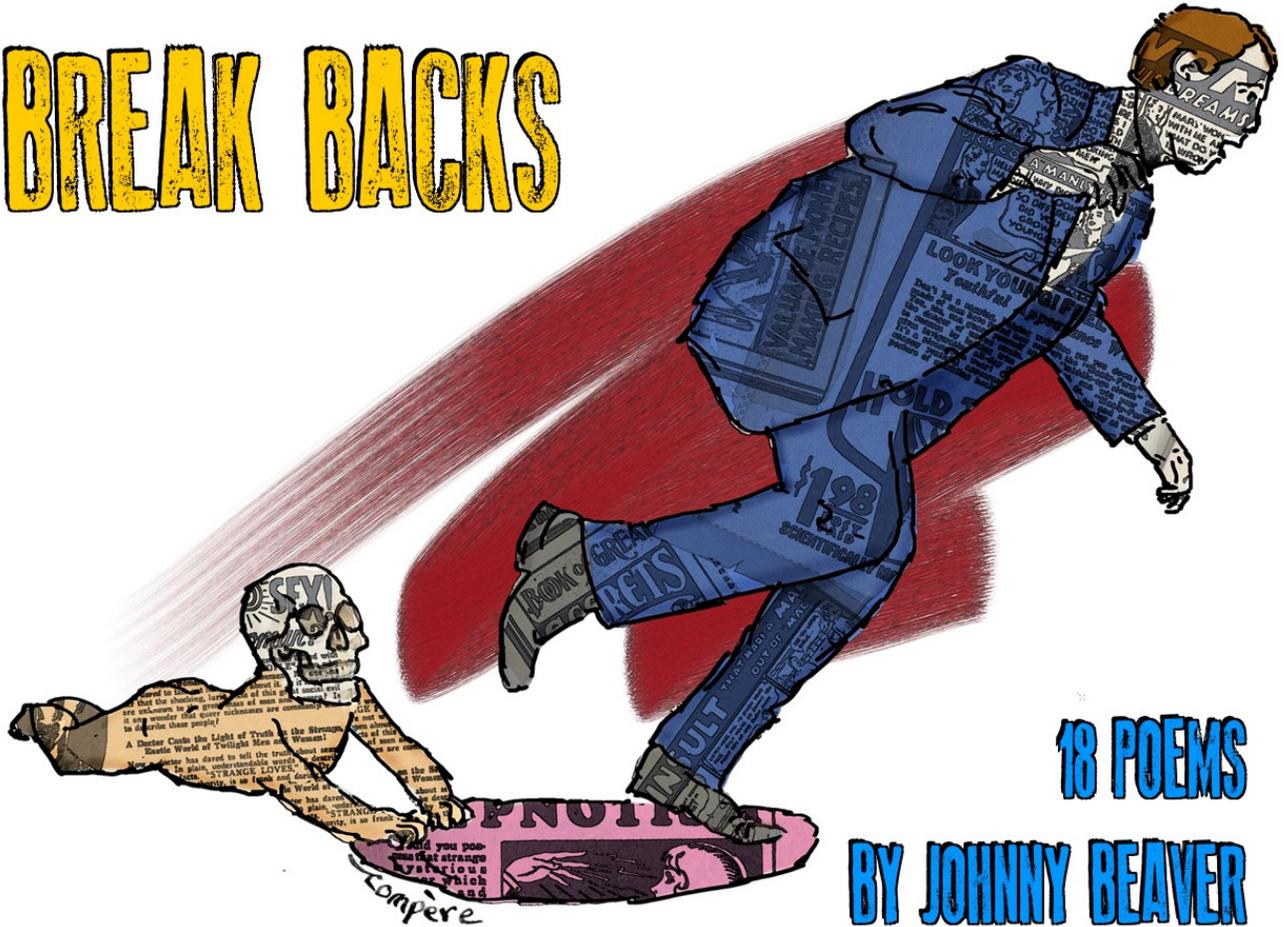


WHERE BEASTS

BREAK BACKS



18 POEMS
BY JOHNNY BEAVER

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Forward, Ho

This will be my 13th poetry chapbook bringing the total number of poems I've patched together to 255. That just seems like kind of a hell of a lot, and my recent foray into trying to operate a bit more like a regular person has convinced me that I should maybe trade in the "praise the artist" style of forward and pen a mangled one myself, risking it all in a whirlwind attempt to offer some insight to anyone that might care. Because I've noticed that the more I try to discuss the nature of my art outside of my own skull, the more ridiculous and convoluted I sound, I'll keep this short and restrict it to a safe fraction of the total potential verbiage.

My work has always been an evolutionary thing, mechanically, on both micro and macro scales. Evolutionary in the sense that, while a piece may have a core concept, every time I approach it during revision (sometimes hundreds of micro-alterations per piece), I color it. Heavily. With momentary emotion, aesthetic desire, mechanical curiosity, intangibly necessary nonsense, etc. These poems aren't picked up and sat down... they're being dragged in the mud from start to finish of each chapbook, no matter how long that might take. And the process is dirty. More like hitting a mailbox with a bat from a moving car than surgey.

