

**BRISTOL STOOL CHART
REQUIRED**

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The Structure

the structure is

so tall that you can't climb over it

so wide that you can't walk round it

so deep that you can't dig under it

so thick that you can't bore through it

turn back?

they all turn back

there's no way to get past it

your only option is to destroy it

good luck with that

I Am

decisions decisions decisions
 an antediluvian swarm
 casting shade on my present

a cloud of buzzing wasps
 thrusting toxin-tipped stingers
 loaded with conundrums

I swat a few away
 seething airborne irritants
 of little or no consequence

but others breach the skin
 plunging angry venom
 directly through the vein

accumulating in my bloodstream
 a concentration of poison
 destined for my heart:

1.
 read all exam questions
 before attempting the paper
 have that one for free

2.
 godless and faithless
 a simple choice to make
 hardly worth writing down

3.
 cheating thieving slacker teen
 cocksure priggish wastrel
 (I had faults too, mind)

4.
 pints puff powder pills
 smörgåsbord of debauchery
 ravagement of memory

5.

brave resolution
to blank the black dog
so very very brave

6.

leaping under a bus
over a matter of debt
didn't happen (just)

7.

leftist affectations
armchair solidarity
in comfortable slippers

8.

deaf to the sound of bigotry
path of least resistance
the coward's coward

9.

microwave a fat fly
for twenty seconds
and it will explode

10.

be kind to animals
especially the tasty ones
a man's got to eat

11.

children are the future
give them your best
you might need a new lung

12.

don't spray deodorant
directly onto your asshole
stings like fuck (so I'm told)

13.

writing 12 (above)

at forty-five years old

Jesus died at thirty-three

14.

three years to draft a novel

fuck sake

three fucking years

15.

write poetry instead

easy and short

no one will read that either

16.

pints puff powder pills

smörgåsbord of debauchery

ravagement of memory

17.

liar liar

pants on fire

hypocrite

decisions decisions decisions

a concentration of poison

destined for my heart

Cunt

Cunt is the grifter holding thrall,
Cunt is the rabble heeding all;
Cunt is the speech that warps the truth,
Cunt is the lost exploited youth;
Cunt is the pundit's caustic views,
Cunt is the silent evening news;
Cunt is the line they itch to cross,
Cunt is the scapegoat holocaust;
Cunt is the cleaver through your tongue,
Cunt is the gallows freshly strung;
Cunt is the windpipe deftly crushed,
Cunt is the killer's murder lust;
Cunt is the mother's severed head,
Cunt is the baby left for dead;
Cunt is the boot that stamps your face,
Cunt is the whole damned human race.

Lines from the Summit of Glenshee

Alone in the infinite silence
 the troposphere sinks below me
 flooding Cairnwell Pass to form
 a spotless white suspension,
 a bleached fugacious canvas
 that induces rumination:

Caulfeild's road is disappeared,
 the subjugator's highway,
 planned by lofty British men
 (who doubted their dominion)
 to satisfy the German king
 that traitors were repressed;
 the brutish redcoats passive too,
 Smith MacKenzie Jones O'Neill,
 breaking backs for groats to build
 these arteries of conquest,
 jealous of Culloden's gore
 and Clearance conflagrations,
 keen to face the Highlander
 to end the thankless toil:

Come out, Sawney! Rebel fiend!
D--n you straight to H--l!
L--d, I'd bear a musket wound if
midgies bled as well!
No-one takes up soldiering
to labour like a beast;
rifles have a purpose, man:
to occupy the priest!
We'll disembowel your mothers!
We'll violate your wives!
We'll bayonet your babies!
We'll take your fucking lives!
We'll civilize these bastards
if it fucking well kills them...

You quickly lose your way up here.
 The air clears and I descend.

Later, in the car park,
a fleet of Barbour wankers
heading up to Ballater
or Betty's summer *pied-à-terre*
bray they've licked the highest road
without so much as breaking sweat.

Would that history could go
as simply as the clouds.

