

Poetry Series

**M.C. Bruce**  
**- poems -**

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## M.C. Bruce(11-18-1956)

Poet and lawyer M.C. Bruce lives in McKinleyville, California. He has been publishing since 1999. He works as a solo lawyer in criminal law and family law. He worked for a number of years for the Orange County Public Defender. His experiences as a PD are found in the now rare chapbook 'Clients, ' though Mr. Bruce has plans to put an expanded version of the book on Kindle soon. His son is a graduate student at Purdue University in Physics. His wife, Rene Diedrich, is the anthologist of the world-renowned book 'How Dirty Girls Get Clean'. Bruce was most recently published in an anthology of lawyer poetry which can be found on Amazon.

# A Long Day

seems to dawdle  
like a child  
on the way to church  
a dollar in his pocket  
for the collection  
which he believes better used  
to buy a Look bar  
a soda  
a comic book  
his communion  
on the sidewalk  
outside the liquor store

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# Adieu, Amy

Rough angel, switchblade heart  
tattoo my tongue to your leg  
pull me down and let me feel  
the flames of wherever you are bound.

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# Blessed Gray

For more than a year  
It has been unreasonably dry,  
the skies refusing to cloud,  
the rain staying away from us

Like an ex-girlfriend angry  
over some perceived slight.  
We walk the streets of bone  
muttering about how long

it has been since the skies opened  
and we were pelted with beautiful rain.  
Today, when I awoke, the sky  
was a blessed gray, the clouds

hanging low and heavy, the smell  
of moisture in the air.  
And everyone I saw  
walked smiling, hoping.

M.C. Bruce

# Confusion

Woke up and found  
I was still here.  
Someone has some  
Explaining to do.

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# Dangerous Women

Her heart was a loaded gun  
She went through this world  
With the hammer half cocked  
A bullet in the chamber.

Her heart was a switchblade  
Waiting impatient for the flick  
Of a button so it could come out  
To do its bloody business.

Her heart was a box of poison  
It never pumped blood, only arsenic  
It would do its dirty work  
The moment after you recognized the taste.

Her heart was a sawed off shotgun  
Hidden beneath her long coat of ribs  
She would swing it out and fire  
Just when you didn't expect it.

M.C. Bruce

# Debris

Sometime in the night  
over a dark ocean  
my heart went missing,  
the last signals  
incomprehensible.

In the morning  
on the back of the blank water  
debris:  
a torn love seat  
a symphony program  
a blanket from our bed.

And all along the horizon  
a long trail  
of oil and tears  
and heart's blood.

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# Disinterested

How you kiss me now as if you're watching  
yourself on television; how you stiffen  
when I touch your back in public; how you tense  
as if to argue with my smallest observations;

Tonight, when you said it was fun to go somewhere  
with me, the tone of your voice was that  
of a woman surprised at herself, as if she'd found  
some new metaphor in a poem she'd memorized

when a child. Tonight, when we embraced  
I found myself suddenly alone with you  
but alone nonetheless. I wonder now where  
have you gone and why couldn't I come with you?

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# Doppelganger

This is not my life  
But some sad parody  
Of what I would have become  
Had I been more cowardly

In my youth, had I  
Not taken the dare to write  
My name large on the blank page  
Of my country men's minds.

No, this is some scene  
From one of those switching places movies  
Where the hero is transmogrified  
Into a lizard while a lizard

Takes human form and astounds everyone  
By eating flies. This is not me,  
My friends. I know I am thinner,  
More handsome, somehow useful.

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# Feast Of St. Valentine

Only sad humanity  
Could take a natural imperative  
For propagating the species  
And transform it into

Bliss, misery, sin  
Salvation, destiny, murder,  
Pleasure, poetry, poverty,  
Fortune, fame, philandering.

And an excuse to sell  
Flowers cards and candy,  
Jewelry, Jesus and Buddha.  
What ever I left out

Is the rest of the world  
And the stars and the other planets  
And philosophy and sport and art  
And every drop of music

Ever created. But you my love  
Make it all new again. And I  
Am convinced there was never so happy  
A fool as I.

