

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
IN VERSE
OUT OF ORDER

THIS
LIFE

EMILIE C. BLACK

This Life

In verse and out of order

Emilie C. Black

To Brian, for the late night ceremonies.

Table of Contents

What Do You Want To Be?.....	2
Cat In the Undertow.....	3
Hindsight.....	5
Threesome.....	8
Mia.....	11
Why Don't I Want To Live?.....	14
Why Do You Want To Work Here?.....	18
The Victim Was Me.....	19
Ignorance.....	21
Fuck Society.....	23
Will I?.....	26
Existence.....	28
What Have I Done With My Life?.....	30
How To Change The World.....	33

What Do You Want To Be?

During the misadventures of my youth

I was torn between

“Spaceman” and “dinosaur”.

But when you’re four,

You don’t know.

I knew I didn’t want to be an adult

Because adults were boring

And regularly abandoned me

In this weird room of bright colours and toys.

I should’ve been resentful, but I had toys.

I spent seventeen years

Locked in education,

Gaining the years and transforming.

Gaining and losing friends, sense and myself

But every day I’m still learning, I can’t be grown up

These days, I sit in an office

That slowly suffocates me.

I’m mature enough to know responsibility,

But I know I can’t be grown up,

I still have a Chewbacca bobble-head on my desk.

I’ve definitely grown old

And I’ve definitely grown out

But I haven’t grown up.

I still don’t know what I want to be.

I’m still torn between “Spaceman” and “dinosaur”.

Cat In the Undertow

Have you ever been so tired
That when the cat jumps into the bath
And gets stuck,
You feel like this is
A perfect metaphor for your life?

Like you're feline less than fine,
And you're a bedraggled ball of fuzz
Caught in an undertow of
Inch-deep, lukewarm
Watery chaos, while
You're pinned down with
A bathtub strapped to your back
And you're struggling to
Find your furry feet
While The Man
Stares down and silently
Laughs in your face?

Up to now,
Life has been a balancing act,
And you've been teetering over
Troubled waters.
Weighed down with
Should'ves, would'ves, could'ves and oughttas,
And if that rhyme feels like
A bit of a stretch,
It's only because I'm
Feeling pretty stretched thin myself.

Like a small skin
On a skeleton of something
Much bigger than I am.
Splitting at the seams and
Being torn apart by
Gravity and a cruel existence.

Curled up like a poor, pathetic
Ball of fluff,
Desperately pawing for attention
And crying for something to change.

I am not the only one
Who has felt this way.
Every day, 1 in 4 people
615 million people
Are battling against a
Tide of anxiety and depression.
like a basket of kittens
Left out in the rain,
They have felt fear,
They have felt alone,
They have felt like
Nobody would care.

But they have fought.
Fought tooth and claw.
Patrolled streets alone.
Survived impossible leaps.
Gotten through scraps and
Licked their wounds and scratches
Away, like kisses on broken bones and skin.

And now,
Despite everything,
Despite being
Fantastic, fluffy and full of beauty,
They are still
615 million cats
Trying to find their feet
In a chaotic new world and
Constantly trying to claw
Their way back to the top
From the bottom of a bathtub.

Hindsight

I remember being small,
Not emotionally or mentally,
Just in terms of being a child.

When I was sick, my dad
Would make his signature soup.
It was nothing overly special,
Chicken, rice and vegetables,
But it tasted like being better.

When I hurt myself, my mum
Would pick me up and clean my cuts
With the weird white cream
in the non-descript bottle,
Kiss it better and send me on my way.

It was just moisturiser,
And maybe it's that over exposure
That's made who I am today,
Soft and gentle,
Not much of a fighter.

But my dad didn't like that,
I didn't overly like that
Because boys were tough,
Rough and tumble, branch and bramble,
Carefree cuts and badge shaped bruises.

From boy scouts to black belts,
I tried to earn whatever rank it would take
To feel like I was on my way to
Being the best I can be.
But I wasn't doing it for me.

