

Poetry Series

Mark Butkus
- poems -

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Mark Butkus()

Mark Butkus wrote about the environment for more than 20 years. In Mexico, he exercises the left side of his brain. As one of the founders of the Bar None Group he has edited two anthologies of English writing from the Costalegre region of Mexico. Caught between two worlds he now calls Chicago home.

Poems listed at Poemhunter first appeared on the Bar None Group website at: with the following exceptions: 'Absinthe Makes the Heart Grow Fonder' first appeared at Stories Space and; 'For A Mother' appeared on the now dormant Basil and Spice.

The Bar None Group welcomes submissions from writers novice and established. Visit the website for details or email: barnonegroup(at)

Absinthe Makes The Heart Grow Fonder

The ice is drinking my Absinthe
Ethereal worms dance in my glass
I have to improvise while wearing spats
My TV is wearing a Hawaiian shirt
(the shirt is red if you are into details)
and speaks to me only in Italian
I'm tempted to tell the talking glass that Absinthe is French
but I'd feel silly talking to a box with electrodes
- Do tubes and such in the back of that beast
even exist in the 21st century?

The ice is drinking my Absinthe
It has consumed three drinks already
There was one before lunch
One before sex with Teresa
and the one that is now
hiding under my chair

I don't see the point
in pouring another

Mark Butkus

Charlotte's Shells

Was looking for some change
To do the laundry on 8th Street
When I came across Charlotte's shells

She had always wanted to
Come to the ocean with me
But as she never could come
I did what I thought
Was the next best thing

I picked up a shell
One for every trip
One for every beach
That Charlotte could not
Share with me

There are nine Charlotte shells
For the next time that we meet
If we never do
I'll always have
Charlotte's shells

Mark Butkus

For A Mother

A mother is more than a night in a delivery room
She is there when needed
Soothes away pain
With a smile or a touch
Provides lessons in life
And especially lessons in laughs

She gives from her heart
Sharing hugs and balloons
Expecting nothing in return
Well, maybe a smile
A mother is more than a womb

Mark Butkus

From Love And Squalor

When your name is stolen from a book
it's easy to lift lines
I don't know if she knows it
or even if it matters

Looking up toward the stars
she asks for recognition
Closer than the distant heavens
she lives within my heart

I've told her from the first we met
when held within my arms
I'm never going to let you down
One promise I have kept

Mark Butkus

La Aurora

La Aurora de Nueva York tiene
cuatro columnas de cieno
y un huracán de negras palomas
que chapotean las aguas podridas.

La aurora de Nueva York gime
por las inmensas escaleras
buscando entre las aristas
nardos de angustia dibujada.

La aurora llega y nadie la recibe en su boca
porque allí no hay mañana ni esperanza posible.
A veces las monedas en enjambres furiosos
taladran y devoran abandonados niños.

Los primeros que salen comprenden con sus huesos
que no habrá paraíso ni amores deshojados;
saben que van al cieno de números y leyes,
a los juegos sin arte, a sudores sin fruto.

La luz es sepultada por cadenas y ruidos
en impúdico reto de ciencia sin raíces.
Por los barrios hay gentes que vacilan insomnes
como recién salidas de un naufragio de sangre.

Mark Butkus

Labor Day

The rains that played havoc with your plans were due here by dawn
There were no puddles nor drops when the day began
Pure folly to think that the bales of hay would be brought in under dry skies
The farmers plight is to out-maneuver the weather
A moment passes as the east wind blows foul and the deluge commences

One hundred and twenty seven bales would need to be wrapped
All would need to be toted from one hundred acres
Before nine
Coffees were inhaled, rain-slickers applied
Faces lined with defeat head out into the storm
The sun would not rise on this day

Tractored paths give way to muddy ruts as the hay-wagons fall into well worn
grooves
More moisture than the ground could absorb the trail now a rushing river
Instructions, directions compete with the sound of rain hitting plastic
Diesel engines strain as they idle, straining louder with each load
Hitching and unhitching wagons opening and closing gates
Hand signals replace the unheard voices that were greeted with shrugs

Seventy-three head of cattle penned in a pasture watch the passing parade
Water may be everywhere but they are cut off from their source
The hours pass, the rains ebb and flow, the temperature rises and falls and rises
and falls again
Fences must be mended, vehicles must be towed, empty wagons must be moved
There can be no lunch for the dripping crew until there is first water for the herd

There are no quiet moments, no time for reflection
Eyes strain against the rain, the sodden foot moves gingerly on the clutch
A loss in focus could mean the loss of a digit, a limb or a morning of toil for not
with an upended cart
Monet would not paint his grainstack haystacks in this tempest (though he had a
penchant for the morn)
A touch of frost was all that he could endure, all that he could immortalize
Brushstrokes of despair, colored gray, paint this pastoral canvas
A watercolor of frantic activity will not subside before the storm passes through

Mocking one and all the winds pick up as the chores wind down

Secure the gates, return the tractors to the barn and shed
Batten down the hatches they say at sea, on land it is lash down the barn doors
before they blow
Tired, beaten but not defeated the wet and the weary exchange grins as they
head in
The day is done, bales toted and wrapped, fences built and mended, cows free to
roam and drink
Laughter fills the farmhouse as lunch delayed is now called supper and the sun
breaks over the horizon.