The King of Spain's Atrophied Testicle

Shrivelled, seedless, solitary:
the Hispanic Monarchy damned
his clannish blood, the Habsburg jaw,
the impotence of devotion.

But dogs will return to their spew;
and shills with selfish urge still pray
for virile mastery, and crave
deposits of promising pearls.

Columba britannica

Starving pigeons lack a certain decorum:
skittish mendicants with bobbing skulls
who barge and fight over sunflower seeds
that I mete and dole with imperial grace.

An aggressor charges like Achilles,
scattering rivals to peck between slabs;
he jams his beak and shits distressed until
a spasm of feathers brings dull liberation.

A ragged-arsed Ulysses,
I kill myself with laughter,
my heavy gut devouring my belt,
a heart attack already in the fucking post.

Better Together

he gets up every morning
(sunshine boiling the dew)
goes downstairs
(every morning)
opens the front door
(every morning)
and sees
(every morning)
a steaming bulldog turd
glistening on the step
(every fucking morning)

he always makes sure
to thank the kindly mutt
for its thoughtful gift
and boundless generosity

and he blames himself
for the canine stink
that turns his insides out
every gorgeous sunny day

**

some would have Scotland
burn
if Britain wanted for heat

Watching The COVID Super Bowl Four Weeks After The First Attempted Coup*Kansas City Chiefs 9 Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31**Raymond James Stadium, Tampa, Florida**7 February 2021**KO: 23:30 GMT*

A.

do not fall asleep
 you must not fall asleep
 even though it's late
 (almost midnight)

even though it's late
 you must not fall asleep

B.

Tholing isolation chills
 and frigid Scottish darkness,
 I calculate the plays of this delirious engagement
 as Martians might misapprehend
 the rites of human war.

The field shows no suggestion of sedition or disease,
 each yard precisely etched on lurid green,
 and nor has virus or rebellion spiked the players' will,
 these eager rivals biding time with rough restraint until
 chaos is unleashed,
 then harmony is quickly overruled:

Mahomes (15),
 drenched in candy red,
 executes his stance,
 fires a sidearm bullet
 through organised anatomies
 of African-Americans,
 their progress soon smothered
 by White (45).

Brady (12),
victory machine,
goes for the throat,
takes a shotgun snap
from the riot cop centre,
his gunmetal skulls
force the chain gang on
to end zones caked with blood.

Black and white arbiters
throw judgement from the sides,
calling grave infractions
under cover of dispassion,
their flags still debated
disputed and declined.

The BBC profess surprise
that I am still awake:
our silence is intentional,
the clever host insists,
those awful Yanks are hawking trash,
it cannot happen here.

And when the clock expires
the silver Hindenburg is raised,
a grateful crowd salute the champs
while losers plot revenge,
cursing slights and injuries
that robbed them of their chance,
and next year,
they assure themselves,
next year we will prevail.

If It Bleeds It Leads

Everywhere when I was younger
some women were killed in real life:
the prostitute and the spinster
and the local councillor's wife.

The one who sold sex for a living
was thought to deserve her demise:
first she was raped in an alley
then wrapped in tarpaulin to die.

The plain introverted old virgin
was dumped in the woods for a year;
police arrested a loner
who'd never been anywhere near.

The spouse of the brash politician
was found with a hole in her head;
gangsters disposed of his hammer
and burned all the sheets from her bed.

The newspapers published the stories;
we bought them with prurient glee;
we crouched in fear of our shadows;
we cherished our locks and our keys.

Everywhere when I was older
some women were killed in real life:
the prostitute and the spinster
and the local councillor's wife.

The Green Lantern

upon reading *Happy Like Murderers: The True Story of Fred and Rosemary West* by Gordon Burn

He owned a café

Him

of all people
of all the things I take away
of all the things I fail to fathom
(anne/rena/charmaine)
this lingers/
in the year of the queen's jubilee
He owned the green lantern

Him and her dad
in partnership
sharing risk
sharing daughters

His brutal probing fingers
tainted with the stink
of compliant savage rose
nine killings down
(lynda/carol/lucy)
cracking and cutting
other things/
shell (membrane/yolk/albumen)
and the flesh of pigs

always waiting
a safe place to stay
for waifs and strays
always waiting

of all people
of all the things I take away
of all the things I fail to fathom
(thérèse/shirley/juanita)
this lingers/
in the year of the queen's jubilee
He owned the green lantern

The Arrival of the Fourth King

"A cold coming we had of it..."