Because I still remember
When I was six years old
My dad was rushed into hospital.

A work accident,
He went from tree surgeon
To needing a surgeon
And I was too young to understand
What hemiplegia meant.

Mum's magic cream cculdn't make
The pain go away
And he couldn't get the special soup
Because he couldn't get to the kitchen
Because the doctor wouldn't let him.

Seeing this man who'd been
My idol and rock
Suddenly become bandaged rubble,
Putting on a brave face for me
When he knew he might never walk again.

So he would just lie there,
Being strong for all of us.
Like the rock in the river
Just before the waterfall.
Something to cling and climb onto.

Never showing signs of erosion,
Never crumbling to sand to become part of the riverbed.
Fighting time and tide to finally
Find his feet and run and jump the best he can
Because he was the rock on which he built his family.

I never really wanted to fight,
And this pansy-poetical, theatrical life
Wasn't really what he had in mind.

He might not understand what it is I do,
He might not understand how he's shaped me,
I've got blackbelts and trophies for taekwondo
But he was the one who taught me
What it really means to fight.

We grew up and grew apart,
I learned I am not the people my parents are,
And I might never be what they expected
Because I'm a lot of dirty words to them
But I'm okay with that.

There's a lot of me that
They might not agree on because
They're rocks, strong and sturdy,
But they don't move,
They don't change.

But to go through that,
They might not like theatre
But it was a performance I'll never forget.
They're still the strongest people I know.

Threesome

I have a threesome every day
And I've been having threesomes
Every day for what seems like
My entire life.
I don't expect you to know
What that feels like but
Let me tell you,
It's exhausting.

It's a constant barrage of
Twisting and tossing and turning
And pushing and pulling
And burning and biting
And clawing and cutting
In a never-ending search
For happiness.

A happiness that never comes,
Much like myself because
I am too generous,
I am on the receiving end of
Two toxic partners working
In discord and out of rhythm and harmony
To give me the best worst fucking
Of my life.

Partner A:

Definitely built for speed and not comfort
And when I say speed,
I don't just mean in terms of firing rate.
I mean the drug, because
He lives at a million miles an hour,
Never slowing, taking me by the hand,
Taking me to the brink,
Taking me on a rollercoaster ride
Where there's no safety bars,
Where there's no speed limit,
Where there's no means of self-preservation,
Only self-destruction and sado-masochism

Partner B:

They like to take it slow,
Painstakingly, mind numbingly slow.
And it's not so much sensual
As it is sensory, with a blend of
Substance and pain,
Blood play and asphyxiation,
Everything is a threat and a challenge,
Like waking up or doing literally
Anything because she leaves a mark on me
Brandings of bites and bruises
And cuts and cigarette burns.
Like I'm her property.

My bedroom is a BDSM dungeon,
A Bipolar Disorder and Sadomasochism Dungeon,
Where I'm locked in my bed and my head
With two lovers who love to fuck me
At every given opportunity.
And it would be fine to
Take them one at a time,
Treat each of them with the right
Time, dedication and medication
But unfortunately, I often find
I'm locked in a situation where
They're both fucking me at the same time,
Tearing my body and mind apart
With thoughts that cut like a knife
And fingernails that run
Over and under my skin.

I have a threesome every day
And I've been having threesomes
Every day for what seems like
My entire life.
I don't expect you to know
What that feels like but
Let me tell you,
It's exhausting.

Mia

My friend Mia makes me sick
And she makes me feel
better in the worst of ways.
Our putrid relationship consists of
the worst sex with
the greatest orgasms I've ever had

And despite meeting her in a moment of insanity,
I have spent five years battling
my feelings and better knowledge.
Common sense says that
we shouldn't be together
but every time I try to confront the issue
it leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

I knew of her since
high school biology.
Like ships in the night,
we passed without interacting.
She had a reputation,
never associating with anyone.
or, at least, anyone I knew.

