it

is a new
year

this is a beach
poem

nighttime
01.2016

It's nighttime again –

I wonder
what she's
doing.

cold poem
01.2016

It's cold.

It's cold.

It's cold.

Nobody is doing anything
because it's too cold.

And, she's cold
too.

She's as cold
as a footprint in the
snow.

poem for C
02.2016

it may not appear
this way
at first

but, you've got
to trust
me

for this
is a bouquet of
Los Angeles flowers (Queen Anne's Lace)

I got them for you
because I love
you

long walk 2
02.2016

not much
happening

went on
a long
walk

saw an old tree
with dead brown leaves
by the side
of the
road

the sun
went down
as I walked
back

not much
happening

red door
08.2016

in
my
church

*

I turn
my head

*

inside
out

*

the
door
is red

plumb
09.2016

I look young
Alas, I am old

I look old
Alas, I am young

I write a poem
Alas, it is dumb

I like you
You are my plumb

Thanksgiving poem
11.2016

It's lonely
and it's only
November.

LUXURY
12.2016

One upon a wallet
there was no
money

my dad is dead
04.2017

my dad is dead

he died at home next to his wife and his mother and his two dogs

he was 68 years old

we had our differences

To be titled
04.2017

Hello?

Hello.

Is anybody home?

Yes.

May I come in?

No.

Why not?

I'm not available today.

sorry
05.2017

I'm not
romantic

I don't have
feelings

I don't have
romantic feelings
for you

Ridge Street
08.2017

in her room
there is a mattress
on the floor

the light is on and
there are three cats

I ask her to please turn

off the light
and get rid of the
cats

she turns off the light
but the cats
stay we

go to
sleep

I am Abelow
02.2018

in
side
the
cha
pel,

I am Abelow

42.

07.2018

Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris...

Rachel went out of town until mid-August.

*

Back home, the dog runs in the green grass.

Soon I will be

42.

frozen divorce
03.2018

the
winter
sun
is
as
cold
as
a
lonely
snowman
in
the
middle
of
a
storm
that
looks
like
a
frozen
divorce

San Francisco
03.2019

Like a comet,
I am falling
down

To earth

With love and affection

For the cats of
San Francisco.

Middle age
01.2019

it was
after midnight
the wind razor sharp.

she said,

"go outside and look up at the blood red moon."

she said,

"a blood red moon doesn't appear every day."

it was
after midnight
the wind razor sharp.

he stayed in bed.

borrowed poem
05.2019

borrowed shoes, pants, shirt, hat
borrowed country road in the afternoon
borrowed sunshine on the back of my neck
borrowed birds and dandelions and bungalows
borrowed cigarette
borrowed walk
borrowed everything

pixelated tornado
06.2019

there is a pixelated tornado blowing
through the forest

now the trees look like
store fronts, traffic jams, and pedestrians

birds are chirping like dump trucks backing up

and honking
automobiles are crashing
into antiquated
computers

New York
06.2019

Damn, Rome—
I miss you.

I know
07.2019

it's late
but sometimes
peeing in the grass
when nobody's around
is better than
fucking

Missing Mush
08.2019

Dear Mush,

I
miss
you.

I'm
not
lying.

Summer Poem (for Rachel)
08.2019

When you
smile, the sky
Bright Blue.

Bumblebees
and hummingbirds
return.

swing dancing
08.2019

No husband, no wife, no kids, no dog, no cat, no goldfish, etc.

Just this church.

All I hear
are the dead
swing dancing
in the graveyard
out back.

September Poem
09.2019

Today
was dressed up
like a man in very plain clothes.

happy
09.2019

happy
sunrays jump
like bright yellow frogs
in the lily pond of
my universe...

boy,
she sure looks
beautiful in
California.

chicken soup
12.2019

the poem years
are behind me
now

grocery
shopping my way
into old
age

chicken soup
is youth on a cold
day

moon
12.2019

let's have
an art show on
the moon

ok?

Bending the Knee
02.2020

Knocked down
in the City of
Angels...

At the top
of Centennial Street,
looking down at the defeated
silhouettes of tall buildings
lying on their
backs.

If only we were happy like we were in the beginning
02.2020

She made me dinner:
A Portobello Mushroom Burger
on an unhappy bun.

I washed it down with a
tall glass of cucumber water
and plenty of miserable electrolytes.

I miss Mush.
09.2020

When Mush wears that green suit
I say, "Mush, you look like a Leprechaun."

Mush looks at me with cold eyes
and says, "You don't know anything about fashion."

I miss Mush.

a talking butterfly
10.2020

Yes, she was a talking butterfly.

"I love you," is what the butterfly said many times.

It wasn't until much later
when the leaves had fallen down to the cold ground
that the man discovered the talking butterfly
was a very good liar.

65 degrees in November–
11.2020

we
haven't talked
since
October 21st.