Hindered by blizzards and squabbling aides,
a desolate manger greeted my call;
slighted, I summoned the innkeeper's boy,
needing my audience, needing my hour.

They've gone, he whispered, reluctant to share,
my presence condemned by his misery,
grieving no doubt for some victim he knew
who Herod decreed must perish impaled;

And clusters of erstwhile mothers denied
me my status and struck me with silence;
they sobbed in the dirt and raked at their dugs,
the teats regretting the suck of their babes:

These women bereaved, their infants destroyed,
the fathers nurturing shoots of revenge...
the child that I missed, if rumours are true,
would know full well that His coming had risks,

yet still He came.

I gave my gift to the lad: his brother
was merely the first and won't be the last;
and homeward I scuttled to cling steadfast
to my ancient laws and moribund gods.

The Elephant's Poem

Once upon a time an elephant wrote a poem about her trunk. She was pleased with the poem, so she showed it to the other animals. The zebra said: "I don't like it. You should write a poem about stripes." The rhinoceros said: "I don't like it. You should write a poem about horns." A fly buzzed in her ear: "I don't like it. You think that my tongue is inferior because your trunk is so long and versatile." The lion yawned: "I don't care for your poem at all. You should write about me. I am king of the jungle." The elephant folded her poem away. She never shared it again, even though it expressed her elephantine thoughts perfectly. And the zebra, rhinoceros, fly and lion understood only themselves, and only a little, and without wonder.

Going Through The Motions

(with apologies to *Viz*)

I am dumped in my sewer again,
the stinking concrete colon in which,
cheek-by-jowl with ordure,
I refine objectionable poetic turds.

I am not *amongst* the filth,
I am *of* the filth: my mouth excretes
(my green-eyed arse is jealous)
& I fill the pipe to the manhole;
my bones disintegrate
& verbal sludge absorbs my skin;
indistinguishable from shit
my brain merges with ooze;
all manner of crap obstructs
but I evacuate
with peristaltic
strain.

The dung returns in a choking swell,
unable to pass, like feculent puke.

I read the editor's note:

*Dear Mr Kirk,
Thank you for your submission,
however...*

& compose a considered response:

*You don't have to
like it.
You just have to
print it.*

I save it in Drafts
with all the rest
& pretend that I am FINE.

In Memoriam (My Father's Sister's Husband)

My uncle liked golf and country,
Ballesteros and Johnny Cash.

He lived in a shit-kicking village,
spitefully distant from everyone.

Nothing impressed him.
Nothing. I mean it. Nothing.

Enthusiasm met him like
a lymph node meets cancer.

If Dolly Parton begged for eighteen holes
he'd tell her where to go.

*Dis the lassie no ken, he'd say,
thit ah mak ma soup oan Mondays?*

He'd be sure you knew, however,
that Dolly asked him out.

Perspective

Mind yon Gregor Samsa cunt?

Seelie as fuck:

hauf a dizzen sturdy shanks

an a riggin stane ower his heid.

Try tellin thon tae some

cruikit jaikie gadge

whae bides in a slap,

grippit wi stangs in his hurdies.