As fellow poet and friend Tod Caviness once said, I have struggled at times to avoid having multiple words occupy the same space. Nothing is sacred, new value is found everywhere. I split ideas open and insert halves of other ones inside them, and then I'll forget what I did or why. Most of the time I couldn't tell you what a piece is about, only what it feels like. Sometimes titles have nothing to do with the poems they're attached to, but almost act as individual works. For me, the goal is to create a snapshot of experience, and I've found that I can't really do that without including the sort of movement through time, in a sense, that results in all of these fractures. Some might call it an intangible rat's nest of pretentious horse shit; sometimes that someone might be me. And that's okay, because I'm not sure it really matters one way or another. When you take a photo, there is inevitably going to be random stuff in the background. In my 'photos,' I try not to differentiate between background and foreground at all. All of this is why I consider my poems to be a written form of the expressionist tradition of painting that I so greatly admire.

All that aside, I'm not trying to say that I'm doing anything different from anyone else. In fact, I don't really trust anyone (myself included) to be unbiased enough to actually paint a consistently clear picture of their own work. Time and again I encounter the concept that high art is bound and gagged by the expectation that it must offer up something profound. I'd like to think there's some profundity involved in just about everything. I just sort of abhor the idea of crafting or wielding it in a way that'd make for a fantastic fortune cookie.

The only thing I'm sure of is that the following 18 poems are no more understood, honest, positive/negative or afraid than the 237 that came before them. Despite what may sound like stagnation, I call the retention of my humanity progress, even if the subject matter is often the byproduct of an attempt to tackle the worst parts of it.

--Johnny Beaver
December 18th 2014

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“ on liquidating the creditors “

certain topics seem too stupid to interact with;
kurt cobain's wishes in 2014, sure, sure, sure:
ever-expanding pop culture is the cure
for discontent // full stomachs, full minds, full hands, full
of full of shit. i stutter through routine like someone has shoved
a strobe light up my ass. i miss the Lithium going down
because it slipped in through the shadows
and pulled the foam sword
from the stone.

sad multiplied by sad is a false connection
with early man, woven from an unruly beard and the inability
to comb one's hair. as for the exponent: we're the same as
we've always been. the light, as it were... it's at the end
of both sides of the tunnel.

damned if you do,
etc.

“ on noticing your sixth toe for the first time “

the inside of my eyelids are increasingly painted
with images of putting my fist through
the well.

i meant to say 'wall,' but fuck it,
that's life with a keyboard – and sometimes
random nonsense is more interesting
than your hardest problems.

; or at least it's a distraction,
worthy of a few stolen minutes.

" flagellant "

the
air
tastes
like

i'm driving a machine &
all of this nonsense is happening to
someone/thing else. could be the lithium
could be my upraising, could be that the
pope is the head of the church, a
vassal to nonsense with no fact-checks
and your sisters all bitched in their midnight hoods
that you didn't squeeze out a proper Catholic brood;
just one and a half sons that've owned various
trucks, some of them red
& an Atari 2600.

i guess you can't control how you
remember people, after all.

" testament to a largely pointless gesture "

the best days are gone,
aren't they? what seems like 200
photo albums disintegrated under the stairs
when the rain came in. my double-chin, bicycles
and hair color we've all forgotten. letting
what's gone go is safe, though, secure,
like a drunken hug with a stranger
or a surreal death or a sleeping
death or a sudden death
in a sleeping bag;
sands, snakes
& scorpions.

i've pushed hard at times,
"against," or maybe not or maybe
it doesn't matter. maybe always in
the wrong direction, maybe i don't care
if it makes sense as long as its cozy;
SCREAM IT TO AN EMPTY ROOM: fucking off
is a warm sweater & i'm counting
the days! a starving belly
whose wide birth has no windshield wipers,
hedge clippers, that sort of thing. no
sticky trace of ghostly pricetags
nor the desire to take
hot water to its
funeral.

maybe i've become that
person (or maybe i was all along);
all efforts for nothing but a toxic sweat
and now the laundry needs washing. no
efforts, all efforts, never learned
to read a compass & the poles keep changing
which side they're on; i can't even drink
to live anymore.

i just get bitchy about not being able
to get anything done.

great christ, maybe i'm old.

" becoming the belly "

what doesn't kill time,
only makes it last longer.

i'm 33 and i've only bought
~3 plungers. i feel like there's
some kind of profundity there, or
at least a bit of poetic nonsense,
but it may take another 33
to vacuum it up from the
peripheral.

fact is,
i've gone soft and a-social; my face
and my liver and my beard have transformed
into the part of the pig that swords
swim in whenever grills heat up
on the backs of trucks.

i want people to shut up,
mind their own business,
disappear. the itch to pee in the pool
has retired.

even on the way to maintain hygiene
the hallway sees bits and pieces
of my body and mind dropping off;
roast beef turns tree turns paper,
notes become brief, water less wet
& soon i can't remember what
i'm studying, let alone
why i lit myself ablaze
in the first
place.