Mark Butkus

Sunset Amy

As Sunset Amy dips into the sea
She rises in my heart
A tentative summer's smile
An autumn's first kiss farewell
We awkwardly said hello

Proclaimed proudly
from atop the Alondra
Barra stops to watch
As Sunset Amy dips into the sea
She rises in my heart

Mark Butkus

The Day We Cried: Remembering 9/11

Shafts of light reach heavenward
to where you both once stood
Again you take my breath away
Once more I shed a tear
Years have passed and yet you still
send shivers down my back

I see your spirit getting dressed
Sparkling on a New York night
Prettier than you ever were
She rises on the horizon
Yet she will not stir the soul
For you were once my pulse

On a quiet September morn
Disturbed only by my thoughts
I quietly reflect upon
my memories of you
and our last goodbye
- Once upon a happier time

Mark Butkus

The Monster Under The Bed

On the night that bin Laden died
with a bullet in his head
A beeping phone awoke me
from a restless night's sleep
there were two messages

The night was still young
I thought about celebrating
but I smiled and went back to sleep
'A small, cool
gathering my house now'

A shout of joy
from down below
ended my restless night
Jay was awake and had seen the news
A new day was about to unfold

Two hours later
Jay was doing laundry
and I was confirming
my flight back home

An hour after that
and Jay was out for eats
and I was on the beach
with my feet facing
our own private Mecca

The waves
oblivious to the news from Pakistan
continue to crash
against the shores of Mexico

Osama bin Laden
the monster under the bed
no longer has to worry about
restless nights
but we do

Mark Butkus

Un Rey Mago En El Nacimiento De Cristo

Hoy Yo tuve un niño en mis brazos
Ha pasado mucho tiempo
Desde que tuve una vida en mis manos

Una vida sencilla
Sin promesa falsa
Sin el corazón roto
Sin pérdida.

En mis brazos
Yo tenía las manitas

Yo era más alegre
Mi perdí de ser un padre
Y lloré por primera vez
Desde que mi abuela murió
Y he perdido tanto desde entonces

Y aun hoy, un niño tocó mi corazón
Por qué aquí? Por qué ahora?

Hoy, Yo tuve un niño en mis brazos
Ha pasado mucho tiempo
Desde que tuve una vida en mis manos

Una vida sencilla
Sin promesa falsa
Sin el corazón roto
Sin Pérdida.

En mis brazos
Me aferraba al manita
En aquel momento
Todo lo que Yo quería, era ser
Parte del manita de ese niño
Y agradecerle
Por hacerme sonreír
Y dejarme llorar
No lágrimas de dolor

Pero lagrimas de felicidad.

Mark Butkus

Yours: A New York Poem

I spent the afternoon exploring
As much of you as I could
Feeding on your flesh
With my lips and tongue
Illuminated my soul

We both glistened this morning
As we crossed over the threshold of our desires
I had now become yours
You held me close and told me to release my fears
You would be my dream-catcher

Yesterday we didn't exist
Yet I allowed you to seduce me
And I don't often fall
And I don't often give up myself
To be led by the moment

Your scent, your taste
So exotic
The paradigm of many cultures
That you can call your own
Confident and sensitive
In equal parts

I averted my eyes
When I saw you rise before me
A schoolboy's wanderlust
Taken to new heights
Cursory words fumbled over my tongue
As I was drawn to you

You didn't resist
And you didn't dismiss
My initial attempts
To brush up against you
To feel the power of your aura
To bathe in you're radiant glow

You entered my heart
First as a silhouette of brilliance
While the setting sun behind you
Framed for me an image I'll never let go

Without any effort
You enveloped me
The deeper I got within you
Secure from the world
Beyond these red sheets

You took me in your arms
As I took you in my heart
How long does a one night stand last
When you fall in love?

I want to love you
For more than what you are
I want to love you like a dream
I've always had

You are giving
Without asking in turn
You are giving
When you, yourself still hurt

I see and touch your scars
I kiss them gently
Knowing that I can't bring back
What was

I raise my eyes from your stomach
Find you smiling down on me
I am here to help you heal
If that is what you want from me

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