As the mood takes me
(2026 version)

16 poems

By

Michael John Holme BSc (Hons) MSc.

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PREFACE

This book began as a way of paying attention. Not to events, but to what happens inside a mind when life presses on it. These poems come from those moments — when mood shifts, when thoughts loop, when the world feels too sharp or too distant.

They aren't a diary and they aren't a confession. They're small studies of how a person thinks and reacts, how fear grows, how clarity appears, how the self changes shape from day to day.

If anything here feels familiar, it's because the machinery is shared. We all deal with pressure, doubt, hope, confusion. The details differ, but the patterns rhyme.

Read these poems as snapshots of a mind trying to understand itself. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it doesn't, but the attempt is the point. The self is temporary, always rearranging, and worth watching while it happens.

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I. THE BREAKING POINT

Amidst depression

I'm not incarcerated, but there's nowhere better
than my bedroom to go. I smashed
the egg-timer. Sand no longer torments me,
and I listen to the sad chamber music
of Kenneth Leighton repeatedly.

I keep thinking that I must be bad,
because why otherwise would I spend
every day alone, listening to music
and confusing people online with mood-swings?
When I look back at my life I don't remember
ever acting out of pure love.
I always got my reward. As such
I'm reaping what I've sown. Hell is on Earth.

I've convinced myself that everybody's alone
only people just haven't realised it.
We live lies. The sooner we realise this truth,
the sooner we can become our true selves.

My god has betrayed me. I'm in the jungle,
and those who perish rot to the ground.
Carbon recycles, but as for souls
it's the biggest fallacy of all, a bigger trap
than thinking sex is for anything but procreation.

I'd like to believe again, but this time
I know I'm bad. Even the priests' expressions tell me.
That's made it really close in on me.
I must be strong though:
I'm still here.

Terminal draft

I could smile, even though I reasoned
that nothing was going to change.
Traits were hard-coded.

Life was a Heath Robinson fashioned jigsaw.
Minds were shielded. People
tended their own confusions.

The first rung was always crowded.
Mum and dad tried to help, but money
can't really turn back the clock.
Society's stragglers were fodder for humiliation.

I projected frowns on the faces
of quizzical people.
I hadn't got money to permanently seduce,
but I realised that that would be a practical lie.

I was no longer a Christian.
Devils lived in churches. The left hand
knew full well about the right.
I needed the saints I'd pushed away.

The days were sixteen hours too long.
I was robbed of dreams, lying awake.

Art had been morphine,
but my tolerance grew.
I couldn't share my honesty.
I was too fucking honest,
that's it in one.
I was too honest for this bullshit.
It just didn't work out.

Forgive me.

The road home from Damascus

John 4:8 - Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

He'd believed in God
and an afterlife.
He could meet folk again.
Then it dawned on him
that everyone has an agenda
and doesn't act out of pure "love" alone.
People want,
giving while receiving their rewards.
Everyone is proud.
He'd been betrayed
and realised that this "love"
did not exist. It followed
that God must be a delusion,
making him think,
as he was alone and wretched,
helplessly watching people starve
and die slaughtered,
that maybe Earth is Hell.
Some of us twig this
whilst others pretend forever.
He wanted to pretend
but sought the truth.
Had the few saints out of the billions
been the only approximation to "love?"
He wondered if he had become bad from birth,
like baptism was another joke,
or if he choose to be bad later?

He amazed at what people felt
when deluding about “love.”
If the truth be known,
he’d never felt anything but a glimmer
his entire life.

Panic attack

A spectacle of eyes transfixed by film
some third rate fifties black and white repeat.
Three minds imprisoned by the endless frames
are islands.

They spend the night with oral yen to stoke,
says Freud arrested growth is why they smoke.
And in between, small mushrooms picked that morn'
keep mouths content, effects will last till dawn.

Ironic, caps they have are 'Liberty'
cause Tom seems quite entrapped, the irony.
Slow rhythmic right hand reflex feeds his face.
He's disappearing from the human race.

When asked are any 'shrooms left in his tin
Tom confidently looks but sees nothing.
They tell him he's been popping them all night,
a moment of denial, futile; they're right.
Affectively the mushrooms make him sink.
Effectively they're time bombs for a shrink.

A den like this is alien to him.
He's guilty now just being in the room
and anxious 'shrooms inside have yet to work.
he says *goodbye* and goes.

Claustrophobic feelings the sky's vast heights relieve.
He breathes in the fresh air, nervous reprieve.
His small red sports car beckons patiently.
He reckons he could handle driving home
and longing for his bed, heads to the car.
He shuts the door behind him – big mistake.
Then knocks a switch. A buzzing fan comes on.
He finds his keys, inserts them, tries to think
so consciously, of how to drive a car.
How does he start? Digressing, what's the buzz?
Check gear in neutral. Clear, now what comes next?
Digressing, what's the buzz? What gear's he in?
He's not, he's checked. Digressing, what's the buzz?
What is the buzz? His head? It's in his head!