(though I keep punctuating poems like this,
so there must be some sort of agenda.)

" ...on comet, on cupid, on ARFID "

for my shattered arrangement,
self-help lasts about 48 - 72 hours.
neurosis gets xmas cards and
 there exists no machine
that can lance buttoholes from tomatoes
fast enough to account for all
necessary vitamins, soften
the other side of the telephone
or dampen the stupid rage
that bursts into existence
from the other side of
thin air.

" anniversaries and empty stomachs "

at this rate,
i'll be dead in a week. (upon editing
time has moved so damn fast i didn't)
since '03; possibly
because my brain is a jelly-pink mess
, the world is broken,
all of the above,
answer D...
 it's slipping away
into a nagging ache
that feels more like
the fattest of all nothings
each and every day.

granted, most of this goes away
once i get something to eat,
or a snap.

" head case pillow case "

the asteroids,
cat-hair-lungs / adjustments to the window
& jupiter's rotations; spun outta control
and bent the screen. out there,
the fucking blanket falling off the
bed AGAIN, moths flapping in the silent spirit,
a tax-less void of tumbling grooves sculpted
into in a black stretch of dusty bullshit
highway. we're
all between tall trees, dense swamps
and alphabet soup;
the only clue
necessary
is the lack
thereof.

" that thing i smelled "

i wondered about myself
when i realized that it took a half-read,
shitty poem to remind me of how much
i hate it when the sheet slips off the
mattress during the night. either the
poem, or the self-actualization
of not wanting to move.

i'm so glad, in this half-black room,
that the soulless don't have to feel bad
about them(my)sel(f)ves in order to change
for the better; worse would be comfort felt
in wrapping a homogenized view of the world
around myself like a coat, snuggling
roughly against the itchy membrane,
looking for sparks, cat hair
or month-old bits
of food.

" a human condition "

i piss in between classes,
during breaks; all the time. i feel
like i'm going to spend half my education
with my dick in my hands, and the
other half trying to define
why realizations like this
are important
to make.

right now i actually don't know if i'll
graduate. it'd be somewhat hilarious
if this were my legacy.

" impermanence "

i'll never know where beasts break backs
& rivers dream down below, because
the miracle required to slow down
long enough to follow footsteps
was spent on learning to
choke the light out
of the darkest dark & pull the trigger on a pistol
loaded with second chances over and over
and over.

" coke bottle glasses "

facing deepest glass, these filters on my face;
they're used to it in just the way we all know
fluid relates;

onto heavy blankets, sprouting from the drywall
like fungus; the tune of this song is fatigued with the task
of proving that the world needs to protect
itself.

nothing lodges
itself in there. my mind is
an oil slick with no
practical application.

" no great fissure "

 a pipe, kinked,
a cold, rabid place; the ground crinkles
 like a sun - burnt nose; it splits;
 blood on the march; sticky in place,
with cold grips on hollow necks
 for minimum / useless wage.
all cell walls breached, the
 innards, they go dancing;
 the lunatics
 bray and just eat shit
 (or something equally
 romantic).

refrain: all sense drinks its own piss
 at the bottom
 of the sea;
 i am a collapse,
& that collapse is me.

" i am later "

throwing myself against the
concrete insides of my eyelids,
dissolving in the salted pillars
of those silly faces, both
nagging like nails in a fence
of strong spine, never mattering
for more than a few distant,
deflated seconds as it all
trips up a flight of sta[i]r(e)s.

frozen to the roof of my mouth,
reluctance seeks northern caves
to hide-n'-seek those swallow'd capsules
that (really) like to fail.

[maintenance stage]
adjust the pillows,
seek the ocean
floor;
 the head dreams of rolling and
i shiver in between the screams of engines,
awake with Momentum.

" straight down "

i want to take everything that is good
, all those Pollyanna good people and dig a hole,
throw it all in and float in the wake -- even if I have to split myself in two
and use the shitty part to take a few pitchforks , distract the mob.

kevin likes his own muscles, afterall; he wears tight shirts
and when he paints every face is his. oh, I tell ya.
the dull ache of shitty people,
the dull ache of shitty
people.

maybe i'll bring the cats as well.

" inversion complex "

i am a great driver &
i am an excellent parker so long as i'm moving forward
& not
dead on the beach
or in the woods, naked under a skin of stars
or cratering in some poor asshole's driveway; these
are great catalysts for the blood pressures of morons,
stacking up thick and Babel high, curdling
and never coming back down; page 6 says that dreams
coagulate under moderate heat. page 7 says "i <3
frank," and frank is pretty well irrelevant.

now raging, organisms are inverted
and can deny themselves; all the same, here i am
writing on the concrete, looking for inspiration in
unidentified corpses.

it's embarrassing and appalling
and ironic; humans die within and love
their downed cast shadows.

they spend the rest of the time
conducting them with great sweeping
motions of the arm : EAT ME EAT ME
EAT ME, they say, strung
up on strings &
with phones
attached.

end.