I was 20 when I met her.
A chance evening, a dinner alone
except for the voices in my head
and the demons in my glass.
Then she was there.
And the voices stopped.
And she was the only thing that made sense.

After one, two, many drinks
and too much deliberation
I chose to let Chaos and Confusion
end this night for me.
She pulled me into a bathroom stall,
forced me down on a fake porcelain throne
and she fucked me.

And she fucked me hard,
physically and mentally.
Her fingernails carved a dark story into my body,
a story only told by a tongue as sharp as hers,
the roars that resonated from our chests were deafening
and at climax, I felt better than I ever had been.

What was casual turns to commitment
What was once a week
Begins to repeat
Breakfast, lunch, dinner
She is there, waiting with her warped reward.
I'm not in control.

My body is at her command
My eyes are stained with exhaustion
I used to smoke cigarettes to relax
But now I just want to mask her perfume.
Because it burns my nose
I can't breathe.

I can't see the line between pain and pleasure anymore
Because of the constant watering in my eyes.
Every throne is a porcelain tombstone,
And my name is engraved by her nails
I am used and abused
And i have no one to blame but myself

I hate that I'm in love with my worst friend.
Despite the euphoria from her toxic kiss
I am still forced to wash my mouth out.
The listerine burns away the memory
Of her bile taste on my tongue
She is always inside my head,
Always whispering, always lying:
"It will make you feel better"

I know that I've spent too long
Curled in a ball or on my knees
Clutching my chest in violent prayer
Wanting it all to stop
Wanting for her to leave
But if she left,
I'd feel emptier than I do when she's there.

Why Don't I Want To Live?

I have spent too long awake
And my thoughts are travelling
At a million miles an hour
As I try to find an explanation
To justify the non-extinction
Of myself.

Please forgive the 1am ramblings
of this shell before you
But I feel a need for an
Inevitable confrontation
And elaborate invocation
Of my feelings

Dear myself,
Why don't I want to live?
Seriously, please tell me
Because I've got enough going on
And I was going so strong so
Why here and Why now?

I have more than I
Feel and deserve
And life lately has been
As easy as soft-serve
Ice-cream because I've been
Pretty smooth and chill

I've got a job and an income
Friends I can rely on
So why is my mind
Greyer than the
Aberdeen skyline
In September?

There's a roof over my head
And pillows and a bed
Yet a lead-lined shadow of doubt
Has cut its claws into my shoulders
And I adorn it and crumble
Under the weight of this dark cape.

Why don't I want to live?
When my mood started cycling,
I started using training wheels
To keep balanced
But there is still a white light
At the end of this track that I'm riding

I have tried to hop, skip and jump
From pity, misery and responsibility
But my physicality and mentality
Are in a separation battle
And the judge said
They can have me on alternate days.

I have syringed the serotonin
From my brain and painted it on my door
And immersed myself in the real world,
And attended firework displays of
Fluoxetine, clozapine and amphetamine
But dark smoke has choked the chemical light.

Why don't I want to live?
Am I averse to positivity
Or have light-headed thoughts
Been pit against a heavy heart
In a rigged boxing match
In my skull?

Are my thoughts made of
Shadow puppets
Which can only be cast
With the setting sun?
Even though a shadow of a shadow
Creeps in with the dawn through my curtain.

Or is it more likely
That a material life
Is unfulfilling
And the things that I want
Are not what I need
And depression is more than a metaphor?

Why don't I want to live?
Why don't things work
the way that they should
And why do I feel that
I should feel better
Because I have it better than others?

Why are questions easier than answers,
Why is sobriety so hard and
Why won't this negativity shut up?
Why am I writing a letter to the
Voices in my head asking them to explain
Why we want me to die?

Because I don't think you understand the
Gravity of the situation,
We live in this same body so
I feel that's a cause for consternation
For you right now because
I don't see a reason why I shouldn't.

