

**JOSHUA ABELOW**

***H-MAN POEMS (2009 – 2026)***





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 4<sup>th</sup>, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

Mr. Round's Unfulfilled Wish  
06.2024

Mr. Round dreamed of a perfect corner,  
Just a simple place to take a break  
From his circular  
Thoughts.

H-Man  
06.2024

have you ever  
given up something  
so fucking wonderful it takes  
your entire sense of self and lights it on fire?

Wyoming  
08.2024

We met a moose today.  
Turns out,  
His name was Steve.

Halloween Poem in August  
08.2024

I'd rather trick-or-treat  
coming home  
with a bag of vegetables  
than spend another  
night out here in the wild wilderness of your  
absence.

Poem with Honors  
08.2024

This poem  
just graduated  
with honors from the University of  
Boring Poems and Pretentious Assholes

15 minutes before turning 48  
09.2024

In bed,  
Katya beside me

She's about to be completely asleep,  
not knowing what I'm doing

I'm watching a documentary on Mary Heilmann  
for the 2nd time this week

I like Mary's paintings even though she gave up  
drugs in 1983

crooked lines on my forehead,  
hair thinning & turning white

My paintings are better than they used to be (if you don't agree, FUCK YOU)

I take my time with them  
because the materials  
are so expensive

Just like our groceries

But,  
I'm still here

A month from now  
I'll be hitched

So long, suckers

American Fine Arts, Co.  
09.2024

They're eating the dogs,  
the people that came in, they're eating the cats.  
They're eating, they're eating the pets  
of the people that live  
there.

honeymoon poem  
10.2024

every time  
you flush paper down  
a Greek toilet (accidentally or on purpose)  
another cat is born on  
Hydra

Love Letter  
01.2025

Empty  
suburban neighborhoods,  
I love you so

Closed front doors,  
dirty windows so limitless with  
uninviting splendor

I'd like to be the car parked  
in your driveway going nowhere—  
not now, not  
ever

AI  
03.2025

Nobody likes you  
your work is terrible  
give up already  
and get a real  
job

Katya Monster  
03.2025

“K” is for Katya  
that’s good  
enough  
for m  
e

Dog Day Afternoon  
07.2025

the kid is drawing  
gnomes  
by an open window

every couple of minutes  
real loud  
he barks my name

calls me an  
old man

and continues  
drawing

Self-Portrait at 49  
12.2025

when the dirty dishes  
stop making Franz West copies  
in the kitchen

sink

you'll know  
AI is here  
for your

job

You've got style  
01.2026

the moon is always  
in your window

even though  
you live in the  
basement

reservoir  
02.2026

a deep reservoir of pointlessness  
opened up, large enough to contain all the gossip in New York,  
every  
time  
“the artist”  
said  
literally  
anything  
at all.