His mind no longer functions.
He's unaware of his breath.
He's drowning in thin air now.
Grasping the steering wheel,
he wants out of the door.
Think! Think! Where's the handle?
Digressing, has he air?
He tries to reach the knob,
he can't, he coils back in,
shaping like a ball.
Just about to die,
he has no air.

Cortex wrenching.
(Hormone rescue?)
A surge,
huge rush,
a slice of thought.
He launches for the knob,
the door bursts open. Out he crashes. Free.
Wild, heart beating, jelly legged freedom.

His brain's learned panic.

Self-Consciousness

Can't you guess what I'm thinking?
or see through my eyes?
What was that smile about?
Am I transparent?

I shyly mirror your grins
and attempt the odd fake chuckle,
sometimes inappropriately,
and socially stumble.

I'm lost
and aim to be polite,
but my frown betrays me.
Do you see it?

If I had words to say
it'd be like balm,
but my lack of focus
is a social handcuff.

You leave and I relax,
until we meet again;
to greet
or not to greet?

We meet several times.
I say *hello*.
How weak I feel.
I'm my own proverbial fly.

The story of my life

Did I mention confusion?
It chokes
weeding its way
through the garden.

Summertime got shorter every year.
That was when the fruit
was most throttled.

It took a while to realise
that everything was seasonal.
Pain wasn't permanent.

It was too late though.
I'd hidden.

Confusion was multiplied
by the sexual imperative.
What was left
after all the best years had rotted
was recursive fertiliser.

So did I tell you about confusion?

It embraced me after 45 years.
We signed a pact.
I sat at the head
at the Mad Hatter's tea party,
realising that my concept of normal
was the same as everybody else's:

madness.

II. THE LONG DISTANCE

Being a loner with an elderly dog

Andy Murray won Wimbledon.
It was a day of national pride.
Lucy and I relaxed outdoors.

Clare would cut roses
from her wheelchair.
I could picture her bending
over the multicoloured, shin-high wall
that the dogs had stripped with their claws.
Lucy's sober now.
At 112 she just excites about apple cores.

Today smoke and laughter diffused
across several plots. I smelled sausages.
Lucy looked tired and flattened herself
on the evening-cooled concrete.
I was tired too; tired of saying I was Okay
when I meant I'd improved:
panics had stopped.

Andy Murray will be in the papers tomorrow.
Good for him.

Just talking

I've nowhere better to be
than forty yards
from a climbing frame,
slide and swings.

I'm peering through weeping
willows like some sort
of paedophile. Light nights
attract son and daddy on bikes.

I could have been a daddy
if my chemicals didn't imbalance.
They don't see
my characterless hatchback.

I've no excuse for loitering
on my jack in this lay-by.
I'll make a mobile call
soon.

It would be nice to chat
face to face with her,
but isolation ironically
comforts.

They're all the same:
people. Don't you see? It's us
and every fucker else.
That takes the worry away.

I'm back to watching this average life.
I write poems and walk dogs. One day
I'd like someone to level with me
about this playground metaphor.

Innocent liaisons

Jimmy Saville, Rolf Harris,
Stuart “fucking” Hall; they’ve stripped us
of credibility. Candour now is bunco.

Innocent liaisons on social media
can be dangerous beginnings.
Mothers vet the lot.

People who don’t even masturbate
are automatically feared. Whatever happened
to chastity? It’s not so bloody queer.

People are tired of judgement.
Trust is prehistoric. “Paedos" are social terrorists,
worst nightmares of them all.

Bomb scares on Facebook;
lock your daughters up.
Sex is the biggest scam.

With innocent liaisons
of loners on networks,
society’s getting more insular.

III. THE ENEMY WITHIN

I can't ... I can ...

I can't dance.
I can't sing.
I can't cook.
I can't earn.
I can't travel.
I can't relate.
I can't date.
I can't wed.
I can't fuck
I can't breed.
I can't progress.
I can't start.
I can't part company with my past.

I can play.
I can write.
I can shite.
I can do alright if you give me a break.

I can waste.
I can taste it.
I can speak my mind when I'm high.
I can post defamatory statements about myself online.
I can destroy my reputation.
I can add to my own fucking isolation.

I can do a lot of things.

Hiding in the corner

Her brow feathers
some consciousness out.
It's love tainted:
instincts polluted.
It's a boy/girl thing.
They accommodate.