What is wrong with me

What is the reason

What is the point

What is the answer

Why don't I want to live?

I don't know.

Why Do You Want To Work Here?

Sir, if you expect me to grovel,
Then I shall exceed expectations.
I routinely aim to exceed expectations,
If I was a Charles Dickens novel,
I would be Great Expectations.
I feel it should be expected
That I am expected to exceed expectations
And I expect that you agree,
And we can both agree on
Expectations I can exceed.

I feel that we can
Expand into the international market.
I know you don't actually sell anything
But there's a market for that.
There's an app for that.
We can make an app for that.
There's a market for an app
For people looking for a market
To make an app for,
And I can help with that.

This is a company that has family values
And I can relate to that.
I will relate to that,
I have relatives and relations that
Let me relate to that
On a relatable level
So I would be a perfect fit
Because we relate to each other
When it comes to building strong relationships.

Sir, if you expect me to grovel,
I will, but in all honesty,
I'm just in this for the money.

The Victim Was Me

I was wearing jeans and a t-shirt.
Were you expecting me to say
Something more fitting,
More form fitting,
Something more pretty?
Or would you rather I said
I was wearing a shirt and tie so
You can fetishize my school uniform
To try and justify his actions
And make the victim him and not me?

Were you hoping I would say
I was wearing nothing but
My sexuality on my sleeve
And leggings so you could say
“They were practically begging”
And then pin the blame on me?
Then go on to say that I was
“Preying on his fragile masculinity”
Twisting the situation and implying
That the problem was me?

Because the truth is
I wasn’t wearing anything that would
Let you dress consent as a foregone privilege
Instead of a basic right.
And the only reason his
Arms and ego are bruised is because
I tried to fight back and tried not to
Not let it happen but I was
Too frightened and pinned down
With brute force and fear.

I still feel his hand
Over my mouth,
Forcing my screams
To back down my throat.
I am forced to wear scars
Carved by his nails and I'm
Stained with bruises that
No shower can wash away and
No knife or razor can cut out.
And I've tried.

No noose or antidepressant
Can change the way that
I have been changed.
And if you think,
If you believe,
That I would ask for this,
For my life to be hollowed out,
For my body to be mutilated to the point
I don't recognise my reflection,
Then you are just as much to blame as him.

I was wearing jeans and a t-shirt,
Now they're stained, tattered and torn
And strewn amongst the shreds of
My dignity and innocence and
Shards of shattered dreams that
Have given way to nightmares that
Don't let me sleep
And broken-record memories
That play over and over and over,
That remind me the victim was me.

Ignorance

Ignorance is bliss and
They are blissful and blissfully aware
That their happiness is contingent
On being ignorant.

Because, that way,
They don't have to support the good fight
Because, to them,
Racism, sexism and oppression is right
Because, doing so,
Does not upset their status quo.

They'd rather believe that
Poverty is an African state
And it's a choice to live there, and
Skin colour and sexuality
Is a matter of purity
And it's a choice and they deserve discrimination.
Because choice is evil,
Because choice is not binary,
Because you're either
Right and Right or Left and Wrong.

They'd rather believe that
Oppressing minorities while having a minority belief
Is absolutely justified and O.KKK.
Because 'white is right' even though
The country isn't even rightfully theirs
But the urge to control and dominate
And trounce and trump
Anything that isn't in their image
Conquers all because
Change is good when it's good for them.
Because they think they're god and
They think It's their God-given right.

Because it's less about injustice
And more about "it just is".
Living a shallow live with
Dissociative Moral Crisis Disorder,
Not feeling guilt or shame,
Desperately finding someone else to blame
All while playing pick and choose
(Because pick and mix sounds
Like it will weaken the gene pool)
Feeding the homeless but white
So as to help build a
New World Order
And hold ticker-tape parades of
Red, White and Black,
Flagging themselves as a confederacy
And raising awareness that
There are problems in the world
While being blissfully unaware that
The problem is them.