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# Grudge

I held my grudge  
With hate and dread.  
My heart was blackened  
Cold and dead.

Then I forgave  
My enemy  
My heart was clean  
And light and free.

M.C. Bruce

## Love Song 42

You are my delight  
The stretch of highway  
Lined with trees before  
I hit the city;

You are an old song  
I forgot completely  
Until it becomes an apparition  
On the car radio during a long ride;

You are the deer I glimpse  
By the highway, watching just under  
The trees as I go  
Speeding past at seventy;

You are the end of a long trip  
As I get out to carry the bags  
Back into the house, dead tired  
And glad to be home.

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# Nomads

She brought her ghosts with her  
When she came to this house.  
She knows by the way the hound  
Glares and growls at a space above  
The television, hackles raised.

It was a little tract house before she came,  
Charming in its anonymity  
Quiet and undisturbed in its long  
Unlonging days and unflinching nights.

Now in some corners of a room  
Sad desire appears and disappears  
Strange sounds stumble in the dark  
As if something is unfamiliar with the way

The furniture is arranged. 'You've brought  
Them with you, ' I tell her. She shrugs.  
'I wouldn't be surprised, ' she says.  
And someone in the corner sighs.

M.C. Bruce

# Not Well

my girl was irked  
that she had suffered for weeks  
from some unknown miscreant  
virus which made

her cough and clogged  
her upper pipes, while i  
sailed blithely through  
my days unscathed.

it's not fair, she said,  
that i am punished for my sins  
but you, equally a sinner  
are skating on grace.

but today my throat is sore  
and my head is clogged  
and she tends to me with tenderness  
and just a little smugness.

M.C. Bruce

# Ode To Leema Lee

O, Redheaded Muse,  
American Goddess,  
Red is the color of danger  
Which fits you just about right.  
Because each photo of you  
In a bikini, in jeans, in your lingerie  
Breaks my ancient heart.  
I know you must be real  
But I do not want to believe it.  
Instead, I will believe  
That some love starved artist  
Imagined you into being.

M.C. Bruce



# On Poetry

Whenever a poem  
Is titled 'Poetry'  
The poet tries too hard  
To convince you

That he makes words dance  
Or she captures time  
Or they recollect emotion in tranquility  
Or any such shit.

I myself have opined  
That Poetry is how  
We explain ourselves  
To an uncaring world.

But Poetry is not benevolent  
And is too wicked clever  
To be caught by such  
Nonentities as poets.

Poetry lurks in the heart  
An undiagnosed cancer.  
Poetry waits in the barrel  
Like a bullet to the brain.

Poetry sits in an uneven web  
An hourglass on its belly.  
Poetry's breath stinks of blood  
In darkness at labyrinth's end.

Poetry will put its arm around you  
And buy you drink after drink  
And laugh at your stupid jokes  
And listen to your weepy tales of love,

All the time gritting its teeth  
Biding its time till the moment  
It pulls the hidden knife from its coat  
And slices your unsuspecting throat.

Then it strolls off laughing.  
'Sing now, ' it mocks.

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# Quickies (Poems For Sexting Anthology)

## Perfume

The scent of you  
Permeates my sheets.  
I can't get myself  
Out of bed.

## True Religion

When I first  
Saw you naked  
I finally knew  
There was a God.

## Nipple

Roseate aura  
Areola cherry  
I nibble  
To taste you.

## Post-Coital

Universe dizzy  
We lose our bearing  
Spinning slowly  
Into eternity

## Eruption

My tongue  
Turns you into  
A volcano.  
Pompeii  
Buried again.

## M.C. Bruce

# Saturday

The dogs are quiet  
The washing machine groans  
My girl naps and snores  
And I am calling on the muse

Who seems peevisish  
That I should be tapping  
A poem out with one hand  
Without benefit of ink.

Oh for the days, she sighs,  
When poets sharpened a quill  
And sat pensively in candlelight  
And courted me properly.