Tha Mi Ag Ionnsachadh Gàidhlig

I have taken to learning Gaelic
using an app on my phone
that I won't name here
(the one with the green hoolet)

I know the words for
herring (sgadan)
salmon (bradan)
and cat (cat)

I've decided to critique
the works of Sorley MacLean
with the confidence of a man
watching women's volleyball
for the first time in his life:

MacLean should have written more about
herring (sgadan)
salmon (bradan)
and cats

Frogs

tramping through the nature trail
my son discerns a frog
tiny as a thumbnail
rigid on the gravel
contemplating crossing
to the river at our backs

we watch for a moment

it jumps an inch
 it jumps an inch
 it jumps an inch
 it jumps an inch

(my boot is thirteen inches long)

soon we notice dozens
leaping
waiting
smeared on the pathway
crushed by careless walkers
seeing ochre stones perhaps
or orbs of rabbit shit

fearing the weight of our shadows
we tread like minefield sappers
death in every footstep
barely conceiving
the lethal disparity of scale

eventually however
like the titans we are
we become amused by
some bird or a bee
and on we crack
no longer minded to check

Packing Up The Tent

In the animal park
confined by wire
macaw and macaw
red-fronted
preen or seem asleep
at rest
perched on a crooked bough.

An adult human male
reading the signs:
Endangered?
No wonder:
seals and chimpanzees
at least
put on a fucking show.

He fails to spot
the globe of terror
the wall of death
and the perishing
safety net. And yet
he still expects
no encore.

Love Note From A Misanthrope

People are burdensome, mostly:
a haversack laden with bricks;
women are bothersome harpies
and men are a parcel of pricks.

Children are armies of pig-dogs
and parents are demons from Hell;
sisters are maidens of Satan
and brothers are evil as well.

Colleagues are not to be trusted
and friends are a stress to be cursed;
strangers are enemies waiting
and neighbours desire you the worst.

You aren't so bad, though, I reckon;
a maddening stone in my shoe;
so please acknowledge my unhate
and I'll accept unhate from you.

Pig Lifter*Museum of Scottish Industrial Life, 31 May 2021*

Tourists in Yeezys and risible shades,
 their offspring bickering loudly at heel,
 sweat by the bucketload, suffering blasts
 of summer amongst industrial ghosts.

They pause beside your display to deride
 your jumble sale cap and walrus moustache,
 cold to your furnace's hellish embrace
 and deaf to the owner's cuntish demands.

The Ironmaster: your muscles are his,
 your victuals are his, your Saviour is his;
 only the plebeian brain is your own,
 counselling patience and grooming revolt.

Is that what you're thinking? Plotting revenge?
 Conspiracies whispered in hostleries
 settled on *you* to murder the gaffer?
 The call of immortal greatness resounds.

Thick as my finger, the veins in your arms
 pulse with the anger of thousands of men,
 giving you power to carry the pig,
 to wield it in rage, to bludgeon the boss;

Then you (whatever your name is) spattered
 with entrepreneur from bunnet to boot
 would marshal the troops like Spartacus if
 we could picture a rebel from Airdrie

(or Coatbridge, if you're a pedant for truth).
 My prejudice fits you neatly, my friend!
 Piqued by your image I wander outside
 to ponder the rusting machinery;

I fondle my Samsung, crafting a verse,
 conjuring fibs about Yeezys and shades,
 tempted to fritter a tenner or two
 on socialist knick-knacks and Haribos.

Dreamless

When daylight finds me tired in bed
with sleep departing from my head,
I notice that I did not dream,
which worries me I'll soon be dead.

I know this fretting is extreme,
a madman's existential scream,
but slumber's ocean once contained
inventive, wild poetic schemes

that now elude; to ascertain
I Google "*cancer of the brain*"
and heed the cranks who guarantee
I'll never fantasise again;

and so each night I dread to see
if my imagination's free,
expecting quietude instead
and maybe death to finish me.

Patronage

blah blah blah
 yadda yadda yadda
 strategic objectives
 plus
 deprivation quintiles
 plus
 quota per annum
 equals
 grant allocation

pauses sagely
checks notes
admires Latin
clears throat

believe me when I say
 it could be you
 your poems are important to us
 (your time not so much)
 so print out our form (A6/A0)
 via online portal (sweet sweet Latin!)
 in portrait (landscape)
 BLOCK CAPS (cursive)
 black ink (blood)
 name (Comic Sans)
 age (twenties only)
 sex (yes please ha ha no but seriously)
 alma mater (Latin!)
 Masters (Creative Writing/Other)
 children (good god no)
 animals (lapdogs)
 why you (in three words)
 why now (in ten letters)
 why us (a full page)
 why not (you're terrible)
 on scale of 1 to 10
 (ten being Croesus one Tiny Tim)
 were you born in a midden
 did you live in a hovel
 did you sleep among rats