Fuck Society

Fuck society! consensually.

The worst it can do is say no.

But in the event it says yes,

You'd best start off slow.

Massage around the issues,
Make them tender and weak,
Then, as the cunning linguist you are,
Speak softly of
All that you're going to do to it.

Turn your tongue into
A scintillating and titillating contortionist,
Running it's story over a landscape
Of peaks and valleys and narrow alleys
Until the world has your name
Under its breath and its skin.

Sink your nails in,
Scratch and carve your ways and your name
So it knows who's going to win because
Society is no virgin.
Society has been fucked before
And society has fucked other people
And seen the best go down
And not come up again.

Screw society! gently,
At first.
Push your ideas and your presence,
At first society was aware of you,
Now it knows you're here.
Feel it shiver,
Feel the fear and anticipation
Ripple and rise to a crescendo.
Ignore the attempted religious undertone of
“Oh god... Oh God” because no God
Can help it now.

Power, endurance and speed,
The three things that both of you need
Society needs it more than you,
So demonstrate a
Distinct lack of greed.
Drive your point home,
Arise and be stronger than ever.
Last longer than anyone else,
Strike harder than those
Who have came before you,
Be faster than the speed of light
But finish society before you finish yourself.

Defy social norms,
Grab the bull by both horns
And reverse cowgirl that motherfucker
Until it begs for change,
Until your name is the only noise
It can scream coherently,
Until you are the only thing
It wants, needs and craves.
Make this money-hungry bitch
The ultimate sex slave.
There are no free rides in this life,
So best make sure you get your damn money's worth
Before you plaster your manifesto over its body.

So yes:

Fuck society! consensually,

But fuck that shit hard.

Will I?

I won't lose my dignity.
Even though everything is gone
And I'm left with just mistakes and chronic emptiness.
Even though I've sold my soul and guitar
For the sake of pipe dreams and smoke and mirrors.

I won't lose my dignity.
Even though I've wound up alone
Except for the ghosts of the voicemail machine.
Even though my life has been repossessed
And I'm now in receipt of income and life support.

I won't lose my dignity.
Even though my skin is so weak and discoloured
That I can't recognise my own ethnicity.
Even though I'm sweating ice cold bullets
And my eyes are leaking like warm battery acid.

I won't lose my dignity,
Even though I'm bound to this hospital bed
Like I'm in an unpayable life debt.
Even though I can't hold my head high
But I know I can rely on this mountain of pillows to do it for me.

I won't lose my dignity.
I've already lost so much.
I've lost my money.
I've lost my friends.
I've lost my mind.
I've lost my body.
I've lost myself.
I've lost my will to be an addict.

I won't lose my dignity.
Even though my grip
Is barely strong enough to hold a needle
Even though I'm here by force,
It's only because I've forced myself to do this.

I won't lose my dignity.
Even though I probably could or should
Because it would just make sense.

I won't lose my dignity.
Because I won't let it go.
Because I refuse to lose the one thing that's keeping me strong.

Existence

I think that I think I exist.

If thinking equals being,

Then I think that I exist.

But it's not a conscious

Decision to will myself

Into this existence

And this is evident by

The persistent indecision

That I find myself facing

On a daily basis.

Because I've lived

My life thinking

“I think, therefore I am”

But I find I am in

A constant battle of

Positive versus negative

And logic dictates

I wouldn't wish it

Upon myself so

Who did?

How would I know

If this wasn't just

Some kind of crazy,

Inconsistent coma dream

From one too many

Car crashes, causing

Flashes of different lives

To flash across my eyes

In a systematic series of

Fortunate and unfortunate events.

Maybe this isn't even me,

Maybe I'm someone else's

Fantasy or hallucination,

A nighttime thought creation
Or process of dissociation,
A cultivation and culmination
And overall manifestation
Of stress and frustration
Or a figment of a
Perfect stranger's imagination.