65 degrees in November–

a beautiful
day
for a long
country
drive

if the dog wasn't dead
we would've
brought
her
along

Tired
12.2020

I'm so tired
of everything

I'm so tired
of everything

I'm so tired
of everything

They say

I'm so tired
of everything

They do

I'm so tired
of their art

I'm so tired
of their scene

*

I'm so tired
of everything

I'm so tired
of everything

I'm so tired
of everything

You say

I'm so tired
of everything

You do

I'm so tired

Of your art

I'm so tired
of your scene

nostalgic future
12.2020

It's 10pm
Do you
know *who*
your children
are?

the tender-hearted lobster
02.2021

remember when we ate
the tender-hearted lobster?

childhood
02.2021

ah, to be in the city

any city

just take me away
from these goddamn cornfields

disoriented

04.2021

maybe it's the drugs
or maybe it isn't the drugs
because I don't do
drugs

Beach Observations
06.2021

a fish above the bed
staring out the window
a dragonfly on the table slowly moving toward death
children singing in the waves
a woman's feet
in the sand
two ships on the horizon
another woman
wearing sunglasses
a straw hat covering her face
as she sits with her
back to the inflatable
llama.

& & &
07.2021

sometimes I think

of my dead
dog

&

your crazy
eyes

&

although
my dog is
dead

your eyes are still
crazy

&

the rooster
crows

thunder
07.2021

the thunder is cracking
a smile as the sky
opens up its
mouth to
yell

plein air poem
07.2021

see the bunny
in the grass?

it's telling you
to go fuck
yourself

self-portrait as a lobster
07.2021

woke up boiled

alive

for nobody in particular
07.2021

all
those years
of disappointment

AND you were still pretty

great

smirk 08.2021

upstairs
talking about art
making sculptures and drinking
beer and whiskey and whatever else
doing coke alone at 3am and not coming down—
stairs until 3pm the next day and being extremely grumpy

with a smirk
he makes coffee
and looks out the window

45

09.2021

45

miles off shore

a seagull just gave this poem a bad review

incoming message
09.2021

a good time down in Maryland,
the place we are from

two UFOs caught in a lightning storm

a good time down in Maryland,
the place we are from

not talking
10.2021

Sometimes
I don't talk to people
just so I will remember
how it feels to miss
them

The World's Best Worms
10.2021

2
empty tin cans
waiting to be filled up
with The World's Best Worms
1 more
time

Trust Fall
11.2021

Trust in me

Trust in you

Jump into the air

Fall through the sky

*

Trust in me

Trust in you

Trust in your mom

Trust in your dad

They know what's best

*

Trust in me

Trust in you

Stand with your hands on your hips

In God We Trust

It feels so good

*

Trust in me

Trust in you

tobacco
01.2022

tobacco.
haven't touched the stuff in over a year.
am I dying?

poem with no electricity
01.2022

people
many artists among them
going through this life
with the lights off
upstairs

church poem
05.2022

alive
in quiet rooms
with that cemetery in the window
is better than
ice cream

inchworm
07.2022

the inchworm
wearing a black top hat
danced in the golden grass
at the edge of the world

neighborhood children were jumping
screaming and doing back flips

the lifeguard
who looked like a Greek statue
smoked cigarettes in his chair and occasionally said
"RELAX"

Sculpture
10.2022

The city is destroying you.

It's taking all those cigarettes
You smoked in the cornfield back home...
Sculpting them into the form of a plane.

And soon you'll be on that plane
Flying back to your cornfield
To sculpt a new plane...
Bringing you back
Again.

Nobody Told Me
01.2023

Creaky nighttime sounds,
loneliness all around.

Rats flying out of
the chimney and bats
running alongside
the field
mice.

She looked so frightened
when she fell to the ground.

don't write a poem
02.2023

don't
write a poem
that uses the phrase

these days

mirrors on the ceiling
03.2023

Once upon a time
there was a very wealthy...

Oh, never mind, you already know this one.

Page 4 (August 18, 2021)
06.2023

Katya made a self-portrait
described as “a sad, vulnerable drawing.”

That cheered me up.

Princess
06.2023

One dog is old and one dog is young. The young dog isn't very bright.
He pees on himself or on the floor and then licks it
up. The sun is out. August is nearly over.

beach observations 2
06.2023

bugs
in the marsh
shark fins just off shore
Manhattans in the jacuzzi at noon
a very large plate of lamb chops on the dinner table
colorful aliens made out of clay battle the forces of good
& evil

July in Massachusetts
07.2023

the rain outside
was the best part
of being in bed
together

Poem as non-idea (July 4th, 2023)
07.2023

the poem-train
came to a screeching
halt

upon exiting,
I wrote this
down

seaside poem
07.2023

in the little house by the sea
wind strums my toes,
button-up shirt
ajar
unrooted trees
float in black waves
smashing just
outside

Maria
07.023

draw
a little poem
paint a little song
have a meeting in the dark
a long time
ago

47

09.2023

The days are longer

The poems are shorter

The kid's in 3rd grade

The Sad Conclusion of an LA Story
10.2023

the palm trees
are dying

it's time to go
home now

4 Letter Words
10.2023

Ache
Book
Clog
Dumb
Easy
Flop
Game
Hate
Idea
Joke
Kiss
Leak
Meat
Neat
Oral
Pool
Quit
Rope
Slop
Type
Ugly
Vain
Wavy
Xeno
Yoke
Zero

vanish
02.2024

on the ol' highway of my imagination
there was

a surprising
thud

poof, I vanished