did you beg steal or borrow
if you could be a fruit
if you could be a vegetable
if you could be a character
if you could invite five people living or dead
who is your favourite fifteenth century
who would you say are your biggest
who was your hero when you were
who would win in a fight between
is port passed to the right or
is gazpacho served hot or
is it correct to say napkin or
is a lord addressed as sir or
give us your best impression of
how many chucks could a woodchuck
she sells seashells
red lorry yellow
bark like a
dance monkey
we say jump and you say
don't call us we'll call

please accept our sincerest
but while you were filling in this
we gave all the cash to our
better luck next

now get yourself to fuck

NOTES

Lines from the Summit of Glenshee

Major William Caulfeild was a British Army Officer who supervised the building of military roads and bridges in the Scottish Highlands in the 18th Century. The purpose of these roads was to facilitate the subjugation of the population. This being the case, the spelling of his surname is only the second most annoying thing about him.

The Green Lantern

In 1977 Fred West and his father-in-law co-owned a café in Gloucester called The Green Lantern. I cannot recommend Gordon Burn's book enough, although you'll only read it once.

Going Through The Motions

On the cover of Issue 66 of Viz magazine is the statement: *You Don't Have To Like It, You Just Have To Buy It*. So aye, I pretty much stole that bit. Do I win £5?

Pig Lifter

I'm talking about a five-foot ingot of pig iron here, not an actual pig. But you knew that anyway. Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life in Coatbridge is well worth a visit. Like Gordon Burn's book on Fred and Rose West, I recommend it. Unlike Burn's book, you'll go back to it more than once, and it won't make you despair about the horrors that humans inflict upon one another. Actually it will, but there are sweets and gifts on sale to sugar the pill.

If you've any other questions: www.google.com

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Some of these poems have been published before. I thank the following publications and their editors (in brackets) for giving space to my work:

(2020) Rock Pools, in *the tide rises, the tide falls: an oceanic literary journal*. Date of Publication: 15 November 2020. (Wyeth Renwick)

(2021) If It Bleeds It Leads, in *Skyway Journal*. Date of Publication: 9 January 2021. (Fred Shrum)

(2021) Packing Up The Tent, in *The Common Breath*. Date of Publication: 4 February 2021. (Kirsten Anderson)

(2021) The Elephant's Poem, in *Sledgehammer Literary Journal*. Date of Publication: 14 May 2021. (J. Archer Avary)

(2021) Columba britannica, The Green Lantern, Cunt, and Going Through The Motions, in *Punk Noir Magazine*. Date of Publication: 20 May 2021. (Stephen J. Golds)

(2021) In Memoriam (My Father's Sister's Husband), in *The Madrigal*. Date of Publication: 24 May 2021. (Helen Jenks and Tomás Clancy)

(2021) The Arrival Of The Fourth King, in *Ink Drinkers Poetry*. Date of Publication: 21 September 2021. (Charlie Mills)

Other poems were rejected for publication, some of them more than once, but I won't tell you which ones. You'll probably be able to guess for yourself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Albert Kirk Jr is a poet from Scotland. He is 45 years old. He has been writing poetry since 2020. Albert Kirk Jr is a pseudonym, so you can fill in some gaps for yourself if you like. Use your imagination. Go daft:

Albert Kirk Jr was born in (pick somewhere nice):

He went to school with (pick someone famous):

He played 417 games and scored 129 goals for (pick a football team, a good one):

He has won the following prizes for his poetry (be realistic, not the Nobel, but apart from that fill your boots):

Website here: www.albertkirkjr.com

Twitter handle here: @AlbertKirkJr

Thanks for taking the time to read my poems. It means a lot to me.

Tapadh leibh.