But at the risk of waxing existential,
I don't think we've considered
The absolute potential of
Being part of an extraterrestrial
Game of The Sims.
Being trapped at the whims
And mercies of martians
Or deities who let us
Virtually have no control
In our lives.

What Have I Done With My Life?

I never accomplished
What I set out to do with my life.
I've been in a series of
Mistimed and unplanned misadventures
Which have led me to this
Period of questioning.

When I was a child,
If you had asked me
What I wanted to be when I grew up,
I would have said
“Astronaut or dinosaur”.
Given I’m not yet extinct,
I have failed in becoming a dinosaur.
And I’ll never be an astronaut,
Just because of who I am as a person.

I failed my four year old self,
And I’ve failed every other self that I’ve been.
But this does not make me a failure.

My car crash of a life
Was defined by an actual car crash.
One 2003 Ford Focus
And a series of somersaults
Helped put me on the path that
I now walk on.
I still need a walking stick in the winter.

But in that fell swoop,
I lost all confidence in myself,
My A in Higher Drama
Suddenly meant nothing.
Confidence was a thing of the past,
Years of youth theatre,
Learning support,
And occupational therapy,
Were undone.

I never stood on a stage for 5 years,
But I found strength through music,
Hiding behind a music stand and a viola,
Hiding under the stage in the pit.
Or staying behind the scenes,
Because no one pays attention
to the man behind the curtain.

But in my mind,
I was nothing,
I was a failure to myself,
A failure to my parents,
A failure to my suicide attempts
And the voices in my head
Only served as a bitter reminder to that.

I spent too long wondering
What am I doing, will I ever be something,
What will I accomplish, am I just nothing?
But what's the use in wondering
When you can't watch and wait for the future?
Because when you run from your past
You can only go forward.

If you had told me
That at age 25
I'd have a career in theatre,
I would have never believed you.
Because I always thought theatre was a hobby,
But people actually call me for my help and designs for
Lighting and sound.

If you had told me
That at age 25
I'd be on a stage performing,
I would have never believed you.
But now I'm pouring my soul and surrealism
Into performance poems that
People actually like.

If you had told me
That at age 25
I might not be the killing type,
I would have never believed you.
But thirty-two hospitalisations for
Suicidal behaviour later,
I'm still here.

Maybe I'm not an actor,
A dinosaur or an astronaut,
And maybe I didn't die before thirty.
But life doesn't always go the way we plan.
Sometimes it's better.

How To Change The World

One pen can change a piece of paper.
It's style may seem insignificant,
But every stroke, every line, every word,
Was put there for a reason.

One person can change a mind,
Planting words and thoughts like seeds,
Which grow into flowers of awareness
That people take the time to notice.

One poem can change an audience,
Maybe not everyone and maybe not all at once,
But there's a collective ear and a collective thought
As this information is absorbed .

I can talk about the things we try not to,
From feminism to religion
To rape culture and xenophobia
And I have the right to.
But that means I have a responsibility,
A responsibility to let you know that
These things are not okay,
And I might not be the catalyst
But I can be the alchemist,
The herald, and psychiatrist
Experimenting, preaching, advising
On how to change the world.

I never said it would happen overnight,
I never said I would do it on my own,
So join me and bust a rhyme, take the time
To write your heart and mind out and then
Plaster your presence on the streets and on the internet.

Take your slam poetry,
Make it battering ram poetry ,
A poetry crash, poetry smashing
Injustice and stigma.
Like a thousand fists in the face of adversity,

Make a difference,
Make ripples in oceans of deep thought
Until you have enough friends and force to
Make a tidal wave of revolution to crash down on
Those who do not seek to address oppression.

Take your prose, haikus and sonnets
Stand up and use words as weapons
Because ten thousand voices
Reciting ten thousand poems
Could change the world.

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DIGITAL EDITION

<https://mxcellany.com>

A SELECTION OF POEMS
RECOUNTING EMOTIONS,
EXPERIENCES, AND
LIFE LESSONS

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