I apologize for the twenty first  
Century, I say. We are an impatient  
People who sharpen damned little  
Who rely on spell correct to keep

Ourselves honest, often with comic  
Results. Well, she sighs, if you must,  
Come a little closer. Kissed by the muse  
I sharpen my heart and listen.

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# Sleep

When I sleep, I am not foolish,  
All of my work is finished,  
Every former lover  
Finally forgives me.

M.C. Bruce

## Sonnet On The Death Of An Ipod

Thou little shiny box which many days  
Did entertain me on my lonely walks  
Containing multitudes, whose random plays  
Perplexed and pleased me. Now your silence mocks  
Our feeble boasts that we can tame the gods  
And pull from nothing sound and soul's repose.  
That we are somehow raised above the clods  
That crunch beneath our feet. There are those  
Who place their faith and heart in the care  
Of science and its servants, nothing more,  
Who never seek signs in dreams. They err.  
The dreams of science hold such little store  
And when, sans warning, everything blinks out  
How then are we to struggle with our doubt?

M.C. Bruce

# Starbuck's, Tuesday Morning

The rattle of the cups  
the ringing of the spoons  
the chatter of the girls  
working the counter;

the whoosh of the steam  
the squish of the whipped cream  
the low rumble of people  
talking to one another;

the scent of coffee  
the pastry's aroma  
the click of computer keys  
on a dozen laptops;

it is all beautiful to me.

M.C. Bruce

# The Burden Of The Dead

The dead are no burden to us at all.  
The earth carries them for us  
Quite nicely, putting its dirty shoulder  
Into their weight so that we

May continue with our petty day  
Bruiting our power over each other  
Putting each other into our boxes  
Pretending we are immortal

And that we, ourselves, will never  
Be confined to that final little box  
When we force the earth to bear us  
When we are empty and cold.

M.C. Bruce



# The Feast Of St. Amy

she never really knew her part  
she couldn't sing the grandest lie  
a martyr, now, to her heart  
we let her die.

her spirit struggled, never free  
no matter how much we were awed'  
tankeray would come to be  
her blood of god

her blurry image flickers long  
her high-heeled ghost uncertain. lost  
Once again she sings the song  
her holocaust

dismiss the lioness. our choice:  
the hollow babes of silicone.  
too disturbing was her voice  
of blood and bone.

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# The Feast Of St. Elvis

(After a Drawing by Leigh White)

The rabble will resort to cliché  
Muttering song titles as if they were  
Holy writ; you know the ones I mean.  
They no longer sing to me.

I will venerate you for the sacred  
Fire with which you purified  
A weary world, scorching  
Television screens and teenagers

Boys and girls alike, visiting  
Their dreams with a vision  
Of damnation and salvation  
With a beat they could dance to.

O, liberator angel,  
Sign of the apocalypse,  
The only one of the four horsemen  
Slinging a guitar.

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# The Feast Of The Martyrdom Of St. Sylvia

Kisses tasting of gas  
You lay down on your  
Chosen cross with alacrity  
And little hesitation.

They now blame  
Your husband, your high strung  
Heart, the poor reviews  
For your first novel.

Fools. You knew this  
Was the only way you could escape  
The tedious beast constantly  
Jabbering at your mind.

Poetry did not kill you.  
Your poems were not suicide notes  
They were small paper rafts  
That kept you from drowning.

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# Thermos

When I was a boy  
My mother put  
A new thermos  
In my lunch.

The lunch box fell  
And the inside  
Of the thermos  
Shattered, leaving

Kool-Ade laced with  
Small bits of metal  
Which I almost drank  
(Being a rather stupid

Child) but my teacher  
Stopped me and poured  
The sweet, deadly drink  
Down the drain.

Years later, when I  
Fell desperately in love  
With a short-haired girl  
Who turned out to be

A studied and serious  
Drunk, her disdain for me  
Saved me from drinking  
A similar sweet potion.

M.C. Bruce

# This Is To Say

when you see me next  
and I seem insubstantial  
parts of me incandescent  
translucent  
it is just because  
when the heart hollows  
the body loses its grasp  
on what's left of ruin

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