He surveys compulsions
whilst accepting aloneness.
His pen is company,
stuffing his face with its flavours;
documenting the "normality"
that his social model excludes him from.

The band's shite:
stereo sound, stereotypical stunt.
He'd like to kill the singer,
because he lies.
Volume perverts,
it's mortar.

The blokes want to fuck.
The women want to talk.
The landlord's satisfied,
surveying on an end-of-bar perch;
armed with a half
and an antidote to smugness.

He writes one last stanza.
Weeds are bluebell-like assassins.
There's incense in the air,
but the beer's unconsecrated
and no-one offers peace.
Everything's religion.

His mantra is "embrace your aloneness."

Opus Dei

I spoke to God today for the first time
in months. I started by apologising
for not being in touch, then thanked him
for helping me hang in down here.
I said *I know you won't send me an email,*
but can we agree that if the bus is on time today,
it must surely be down to you,
because the First bus company operates
on a basis of wasting our time,
whereas you would ostensibly save it; Amen.

The bus came one minute early.
There was something strange
about the driver today, his joviality.
I thought he'd smoked "wacky-backy"
as I sat staring out of the window.
He took the wrong route despite mutterings
from the whole bus. Veering back
we arrived in town four minutes late.
It seems the Devil had tapped my line,
hallelujah! If there's a devil there must be a god.

I give to you

I've much to learn
but would like to share
a potpourri to ponder,
ignore, or confirm me
delinquent or odd.

Try to wake up at least once,
in a warm double bed with a stranger.
Reach for a cigarette, if you smoke,
smoke it, then kiss gently, spare words
and leave.

Taste Arabia once, maybe twice.
Barter for basics to sustain you one day.
Budget, it's the Arabs' way to provide a meal.
If you partake, buy hashish at the price of educated -
OXO.
Don't smuggle it. Never gamble more -
than you're prepared to lose.

Get to know your parents.
You won't always have the chance.
Make decisions, otherwise you'll end up like me,
in the flow. Take heart though, -
death is the ultimate leveller.
We all converge at the narrow gate.

Consider hints. Look at what becomes of others,
they're your biggest clues.
Take them or leave them,
I give to you
these words.

IV. THE REACH

Transition

Day one

Waking early, the first thing is to see
if I'm Facebooked or Tweeted.
I've got that newfangled Internet Addiction Disorder.
I don't work, so I drink coffee then walk.
I say hello to everybody.
Those who don't catch my eye haven't realised,
that we're all navigating this confusion called self.
The sooner we sense commonality,
the sooner we smile.

Day two

This is like day one, only I can't afford Costa.
The boating lake woman thinks my pepsi is beer.
I say, "I'm a tee-total nonsmoker."
Her husband asks if I'm a virgin. The remainder
is spent enjoying music and surfing the web.
I "meet" this new online poet.
I'm happy.

Day three

I visit town. Despite being broke,
I buy a boxset of AC/DC and listen all day.
I get excited and spam Facebook with track names.
My neighbours “rock” through a thin wall.

In the morning it clicks.
I haven’t thought about her for three days.
I realise with guilt, then acceptance,
that I’ve stopped mourning.
I recognise that I’ve mourned
for the past eighteen months.

match.com

I didn't want to end up alone.
I thought “six months.” It would work or not.
At least when I was sixty
I’d not say, “I should have gone on match.com”

I took the honest tack after messaging Kate:
a post op transgender female.
Her candour precipitated my bipolar,
unemployed status:
“I write poems and walk dogs,”
it’s hardly the big time in some women’s eyes.
I’ll never drive a BM-fucking-W
or regularly holiday in the sun.

Honesty increased isolation.
So I opted to *show* humour.
The moustache was negotiable.

* * *

I wasn’t going to pass on the wink.
Despite her profile scaring me
I suggested a date.
I rang. We chatted, texted, Facebooked, all that shit.
I thought I’d blown it by revealing my illness,
but she was crazy as well.

* * *

On meeting her I beamed.
She appealed to my animal side.
Dollyd74 and Holmesy just went BAM.
I was soon scared by our wildfire.
I had no intention of dousing it.
A lifetime is a long time to wait.

V. THE REMNANT

Wednesday 29/4/15

I played “Somewhere over the rainbow”
to make us cry. Michelle wept the most.

My life:
I get up, I get through, I sleep.

If it was a good day it was a blessing.
If it was bad it was a curse.

I try not to think, like meditating.
I don’t need yoga.

The beat of a butterfly wing a hundred years ago
could have changed everything.

I hope it didn’t all end in the still birth room
aka “The butterfly room.”

This isn’t boringly affective is it? As I say,
“I write poems and walk dogs.”

It’s not raining.
That’s good.